

Shared infrastructures, informational asymmetries: Persians and Indians in Japan, c.1890–1930*

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Abstract

Drawing on primary materials in Persian, Urdu, and English, this article compares Persian and Indian travel accounts to assess the similarities and differences of contemporaneous encounters with Japan. By linking Persian and Urdu writings from either side of 1900 to the differential impact of industrial communications (vernacular printing, steam travel) on Persia and India, the article reconstructs the global connections and inter-Asian networks that suddenly rendered Japan an important touchstone for intellectuals in the Middle East no less than South Asia. By presenting a triangulated and comparative model of inter-Asian exchange, the article contributes to building robust material foundations for positioning Asia, and its Muslims in particular, within global intellectual history, and concludes by contrasting the sources of information generation that preceded ideological formation.

Keywords India, intellectual history, Iran, Japan, transnational, travel writing

I am going to Japan partly as a critic and partly as a student. I want to understand the secret of Japan's wonderful progress.¹

Introduction

In the decades either side of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, both Indians and Persians turned in fascination to Japan as an independent and industrializing 'eastern' nation. Indian and Persian travellers made use of the same industrializing travel networks that were transforming the 'Indian Ocean world' into a global oceanic arena that now linked India and

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1 Diary of Ross Mas'ud, 12 March 1922, in Syed Ross Masood, *Travels in Japan: Diary of an Exploring Mission*, ed. Jalil Ahmad Kidwai, Karachi: Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, 1968.

Persia with Japan and the United States.² As they struggled to relate Japan's achievements to their own societies, these Indians and Persians brought with them to Japan many of the same questions and conceptions. This was by no means a one-way traffic and these decades of rapid exchange also saw Japanese intellectuals turn towards Asia in search of their own heritage, though Japanese travels lie beyond the scope of this article.³ By placing the Persia–India relationship into the larger geographical and cultural exchange made possible by the industrialized globalization of the late 1800s, the following pages draw on Persian, Urdu, and Indian English travel accounts of Japan to assess the lessons and limitations of these mutual fascinations. For if Persian and Indian intellectuals were similarly fascinated by the question of how Japan had managed to become 'modern' without sacrificing its cultural and religious heritage, their common focus on the same place and question would have to be processed through their connected but nonetheless distinct histories and circumstances. The written record of the mutual fascinations of the globetrotting savants of the steam age therefore allows us to chart – indeed, to triangulate – new kinds of intellectual history as they were formed through the interaction of different regions of Asia.

It is this multi-sited exchange of ideas that is traced in the investigations that follow. More specifically, in using travel diaries as the principal source for this encounter, the aim is to capture the gathering of raw data on Japan that preceded and subsequently fed into more structured ideological conceptions of Japan and its relations to the rest of 'Asia', itself one of the key conceptual components of the new relations being forged between different peoples during this period.

With the opening of the port of Yokohama to foreign trade in 1859 and the wider Japanese engagement with the West that followed the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan underwent a period of swift modernization that has since fascinated historians no less than it fascinated contemporary observers.⁴ Japan's rapid shift from a pre-industrial society bullied by the American flotilla of Commodore Perry in 1853 to the status of *primus inter pares* with the imperial powers signalled by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 resulted in tremendous international interest in how Japan had transformed itself so rapidly while keeping the colonial powers at bay. For those across Asia who had not noticed the advance of Japan earlier, her defeat of imperial Russia in 1905 was truly a trans-Asian news sensation that was reported and commented on in vernacular newspapers across Asia. In this way, the sudden

2 For a critique of the model of an Indian Ocean 'world', see Nile Green, 'Maritime worlds and global history: comparing the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through Barcelona and Bombay', *History Compass*, 11, 7, 2013.

3 Yukiko Sumi Barnett, 'India in Asia: Okawa Shūmei's Pan-Asian thought and his idea of India in early twentieth-century Japan', *Journal of the Oxford University History Society*, 1, 2004, pp. 1–23; Selçuk Esenbel, 'A "fin de siècle" Japanese romantic in Istanbul: the life of Yamada Torajirō and his "Toruko Gakan"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 59, 2, 1996, pp. 237–52; Richard M. Jaffe, 'Seeking Śākyamuni: travel and the reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 30, 1, 2004, pp. 65–96; and Richard M. Jaffe, 'Buddhist material culture, "Indianism," and the construction of Pan-Asianism in prewar Japan', *Material Religion*, 2, 3, 2006, pp. 266–93.

4 Clark L. Beck and Ardath W. Burks, eds., *Aspects of Meiji modernization: the Japan helpers and the helped*, New Brunswick, NJ: Archibald Stevens Alexander Library, 1983; Selçuk Esenbel, 'Japanese interest in the Ottoman empire', in Bert Edstrom, ed., *The Japanese and Europe: images and perceptions*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000; Laura Nenzi, 'Encountering the world: Kawai Tsugunosuke's 1859 journey to Yokohama and Nagasaki', *Early Modern Japan*, 16, 2008, pp. 68–83; and David G. Wittner, *Technology and the culture of progress in Meiji Japan*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.

Persian and Indian interest in Japan appeared as part of a wider Asian interest in the ‘secret’ of Japan’s modernization, an interest that was felt all the more urgently among the Muslim peoples of both colonial Asia and the Ottoman empire and Egypt.⁵ In textual terms, the outcome of this new interest was the diverse series of travel accounts that were published in languages from Arabic and Turkish to Malay, Vietnamese, and Bengali.⁶ In this way, initial images and perceptions of Japan were exported through the informational vessel of the travelogue, which provided readers as far apart as Cairo and Singapore with a vicarious experience of this new power on the far reaches of the Indian Ocean.

As we have already noted, these travels were enabled by the new industrial travel infrastructure that emerged in the late nineteenth century. This infrastructure primarily comprised the expansion of the Indian Ocean’s steamship routes from European colonies in Asia to the treaty ports of China and, after the Meiji opening of Yokohama in the 1860s, to the ports of Japan: Nagasaki, Kobe, and most importantly Yokohama itself. As Japan’s own industrialization expanded, such Japanese shipping lines as Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) and Osaka Shosen Kaisha (OSK) added to the options that were open to travellers, in many cases by undercutting the fares offered by American and British carriers. NYK had opened their regular service between Bombay and Yokohama as early as 1885; OSK began operating their service between Bombay and Kobe in 1911.⁷ With India’s great industrial port of Bombay closely linked by ship with Persia and possessing a large expatriate Persian merchant community in its own right, it was via Bombay that Persians were able to reach Japan.

However, the gradual opening of sections of the Trans-Siberian Railway between 1891 and 1916 also opened up an overland route for Persians in the north of their country able to cross into the Caucasus to access the Russian railway system.⁸ This vastly important new travel infrastructure, which in the last years of the nineteenth century expanded across Eurasia to link Moscow, the Caucasus, and ultimately Berlin and Paris to the port cities of Vladivostok, Port Arthur (Lüshunkou), Mukden (Shenyang), and the shipping lanes of the Sea of Japan, afforded access to Japan to people residing far away from the connected ports

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- 5 Selçuk Esenbel, *Japan, Turkey and the world of Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 2011; Roxane Haag-Higuchi, ‘A topos and its dissolution: Japan in some 20th-century Iranian texts’, *Iranian Studies*, 29, 1–2, 1996, pp. 71–83; Nile Green, ‘Forgotten futures: Indian Muslims in the trans-Islamic turn to Japan’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 72, 3, 2013 (forthcoming); Alain Roussillon, *Identité et modernité: les voyageurs égyptiens au Japon*, Paris: Actes Sud, 2005; Barbara Watson Andaya, ‘From Rûm to Tōkyō: the search for anticolonial allies by the rulers of Riau, 1899–1914’, *Indonesia*, 24, 1977, pp. 123–56; and Renée Worringer, ed., *The Islamic Middle East and Japan: perceptions, aspirations, and the birth of intra-Asian modernity*, Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007.
- 6 On colonial Vietnamese and Bengali travels to Japan, see My-Van Tran, ‘Japan through Vietnamese Eyes (1905–1945)’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30, 1, 1999, pp. 126–46; My-Van Tran, *A Vietnamese royal exile in Japan: Prince Cuong De, 1882–1951*, London: Routledge, 2005; and Stephen N. Hay, *Asian ideas of East and West: Tagore and his critics in Japan, China, and India*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970. On Tatar, Egyptian, and Persian travellers, see François Georjon, ‘Un voyageur tatar en Extrême-Orient au début du XXe siècle’, *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 32, 1, 1991, pp. 47–59; Michael F. Laffan, ‘Making Meiji Muslims: the travelogue of ‘Ali Ahmad Al-Jarjawi’, *East Asian History*, 22, 2001, pp. 145–70; and Hideaki Sugita, ‘The first contact between Japanese and Iranians as seen through travel diaries’, in Worringer, *Islamic Middle East*.
- 7 *The first century of Mitsui O. S. K. Lines, Ltd*, n.p. [Japan]: Mitsui O. S. K. Lines, 1985; and Momohei Chida and Peter N. Davies, *The Japanese shipping and shipbuilding industries: a history of their modern growth*, London: Athlone Press, 1990.
- 8 Nile Green, ‘The rail hajjis: the Trans-Siberian Railway and the long way to Mecca’, in Venetia Porter, ed., *Hajj: collected essays*, London: British Museum Press, 2013.

of the Indian Ocean. For travellers from the Ottoman empire – and especially for the large number of Tatar Muslims and other exiles from the Russian empire who fled to Japan in the 1910s and 1920s – the Trans-Siberian Railway was tremendously important. This was all the more so because the Trans-Siberian Railway (a singular designation which exists only in foreign sources and not in Russian) was actually a network of interconnecting routes funnelling passengers from the far south and west of Russia to its political centre and thence east towards Mongolia, China, or Japan.⁹ The result of this new travel infrastructure, both on land and at sea, was a rapid diversification of the types of traveller now able to reach Japan, who comprised not merely diplomats, merchants, and professional seamen but also students, artists, and various kinds of educated job-seekers. The mobilization of such literate types was crucial to the dissemination of information about Japan.

