

Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse¹

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One of the literary innovations credited to the Indo-Persian poet, Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (d. 1325), is his use of recent historical events and his own contemporaries, instead of stories and legendary characters from the past, as the subjects of epic and romantic *masnavis*.² Furthermore, it seems culturally anachronistic for a poet who was renowned for his devotion to his sufi *pir*, Nizam al-Din Awliya (d. 1325), to produce a prodigious amount of dynastic history in verse that mainly deals with the power struggles and conquests of the various Khalji and Tughlaq sultans of medieval Delhi. Both the sultan and sufi master are dedicatees in many of Amir Khusraw's works, pointing to the overlapping spheres of their influence on the society of the time.³ Written in the *masnavi* form, chiefly used for mythological and romantic tales, the subject matter of his courtly narrative verse was ostensibly current or fairly recent historical episodes that were connected with the patron of the work and that the poet had witnessed himself. Even though Amir Khusraw's works provide a wealth of information for historians of the Sultanate period, they tend to be neglected by literary critics because they defy all the established typologies of form and genre in classical Persian literature;⁴ in addition, "attention to synchronous historical relationships can cause the text's participation in a diachronic *literary* history to be overlooked."⁵ Rather than taking up the questions of Amir Khusraw's value as an historian and/or poet,⁶ however, this paper will place his works in the larger context of (pseudo)-historical writing in verse that ultimately derives its inspiration from two major poets of the *masnavi* form, Firdawsi (d. 1019-20) and Nizami (d. 1209), and raise issues such as the poet's choice of literary genre and form and the nature of hybrid texts.

In post-Mongol Persian literature, the *ghazal* and *masnavi* forms were increasingly valorized over the *qasidah*, which until then had been the primary form for panegyric poetry, often containing much historical information.⁷ With the shift in the patterns of literary culture, there was an interest on the one hand in mystical writing, and on the other hand in the production of historical texts, both in prose and verse. The practice of writing versified history partly derives from "[t]he love of historical narrative and desire for annals of their own times evinced by the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers [that] continued down to the days of Timur and his successors."⁸ This trend continued through the Safavid and Mughal period right down to this day.⁹ Instead of being occasional like the *qasidah*, the historical *masnavi* encompassed the larger arena of the military conquests and kingly virtues of a poet's patron and/or other personages of his dynasty. The popularity of long historical narratives, impossible in any other form, and the prestige of Firdawsi's and Nizami's works promoted the adoption of the *masnavi* form by poets at the expense of the *qasidah*.¹⁰ The *masnavi* as epic was perfected in the hands of Firdawsi with the *Shahnamah* and as a romance in court circles, beginning with 'Unsurī at the Ghaznavid court and then at the Seljuq

court with Fakhr al-Din Gurgani, culminating in the works of Nizami.¹¹ But these monolithic categories of epic and romance are not rigid and should be used cautiously, especially in dealing with texts that are consciously trying to challenge the generic expectations of their readers.

Firdawsi's *Shahnamah* enjoyed a special status in Iranian courtly culture as not just a mythical but a historical narrative as well. The powerful effect that this text came to have on the poets of this period is partly due to the value that was attached to it as a legitimizing force, especially for new rulers in the Eastern Islamic world:

In the Persianate tradition the *Shahnama* was viewed as more than literature. It was also a political treatise, as it addressed deeply rooted conceptions of honor, morality, and legitimacy. Illustrated versions of it were considered desirable as expressions of the aspirations and politics of ruling elites in the Iranian world.¹²

There were three ways that poets received the *Shahnamah* and modeled themselves after it.¹³ First, poets attempted to continue the chronology to a later, usually the poet's, period, such as the *Zafarnamah* of the Ilkhanid historian Hamdullah Mustawfi (d. 1334-35), which deals with Iranian history from the Islamic conquest to the Mongols and is longer than Firdawsi's work,¹⁴ and the *Shahanshabnamah* (or *Changiznamah*) of Ahmad Tabrizi in 1337-38 which is a history of the Mongols written for Abu Sa'īd. Second, poets who versified the history of a contemporary ruler for reward, such as the *Ghazannamah* written in 1361-62 by Nur al-Din ibn Shams al-Din. Third, heroes not treated in the *Shahnamah* and those who have minor roles in it became the subjects of their own epics, such as the eleventh century *Garsbasnamah* by Asadi.¹⁵ Over time, it became an important ingredient of the political ambitions of a ruler in the Persianate lands to not only commission a copy of the *Shahnamah*, but also have his own epic, which allowed court poets to attempt to reach the level of Firdawsi. Here, the first two types of texts will be discussed, the value of which should not be underestimated as noted by Christine Woodhead:

