

ای نام تو بهترین سر آغاز بی نام تو نامه کی کنم باز

...

یادگاری کز آدمی زاد است

سخن است آن دگر همه باد است

Politicization of the background of Nizami Ganjavi: Attempted de-Iranization of a historical Iranian figure by the USSR

By Dr. Ali Doostzadeh
(alidoostzadeh "AT"yahoo.com)

تقدیم به یاد ولادمیر مینورسکی و نوروز علی محمداف

(In memory of Vladimir Minorsky and Nowruzali Mohammadzadeh)

Special thanks go to Shahrbaraz <http://shahrbaraz.blogspot.com> for proof-reading and adding useful comments. This article is dedicated to the memory of Novruzali Mammadov and Vladimir Minorsky.

Note 1: The article believes that Nizami Ganjavi despite his Iranic background, culture and contribution to Iranian civilization, and being a product of this civilization is a universal figure. He is also equally a part of the heritage of Iran, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and modern republic of Azerbaijan. These are people that are either Iranian or have been greatly affected by Iranian civilization although at his own time, the concept of nation-state did not exist for any particular modern country to claim Nizami Ganjavi. People of Iranic backgrounds and inheritors of Persian language, civilization and culture have the duty to present this universal figure to the world and keep his language alive. At the same time, this great figure has been politically manipulated by some ethno-minded scholars and USSR ethno-engineers. The article discusses this issue at length where USSR tried (and failed) to detach this great Iranian figure from Iranian civilization.

Note 2: the PDF version of this article reads much better and can be downloaded from here:

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The goal of this article is to examine the ethnic roots and cultural association of Nezami Ganjavi, one of the greatest Persian poets. It is of course well known that Nezami is a universal figure, but there are two reasons to examine his ethnic and cultural associations. The first reason is that it helps us understand his work better. We provide exposition of rare sources (such as Nozhat al-Majales) which are crucial for the study of the 12th century region of Arran and Sherwan. The other reason to write this article, as explained later in this paper (under the section: *politicization of Nizami USSR and its remnants today*), is the politicization surrounding Nezami Ganjavi's ethnic and cultural background by the USSR for the purpose of nation building. Through objective analysis based on Nezami Ganjavi's work and other primary sources, we analyze the ethnic root and cultural background of Nezami Ganjavi.

The politicization discussion centers on the following points. Despite the fact that Nizami Ganjavi being a Persian poet and all of his poetry is in Persian, is he a cultural icon from the Iranian civilization or Turkic civilization? What is his ethnic background and does it play role in assigning to which civilization he belongs?

ای برادر تو همه اندیشه ای
ما بقی تو استخوان و ریشه ای

And does this question matter at all, given Nizami's usage of Persian as his cultural vehicle and hence his contribution to Persian culture, language and civilization? Given the fact that Nizami Ganjavi's poem cannot be translated without losing its multi-layered symbolic meaning and fine details, and given the fact that there is no "pure ethnicity" in the modern Middle East and Caucasia, and given the fact that ethnic divisions were not as prominent as they are today, does the question even matter? The belief of this author is that the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi belongs to all humanity equally. At the same time, Nizami and his legacy are part of the same culture that he was influenced by and expanded upon. That is other great poets before him, including Ferdowsi, Asadi Tusi, Fakhr ad-in Asad Gorgani and Sanai were his predecessors. Those who speak, read and write Persian, and understand verses of Nizami's poetry, are those that keep the heritage

of Nizami alive today and have a special responsibility to pass down the cultural heritage of great Persian poets like Ferdowsi, Sanai, Nizami, Attar and many others. For example, Pushkin who is the most popular literary figure of Russians is a Russian poet and has served the Russian language and followed the Russian literary tradition. His ethnicity from his father's side was partially Ethiopian but nevertheless he is part of Russian culture and civilization. We shall get back to this issue in the conclusion of this essay. Thus the question of ethnicity is secondary relative to that of the culture/civilization which a poet arises from and contributes towards. Especially in the middle ages when the concept of nation-state did not exist and one has to concentrate on ethnicity and culture which defines ethnicity.

Despite this simple fact that ethnicity of most 12th century figures (and most people do not know their say 20th ancestor!) cannot be 100% known, we will look into the details of Nizami's background and we will provide criticism for invalid interpretations, recent forgeries of non-existent verses and the politicization of Nizami by the USSR in order to materialize Stalin's unfulfilled wish that "*Nizami must not be surrendered to Iranian/Persian literature*"! Ultimately, Nizami is part and parcel of Persian-Iranian literature and culture, since he lives through this language, all his thoughts are in this language and he is popular due the masterpieces in this language. The question of whether he belongs to Iranian civilization or Turkic civilization is simply answered by anyone who can read his untranslatable work in its original language. The issue of his ethnicity has no bearing on this fact. Yet, we will look at this issue in detail and show that there is nothing to support a Turkic ethnicity for Nizami where-as the corpus of **Nizami's work** and other historical and cultural reasons show an Iranic background. That is the issue of claiming Turkic father line for Nizami lacks any solid proof and is used today ethno-nationalists from the republic of Azerbaijan to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization.

It is clearly evident that in terms of cultural orientation, cultural background, legacy, myth, folklore and language, Nizami Ganjavi is part of Iranian civilization and a prominent of Persian cultural history. Thus attempted political annexation of Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and attribution of Nizami Ganjavi towards Turkic civilization will simply bear no fruit in the long run (since he does not even have a single verse in any other language than Persian) and is a futile political effort which was taken up by USSR for nation-building process and is continued today for unscientific reasons of ethnic nationalism. Nizami Ganjavi survives through more than 30000+ Persian verses and his background is well known to be at least half Iranic and we will show in this article that it was full Iranic. There is nothing to support a Turkic background for Nizami Ganjavi's father, who Nizami was orphaned from in an early age and was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle Khwaja Umar.

The reader of course is free to make their own conclusion, but this does not change the simple fact that Nizami inherited the Persian heritage by previous Iranian poets, composed in the Persian language through Iranian culture, is alive through the Persian language, Iranian folklore, mythology and culture and finally it is the Persian speakers of the world who can read him in his own language and appreciate his untranslatable poetry

(he is arguably one of the hardest poets to translate because of the multi-layered meaning of many verses, play with language and extensive use of symbolism/imagery pertinent to Persian language and culture). At the same time, we do not deny his shared heritage among countries that have been influenced heavily by Iranian culture and are inheritors of Iranian civilizations and culture. Thus besides highlighting the politicization by the USSR and Stalin, the article will expose many forgeries and invalid arguments to detach Nezami Ganjavi from Iranian background, language and culture.

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Basic Nomenclature on ethnic names used in this writing

In this article we use the term Persian, Kurdish, Azeri, Iranian, Qipchaq, Oghuz and Turkic. It is important to have a clear definition with this regard.

Kurdish: Speaker of the dialects and languages considered Kurdish which is the NW Iranian language family.

Persian: Is a native speaker of various Iranian dialects. This includes Pahlavi dialects as well as NW Iranian languages identified as *Fahlaviyyat* and *Azari* during the middle ages and also the Parsi-Dari. The term Persian usually is not as a single linguistic term rather it denotes a speaker of variety any of the Iranian dialects who have pre-Islamic Sassanid heritage and Iranian mythology as exemplified by the Shahnameh. We will make a distinction when we speak of the Dari form of Persian (itself according to scholars the Khorasani dialect of Middle Persian) rather than what Qatran Tabrizi, Al-Masudi, Biruni and Nezami have called Persian (Parsi), which is the general definition.

Iranic: Means a native speaker of the Iranian languages. This term encompasses both Persian and Kurdish and various other Iranian speakers including Soghdians, Scythians, Medes and etc. In general it encompasses the totality of Iranian civilization and languages as well those with Iranian heritages.

Oghuz: Speaker of Oghuz dialects, mainly the western Turkic languages.

Qipchaq: Speakers of Qipchaq or similar eastern Turkic languages.

Turkic: Like Iranian, it denotes the speakers of Turkic languages. In Persian literature, the Mongols have also been considered as Turks since the bulk of the troops and tribes of the Mongol federation were of Turkic rather than Mongolic origin. Also the term Tatar has been used in this fashion. Thus Turkic encompasses the totality of various Turkic cultures, language and civilizations and the Altaic people. It should be noted that however in early Islamic era, non-Altaic speakers such as Soghdians, Alans and Avesta Turanians etc. have also been lumped with Turks in some sources due to geographical reasons. See Appendix B and C of this article for some observations with this regard.

Arabic: Native Arab speaker.

Armenian: Native Armenian speaker.

Georgian/Caucasian: Speaker of one of the languages that has been loosely classified as Caucasian languages by linguists of today.

On the ethnonym Azeri/Azerbaijani

The name Azerbaijan is a Persian word and goes back to the Persian Satrap of Media, Atropates.

Professor Vladimir Minorsky writes:

“Called in Middle Persian Aturpatakan, older new-Persian Adharbadhagan, Adharbayagan, at present Azarbaydjan, Greek Ἀτροπατήνη, Byzantine Greek Ἀδραβιγάνων, Armenian Atrapatakan, Syriac Adhorbayghan, the province was called after the general Atropates (“protected by fire”), who at the time of Alexander’s invasion proclaimed his independence (328 B.C.) and thus preserved his kingdom (Media Minor, Strabo, xi, 13, 1) in the north-western corner of later Persia (cf. Ibn al-Muqaffa, in Yaqūt, i, 172, and al-Maqdisi, 375: Adharbadh b. Biwarasf).

(Minorsky, V. “Adharbaydjan (Azarbaydjan) .”Encyclopaedia of Islam. Edited by: P.Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007. Brill Online.)

Professor K. Shippmann states:

“In the Achaemenid period Azerbaijan was part of the satrapy of Media. When the Achaemenid Empire collapsed, Atropates, the Persian satrap of Media, made himself independent in the northwest of this region in 321 B.C. Thereafter Greek and Latin writers named the territory Media Atropatene or, less frequently, Media Minor (e.g. Strabo 11.13.1; Justin 23.4.13). The Middle Persian form of the name was (early) Aturpatakan, (later) Adurbadgan) whence the New Persian Adarbayjan” (Encyclopedia Iranica, “Azerbaijan: Pre-Islamic History”, K. Shippmann).

The word *Azari/Azeri* has been used in the early Islamic period for a Persian related Iranian dialect. Naturally the name of the dialect was derived from the name of the region itself. We will make mention of this Iranian dialect later in the article.

But it is important to note that the ethnonym *Azeri/Azerbaijani* has been used no earlier than the late 19th century or the early 20th century to designate Turkic speaking Shi’i Muslims (Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, “Turko-Tatars”) (Roy, Oliver. “The new Central Asia: The Creation of Nations”) and was really accepted as a self-designation around 1930.

The origin of Turkic speaking Azeris has been described as:

- 1) Iranian
- 2) Turkic
- 3) Symbiosis of Iranian and Turkic
- 4) Symbiosis of Iranian, Turkish and Caucasian peoples

According to the multi-volume book “History of the East” (“Transcaucasia in XI-XV centuries” in Rostislav Borisovich Rybakov (editor), History of the East. 6 volumes. v. 2. “East during the Middle Ages: Chapter V., 2002. – ISBN 5-02-017711-3. <http://gumilevica.kulichki.com/HE2/he2510.htm>)

The formation of a distinct Turkic speaking groups who speak the language called “Azerbaijani-Turkic”(note in Iran it is called Torki and the pre-fix “Azerbaijani” to Turkic is also recent) language occurred between 15th-16th century.

"Современная наука относит завершение сложения турецкой народности к концу XV в. Очевидно, так же следует датировать и сложение азербайджанского этноса"

Translation:

"Modern science considers the completion of addition of the Turkish nation by the end of XV century. Obviously, the same should be dated and addition of the Azerbaijani ethnic group. "

The book also states that:

“

В XIV-XV вв. с началом формирования азербайджанского тюрко-язычного этноса возникает и его культура. Первоначально она не имела своих стабильных центров (вспомним, что один из ее ранних представителей, Несими, погиб в Сирии), и ее довольно трудно для данного времени отделить от османской (турецкой) культуры. Даже этническая граница между турками и азербайджанцами установилась только в XVI в., да и тогда она еще окончательно не определилась. Тем не менее в XV в. формируются два центра азербайджанской культуры - Южный Азербайджан и Карабах (равнинный). Окончательно они сложились уже позже, в XVI-XVIII вв.

Говоря о возникновении азербайджанской культуры именно в XIV-XV вв., следует иметь в виду прежде всего литературу и другие части культуры, органически связанные с языком. Что касается материальной культуры, то она оставалась традиционной и после тюркизации местного населения. Впрочем, наличие мощного пласта иранцев, принявших участие в формировании азербайджанского этноса, наложило свой отпечаток прежде всего на лексику азербайджанского языка, в котором огромное число иранских и арабских слов. Последние вошли и в азербайджанский, и в турецкий язык главным образом через иранское посредство.”

Translation:

“

In the XIV-XV cc., as the Azerbaijani Turkic-language ethnos was beginning to form, arose its culture, as well. At first it had no stable centers of its own (recall that one of its early representatives, Nesimi, met his death in Syria) and it is rather difficult at that time to separate from the Osman (Turkish) culture. Even the ethnic boundary between the Turks and the Azerbaijanis stabilized only in the XVI c., and even then it was not quite defined yet. Nevertheless, in the XV c., two centers of the Azerbaijani culture are forming: the South Azerbaijan and (lowland) Karabakh. They took final shape later, in the XVI-XVIII cc.

Speaking of the Azerbaijan culture originating at that time, in the XIV-XV cc., one must bear in mind, first of all, literature and other parts of culture organically connected with

the language. As for the material culture, it remained traditional even after the Turkicization of the local population. However, the presence of a massive layer of Iranians that took part in the formation of the Azerbaijani ethnos, have imposed its imprint, primarily on the lexicon of the Azerbaijani language which contains a great number of Iranian and Arabic words. The latter entered both the Azerbaijani and the Turkish language mainly through the Iranian intermediary. Having become independent, the Azerbaijani culture retained close connections with the Iranian and Arab cultures. They were reinforced by common religion and common cultural-historical traditions.”

Thus neither the ethnonym nor ethnic group nor language by the name Azerbaijani-Turk has been recorded in the 12th century. Since this ethnonym Azeri/Azerbaijani was not in use during the time of Nizami to refer to any dialect and group of Turkic speaking people, then it is not used in this work. Also one cannot necessarily talk of an Azerbaijani Turkic group in the 12th century as noted by the sources above (we will show Azerbaijan was far from Turkified by the 12th century using primary sources). The fact remains that the ethnonym Azeri/Azerbaijani was not in use at the time of Nezami, although Azerbaijanis have a thick layer of Iranian culture as well. Thus to say Nezami was an Azerbaijani poet does not correspond to any historical fact, since the term Azerbaijani was not used for an ethnic group (it was a geographical location of NW Iran) and the Azerbaijani Turkic ethnic group was not formed back then. He did not write in Azerbaijani-Turkish language (no one from 1140-1209 has written in that language from the Caucasus) and neither was the ethnic designation Azerbaijani used during or before his time. The formation/ethno genesis of ethnic Azerbaijanis as a symbiosis and blending of Iranian, Turkic and Caucasian elements comes in a much later. Also the land of Nezami Ganjavi, where he might have been born (most likely Ganja according to modern scholars and a minority of manuscripts have said Qom in central Persia or some scholars have said his ancestry from his father-side was in Tafresh), was really called Arran rather than Azerbaijan by most historical/geographical sources at that time. Indeed Nizami uses Arran, Armenia and Azarabadegan (Azerbaijan) and the majority of historical sources have differentiated between these three lands at the time of Nezami Ganjavi.

Some might make a counter-argument that they want to use the term *Oghuz Turk* or Turkic in general instead of Azeri. In their opinions, modern Azerbaijanis are Oghuz Turks (also called Tatars by Russians). The difference between eastern Turkic (Qipchaq) and Western Turkic Oghuz had become significant at the time of Nizami. Thus they might even reduce it to Western Turkic. In any case, “Turk” is a very generic term as an ethnic indicator: Would it have suggested “*Azeri Turkish*” in Nezami’s day, or was there even yet such a language branched out from the common Oghuz? Definitely not - most likely it would suggest the Seljuq tribesmen, whom I believe were Oghuz, but around the same time, it could also refer to Khatai Turkic, or Uighur, Chaghatay, Turkoman, Mongol (Mongols and Turks being used interchangeably in Persian literature around the time of the Mongol invasion), Kipchaks, Chinese, and Tibetans (being identified with Turks in some Islamic literature like Qabusnama), Iranic Sogdians (they have been identified with Turks in some Arabic literature due to being neighbors of Turks) etc.? We have no exact data from those days, but we may assume that the various Turkic speakers, to the extent that they held a shared sense of identity, would do so on the basis of a similar language

and nomadic lifestyles although tribal identifications would overtake any sort of shared cultural identity between these groups.

Here are what some scholars and authorities state on the ethno genesis of modern Azerbaijanis. Some have stated that an Azerbaijani ethnic group was formed by the XIII centuries, however more specialized sources put it around the Safavid era XVI. We believe the fact that Safina Tabrizi and Nozhat al-Majales (to be discussed later) show major urban centers of Arran, Sherwan and Azerbaijan to have been Iranic even in the Ilkhanid era are an elegant proof that the latter date of XVI is when Azerbaijan and Eastern Transcaucasia was decisively Turkified.

Professor Richard Frye states:

The Turkish speakers of Azerbaijan are mainly descended from the earlier Iranian speakers, several pockets of whom still exist in the region

(Frye, Richard Nelson, "Peoples of Iran", in Encyclopedia Iranica).

For example Professor Tadsuez Swietchowski states:

What is now the Azerbaijan Republic was known as Caucasian Albania in the pre-Islamic period, and later as Arran. From the time of ancient Media (ninth to seventh centuries B.C.) and the Persian Empire (sixth to fourth centuries B.C.), Azerbaijan usually shared the history of what is now Iran. According to the most widely accepted etymology, the name "Azerbaijan" is derived from Atropates, the name of a Persian satrap of the late fourth century B.C. Another theory traces the origin of the name to the Persian word azar ("fire") - hence Azerbaijan, "the Land of Fire", because of Zoroastrian temples, with their fires fueled by plentiful supplies of oil.

Azerbaijan maintained its national character after its conquest by the Arabs in the mid-seventh century A.D. and its subsequent conversion to Islam. At this time it became a province in the early Muslim empire. Only in the 11th century, when Oghuz Turkic tribes under the Seljuk dynasty entered the country, did Azerbaijan acquire a significant number of Turkic inhabitants. The original Persian population became fused with the Turks, and gradually the Persian language was supplanted by a Turkic dialect that evolved into the distinct Azerbaijani language. The process of Turkification was long and complex, sustained by successive waves of incoming nomads from Central Asia. After the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, Azerbaijan became a part of the empire of Hulagu and his successors, the Il-Khans. In the 15th century it passed under the rule of the Turkmens who founded the rival Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep) and Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep) confederations. Concurrently, the native Azerbaijani state of the Shirvan-Shahs flourished.

(Swietochowski, Tadeusz. "AZERBAIJAN, REPUBLIC OF" ,., Vol. 3, Colliers Encyclopedia CD-ROM, 02-28-1996)

"The mass of the Oghuz Turkic tribes who crossed the Amu Darya towards the west left the Iranian plateau, which remained Persian, and established themselves more to the west, in Anatolia. Here they divided into Ottomans, who were Sunni and settled, and Turkmens, who were nomads and in part Shiite (or, rather, Alevi). The latter were to keep

the name “Turkmen” for a long time: from the 13th century onwards they “Turkised” the Iranian populations of Azerbaijan (who spoke west Iranian languages such as Tat, which is still found in residual forms), thus creating a new identity based on Shiism and the use of Turkish. These are the people today known as Azeris.”

(Olivier Roy. “The new Central Asia”, I.B. Tauris, 2007. Pg 7)

Although, we do not believe the Oghuz nomads were Shi'ites when they entered Iran, rather they were Hanafis. They turned to Shi'ism probably due to the Ilkhanid atmosphere where Shi'ism was supported by some Ilkhanid rulers like Sultan Khodabanda. A further testament to this fact is that there is not Turkic Shi'ites in Central Asia and thus the adoption of Shi'ism by Turkic speaking tribes occurred in Anatolia and Persia.

Professor Peter Golden has written one the most comprehensive book on Turkic people called *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Peter B. Golden. Otto Harrassowitz, 1992). Professor Golden confirms that the Medes were Iranians and Iranian languages like Talyshi/Tati speakers being assimilated into Turkish speakers. Considering the Turkic penetration in Caucasian Azerbaijan and the Turkification of large parts of North Western Persia, Professor Golden states in pg 386 of his book:

Turkic penetration probably began in the Hunnic era and its aftermath. Steady pressure from Turkic nomads was typical of the Khazar era, although there are no unambiguous references to permanent settlements. These most certainly occurred with the arrival of the Oguz in the 11th century. The Turkicization of much of Azarbayjan, according to Soviet scholars, was completed largely during the Ilxanid period if not by late Seljuk times. Sumer, placing a slightly different emphasis on the data (more correct in my view), posts three periods which Turkicization took place: Seljuk, Mongol and Post-Mongol (Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu and Safavid). In the first two, Oguz Turkic tribes advanced or were driven to the western frontiers (Anatolia) and Northern Azarbaijan (Arran, the Mugan steppe). In the last period, the Turkic elements in Iran (derived from Oguz, with lesser admixture of Uygur, Qipchaq, Qalug and other Turks brought to Iran during the Chinggisid era, as well as Turkicized Mongols) were joined now by Anatolian Turks migrating back to Iran. This marked the final stage of Turkicization. Although there is some evidence for the presence of Qipchaqs among the Turkic tribes coming to this region, there is little doubt that the critical mass which brought about this linguistic shift was provided by the same Oguz-Turkmen tribes that had come to Anatolia. The Azeris of today are an overwhelmingly sedentary, detribalized people. Anthropologically, they are little distinguished from the Iranian neighbors.

It should be noted that Professor Golden on pg 12 of the same book states:

“Turkic population of today shows extraordinary physical diversity, certainly much greater than that of any group of Altaic language. The original Turkish physical type, if we can really posit such, for it should be borne in mind that this mobile population was intermixing with its neighbors at a very stage, was probably of the Mongloid type (in all likelihood in its South Siberian variant). With may deduce this from the fact that

populations in previously Europoid areas of Iranian speech begin to show Mongoloid influences coincidental with the appearances of Turkic people. The physical transformation of these Turkicizing peoples, however, illustrated by the population of Uzbekistan, Karakalpakia and especially the Turkic population of Iran and Turkey itself. To add to the complexity of this process, the Turkic populations that moved to Central Asia were themselves already mixed. In general, then, the further east, the more Mongoloid the Turkic population is; the further west, the more Europoid”

We shall affirm this fact by showing the description of Turks in classical Persian literature in another section. Indeed, this physical description, as described by countless poets including Nizami was Mongoloid rather than Caucasoid and this point to the Turkification of the mainly Caucasoid-featured population by the Mongoloid-featured Altaic groups.

According to Professor Xavier De Planhol:

“Azeri material culture, a result of this multi-secular symbiosis, is thus a subtle combination of indigenous elements and nomadic contributions, but the ratio between them is remains to be determined. The few researches undertaken (Planhol, 1960) demonstrate the indisputable predominance of Iranian tradition in agricultural techniques (irrigation, rotation systems, terraced cultivation) and in several settlement traits (winter troglodytism of people and livestock, evident in the widespread underground stables). The large villages of Iranian peasants in the irrigated valleys have worked as points for crystallization of the newcomers even in the course of linguistic transformation; these places have preserved their sites and transmitted their knowledge. The toponyms, with more than half of the place names of Iranian origin in some areas, such as the Sahand, a huge volcanic massif south of Tabriz, or the Qara Dagh, near the border (Planhol, 1966, p. 305; Bazin, 1982, p. 28) bears witness to this continuity. The language itself provides eloquent proof. Azeri, not unlike Uzbek (see above), lost the vocal harmony typical of Turkish languages. It is a Turkish language learned and spoken by Iranian peasants.”
(X. Planhol, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, “Iran: Lands of Iran”)

Professor Gernot Windfuhr in the article: *Isoglosses: A Sketch on Persians and Parthians, Kurds and Medes*, in *Hommages et Opera Minora, Monumentum H. S. Nyberg*, Vol. 2., Acta Iranica 5. Tehran-Liège: Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 457-472. On pg 468, he writes:

One may add that the overlay of a strong superstate by a dialect from the eastern parts of Iran does not imply the conclusion that ethnically all Kurdish speakers are from the east, just as one would hesitate to identify the majority of Azarbayjani speakers as ethnic Turks. The majority of those who now speak Kurdish most likely were formerly speakers of Median dialect.

It is important to note that the Oghuz Turks who Turkified Azerbaijan linguistically were not themselves pure Turks according to Mahmud Kasghari. Although without a doubt

Turkic speaking, Turkology expert N. Light comments on this in his *Turkic literature and the politics of culture in the Islamic world* (1998):

“... It is clear that he [al-Kashgari] ‘a priori’ excludes the Oghuz, Qipchag and Arghu from those who speak the pure Turk language. These are the Turks who are most distant from Kashgari’s idealized homeland and culture, and he wants to show his Arab readers why they are not true Turks, but contaminated by urban and foreign influences. Through his dictionary, he hopes to teach his readers to be sensitive to ethnic differences so they do not loosely apply the term Turk to those who do not deserve it. ...”

N. Light further explains:

“... Kashgari clearly distinguishes the Oghuz language from that of the Turks when he says that Oghuz is more refined because they use words alone which Turks only use in combination, and describes Oghuz as more mixed with Persian ...”

The actual Arabic statement of Kashgari is follows:

«الغزية لما اختلطت بلفرس نسبت كثيراً من لغت الترك و استعملت الفارسيه مكانها ج.ا، شماره 73)

Translation:

The Ghuzz due having mixed with Persians (Iranians/Fars) have forgotten many Turkic words and use Persian words instead.

Taymas, Abdullah Battal. “Divan Lagait – Turk Tercumesi”, *Turkiyat Mecmuasi*, Cilt (XI), Istanbul. 1954, pg. 76”

There are others opinions but we believe that a symbiosis between Iranian and Turkic elements (where the Oghuz nomads themselves before entering Azerbaijan and the Caucasia had already assimilated some Iranian nomads in Central Asia) formed the ethnicity of modern Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus and Iran, although the number of Turkmen nomads who entered Azerbaijan and Caucasia was small relative to the original population. The Turkmens of Iran and Turkmenistan, all of them nomads till the last century, also speak an Oghuz dialect which has been described as more archaic than that of the Turkish of NW Iran, Caucasia and Anatolia. There are probably many similarities between them and the Oghuz nomads who entered Azerbaijan during the Seljuq prelude and Turkmens of Iran and Turkmenistan.

Since the term *Azeri/Azerbaijani* as an ethnic term for the speakers of Turkic languages in Iran and Caucasia was adopted in the late 19th century (possibly some Russian works might have used Azerbaijani-Tatar and shortened it to Azerbaijani) or early 20th, we will not use it in this article. If some feel the identification of *Azerbaijani Turk* with *Oghuz Turks* because of linguistic reason, then we have used the term Oghuz Turks and Turkic in this article. Because the terms Oghuz and Turk are historical term that had been in use since at least 10th century. On the other hand, the ethnic name *Azeri/Azerbaijani Turkic* was not accepted until the 1920s or 1930s by its speakers and the overwhelming

reference to "Azerbaijani" without any suffix is geographical in the period before the adoption of this name for ethnic identification.

As noted by Oliver Roy:

"The concept of Azeri identity barely appears at all before 1920. Up until that point Azerbaijan had been a purely geographical area. Before 1924, the Russians called Azeri Tatars "Turk" or "Muslims".(Roy, Oliver. "The new Central Asia: The Creation of Nations").

According to Prof. Tadeusz Swietochowski: "Azerbaijani" was coined in the 1930s to refer to the inhabitants of the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.(Azerbaijan Seven Years of Conflict Nagorno-Karabagh – Human Rights Watch / Helsinki– December 1994 by Human Rights Watch).

Overall then, the term Azeri/Azerbaijani was overwhelmingly and primarily used as a geographical area before 1930 and also designates inhabitants of the newly formed state of Azerbaijan regardless of their ethnicity (Talysh, Tat, Azeris, Lezgins, Kurds, Armenians). So words like "Azerbaijan poet" or "Azerbaijani poet" might have been used a geographical designation for some poets of the area by scholars, but they did not have any sort of ethnic meaning and were purely geographical. Just like Khorasani poets or Khwarizmi Poet or Esfahani Poet or Shirazi poet..and etc is geographical. Some authors also distinguish between "Azerbaijani" and "Azeri". "Azerbaijani" means citizen of the republic of Azerbaijan or from the land of Azerbaijan where-as "Azeri" means the native speaker of Azeri Turkic.

In any event, we shall show from Nizami and the writing of other Persian poets, the physical features of Turk are clearly described as Mongloid and do not resemble those of the Caucasoid Anatolian and Azerbaijani Turkic speakers This alongside recent genetic evidence indicates that a language replacement via elite dominance is a likely explanation of the Turkification of Anatolia, Caucasia and Iranian Azerbaijan. Nizami does use *Iranians, Parsi/Ajam(Persian), Kurd(Kurd), Taazi(Arab), Turk(Oghuz, Qipchaq, Khatai..), Alan and Rus (the Viking Rus) and etc.* So we will use the terminology used during his time and this is the correct historiography that diligent historians of that era utilize. We should note that term 'Ajam was originally used by Arabs for Iranians but slowly this term became accepted and even Iranian nationalist poets like Ferdowsi and Asadi Tusi have used it in a positive manner and Nezami who was influenced by these two poets has also used it interchangeably with Parsi. Also Khaqani's title was the Persian Hessān al-'Ajam (the Persian Hessian, Hessian being a very famous Arab poet before Islam and Khaqani is the Persian version of him by this title).

It should be noted that Nezami has specifically himself mentioned the area where he lived as part of the "Persian realm" which is a cultural and geographical term. The reader can also see the section: *Regional Iranian Culture and Nezami's designation of Iran/Persian for his land* of this article for further usage of these terms.

Usage of Azerbaijani to describe Nezami based on geography is also not valid at Nizami's time (although he was born in the territory that is called Azerbaijan today), since the territory around Ganja usually was primarily called Arran rather than Azerbaijan in medieval history. Thus we should mention that some Western sources and possibly other sources have used the term *Azerbaijani* or *Azerbaijan poet* (not ethnic sense since such a name was not adopted until the 1930s and before 1930s its primarily and overwhelming usage was geographic) for Nezami as a geographical designation, but this is not historically valid as Nizami himself uses the terms Aran, Arman and Azarabadegan. Also Nezami has praised three different rulers as rulers of Iran/Persian and Persian lands, and this shows that not only culture but the land was considered part of the geographical/cultural region of Persia/Iran.

An example of erroneously using this term and anachronism is for example given by this quote by a noted scholar: "*In the fifteenth century a native Azeri state of Shirvanshahs flourished north of the Araxes.*" (Tadeusz Swietochowski. *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*, Columbia University, 1995, p. 2.)

Yet the Shirvanshah called their territory Shirwan, not Azerbaijan. Also the Shirvanshah were not ethnically Turkic, but were a mixture of Iranians and Arabs and culturally they were Persians. And also "Azeri" denotes the native Turkic speaker where-as Azerbaijani would at least have geographical meaning.

This sort of wrong and anachronistic application of geographical name has unfortunately occurred many times and has been used for various poets and scientific figures.

An inquirer asked one academic writer who used this term:

In the book "Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-century Iran" on page 65 you wrote "The renowned Azerbaijani poet, Nizami of..."
What do you mean with "Azerbaijani poet Nizami"? Ethnic, cultural, geographical or other characteristic?

The Author of the book who used the term responded back:

geographical. The whole subject of nationalities is fraught with controversy since in mediaeval times nation-states did not exist people could not so easily be labeled. Often people were defined by their city, e.g. Samarqandi, Balkhi, though often by the region, Rumi. Nizami has been claimed by the modern state of Azerbaijan though he continues to be considered a Persian poet and for the student seeking further information Azerbaijan could be a starting point for their research. You should not read too much into such labels. George Lane

Despite this, we should note that Ganja at that time was part of Arran and the area was not called Azerbaijan. So indeed this is a wrong and anachronistic application of the geographical conventions. At the same time, it illustrates that by this convention, is

being used as a modern geographical location(Azeri, Azerbaijani) and not necessarily culture, ethnicity, language and heritage.

Also as the author who responded back noted, the concept of nation-state did not exist back then. This is an important point which some people have not unfortunately grasped. So for example to speak of Iranian or Turkic or Azeri or Arab or Armenian or Georgian citizenship or nationality(based on citizenship rather than culture/ethnicity) at that era does not make sense since the ethnicity of the ruler had no implication on the citizenship (e.g. Seljuqs controlled Iran but overwhelming majority of the inhabitants were neither Turks or Seljuqians and no one identified their identity through a state).

So for example the Buyids were an “Iranian State”(meaning an Iranic-speaking ruling elite controlled a state) but they controlled areas (such as Iraq) that had a substantial non-Iranian population. Those non-Iranian population will not be considered Iranians ethnically or culturally just because the Buyids were Iranian rulers(which some might call “Iranian State”). The same is true with Seljuqs or the semi-autonomous Atabeks who had established a state with Turkic ruling elite, but their main population was non-Turkic and so the identity of their inhabitants should not be erroneously described as the citizenship/nationality(based on state not ethnicity/language)/nation-state concepts that did not exist at that time.

As per the term *Azari*, there was an ancient Azari-Fahlavi language or group of dialects spoken in Iranian-Azerbaijan (Atrapatkan) (remnants of it being the Tati in Iran), but this was an Iranic language. We shall touch upon this later. Scientifically, one cannot impose a different space and time upon medieval historical settings. So at the time of Nizami Ganjavi, the term *Azerbaijani* did not denote a subset of Turkic speakers. At his time, the overwhelming majority of the sources have referred to the area of Ganja as part of Arran. For example, to say, Homer was Turkish because he was born in the land of Turkey does not seem correct. Certainly the people of Turkey should be proud of him that such a great figure has come from their land, but to assign him the modern majority ethnicity *Turkish* of Turkey does not make sense since such a term even did not exist nor is attested during the time of Homer. This author is of the opinion of Professor Xavier Planhol:

“Azeri material culture, a result of this multi-secular symbiosis, is thus a subtle combination of indigenous elements and nomadic contributions, but the ratio between them is remains to be determined.”

Thus just like ancient Egyptians spoke ancient Egyptian, but modern Egyptians speak Arabic, it does not mean that ancient Egyptians are not connected to modern Egyptians. Same with modern Turks of Anatolia who also share in the pre-Turkic Greek civilization. Although it should be mentioned that there are Iranian speakers in some of these countries although many of them have become Turcophones gradually in the last several hundred years and rapidly in last century. The difference with Iranian cultural items that are claimed by modern Turkic speaking countries (Biruni, Rudaki, and Avicenna in Uzbekistan; Nizami, Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism, Bahmanyar.. in the Republic of Azerbaijan; and Abu Said Abul Khair in Turkmenistan) is that there are also countries

that speak Iranian languages and Persian in particular, thus they rightfully also claim to be inheritors of these Iranian cultural items, since the culture has continued. Especially for such a poet as Nizami Ganjavi, who only wrote in Persian and contributed to the Persian culture and language, expanded Persian myths and legends and finally came from an Iranian background. In the end, these countries (both Iranian speaking and Turkic speaking) have a shared heritage due to the fact that some of these Turkic countries had a linguistic shift from Iranian languages to Turkish languages due to migration of Turkic nomads and the Turkification of some of the lands. The question of whether Nizami belongs to Iranian civilization or Turkic civilization is something we will discuss in this article. We also note that modern nationalism especially that of pan-Turkism which has also influenced Caucasia, was a reactionary movement spawning out of the decay and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Thus that secular identity created by it today (which is based on ethno-nationalism as seen in modern Turkey and republic of Azerbaijan) in our opinion is radically different than the identities of the Caucasia and Ottoman Empire prior to this period. For a clear picture of identity of the Caucasus in the 12th century, one can look at the book Nozhat al-Majales which we shall discuss later in this article.

What did the USSR mean by Azerbaijani?

Since the ethnonym Azerbaijani for an ethnic group was new, the USSR era did not provide a clear definition. For example some considered Azerbaijanis to be Medes, others as Turks and others as Caucasian Albanians. Then there was theories combining some or all of these. This is another reason why calling Nezami Ganjavi as “Azerbaijani” in the politicized USSR sources lacks clarity. Do they mean Medes(and the descendant of Iranic Medes like Talysh, Kurds?), or Caucasian Albanians or Turks and etc.

For example Bolukbashi mentions:

“During the Stalin era, Azeri historians were forced to link Azeri history to Persian Medes, whose appearance in Iran and the southern Caucasus dates back to the ninth century BC. In the post-Stalin era, this theory gave away to one which linked the Azeris’ origin to the Atropathenes and Caucasian Albania. By the early 1970s, however, the Turkic role in Azeri history had begun to be admitted, so that until the Gorbachev era the Azerbaijani historiography based Azeri identity on a combination of the Medes, the Atropathenes, the Albanians and the Turkic settlers, a formula which helped prevent the emergence of an all-Turkic historiography” (Susha Bolukbashi, ‘Nation building in Azerbaijan: The Soviet Legacy and the Impact of the Karabakh Conflict’ in Van Schendel, Willem(Editor) . Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century. London , GBR: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2001.)

Arya Wasserman notes:

“The growing interest in the nationalities problem and the rising influence of the ideology of Turkism revived the old controversy over the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people, that is between adherents of the concept of the decisive Turkic role and supporters of the pro-Iranian theory. In the mid 1970s, the republican authorities headed by the First Secretary Heydar Aliiev had resolved the debate by ruling in favour of the Iranian concept. Now, for the first time monographs dedicated of this problem were published. The purely scientific problem of ethnogenesis became a regular theme in newspapers. The authors of some articles used this discussion to express their opposition to the policy of Turkicization. Politicians also intervened in the dispute. The President’s adviser on nationalities, Idaiat Orujev, supported the concept according to which Azerbaijan was the homeland of Oguz Turks, which obviously meant that he was inclined to accept the theory of the Turkic origins of the Azerbaijani people.

Opponents of the proto-Turkic conceptions of ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people insist that the Kurds, Talysh, Lakhij and other Persian-speaking peoples are ethnic Azerbaijanis, who had a part from ancient times in the ethnogenesis of the Azerbaijani people, and that all of them share the same Caspian racial type, to which no other Turkic-speaking peoples, not even the Turks themselves, belong to”

(Aryeh Wasserman, “A Year of Rule by the Popular Front of Azerbaijan” in Yaacov Roi, “Muslim Eurasia”, Routledge, 1995. pp 150-152.)

Thus the usage of “Azerbaijani” as an ethnic term was recent and during the USSR era, the term did not necessarily mean Turcophone people. Now, today the designation “Azeri” and “Azerbaijani” are further confused because Azerbaijani has been used as a geographical term since 1918 for all inhabitants of Eastern Southern Caucasus (corresponding to the modern republic of Azerbaijan) whereas “Azeri” denotes the Oghuz Azerbaijani-Turkic speaker of that area. But for the USSR, it seems to have meant a combination of Turks, Iranians and Caucasian Albanians who became Turcophones. Prior to that, the term was mainly geographical and it could be possible some authors after 1918 have referred to Nezami as an Azerbaijani/Azerbaijani poet noting that he lived most if not all of his life in Ganja. However, such an ethnic formation had not yet occurred during the time of Nezami Ganjavi as noted. Thus the article will not use anachronistic terms and will stick with terms such as Persian, Iranian, Turkic, Oghuz, Kurds and etc.

Politicization of Nizami by the USSR and its Remnants Today

The reason to write this article is due to the fact that the USSR politicized and even distorted the character of Nizami Ganjavi for the purpose of nation building. Remnant of that period still can be seen in some modern post-USSR texts. The USSR tried to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and use him for nation building. In this section we show many of political manipulations surrounding the figure of Nizami Ganjavi. We will evaluate the merit of the arguments of the USSR era in a later section and show its

invalidity. So in this section, we prove that politicization of the figure of Nizami Ganjavi and the USSR's efforts to detach him from Persian and Iranian culture and appropriate him to an ethnic and cultural *Turkic* label. (Something we believe lacks any evidence when one actually reads Nizami's works and considers the cultural background of his work). For example, in recent years, false verses that are not in any edition or manuscripts of the works of Nizami have found their way on the internet and are quoted extensively by nationalistic sites.

One of these false verses is as follows:

**پدر بر پدر مرا ترک بود
به فرزانی هر یکی گرگ بود**

Translation:

*“Father upon father of mine were all Turks,
In wisdom each one of them was a wolf”!*

The problems with the above verse is that not only it is not found in any extant manuscript of Nizami Ganjavi's work, but also the words “Tork/Turk” do not rhyme with the words “Gorg/Gurg”(Wolf). For more on the history of the falsification of this verse which was traced back to 1980 in Azerbaijan SSR see:

جلال متینی، «سندی معتبر بودن بر در ترک بودن نظامی گنجوی!»، ایرانشناسی، سال 4، 1371.

Matini, J. “A solid proof on the Turkic roots of Nizami Ganjavi?!”, *Iranshenasi*, Volume 4, 1371 (1992-1993).

Other times, poetry from Turkic language poets are ascribed to Nizami Ganjavi. Since Nizami Ganjavi wrote all his works in Persian, this has led to some nationalist pan-Turkist groups making such unfounded claims. For example, a news report appeared where two pan-Turkist nationalists have claimed that they have found the Divan of Nizami Ganjavi in Turkish.

Here is a link for such a news item:

<http://www.apa.az/en/news.php?id=28178>

Nizami Ganjavi's divan in Turkish published in Iran

[08 Jun 2007 13:17]

Divan of Nizami Ganjavi in Turkish was found in Khedivial library of Egypt, poet and researcher Sadiyar Eloglu told the APA exclusively.

Eloglu said that he is analyzing Nizami Ganjavi's divan in Turkish. He added that the divan was found by Iranian researcher of Azerbaijani origin Seid Nefisi 40 years ago in Khedivial library but for some reasons the scientist did not analyze the book.

Poetess from Maraga Fekhri Vahizeden living in Egypt found the divan two years ago and sent a copy of it to Sadiyar Eloglu. The scientist has been analyzing the work for two years. He said that the claims denying the works'belonging to Nizami Ganjavi were not proved.

"Historical points and personalities noted in the works were Nizami Ganjavi's contemporaries,"he said. He noted that 213 couplets in the divan were proved to be written by Nizami Ganjavi.

Eloglu has already published these poems in Iran. /APA/

This Turkish Diwan was found to be from a poet named Nizami Qunavi (d. 1469 or 1473) from the Ottoman Empire and it is written in the Ottoman Turkish language.

محمدعلی کریمزاده تبریزی، «دیوان ترکی نظامی گنجوی!»، ایرانشناسی، سال هفدهم، شماره-۵ سوم، 1384.

See:

Tabrizi, Mohammad Ali Karim Zadeh. "The (supposed) Turkish Diwan of Nizami Ganjavi!", *Iranshenasi*, Seventeenth year, Volume 3, 2005.

See also:

(Osman G. Oguzdenli, "Nizami Qunavi" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*)

We will later show that at the time of Nizami Ganjavi, not a single verse of Turkish has ever been written from the area and essentially there is no proof that a Turkish literary tradition existed in the Caucasia (Arran) or Azerbaijan at that time.

False arguments created by the USSR, like "Nizami was forced to write Persian for the Shirvanshah", based on misinterpretation of verses shall also be dealt with in this article.

Another nationalistic writer who has equated Azeris with Turks (unlike what we wrote) has written: "Although Nizami did not produce his work in Azeri language, his narratives are, nonetheless, rooted in Azeri culture and tradition."

The reader is surprised by the above writer since he must think that the Sassanid heritage (like the stories of *Khusraw o Shirin*, *Haft Paykar*) or the Irano-Islamic rendition of Alexander (*Eskandarnama*) or the Persianized story (by Nizami) of *Layli o Majnoon* have their roots in Turkic cultures and tradition. Such nationalistic outbursts are common from ethnic nationalistic scholars but they lack any scientific basis.

So what is the root of all these modern forgeries? Why is there a need to retroactively Turkify Nizami Ganjavi by attributing to him works that are not his? What is the purpose of creating false verses within the last 30 years or so in order to attribute Grey Wolf myths to Nizami Ganjavi? What is the origin of the false argument that "Nizami was forced to write in Persian" or Nizami was "a victim of Persian Chauvinism"!??

We must seek the root of all these forgeries by going back to the nation-building period of the USSR. I always bring the example of famous Russian poet Pushkin when some nationalists make their claims about Nizami and attribute him to Turkic civilization.

Pushkin was of Ethiopian origin (his grandfather was Tsar Peter the Great's slave). However, he considered himself and is widely regarded as a Russian poet, and not Ethiopian poet. No one makes even an attempt to talk about Pushkin's ethnic origin and question his place in Russian literature or assign him to Ethiopian literature! In the case of Nizami Ganjavi however, false verses and unsound reasons were invented (as we shall see mainly misinterpretation of verses associated with the introduction of *Layli o Majnoon*) to claim him of non-Iranian origin and detach him from the Iranian culture world. So unlike Pushkin where one can reliably confirm some Ethiopian ancestry, there is absolutely nothing to suggest Nizami was Turkic, where-as he was at least half Iranic and we will show in this article that he was full Iranic based on different valid arguments. The USSR attempted to disconnect him from the category of Persian literature altogether and to assign him to the non-existent category (during Nizami's time) of *Azeri literature*, where-as Azeri-Turkic is a branch of Turkic and Nizami Ganjavi does not have a single verse in that language and actually the first evidence of poetry from that language from Azerbaijan or Anatolia or Caucasia comes many years after Nizami.

The Encyclopedic Dictionary Brockhaus and Efron, published between 1890-1906 (before the USSR) has an entry on Nizami Ganjavi. It goes as:

“Nizami (Sheikh Nizamoddin Abu-Mohammed Ilyas ibn-Yusuf) is the best romantic Persian poet (1141-1203), born in Cumsky (Qom), but the nickname is “Ganjevi (Gandzhinsky) because most of life spent in Gunja (now Elizavetpol), and there however died.”

За свою поэму “Хосров и Ширина”(1180), посвященную азербайджанским атабекам, Н. был призван ко двору, но очень скоро удалился от его суеты и вел жизнь аскетическую.”

<http://be.sci-lib.com/article071752.html>

It is worthy to check what the Encyclopedia Britannica 1911 with this regard. Under Nizami, it is written:

“Nizam-uddin Abu Mohammad Ilyas bin Yusuf, Persian Poet, was born 535 A.H. (1141 A.D.)”

We note that before the USSR, not a single book or article has described Nizami Ganjavi as *Turkic poet*. Even as will be shown later, a Turkic nationalist like the Chagatai poet Alisher Navai considers Nizami Ganjavi as a Persian and not a Turk. This indeed shows how Nizami's cultural heritage and background was ascertained 200-300 years after his own time.

So what did occur during the USSR era? For the readers in Persian, there is an article by Professor Sergei Aghajanian which has outlined exactly what has occurred:

سرگی آفاجانیان، «پنجاهمین سالگرد یک تحریف تاریخی، به مناسبت هشتصد و پنجاهمین سالگرد تولد نظامی»، ایران شناسی، سال 4، شماره یک (بهار 1371).

Sergei Aghajanian, “*The fiftieth anniversary of a historical distortion: On the occasion of the 850th anniversary of the birth of Nizami*”, *Iranshenasi*, 4th year, Volume 1, 1992-1993.

According to Aghajanian, around 1930 or so, Nizami Ganjavi’s heritage was changed to Azerbaijani from Persian and the USSR political committee decided to detach him from Persian literature and incorporate him into *Azerbaijani literature*. Of course part of it had to do with the fact that a new country by the name Azerbaijan was formed in 1918 and the name persisted as Azerbaijan SSR during the USSR era. Thus one argument was that since Nizami was from Ganja, then he is Azerbaijani (which he would have been from a citizenship perspective had he been born in the 20th century and the concept of nation state existed! But it did not exist in the 12 century!). This argument again is misplacing both time and space. During Nizami Ganjavi’s time, the region was called Arran and in general, the Islamic-Iranian culture was a continuously present throughout the whole urban Eastern Muslim world, especially in the Caucasia. Also as we mentioned, later on *Azerbaijani* despite the quotes we brought, has taken to be equivalent to Turkic by some authors.

Interestingly enough, the writer of the 1897 (Brockhaus and Efron) wrote “Persian and its literature” in 1900 and also its third edition in 1912 all mentioning Nizami as Persian poet. But because of the political climate in 1939(see below and the Appendix), he wrote a monograph “Nizami and his contemporaries” claiming:

““We should fully realize and accept Azerbaijani Nizami, of course, was true Azerbaijani poet, and Heroes" Leila and Majnun " is not the Arabs from an Arab legend, but Turkic romantic heroes.””

Such baseless claims like Lili o majnoon was a Turkic legend! Or Nizami was Azerbaijani poet (rather than Persian poet) were made during the political atmosphere of 1930s and onward.

In the book *Russia and her Colonies*, Walter Kolarz exposes the USSR’s anti-Iranian schemes (both cultural and territorial) and support of irredentist policy vis-à-vis Iranian Azerbaijan:

“Whilst trying to link Azerbaidzhani culture as closely as possible with Russian culture, the Soviet regime is equally eager to deny the existence of close cultural ties between Azerbaidzhan and Persia. The fact that most of the great poets brought forth by Azerbaidzhan in the past wrote mainly in Persian does not discourage the Soviet theoreticians, who are working out the ideological basis of Soviet nationalities policy. They declare categorically that everything produced by poets born in Azerbaidzhan ‘belongs to the Azerbaidzhani people,’ notwithstanding the language in which the works of the so-called Azerbaidzhani poets were written. (46) According to this theory the Persians have no right to claim any of the outstanding poets who had written in the Persian language; if, nevertheless, they do advance such a claim they are immediately branded as guilty of ‘pan-Iranianism’.

The attempt to ‘annex’ an important part of Persian literature and to transform it into ‘Azerbaijani literature’ can be best exemplified by the way in which the memory of the great Persian poet Nizami (1141-1203) is exploited in the Soviet Union. The Soviet regime does not pay tribute to Nizami as a great representative of world literature, but is mainly interested in him as a ‘poet of the Soviet Union’, which he is considered to be because he was born in Gandzha in the territory of the present Azerbaijani Soviet Republic. The Soviet regime proclaims its ownership over Nizami also by ‘interpreting’ his works in accordance with the general pattern of Soviet ideology. Thus the leading Soviet journal Bolshevik stressed that Nizami’s ‘great merit’ consisted in having undermined Islam by ‘opposing the theological teaching of the unchangeable character of the world’. (47)

Stalin himself intervened in the dispute over Nizami and gave an authoritative verdict on the matter. In a talk with the Ukrainian writer, Mikola Bazhan, Stalin referred to Nizami as ‘the great poet of our brotherly Azerbaijani people’ who must not be surrendered to Iranian literature, despite having written most of his poems in Persian [*Note by the author of the present article: It should be noted that not a single verse of Turkish was ever written by Nizami and his mother was Kurdish and his works point to a father of Iranian background*]. Stalin even quoted to Bazhan a passage from Nizami where the poet said that he was forced to use the Persian language because he was not allowed to talk to the people in their native tongue [*Note by the writer of this present article: Shirvanshahs were not Turkic speaking and Nizami wrote his introduction after completing the story of the Layli and Majnoon. The verse in question has to do with Ferdowsi and Mahmud, and Nizami through the mouth of Shirvanshah’s versifies that we are not unfaithful like Turks, so we need eloquent speech not low speech. This issue has been expanded upon by the Iranian writer Abbas Zarin Khoi and this invalid claim will be examined in detail later*]. (48)

Thus in Stalin’s view Nizami is but a victim of Persian centralism and of a denationalization policy directed against the ancestors of the Azerbaijani Turks. Nizami is not a Persian poet, but a historical witness of Persian oppression of ‘national minorities’. It is by no means surprising that Stalin should take this line or that he should attach the greatest importance to everything that would undermine Persia’s cultural and political prestige. Stalin’s interest in Persia is that of a Georgian rather than that of a Russian. In spite of being, as we have seen, a bad Georgian nationalist in many other respects, he is animated as far as Persia is concerned by a traditional Georgian animosity against the ‘hereditary enemy’. To gain economic and political influence in Persia is traditional Russian policy ever since Peter the Great, but the Soviet Government, thanks to Stalin’s influence, has done more than follow in the footsteps of Czarist diplomacy. It has put into effect new methods to disintegrate Persia, methods which only a Caucasian neighbour of the Persians and an expert on nationality problems could design.

THE OTHER AZERBAIDZHAN

Even before the Second World War the Soviet authorities of Moscow and Baku knew that autonomist and separatist movements would emerge one day in Persia, particularly among the Turks of Persian Azerbaidzhan. It was felt however that some time might elapse before conditions would be ripe for launching a 'national liberation' campaign in Persia. The organ of the Soviet of Nationalities, *Revolutsiya i Natsionalnosti*, stated as late as 1930 that the Azerbaidzhani Turks of Persia never ceased to consider themselves as an integral part of the Pahlevi monarchy and continued to supply both leaders and pioneers for the Persian national movement. However, the same article forecast that the growth of Turkic culture in Soviet Azerbaidzhan and the attraction of the Baku oilfields would play their part in awakening the Turkic national consciousness of the people of Persian Azerbaidzhan. (49)

The 'awakening' of the Azerbaidzhani Turks came earlier than the Soviet sociologists could have foreseen in 1930, and was a direct consequence of the Russian military occupation of Northern Persia of 1941-46. During this occupation the Persian Azerbaidzhani were brought into close contact with the people of the Azerbaidzhani Soviet Republic, and it is small wonder that the idea of a union took shape in the two Azerbaidzhans, which, though widely differing economically and politically, are united by the bond of a common language. With the assistance of the 'brothers from the North' this Turkic language - ignored under Persian rule - was given the first place in education and administration all over Persian Azerbaidzhan. An Azerbaidzhani university and an Azerbaidzhani National Museum were opened; Azerbaidzhani books and newspapers were either printed on the spot or imported from Soviet Azerbaidzhan. While contact between Tabriz, the capital of Persian Azerbaidzhan, and Teheran was practically cut off; the most advanced Turkic nationalists were encouraged to look to Baku for political and cultural inspiration. Left-wing Azerbaidzhani poets praised Baku with oriental hyperbole. One of them, Tavrieli, described Baku as the 'Rose of beauty graved in stone' and another, Muhammed Biriya, poet and also secretary of the trade unions of Persian Azerbaidzhan, said he came to Baku to drink the 'life-giving water' of this city and that he wept 'happy tears' on seeing Baku. (50)

In 1946, when the Soviet troops left Northern Persia, the Persian Government only too easily swept away the regime set up by pro-communist Azerbaidzhani autonomists in Tabriz. The nationalism of the Azerbaidzhani Turks of Persia was still too feeble to put up a successful resistance even to a weak Persian State. The end of the Azerbaidzhani separatist government was, however, not the end of the Azerbaidzhan problem. The Soviet regime did its best to keep the issue alive both in Soviet 'Northern Azerbaidzhan' and in Persian 'Southern Azerbaidzhan'. Soviet Azerbaidzhani poets and writers continued to deal in their works with the problem of the unredeemed brothers in the South and thus to foster an irredentist ideology among the people of the Azerbaidzhani S.S.R. On the other hand communist refugees from Southern Azerbaidzhan were given shelter in Baku and were assisted in their efforts to keep in touch with the Turkic-speaking people of Northern Persia.

(Walter Kolarz., *Russia and her Colonies*. London: George Philip. 1952.)

Indeed Stalin in his interview in April of 1939 expressed the opinion as noted by Kolarz:

*“Comrade Stalin in an interview with the writers of Azerbaijan (SSR) was talking about Nizami Ganjavi and brought some verses from him in order to reject the fact that this poet of our brothers (he means the Azerbaijan SSR) is part of Iranian/Persian literature, just due to the fact that he has written **most** of his work in Persian” (Kolarz, Aghajanian)*

We note the amazing forgery here. Nizami Ganjavi does not have one verse of Turkish. There is not a single non-Persian verse from Nizami Ganjavi. Yet Stalin claims that Nizami Ganjavi was a victim of Persian oppression and only **“most of his work”** (in reality all of his work) is in Persian. We note that the first verse in classical Azerbaijani Turkish was written much later than Nizami’s passing away. It is amazing that Nizami Ganjavi is not part of Persian literature according to the chief USSR ideologue, despite the fact that he wrote not “most”, but all of his work in the Persian language and is known throughout the world for his quintuple Persian masterpiece.

As Walter Kolarz has correctly noted:

The attempt to ‘annex’ an important part of Persian literature and to transform it into ‘Azerbaijani literature’ can be best exemplified by the way in which the memory of the great Persian poet Nizami (1141-1203) is exploited in the Soviet Union.

We may quote the modern Turkic nationalist newspaper Ayna which regularly uses the term Persian Chauvinists (common amongst pan-turkist nationalists) to describe Iranians. The newspaper Ayna states:

“Ayna, Baku

10 Aug 04 Now, let us have a brief look at Khatami's mistake. While on a trip to Ganca, he wrote down his words and wishes in the visitors' book at the world's renowned thinker Nizami Gancavi's mausoleum. There he called Nizami a poet of "Persian literature". We have always boasted our hospitality. This national value has always been a feature distinguishing Azerbaijani Turks from others.

Our ills

have often resulted from this feature. With his remarks Khatami proved that he was a representative of the chauvinist Persian ideology masked under the cover of democracy.”

Yet no one dispute Nizami wrote in Persian and is part of Persian literature. Even Nizami himself says he is composing Persian literature and nowhere does he use the term Turkish literature or any other ethno-linguistic term that would imply it is not Persian literature. For example, when he was inspired and advised by the Prophet Khezr, Nizami who calls the Persian language as Dorr-i-Dari (a term that was used at least since the time of Nasir Khusraw) states in his Sharafnama:

چو در من گرفت آن نصیحت‌گری
زبان برگشادم به در دری

*When all those advices were accepted by me
I started composing in the Persian Pearl (Dorr-i-Dari)*

Or again for example in the Sharafnama he states:

نظامی که نظم دری کار اوست
دری نظم کردن سزاوار اوست

*Nizami whose endeavor is producing Persian poetry (Nazm-e-Dari)
Versification of Persian(Dari Nazm Kardan) poetry is what suits him*

Nizami never says I have composed in “*Turkish*” or “*Azerbaijani literature*”(a term that did not exist back then and Azerbaijan at that time would be part of the geographical region of Iran and its people would not be Turcophones at that time). He clearly states Nazm-e-Dari (Persian poetry). Parsi-i-Dari(term used by Ferdowsi) being the Khurasani Persian. Nezami uses Parsi and Dari sometimes interchangeably but other times, like Qatran Tabrizi, local dialects were also called Parsi and this is distinguished within its own context.

Professor. Gilbert Lazard, a famous Iranologist and also the writer of Persian grammar states: "The language known as New Persian, which usually called at this period by the name of Dari or Parsi-Dari, can be classified linguistically as a continuation of Middle Persian, the official religious and literary language of Sassanian Iran, itself a continuation of Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenids. Unlike the other languages and dialects, ancient and modern, of the Iranian group such as Avestan, Parthian, Soghdian, Kurdish, Pashto, etc., Old Middle and New Persian represent one and the same language at three states of its history. It had its origin in Fars (the true Persian country from the historical point of view and is differentiated by dialectical features, still easily recognizable from the dialect prevailing in north-western and eastern Iran".(Lazard, Gilbert 1975, “The Rise of the New Persian Language” in Frye, R. N., The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 4, pp. 595-632, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Unfortunately, few people (some politically minded and some ignorant) who cannot read Persian have started to call Nizami Ganjavi’s poetry as something else rather than Persian literature.

Professor Yuri Slezkine has given a more general description of that era of USSR nation building as well a reference to Nizami Ganjavi:

...After the mid-1930s students, writers, and shock-workers could be formally ranked - and so could nationalities. Second, if the legitimacy of an ethnic community depended on the government’s grant of territory, then the withdrawal of that grant would automatically “denationalize” that community (though not necessarily its individual passport-carrying members!). This was crucial because by the second half of the decade the government had obviously decided that presiding over 192 languages and potentially 192 bureaucracies was not a very good idea after all. The production of textbooks, teachers and indeed students could not keep up with formal “nationalization,” the fully bureaucratized command economy and the newly centralized education system required manageable and streamlined communication channels, and the self-consciously Russian

“promotees” who filled the top jobs in Moscow after the Great Terror were probably sympathetic to complaints of anti-Russian discrimination (they themselves were beneficiaries of class-based quotas). By the end of the decade most ethnically defined Soviets, villages, districts and other small units had been disbanded, some autonomous republics forgotten and most “national minority” schools and institutions closed down.

However - and this is the most important “however” of this essay - the ethnic groups that already had their own republics and their own extensive bureaucracies were actually told to redouble their efforts at building distinct national cultures. Just as the “reconstruction of Moscow” was changing from grandiose visions of refashioning the whole cityscape to a focused attempt to create several perfect artifacts, so the nationality policy had abandoned the pursuit of countless rootless nationalities in order to concentrate on a few full-fledged, fully equipped “nations.” While the curtailment of ethnic quotas and the new emphasis on Soviet meritocracy (“quality of cadres”) slowed down and sometimes reversed the indigenization process in party and managerial bureaucracies, the celebration of national cultures and the production of native intelligentsias intensified dramatically. Uzbek communities outside Uzbekistan were left to their own devices but Uzbekistan as a quasi-nation-state remained in place, got rid of most alien enclaves on its territory and concentrated on its history and literature. The Soviet apartment as a whole was to have fewer rooms but the ones that remained were to be lavishly decorated with hometown memorabilia, grandfather clocks and lovingly preserved family portraits.

Indeed, the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, which in many ways inaugurated high Stalinism as a cultural paradigm, was a curiously solemn parade of old-fashioned romantic nationalisms. Pushkin, Tolstoy and other officially restored Russian icons were not the only national giants of international stature - all Soviet peoples possessed, or would shortly acquire, their own classics, their own founding fathers and their own folkloric riches. The Ukrainian delegate said that Taras Shevchenko was a “genius” and a “colossus” “whose role in the creation of the Ukrainian literary language was no less important than Pushkin’s role in the creation of the Russian literary language, and perhaps even greater.” The Armenian delegate pointed out that his nation’s culture was “one of the most ancient cultures of the orient,” that the Armenian national alphabet predated Christianity and that the Armenian national epic was “one of the best examples of world epic literature” because of “the lifelike realism of its imagery, its elegance, the profundity and simplicity of its popular wisdom and the democratic nature of its plot.” The Azerbaijani delegate insisted that the Persian poet Nizami was actually a classic of Azerbaijani literature because he was a “Turk from Giandzha” and that Mirza Fath Ali Akhundov was not a gentry writer, as some proletarian critics had charged, but a “great philosopher-playwright” whose “characters [were] as colorful, diverse and realistic as the characters of Griboedov, Gogol’ and Ostrovskii.” The Turkmen delegate told the Congress about the eighteenth-century “coryphaeus of Turkmen poetry,” Makhtum-Kuli; the Tajik delegate explained that Tajik literature had descended from Rudaki, Firdousi, Omar Khayyam and “other brilliant craftsmen of the world”; while the Georgian delegate delivered an extraordinarily lengthy address in which he claimed that Shot’ha Rust’haveli’s *The Man in the Panther’s Skin* was “centuries ahead of west European

intellectual movements,”infinitely superior to Dante and generally “the greatest literary monument of the whole ... so-called medieval Christian world.”

According to the new party line, all officially recognized Soviet nationalities were supposed to have their own nationally defined “Great Traditions”that needed to be protected, perfected and, if need be, invented by specially trained professionals in specially designated institutions. A culture’s “greatness” depended on its administrative status (from the Union republics at the top to the non-territorial nationalities who had but a tenuous hold on “culture”), but within a given category all national traditions except for the Russian were supposed to be of equal value. Rhetorically this was not always the case (Ukraine was sometimes mentioned as second-in-command while central Asia was often described as backward), but institutionally all national territories were supposed to be perfectly symmetrical - from the party apparatus to the school system. This was an old Soviet policy but the contribution of the 1930s consisted in the vigorous leveling of remaining uneven surfaces and the equally vigorous manufacturing of special - and also identical - culture-producing institutions. By the end of the decade all Union republics had their own writers’ unions, theaters, opera companies and national academies that specialized primarily in national history, literature and language. Republican plans approved by Moscow called for the production of ever larger numbers of textbooks, plays, novels, ballets and short stories, all of them national in form (which, in the case of dictionaries, folklore editions and the “classics”, series came dangerously close to being in content as well).

....

Even in 1936-1939, when hundreds of alleged nationalists were being sentenced to death “the whole Soviet country”was noisily celebrating the 1000th anniversary of Firdousi, claimed by the Tajiks as one of the founders of their (and not Persian) literature... (Slezkine, Yuri. “The Soviet Union as a Communal Apartment.”in *Stalinism: New Directions*. Ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Routledge, New York, 2000. pages 330-335)

Professor Bert G. Fragner has also examined the arbitrary decisions of central powers in the USSR to determine and make history for the purpose of nation building:

Peculiarities of Soviet Nationalism

If these were the basic requirements, we should now look for the consequences. According to the Soviet concept, nations had to have their own specific territories. Territorialism was obligatory according to Stalin’s basic theses on the National Question. The Soviet principle of territoriality clearly and outspokenly contradicts the theories of Renner and Bauer, who rejected territorial requirements for national minorities etc. Within the Soviet system, any decisions on the limitation of territory were the exclusive prerogative of the central power in Moscow. Economic considerations and planning were also largely concentrated in central hands. The Soviet power created territories for created nations like planned habitats or biotopes, according to their Utopian vision of human and social engineering.

This means that in Soviet nationalism there was no place for direct political leadership towards national independence, and no place for a nation's independent economic growth. But there was an important task for potential national leaders: to support distinct collective identification with the specific nation, that is, its territory, its (regulated, or at least standardized) language, and its internal administration. This set of tasks was to be crowned by the development of a specific and distinct culture within the Soviet frame, not to be confused with others. Therefore, Soviet nationalism was less harmonizing than was widely believed; it accepted inner-Soviet nationalist contradictions and dissent on territories, divergent interpretations of the cultural heritage (such as: **Was al-Farabi a Kazakh? Was Ibn Sina (Avicenna) a Tajik or an Uzbek? To whom does al-Biruni belong?**) It was up to the central power to solve these kinds of contradiction by arbitrary decisions. This makes clear that Soviet nationalism was embedded into the political **structure of what used to be called 'Democratic Centralism'**. The territorial principle was extended to all aspects of national histories, not **only in space but also in time: 'Urartu was the oldest manifestation of a state not only on Armenian soil but throughout the whole Union (and, therefore, implicitly the earliest forerunner of the Soviet state)', 'Nezami from Ganja is an Azerbaijani Poet', and so on.** The Georgian linguist Nikolai Marr's bizarre, not to say extremist, theoretical rejection of any migrations in world history was, after some years of disastrous consequences, officially rejected itself, during Stalin's lifetime. In practice, this concept never vanished from the national discourses in the Soviet Union, albeit on a scholarly or on a popular and even folkloristic level. (Fragner. B.G., 'Soviet Nationalism': An Ideological Legacy to the Independent Republics of Central Asia'in: Willem van Schendel/Erik J. Zürcher (eds.), Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World. Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century, London 2001)

We note that Uzbekistan still claims that Biruni is an Uzbek despite the fact that Biruni has a direct statement saying the people of Chorasmia are a branch of Persian and it is known that his language was the Chorasmian Iranian language (which he has left important remnants of). He has specifically mentioned that his native language was the Iranian Chorasmian language.

J.G. Tiwari has also summarized and examined the USSR nation building policies with regards to Azerbaijan SSR.

(Excerpted from Muslims Under the Czars and the Soviets by J.G. Tiwari, 1984, AIRP). Taken from: <http://admin.muslimsonline.com/babri/azerbaijan1.htm> (access date June 2006)

“Right on heels of October Revolution, the Bolsheviks in the Russian dominated town of Baku seized political power although they were in a minority [100] in the local Soviet. But the nationalists led by their Mussavat Party overthrew that government and set up their own independent government in its place in November, 1918 [101]. The Eleventh Russian Soviet Army was sent to Baku to curb the nationalists and seize power from them. On April 27, 1920 the nationalist government was overthrown and Soviet authority

was established [102] and the army captured millions of puds of oil, according to April 28, 1920 telegram sent to Moscow by Revolutionary War Council of the Eleventh Russian Soviet Army concerning the liberation of Baku [103].

Immediately after this economic exploitation of Azerbaijan began. Oil drilling rapidly increased. Influx of Russian settlers to Baku was accelerated. By 1934, only one out of five oil workers was the Azerbaijani Turk. In 1949 Russian was the language employed in most of the schools [104]. The economy of Azerbaijan being mostly agricultural, emphasis was given on increasing the area under cotton cultivation. Between 1913 and 1938 the area under cotton increased by 90 per cent while that under wheat shrunk by 12 per cent and that under rice cultivation by 48 percent. There was popular opposition to cotton growing. Even the Communist Party organization in villages and rural districts sabotaged the instructions which Baku authorities issued for the implementation of the cotton plan [105]. Coercion was employed to extend cotton area, to set up collective farms and to implement alphabet revolution.

Within the Communist Party, opposition arose against Russification and economic exploitation of Azerbaijan. Between 1921 and 1925, this opposition was led by Sultangaliyevists who were working within the party under the leadership of Narimanov. The deviationists were liquidated. This was followed by another similar revolt in the party led by Khanbudagovism demanding the end of Russian colonization and the replacement of Turkic workers by Non-Turkic workers. Beria, the NKVD Chief was specially sent there in the thirties who took a “merciless part in unmasking and extermination of the Trotskyite-Bukharinist and bourgeois-nationalist deviationists in the country [106].

Azerbaijan history was re-written to establish the existence of strong friendly relations between Russia and Azerbaijan in the past and to deny close cultural ties with Persia of which for hundreds of years Azerbaijan was an integral part. Vigorous attempts were made to snap Azerbaijan’s cultural ties with Iran.

A striking example of Soviet attempts to snap the cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Persia was their treatment of Nizami, one of the most outstanding Persian poets. Since Nizami was born in a place that now falls within Soviet Azerbaijan, their propagandists claimed that Nizami belonged to Soviet Azerbaijan. The Soviet regime went to the extent of proclaiming that Nizami’s works were in accordance with Soviet ideology. Their leading journal Bolshevik stressed that Nizami’s ‘great merit’ consisted in having undermined Islam [107]. Stalin referred to Nizami ‘as the great poet of our brotherly Azerbaijan people’ who must not be surrendered to Iranian literature, despite having written most of his poems in Persian. Stalin even quoted passages from Nizami showing that he was forced to write in Persian language because he was not allowed to talk to his people in their native language [108]. He emphasized the view that Nizami was a victim of Persian oppression of Azerbaijanis and he opposed Persian oppression of minorities.

New generation of Azerbaijan poets has cropped whose main theme is that Azerbaijanis in Persia live under oppression while the people of Soviet Azerbaijan live a prosperous

life. One Azerbaijani poet in one of his works puts the following words in the mouth of Stalin:

From here the light will burst in living torrents, On Araby, Afghanistan and Iran; and dawn will bathe the Orient tomorrow, From this thy land, the happiest of lands [109].

The objective of Soviet literature and propaganda in Azerbaijan is to alienate the Azerbaijanis from Tehran, from Iran's religion and culture and to encourage people to look to Baku and not Tehran for cultural and political inspiration.

Since the very inception of Bolshevik regime Baku and Azerbaijan have been used as instruments for Soviet expansionist aims. Baku is the venue of the Soviet University of the Peoples of the East where cadres are trained for work beyond the southern borders of Soviet Union. In 1921 and 1941, twice Soviet army in Azerbaijan aggressed on Iran and made abortive attempts to set up puppet Soviet regimes there. As early as 1930, the organ of the Soviet Nationalities, *Revolutsiyai Natsionalnost i*, complained that Azerbaijan Turks consider themselves as integral part of Pahelvi's monarchy and forecasted that in due course of time Baku would play an important role in bringing about a new consciousness among Turks of Persian Azerbaijan, [110] in other words implying that Baku would be used as a propaganda centre for instigating Communist revolts in Iran. These endeavours have been reinforced by the recurrent theme of Soviet propagandists and litterateurs that their brothers in Persian Azerbaijan should be redeemed. In this way an irredentist ideology has been kept alive in Soviet Azerbaijan. Soviet Azerbaijan is the sanctuary of Iranian Communists and a centre for funding the Iranian Communist Party. On its Iranian border is positioned a radio station, called the National Voice of Iran which beams communist propaganda to Iran. As many as 28 Soviet divisions are stationed for action in Iran [111] and this border is connected by road net-works with the metropolitan cities of Soviet Union. In other words Soviet Azerbaijan is being keyed to play a vital role in the realization of Soviet plan to reach Gulf waters. Communist Party of Azerbaijan remained an important source of help for Afghan communists before they took over.

Because of the iron curtain the outside world knows very little of the current popular reaction to Soviet regime in Azerbaijan, but the following two reports in ABN Correspondence can serve as an indication:

“The Daily Telegraph dated May 22 1973 reported that the nationalist upsurge has taken place in Ukraine. Recently two writers have been sentenced to 7 and 5 years forced labour, respectively, for participating in activities of a ‘national cultural movement’. There has been considerable national and religious uprising in Latvia and Lithuania. Similar activities are evident in Tadzhikstan, Azerbaijan and Turkestan. [112]

“The underground radio stations’ are known to exist in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.”[113]

References:

1. Kolarz Walter, *Russia and Her Colonies*, p. 32.
2. *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1976, Vol. 9, p. 493 and Vol. 7, p. 71.

An example of nation building process is also given by Ismet Cherif Vanly in his article describes the official state policy (which was really part of the USSR policy of assimilating smaller groups into larger groups):

“Not only did Turkey and Azerbaijan pursue an identical policy, both employed identical techniques, e.g. forced assimilation, manipulation of population figures, settlement of non-Kurds in areas predominantly Kurdish, suppression of publications and abolition of Kurdish as a medium of instruction in schools. A familiar Soviet technique was also used: Kurdish historical figures such as Sharaf Khan of Bitlis and Ahmad Khani and the Shaddadid dynasty as a whole were described as Azeris. Kurds who retained “Kurdish” as their nationality on their internal passports as opposed to “Azeri” were unable to find employment.”

(Ismet Chériff Vanly, “The Kurds in the Soviet Union”, in: Philip G. Kreyenbroek & S. Sperl (eds.), *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview* (London: Routledge, 1992))

It should be pointed out that during the decay and finally the demise of the USSR, some notable Russian scholars have spoken about the political attempt of detaching Nizami Ganjavi from Persian literature and the wider Iranian culture and civilization.

The late Professor Igor M. Diakonoff gives a background on his writing of the book *History of Media* and he clearly states as he always had maintained that the Medes were Iranians. He also gives his impression on the 800th anniversary celebration of Nizami Ganjavi. He gives an overview of the USSR nation building.

http://www.srcc.msu.ru/uni-persona/site/ind_cont.htm

http://www.srcc.msu.ru/uni-persona/site/authors/djakonov/posl_gl.htm

Accessed August 2006.

I.M. Dyakonoff (1915- 1999)

Publisher: (European House), Sankt Petersburg, Russia, 1995

ISBN 5-85733-042-4

The book can also be found at the Russian National Library

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_National_Library

<http://www.nlr.ru/cgi-bin/opac/nog/opac.exe>

Дьяконов, Игорь Михайлович(1915-).

Книга воспоминаний. - СПб.: Фонд регион. развития Санкт-Петербурга и др., 1995.

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The Book of Memoirs

Last Chapter (After the war)
pp 730 - 731

Our faculty at the University, as I already mentioned, was closed “for Zionism”. There was only one position left open (“History of the Ancient East”) which and I have conceded to Lipin, not knowing for sure then, that he was an (secret service) informer, and was responsible for death of lovely and kind Nika Erschovich. But Hermitage salary alone was not enough for living, even combined with what Nina earned, and I, following to an advice from a pupil of my brother Misha, Lesha Brstanicky, [signed a contract and] agreed to write “History of the Media”for Azerbaijan. All they searched for more aristocratic and more ancient ancestors, and Azerbaijanis hoped, that Medes were their ancient ancestors.

The staff of Institute of History of Azerbaijan resembled me a good panopticon. All members had appropriate social origin and were party members (or so it was

considered); few could hardly talk Persian, but basically all were occupied by mutual eating (office politics). Characteristic feature: once, when we had a party (a banquet) in my honor at the Institute director's apartment (who, if I am not wrong, was commissioned from a railway related-job), I was amazed by fact that in this society consisted solely of Communist party members, there were no women. Even the mistress of the house appeared only once about four o'clock in the morning and has drunk a toast for our health with a liqueur glass, standing at the doors.

The majority of employees of the Institute had very distant relation to science. Among other guests were my friend Lenja Bretanitsky (which, however, worked at other institute), certain complacent and wise old man, who according to rumors, was a red agent during Musavatists time, one bearer of hero of Soviet Union medal, Arabist, who later become famous after publication of one scientific historical medieval, either Arabic, or Persian manuscript, from which all quotes about Armenians were removed completely; besides that there were couple of mediocre archeologists; the rest were [Communist] party activists, who were commissioned to scientific front.

Shortly before that celebrations of a series of anniversaries of great poets of the USSR people started. Before the war a celebration of Armenian epos hero of David of Sassoon anniversary took place (epos' date was unknown, though). I caught only the end of the celebrations in 1939 while participating in the expedition, excavating Karmir Blur [in Armenia]. And it was planned an anniversary of the great poet Nizami celebration in Azerbaijan. There were slight problems with Nizami - first of all he was not Azeri but Persian (Iranian) poet, and though he lived in presently Azerbaijani city of Ganja, which, like many cities in the region, had Iranian population in Middle Ages. Second, according to the ritual, it was required to place a portrait of the poet on a prominent place, and whole building in one of the central areas of Baku was allocated for a museum of the paintings illustrating Nizami poems.

Problem was that the Koran strictly forbids any images of alive essences, and nor a Nizami portrait, neither paintings illustrating his poems existed from Nizami's time.

So Nizami portrait and paintings illustrating his poems were ordered three months before celebrations start. The portrait has been delivered to the house of Azerbaijan Communist Party first secretary Bagirov, local Stalin. He called a Middle Ages specialist from the Institute of History, drew down a cover from the portrait and asked:

- Is it close to original?*
- Who is the original? - the expert has shy mumbled. Bagirov has reddened from anger.*
- Nizami!*
- You see, - the expert told, - they have not created portraits in Middle Ages in the East...*

All the same, the portrait occupied a central place in gallery. It was very difficult to imagine more ugly collection of ugly, botched work, than that which was collected on a museum floor for the anniversary.

I could not prove to Azeris, that Medes were their ancestors, because, after all, it was not so. But I wrote "History of the Media", big, detailed work. Meanwhile, according to the USSR law a person could not have more than one job, so I was forced to leave (without a regret) Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, and, alas, the Hermitage, with its scanty earnings. For some period I worked at Leningrad's Office of History museum...

(It should be noted that Diakonoff here considers Azeris as equivalent to a Turkic group, where-as in this author's opinion, Azeri's have a considerable Iranic heritage and thus the Medes and their civilization are part of the broader Iranic heritage of Azeris as well. This is what Prof. Planhol has called a multi-secular symbiosis. It is noteworthy that the whole concept of USSR nation building is succinctly described by one of its greatest historians (Diakonov).

http://www.srcc.msu.su/uni-persona/site/authors/djakonov/posl_gl.htm

Original Russian of Professor Diakonov (this author does not speak Russian and thanks the anonymous friend who helped him by translating it and the translation was checked via computerized translator):

В Университете нашу кафедру, как я уже говорил, закрыли «за сионизм». По специальности «история Древнего Востока» оставили одну ставку – и я уступил ее Липину, не зная еще тогда достоверно, что он стукач, и на его совести жизнь милого и доброго Ники Ершовича. Но на одну эрмитажную зарплату было не прожить с семьей, даже с тем, что зарабатывала Нина, и я, по совету ученика моего брата Миши, Лени Брстаницкого, подрядился написать для Азербайджана «Историю Мидии». Все тогда искали предков познатнее и подревнее, и азербайджанцы надеялись, что мидяне – их древние предки. Коллектив Института истории Азербайджана представлял собой хороший паноптикум. С социальным происхождением и партийностью у всех было все в порядке (или так считалось); кое-кто мог объясниться по-персидски, но в основном они были заняты взаимным поеданием. Характерная черта: однажды, когда в мою честь был устроен банкет на квартире директора института (кажется, переброшенного с партийной работы на железной дороге), я был поражен тем, что в этом обществе, состоявшем из одних членов партии коммунистов, не было ни одной женщины. Даже хозяйка дома вышла к нам только около четвертого часа утра и выпила за наше здоровье рюмочку, стоя в дверях комнаты. К науке большинство сотрудников института имело довольно косвенное отношение. Среди прочих гостей выделялись мой друг Леня Брстаницкий (который, впрочем, работал в другом институте), один некий благодушный и мудрый старец, который, по слухам, был красным шпионом, когда власть в Азербайджане была у мусаватистов, один герой Советского Союза, арабист, прославившийся впоследствии строго научным изданием одного исторического средневекового, не то арабо-, не то ирано-язычного исторического источника, из которого, однако, были тщательно устранены все упоминания об армянах; кроме того, были один или два весьма второстепенных археолога; остальные все были партработники, брошенные на науку. Изысканные восточные тосты продолжались до утра.

Незадолго перед тем началась серия юбилеев великих поэтов народов СССР. Перед войной отгремел юбилей армянского эпоса Давида Сасунского (дата которого вообще-то неизвестна) – хвостик этого я захватил в 1939 г. во время экспедиции на раскопки Кармир-блур. А сейчас в Азербайджане готовится юбилей великого поэта Низами. С Низами была некоторая небольшая неловкость: во-первых, он был не азербайджанский, а персидский (иранский) поэт, хотя жил он в ныне азербайджанском городе Гяндже, которая, как и большинство здешних городов, имела в Средние века иранское

население. Кроме того, по ритуалу полагалось выставить на видном месте портрет поэта, и в одном из центральных районов Баку было выделено целое здание под музей картин, иллюстрирующих поэмы Низами. Особая трудность заключалась в том, что Коран строжайше запрещает всякие изображения живых существ, и ни портрета, ни иллюстрацион картин во времена Низами в природе не существовало. Портрет Низами и картины, иллюстрирующие его поэмы (численностью на целую большую галерею) должны были изготовить к юбилею за три месяца.

Портрет был доставлен на дом первому секретарю ЦК КП Азербайджана Багирову, локальному Сталину. Тот вызвал к себе ведущего медиевиста из Института истории, отдернул полотно с портрета и спросил:

– Похож?

– На кого?... – робко промямлил эксперт. Багиров покраснел от гнева.

– На Низами!

– Видите ли, – сказал эксперт, – в Средние века на Востоке портретов не создавали...

Короче говоря, портрет занял ведущее место в галерее. Большого собрания безобразной мазни, чем было собрано на музейном этаже к юбилею, едва ли можно себе вообразить.

Доказать азербайджанцам, что мидяне – их предки, я не смог, потому что это все-таки не так. Но «Историю Мидии» написал – большой, толстый, подробно аргументированный том. Между тем, в стране вышел закон, запрещающий совместительство, и мне пришлось (без сожаления) бросить и Азербайджанскую Академию наук, и, увы, Эрмитаж с его мизерным заработком. Некоторое время работал с Ленинградским отделением Института истории, созданном на руинах разгромленного уникального музея истории письменности Н.П.Лихачева, а одно время числился почему-то по московскому отделению этого же Института истории.»

Another Russian scholar that can be mentioned Victor A. Shnirelman, who received his Ph.D. in History and is a leading scientist of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He has published studies and articles on interethnic relations and conflicts, and focused on Russian nationalist ideologies and anti-Semitism from the historical and current perspectives. He teaches the sociology of interethnic relations and nationalism, as well as an introduction to the History of anti-Semitism at the Jewish University of Moscow.

Shnirelman writes in his important book in 2003:

К этому времени отмеченные иранский и армянский факторы способствовали быстрой азербайджанизации исторических героев и исторических политических образований на территории Азербайджана. В частности, в 1938 г. Низами в связи с его 800-летним юбилеем был объявлен гениальным азербайджанским поэтом (История, 1939. С. 88-91). На самом деле он был персидским поэтом, что и неудивительно, так как городское население в те годы было представлено персами (Дьяконов, 1995. С. 731). В свое время это признавалось всеми энциклопедическими словарями, выходившими в России, и лишь Большая Советская Энциклопедия впервые в 1939 г. объявила Низами "великим азербайджанским поэтом" (Ср. Брокгауз и Ефрон, 1897. С. 58; Гранат, 1917. С. 195; БСЭ, 1939. С. 94).

Translation from Russian:

By that time, already mentioned Iranian and Armenian factors contributed to the rapid azerbaijanization of historical heroes and historical political entities on the territory of Azerbaijan. In particular, in 1938, Nizami in connection with his 800-year anniversary was declared a genius (marvelous) Azerbaijani poet (History, 1939. Pp 88-91). In fact, he was a Persian poet, which is not surprising, because the urban population in those years was Persian (Dyakonov, 1995. page. 731). At one time it was recognized by all Encyclopedic Dictionaries of published in Russia, and only the Big Soviet Encyclopedia for the first time in 1939, announced Nizami as a "Great Azerbaijani poet (Sr. Brockhaus and Efron, 1897. page. 58; Garnet, 1917. page. 195 ; BSE, 1939. p. 94).

Source:

(Russian) Shnirelman, Viktor A. *Memory Wars: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia*. Moscow: Academkniga, 2003 ISBN 5-9462-8118-6.

Note the above book is critical of ethnic driven historiography in the Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) in general.

The Russian philologist Ivan Mikhailovich Steblin-Kamensky, Professor and the Dean of the Oriental Department of Saint Petersburg University comments ("Oriental Department is ready to cooperate with the West", Saint Petersburg University newspaper, № 24—25 (3648—49), 1 November 2003").

<http://www.spbumag.nw.ru/2003/24/1.shtml>):

Мы готовили таких специалистов, но, как показывает наше с ними общение, там очень много националистических тенденций, научных фальсификаций. Видимо, это связано с первыми годами самостоятельности. В их трудах присутствует националистическое

начало, нет объективного взгляда, научного понимания проблем, хода исторического развития. Подчас – откровенная фальсификация. Например, Низами, памятник которому воздвигнут на Каменноостровском проспекте, объявляется великим азербайджанским поэтом. Хотя он по-азербайджански даже не говорил. А обосновывают это тем, что он жил на территории нынешнего Азербайджана – но ведь Низами писал свои стихи и поэмы на персидском языке!

Translation:

" We trained such specialists, but, as shown by our communication with them, there are a lot of nationalistic tendencies there and academic fraud. Apparently it's related to the first years of independence. Their works include nationalist beginnings. Objective perspective, scientific understanding of the problems and timeline of historical developments are lacking. Sometimes there is an outright falsification. For example, Nizami, the monument of whom was erected at Kamennoostrovsk boulevard, is proclaimed Great Azerbaijani poet. Although he did not even speak Azeri. They justify this by saying that he lived in the territory of current Azerbaijan, but Nizami wrote his poems in Persian language!"

Overall, it seems the political detachment of Nezami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization is recognized by authors who write about the former USSR: Yo'av Karny, "Highlanders : A Journey to the Caucasus in Quest of Memory", Published by Macmillan, 2000. Pg 124: "In 1991 he published a translation into Khynalug of the famous medieval poet Nezami, who is known as Persian but is claimed by Azeri nationalists as their own."

Another Russian scholar, by the name of Mikhail Kapustin in 1988 (during the time when the USSR was opening up to the world and there was no pressure on scholars to manipulate fact) wrote in the cultural magazine of Soviets:

Nizami Ganjavi is one of the greatest thinkers and poets of the middle ages and belongs to the exceptional heritage of Persian literature of Iran. He had no connection with the current culture of Azarbaijan. And Azerbaijanis are making a useless effort to claim him as one of their own. At the time of Nizami, Azeri-Turks did not exist in that land.

(Sovietkaya Kultura (Soviet Culture) magazine, 27 of December, 1988).

This author does not agree with Mikhail Kapustin in terms of not having any connection with the culture of Azerbaijan. Nizami Ganjavi has influenced the whole realm of Islamic literature and he is also part of the Iranian heritage of the Republic of Azerbaijan. At the same time, the folklore of Nizami Ganjavi is based on Persian (Sassanid, Shahnameh) and Iranian folklore (with the exception of the case of *Layli o Majnoon* which was a Persianized version of an original Arab story) and not Turkmen/Oguz folklore like those of Dede Qorqud or Grey-Wolves. Nizami Ganjavi's epics are not based on Turkic themes. It is also important to emphasize that the two major influences on Nizami were Sanai and Ferdowsi. So Nizami Ganjavi is part of the Iranian heritage of Iranian people and people that also have Iranian heritage including Azerbaijanis. The view of Diakonof and Kapustin put Nizami Ganjavi in Iranian civilization.

For example, a relatively nationalistic website mentions:

“The original opera had been based on “Kaveh, the Blacksmith”. However, such a plot would absolutely have jeopardized their lives. First of all, it was based on a foreign tale: Kaveh was a mythical figure of ancient Persia, memorialized by 10th century Ferdowsi in Persian verse in the “Shahnameh”(Book of the Kings)”

http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai142_folder/142_articles/142_koroghlu_why.html

(Betty Blair, Why Hajibeyov wrote the Opera Koroghlu, Azerbaijan International, Summer 2006)

On the other hand, Nizami Ganjavi has mentioned dozens of Shahnameh figures in his *Panj-Ganj* or *Khamseh* (these is a small section on this in this article). He has written that he considers himself a successor and inheritor of Ferdowsi. He has never mentioned once a symbol from Turkish mythology like those of Grey Wolf, Dede Qorqud, Oghuz-nama and other myths/folklore of Turkic groups. Ferdowsi is widely praised and used by Nizami Ganjavi, yet a nationalist journal claims Ferdowsi’s work is a foreign tale. So a minority of the modern intellectuals (from both Iranian Azerbaijan and the Republic of Azerbaijan) identify themselves solely with Oghuz Turks and even if there are strong Iranic elements in the history of Azerbaijan and the Caucasia (like Masud ibn Namdar, Nasir ad-din Tusi, Bahmanyar, Nizami Ganjavi, Zoroaster, Medes, Parthians, Achaemenids), some of these intellectuals will either dismiss them or attempt to Turkify them if possible.

Two important and recent articles on Politicization of Nezami by Alexandar Otarovich Tamazshvilli

Alexander Otarovich Tamazshvilli worked as one of the scholar in the Russian institute of Oriental studies in St. Petersburg until his retirement. He has written two important articles on the politicization of Nezami and USSR views on the Persian culture heritage. This author through a friend that spoke Russian as good as a native speaker had a chance to ask him several questions through the phone. We obtained his phone number through the Russian institute of Oriental Studies and unfortunately he did not use email.

Question: Your two articles on politicization of Nezami are very important. Can they be translated?

Answer: Yes of course.

Question: Do you have an e-mail?

Answer: No I do not use e-mail but I can give you my address for further questions.

Question: Do you think Nezami was Iranian or Azerbaijani Turkic? Because in your article you mention that the overwhelming orientalist scholars consider him Persian, yet you mention that the USSR results could have been reached later, but they came during his 800th anniversary?

Answer: I am not a scholar Nezami or ancient history of the East. Rather I study the politicization and USSR politics. So I have no position on the ethnicity or cultural attribution of Nezami.

Question: Do you think that the republic of Azerbaijan will reconsider its position on Nezami?

Answer: No. Nezami is a very important figure for Azerbaijani nation building. Thus the view that he is an Azerbaijani will remain there for the foreseeable future.

Anyhow, despite Dr. Tamazshvilli not taking a position himself (which is reasonable since he did not consider himself an expert), he has two articles which reveal how Nezami was politicized and used for nation building. We should recall though that in the USSR era especially 1940-1970's, the term "Azerbaijani" was not equivalent to Turkic rather it meant primarily a synthesis of Iranian (Medes) and Caucasian Albanians. Indeed the USSR Great Soviet Encyclopedia mentions the Avesta as the oldest form of Azerbaijani literature, where the Avesta is in an Iranian language and the correct term would be Iranian literature.

Dr. Tamazshvilli wrote two important articles and here we provide translations of both articles where it concerns politicization of Nezami. Dr. Tamazshvilli himself though took no position on the actual background of Nezami in our interview and said he is not an expert in ancient history or Persian literature.

Article 1:

Tamazshvilli A.O. "From the History of Study of Nezami-ye Ganjavi in the USSR: Around the Anniversary – E.E. Bertels, J.V. Stalin, and others" in "Unknown pages of domestic oriental studies" (Editors: Naumlin VV, Romanova NG, Smilyanskaya IM), The Russian Academy of Sciences. Oriental studies institute. 2004.

Article 2:

Tamazshvilli, A.O. Posleslovie (Afterword). Iranistika v Rossii i iranisty (Iranology in Russia and Iranologists). Moscow, 2001 Russian Citation: Тамазишвили А. О. Послесловие [к публикации доклада Б. Н. Заходера «Е. Э. Бертельс»]. — Иранистика в России и иранисты. М., 2001.

However the articles of Tamazshvilli speak for themselves. They clearly show that the USSR scholarship was concerned about nation building. Indeed scholars such as E.E. Bertels were affected by political decisions.

Article 1 of Tamazashvili: From the History of Study of Nezami-ye Ganjavi in the USSR: Around the Anniversary – E.E. Bertels, J.V. Stalin, and others”

One of the most glaring and remarkable cultural and socio-political events of the USSR in the autumn of 1940 was supposed to have been the 800th anniversary of the poet and thinker, Nezami-ye Ganjavi. The war pushed the festivities six years back until the autumn of 1947.

This long (from 1937 to 1947) anniversary campaign, in which many scholars – Orientalists, literary people, and politicians – took part, gave good results. In the boundary of 1930s and 1940s, its active participant, E.E. Bertels said, “real scholarly study of Nezami can only be done in our time.”¹ He himself concluded that “Only twenty years ago all the literature on Nezami in Russian language was based on few articles mostly of bibliographic character. The 800th anniversary of the Great Azerbaijani thinker and poet in all the corners of our Homeland has basically changed this situation.”² Main, revolutionary result of this campaign for our native scholarship became attributing Nezami as an Azerbaijani poet, and his works as achievements of the

¹ Bertels, E.E. Some Tasks of the Study of Nezami’s Works. – Nezami. First Collection. Baku, 1940. p. 3.

² Bertels, E.E. The Great Work of Nezami. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 15.12.1953. №148.

Azerbaijani literature, while in the realm of the world Oriental Studies (and prior to this in the Soviet as well), the viewpoint of him as a representative of Persian literature.

.....

Political content of the Soviet Nezami-studies was left out of the view of the historians of the native scholarship, including the biographers of E.E. Bertels. Moreover, the question of nationality of Nezami and his works, other than scholarly aspects, had clear political aspects; and a scholarly based answer to this question is an important political meaning which was based on the creation of the Azerbaijani SSR.³ Therefore, from beginning to the end of Nezami's 800th anniversary campaign, scholarship and politics went hand-in-hand, supporting and directing each other; but it seems that politics still had a more important role. This was stipulated by a number of objective and subjective reasons.

Nezami deserved an anniversary in any case, which seemed to have an evident benefit to scholarship. There was a precedent as well – in 1934, the 1000th birth anniversary of the classic of Persian literature, Ferdowsi, was held in the USSR. However, having the anniversary of Nezami, while presenting him with the same qualities, would not have been objectively expedient.

³ The scholars of the Azerbaijani SSR gave and propagated very high appraisals of Nezami. "The role of Nezami in the development of human civilization can only be compared with the missions of Aristotle, Avicenna, Shakespeare, and Pushkin." (Aliev, R.M., *Nizami Gyandzhevi* (Nezami Ganjavi). *Nizami Gyandzhevi. Kratkiy Spravochnik* (Short Handbook). Baku, 1979, p.9). "The works of Nezami played an incomparable role in the formation and the further development of philosophic and artistic thought, the socio-ethic view of not only our people, but all the people of Near and Middle East – Turks, Iranians, Kurds, Indians, Afghans, Arabs, and others"(Aliev, Rustam. *Nizami. Kratkiy Bibliograficheskiy Spravochnik* (Nezami. Short Bibliographic Handbook). Baku, 1982, p. 123). Naturally, it is honorable and flattering for a new sovereign state to have a person of such scale in its history.

The second half of the 1930s became a period of national literary anniversaries.: In 1937, 750th anniversary of Shota Rustaveli's poem, "The Knight in the Panther's Skin"; in 1938, 750th anniversary of "The Tale of Igor's Campaign"; in 1939, 1000th anniversary of the Armenian epic, "David of Sasun." These anniversaries were held in the Azerbaijani SSR as well. If Azerbaijan would not propose a similar anniversary, both from chronological as well as cultural perspective, it could have been an argument for beliefs (and not only from a narrow-minded level) about historically formed backwardness of the Azerbaijanis and their national culture in comparison to the Persians, Georgians, and Armenians. This is supported by a reference to Nezami and his works during the anniversary campaign and the controversy on the development level of Azerbaijan in the 12th century; but later on this.

"Celebrating the 800th anniversary of the birth of Nezami is a huge achievement of our people in the area of cultural buildup," was said in Azerbaijan.⁴

The loud anniversary of an Azerbaijani poet of the middle ages was, for the current situation, vital in the interests of the policy of harmonizing international relations in the South Caucasus, which was being held by the Soviet government and the ACP(b) (All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks)).

The First Secretary of the CC CP(b) (Central Committee of the Communist Party (bolsheviks)) of the Azerbaijani SSR of those years, M.D. Baqerov, had very strong anti-Iranian feelings, and undoubtedly was a patriot of Azerbaijan, although a one who could

⁴ To Comrade Stalin. – *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 28.09.1947, №191.

get carried away.⁵ It is enough to say that in the Resolution of the 14th Convention of the CP(b) of the Azerbaijani SSR, which was accepted due to Baqerov's speech, demanded "foundational improvements in the teaching of the Azeri language, while clearing it out of Arabisms, Farsisms, Ottomanisms, etc."⁶ Baqerov tried to attentively follow the study of history and culture of the peoples of Caucasus and South Caucasus, and actively struggled against situations that seemed wrong and ideologically fallacious to him. One such situation surely was the statement that Nezami is a Persian poet. Mostly, due to M.D. Baqerov, the anniversary was very successful.

It must be admitted that Baqerov was left in a difficult situation, when the problem of a literary anniversary appeared for Azerbaijan. The question of Nezami, as it was put in the Republic, in the 1930s, was a question that did not only concern, or was in the level, of the Republic. His decision was outside of the competency of the leadership of the Azerbaijani SSR. The attempt to reconsider the nationality of Nezami and his works in the interests of Azerbaijan, could have been viewed by the official Moscow as demonstration of nationalist tendencies – an attempt to "better" the past of the Azerbaijani people, strengthen the authority of the Republic in the detriment of the historical truth.

How definitely and harshly the political leadership of the USSR struggled with the displays of nationalism, as well as nationalists, was perfectly known. Objections from scholars could be expected as well, primarily from the Leningrad specialists, who

⁵ His name is written either as Mir Ja'far Baqerov or Mir Ja'far Abbasovich Baqerov in different sources. He has left a visible mark in the history of Soviet oriental studies, which is practically unknown in the scholarly literature.

⁶ *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 17.06.1938, №137.

created the trend for the Soviet literary Orientalism. However, it worked; and the “transfer” of Nezami as an Azerbaijani poet was done in a very well thought manner, fast, persistently, but properly, and overall, even elegantly. But everything started with a scandal.

It was planned that in 1938, there would be a decade of the Azerbaijani art in Moscow, for which the Republic had decided to prepare an “Anthology of Azerbaijani Poetry” in Russian. The first version of the anthology, which was supposed to present “the greatest masters – the creators of the Azerbaijani poetry,” the inclusion of Nezami’s poetry was not considered. This was the case in May, 1937.⁷ But already on August 1, the press reported that the two-year work on translating poetry for the Anthology is over, and the Russian reader can become acquainted with the monumental poetry of Nezami. “At some point, the dirty hand of the enemies of the people was placed on the Anthology [...] they did everything so that the Anthology looked perhaps more skinny and decrepit,” reported the newspaper.⁸ But there are not enough bases to argue that the decision to include the poetry of Nezami was based purely on the political basis. Argument for this decision could have been the view of the Soviet Orientalist, Yu.N. Marr on Nezami. In one of his works, he had stated that as soon as he started researching Rustaveli, Khaqani, and Nezami, and their epochs, he right away was convinced that “the epoch and authors are in a disgracefully neglected situation.”⁹ Back

⁷ Shamilov, S., Lugovskiy V., Vurgun, Samed. *Poety Azerbaydzhana na russkom yazyke* (Poets of Azerbaijan in Russian Language). – *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 16.05.1937, №112. All the three of it’s authors were editors of the first version of the “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry.”

⁸ *Antologiya Azerbaydzhanskoy poezii na russkom yazyke* (The Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry in Russian Language). *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 01.08.1937, №177.

⁹ Marr, Yu.N. Predislovie (Foreword). – *Khakani, Nizami, Rustaveli*. M. - L., 1935, p.5

in 1929, Yu.N. Marr asserted that “Nezami is its own for Caucasus, especially for the ethnic group that has kept the Persian tradition in its literature until recently, i.e. for Azerbaijan, where the Ganjian poet is more respected than in Persia.”¹⁰ Of course, “its own for Azerbaijan” is not the same as “Azerbaijani,” but in the middle of 1937, Marr who had died in 1935, was the only Soviet Orientalist on whose research could the proponents of the view of Nezami as an Azerbaijani poet lean. It must be noted that luck was on their side as a whole, and especially because it was Yuriy Marr in Particular who spoke of Nezami. His scholarly reputation in the eyes of the political leadership of the country must have been somehow connected with the reputation of his father – Academician N.Ya. Marr, whose name was very authoritative in those years in the Soviet scholarship, as well as in the Party circles. The rays of father’s popularity fell on the son too.

They did not fail to tie the name of N.Ya. Marr with the Nezami-studies in Azerbaijan: “Special merit in the revision of the scholarly understanding of Nezami is owed to the Azerbaijani scholars, Academician N.Ya. Marr, Professor Yu.N. Marr, and others. They hold the merit of revising the Bourgeoisie Oriental scholarship, which has distorted the image of the Azerbaijani poet...”¹¹ This reference to Marr appeared more for political reasons, because there were no direct statements of the scholar that Nezami is an Azerbaijani poet.

¹⁰ Cited by Arasly, G., Arif, M., Rafili M. *Antologiya Azerbaydzhanskogo Naroda* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani People) – *Antologiya Azerbaydzhanskoy Poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). Moscow, 1939, p. XIX.

¹¹ Rafili, M., *Nizami Gyandzhevi i ego tvorchestvo* (Nezami Ganjavi and his works). Baku, 1947, p.7-8.

The Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Azerbaijani Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR started working on the study and the preparation of publication of the works of Nezami Ganjavi, who from 1937 was confidently referred to as the great classic of the Azerbaijani literature.¹² In the published materials in Azerbaijan in the second half of 1937, where Nezami is mentioned, his name and works are often closely tied to the name and works of Shota Rustaveli. Showing the speech by an Azerbaijani literary in a ceremonial plenum of the Baku Municipal Soviet of Deputies of the Workers for the 750th anniversary of the poem, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” of is a good example. “Comrade Merza Ebrahimov names the classics of the Azerbaijani literature – Nezami and Khaqani – that lived and created in the epoch of Rustaveli, who were struggling for the same high ideals and aspirations, which were geniusly sang by the great Shota, and which were realized only in our Stalin epoch.”¹³ The name of Rustaveli here helps give the basic idea about the consonance of the works and ideas of Nezami with the ideas of the Stalin epoch more tacitly, and consequently some ideas of Stalin himself. The support of Moscow is extremely important in the Azerbaijani decision of the Nezami question.

Next year of 1938 became the year when the USSR once and for all ended the “negligence” of Nezami. The Decade of Azerbaijani Arts was passing with great success in Moscow from 5th to the 15th of April of 1938. In Baku, the “Azerneshr” publishing published 700 remembrance copies of the “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry,” where

¹² Yagubov, A.A. *Nauchnaya Rabota v Azerbajjane* (The Scholarly Work in Azerbaijan). *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 28.02.1938. №48.

¹³ *750-letie genial'nogo tvoreniya Shota Rustaveli “Vepkhis Tkaosani”* (750th anniversary of the genius work of Shota Rustaveli “Vepkhis Tkaosani”). *Na Torzhestevvnom Plenumе Bakinskogo Soveta* (In the Ceremonial Plenum of the Baku Soviet). *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 31.12.1937. №304.

there were Nezami Ganjavi's poems translated by Konstantin Simonov. The editor of the anthology was only one – V. Lugovskiy. It is logical to conclude that the other two – Samed Vurgun and S. Shamilov – were removed in 1937 as those who were not able to work, but it is presumed that the reason was not only this. According to some sources the anthology had a second editor as well – Merza Ebrahimov (Esmail Merza Azhdar-Zadeh), who was already the Head of the Department for Arts Affairs under the Soviet People's Committee [Ministry] of the Azerbaijani SSR, but his name was not in the book either.¹⁴ The reason that the name of high ranking officials disappeared from the list of editors of the anthology was probably because the work was supposed to look as a result of the initiative and work of only creative intelligentsia of Azerbaijan and Russia. Moreover, the work done only by (only on the surface) non-Azerbaijani poets is harder to consider a nationalist view of Nezami. The anonymous foreword to the Anthology says, "Among the Azerbaijani poets of the 12th century, Nezami is highly regarded," but this assertion is not backed by anything.¹⁵

The publication of this anthology was a crafty tactical move to make a decision about Nezami's situation. Undoubtedly, this book was being given to the members of the government of the USSR and the leadership of the ACP(b), who showed lively interest in the Decade of the Azerbaijani Art, among whom was Stalin. If anything in the contents of the "Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry" (for example, assertion on the

¹⁴ *Antologiya Azerbaydzhanskoy Poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). *Literaturniy Azerbaydzh* (Literary Azerbaijan). 1938, №3. p.8; *Antologiya Azerbaydzhanskoy Poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 05.04.1938, №19.

¹⁵ *Poeziya azerbaydzhanskogo naroda. Istoricheskiy obzor.* (The Poetry of the Azerbaijani People. An Historical Overview). *Antologiya azerbaydzhanskoy poezii* (The Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). Baku, 1938, p.3.

national belongingness of Nezami) would bring about objection and politicized criticism “from above,” the fault for the publishing of a flawed book would remain on the leadership of the Azerbaijani SSR; however, there were no proofs that their views on Nezami were reflected in the book.

However, exposing these views with full manifest, as with the authors of the foreword in the Anthology, would not be too hard. But, evidently, there were no questions or objections to the contents of the Anthology. In any way, the first edition of the “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry” had a strange fate. It is unlikely that the Anthology remained practically unknown to the literary people and scholars; however, for some reason people did not talk much about it. The short essay, “Nezami Ganjavi,” which was part of the foreword in the book, is not mentioned in the work of Rostam Aliev, “Nezami: A Short Bibliographic Reference” (Baku, 1982) either.

On the day of the opening of the Decade, *Pravda* [“The Truth” – official Communist Party of the USSR Publication] had an editorial, “The Art of the Azerbaijani People.” It stated, “Back in the age of the feudal lawlessness, the Azerbaijani people gave birth to the greatest artists. The names of Nezami, Khaqani, Fuzuli of Baghdad are on par with the Persian poets Saadi and Hafez. Nezami, Khaqani, and Fuzuli were flaming patriots of their people who were serving the foreign newcomers, only under pressure.”¹⁶ The meaning of the article is hard to overstate for the “repatriation” of Nezami to Azerbaijan. This was a proof that the official Moscow agreed with the decision made in the Azerbaijani SSR on Nezami.

¹⁶ *Iskusstvo azerbaydzhanskogo naroda*. (The Art of the Azerbaijani People). *Pravda*. 05.04.1938, №94.

On the next day, April 6, 1938, “The Baku Worker” republished the article from *Pravda* (which strengthened its meaning for the Republic). From this moment on, the official Baku every time would demonstrate that gave up the initiative to Moscow, and the course of the 800th Anniversary of Nezami is coming from Moscow.

On April 18, 1938, *Pravda* came out with “The Triumph of the Azerbaijani Art.” “But despite all the prohibitions and persecutions, in defiance of victimizations, the heroic Azerbaijani people would bring out those who expressed their rebellious, courageous, and angry spirits. Back in the age of the feudal lawlessness, the Azerbaijani people gave birth to such greatest artists as Nezami, Khaqani, Fuzuli. They were flaming patriots of their people, the champions of freedom and independence of their country.” This was a better reference of Nezami by *Pravda*.¹⁷ It seems that the poet no longer served the foreign newcomers.

In the preparations of this material, it should be assumed, the Azerbaijani side took part with the leadership of Baqerov and Ebrahimov, who were part of the delegation to Moscow of Azerbaijan to the Decade of the Azerbaijani Art. Only Baqerov could coordinate the publication of these articles in different instances.

But whoever has written them, they reflected the official viewpoint of the CC ACP(b); this was the meaning of the writings of *Pravda*. Only a select few Orientalists could contend the viewpoints, but they did not do it, maybe because the question of Nezami was quite contesting even before *Pravda*'s publication. Here we can refer to the

¹⁷ *Torzhestvo azerbaydzhanskogo iskusstva* (The Triumph of the Azerbaijani Art). “*Pravda*” 18.04.1938, №107; *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 20.04.1938, №90.

interpretations of Yu.N. Marr and A.N. Boldyrev.¹⁸ In the end of the 1940s, Bertels asserted that “Back in 1938, it was evident to me that groundlessly ascribing the whole of great, colossal Persian literature to Iran is not only wrong, but the largest mistake. The Persian language was used by many people, which was the mother tongue of a completely different system.”¹⁹ It is quite possible that the reason for Bertels’ review of his former views on Nezami, whom he considered a Persian poet only in 1935-1936, was the publication in Pravda.

A viewpoint was said in our scholarly literature that “E.E. Bertels publicly called Nezami an Azerbaijani poet earlier than anyone.”²⁰ However, as the deeper research of the question showed, the conclusion that Nezami is an Azerbaijani poet, was done by the scholars, literary people, and politicians of Azerbaijan without much concern for the view of their Russian colleagues, and before E.E. Bertels.

On May 9, 1938, another “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry,” which was under the edition of the same V. Lugovskiy and Samed Vurgun, was given to print to the Moscow State Publishing House of the Artistic Literature. It also had the foreword, “The Poetry of the Azerbaijani People”, which showed the authors – Azerbaijani literary people and scholars, G. Arasly, M. Aref, and M. Rafili. Evidently, it was mentioned

¹⁸ Look up Boldyrev, A.N., *Dva shirvanskikh poeta Nizami i Khakani* (Two Shervani Poets: Nezami and Khaqani). – *Pamyetniki epokhi Rustaveli* (The Statues of the Rustaveli, Epoch), Leningrad, 1938.

¹⁹ Quote from Tamazshvili, A.O. *Posleslovie* (Afterword). *Iranistika v Rossii i iranisty* (Iranology in Russia and Iranologists). Moscow, 2001, p. 185-186.

²⁰ Same place, p. 191.

before the Decade of the Azerbaijani Art in Moscow – “A mass publication of the Anthology is being published in Moscow.”²¹

The initiators of the review of national belongingness of Nezami were ready for good and bad luck.

The textual closeness of the two texts, one of which was published in Baku and the other in Moscow, of the “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry,” shows that the group of writers was the same or almost the same. The Moscow version of the Anthology was signed only two days left to a year later – May 7, 1937 – and the reason is not known.

The initiators of the campaign for the 800th Anniversary of Nezami waited a long time for the scholarly circles of Leningrad and Moscow to make a clear statement on the poet.

On May 8, 1938, the Council of the People’s Commissars [The Council of Ministers] of the USSR, which was looking over the working plan of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, decided not to approve the plan and return it for further deliberation to the Academy of Sciences.²²

On May 17, 1938, there was a state banquet for the workers of the Highest School. Stalin made a small speech, rather a toast at the banquet, where he said, “For the flourishing of sciences, those sciences, the people of which, while understanding the power and meaning of the scientific traditions and using them for the interests of

²¹ *Antologiya azerbaydzhanskoy poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 23.03.1938, №67. An interesting fact – in 1937, M. Rafili was kicked out of the Union of Writers of Azerbaijan, including for “showing the Crimean writer (Karaim) as an Azerbaijani.”

²² *V Sovete Narodnykh Komissarov Soyuz SSR* (In the Council of the People’s Commissars of the Union of SSR. VAN, 1938, №5, p. 72.

sciences, still do not want to be slaves of these traditions; which has courage, resolution to break the old traditions, norms and arrangements when they become old, when they become breaks for movement forward; and the one that can create new traditions, new norms, new arrangements.”²³ All of this could be used for the study of Nezami.

On July 25, 1938, the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR once again gave a negative vote to the working plan of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.²⁴ The Presidium, while reviewing already the third version of the plan, on September 11, 1938, mentioned that “The scholarly councils of the institutes did not mobilize the whole collective of the workers for the struggle to fulfill the sayings of Comrade Stalin to develop and strengthen progressive sciences.” They proposed that the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR enter the preparation of a scientific monograph on the “life and works of the great Azerbaijani poet, Nezami.”²⁵ This meant the official recognition of Nezami Ganjavi as an Azerbaijani poet, as well as the Academy of Sciences as whole, and the Institute of the Oriental Studies. The question of national belongingness of Nezami seemed decided completely. Pravda “canonized” the view of Nezami as a poet – a patriot of Azerbaijan, who was not spiritually broken with the most difficult situations. In the XIV Convention of the CP(b) of the Azerbaijani SSR, M.D. Baqerov referred to the 12th century as the “golden age of the Azerbaijani literature,” because “the great epic poet Nezami Ganjavi and no less

²³ The same place, p.1.

²⁴ *V Prezidiume Akademii nauk SSSR* (In the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR). VAN, 1938. №7-8, p.119.

²⁵ The same place, p.119, 126.

gifted, beloved people's poet of Azerbaijan, Khaqani, lived" at this age.²⁶ This assessment was received in the Republic as a canonizing assessment, and in that very year one could read about the "epoch of Nezami, which has come into history as the "Golden Age of the Azerbaijani culture."²⁷ "This is how the Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Comrade M.D. Baqerov defined it," was reported to the so-called "wide reader" of the USSR.²⁸ And for him, it was certainly authoritative.

Both the political circles, as well as the scholars of Azerbaijan were fully aware that the best results in the works on the legacy of Nezami – a work that by its nature related to the classical Oriental philology – could be achieved only through cooperation with the specialists from the Oriental centers of Russia, primarily Leningrad. The Republic acknowledged that the "Institute of History, Language, and Literature is still the most weak part of the AzBAS [Azerbaijani Branch of the Academy of Sciences]."²⁹ At the same time, in Russian Orientalism there already appeared a good tradition, even school of helping the peoples of the USSR in their national and cultural building. The press had a report: "The leaders of the organization of Azerbaijan are attracting to the preparation of the Anniversary (Nezami – A.T.) the Institute of Oriental Studies of the AS of the USSR, scholars, artists, and poets."³⁰

²⁶ From the ending speech by Comrade M.D. Baqerov in the XIV Convention of CP(b) of Azerbaijan. – *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 16.06.1938, №136.

²⁷ Yaqobov, A.A. *Pered yubileem velikogo Nizami* (Before the Anniversary of Great Nezami) – *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 11.11.1938 №136.

²⁸ Rafili, Mikael. *Nizami Gyandzhevi. Epokha, zhizn', tvorchestvo* (Nezami Ganjavi: Epoch, Life, and Works). Moscow, 1941, p.6.

²⁹ *Za dal'neyshiy rastvet sotsialisticheskoy kul'tury i nauki v Azerbaydzhanskoy SSR* (For the Future Flourishing of the Socialist Culture and Science in the Azerbaijani SSR) – *Izvestiya Azerbaydzhanskogo Filiala AN SSSR* (News of the Azerbaijani Branch of the AS of the USSR). Baku, 1938, №4-5, p.26.

³⁰ *800-letie so dnya rozhdeniya poeta Nizami* (800 Years of Poet Nezami's Birth). *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 29.09.1938, №52.

E.E. Bertels took the most active part in this process, and it is an interesting, mostly a model fragment of the history of the Soviet Orientalism. The political situations played an important role in the biography of E.E. Bertels. Maybe the most difficult ones and the most unique were connected to his works on Nezami.

There were achievements in 1938, but the Anniversary Campaign for the 800th Anniversary of Nezami as a whole was not going as dynamically, as its initiators wanted, and required constant control and stimulation. This is not strange either. With all due respect and interest towards Nezami, the problem of his anniversary in the period of 1938-1941 objectively could not be considered as a primary problem. Moreover, on February 3, 1939, *Pravda* published an article by E.E. Bertels, "Genius Azerbaijani Poet, Nezami."³¹ Getting published by own initiative in *Pravda*, especially not long before the XVIII Convention of the ACP(b) was obviously very difficult. Therefore, it can be assumed that the article was ordered. This was E.E. Bertels' first public statement to the whole country, where he called Nezami an Azerbaijani poet. Almost ten years later, Bertels stated: "To ascertain ethnic belongingness of every author worthy of attention, and then reclassify them by different literatures; well such a task, firstly, would be impossible to implement, because we do not have the data on the ethnic belongingness of old writers, and will likely never have them. Secondly, methodologically it would have been faulty to the most extreme. Consequently, we would be building literature based on blood, based on race. We do not need to mention that we cannot and will not build literature in such a fashion; I in any case will not; if somebody else wants to,

³¹ *Pravda*. 03.02.1939, №33; *Bakinskiy rabochiy*. 04.05.1939, №100.

please, it is his personal business.”³² However, in his 1939 article, Bertels did not bring any proof that Nezami is an Azerbaijani poet, other than the fact that the Poet was born and lived in Ganja (future Kirovabad). This is one of the riddles of the Scholar: he, for some reasons, decided to recede from his original scholarly views in the 1930s, or they changed at the end of the 1940s?

E.E. Bertels’ article in *Pravda* surely was an important stage in the formation of the Soviet Nezami studies. Academician and literalist, I.K. Luppov said: “If half a year ago, a “cellar” on Nezami was found in *Pravda*, if in the Soviet Union, an organ of the Party put a “cellar” on Nezami, it means that every conscious inhabitant of the Soviet Union must know who Nezami is. It is an indication to all the directorate organizations, to all the instances of the Republican, County, District scale, and here the Academy of Sciences must say its word in this work, while not violating its high scholarly dignity.”³³

However, the view on Nezami in the publications of *Pravda*, could be reviewed, and accepted as wrong. Many people who were declared “enemies of the people” were published in different times in *Pravda* and many wrong viewpoints had appeared in its pages. A good chance interfered into the situation, possibly a very well organized one.

On April 3, 1939, *Pravda* published the material “On the Results of the XVIII Convention of the ACP(b). The speech by Comrade M. Bazhan in the meeting of the intelligentsia of Kiev on April 2, 1939.” The Ukrainian poet, Mikol Bazhan informed about the meeting between J.V. Stalin with writers, Alexander Fadeev and Peter Pavlenko. “Comrade Stalin especially attentively asked, was interested, and even

³² Quoted in Tamazshvili A.O. Ukaz. soch., p.184

³³ Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, ф.456, оп. 1, д. 18, л. 70-71.

checked the knowledge of these Comrades about the phenomena and names of the Tajik, Kyrgyz, Kalmyk, Lak people's literature, whose literature unfortunately, even today is not fully known to the Soviet reader. Comrade Stalin spoke of the Azerbaijani poet, Nezami, quoted his works to destroy the viewpoint by his own words that this great poet of our brotherly Azerbaijani people, should be given to the Iranian literature, just because he has written most of his works in the Iranian language. Nezami, in his poems himself asserts that he was compelled to resort to the Iranian language, because he is not allowed to address his own people in his native tongue. This very place did Comrade Stalin quote with the genius swing of his thought and erudition, while including everything remarkable that has been created by the history of mankind."³⁴

Although Stalin's viewpoint was promulgated literally through the third person, certainly it was told correctly, and the conversation with Stalin in fact did take place. Nobody would even think of coming up with something from Stalin's mouth. After M. Bazhan's speech was published, E.E. Bertels' article on Nezami became of secondary importance. A logical question arises: why did Stalin remember of Nezami, especially during the political situation of 1939? It must be taken into account that Stalin loved poetry and understood it, and he loved Baku. However, even without these factors, he perfectly understood the political meaning of the anniversary of Nezami – the Azerbaijani poet.

Bazhan's report was met with enthusiasm in Baku. On April 10, 1939, the Meeting of the Intelligentsia of the city adopted the poem for J.V. Stalin. The authors of

³⁴ *Pravda*. 03.04.1939, №92.

the poem were Samed Vurgun, Rasul Reza, and Soleiman Rostam, while the translators to Russian were P. Panchenko, I. Oratovskiy, and V. Gurvich. On April 16, 1939, this message was published in *Pravda*. It has the following lines:

*Vladeli nashym Nizami, pevtsa pokhitiv chuzhaki,
No gnezda, svitye pevtsom v serdtsakh preznatsef'nykh krepky
Ty nam vernul ego stikhi, ego velich'e vozvratil
Bessmertnym slovom ty o nem stranitsy mira ozaril*³⁵

|[They] Possessed our Nezami, the singer| stolen| [the] aliens|
|But| [the] the words sung by [the] singer| in hearts| grateful| are strong|
|You| to us| returned his poems, his greatness [you] returned
|With immortal word| you about him| the pages of the world| [you] brightened
On the next day, "The Baku Worker" republished the Russian version referring to

Pravda. But interestingly the Azerbaijani original was not published until April 17, 1939.³⁶

The official Baku underlined that all the events on Nezami's anniversary which have a political aspect are done through the initiative of Moscow, and by Moscow's approval.

The new interest, which was shown by Stalin on Nezami, gave a new impulse for the further development of the anniversary campaign. In Azerbaijan, Committee for

³⁵ *Pis'mo bakinskoy intelligentsii tovarishu Stalinu* (The Letter of the Baku Intelligentsia to Comrade Stalin). – *Pravda*. 16.04.1939. №105

³⁶ *Communist* (in Azerbaijani language). 17.04.1939, №88.

Preparation and Carrying-out of the 800th Birth Anniversary of Nezami Ganjavi under the Council of the People's Commissars (CPS) of the AzSSR, which started its work in May of 1939. Its membership included all three authors of the Address to Stalin, as well as E.E. Bertels, I.A. Orbeli, Merza Ebrahimov, M.D. Baqerov, who was formally an ordinary member of the Anniversary Committee and others.³⁷ However, the activities of the Committee were naturally under the control of Baqerov.

After the viewpoint of Stalin on the issue of Nezami was published, the affair of publishing the "Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry" in Moscow made a progress, and hardly is it an accident. In the autumn of 1939, it came out in 15,000 copies. Poetess A. Adalis, wrote a very benevolent review, which has nonetheless strange and difficult to explain positions. The review says that such an anthology is coming out for the "first time in the history of world literature," and "a clear word is said about the belongingness to the Azerbaijani people of a number of world classics in this book."³⁸ The full impression that Adalis did not know anything about the Anthology, published in 1938 in Baku, in which, by the way, a fragment from "Kor-oglu" epoch, translated by her took place.

In the foreword of the Moscow Anthology, and the assertion that Nezami Ganjavi is the great Azerbaijani poet-romantic, leans on a selection of arguments. There is a reference on Yu.N. Marr's saying, who is referred to as the best Soviet Iranologist, an excellent expert on Nezami and Khaqani, and a reference to Institute of Oriental

³⁷ *V SNK Azerbaydzhanskoj SSR* (In the CCP of the Azerbaijani SSR) – *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 04.05.1939 №100.

³⁸ Adalis, A. *Antologiya azerbaidzhanskoj poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 26.09.1939 №53.

Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR “in its special decision on the anniversary of Nezami firmly and decisively accepted in Nezami a great Azerbaijani poet.”³⁹ Here the Azerbaijani authors pretended that everything that is happening around Nezami has been started by the initiative and scholarly viewpoints from Russia. However, local proofs of belongingness of Nezami’s works to the Azerbaijani literature were promoted. “Lively pages of history appear in the works of Nezami. Fantasy, fabulous imagination interweave with the true pictures of life of the Azerbaijani people. The attack of the Rus’ to Barda, a fable story about a Russian Tsarevna (Princess), beauty Shirin and Tsaritsa (Queen) Shamira, the Amazons, battles described in different poems of Nezami – all of this is historically and geographically connected with Azerbaijan and the Caucasian middle age world.

“Is it necessary after this to proof after this the right of the Azerbaijani people to consider the works of Nezami as its own! Inability and reactionary works of traditional attachment of Nezami to the Iranian literature by the Bourgeoisie Orientalists is evident. Artificial, forced distortion of the history of world poetry, not understanding the role of the Farsi language and the Iranian tradition in the history of the Azerbaijani culture, denial of centuries-long history, of high and rich culture and the literature of the Azerbaijani people by the Bourgeoisie Orientalism; all of this brings to the denial of the large historical truth, and strong creative powers of the people.”⁴⁰ The supporters of

³⁹ Arasly G., Arif M., Rafili, M. *Poeziya azerbaydzhanskogo naroda* (Poetry of the Azerbaijani People). – *Antologiya azerbaydzhanskoy poezii* (Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry). Moscow, 1939, page XVI, XIX.

⁴⁰ Same place, p. XVII-XIX.

the new viewpoint on Nezami saw political enemies in their opponents, and were not going to be sentimental with them.

Baku also declared that the Azerbaijani people “honors the memory of its great poet for 800 years,”⁴¹ and the clear insufficient level of knowledge of Nezami’s works was explained in the following manner: “Base agents of fascism, Bourgeoisie nationalists, super power chauvinists did everything possible to hide from the Azerbaijani people the heritage of its great son – Poet Nezami.”⁴² Such formulations also clearly did not allow the wish to discuss – whose poet is Nezami.