Turning towards the main substance of this article, the following pages present a comparison of the most important Persian and Indian travel accounts of Japan from around 1890 to 1930. While other such travelogues may be found in future, the analysis here draws on all of the travelogues previously known to scholarship, as well as several new works located as part of the research for this investigation. The aim is to use travel to Japan to undertake a comparative case study of Persian and Indian information about the wider world that was opened up by the cheaper industrialized travel of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recent scholarship has already begun to examine direct Persian connections with India (with the port of Bombay in particular), as seen through the Persian travel accounts written by such figures as the wandering Sufi intellectual Hajji Pirzada (d. 1904).¹⁰ But rather than examining direct connections between Persia and India, the aim here is to use the shared Persian and Indian interest in Japan as a way of comparing the increasingly global horizons of mobile intellectuals from these two countries. What we will see is a series of similarities – in terms of both openings and limitations – as Persian and Indian intellectuals developed a mutual fascination with Japan that was lived out differently according to the variable opportunities made available by the different social networks to which these travellers had access. By looking closely at the commonalities and disjunctions in communicational infrastructures, the article traces some of the asymmetries of information gathering that contributed to differential Indian and Persian understandings of Japan up to around 1930. As an exercise in comparative history, the article therefore aims to contribute to the writing of global intellectual histories that can grapple with the variability of knowledges that have emerged from a common world system.

The Persian turn to Japan

In some respects, the Persian fascination with Japan emerged as part of a wider engagement with non-Islamic Asia that also saw commercial and cultural exchanges with India

9 Edward Ames, 'A century of Russian railroad construction: 1837–1936', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 6, 3–4, 1947, pp. 57–74; and Steven G. Marks, *Road to power: the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the colonization of Asian Russia, 1850–1917*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

10 Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: the religious economy of the west Indian Ocean, 1840–1915*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, chs. 4 and 5; and Anja Pistor-Hatam, 'Fremde Menschen in fremdem Raum: Aufzeichnungen eines persischen Derwischs von einem Besuch in Bombay', in Stephan Conermann and Jan Kusber, eds., *Studia Eurasiatica*, 10, 2003, pp. 317–47.

in particular. Recent work on these larger interactions points to the varied sources of Persian modernity and helps to recalibrate the historiographical location of Persia within the Middle East.¹¹ It is amid this Persian interest in the wider world – itself a product of the twin nineteenth-century forces of imperialism and the global communications revolution – that the Persian turn to Japan must be located. While Persia and Japan first made diplomatic contact with the mission of Yoshida Masaharu (1852–1921) in 1880, this came mainly at the initiative of the Japanese as part of the larger Meiji outreach to the world.¹² Nonetheless, it was from this time that the first expressions of Persian interest in Japan can be traced, both in terms of reports in the newspaper *Akhtar* from 1880 onwards and in Mātahūs Khān Malīk Yānas’ 1904 *Mamlīkat-i Shams-i Tali’i* (*Land of the Rising Sun*).¹³ Yet even at the outset, there were important contrasts between the Persian and Indian positions on Japan, not least owing to the fact that Persia’s primary imperial threat was Russia rather than Britain. This made the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905 all the more important. It was an achievement that was widely reported in the Persian press of the constitutional period (c. 1905–11) and that within two years was also celebrated in the Persian epic verse of Husayn ‘Ali Shirāzi’s *Mikadonama* (*Book of the Mikado*).¹⁴

It is worth pausing to look a little more closely at the *Mikadonama*, for its publication in Calcutta helps us to recognize the role of India – and, moreover, of India’s more developed communications infrastructure – in mediating knowledge about Japan to Persia. That the Calcutta-printed book was intended for a Persian readership is made clear by the printing of the Persian currency price on the cover: 1 toman. As a literary work, the *Mikadonama* consisted of just over a hundred pages of epic verse telling the story of the war against Russia and culminating in the land battle at Mukden and the great sea battle at Tsushima. There is no evidence that the poet Husayn ‘Ali Shirāzi ever went anywhere near Japan and his epic verses appear to have been based on news reports. Given the relative lack of ongoing direct Persian links with Japan to compare with the imperial information order of India and the large number of Indian merchants resident in Japan by 1905, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that even in this most iconic text of Persian Japanophilia there were close links with India as an informational hub. For in Calcutta, the *Mikadonama* was printed as part of the expatriate Persian publishing industry based in India’s ports, in this case on the printing press

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- 11 Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vajdani, eds., *Iran facing others: identity boundaries in a historical perspective*, New York: Palgrave, 2012; Green, *Bombay Islam*, chs. 4 and 5; Afshin Marashi, ‘Imagining Hāfez: Rabindranath Tagore in Iran, 1932’, *Journal of Persianate Studies*, 3, 1, 2010, pp. 46–77; and Fariba Zarinbaf, ‘From Istanbul to Tabriz: modernity and constitutionalism in the Ottoman empire and Iran’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 28, 1, 2008, pp. 154–69.
- 12 Tadahiko Ohtsu and Hashem Rajabzadeh, ‘Japan iii: Japanese Travelers to Persia’, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/japan-iii-japanese-travelers-to-persia> (consulted 6 June 2013).
- 13 Anja Pistor-Hatam, ‘Progress and civilization in nineteenth-century Japan: the Far Eastern state as a model for modernization’, *Iranian Studies*, 29, 1–2, 1996, pp. 111–26; and Mātahūs Khān Malīk Yānas, *Mamlīkat-i Shams-i Tali’i yā Dawlat-i Zhāpūn*, Tehran: Dār al-Tabā’a-i Fārūs, 1322/1904.
- 14 Husayn ‘Ali Shirāzi, *Mikādōnāma*, Calcutta: Matba’a-yi Habl al-Matīn, 1333/1907. For a study of the text, see ‘Ali Mīr Ansārī, ‘Jalūh-hā’ī az Rūshanfīkrī-yi ‘rānī dar Āstāna-yi Qarn-i Bistum (bar Asās-i Risāla-yi *Mikādōnāma*) (The appearance of Iranian enlightened thinkers at the threshold of the twentieth century (based on the *Book of the Mikado*), *Ayīna-i Mirās (Mirror of Heritage)*, 5, 4, 39, 2008, pp. 138–52. On the newspaper reports, see Hashem Rajabzadeh, ‘Russo-Japanese War as told by Iranians’, *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, 3, 2, 1988, pp. 144–66.

of the influential Persian newspaper *Habl al-Matin*.¹⁵ It was that same expatriate printing industry – albeit in its Bombay branch – that had earlier overseen the publication of perhaps the most important pre-1905 Persian account of Japan, *Kitab Mirat al-Zaman dar Tarikh-i Chin u Machin u Japan* (*Book of the mirror of the times through the history of China, Greater China, and Japan*).¹⁶ In dealing more with China than Japan, the *Kitab Mirat al-Zaman* marked an important moment of transition between the older recognition of the imperial might of China and the glimmering realization that a new power was rising in East Asia. Written by the prominent Bombay-based Persian publisher Mirza Muhammad Malik al-Kuttab Shirazi, the *Kitab Mirat al-Zaman* was printed by the same publisher that three years later would print the important missive on the Persian Tobacco Revolt by the exiled Baha'i leader, 'Abd al-Baha.¹⁷ In infrastructural as much perhaps as ideological terms, then, Persian Japanology was linked to reformist exile groups resident in the port cities of British India.

