

While the book generally attempts to provide a sequential narrative of developments during this period, the chronology of events (especially those described within the book's middle sections) could be clearer at times. Several unanswered questions also remain at the book's end, chiefly the precise ways in which the Chinese and Japanese attempted to harness the purported financial and political clout of the Jews for their respective wartime gains. While much is made of the Japanese determination to 'exploit' the Jews, the specifics of how the Japanese actually attempted to solicit Jewish capital and expertise in the years leading up to the Pacific War remain somewhat blurry in the text. Also, what the Japanese *really* thought of Nazi ideology on Jews during the period deserves further analytical consideration. On a related note, while the author attributes the eventual hardening of Japanese policies on Jews to Japan's signing of the Tripartite Pact with Germany, the question of whether security or practical concerns on the ground may have partially accounted for the Japanese decision to herd the Shanghai Jews into a ghetto remains largely unanswered. That said, her book does indeed provide several richly-illuminating perspectives on Chinese and Japanese policies on these refugees during this tumultuous period and is poised to make a refreshing contribution to scholarship on the political forces which affected the Jewish wartime experience in the East. <felicia.yap@cantab.net>

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PEARLS OF PERSIA. THE PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY OF NĀṢĪR-I KHUSRAW. Edited by ALICE C HUNSBERGER. pp. 279. London, I. B. Tauris, 2012.
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The *Safarnāma* is probably the best known of the works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw. It describes his seven year journey to the Muslim holy places and is written in a pleasant, unfussy manner. His particular focus was on the great cities of Jerusalem, Mecca and Cairo, and his description contains detailed accounts of them which are of singular value as primary source material. For those of us who have struggled with the complex style of later Persian writers such as Waṣṣāf, the honest clarity of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Safarnāma* has much to commend it. There is a good modern translation by Wheeler M Thackston.

However, this classic travelogue has served somewhat to overshadow Nāṣir-i Khusraw's contributions to poetry and philosophy. The volume of essays under discussion here seeks to redress the balance. And we are fortunate that the contributors are such able guides on what can appear a daunting journey.

Dr Hunsberger tells us in her Introduction that "Nāṣir-i Khusraw is the greatest philosophical poet in the Persian language". (p.xiii) The evidence presented in this collection of essays makes the case for this statement abundantly. Dr Hunsberger is herself a scholar of the poet-philosopher and the author of an engaging biography. In *Nasir Khusraw* Dr Hunsberger presents in the course of her narrative a depiction of the poet as a man guided by a firm faith, a powerful ethical sense and a philosophical detachment from material success and failure. Dr Hunsberger makes clear in her *Nasir Khusraw* that neither his doctrine nor his personality allowed Nāṣir-i Khusraw to acquire knowledge and not share it with others. The poet was contemptuous of ignorance - especially when he felt that ignorance caused people to miss the inner message of religion or philosophy. The intent of the work under discussion here has an aim worthy of Nāṣir-i Khusraw: to dispel ignorance.

Pearls of Persia provides a very detailed analysis of various aspects of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's intellectual life as poet and thinker. In Chapter One Faquir Muhammad Hunzai considers Nāṣir-i Khusraw's exaltation of intellect. Nāṣir-i Khusraw argued that as the intellect is a divine gift to mankind it is of paramount

importance to use it and failure to act according to the innate intellect causes one to become as “the vilest of beasts”.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s perspective as an Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* it seemed clear that a differentiation existed between innate intellect and perfect intellect. The issue concerned him throughout his life. The overwhelming spiritual experience that Nāṣir-i Khusraw felt at his meeting with the Imam of the Age al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh led to what he understood to be an inner transformation from ignorance to illumination. It is the power of transformational knowledge, of perfect intellect, that Nāṣir-i Khusraw returns to frequently in his poetry. All this was not of course new to the Ismā‘īlī tradition, but Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s works are very effective in conveying “the importance of higher and eternal realities and speak to human beings across time and space”. (p. 24)

Chapter Two by M J Esmaili demonstrates that Nāṣir-i Khusraw actively followed the ideas of Plato and Aristotle while remaining a devout Muslim. Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s Persian poetry was informed by his erudition, his knowledge of Arabic scripture, scriptural interpretation, esoteric exegesis, ḥadīth, and theology. This can lead one to the supposition that his poetry “is more the product of reason than of emotion” (p. 30), however, Esmaili concludes that Nāṣir-i Khusraw is a worthy representative of the Ismā‘īlī tradition of studying philosophy “in the quest for understanding Divine, Eternal Truth”. (p. 36)

Daniel Rafinejad in Chapter Three explores how Nāṣir-i Khusraw expresses biographical material, emotions and beliefs in his poetry. Interesting parallels are made with the work of William Wordsworth – Nāṣir-i Khusraw expressed what the English poet calls “the essential passion of the heart” in his verse. In Chapter Four Leonard Lewisohn offers an annotated translation of Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s *qaṣīda* 112 ‘Ode to the Universal Soul and Intellect’. In the course of his prologue to his translation Lewisohn makes an interesting comparison with verses of Francis Thompson – the poet of ‘The Hound of Heaven’ had similar other-worldly concerns to those of Nāṣir-i Khusraw. As one might expect Lewisohn’s notes and commentary are exemplary.