M.D. Baqerov in every possible way propagated the version that the return of Nezami and his works to Azerbaijan is namely due to Stalin. In December of 1939, in the meeting of the Party activists of the city of Baku, dedicated to the 60th birthday of J.V. Stalin, Baqerov made a speech, where he quoted Mikola Bazhan, and added: “This saying of Stalin, which is full of wisdom, teaches us how our relation should be to our past cultural heritage.”⁴³

In 1939, a volume of BSE came out where E.E. Bertels in his article on Nezami refers to him as a great Azerbaijani poet.⁴⁴ This in a way formalized the review process by our Orientalists of the national belongingness of Nezami Ganjavi.

⁴¹ *800-letniy yubiley Nizami* (800th Anniversary of Nezami) – *Literaturniy Azerbaydzhana* (Literary Azerbaijan), 1938. №10-11, p.100.

⁴² *Nauchno-issledovatel'skaya literatura o zhizni i tvorchestve Nizami* (Scholarly Research Literature on the Life and Works of Nezami) – *Literaturniy Azerbaydzhana* (Literary Azerbaijan), 1939, №3, p.73-74.

⁴³ Baqerov, M.D. *Iz istorii bol'shevistskoy organizatsii Baku i Azerbaydzhana* (From the History of the Bolshevik Organization of Baku and Azerbaijan) *Doklad na obshebakinskom sobranii partiynogo aktiva posveshennogo shestidesyatiletiiyu so dnya rozhdeniya tovarisha I.V. Stalina. 19-20 dekabrya 1939g* (Speech in the Meeting of the Party Activists of the city of Baku, dedicated to the 60th birthday of Comrade J.V. Stalin). Baku, 1944. p. 170.

⁴⁴ Bertels, E.E. *Nizami* (Nezami) BSE. First edition, volume 42. Moscow, 1939, p.93.

Undoubtedly, Bertels was well aware of Mikol Bazhan's speech and the details of the future scholarly-political campaign, and at the time he did not see a principal fault in some politicization of some works on eastern literature.

We will bring, out of necessity, a quote from currently forgotten article by E.E. Bertels, which talks about the hero of Nezami's "Eskandarnameh":

The wise man travelled for a long time. He was in the south, in the west, and the east, but could not find happiness anywhere. Finally, his travels brought him to the north. If we tried to draw his travels on a map, then this place would be approximately in Siberia. And there Eskandar finally found what he was looking for. He met people who did not know rich or poor; who did not know depression or oppression; who did not know kings or tyrants. In this open society where powers are not spent on struggle, everything is directed towards improvement and fixing of life.

There people were able to get rid of illnesses, and prolong the happy life of people. Everything flowers there; everything makes the eye happy; this is the reign of everlasting peace and everlasting happiness. After he found this amazing country, Eskandar exclaims that if he knew about its existence earlier, he would not waste time on his travels, and would make its lifestyle a law.

Perhaps to the bourgeoisie researchers this country seemed a "scholastic imagination." We, Soviet readers of Nezami, look at this from a completely different viewpoint. We know this country; we are lucky to live in this country and know which way one should go in order to achieve such happiness.

It also excites the Soviet reader that the greater Azerbaijani thinker of the 12th century, put this country in the geographic location, where his great dream was in fact realized. Let us note that all of Nezami's works end here; that all of his works were to get to this culminating period ... And now, in the country where socialism became victorious, a country that does not know the fear of historical truth, Soviet scholars take onto themselves an honorable task to give to the peoples of their country the treasures that were denied to them for centuries.⁴⁵

What would a word of thanks to Stalin for his help to scholarship mean as oppose to the abovementioned words of political loyalty?! Bertels, according to a number of his publications, was very respectful of J.V. Stalin, however, in any of his Russian-language works of this era on Nezami, does he mention that the poet has been returned to Azerbaijan by Stalin, and hence there are no words of thanks to Stalin. It is possible that this has been mentioned in any of Bertels' small newspaper notes, probably in the Azeri language, however the possibility is very slim.

Actually, in Moscow and in Leningrad – the largest cultural and scholarly centers – as of 1939, there is a widely accepted practice: not to mention the role of Stalin in the decision of national belongingness of Nezami Ganjavi in the press. It is not evident whose initiative this was – the government or the scholars and the literary circles. This, as a rule, was extended to the Azerbaijani authors in the Russian publications.

⁴⁵ Bertels, E.E. "Preparation for the Anniversary of Nezami." *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Literary Gazette) 10.12.1939. №68

The story that Stalin returned Nezami to Azerbaijan is not mentioned in the Moscow edition of the “Anthology of the Azerbaijani Poetry,” although the Decade of the Azerbaijani Arts of April of 1938 is mentioned. In 1939, for occasion of the 60th birth anniversary of Stalin, Samed Vurgun published an article in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette), named “Pride of People.” He has written there that “Comrade Stalin loves the Azerbaijani popular proverbs and uses them in an appropriate situation. Comrade Stalin lived in Azerbaijan back in his young age. More than thirty years have passed since, but he has not forgotten the Azerbaijani proverbs”⁴⁶; but not a word about Stalin returning the poetry and greatness of Nezami to Azerbaijan.

In 1940, there was the 20th anniversary of the Soviet rule in Azerbaijan. In all the festivities a single message to J.V. Stalin was accepted. In it Nezami was quoted; there were words about the everyday patriotic Stalinist care, which has warmed the Azerbaijani people; that Stalin is well aware of the history of this people; but there was not a word about Stalin returning Nezami to it.⁴⁷

15-20 May, 1940, Moscow held the Decade of Azerbaijani Literature. One of its participants has written about the trip to Moscow: “We are headed by the greatest representative of the world literature, a genius poet of Azerbaijan, the ever living Nezami ... He threw the heavy chains of tyrants and oppressors, from himself, who were forcing him to write in a strange language, and came back to his beloved land. Nezami is going to Moscow, he is going to thank Stalin, who returned him to his native

⁴⁶ Vurgun Samed. *Gordost' naroda* (Pride of People) – *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 21.12.1939, №70.

⁴⁷ *Velikomu Stalinu* (To the Great Stalin). *Literaturniy Azerbaydzhan* (Literary Azerbaijan). 1940, №4-5, p.15-17.

Azerbaijani people.”⁴⁸ During the Decade, Samed Vurgun, made a speech in the Lenin Military-Political Academy, and gave a new accent to the theme of “repatriation” of Nezami. “Foul enemies of the people, nationalists-Musavatists, Pan-Turks, and other traitors wanted to take away Nezami from their own people, just because he wrote most of his works in the Iranian language. But the great genius of the workers, our father and leader, Comrade Stalin, returned to the Azerbaijani people their greatest poet.”⁴⁹ Well, Stalin really did fight Pan-Turkism very strongly.

In 1940, in Baku, the book of E.E. Bertels, “The Great Azerbaijani Poet, Nezami: Epoch, Life, Works,” where Stalin was not mentioned. Although the version of Stalin’s great role in returning Nezami to Azerbaijani people, started to dominate in Azerbaijan, none of Bertels’ works published there, Stalin was not mentioned by editors; although they could, especially if Baqerov would demand.

In 1941, the book of Mikael Rafili came out in Moscow, which practically had the same name, “Nizami Ganjavi: Epoch, Life, and Works.” Its author, at the end referred to Stalin’s saying about the poet as “the greatest stage in the development of scholarship on Nezami.”⁵⁰ Hence it seems logical that the book opened with the corresponding quote from M. Bazhan’s speech.

Was it an exchange of experiences or correction of someone’s (E.E. Bertels’?) political mistake? The idea of opening the book with reference to Stalin’s words might not have been Rafili’s. He was Responsible Secretary of the Anniversary Committee of

⁴⁸ Sadykh, A. *Moskva! Stalin!* (Moscow! Stalin!). – *Dekada azerbaydzhanskoy literatury v Moskve*. (The Decade of the Azerbaijani Literature in Moscow). Baku, 1940, p.121.

⁴⁹ Vurgun Samed. Speech at the Reception of the Lenin Military-Political Academy. Same place, p.222.

⁵⁰ Rafili M. *Nizami Gyandzhevi i ego tvorchestvo* (Nezami Ganjavi and His Works). Baku, 1947, p.8.

Nezami under the CPC (Council of People's Commissars) of the Azerbaijani SSR, but in his publications on Nezami, (primarily before the war) often did not mention Stalin at all.

Under the accompaniment of the politicized anniversary ballyhoo, the translating scholarly-research and publishing work became more active, which was important both politically and culturally. According to E.E. Bertels, already by 1948, by the hard work of Soviet scholars, a new field in scholarship was started – Nezamiology – whose works, written in the past decades “are much better than what Western Europe could write in one and a half centuries.”⁵¹

The war did not stop the process of creating the Soviet Nezamiology. In autumn of 1941, the 800th anniversary of Nezami was even celebrated in Leningrad. “On October 17,” retells Piotrovskiy, “there was a meeting dedicated to Nezami in Hermitage, to which many of its participants, including two of its speakers came straight from the front. The bomb shelters of the Hermitage were prepared in such a way that, in case of necessity, the meeting could be continued there.”⁵² The first speaker was the director of the Hermitage, Academician J.A. Orbeli, “he delivered a fiery speech, which warmed hearts.”⁵³ Then the gathered ones listened to the speeches by A.N. Boldyrev,

⁵¹ Bertels, E.E. *Nizami i ego poema “Khosrov i Shirin”* (Nezami Ganjavi and His Poem “Khosrow and Shirin). *Nizami Gyandzhevi. Khosrov i Shirin* (Nezami Ganjavi. Khosrow and Shirin). Moscow, 1948, p.20.

⁵² Yuzbashyan, K.N. *Akademik Iosif Abgarovich Orbeli* (Academician Joseph Abgarovich Orbeli) 1887-1961. 2nd ed. Moscow, 1986, p.85.

⁵³ Word of the writer. The speech of Nikolay Tikhonov in the meeting of Presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR and the Plenum of the Board of the Union of the Soviet Writers of Azerbaijan on September 23, 1947. *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 26.09.1947, №189.

G.V. Ptitsyn, M.M. D'yakonov, and Poet V.A. Rozhdenstvenskiy read out his translations of Nezami.⁵⁴

In this way, Nezami's anniversary was held according to plan, and with most possible dignity. It was possible not to continue the 800th anniversary campaign for the Poet after this. However, Baku disagreed.

In 1944, the abovementioned book of M.D. Baqerov was published. Victory in the war already near; and one could build definite plans for the peaceful post-war life, and remember the Nezami celebrations that were cut off by war.

In May of 1945, Baku built the Nezami Museum. "Just starting the peaceful built-up, the workers of Azerbaijan honored the memory of their immortal countryman."⁵⁵ The visitors of the Museum in the Hall "Nezami and Our Epoch" could see "The words of Comrade Stalin about Nezami as a great Azerbaijani poet, who was compelled to resort to the Iranian language, because he was not allowed to address his people in the native language, with golden letters were placed on the wall"⁵⁶ Izvestiya reported on it, but the Baku Worker for some reason did not pay attention to this. In 1946, Baku published Baqerov's book in the second edition. Whatever the reasons, this was another reminder about the Nezami problem; about the uncelebrated anniversary of the Poet in the Republic. The question about why this anniversary was not held in 1945, 1946, but only in 1947, is still not answered. Nevertheless, E.E. Bertels, most likely because of the circumstances, said that the date of birth of Nezami "cannot be

⁵⁴ Yuzbashyan, K.N. abovementioned, p.85.

⁵⁵ Raeva, R. "Po zalam museya Nizami" ("Through the Halls of the Nezami Museum"). – *Bakinskiy rabochiy*(The Baku Worker). 27.09.1947 №190.

⁵⁶ Gik, Ya. *Muzey velikogo poeta* (Museum of the Great Poet). Izvestiya. 21.09.1947. №190.

considered firmly fixed” and “there are basis to believe that he was born a few years later, or in 1147.”⁵⁷

Victory in the Great Patriotic War strengthened the feeling of national identity and national pride of the peoples of the USSR. In such a atmosphere, in summer-autumn of 1947, a limited discussion on the circumstances of Nezami’s life and works, and the level of cultural development during the Shirvan-Shahs. Without getting to the details of the discussion, that such an argument appeared: “The Azerbaijani people – according to Comrade Skosyrev – were almost all illiterate, destitute, and without rights. They were under the foreign domination of Shirvan-Shahs, and their national culture was trampled upon. The question arises that on what basis were the works of Nezami born then? Is it possible that a people almost fully illiterate and destitute, according to Comrade Skosyrev, could create Nezami? Why did Skosyrev need these black colors towards the Azerbaijani literature of the 12th century?”⁵⁸ And this underlined that the Nezami anniversary was needed for Azerbaijan as a political measure as well.

⁵⁷ Bertels, E.E. *Nizami i ego tvorchestvo* (Nezami and His Works). *Bakinskiy rabochiy* (The Baku Worker). 27.09.1947. №107.

Member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, A.O. Makovel’skiy thought the same. Look at his article, “*Azərbaydzhanskoe obshchestvo XII veka po proizvedeniyam Nizami*” (“The Azerbaijani Society of the 12th Century According to the Works of Nezami. *Znamya* (Banner) (Journal). 1947. №10, p. 177.

⁵⁸ [The Speech of S. Vurgun in the XI Plenum of the Board of the Union of the Soviet Writers of the USSR]. *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 08.07.1947, №28. Samed Vurgun argues against the article of the Soviet writer and literary critic, P.G. Skosyrev, “*Vopros daleko ne akademicheskoy. Protiv Putanitsy i izrasheniya v otsenke literaturny proshlogo*” (The Question is not Quite Academic: Against the Confusion and Perversion in evaluating the Literary Past.” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Literary Gazette). 14.06.1947, №24.

Article 2 of Tamazshvili: Afterword: (Iranology in Russia and Iranologists)

The life and the work of Evgeni Eduardovich Bertels have not been studied, as yet, as fully as they deserve, both by virtue of their own outstanding character, and as a reflection of the peculiarities of the formation and the development of oriental studies in the USSR. Therefore it is objectively necessary to enter any materials that tell us something new about E. E. Bertels into scholarly circulation. This applies to the text of B. N. Zakhoder's speech, published now, which is dominated by the motif of the immense significance of Bertels's work in the development of research in the area of oriental philology, and the scholar's contribution to the cause of acquainting broad masses of readers with the literary heritage of the East. But among those, probably not numerous, readers who are well acquainted with the biography and the creative output of E. E. Bertels, the first impression might be that they are facing a text of rather ordinary anniversary celebration speech, for all its vividness and elegance, a speech not violating the canons of its genre and, moreover, containing little that is new. There would be grounds to be satisfied with such an estimate. But feeling the atmosphere in which the speech was made, getting a notion of the reasons why it became what it was, realizing what it says about the relations between E. E. Bertels and B. N. Zakhoder, and what is its significance for the characterization of them both – in short, understanding this speech in full, is only possible by implementing the recommendation – or the demand – of another well-known orientalist, E. M. Zhukov: “We are obligated to translate everything, through to the end, into the language of politics”. That was said precisely in connection with the discussion of the works of E. E. Bertels, in the process of the academic-political campaign of struggle against bourgeois cosmopolitanism in Soviet oriental studies that developed in the late forties. That campaign was conducted mainly “in the language of politics”, as also was (though to a lesser degree) another campaign that took place simultaneously: for a Marxist treatment of the history of literatures of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Both campaigns have remained in the history of the nation's oriental studies as very ambiguous phenomena. In their course, E. E. Bertels was subjected to harsh, politicized criticism.

It is logical that the events of both academic-political campaigns are only mentioned by B. N. Zakhoder in passing, as intensive and fruitful discussions; nevertheless, they have largely determined the content and the goals of his speech. Even though Zakhoder is evidently well-informed, yet in many details he is imprecise, sometimes deliberately so. He could not fail to know that the most criticized work of E. E. Bertels was his recent, 1949, article, “Persian-language literature in the Central Asia”². The author said in it: “By the Persian literature we shall, from now on, understand all the literary works written in the so-called 'neo-Persian' language, irrespective of their authors' ethnic identity and of the geographical point where these works emerged.”³ It was around this statement that the passions mainly flared.

It all began with the appearance of A. A. Fadeev, the General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, on the podium of the XII Plenum of the SSW (December 15-20, 1948).⁴ The problems discussed at the plenum became the topic of an article in “Culture and Life” [“Kultura i zhizn”], the newspaper of the Department of Agitation

and Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Its author, the writer K. M. Simonov, asserted, following Fadeev: "Theories still have circulation among our orientalists, according to which the history of the literature of the peoples of Central Asia, beginning almost as far off as the middle of the past century, should be considered as some unified history. These scholars, under the guise of "historical objectivity", turn over to Persians, to Persian literature, a whole series of outstanding writers and major literary phenomena, undoubtedly belonging to the history of the literatures of the peoples of the Soviet Central Asian republics. This question was raised especially sharply ... in connection with the history of the Tajik literature. These and a whole series of other errors, present in works of historians of literature in the republics and of orientalists in Moscow and Leningrad require analysis and severe criticism and correction."⁵ Both Fadeev and Simonov were speaking about, among others, E. E. Bertels.

In the Moscow group of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences (IOS AS), where Bertels was working in the late 40s, a discussion took place, at an open Party meeting, over a report by the Institute's deputy director A. K. Borovkov "For a Marxist-Leninist history of the literatures of Central Asia and the Caucasus" (the discussion was held on February 7, 10, and 24, 1949). On April 4-6, an extended combined meeting was held of the academic council of the Pacific Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and the Bureau of the Moscow Group of IOS AS, discussing the report of the Pacific Institute director E. M. Zhukov: "On the struggle against bourgeois cosmopolitanism in oriental studies." During both meetings, colleagues blamed E. E. Bertels for deviating from Marxism, for reflecting in his works the objectivist errors and the cosmopolitan views characteristic of bourgeois oriental studies. It would be a stretch to assert that the criticism pursued the goal of "extirpating" Bertels from oriental studies. But he, too, was the target of calls to expose to the bottom and discard the "regional cosmopolitan theories of 'classical Persian literature'" and to "smash to the end the miserable bunch of rootless cosmopolitans, poisoning with their toxic breath the atmosphere of creative surge in our country."

In the discussion over Borovkov's report, Bertels admitted: "I must say candidly that those papers which I wrote on the issues of Persian literature, in no way I want to claim that this was remotely similar, not only to Marxism, but even to anything approaching it."⁶ But at the same time he was in no hurry (and that, too, was well known to B. N. Zakhoder) to agree unreservedly with the criticism of his views. "To find out the ethnic identity of every author worth notice, and then classify them over the various literatures – but such a task would be, first of all, impossible to perform, because we have no data on the ethnic identity of old writers, and, probably, we will never have them; and, secondly, that would be methodologically vicious to the extreme. We would, then, be constructing literature by blood, by race. It hardly needs saying that we cannot and shall not be constructing literature in such a way, I won't, at least – if someone else wants to do it, let him, that is his private affair" Bertels said in the same statement, and he added: "How to draw the dividing line between the Persian and the Tajik literatures, I, frankly, do not know. If we take the position that a writer must

necessarily be assigned to the place where he was born and where he acted for the greatest part of his life, then that principle will lead us nowhere.”

A. K. Borovkov called E. E. Bertels's statement unsatisfactory and non-self-critical, because the latter “did not say that the criticism of his views is just” and “repeated those usual assertions that he had made even before.”⁸

In the same discussion, B. N. Zakhoder, first making the reservation that he was not a specialist in literary history, agreed with A. A. Fadeev that “cosmopolitanism has, undoubtedly, influenced many theses of the Academy of Sciences corresponding member E. E. Bertels” “as a result of the uncritical acceptance by him of the erroneous theories of the pre-revolutionary literary historian A. N. Veselovski.”⁹ Besides that, Zakhoder did not criticize Bertels, but also did not defend him, though in 1949 it would have been both timely and appropriate to give the characteristic of Bertels expressed by him later, at the anniversary celebration: as a Soviet scholar “who has not stopped in his development, did not ossify in the traditions imbibed before, but kept growing and developing together with the growth and development of our science.” Such behavior of B. N. Zakhoder is explainable, of course, not by his cowardice etc. (in the same discussion he unreservedly defended the Academician I. Yu. Krachkovski) but by his views concerning the issue, by his social-political position. They predetermined the evaluation by B. N. Zakhoder of the discussion and the criticism that was expressed in it.

With the further development of the campaign of struggle against bourgeois cosmopolitanism in oriental studies (and not only in them), E. M. Zhukov accused E. E. Bertels in his report: “By spreading the legend about a unity of different peoples' literatures on the sole ground that the writers and the poets of these peoples wrote in the same literary language – though they expressed different thoughts, different views, different feelings and traditions – by contributing to that legend, Evgeni Eduardovich is obviously aiding the spread of the newest bourgeois-nationalist conceptions about an imaginary superiority of Iran's culture to the cultures of other countries adjacent to Iran, in particular when speaking about the Soviet socialist republics of Central Asia and Transcaucasia.”¹⁰ The conversation in the language of politics about the scholarly work of E. E. Bertels was heating up.

Bertels answered: “I must say that I love the peoples of Central Asia dearly, and will never let anyone abuse them. In Central Asia, they know that very well.” At the same time, he admitted, and made an attempt to explain, his mistake. “This criticism is, for the most part, fair. The article gave an occasion, and had to give an occasion, for seeing the relation between literatures of Near and Middle East as different from what it really is. [...] But it was already clear to me in 1938 that a wholesale assigning to Iran of all the immense, colossal, Persian literature – that this is not only wrong, but is a major mistake. So, one had to either look for a solution to this problem, or to discard this term altogether. And the whole issue is that I did not discard that old term, but tried to fill it with new content. And that is where this collision occurred. I was departing from an assumption that has been accepted in Tajikistan by public opinion through all these years – namely the assumption of commonality of the Tajik heritage with the Iranian – for the centuries X through XV.”¹¹

But these explanations were not, apparently, accepted by many. Criticism directed at Bertels sounded also from the side of Avdiev, the Egyptologist: "His main theoretical and even, partially, political mistake is that he covered with one traditional and conventional term 'Persian literature' the literary output of different peoples of Western Asia, including the great literary heritage of the Azerbaijan people and the peoples of Central Asia, which have created through a number of centuries grandiose monuments of their fully original cultural creativity.

Repeating in this way the statements of bourgeois scholars, and by this artificially impoverishing the great cultural heritage of the peoples of Soviet East, E. E. Bertels, anti-historically, artificially and quite incorrectly, constructed an ethnically abstract Oriental cosmos, devoid of substantial internal unity, in which Persians, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Tajiks and other peoples of Western Asia somehow merge. Such a point of view and its promotion in academic literature undoubtedly contribute to reactionary pan-Iranism, and do significant damage to, on one hand, development of Soviet Oriental studies and, on the other hand, development of national cultures of the peoples of the Soviet East."¹²

Such a criticism required adoption of radical measures, and the topic "History of the Persian literature", developed by E. E. Bertels, was excluded from the research plan of IOS AS. He was instructed to concentrate, temporarily, on dictionary work.

In 1950, critical campaigns in Soviet oriental studies continued. In the article by I. S. Braginsky "On the wayside from urgent issues: on the collections 'Soviet Oriental Studies' [Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie] V (1948) and VI (1949)" the same work of E. E. Bertels was qualified as fundamentally erroneous due to the author's underestimation of the creative potential of the Tajik people. Braginsky drew a general conclusion that was categorical and severe: "The editorial board cultivates a backward, apolitical, and essentially unscientific, direction in oriental studies."¹³

On November 2, 1950, I. S. Braginsky's article was discussed in the Moscow group of IOS AS. The main speaker, V. I. Avdiev, repeated, in fact, word for word what he had said almost a year earlier about E. E. Bertels and his works, including his aid to the reactionary pan-Iranism.

And again, B. N. Zakhoder did not contradict Avdiev's point of view.

The editorial board of "Soviet Oriental Studies" reacted to the criticism. The seventh issue of the collection, scheduled to appear in 1950, was to open with the article of A. K. Borovkov, "The current tasks of Soviet oriental studies". It asserted that such an understanding of the history of literatures' development as Bertels's "inevitably leads to national nihilism, to denial of the richness of the literary heritage of the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus, to denial of the originality of their artistic creativity."¹⁴ The collection was already set up, but 1950 was pregnant with new shocks and changes in Soviet oriental studies. The discussion in "Pravda" on the linguistic issues erupted, triggering the campaign against "Marrism" - and the leadership of IOS AS (its director was Academician V. V. Struve) correctly realized that the beginning of the new academic-political campaign, objectively more limited in scale, was in essence also the beginning of the folding down of the preceding campaign. It was decided not to publish Borovkov's article, replacing it with I. V. Stalin's works on the issues of linguistics. In the

end, the seventh issue of "Soviet Oriental Studies" did not appear at all; but all the same the criticism of Bertels and others in print did not cease with that. After the transfer of IOS AS from Leningrad to Moscow (in August 1950) its new director S. P. Tolstov published an article, "For progressive Soviet oriental studies", now quite forgotten even by historians of science, but at the time, of course, well-known to all who worked at the Institute. This was the third criticism of Bertels on the pages of "Culture and Life" in less than two years (quite an "achievement" in its way), where an image was being formed of him as a scholar who is not transforming his erroneous, and politically harmful, views. And the estimates given in this paper's issues, irrespective of the person of their author, were perceived by many as a reflection of the opinion of the Party's leading organs.

Bertels anniversary celebrations were held in a situation when the topic of his (true or imaginary) mistakes that had been discussed for about two years, was not yet closed. In preparing his speech Zakhoder had to take into account the consideration that, even though new acute issues, which were also being discussed "in the language of politics", have significantly displaced the previous ones, there was no occasion to completely discount the latter. Therefore Zakhoder did touch on the issue of Bertels's mistakes, but, as was quite natural, softened and smoothed it to the maximum. The mention of the anniversary hero's passion for butterflies was an elegant and effective ploy: the butterfly wings might help freshen a tense or too-official atmosphere, should it congeal at the meeting.

Zakhoder, naturally, remained a non-specialist in the history of literature; and his speech was, in essence, counteracting the residual influence of the critical campaigns, which had subsided, but not died out. Whether Zakhoder expected his speech to have a wider resonance, is unknown. It is also unknown whether he was following in full the criticism of Bertels that was also sounding in the republics. But, counter to many of the critics' assertions, Zakhoder says the direct opposite about Bertels. The example with the evaluation of Bertels's work by Academician Bartold may be a coincidence, but this coincidence is significant.

At the time when, in Uzbekistan, the estimates of Alisher Navoi in the works of E. E. Bertels are being criticized, Zakhoder is speaking of Bertels 's struggle for clearing the image of Navoi, etc.

In 1949, an accusation was voiced against E. E. Bertels that some of his theoretical constructs and conclusions lead "first of all, to the tearing away the peoples of the East from Russia, to introducing hostility between the Russian people and oriental peoples." ¹⁶ And Zakhoder emphasizes that the activity of Bertels as a translator has "enriched our culture, contributed in every way to mutual cultural understanding between the Russian people and the peoples of the East." E. E. Bertels is reproached for underestimating the originality of the Tajik literature – and Zakhoder declares that "with great hope and interest, our public is awaiting the appearance of the fundamental work, by the anniversary's hero, on the history of the Tajik literature."

Bertels is directly listed among those who "give away" writers representative of the peoples of the Soviet East, to Persia, to Iran; Zakhoder specifically underscores the anniversary hero's merit in "repatriating" to Azerbaijan the poet Nizami Ganjavi. One could probably find other, more striking, examples of the anniversary hero's powers of

observation – but Zakhoder preferred to recall the participation of Bertels in the 800 years celebration of Nizami. It is easy to notice that the question of Bertels's contribution to the study of Nizami is especially important for Zakhoder. This is understandable: in this area, Bertels has the most indisputable, under any circumstances, academic and political merits. The article in “Pravda” where Nizami was called an Azerbaijani poet, and not a Persian one, as he had been considered before, is among them.¹⁷ Nizami is an Azerbaijani poet; this treatment of him will be now unchangeable in Soviet oriental studies, independently of Bertels's will, but thanks to him, whatever his subsequent mistakes. However, even here not everything was smooth and unruffled. The Nizami studies, while one of the most successful and fruitful directions of E. E. Bertels's research, were also the most politicized.

On April 3, 1939, “Pravda” published the material: “On the results of the XVIII Congress of the VKP(b). Report of Comrade M. Bazhan to the meeting of intelligentsia of the city of Kiev, April 2 1939.” There, the Ukrainian poet Mikola Bazhan told about the meeting of I. V. Stalin with the writers Konstantin Fedin and Pyotr Pavlenko. “Comrade Stalin spoke of the Azerbaijani poet Nizami, quoted his work, to demolish, with the words of the poet, the unfounded claim that this poet must, allegedly, be given to the Iranian literature just because most of his poems he wrote in the Iranian language. Nizami asserted himself in his poems that he is forced to have recourse to the Iranian language because he is not permitted to address his people in his native language. Comrade Stalin quoted just this piece, embracing with a sweep of his genius all the outstanding achievements created by the history of humanity”

On April 10, 1939, a meeting of Baku intelligentsia voted a verse address to I. V. Stalin¹⁸. It was published by “Pravda” on April 16, 1939. It included the words: “The aliens had held our Nizami, having appropriated the singer, /But the nests that the singer has built in grateful hearts, are strong;/ You gave back his verse to us, you have returned his greatness./ With an immortal word about him you have lighted up the world's pages. By 1947, the point of view that it was Stalin who first “returned” Nizami to Azerbaijan was dominant, at any rate, among Azerbaijani scholars. The participants of the celebratory meeting in Baku honoring Nizami's anniversary, adopted with great enthusiasm, as Bertels wrote, the text of greetings to Stalin containing the same lines about Nizami. Thus, the priority of Stalin in ascribing Nizami to the literature of Azerbaijan seemed to be recognized by Bertels himself. And the criticism by himself of his own mistakes, as it was done in 1949 after the speech of E. M. Zhukov, gave a formal ground to reproach Bertels (as V. I. Avdiev in fact did) for an attempt to revise an already established view of Nizami Ganjavi as an Azerbaijani poet, a view shared by I. V. Stalin.

V.I. Avdiev also said this about Bertels: “Having admitted that his theoretical mistakes are due to the heavy burden of bourgeois science's old traditions, Bertels, undoubtedly, has made a significant step forward which gives him an opportunity to start on the way towards rectifying these mistakes, which is possible only by effectively mastering the basics of dialectic and historical materialism.”²⁰ In conditions when any pronouncement by Stalin was declared by many to be a contribution of genius, both into dialectical and historical materialism, it would have been obviously profitable for E.

E. Bertels's reputation to play in this respect on the coincidence of his and Stalin's views on Nizami. But neither Bertels, nor Zakhoder do this... As we see there are no mentions of Stalin in Zakhoder's speech – on the contrary, he, quite rightly, emphasizes that Bertels called Nizami an Azerbaijani poet before anyone else.

The speech of B. N. Zakhoder became the basis of the first, in two years, positive publications about E. E. Bertels, though in one of them it was said anyway that he, “having once ascribed Nizami to the number of Persian poets, succeeded in overcoming this mistake, which had been uncritically borrowed from bourgeois orientalism.”²¹ Obviously, in publications, too, it would have been very profitable for Bertels to refer to I. V. Stalin's point of view, but here, too, it was not done.

This is an additional proof that those who did not want, to refer necessarily to Stalin, in or out of context, in academic statements or publications, - did not do it.

The knowledge of all the above allows to conjecture the reason why it was Zakhoder who became the main speaker at E. E. Bertels's anniversary in December 1950.²² After all, something of the same kind could have been said by some of the anniversary hero's colleagues – literary historians. Many could have found sincere, kind words about him, could have recalled E. E. Bertels's services to knowledge. But to Zakhoder it was also an opportunity to cancel, in some measure, his moral debt, to say about Bertels what he had not said before, in conditions that were, of course, more difficult. Such a version is not at all excluded – but if so, has Zakhoder succeeded in compensating for what was omitted before?

Notes

1. The archive fund of the Moscow group of IOS AS
2. Soviet oriental studies, volume V, Moscow-Leningrad, p. 199-228.
3. Ibid. p. 200
4. For a new advance of the Soviet literature. (Debate over the reports of A. Siras, I. Muijniek, and S. Mukanov, and co-reports of K. Simonov, A. Surkov, and B. Gorbatov) // Literaturnaya Gazeta, Dec 12, 1948, #102
5. K. Simonov, Some issues of the development of the literatures of peoples of the USSR, (On the results of the Plenum of the Union of Soviet Writers). Kultura I Zhizn, Jan. 11 1949, #1.
6. The archive fund of the Moscow group of IOS AS
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Kultura I Zhizn, Jan. 11 1950, #1.
14. The archive fund of IOS AS
15. Kultura I Zhizn, Aug. 11 1950, #22.

16. The archive fund of the Moscow group of IOS AS
17. E. Bertels. The genius poet of Azerbaijan, Nizami// Pravda, Feb.3,1939, #33.
18. Samed Vurgun, Rasul Rza, Suleiman Rustam, A letter of Baku intelligentsia to Comrade Stalin.// Literaturnyi Azerbaijan, Baku, 1939, #4, p. 3-12
19. See: E. E. Bertels, The Nizami anniversary in Azerbaijan // Vestnik AN SSSR, 1947, #12, p. 96.
20. The archive fund of the Moscow group of IOS AS
21. Celebration of the Corresponding Member of AS of the USSR Professor E. E. Bertels: in connection with sixty years' birthday and thirty years of scholarly work in oriental studies// Brief notices of IOS AS USSR, Issue 1, Moscow, 1951, p. 63.
22. On November 17, 1950, by the order # 95 at IOS AS, an anniversary commission has been formed in the Institute, to celebrate sixty years of E. E. Bertels. The commission's chairman was the institute's director S. P. Tolstov, among its members were I. S. Braginsky, B. N. Zakhoder and others.

The introductory remarks at “the celebration meeting in honor of E.E. Bertels were made by S. P. Tolstov, the address of greetings from IOS AS USSR was read by V. I. Avdiev, and today it may seem somewhat strange in the eyes of some people. E. E. Bertels himself, to judge by some of his remarks, perceived objective criticism, even if very harsh, as a necessary element of scholarly work. All the same, it would be rash to assert anything about the influence of the criticism on his relations with his colleagues in the period under consideration.

Recent Politicization of the Figure of Nizami Ganjavi

Thus we saw that during the USSR era, the heritage of Nezami Ganjavi became politicized. He was attributed to a non-existent identity (Azerbaijani-Turkic) during his own time and it was falsely he claimed that he was forced to write in Persian. Even Stalin got involved and E.E. Bertels himself who said that it is impossible to discuss the ethnicity of 12th centuries figure was politically pressured and recognized Stalin’s decision. Indeed, later on when he wanted to express a differing opinion about the integrity of Persian literature but again was forced to take back his opinion due to political pressure. Overall, we can see that attribution of Nezami Ganjavi as an “Azerbaijani” (which was defined by the USSR as Medes, Caucasian Albanians or etc.) was political in nature. However in order to justify this political maneuver, some false arguments (like Nezami was forced to write in an Iranian language) were coined. These false arguments are dealt with in another section of this article.

After the breakup of the USSR, independent Muslim republics emerged and one of them was the Republic of Azerbaijan. Small minority of the opposition and elite in that country (including the People’s Front) strongly identified with pan-Turkism at one hand and also continued upon the policy of weakening cultural ties with Iran by not mentioning or minimizing their fraternal relationship with the wider Iranian world.

The USSR historiography legacy has been continued by some of the elite elements in the Republic of Azerbaijan after the fall of the USSR. According to Professor Bert G. Fragner:

“In the case of Azerbaijan, there is another irrational assault on sober treatment of history to be witnessed: its denomination. The borders of historical Azerbaijan crossed the Araxes to the north only in the case of the territory of Nakhichevan . Prior to 1918, even Lenkoran and Astara were perceived as belonging not to Azerbaijan proper but to Talysh, an area closely linked to the Caspian territory of Gilan. Since antiquity, Azerbaijan has been considered as the region centered around Tabriz, Ardabil, Maragheh, Orumiyyeh and Zanjan in today’s (and also in historical) Iran. The homonym republic consists of a number of political areas traditionally called Arran, Shirvan, Sheki, Ganjeh and so on. They never belonged to historical Azerbaijan, which dates back to post-Achaemenid, Alexandrian ‘Media Atropatene’. Azerbaijan gained extreme importance under (and after) the Mongol Ilkhanids of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when it was regarded as the heartland of Iran.

..

Under Soviet auspices and in accordance with Soviet nationalism, historical Azerbaijan proper was reinterpreted as ‘Southern Azerbaijan’, with demands for liberation and, eventually, for ‘re’-unification with Northern (Soviet) Azerbaijan a breathtaking manipulation. No need to point to concrete Soviet political activities in this direction, as in 1945-46 etc. The really interesting point is that in the independent former Soviet republics this typically Soviet ideological pattern has long outlasted the Soviet Union.

(Bert G. Fragner, ‘Soviet Nationalism: An Ideological Legacy to the Independent Republics of Central Asia’ in Van Schendel, Willem(Editor) . Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century. London , GBR: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2001.)

According to Professor Douglass Blum:

“Finally, Azerbaijan presents a somewhat more ambiguous picture. It boasts a well-established official national identity associated with claims of a unique heritage based on an improbable blend of Turkism, Zoroastrianism, moderate Islam, and its historical function as ‘bridge’ between Asia and Europe along the Silk Road. At the same time there remain strong local allegiances and ethnic distinctions, including submerged tensions between Azeris, Russians, and also Lezgins and Talysh (besides Armenians), as well as stubborn religious cleavages (roughly two thirds of the Islamic population is Shi’ite one third Sunni). This persistence of parochialism is hardly surprising inasmuch as there has been little historical basis for national identity formation among Azeri elites, who were significantly affected by Russification and are still generally lukewarm in their expressions of pan-Turkism. Perhaps the most powerful source of social cohesion and state legitimacy is the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has at least generated some degree of collective identity as victim of Armenian aggression perhaps a slender reed on

which to construct a national identity conducive to developmental state building in the future”.

(Douglass Blum, “Contested National Identities and Weak State Structures In Eurasia”(in Sean Kay, S. Victor Papacosma, James Sperling, Limiting Institutions: The Challenge of Eurasian Security Governance, Manchester University Press, 2003.)

Here are examples of some news reports from a Republic of Azerbaijan news site on Nizami Ganjavi. (All accessed in Dec, 2007 and the URL given on the bottom of each picture)

Today.Az » Society » Iran again calls Nizami "Iranian poet"

02 July 2006 [17:49] - [Today.Az](#)

Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi's love stories of "Leyli ve Majnun" and "Khosrov ve Shirin" were translated into the Uzbek language.



According to the Mehr News Agency, Abbas-Ali Vafaii, Iran's cultural attache in Uzbekistan said Sunday that the books of the "Iranian poet" were translated by the Uzbek poet Alim Jan Buriev, edited by Muhammad Khan Muminov, and published by

Al-Hoda Publications.

It's not the first time when Iran's officials try to pose Nizami as Iranian poet.

Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209) lived and died in Ganja, an ancient city in Azerbaijan, where his mausoleum stands.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/27781.html>

Editors of "Tolishi sedo" newspaper took stand of betrayal of country

Azerbaijani well-known poet Nizami Ganjavi and historical hero Babek were shown as Talish in these materials published in the newspaper.

Court consideration on the cases of Novruzeli Mammadov, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences Linguistics department chief, editor-in-chief of "Tolishi sedo" newspaper and Elman Guliyev, official of Linguistics Institute was started in the Court of Grave Crimes today. Shakir Alasgarov presided at the trial. Court consideration was held behind closed doors.

Answering the questions of Ramiz Mammadov, lawyer of defendant Mammadov, Guliyev admitted that Iranian Talish Study scientist Ali Abdeyin rendered amount of financial assistance to "Tolishi sedo" newspaper.

Azerbaijani well-known poet Nizami Ganjavi and historical hero Babek were shown as Talish in these materials published in the newspaper. It was shown in the newspaper that Turkish came to Azerbaijani regions afterwards where Talish people live and these lands were Talish lands historically. Guliyev admitted that they received \$1000 a month from Talish organizations in Iran. Trial will continue in the second half of the day.

Novruzali Mammadov was detained on February 3 and Yasamal Court passed decision to arrest Novruzeli Bayramov for 15 days. Novruzeli Mammadov faced charge under Article 274 (State betrayal) of Criminal Code on February 17. Elman Guliyev is also accused of the same article.

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Story from anspress.com: <http://www.anspress.com>

Published: 19.12.2007 17:37

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Today.Az » Society » Unidentified persons insulted bas-relief of Nizami Ganjavi in Georgia

17 April 2008 [09:45] - [Today.Az](#)

The great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi's bas-relief in the center of Mameuli region in Georgia suffered of insulting behavior April 13 to 14.



APA reports that the bas-relief for Nizami Ganjavi stands next to the bas-relief of Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli. Unidentified persons wrote the word "Father" under the memorial of Rustaveli with color and insulting words under the memorial of Ganjavi.

Besides, the unidentified persons throw mud on Nizami's face. The analogous behavior was redone next day. The correspondent of [APA](#) appealed to the governor of Marnueli Amiran Subitidze regarding the incident. The governor said the police had partially identified the hooligans. He also said that after necessary investigations they would be detained and punished.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/25210.html>

Today.Az » Society » Afshar Suleymani considers Nizami and Shahriyar as Persian poets

18 March 2006 [10:06] - [Today.Az](#)

"Former Iranian President Mahammad Khatami's writing that Nizami Ganjavi is a Persian poet is true. Nizami wrote and created his works in Persian, he didn't have even one work in Azerbaijani," Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Afshar Suleymani, told.



As [APA](#) reports, Suleymani also said there is no evidence to prove that Nizami wrote in Azerbaijani.

"Nizami didn't write in Azerbaijani. Nizami wrote in Persian but these poems were translated into Azerbaijani later".

The Iranian Ambassador also claimed that Shahriyar is not Azerbaijani poet as

well.

Chairman of parliament standing commission on culture affairs, Professor Nizami Jafarov doesn't agree with Iranian Ambassador.

"It is a fact that Nizami Ganjavi praised Macedonian Alexander, who raised Iran, while other Persian poets showed Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer. If Nizami Ganjavi had been a Persian poet, he would also have show Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer instead of praising him. It proves that Nizami is a genius Azerbaijani poet. Nizami's creative works are in the spirit of Azerbaijan-Turk".

As for great Turkish-Azerbaijani poet Shahriyar, professor said that his nationality was reflected in his documents and works.

"Iran was a Turkish state till XX century and it was personalized after that. If am not wrong, Afshar Suleymani is Azerbaijani as well. He should investigate and learn history, he, as a diplomat, may need this knowledge".

Jafarov also said that 35 million Azerbaijanis live in Iran and their rights are violated there. Professor thinks that it would be better for Afshar Suleymani to answer the ban imposed in Iran on speaking its own language and getting education.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/24262.html>

Another news article claims:

**Day.Az » Общество » Писатель Эльчин Гасанов:
«Нам нужно работать над тем, чтобы во всем
мире поверили в то, что Низами и Физули –
азербайджанцы»**

22 Марта 2006 [02:33] - [Day.Az](#)

[Распечатать](#)

*Эксклюзивное интервью Day.Az с членом Союза писателей
Азербайджана, известным публицистом Эльчином Гасановым.*



- Эльчин муаллим, как Вы прокомментируете заявления посла Исламской Республики Иран в Азербайджане Афшара Сулеймани о том, что он против того, чтобы называть Шахрияра азербайджанским поэтом, а Низами Гянджеви и вовсе является иранским

поэтом и что он, потому что великий поэт, мол не читал свои стихи на азербайджанском языке, а читал их на фарси, и они позднее были переведены на азербайджанский?

- Начнем, по порядку, с Шахрияра. Это, безусловно, азербайджанский поэт. Он был иранским азербайджанцем и писал на азербайджанском языке. А вот с Низами все несколько проблематичнее. К примеру, на него претендуют и таджики, которые заявляют, что он писал на таджикском языке. То же самое говорят иранцы, и арабы, и иранцы. Памятники Низами есть не только в Азербайджане, но и в Иране, Таджикистане и странах арабского мира. Да, великий поэт жил в Гяндже. Но достаточно ли этого для того, чтобы весь мир признал Низами азербайджанцем? На мой взгляд, нет.

- А кого, на Ваш взгляд, можно назвать истинно азербайджанским писателем и поэтом?

- Это – Хагани, Вазех, Ширази, Сабир. С признанием их азербайджанцами у нас проблем нет. Но в то же время мы также считаем азербайджанцем и Физули. Но это также трудно

Поймите, я не говорю, что Низами или Физули не являются азербайджанцами, но это еще нужно доказать всему миру. А для этого нам нужно для этого, прежде всего, построить правильную линию пропаганды. Пока она на очень низком уровне.

В этом смысле, нам нужно не стесняться учиться у армян. Посмотрите, как умело они распустили информацию о том, что Рамиль Сафаров убил спящего армянина. На самом деле «спящий армянин» это – миф. Но в него успело поверить очень много людей в мире. Также и нам нужно работать над тем, чтобы во всем мире поверили в то, что Низами и Физули – азербайджанцы.

Which translates to (roughly done with google translator):

<http://www.day.az/news/society/44452.html> (March 22, 2006)

Day.Az exclusive interview with a member of the Writers' Union of Azerbaijan, a famous writer Elchin Hasanov.

- Elchin Mualla how would you comment the statements of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Azerbaijan by ambassador Afshar Suleimaniyeh that he objected to calling Shahriyar and Nizami and states they are Iranian poet. They say that they did not write their poems in Azeri language and that they were later translated to Persian?

- For starters, on Shahriyar. He is of course, Azeri poet. He was an Iranian Azeri and wrote in the Azeri language. But with a Nizami several problems. For example, he is claimed by different groups and Tajiks claim that he wrote in the Tajik language. The same about Iranians and Arabs. Monuments of Nizami are not only in Azerbaijan but also in Iran, Tajikistan and the Arab world. Yes, the great poet lived in Ganja. But is this to the whole world recognized Nizami Azerbaijani? In my opinion, no.

- Who, in your opinion, can be called truly Azerbaijani writers and poets?

- It - Khagani, Vazeh, Shirazi, Sabir. With the recognition of Azerbaijani, we do not have problems. But at the same time, we also believe in Fizuli. But it is also difficult to prove. After all, he lived in Syria, has never been in Azerbaijan, and also wrote Arabic.

Understand, I am not saying that Nizami, Fizuli are not Azerbaijani, but it remains to be proved to the world. And for that we need to do this, first of all, to build a proper line of propaganda. While it is very low.

In this sense, we should not hesitate to learn from the Armenians. See how well they dissolved the information that Ramil Safarov killed Armenian sleep. In fact, «sleeping Armenian» that - a myth. But he managed to believe so many people in the world. Also, we need to work to make the world believe that Nizami and Fizuli - Azeris.

And finally here is a report from an Azeri Ambassador in Europe:

Today.Az » Society » Conference devoted to Nizami Ganjavi held in Strasbourg

26 January 2007 [01:25] - [Today.Az](#)

Scientific conference devoted to famous Azerbaijani poet, thinker and philosopher Nizami Ganjavi's life and literary activity was held in Mark Bloch University in Strasbourg, France.



Members of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), head of the permanent Azerbaijani delegation to PACE Arif Mammadov, students, teachers, professors and literary critics participated in the conference organized by

"Azerbaijani House" organization and Association of Students Studying in France.

MP Rafael Huseynov made a broad speech about Nizami Ganjavi's life and literary activity. He touched upon the question that being an Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi wrote in Persian. Most in Europe consider Nizami a Persian poet. After his speech Rafael Huseynov was asked a lot of questions. Rafael Huseynov and other parliamentarians called upon the Azerbaijani students to be active in the protection of interests of our country, [APA](#) correspondent in Strasbourg reports.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/35499.html>

Thus the above news reports from the Republic of Azerbaijan takes an issue with calling Nizami Ganjavi an Iranian. Indeed an ethnic Iranian Talysh editor who believes that Nizami Ganjavi and Babak Khorramdin were Talysh (perhaps the merit of the argument being that the old Azari language and Kurdish and Talysh are all of the same root and at that time mutually intelligible NW Iranian languages and the Pahlavi idioms as shown in Nozhat al-Majales are closely related to Talysh language as well) is accused of a grave crime for disagreeing about the background of Nizami Ganjavi (although the article does not make it clear this was the reason or something else that the Talyshi editor was jailed, nevertheless why should an arrest of a person have to do with Nizami Ganjavi who lived 850+ years ago?). The whole situation is easily solvable if some elites in the country also attest to their shared heritage with the wider Iranian world.

Yet all scholars agree that Nizami was at least half Iranian ethnically and he wrote all his work in Persian. He also praised his rulers as rulers of Persia/Iran which means that to him, the land he was living in was the Persia/Iran. Furthermore, as will be shown, there

are clear arguments for 100% Iranian ethnicity and of course explicit testaments to his Persian heritage.

Nizami Ganjavi is known by his Persian epic poetry. The Iranian world and Persian speaking world has many great poets and the current government of Iran is a pan-Islamic government and in terms of nation building, it does not put a serious endeavor like former USSR countries, many of whom have been besieged by ethnic war and thus have a high nationalist fervor both amongst their government elite and some of their people.

Thus some elite sectors refuse to recognize that Nizami Ganjavi, who is part of the Iranian civilization, is also part of the Azerbaijani's heritage due to the fact that they also have Iranian heritage. Instead, some still believe Nizami Ganjavi was a *Turk!* who was forced to write in Persian or he used Persian since it was a common tool. We will show both ideas are false and actually not only Nizami wrote in Persian, but he expanded upon Iranian folklore and mythology while nothing is said in his work about Turkic folklore and mythology. His stories were Persian/Iranian and not just the language he used. Thus besides ethnic reasons, the use of the cultural language, Nizami Ganjavi was culturally Iranian as well due to the stories he versified (and the ones he optionally chose like *Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw o Shirin* is a testament to this).

A more prudent approach which will not cause contradiction would be to simply accept the obvious fact that Nizami is part of the Persian culture and historic Iranian civilization, and the Republic of Azerbaijan is also one of the inheritors (alongside with Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran) of this Persian culture. However, nationalistic scholars in the republic of Azerbaijan do their best to disassociate Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and to attribute it to newly forged identity (Azerbaijani-Turkic) which did not exist at that time and is mainly a product of USSR and pan-Turkist theories. The current Iranian government of course does not care too much about this issue since Iran has many historical poets and of course it is a pan-Islamists government rather than a nationalist one. There are pan-Turkist publications in Iran (like the Turkish-Persian journal Varliq) who also claim Avicenna and Biruni as Turkic scholars. They also obviously claim Nizami Ganjavi (and we will respond to their arguments in the section "Misinterpretations of verses by the USSR"). In our opinion, 1000 year from now, if civilization survives, Nizami Ganjavi will still be known by his Persian poetry and Iranian cultural heritage since that reflects the character and content of his work.

Going back to such nationalistic writers who disregard scholarly convention, the word of Dr. Jafarov (in the above news reports) shows ultra-nationalistic fever is very high with regards to Nizami Ganjavi. Note Dr. Jafarov's unsound assertion:

"It is a fact Nizami Ganjavi praised Macedonian Alexander, who raised [*sic.* he meant razed] Iran, while other Persian poets showed Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer. If Nizami Ganjavi had been a Persian poet, he would also have shown Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer instead of praising him. It proves that Nizami is a genius Azerbaijani poet. Nizami's creative works are in the spirit of Azerbaijan-Turk"

What Dr. Jafarov fails to mention is that Nizami Ganjavi says that Alexander followed all of the traditions and customs of the Kiyani kings (Achaemenid kings) with the exception of Zoroastrianism. Without the understanding Persian language and its classical literature (Ferdowsi, Sanai, Qatran, ...) the understanding of the works of Nizami Ganjavi is also impossible. Alexander the Great was also identified with Dhul-Qarnain of the Qur'an and many Persian poets have praised him. He is after all an Islamic figure and Nizami was also a devout Muslim.

For example, Sa'adi the Persian poet also praises Alexander:

ایشان در حکایت آخر از باب اول از کتاب گلستان خود به صراحت گفته که "اسکندر رومی
را گفتند شرق و غرب عالم را به چه گرفتی در حالی که پادشاهان پیشین را که مکت و
قدرت بیش از این بود اینچنین امری مقدر نشد؟
گفتا بعون خدای عزوجل در هر سرزمینی که وارد شدم رعیت آن نیازدم و نام بزرگان آن
جز به نیکی یاد نکردم."

These sorts of statements about Alexander are typical of many Persian poets. This does not make Sa'adi a Turk just for saying something positive about Alexander. Neither Sa'adi praising the local Turkic ruler of the area makes him a Turk.

And according to the Encyclopedia of Islam (Iskandar-Nama):

In the *Shahnama*, Firdawsi already makes Iskandar an exemplary figure, whom the companionship of Aristotle helps to rise still higher, by the path of wisdom and moderation, in the direction of abstinence and contempt for this world. And Firdawsi laid stress on the defeat of Dārā (the Darius of the Greeks) as something desired by "the rotation of the Heavens".

..
At the time of Nizami, however, Islam is from then onwards well established in Iran, and it is the prophetic and ecumenical aspect of his destiny that the poet makes evident in his hero. As a learned Iranian poet, Nizami, who demonstrates his eclecticism in the information he gives (he says, "I have taken from everything just what suited me and I have borrowed from recent histories, Christian, Pahlavi and Jewish ... and of them I have made a whole"), locates the story of his hero principally in Iran. He makes him the image of the Iranian "knight", peace-loving and moderate, courteous and always ready for any noble action. Like all Nizami's heroes, he conquers the passions of the flesh, and devotes his attention to his undertakings and his friendships. These features appear in the account, which follows ancient tradition, of his conduct towards the women of the family of Darius, in his brotherly attitude on the death of that ruler, in his behaviour towards queen Nushaba (the Kaydaf of Firdawsi, the Kandake of the pseudo-Callisthenes) whom he defends against the Russians. (Abel, A.; Ed(s). "Iskandar Nama." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007. (2nd edition online version))

The Encyclopedia Iranica also discusses the difference between Perso-Islamic and Perso-Zoroastrian view on Alexander. Persian historians and poets (including Ferdowsi) according to this Professor Hanaway present Alexander as a just king:

“Two aspects of the story are important in differentiating the versions of the Alexander romance that descend from the Greek through the Syriac from those influenced by Persian oral tradition. The first is the genealogy of Alexander. In the Pseudo-Callisthenes tale, and the Syriac version, Alexander is the son (by an illicit union) of the Egyptian Pharaoh Nectanebos and Philip of Macedon’s wife Olympias.

In many of the Persian versions, including that of Ferdowsi, Alexander is the son of Darab (Darius II?) and the daughter of Philip of Macedon. The second aspect is the way in which Alexander himself is viewed in the text. In the Persian versions of the story, Alexander is usually identified with Dhu’l-Qarnayn, a prophet mentioned in the Koran 16:84 (see Watt). In the early New Persian commentary on the Koran entitled *Tarjoma-ye Tafsir-e Tabari* Dul-Qarnayn is mentioned twice in connection with the wall of Gog and Magog (I, p. 196; IV, p. 918). Stories of Alexander/D`u`l-Qarnayn appear in popular lives of the saints, such as Abu Eshaaq Neyshaburi`Qesas al-Anbiyya (pp. 321-33 and in a chapbook version, Kabul, n. d., pp. 94-101).

Among the historians, Tabari (I, pp. 692-704; tr., IV, pp. 87-95) gives the fullest summary of the tale of Alexander, including the birth story in which Alexander and Dara are half-brothers, the details of which appear in various Persian versions. Neither the historians (Tabari, Masudi, Dinavari, and Hamza Esáfahani) nor Ferdowsi develop the prophetic role of Alexander which the connection with Du`l-Qarnayn suggests, presenting Alexander as a conquering hero and a just king. Nezami Ganjavi develops the prophetic side fully in what is the most extensive surviving version in New Persian”. (Encyclopedia Iranica, “Eskandar Nama”, William L. Hanaway)

We note that in the Shahnameh, Alexander the Great even visits Mecca and in the Shahnameh, he is actually half Iranian. Nizami Ganjavi praises Ferdowsi (who definitely was not a Turk and according to many sources his Shahnameh had a certain anti-Turkish bias) and the Shahnameh had an important role in the Eskandarnama (as well as *Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw o Shirin*). Neither Sa`adi nor Ferdowsi were of *Azerbaijan-Turk* background but they both have praised Alexander who was identified with the Muslim Dhul-Qarnain. We also note that Nizami’s romantic poetry is based on Persian folklore (*Haft Paykar*, *Khusraw o Shirin*) and have absolutely nothing to do with Turkic folklore like Dede Qorqod. Finally in the Eskandarnama, Alexander attacks Azarabadegan (traditional Iranian Azerbaijan) and puts out the fire temples. Yet some of the same elite who deny any Iranian also claim Zoroastrianism is a Turkic religion and Zoroaster was a Turk.

As per the nationalist writer Elchin Hassanov. He is incorrect about Nezami and Shirazi. By Shirazi, he could possibly mean Sa`adi of Shiraz (who is popular in the country Azerbaijan) but he is not Azerbaijani nor does anyone know him as Azerbaijani nor has he written anything in Azerbaijani. Similarly Shahriyar is an Iranian Azeri poet. He was born of Iranian nationality and spoke Azerbaijani as his native language. However, it

should be mention that the pan-Turkic claim on Nezami Ganjavi is a falsified allegation that his father was Turkic. While the arguments of pan-Turkists arguments are analyzed in this article and are shown to lack any proof (and are misinterpreted verses seen through highly ethno-nationalistic narrow prisms), we should not that Shahriyar's full name was Seyyed Muhammad Shahriyar. Thus if one goes by purely father line, rather than cultural contribution, someone like Shahriyar would be an Arab since his father line (a Seyyed) goes back to Prophet of Islam (PBUH). Thus if a poet is to be classified by their father line (we will discuss Nezami's later), then Shahriyar is an Arab poet. If they are supposed to be by their output, then obviously Shahriyar who wrote 90% of his work in Persian, will be a Persian poet. However, Shahriyar is classified as an Iranian Azeri poet (which we believe is correct) because of his culture milieu. He hailed from an Iranian Azeri cultural background. However at the time of Nezami Ganjavi, the cultural milieu of Arran and Sherwan was Persian as will be shown by works such as Nozhat al-Majales and others. For example at least 24 Persian poets have been mentioned in the Nozhat al-Majales which is from Nezami's era and all being from Ganja.

Also there was no Azerbaijani-Turkic language, culture, identity at that time of Nezami. Also the comments about "manipulation" and using methods of "Armenians" in order to prove to the world that Nezami was "Azeri" shows that the world does not at this time buy such a claim. The Azerbaijani republic ambassador also confirms this claim as he clearly states: "Most of Europe considers Nezami a Persian poet". In actuality, it is all European scholars outside of USSR, since they recognize that one cannot misplace time and history and assign non-existent identities during the time of Nezami to Nezami.

Of course if Iran's government does not do anything, and ordinary Iranians remain aloof, and some scholars are paid (we bring such an example later), then obviously falsehood will creep into mainstream Western scholarship.

Indeed there was no ethnicity by the name Azerbaijani-Turkic at that time neither was there an Azerbaijani-Turkic culture or language (it came about through proto-Oghuz mixed with Persian and Arabic vocabulary at least a century after Nezami. All of the work of Nezami is in Persian, his cultural contribution is to the Persian language and his stories are from Persian folklore and culture. As per his ethnicity, it is agreed that he was at least half Kurdish (an Iranian people/group), and we shall show that the ethnicity of his father was Iranian(which is somewhat irrelevant in the case of Nezami since he was raised by his maternal uncle and he was orphaned early from his father), although this issue by itself does not make difference on his cultural characterization as a Persian poet.

Just like Shahriyar or Nasimi's father line (both Arabic Seyyed) does not change their cultural characterization as "Iranian Azeri poet" and "Turkic poet" respectively. Although with regards to Nasimi, he also has written in Arabic and Persian and thus one should classify him as a "Turkish, Arabic and Persian poet" and we do not know his cultural milieu and native language clearly. Similarly, the founder of Safavid dynasty, Ismail I is hailed as an "Azerbaijani poet" because he has written in Azerbaijani-Turkic (less of his Persian works has survived). However if one goes by father line, all major modern Safavid scholars classify his ancestor as Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili who was of

Kurdish Shafi'i background. All Safavid chronicles both before 1501 and after 1501 trace the Safavids lineage to Firuz Shah Zarin Kolah and in the oldest extant genealogy, he is called Firuz Shah Zarin Kolah Kurd of Sanjan and he is called Kurdish directly. The same issue holds with Pushkin who had Ethiopian father line, but no one challenges his place in Russian literature. With regards to Nezami, he contributed to the Persian language and used Persian cultural stories and thus is rightfully a Persian poet. A poet cannot be translated and thus the masterpiece he has created makes it also belong to the particular language he has used. However irrelevant the issue of his father line may be, we shall also show that all indicators show Nezami's father line just like his mother line was Iranian. Thus the above news reports show that politicization of Nezami Ganjavi and robbing him of his Persian cultural heritage is actively being pursued for pan-Turanist/ethno-nationalistic reasons and nation building.

A more recent statement from the ministers of foreign affairs of Azerbaijan has a more scientific tone:

a country which embraced Islam in its very early days and which remarkably contributed to enriching the Islamic civilization through its illustrious sons of eminent philosophers, scholars, thinkers, historians and poets like Nizami and Khaquani, Bahmanyar, Masud Ibn Namdar and many others.

<http://www.oic-oci.org/press/English/2007/04/sg-speech-baku.htm>

(Accessed September 2007)

We note that Abul Hasan Bahmanyar the son of Marzaban was a Persian Zoroastrian and a student of Avicenna. The name of his uncle, which he devoted one of his works too is: Abu Mansur the son of Bahram the son Khurshid the son of Yazdyar who was also a Zoroastrian. Masud ibn Namdar, as Vladimir Minorsky has clearly stated, was a Kurd. Indeed Masud ibn Namdar himself affirms he was a Kurd. The Persian poet Khaqani has a Christian Iranian or Georgian or Greek mother and an Iranic father. His title was the "Persian Hassan". Finally, Nizami is the case we study in detail and it is shown that all evidences point to non-Turkic, Iranian father as well as Kurdish mother. Culturally, all that is left from Nizami are his work and he considers himself an inheritor/successor of Ferdowsi. Again it is this author's opinion that just like ancient Egyptians are connected to modern Egyptians, some of the writers from the Republic of Azerbaijan do not need Turkify Avesta, Zoroastrianism, Bahmanyar and Iranian cultural relics in order to feel a connection with their past. The Iranian ambassador mentioned in the news should also explain that Turkic speaking Azerbaijanis of Caucasus have Iranian heritage (despite massive efforts by both USSR and pan-Turkists to deny and erase this heritage) and while the language of the area has changed, Nezami is part of the Iranian culture heritage of the region and they should also see this heritage as their own as well and not try to retroactively and anachronistically Turkify it.

Nizami's Mother

Professors Vladimir Minorsky, Jan Rypka, Julia Meysami, Vahid Dastgerdi and other Nezami scholars are unanimous that Nizami's mother was of a Kurdish (an Iranic speaking group) background.

Vladimir Minorsky writes (V. Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, Cambridge University Press, 1957. pg 34):

“The author of the collection of documents relating to Arran Mas'ud b. Namdar (c. 1100) claims Kurdish nationality. The mother of the poet Nizami of Ganja was Kurdish (see autobiographical digression in the introduction of *Layli wa Majnun*). In the 16th century there was a group of 24 septs of Kurds in Qarabagh, see *Sharaf-nama*, I, 323. Even now the Kurds of the USSR are chiefly grouped south of Ganja. Many place-names composed with Kurd are found on both banks of the Kur”

Also Vladimir Minorsky writes (G. H. Darab, *Makhzan al-Asrar*, 1945 (reviewed by Minorsky, *BSOAS.*, 1948, xii/2, 441-5)):

Whether Nizami was born in Qom or in Ganja is not quite clear. The verse (quoted on p. 14): “I am lost as a pearl in the sea of Ganja, yet I am from the Qohestan of the city of Qom “, does not expressly mean that he was *born* in Qom. **On the other hand, Nizami's** mother was of Kurdish origin, and this might point to Ganja where the Kurdish dynasty of Shaddad ruled down to A.H. 468; even now Kurds are found to the south of Ganja.

Professor Julia Scott Meysami also states the same:

“His father, who had migrated to Ganja from Qom in north central Iran, may have been a civil servant; his mother was a daughter of a Kurdish chieftain; having lost both parents early in his life, Nizâmî was brought up by an uncle. He was married three times, and in his poems laments the death of each of his wives, as well as proffering advice to his son Muhammad.”

(Nizami Ganjavi, *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance*. Translated with introduction and notes by Julia Scott Meysami. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.)

We will discuss the Qom theory and his forefather in a later section. For now, this section is concerned with Nizami's mother.

Jan Rypka (Rypka, Jan. ‘Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods’, in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 5, The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed., Published January 1968. pg 578):

“As the scene of the greatest flowering of the panegyric qasida, southern Caucasia occupies a prominent place in New Persian literary history. Hakim Jamal al-din Abu Muhammad Ilyas b. Yusuf b. Zaki b. Mu'ayyad Nizami a native of Ganja in Azarbaijan, is an unrivalled master of thoughts and words, a poet whose freshness and vigour all the

succeeding centuries have been unable to dull. Little is known of his life, the only source being his own works, which in many cases provided no reliable information. We can only deduce that he was born between 535 and 540 (1140-46) and that his background was urban. Modern Azarbaijan is exceedingly proud of its world famous son and insists that he was not just a native of the region, but that he came from its own Turkic stock. At all events his mother was of Iranian origin, the poet himself calling her Ra'isa and describing her as Kurdish."

The late Professor Rypka does not get himself involved in the petty argument about the ethnicity of Nizami. He just mentions what is a well known fact that the poet's mother was of Kurdish background and of Iranian origin. Professor Rypka also uses the term "Modern Azerbaijan" which is a reference to the surge of popularity of Nizami in the Azerbaijan SSR during the Nezami celebration of the USSR. Another point made by Jan Rypka is about the forefathers of Nizami. These are: Nizami the son of Yusuf son of Zaki son of Mua'yyad.

From the above data, we clearly state that the mother of Nizami was a Kurd. This is shown in the following verses of his famous *Layli o Majnoon* where he alludes to the deceased past ones of his family. He mentions his father Yusuf the son of Zaki the son of Mua'yyad (some have read it as Yusuf the son of Zakkiyeh Mua'yyad), he mentions his Kurdish mother and finally he mentions his maternal uncle Khwaja Umar.

This is given as:

گر مادر من رئیسہ کرد
مادر صفتانہ پیش من مرد
از لابه گری کرا کنم یاد
تا پیش من آردش بہ فریاد
غم بیشتر از قیاس خورد است
گردابہ فزون ز قد مرد است
زان بیشتر است کاس این درد
کانرا بہ ہزار دم توان خورد
با این غم و درد بی کنارہ
داروی فرامشیست چارہ
ساقی پی بار گیم ریش است
می دہ کہ رہ رحیل پیش است
آن می کہ چو شور در سر آرد
از پای ہزار سر بر آرد

Furthermore, scholars know his name as Ilyas due to this verse which is also connected with his mother:

مادر که سپند، یار دادم
با درع سپندیار زادم
در خط نظامی ارزهی گام
بینی عدد هزار و یک نام
و الیاس کالف بری زنامش
هم «با»، نود و نه است نامش
زین گونه هزار و یک حصارم
با صد کم یک سلیح دارم

The first couplet clearly shows Nizami identifies with Iranian legends and cultural themes. We will delve fully into this later in this article. But, for example, the first two verses we translate as follows:

*My Mother who aided/protected me with Spand,
Gave birth to me with the armor of Spandyar*

He means that his mother, who used to burn the incense Spand for him, gave him birth with protected armor of the warrior Spandyar due to this Spand and blessing.

We note that one reason it is impossible to translate and explain Nizami from Persian to any other language is the way he has interwoven words and symbols of Iranian culture. It is very hard to translate the words Spand and Spandyar. Also the translation will not have the rhythmic nature of the verse. Finally words such as Spand and Spandyar are unfamiliar to those who are not familiar with Iranian civilization. They can be translated to for example Western cultural languages by transforming Spandyar to Achilles the Greek warrior.

It is worth explaining what Esfand and Esfandyar are just to demonstrate this subtle but very important point.

Esfand is Persian word and it goes back to old Iranian languages like Avesta. In Avesta, the word according to linguists means Pure and Holy. In Iranic cultures, Esfand is a seed that was burned as incense in order to keep the evil eye away. Usually mothers and grandmothers burn this seed in order to cast away the evil eye which according to traditions occurs due to envy and jealousy of others. This writer himself recalls many times that his Grandmother has burned this incense for this purpose. *Esfand* according to Professor Omidsalar was well known among the ancient Indo-Iranians. Dioscorides provides in the 1st century C.E. the earliest description of the plant; he further state:

“The practice of burning *esfand* seeds to avert the evil eye is widely attested in early classical Persian literature (e.g., Lazard, *Premiers poètes* II, p. 12; *Shahnama*, ed. Khaleghi, I, p.337; Farrokhi, p. 106). This practice may have been influenced by the association of *esfand* with *haoma* (q.v.), the sacred beverage of Zoroastrian lore (for argument in favor of such identification see Flattery and Schwartz). The continuity of Persian tradition has brought the ancient sacred plant into Islamic sources.”

(Omidshah, Mahmoud. "Esfand" in Encyclopedia Iranica
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v8f6/v8f615.html>)

Esfandiyar is a popular hero in Iranian literature and especially in the nationalistic Iranian/Persian epic of Shahnameh. Nizami Ganjavi was well familiar with Ferdowsi and Shahnameh (including the 1000 verses of Daqiqi included by Ferdowsi) and has praised Ferdowsi and has used the Shahnameh as one of his major sources. We shall write more about Ferdowsi/Shahnameh and Nizami's connection to it in a later section.

["Esfandiyar" in Encyclopedia Iranica by Professor Ehsan Yarshater
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v8f6/v8f616.html>]

In the Shahnameh, we read about Esfandiyar and his battle against Turks (in the Shahnameh, the ancient Iranian tribes of Tur/Turanians were taken in different places to be the same as Turks due to similar geographical designations). Esfandiyar fights on the behalf of Iran against the Turanian (also identified as Turks during the time of the Shahnameh) Arjasp.

Here is one comment from Esfandiyar from the story of the Shahnameh:

بخندید روشن دل اسفندیار
بدو گفت کای ترک ناسازگار
بینی تو فردا که با نره شیر
چگونه شوم من به جنگش دلیر

Again we read from Esfandiyar:

سر شاه ترکان از آن دیدگاه
بیندخت باید به پیش سپاه

Again about Esfandiyar after his battle with Turks:

ز ترکان چینی فراوان نماند
وگر ماند کس نام ایشان نخواند

Esfandiyar is a major hero in the Shahnameh who saves Iran from the invader Turks (although again it should be stressed that the Turanians mentioned in the Avesta were not Turks but were identified as Turks in the Shahnameh period due to similar geographical location and this is discussed in Appendix C). Throughout the Panj-Ganj of Nizami, we do not see one instance of heroes from Turkic (whether Oghuz or Qipchaq or Uyghur) mythology. From the evidence so far, Nizami Ganjavi's praise of Esfandiyar who has made some comments against Turks in the Shahnameh is an indication that he was not Turkic or at least he was totally immersed in Iranian culture such that he did not really recognize himself as a Turk. No one that knows the Shahnameh well and considers himself a Turkic nationalist would be relating himself to Esfandiyar. We shall get back to this issue when we discuss Nizami's father and culture.

Nizami and his maternal uncle Khwaja Umar

Nizami writes about the passing away of his maternal uncle (*khaal* in Persian means maternal uncle and is used in Kurdish and this is another hint at Nezami's background since he uses this family term with regards to his maternal uncle) Khwaja Umar:

گر خواجه عمر که خال من بود
خالی شدنش وبال من بود
از تلخ گواری نواله ام
درنای گلو شکست ناله ام
می ترسم از این کبود زنجیر
کافغان کنم او شود گلوگیر
ساقی ز خم شراب خانه
پیش آرمی چو نار دانه
آن می که محیط بخش کشتست
همشیره شیره بهشتست

It is well known fact that Nizami was orphaned at an early age. According to Jerome Clinton and Kamran Talatoff:

“His father, Yusuf and mother, Rai'sa, died while he was still relatively young, but maternal uncle, Umar, assumed responsibility for him”.

(Talatoff K., Clinton J.W. “The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetortics”, NY, 2001.)

Thus if the above assertion of the authors are correct (Jan Rypka and Julia Meysami also states he was orphaned as an early age and so do other biographers of Nizami), then Nizami Ganjavi was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle. The verse about his father also points to the fact that he was orphaned early. Thus, even assuming the argument that his father was not Kurdish, he did not know his father well and was raised by a Kurdish maternal uncle. We shall show later that it was the case that Iranians usually married Iranians (like most people at that time), Shafi'ites usually married Shafi'ites (like most people at that time) and thus it is hard to imagine that unless Nezami's mother was a servant (which she was not given the fact that the maternal uncle takes care of Nezami and some have stated that Nezami's mother was of an important Kurdish clan due to the name Ra'isa being a title of a high women), his father would also be Iranian. We will delve into the issue of Nezami's father later since Nezami does not explicitly pronounce the background of his father as he does with his mother.

Nizami's Father

According to Jan Rypka, the background of Nizami Ganjavi was Urban. This would make sense given the fact that Nizami Ganjavi's writing is a product of sedentary culture

rather than one of nomadic culture. We have little information on Nizami Ganjavi's father and all that is left is given in the following verses:

گر شد پدرم به نسبت جد
یوسف پسر زکی مؤید

As Jan Rypka pointed out and most scholars concur with him, the father of Nizami Ganjavi was named Yusuf. His grandfather is named Zaki and finally his great grandfather is named Mu'ayyad.

This is all the information that Nizami Ganjavi has left for us on his father. Although it is not a whole lot of information, it can still provide us with a few clues.

First all the names are Arabic. This suggests that Nizami Ganjavi's father line was Muslim for at least three generations before Nizami Ganjavi. The second pointer is that there is no tribal designation in the name. That is when we consider the names/designations of Seljuqs, Ghaznavids, Ghezelbash Safavid tribes or even Turkic poets like Fizuli (reputedly from the Bayyat tribe for example which was an Oghuz tribe although some authors have mentioned Kurdish (see Kurds in Encyclopedia of Islam 2nd edition)), we see tribal names from the father-side. This corroborates with the evidence that Nizami Ganjavi was urban. Finally, since Nizami Ganjavi was orphaned early and lost his father, we can perhaps surmise that his father was at least 40 years old when Nizami Ganjavi was born. Thus we may assume that 1140 A.D. (approximately when Nizami Ganjavi was born), 1100 A.D. (when Yusuf was born), 1075 A.D. (when Zaki was born) and finally 1050 A.D. (when Mu'ayyad) was born. Noting the fact that there is an absence of tribal designation with regards to Nizami, we can perhaps assume that Nizami Ganjavi's father's family went back to Ganja (assuming it was originally from Ganja which again there is nothing to confirm this) to at least 1050 A.D. On the other hand, some manuscripts of Iqbal Nama (although not all of them) claim that Nizami Ganjavi's family goes back to the village of Ta, near Tafresh in Qom in Central Iran today. And other authors have made such a claim based on other verses outside of that one. We will look at this point later. For now, we can see that there is no evidence from the above verse that Nizami Ganjavi was Turkic. Indeed the Urban setting, the Muslim names, the lack of tribal designation points to non-nomadic cultures of Iranians before the Seljuq domination of Ganja in 1075 A.D. Before the Seljuq domination of Ganja, the area of Ganja was controlled by the Shaddadid Kurdish dynasty and it was their capital. We will briefly go over this point later in the article.

Either way, Nizami Ganjavi has not left us explicit statement about the ethnicity of his father as he has done with his mother. The point also is not important with regards to Nizami's culture as he was raised by his Kurdish mother's family and all of his works are in Persian. But the evidence points overwhelmingly to Iranic ethnicity and a clear Iranic culture as we will show later. Less likely, but possible is another local Muslim group (possibly Christian converts generations ago or even Arab migrants) origin who were Iranicized. Thus we will have to look at other indirect evidence to see if we can find anything conclusive about Nizami Ganjavi's father's background. This is the area where

many misinterpretations have taken place during the USSR era. The worst interpretation which is often repeated is that Nizami wanted to write the *Layli o Majnoon* in Turkish but was forced to write in Persian. This invalid claim will be discussed in its own section.

We note that some have even gone further and (as mentioned already) recently falsified the verse in 1980 about his father:

**پدر بر پدر مر مرا ترک بود
به فرزانی هر یکی گرگ بود**

The above verse, like much false information on Nizami Ganjavi, can be easily found in different nationalist websites although it was falsified in 1980. Its basic rhyme of Gurg/Gorg (Wolf) and Turk/Tork show its invalidity and the lack of knowledge of the nationalist person who forged it. Some nationalist groups have used this falsified verse in their article to claim that Nizami Ganjavi was of Turkic stock. Supposedly the Grey Wolf or Wolf is seen as wise creature in Turkic mythology. If that is the case, then one should look at actual and authentic verses of Nizami Ganjavi about Wolves which gives a totally opposite picture.

Here are some verses about Wolves by Nizami Ganjavi which depict wolves as stupid, vile character and bloodsucking creature! There is nothing about the wisdom (Farzanegi) of the Wolf in his poems. The wolf is considered a vile, savage and stupid creature whose stupidity makes him inferior to a fox. The wolf is also compared with evil people. For example:

از آن بر گرگ روبه راست شاهی
که روبه دام ببند گرگ ماهی.
یا:

به وقت زندگی رنجور حالیم
که با گرگان وحشی در جوالیم

یا:
پیامت بزرگست و نامت بزرگ
نهفته مکن شیر در چرم گرگ.

یا:
روباه ز گرگ بهره زان برد
کین رای بزرگ دارد آن خرد.
یا:

مردمانی بدند و بد گهرند
یوسفانی ز گرگ و سگ بترند.
یا:

پیامت بزرگست و نامت بزرگ
نهفته مکن شیر در چرم گرگ.

یا:
مردماني بدند و بد گوهرند
يوسفاني ز گرگ و سگ بترند
کرد گرگ را گرگ بند بايد
رقص روباه چند بايد کرد
خاكياني که زاده ز ميند
آدميند ددگاني به صورت
ددگان بر وفا نظر ننهند
حکم را جز تيغ سر ننهند
خوانده باشی ز درس غمزندگان
که سیاوش چه دید از ددگان

یا:
سوم موبد چنان زد داستان
که با گرگي گله راند شبانی
ربايد گوسفندي گرگ خونخوار
در آویزد شبان با او به پیکار
کشد گرگ از يکي سو تا تواند
ز ديگر سو شبان تا وارھاند
چو گرگ افزون بود در چاره سازی
شبان را کرد بايد خرقة بازی

Thus it is extremely unfortunate that someone in 1980 falsified such a verse. Unfortunately the above false verse as well as Turkish poems not belonging to Nizami Ganjavi are attributed to Nizami on the Internet and many susceptible readers will get false information if they use "Google" or other tools.

Dynasties before and during the era of Nizami

Pre-Islamic Iranic dynasties of Arran, Sherwan and Azerbaijan

Northern Iranian peoples such as the Scythians, Sarmatians, and Alans began to appear in the northern Caucasus in the 1st millennium, B.C.E. The Persians and Medes who settled in Iran could have come in large numbers through the Caucasus. But the first complete control of the Caucasus by an Iranic dynasty was that of the Achaemenids (although it is possible that the Medes expanded towards some portions of Caucasus but the evidence on the Median Empire is usually slim). Caucasia was under the control of the Achaemenid dynasty until the conquest of Alexander the Great. Afterwards, it came under the control of the Iranian Parthian dynasty. The Parthian influence in Caucasus can be ascertained

by the large number of Iranian loan-words in classical Armenian (Grabar). Also the Parthian language is considered by some linguists as a predecessor (or to have greatly influenced) Baluchi, Kurdish, Zazaki and some other Iranian languages.

Perhaps the greatest pre-Islamic dynasty that had tremendous influence in the area was the Sassanids. Indeed Nizami Ganjavi wrote three of his five jewels about ancient Persia (the *Eskandar-nama* being Persianized/Islamicized version of the story of Alexander). But the two Sassanid works of Nizami Ganjavi, the *Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw o Shirin* are considered his most important masterpieces. Both of these works have to do with Sassanid Kings. We shall see in the section on Qatran Tabrizi, that the Sassanids were praised widely by local poets. Also as will be noted, the Shirwanshah dynasty claimed descent from the Sassanids as did later Turkic dynasties that conquered Persia and became Persianate in culture and kingship.

Major cities and areas with Iranian names like Darband, Ganja, Sharwan, Beylekan (Paydaaregaan), Piruzpad (Armenian Partaw probably Islamicized to Barda') testify to the Iranian influence of the area. During the Sassanid era, large number of Iranians also settled in Caucasia and the Sassanids built walls and forts to protect the Caucasus from northern invaders.

We will here quote several scholars with regards to the Sassanid era.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica (Albania):

All along the Caspian coast the Sasanians built powerful defense works, enclosing the space between the mountain and the sea and designed essentially to bar the way to invaders from the north. Firstly, north of the Apsheron peninsula, the two parallel walls of Barmak rise up, 220 meters apart; these are known from the *Armenian Geography* of Pseudo-Moses (ed. Patkanian, St. Petersburg, 1877, pp. 30-31) by the name of Xorsbēm (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 274ff.). Next are the walls of Šervan (or Šabran), remarkable for their 30 km length (cf. Pakhomov, "Krupnejšie pamyatniki sasanidskogo stroitel'stva v Zakavkaz'e," *Problemy istorii material'noj kul'tury*, 1933/9-10, pp. 41-43 and fig.; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 269-71).

To the north of Samur a third line of defense works could be the wall referred to as Afzūt-Kavad in the *Armenian Geography* (p. 31) and thus have been built by Kavad (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 271-72). The most celebrated of these fortifications are those of Darband, which shut off the pass of Čor (2-3 km between the mountain and the sea).

The contribution of the Sasanians to the defense of this pass (mentioned in classical sources from the 1st century A.D.) covered a considerable area. Movsēs Kałankatuac'i (*History* 2.11, tr. p. 83) speaks of "magnificent walls built at great expense by the kings of Persia." Yazdegerd II undertook the construction of a mighty wall of unbaked brick mixed with straw which extended from the sea to the slopes of Darband (cf. A. A. Kudryavtsev, "O datirovke pervykh sasanidskikh ukreplenij v Derbente," *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1979/2, pp. 243ff.).

Kosrow II Anōširavan—and perhaps his father Kavad I before him—set himself to reinforce the existing works with a solid wall of stone provided with iron gates (on Darband, cf. Geiger and Kuhn, *Grundr. Ir. Phil.* II, pp. 535-36; Barthold, *EI*^I, pp. 940-45; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 274ff.). Twenty inscriptions dated 700, are found on the northern wall (cf. Pakhomov in *Izvestiya obshchestva obsledovaniya i izucheniya Azerbaïdzhana* 8/5, 1929, pp. 3-22; H. S. Nyberg, *ibid.*, pp. 23ff.; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 346-53). If this date is related to the Seleucid era, it should correspond to A.D. 386 (G. Gropp, “Die Derbent-Inschriften und das Adur Gušnasp,” *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg* I, Acta Iranica 4, Tehran and Liège, 1975, pp. 317ff.); but there are other, later datings (Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 350ff.; Gropp, “Derbent-Inschriften,” p. 317, n. 4; V. G. Lukonin in Kudryavtsev, “O datirovke,” pp. 256-57.)”

(Albania in Encyclopedia Iranica, M.L. Chaumont)

A more detailed article on the influence of Parthians and Sassanids is beyond the scope of this article. The reader is referred to Lang, David M. (1983), “Iran, Armenia and Georgia”, in Yarshater, Ehsan, Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 3.1, London: Cambridge UP, pp. 505-537 for a short survey.

Also available here:

[Iran, Armenia and Georgia](#)

Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 3, David M. Lang

Not only were Iranian settlements established during the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid era (and most of the Armenian dynasties had Iranian ancestry), but in the words of Professor Lang, cultural influences of Iran were also profound:

In other cultural spheres also, there was much mutual enrichment arising from contacts between Iran and the Caucasian nations during the Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian eras. One has only to think of the perpetuation of the ancient Iranian *gosdn* or minstrel in the Armenian *gusans* (Georgian, *mgosani*), who have continued to delight popular audiences right up to modern times, composing both music and poetic text as they went along. As early as the 5th century, the Armenian Catholicos St John (Hovhannes) Mandakuni composed a treatise, “On the Theatre and the Gusans”, a copy of which may be seen in the Matenadaran or National Manuscript Library in Erevan. Political relations between Iran and her Caucasian neighbours may not always have been cordial, but there is no doubt of the depth and extent of reciprocal influences in many spheres of art, literature and religion, as well as in social and political organization.”

It should be noted that occasional Iranic and Altaic nomads including the Khazars penetrated the Caucasus, but this does not equate to settlement in the area by the nomads. Much like for example the Bulgars had penetrated Thrace, Greece or etc. For example the Viking Rus penetrated in Barda’ and Shirwan around 1000 years ago, but they did not have permanent settlements.

Post-Islamic period, the Iranian Intermezzo before the Seljuqids

In this section we list some of the Iranian dynasties of the era when Nizami's great grandfather Mua'yyad lived. We also mention the dynasties who patronized Khurasani (Dari-Persian) poetry including Shaddadids, Rawwadids and Shirwanshahs. Iranian dynasties predominated in what is known as the "Iranian Intermezzo", a period after the Arab conquest which ended with Seljuq conquest. The study of these Iranian and Iranicized dynasties is important since they promoted Khurasani Persian (Dari-Persian) poets and were patrons of Iranian culture.

Vladimir Minorsky in one of his seminal works "Studies of Caucasian History" writes:

THE IRANIAN INTERMEZZO

It is still insufficiently realised that the so-called Persian Renaissance in Khorasan had a momentous sequel in Central and Western Persia and in Armenia. By the beginning of the 10th century a great Iranian movement came from the Caspian provinces. At the head of the hosts of Gilan and Daylam, a new set of rulers ousted the Arabs from their last positions held in Iran, and round this new power a fringe of other small principalities was created in the farther west of the Iranian territories.

Even when the Arabs adopted the system of indirect control of Armenia through the agency of the Bagratid princes (A.D. 806-1045) to the east of this autonomous area they retained the system of direct rule in Azarbayjan and Arran. To some extent this policy was dictated by the great rebellion of Babak (201-23/816-37) in the eastern part of Azarbayjan. Babak was captured and executed but there remained a number of important problems, political, social and national, as between the Arab conquerors and the local populations, such as the Armenians.

The grip of the Abbasids was gradually weakening as shown by the centrifugal developments in the family of the last energetic rulers appointed from Baghdad, the Sajids. I Muhammad b. Devdad (276-88/889-91) and especially Yusuf b. Devdad (appointed in 296/908) were powerful rulers and a formidable check on Armenia. However, soon after 299/911 Yusuf showed signs of disobedience. He revolted openly in 305/917. In June 919 he was captured by the Caliph's troops and for three years remained in disgrace. He was re-instated in 310/923 but this time (down to 313/925) his attention was absorbed by affairs in Central Persia (Rayy, Hamadan). In 314/926-7 he received an assignment against the Qarmatians and on 7 December 927 lost his life fighting these dissenters. Practically the beginning of a new era in Azarbayjan can be dated from Yusuf's disgrace. The stage vacated by the Arabs was occupied by local Iranian elements, the Daylamites and the Kurds.

The rise of the DAYLAMITE Highlanders, inhabitants of the small and poor area above Gilan, reminds one of the expansion of the Northmen in Europe. In point of fact the Daylamites had an old dynasty of kings ("the family of JUSTAN") who ruled on the Shahrud, i.e., on the river which flows from the East and joins the Safid-rud near Manjil. The MUSAFIRIDS, or Kangarids, whose centre was Tarom were linked by marriage ties with the Justanids but were a family apart. It must not be forgotten that the more

important Daylamite princes, the BUYIDS were upstarts who, with a crowd of other adventurers from Gilan and Daylam, appeared on the stage towards 308/ 920.2 By 323/935 the sons of the Daylamite Buya were masters of Isfahan and Rayy. On 17 January 946 Baghdad was theirs, and for a century the orthodox caliphs became puppets in the hands of these heterodox usurpers.

The rise of the Buyids did not directly affect the northwestern corner of Iran. Apart from a few expeditions into eastern Azarbayjan, the Buyids did not interfere with the affairs of this region. But the impulse given by them resulted in the rise of a number of local Iranian dynasties, partly Daylamite and partly Kurdish, both in Azarbayjan and in the adjoining regions of Transcaucasia and Armenia.

Thanks to the publication of Miskawayh's excellent *Tajarib al-Umam* we now know much better the events in the lands between the Buyids' territories and Armenia, i.e., in the area under our consideration.

The original sedentary population of Azarbayjan consisted of a mass of peasants and at the time of the Arab conquest was comprised under the semi-contemptuous term of uluj ("non-Arabs")—somewhat similar to the raya (*ri'aya) of the Ottoman Empire. The only arms of this peaceful rustic population were slings, see Tabari, III, 1379-89. They spoke a number of dialects (Adhari, Talishi) of which even now there remain some islets surviving amidst the Turkish speaking population.

It was this basic population on which Babak leaned in his revolt against the caliphate. After the collapse of the Arabs and their Turkish generals, the same population came under the sway of the warlike Iranian clans and families. Despite their languages belonging to the common Iranian stock, the new masters, DAYLAMITES and KURDS, differed among themselves to a considerable extent. The Daylamites belonged to a particular blend of Caspian tribes, spoke a Caspian dialect, were attached to the Shia, were recognisable by their hirsute appearance and fought on foot, their arms being javelins (zhupiri) and huge shields. The basic haunts of the Kurds lay to the south of Armenia. They spoke a more isolated Iranian language, they professed the Sunna (or the Kharijite doctrine) and they were horsemen. At a very early date the Kurds penetrated into Western Azarbayjan and even crossed the Araxes (see below, p. 123). There seems to have been a feeling that the Kurds, more permanently established in Azarbayjan, protected it against the later invaders from the Caspian provinces.

After the fall of the Sajids their former general DAYSAM ibn IBRAHIM struggled for supremacy in Azarbayjan during some eighteen years (327-45/938-56) with interruptions. He was a Kharijite born of an Arab father and a Kurdish mother, and his fighting force consisted chiefly of Kurds.

Daysam's first opponent was LASHKARI b. MARDI, a native of Gilan supported by his countryman and former master, the Ziyarid Vushmagir ("the Quail-catcher"). His conquest of Azarbayjan in 326/937 was a short-lived episode (LA., VIII, 261). Much more important was the expansion of the MUSAFIRIDS. As already mentioned, this Daylamite house, whose home was in Tarom, south of Ardabil, was independent both of the Justanids and of the Buyids; its main operational axis was in the northerly and westerly directions, Under Marzuban b. Muhammad b. Musafir, surnamed Sallar (330-46/941-57) the Musafirids expanded not only over the whole of Azarbayjan and up the

Araxes valley, but even into the eastern part of Transcaucasia (Arran, Sharvan) and up to the Caucasian range. Both the Armenian royal houses, the Bagratids and the Artsruni were their tributaries.

When after Marzuban's death (346/957) quarrels arose among his successors, the dominions of the Musafirids shrunk to the area near their original home in Tarom, while new masters appeared in Western Azarbayjan, namely the family of RAWWAD. Its eponym, Rawwad, was an Arab of the Azd tribe first mentioned towards 200/815 as a semi-independent ruler of Tabriz. After nearly two centuries of new occupations and invasions, we hear again of the masters of Tabriz and Maragha bearing Iranian names (Vahsudan, Mamlan, Ahmadi) but considered as descendants of a Rawwad. I have little doubt that these new rulers were scions of the same old family although this time their family name, al-Rawwadi, is sometimes followed by a further qualification al-Kurdi. Kasravi thought it preferable to distinguish between the old Arab Rawwadi and the later Iranian Rawwadi, and occasionally I make use of this suggestion. It would be only too natural for the Arabs stranded in Azarbayjan to have intermarried with local elements so that the term al-Rawwadi al-Azdi lost all practical meaning and had to be replaced by al-Rawwadi al-Kurdi.

There are numerous examples of similar denationalisation among the chiefs of Kurdish tribes. Between the two spells of Rawwadi domination in Tabriz lies a period (struggles with Babak, Sajid rule) when we hear nothing of the family's presence in that fief. Then suddenly in the list of Marzuban's tributaries (A.D. 955) we find an Abul-Hayja b. Rawwad as lord of Ahar and Varzuqan. In this case "Rawwad" is not necessarily the father's name, but more probably only the designation of the family. The two points mentioned by I. Hauqal lie north-east of Tabriz. The identity of the earlier and later Rawwadis appears also from the fact that, according to Ya'qubi's History, p. 446-7, Yazid al-Muhallabi, the governor of Azarbayjan on behalf of Abu-Jaafar (754-75) allotted to Rawwad b. al-Muthanna al-Azdi a fief stretching from Tabriz down to al-Badhhdh (later Babak's stronghold). The possessions of the later Rawwadis (Tabriz-Ahar) lay precisely along this line.

Very unfortunately, the History of Azarbayjan, written by one of the family, Abul-Hayja al-Rawwadi is now lost. It would have been useful to fill the gap between 369/979, the year in which Miskawayh ends, and 420/1029, when Ibn al-Athir takes up the thread of events in Azarbayjan.

While the Rawwadis were controlling Azarbayjan, another Kurdish dynasty issued from a SHADDAD sprang up in the part of Marzuban's dominions which lay to the north of the Araxes. We have spoken of the Shaddadids in great detail and at this place we need only stress for memory the fact of their domination in Dvin and their close association with the Ayyubids. We shall have further occasion to explain how the roots of Saladin's family go back to the Iranian intermezzo.

Similarly in another seminal work titled "*A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th-11th Centuries*", Minorsky provides a description of the Iranian dynasties that controlled the area of the Ganja before the Seljuqids. Furthermore, Minorsky describes various Iranian tribes including Kurds and Daylamites who controlled the region after the Arab conquest of the region.

The Albanians

Our oldest information on Eastern Transcaucasia is based on the reports of the writers who accompanied Pompey on his expedition in 66 B.C. In Greek and Latin, the alluvial plain of the lower Kur and Araxes extending between Iveria (Georgia) and the Caspian sea was called Albania. The Armenian equivalent of this name is Alvank* or Ran, in Syriac Arran (pseudo-Zacharia Rhetor, XII, ch. 7)—from which the Islamic sources derived their al-Ran, or Arran.

According to Strabo, XI, 4, I-8, the soil of Albania was fertile and produced every kind of fruit, but the Albanians were inclined to the shepherd's life and hunting. The inhabitants were unusually handsome and tall, frank in their dealings and not mercenary. They could equip 60,000 infantrymen and 22,000 horsemen. The Albanians had twenty-six languages and formed several federations under their kings but "now one king rules all the tribes". The western neighbours of the Albanians were the Iberians (Iberia being the ancient name of Georgia) and the Armenians. Caspia (probably the region near Baylaqan) also belonged to Albania.

According to Ptolemy, V, 11, Albania comprised not only the above-mentioned territories of Transcaucasia but extended north-east to comprise the whole of the region now called Daghestan along the Caspian coast.

One must bear in mind the distinction between the areas occupied by the tribes of Albanian origin and the territories actually controlled by the Albanian kings. The Armenians considerably curtailed the Albanian territories to the south of the Kur and Armenicised them. Only after the division of Armenia between Greece and Persia in 387 did the provinces of Uti and Artsakh (lying south of the Kur) fall again to the lot of the Albanian ruler. The earlier capital of Albania seems to have lain north of this river, whereas the later capital Perozapat (Partav, Barda'a) was built by the Albanian Vach'e only under the Sasanian king Peroz (457-84).

In the words of Marquart, Eranshahr, 117, Albania was essentially a non-Aryan country ("eminent unarisches Land"). In the fifth century A.D. one of the languages of Albania (that of the Gargars near Partav) was reduced to writing by the Armenian clergy who had converted the Albanians to Christianity in its Armenian form. According to Moses of Khoren, III, ch. 54, this Albanian language was "guttural, rude, barbaric and generally uncouth". The forgotten alphabet, the table of which was found by the Georgian Prof. Shanidze in 1938, consisted of fifty-two characters reflecting the wealth of Albanian phonetics. The Arab geographers of the tenth century still refer to the "Raman" language as spoken in Barda'a. At present, the language of the Udi, surviving in two villages of Shakki, is considered as the last offshoot of Albanian. Living as they did on open plains, the Albanians were accessible to the penetration of their neighbors and, at an early date, lived in a state of dependence on the Persian Empire and the Armenians. In 359 the Albanian king Urnayr took part in the siege of Amid by the Sasanian Shapur II. In 461 the rebel king Vach'e lost his throne and the country was apparently taken over by the direct Persian administration. Even under the Sasanians Sharvan, Layzan and other

principalities of the northern bank of the Kur were completely separated from Arran. Towards the end of the sixth century a new dynasty, issued from a Mihran sprang up in Arran and was soon converted to Christianity.

Though the names of the kings are recorded in the local history of Moses Kalankatvats'i, III, ch. 19 and 22, the facts about them are fragmentary and confused. We must await the publication of the new translation by C. Dowsett. Albania suffered particularly from the invasions from Northern Caucasus, first of the "Huns" and then of the Khazars (see below p. 105).

Arran surrendered by capitulation to Salman b. Rabra al-Bahili in the days of 'Othman, see Baladhuri, 203, but the presence of the Arab amirs did not do away with the feudal rights of the local princes. The fact that the Mihranid Varaz-Trdat, who died in A.D. 705, paid yearly tribute simultaneously to the Khazars, the Arabs and the Greeks (Moses Kal., III, ch. 12), shows how uncertain the situation remained on the eve of the eighth century. The authority of the "kings" of Arran was restricted to local affairs and was mainly reduced to the southern bank of the Kur. We know, for example, that when Sa'id b. Salim (*Salm) was appointed to Armenia by Harun al-Rashid (ci Ya'qubi, II, 518), the town of Shamakhiya was founded by Shamakh b. Shuja whom Baladhuri, 210, calls "king (malik) of Sharvan". Consequently Sharvan on the northern bank remained outside the administrative purview of Arran.

The revolt of Babak (210-22/816-37) greatly disorganised the Arab administration, and, under the cover thereof, a significant change took place in Arran. The last Mihranid Varaz-Trdat II was murdered in A.D. 822. His title Eranshahik was picked up by the prince of Shakki Sahl b. Sunbat. In 853 many Armenian and Albanian princes were deported to Mesopotamia and this secured a firmer basis for the domination of the new Islamic dynasties. After the liquidation of the Sajids (circa 317/929) the system of direct appointments by the caliph collapsed and gave way to the hereditary domination of Muslim houses: the (Hashimids of Darband, Musafirids of Azarbayjan, Yazidids of Sharvan and Shaddadids of Ganja).

b. Iranian penetration

As we have seen, the original population of Arran belonged to a special group unrelated to any of its great neighbours. However, the Persians penetrated into this region at a very early date in connection with the need to defend the northern frontier of the Iranian empire. Possibly already under the Achaemenids some measures were taken to protect the Caucasian passes against the invaders, but the memory of the fortification of the most important of them, Darband (in Armenian Ch'or, in Arabic al-Sul, but usually al-Bab) and of a series of "gates"* (i.e. fortified passes), is traditionally connected with the names of the Sasanian kings Kavut (in Arabic: Qubadh b. Firuz, A.D. 488-531) and his famous son Khusrau (Chosroes, Kisra) Anushirvan (A.D. 531-79). A brief account of these works will be found on p. 86. Apart from such feats of military engineering, the Sasanians strove to reinforce their northern frontier by organising vassal principalities of local tribes and by settling in its neighbourhood large numbers of their subjects, chiefly from the

Caspian provinces. The titles Tabarsaran-shah, Khursan-shah, Vardan-shah, “the Lord of the Throne”(sarir), etc., found in Muslim historians (cf. Baladhuri, 207), refer to the first class of indigenous vassals, though even in this case some tribal names may have in view not the aboriginal inhabitants but the aristocracy of outsiders superimposed upon them. It is curious that the grandfather of Mardavij (the founder of the Ziyarid dynasty and a native of Gilan) bore the name (title?) of Vardan-shah, which points to the existence of a Vardan tribe or family.

The presence of Iranian settlers in Transcaucasia, and especially in the proximity of the passes, must have played an important role in absorbing and pushing back the aboriginal inhabitants. Such names as Sharvan, Layzan, Baylaqan, etc., suggest that the Iranian immigration proceeded chiefly from Gilan and other regions on the southern coast of the Caspian. In fact even in Roman times the presence of Daylamite mercenaries is attested as far as Pegamum in Asia Minor, and in the tenth century A.D. Daylam (i.e. the hilly part of Gilan, lacking fertility) became the prodigious reservoir of man-power from which the greater part of Persia and a considerable part of Mesopotamia, including Baghdad, were conquered.

The most obvious of the Gilanian names in the region interesting us is Layzan, now Lahlj, which is definitely connected with the homonymous Lahijan in Gilan, see Hudud al’Alam, p. 407.1 Similarly Baylaqan (probably *Bel-akan) is to be linked up with Baylaman in Gilan (Bel-man “home of the Bel-s”), see Muqaddasi, 372-3, etc. Sharvan itself (“place of the Shar-s”, Gurji-van, Kurdi-van in the same neighbourhood) must belong to the same series. Ibn Khurdadhbih, 118, and Ibn al-Faqih, 303, refer to a town in the district of Ruyan (between Gilan and Tabaristan, see E.I) called al-Shirriz, which may have been the metropolis of the contingent transplanted to Sharvan. According to Tabari III, 1014, Lariz and Shirriz, which his grandfather conquered, belonged to Daylam.

c. Christian elements and influences

Of great importance in the life of the area under our consideration were the Armenians who after 190 B.C. incorporated the territory of Siunik’(also called Sisakan) 5 and other districts in the highlands near Lake Sevan, and played a conspicuous part in the affairs of the region lying between the Kur and the Araxes, and even north of the Kur (in Shakki). After A.D. 387 these provinces were lost by the Armenians, but we have seen that the conversion of the Albanians to Christianity and the endowing of the Albanians with an alphabet were the work of the Armenians. Armenian settlers and cultural elements contributed to the further absorption of the Albanian nation. The Albanian and Armenian nobility freely intermarried, with the result that there appeared a mixed class of Albano-Armenian aristocracy. The later Armenian kingdoms of Ani and Vaspurakan had little influence in Eastern Transcaucasia but the petty Armenian rulers of Siunik* and Artsakh (south of Barda’a) played a considerable role in the affairs of Albania.

The other Christian neighbours of Albania, the Georgians, had to a large extent succeeded in preserving their statehood, but their attempts at expansion were noticeable chiefly along the northerly line Kakhétia-Shakki. This latter territory (Shakki), situated to

the north of the Kur, had a dynasty of its own, which in the ninth century played some role in the affairs of Arran, see below, p. 83.

The Georgians professed Byzantine Christianity and consequently were opposed to the Armeno-Albanian Monophysitism. Attempts to introduce the Greek (Chalcedonian) creed in Albania met with opposition. When the wife of Varaz-Trdat (d. in 715), with the help of the bishop of Gardaman, took steps in that direction, the Monophysite clergy rose against them and even invoked the help of the caliph *Abd al-Malik (d. in 86/705).² On the other hand, politically the Greek Empire had much to attract the Albanians, hard pressed as they were by their non-Christian neighbours. Though at the time of the arrival of Emperor Heraclius in 624 the Albanian prince did not join him, for fear of the Persians (cf. Moses Kalan., II, ch. 11), local historians on several occasions record - the close relations of the Albanians with the Byzantine empire to which they even paid tribute.

d. Northern invaders

The question of the ancient invasions into Eastern Transcaucasia from the North cannot be adequately treated in this place. We know that the Alans and other Caucasian highlanders were an essential part of the forces at the disposal of the Armenian Arshakid Sanesan who carved out for himself a kingdom north of the Kur in the neighbourhood of the Caspian (in the region later called Masqat) and opposed his brother (or relative) King Khosrov II of Armenia (316-25).

The most important invaders from the northern Caucasus were the Khazars, a people probably belonging to a particular group of Turks, and at all events including a considerable number of other Turkish tribes. During Heraclius's struggle with Khusrau Parviz of Persia the Khazars acted as the allies of the Byzantine emperor, and in 626 Heraclius met Ziebel (Silzibil?), the nephew of the Khaqan, under the walls of the besieged Tiflis. The Byzantines did not expand their dominions in Transcaucasia which remained at the mercy of the Khazars till the arrival of the Arabs. Baladhuri, 194, who confirms this situation, speaks particularly of Qabala (east of Shakki) as belonging, or being occupied, by the Khazars (wa hiya Khazar). Some peaceful Khazars were brought to Shamkur in 240/854, see Baladhuri, 203. A party of Khazars was settled by Marwan b. Muhammad between the Samur and Shabaran. The devastating Khazar inroads under the caliphs Hisham {circa 112/730} and Harun al-Rashid in 183/799, see Tabari, II/3, 1530 and III, 648, must have also increased the number of Khazars in Transcaucasia.

[We are far from having exhausted the list of northern invasions in Transcaucasia which must have left settlements in various parts of the country. In their rush towards Armenia and Asia Minor the Cimmerians may have left traces of their infiltrations. About the middle of the seventh century B.C. they were followed by the Scythians (Saka), one of whose centres must have been the province EaKaorpty) (Strabo, XI.8.4-5), irregularly called in Arranian Shaka-shen (the first sh may have been influenced by the following -shen, or by the aberrant Armenian pronunciation (Adonts). The most curious perhaps was the arrival in the middle of the seventh century A.D. of a group of Hungarians who

became settled west of Ganja near Shamkhor (Shamkur), see below p. 164, n. 6.] [Note Minorsky is talking about the Sabartians or Armenian Sawardiya].

e. The Arabs

The facts concerning the Muslim occupation of Transcaucasia will be dealt with in the commentary on our text and here we can add only a few general remarks.

Islamic geographers use the term al-Ran (*Arran) somewhat conventionally. A detailed definition of its territory is found in Muqaddasi, 374, who describes it as an “island” between the Caspian Sea and the rivers Araxes and Kur, but among its towns mentions both Tiflis and al-Bab, as well as the towns of Sharvan. Ibn-Hauqal, 251, uses the term “the two Arrans” apparently for the northern and the southern banks of the Kur. In practice, during the period which specially interests us (circa A.D. 950-1050), three main territories were clearly distinguished: Arran to the south of the Kur, Sharvan to the north of this river, and al-Bab, i.e. the town of Darband and its dependencies. On the lesser and intermediate areas see below PP. 77. 83.

Partav (of which Arabic Bardhaca, later Barda’ a and Barda* is only a popular etymology, “a pack-saddle of an ass”) was occupied in the days of Othman by capitulation. Although the local princes retained their lands, Bardafa, the capital of Arran, became the spearhead and the centre of the Arab administration. Arab geographers praise its site, its extensive gardens and its abundance of various fruits.

Among the titles which the Sasanian Ardashir conferred on local rulers Ibn Khurdadhbih, 17, quotes Shirian-shah or Shiran-shah, which is probably a magnified honorific of the Sharvan-shah. The ruler bearing this title submitted to Salman b. Rabi’ a in the caliphate of Othman, Baladhuri, 209. The building of the important centre Shamakhiya (Shamakhi) is attributed by the same author to al-Shamakh b. Shuja* (see above p. 13).

The earliest Muslim reference to a native of al-Bab is found under the year 15/636: a certain dihqan of al-Bab called Shahriyar, whose corpulence (“like a camel”) struck the imagination of the Arabs, commanded a detachment of the Sasanian army and was killed in single combat with an Arab at Kutha, near al-Mada’in, see Tabari I, 2421-2. When the Arabs reached al-Bab (in the year. 22/643) its governor on behalf of Yazdajird III was Shahr-Baraz - a relative of his famous namesake who conquered Jerusalem in 614 and for a few months ascended the throne of the Chosroes. This governor submitted to Suraqa b. ‘Amr.

After the conquest, al-Bab became the base of Arab operations against their great north-eastern enemy, the Khazars, who thwarted their plans of expansion into Eastern Europe.² Many famous Umayyad generals, such as Maslama b. Abd al-Malik and the future caliph Marwan b. Muhammad, won their laurels on the Khazar front, and a considerable number of Arab warriors and settlers were introduced into Eastern Transcaucasia and especially into Darband, just as Khazar prisoners and settlers appeared in Transcaucasia (see above p. 17).

With the advent of the Abbasids, the grip of the caliphs on the Caucasian frontier gradually weakened and our source dates the decay from the time of al-Mutawakkil (232-47/847-61). In 238/852 the expedition of Bugha al-Kabir sent by the caliph liquidated the amir of Tiflis, Ishaq b. Isma'il (of Umayyad parentage), who entertained close relations with his non-Muslim neighbours and whose wife was a daughter of the ruler of al-Sarir.² After Ishaq's death, Bugha attacked Ishaq's allies (the Sanar mountaineers) who inflicted a heavy defeat upon him. However, in the following years (852-5) Bugha dealt severely with the Armenian and Albanian princes, many of whom, with their families, were deported to Mesopotamia. Though, on the whole, his campaigns were tactically successful, the local life was thoroughly disorganised, and when the caliph's attention was absorbed by the war with the Byzantines, the central government's hold on Transcaucasia loosened. The foundation (or restoration) of Ganja by the Yazidid Muhammad, in 245/859, was the first symptom of the self-determination of a local governor. A parallel development in al-Bab was the advent to power of the Hashimids in 255/869. Under the Sajids, and especially under Yusuf ibn Abil-Saj (288-315/901-28), an attempt was made to resume the tradition of energetic policy in Armenia and Transcaucasia, but with Yusuf's death the Yazidids and the Hashimids restored their de facto independence.

In the beginning of the tenth century the great movement of Iranian tribes (Daylamites and Kurds) withdrew from the caliph's control the whole of the western half of Iran. The Daylamite Musafirids who seized Azarbaijan successfully extended their rule into Transcaucasia up to al-Bab but only for a short time. In 360/970 the Kurdish Shaddadids ousted the Musafirids from Arran, and thus Eastern Transcaucasia became divided into three autonomous Muslim principalities:

The Arab Hashimids (of the Sulaym tribe) of al-Bab, who became strongly mixed with local Daghestanian influences and interests;

The Arab Yazidids (of the Shayban tribe) of Sharvan, who gradually became integrated in the local Iranian tradition;

The Kurdish Shaddadids of Arran.

For this period of local awakening, which forms a kind of interlude between the Arab dominion and the Turkish conquest, our History of al-Bab is a source of outstanding importance.

The three dynasties of Shaddadids, Rawwadids and Shirwanshahs deserve a closer examination. All three dynasties were either Iranian or Iranicized and controlled the areas of Azerbaijan, Ganja in Arran and Shirwan before the Seljuq incursion and subsequent gradual Turkification of the region. The Shirwanshah maintained control of Shirwan even after the Seljuq invasion. Sometimes, they were vassal kingdoms and other times they ruled virtually as independent ruler. The duration of this dynasty was the longest or one of the longest in the Islamic World. Also assuming Nizami Ganjavi's

ancestors were from the region of Ganja, then his ancestry through his great grandfather Mu'ayyad goes back to this pre-Seljuqid era.

The Rawwadids who patronized Persian poets such as Qatran Tabrizi were in the 10th century accounted as Kurdish. But in reality, according to many experts (Minorsky, Bosworth), the family was probably of Arabic origin, from the Yemeni tribe of Yazd, but became Iranicized with such Kurdish names “Mamlan” and “Ahmadil” being characteristic Kurdish versions of the familiar Arabic names “Muhammad” and “Ahmad”. The Rawwadids rulers between a period of early fourth century to approximately 951-1071 A.D. when the Seljuqs gained control of Azerbaijan. Their center was Tabriz and a good deal of information about them is actually derived from the Diwan of the Persian poet Qatran Tabrizi. Prior to their submission in 1054 to Seljuq rule, and the subsequent Seljuq control of Azerbaijan in 1071, an important Oghuz Turkmen incursion from the Ghaznavid realm occurred around 1020-1030. The details of this incursion are given in Ibn Athir, the Diwan of Qatran Tabrizi and Ahmad Kasravi's “*Shahryaran Gomnam*”. Later in this article, we shall look at how Qatran Tabrizi viewed this event. But Wahsudan b. Mamlan with the help of Kurdish neighbors and allies was successful in coping with this incursion and were able to get rid of the chiefs of the Ghuzz tribes and driving off the invaders from Azerbaijan and the Caucasus. So in short the Rawwadids lost control of Azerbaijan until Alp Arsalan returned from his Anatolian campaigns and deposed Mamlan II. B. Wahsudan. But one later member of the family is known as Ahmadil of Maragha, and his name was perpetuated in the twelfth by a line of his Turkish Ghulams (servants), called after him the Ahmadilis (historians have called this dynasty the Atabekan-e-Maragha (feudal-lords of Maragha)).

The Shaddadids were another Kurdish dynasty who ruled Arran and eastern Armenia. In particular, they ruled Ganja up to the year 1075 A.D. when the Seljuq commander Sawtigin took control of the area. Qatran Tabrizi was also a court poet of the Shaddadids and in particular has praised the ruler Ali Lashkari among others. The Shaddadids submitted to the Seljuq Toghril Beg when he first appeared in the Transcaucasia region, but in 1075 A.D., Alp Arsalan's general Sawtigin invaded Arran and forced Fadlun to yield his ancestral territory (including Ganja). Ganja was the main capital of Shaddadids and the Kurdish ancestry of Nizami Ganjavi might possibly be due to the Kurdish settlements in and around Ganja. A line of Shaddadids did survive in Ani, capital of the Armenian Bagratids and ruled from 1072 to 1174.

The Shirwanshahs were a dynasty of mixed Arab and Iranian origin that were thoroughly Persian in culture and language at the time of Nizami Ganjavi. They claimed Sassanid descendant and are also called Kisranids (meaning related to Kisra=Sassanids). According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, the title of Shirwanshah might well go back to Sassanid times. The father line of these Shahs goes all the way back to Yazid b. Mazyad al-Shayabani, governor of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Arran, Sharwan and Darband under the Abbasids. Well before the 10th century, these Shahs were profoundly Iranicized and in fact claimed descent from Bahram Gur. They are praised for their Sassanid ancestry by Nizami Ganjavi and Khaqani Shirwani. Nizami Ganjavi devoted his *Layli o Majnoon* to the Shirwanshah Akhsitan the son of Manuchehr (whose name according to Minorsky

could possibly be Ossetic). The Shirwanshahs not only survived the Seljuq invasion, but they also survived the subsequent Khwarazmian, Mongol, and Turkmen invasions and their rule ended around 1607 A.D. during the Safavid era. They are well known for their patronization of Persian culture and language. The introduction of *Layli o Majnoon* was misinterpreted during the USSR era in order to claim Turkic descent for Nizami Ganjavi. We shall address this issue in a later section. As will be touched upon later, Nizami Ganjavi entrusted his son to the son of Akhsitan.

Overall, the Iranian nomadic incursions (Scythians, Cimmerians...) and the subsequent Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, Sassanids and the subsequent Musafarids, Shaddadid and Shirwanshahs brought strong Iranicization to the region of Arran (and Shirwan) and many Iranian toponyms for the major cities of the region, as well as fire temples, also attest to this fact.

Also many local Iranian dynasties like the Mihranid and various Armenian dynasties were of Iranian (Parthian/Middle Persian speaking) origin. The name Ganja, which could date back to the Sassanid era (See "Ganja" in Encyclopedia Iranica by C.E. Bosworth) and other Iranian names (Darband, Piruzpat, Sharwan...) are testament to these settlements. A testament to the Sassanid influence is given by the fact that Nizami Ganjavi chose the two most important work of his (*Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw o Shirin*) based on his own free will. Besides Nizami Ganjavi, Khaqani Shirwani and Qatran Tabrizi, as well many other poets from the region have praised the Sassanid dynasty, which shows its lasting influence on the region's culture, despite its demise 500 year prior to Khaqani and Nezami. We shall mention this briefly when we discuss Qatran Tabrizi.

Seljuqid Empire and subsequent local Atabak dynasties

The rise of the Seljuq Empire had a significant social and political effect in the Islamic world and beyond. We will briefly touch upon the most salient aspects of this empire. For more detailed information, the reader is referred to Encyclopedia of Islam (Saldjukids) and Cambridge history of Iran.

According to Professor Ehsan Yarshater ("*Iran*" in Encyclopedia Iranica):

A Turkic nomadic people called Oghuz (Ghozz in Arabic and Persian sources) began to penetrate into the regions south of Oxus during the early Ghaznavid period. Their settlement in Khorasan led to confrontation with the Ghaznavid Masud, who could not stop their advance. They were led by the brothers Tögröl, Čaghri, and Yinal, the grandsons of Saljuq, whose clan had assumed the leadership of the incomers.

Tögröl, an able general, who proclaimed himself Sultan in 1038, began a systematic conquest of the various provinces of Persia and Transoxiana, wrenching Chorasmia from its Ghaznavid governor and securing the submission of the Ziyrids in Gorgan. The Saljuqids, who had championed the cause of Sunnite Islam, thereby ingratiating themselves with the orthodox Muslims, were able to defeat the Deylamite Kakuyids,

capturing Ray, Qazvin, and Hamadan, and bringing down the Kurdish rulers of the Jebel and advancing as far west as Holwan and Kanaqayn. A series of back and forth battles with the Buyids and rulers of Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia ensued; and, although the Saljuqids occasionally suffered reverses, in the end their ambition, tenacity, and ruthlessness secured for them all of Persia and Caucasus. By the time Tögröl triumphantly entered Baghdad on 18 December 1055, he was the master of nearly all of the lands of Sasanian Iran. He had his title of Sultan confirmed by the caliph, and he now became the caliph's protector, freeing the caliphate from the bond of Shiite Buyids.

After nearly 200 years since the rise of the Saffarids in 861, this was the first time that all of Persia and its dependencies came under a single and powerful rule which did not dissipate and disband after a single generation. Tögröl (1040-63) was followed by his nephew Alp Arslan (q.v.; 1063-73). He was a warrior king. In his lifetime the realm of the Saljuqids was extended from the Jaxartes in the east to the shores of the Black Sea in the west. He captured Kottalan in the upper Oxus valley, conquered Abkhazia, and made Georgia a tributary, and he secured Tokharestan and Čaghanian in the east. In 1069 he crowned his triumphs with his defeat of the eastern Roman emperor, Romanos Diogenes, by sheer bravery and skillful planning; after extracting a huge tribute of 1,500,000 dinars he signed a peace treaty with the emperor for 50 years. This victory ended the influence of Byzantine emperors in Armenia and the rest of Caucasus and Azerbaijan, and spread the fame of the Saljuqid king in the Muslim world.

Alp Arslan was succeeded by his son Malekšah (1073-92). Both were capable rulers who were served by the illustrious vizier Nezam-al-molk (d. 1092). Their rule brought peace and prosperity to a country torn for more than two centuries by the ravages of military claimants of different stripes. Military commands remained in the hands of the Turkish generals, while administration was carried out by Persians, a pattern that continued for many centuries. Under Malekšah the Saljuqid power was honored, through a number of successful campaigns, as far north as Kashgar and Khotan in eastern Central Asia, and as far west as Syria, Anatolia, and even the Yemen, with the caliph in Baghdad subservient to the wishes of the great Saljuqid sultans.

The ascent of the Saljuqids also put an end to a period which Minorsky has called "the Persian intermezzo" (see Minorsky, 1932, p. 21), when Iranian dynasties, consisting mainly of the Saffarids, the Samanids, the Ziyarids, the Buyids, the Kakuyids, and the Bavandids of Tabarestan and Gilan, ruled most of Iran. By all accounts, weary of the miseries and devastations of never-ending conflicts and wars, Persians seemed to have sighed with relief and to have welcomed the stability of the Saljuqid rule, all the more so since the Saljuqids mitigated the effect of their foreignness, quickly adopting the Persian culture and court customs and procedures and leaving the civil administration in the hand of Persian personnel, headed by such capable and learned viziers as 'Amid-al-Molk Kondori and Nezam-al-Molk.

After Malekšah's death, however, internal strife began to set in, and the Turkish tribal chiefs' tendencies to claim a share of the power, and the practice of the Saljuqid sultans to appoint the tutors (*atabaks*) of their children as provincial governors, who often became

enamored of their power and independence, tended to create multiple power centers. Several Saljuqid lines gradually developed, including the Saljuqids of Kerman (1048-1188) and the Saljuqids of Rum in Anatolia (1081-1307); the latter survived the great Saljuqs by more than a century and were instrumental in spreading the Persian culture and language in Anatolia prior to the Ottoman conquest of the region.

The establishment of the Turkish Seljuq Empire in Persia and Iraq reversed the political march of Shi'ism and the removal of the Buyyid dynasty reinvigorated the Sunnite World. The Seljuqs were Sunnis of Hanafi rite who replaced the existing powers in Persia including the Ghaznawids and Shi'i Daylamite dynasties of northern and western Persia. C.E. Bosworth brings an interesting praise of the Seljuqs by their Persian historian, Rawandi:

“Saljuqs achieved some prestige in the eyes of the Orthodox by overthrowing Shi'i Buyid rule in Western Iran. Sunni writers even came to give an ideological justification for the Turks' political and military domination of the Middle East. The Iranian historian of the Saljuqs, Rawandi, dedicated his *Rahat al-Sudur* to one of the Saljuq Sultans of Rum, Ghiyath al-Din Kay Khusraw, and speaks of a hatif, a hidden, supernatural voice, which spoke from the Ka'ba in Mecca to the Imam Abu Hanifa and promised him that as long as the sword remained in the hands of the Turks, his faith (that of the Hanafi law school, which was followed *par excellence* by Turks) would not perish. Rawandi himself adds the pious doxology, “Praise be to God, He is exalted, that the defenders of Islam are mighty and that the followers of the Hanafi rite are happy and In the lands of the Arabs, Persians, Byzantines and Russians, the sword is in the hand of the Turks, and fear of their sword is firmly implanted in all hearts!”

(C.E. Bosworth, “The rise of Saljuqs”, Cambridge History of Iran).

Indeed religious loyalties were for the most part much stronger than ethnic affinities during these centuries and the Seljuqs were welcomed by many Iranian Sunnis.

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam:

“The Seljuqs were soon able to overrun Khorasan and then to sweep into the remainder of Persia. We need not assume that the actual numbers of the Turkmens were very large; for the ways of life possible in the steppes meant that there were natural and environmental limitations on the numbers of the nomads. Yuri Bregel has implied, working from the 16,000 Oghuz mentioned by the Ghaznawid historian Bayhaki as present on the battle field of Dandankan (*Tarikh-i Masudi*, ed. Ghani and Fayyad, Tehran 1324/1945, 619), that we should probably assume, in this instance, a ratio of one fighting man to four other members of the family, yielding some 64,000 Turkmens moving into Khorasan at this time (*Turko-Mongol influences in Central Asia*, in R.L. Canfield (ed.), *Turko-Persia in historical perspective*, Cambridge 1991, 58 and n. 10).

...

The sultans never conceived of themselves as despotic rulers over a monolithic empire, rulers in the Perso-Islamic tradition of the power state as it had developed, for instance, under the early Ghaznawids [q.v.]. They had risen to power as the successful military leaders of bands of their fellow-Oghuz tribesmen, and at the outset depended solely on these tribal elements. The position of the Saldjuk sultans was thus fundamentally

different from their predecessors in the East, both from the Samanids, with their aristocratic Iranian background but a military dependence on professional, largely slave Turkish, troops, and from the Ghaznavids, themselves of slave origin and dependent on a purely professional, salaried standing army; likewise, their opponents in the West, the Buyids and Fatimids, had come to depend upon professional, multi-ethnic armies. The sultans did not prove to be wholly exempt from the pressures arising out of the ethos of power in the Middle East at this time; they endeavoured to increase their own authority and to some extent to marginalise the Turkmen tribal elements, yet these last remained strong within the empire, and on occasions, powerful enough to aspire, through their favoured candidates for the supreme office of sultan, to a controlling influence in the state.

...

The threat of economic dislocation to the agricultural prosperity of Persia was alleviated by the deflection of the Turkmens and their herds westwards, against the Christian princes of the Caucasus and Anatolia and against the Fatimites and their allies in Syria, and Alp Arslan attached such importance to these projects that he fought in Georgia and Armenia personally.

...

...

Whilst many of the Turkmen elements percolating into northern Persia all through the Seljuq period passed on towards Anatolia, others became part of the increasing nomadic and transhumant population of Persia and central Arab lands, and this process became accelerated in the time of succeeding invaders, the Khwarizmshahs and Mongols, through the movement of the Turco-Mongol people.

(“Saljuqids” in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2007).

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam:

“Culturally, the constituting of the Seljuq Empire marked a further step in the dethronement of Arabic from being the sole lingua franca of educated and polite society in the Middle East. Coming as they did through a Transoxania which was still substantially Iranian and into Persia proper, the Seljuqs with no high-level Turkish cultural or literary heritage of their own – took over that of Persia, so that the Persian language became the administration and culture in their land of Persia and Anatolia. The Persian culture of the Rum Seljuqs was particularly splendid, and it was only gradually that Turkish emerged there as a parallel language in the field of government and adab; the Persian imprint in Ottoman civilization was to remain strong until the 19th century.”

(“Saljuqids” in the Encyclopedia of Islam).