Thus, as with any piece of historical writing, a *sehname* can be evaluated as a historical source on two levels: firstly, for its contribution to the store of basic factual knowledge of a period, and secondly, for the light it sheds, intentionally or otherwise, on contemporary thought and politics.¹⁶

The other source of inspiration for poets writing dynastic history in verse was Nizami, the most admired, illustrated and imitated writer of romantic *masnavis*:

There was a whole series of poets who strove to acquire fame by composing a *khamseh* [quintet], but they seldom got further than writing one or two poems. The fact that so few of these have been preserved—and even then often in single copies—undoubtedly goes to prove their

weakness. We must moreover remember that the harvest of epical works surpasses that of the lyrical quality. More numerous and at the same time more successful are the poetical tales of smaller compass.¹⁷

According to De Bruijn, “Nizami, through the models in the *matnavi* form which he created, produced a series of types, each different from the other although there were certain features which they all had in common.”¹⁸ The issues of kingship and ethics dealt with in Nizami’s poem *Iskandarnamah* made it a particularly appealing text for poets writing dynastic poetry. At times, the two traditions of imitating Firdawsi and Nizami overlapped, and the poet’s own statements in the introductory portion of the *masnavi*, which must be read carefully because he might claim to be inspired by a particular poet’s work while creating something of a different nature, as well as the meter of the poem assist in tracing the genealogy of a text.¹⁹

Among pre-Mughal Persian poets in India, beginning with Amir Khusraw, the production of versified history was a trend independent of the Ilkhanid one, and according to Aziz Ahmad, the genre was primarily an epic of conquest,²⁰ even though with the Mughals both traditions became equally prevalent. Amir Khusraw, an important figure in the Delhi court and active participant in the Chishtiyah Sufi order of his time, was an extremely prolific author in poetry and prose.²¹ For the two chief poetic forms that he employed, *ghazal* and *masnavi*, Khusraw took as his models Sa’di (d. 1292) and Nizami, respectively. Khusraw wrote two of his historical *masnavis* before he “conceived the plan of rivaling, and, if possible, of surpassing the great master.”²² He wrote an entire *khamsab* in imitation of Nizami between 1299 and 1302 for his patron Sultan Ala al-Din Khalji. In addition, he wrote five other *masnavis* on historical and Indian themes, as well as one historical chronicle in prose.²³ These works were often produced quickly and presented to a patron whose power was not always stable. Amir Khusraw’s role as a witness to the events of his time endows him with a special authority as noted by modern scholars,²⁴ but equally significant is his contribution in the creation of an independent Indian Persian literature that broke from the Iranian tradition without losing its ties to the older canon of literature. Along with Firdawsi and Nizami’s works, Amir Khusraw’s *khamsab* also came to enjoy tremendous prestige, and multiple copies of it were produced at Persianate courts.²⁵ His historical *masnavis* had a more subtle influence on the writing of narrative verse; eventually, the poet influenced the very tradition that he had challenged with his own innovation.

Amir Khusraw’s first *masnavi*, the *Qiran al-sa’dayn* (The Conjunction of Two Auspicious Stars), was completed in 1289 in three months and has been described as “a picture composed of figures painted separately and independently and then put together, with a suitable background, to represent the scene the artist wanted to depict.”²⁶ The plot of this work is rather thin and describes the quarrel and reconciliation between Bughra Khan and his son (and Amir Khusraw’s patron) Sultan Mu’izz al-Din Kayqubad, but this is interspersed with vivid descriptions of Delhi and its buildings, the Indian seasons and a Mongol raid, among other noncourtly topics. Each section has a heading and is interspersed with *ghazals*.²⁷ In an appendix to the work, he describes the details of his creative endeavor and repeatedly valorizes truth (*rasti*)

over lies (*durugh*), a theme to which he would return later.²⁸ His second work in this genre was a shorter and less ambitious work, *Miftah al-futub* (Key to Victories), completed two years later, that describes four victories of Jalal al-Din Firuz Khalji within the course of one year. Here, he again speaks of writing the truth:

When I considered lying,
Truth came out and grasped my hand.
My heart did not rejoice in this desire
That I play a crooked lyre in a truthful mode.
Although the falsehood of verse is the ornament of speech,
But truth is a wonderful thing.²⁹

