Published: December 15, 2008
Last Updated: October 1, 2016

JALĀL-AL-DIN MIRZĀ

JALĀL-AL-**DIN MIRZĀ**, Qajar historian and freethinker (b. 1242/1827; d. 1279/1872; BABISM) in the middle of the 19th century, with its advocacy of a break with Islam and the founding of a new circle of revelation (Amanat, 1999, pp. 8-9; Idem, 1989, pp. 48-105).

Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's unorthodox proclivities found further exposure through association with Mirzā Malkom Khan (1833-1908) and his secret society, the Farāmuš-ḵāna ('house of oblivion,' see FREEMASONRY), which made strident efforts to recruit members from the Qajar family, the ulema, and students from the Dār-al-fonun. Established in 1289/1861-62, the Farāmuš-ḵāna was a semi-clandestine political organization which aimed at bringing about reforms based on the ideas of Mirzā Malkom Khan and his father, Yaʿqub Khan (Amanat, 1997, pp. 358-64, 383-94). Its founding coincided with a series of administrative reforms such as the dissolution of the office of the Chief Minister (*ṣadr aʿaẓam*, *ṣadārat*) in 1274/1858 and the formation of a consultative council (*majles-e mašwarat* or *mašwarat-ḵāna*). Eventually, however, the more conservative elements convinced the shah that the Farāmuš-ḵāna was a den of heresy and support for European ways, bent on overthrowing the government itself (Amanat, 1997, pp. 351-54, 358-83). Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's connections with the Farāmuš-ḵāna might in part be attributed to his dissatisfaction with the line of succession that had side-stepped the Fatḥ-ʿAli Shah branch of the Qajar dynasty. In the aftermath of the dissolution of this semi-secret organization, clandestinely produced and distributed pamphlets (*šab-nāmas*) began to appear, criticizing the shah and the

conservative elements within the court. These broadsheets were perhaps the first examples of explicit criticism of the government during Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's (r. 1848-96) reign (excluding the earlier Babi example), and ultimately led to the repression of former members of the Farāmuš-ḵāna. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā, fearing for his life, took refuge at the shrine of Šāh ʿAbd-al-ʿAẓim near Tehran while other prominent members, including Mirzā Malkom Khan, sought refuge abroad. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā, as a member of the royal family, was eventually pardoned (Divān-Beygi, I, p. 370).

Nāma-ye ḵosrovān. While remaining critical of the Qajar government, towards the end of his short life Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā turned to writing a history textbook noted for its attention to the Iranian pre-Islamic past and written in "pure Persian" prose shorn of Arabic loanwords. The initial instigation for embarking on such a venture is not entirely clear although in a letter to Mirzā Fatḥ-ʿAli Āḵundzāda (1812-78, q.v.), Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā suggests that he was driven to write a history of his Iranian ancestors in pure Persian in order to restore their greatness which had long "disappeared as a result of the Arab invasion" (Āḵundzāda, p. 373). Initially, the text was meant to comprise of four volumes, but only three were ever completed and published in Tehran. The first volume (1285/1868) covered the ancient history of Iran until the end of the Sasanian dynasty. The second volume (1287/1870) dealt with Islamic Iran from the Taherid dynasty to the demise of the Ḵʷārazmšāhs. The third volume (1288/1871) covered the period from the Mongol invasion to the Zand dynasty. The fourth volume, which was meant to bring the events to his time, never materialized, perhaps out of concern for the outcome if it ventured to criticize the Qajar establishment in its narrative.

The two main foreign culprits in Iranian history, according to the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, were the Arabs and the Mongols. Surprisingly, the Greeks are not included in the list. Such a view of history, particularly in its depiction of Islam and the Arab invasion as a great calamity, stands well apart from traditional Qajar historiography, as manifested in works by Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat (1800-71, q.v.) or Moḥammad-Taqi Sepehr (1792-1879). Stylistically, *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān* was written in simple Persian, free of foreign words (particularly Arabic). It was intended "for the general public (*mardomān*), especially children" (*Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, I, p. 6), and might have been written with French textbooks in mind. Another exceptional aspect of the text was the inclusion of portraits of the kings mentioned in the book, often modeled on Sasanian coins (ĀẔAR KAYVĀN, b. circ. 1529-33; d. circ. 1609-18) a neo-