Rene Grousset states: "It is to be noted that the Seljuks, those Turkomans who became sultans of Persia, did not Turkify Persia-no doubt because they did not wish to do so. On the contrary, it was they who voluntarily became Persians and who, in the manner of the great old Sassanid kings, strove to protect the Iranian populations from the plundering of Ghuzz bands and save Iranian culture from the Turkoman menace"

(Grousset, Rene, The Empire of the Steppes, (Rutgers University Press, 1991), 161,164)

It is noteworthy that the Persian culture of the Seljuqid era was not that of the culture of their Turcoman troops but rather the culture of native population of the lands they conquered as well as the high culture of the court. The Seljuqs relied upon Iranian Viziers including the famous Nizam al-Mulk to run the everyday affairs. They also lacked a high culture of their own and in reality had no alternative except to adopt Persian culture as part of their own culture. The Seljuq were also major patrons of Persian culture. Many of their ministers and viziers were Persian. The most famous of these viziers was Nizam al-Mulk, whose influence was so pervasive that a later historian like Ibn al-Athir calls his thirty years of office as the government of Nizamiyya.

Mehmad Fuad Koprulu also speaks about the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Iranian influence on Turks and the Seljuqs of Rum:

“On Pre-Islamic influence, one must mention Soghdians who influenced Eastern Turks greatly. Because of their geographical location, the Turks were in continuous contact with China and Iran from very ancient times. The early Chinese chronicles, which are reliable and comprehensive, show the relationship of the Turks with China fairly clearly. The early relationship of the Turks with Iran, however, only enters the light of history - leaving aside the legends in the Shahname — at the time of the last Sasanid rulers. After the Turks had lived under the influence of these two civilizations for centuries, Iran, which had accepted Islam, gradually brought them into its sphere of influence. Even during the development of the Uighur civilization, which was the {Turkish civilization} most strongly influenced by China, the attraction of the Turks to Iranian civilization, which had proven its worth in art, language, and thought, was virtually unavoidable, especially after it was invigorated with a new religion.

Even before it drew the Turks into its sphere of influence, Iranian civilization had had, in fact, a major effect on Islam. With respect to the concept of government and the organization of the state, the Abbasids were attached not to the traditions of the Khulafa al-Rashidun {the first four caliphs} but to the mentality of the Sasanid rulers. After Khurasan and Transoxiana passed into the hands of native Iranian — and subsequently highly Iranized Turkish — dynasties with only nominal allegiance to the Abbasids, the former Iranian spirit, which the Islamic onslaught was not able to destroy despite its ruthlessness, again revealed itself. In the fourth/tenth century, Persian language and literature began to grow and develop in an Islamic form. This Perso-Islamic literature was influenced, to a large extent, by the literature of the conquerors. Not only were a great many words brought into the language via the new religion, but new verse forms, a new metrical system, and new stylistic norms were also adopted in great measure from the Arabs.

Indeed, almost nothing remained of the old Iranian syllabic metrical system, the old verse forms, or the old ideas about literature. Still, the Iranians, as heirs of an ancient civilization, were able to express their own personality in their literature despite this enormous Arab influence. They adopted from the ‘arud meters only those that suited their taste. They created or, perhaps, revived the ruba’i form {of verse}. They also introduced novelties in the qasida form {of verse}, which can be considered an old and well known product of Arabic literature, and in the ghazal {lyric “love song”}. Above all, by

reanimating {their own} ancient mythology, they launched an “epic cycle” that was completely foreign to Arabic literature.

These developments were on such a scale that the fifth/eleventh century witnessed the formation of a new Persian literature in all its glory.

The Turks adopted a great many elements of Islam not directly from the Arabs, but via the Iranians. Islamic civilization came to the Turks by way of Transoxiana from Khurasan, the cultural center of Iran. Indeed, some of the great cities of Transoxiana were spiritually far more Iranian than Turkish. Also, the Iranians were no strangers to the Turks, for they had known each other well before the appearance of Islam.

For all these reasons, it was the Iranians who guided the Turks into the sphere of Islamic civilization. This fact, naturally, was to have a profound influence on the development of Turkish literature over the centuries. Thus, we can assert that by the fifth/eleventh century at least, Turko-Islamic works had begun to be written in Turkistan and that they were subject to Perso-Islamic influence. If Iranian influence had made an impact so quickly and vigorously in an eastern region like Kashghar, which was a center of the old Uighur civilization and had been under continuous and strong Chinese influence, then naturally this influence must have been felt on a much wider scale in regions further to the west and closer to the cities of Khurasan.

But unfortunately, ruinous invasions, wars, and a thousand other things over the centuries have destroyed the products of those early periods and virtually nothing remains in our possession. Let me state clearly here, however, that such Turkish works that imitated Persian forms and were written under the influence of Persian literature in Muslim centers were not widespread among the masses. They were only circulated among the learned who received a Muslim education in the madrasas {these colleges of Islamic law began to spread in the fifth/eleventh century}.

....

{As they emigrated to the west,} the Oghuz Turks who settled in Anatolia came into contact with Arab and Muslim Persian civilization and then, in the new region to which they had come, encountered remnants of ancient and non-Muslim civilizations. In the large and old cities of Anatolia, which were gradually Turkified, the Turks not only encountered earlier Byzantine and Armenian works of art and architecture, but also, as a result of living side by side with Christians, naturally participated in a cultural exchange with them. The nomadic Turks {i.e. Turkmen}, who maintained a tribal existence and clung to the way of life they had led for centuries, remained impervious to all such influences. Those who settled in the large cities, however, unavoidably fell under these alien influences.

At the same time, among the city people, those whose lives and livelihoods were refined and elevated usually had extensive madrasa educations and harbored a profound and genuine infatuation with Arab and Persian learning and literature. Thus, they cultivated a somewhat contemptuous indifference to this Christian civilization, which they regarded as materially and morally inferior to Islamic civilization. As a result, the influence of this non-Muslim civilization on the Turks was chiefly visible, and then only partially, in those

arts, such as architecture, in which the external and material elements are more obvious. The main result of this influence was that life in general assumed a more worldly quality. If we wish to sketch, in broad outline, the civilization created by the Seljuks of Anatolia, we must recognize that the local, i.e. non-Muslim, element was fairly insignificant compared to the Turkish and Arab-Persian elements, and that the Persian element was paramount/The Seljuk rulers, to be sure, who were in contact with not only Muslim Persian civilization, but also with the Arab civilizations in al-Jazira and Syria - indeed, with all Muslim peoples as far as India — also had connections with {various} Byzantine courts. Some of these rulers, like the great ‘Ala’al-Din Kai-Qubad I himself, who married Byzantine princesses and thus strengthened relations with their neighbors to the west, lived for many years in Byzantium and became very familiar with the customs and ceremonial at the Byzantine court. Still, this close contact with the ancient Greco-Roman and Christian traditions only resulted in their adoption of a policy of tolerance toward art, aesthetic life, painting, music, independent thought - in short, toward those things that were frowned upon by the narrow and piously ascetic views {of their subjects}. The contact of the common people with the Greeks and Armenians had basically the same result.

{Before coming to Anatolia,} the Turks had been in contact with many nations and had long shown their ability to synthesize the artistic elements that they had adopted from these nations. When they settled in Anatolia, they encountered peoples with whom they had not yet been in contact and immediately established relations with them as well. Ala al-Din Kai-Qubad I established ties with the Genoese and, especially, the Venetians at the ports of Sinop and Antalya, which belonged to him, and granted them commercial and legal concessions.’’Meanwhile, the Mongol invasion, which caused a great number of scholars and artisans to flee from Turkistan, Iran, and Khwarazm and settle within the Empire of the Seljuks of Anatolia, resulted in a reinforcing of Persian influence on the Anatolian Turks. Indeed, despite all claims to the contrary, there is no question that Persian influence was paramount among the Seljuks of Anatolia. This is clearly revealed by the fact that the sultans who ascended the throne after Ghiyath al-Din Kai-Khusraw I assumed titles taken from ancient Persian mythology, like Kai-Khusraw, Kai-Ka us, and Kai-Qubad; and that. Ala’al-Din Kai-Qubad I had some passages from the Shahname inscribed on the walls of Konya and Sivas. When we take into consideration domestic life in the Konya courts and the sincerity of the favor and attachment of the rulers to Persian poets and Persian literature, then this fact {i.e. the importance of Persian influence} is undeniable. With regard to the private lives of the rulers, their amusements, and palace ceremonial, the most definite influence was also that of Iran, mixed with the early Turkish traditions, and not that of Byzantium. (Mehmed Fuad Koprulu , Early Mystics in Turkish Literature, Translated by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff , Routledge, 2006, pg 149)

According to Hodgson:

“The rise of Persian (the language) had more than purely literary consequence: it served to carry a new overall cultural orientation within Islamdom. Henceforth while Arabic

held its own as the primary language of the religious disciplines and even, largely, of natural science and philosophy, Persian became, in an increasingly part of Islamdom, the language of polite culture; it even invaded the realm of scholarship with increasing effects. It was to form the chief model of the rise of still other languages. Gradually a third “classical” tongue emerged, Turkish, whose literature was based on Persian tradition.”

(Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Volume 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Venture of Islam, Chicago, 1974) page 293.)

E. J. W. Gibb, author of the standard *A Literary History of Ottoman Poetry* in six volumes, whose name has lived on in an important series of publications of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish texts, the Gibb Memorial Series. Gibb classifies Ottoman poetry between the Old School, from the fourteenth century to about the middle of the nineteenth, during which time Persian influence was dominant; and the Modern School, which came into being as a result of the Western impact. According to him in the introduction (Volume I):

The Turks very early appropriated the entire Persian literary system down to its minute detail, and that in the same unquestioning and wholehearted fashion in which they had already accepted Islam.

The Seljuqs had, in the words of the same author:

Attained a very considerable degree of culture, thanks entirely to Persian tutorage. About the middle of the eleventh century they [that is, the Saljuqs] had overrun Persia, when, as so often happened, the Barbarian conquerors adopted the culture of their civilized subjects. Rapidly the Seljuq Turks pushed their conquest westward, ever carrying with them Persian culture ...

So, when some hundred and fifty years later Sulayman’s son [the leader of the Ottomans] . . . penetrated into Asia Minor, they [the Ottomans] found that although Seljuq Turkish was the everyday speech of the people, Persian was the language of the court, while Persian literature and Persian culture reigned supreme. It is to the Seljuqs, with whom they were thus fused, that the Ottomans, strictly so called, owe their literary education; this therefore was of necessity Persian as the Seljuqs knew no other.

The Turks were not content with learning from the Persians how to express thought; they went to them to learn what to think and in what way to think. In practical matters, in the affairs of everyday life and in the business of government, they preferred their own ideas; but in the sphere of science and literature they went to school with the Persian, intent not merely on acquiring his method, but on entering into his spirit, thinking his thought and feeling his feelings. And in this school they continued so long as there was a master to teach them; for the step thus taken at the outset developed into a practice; it became the rule with the Turkish poets to look ever Persia-ward for guidance and to follow whatever fashion might prevail there. Thus it comes about that for centuries Ottoman poetry continued to reflect as in a glass the several phases through which that of Persia passed....

So the first Ottoman poets, and their successors through many a generation, strove with all their strength to write what is little else than Persian poetry in Turkish words. But such was not consciously their aim; of national feeling in poetry they dreamed not; poetry was to them one and indivisible, the language in which it was written merely an unimportant accident.”

C.E. Bosworth mentions:

While the Arabic language retained its primacy in such spheres as law, theology and science, the culture of the Seljuk court and secular literature within the sultanate became largely Persianized; this is seen in the early adoption of Persian epic names by the Seljuq Rulers (Qubad, Kay Khusraw and so on) and in the use of Persian as a literary language (Turkish must have been essentially a vehicle for every days speech at this time). The process of Persianization accelerated in the thirteenth century with the presence in Konya of two of the most distinguished refugees fleeing before the Mongols, Baha al-din Walad and his son Mawlana Jalal al-din Rumi, whose Mathnawi, composed in Konya, constitutes one of the crowning glories of classical Persian literature.

(“Turkish expansion towards the west”, in UNESCO History Of Humanity, Volume IV: From the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century, UNESCO Publishing / Routledge, 2000.).

The overall political and cultural climate of the Seljuqs is succinctly summarized.

“The entry of the Seljuqs and their nomadic followers began a long process of profound social, economic and ethnic changes to the ‘northern tier’ of the Middle East, namely the zone of lands extending from Afghanistan in the east through Persia and Kurdistan to Anatolia in the west; these changes included certain increase in pastoralisation and a definitely increased degree of Turkicisation. Within the Seljuq lands there remained significant number of Turkish nomads, largely unassimilated t settle life and resentful of central control, and especially, of taxation. The problem of integrating such elements into the fabric of state was never solved by the Seljuq sultans; where Sanjar’s reign ended disastrously in an uprising of Oghuz tribesmen whose interest had, they felt, been neglected by the central administration, the Oghuz captured the Sultan, and, on his death soon afterwards, Khorasan slipped definitely from Seljuq control. The last Seljuq sultan in the west, Toghril III, struggled to free himself from control by the Eldiguzid Atabegs, but unwisely provoked a war with the powerful and ambitious Khwarazm Shah Tekish and was killed in 1194. Only in central Anatolia did a Seljuq line, that of the sultans of rum with the capital at Konya, survive for a further century or so.”

(C.E. Bosworth, The New Islamic Dynasties).

Thus the Seljuqs were one of the reasons of the gradual Turkification that was brought upon in the region. Although the Seljuq elites and Sultan had Persian culture, the Turkomen nomads who were the backbone of their army was not Persianized at that time.

The number of these nomads as shown by the Encyclopedia of Islam was not large and many of the Turkmen followers found new pasture land through the conquest of the former Christian lands of Armenia, Georgia and Anatolia. Much larger number of nomads appeared during the Mongol era.

Thus the actual number of nomadic Turks that came to the region with the Seljuqs were small and this is clearly seen in the book of Nozhat al-Majales where the everyday Muslim urban culture was Persian/Iranian and there is absolutely no hint of any Turkish culture in the region. The Turkish dynasties themselves like Seljuqs, Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis became Persianized and we do not see trace of any Turkish culture from their courts as well. However, after the Khwarzmian empire and the Mongol conquest (the majority of whose elements were Turkic and also their movement pushed opposing Turkic tribes westwards), larger number of Turkic elements were also pushed from Central Asia towards Anatolia, Persia and the Caucasus. When it comes to the plans, there could have been a significant Turkic element by the end of the Seljuqid era, however these had to compete with the already established Iranian tribal elements.

Still the major urban centers were not affected since the cultural of the Turkmen nomads was not compatible with the urban culture whose major elements were Iranian in Persia and cities like Ganja, Darband and Tabriz. Thus we see for example during the Ilkhanid era, Tabriz which was a major city had its own Iranian language as recorded in the Safinaye Tabrizi and it is called "Zaban-e-Tabrizi". The cultural language was also Persian which was related to the Tabrizi dialect. In Maragha, we saw that Hamdullah Mustawafi clearly shows that the language was Fahlavi. In the Caucasus, the Nozhat al-Majales which is from 1250 or so again shows that Iranic culture was prevalent.

The migratory Turkmen tribes should not be confused with more advanced urban Turkic cultures like those of Kashghar or Uighyurs who were influenced by Soghdians. We already brought the example of Tabriz, where historical sources use the term "Zaban-e-Tabrizi" for the Persian dialect that was predominant there, even during the Ilkhanid era. Also according to Diakonov (1994) as mentioned:

"There were slight problems with Nizami - first of all he was not Azeri but Persian (Iranian) poet, and though he lived in presently Azerbaijani city of Ganja, which, like many cities in the region, had Iranian population in Middle Ages".

Thus Nizami's urban background in this author's opinion clearly again establishes a non-Turkic father line. For example Nizami Ganjavi explicitly mentions the nomadic lifestyle of Turks:

چو ترکان گشته سوی کوچ محتاج
به ترکی داده رختم را به تاراج
(خسرو و شیرین)

ترک سمن خیمه به صحرا زده
ماهچه خیمه به صحرا زده
(مخزن الاسرار)

Additionally we note there is no tribal designation (Seljuq, Bayat, Oghuz, Bayandur...) in the names of his forefathers. While Persian culture was not the culture of the nomadic Turkmen supporters of the Seljuqs, but it was the main culture of the courts, viziers, sedentary towns of the empire. Linguistically this makes sense, since the major ethnic

component of Greater Persia including Central Asia and the Caucasia (Nezami addressing his different patrons as Kings of Persia) were Iranian and Iranian ministers had a large say in the Seljuq government. Later in this article, we shall delve into these points in more detail.

During the era when Nizami was born, Seljuq power was actually declining and new local dynasties called Atabegs were former who effectively held major power and were under nominal Seljuq control. Atabegs were originally commanders who were trusted as tutors for young Seljuk princes. But later on, they grew powerful enough to become virtually independent of the Seljuq Sultan and were sometimes the driving force in Seljuq politics. Two of these dynasties who actually commissioned Nizami Ganjavi to write two of his most important epics were the rival dynasties of Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis. Later on historians would also refer to them as Atabakan-e-Azerbaijan and Atabakan-e-Maragheh. Interestingly enough, they allowed Nezami Ganjavi to choose the topic (unlike the quest by Shirwanshahs which wanted the story of Leyli o Majnoon) and Nezami voluntarily chose the Sassanid stories of Khusraw o Shirin and Haft Paykar.

The Eldiguzid were an Atabeg (feudal-lord) dynasty of Qipchaq Turkic origin who controlled most Azerbaijan, Arran and the northern Jibal during the second half of the 12th century. At this time, the Seljuq sultanate of Persia and Iraq was in full decay and unable to prevent the expansion of the virtually independent dynasties. Eldiguz was in control of Ganja, which the contemporary Kurdish Muslim historian Ibn Athir (1160-1233) has called “The mother city of Arran”. During the reign of the Seljuqid ruler Arsalan, the Eldiguzids were the power behind the throne and controlled the great Seljuqid Empire. Their territories stretched from the south as far as Isfahan, in the west to Akhlat and in the north to Sharwan (controlled by the Sharwan) and Georgian dynasties. In their last phase of the Eldiguzids, their power decayed and they were once more local rulers in Azerbaijan and east Transcaucasia, and by 1225, they were incorporated into the Khwarazm Shah Empire.

“The historical significance of these Atabegs thus lies in their firm control over most of north-west Persia during the later Seljuq period and also in their role in Transcaucasia as champions of Islam against the resurgent Bagratid Georgian kings”.

(C.E. Bosworth, The New Islamic Dynasties).

The Encyclopedia Iranica has an overview of the Eldiguzids under the entry “Atabakan-i Azerbaijan”(a name used by historians to distinguish different Atabek kingdoms based on regions) states:

ATĀBAKĀN-E ĀZARBĀYJĀN, an influential family of military slave origin, also called Ildegozids, ruled parts of Arrān and Azerbaijan from about 530/1135-36 to 622/1225; as “Great Atābaks”(atābakān-e azam) of the Saljuq sultans of Persian Iraq (western Iran), they effectively controlled the sultans from 555/1160 to 587/1181; in their third phase they were again local rulers in Arrān and Azerbaijan until the territories which had not already been lost to the Georgians, were seized by Jalāl-al-dīn Khārazmshāh in 622/1225.

Literature, learning, and architecture. All of the Ildegozids were patrons of literature and learning, even though the later ones were apparently more drunken than devout. They were patrons of many of the well-known poets of the period and were closely associated with some of them. Mojir-al-din Baylaqani seems to have been closer to Ildegoz and Mohammad whereas Athir-al-din Akhsikati was nearer to Qezel Arslan (Divan-e Athir, introd. Homayun Farrokh, pp. 75-77; Rypka, Hist. Iran. Lit., p. 208). Zahir-al-din Faryabi is especially associated with Abu Bakr (Divan, introd. Binesh, pp. 86-92). Sharaf-al-din Safarva Esfahani may have belonged to Mohammad's entourage (Awfi, Lobab, p. 615). Other poets connected with the family are: Emadi Shahrari (Awfi, p. 724; Shafa, Adabiyat II, p. 745); Jamal-al-din Mohammad Abd-al-Razzaq Esfahani (Shafa, II, p. 732); Rokn-al-din Davidar (Shafa, III/1, p. 347); Athir-al-din Awmani (Shafa, III/1, p. 395); Qewami Moarrez, Yusof Fozuli (Dawlatshah, ed. Browne, p. 117); Jamal Ashari (Awfi, p. 406); Jamal olandi (Ebn Esfandiari, II, p. 152). Khaghan wrote poems in praise of Qezel Arslan (Divan, introd. Abbasi, p. 26) and also wrote a long letter to that atabak (Monshaat, pp. 148-63). Nezami Ganjavi certainly dedicated his Khosrow o Shirin to members of the family, first to Mohammad, then to Qezel Arslan, along with Sultan Toghril, according to Shafa (II, p. 803). As far as Nezami's Eqbāl-nāma is concerned, there is a difference of opinion (Nafisi, Nezami, pp. 115-16; Minorsky, "Caucasica II," pp. 872-74; Shafa, II, pp. 704-06) as to whether or not it was dedicated to an Ildegozid. It does seem to be true that the only meeting Nezami had with any ruler was with Qezel Arslan (Nafisi, Nezami, pp. 86-93). Uzbek's vizier, Abu'l-Qasem Harun (q.v.) was a well-known patron of learning in Tabriz.

(Luther, K. "Atabkan-e-Adarbayjan: Saljuq rulers of Azerbaijan", Encyclopedia Iranica).

We should note that the court culture of the Eldiguzids was also Persian and culturally, they were not different than the Persianized Seljuqid elite. The urban centers and culture was Iranian at the time as shown clearly by books such as Nozhat al-Majales.

We should also note that Nezami Ganjavi was not a court poet and was not attached to any particular dynasty. Thus Nezami was more like Ferdowsi, who was not a court poet and unlike Khaqani or Onori who were court poets. For example, he devotes works to rival dynasties of Eldiguzids including the Shirwanshahs and Ahmadilis. He also sent his son to the court of the Sherwanshahs and entrusts his son to them.

Another dynasty which commissioned one of Nizami Ganjavi's works (the *Haft Paykar*) was the Ahmadilis. The Ahmadilis which historians have also called "Atabakan-Maragheh" were rulers of Maragheh and Ru'in Diz (Ruin Duzh=Persian for Brass Fort compare with Esfandiyar's title "Ruyin Tan"(invulnerable body)) in Iranian Azerbaijan. The dynasty ruled early in Maragheh in the 12th century and maintained themselves against the much more powerful neighbors like Eldiguzid Atabegs. Aq Sunqur Ahmadili, the founder of this dynasty, was presumably a freeman of Ahmadil, a Kurdish noble possibly related to the Rawwadids. Ala'al-din Korp Arsalan, who the *Haft Paykar* was commissioned by (the story itself being chosen by Nizami Ganjavi) is said to have ruled between 1175-1188.

The fact that Nizami Ganjavi was commissioned by at least three rival dynasties (Shirwanshah, Eldiguzid and Ahmadilis) is a testament to his fame. We should note the court culture of all these dynasties (whatever their ethnic origin) was Persian and one cannot claim these dynasties had a non-Iranian identity. Since the court itself brought Iranianization of these dynasties as the administrators, officials and poets who gathered there were natives of the region whose urban cultural language was Persian. Also the Viziers of majority of the Persianized Turkic dynasties who ruled Iran, Caucasus and even sometimes India were of Iranian origin. At the same time, Nizami Ganjavi was aloof from politics and was not a court poet. This allowed him to remain on friendly terms with rival dynasties that actually attacked each other's territories. The Encyclopedia of Islam entry on him states:

“Usually, there is more precise biographical information about the Persian court poets, but Nizami was not a court poet; he feared loss of integrity in this role and craved primarily for the freedom of artistic creation. His five masterpieces are known collectively as the Khamsa, Quintet, or the Pandj Gandj, the Five Treasures. The five epic poems represent a total of close to 30,000 couplets and they constitute a breakthrough in Persian literature. Nizami was a master in the genre of the romantic epic.”

(Nizami Ganjavi, “Encyclopedia of Islam” by Chelkowski, P).

Regional Iranian culture in Arran/Sherwan and Azerbaijan

Arran/Sherwan and Nezami's designation of Iran/Persia for his land

Overall, a brief survey of all these dynasties (Rawwadids, Shaddadids, Shirwanshah, Seljuqids, Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis) is important. The Rawwadids, Shirwanshah and Shaddadids were some of the early patrons of Persian-Dari poetry in the area and the Shirwanshah ruled the area of Shirwan during the time of Nizami Ganjavi. Taking Tabriz as an example, and also the statement of Diakonov about Ganja, Ganja transitioned from Iranic rule to that of Persianate Turkic dynasties but it did not lose its Iranic character at once and overnight. The general Muslim culture of Arran and Sherwan during the era of Nezami Ganjavi is reflected perfectly in its totality in the book *Nozhat al-Majales*. This book provides the best evidence of the culture of the region today and unless a time-machine is created, it is the best resource available to scholar to assess the urban culture of the population.

The Persianate Turkic dynasties although of nomadic origin were nevertheless soon establishing their thrones and ruled in what C.E. Bosworth has called Perso-Islamic manner. Their courtly life was in Persian and they upheld Persian culture and standards in governing their major cities. This was because the bulk of the Muslim population was Iranian and culturally Persian was the chief language. This might have alienated them from their Turkomen followers as it was the case for the Seljuqid Sultan Sanjar. Yet

many Iranian Sunnis supported the Seljuqids in order to weaken the rise of Shi'ism under the Buyid dynasty. They also supported the Seljuqid rule, since it brought a sense of stability and unity which did not exist prior.

Ganja, which was called the mother city of Arran, was the capital of the Shaddadids (assuming Nizami's great ancestor was from them). We already touched upon Nizami's Kurdish mother and his Kurdish uncle who raised him. Later on Ganja passed to the Seljuqs and Eldiguzids before the Khwarazmid and Mongol invasion. There is no evidence of the process of Turkification of Ganja at the time of Nizami (as the Oghuz nomads were not urban and the book *Nozhat al-Majales* shows the culture of everyday urban people was Persian). Also looking at Tabriz (a city under the Eldiguzids) as an example (which had an Iranic language after Mongol invasion as exemplified in the *Safinayeh Tabriz*), it is clear (as mentioned by Diakonov) that Ganja was an Iranic speaking city, at least before the Mongols and Ilkhanid era. Note cities, even when they accept migrants, usually have some capacity to absorb the migrants and mould them into the culture of the city. According to Professor Xavier De Planhol:

“Thus Turkish nomads, in spite of their deep penetration throughout Iranian lands, only slightly influenced the local culture. Elements borrowed by the Iranians from their invaders were negligible.”

(X.D. Planhol, *LANDS OF IRAN* in *Encyclopedia Iranica*)

Even during the Mongol era, Hamdullah Mostowfi in his *Nozhat al-Qolub* mentions that the city of Abhar (near modern Zanzan) has migrants from everywhere, *“but their language is of not yet unified, but it will be most likely be a modified Persian”*.

We note that travelers before the time of Nizami Ganjavi maintain Persian (not necessarily Khorasanian Persian) was the major binding language and was a common language of the area. The influx of Turkish nomads from the Seljuqs and the much larger influx during the Mongol/Khwarazmid movement were some of the phases of history in which Turkification of Arran was gradually started. Indeed on the eve of the Mongol invasion, large numbers of Turkomen tribes are mentioned in the Caucasia by Nasavi, the Khwarazmian historian. It is not known if these were pushed by the waves of Mongols attacking Central Asia or had come gradually during the Seljuq era. But they were recent nomads and their ancestry does not go back to the Shaddadid era. Their culture was also not urban and we do not have any cities with Turkic names at that time while Ganja, Darband, Barda', Baku and etc. are all Iranic names.

Thus the subsequent Khwarazmian/Mongol push was instrumental for the gradual Turkicization of the region of Arran(which in many maps also includes Shirwan). However, just taking into account the Seljuq/Eldiguzid era before Khwarazmian empire, the Oghuz nomads only settled in grazing lands and not cities and even most nomads of Arran and Shirwan were probably Kurdish and other Iranian/Caucasian types. The culture of urban Muslim people and city dwellers was firmly Iranian as shown by the *Nozhat al-Majales* and its everyday idiom.

As noted, the Safinaye Tabriz shows a Persianate-Iranian culture in the city of Tabriz (a city which was also under the Ildiguzids like Ganja) during the Mongol era. This, despite the fact that the Mongol army itself was overwhelmingly composed of Turkic tribes. The urban life of the major cities of the area was not compatible with the nomadic culture of the Turkomen tribes and the Muslim cities had Perso-Islamic culture. In Iranian Azerbaijan for example, according to the Encyclopedia Iranica, the deciding factor for Turkification was the Safavid period:

But the decisive period no doubt occurred in the Safavid period with the adoption of Shi'ism as the state religion of Iran, while the Ottoman state remained faithful to Sunnism. Soon Shi'ite propaganda among the tribes located outside of the urban centers of orthodoxy, prompted the Anatolian nomad tribes to return to Iran. This migration began in 1500 when Shah Esmail assembled the Qezelbash tribes in the region of Erzincan. The attraction made itself felt as far as the region of Antalya, whence came the Tekelu, who were to play an important role in Iran, in mass along with 15,000 camels. Nomads undoubtedly constituted the majority of the movement, though it also affected semi-nomads and even peasants. At the end of the 11th/16th century, Shah Abbas I's organization of the great confederation of the shahseven precipitated the massive entry of Turks into Azerbaijan, and the area became definitively Turkish in this period, with the exception of some isolated Tati-speaking communities. (Azerbaijan in Encyclopedia Iranica)

This would also hold true for the Caucasus in our opinion. Specially the Sherwan regions which were under the Sherwanshah until the Safavid era. Also the Turkmen nomads for many generations lived a nomadic lifestyle. Even after disassociation from the nomadic lifestyle, the next step would be part migration and part settlement in villages.

Afterwards, it would be full settlement in farming villages and finally migration from villages to major cities. All these steps come through many generations and not instantly. One reason for example the Atabeg dynasties of Fars, Yazd, Syria and etc. were not able to Turkify their respective area (although large number of nomadic Turkic Qashqai tribes live in Fars today, but this nomadic component in Fars was after the Seljuqid rule) is due to the fact these areas did not provide a widely available pasture land and thus they were absorbed into the local Iranian population. Let us bring some of the primary sources and review some of them again:

Estakhri of 10th century also states:

“In Azerbaijan, Armenia and Arran they speak Persian and Arabic, except for the area around the city of Dabil: they speak Armenian around that city, and in the country of Barda people speak Arranian.”

Original Arabic:

و لسان اذربيجان و ارمينية و الران الفارسيه و العربيه غير ان اهل دبيل و حوالها يتكلمون
بالارمنيه، و نواحي بردعه لسانهم ارانيه

(Estakhari, Abu Eshaq Ebrahim. Masalek va Mamalek. Bonyad Moqfat Dr. Afshar, Tehran, 1371 (1992-1993))

Al-Muqaddasi (d. late 4th/10th cent.) considers Azerbaijan and Arran as part of the 8th division of lands. He states:

“The languages of the 8th division is Iranian (al-’ajamyya). It is partly Dari and partly convoluted (monqaleq) and all of them are named Persian”

(Al-Muqaddasi, Shams ad-Din Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ahmad, *Ahsan al-Taqasi fi Ma’rifa al-Aqalim*, Translated by Ali Naqi Vizieri, Volume One, First Edition, Mu’alifan and Mutarjiman Publishers, Iran, 1981, pg 377.)

المقدسي، شمس الدين ابو عبدالله محمد بن احمد، احسن التقاسيم في معرفة الاقاليم، ترجمه دكتور علي نقى وزيري، جلد 1، چاپ اول، انتشارات مؤلفان و مترجمان ايران، 1361، ص 377.

Al-Muqaddasi also writes on the general region of Armenia, Arran and Azerbaijan and states:

“They have big beards, their speech is not attractive. In Arminya they speak Armenian, in al-Ran, Ranian (Aranian); Their Persian is understandable, and is close to Khurasanian (Dari Persian) in sound”

(Al-Muqaddasi, ‘The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions’, a translation of his *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma’rifat al-Aqalim* by B.A. Collins, Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Garnet Publishing Limited, 1994. pg 334).

Thus from Muqaddasi we can see that a regional Persian language was spoken in the area and cross referencing with Estakhri, we can conjecture that this was the main language of the muslim population, specially in the urban areas.

According to C. E. Bosworth:

“North of the Aras, the distinct, presumably Iranian, speech of Arran long survived, called by Ebn Hawqal al-Raniya”

(Azerbaijan: Islamic History to 1941, Encyclopedia Iranica).

Although we do not have any manuscripts of al-Raniya to really judge the nature of this dialect (Was it was a dialect of Parthian or Iranian languages, or was it a Caucasian language or non-standard dialect of Armenian?), nearby the Kur river, in the town of Barda’ in Arran:

“The fertile rural environs produced much fruit (with a particularly noted variety of figs), nuts, and also the dyestuff madder (*rūnās*), which was exported as far as India. In the Kor and other nearby rivers, the sturgeon (*sormāhī* from Persian *šūrmāhī*, salt fish) and other tasty fish were caught; and there was extensive production of textiles, including silks (see Ebn Hawqal, pp. 337-39, 347, 349, tr. Kramers, II, pp. 330-32, 340, 342; Maqdesī, [Moqaddasī], p. 375; *Hodūd al-Aālam*, tr. Minorsky, pp. 143-44, secs. 36.21, 36.30; R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles. Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest, Beirut, 1972, p. 69*)”

(Barda, Encyclopedia Iranica, Bosworth).

The word *sormāhī* which Prof. Bosworth derives from Shurmahi in Persian could actually be red fish (sor/suhr being the Pahlavi for red which in modern Persian is Surkh).

Al-Muqaddasi translates the “Monday” to Yam al-Ithnayn which in Persian and Iranian dialects is Doshanbeh (the second day). An important point to mention is that Ganja like many other pre-Seljuq toponyms has an Iranian name, which naturally reflects the fact that it was founded by Iranian settlers (C.E. Bosworth, “Ganja”, Encyclopedia Iranica). One should also mention the native Iranian (Parthian/Persian) dynasty which ruled over the area of Arran up to at least the 8th century.

Al-Mas’udi the Arab Historian States:

“The Persians are a people whose borders are the Mahat Mountains and Azarbaijan up to Armenia and Arran, and Bayleqan and Darband, and Ray and Tabaristan and Masqat and Shabaran and Jorjan and Abarshahr, and that is Nishabur, and Herat and Marv and other places in land of Khorasan, and Sejjistan and Kerman and Fars and Ahvaz...All these lands were once one kingdom with one sovereign and one language...although the language differed slightly. The language, however, is one, in that its letters are written the same way and used the same way in composition. There are, then, different languages such as Pahlavi, Dari, Azari, as well as other Persian languages.”

Source:

Al Mas’udi, Kitab al-Tanbih wa-l-Ishraf, De Goeje, M.J. (ed.), Leiden, Brill, 1894, pp. 77-8.

Thus Masu’ di testifies to the Iranian presence in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan during the 10th century and even names a local Iranian dialect called Azari and says Persian peoples in Arran, Armenia and Darband and Bayleqan spoke Persian languages.

This Iranian culture was strong in the region and perhaps even grew during the Seljuqs and Ilkhanids. It is only with the Safavids that probably the traditional Sufi-Shafi’ite oriented Persian culture faded away.

Probably the best example to show the extent of Iranian culture and population in Arran and Shirawn is through the book Nozhat al-Majalis. There are 114 poets in Persian just from this book in the area of Azerbaijan, Arran, and Shirwan.

- 1- ابو علا شاپور، 2- ابوالفضل تبريزي، 3- ابوالقاسم، 4- قاضي ابوالمجد، 5- اسدي، 6- اسمعيل فارسي، 7-
- اطلسي، 8- بختيار شرواني، 9- بدر تغليسي، 10- بدرالدين محمود، 11- بديع بيلقاني، 12- برهان گنجه‌اي،
- 13- بهاء شرواني، 14- پسر خطيب گنجه، 15- پسر سله گنجه، 16- پسر قاضي دربند، 17- تاج خلاطي، 18-
- تاج زنگاني، 19- تاج صالح، 20- تغليسي شرواني، 21- جلال خواري، 22- جلالي، 23- جمال جويي، 24-
- جمال خليل شرواني، 25- جمال حاجي شرواني، 26- جمال عصفوري، 27- جمال عمر، 28- جمال گنجه‌اي،
- 29- جهان گشته، 30- حديثي، 31- شيخ حسين سقا، 32- حسين هزارمرد، 33- حميد تبريزي، 34- حميد
- شرواني، 35- حميد گنجه‌اي، 36- خاقاني شرواني، 37- دختر حكيم گاو، 38- دختر خطيب گنجه، 39- دختر
- سالار، 40- دختر ستي، 41- رشيد بيلقاني، 42- رشيد شرواني، 43- رشيد گنجه‌اي، 44- حسين گنجه‌اي،
- 45- رضيه گنجه‌اي، 46- رفيع بكراني ابهر، 47- ركن خويي، 48- زاهد، 49- زكي اكاف (پالاندوز)، 50- زكي

مراغه اي، 51- سجاسي، 52- سعد صفار، 53- سعد گنجه‌اي، 54- سعيد شرواني، 55- سيد شيراني، 56- سيف تفليسي، 57- شرف شفروه، 58- شرف صالح بيلقاني، 59- شرف مراغي، 60- شرف‌الدين مرتضي، 61- شروانشاه، 62- شمس‌الدين اسعدگنجه‌اي، 63- شمس اقطع بيلقاني، 64- شمس الياس گنجه‌اي، 65- شمس اهري، 66- شمس تبريزي (به غير از شمس تبريزي معروف است)، 67- شمس عمر گنجه، 68- شهاب كاغذي، 69- شهاب گنجه‌اي، 70- صاين مراغي، 71- صدر زنگاني، 72- صفي بيلقاني، 73- صفي شرواني، 74- طهير خونجي، 75- طهير شفروه، 76- ظهردين مراغه‌اي، 77- عبدالعزيز گنجه‌اي، 78- عثمان مراغه‌اي، 79- عز ابوالبقا، 80- عرشرواني، 81- عزيز شرواني، 82- عزيز كمال، 83- عماد شرواني، 84- عياني گنجه‌اي، 85- فخرالدين ابوبكر ابهري، 86- فخر گنجه‌اي، 87- فخر مراغه‌اي، 88- فخر نقاش، 89- فلكي شرواني، 90- قاضي، 91- قاضي تفليس، 92- قطب اهري، 93- قطب عتيقي تبريزي، 94- قوامي گنجه‌اي، 95- كمال ابن‌العزير، 96- كمال ابو‌عمر ابهري، 97- كمال تفليسي، 98- لطيف تفليسي، 99- مجير بيلقاني، 100- محمد طبيب اردبيلي، 101- مختصر گنجه‌اي، 102- مظفر تبريزي، 103- مقرب باكوبي، 104- مهذب‌الدين دبیرشرواني، 105- مهستي گنجه‌اي، 106- موفق سراج، 107- نجم سيمگر، 108- نجم گنجه‌اي، 109- نجيب گنجه‌اي، 110- نصير گنجه‌اي، 111- نظامي گنجه‌اي، 112- نفيس شرواني، 113- يحيي تبريزي. 114- جمال خليل شيرواني

We note none of these poets have a Turkish name. In the introduction, we read that the quatrains by these Persian poets were song in the Khanaqah (Sufi Houses), Bazars, Streets (Kucheh) and thus Persian was the common and everyday language of Muslims in Arran and Shirwan at the time. Some of these poets are women who did not usually receive education but their Persian poetry proves the expanse and spread of the Persian language during that time. The book was written between 1225 to 1290 and the only manuscript is from Istanbul dated to the early 14th century. The book is a complete mirror of the culture of Arran and Shirwan at that time.

(Jamal Khalil Shirvani, Nozhat al-Majles, Edited by Mohammad Amin Riyahi, Tehran, 1987)

Here we have also included the full article from Iranica which shows the common Persian language and heritage of the region before its linguistic Turkification. Some excerpts which we have bolded illustrate the full extent of Iranian culture at the time:

NOZHAT AL-MAJĀLES, an anthology of some 4,000 quatrains (*robāʿi*; a total of 4,139 quatrains, 54 of which have been repeated in the text) by some 300 poets of the 5th to 7th/11th-13th centuries, compiled around the middle of the 7th/13th century by the Persian poet Jamāl-al-Din Ḳalil Šarvāni. The book is arranged by subject in 17 chapters (*bābs*) divided into 96 different sections (*namat*). The anthology also includes 179 quatrains and an ode (*qaṣida*) of 50 distiches written by the author himself, who is also credited with one lyric (*ġazal*) in Moḥammad Jājarmi's *Moʿnes al-aḥrār*.

As stated in Jamāl-al-Din's own ode at the end of the book, he compiled his anthology in the name of ʿAlāʾ-al-Din Šarvānšāh Fariborz III (r. 1225-51), son of Goštāsb and dedicated it to him. It has reached us in a unique manuscript copied by Esmāʿil b. Esfandiār b. Moḥammad b. Esfandiār Abhari on 25 Šawwāl 731/31 July 1331, and is presently bound together in one volume with the *divān* of Faḳr-al-Din ʿEraqi at the Süleymaniye Library in Turkey (no.1667) among Wali-al-Din Jār-Allāh's collection. This manuscript embraces some 77 leaves (fols. 41a-118a), each page having 27 lines. The first few leaves of the book, which had probably embodied a preface in prose, have been lost. Fritz Meier (p. 117) and Christian Rempis (1935, p. 179) have erroneously taken Esmāʿil b. Esfandiār, the copyist, to be the author of the book.

The manuscript of *Nozhat al-majāles* was first described by Hellmut Ritter (pp. 223-33). Three years later, in 1935, Rempis extracted and published the quatrains of Omar Khayyam (Ḳayyām) recorded in the anthology, and in 1963 Fritz Meier performed the same task for Mahasti's quatrains. The first Persian scholar to use this anthology was Moḥammad-ʿAli Forugi, who obtained a copy of the manuscript and incorporated 31 quatrains of Khayyam found there in his edition of the *Robāʿiyāt-e Ḳayyām* (pp. 35-44). Saʿid Nafisi (pp. 176-77) wrote on the *Nozhat al-majāles* and extracted the names of the unknown poets of Arrān and Šarvān who were mentioned in the anthology. Moḥammad-Taqi Dānešpažuh, in his article describing this anthology, rearranged the list of names extracted by Nafisi according to the names of the poets' hometowns and also gave the list of the subject matter in each section of the book (pp. 573-81).

Nozhat al-majāles belongs to an era when quatrains were very popular and formed substantial sections in the *divāns* of major poets of the time such as Anwari, ʿAṭṭār, Sanāʿi, Ḳāqāni, Rumi, and Kamāl-al-Din Esmāʿil. Sadid-al-Din Moḥammad ʿAwfi (d. ca. 1232-33) remarked in his biographical anthology *Lobāb al-albāb*, that many poets wrote only quatrains. At about 1192, approximately a hundred years before the compilation of *Nozhat al-majāles*, a similar anthology of quatrains entitled *Majmaʿ al-robāʿiyāt* had been compiled in Ankara by Abu Ḥanifa ʿAbd-al-Karim b. Abi Bakr, an incomplete copy of which is now at the library of Ḥālat Afandi (Ateş, pp. 94-133). Jājarmi also devoted the twenty-eighth chapter of his *Moʿnes al-aḥrār* (comp. 1340) to *robāʿis*, comprising 470 quatrains. In another recently discovered anthology, entitled *Safina-ye Tabriz*, a major part called “Ḳolāṣat al-ašʿār fi'l-robāʿiyāt” contains 498 quatrains arranged in 50 sections (*bāb*). Most of them, however, are selected from *Nozhat al-majāles* and in a number of cases offer a more reliable reading (Afšār, pp. 535-38).

Nozhat al-majāles is a very valuable source for identifying the authors of many quatrains which had been wrongly attributed to major poets or whose authors had not been identified at all. For example, eighty quatrains published in Badi'-al-Zamān Foruzānfar's edition of Rumi's *Divān-e Šams* are now proven to belong to other poets, due to their inclusion in this anthology. The same is true about nine quatrains attributed to Hafez in some old manuscripts of his *divān*.

Another significant merit of *Nozhat al-majāles* is that it contains the quatrains of a number of poets whose collected works are no longer extant. For instance, the thirty-three quatrains by Khayyam and the sixty quatrains by Mahasti found in this anthology are among the oldest and most reliable collections of their works. *Nozhat al-majāles* also comprises many quatrains by such scholars and mystics as Avicenna, Aḥmad Ghazali, Majd-al-Din Baḡdādi, and Ahmad-e Jām, who had never been recognized as poets, and such poets and writers as Neẓāmi Ganjavi, Asadi Tusi, Faḡr-al-Din As'ad Gorgani, and 'Onşor-al-Ma'āli Kaykāvus, who had been known only by their major works and hardly any poems had been ascribed to them; as well as quatrains by a number of rulers and statesmen, including the Saljuk sultan Toḡrol, Atsīz K̄wārazmšāh, Fariborz Šarvānšāh, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Jovayni, Malek Zawzan, Solaymānšāh of Iva, Amir Kāmyār, and 'Alā'-al-Din Kabud-jāma.

The most significant merit of *Nozhat al-majāles*, as regards the history of Persian literature, is that it embraces the works of some 115 poets from the northwestern Iran (Arrān, Šarvān, Azerbaijan; including 24 poets from Ganja alone), where, due to the change of language, the heritage of Persian literature in that region has almost entirely vanished. The fact that numerous quatrains of some poets (e.g. Amir Šams-al-Din As'ad of Ganja, 'Aziz Šarvāni, Šams Sojāsi, Amir Najib-al-Din 'Omar of Ganja, Badr Teflisi, Kamāl Marāḡi, Šaraf Šāleḡ Baylaqāni, Borhān Ganja'i, Elyās Ganja'i, Baḡtiār Šarvāni) are mentioned together like a series tends to suggest the author was in possession of their collected works. *Nozhat al-majāles* is thus a mirror of the social conditions at the time, reflecting the full spread of Persian language and the culture of Iran throughout that region, clearly evidenced by the common use of spoken idioms in poems as well as the professions of the some of the poets (see below). The influence of the northwestern Pahlavi language, for example, which had been the spoken dialect of the region, is clearly observed in the poems contained in this anthology.

It is noteworthy, however, that in the period under discussion, the Caucasus region was entertaining a unique mixture of ethnic cultures. K̄qāni's mother was a Nestorian Christian, Mojir Baylqāni's mother was an Armenian, and Neẓāmi's mother was a Kurd. Their works reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region. Ḥobayš b. Ebrāhim Teflisi paraded his knowledge of different languages by mentioning the name of the drugs in his medical dictionary, *Taqwim al-adwīa* in several languages, including Persian, Arabic, Syriac, and Byzantine Greek. This blending of cultures certainly left its mark on the works of the poets of the region, resulting in the creation of a large number of new concepts and terms, the examples of which can be noticed in the poems of K̄qāni and Neẓāmi, as well as in dictionaries.

In contrast to poets from other parts of Persia, who mostly belonged to higher echelons of society such as scholars, bureaucrats, and secretaries, a good number of poets in the northwestern areas rose from among the common people with working class backgrounds, and they frequently used colloquial expressions in their poetry. They are referred to as water carrier (*saqqā*), sparrow dealer (*osfori*), saddler (*sarrāj*), bodyguard (*jāndār*), oculist (*kaḥḥāl*), blanket maker (*lehāfi*), etc., which illustrates the overall use of Persian in that region. Chapter eleven of the anthology contains interesting details about the everyday life of the common people, their clothing, the cosmetics used by women, the games people played and their usual recreational practices such as pigeon fancying (*kabutar-bāzi*; p. 444), even-or-odd game (*taq yā joft bāzi*; p. 446), exercising with a sledgehammer (*potk zadan*; p. 443), and archery (*tir-andāzi*; p. 444). There are also descriptions of the various kinds of musical instruments such as *daf* (tambourine; see **DAF[F] and DĀYERA**), *ney* (reed pipe), and *čang* (harp), besides details of how these instruments were held by the performers (pp. 150-63). One even finds in this anthology details of people's everyday living practices such as using a pumice (*sang-e pā*) to scrub the sole of their feet and *gel-e saršur* to wash their hair (pp. 440-41).

Nozhat al-majāles suffers from certain structural shortcomings. The overriding concern of the author has been to arrange the quatrains strictly according to their contents, therefore paying little heed to the names of the poets of the verses. This has occasionally led to the attribution of a particular quatrain to two different persons. The scribe has not been very careful in doing his work either. He has apparently transcribed all of the available poetry first and then added the names of their poets so haphazardly that the name of a poet is sometimes mentioned either further down or further up than the place where his quatrains are located. Some of the errors and oversights have been identified in the edited version, and, following the publication of the text, Sayyed 'Ali Mir-Afzali pointed out a number of other errors missed by the editor (see bibliography).

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Idem, “*Nozhat al-majāles*-e Jamāl-al-Din Ḳalīl Šarvāni,” *Rāhnemā-ye ketāb* 15/7-9, 1972, pp. 569-84.

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Abu'l-Majd Moḥammad b. Maḥmud Tabrizi, *Safina-ye Tabriz*, facsimile ed., Tehran, 2002. Sa‘id Nafisi, *Naẓm o naṭr*, pp. 176-77.

Christian Herrnhold Rempis, *Omar Chajjām und seine Vierzeiler*, Tübingen and New York, 1935.

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(Moḥammad Amin Riāḡi)

December 15, 2008

(Mohammad Amin Riahi, “Nozhat al-Majales” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

Thus books like Nozhat al-Majales show that the people in the Arran and Sherwan region spoke regional Iranian dialects and were fully part of the Persian cultural milieu. Such a book as Nozhat al-Majales does not exist from the area in Turkish because at that time. This is because the urban dwellers of major cities were Persian culturally and spoke Iranian dialects. Thus the book is a decisive proof about the culture of the area and ends any speculation by politicized authors.

As shown by the Nozhat al-Majales, we note that not only court poets, but everyday people who have various trades and works, women, and etc. have left us a glimpse of the prevalent Iranian culture of the area at one time. Every day words like “Sang-pa” and “Gel-e-Sarshur” shows that Persian and Iranian languages were the native language of

Ganja (where 24 poets are mentioned in this book alone which by itself is sufficient since politicized authors cannot even demonstrate a single Turkish verse from any author from that era) and urban Islamic areas of Arran and Sherwan. As noted by the major scholar of this work (Shaadravan Mohammad Amin Riahi, a native of Khoy in Iran): “*Nozhat al-mājales* is thus a mirror of the social conditions at the time, reflecting the full spread of Persian language and the culture of Iran throughout that region, clearly evidenced by the common use of spoken idioms in poems as well as the professions of the some of the poets (see below). The influence of the northwestern Pahlavi language, for example, which had been the spoken dialect of the region, is clearly observed in the poems contained in this anthology.”

It is obvious that if there was a sophisticated urban Turkic culture in the region at the time (beyond the nomadic Oghuz tribes who were arriving), then one would have an equivalent work as the *Nozhat al-Majales* in Turkish. Thus the important of *Nozhat al-Majales* for the study of the region’s history as well as the study of some of the more uncommon symbols of poetry used from the areas of Sherwan and Arran cannot be underestimated.

Even according to Russian sources (“Caucasus in IV-XI centuries” in Rostislav Borisovich Rybakov (editor), *History of the East*. 6 volumes. v. 2. “East during the Middle Ages: Chapter V., 2002. – ISBN 5-02-017711-3.

<http://www.kulichki.com/~gumilev/HE2/he2103.htm>)

Пестрое в этническом плане население левобережной Албании в это время все больше переходит на персидский язык. Главным образом это относится к городам Арана и Ширвана, как стали в IX-X вв. именоваться два главные области на территории Азербайджана. Что касается сельского населения, то оно, по-видимому, в основном сохраняло еще долгое время свои старые языки, родственные современным дагестанским, прежде всего лезгинскому.

Translation:

The multi-ethnic population of Albania left-bank at this time is increasingly moving to the Persian language. Mainly this applies to cities of Aran and Shirwan, as begin from 9-10 centuries named two main areas in the territory of Azerbaijan. With regard to the rural population, it would seem, mostly retained for a long time, their old languages, related to modern Daghestanian family, especially Lezgin.

And we already mentioned Diakonov:

[http://uni-persona.src.msui.edu/~djakonov/posl_gl.htm Дьяконов, Игорь Михайлович. Книга воспоминаний. Издательство "Европейский дом", Санкт-Петербург, 1995., 1995]. - ISBN 5-85733-042-4. стр. 730-731 [[Igor Diakonov]]. The book of memoirs: (Nizami) was not Azeri but Persian (Iranian) poet, and though he lived in presently Azerbaijani city of Ganja, which, like many cities in the region, had Iranian population in Middle Ages. (russian text: (Низами) был не азербайджанский, а персидский (иранский) поэт, хотя жил он в ныне азербайджанском городе Гяндже, которая, как и большинство здешних городов, имела в Средние века иранское население)..

Late 15th century Persian poets like Badr Shirwan who has left 12500 Persian lines and 60 Turkish and dozens or so of verses in the peculiar Persian Kenarab dialect show

examples of Iranian dialects in the region. For example Badr Sherwani has poetry in the Kenarab Persian dialect.

We should also mention the many Iranic words collected in a medical dictionary by a person from Shirwan. The book *Dastur al-Adwiyah* written around 1400 A.D. also lists some of these native words for plants in Shirwan, Beylakan, Arran: [Shang](#), [Babuneh](#), [Bahmanak](#), [Shirgir](#), [KurKhwarah](#), [Handal](#), [Harzeh](#), [Kabudlah](#) (Beylakani word, standard Persian: [Kabudrang](#)), [Moshkzad](#), [Kharime](#), [Bistam](#), [Kalal](#). (Sadeqi, Ali Ashraf, “*New words from the Old Language of Arran, Shirvan and Azerbaijan*” (in Persian), *Iranian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 17, No 1(33), pp 22-41, 1381/2002). Usually words for native plants and fish (ShurMahi/SorMahi) would be a word from the native language of the region and this shows the wide usage of Iranic dialects in the region at the time. As shown by the *Nozhat al-Majales*, also words for food, games, music instruments and everyday cultural items, hobbies and jobs are also all in Persian. Thus making it clear that in Arran and Sherwan as mentioned by al-Muqaddesi and other travelers, Persian and Iranic languages were predominant.

Mention should also be made of Kurds, since Nizami’s maternal uncle was Kurdish as well as his mother and possibly his father.

Vladimir Minorsky writes (V. Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, Cambridge University Press, 1957. pg 34):

“The author of the collection of documents relating to Arran Mas’ud b. Namdar (c. 1100) claims Kurdish nationality. The mother of the poet Nizami of Ganja was Kurdish (see autobiographical digression in the introduction of *Layli wa Majnun*). In the 16th century there was a group of 24 septes of Kurds in Qarabagh, see *Sharaf-nama*, I, 323. Even now the Kurds of the USSR are chiefly grouped south of Ganja. Many place-names composed with Kurd are found on both banks of the Kur”

Indeed the Kurdish presence goes back to at least Shaddadid times. According to Dr. Sadeqi: “Masudi points to the presence of Kurds in Armenia, Aran, Beylakan and Darband. Ibn Fiqiyeh, when describing the conquest of Arran and Balasagan (a region located for the most part south of the lower course of the rivers Kura and the Aras (Araxes), bordered on the south by Atropatene and on the east by the Caspian Sea.) mentions Salman ibn Rabi’a inviting the Kurds of Balasagan to Islam. Baladhuri also mentions the Kurds of Balasagan, Sabalan and Satrudan. Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal also mention the Bab al-Ikrad near Barda’. Baladhuri also mentions the Nahr-e-Akrad (Kurdish river) in Armenia. Shaddadids which ruled over parts of Armenia and Arran were also Kurds” (Sadeqi Ali Ashraf, “The conflict between Persian and Turkish in Arran and Shirvan”, *Iranian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (35), pp 1-12, 2003)

The *Encyclopedia of Islam* also states:

Mas’udi (about 332/943) and Istakhri (340/951) are the first to give systematic information about the Kurds. In the *Murudj al-dhahab* (iii, 253) Mas’udi enumerates the following tribes: at Dinawar and Hamadhan: Shuhdjan; at Kangawar: Maddjurdan; in Adharbaydjan (so the text should be emended): Hadhabani and Sarat (probably

Shurat=Khridjis [*q.v.*]; cf. the story of Daysam below); in Djibal: Shadandjan, Lazba (Lurri?), Madandjan, Mazdanakan, Barisan, Khali(Djalali), Djabarki, Djawani and Mustakan; in Syria: Dababila etc.; at Mawsil and Djudi the Christian Kurds: al-Ya'kūbiyya ("Jacobites") and the Djurkan (Djurughan). To this list, the *Tanbīh* of the same author (88-91) only adds Bazindjan (c.f. Istakhri, 155), Nashawira, Budhikan and Kikan (at the present day found near Mar'ash), but he gives a list of the places where there were Kurds: the *rumūm* (*zumūm?*) of Fars, Kirman, Sidjistan, Khurasan, (Istakhri, 282: a Kurd village in the canton of Asadābād), Iṣfāhān (a section of the Bāzandjān tribe and a flourishing town described as Kurd, Yakubi 275; Istakhri, 125), Djibal, notably Mah Kufa, Mah basra, Mah Sabadhan (Masabadhan) and the two Ighars (i.e. Karadj Abi Dulaf and Burdj), Hamadhan, Shahrizur, with its dependencies Darabad and Shamghan (Zimkān), Adharbaydjan, Armenia (at Dwin on the Araxes the Kurds lived in houses **built of clay and of stone; Muḩaddasi, 277), Arran (one of the gates of Bardha'a was called Bab al-Akrad and Ibn Miskaawayh says that at the invasion of the Rus in 332/942 the local governor had Kurds under his command), Baylakan, Bab al-Abwab (Darband), al-Djazira, Syria and al-Thughur (i.e. the line of fortresses along the Cilician frontier).**

(Bois, Th.; Minorsky, V.; Bois, Th.; Bois, Th.; MacKenzie, D.N.; Bois, Th. "Kurds, Kurdistan." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007.)

Also Hamdullah Mostowfi mentions the province of Goshtasfi in the Caucasus in the Ilkhanid era. According to Mostowfi, this Caucasus region the adjoining Caspian Sea spoke Pahlavi close to Gilani (Gilaki) and were followers of Imam Shafi'i. Actual quote:

از کنار آب دریا ولایت گشتاسفی است که گشتاسب بن لهراسپ آن را ساخت و نهری بزرگ از آب کر و ارس بریده است و از آن جویها برداشته و بر آن دیهای فراوان ساخته. حاصلش غله، برنج، اندک پنبه و میوه بود مردمش سفیدچهره اند و بر مذهب امام شافعی. زبانیشان پهلوی بخیلانی باز بسته است. حقوق دیوانیش بر امان سابق پیش از ظهور دولت مغول کمابیش صد تومان این زمان بوده است و اکنون صد و هجده هزار و پانصد دینار است و در وجه اقطاعات عساکر که آنرا ساکن اند متفرق باشد

(Mostowfi, Hamdallah. "*Nozhat al-Qolub*". Edit by Muhammad Dabir Sayyaqi. Tahuri publishers, 1957.)

Indeed Nezami Ganjavi himself praises the Eldiguzids as the King of the Persian lands which obviously shows that the area was associated with Iranian people and culture:

در آن بخشش که رحمت عام کردند
 دو صاحب را محمد نام کردند
 یکی ختم نبوت گشته ذاتش
 یکی ختم ممالک بر حیاتش
 یکی برج عرب را تا ابد ماه
 یکی ملک عجم را جاودان شاه

In that day that they bestowed mercy upon all,

*Two great ones were given the name Muhammad,
One who's pure essence was the seal of prophecy,
The other who is the Kingdom's Seal, in his own days
One whose house/zodiac is moon of the Arabs
The other who is the everlasting Shah of Realm of Persians*

In praising the rulers of Shirwan (who sometimes extended their rule beyond Shirwan), Nizami again mentions:

این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان
شروان چه که شهریار ایران

*This book is better to be written
A young peacock is better to have a mate
Specially for a king like the Shah of Shirwan
Not only Shirwan, but the Shahriyar (Prince, Ruler) of all Iran*

Nizami Ganjavi calls upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH &HP):

سوی عجم ران منشین در عرب
زرده روز اینک و شبیدیز شب
ملک برآرای و جهان تازه کن
هر دو جهان را پر از آوازه کن

*Do not stay in Arabia, come to Persia
Here are the light steeds of night and day*

So the area at that time was considered part of the Persian ethnic and cultural region. He has used the term Molk-e-Ajam (Persian realm), 'Ajam (Persia) and Iran for his land.

According to Bosworth: “*But by the 3rd/9th century, the non-Arabs, and above all the Persians, were asserting their social and cultural equality (taswīa) with the Arabs, if not their superiority (tafzīl) over them (a process seen in the literary movement of the Šo' ūbīya). In any case, there was always in some minds a current of admiration for the 'Ajam as heirs of an ancient, cultured tradition of life. Even the great proponent of the Arab cause, Jāhez, wrote a Ketāb al-taswīa bayn al-'Arab wa'l-'Ajam. After these controversies had died down, and the Persians had achieved a position of power in the Islamic world comparable to their numbers and capabilities, “Ajam” became a simple ethnic and geographical designation*”(Encyclopedia Iranica, “Ajam”, Bosworth)

And Khaqani, who was given the title Hessian al-Ajam also uses this term for his homeland and praises one of his patrons as the pride of the Persian land (Molk-e-Ajam):

خواجه و دستور شاه دوار ملک و سپاه

دين عرب را پناه ملك عجم را فخار

“the supporter of the Arab religion (Islam)
The pride of the Persian realm”

and Sa’adi also praises the Atabek Sa’ad ibn Zani ibn Mauwdud as the ruler of Molk-e-Ajam:

وارث ملك عجم اتابك اعظم
سعد ابوبكر سعد زنگی مودود

“The inheritor of the Persian Realm”

The current Turkic Oghuz language spoken in Azerbaijan and Arran has its roots with the Turkoman/Oghuz nomads that arrived in the region during the Seljuq incursions. But this movement was small relative to the bulk of population. However, a large amount of nomads entered the area during the Mongol invasion. But in reality, the steadily replacement of the old Iranian dialects by Turkish takes a turning point around the beginning of the Safavid dynasty’s rule in Persia. Although there are still Tati settlements in Iranian Azerbaijan and Iranian speakers in Arran, which is in the territory of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan. West Azerbaijan region of Iran also was predominantly Kurdish until the Safavid era and even today, Kurds make up between 50 to 70% of its population.

Many Turkic speaking nomads had chosen the green pastures of Azerbaijan, Arran and Shirvan for their settlement during the advent of the Seljuq. However, they only filled in the pasturelands while the farmlands, villages and the cities remained Iranian in language. The linguistic conversion of Azerbaijan had much to do the conversion of the Azeris into Shi’ism, when large number of heterodox Shi’ite Ghezelbash tribes moved from Anatolia, Rum and Syria into the Safavid realm and supported the new dynasty. Even during the Safavid era, Awliya Chelebi of the 17th century mentions “Pahlavi, Dari, Farsi and Dehqani” among the languages of Naxchivan(Sadeqi Ali Ashraf, “The conflict between Persian and Turkish in Arran and Shirvan”, Iranian Journal of Linguistics, Vol. 18, No. 1 (35), pp 1-12, 2003).

Even up to the 20th century, there was a large number of Iranian speakers Tats (Persian), Talysh and Kurds in Arran and Shirwan, but the Turkic linguistic elements by the 20th were predominant and many of these Iranian elements were assimilated into the Azeri-Turkic identity, specially during the USSR era. For example on Tats:

“In the nineteenth century the Tats were settled in large homogeneous groups. The intensive processes of assimilation by the Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis cut back the territory and numbers of the Tats. In 1886 they numbered more than 120,000 in Azerbaijan and 3,600 in Daghestan. According to the census of 1926 the number of Tats in Azerbaijan (despite the effect of natural increase) had dropped to 28,500, although there were also 38,300 “Azerbaijanis” with Tat as their native language.”

(World Culture Encyclopedia: “Tats”,

<http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Tats-Orientation.html> accessed Dec, 2007)

(Natalia G. Volkova “Tats” in Encyclopedia of World Culture, Editor: David Publisher, New York: G.K. Hall, Prentice Hall International, 1991-1996).

Abbas Qoli Agha Bakikhanov, a 19th century literary figure from the Caucasia mentions in his Golestan Iram large number of Tats in the area around Baku:

There are eight villages in Tabarsaran which are: Jalqan, Rukan, Maqatir, Kamakh, Ridiyan, Homeydi, Mata'i, and Bilhadi. They are in the environs of a city that Anushiravan built near the wall of Darband. Its remains are still there. They speak the Tat language, which is one of the languages of Old Persia. It is clear that they are from the people of Fars and after its destruction they settled in those villages. ..The districts situated between the two cities of Shamakhi and Qodyal, which is now the city of Qobbeh, include Howz, Lahej, and Qoshunlu in Shirvan and Barmak, Sheshpareh and the lower part of Boduq in Qobbeh, and all the country of Baku, except six villages of Turkmen, speak Tat. It becomes apparent from this that they originate from Fars.

(Floor, Willem. and Javadi, Hasan. i(2009), "The Heavenly Rose-Garden: A History of Shirvan & Daghestan by Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov, Mage Publishers, 2009)

Original Persian:

در صفحه 18 کتاب مذکور آمده است: هشت قریه در طبرسران که جلقان و روکال و مقاطر و کماخ و زیدیان و حمیدی و مطاعی و بیلجادی باشد، در حوالی شهری که انوشیروان در محل متصل به دریند تعمیر کرده بود و آثار آن هنوز معلوم است، زبان تات دارند، ایضا در صفحه 19 کتاب یاد شده آمده است: محلات واقع در میان بلوکیں شماخی و قدیال که حالا شهر قیه است، مثل حوض و لاهج و قشونلو در شیروان و برمک و شش پاره و پایین بدوق در قیه و تمام مملکت باکو سوای شش قریه ی تراکمه، همین زبان تات را دارند... قسم قریه مملکت قیه سوای قریه ی خنالق که ربانی علیجده دارد و ناحیه ی سموریه و کوره دو محال طبرسران که دره و احمدلو میباشند به اصطلاحات منطقه، زبان مخصوص دارند و اهالی ترک زبان را مغول می نامند.

(Gulistan-i Iram, Baki Khanuf, “*Gulistan-i Iram*”, matn-i ilmi - intiqadi bi-sayy va ihtimam: Abd al-Karim Ali-zadah [va digaran], Bakku: Idarah-i intisharat-i Ilm, 1970.)

On the Talysh, according to Hema Kotecha:

According to a 1926 census, there were 77,039 Talysh in Azerbaijan SSR. From 1959 to 1989, the Talysh were not included as a separate ethnic group in any census, but rather they were included as part of the Turkic-speaking Azerbaijani's, although the Talysh speak an Iranian language. In 1999, the Azerbaijani government claimed there were only 76,800 Talysh in Azerbaijan, but this is believed to be an under-representation given the problems with registering as a Talysh. Some claim that the population of the Talysh inhabiting the southern regions of Azerbaijan is 500,000.

(Hema Kotecha, Islamic and Ethnic Identities in Azerbaijan: Emerging trends and tensions, OSCE, Baku, July 2006.

http://www.osce.org/documents/ob/2006/08/23087_en.pdf)

We already mentioned Kurds and Minorsky's statement on Kurds in Ganja during Shaddadid times and even in the south of Ganja during modern times.

Svante Cornell, a writer who researches into the modern Republic of Azerbaijan and is actually accused of pro-Azerbaijani bias also states:

In Azerbaijan, the Azeris presently make up over 90 per cent; Dagestani peoples form over 3 per cent and Russians 2.5 per cent. 6 These figures approximate the official position; however, in reality the size of the Dagestani Lezgin community in Azerbaijan is unknown, officially put at 200,000 but according to Lezgin sources substantially larger. The Kurdish population is also substantial, according to some sources over 10 per cent of the population; in the south there is a substantial community of the Iranian ethnic group, of Talysh, possibly some 200,000–400,000 people.

(Cornell, Svante E. *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Richmond, Surrey, GBR: Curzon Press Limited, 2000.)

It is this author's opinion, if the subsequent USSR assimilation policies of the last 80-100 years were not upheld in the historical Arran and Shirvan, approximately 20% or more of the modern population of the Republic of Azerbaijan would be speaking an Iranian language. However this deserves its own study and the goal of this article is to examine historical facts without being involved in modern politics.

Iranic languages and people of Azerbaijan

The Turkification of Arran/Ganja has some similarities to that of historical Azerbaijan. Although both places were primarily used in the beginning as a pass to the wider pastures of Anatolia, but they were also Turkified through a long list of Turkic dynasties as well as the fact that they provided some pasture grounds for the Turkic nomads entering via Central Asia. Linguistic Turkification of Azerbaijan was a complex and multistage process. Diakonov has already stated that the population of urban centers like Ganja at the time of Nizami Ganjavi was Iranian.

According to Vladimir Minorsky:

*“The original sedentary population of Azarbayjan consisted of a mass of peasants and at the time of the Arab conquest was compromised under the semi-contemptuous term of Uluj(“non-Arab”)-somewhat similar to the raya(*ri’aya) of the Ottoman empire. The only arms of this peaceful rustic population were slings; see Tabari, II, 1379-89. They spoke a number of dialects (Adhari (Azari), Talishi) of which even now there remains some islets surviving amidst the Turkish speaking population. It was this basic population on which Babak leaned in his revolt against the caliphate”*

(V. Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, Cambridge University Press, 1957, pg 112).

The process of Turkification as mentioned was long and complex and there are still remnants of Tati and other Iranian languages in Caucasia and NW Iran. It is worthwhile to give an overview of the linguistic Turkification of Azerbaijan and some of the historical attestations. Also it is worthwhile to give samples of the ancient language of Azerbaijan. Since Azerbaijan is the closest region to Caucasia, one may assume that the Turkification of Arran took a similar path. Although in Arran, both Caucasian and Iranian elements were present, but the Caucasian elements around Ganja had a Christian culture and the Muslim high culture at the time in and around Ganja was that of Iranian culture and Muslim Iranian dynasties ruled the area before arrival of the Seljuqs.

Ebn al-Moqaffa' (d. 142/759) is quoted by Ibn Al-Nadim in his famous Al-Fihrist that the language of Azerbaijan is Fahlavi and Azerbaijan is part of the region of Fahlah (alongside Esfahan, Rayy, Hamadan and Maah-Nahavand):

ابن نديم در الفهرست مي نويسد:

فأما الفهلوية فمنسوب إلى فهلها اسم يقع على خمسة بلدان وهي أصفهان والري وهمدان وماه نهاوند وأذربيجان وأما الدرية فلغة مدن المدائن وبها كان يتكلم من بياض الملك وهي منسوبة إلى حاضرة الباب والغالب عليها من لغة أهل خراسان والمشرق و اللغة أهل بلخ وأما الفارسية فتكلم بها الموأبة والعلماء وأشباههم وهي لغة أهل فارس وأما الخوزية فيها كان يتكلم الملوك والأشراف في الخلوة ومواضع اللعب واللذة ومع الحاشية وأما السريانية فكان يتكلم بها أهل السواد والمكاتبه في نوع من اللغة بالسرياني فارسي

(=) اما فهلوي منسوب است به فهلها كه نام نهاده شده است بر پنج شهر: اصفهان و ري و همدان و ماه نهاوند و آذربايجان. و دري لغت شهرهاي مداين است و درباريان پادشاه بدان زبان سخن مي گفتند و منسوب است به مردم دربار و لغت اهل خراسان و مشرق و لغت مردم بلخ بر آن زبان غالب است. اما فارسي كلامي است كه موبدان و علما و مانند ايشان بدان سخن گویند و آن زبان مردم اهل فارس باشد. اما خوزي زباني است كه ملوك و اشراف در خلوت و مواضع لعب و لذت با نديمان و حاشيت خود گفت و گو کنند. اما سرياني آن است كه مردم سواد بدان سخن رانند).

Source:

ابن نديم، محمد بن اسحاق: «فهرست»، ترجمه ي رضا تجدد، انتشارات ابن سينا، (1346)

Ibn Nadeem, "Fihrist", Translated by Reza Tajaddod, Ibn Sina publishers, 1967.

A very similar explanation is given by the medieval historian Hamzeh Isfahani when talking about Sassanid Iran. Hamzeh Isfahani writes in the book *Al-Tanbih 'ala Hoduth al-Tashif* that five "tongues" or dialects, were common in Sassanian Iran: Fahlavi, Dari, Farsi (Persian), Khuzi and Soryani. Hamzeh (893-961 A.D.) explains these dialects in the following way:

Fahlavi was a dialect which kings spoke in their assemblies and it is related to Fahlah. This name is used to designate five cities of Iran, Esfahan, Rey, Hamadan, Maah Nahavand, and Azerbaijan. Farsi (Persian) is a dialect which was spoken by the clergy (Zoroastrian) and those who associated with them and is the language of the cities of Fars. Dari is the dialect of the cities of Ctesiphon and was spoken in the kings'/darbariyan/ 'courts'. The root of its name is related to its use; /darbar/ 'court* is implied in /dar/. The vocabulary of the natives of Balkh was dominant in this language, which includes the dialects of the eastern peoples. Khuzi is associated with the cities of Khuzistan where kings and dignitaries used it in private conversation and during leisure time, in the bath houses for instance.

(Mehdi Marashi, Mohammad Ali Jazayery, Persian Studies in North America: Studies in Honor of Mohammad Ali Jazayery, Ibex Publishers, Inc, 1994. pg 255)

Ibn Hawqal (d. ca 981) states:

“the language of the people of Azerbaijan and most of the people of Armenia is Iranian (al-faressya), which binds them together, while Arabic is also used among them; among those who speak al-faressya (here he seemingly means Persian, spoken by the elite of the urban population), there are few who do not understand Arabic; and some merchants and landowners are even adept in it”.

(E. Yarshater, “Azeri: Iranian language of Azerbaijan” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

It should be noted that Ibn Hawqal mentions that some areas of Armenia are controlled by Muslims and others by Christians. So unlike what some scholars state, we believe he means Caucasus as those were areas controlled by Christian kingdoms at that time.

Reference: Ibn Hawqal, Surat al-Ardh. Translation and comments by: J. Shoar, Amir Kabir Publishers, Iran. 1981.

Estakhri of 10th century also states in his

“In Aderbeijan, Armenia and Arran they speak Persian and Arabic, except for the area around the city of Dabil: they speak Armenian around that city, and in the country of Barda people speak Arranian.”

Original Arabic:

و لسان اذربيجان و ارمينية و الران الفارسيه و العربيه غير ان اهل دبيل و حواليتها يتكلمون
بالارمنيه، و نواحى بردعه لسانهم ارانيه

(Estakhari, Abu Eshaq Ebrahim. Masalek va Mamalek. Bonyad Moqfat Dr. Afshar, Tehran, 1371 (1992-1993))

Al-Muqaddasi (d. late 4th/10th cent.) considers Azerbaijan and Arran as part of the 8th division of lands. He states:

“The languages of the 8th division is Iranian (al-’ajamyya). It is partly Dari and partly convoluted (monqaleq) and all of them are named Persian”

(Al-Muqaddasi, Shams ad-Din Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Ahsan al-Taqasi fi Ma’rifa al-Aqalim, Translated by Ali Naqi Vizieri, Volume One, First Edition, Mu’alifan and Mutarjiman Publishers, Iran, 1981, pg 377.)

المقدسي، شمس الدين ابو عبدالله محمد بن احمد، احسن التقاسيم في معرفه الاقاليم، ترجمه دكتور
علي نقى وزيرى، جلد 1، چاپ اول، انتشارات مؤلفان و مترجمان ايران، 1361، ص 377.

Al-Muqaddasi also writes on the general region of Armenia, Arran and Azerbaijan and states:

“They have big beards, their speech is not attractive. In Arminya they speak Armenian, in al-Ran, Ranian (Aranian); Their Persian is understandable, and is close to Khurasanian (Dari Persian) in sound”

(Al-Muqaddasi, ‘The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions’, a translation of his *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma’rifat al-Aqalim* by B.A. Collins, Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Garnet Publishing Limited, 1994. pg 334).

Thus from Muqaddasi we can see that a regional Persian language was spoken in the area and cross referencing with Estakhri, we can conjecture that this was the main language of the muslim population, specially in the urban areas.

According to C. E. Bosworth:

“North of the Aras, the distinct, presumably Iranian, speech of Arran long survived, called by Ebn Hawqal al-Raniya”

(Azerbaijan: Islamic History to 1941, Encyclopedia Iranica).

Although we do not have any manuscripts of al-Raniya to really judge the nature of this dialect (weather it was a dialect of Parthian or Iranian languages, or was it a Caucasian language or non-standard dialect of Armenian?), nearby the Kur river, in the town of Barda' in Arran:

“The fertile rural environs produced much fruit (with a particularly noted variety of figs), nuts, and also the dyestuff madder (rūnās), which was exported as far as India. In the Kor and other nearby rivers, the sturgeon (sormāhī from Persian šūrmāhī, salt fish) and other tasty fish were caught; and there was extensive production of textiles, including silks (see Ebn Hawqal, pp. 337-39, 347, 349, tr. Kramers, II, pp. 330-32, 340, 342; Maqdesī, [Moqaddasī], p. 375; Hodūd al-Aālam, tr. Minorsky, pp. 143-44, secs. 36.21, 36.30; R. B. Serjeant, Islamic Textiles. Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest, Beirut, 1972, p. 69)”

(Barda, Encyclopedia Iranica, Bosworth).

The word *sormāhī* which Prof. Bosworth derives from Shurmahi in Persian could actually be red fish (sor/suhr being the Pahlavi for red which in modern Persian is Surkh). Al-Muqaddasi translates the “Monday” to Yam al-Ithnayn which in Persian and Iranian dialects is Doshanbeh (the second day). An important point to mention is that Ganja like many other pre-Seljuq toponyms has an Iranian name, which naturally reflects the fact that it was founded by Iranian settlers (C.E. Bosworth, “Ganja”, Encyclopedia Iranica). One should also mention the native Iranian (Parthian/Persian) dynasty which ruled over the area of Arran up to at least the 8th century.

Al-Mas'udi the Arab Historian States:

“The Persians are a people whose borders are the Mahat Mountains and Azarbaijan up to Armenia and Arran, and Bayleqan and Darband, and Ray and Tabaristan and Masqat and Shabaran and Jorjan and Abarshahr, and that is Nishabur, and Herat and Marv and other places in land of Khorasan, and Sejjistan and Kerman and Fars and Ahvaz...All these lands were once one kingdom with one sovereign and one language...although the language differed slightly. The language, however, is one, in that its letters are written the same way and used the same way in composition. There are, then, different languages such as Pahlavi, Dari, Azari, as well as other Persian languages.”

Source:

Al Mas'udi, Kitab al-Tanbih wa-l-Ishraf, De Goeje, M.J. (ed.), Leiden, Brill, 1894, pp. 77-8.

Thus Masu'di testifies to the Iranian presence in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan during the 10th century and even names a local Iranian dialect called Azari.

Original Arabic from www.alwaraq.net:

فالفرس أمة حد بلادها الجبال من الماهات و غيرها و آذربيجان إلى ما يلي بلاد أرمينية و أران و البيلقان إلى دربند و هو الباب والأبواب و الري و طبرستن و المسقط و الشابران و جرجان و ابرشهر، و هي نيسابور، و هراة و مرو و غير ذلك من بلاد خراسان و سجستان و كرمان و فارس و الأهواز، و ما اتصل بذلك من أرض الأعاجم في هذا الوقت و كل هذه البلاد كانت مملكة واحدة ملكها ملك واحد و لسانها واحد، إلا أنهم كانوا يتباينون في شيء يسير من اللغات و ذلك أن اللغة إنما تكون واحدة بأن تكون حروفها التي تكتب واحدة و تأليف حروفها تأليف واحد، و إن اختلفت بعد ذلك في سائر الأشياء الأخر كالفهلوية و الدرية و الأذرية و غيرها من لغات الفرس.

Ahmad ibn Yaqubi mentions that the People of Azerbaijan are a mixture of 'Ajam-i Azari (Ajam is a term that developed to mean Iranian) of Azaris and old Javedanis (followers of Javidan the son of Shahrak who was the leader of Khurramites and succeeded by Babak Khorramdin).

Source:

Yaqubi, Ahmad ibn Abi, Tarikh-i Yaqubi tarjamah-i Muhammad Ibrahim Ayati, Intisharat Bungah-i Tarjomah o Nashr-i Kitab, 1969.

“Zakarrya b. Mohammad Qazvini’s report in Athar al-Bilad, composed in 674/1275, that “no town has escaped being taken over by the Turks except Tabriz”(Beirut ed., 1960, p. 339) one may infer that at least Tabriz had remained aloof from the influence of Turkish until the time”.

(“Azari: The Iranian Language of Azerbaijan”in Encyclopedia Iranica by E. Yarshater <http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v3f3/v3f2a88b.html>)

“From the time of the Mongol invasion, most of whose armies were composed of Turkic tribes, the influence of Turkish increased in the region. On the other hand, the old Iranian dialects remained prevalent in major cities. Hamdallah Mostowafi writing in the 1340s calls the language of Maraqa as “modified Pahlavi”(Pahlavi-ye Mughayyar). Mostowafi calls the language of Zanjan (Pahlavi-ye Raast). The language of Gushtaspi covering the Caspian border region between Gilan to Shirvan is called a Pahlavi language close to the language of Gilan”.

Source:

(“Azari: The Iranian Language of Azerbaijan”in Encyclopedia Iranica by E. Yarshater <http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v3f3/v3f2a88b.html>)

Ahmad ibn Yaqubi mentions that the People of Azerbaijan are a mixture of 'Ajam-i Azari (Ajam is a term that developed to mean Iranian) of Azaris and old Javedanis (followers of Javidan the son of Shahrak who was the leader of Khurramites and succeeded by Babak Khorramdin).

(Yaqubi, Ahmad ibn Abi, Tarikh-i Yaqubi tarjamah-i Muhammad Ibrahim Ayati, Intisharat Bungah-i Tarjomah o Nashr-i Kitab, 1969.)

Probably the best proof of Iranian language, culture and heritage of the Muslims of that time are the books of Safinaye Tabriz and Nozhat al-Majales. Both of these will be discussed later and provide a complete mirror of the culture and language of the area.

Language of Tabriz as a special case

The language of Tabriz, being an Iranian language, was not the standard Khurasani Dari. Qatran Tabrizi has an interesting verse mentioning this in a couplet:

بلبل به سان مطرب بیدل فراز گل
گه پارسی نواز، گاهی زند دری

Translation:

The nightingale is on top of the flower like a minstrel who has lost its heart
It bemoans sometimes in Parsi (Persian) and sometimes in Dari (Khurasani Persian)

Source:

ریاحی خویی، محمدامین، «ملاحظات دربارہ زبان کهن آذربایجان»: *اطلاعات سیاسی-اقتصادی*، شماره 181-182

(Riyahi Khoi, Mohammad Amin. "Molehezati darbaareyeh Zabaan-i Kohan Azerbaijan" (Some comments on the ancient language of Azerbaijan), 'Itilia' at Siyasi Magazine, volume 181-182)

Also available at:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/26.pdf>

There are extant words, phrases and sentences attested in the old Iranian dialect of Tabriz in a variety of books and manuscripts. Here are some examples:

Hamdullah Mostowafi mentions a sentence in the language of Tabriz:

انگور خلوقی بی چه در، در سوه اندرین

یک جمله از زبان تبریزیان در نزهةالقلوب حمدالله مستوفی: "تبارزه اگر صاحب حُسنی را با لباس ناسزا یابند، گویند "انگور خلوقی بی چه در، در سوه اندرین"; یعنی انگور خلوقی (انگوری مرغوب) است در سید دریده "pg 98

Translation:

"The Tabrizians if they see a fortunate man in an uncouth clothes say: He is like a fresh grape in a ripped fruit basket."

Source:

مستوفی، حمدالله: «نزهةالقلوب»، به کوشش محمد دبیرسیاقی، انتشارات طهوری، 1336

Mostowafi, Hamdallah. Nozhat al-Qolub. Edit by Muhammad Dabir Sayyaqi. Tahuri Publishing, 1957.

A *mulama* 'poem (meaning 'colourful', which is popular in Persian poetry where some verses are in one language and others in another language) from Homam Tabrizi where some verses are in Khorasani (Dari) Persian and others are in the dialect of Tabriz:

بدیدم چشم مستت رفتم از دست
کوام و آذر دلی کویا بتی مست
دلأم خود رفت و می دانم که روژی
به مهرت هم بشی خوش کیانم از دست
به آب زندگی ای خوش عبارت
لوانت لاود جمن دیل و کیان بست
دمی بر عاشق خود مهربان شو
کزی سر مهرورزی کست و نی کست
به عشقات گر همام از جان برآید
موازش کان بوان بمرت وارست
کرم خا و ابری بشم بوینی
به بویت خته بام ژاهنام

Source:

انصاف پور، غلامرضا: "تاریخ تبار و زبان آذربایجان"، انتشارات فکر روز، 1377

Gholam Reza Ensafpur, "Tarikh o Tabar Zaban-i Azarbaijan" (The history and roots of the language of Azarbaijan), Fekr-I Rooz Publishers, 1998 (1377).

Another ghazal from Homam Tabrizi where all the couplets except the last couplet is in Persian, the last couplet reads:

«وهار و ول و دیم یار خوش بی // اوی یاران مه ول بی مه وهاران»

Transliteration:

Wahar o wol o Dim yaar khwash Bi
Awi Yaaraan, mah wul Bi, Mah Wahaaraan

Translation:

*The Spring and Flowers and the face of the friend are all pleaseant
But without the friend, there are no flowers or any spring.*

Source:

کارنگ، عبدالعلی: «تاتی و هرزنی، دو لهجه از زبان باستان آذربایجان»، تبریز، 1333

Karang, Abdul Ali. "Tati, Harzani, two dialects from the ancient language of Azerbaijan", Tabriz, 1333. 1952.

Another recent discovery by the name of Safina-yi Tabriz has given sentences from native of Tabriz in their peculiar Iranic dialect. A sample expression of from the mystic Baba Faraj Tabrizi in the Safina:

انانک قدهي فرجشون فعالم آندره اووارادا چاشمش نه پيف قدم کينستا نه پيف حدوث

Standard Persian (translated by the author of Safina himself):

چندانک فرج را در عالم آورده‌اند چشم او نه بر قدم افتاده است نه بر حدوث

Modern English:

They brought Faraj in this world in such a way that his eye is neither towards pre-eternity nor upon createdness.

Source:

منوچهر مرتضوی، زبان دیرین آذربایجان، بنیاد موقوفات دکتر افشار، 1384.

Mortazavi, Manuchehr. Zaban-e-Dirin Azerbaijan (On the Old language of Azerbaijan). Bonyad Moqufaat Dr. Afshar. 2005(1384).

Indeed the Safina is a bible of the culture of Tabriz which was compiled in the Il-khanid era. It is a clear testament and proof that no trace of Turkic culture, folklore and language was present in Tabriz during the Ilkhanid era.

A sample poem in which the author of the Safina writes “Zaban Tabrizi”(Language of Tabriz):

دَچان چو چرخ نکویت مو ایر رهشه مهر دورش
چوش دَ کارده شکویت ولول ودارد سر یوه
پری بقهر اره میر دون جو پور زون هنرمند
پروکری آنزوتون منی که آن هزیوه
اکیز بخت ورامرو کی چرخ هانزمویتی
ژرور منشی چو بخت اهون قدریوه
نه چرخ استه نبوتی نه روزو ورو فوتی
زوم چو واش خللیوه زمم حو بورضی ربوه

Sadeqi, Ali Ashraf. "Chand She'r beh Zaban-e Karaji, Tabrizi wa Ghayreh" (Some poems in the language of Karaji and Tabrizi and others), *Majalla-ye Zabanshenasi*, 9, 1379./2000, pp.14-17.

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/zabankarajitabrizi.pdf>

A sentence in the dialect of Tabriz (the author calls Zaban-I Tabriz (dialect/language of Tabriz) recorded and also translated by Ibn Bazzaz Ardabili in the *Safvat al-Safa*:

«علیشاه چو در آمد گستاخ وار شیخ را در کنار گرفت و گفت حاضر باش بزبان تبریزی گو
حریف ژاته یعنی سخن بصرغ بگو حریت رسیده است. در این گفتن دست بر کتف مبارک
شیخ زد شیخ را غیرت سر بر کرد»

The sentence "Gu Harif(a/e)r Zhaatah" is mentioned in Tabrizi dialect.

Source:

Rezazadeh, Rahim Malak. "The Azari Dialect" (Guyesh-I Azari), Anjuman Farhang Iran Bastan publishers, 1352(1973).

A sentence in the dialect of Tabriz by Pir Hassan Zehtab Tabrizi addressing the Qara-Qoyunlu ruler Eskandar:

يك جمله از «پير حسن زهتاب تبریزی» خطاب به اسکندر قراقویونلو: «اسکندر! رودم
کشتی، رودت کشاد!» (= اسکندر! فرزندم را کشتی. خدا فرزندت را بکشد) (ریاحی
خویی، ص 31)

"Eskandar! Roodam Koshti, Roodat Koshaad"
(Eskandar! You killed my son, may your son perish")

Source:

ریاحی خویی، محمدامین، «ملاحظات دربارہی زبان کهن آذربایجان»: *اطلاعات سیاسی*
-اقتصادی، شماره 181-182

Riyahi, Mohammad Amin. "Molahezati darbaareyeh Zabaan-I Kohan Azerbaijan" (Some comments on the ancient language of Azerbaijan), 'Itilia' at *Siyasi Magazine*, volume 181-182.

Also Available at:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/26.pdf>

The word Rood for son is still used in some Iranian dialects, specially the Larestani dialect and other dialects around Fars.

Four quatrains titled Fahlaviyat from Khwaja Muhammad Kojjani (d. 677/1278-79); born in Kojjan or Korjan, a village near Tabriz, recorded by Abd-al-Qader Maraghi

(Fahlaviyat in Encyclopedia Iranica by Dr. Ahmad Taffazoli,
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)

(Dr. A. A. Sadeqi, "Ash'ar-e mahalli-e Jame'al-Alhaann,"Majalla-ye zaban-shenasi 9,
1371./1992, pp. 54-64/
<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/AshrafSadeqiasharmahalimaraqi.pdf>
).

A sample of one of the four quatrains from Khwaja Muhammad Kojjani

همه کیژی نهند خُشتی بَخُشتی
بنا اج چو گه دستِ گیژی و نیژه
همه پیغمبران خُو بی و چو کی
محمد مصطفی کیژی و نیژه

Two qet'as (poems) quoted by Abd-al-Qader Maraghi in the dialect of Tabriz (d. 838
A.H./1434-35 C.E.; II, p. 142)

(Fahlaviyat in Encyclopedia Iranica by Ahmad Taffazoli,
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)
(A. A. Sadeqi, "Ash'ar-e mahalli-e Jame'al-Alhaann,"Majalla-ye zaban-shenasi 9,
1371./1992, pp. 54-64.
<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/AshrafSadeqiasharmahalimaraqi.pdf>)

رُورم پری بجولان
نو کُو بَمَن وُرارده
وی خَد شدیم بدامش
هیذا آوو وُرارده

A ghazal and fourteen quatrains under the title of Fahlaviyat by the poet Maghrebi
Tabrizi (d. 809/1406-7)

(Fahlaviyat in Encyclopedia Iranica by Dr. Ahmad Taffazoli,
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)
(M.-A. Adib Tusi "Fahlavyat-e Magrebi Tabrizi,"NDA Tabriz 8, 1335/1956
<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/fahlaviyaatmaghrebitabrizi.pdf>)

A text probably by Mama Esmat Tabrizi, a mystical woman-poet of Tabriz (d. 9th/15th cent.), which occurs in a manuscript, preserved in Turkey, concerning the shrines of saints in Tabriz.

Adib Tusi, “Fahlawiyat-e- Mama Esmat wa Kashfi be-zaban Azari estelaah-e raayi yaa shahri”, NDA, Tabriz 8/3, 1335/1957, pp 242-57.

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/fahlaviyaatmamaesmat.pdf>

An interesting phrase “Buri Buri”(which in Persian means “Biya Biya”or in English “Come! Come!”) is mentioned by Rumi from the mouth of Shams Tabrizi in this poem:

«ولی ترجیع پنجم در نیایم جز به دستوری
که شمس الدین تبریزی بفرماید مرا **بوری**
مرا گوید **بیا**، بوری که من باغم تو زنبوری
که تا خونت غسل گردد که تا مومت شود نوری»

The word “Buri”is mentioned by Hussain Tabrizi Karbalai with regards to the Shaykh Khwajah Abdul-Rahim Azh-Abaadi:

در روضات الجنان، دفتر نخست، ص 115:

«مرقد و مزار...خواجه عبدالرحیم اژآبادی...در سرخاب مشخص و معین است...وی تبریزی اند منسوب به کوچۀ اچاباد(اژآباد) که کوچۀ معینی است در تبریز در حوالی درب اعلی...و از او چنین استماع افتاده که حضرت خواجه در اوایل به صنعت بافندگی ابریشم مشعوری می نموده اند و خالی از جمعیتی و ثروتی نبوده و بسیار اخلاص به درویشان داشته، روزی حضرت بابا مزید وی را دیده و به نظر حقیقت شناخته که در معرف الهی در صدف سینه اش مختفی است، گفته: عبدالرحیم **بوری بوری** یعنی بیا بیا، که دیگران را نان از بازار است و تو را از خانه یعنی کلام تو از الهامات ربانی باشد.»

حافظ حسین کربلائی تبریزی، «روضات الجنان»، بنگاه ترجمه و نشر کتاب، 1344-1349
1970-1965.

Karbalai Tabrizi, Hussein. “Rawdat al-Jinan va Jannat al-Janan”, Bungah-I Tarjumah o Nashr-i Kitab, 1344-49 (1965-1970), 2 volumes.

This word is also mentioned in the Fahlawiyat of Baba Taher. In the Harzandi Iranic dialect of Harzand in Azerbaijan as well as the Iranic Karingani dialect of Azerbaijan, both recorded in the 20th century, the two words “Biri”and “Burah”means to “come”and are of the same root.

Source:

کارنگ، عبدالعلي: «تاتي و هرزني، دو لهجه از زبان باستان آذربايجان»، تبريز، چاپخانه-ی شفق، 1333

Karang, Abdul Ali. “*Tati o Harzani, Do lahje az zabaan-i baastan-i Azerbaijan*”, Shafaq publishers, 1333(1955) (pg 91 and pg 112)

Maragheh

Hamdollah Mostowfi of the 13th century A.D. mentions the language of Maragheh:

حمدالله مستوفي هم که در سده‌هاي هفتم و هشتم هجري مي‌زيست، ضمن اشاره به زبان مردم مراغه مي‌نويسد: «زبانشان پهلوي مغير است»

Interestingly enough, the 17th century A.D. Ottoman Turkish traveler Evliya Chelebi, who visited Safavid Iran, writes: “The majority of the women in Maragheh speak in Pahlavi”.

Source:

رياحي خويي، محمدامين، «ملاحظاتى درباره‌ي زبان كهن آذربايجان»: *اطلاعات سياسي-اقتصادي*، شماره‌ي 181-182

Riyahi, Mohammad Amin. “Molahezaati darbaareyeh Zabaan-I Kohan Azerbaijan”(Some comments on the ancient language of Azerbaijan), ‘Itilia’ at Siyasi Magazine, volume 181-182.

Also available at:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/26.pdf>

Maragheh was the Ilkhanid capital and yet the language is called Fahlavi. Similarly Tabriz was an an important city of the Ilkhanids yet we have references to “Zaban-i Tabrizi” in the Safinayeh Tabriz, in the collected songs of AbdulQadir Maraghi and in the Safwat as-Safa. Thus making it explicitly clear that major urban centers like Tabriz and Maragheh were far from being linguistically Turkicized even in the Ilkhanid era. We believe this to be the case in Arran during the Ilkhanid era. As per Sherwan, the area was under the Sherwanshahs and so it was less Turkicized than Arran and Azerbaijan in the era.

Another look at the linguistic Turkification of Azerbaijan, Arran and Sherwan

There have been two theories with regards to the Turkicization of the Eastern Southern Caucasus (Arran/Sherwan now basically the same as territory of modern republic of Azerbaijan) and Azerbaijan proper (compromising North Western Iran). One theory

states that Turkicization was nearly complete at the end of the Seljuq or Mongol era. By nearly complete, I would presume it means that it was in an advanced stage. The other theory mentions that the advance stage occurred during the Safavid era. The Western sources we found about Seljuq/Mongol era (where supposedly Turkicization was in advanced stage) are usually one line and are not written by experts in the area (who would also need to know Persian and Arabic) and of that medieval period.

A third theory which does not concern us (see also the appendix) is in the actual republic of Azerbaijan where ethno-genesis is a highly political and ideological issue. This theory dates the Turkicization back to the Khazar era or even claiming the Caucasian Albanians and Medes had Turkic components. 60+ years of USSR control and subsequent pan-Turkist nationalist writing had combined history and politics to such a degree that it will take time for the local historians to sort out the truth. However we have tried to examine this issue using Western sources.

There seems to be a sort of contradiction or at least lack of clarity from some Western writers. That is they express uncertainty on when this issue occurred and even the same authors sometimes seem to make different statements in different publications and writings.

Unfortunately, as far as we know, there has not been a recent detailed study on the Turkicization of Azerbaijan, Arran and Sherwan. That is no specialized book (or thesis) has been written on this area. The only substantial work would be that of Kasravi, but Kasravi had no access to Safinaye Tabriz, Nozhat al-Majales, the numerous Fahlaviiyyats (Maghrebi, Mama 'Esmat) and etc. Also he did not have access to many Armenian and Georgian sources that have to light. He had to work with what he had at that time. His main concentration was also on Azerbaijan proper and not Arran/Sherwan.

With regards to some (not all) modern Western sources, there has been some weakness due to lack of detail. Authors have lumped Azerbaijan, Arran and Sherwan together although Turkicization occurred differently in these areas. For example, in terms of Sherwan, the area was never directly ruled by a Turkic dynasty until the demise of the Sherwanshahs during the Safavid era. Authors have not distinguished between nomadic plains (say the Mughan steppes or steppes in Arran and Azerbaijan) and urban city centers. It takes many generation to give up the nomadic lifestyle, for semi-nomadic lifestyle, to rural settlements and finally to urban settlement. Authors have not looked in detail at the differences of Islamic sects. For example in Western Iran (Azerbaijan) unlike Khorasan, the population was mainly Sunni Shafi'i where-as the Turks that entered the region were overwhelmingly Hanafi.

We believe the following scholars are correct based on the primary evidences we have presented thus far.

According to Xavier Planhol, a well known scholar of historical geography (a branch that studies both history and geography and their interaction) and specialist on cultural history of Islam as well nomadicization of Iran, Central Asia and Turkey:

“This unique aspect of Azerbaijan, the only area to have been almost entirely "Turkicized" within Iranian territory, is the result of a complex, progressive cultural and historical process, in which factors accumulated successively (Sümer; Planhol, 1995, pp. 510 -- 12) The process merits deeper analysis of the extent to which it illustrates the great resilience of the land of Iran. The first phase was the amassing of nomads, initially at the time of the Turkish invasions, following the route of penetration along the piedmont south of the Alborz, facing the Byzantine borders, then those of the Greek empire of Trebizond and Christian Georgia. The Mongol invasion in the 13th century led to an extensive renewal of tribal stock, and the Turkic groups of the region during this period had not yet become stable. In the 15th century, the assimilation of the indigenous Iranian population was far from being completed. The decisive episode, at the beginning of the 16th century, was the adoption of Shi'ite Islam as the religion of the state by the Iran of the Safavids, whereas the Ottoman empire remained faithful to Sunnite orthodoxy. Shi'ite propaganda spread among the nomadic Turkoman tribes of Anatolia, far from urban centers of orthodoxy. These Shi'ite nomads returned en masse along their migratory route back to Safavid Iran. This movement was to extend up to southwest Anatolia, from where the Tekelu, originally from the Lycian peninsula, returned to Iran with 15,000 camels. These nomads returning from Ottoman territory naturally settled en masse in regions near the border, and it was from this period that the definitive "Turkicization" of Azerbaijan dates, along with the establishment of the present-day Azeri-Persian linguistic border-not far from Qazvin, only some 150 kilometers from Tehran. (in the 15th century assimilation was still far from complete, has been the adoption of a decisive Shiism in the 16th Century)”

<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/unicode/v13f2/v13f2024i.html>

Professor Ehsan Yarshater who has also studied

“The gradual weakening of Āḍarī began with the penetration of the Persian Azerbaijan by speakers of Turkish. The first of these entered the region in the time of Maḥmūd of Ġazna (Ebn al-Aṭīr [repr.], IX, pp. 383ff.). But it was in the Saljuq period that Turkish tribes began to migrate to Azerbaijan in considerable numbers and settle there (A. Kasravī, Šahrīārān-e gomnām, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956, III, pp. 43ff., And idem, Āḍarī , pp. 18-25). The Turkic population continued to grow under the Ildegozid atabegs of Azerbaijan (531-622/1136-1225), but more particularly under the Mongol il-khans (654-750/1256-1349), the majority of whose soldiery was of Turkic stock and who made Azerbaijan their political center. The almost continuous warfare and turbulence which reigned in Azerbaijan for about 150 years, between the collapse of the Il-khanids and the rise of the Safavids, attracted yet more Turkic military elements to the area. In this period, under the Qara Qoyunlū and Āq Qoyunlū Turkmen (780-874/1378-1469 and 874-908/1469-1502 respectively), Āḍarī lost ground at a faster pace than before, so that even the Safavids, originally an Iranian -speaking clan (as evidenced by the quatrains of Shaikh Šafī-al-dīn, their eponymous ancestor, and by his biography), became Turkified and adopted Turkish as their vernacular. Safavid rule (905-1135/1499-1722), which was initially based on the support of Turkish tribes and the continued backing and influence

of the Qezelbaş even after the regime had achieved a broader base, helped further the spread of Turkish at the detriment of Āḍarī, which receded and ceased to be used, at least in the major urban centers, and Turkish was gradually recognized as the language of Azerbaijan. Consequently the term Āḍarī, or more commonly Azeri, came to be applied by some Turkish authors and, following them, some Western orientalists, to the Turkish of Azerbaijan (a large migration of Turks in 12 century, then age 13, Adar loses position in 16 th century during the Safavid)”

<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/index.isc?Article=http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v3f3/v3f2a88b.html>

According to Fridrik Thordarson:

Iranian influence on Caucasian languages. There is general agreement that Iranian languages predominated in Azerbaijan from the 1st millennium b.c. until the advent of the Turks in a.d. the 11th century (see Menges, pp. 41-42; *Camb. Hist. Iran* IV, pp. 226-28, and VI, pp. 950-52). The process of Turkicization was essentially complete by the beginning of the 16th century, and today Iranian languages are spoken in only a few scattered settlements in the area.

(Fridrick Thordarson, “Caucasus and Iran” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

John Perry:

“We should distinguish two complementary ways in which the advent of the Turks affected the language map of Iran. First, since the Turkish-speaking rulers of most Iranian polities from the Ghaznavids and Seljuks onward were already iranized and patronized Persian literature in their domains, the expansion of Turk-ruled empires served to expand the territorial domain of written Persian into the conquered areas, notably Anatolia and Central and South Asia. Secondly, the influx of massive Turkish-speaking populations (culminating with the rank and file of the Mongol armies) and their settlement in large areas of Iran (particularly in Azerbaijan and the northwest), progressively turkicized local speakers of Persian, Kurdish and other Iranian languages. Although it is mainly the results of this latter process which will be illustrated here, it should be remembered that these developments were contemporaneous and complementary.

2. General Effects of the Safavid Accession

Both these processes peaked with the accession of the Safavid Shah Esmā'il in 1501 CE. He and his successors were Turkish-speakers, probably descended from turkicized Iranian inhabitants of the northwest marches. While they accepted and promoted written Persian as the established language of bureaucracy and literature, the fact that they and their tribal supporters habitually spoke Turkish in court and camp lent this vernacular an unprecedented prestige.”(John Perry. *Iran & the Caucasus*, Vol. 5, (2001), pp. 193-200.

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF TURKISH IN RELATION TO PERSIAN OF IRAN)

So it is ironic that the Safavids, themselves of Iranian fatherline but progressively Turkicized had the decisive role in the Turkicization of Azerbaijan.

Professor Peter Golden states:

"Turkic penetration probably began in the Hunnic era and its aftermath. Steady pressure from Turkic nomads was typical of the Khazar era, although there are no unambiguous references to permanent settlements. These most certainly occurred with the arrival of the Oguz in the 11th century. The Turkicization of much of Azarbayjan, according to Soviet scholars, was completed largely during the Ilxanid period if not by late Seljuk times. Sumer, placing a slightly different emphasis on the data (more correct in my view), posts three periods which Turkicization took place: Seljuk, Mongol and Post-Mongol (Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu and Safavid). In the first two, Oguz Turkic tribes advanced or were driven to the western frontiers (Anatolia) and Northern Azarbaijan (Arran, the Mugan steppe). In the last period, the Turkic elements in Iran (derived from Oguz, with lesser admixture of Uygur, Qipchaq, Qaluc and other Turks brought to Iran during the Chinggisid era, as well as Turkicized Mongols) were joined now by Anatolian Turks migrating back to Iran. This marked the final stage of Turkicization. Although there is some evidence for the presence of Qipchaqs among the Turkic tribes coming to this region, there is little doubt that the critical mass which brought about this linguistic shift was provided by the same Oguz-Turkmen tribes that had come to Anatolia. The Azeris of today are an overwhelmingly sedentary, detribalized people. Anthropologically, they are little distinguished from the Iranian neighbors." (According to the Soviet school turkizatsiya Azerbaijan was completed with Ilhanidah until the mid 14 century, the author takes the point view that it happened later in the Kara-Kuyunlu and Safavid in the 16 st Century) (Peter Golden mentions both theories) (An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples (Peter B. Golden. Otto Harrasowitz, 1992. Pg 386)

We note that Professor Golden states: *"The Turkicization of much of Azarbayjan, according to Soviet scholars, was completed largely during the Ilxanid period if not by late Seljuk times. Sumer, placing a slightly different emphasis on the data (more correct in my view), posts three periods which Turkicization took place"*. We have not looked at his other writings with this regard, however his overview is based on Sumer or USSR sources, which both seem to be outdated. We have found the viewpoint of Xavier Planhol, a brilliant scholar of historical-geography and specialist on Muslim culture to be the most up to date. But even Professor. Planhol provides only a paragraph or two (which is understandable for an Encyclopedia).

Professor Clifford Edmonds Bosworth, a giant in the field also states:

During this later medieval period, the gradual Turkicization of Azerbaijan was favored by the Il-khanids' policy of allotting to their leading commanders land grants (eqtā's, soyurgāls) (cf. I. P. Petrushevsky, in Camb. Hist. Iran V, pp. 518ff.); by the presence of the khans themselves and their entourages in these favored regions of upland pasture, and then of their Turkman epigoni, beginning with the Jalayerids; and finally, by the incoming of fresh waves of Central Asian nomads accompanying Tīmūr on his campaigns to the west.

C.E. Bosworth, “Azerbaijan: History up to 1941”, Encyclopedia Iranica.

In a detailed (as possible) examination of the Turkicization of Arran, Sherwan and Azerbaijan we must look at primary sources as well secondary sources. It appears there were four stages to this process.

First, the Seljuqs who brought with them influx of Oghuz tribes and settled them in grazing lands. However, these had little effect on the urban centers. The best proof of this is the Nozhat al-Majales, Safinayeh Tabrizi and the description provided by Hamdullah Mutsawafi on major cities such as Goshtasfi province, Tabriz, Abhar, Maragheh and etc. However the rulers themselves were Persianized and upheld Persian culture. Also one cannot expect the nomadic Oghuz tribes to settle down overnight in urban centers after many generations of nomadic lifestyle. Rather the first step from nomadism to semi-nomadism is to establish villages and then from semi-nomadism to rural villages takes many other generations and finally from rural villages to urban centers takes some time itself. Thus in terms of urban centers, as witnessed by Nozhat al-Majales and Safinaye Tabrizi, we can say these nomads had no effects. However on the grazing plains, they were assigned some lands. But bulks of these nomadic tribes were sent off to battle Christians in the Caucasus and Anatolia. Thus Azerbaijan proper was probably the least affected. Note in this period, we consider not only Seljuqs, but the whole area of Arran, Sherwan and Azerbaijan up to the Mongol invasion.

Second, the Mongol invasion and subsequent Ilkhanid dynasty brought a large influx of Turks into Caucasus, Iran and Anatolia. Most of the Mongol army was of Turkic components. However, as noted, the two major cities of the Ilkhanids that is Tabriz and Maragheh held their Iranian culture. The Safinaye Tabrizi explicitly states “Zaban-i Tabrizi” and this Zaban-i Tabrizi is an Iranic dialect as studied by Dr. Ali Ashraf Sadeqi.

A sample poem in which the author of the Safina writes “Zaban Tabrizi”(Language of Tabriz):

دَچَان چو چرخ نکوبیت مو ایر رهشه مهر دورش
چو ش دَ کارده شکوبیت ولول و دَارد سر یوه
پری بقهر اره میر دون جو پور زون هنرمند
پروکری آنزوتون منی که آن هزیوه
اکیز بحت ورامرو کی چرخ هانزمویتی

ژرور منشی چو بخت اهون قدریوه

نه چرخ استه نبوتی نه روزو ورو فوتی

زوم چو واش خللیوه زمم حو بورضی ربوه

Sadeqi, Ali Ashraf. "Chand She'r beh Zaban-e Karaji, Tabrizi wa Ghayreh"(Some poems in the language of Karaji and Tabrizi and others), Majalla-ye Zabanshenasi, 9, 1379./2000, pp.14-17.

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/zabankarajitabrizi.pdf>

We should also mention that an unfortunate error occurred in a recent overview of the book: A.A. Seyed-Gohrab & S. McGlenn, The Treasury of Tabriz The Great Il-Khanid Compendium, Iranian Studies Series, Rozenberg Publishers, 2007.

And it is understandable that the authors were not linguists.

Here are the exchanges:

From: Ali Doostzadeh

To: Seyed, Gohrab A.A.

Subject: Correction on your book

Dear. Dr. Ghoraab,

I have the book you edited Safina Tabrizi and also your book on Nizami Ganjavi: Love, Madness and Mystic longing. Both are excellent books.

I just wanted to make a correction on your article on Safina. Pages 678-679 of the Safina are not about a Turkish dialect (Tabrizi and Gurji)(page 18 of your book), but they are both Iranian dialects that predate the Turkification of Tabriz. For more information, please check these two articles by Dr. Ashraf Saadeghi

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/zabankarajitabrizi.pdf>

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/AshrafSadeqiasharmahalimaraqi.pdf>

There are Karaji and Tabrizi languages. Both are studied in detail by Dr. Sadeghi Tashakkor,
Ali Doostzadeh, Ph.D.

Here was the response with this regard.

From: "Seyed, Gohrab A.A.

To: Ali Doostzadeh

Dear Dr. Doostzadeh

I would like to thank you very much for your kind email and your friendly words about my books. I deeply appreciate your constructive critical note and will surely correct this in a second edition of the book.

With kind regards and best wishes,
Asghar Seyed-Ghorab

Dr. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab
Chairman of the Department of Persian Studies
Fellow of the Young Academy of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)
Leiden University
Faculty of Arts

A sentence in the dialect of Tabriz (the author calls Zaban-i Tabriz (dialect/language of Tabriz) recorded and also translated by Ibn Bazzaz Ardabili in the Safvat al-Safa (d. around 1350):

«علیشاه چو در آمد گستاخ وار شیخ را در کنار گرفت و گفت حاضر باش بزبان تبریزی گو
حریف ژاته یعنی سخن بصرف بگو حریت رسیده است. در این گفتن دست بر کتف مبارک
شیخ زد شیخ را غیرت سر بر کرد»

The sentence “Gu Harif(a/e)r Zhaatah” is mentioned in Tabrizi dialect. Zhaateh ژاته is etymologically equivalent to modern Kurdish Haateh هاته which means “come”. Thus is a direct statement about Tabriz not being Turkified yet. Also the quatrains of Shaykh Safi al-Din in the local Iranic dialect of Tabriz and that of his successors are from this era.

In terms of Arran and Sherwan, Sherwan was under the Sherwanshahs and the inhabitants were primarily Tat. However, the plains of Arran had large number of nomadic Turkic and Kurdish tribes. The major urban centers however based on the Nozhat al-Majales were Persian/Iranic speaking. In Maragheh, the capital of the Ilkhanids, the language was Fahlavi as mentioned by Hamdollah Mustafawi. Thus we have direct and primary references with regards to Maragheh and Tabriz. And the Nozhat al-Majales covers a portion of the Mongol era.

Third was the Turkmen era (Aq-Qoyunlu and Qara-Qoyunlu) going from 1378-1501/1502. It seems that Turkic languages progressed during this era. However, we have examples of Fahlaviyyat from Mama ‘Esmat Tabrizi, Pir Zehtab Tabrizi and Abdul Qadir Maraghi. The most interesting is Abdul Qadir Maraghi who records again in the dialect of Tabriz:

Two qet’as (poems) quoted by Abd-al-Qader Maraghi in the dialect of Tabriz (d. 838 A.H./1434-35 C.E.; II, p. 142)

(Fahlaviyat in Encyclopedia Iranica by Ahmad Taffazoli,
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)
(A. A. Sadeqi, "Ash'ar-e mahalli-e Jame'al-Alhaann,"Majalla-ye zaban-shenasi 9,
1371./1992, pp. 54-64.
<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/AshrafSadeqiasharmahalimaraqi.pdf>)

رُورم پَری بجولان

نو کُو بَمَن وُرارده

وی خَد شدیم بدامش

هیزا آوو وُرارده

A ghazal and fourteen quatrains under the title of Fahlaviyat by the poet Maghrebi Tabrizi (d. 809/1406-7)

(Fahlaviyat in Encyclopedia Iranica by Dr. Ahmad Taffazoli,
<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)
(M.-A. Adib Tusi "Fahlavyat-e Magrebi Tabrizi,"NDA Tabriz 8, 1335/1956
<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/fahlaviyaatmaghreibitabrizi.pdf>)

In this era, the author does not have much information on Arran proper (primary sources).

Vladimir Minorsky writes (V. Minorsky, Studies in Caucasian History, Cambridge University Press, 1957. pg 34):
"The author of the collection of documents relating to Arran Mas'ud b. Namdar (c. 1100) claims Kurdish nationality. The mother of the poet Nizami of Ganja was Kurdish (see autobiographical digression in the introduction of Layli wa Majnun). In the 16th century there was a group of 24 septs of Kurds in Qarabagh, see Sharaf-nama, I, 323. Even now the Kurds of the USSR are chiefly grouped south of Ganja. Many place-names composed with Kurd are found on both banks of the Kur"

We should also mention the many Iranic words collects in a medical dictionary by a person from Shirwan. The book Dastur al-Adwiyah written around 1400 A.D. also lists some of these native words for plants in Shirwan, Beylakan, Arran: Shang, Babuneh, Bahmanak, Shirgir, KurKhwarah, Handal, Harzeh, Kabudlah (Beylakani word , standard Persian: Kabudrang), Moshkzad, Kharime, Bistam, Kalal.

(Sadeqi, Ali Ashraf, "New words from the Old Language of Arran, Shirvan and Azerbaijan"(in Persian), Iranian Journal of Linguistics, Vol. 17, No 1(33), pp 22-41, 1381/2002)

However we propose our theory. First we need to distinguish urban centers from nomadic grazing lands. If there were significant cultural activities in the area according to primary sources in the urban centers, then we need to look at the language of the

cultural activities, the culture itself and also notice if there is any trace of Fahlavviyat/Kurdish or other dialects. The Dastur al-Adwiyah which we mentioned is a good start with this regard and it is from 1400 A.D.

Our theory is that the urban centers of Arran (those that had survived the Mongol invasions and were not totally decimated) were like Tabriz. They had Sunni Shafi'i religion with primary Iranian population but they were ruled by Turkmens. Thus Turkicization had advanced possibly in these cities. However, it seems from what Maraghi has called the Tabrizi language and the Dastur al-Adwiyah, and also the Fahlaviyyat of Mama 'Esmat Tabrizi (a mystic Women who did not have education), the primary language of Arran which is very close to Tabriz was Iranic. It should be noted the daughter of Fazlollah Astarabadi who was born and lived in Tabriz has all her work in Persian as well where-as in Iraq, Nasimi, a Seyyed (descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) wrote in both Persian and Turkic. Thus our first theory is that just like Tabriz, major centers in Arran were not Turkified. However, the plains of Arran were definitely an area of grazing for Iranian (Kurdish) and Turkic nomads. Which group was more is not certain, but the Sharafnama as alluded to by Minorsky mentions 24 septes of Kurds in Qarabagh (roughly equivalent to Arran proper) alone. A contradiction to this theory would be brought if there are primary sources that mention the urban centers and their language and cultural around the 1400 A.D. period. For now, the author is only aware of Dastur al-Adwiyah.

As per Sherwan, the area was under the Sherwanshah. Badr Sherwani has poetry in the Kenar-ab dialect. Also there is a mistake in the Iranica article on Badr Sherwani which was brought to the attention of Iranica authors by this editor. Unfortunately the Azerbaijani writer Rahimov has omitted many verses of Badr Sherwani for political reasons in his edition and he has claimed that Badr's mother tongue was Turkish. In reality this was not the case as noted in:

Sadeqi, Al Asharf. "The conflict between Persian and Turkish in Arran and Shirvan" (in Persian), *Iranian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol 18, No (35). Pages 1-12. ISSN 0259-9082

Badr Sherwani clearly states he is not a Turkomen but he knows some Turkish:

لطیف طبعا ترکی دگر همی دانم
نیم از آنکه ندارم ز علم ترکی خبر...

در خط و شعر و تربیت و دانش و ادب
بالله که کم نیم من از این قوم ترکمان..

He also has harsh words against the Turkomens as it seems at that time, there was major battles between the Sherwanshah and the Turkomens:

از جفای ترکمانان خود دلی دارم خراب
زان خرابیها که زیشان شد به ملک و مسکنم
خانه ها در شماخی سوخت دود در بند بین
دود آه آتشین بر من میشود از روزنم

چون ترکمان هر یک ._. بد پیکری
عالی قدی گنبدی سری بز ریش چند گلهبان
فارغ ز علم و معرفت چرکین حدیث و بدلغت
ایشان همه ._. صفت من مانده مسکین در میان

Unfortunately Rahimov did not publish “_.” parts of these verses but from the other words we can see Badr Sherwani had disdain for the Turkomans.

After contacting the editor of Iranica and sending him the study by Dr. Sadeghi, this is what Dr. Yarshater stated:

“Very many thanks for your email of November 19 and the attached article by Professor Sadeghi on the languages of Arran and Shervan. I truly appreciate your drawing my attention to the inexcusable error in Rahimov’s short entry. Obviously the author was a Turkish Azarbaijani intent on the glorification of Turkish. We shall remove the entry from our electronic version and we shall add in the Addenda and Corrigenda of the Volume XV the fact that the entry in the printed version is erroneous and one needs to look at the electronic version for the correct entry.

I was wondering that since you have detected the error, whether you could give us the added assistance of putting together an entry on Badr-e Shirvani, to be published under your own signature, based on Prof. Sadeghi’s article and other articles that you may have come across on the poet? He deserves a longer and more substantial entry. I should greatly appreciate your help.”

Dr. Yarshater at first had the impression I was a scholar of Persian poetry since I introduced him to articles on Badr Sherwani. However as I explained to him, I was not and he is currently in the process of finding someone suitable to rewrite that entry.

According to Dr. Ali Ashraf Sadeqi: “*However it seems in Badr’s time, some Iranian dialects, other than Persian i.e. Tati, Talesh and Pahlavi, still prevailed in the area*”

What is interesting though about Badr Sherwani is that he knew Persian, a Kenar- Ab Iranic dialect and also Turkic which he had learned. He has less than 100 verses total in these two and the rest of his work (12500 verses or so) are in Persian. The Kenar-ab dialect is the rarest dialect among these and it is in our opinion the native dialect of Badr Sherwani himself. It seems that this period was a period of increasing bi-lingualism but at the same time, Badr points out “I am not one of those that do not know Turkish” which means that a large portion of the Muslim population of the area did not yet know Turkish. Thus when it comes to Sherwan, we can safely assume Iranic dialects were prevalent.

Finally, the Safavid era is a key turning point. The Safavids not only transformed the religious landscape of Azerbaijan (except some Kurdish areas which kept their Shafi’I faith), but they brought large number of nomads to settle in the Azerbaijan. Majority (if not all) of the Ghezelbash supporters of the Safavids were from Anatolia and Syria. The names of these tribes such as Rumlu (from Rum (Anatolia)), Qaramanlu (from Qaraman in Anatolia), Shamlu (from Syria) and etc. also show this. It should be noted that Tabriz

for example was mainly a Sunni Shafi'i city before the Safavids. Today in Azerbaijan proper (historical Iranian Azerbaijan), the Sunni Tats, Talysh and Kurds all follow the Shafi'i rite. Turks that entered the area as shall be explained later were mainly followers of Hanafi rite of Islam. Despite this, even in the Safavid era, the 17th century Ottoman traveler 'Awliya Chelebi mentions that most of the Women in Maragheh speak Fahlavi. On Naxchivan he also mentions Iranian dialects as among the languages spoken including "Pahlavi, Dari, Farsi and Dehqani". He also mentions the high class in Tabriz spoke Persian (not just write) which probably means the lower class now started speaking Turkish. It should be noted that Turkicization of Azerbaijan continued in the Safavid and Qajar era, and large pockets of Talyshi/Tati dialects were Turkicized. In terms of Arran and Sherwan, it seems that Talyshi, Tati and Kurdish after the Safavid era increasingly lost space. Specially after the demise of the Sherwanshah in Sherwan.

But even up to the 20th century, there were a large number of Iranic speakers Tats (Persian), Talysh and Kurds in Arran and Shirwan, but the Turkic linguistic elements by the 20th were predominant and many of these Iranic elements were assimilated into the Azeri-Turkic identity, especially during the USSR era. For example on Tats:

"In the nineteenth century the Tats were settled in large homogeneous groups. The intensive processes of assimilation by the Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis cut back the territory and numbers of the Tats. In 1886 they numbered more than 120,000 in Azerbaijan and 3,600 in Daghestan. According to the census of 1926 the number of Tats in Azerbaijan (despite the effect of natural increase) had dropped to 28,500, although there were also 38,300 "Azerbaijanis" with Tat as their native language."

(World Culture Encyclopedia: "Tats",

<http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Tats-Orientation.html> accessed Dec, 2007)

(Natalia G. Volkova "Tats" in Encyclopedia of World Culture, Editor: David Publisher, New York: G.K. Hall, Prentice Hall International, 1991-1996).

Abbas Qoli Agha Bakikhanov, a 19th century literary figure from the Caucasia mentions in his Golestan Iram large number of Tats in the area around Baku:

There are eight villages in Tabarsaran which are: Jalqan, Rukan, Maqatir, Kamakh, Ridiyan, Homeydi, Mata'i, and Bilhadi. They are in the environs of a city that Anushiravan built near the wall of Darband. Its remains are still there. They speak the Tat language, which is one of the languages of Old Persia. It is clear that they are from the people of Fars and after its destruction they settled in those villages. ..The districts situated between the two cities of Shamakhi and Qodyal, which is now the city of Qobbeh, include Howz, Lahej, and Qoshunlu in Shirvan and Barmak, Sheshpareh and the lower part of Boduq in Qobbeh, and all the country of Baku, except six villages of Turkmen, speak Tat. it becomes apparent from this that they originate from Fars.

(Floor, Willem. and Javadi, Hasan. i(2009), "The Heavenly Rose-Garden: A History of Shirvan & Daghestan by Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov, Mage Publishers, 2009)

Despite these, we believe that one can decisively state that Turkish became the main language of urban areas in Arran, Sherwan and Azerbaijan after the Safavid era and not before that era. When exactly this occurred in the Safavid era, it is unknown to us.

However taking Tabriz an example, the period of constant Ottoman and Safavid warfare which brought major decline to the fortunate of the city is a possibility. A period of bilingualism is possible in the Turkmen Aq-Qoyunlu and Qara-Qoyunlu era for some urban centers (outside of Sherwan but in Azerbaijan and Arran). However when it comes to the Seljuqs, Atabeks, Khwarizmshahids and Ilkhanids, the major urban centers were predominanetly Iranic as mentioned and the Turkish nomads at that time hand not settled down in the major urban centers in noticeable numbers.

A complete book or a Ph.D. dissertation can be written on this subject because there are many primary materials. This article has probably provided one of the more details look at this process (Turkicization) in Azerbaijan, Sherwan and Arran. However, some authors who are not specialist in the area or authors with nationalistic concerns or authors who do not possess the necessary languages (Persian and Arabic, and also Armenian and Georgian can be helpful), have came up with variety of conclusions. Sometimes even notable scholars have contradicted themselves. And even more, sometimes even myths (see the appendix) have been used to comeup with a totally unrealistic scenario. However, without important sources such as Safinayeh Tabriz, Nozhat al-Majales, Hamdullah Mustawafi, ‘Awliya Chelebi, Badr Sherwani, Rodhat al-Janani, the Fahlaviyyat of Mama ‘Esmat, Maghrebi Tabrizi, Armenian and Georgian sources and etc., a complete study cannot be claimed. Virtually none of the authors we mentioned had available to them the rare manuscripts of Safinayeh Tabriz and Nozhat al-Majales.

Qatran Tabrizi, rise of Persian-Dari poetry and what a few modern scholars have called “Azerbaijani school” of Persian poetry

Qatran Tabrizi is generally regarded as one of the earliest Persian poets of Azerbaijan who composed in Khorasani Persian (Dari-Persian). Although earlier examples of Persian poetry (whether Fahlaviyat (vernacular Iranic dialects) or perhaps Khorasani-Persian) is attested by the historian Tabari. Tabari mentions a governor of Maragheh by the name of Muhammad ibn al-Ba’ith who composed poetry around 829 A.D in Persian.

