
The 'Merits of Isfahan' from Arabic into Persian*



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Abstract

Writing in Isfahan in 729/1328-9, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Riẓā 'Alavī Āvī produced a translation into Persian of the eleventh-century Arabic *Risālat Maḥāsīn Isfahān* ('Epistle on the Merits of Isfahan') of Mufaḍḍal b. Sa'd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māfarrukhī. This article explores the context for and purposes of Āvī's translation-adaptation with particular reference to the extensive system of networks active in western Iran during the reign of the Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd (r. 716-36/1316-35). It is proposed that Āvī intended his translation to provide a means of entry into the urban élites and an affiliation with the administrative circles associated with the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 736/1336), a son of Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh, who occupied a position at the apex of this system of networks.

Keywords: Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Riẓā 'Alavī Āvī; 11th C translation into Persian; Epistle on the Merits of Isfahan'; Mufaḍḍal b. Sa'd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māfarrukhī.

Writing in 729/1328-9, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Riẓā 'Alavī Āvī produced a translation into Persian of the eleventh-century Arabic *Risālat Maḥāsīn Isfahān* ('Epistle on the Merits of Isfahan', hereafter *RMI*) of Mufaḍḍal b. Sa'd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māfarrukhī.¹ Āvī dedicated his Persian text, *Tarjameh-yi Maḥāsīn-i Isfahān* ('Translation of the Merits of Isfahan', hereafter *TMI*), sometimes referred to in the manuscript tradition as *Tārīkh-i Isfahān*,² to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 736/1336), son of Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh (d. 718/1318).³ Ghiyāth

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¹References to *RMI* in this article are to Mufaḍḍal b. Sa'd Māfarrukhī *Isfahānī*, *Kitāb Maḥāsīn Isfahān*, (ed.) Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusaynī Ṭīhrānī (Tehran, 1933). Since the manuscript from which Ṭīhrānī worked is dated 735/1334-5 (Editor's Introduction, [bā']), I take the published edition of *RMI* to represent a reasonable facsimile of the text available to Āvī in 729/1328-9. The principal modern scholarly studies of *RMI* are Jürgen Paul, 'The Histories of Isfahan: Mafarrukhi's *Kitāb Maḥāsīn Isfahān*', *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 117-132; David Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsīn Eṣfahān', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (hereafter *EI*) (2016), online (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mahasen-esfahan>), accessed 18 March 2018; *idem*, *Iranian Élites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahān in the Saljūq Period* (London, 2010), pp. 15, 130-135 and *passim*.

²References to *TMI* apply to *Tarjameh-yi Maḥāsīn-i Isfahān az 'arabī bi-fārsī*, (ed.) 'Abbās Iqbāl (Tehran, 1949), unless otherwise indicated (on the work's textual history, see below). The variant title appears in MSS Persian 180, Royal Asiatic Society; E. G. Browne Collection, I.2, Cambridge University Library.

³*TMI*, pp. 7, 101, 131, 135, 145-146.

al-Dīn, who had been appointed to the vizierate and entrusted with vast power by the Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd (r. 716–36/1316–35) in 727/1327, presided over a large-scale system of patronage, as the copious number of texts dedicated to him attests.⁴

The period of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's vizierate saw the prolific production of works dedicated not only to the vizier himself but also to several of the individuals affiliated with him through an extensive regional network in which he occupied the most prominent position. Among the large and varied group of texts linked with Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his associates and clients, translations from Arabic into Persian constitute a small but distinct sub-set. This sub-set includes the *Tajārib al-salaf* of Hindūshāh b. Sanjar Nakhjavānī; commenced in about 723/1323, this composition is a translation-adaptation, dedicated to the Hazāraspid ruler Atabeg Nuṣrat al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Yūsufshāh (r. 696–730 or 733/1296–1330 or 1333), of part of Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā's *Kitāb al-Fakhrī* (701/1302). The sub-set also includes the *Durrat al-akhbār wa-lum'at al-anwār* (729–30/1328–9) of (probably) Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī Kirmānī, a translation, dedicated to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad, of the *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* of Zāhīr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Zayd al-Bayhaqī (493–565/1100–69). Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī and Nāṣir al-Dīn Kirmānī belonged to well-known families of *littérateur*-administrators, and they were closely connected with the region's bureaucratic and cultural élites.

Considering the social and economic as well as the literary and cultural dimensions of Āvī's *TMI*, this article seeks to situate his Persian 'translation' of Māfarrukhī's *RMI* in its late Ilkhanid context. With *TMI* as the major point of reference, the article also offers some speculations regarding the contribution of translations in this period to larger processes of historical change.

The translator Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Rizā 'Alavī Āvī

As his *nisba* implies, Āvī hailed from, or had links to, Āveh, probably the Āveh situated in the vicinity of Sāveh, which lay on the route between Kashan and Qumm.⁵ Two celebrated eleventh-century men of letters hailed from this Āveh.⁶ Its larger neighbour Sāveh, which had, prior to the destructive Mongol invasions of 617/1220–1, boasted a remarkable library,⁷ produced in Āvī's lifetime several bureaucrats and men of letters, including the vizier

⁴See Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Tārikh-i guzādeh*, (ed.) 'A. Navā'ī (Tehran, 1983), pp. 620–623; Khāndamīr, *Dastūr al-vuzarā'*, (ed.) Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran, 1938), pp. 324–331; Peter Jackson and Charles Melville, 'Gīāt-al-Dīn Moḥammad', *Elr* x (2001), pp. 598–599, updated 2012 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/giat-al-din-mohammad>), accessed 9 December 2017. A letter of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's is contained in the *Safīneh-yi Tabrīz* of Abū l-Majd Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd Tabrīzī (Tehran, 2003), pp. 733–734.

⁵Āveh was, in fact, the name of two locations. I take Āvī's *nisba* to refer to Āveh (also Ābeh, Ar. Āba), a town and district of Sāveh, which lay some six *farsangs* to the west of Qumm (Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, (ed.) G. Le Strange [Tehran, 1983], pp. 62–63, 184, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, Translation G. Le Strange with a New Preface by Charles Melville, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2017 [first published Leiden and London, 1919], pp. 68, 175). Another small town, also known as Āvā, lay roughly half-way between Qazvin and Hamadan (Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 60, *Geographical Part*, p. 66). Yāqūt (574 or 575–626/1179–1229), writing in the early seventh/thirteenth century, noted the disagreement or confusion regarding the location of Āba; in addition to the Āba, known locally as Āveh, that lay close to Sāveh, he knew of an Āba located in Upper Egypt (*Mu'jam al-buldān* [Beirut, 1955], i, p. 51). See further C. E. Bosworth, 'Āva', *Elr* iii (1989), pp. 29–30, updated 2011 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ava>), accessed 18 April 2019.

⁶The most notable of the eleventh-century bearers of the *nisba* Āvī (Ar. al-Ābī) was Abū Sa'd Maṣū' b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī, author of the anthology *Nathr al-durar*.

⁷On the *ahl al-'ilm* who hailed from Sāveh and its library, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, iii, pp. 179–180.

Sa'd al-Dīn Muḥammad Sāvajī (d. 711/1312) and the poet and panegyrist Salmān-i Sāvajī (c. 709–78/1309–76). Both of these individuals, who were contemporaries of Āvī, possessed links with the Ilkhanid administration and especially with the viziers Rashīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn.⁸ These factors provide helpful context for Āvī, concerning whom, apart from the few biographical and incidental details conveyed in *TMI*, little information has come to light. This small amount of material, which includes Āvī's self-identification with emblems of the literary and secretarial arts, suggests that perhaps he too belonged to a family well-versed in the traditions of Arabic and Persian letters and familiar with bureaucratic service.⁹

It seems highly likely, as several scholars have assumed, that Āvī was an Imāmī Shī'ī.¹⁰ Among the circumstantial factors that might support this inference is the report of his contemporary Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī (b. c. 680/1281–2, d. c. 750/1349), who described the population of Āveh as deeply committed (*bi-ghāyat muta'aṣṣib*) in their devotion to Imāmī Shī'ism, and often at odds with their neighbours in Sāveh, who were firmly Sunnī and Shāfī'ī.¹¹ As scholars have pointed out, boundaries between 'Sunnī' and 'Shī'ī' Islam in early fourteenth-century north-western Iran and Azerbaijan were often indeterminate, although it is apparent that the period's many examples of 'confessional ambiguity' co-existed with manifestations, in specific moments and locations, of clearer sectarian demarcations.¹² In this context, the internal evidence of *TMI* is highly suggestive, if not entirely

⁸Sa'd al-Dīn, a close associate of Rashīd al-Dīn, with whom for a period he shared the vizierate, was executed in 711/1312, some years before Rashīd al-Dīn's fall and execution (718/1318). Salmān, whose father held a post in the Ilkhanid financial administration, began his career under the patronage of Ghiyāth al-Dīn (see M. Glünz, 'Salmān-i Sāvajī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, (eds.) P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs (hereafter *EI*²), viii (1995), pp. 997–998, online (http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_65588), accessed 18 April 2019).

⁹On the insignia, symbolic of involvement in the literary and secretarial arts, that Āvī associates with his exodus from his home city, see below, at n. 39. As M. T. Dānīshpazhūh has proposed, a certain Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Abī l-Rizā al-'Alavī al-Āvī, a contemporary of the translator and the author of a collection of *masā'il* dealing with Arabic grammar, is almost certain to have been a relative (Ḥusayn 'Alavī Āvī, *Farmān-i Mālik-i Ashtar*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānīshpazhūh [n. p., 1979], p. 50). Possible associates or acquaintances of Āvī include several individuals whose writings have been preserved in a single miscellany, the contents of which suggest a *milieu* sympathetic to Shī'ī sensibilities: Zayn al-Dīn Āvī (perhaps the grammarian), whose verses follow a copy of the *Sirat-i ma'sūmān-i shī'ī* of 'Alī b. Muḥammad Nizām 'Vā'iz-i Shāmī'; 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Rizā Husaynī Ḥāfīz, who copied several of the pieces contained in the manuscript, including the *Maqāla fi fādā'il Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, and two pieces dated 738/1337, one of which he wrote for Shams al-Dīn Āvī; and Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭālib Āvī, who produced a copy, dated 735/1335, of the *Uṣūl 'ilm al-balāgha* of Kamāl al-Dīn Mītham b. 'Alī b. Mītham Bahrānī (d. 679/1280–1) (Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Akhlaq-i muḥtashamī*, (ed.) M. T. Dānīshpazhūh [Tehran, 1960], xxx–xxxii).

¹⁰Muḥsin al-Amīn al-Ḥusaynī al-'Āmilī (*A'yān al-shī'a*, [Damascus, 1948], xxvii, p. 127, no. 5404) counted Āvī among the Shī'a and included him in his collection of Shī'ī biographies, where he cited an Arabic verse that concludes with the poet's pride in his exaltation of the Prophet and love of the Prophet's family (*TMI*, p. 137). Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭīhrānī likewise counted Āvī among the Shī'a (*Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-shī'a* [Beirut, 2009], v, p. 58); Mahdī Faḥrī Imānī lists Āvī, whom he describes as a *sayyid*, and Māfarukhī among the Shī'a (*Tārīkh-i tashayyu'i-i Isfahān* [Tehran, 1995], pp. 257–258, 318–319); Durand-Guédy likewise considers it likely that Āvī was a Shī'ī ('Mahāsen Eṣfahān').

¹¹*Nuzhat al-qulūb*, pp. 60, 62–63, *Geographical Part*, pp. 66, 68. Mustawfī, who found the inhabitants of almost all Sāveh's surrounding villages to be Ithnā' Ash'arī Shī'ites, also notes the presence of the tomb (*mashhad*) of Ishāq, son of the Imām Mūsā al-Kāzīm, just north of Sāveh (*Nuzhat al-qulūb*, pp. 62–63, *Geographical Part*, p. 68). Yāqūt, writing a century earlier than Mustawfī, already reported continual conflict between the population of Āba, who belonged to the Imāmī Shī'a, and the inhabitants of Sāveh, who were Sunnī and Shāfī'ī (*Mu'jam al-buldān*, i, p. 50; iii, p. 179).