Rather than focus on the derivative historical narratives about Japan that featured in the *Mikadonama* and the *Kitab Mirat al-Zaman*, the following pages turn instead to two individual travelogues that drew on direct first-hand experiences of East Asia. The two accounts in question are those of Ibrahim Sahhafbashi and Mahdi Quli Hidayat, who travelled in Japan in 1897 and 1904 respectively.¹⁸ While with their closer proximity and more direct steamship connections, as well as their more pressing political situation, Indians were quicker than Persians to engage with Japan, these two Persian travelogues were nonetheless written several decades before their Indian English and Urdu counterparts discussed in the next section. The Persian and Indian accounts present useful contrasts, however, not least because, whereas Mahdi Quli Hidayat was a statesman-intellectual in the mould of the Indian Ross Mas'ud, as an educated merchant Ibrahim Sahhafbashi allows us to trace the perceptions of a member of the merchant classes who were the pioneers of both Indian and Persian direct engagement with Japan. As we will see, the Persian texts are also comparable with the Urdu travelogues for their mutual dependence on the global infrastructure of steam travel. Both the Indian and Persian travellers were able to reach Japan as a result of the steam networks that by the late nineteenth century had tied both Persia and India into a globalized set of steamship and train lines. This point is all the more apparent in the fact that Sahhafbashi and Hidayat both made their Japanese journeys as part of larger and truly global itineraries that took in other parts of Asia and also the United States.

Turning first to the merchant Sahhafbashi, it is important to recognize that his journey of 1897 by no means marked the beginning of Persian awareness of Japan, since, even before the 1893 *Kitab Mirat al-Zaman*, shorter reports on Japan had been appearing since the early 1880s in such Persian exile newspapers as the Istanbul-based *Akhtar*.¹⁹ Yet Sahhafbashi's journey did mark the increasing Persian usage of global steam networks. For, like those of the other travellers discussed below, Sahhafbashi's was a steam itinerary that took him from

15 Green, *Bombay Islam*, pp. 148–53.

16 Mirzā Muhammad Malik al-Kuttāb Shīrāzī, *Kitāb Mirāt al-Zamān dar Tārīkh-i Chīn ū Māchīn u Japān* [sic], Bombay: Dutt Prasad Press, 1893. On early modern indirect Persian knowledge of Japan, see Hashem Rajabzadeh, 'Japan as described in *Safina-ye-Solaimani*, a 17th century travel-book in Persian', *Journal of Osaka University of Foreign Studies*, 5, 1991, pp. 189–205.

17 On the latter text, see Green, *Bombay Islam*, p. 124.

18 Short sections of both travelogues have been previously discussed in Haag-Higuchi, 'A topos'.

19 Pistor-Hatam, 'Progress and civilization', pp. 113–18.

his home in Tehran through the Caspian by steamship; by train to Moscow and from there on to Berlin; from there to London and then Paris and back to London; across the Atlantic to New York; on a short excursion to see the Niagara Falls and Canada; then across the entire continental United States by train; through the Rockies and on to Vancouver and Victoria; across the Pacific to the Japanese port of Yokohama; and, after leaving Japan, a return sea journey via Hong Kong, Penang, and India. As a global steam traveller, Sahhafbashi was in this respect entirely similar to his compatriot Mahdi Quli Hidayat and the Indian travellers discussed below. But, unlike the Indians' journeys, Sahhafbashi's trip to Japan took place several years before the Japanese defeat of Russia that served as the turning point of Japanese prestige among Muslims (and particularly among Persian and Ottoman long-standing enemies of imperial Russia). What is most striking about Sahhafbashi's description of Japan is therefore its relative negativity in comparison with both the Indian accounts and the subsequent Persian panegyrics to Japan in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War.

Like the Indian travelogues to which we will turn later, Sahhafbashi's account of Japan certainly recognized the modernizing and technological achievements of the Japanese. His description of the country began with a scene of many Japanese warships at anchor in the harbour at Yokohama as his own ship arrived from Canada.²⁰ Later, when he was in the port of Kobe, Sahhafbashi described in fascinated detail the great 'exposition' of fish that has been set up there, by which 'steam wheels' (*charkha-yi bukhar*) pumped water into and out of a great tank in which thousands of fish and all kinds of other creatures from the depths of the oceans could be seen through panels of glass.²¹ In long-winded form, he was of course describing an aquarium for which he had no vocabulary or point of reference. (He was not the only Persian traveller at this time to be fascinated by such displays of nature: in 1892 the female *hajji* 'Alaviya Kirmani penned in her travel diary a fascinated description of the cages of animals and vitrines of flora at the zoological gardens in Kobe's Indian counterpart, Bombay.²²)

Elsewhere, Sahhafbashi remarked on the fact that there were very few beggars on the street and that all Japanese children began work and study from the age of four or five.²³ He was also a careful describer of Japanese customs and lifestyles, whether in terms of food habits, patterns of socializing, or scenes from domestic life. He gave his readers what were perhaps the first Persian accounts of dining on sushi (*mahi-yi kham*) and sake (*sharab-i zhapuni ke az berenj migirand*, 'a Japanese alcoholic drink which they make from rice') and eating 'with two delicate wooden sticks' (*do chub-i nazuk*).²⁴ He described a party in which a young woman – presumably a geisha – played a stringed instrument (*tar-i zhapuni*) for the male guests amid much bowing and mannerism.²⁵ Sahhafbashi was also curious about

20 Ibrāhīm Sakhāf-bāshī Tih-rānī, *Safarnāma-yi Ibrāhīm Sakhāf-bāshī* (*Travelogue of Ibrahim Sahhafbashi*), ed. Muhammad Mushīri, Tehran: Shirkat-i Mu'allifān, 1985, p. 85.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

22 Hājjiya Khānum 'Alaviya Kirmānī, *Rūznāma-yi Safar-i Hajj, 'Atabāt-i 'Āliyāt va Darbār-i Nāsiri 1309–1312 Q, 1271–1273 SH* (*Travel diary to the Hajj, the sacred cities of Iraq, and the court of Nasir al-Din Shah*), ed. Rasūl Ja'fariyān, Qum, Iran: Nashr-i Muvarikh, 1386/2007, pp. 53–4. Thanks to Kathryn Babayan for providing access to this book.

23 Sakhāf-bāshī, *Safarnāma*, p. 87.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–8, 86.

25 *Ibid.*, p.88.

Japanese religiosity and penned a brief account of the altars found in every shop and home and of the priests who, despite police bans, continued to be called on to provide ‘prayer water’ (*ab-i du‘a*) for the sick.²⁶ In another activity that would be familiar to Persian readers – and this time explicitly compared to Persian custom – he described the Japanese habit of removing shoes before entering a house.²⁷ In its ethnographic tendencies, then, the Persian travelogue had much in common with its Indian counterparts of a few decades later.

Sahhafbashi’s travelogue is particularly useful in portraying Persian attitudes *before* the turning point of the Russo-Japanese War (his account was written in 1897) and of a merchant rather than an intellectual such as his fellow Persian Mahdi Quli Hidayat and the Indian travellers discussed below. For, while recognizing Japan’s technological advances and taking an interest in their religious and social practices, Sahhafbashi voiced criticism and distaste for Japanese ways that are far from apparent in the post-war travelogues. For example, he was particularly upset with regard to the moral behaviour of women. One of his earliest sights in Yokohama was of a Japanese woman emerging naked from the sea and casually wandering up to a group of men to dress herself.²⁸ Later, he described in detail how in Japanese *hammams* (bath-houses) it was the custom for men and women to bathe together naked, even mixing fathers with their wives, daughters, and sons-in-law.²⁹ Nor did Sahhafbashi have a taste for Japanese food, finding sake particularly unpleasant.³⁰ His implicit evaluation of Japanese religiosity was also very low.

There are also distinctions in conceptual terms, for, unlike subsequent Persian and Indian (and Ottoman and Arab) accounts of Japan, there was no recourse to the vocabulary of ‘progress’ or *taraqqi* in Sahhafbashi’s depiction. Nor was there any sense of being part of a common ‘eastern civilization’ (*mashriqi tamaddun*). Along with the absence of such ideological apparatus, Sahhafbashi’s account further differed from its later counterparts in its relative ignorance of Japanese life. There are no Japanese loanwords; not even the most cursory summary of Japanese history; and no sense of awareness of the cultural achievements of Japan or the meanings of its religious and artistic practices. When he did attempt ethnographic description, Sahhafbashi had to depict Japanese practices in terms of the Persian practices and vocabulary he had available to him – his was a Japan of *hammams*, *mahfils* (musical gatherings), and even *mullahs* and *akhunds* (Muslim priests). What we see in Sahhafbashi’s travelogue, then, is an account of Japan as it was perceived before its defeat of Russia cast its cultural and economic achievements in a new light. If Sahhafbashi shared the means by which he was able to reach Japan in common with the Indian and other Muslim travellers of the next few decades, in his early account there was not yet any sign of the ideological mutuality of an appreciation of Japan as a model for Muslim development. Here in the prose of this Tehrani merchant was no fascination – at least not yet.