طبري در تاريخ خود، ذيل وقايع سنه 235 ق / 228 خ، از شخصي به نام “محمد بن البعيث” نام مي برد كه با متوسل عباسي به جنگ پرداخته است؛ او مي نويسد: “حد ثني انه انشدني بالمرآغه جماعه من اشياخها اشعاراً لابن البعيث بالفارسيه و تذكرون ادبه و شجاعه و له اخباراً و احاديث». در عبارت فوق، طبري به صراحت زبان مردم آذربايجان را (در اوایل قرن سوم هجري) فارسي مي شمارد.

کسروي نيز با استناد به قول طبري مي نويسد: "به نوشته طبري، اين مرد [محمد بن البعث] شعرها نيز به زبان پارسي يا آذري داشته و ميان آذربايجان معروف بوده است. اگر تا به امروز مي ماند، از کهنه ترين شعرهاي پارسي به شمار بوده و ارزش شايان در بازار ادبيات داشت»

(See: Ahmad Kasravi, *Azari ya Zaban Bastan Azerbaijan*).

But the earliest extant example of Persian poetry from the area is that of Qatran Tabrizi. It is worth looking into the biography of Qatran Tabrizi, since he is what some authors have mentioned as the initiator of the "Azerbaijani" or "Trans-Caucasian" style of Persian poetry. Also recently, a statement from the *Safarnama* of Naser Khusraw has been misinterpreted and some sources have claimed that Qatran also wrote in Azeri Turkish. (See for example here:

http://literature.aznet.org/literature/qtabrizi/qtabrizi_en.htm, accessed in Dec, 2007.)

While the language native to Tabriz, as shown above and clearly stated in the *Safinaye Tabrizi*, was a peculiar Iranian dialect that was not exactly the Khorasani Persian dialect of Naser Khusraw.

Qatran Tabrizi, who lived at the courts of the Shaddadid and Rawwadid dynasties, was according to Jan Rypka: "*The most famous panegyric poet of his time from Azerbaijan.*" Qatran was born in Shadiabad (Persian Shaadi+Abaad for Happy Dwelling/Prosperous place) and lived between 1009/1014 to 1072 and died in Ganja. His full name according to an old manuscript attributed to the famous poet Anvari Abivardi (529 Hijra about 60 years after the passing away of Qatran) is Abu Mansur Qatran al-Jili al-Azerbaijani.

The Al-Jili would identify his ancestry from Gilan while he himself was born in Shadiabad. The Dehqan class was the same class of Iranians that Ferdowsi was from and possibly even Nizami Ganjavi (we shall mention this later). Note the verse of *Shahnameh*:

از ايران و ترک وز تازيان
نژادی پديد آيد اندر ميان
نه دهقان نه ترک و نه تازی بود
سخنها بکردار بازی بود

Here Dehqan is used for Iranian and at that time, the word Dehqan actually denoted an important class of Iranians.

According to the *Encyclopedia Iranica*:

The term *dehqan* was used in the late Sasanian period to designate a class of landed magnates (*Mojmal*, ed. Bahar, p. 420) considered inferior in rank to *Azadan*, *Bozorgan* (qq.v.; *Zand i Wahman Yasn* 4.7, 4.54), and *kadag-xwadayan* "householders" (*Arda Wiraz-namag* 15.10, where *dahigan* should be read for *dadagan*). According to some early Islamic sources, the rank of the *dehqan* in the Sasanian period was also inferior to

that of the *šahrigan* “chief of the small cantons”(Yaqūbi, *Tarikh* I, p. 203; Masūdi, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 662; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 140).

...

The Arab conquest (q.v.) of the Sasanian Empire began with sporadic attacks on the lands of the *dehqans* of the Sawad, the cultivated areas of southern Iraq. After the defeat of the Persian army and the gradual disappearance of the nobles who administered the country, the local gentry, that is, the *dehqans*, assumed a more important political and social role in their districts, towns, and villages. Some were able to protect their settlements from the conquering armies by surrendering and agreeing to pay the poll tax (*jezya*).

...

The majority of *dehqans* favored Persian culture, however, and some were patrons of renowned Persian poets. Rūdaki (p. 458) related that the *dehqans* gave him money and riding animals. Farrokhi in his youth served a *dehqan* in Sistan and received an annual pension from him. According to one tradition, Ferdowsi himself was a *dehqan* (*Čahar Maqala*, ed. Qazvini, text, pp. 58, 75).

...

Most of the credit for preservation of the stories in the national epic, the *Šah-nama*; pre-Islamic historical traditions; and the romances of ancient Iran belongs to the *dehqans*.

(Tafazzoli, Ahmad. “Dehqan” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

Qatran as Zabih Allah Safa in his famous *Tarikh-e-Adabiyaat Iran* has mention was also from the Dehqan class (as Qatran himself has mentioned):

یکی دهقان بدم شاهها شدم شاعر ز نادانی
مرا از شاعری کردن تو گرداندی به دهقانی

Translation:

*I was a Dehqan (Noble Iranian class) myself, O King, and became a poet from ignorance
From being a poet, you turned me back to be a Dehqan again*

According to Jan Rypka:

“He sings the praise of some thirty patrons. His work has aroused the interest of historians, for in many cases Qatran has perpetuated the names of members of regional dynasties in Azerbaijan and the Caucasia region that would have otherwise fallen in oblivion. His best qasidas were written in his last period, where he expressed gratitude to the prince of Ganja, the Shaddadid Fadlun, for the numerous gifts that were still recollected by the famous Jami (d. 1492). Qatran’s poetry follows in the wake of the poets of Khurasan and makes an unforced use of the rhetorical embellishment. He is even one of the first after Farrukhi to try his hand at the Qasida-I Masnu’i, ‘particular artificial qasida’. When Nasir Khusraw visited Azarbayjan in 1046, Qatran requested to him to explain some of the most difficult passages in the divan of Munjik and Daqiqi that were written in “farsi”, i.e. according Chr. Shaffer, in the Persian of Khurasan, a language that he, as a Western Persian, might not be expected to understand, in contrast to the guest from Khurasan. Kasravi is the opinion that the text of the *Safar-nama* has here been

corrupted because Qatran, though he spoke Iranian Adhari (the old Iranic language of Azerbaijan before the advent of Oghuz Turkish) was fully acquainted with Parsi, as his Divan shows. Qatran's qasida on the earthquake of Tabriz is regarded as a true masterpiece"

(Jan Rypka, "*History of Iranian Literature*". Reidel Publishing Company. 1968).

An important epoch of the history of Iran and Azerbaijan is the Oghuz attack on Western Iran, specially the areas of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan and Caucasia. The terrifying massacres committed by these bands of Oghuz Turks against native Iranians have been documented by different historians.

Bosworth gives an overview of the description of the Kurdish Rawwadid dynasty and the Oghuz attack during their reign:

The Rawwadids (latterly the form "Rawad" is commoner in the sources) were another product of the upsurge of the mountain peoples of northern Iran; their domain was Azarbaijan, and particularly Tabriz. Strictly speaking, the Rawwadid family was of Azdi Arab origin, but by the 4th/10th century they were accounted Kurdish. At the opening of the 'Abbasid period Rawwad b. Muthanna had held a fief which included Tabriz. Over the course of the next two centuries his descendants became thoroughly Kurdicized, and the "Rawwadi Kurds" emerged with Iranian names, although the local poet Qatran (d. c. 465/1072) still praised them for their Arab ancestry. Early in the 4th/10th century the Sajid line of Arab governors in Azarbaijan collapsed, and the region became politically and socially disturbed. A branch of the Musafirids of Tarum first emerged there, but despite Buyid help the Musafirid Ibrahim b. Marzban was deposed in c. 370/980-1, probably by the Rawwadid Abul-Haija Husain b. Muhammad (344-78/955-88); certainly it was the Rawwadids who succeeded to all of the Musafirid heritage in Azarbaijan.

The most prominent member of the dynasty in the 5th/nth century was Vahsudan b. Mamlan b. Abol-Haija (1019-54). It was in his reign that the Oghuz invaded Azarbaijan. These were some of the first Turkmen to come westwards, being the so-called 'Iraqis', or followers of Arslan Israeli, expelled from Khurasan by Mahmud of Ghazna (see pp. 58 and 40-1). Vahsudan received them favourably in 419/1028, hoping to use them as auxiliaries against his many enemies, such as the Christian Armenians and Georgians and the rival Muslim dynasty of Shaddadids. He even married the daughter of an Oghuz chief, but it still proved impossible to use the anarchic nomads as a reliable military force. In 429/1037 they plundered Maragheh and massacred large numbers of Hadhbani Kurds. Vahsudan allied with his nephew, the chief of the Hadhbanis, Abul-Haija' b. Rahib al-Daula, against the Turkmen; many of them now migrated southwards towards Iraq, and in 432/1040-1. Vahsudan devised a stratagem by which several of the remaining leaders were killed. The rest of the Oghuz in Azarbaijan then fled to the territory of the Hakkari Kurds south-west of Lake Van. Vahsudan's capital, Tabriz, was destroyed by an earthquake in 434/1042, and fearing that the Saljuqs would take advantage of his resulting weakness, he moved to one of his fortresses; but the city was soon rebuilt, and Nasir-i Khusrau found it populous and flourishing.

(C.E. Bosworth, *The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1200)* in *Camb. Hist. Iran V*)

The Persian poet Qatran Tabrizi was alive at that time and has described the unruliness and savageness of the invading Oghuz nomads and the massacres committed by them in Azerbaijan. At the time of Qatran Tabrizi, the inhabitants spoke Persian/Iranian dialects slightly distinct from the Dari Persian dialect of Khorasan. Naser Khosrow, himself from Khorasan mentions the slight dialect differences between the two places. This difference is partially also examined in this article:

جلال متینی، زبان دری و لهجه آذری، زبان فارسی در آذربایجان، گردآوری: ایرج افشار، تهران، بنیاد موقوفات دکتر محمود افشار (1371، ج 2، صفحه 405-418).

Matini, Jalal. "Daqiqi, Zaban-i Dari o Lahjeyeh Azari" in Zaban-i Farsi dar Azerbaijan, Gerdavari: Iraj Afshar, Tehran, Bonyaad Moqoofaat Dr. Mahmud Afshar, (1371, volume 2, pg 405-418.

Available here:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/daghighizabandariazari.pdf>, accessed Dec, 2007.)

The Iranian dialect difference is mentioned by the following verse of Qatran where he contrasts Parsi (Persian)(meaning his own dialect) with Dari-Persian (Persian of Khorasan which through time became the main medium of communication after Islam):

در بیتی از قطران تبریزی هم که «پارسی» را در برابر دری آورده، پارسی در مورد زبان آذربایجان به کار رفته،
در برابر دری خراسان:
بلبل به سان مطرب بیدل فراز گل
گه پارسی نوازد، گاهی زند دری

Translation:

The nightingale is on top of the flower like a minstrel who has lost her heart

It bemoans sometimes in Parsi (Persian) and sometimes in Dari (Khurasani Persian)

Qatran had a very unfavorable view of the Oghuz attack during the Ghaznavid era and has harshly criticized Turks and shows that Turks at the time were foreign in Azerbaijan.

قطران تبریزی نیز در بسیاری از چکامه هایش ترکان را شایسته سرزنش دانسته و آنان را سخت نکوهش کرده است. نمونه هایی از ان ابیات در ذیل می آید:

.....
زمانی تازش ایشان به شروان اندرون بودی
زمانی حمله ایشان به آذربایگان اندر
نبود از تازش ایشان کسی بر چیز خود ایمن
نبود از حمله ایشان کسی بر مال خود سرور (احمد کسروی شهریاران گمنام، 1377، ص ۱۶۰)
شده چون خانه زنبور با غم از ترکان
همی خلند به فرمان ما چو زنبورم (همان، ص ۱۹۷)

قطران در یکی از سروده هایش به هنگام ستایش یکی از فرمانروایان بومی اذربایجان عامل عدم پیشرفت کار او را حضور ترکان برشمرده است:

گر نبودی آفت **ترکان** به گیتی در پدید
بستندی گیتی همه چون خسروان باستان (همان، ص ۱۹۷)

قطران در بدگویی و مذمت ترک تباران چنان سخن گفته که حتی آنان را موجب ویرانی ایران زمین برشمرده و این مفهوم به روشنی از بیت زیر که در ستایش امیری از امیران اذربایجان سرایش یافته برمی آید:
اگر چه داد ایران را بلای **ترک** ویرانی
شود از عدلش آبادان چون یزدانش کند یاری (همان، ص ۱۹۷)

این شاعر اذربایجانی در یکی دیگر از چکامه هایش که در قالب قصیده سروده است ترکان را خونخوار و جرار و غدار و مکار خوانده است:

کمر بستند بهر کین شه **ترکان** پیکاری
همه بکرو به خونخواری همه یکدل به جراری
یکی **ترکان** مسعودی به قصد خیل مسعودان
نهاده تن به کین کاری و دل داده به خونخواری

....

چه ارزد غدر با دولت، چه ارزد مکر با دانش
اگرچه کار **ترکان** هست غداری و مکاری (همان، ص ۱۷۲)

ترا خیلی و رهی ای شاه بسیارند من دانم
رهی را کی کم از قلاش و خیلی کمتر از ترکان
همیشه عزم ایشان بوده بر تاراج بر کشتن
چو باشد عزمشان آنگونه باشد حالشان اینسان

As can be seen by the above verses, the poet Qatran complains intensely about the plundering and destruction brought by the first wave of the nomadic Oghuz Turks who ravaged and plundered Azerbaijan. He calls these nomads Khoonkhaar (blood suckers), bringers of Viran (ruin) to Iran, kin-kaar (workers of hatred), covenant breakers (Ghadar), Makar (Charlatan and deceiver). These Oghuz tribes were too unruly for the Ghaznavids and they were not manageable by the Kurdish rulers of Azerbaijan who initially wanted to use them against their neighboring and rival Christian kingdoms.

At the same time following Khorasani poets, the Turks (Of course the Kazakh/Kyrgyz types of today which were the original Turks) were also seen as the ideal type of beauty by Qatran as in other Persian poets:

ای حور ترک پیکر و ای ترک حوروش

هم زینت بهشتی و هم زیور خزر

یا

شکفته لاله در چمن چو روی ترک ده ساله

نشسته در چمن زاله چو عکس ماه در پروین

(Qatran Tabrizi, "Divan Hakim Qatran Tabrizi", corrected and edited by Mohammad Nakhjavani with articles from Badi ol Zaman Foruzanfar, Zabillah Safa, and Hasan Taqizadeh, Qoqnus Publishers, 1983)

Qatran Tabrizi also praises the Sassanids in many of his poems, and uses Persian mythology and symbolism throughout his work. Qatran is an example of the Iranian culture of the region and in praising the Amir Lashkari, we can observe this:

این جهان بودست دایم ملکت ساسانیان
خواست سالارش خدا در ملکت ساسان کند
نیست کس در گوهر ساسانیان چون لشکری
تا پس آن چون نیاکان شاهی ایران کند
همچو افریدون بگیرد ملک عالم سر به سر
و آنکھی تدبیر ملک خیل فرزندان کند
روم و گرجستان به فرمان منوچهر آورد
هند و ترکستان به زیر حکم نوشروان کند
او به تخت ملک ایران بنشیند در سطر
کهنترین فرزند خود را مهتر آران کند
تا همی فرمان داور خاک را ساکن کند
تا همی تقدیر یزدان چرخ را گردان کند
ملک او را از زوال ایمن همی گردون کند
جان او را از فنا ایمن همی یزدان کند
شاد بنشیند به کام دل بر ایوان شهی
وز فروغ روی خویش آراسته فرمان کند

Qatran was steeped in his ancient Iranian culture and his use of Shahnameh symbolism is significant and ranks him with Nizami. Dr. Sajad Ayadlu has done a comprehensive study with this regard:

(Ayadlu, Sajad. "Nokhostin Sanad Adabi Ertebaat-i Azerbaijan o Shahnameh, Iranshenasi Magazine, al Year 17, also available here:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Persian/shahnamehqatran.pdf>,
accessed Dec, 2007.)

And Qatran being himself of the Dehqan class was well of the Iranian folklore, much like his compatriot Ferdowsi who was of the same class.

The importance of Qatran in terms Persian-Dari poetry is the fact that the oldest extant verses of Persian-Dari from the region are from him. Some have also gone further and have said that Qatran started the Persian-Dari poetry in Azerbaijan (at the court of the Rawwadids) and Caucasia (at the court of the Shaddadids). Some scholars have used the term "Azerbaijani school of poetry" or "Azerbaijani style of poetry" or "Trans-Caucasian style of Poetry" or "Arrani style of poetry" to describe the poetry of the region of Azerbaijan and Arran. This term in reality was created by USSR scholars and may possibly even be politically motivated in order to support local nationalism and nation building. Some scholars have pointed to the great Christian symbols in the poetry of the region, but from this author's own analysis, the stories and flows of Nizami Ganjavi has a great resemblance with that of Vis o Ramin. Professor. Dick Davis also mentions this point:

The poem (*Vis o Ramin*) had an immense influence on Nezami, who takes the bases for most of his plots from Ferdowsi but the basis for his rhetoric from Gorgani. This is especially noticeable in his *Khusraw o Shirin*, which imitates a major scene (that of the lovers arguing in the snow) from *Vis o Ramin*, as well as being in the same meter (*hazaj*) as Gorgani's poem. Nezami's concern with astrology also has a precedent in an elaborate astrological description of the night sky in *Vis o Ramin*. Given Nezami's own paramount influence on the romance tradition, Gorgani can be said to have initiated much of the distinctive rhetoric and poetic atmosphere of this tradition, with the exception of its Sufi preoccupations, which are quite absent from his poem. (Encyclopedia Iranica, "Vis o Ramin")

It should be noted that unlike the other styles of Persian poetry: Sabk-e- Araqi (this is the Persian central area or Araq-i Ajam), Sabk-i Esfahani or Hindi (Indian style) and Sabk-i-Khurasani (Khurasanian school) which are historical names used by Persian poets, this is a modern nomenclature. Dr. Mohammad Amin Riyahi uses the term Sabk-e-Arrani (Arranian style) since the two greatest poets (Nizami and Khaqani) from the Caucasia were actually from historical Arran (which at times included Sherwan).

We note the term the term "Azerbaijan" is actually an Iranian term, and the ethnic term "Azerbaijani" used for Turkic speakers goes back to the 19th /20th century. So when these scholars speak about a style, they do not have any ethnic designation in mind. This notion has been misinterpreted by some people in order to assign a Turkic nationality to the Persian literature of the region. The best proof of this misinterpretation is the fact that Qatran Tabrizi was not of Turkic background and the Oghuz nomads who attacked Azerbaijan were foreigners to him. He had a completely Iranian culture and heritage and alludes to himself as part of the Dehqan (which is a class of Iranians at the time). And Jan Rypka notes about the "Azerbaijan school of Persian poetry":
The school, which begins with Qatran (d. 1072), formed a well defined group of teachers and pupils of whom two, Khaqani and Nizami, were to exert a lasting development of their respective genre: Khaqani being the greatest exponent of the qasida and Nizami the most brilliant writer of romantic epics".

The importance of Qatran Tabrizi is also illustrated in the manuscript of Safinayeh Tabrizi where he takes a predominant place among the poets of the region.

What did Nezami call his own style?

There is no doubt that Nezami like Sa'adi, Ferdowsi, Hafez, Naser Khusraw and other great Persian poets had his own lively style. But in general, Persian poetry has been subcategorized by various forms. One of these forms is the Araqi(Iraqi) form where Araq/Iraq/Arak here denotes the Arak-e-Ajam or Persian Iraq consisting of areas of Shiraz, Hamadan, Esfahan. Nezami states:

چرا گشتی درین بیغوله پا بست
چنین نقد عراقی بر کف دست

As Hafez states:

غزلیات عراقیست سرود حافظ
که شنید این ره دلسوز که فریاد کرد

Thus both Nezami and Hafez considered themselves as part of the Iraqi school rather than the Khorasani school. Indeed, the Saqi Nameh of Hafez has been greatly influenced by that of Nezami in his Eskandarnama. So the “Arranian”, “Azerbaijani”, “Trans-Caucasian” style of Nezami is a subset of the same Iraqi style, although these terms were invented in the 20th century and were not used prior to that. As mentioned, one of the first people to use “Azerbaijani school of poetry” was the politicized author Bertels (see the articles about him in this article) who before 1935 was clear that Nezami was a Persian poet. So it is very possible that name “Azerbaijani school of poetry” is politically motivated although Khaqani, Qatran and Nezami like most poets of the world, were from a particular area and had local influences. So it could just be an unintentional term to denote regional style. Still, we believe “Arranian” or “Khaqani style” is a better term for poets such as Nezami and Khaqani due to the fact that Nezami lived in Arran. We state “Khaqani” style because he was the first to use such symbolic and metaphorical language and had a tremendous effect on Nezami. The high usage of metaphors and symbols is what distinguishes Khaqani/Nezami and thus a “Khaqani” style is also appropriate. But from what Nezami himself states, his style is simply the Iraqi style and the Iraqi style is a historical term used in Persian poetry unlike “Arranian”, “Azerbaijani school of poetry”, “Trans-caucasian school of poetry” and etc. So “Arranian” or “Khaqani style” would indeed be a regional variation of Sabk-e-Iraqi.

Persian poetry images and symbols: Turk, Hindu, Rum, Zang/Habash

چو کرسی نهاد از برچرخ شید
جهان گشت چون روی رومی سپید
(فردوسی)

The words “Turks”(Turks), “Hindus”(Hindus),”Rums”(Greeks, Romans), “Zang/Habash”(Blacks, Ethiopians) are favorite symbols of the earliest Persian poets in forming poetic images. As we shall show, in the context of compare and contrast, as well as in other contexts, these words did not have an ethnic meaning but rather were used to contrast various moods, colors and feelings. It is very important to cross-reference the verses of various poets using such symbolic imagery for a better understanding of their usage in Persian poetry. In other words, just like one cannot study Nizami in depth without studying Sanai, Gorgani, Nozhat al-Majales, Asadi Tusi and of course Ferdowsi, one cannot understand Persian poetry without proper understanding of its symbols and imagery.

It is this imagery, metaphors and symbolic devices of poetry that were misinterpreted by the political atmosphere of the USSR in order to claim that Nizami Ganjavi had nothing to do with his Iranian/Persian heritage and was actually a Turk who was forced to write Persian. Before we study the misinterpretation of Persian poetry in the next chapter by such publications as Varliq and other ethnic-minded scholars, we briefly touch upon this subject. We also study its usage in Persian literature among Attar, Hafez, Khaqani, Nizami, Rumi, Amir Khusraw and Sanai. Poetic symbols in Persian poetry have been studied by various scholars who had a deep understanding of the Persian language and were free in the West to pursue their academic interest. One of these scholars is the later Professor Annemarie Schimmel. We will quote two of her articles here before giving more examples from Persian poetry as well as various Persian poets.

We quote her paper here:

Schimmel, Annemarie. "A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry", the imagery of Persian poetry. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. (pg 137-144).

Turk and Hindu

"O Venus, from your Hindu-eyes notch the arrow on the bow like a Turk!"

Over the preceding chapters we have observed that Persian poetry is imbued to a certain extent with images that evoke the external interplay of Beauty and Love, or the tension between legalism and love, between intellect and inspired madness. As with Mahmud and Ayaz, we may also discern this tendency in another favorite combination that arose in historical and social reality but served mostly as a poetical image whose original context was soon forgotten: the contrast between Turk and Hindu. Turks enjoyed an important role as soldiers in the Abbasid Empire beginning in the mid-ninth century, and former military slaves soon rose to become rulers (sultans) in their own right, especially on the eastern fringes of Iran and in their homeland, Transoxania.

Indeed the idea of the Turk as the beloved first emerged, it seems, in the days of Mahmud of Ghazna, whose love for Ayaz of the Oymaq tribe was a model for the delight one could take in one's love for a Turk. The Turk was considered as beautiful as the moon, even though he might be cruel. Soon the Turkish type of beauty became prominent both in pictures and in poetical descriptions: a round face with narrow eyes and a minute mouth. The most famous expression of an Indo-Persian writer's infatuation with a "Turk" is Amir Khusrau's verse:

His tongue is Turkish, and I don't know Turkish— how nice it would be if his tongue were in my mouth!

Turkish cities in Central Asia, such as Chigil and Taraz, became ciphers for the dwelling place of the beloved, where the lover directs his thoughts. Thus Hafiz asks, using a fitting *tajnis*:

That Turk with a fairy's countenance went away from me yesterday— what mistake (khata) did he see, that he took the road to Khata [Cathay]?

As for the Hindu, he is the perfect contrast to the Turk. Like the Greeks, the peoples of Western and Central Asia regarded the Indians as black, and the Arabs were in contact

with the dark-skinned inhabitants of southern India well before the advent of Islam. Thus the black Hindus came to be compared to devils, both in travelogues and in mystical visions—where the angles of course resembled Turks. Moreover, India was for the Muslims a country benighted in blackest heathendom:

Light up the candle of monotheism,

Set forth into infidel Hindustan:

says Sana'i. The term Hindu, then, meant in the first place “black,” but also “lowly slave”—a slave who had to serve and obey the ruling Turkish princes, as the first Muslim dynasties in northern India were indeed Turks.

The beloved's beauty mark, the black mole, the tresses, the eyes, could all be called “Hindu” because of their blackness, but the term also implied treacherous and faithless behavior. The “infidel tresses of Hindu origin” lurk like highway robbers, or else they stretch across the pale ear like a naked Hindu on a white bed. The Hindu tresses may even open a shop: “Give a life for every hair!” And the small mole may be a Hindu child that plucks roses from the cheek.

Images of this kind show that the apparently negative connotation of the “black” Hindu could be transformed into something quite lovable, and in somewhat later times Katibi Isfahani would give a delightful description of the beloved's face, ridiculing the narrow-minded theologian who would rather not admit that a Hindu infidel can reach Paradise:

O ascetic, if you deny that a Hindu finds the way toward Kauthar

And an infidel comes to the eternal garden,

Then look how those tresses and the mole came on his face and his

Ruby mouth: an infidel in the garden of Paradise, a Hindu at the well of Kauthar!

Hindustan is, then, logically, the country of blackness (and for some poets it was even the veritable Hell, as Khushhal Khan, the Pathan warrior, states).

A late poet, longing for his home in Iran, sighed during his stay in India:

Like a black hair that finally turns white

Draw myself from India to Iran.

And Hazin, in a comparable situation, saw his stay in Hindustan as proof of sad fact that the day of his life had ended in black night.

More famous, however, is Talib-i Amuli's remark, on his emigration from Iran to India, that now perhaps his bad luck (called in both Persian and Turkish “black fortune”) would finally leave him alone:

Nobody has ever brought a Hindu as gift to Hindustan— therefore leave your “black fortune” in Iran!

The darkness could, however, also gain a positive meaning—was not the Water of Life hidden in darkness? Therefore Molla Shakibi praised the Mughal Khankhanan 'Abdur Rahim, the greatest benefactor of poets around 1600, with the verse:

Come, cupbearer, give the Water of Life!

Draw it from the Khankhanan's fountain!

Alexander sought it but found it not,

For it was in India and he hastened into the darkness.

In astrology, Saturn, connected with black, is called “the Hindu of the sky” or else the Hindu doorkeeper, as it was the last planet known to medieval observers. Hence the chapter in Nizami’s *Haft Paykar* about Saturday, which is ruled, as its name says, by Saturn, takes its comparisons, images, and stories entirely from this sphere of blackness. The Indian princess whom Bahram Gor visits is a gazelle with Turkish—that is, dangerous—eyes, eyes of the kind that are often called “drunken Turks,” and the black tresses on her rosy cheeks resemble fire-worshipping Hindus.

The Muslims had a certain knowledge of the rites of cremation as practiced by the Hindus, and Amir Khusrau in particular, who lived in India, sometimes alludes to the custom of *satti*, the burning of widows.

Learn from the Hindu how to die of love—

It is not easy to enter the fire while alive.

He also describes sunrise with a related image:

The Hindu Night has died, and the sun

Has kindled the fire to burn that Hindu.

The custom of *satti* formed on one occasion the topic of a Persian epic, Nau’i’s *Suz u gudaz* (Burning and Melting), which was composed for Akbar’s son Daniyal and was several times illustrated.

Cross-relations with the fire worship of the Zoroastrians occur now and then (see also chapter 6 above). A typical example, from the late sixteenth century, is by Yolquli Anisi, who tells his beloved:

My heart is a fire temple when I think of you,

And on it is your brand, like a black Hindu who tends the fire.

Such mixture of images is found as early as Nizami’s *Haft Paykar*.

The Hindu was the slave of the Turkish rulers, and for this reason poets liked the idea that they would lovingly become Hindu slaves if only their Turkish beloved would be kind to them—an idea paradoxically elaborated in Hafiz’s often-quoted Ghazal about the “Turk of Shiraz” (see below).

The word Turk came to designate, in India as in parts of Europe, the Muslim in general, and the positive picture of the moonlike Turkish beloved often also has a tinge of cruelty to it. Poets developed a large stock of metaphors about the pillaging, drunken “Turk” who gallops through the countryside, shooting arrows with his eyelashes to wound his admirers: perhaps he plays polo with the severed head of a victim who enjoys being treated like that, and he plunders (*yaghma*) every place. Such negative images—without the positive aspect—can be found, for instance, in satires by ‘Ubayd-i Zakani. But when

reading these descriptions one must always keep in mind that the beloved in traditional Persian poetry is indeed cruel and does not care for his lover, and that the lover, in turn, seems to relish all the wounds inflicted on him—for the beloved's cruelty is better than outright indifference.

The mystics too made use of the Turk-Hindu contrast. Rumi saw the whole world as a dark Hindustan that must be destroyed “in Turkish style” so that the soul may finally be freed from material fetters. And Turk and Hindu appear in “the Hindustan of clay and water and the Turkestan that is the spiritual world”.

As Saturn is the “Hindu of the sky,” Mars, the martial planet, is rightly called the “Turk of the sky.” But in the service of the beloved both are lowly slaves, as Bayram Khan, a Turcoman general in Mughal service, sings:

For your castle, old Saturn is the doorkeeper;

For your Hindu curls the Turk of the sky is a Circassian slave!

Much later another poet from India would complain:

From grieving for you I have black fortune and wet eyes—

I own [the whole area of] black [fertile] soil from India to the Oxus!

The contrast of Turk and Hindu was certainly strengthened by the realities of Muslim history at the turn of the first millennium, but the many possible interpretations of both terms made them a favorite for poets throughout the centuries. With these possibilities in mind one gets closer to

the secret of Hafiz's famous (and often misinterpreted) verse:

If that Turk of Shiraz would take my heart in his hand,

I would give for his Hindu mole Bukhara and Samarqand.

The Shirazi Turk has a black—Hindu—mole, and for this mole, which is traditionally seen as a black slave, the poet is willing to sacrifice the most of beautiful cities of the Turkish empire. Besides this grand exaggeration in which all values seem to be reversed, the verse contains three names of cities (Shiraz, Bukhara, Samarqand), as well as three parts of the body (hand, mole, heart), and furthermore plays on the contrast of giving and taking, so that a whole chain of rhetorical figures is incorporated into these seemingly simple lines which express the poet's hope for some kindness from his beloved. But the whole beauty of the verse is inevitably lost in translation, especially in translations by those unaware of the delightful wordplay which the poet—effortlessly, as it seems—puts before his readers.

The Turk also appears, though rarely, in other connections. On a few occasions the aggressive riders from the steppes are contrasted with the complacent, urban Tajiks, and sometimes a poet collects a veritable “league of nations” around his friend's face:

“The Turk of your eye carries away the heart from the Arab and the

Soul from the Persian; the Abyssinian mole on your face makes the Hindu a slave!”

In the eighteenth century Qani'the historian of Sind, considered that Byzantines, Europeans, and Indians were all variously destroyed by his beloved's face, his down, and his lip—each of which corresponds to a color: white, black, and red.

Besides the Turk and the Hindu one finds the juxtaposition of Rum and Habash-Byzantium and Ethiopia—to allude to white and black, but in this connection the meaningful symbolism that lies behind Turk and Hindu is lacking. The Ethiopian or Negro, Zangi, is usually remembered for his curly hair, as Sa'di says in the Gulistan:

The world is more confused than a Negro's hair.

A similar combination of the Daylamites—mountain-dwellers near the Caspian Sea—with curly, “broken”hair occurs in early Persian poetry.

From the late sixteenth century onward the role of the Turk as dangerous beloved was taken over at least in part by the Firangs—the “Franks”—that is, the Europeans and in particular the Portuguese, who from 1498 had begun to settle on the southern and western coast of India and had plundered affluent ports, like Thatta in the Indus Delta, most cruelly. They thus could replace the pillaging Turk, and the “European prison”became a new image in Indo-Persian poetry. This prison sometimes seems rather colorful, and the Europeans are generally connected with colors and pictures, for European paintings were brought to Mughal India beginning in the days of emperor Akbar and were copied by indigenous artists with amazing skill: hence the new combinations in color imagery in later poetry. But the Turk and the Hindu still survive in folk poetry, even in lullabies.

Another article by Professor Schimmel also gives remarkable examples of these symbolic images in Persian poetry in addition to supplying the original Persian alongside the English translation.

Annemarie Schimme Turk And Hindu A Literary Symbol

(Schimmel, Annemarie. “Turk and Hindu; a literary symbol”. Acta Iranica, 1, III, 1974, pp.243-248)

A field which is still to be elaborated is the study of Persian symbolic language. Though scholars like Ruckert and Hammer-Purgstall, like Ritter and Rypka and, recently, Bausani in his Storia della letteratura Persiana (Motivi e Forme della poesia Persiana, cf. also his Persia Religiosa) have dealt with several symbols and *topoi* which are preferably used in Persian poetry — and therefore later on also in Turkish and Urdu poetry — there is still a large field for further investigation into the development of certain symbolic expressions.

We need not mention here the symbols taken from the Quran, starting with the ruz-i alast (روز الست) which is alluded to in poetry so frequently with dush / دوش «yesterday»; or the use of Quran personalities; or the old Iranian tradition which is interwoven in the fabric of lyrical poetry, the most famous example being the Jam-i Jam (جام جم). Others, like the Rose and the Nightingale, gul u bulbul (گل و بلبل) can, in their elementary

meaning, be traced very far back in the history of religions, the complaining nightingale being only the poetical transformation of the primitive concept of the soul-bird.

Of special interest are, however, those symbols which stem from a certain historical person or a specific act in history — the classical example is the figure of Mansur — al-Husain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922), the martyr mystic who has become, at least since ‘Attar’s time, a central symbol of mystical love, suffering, and, though by wrong interpretation of his cry *ana’l-haqq* (اناالحق), a representative of the essential unity of being not only in Persian poetry but as well in Turkish literature and even more in Muslim India where his name is well known to the Urdu, Sindhi and Punjabi poets, so that even the simple villagers of the Indus valley remember him in their songs.

Persian poetry has always liked the use of pairs of contrasting symbols, and the literatures under its influence share this predilection. A famous example of this style is Hafiz’s oft-quoted couplet:

اگر آن ترک شیرازی بدست آرد دل ما را
به خال هندویش بخشم سمرقند و بخارا را

«If this Turk from Shiraz would take my heart in his hand,
I would give for his Hindu-mole Samarqand and Bukhara”

with the confrontation of Turk and Hindu. It is interesting to follow the development of this contrast-pair in early Persian poetry.

Hammer-Purgstall has given, in the introduction of his *Geschichte der schonen Redekunste Persiens* (1818) some explanations of common Persian symbols; here we find f.i. that the eyelashes are the two battle arrays of the Indians; the eye, too, can be called a Hindu since it is black, whereas the beautiful white face is Turkistan; the down (*khatt* / خط) and the mole (*Khal* / خال) are likewise compared to India and Hindus — that means, Hindu has, in later time, become synonymous with black; Turk, Turkish is everything white and lovable, (cf. Steingass’ dictionary s.v. هندو)

Turks are already mentioned in the poetry of the early Abbasid period — Abu Nuwas compares the bubbles of wine to Turks who shoot their arrows, and this connection of the word Turk with the young, dangerous but attractive hero is common in early Persian poetry too — thus, when Farrukhi addresses his friend

ترکش ای ترک به یک سو فکن و جامهء جنگ...

«Throw the quiver aside, oh Turk, and the dress of war...» The Hindus, on the other hand — mentioned in prophetic traditions as well as the Turks — have been mostly described in Arabic sources of old as blackish, and Hindustan was, at least from the time of Mahmud of Ghazna, the typical battlefield (cf. Asadi, in Shafaq, *Tarikh* 136 who, however, compares the night still to a negro, Zang, not to a Hindu) for the Muslims who were, in the Ghaznawid period, mostly of Turkish origin. Thus Sanai says in the *Hadiqa*:

شمع توحید را منور کن
قصد هندوستان کافر کن

Make the candle of tauhid shining,

Turn toward infidel Hindustan.

Sometimes the famous Indian swords are mentioned, and the Muslim knew about the strange customs of Hindu ascetics, who might even burn themselves (thus Naubakhti in the *فرق الشيعه*) — Biruni's book on India then enlarged the knowledge of his coreligionists about Indian customs.

The slaves which were brought from India were considered ugly, mean, and blackish — in contrast to the Turkish slaves —, and in a poem by Mukhtar-i Gaznawi (quoted by Fritz Meier in *Die schone Mahsati*, p. 8) the poet says that he kept well an ugly Hindu slave until he became good so that one could kiss him.

It may be that the famous love story of Sultan Mahmud and Ayaz which has become a symbol in itself may have contributed to the development of the symbol Turk for the beloved which is very common, it seems, in the Seljukid period. In Mahsati's poetry (i.e. first quarter of the 12th century) the Turk-i Tir andaz (ترک تیر انداز) or the Turk who uses his club for beating people are common symbols for the friend (cf. Meier No. 5, No. 149, p. 362). At that time the theories of mystical love developed in Iran, theories which are reflected in the work of Ahmad Ghazzal and 'Ain-ul-qudza Hamadani.

The fact that here the beloved is not only beautiful but also extremely cruel — so that the lover finds his highest happiness in being wounded or even killed through him — seems to have made the Turk, who was already connected with the qualities of both beauty and cruelty, a fitting symbol of the Divine Beloved — a fact that is expressed verbally by Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209) who told that he had seen his Divine Beloved in the shape of a Turk wearing his silken headgear awry (i.e. the kajkuldh / كج كلاه of later Persian poetry). Ritter has drawn the attention of the reader to the fact that Abu Hamid Ghazzal has mentioned in his *Mishkat ul-Anwar* that Turks at the end of the earth are fond of perfect beauty that they prostrate before things of overwhelming beauty. (Ritter, *Meer der Seele* 454, Gairdner, *mishkdt* 92).

By the end of the 12th century, the symbol Hindu for black is used commonly by Nizami: — The Indian princess — described with the famous contrast-pair as

«Gazelle with Turkish (i.e. killing) eyes, from Hindu origin»

آهوی ترک چشم هندو زاد

is that of Saturday which is ruled by Saturn which is poetically called the *هندوی باریک بین* or *هندوی سپهر* and has, according to astrological tradition, black colour. But Nizami has also compared the crow to the Indian:

زاغ جز هندوی نسب نباشد

دزدی از هندوان عجب نباشد

« The crow is surely of Hindu origin,

and to steal is not astonishing in Hindus » (HP 112)

And how beautifully has he, as Ritter has pointed out, used this symbolism in his description of the fire in winter:

مجوسی ملتی هندوستانی

چو زردشت آمده در زندخوانی

«*A magician from Hindustan, like Zardusht starting with murmuring the zand*».

(Khosrow o Shirin) or,

آتش افروخته ز صندل و عود

دود گردش چون هندوان بسجود

«*The fire lit from sandal and aloe-wood,*

the smoke around it is like Hindus in prostration.»

ترکی از نسل رومیان نسبش

قرة العين هندوان لقبش

«*A Turk from Byzantine origin,*

whose surname is «the object of pleasure to the Hindus»», (cf. Ritter, *Bildersprache* 12 f.)

In 'Attar's work (d. 1220) we find again a number of allusions to Indian and Turkish subjects — the self-sacrifice of the Hindu ascetic is mentioned in the *Ilahiname* (6/9), the Hindu is several times shown as a seeker of religious truth (cf. *Mantiq ut-tair* 31/2, *Musibatname* 19/4 where he asks «What shall I do with the house without the Lord», i.e. the Kaaba, cf. *Meer der Seele* 262, 522, 533). Even Mahmud of Ghazna whose destruction of the temple of Somnath has become one of the famous symbols of the victory of faith over infidelity (MT 36/6) is said to have put a little Hindu boy besides him on the throne (A pious Hindu slave is also mentioned IN 176/13). The Hindu in the *Ilahiname* (79/9) is contrasted with the beautiful princess of China, not with a Turk. The Turk is depicted in 'Attar's epic in the usual way — cruel, but also an object of love (Mus. 32/1, 33/8, IN 10/7). The picture is, however, different when we turn to 'Attar's *divan* (ed. by Said Nafisi). Here the term Hindu is almost exclusively used for the meant and obedient slave: the poet often calls himself a Hindu, and tells his beloved that he would like to become «the Hindu of the Hindu of his curling locks (467). Though once he claims to be «*not a Hindu-yi badkhu, of bad character, in the service of his beloved but an Abessinian who bears his mark*»

در بندگیش نه هندویم بدخو

هستم حبشی که داغ او دارم

He mostly declares himself to be the Hindu slave of the Turkish beloved (465):

ترکتازی کن بتا بر جان و دل

تا ز جان و دل شوم هندوی تو

The classical locus is perhaps in 371:

بوسه چو داد ترک من

هندوی او شدم بجان

«Since my Turk gave me a kiss I became from the bottom of my heart his Hindu...»

The cruelty of the Turkish beloved is alluded to in the lines:

هست ترک و من بجان هندوی او
لاجرم با تیغ در کار آمدست

«He is a Turk and I from the bottom of my heart his Hindu, necessarily he has come to work with his sword.» (129)

Attar uses astrological symbolism in the words (466)

گشت هندوخان لقب برخان چرخ
ترک گردون تا که شد هندوی تو

« *Hindukhan became the surname of the Lord of the Heaven since the Turk of the Heaven (i.e. Mars) became your Hindu(slave),*»

A verse which has probably influenced Maulana Rumi's verse (Div.V2130)

ترک فلک چاکر شود
آن را که شود هندوی او

«*The Turk of the Heaven (i.e. Mars) becomes the servant of Him, who became His (i.e. the beloved's) Hindu.*»

Though Rumi has sometimes compared black and white, good and bad to Rumis and Abessinians (Div. Y 2428), the contrast-pair Hindu-Turk is completely developed in his poetry — thus when the Prophet says in the Mathnawi (I 2370)

گفته من آئینه ام مصقول دست
ترک و هندو در من آن بیند که هست

«*I am the polished mirror, Turk and Hindu see in me that what exists.*»

The day is compared to the beautiful Turk with fair face (Div. II 524):

روزی است اندر شب نهران
ترکی میان هندوان

«*The day is hidden in the night, a Turk in the midst of Hindus,*»

and just as the infidels shout when the Muslim Turks fight them

هندوی شب نعره زنان
کان ترک در خرگاه شد

«the Hindu night is uttering loud cries since the Turk entered the tent (Div. II 252)»

Maulavi Rumi compares, as most profane poets, the curls of the beloved to Hindustan (Div. V 2363) but gives the whole symbolism of Turk and Hindu a more metaphysical sense, since for him this world is the Hindustan of polluted earthly life, and thus he can say in a description of spring that (Div. II 570):

ز ترکستان آن دنیا بنهء ترکان زیارو
به هندوستان آب و گل به امر شهریار آمد

«*The baggage of the nice-looking Turks from the Turkistan of the other world*

came to the Hindustan of clay and water by the order of that prince.»

And the comparison of Sanai — the Hindustani Kafir — is carried on further when Rumi says (Div. IV 1876):

هندویک هستی را ترکانه تو یغما کن

«Like a Turk (or in the Turkish way) pillage the little Hindu of existence...»

i.e. kill the natural worldly existence and reach the Turkistan-i 'adam. It may be interesting to throw a look at the symbolism of a Persian-writing poet who lived in Hindu environment, Amir Khosrau. In his Divan (ed. M. Darwesh, introduction Said Nafisi) the symbol of the turk-i tir andaz is used very often (1416, 1081, 1104, 350, 243), the intoxicated Turk appears likewise (347, 848), the rose-cheeked (308) and coquettish (289), or white faced (1096) Turk are frequently mentioned. The Hindus are mentioned comparatively rarely (cf. 449 the contrast Turk-Hindu); perhaps the most interesting example of the use of this symbol is the last verse of a Ghazal (186)

هندوان را زنده سوزند این چنین مرده مسوز

بنده خسرو را که ترک است آخر و هندوی تست

«They burn the Hindus alive; do not burn such a dead, (namely) the slave Khusrow who is a Turk, and yet your Hindu».

These few notes which should be elaborated by careful exegesis and collection of material from early Persian poetry show that the couplet in Hafiz' famous ghazal stands in a long literary tradition which reflects also some political and social features of the Islamic Empire in its contact with its neighbours — and the contrast pair Turk-Hindu has always remained popular, be it in the poetry of Sir Muhammad Iqbal, or even in a lullaby from Shiraz, which Zhukovsky noted down in 1886:

There came two Turks from Turkestan

and carried me to Hindustan...

Before summarizing the relevant information provided by Professor Schimmel, we will provide more examples of the usage of the term, Turk, Rum, Hindu, Habash/Zang.

One of the earliest poets who considered Turks to be the ideal type of beauty is actually the Persian poet Ferdowsi:

که ترکان به دیدن پریچهره اند
به جنگ اندرون پاک بی بهره اند

Thus Ferdowsi says that Turks in the view are as beautiful as fairies.

Even before Ferdowsi, one of the first Persian poets (Rudaki) states:

ترک هزاران به پای پیش صف اندر
هر یک چو ماه بر دو هفته درفشان

And we also noted Qatran Tabrizi, who is one if not the first Persian poet from Azerbaijan who composed in Eastern Khorasanian Persian:

ای حور ترک پیکر و ای ترک حوروش

هم زینت بهشتی و هم زیور خزر

یا

شکفته لاله در چمن چو روی ترک ده ساله

نشسته در چمن زاله چو عکس ماه در پروین

Instead of listing about thousands of uses of Hindu, Turk, Rum, Zang and Habash amongst in Persian poetry, we take examples from the recent excellent book of Professor Rahim Afifi. The author of each of these couplets is given. We note that many times these imageries come together in the sense that all four (Turk, Hindu, Rum, Zang) can be used in a single verse.

Some examples of the symbolic meaning of Hindu as allusion and imagery:

Hindu=From India, Slave, Overseer, Watcher, the blackness of the hair of the beloved.

تیغ تو داند که چیست رمز و اشارت دین
طرفه بود هندویی از عربی ترجمان
(خاقانی)

تا بر در حکم توست کامش
شد هندوی هندوی تو نامش
این هندو هندوش چه نام است
یعنی حجر تو را غلام است
(خاقانی)

حاجی ما چون ز سفر باز
کرد بر آن هندوی خود ترکناز
(نظامی)

کی توانم گفت هندوی توام
هندوی خاک سگ کوی توام
هندوی با داغ را مفروش تو
حلقهای کن بنده را در گوش تو
(عطار)

شد بر دل من زلفک هندوی تو چیر
بر بودش و در زیر کله رفت دلیر
میگویمت ای دوست بگو با کلهت
تا هندوی دزد را نگیر در زیر
(کمال اسماعیل)

We note Kamal Ismail uses the word Hinduyeh-Dozd or the Hindu Thief. Something used by other Persian poets including Nizami.

هندویت رانده برشاه خاور سپه
لشکر زنگت آورده بر چین حشر
(خواجو)

Hindu beh Azar Sookhtan (Burning the Hindu in the fire=symbolically getting rid of darkness and become day/light):

جون قرصهء آتش فشان گردون گرفت اندر دهان
بنمود بیهندوستان هندو به آذر سوخته
(مجیر بیلقانی)

هندوبار=کنایه از دوات

قلم به یمن یمینیش چه گرم رو مرغی ست
که خط روم برد دم به دم ز هندوبار
(سعدی)

Hinduvash (Hinu-face=like a slave, servant):

شاهها سخن غلام من آمد اگر چه هست
هندووشی که قیمت نیکو نیاورد
(مجیر بیلقانی)

Hinduyeh Atash-neshin (The Hindu sitting in fire=A symbol for the hair of the beloved):

زلف تو هندو نژاد، لعل تو کوثر نهاد
هندوی آتش نشین کوثر آتش نشان
(خواجو)

Hinduyeh Aiinehdaar Cheshm (The Hindu holding the mirror for the eye=a symbol for the blackness of the eye):

هندوی آیینهدار چشم=کنایه از مردمک چشمک

رشاشه از سرشک کند شانه از مزه
پیش رخ هندوی آیینهدار چشم
(کمال اسماعیل)

هندوی بدسودا
هندوی حیلہگر، کنایه از کافر و مشرک

Here the unbeneficial Hindu is compared to a trickster and an unbeliever:

هرک چون هندوی بدسودایی است
روز عرضش نوبت رسوایی است
(مولوی)

Hinduyeh-Basar (The Hindu of the eye=the blackness of the eye):

هندوی بصر – کنایه از مردمک چشم
روی تو کز ترک آفتاب دریغ است
در نظر هندوی بصر که پسندد

رویت ای ترک اگر نخواهم دید
زحمت هندوی بصر که پسندد

(عطار)

Hinduyeh Bakr SalKhurdeh (The old pure Hindu=the black rock of Mecca):

هندوی بکر سالخورده- کنایه از حجرالاسواد

هندوی تیغ - شمشیر و تیغ هندی

هندوی تیغت ز حد شرق تا اقصای غرب
چون شه سیارگان در تحت فرمان

(خواجو)

Hinduyeh Charkh (literally the Hindu Wheel=used as an image for Jupiter)

هندوی چرخ - کنایه از ستاره زحل، کیوان

هندوی چرخ را ز طالع شاه
لقب خاص سعد اکبر باد

(جمال عبدالرزاق)

برآویخت هندوی چرخ از کمر
به هارونی شب جرسهای زر

(نظامی)

Hinduyeh Choobak zan - (The Hindu with the wooden weapon=symbolically means the head servant)

هندوی چوبک زن - کنایه از مهتر پاسبان

برفراز بام قدرت هندوی چوبک زن است
پاسبانه قلعه هفتم که خوانندش رحل
(شمس طبسی)

Hinduyeh Chahaar Paareh Zan-(A symbol of a dancing slave, dancer...)

هندوی چارپاره زن
کنایه از بنده و زر خرید، مطرب، رقاص(چارپاره زنگهای کوچکی است که رقاصان هنگام رقص در انگشتان
کنند و آن را به صدا در آورند)

شارک ز تو مطرب چمن گشت
هندوی چارپاره زن گشت
(خاقانی)

هندوی زلف
کنایه از سیاهی زلف محبوب

دل را ز بند هندوی زلفت خلاص ده
چون رای مدح میر ملایک خصال کرد
(شمس طبسی)

کارم از هندوی زلفش واژگون
روز من شب شد، شیم روز جنون
(شیخ بهائی)

Hinduyeh-Shab (The Hindu of Night=symbol of the darkness of night)

هندوی شب - کنایه از تاریکی شب

خوش خفتهای که هندوی شب پاسبان تست
ای طفل طبع دزد چه گیری به پاسبان
(مجیر بیلقانی)

باز از هندوی شب چون ماه زاد
در سر روزنی نوری فتاد
(مولوی)

مردم چشم شبی تا سحر پاس داشت
گرچه بر ایوان ماست هندوی شب پاسبان
(خواجو)

Hindu-Guy (Literally one that talks Hindu)

آن که به هندی سخن گوید

ز رومی رخ هندو گوی او
شه رومیان گشته هندوی او
(نظامی)

هندوی مه پوش
کنایه از زلف سیاه شب

از چه روی هندوی مه پوش شما در تاب شد
گر به مستی دوشم آمد دوش بر دوش شما

Hinduyeh-Noh-Chashm (The Hindu with nine eyes=a black reed music instrument with nine holes)

آلتی از موسیقی (نی سیاه) که دارای نه سوراخ است

جنیش ده ترک لرزه دار ز شادی
هندوی نه چشم را به بانگ در آورد
(خاقانی)

Hinduyeh-Haft-Chashm (the Hindu with seven eyes=another black reed that has 7 holes)

هندوی هفت چشم
آلتی از موسیقی (نی سیاه) که دارای هفت سوراخ است.
همان زاغ گون هندوی هفت چشم
برآورد فریاد بیدرد و خشم
(اسدی طوسی)

Hindu Haftom Pardeh=One of the stars or planets, Jupiter or Saturn

هندوی هفتم پرده
کنایه از ستارهء زحل یا کیوان
ای به رسم از آغاز دوران داشته
طارم قدر تو را هندوی هفتم چرخ پاس
(انوری)

هندوی هفتم سرا
هندوی هفتم سرا حارس ایوان توست
ورنه کجا یافتی منزلت برتری
(شمس طبسی)

Hindi (a symbol of sword, dagger)/Hindish

هندی-کنایه از شمشیر
سحرنماست مصریش، مصر گشاست هندیش
مصری کلک مُلک ده، هندی تیغ جان ستان
(مجیر بیلقانی)

چو هندی زخم بر سر زنده پیل
زند پیلان جامه در خم نیل
(نظامی گنجوی)

Hindi Dragon (symbol of sword, dagger)

هندی اژدها
کنایه از شمشیر و تیغ هندی
آفتاب مشتری حکم و سپهر قطب حلم
زیر دست آورده مصری مار و هندی اژدها

Hindi Parand (Indian Silk=another symbol of sword, dagger)

هندی پرند
ز شادروان، به خاک اندر فکندیش
ز دستش بستند آن هندی پرندش
(فخرالدین اسعد گرگانی)

هندی کژمژ سخن
گنایه از غلام و بندهای که شکسته و بسته و نادرست سخن گوید.
من ار باشم ارنه سگ آستانت
ز هندی کژمژ سخن در نماند
(خاقانی)

Hindu-Vash (used as in slave)

شاهها سخن غلام من آمد اگر چه هست
هندووشی که قیمت نیکو نیاورد
مجیرالدین بیلقانی

Hinduyeh Atash Neshin (used for the hair of beloved)

زلف تو هندو نژاد، لعل تو کوثر نهاد
هندوی آتش نشین کوثر آتش نشان
خاجو کرمانی

Some examples of the symbolic meaning of Turks as allusion and imagery: Tork (symbol of the beloved, loved one, and the Sun)

نام و ننگ و صبر و هوش و عقل و دینم شد حجاب
ترک من بازاً که سلمان ترک هر شش میکند
(سلمان ساوجی)

ترک عاشق کش من مست برون رفت امروز
تا دگر خون که از دیده روان خواهد بود
(حافظ)

جانهای باطن روشنان شب را به دل روشن کنان
هندوی شب نعره زنان کان ترک در خرگاه شد
(مولوی)

Torkkaar/Torkaar (Turkish work-symbol of aggressiveness)

ای روزی دلها رسان جان کسان و ناکسان
ترکاری و یاغی بسان هموار و ناهموار
(مولوی)

Tork-i-Aseman (The Turk of Sky=symbolically the Sun):

بود چون ترک آسمان به جهان
زیر گلنارگون پرند نهان
(امیر خسرو)

Torkan-i Charkh (The Turk of the Wheel = symbol for the moon, sun and the 5 classical planets: mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn)

ترکان چرخ
کنایه از سیارات هفتگانه که عبارتند از عطارد، زهره، ماه، آفتاب، مشتری، مریخ و زحل.
شب که ترکان چرخ کوچ کنند
کاروان حیات برحذر است
(خاقانی)

ترکان خدیو-پادشاه ترکستان
چو ارجاسب بشنید گفتار دیو
فرود آمد از گاه ترکان خدیو
(دقیقی)

ترکان سخن-کنایه از سخن آبدار و نغز
زان عرضه کند به عرضه فکر
ترکان سخن ز خرگه فکر
این ترکانند خنهرادش
خاقانی از لقب فتادش
(خاقانی)

Torkan-i-Falak (The Turks of heaven=reference to the classical seven rotating bodies)

ترکان فلک-کنایه از ستارگان هفتگانه
همه ترکان فلک را پس از این

خلق تتماجی ایشان شمروند
(خاقانی)

Tork Ahu Cheshm (The Turk with the eye like that of Gazzelle- symbol of the beloved)
ترک آهو چشم-کنایه از محبوب

من سگت، ای ترک آهو چشم، برقع بازکن
کز برای دیدن روی تو چشمم چار شد
(هلالی)

Tork-e-Aflak (The Turk of Heaven=a symbol of Mars)

ترک افلاک – کنایه از ستارهء مریخ یا بهرام
در جهان از نیابت فطرت
ترک افلاک قهرمان باشد
(سلمان ساوجی)

ترک پرچهره –کنایه از محبوب زیبا روی
(آن ترک پرچهره که مانند فرشتهست
یارب گل پاکش ز چه ترکیب سرشتست)
(اوحدی)

آن ترک پرچهره که دوش از برما رفت
آیا چه خطا دید که از راه خطا رفت
(حافظ)

Torktaaz (Attacker, someone that attacks like Turks)

ترکتاز – حمله کننده
به دستش اندر شمشیر ترکتاز بین
ندیدی ار تو به یک جای همبر آتش و آب
(معزی)

ای طبع روسپاه سوی هند باز رو
وی عشق ترکتاز سفر سوی جند کن
(مولوی)

عافیت وقتی ارچه قاعده بود
ترکتاز غم تو آن برداشت
(مجیر بیلقانی)

Torktaaz Kardan, Torktaazi Kardan (To attack in a Turkish manner=literally pillage and plunder)

ترکتاز کردن، ترکتازی کردن
کنایه از تاراج کردن
هجوم بردن به ناگاه، تاخت و تاز کردن

باز فکر تو چشم باز کند
موکب روح ترکتاز کند
(اوحدی)

گر از بهر آن کردی این ترکتاز
که چون بندگان پیشت آرم نماز

(نظامی)

ترک تازی کنم و بوسه پیاپی زنمت
تا که گوید که مزن وز تو که دارد بازم
(جمال عبدالرزاق)

طرف کُله شکستهای آشوب خلق شو
دامان فتنه بر زدهای ترک تاز کن
(سلیم)

ترک تازی - کنایه از تاخت آوردن با شتاب و ناگاه.

ماه با این ترک تازی چیست؟ جز هندوی او
خاصه کو چون قیرگون از قیروان آمد پدید
(مجیر بیلقانی)

ترک ترلکپوش - کنایه از محبوب (ترلک، جامه‌ی آستین کوتاه و پیش باز باشد)
ترک خنجر کش لشکر شکن ترلکپوش
بت خورشید بناگوش و مه دزدی نوش
(خواجو)

ترک تندخو - کنایه از محبوب

فکر کفن کنید آن ترک تندخو
تیغی چنان رساند که از استخوان گذشت
(باباافغانی)

ترک جوش - گوشت نیم پخته و کنایه از ناتمام

این ترک جوش آمد ولی ترجیع سیوم میرسد
ای جان پاکی که ز تو جان میپذیرد دهر جسم

ترک جوشش شرح کردم نیم خام
از حکیم غزنوی بشنو تمام
(مولوی)

Tork-Chihreh (Turkish face=symbol of the beloved)

ترکچهره-کنایه از زیبا و زلف

طفلان طبع من به صفت ترک چهره‌اند
وین طرفه تر که ارمنی بودم مادرم
(مجیر بیلقانی)

ترک چینی نگار- کنایه از محبوب
مکن ترکی ای ترک چینی نگار
بیا ساعتی چین در ابرو میار
(نظامی)

ترک حصار-کنایه از خورشید

جو ترک حصار ز کار اوفتاد
عروس جهان در حصار افتاد

(نظامی)

Tork Del Siyah (The Turk with the black heart=symbolically means the eye of the beloved)

ترک دل سیه-
کنایه از چشم معشوق
دل ز نرگس ساقی امان نخواست به جان
چرا که شیوه آن ترک سیهدل دانست
(حافظ)

ترک رزم آرای گردون-کنایه از مریخ یا بهرام

ترک رزم آرای گردون گردد اریابد مجال
کمترین هندوت را چاکر ز بهر اختیار
(ابن یمین)

Tork-e-Zard-rooy (The Turk with the yellow face=Symbol for the Sun)

ترک زرد روی-کنایه از آفتاب

عزم سیک عنان تو هر دم به مهر گوید
کای ترک زردروی روی چرا تیزتر نرانی
(شمس طبسی)

ترک سپهر-کنایه از آفتاب

تا به نوروزی شود در خرگه تُرک سپهر
قرص گرم از جرم خور بر گوشهٔ خوان یافته
(خواجو)

ترک سلطان شکوه (کنایه از آفتاب)

دگر روز کاین ترک سلطان شکوه
ز دریای چین کوه بر زد کوه
(نظامی)

ترک شکار افکن(کنایه از محبوب)

ای ترک شکار افکن، شمشیر مکش برمن
یا آنکه پس از کشتن بر بند به فتراکم
(هلالی)

ترک شکر ریز(کنایه از محبوب)

شهید و تشنهٔ آن ترک شکرریزم
که نقل مجلسش نقل سیاه خویشتن بودی
(بابافغانی)

Tork-e-Sobh (The morning Tork=the Sun)

ترک صبح
(کنایه از خورشید)

در پای اسب شام کند اطلس شفق

در جیب ترک صبح نهد عنبر صبا
(عطار)

Tork-e-Sahraayeh Aval (The first Tork of the Sahara-a symbol of the moon)

ترک صحرای اول - کنایه از ماه
ترک این صحرای اول با جلاجلهای نور
گرد ملکت به طریق پاسبانی آمدهست
(سنائی)

Tork Tab'(Turkish natured=symbol of cruelty and harshness)

ترک طبع- کنایه از ستمگر، جورپیشه

با عدل تو دست ترک طبعان
خوشرویی بوستان گرفته
(مجیر بیلقانی)

ترک طناز-کنایه از محبوب

به گاه شرح چشم ترک طناز
همی کن فتنه دور قمر باز
بدید آن نقشها را ترک طناز
ز تخت شاه چین تا دیر ابخاز
(عارف اردبیلی)

ترک عقیقل گیسو- کنایه از محبوب.

خانه روشن شد از آن ماه سجنجل سینه
حجره گلش شد از آن ترک عقیقل گیسوی
(اوحدی)

Tork-e-Falak (The Tork of heaven=symbolizing the planet Mars or the Sun)

ترک فلک-کنایه از سناره مریخ با بهرام و نیز آفتاب

گفته با چشمان تو ترک فلک
بنده خونریز هندوی شماسست
(ابن یمین)

اگر نه ترک فلک پیش او کمر بندد
فلک به جای گله بر سرش نهد بنطاق
(سلمان ساوجی)

ترک فلک را بین داغ حبش بر جبین
طره شب را نگر نافه چین در شکن
(خواجو)

غلام است ترک فلکه مر تورا
چو بدخواه تو در عرب راه نیست
(طالب آملی)

چون علم افراخت به پنجم رباط
ترک فلک رفت به سبیل بساط
(امیر خسرو)

Tork-e-Kafar Kish (The Kaffar (unbeliever) Turk-symbol of the beloved)

ترک کافرکیش-کنایه از محبوب
چيست قصد خون من آن ترک کافر کیش را
ای مسلمانان نمیدانم گناه خویش را
(وحشی)

ترک کج کلاه-کنایه از محبوب
گر آن بودی که پختم نیکخواه خویشتن بودی
سر در پای ترک کج کلاه خویشتن است
(بابا فغانی)

ترک کمانکش - کنایه از محبوب

ترک کمان کشم به کمین میکشد ولی
ترک هوای عشق گرفتن نمیتوان
(حلاج)

ترک گردون-کنایه از ستارهٔ مریخ یا بهرام

ترک گردون که میخرامد کج
مست ته جرعهٔ سفال من است
(فیضی)

ترک وار - همچون ترک حملهکنان
خیز تا ترک وار در تازیم
هندوان را در آتش تازیم
(نظامی)

ترک و تاز - کنایه از تاراج و غارت و جولان
غافلیم از ترک و تاز چراغ صائب از غرور
پیش پای سیل بیزنهار در خوابیم ما
(صائب)

ترکوش-مانند ترک و کنایه از زیبا و دوست داشتنی
ای جوان ترکوش میر کدامین لشکری
ای خوشا آن کشوری کانجا تو صاحب کشوری
(وحشی)

ترکی آوردن-کنایه از سخت گرفتن-سنگدلی کردن.

اگر تتر غمت خشم و ترکیی آرد
به عشق و صبر کمر بسته چو خرگاهم
(مولوی)

ترکی تاز کردن - کنایه از با شتاب ناختن.

طوطی مرده چنان پرواز کرد
کنآفتاب شرق ترکی تاز کرد (مولوی)

ترکی صفتی- کنایه از بیوفایی و عهدشکنی

ترکی صفتی وفای ما نیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست

(نظامی)

ترکی کردن-کنایه از جور و ستم کردن، سخت دلی کردن، کینه ورزی کردن.

مینینید آن سفیهانی که ترکی کردهاند
همچو چشم تنگ ترکان گور ایشان تنگ و تار
(سنائی)

خون خوری ترکانه کاین از دوستی است
خون مخور، ترکی مکن، تازان مشو
(خاقانی)

مکن ترکی ای میل من سوی تو
که ترک توام بلکه هندوی تو
(نظامی)

Some examples of the symbolic usage of Rum(Greek) in Persian allusion and imagery:
Rum o Zang (Greek and Black=Day and Night)

روم و زنگ-کنایه از شب و روز، روشنی و تاریکی،

سوم روز کاین طاق بازیچه رنگ
برآورد بازیچه روم و زنگ
(نظامی گنجوی)

هر زمانی همی رسد مددش
دو سپه روز و شب ز روم و زنگ
(مسعود سعد)

Rumi (Greek=Sun, brightness)

رومی-کنایه از روشنایی، آفتاب

نماید گهی رومی از بیم پشت
گریزان و آن زرد خنجر به مشت
(اسدی طوسی)

رومی پنهان گشت چو دوران حبش رسید
امروز در این لشکر جرار برآمد
(مولوی)

Rumiyaaneh Roo Daashtan (Having the face of a Greek=bright face, light face, beautiful face)

رومیانه رو داشتن-کنایه از سفید چهره، زیبا روی بودن

رومیانه روی دارد، زنگیانه زلف و خال
چون کمان چاچیان ابروی دارد پر عتیب
(سعدی)

رومی ابیض-کنایه از روز روشن

از روی تو و موی تو دارند نشانی
این رومی ابیض دگر آن شامی اسود
(ابن حسام)

Rumi Bachegan (Greek Kids=tear drops of the eye)

خون گریم وز دو هندوی چشم
رومی بچگان دوان ببینم
(خاقانی)

RumiyeH Talkh (The bitter Greek=a bitter wine)

رومی تلخ -کنایه از شراب تلخ.

حدیث جامی و شیرین شدن به رومی تلخ
کرامتی است که از پیر جام میگوید
(جامی)

رومی خوی-کنایه از دو رنگ و متلون المزاج.

هوا چون خاک پای و آز خوک پایگاهت شد
خراج از دهر ذمی روی رومی خوی بستانی
(خاقانی)

رومی رخ- کنایه از زیبا روی.

رومی رخی و باد چو بر زلف تو جهد
از مشک ساده شکل چلیپا همی کند.
(ادیب صابر)

رومی روم بودن- کنایه از یکرو و یکرنگ و یکدل و باصفا بودن.

دلت از یاد حق چیزی ندانست
همه میل دلت با چینه دان است
اگر رومی در حقیقت
چرا میل دلت با زنگیان است؟
(قاسم انوار)

رومیزاد، رومیزاده-کنایه از روشن و درخشان

شاه رومی زاده خورشید را گوی
برمکش تیغ از میان آفرینش
تیره کرده آسمان به دوده شب
چهره اختران رومی زاد
(شمس طبسی)

رومی زن رعنا - کنایه از آفتاب
گرچه زان آیند خاتون عرب را نگرند
در پس آینه رومی زن رعنا بینند
(خاقانی)

رومی سلب - جامه رومی
آزاده دلی است بندگی کوش

صوفی صفتی است ششتری پوش
رومی سلبی است لیک محروم
زنگی طربی است لیک با غم
(خاقانی)

رومی و زنگی - کنایه از روزگار، شب و روز سپید و سیاهی.
مگر با من این بیمحابا پلنگ
چو رومی و زنگی نباشد دو رنگ
(نظامی)

بدین دو رومی و زنگی گر اعتبار کنی
ز روم تا در زنگبار بگشاید
(ظهیر فاریابی)

دو قرن رومی و زنگی عنان در پار دُم بسته
به گیرد قبه ازرق همی یابند از جولان
(اثیر اخسیطکی)

الا تا روز با شب دو رنگی است
زمانه گاه رومی گاه زنگی است
(امیر خسرو)

رومی و زنگی نمودن جهان-کنایه از روشنی و تیرگی شب و روز.

جهان را نیست کاری جز دو رنگی
گهی رومی نماید گهی زنگی
(نظامی)

رومیوش - مانند رومی و کنایه از صاف و روشن.

بیا ساقی آن می که رومیوش است
به من ده که طبعم چون زنگی خش است
(نظامی)

Some examples of the symbolic usage of Zang/Habash (Blacks/Ethiopians) in Persian poetic allusions and imageries: Habashi (Abyssenian/Black=symbol of blackness, symbol of darkness of the beloved's hair)

حبشی
کنایه از سیاه رنگ- سیاه چهر-سیاه زلف
یکانیکان حبشی چهره و یمانی اصل
همه بلال معانی همه اوپس هنر
(خاقانی)

حبشزلف یمانی رخ زنگیخال
که چو ترکانش تتق رومی خضرا بینند
(خاقانی)

Zangi (Black/ symbol of the darkness and darkness of night)

زنگی - کنایه از سیاهی و تاریکی شب

گهی آید آن زنگی تاخته
ز سیمین سپر نیمی انداخته
(اسدی طوسی)

در عزیمت و هزیمت هر زمان زنگی و روم
این گران کردی رکاب و آن سبک کردی عنان
(سید حسن غزنوی)

زنگیانه-همچو زنگیان - کنایه از سیاه

رومیانه روی دارد زنگیانه زلف و خال
چو کمان چاچیان ابروی دارد پرعتیب
(سعدی)

خاقانی است هندوی آن هندوانه زلف
و آن زنگیانه خال سیاه مدورش
(خاقانی)

زنگی بچگان-کنایه از خال سیاه محبوب
در گلشن بوستان رویش
زنگی بچگان ز ماده زاده
(سعدی)

زنگی بچگان تاک-کنایه از خوشه‌های انگور سیاه.
انداخته هندوی کدیور
زنگی بچگان تاک را سر
سرهای تهی ز طره کاخ
آویخته هم به طره شاخ
(نظامی)

زنگی بچگان زر-کنایه از دانه‌های انگور سیاه
خون زنگی بچگان رز میخور پیوست
گر همی خواهی که شاخ بقا برگردد
(شمس طبسی)

زنگی پر زنگله-کنایه از تاریکی شب

در روز چو ایمن شدی زین رومی با عربده
شب هم مکن اندیشه‌های زین زنگی پر زنگله
(مولوی)

زنگی پیر- کنایه از تاریکی شب
گردش انجم از وراى ائیر
خیل رومی به گرد زنگی پیر
(سنائی)

زنگی تار-کنایه از تاریکی شب
از آن گریان شدم کاین زنگی تار
چو زنگی خود نمیخندد یکی بار
(نظامی)

جنگی جبین-سیاه روی، پیشیانی سیاه
راویة ما اشتر ما هست این

پس کجا شد بنده زنگی جبین
(مولوی)

زنگی چارپاره زن-کنایه از نوازنده و مطرب
سار مسکین که نیست چون بلبل
رومی ارغنون زن گلزار
لاجرم شاید ار برسته بید
زنگی چارپاره زن شد سار
(خاقانی)

زنگی خفته-کنایه از تاریکی شب.
از باد یک دو عطسه که زد صبح بر دماغ
زنگی خفته تا به کمر گه نشست باز
(اثیر اخسیکتی)

Zangi Del/Zangi Deli (Zangi heart, Zangi heartedness, =merciless, black hearted)

زنگیدل - کنایه از آن که بیرحم و سیاهدل است
زنگیدلی - کنایه از کینهتوزی و شقاوت، سختدلی.

ز غوغای زنگی دلان عرب
گریزان ندانی که چون آمدیم
(خاقانی)

چو او زنگیان فارغ دل آمد
بسی زنگی دلی زو حاصل آمد
(عطار)

زنگی زشت - کنایه از تاریکی شب
چون ز سرمای صبح زنگی زشت
دم دمید اندر آتش و انگشت
صبحدم برون همی زد خیل
گفتی جان همی بود بواللیل
(سنائی)

زنگی سرگشته-کنایه از موی سپاه معشوق
ای آن که ز مه گرد شب انگیختهای
ب سر و روان زنگ گل آمیختهای
آن زنگی سرگشته راه که زدهست
کز کنگره مهش در آویختهای
(شمس طبسی)

زنگی شب- کنایه از تاریکی شب.

رومی روز آب کارت برد و تو در کار آب
زنگی شب رخت عمرت برد و تو در پنج و جار
(جمال عبدالرزاق)

زنگی مغرب نشین-کنایه از سیاهی شبانه، هنگام غروب

زنگی مغرب نشین گردن رومی برید
داد شفق را به خون رنگ عقیق مذاب
(ابن حسام)

زنگین کردن چیزی-آلوده به زنگ کردن چیزی.
تو زنگ رزی تو نیل پزی
هان کآینه را زنگین نکنی
(مولوی)

Thus as we can see:

“The Hindu in Persian poetry is used a symbol for ugliness, black, of evil omen, mean servant of Turkish emperors, the nafs, the base soul which on other occasions is to compared to an unclean black dog. Yet, even the nafs if successfully educated – can become useful, comparable to the little Hindu-slave whose perfect loyalty will be recognized by any Shah. Turk is from Ghaznavid times onwards equivalent with the beloved; the word conveys the idea of strength, radiance, victory, sometimes cruelty, but always beauty; ..These stories in which the Turkish warrior-not endowed with too much intelligence-is slightly ridiculed, are by far outweighed by those allusions (not stories) in which the Turk is contrasted to the Hindu as the representative of the luminous world of spirit and love, against the dark world of the body and matter”
(Schimmel, Triumphal Sun).

Also as Professor Annmarie Schimmel alluded to:

“Besides the Turk and the Hindu one finds the juxtaposition of Rum and Habash-Byzantium and Ethiopia—to allude to white and black”.

In the above examples we have shown how Turk, Hindu, Zangi/Habash, Rum is used for description and symbols of slavery, rulership, slave (Hindu), ruler (Turk), trees, birds, flowers, stars, climes, complexions, colors (yellow, white, black), animals (the eye, face), planets, day (Rum, Turk) and night (Hindu, Habash/Zang), languages, tears, hair, face, various moods and feelings without taking any ethnic meaning. Unfortunately during the USSR era, there was attempt to detach Nizami Ganjavi from his Iranian heritage and Turkify him to the extent possible. We shall look at such wrong interpretations in the next chapter.

Thus the multitude of examples given from Persian literature from the above books and articles does not denote ethnicity, especially when comparing and contrasting.

We note some examples that show multiple of contradiction if we are to take them literary.

Attar:

Attar is a well known Persian poet and philosopher and has had tremendous influence on Sufism and mysticism. So much so that Rumi considers himself to be in the niche of a street while he considered Attar to have travelled through the Seven Cities of Love.

Attar says:

کی توامم گفت که هندوی توام

هندوی خاک سگ کوی تو ام

If we are to take this literally, then Attar is actually an Indian (Hindu) and he was not Iranian. And here will quote again from Schimmel who quotes:

The classical locus is perhaps in 371:

بوسه چو داد ترک من
هندوی او شدم بجان

«Since my Turk gave me a kiss I became from the bottom of my heart his Hindu...»

Thus if we are to take this literally, then Attar was a Turk or had a Turk who gave him a kiss and his heart became a Hindu.

Here again:

«not a Hindu-yi badkhu, of bad character, in the service of his beloved but an Abessinian who bears his mark»

در بندگیش نه هندویم بدخو
هستم حبشی که داغ او دارم

Thus now Attar is a Ethiopian (Abessinian).

ترک فلک چاکر شود
آنرا که شود هندوی او
«The Turk of the Heaven (i.e. Mars) becomes the servant of Him,
who became His (i.e. the beloved's) Hindu.»

Now heaven is a Turk, for who is a servant to those that became his Hindu.

هست ترک و من بجان هندوی او
لاجرم با تیغ در کار آمدست

هست ترک و من بجان هندوی او
لاجرم با تیغ در کار آمدست

« He is a Turk and I from the bottom of my heart his Hindu, necessarily he has come to work with his sword.» (129)

Thus as we can see if we are to take Attar's imagery and symbolism literally, then there would be arguments between Ethiopians and Indian nationalists about the ethnicity of Attar.

Abu Esmail Abdallah Al-Ansari Al-Heravi (Khwaja Abdullah Ansari of Herat):

He was born in Herat and is considered one of the outstanding Persian writers and mystics. Khwaja Abdullah Ansari was a descendant of the companion of the Prophet of Islam, Abi Ayub Ansari. This companion of the Prophet or one of his early descendants migrated to Herat and eventually the family became Persianized.

The Pir of Herat, Khwajah Ansari writes:

ای شب تو کیستی زنگی سیاهی و من ختنی زادهی چون ماهی
ای شب تو بر خرابه‌های تاریک چون بومی و من بر تخت روزگار اسکندر رومی.
(Dastgerdi, Wahid. "Resa'il Jaami" 'Aref Qarn Chaharom Hejri: Khwaja Abdullah Ansari", Foroughi Publishers, 1349/1970, 2nd edition. p 60)

Translation:

Oh Night, What are? A black Zangi, and I am of Khotanese descent (look like) a moon (beautiful).

Oh Night, you are upon the dark ruins like an owl and I am on the throne of the age of Eskandar-e-Rumi (Alexander the Greek).

Thus if we take this literally, then the well known Ansari, a descendant of the companion of the Prophet of Islam, would be of Khotanese descent. Of course the contrast between Dark/African/Zang and Khotanese is a well known contrast used by many Persian poets.

Amir Khusraw:

Amir Khusraw, according to Annmarie Schimmel, was born to a Turkish father and an Indian mother and is one of the most important Persian poets of India. Although ethnically, he was not Iranian, but rather Indian/Turkic, nevertheless, culturally he was Iranian.

Schimmel quotes this verse from Amir Khusraw and then further explains:

*"The tongue of my friend is Turkish
And I know no Turkish –*

Amir Khusraw's own father was of Turkish extraction and the great mystic guru in Delhi Nizamuddin Auliya affectionately called the poet Turki Allah 'God's Turk'. However the word Turk was traditionally used to also mean a beautiful, fair-complexioned, lively, sometimes also cruel beloved, compared to which the miserable lover felt himself to be but a lowly, humble, swarthy Hindu slave. The literary counterpart *turk-hindu*, which can also mean 'black-white', was in use for centuries in Persian literature, and had its counterpart in reality on the subcontinent since the days of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. Mahmud was of Turkic lineage, and he invaded India no fewer than seventeen times between 999 and 1030. As a result the Turks were established as a military force, and they also formed the ruling class, under whose auspices the theologians and lawyers henceforth had to work"

(Schimmel, Annmarie. "The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture; translated by Corinne Atwood ; edited by Burzine K. Waghmar; with a foreword by Francis Robinson. London: Reaktion Books, 2004. Excerpt from pg 233)

Thus if one was to take this verse out of context, Amir Khusraw who knew Turkish (note his praise of India) did not know any Turkish, although he said:

“And there are the numerous languages of India which, when imported, develop more beautifully than it was possible in their native country – is not the Persian of India much superior to that of Khurasan and Sistan? Do not people learn the finest Turkish here?” (Annemarie Schimmel, Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and Its Application to Historical Fact in Speros Vryonis, Jr., ed., Islam and Cultural Change in the Middle Ages (Udena Publications, 1975), posthumously honoring G.E. von Grunebaum)

We should note something here about the cultural identity of person like Amir Khusraw, Blban (one of his patrons) and the Turco-Mongols that settled in India. Schimmel points out: “In fact as much as early rulers felt themselves to be Turks, they connected their Turkish origin not with Turkish tribal history but rather with the Turan of Shahnameh: in the second generation their children bear the name of Firdosi’s heroes, and their Turkish lineage is invariably traced back to Afrasiyab—weather we read Barani in the fourteenth century or the Urdu master poet Ghalib in the nineteenth century. The poets, and through them probably most of the educated class, felt themselves to be the last outpost tied to the civilized world by the threat of Iranianism. The imagery of poetry remained exclusively Persian.” (Annemarie Schimmel, Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and Its Application to Historical Fact)

As Canfield also notes: “The Mughals, Persianized Turks who had invaded from Central Asia and claimed descent from both Timur and Genghis strengthened the Persianate culture of Muslim India.” (Robert L. Canfield, Turko-Persia in historical perspective, Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Khaqani:

Afzal a-din Badil Ibrahim who received the penname from the Shirvanshah Khaqan ‘Azam Abul’ Mufazzar Khaqan-i Akbar Manuchehr b. Faridun and was also known as Hessian al-Ajam Khaqani (the Persian Hassān) may be regarded as the second most important literary figure of the Islamic Caucasia after Nezami Ganjavi. In actually, when it comes to certain forms like the Qasida, he would be the greatest poet of the area. He also had a great influence on Nezami as shown in the appendix. He was born to a Christian mother (possibly Iranian, Armenian, Georgian) and an Iranian (Iranic) father. He writes about his mother:

نسطوری و موبدی نژادش

“Nesturi o Mobedi Nejaadesh” (Of Nestorian and Zoroastrian (Mobed being the title of Zoroastrian priests). That is his mother’s family might have been originally Zoroastrians who converted to Nestorian Christianity, like many Iranians did in the late Sassanid era.

Here are some verses that Khaqani Shirvani literally claims to be a Hindu (that is if we read it literally):

گر دلم سوز سموم بادیه

پس مفرح کز لب و خالش کنم

کمتربن هندوی او خاقانی است

گر پذیرد نام مثقالش کنم

(خاقانی)

خاقانی است هندوی آن هندوانه زلف
و آن زنگیانه خال سیاه مدورش
(خاقانی)

Thus at least twice Khaqani is claiming to be a Hindu here. But these verses are obviously not taken literally. Or for example, in his famous “Aivaan Mada’en”, Khaqani remarks:

اینست همان درگه کورا ز شهان بدی
دیلم ملک بابل، هندو شه ترکستان
(خاقانی)

This is that same kingly court, which had from its great Kings
(relative to it) a Daylamite was a king of Babylon, A Hindu the King of Turkistan

Rumi:

According to Annemarie Schimmel: *“Rumi’s mother tongue was Persian, but he had learned, during his stay in Konya, enough Turkish and Greek to use it, now and then in his verses.”*

Here are two contradicting verses from Rumi:

ای ترکِ ماهِ چهره، چه گردد که صبح، تو
آبی به حجره‌ی من و گویی که: گل برو!
تو ماهِ ترکی و من اگر ترک نیستم،
دانم من این قدر که به ترکی است، آب سو
آبِ حیاتِ تو گر از این بنده تیره شد،
ترکی مکن به گشتنم ای ترکِ ترک‌خو!

Translation:

*“You are a Turkish moon and I, although I am not a Turk,
I know this little, that in Turkish the word for water is su”*

گه ترکم و گه هندو گه رومی و گه زنگی
از نقش تو است ای جان اقرارم و انکارم

Translation:

*“I am sometimes Turk, sometimes Hindu, sometimes Rumi and sometimes Negro,
O Soul, from your image is my approval and denial”*

*“Everyone in whose heart is the love for Tabriz, becomes – even though he be a Hindu –
he becomes a rose cheeked inhabitant of Taraz (i.e. Turk)” (Schimmel, Triumphal Sun)*

Note Taraz is a city in central Asia known for its beauties. All these contradictory verses have symbolic meaning and should not be taken out of their context.

In the case of Rumi, he has also left compositions and his followers have written about him. Here is an interesting Sufic view on the role of Turks according to Rumi in history.

Nizami:

Finally we discuss some imagery from Nizami before discussing misinterpretation of his verses in the next chapter. It should be noted that the misinterpretation has gone as far as assigning Turkish ethnicity to Layli (in *Layli o Majnoon*) and to Shirin (in *Khusraw o Shirin*) despite the fact that their names are Arabic and Persian respectively; Shirin was a Christian originally of probably Aramean origin, but later on she became known by poets as an Armenian princess. But these shall be discussed in the next chapter.

As Schimmel has already noted:

By the end of the 12th century, the symbol Hindu for black is used commonly by Nizami: — The Indian princess — described with the famous contrast-pair as

*«gazelle with Turkish (i.e. killing) eyes,
from Hindu origin»*

آهوی ترک چشم هندو زاد

is that of Saturday which is ruled by Saturn which is poetically called the *هندوی سپهر* or *هندوی باریک بین* and has, according to astrological tradition, black colour. But Nizami has also compared the crow to the Indian:

زاغ جز هندوی نسب نباشد

دزدی از هندوان عجب نباشد

« The crow is surely of Hindu origin,

and to steal is not astonishing in Hindus » (HP 112)

ترکی از نسل رومیان نسبیست

قرة العین هندوان لقبش

« A Turk from Byzantine origin,

whose surname is «the object of pleasure to the Hindus»

Here are some other examples.

In praise of one of the rulers:

همه ترکان چین بادند هندوش
مباد از چینیان چینی بر ابروش

Translation:

*May all the Turks of China be his Hindu (slave),
May no frown come upon his brows from the Chinese*

We note that *Chin* in Persian poetry (Shahnameh and Panj Ganj) is actually Western China and parts of Central Asia that were ruled by Khaqan. That is why the Khaqan of Gok Turks in the Shahnameh is called the Khaqan of Chin.

Here is another example from Nizami:

سیاهان حبش ترکان چینی
چو شب با ماه کرده همنشینی

Author's translation:

*Siyaahaan Habash (The blacks of Ethiopia), Torkaan Chini (the Turks of China),
Cho Shab (like the night) baa maah (with the moon) kardeh hamneshi (have gathered
together): The blacks of Ethiopia, the Turks of China, like the night with the moon have
gathered together.*

Note here that the Siyaahaan Habash (blacks of Ehtiopia) are the color of the night while the Torkan Chini are the moon (and the stars).

Another example: Here is one where the Kurd's daughter is of Hindu Mole, Indian nature/created and Turkish eye and face.

کرد را بود دختری با جمال
لعبتی ترک چشم و هندوخال
مهی ترک رخساره هندو سرشت
ز هندوستان داده شه را بهشت

*The Kurd had a daughter with beautiful face
A lovely beauty with Turkish eyes and Indian mole
A bride of Hindu components and Turkish face
From Hindustan has given the king a paradise*

When the King of India offers his daughter to Alexander the Great, Nezami Ganjavi writes this description of her in his Eskandarnama:

مهی ترک رخساره هندو سرشت
ز هندوستان داده شه را بهشت

نه هندو که ترک خطائی به نام
به دزدیدن دل چون هندو تمام
ز رومی رخ هندوی گوی او
شه رومیان گشته هندوی او

*A great beauty of Hindu origin with Turkish face
It has made Hindustan (India) a Paradise for the King
Not a Hindu, but a Khatai Turk in name
But when it comes to stealing hearts, as adept as a Hindu
From her Roman face and Hindu (sweet) talks
The King of Rome (Alexander) has become her Hindu (Slave)*

Another example: A verse from Shirin in *Khusraw o Shirin*:

و گر چشمم ز ترکی تنگی ای کرد
به عذر آمد چو هندوی جوانمرد

Author's translation:

*If my eye because of Turkishness has narrowed,
Came apologizing the chivalrous Hindu*

(Here in my opinion Nizami is describing the blackness of the eye beautifully)

Here the whiteness of the eye is the Turk and the blackness of the eye is the Hindu, furthermore, Turks in Persian poetry are known for Tang-Cheshmi (narrow eyedness) due to the fact that the Turks described in Persian poetry are the original Asiatic Turks and not the linguistically Turkified people of later Azerbaijan, Caucasia and Anatolia. We shall discuss this in the next section. Unfortunately ethnic-biased misinterpretations by has used such symbolic imagery to claim that Shirin and also Layli in *Layli o Majnoon* to be Turkish. Despite the fact that the image of Shirin is known in Persian poetry and both Shirin and Mahin Banu are Persian names, and the historical Shirin was Aramean while the Shirin of Nizami Ganjavi is popularized as a Christian Armenian (note the many places where Shirin reveres the One God) princess and regarded as such by most scholars. And Layli was from Arabia and Nizami Ganjavi refers to the foreignness of the tale.

We now quote some verses from the translation of *Haft Paykar* with regards to Persian imagery. Original Persian of some of these verses is brought here:

*“The Slav king’s daughter, Nasrin-Nush
A Chinese Turk in Grecian Dress”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 51-52)*

Thus we can see that if we take the verse literally, Slavic king had a daughter who was a Chinese Turk in Grecian Dress. But the verse makes perfect sense given the brief overview that was given on Persian poetic symbols, imagery and allusion.

*“A fair Turk from Greek stock it seemed
The Joy of Hindus was its name”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Pakyar, pg 99)*

Thus we can see the symbols Rum, Hindu and Turk all at play in a two verses.

We note that when the Persian Sassanid King Bahram enters the black dome which is identified with the kingdom of India:

*“When Bahram please sought, he set
His eyes on those seven portraits
On Saturday from Shammasi temple went
In Abbassid black to pitch his tent;
Entered the musk-hued dome and gave
His greetings to the Indian maid”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Pakyar, pg 105)*

*“See what a Turkish raid heaven made,
What game with such a prince it played
It banished me from Iram’s green
Made my black lot a legend seem”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 108)*

*“A queen came forth from her palace dome
Greek troops before Ethiops behind
Her Greeks and Blacks, like two-hued dawn,
Set Ethiops troops against those of Rum (in reality Greece=Rum)”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 108)*

While still in the black dome (associated with the kingdom of India) he meets a lady by the name Turk-taz (Turkish attack, Turkish raid). This is reminiscent of this verse of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari of Herat:

عشق آمد و دل بکرد غارت
ای دل تو به جان بر این بشارت
ترکی عجب است عشق، دانی
کز ترک عجیب نیست غارت

Here is another use of this in the *Haft Paykar*:

“My love”, said I, “What will you? Fame

You surely have; what is your name?"
She said: "A lissome Turk I am,
Turktaz the beautiful my name
In harmony and accord, I said
Our names are to each other wed
How strange that Turktaz your name
For mine-Turktaazi-is the same
Rise; let us make a Turkish raid
Cast Hindus aloes on the flame;
Take life from the Magian cup
With it, on lovers sweetmeas sup"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, 119-120)

"I'll favor you, at life's own cost
If You're a Turk, I am your black"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 128)

(Here Hindu or Ehtiop was probably translated as Black)

"Without the light's radiance, like a shade,
A Turk, far from that Turkish raid"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 131)

"The Chinese-adorned bride of Rum
Said 'Lord of Rum, Taraz, Chin"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 133)

In the tale of the Greek's daughter in the Yellow dome we read:

"Each newly purchased maid she'd hail
As 'Rumi' queen and Turkish belle"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 134)

"Although her Turkish wiles enflamed,
He kept his passion tightly reined"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 137)

In the Turquoise Dome

"In Egypt dwelt a man, Maahaan
More beautiful than the full moon,
Like Egypt's Joseph, fair of face;
A thousand Turks his Hindu Slave"
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 175)

"Till the nights Ethiop rushed day's Turks,

*The king ceased not his joyful Sport”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 216)*

Chinese King apologizing to Bahram:

*“I’m still his humble slave; of Chin
At home, but Ehtiop to him”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 257)*

We note all these symbolic allusions and imagery are part of Persian poetry and have been used by many Persian poets including Hafez, Sa’adi, Sanai, Attar, Khaqani and Nizami Ganjavi. Nezami Ganjavi, Attar, Rumi, Hafez, Khaqani, Sanai and several other Persian poets used them extensively. Unfortunately due to lack of knowledge of Persian language and literature, and also due to political reasons, the USSR tried to misinterpret some of the verses with the word Turk in order to assign a Turkic ethnicity to Nizami. The ultimate goal was what Stalin tried to portray, that Nizami Ganjavi was forced to write in Persian and was a victim of Persian Chauvinism! We shall deal with this issue in the next chapter but this section has overall proved that the context of the verse and its meanings must be understood appropriately and Nizami Ganjavi who was not an ethnocentric has used these symbols like many other Persian poets have.

Which Turks are described in Persian Poetry?

Today there are two groups of Turkic speakers in term of physical characteristics (phenotypes) although the genotypes show a greater variety. The Turcophones of Anatolia, Azerbaijan and the Caucasia as opposed to the Turks of Central Asia, China and Siberia are overwhelmingly Caucasian looking. It is easily shown that when Nizami Ganjavi and other Persian poets (Attar, Hafez, Sanai, Rumi, Khaqani, Salman Saveji...) use the term Turk, they are referring to the Mongloid types of Central Asia and not the Caucasoid type of the Caucasia and the Near East. This is important since the association of Turks in classical Persian poetry at least up to the time of Hafez has to do with the Central Asian types. Of course, the Caucasoid types (who are mainly linguistically Turkified due to the elite dominance of Turks) are not physically different than Persians, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs and etc where-as the Mongoloid types are radically different. It is clear that the primary heritage left by the Turkic nomads and invaders of the region was that of language (heavily influenced by Persian and Persianized Arabic) rather than culture. Thus it was their distinctive facial and physical features which made the Turks of Central Asia as the ideal type of beauty in Persian literature.

We already quoted Professor Peter Golden who has written the most comprehensive book on Turkic people in English up to this time:

“The original Turkish physical type, if we can really posit such, for it should be borne in mind that this mobile population was intermixing with its neighbors at a very stage, was

probably of the Mongloid type (in all likelihood in its South Siberian variant). With may deduce this from the fact that populations in previously Europoid areas of Iranian speech begin to show Mongloid influences coincidental with the appearances of Turkic people.”

We have also quoted Prof. Schimmel who has said:

“Soon the Turkish type of beauty became prominent both in pictures and in poetical descriptions: a round face with narrow eyes and a minute mouth.”

Iraj Anvar, the translator of forty eight ghazals from Rumi also mentions this:

“It indicates people from the North, with high cheek bones and almond shaped eyes, considered to be the most beautiful people”.

(Anvar, Iraj. “Divan Shams Tabrizi, Fourthy Eight Ghazals, Translated by Iraj Anvar”, Semar Publishers Srl, 2002. Pg 131)

We now quote many Persian poets including Nizami Ganjavi, as well as Muslim historians account. One attribute of Turks identified in Persian poetry is Tang-Cheshm (literally: narrow-eyes) which is part of the Mongloid features.

Nizami Ganjavi mentions this fact at least four times with respect to Turks:

ز بس که آورده ام در چشمها نور
ز ترکان تنگ چشمي کرده ام دور

“I brought so much light into this world, that I cast away narrow-eyedness from Turks”

Nizami Ganjavi describing the anger of Alexander at the Khaqan:

به یفرین تُرکان زَبان بَرگُشاد
که بی فتنه تُرکی ز مادر نَزاد
ز چینی یجز چین آبرو مَخواه
ندارند پیمان مردم نگاه
سُخَن راست گُفتند پیشینیان
که عَهْد و وفا نیست در چینیان
همه تنگ چشمي پَسندیده اند
فَرَاخِي به چَشم گَسان دیده اند
خبر نی که مهر شما کین بُود
دل تُرکِ چین پُر خَم و چین بُود
اگر تُرکِ چینی وفا داشتی
جهان زیر چین قبا داشتی

And in another description:

سرآینده ترک با چشم تنگ
فروهشته گیسو به گیسوی چنگ

An allusion to the beauty of the eyes:

وگر چشمم ز ترکی تنگی کرد
به عذر آمد چو هندوی جوانمرد

According to Ibn Athir, When the Mongols reached the Alans (Iranian tribe) and Qipchaq (Turkic Tribe) tribes, the Mongols told the Qipchaq:

“We and you are of the same race, but the Alans are not from you, so that you should help us. Your religion is also not like theirs.” Thus the Qipchaq turned away from the Alans, but later on the Mongols attacked the Qipchaq).

(Al-Kamil Ibn Athir).

In Persian literature, when Turks are described, they are described with the physical feature of the Turks of Central Asia and Yakuts. For example this statue of an ancient Turkish King of the Gok-Turks Kul Tegin exemplifies this

<http://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/kulturedebiyat/grafik/kultigin.jpg>



Here is a picture of Seljuq Prince found online:



حافظ:

به تنگ چشمی آن ترک لشکری نازم
که حمله بر من درویش یک قبا آورد

نظامی:

سرآیندهء ترک با چشم تنگ
فروهشته گیسو به گیسوی چنگ

مولوی:

ترک خندیدن گرفت از داستان
چشم تنگش گشت بسته آن زمان

مولوی:

دو چشم ترک خطا را چه ننگ از تنگی
چه عار دارد سیاح جهان از این عوری

مولوی:

گفت کای تنگ چشم تاتاری
صید ما را به چشم می‌ناری؟

مولوی:

قاصرات الطرف فی حجب الخیام
حال ترکان است گوپی والسلام

.....

.....

.....

تنگ چشمانند لیکن دوربین
خوبرویانند لیکن خویش کام

سنایی غزنوی:

می‌نبیند آن سفیهانی که ترکی کرده اند

همچو چشم تنگ ترکان گور ایشان تنگ و تار

سنایی غزنوی:

باش تا چون چشم ترکان تنگ گردد گور تو
گر چه خود را کور سازی در مسافت صد کری

خاطرات نجم الدین رازی معروف به دایه

وي يکي از رهبران مهم صوفيه و نثر نويس پخته اين روزگار است که تا سال 653 زنده بوده است. او شاگرد نجم الدین کبری است که در حمله مغولان به خوارزم در میدان جنگ کشته شده است. مهم ترين اثر وي، کتاب تصوف مرصاد العباد است که سلوک عرفاني را به زبان پارسي دري شرح داده است. دربخشي از اي متن به حمله ترک و مغول و گریز خود اشاره کرده است. با هم اين بخش را مي خوانيم:

«در تاريخ شهر سنة سبع و عشر و ستمائه (617) لشکر مخذول کفار تار استيلا يافت بر آن ديار ، و آن فتنه و فساد و قتل و اسر و هدم و حرق که از آن ملاعين ظاهر گشت، در هيچ عصر و ديار کفر و اسلام کس نشان نداده است و در هيچ تاريخ نيامده الا آنچه خواجه (پيغمبر) عليه الصلوة و السلام از فتنه هاي آخر الزمان خبر باز داده است و فرموده: لا تقوم الساعة حتي تقاتلوا الترك صغار الاعين حمر الوجوه ذلف الانوف کان وجوههم المجان المطرقة ، صفت اين کفار ملاعين کرده است و فرموده که ، قيامت برنخيزد تا آنگاه که شما با ترکان قتال نکنيد، قومي که چشم هاي ایشان خرد باشد و بيني هايشان پهن بود و روي هاي ایشان سرخ بود و فراخ همچون سپر پوست در کشيده. و بعد از آن فرموده است: و يكثر الهرج، قيل: يا رسول الله! ما الهرج؟ قال: القتل ، القتل. فرمود که قتل بسيار شود. به حقيقت، اين واقعه آن است که خواجه عليه الصلوة و السلام به نور نبوت پيش از ششصد و اند سال باز ديده بود. قتل از اين بيشتتر چگونه بود که از یک شهر ري که مولد و منشأ اين ضعيف است و ولايت آن قياس کرده اند ، کما بيش پانصد هزار آدمي به قتل آمده و اسير گشته. و فتنه و فساد آن ملاعين بر جملگي اسام و اساميان از آن زيادت است که در حيز عبارت گنجد... عاقبت چون بلا به غايت رسيد و محنت به نهايت و کار به جان رسيد و کارد به استخوان... اين ضعيت از سهر همدان که مسکن بود به شب بيرون آمد با جمعي از درويشان و عزيزان در معرض خطري هرچ تمام تر ، در شهر سنة ثمان عشر و ستمائه به راه اربيل و بر عقب اين فقير خبر چنان رسيد که کفار ملاعين.. به شهر همدان آمدند و حصار دادند و اهل شهر به قدر و وسع بکوشيدند و چون طاقت مقاومت نماند - کفار دست يافتند و شهر بستند و خلق بسيار کشند و بسي اطفال را و عورات را اسير بردند و خرابي تمام کردند و اقرباي اين ضعيف را که به شهر بودند، بيشتتر شهيد کردند.

باريد به باغ ما تگرگي
وز گلبن ما نماند برگي»

ملاحظه کنيد:

«قومي که چشم هاي ایشان خرد باشد و بيني هايشان پهن بود و روي هاي ایشان سرخ بود و فراخ همچون سپر پوست در کشيده»

Unsound arguments made during the USSR era about the ethnicity of Nizami

We now have provided the necessary images of Persian poetry and history background to review the merit of the unsound arguments made during the USSR era. We also demonstrated that Nezami Ganjavi became fully politicized in the USSR scholarship and even Stalin gave a direct verdict. Although it seems Bertels did not provide a detailed study of Nezami Ganjavi's background (nor any significant USSR author did), false arguments were made by ethno-nationalists in Azerbaijan SSR and some other USSR scholars. In order to look at the arguments, we have chosen three sources:

- 1) An article in the bi-lingual (Persian and Azeri) magazine Varliq written by Javad Heyat which has a well known Turkic nationalist bent in Iran. The article references sources from the Republic of Azerbaijan and the former USSR.
- 2) An article by a scholar Mohammad Zadeh Sadiq who received his doctorate from Turkey and claims the Sumerians, Elamites, Avesta and etc. were Turks.
- 3) An article by a Hossein Feyzollahi from Tabriz going as far as claiming Layli in the *Layli o Majnoon* in Nizami Ganjavi's was from a Turkic tribe in Arabia. (Again because Persian imagery where central Asiatic Turks were seen as the ideal type of beauty).

The arguments by these three authors as well the random sites have been taken straight from USSR historiography and repeat the same arguments first made in the USSR. We will also mention their reasoning, analyze them, and finally show that they lack any basis for assigning Nizami Ganjavi a Turkic father line.

False argument: A false verse created in 1980

Although we touched upon this false verse before, it is important to touch upon it again, since a good deal of nationalist websites are spreading it over the internet and print media. Indeed and unfortunately, there is no regulation for search engines such as google and many people will google out false information from the internet.

As mentioned recently, a false verse in 1980 about Nizami's father was forged:

پدر بر پدر مر مرا ترک بود
به فرزانیگی هر یکی گرگ بود

Translation of the false verse:

*“Father upon father of mine were all Turks,
each one of them was wise as wolf!”*

The above couplets, like much other false information on Nizami Ganjavi can be easily found in pan-Turkist websites/books/articles although it was falsified in 1980. Its basic rhyme of Gurg/Gorg (Wolf) and Turk/Tork show its invalidity and non-ingenuity of the author who falsified it. Yet the USSR scholar from Azerbaijan SSR, Arsali Nushabi writes:

Ali Ganjali, a well known researcher from the Azerbaijan SSR in the introduction of his *Layli o Majnoon* Nizami, translated by the Turkish author M.K. Kurtuncan has written: “I do not know which manuscript of *Layli o Majnoon* I have seen this verse in the Ayasufia library, which Nizami explicitly mentions that he is a Turk and his fathers were Turks, the verse is this:

پدر بر پدر مر مرا ترک بود
به فرزانی هر یکی گرگ بود

See:

جلال متینی، «سندی معتبر بودن بر در ترک بودن نظامی گنجوی!»، ایرانشناسی، سال 4، 1371.
Matini, J. “A solid proof on the Turkic roots of Nizami Ganjavi?!”, *Iranshenasi*, Volume 4, 1371(1992-1993).

The above example, like the false statement of Stalin that: “*Nizami wrote most of his poetry in Persian*” (Trying to hint that he has Turkish poetry!), shows the unethical and unscholarly political writings that have attempted to demean the personality of Nizami Ganjavi. All of these futile efforts were to take Nizami Ganjavi out of Iranian civilization by any means possible. Indeed, if Nizami Ganjavi had any serious references to any sort of Turkish identity or culture, there would not be a need to create such a false verse.

The nationalist groups have used this falsified and forged verse in their articles and books to claim that Nizami Ganjavi was of Turkic stock. Supposedly, the Grey Wolf or Wolf is seen as wise creature in Turkic mythology. If that is the case, then one should look at actual and authentic verses of Nizami Ganjavi about Wolves which would actually counter their argument (since Wolf is a holy symbol in Turkic mythology than Nizami Ganjavi’s derision of it means he was not from that culture).

Here are some verses about Wolves by Nizami Ganjavi which depict wolves as *stupid*, *vile character* and *bloodsucking* creature and even prefers a fox to a wolf and calls the fox as the king of Wolf due to the Wolf’s stupidity! There is nothing about the wisdom (Farzanegi) of the Wolf in his poems and indeed bad and unpleasant people are compared with Wolf:

برای نمونه:

از آن بر گرگ روبه راست شاهی
که روبه دام بیند گرگ ماهی
یا:
به وقت زندگی رنجور حالیم

که با گرگان وحشی در جوالیم

یا:

پیامت بزرگست و نامت بزرگ
نهفته مکن شیر در چرم گرگ

یا:

روباه ز گرگ بهره زان برد
کین رای بزرگ دارد آن خرد.

یا:

پیامت بزرگست و نامت بزرگ
نهفته مکن شیر در چرم گرگ

یا:

مردمانی بدند و بد گوهرند
یوسفانی ز گرگ و سگ بتزند
گرگ را گرگ بند باید کرد
رقص روباه چند باید کرد
خاکبانی که زاده ز میند
ددگانی به صورت آدمیند

یا:

سوم موبد چنان زد داستانی
که با گرگی گله راند شبانی
رباید گوسفندی گرگی خونخوار
در آویزد شبان با او پیکار
کشد گرگ از یکی سو تا تواند
ز دیگر سو شبان تا وارهند
چو گرگ افزون بود در چاره سازی
شبان را کرد باید خرقة بازی

Thus it is extremely unfortunate that someone in 1980 falsified such a verse in the former USSR. This was part of the USSR policy of nation building but there is no excuse for its abundance in Google and some non-internet publications. Unfortunately, lies coupled with ethnic nationalism propagate fast on the Internet and other media and the ethnic nationalists who spread these lies have little regards for truths. More unfortunately, the above false verse is coupled with Turkish poems of other authors and then attributed to Nizami Ganjavi. Thus many susceptible readers will get false information with regards to Nizami Ganjavi unless they were aware of ethnically natured manipulations with regards to his personality. Anyhow, if Nizami Ganjavi was not Iranian and did not have Iranian culture and had Turkic culture (which the book Nozhat al-Majales provides decisive proof that Iranic culture was dominant in the urban centers), there would be no

need to create such false verses to associate him with Turkic nationalist Gray Wolf myths.

Incorrect argument: Nizami uses “Turkish words” so “he must be Turkish”

One of the unsound claims used is that since Nizami Ganjavi uses a dozen or so Turkish words, then he could have been Turkic! Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh (who was a pro-Iranian nationalist at first but later on became pro-Turkic nationalist and pan-Turkic) is known for his political activism, but he also admired Persian poetry and has written a book where he enumerates 30 or so “Turkish” words and titles. It should be mentioned that the etymology of some of these words that are claimed to be Turkish by him are not probably Turkish. For example Khatun, Saav, Ghirmiz, Miyanji, and Amaaj are not Turkic words. Before looking at the matter closely, we should mention that many Persian poets before and after Nizami use the same Turkish words. Indeed as Professor Xavier Planhol has stated:

“The Turks, on the other hand, posed a formidable threat: their penetration into Iranian lands was considerable, to such an extent that vast regions adapted their language. This process was all the more remarkable since, in spite of their almost uninterrupted political domination for nearly 1,000 years, the cultural influence of these rough nomads on Iran’s refined civilization remained extremely tenuous. This is demonstrated by the mediocre linguistic contribution, for which exhaustive statistical studies have been made (Doerfer). The number of Turkish or Mongol words that entered Persian, though not negligible, remained limited to 2,135, i.e., 3 percent of the vocabulary at the most. These new words are confined on the one hand to the military and political sector (titles, administration, etc.) and, on the other hand, to technical pastoral terms. The contrast with Arab influence is striking. While cultural pressure of the Arabs on Iran had been intense, they in no way infringed upon the entire Iranian territory, whereas with the Turks, whose contributions to Iranian civilization were modest, vast regions of Iranian lands were assimilated, notwithstanding the fact that resistance by the latter was ultimately victorious. Several reasons may be offered.”

(Land of Iran, Encyclopedia Iranica)

Thus Persian has been influenced slightly by Turkish and Turkish has actually been influenced much more by Persian. The argument also has no importance. For example Ottoman Turkish has many Persian words but that does not make the users of the Ottoman language necessarily Persian.

Now as per some of the words Khatun, Saav, Ghirmiz, Miyanji, Amaaj, their etymologies are not Turkish.

For example Khatun:

This is considered Soghdian by Frye (History of Bukhara, 1954), Clauson from Soghdian *xwate:n* (“lord” with fem. end.).

Modern Iranians use the term Khanum (which is Turkish) besides the Persian word Banu (which is Persian) and occasionally Khatun is seen. Nevertheless, the word Khatun had entered modern Persian from Soghdian already and is attested in Rudaki's Diwan, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and Naser Khusraw's Diwan. The Dekhoda Dictionary provides sufficient testimony to this fact.

بدانست بیدار دل پاک زاد
که دورند خاقان و خاتون ز داد
(فردوسی)

فقیه آن یابد از میر خراسان
که خاتون زو فزونتر یابد اکنون
(ناصر خسرو)

The word Saav (ساو) is a Persian word and its Middle Persian/Pahlavi form is saag or saav and it is also used already by Ferdowsi (again quote from the Dekhoda Dictionary):

مرا با چنین پهلوان تاو نیست
اگر رام گردد به از ساو نیست
(فردوسی)

The word Miyanji is also Persian and is related to 'Mian' or middle. Its Middle Persian/Pahlavi form is Mianjig and has been used numerous times in the Shahnameh and has been also used by Nasir Khusraw:

میانجی نخواهی بجز تیغ و گرز
منش برزرداری ز بالای برز
(فردوسی)

It is the same with the word Ghirmiz (red) and Amaaj which have been used by Persian poets before Nizami. One may refer to the RIRA online Persian poetry (<http://rira.ir/rira/php/?page=view&mod=classicpoems&obj=home&id=0> accessed Dec 2007) or the Dekhoda Dictionary.

For example, Nasir Khusraw, the Khorasani poet says:

همچنین دانم نخواهد برگشت زمان
جعدت عنبری و روی خوبت قرمزی
(ناصر خسرو)
(برگرفته از لغتنامه دهخدا)

And the word Amaaj has already been used by Khorasani poets including Sanai Ghaznawi and Farrokhi Sistani:

چون تو به آماجگاه تیر نهی بر کمان
سجده کند عقل و روح دست و عنان ترا
(سنائی)

The word Bilak (بیلک) is probably a Persian word although some sources have said it could be Indian. Anyhow, regardless of its etymology, it has been used by many poets, even prior to Nizami. For example Sanai, Suzani, Anvari Abivardi.

زودا که آسمان ممالک تهی کند
از دیو فتنه بیلک همچون شهاب تو
(انوری)

So not all words claimed to be Turkish are indeed of Turkic origin. We now take a look at ten of the words which we believe have clear or probable Turkish etymology and that are used by Nizami Ganjavi. The Dekhoda Dictionary brings sufficient examples that these words were used by Persian poets before Nizami Ganjavi. Also a false claim has risen by authors who are not familiar with the Turkish law of vowel harmony nor Perso-Arabic script that Nezami used Turkish spelling of these words. Actually as shown he uses Persian spelling which were used by previous poets. We should also note that Doerfer has listed virtually all Turkish words in Persian and all the Turkish words used by Nezami have been used by other Persian poets and they follow Persian spelling and form of these words.

1)

Yotaaq/Yataaq (یتاق) which in Persian means “Paas Daashtan, Sarvari, Hefz, Mohafezat” has been used by the Seljuqid Vizier Nizam Al-Molk. We will quote the Dekhoda dictionary here:

معلوم کرده بودند که چند مرد به یتاق رفتندی و جایگاهی گروهی پایدار بودی (سیر الملوک نظام الملک)

The word is also used by Sa’adi who is definitely not considered to be Turk:

تو مست شراب ناز و ما را
بیداری کشت در یتاقت

We note that Turkish spelling of this word is یتاق which neither Nezami nor Sa’adi nor Nezam al-Moolk use.

2)

Another word is Totoq (تتق). Note Nezami uses the form تتق but in Turkish spelling it would be spelled as توتوق. The Dekhoda Dictionary believes its etymology is possibly Persian. The meaning of this word is a big tent or curtain. Anyhow the word has been already used by famous poets like Asadi Tusi and Anvari Abivardi before Nizami. We will quote examples from the Dekhoda Dictionary:

دل خانه فروش نام و ننگم زو
دلبر ز تتق بدر نمی آید
(انوری)
ز اول که داشت در تتق صنع منزوی

ارواح را مشیت و اشباح را گهر
(انوری)

The word is also used by the Persian poet Attar:

چون تتق از آفتاب چهره کنی دور
عقل براندازی و بصر بریایی
(عطار)

3)

Another word is Manjuq/Monjuq (منجوق). Although the Dekhoda Dictionary is not sure about etymology of this word, that could possibly be Iranian (it might even be Greek), there are numerous examples of this word in Persian poetry by Attar, Farrokhi, Asadi Tusi, Sanai and other Khorasani Persian poets.

سر ماه دادش کلاه و کمر
یکی مهر منجوق و زرین سپر
(اسدی طوسی)

باغ پنداری لشرگه میر است که نیست
ناختی خالی از مطرد و منجوق و علم
(فرخی سیستانی)

در کوکبھی طلوع آدم
منجوق لوائ عز والاست
(عطار)

از برای نصرت دین ساختی هر روز و شب
طبل و منجوق و عراده نیزه و خود و مجن
(سنائی)

As well as Nezami:

به هر سو دیلمی گردن به عیوق
فروهشته کله چون جعد منجوق
(نظامی)

Again the etymology of Majnuq was claimed to be Turkish by a Turkish author, but we are not sure. Be that it may, the word has been used by many other Persian poets.

4)

Another word is Bayraq (بیرق or flag) which we believe is Turkish since the Persian word for it is Akhtar/Darafsh. The word has been used by Khorasani poets already and the Dekhoda Dictionary gives the example of Anvari Abivardi:

به حکمتی که خلل اندرو نیابد راه
ز مهر و ماه گشادند زان میان بیرق
(انوری)

The word is also used by Khaqani, Khaju and other Persian poets.

5)

Toghra (طغرا). This word has been used by Attar, Borhani (an early Persian poet of the Seljuq era who served in the Seljuq courts), Hafez, Khaqani and etc. The Dekhoda Dictionary gives some example of the usage of this word. Here is couplet from Borhani:

طغرای نکونامی و منشور سعادت
نزد ملک العرش به توقیع تو بردم
(برهانی)

ز فیض نقطه‌ی نام تو همچو دریایی
محیط گشت و چنین نامدار شد طغرا
(عطار)

و در این بیت خواجه حافظ:
صاحب دیوان ما گوئی نمیداند حساب
کاندر این طغرا نشان حسبه لله نیست
(حافظ)

6)

Yazak (یزک). The Dekhoda Dictionary believes the word is actually Persian. Whatever the origin, it has been used by such poets as Anvari Abivardi, Rumi, Sa'adi, Nizami, Khaqani and the Samanid era Tarikh-i Bal'ami (a Persian translation of the Tarikh-i Tabari).

ای سپاهت را ظفر لشکرکش و نصرت یزک
نی یقین بر طول و عرض لشکرت واقف نه شک
(انوری ابیوردی)

آن بحر که در یگانگی اوست یکی
یک قطره از آن بحر نسجد فلکی
گر هجده هزار عالم افتد در وی
حقا که از او برون نباید یزکی
(عطار)

7)

Totmaj (تتماج). This word has already been used in the Persian medical dictionary (Dhakhireyeh Khwarizmshahi) and the Khorasani poet Suzani and the Shirwani poet Khaqani. It is a certain type of soup and there are many Persian food names in Turkish and there are Turkish food names in Persian. Just like the word Macaroni is in many languages of the world. Here is what Dhakhireyeh Khwarizmshahi (written in Khorasan which shows the familiarity of Persians with this type of meal) says:

در جمله سبب تولد سنگ امتلاست و رطوبتهای لزج که از طعامهای غلیظ تولد کند چون گوشت
گاو...تتماج و رشته و کرنج و ..(ذخیرهء خوارزمشاهی)

The fact the word is used by a famous medical tome written in Khorasan shows that it was a popular dish throughout the Persian Islamic world.

چشم اعدای تو خلیده بخار
هم بر آنسان که تیغ در تتماج
(سوزنی)

همه ترکان فلک را پس از این
خلق تتماجی ایشان شمرند
(خاقانی)

We should note that Turkish spelling (following vowel harmony) would be *توتماج* which is not used by Nezami.

8)

Chavush (چاوش) is another military term that has been claimed to be Turkish (it is possible too since a good portion of Turkish loanwords in Persian had to do with military, nomadic lifestyles and aristocratic titles). It has been used by such Persian poets as Anvari Abivardi and Amir Mo'ezzi (early Seljuqid era poet):

گر حاجب تو پوشد پیکار را زره
ور چاوش تو بندد پرخاش را کمر
(امیر معزی)

چاوش اوهام نتوان رسیدن
تا کجا تا آخرین صف رو بارت
(انوری)

9)

Voshaq (وشاق) has also been used by such Khorasani poets as Manuchehri and Attar.

کی تواند داشت رندی در سپاه
زهرهی گستاخی در پیش شاه
گر به راه آید وشاق اعجمی
هست گستاخی او از خرمی
(عطار - منطق الطیر)

گرفتم عشق به آن جادو سپردم دل بدان آهو
کنون آهو وشاقی گشت و جادو کرد اوشاقش
(منوچهری)

10)

Khailtash (خیلتاش). The word Tash in this word is Turkish. The word has already been used by the Ghaznavid era historian, Beyhaqi in his famous Tarikh.

و سه خیلتاش مسرع را نیز از طریق به غزنین فرستاد. (تاریخ بیهقی)

(برگرفته از دهخدا)

Where-as the dozen or so Turkish words Nizami uses have been used by Persian poets and can be found in Persian texts before and after Nizami, he has used peculiar Kurdish words that no other Persian poet has used as far as we know, like 'golalakan' in the following couplet:

گوهر به «گللالکان» برافشاند
و ز گوهرکان شه سخن راند
(لیلی و مجنون)

Dr. Servatian considers this as Kurdish meaning the eyes. (Ayandeh, 15/657)

As clearly demonstrated, a number of Turkish words which became part of the Persian lexicon have been used by poets and authors before and after Nizami Ganjavi. Indeed we only used two sources, the Dehkhoda Dictionary and a poetry database with 25 poets, most of them after Nizami Ganjavi. There are thousands of manuscripts before, during and after the time of Nizami Ganjavi. Indeed it is surprising to see that out of an estimated 300,000 (unique and non-unique) words (in 30,000 couplets and assuming 10 words per couplet) only 30 or so words are of possible Turkish origin (assuming the etymology is certain). This is extremely of a low frequency and percentage. Dr. Behruz Therwatiyan and Barat Zanjani are also clear that the frequency of Turkish words used by Nezami is characteristic of Persian poets of that era. Thus we can see many of the same words are also used by Khaqani who is another Persian poet.

Had one browsed through every book before, around and after Nizami Ganjavi, one could easily find Turkish words also and Doerfer has done a complete listing (although it should be mentioned that not all of his etymologies are agreed upon). This is expected, since at least from Samanid era, Turkish soldiers were used in the army. Consequently Turkish terms (many of them military) slowly entered the Persian-Dari language. The argument can also be brought for Greek words that are part of Persian like *دیهیم*, *اقلیم*, *لغت*, *ارغنون*, *سمندر*, *قلم*, *کلید*, *زمرد*, *دفتر*, *اکسیر*, (all used by Nezami and many also by Ferdowsi)..and more. As well the many Greek names and titles used by Nizami (overall Greek words come third after Persian and Arabic). Yet none of this implies that Nizami's father was Greek or he knew Greek!

The politically minded scholars who want to use such an unsound argument in order to cut off Nizami Ganjavi from his Iranian and Persian heritage are actually showing their lack of knowledge in the Persian language. These politically minded scholars do not understand that Nizami Ganjavi is part of the greater genre of Persian poetry and it is imperative to study important works of Persian poetry in order to understand him. Thus as we can see, this was another unsound argument created during the USSR era in order to disassociate Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization. It is like claiming that Fizuli or Ottoman writers were all Persians because they used many Persian words (with extremely higher frequency than Persian poets use Turkish or Greek words).

Interestingly enough, we would like to point out that Nizami Ganjavi pronounces Azerbaijan as in the New Persian Shahnameh: آذربايجان and *Vis o Ramin*: آذربايجان . This is the older Persian pronunciation where-“Azerbaijan” is a somewhat Arabicized form of the Middle Persian word Aturpatakan.

Incorrect argument: Nizami Praises Seljuq Turks (or Turks) so he was half Turkic

One of the arguments used to ascribe Turkic ethnicity to Nizami Ganjavi is that he supposedly praises Turkic rulers and thus he has Turkic background. The argument has several flaws on the onset.

The first flaw is that praising qualities of one group does not mean the author is from that group. For example Xenophon the Greek writer and host of other Greeks (including Plato) have praised Cyrus the Great of Persia. But these do not make Plato to be an author of Persian background. Indeed good qualities of Persians are praised by many Greek historians including even Herodotus. Or for example, Western European writers have praised ancient Greeks, ancient Chinese or etc. Shakespeare has plays about Romans and praises of their good qualities. It does not make Shakespeare a Roman. Goethe has praised Persians, Persian poetry and etc., it does not make him a Persian. Thus the argument is flawed from the onset (Note see our comments under the fifth flaw of the argument where Nezami also has some chastising comments about Turks as well).

The second flaw is that we have already shown how Turk, Hindu, Zangi/Habash, Rum is used for description and symbols of slavery, rulership, slave (Hindu), ruler (Turk), trees, birds, flowers, stars, climes, complexions, colors (yellow, white, black), animals (the eye, face), planets, day (Rum, Turk) and night (Hindu, Habash/Zang), languages, tears, hair, face, various moods and feelings without taking any ethnic.

The third flaw is that many other Persian poets besides Nizami including Hafez, Sa'adi, Attar and etc. have used the term Turk for a beautiful beloved, ruler, light and spiritual and etc. This was part of the Persian poetic imagery used by many Persian poets throughout centuries. Later on European types took this place in Persian poetry. In the 20th century for example, the ideal type of beauty in many non-European countries was the blond hair and blue eye Nordic type Women. These do not make any of these people as Nordic.

The fourth flaw is that many Persians, especially Persian Sunnis have praised the Seljuqids including the historian Ravandi and their Vizier Nizam al-Molk. Indeed the courts of such dynasties as Ghaznavids and Seljuqids were full of Iranians and they patronized many Persian poets. Or they commissioned many Persian poets who indeed bestowed praise upon them.

Rene Grousset states: ".renewed the Seljuk attempt to found a great Turko-Persian empire in eastern Iran..", "It is to be noted that the Seljuks, those Turkomans who became sultans of Persia, did not Turkify Persia-no doubt because they did not wish to do so. On the contrary, it was they who voluntarily became Persians and who, in the manner of the great old Sassanid kings, strove to protect the Iranian populations from the plundering of Ghuzz bands and save Iranian culture from the Turkoman menace" (Grousset, Rene, The Empire of the Steppes, (Rutgers University Press, 1991), 161,164)

So praising by itself does not prove that Nizami's father who he was orphaned from at an early age was of Turkic ancestry! The Seljuqids initial rise indeed was welcomed by many Iranian Sunnis. We already have quoted the Persian historians such as Ravandi and Nizam al-Molk and mentioned how the Seljuqids brought stability to places where many local kingdoms used to feud. One episode that has lead for misinterpretation is when the old lady talks about the lack of justice to Sultan Sanjar of the Seljuqs:

دولت ترکان چون بلندی گرفت
مملکت از داد پسندی گرفت

Translation:

“The rise of the empire of Turks (Seljuqs) was due to their justice
Since thou fosters injustice, thou are not Turk, thou art a plundering slave (Hindu).”

If one reads the whole story, as shall be brought here, one can see that this is an old lady crying for justice and indeed she has criticized the Seljuq rulers. The empire of Turks here is a reference to the Seljuqs. The second couplet is simply a comparison between ruler (Turk) and Hindu (slave) and is a common Persian imagery. The old lady has called rulers (Turks) that do injustice, as Hindus (slaves/thieves). This was obviously due to the position of these two groups in the Islamic world and we have already discussed this symbolism in the last chapter. Also the fact that Turk was a symbol of light/beauty and Hindu that of ugliness/darkness. As we already mentioned, the dislodging of the Shi'ite Buyids from Baghdad was welcome by Iranian Sunnis and the rise of the empire of Turks (Seljuqs) was praised. C.E. Bosworth brings an interesting praise of the Seljuqs by their Persian historian, Rawandi.

“Saljuqs achieved some prestige in the eyes of the Orthodox by overthrowing Shi'i Buyid rule in Western Iran. Sunni writes even came to give an ideological justification for the Turks' political and military domination of the Middle East. The Persian historian of the Saljuqs, Rawandi, dedicated his *Rahat al-Sudur* to one of the Saljuq Sultans of Rum, Ghiyath al-Din Kay Khusraw, and speaks of a hatif, a hidden, supernatural voice, which spoke from the Ka'ba in Mecca to the Imam Abu Hanifa and promised him that as long as the sword remained in the hands of the Turks, his faith (sc. that of the Hanafi madhhab) would not perish. Rawandi himself adds the pious doxology, “Praise be to God, He is exalted, that the defenders of Islam are mighty and that the followers of the Hanafi rite are happy and In the lands of the Arabs, Persians, Byzantines and Russians, the sword is in the hand of the Turks, and fear of their sword is firmly implanted in all hearts!”