¹²Judith Pfeiffer, 'Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate', in *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz*,

conclusive regarding the confessional allegiance of the author, who wrote, it should be remembered, for a Sunnī vizier. Āvī's few references to figures of religious significance from the early Islamic centuries are almost entirely imported, usually with little change, from *RMI*, whose author, probably a Mu'tazilite, is quite likely to have held the pro-'Alid sentiments prevalent among the Mu'tazila.¹³ The figure who receives most attention, by far, is Salmān-i Fārisī (d. 35 or 36/665 or 666), whose origins in Isfahan are asserted and highlighted.¹⁴ When, in one narrative, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44) appears as an interlocutor, Āvī omits the formula *raḍīya Allāhu 'anhu* with which Māfarrukhī had followed the caliph's name.¹⁵ Both authors introduce 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his son al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib with the title *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*;¹⁶ Āvī also adds a reference and quotation from 'Alī in his *dhayl*.¹⁷ In Āvī's time, the inclusion of Ḥasan among the early 'caliphs' would have been neither unusual, nor a marker of a firmly demarcated sectarian identity.¹⁸ Also evident in *TMI* is Āvī's deep attachment to the Prophet's family, which, in a phenomenon that transcended sectarian divisions, he shared with Sunnī and Shī'ī Muslims alike.¹⁹

Apparently in quick succession, Āvī, following his arrival in Isfahan at an unspecified date, produced two translations from Arabic into Persian: the *TMI* that forms the subject of this essay, and the *Ahdnāmeḥ*, a translation of the 'Letter' of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) to Mālik al-Ashtar (d. c. 37/658).²⁰ The latter text survives in a copy produced in Isfahan and dated to the year 730/1330, that is, the year after Āvī's completion of *TMI*. The copyist of this manuscript, Abū l-Maḥāsīn Muḥammad b. Sa'd al-Nakhjavānī, known as Ibn al-Sāvajī, produced in the same period several other manuscripts, many related to the writings of 'Alī; Ibn al-Sāvajī himself composed a *Durrat al-ma'ālī fī tarjamat al-la'ālī*, a paraphrase in Persian of the Arabic *Nathr al-la'ālī*, a collection of the words of 'Alī.²¹ Āvī dedicated his *Ahdnāmeḥ*, as he did his *TMI*, to a vizier, namely Sharaf al-Dawla wa-l-Dīn 'Alī al-Fāminīnī.²²

(ed.) Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden, 2014), pp. 129–168. The term 'confessional ambiguity' derives from John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Salt Lake City, 1999), p. 4.

¹³Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfahān'.

¹⁴*TMI*, pp. 69–72; *RMI*, pp. 23–25.

¹⁵*RMI*, p. 6; *TMI*, p. 80.

¹⁶*TMI*, pp. 11, 126; *RMI*, pp. 5, 35.

¹⁷*TMI*, p. 145.

¹⁸See, for example, two contemporaneous compositions, both dedicated to the Hazāraspid (Faḏlavī) Atabeg Nuṣrat al-Dīn Aḥmad (r. 696–730 or 733/1296–1330 or 1333) of Greater Luristan: Hindūshāh Ṣāhibī Nakhjavānī, *Tajārib al-salaḥ*, (ed.) 'Abbās Iqbāl (Tehran, 1965), pp. 52–6; and *Tuḥfeh (dar akhlāq va-siyāsat)*, (ed.) M. T. Dānishpazhūh (Tehran, 1962), pp. 133–134; cf. L. Marlow, 'Teaching Wisdom: A Persian Work of Advice for Atabeg Aḥmad of Luristan', in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, (ed.) Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Syracuse, 2013), pp. 122–159.

¹⁹*TMI*, pp. 119–122, 126.

²⁰Interestingly, Āvī associated 'Alī's 'Letter' with Mālik-i Ashtar's appointment as governor of 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, rather than, as in *Nahj al-balāgha*, as governor of Egypt (*Famān-i Mālik-i Ashtar*, p. 59; cf. William C. Chittick, *A Shī'ite Anthology* [Albany, 1981], p. 68).

²¹*Famān-i Mālik-i Ashtar*, pp. 50–52, 100; A. J. Arberry, B. W. Robinson, the late E. Blochet and the late J. V. S. Wilkinson, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Dublin, 1962), iii, pp. 72–73, no. 308.

²²This individual, apparently a highly placed administrator in the fiscal administration of Isfahan and its environs, is praised lavishly for his experience, knowledge and abilities in *TMI*, where Āvī invokes him as *ṣāhib-i a'zam dastūr-i a'lam niẓām va-ṣalāh-i jahān mudabbir-i umūr-i Irān iftikhār al-vuzarā' ikehtiyār al-varā Sharaf al-Dawla wa-l-Dīn 'Alī al-Fāminīnī* (*TMI*, p. 50). The reading of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī's *nisba* is somewhat uncertain. I have adopted the reading of 'Abbās Iqbāl (*TMI*, p. 50; appearing in the index, however, as Fāmīnī [p. 154]). Dānishpazhūh also reads Fāminīnī

Āvī wrote in an Isfahan that had recovered considerably since its devastation in the wake of the Mongol army's first advance roughly a century earlier, in 623/1226, and the extreme suppression of continuing local resistance that endured for decades, well into the reign of Abaqa Khan (r. 663–80/1265–82), after the city's final conquest in 638/1240–1. Modern scholars have discerned in the later period of Abū Sa'īd's reign both signs of stability and the beginnings of the disintegration that anticipated the end of the Ilkhanate,²³ and the impact of the peace treaty concluded between Abū Sa'īd and the Mamluk ruler, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad I b. Qalāwūn (r. 693–4/1293–4, 698–708/1299–1309, 709–41/1310–41), in 723/1323, after some sixty years of conflict, remains somewhat uncertain.²⁴ There is ample evidence to suggest, however, that Isfahan had, by the time of Āvī's arrival, benefited from the land and tax reforms initiated by Ghazan Khan (r. 694–703/1295–1304) and pursued by his successor Öljeytü (r. 703–16/1304–16).²⁵ Ghazan had sponsored the foundation of a *dār al-siyāda* (a 'house for *sayyids*') in the city, and Mustawfī, who visited Isfahan during this period, reported the presence of numerous *madrasas*, *khānaqāhs* and charitable institutions established for purposes of benevolence (*abu'āb-i khayr*);²⁶ he also remarked on the active state of Isfahan's craftsmanship.²⁷ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who visited in 727/1327, experienced generous hospitality in the *zāwiya* (*khānaqāh*) affiliated with the Shaykh 'Alī b. Sahl, a student of al-Junayd.²⁸ At the same time, the city retained its longstanding reputation for recurrent inter-communal conflict. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, much of the fine and substantial city of Isfahan had fallen into ruin as a result of the still active *fitna* between *ahl al-sunna* and the *rawāfiḍ*.²⁹ Like their counterparts in other urban centres, the citizens of

(pp. 50, 59, where Āvī invokes him with similar epithets to those that appear in *TMI*). The *nisba* almost certainly derives from the name of a village lying in Azmāvin, one of the five districts in Hamadan, for which various names are recorded (*Hamadān-nāmeḥ: Bist maqāleh dar-bāreh-yi Mādistan*, (ed.) Parvīz Adhkā'ī [Hamadan, 2001], pp. 15 [map], 77–78, 80, 140). In Le Strange's edition of Mustawfī's *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, the name appears as Fāmīti, with variants supplied (*Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 72 and n. 6; *Geographical Part*, p. 75; cf. *Hamadān-nāmeḥ*, p. 132 and n. 2). Writing in 1901, without the benefit of Dānīshpazhūh's edition of the *Farmān-i Mālik-i Ashtar*, E. G. Browne, following the Persian manuscript RAS 180, initially read the name as a reference to Nāyin, which, according to Mustawfī, lay twenty-six *farsangs* from Isfahan (Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, pp. 52, 74, 141; cf. Bertold Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran* [Leiden, 1985], p. 290). Having consulted a second manuscript, Browne later emended his reading to Ghāmīn ('of Ghāmīn'; 'Account of a Rare Manuscript History of Isfahān, Presented to the Royal Asiatic Society on May 19, 1827', *JRAS* [1901], pp. 433, 700).

²³For leanings towards the former view, see David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986), p. 173; Peter Jackson, 'Abū Sa'īd Bahādor Khan', *Elr* 1 (1983), pp. 374–377, updated 2011 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-said-bahador-khan>), accessed 8 February 2018; for the latter view, see Charles Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37: A Decade of Discord in Mongol Iran* (Bloomington, 1999), p. 3 and *passim*. See also David Morgan, 'The Mongols in Iran: A Reappraisal', *Iran* 42 (2004), pp. 134–135.

²⁴Reuven Amitai, 'The Resolution of the Mongol-Mamluk War', *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, (eds.) R. Amitai and M. Biran (Leiden, 2005), pp. 359–390; Reuven Amitai, *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands: Studies in the History of the Ilkhanate XVI* (Aldershot and Burlington).

²⁵On the reforms of Ghazan, see Judith Kolbas, *The Mongols in Iran: Chingiz Khan to Ulyaytu 1220–1309* (London, 2006), pp. 310–374.

²⁶Literally 'gates of benevolence'; compare *abu'āb al-birr*, literally 'gates of piety', a phrase referring to a piously founded complex, often including a tomb (Laylā Shahriyārī, *Sharḥ-i dushvārīhā-yi Vaqfnāmeḥ-yi Rab'-i Rashīdī* [Tabriz, 2008], p. 66; Birgitt Hoffmann, *Waqf im mongolischen Iran: Rašīduddīn's Sorge um Nachruhm und Seelenheil* [Stuttgart, 2000], pp. 17, 38, 76, 166–167, 200, 206, 235–236, 243, 247, 255, 276, 348, 404; Sheila S. Blair, 'Ilkhanid Architecture and Society: An Analysis of the Endowment Deed of the Rab'-i Rashīdī', *Iran* 22, 1984, pp. 67, 84. On the *dār al-siyāda*, see Pfeiffer, 'Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization', p. 146.

²⁷*Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 214.

²⁸Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuhfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār* (Beirut, 1992), pp. 214–215.

²⁹Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuhfat al-nuẓẓār*, p. 214. See also Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 49, where the author notes that the majority of the population were Sunnī and Shāfi'ī, and by and large utterly obedient (*dar tā'at darajeh-yi tamām*

Isfahan had resisted an attempt under Öljeytü to declare Imāmī Shī'ism the official religion of parts of the Ilkhanid kingdom.³⁰ The number and variety of explanatory narratives generated by Öljeytü's adoption of Shī'ī Islam, as well as reports of his subsequent return to Sunnī Islam, suggest that, in Judith Pfeiffer's words, Shī'ism represented "the exception, not the rule" in Ilkhanid Iran.³¹ Isfahan and its environs, however, appear to have possessed a significant Shī'ī population; and the nearby shrine of Pīr-i Bakrān, where the shaykh was buried in 1303, contains an inscription naming the twelve imams.³²

Tarjameh-yi Maḥāsīn-i Isfahān

I shall begin my analysis of *TMI* with a discussion of Āvī's preface, which, designed to forge a connection between the text to follow and its audience, provides useful contextual material. After examining a number of contextual factors, I shall turn to a consideration of Āvī's purposes in selecting *RMI* as his source-text.

The extant manuscripts of *TMI* vary quite considerably in length.³³ Some lack significant sections of introductory material; one omits substantial passages from the body of Āvī's text; furthermore, the various manuscripts conclude at different points. On the basis of a manuscript thought likely to date from Āvī's lifetime, 'Abbās Iqbāl, in 1949, published an edition of the Persian text.³⁴ Other relatively early manuscripts include an unsigned, undated copy preserved in the Chester Beatty Library, thought to date from the mid-fourteenth-century, and the copy, dated 884/1479, that formed the principal, if defective, basis for the detailed study of E. G. Browne, who published a thorough two-part summary of its contents in 1901.³⁵ Two nineteenth-century copies, both produced in Isfahan, appear to preserve full

dārānd), other than their tendency to internal conflict (*muḥārabeh va-nizā*). On the physical virtues and sociological problems of Isfahan, Mustawfī cites two poems, one by Kamāl al-Dīn Isfahānī (pp. 49–50). On this persistent conflict, see also Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Leiden, 2015), p. 4.

³⁰Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuhfat al-nuẓẓār*, pp. 219–221; Judith Pfeiffer, *Twelver Shī'ism in Mongol Iran*, (Istanbul, 1999), pp. 14–16.

³¹Judith Pfeiffer, 'Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeytü's Conversion to Shī'ism (709/1309) in Muslim Narrative Sources', *Mongolian Studies* 22 (1999), pp. 43; *eadem*, *Twelver Shī'ism*, p. 18.

³²Lisa Golombek, 'The Cult of Saints and Shrine Architecture in the Fourteenth Century', in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. D. Kouymjian (Beirut, 1974), p. 423; cf. Hoffmann, *Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, 207. Several shrines of the period are characterised by Shī'ī versions of the profession of faith (Golombek, 'Cult of Saints', pp. 422, 425, 427), and Öljeytü's attempt to establish Shī'ism in Isfahan remains visible in the *miḥrāb* added to the Friday mosque; see Charles Melville, 'The Mongols in Iran', in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353*, (eds.) Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New Haven, 2002), p. 58.

³³On the extant manuscripts, see Aḥmad Munzavī, *Fihrist-i nuskheh-hā-yi khaṭṭī-yi fārsī* [*Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*] (Tehran, 1969), vi, p. 4295.