The poet candidly states that he is not engaging in writing history as such, but rather combining recent events in a consciously literary mode. His third historical poem, *Duval Rani Khizr Khan*,³⁰ was completed in 1316 after he had written his *khamsab* and is probably the best known and most remarkable work among his historical poems. The theme of this romance is as fabulous as any fiction, describing the tragic love of prince Khizr Khan, the son of Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji, for the Hindu princess Devaldi (which Khusraw changed to Duval Rani), daughter of Raja Karan of Gujarat. Mirza says that the “facts of history narrated with great fidelity have been woven round with such a rich mass of fresh fancies and variegated imagery that the whole forms a peerless specimen of the masterpieces of romantic literature.”³¹ Amir Khusraw was doing for Indo-Persian literature what Nizami had done for Persian literature:

Further, on the model of *Layli and Majnun*
[I] composed the *Duval Rani Khizr Khan*.
Since this story needs to be told
There is no harm in narrating it.³²

Here the inspiration from Nizami’s romance is combined with his engagement with historical episodes from his own time. The poet’s obsession with everything Indian is already evident here, something that would be most fully developed in his next work, *Nuh sipibr* (Nine Spheres), completed three years later. The latter is a literary *tour de force*: it is divided into nine sections of unequal length, each section in a different meter and concluded by a *ghazal*. The different sections are devoted to praising Sultan Mubarak Shah and the birth of his son Muhammad, his building activities, with the third sphere devoted to an extensive eulogy on all aspects of Indian culture. Mohammad Wahid Mirza, the editor of this text, comments on Amir Khusraw’s resourcefulness:

Mubarak Shah’s reign was a very short one and the poet had really very scanty material to build up a glorious epic around it, but the few political events on which the poet could lay his hands, and on the score of which he could lavish praise upon that hapless monarch, have been manipulated with great skill and the poet has supplied, with great care and fidelity, many minor details which we could not trace in other works of history.³³

In his last *masnavi*, the *Tughlaqnamah*, written at the end of his life in 1320, Amir Khusraw returned to the realm of politics. This work is a dramatic and thrilling narrative of the convert Khusraw Khan’s bloody usurpation of the throne from his master Sultan Qutb al-Din Mubarak Shah, his subsequent defeat by Ghiyas al-Din Tughlaq, and the re-establishment of proper Islamic rule.

Most critics have deprecated Amir Khusraw's efforts at writing history dismissing it as insincere encomiastic verse, such as M. Habib's dismissive remarks:

[T]he dull records of one of the most stupid reigns of mediæval India was hardly the proper theme for Khusrau's muse ... Khusrau, however, was prevented from making a poetic use of his material by the very purpose of his work; things had to be surveyed from the official, not the artistic, view-point; and this made the production of a real poem impossible. There is here, as elsewhere, no lack of verbal ingenuity and verbal trickery and quaint turns of thought and figures of speech, that delighted his contemporaries but are wearisome to our modern taste.³⁴

This view disregards the possibility that the poet could criticize the vagaries of the political situation of his time even as he praised the rulers. Amir Khusraw's works are actually full of implicit moral and ethical exhortations to his patrons, and he is as interested in issues of courtly conduct and justice as of rhetoric and poetics:

For Amir Khusrau wrote about the past to fulfill not a practical, or a moral, or a religious, or an academic purpose, but to fulfill an aesthetic purpose. He wrote not in order that man should know what man has done and should, therefore, leave undone, or that he should know how the present came to be, or that he should know what is the will of God, but that he should be diverted and amused.... Amir Khusrau did not write history—he wrote poetry.³⁵

It is clear that the major problem these works cause is their classification into an appropriate and familiar literary genre; they are, in fact, hybrid texts that drew from a variety of generic traditions and had a specific purpose in the milieu in which they were created. Another problem for scholars of literature, and for those who are not familiar with Indo-Muslim history, is that these stories are localized and presented without a larger context, unlike the well-known narratives drawn from the corpus of Perso-Arabic traditions. This is true for historical verse in other literary traditions as well:

All the poets of historical epic and romance had problems with their plots. These difficulties came from the material, and not from the possible ordering of that material, since all the poets faced them, whether they began their plots at the beginning of the story, romance fashion, or started in the midst of things and presented only a single set of interlocked events, after the classical manner.³⁶

Thus our expectations of what information these texts should yield and the position they have in the Persian literary canon need to be modified in order to do full justice to them.