(C.E. Bosworth, “The rise of Saljuqs”, Cambridge History of Iran)

We also noted that in general, the rise of the Seljuqs brought an era of stability. As noted by Ehsan Yarshater:

The ascent of the Saljuqids also put an end to a period which Minorsky has called “the Persian intermezzo”(see Minorsky, 1932, p. 21), when Iranian dynasties, consisting mainly of the Saffarids, the Samanids, the Ziyarids, the Buyids, the Kakuyids, and the Bavandids of Tabarestan and Gilan, ruled most of Iran. By all accounts, weary of the miseries and devastations of never-ending conflicts and wars, Persians seemed to have sighed with relief and to have welcomed the stability of the Saljuqid rule, all the more so since the Saljuqids mitigated the effect of their foreignness, quickly adopting the Persian culture and court customs and procedures and leaving the civil administration in the hand of Persian personnel, headed by such capable and learned viziers as Amid-al-Molk Kondori and Nezam-al-Molk.

(Ehsan Yarshater, “Iran” in Encyclopedia of Iranica)

Nizam al-Molk, a very important minister whose influence was so pervasive that a later historian like Ibn al-Athir calls his thirty years of office as the government of Nizamiyya. He was a major factor in the rise and stability of the empire of Turks (Seljuqs). The Seljuqs in turn patronized Persian culture and writing and this was discussed in the preceding Chapters. What is indeed interesting is that through the story, Nizami Ganjavi has criticized the rulers of his time and even the Turkish Sultan Sanjar. Given that the ruler lived very close to his time, this was indeed a political criticism by Nizami Ganjavi.

Sultan Sanjar on the other hand has been described positively by other Persian poets including the famous Anvari. This story criticizes later Seljuq ruler and the tragic story of Sultan Sanjar and his capture by Ghuzz tribes is perhaps interpreted by Nizami due to his laxness on Justice. Due to the fact that unlike the earlier Seljuq rulers (who have also been praised by Persian poets and they in turn had Persian Viziers and their court culture was Persia), he has forsaken justice. The poem is interesting because we have someone like Nizami Ganjavi criticizing a major ruler of the Seljuq Empire (Sultan Sanjar) through this story where-as criticism of rulers was a taboo in Sunni Islam and many Persian poets throughout the centuries have been praising Kings. Especially criticism of a ruler of a dynasty that was still ruler in name (and the Seljuq Sultan was regarded highly) seems somewhat out of the ordinary for its time.

Here we bring the whole story through the translation of Gholam Hossein Darab:

*An old woman suffered injustice ;
she laid hold on the skirt of Sanjar,*

*Saying: “Oh king, I have seen little of thy justice,
and all the year long I have suffered thy tyranny.*

*A drunken watchman came down my street
and kicked me sorely.*

*I was innocent, but he forced me from my house
and dragged me to the end of the street by my hair.*

*He abused me shamefully and placed the seal
of oppression on the door of my house.*

*He said: 'Oh hunchback, who killed
such a one at midnight in thy street??'*

*He searched my house, saying: 'Where is the murderer?'
'Oh king, what humiliation could exceed this?'*

*When the watchman is intoxicated a-murder is committed.
Why should he violently accuse an old woman?*

*The drunkards consume the revenue of the country;
they carry off old women on false accusation*

*He who has condoned this tyranny,
has destroyed my honour and thy justice,*

*"My wounded breast was smitten;
there nothing left of me, body or soul."*

*"Oh king, if thou dost not do me justice,
will be counted against thee on the Day of Judgment.*

*"Thou art a judge, I see in thee no justice
I cannot acquit thee of tyranny."*

*"Strength and help come from kings,
See what misery comes to us from thee.*

*"It is not right to seize the goods of orphans
Cease from it; this is not the usage of nobility,"*

*"Do not rob an old woman of her trifles;
be shamed by the grey hairs of an old woman,"*

*"Thou art a slave, and thou claims sovereignty.
Thou art not a king, when thou workest destruction."*

*"The king who attends to the affairs-of his kingdom,
passes just judgment on his subjects,"*

*“So that they may all obey his commands
and love him in their hearts and souls,”*

*“Thou hast turned the world upside down.
all thy life what good deeds hast thou really done?”*

*“The rise ‘of the Empire of the Turks was due to their love of justice.
“Since thou fosterest injustice, thou art not Turk, thou art a plundering slave,”*

*“The houses of the town-dwellers have been ruined by thee.
The harvest of the villagers has been ravaged by thee.”*

*“Reckon with the coming of death.
Protect thyself whilst thou canst.”*

*“Thy justice is the lamp illuminating thy night.
The companion of thy to-morrow is to-day.”*

*“Give the old woman joy by thy words,
and remember this word of an old woman.”*

*“Withdraw thy hand from the wretched,
that the arrows of the sorrowful may not wound thee.”*

*“How long wilt thou shoot arrows in every direction?
Thou knowest not the spiritual power of the poor.”*

*“Thou art a key to the conquest of the world,
Thou wast not created for injustice.”*

*“Thou art a king to lessen tyranny,
and if others wound, thou shouldst heal.”*

*“The relation of the poor to thee is that of the beloved to the lover.
Thy relation to them should be to foster them.”*

“Beg at the door of the saints and protect the poor”

*Sanjar who had won the empire of Khorasan,
suffered loss when he disregarded these words.*

*Justice has vanished in our time;
she has taken up her abode on the wings of the Phoenix.*

There is no respect under this blue dome; no honour remains on this suspended earth.

*Arise Nezami, thou exceedest all limits.
Thou woundest the bleeding heart.*

On the other hand, Nizami Ganjavi has another story in the *Makhzan al-Asrar* praising the Persian Sassanid king Anushiravan who was a model of justice. Here we bring the translation from Gholam Hossein Darab:

The story of Nushiwan and his vizier

*Whilst hunting, the horse of Nushirvan carried
him far away from the royal retinue.*

*The only companion of the king was his minister;
the king and the minister were alone together.*

*In that hunting ground the king saw a village?
ruined like the heart of an enemy.*

*Two birds were sitting close together;
their discussion was closer than the heart of the king.*

He said to the minister: "What is their argument? What is the meaning of their cries to one another?"

The minister said: "Oh, the king of the world, I will explain it, if the king would take a lesson."

"These two voices are not mere singing; they are the proclamation of a marriage ceremony.

"This bird has given a daughter in marriage to that other bird and demands from him that the price of mother's milk be settled in the morning,

"Saying: 'Leave this ruined village to us together, with a few more like it'

'The other one answers, saying: 'Do not worry about this. See the tyranny of the king and do not grieve.

"If we have this same king and this destiny, in a short time I will give thee a hundred thousand ruined villages like this'"

*These words had such an effect on the king,
that he heaved a sigh and began to lament.*

*He tore his hair and wept grievously, What can
be the result of injustice but tears?*

*He gnawed his finger at this oppression. He said: "Look at the oppression which is
known even to the birds."*

"See my tyranny which leaves owls for the farmers instead of hens.

*"Oh, how negligent and worldly I have been!
For this tyranny I shall have to suffer much regret,*

*"How long shall I take the property of the people by force?
I am unmindful of death and the grave of tomorrow.*

*"How long shall I usurp? See how I am playing with my life,
"God gave me the empire, that I may not do that which is unworthy.
"My base metal is covered with gold; yet I do what is prohibited,*

*"Why should I spoil my good name by oppression? I oppress
others, alas! I oppress myself.*

*"May there be a truer justice in my heart. Let me be ashamed either before God or before
myself,*

"Today I am the embodiment of oppression. Alas for the exposure of my tomorrow!

"My unproductive body is fuel. For this grief my heart burns for my heart,

"How long shall I raise the dust of injustice, spill my own glory and the blood of others?

"On the day of resurrection, they will call me in question for this spoliation.

"I am shameless, if I am not humbled, now-My heart is of stone, if I do not grieve now.

*"See how long I will suffer reproach, that I may bear this shame till the day of
resurrection,*

*"That which bears me is, in truth, my burden-That which is my remedy is, indeed, my
poison*

*"Of these countless jewels and treasures, what did Sam take, and what did Feridun carry
away?*

"And of this power and empire which is mine what in the end shall I possess? "

The king, became so heated over this matter, that the shoe of his horse melted from his haste.

When he reached his camp and royal standard, the hope of kindness spread over the country,

Immediately, he remitted the taxes on the overtaxed land. He abolished bad customs and the ways of injustice.

He spread justice and destroyed tyranny, and to his last breath he remained faithful to this.

He has gone, and after many turns of the wheel of fortune, the fame of his justice remains.

In the empire of the spiritually-minded, the die of his name bore the impress of justice.

He found a fortunate ending. He who knocked at the door of justice found this name,

*Pass thy life in making hearts happy, that God may be pleased with thee.
Seek the protection of angels. Seek thine own toil and the comfort of thy friends.*

Take away pain and give remedies, that thou mayest reach kingship.

Be warm in love and cold in revenge. Be generous like the moon and the sun

The good that he did returned to him who began a good work

As an analogy, the revolving dome knows what is due to good and to evil.

Devote thyself to prayer; turn thy face from sin, that thou mayest not make excuses like sinner.

Since life in this world is but an hour, spend that hour in devotion, because devotion is better than all.

Do not make excuses; they do not ask for wiles. These are only words; they demand action from thee.

If matters could be simplified by words, the affairs of Nizami would reach heaven.

So the story of Nushirawan the Sassanid king is opposite to the story of Sultan Sanjar and the old lady. In the story of Nushirawan, we see that after hearing complaints about injustice, Nushirawan takes bold action and brings justice to his empire. Indeed Nizami states: “*He has gone, and after many turns of the wheel of fortune, the fame of his justice remains.*” On the other hand, on the lack of action of Sultan Sanjar, Nizami Ganjavi

states: “Sanjar who had won the empire of Khorasan, suffered loss when he disregarded these words. Justice has vanished in our time; she has taken up her abode on the wings of the Phoenix.”

As noted though, the line coming from the old lady is nothing more than contrast of Turk (Ruler/light) and Hindu (Slavery/Thief/Darkness) and has no relationship to any ethnic affiliation.

Nizami also praises Zoroastrian sense of justice and virtue and abhors the lack of justice/virtue in his own time:

سیاست بین که می‌کردند ازین پیش
نه با بیگانه با دردانه خویش
کنون گر خون صد مسکین بریزند
ز بند قراضه برنخیزند
کجا آن عدل و آن انصاف سازی
که با رزند از اینسان رفت بازی
جهان ز آتش پرستی شد چنان گرم
که بادا زین مسلمانی ترا شرم
مسلمانیم ما او گیر نام است
گر این گبری مسلمانی کدام است
نظامی بر سرافسانه شوباز
که مرغ بند را تلخ آمد آواز
(خسرو و شیرین)

He writes

*“Look at the politics/governance of the past,
And the justice that did not even escape the beloved son of King.
Nowadays, if they spill the blood of hundred poor people,
no justice will be met.
What happened to the justice and virtue of those Sassanid Kings?
The World became so warm (full of justice/prosperous) from the fire-worshippers
that thou should be ashamed of this Islam.
We are Muslims and they Zoroastrians.
But if they are Zoroastrians, then what is a Muslim?”*

Here Nizami, who is of a devout Muslim background, criticizes Muslims and their understanding of Islam and praises Zoroastrians.

So overall, none of these poems tell anything about Nizami’s father whom he was orphaned from early and consequently was raised by his Kurdish uncle.

The fifth flaw in this argument is that Nizami Ganjavi and many of the same Persian poets also have negative comments about Turks when the term Turk was not used as imagery. It should be remembered that Nizami Ganjavi or other Persian poets were not thinking of positives or negatives when using Rumi, Zang, Turk, and Hindu as part of

poetic imagery. They were simply using the imagery of Persian poetry used by many Persian poets and were common.

For example, Nizami's usage of the term "Turk" for Layli and her tribe here in Arabia:

ترکان عرب نشینشان نام
خوش باشد ترک تازی اندام

As explained, this was the imagery used by many Persian poets to describe a beautiful person and here Layli is used as a Turk.

For example in describing Eskandar, Nizami uses the imagery of a Turk as a ruler/conqueror:

اگر پیره زن بود و گر طفل خرد
گه داد خواهی بدو راه برد
بدین راستی بود پیمان او
که شد هفت کشور به فرمان او
به تدبیر کار آگهان دم گشاد
ز کار آگهی کار عالم گشاد
وگرنه یکی ترک رومی کلاه
به هند و به چین کی زدی بارگاه
شنیدم که هر جا که راندی چو کوه
نبودی درش خالی از شش گروه

That is, Alexander is called a Turk with a Roman hat. Turk here describes ruler/conqueror/king and not a Turkic person. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is called the "Turk" (Ruler) of the Seven Armies in another poem. The reason that "Turk" became equivalent with rulers/conquer is obvious, since Turkic dynasties were ruling almost all of the Middle East, parts of Africa, Caucasia, Central Asia, India and Persia.

Perhaps, the highest mention of Turks I have founded in Iranian literature is from the Iranian ethnic Daylamite Roozbehan Baqli (d. 1209 and a contemporary of Nezami's time) who states: "Last night it was though I saw myself in the desert of China, and God arose in the form of clothing with divinity, in the forms of Turks" (Ernest, Carl E. , "Ruzbihan Baqli", Curzon Sufi Series, 1996, pg 83).

Note while Alexander was a roman, in another verse of Nezami he takes the symbolic qualities of a Hindu. When the King of India offers his daughter to Alexander the Great, Nezami Ganjavi writes this description of her in his Eskandarnama:

مهی ترک رخساره هندو سرشت
ز هندوستان داده شه را بهشت
نه هندو که ترک خطائی به نام
به دزدیدن دل چون هندو تمام

ز رومی رخ هندوی گوی او
شه رومیان گشته هندوی او

*A great beauty of Hindu origin with Turkish face
It has made Hindustan (India) a Paradise for the King
Not a Hindu, but a Khatai Turk in name
But when it comes to stealing hearts, as adept as a Hindu
From her Roman face and Hindu (sweet) talks
The King of Rome (Alexander) has become her Hindu (Slave)*

Thus when describing Alexander as a conqueror, he is likened to a Turk (conqueror) and when he falls involve with the daughter of the ruler of India, he becomes the Hindu (slave) of that Indian.

On the other hand, Alexander's thought and words during an encounter with Turks and their Khaqani is also versified in another portion:

به نفرین ترکان زبان برگشاد
که بی فتنه ترکی ز مادر نژاد
ز چینی بجز چین ابرو نخواه
ندارند پیمان مردم نگاه
سخن راست گفتند پیشینیان
که عهد و وفا نیست در چینیان
همه تنگ چشمی پسندیده-اند
فراخی به چشم کسان دیده-اند
وگر نه پس از آنچنان آشتی
ره خشمناکی چه برداشتی
در آن دوستی جستن اول چه بود
وزین دشمنی کردن آخر چه سود
مرا دل یکی بود و پیمان یکی
درستی فراوان و قول اندکی
خبر نی که مهر شما کین بود
دل ترک چین پر خم و چین بود
اگر ترک چینی وفاد داشتی
جهان زیر چین قبا داشتی

Opened his tongue in execration of the Turks, Saying:—

“Without (hidden) Fitnah (calamity, discord, rebellion) no Turk is born of his mother.

“Seek not from the Chini aught save the frown on the eye-brow (the vexation of the heart):

“They observe not the treaty of men.

*“True speech uttered the ancients;
“Treaty-faith exists not among the men of Chín.*

*“No one seeks manliness from the Chíní;
“For, save his form, that pertaining to man is not theirs.*

*“They have all chosen narrow-eyedness (shamelessness);
“They have beheld (experienced) openness of the eyes (shamefacedness) in other persons.*

*“Otherwise, after such amity,
“Why tookest thou up the path of hatred?*

*“First, in that friendship-seeking,—what was there?
“At last, in this hostility-displaying,—what advantage?*

*“Mine,—the heart was one, and covenant one;
“Truthfulness great; treachery little (none).*

*“Not (mine),—the intelligence that your love was hate;
“That the heart of the Turk of Chín was full of twist and turn.*

*“If the Turk of Chín had kept faith,
“He would (like the faith-keeping Sikandar) have kept the world beneath the fold (the skirt) of his garment.*

Note in the above verses Chini means Turk also and not Chinese. Since in the Shahnameh, the Khaqan of GokTurks was called Khaqan of Chin and Chin in ancient Persian literature references NW China and parts of Central Asia. The above verses are certainly not positive and unlike Alexander who is symbolically called a Turk (ruler, conquerer), here we have direct reference to Turks as an ethnic group.

Here is another instance of Alexander describing Turks as one poison to be used against another poison (Russians):

اگر چه نشد ترک با روم خویش
هم از رومشان کینه با روس بیش
به پیکان ترکان این مرحله
توان ریخت بر پای روس آبله
بسا زهر کو در تن آرد شکست
به زهری دگر بایدش باز بست

..
شنیدم که از گرگ روباه گیر
به بانگ سگان رست روباه پیر
دو گرگ جوان تخم کین کاشتند
پی روبه پیر برداشتند
دهی بود در وی سگانی بزرگ
همه تشنه‌ی خون روباه و گرگ

یکی بانگ زد روبه چاره ساز
 که بند از دهان سگان کرد باز
 سگان ده آواز برداشتند
 که روباه را گرگ پنداشتند
 زبانگ سگان کامد از دوردست
 رمیدند گرگان و روباه رست
 سگالندهی کاردان وقت کار
 ز دشمن به دشمن شود رستگار
 اگر چه مرا با چنین برگ و ساز
 به هم پشتی کس نیاید نیاز
 در چاره بر چاره گر بسته نیست
 همه کار با تیغ پیوسته نیست

Translation:

*“Although the Turks were not allied (in friendship) with the men of Rúm,
 “With the men of Russia their rage even greater than with the men of Rúm:
 “By the sharp darts of the Turks of this halting-place (Sikandar’s camp)
 “One can scatter the blisters (of flight) on the feet of the Russians.
 “Often, the poison which brings distress to the body,—
 “By another poison it is proper to obstruct.
 “I have heard that from the wolf, the fox-seizer,
 “The old fox escaped through the noise of dogs:—
 “Two young wolves sowed the seed of malice;
 “They took up the pursuit of the old fox.
 “A village there was; in it large dogs,—
 “All thirsty for the blood of the fox and the wolf.
 “The fox, remedy-deviser, expressed a cry
 “Which opened the fastening from the mouth of the dogs.
 “The village-dogs took up the cry;
 “For they thought the fox a wolf.
 “From the noise of the dogs, which came from afar,
 “The wolves were terrified and the fox escaped.
 “The meditator, work-knowing, at the time of action,
 “Becomes free from the enemy (the Russians) by the enemy (the Turks).
 “Although—with these arms and weapons,—mine
 “Is no need of anyone’s aid,
 “Not closed is the door of remedy to the remedy-deviser;
 “Every matter is not connected with the sword.”*

Here is another verse from Nizami Ganjavi with negative connotations:

ز بس کاوردهام در چشمها نور
 ز ترکان تنگچشمی کردهام دور.

Translation:

I have brought so much light into the eyes

I distanced narrow-eyedness from Turks

Here Nezami calls the Qifchaq, a major Turkish tribe, as savages and Alexander builds a walled gate in order to protect people (Sharafnama) who are plundered by them:

که از بیم قفچاق وحشی سرشت
درین مرز تخمی نیاریم کشت

*Due to the savage nature of the Qifchaq
We cannot cultivate the seeds we sow*

When the Khaqan of Turks attacks Iran during the reign of Bahram in *Haft Paykar* or *Bahram Nama*, Nizami Ganjavi writes in praise of the Sassanid King:

تیغ از اینسان و تیر از انسان بود
شاید از خصم ازو هراسان بود
ترک از این ترکتاز ناگه او
وآنچنان زخم سخت بر ره او
همه را در بهانه گاه گریز
تیغها کند گشت و تکها تیز

آهن شه چو سخت جوشی کرد
لشگر ترک سست کوشی کرد
شه نمودار فتح را به شناخت
تیغ می راند و تیر می انداخت
درهم افکندشان به صدمه تیغ
گفتی او باد بود و ایشان میغ

لشگر ترک را ز دشنه تیز
تا به جیحون رسید گرد گریز

*And if with stroke oblique he terrified,
he cleft the man asunder at the waist.
Of this kind was (his) sword, of that, (his) shaft—
'tis likely that the foe would be dismayed.
The Turks from this his sudden Turk-like raid,
and wounds so deadly on the path he took*

*Inclined to flight; the swords of all of them became (all) blunted, and their racing keen.
When the king's sword was brandished on all sides,
the Turkish troops relaxed in (their) attempts.
The king discerning signs of victory, drove (at the foe his) sword, and shot (his) shafts.
By the shock of (his) sword he broke their ranks: he was the wind, you'd say, and they
were clouds.*

*Through the sharp dagger's (work) the dust of flight
reached the Turks army to the Oxus stream*

Another usage of the word in Nizami's literature is "Turki" as an act/verb:

مکن ترکی ای ترک چینی نگار
بیا ساعتی چین در ابرو میار

Translation:

Do not Turki (as a verb) Oh Turkic beauty with Chinese decorations

Display not frown on thy eye-brow, come for a moment to gather

Turki as a verb here means rough, acting in Turkic manner and etc. Here is another instance of negative usage where Nezami composes (these verses will also be described in detail but Nezami versified these and calls each character of the letter of Sherwanshah as blessed):

ترکی صفت وفای ما نیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست
آن که ز نسب بلند زاید
او را سخن بلند آید

Our faithfulness it not like Turks

Turkish-way of speech (or speeches meant for Turks) does not suit us

That who comes from a high ancestry

High and eloquence is befitting for him

(Note the above four verses are from Nezami who takes a poetic interpretation of the letter of Shirvanshah and praises every word of the letter as a blossoming garden, which shows his agreement with the letter).

Or common words like Turktazi (Turkish Plunder) and association of plundering with Turks.

فرس میخواست بر شیرین دواند
به ترکی غارت از ترکی ستاند

He was looking for a horse to follow towards Shirin

In a Turkish manner (Turk being used as plunder), sought Plunder from a Turk (being used as a beautiful)

غارتی از ترک نبردست کس
رخت به هندو نسپردست کس

No one has plundered Turks

No one has given up his belongings to a Hindu

(using common imagery about Turks taking plunder and Hindus as thief/beggars)

Thus the wide array of usage (from positive to negative) was used as a tool in Persian poetry and does not say anything about Nizami's ancestry. It was used by previous Persian poets before Nezami and had become a poetic tool. One cannot call Hafez a Turk just because of the verse:

"If that Turk from Shiraz were to capture my heart.

I would give away Samarkand and Bokhara for her Hindu mole"

And simple logic dictates just because Greeks like Plato, Xenophon, Herodotus have both praises Persians and also used negative feeling as well, it does not mean they were Persian!

The sixth flaw why the argument also falls apart because Nizami Ganjavi has also praised Romans, Persians (while having nothing negative from any positive character), Zangis and Hindus. He has also praised Zoroastrianism's sense of Justice in *Khusraw o Shirin* (and says Muslims should learn as we shall see), calls himself the successor and inheritor of Ferdowsi, praises the eloquence of the Persian Dehqan (An important class from the Sassanid era), and etc. For example on the Persian Dehqan (which some authorities like Behruz Servatiyan claim is Nizami Ganjavi himself), Nizami says:

In *Leili o Majnoon*:

در حال و هوای ایران باستان و "دهقانان" آن دوران است. (لیلی و مجنون):
دهقان فصیح پارسی زاد
از حال عرب چنین کند یاد.

In *Khosrow o Shirin*:

در ستایش از همین ایران کهن (خسرو و شیرین):
چنین گفت آن سخنگوی کهن زاد
که بودش داستان‌های کهن یاد
کهن کاران سخن پاکیزه گفتند
سخن بگذار مروارید سفتند
سخن‌های کهن زالی مطراست
وگر زال زر است انگار عنقااست.

In *Sharafnameh*:

درین فصل فرخ ز نو تا کهن
ز تاریخ دهقان سرایم سخن.

همان پارسی گوی دانای پیر
چنین گفت و شد گفت او دلپذیر

Or on the Zangi (black) says:

بیا ساقی آن می که رومی وشست
به من ده که طبعم چو زنگی خوشست
مگر با من این بی محابا پلنگ
چو رومی و زنگی نباشد دو رنگ

Translation

Bring Saqi that wine that is Rumi Faced (White)

Give me some of that wine, since my nature is cheerful that of the Zangi (Black, Ethiopian).

One can imagine if Nizami used Turk instead of Zangi in the above, then ethno-nationalist groups would use it to claim that Nizami was Turkish. Where-as we can see again, these comparisons are part of Persian literature (and World literature in general) and are not tied to ethnicity. We should also note that Nizami Ganjavi was a strict Muslim and did not drink wine. For example during his one visit to the court, the Sultan ordered all wine out of the court. Wine was used as a symbol in much of Sufic Persian poetry and to deal with this symbol here is outside the scope of this article.

Or in praise of the land of Iran, Nizami Ganjavi proclaims:

همه عالم تن است و ایران دل
نیست گوینده زین قیاس خجل
چون که ایران دل زمین باشد
دل ز تن به بود، یقین باشد
زان ولایت که مهتران دارند
بهترین جای بهتران دارند

*The world's a body, Iran its heart,
No shame to him who says such a word
Iran, the world's most precious heart,
excels the body, there is no doubt.
Among the realms that kings possess,
the best domain goes to the best.*

Thus Nizami Ganjavi considers Iran the best land, and the most precious heart of the world and he has no shame in making such a proclamation. Alexander, Shirin or Layli and the usage of “Turk” for them or the term “Hindu” for one of Khusraw Parviz’s messenger are all imageries used by Nizami.

So what did really Nezami preach?

In one of his famous Ghazals, Nezami considers himself the dust of the feet of Believers, Armenians, Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews.

این خرابات مغان است در آن رندانند
شاهد و شمع و شراب و شکر و نای و سرود
هرچه در جملهی آفاق در آنجا حاضر

مؤمن و ارمنی و گبر و نصارا و یهود
گر تو خواهی که دم از صحبت ایشان بزنی
خاک پای همه شو تا که بیابی مقصود

Translation:

*This is the ruin tavern of the Magians, and in it are rebels for God
Witnesses, Candles, Wine, Sugar, Reed and Beautiful Music
Whatever that exists in the horizon is present there
Muslims, Armenians, Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews
If you want to be allowed in the ruin of the Magian (divine wisdom)
Become a dust upon the feet of all of these people, so that you may reach the goal.*

(Zanjani, Barat. "Ahwal o Athar o SharH Makhzan ol_Asraar Nezami Ganjavi", Tehran University Publications, 2005, pg 18)

In our opinion, this Ghazal (which are usually much more personal than the pentaologue) brings out the true Nezami.

Back to the current argument though, as described, Turk, Hindu, Zangi/Habash, Rum are used for descriptions and symbols of slavery, rulership, slave (Hindu), ruler (Turk), trees, birds, flowers, stars, climes, complexions, colors (yellow, white, black), animals (the eye, face), planets, day(Rum, Turk) and night(Hindu, Habash/Zang), languages, tears, hair, face, various moods and feelings without taking any ethnic. Nizami like many Persian poets before him has used these symbols (with their vast range of positive and negative meanings) to decorate his poetry and make his allusions more appealing. There are negative/positive usages of these terms but Nizami was employing symbols of Persian poetry.

So in conclusion, Nizami's usage of these symbols and images are just in the steps of other Persian poets before him and are not his own innovations to Persian literature. They encompass both positive and negative meanings and again not related to ethnicity per se, but have to do with the employment of these symbolic and imagery tools in Persian poetry. Finally Nizami's praise of Rum, Zang, and Arabs, becoming a dust upon the feet of Armenians(It should be noted that no modern pan-Turkist nationalist (widely present ideology in Turkey, Republic of Azerbaijan and some other regions) is ready to become a dust upon the feet of an Armenian.), Jews, Zoroastrians are also not necessarily any sort of ethnic or religious identification either.

Invalid Argument: Nizami wanted to write Turkish but he was forced to write in Persian!

The false statement from Stalin

This argument, which is based on false interpretation of Persian verses of Nizami, was forged in the Soviet era and is the most common misinterpreted and invalid opinion.

Recall that Stalin (and this was part of the USSR biography on Nizami) said explicitly in an interview: “Stalin even quoted to Bazhan a passage from Nizami where the poet said that he was forced to use the Persian language because he was not allowed to talk to the people in their native tongue”.

From the onset, the argument lacks basis, since even if we assume (as we shall show the argument is a product of false nation building and has no basis except a lack of understanding of Persian literature) Nizami wanted to write Turkish that does not make him Turkish. Also as we shall show, Nizami Ganjavi was of Iranian ancestry and Turkish would not be his native tongue.

Just like for example, Rumi’s son, Sultan Walad (who admits that he does not have very good knowledge of Greek and Turkish) has left us some scattered Cappadocian Greek verses (actually the oldest extant (possibly first) Greek poems by anyone in the Cappadocian dialect and one of the earliest if not the earliest Muslims to write in a Greek dialect).

Or the Iranian author Mirza Habib Esfahani has written in Persian and Ottoman Turkish (“Habib Esfahani Mirza”, Tahsin Yazici, “Encyclopedia Iranica”<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v11f4/v11f4056.html>).

We shall touch upon Nizami’s significant contribution to the Persian cultural heritage in the next Chapter. But the false argument and incorrect interpretation that Nezami wanted to write in Turkish by itself does not prove any sort of ethnicity. Else more 30,000+ verses of Nizami Ganjavi in Persian which has enriched Persian thought, language, heritage, culture and civilization versus zero verses in Turkish can be used to say that Nizami’s was Persian ethnically. Besides all the Quatrains, Ghazals and etc. of Nezami are in Persian (not a single verse of Turkish has been recorded from the Caucasus during Nezami’s era since the language was limited to the Turkic nomads and not urban centers like Ganja) which shows he voluntarily wrote in the language. And of course this is strong enough argument, since culture is the most important aspect of a poet and not blood! But this point shall be discussed in the next Chapter.

Before we examine the false allegation by Stalin/ USSR (continued by some ethno-nationalists) that Nizami Ganjavi wanted to write Turkish but was forced to write in Persian (as if one can create masterpieces under force!), we should note the following important facts, which by itself invalidates any claims on Nizami Ganjavi writing Turkish.

No evidence of Turkic literature in the Caucasus and historical invalidity of the argument due to Shirvanshah not being Persian and not Turkic rulers

Some pan-Turkist nationalist authors claim that the Oghuz book Dede Korkut was written down in the 7th century. Where-as this is false given Dede Korkud’s use of hundreds of Persian and Arabic word, and given its reference to names such as Istanbul (with the name transformation occurring after the fall of Constantinople) . Also Nizami Ganjavi considers himself a successor and inheritor of Ferdowsi and has used Shahnameh folk

and epic, rather than any Turkic epic, again defining his background. But let us first quote from some academic books on the age of Dede Korkut:

It was not earlier than the fifteenth century. Based on the fact that the author is buttering up both the Akkoyunlu and Ottoman rulers, it has been suggested that the composition belongs to someone living in the undefined border region lands between the two states during the reign of Uzun Hassan (1466-78). G. Lewis on the hand dates the composition “fairly early in the 15th century at least”.

(Cemal Kafadar, “in Between Two Worlds: Construction of the Ottoman states”, University of California Press, 1995)

The greatest folk product of the fourteenth century was the prose collection of Dede Korkut, the oldest surviving examples of Oghuz Turkmen epic. Dede Korkut relates the struggles of Turkmens with the Georgians and Abkhaza Circassians in the Caucasia as well as with the Byzantines of Trabazon, adding stories of relationships and conflicts within Turkomen tribes.

(Stanford Jay Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Cambridge University, 1977, pg 141)

The Dede Korkut stories have their origins among the thirteenth to fourteenth century Oguz people of North Eastern Anatolia.

(Michael E. Meeker, “A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity”, University of California, Press, 2002.)

Professor Michael E. Meeker notes:

The *Book of Dede Korkut* is an early record of oral Turkic folktales in Anatolia, and as such, one of the mythic charters of Turkish nationalist ideology. The oldest versions of the *Book of Dede Korkut* consist of two manuscripts copied sometime during the 16th century. The twelve stories that are recorded in these manuscripts are believed to be derived from a cycle of stories and songs circulating among Turkic peoples living in northeastern Anatolia and northwestern Azerbaijan. According to Lewis (1974), an older substratum of these oral traditions dates to conflicts between the ancient Oghuz and their Turkish rivals in Central Asia (the Pecheneks and the Kipchaks), but this substratum has been clothed in references to the 14th-century campaigns of the Akkoyunlu Confederation of Turkic tribes against the Georgians, the Abkhaz, and the Greeks in Trebizond. Such stories and songs would have emerged no earlier than the beginning of the 13th century, and the written versions that have reached us would have been composed no later than the beginning of the 15th century. By this time, the Turkic peoples in question had been in touch with Islamic civilization for several centuries, had come to call themselves “Turcoman” rather than “Oghuz,” had close associations with sedentary and urbanized societies, and were participating in Islamized regimes that included nomads, farmers, and townsmen. Some had abandoned their nomadic way of life altogether.

...

Composed by an individual who was reworking Oghuz tales in a specific time and place, the *Book of Dede Korkut* itself bears the marks of social and political history in southwest Asia. The presentation of Oghuz heroes and heroines in the Dede Korkut stories is

designed to highlight an Oghuz ethical outlook rather than to celebrate the variety and richness of Oghuz narrative tradition. In this respect, the stories reveal that the Oghuz heritage was, at the time of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, associated with a question about the proper form of personal identity and social relations. This feature of the Dede Korkut stories may itself be a literary reflection of projects of institutional redesign and remaking that had been pursued by Turkic dynasts in Anatolia for several centuries. In any event, the Dede Korkut ethic became part of Anatolian society and culture by virtue of these dynastic projects. Consequently, the modern Turkish reader who is likely to have an Albanian, Circassian, Kurdish, or Arab among his or her forebears is nonetheless able to see a piece of himself or herself in the Dede Korkut stories.

(Michael E. Meeker, “**The Dede Korkut Ethic**”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), 395-417)

Despite these facts, one can find articles on the internet by some nationalist circles claiming Shahnameh, the works of Nizami Ganjavi and even Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey were influenced by Dede Korkut and have their roots in them! The fact of the matter is while Nizami Ganjavi refers to approximately one hundred Shahnameh characters or so, he does not refer to one character that has to do with ancient Turkic folklore. The verse forged around 1980 about his father’s being brave as a wolf is a testament to political attempts that try to connect Nezami Ganjavi to some sorts of Oghuz folklore.

Now we overview the development of Turkish literature of Azerbaijan and Caucasia. We should note that we are not talking about Eastern Turkic languages which had a much earlier literature due to interactions with Soghdians. The oldest person to have written in what is now known as “Azeri-Turkish” was Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din Asfarayini, a 13th century poet from Khorasan. He has left a Persian and Turkish Diwan and two Azeri-Turkish Ghazals of his (heavily Persianized) were recorded by later biographers. The two Ghazals contain more Persian words than Azeri-Turkish and show that the poet tried to adapt forms from Persian poetry into Azeri-Turkish. We note that Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din Asfarayini was not born in the Caucasia and Azerbaijan and actually hailed from Khorasan.

According to Gerhard Doerfer:

Azeri belongs to the Oghuz branch of the Turkic language family. In the eleventh century the “Turan defeated Iran” and a broad wave of Oghuz Turks flooded first Khorasan, then all the rest of Iran, and finally Anatolia, which they made a base for vast conquests. The Oghuz have always been the most important and numerous group of the Turks; in Iran they have assimilated many Turks of other origins and even Iranians.

...

The early Azeri texts are a part of the Old Osmanli literature (the difference between Azeri and Turkish was then extremely small). The oldest poet of the Azeri literature known so far (and indubitably of Azeri, not of East Anatolian or Khorasani, origin) is Emad-al-din Nasimi (about 1369-1404, q.v.). Other important Azeri authors were Shah Esmail Safawi “Khatai”(1487-1524), and Fozulu (about 1494-1556, q.v.), an outstanding Azeri poet”.

(Encyclopedia Irani, “Azeri Turkish” G. Doerfer).

We note that Fizuli was from Baghdad. As per Nasimi, despite what Professor Doerfer mentions, different birthplaces are given, the most common being in the modern country of Iraq (Dehkhoda dictionary based on older biographies mentions Shiraz).

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam on Nasimi:

“An early Ottoman poet and mystic, believed to have come from Nesim near Baghdad, whence his name. As a place of this name no longer exists, it is not certain whether the laqab (Pen-Name) should not be derived simply from nasim zephyr, breath of wind. That Nesimi was of Turkoman origin seems to be fairly certain, although the Seyyid before his name also points to Arab blood. Turkish was as familiar to him as Persian, for he wrote in both languages. Arabic poems are also ascribed to him.”

(Babinger, Franz (2008). Nesimi, Seyyid ‘Imad al-Din Encyclopaedia of Islam. Brill Online. Retrieved on 01-09, 2008.)

The birth-place of Nasimi is not known exactly (Baghdad being the most common one, some have said Syria, others have Shiraz, others Shirvan), so we cannot definitely ascribe his birth place to any particular place.

The next two writers, who were from the area that have written in Turkish are Moin al-Din Ali Shah Qasim Anwar (born in 1356) and Abdul Qadir Maraghi. It should be noted that both men spent time in the courts of Ottomans or Timurids. To distinguish early Turkish Ottoman and Azeri is not clear cut, since for example Fizuli, Nasimi and Dede Korkut are all considered both Azeri and Ottoman Turkish literature by various sources.

Now going back to Shah Qasim Anwar. Shah Qasim Anwar has also some poems in the Gilaki Iranian dialect which would be extremely rare for Turkic speaker.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica:

“The Dialect poems of Qasem Anwar (d. 1433-34) may belong to the Fahlavi genere (Kolliyat, pp. 342-344, 347; Brown, Lit. Hist. Persia III, pp 473-87; Dawlatabadi, pp. 553-556” (Fahlaviyyat in Encyclopedia Iranica)

While others have called the Iranian dialect used by Shah Qasim Anwar as an early form of Gilaki.

But, he also spent time in Herat and Khorasan, and this may be the possible place that he wrote his Turkish work (Around 10 Ghazals of Turkish are ascribed to him). Thus it is our belief that he since he also wrote in Gilaki, he was not of Turkish background and his few Turkish poems were written in Khorasan under the Timurid renaissance (recall the first poet in “Azeri-Turkish” is actually from Khorasan).

Abd al-Qadir Maraghi (d. 1435) who wrote his four important music treaties in the Persian language, not only recorded songs in the Persian language, but also in Arabic, Mongolian, Turkish, Chagatay as well as various Iranic dialects (Fahlavviyat).

For the Fahlaviyat, one can check:

Dr. A. A. Sadeqi, “*Ash’ar-e mahalli-e Jame’al-alHaann*,” *Majalla-ye zaban-shenasi* 9, 1371./1992, pp. 54-64.

Also available here:

<http://www.azargoshnasp.net/languages/Azari/AshrafSadeqiasharmahalimaraqi.pdf>

We note that under the dialect of Tabriz, Abdul Qadir Maraghi records songs in an Iranic language and not Turkish one. He records two Qet’as (poems) which he calls “dialect of Tabriz”. For example the four quatrains titled Fahlaviyyat (regional Iranic dialect) from Khwaja Muhammad Kojjani (d. 677/1278-79); born in Kojjan or Korjan, a village near Tabriz, recorded by Abd-al-Qader Maraghi.

(“Fahlaviyat” in Encyclopedia Iranica by Dr. Ahmad Taffazoli

<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)

A sample of one of the four quatrains from Khwaja Muhammad Kojjani

همه کیژی نهند خُشتی بَخُشتی
بنا اج چو گه دستِ گیژی و نیژه
همه پیغمبران خُو بی و چو کی
محمد مصطفی کیژی و نیژه

We already mentioned that Hamdallah Mostowfi mentions the language of Maragheh as modified Pahlavi and even the 16th century Ottoman traveler, Evliya Chelebi mentions the majority of the Women of Maragheh speak Fahlavi. So there is no proof Abdul Qadir Maraghi who spent time in the courts of various Turkic dynasties was of Turkic background. Thus, probably the beginning of Azeri-Turkish literature in Azerbaijan and Caucasia goes back to the Qara Qoyunlu era. Even then, there are recorded Fahlaviyyat poems from Mama Esmat Tabrizi, Maghrebi Tabrizi and Pir Zehtab Tabrizi.

(“Fahlaviyat” in Encyclopedia Iranica by Dr. Ahmad Taffazoli

<http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v9f2/v9f232.html>)

Anyhow, taking Nasimi (1369-1417), Shah Qasim Anwar (b. 1359) and Abdul Qadir Maraghi (b. mid 14th century d. 1435), we can see that the first Turkish poems available from the Caucasia and Azerbaijan proper were written at least (taking a minimum

number, assuming Nasimi was not from Iraq or Aleppo, assuming the Turkish poems of Shah Qasim Anwar were not written in Khorasan a) approximately 200 years after Nizami Ganjavi(born around 1140) and Qasim Anwar born around 1359.

It should be noted that a pan-Turkist nationalist scholar named Javad Heyat has claimed: 1) Scythians were Turks and Herodotus has mentioned Turks 2) Qatran Tabrizi was a Turk 3) two Million Turks were settled in Azerbaijan by the Mongols 4) Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavi sent 45000 teachers to Iran to teach Persian and other unsubstantiated claims. None of these claims have had any source. We mention his name here, because he also has mentioned a poet by the name of “Nasir Bakui” who is claimed to have written a single Turkic panegyric poem in the honor of Oljaitu the Ilkhanid King (1304-1316). Unfortunately no source to any ancient documents were given by Javad Heyat and thus we do not know when such a poet existed and in what book this poem is recorded, or if he wrote the poem at that time (recorded when?) or much later period in praise of Oljaitu. However, if we take Javad Heyat’s word to be accurate, as we can see, even this poet lived 100+ years after Nezami and thus there is not a single evidence for any Turkish poetry from the Caucasus during the time of Nezami.

Indeed the book of Nozhat al-Majales shows 100+ Persian poets from Ganja, Arran, Sherwan, Azerbaijan as opposed to zero verses of Turkish from the time of Nezami Ganjavi. If there was an urban Turkish culture at that time, it would obviously have had produced its own poetry and be present in an anthology like Nozhat al-Majales. Nozhat al-Majales as clearly shown, records Persian poetry from ordinary everyday people from the Caucasus who were not affiliated to the court. 24 of these Persian poets including Nezami and even some woman from Ganja are recorded in this anthology. Most of these were everyday common people not affiliated with the courts. The only explanation for this would be that Persian was a widespread spoken regional language and regional Persian dialectical features occur in Nozhat al-Majales.

So the question comes up that if according to Stalin (and then later on USSR historiographers and finally ethnic nationalists from the Republic of Azerbaijan) Nizami was: **“the great poet of our brotherly Azerbaidzhani people who must not be surrendered to Iranian literature, despite having written most of his poems in Persian”** (Stalin), why is there not a single historian, biographer and etc. who has recorded a single Turkish verse not only from Nizami, but from no one else during the time of Nizami from this area! This opposed to hundreds of thousands of surviving Persian poetry (and more than 114 authors recorded in Nozhat al-Majales) yet not a single verse of Turkish poetry has remained from the same era. Obviously a Turkish literary tradition did not exist at that time. There is not a single verse in Turkish from Nizami’s time from that area, let alone a developed romantic epic!

The misinterpretation of Nizami’s Persian verses goes further. The ethnic nationalists allege that Nizami wanted to write the *Layli o Majnoon* in Turkish but Shirvanshah forced him to write it in Persian! We shall show the invalidity of this argument by careful examination. However before that, we should mention some important facts with this false claim:

1)

The Shirvanshah was one of the very few rulers that were not of Turkic origin and praised by Nezami. Although of remote Arabic father line, by the time of Nezami they were completely Persianized in culture, ethnicity and language and had mixed in with the local Iranian population. If Nizami knew Turkish (assuming possible) and wanted to write Turkish, he would have written Turkic poems for the Kipchak rulers like the Eldiguzids or Ahmadilis, or the Turkic Oghuz rulers such as the Seljuqs. Although again it should be emphasized that even Seljuqs, Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis were Persianized in the sense of culture and their court language was Persian and their Viziers were generally Iranians. This is because nomadic Turks that had just entered the area were not urban and the urban culture brought automatic Iranianization for Muslims.

Rene Grousset states: "It is to be noted that the Seljuks, those Turkomans who became sultans of Persia, did not Turkify Persia-no doubt because they did not wish to do so. On the contrary, it was they who voluntarily became Persians and who, in the manner of the great old Sassanid kings, strove to protect the Iranian populations from the plundering of Ghuzz bands and save Iranian culture from the Turkoman menace"

(Grousset, Rene, The Empire of the Steppes, (Rutgers University Press, 1991), 161,164)

But these rulers probably at least knew Turkic unlike Shirvanahs who were proud of their claimed ancient Persian descent. The Shirvanshah who was not Turkic king, did not understand Turkish and was not Turkic and obviously would never ask for Turkic poetry for his court. In fact not a single author from that era has written a Turkish poem for any Turkic or non-Turkic ruler in that area, let alone a romantic epic in that language. No one has written Turkish from that era in the court of Shirvanshah since they were not Turks. So this fact within itself shows that the introduction of Layli o Majnoon is not about Turkish language or poetry or demand not to write Turkish and these are false interpretations in line with communist ideological thinking. Only false communist ideologies mixed with ultra ethno-nationalist would come up with arguments and thoughts like "Nezami wanted to write in his native language but the local aristocratic rulers forced him to write in Persian". This false communist ideological thinking designed for nation building has been taken as a fact by few nationalistic authors, but reasonable and sane interpretations of these verses based on detailed examination will be given.

2)

Nizami Ganjavi praises the Shirvanshah (as we shall show), sends his son to be tutored in the Shirvanshah's court (as we shall show), encourages the reading of the Shahnameh by the son of Shirvanshah, praises the son of the Shirvanshah and finally praises Shirvanshah in his Eskandarnama and according to some sources, he originally wanted to dedicate the Eskandarnama to the Shirvanshah Axsatan, but Axsatan passed away and Nizami writes a praiseful eulogy for him in the Eskandarnama. So he had an excellent relationship with the Shirvanshah and if he was forced to do anything against his will by them that would not be the case! In reality, he did not live under the Shirvanshah domain(who would be rivals of the Eldiguzids just like Ahmadilis were rivals of

Eldiguzids) although he had an excellent relationship with them (and it seems from available all other kings).

So, as we can see, the allegation that Nizami Ganjavi wanted to write Turkish is invalid historically. Nezami himself refers to his Panj Ganj and mentions all of them by name, but never does he talk about a single Turkish work. There was no “Turkish” or “Azeri-Turkish” literature/culture at the time of Nizami Ganjavi from Arran, Shirwan and Azerbaijan, and there is not a single verse of Turkish from the courts of the Seljuqs, Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis and Shirwanshahs at the time of Nizami Ganjavi. Shirwanshahs were not Turks. Indeed, the Seljuqids, Ahmadilis, Eldiguzids were of Turkic origin although one cannot say they were necessarily culturally Turkic since they were largely Persianized. There did not exist an urban Turkic culture at the time and these rulers obviously were assimilated to the Persian urban culture (which is illustrated well by the book of Nozhat al-Majales) of the area. For example Khusraw o Shirin and Haft Paykar, both stories chosen voluntarily by Nezami Ganjavi are of Persian Sassanid origin and have nothing to do with nomadic Oghuz culture or Turkic folklore. These two were patronized by Seljuqs/Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis and read by them in their courts.

However, if Nezami Ganjavi allegedly (based on false nation building interpretation of the 20th century) wanted to write Turkic for the Persian Shirwanshahs, it would make no sense to write Persian for Turkic rulers like Eldiguzids/Seljuqids/Ahmadilis who could probably at least understand Turkic. But there is not a single Turkic verse from him or anyone else in the Caucasus region during the lifetime of Nezami. In fact, not even a single verse, but to go from simple verses to poetic forms and poetic forms to highly refined romantic epic poetry takes generations.

As noted by Turkish professor (Tourkhan Gandjei, “*Turkish in Pre-Mongol Persian Poetry*” BSOAS 49, 1986, pp. 67-76), also states:

The Oghuz tribes which formed the basis of the Saljuq power, and to one which the Seljuqs belonged were culturally backward, and contrary to the opinion advanced by some scholars(he mentions a Turkish scholar), did not possess a written language. Thus the Seljuqs did not, or rather could not take steps towards the propagating the Turkish language, in a written form, much less the patronage of Turkish letters.

Example of politically minded writer today

Yet we have politically minded scholars like Brenda Shaffer who make up theories. For those who do not know Brenda Shaffer, we recommend a look at this article:

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Brenda_Shaffer&oldid=195820661

She is a military officer in the Israeli army who later worked as a post-doc in the University of Harvard. She wrote a book with false sources and information (see the link

above) alleging that Azerbaijanis in Iran want to separate from Iran. Anyhow, she was the head of Harvard's Caspian program which also turned into a big controversy.

According to Ken Silverstein of the prestigious Harper Magazine:

Harvard's program is led by Brenda Shaffer, who is so eager to back regimes in the region that she makes Starr look like a dissident. A 2001 brief she wrote, "U.S. Policy toward the Caspian Region: Recommendations for the Bush Administration," commended Bush for "intensified U.S. activity in the region, and the recognition of the importance of the area to the pursuit of U.S. national interests." Shaffer has also called on Congress to overturn Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which was passed in 1992 and bars direct aid to the Azeri government. The law has not yet been repealed, but the Bush Administration has been waiving it since 2002, as a payoff for Azeri support in the "war on terrorism."

Harvard's Caspian Studies Program receives a lot of money from both the oil companies and from some of the governments." I share Starr's concerns here, and since I briefly mentioned Harvard in my original story, and since several readers asked for more details, let me provide it here. As I had previously reported, the Caspian Studies Program (CSP) was launched in 1999 with a \$1 million grant from the United States Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce (USACC) and a consortium of companies led by ExxonMobil and Chevron. The program's other founders include Amerada Hess Corporation, ConocoPhillips, Unocal, and Glencore International.

(Academics for Hire - Tuesday, May 30, 2006

<http://www.harper.org/archive/2006/05/sb-followup-starr-2006-05-30-29929>

Accessed in 2007.)

Her book has also been criticized by different scholars as show here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Brenda_Shaffer&oldid=195820661

For example Full Professor Evan Siegel mentions about her book:

"Brethren and Borders is a highly political book on an emotional subject which needs careful, dispassionate analysis. Its chapters on the historical background are full of inaccuracies. Its chapters on current events and trends include a few interesting observations which don't appear in the literature, but most of it is readily available elsewhere."

Full Professor Dr. Touraj Atabaki comments:

"With Brenda Shaffer's Borders and Brethren one would expect a contribution to our understanding of future developments in Iran as well as in the neighboring countries. Within the first two chapters, however, the reader becomes disappointed with the unbalanced and sometimes even biased political appraisal that not only dominates the author's methodology but also shapes her selective amnesia in recalling historical data." Atabaki concludes his review by stating "Borders and Brethren is an excellent example of how a political agenda can dehistoricize and decontextualize history"

The Full Professor American historian Ralph E. Luker echoes Silversteins article, saying:

“Silverstein’s second article also implicates Harvard historian Brenda Shaffer, who is research director of the University’s Caspian Studies Program, in similar apologies. These programs appear to be largely funded by regional regimes, American oil and industrial investors in the region, and right-wing foundations in the United States.”

Now let us see what this person whose Caspian Studies program was funded by several governments has to say about Nizami Ganjavi:

If you will allow me to be a little sentimental at the end, I would like to quote Nizami. Why the poet Nizami? Well, first because both Azerbaijanis and Iranians claim him as their own, and thus he is a great symbol of the fluidity of culture in this region. Nizami was of Turkic-Azerbaijani origin from Ganja, but wrote mostly in Persian. And this is what this region is about, is actually about fluidity of cultures. Right?

Well Nizami, in his famous Khamsa, which in the East is considered comparable to the works of Shakespeare, and many of the stories are very similar, wrote about great love. One of the most important parts of the Khamsa is about the love of Xosrow and Shiren. Some have interpreted Xosrow to be an ancestor of today’s Turks in the Caucasus, and Shiren as a woman who is an ancestor of Armenians. Nizami ended his epic Khamsa relating to the great love between Xosrow and Shiren.

(Brenda Shaffer, “Stability and Peace in the Caucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabagh: Keynote Address”, Event Report, Caspian Studies Program, The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh, May 2-4, 2001,

http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/12777/stability_and_peace_in_the_caucasus.html

Accessed 2006).

Note the many alleged falsifications. Nizami was of “Azerbaijani-Turkic origin” from Ganja. Yet there was no “Azerbaijani-Turkish” culture or literature at the time of Nizami. Furthermore, Nizami was shown to be of Kurdish origin from his mother line and we shall show that there is no proof of Turkic origin from his father line and all evidences point to Iranian ancestry. Furthermore, we note the false statement: “wrote mostly in Persian”. Again there is not a single verifiable verse in Turkish from the time of Nizami from any poet or court in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. No biographer has mentioned any work except Persian works for Nizami Ganjavi alludes to the fact that he wrote in Persian as well. Such political authors like Brenda Shaffer still try to propagate USSR Stalinist nation building myths in order to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and pursue their political agenda. These types of writers will forge any lie in order to achieve political agendas or nation building concepts.

Nezami Ganjavi calls his work as Persian literature:

او زبان فارسی را «درّ دری» می‌نامد (خسرو و شیرین):
سخن‌پیمای فرهنگ‌چی چین گفت
به وقت آنکه درهای دری سفت.

یا در شرف‌نامه:

چو در من گرفت آن نصیحت‌گری
زبان برگشادم به در دری.

*When all those advices were accepted by me
I started composing in the Persian Pearl (Dorr-i-Dari)*

یا در شرفنامه:
نظامی که نظم دری کار اوست
دری نظم کردن سزاوار اوست.

*Nizami whose endeavour is producing Persian poetry (Nazm-e-Dari)
Versification of Persian(Dari Nazm Kardan) poetry is what suits him*

(Note Nizami's use of Dari is much like that of Qatran Tabrizi where Parsi is term that means Iranian and the local Iranic dialect and Dari means Khurasani Persian which was becoming spread at the time in the region).

But nowhere does Nizami ever allude to writing in any other language (we shall examine the misinterpretations of the USSR era soon) or even using such a non-existent term at the time of "Azerbaijani Turkish literature"! He mentions all of his Panj Ganjs by name in his poetry, but never does he mention any work in Turkish nor do any biographers mention anything Turkish from him (if ever a single verse of Turkish existed, then Alisher Navai would have mentioned it as we discuss below and other biographers too). But not a single verse of Turkish has come down from the Caucasus from the era of Nezami.

Yet we have politically minded people continuing the lies of Stalin, USSR historiographers and ethnic nationalists. Indeed the situation gets more distressful when the Sassanid Khusraw Parviz (and hence the whole Sassanid dynasty) is exported to Turkic civilization.

Of course the reason is simple. The two most notable and important of the five works of Nizami Ganjavi are about Sassanid kings and Sassanid Iran. And the tremendous influence of the Sassanids in the Caucasus and the many important Iranian place names left from them are well known to scholars. Therefore, there is no connection between Sassanid Iranian culture and Turkic culture and civilization. So what is the best way out of this for paid scholars to continue the Stalinist nation building process? Claim that Sassanids were the ancestors of today's "Turks in the Caucasus". We also note that she spelled Shirin as "Shiren", but that is not even worth considering relative to the grave falsification about Nizami which have their roots in USSR historiography. The interesting thing is that some writers in the Republic of Azerbaijan also try to disassociate Shirin (with her Persian name) and Mahin Banu (with her Persian name) from Armenians (although all poets after Nizami inspired by Nizami's work considered Shireen an Armenian and she was a monotheist and historically well known Christian) and claim that she was Turkish despite the fact that she is known to be a historical Aramean

Christian in the Sassanid era and has Persian name and was a monotheist, but they abuse the symbolic term “Turk” for beauty when used for Shirin or Lili in the *Lili o Majnoon* which actually is a reference to Central Asiatic Turkic features and nothing to do with Anatolian/Caucasian Turcophones who were not formed yet at the time of Nezami. Anyhow, this author condemns the misuse of the high personality of Nizami for political and nationalist games.

Here was another falsification we brought in the beginning of this article:

<http://www.apa.az/en/news.php?id=28178>

Nizami Ganjavi's divan in Turkish published in Iran

[08 Jun 2007 13:17]

Divan of Nizami Ganjavi in Turkish was found in Khedivial library of Egypt, poet and researcher Sadiyar Eloglu told the APA exclusively.

Eloglu said that he is analyzing Nizami Ganjavi's divan in Turkish. He added that the divan was found by Iranian researcher of Azerbaijani origin Seid Nefisi 40 years ago in Khedivial library but for some reasons the scientist did not analyze the book.

Poetess from Maraga Fekhri Vahizeden living in Egypt found the divan two years ago and sent a copy of it to Sadiyar Eloglu. The scientist has been analyzing the work for two years. He said that the claims denying the works' belonging to Nizami Ganjavi were not proved.

"Historical points and personalities noted in the works were Nizami Ganjavi's contemporaries," he said. He noted that 213 couplets in the divan were proved to be written by Nizami Ganjavi.

Eloglu has already published these poems in Iran. /APA/

We note all these falsifications (even going as far as making up verses about Nizami Ganjavi's father line) are to simply disconnect Nizami Ganjavi from the Irano-Islamic civilization and to assign him to Turkic culture and civilization, which was not developed in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan at his time. Thus when Stalin or Brenda Shaffer claim that Nezami Ganjavi wrote "most of his work in Persian" (while not a single poetic anthology has ever mentioned anything but Persian nor is there a single verse of Turkish from anyone at the time of Nezami Ganjavi from the Caucasus and Nezami clearly states his poetic work is in Persian), they give license to other nationalists to find obscure Turkish works of other authors and claim it as that of Nezami (in this case it is a Ottoman poet from Konya called Nezami Qunavi who is also a victim of political nationalists since his works are ascribed by these nationalists to Nezami Ganjavi in order for them to falsely verify the statement of Stalin and Brenda Shaffer).

Critical editions of the verses in question

In order to examine these misinterpreted verses in the *Layli o Majnoon* and *Haft Paykar*, we rely on four editions of Nizami Ganjavi.

1) Kolliyaat Nezami Ganjavi, Wahid Dastgerdi (Tehran, 1315 /1936)

One can find this on the internet:

<http://rira.ir/rira/php/?page=view&mod=classicpoems&obj=poet&id=30>

The Dastgerdi edition has valuable comments on many of the verses and thus his comments have been used by numerous researchers.

According to one book (written from a nationalist Turkish point of view) by the R. Azada (R. Azada, Nezami, Elm Publishers, 1981. Translated in 1991.) (The book does not mention anything about Nizami's Kurdish mother and claims in the end that:

“Nizami is studied and read by many fraternal Soviet people in their own language. His translation and publications in Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Turkmen, Tartar, Tajik, Beylorussian, Kirghiz and other languages are evident of this. [The writer forgets that Tajik is the same as Persian and claims are made on Persian writers like Suhrawardi (whose Zoroastrian influence and symbology is well known and has only Persian and Arabic works) and ‘Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani (who has writing in the local Iranic Fahlaviyyat vernacular and has only Persian, Fahlaviyyat and Arabic works)(both authors lived before the linguistic Turkification of Azerbaijan) on being Turks. Unfortunately the USSR even tried to say Ferdowsi was not a Persian but a Tajik poet!]: Remarkable are Vahid Dastgerdi's studies on Nizami being a step forward in world orientalism. He prepares the most correct texts of Nizami's works by comparing various manuscripts of different scribes and times, commenting on difficult couplets, lines and allusions, and compiled a dictionary of words which were not easily understood, and not least of all, did an honourable job by researching into poet's life and creative activity”(Ibid)

Although better editions of various jewels of Nizami have come forward since Vahid Dastgerdi, we should mention that the verses where misinterpretations have occurred are exactly or almost the same in both the Dastgerdi edition and newer editions.

2)

According to Francois de Blois:

More recently, the *Haft Peykar* was re-edited by the Azerbaijani scholar T. A. Magerramov (Maharramov) (Moscow, 1987). This edition quotes variants from fourteen manuscripts, the Ritter/Rypka edition and the uncritical edition by Wahid Dastgerdi (Tehran, 1315/1936 and reprints), but Magerramov made no attempt to divide the manuscripts into families and in this regard his version is a step backwards from the Prague edition.

Nevertheless, we found this edition useful, since it highlights the discrepancies on variant versions of *Haft Paykar*.

“*Haft Paykar*” edited by Tahir Magerramov (Maherramov), Moscow: Idarah-i Intisharat-i Danish, Shu’bah-i adabiyat-i Khavar, 1987.

3)

We also have consulted the USSR edition with its numerous mistakes:

خمسہ-نظامی: بر اساس چاپ مسکو – باکو (نشر هرمس) – 1385-1386

4)

For *Layli o Majnoon* we utilize the excellent edition by Dr. Barat Zanjani:

Zanjani, Barat. *Layla o Majnun-i Nizami Ganjavi: matn-i ilmi va intiqadi az ru-yi qadimtarin nuskhah ha-yi khatti-i qarn-i hashtum ba zikr-i ikhtilaf-i nusakh va ma'ni-i lughat va tarkabat va kashf al-bayat / bih taṣḥiḥ* Barat Zanjani., [Tehran]: Mu'assasah-i Chap va Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, 1369 [1990].

Nezami – Khamsa- The Moscow-Baku edition, Hermes Publisher, 1385-1386

We note that Professor Barat Zanjani has shown more than 20 wrong readings by USSR scholars just in the introduction (before the start of the work of Nizami) of his edition. Although some USSR scholars have done an excellent job at producing critical editions of ancient manuscripts, Iranian scholars have since the time of Bahar learned this method from Western scholars (although Hamdallah Mosowfi actually comes up with a critical edition of Shahnameh 700 years ago). Obviously people that have been trained in Persian, schooled in Persian or whose mother tongue is in Persian have greater advantage in understand the language, symbolism and imagery of Nizami Ganjavi and combined with newer methods of producing critical editions of texts, we can expect better editions of major Persian texts in the future.

Here are some examples of mistakes pointed out by Professor Zanjani on the USSR edition:

شوروی:
زانگونه که او سرشک رانده
چشم همه پر سرشک مانده

چاپ تصحیح شده دکتر برات زنجانی:

زانگونه که او سرشک رانده
چشم همه پر سرشک مانده

و در این بیت:
شرک است مرا شریک با تو
یا عشق مرا حریف یا تو (زنجانی)

کاتبی «شرک است» را به شکل «شرکت» نوشته و مصحح لیلی و مجنون شوروی آن را «شرگشت» خوانده و آخر هر دو مصراع را «با تو» تصور کرده و ردیف دانسته و برای این که شعر قافیه را از دست ندهد ناچار شده «شریک» را به «شریف» تبدیل و بیت را چنین ضبط کند:

شرگشت مرا شریف با تو

یا عشق مرا حریف با تو (شوروی)

کافروخته روی بود و **بدرام**
پاکیزده نهاد و نازک اندام (زنجانی)

کلمه «بدرام» را نتوانسته بخواند (بدرام) ضبط کرده و برای خواننده مشکلی بوجود آورده است:

کافروخته روی بود و **بدرام**
پاکیزده نهاد و نازک اندام (شوروی)

و در این بیت بالیده را پالیده خوانده:
بالیده‌ی دانه‌ی تو کشتم
خاک در تو در بهشتم (زنجانی)

پالیده‌ی دانه‌ی تو کشتم
خاک در تو در بهشتم (شوروی)

و در این دو بیت:
یارب برسان بدان چراغم
کز آتش او رسید داغم
گو بخشدم از جهان فروزی
در تنگ شبی فراخ روزی (زنجانی)

گو بخشدم از جهان فروزی
در تنگ شبی فراخ روزی (شوروی)

و در این بیت:
شد بدر **بهیش** چون هلالی
وان سرو سهیش چون خلالی (زنجانی)

که ضعیف و ناتوان شدن لیلی را نشان میدهد، به معنی عنایت نکرده و از دستنویسها شکل زیر را پذیرفته:

شد بدر **مهیش** چون هلالی
وان شرو شهیش چون خیالی (شوروی)

و این بیت را:
خواننده‌هاش اگر فسرده باشد
عاشق شود **ارنه مرده** باشد (زنجانی)
بدین شکل پذیرفته:

خواننده‌هاش اگر فسرده باشد
عاشق شود **ار نمرده** باشد (شوروی)

در مدح امیر اخستان گوید:

شاه سخی اخستان که نامش
مهریست که مهر شد غلامش (زنجانی)

و خاقانی شروانی هم او را در سخاوت تعریف کرده و گفته:
شاه سخن به خدمت شاه سخا رسیده
شاه سخا سخن ز فلک دید برترش

خاقانی خود را شاه سخن و ممدوح را شاه سخا نامیده است و نظامی هم او را شاه
سخی نامیده است، مصحح لیلی و مجنون شرووی بدون توجه به این نکته بیت فوق
الذکر را چنین ضبط کرده است:
شاه سخن اخستان که نامش
مهریست که مهر شد غلامش (شرووی)

The above examples demonstrate the importance of understanding Khaqani, Ferdowsi, Sanai and Nezami in order to understand each poet better.

Here are some more examples:

تا کی به خودت غرور باشد
مرگ از تو به مرگ دور باشد (زنجانی)

آن را به شکل ذیل ضبط کرده:
تا کی به خودت غرور باشد
برگ از تو به مرگ دور باشد (شرووی)

و به عبارت «متوا قبل ان تموتوا» که مورد نظر شاعر بوده توجه نکرده است.

و در بیت ذیل:
شروان ز تو خيروان جلالت
خزران ز تو خيزران عدالت (زنجانی)

که به اشکال مختلف در نسخ خطی ضبط شده است. در چاپ شرووی به جای خيروان
کلمهی خيزران را انتخاب و پذیرفته‌اند و قطعاً نوشته‌های خاقانی را دربارهی کلمه
(شروان) ندیده‌اند. خاقانی شروانی در آثار خود به دو حرف اول (شروان) که زادگاه اوست
حساسیت نشان داده و گفته است:

عیب شروان مکن که خاقانی
هست از آن شهر کابتدایش شراست (خاقانی)
و سعی کرده که برای آن تعبیری خوب پیدا کند و معنی (شر) را که از تلفظ اسم آن شهر
در ذهنها تداعی میشود بشنود و چنین گفته:
خاک شروان مگو که آن شر است
کان (شرفوان) به خیر مشتهر است
هم (شرفوان) نویسمش لیکن
حرف علت از آن میان به در است
عیب شهری چرا کنی به دوحرف
کاول شرع و آخر بشر است

(خاقانی)
و در جای دیگر گفته:
تا کلیهی من در این مکان است
شروان هم‌مهساله خیروان است

و در انشاء خود آورده:
شروان، شرفوان و خیروان شده است و از هفت شهر عراق به شرف اعراق و از
چهار شهر خراسان به عدل و احسان قصبالسبق برده‌اند، و بل که شروان روضات الجنان
است و ساکنان او خازنان رضوان (منشهی خاقانی)

و نظامی هم در مدح اخستان که شروان در سلطهی قدرت داشت از نظر خاقانی پیروی
کرده و گفته است:
شروان ز تو خیروان جلالت
خیزان ز تو خیززان عدالت (زنجانی)
اما در چاپ شوروی بدین شکل ضبط شده است:
شروان ز تو خیززان جلالت
خوزان ز تو خیززان عدالت (شوروی)

و در جنگ اول نوفل با قبیلهی لیلی کار به صلح میانجامد و نوفل چون از ادامهی جنگ
عاجز می‌شود از خویشان خود یک نفر میانجی برای صلح می‌فرستد. نظامی در این باره
مینویسد:

چون کرد سخن میانجی آغاز
گشت آن دو سپه ز یکدگر باز (زنجانی)

اما در بعضی از نسخهها چنین ضبط شده:
چون کرد میانجی سراغاز
گشت آن دو سپه ز یکدگر باز (شوروی)

و در این بیت:
چشمش نه به چشم یار ماند
رویش نه به نوبهار ماند (زنجانی)
که همه نسخههای قدیم «رویش» نوشته‌اند اما دانشمندان شوروی «بویش» ضبط کرده‌اند.
تشخیصشان درست نبوده است.
چشمش نه به چشم یار ماند
بویش نه به نوبهار ماند (شوروی)

و در این بیت:
دانست کزو فراغ دارد
چربی ز دگر چراغ دارد (زنجانی)

که نسخهها به صورت مختلف نوشته‌اند:

- (1) خوبی ز دگر چراغ دارد
- (2) جز بوی دگر دروغ دارد

- (3) جز بوی دگر چراغ دارد
- (4) چون جای دیگر چراغ دارد
- (5) چون بوی دیگر چراغ دارد
- (6) جز سوی دگر چراغ دارد
- (7) جز وی دگری چراغ دارد

مصححان شوروی شماره (7) را ترجیح داده‌اند در حالی که «چربی ز دگر چراغ دارد» درست است زیرا کنایه از آن ست که مایه‌ی نور خود را از چراغ دیگر گرفته است و روغن از چراغ دیگر گرفتن و یا داشتن در آثار نظامی سابقه دارد، در اقبالنامه در نعت پیغمبر اکرم (ص) گوید:

زهی روغن هر چراغی که هست
به دریوزهی شمع تو چربدست

یعنی چراغهای دیگر روغن خود را از شمع تو و از چراغ تو گرفته‌اند و نشانه‌ی آن در دست آنها مانده است و دستشان چرب شده‌است زیرا روغن دریوزگی کرده‌اند.

در جایی که سخن از سازگاری است نظامی گوید:

در هر چه ز اعتدال یاری است
انجامش آن به سازگاری است
هر رود که با غنا بسازد
در پرده غناگرش نسازد (زنجانی)

مصححان شوروی بیت دوم را چنین ثبت کرده:

هر رود که با غنا نسازد
برد چون غناگرش نوازد (شوروی)

Overall, we see that it is important to have proper knowledge of Persian and also a detailed understanding of other poets like Khaqani, Ferdowsi, Gorgani, Asadi Tusi, Sanai and others to fully understand the poetry of Nizami Ganjavi. That is the poetry of these poets help in their mutual understanding. For example, Khaqani was a poet that had tremendous influence upon Nezami and this is clearly shown in the high usage of metaphors by both poets (see also the appendix). The Nozhat al-Majales for example would be critical for understanding some of the more symbolic verses of Khaqani, Mojir al-Din Beylekani and Nezami. Yet as far as we know, such methodology has not been used by most scholars. It is imperative that scholars use modern technology and if there is confusion about the meaning of some of the very difficult verse, they check with other poets and anthologies like Nozhat al-Majales. Keeping this in mind, we shall bring the misinterpretation of the USSR and cross reference it with other poets as well as Nizami's other verses. At the same time, there was no variance between the verses that were misinterpreted and all editions seem to agree on the words of these verses.

Translation and explanation of the introduction of Layli and Majnoon

The first misinterpretation in order to allege Nizami was going to write Turkish is based on the beginning of *Layli o Majnoon*, in the section when Nizami describes the reasoning for writing the book:

روزی به مبارکی و شادی
بودم به نشاط کیقبادی
ابروی هلالیم گشاده
دیوان نظامیم نهاده
آینه بخت پیش رویم
اقبال به شانه کرده مویم
صبح از گل سرخ دسته بسته
روزم به نفس شده خجسته
پروانه دل چراغ بر دست
من بلبل باغ و باغ سرمست
بر اوج سخن علم کشیده
در درج هنر قلم کشیده
منقار قلم به لعل سفتن
دراج زبان به نکته گفتن
در خاطرم اینکه وقت کار است
کاقبال رفیق و بخت یار است
تا کی نفس تهی گزینم
وز شغل جهان تهی نشینم
دوران که نشاط فریبهی کرد
پهلوی ز تهی روان تهی کرد
سگ را که تهی بود تهی گاه
نانی نرسد تهی در این راه
برساز جهان نوا توان ساخت
کان راست جهان که با جهان ساخت
گردن به هوا کسی فرازد
کو با همه چون هوا بسازد
چون آینه هر کجا که باشد
جنسی به دروغ بر تراشد
هر طبع که او خلاف جویت
چون پرده کج خلاف گویت
هان دولت گر بزرگواری
کردی ز من التماس کاری
من قرعه زنان به آن چنان فال
واختر به گذشتن اندر ان حال
مقبل که برد چنان برد رنج
دولت که دهد چنان دهد گنج
در حال رسید قاصد از راه
آورد مثال حضرت شاه

بنوشته به خط خوب خویشم
ده پانزده سطر نغز بیشم

هر حرفی از او شکفته باغی افروخته تر ز شب چراغی

کای محرم حلقه غلامی
جادو سخن جهان نظامی
از چاشنی دم سحرخیز
سحری دگر از سخن برانگیز
در لافگه شگفت کاری
بنمای فصاحتی که داری
خواهم که به یاد عشق مجنون
رانی سخنی چو در مکنون
چون لیلی بکر اگر توانی
بکری دو سه در سخن نشانی
تا خوانم و گویم این شکربین
جنیانم سر که تاج سر بین
بالای هزار عشق نامه
آراسته کن به نوک خامه
شاه همه حرفهاست این حرف
شاید که در او کنی سخن صرف
در زیور پارسی و تازی
این تازه عروس را طرازی
دانی که من آن سخن شناسم
کابیات نو از کهن شناسم
تا ده دهی غرابیت هست
ده پنج زنی رها کن از دست
بنگر که ز حقه تفکر
در مرسله که می‌کشی در
ترکی صفت وفای مانیست (نسخه: ترکانه صفت وفای ما نیست)
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست
آن کز نسب بلند زاید
او را سخن بلند باید
چون حلقه شاه یافت گوشم
از دل به دماغ رفت هوشم
نه زهره که سر ز خط بتایم
نه دیده که ره به گنج یابم
سرگشته شدم دران خجالت
از سستی عمر و ضعف حالت
کس محرم نه که راز گویم
وین قصه به شرح باز گویم
فرزند محمد نظامی
آن بر دل من چو جان گرامی
این نسخه چو دل نهاد بر دست

در پهلوئی من چو سایه بنشست
داد از سر مهر پای من بوس
کی آنکه زدی بر آسمان کوس
خسروشیرین چو یاد کردی
چندین دل خلق شاد کردی
لیلی و مجنون بیایدت گفت
تا گوهر قیمتی شود جفت
این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر

خاصه ملکی چو شاه سروان سروان چه که شهریار ایران

نعمت ده و پایگاه سازست
سرسبز کن و سخن نوازست
این نامه به نامه از تو درخواست
بنشین و طراز نامه کن راست
گفتم سخن تو هست بر جای
ای آینه روی آهنین رای
لیکن چه کنم هوا دو رنگست
اندیشه فراخ و سینه تنگست
دهلیز فسانه چون بود تنگ
گردد سخن از شد آمدن لنگ
میدان سخن فراخ باید
تا طبع سواریی نماید
این آیت اگرچه هست مشهور
تفسیر نشاط هست از دور
افزار سخن نشاط و ناز است
زین هر دو سخن بهانه ساز است
بر شیفتگی و بند و زنجیر
باشد سخن برهنه دلگیر
در مرحله‌ای که ره ندانم
پیداست که نکته چند رانم
نه باغ و نه بزم شهریاری
نه رود و نه می نه کامکاری
بر خشکی ریگ و سختی کوه
تا چند سخن رود در اندوه
باید سخن از نشاط سازی
تا بیت کند به قصه بازی
این بود کز ابتدای حالت
کس گرد نگشتش از ملالت

گوینده ز نظم او پر افشاند
تا این غایت نگفت زان ماند
چون شاه جهان به من کند باز
کاین نامه به نام من پرداز

با این همه تنگی مسافت
آنچاش رسانم از لطافت
کز خواندن او به حضرت شاه
ریزد گهر نسفته بر راه
خواننده‌اش اگر فسرده باشد
عاشق شود از نه مرده باشد
باز آن خلف خلیفه زاده
کاین گنج به دوست درگشاده
یک دانه اولین فتوحم
یک لاله آخرین صیوحم
گفت ای سخن تو همسر من
یعنی لقبش برادر من
در گفتن قصه‌ای چنین چست
اندیشه نظم را مکن سست
هرجا که بدست عشق خوانیست
این قصه بر او نمک فشانیست
گرچه نمک تمام دارد
بر سفره کباب خام دارد
چون سفته خارش تو گردد
پخته به گزارش تو گردد
زیبا روئی بدین نکوئی
وانگاه بدین برهنه روئی
کس در نه به قدر او فشانده است
زین روی برهنه روی مانده است
جانست و چو کس به جان نکوشد
پیراهن عاریت نپوشد
پیرایه جان ز جان توان ساخت
کس جان عزیز را نینداخت
جان بخش جهانیان دم تست
وین جان عزیز محرم تست
از تو عمل سخن گزاری
از بنده دعا ز بخت یاری
چون دل دهی جگر شنیدم
دل دوختم و جگر دریدم
در جستن گوهر ایستادم
کان کندم و کیمیا گشادم

راهی طلبید طبع کوتاه
کاندیشه بد از درازی راه
کوته‌تر از این نبود راهی
چابکتر از این میانه گاهی
بحریست سبک ولی رونده
ماهیش نه مرده بلکه زنده
بسیار سخن بدین حلاوت

گویند و ندارد این طراوت
 زین بحر ضمیر هیچ غواص
 برنارد گوهری چنین خاص
 هر بیتی از او چه رسته‌ای در
 از عیب تهی و از هنر پر
 در جستن این متاع نغم
 یک موی نبود پای لغزم
 می‌گفتم و دل جواب می‌داد
 خاریدم و چشمه آب می‌داد
 دخلی که ز عقل درج کردم
 در زیور او به خرج کردم
 این چار هزار بیت اکثر
 شد گفته به چار ماه کمتر
 گر شغل دگر حرام بودی
 در چاره شب تمام بودی
 بر جلوه این عروس آزاد
 آبادتر آنکه گوید آباد
 آراسته شد به بهترین حال
 در سلخ رجب به تی و فا دال
 تاریخ عیان که داشت با خود
 هشتاد و چهار بعد پانصد
 پرداختمش به نغز کاری
 و انداختمش بدین عماری
تا کس نبرد به سوی او راه
الا نظر مبارک شاه

Translation:

The Reason for Composing the Book

It was a felicitous and happy day / I was enjoying like King Kai-Qubâd

My crescent eyebrows were undone / My Diwan of Nezami was open

The Mirror of Fortune was in front of me / And Good Luck was combing my hair

Morning was making bouquets of roses / And with its breath it was making my day auspicious

My butterfly of heart was holding a candle / I was the Nightingale in the garden, and the garden intoxicated

I was carrying my standard to the Apex of Words / In the Jewel-box of Art I had my pen

Beak of Pen was engaged in piercing ruby / My francolin of tongue was making fine tunes

I was thinking: it is time to do some work / Good Luck is my comrade, Fortune is my friend

How long should I choose to stay in empty cage? / And sit unengaged in the world affairs

Time was giving the Rich good time / It was keeping it distance from the Empty-handed

A dog with thin and empty flanks / Is not picked for watch and cannot earn any bread

In accordance with the World you can make your fortune / Those compatible with the World can win it

One can hold his head up / Who is compatible with all like the air

Like a mirror wherever they are / They would erase the lies

Any temperament which is seeking wrong / Is like a wrong note in dissonance

Oh Fortune, if you are gracious / You would beg me to do something

I was throwing my lot to this / And a lucky star was passing then

When someone is accepted this is it / When Fortune is giving treasure, this is it

Right away a courier came from the road / And a letter from His Kingship he brought

With his beautiful handwriting / His Majesty has written me ten, fifteen or more eloquent lines

Each word of the letter like a blooming garden / It was more glowing than a night lamp

Saying: "O Privy to Our Circle of Service / O Magic-Word of the World! O Nezami!

With the sauce of your early-rising breath / Raise another Magic with your words

In the Arena of the Wondrous Words / Exhibit the eloquence that you possess

I want you to recite a story like a pearl / In the memory of Majnun's love affair

Like the Virgin Leyli if you can / Produce some virgin words in the literature

So that I can read and say: behold this sugar / I can shake my head and say: behold this crown!

More than thousand books of love / Have been decorated so far

This story is the king of all stories / It is worth if you spend you effort on it

In Persian and Arabic ornaments / Beautify and dress this new bride fresh

You know that I am that expert / Who recognizes the new couplets from the old

While you can mint new pure gold coins of wondrous words / Leave out the business of fake coins

Watch that from the jewel-box of thoughts / In whose necklace you are putting pearl

Verses misinterpreted:

Literal translation:

*Our fidelity does not have Turkic manner /
Turkish-like(=vulgar/harsh) talk do not befit us*

Or:

*(since) Our fidelity is not like that of Turks –
(thus) Speech for Turks (Turkish Kings) is not befitting for us*

One who is of a high birth / He deserves the high praises/words

*When my ears found the rings of King(when I became a servant of the King)/ From heart
to mind I lost sense*

No courage to reject his request / No sight to find my way to this treasure

I was perplexed in that embarrassment / Because of my old age and frail nature

No privy to tell them my secret / And explain my story in detail

My son, Mohammad Nezami / Who is dear to me like soul to my body

*He took this copy of the story in hand dear like his heart / Like a shadow he sat next
down to me*

*From his kindness he gave some kisses on my feet / Saying: “O you who beat drums in
the sky*

*When you retold the story of Khosrow and Shirin / You brought happiness to so many
hearts*

*Now you must say the story of Leyli and Majnun / So that the Priceless Pearls become
twin*

*This eloquent book is better be told / The young peacock is better be a couple
 Especially a king like King of Sharvan / Why Sharvan? He is the King of Iran
 He gives blessing and he gives station / He raises people and he encourages poets
 He has requested this book from you with his letter / Please sit and prepare your pen”
 I told him: “Your words are very true / O my Mirror-faced and Iron-resolved!
 But what can I do, the weather is double / Thought is wide but my chest is tight
 When corridors of tale are narrow / Words become limp in their traffic
 The field of words must be wide / So that talent can have a good ride
 This story, even though, well-known / No joyful rendering for it is possible
 The instruments of story are joy and luxury / But this story has excuse for both
 On the subject of infatuation and chain and bond / Bare words would be boring
 And if decorations beyond the limits are imposed on it / Would make the face of this
 story sore
 In a stage that I don’t know the ways / It is obvious how much I can show my talent
 There is no garden, no royal feast in this story / No songs, no wine, no pleasure
 On the dry dunes and hard hills in desert / How long can one talk about sorrow?
 The story must be about joy / So couplets can play and dance in the story
 This is the reason that from the beginning / No one has ventured around it for its
 boredom
 Any poet has dismissed its composition / Before they reached the end, they abandoned it
 Since King of the World has requested gently / “Compose this story in my name!”
 Now despite this narrow field of maneuver / I will take it so high in delicacy
 That when they recite it for His Majesty / He would cast un-pierced pearls on the road
 If its readers are depressed / They would fall in love otherwise they are dead*

Then that worthy dear son of mine / Because of whom doors of this treasure are open
The only child from my first marriage / The only tulip of my morning wine
Told me, "O! who your words are my equals / That is they are like my brothers
In composing this swift story / Do not have hesitation in your thoughts
Wherever Love has set up a feast table / This story is like a salt-shaker
Even though it has all the savors / It has raw kabab on its table
When its pearl is pieced on your hand / The story would be cooked by you rendering
It is a lovely beauty with nice appearance / But it lacks any make-up and decoration
Nobody has cast pearl on it what it is worth / That is why it has been left bare-face
It is soul, and if nobody works one's soul on it / This will not wear a rented dress [of
insufficient work]
The soul could be decorated only by soul / Nobody has spent one's dear soul on this story
Your breath gives life to the whole World / This dear soul of mine is your privy
You start the rendering of this story / Yours truly will pray and the Fortune will help"
When I heard the heartening of my beloved son / I gave my heart and conquered the
battle
I persisted in finding pearls / I dug mines and opened alchemy
My talent was seeking a short path / Because it was worried about the road length
There was no path shorter than this / Nothing more agile than this method
This is a meter light but easy flowing / The fish in this sea are not dead but live
There has been many stories with this sweetness / But none has the freshness of this
No diver from this sea of mind / Has ever brought up a pearl so special
Each couplet of this book is like a line of pearls / Empty of any fault and filled with many
arts
In seeking this elegant product / There was no a hair to slip

I would say something and my heart would reply / I was scratching and the spring was giving water

Whatever I earned with my mind / I spent on decorating this story

These more than four thousand couplets / Were composed in less than four months

Had any other commitments were held up / It would have finished in a fortnight

On the lovely appearance of this Free Bride / Prosperous be those who say 'Prosperous!'

It was decorated in the best possible way / In the last night of Rajab in Thi, Fa, Dal

The explicit year this book carries on it / Would be Eight Four after Five Hundred

I polished and decorated this bride with the best excellence / And I sat her on the camel-litter

So that nobody could find their ways to her / Except for the eyes of His Majesty

According to those who have tried to misinterpret the verses of Nizami Ganjavi (and this was the section quoted by Stalin who did not even have a proper understanding of Persian), the following couplets are meant to make the unfounded claim that Nizami wanted to write Turkish but was prohibited:

**ترکی (ترکانه) صفت وفاى ما نيست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نيست
آن کز نسب بلند زايد
او را سخن بلند بايد**

Verses misinterpreted:

Literal translation:

*Our fidelity does not have Turkic manner /
Turkish-like (Turkish-mannered=Harsh/Vulgar) talk do not befit us*

One who is of a high birth / He deserves the high praises/words

Or:

*(since) Our fidelity is not like that of Turks –
(thus) Speech for Turks (Turkish Kings) is not befitting for us*

One who is of a high birth / He deserves the high praises/words

According to ethnic-minded misinterpreters who have not examined these lines carefully, the bolded portion: “Means that Shirvanshah wrote to Nizami that do not write in Turkish! And Nizami was upset”

Unfortunately they have not looked at the whole section and have not understood the meaning of the verses above. First let us analyze this whole section from beginning. We note at the end of the section, Nizami Ganjavi mentions he finished the work in four months and if he did not have other duties, he would have done it in fourteen days. We do not doubt this claim of Nizami Ganjavi, since he was indeed **جادوی سخن** “Jadooy-Sokhan” (having magical discourse). Thus Nizami Ganjavi wrote this section (the introduction after praise of God) after he had finished the book. That is this section is the last or one of the last sections to be written despite coming into the intro. The reason it is put in the introduction is because it is a section about composing the book.

Next, in the beginning of this section, it starts with the fact that Nizami Ganjavi while in happy state (شاد=shad) and in a Kay-Qobadi state (he refers to it as Neshaat-e- Kay-Qobaadi, Kay-Qobaad being an important king in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi and Nizami Ganjavi comparing his state of happiness to that of Kay-Qobaad, which again shows the influence of Shahnameh), received a letter from the Shirvan Shah.

He refers to the letter from Shirvanshah as a composition (satr=سטר) (composition/paragraphs and not poetry). Thus we do not have the original letter of Shirvanshah and all the verses/poetry were composed by Nizami and of course the style/quality of the verses which are in the meter of the poem (the meter Nizami chose) show this. How true is Nizami’s poetic verses to the letter of Shirvanshah and how much of it is poetic interpretation? We will never know. But, we do know that Nizami Ganjavi describes the letter as “naghz” (very pleasing, eloquent, excellent) and he states that each and every single word of it is like a *blossomed garden whose light is brighter than the flames lit at night*.

هر حرفی از او شکفته باغی
افروختهتر ز شب چراغی

So Nizami Ganjavi was very pleased with the words of the Shah and praises the letter. He considers this letter like night flames which light up the dark and he considers each word as a pleasant blossoming garden. So this by itself invalidates the false claim that Nizami Ganjavi was upset at the letter of the Shirvanshah.

As per the verses which Nizami Ganjavi composed (the Shirvanshah did not compose any verses, he wrote a letter in prose, just like Nizami Ganjavi’s son did not compose any verses and Nizami talked through him) and was misinterpreted by the USSR:

ترکی صفت وفای مانیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست (دستگردی)
آن کز نسب بلند زاید

او را سخن بلند باید

ترکانه صفت وفای ما نیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست (زنجانی)
آن کز نسب بلند زاید
او را سخن بلند باید

Translation:

*Our fidelity does not have Turkic manner /
Turkish-like (Turkish-mannered=Harsh/Vulgar) talk do not befit us*

One who is of a high birth / He deserves the high praises/words

Or:

*(since) Our fidelity is not like that of Turks –
(thus) Speech for Turks (Turkish Kings) is not befitting for us*

One who is of a high birth / He deserves the high praises/words

The late Dr. Zaryab Khoi has responded to the misinterpretation by ethno-nationalist authors who tried to misinterpret these verses in order to falsify the theory that Nizami Ganjavi wanted to write Turkish.

As observed in detail by Dr. Abbas Zarin Khoi and here we bring the original Persian of his article:

نویسنده روزنامه آذربایجان از شعر: ترکی صفت وفای ما نیست- ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست- می خواهد استدلال کند که نظامی می خواسته است شعر ترکی بگوید و شروانشاه مانع گردیده است و پیغام داده است که «ترکی صفت وفای ما نیست...الخ» و «او را سخن بلند باید...الخ»

ولی نویسنده اشتباه کرده است، چه، اگر مقصود از «ترکی» زبان ترکی بود، ربطی به صفت وفای شروانشاه نداشت تا در نامه ای که به نظامی نوشته است بگوید: «ترکی صفت وفای ما نیست»، بلکه مقصود از «ترکی» معنی مصدری است، یعنی ترک گری و ترک بودن، و این تعبیر در ادبیات فارسی سابقه زیادی دارد. چنان که می گفتند: «ترکی تمام شد» یعنی نوبت هرج و مرج گذشت، و ترک گری به معنی بی رحمی و قساوت و بی ادبی و خشونت آمده است. چنان که سنایی می فرماید:
می نبیند آن سفیهانی که ترکی کرده اند
همچو چشم تنگ ترکان، گور ایشان تنگ باد

و در زبان فرانسه هم «تورکری» به معنی زمختی و شدت استعمال شده است. پس معنی مصرع اول چنین است که: ترکی، یعنی ترک گری و بی وفایی صفت وفای ما نیست، چنان که در بعضی نسخ هم «ترکی صفتی، وفای ما نیست» ضبط شده است و مرحوم وحید دستگردی در کتاب لیلی و مجنون نظامی که به تصحیح ایشان طبع شده است، در زیر این بیت همین معنی را می کنند و آن را اشاره و تلمیحی به قصه سلطان محمود غزنوی که نسبت به فردوسی بی وفایی کرده است می دانند. و چنان که معلوم است، ترکان در آن زمان به بی وفایی و عهد شکنی معروف بوده اند.

و نظیر این معنی در اشعار شعرای بزرگ فراوان است. چنان که اسدی گوید:

وفا ناید از ترک هرگز پدید
از ایرانیان جز وفا کس ندید

و سنایی گوید: ما خود ز تو این چشم نداریم. ازیراک- ترکی تو و هرگز نبود ترک وفادار- و کسایی که مایل به تفصیل باشند به کتاب امثال و حکم دانشمند معظم آقای دهخدا، زیر مثل «اترک التروک و لوکان اباک» مراجعه کنند. و مصرع دوم بیت: «ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست» معنی اش این است که: سخن پست و رکیک سزای ما نیست. زیرا در آن عهد ترکان به بددهنی معروف بودند و موید این ادعا، بیت بعدی است که می گوید: «آن کز نسب بلند زاید- او را سخن بلند باید» چنان که می بینیم، ترکانه سخن را در مقابل سخن بلند قرار داده است که معنی آن سخن پست و رکیک است و تعبیر «ترکانه سخن» هرگز به معنی «ترکی سخن گفتن» نمی باشد. (عباس زریاب خوئی)

As noted by Professor Zaryab Khoi, the word “Torki” is used as verb in Persian (Torki boodan and Torki Gari) and has nothing to do with language. Professor Zaryab Khoi who instructed at Tehran university (Iran’s top university) is well known in Iranologist circles and he was also the head of the library of congress of Iran during the Shah’s time. Originally born in Khoi in West Azerbaijan Province of Iran, he was invited to the university of Berkeley by Walter B. Henning as a visiting Professor and thought Persian language for two years in that prestigious university. But he was requested back to Iran for a prestigious position in Tehran university and he accepted this position due to his love for his homeland. For an online biography, the reader can look at here:

http://fa.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3_%D8%B2%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8_%D8%AE%D9%88%DB%8C%DB%8C&oldid=1451204

Here we translate what Dr. Abbas Zaryab Khoi has stated:

The writer of the newspaper Azerbaijan (Newspaper under the Pishvari regime which was setup by the USSR) has misinterpreted the lines: Torki Sefat Vafaayeh Maa Nist – Torkaaneh Sokhan Sezaayeh Maa nist and wants to argue that that Nizami wanted to write in Turkish and the Shirvanshah forbid him and instead told him: Torki Sefat-i Vafaayeh Maa Nist – Torkaaneh Sokhon Sezaayeh Maa nist - An koo Ze Nasab Boland Zaayad – Oo raa Sokhon Boland Baayad.

But the writer is deeply mistaken, because if from the word “Torki” the meaning that is to be derived is language, then it has nothing to do with faithful characteristic (Sefat-e-Vafaaye) of Shirvanshah, so that he would write in his letter to Nizami: “Torki Sefat-e Vafaayeh Maa nist” (Our faithfulness is not of Turkish characteristics). The meaning from “Torki” in this line is an infinitive (verb found from noun) like Torki-Gari (To do Turkish stuff) and Tork Boodan (to act/become Turkish), and this expression has an old tradition in Persian. For example “Torki Tamaam Shod” (Torki has finished means acting like Turkish has finished) which means that harj o marj (confusion, wildness and unruliness) has finished and Torki-Gari (To do Turkish stuff) is equivalent to cruelty, harshness and this meaning is used by Sanai (translator: from a poem which criticizes the

Turkish rulers. Sanai is a famous Persian poet who lived before Nizami and influenced him):

Do you see those unwise who Torki(Translator: used as an infinitive/verb)
May their grave be tight and dark like the eyes of Turks

Thus the first part of this couplet means this: Torki is an infinitive(verb derived from noun), and Torki-Gari (To do Turkish) and unfaithfulness is not the characteristic of our faith. And in some of the manuscripts it has come down as “Torki Sefati, vafaayeh maa nist” and Vahid Dastgerdi, may God bless him, in his corrected edition of Lili o Majnoon, brings forth this interpretation and points to the story of Mahmud Ghazna who was unfaithful to Ferdowsi. And what is clear is that at that time, Turks were known for unfaithfulness and covenant-breaking.

And such a phrase is found in the poetry of many great poets. For example Asadi Tusi(Translator: famous Persian poet who lived before Nizami) states:

(vafaa naayad az tork hargez padid)
Faithfulness will never appear amongst Turks

(Az Iranian joz vafaa kas nadid)
And from Iranians, there is nothing but faithfulness

And Sanai(Translator: Another famous Persian poet who lived before Nizami) states:

(Maa khod ze to in cheshm nadaarim aziraak),
We ourselves do not expect anything from you because

(Torki to o Hargez Nabovad Tork vafaadaar)
You are a Turk and a Turk is never faithful

And those that want to see more expressions like these can look at the book of “sayings and wise quotes” by the great scholar Dekhoda under “Atrak al-Torook wa law Kaana Abuk”(Forget being Turkish even if your forefathers were Turkish).

And the second part of the couplet: “Torkaaneh Sokhan sezaayeh maa nist” (Turkish-like talk is not befitting for us) means that ineloquence and vulgarity is not befitting for us, because at that time, Turks were known for vulgarity and unmannered words, and the proof of this is given the next: “An kaz nasab boland zaayad”(That who is born from a high birth),“oo raa Sokhan boland baayad” (*Elequent speech then are suited/befitting for him*).

Thus as we see, he has compared Torkaaneh-Sokhan(Turkish-like/Turkish-manner discourse/ speech/talk) to high/eloquence discourse/speech and thus Torkaaneh-Sokhan means ineloquence, unmannerly and vulgar speech, and the interpretation of “Torkaaneh Sokhan” never means “Torki Sokhan Goftan” (To speak/write in Turkish language).

(Abbas Zaryab Khoi, Ayandeh Magazine, Esfand Maah (February 21-March 21), 1324 (1946), pages 780-781.)

Since Professor. Zaryab Khoi has mentioned Vahid Dastgerdi, it is interesting to see what this commentator states. We note that most of all modern interpretations of symbolic and difficult verses are based upon or have been influenced by Dastgerdi's extensive commentary. His extensive commentary on the verses were the first of their kind with regards to Nezami. Dastgerdi mentions:

معنی بیت اینست که وفای ما چون ترکان و عهد ما چون سلطان محمود ترک نیست که شکسته شود پس آنگونه سخن که سزای پادشاهان ترکست برای ما ناسزاوار است.
Translation:

The meaning of these verses is that our fidelity is not like the Turks and our faithfulness is not like that of Sultan Mahmud the Turk. Our fidelity and commitment will not be broken, so words that are befitting for Turkish kings is not befitting for us.

Nezami also does mention the story of Mahmud and Ferdowsi elsewhere. The Iranian scholar Said Nafisi also hints that the "Nasab boland" (high birth) had to do with the fact that many Ganjaviyans including Nezami who were Iranians saw themselves as of high birth relative to Turkish nomads.

Behruz Servatiyan, an Iranian Azerbaijani scholar who is very passionate about Nezami and makes many personal commentaries also has made an interesting comment on these verses. In his 1986 publication of *Khusraw o Shirin*, he mentions various theories, one that the verses might refer to the Turkish language based on the USSR theory. But at the same time, he mentions that the verse:

"The eloquent Persian born Dehqan
Describes the situation of Arabs as such"

is a reference to Nezami. He also mentions that Nezami Ganjavi's mother was Kurdish. However, he states in this 1986 publication that all these things need further analysis.

That is he states: "It is too soon to make a judgment and one needs to a deeper analysis which if God willing, and there is years left, I shall undertake"

(Servatiyan, Behruz. "Khusraw o Shirin of Nezami Ganjavi", critical edition and commentary. Tus publishers, 1986. (pg 58))

However in his *Leyli o Majnoon*, published in 2008, after 20 years, he clearly states:

نگاه کن و بیندیش که از حقهی اندیشه خودت در گردنبد چه کسی مروارید به رشته میکشی؟ یعنی من قدر و بهایی دارم و شعرشناس هستم.

یادداشت-این سه بیت از نژادپرستی شاه اخستان و نظامی شاعر سرچشمه میگردد که دور از حکمت و خدادانی شاعر است و هرگز به عقل راست نمیآید که عارف و حکیمی چون نظامی این سخنان را بر زبان آورد و خود نداند که در تعصبات خاص و زمان و مکان لای چرخ افتاده و در عصر حکومت ترکان سلجوقی در سراسر خاک ایران، تحت تأثیر احساسات تعصب انگیخته چنین سخنانی را بر زبان قلم جاری میکند:

صفت وفای ما ترکی نیست و ما همانند ترکان بیوفا نیستیم و سخن ترکانه و سرسری گفتن سزاوار ما نایست.

یعنی من شاه اخستان همانند محمود غزنوی از نژاد ترک نیستم که عهدی با فردوسی بسته بود و وفا نکرد. من از نژاد ایرانی هستم و به عهد خود وفا خواهم کرد و رنج و زحمت تو را پاداش خواهم داد.

طالع عقربی است با قوسی
یخل محمد و بذل فردوسی
(هفت پیکر)

آن کسی که از نسب و نسل بلند بزاید باید او را سخنی از دست بلند بیاوری و لیلی و مجنون را به هنر آراسته، در نهایت توانایی و چابکدستی به رشتھی نظم بکشی.

یادداشت-«سخن از دست بلند برای نسب و نژاد بلند» یک اندیشه‌ی بیپایه و بیاساس به نظر می‌آید!
(Servatiyan, Behruz. “Lili o Majnoon”, critical edition and commentary. Amir Kabir publishers, 2008. pp 338-339)

Translation: “These verses emanate from a feeling of excessive racial pride from Nezami and Akhsatan relative to Turks. Normally a wise sage like Nezami would not make such comments, but he did it knowingly probably under ethnic emotions while being fully aware that the Seljuqids were ruling Iran.

They mean:

Our manners and fidelity is not Turkish and we are not unfaithful like Turks and thus Turkish-type speech and thoughtless words are not befitting to us.

Akhsatan is saying through the verses of Nezami: “I am shah Akhsatan and I am not a Turk like Mahmud the Gazna who broke his vow with Ferdowsi and did not fulfill his commitment. I am an Iranian and I fulfill my vow and will justly reward your effort and undertaking. The person who is of high birth deserves high speech and decorate Lili o Majnoon eloquently, with your poetic versatility. The offering high speech for someone of high birth and race seem in my opinion (Behruz Servatiyan) to be a low thought.

Although this author does not necessarily agree with the personal comments of Dr. Servatiyan (rather we believe these were simply poetic conventions that were widely used and one will never know the emotional state of the poet), we have bolded the portion where the verse is explained. After 20 years, Dr. Behruz Servatiyan (himself a translator of many Persian poems into Azerbaijani Turkish and proud of both his Iranian and his Azerbaijani-Turkic heritage) has mentioned what is the natural explanation of these verses.

In our opinion these verses have a simple explanation based on what Vahid Dastgerdi has said. We note that according to a very popular legend (which was known by Nezami and also mentioned by him in other verses (see our section on Nezami and Ferdowsi)), after Ferdowsi was not properly rewarded and Mahmud Ghaznavi broke his vow, and showed his infidelity and lack of faithfulness, Ferdowsi escapes Khorasan and goes in exile and writes a Hajw-Nama or a versified lampoon for Sultan Mahmud. The Hajw-Nama or

versified lampoon makes fun of Mahmud, criticizes him and belittles him by using harsh and near vulgar language. This Hajw-Nama is exactly what is meant by “Torkaaneh Sokhan” which can mean “Turkish-mannered speech” or “Speech befitting for Turks”. It has absolutely no relation with Turkish language as explained previously since there was no concept of Turkish literature at the time nor were the Shirwanshahs whom Nezami praises Turks.

Let us analyze these verses in even more detail. The word Vafa/Wafa (faithfulness/fidelity) is said to be lacking among Turks in these verses composed by Nizami. This is not only mentioned by Nizami Ganjavi, but many other Persian poets. For example Sanai Ghaznavi, who Nizami Ganjavi modeled his *Makhzan al-Asrar* after also mentions:

ما خود ز تو این چشم نداریم ازیراک
تو ترکی و هرگز نبود ترک وفادار
(سنائی)

Translation of Sanai:

*We ourselves do not expect anything from you because
You are a Turk and a Turk is never faithful.*

We also have Asadi Tusi, who migrated from Tus to Azerbaijan and was a well known poet of the region who Nizami was familiar with. Asadi Tusi also says in one his poems where he is comparing Iranians to Turks:

وفا ناید از ترک هرگز پدید
وز ایرانیان جز وفا کس ندید
(اسدی توسی)

Asadi Tusi expresses the same opinion:

*Faithfulness will never appear amongst Turks
And from Iranians, there is nothing but faithfulness*

The verse is in the poem where the Iranian warrior Garshasp addresses the Turks:

مزن زشت بیغاره از ایرانزمین
که یک شهر او به ز ماچین و چین
به هر شه بر از بخت چیز آن بود
که او در جهان شاه ایران بود
به ایران شود باژ یکسر شهان
نشد باژ او هیچ جای از جهان
از ایران جز آزاده هرگز نخاست
خرید از شما بنده هر کس که خواست
ز ما پیشتان نیست بنده کسی

و هست از شما بنده ما را بسی
وفا ناید از ترک هرگز پدید
وز ایرانیان جز وفا کس ندید

Nizami Ganjavi was familiar with Asadi Tusi's work and has mentioned his name directly in the *Haft Paykar*. Thus Shirwanshahs who were Iranians are naturally faithful according to the poet and overall Iranians saw themselves as faithful relative to Turks.

And there is also an old *Eskandarnama* (not to be confused with the one by Nizami Ganjavi) where this is mentioned:

و شاه ندانست که ترکان را وفا نباشد. (اسکندر نامه قدیم نسخه سعید نفیسی)
(بنگرید: لغتنامه دهخدا زیر واژه «ترک»)

Translation: And the King did not know that Turks lacked faithfulness.

Without understand other Persian poets, including Sanai, Ferdowsi, Khaqani, Asadi Tusi, Gorgani and others, knowledge of Nizami Ganjavi and his verses will also be deficient. Thus by that time, it was accepted in Persian poetry that Turks lacked faith. This was used in two contexts. One in the context of Mahmud of Ghazna and the other in the context of symbols of beauty who lacked faith.

Numerous other examples can be given, but the best example is Nizami Ganjavi himself who repeats the lack of faithfulness amongst Turks through the mouth of Alexander the Great. Nizami Ganjavi talks about the lack of faithfulness in Turks through the mouth of Alexander (who complains about the Khaqan of Turks/Chin):

به نفرین ترکان زبان برگشاد
که بی فتنه ترکی ز مادر نژاد
ز چینی به جز چین ابرو مخواه
ندارند پیمان مردم نگاه
سخن راست گفتند پیشینیان
که عهد و وفا نیست در چینیان
همه تنگ چشمی پسندیده-اند
فراخی به چشم کسان دیده-اند
وگر نه پس از آنچنان آشتی
ره خشمناکی چه برداشتی
در آن دوستی جستن اول چه بود
وزین دشمنی کردن آخر چه سود
مرا دل یکی بود و پیمان یکی
درستی فراوان و قول اندکی
خبر نی که مهر شما کین بود
دل ترک چین پر خم و چین بود
اگر ترک چینی وفا داشتی
جهان زیر چین قبا داشتی

*Opened his tongue in execration of the Turks,
Saying:—“Without (hidden) Fitnah (calamity, discord, rebellion) no Turk is born of his mother.*

“Seek not from the Chini aught save the frown on the eye-brow (the vexation of the heart): “They observe not the treaty of men.

*“True speech uttered the ancients;
“Treaty-faith exists not among the men of Chín.*

*“No one seeks manliness from the Chini;
“For, save his form, that pertaining to man is not theirs.*

*“They have all chosen narrow-eyedness (shamelessness);
“They have beheld (experienced) openness of the eyes (shamefacedness) in other persons.*

*“Otherwise, after such amity,
“Why tookest thou up the path of hatred?*

*“First, in that friendship-seeking,—what was there?
“At last, in this hostility-displaying,—what advantage?*

*“Mine,—the heart was one, and covenant one;
“Truthfulness great; treachery little (none).*

*“Not (mine),—the intelligence that your love was hate;
“That the heart of the Turk of Chín was full of twist and turn.*

*“If the Turk of Chín had kept faith,
“He would (like the faith-keeping Sikandar) have kept the world beneath the fold (the skirt) of his garment.*

So the first part of the couplet clearly shows that lack of faithfulness amongst Turks was common attribution amongst Persian poets and writers. Nizami Ganjavi also used the same words as other Persian poets who regarded Turks as lacking fidelity at the time. Vahid Dastgerdi believes that the lack of faithfulness of Turks in Persian literature is due to Mahmud’s treatment of Ferdowsi. These verses were also of course composed by Nezami himself since the Shirwanshah did not compose the verses of poetry in the poetic rhythm of Lili o Majnoon. For example words such as:

کای محرم حلقهی نظامی
جادو سخن جهان نظامی
از چاشنی دم سحرخیز
سحری دگر ز سخن برانگیز

Are clearly words of Nezami as are the rest of the intro. If Sherwanshah could have composed the above four verses, he would not need any court poets.

As per Turki being used as an infinitive, we note here that Nizami Ganjavi and Sanai both use it:

مکن ترکی ای ترک چینی نگار
بیا ساعتی چین در ابرو میار
(نظامی)

*Do not Turki oh Turk of Chinese art
Stay for a while, do not furrow your brow*
(Nezami)

می نبیند آن سفیهانی که ترکی کرده اند
همچو چشم تنگ ترکان، گور ایشان تنگ باد
(سنائی)

*Do you see those idiots that have Turkied
May their grave be narrow, like the eyes of Turks*
(Sanai)

As per the second part of the first couple, it is significant to note the following verses from Khaqani Shirvani which connects the words “Torkaan”(Turks) and “Torkaneh”:

آشنای دل بیگانه مشو
آب و نان از در بیگانه مخور
نان ترکان مخور و بر سرخوان
با ادب نان خور و ترکانه مخور
(خاقانی)

*Do not be friendly to that stranger
Do not drink the water and eat the bread of that stranger
Do not eat the bread of the Turks (Torkaan) and at the food table
Eat with manners and do not eat Torkaneh (in the Turkish-way)*

We note the in the above, Torkaaneh (Turkish-like/Turkish-mannered) is used as a synonym with vulgar and used as antonym of manners. So Turkaneh does not mean Turkish but Turkish-like/Turkish-mannered/Turkish-behaving. Just like Divaaneh in Persian does not mean “Daemon” but rather crazy. Or Shahaaneh does not mean King but it means grand and royal. In other words, “sit in a Kingly fashion” or in this case, “Eat with manners and not in a Turkish-type fashion”.

Or else to eat with manners and “not to eat Turkish” does not make any sense. That is Torkaaneh-Khordan (eating the Turkish-way) is used as an opposite to *baa adab khordan* (to eat with manners). This is the way Nizami Ganjavi uses Torkaaneh Sokhan (Turkish-manner/Turkish-like speech) as opposed to Sokhan-e-Boland (eloquent/high speech).

That is exactly how the verse by Nizami Ganjavi goes:

ترکی/ترکانه صفت وفای ما نیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست
آن کز نسب بلند زاید
او را سخن بلند باید

“Torkaaneh Sokhon” (Turkish-like speech) does not mean “Zaban-e-Torki” (Turkish language) but rather vulgarity or harsh words as observed also by Professor Zaryab Khoi. “Nasab e Boland” (high birth) is contrasted to Turkish characteristics / unfaithfulness and high words is contrasted to Torkaneh (Turkish-way) (Vulgar/Non-Eloquent/harsh) words. Shirwanshahs who claimed descent from Sassanids most likely considered Turks of lower descent. Later on, Seljuqs, Ghaznavids and other dynasties of Turkic origin that were Persianized also claimed Sassanid descent. The verse by Khaqani explains the verse by Nizami and shows how the word “Torkaaneh” has been used by contemporary poets of Nizami.

Here is another verse again by Khaqani using Torkaaneh which connects with the verb Torki kardan:

خون خوری **ترکانه** کاین از دوستی است
خون مخور ، **ترکی مکن** ، تازان مشو
کشتیم پس خویشتن نادان کنی
این همه دانا مکش ، نادان مشو
(خاقانی)

You drink blood Torkaaneh (Turkish-manner/Turkish-like) and say this is from friendship,

Do not drink blood, do not do Turki (used as verb here), do not be violent

You killed me and then claim you did not know

Do not kill so many knowledgeable people, do not be stupid

We note Nizami Ganjavi says nothing about “Zaban-e-Torki” (Turkish language) or Sokhan-e-Torki (Turkish speech) here. But “Torkaaneh Sokhan” (Turkish-way of speech and not Turkish speech) means vulgar/low/harsh speech and the proof is brought by both the Khaqani verses(a contemporary of Nizami and they knew each other) and also the next verse by Nizami Ganjavi himself where it is contrasted to “Sokhan Boland” (high speech/words). As can be seen both of these negative meanings(in this context) were common in Persian poetry and Nizami Ganjavi used them. Of course if Nizami Ganjavi was Turkic(like Alisher Navai) or had any Turkic national consciousness or cared for any sort of ethno-nationalism, he would not have versified these couplets which were negative and would have dedicated Leyli o Majnoon to another king.

Indeed any king would have been proud to have such a work in his honor and would have compensated Nezami accordingly.

It is this author's belief that the Shirvanshah letter really did not contain of these details and these verses were versified by Nizami. Obviously their high poetic style establishes this fact. Rather, the Shirvanshah's letter asked for Lili o Majnoon to be versified and it would have obviously been in Persian without asking since they were Persianized Kings (who claimed descent from Sassanids), they knew about the stories Arabic origin and there is not a single verse of Turkic from the area let alone a romantic epic. Also Nezami Ganjavi had never done a romantic Arabic epic neither has there been a romantic Arabic epic been produced from Persian lands in such a fashion.

That is Nizami had no imitative of his own to versify this story, but rather he was commissioned to do so and of course naturally the Shirvanshah's who were not Turks would not even order someone not to write Turkish, since it was common knowledge they had a Persian identity and Nezami knew them well enough to send his son to their court. Nizami, who was aware of their claimed Sassanid origin (praises them as descendents of Bahram), was also aware that these Kings were not Turkish in terms of genealogy and background as he has called them bahram-nejad (descendants of Bahram) and incidentally Khaqani Shirvani also calls them Bahramian (from the family of Bahram and the Encyclopedia of Islam also claims they claimed descent from either Bahram Gur or Khusraw Anushirawan).

Let us examine the verses before and after the misinterpreted verse to clearly demonstrate that the verses have a clear meaning and no conspiracy theories which were created by the USSR.

شاه همه حرفهاست این حرف
شاید که در او کنی سخن صرف
در زیور پارسی و تازی
این تازه عروس را طرازی
دانی که من آن سخن شناسم
کابیات نو از کهن شناسم
تا ده دهی غرابیت هست
ده پنج زنی رها کن از دست
بنگر که ز حقه تفکر
در مرسله که می کشی در
ترکانه صفت وفای ما نیست
ترکانه سخن سزای ما نیست
آن کز نسب بلند زاید
او را سخن بلند باید

*This story is the king of all stories
and it is suitable if you spend your speech on it.*

*In Persian and Arabic ornaments
Beautify and dress this new bride fresh*

*you know that I am a literary expert and I know new
couplets from the old ones and imitations*

*While you have pure gold(10/10) as your wondrous (=rhymes/couplets)
dispose of the valueless metal (5/10) from your hand(= the inelegant and ineloquent
speech)*

*look that from your jewel box of thought, in whose
necklace you are linking pearls*

Our promises/faithfulness/fidelity are not of Turkish characteristics(Turkish-way)

*Torkaaneh (Turkish-way/Turkish-like= ineloquent/low/uncouth/unmannerly/vulgar)
Sokhan(speech) are not befitting to us.*

*Or:
Speech meant for Turkish kings are not befitting for us*

*The person who is born of high birth
Eloquent and high speech is what he deserves*

We note that Nizami wrote the **story in Persian and not “Persian and Arabic”**. Persian and Arabic here are not languages as misinterpreted by USSR authors (and unfortunately this misinterpretation from USSR sources have crept into some articles by Turkish author). One could argue for a language if it was **“Persian or Arabic”**. But here it is **“Persian and Arabic”**. We note the fact that the stories origin is Arabic, its manuscripts were probably in Arabic and Nezami for the first time rendered it in Persian.

This would make it unique in its own aspect, since no one before ever tried to write this poem in Persian. Nezami too also says that no one had touched this story due to its barrenness. So Nezami was breaking new grounds by writing this story of Arabic origin into Persian and decorating under Persian symbols and ornaments. That is he states:

*This is the reason that from the beginning
No one has ventured around it for its boredom
Any poet has dismissed its composition
Before they reached the end, they abandoned it*

So what does Persian and Arabic ornaments mean? Since it is not language (if it was Persian or Arabic one could remotely argue for such a case), then we must look at the nature of the final masterpiece and its ornamentation. We know Nezami Ganjavi wrote the introduction on the reason for composing the poem after he had finished versifying the story.

Professor Gohrab states:

In composing his romance, Nezāmi used many of the Arabic anecdotes and considered several key elements of the ‘Udri genre. He refers explicitly to his sources seventeen times, at the beginning of each episode, but none of the sources can be identified with certainty: these references are probably a narrative device to emphasize the romance’s outlandish origin to his Persian readers (Seyed-Gohrab, 2003, pp. 55-57). **Nezāmi adds a strong Persian flavor to the legend.** For example, the Nowfal episode is developed into a completely different event, hardly resembling the original Arabic account. The Arabic sources portray Nowfal as an official, but Nezāmi’s Nowfal is a chivalrous Persian chieftain (*javānmard*) ready to risk his life to bring the two lovers together. Nezāmi threads the scattered anecdotes about Majnun’s love into a finely woven narrative with a dramatic climax. Persian verse romances are commonly about princes, and characters are usually related to courtly circles. Likewise, Nezāmi portrays the lovers as aristocrats. He also urbanizes the Bedouin legend: Majnun does not meet Leyli in the desert amongst the camels, but at school with other children. Other Persian motifs added to the story are the childless king, who desires an heir; nature poetry, especially about gardens in spring and autumn, and sunset and sunrise; the story of an ascetic living in a cave; the account of the king of Marv and his dogs; the Zeyd and Zeynab episode; Majnun’s supplication to the heavenly bodies and God; his kingship over animals, and his didactic conversations with several characters.

(A. Seyed-Gohrab, “Leyli O Majnun” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

http://www.iranica.com/newsite/index.isc?Article=http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/unicode/ot_grp18/ot_leyli_o_majnun_20090715.html

(accessed 2009)

And in his book, he states:

Although Majnun was to some extent a popular figure before Nizami’s time, his popularity increased dramatically after the appearance of Nizami’s romance. By collecting information from both secular and mystical sources about Majnun, Nizami portrayed such a vivid picture of this legendary lover that all subsequent poets were inspired by him, many of them imitated him and wrote their own versions of the romance. As we shall see in the following chapters, the poet uses various characteristics deriving from ‘Udhrite love poetry and weaves them into his own Persian culture. In other words, Nizami Persianises the poem by adding several techniques borrowed from the Persian epic tradition, such as the portrayal of characters, the relationship between characters, description of time and setting, etc.

(Translation taken from: Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Madness and Mystic Longing*, Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 76-77).

This is also alluded to by the Encyclopedia of Islam:” **He adapted the disconnected stories to fit the requirements of a Persian romance”**

(Pellat, Ch.; Bruijn, J.T.P. de; Flemming, B.; Haywood, J.A. "Maḏj̄nūn Laylā." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online.)

In reality the story was well known in Persian and Arabic literatures and sources. But Nizami Ganjavi consciously Persianized it and brought it to a Persian setting and was the first romantic epic poet to compose this story in Persian. At the same time the story has its Arabic motifs and Nezami used many Arabic anecdotes as mentioned by Dr. Gohrab. Thus the story became a mixture of Arabic and Persian symbols and imagery and the final ornamentation and décor came through by such a mixture. We should mention that when it comes to the actual Persian language which Nezami wrote the story in, he uses the term "Dari" rather than Persian. This is just like Qatran Tabrizi who calls his Iranian language as Parsi and that of the Khorasani-Persian as "Dari".

Thus "Parsi o Tazi"(Persian and Arabic) should not be taken as a language as much cultural Iranianization of the story. Because Dari or more formally as Ferdowsi calls it "Parsiye-Dari" was the literary Persian while "Parsi" to Nezami was the local Persian dialect of the region. We should also note for example Nizami mentions his sources for Bahram-Nama (Arabic, Persian books, Bukhari, Tabari (books or possibly dialects)) and Haft Paykar(Pahlavi, Shahnameh, Hebrew, Nasrani(Christian) sources/dialects).

Arab migrants to the area (including the Persianized and Persian speaking Shirvanshahs of Arab origin that had through intermarriage with Iranian royal families forgotten their Arab origin and claimed Sassanid origin) had brought the Lili o Majnoon folklore (which was from pre-Islamic Arabia) with them. It was even known in Khorasan. Already, two centuries before Nizami, one of the first great Persian poets Rudaki has mentioned it. Although the story was relatively known, it was still considered a foreign tale in some sense. Nizami Ganjavi brought it to its highest level by being the first Persian to compose it as a romantic epic. But before him, due to its popularity in local folklore, it is called as a *king of stories*. And that is why Nizami's son actually brings him a manuscript which shows that Nizami had a copy of it (in Arabic most likely) and shows the story was known. Nezami was the first Persian poet to write an epic in the Persian style for this story. Thus these verses of Nezami and his poetic interpretation of the letter of the Shirvanshah are easily understood without any conspiracy theories.

After praising this story as the king of stories, the verses of Nizami through the mouth of the Shirvanshahs asks Nizami to utilize these jewels(stories)/ornaments(Arab origin story and anecdotes and Persian symbols/imagery/romantic epic) and bring out a new version with his magical speech (Jadooyeh Sokhan). At the same time, he was told, he should not copy or imitate couplets and old sources, since the King is praised as literary expert by Nizami and is expecting his magical discourse. Instead Nizami should show his magic discourse, spend effort on the story and dispose of valueless and ineloquent speech. And he will be rewarded for his eloquent and high speech unlike the legend of Ferdowsi who was not rewarded for the monumental Shahnameh and Ferdowsi thus bestowed Mahmud the versified lampoon which he deserved due to Mahmud's breaking his covenant. But since the King (Shirvanshah) is of high birth, an Iranian and is faithful,

he deserves eloquent speech and not harsh/vulgar words/speech (which is reference to the satirizing poem of Ferdowsi about Mahmud)..

Yet the conspiracy theory that Nizami was forced to write Persian! But wanted to write in Turkish! seems to have spread in some Turkic speaking countries unintentionally based on uncritical examination of Nezami's legacy in the USSR. For example Professor Mehmet Kalpakli (first author) and Walter Andrews (second author) in the "*Nizami's Layla and Majnun "in the Turkish Manner"* in Kamran Talatoff and Jerome W. Clinton. The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric. Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.) has translated: "Torkana Sokhan Sezaayeh maa nist" as "*so writing in the Turkish manner does not suit us*". There is no verb here about writing, but what is mentioned is Torkaaneh Sokhan (Turkish-way of speech=harsh words, vulgar speech) which is contrasted with high speech in the next line. Also in their translation, the four crucial translations of the lines before this line and the important line that contrasted Turkish-mannered speech to eloquent speech and high birth to Turkish characteristics/(acting in Turkish characteristics) were not brought.

To their credit, Professor Kalpakli does mention Nezami as a Persian poet:
"The story of Layla and Majnun by Ottoman times was a tale told often appearing in numerous poetic-narrative versions, including rendition by famous Persian poets Nizami (1140-1202) and Jami (1414-1492)." (Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black, Mehmet Kalpakli, "Ottoman Lyric Poetry", Published by University of Washington, 2006. pp 70).

As we mentioned in the introduction, according to the Russian philologist Ivan Mikhailovich Steblin-Kamensky, Professor and the Dean of the Oriental Department of Saint Petersburg University comments ("Oriental Department is ready to cooperate with the West", Saint Petersburg University newspaper, № 24—25 (3648—49), 1 November 2003").
<http://www.spbumag.nw.ru/2003/24/1.shtml>) (original Russian in the introduction of article)

" We trained such specialists, but, as shown by our communication with them, there are a lot of nationalistic tendencies there and academic fraud. Apparently it's related to the first years of independence. Their works include nationalist beginnings. Objective perspective, scientific understanding of the problems and timeline of historical developments are lacking. Sometimes there is an outright falsification. For example, Nizami, the monument of whom was erected at Kamennostrovsk boulevard, is proclaimed Great Azerbaijani poet although he did not even speak Azeri. They justify this by saying that he lived in the territory of current Azerbaijan, but Nizami wrote his poems in Persian language!"

I did ask Dr. Kamran Talatoff also about this issue and he said: "*Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and concerns with me. It seems that many of these former soviet republics have been trying to make history and construct cultural background in the process of their attempt for nation building. The official websites of the Republic of*

Azerbaijan featured Nezami as one their own many years ago. This happened at the time when our own officials did not care much about our cultural heritage.’’. Thus the editors invited article was printed as it was. It should be noted that based on my own e-mail with Dr. Kamran Talatoff has no doubt about the Iranian background and heritage of Nezami.

There is no proof that Nezami even knew Turkish and had he known Turkish, he would have written it for a Turkish king. We should note that some have claimed Nezami knew Qipchaq Turkic because his first wife given to him as a gift was a Qipchaq and also illiterate , but this claim has no merit since many illiterate people know many languages. For example, literacy rate in Iran was about 3% in the Qajar era, but Persian was spoken by a variety of groups as a medium and common language.

Also Nizami addresses his son in Persian and also sends his son to the court of the Shirwanshahs who were Shafi’ites and Persians culturally and ethnically (claiming descent from Bahram Gur while actually being of mixed Arab/Iranian origin). So there is no proof that Nizami knew any Turkic language and indeed he never mentions any Turkic sources in his works. Although again, many Iranian people could have learned Turkic, since it was the language of rulers. However as shown by the Safinayeh Tabrizi and Nozhat al-Majales, even after the demise of Seljuqs/Eldiguzids, Persian/Iranic languages were the main languages of urban center and it is our belief based on these works that Turkic in Azerbaijan and Caucasus was specific only to parts of the nomadic populations. And a best proof of this is the fact that it was these Turkic rulers (like Eldiguzids and Seljuqids) that learned Persian since their ministers were many time Persians and the fact that these rulers themselves patronized Persian culture and became absorbed in Persian culture shows that the regional Iranian people were able to impose their culture upon these rulers while these rulers imposed their rule upon them. Indeed these, rulers are praised as rulers of Persian lands which shows the ethnic characteristics of the land and culture. So there is no proof that Nezami Ganjavi even knew Turkish.