³⁴See above, n 2. Since its appearance in 1949, Iqbāl's edition has been reprinted as 'Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, *Maḥāsīn-i Isfahān* (Isfahan, 2006). The manuscript from which Iqbāl prepared his edition was perhaps identical to the old manuscript read by Muḥsin al-Amīn al-'Amīlī in the Maktabat Sharī'atmadār in Rasht (*A' yān al-shī'a*, xxvii, p. 127).

³⁵The copy held in the Chester Beatty Library, listed under the title *Maḥāsīn-i Isfahān*, is undated and unsigned; defective at both ends, it is described as 'old' and dated to the mid-fourteenth-century (*The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, iii, p. 74, no. 312). The manuscript that formed the subject for E. G. Browne's summary and discussion ('Account of a Rare Manuscript'; see above, n. 22) is held in the Royal Asiatic Society (Persian 180), dated 884/1479 and completed in Isfahan at the Mosque of Amīr Ibrāhīm Shāh (f. 82b). A postscript to Browne's article contains additional materials and emendations, based on his late access to a second manuscript, transcribed in Isfahan at the request of Charles Schefer, and dated 1315/1897 (E. Blochet, *Catalogue de la collection de manuscrits orientaux arabes, persans et turcs formée par M. Charles Schefer et acquise par l'état* [Paris, 1900], p. 137, no. 1573;

versions of the text, in a form almost identical to the text reproduced in Iqbāl's edition.³⁶ It would seem, then, that the earliest surviving manuscript and the nineteenth-century copies, all of which preserve the fullest versions of the text, provide a sound basis for the present study.

Āvī's preface

In his preface, Āvī writes in his own person, his voice not yet mediated by Māfarrukhī or Māfarrukhī's interlocutors. Nothing in *TMI* suggests that Āvī wrote in response to a commission; nor did he employ the common device of ascribing the impulse behind his composition to the entreaties of friends. Employing a different trope, Āvī adopts the posture of an outsider. Without means and dependent on the goodwill of strangers, he presents himself as a marginal, isolated figure, who rapidly became enchanted by the remarkable qualities of the city.³⁷ In the supporting narrative, Āvī recounts that, having spent a period of time lamenting the (unspecified) misfortunes that had befallen him, he pondered his father's advice and the examples of his brother and uncles, and experienced a sudden moment of inspiration, which moved him to resolve to leave his homeland (*vaṭan*).³⁸ Gathering the symbolic accoutrements of the student (and perhaps aspiring secretary)—a few leaves of paper, ink, pen-holder—he left the 'house of sorrows' (*bayt al-aḥzān*) that had been his home in Āveh, and after some days, passing through Kashan (as he recounts in verse), he reached Isfahan.³⁹ In Isfahan, where he knew no one, he sought succour in a *madrassa* designated for strangers (*madrasesh-ī bi-rasm-i gharībān*).⁴⁰ As he passed through the streets and markets, Āvī avers that he found Isfahan greatly superior, by a factor of ten, to all that he had previously heard about it.⁴¹ By chance, he recounts, he came across "a book by the name of *Maḥāsīn*, which contained details of the singular qualities and beautiful features of Isfahan".⁴² Delighted by its contents and by Māfarrukhī's pleasing use of language, he decided to translate it into Persian. Describing this impulse with metaphors drawn from clothing, Āvī explains his intention to divest the book of its (Arabic) *durrā* 'a and adorn it instead in the *qabā* ' of Persian, to relieve the doubts of *tāzī* and *pārsī*, "so that 'Arab and 'Ajam might enjoy the good fortune of beholding its beauty and contemplating its perfection".⁴³ He

E. Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits persans de la Bibliothèque nationale* [Paris, 1905], i, pp. 308–9, no. 502). A further manuscript, Or. 10980 (British Library), lacks a title, doxology and colophon, but resembles RAS Persian 180 in several of its lacunae.

³⁶The two nineteenth-century copies are Browne I.2 (Cambridge University Library), dated 1278/1861–2, and the manuscript, dated 1315/1897, copied for Schefer and now held in the BnF (see previous note).

³⁷On this trope, see L. Marlow, 'The *Way of Viziers and the Lamp of Commanders* (*Mīnhāj al-wuzarā* ' *wa-sirāj al-umamā* ') of Ahmad al-Isfahbadhī and the Literary and Political Culture of Early Fourteenth-Century Iran', in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, (eds.) Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 179–180.

³⁸*TMI*, p. 2.

³⁹*TMI*, pp. 2–3. Kashan lay on the route from Sāveh, via Āveh, to Isfahan; *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 184, *Geographical Part*, p. 175.

⁴⁰*TMI*, p. 3. Ibn Baṭṭūta likewise lodged in the city, where he received a fortnight's generous hospitality in a *khānaqāh* that dispensed food to travellers (*al-wārid wa-l-ṣādīr*); *Tuḥfat al-nuḥḥār*, pp. 214–215.

⁴¹*TMI*, p. 3.

⁴²*TMI*, pp. 3–4. Āvī dates Māfarrukhī's composition, incorrectly, to the year 421/1030, a date that appears in the text of *RMI* (*RMI*, p. 107; *TMI*, p. 4). M. Minovi pointed out the erroneous nature of this dating and proposed c. 480/1087 as the likely time of Māfarrukhī's composition (M. Minovi, 'Notes on Māfarrukhī's *The Beauties of Isfahān*', *Bulletin of the American Institute for Art and Archaeology* v, i [1937], p. 28).

⁴³*TMI*, p. 4.

judged that the contents of Māfarrukhī's *Risāla* covered eight principal topics, and, arranging his translation accordingly, he lists the subjects of the eight thematic sections (sg. *dhikr*) into which he divided the material.⁴⁴ Āvī concludes his preface with the dedication of his translation to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad, in whose praise he includes a lengthy *qaṣīdeh*, in Persian, of his own composition; finally, he apologises for any imperfections and errors.⁴⁵ Āvī recapitulates some of the points mentioned in his preface in the 'continuation' (*dhayl*) that follows his eighth *dhikr*. In his *dhayl*, he describes the activities involved in producing his translation as the revelation of (the meanings of) the Arabic expressions, which had been concealed; the renewal of the text in the Persian language; and the addition of records of recent events.⁴⁶ He concludes this epilogue, as he had his preface, with verses in praise of Ghiyāth al-Dīn.⁴⁷

The specific elements in Āvī's account—his references to his origins in Āveh, his status as a student of the literary arts, his migration first to Kashan and next to Isfahan—reflect his accommodation of his particular circumstances to the structures of established literary convention. The author's despairing abandonment of his natal town, his unplanned travels in search of a hospitable place of residence, his poverty and reliance on the kindness and generosity of strangers, his rapture at his new surroundings and gratitude for an actual or anticipated improvement in his circumstances—these tropes conveyed the needs and aspirations, in a manner conditioned in accordance with the region's literary culture, of numerous itinerant or displaced individuals. The date of Āvī's arrival in Isfahan remains unknown, but by the time of his writing in 729/1328–9 he had evidently spent long enough in the city to be able to report on, for example, the types and amounts of its revenues as well as the status of various buildings.⁴⁸

Āvī's expression of his circumstances and his dedication of *TMI* to the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn strongly suggest, I propose, that he sought access to the circles of the vizier, and that he composed *TMI* in the hope that it would bring him a means of economic support, whether in the form of remuneration for his 'gift' or a position in the chancery.⁴⁹ The text, as will be seen in what follows, contains numerous allusions to viziers, and strongly implies a comparison between Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his Seljuk predecessor Niẓām al-Mulk (c. 408–85/1018–92), both of whom combined extensive patronage with extraordinary power in the military as well as the bureaucratic domains.⁵⁰ It is instructive to consider Āvī's *TMI* in conjunction with a composition completed in the same year, in Arabic, and dedicated to the same vizier, namely the mirror for viziers *Minhāj al-wuzarā' wa-sirāj al-umarā'* of Aḥmad

⁴⁴ *TMI*, pp. 4–5. Āvī's table of contents outlines the subjects treated in the source and target texts: the qualities of Isfahan and its superiority to other locations; description of Isfahan and its surroundings; Gāvkh'ānī and the distinguishing qualities of the environs of Isfahan; the beautiful features of the city's interior and exterior; Isfahan's rulers and would-be rulers, from Pharaoh onwards; contemporary notables; the qualities of the Isfahani population; description of the seasons; novelties; description of the *Muṣallā*, and the roads and remarkable personages of Isfahan in the past and present (see the useful summaries of the contents of *RMI* and *TMI* in Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfāhān', and of *TMI* in Browne, 'Account of a Rare Manuscript').

⁴⁵ *TMI*, pp. 5–7.

⁴⁶ *TMI*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ *TMI*, pp. 145–146.

⁴⁸ *TMI*, p. 49 and *passim*.

⁴⁹ The bestowal and exchange of gifts constituted a critical element in the disposition of the affairs of the court; on the economy of gift-giving in the reigns of Ghazan and Öljeitü, see Kolbas, *Mongols in Iran*, pp. 310–313.

⁵⁰ See below, n. 103.

al-İşfahbadhī, who, in a fairly explicit allusion to his aspirations, described his work as “a conveyance towards his [Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s] lofty presence” and “a means of access to his High Gate”.⁵¹

Ghiyāth al-Dīn and the late Ilkhanid western Iranian network

Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the son of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh, the celebrated vizier of Ghazan Khan (r. 694–703/1295–1304) and his successor Muḡammad Khudābandeh Öljejtü (r. 1304–16).⁵² Executed in 718/1318, towards the beginning of Abū Sa’īd’s reign, Rashīd al-Dīn was, of course, also the remarkable author of the universal history *Jāmi’ al-tavārīkh* or *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*. Abū Sa’īd, who had ordered the execution of Rashīd al-Dīn, appointed the latter’s son Ghiyāth al-Dīn to the vizierate in 727/1327, the same year that saw the fall of Amīr Chūpān (c. 660–727/1262–1327), the leading Mongol amīr of the late Ilkhanid period and effective ruler for the previous decade.⁵³ Like his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn wielded considerable power, not only in the administrative and cultural but also in the political and even military arenas (strikingly, several contemporary sources refer to him as Amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn); according to al-Şafādī (696–764/1297–1363), Abū Sa’īd entrusted him with the reins of government (*maqālīd al-mamālīk*), and bestowed upon him advancement (*irtiqā*) and sovereign authority (*mulk*) of a degree that no other vizier of his time had possessed.⁵⁴ Again like his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn did not long survive the death of his sovereign, and after the death of Abū Sa’īd, in the ensuing disintegration of the Ilkhanate, he too was killed.⁵⁵

Ghiyāth al-Dīn occupied the most prominent position in an extensive network of administrators, men of letters, scholars and Sufi masters, interlinked with members of leading Mongol families, including the family of the Ilkhans, as well as the Ilkhanate’s vassal rulers, who were frequently tied to the Ilkhanid ruling dynasty by marriage.⁵⁶ Individuals affiliated through the period’s networks often participated in them in multiple capacities; for example Vaşşāf, who wrote during the reigns of Ghazan, Öljejtü and Abū Sa’īd, was variously and often simultaneously an official in the financial administration, a member of the court, an admired poet and stylist, a panegyrist, and a historian.⁵⁷ The overlapping connections—

⁵¹Marlow, ‘The *Way of Viziers*’, pp. 179–180.

⁵²Birgitt Hoffmann proposes that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḡammad owed his naming to the Muslim names of his royal namesake, Öljejtü (*Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, pp. 77, 92).

⁵³His appointment, at first briefly held jointly with ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḡammad Faryūmardī, followed the fall of Dimashq Kh’āja b. Chūpān (see Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, pp. 10–18, 29).

⁵⁴Al-Şafādī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi-l-wafāyāt*, (ed.) Aḡmad al-Ārna’ūṭ and Turķī Muştafā (Beirut, 2000), iv, p. 234. At one point, Abū Sa’īd commanded Ghiyāth al-Dīn to take control of the army, reportedly during a period of illness that preceded the Ilkhan’s death in 736/1335 (Melville, *Fall of Amir Chupan*, p. 60). On the scope of Rashīd al-Dīn’s power, see Hoffmann, *Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, pp. 77–89.

⁵⁵Ghiyāth al-Dīn took an active part in the struggle for power that followed the death of Abū Sa’īd. Charles Melville observes that the attachment to the vizier of the title ‘Amīr’ reveals the ambiguities in the evolving collaboration between viziers and *noyans*, likely to have contributed significantly to the alienation against him (*Fall of Amir Chupan*, p. 44).

⁵⁶Melville, ‘The Mongols in Iran’, p. 46; cf. Jean Aubin, ‘Le patronage culturel en Iran sous les Ilkhans: une grande famille de Yazd’, *Le monde iranien et l’Islam* 3 (1975), pp. 107–118.