By the time we turn to the travels of Mahdi Quli Hidayat (1864–1955) just a few years later, the Persian estimation of Japan was already changing. Hidayat was the son of a

26 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

courtier and literary historian who had himself written a well-known travel account concerning the steppe lands on Persia's north-eastern frontier.³¹ He was sent by his father to study medicine in Berlin and after returning to Persia worked in the Telegraph Office and later the Dar al-Funun polytechnic, echoing the educational careers of the Indian Muslim travellers discussed below.³² Hidayat later assumed a position at the Qajar court, translating German books for Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1848–96), before making his great journey in 1903–04 that included the visit to Japan. He travelled in a small party that accompanied the former prime minister, Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan Atabek (1858–1907). As with the Indian and other Muslim travellers to Japan, Hidayat's journey was only made possible through the expansion of steam travel. In his case this involved a journey from Persia to the Caucasus by animal transport and thence to Moscow by train and from there across the whole length of Eurasia on the recently opened Trans-Siberian Railway. Like every other traveller of the period, Hidayat arrived in Japan via steamship into one of its three industrializing ports of Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki (in his case, Nagasaki). Passing from Russia to Japan just as the Russo-Japanese War was about to begin, his travelogue is in part a narrative of close calls, spies, and adventures.

Given that Hidayat had already travelled widely and was committed to Persia's modernization (having worked in the Tehran telegraph office), it is perhaps unsurprising that his estimation of Japanese achievements was more upbeat than that of the merchant Sahhafbashi. Like his Persian predecessor, on sailing into Nagasaki Hidayat noted the presence of a warship in the harbour bearing a Japanese prince; though in this case it was a German ship, it was nonetheless a pointer towards the international status of Japan.³³ From the moment of his arrival, Hidayat's travelogue displayed a much fuller awareness of Japan's modern history and recent achievements than Sahhafbashi's from a few years earlier. Hidayat penned a brief history of the opening of Japan's ports to global trade from the first treaty with the Portuguese in 1571 onwards and noted that his party had arrived just in time for the famous cherry blossom festival.³⁴ His appreciation of Japanese religiosity was both more respectful and informed than that of Sahhafbashi. The day after his arrival he was already visiting a Japanese shrine, recognizing both the correct name of the religion name (*Shinto*) and the shrine (*jingo*) and buying souvenir photographs of its picturesque views.³⁵ He later gave a respectful account of the Buddhist heritage of Kyoto and the various Shinto shrines in the small pilgrimage town of Niko.³⁶

31 On the father's travelogue, see Arash Khazeni, 'Across the black sands and the red: travel writing, nature, and the reclamation of the Eurasian steppe, circa 1850,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42, 4, 2010, pp. 591–614.

32 For a summary of Hidayat's life, see Mahdī Bāmdād, *Sharb-i Hāl-i Rejāl-i Irān Dar Qarn-i 12 va 13 va 14 Hijrī (Biographies of Iranian notables from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Islamic centuries)* 6 vols., Tehran: Zavvār, 1363/1984, vol. 2, pp. 455–9; vol. 4, pp. 184–7; vol. 6, pp. 196–8; also Manouchehr Kasheff, 'Hedāyat, Mokber al-Saltana. i. life and work', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hedayat-mokber-al-saltana-i> (consulted 6 June 2013). On his political thought, see Ali Barzegar, 'Mahdi Qoli Hidayat: a conservative of the late Qajar era', *Iranian Studies*, 20, 1, 1987, pp. 55–76.

33 Mahdī Quli Hīdāyat, *Safarnāma-yi Tasharruf bih Makka-yi Mu'azzama (Blessed travelogue to Mecca the Great)*, Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Majlis, n.d., p. 93.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 105.

Linked to this new-found Persian respect for Japan's religious heritage was a new appreciation of its economic and political importance. For a trader's text, Sahhafbashi's diary is surprisingly sketchy in practical details and more concerned with Japanese morality than merchandise. Hidayat, by contrast, collected detailed information on all manner of practical issues: the number of hotels and newspapers in Nagasaki; the routes of the railways; the specialities of factories (several of which he inspected); the topography of the European quarters in different ports; the hotels of Tokyo; and the well-stocked emporia of Yokohama.³⁷ By the time he had left Persia in 1903, such Japanese goods had already penetrated Persian markets and it is in fact Hidayat rather than Sahhafbashi himself who tells us that Sahhafbashi brought so many items back from Japan that every house in Tehran contained something Japanese.³⁸

Hidayat was also well aware of the political importance of Japan as a potential ally against imperial Russia, in a way that closely reflected the interest of Indian and other Muslim travellers in Japan as an ally against imperial Britain or Holland. He and his senior travel partner, Atabek, held many meetings with Japanese soldiers and politicians, many of which were detailed in his travelogue. Once again recognizing Japan's importance in a way that Sahhafbashi had not, Hidayat and Atabek discussed such topics as the German input into the new Japanese legal system.³⁹ Hidayat made inspection tours of several Japanese schools. In suitably progressive mode, he also took in a girls' school and described the curricula being taught there.⁴⁰ His book was more than a travel diary and included long sections devoted to Japanese history, religiosity, art, geography, etiquette, and relations with the Christian powers.⁴¹ Here was the richly detailed prose of a genuine fascination.

So far we have treated the Persian and Indian travellers only in comparative mode, but there is scope to see direct connection as well as comparison. Several Indians in fact appear in Hidayat's account. In Tokyo, for example, the Persian party was visited by a group of twelve Indian students, who presented them with a copy of the Calcutta-printed Persian newspaper *Habl al-Matin* (*The strong bond*).⁴² The Indian students, we are told, could all speak Persian and begged the influential Persians for help in India's freedom struggle. A few weeks later, in their hotel in Kyoto, Hidayat's party was invited to dinner by an Indian prince whom Hidayat recalled as being named 'Raja Kapur Talo'.⁴³ The prince in question was Maharaja Jagatjit Singh (1872–1949), the maharaja of the princely state of Kapurthala in Punjab, who published his own memoir (in Urdu and English) of the journey that took him to Japan as well as China and Java between 1903 and 1904.⁴⁴ Trivial as the incident was, the

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 96, 97, 99, 113.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 100.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 116–40.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

44 Jagatjit Singh, *Safari-i Chīn ū Jāpan ū Jāva* (*Travels in China, Japan, and Java*), Lahore, 1906; and His Highness the Raja-i-Rajgan Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China, Japan and Java*, 1903, London: Hutchinson, 1905.

meeting in Kyoto is a rare case of an encounter recorded from both the Indian and Persian side. According to Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, his ‘Indian cook prepared a number of savoury dishes, which met with high approval from my guests, who declared that they had enjoyed nothing so much in the way of food since their departure from Persia’.⁴⁵ But this appears to have been polite Persian *ta‘aruf*, for, according to Hidayat’s own version of the dinner, the rice was excellent but the ‘pepper and spices burned the tongue and mouth’.⁴⁶ Even so, the very fact that the two parties met is an important reminder that this story of travel to Japan was a shared history and, moreover, one that Persians and Indians knew they were sharing. It was a new sequence in a much older shared history of which both parties were aware. For just as the Indian students in Tokyo had presented Hidayat’s party with the Indian Persian newspaper *Habl al-Matin*, so did Jagatjit Singh see the meeting with the Persians as ‘the opportunity ... of reviving my old knowledge of the beautiful Persian tongue’.⁴⁷

The Indian turn to Japan

Before turning to the Indian travelogues, it is worth briefly contextualizing the arrival of these Indian visitors in Japan. Indian merchants were among the earliest outsiders to enter Japan after the opening of Yokohama as a treaty port in 1859. In many respects, Yokohama developed as the sibling city of Bombay: both served as the earliest railheads and as the chief international steamship ports, trading emporia, and industrial centres of their countries. Both cities also played parallel roles in the introduction of photography, newspaper printing, and gaslights to India and Japan. In comparative terms, it is important to note here that, while Persians could board steamships at Bandar-i Anzali and Bushehr, nineteenth-century Persia never developed any comparable global-industrial port. This fact was underlined by the wonderment and shock experienced by so many Persian travellers to Bombay, which served as Persia’s southerly window to the industrial world.⁴⁸

If Persian merchants reached out to Bombay, then Bombay’s merchants reached out to Yokohama (as well as Kobe) soon after its opening as a treaty port, with such famous Bombay companies as Sassoon, Sons & Co. and Messrs Tata & Co. opening branches in Yokohama.⁴⁹ In response, in 1894 the Yokohama Specie Bank opened the principal Indian branch of its business in Bombay.⁵⁰ By the time that the last of the Indian travellers discussed here reached Japan, around 1925, Yokohama was home to over thirty sizeable Indian businesses, with many others based in the port of Kobe, where they would soon build Japan’s first mosque.⁵¹ As we will see below in the discussion of Sayyid Ross Mas‘ud, such a large

45 Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China*, p. 152.

46 Mahdī Qulī Hidāyat, *Safarnāma*, p. 98.

47 Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China*, p. 152.