Those who claim Nizami Ganjavi wanted to write in Turkish but was ordered not to do so!, not only misinterpret the above verses(sometimes the lie has penetrated Russian literature that they have took the verse without examining and unintentionally), but claim that Nizami Ganjavi was upset at the Shah(ignoring Nizami’s direct praise of the letter which each word is described as a blossoming garden) and quote this verse after which the king asked for high and eloquent speech:

چون حلقه شاه یافت گوشم
از دل به دماغ رفت هوشم

When my ears found the rings of King(when I became a servant of the King)/ From heart to mind I lost sense

But they do not quote the continuation:

نه زهره که سر ز خط بتابم

نه دیده که ره به گنج یابم
سرگشته شدم در آن خجالت
از سستی عمر و ضعف حالت
کس محرم نه که راز گویم
وین قصه به شرح باز گویم
فرزند محمد نظامی
آن بر دل من چو جان گرامی

این نسخه چو دل نهاد بر دست
در پهلوی من چو سایه بنشست
داد از سر مهر پای من بوس
کی آنکه زدی بر آسمان کوس
خسروشیرین چو یاد کردی
چندین دل خلق شاد کردی
لیلی و مجنون بیایدت گفت
تا گوهر قیمتی شود جفت
این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر

خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان
شروان چه که شهریار ایران

نعمت ده و پایگاه سازست
سرسبز کن و سخن نوازست
این نامه به نامه از تو در خواست
بنشین و طراز نامه کن راست
گفتم سخن تو هست بر جای
ای آینه روی آهنین رای
لیکن چه کنم هوا دو رنگست
اندیشه فراخ و سینه تنگست
دهلیز فسانه چون بود تنگ
گردد سخن از شد آمدن لنگ
میدان سخن فراخ باید
تا طبع سواریی نماید
این آیت اگرچه هست مشهور
تفسیر نشاط هست ازو دور
افزار سخن نشاط و ناز است
زین هردو سخن بهانه ساز است
بر شیفتگی و بند و زنجیر
باشد سخن برهنه دلگیر
در مرحله‌ای که ره ندانم
پیداست که نکته چند رانم
نه باغ و نه بزم شهریاری
نه رود و نه می نه کامکاری
بر خشکی ریگ و سختی کوه
تا چند سخن رود در اندوه

باید سخن از نشاط سازی
تا بیت کند به قصه بازی
این بود کز ابتدای حالت
کس گرد نگشتش از ملالت

No courage to reject his request / No sight to find my way to this treasure

I was perplexed in that embarrassment / Because of my old age and frail nature

No privy to tell them my secret / And explain my story in detail

My son, Mohammad Nezami / Who is dear to me like soul to my body

*He took this copy of the story in hand dear like his heart / Like a shadow he sat next
down to me*

*From his kindness he gave some kisses on my feet / Saying: "O you who beat drums in
the sky*

*When you retold the story of Khosrow and Shirin / You brought happiness to so many
hearts*

*Now you must say the story of Leyli and Majnun / So that the Priceless Pearls become
twin*

This eloquent book is better be told / The young peacock is better be a couple

Especially a king like King of Sharvan / Why Sharvan? He is the King of Iran

He gives blessing and he gives station / He raises people and he encourages poets

He has requested this book from you with his letter / Please sit and prepare your pen"

I told him: "Your words are very true / O my Mirror-faced and Iron-resolved!

But what can I do, the weather is double / Thought is wide but my chest is tight

When corridors of tale are narrow / Words become limp in their traffic

The field of words must be wide / So that talent can have a good ride

This story, even though, well-known / No joyful rendering for it is possible

The instruments of story are joy and luxury / But this story has excuse for both

On the subject of infatuation and chain and bond / Bare words would be boring

And if decorations beyond the limits are imposed on it / Would make the face of this story sore

In a stage that I don't know the ways / It is obvious how much I can show my talent

There is no garden, no royal feast in this story / No songs, no wine, no pleasure

On the dry dunes and hard hills in desert / How long can one talk about sorrow?

The story must be about joy / So couplets can play and dance in the story

This is the reason that from the beginning / No one has ventured around it for its boredom

Any poet has dismissed its composition / Before they reached the end, they abandoned it

We already noted that Nizami Ganjavi praised the composition of the Shirvanshah and praised every word of that letter as a blossoming garden. So he had nothing but praise for the Shirvanshah and his letter. Nizami Ganjavi's complaint is about the nature of the story of *Layli o Majnoon*, as shown in the above verses and he makes himself explicitly clear. It is not about the Shirvanshah.

As noted by the Encyclopedia of Islam:

In 584/1188 Nizāmī of Gandja composed at the request of the Shirwān-Shāh Akhsitān the *mathnawī Laylī u Madjnūn* in the metre *hazadj-i musaddas-i akhrab-i makbūd-i mahdhūf* with about 5,000 *bayt*s. This was the third part of the set of poems known as the *Khamisa* [q.v.]. The theme was chosen for the first time as the subject of a Persian narrative poem, but the precedent of the treatment of a similar subject of Arabic origin existed in 'Ayyūqī's *Warka u Gulshāh*. **Nizāmī states in the introduction** to his poem that he accepted the assignment with some hesitation. At first, he doubted whether this tale of madness and wanderings through the wilderness would be suitable for a royal court (ed. Moscow 1965, 41 ff.). He adapted the disconnected stories to fit the requirements of a Persian romance. They were joined together into a coherent narrative which describes the development of a frantic love affair from the scene of the first meeting of the two lovers till the death of Madjnūn at the grave of Laylī. In some respects, the Bedouin setting of the original has been changed under the influence of urban conditions more familiar to the poet and his audience: the young lovers become acquainted at school; the generous Nawfal is a prince in the Iranian style rather than an Arab official. Nizāmī added a second pair of lovers, Zayn and Zaynab, in whom the love between the main characters is reflected. It is Zayn who in a dream sees Madjnūn and Laylī united in paradise at the end of the romance.

Several other features mark this new adaptation of the romance. Specimens of nature poetry were used to emphasise, symbolically, important points in the development of the

plot: a description of a palm bush in spring where Laylī sits in the flower of her youth; of the night at the moment of Maḍjnūn's deepest despair; of autumn at the time of Laylī's death. Much attention is given to Maḍjnūn's rôle as a poet. In several places, *ghazal*s are quoted in the text, which in metre and rhyme are adjusted to the prosodic characteristics of the *mathnawī*. It is quite evident that, to Niẓāmī, the subject matter was not least interesting because of its emblematic possibilities. His poem is, therefore, a didactic work as well as a narrative. The former quality is noticeable in the frequent asides containing reflections on such themes as ascetism, the vanity of this world, death and, of course, love in its various aspects, including its transformation into mystical love. Didacticism is also the main element of the introduction and the epilogue. (Pellat, Ch.; Bruijn, J.T.P. de; Flemming, B.; Haywood, J.A. "Maḍjnūn Laylā." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online.)

Colin Turner who also translated the poem states in his foreward: "The Persian poet Nizami was commissioned to write *Layla and Majnun* by the Caucasian ruler, Shirvanshah in AD 1188. In his original preface to the poem, Nizami explains that the messenger from Shirvanshah arrived and gave him a letter written in the King's own hand. Extolling Nizami as 'the universal magician of eloquence', Shirvanshah asked the poet to write a romantic epic based on a simple Arab folktale: the age old tale of Majnun, the 'love-mad' poet, and Layla, the celebrated desert beauty. Since the dawn of Islam some five hundred years before, the legend of Layla and Majnun had been a popular theme of love songs, sonnets and odes of the Bedouins in Arabia. Majnun was associated with a real-life character, Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, who probably lived in the second half of the seventh century AD in the desert of Najd in the Arabian peninsula. By Nizami's time there were many variations on the Majnun theme circulating throughout the region, and no doubt Shirvanshah approached Nizami with a view to the creation of something 'special'.

Initially, Nizami was loathe to accept the commission, as he felt the story offered 'neither gardens nor royal pageants nor festivities, neither streams nor wine nor happiness', all of which are staples of classical Persian poetry. But eventually, at his son's insistence, he relented. Less than four months later, Nizami's *Layla and Majnun*, which comprises in the original some 8000 lines of verse, was completed" Colin Turner (translator and scholar), *Layla and Majnun: The Classic Love Story of Persian Literature [ILLUSTRATED]* (Hardcover), "John Blake; illustrated edition (June 1, 1997)".

This is also mentioned by Dr. Gohrab:

"Neẓāmī initially doubted that this simple story about the agony and pain of an Arab boy wandering in rough mountains and burning deserts would be a suitable subject for his cultured audience. It was his son who persuaded him to undertake the project, saying: "wherever tales of love are read, this will add spice to them.""

(A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Leyli O Majnun" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*)

http://www.iranica.com/newsite/index.isc?Article=http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/unicode/ot_grp18/ot_leyli_o_majnun_20090715.html

(accessed 2009)

Thus scholars concur that Nizami's complaint was about the nature of the story and not some nation-building interpretation of the 20th century about wanting to write in Turkic! but being forced to write in Persian for a King that did not even know Turkic! Such nation-building and wrong interpretation of a 12th century medieval author who has written Ghazals, Qasida, Quatrains and Mathnawis all in Persian are a product of USSR nation building.

What Nizami complains about are his old age, and the barrenness of the story of *Layli o Majnoon*. He feels restricted because of the raw and barren landscape of the original Bedouin tale. He even complains about this:

*There is neither garden nor kingly banquet,
no bow-string, nor wine nor blandishment.
How long can one fare on dry sands
and rugged mountains, talking about sorrow?*

Despite this complaint, the poet places his initial scene in the Arabian Desert but adorns the grounds tastefully, giving additional meaning to the desert, cave and mountain, and including several fantastic sceneries which are purely the product of his imagination and his poetic eloquence.

(Translation taken from: Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Layla and Majnun: Madness and Mystic Longing*, Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 313-314).

As Dr. Seyed-Gohrab also mentions:

As in the 'Udhrite love poetry, the entire plot of the romance revolves around the lover, on an unremitting quest for his unattainable love. Nizami is aware of the legend and doubts whether this modest Bedouin tale would be suitable for the Iranian court. In chapter five of the introduction to the romance, the author refers to the legend as an aya whose tafsir is sorrowful. The word aya means both a 'Koran verse,' and a 'sign' or 'wonder,' as well as 'paragon' and 'masterpiece.' Nizami says that legend needs a tafsir, 'Koran exegesis,' 'explanation,' or 'commentary'. Such commentaries include details of the events that led to the revelation of the verse in question, an elaboration of the 'story' of the Koran, but may also extend to pious sentiments and esoteric interpretation. Thus Nizami is using a religious metaphor: as a verse of the Koran needs a commentary, the Arabic tale needs an elaboration. He is also warning his readers that such a sorrowful—and serious—theme does not entirely suit the highly conventional and polite style required of court literature:

*Although this tale (aya) enjoys celebrity,
a cheerful interpretation (tafsir) is far from it.*

*The tools of discourse are joy and amorous delight,
discourse thrives by these two means.
The discourse on a naked person,
who is enamoured, fettered and in bondage, is sorrowful.
If one was to adorn the tale to excess,
this would distort the face of the story;
But when I know not the way at some stage,
clearly I shall then add some conceits.
(11. 53-7)*

When Shirwanshah Abu I-Muzaffar Akhsitan commissioned Nizami to versify Majnun's tragic love story, the poet found himself in a quandary. The writer of love-stories about the pompous and powerful pre-Islamic Iranian kings such as Khusrau Parwiz II is suddenly ordered to write a romance about a distraught and naked Arab boy. Nizami skillfully uses the sad nature of the legend to whet the reader's curiosity about how he will narrate this tragic but simple romance. Grief, as MJ. Toolan notes, is perhaps the most "powerful trigger," and strangeness, an element which attracts the reader to know the unknown. The poet refers frequently to the Arab traditions and way of life to remind us of the story's foreign origin. Moreover, he promises the reader that despite the thin plot of the story, he will bring his poem to a dramatic perfection so that "unpierced pearls" will flow from the reader's eyes (5:64—5). With his profound knowledge of the human psyche, Nizami knows how to draw emotional effect by reshaping this strange and shallow story.

Nizami was at first reluctant to versify this tale. It was his four-teen-years-old son Muhammad, who encouraged his father to undertake the task:

*When you composed Khusrau and Shirin,
you cheered the hearts of the people.
You have to compose Layli and Majnun
so that the precious pearl has a pair.
This book is better to be written,
a young peacock is better to have a mate. (. . .)
Wherever love-tales are to be read,
this tale will serve as salt for them. (11. 43-5, 71)*

Although Majnun was to some extent a popular figure before Nizami's time, his popularity increased dramatically after the appearance of Nizami's romance. By collecting information from both secular and mystical sources about Majnun, Nizami portrayed such a vivid picture of this legendary lover that all subsequent poets were inspired by him, many of them imitated him and wrote their own versions of the romance. As we shall see in the following chapters, the poet uses various characteristics deriving from 'Udhrite love poetry and weaves them into his own Persian culture. In other words, Nizami Persianises the poem by adding several techniques borrowed from the Persian epic tradition, such as the portrayal of characters, the relationship between characters, description of time and setting, etc.

(Translation taken from: Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Madness and Mystic Longing*, Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 76-77).

The conspiracy theory that Nizami Ganjavi wanted to write in Turkish, but was ordered to write in Persian, and then Nizami becomes upset is a hoax that was fabricated by the USSR. This hoax is a product of USSR misinterpretation in order to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and attach him to Turkic civilization. Of course the fabricators forgot small details like the Shirwanshahs were not Turks and there was no Turkic urban culture or literature or even a verse from any other writer or poet in the Caucasus. They also forgot Nezami Ganjavi praises the letter of the Shirwanshah.

Nezami Ganjavi's only complaint is about the nature of the story.

The Iranian scholar Abdul-Ali Karang has also explained this:

سپس مي گويد چون فرمان شاه را دريافتم به اندیشه فرورفتم، چه از يك طرف «سستي عمر و ضعف حالت» (سرگشته شدم بدان خجالت- از سستي عمر و ضعف حالت) مانع اجراي امر بود، و از طرق ديگر از انجام آن گزيري نداشتم، شرح حال با يگانه محرم اسرار خود، فرزندم محمد نظامي نهادم، او با نهايت مهر و ادب بر تنظيم ليلي و مجنونم ترغيب، و اضهار نمود که دريغ است پادشاه «نعمت ده و سخن نوازي» (خاصه ملكي چو شاه شيروان - شيروان چه، که شاه ايران- نعمت ده و پاگاه ساز است - سرمايه ده و سخن نواز است) چون شروانشاه، از تو به نامه خواهشي کند و تو نپذيري؛ اين گفتار در من کارگر افتاد، و من تنگي ميدان سخن و فقدان نشاط و انبساط جواني را ناپديده انگاشتم، و گفتم:

«چون شاه جهان همي کند ساز
کاین نامه به نام من بپرداز
با این همه تنگي مسافت
آنچاش رسانم از لطافت
کز خواندن او به حضرت شاه
ريزد گهر نسفته بر راه
خواننده اش گر فسرده باشد
عاشق شود ار نمرده باشد»

جگر گوشه ي من چون این سخن بشنيد بيش از بيش مرا اميدواري داد تا این داستان شاهوار که بيش از چهار هزار بيت است، در مدتي کمتر از چهار ماه به رشته ي نظم درآورد و تقديم خدمت شاه نمودم. چنانکه ملاحظه مي شود نظامي از این لحاظ که شاه از «صفت ترکانه» بيزاري جسته، هيچگونه اظهار کدر و ملال خاطر نموده است، بلکه بيم آن داشته که «سستي عمر و ضعف حالت» و «تنگي دهليز افسانه» (دهليز افسانه چون بود تنگ - گردد سخن از شد آمدن لنگ - ميدان سخن بلند بايد - تا طبع سوارائي نمايد) مایه ي خجالت وي را فراهم سازد، و اصلا موضوع زبان ترکي در میان نیست، چه «ترکي صفتي و ترکانه سخن» (ترکي صفتي و ترکانه سخن کنایه اي از داستان جفا و بي مهري و غدر سلطان محمود غزنوي در حق حکيم ابوالقاسم فردوسي است و وحيد دستگري نيز در حاشيه ص 26 نامه ليلي و مجنون چاپ 1313 به این معني اشاره کرده است) به معني غدر و بيوفائي است نه معني «زبان ترکي» و «سخن بلند» به معني سخن پر معني و بخردانه است و نه به معني «زبان فارسي»، و شايد اشتباه یک عده در این باره از مطالعه ي ترجمه ي کتاب ليلي و مجنون نظامي به شعر سيلابیک ترکي ناشي شده باشد، زیرا مترجم کتاب مزبور و در خيلي جاها مفاد اشعار، و معاني لغات را نیک درنيافته، و ترجمه اي به تخمين کرده است* (عبدالي کارنگ)

An English scholar of the 19th century also mentions this about the introduction:
S. ROBINSON. "PERSIAN POETRY FOR ENGLISH READERS: BEING SPECIMENS OF SIX OF THE GREATEST CLASSICAL POETS OF PERSIA", 1883. Printed for private circulation. Google books: (pages 140-145)

The prince of the neighbouring Shirvan, Akhsitan, also named Manuchahar, with the surname of Jelal-ud-din Abul- Muzaffer, wishes him to elaborate the love-story of the celebrated pair Laila and Mejnun. This prince, with whom begins a new dynasty for Shirvan, had assembled around him a complete poetical city, to which he gave a king as supreme head. From his origin, which reached back to the old kingly dynasties of Persia, he regarded himself as the representative of the Persian nationality, and of the Persian spirit, and wished at least to animate his not very wide spread dominion by making it the protector of Persian literature. The charge of the prince to Nizami had probably no other ground than to draw also to his court from his quiet seclusion the poet who was already so renowned that he was able to say of himself:

I have brought to such refinement my enchanting poesy, That my name is—" The mirror of the world to come ; "

and so to complete his poetical circle.

The task enjoined upon him by no means at first corresponded with Nizami's inclination. The subject proposed was indeed a worthy one; the exalted taskmaster thus expresses himself about it:

Loove-tales there are more than a thousand,

Which have been embellished by the tip of the pen ;

But this is the King of all love-stories :

See what thou canst make of it by the cunning of thine art !

But the subject appears to Nizami too dry to be manufactured into a great poem. The desolate Arabian wilderness for his theatre, two simple children of the desert as his heroes, nothing but an unhappy passion—this might well daunt the poet of Khosru and Shirin, which, in everything, place, persons, and treatment, presented the greatest variety and grandeur. He says :

The entrance-court of the story is too contracted ;

It would lame the poetry to be ever going backwards and forward !

The race-ground of poetry ought to be spacious, If it is to show off the ability of the rider.

Although the verse of the Koran may deserve to be well known, The commentary upon it may be far from delightful. The fascinations of poetry are its cheerfulness and

blandishments; From these two sources is derived its harmony. On a journey in which I know not the way, How can I know what pleasant spots I shall meet with ? There may be neither gardens, nor royal banquets, Nor music, nor wine, nor aught to wish for ; Only arid sands and rugged mountains, Till poetry at last becometh an aversion.

But the persuasion of his son Mohammed, at that time fourteen years old, and regard to the princely sender concurred to overcome the reluctance of the poet, and he took to the labour. Here was evinced how Nizami, once roused, was able to exhibit an extraordinary activity. Within a short tirlie he completed this master-work of love-poetry, which, according to Von Hammer, " in the -comprehensive laying-out of the plan and the connected execution of the several parts, has remained unsurpassed, though even such poets as Hatifi and Jami have at a later period treated the same subject." As to the quickness of the *composition*, Nizami says :

These five thousand couplets and more
Were indited in less than four months :
Had I not been restrained by other occupation,
They might have been written in fourteen nights.
With reference to his first epic he had boasted also that
This beautiful image, the darling of the soul,
Received its completion in a very brief period.
In his outward circumstances, Nizami's new work led to no change. The decoying invitation from Shirvan could not move him to expose himself to the disagreeable air of the court. He avails himself rather of the opportunity to address to himself a warning :
Refrain from seeking the society of Kings,
As from exposing dry cotton to a hot fire !
The light from the fire may be pleasant enough,
But he who would be safe must keep at a distance ;
The moth which was allured by the flame of the taper
Was burnt when it became its companion at the banquet.

Kizil Arslan's present had enabled him to live a quiet country-life. On this account we find, amongst many personal intimations in the introduction to the *Laila and Mejnun*, no complaint of want, and even in the dedication appears no request alluding to it.

Tranquillised by his quiet life, he says in the same passage:

In thy village, on thine own private estate,
Think not of eating from the portion of another.
Fortune will turn round on that light-minded fellow
Who extendeth his foot beyond his garment.
The bird which flieth beyond its own sphere
Measureth its flight with the measure of death ;
The serpent which keepeth not its own path
Twisteth itself in its twistings to its own destruction ;
If the fox come to blows with the lion,

Thou knowest well whose is the hand that holdeth the sword.

But what he declined for himself he was not unwilling to grant to his before-named son, who besought his father to permit him to go to the court of Shirvan, and reside there as the companion of the young prince :

Me, a friendless boy, for counsel and protection
Intrust to the asylum of that powerful master.
Nizami consents to this, and, it would appear, sent the youth as the bearer of the poem ;
for in his congratulation to the young prince, to whom he gave beforehand information of
his son's request, he says :
No doubt, thou wilt read the book of the Khosrus,
No doubt, thou wilt study the sayings of the wise ;
The treasures, too, hidden within this volume
Look upon as the moon in the fulness of her circuit.
If thou dost not behold the face of its father,
Deign to bestow thy care on him who is its brother.

Even out of this consent it is disclosed, that Nizami would have wished to give another direction to his son's career than he had struck into himself. He gives him practical counsels in the school of life. "Hast thou, too," he says to him, "a talent for poetry, do not devote thyself to it; for that which pleases thee soonest is the most untrue."

This judgment certainly does not apply to poetry as Nizami understood it, for, according to him, Truth is the very theme of poetry; but he means to warn his youthful son against that counterfeit poetry which had spread itself through the courts of princes and inspired him with a genuine abhorrence, and to the ensnaring atmosphere of which he was about to be exposed. Then he goes on :

Although poetry be of high dignity,
Seek thou the knowledge of what is useful.
The Prophet hath said : " The science of sciences
Is the science of matter nml the science of faith."
In the navel of each is a fragrant odour,
In that of the law, and in that of medicine.
But let the law instruct thee in the service of God,
Let it not be to thee a teacher of sophistries.
If thou become an adept in both,
Thou wilt have reached the summit of excellence,
And wilt be held in high estimation in the sight of all men.
And at the same time he recommends to him before everything assiduous activity and
solidity :
Even in thy childhood thou hadst a name and lineage ;
Thy race hath been one highly distinguished for poetry ;
The place which, grown up, thou shouldst occupy is thine
already ;

In that thou hast nothing to gain by being my son :
Be, like a lion, invincible thyself;
Show thyself to be the child of thine own good qualities.

The Iranian scholar Said Nafisi also believes that the people of Ganja considered Turks who were newcomers and nomads as lowly and this verse of Nizami Ganjavi (Torki Sefat-...) reflects that. Indeed, these verses were composed by Nezami (we do not know what exactly was the composition of Shirvanshah whom Nezami praises every word of the composition and compares to a blossoming garden which is brighter than the flames lit at night) and normal Persian speakers would probably agree with Nafisi's interpretation.

Thus we can see that on one end of the spectrum, we have the false interpretation done in the USSR, but there are valid interpretations when one cross references with Nizami's other verses and other Persian poets who have been named by Nezami as his source. In this article, we cross-referenced with Nizami's other verses and also other Persian poet to elucidate the verses that were misinterpreted. We saw that not only Nizami described each word of the letter of Shirvanshah as a blossomed Garden, but in the next two sections he praises the Shirvanshah highly. He does complain about the dryness of the story, his age, the fact that no one else has touched this story due to its dryness and everyone has avoided it, its barrenness, yet his son urges him on and says for a great king like Shirvanshah, he should accomplish this. Specifically as he puts:

"What is Shirvan, he is the Shahryar (prince) of Iran".

For example not only in the section on preparation of the book (which we discussed), but in the next section, he has written about 45 couplets in praise of the Shirvanshah. We will bring just some of these couplets:

در مدح شروانشاه اخستان

سر خیل سپاه تاجداران
سر جمله جمله شهریاران
خاقان جهان ملک معظم
مطلق ملک الملوک عالم
دارنده تخت پادشاهی
دارای سپیدی و سیاهی
صاحب جهت جلال و تمکین
یعنی که جلال دولت و دین
تاج ملکان ابوالمظفر
زبینده ملک هفت کشور
شروانشه آفتاب سایه
کیخسرو کیقباد پایه
شاه سخی اخستان که نامش
مهریست که مهر شد غلامش
سلطان به ترک چتر گفته
پیدا نه خلیفه نهفته

بهرام نژاد و مشتری چهر
در صدف ملک منوچهر
زین طایفه تا به دور اول
شاهپیش به نسل دل مسلسل
نطفه‌اش که رسیده گاه بر گاه
تا آدم هست شاه بر شاه
در ملک جهان که باد تا دیر
کوتاه قلم و دراز شمشیر
اورنگ نشین ملک بی‌نقل
فرمانده بی‌نقیصه چون عقل
گردنکش هفت چرخ گردان
محراب دعای هفت مردان
رزاق نه کاسمان ارزاق
سردار و سریر دار آفاق
فیاضه چشمه معانی
دانای رموز آسمانی
اسرار دوازده علومش
نرمست چنانکه مهر مومش
این هفت قواره شش انگشت
یک دیده چهار دست و نه پشت
تا بر نکشد ز چنبرش سر
مانده است چو حلقه سر
به چنبر دریای خوشاب نام دارد
زو آب حیات وام دارد
کان از کف او خراب گشته
بحر از کرمش سرای گشته
زین سو ظفرش جهان ستاند
زان سو کرمش جهان فشاند
گیرد به بلا رک روانه بخشد
به جناح تازیانه
کوثر چکد از مشام بختش
دوزخ جهد از دماغ لختش
خورشید ممالک جهانست
شایسته بزم و رزم از آنست
مریخ به تیغ و زهره با جام
بر راست و چپش گرفته آرام
زهره دهدش به جام یاری
مریخ کند سلیح داری
از تیغش کوه لعل خیزد
وز جام چو کوه لعل ریزد
چون بنگری آن دو لعل خونخوار
خونی و مییست لعل کردار
لطفش بگه صبح ساقی
لطفیست چنانکه باد باقی
زخمش که عدو به دوست مقهور
زخمیست که چشم زخم ازو دور
در لطف چو باد صبح تازد
هرجا که رسد جگر نوازد

در زخم چو صاعقه است قتال
 بر هر که فتاد سوخت در حال
 لطف از دم صبح جان فشان‌تر
 زخم از شب هجر جانستان‌تر
 چون سنجق شاهیش بجنبید
 پولادین صخره را بسنبد
 چون طره پرچمش بلرزد
 غوغای زمین جوی نیرزد
 در گردش روزگار دیر است
 کاتش زیر است و آب زیر است
 تا او شده شهسوار ابرش
 بگذشت محیط آب از آتش
 قیصر به درش جنیبه داری
 فغفور گدای کیست باری
 خورشید بدان گشاده‌روئی
 یک عطسه بزم اوست گوئی
 ...

یا پرتو رحمت الهی
 کاید به نزول صبحگاهی
 هر چشم که بیند آنچنان نور
 چشم بد خلق ازو شود دور
 یارب تو مرا کاویس نامم
 در عشق محمدی تمامم
 زان شه که محمدی جمالست
 روزیم کن آنچه در خیالست

and then Nizami Ganjavi, in the section after praising Shirvanshah, has yet another section praising the Shirvanshah and paying homage:

خطاب زمین بوس

ای عالم جان و جان عالم
 دلخوش کن آدمی و آدم
 تاج تو و رای تاج خورشید
 تخت تو فزون ز تخت جمشید
 آبادی عالم از تمامیت
 و آزادی مردم از غلامیت
 مولا شده جمله ممالک
 توفیق ترا به (صح ذلک)
 هم ملک جهان به تو مکرم
 هم حکم جهان به تو مسلم
 هم خطبه تو طراز اسلام
 هم سکه تو خلیفه احرام
 گر خطبه تو دمنند بر خاک

زر خیزد از او به جای خاشاک
 و سکه تو زند بر سنگ
 کس در نزند به سیم و زر چنگ
 راضی شده از بزرگواریت
 دولت به یتاق نیزه داریت
 میرآخوری تو چرخ را کار
 گاه و جو ازان کشد در انبار
 آنچه از جو و گاه او نشانست
 چو خوشه و گاه کهکشانشست
 بردی ز هوا لطیف خوئی
 وز باد صبا عبیر بوئی
 فیض تو که چشمه حیاتست
 روزی ده اصل امهاتست
 پالوده راوق ربیعی
 خاک قدم تو از مطیعی
 هر جا که دلیست قاف تا قاف
 از بندگی تو میزند لاف
 چون دست ظفر کلاه بخشی
 چون فضل خدا گناه بخشی
 باقیست به ملک در سیاست
 پیش و پس ملک هست پاست
 گر پیش روی چراغ راهی
 و پس باشی جهان پناهی
 چون مشعله پیش بین موافق
 چون صبح پسین منیر و صادق
 دیوان عمل نشان تو داری
 حکم عمل جهان تو داری

Translation of a portion of these praises are given here:

*The owner of Royal Crown / Darius of the Light and the Darkness
 Chief Commander of all crowned kings / The head of all the rulers
 Khaghan of the world, the Great King / The absolute King of Kings of the world
 The owner of glory and respect / That is, Jalal Dowlat and Jalaeddin
 Crown of kings, Abulmozaffar / Worthy of the kingdom of Seven Climes
 Sharvanshah whose shadow is on the Sun / Kay-Khosrow with the rank of Kay-Qubad
 The generous king, Akhsatan whose name / Is a seal whose slave is the Sun
 A sultan who has left the shade / Not apparent, but a hidden caliph
 Descendant of Mars and with love of Jupiter / Pearl in the shell of King Manuchehr
 From this House up to the early rounds / Kingship has been so continuous
 His seed has been on throne upon throne / Up to Adam they have been king upon king
 In the kingdom of the world, they may last long / He has a short pen and a long sword
 Throne-sitting of the non-transferable kingdom / A commander with no fault, like Reason
 Commander of the Seven Whirling Heavens / Sanctuary of prayers for the Seven Men
 The day he gives audience / It would be a prestigious Nowruz
 I have not seen it, but I can tell / From his ancestors and fortune how splendid he looks
 on the throne*

*Like a full Moon rising from the mountains / There are multitudes standing in lines in his presence
Or like the Bright Spring of Sunlight / That becomes cheerful at the time of entertainment
Or the Rays of Divine Bliss / That come down at morning time
Any eyes that see such light / May the evil eyes of people would be away from them*

According to Dr. Gohrab, after paying homage, “the relationship between Shirvanshah and his son, Manuchihr, is mentioned in chapter eight. Nizami advises the king’s son to read Firdausi’s Shah-nama and to remember the pithy sayings of the wise. Nizami overtly refers to the didactic aspect of his poem. He promises the prince that in his poem there is a “treasure concealed in a casket.” He considers the poem as his daughter, a beautiful maiden, whom he presents to the royal family. He adds that even if the prince does not have any regard for her father, he might look with kindness on her brother, that is, on Nizami’s son. In this subtle way, Nizami not only entrusts his son to prince Manuchihr, he also draws the prince’s attention to the poem’s didactic nature”.

(Seyed-Gohrab, Ali Asghar, Layli and Majnun: Madness and Mystic Longing , Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 276).

Indeed, if Nizami was upset about the letter of the Shirvanshah (whose every word according to Nizami Ganjavi was a blossomed Garden and actually the verses which are insults to Turkic descent and way of speech are composed by Nezami himself), then he would not entrust his son to the courts of the Shirvanshah and ask the son of the Shirvanshah to always look out for his own son. Out of all the dynasties around him, it tells of Nizami Ganjavi’s culture that he entrusts his son to the Shirvanshah and advises the King’s son to read the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. Despite the fact that Nizami Ganjavi was apolitical, he still had a very close relationship with the Shirvanshah and consequently entrusts his own son to their court. The Shahnameh is referred to a lot by Nizami Ganjavi where-as not a single Turkic folklore is referenced by him as a source. Anyhow, the fact that Nizami advises the King’s son to read the Shahnameh also shows Nizami Ganjavi read the Shahnameh numerous times, since he would not advise something which he himself did not practice. The section where Nizami Ganjavi entrusts his son is given here:

سپردن فرزند خویش به فرزند شروانشاه

چون گوهر سرخ صبحگاهی
بنمود سپیدی از سیاهی
آن گوهر کان گشاده من
پشت من و پشت زاده من
گوهر به کلاه کان برافشانند
وز گوهر کان شه سخن راند
کاین بیکس را به عقد و پیوند
درکش به پناه آن خداوند
بسپار مرا به عهدش امروز
کو نو قلم است و من نوآموز

تا چون کرمش کمال گیرد
اندرز ترا به فال گیرد
کان تخت نشین که اوج سایست
خرد است ولی بزرگ رایست
سیاره آسمان ملک است
جسم ملک است و جان ملک است
آن یوسف هفت بزم و نه مهد
هم والی عهد و هم ولیعهد
نومجلس و نو نشاط و نومهر
در صدف ملک منوچهر
فخر دو جهان به سر بلندی
مغز ملکان به هوشمندی
میراثستان ماه و خورشید
منصوبه گشای بیم و امید
نور بصر بزرگواران
محراب نماز تاجداران
پیرایه‌ی تخت و مفخر تاج
کاقبال به روی اوست محتاج
ای از شرف تو شاهزاده
چشم ملک اختسان گشاده
ممزوج دو مملکت به شاهی
چون سیب دو رنگ صبحگاهی
یک تخم به خسروی نشانده
از تخمه کیقباد مانده
در مرکز خط هفت پرگار
یک نقطه نو نشسته بر گار
ایزد به خودت پناه دارد
وز چشم بدت نگاه دارد
دارم به خدا امیدواری
کز غایت ذهن و هوشیاری
آنجات رساند از عنایت
کماده شوی بهر کفایت
هم نامه خسروان بخوانی
هم گفته بخردان بدانی
این گنج نهفته را درین درج
بینی چو مه دو هفته در برج
دانی که چنین عروس مهدی
ناید ز قران هیچ عهدی
گر در پدرش نظر نیاری
تیمار برادرش بداری
از راه نوازش تمامش
رسمی ابدی کنی به نامش
تا حاجتمند کس نباشد
سر پیش و نظر ز پس نباشد
این گفتم و قصه گشت کوتاه
اقبال تو باد و دولت شاه
آن چشم گشاده باد از این نور
وین سرو مباد ازان چمن دور

روی تو به شاه پشت بسته
پشت و دل دشمنان شکسته
زنده به تو شاه جاودانی
چون خضر به آب زندگانی
اجرام سپهر اوج منظر
افروخته باد از این دو پیکر

*When the Red Pearl of Dawn / Separated darkness from brightness
That pear of mine out of pearl mine / My back and fruit of my back
He told me "Put me in the care of that lord / I have nobody (else to support me)
Put me in his care and his promise / He is novice-pen and I am a novice
So when his generosity has reached perfection / He would accept your advice
That Throne-Sitter who is the Apex of Shadows / He is still little but has a great mind"
O, Prince! From whose honour / The Great King Akhsitan is delighted
You have seed from the kingship / Your lineage goes back to Great King Kay-Qubad
May God keep you in His protection! / May He keep you from evil eyes!
I do hope to God / That you reach a level of understanding
May God take from His bliss / Where are ready for any quality
So you can read the Epic of Kings / And you learn the words of learned men
You know that such bride / Does not emerges in any age
If you don't look at his father / Then do take care of his brother
By giving him full attention / Till his alive, take care of him
So he will not need anyone / He will not have a low head or eye after others
I said this and it is end of story / May you have fortune and May King have command*

So not only Nizami praises the Shirvanshah, praises the Shirvanshah's son, advises the Shirvanshah's son to read the Shahnameh, but he goes further by entrusting his own son to the son of Shirvanshah and asking the son of Shirvanshah to always look out for his own son, so that Nezami's son would never be in need of anyone else. Anyhow, the belittlement towards Turks (and we note that these were the original Asiatic Turks) in the introduction of *Layli o Majnoon* is just Nizami Ganjavi using common Persian poetic tools, but it is hard to imagine someone who is allegedly "Turkic"(USSR/Stalin) and is against Persian Chauvinism (USSR/Stalin (note such concepts did not exist back then)), would compose such an insulting verses and we believe the interpretation by Said Nafisi has the most merit here. As we said the word Turk has taken negative and positive meanings in Persian poetry. This has lead to the misinterpretation by ethno-minded scholars who misinterpreted these verses in their own way in order to say "*Nizami wanted to write in Turkish but he was forced to write in Persian*". All of these are enough (the praise of the Shirvanshah and entrusting his son to the Shirvanshah) are enough to dispel false nation-building/identity-building myths created in the last century in order to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization/Persian literature and appropriate him for "Turkic" civilization.

Also these ethnic theorists do not mention Nizami Ganjavi is great because of his works which are in Persian and one cannot be forced to create masterpieces under duress! If the above misinterpretations were not sufficient, the ethnic minded scholars who try to assign

a Turkic ethnicity to Nizami Ganjavi claim that Nizami belittled the Shirvanshah in the end. Let us examine the end and dispel this myth as well (Note the name of the section is “conclusion of the book in the name of the Shirvanshah”):

ختم کتاب به نام شروانشاه

شاهها ملکا جهان پناها
یک شاه نه بل هزار شاها
جمشید یکم به تخت گیری
خورشید دوم به بی نظیری
شروانشه کیفیاد پیکر
خاقان کبیر ابوالمظفر
نی شروانشاه بل جهانشاه
کیخسرو ثانی اخسرتن شاه
ای ختم قران پادشاهی
بی خاتم تو میاد شاهی
ای مفخر نسل آدمیزاد
ای ملک دو عالم از تو آباد
ای چشمه‌ی خوش میان دریا
پاکی و بزرگیت مهیا
روزی که به طالع مبارک
بیرون بری از سپهر تارک
مشغول شوی به شادمانی
وین نامه نغز را بخوانی
از پیکر این عروس فکری
گه گنج بری و گاه بکری
آن باد که در پسند کوشی
ز احسنت خودش پرند پوشی
در کردن این چنین تفضل
از تو کرم وز من تو کل
گرچه دل پاک و بخت فیروز
هستند تو را نصیحت آموز
زین ناصح نصرت آلهی
بشنو دو سه حرف صبحگاهی
بنگر که جهان چه سرفشاندهست
وز چند ملوک بازماندهاست
بر کار جهان جهان پرداز
کان به که تومانی از جهان باز
بیدار شهی به کاردانی
بیدارترک شو اگر توانی
داد و دهشت کران ندارد
گر بیش کنی زیان ندارد
باز ملکی که سزای رایت تست
خود در حرم ولایت تست
کاریکه صلاح دولت تست
در جستن آن مکن عنان سست
از هرچه شکوه تو به رنج است
پردازش اگرچه کان و گنج است

موئی میسند ناروائی
در رونق کار پادشائی
دشمن که به عذر شد زبانش
ایمن مشو وز در برانش
قادر شو و بردبار می باش
می می خور و هوشیار می باش
بازوی تو گرچه هست کاری
از عون خدای خواه یاری
رای تو اگرچه هست هشیار
رای دیگران ز دست مگذار
با هیچ دو دل مشو سوی حرب
تا سکه درست خیزد از ضرب
از صحبت آن کسی پرهیز
کو باشد گاه نرم و گاه تیز
هرجا که قدم نهی فرابیش
باز آمدن قدم بیندیش
تا کار به نه قدم برآید
گر ده نکنی به خرج شاید
مفرست پیام داد جویان
الا به زبان راست گویان
در قول چنان کن استواری
کایمن شود از تو زینهار
کس را به خود از رخ گشوده
گستاخ مکن نیازموده
بر عهد کس اعتماد منمای
تا در دل خود نیابیش جای
مشمار عدوی خرد را خرد
خار از ره خود چنین توان برد
در گوش کسی میفکن آن راز
کازرده شوی ز گفتنش باز
آنرا که زنی ز بیخ بر کن
و آنرا که تو برکشی میفکن
از هرچه طلب کنی شب و روز
بیش از همه نیکنمای اندوز
بر کشتن آنکه با زبونیست
تعجیل مکن اگرچه خونست
بر دوری کام خویش منگر
کاقبال تو باش درآرد از در
زاینجمله فسانها که گویم
با تو به سخن بهانه جویم
گرنه دل تو جهان خداوند
محتاج نشد به جنس این پند
زانجا که تراست رهنمائی
ناید ز تو جز صواب رائی
درع تو به زیر چرخ گردان
بس باد دعای نیک مردان
حرز تو به وقت شادکامی
بس باشد همت نظامی

یارب ز جمال این جهاندار
 آشوب و گزند را نهاندار
 هر در که زند تو سازکارش
 هر جا که رود تو باش یارش
 بادا همه اولیاش منصور
 و اعداش چنانکه هست مقهور
 این نامه که نامدار وی باد
 بر دولت وی خجسته پی باد
 هم فاتحه‌ایش هست مسعود
 هم عاقبتیش باد محمود

We note that the section starts with the praise of the Shah:

*O King, O Ruler, O protector of the World
 One king not, but equivalent to hundred thousand Kings
 The second Jamshid when it comes to capturing the throne
 The number one Khorshid (Sun) who has no likeness
 The Shirvanshah, the Kay-Qobaad Peykar (body)
 Khaqan Kabir Abul Mufazzar (The great ruler Abul Muzaffar)
 Not only Shirvanshah, but Jahanshah (ruler of the World)
 Kay-Khusraw Thaani (The second Kay-Khusraw), Akhsatan Shah (King Akhsatan)
 Oh pride of the sons of Adam
 O who both Worlds (earth and heaven) are prosperous from thee*

Thus the section begins with this. Then Nizami Ganjavi gives some advice to the king. One of these advices has been misinterpreted by ethnic nationalists in order to claim that Nizami Ganjavi was upset due to the introduction of the *Layli o Majnoon!!*:

زین ناصح نصرت آلهی
 بشنو دو سه حرف صبحگاهی
 بنگر که جهان چه سرفشاندهست
 وز چند ملوک بازماندهاست
 بر کار جهان جهان پرداز
 کان به که تو مانی از جهان باز
بیدار شهی به کاردانی
بیدارترک شو اگر توانی
 داد و دهشت کران ندارد
 گر بیش کنی زیان ندارد

*Listen from these adviser, God's Helper
 Listen two three words, in the morning
 Look at the world, and see what it has left
 And how many Kings have left it
 Thus be aware of the world, and cautious of it*

*Since it is best that you are well kept in this world
You are [already] an awakened King in running affair
Become a little more aware if you can
Your justice and giving gifts has no end
If you give more, it will not lessen*

Here the ethnic-ideologists have made a big mistake in reading and understanding the line in bold face. The Persian word causing this misreading is بیدارتُرک 'bidartarak' which consists of 'bidartar', the comparative adjective of 'bidar' (awake/aware), plus 'ak', a suffix denoting gentle or kind or diminutive address like 'delbarak' meaning little or lovely sweetheart; but they have read it as 'bidar tork' (awakened Turk!)!. Bidar-tork does not make much sense here and this reading will cause a disconnect from the first part of the line: You are [already] an awake/aware king in running affairs, become an awakened Turk if you can. What is the relation between being an aware king and becoming an aware Turk?

Moreover, this reading will produce an unacceptable pause or 'sakteh' in the meter of the poem which would be a major fault in the meter, far from a grand master of Nezami's caliber.

The meter of the epic *Layli o Majnoon* is

مفعول مفاعلهن فاعولن

(maful o mafaalelon faulon) but the wrong reading would make it مفعال مفاعل فاعولن

(mefal o mafaalelo faulon).

The reason for this mistake by the ethno-ideologists (assuming it was unintentional) is that in Persian script, like in Arabic, the short vowels are not written and diacritic signs are used to clarify when required. So تُرک ('TRK') could be read differently including تُرک (tork=Turk), تَرک (tark=leave) or تَرَک (tarak=crack). The correct reading requires education and familiarity with the language, the meter of the poem and the context. It is unfortunate that even the meter of the poem has been disregarded in order to arrive at such false misinterpretations.

Even the Moscow-Baku edition (unlike the even more politically editor of Varliq) uses the term Bidaratarak which obviously is the correct reading and does not create the major fault in the meter. See:

خمسہ-نظامی: بر اساس چاپ مسکو - باکو (نشر هرمس) - 1385-1386

Nezami - Khamsa- The Moscow-Baku edition, Hermes Publisher, 1385-1386

And Nezami used such terms as Khoshtarak, Bidartarak and Pishtarak, Delak and etc:

من که درین منزلشان مانده ام
مرحله ای پیشترک رانده ام

نظامی.

پیشترک زین که کسی داشتم
شمع شب افروز بسی داشتم

نظامی.

فر خوشترک ران که صحرا خوشست
عنان درمکش بارگی دلککشست
نظامی.

This is common in classical Persian poetry and perhaps one the best example of this is a poem by Khaqani who lived in the same region and was acquainted with Nezami:

این گربه چشمک این سگک غوری غرک
سگسارک مخنثک و زشت کافرک
با من پلنگ سارک و روباه طبعک است
این خوگ گردنک سگک دمنه گوهرک
بوده سگ رمنده و اکنون به بخت من
شیرک شده است و گرگک و از هر دو بدترک (note this is badtarak and not bad turk!)
خنیک زند چو بوزنه، جنیک زند چو خرس
این بوزنینه ریشک پهنانه منظرک
خرگوشک است خنثی زن و مرد در دو وقت
هم حیض و هم زناش، گهی ماده گه نرک
این پیشم سگ که ... سگش خوانم از صفت
چو ... سگ برهنگک و سرخ پیکرک
چون یوزک قمی جهد از دم آهوان
با دوستان رود گفتار در برک
گرد غزالکان و گوزنان بزم شاه
فحلی کند چو گور خرک گرد مادرک
گر دست و پاش چون سگک کھف بشکنی
هم برنگردد از دمشان این سبک سرک
بی نام هم کنونش چو بید سترک خصی
این بد گهر شکالک و توسن رگ استرک
خاقانیا گله مکن او از سگان کیست
خود صیدکی کند سگک استخوان خورک
سگ عففک کند چو بدو نانکی دهی
دم لابلگک کند بنشیند پس درک
میزان حکمتی و تو را بر دل است زخم
زین شوله فعل عقربک شوم نشترک
هم شوله بود کو پس شوال زخم زد
بر تارک مبارک پور طغان یزک

For the sake of argument (even though it goes against the meter and meaning and flow of the poem and even the USSR edition uses the correct meter and of course not a mediocre poet, let alone Nizami would never make such a simple meter mistake) with regards to the nationalist Varliq editor Javad Heyat, even the usage of “Awakened Turk” simply means a ruler who is spiritually awakened (and gives charity to the people as the next line says) and has no ethnic connotation. For example, Alexander the Great is also called a “Turk” (Ruler, conqueror) (and in another place a “Hindu” of the daughter of the King of India) and the fact is in another poem, the old lady complains that the Seljuq ruler is not a “Turk” (Ruler) but is acting like a Hindu (Beggars, slave).

Turks at the time of Nizami Ganjavi were ruling from Africa to India to Central Asia. Thus the term Turk (Ruler) and Hindu (slave) were prominent and their usage in Persian poetry have already been discussed. However in this case, there is no argument as even the USSR knows such a invalid and false play with words goes against the basic meter of the poem and has no meaning. Only people looking for the most absurd and ridiculous ethno-centric arguments would misread the poem and go against its basic meter.

So the usage of the term bidartarak here was nothing insulting towards Shirvanshah as ethnic-minded scholars of Nizami misinterpret it and read it mistakenly as bidar tork!(awakened Turk!), and indeed Nizami Ganjavi mentions that Shirvansah is not in need of his advise (possibly Nizami Ganjavi was aware of giving these advises for future Kings or to other rulers who were not awakened). Nizami Ganjavi highly praises the Shirvanshah in every section the King is mentioned.

But after giving many advices on kingship, he says that he is looking for an excuse (Bahaaneh) to have a conversation (in order to show his admiration) with the King in his presence and a King like the Shirvanshah is already Great and does not need his advise and then ends the book with the praise of the Shirvanshah.

زاینجمله فسانه ها که گویم
 با تو به سخن بهانه جویم
 گرنه دل تو جهان خداوند
 محتاج نشد به جنس این پند
 زانجا که تراست رهنمائی
 ناید ز تو جز صواب رائی
 درع تو به زیر چرخ گردان
 بس باد دعای نیک مردان
 حرز تو به وقت شادکامی
 بس باشد همت نظامی
 یا رب ز جمال این جهاندار
 آشوب و گزند را نهان دار
 هر در که زند تو ساز کارش
 هر جا که رود تو باش یارش
 بادا همه اولیاش منصور
 و اعداش چنانکه هست مقهور
 این نامه که نامدار وی باد
 بر دولت وی خجسته پی باد
 هم فاتحه‌ایش هست مسعود
 هم عاقبتیش باد محمود

*These tales (advices he just gave) that I just told you
 I wanted to seek an excuse to speak to you
 Although the heart of yours, O lord of the World
 Does not require any of such advises*

*Because you are already well guided
Nothing comes from you, except Good commands*

...
*O God, from the face of this World-holder (Shirvanshah)
Cast away all harm and disorder
Whatever door he knocks, you be his helper
Wherever he goes, you be his helper
Be a helper to all his elders
And give him victory over all his enemies*

Thus we can see Nizami has had nothing but praise for the Shirvanshah. From the start, he praises every word of the Shirvanshah's composition till the last line of the poem, he praises the Shirvanshah.

Finally, we note that in the *Eskandarnama*:

“Moreover, in *Sharafnama*, Chap. 41, vv. 3-23, the author laments the death of the Shirvanshah Akhsatan (the dedicatee of *Leyli o Majnoon*) and addresses words of advice to his (unnamed) successor. This suggests that Nezami originally planned to dedicate the *Eskandar-nama*, like *Leyli o Majnoon*, to one of the kings of Sharvan. But that dynasty evidently lost power over Ganja by the time the poems were completed, and in their final form they are dedicated to the *malek* of Ahar, Nosrat al-Din Bishkin b. Mohammad. This ruler is mentioned in the introduction to *Sharafnama*, Chap. 10, vv. 11-12, where the poet makes a pun on his name Bishkin (“whose hatred is more”(in Persian)), though some of the manuscripts have a superscription claiming (wrongly) that the verses evoke Bishkin's overlord, the atabeg Nosrat al-Din Abu Bakr.”

(Encyclopedia Iranica, “Eskandar Nama”, Francois de Blois,
<http://www.iranica.com/articles/v8f6/v8f645.html>).

Whatever the historical and political situation was, what is undeniable is the lament over the death of the Shirvanshah Akhsatan and again shows the great bond between him and Nizami Ganjavi. Obviously a poet like Nezami, if he was not a friend of Akhsatan would not lament over his death but would rejoice. Neither of course would he constantly praise him in his *Leyli o Majnoon*, praise his letters and dedicate an epic to him.

In the *Eskandarnama* also, Nezami shows that Persian language is his own language and he wrote it in it naturally:

چو دلداری خضرم آمد به گوش
دماغ مرا تازه گردید هوش
پذیرا سخن بود شد جایگیر
سخن گز دل آید بود دلپذیر
چون در من گرفت آن نصیحت گری
زبان برگشادم به در دری

*When the consolation of (the prophet) Khizr came to my ear,
Sense made my brain more fresh.
The word (of counsel) was accepted; it became place-seizing;
The speech which comes from the heart is heart-pleasing.
When this counselling took hold on (affected) me,
I opened my tongue with a pearl of the Dari language.*

So when he opened his tongue after being divinely inspired, Nezami opened it in the pearl of Dari (the refined form of Persian). Had he any desire to write Turkish or it was his natural tongue, then after being inspired, he would have written in Turkish. Or for example his speech to his son and his son's speech to him are all in Persian. No where does Nezami mention that he knows even Turkish.

So let us conclude this part of the section:

1) During the time of Nizami Ganjavi, there is not a single extant Turkish verse from the area. Azeri Turkish literature was not present in the Caucasus or Azerbaijan and the first sample of Turkish comes around 200 years after Nizami Ganjavi. Not only Nizami Ganjavi, but not a single extant Turkish verse exists from that area during that era. On the other hand, a book such as Nozhat al-Majales shows everyday people used Persian in the Khanaqahs (Sufi prayer house) and non-court poets, even normal folks composed Persian poetry. The Safinayeh Tabrizi shows that Tabriz (the major capital of Ilkhanids) had its own Iranic language called "Zaban-i Tabrizi" and Khorasani-Dari Persian was its cultural language. Thus Nezami Ganjavi besides being Iranian, lived in a completely Persianate cultural environment as exemplified by Nozhat al-Majales.

2) Shirwanshahs were not Turkic origin and did not know Turkic. Had there existed even a Turkic literary tradition (which not a single verse exists from that time in the Caucasus and would have to go many stages to eventually lead to a romantic epic), Nezami would have written something Turkic for a Turkic-language ruler. As mentioned the Seljuqs, Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis and etc. were Persianized in culture and manner. But at least these rulers had Turkic ancestry unlike the Shirwanshahs who were not of Turkic ancestry. The Shirwanshah were proud of their claimed Sassanid descent (nasab-i boland (high birth) as opposed to Turkaaneh-Sefat (Turkic-way-characteristics)). So naturally, writing in Turkic for a non-Turkic ruler who does not understand such a language makes no logical sense. So besides not being able to differentiate between the words "Torkaaneh" and "Torki", the nationalist-ideological authors have no context for their wild conspiracy theories.

3) The Shirwanshah's letter to Nizami was in composition and Nizami Ganjavi versified it and the verses about the unfaithfulness of Turks and Turkish-way talk (Vulgar as opposed to Sokhan e Boland) have been mentioned by other Persian poets as well as Nizami Ganjavi. These were versified by Nizami and were his thoughts (even assuming the Shirwanshah wrote the verses, Nizami praises every word in the letter as a blossoming garden and brighter than flames lit at night and thus has the same opinions), as were the

words of his son, which were again versified by Nizami Ganjavi. In the Khusraw and Shirin also, when the King speaks, it is all Nezami's versification and interpretation of their words. Neither the Sherwanshah nor the Ildiguzids versified a single verse in any of Nezami's work.

Nizami Ganjavi praises the Shirvanshah both in *Layli o Majnoon* and in the *Eskandarnama*. He praises the Shirvanshah's son, advises the Shirvanshah's son to read the *Shahnameh* and most significantly, he entrusts the well being of his own son to the son of Shirvanshah. That is amongst all the kings and rulers of his area, he chose to entrust his son to the Persianized Shirvanshah who considered themselves descendants of Sassanids and were not Turks. Although this does not mean Nizami Ganjavi preferred any ruler over another (since he was a recluse), but the fact that he entrusts his son to the Shirvanshah's court (despite not being a court poet) fundamentally rejects any sort of conspiracy theory that Nizami was forced (!!!) to write in Persian for the Shirvanshah! Similarly his lament about Axsatan. The two verses are clear. Since the Shirwanshahs were not Turks and were of high birth and did not break their vow, they deserved high words and praises. Not the versified lampoon that was written for Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi after he broke his vow. Sherwanshah would not break their vow do deserve such lampoon (Torkaaneh Sokhan).

4) The only complaint from Nezami is not about anything in the letter of the Shirwanshah which he calls a blossoming garden more brighter than a night flame, but about confidence in his ability to write an epic for the theme and the nature of the story itself. Due to his old age and also due to the fact that the story according to Nezami is dry, barren, lacks joy and hence is not suited for court poetry

*I was perplexed in that embarrassment
Because of my old age and frail nature*

....

*There is neither garden nor kingly banquet,
no bow-string, nor wine nor blandishment.
How long can one fare on dry sands
and rugged mountains, talking about sorrow?*

...

*Although this tale (aya) enjoys celebrity,
a cheerful interpretation (tafsir) is far from it.
The tools of discourse are joy and amorous delight,
discourse thrives by these two means.
The discourse on a naked person,
who is enamoured, fettered and in bondage, is sorrowful.
If one was to adorn the tale to excess,
this would distort the face of the story;
But when I know not the way at some stage,
clearly I shall then add some conceits.*

The idea that the Shirvanshah forced Nizami to write in Persian is false and was created by the USSR (Stalin's quote already mentioned). The *Nozhat al-Majales* mentioned earlier which has 114 poets from the area and does not have a single Turkish quatrain and all of its authors work are in Persian (many of them from normal Sufis and every day people). 24 of these authors are from Ganja (including Nezami). Interestingly enough, not one USSR source has mentioned such a grand book.

Obviously it would shatter all the false nation-building theories as 114 Persian poets from the area, many of them ordinary folks would not serve the USSR type nation-building. The Shirvanshahs did not know Turkish to begin with. Had Nizami Ganjavi known Turkish (not proven even though it was the language of some of the rulers and it may be desirable to learn the language of the ruling class as many non-Turcophone Iranians learned Turkish during the rule of the Turcophone Safavid dynasty) and desired to write Turkic, he would have written for a king that actually knew Turkish and not the Shirvanshahs. He would have been the first Turkish poet of the area, had he written even a single verse in Turkish, but not a single biography mentions even a verse of Turkish from that era or from Nizami Ganjavi. Finally, we denote the great *Shahnameh* imagery (e.g. *Halat Kayqobadi* in this section) used all over by Nizami Ganjavi while not a single Turkic folklore image is used by him. The clear Iranian character of Nezami Ganjavi is more than obvious and had there not been such a massive political attempt by the USSR, there would be no need for the present article.

Misinterpretation of a verse in Haft Paykar

Another misinterpretation of a verse by those claiming of Turkish origin occurs in the *Haft Paykar*. This misinterpretation is again brought to allege that Nizami wanted to write Turkish but no one would appreciate it. This misinterpretation fits with Stalin's idea that Nizami was forced to write in Persian and so this misinterpretation was continued. The misinterpretation has to do with the section: "*In praise of discourse, and a Few Words of Wisdom*" of the *Haft Paykar*. We will bring the original Persian and then a translation by Dr. Julia Meysami. We shall also discuss the translation of Wilson of the disputed verse. By bringing the whole section, we demonstrate that the section has nothing to do with Nizami Ganjavi wanting to write in Turkish as misinterpreted by scholars who were following Stalin's opinion.

ستایش سخن و حکمت و اندرز:

آنچه او هم نوست و هم کهن است
سخن است و در این سخن سخن است
ز آفرینش نژاد مادر کن
هیچ فرزند خوبتر ز سخن
تا نگوئی سخنوران مردند
سر به آب سخن فرو بردند

چون بری نام هر که را خواهی
سر برآرد ز آب چون ماهی
سخنی کو چو روح بی‌عیب است
خازن گنج خانه غیب است
قصه ناشنیده او داند
نامه نانبشته او خواند
بنگر از هرچه آفرید خدای
تا ازو جز سخن چه ماند به جای
یادگاری کز آدمیزاد است
سخن است آن دگر همه باد است
جهد کن کز نباتی و کانی
تا به عقلی و تا به حیوانی
باز دانی که در وجود آن چیست
کابدالدهر می‌تواند زیست
هر که خود را چنانکه بود شناخت
تا ابد سر به زندگی افراخت
فانی آن شد که نقش خویش نخواند
هرکه این نقش خواند باقی ماند
چون تو خود را شناختی به درست
نگذری گرچه بگذری ز نخست
وانکسان کز وجود بی‌خبرند
زین در آیند و زان دگر گذرند
روزنه بی‌غبار و در بی‌دود
کس نبیند در آفتاب چه سود
هست خشنود هر کس از دل خویش
نکند کس عمارت گل خویش
هرکسی در بهانه تیز هوش است
کس نگوید که دوغ من ترش است
بالغانی که بلغه کارند
سر به جذر اصم فرو نارند
صاحب مایه دوربین باشد
مایه چون کم بود چنین باشد
مرد بامایه را گر آگاهست
شحنه باید که دزد در راهست
خواجه چین که نافه‌بار کند
مشگر از انگزه حصار کند
پر هدهد به زیر پر عقاب
گوی برد از پرندگان به شتاب
ز آفت ایمن نیند ناموران
بی خطر هست کار بی‌خطران
مرغ زیرک به جستجوی طعام
به دو پای او فتد همی در دام
هرکجا چون زمین شکم خوارست
از زمین خورد او شکم‌وارست

با همه خورد و برد ازین انبار
کم نیاید جوی به آخر کار
جو به جو هرچه زو ستانی باز
یک به یک هم بدو رسانی باز
شمع وارت چو تاج زر باید
گریه از خنده بیشتر باید
آن مفرح که لعل دارد و در
خنده کم شد است و گریه پر
هر کسی را نهفته یاری هست
دوستی هست و دوستداری هست
خرد است آن کز او رسد یاری
همه داری اگر خرد داری
هرکه داد خرد نداند داد
آدمی صورتست و دیو نهاد
وان فرشته که آدمی لقب است
زیرکانند و زیرکی عجب است
در ازل بود آنچه باید بود
جهد امروز ما ندارد سود
کار کن زانکه به بود به سرشت
کار و دوزخ ز کاهلی و بهشت
هرکه در بند کار خود باشد
با تو گر نیک نیست بد باشد
با تن مرد بد کند خویشی
در حق دیگران بداندیشی
همتی را که هست نیک اندیش
نیکوئی پیشه نیکی آرد پیش
آنچنان زی که گر رسد خاری
نخوری طعن دشمنان باری
این نگوید سرآمد آفاتش
وان نخندد که هان مکافاتش
گرچه دست تو خود نگیرد کس
پای بر تو فرو نکوبد بس
آنکه رفق تو اش به یاد بود
به از آن کز غم تو شاد بود
نان مخور پیش ناشتا منشان
ور خوری جمله را به خوان بنشان
پیش مفلس زر زیاده مسنج
تا نه پیچد چو اژدها بر گنج
گر بود باد باد نوری
به که پیشش چراغ نفروزی
آدمی نر پی علف خواریست
از پی زیرکی و هشیاریست
سگ بر آن آدمی شرف دارد
که چو خر دیده بر علف دارد

کوش تا خلق را به کار آئی
تا به خلقت جهان بیارائی
چون گل آن به که خوی خوشداری
تا در آفاق بوی خوش داری
نشیندی که آن حکیم چه گفت
خواب خوش دید هرکه او خوش خفت
هرکه بدخو بود گه زادن
هم برآن خوست وقت جان دادن
وانکه زاده بود به خوش خوئی
مردنش هست هم به خوش روئی
سخت‌گیری مکن که خاک درشت
چون تو صد را ز بهر نانی کشت
خاک پیراستن چه کار بود
حامل خاک خاکسار بود
گر کسی پرسدت که دانش پاک
ز آدمی خیزد آدمی از خاک
گو گلاب از گل و گل از خارست
نوش در مهره مهره در مارست
با جهان کوش تا دغا نرنی
خیمه در کام ازدها نرنی
دوستی ز ازدها نشاید جست
کاژدها آدمی خورد به درست
گر سگی خود بود مرقع‌پوش
سگ دلی را کجا کند فرموش
دوستانی که با نفاق افتند
دشمنان را هم اتفاق افتند
چون مگس بر سیه سپید خزند
هر دو را رنگ برخلاف رزند
به کز این ره زنان کناره کنی
برخود این چار بند پاره کنی
در چنین دور کاهل دین پستند
یوسفان گرگ و زاهدان مستند
نتوان برد جان مگر به دو چیز
به بدی و به بد پسندی نیز
حاش لله که بندگان خدای
این چنین بند بر نهند به پای
از پی دوزخ آتش انگیزند
نقط جویند و طلق را ریزند
خیز تا فتنه زیر پای آریم
شرط فرمانبری به جای آریم
به جوی زر نیازمندی چند
هفت قفلی و چاربندی چند
لاله را بین که باد رخت ربود
از پی یک دو قلب خون‌آلود

چو درمنه درم ندارد هیچ
باد در پیکرش نیارد هیچ
گنج بر سر مشو چو ابر سفید
پای بر گنج باش چون خورشید
تا زمینی کز ابر تر گردد
از زمین بوش تو به زر گردد
کیسه زر بر آفتاب فشان
سنگ در لعل آفتاب نشان
تو به زر چشم روشنی و به دست
چشم روشن کن جهان خردست
زر دو حرفست هر دو بی پیوند
زین پراکنده چند لافی چند
دل مکن چون زمین زر آکنده
تا نگردي چو زر پراکنده
هر نگاری که زر بود بدنش
لاجوردی رزند پیرهنش
هر ترازو که گرد زر گردد
سنگسار هزار در گردد
کرده گيرت به هم به بانگی چند
از حلال و حرام دانگی چند
آمده لاابالیی برده
سیم کش زنده سیم کش مرده
زر به خوردن مفرح طربست
چون نهی رنج و بیم را سببست
آنکه خود را ز رنج و بیم کشی
زر پرستی بود نه سیم کشی
ابلهی بین که از پی سنگی
دوست با دوست می کند جنگی
به که دل زان خزانه برداری
که ازو رنج و بیم برداری
تشنه را کی نشاط راه افتد
کی زید گر در آب چاه افتد
آنچ زو بگذرد و بگذاری
چند بندی و چند برداری
خانه دیو شد جهان بشتاب
تا نگردي چو دیو خانه خراب
خانه دیو دیو خانه بود
گر خود ایوان خسروانه بود
چند حمالی جهان کردن
در زمین حمل زر نهان کردن
گر سه حمال کارگر داری
چار حمال خانه برداری
خاک و بادی که با تو مختلفست
خاک بی الف و باد بی الفست

خار کز نخل دور شد تاجش
به که سازند سیخ تتماجش
آری آنرا که در شکم دهلست
برگ تتماج به ز برگ گلست
به که دندان کنی ز خوردن پر
تا گرامی شوی چو دانه در
شانه کو را هزار دندانست
دست در ریش هر کسی زانست
تا رسیدن به نوشداروی دهر
خورد باید هزار شربت زهر
بر در این دکان قصابی
بی جگر کم نواله‌ای یابی
صد جگر پار شده به هر سوئی
تا در آمد پهی به پهلویی
گردن صد هزار سر بشکست
تا یکی گر دران ز گردن رست
آن یکی پا نهاده بر سر گنج
وین ز بهر یکی قراضه برنج
نیست چون کار بر مرادکسی
بی‌مرادی به از مراد بسی
هر مرادی که دیر یابد مرد
مژده باشد به عمر دیر نورد
دیر زی به که دیر یابد کام
کز تمامیست کار عمر تمام
لعل کو دیر زاد دیر بقاست
لاله کامد سبک سبک برخاست
چند چون شمع مجلس افروزی
جلوه‌سازی و خویشتن‌سوزی
پای بگشای ازین بهیمی سم
سر برون آر ازین سفالین خم
از سر این شاخ هفت بیخ بز
وز سم این نعل چار میخ بکن
بر چنین چاره بوریا بر سر
مرده چون سنگ و بوریا مگذر
زنده چون برق میر تاخندی
جان خدائی به از تنومندی
گر مریدی چنانک رانندت
بر رهی رو که پیر خوانندت
از مریدان بی‌مراد مباش
در توکل کم اعتقاد مباش من
که مشکل گشای صد گره
دهخدای ده و برون دهم
گر درآید ز راه مهمانی
کیست کو در میان نهد خوانی

عقل داند که من چه می‌گویم
 زین اشارت که شد چه می‌جویم
 نیست از نیستی شکست مرا
 گله زانکس که هست هست مرا
ترکیم را در این حبش نخرند
لاجرم دوغ بای خوش نخورند
 تا در این کوره طبیعت پز
 خامیی داشتیم چو میوه رز
 روزگارم به حصر می می‌خورد
 توتیاهای حصر می می‌کرد
 چون رسیدم به حد انگوری
 می‌خورم نیشهای زنبوری
 می که جز جرعه زمین نبود
 قدر انگور بیش ازین نبود
 بر طریقی روم که راندم
 لاجرم آب خفته خواندم
 آب گویند چون شود در خواب
 چشمه زر بود نه چشمه آب
 غلظند آب خفته باشد سیم
 یخ گواهی دهد بر این تسلیم
 سیم را کی بود مثبت زر
 فرق باشد ز شمس تا به قمر
 سیم بی یا ز مس نمونه بود
 خاصه آنکه که باژگونه بود
 آهن من که زرنگار آمد
 در سخن بین که نقره کار آمد
 مرد آهن فروش زر پوشد
 کاهنی را به نقره بفروشد
 وای بر زرگری که وقت شمار
 زرش از نقره کم بود به عیار
 از جهان این جنایتم سخت است
 کز هنر نیست دولت از بخت است
 آن مبصر که هست نقدشناس
 نیم جو نیستش ز روی قیاس
 وآنکه او پنبه از کتاب نشناخت
 آسمان را ز ریسمان نشناخت
 پر کتان و قصب شد انبارش
 زر به صندوق و خز به خروارش
 چون چنین است کار گوهر و سیم
 از فراغت چه برد باید بیم
 چند تیمار ازین خرابه کشیم
 آفتابی در آفتابه کشیم آید
 آواز هر کس از دهلیز
 روزی آواز ما برآید نیز

چون من این قصه چند کس گفتند
هم در آن قصه عاقبت خفتند
واجب آن شد که کار دریابم
گر نگیرد چو دیگران خوابم
راه رو را بسیج ره شرطست
تیز راندن ز بیمگه شرطست
می‌روم من خرم نمی‌آید
خود شدن باورم نمی‌آید
آنگه از رفتنم خبر باشد
کاشیانم برون در باشد
چند گویای بی خبر بودن
دیده در بسته در بر نمودن
یک ره از دیده‌ها فرامش باش
محرم راز باش و خامش باش
تا بدانی که هر چه می‌دانی
غلطی یا غلط همی‌خوانی
پیل بفکن که سیل ره کندست
پیلکیهای چرخ بین چندست
خاک را پیل چرخ کرده مفاک
به چنین پیل گل ندارد باک؟
بنگر اول که آمدی ز نخست
زانچه داری چه داشتی به درست
آن بری زین دو پیل نوردی
کاولین روز با خود آوردی
وام دریا و کوه در گردن
با فلک رفص چون توان کردن
کوش تا وام جمله باز دهی
تا تو مانی و یک ستور تهی
چون ز بار جهان نداری جو
در جهان هرکجا که خواهی رو
پیش ازانت فکند باید رخت
کافسرت را فرو کشند از تخت
روز باشد که صد شکوفه پاک
از غبار حسد فتد بر خاک
من که چون گل سلاح ریخته‌ام
هم ز خار حسد گریخته‌ام
تا مگر دلق پوشی جسدم
طلق ریزد بر آتش حسدم
ره در این بیمگاه تا مردن
این چنین می‌توان به سر بردن
چون گذشتم ازین رباط کهن
گو فلک را هرآنچه خواهی کن
چند باشی نظامیا دربند
خیز و آوازه‌ای برآر بلند

جان درافکن به حضرت احدی
تا بیابی سعادت ابدی
گوش پیچیدگان مکتب کن
چون در آموختند لوح سخن
علم را خازن عمل کردند
مشکل کاینات حل کردند
هرکسی راه خوابگاهی رفت
چون که هنگام خوابش آمد خفت

English Translation by Professor Julia Meysami:

In Praise of Discourse, and a Few Words of Wisdom

*That which at once is new and old
is discourse; let its tale be told.
The mother 'Be!' hath never born,
than discourse, any better son;
Say not the eloquent are dead;
'neath waves of speech they've disappeared.
But should you mention one by name,
fish-like, he'll raise his head again.
Discourse—like to a flawless soul—
the keys to unseen treasure holds.
It knows the story yet unheard,
and reads the yet unwritten word.
Look round: of all that God has made,
what else, save discourse, does not fade?
The sole memorial of mankind
is discourse; all the rest is wind.
Strive, from the worlds of mineral,
plant, animal, and rational,
To learn what in creation lives
that to eternity survives?
He who his own self truly knows,
triumphant over this life goes.
Who knows not his design must die;
but who can read it, lives for aye.
When once you know yourself aright,
though gone, you shall not pass from sight.
Those who life's mysteries ignore
come in through this, go out that door.
Doors cleaned of smoke, windows of grime:
yet none can see—what use the sun?
Each with himself is well content;
no one will his own garden tend.
All offer clever pretexts; nor*

will any say, 'My milk is sour.'
Wise men, who have great knowledge gained
don't bend their minds to empty sums;
The man of substance plans ahead;
when substance lacks, 'tis as I've said.
But such a man, though sharp, no doubt,
requires a guard; there's thieves about!
The Chinese merchant, loading musk,
guards it with gum against the thief.*
The hoopoe, 'neath the eagle's wing,
in flight leaves other birds behind.
The famed are not immune to sin;
only the base are free from stain.
In search of grain, the clever bird
falls in the trap with both feet snared.
He who's a glutton like the earth
takes from it but a stomach's worth;
Though all its stores be well devoured
and plundered, not a grain falls short;
For all you gather, grain by grain,
you one by one give back again.
If, candle-like, you'd seek a crown
of gold, tears will your laughter drown.
That draught of pearls and rubies made
brings little joy, but tears unstayed.
Each person has a hidden friend,
a confidant, that help will lend:
'Tis wisdom, from which succour comes;
he has all things who wisdom owns.
Who gives not wisdom its just due,
though man in form, his nature true
Is demon-like; angelic men
are those with wisdom—wondrous thing!
All was decreed when Time began;
men strive today, but reap no gain.
Strive to improve your nature; sloth
leads but to Hell; to Heaven, work.
He who's imprisoned by his deeds,
if he's not good, he will be bad.
To think the worst of others; that's
the habit of the bad man; but
Who thinks the best of others, wins:
goodness is from good conduct born.
Live such that, if a thorn appears,
you will not reap your foes' sharp jeers;
Lest this one say, 'His faults have shown,'

or that, 'His just reward has come.'
If no one takes your hand, at least
at your death he won't stamp his feet
In joy. Who treats you well is best;
not he who's by your sorrow pleased.
Don't eat in front of those who fast,
or else, make sure they join your feast.
Don't weigh your gold before the poor,
lest they twist, snake-like, with desire.
Though New Year's breeze may gently waft,
best not light lamps before its draft.
Man does not live to eat his fill,
but that he may seek sense and skill
A dog is nobler than the man
whose eyes, ass-like, for fodder scan,
Then strive to serve mankind; 'tis so
your nature will adorn the world.
One who's good-tempered, like the rose,
smells sweetly everywhere he goes.
Have you not heard the wise man tell,
'He dreameth best who sleepeth well'?
He who's bad-tempered at his birth
will be that way until his death;
But he who's with good temper born
will meet a good and happy end.
Don't take things hard; for many a one
like you, the coarse earth's fed and slain.
What use to deck out earth, when ye
who bear earth's form, half ashes be.
If someone says, 'Pure reason must
rise from man, and man's from dust
Say, 'From the thorny rose there comes
rose-water; life from the snake-stone.'
Strive with the world; its wiles abhor;
don't pitch your tent in dragon's maw.
Seek not the dragon's friendship; for
the dragon does all men devour.
A dog may wear a patched cloak; but
its currish nature's not forgot.
When friends fall out and quarrel, see
how speedily their foes agree.
Like flies o'er black and white they flock,
make black seem white and white look black.
'Tis better to avoid such thieves,
and cut this fourfold purse away.
In times when pious men are base,

*the Josephs wolves, the ascetics dazed
 With drink, one only 'scapes from peril
 by doing, or approving, evil.
 May God forbid His servants place
 such bonds as these upon their legs.
 They kindle fires for Hell's sake,
 seek naphtha, and pour talc away.
 Rise; let us stamp out all sedition;
 observe obedience's condition.
 How long seek gold to answer dearth?
 How long be bound by sky and earth?
 The harsh wind rends the tulip's robes
 in search of bits of bloody dross;
 Since wormwood bears no golden coin,
 the wind does not assail its form.
 Don't, like the cloud, bear treasure on
 your head; rise o'er it, like the sun,
 That, when earth's moistened by the cloud,
 your sun-like kiss turn it to gold.
 Scatter your gold upon the sun;
 break sun-like rubies with a stone.
 'Tis wrong gold makes your eyes shine bright,
 for wisdom's the world's true delight.
 'Gold' is two letters, unconnected;
 how should you boast of something scattered?
 Don't fill your heart with gold, like earth,
 lest, like 'gold', you be scattered forth.
 Those beauties that have golden forms
 are by blue mourning robes adorned.
 Each scale which deals with gold is stoned
 before a thousand doors. Assume
 That, with great effort, you've obtained
 of wealth, lawful or not, some grains:
 Some reckless rogue steals them away
 and lives, while their collector dies.
 To spend gold brings rejoicing; but
 'tis pain and fear to lay it up.
 'Tis loving gold, not its expense,
 that kills the self with pain immense.
 See how the fool who seeks a stone
 sets friends at war, one against one.
 'Tis best to quit this earthly ruin,
 which brings you nought but fear and pain.
 How long be porter for the world,
 hiding gold's burden in the earth?
 Though you may own three porters loads,*

you'll gain but the four porters' abode.
'Tis earth and air that are your foes:
unfriendly earth, air full of woes.
The thorn torn from the date-palm's crown
will serve the cooking fire to turn.
Thick noodle soup will better fill
the stomach, than rose-petals will.
Pull out your teeth; don't eat your fill;
then you'll be worthy as the pearl.
See, with its thousand teeth, the comb
can dress the beard of anyone.
Before you taste time's remedy,
a thousand poisoned draughts you'll see.
From this world's butcher-shop you'll gain
no portion without causing pain.
A hundred hearts are rent in twain
before a fat haunch is obtained.
A thousand necks are cast aside
in favour of a fattened thigh.
One sets his foot upon a treasure,
another toils for trifling measure.
Since none achieves his goal, 'tis best
to have none, than for many quest.
The man who late his goal achieves
finds joy in his long-travelled life.
Long life is best, for one will find
his goal perfected through long time.
The slow-born ruby long endures;
the swift-come tulip swiftly goes.
How long, like candles, brightly glow?
Consume yourself, your self to show.
Cast off these hoofs of beast-like greed;
from this clay vat pull out your head.
Cut off this seven-rooted branch;
these four-nailed horseshoes, * too, renounce.
Don't pass o'er this straw-covered pit
like stones and straw that cover it.
Like lightning, die while flashing bright;
rude health's eclipsed by virtuous life.
Do as your masters teach, if you
are a disciple; follow true
The path that leads to wisdom; put,
with perfect faith, your trust in God.
I, who untie a hundred knots,
possess a village, dwell without.
If from the road a guest should come,

*who then will lay the feast for him?
 Reason knows well of what I speak;
 by this allusion, what I seek.
 I don't despair, despite my want;
 I blame but those who earn complaint.
 The Ethiop scorns my Turkish wares,
 rejects the fine foods I prepare.
 When I was raw as unripe grapes
 in this, old nature's cooking-place,
 Time pressed me like a grape unripe,
 to make collyrium for the sight. **

*Since I grew ripe, I've suffered
 from the stings of bees, just as the wine
 That's poured upon the earth is lost.
 Is not the grape's worth more than that?
 I tread the path on which I'm driven,
 the name of 'frozen water' given;
 They say that water, frozen cold,
 is not water, but a spring of gold;
 They err: still water silver forms,
 as silvery ice of this informs.
 Whene'er did silver like gold seem?
 they're different as the moon and sun.
 Sim without ya is miss (that's brass),
 especially when they're reversed.
 Observe my iron, inlaid with gold,
 its silvery work in speech unfold.
 Ironmongers would wear golden robes
 who iron at silver's prices sold.
 Woe to the goldsmith when, assayed,
 his gold is less than silver weighed.
 The world's harsh treason chafes me: luck's
 the source of fortune, wisdom's not.
 That keen assessor who knows coin
 owns not a half-grain, while the man
 Who can't tell cotton plants from flax,
 nor ships and shoes from sealing-wax,
 With finest stuffs fills up his hoard:
 with loads of silks, and chests of gold.
 If this is gold and silver's case,
 why should one then fear idleness?
 How long should we this ruin grieve,
 and draw up water in a sieve?
 All from the antechamber call;
 one day our turn will come withal.
 Others, like me, this tale have told,*

*and, at the end, have found repose.
 It was my task to grasp it firm,
 lest sleep should seize me in my turn.
 The traveller must have supplies,
 and flee the perilous places. I
 Walk on; my donkey does not follow; I
 can't believe that on some morrow
 I too will leave; I'll only know
 when I have passed beyond that door.
 How long, in ignorance, shall I
 go on; string pearls with closed eyes?
 Forget your eyes, and silence keep;
 be confidant of secrets deep.
 All that you know—know this, and heed—
 you take in error, or misread.
 The flood has swept the road away;
 discard your spade; see how the sky
 Digs pits for men within the earth;
 the earth recks not such spades as yours.
 Consider: when you first were born,
 what did you have of what you own?
 From day and night you'll bear away
 what you brought with you that first day.
 Your neck weighed down with borrowed gems
 from earth and sea: how can you then
 Dance with the sphere? repay your loan;
 let but you arid an empty mount
 Remain. Without a grain of this
 world's burden, go where'er you wish.
 Before your crown's pulled from the throne,
 you must cast off what wealth you own.
 One day a hundred blossoms must fall
 to the ground 'neath envy's dust.
 I, like the rose, of weapons shorn,
 have also fled from envy's thorn;
 Donned a patched cloak, in hope this might
 scatter pure talc on flames of spite;
 For even so is the road travelled
 that passes through this place of peril.
 When I've bid this old inn farewell,
 say to the sphere, 'Do what you will.'
 How long, Nizami, dwell in bonds?
 Arise! send forth your voice in song;
 Devote your soul to Unity,
 and gain, fore'er, Felicity.*

Let us first recall (far more extensive examples are brought in the introduction) some examples from Nizami Ganjavi and other Persian poets with regards to imagery in Persian poetry:

Nizami:

تا نزد بر ختن طلايه زنگ
شه ز شادی نکرد میدان تنگ

*“Till the nights Ethiop rushed day’s Turks,
The king ceased not his joyful Sport”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 216)*

سیاهان حبش ترکان چینی
چو شب با ماه کرده همنشینی

Author’s translation: Siyaahaan Habash (The blacks of Ethiopia), Torkaan Chini (the Turks of China), Cho Shab (like the night) baa maah (with the moon) kardeh hamneshini (have gathered together). Note that the Siyaahaan Habash (blacks of Ehtiopia) are the color of the night while the Torkan Chini are the moon (and the stars).

ناسود ز چاره باز جستن
زنگی ختنی نشد به شستن

*Was not relieved from seeking other solution
An Ehtioipian will not be Khotanese (a place in classical Turkistan) by washing*

چو صبح از رخ روز برقع گشاد
ختن بر حبش داغ جزیت نهاد

*When the morning cast away the cover from day’s face
Khotan (light) upon Habash (darkness) imposed a painful cost*

من همان سفته گوش حلقه کشم
با خود از چین و با تو از حبشم

*I m still his humble slave; of China
at home, but Ethiop with you.*

ناز تو گر به جان بود بکشم
گر تو از خلخی من از حبشم

*Your wile, if it costs life, I shall bear
If you are from Khallukh (a city in Turkestan) (light), I am from Ethiop (dark)
(signifying opposites here)*

*“In Egypt dwelt a man, Maahaan
More beautiful than the full moon,
Like Egypt’s Joseph, fair of face;
A thousand Turks his Hindu Slave”
(Julia Meysami, Haft Paykar, pg 175)*

Thus as we can see the contrast between light, pleasing (Turk) and Habash (Dark) is a common affair in Nizami’s poetry. But this is not limited to Nizami and many other Persian poets have used such a symbolism and we provide some more examples:

سنبل سپاه بر سمن مزن
لشکر حبش بر ختن مزن
(خواجو)
چون ترک من سپاه حبش بر ختن زد
از مشگ سوده سلسله بر نسترن زد
(خواجو)

(Khaju Kermani: Since my Turk brings upon Khotan (Turkestan) the army of Habash(Ethiop)):

چون لشکر حبش شب بر روم حمله کرد
(مولوی)
روی تاجیکانه-ات بنمای تا داغ حبش
آسمان بر چهره ترکان یغمایی کشد
(سعدی)
خورشید روم پرور و ماه حبش نگار
(خاقانی)
چون خیل ترک که بر لشگر حبش تازد
(عبید زاکانی)
پیش تو بگو کای بت سوزنده چون هندویم
برآینه ریز آنکه خاکستر هندویت
(امیر خسرو)

The Pir of Herat, Khwajah Ansari writes:

ای شب تو کیستی زنگی سیاهی و من ختنی زادهی چون ماهی
ای شب تو بر خرابه‌های تاریک چون بومی و من بر تخت روزگار اسکندر رومی.
(Dastgerdi, Wahid. “Resa’il Jaami” ‘Aref Qarn Chaharom Hejri: Khwaja Abdullah Ansari”, Forooghi Publishers, 1349/1970, 2nd edition. p 60)

Translation:

Oh Night, What are? A black Zangi, and I am of Khotanese descent (look like) a moon (beautiful).

Oh Night, you are upon the dark ruins like an owl and I am on the throne of the age, like Eskandar-e-Rumi (Alexander the Greek).

Thus if we take this literally, then the well known Ansari, a descendant of the companion of the Prophet of Islam, would be of Khotanese descent. Of course the contrast between Dark/African/Zang and Khotanese is a well known contrast used by many Persian poets.

The alleged claim by the three articles we mention (who claim Nizami Ganjavi was an Oghuz Turk) is that the line (not in a 15th century edition but it is in the Dastgerdi edition and most editions) in the praise of discourse and wisdom:

ترکیم را در این حبش نخرند
لاجرم دوغ بای خوش نخورند

is meant to say that Nizami wanted to write Turkish but it was not appreciated and hence he had to write in Persian! Anyone that has read all of the above section and knows the contrast between Turk (light) and Ethiopia (Dark) in Persian poetry and can easily see the invalidity of ethno-nationalistic interpretation.

Let us bring two professional English translations:

*The Ethiop scorns my Turkish wares,
rejects the fine foods I prepare.
(Julia Meysami, 1995)*

Commentary by Dr. Julia Meysami:

“The Ethiop scorns my Turkish wares: literally, ‘The Ethiops (of this region) reject my Turkish delicacies,’ that is, in this dark and savage region my fine words go unappreciated.” (Julia Meysami)

Wilson:

*This Ethiopia likes not Turkish wares
hence it will have not palatable curds
(1925 translation of Haft Paykar, C.E. Wilson)*

The section is about discourse and word of wisdom. Referring to people who claim wisdom, Nizami says in this section:

*All offer clever pretexts; nor
will any say, ‘My milk is sour.’*

Indeed food as a spiritual metaphor (and we note Dooghbaa is bright and white like the imagery of Turks in Persian poetry) has been used through Persian literature. Sufficient is to refer to the comparison between homemade Paludeh and Bazar Paludeh in Persian poetry. As Annemarie Schimmel has noted:

“Paludeh, a dish of milk, fine flour, and some spices, was popular enough in the thirteenth century to be mentioned several times as the symbol of spiritual sweetness”(Triumphal Sun, pg 143. A two colored Brocade, pg 435).

Let us look at English translation by these two knowledgeable translators. The key words they have used are Nakharand (Doesn't buy), Lajaram (consequently), Dooghbaay (This is a Persian word which is a soup made of yogurt milk, whose color is white and probably made best by Turkish nomads). So they have taken a meaningful translation of the all the words. Furthermore, if one goes with a literal translation, Torkiyam as the authors have translated more naturally takes the meaning of wares literally, since Nizami uses the other word Nakharand (buy), and lajaram (consequently) they do not taste fresh Dooghbaa (a soup made of milk best prepared by Nomads).

Nizami here is stating that his beautiful milk/food (the advices and discourses of this section) he gives are not paid attention to. The context of the section which is on discourses, advices and ethics makes it clear. It has no political/ethnic content.

Furthermore the contrast of Habash and Turk is something that we have discussed already. As already demonstrated, Persian poets often make contrasts. Since the opposition of */sepid /*(Tork) (light, North) and */zangi/Habashi/* (Abyssinian/Ethiopian) (south) has a figurative meaning, it simply signifies the range of tastes and climes, cultures and complexions, specifically with the Turks representing fair skin as opposed to the dark-skinned Habashis.

If we look at that section, it is about spiritual advices Nizami provides and there is nothing about the Turkish language! So if Nizami wanted to write Turkish, the statement “Torkiyam raa dar in Habash Nakharand” as some writers claim is not in the context of the section. If literal (and assuming Nizami meant Turkish language by Torkiyyam! and not Turkish wares or something that “kharidani” (some that can be bought or obtained)), we would also need to take the /Habash/ part literally and the Dooghbaa part literally, and unless Nezami made a trip to Ethiopia (which he never did) or was in Ethiopia, or composed poems in honor of a dark-skinned African prince (which he never did), then /Habash/ does not have a literal meaning here. And of course Nezami's trade was poetry and not selling (offering) Dooghbaa. So the verse is clear from the section, which simply means my bright/shining advice are not taken in this dark place.

As well known already, Nizami not only wrote all of the five jewels in Persian but also he has written ghazals in Persian. Yet in all his work, he only refers to his Persian writing. There was no Turkish literature at the time of Nizami in Ganja and not a single verse of Turkish exists from the area during Nizami's time from any poet or writer. Unfortunately, misinterpretation of basic Persian poetic imagery was the major tool used by Stalin and USSR to claim that *“Nizami was a victim of Persian Chauvinism and he wanted to write in Turkish, but he was forced to write in Persian”*.

Lack of knowledge or misuse of basic Persian imagery and symbols (note the previous Chapter where we discuss this extensively) was used to politicize Nizami Ganjavi for

ethno-nationalistic nation building and propagate the false idea that Nizami (who is great because of his actual words which are all in Persian) wanted to write in Turkish (which had no tradition in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan and the language of Turkish nomads was not the urban language) but was forced to write in Persian! As if one can create such masterpieces (five them!) under duress which is illogical! This misinterpretation alongside the misinterpretation of the verses in the beginning of the *Layli o Majnoon* was the major basis for this false political claim made during the USSR era and unfortunately continuing in some circles.

Incorrect argument: Nizami and his research into Dari-Persian and Arabic literature means that he was a Turk

The argument from a discussion was: *Since Nezami mentions his research into Arabic, Persian, Jewish, Christian and Pahlavi sources and books, then he is a Turk or else if he was of Iranian Origin, he would not boast of knowledge and ability to research into these languages!*

The argument lacks basis since it does not correspond to Nizami's verses, but is a invalid interpretation and an ethno-nationalistic extrapolation. Nor being proud of the capability of research into Arabic/Dari-Persian literature (as many Iranians are) has any ethnic bearing. First let us see what Nizami Ganjavi states in the Haft Paykar and Eskandarnama.

In Eskandarnama he states:

اثرهای آن شاه آفاق گرد
ندیدم نگاریده در یک نور
سخنها که چون گنج آگنده بود
به هر نسختی پراکنده بود
ز هر نسخه برداشتم مایهها
برو بستم از نظم پیرایهها
زیادت ز تاریخهای نوی
یهودی و نصرانی و پهلوی
گزیدم ز هر نامه‌ای نغز او
ز هر پوست پرداختم مغز
زبان در زبان گنج پرداختم
از آن جمله سر جمله‌های ساختم
ز هر یک زبان هر که آگه بود
زبانیش ز بیغاره کوتاه بود
در آن پرده کز راستی یافتم
سخن را سر زلف بر تافتم
وگر راست خواهی سخنهای راست
نشاید در آرایش نظم خواست
گر آرایش نظم از او کم کنم

به کم مایه بیتش فراهم کنم
همه کرده‌ی شاه گیتی خرام
درین یک ورق کاغذ آرم تمام

*The traces (deeds) of that monarch, world-wandering,
I saw not written in one book.
Speeches (subtleties) that were like stuffed treasure
Were scattered in every work.
I took up materials from every book;
I bound on them the ornaments of verse.
More than (besides) new histories,—
—Hebrew/Jewish, Nestorian/Christian, and Pahlavi—
I chose from every book its charm (excellence);
Took out from every husk (book) its brain (pith):
Gathered treasure (the Sikandar-Náma)—speech within speech (boundless);
And prepared from that total (of varied tongues) the sum total (the Sikandar-Náma).
Whosoever is acquainted with every language (in which the tale of Sikandar is related),
His tongue is short of criticism (on this work).
In that screen of history from which I found truth,
I twisted (arranged) the tip of the curl of (lustrous) speech.
And, if thou desirest truth;—true words,
It is not fit to seek in the ornament of verse.
If of it (speech) I diminish the decoration of verse,
I may put it together in couplets of little value (few and void of lustre).
Everything done by the king (Sikandar) world proudly traversing,
I may bring together complete in this single page of paper.*

And in the Haft Paykaer:

*Again I sought, from books concealed,
And scattered throughout the world's
I searched through books both fine and rare
for what would free sore hearts from care.
All chronicles of kings of yore
were gathered in one book of lore;
Already one of keenest mind
had ordered it in verse refined.
From that, some ruby dust remained,
shared from which others something feigned.
I, from those fragments, jeweller-wise,
this precious treasure cut to size,
So that the experts who assay
all efforts, this most worthy weigh.
That which was left by him half-said
say; the half-pierced pearl thread;*

*While that which I found right and true,
 just as before I've left to view.
 I strove that this fair jointure, too,
 should be adorned in foreign hue.
 Again I sought, from books concealed
 and scattered through the world's broad field;
 Those words/works in Dari (Khorasani Persian) and Araby's;
 Bukharis pen, and Tabari's; (a minority have viewed/translated it as Bukhari (Soghdian)
 and Tabari (Iranian dialect) both of them which have attested literature but majority
 consider it as Hadeeth of Bukhari and Tarikh of Tabari)
 From other texts, all scattered wide:
 each pearl, in hiding, cast aside.
 The pages coming to my hand
 I wrapped in leather, tied with band.
 When all was chosen, ordered well,
 when 'neath my pen's black ink all fell,
 A poem I wrote that would win praise,
 and not the scholars' laughter raise.
 This written temple I've adorned,
 with seven brides, like Magian Zand,
 (Julia Meysami: Haft Paykar a Medieval Persian Romance)*

So Nezami Ganjavi is simply stating his sources which were in different languages. For example if a random author states: "*I used sources that were scattered, whether in French, American English and Russian*", no one can obtain information about their father through this and then claim the person must have been a Turk (like it is falsely claimed for Nezami) just because they did not mention Turkish! So such weak (indeed none) arguments to derive the ethnic background of Mu'ayyad (Nezami's great ancestor) from such a simple non-ethnicity related statement. Or for example if modern books by Iranian authors mention the usage of Persian, Arabic and English sources for the book, it is precisely because such sources contain valuable information. They are not necessarily boasting about their knowledge of these languages! By the time of Haft Paykar, everyone already knew that Nezami was a master poet and he did not need to remind anyone that he knows Persian.

Nizami references the Shahnameh and other Dari books and Arabic books, precisely because his stories (*Eskandarnama, Bahram Nama* or *Haft Paykar, Khusraw o Shirin*) were based on Persian folklore and *Layli o Majnoon* being of Arabic origin. That is written sources on Alexander were in these books. For example in the Haft Paykar, he starts with referencing the story in the Shahnameh and then searches in other books of Dari (in the strict sense Khorasani Persian and as noted Qatran Tabrizi distinguishes between Persian and Dari and Nezami too by using Dari and Parsi in different places, most likely knew Dari was a subset of the larger Parsi/Persian group) and Arabic. Dari which is a subset of Persian language group, is the refined spoken and written Persian as opposed to rustic dialects which were scattered in the Iranian world.

Had Nizami wrote anything about Turkish folklore or had any connection with Turkish culture/civilization or knew Turkish or had access to Turkish literature, then he would have mentioned books or at least oral traditions that are in Turkish. So the ethno-ideological arguments lacks basis for many reason:

1)

Nizami does not “boast” about his knowledge of Persian language! He mentions that for his work (*Haft Paykar*), he researched out at many scattered works of Dari- Persian and Arabic literature. According to Julia Meysami: “[In the prologue to the Haft Paykar, Nizami describes his search for sources and gives pride to one: the Shahnama](#)”(Haft Paykar by Julia Meysami pg XXIII). So he is describing his search for sources. However, researching the Qur’an and Shahnameh are a source of pride for many speakers of Arabic and Dari-Persian. And people who recite the Qur’an or Shahnameh are generally admired by the public and this level of knowledge is much more than the average speakers of these languages.

2)

No Iranian, whether those that speak Dari-Persian [(Nizami mentioning Dari) or Iranian dialects (other versions of Persian and other Iranian dialects) in their family or Parsi distinguished from Dari-Persian as mentioned by Qatran, Masudi and Ibn Nadeem)] is born with the knowledge of Persian literature. This knowledge is obtained through many years of study and hard work. Assuming Nizami says he is “proud” of his knowledge of the language (which neither the original Persian or the Professional English translation support such an interpretation), many Iranians (both Dari Persian speakers and other Iranians) are proud of their research into Persian literature (Adabiyat-e-Farsi). Indeed it is a great honor to get a degree in Persian literature and research into Persian manuscripts from the Balkans to India. Many people who speak English as first language boast of their knowledge of English vocabulary, their research into the English literature or the their knowledge of spelling. Indeed the native speaker who wins the spelling-bee is proud of his/her knowledge of the English language and vocabulary. Many Arabs are proud of memorizing the Qur’an or part of it. Many Iranians memorize lines from Nizami, Hafez, Ferdowsi and are proud of their Persian language/literature knowledge. Nizami does not say anything about the knowledge of the Persian language (which is obvious by his work), but he is praising important works of Persian and Arabic literature by mentioning his sources.

3)

Hafez, Naser Khusraw and many other Iranians poets acknowledge their knowledge of Persian and the masterpieces they have created in Persian and are proud of their Persian poetry. They are proud of their work and mention its language. Indeed Nizami does boast elsewhere about his masterpiece in Persian, but so do Hafez, Ferdowsi and Naser Khusraw and other Persian poets mention their work explicitly in the Persian language. (Obvious for the reader, their work is in the Persian language but nevertheless by explicitly mentioning the Persian language by name, they acknowledge their knowledge of the language and the masterpieces they have created).

ز شعر دلکش حافظ کسی بود آگاه
که لطف طبع سخن گفتن دری داند
(حافظ)

بسی رنج بردم درین سال سی
عجم زنده کردم بدین پارسی
(فردوسی)

شکر شکن شوند طوطیان هند
زین قند پارسی که بنگاله میرود
(حافظ)

من آنم که در پای خوکان نریزم
مر این قیمتی در لفظ دری را
(ناصر خسرو)

4)

Indeed a more logical consequence of the verses of Nizami is the fact that he points to many scattered (hence a wide geographical area) sources that were examined for his story (including the Shahname) in different languages but not once does he mention anything about Turkic/Turkish sources or materials of Turkic civilization. That is Nizami does not mention anything about Turkish sources or books in Turkish or oral sources or etc. Many times he mentions Ferdowsi and other Persian sources as his sources but not once does he mention any Turkic source. This once again shows there was no high Turkish culture or civilization in Azerbaijan or the Caucasus at his time and books did not exist in that language at the time. Also if there was any Turkish work available say from Uighyurs or etc., it shows Nezami did not know about it or did not read Turkish or did not have any influence on him.

It also shows he did not know Turkish or else he could have mentioned Turkic folklore if it had any effect upon his culture or upbringing. But he never mentions anything about Turkic sources nor do any of his stories (like *Khusraw o Shirin*, *Eskandarnama*, *Bahram Nama* or *Haft Paykar*, *Layli o Majnoon*, and *Makhzan al-Asrar*) have anything to do with Turkish folklore/myths. As shown later, he considers the Persian story of Khusraw and Shirin as the sweetest story of all time. Had he any knowledge or affection for any Turkic folklore, he could have mentioned such a work once in his more than 30,000 Persian verses. Indeed, in the *Eskandarnama*, he mentions again the *Shahnameh* and books in Pahlavi (probably Zoroastrian books), Nasrani (Christian) and Eברי (Hebrew/Judaism). Whether this is meant as religion (whose books were translated into Persian or Arabic) or languages (Pahlavi is a language rather than Magian/Zoroastrian and it is a very hard language to learn unless one knows modern Persian which is its descendant), once again shows that he does not mention anything about Turkic sources when writing his stories.

Incorrect argument: Nizami praises Alexander, so “he must have been a Turk”

The argument was already refuted in the introduction. But it is worth quoting more sources (like Prof. Chelkowski below) who has analyzed the similarities between Eskandar Nama and Shahnameh. Also we must add that the argument is easily countered because Nizami Ganjavi has praised many Sassanid Kings who were major enemies of Turkish empires (Gok-Turks and Khazars), then he must not have been a Turk. On the other hand, praise of Alexander was part of the Iranian-Islamic culture and Sa’adi and Ferdowsi, for example, have also praised Alexander.

The word of Dr. Jafarov (in news report brought from beginning) shows ultra-nationalistic fever is very high with regards to Nizami Ganjavi. Note Dr. Jafarov’s unsound assertion:

“It is a fact Nizami Ganjavi praised Macedonian Alexander, who raised [*sic.* he meant razed] Iran, while other Persian poets showed Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer. If Nizami Ganjavi had been a Persian poet, he would also have shown Alexander as a bloodthirsty killer instead of praising him. It proves that Nizami is a genius Azerbaijani poet. Nizami’s creative works are in the spirit of Azerbaijan-Turk”

What Dr. Jafarov fails to mention is that Nizami Ganjavi states that Alexander followed all of the traditions and customs of the Kiyani kings (Achaemenid kings) with the exception of Zoroastrianism.

سکندر که شاه جهان گرد بود
به کار سفر توشه پرورد بود
به هر تختگاهی که بنهاد پی
نگهداشت آیین شاهان کی
خردنامه ها را ز لفظ دری
به یونان زبان کرد کسوت گری

We now quote Professor Peter Chelkowski, who is an authority on the Eskandarnama of Nizami:

Robert Hartle opens his article entitled “The image of Alexander the Great in Seventeenth Century France” with a statement: ‘When Alexander the Great had conquered Persia he began to adopt Persian ways; it should be no surprise that when he conquered seventeenth century France he began to act like a Frenchman’

...

Alexander was glorified by the Muslims as a divine agent, a prophet-king and the blessed conquerer of the lands that were to become the stronghold of Islam. To some Muslims, Islam was a realization of Alexander’s “koine”—a commonwealth where people could live in harmony and in peace of heart and mind. In this atmosphere attempts were made to make out Alexander not only a Muslim but a Persian as well.

....

The great Muslim historian Tabari (9th/10th century A.D.) (we note: also of Iranian origin) gives several accounts of Alexander based on various sources. In his presentation of the Persian origin of Alexander, he describes Darius the Third as an oppressive ruler (we note: Alexander actually praises Darius before Darius dies and asks for advice from Darius). Tabari's description of Alexander's refusal to pay tribute to Darius, the war of Alexander with Darius and the death of Darius, reappear in Nizami's account. Similarities between Tabari and Nizami are also to be found in the description of Alexander's treatment of knowledge, science, philosophy, and Alexander's journeys to India, China, Tibet and the "Land of Darkness".

..
However, it was not Tabari directly, but Ferdowsi who was Nizami's source of inspiration and material in composing *Iskandarnameh*. Nizami constantly alludes to the *Shahnameh* in his writing, especially in the prologue to the *Iskandarnameh*. It seems that he was always fascinated by the work of Firdawsi and made it a goal of his life to write an heroic epic of the same stature. And so, for his last masnavi Nizami chose as a theme the story of Alexander, which is recounted in Firdawsi's *Shahnameh*. Even without the Pseudo-Callisthenes model, Firdawsi had been able to look for the continuity of Iranian spirit from prehistoric times and was able to consider Alexander as a great hero in the history of Persian civilization. Persia was the only country which had preserved not only her language after the Arab-Muslim invasion but also many aspects of her national identity and character.

In fact, although Alexander conquered Iran, he was soon conquered by Persian customs and ways of life. In many aspects he was so overwhelmed by Persian civilization that he became more Persian than the Persians. He tried to make a blend of the Greek and Persian civilizations – even genetically, when he sponsored mass marriages between his troops and Persian women. He himself married Roxane (Rowshanak) the daughter of Sogdian (we note: Sogdians are another Iranian people) prince—not the daughter of Darius the Third, as both Firdawsi and Nizami believed.

Like Alexander, Arabs, Turks, Mongols and other people who overran the Iranian plateau also came under the spell of Persian culture. Foreign invaders remained to become contributors and patrons of Persian art and culture. To give one example, some of Nizami's benefactors were of Turkic stock.

As previously mentioned, it seems that Nizami's favorite pastime was reading Firdawsi's monumental epic *Shahnameh* (*The book of Kings*). Firdawsi's treatment of Alexander in this great heroic poem was by no means negligible, but in Nizami's opinion it was not complete and he wanted to write a poetic supplement to it. After several years of research he gave up this idea and decided that the subject called for a new and independent work. He still, however, acknowledged his indebtedness to his great master, Firdawsi, and considered himself a respectful follower of that literary pioneer. He, therefore, chose for the *book of Alexander* one heroic epic verse known as *Mutaqarib*, which Firdawsi employed in his *Shahnameh*.

(Chelkowski, P. "Nizami's *Iskandarnameh*:" in *Colloquio sul poeta persiano Nizami e la leggenda Iranica di Alessandro magno*, Roma, 1977).

Without the understanding of Persian language and its classical literature (Ferdowsi, Sanai, Qatran, Khaqani...) the understanding of the work of Nizami Ganjavi will also be deficient. Alexander the Great was also identified with Dhul-Qarnain of the Qur'an and many Persian poets have praised him. He is after all an Islamic figure and Nizami was also a devout Muslim.

For example besides the positive outlook of Ferdowsi, Sa'adi also praises Alexander:

ایشان در حکایت آخر از باب اول از کتاب گلستان خود به صراحت گفته که:
اسکندر رومی را گفتند شرق و غرب عالم را به چه گرفتی در حالی که پادشاهان پیشین
را که مکت و قدرت بیش از این بود اینچنین امری مقدر نشد؟
گفتا بعون خدای عزوجل در هر سرزمینی که وارد شدم رعیت آن نیازدم و نام بزرگان آن
جز به نیکی یاد نکردم.

The Encyclopedia Iranica also discusses the difference between Perso-Islamic and Perso-Zoroastrian view on Alexander. Persian historians and poets (including Ferdowsi) according to Prof. Hanaway present Alexander as a just king:

“Two aspects of the story are important in differentiating the versions of the Alexander romance that descend from the Greek through the Syriac from those influenced by Persian oral tradition. The first is the genealogy of Alexander. In the Pseudo-Callisthenes tale, and the Syriac version, Alexander is the son (by an illicit union) of the Egyptian Pharaoh Nectanebos and Philip of Macedon's wife Olympias. In many of the Persian versions, including that of Ferdowsi, Alexander is the son of Darab (Darius II?) and the daughter of Philip of Macedon. The second aspect is the way in which Alexander himself is viewed in the text. In the Persian versions of the story, Alexander is usually identified with Dhu'l-Qarnayn, a prophet mentioned in the Koran 16:84 (see Watt). In the early New Persian commentary on the Koran entitled *Tarjoma-ye tafsir-e Tabari* Dhul-Qarnayn is mentioned twice in connection with the wall of Gog and Magog (I, p. 196; IV, p. 918). Stories of Alexander/Dhul-Qarnayn appear in popular lives of the saints, such as Abu Eshaq Neyshaburi's *Qesas al-Anbiyya* (pp. 321-33 and in a chapbook version, Kabul, n. d., pp. 94-101). Among the historians, Tabari (I, pp. 692-704; tr., IV, pp. 87-95) gives the fullest summary of the tale of Alexander, including the birth story in which Alexander and Dara are half-brothers, the details of which appear in various Persian versions. Neither the historians (Tabari, Masudi, Dinavari, and Hamza Esáfahani) nor Ferdowsi develop the prophetic role of Alexander which the connection with Du'l-Qarnayn suggests, presenting Alexander as a conquering hero and a just king. Nezami Ganjavi develops the prophetic side fully in what is the most extensive surviving version in New Persian”.

(Encyclopedia Iranica, “Eskandar Nama”, William L. Hanaway)

And according to the Encyclopedia of Islam (Iskandar-Nama):

In the *Shahnama*, Firdawsī already makes Iskandar an exemplary figure, whom the companionship of Aristotle helps to rise still higher, by the path of wisdom and moderation, in the direction of abstinence and contempt for this world. And Firdawsī laid

stress on the defeat of Dārā (the Darius of the Greeks) as something desired by “the rotation of the Heavens”.

..
At the time of Nizami, however, Islam is from then onwards well established in Iran, and it is the prophetic and ecumenical aspect of his destiny that the poet makes evident in his hero. As a learned Iranian poet, Nizami, who demonstrates his eclecticism in the information he gives (he says, “I have taken from everything just what suited me and I have borrowed from recent histories, Christian, Pahlavi and Jewish ... and of them I have made a whole”), locates the story of his hero principally in Iran. He makes him the image of the Iranian “knight”, peace-loving and moderate, courteous and always ready for any noble action. Like all Nizami's heroes, he conquers the passions of the flesh, and devotes his attention to his undertakings and his friendships. These features appear in the account, which follows ancient tradition, of his conduct towards the women of the family of Darius, in his brotherly attitude on the death of that ruler, in his behaviour towards queen Nushaba (the Kaydāf of Firdawsi, the Kandake of the pseudo-Callisthenes) whom he defends against the Russians. (Abel, A.; Ed(s). "Iskandar Nama." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007.)

We note that in the Shahnameh, Alexander the Great even visits Mecca and in the Shahnameh, he is actually half Iranian. Nizami Ganjavi praises Ferdowsi (who definitely was not a Turk and according to many sources his Shahnameh had a certain anti-Turkish bias) and the Shahnameh had an important role in the Iskandar-nama (as well as *Haft Paykar* and *Khursaw o Shirin*). Neither Tabari nor Sa'adi nor Ferdowsi and nor many other Iranians (many whom have written Quranic exegesis relating Alexander to Dhul Qarnain) were of “Turk” background, but they have praised Alexander who was identified with the Muslim Dhul-Qarnain. Indeed, he was popularly identified with the Quranic Dhul-Qarnain by many Muslim history books and Quranic commentaries. This popular identification (some modern Muslim scholars have now disclaimed this) was a sufficient enough reason to embrace him for any believing Muslim regardless of background.

Also the argument of the likes of Dr. Jafarov can be turned on its head. Can he claim Ferdowsi was a Turk because he also had a positive view of Alexander!? Or as we already noted that the Shahnameh is considered as a foreign tale by some nationalists: *“The original opera had been based on “Kaveh, the Blacksmith”. However, such a plot would absolutely have jeopardized their lives. First of all, it was based on a foreign tale: Kaveh was a mythical figure of ancient Persia, memorialized by 10th century Ferdowsi in Persian verse in the “Shahnameh” (Book of the Kings)”* (Betty Blair, Why Hajibeyov wrote the Opera Koroghlu, Azerbaijan International, Summer 2006)

Bahram Gur who is praised by Nezami also fought and defeated the Turks in the Haft Paykar. So using the argument of Dr. Jafarov, we can say Nezami was not a Turk.

We also note as per some authors that although Ferdowsi was a pious Muslim, “*the Shahnameh nevertheless has a certain anti-Arab and anti-Turk bias*”. Yet Nizami Ganjavi praises Ferdowsi, considers himself as a successor of Ferdowsi, reads the Shahnameh as his favorite pastime, has chosen his stories from the Shahnameh and finally advises the son of the Shirvanshah to read the Shahnameh.

Finally in the Eskandarnama, Alexander attacks Azarabadegan (traditional Iranian Azerbaijan) and puts out the fire temples. Yet some ethnic nationalists claim that even Zoroastrianism is an Altaic religion and Zoroaster was of an Altaic background and Iranians rewrote the Avesta which was originally in Turkish! So this way of argumentation would conflict with their other non-scientific theories.

Invalid arguments about Idioms, Dedictees, Eldiguzids, Sunni and Shi'i and other invalid arguments.

Alleged Claim of Turkish Idioms

We should also note that some nationalists like Javad Heyat claim that Nezami Ganjavi uses Turkish phrases and expressions and then translated them into Persian!(Note pan-Turks have recently claimed that the Avesta Zoroastrian holy book was originally Turkish but it was translated to Iranian languages and its original was lost!)

For example they claim the following expressions are originally Azerbaijani Turkish (a language and ethnicity that was not formed yet) and were translated by Nezami. Yet they cannot show any Turkish books or writings that has them before Nezami (nor is there such a book from the area during the time of Nezami). There is a large overlap between phrases in Arabic, Persian and other Islamic languages and had they sift through the work of Persian expressions or even Khorasani poets, they would have easily found such or similar expressions. We should note also that using phrases of many languages (if their origin can be proven) has no bearing on ethnicity but at the time of Nezami there was no Azerbaijani-Turkish identity, ethnicity or language. However there were Turkmen(Oghuz) nomads and even if they had Turkic folkloric expression, there is no proof they did not borrow it or Nezami used such expression or etc. But by itself, this has no bearing on ethnicity.

We will just give few examples.

Javad Heyat claims that the first verse of the following couplet by Nezami:

بیا تا کج نشینم راست گویم
چه خواربها کزو نامد برویم

Is taken from the Turkish expression:

گول آگری اوتوراق دوز دانشاق

Where-as if he looked under the Dehkhoda dictionary:

کج نشستن

He would have found this from Anvari, a Khorasani poet who lived before Nezami has used it already:

بیا تا کج نشینم راست گویم

که کجی مانم آرد راستی سور

(انوری)

بر جهان افکن نظر پس کج نشین و راست گو

کز خوشی و خرمی اندرخور نظاره نیست

(انوری)

We note the first verse is an exact replica used by Nezami and was already in use by Persian Khorasani poets before him. Sometimes Nezami Ganjavi even gives his source for the phrase and yet Javad Heyat has deleted the first verse:

چه خوش گفت آن نهاوندی به طوسی

که مرگ خر بود سگ را عروسی

Translation:

How sweet said the man from Nahavand to the one in Tus

That the death of the donkey is the wedding of the dog.

Javad Heyat for example deleted the first line about Nahavand and Tus (two Iranian speaking regions then and now) for his reader and then claims the phrase is taken from the Turkish:

آت اولوب- ایتین بایرامیدیر

Or another one is:

کلاغی تک کبک در گوش کرد

تک خویشتن را فراموش کرد

(نظامی - تک در اینجا به معنی رفتن/دویدن است و طرز راه رفتن پرندگان است که تک-پا میروند)

He claims it is taken from the Turkish:

قارغا ایستهدی کهلیک یئرشی یئرسیین - اوز یئرشینی ده ایتیردی

Whereas there is an exact and famous Persian expression:

کلاغ راه رفتن کبک را بیاموزد راه رفتن خود را هم فراموش کرد(امثال و حکم دهخدا)

And this uses exactly the name of the same birds.

Another one is:

هرکسی در بهانه تیز هشتست

کس نگوید دوغ من ترشست

Translation: "No one calls their Doogh (Persian Yogurt drink which in Turkish is called Ayran) tart (Torsh) is from the Turkish expression:

هیچ کس اوز آیرینا تورش دئمز

Where-as the words Hich Kas and Torsh in this Turkish expression are Persian and furthermore, Dehkhoda has the following Persian expression in his book on phrases and wisdom which matches exact words of Nezami:

هیچ کس به دوغ خود ترش نمیگوید.

Another claim is that terms like Del-Dookhtan (to sow heart) is unique to Turkish and was translated exactly. We note that Attar uses the exact same term:

پاره دل زانم که در دل دوختن
نرگش تو پارهیی کار آمدست
(عطار)

To claim that phrases used by Nezami are from Turkish, one has to show that similar phrases do not exist in any other language in the region and never existed in any language and that the Turkish phrases came before Nezami. One can show many phrases used by previous Persian poets and almost exactly copied by Nezami. For example one can easily demonstrate the following verses were taken from Ferdowsi by Nezami (as we also mentioned Anvari before) or Gorgani:

بیا تا کج نشینم راست گویم

که کجی ماتم آرد راستی سور

(انوری)

بیا تا کج نشینم راست گویم
چه خواربها کزو نامد برویم
(نظامی)

فردوسی:
چنان دان که شاهی و پیغمبری
دو گوهر بود در یک انگشتی

نظامی:
نزد خرد شاهی و پیغمبری
چو دو نگین است در انگشتی

فردوسی:
جهان را بلندی و پستی تویی
ندانم چی ای هر چه هستی تویی

نظامی:
همه نیستند آنچه هستی تویی
پناه بلندی و پستی تویی

فخرالدین اسعدی گرگانی:
شوم خود را بیندازم از آن کوه
که چون جشنیبود مرگ بانبوه

نظامی:
سخنگو سخن پاکیزه راند
که مرگ بانبوه را جن خواند

Also many examples from Persian books like Kashf al-Mahjub, Mersad al'Ibad, Balami's history, Jawama' Al-Hekaayaat, as well as the Muslim holy books of Quran and Hadeeth have been collected and compared to the works of Nezami:

Three or four example of the many suffices here:

در کتاب کشف المجهوب آمده:
«شیخ ابولحسن سالبه گفتی مرید را در حکم گریهای بودن بهتر از آنچه اندر حکم خود، از آنچه صحبت با
غیر بودن از برای خدا بود، و صحبت با خود از برای پروردن هوا بود»
در کتاب مرصاد العباد:
«و مشایخ از آنجا گفتهاند در تصرف گریه‌اشی به از آنکه در تصرف خود باشی»
نظامی:
در عشق گریه گر خود چیرباشی
از آن بهتر که با خود شیر باشی

Two examples from the Quran:

فتبارک‌الله احسن الخالقین(قرآن)
نظامی:
بر صورت من ز روی هستی
آرایش آفرین تو بستی

انا نحن نحیی و نمیت و الینا المصیر(قرآن)

نظامی:
پدید آور خل عالم تویی
تو میرانی و زنده کنهم تویی

Going beyond the region, this author had seen an article where 100 phrases from English and Persian were put side to side and they were very similar. For example:

دیگ به دیگ میگه سیاه

The pot is calling the kettle black.

دو صد گفته چو نیم کردار نیست

Action speaks louder than words

سراپا گوش بودن

To be all ears

هرچه باد بادا

Be it so

بالا تر از سیاهی رنگی نیست

Black will take no hue

این نیز بگذرد

This too shall pass.

از آب گلالود ماهی گرفتن

They are fishing in muddy waters

Given the similarities above between English and Persian phrases, it is obvious that phrases in Iranian languages (Persian, Middle Persian, Kurdish, Luri, Mazandarani, and other Iranic languages/dialects) and other neighboring languages including Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Armenian and etc, will have similarities. Also many of the verses of Nezami have been identified as being translations of the Qur'an and Hadeeth which permeates many different Islamic cultures. Also in the Caucasus, Kurdish, Talyshi, Tati Persian, and other non-Iranian languages like Armenian, Georgian, Turkic and etc. will exchange phrases, much like music, food and dances have similarities in that region as well. Or just like similarities in music instruments (many of them the same), food and musical mode has risen due to geographic proximity. So nationalists like Javad Heyat

have made an argument that is not valid. They did not look close enough at Persian phraseology and other Iranian languages, besides phrases used by other Persian poets and also phrases that are common to the region.

Eldiguzids-Feudal lords (Atabekan) of Azerbaijan

Another argument used to claim Nezami as a Turk was that he lived under the Eldiguzids or (“*Atabeks (feudal lords) of Azerbaijan*” used by later historians) for almost all of his life. The argument despite being very poor is sometimes repeated. It is as silly as to claim Homer was a Turk because he lived in modern Turkey or Ferdowsi was a Turk because the Ghaznavids controlled Tus or Fakhr al-Din Asad Gorgani (the writer of *Vis o Ramin*) was a Turk because the Seljuqs ruled Iran or that a certain Parsi scholar from India is British because the British ruled India. Despite this, some further clarifications are made.

First the name Azerbaijan in the 12th century denoted mainly the area below the Aras River. The etymology of the name is Iranian, and the forms Nezami uses for this name in the *Eskandarnama* (آذربادگان/آذرآبادگان) are in the exact form of *Shahnameh* and another form he uses is in the exact form of the Persian love story *Vis o Ramin* (آذربایگان). So this name is not related in any way or form to Turkic cultures in the 12th century. The ethnonym *Azerbaijani* was only chosen in the late 19th/early 20th century and became accepted in 1930s for Turkic speaking people who speak the regional (Azerbaijani) version of the Oghuz language. So the term Azerbaijan in its 12th century form is independent of the ethnic term Azerbaijani which was chosen much later. The ethnic term Azerbaijani for example was not even chosen when the formation of the Azerbaijani Turkic speaking group took place in the 14th-16th century.

A source very close to Nezami Ganjavi's is the *history of Jalal al-Din Mangubirti (reigned in 1220-1231)* written by a high official of his court Shihab al-Din al-Nasawi (d. 1249). He fled with his king, the Khwarzshah Jalal al-Din Mangubiri before the Mongols to Tabriz and from there to Mughan. He was able to escape in the last battle of the Khwarzshah with the Mongols in 1231 and passed away in Aleppo in 1249.

We note the many times this book whose author spend time and lived in the area differentiates between Arran and Azerbaijan.

Nasawi, Shahab al-Din, “The adventures of Jalal al-Din Mangubirti”, Bongah Publishers, 1344 (1964).

“اتابک سعد ابن زنگی سلطان پارس و اتابک ازبک بن محمد صاحب اران و آذربایجان را طمع در ملک عراق مستحکم شد” (صفحه 22)

Translation:

Atabek Sa'ad ibn Zangi, the Sultan of Pars (modern Fars Province and surrounding areas) and Atabek Uzbek ibn Muhammad, the Sahib (ruler) of Arran and Azerbaijan strengthened their desire to capture 'Arak

"و چون سلطان جلال الدین آذربیکان و اران را بگرفت" (صفحه 24)

Translation:

And since the Sultan Jalal al-Din took Azerbaijan and Arran”

"بعد از آن که اتابک از حدود همدان گریخته و جان برده ، و فرموده که رسم خطبه و سکه در آران و آذربایجان به نام سلطان کند" (صفحه 26)

After when Atabek fled the area of Hamadan and kept his life, he ordered that the Khutba (Friday Prayer) and the coins in Arran and Azerbaijan be in the name of the Sultan.

"و این قیاس در سایر خراسان و خوارزم و مازندران و اران و آذربایجان و غور و غزنی و بامیان و سیستان تا حدود هند مطرد است.." (ص 82)

“And this account is also valid in Khorasan and Mazandaan and Arran and Azerbaijan and Ghur and Ghazni and Bamiyan and Sistan till India”

The term Arran has always been overwhelmingly distinguished from Armenia and Azerbaijan in the course of its long history. Although some authors have contradictorily confused Armenia, Arran and Azerbaijan but this has not been the case for most medieval authors. Indeed the current author has examined 20+ maps and has not found a single map that claims the territory of Azerbaijan as above the Aras prior to the 20th century. Several historians also attest to the fact that the name Azerbaijan was chosen for political reasons in the 20th century.

Vasily Barthold states: *“Shirvan is not used that way, to encompass the territory of the now day Azerbaijan Republic. Shirvan is "not that big" with the main city of Shemakha, cities like Ganja and others were never part of Shirvan, and whenever it is necessary to choose a name that will encompass all regions of the republic of Azerbaijan, the name Aran can be chosen. But the term Azerbaijan was chosen because when the Azerbaijan republic was created, it was assumed that this and the Persian Azerbaijan will be one entity, because the population of both has a big similarity. On this basis, the word Azerbaijan was chosen. Of course right now when the word Azerbaijan is used it has two meanings as Persian Azerbaijan and as a republic, its confusing and a questions rises as to which Azerbaijan is being talked about.”*

Vladimir Minorsky states:

The territory of the present-day Soviet republic of Azarbayjan roughly corresponds to the ancient Caucasian Albania (in Armenian Alovan-k', or Alvan-k', in Arabic Arran > al-Ran)

Vladimir Minorsky states:

Historically the territory of the republic corresponds to the Albania of the classical authors (Strabo, xi, 4; Ptolemy, v, 11), or in Armenian Alvan-k, and in Arabic Arran. The part of the republic lying north of the Kur (Kura) formed the kingdom of Sharwan (later Shirwan). After the collapse of the Imperial Russian army Baku was protectively occupied by the Allies (General Dunsterville, 17 August-14 September 1918) on behalf of Russia. The Turkish troops under Nuri Pasha occupied Baku on 15 September 1918 and reorganized the former province under the name of Azarbaydĵān—as it was explained, in view of the similarity of its Turkish-speaking population with the Turkish-speaking population of the Persian province of Ādharbaydĵān.

Professor Bert Fragner also mentions:

In the case of Azerbaijan, there is another irrational assault on sober treatment of history to be witnessed: its denomination. The borders of historical Azerbaijan crossed the Araxcs to the north only in the case of the territory of Nakhichevan. Prior to 1918, even Lenkoran and Astara were perceived as belonging not to Azerbaijan proper but to Talysh, an area closely linked to the Caspian territory of Gilan. Since antiquity, Azerbaijan has been considered as the region centered around Tabriz, Ardabil, Maraghch, Orumiyeh and Zanzan in today's (and also in historical) Iran. The homonym republic consists of a number of political areas traditionally called Arran, Shirvan, Sheki, Ganjeh and so on. They never belonged to historical Azerbaijan, which dates back to post-Achaemenid, Alexandrian 'Media Atropatene'. Azerbaijan gained extreme importance under (and after) the Mongol Ilkhanids of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when it was regarded as the heartland of Iran.

...

Under Soviet auspices and in accordance with Soviet nationalism, historical Azerbaijan proper was reinterpreted as 'Southern Azerbaijan', with demands for liberation and, eventually, for 'reunification with Northern (Soviet) Azerbaijan a breathtaking manipulation. No need to point to concrete Soviet political activities in this direction, as in 1945-46 etc. The really interesting point is that in the independent former Soviet republics this typically Soviet ideological pattern has long outlasted the Soviet Union.

(Bert G. Fragner, 'Soviet Nationalism': An Ideological Legacy to the Independent Republics of Central Asia' in" in Van Schendel, Willem(Editor). Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World: Nationalism, Ethnicity and Labour in the Twentieth Century. London, GBR: I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2001)

“Azarbaydĵan comprises the northwestern corner of the Iranian plateau, from the Qizil Uzan and Tarum Highlands in the south of the Aras (Araxes) in the north. Arran, i.e. the territory further to the north, between the Aras and the Kur River and largely identical with the former Soviet Republic of Azarbaydĵan, was usually considered a separate region, even though it was sometimes administered together with Azarbaydĵan proper.”

(Peter Christensen, The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History

of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1993)

“Although Azerbaijan was a geographical entity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term was only used to identify the province in northwest Persia. The Safavids, at one time, for revenue purposes, included some of the lands north of the Arax river as part of the province of Azerbaijan. This practice gradually fell out of use after the fall of Safavids. To Mirza Jamal and Mirza Adigozal Beg (comment: two Caucasian Turcophone writers), as well as other eighteenth century and nineteenth-century authors, Azerbaijan referred to the region located south of the Arax river”(George Bournoutian, “History of Qarabagh: An Annotated Translation of Mirza Jamal Javanshir Qarabaghi’s Tarikh-e Qarabagh.” Mazda Publishers, 1994)

Be that it may (as this is not the main point of the article), what is seen is that Nasawi, who travelled to the area, distinguishes Arran from Azerbaijan. Also Nezami Ganjavi mentions Arran, Sherwan, Armenia and Azarabadegan, thus the name Arran and Sherwan were in use at that time and the area of Sherwan under Shirwanshahs and the area of Arran, was not denoted as Azerbaijan.