⁵⁷The preface to Vaşşāf’s *Tajziyat al-amşār va-tazjiyat al-a’sār*, commonly referred to as *Tārīkh-i Vaşşāf*, a five-volume history of the Ilkhans from 658/1260, is dated 699/1300. Vaşşāf had completed four volumes by 712/1312, the fifth reaching completion in 727/1326–7 or 728/1327–8.

personal and familial, professional, religious and local—among members of these networks multiplied still further as the reach of individuals extended through the members of their families. The reach of the network was both geographical and institutional; it was commonplace, for instance, for viziers to install members of their families, as well as other members of their local, professional and religious networks, to positions throughout the kingdom.⁵⁸

Western Iran and its extension north into Azerbaijan lay at the centre of the network over which Ghiyāth al-Dīn presided. The geographical area mapped by the urban centres of Tabriz, Qazvin, Īdhaj in Greater Luristan, Kashan and Isfahan, as far as the borders of Fars and Yazd, formed in this period an interconnected, coherent unit. Rashīd al-Dīn had owned property in several of these locations,⁵⁹ many of which, for the first half of the fourteenth century, fell within one of three regional monetary divisions (north-western, south-western and north-eastern) in the Ilkhanid territories. Orientated towards Tabriz (designated *dār al-saltana*), 'Irāq-i 'Ajam, a section of the north-eastern division that included Isfahan, comprised a sub-region within the *dīvān*, and a distinctive sub-regional coinage linked Hamadan, Isfahan and Kashan with Greater and Lesser Luristan.⁶⁰ The vitality of the network in which Ghiyāth al-Dīn, for the duration of his vizierate, occupied the leading position is apparent in the high level of mobility that typified the lives of several members of the various élites, who moved frequently among these urban centres. Rulers, soldiers, government officials and administrators moved constantly; so too did religious figures, scholars and holy men and writers, poets and scholars in search of patronage.⁶¹ In a reflection of the mediated sovereignty that characterised much of the Ilkhanid kingdom, several writers moved between Isfahan and the court of the vassal or client dynasty of the Hazāraspids in Īdhaj, a distance of forty-five *farsangs*.⁶² In accordance with their movements, writers frequently revised and rededicated their writings to new or potential patrons.⁶³

This broad set of interconnections encompassed individuals who participated simultaneously in a variety of parallel or subsidiary networks, which intersected at various points.

⁵⁸Jean Aubin, *Émiris mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris, 1995); Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World from Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven, 2017), pp. 282–296.

⁵⁹A. K. S. Lambton, 'The *Āthār wa Ahyā'* of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī and His Contribution as an Agronomist, Arboriculturist and Horticulturalist', in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, (eds.) Reuven Amitai-Preis and David O. Morgan (Leiden, 1999), p. 128.

⁶⁰Stephen Album, 'Studies in Ilkhanid History and Numismatics: I: A Late Ilkhanid Hoard (743/1342)', *Studia Iranica* 13 (1984), pp. 52–53 (examples struck in Isfahan *passim*); Sheila S. Blair, 'The Coins of the Later Ilkhānids: Mint Organization, Regionalization, and Urbanism', *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 27 (1982), pp. 217–218; Kolbas, *Mongols in Iran*, pp. 327–336, 342–344.

⁶¹Charles Melville, 'The Itineraries of Sultan Öljeitü, 1304–16', *Iran* 28 (1990), pp. 55–70; *Persian Historiography*, (ed.) Charles Melville (*A History of Persian Literature*, Volume X) (London, 2012), pp. 176–179.

⁶²*Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 51. On Īdhaj, also known as Māl al-Amīr, see Ibn Battūṭa, *Tuḡfat al-nuḡẓār*, pp. 209–13; Bahman Karīmī, *Jughrāfi-yi muḡaṣṣal-i tārikhī-yi gharb-i Irān* (Tehran, 1937), pp. 310–13 (Īdheh). The phrase 'mediated sovereignty' is adopted from Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, pp. 242–268.

⁶³Shabānkāra ī, for example, produced three versions of his *Majma' al-ansāb*. He dedicated the initial version, composed in 733/1332–3, to Abū Sa'īd; he entrusted this work to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, but before the vizier had been able to convey it to the Ilkhan, Abū Sa'īd died, and the book was subsequently lost, reportedly when the vizier's house was pillaged in 736/1336. Shabānkāra ī completed a second redaction in 738/1337; and a further version bears the date 743/1342–3 (Shabānkāra ī, *Majma' al-ansāb* [Tehran, 1984], pp. 272–273, 279–280; Jean Aubin, 'Un chroniqueur méconnu, Šabānkāra ī', *Studia Iranica* 10 [1981], pp. 213–224). Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī similarly dedicated various works to the potential patrons of the time (Melville, *Persian Historiography*, 203), and Kh'ājū Kirmānī, who was perpetually on the move, appears to have made a practice of invoking certain patrons in the prefaces to his *mathnavīs* and different figures in his conclusions (Teresa Fitzherbert, 'Khwājū Kirmānī (689–753/1290–52): An *Éminence Grise* of Fourteenth Century Persian Painting', *Iran* 29 [1991], pp. 138–139, 145–146).

Notably, Ghiyāth al-Dīn cultivated and maintained close relations with several religious scholars and Sufi masters, in an era in which strong attachment to holy men and women was finding expression in the proliferating construction of shrines that gradually transformed the landscape.⁶⁴ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (642–723/1244–1323), whom Ghiyāth al-Dīn summoned to the Madrasa al-Rashīdiyya one evening in 726/1325–6, conveys the conviviality of his *majlis*, which, with a gathering of the leading men of religious and humanistic learning (a 'yān al-'ulamā' wa-akābir al-fuḍalā'), he attended; after the group had performed the prayer, the soon-to-be vizier presided over a long evening of entertainments and refreshments.⁶⁵ It is evident from the large number of writings, varying widely in genre and in scale, addressed or dedicated to him that Ghiyāth al-Dīn enjoyed the reputation of an especially active and generous patron.⁶⁶ In addition to commissioning a number of writings and remunerating authors who offered him their unsolicited compositions, Ghiyāth al-Dīn almost certainly sponsored and supervised the production of the Great Mongol ('Demotte') *Shāhnāmeḥ* in Tabriz between 736/1336 and 737/1336.⁶⁷

Perhaps the prime example of an individual's multiple points of connection within and across networks was the Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (659–736/1261–1336). 'Alā' al-Dawla, initiated into the Kubrawiyya, belonged to a family of wealthy landlords and high officials in the Ilkhanate (his paternal and maternal uncles and his father had all served as viziers). About the same age as Arghun (r. 683–90/1284–91), he had grown up with him at the *ordu*, and at the age of fifteen had entered into his official service, before withdrawing in order to pursue the path of spiritual engagement. At a later date, his status as a leading Sufi teacher established, he interceded with the Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd on behalf of Amīr Chūpān.⁶⁸ 'Alā' al-Dawla, a prolific writer, also received visits from poets, including Kh'ājū Kirmānī (c. 689–750/1290–1349), himself a scion of a family of high social status, the composer of poetry addressed to a spectrum of political and spiritual figures, and an initiate into the

⁶⁴Golombek, 'Cult of Saints'; Sheila S. Blair, 'Sufi Saints and Shrine Architecture in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Muqarnas* 7 (1990), pp. 35–49.

⁶⁵Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma' al-ādāb fī mu'jam al-aqāb*, (ed.) Muḥammad al-Kāzīm (Tehran, 1995), ii, pp. 456–457, no. 1803. Birgitt Hoffmann suggests that Ghiyāth al-Dīn, whose father and brother suffered execution on the command of the Ilkhan who appointed him to the vizierate, preferred intellectual and spiritual pursuits to the political career into which he nevertheless stepped (*Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, p. 93). Al-Ṣafādī describes Ghiyāth al-Dīn, after the execution of his father and before Abū Sa'īd called him to the vizierate, as devoting himself to study and associating with worthy and benevolent persons (*ishtaḡhala muddatan wa-ṣāḥiba ahl al-khayr*, al-Ṣafādī, *Kitāb al-Waḡf bi-l-uḡfayāt*, iv, p. 234).

⁶⁶For a partial list, see Marlow, 'The Way of Viziers', p. 176.

⁶⁷Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago, 1980), p. 48; Sheila Blair, 'Patterns of Patronage and Production in Ilkhanid Iran: The Case of Rashīd al-Dīn', in *The Court of the Ilkhans, 1290–1340*, eds. Julian Raby and Teresa Fitzherbert (Oxford, 1996), p. 56; *eadem*, 'Coins of the Later Ilkhānids', pp. 224–225; *eadem*, 'Rewriting the History of the Great Mongol Shahnama', in *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, (ed.) Robert Hillenbrand (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 40, 47–48.

⁶⁸Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīdeh*, pp. 675–676. See Giovanni Maria Martini, 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power: A Persian Lord and Intellectual in the Heart of the Ilkhanate (Leiden, 2018), pp. 1–97; Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of 'Alā' ad-Dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany, 1995); J. van Ess, 'Alā' al-Dawla Semnānī', *Elr* i (1984), pp. 774–7, updated 2011 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ala-al-dawla-semnani>), accessed 20 June 2018; Amitai, 'Sufis and Shamans', p. 32; Lawrence G. Potter, 'Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran', *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994), pp. 92–95. Chūpān, furthermore, held discussions with al-Simnānī, and shortly before his fall he required his *amīrs* to swear an oath of loyalty both in Mashhad-i Tus and at the *khānaqāh* of Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dīn in Simnan (Melville, *Fall of Amir Chupan*, pp. 20–22; Martini, 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī', pp. 86–87).

Murshidiyya.⁶⁹ Collaboration among members of the Ilkhanid family, their high administrators and members of religious institutions also took the form of dual patronage of shrines in the early fourteenth century, a trend that began under Öljeytü and continued after the end of the Ilkhanid state.⁷⁰ Several of these individuals possessed considerable authority, of various kinds, and they were able to exercise it to appeal to and sometimes constrain the power of the ruler or his viziers.⁷¹

The combination of textual and contextual evidence indicates the likelihood that Āvī's principal incentive in producing *TMI* was the prospect of gaining access to the system of networks over which Ghiyāth al-Dīn occupied a position of primacy. But what factors, in his efforts to achieve this objective, led him to choose the particular mechanism of producing a Persian version of the Arabic *RMI*? I turn now to the relationship between *RMI* and *TMI*, and of Āvī to his predecessor, the *littérateur* Mufaḍḍal b. Sa'd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māfarrukhī.

A multi-generic composition, Māfarrukhī's Arabic *Maḥāsīn Isfāhān* combines aspects of the 'local history', the 'literary anthology', and *faḍā'il* literature.⁷² Unlike Āvī, Māfarrukhī, who composed his *RMI* during the reign of the Seljuk Sultan Malikshāh (r. 465–85/1073–92),⁷³ belonged to one of Isfahan's long established families of notables.⁷⁴ During the Buyid period (320–454/932–1062), several members of the Māfarrukhī family appear to have enjoyed associations with the city's rulers and the courtly élites. The family participated in the cultural life of the flourishing local court established in the city by the vizier and *littérateur* Abū l-Qāsim Ismā'īl al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (326–85/938–95), during the reigns of the Buyid rulers Abū Maṣṣūr Mu'ayyad al-Dawla (r. 366–73/976–84) and Abū l-Ḥasan Fakhr al-Dawla (r. 373–87/984–97).⁷⁵ After the Seljuk conquest of Isfahan in 443/1051, Mufaḍḍal and his father Sa'd became clients of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (c. 408–85/1018–92), and Mufaḍḍal's *RMI* includes an implicit dedication to Niẓām al-Mulk's son, the governor of Isfahan, Abū l-Faṭḥ Muẓaffār Fakhr al-Mulk (d. 500/1106).⁷⁶ During the reign of Malikshāh (r. 465–85/1073–92), who grew up in the environs of Isfahan and remained attached to it, Isfahan developed into the real and symbolic centre of Seljuk power.⁷⁷ Niẓām al-Mulk,

⁶⁹On Kh'ājū Kirmānī's encounter with Simnāni, see Dawlatshāh, *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā'*, (ed.) Fāṭimeh 'Alāqeh (Tehran, 2007), pp. 435–443; Fitzherbert, 'Khawājū Kirmānī', p. 142, n. 77. Elsewhere, it is Amīn al-Dīn Balyānī (d. 745/1345) who is reported to have guided the initiation (J. T. P. de Bruijn, 'Kh'ājū Kermānī', *Elr* [2009], online [<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kvaju-kermani>], accessed 28 August 2018).

⁷⁰Golombek, 'Cult of Saints', pp. 419–430.

⁷¹Potter, 'Sufis and Sultans'; Martini, 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī between Spiritual Authority and Political Power; Melville, 'The Mongols in Iran', pp. 57–58.