After Amir Khusraw, Abu al-Malik 'Isami (d. 1350), his younger contemporary, composed a *Shahnamah* on the history of Islam in India, calling it the *Futuh al-salatin* (Conquests of the Sultans). Working in a similar courtly milieu as Khusraw, 'Isami wrote this work in five months for the Bahmanid ruler 'Ala' al-Din Muzaffar in the Deccan, away from the center of power, and its scope is grander than any of Amir Khusraw's works.³⁷ 'Isami's history begins with the Muslim conquest of India and goes down to his own time. He claims to be inspired by Nizami:

In this art [*masnavi*] that gladdens men's souls,

There was no one before Nizami.
Men of discernment know
That no one else comes after him.³⁸

He emphasizes this point again at the end of the work:

Two poets, expert in this art [*masnavi*],
Have achieved perfection in the world.
One [Firdawsi] made a peacock manifest itself
And adorned Tus like paradise.
The second [Nizami] made a nightingale sing
And graced the garden of Ganjah.
I followed both of them
And became the disciple of both in the *masnavi*.
From the peacock and nightingale, in India
A melodious parrot [Khusraw] was born.
I have included many lines in this work
[On the model of] both the *Shahnamah* and the *Khamsab*.³⁹

And again:

Since I followed the king of Ganjah,
I struck a royal coin in his name.⁴⁰

'Isami's work actually falls somewhere between Amir Khusraw's historical poems and the *Shahnamah*-like epics of the Ilkhanid period. It was this type of *masnavi* that would become popular later since it enabled the poet to place his patron on a larger and grander canvas of history. One exception to this was in a different part of the Persianate world, at about this time, when Salman Savaji (d. 1376) wrote a romantic-historical *masnavi*, the *Firaqnamah*, about the love of the Jalayrid Sultan Uvays for his slave who died.⁴¹

An important link to later Mughal, Safavid and Ottoman poems of this nature is 'Abdullah Hatifi of Harat (d. 1521), a poet and Sufi like his more famous uncle Jami (d. 1492). Hatifi wrote the *Timurnamah*, a historical biography in verse that glorifies the exploits of the ancestor of his patron, the Timurid ruler Sultan Husayn Bayqara. Unlike the earlier imitations of the *Shahnamah*, this work is neither a history of the entire dynasty nor of a living ruler, but is exclusively devoted to the military exploits of Timur.⁴² In Hatifi's *khamsab*, which consists of *Khusraw va Shirin* and *Layli va Majnun*, the *Timurnamah* became the counterpart of the *Iskandarnamah* in Nizami's *khamsab*. This work is a straight narrative of battles and political events written in the style of Firdawsi, without any elements of romance or philosophy. But it cannot be classified neatly; it is an epic and updates Firdawsi's narrative, making Timurid rule a part of Iranian history, but it is also a panegyric to the founder of the dynasty, who is likened to Alexander.⁴³ Hatifi explains his relationship to his predecessors:

First, when the magician Firdawsi
Adorned speech [by writing] the *Shahnamah*,
The ocean of meanings was filled with oysters,
The oysters full of kingly pearls.
His words were fresh and precious,
Nobody finds fault with the first fruit.⁴⁴

Firdawsi is important because he is a pioneer in his field, but the master is Nizami:

Nizami who swept the mine of poetry,
Composed gems with his description of Alexander.
The ocean of my poetry too has many pearls

To scatter in the description of Timur.⁴⁵

Thus, although Hatifi was conscious of Firdawsi's importance in the Iranian world and the value of the *Shahnamah* for his patrons, from a structural point of view Nizami was his model, as he had been with 'Isami. By invoking Anvari (d. ca. 1169) and Zahir Faryabi (d. 1201), who were admired for their panegyric *qasidabs*, Hatifi shows that poets who wrote in other forms are also important to him:

Through the words of the wise Firdawsi
The names of Ka'us and Kay became renowned.
If Anvari had not composed verse
Who would have spoken of Sanjar and his exploits?
Who would remember Qizil Arsalan,
If Zahir had not given him his due of praise?
I am determined, after praying to the creator,
To record his [Timur's] good name.⁴⁶

At the end of the work, he responds to his critics who compared his work to that of Nizami and Amir Khusraw:

Although Nizami and Khusraw are better than I am,
Those greater than you are less than I am.⁴⁷

Yet, the *Timurnamah* is not like any work of the poets he mentions, but is a reconstitution of both into something unique in response to the poet's own times. The historical *masnavi* must not be seen as an entirely independent phenomenon from the imitation of Nizami's romances; some works like Hatifi's *Timurnamah* overlap several traditions and are the result of the synthesis of a complex literary tradition that included poets writing in different forms and experimenting with mixing genres. Hatifi later began writing a similar work about his new patron, the Safavid ruler Shah Isma'il (r. 1502-1524), but it remained incomplete.