48 Green, *Bombay Islam*, ch. 4.

49 ‘Sassoon, J. David’ and ‘Jamshetji N. Tata’, in *The cyclopedia of India: biographical, historical, administrative, commercial*, 3 vols., Calcutta: The Cyclopedia Publishing Co., 1907, vol. 1, pp. 280, 391, 399.

50 ‘Yokohama Specie Bank’, in *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 399.

51 List of Indian businesses in Yokohama in 1930 in *Yokohama Archives of History Review*, 29, 2011, p. 41.

Indian presence – for which there was no comparable Persian counterpart – presents an important contrast between the Indian and Persian experiences of Japan.

On the back of the amount of traffic between the major ports of India and Japan, a considerable body of travel writings on the region gradually emerged. Given the colonial context, which by the end of the nineteenth century was increasingly seeing Indian intellectuals seeking a range of nationalist and internationalist political alternatives to British rule, there is no doubt that the colonial experience played an important role in the Indian interest in Japan.⁵² Even so, it is clear that mercantile rather than political aspirations underwrote the first chapter of Indian engagement with Japan, though no one Indian merchant travelogue has yet been discovered to compare with that of the Persian Sahhafbashi. While it is unwise to over-interpret such a non-discovery, it does seem fair to characterize the Indian travelogues to Japan as being written by members of either the Indian aristocracy or the new colonial intelligentsia, for whom Japan held a special interest as a non-colonial Asian power in a formulation that also appealed to Persian and other Asian intellectuals. Among the earliest of such travellers was the Punjabi Swami Rama Tirtha (1873–1906), who, after completing his studies at Lahore's prestigious Government College and becoming a professor of mathematics at Mission College, Lahore, renounced his career for the life of a holy man. Having heard rumours that Tokyo was about to host a follow-up to Chicago's 1893 World Parliament of Religions, Swami Rama set out for Japan in 1902 and spent several months living with Indian students at the Indo-Japanese Club in Tokyo and exchanging ideas with such Japanese Indophiles as Takakusu Junjiro (1866–1945), the professor of Sanskrit at the Imperial University.⁵³

However, it is Bengalis and not Punjabis who are the best-known Indians to have developed such an interest in Japan, whether as a locus of cultural exchange or as a place of political asylum. The two most important Bengali figures in this regard were the Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and the anti-colonial activist Rashbehari Bose (1886–1945), both of whom made their first journeys to Japan around 1915. In Tagore's case, his four Japanese journeys of 1916, 1924, and twice in 1934 were part of a larger sequence of artistic exchanges between members of his family and Japanese artists in the circle of Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913) and Yokoyama Taikan (1868–1958).⁵⁴ In response to his experiences, Tagore wrote a Bengali travel account entitled *Japanyatri* (*Journey to Japan*, 1919), as well as a series of *haiku* in Bengali. For Bose, meanwhile, Japan served as a place of secret refuge after being hunted by police as a leader of the 1915 transnational Ghadar Conspiracy. He was far from the only anti-colonial activist to flee to Japan, with the other famous examples being Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945) and

52 Though somewhat dated in approach, helpful references to the inspirational role of Japan in the Bengali nationalist press are found in Ramparkash Dua, *The impact of the Russo-Japanese (1905) War on Indian politics*, Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1966.

53 Puran Singh, *The story of Swami Rama: the poet monk of the Punjab*, Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1924; on the Japanese journey, see pp. 120–38. The meeting with 'Professor Takakutsu' [sic] is detailed on p. 127.

54 Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. On the Japanese experiences of Sandip Tagore (1931–), a later member of the Tagore clan, see Sandip Tagore, *Peopled azimuth: reminiscences and reflections of an Indian in Japan*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1987. In addition to detailing its author's own journey to Japan in 1957, the book provides data on the interactions that various Tagores had with Japan.

Mawlana Muhammad Barakatullah (1854–1927), who lived in Tokyo from 1909 to 1913 and published from there the journal *Islamic Fraternity*.⁵⁵ Given the point we have made earlier about the importance of steamship networks in providing the infrastructure for such journeys, it is worth noting how many of these trips to Japan were made as legs of larger onward journeys to the United States; for this was true not only of the Indian Swami Rama, Rabindranath Tagore, Rashbehari Bose, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Muhammad Barakatullah but also of the Persian Ibrahim Sahhafbashi and Mahdi Quli Hidayat. The journey to and interest in Japan was therefore not so much an intrinsic interest as part of a larger exploration of the world opened up to Asian intellectuals by cheaper global passenger shipping.

Given the fact that the Indian community that emerged in Japan between 1860 and 1930 comprised Sindhis, Gujaratis, and Punjabis as well as the better-known Bengalis, it seems likely that unknown travelogues in these regional languages await scholarly discovery. However, in what follows the focus is on Indian travel accounts written in English and in Urdu. The first to which we will turn coincided with that of the Persian Mahdi Quli Hidayat, being written by the Maharaja Jagatjit Singh (1872–1949), whom we have already seen encountering Hidayat's party in Kyoto. As ruler of the north Indian princely state of Kapurthala, Jagatjit Singh travelled to Japan in 1903 as part of a larger steamship and train itinerary that also took him to China and the Dutch East Indies. In many respects, his interests echoed those of Hidayat. For just as the latter included in his travel account long discussions of Japan's religious and cultural history, so did Jagatjit Singh's travelogue demonstrate a similar mutual fascination. But his appreciation of Japan's Buddhist heritage was much more sympathetic. Taking the opportunity to visit such historical sites as Nara, Kyoto, and Nikko, Jagatjit Singh was very enthusiastic in his appreciations of the architectural and artistic heritage of Japanese Buddhism.⁵⁶ He was keen to note the ancient links of Japanese Buddhism to India, whether by way of Sanskrit inscriptions on many of the statues he examined in the Imperial Museum or through the preservation of Max Müller's collection of Sanskrit manuscripts in the adjoining library.⁵⁷ This reading of Japanese Buddhism as being part of a high cultural continuum with ancient Indian culture may also explain his low opinion of Shinto, 'which is the State or Emperor's religion ... [and] can hardly be dignified by the name of religion, as it consists chiefly of ancestor worship'.⁵⁸ By linking it to India's own past, Jagatjit Singh's appreciation of Japan's Buddhist heritage was clearly distinct from the more universalistic valorization that Mahdi Quli Hidayat made of Japanese Buddhism from the position of a cosmopolitan religious sceptic.

Overall, however, there was still much in common between these Persian and Indian contemporaries. As new kinds of privileged globetrotting savants, their appreciation of a Buddhist culture that – until the archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century – was as alien to Indians as it was to Persians marked a new cosmopolitan moment that, in being partly predicated on rapid industrialized travel, was shared by Persians and Indians alike.

55 Cemil Aydin, *The politics of anti-Westernism in Asia: visions of world order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, pp. 113–14; and Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971.

56 Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China*, pp. 115–16, 134–48.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

It also relied on new comparative categories – particularly the notion of ‘civilization’ – that did much conceptual work in making sense and value of these otherwise confusing experiences of different places.⁵⁹ A decade earlier, Jagatjit Singh had travelled to the United States and Europe, while Hidayat’s Japanese journey was itself part of a larger round-the-world tour that similarly included Europe and the United States.⁶⁰ And so such educated and cosmopolitan tastes were not the lot of the common man or woman, and both Hidayat and Singh’s travelogues often remind us of their authors’ privileged status, one a courtier and the other a prince. Their tolerant attitudes towards Japanese culture were inseparable from the financial means that allowed them to travel in first-class carriages and purchase fine souvenirs of their journeys. On a visit to an exhibition of modern Japanese painting at the Imperial Museum in Tokyo’s Ueno Park, for example, Jagatjit Singh ‘indulged [his] taste for art by making a few purchases’.⁶¹ The cultivated and cosmopolitan tastes of educated upper-class travellers such as Singh and Hidayat were quite distinct from those lower down the social ladder such as the merchant Sahhafbashi, who, as we have seen, held Japanese culture in low regard. This would suggest that, even if certain Persians and Indians did look at Japanese culture with a new curiosity, these were more the shared fascinations of an international elite rather than generalized ‘Indian’ or ‘Persian’ attitudes.