We already mentioned that Nezami Ganjavi also praises his patrons as Kings of Iran and Kings of Molk-e-Ajam (Persia). Thus this by itself shows that Nezami saw his region as part of the Iranian cultural region.

Second flaw with the argument is that “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan” or in English Atabeks of Azerbaijan or more precisely “Feudal-Lords of Azerbaijan” was simply a title. The term Azerbaijan is no more than a geographical designation used by later historians to distinguish between various minor rulers who are under nominal Seljuq ruler but ruled autonomously and sometimes even controlled the dynasty. Also there were other Atabek (feudal lord) dynasties in Mosul, Shaam (Syria), Luristan, Fars, Maragheh and etc.

Indeed, Sa’adi of Shiraz does not become a Turk because he lived and was patronized by Atabek Sa’ad ibn Zangi. Ferdowsi does not become a Turk because he lived under the Ghaznavids and Nizam al-Molk or Ghazali do not become Turks because they lived under the Seljuqs. None of these regions were ethnically Turkic at the time, especially in their urban centers. The reason later historian called the ruling family “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan” rather than Arran is that Azerbaijan is the more important and wider land and these two and more were under the control of these rulers (although acknowledging Seljuq supremacy but effectively ruling as the main power). And the reason they don’t use “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan, Jebal, Arran” because it is too long. But there is no coin or map or text from the era of Eldiguzids which calls them “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan”. The term Eldiguzids is more popular as it is in Encyclopedia of Islam, but Iranica which uses Persian terms and started with “A” (trying to be comprehensive as possible), has opted for “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan”. It should also be noted that the Eldiguzids origin is Kypchak Turk which is different than the Oghuz Turks whose Turkish dialect is now prevalent in Azerbaijan, Anatolia and Arran/Sherwan.

And we point out Azerbaijan is an Iranian name, there was an old Iranian languages (denoted by Azari/Fahlavi in the area) and the ethnonym Azerbaijani for Turkic speakers is a much later phenomenon and the general ethnonym for Turkic speakers was only accepted in the 1930s in the USSR. The ethnic minded theorists who try to detach Nezami from Iranian civilization, should recognize that the concept of nation-state did not exist back then. While the greatest territory of the Eldiguzids was most Azerbaijan (hence the name given to them later as “Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan but excluding the areas of Maragha), the population of Urban areas was Iranian and Christian Armenians and other groups. A best proof of this is the city of Tabriz and the book Safina Tabriz from the Ilkhanid era which we alluded to earlier. It was shown in this book that not a single manuscript is in Turkish and the local language (called Zaban-e-Tabrizi or the Tabrizi tongue) was an Iranic/Persian dialect. Another proof is the Nozhat al-Majales by Jamal Khalil Shirvani and mentioning 24+ Persian poets from Ganja alone. This even after 100 years after the demise of Eldiguzids, places like Tabriz were not Turkified in speech.

Third flaw with this argument is that just like the Saljuqs (whom sometimes had tight control and sometimes were controlled by the regional lords specially the Eldiguzids), the Eldiguzids were Persianate in culture and language. The best proof of this is that not a single verse or line in Turkish has existed from their court where-as one can discern hundreds of thousands of Persian poetry from their court. Even the name of famous architects like Ajami Naxchavani (the Persian Naxchvani) shows that the Eldiguzids were much like the Seljuqids and Ghaznavids, and did not patronize or do anything for Turkic culture. So they cannot be really considered “Turkic” in the cultural sense and their ethnicity like the Seljuqs would have become diluted due to intermarriages with high class dynasties (some possibly Christian). Ethnically, many of their viziers were Persian as well as the urban Muslim centers which were Iranian and Iranian speaking and the flood of Turkomen nomads were not yet settled at that time (which takes many generations where-as the Turkomen nomads came after the Seljuq invasion and in reality Nizami’s ancestry is recorded before the Seljuq invasion).

Nezami Ganjavi himself praises the Eldiguzids as the King of the Persian lands which obviously shows that the area was associated with Iranian people and culture:

در آن بخشش که رحمت عام کردند
 دو صاحب را محمد نام کردند
 یکی ختم نبوت گشته ذاتش
 یکی ختم ممالک بر حیاتش
 یکی برج عرب را تا ابد ماه
 یکی ملک عجم را جاودان شاه

*In that day that they bestowed mercy upon all,
 Two great ones were given the name Muhammad,
 One who's pure essence was the seal of prophecy,
 The other who is the Kingdom's Seal, in his own days
 One whose house/zodiac is moon of the Arabs*

The other who is the everlasting Shah of Realm of Persians

In praising the rulers of Shirwan (who sometimes extended their rule beyond Shirwan), Nizami again mentions:

این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان
شروان چه که شهریار ایران

*This book is better to be written
A young peacock is better to have a mate
Specially for a king like the Shah of Shirwan
Not only Shirwan, but the Shahriyar (Prince, Ruler) of all Iran*

Nizami Ganjavi calls upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH &HP):

سوی عجم ران منشین در عرب
زرده روز اینک و شب‌دیز شب
ملک برآرای و جهان تازه کن
هر دو جهان را پر از آوازه کن

*Do not stay in Arabia, come to Persia
Here are the light steeds of night and day*

So the area at that time was considered part of the Persian ethnic and cultural region. He has used the term Molk-e-Ajam (Persia) and Iran for his land and both Azerbaijan and the urban cities of Trans-Caucasia were ethnically Iranian at the time.

The Persian poet Khaqani(1126-1198) has used "Iran" thirty times in his Diwan.

از هند رفته در عجم،
ایران زمین کرده ارم

*From India he has gone to 'Ajam (Persia),
has made Iran a blessed Garden like Iram*

So in summary, there was no nation-state in the 12th century, the bulk of the population living under feudal dynasties who are called by historians as Atabekan-e-Azerbaijan, Atabekan-e-Mosul, Atabekan-e-Shaam, Atabekan-e-Fars, Atabekan-eMaragheh, Atabekan-e-Luristan, Atabekan-e-Yazd and etc. were ethnically non-Turkic and the bulk in Iranian plateau and Muslim urban cities in Trans-Cauacasia were Iranian. The urban population of Azerbaijan was not Turkic at the time, as can be seen clearly by the books Safina of Tabriz and Nozhat al-Majales. The name Azerbaijan itself is Iranian and has been part of Iranian history, the Turkification of it came much later although the

Turcophone population there today have also become connected to Iran due to many reasons. One needs to define the term (culturally, geographically, ethnically) as it was in the 12th century and not redefine it based on definitions of 19th/20th century centuries. Culturally, the Muslim culture of the area was part of the greater Iranian world as mentioned by both Khaqani and Nezami for the designation of their land. Thus this argument is flawed as claiming an Armenian author who lived in Ganja during the Shaddadid era was a Kurd because Shaddadids were Kurds or that Sa'adi was a Turk because he lived under Atabek Sa'ad ibn Zangi.

Invalid arguments: Dedictees of Nezami were Turks so Nezami was a Turk!

Another argument that this author has encountered was this: “Nezami dedicated four of his five works to Turkic kings and only one to the Iranian Shirwanshah, so he was Turkic!”.

First, the argument is of course baseless since the dedictees have nothing to do with the ethnic background of Nizami's father. For example Teimurids, Seljuqids, Ghaznavids had many Persian poets in the courts who dedicated their works solely to these rulers. None of these become Turks! Where-as Nezami himself was not even attached to any particular court and was not a court poet.

Second all of Iran and Persia except for minor dynasties like Shirwanshahs were under the rule of Turkic rulers. At the same time, these Turkic rulers would be as foreign to modern Turkic nationalists as Persians are. Since these Turkic rulers adopted Persian custom, language and promoted Persian culture and there is not absolutely a single verse of Turkish from the courts of Seljuqs, Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis and etc. at this time.

“It is to be noted that the Seljuks, those Turkomans who became sultans of Persia, did not Turkify Persia-no doubt because they did not wish to do so. On the contrary, it was they who voluntarily became Persians and who, in the manner of the great old Sassanid kings, strove to protect the Iranian populations from the plundering of Ghuzz bands and save Iranian culture from the Turkoman menace”(Grousset, Rene, *The Empire of the Steppes*, (Rutgers University Press, 1991)

The dedicatee for *Eskandarnama* is not known, but many sources state it was a Georgian ruler of Ahar in Azerbaijan who had had the Persian name Bishkin:

“Moreover, in *Sharaf-nama*, chap. 41, vv. 3-23, the author laments the death of the Sharvanshah Akhsatan (the dedicatee of *Leyli o Majnun*) and addresses words of advice to his (unnamed) successor. This suggests that Neẓāmī originally planned to dedicate the *Eskandar-nāma*, like *Leyli o Majnun*, to one of the kings of Sharvan. But that dynasty evidently lost power over Ganja by the time the poems were completed, and in their final form they are dedicated to the *malek* of Ahar, Noṣrat-al-Dīn Bishkin b. Moḥammad. This ruler is mentioned in the introduction to *Sharaf-nama*, chap. 10, vv. 11-12, where the poet makes a pun on his name Bishkin (“whose hatred is more”), though some of the

manuscripts have a superscription claiming (wrongly) that the verses evoke Bishkin's overlord, the atabeg Noşrat-al-Dīn Abū Bakr.””

(Encyclopedia Iranica, “Eskandar Nama” by Francois De Blois)

And with regards to the Eqbal-Nama:

“A third group of manuscripts has the (genuine) dedication to Noşrat-al-Dīn in the prologue, but the (spurious) dedication to ‘Ezz-al-Dīn in the epilogue, evidently combining material from two different master copies”

(Encyclopedia Iranica, “Eskandar Nama” by Francois De Blois)

Third, the Shirwanshahs, Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis, Seljuqs, Rulers of Ahar Menjukadis (Fakhr ad-din Bahramshah) were Persianized and Iranianized in culture and language. That was the common unifying culture. There is not a single verse of Turkish from the courts of any of these rulers. So none of these can be considered Turkic culturally. That is why they patronized Persian poetry. Be that it may, one can see what kind of poor arguments are made by ethno-nationalists to detach Nezami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization. If anything, we should note that the two works of Persian origin, Bahramnama (Haft Paykar) and Khusraw o Shirin were chosen by Nezami himself and are grounded firmly in Iranian culture and have nothing to with Turkic culture (like all the other works of Nezami) are patronized by Turkic kings.

Finally, the diversity of dedications shows that Nezami did not necessarily prefer any ruler although he does entrust his son to the son of Shirwanshah. At the same time, many of these rulers for example Eldiguzids, Ahmadilis and Shirwanshahs were rivals. Specially, the Eldiguzids were rivals of Ahmadilis and Shirwanshahs. Nezami dedicated his later works to these rulers as it was common practice to do so. That is dedication of a work to a ruler brought not only the poet fame, but also perhaps ensured the preservation of his work. Nezami despite not being a court poet (much like Ferdowsi and unlike Khaqani who was a court poet) was following the common practice set by many other Persian poets in dedicating his work to the rulers of his own time. The only difference is that Nezami dedicated his work to rival rulers who fought bitterly and in our opinion, this shows that he really was not devoted to any ruler of his time.

Invalid Argument: Court poetry and official language was in Persian and that is why Nezami wrote in Persian to get paid

A person has written:

“Azerbaijani Turkic kings of Azerbaijan in 12th century used Persian language as *lingua franca*, just like Russian aristocracy at the end of 18th century used French, and encouraged court poet Nizami to compose poetry in it”

The argument and sentence is invalid because of many reasons, but the author is trying to imply that Nezami wrote in Persian because of the court. First the Eldiguzids were not “Azerbaijani”(not used as an ethnic name then) in the ethnic sense. They were Qipchaq

Turks and they ruled areas such as part of Arran, parts of Azerbaijan (the historical one) and even extended far as Jabal and Ray. So they did not speak Oghuz Turkish. They were obviously of Turkic lineage but culturally they were Persianized.

However, the most important reason for the argument to be invalid is that Nezami Ganjavi was not a court poet. He did not serve in any of the courts. Indeed, it was the Eldiguzids, and Ahmadilis who commissioned him and he was free to choose whatever story and language he wished. Obviously he chose his stories based on Persian Sassanid stories (Khusraw and Shirin, Haft Paykar) for these two rulers and he wrote in Persian, which was the common language of the area. The comparison with Russian aristocracy is also invalid as there are many Russian texts from the end of 18th century, but there is not a single verse of Turkish from Nezami Ganjavi or any other writer or poet from that era. Also the Russian aristocracy ruled a Russian speaking country, where as the newly Persianate Turkic dynasties ruled a predominantly Christian and Iranian Muslim region. They are given the title rulers of Persia/Iran by Nezami.

Also a major rebuttal to the argument above is the book *Nozhat al-Majales*. We will again mention some important points from this book:

NOZHAT AL-MAJĀLES, an anthology of some 4,000 quatrains (*robāʿi*; a total of 4,139 quatrains, 54 of which have been repeated in the text) by some 300 poets of the 5th to 7th/11th-13th centuries, compiled around the middle of the 7th/13th century by the Persian poet Jamāl-al-Din Ḳalil Šarvāni. The book is arranged by subject in 17 chapters (*bābs*) divided into 96 different sections (*namat*). The anthology also includes 179 quatrains and an ode (*qaṣida*) of 50 distiches written by the author himself, who is also credited with one lyric (*ġazal*) in Moḥammad Jājarmi's *Moʿnes al-aḥrār*.

As stated in Jamāl-al-Din's own ode at the end of the book, he compiled his anthology in the name of ʿAlāʿ-*al-Din Šarvānšāh Fariborz III* (r. 1225-51), son of Goštāsb and dedicated it to him. It has reached us in a unique manuscript copied by Esmāʿil b. Esfandiār b. Moḥammad b. Esfandiār Abhari on 25 Šawwāl 731/31 July 1331, and is presently bound together in one volume with the *divān* of Faḳr-al-Din ʿEraqi at the Süleymaniye Library in Turkey (no.1667) among Wali-al-Din Jār-Allāh's collection. This manuscript embraces some 77 leaves (fols. 41a-118a), each page having 27 lines. The first few leaves of the book, which had probably embodied a preface in prose, have been lost. Fritz Meier (p. 117) and Christian Rempis (1935, p. 179) have erroneously taken Esmāʿil b. Esfandiār, the copyist, to be the author of the book.

..

The most significant merit of *Nozhat al-majāles*, as regards the history of Persian literature, is that it embraces the works of some 115 poets from the northwestern **Iran (Arrān, Šarvān, Azerbaijan; including 24 poets from Ganja alone)**, where, due to the change of language, the heritage of Persian literature in that region has almost entirely vanished. The fact that numerous quatrains of some poets (e.g. Amir Šams-al-Din Asʿad of Ganja, ʿAziz Šarvāni, Šams Sojāsi, Amir Najib-al-Din ʿOmar

of Ganja, Badr Teflisi, Kamāl Marāgi, Šaraf Šāleḥ Baylaqāni, Borhān Ganja`i, Elyās Ganja`i, Baḳtiār Šarvāni) are mentioned together like a series tends to suggest the author was in possession of their collected works. *Nozhat al-mājales* is thus a mirror of the social conditions at the time, reflecting the full spread of Persian language and the culture of Iran throughout that region, clearly evidenced by the common use of spoken idioms in poems as well as the professions of the some of the poets (see below). The influence of the northwestern Pahlavi language, for example, which had been the spoken dialect of the region, is clearly observed in the poems contained in this anthology.

...

In contrast to poets from other parts of Persia, who mostly belonged to higher echelons of society such as scholars, bureaucrats, and secretaries, a good number of poets in the northwestern areas rose from among the common people with working class backgrounds, and they frequently used colloquial expressions in their poetry. They are referred to as water carrier (*saqqā`*), sparrow dealer (*‘oşfori*), saddler (*sarrāj*), bodyguard (*jāndār*), oculist (*kaḥḥāl*), blanket maker (*leḥāfi*), etc., which illustrates the overall use of Persian in that region. Chapter eleven of the anthology contains interesting details about the everyday life of the common people, their clothing, the cosmetics used by women, the games people played and their usual recreational practices such as pigeon fancying (*kabutar-bāzi*; p. 444), even-or-odd game (*taq yā joft bāzi*; p. 446), exercising with a sledgehammer (*potk zadan*; p. 443), and archery (*tir-andāzi*; p. 444). There are also descriptions of the various kinds of musical instruments such as *daf* (tambourine; see **DAF[F] and DĀYERA**), *ney* (reed pipe), and *čang* (harp), besides details of how these instruments were held by the performers (pp. 150-63). One even finds in this anthology details of people's everyday living practices such as using a pumice (*sang-e pā*) to scrub the sole of their feet and *gel-e saršur* to wash their hair (pp. 440-41).

Nozhat al-majāles suffers from certain structural shortcomings. The overriding concern of the author has been to arrange the quatrains strictly according to their contents, therefore paying little heed to the names of the poets of the verses. This has occasionally led to the attribution of a particular quatrain to two different persons. The scribe has not been very careful in doing his work either. He has apparently transcribed all of the available poetry first and then added the names of their poets so haphazardly that the name of a poet is sometimes mentioned either further down or further up than the place where his quatrains are located. Some of the errors and oversights have been identified in the edited version, and, following the publication of the text, Sayyed ‘Ali Mir-Afzali pointed out a number of other errors missed by the editor (see bibliography).

(Mohammad Amin Riyahi, “Nozhat al-Majales” in Encyclopedia Iranica).

Thus many everyday people from Ganja have used Persian during the era of Nezami Ganjavi, but not a single Turkish verse has been found. It is obvious that blanket makers,

water carriers, sparrow dealers, saddlers, occultists and etc. were not affiliated with the court. Neither were the women poets mentioned in this anthology. As mentioned by different sources, the urban areas of Arran and Sherwan at that time were not Turkish speaking. Example of everyday usage of Persian in the area is given in the Nozhat al-Majales with its own peculiar dialect and Fahlavi features. In other words, as mentioned by one author; Stephen P. Blake, "Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739". Cambridge University Press, 1991. pg 123: "For the Seljuks and Il-Khanids in Iran it was the rulers rather than the conquered who were "Persianized and Islamicized".

Also the Quatrains, Ghazals and etc. of Nezami were not for the court and not a single quatrain, ghazal or etc. exists in Turkic from the region by any writer or poet at the time of Nezami Ganjavi. Obviously these did not have any monetary value.

Furthermore, Nezami did not write for money as he had another job (which we believe since he was from the Dehqan class, he was caretaker of some villages). However, to disprove the argument about money, we note that Nezami Ganjavi writes in the Sharafnama (one of the last epics to be composed by Nezami in his life):

گر این نامه را من به زر گفتمی
به عمری کجا گوهری سفتمی
همانا که عشقم بر این کار داشت
چون من کمزنان عشق بسیار داشت

*If I hold told this story for Gold
How could have pierced shells and brought pearls then?
It was love that brought this magnificent work
Love had a lot of people who did not seek Gold and Silver.*

Also we can see this with Layli o Majnoon were the author says "if it was not for other works, this would have finished in two weeks". Thus Nezami Ganjavi had other sources of income. Also he did not get paid for his ghazals, qasida, quatrains which are all in Persian. Thus such arguments are just ideological-nationalistic arguments in order to disconnect Nezami Ganjavi from his Iranian heritage and use him for local nation building consumption.

Sunni and Shi'i!

The author found the following quote from Bertels whom was mentioned earlier and (unfortunate since USSR ideology pervaded over scholarship):

"the fact that, unlike the Shia Iranians, "Nizami was righteous Sunni" [Bertels E.E. Selected Works. Nizami and Fizuli. M., ""Oriental literature, 1962, p. 109];

This means by the same criterion Sa'adi, Hafez, Sanai and etc. were not Iranians!! Such absurd arguments/sentences show the degree of compliancy that USSR scholars were forced to undergo in order to achieve the desired political outcomes. Also Kurds who are an Iranic group are overwhelmingly Sunni as are Tajiks, Baluchis and etc. Indeed Iran

was predominantly Sunni before the rise of the Safavids in 1501. But all these were ignored due to politicization of Nezami, political pressure and Stalinist nation building.

This means by the same criterion Sa'adi, Hafez, Sanai, Jami and etc. were not Persians/Iranians!! Such absurd arguments/sentences show the degree of compliancy that USSR scholars were forced to undergo in order to achieve the desired political outcomes. Also Kurds who are mainly Shafi'ite Sunnis are an Iranian people. Thus one sees nonsensical comments in the USSR literature for the purpose of nation building and robbing Nezami Ganjavi of his heritage, literature, language and culture.

Conclusion of invalid arguments

In Conclusion, many poor arguments, misinterpretation of verses and even forging of verses were made in order to detach Nizami Ganjavi from the Iranian civilization. Lies were made that Nizami Ganjavi was forced to write in Persian. Lies were made-up that Nizami Ganjavi considered his father upon father to be Turks and as wise as a wolf. More than 30,000+ verses of Persian poetry (against zero verses of Turkish poetry) were ignored when examining Nizami Ganjavi's cultural heritage and the background of his work, for the purpose of nation building. Nizami's connection to other Persian poets was ignored and the study of other Persian poets for understanding of Nizami Ganjavi was ignored. As we showed, there is absolutely no proof that Nizami's father was of a Turkic background, but the fact is that Nizami's father's background, whom he was orphaned from early has no bearing on the fact that Nizami contributed to the Persian culture and civilization and was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle. In the next chapter, we show that there is enough proof to show that Nizami's background was fully Iranian and his culture was also Iranian.

A Tajik friend from the Internet, who was educated in the USSR era but was in the eighth grade when the USSR started breaking up, told me:

When I was in school, up until the seventh grade, all the teachers that I had for Persian Literature taught us that Nezamee Ganjavee was an Azeri Turk, who had just happened to write in Persian. We were taught that he is the national poet of Azerbaijan. This was even written in our textbooks, which were published during Soviet Era. However, from the very beginning I was told by my mother that he is not a Turk, and that it is a lie. This is widely known in the academic circles in Tajikistan, but, especially during Soviet times it was politically incorrect to say that he is not a Turk. When I came to eighth grade to another school, I had a different literature teacher, who always told us that Nezamee is not a Turk.

Indeed currently, Nizami Ganjavi is not detached from Iranian civilization in Tajikistan anymore, although the USSR had planned otherwise.

Nizami's Iranian Background, Culture and Contribution to the Persian Language, Culture and Civilization

As shown the last chapter, the only thing that the proponents of connecting Nizami Ganjavi to Turkic civilization utilize is misinterpretation of some verses, as well as creation of false verses, in order to push the invalid claim that Nizami Ganjavi's father might have been a Turk. Whereas Nizami's culture, the fact that he was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle, his dependence on Ferdowsi, his vision of himself as the successor of Ferdowsi, all his works being in Persian and the basis of his stories which is Persian/Iranian folklore has all been ignored. These are all more critical factors when connecting a person to a particular civilization. A poet belongs to the language he creates his art in and the poetry is completely dependent upon the language. All the cultural relics left by Nezami are in Persian. In this chapter, we discuss Nizami's Iranian background, his culture and his contribution to the Persian language, culture and civilization.

Although there is no doubt about the Kurdish background of Nizami's mother and his maternal uncle who raised him, much less is known about Nizami's father. We have already discussed Nizami's mother's background and his uncle in the introduction. Indeed, on Nizami's personal life, not much can be known and later biographers have even confused him with other poets. But it should be noted, that prior to the 20th century and the USSR politicization of Nizami, he was assigned universally to Iranian civilization and culture. Indeed what we show in this chapter is that even if Nizami's father was a Zangi (and Nizami says his nature is cheerful like that of a Zangi!), he would still be part of Iranian civilization by the fact that he contributed more than 30000+ Persian verses based on Persian folklore to the Iranian civilization where-as he did not contribute a single verse in Turkish/Zangi. Nizami due to his culture, his revival of Sassanian folklore/stories and his fundamental and direct contribution to Persian literature, will always be considered part of Iranian civilization and speculation about his father's origin cannot change this simple fact. Without the study of Ferdowsi, Sanai, Asadi Tusi one cannot understand Nizami as well. Nizami by expressing and enriching Persian literature is a Persian poet and not a Turkic poet. Indeed, Nizami Ganjavi lives through the Persian language and the Persian language lives through him. Without the Persian language there is no Nizami Ganjavi and without Nizami Ganjavi, the Persian language is not as rich. Just like the Persian language would not be as rich without Hafez or Sa'adi. We do not mention Ferdowsi with this regard, since Ferdowsi's Kaakh-e-Boland was the fundamental groundwork which latter poets thrived in, decorated and built upon and one can argue without Ferdowsi's work, the Persian language would have lost its place among the world's great literary languages. Nizami Ganjavi also considered himself a successor of Ferdowsi and directly mentions his Persian poetry, thus making him a Persian poet regardless of his background.

But before delving into Nizami's culture, we bring strong proofs that his father was also of Iranian and at least non-Turkic background. Although we are discussing the paternal line of someone from the 12th century, and due to lack of a time machine, there might have been other ancestries in his line (Semitic, Greek, Georgian...). Thus, what is most important with regards to Nizami's ethnic/cultural background is Nizami's culture, which is Iranian and his claim of being a successor of Ferdowsi.

Iranian background and some statements from scholars

As mentioned, we already discussed the Kurdish background of Nizami's mother as well his maternal uncle Khwaja Umar. We now discuss some sources by different scholars on Nizami's ethnic background. We do not mention hundreds of scholars who have called Nizami Ganjavi as a "Persian poet" since it can be argued that they are describing Nizami's culture and contribution to Persian civilization (which we believe is the most important ethnic/cultural identifier of a poet) rather than specific ethnicity. On the other hand, we already showed that "Azerbaijan poet" does not mean a "Turkic poet" since we already know Nizami was at least half Kurdish, he did not write in Turkic nor can he be considered part of the Oghuz Turkic civilization, nor was there an Azerbaijani Turkic ethnicity or language existent at the time of Nezami. Rather, "Azeri or Azerbaijani Azerbaijan" simply denotes geographical region of today's country of Azerbaijan and can even encompass Iranian speakers like Kurds, Talysh and Tats. Also we are not looking to randomly quote scholars (where many more quotes can be brought); rather we mention quotes that give a clear verdict on Nezami's background.

His mother was an Iranian Kurd and it is possible that his father had the same ethnic origin, though he is claimed also by Turkish Azerbaijanis as being of their stock.

(Ian Philip McGreal , "Great Literature of the Eastern World", Published 1996, p. 505).

We note that the above claims seem valid for different reasons. But we shall expand upon each point in different sections. Let us also recall the quote by the eminent scholar Vladimir Minorsky:

"The author of the collection of documents relating to Arran Mas'ud b. Namdar (c. 1100) claims Kurdish nationality. The mother of the poet Nizami of Ganja was Kurdish (see autobiographical digression in the introduction of Layli wa Majnun). In the 16th century there was a group of 24 septs of Kurds in Qarabagh, see Sharaf-nama, I, 323. Even now the Kurds of the USSR are chiefly grouped south of Ganja. Many place-names composed with Kurd are found on both banks of the Kur"

Nizami's mother, named Raisa, was of a high birth. She might have been a daughter of important Kurdish figure as some scholars have indicated. Usually, by probability, if a woman was not given as a slave (like Nizami's first wife who was slave sent as a gift and was later married to Nizami), then they would most likely marry the person of the same ethnicity. That is, an average Kurd is married to an average Kurd and an average German is married to an average German.

As noted, Ganja was the capital of the Shaddadids who controlled Arran. Nizami's father's background predates the Seljuqid capture of Ganja.

Sunni Kurds (as well as western other Persianate/Iranian people like Sunni Tats, Sunni Talysh, Sunni Persian speakers in Fars province) overwhelmingly in history have been followers of Shafi'ite rite of Sunnism. As we show, Nizami Ganjavi was also most likely follower of Shafi'ite rite. Turks on the other hand, have overwhelmingly been followers of Hanafism. This is especially true with regards to Oghuz Turks. We shall discuss this in a separate section.

We now recall another scholar, I.M. Diakonoff who is world famous for his study of human history. He had a great knowledge of the history of the Caucasus and Iran and thus his word has weight on the topic of Nizami Ganjavi. As already quoted (with the original Russian):

I.M. Dyakonoff. (1915- 1999)

Publisher: (European House), Sankt Petersburg, Russia, 1995, pg 730-731

And it was planned an anniversary of the great poet Nizami celebration in Azerbaijan. There were slight problems with Nizami - first of all he was not Azeri but Persian (Iranian) poet, and though he lived in presently Azerbaijani city of Ganja, which, like many cities in the region, had Iranian population in Middle Ages.

Thus Diakonov does not consider Nizami Ganjavi ethnically as Turk and does not consider him as part of Turkic civilization. In terms of Diakonof states about the cities in the region, the Nozhat al-Majales and Safinaye Tabriz provide the most elegant proof. Diakonov criticizes the USSR national building policy ("there was a slight problem") but at that time, he was not free enough to counter Stalin's verdict (as mentioned and published in the USSR newspaper:

In a talk with the Ukrainian writer, Mikola Bazhan, Stalin referred to Nizami as 'the great poet of our brotherly Azerbaidzhani people' who must not be surrendered to Iranian literature, despite having written most of his poems in Persian.

The important observation about Diakonov's point is that the cities had Iranian population. That is the Turkic nomads who slowly arrived with the Seljuqs and then came in much larger numbers during the Khwarazmid/Mongol era were not city dwellers but rather lived a nomadic lifestyle. Nizami Ganjavi, as we have shown already and we will illustrate again, refers to the nomadic lifestyle of Turks. Nizami Ganjavi was a product of a long sedentary civilization and his ancestry pre-dates the nomadic arrival of Seljuqs and Oghuz tribes. His cultural background and sources were Ferdowsi, Asadi Tusi, Sanai, and Fakhr al-Din Gorgani amongst other Persian poets.

For example as noted by Francois de Blois:

“Nizami Ganja’i, whose personal name was Ilyas, is the most celebrated native poet of the Persians after Firdausi. His *nisbah* designates him as a native of Ganja (Elizavetpol, Kirovabad) in Azerbaijan, then still a country with an Iranian population, and he spent the whole of his life in Transcaucasia; the verse in some of his poetic works which makes him a native of the hinterland of Qom is a spurious interpolation.”

C. A. (Charles Ambrose) Storey and Franço de Blois (2004), “Persian Literature - A Biobibliographical Survey: Volume V Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period.”, RoutledgeCurzon; 2nd revised edition (June 21, 2004). ISBN-10: 0947593470. (Pg 363)

Another important indicator is also the fact that in the lineage of Nizami Ganjavi, one does not see any Turkic names, but in the lineage of the Seljuqs, Eldiguzids and the Atabekan-e-Maragheh (also called Ahmadilis), one can see Turkish names. These Turkish names of these rulers were in the time of Nizami and also in the lineage of these Turkish rulers. For example Togrul, Arsalan, Aq-Sonqor, Ildegoz, Karpa/Korpa Arsalan, Qizil Arsalan, Ozbek and so on were the names of Seljuq, Eldiguzid and Ahmadili rulers of Nizami’s lifetime. We shall discuss this issue further.

Finally, there are some sources about Nizami Ganjavi’s father line being from the city of Qom. Although the issue is not hundred percent provable due to the fact that the verses in relation with Qom is not mentioned in all manuscripts.

Vladimir Minorsky writes

Whether Nizami was born in Qom or in Ganja is not quite clear. The verse (quoted on p. 14): “I am lost as a pearl in the sea of Ganja, yet I am from the Qohestan of the city of Qom” does not expressly mean that he was *born* in Qom. **On the other hand, Nizami’s** mother was of Kurdish origin, and this might point to Ganja where the Kurdish dynasty of Shaddad ruled down to A.H. 468; even now Kurds are found to the south of Ganja.

(C. H. Darab, Makhzan al-Asrar, 1945, pp. 55-61 (reviewed by Minorsky, BSOAS., 1948, xii/2, 441-5))

Professor Julia Scott Meysami also states the same:

“His father, who had migrated to Ganja from Qom in north central Iran, may have been a civil servant; his mother was a daughter of a Kurdish chieftain; having lost both parents early in his life, Nizâmî was brought up by an uncle. He was married three times, and in his poems laments the death of each of his wives, as well as proffering advice to his son Muhammad.”

(Nizami Ganjavi, A. The *Haft Paykar*: A Medieval Persian Romance. Translated with introduction and notes by Julia Scott Meysami. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.)

We make some quick remarks about this and will discuss it later. One interesting fact about Nizami Ganjavi is that he was entrusted with his Kurdish maternal uncle after the passing away of his parents. Usually, in the traditional Islamic and patriarchal societies, rather than the maternal side, it is the paternal side that takes custodianship of a son. Also

Nizami Ganjavi as we shall show when discussing the possible origin from Qom section refers to himself as a prisoner in Ganja. According to Gholam Hussein Darab Khan:

“I believe that he was compelled to remain in Ganjeh for some reason unknown at present, and I doubt if it ever will be known. He continually refers to his being imprisoned in Ganjeh and forbidden to go out; he never mentions the cause. His great sanctity would have prevented his being imprisoned in Ganjeh. In the conclusion of Makhzanol Asrar he says, he lowered his head and from his lips he scattered pearls, and brought the Treasury of Mysteries to completion. He gives thanks to God that he has finished the Makhzanol Asrar, and further, he tells us the important fact that most of his life has come to an end.”

(G.H. Darab, “The Treasury of Mysteries”(Makhzan al-Asrar of Nizami Ganjavi)).

On the other hand, the Qom paternal line is not in every manuscript of the Sharafnama. Whether genuine or not, it can never be known 100% since there is a village by the name “Ta” near Qom and there are local people who claim to be related to Nizami’s family.

Thus we have assumed “possible origin from Qom” noting the fact that not Nizami himself necessarily, but his ancestry may possibly be from Qom. We believe the fact that Nezami is entrusted to his maternal uncle rather than father-side shows that his father’s family might not have been from Ganja. If his ancestry from the paternal line was from Ganja, it would go back to the Shaddadid times (before the Seljuqs). Anyhow, the Arabic names Yusuf, Zaki, Mua’yyad has pointed some scholars to claim an Arabic or even Jewish or possibly other Semitic (like Assyrian Christian) for Nizami’s ancestry. Even due to the large Armenian population of the area (which used Semitic names), such theories are brought up. We believe that this simply shows Nizami Ganjavi’s family was Muslim for many generations and furthermore, his view of *Layli o Majnoon* as a foreign story whereas his favorite story is *Khusraw o Shirin* (by his own admission) discounts any Semitic origin for his paternal line. However, Semitic names have been used by Iranians, Armenians and of course Semites, as well later on Turks who entered the area and shed away their tribal names for Islamic names.

Nezami’s reference to himself as the Persian Dehqan

The Dehqan as already mentioned were a noble class of Iranians who were the main proponents and repository of Iranian and Persian culture during the Islamic era.

The term dehqān was used in the late Sasanian period to designate a class of landed magnates (Mojmal, ed. Bahār, p. 420) considered inferior in rank to āzādān, bozorgān (qq.v.; Zand ī Wahman Yasn 4.7, 4.54), and kadag-xwadāyān “householders” (Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag 15.10, where dahīgān should be read for dādagān)

The origin of the dehqān class is usually attributed in both Zoroastrian Pahlavi books of the 9th century and early Islamic sources to Wēkard/t, brother of Hōšang, the legendary Iranian king (Dēnkard, ed. Madan, pp. 438, 594, 688; Bīrūnī, Ātār, pp. 220-21; Mas‘ūdī, ed. Pellat, I, sec. 662; Christensen, pp. 68, 134, 151, 156). In some sources the

innovation is credited to Manūčehr (Tā'ālebī, p. 6; Ṭabarī, I, p. 434; Bal'amī, ed. Bahār, p. 345; Ebn al-Balkī, p. 37). Nevertheless, as the term *dehqān* is not attested in early Sasanian documents but is sometimes mentioned in the Pahlavi books and frequently occurs in descriptions of late Sasanian administration in early Islamic sources, it is admissible to suppose that *dehqāns* emerged as a social class as a result of land reforms in the time of Kōsrow I (531-79). He is reported to have admonished future kings that they should protect the *dehqāns*, just as they would protect kingship, because they were like brothers (Tā'ālebī, Ḡorar, p. 6).

After the defeat of the Persian army and the gradual disappearance of the nobles who administered the country, the local gentry, that is, the *dehqāns*, assumed a more important political and social role in their districts, towns, and villages.

Aside from their political and social significance, the *dehqāns* played an important cultural role. Many participated in the courts of caliphs or governors, and after the establishment of the Persian dynasties in the east they served kings, princes, and amirs as learned men who were well informed on the history and culture of ancient Iran. Bayhaqī (p. 299) reported that Zīād b. Abīhi (d. 56/675), while still governor of Baṣra, had in his service three *dehqāns*, who told him stories of Sasanian grandeur and pomp, causing him to think Arab rule much inferior. In the *Tārīḵ-e Sīstān* (p. 106) a number of wise sayings, similar to the Pahlavi *andarz* (q.v.), are attributed to a certain Zoroastrian *dehqān* named Rostam b. Hormazd, who reportedly uttered them at the request of 'Abd-al-'Azīz b. 'Abd-Allāh, an Omayyad governor of Sīstān (cf. *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Moscow, IX, p. 211 vv. 3380-83). The 9th-century author Jāḥeẓ (1385/1965, I, p. 115, II, p. 125) also quoted some pieces of folklore from *dehqāns*. In both Arabic and Persian sources the names of many learned persons and men of letters, including theologians, who were *dehqāns* or decendants of *dehqān* families are mentioned (Ebn Fondoq, pp. 116, 149). Some were patrons of Islamic religious scholars; for example, Ebn Fondoq (p. 185) mentioned a wealthy *dehqān* from Sabzavār who, in 418/1027, founded a religious school for a Koran commentator named Ebn Ṭayyeb. The majority of *dehqāns* favored Persian culture, however, and some were patrons of renowned Persian poets. Rūdakī (p. 458) related that the *dehqāns* gave him money and riding animals. Farroḳī in his youth served a *dehqān* in Sīstān and received an annual pension from him. According to one tradition, Ferdowsī himself was a *dehqān* (*Čahār Maqāla*, ed. Qazvīnī, text, pp. 58, 75).

Most of the credit for preservation of the stories in the national epic, the *Šāh-nāma*; pre-Islamic historical traditions; and the romances of ancient Iran belongs to the *dehqāns*. Abū Mansūr Ma'marī (q.v.), who compiled the prose *Šāh-nāma-ye abū-manšūrī* (346/957), now lost, wrote in his preface, which does survive, that in gathering his material he summoned a number of *dehqāns* from various cities of Khorasan (pp. 34-35). Ferdowsī often cited *dehqāns* as sources, apparently oral ones, for his narratives (e.g., *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Moscow, I, p. 28 v. 1, II, p. 170 v. 15, III, pp. 6-7 vv. 8, 19, IV, p. 302 vv. 19-20, VI, p. 167 v. 25). Other poets, too, referred to traditions from the *dehqāns* (e.g., Asadī, p. 21 v. 1; *Īrānšāh*, p. 17; *Neẓāmī*, pp. 436, 508). The term *dehqān* thus also came to be defined as "historian, versed in history" (*Borhān-e qāṭe'*, ed. Mo'in, II, p. 905). The

profound attachment of the dehqāns to the culture of ancient Iran also lent to the word dehqān the sense of “Persian,” especially “Persian of noble blood,” in contrast to Arabs, Turks, and Romans in particular.

(Tafazzoli, Ahmad. “Dehqan” in Encyclopedia Iranica)

In the story of Leyli o Majnoon, Nezami Ganjavi as some scholars have mentioned has called himself the Dehqan (Iranian) and Parsi-Zad (Persian).

In the verses which start in the section:

رفتن پدر مجنون به دیدن فرزند

The visit of Majnoon’s dad to visit his son:

در لیلی و مجنون:
دهقان فصیح پارسی زاد
از حال عرب چنین کند یاد
کان پیر پسر به باد داده
یعقوب ز یوسف اوفتاده

*The Fasih (eloquent) Persian Dehqan
Recounts the situation of Arabs as such:
That Old man who lost his son to the wind
That Jacob who was separated from Joseph
...*

There are some points to note here. The word Fasih from Arabic فصیح and another form it فصاحت (eloquence) is used to describe Nezami. For example in the letter of Sherwanshah versified by Nezami and in reality his poetic interpretation of the letter:

در لافگه شگفت کاری
بنمای فصاحتی که داری

*In the Arena of the Wondrous Words
Exhibit the eloquence (فصاحتی) that you possess*

Thus in the same story, Nezami is called a possessor of eloquence. He also calls himself Fasih elsewhere in the Lili o Majnoon as in the famous verse when he complains those that are jealous of him and want bad for him:

در سحر سخن چنان تمامم
کایینه غیب گشت نامم
شمشیر زبانه از فصیحی
دارد سر معجز مسیحی

Note both "Sehr" (magic) was also mentioned in the part about reason for writing this book where he is called Jadooyeh Sokhan (magical words). Here in the above verses, again Nezami mentions himself as Fasih.

We note that the story of Leyli o Majnoon would not be a Persian story known by the Dehqans who were repositories of ancient Iranian lores. Furthermore, as Nezami pointed out, before him other poets did not touch the story and the story lacked the elements to make it eloquent. Indeed according to these scholars, Nizami was part of the land owning Dehqan class and he refers to himself as the Persian Dehqan.

For example Dr. Behruz Servatiyan also provides commentary on the above verse where Nezami Ganjavi calls himself the Persian Dehqan:

دهقان فصیح پارسی زاد: نظامی گنجهای
عرب:مجنون و پدر او
یادداشت- سرآغاز بندهای لیلی و مجنون همه به توضیحی کنایی آراسته است و شاعر
بالکنایه اشاره میکند که این بخش از خود اوست یا در داستان اصلی و به زبان عربی آمده
است.
بیت اول بند 36 از اهمیت به سزایی از نظر تاریخ تحقیق در زندگی و آثار نظامی برخوردار
است و آن اینکه شاعر شغل و موقعیت اجتماعی خود را که «دهقان» بوده است و
همچنین نژاد او که خود را «پارسی زاده» مینامد، به تصریح بیان داشته و هیچگونه
تردید در صحت بیت و مطلب نیست و با تحقیق دربارهی دهقانان قرن ششم در
آذربایجان و بررسی "پارسی" که آیا نظر او «ایرانی» است یا زبان «پارسی» و یا هر دو،
گوشهای از حیات و موقعیت اجتماعی شاعر آشکار میگردد.

(Servatiyan, Behruz. "Lili o Majnoon", critical edition and commentary. Amir Kabir publishers, 2008. Pg 424)

Dr. Servatiyan mentions that in each section of Lili o Majnoon, Nezami hints at Nezami's source. Here there is no doubt that he is mentioning himself and the word Parsi-Zaadeh and Dehqan is a reference to his lineage.

We also note that he uses Parsi-Zadegaan for Persian in another verse in Haft Paykar:

تازیان را دهد ولایت و گنج
پارسیزادگان رسند به رنج
(هفت پیکر)

Furthermore, Nezami was awarded a village by the name Hamdooniyan (an Iranian name) for the Khusraw and Shirin. This leads further credence that he was already a minor land owner from the Dehqan class and indeed it were the Dehqans like Ferdowsi and Nezami who kept the Iranian traditions alive. This could also explain why he as constantly referred to himself as "Shahrband" (someone that cannot leave the area) as he had personal responsibilities.

We have already overviewed the Iranian land-owning class of Dehqans in the section on Qatran Tabrizi. All three poets, Qatran Tabrizi, Nizami Ganjavi and Ferdowsi Tusi were also inheritors of ancient Persian history, culture and myths, and it was the Dehqan class who preserved much of this history. It is natural for Nezami to for example consider the story of Khusraw and Shirin the sweetest story in existence and naturally choose such a story. Or his voluntary choosing of the story of Haft Paykar or his attachment to Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh. All of this in our opinion is due to the fact that he belonged to the noble Iranian Dehqan class and of course he already had few lands around Ganja and came from a well off family which means he was not just a descendant of this class but rather this class was still present at that time.

Nizami's reference to his wife and another proof of non-Turkic background for Nizami

It is well known that Nizami Ganjavi was greatly influenced by the Shahnameh and he has alluded to the greatness of Ferdowsi and Shahnameh in the *Haft Paykar*, *Eskandarnama*, *Khusraw o Shirin* and in *Layli o Majnoon*, where he also advised the son of the Shirwanshah to read the Shahnameh. In the Shahnameh, the term "Tork-zaad" (born of a Turk) is used with reference to a person who is born of Iranian father line and Turkish mother. Specifically, it is used with reference of Hormozd-e-Torkzaad, the son of Anushirawan the Just. Anushirawan the Just has been mentioned several times by Nizami and we have already brought a story from Makhzan al-Asrar. In the Shahnameh specifically we noted the designation of Hormozd:

بهرام آذرْمهان به سیمابرزین در رابطه با هرمز:

که این ترکزاده سزاوار نیست
 به شاهی کس او را خریدار نیست
 که خاقان نژادست و بدگوهرست
 به بالا و دیدار چون مادرست
 تو گفستی که هرمز به شاهی سزاست
 کنون زین سزا مر ترا این جزاست

Bahram Azar-Mahan complains to Sima Borzin in front of Hormozd:

*This prince who was born of a Turk(Torkzaadeh) is not worthy of the throne
 No one is supportive of his kingship,
 He of the blood of the Khaqan and of evil nature,
 His form and stature is like that of his mother,
 You said that Hormozd is fitting for this kingship,
 Well this is the reward you've received from that worthy man,
 That is why I have spoken against you and cursed you.*

بهرام به هرمز:
بدو گفت بهرام کای ترک زاد
به خون ریختن تا نباشی تو شاد
تو خاقان نژادی نه از کیقباد
که کسری تو را تاج بر سر نهاد

Bahram Azar-Mahan told Hormoz:

*You are born of a Turkish woman,
And you can never be sated with bloodshed
Your ancestry is from the Khaqan not Kay-Qobaad
Even through Khusraw (Anushirawan) bestowed upon you this crown*

یلان-سینه به گردیه:
سخن بس کن ز هرمزد ترکزاد
که اندر زمانه مباد آن نژاد

Yalan-Sineh (a commander of Bahram Chubin) states to Gordiyeh, the sister of Bahram Chubin, who advises Bahram Chubin not to go against Hormoz:

*Enough talk of the Turkish-born (Torkzaad) Hormoz
May such a lineage/race never exist*

This is also mentioned with regards to other characters who were half Turk in the Shahnameh:

جریره به فرود:

بدو داد پیران مرا از نخست
وگر نه ز ترکان همی زن نجست
نژاد تو از مادر و از پدر
همه تاجدار و هم نامور

طوس به بهرام:

چنین داد پاسخ ستمکاره طوس
که من دارم این لشکر و بوق و کوس
ترا گفتم او را بنزد من آر
سخن هیچگونه مکن خواستار
گر او شهریارست پس من کیم
برین کوه گوید ز بهر چیم
یکی ترکزاده چو زاغ سیاه
برین گونه بگرفت راه سپاه
نبینم ز خودکامه گودرزیان
مگر آنک دارد سپاه را زیان

بترسیدی از بیهنر یک سوار
نه شیر ژیان بود بر کوهسار

Similarly, in the story of Forud, who was half Iranian, Jarireh tells his son that his father would not have married a Turk had Piran not offered her to him. Tus, who was responsible for the ultimate perishing of Forud, calls him a Tork-Zaad (Born of Turkish Women). Note the word “Tork-Zad” needs to be understood in the context of Persian literature.

Nizami Ganjavi was married three times in his life. He was not polygamous, but per the saying of Islam: “Marriage is half of the religion”, he fulfilled his Islamic duty by marrying every time a wife of his passed away. On this matter, Nizami provides a chronology of his wives in The Book of Alexander.

مرا طالعی طرفه هست از سخن
که چون نو کنم داستان کهن
در آن عید کان شکرافشان کنم
عروس شکرخند قربان کنم
چو حلوی شیرین همی ساختم
ز حلواگری خانه پرداختم
چو بر گنج لیلی کشیدم حصار
دگر گوهری کردم آنکه نثار
کنون نیز چون شد عروسی بسر
به رضوان سپردم عروسی دیگر
ندانم که با داغ چندین عروس
چه گونه کنم قصه روم و روس
به ار نارم اندوه پیشینه پیش
بدین داستان خوش کنم وقت خویش

Here Nizami Ganjavi alludes to the fact that he lost one wife when writing the story of *Khusraw o Shirin*, another wife when he enclosed the treasure of *Layli o Majnoon* and gave up another jewel. Finally before the story of *Eskandarnama*, he gives away another wife.

At the end of the story of *Khusraw o Shirin*, Nizami Ganjavi mentions his first wife, who was sent as a gift to him from the ruler of Darband.

تو کز عبرت بدین افسانه مانی
چه پنداری مگر افسانه خوانی
درین افسانه شرطست اشک راندن
گللابی تلخ بر شیرین فشاندن
به حکم آن که آن کم زندگانی
چو گل بر باد شد روز جوانی
سبک رو چون بت ففچاق من بود
گمان افتاد که خود آفاق من بود

همایون پیکری نغز و خردمند
 فرستاده به من دارای دربند
 پرندهش درع و از درع آهنینتر
 قباش از پیرهن تنگ آستینتر
 سران را گوش بر مالش نهاده
 مرا در همسری بالمش نهاده
چو ترکان گشت سوی کوچ محتاج
به ترکی داده رختم را به تاراج
اگر شد ترکم از خرگه نهانی
خدایا ترکزادم را تو دانی

Nizami Ganjavi was married three times in his life. His first wife was a Turkish slave sent by the ruler of Darband (Nizami calls him the Daaraa (Darius) of Darband). She passed away during the time when Nizami was writing *Khusraw o Shirin*. According to some scholars, Nizami wrote the *Khusraw o Shirin* as a memorial for his first wife. Some scholars, (starting probably with Vahid Dastgerdi) have called her name Afaq due to the above verse. But much more correct, as pointed out by Said Nafisi, is that Afaq is to be taken here as horizon and not a personal name. This author agrees with Said Nafisi, the word Afaq appears many times in Nizami's poetry and it simply means horizon. For example when praising a ruler of his, Nizami Ganjavi mentions:

سر و سرخیل شاهان شاه آفاق
 چو ابرو با سری هم جفت و طاق
 ..
 سکندر که خورشید آفاق بود
 به روشن دلی در جهان طاق بود

Calling the king, King of Kings of Afaq. Indeed one would feel that it would be rare for Nizami to call Alexander or the Ildeguzids, the king or ruler of the personal name of his wife. Thus we do not know the names of any of the wives of Nizami Ganjavi. Of course in terms of scholarship, it is more romantic for Afaq to have been a personal name, however from a scientific point of view, there is no proof of this. Thus Nizami is alluding to the fact that she was her horizon (what he saw all around).

Nevertheless, some USSR scholars have even gone further and without zero proof, made-up the wrong argument that since Arabic does not have any "p", her original name was Apaqa (snow white or very white!) and later manuscripts changed 'p' to 'f'! They forget that Nizami wrote in Persian and Persian has 'p' and Nizami uses many words with 'p'. Also Nizami Ganjavi, mentions his wife as an "Idol of Qipchaq", so it is very possible that she was a Qipchaq. In general, idols of Qipchaq, Taraz, and Khotan were referred to as the beloved in Persian poetry.

By marrying Nizami, she also was obliged to convert to the religion of Islam. Since she was also given to him as a present and was originally taken as a captive, she was originally of a non-Muslim background.

After describing the beauty of his first wife, Nizami Ganjavi writes:

چو ترکان گشت سوی کوچ محتاج
به ترکی داده رختم را تاراج
اگر شد ترکم از خرگه نهانی
خدایا ترکزادم را تو دانی

Translation:

*Since like the Turks, it became necessity that she migrates
In Turkish manner, she plundered my belongings
If my Turk disappears from the tent
O God, about my Turkish-born, you know (best)*

The first two verses indicate some observable facts. That Turks were associated with nomadic lifestyles and we examine this more in the next section. We note that in the second line, that Nizami Ganjavi uses the word plunder with respect to Turkish actions/manners. This has been used by countless Persian poets. Just two examples from Khwaja Abdullah Ansaari and Jaami are sufficient to demonstrate this point:

یکی از ریشه تعبیر عرفانی مفهوم ترک (غارتگری) را می توان در این چند بیت خواجه
عبدالله انصاری جست:

عشق آمد و دل بکرد غارت
ای دل تو به جان بر این بشارت
ترکی عجب است عشق دانی
کز ترک عجیب نیست غارت

Translation:

*Love came and plundered the heart
Oh heart, give this good news to life
Love is a strange Turk, do you know?
Because plundering is not strange of a Turk*

بنابراین می توان گفت که ترکان اصیل چنان به تاراجگری و ویرانگری شهره و انگشت نما
بوده اند که در ادب و عرفان ایرانی، ترکان به نماد ویرانی و تاراج مبدل می شوند، به
طوری که در زبان فارسی به تهاجم و غارتگری «ترک تازی» گفته می شود.

حتی عبدالرحمان جامی که یکی از شاعران بزرگ بوده است و در زمان سلاطین ترک-تبار
می زیسته، این شعر را سروده است:

اهن شنیدستی که ترکی وصف جنت چون شنید
گفت با واعظ که انجا غارت و تاراج هست ؟
گفت نی ، گفتا بدتر باشد ز دوزخ ان بهشت
کاندرو کوتاه بود از غارت و تاراج دست

Translation:

*Have you heard the story when a Turk heard about Heaven
He told the religious preacher if there is plunder and pillage in there*

*The preacher said: No, and the Turk responded this is worst than Hell
Because the hand is cut off from pillage and plunder in Heaven*

(Note Jaami was using common simile here, since he was very close friends with Navai and is praised by him.)

And also by Nizami the words Gharat, Taraaj which mean plunder are used with the word Turk in order to create similes:

ز رشک نام او عالم دو نیم است
که عالم را یکی او را دو مریم است
به ترکان قلم بینسخ تاراج
یکی میمش کمر بخشد یکی تاج

(in praise of the Eldiguzid ruler called Mohammad)

From jealousy of him, 'Alam is in two (in reference to the spelling of عالم)

The word 'Alam has only one Mim, but his name has two Mims

The pen like (an army) of Turks, writes his name without revoking the permission to plunder

His first Mim bestows sash/waistband, the second bestows the crown

فرس میخواست بر شیرین دواند
به ترکی غارت از ترکی ستاند

He was looking for a horse to follow towards Shirin

In a Turkish manner (Turk being used as plunder), sought Plunder from a Turk (being used as a beautiful)

غارتی از ترک نبردست کس
رخت به هندو نسپردست کس

No one has plundered Turks

No one has given up his belongings to a Hindu

(using common imagery about Turks taking plunder and Hindus as thief/beggars)

بگفت آن پری روی را پیش من
بباید فرستاد پی انجمن
بینم که تاراج آن ترکتاز
تو را از سر علم چون داشت باز

(In the story of Archimedes with the Chini (Turkish) servant):

Bring forth that fairy face near me

And to the group too

*It is time to see how the plunder of that Turkish-attacker
Kept you away from knowledge.*

Thus the nomadic lifestyle, which in many ways leads to the plunder of sedentary civilization, was a common theme in Persian literature. Here Nizami Ganjavi is comparing the plundering of his belongings (and metaphorically his heart) by his wife in the Turkish manner, with the way his Turkish wife “migrated” (passed away).

The third line again like the first line, points to the nomadic lifestyle of Turks. Tents or Khargah (خرگاه in Persian), is associated with Turks in the third line. Finally in the fourth line, Nizami Ganjavi, like the Shahnameh before him, refers to his son not as a Turk, but as a Turkzaad. That is a person born of a Turkish woman and Iranian father. Had Nizami Ganjavi been Turkish, then there would be no reason for him to constantly and explicitly distinguish his wife ethnically as a Turk and his son as Tork-zaad (meaning born of a Turkish mother and Iranian father as followed in the Shahnameh and other classical texts). Thus, in our opinion, the above is sufficient to show that Nizami Ganjavi himself was not a Turk.

Other Indicators of Nizami Ganjavi's Father line

Lack of Turkish names unlike Turkish dynasties and groups

Besides the above, we mention several other facts about Nizami Ganjavi which makes a Turkic father line for him extremely unlikely. The first issue is that of the name of his ancestors. The Seljuqs, Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis all had names with Turkish ancestry. On the other hand, Nizami's ancestry goes back prior to the Seljuq takeover of Ganja. In the father lineage of Nizami Ganjavi, one does not see any Turkish names, but in the lineage of the Seljuqs, Eldiguzids and the Atabekan-e-Maragheh (also called Ahmadilis), one can see Turkish names (in the time of Nizami) and also in the lineage of these Turkish rulers. For example Togrul, Arsalan, Aq-Sonqor, Ildegoz, Karpa/Korpa Arsalan, Qizil Arsalan, Ozbek and so on were the names of Seljuq, Eldiguzid and Ahmadili rulers of Nizami's lifetime. Nizami's ancestry is Yusuf, Zakki and Mu'ayyad. All of these are Semitic names. The fact that these dynasties were Turkic makes it natural that they had Turkic names. Thus the fact that none of the dynasties lack Turkic names also indicates that their ancestry was Turkic. One can surmise that the Turkic nomads who arrived with the Seljuqs and the greater bulk who arrived with the Mongols (either as a push of the Mongols or they were part of the Mongol army), had Turkic names. Slowly after merging into the local culture, Semitic and less so, but often Iranian names would become prominent. Based on these Semitic names (Yusuf, Zakki, Mu'ayyad), some authors have mentioned possible Jewish or Christian ancestry. Although there was a large number of Armenian Christians in the area, it is our belief that the Iranian culture of Nizami makes this less likely.

Urban background

The second indicator is the fact that Nizami's background was urban, where-as the Turkic nomads with their tribal affiliation were migratory tribes. Nizami and other poets have

alluded to this fact. For example Nizami Ganjavi explicitly mentions the nomadic lifestyle of the migratory Turks:

چو ترکان گشته سوی کوچ محتاج
به ترکی داده رختم را به تاراج
(خسرو و شیرین)

ترک سمن خیمه به صحرا زده
ماه چه خیمه به صحرا زده
(مخزن الاسرار)

As mentioned by Diakonov, the region of Arran, *“like many cities in the region, had Iranian population in Middle Ages”*. Indeed the name Ganja pre-dates the Saljuq invasion and is a clear Iranian name. We can get a glimpse of the everyday Muslim culture through the book Nozhat al-Majales. The fact is like almost any city, the original founders of it would have named it from their own language. The Oghuz Turkish nomads, who migrated to the region during the Saljuq of era, were not city dwellers. After many generations of nomadic lifestyle, they would still not be city dwellers, but would settle down in villages and live of farming. Thus the process of going from a nomadic lifestyle to city dwelling is a process that takes many centuries, unless nomads are forcefully settled like the modern era. Further evidence of Nizami’s sedentary background is that Nizami advises his son to become either a religious doctor of law (faqih) or a physician (tabib) or to undertake both professions. However, he advises his son:

Be a lawyer who concentrates on the worship of God and not a lawyer who teaches deception.

Be a physician as capable as Jesus, not a physician who ends man’s life.

Again, there are professions that are part of the sedentary and city dwelling civilizations. Thus Nizami’s lack of any Turkic name and his urban background (born probably in the city of Ganja with an Iranian name), is an indicator of his non-Turkic background.

Shafiite Madhab

Another indicator is Nizami Ganjavi’s Madhab. He was very likely a Shafi’i Muslim where-as the Turkic nomads who adopted Islam were overwhelmingly Hanafi Muslims. Indeed today, all the Turkic people of Central Asia are Hanafis. In Turkey, the major difference between Kurds and Turkic speakers is also the fact that Kurds are followers of Shafi’ite rite. The Sunni Talysh, Tat, Persian (Larestani) and Kurdish speakers of Western Iran are all Shafi’ites and major cities in Azerbaijan before their Turkification and Shi’ification were Shafi’ite.

That Turkic groups association with Hanafism is well known in Islamic history. For example, we already quoted Bosworth who quotes the Iranian historian Rawandi: “Saljuqs achieved some prestige in the eyes of the Orthodox by overthrowing Shi’i Buyid rule in Western Iran. Sunni writes even came to give an ideological justification for the Turks’ political and military domination of the Middle East. The Iranian historian of the Saljuqs, Rawandi, dedicated his *Rahat al-sudur* to one of the Saljuq Sultans of Rum, Ghiyath al-Din Kay Khusraw, and speaks of a *hatif*, a hidden, supernatural voice, which spoke from the Ka’ba in Mecca to the Imam Abu Hanifa and promised him that as long as the sword remained in the hands of the Turks, his faith (that of the Hanafi law school, which was followed *par excellence* by Turks) would not perish. Rawandi himself adds the pious doxology, “*Praise be to God, He is exalted, that the defenders of Islam are mighty and that the followers of the Hanafi rite are happy and In the lands of the Arabs, Persians, Byzantines and Russians, the sword is in the hand of the Turks, and fear of their sword is firmly implanted in all hearts!*”

Rawandi lived during the time of Nizami Ganjavi.

Another testament to this is from traveler Ibn Battutah who lived in the 14th century. On Turks, he provides some description of their religion:

“..After eating their food, they drink the yogurt/milk of mare called Qumiz. The Turks are followers of Hanafism and consider eating Nabidh (Alcoholic beverage) as Halal (lawful in Islam).”

(Ibn Battutah, translated by Dr. Ali Muvahid, Tehran, Bongaah Publishers, 1969).

Qumiz or Kumis is an alcoholic beverage made from fermented mare’s milk. It is still drunk by some Central Asian Turkic people like Kirgiz and Kazakhs. Nabidh (a Persian or possibly Semitic word) is a mild fermented beverage originally made from raisins or barley or dates. By the time of Ibn Battutah, it generally meant different types of alcoholic liquor.

It should not be surprising that many Hanafis, especially Turks, actually drank Kumis and Nabidh. They did not consider it as unlawful in the sense of Islamic law. Hanafite and Shafi’ite schools of law had a conflicting viewpoint on alcoholic beverages. Accordingly: “Thus if a Shaf’ite sees a Hanafi drinking such liquor, he has no business forbidding him, whereas if a Hanafi sees a Shaf’ite doing so, he should indeed forbid him.

(M.A. Cook, “Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought”, Cambridge University Press, 2000. pg 214)

(Also according to the same book: “For conflicting attitudes of Shafi’ites and Hanafis to this of liquor, see: Marghinani (d. 593/1197) , Hidayah, Beirut, 1990, 3-4:450”)

Besides these classical sources, like Rawandi and Ibn Battutah, the history of Hanafism with Turks is well known.

“The Turkmens who entered Anatolia no doubt brought with them vestiges of the pre-Islamic inner Asian shamanistic past but eventually became in considerable measure firm adherents of the near-universal Islamic madhab for the Turks, the Hanafi one”

(Mohamed Taher, "Encyclopedic Survey of Islamic Culture", Anmol Publication PVT, 1998. Turkey: Pg 983).

"There have sometimes been forcible and wholesale removals from one "rite" to another, generally for political reasons; as when the Ottoman Turks, having gained power in Iraq and the Hijaz in the sixteenth century, compelled the Shafi'ite Qadis either to change to the Hanafi "rite" to which they (the Turks) belonged, or to relinquish office."
(Reuben Levy, "Social Structure of Islam", Taylor and Francis, 2000. Pg 183).

"Unlike the Sunni Turks, who follow the Hanafi school of Islamic law, the Sunni Kurds follow the Shafi'i school"
(Federal Research Div Staff, Turkey: A Country Study, Kessinger Publishers, 2004. pg 141).

"Hanafism was founded by a Persian, Imam Abu Hanifa, who was a student of Imam Ja'far Al-Sadeq, ... His school held great attraction from the beginning for Turks as well as Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. Today the Hanafi school has the largest number of follows in the Sunni world, including most Sunni Turks, the Turkic people of Caucasus, and Central Asia, European Muslims, and the Muslims of Indian subcontinent"

(Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. "The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity". HarperColins, 2004. Pg 68).

"On the other hand, because the Turkish rulers were so devoted to Islamic beliefs, they had accepted Hanafism with a great vigor and conviction"
(Mehmed Fuad Koprulu's , Early Mystics in Turkish Literature, Translated by Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff , Routledge, 2006, pg 8).

As mentioned, the Sunni Talysh, Tat, Persian (Larestani) and Kurdish speakers of Western Iran are all Shafi'ites and major cities in Azerbaijan before their Turkification and Shi'ification were Shafi'ite. For example the Safinayeh Tabriz shows that Shafi'ism was the main faith in Tabriz in the 13th century. Or Hamdullah Mostowfi mentions the province of Goshtasfi in the Caucasus in the Ilkhanid era. According to Mostowfi, this Caucasus region lying between the rivers Aras and Kur and the adjoining Caspian Sea spoke Pahlavi close to Jilani (Gilaki) and were followers of Imam Shafi'i. Actual quote:

از کنار آب دریا ولایت گشتاسفی است که گشتاسب بن لهراسپ آن را ساخت و نهری بزرگ از آب کر و ارس بریده است و از آن جویها برداشته و بر آن دیهای فراوان ساخته. حاصلش غله، برنج، اندک پنبه و میوه بود مردمش سفیدچهره اند و بر مذهب امام شافعی. زبانشان پهلوی بجیلانی باز بسته است. حقوق دیوانیش بر امان سابق پیش از ظهور دولت مغول کمابیش صد تومان این زمان بوده است و اکنون صد و هجده هزار و پانصد دینار است و در وجه اقطاعات عساکر که آنرا ساکن اند متفرق باشد

(Mostowfi, Hamdallah. "Nozhat al-Qolub". Edit by Muhammad Dabir Sayyaqi. Tahuri publishers, 1957.)

Besides its strictness against alcoholic/fermented drinks relative to Hanafism, there is another distinguishing marker of Shafi'ism. Shafi'ites accept Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman as rightly guided caliphs and the companion of the Prophet, but many of them put the first Shi'ite Imam, Ali ibn Abi-Talib (AS) above these three.

Imam Shafi'i has a famous poem:

*The Family of the Prophet are my intermediary to him! (wasilatî)
Through them I hope to be given my record with the right hand.*

and:

*O Family of Allah's Messenger! To love you is an obligation
Which Allah ordained and revealed in the Qur'an.
It is enough proof of your immense glory that
Whoever invokes not blessings upon you, his prayer is invalid.*

Now there are important indications on why Nizami Ganjavi was a Shafi'ite:

A)

Nizami's Kurdish background has already been discussed. Shafi'ites and Hanafites rarely married at that time. Unless there was a compelling reason to marry (for example if two dynasties wanted to strengthen their relation), marriage between these two sects rarely took place. Indeed, theological arguments between these two rites have led to bloodshed in Islamic history. Here are some examples.

Imam Shaafi in "Tabaqat al Kubra" writes:

"I have read Abu Hanifa Numan's books and Numan and his followers proclaim that we believe in the Qur'an and Allah (swt) but they are opposed to it".

In "Jazeel al Muwahib fi Ikhtilaab al Madhaib" by Suyuti page 184:

Suyuti said:

"The most praised Madhab is Shaafi due to its precautions. Due to this whoever reads Shafi'i Salaat will feel confident. Whoever reads Hanafi Salaat will be confused because it is questionable, on account of the following:

1. He considers it permissible to perform ablution with alcohol fermented by dates.

2. You can wear dog leather in Salaat

....

B)

Nizami brings the name of Ali first before the three other Caliphs and praises him first and considers his love for him more than Omar although admits that he is not empty of adoration for the second caliph (This position is consistent with Shafi'ism, specially in and around the Mongol era):

به مهر علی گرچه محکم بيم
ز عشق عمر نیز خالی نیم
همیدون در این چشم روشن دماغ
ابوبکر شمعست و عثمان چراغ

C)

“Nizami lived a secluded life and even his royal patrons respected the poet’s lifestyle. When Qizil Arslan invited Nizami to his banquet, he ordered the servants to remove the wine, to cancel the music and to stop the dancers out of respect for the poet”. (Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Madness and Mystic Longing*, Dr. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 28).

In the *Khusraw o Shirin*, this episode is mention in detail:

شکوه زهد من بر من نگهداشت
نه زان پشیمی که زاهد در کله داشت
بفرمود از میان می بر گرفتن
مدارای مرا پی بر گرفتن
به خدمت ساقیان را داشت در بند
به سجده مطربان را کرد خرسند
اشارت کرد کاین یک روز تا شام
نظامی را شویم از رود و از جام
نوای نظم او خوشتر ز رود است
سراسر قولهای او سرود است
چو خضر آمد ز باده سر بتابیم
که آب زندگی با خضر یابیم

It is not surprising that Qizil Arslan drank wine at his court. After all, the Hanafi Madhab was lax on this issue, especially with regards to Turkic Hanafism. On the other hand, Nizami’s shunning away from Nabidh and other alcoholic beverage is indeed part of his Shafi’ite rite.

In the *Eskandarnama*, Nizami Ganjavi desires the wine (the spiritual wine) that is lawful in the four Sunni Madhabs:

بیا ساقی از سر بنه خواب را
می ناب ده عاشق ناب را
میی گو آب زلال آمده است

Which Vahid Dastgerdi correctly interprets as:

در چهار مذهب اهل سنت یکی از آن چهار که ظاهراً مذهب حنفی باشد شراب پخته را حلال می داند ولی باده وعده ایزدی در هر چهار مذهب حلال است.

Thus, these proofs are strong indicators that Nizami Ganjavi was a Shafi'ite like the bulk of Iranian speakers [Kurds (his mother, his guardian maternal uncle), Persian/Persian dialect speakers, Talysh, Tats] of western Iran while the bulk of the nomadic Turkic speakers who had arrived in the area (during the Seljuq era) followed Hanafism. Shafi'ites and Hanafis would rarely marry since they followed different rites. Much like Shi'ite and Sunnis would not generally marry at that time. This is another strong indicator of the Iranian father line of Nizami Ganjavi.

Qom theory

There are some sources about Nizami Ganjavi's father line being from the city of Qom. Although the issue is not hundred percent provable due to the fact that the verses in relation with Qom is not mentioned in all manuscripts. But there are also two other verses that compare Araq (central Iran) with Ganja. If Nizami's ancestry from the paternal line was from Ganja, it would go back to the Shaddadid times. Anyhow, the Arabic names Yusuf, Zaki, Mua'yyad has pointed some scholars to claim an Arabic or even Jewish or possibly other Semitic (like Assyrian Christian) for Nizami's ancestry. We believe that this simply shows Nizami Ganjavi's family was Muslim for many generation and furthermore, his view of *Layli o Majnoon* as a foreign story whereas his favorite story is *Khusraw o Shirin* (by his own admission), lends credence to this.

Vladimir Minorsky writes:

Whether Nizami was born in Qom or in Ganja is not quite clear. The verse (quoted on p. 14): "I am lost as a pearl in the sea of Ganja, yet I am from the Qohestan of the city of Qom", does not expressly mean that he was *born* in Qom. **On the other hand, Nizami's** mother was of Kurdish origin, and this might point to Ganja where the Kurdish dynasty of Shaddad ruled down to AH. 468 ; even now Kurds are found to the south of Ganja. (C. H. Darab, Makhzan al-Asrar, 1945, pp. 55-61 (reviewed by Minorsky, BSOAS., 1948, xii/2, 441-5))

Professor Julia Scott Meysami also states the same:

"His father, who had migrated to Ganja from Qom in north central Iran, may have been a civil servant; his mother was a daughter of a Kurdish chieftain; having lost both parents early in his life, Nizâmî was brought up by an uncle. He was married three times, and in his poems laments the death of each of his wives, as well as proffering advice to his son Muhammad." (Nizami Ganjavi, A. The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance. Translated with introduction and notes by Julia Scott Meysami. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.)

As mentioned, one interesting fact about Nizami Ganjavi is that he was entrusted with his Kurdish maternal uncle after the passing away of his parents. Usually, in the traditional Islamic and patriarchal societies, rather than the maternal side, it is the paternal side that takes custodianship of a son, rather than the maternal side.

On the other hand, the line about Qom, Tafresh and Taa is not in every manuscript of the Sharafnama. It is in more recent manuscripts. But some medieval biographers have also mentioned the Qom origin. Whether genuine or not, it can never be known 100%. Unlike what some authors originally thought (Said Nafisi for example), there is a local district by the name “Ta” near Qom and there are local people who claim to be related to Nizami’s family (the author read this in an Iranian journal). Noting the fact that not Nizami himself necessarily, but his ancestry may possibly be from Qom, the idea is worth investigating. Certainly, we do not know what city Nizami Ganjavi’s father was born.

Yet his Islamic name and Nizami Ganjavi’s urban background can only point to the fact that his father line were from Ganja prior to the Saljuq era or they migrated from Western Iran, whose Sunni population was overwhelmingly Shafiite. It seems that deeply rooted scholarly and sedentary lineage is indicated. Might the rule of the Buyids, with their strong adherence to Shi’ism, forced some of the Sunnis (as mentioned by C.E. Wilson) to move to other regions? Specially a region that was under Shafi’i control like the Shaddadid Arran? All these are plausible. The fact that Nizami is entrusted to his maternal uncle rather than fathers-side shows that his father might not have been from Ganja and perhaps his father’s family was not present in that city.

According to G.H. Darab:

I believe that he was compelled to remain in Ganjeh for some reason unknown at present, and I doubt if it ever will be known. He continually refers to his being imprisoned in Ganjeh and forbidden to go out; he never mentions the cause. His great sanctity would have prevented his being imprisoned in Ganjeh. In the conclusion of Makhzanol Asrar he says, he lowered his head and from his lips he scattered pearls, and brought the Treasury of Mysteries to completion. He gives thanks to God that he has finished the Makhzanol Asrar, and further, he tells us the important fact that most of his life has come to an end.” (G.H. Darab, “The Treasury of Mysteries” (Makhzan al-Asrar of Nizami Ganjavi)).

Nizami does refer to being stuck in Ganja and besides the reference to Tafresh, Ta and Qom found in some manuscripts, he refers to Persian Iraq (which Qom/Tafresh/Ta are part of) twice when comparing his situation in Ganja:

نظامی که در گنجه شد شهر بند
مباد از سلام تو نابهرمند

گنجه گره کرده گریبان من
بی گرهی گنج عراق آن من

نظامی ز گنجیه بگشای بند

گرفتاری گنجه تا چند چند

چرا گشتی درین بیغوله پابست
چنین نقد عراقی در کف دست
رکاب از شهر بند گنجه بگشای
عنان شیر داری پنجه بگشای

On the verse which occurs at the end of the *Makhzan al-Asrar* where he:

گنجه گره کرده گریبان من
بی گرهی گنج عراق آن من

Vahid Dastgerdi mentions:

در این بیت به وطن اصلی و مسقط الراس خویش که عراق عجم باشد اظهار اشتیاق می کند یعنی با آن که گنجیه عراق بدون هیچ گره و سختی از آن منست شهر گنجه خود را به گریبان من انگل و گره کرده است.

Translation (per Dastgerdi):

In this verse, Nizami is referring to his original homeland and place of origin, and shows his great love for the place. He says although the treasures of Araq without any knots/twists and hardship is in my hands, the city of Ganja, has taken me by the neck and tied a knot upon me.

On the verse:

چرا گشتی درین بیغوله پابست
چنین نقد عراقی در کف دست
رکاب از شهر بند گنجه بگشای
عنان شیر داری پنجه بگشای

Vahid Dastgerdi mentions:

نقد عراقی در سره و پاک بودن ضرب المثل بوده و چون حکیم نظامی عراقی است به دو مناسب سخن خود را نقد عراقی مینامد.

Overall, Vahid Dastgerdi writes:

«برای اثبات این مطلب که آیا زاد و بوم نظامی همان شهر گنجه است یا آنکه در عراق متولد و در زمان کودکی با پدر به گنجه رفته، دلیلی در اشعارش نیست، ولی تقریباً تمام تذکره نویسان مینگارند که در گنجه متولد شده است، اما عراقی الاصل بودن وی مسلم استن. بدین دلیل که در همه جا عراق را ستایش و همواره به دیدار عراق و مسافرت بدین صوب اظهار شوق کرده است و از آن جمله است(مخزن الاسرار ص 179):
گنجه گره کرده گریبان من
بیگرهی گنج عراق آن من

بانگ برآورده جهان کای غلام
گتجه کدام است، نظامی کدام؟
(خسرو و شیرین ص 361):
عراقیوار بانگ از چرخ بگذاشت
به آهنگ عراق این بانگ برداشت
شرفنامه(ص 53)
عراق دل افروز باد ارجمند
که آوازه‌ی فضل از او شد بلند
دلیل قمی و تفرشی بودن نظامی نزد تذکره نویسان این دو بیست از اقبالنامه ص (29):
چه در گرچه در بحر گنجه گم
ولی از قهستان شهر قم
به تفرش دهی هست "تا" نام او
نظامی از آنجا شده نام جو
این دو بیت به ابیات نظامی هرچند شباهت تام دارد ولی همان زبان است، اما در
نسخ کهن سال ما این دو نیست، بعلاوه در جایی واقع شده است که ارتباطی با مطلب
ندارد و رشتته‌ی معنی را قطع میکند، یعنی میانهای این دو بیت:
نظامی ز گنجینه بگشای بند
گرفتاری گنجه تا چند چند
برون آر اگر صیدی افکندهای
روان کن اگر گنجی آکندهای (اقبالنامه ص 29):
این دوبیت کمال ارتباط معنوی و لفظی را با هم دارند و صاحب ذوق سلیم میداند که
جای دو بیت تفرش و قم در میان این دو بیت نیست، پس باآنکه عراقی بودن نظامی
مسلم است و پدر و نیاکانش اهل عراق عجم بوده‌اند دلیل مسلمی برقمی و تفرشی
بودن وی در دست نیست و این دو بیت به دلیل عدم تناسب مکان و نبودن در نسخ کهن
سال شاید الحاقی باشد»

(Zanjani, Barat. "Ahwal o Athar o SharH Makhzan ol_Asraar Nezami Ganjavi", Tehran University Publications, 2005.)

Thus Nizami's feeling of imprisonment in Ganja, and his praise and feeling of belonging to Persian Araq in the same verse where he feels imprisoned in Ganja, lends some credence to the Qom theory. The fact will remain that we will not even know for 100% what Islamic city Nizami's father line came from. We should mention though that both Ganja and Arak were considered part of Persia and Persian lands by Nezami as he states himself. Indeed Nezami Ganjavi himself praises the Eldiguzids as the King of the Persian lands which obviously shows that the area was associated with Persian people and culture:

در آن بخشش که رحمت عام کردند
دو صاحب را محمد نام کردند
یکی ختم نبوت گشته دانش

یکی ختم ممالک بر حیاتش
یکی برج عرب را تا ابد ماه
یکی ملک عجم را جاودان شاه

*In that day that they bestowed mercy upon all,
Two great ones were given the name Muhammad,
One who's pure essence was the seal of prophecy,
The other who is the Kingdom's Seal, in his own days
One whose house/zodiac is moon of the Arabs
The other who is the everlasting Shah of Realm of Persians*

In praising the rulers of Shirwan (who sometimes extended their rule beyond Shirwan),
Nizami again mentions:

این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان
شروان چه که شهریار ایران

*This book is better to be written
A young peacock is better to have a mate
Specially for a king like the Shah of Shirwan
Not only Shirwan, but the Shahriyar (Prince, Ruler) of all Iran*

Nizami Ganjavi calls upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH &HP):

سوی عجم ران منشین در عرب
زرده روز اینک و شبیدیز شب
ملک برآرای و جهان تازه کن
هر دو جهان را پر از آوازه کن

*Do not stay in Arabia, come to Persia
Here are the light steeds of night and day*

So the area at that time was considered part of the Iranian/Persian ethnic and cultural region.

Intermarriage was rare between Western Iranians and Turks due to both religious and ethnic factors

We have already mentioned that Shafi'ism of Western Iranians contrasted with Hanafism which was the religion of Turks.

We also noted that the physical features of Turks which were seen as beautiful by Persian poets since at least Rudaki, Ferdowsi and Qatran distinguished them from the

Mediterranean Iranian look. It should be noted the bulk population was not Turkified just like Safina Tabriz shows in the case of Tabriz or Anatolia was mainly Greek/Armenian at the time.

An average person at that time with a high probability would have had both parents from the same ethnic background and religion. There were rare exceptions of course, for example royal dynasties, even those of both Muslims and Christians of the area had intermarriages among the royal class. Also if a slave was given as a gift (like Nezami's first wife), then marriages were consummated. We already pointed out that due to this rare situation, Nezami explicitly mentions his wife as a Turk and his son as a Turk-Zad. As a rule, the average class of Iranians and Turks did not intermarry due to different physical features, religious sect (Shafiite vs Hanafism) and also culture.

There was indeed some hostility between Iranians and Turks (like many neighboring groups in the world) although the common Islamic religion helped to heal these divisions.

“Intermarriage between Turk and Tajik were unusual during the Qaraqoyunlu and Aqqoyunlu periods”(Andrew J. Newman, “Safavid Iran”, Published by I.B.Tauris, 2006. Pg 167)

“Bartold, Schineye, pg 460, describes tensions between them during the period of the Khorezmshahs. At the time when there were both Turkish and Iranian commanders, in reply to a proposal from the Turkish commander that they can cooperate, the Gurid command is said to have replied: “We are Gurids and you are Turks. We cannot live together”. Likewise, when the (Turkic) Khorezmshahs proposed an alliance with Mazandaran, his advisors warned: “The paths are dark between Turk and Tajik” and “The Tajik will never trust a Turk”
(Paul Bergne, “The Birth of Tajikistan”, Published by I.B.Tauris, 2007. Pg 136.)

The Artukids, Atabaks of Diyārbakır, several times came into conflict with the Kurds (Abu 'l-Fida', iii, 583; Usāma, i, 321). The 'Abbāsīd caliphs, freeing themselves from the tutelage of their protectors, negotiated with the Kurds (cf. the case of 'Isa Khumaydi in 528/1134, and Kamil, xi, 7, 188) and sought to weaken the Turks. In 581/1185 under the caliph al-Nasir, a minor incident resulted in a war between the Kurds and the Turkomans (Kāmil, iii, 342) which extended over a vast area (Syria, Diyarbakır, Djazira, Mawsil, Shahrizur, Khilat and Adharbaydjan). Two years later the rivals stopped fighting in order to join against the Christians of Armenia, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Syria and Cappadocia, but new feuds soon broke out between the Kurds and Turkomans. After many fierce battles, the Kurds fought their way back into Cilicia. The Turks practically exterminated the Kurds of Cilicia and Syria. As the Kurds on leaving their old homes had entrusted their goods to their Christian neighbours, and as the Christians concealed some Kurds, the Turks finally fell upon the Christians at Thelmuzen(?) and Arabthil (= Arabgir?) (Michael the Syrian, in Recueil, doc. armen., 395)(Encyclopedia of Islam, “Kurds”(Bois, Th.; Minorsky, V.; Bois, Th.; Bois, Th.; MacKenzie, D.N.; Bois, Th. "Kurds, Kurdistān." Encyclopaedia of Islam. Edited by: P.

Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2008. Brill Online.)

“It was a great merit of Saladin’s policy to keep his Muslim warriors in proper balance, for we never hear of considerable clashesh between his Turkish and Kurdish supporters.(Footnote 3: What danger was thereby conjured up is clear from Ibn Athir’s record (XI, 342) of the events of 581/1185. A trivial incident started a terrible carnage between the Turkmans and the Kurds which lasted several years in a vast areas from Azarbayjan to Upper Mesopotamia, see in great detail Michel le Syrien, *Recueil, Documents armenians* pg 395. End of footnopte.) The fact that there was a possibility of tension among them is supported by the letter which was addressed to Saladin in July 1192 by the governor of Jerusalem Abul-Hayja al-Hadhabani (a Kurd). He wrote that after the disastrous fall of ‘Akka the garrison of Jerusalem was hesitant about the defence of the Holy City: ‘so send us someone of your family round whom we shall rally otherwise the Kurds will not believe in the Turks nor the Turks in the Kurds.’” (Minorsky, Vladimir. “*Studies in Caucasusn history*”, Cambridge University Press, 1957. Pg 138.)

All these indicators (plus Nozhat al-Majales and what will follow in the next chapter) are sufficient proofs in our view that Nizami Ganjavi did not have a Turkic father line. Furthermore, the falsification of the verse relating Wolves to Nizami’s father shows that there is no valid proof for any Turkic father line for Nizami Ganjavi. Else there would be no need to create such a false verse. Also the verses we brought: 1) where he references himself as Persian Dehqan, 2) distinguishes clearly the race of his first wife (given to him as a gift by the ruler of Darband) and calls his son as born of Turkish women, 3) the fact that the urban population of the area were Iranians, 4) the fact that his ancestry predates the Seljuq takeover of the area, 5) the fact that unlike all the Turkish dynasties of the area he has no Turkish name in his genealogy, 6) the fact that as a Western Iranian he followed Shafi’ism where-as Turks overwhelmingly have been Hanafites, 7) and the fact of racial and cultural differences between Iranians (Persians/Kurds) and Turkic groups at the time are all in our opinion sufficient indicators for Nezami’s fathers background.

We have not yet looked at the most important part of Nezami when analyzing his background. That is Nezami’s culture since Nezami’s culture by itself proves his own identity and background. Let us now concentrate on Nezami’s culture, since scientist today are of increasing belief that all humans come from the same origin (much like the holy books mention Adam and Eve or in Zoroastrian text Mashi and Mashyoi) and race is more a social construct and culture is the ultimate indicator of the a person’s identity and background.

Nizami Ganjavi’s Culture

چون شیر به خود سپهشکن باش

فرزند خصال خویشتن باش

One way of distinguishing which civilization Nizami Ganjavi belongs to (Turkic or Iranian) is to simply review his culture background, folklore, myths and his cultural orientation and contribution. Culture after all is the ultimate indicator of modern ethnicities. We note that unlike a scientist who writes in Latin or English, a poet is closely tied to the culture he grew up in, learns from and contributes to. Specially, if the poet's material is based upon the culture he contributes to. With this regard, none of the five jewels of Nizami Ganjavi have anything to do with Turkic/Oghuz civilization. These jewels are based on Iranian cultural materials. Ultimately, Nizami's legacy is based upon his work, as he himself has claimed so many times. It has nothing to do with his father (who we showed was most certainly Iranian) who he lost early in his life and was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle. Poetry unlike scientific works or many novels is tied eternally to the language it is composed in and language is the major difference between various cultures.

If the only thing that justifies calling Nezami Ganjavi a "Turkic poet" rather than Iranian poet of Iranian civilization is the wrongfully alleged (and as we showed in this article without any basis) ethnicity of his father whom he lost very early in his life, then that reasoning does not hold at all with regards to Nizami Ganjavi's culture. We should note for example that three Azerbaijani-Turkic poets were not of Oghuz father line ancestry. That is Nasimi, Ismail I of Safavids and Shahriyar are not Azerbaijani-Turkic poets because of their lineage but rather because of their culture.

Else both Nasimi and Shahriyar are Seyyeds which means their father line goes back to the Prophet Muhammad, but no one would classify them as "Arab poets". The same is true of Esmail I, the founder of Safavids, whose lineage is traced back to Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili and from there to Piruz Shah Zarin Kolah the Kurd of Sanjan. Oldest preserved manuscript about Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili dating prior to the Safavid control of Iran clearly states his ancestry as Kurdish. But by no means this makes Ismail I a "Kurdish poet". The same is true of the Russian poet Pushkin, whose father line was Ethiopian, but no one has called him an "Ethiopian poet". However these cases are different than Nezami since Nezami had Iranian ancestry on both sides. However, while it is certain that Nezami Ganjavi was Iranian from both sides, it is not the reason why he is an Iranian cultural icon and Persian poet. Nizami Ganjavi is Iranian Persian poet and part of Iranian civilization because of culture, his impact on Persian poetry and the untranslatable language of poetry he used. Cultural contribution is the major indicator of the poet's heritage and why he is known universally as a Persian poet in non-political academic writings.

Viewpoints of Navai and a perspective upon culture

In his very informative book "*The Turkish State and History: Clio Meets the Grey Wolf*" (1991), Professor Speros Vyrona takes issue with history writing of some nationalist Turkish authors who claim Iranian scientists such as Avicenna, Ghazali and

others as Turkic. We note that both Ghazali Tusi (same city as Ferdowsi) and Avicenna have also very important works in Persian. Besides the fact that Avicenna has mentioned that the only languages he knows are Persian and Arabic, and besides the fact that in one of his works, he says that Turks and Blacks of his time, due to living in far away and harsh climates, are far away from knowledge and logic and are meant to serve the people of the city of knowledge:

مثلاً در کتاب اشارات که در حکمت بعد از شفا مهمترین مصنفات اوست در باب منطق در اشاره ششم آنجا که تحقیق در قضیهء سالبهء کلیه میکند میگوید: لکن اللغات التي نعرفها قد خلت في عاداتها عن استعمال النفي على هذه الصورة... فيقولون بالعربية لاشيء من > ب... و كذلك ما يقال في فصيح لغة الفرس هیچ > ب نیست. ملاحظه بفرمائید که ابتدا میگوید: «در زبانهای که ما میدانیم، آنگاه مثال از عربی میزند سپس از زبان فارسی شاهد می آورد و عین عبارت را نقل میکند که « هیچ > ب نیست» و اگر زبان دیگر هم میدانست البته میگفت در آن زبان چگونه میگویند. (لغتنامه دهخدا ابوعلی سینا)

Thus Ibn Sina states: "In the languages we know ... in Arabic it is La-shayy .. and in Persian it is Hich Nist". Thus if Ibn Sina knew any other languages, he would have mentioned it.

شیخ الرئیس ابن سینا در آخر الهیات کتاب شفا با ذکر جمله «المدينة الفاضلة» می نویسد: «و انه لابد من ناس يخدمون الناس، فيجب ان يكون هؤلاء يجبرون علي خدمه اهل المدينة الفاضلة، و كذلك من كان من الناس بعيداً عن تلقي الفاضله فهم عبيد بالطبع، نثل الترك والزنج، و بالجمله الذين نشأوا في غير اقاليم الشريفه التي اكثر احوالها ان ينشأ فيها حسنه الامزجه صحيحه القرايح و العقول». حاصل معنی است که ابن سینا می خواهد بگوید ترکان و زنگیان آن عصر که طبعاً عبيد و بنده بشمار می رفتند و کسانی که در سرزمینهای ناسازگار که پرورنده قریحه صحیح و عقول سلیم نیست، زندگی می کنند از **فضیلت دورند** و مجبور به خدمت اهل مدینه فاضله می باشند.

Avicenna in the book of "The Healing: (Ash-Shifa) in Chapter 5 (*Concerning the caliph and Imam: the necessity of obeying them. Remarks on politics, transactions and morals*) states:

"...As for the enemies of those who oppose his laws, the legislator must decree waging war against them and destroying them, after calling on them to accept the truth. Their property and women must be declared free for the spoil. For when such property and women are not administered according to the constitution of the virtuous city, they will not bring about the good for which the property and women are sought. Rather, these would contribute to corruption and evil. Since some men have to serve others, such people must be forced to serve the people of the just city. The same applies to people not very capable of acquiring virtue. For these are slaves by nature as, for example, the Turks and Zinjis and in general those who do not grow up in noble climes where the condition for the most part are such that nations of good temperament, innate intelligence and sound minds thrive"(Chris Brown, Terry Nardin, Nicholas J. Rengger,

“(International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War”, Published by Cambridge University Press, 2002, pg 156-157).

Despite these clear proofs, Professor Vyrona does not bother with racial argument and puts the emphasis on culture.

Professor Vyrona states:

Even if one were to assume that all three of these philosophers had been Turks by origin one still could not say either: (a) That their cultural heritage and proclivity were due to their alleged ethnic affiliation. They came to know Islamic philosophy, science, medicine within a Muslim and Arabo-Persian cultural milieu and in the Arabic language. Their ethnicity, whatever it might or might not have been, is irrelevant in this matter; or (b), one could not say that the particular careers of these three men within philosophy had any effect on the mass of Turks entering the Islamic world and Anatolia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, since they were by and large nomads, illiterate and without any widespread tradition of written culture in the Turkish language.

Indeed without the Sassanid civilization, an Islamic milieu would have been impossible. Many works were translated from Pahlavi and many authors wrote scientific works in Persian and Arabic. Yet the culture of the Oghuz/Turkic nomads had absolutely no influence either on Nizami or the Islamic-Iranian Golden age of culture. Turkish dynasties like the Seljuqs and Ghaznavids were rapidly Iranified.

For example:

Here one might bear in mind that non-Persian dynasties such as the Ghaznavids, Saljuqs and Ilkhanids were rapidly to adopt the Persian language and have their origins traced back to the ancient kings of Persia rather than to Turkish heroes or Muslim saints (Amir-Moezzi, M.A “Shahrbanu”, Encyclopaedia Iranica.).

Not a single work in Turkish was produced in Iran or Caucasus under these two and similar Turkic dynasties up to at least the Mongol era. We have already brought examples from Seljuqs. On the Ghaznavids one does not have to look what these scholars say (David Christian, “*A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*”, Blackwell Publishing, 1998, pg 370: “*Though Turkic in origin and, apparently in speech, Alp Tegin, Sebuk Tegin and Mahmud were all thoroughly Persianized*”). With this regard, we can also point to one of the earliest “Turkish nationalists”. That is Alisher Navai, who wrote an interesting (from the point of view of classical Turkish nationalism although he was not a linguist) book in order to try to prove that the “Turkish” language is superior to Persian. The book was the last work written by Navai.

Robert Devereux (tr.), “Judgment of Two Languages; Muhakamat Al-Lughatain By Mir ‘Ali Shir Nawai”; Introduction, Translation and Notes: Leiden (E.J. Brill), 1966.

“He (Nawai) found Chagatai an unrefined language of tribesmen and he left it a language recognized and accepted as a suitable medium for literature. This contribution was not by

happenstance. Nawa'i was a strong Turkish patriot and nationalist, which sentiments expressed themselves as linguistic chauvinism. As he grew older Nawa'i came to feel that real Turkish sovereignty would arrive only when Turkish (Chagatai) was used as the state language and when its literature was written in that idiom. His dream had perhaps not been fully realized by the time of his death, but a good start had been made and, in later years, thanks to his contribution, Chagatai did ascend to the heights he believed it deserved.

...

In the first half, Nawa'i proclaims in extravagant terms that Turkish - he never uses the term Chagatai - is not only a proper literary language but is actually superior to Persian for that purpose. He then devotes the remainder of the essay to a glowing - modesty is not one of his virtues - account of his own literary works, designed to convince the reader that his view of the comparative merits of Turkish and Persian stemmed from a profound knowledge of both languages and not merely from prejudice inspired by his Turkish background. Any linguist of today who reads the essay will inevitably conclude that Nawa'i argued his case poorly, for his principal argument is that the Turkish lexicon contained many words for which the Persians had no exact equivalents and that Persian-speakers had therefore to use the Turkish words. This is a weak reed on which to lean, for it is the rare language indeed that contains no loan words. In any case, the beauty of a language and its merit as a literary medium depend less on size of vocabulary and purity of etymology than on the euphony, expressiveness and malleability of those words that its lexicon does include. Moreover, even if Nawa'i's thesis were to be accepted as valid, he destroyed his own case by the lavish use, no doubt unknowingly, of non-Turkish words even while ridiculing the Persians for their need to borrow Turkish words. The present writer has not made a word count of Nawa'i's text, but he would estimate conservatively that at least one-half of the words used by Nawa'i in the essay are Arabic or Persian in origin."

(Robert Devereux (tr.), "Judgment of Two Languages; Muhakamat Al-Lughatain By Mir 'Ali Shir Nawai"; Introduction, Translation and Notes: Leiden (E.J. Brill, 1966)

Thus Nawai's book is highly nationalistic for its own time, when modern nationalism based on the European model was not developed yet. It is really a classical form of 'Assabbiyya which the Iranian Shu'abbiyah movement can be called an example of. But the Shu'abbiyah movement was widely popular and took many forms including important revolts, where-as the ideas of Nawai seemed not to have the same mass appeal during his own time.

Navai mentions:

He [Nuh] made Sam, whom they call the Father of the Persians, the ruler of the lands of Iran and Turan, and he sent Ham, who is called the Father of the Hindus, to Hindistan. The children of these three sons of the Prophet spread and multiplied in the places named. The son of Yafith was the progenitor of the Turks.

Interestingly enough, Navai who was aware of Turkic folklore, differentiates between the origin of Turks and the lands of Turan. Only in the last 100 years, by studying Avesta and

Pahlavi, have scholars realized that the Turanians of Shahnameh have no relation to Turks. In words of Bosworth:

“Hence as Kowalski has pointed out, a Turcologist seeking for information in the Shahnama on the primitive culture of the Turks would definitely be disappointed.” (Bosworth, C. E. “Barbarian Incursions: The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World.” In Islamic Civilization . Edited by D. S. Richards. Oxford, 1973.)

This issue is also discussed in the Appendix. Navai believed adamantly in the superiority of his language (just like many nationalists believe in the superiority of their language): “Turkish is much superior to Persian as regards the formation of words and expressions and contains nuances and eloquences which, God willing, shall be explained at the proper place.” (Robert Devereux (tr.), “Judgment of Two Languages; Muhakamat Al-Lughatain, pg 5)

Thus Navai was truly a Turkish nationalist for his day and age. Nevertheless, what is interesting is that he considers Seljuqs of Persian ethnicity and of course he considers Nizami/Ferdowsi and many others as Persian poets (here in the ethnic sense since he mentions even the Seljuqs as Persian rulers).

“Then Persian rulers won independence in some climes and territories, whereupon Persian poets appeared: Khaqani and Anwari and Kamal Isma’il and Zahir and Salman for qasidas; Firdawsi (Master of Knowledge), Nizami (the Incomparable) and Mir Khusraw (Sorcerer of India) for mathnawis; and Sa’di (Inventor of Time) and Hafiz (Non-pareil of the Century) for ghazals. All of them have already been discussed and their qualities noted, so there is no need to extend my words, which men of learning would not find seemly. Amongst Persian rulers also there have been great and worthy rulers and high-ranking commanders of vast armies, such as Sultan Tughrul and Shah Shuja’, who wrote brilliant couplets and beautiful ghazals that were famous in their day and known throughout the world. Then the land passed from the Arab and Persian rulers to Turkish khans. From the time of Hulagu to the end of the reign of Timur and his son and successor, Shahrukh, many Turkish poets appeared, and from amongst the sons and grandsons of these rulers came sultans of gentle temperaments. The poets were al-Sakkaki and Haydar Khwarazmi and Atayi and Muqimi and Amir and Yaqini and Gadayi. But none of them was comparable to the Persian poets I have named.” (Robert Devereux (tr.), “Judgment of Two Languages; Muhakamat Al-Lughatain, pg 40-41)

Thus for Navai, culture was the differentiating factor than possible ethnicity which had become more convoluted as Muslims intermarried. The Seljuqs who considered themselves descendants of Sassanid kings and adopted Persian language and married within Iranian families were Persianized enough to be considered Persians by Navai. I believe that the way Navai saw ethnicity in his own era is similar or the same as that of the era of Nezami. That is ethnicity was defined by language and culture foremost.

The question of which civilization, Turkic or Iranian does Nizami Ganjavi belong to, is really not a serious question. The answer is obvious, even if the biggest superpower like

the USSR tried to falsify history and attempted to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian literature and civilization. All one has to do is actually read Nizami Ganjavi, in his original language, and read his masterpieces like *Haft Paykar* or *Khusraw o Shirin*. They have nothing to do with Turkic civilization and are parts of the culture of Sassanid Iran, originally expanded upon by Ferdowsi and then other later poets. Despite the obvious answer to this simple question, we shall provide a short review of these works.

Nizami and the inheritance of Ferdowsi's throne

As we mentioned already, Nizami Ganjavi advises the son of Shirwanshah to read the Shahnameh, has praised Ferdowsi, has used Shahnameh as his main source for different romantic epics, considered himself as successor to Ferdowsi and according to some scholars: “it seems that Nizami’s favorite pastime was reading Firdawsi’s monumental epic Shahnameh (*The book of Kings*)” (Chelkowsi).

Nizami Ganjavi has taken verses from the Shahnameh as well or has slightly modified them. For a famous example:

فردوسی:
چنان دان که شاهی و پیغمبری
دو گوهر بود در یک انگشتری

نظامی:
نزد خرد شاهی و پیغمبری
چو دو نگین است در انگشتری

فردوسی:
جهان را بلندی و پستی تویی
ندانم چی ای هر چه هستی تویی

نظامی:
همه نیستند آنچه هستی تویی
پناه بلندی و پستی تویی

Nizami Ganjavi considered himself a successor and inheritor of Ferdowsi:

در بخش «خطاب زمین بوس اقبال نامه:

ز کاس نظامی یکی طاس می
خوری هم به آیین کاوس کی
ستانی بدان طاس طوسی نواز
حق شاهنامه ز محمود باز

دو وارث شمار از دو کان کهن
تو را در سخا و مرا در سخن
به وامی که ناداده باشد نخست
حق وارث از وارث آید درست
من آن گفته‌ام که آنچنان کس نگفت
تو آن کن که آن نیز نتوان نهفت

The meaning of these four verses is as follows.

From the wine cup of Nizami, take a cup and drink in the manner of the Kayanid (Achaemenid) Kings. Listen to these eloquent words which refresh the memory of Ferdowsi. Seek the rights of Ferdowsi from Mahmud, and give it to me (Nizami), since I am the inheritor of Ferdowsi and you are the inheritor of Mahmud. And what Mahmud has not given to Ferdowsi, his successor will give to the successor of Ferdowsi.

A relatively Turkic nationalist view is mentioned here:

http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai142_folder/142_articles/142_koroghlu_why.html

(Betty Blair, Why Hajibeyov wrote the Opera Koroghlu, Azerbaijan International, Summer 2006)

“The original opera had been based on “Kaveh, the Blacksmith”. However, such a plot would absolutely have jeopardized their lives. First of all, it was based on a foreign tale: Kaveh was a mythical figure of ancient Persia, memorialized by 10th century Ferdowsi in Persian verse in the “Shahnameh” (Book of the Kings)”

Thus the Shahnameh in reality has nothing to do with Turkic civilization and it is considered a foreign tale for Turkic-minded nationalists. Turkish folklore, like Oghuz-Nama, Dede Qorqod and etc., has no relationship with the Shahnameh. The Shahnameh is a statement of Iranian patriotism, a product of the Shu’ubbiya movement and a testament of Iranian civilization. It glorifies Iran and it is centered on Iran. The epics of Shahnameh are grounded in the Iranian civilization and are obviously not part of Turkic-Oghuz culture. Indeed after the era of modern Turkic nationalism, many Turkish nationalists looked towards the Shahnameh with enmity. Among them, one can mention the Varliq magazine which has many times criticized Ferdowsi while attempting to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization and attach him into Turkic civilization. Or one can simply check recent pictures where some Persian books were burned by some pro-Turkist nationalists in Iran. This author believes that any sort of ethnic nationalism is very dangerous, where-as feeling of patriotism on the style of George Washington is defensive. Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh was also defensive and patriotic in the sense that for him, Iran was being overrun by non-Iranian invaders.

Nizami Ganjavi also is completely influenced and absorbed by the Shahnameh. There is absolutely no mention of any Turkic folklore or tales by Nizami Ganjavi. He has mentioned Ferdowsi and his Shahnameh in four of his five books/stories.

اندر پژوهش خسرو و شیرین:

حکیمی که این حکایت شرح کردست
 حدیث عشق از ایشان طرح کردست
 چو در شصت او فتادش زندگانی
 خدنگ افتادش از شصت جوانی
 به عشقی در که شصت آمد پسندش
 سخن گفتن نیامد سودمندش
 نگفتم هرچه دانا گفت از آغاز
 که فرخ نیست گفتن گفته را باز

Nizami calls Ferdowsi, sage (Hakim) and Daanaa (wise, the knowledgeable). He also mentions that since Ferdowsi was in his sixties, he did not expand upon the romantic nature of the story (since at that age romance did not suit him), where-as Nizami will expand upon it. Khusraw the Sassanid King and his Christian wife Shirin (note the monotheism of Shirin throughout the whole story as well as the fact that the historical Shirin was a Christian) have no relationship with Turkish folklore and culture. Nizami Ganjavi mentions:

حدیث خسرو و شیرین نهان نیست
 وزان شیرینتر الحق داستان نیست

Thus Nizami Ganjavi considers the story of Khusraw and Shirin to be the sweetest story he knows. If Nizami Ganjavi had derived any influence from Turkic civilization, he would have chosen one of his stories based on themes of that civilization. But as we see, this was not so and he considers the Iranian folkloric story of Khusraw and Shirin to be the most beloved story of his civilization. He chose a Sassanid based story and he has given us great detail about Iran's ancient culture.

In his Eskandarnama, Nizami again mentions Ferdowsi:

مگوی آنچه دانای پیشینه گفت
 که در در نشاید دو سوراخ سفت

We note again, Nizami uses the term “Daanaa” (Wise, knowledgeable) for Ferdowsi. And again he mentions Ferdowsi as the “great wise discourse-writer who decorated words like a new bride”.

از ان خسروی می که در جام اوست
 شرف نامهی خسروان نام اوست
 سخنگوی پیشینه دانای طوس
 که آراست روی سخن چون عروس
 در آن نامه کان گوهر سفته راند
 بسی گفتنیهای ناگفته ماند
 اگر هر چه بشنیدی از باستان
 بگفتی دراز آمدی داستان
 نگفت آنچه رغب پذیرش نبود
 همان گفت کز وی گزیرش نبود
 دگر از پی دوستان زله کرد
 که حلوا به تنها نشایست خورد
 نظامی که در رشته گوهر کشید

قلم دیدهها را قلم درکشید
بناسفته دری که در گنج یافت
ترازوی خود را گهرسنج یافت
شرفنامه را فرخ آوازه کرد
حدیث کهن را بدو تازه کرد

As previously mentioned, according to Professor Chelkowski:

It seems that Nizami's favorite pastime was reading Firdawsi's monumental epic *Shahnameh* (*The book of Kings*). Firdawsi's treatment of Alexander in this great heroic poem was by no means negligible, but in Nizami's opinion it was not complete and he wanted to write a poetic supplement to it. After several years of research he gave up this idea and decided that the subject called for a new and independent work. He still, however, acknowledged his indebtedness to his great master, Firdawsi, and considered himself a respectful follower of that literary pioneer. He, therefore, chose for the *book of Alexander* one heroic epic verse known as *Mutaqarib*, which Firdawsi employed in his *Shahnameh*. (Chelkowski, P. "Nizami's Iskandarnameh:" in *Colloquio sul poeta persiano Nizami e la leggenda iranica di Alessandro magno*, Roma, 1977).

In the *Haft Paykar*, again Nizami mentions Ferdowsi and praises him:

هرچه تاریخ شهریان بود
در یکی نامه اختیار آن بود
چابک اندیشهی رسیده نخست
همه را نظم داده بود درست
مانده زان لعل ریزه لختی گرد
هر یکی زان قراضه چیزی کرد

Translation:

*All chronicles of king of yore
Were gathered in one book lore
Already one of the keenest minds
Had ordered its verse refined
From that, some Ruby dust remained
Shards from which others sometimes feigned*

Finally in the *Layli o Majnoon*, despite its Arabic origin (although the story has been mentioned since the time of Rudaki in Persian), Nizami Ganjavi again alludes to the *Shahnameh*:

هم نامه خسروان بخوانی
هم گفته بخردان بدانی

After paying homage to the son of Shirvanshah, "the relationship between Shirvanshah and his son, Manuchihr, is mentioned in chapter eight. Nizami advises the king's son to read Firdausi's *Shahnama* and to remember the pithy sayings of the wise. Nizami overtly refers to the didactic aspect of his poem. He promises the prince that in his poem there is a "treasure concealed in a casket." He

considers the poem as his daughter, a beautiful maiden, whom he presents to the royal family. He adds that even if the prince does not have any regard for her father, he might look with kindness on her brother, that is, on Nizami's son. In this subtle way, Nizami not only entrusts his son to prince Manuchihr, he also draws the prince's attention to the poem's didactic nature".

(Seyed-Gohrab, Ali Asghar, Layli and Majnun: Madness and Mystic Longing, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern literature, Jun 2003, pg 276).

The only other work which Nizami Ganjavi does not mention Ferdowsi has ample enough stories about ancient Persian Kings, and uses Shahnameh imagery and also Nizami Ganjavi mentions the Persian poet Sanai in it.

According to Peter Chelkowski:

He was looking for universal justice, and is trying to protect the poor and humble people and to put under scrutiny the excesses of the powerful of the world. The guidelines for people in the poem are accompanied by warnings of the transitory nature of life. Makhzan al-Asrar is an emulation of Sanai's Hadikat al-Hakika, and Nizami acknowledges this but stresses his own superiority. The similarities between Sanai's poem and Nizami's are in the ethico-philosophical genre, but Nizami used a different metre and organised the whole poem in a different way.
(Encyclopedia of Islam, "Nizami", P. Chelkowski).

Among the multitude of references and symbolism from the Shahnameh, one can mention the more famous characters and concepts of the Shahnameh. For example:

Farr(فره),

For example on Farr, the eminent Professor Gheraldo Gnoli writes:

"FARR(AH),X^vARĒNAH, literally, "glory," according to the most likely etymology and the semantic function reconstructed from its occurrence in various contexts and phases of the Iranian languages. In all Iranian dialects the form had initial *f*-, except Avestan and Pahlavi, in which we find initial *x^v*- (*hy*-): *x^varənah*- and *xwarrah* (cf. NPers. *korra*, below).

(Encyclopedia Iranica, "Farr(ah)", Gherado Gnoli)

Each of these names and concepts has a deeply rooted historical or philosophical meaning in Iranian civilization and are mentioned in Nezami's work:

Simorgh (Mythical Iranian bird mentioned in Avesta),
Rustam (The most famous Iranian Hero in Shahnameh),
Fariborz (The son of Rustam)
Darafsh Kawiyaani (The flag of Kaveh, symbol of Iranian nation),
Fereydun(legendary ancestor of Iranians),
Anushirawan (Famous Sassanid King),
Esfandyaar (Great legendary Hero of Avesta and Shahnameh, see also the section **under Nezami's mother where we delved into a verse of Nezami**),
Zand/Avesta (Zoroastrian holy texts attributed to Zoroaster),

Zahak (Bivarasb the villain in Shahnameh),
 Zardosht(Prophet),
 Siyavash(Iranian Martyr),
 Sikandar(Alexander mentioned extensively in the Shahnameh),
 Siamak (The son of Kayumarth who was killed by Deamons/Divs) ,
Div (“Demons”),
 Bahram Gur (celebrated Sassanid King),
 Bahram Chubin (Celebrated Sassanid General),
 Afrasiyab (Famous villain in the Shahnameh of Turanian origin (an Iranian tribe),
 he is also mentioned in the Avesta),
 Zaal (the father of Rostam who was abandoned by Saam but saved by the Simorgh
 and later on reclaimed by Saam),
 Saam(the Father of Zaal),
 Shirin (Armenian/Christian princess according to later poets but also mentioned in
 the Shahnameh as a beloved of Khusraw and a historical figure in Sassanid court),
 Farhad (a legend both in the Shahnameh and in Iranian history from the Sassanid
 time who falls in love with Shirin),
 Kayanids (Royal Iranian dynasty),
 Parviz(victorious and another name of Khusraw),
 Nard (Backgammon whose history is given in the Shahnameh and is considered to
 be of Iranian origin),
 Magi (Zoroastrian Priest),
 Kisra/Khusraw (Sassanid Kings),
 Kayumarth(the Adam of Zoroastrianism and the first King in Shahnameh),
 Kay-Qubad (first Kayanid King),
 Kay-Khusraw(great mystic/hero/king of the Shahnameh),
 Kay-Kavus(father of Siyavash and a Kayanid King),
 Jamshid(great mythical King in the Shahnameh and Zoroastrian texts),
 Iraj(Father of Iranians in Shahnameh and one of the sons of Fereydun.),
 Giv(a famous hero in the Shahnameh),
 Gushtasp(famous hero and legendary ancestor of Rostam),
 Dehqan (Iranian),
 Darius/Dara (name of several Kayanid/Achaemenid kings),
 Bistun(the famous point in Kermanshah),
 Bahman (Zoroastrian and Shahnameh King and son of Esfandiyar),
 Artang (the art work of Mani), Ardeshir Babakan (founder of Sassanids),
 Arash (famous Iranian Hero and archer who gave up life for Iran),
 Barbad (famous Sassanid musician),
 Nakisa (famous Sassanid musician),
 Kalila o Demna (famous stories brought by the Vizir of Anushirawan from India
 and expanded by Persian stories).

...

Indeed, without the Shahnameh and its symbolism, one would simply not understand the
 poetry of Nizami Ganjavi. Neither would there have been a Nizami Ganjavi without
 previous Persian poets like Ferdowsi, Khaqani, Sanai, Asadi Tusi and etc. It is clear that

Nizami continued upon the traditions of Iranian civilization and culture. Besides his praise of the Shahnameh and Ferdowsi, an important note should be mentioned with regards to the general view of the Shahnameh at the time. The Shahnameh among religious orthodox Muslims, even of Iranian background, was sometimes belittled due to it being in praise of Iranian-Zoroastrian lore.

In the next section, we point to the fact that Nizami Ganjavi is criticized by his friend for reviving the stories of Zoroastrians. As Professor Julia Meysami has pointed out: “The *Haft Paykar* blends historical and legendary materials concerning the pre-Islamic Iranian past with the Islamic beliefs of esoteric symbolism. Over a century earlier, Firdawsi had in his *Shahnama* (‘Book of Kings’; c 1010) chronicled the history of Iranian monarchy from its mythical beginnings to the defeat of the Sassanians by the Muslim Arabs in 637, incorporating materials drawn from popular legend and saga as well as panegyrics in which he presented the poem’s dedicatee, Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 997-1030), as embodying both Iranian and Islamic kingship. But Mahmud received the work coolly; and both historians and panegyrists of this and early Seljuk period speak slightly of the ‘false’ and fabulous history represented by the *Shahnama*. Nizami both recuperates and reworks Firdawsi’s treatment of the Iranian past to create a different sort of poem, one that reflects the concern of his age.” (Haft Paykar by Julia Meysami pg XXIII).

Indeed Ferdowsi was not buried in a Muslim cemetery on the account of being a Shi’i (Rafidhi), composing Zoroastrian stories and praising Zoroastrians. The Muslim Imam according to the popular folklore refused to say prayer on his dead body before his burial when he passed away. Some Sunni and even Shi’i (despite Ferdowsi being Shi’i) authorities considered his book which was based on the Irano-Zoroastrian culture as the false stories of Zoroastrians, without use and something to be avoided.

بعدها بسیاری از عالمان شیعه و سنی، فردوسی را به این دلیل که عمري ستایش گبران کرده، مورد ملامت قرار دادند. برای او ایران ایران است، بدون هیچ فید و بندی. شیخ حسن کاشی در سال 708 هجری در این باره گفت:

ای پسر قصه مجاز مخوان
الحذر الحذر ز خواندن آن
چند خوانی کتاب شهنامه
یاد کن زود زین گنه نامه
چند گوئی حدیث رستم زال
لعب و بیهوده دروغ محال
ذکر گبران و اهل استوران
چند خوانی تو بر مسلمانان

Despite the fact that there is no doubt today that Ferdowsi was a Muslim, he was chastised severely for revival of Zoroastrian/Iranian/Sassanid stories which today forms the major pillar of the Iranian identity. With this regard, Nizami Ganjavi advises others to read the Shahnameh, has praised the Shahnameh, has praised Ferdowsi and has considered himself a successor of Ferdowsi. Thus the deep connection between Nizami Ganjavi’s culture/work and the Shahnameh/Ferdowsi again puts Nizami Ganjavi squarely

in the Iranian cultural world and not in the Turco-Oghuz cultural world. Indeed one feels Ferdowsi had people like Nizami in mind when he stated:

تو این را دروغ و فسانه مدان
به یکسان روش در زمانه مدان
از او هر چه اندر خورد با خرد
دگر بر ره رمز معنی برد

Cultural Content of the works of Nizami Ganjavi

Although the cultural content of Nizami Ganjavi's work is well known to its readers in the original Persian, it is sufficient to briefly review them to show again that they are part of the Iranian cultural world. Besides his Ghazals and other form of poetry which are all in Persian, Nizami Ganjavi is mainly known for his five epics. Indeed one of the arguments for those who try to appropriate Nizami Ganjavi to Turkish civilization is that the Persian language was a custom of the day. Although there is absolutely nothing to connect Nizami Ganjavi directly to Turkish civilization with the exception of the fact that some proponents of such theory misinterpret some verses in order to show that Nizami Ganjavi's father, whom Nizami was orphaned from, "*might have been possibly Turkic*".

This is indeed a very weak argument and we have already shown that Nizami Ganjavi's ancestors from both sides were most likely Iranian. They also forget that none of the story of Nizami Ganjavi's stories had anything to do with Turkish culture/civilization. They are part of the Iranian culture and civilization came about through Iranian civilization/culture (Nizami being influenced greatly by previous Persian poets) and thus Nizami Ganjavi not only wrote in Persian, but also popularized Persian culture. He coined many new Persian phrases which again show his fundamental contribution to the Iranian civilization. Thus the case of Nizami Ganjavi cannot be compared to say someone like Einstein who is of Jewish background but wrote his scientific papers in English or German. Nizami Ganjavi is alive through his poetry, which is alive through the Persian language.

He explicitly mentions that what is left from humans is Sokhan (discourses/words) and all these discourses are in Persian and tied with Persian literature and mythology. In other words, Nizami Ganjavi would not exist without the Persian language. A scientific paper can be translated to any language, but poetry is tied and dependent on the language. Actually if there was no Einstein, another person would have eventually discovered relativity. But the poetry of Nizami Ganjavi was not just any poetry, it was Persian epic poetry in the sense that the stories and themes expounded upon by Nizami Ganjavi were from Iranian civilization. And poetry from a seminal poet will not be repeated again. No one would say that the theory of relativity comes from English civilization. It is a scientific theory, which can be explained in any language. But the stories of Nizami Ganjavi are directly from Iranian civilization, Persian folklore and based upon the predecessors of Nizami who were also Iranians (Ferdowsi, Sanai, Gorgani, Khaqani and Asadi Tusi) and part of the Iranian civilization.

The first work of Nizami Ganjavi is a moral/ethical work called the *Makhzan al-Asrar* (Treasury of Secrets) and it was inspired by another great Persian poet: Sanai. The poems in *Makhzan al-Asrar* (The Treasury of Secrets) (570/ 1174-5) are mystic-didactic and an artistic imitation of Sana'i's *Hadiqat al-Haqiqa* (=Garden of Truth) (Gohrab, Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing).

According to Professor Chelkowski:

To Nizami, truth was the very essence of poetry. On this principle, he attacks the court poets who sell their integrity and talents for earthly returns. The Islamic law served as the loom on which the philosophy of his *Makhzan al-Asrar* was woven in intricate patterns. He was looking for universal justice, and is trying to protect the poor and humble people and to put under scrutiny the excesses of the powerful of the world. The guidelines for people in the poem are accompanied by warnings of the transitory nature of life.

Makhzan al-Asrar is an emulation of Sanai's *Hadikat al-Hakika*, and Nizami acknowledges this but stresses his own superiority. The similarities between Sanai's poem and Nizami's are in the ethico-philosophical genre, but Nizami used a different metre and organised the whole poem in a different way.

(Nizami Ganjavi in Encyclopedia of Islam)

Thus Nizami Ganjavi's first work is a continuation of the Persian tradition established by his predecessors. Indeed a culture/civilization does not produce Nizami Ganjavi or Sanai or etc. overnight. Nizami Ganjavi builds upon the stories of the civilization he belongs to, is inspired by the poetic forms of previous Persian poets and offers his own genius for the next generation to build upon.

The next great epic poem of Nizami Ganjavi was *Khusraw o Shirin*. This, according to many, alongside the *Haft Paykar*, is Nizami Ganjavi's greatest masterpiece. Nizami Ganjavi considers the story of Khusraw and Shirin as the sweetest story that existed in the world and according to him, no story is sweeter than this story:

حديث خسرو و شيرين نهان نيست
وزان شيرينتر الحق داستان نيست

Indeed, Nizami Ganjavi chose the story himself (unlike *Layli o Majnoon* where the poet complains of the stories foreignness) (Rypka: "*When the Iraqi Saljuq Toghril II requested a love epic from the poet without specifying the subject further, Nizami picked on the story of lovers Khusraw o Shirin, a theme set in his own region and based on at least partly historical facts, through an aura of legend already surrounded it*"). By choosing this Iranian story from his own Iranian culture and civilization, Nizami Ganjavi clearly shows that he is a part of the Iranian civilization and hundreds of Stalins can't change the course of history (a lie will eventually vanish, even if it takes one thousand years or more). The story is a well known part of Sassanid folklore. Shirin was a Christian princess (some sources mention her as Armenian and others Aramean) who in the *Khusraw o Shirin* of Nizami also has Christian virtues (No intercourse before marriage, monotheism and etc). Nizami Ganjavi, as mentioned already, alludes to the

Shahnameh and Ferdowsi in this work. One of his friends chastises him for reviving Zoroastrianism by writing *Khusraw o Shirin*. The critique tells Nizami Ganjavi:

در توحید زن کاوازه داری
چرا رسم مغان را تازه داری
سخندانان دلت را مرده دانند
اگر چه زندخوانان زنده خوانند

His friend tells Nizami:

*Speak of the unity of God, which thou are well known for,
Why have you renewed the customs of the magians,
The people who appreciate words would consider your heart to be dead,
Although those that read the Zoroastrian texts would consider it alive*

Nezami answer the critique, by reading some of the poem and his friend was intoxicated by the beauty of the poem. The fact that the story is a Persian-Zoroastrian story is well known and again falls within the realm of the Iranian civilization and culture. The story might have upset some very orthodox Muslim (although Nizami like Ferdowsi was a Muslim but he also appreciated his pre-Islamic Iranian heritage), but Nizami persevered just like Ferdowsi.

Nizami also praises Zoroastrian sense of justice and virtue and abhors the lack of justice/virtue in his own time:

سیاست بین که می‌کردند ازین پیش
نه با بیگانه با دردانه خویش
کنون گر خون صد مسکین بریزند
ز بند قراضه برنخیزند
کجا آن عدل و آن انصاف سازی
که با فرزند از این سان رفت بازی
جهان ز آتش پرستی شد چنان گرم
که بادا زین مسلمانان ترا شرم
مسلمانیم ما او گیر نام است
گر این گیری مسلمانان کدام است
نظامی بر سرافسانه شو باز
که مرغ پند را تلخ آمد آواز

He writes

*“Look at the politics/governance of the past,
And the justice that did not even escape the beloved son of King.
Nowadays, if they spill the blood of hundred poor people,
no justice will be met.
What happened to the justice and virtue of those Sassanid Kings?
The World became so warm (full of justice/prosperous) from the fire-worshippers,
That thou should be ashamed of this Islam.
We are Muslims and they Zoroastrians.
But if they are Zoroastrians, then what is a Muslim?
Oh Nezami go back to telling myth/stories*

Since Bird of Advice has a bitter song”

In other words, Nizami Ganjavi is saying that the Zoroastrians had followed the true ideals of Islam. These are strong words, even in the modern Islamic Republic of Iran, let alone 800 years ago. Once again we sense the feeling and appreciation that Nizami Ganjavi had for his pre-Islamic Iranian heritage. For example, Barbad is a famous musician of the Sassanid era and the stuff of legends. Nizami Ganjavi has done a great service by mentioning the thirty airs composed by Barbad.

According to the late Tafazzoli:

Bārbad was a poet-musician of panegyric as well as elegy. He used to compose verses and sing them to his own accompaniment on various occasions, e.g., in the great Iranian festivals, especially Nowrūz and Mehragān, at state banquets, etc. He also versified victories and current events. He is related to have composed, at the request of the workmen, a melody called Bagh-e-Nakhjiran “garden of the game” on the occasion of the completion of the great gardens at Qasr-e Shirin. Nezami (*Khosrow o Shirin*, pp. 190-94) mentions the name of the thirty airs composed by Bārbad for each day of the month. (Tafazzoli, Ahmad. “Barbad” in Encyclopedia Iranica).