Another poet whose career spanned two ages was the poet Qasimi (d. after 1581), who wrote the *Shahnamah-yi Shah Isma'il* in addition to the *Shabrukbnamah*, modeled on Hatifi's work. Similarly, in Mughal India, the emperor Akbar's poet laureate Fayzi (d. 1595) left an incomplete *kbamsab*, the plan of which included a versified *Akbarnamah*, as a counterpart of the *Iskandarnamah*, that was never written. During Jahangir's reign (r. 1605-27), Talib (d. 1626-27) wrote the *Jahangirnamah*, and during Shah Jahan's reign (r. 1628-57), historical writing proliferated in general, and several poets wrote versified histories, such as the *Shabanshabnamah* of Kalim (d. 1651). The encounter with European powers also finds a place in this enterprise: a certain Qadri wrote the *Jangnamah-i Kishm* and the *Jarunnamah* about the Portuguese attempts to capture the islands of Kishm and Hurmuz in 1623 and 1633-34 respectively.⁴⁸ Mulla Firuz (d. 1830) wrote the *Jarjnamah* about the British conquest of India.⁴⁹ Many of these texts have not yet been published and require serious study to understand the different ways in which this genre was being manipulated at this time. For instance, in the Qajar period, with the *bazgasht* movement, the Ghaznavid poets were back in fashion and the *Shahnamah* was the model for a versified history of the Qajars, written by the poet laureate Saba (d. 1822-23) at the court of Fath 'Ali Shah as the *Shabanshabnamah*.⁵⁰ Earlier, at the Uzbek court, which was another heir to the cultural legacy of the Timurids, the poet Bana'i (d. 1512) wrote the *Shaybaninamah* about the rise of Shaybani Khan in a mixture of prose and verse, taking this tradition in a new direction. Through the Persian poets Kashifi, who wrote the *Ghazanamah-i Rum*, and

Mu'alli's *Khunkarnamah*, both written for Mehmed II (r. 1451-81), the tradition passed on to the Ottoman realm. In the sixteenth century, it developed into an independent institution, that of the *sehnameci*, who was appointed by Sultan Sulayman "to compose literary accounts of contemporary or near-contemporary Ottoman history; as an early type of court historiographer, the *sehnameci* predates the *vak'aniivis* by almost 150 years."⁵¹ These works, like that of Bana'i's, were often in mixed prose and poetry and were probably inspired by older models in this form. In the long run, owing to the plots of these texts centering on local history, many of them probably did not have a large circulation, and even in our times they are studied almost exclusively by historians.

Amir Khusraw's historical *masnavis* have not fared much better in our times: not being available in modern editions with scholarly apparatus, they are largely unutilized by non-historians. There is an interesting episode in connection with the reception of Amir Khusraw's works in the sixteenth century that addresses problems concerning the recension and authorship of premodern texts. Copies of his historical *masnavis* existed in Mughal and Ottoman libraries almost three centuries after the poet's death. In the time of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), it was discovered that the imperial copy of Amir Khusraw's *Tughlaqnamah* was missing some folios at the beginning and end. Apparently, the poet laureate Fayzi (d. 1595) wrote to a provincial official, trying unsuccessfully to locate a complete copy of this rare text.⁵² During the reign of the next ruler Jahangir (r. 1605-27) the Iranian émigré poet Hayati Gilani was commissioned to complete the missing sections (about three hundred lines) of the work.⁵³ Ironically, even that new composition was lost until the early twentieth century, when a semi-complete manuscript copy, with Hayati's introduction, was found in a private collection in India and the text published in Hyderabad (Deccan) in 1933;⁵⁴ later another copy supplied Hayati's conclusion to the work. Hayati had been weighed in gold for his work, in the introduction of which he indirectly invokes both Nizami and Amir Khusraw:

When the command came forth from the lofty court
That the lost parts be rewritten,
I picked up my pen to write
And unveiled the faces of the sun and Jupiter...
I opened a jewel-box of pearls in the sea
And presented the treasure of Ganjah in Delhi.⁵⁵

Why did the Mughals pay so much attention to a text that was already out of circulation? Apart from the fact that Amir Khusraw was an important figure in the Indo-Persian literary consciousness, his text helped the Mughals to forge symbolic connections with the North Indian Muslim dynasties of the past, and the theme of this work, a moralizing tale about the triumph of righteous Islamic rule in an age of injustice and debauchery, must have had a special appeal for them.