As a prince abroad, Jagatjit Singh certainly travelled in style: his first-class train carriage on the Russian Eastern Chinese Railway to Dalny (Dalian) was ‘equipped with every imaginable luxury, even to a piano’, while the Oriental Palace Hotel in Yokohama was ‘the most luxurious caravan-serai ... I have stayed at east of Suez’.⁶² Nonetheless, this was more than a princely vacation and, like the Persian travelling statesmen Hidayat and Atabek, Jagatjit Singh used his journey to meet what he imagined were his East Asian counterparts and to learn what he could from Japan’s developmental policies. Even so, it is important to recognize here that this was not anti-colonial politics: as a Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, a Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire, and a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Maharaja *Sir* Jagatjit Singh was a loyalist prince of the British empire. What we see was rather a project in which loyalist Indian princely politics became linked with Japan as a means of developing the princely state rather than any imagined postcolonial Indian nation.⁶³ Moving beyond the cultural sphere into the arenas of politics and diplomacy, we see again how Jagatjit Singh’s concerns reflected those of the Persian party, even down to the meetings that they arranged in Japan with representatives of various East Asian powers. Just as Hidayat and his senior travel companion, the former prime minister Mirza ‘Ali Asghar Khan Atabek, were interested in Japanese policy and national development, so, as the hereditary ruler of his own state, Jagatjit Singh was concerned with similar questions. For, even if they were unable to control their own military or

59 Prasenjit Duara, ‘The discourse of civilization and Pan-Asianism’, *Journal of World History*, 12, 1, 2001, pp. 99–130.

60 Jagat-Jit Singh, Raja-i-Rajgan of Kapurthala, *My travels in Europe and America*, 1893, London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1895.

61 Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China*, p. 112.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 63.

63 For more on the Indo-Japanese aspirations for independent princely polities as opposed to a composite Indian nation, see Green, ‘Forgotten futures’.

foreign policies, the leaders of India's princely states held significant control over their domestic policies, particularly with regard to educational and economic matters.

There is a sense in Jagatjit Singh's actions of the ruler of an Indian princely state being able to play out the semi-fantasy of being the sovereign of a fully independent nation. Yet it was only a partial fantasy because, as with the Japanese travels of the Hawaiian ruler King David Kalakaua in 1881, those of Jagatjit Singh tell us about the genuine if constrained political agency of the little kings of the world either side of 1900.⁶⁴ The ruler of Kapurthala thus held meetings in Tokyo with the Russian, Italian, Chinese, and Siamese ambassadors, as well as the first secretary to the German Legation, for example.⁶⁵ As though making a formal state visit, he received separate audiences with the Japanese emperor and empress, noting the presence at the same event of the representatives of such major powers as Russia.⁶⁶ He also made an inspection of the visiting American battleship *USS Oregon*, in which he was taken on a cruise around Yokohama harbour, and he attended various official parties at the British Legation.⁶⁷ Despite being in their different ways constrained by the European colonial powers, both Persian and Indian statesmen used their travels to Japan as opportunities to do more than learn from Japan's recent history. Far from the direct influence of the European powers, Tokyo allowed such Persian and Indian travellers as Hidayat and Singh to acquire valuable diplomatic experience by acting as unofficial ambassadors and holding meetings with the representatives of the United States, Russia, Japan, China, or even Siam.

Such stately undertakings were far from examples of a colonial subject acting out the fantasy of being an independent ruler. For, just as Mahdi Quli Hidayat would go on to serve as a government minister in Persia, Jagatjit Singh's later career saw him not only overseeing the development of Kapurthala but also serving as the Indian Representative to the General Assembly of the League of Nations between 1926 and 1929 and, as independence beckoned, attending the Round Table Conference in 1931. However, in comparison to what we will see below of the travels of the Indian Muslim Ross Mas'ud, what is notable about Jagatjit Singh's travelogue is that it does not mention him meeting a single other Indian in Japan. Instead, he described himself as being constantly in the company of Japanese ministers and royalty, the representatives of other Asian states, or such senior representatives of the British Empire as the ambassador, Sir Claude MacDonald. Indeed, it appears to have been partly through the latter's influence (or, at least, approval) that Jagatjit Singh was able to meet so many members of Japanese high society, not least through the garden party held at the British Legation soon after Singh's arrival and to which 'the *élite* of Yokohama and Tokio [*sic*] was invited ... and for the first time I met some of the leading foreign and Japanese ministers'.⁶⁸ Pointing to colonialism's ambivalent blend of oppression and opportunity, Jagatjit Singh's elevated status as a princely member of the British empire (and his titles of GCSI, GCIE, and GBE) allowed him to make use of the most restricted imperial networks to

64 Richard A. Greer, ed., 'The royal tourist: Kalakaua's letters home from Tokio to London', *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 5, 1971, pp. 75–109.

65 Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, *My travels in China*, pp. 81, 85.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 74–5, 116–22.

67 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

gain entry into the highest levels of Japanese society within days of his arrival. Personally hosted by the British Minister Sir Claude MacDonald, he had no need for the bourgeois network of Indian textiles and electronics traders that we will see used by Ross Mas'ud in Japan a few years later.

The next Indian traveller to whom we will turn is Sayyid Ross Mas'ud (1889–1937). His grandfather was the great Indian Muslim modernist and founder of the Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College at Aligarh, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98). Following in his footsteps, Mas'ud was himself the key figure behind the foundation of India's first vernacular-medium university, the Osmania University in Hyderabad.⁶⁹ His visit to Japan in 1922 built on these concerns and was intended as a fact-finding mission on the educational development of Japan, in particular on the question of how Japan had developed a system of modern technical education in its own language rather than in English, which by the 1920s had become the dominant language of university education in India. The main written record of Mas'ud's travels was therefore the official report that he wrote on his journey for the Nizam's Government in Hyderabad, which was published in both English and Urdu as *Japan and its educational system* (1923) and *Japan aur uska ta'limi nazm u nasq* (1925).⁷⁰ He also wrote several other short texts on Japan, such as his 1926 *Rub-i Japan (Spirit of Japan)*, while a posthumous edition of his private diary was published in 1968.⁷¹ Between these various sources, Mas'ud's journey can be reconstructed in detail, in terms of both its practical undertaking and its ideological motivations.

As a Muslim modernist who looked to Japan as a model for modernizing the Muslim-ruled princely state of Hyderabad, Mas'ud had in certain respects more in common with the Persians than with some of the other Indian travellers. However, as we will see, the matter is not so straightforward as dividing 'Hindu' and 'Sikh' from 'Muslim' concerns and there were various overlaps, not least in the concerns of the ruler of Kapurthala and the loyal servant of princely Hyderabad, Ross Mas'ud. In this respect, as non- or semi-colonized states on the fringes of European rule, Persia, Hyderabad, and Kapurthala (as well as Afghanistan and the Malay native states, for that matter) are all comparable for the way in which they looked to Japan for an Asian model of modernizing national development.⁷² Indeed, the 1920s and 1930s saw Ethiopian princes and statesmen, such as Heruy Wäldä-Sellāsē (1871–1938) and Bejirond Tekle-Hawaryat (1900–69), travel to Japan and compose their own accounts of the lessons that Ethiopia should draw.⁷³

69 Kavita Datla, 'A worldly vernacular: Urdu at Osmania University', *Modern Asian Studies*, 43, 5, 2009, pp. 1117–48.

70 Sir Syed Ross Masood, *Japan and its educational system: being a report compiled for the Government of His Exalted Highness the Nizam*, Hyderabad: Government Central Press, 1923; and Sayyid Rās Mas'ud, *Japān aur uskā ta'limī nazm ū nasq*, Aligarh: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū, 1925. For studies of the latter and other Urdu accounts of Japan, see Moinuddin Aqeel, 'A culture shock: a narrative of the late 19th century Japan in Urdu', *Area and Culture Studies*, 53, 1996, pp. 135–51; and Nile Green, 'Anti-colonial Japanophilia and the constraints of an Islamic Japanology: an Indian Muslim interprets the rise of Japan', *Journal of South Asian History and Culture*, 2013.

71 Rās Mas'ud, *Rūb-i Japān*, Hyderabad: Matbū'a-i Dār al-Matba'-'i Sarkār-i 'Āli, 1345/1926; and Syed Ross Masood, *Travels in Japan: diary of an exploring mission*, ed. Jalil Ahmad Kidwai, Karachi: Ross Masood Education and Culture Society of Pakistan, 1968.