⁷²Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan'; Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfāhān'; *idem*, 'The Political Agenda of an Iranian *Adīb* at the Time of the Great Saljuqs: Māfarrukhī's *K. Maḥāsīn Isfāhān* Put into Context', *Nouvelle Revue des Études Iraniennes* 1 (2008), p. 68.

⁷³Minovi dated *RMI* to c. 480/1087 ('Notes on Māfarrukhī's *The Beauties of Isfāhān*', p. 28); Durand-Guédy likewise dates *RMI* to the earlier part of Malikshāh's reign, and almost certainly earlier than 479–80/1086–7 ('Political Agenda', p. 70; *idem*, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfāhān').

⁷⁴Durand-Guédy, 'Political Agenda', pp. 69–70; *idem*, *Iranian Élites and Turkish Rulers*, p. 15.

⁷⁵*RMI*, pp. 25–26, 99–100; Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfāhān'; *idem*, 'Political Agenda', p. 70. It is perhaps worth noting that an earlier *littérateur* from Āveh, Maṣṣūr b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī, author of *Nathr al-durar*, had enjoyed the patronage of al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (Bosworth, 'Āva').

⁷⁶*RMI*, p. 117; the author's panegyric is anticipated in his mentions of Fakhr al-Mulk earlier in the section (pp. 105, 109). Cf. *TMI*, 'Muqaddimeh-yi nāshir', *dāl*; Durand-Guédy, 'Political Agenda', p. 72; *idem*, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfāhān'. On Fakhr al-Mulk, see Kh'āndamīr, *Dastūr al-vuzarā'*, p. 188.

⁷⁷Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Élites and Turkish Rulers*, pp. 78–83, 83–101. Māfarrukhī explicitly states that Malikshāh grew up not in the city but *fi nawāḥiḥā* (*RMI*, p. 105; noted in David Durand-Guédy, 'Ruling from the

who had taken up residence in Isfahan in about 456/1063, transformed it into the focal point of the vast and powerful network that he had constructed across Iran.⁷⁸ It was also at this time, however, that the city's established social and political structures, in which the Māfarrukhī family had long participated, experienced the profoundly dislocating effects of Niẓām al-Mulk's importing of notable families from Khurasan.⁷⁹ In *RMI*, Māfarrukhī responded to a particular historical moment. It seems likely that he sought to convince the city's newly powerful élites of its worthiness to serve as the Seljuk 'capital',⁸⁰ and of the enduring merits of Isfahan's indigenous notable families.⁸¹ This perspective finds support in the extensive attention in *RMI* to the city's notables (*ru'asā'*), and the wide range of individuals – including landowners and merchants – to whom he ascribes this status.⁸²

From Arabic into Persian

As the preceding discussion of Āvī's preface indicated, Āvī's announced purpose in producing *TMI* was to broaden the accessibility of the engaging Arabic source-text for a Persian-speaking audience. He also states his decision to supplement the materials in his source-text with more recent materials. It is quickly apparent, however, that Āvī's 'translation', like many other Persian renderings of prestigious Arabic texts, diverges substantially from its source-text. Some of Āvī's most striking interventions in Māfarrukhī's text occur at the level of structure: whereas Māfarrukhī composed his *RMI* as a continuous, undivided text, Āvī divided the contents into sections, which he rearranged into eight thematically differentiated divisions. In another basic alteration of the source-text's structure and contents, Āvī omits considerable amounts of material and adds new matter, including substantial quantities of verse.⁸³ To this eight-part structure Āvī added, as previously indicated, a preface and a *dhayl*, in which he included certain passages from Māfarrukhī's text, augmented, as his choice of the term *dhayl* implied, with materials that reflected the passage of time since *RMI*'s composition. Some of the translator's modifications pass without remark. In several cases, however, Āvī announces his interventions; introducing his fourth *dhikr*, for example, he adds the clarifying words, "on the excellent qualities of the interior and exterior parts of the city ... in former times and in the era of the translator".⁸⁴ Indeed, Āvī, who refers to himself as

Outside: A New Perspective on Early Turkish Kingship in Iran', in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies in Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, (eds.) Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville [Boston, 2013], p. 331.

⁷⁸Durand-Guédy, 'New Trends in the Political History of Iran under the Great Saljuqs (11th-12th Centuries)', *History Compass* 13 (2015), pp. 327-330 and Fig. 3.

⁷⁹Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, pp. 256-297; *idem*, 'Political Agenda', pp. 71-2.

⁸⁰On the use of the term 'capital' in referring to Isfahan's status during the reign of Malikshāh, see the comments of Durand-Guédy (*Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, p. 75) and Jürgen Paul ('Review Article: Recent Publications on the History of Iran under the Seljuqs', *Eurasian Studies* 9 [2010], p. 267).

⁸¹Durand-Guédy, 'Political Agenda', pp. 73-89; *idem*, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, pp. 15, 115-129, 131-135; *idem*, 'Iranians at War under Turkish Domination: The Example of Pre-Mongol Isfahan', *Iranian Studies* 38 (2005), pp. 589-590.

⁸²For a fuller consideration of the context and motivations underlying Māfarrukhī's composition, see Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan', pp. 117-132; *idem*, 'Isfahan V: Local Historiography', *EIr* xiii (2006), pp. 638-641, updated 2012 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/isfahan-v-local-historiography>), accessed 3 March 2018; Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, p. 131.

⁸³Manuscripts of *TMI* reveal variations in the arrangement and contents; see above, n. 35, and Browne, 'Account of a Rare Manuscript', pp. 690-704.

⁸⁴*TMI*, p. 47. It is in this chapter that Āvī states the date of his writing (*TMI*, p. 49).

bandeh-yi mutarjīm or *mutarjīm*, repeatedly draws attention to his relationship with his predecessor, to whom he refers as *Ṣāhib-i Risāleh-yi Maḥāsīn*.⁸⁵

Several aspects of Māfarrukhī's *Risālat Maḥāsīn Isfahān* must have rendered it an especially promising point of departure for a bilingual literary specialist seeking access to the city's cultural and administrative élites. Adopting the earlier Arabic work as a foundation for his new composition allowed Āvī to approach his intended audience with a degree of indirectness, in accordance with the conventional requirement of authorial modesty; especially importantly in an unsolicited text, it also provided him with a means of addressing this audience in terms of its particular cultural code. *RMI*'s praise of Isfahan and its emphasis on the city's singular qualities provided Āvī, in the pose of the unfamiliar newcomer, with the opportunity to add laudatory materials of his own selection and composition. His source-text's preoccupation with the local municipal leaders invited him to expand this focus to accommodate contemporaneous notables. *RMI*'s attention to viziers and its implied dedication to Fakhr al-Mulk furnished Āvī with a nice pretext to dedicate his *TMI* to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, similarly a scion of an illustrious family of viziers. Finally, *RMI*'s generic hybridity provided Āvī with an opportunity to demonstrate his mastery of a variety of linguistic and literary skills, appropriate to the chancellor's practice of *inshā'*, and to display his affinity with the cultural vocabulary of the bilingual urban and courtly élites.

The presentation of Isfahan

RMI's celebration of Isfahan's distinctive qualities and notable figures furnished Āvī with the opportunity to link himself with a repertoire of materials of immediate interest and appeal to his intended audience. It relieved him of the literary imperative of explaining and justifying his decision to write in praise of a city to which he had, according to his conventional self-presentation, only recently arrived, and it provided him with a means of accommodating the set of tropes discussed in the previous pages. Furthermore, Āvī used this opportunity to supplement the materials recorded in his source. He added large amounts of Persian and some Arabic poetry, including verses of his own composition in both languages, and he added laudatory treatments of contemporary notables to the preoccupation with the merits of the urban *nu'asā'* in his source-text.

In an example of his adaptation of *RMI* to accommodate contemporary notables, Āvī reworked a section in his source-text devoted to the remarkable features of locations in the vicinity of Isfahan. In the corresponding section of *RMI*, Māfarrukhī narrates a story concerning a *qanāt*, in the region of Kashan, from which Arabs reportedly drank at their peril.⁸⁶ He proceeds to discuss the remarkable properties of a series of nearby villages (sg. *qarya*). Among these locations is the town of Yazd. Jürgen Paul has noted the ironic distance that Māfarrukhī deploys in this sequence of narratives, which he concludes with a wry reference to himself as a narrator of worthless tales (*asāfir*).⁸⁷ At the conclusion of this section, Māfarrukhī includes his own verses in praise of the fine natural qualities of Isfahan.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *TMI*, pp. 6, 9, 16, 24, 28, 44, 49, 51, 54, 94, 99, 115, 119, 123.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of this report in Māfarrukhī's text, see Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan', pp. 120–121.

⁸⁷ *RMI*, p. 20; Paul, 'Histories', p. 121.

⁸⁸ *RMI*, p. 21.

Āvī narrates the story (*ḥikāyat*) of the *kārīz* near Kashan in a fashion very similar to that of his source.⁸⁹ His accounts of the other villages (sg. *dih*) largely correspond to the reports in *RMI*, although in one case, concerning the spring at Mount Dinārat in Qumdār, Āvī substitutes a different narrative for the tale adduced in *RMI*.⁹⁰ Strikingly, however, Āvī omits the city of Yazd from his sequence, and proceeds instead to discuss the remaining locations treated in his source.⁹¹ It is only after reaching the end of this sequence that Āvī turns his attention to Yazd, which, treated separately from the previously mentioned locations, appears as the culmination of the section. His purpose in highlighting Yazd was to avail himself of the occasion to praise at length Shams al-Dīn [Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn al-Nizām al-Ḥusaynī] Yazdī (d. 733/1332-3), a prominent member of the family of *sayyids* known as the Āl-i Nizām. Shams al-Dīn's father Rukn al-Dīn (d. 732/1331-2), like his son *naqīb* and *qāḍī* of the Shāfi'īs, had constructed a complex, the 'Iṣmatiyya, in Isfahan, and Shams al-Dīn, married to a sister of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, had been appointed by him to the office of *qāḍī l-quḍāt* and to the deputy vizierate over the kingdom's territories.⁹² In other words, he was a highly placed and widely admired local figure in the network(s) to which Āvī sought access.

In the continuation of this section, Āvī omits his predecessor's self-referential irony and proceeds directly to poetry in praise of Isfahan. In another reshaping of his source-text, he adduces in the first instance verses of his own composition, in Arabic, in praise of Isfahan; only after these verses does he cite the verses of his predecessor Māfarrukhī, which he retains in the Arabic original.⁹³ This pairing of Māfarrukhī's verses with verses of his own, sometimes in Arabic and sometimes in Persian, is a strategy that Āvī replicates in several instances in *TMI*; it reinforces his linking of *ṣāḥib al-risāla* with *bandeh-yi mutarjim*, of the newcomer with his predecessor, who had belonged to the literary circles of the city's rulers and viziers.

The notables of the city and the prominence of viziers

In his reworking of Māfarrukhī's *RMI*, Āvī continued and extended his predecessor's striking attention to the local notables of Isfahan. The prominence of this theme in his source-text allowed Āvī to appeal in an indirect manner to the social category to which he sought access. Emulating Māfarrukhī, Āvī reports accounts and records verses, including poetry of his own composition, in praise of numerous contemporary figures holding posts in the administrative and military leadership. He extolled, in addition to the previously mentioned Shams al-Dīn Yazdī, the Amīr Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shaykh 'Alī b. Amīr Muḥammad b. Girāy Īdājī (a descendant of Arghun and Nawrūz), who had assumed the governorship of Isfahan after the accession of Ghazan, and his deputy Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shujā' al-Dīn Lunbānī

⁸⁹*TMI*, p. 38. Following Māfarrukhī, who terms the account a *ḥikāya* and uses the phrase *ḥukiya li*, Āvī classifies the report as a *ḥikāyat* (*RMI*, p. 17; *TMI*, p. 38).

⁹⁰*RMI*, p. 19; *TMI*, p. 41. In another modification, Āvī expands on his source's story concerning the medicinal remedy of the people of Narsābād.

⁹¹*RMI*, p. 20; *TMI*, p. 41.

⁹²*TMI*, pp. 42-3; Shabānkāra'ī, *Majma' al-ansāb*, p. 214; Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīdeh*, pp. 622-623; Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ja'farī, *Tārīkh-i Yazd*, (ed.) Īraj Afshār (Tehran, 1960), pp. 106-107, 111; Aubin, 'Le patronage culturel', pp. 113-114, 116; Ilker Evrim Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran: Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Islamic Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 26-37.

⁹³*TMI*, pp. 43-44.