Amir Khusraw was an innovator in a tradition with literary strands that intersected at several historical moments. On the one hand, under the burden of Nizami he created his own *kbamsab*, thus ensuring his reputation in the larger world of Persian poetry, but at another level he was conscious of his position as an Indian poet and sought to produce localized works that would appeal to his immediate audience. In the long run, even these latter works had a universal impact on

the writing of Persian poetry. As with any other literary genre, texts written in the genre of historical verse are of varying quality, but they should not be disregarded because they do not provide factual information to supplement the writing of history. Although they are lumped together under the category of historical poems, each of these works is unique with respect to its literary genealogy and is best studied in the context of the period in which it was written. The statements of the poet with regard to his models merit close attention and should not be dismissed as standard fare in works of this kind, for here we see poets negotiating their relationships with each other and the past, remote and recent.

NOTES

¹Several individuals have contributed to the writing of this paper; I am grateful to them for suggestions, comments and corrections.

²For the innovative aspects of Amir Khusraw's works, see Syed Sabahuddin Abdur Rahman's "Appreciative Study of Variegatedness of Ameer Khusraw's Poetry," in *Life, Times & Works of Amir Khusraw Dehlavi* (New Delhi: Seventh Centenary Amir Khusraw Society, 1975), 83-102.

³For a detailed exploration of this topic, see Sunil Kumar's "Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi," in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 37-65.

⁴See Aziz Ahmad, "Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1962): 470-76 for a treatment of this topic. In C.A. Storey's *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 1 (London: Luzac & Co., 1953), these works are classed in the history section although they belong equally to the realm of poetry. Hermann Ethé uses two broad classifications of historical and romantic epics, "Neupersische Literatur," in *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*, ed. W. Geiger and E. Kuhn (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1896-1904), 233-255. For Safa's classification, see note 13 below.

⁵David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15.

⁶For Amir Khusraw as historian, see S.H. Askari, *Amir Khusraw as a Historian* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1985), esp. 1-15; Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusraw of Delhi* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1927); and Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusraw* (Lahore: Punjab University Press, 1962) are still the most illuminating sources in English on the poet's life and works.

⁷For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1968), 248-49; and Michael Glünz, "The Persian Qasida in Post-Mongol Iran," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden: Brill, 1996), vol. 2, 191-195.

⁸Zabihullah Safa, "Persian Literature in the Timurid and Turkmen Periods," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 6, 924.

⁹For a contemporary verse history of Iran, see Mu'ini

Kirmanshahi, *Shabkar: tarikh-i manzum-i Iran* (Tihiran: Sana'i, 1999-). Also see Bert Fragner, *Die "Persophonie"* (Berlin: Anor, 1999), 59-61 for an overview of this topic.

¹⁰See the discussion on the rise of the romance and the "disaffection with the social values embodied in epic," Julie S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, 1987), 80-81. The Ghaznavid poet Farrukhi's *qasidabs* for Mahmud of Ghazna contrast well with the historical *masnavis* and demonstrate how the choice of form can function independently from the subject matter of a poem.

¹¹The didactic *masnavi* was developed by Sufi poets such as Sana'i, 'Attar and Rumi, mainly in non-courtly circles; these poets also helped the formation of the *ghazal*. For a theory of the *masnavi* see J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Hakim Sana'i of Ghazna* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 185-191; also Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 77ff.

¹²Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1989), 126.

¹³Manuchihr Murtazavi has discussed this phenomenon and several works from this period in his essay, "Muqallidan-i *Shahnamah* dar dawrah-yi Mughul va Timuri," in *Masa'il-i 'asr-i Ilkhanan* (Tabriz: Mu'assasah-i Tarikh va Farhang-i Iran, 1358), 554-55. He formulates three categories of such works too: poets who took up material not covered in the *Shahnamah*, poets who panegyricized their patrons and their ancestors in *masnavi* form for monetary reward, and poets who wrote poems for rulers who saw themselves as heroes in the *Shahnamah*. Also compare the earlier Samanid trend of patronizing *Shahnamahs* as legitimizing texts, Julie S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 37.