72 Green, 'Forgotten futures'.

73 Hidéko Faërber-Ishihara, *Les premiers contacts entre l'Éthiopie et le Japon*, Paris: Aresae, 1998; Hidéko Faërber-Ishihara, 'Heruy, le Japon et les "japonisants"', in Alain Rouaud, ed., *Les orientalistes sont des*

Availing himself of the Japanese shipping lines (of which there were several connecting India with Japan by the 1920s), Mas'ud set sail from Bombay on 12 March 1922 aboard the Japanese steamship *Wakasa Maru* and caught his 'first glimpse of the land of the Rising Sun' some three and a half weeks later on 7 April.⁷⁴ Sailing in first class, Mas'ud had already made his first Japanese contacts on board ship and, though he noted that 'all the Japanese on the boat ... look alike to me', he had soon made friends with the Japanese artist Yazaki Chiyoji (1872–1947), who was returning from a tour of India and presented Mas'ud with a watercolour of Daulatabad fortress in the Hyderabad state.⁷⁵ This acquaintance was not to prove much help, since Yazaki disembarked in Singapore before reaching Japan, to open an exhibition at the Japanese Club comprising his paintings of 'many fascinating studies of Indian and Eastern scenes'.⁷⁶ If Yazaki was only one of many Japanese artistic and religious visitors to India, he was matched aboard the *Wakasa Maru* with various Indians sailing to Japan, among whom Mas'ud made friends with a certain Advani, who was to prove of much practical help to him.⁷⁷ Advani was an Indian resident of Yokohama, where he was sufficiently well known that when he and Mas'ud reached the city there was a crowd of Indians awaiting them at the railway station.⁷⁸

From this point onwards, what is striking about the practical aspects of Mas'ud's journey was the way in which he was able to rely on the network of Indians – in his case, mainly Indian Muslims – that had developed in Japan by the 1920s. On landing at Kobe, for example, Mas'ud immediately went to the office of the Indian merchants Poohoomull Bros, where he was provided with a room to stay in and other assistance, including the services of the Poohoomull company's Japanese translator, Mahtani.⁷⁹ The same pattern was repeated in each of the cities Mas'ud visited: in Yokohama, for example, he was helped by a Punjabi graduate of Waseda University called Bhagat, who had settled down in Japan as an exporter of electrical goods.⁸⁰ Bhagat in turn presented him with letters of introduction to various professors at Waseda University whom Mas'ud was anxious to meet. When rents in Yokohama proved expensive, Bhagat also introduced him to Mirza 'Ali Raza of Bangalore, who found him an inexpensive house to rent (though the deal was hardly a good one: 'my new house was not comfortable, as motors and other vehicles kept passing and repassing my house and shook it till 2 a.m.').⁸¹ As an exporter of leather, Mirza 'Ali Raza was, of course, a businessman and it was to other such Indian Muslim businessmen that he introduced

aventuriers: Guirlande offerte à Joseph Tubiana par ses élèves et ses amis, Paris: Sèpia, 1999; and Bahru Zewde, 'The concept of Japanization in the intellectual history of modern Ethiopia', in Bahru Zewde et al., eds., *Proceedings of fifth seminar of the Department of History*, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1990. My thanks to Jonathan Miran for providing access to these readings.

74 Masood, *Travels in Japan*, pp. 5, 16.

75 *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6, 9.

76 *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 31 May 1922, p. 7.

77 On Japanese Buddhist religious travellers to India, see Jaffe, 'Seeking Śākyamuni'.

78 Masood, *Travels in Japan*, p. 20.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 19.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–31.

Mas'ud, such as Mr Beg from the firm Abdul Karim Bros, Ispahani of Madras, and an unnamed silk exporter from Junagadh who was the representative in Japan of a firm based in Rangoon.⁸² By 1915, India had replaced China as Japan's largest export market for certain goods, such as matches;⁸³ Muslim merchants from the Bombay Presidency played a leading role in exporting a wide range of other Japanese manufactures (such as ceramics, glassware, and cotton goods), in return largely importing raw cotton.⁸⁴

Some of the Indian merchants, such as 'Abd al-Qadir ('Mr Kadir') of Madras and Jayyakar of Bombay, had lived in Japan since the Meiji opening of the country forty years earlier and had taken Japanese wives and citizenship.⁸⁵ While there was a clear sense of entering an Indian Muslim circle in Japan, Mas'ud's diary suggests that the circles of Indian Muslims and Hindus were very fluid and 'a few Hindus such as Bhagat and Jayakkar' were even present at the celebration of 'Id al-Fitr hosted by Abdul Karim Bros.⁸⁶ On another occasion, Mas'ud was taken to the Indian Club in Tokyo, where he found a group of Indians playing billiards, noting in his diary that, of the eighty Indian traders who were resident in Tokyo, all but two of them were Hindu silk exporters from the city of Hyderabad in Sindh.⁸⁷ He also acquired letters of introduction through the help of former Indian visitors to Japan, such as Sir Mokshyagundam Visvesvaraya (1860–1962), an Indian engineer who served as a consultant to the Nizam's Government in Hyderabad and later as chief minister of the princely state of Mysore. Having himself inspected Japan's educational and industrial progress a few years earlier and having written his own account of the country in 1920, Visvesvaraya had met with Mas'ud in Bombay on the eve of his departure to present him with letters of introduction to various Japanese educationalists.⁸⁸ In Tokyo, for example, Mas'ud was put into contact with Visvesvaraya's former translator, Toraji Makino, who worked for the Bureau of Social Work and who in turn introduced Mas'ud to the Minister of Education and to the Sanskrit scholar Professor Takakusu of the Imperial University, whom we have seen previously meeting Swami Rama.⁸⁹ An Oxford graduate himself, Mas'ud was happy to discover that Professor Takakusu had previously studied Sanskrit under Max Müller at Oxford, where he had also acquired the impeccable English through which he communicated with Mas'ud.⁹⁰

Although the two Persian accounts examined earlier were written around twenty years before Mas'ud's journey, they give no impression whatsoever of there existing any comparable network of Persians in Japan. Indeed, neither Sahhafbashi nor Hidayat mention

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 62–3.

83 Takashi Oishi, 'Indo-Japan cooperative ventures in match manufacturing in India: Muslim merchant networks in and beyond the Bengal Bay region 1900–1930', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 1, 2004, pp. 49–85, esp. p. 53.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 73.

85 Masood, *Travels in Japan*, pp. 46–47.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 4; and Mokshyagundam Visvesvaraya, *Reconstructing India*, London: P. S. King and Son, 1920.

89 Masood, *Travels in Japan*, p. 34.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

meeting any other Persian in Japan, a fact that is in some contrast to the two separate groups of Indians that Hidayat described meeting in Yokohama and Kyoto. This would seem to reflect accurately the differing degrees of Indian and Persian contact with Japan, in that Indian merchants had been among the earliest to establish themselves in Kobe and Yokohama, directly after the Meiji opening of the nation to foreign trade. As a result, Indian and Sri Lankan ports such as Bombay and Colombo were directly connected with Japan, whereas the Persian travellers found it necessary to make detours either via Bombay or, in Hidayat's case, Moscow and the Trans-Siberian Railway. These closer Indian connections in turn opened other possibilities, including the closer information exchange and interaction afforded by shared languages: long-term Indian merchant residents had either learned Japanese themselves or counted Japanese interpreters among their regular employees. As we have already seen with regard to Maharaja Jagatjit Singh's journey, for upper-middle-class and aristocratic Indians at least, the consular and social appendages of the British empire provided an additional network in Japan. Moreover, Indians' relatively greater exposure to the English language also afforded the possibility of direct communication with those Japanese who had studied in England or the United States, of whom Mas'ud met quite a number, such as Professor Kusu, who had studied at Oxford, and Professor Dusi, who had studied at Columbia.⁹¹

Published in the Urdu language that was readable by tens of millions of people across India, Mas'ud's book brought a sophisticated understanding of Japan to a large vernacular readership. Given that neither Sahhafbashi nor Hidayat published their works in their lifetime, the same cannot be said for what Persian travellers learned through their journeys to Japan. Instead, aside from short newspaper reports, Persian readers of the early 1900s had to rely on the eulogistic and versified history of Japan contained in Husayn 'Ali Shirazi's Calcutta-published *Mikadonama* or the brief history of both Japan and China presented in the hundred pages of the Bombay-published *Mira't al-Zaman (Mirror of the Times)* of Malik al-Kuttab Muhammad ibn Muhammad Rafi'.⁹² Yet even in such cases as these, Persian knowledge of Japan was filtered through the port cities of India, where both books were published.

Although Mahdi Quli Hidayat appended lengthy discussions of Japanese culture to his own travelogue, these sections appear to have been added during a revision process that took place prior to its publication in the early 1940s rather than at the time of the journey itself in 1903. Be that as it may, the larger number of more detailed and informed first-hand Indian accounts of Japan suggest that, with their closer connections to Japan, Indian intellectuals were able to gather much more knowledge on Japan than their Persian counterparts. While the Russo-Japanese War saw a burst of Persian interest in Japan, Hashem Rajabzadeh has stated that 'for four decades after Persia's Constitutional Revolution (1905–11), however, there are no records of any further Persian publications about Japan', with a renewed interest only emerging in the 1940s, when Hidayat's travelogue was itself finally published.⁹³ If, at least for a while, the Indian and Persian fascination with Japan was mutual, then the Indians were able to develop a richer body of knowledge based on their access to a larger set

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 54.

92 Muhammad ibn Muhammad Rafi', *Mir'at al-Zaman*, Bombay: n.p., 1893.

93 Hashem Rajabzadeh, 'Japan, xiii: translations of Japanese works into Persian', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/japan-xiii-translations-of-japanese-works-into-persian> (consulted 7 June 2013).

of social and intellectual networks built on India's, and Britain's, more extensive relations with Japan.