Iṣfahānī;⁹⁴ the Ṣāhib-Dīvān Qāzī Nizām al-Dīn Iṣfahānī;⁹⁵ the *naqīb* Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥusaynī;⁹⁶ the vizier Sharaf al-Dawla wa-l-Dīn ‘Alī al-Fāminīnī, to whom he dedicated his *‘Ahdnāmeḥ*;⁹⁷ and the recently deceased Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Ashtarjānī (fl. 713-17/1313-17), vizier to the Mongol Amīr Sevinj b. Shishi, and a leading *mustawfī* in the reign of Abū Sa‘īd.⁹⁸ All of these individuals occupied prominent positions in Isfahan. Many (perhaps like Āvī himself) belonged to families of *sayyids*, established in the region’s towns and cities; many held offices as *ra‘īs*, *naqīb* and *nā‘ib* as well as *vazīr* and *ṣāhib-dīvān*; many dispensed patronage and sponsored charitable works in their cities; and many belonged to the system of networks affiliated with Ghiyāth al-Dīn.⁹⁹ The extensive list of contemporary and near-contemporary figures upon whom Āvī lavishes praise was perhaps designed to be as inclusive as possible, in an environment in which, as had been the case in earlier periods, the élites of Isfahan were often fractured by competing interests, and alliances frequently crossed ethnic and cultural divides. Furthermore, by invoking a varied set of notables, Āvī availed himself of the opportunity to demonstrate his proficiency in deploying the appropriate forms of address, in accordance with the rules of *inshā’*.¹⁰⁰

Among the notables to whom Māfarrukhī had paid attention in *RMI* were some of the most eminent viziers associated with the city. Āvī, addressing himself to the most powerful vizier of his own age, combined Māfarrukhī’s interest in viziers of the past with corresponding attention to viziers of the present. He retains most of Māfarrukhī’s accounts concerning al-Ṣāhib b. ‘Abbād and Nizām al-Mulk,¹⁰¹ and adds poems in praise of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his father Rashīd al-Dīn.¹⁰² By adding contemporary figures to Māfarrukhī’s treatment of viziers, Āvī is able to imply links between the illustrious viziers of the past and the current vizier, to whose patronage he aspired. His implied parallel between Nizām al-Mulk and Ghiyāth al-Dīn echoes the explicit comparison that al-Ṣafādī, finding no counterpart to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s extraordinary (military as well as bureaucratic) power in his own time, would evoke, in describing Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s rank as ‘of the kind held by Nizām al-Mulk’ (*kānat rutbatuhu min naw‘ rutbat Nizām al-Mulk*).¹⁰³

⁹⁴ *TMI*, p. 57, and ‘Ḥavāshī va-mulāḥazāt’, pp. 164–5. On Muẓaffar al-Dīn’s father, Amīr Muḥammad Idāji (also Idāchī), governor (*hākīm*) and *bāsqāq* of Isfahan from the accession of Geikhatu Khan, see Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī Kirmānī, *Simṭ al-‘ulā li-l-ḥazrat al-‘ulyā*, (ed.) Maryam Mīr Shamsī (Tehran, 2016), p. 109. Lumbān is a village near Isfahan.

⁹⁵ *TMI*, p. 59, and ‘Ḥavāshī va-mulāḥazāt’, p. 165. *Qāḍī l-quḍāt* of Isfahan and associated with the Juvaynī family, Nizām al-Dīn was renowned for his Arabic and Persian compositions, including his *mulamma‘* (mixed Arabic and Persian, interlingual) poetry (Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīdeh*, pp. 754–755).

⁹⁶ *TMI*, p. 23.

⁹⁷ *TMI*, p. 50, and see above, n. 22.

⁹⁸ *TMI*, p. 68, and ‘Ḥavāshī va-mulāḥazāt’, p. 166. See also Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma‘ al-ādāb*, iii, p. 178, no. 2431; Aubin, *Émirs mongols et viziers persans*, pp. 77, 84. For other examples of contemporary and near-contemporary notables whom Āvī mentions with praise in *TMI*, see pp. 57, 42–43, 49.

⁹⁹ Cf. Aubin, ‘Le patronage culturel’.

¹⁰⁰ On the appropriate forms of address for individuals at different levels in the political hierarchy in this period, see Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd Āmulī (d. 753/1352–3), *Nafā‘is al-funūn fī ‘arā‘is al-‘uyūn*, (ed.) Mīrzā Abū l-Ḥasan Sha‘rānī (Tehran, 1998), i, pp. 280–292.

¹⁰¹ *RMI*, pp. 5, 13, 26, 27, 84, 85–86, 90, 98, 99, 111; 103–104; *TMI*, p. 14 (citing a verse of al-Ṣāhib b. ‘Abbād that does not appear in *RMI*), pp. 45, 46, 54, 73, 92, 95; 140–143.

¹⁰² *TMI*, pp. 131–135, 145–146.

¹⁰³ Al-Ṣafādī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, iv, p. 234.

In devoting substantial attention in *TMI* to viziers, Āvī participated in the elevation of the office of the vizierate evident in several early fourteenth-century writings. As scholars have pointed out, most authors of the period's historiographical, administrative and advisory sources were affiliated, often over several generations, with the administrative and secretarial professions, which shaped their perspectives.¹⁰⁴ If these writers approached the topic of the vizierate with a professional and familial predisposition to attach high value to the office at the apex of the administration, they also displayed an awareness of the immense power of specific viziers in their own lifetimes. Rashīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn participated actively in the political life of the Ilkhanid state: members of a family distributed at various levels in the administrative hierarchy, these two individuals engaged in negotiations at the highest levels of power, possessed great wealth and extensive estates, and participated, as previously noted, in military as well as administrative activities.¹⁰⁵ If these two individuals, like certain members of the Juvaynī family, had risen to the highest levels of power, the vizieral office and its associated duties varied considerably throughout the Ilkhanid period; even the titles ascribed to the office's holders varied,¹⁰⁶ and the frequent practice of dividing the office between two, often mutually hostile individuals constrained the authority and hampered the effectiveness of both parties.¹⁰⁷ The fourteenth-century writers who highlighted the office distinguished among its more and less effective holders.

Notably, several early fourteenth-century authors of compositions devoted to the vizierate and dedicated to viziers of the Ilkhanid period attached similar importance to viziers of the Seljuk era. Niẓām al-Mulk, celebrated during his lifetime and remembered more or less ever since, as Nequīn Yavari has written, as "the archetypal good vizier in Islamic history",¹⁰⁸ appears prominently in the historiographical and literary discourses of the Ilkhanid period as the supremely efficacious administrator and quintessentially sagacious counsellor.¹⁰⁹ Writing in the year 725/1325, two years before Ghiyāth al-Dīn's appointment to the vizierate, the Munshī Nāṣir al-Dīn Kirmānī completed his *Nasā'im al-ashār min laqā'im al-akhbār*, a treatment of the viziers of the Islamic period, grouped according to the dynasty they served. Kirmānī devoted particularly extensive sections to the viziers of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods. In the former case, he included the biographies of dozens of figures, many of them relatives of Niẓām al-Mulk; his presentation conveys the scale of the network over which the Seljuk vizier presided.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴Melville, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 155–208, particularly pp. 157–160; Denise Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole. Politique et fiscalité (XIIIe-XIVe s.)* (Paris, 2005), pp. 87–88; Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁵On the power exercised by Rashīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn, see respectively Michael Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhānate of Iran* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 9, 194; Melville, *Fall of Amir Chupan*, pp. 29, 35, 41, 60–68 and *passim*; Hoffmann, *Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, pp. 91–99.

¹⁰⁶Aigle, *Le Fārs*, pp. 88–99, notes the varied vocabulary used of the office, as well as the tendency – by no means without exception – to restrict the vizier's areas of responsibility to taxation and financial administration.

¹⁰⁷For the various shifts in appointments and their titles (and their proverbially perilous nature) in the reign of Öljeytū, see Hoffmann, *Waḡf im mongolischen Iran*, pp. 83–89.

¹⁰⁸Nequīn Yavari, *The Future of Iran's Past: Niẓām al-Mulk Remembered* (New York, 2018), xiii; see also pp. 61–104, 127–148.

¹⁰⁹Hindūshāh Šāhibi Nakhjavānī, for example, asserted his unparalleled stature in a long portrayal of the vizier (*Tajārib al-salaf*, pp. 266–281). See also Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Iṣfahānī, *Dastūr al-vizāra*, (ed.) Riẓā Anzābī-Nizhād (Tehran, 1985), pp. 67–74, and 37. On Ilkhanid uses of sources from the Seljuk period and portrayals of the Seljuks, see Alexander H. Morton, 'Qashani and Rashid al-Din on the Seljuks of Iran', in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, (ed.) Yasir Suleiman (Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 166–177.

¹¹⁰*Nasā'im al-ashār min laqā'im al-akhbār*, (ed.) Mīr Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥusaynī Urmavī Muḥaddith (Tehran, 1959), pp. 48–93, 100–119. The same approach is evident in Kh^vādamār, *Dastūr al-vuzarā'*, pp. 149–189, 206–207.

It is not surprising that Āvī's text reflects this contemporary perception of viziers' significance. In portraying the great viziers of the Seljuk period, above all Niẓām al-Mulk, as pre-figurations of the viziers of his own time, he joined certain of his contemporaries. For instance, in his *Zafarnāmeḥ*, a versified history dedicated to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Mustawfī depicted the figures of Buzurgmihr and Niẓām al-Mulk as precursors of Rashīd al-Dīn, the vizier to whom Mustawfī owed his position in the financial administration.¹¹¹ Offering a perspective from the Mamluk territories, al-Ṣafadī, who, as previously mentioned, declared the scope of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's authority unparalleled among the viziers of his time, expressly likened his status (*rutba*) to that of Niẓām al-Mulk.¹¹²

An opportunity for bilingual literary display

The multi-generic *RMI* belongs within the literary-cultural repertoire of Arabic *adab*. Jürgen Paul has drawn attention to Māfarrukhī's subtle use of narrative techniques to convey implicit meanings within the context of a shared cultural code.¹¹³ David Durand-Guédy has noted Māfarrukhī's deployment of specific rhetorical devices and his fondness for rare words.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the display of his fluency in the literary arts, the establishment of his sharing in the cultural system that correlated with the repertoire of *adab*, and by implication the demonstration of the excellent Arabic skills of the indigenous Isfahani élites were, in all likelihood, among Māfarrukhī's principal authorial objectives.¹¹⁵ These objectives coincided with the motivations that prompted Āvī, at a remove of two-and-a-half centuries, to rework *RMI* in the guise of a 'translation'.

Āvī's reworkings of *RMI* were designed to display his rhetorical and literary skills and his cultural fluency. Emulating Māfarrukhī's example, Āvī combines prose and poetry in a text that demonstrates his familiarity with the poetic repertoires of both his source and his target languages. The close interplay of prose and poetry constituted an important feature of the historiography of the Ilkhanid period, as the example of Vaṣṣāf, perhaps most notably, displays.¹¹⁶ In an illustration of Āvī's exhibition of his skill in the arts of *inshā'*, he invokes, when announcing his decision to sub-divide Māfarrukhī's continuous text into eight parts, the eight bearers of God's Throne and the eight Gates of Paradise (*hasht ḥamaleh-yi 'arsh, hasht dar-i bihishṭ*), and neatly links his reworking of his source with the cosmic order; the passage recalls his contemporary Aḥmad al-Iṣfahbadhī's quotation of the maxim 'the number ten is auspicious' in announcing his arrangement of *Minhāj al-wuzarā' wa-sirāj al-umarā'* into ten chapters.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹See Stefan T. Kamola, 'Rashīd al-Dīn and the Making of History in Mongol Iran', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2013; see also Kamola's forthcoming monograph on the subject.

¹¹²Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-i guzīdeh*, pp. 620–623; al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, iv, p. 234 (see above, n. 103).

¹¹³Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan'.

¹¹⁴Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfahān'.

¹¹⁵Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan', p. 128; *idem*, 'Local Historiography'; Durand-Guédy, 'Maḥāsen Eṣfahān'.

¹¹⁶William L. Hanaway, 'Secretaries, Poets, and the Literary Language', in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, (eds.) Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 97, 120.

¹¹⁷*TMI*, p. 5; Marlow, 'The Way of Viziers', p. 178.