Here is a sample of that portion:

(سی لحن بارید در داستان خسرو و شیرین نظامی گنجوی)

در آمد بارید چون بلبل مست
گرفته بریطی چون آب در دست
ز صد دستان که او را بود در ساز
گزیده کرد سی لحن خوش آواز
ز بی لحنی بدان سی لحن چون نوش
گهی دل دادی و گه بستدی هوش
ببریط چون سر زخمه در آورد
ز رود خشک بانک تر در آورد

-اول گنج باد آورد-

چوباد از گنج باد آورد راندی
ز هر بادی لبش گنجی فشانندی
-دوم گنج گاو -

چو گنج گاو را کردی نواسنج
برافشانندی زمین هم گاو و هم گنج
-سوم گنج سوخته-

ز گنج سوخته چون ساختی راه
ز گرمی سوختی صد گنج را آه
-چهارم شادروان مروارید

چو شادروان مروارید گفتی
لبش گفتی که مروارید سفتی
-پنجم تخت طاقدیسی-

چو تخت طاقدیسی ساز کردی
بهشت از طاقها در باز کردی

-ششم و هفتم ناقوسی و اورنگی-
چو ناقوسی و اورنگی زدی ساز
شده اورنگ چون ناقوس از آواز

-هشتم حقه کاوس-
 چو قند ز حقه کاوس دادی
 شکر کالای او را بوس دادی
 -نهم ماه بر کوهان-
 چون لحن ماه بر کوهان گشادی
 زیانش ماه بر کوهان نهادی
 -دهم مشک دانه-
 چو برگفتی نوای مشک دانه
 ختن گشتی ز بوی مشک خانه
 -یازدهم آرایش خورشید-
 چو زد زارایش خورشید راهی
 در آرایش بدی خورشید ماهی
 -دوازدهم نیمروز-
 چو گفتی نیمروز مجلس افروز
 خرد بی خود بدی تا نیمه روز
 -سیزدهم سبز در سبز-
 چو بانگ سبز در سبزش شنیدی
 ز باغ زرد سبزه بر دمیدی
 -چهاردهم قفل رومی-
 چو قفل رومی آوردی در آهنگ
 گشادی قفل گنج از روم و از زنگ
 -پانزدهم سروستان-
 چو بر دستان سروستان گذشتی
 صبا سالی به سروستان نگشتی
 -شانزدهم سرو سهی-
 و گر سرو سهی را ساز دادی
 سهی سروش به خون خط باز دادی
 -هفدهم نوشین باده-
 چو نوشین باده را در پرده بستی
 خمار باده نوشین شکستی
 -هیجدهم رامش جان-
 چو کردی رامش جان را روانه
 ز رامش جان فدا کردی زمانه
 -نوزدهم ناز نورو یا ساز نورو-
 چو در پرده کشیدی ناز نورو
 به نروزی نشستی دولت آن روز
 -بیستم مشگویه-
 چو بر مشگویه کردی مشگ مالی
 همه مشگو شدی پرمشک حالی
 -بیست و یکم مهرگانی-
 چو نو کردی نوای مهرگانی
 ببردی هوش خلق از مهربانی
 -بیست و دوم مروای نیک-
 چو بر مروای نیک انداختی فال
 همه نیک آمدی مروای آن سال
 -بیست و سوم شبدیز-
 چو در شب بر گرفتی راه شبدیز
 شدند جمله آفاق شب خیز
 -بیست و چهارم شب فرخ-
 چو بر دستان شب فرخ کشیدی
 از آن فرخنده تر شب کس ندیدی
 -بیست و پنجم فرخ روز-
 چو یارش رای فرخ روز گشتی

زمانه فرخ و فیروز گشتی
 -بیست و ششم غنچه کبک دری-
 چو کردی غنچه کبک دری تیز
 ببردی غنچه کبک دلاویز
 -بیست و هفتم نخجیرگان-
 چو بر نخجیرگان تدبیر کردی
 بسی چون زهره را نخجیر کردی
 -بیست و هشتم کین سیاوش-
 چو زخمه راندی از کین سیاوش
 پر از خون سیاوشان شدی گوش
 -بیست و نهم کین ایرج-
 چو کردی کین ایرج را سرآغاز
 جهان را کین ایرج نو شدی باز
 -
 سیام باغ شیرین-
 چو کردی باغ شیرین را شکر بار
 درخت تلخ را شیرین شدی بار

نواهایی بدینسان رامش انگیز
 همی زد بارید در پرده تیز
 بگفت بارید کز بار به گفت
 زبان خسروش صدبار زه گفت
 چنان بد رسم آن بدر منور
 که بر هر زه بدادی بدره زر
 به هر پرده که او بناخت آن روز
 ملک گنجی دگر پرداخت آن روز
 به هر پرده که او بر زد نوائی
 ملک دادش پر از گوهر قبائی
 زهی لفظی که گر بر تنگ دستی
 زهی گفتی زهی زرین به دستی
 درین دوران گرت زین به پسندند
 زهی پشمین به گردن وانه بندند
 ز عالی همتی گردن برافراز
 طناب هرزه از گردن بینداز
 به خرسندی طمع را دیده بر دوز
 ز چون من فطره دریائی در آموز
 که چندین گنج بخشیدم به شاهی
 وز آن خرمن نجستم برگ کاهی
 به برگی سخن را راست کردم
 نه او داد و نه من درخواست کردم
 مرا این بس که پر کردم جهان را
 ولی نعمت شدم دریا و کان را

These provide invaluable data on ancient Iranian music. Thus Nezami's poetry is invaluable for the study of the history of Persian/Iranian music.

According to Peter Chelkowski:

Khusraw wa Shirin is the second poem of Nizami's *Khamsa* and the first of his romantic epics. Its protagonists are Khusraw II (590-628), the last great Sasanid monarch, known

as Parwiz [q.v.], the Victorious, and his mistress Shirin. Their love was recorded by many subsequent Islamic writers, and Firdawsi devoted more than 4,000 couplets to Khusraw II's reign in his Shah-nama. It was Nizami, however, who gave the story a real structural unity. Infusing it with his own profound experience of love and expanding it with his thoughts on religion, philosophy, and government, he created a romance of great dramatic intensity. The story has a constant forward drive with exposition, challenge, mystery, crisis, climax, resolution, and finally, catastrophe. The action increases in complexity as the protagonists face mounting complications. Khusraw and Shirin are not able to meet for a long time, despite their untiring efforts and the help of their confidant. Then, after they do meet, they are forced apart by the political marriage of Khusraw and Maryam. When Khusraw promises Shirin to Farhad as a prize for completing a feat of daring and endurance, the story nearly comes to a premature conclusion.

After the death of Maryam and the murder-suicide of Farhad, it seems that all obstacles are removed and the lovers will be united. But Nizami introduces an affair between Khusraw and a girl from Isfahan that further complicates and delays his union with Shirin. Finally, on the lovers' wedding night, Nizami creates a bizarre episode, a humorous entr'acte that gives the reader or listener a chance to take a deep breath before the epic's tragic climax. Khusraw gets drunk and Shirin replaces her presence in the nuptial chamber with that of a knotty, wizened old crone. Through these dramatic devices, Nizami makes a powerful commentary on human behaviour.

Nizami's deep understanding of women is strongly expressed in Khusraw wa Shirin . Shirin is the central character and there is no question that she is a poetic tribute to Nizami's wife Afak. She is well educated, independent, fearless, resourceful, imaginative, erotic and humorous. Her loyalty knows no bounds. That she is a queen rather than a commoner, as is the case in Firdawsi's Shah-nama, gives the story a stately quality. Her association with Armenia is, perhaps, a reflection of its geographical proximity to Gandja, and she is, like the Byzantine Maryam, a Christian; Nizami was a pious Muslim, but he tolerated and respected other religions.

Shirin's sense of justice is so great that she forswears Khusraw's love until he should regain his throne, thus fulfilling his responsibility to his people. Even after they are married, she continues to exert a strong influence on Khusraw, educating him as always through example and love; as a result, the country flourished, justice was observed and strengthened, and science, religion and philosophy thrived.

The tension between the strength of Shirin and the weakness of Khusraw is enhanced dramatically by Nizami's tight control of plot and setting, and in his development of the towering figure of Farhad. Episodes of meeting and of missing, of searching and of waiting, are richly entwined with scenes of the barren desert and of luxurious court life; asceticism vies with sensuality.

Nizami's use of allegories, parables and words with double meaning raised the Persian language to a new height. The poem is written in the light, flowing, graceful hazadj

musaddas maksūr metre, deliberately imitating that used by Gurgani in *Vis u Ramin*. There are about 6,500 couplets. (Encyclopedia of Islam, “Nizami Ganjavi”).

Professor. Dick Davis also mentions this point about *Vis o Ramin*:

The poem (*Vis o Ramin*) had an immense influence on Nezami, who takes the bases for most of his plots from Ferdowsi but the basis for his rhetoric from Gorgani. This is especially noticeable in his *Khusraw o Shirin*, which imitates a major scene (that of the lovers arguing in the snow) from *Vis o Ramin*, as well as being in the same meter (*hazaj*) as Gorgani's poem. Nezami's concern with astrology also has a precedent in an elaborate astrological description of the night sky in *Vis o Ramin*. Given Nezami's own paramount influence on the romance tradition, Gorgani can be said to have initiated much of the distinctive rhetoric and poetic atmosphere of this tradition, with the exception of its Sufi preoccupations, which are quite absent from his poem. (Encyclopedia Iranica, “Vis o Ramin”)

Thus Nizami Ganjavi is greatly influenced by the *Shahnameh* and *Vis u Ramin*. The story of *Khusraw* and *Shirin* is part of the Iranian-Zoroastrian lore and is not related to the Turkic-Oghuz civilization. Nizami Ganjavi also does not mention any Turkic sources for this work. Thus this story like that of *Makhzan al-Asrar* is part and parcel of Iranian civilization and from there, it has influenced many neighboring people. The story of *Khusraw o Shirin* and *Farhad* today is probably the most prevalent amongst Kurds.

The story of *Layli* and *Majnoon*, although originally of Arabic origin, was well known to Persian poets and Persian versions of the story would have existed (it was as mentioned king of stories by Nizami through the mouth the *Shirvanshah*). For example *Rudaki*, one of the earliest Persian poets:

مشوش است دلم از کرشمهی سلمی
چنان که خاطرهی مجنون ز طرهی لیلی

(See Zanjani for this verse from *Rudaki*)

According to *Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab*, who has written a detailed study of *Layli o Majnoon*:

Compared to Nizami's other romances, the textual organization of *Layli and Majnun* is not very complicated. Prior to Nizami's era, the legend of *Majnun* circulated in anecdotal forms. It was Nizami who threaded the scattered pearls of anecdotes about *Majnun's* love and made a solid narrative of it. Nizami Persianises the legend by adding certain Persian elements to it. Persian romances are almost always about royal personages, and people from other social ranks are simple and shadowy characters in the plot. As in a Persian romance, the narrator in *Layli and Majnun* portrays the lovers as royal personalities; he civilizes the plot of this Bedouin legend to suit the taste and temperament of his Persian reader. Unlike the Arabic sources in which *Majnun* meets *Layli* in the desert amongst the camels, in Nizami's poem, he meets *Layli* at school. Nizami integrates many anecdotes and several details of the Arabic legend into his romance.

(Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Madness and Mystic Longing*, 56).

...

If Nizami's reference to the dihqan as a source is taken at face value, that is, that a dihqan really reported the story to him, it indicates the popularity of the legend of Majnun in the Iranian world. Several references to the legend can be found in Persian literary works before Nizami. A.H. Zarrinkub does not exclude the possibility of a Persian source, yet he rightly maintains that the authority behind the source cannot be identified.

(Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Madness and Mystic Longing*, pg 57).

...

When Shirwanshah Abul-Muzaffar Akhsitan commissioned Nizami to versify Majnun's tragic love story, the poet found himself in a quandary. The writer of love-stories about the pompous and powerful pre-Islamic Iranian kings such as Khusrau Parviz II is suddenly ordered to write a romance about a distraught and naked Arab boy. Nizami skillfully uses the sad nature of the legend to whet the reader's curiosity about how he will narrate this tragic but simple romance. Grief, as M.J. Toolan notes, is perhaps the most "powerful trigger," and strangeness, an element which attracts the reader to know the unknown. The poet refers frequently to the Arab traditions and way of life to remind us of the story's foreign origin. Moreover, he promises the reader that despite the thin plot of the story, he will bring his poem to a dramatic perfection so that "unpierced pearls" will flow from the reader's eyes (5:64-5). With his profound knowledge of the human psyche, Nizami knows how to draw emotional effect by reshaping this strange and shallow story. Nizami was at first reluctant to versify this tale. It was his fourteen-years-old son Muhammad, who encouraged his father to undertake the task:

When you composed Khusrau and Shirin,

You cheered the hearts of the people.

You have to compose Layli and Majnun so that the precious pearl has a pair.

This book is better to be written,

A young peacock is better to have a mate. (. . .)

Wherever love-tales are to be read, this tale will serve as salt for them. (11. 43-5, 71)

Although Majnun was to some extent a popular figure before Nizami's time, his popularity increased dramatically after the appearance of Nizami's romance. By collecting information from both secular and mystical sources about Majnun, Nizami portrayed such a vivid picture of this legendary lover that all subsequent poets were inspired by him, many of them imitated him and wrote their own versions of the romance. As we shall see in the following chapters, the poet uses various characteristics deriving from 'Udhrite love poetry and weaves them into his own Persian culture. In other words, Nizami Persianises the poem by adding several techniques borrowed from the Persian epic tradition, such as the portrayal of characters, the relationship between characters, description of time and setting, etc.

(Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Madness and Mystic Longing*, 77-78).

Thus although the story was originally of Arabic origin, it was relatively known prior to Nizami Ganjavi. But it was really Nizami Ganjavi who popularized it tremendously and the story became the most famous romance of the Islamic world. It should be noted that Nizami Ganjavi did not choose the story himself (like he did with the Persian/Iranian-

origin *Khusraw o Shirin* and *Haft Paykar*) and was aware of the stories foreign origin. This is another important factor that shows Nizami Ganjavi is part and parcel of the Iranian civilization.

The fourth or last great work of Nizami Ganjavi is *Haft Paykar*. The recent Encyclopedia Iranica entries on *Eskardanama* and *Haft Paykar* argue for the *Haft Paykar* to be Nizami Ganjavi's last work. This author is also convinced by the arguments given in that article. Anyhow, it is considered Nizami Ganjavi's greatest work by many authorities. It is a story about the life of the Sassanid emperor Bahram Gur (Bahram V) and it is again based upon Iranian history. This great King is greatly admired in Persian literature and was already popular prior to Nizami Ganjavi. But Nizami Ganjavi brought the romantic side of Bahram Gur (and Persian epic romance) to great new heights by describing seven princesses who were married to Bahram, the central figure of the story.

According to Professor Chelkowski:

Haft Paykar is the fourth and the most intricate poem of Nizami's Khamsa . It is a bedazzling exploration of the pleasures of love. At the same time, it can be interpreted as mystical. The seven stories told by the seven princesses can be interpreted as the seven stations of human life, or the seven aspects of human destiny, or the seven stages of the mystic way. In fact, the title of the story can be translated as the "Seven Portraits", the "Seven Effigies", as well as the "Seven Princesses". The poem is also known as the Haft Gunbad or "Seven Domes".

In Islamic cosmology, the earth was placed in the centre of the seven planets: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. These were considered agents of God, and in their motion influenced beings and events on earth. Nizami firmly believed as well that the unity of the world could be perceived through arithmetical, geometrical, and musical relations. Numbers were the key to the one interconnected universe; for through numbers multiplicity becomes unity and discordance, harmony. Hence Nizami used seven, the number that has always been pre-eminent among the people of the East, as the major motif of *Haft Paykar*; for in Islam, seven is considered as the first perfect number.

In *Haft Paykar*, the phantasmagoric movement of its hero, Bahram Gūr, as he visits each princess, covers a symbolic path between black, or the hidden majesty of the Divine, and white, or purity and unity. The princesses and their pavilions are manifestations of specific planets, specific climes, colours, and days. The pavilions are domed, representing the structure of the heavens. Nizami illustrates the harmony of the universe, the affinity of the sacred and the profane, and the concordance of ancient and Islamic Iran.

(Nizami Ganjavi in Encyclopedia of Islam, Chelkowski).

Again what is important with regard to Nizami Ganjavi's culture and civilization is the concordance of ancient Iran and Islamic Iran. Furthermore, Nizami Ganjavi himself chose this story voluntarily unlike the story of *Layli o Majnoon* (Rypka comments on the Bahram Nameh: *It is dedicated to the Aq-Sunqurid Ala'al-Din Korp Arsalan, the Prince of Maragheh, who had commissioned it without specifying a theme*). The fact that Nizami Ganjavi chose these two stories voluntarily (*Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw and Shirin*) shows

that he considered himself part of the Iranian civilization, the civilization which he also made his contributions into.

Finally, the *Eskandarnama* is traditionally considered to be Nizami's last work (although again we believe based on the recent Encyclopedia Iranica entries, the *Haft Paykar* was his last work).

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam (Iskandar-Nama):

In the *Shahnama*, Firdawsi already makes Iskandar an exemplary figure, whom the companionship of Aristotle helps to rise still higher, by the path of wisdom and moderation, in the direction of abstinence and contempt for this world. And Firdwasi laid stress on the defeat of Dārā (the Darius of the Greeks) as something desired by “the rotation of the Heavens”.

..

At the time of Nizami, however, Islam is from then onwards well established in Iran, and it is the prophetic and ecumenical aspect of his destiny that the poet makes evident in his hero. As a learned Iranian poet, Nizami, who demonstrates his eclecticism in the information he gives (he says, “I have taken from everything just what suited me and I have borrowed from recent histories, Christian, Pahlavi and Jewish ... and of them I have made a whole”), locates the story of his hero principally in Iran. He makes him the image of the Iranian “knight”, peace-loving and moderate, courteous and always ready for any noble action. Like all Nizami's heroes, he conquers the passions of the flesh, and devotes his attention to his undertakings and his friendships. These features appear in the account, which follows ancient tradition, of his conduct towards the women of the family of Darius, in his brotherly attitude on the death of that ruler, in his behaviour towards queen Nushaba (the Kaydaf of Firdawsi, the Kandake of the pseudo-Callisthenes) whom he defends against the Russians. (Abel, A.; Ed(s). "Iskandar Nama." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007.)

We have already quoted Professor Peter Chelkowski and the relation of this story with regards to Iranian civilization and culture. Professor Peter Chelkowski, who is an authority on the *Eskandarnama* of Nizami:

Robert Hartle opens his article entitled “The image of Alexander the Great in Seventeenth Century France” with a statement: ‘When Alexander the Great had conquered Persia he began to adopt Persian ways; it should be no surprise that when he conquered seventeenth century France he began to act like a Frenchman’

...

Alexander was glorified by the Muslims as a divine agent, a prophet-king and the blessed conqueror of the lands that were to become the stronghold of Islam. To some Muslims, Islam was a realization of Alexander's “koine”- a commonwealth where people could live in harmony and in peace of heart and mind. In this atmosphere attempts were made to make out Alexander not only a Muslim but a Persian as well.

....

The great Muslim historian Tabari (9th/10th century A.D.) [we note: also of Iranian origin] gives several accounts of Alexander based on various sources. In his presentation of the Persian origin of Alexander, he describes Darius the Third as an oppressive ruler [we note: Alexander actually praises Darius before Darius dies and asks for advice from Darius]. Tabari's description of Alexander's refusal to pay tribute to Darius, the war of Alexander with Darius and the death of Darius, reappear in Nizami's account. Similarities between Tabari and Nizami are also to be found in the description of Alexander's treatment of knowledge, science, philosophy, and Alexander's journeys to India, China, Tibet and the "Land of Darkness".

...

However, it was not Tabari directly, but Ferdowsi who was Nizami's source of inspiration and material in composing *Iskandarnameh*. Nizami constantly alludes to the *Shahnameh* in his writing, especially in the prologue to the *Iskandarnameh*. It seems that he was always fascinated by the work of Ferdowsi and made it a goal of his life to write an heroic epic of the same stature. And so, for his last *masnavi* Nizami chose as a theme the story of Alexander, which is recounted in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Even without the Pseudo-Callisthenes model, Ferdowsi had been able to look for the continuity of Iranian spirit from prehistoric times and was able to consider Alexander as a great hero in the history of Persian civilization. Persia was the only country which had preserved not only her language after the Arab-Muslim invasion but also many aspects of her national identity and character.

In fact, although Alexander conquered Iran, he was soon conquered by Persian customs and ways of life. In many aspects he was so overwhelmed by Persian civilization that he became more Persian than the Persians. He tried to make a blend of the Greek and Persian civilizations – even genetically, when he sponsored mass marriages between his troops and Persian women. He himself married Roxane [Rowshanak] the daughter of Sogdian [we note: Sogdians are another Iranian people] prince—not the daughter of Darius the Third, as both Ferdowsi and Nizami believed.

Like Alexander, Arabs, Turks, Mongols and other people who overran the Iranian plateau also came under the spell of Persian culture. Foreign invaders remained to become contributors and patrons of Persian art and culture. To give one example, some of Nizami's benefactors were of Turkic stock.

As previously mentioned, it seems that Nizami's favorite pastime was reading Ferdowsi's monumental epic *Shahnameh* (*The book of Kings*). Ferdowsi's treatment of Alexander in this great heroic poem was by no means negligible, but in Nizami's opinion it was not complete and he wanted to write a poetic supplement to it. After several years of research he gave up this idea and decided that the subject called for a new and independent work. He still, however, acknowledged his indebtedness to his great master, Ferdowsi, and considered himself a respectful follower of that literary pioneer. He, therefore, chose for the *book of Alexander* one heroic epic verse known as *Mutaqarib*, which Ferdowsi employed in his *Shahnameh*. (Chelkowski, P. "Nizami's *Iskandarnameh*:" in *Colloquio sul poeta persiano Nizami e la leggenda iranica di Alessandro magno*, Roma, 1977).

Thus the themes of Nizami's story are Iranian and have to do with the Iranian culture and civilization. There is no trace of Turkic folklore and civilization or sources in Nizami Ganjavi's work. Indeed, he chose the Sassanid stories of *Haft Paykar* and *Khusraw o Shirin* voluntarily, which shows his attachment to the Iranian civilization. The main influences on Nizami were foremost Ferdowsi, then Gorgani, Asadi Tusi, Sanai Tusi and Khaqani (see appendix).

Nizami Ganjavi's attachment to Iran

Nizami praises Iran and considers the kings that ruled around his era to be Kings of Iran and the Persian lands. Thus this very important fact again shows the Muslims of the area were at that time mainly Iranians. These praises for the land of Iran and the rulers as the Kings of Persia are direct. What is interesting is that at least three different and rival dynasties are praised as rulers of Iran/Persia and their land is considered as part of Persia/Iran. This shows that despite the fact that there was not a unifying force through these lands (the Seljuqs ruling nominally), there was a unifying cultural force which was that of the Irano-Islamic civilization.

In the *Haft Paykar*, Nizami Ganjavi, when addressing the Ahmadili ruler (known as Atabakan-e-Maragheh in later history where Maragheh is a city in the Iranian province of East Azarbaijan), he praises the land of Iran as the best land in the World:

همه عالم تن است و ایران
نیست گوینده زین قیاس خجل
چون که ایران دل زمین باشد
دل ز تن به بود یقین باشد
زان ولایت که مهتران دارند
بهترین جای بهتران دارند

*The World's a body, Iran its heart
No shame to him who says such a word
Iran, the world's most precious heart,
Excels the body, there is no doubt
Among the realms the kings possess
The best domain goes to the best*
(Translation by Professor Julia Meysami).

Note the similarity with that of the Avestan concept where the land of Iran was the center of the seven lands and the one blessed by Ahura Mazda.

In the *Khusraw o Shirin*, Nizami Ganjavi, when addressing the ruler Shams al-Din Muhammad Ildigoz (the dynasty being later known as the Atabakan-e-Azerbaijan and ruling parts of Arran and Azerbaijan and extending further in Western Persia as its height), mentions:

در آن بخشش که رحمت عام کردند
دو صاحب را محمد نام کردند
یکی ختم نبوت گشته ذاتش
یکی ختم ممالک بر حیاتش
یکی برج عرب را تا ابد ماه
یکی ملک عجم را جاودان شاه

*In that day that they bestowed mercy upon all,
Two great ones were given the name Muhammad,
One who's pure essence was the seal of prophecy,
The other who is the Kingdom's Seal, in his own days
One whose house/zodiac is moon of the Arabs
The other who is the everlasting Shah of Realm of Persians*

In praising the rulers of Shirwan (who sometimes extended their rule beyond Shirwan),
Nizami again mentions:

این نامه نغز گفته بهتر
طاووس جوانه جفته بهتر
خاصه ملکی چو شاه شروان
شروان چه که شهریار ایران

*This book is better to be written
A young peacock is better to have a mate
Specially for a king like the Shah of Shirwan
Not only Shirwan, but the Shahriyar (Prince, Ruler) of all Iran*

Nizami Ganjavi calls upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH &HP):

سوی عجم ران منشین در عرب
زرده روز اینک و شبیدیز شب
ملک برآرای و جهان تازه کن
هر دو جهان را پر از آوازه کن

*Do not stay in Arabia, come to Persia
Here are the light steeds of night and day*

Conclusion

Stalin, as noted, claimed that: *“Nizami must not be surrendered to Iranian/Persian literature”* and Nizami Ganjavi according to the USSR was: *“a victim of Persian*

oppression of minorities". As ridiculous as these claims sound, they were taken as official USSR policy by some of its researchers. The ultimate aim was not only to detach Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization, but even to claim that Ferdowsi did not belong to Persian literature either, but belonged to Tajik literature (See the section of the book of Kolarz on Tajikistan). Note the term "Tajiki" for the Persian language is a 20th century invention and the speakers have always called it Farsi/Parsi/Parsi-Dari/Dari (Persian). The term Tajiki for the Persian language was created in order to further de-Iranify the cultural heritage of the Iranian civilization and fragment it.

A Tajik friend from the Internet, who was educated in the USSR era but was in the eighth grade when the USSR started breaking up, told me:

When I was in school, up until the seventh grade, all the teachers that I had for Persian Literature taught us that Nezamee Ganjavee was an Azeri Turk, who had just happened to write in Persian. We were taught that he is the national poet of Azerbaijan . This was even written in our textbooks, which were published during Soviet Era. However, from the very beginning I was told by my mother that he is not a Turk, and that it is a lie. This is widely known in the academic circles in Tajikistan, but, especially during Soviet times it was politically incorrect to say that he is not a Turk. When I came to eighth grade to another school, I had a different literature teacher, who always told us that Nezamee is not a Turk.

And he recalled at the start of that school year:

I remember when I just started school, they told us in Lit. class in Tajikistan: Nezamee Ganjavee is an Azerbaijani (Turk) poet, but he wrote some things (that's funny how they said some things) in Persian. However, a few years later, since we were independent, we could say that he was not a Turk.

Indeed currently, Nizami Ganjavi is not detached from Iranian civilization in Tajikistan anymore, although the USSR had planned otherwise. He is considered a part and parcel of Iranian civilization. Modern nation and countries that have been affected by Iranian civilization (and are part of the Iranian world) are not only Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kurdish people, but also the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan who also share in this same heritage. Of course later Turkmens had influence on the culture of Republic of Azerbaijan, but the ratio of these two factors (pre-Turkmen elements and Iranians elements) is something for scholars to study. But at the time of Nizami Ganjavi the ethno genesis of the Azerbaijanis was not started and the term was not used as designation for Turkic-speaking people. Thus the only reason to attach him to Turkic civilization were verses (some even falsified but rampant over the Internet) that allegedly claimed his father (who he was orphaned from early and was raised by his Kurdish maternal uncle) to be of a Turkic origin. We showed that there is no proof of this and all indicators are that Nizami Ganjavi was of Iranian background from both sides. In the end, even if some want to endlessly argue that his father might have been "Turkic" or even forge verses towards that end, it will bear no fruit, since culture, which poetry is its eloquent and

highest point, is a key to a poet's heritage/identity and the assignment of a poet to a particular civilization. We believe that the answer to question we asked in the beginning is clear. Nizami Ganjavi is part of the Iranian civilization. From ethnic background, to cultural orientation, to cultural legacy, myth, folklore and language, Nizami Ganjavi is an eternal and inseparable part of Iranian civilization. The Nozhat al-Majales (24 poets from Ganja alone) shows the peak of Persian civilization in Arran and Sherwan and is a complete mirror of the Iranian culture of the region at that time before its Turkification. Of course, it will take time for the modern republic of Azerbaijan to put away bias and study its history without any ideological leaning and accept the fact that Persian heritage is also part of the heritage of the people there. The current approach has been to sideline Persian heritage or to makeup claims that one or two important figures were forced! to create masterpieces.

All these political attempts at detachment of Nizami Ganjavi from Iranian civilization will not bear fruit (in the long term of course, since once in a while there is a super power like USSR which has many resources), since the works of Nizami Ganjavi are part and parcel of Iranian civilization and history cannot be changed. Nizami Ganjavi wrote exclusively in Persian, about ancient Persia and followed the paths of other Persian poets. He expanded, decorated and versified Persian folklore and contributed to Iranian civilization. A poet that draws from the culture of the language is different than a scientist who uses a language as part of a scientific purpose. He is indeed even different than poets that use a particular language to express various ideas. Since Nizami Ganjavi delved deeply into the heart of folklore of Iranian civilization, myths, history and from there he created some of the greatest masterpieces in Persian literature. The poet lives through the language and Nizami Ganjavi as a phenomenon of Persian literature would not exist without the Persian language, Shahnameh and myths/folklore. In the case of Nizami Ganjavi, he not only lives through the language, but his work and themes are based upon Iranian civilization and previous Persian poets. He even advises others to read the Shahnama and is proud of this monumental work of Iranian civilization, which is one of its ultimate monuments and an indicator of its identity. The culture that Nizami Ganjavi belongs to is the same culture that Ferdowsi belongs to, Nizami Ganjavi was a successor of Ferdowsi as he himself has claimed. So it is important for future Iranians and Persian speakers (Afghans, Tajiks, Bukharians/Samarqandis, Iranians..) to keep the Persian language alive and read the Shahnameh, Vis o Ramin, Garshaspnama, Panj Ganj , Mathnawi, Diwan-e-Hafez and other wonderful blessings bestowed upon the Persian language and Iranian civilization. They should strive to understand these jewels better.

Specially, the two grand works of Nozhat al-Majales and Safina-ye Tabriz which even contain Iranian dialects of the region will pave the way for better understanding of some of the poetic symbols common at the time. There are indeed many hidden treasures of culture and subtleties built in Persian literature and Iranians should be thankful to God for this blessing and delve into them. No amount of TV. programs, cinema, video games, modern music and art can really take the place of these jewels in this author's opinion.

روان تو بادا میان بهشت

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Appendix A: Modern scholastic sources

Mainstream modern scholastic sources have mentioned Nezami Ganjavi as a Persian poet. This is a reference to his cultural heritage and/or his Iranian background (Persian being reference for Iranian in general). These include major Encyclopedias such Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden), Encyclopedia Iranica and Encyclopedia Britannica.

Here we list some other English languages sources that we have encountered and found among the many covering various topics in art, literature, Persian literature, history, novel and fictions, science and etc. The range of dates cover mainly 2009-1989, however we have included even some sources from the 19th century. In the 19th century we have not found any usage of the anachronistic terms for Nezami’s designation and as shown in this article, this was made in the 20th century and mainly by the USSR nation building concept. In the long term, it is our belief that Nezami Ganjavi has not been introduced to the world in the fashion he deserves and obviously, the first step in introducing him is to propagate the Persian language, because the most striking part of Nezami’s poetry is his usage of this language. That is while the themes of Nezami Ganjavi are deeply rooted in the Quran, Shahnameh, Iranian history and Islamic mystics, what makes them unique is how presents the words that convey these concepts.

1)
John R. Haule, “Divine madness: archetypes of romantic love”, Shambhala, 1990. Pg 301: “The Persian poet, Nizami, collected most of the lovers’ legends into a single poem, which mainly follows the life of Majnun and observes how love transforms”

2)
Bill Beckley, David Shapiro, “Uncontrollable Beauty: Toward a New Aesthetics”, Allworth Communications, Inc., 2002. Excerpt from pg 132: “... and in the epic poems of the twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami and in the fifteen century ...”

3)

Rudolf Gelpke, "The Story of Layla and Majnun", Translated by Rudolf Gelpke, Omega Publications, 1997. Excerpt from pg xi: "somewhere in the western half of the Arabic peninsula, about 500 years before AD 1188 (584 H), the year in which the Persian poet Nizami wrote his poem"

4)

Frank Tallis, "Love sick: love as a mental illness", Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005. Pg 90: ".are the precursors of one of the most influential love stories ever written - the story of Layla and Majnun by the twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami."

5)

V. I. Braginskiĭ, "The comparative study of traditional Asian literatures: from reflective traditionalism to neo-traditionalism", Routledge, 2001. Excerpt from Pg 119: "In the 12th century ideas very similar to those expounded above were graphically expressed in the works of the great Persian poet Nizami, especially in a chapter entitled the "Advantage of Strung Speech over Scattered Speech" in his mathnawi the "Depository of Mysteries" (Makhzan al-Asrar)"

6)

Gholam-Reza Sabri-Tabrizi, "Iran: A Child's Story, a Man's Experience ", International Publishers Co, 1990. Excerpt from 197: "Nizami School was called after a great Persian poet — Nizami Ganjavi. Nizami Ganjavi (his real name was Ilyas ibn-Yusuf), ..."

7)

Gülru Necipoğlu, Julia Bailey, "Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World", BRILL, 2005. Pg 99: "Trying to emulate another great Persian poet, Nizami, Hatifi attempted to write a Khamsa (Quintet) but only produced four works ..."

8)

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Ali Akbar Husain, "Scent in the Islamic Garden: A Study of Deccani Urdu Literary Sources", Oxford University Press, USA (March 8, 2001). page 29: "... Muhammad Quli acknowledges his debt to the poetry of the Iranian poets, Nizami and Khaqani..."

109)

Dr. Julie Scott Meisami, "*The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance (Oxford World's Classics)*", Oxford University Press (T), 1995. Pg XXXV: "Nizami's imagery was the subject of a study by Hellmut Ritter, who compared the Persian poet's style to that of Goethe, contrasting the vividness and immediacy of the latter to Nizami's supposed 'metaphorical transformation' of physical phenomena which permits the invention-of new relationships which have no basis in 'reality'."

110)

Dr. Colin Turner (translator and scholar), *Layla and Majnun: The Classic Love Story of Persian Literature [ILLUSTRATED] (Hardcover)*, "John Blake; illustrated edition edition (June 1, 1997)". Page ix (Forward): "The Persian poet Nizami was commissioned to write *Layla and Majnun* by the Caucasian ruler, Shirvanshah in AD 1188. "

111)

Camron Micheal Amin (Editor), Benjamin C. Fortna (Editor), Elizabeth B. Frierson (Editor), "The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History ", Oxford University Press, USA (November 24, 2007). Page 140: "composed by the twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami and first translated into Ottoman in the fifteenth"

112)

Oxford Encyclopedia of World History, Oxford University Press, USA (April 8, 1999), excerpt page 18: "In Persian sources, his search for knowledge takes precedence over world conquest. In the Iskandar-namah (Book of Alexander) by the Persian poet Nizami, Alexander is depicted as the half-brother of the conquered King"

113)

Edward G. Browne, "A literary History of Persia", Vol. 2 (London, 1906). Pg 403: "And if his genius has a few rivals amongst the poets of Persia, his character has even fewer. He was genuinely pious, yet singularly devoid of fanaticism and intolerance.." (Also quoted in *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, Peter J. Chelkowski, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975, pg 5.)

114)

Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology", Oxford University Press, USA (May 28, 2009). Pg 75: "Janza would become known as the home of the famous Persian poet Nizami (d. c. 604/1207)."

115)

Giampaolo Casati , "Alexander the Great: Conquerer", Thunder Bay Press (CA) (February 28, 2005). page 131: "Magog behind a wall of iron, while the famous Persian poet Nezami, in Iskander-name, makes the conqueror into a just and wise ..."

116)

W. Ouyang , "New Perspectives On Arabian Nights", Routledge; 1 edition (September 22, 2005) .pg 46: "... of the latter version in the first tale of the Persian poet Nezami's (died 1202) Haft peikar-e Bahrám-Gur and.."

117)

Afkham Darbandi, and Dick Davis, "Conference of the Birds" (Attar), Penguin Classics (July 3, 1984). Pg 231: "on this story, the most famous being that of the Persian poet Nezami. Majnoun's madness is a frequent symbol in Islamic mystical poetry"

118)

Nikolaj Serikoff, "Islamic Calligraphy from the Wellcome Library", Serindia Publications, Inc. (June 1, 2007). Pg 12: "...beings, animals, birds, trees, etc. For example the 12th century Iranian poet Nizami Gandjawi described the master of the world, the Prophet Muhammad, ..."

119)

Gregory Minissale, "Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives. (Consciousness, Literature & the Arts)", Rodopi (May 5, 2009). page 304: "... author of the original text in the twelfth century, the Iranian poet Nizami, who composed the poetic imagery which the painting is meant ..."

120)

New Encyclopedia of Islam: A Revised Edition of the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam. Cyril Glasse (Columbia university), Huston Smith, Altamira, 2003. "Nizami (Abu Yusuf Muhammad Ilyas ibn Yusuf Nizam ad-Din) (535-598\ 141—1202). A Persian poet and mystic, he was born in Ganja in Azerbaijan"

121)

Garth Fowden, "Qusayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria (Transformation of the Classical Heritage)", University of California Press; 1 edition (September 20, 2004) . page 111: "...As by the twelfth-century Iranian poet Nizami, Haft paykar 25–26..."

122)

Kamran Talattof and Jerome W. Clinton, K. Allin Luthe. The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric. Palgrave, 2001 .

Excerpt from Forward of book: "The work of Nezami Ganjavi, one of the great Persian poets, has achieved enduring significance"

Excerpt from Pg 51: "Women are featured in the works of three major classical Persian poets, Nizami Ganjavi (1140-1202), Abu al-Qasim Firdawsi (932-1020), and Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-92)

123)

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition", HarperOne; Reprint edition (September 2, 2008).

pg 67: "... on this story, but much elaborated, is by the twelfth-century Persian poet Nizami, who turned it into one of the masterpieces of ..."

124)

A.A. Seyed-Gorhab, "Magic in classical Persian amatory literature", Iranian Studies, 1475-4819, Volume 32, Issue 1, 1999, Pages 71 – 97. Excerpts: "A meticulous description of Qays's demoniac had to wait till the twelfth century when the Persian poet Nizami of Ganjah composed an artistic and refined story of Majnun's legend. In recounting his version of the lives and love of Layla and Majnun, Nizami relies on a popular folkloristic theme in which a young prince is smitten by love for a fairy."

125)

Richard N. Frye Reviewed work(s): The Turkic Languages and Literatures of Central Asia: A Bibliography by Rudolf Loewenthal. Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Vol. 21, (Dec., 1958), p. 186. excerpt: Many works that appear in this bibliography have no proper place in it; for example, publications on the Persian poet, Nizami (page 73), as well as articles on such political matters as pan-Turkism

126)

C. A. (Charles Ambrose) Storey and Franço de Blois (2004), "Persian Literature - A Biobibliographical Survey: Volume V Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period.", RoutledgeCurzon; 2nd revised edition (June 21, 2004). Pg 363: "Nizami Ganja'i, whose personal name was Ilyas, is the most celebrated native poet of the Persians after Firdausi. His nisbah designates him as a native of Ganja (Elizavetpol, Kirovabad) in Azerbaijan, then still a country with an Iranian population.."

127)

Annemarie Schimmel, "And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety (Studies in Religion)", The University of North Carolina Press (November 30, 1985) . pg 18: "In Persian sources, his search for knowledge takes precedence over world conquest. In the Iskandar-namah (Book of Alexander) by the Persian poet Nizami, Alexander is depicted as the half-brother of the conquered King "

Corrected information

Despite the overwhelming number of sources in the previous section, we note that once in a while wrong usage and information creeps in from the USSR. Unfortunately wrong information from the USSR era has sometimes been looked at uncritically.

Here are three correspondences between this author and three Western writers. Dr. Van Ruymbeke is a major Nezami scholar however in one of her books she has written:

Christine van Ruymbeke, "Science and Poetry in Medieval Persia: The Botany of Nizami's Khamsa", University of Cambridge Oriental Publications (No. 65), 2008. pg 9: "He might have been of Jewish background, or maybe Turkish." pg 18: "Before submitting the tree imagery in the Khamsa to a scientific examination, we first need to define closely as possible what is understood by "botanical knowledge", or more precisely, by "knowledge about trees and fruit", when this is applied to a twelfth century Persian poet." pg 236: "As a result, this study not only proposes a better understanding of nature imagery in the work of a seminal Persian poet, but provides a useful insight into the breadth and depth of education of Medieval poets and their readers."

I asked her about "Jewish background" and even maybe Turkish, and gave her some of the sources from the article. This was her response:

f

Thank you for your email and your query on Nezami. I am grateful to you for writing to me for clarification rather than jumping to conclusions. As you will notice from my book, I am absolutely NOT taking position on Nezami's origins, I am only mentioning - using the conditional - opinions found in previous scholarly works, one of which (but this is so far away I unfortunately cannot remember who the author might have been) must have mentioned the possibility that Nezami came from a Jewish background. If I remember correctly, no actual proof for this was given, except for his first name Ilyas son of Yusuf. The point I was making was that we have no biographical details on Nezami's origin,

family background and education and thus need to look at his verses to understand who he was. I have not researched his background and all I can say is that no, there are no known works in Hebrew written by him, nor any traces of ties to a Jewish community, nor any mention by him that I know of that he was of Jewish origin.

As to the opinions you are quoting, I would like to remark that this is a dangerous and pointless debate, as we have no biographical details about this or about most other medieval authors who wrote in Persian. There was no definition of political nationalities in the large Saljuq Turkish Muslim empire in which Nezami was living. Nationalities, as Soviet and present-day Azerbaijan or Iran refer to, is not a concept that is relevant for those times. People who call Nezami a Persian poet are perfectly right, as the language in which he chose to express himself was Persian, whatever his family background might have been, and it was most probably Iranian. The area and town in which he lived has become Azerbaijan nowadays, so Azerbaijan is perfectly correct in claiming him as a local man - this might also be correct for the Soviet Union at one time. In my eyes, this does not rob Persian culture from one of its greatest men either.

As to Medieval Jewish authors, I do not research this but my experience tells me that they ought not to be too hard to locate, as I am sure their works or names would normally advertise their origins in one way or another.. There was no reason to hide this in any way.

I hope this is helpful and wish you success in your research.

C van Ruymbeke (Correspondence took place in March 2009)

Doing a search in Google Books (in the year 2009) under “Nezami Azeri poet”, we did not come across any serious source except one literature book. Here is the correspondence with that author:

Finally we did mention that a small number of writers have used anachronistic place names and used modern geographical conventions without any ethnic designation.

An inquirer asked one academic writer who used this term:

In the book “Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-century Iran” on page 65 you wrote “The renowned Azerbaijani poet, Nizami of...”.

What do you mean with “Azerbaijani poet Nizami”? Ethnic, cultural, geographical or other characteristic?

The Author of the book who used the term responded back:

geographical. The whole subject of nationalities is fraught with controversy since in mediaeval times nation-states did not exist people could not so easily be labeled. Often people were defined by their city, e.g. Samarqandi, Balkhi, though often by the region, Rumi. Nizami has been claimed by the modern state of Azerbaijan though he continues to be considered a Persian poet and for the student seeking further information Azerbaijan could be a starting point for their research. You should not read too much into such labels. George Lane

And here is another correspondence:

Dear Sir,

In your book "The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction", you have written:

"The Haft Paykar (Seven Beauties), a mystical epic by the twelfth-century Azeri Poet, Nizami, tells of a legendary King Bahram..."

Response:

Dear Mr. Doostzadeh,

"thank you very much for your note on my anachronistic use of the term "Azeri" for Nizami. I am usually reluctant to ascribe national/ethnic origins to any writer, since it is ultimately the language that counts. I will make the appropriate changes when and if a second edition comes out. For the record, I did note in the sentence you quoted that the Seven Beauties is a _Persian_ poem.

*With best wishes,
Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr."*

“

Also noted should be an effort around the time of November 2008 where due to lobbying, Encyclopedia Britannica had changed Nezami Ganjavi from a Persian poet to a “Persian language poet” as a first step to rob him off his Iranian heritage. However, after consulting with some scholars, they accepted the correct term *Persian Poet*.

In the long term these efforts will be futile (say 1000 years from now), but due to geo-political maneuvering and active lobbying, and also lack of awareness of the historical politicization of Nezami, as well as not everyone being able to dissect USSR propaganda, it can be expected that in the near term, if nationalistic feelings flare-up and oil money is

poured in, there will be massive political efforts to rob Nezami Ganjavi of his Iranian heritage (see some of the news item posted in the intro). But in the long term, without a doubt, this effort is futile.

Appendix B: Response to two arguments with regards to the population of Turks in Caucasus

Do “Turkish” soldiers in Baghdad during the early Abbasid period have anything to do with Caucasus and Azerbaijan

One critic has claimed that: **there was a lot of Turks in Baghdad serving the caliphate, so Azerbaijan and Caucasia had a large Turkic military population before the Seljuqs.**

The argument is disconnected and lacks coherency. First what does Baghdad and Iraq have to do with Azerbaijan and Caucasian Albania? Second why would Nezami’s father line be related to mercenary soldiers in Baghdad? There is no evidence of any Turkic culture in the area, especially in urban centers (see for example Nozhat al-Majales for a clear example of Iranian culture). Furthermore, the Turkic military population in Iraq was not large, but Turks being employed in various armies is like Berbers, Slavs, Iranians (Soghdians specially) and etc. being employed in various armies. None of these show evidence of any Turkish speaking cities and colonies in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. Indeed, there is no Turkish toponyms in both Eastern Southern Caucasus or Azerbaijan before the Seljuqs, directly disproving any claim of any substantial Turkish population. For example unlike the Iranian names such as Ganja, Baku, Sherwan, Darband, Barda’, Lahijan and etc., one would expect some Turkic names in the area. Also the area of Azerbaijan and Caucasus were controlled by Medes, Achaemenids, Greeks, Parthians, Sassanids and then Arabs (occasional Khazar incursions), then Sherwanshahs, Rawwadids, Sajids, Justanids, Daylamites and Shaddadids and etc. Thus no real Turkic rule was present until the Seljuqs. Again there is nothing comparable to say Armenian writings or the Nozhat al-Majales (a complete picture of Muslim Arran) and Safinaye Tabriz (a complete picture of Muslim Azerbaijan) that shows any proof or evidence of Turkic culture.

Let us first see how many Turks were in Baghdad and was is meant by Turks. However, the number of Turks in Iraq has nothing to do with Azerbaijan, Sherwan or Arran. But we will quote a book which consider the number of “Turks” (generic demeanor as explained by M.A. Shaban). **“More difficult question surround the size of the Turkish Guard. Ibn Tahribirdi’s example indicates the problem of relying directly on the source: “(al-Mu’tasim) devoted himself to the purchase (of Turks) such that their number reached 8,000 *mamluks*. The number also reported as 18,000, which is the more widely known (of these two numbers.”. The sources, in other words, provide a range of figures. The earliest references are those of al-Ya’qubi, who has 3000 *Ghulams* collected by al-Mu’tasim during al-Ma’mun’s reign; al-Mas’udi, who refers to 4000 Turks collected by**

al-Mu'tasim; and al-Kindi who reports on the 4,000 strong force of Turks in Egypt with al-Mu'tasim shortly before his rise to the caliphate. Michael the Syrian provides a similar number. It is surprising, therefore, to find later authors such as al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (50,000), Nizam al-Mulk (70,000), and Yaqt al-Hamawi (70,000) provide numbers in the tens of thousands (of Turkish soldiers). Between the two poles lies a third group of sources, which are content with a figure between 17,000 and 20,000.

...

Kennet's number (103,000) however, are considerably higher than those proposed by Tollner, who argues for a maximum figure of 20,000 Turkish guardsmen. Kennet's number seems excessive and until certain issues are better resolved, the lower figure is probably to be preferred." (Matthew S. Gordon, "The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra, State University of New York Press, 2001. Pg 72-73)

Thus a rough estimate from 4,000 (earliest sources) to 100,000 (one author) and the consensus seems to be 20,000. However what should be pointed out is that "Turk" used by these Arab authors was a generic term.

According to one modern source with regards to military personal in Baghdad:

"The name Turk was given to all these troops, despite the inclusion amongst them of some elements of Iranian origin, Ferghana, Ushrusana, and Shash – places where in fact the centers were the slave material was collected together" (Uthmān Sayyid Aḥmad Ismā'īl Bīlī, "Prelude to the Generals", Published by Garnet & Ithaca Press, 2001.)

M. A. Shaban goes further:

"These new troops were the so-called "Turks". It must be said without hesitation that this is the most misleading misnomer which has led some scholars to harp *ad nauseam* on utterly unfounded interpretation of the following era, during which they unreasonably ascribe all events to Turkish domination. In fact the great majority of these troops were not Turks. It has been frequently pointed out that Arabic sources use the term Turk in a very loose manner. The Hephthalites are referred to as Turks, so are the peoples of Gurgan, Khwarizm and Sistan. Indeed, with the exception of the Soghdians, Arabic sources refer to all peoples not subjects of the Sassanian empire as Turks. In Samarra separate quarters were provided for new recruits from every locality. The group from Farghana were called after their district, and the name continued in usage because it was easy to pronounce. But such groups as the Ishtakhanjiyya, the Isbijabbiya and groups from similar localities who were in small numbers at first, were lumped together under the general term Turks, because of the obvious difficulties the Arabs had in pronouncing such foreign names. The Khazars who also came from small localities which could not even be identified, as they were mostly nomads, were perhaps the only group that deserved to be called Turks on the ground of racial affinity. However, other groups from Transcaucasia were classed together with the Khazars under the general description."

(M.A. Shaban, "Islamic History", Cambridge University Press, v.2 1978. Page 63)

Note unlike what M.A. Shaban states, even Iranian Soghdians and Alans have been counted as Turkish groups in some Arabic sources. The name Turk itself does not have agreed etymology or even origin. Its identification firmly with Altaic speakers (although now Mongols are not considered part of this language family by some linguists) is fairly

recent, since in old Islamic sources even Tibetians, Chinese (Nezami Ganjavi himself), Mongols and etc. were all called Turks (besides Iranian peoples like Soghdians, Alans and etc. that we have mentioned). One possible hypothesis is that the word is connected to Turan and Turaj/Turag (Pahlavi), just like Iranian and Iran are connected to Iraj of the Shahnameh. However this is a hypothesis and as Peter Golden has mentioned in the introduction of his book (An introduction to the history of the Turkic peoples), there is no agreed upon root for the word.

One Soghdian (Iranian) in particular who was mistaken for a Turk was the general Afshin. That is while two old Arabic sources mention Afshin as a Turk, it is clear to modern scholars he was a Soghdian and other sources have mentioned him as such.

Daniel Pipes states: "Although two classical sources claim him a Turk, he came from Farghana, an Iranian cultural region and was not usually considered Turkish" (D. Pipes. Turks in Early Muslim Service — JTS, 1978, 2, 85—96.)

Bernard Lewis also states: "Babak's Iranianizing Rebellion in Azerbaijan gave occasion for sentiments at the capital to harden against men who were sympathetic to the more explicitly Iranian tradition. Victor (837) over Babak was al-Afshin, who was the hereditary Persian ruler of a district beyond the Oxus, but also a masterful general for the caliph." (Bernard Lewis, "The Political Language of Islam", Published by University of Chicago Press, 1991. Pg 482)

And J.H. Kramer states about Oshrusana:

"Under Mamun, the country had to be conquered again and a new expedition was necessary in 207/822. On this last occasion, the Muslim army was guided by Haydar (Khedar), the son of the Afshīn Kāwūs, who on account of dynastic troubles had sought refuge in Baghdād. This time the submission was complete; Kāwūs abdicated and Haydar succeeded him, later to become one of the great nobles of the court of Baghdād under al-Mutasim, where he was known as al-Afshīn. His dynasty continued to reign until 280/893 (coin of the last ruler Sayr b. Abdallāh of 279 [892] in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg); after this date, the country became a province of the Sāmānids and ceased to have an independent existence, while the Iranian element was eventually almost entirely replaced by the Turkic." (J.H. Kramers "Usrūshana." Encyclopaedia of Islam. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007) Thus modern scholars affirm Afshin was Iranian. However to Arab authors at the time, the term "Turk" did not specifically mean Altaic speakers as much as a person from the far away regions of Central Asia.

According C.E. Bosworth, "The Appearance of the Arabs in Central Asia under the Umayyads and the establishment of Islam", in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. IV: The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century, Part One: The Historical, Social and Economic Setting, edited by M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth. Multiple History Series. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1998. excerpt from page 23: "Central Asia in the early seventh century, was ethnically, still largely an Iranian land whose people used various Middle Iranian languages.

C. Edmund Bosworth: "In early Islamic times Persians tended to identify all the lands to the northeast of Khorasan and lying beyond the Oxus with the region of Turan, which in the Shahnama of Ferdowsi is regarded as the land allotted to Fereydun's son Tur. The

denizens of Turan were held to include the Turks, in the first four centuries of Islam essentially those nomadizing beyond the Jaxartes, and behind them the Chinese (see Kowalski; Minorsky, "Turan"). Turan thus became both an ethnic and a geographical term, but always containing ambiguities and contradictions, arising from the fact that all through Islamic times the lands immediately beyond the Oxus and along its lower reaches were the homes not of Turks but of Iranian peoples, such as the Sogdians and Khwarezmians."(C.E. Bosworth, "Central Asia: The Islamic period up to the Mongols" in Encyclopedia Iranica).

Anyhow, besides pointing to generic term Turk, these Turks in Baghdad have no relationship with actual large settlements of Turkic peoples in Azerbaijan and Caucasus. As explained already by Golden:

Turkic penetration probably began in the Hunnic era and its aftermath. Steady pressure from Turkic nomads was typical of the Khazar era, although there are no unambiguous references to permanent settlements. These most certainly occurred with the arrival of the Oguz in the 11th century. The Turkicization of much of Azarbayjan, according to Soviet scholars, was completed largely during the Ilxanid period if not by late Seljuk times. Sumer, placing a slightly different emphasis on the data (more correct in my view), posts three periods which Turkicization took place: Seljuk, Mongol and Post-Mongol (Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu and Safavid). In the first two, Oguz Turkic tribes advanced or were driven to the western frontiers (Anatolia) and Northern Azarbaijan (Arran, the Mugan steppe). In the last period, the Turkic elements in Iran (derived from Oguz, with lesser admixture of Uygur, Qipchaq, Qaluc and other Turks brought to Iran during the Chinggisid era, as well as Turkicized Mongols) were joined now by Anatolian Turks migrating back to Iran. This marked the final stage of Turkicization. Although there is some evidence for the presence of Qipchaqs among the Turkic tribes coming to this region, there is little doubt that the critical mass which brought about this linguistic shift was provided by the same Oguz-Turkmen tribes that had come to Anatolia. The Azeris of today are an overwhelmingly sedentary, detribalized people. Anthropologically, they are little distinguished from the Iranian neighbors.

In general as shown already, the urban population based on books such as Nozhat al-Majales of Arran and Sherwan was Persian and there is no mention of Turkish language in Arran by travelers (for example Estakhri clearly mentions Persian and Arabic as do others).

References (note first name of Author is put first here):

- Matthew S. Gordon. "The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Sammara, State University of New York Press, 2001. Narshaxi, Muhammad –
- Bernard Lewis, "The Political Language of Islam", Published by University of Chicago Press, 1991.
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- C.E. Bosworth, "The Appearance of the Arabs in Central Asia under the Umayyads and the establishment of Islam", in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. IV: The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century, Part One: The Historical, Social and Economic Setting, edited by M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth. Multiple History Series. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1998.
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- M.A. Shaban, "Islamic History", Cambridge University Press, v.2 1978.

Akbar Kitab al-Tijan: The Arab folklore Kitab al-Tijan and fight between mythical Yemenese Kings and Turanians/Turks in Azerbaijan has no historical validity. On the background of Turanians.

The writer saw this posed in a forum: “At the time of the Arab conquest there was a large Turkish population in Iranian Azerbaijan and it is possible to find these in Arab sources. Arab sources refer to the collision of Yemeni raiders in Azerbaijan and a victory by the Yemenese and taking the children of the Turks as captive. Ibn Hisham describes to the Omayyad Caliph Mua’wiyah about the question of Azerbaijan and Turks that originally Turks lived in Azerbaijan. To sum up the message of Arab authors was that Turks were majority in Azerbaijan”

Such statements stem from nationalistic considerations rather than close examinations of the books attributed to Ibn Hisham. We believe the author is referring to the book al-Tijan (the book of crowns) by Wahb b. Munabbih which appears in recension of Ibn Hisham. Ibn Hisham (died 833 A.D.) himself lived much later than the Ummayad Caliph Mua’wiyah (602-680 A.D.). The other book is Akhbar ‘Ubayd (the history, poetry and genealogy of Yemen) again both published in 1928 based on the Hyderabad manuscript that is a copy of a 1622 lost manuscript. And also one cannot “sum up” based on a mythical story anything about Turks being majority in Azerbaijan where there is not a single reference from Arab travelers to the area (like Istakhri) and clear manuscripts like Safinaye Tabriz and Nozhat al-Majales which shows that there was no Turkish urban culture present in the area even during the time of the Seljuqids. It seems the author who made this statement has not read the works of al-Tijan and Akhbar ‘Ubayd and has referenced another nationalist writer who has taken a certain quote out of the context of the story. Finally to make a generalization based on a legendary source shows complete disregard of methodology of history writing as well scientific observations.

Although the legendary nature of the works of Akhbar ‘Ubayd and Kitab al-Tijan are well known and have been already dismissed by Ibn Khaldun (and before him by Al-Masu’di) before being subsequently dismissed by Western scholars, we shall delve into this argument in more detail by bringing primary sources. Before we do so, we should note before the Seljuqs, Arab and Persian travelers mention the language of the Caucasus as Persian and Arabic, and not Turkish. Qatran Tabrizi’s poetry shows that the Oghuz who made a minor incursion in Azerbaijan during the Ghaznavid era (before being driven out) were foreigners. Similarly, all dynasties before the Seljuqs ruling these areas were not Turkic (only Khazars and Ummayads skirmished for 100 years were the Khazars occasionally raided the Southern Caucasus and the ‘Ummayads the Northern Caucasus. However in the end, the boundary of both empires remained the same as that of the

Sassanids and Khazars). Dynasties such as Sajids (of Soghdian origin), Sherwanshahs, Shaddadids, Rawwadids, Justanids, and etc. have already been discussed and none of these were Turkish. Before the Arab invaders, Caucasian Albania and Azerbaijan were ruled also by Iranian dynasties such as Sassanids and sometimes minor dynasties under Sassanids such as the Mehranids and Parthian dynasties of Albania. Before that the area was ruled by the Parthians, and before that it was the Romans and Greeks in Caucasia Albania and Atropates Persian dynasty in Azerbaijan. And before the Romans and Greeks, we have the Achaemenids, and then Iranian Medes. Thus there was no interval for large numbers of Turks to inhabit Azerbaijan and displace the original Iranians of the area. The toponyms such as Ganja, Azerbaijan, Baku, Sherwan, Ardabil, Tabriz and etc. are not Turkic and one cannot find one reliable Turkic toponym from this area before the Seljuqs. And we have already brought examples of the pre-Turkish language of Azerbaijan which has been references by both Islamic authors, manuscripts (such as Safinayeh Tabriz and Nozhat al-Majales, Homam Tabrizi and etc.). Also the book Nozhat al-Majales shows the everyday Persian culture of the Caucasus and uses many local idioms and words. This book was also discussed as well as the fact there does not exist a single verse of Turkish from the area even after 100 years when Nezami passed away.

All of these and more were described in such sections and subsections of the article.

As well as quotes brought on the formation of Azerbaijani people from Golden, History of the East and other sources and authors. Consequently, such manuscripts as the Nozhat al-Majales using everyday Persian idioms from the Caucasus, and describing the cultural life of the area (the terms of everyday cultural life being Persian not Turkish), showing everyday average people (not related to courts) using Persian is sufficient proof that the culture of urban centers and the area of the Caucasus even during the Seljuqid era was not Turkish. Only with the Mongol invasions were large number of Turkmen/Oghuz tribes pushed in the area and it took many centuries onward (even up to the 19th century as noted by Bakikhanov Baku was still predominantly Persian) to finally linguistically Turkify the area. The tipping point as we mentioned was probably the Safavid era.

Given these well known facts which are agreed upon by Western scholars (and Russian ones such as History of the East), there is no reason to delve into Yemenese legends of Akhbar 'Ubayd and Kitab al-Tijan. However we do so to show that these legends really have nothing to do with Turks (speakers of Altaic speakers) but have to do with Turanians (mythical Iranian group). The Yemenese components of these legends have been dismissed by Ibn Khaldun (and before him by al-Masu'di) long before modern scholars began examining the Kitab al-Tijan and Akhbar 'Ubayd.

Before we bring translations of Ibn Hisham who quotes 'Ubyad (also written as 'Abid), we should first mention who/what are Ibn Hisham, 'Ubayd, Muaw'iyah, Kitab al-Tijan and Akhbar 'Ubayd. The Kitab al-Tijan is a book that is ascribed to Ibn Hisham which has many Himyarite (name for Yemen) legends. As will be shown the Kitab al-Tijan is a legendary composite work with its oldest manuscript dating from 1622 A.D. and with many interpolations. It is ascribed to Ibn Hisham and it quotes a certain 'Ubayd who is

thought of as a legendary figure. The stuff attributed to ‘Ubayd is remotely related to the question of the existence of a historical ‘Ubayd at the court of the Ummayyad Caliph Mua’wiyah. Furthermore, the Himyarite Kings quoted with regards to their attack on Azerbaijan are all legendary and existed during the time of ancient legendary Iranian Kings (like Manuchehr).

First we quote an entry on Ibn Hisham:

Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833)

Abu Muhammad ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham was an Egyptian scholar of south Arabian origin, best known for edition of the *Sira*, or life (of the Prophet Muhammad), of Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767).

Ibn Hisham's edition of the *Sira* was based on *the* Kufan recension of al-Bakka'i (d. 183/799), extensive quotations from which were used by al-Azraqi (d. c.250/865), al-Tabari (d. 310/923) and others, and provide a basis for assessing how Ibn Hisham proceeded. The most significant change was the suppression of much of the *Mubtada'* section of the work, which dealt with the pre-Islamic background of Muhammad's life and contained much legendary material to which some authorities objected. Ibn Hisham also reduced the amount of poetry, and added many remarks, clearly separated from the main text by the introductory phrase *gala*, 'Ibn Hisham said, 'to explain obscure allusions to individuals, define unusual words, provide variants, or elaborate when he felt he had relevant material to offer. In this new form the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq was very popular and rapidly became the authoritative interpretation of the life of Muhammad.

Also extant from Ibn Hisham's pen is his *Kilab al-Tijan fi rnuluk Himyar wa-al-Yaman (Book of Crowns, concerning the Kings of Himyar and Yemen)*, a book of Biblical and ancient Arabian lore based on an earlier collection of such materials by Wahb ibn Munabbih. The work begins with Creation of Adam and Eve, and the early patriarchs; all this is made to lead to the history of Yemen and the southern Arabs. The rest of the book stays with this subject, relating early folklore about the glories and achievements of the Yemenites, most particularly the exploits of al-Sa'b Dhu al-Qarnayn. Legends pertaining to the Quraysh are also introduced, and the work ends with tales about Sayf ibn Dhl Yazan. The *Kitab al-Tijan* is clearly a composite work that had not stabilized even in the time of Ibn Hisham, but nevertheless reflects a type of early material that was becoming increasingly marginalized as scholars excluded it from their more formal studies.

..

Kitab al-Tijan, Fritz Krenkw (ed.), Hyderabad, 1928.

(L.I. Conrad, "Ibn Hisham" in Julie Scott Meisami, Paul Starkeym, "Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature", Taylor & Francis, 1998. Page 335.)

Before delving into these Yemenese legends, we should know more about Wahb B. Munabbih. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam:

WAHB B. MUNABBIH, ABU ‘ABD ALLAH, Yemeni narrator and author-transmitter from South Arabia. He was of Persian origin, having been born at Dhimar, two days'

march from Sana' in the year 34/654-5. Information about his conversion to Islam in the year 10 A.H. is unreliable. More probably the details concerned his father Munabbih, of whom it was said that "he converted to Islam at the time of the Prophet and that he was a good Muslim" (Ibn Hadjar, *Tahdhib*, xi, 167). He lived with his five brothers at Sana', and Hammam was the eldest of them. The most reasonable date for the brother's death seems to be 101 or 102/719-20, and the least probable is 132, when compared with that of Wahb (see below). He left a *Sahifa* with almost 140 translations and commentaries; these were published by R.F. 'Abd al-Muttalib in 1406/1986, following a manuscript from the Dar al-Kutub in Cairo, which corrects and expands the edition by Hamfdullah, who followed mss. from Berlin and Damascus.

...

Alongside the biblical section, which all these titles denote, is another which concerns the pre-Islamic Arab period; this established a true bridge between the biblical world and the Yemeni Arab past. It is the *K. al-Muluk al-mutawwad'a min Himyar wa-akhbarihim wa kishasihim wa-kuburihim wa-asha'rihim*, and according to Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, iii, 671]. Ibn Kutayba is said to have seen a version of it himself. In any case, the presence of material on the same theme was attested by the *Kitab al-Tidjan* of Ibn Hisham, who referred to Wahb as his primary source, through the intermediary of the same grandson, and from him Asad b. Musa [*q.v.* in Suppl]. He found it in the library of the judge of Egypt, who received him and opened his house to him as a disciple (see Khoury, *Asad b. Musa*, 23). In the first part of this book Wahb is found everywhere as the only authority; these are the pages containing the beginning of the biblical world, where the indication of names and dates, etc. points to certain, detailed knowledge; and it was to this world that the author wanted to connect Yemen, with a view to enhancing the worth of this country to the bosom of Islam, to Meccan and then to North Arabian roots, and to the centre of rivalries which had built up between north and south.

In the second part of Ibn Hisham's book it is noticeable that the name of Wahb is mentioned increasingly less often, eventually disappearing altogether in the last part. The global tone which dominates this book resides in its distinctively biblical character, and this distinguishes it entirely from the book of cAbid (or cUbayd) b. Sharya [see IBN SHARYA], *Akhbdr cAbid b. Sharyai fi akhbaral-Yaman wa-ashariha wa-ansabiha* (ed., with Ibn Hisham's *K. al-Tidjan*, Haydarabad 1347/1928-9). In that book we are dealing with a story-teller who becomes the *samir*(=legend/story teller) of Mu'awiya in Damascus, and fills out his stories mainly with poetry. This becomes the dominant element and confirms historical narrations (on this subject see Khoury, *Kalif, Geschichte und Dichtung*, esp. 213 ff.).

...

As for later authors, they often altered certain traditions which they attached to his name, which means that not all of the alterations may have come from him. In any case, in his *Kitab al-Tidjan* he showed a real knowledge of the Bible, even if this was not extensive,

in certain citations from the text (see Khoury, *Quelques reflexions.*, 553 ff., esp. 555-6). What was circulated with these biblical and extra-biblical studies was a common Semitic reservoir of great antiquity, and this was often disseminated orally, especially outside the Judaeo-Christian dogmatic centres; this has been very ably noted by H. Schwarzbaum in his book on biblical and extra-biblical stories (see *BibL*). In short, Wahb is an important representative of the expansion of the historical perspective. His writings embodied a truly universal vision of history, comprising: 1. Ancient biblical history; 2. pre-Islamic Yemeni history; 3. Islamic history of the prophet; and 4. history of the caliphate.

(R.G. Khoury, "Wahb b. Munabbih", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007. (2nd edition-online version)).

We should also know about 'Ubayd ibn Sharya who is mentioned in the Kitab al-Tijan being the main story teller of Mua'wiya. The Encyclopedia of Islam article by Rosenthal has an article on 'Ubayd.

SHARYA. ABID/^cUBAYD AL-DJURHUMI, sage and antiquary, frequently cited as a relater of *quasi-historical* traditions. The form of his name is not certain. The manuscripts appear to vacillate between ^cAbid and ^cUbayd. 'Umayr occurs by mistake (Ibn al-Athir, *Usd al-ghaba*, Bulak 1286, iii, 351; Ibn Hadjar, *Isaba*, Calcutta 1856-73, iii, 201). The form Sharya is confirmed by the metre (cf. O. Lofgren, *Ein Hamdani-Fund, Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift*, vii (1935), 24; al-Hamdani, *Ikhlil*, ed. O. Lofgren, Uppsala 1954,6). However, Ibn Hadjar advocates the pronunciation Shariyya. Sariya, Sariyya, and Shu-bruma(?) also occur (Ibn ^cAsakir, *Tarikh Dimashk*; Yakut, *Udaba'* v, 10; *Usd*). Strong attempts have been made in recent years to defend the historical existence of Ibn Sharya (cf., for instance, N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic literary papyri*, i, Chicago 1957, 9 ff.), but his historicity as a scholar and author remains entirely conjectural. According to the sources, Mu^cawiya called him to his court in order to hear him tell stories of the past. He died at the age of over 220, 240, or 300 years during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. In the first half of the 3rd/9th century, Abu Hatim al-Sidjistani (*Mu'ammarnun*, ed. Goldziher, *Abk. z. arab. Phil.*, ii, 40-3) knew him as a long-lived sage. Al-Djahiz (*Bukhala'*, Cairo 1948, 40, trans. Pellat, 67, 337) already seems to refer to him as an authority on the great South Arabian past, and so does Ibn Hisham in the *Kitab al-Tijan*, Haydarabad 1347, 66, 209).

Later in that century, Ibn Kutayba (*Ta'will mukhtalif al-hadith*, Cairo 1386/1966, 283, trans. Lecomte, Damascus 1964, 313) knew him as a genealogist, apparently in connection with South Arabian history. The early historians usually do not mention him by name. Al-Mas'udi (*Murudi*, iv, 89) is inclined to discount his reports on South Arabian history as fiction.

He is credited with a collection of proverbs, which is not preserved (*Fihrist*, 89; al-Bakri, *Fasl*

al-malakut, Khartum 1958; R. Sellheim, *Die klassischarabischen Sprichwortersammlungen*, The Hague 1954, 45, 89, 149). His famous "Book of the kings and history of the past" (*Fihrist*, 89) was already quoted by al-Mas'udi (*Murudi*, iii, 173-5, 275 ff., iv, 89; A. v. Kremer, *Uber die sudarabische Sage*, Leipzig 1866, 46 ff.).

According to a somewhat corrupt passage in Ibn Hadjar, *Isaba*, iii, 202, al-Hamdani mentioned that in the 4th/10th century a great number of different recensions of the work were in circulation. One of those recensions has been preserved in an incomplete form. It has been published under the title of *Akhbdr al-Yaman wa ash'aruha wa-ansabuha*, together with *Kitab al-Tidjan*, Haydarabad, 1347, 311-487.

The quotations in al-Mas'udi are sufficiently similar to the published text (cf. *Murudi*, iii, 275 ff. = 483 if. of the ed.) to prove the general identity. The published text has later additions; it refers often to Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas as a cousin of Mucawiya; it has an allusion to the expected South Arabian Mahdi (478, cf. also the verses quoted in Nashwan, *Shams al-'ulum*, GMS, xxiv, 103) and one to the Berber 'Alid (which may be a later, Fatimid-period addition, 323); and it mentions the Daylam and Turks (476).

The available data would seem to indicate that the use of the figure of Ibn Sharya as an historical narrator does not antedate the early 3rd/9th century, after the figure of the sage had become securely established. The author of the "Book of kings" may not have been a South Arabian patriot, but rather some Baghdad antiquarian who tried to profit from the fashionable interest in South Arabian antiquity. Whether the work contains many reflexions of genuine South Arabian folklore, as v. Kremer maintained, is another question, though great scepticism would seem to be indicated. (F. Rosenthal, "Ibn Sharya", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2007. (2nd edition-online version)).

According to Norris:

Both Umayyad and Abbasid story-tellers could draw upon a fund of heroic themes. At an early date there were numerous legends of Muslim martyrs and warriors, but non-Muslim models were also provided by the flourishing Yemeni school of authors who gloried in the pre-Islamic past of the Himyarites; the material contained in such works as Wahb b. Munabbih's (d. 110/728 or 114/732) *Kitab al-Tijan* (in the recension of Ibn Hisham, d. 218/833) and al-Hamdani's (d. 334/945). *Ikli'l* is no less genuinely South Arabian in stamp for all its borrowings from the Alexander Romance and from Persian tales and epics. The portrait of a Yemeni hero borrowed from Alexander stories can already be seen in a poem attributed to the pre-Islamic poet Imru al-Qays:

Have I not told you that destiny slays by guile,
A slayer most treacherous indeed, it consumes men's sons.
It banished Dhu Riyash from lordly citadels.
When he had ruled the lowlands and the mountains.
He was a valiant king; by revelation he sundered the horizons.
He drove his vanguards to their eastern edges,
And, where the sun climbs, barred the hills to Gog and Magog.

(H.T. Norris, "Fables and Legends" in Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant and G. Rex Smith (editors) in "The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: 'Abbasid Belles-Lettres", Cambridge University Press, 1990. pp. "138-139")

According to Crosby who has written an excellent book on the legends of Yemen:

“Islamic scholars have debated both the author and his work. Modern scholars question ‘Abid’s existence as well as the attribution of the Akhbar to him. Fritz Krenkow, in particular, the editor of *Tijan* and *Akhbar*, cast doubt on ‘Abid’s existence, his authorship of the work, and the historical validity of the material in *Akhbar*, which he dismissed as merely “*Arabic Folklore*”.

(Elise W. Crosby, “The history, poetry, and genealogy of Yemen”, Gorgias Press LLC, 2007. Page 1)

Crosby has done a detailed study on the oldest manuscripts of Al-Tijan and Akhbar ‘Ubayd. There exists only three manuscripts (Hyderabad, London and Germany) and the oldest extant manuscript of Al-Tijan is copied from a manuscript of 1622-1625 A.D. and as mentioned (Elise W. Crosby, “The history, poetry, and genealogy of Yemen”, Gorgias Press LLC, 2007. Pages 61-65). We should note that in the book al-Tijan and Akhbar ‘Ubayd, the first Shi’i Imam is given the salutation (‘May God be Pleased with him) when he is quoted. However history tells us that Mu’awiya had declared public cursing of the first Shi’i Imam in Friday sermons and after him, this was the case with Ummayyads until the Ummayyad caliph Aziz ibn Umar. This is one of the many reasons for the inconsistency of the book.

Thus we have these two books containing old Himyarite (Yemenese legend) which is attributed to Ibn Hisham (d. 833 A.D.) who collected its material from an alleged existing work of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728-732) and it contains much legendary information from a legendary ‘Ubayd who supposedly was the story teller in Muaw’iyya’s court (d. 680). The Encyclopedia of Islam casts doubt on ‘Ubayd’s existence and if there was indeed an ‘Ubayd in Muaw’iyya’s court, the dialogue with the Caliph as preserved in the Akhbar ‘Ubayd are to be separated from any such historical figure. Islamic scholars such as Ibn Khaldun have already dismissed much of the historicity of the Yemenese legends especially with regards to the raid of Yemenese to Mosul, Azerbaijan, China, India and etc. Before we bring what Ibn Khaldun states, we should first mention some details about these Yemenese myths. According to Kitab al-Tijan, the following were the lines of the Himyarite Kings (note we do not differentiate here between the two h and t sounds in Arabic when transliterating it into English):

Qahtan

Ya’rub b. Qahtan

Yashjub b. Ya’rub

‘Abd Shams Saba’ b. Yashjub

Himyar b. Saba’

Wa’il b. Himyar

as-Saksak b. Wa’il

Yu’fir b. as-Saksak

Baran b. ‘Awf b. Himyar (a usurper)

Amir Dhu Rayish b. Baran b. ‘Awf b. Himyar

an-Nu'man al-Ma'afir b. Yu'fir b. as-Saksak
 Shaddad b. 'Ad b. Miltat (a descendant of Wa'il b. Himyar)
 Luqman b. 'Ad (brother of Shaddad)
 Dhu Shaddad al-Hammal b. 'Ad (brother of Shaddad)
 Dhu Marathid al-Harith b. al-Hammal ar-Raish
 As-Sa'ab Dhu al-Qarnayn b. al-Harith
 Abraha Dhu al-Manar as-Sa'ab
 Ifrqiis Dhu al-Ashrar al-'Abd b. Abraha
 Dhu al-Idh'ar 'Amr b. Abraha (brother of Dh al-Ashrar)
 (at Ma'rib) Sharahbil b. 'Amr b. Ghalib (a descendant of Yu'fir b. Saksak)
 al-Hadhad b. Sharahbil
 Bilqis bint al-Hadhad (Note this is the Islamic/Hebrew Equivalent to Queen of Sheba
 who appears in the Prophet Solomon's court)
 Nashir an-Na'im Malik b. 'Amr b. Yu'fir (a descendant of Wa'il b. Himyar)
 Shammar Yar'ash b. Nashir an-Ni'am
 Sayfi b. Shammar Yar'ash
 (at Ma'arib) 'Amr b. 'Amir b. Muzayqiya'
 Rabi'a b. Nasr b. Malik
 (interregnum before and after Abu Karib)
 'As'ad Abu Karib ar-Raish b. 'Adi b. Sayfi
 Hassan b. As'ad Abu Karib
 'Amr b. As'ad Abu Karib (brother of Hassan)
 'Abd Kalil b. Yanuf
 Tubba' b. Hassan b. As'ad Abu Karib (the last Tubba')
 Rabia b. Marthad b. 'Abd Khalil
 Hassan 'Amr b. Tubba'
 Abraha b. as-Sabbah
 Lukhay'a b. Yanuf
 Dhu Nuwas Zur'a (the last king of Himyar)

Most of these Kings also occur in the Akhbar 'Ubayd.

Some of these Yemenese myths also occur in combination with other Semitic and Indo-Iranian myths in the books of Tabari, Miskawayah Dinavari and later historians.

Before bringing the relevant passages from the Akhbar which we believe the nationalistic writer is referencing, an overview of this book is in order. In Tabari and Miskawayah the Yemenese myth is joined with Iranian myth (and note Wahb was himself Persian) where Manuchehr the mythical Persian King defeats the mythical Turanian fiend Afrasiyab. While the original Turanians of Avesta have nothing to do with Altaic speakers, in the Islamic era and possibly late Sassanid era, the term Turk and Turanian applied to any group from Central Asia. Thus by the time of Tabari and Ibn Hisham, these terms were used interchangeably.

Overall, the book of Al-Tijan and Akhbar trace back of Himyar from Dhu Nuwas Zur'a all the way back to Adam. We will go over some of the myths and the Kings associated

with them in this book in order to give general feel for the reader. One of these Kings for example who allegedly made a raid into Azerbaijan is al-Harith b. al-Hammal ar-Raish. Who is the son of Dhu Shaddad as given in the table above.

According to the book al-Tijan and Akhbar, he was called Ar-Raish (Dhu Marathid al-Harith b. al-Hammal ar-Raish) because he made Yemen prosper through plunder he amassed (rasha) from his raids during his long rule. According to the book al-Tijan, which quotes the legendary ‘Ubayd, he lived for 225 years. And o his rule was before King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. In Tabari, his rule is the same time as Manuchehr and that of the Prophet Moses. With regards to his raids outside of Yemen, it is said that he first raided India and ordered his kinsmen Yu’fir b. ‘Amr b. Sharahbil to remain behind and build a city. The city in India was named ar-Raish in the honor of ar-Raish. Ar-Raish also invaded Azarbayjan, Mosul and Anbar. In Azarybayjan, he met the Turks, defeated them and put them to flight (note this is the portion of the passage that the Turkish nationalist user is referencing). In Azarbayjan, after defeating the Turks, and taking their children captive, he celebrated his journey by inscribing in two rocks his exploits. According to the legendary Akhbar of ‘Abid the rocks still existed during his own time (no specification of what language but it is read in Arabic!).

Anyhow as the reader can see, all of these are in the realm of myth and legends. We will also bring Tabari and etc. later and try to find at least some historical roots with legend through the Iranian Scythians (which were confused with Turanians probably after much myth sizing of history).

Going back to al-Tijan, after Raish, his son As-Sa’ab Dhu al-Qarnayn b. al-Harith. He is identified with the Dhu al-Qarnayn of the Qur’an. However, most Muslims historians of the classical era have identified Dhu al-Qarnayn with Alexander the Great. Taking into account more detailed history, some modern Muslim historians have discounted the Alexander the Great connection and have opted for Cyrus the Great. Be that it may, the Dhu al-Qarnayn in al-Tijan conquers Ethiopia, Sudan, East and West and blocks the path of the Gog and Magog. A good portion of al-Tijan deals with the exploits of Dhu al-Qarnayn (which is before the Kingdom of Solomon in the books chronology).

After Dhu al-Qarnayn, the Kingdom if Himyar according to Akhbar and al-Tijan is ruled by Abraha Dhu al-Manar. Abaraha, who ruled for 180 years had a son name al-‘Abd, whose mother was a *jinn* (almost equivalent to a daemon in Western culture but also can be friendly like the Genie bottle) called al-‘Ayuf. The father and son together raided the West, while Ifriqis another son, remained in Yemen to rule. Abraha was also called Dhu al-Manar (“he of the lighthouses”), because he ordered lighthouses build and fires ignited in them to guide his armies from their raids. Al ‘Abd was given the title “Dhu al-Idhar” because he brought terror and fear to the prisoners that were captured by his father. But it was Ifriqis who ruled Yemen and he ruled for 164 years. He colonized the Berbers of the West. After him Dhu al-Idhar rules for 25 years.

Later on in the story, al-Hadhad b. Sharahbil the father of Bilqis (the queen of Sheba and also mentioned in the Qura'n) takes over the throne. Many legends and stories with regards to Solomon and Bilqis (the Queen of Sheba) are described in the book.

Probably an interesting character in the Akhbar is the King Shamar Yar'ash who ruled for 160 years. He travelled to Iraq, China and Iran. According to the book he fought the Soghdians, destroyed their capital. Later on the local population build the city Shammar-Kand for him which is today called Samarqand(In reality, the name SamarKand means stone-fortress and Asmar/Samar is Old Iranian for stone and Kanth is Old Iranian for fortress/city). Of course the book contains many such legends with place names. While trying to conquer China, he was tricked, but 30000 of his troops go to Tibet and 'Ubayd mentions to Mua'wiya that their descendants are still there, and they dress like Arabs and acknowledge they are Arabs! In the Akhbar, he is involved in a fight with the legendary Iranian mythical King KayKavus (called Kay'Qaus). Kayqa'us is called the King of Babylon. Shammar fought him, defeated him and took him as prisoner according to the Akhbar. But his daughter Su'da pleads with his father (Shammar) to release him and Shammar releases him on condition that Babylon pays its annual tribute to Yemen.

Another King after him Shammar according to the Akhbar is Tubba' al-Aqran Dhu al-Qarnayn. The Akhbar identifies him as Dhul Qarnayn and he lived for 153 years because he did not reach the water of life. Another king after him was Tubba ar-Ra'id, who is the son of Dhu al-Qarnayn.

He wanted to settle a revolt among the Turks and Khazar, but they killed in his ambassador. He had no choice but revenge, and took over Mosul and Anbar, and then met the Turks and routed them out from Azerbaijan and pillaged their lands and took their children. With this regard, in the Akhbar, the tale goes that Muawiya asks what is the Turk and Azerbaijan and 'Ubayd responds those were their lands (under their control). Ubayd reports that that he himself participated in a raid in that region to ask the Persians about the events to have taken place under Ra'id. The pseudo-'Ubayd expresses the opinion that certainty on the matter can be gained only by asking about it. When it is a dimly remembered event of the past, the witnesses are dead, what really happens is no longer evident.

Ra'id comes back to Yemen and ruled for 163 years. Because of his victory over the Turks, the Persians and non-Arab kings feared him greatly. He received presents of silk, linen, porcelain, musk, and other products from China. He asked the Indian ambassador that if it is true all these products come from India and China and the Indian ambassador confirmed it to him. So Ra'id decides to take military expedition into China. His journey, takes him seven years and ten months and takes him through Khorasan. He finishes his plundering of China, and leaves a deputy there by the name of Barid b. an-Nabt. He does not leave a Persian or non-Arab land without leaving a garrison there. The troops he leaves in China still claim Arab origin and have a house which they circumambulate seven times and to which they bring sacrifices.

After Ra'id, several other Kings rule Yemen. One of them was Abu Karib who rules for 320 years. He combines astrological knowledge with experience in warfare. He would not undertake a raid without consulting astrologers. He wrote poems describing his journey and battles. He led raids to Persia, Syria, and North Arabia. Into every land that was plundered by previous Himyarite kings, he would go and plunder again. A number of poems describing the lands he conquered are said to be composed by him. He took expeditions to Iraq and found what he thought was a luxurious life. He prepared a march against the Persian King Qubadh. The Persians assembled at Babil while Abu Karib and his troops assembled near Kufa. Abu Karib got lost for a while and due to being lost, he found the city called Hira (popular etymology "lost"). He founded himself and his troop, then he proceeded towards Babil and defeated the army of Qubadh (legendary Shahnameh character). They fled to Rayy (near modern Tehran), his nephew Shammar pursued the Persian King and killed the Qubadh in Rayy. Abu Karib returned to Hira after his victory. Abu Karib next went to Khorasan. Abu Karib wanted to convert the people of Himyar to Judaism, but they revolted and installed his son Hassan at his request. They killed Abu Karib but not before he gave some instructions to his son Hassan to go to a certain mountain. Hassan appointed his brother as caretaker and went to the mountain his father instructed him. A woman met him there and asked him to take a seat. He refused because of the worms he saw on his bed and pillow. She next presented him with several human heads and asked Hassan to eat them. He refused. She offered him a drink from a vessel filled with blood and he declined. The woman chastised Hassan for refusing to obey his father's wishes that he do whatever is asked of him in the mountain. She told him if he wants to live, he should kill his father's murderers and that his reign will be short. Hassan returns home and told his mother what happened. She tells him that his reign would have been long and easy if he had sat down on the worms; that Yemen and the Bedouins would have obeyed him if he had eaten the heads; and that he would have become able to spill blood of the people of the earth if he had drunk the vessel full of blood.

It is at this point that the manuscript of Akhbar breaks and excerpts from Ibn Athir's al-Kamil (d. 1373) completes the story (thus probably dating the manuscript at most from 1373).

Thus as we can see both the Akhbar of 'Ubayd and Kitab al-Tijan whose oldest manuscript is supposed to be based on a copy of a 1622 A.D. manuscript are seen as legendary works, and the figure of 'Ubayd is highly suspect. The portion that the Turkish nationalist writer is referencing has to do with the mythical figure Rayish who lived before Solomon at the time of Moses (according to Tabari) and ruled for 225 years. The other portion has to do with Ra'ed who ruled for 163 years. Both of these encounter Turks and defeat them in Azerbaijan and route them out. However these stories unlike what the Turkish nationalist author wrote is not taking place during the time of Ummayyads (where there was actually a Khazar – Ummayyad war) but in the realm of myth. Both books are simply Himyarite legends. Obviously an Ummayyad caliph that ruled over an area would know where Azerbaijan is and the stories of 'Ubayd in Akhbar are a legend. Also the fact is that in these mythical stories, the "Turks" are routed from Azerbaijan and are seen as conquered in some respect.

Let us cross reference these stories with Tabari. Tabari writes:

The Children of Israel

The sons of Isaac were lions when they gilded themselves with the sword belts of death, clothed in armor, And when they claimed descent they numbered al-Sibahbadh to be of them and Chosroes, and they counted Hurmuzan and Caesar. Scripture and prophecy were among them, and they were kings of Istakhr and Tustar. There unites us and the noble ones, sons of Faris, a father after whom it matters not to us who comes later. Our forefather is the Friend of Allah, and Allah is our Lord. We are pleased with what God has bestowed and has decreed.

...

I was informed by Hisham b. Muhammad: Between themselves Tuj and Sarm ruled the earth for three hundred years after they had slain their brother Iraj. Then Manushihr b. Iraj b. Afridhun ruled for one hundred and twenty years. Then a son of the son of Tuj the Turk pounced upon Manushihr, exiling him from the land of Iraq for twelve years. Manushihr, in turn, replaced him, exiled him from his land, and returned to his rule, reigning for an additional twenty-eight years.

Manushihr was described as just and generous. He was the first who dug trenches and collected weapons of war, and the first who set up dihqans, imposing a dihqan over each village, making its inhabitants his chattels and slaves, clothing them in garments of submission, and ordering them to obey him.

It is said that Moses the Prophet appeared in the sixtieth year of his reign. It has been mentioned by someone other than Hisham that, when Manushihr became king, he was crowned with the royal crown, and he said on the day of his enthronement, "We will strengthen our fighting force and promise them to take vengeance for our forefathers and drive the enemy from our land." Then he journeyed to the land of the Turks, seeking to avenge the blood of his grandfather Iraj b. Afridhun. He slew Tuj b. Afridhun and his brother Salm, achieving his revenge; then he left.

He also mentioned Frasiyab b. Fashanj b. Rustam b. Turk (from whom the Turks claim descent) b. Shahrab (or, as some say, the son of Arshab) b. Tuj b. Afridhun the king, (Fashak is also called Fashanj b. Zashamin). [Frasiyab] did battle with Manushihr sixty years after the latter had slain Tuj and Salm, and [he] besieged him in Tabaristan. Then Manushihr and Frasiyab reached an agreement that they would set a boundary between their two kingdoms at the distance of an arrow shot by a man from among Manushihr's companions named Arishshibatir (but sometimes one shortens his name and calls him Irash): Wherever his arrow fell from the place where it was shot, adjacent to the land of the Turks, would be the boundary between them, which neither of them was to cross to the other side. Arishshibatir drew an arrow in his bow, then released it. He was given strength and power so that his shot reached from Tabaristan to the river of Balkh. Because the arrow fell there, the river of Balkh became the boundary between the Turks and the children of Tuj, and the children of Iraj and the region of the Persians. In this way, through Arishshibatir shot, wars were ended between Frasiyab and Manushihr.

They have mentioned that Manushihr derived mighty rivers from al-Sarat, the Tigris, and the river of Balkh. It is said that he was the one who dug the great Euphrates and commanded the people to plow and to cultivate the earth. He added archery to the art of warfare and gave leadership in archery to Arishshibatir, owing to the shooting he had performed.

They say that, after thirty-five years of Manushihr's reign had passed, the Turks seized some of his outlying districts. He reproached his people and said to them: "*O people! Not all those you have sired are people, for people are only truly people so long as they defend themselves and repel the enemy from them, but the Turks have seized a part of your outlying districts. That is only because you abandoned warfare against your enemy and you lacked concern. But God has granted us dominion as a test of whether we will be grateful, and He will increase us, or will disbelieve and He will punish us, though we belong to a family of renown, for the source of rule belongs to God. When tomorrow comes, be present!*" They said they would and sought forgiveness.

He dismissed them, and when the next day came, he sent for those possessing royalty and the noblest commanders. He invited them and made the leaders of the people enter: he invited the Chief Magus, who was seated on a chair opposite his throne. Then Manushihr rose on his throne, with the nobles of the royal family and the noblest commanders rising to their feet. He said: "*Be seated! I stood up only to let you hear my words*". They sat down, and he continued:

O people! All creatures belong to the Creator; gratitude belongs to the One Who grants favors, as does submission to the All-Powerful. What exists is inescapable, for there is none weaker than a creature, whether he seeks or is sought; there is no one more powerful than a creator or anyone more powerful than He who has what He seeks [already] in His hand or one weaker than one who is in the hand of His seeker. Verily, contemplation is light, while forgetfulness is darkness, ignorance is misguidance. The first has come, and the last must join the first. Before us there came principles of which we are derivative— and what kind of continued existence can a derivative have after its purpose disappears?

Verily God has given us this dominion, and to Him belongs praise. We ask Him to inspire us with integrity, truth, and certainty. For the king has a claim on his subjects, and his subjects have a claim on him, whereas their obligation to the ruler is that they obey him, give him good counsel, and fight his enemy, the king's obligation to them is to provide them with their sustenance in its proper times, for they cannot rely on anything else, and that is their commerce. The king's obligation to his subjects is that he take care of them, treat them kindly, and not impose on them what they cannot do. If a calamity befalls them and diminishes their gains because a heavenly or earthly evil comes upon them, he should deduct from the land tax that which was diminished. If a calamity ruins them altogether, he should give them what they need to strengthen their rebuilding. Afterward, he may take from them to the extent that he does not harm them, for a year or two years. The relationship of the army to the king is of the same status as the two wings of a bird, for they are the wings of the king. Whenever a feather is cut off from a wing, that is a blemish in it. Likewise in the case of the king, for he is equally dependent on his wings and feathers. Moreover, the king must possess three qualities: first, that he be truthful and not lie, that he be bountiful and not be miserly, and that he be in control of himself in anger, for he is given power with his hand outstretched and the land tax coming to him.

He must not appropriate to himself what belongs to his troops and his subjects. He must be liberal in pardon, for there is no king more long-lasting than a king who pardons or one more doomed to perish than one who punishes. Moreover, a man who errs regarding pardon and pardons is better than one who errs in punishing. It is necessary that a king be cautious in a matter involving the killing of a person and his ruin. If a matter requiring punishment is brought to him regarding one of his officials, he must not show him favor. Let him bring him together with the complainant, and, if the claim of the wronged one is proved right against him, the sum is transferred from the official to him. But, if [the official] is unable to [pay], then the king should pay the sum for him and then return the official to his position, requiring that he make restitution for what he extorted. So much for my obligation to you. However, I will not pardon one who sheds blood wrongfully or cuts off a hand without right, unless the aggrieved one pardons. Therefore accept this from me [as my right]. The Turks have coveted you, so protect us and you will only protect yourselves. I have commanded arms and provisions for you. I am your partner in this matter, for I can only call myself king as long as I have obedience from you. Indeed, a king is a king only if he is obeyed. For if he is contradicted, he is ruled and is not a ruler. Whenever we are informed of disobedience, we will not accept it from the informer until we have verified it. If the report is true, so be it; if not, we will treat the informer as a disobedient one. Is not the finest act in the face of misfortune the acceptance of patience and rejoicing in the comfort of certainty? Whoever is slain in battle with the enemy, I hope for him the attainment of God's pleasure. The best of things is the submission to God's command, a rejoicing in certainty, and satisfaction in His judgment. Where is sanctuary from what exists? One can only squirm in the hand of the seeker. This world is only a journey for its inhabitants; they cannot loosen the knots of the saddle except in the other [world], and their self-sufficiency is in borrowed things. How good is gratitude toward the Benefactor and submission to the One to Whom judgment belongs! Who owes submission more to One above him than he who has no refuge except in Him, or any reliance except on Him! So trust in victory if your determination is that succor is from God. Be confident of achieving the goal if your intent is sincere. Know that this dominion will not stand except through uprightness and good obedience, suppression of the enemy, blocking the frontiers, justice to the subjects, and just treatment of the oppressed. Your healing is within you; the remedy in which there is no illness is uprightness, commanding good and forbidding evil. For there is no power except in God. Look to the subjects, for they are your food and drink. Whenever you deal justly with them, they desire prosperity, which will increase your land-tax revenues and will be made evident in the growth of your wealth. But, if you wrong the subjects, they will abandon cultivation and leave most of the land idle. This will decrease your land-tax revenues, and it will be made evident in the decrease of your wealth. Pledge yourself to deal justly with your subjects. Whatever rivers or overflows there are, of which the cost [of repair] is the ruler's, hurry to take care of it before it increases. But whatever is owed by the subjects of which they are unable to take care, lend it to them from the treasury of the land taxes. When the times of their taxes come due, take it back with their produce tax to the extent that it will not harm them: a quarter [of it] each year, or a third, or a half, so that it will not cause them distress.

This is my speech and my command, O Chief Magus! Adhere to these words, and hold onto what you have heard this day. Have you heard, O people? They said, "*Yes! You have spoken well, and we will act, God willing*" Then he ordered the food, and it was placed before them. They ate and drank, then left, thankful to him. His rule lasted one hundred and twenty years.

Hisham b. al-Kalbi claimed—in what has been transmitted to me from him — that al-Ra³ish b. Qays b. Sayfi b. Saba b. Yashjub b. Ya^crub b. Joktan (Qahtan) was one of the kings of Yemen after Ya^crub b. Joktan b. Eber b. Shelah and his brothers, and that the reign of al-Ra'ish in Yemen was during the days of Manushihr. He was only called al-Raish, although his name was al-Harith b. Abi Sadad, because of the booty he had plundered from people he raided and had taken to Yemen,- therefore he was called al-Ra'ish. He raided India, slaying there, taking captives, and plundering wealth; then he returned to Yemen. He traveled from there and attacked the two mountains of Tayyi then al-Anbar, then Mosul. He sent out his cavalry from Mosul under the command of one of his companions, a man called Shimr b. al-Ataf. He fought against the Turks of the land of Adharbaijan, which was in their hand. He slew the fighters and took their children captive. He engraved on two stones, which are known in Adharbaijan, what had happened on his campaign.

Imru al-Qays said about this:

Did he not inform you that Time is a demon, traitor to a pact, gobbling up men? He caused the "feathered one" to cease his banquets, though he had already ruled plains and mountains, And he attached Dhu Manar to the claws and set snares for the stranglers.

Dhu Manar, whom the poet mentioned, is Dhu Manar b. Radish, the king after his father, and his name was Abrahah b. al-Radish. He was called Dhu Manar only because he raided the lands of the west and penetrated them by land and by sea. He feared that his troops might lose their way on their return journey, so he built a lighthouse tower (*manar*) with which to guide them. The people of Yemen claimed that he sent his son, al-^cAbd b. Abrahah on his raid to the area of the most distant lands of the west, where he plundered and seized their wealth. He brought back to [his father] some *ndsnas*, which had wild and abominable faces. People were frightened of them and called him Dhu al-Adh^car (possessor of frightening things). He said further: Abrahah was one of their kings who penetrated deeply in the earth. I have mentioned the King of Yemen because I remembered the word of one who claimed al-Ra'ish was ruler in Yemen in the days of Manushir that the kings of Yemen were governors for the kings of Persia, which was their dominion before them.

(William M. Brinner, "The history of Al-Tabari: volume III: The Children of Israel", translated and annotated by William M. Brinner, (Editorial board: Ishan Abbas, C.E. Bosworth, Jacob Lassner, Franz Rosenthan, Ehsan Yarshater (general editor)). State University of New York Press, 1991. pp 22-29)

We bring the original Arabic of the last portion as well (accessible through various internet sites including www.alwaraq.net):

وقد زعم هشام بن الكلبي فدا حدثت عنه أن الرائش بن قيس بن صيفي ابن سبأ بن يشجب بن يعرب بن قحطان كان من ملوك اليمن بعد يعرب بن قحطان بن عابر بن شالخ وإخوته، وأن الرائش كان ملكه باليمن أيام ملك منوشهر، وأنه إنما سمي الرائش - واسمه الحارث بن أبي شدد - لغنيمة غنمها من قوم غزاهم فأدخلها اليمن، فسمي لذلك الرائش، وأنه غزا الهند فقتل بها وسبى وغنم الأموال، ورجع إلى اليمن ثم سار منها، فخرج على جبلي طيئ ثم على الأنبار، ثم على الموصل، وأنه وجه منها خيله وعليها رجل من أصحابه، يقال له: شمير بن العطاف، فدخل على الترك أرض أذربيجان وهي في أيديهم يومئذ، فقتل المقاتلة وسبى الذرية، وزير ما كان من مسيره في حجرين، فهما معروفان ببلاد أذربيجان. قال: وفي ذلك يقول امرؤ القيس:

ألم يخبرك أن الدهر غول ... خنور العهد يلتقم الرجالا
أزال عن المصانع ذا رياش ... وقد ملك السهولة والجبالا
وأنشبت في المخالب ذا منار ... وللزباد قد نصب الحبالا
قال: وذو منار الذي ذكره الشاعر هو ذو منار بن رائش، الملك بعد أبيه، واسمه أبرهة بن الرائش، وإنما سمي ذا منار لأنه غزا بلاد المغرب فوغل فيها برا وبحرا، وخاف على جيشه الضلال عند فقوله، فبنى المنار ليهدتوا بها. قال: ويزعم أهل اليمن أنه كان وجه ابنه العبد بن أبرهة في غزوته هذه إلى ناحية من أقاصي بلاد المغرب، فغنم وأصاب مالا وقدم عليه بنسنانس لهم خلق وحشية منكرة، فذعر الناس منهم، فسموه ذا الأذعار.
قال: فأبرهة أحد ملوكهم الذين توغلوا في الأرض؛ وإنما ذكرت من ذكرت من ملوك اليمن في هذا الموضوع لما ذكرت من قول من زعم أن الرائش كان ملكا باليمن أيام منوشهر، وأن ملوك اليمن كانوا عمالا لملوك فارس بها، ومن قبلهم كانت ولايتهم بها.

In another portion of Tabari we read:

“The account of the Kings of Yaman in the Days of Qabus, and After him, the age of Bahman. B. Isfandyar”

Abu Ja far says: As reported previously, some assert that Qabus lived in the age of Solomon the son of David. We have also mentioned the kings of the Yaman in the age of Solomon, and the story of Bilqis, the daughter of Ilsharah.

According to Hisham b. Muhammad al-Kalbi: After Bilqis, kingship over the Yaman went to Yasir b. Amr b. Ya fur who was called Yasir An'am. He was named Yasir An'am (the Gracious) because of the gifts he bestowed upon them, which strengthened their realm and their loyalty.

The people of the Yaman assert that he conducted raids westward until he reached a dried out river bed (*wadi*) called Wadi al-Raml which had never been reached by anybody before him. Once there, he found no passage beyond it, so abundant was the sand (*rami*). However, while staying there, the sand opened up. He then ordered a man of his house, 'Amr by name,

After him ruled a king {*tubba'*}, that is, Tiban As'ad, the father of Karib b. Malki Karib Tubba' b. Zayd b. Amr b. Tubba', that is, Dhu al-Adhar, the son of Abrahah Tubba' Dhi al-Manar b. al-Ra'ish b. Qays b. Sayfi b. Saba'. He was called al-Ra'id.

This king lived in the days of Bishtasb and Ardashir Bahman b. Isfandiyar b. Bishtasb. He emerged from the Yaman on the road taken by al-Ra'ish (and travelled) until he reached two mountains of the Tayyi'. He then marched toward al-Anbar, but when he reached al-Hirah—this was at night—he became confused [taHayyara) and stopped, and that place was named al-Hirah. He left some men there of the tribes of the Azd, Lakhm Judham, Amilah, and Quda'ah. They built it up and remained there. Later they were joined by people from the tribes of the Tayyi', Kalb, Sakkun, BalHarith b. Kacb and Iyad. The king advanced to al-Anbar, then to Mosul, and then to Adharbayjan, where he encountered the Turks. He put them to flight, slaying their fighting men and capturing the children. Following this, he returned to the Yaman where he spent many years; the kings held him in awe and respect, and they brought him gifts.

A messenger of the king of India came to him with gifts and presents of silk, musk, aloe and other precious products of In-dia. He saw things the like of which he had not seen before, and said, "My, is all that I see found in your country?" The messenger replied, "Bless you, some of what you see is available in our country; most of it is from China". The messenger then described China to the king: its vastness, fertility, and the extent of its borders. The king swore to conquer it. He set out at the head of the Himyar along the coast, until he reached al-Raka'ik and the wearers of black headgear. He sent one of his men—a man called Thabit—with a large force to China. However, Thabit was wounded; so the king (himself) proceeded until he entered China. He killed its defenders and plundered what he found there. They assert that his expedition to China, his stay there, and the return took seven years, and that he left in Tibet twelve thousand horsemen from Himyar. They are the people of Tibet, and assert nowadays that they are Arabs. They are Arabs in constitution and pigmentation.. According to 'Abdallah b. Ahmad al-Marwazi—his father —Sulayman—Abdallah—Ishaq b. Yahya—Musa b. Talhah: A king [tubba'] set out with a few Arabs until they lost their way outside (what is now) Kufah. It became one of the stations where some infirm men remained. It was called Hirah because they had lost their way [taHayyur). The king proceeded on his way but later returned to them. In the meantime, they had built up the place as a permanent settlement. The king left for the Yaman but they stayed on, and among them were people from all the Arab tribes such as Banu Lihyan, Hudhayl, Tamim, Ju'fl, Tayyf, and Kalb.

(Moshe Perlmann (trans), *The History of Al-Tabari. Vol IV. The Ancient Kingdoms.* (Editorial board: Ishan Abbas, C.E. Bosworth, Jacob Lassner, Franz Rosenthan, Ehsan Yarshater (general editor)), State University of New York Press, Albany, 1989

Ba'lami also sees this myth during the era of Manucehr and Afrasiyab (legendary Iranian mythical characters of the Shahnameh), the era before the Prophet Moses. Manucehr and Afrasiyab make peace, however after the death of Afrasiyab, the Turks cross Jeyhun and occupy some Iranain lands.

The Persian Muslim historian Ahmad ibn Mihammad Ibn Miskawayah (d. 1030 A.D) also states in his *Kitab Tajarib al-Umam* (here we just bring the translation):

[Manucehr and Rayish ibn Qays](#)

And in his [Manucehr's] days, Alrayish bin Qays bin Sifi bin Yashjub bin Ya'rub bin Qahtaan, who was a king from Yemen, started a military campaign. And the name of Alrayish was Alhaarith. He invaded India, and he collected great booty. He gave authority to a man of his circle, who was known as Shamar ben Alattaaf. Then he entered against the Turks from Azerbaijan, which was during that time in the hands of Turks, and he killed and enslaved and collected booty. And after him, DhuManaar ben Alrayish started a campaign. He was called DhuManaar (lit. "he of the Minaret") because he invaded the lands of the Maghreb(West) and he extended in it by land and sea, and he worried about his army from destruction after his return, so he built a Minaret (i.e. light-house) to guide them. Then he sent his son to the furthest parts of the Maghreb, where he collected booty and got some riches and enslaved some people with ugly distasteful looks -- that some people where horrified and called him DhuAlAthaar ("he of the horrors"). I only mentioned them here because of the connection with the mention of Manucehr. The Persians claim that the kings of Yemen were subordinated to the kings of Persia, and that Alrayish was invading the Turks and others on the behalf of Manucehr. And the Arabs deny this, and claim that their king was no subordinate to any one.

The coming of Moses in the era of Manucehr

And in the era of Manucehr, there appeared Moses (peace be upon him)...
(Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Miskawayah, "Kitab Tajarib al-Umam", Baghdad, yuTlab min Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1965.)

Thus as we can see, these stories have no historical basis and are in the realm of myth making. Ibn Khaldun states with regards to Himyar myths: **All this information is remote from the truth. It is rooted in baseless and erroneous assumptions. It is more like fiction of story tellers.**

Before we mention the whole statement by Ibn Khaldun, since Tabari and ibn Miskawayah mentioned the Turanians and Al-Tijan mentions that fictional 'Ubayd heard these stories from the Persians, we should mention something about the Turanians. One reason to do so is the fact that the Turanians were an Iranic group themselves and thus these Himyarite myths as well as the Avesta Turanians have nothing to do with Turks (Altaic) speakers.

Herodotus mentions Scythians attacking Media (Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and Tehran, Isfahan) before the Achaemenid era. And it is known that the Achaemenids also fought the Scythians. The Scythians are well known to be of Iranian origin:

“...of Indo-European stock belonging to...the Iranian group, often called the Scythian group of peoples...they were akin to the ancient Medes, Parthians and Persians. Their language was related to that of the Avesta...”

[Tadesuz Sulimirski, *The Sarmatians*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1970, p.22]

A people called Turanian are mentioned in Avesta and some scholars have claimed that the episodes between Turanians and Arya tribe in the Avesta parallel the battles of Scythians and Medes/Achaemenids. That is they have related the Turanians with the Scythians. Chief among these are the Ossetian scholar Vasily Abaev.

Professor C.E. Bosworth explains:

“In early Islamic times Persians tended to identify all the lands to the northeast of Khorasan and lying beyond the Oxus with the region of Turan, which in the *Shahnama* of Ferdowsi is regarded as the land allotted to Fereydu'n's son Tur. The denizens of Turan were held to include the Turks, in the first four centuries of Islam essentially those nomadizing beyond the Jaxartes, and behind them the Chinese (see Kowalski; Minorsky, “Turan”). Turan thus became both an ethnic and a geographical term, but always containing ambiguities and contradictions, arising from the fact that all through Islamic times the lands immediately beyond the Oxus and along its lower reaches were the homes not of Turks but of Iranian peoples, such as the Sogdians and Khwarezmians.” (Encyclopædia Iranica, "CENTRAL ASIA: The Islamic period up to the mongols", C. Edmund Bosworth)

Professor Edward A. Allworth, Emeritus Professor of Turco-Soviet Studies at Columbia University remarks: “The Iranian tribes (Massagetae and others) east and northeast of the Persian empire, who disappeared without leaving a trace, were nomadic, as were originally most, if not all, of the Iranian people as well as those known as Soghdians, Khwarazmians, and Sakai. They were generally called, in the Persian national tradition, "Turan," as opposed to Iran, and were always considered enemies of the sedentary Persians. After the arrival of the Turks in those areas, the term Turan was ascribed by the Persians to them also, as the Turks played the same dangerous, often disastrous, historical role as had the Iranian nomadic tribes.”

(Edward A Allworth, “*Central Asia: A Historical Overview*”, Duke University Press, 1994. pp 86.)

Prof. Gherardo Gnoli: “Iranian tribes that also keep on recurring in the Yasht, Airyas, Tuiryas, Sairimas, Sainus and Dahis”. (G. Gnoli, *Zoroaster's time and homeland*, Naples 1980).

According to Prof. Mary Boyce, in the Farvardin Yasht "In it (verses 143-144) are praised the fravashis of righteous men and women not only among the Aryas (as the “Avestan” people called themselves), but also among the Turiyas, Sairimas, Sainus and Dahis; and the personal names, like those of the people, all seem Iranian character". (M. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*. 3V. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991. (*Handbuch Der Orientalistik/B. Spuler*)).

And again according to Bosworth who quotes a Shahnameh scholar:

"Hence as Kowalski has pointed out, a Turkologist seeking for information in the *Shahnama* on the primitive culture of the Turks would definitely be disappointed." (C.E. Bosworth, "Barbarian Incursions: The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World." In *Islamic Civilization*, Edited by D. S. Richards. Oxford, 1973. pg 2)

The name Turk itself might be related to Turanian. However Altaic speaking Turks are distinct from the Avesta and Shahnameh (itself based on Avesta and Pahlavi myths) Turanians.

"It is possible that in Islamic times the Turks were really equated with a Tur people of an earlier age, since the designation 'Turk' is probably a plural Tur-k, with the word 'Tur' designating some totem among the Ur-Turks of Central Asia. Hence Turkic Tur-k would equal Iranian Tur-an, also plural. The history of the word 'Turan', scanty though it is, however, must be investigated. Although the Tura in the Avestan Age were most probably Iranian, perhaps the memory of the struggles with aborigines played a part in the development of the epic. Later, of course, the Turks conveniently took the role of the great enemies of Iran. The extent of the influence of the Iranian epic is shown by the Turks who accepted it as their own history as well as that of Iran..."

(R.N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia: The pre-Islamic History of One of the World's Great Civilizations*, World Publishing Company, New York, 1963. Pg 40-41)

Thus Kashgari who mentions Alp-Tongra and equates to the Avesta Afrasiyab is actually trying to equate Iranian myths with possibly those of Turks. However, scholars are clear that the Avesta/Shahnameh Turanians are not Turks (Altaic speakers) but Iranians:

The Shahnameh scholar Olga M. Davidson also states:

The Turanians, the prime enemies of the Iranians in the *Shahnama*, are themselves paradoxically Iranians from the standpoint of Avesta. As the studies of Nyberg have shown the institutions represented as Turanians in the Avesta are thoroughly Iranian, but they are distinct in both form and content from the institutions represented as orthodox Iranians. Pictured in the Avesta as barbaric and predatory nomads, the Turanians seem to have idiosyncratic cult, especially of vayu, the wind-god warriors, and Anahita, the river-goddess of fertility.

(Olga M. Davidson, "The Crown-Bestower in the Iranian Book of Kings", Brill Archive, 1985. Pg 83).

Igor M. Diakonoff also connects the Turanians with Iranian Scythians. He states about the Avesta legends:

"Aryoshana was later conquered by a chief of the Tura nomad (Turanians, one of the Scythian-Sacae tribes, also Iranians, perhaps Khoresmians?), called Frangrasyan (12).

Note 12: In later legends he is called Afrasyab. The usage, widespread even in the twentieth century, of applying the demonination “Turanian” to Turkic-speaking people, is an older error”

(Igor Mikhailovich Diakonov (translated by Alexandar Kirjanov), “Early antiquity”, University of Chicago Press, 1991. Pg 383)

And as mentioned by Dr. Yarshater

The names of Turanian heroes leaves no doubt that the Turanians also were an Aryan people. In post-Avestan tradition they were thought to inhabit the region north of the Oxus, the river separating them from the Iranians. Their presence, and their incessant wars with the Iranians, help to define the latter as a distinct nation, proud of their land and ready to spill their blood in its defence.

The continuation of nomadic invasions on the north-eastern borders in historical time kept the memory of the Turanians alive. After the 6th century, when the Turks, who had been pushed westward by other tribes, became neighbors of Iran and invaded Iranian lands, they were identified with the Turanians. Hence the confusion of the two in Islamic sources, including *Shah-nama*, and the frequent reference to Afrasiyab as “king of Turks”. Concern for the safety of the Iranian borders and the continuation of the kingdom finds eloquent expression in the national history and is unifying element in epic cycles.

(Ehsan Yarshater, "Iranian National History," in The Cambridge History of Iran 3(1)(1983), 408-409)

And all the Avesta Turanian names as well virtually all the Turanian Shahnameh names of Turanians have clear Iranian etymology. And a detailed etymology of the Iranic Turanian names have been given Professor Mayrhofer.(M. Mayrhofer, Die avestischen Namen,IPNB I/1(Vienna 1977))

Thus it is possible as Abaev has stated, that the Scythians and Massagatae and other East Iranian tribes are to be identified with the Avesta Turanians. Memories of the fight between Achaemenids/Medes vs. the Scythians/Massagatae might have been mythified as the form in these stories, if we are able to take anything from these legends.

But the Yemenese interjections into these myths are from the early centuries of Islam (probably from 9th century if not later) where rivalry between Iranians and Arabs was taking its height (Shuabbiyah) and various myths were intermixed in order to prove superiority of one group over the other (Shuabbiyah movement).

Here we bring the whole quote from Ibn Khaldun (original Arabic is readily available on the internet) who has already rejected any possibility of warriors from Yemens coming into Iranians lands such Azerbaijan or Soghd (note by the time of Ibn Khaldun Soghdians were almost extinct and here he makes a minor mistake since Altaic Turks had replaced Soghdians during his time):

The history of the Tubba's, the king of the Yemen and of the Arabian Peninsula, as it is generally transmitted, is another example of silly statements by historians. It is said that from their homes in the Yemen, the Tubba's used to raid Ifriqiyah and the Berbers of the Maghrib. Afriqus b. Qays b. Sayfi, one of their great early kings who lived in the time of Moses or somewhat earlier, is said to have raided Ifriqiyah. He caused a great slaughter among the Berbers. He gave them the name of Berbers when he heard their jargon and asked what that barbarah was. This gave them the name which has remained with them since that time. When he left Maghrib, he is said to have concentrated some Himyar tribes there. They remained there and mixed with the native population. Their descendants are the Sinajah and the Jutamah. This led al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi, and others to make the statement that the Sinajah and the Kutamah belong to the Himyar. The Berber genealogists do not admit this, and they are right. Al-Mas'udi also mentions that one of the Himyar kings after Afriqus, Dhu l-Adh'ar, who lived in the time of Solomon, raided the Maghrib and forced it into submission. Something similar is mentioned by al-Mas'udi concerning his son and successor, Yasir. He is said to have reached the Sand River in the Maghrib and to have been unable to find passage through it because of the great mass of sand. Therefore, he returned.

Likewise, it is said that the last Tubba', As'ad Abu Karib, who lived in the time of the Persian Kayyanid king Yastab, ruled Mosul and Azerbaijan. He is said to have met and routed the Turks and to have caused a great slaughter among them. Then he raided them again a second and a third time. After that, he is said to have sent three of his sons on raids, (one) against the country of Fars, one against the country of Soghdians, one of the Turkish nations of Transoxania, and one against the country of Rum (Byzantines). The first brother took possession of the country up to Samarkand and crossed the desert into China. There, he found his second brother who had raided the Soghdians and had arrived in China before him. The two together caused a great slaughter in China and returned together with their booty. They left some Himyar tribes in Tibet. They have been there down to this time. The third brother is said to have reached Constantinople. He laid siege to it and forced the country of the Rum into submission. Then, he found his second brother who raided the Soghdians and had arrived in China before him. The two together caused a great slaughter in China and returned together with their booty. They left some Himyar tribes in Tibet. They have been there down to this time. The third brother is said to have reached Constantinople. He laid siege to it and forced the country of the Rum into submission. Then, he returned.

All this information is remote from the truth. It is rooted in baseless and erroneous assumptions. It is more like fiction of story tellers. The realm of Tubba's was restricted to the Arabian peninsula. Their home and seat was San'a' in the Yemen. The Arabian Peninsula is surrounded by the ocean on three sides: the Indian Ocean on the south, the Persian Gulf jutting out of the Indian to Basrah on the east, and the Red Sea jutting out of the Indian Ocean to Suez in Egypt on the west. This can be seen on the map. There is no way from the Yemen to the Maghrib except via Suez. The distance between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean is two days' journey or less. It is unlikely that the distance could be traversed by a great ruler with a large army unless he controlled that region. This, as a rule, is impossible. In the region there were the Amalekites and

Canaan in Syria, and, in Egypt, the Copts. Later on, the Amalekites took position of Egypt, and the Israelites of Syria. There is, however, no report that the Tubba's ever fought against one of these nations or they had possession of any part the region. Furthermore, the distance from the Yemen to the Maghrib is great, and an army requires much food and doffer. Soldiers travelling in regions other than their own have to requisition grain and livestock and to plunder the countries they pass through. As a rule, such a procedure does not yield enough food and fodder. On the other hand, if they attempted to take along enough provisions from their own region, they would not have enough animals for transportation. So, their whole line of march necessarily takes them through regions they must take possession of and force into submission in order to obtain provisions from them. Again, it would be most unlikely and impossible assumption that such an army could pass through all those nations without disturbing them, obtain its provisions by peaceful negotiations. This shows that all such information is silly or fictitious.

Mention of the allegedly impassable Sand River has never been heard in the Maghrib, although the Maghrib has often been crossed and its roads have been explored by travelers and raiders at all times and in every direction. Because of the unusual character of the story, there is much eagerness to pass it on.

With regard to the supposed raid of the Tubba's against the countries of the East and the land of the Turks, it must be admitted that the line of march in this case is wider than the (narrow) passage at Suez. The distance, however, is greater, and the Persian and Byzantine nations are interposed on the way to the Turks. There is no report that the Tubba's ever took possession of the countries of the Persians and Byzantines. They merely fought the Persians on the border of the 'Iraq and of the Arab countries between al-Bahrayn (Bahrain) and al-Hirah, which were border regions common to both nations. It would, however, ordinarily have been impossible for the Tubba's to traverse the land of the Persians on their way to raid the countries of the Turks and Tibets, because of the nations that are interposed on the way to the Turks, because of the need for food and fodder, as well as the great distance mentioned before. All information to this effect is silly and fictitious. Even if the way this information is transmitted were sound, the points mentioned would cast suspicion upon it. All the more then must the information be suspect since the manner in which it has been transmitted is not sound. In connection with Yathrib (Medina) and the Aws and Khazraj, Ibn Ishaq says the last Tubba' travelled eastward to the 'Iraq and Persia, but a raid by the Tubba's against the countries of the Turks and Tibet is in no way confirmed by the established facts. Assertion to this effect should not be trusted; all such information should be investigated and checked with sound norms. The results will be that it will be most beautifully be demolished. (Ibn Khaldun, "The Muqaddimah an introduction to History", Translated by Franz Rosenthan; Edited by N.J. Dawood. Princeton University Press, 1989.)

So to conclude. We have two books in three manuscript, the oldest being a copy of a 1622 A.D. manuscript called the Akhbar 'Ubayd and Kitab al-Tijan. They talk about mythical Yemenese Kings battling China, Persia, Iran, Turks and etc. One of the books called Akhbar 'Ubayd has a fictional dialogue between Mua'wiyah and 'Ubayd about Yemenese Kings who ruled for 225 years named Ra'esh. Ra'esh does battle against

Turks in Azerbaijan and defeats them and ‘Ubayd in the story states that he heard it from the Persians. The characters Ra’esh lived before the Prophet Solomon and that of Ra’ed during the time of Qobad (in Tabari during the time around Bahman Ibn Esfandyar both Qobad and Bahman the son of Isfandyar being mythical characters). Scholars today agree that both these books Akhbar ‘Ubayd and Kitab al-Tijan are myths and we know at the time of Solomon for example, there was no Altaic speakers in the area. Looking at Persian sources (which the fictional ‘Ubayd of Akhbar ‘Ubayd said he heard from), the events of Ra’esh and Ra’ed occur during the time of pre-historic/mythical Shahnameh characters. They are connected to the Turanians, who if historical, are to be identified with the Iranian Scythians. As shown, there were never any Yemenese warriors in NW Iran fighting Turks and all these stories are fictional as noted by Ibn Khaldun. The actual history of the region goes from Iranian Medes, to Achamenids, Seleucids, Parthians and Sassanids. Then the area becomes part of the caliphate (with occasional intrusions by Khazars which did not have any significant impact). One the area was stable, it comes under various Arab and Iranic dynasties such as the Caliphate, Sajids, Shaddadids, Shirwanshahs and etc. It is only with the Seljuq era that Altaic Turks start settling the area in a noticeable number, however the real influx of Turks occurs during the Mongol invasion where either large number of Turks were pushed in the area by fleeing the Mongols or became part of the Mongol army whose bulk was Turkic. By the mid Safavid era, it appears that most of the area was Turkified. Scholars who want to study the actual history of the area during the time of Nezami Ganjavi can consult this article and the magnificent Nozhat al-Majales which is a clear mirror of the culture of that time.

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Appendix C: Some important neglected sources in the study of Nezami Ganjavi

We have mentioned the fact that Persian poets and sources help each other in mutual understanding.

For example, the Nozhat al-Majales:

We have already discussed this book in this article. However the book is important for several reasons for the study of Nezami and Khaqani and other authors. One is the fact quatrains from 24 poets from Ganja alone are brought about in this book. The quatrains of Nezami Ganjavi in this book has not been analyzed in detail.

The second is that while some authors claim there is not much about Nezami Ganjavi's biography, this book can easily fill lots of the gap. Because of its sections on the cultural life, games, music and overall cultura of the area, this book provides a complete mirror of the cultura which nezami Ganjavi thrived in. Similarly is the case of the book Safina of Tabriz which is written about 1 century after Nezami but provides a detailed view of the Iranian cultural life of the area.

Without a doubt, Khaqani Sherwani and Nezami Ganjavi are two poets tht use imagery and symbolic language more than other poets. We have used Khaqani for example to elucidate some of Nezami Ganjavi's verses and bring the meaning of the words into their context.

The Encyclopedia Iranica states:

"Influence and Reception of Kāqāni. Kāqāni's literary background consisted both of classical Arabic poetry (e.g. in the autobiographical passage in the Toḥfat al-'Erāqayn (p. 219) already referred to, he mentions al-Ma'arri's (973-1058) Saqṭ al-zand) and the great Ghaznavid poets (especially, 'Onṣori, Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salmān and Sanā'i). His own poetry, in particular his daring imagery, was to have a momentous influence, first of all on his younger fellow countryman Neẓāmi Ganjavi, and through the latter on Persian poetry in general. His qaṣidas influenced both those of poets of the late 12th and early 13th century, such as Šams-al-Din Ṭabasi (Introduction, pp. xxxii-xxxiii) and Sayf-al-Din Esfarangi (Introduction, pp. 46-47) and later on, in the 16th century, with the new flowering of the qaṣida in Indo-Persian poetry, those of poets such as Fayzi and 'Orfi. This influence appears, amongst others, in the qaṣidas many of these poets wrote in response (jawāb) to his poems (see also above). Moreover, the inclusion of many of Kāqāni's qaṣidas in a large number of anthologies from the centuries after his death proves that they were still read, although, as we may gather from the number of qaṣidas

included, he was not as popular as his contemporary Anwari (d. not long after 1164-65) who also excelled in this verse-form. Given their rich vocabulary and ingenuous images, Kāqāni's poems proved, from early on, a challenge to their readers, and hence required commentaries for their elucidation" (Anna Livia Beelaert, "Khaqani Sherwani" in Encyclopedia Iranica). There are of course many other sources including Qur'an, Hadeeth, books on princely advices, Kalila o Demna and etc. However, it is unfortunate that Nozhat al-Majales, and the poets mentioned (Khaqani, Asadi Tusi, Ferdowsi, Gorgani, Sanai) and others have been neglected. Khaqani himself as noted had a momentous influence on Nezami and and at the same time, he was influenced by Ghaznavid era poets and Sanai. Or for example, Asadi Tusi provides dialogues between the hero Garshasp and the Greek/Indian and other sages (sometimes very similar topics as Eskandarnama and in the same fashion were a hero tries to learn from the sages). With the advent of digital tools and computers, one can easily search for similar words and phrases in the database of all these poets and mutually understand them better. For example, there is no doubt that Nezami Ganjavi had a great knowledge of the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi and influenced by the Shahnameh. So a Shahnameh scholar needs to study Nezami Ganjavi, Pahlavi manuscripts, Avesta, etc. and a Nezami Ganjavi scholar needs to study Khaqani, Nozhat al-Majales and Shahnameh.

Appendix D: On the etymology of the name Axsartan

The etymology of Axsartan, Aghsartan, Axsetan (Persian: اخستان) had not been properly studied by scholars until recently. However Minorsky had pointed out the name is probably of Ossetian origin. Recent advances in philology seems to have confirmed Minorsky's theory and shown the Old Iranian origin of this title/name. (Agustí Alemany, *Sources on the Alans*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2000.)

9.9. Aġsart'an

PN [m.] S Aġsart'an Q 308-328 (B 189-206), etc. — P Name of two kings of Kaxet'i, Aġsart'an I (1058-84) & Aġsart'an II (1102-5), as well as of other persons (cf. NB 12: Arm. *Asxart'an*, Arab. *Aḡsarṭān*). — I From an OIran. *xšaθra- > Oss.D. *æxsaræ* I. ^a*xsar* "bravery, victory, power" + OIran. suffix *-ana-; cf. among others the names Ξαρθανος (Tanais III^p) and Ξαρταμος (Olbia), as well as Oss.D. *Æxsærtæg* I. ^a*Xsærtæg* < OIran. *xšaθraka-, the name of a Nart hero (OЭ III 80; NB 12; Slav. I 143, 172-174, 191; OЯФ I 188-189; Oчн. 309; PN 122; Abaev 1956:441; Minorsky 1943-46:560; 1958:67; Perihanian 1966:24 n. 10; Sarm. 94; ИЭСОЯ IV 224-225, 229-230).

My God's blessing be upon his Prophets, Saints and Angels.