Zoroastrian movement originating in Iran and thriving in the Mughal court of Akbar (r. 1556-1605, q.v.), which tended to emphasize the superiority of Persian-Zoroastrian legacy over Arab-Islamic elements. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā draws upon the pseudo-historical text *Dabestān-e maḏāheb* associated with this school, as a crucial source for the early period of Iran's ancient history, although much of the details provided are mythical and legendary. In the absence of proper historical sources for ancient Iran, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā often turned to texts inspired by Āḏar Kayvān's school. Although these texts have been dismissed by many scholars as historically unreliable, they are still important for the light they shed on the intellectual formation of the authors of the time, including Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā, and their attempt to retrieve the Iranian national identity and heritage. In terms of European sources, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā makes some mention of European travelers to Persepolis (*taḵt-e jamšid*) alluding perhaps to Sir Gore Ouseley (1770-1844, q.v. at *iranica.com*) and Sir William Ouseley (1769-1842, q.v. at *iranica.com*) or to the British painter and traveler Robert Ker Porter (1777-1842). His use of European sources for the Sasanian period is also evident from his references to European calendar dating.

The sources for the second and third volumes of the *Nāma-ye ḵ¨osrovān* appear to have been drawn mainly from two popular universal histories: Ḡiāṯ-al-Din Ḵᵛāndamir's (ca. 1475—ca. 1535, q.v.) *Ḥabib al-siar* (q.v., printed in Tehran in 1263/1846-47) and Moḥammad b. K¨ᵛāndšāh Mirḵᵛānd's (1433-98) *Rowżat al-ṣafāʾ* (qq.v.), supplemented by Reżāqoli Khan Hedāyat's addendum (printed in Tehran in 1270-74/1853-58). He generally follows these sources closely in outline and chronology, though with a more plain and simple diction than that of his medieval or contemporary counterparts. For the third volume he also appears to draw on Mirzā Moḥammad-Mahdi Khan Astarābādi's (d. between 1759-68) *Tāriḵ-e Jahāngošā-ye Nāderi*.

Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's narrative is unique among Persian historical sources for the manner in which it connects the pre-Islamic period to the Islamic era. While there were other Persian texts establishing continuity with pre-Islamic past, this was often done through stories from the Hebrew Bible, the Qurʾān, Hadith narratives, and even accounts of the Jāheliya period and Hellenistic philosophers. *Nāmā-ye ḵosrovān*, on the other hand, was probably the first to observe continuity in the political and cultural narrative of the Perso-Islamic past. Islam thus received little exposure in the narrative of the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*. Moreover, the Arab conquest and the subsequent destruction of the

Sasanian Empire is given central importance. Turco-Mongol tribal dynasties were also blamed alongside the Arabs for bringing havoc in their wake (*Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, I, p. 10 and II, p. 12). Such an emphasis on the destructive character of the Arab and Mongol invasions was rooted in the nineteenth century European Orientalist scholarship. More broadly, it stemmed from European Romanticist historiography that tended to see the shaping of national identity through the prism of national conflict against foreign and tyrannical powers. The ancient and glorious past, therefore, was held up as an emblematic model for a better future while the present was interpreted as being oppressive in light of injustices emanating from abroad.

While Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā might not have been directly influenced by European romanticism, he certainly conjured up an idealized image of the past, the shaping of which took precedence over historical accuracy. This becomes palpable in his uncritical praise for the pre-Islamic shahs of Persia, an implicit counterpart to his criticism of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah and the Qajar establishment, and perhaps intended to serve also as kind of counsel to the king (*naṣiḥat-nāma*). This is not to say, however, that Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā sympathizes with historical anti-state movements in pre-Islamic Iran. Mazdak and Mani are assessed negatively and so are other heterodox movements of later centuries. Indeed, at no point does he appear to question the royal institution itself and its claims to inherent legitimacy (*Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, I, pp. 251, 318-40).

While foreigners, mainly the Arabs and Turks, are blamed for the Iranian decline, there are some exceptions. Surprisingly, he is sympathetic towards the Ghaznavid ruler Maḥmud (r. 998-1030; *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, III, p. 49), Chinghiz Khan (d. 1227, see ČENGIZ KHAN), and Timur (1336-1405, q.v.), although he remains critical of the Il-khanids (q.v.). Among more recent monarchs, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā praises Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629, q.v.; *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, III, p. 99), Nāder Shah (r. 1736-47, q.v.; *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, III, pp. 117-38), and Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-79; *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, III, pp. 139-48). His praise for Karim Khan, the great rival of the early Qajars, as a “victorious and brave king” who showed considerable kindness to his subjects, testifies to Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā’s ability to distance himself from entrenched pro-Qajar loyalties.

Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā’s commitment to employing exclusively words of Persian origin should be understood within the broader context of his desire to revive Persia’s pre-Islamic heritage. The origins of such a nostalgic return to pure Persian harks back, as suggested above, to at least the 16th-century Āḏar-e Kayvān movement that was possibly known to Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā through

reading Mollā Firuz's *Dasātir* (q.v.). Among his near contemporaries, several men of letters could have also had some influence on him. Yaḡmā Jandaqi (1781-1859) noted for his epistolary style, was known for employing pure Persian in his letters. But, unlike him, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's pure Persian was aimed to be simple and accessible. In this respect, he should be seen as a forerunner of the 20th-century writers of simple Persian prose, but, contrary to later figures such as Aḥmad Kasravi (1890-1946), Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā made no attempt to coin Persian neologisms. He did however employ new expressions with skill, including *dāstān* for history, *dāstānsarā* for historian, and *peyḡambar* instead of *rasul* for prophet or messenger. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's style was praised by Mirzā Eskandar Kāẓem Beg (*Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, II, preface) and Fatḥ-ʿAli Āḵundzāda (Āḵundzāda, p. 221), both of whom wrote to the Qajar prince expressing their admiration. Āḵundzāda in particular commended Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā for having liberated Persian from the ungainly shackles of adopted Arabic words and expressions in Persian. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā, however, was open in his criticism of Āḵundzāda's naive usage of Arabicized French words. His aversion to Arabic made him hope that, in the future, Persian children would learn French rather than Arabic in schools (Āḵundzāda, pp. 376-77). While Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's purified Persian appears to have had few immediate imitators, yet it in due course he foreshadowed similar attempts during the Pahlavi era (see FARHANGESTĀN).

Death and legacy. Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā had already lost his sight at the time of publication of the second volume of his history (*Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, III, p. 386). He had also contracted syphilis (possibly contributing to his blindness) which eventually led to his death at the age of forty-six in 1872 (Bāmdād, I, p. 255). Towards the end of his life, the Qajar prince expressed a desire to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca (Āḵundzāda, p. 252). One interpretation for this apparent conversion may have been his hope for recovery and the urge to absolve himself from accusations of heresy. It is also possible that his request to leave the country for *ḥajj* might, in reality, have been a mere pretext for gaining royal permission to leave Persia and possibly visit Europe. Such hope may have been spurred by the appointment of Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošir-al-Dawla to the premiership in 1869. Indeed, the liberalizing cultural climate of the early 1870s allowed the publication of the third volume of the *Nāma-ye Ḵosrovān*, possibly with the premier's patronage.

After his death, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's work was largely forgotten by the general public. *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān* was published twice abroad, in Bombay in

1319/1899 and then in Lucknow in 1931, where it may have been assigned as a history textbook. Khan Ṣāḥeb Moḥammad Širāzi, Malek-al-Kottāb, the publisher of the Bombay edition, also produced the fourth volume of the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān* in the style of Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā and brought the events up to date, albeit in an inferior quality. The conclusion of volume four of the Bombay edition states that the text was assigned for Persian examination (presumably the Indian Civil Service) from 1901 to 1904.

In spite of the apparent neglect, the influence of *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān* can be traced in historical writing of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11, q.v.) and after. Although no longer published in Iran, it served as a prototype for modern Persian textbooks and the emphasis on dynastic history continued into the nationalist histories of the early Pahlavi period. Like the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, historiography of the Pahlavi period tended to glorify the pre-Islamic era at the expense of the Islamic era—particularly the recent past, which received less attention. Likewise, the Arab conquest and the Turkish and Mongol invasions were blamed for Iran's decay and destruction. In such reading, the West was held up as a model of renewal. In the linguistic project of the Pahlavi era there also existed a tendency, similar to that of the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān*, of expunging Arabic and Turkish elements from Persian.

Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā's focus of blame on the twin forces of emasculated traditional kingship and conservative religious establishment is emblematic of liberal intellectuals of his age. Like his contemporaries, he, too, was enamored of the modern Western secular culture and saw it as the panacea for Persia's ills, but like many he failed to see the West's hegemonic presence as a political threat. Like Āḵundzāda, he tended to emphasize culture and language as the key to the country's renewal. Yet his work marked a new age in Persian historiography. It differs markedly not only from court chronicles of his time, but also from the Shiʿite *rejāl* literature or martyrology and from the Sufi hagiographies of the period. As such, his works should be seen as one of the earliest examples of modern Iranian national narrative standing between the legendary memory of the past, as in the *Šāh-nāma*, and the first glimpses of European studies of ancient Iran popularized for Iranian audiences. Although in popular appeal it came nowhere near such contemporary chronicles as Sepehr's *Nāseḵ al-tawāriḵ* and Hedāyat's *Rowżat al-ṣafāʾ-e Nāṣeri*, the *Nāma-ye ḵosrovān* nonetheless seems to have been the source of inspiration for the popular painters of the so called "coffeehouse school" (see ṢAQQĀ-ḴĀNA School of Painting) of the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods.

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