Not surprisingly, Āvī's reworkings involve a degree of 'Persianisation'. A substantial amount of the Arabic poetry quoted in Māfarrukhī's *RMI* does not reappear in *TMI*.¹¹⁸ While he dispenses with a significant number of his source-text's Arabic verses, Āvī adds large amounts of Persian poetry. He draws especially on the verses of recent and contemporary poets from western and north-western Iran, many of whom were or had been resident in Isfahan: Khāqānī Shīrvānī (b. Shirvan, c. 521/1127; d. Tabriz, between 582/1186-7 and 595/1199);¹¹⁹ Khāqānī's twelfth-century contemporary and sometimes rival, Muǰīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī of Arran (Azerbaijan) (d. c. 594/1197-8);¹²⁰ Abū l-Faẓl Kamāl al-Dīn Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī (b. c. 568/1172-3; d. c. 635/1237);¹²¹ and Sa'd al-Dīn Sa'īd Haravī (d. 766/1364-65).¹²²

In another example of 'Persianising', Āvī integrates several references to the Iranian cultural past into his text. Māfarrukhī had already referred to certain figures remembered from the Iranian past, such as Nūshīrvān and Jam(šīd),¹²³ but Āvī pursues the pattern, especially in poetic contexts. In accordance with the code of Persian poetics, for instance, Āvī invokes Mānī for the sublime beauty of his painting.¹²⁴ Also prominent are Āvī's references to figures from the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, a pattern in keeping with the extensive use of the poem in the Ilkhanid period in a wide variety of literary, artistic and architectural contexts. Āvī cites the long *qaṣīdeḥ*, composed in 724/1323-4, of his contemporary Sa'd al-Dīn Sa'īd Haravī, in which the poet likens the Isfahanis to the kings and heroes of the *Shāhnāmeḥ*.¹²⁵ The poet and translator drew upon prevalent contemporaneous associations of the city with the epic tradition: Mustawfī narrated accounts of Isfahan's foundation by the Pīshdādī Ṭahmūrath, Jamshīd or Dhū l-Qarnayn, and reported that Kayqubād, first of the Kayānids, had made it his *dār al-mulk*, ushering in a period of extensive cultivation and population growth, as people flocked to the city.¹²⁶ Āvī, furthermore, invokes the Pīshdādī Jamshīd in a panegyric in praise of Ghiyāth al-Dīn,¹²⁷ and evoked associations of the epic past with the vizier,

¹¹⁸ Among the poets with whom Āvī dispensed in his translation-adaptation are Abū l-Faṭḥ Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Māfarrukhī, Abū 'Alī al-Baṣīr, 'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Khāzin, Abū l-Faraj 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Yūnus, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn, Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Abū l-Faraj Ibn Hindū, Abū Tammām, Abū Sa'īd al-Ābī, and several poets of Zoroastrian background, including Abū Maṣṣūr b. Buzurg-Umīd b. Ādharjashnāsh and his father Buzurg-Umīd.

¹¹⁹ *TMI*, pp. 10, 13. See Anna Livia Beelaert, 'Kāqānī Šīrvānī', *Elr* xv (2010), pp. 521-529, updated 2012 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaqani-servani>), accessed 23 August 2018; Sa'īd Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm va-nathr dar Īrān* (Tehran, 1984), i, pp. 103-104.

¹²⁰ *TMI*, p. 102. See Anna Livia Beelaert, 'Moǰīr-al-Dīn Baylaqānī', *Elr* (2014), online (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mojir-al-din-baylaqani>), accessed 23 August 2018; Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm va-nathr*, i, pp. 74, 107; F. C. de Blois, 'Muǰīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī', *El² Supplement*, XII (2004), pp. 630-631, and online (http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.wellesley.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_8830), accessed 18 April 2019. Isfahan figured prominently in the poetic disputes of Baylaqānī and Khāqānī, who composed a poem in praise of the city.

¹²¹ *TMI*, pp. 31, 103, 107. See Ibn al-Fuwaṣī, *Majma' al-ādāb*, iv, p. 129, no. 3508; David Durand-Guédy, 'Kamāl-al-Dīn Eṣfahānī', *Elr* xv (2010), pp. 415-417, updated 2012 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kamal-al-din-esfahani>), accessed 24 August 2018; Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm va-nathr*, i, pp. 74, 100-101.

¹²² *TMI*, pp. 29, 30, 57, 58. Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm va-nathr*, i, p. 175. Haravī was an eminent poet who wrote panegyrics for Atabeg Aḥmad of Greater Luristan as well as for Ghazan Khan and Öljjeitü (r. 703-17/1304-17); a few of his poems survive, although his *divān* has been lost (Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i naẓm va-nathr*, i, p. 175).

¹²³ *RMI*, pp. 42, 92.

¹²⁴ See, for example, the poem of Khujandī in which Mānī appears twice in contexts that refer to his aesthetic brilliance (*TMI*, pp. 102, 107); cf. *TMI*, p. 36.

¹²⁵ *TMI*, pp. 29-30.

¹²⁶ Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, p. 48.

¹²⁷ *TMI*, p. 7; for further references to Jam(šīd), see *TMI*, pp. 16, 131.

whose interest in the *Shāhnāmeḥ* has been mentioned.¹²⁸ Āvī's use of the kings and heroes of the *Shāhnāmeḥ* mirrors the work of his contemporary Mustawfī, whose involvement with the *Shāhnāmeḥ* induced him to produce an edition of the poem,¹²⁹ and whose *Zafarāmeḥ*, dedicated to the vizier, alluded to Firdawsī's poem in its use of the metre *mutaqārib*.¹³⁰

If Āvī's *TMI* displays several instances of Persianising, almost equally striking is its conspicuous use of Arabic. While he exchanged amounts of Māfarrukhī's Arabic verses for more recent, and local, verses in Persian, Āvī also retained substantial amounts of the Arabic poetry that he encountered in Māfarrukhī's work—without, however, providing translations or paraphrases in a single case. Furthermore, Āvī selects and cites additional Arabic verses, including a long Arabic poem of the late Qāzī Nizām al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, whom he describes as a master of Arabic and Persian poetry and prose (*ṣāhib-dīvān-i mamālik-i nazm va-nathr-i 'arab va-'ajam*).¹³¹ Notably, the translator includes several examples of his own Arabic poetry.¹³² When broaching a topic, such as the excellence of the Zendeḥ-Rud, he quite frequently begins with Arabic and Persian verses, which he quotes in that order.¹³³ Āvī's treatment of Isfahani speech is of particular interest in this regard. In *RMI*, Māfarrukhī had recounted a number of narratives that culminate in citations of direct speech in the distinctive verbal patterns of Isfahan. Māfarrukhī transcribed these phrases in accordance with their sounds, then supplied translations into the standard written language of Arabic. In *TMI*, Āvī follows Māfarrukhī's model in transcribing the Isfahani phrases, but translates or paraphrases them variously. In one case, he translates the Isfahani speech into standard literary Persian;¹³⁴ in another instance, he translates a phrase into Persian, and follows his Persian translation with Māfarrukhī's Arabic rendering;¹³⁵ in yet another case, he takes Māfarrukhī's terse rendering of an Isfahani phrase into Arabic prose as an occasion to craft an Arabic verse of his own.¹³⁶ It seems clear from the range of these authorial choices that Āvī's principal concern in his treatment of Isfahani diction had little to do with rendering it comprehensible to his Persian-speaking, largely Isfahani audience.

Āvī's *TMI*, then, is hardly a monolingual product in the target language of Persian. It seems that Āvī intended to make *RMI* the foundation for a work in which Persian predominated, especially in its prose sections, but which assumed full conversance with the source and target languages on the part of a bilingual if not multi-lingual audience. His contemporary Aḥmad al-Iṣfahadhī, whose mirror for viziers functioned as a vehicle to exhibit its

¹²⁸See above, n. 67.

¹²⁹Abolala Soudavar, 'The Han-Lin Academy and the Persian Royal Library-Atelier', in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, (eds.) Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn in Collaboration with Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 474-475; Bert G. Fragner, 'Ilkhanid Rule and Its Contributions to Iranian Political Culture', in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) Linda Komaroff (Leiden, 2006), p. 74; Kamola, 'Rashīd al-Dīn and the Making of History', p. 261.

¹³⁰Charles Melville, 'Between Firdausī and Rashīd al-Dīn: Persian Verse Chronicles of the Mongol Period', *Studia Islamica* 104-105 (2007), pp. 45-65; Kamola, 'Rashīd al-Dīn and the Making of History', pp. 260-268.

¹³¹*TMI*, pp. 59-61.

¹³²*TMI*, pp. 43-44, 99, 115. It is likely that some of the unattributed verses in *TMI* are also the work of Āvī.

¹³³*TMI*, pp. 12-13.

¹³⁴*RMI*, p. 47, l. 3 = *TMI*, p. 113, ll. 9-10.

¹³⁵*RMI*, p. 45, ll. 3-4 = *TMI*, p. 111, ll. 2-3, retaining after the Persian paraphrase the Arabic *inna l-madād khulūq thawb al-kātib*, introduced with the phrase *chunānkeh 'arab gūyand*, 'As the Arabs say ...'

¹³⁶*RMI*, p. 47, l. 16; *TMI*, p. 114, l. 7. The three examples are listed in Browne, 'Account of a Rare Manuscript', ii, p. 673.

author's fitness for secretarial and administrative service, opted to write entirely in Arabic.¹³⁷ Service in the chancellery required fluency and expertise in both Arabic and Persian, a bilingual dexterity demonstrated in the documents, official correspondence, historiographical and advisory writings of the *munshīs* and *mustaufīs* who dominated the period's literary production. Vaṣṣāf, who combined his literary activities with his service in an official administrative post, incorporates copious examples of Arabic as well as Persian poetry into his historiographical text, and records his composition of Arabic and Persian panegyrics for Geikhatu Khan (r. 690-4/1291-5), as well as epistles (*chand risāleh*) and discourses (*maqālāt*).¹³⁸ Parts of Rashīd al-Dīn's corpus, according to the express instructions in his *vaqfnāmeḥ*, were to be copied annually in Persian and Arabic.¹³⁹ Āvī's contemporary, Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī (c. 679-768/1280-1366), a native speaker of neither language, both stipulated and exemplified the requisite bilingualism in his administrative manual *Dastūr al-kātib fī ta'yīn al-marātib*, commissioned by the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad.¹⁴⁰ Surviving texts of the Ilkhans' correspondence with the Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers of Syria and Egypt, and of several of their proclamations to their Arabic-speaking subjects, survive in Arabic versions, sometimes intermixed with Persian phrases. In many cases initially composed in Mongolian, the extant recensions of these documents display the obvious requirement of translation into Arabic at some point in their transmission to their recipients.¹⁴¹ The *divān* employed official translators, in addition to which many individuals in the Ilkhans' service were proficient in two or more languages.¹⁴² Preparation of a 'translation' provided Āvī with a vehicle to display just such bilingual proficiency.

This interpretation of Āvī's undertaking finds further support in his placement of Arabic materials in conspicuous locations in *TMI*. For example, he opens his first, seventh and eighth chapters with Arabic verses, in the last-mentioned case verses of his own composition. He opens his first *dhikr* with an unattributed pair of verses in Arabic that do not appear in Māfarrukhī's text, and ends it with four lines of the Arabic verse of al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād,

¹³⁷Marlow, 'The Way of Viziers'.

¹³⁸*Tahūr-i Tārkh-i Vaṣṣāf*, (ed.) 'Abd al-Muḥammad Āyatī (Tehran, 1967), p. 151. On Vaṣṣāf's writings, see further Judith Pfeiffer, "'A Turgid History of the Mongol Empire in Persia": Epistemological Reflections concerning a Critical Edition of Vaṣṣāf's *Tājziyat al-amṣār va tajziyat al-a'ṣār*', in *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Istanbul, March 28-30, 2001* (Beirut-Würzburg, 2007), pp. 110-111. As Pfeiffer points out, Vaṣṣāf's text preserves much larger quantities of poetry than that included in Āyatī's simplified published version (Pfeiffer, "'Turgid History'", p. 121).

¹³⁹Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, p. 26, n. 79.

¹⁴⁰Hanaway, 'Secretaries, Poets, and the Literary Language', pp. 107-108, 110; Jürgen Paul, 'Enšā', *Elr* viii (1998), pp. 455-457, updated 2011 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ensa>), accessed 10 March 2018.

¹⁴¹On the surviving recensions of the Mongols' diplomatic correspondence and other documents, see Aigle, *Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality*, pp. 199-218, 255-282; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, 'An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abaya Ilkhān and Sultan Baybars (A. H. 667/A. D. 1268-69)', *Central Asiatic Journal* 38 (1994), pp. 11-33 (Reuven Amitai, *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands*, X); Pfeiffer, "'Turgid History'", pp. 110 and n. 30, 121-122 and n. 28.