¹⁴*Zafarnamah-i Hamd Allah Mustawfi: bi-inz'imam-i Shahnamah-i Abu al-Qasim Firdawsi (bib tashih-i Hamd Allah Mustawfi): chap-i 'aksi az ru-yi nuskhah-i khatti-i muvarrakh-i 807 Hijri dar Kitabkhanah-i Biritaniya (Or. 2833)*, (Tihiran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishgahi-i Iran; Vin: Akadimi-i 'Ulum-i Utrish, 1999). The literary value of these works must be considered on an individual basis as Rypka cautions, "[A]ll these numerous epics cannot be assessed very highly, to say nothing of those works that were substantially (or literally) copies of Firdausi. There are however exceptions, such as the *Zafarnama* of Hamdu'llah Mustawfi a historically valuable continuation of the *Shah-nama*," Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 165.

¹⁵This tradition, chiefly a non-Ilkhanid and Timurid one, resulted in the creation of Islamic epics of conquests as discussed by Marjan Molé, "L'épopée iranienne après Firdosi," *La Nouvelle Clio* 5 (1953): 377-393. Also see the classification employed by Z. Safa for epics in his *Hamasahsarayi dar Iran* (Tihiran: Amir Kabir, 1990): *milli* (national, those inspired by Firdawsi's epic), *tarikhi* (historical, those written in imitation of Nizami's *Iskandarnamah*) and *dini* for religious works.

¹⁶Christine Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of *Sebnameci* in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555-1605," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983): 174.

¹⁷Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 284.

¹⁸Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry*, 187.

¹⁹The Indo-Persian poet, Ghalib Dihlavi (d. 1869) left an unfinished *masnavi*, *Abr-i Gambarbar*, on the holy wars of the Prophet Muhammad; in its introduction he states that Firdawsi and Nizami were the models for his work, quoted in Waris Kirmani, *Evaluation of Ghalib's Persian Poetry* (Aligarh: Department of Persian, Aligarh Muslim University, 1972), 49. For aspects of intertextuality in historical writing in prose and verse, see Sholeh A. Quinn's, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000), 56-57.

²⁰Ahmad, "Epic and Counter-Epic," 470.

²¹For a list of extant works of Amir Khusraw and their manuscripts and published editions, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, I: 495-505.

²²Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, 70. A contemporary émigré poet in India, 'Ubayd, is said to have commented, "Khusraw made a mistake out of naïveté by cooking his stew in the poet of Nizami," Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, 191. For the varying literary quality of Khusraw's *masnavis*, historical and others, see Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, 51-52, 76.

²³Concerning this work, the *Tarikh-i 'Ala'i* or *Khaza'in al-Futub*, Peter Jackson writes that it suffers from Khusrau's "principal defect—excessive adulation of the reigning sultan...where a bland account of the accession of Jalal al-Din's nephew 'Ala' al-Din Khalji in 695/1296 omits all mention of the old sultan's murder," *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50. The editor of this text, Mohammad Habib, suggests that prose was more difficult for Amir Khusraw than poetry, 46. *The Campaigns of 'Ala'u'd-din Khalji being the Khaza'inul Futub (Treasures of Victory)* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporewala, Sons & Co., 1931), 2. The work is divided into paragraphs, each one beginning with an indication of the images to be encountered therein (e.g., *nisbat az 'arus va mashshatab*) with a line of poetry in Arabic or Persian at the beginning of various sections.

²⁴See E.B. Cowell's statement, "Living then, as he did, in such a busy time, we need not wonder that a man who with all his faults was a true poet, could see materials for romance in the presence around him, as well as the legendary glories of Alexander and Chosroes," in "The Kiran-us-Sa'dain of Mir Khusrau," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1860), 226. Also, S. Azmi, *Farsi adab bi-'abd-i salatin-i Tughlaq* (Dihli: Indo-Parshiyani Sosa'iti, 1984), 181.

²⁵There is a useful catalog of all known copies of this text in John Seyller's, *Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Walters Art Museum Khamsa of Amir Khusraw of Delhi* (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2001), 143-58.

²⁶Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, 175.

²⁷For this type of hybrid form see Robert Dankoff, "The Lyric in the Romance: The Use of Ghazals in Persian and Turkish Masnavis," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43, no. 1 (1984): 9-25.

²⁸For a discussion on writing fiction vs. history in pre-modern literatures, see Michael Murrin on the historical epic/romance in European literature, *History and Warfare in*

Renaissance Epic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13.