Mohammad Azadpur’s essay on ‘Imagination, Prophecy and the Poetics of the Imagination’ constitutes Chapter Five of this work, and considers amongst other things the distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric in philosophical texts. Dr Azadpur contends that symbolic poetry assists the believer in “mastering the needs and desires that distract the soul”. Freedom from mundane attachments and concerns brings the soul of the believer “into the vicinity of the Universal Soul”. (p.84) Azadpur points out that this is a familiar element of the Ismā‘īlī ‘initiatory tradition’ to which Nāṣir-i Khusraw belonged.

Chapter Six by Mehdi Aminrazavi presents an intriguing, although all too brief, comparison between the philosophy of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Immanuel Kant’s *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Briefly, Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s argument may be stated syllogistically that as God is all rational all creation is rational and because moral imperatives are part of creation they are therefore rational. It would be interesting to read more in this vein. The following Chapter Seven by Mohsen Zakeri is a fascinating discussion of the aspects of the Zoroastrian cosmogony that found their way into the work of Nāṣir-i Khusraw. These borrowings are part of a pattern – Nāṣir-i Khusraw studied the wisdom of many cultures in his search for truth.

Michael Beard’s contribution Chapter Eight makes some interesting points about the poetic philosophy of different cultures, drawing examples from Lucretius, Aquinas and Laozi amongst others. It is intellectually stimulating, and, once again, as with Aminrazavi’s essay, one would like to see these points pursued further. One hopes that both authors will return to these themes in future. Chapter Nine by Nasrollah Pourjavady is a study of the authorship of *Rawshana’i-nama*. Chapter Ten by Dr Hunsberger is an analysis of a philosophical poem of Nāṣir-i Khusraw ‘On the Steed of Speech’. This is explained and annotated in an exemplary manner. The following Chapter Eleven by Julie Scott Meisami considers the symbolic structure of a poem by Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Professor Meisami explores the Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic concept of the poem as a literary microcosm. The role

of numerology is assessed: it is made clear that Nāṣir-i Khusraw was intrigued by Pythagorean ideas relating to number as “an organizing principle”. This topic is pursued with commendable thoroughness. The philosophical and literary awareness of this chapter maintains the high standards demonstrated throughout this collection.

Finn Thiesen’s essay in Chapter Twelve looks at rhythm in Nāṣir-i Khusraw poems, and remarks on the instinctive feel of many Persian readers for this quality as demonstrated by an elderly Iranian acquaintance of his in Oslo “who will immediately complain that the line is halting – *miṣrā’ saqṭa dārad* – if he reads or hears a line of Persian poetry that is not in complete agreement with ‘ilm-i ‘arūz, ‘the science of prosody’”. (p. 209)

Dr Thiesen gives a detailed analysis of Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s use of rhythm and examples from other classical Persian poets including Ḥāfiẓ. One looks forward to the publication of Dr Thiesen’s *Rhythm and Rhyme in Ḥāfiẓ* to which he refers in this chapter.

The final Chapter Thirteen by Professor Meisami has the telling title of ‘Nāṣir-i Khusraw: A Poet Lost in Thought?’ According to Professor Meisami because his poetry is seen as a vehicle for his thought “the promulgation of his philosophical, ethical and (on occasion) political views” (p. 223) one can all too easily lose sight of Nāṣir-i Khusraw as a poet. After all he had a clear religious purpose: a powerful personal devotion to the *ahl al-bayt* and to the Imam of the Age, al-Mustaṣfir bi-llāh. Although Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s political and religious beliefs provide some context, there are other questions. Who was the intended audience? Were the poems meant to be read or recited or sung? (Perhaps all three may be the answer). What do the figures of speech in the poems tell us? As an example of her approach to this latter issue Professor Meisami points out in *Dīwān* 47:3–9 the repeated use of the word *khirad* – reason – as well as the compounds *bikhirad*, *bā khirad*, *khiradmand*. Meanwhile in *Dīwān* 192:13–20 the repeated word is *sukhan* – speech. The examples are numerous: indeed too numerous for recapitulation in this review.

Looking to the future Professor Meisami concludes “In short, there is much to be done; and it is to be hoped that younger and more energetic scholars will proceed along these and other lines of inquiry, with the goal of increasing our understanding, and appreciation, of that most consummate of Persian poets: Nāṣir-i Khusraw”. (p. 251)

It is a fitting conclusion to a handsome and enlightening volume. dsf62@hotmail.com

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