¹⁴²In his biographical dictionary, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī lists a Muẓaffar al-Dīn Qutluḡ Beg b. Ibrāhīm, a translator in the *divān*; describing him as *al-turkī al-amīr al-tarjumān*, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī reports that he rendered 'Turkic, Uighur and Persian speech into eloquent Arabic, and accurately translated phrases' (*yutarjimu l-kalām al-turkī wa-l-ayghūrī wa-l-fārsī bi-l-'arabiyya al-faṣīḥa wa-l-'ibārāt al-mutarjama al-ṣaḥīḥa*) (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma' al-ādāb*, v, pp. 287-8, no. 5106; cited in Devin DeWeese, 'Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: Notes from the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī', in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff [Leiden, 2006], pp. 23-25 and n. 30). Another translator, Sayf al-Dīn Sa'īd Tarjumān, accompanied a Mongol officer sent by Abaqa Khan by way of Armenia to Sultan Baybars in 667/1228 (Amitai-Preiss, 'Exchange of Letters in Arabic', pp. 13-14).

which, despite Māfarrukhī's inclusion of examples of the Šāhib's poetry, do not appear in *RMI* either.¹⁴³ After a brief sentence that introduces the town of Jayy at the opening of the second *dhikr*, Āvī cites three lines of the Arabic poetry of Abū 'Āmir al-Jarwa'ānī, which also do not appear in *RMI*; he ends this *dhikr* with long sections of Arabic verse taken directly from his source.¹⁴⁴ An Arabic verse of al-Buḥturī (206–84/821–97) provides the poetic conclusion to the third *dhikr*.¹⁴⁵ He begins his seventh *dhikr* with four Arabic verses of his own, and he finishes it with the previously mentioned poetic treatment in Arabic of an Isfahani expression.¹⁴⁶ He opens his eighth *dhikr* with a poem of his own composition in Arabic,¹⁴⁷ and he ends his *dhayl* with a final panegyric in Arabic.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, when he introduces Arabic verses taken directly from his source-text, he not infrequently retains Māfarrukhī's introductory phrases (for example, *wa-qāla* [*al-shā'ir*] *fi qaṣīda*, *wa-qāla aydan*, *wa-li-ba'dhim yadhkuru fihi ... fi qaṣīda*, *wa-min qaṣīda lahu*) in their original Arabic wordings.¹⁴⁹

Not only does Āvī include Arabic as well as Persian materials in *TMI*; he also combines the two languages in a demonstration of bilingual interplay between Arabic and Persian. In his *dhayl*, he includes a four-line, mostly Persian poem in which the penultimate (third) line is entirely in Arabic, and the remaining three lines end in Arabic words and expressions; for example, the phrases *li-l-ḥurūb rijāl* and *'alā l-ijmāl* form the rhymes of the second and fourth lines respectively.¹⁵⁰ When he declares that it is imperative to adduce some of the poetry in Arabic and Persian in praise of the city, he begins with the local eleventh-century poet and linguist *Dhū l-lisānayn* Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Naṭanzī (d. 497/1103 or 499/1105), in Arabic.¹⁵¹ He cites *mulamma'* verses, which mix Arabic and Persian hemistiches; one of these poems is a panegyric in praise of Ghiyāth al-Dīn.¹⁵² In this conscious demonstration of bilingual artistry, Āvī avails himself of the appropriate materials in his source, and at the same time emulates the bilingual *oeuvres* of the poets Khāqānī, Muḥjir al-Dīn Baylaqānī and Kamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, poets whose verses he cites repeatedly.¹⁵³

Conclusion

Consideration of Āvī's reworking in Persian of Māfarrukhī's Arabic *RMI* suggests that the Persian writer's chief objective was to associate himself with the local élites to whose ranks he hoped to gain admittance. In producing his *TMI*, Āvī profits from the prestige

¹⁴³ *TMI*, pp. 8, 14.

¹⁴⁴ *TMI*, pp. 15 (cf. Browne, 'Account of a Rare Manuscript', i, p. 417), 33–4 (*RMI*, pp. 54, 57, 58).

¹⁴⁵ *TMI*, p. 46; *RMI*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ *TMI*, pp. 99, 114.

¹⁴⁷ *TMI*, p. 115.

¹⁴⁸ *TMI*, p. 146.

¹⁴⁹ *TMI*, pp. 33–34, 45; *RMI*, pp. 13, 54, 57, 58.

¹⁵⁰ *TMI*, pp. 145–146.

¹⁵¹ *TMI*, pp. 126–127. Cf. 'A. N. Monzawī, 'Adīb Naṭanzī', *Etr* i (1985), pp. 459–460, updated 2011 (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/adib-natanzi>), accessed 10 April 2018. Hailing from Natanz, near Isfahan, Naṭanzī has also been credited with an Arabic–Persian dictionary, *al-Mirqāt*.

¹⁵² *TMI*, pp. 103, 145–146.

¹⁵³ Muḥjir al-Dīn Baylaqānī, like Sa'dī (d. 691/1292) and several other contemporary poets, includes *mulamma'āt* in his *divān*. Kamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, who styled himself an 'ālim, faqīh and adīb as well as a poet, wrote at least one prose work in Arabic, a treatise on archery (*Risālat al-qaws*, *al-risāla al-qawsiyya*).

of his Arabic source-text and the authority of its author, identified with the urban élites of an earlier era that was increasingly imagined as a forerunner of the contemporary period. The identity of *RMF*'s author, the language of its composition, its engagement with the culture and resources of *adab*, the prominent place that it assigns to members of the urban élites, and to viziers and administrators at the local, regional and imperial levels, all rendered the earlier work a promising basis for extension and repurposing in Persian. It permitted Āvī to demonstrate his sharing in the pertinent cultural code, in an example of what Charles Melville has called "a sort of ritualized act of mutual support and solidarity".¹⁵⁴

I believe, however, that *TMI* illuminates larger topics than its author's immediate aspirations. It is, as indicated at the outset of this article, one of a number of similarly free translation-adaptations made from Arabic into Persian in the later Ilkhanid period; these 'translations' from Arabic into Persian comprise a small but distinct sub-set of the many literary compositions dedicated to members of the regional network headed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn. In producing two translations (*TMI* and the *Ahdnāme*), Āvī joined in an activity practised by his contemporaries Hindūshāh b. Sanjar Nakhjavānī and Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī Kirmānī, both of whom belonged to prominent families involved in the chancellery and the region's official administration – a point that supports the premise that Āvī aspired through his translations to gain access to the administrative ranks.

The existence of this cluster of translations points to further dimensions of the practice of repurposing Arabic works in Persian forms in the late Ilkhanid period. Part of the significance of the practice, I suggest, lies in the choice and display of Persian as the primary medium for communication. The centrality of the language stimulated a deliberate focus of attention on its linguistic and literary qualities, as, for example, the production of dictionaries attests: Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh, whose *Dastūr al-kātib*, commissioned by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, has been mentioned, also compiled a Persian-Persian lexicographical dictionary, in which he explicated and illustrated his entries with citations from Persian poetry.¹⁵⁵ During the Mongol period, Persian became the primary lingua franca not only of the Ilkhanid domains but of the entire Mongol Empire;¹⁵⁶ it provided the main linguistic means of communication among Muslims between Iran and China.¹⁵⁷ It was often in Persian that the Ilkhans, as well as members of their families and the Mongol amīrs, communicated with their administrative staff. The Amīr Nawrūz, son of Arghun Aqa (Mongol administrator of Khurasan from 641/1243-4 until his death in 673/1275), spoke Persian.¹⁵⁸ Ghazan was

¹⁵⁴Melville, *Persian Historiography*, p. 207; see also Paul, 'Histories of Isfahan'.

¹⁵⁵In keeping with the period's bilingualism, Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh includes a considerable number of Arabic quotations in his preface; *Ṣaḥāḥ al-furs*, (ed.) 'Abd al-'Alī Ṭā'atī (Tehran, 1962), pp. 20-21. The author, who states that he first conceived of the project at the Dār al-mulk, Tabriz, in 718/1318-19 (p. 8), refers in his preface to two of his predecessors in the compilation of Persian dictionaries, Ḥakīm Qatrān Urmavī and, especially, Asādī Ṭūsī, compiler of the late eleventh-century *Lughat-i furs*. Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh also provides a list of the poets whom Asādī cites most frequently, and states explicitly that he will add to this corpus the poetry of contemporary poets, including his late father Fakhr al-Dīn Hindūshāh (*Ṣaḥāḥ al-furs*, pp. 8-11).

¹⁵⁶David Morgan, 'Persian as a Lingua Franca in the Mongol Empire', in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, (eds.) Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 160-170. See also Aptin Khanbaghi, 'Champions of the Persian Language: The Mongols or the Turks?', in *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*, eds. Bruno De Nicola and Charles Melville (Leiden, 2016), pp. 195-215.

¹⁵⁷Fragner, 'Ilkhanid Rule', p. 79; Morgan, 'Persian as a Lingua Franca'.

¹⁵⁸Charles Melville, 'Pādshāh-i Islām: The Conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān', *History and Literature in Iran: Persian and Islamic Studies in Honour of P. W. Avery*, (ed.) Charles Melville (London, 1990), p. 162. Nawrūz

familiar with several languages: at the very least, he spoke Mongolian and Turkish, and he knew Persian, which he spoke with Rashīd al-Dīn “and his like from among the close associates of his court [*akhiṣṣā’ ḥaḍratihī*]”; he also understood Arabic quite well.¹⁵⁹ Abū Sa’īd had a fine hand in Persian and Mongolian (*pārsī va-mughūlī*), and his proficiency in Persian extended to the composition of poetry.¹⁶⁰ The gradual process of assimilation of aspects of the indigenous cultures on the part of at least some members of the Mongol population in the Ilkhanid domains was complex, inconsistent and incomplete; the production of translations into Persian, however, supported the movement towards greater integration also perceptible in Abū Sa’īd’s composition of poetry.¹⁶¹ Persian collapsed boundaries.¹⁶²

In addition to its practical uses, Persian, I propose, possessed a symbolic value: it was the language equated with ‘Iran’. The Ilkhanid period witnessed the re-appropriation, in Bert Fragner’s term the ‘reinvention’, of the concept of ‘Īrān’ or ‘Īrān-zamīn’; the Ilkhans styled themselves *pādshāhān-i Īrān* and later *pādshāhān-i Islām*, and articulations of a renewed notion of ‘Iran’ proliferated in numerous facets of the cultural life of the Ilkhanid kingdom.¹⁶³ As the new ‘Iran’ provided a large and inclusive framework for the assimilation of diverse populations, translation into Persian not only facilitated contact among the vast and varied communities brought together in the networks that traversed the Ilkhanid domains, but also provided symbolic support for the process of social and cultural integration. <lmrlow@wellesley.edu>

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engaged in a protracted rebellion against the future Ilkhan Ghazan until their reconciliation, and Ghazan’s accession, in 694/1294; see Michael Hope, ‘The ‘Nawrūz King’: The Rebellion of Amir Nawrūz in Khurasan (688–694/1289–94) and Its Implications for the Ilkhan Polity at the End of the Thirteenth Century’, *BSOAS* 78 (2015), pp. 451–473.

¹⁵⁹The abbreviated list reflects the reports of al-Ṣafādī and Ibn Ḥajar; according to Rashīd al-Dīn, Ghazan knew, in addition to Mongolian, some Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Kashmiri, Tibetan, Khitā’ī, ‘Frankish’ and other languages; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, ‘New Material from the Mamluk Sources for the Biography of Rashīd al-Dīn’, in *The Court of the Ilkhans*, (eds.) J. Rabi and T. Fitzherbert (Oxford, 1996), pp. 23–37 (= Amitai, *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands*, III), p. 27 and n. 23; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, ‘Ghazan, Islam and Mongol Tradition: A View from the Mamlūk Sultanate’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 99 (1996), pp. 1–10 (= Amitai, *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands*, VI), pp. 3, 4 and n. 22. Reuven Amitai-Preiss has suggested that Ghazan may have had a circle of Persian-speaking intimates with whom he held conversations in Persian, perhaps on topics related to the rational sciences, the Islamic religion, Mongolian history and tradition, and that they perhaps contributed to the vibrant artistic, cultural and intellectual activity of the late Ilkhanid period (Amitai-Preiss, ‘New Material’, pp. 28, 34).

¹⁶⁰Shabānkāra’ī, *Majma’ al-ansāb*, p. 286.

¹⁶¹George Lane, ‘Persian Notables and the Families Who Underpinned the Ilkhanate’, in *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change: The Mongols and Their Eurasian Predecessors*, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Honolulu, 2015), pp. 182–213; Fragner, ‘Ilkhanid Rule’; Hend Gilli-Elewy, ‘Women, Power, and Politics in the Last Phase of the Ilkhanate’, *Arabica* 59 (2012), pp. 709–23; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, p. 16.

¹⁶²Morgan, ‘Persian as Lingua Franca’.

¹⁶³On the renewed use of the concept of ‘Iran’ in the Ilkhanid period, see Dorothea Krawulsky, ‘Zur Wiederbelebung des Begriffes “Īrān” zur Ilkhānzeit’, in *Mongolen und Ilkhāne: Ideologie und Geschichte* (Beirut, 1989), pp. 113–30; *eadem*, *The Mongol Ilkhāns and Their Vizier Rashīd al-Dīn* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011), pp. 43–51; Melville, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 156, 162–76; Melville, ‘The Mongols in Iran’; Fragner, ‘Ilkhanid Rule’, pp. 72–3; *idem*, ‘The Concept of Regionalism in Historical Research on Central Asia and Iran (A Macro-Historical Interpretation)’, in *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWeese (Bloomington, 2001), pp. 349–50; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, pp. 239, 325–7.