²⁹Amir Khusraw, *Miftab al-futub*, ed. Shaikh Abdur Rashid (Aligarh: Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, 1954), 39. Translations are mine.

³⁰For variants of this title, see Storey, *Persian Literature*, I: 502.

³¹Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, 180.

³²Amir Khusraw, *Duval Rani Khizr Khan*, ed. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1988), 45.

³³Amir Khusraw, *The Nub Sipibr of Amir Khusraw* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), xxxvi.

³⁴Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, 51-52.

³⁵P. Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing* (London: Luzac, 1960), 92-93.

³⁶Murrin, *History and Warfare*, 103.

³⁷In his analysis of this work, Hardy concludes that it "offers the student not critical history but historical evidence ... [it] is not a critical history, not a theology, not an ethic, but an epic," *Historians of Medieval India*, 110. The chapter on 'Isami is of interest in comparing historical writing in verse with that in prose during the same time period.

³⁸'Isami, *Futub al-salatin*, ed. A.S. Usha (Madras: University of Madras, 1948), 17.

³⁹'Isami, *Futub al-salatin*, 609.

⁴⁰'Isami, *Futub al-salatin*, 615.

⁴¹Rypka writes of this work, "In taking a current topic as his theme Salman was one of the first to follow the example of Amir Khusrau," *History of Iranian Literature*, 262.

⁴²Murtazavi also discusses a versified history of Timur that 'Ali Sharaf al-Din Yazdi the historian and author of the *Zafarnamah* wrote, 574-86. A distinction must be made between the approaches of historians such as Yazdi and Mustawfi writing such works and writers who are primarily poets and more entrenched in a poetic tradition.

⁴³See Michele Bernardini's study on some illustrated manuscripts of this text, "Il *Timurname* di Hatifi e lo *Sabname-ye Esma'il* di Qasemi (Il Ms. Frazer 87 della Bodleian Library di Oxford)," *Oriente moderne*, n.s. 15, 2 (1996): 97-118. A relevant issue that needs to be taken up but is beyond the scope of this paper is the illustration of historical *masnavis*; specifically, which manuscripts of this genre were chosen to be illustrated and why? It appears that texts that had a wider appeal beyond the local milieu and are extant in multiple manuscript copies in collections around the world today, such as Hatifi's *Timurnamah* and Amir Khusraw's *Duval Rani Khizr Khan*, were often furnished with illustrations. For illustrations to Amir Khusraw's works, see Hamid Suleiman and Fazila Suleimanova, *Miniatures Illuminations of Amir Hosroe Deblevi's Works* (Tashkent: Fan Publishers, 1983).

⁴⁴Hatifi, *Timurnamah*, ed. A.S. Usha (Madras: University of Madras, 1958), 12.

⁴⁵Hatifi, *Timurnamah*, 13.

⁴⁶Hatifi, *Timurnamah*, 14.

⁴⁷Hatifi, *Timurnamah*, 233.

⁴⁸Storey, *Persian Literature*, I: 309.

⁴⁹*The George-Namah of Mulla Feruz bin Kawus* (Bombay, 1837); see Storey, *Persian Literature* I: 645.

⁵⁰Rypka's brings up the discourse of truth vs. fiction in regard to this poem, "Saba's *Shahanshab-nama* was in its time regarded more highly than the *Shah-nama*, and the author himself remained convinced of the superiority of his epic until on his deathbed his eyes are supposed to have been opened. His work cannot be classed as a chronicle because its contents are not in keeping with the truth. The poet departs from the truth in blindly imitating the *Shah-nama*; for instance, military equipment and battles that took place in the nineteenth century are depicted in the ancient manner and from the standpoint of Firdausi in the chivalric feudal epoch," *History of Iranian Literature*, 326-27.

⁵¹Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography," 157. This never became an official post in the Persian lands.

⁵²*Insha-yi Fayzi*, ed. A.D. Arshad (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqi-i Adab, 1973), 296-97.

⁵³On Hayati, see M.L. Rahman, *Persian Literature in India during the Time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan* (Baroda: Department of Persian and Urdu, M.S. University of Baroda, 1970), 74-76.

⁵⁴For the story of the discovery of this manuscript and the publishing of the text, see Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, 245-53.

⁵⁵*Zamimah-i Tughlaqnamah-i Amir Khusrau*, ed. S.A.H. Abidi and S. Maqbul Ahmad (Dihli: Indo-Parshiyani Sosa'iti, 1975), 45.