Conclusions

Through the Persian travelogues of Mahdi Quli Hidayat and Ibrahim Sahhafbashi, and the Indian English and Urdu writings of Maharaja Jagatjit Singh and Sayyid Ross Mas'ud, we have seen how Persians and Indians participated in a wider interest in East Asia in the years before and after the Russo-Japanese War. Whether looking east from Tehran, Istanbul, or Delhi, in the years before Japanese imperialism took its own darker turn, in the far reaches of Asia Indian Muslims, Bengali nationalists, Persian progressives, and Young Turks each looked to Japan as a rising sun beyond the British and Russian empires. As at once the last and first Asian empire, Japan was conceived as a developmental model for Muslim-ruled states confronted with European power. While it would be easy to classify the texts that we have examined as part of a larger Pan-Asianism or Pan-Islamism, this would be to silence their distinct and several agendas.⁹⁴ While such Pan-Asianist and Pan-Islamist ideologues did reach out to Japan, just as Japanese imperialists reached out to them in return for their own reasons, the range of travelogues we have considered point to a more complex set of agendas and motivations. These ranged from the mercantile seeking of new goods and markets (Sahhafbashi) to the search for empowering lessons for existing nations (Hidayat) and princely states (Jagatjit Singh, Mas'ud). Such a variety of agendas is only to be expected, for it was itself a reflection of the increasing variety of individuals who were enabled to travel by the cheaper industrial transport of the period. Distinct from the raw data of first impressions that we have accessed through these travel diaries, the larger ideologies of the period – whether Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism, or any number of local nationalisms – were secondary intellectual responses that attempted to channel the increasing information brought back by such travellers, and the wider communications infrastructure of which they were part, into distinct ideological shape.

Lying beneath these globalizing 'pan' ideologies, we have seen a set of direct experiences that emerged from the common impact of a shrinking connected world and the various attempts to make sense of them in writing, each of which were shaped by asymmetric access to wider information and knowledge on Japan. Yet such asymmetry must itself be factored into the integrating if variegated informational impact of a global communications system. For, through such Persian works as the Calcutta-printed *Mikadonama* of 1907, we have seen how the Persian and Indian turns towards Japan were closely intertwined as intrinsically global communication objects as well as acts. This intertwining of Indo-Persian knowledge of Japan was not only in textual or thematic terms but also in concrete terms. As a physical book, the *Mikadonama* brought to life the story of Japan's triumph over Russia through fifty-eight black and white illustrations on glossy imported paper in the dramatic style popularized by the *Illustrated London News*. Mainly battle scenes, whether at land or sea, the illustrations bear alternating and sometimes overlapping signatures of the artists 'HW Koekkoek' and 'Bose'. This strongly suggests that, before the illustrations were reissued

94 See Aydin, *Politics of anti-Westernism*; Duara, 'Discourse of civilization'; and Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: nationalism and internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54, 1, 2012, pp. 65–92.

in the Persian *Mikadonama*, they were copied and adapted by a Bengali artist named Bose from originals drawn by the Dutch news illustrator and painter of militaria, Hermanus Willem Koekkoek (Amsterdam 1867–1929).⁹⁵ Around the same time that Koekkoek's work was being adapted in Calcutta for export to Persia, it was also being adapted for the *Illustrated London News*.⁹⁶ Moreover, before being adapted for the *Mikadonama*, Koekkoek's same illustrations of the war – including the same portrait of Admiral Kamimura – had previously appeared in London news magazines and other publications.⁹⁷ In other words, we are looking at a situation in which a Dutch artist from Amsterdam made illustrations of a war fought in the ports of the far side of Eurasia and sent these images for publication in a London newspaper, which itself circulated as far as Calcutta, where its illustrations were copied by a Bengali artist to be printed in a Persian book intended for export to Persia. What this tells us is that, their differences notwithstanding, both the Indian and Persian accounts of Japan were products of the new global communications infrastructure, whether by way of illustrated print media that circulated images and information second-hand or by way of the trains and steamships that afforded a new category of intellectual traveller the opportunity to inspect Japan first-hand. But if such inspection was a relatively equal opportunity, the ability to make sense of such experiences through access to a wider body of knowledge and a wider network of informants was markedly differentiated. It was here that Persian and Indian knowledge diverged.

Motivations might nevertheless be shared. Based on this communications infrastructure, between around 1900 and 1930 Indians and Persians developed many common interests in Japan, if not necessarily common ideologies. These interests were primarily in terms of Japan's rapid political and economic transformation from a bullied minor Asian nation to an industrialized world power that by 1905 could defeat imperial Russia. However, these political interests inspired other interests in turn, as questions of Japan's economic transformation led to inquiries into her education system and thereby into the realms of culture and even religion. For Persian as well as Indian intellectuals, one of the key questions of the time was how Japan had managed to become 'modern' without sacrificing its distinct cultural heritage. It was a question that Persians and Indians shared with other Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals from Cairo and Istanbul to Hanoi and Addis Ababa.

Yet, while there were many similarities in the mutual fascination that Indians and Persians shared, there were also important differences. These were not least in the breadth and depth of their interactions with Japan. Unlike Persian travellers, Indian visitors to Japan were able to make use of a much wider set of networks that in turn afforded deeper interaction and fuller understanding of Japan. These distinct networks comprised the various Indian merchant communities in Japan, the imperial networks of assistance that we have seen being used by

95 The case for the Bengali artist adapting the images is made clear by the appearance of both illustrators' signatures on the same image, as for example with the portrait of Admiral Kamimura in *Shīrāzī, Mikādōnāma*, image opposite p. 23.

96 For example, the cover image of fighting at the Liverpool general strike in the *Illustrated London News*, 19 August 1911.

97 For example, Koekkoek's portraits of General Kuroki and Admiral Kamimura appeared in the *Illustrated London News* and *Outlook* magazines in 1904. See American Library Association, *A.L.A. Portrait index: index to portraits contained in printed books and periodicals*, 3 vols., New York: Franklin, 1906, vol. 2, pp. 785, 816. Another of Koekkoek's illustrations was used in H. W. Wilson, *Japan's fight for freedom: the story of the war between Russia and Japan*, 2 vols., London: Amalgamated Press, 1905, vol. 2, p. 640.

Jagatjit Singh, the Japanese interest in India (especially in its Buddhist and Sanskrit heritage) that opened up contacts with artistic Indophiles, and Japan's own imperial expansion in Asia that provided jobs for language teachers and refuge for political activists. These several networks offered opportunities that were unavailable to Persian travellers of the period, whose mercantile and imperial arenas were far more limited than those of their Indian counterparts. Finally, as we have already noted in the contrast between Hidayat and Mas'ud, unlike their Persian counterparts, Indian intellectuals were able to draw on a colonial information order that by the 1920s comprised large numbers of English publications on Japan. That these works were accessible in Indian libraries is testified to in Mas'ud's writings, where he makes direct reference to such books, as well as in the extensive English bibliography that appended such Urdu works as Badr al-Islam Fazli's *Haqiqat-i Japan (Truth about Japan)* from the early 1930s.⁹⁸ Colonial knowledge, then, could feed a variety of intellectual purposes.

Despite their multiple agendas and local concerns, the writers of these various Indian and Persian accounts of Japan did share a comparative model of historical development through which lessons were sought in a radically different and spatially distant land that they conceptualized as no less 'eastern' (*mashriqi*) than their own. This comparative method emerged from the mass availability of industrialized communication technologies (passenger liners, vernacular printing) that, by the early twentieth century, allowed Muslim intellectuals from all across Asia to travel to Japan and their travel accounts to reach mass audiences. While the writers of these different Urdu and Persian texts were not necessarily aware of each other's writings, they were nonetheless participants in a trans-Islamic turn to Japan that was mediated through newspaper reports and ephemeral communications no less than books. In 1905 Mahdi Quli Hidayat's travelogue described its author sending postcard after postcard home to Persia from Japan and China, for example, while in 1912 the pioneering Afghan newspaper *Siraj al-Akhhbar* printed a travel report on Japan.⁹⁹

Ultimately, the mutual fascinations of Persian and Indian travellers to Japan were underwritten by the global communications revolution of the nineteenth century that brought an awareness of the Japanese achievement simultaneously into the consciousness of Persian, Indian, Afghan, and even Tatar intellectuals. The awareness that came from the many Asian travellers to Japan, among whom we have identified the small number who recorded their experiences, was the raw material from which a smaller number of ideologues carved their creeds. In trying to piece together from such materials new intellectual histories on a global scale, we need to recognize the entropy that came before order as information preceded ideology.

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98 Shaykh Muhammad Badr al-Islām Fazlī, *Haqiqat-i Jāpān*, Delhi and Aurangabad: Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdu, 1934. For a study of this text, see Green, 'Anti-colonial Japanophilia'.

99 Mahdī Qulī Hīdāyat, *Safarnāma*, pp. 14, 21, 26 and *Sirāj al-Akhhbār* [Kabul], no. 14, 1912, p. 13.