



JAPAN XIII. TRANSLATIONS OF JAPANESE WORKS INTO PERSIAN

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Translation into Persian of works written in French, English, and other European languages began in Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's reign (1848-96). The Government Translation Bureau (Dār-al-tarjama-ye kāṣṣa-ye dawlati) under Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-Salṭana engaged in translating diverse historical, geographical, and literary works. Perhaps some of these touched on East Asian history and culture, including Japan. But a specific introduction of Japan to Persian readers began when Japanese military victories over China (Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95) and, especially, Russia (Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05) excited the interest of Iranians and other Western Asian nations. One such notable work was *Mamlakat-e šams-e ṭāle' yā dawlat-e Žāpon* compiled and translated by Māṭāvus Khan Melikiān and published in 1904. In 1907 Ḥosayn-'Ali Tājer Širāzi published an account of the Russo-Japanese War in 2,000 couplets of epic verse. Titled *Mikādo-nāma*, it was based on translated reports and commentaries. For four decades after Iran's Constitutional Revolution (1905-11, q.v.), however, there are no records of any further Persian publications about Japan.



In the early 1940s, after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, the changed political atmosphere led to a revival of publishing activities, and several new literary journals appeared. Prominent among them was *Sokān*, founded in 1943 by Parviz Nātel Kānlari, who was also its chief editor. *Sokān* provided incentives and opportunity for growth to the promising younger generation of writers and translators. Many celebrated literary figures, including Kān-lari himself and Šādeq Hedāyat (q.v.), translated examples of Japanese literature from French or other Western languages, and these were published in *Sokān* (see Rajabzadeh, 1997). These include translations of some old Japanese stories and a few stories of Kyōgen (Japanese comic plays) by Hamid ‘Enāyat; “Urāshimā Tārō,” a Japanese folk-tale, by Hedāyat; and a representative work of Junichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965) by Zahrā Kānlari. Japanese poetry was first introduced to Persian readers by a number of contributors to *Sokān*, of whom Hamid ‘Enāyat, Sohrāb Sepehri, and Aḥmad Šāmlu are notable. Sepehri rendered a number of *tanka* verses (a classical 31 syllable poetry, comprising five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables) into beautiful Persian. Selections of the 14th-century *Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in idleness), a collection of observations and anecdotes by the monk Kenkō Yoshida (d. 1350), were also first introduced in *Sokān*—apparently translated by P. N. Kānlari.

Translations continued to appear in the 1950s and 1960s in such literary journals as Aḥmad Šāmlu’s *Ketāb-e haftā* and Gōlām-Ḥosayn Šā‘edi’s *Alefbā*. ‘Abbās Sa‘idi (1973) is credited as one of the first authors since Māṭāvus Khan Melikiān to compile an introductory book on Japan, based on sources in European languages. More recent works on modern Japanese history include Aḥmad Birašk’s translation (1996) of *The Japan Reader* (ed. Jon Livingston et al.).

Japanese classical poetry is represented in Persian by anthologies of haiku translations (Šāmlu, 1997; Maeda and Pāšā’i, 2002), as well as *Gol-e šadbarg*, a selection from the 8th-century anthology of poems in a number of different verse forms, *Man’yōshū* (Collection of 10,000 leaves), which is the earliest collection of Japanese poetry (selections tr. Rajabzadeh and Fujimoto, 1993). Prose literature is represented by the *Tsurezuregusa* (tr. Rajabzadeh, 1993).

Since the 1950s a considerable number of books containing Persian translations of short stories and novels by Japanese writers has been published, mostly introducing works of Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927), Masuji Ibuse (1898-), Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972), Kojiro Serisawa (1897-), Yukio Mishima (1925-70), and Kenzaburō



Ōe (1935-). Compilations of selected short stories by Japanese writers have also been published, such as the work translated by Ārtuš Budaqiān. In recent years, two literary journals, *Kelk* (no. 65, 1995) and *Pol-e firuza* (1/4, 2002), have published special issues on Japan with Hashem Rajabzadeh as guest editor; these contain a number of articles translated from Japanese.

Japan has also been the subject of original fiction written in Persian. A number of works depict adventures and hardships experienced by unauthorized Iranian workers there in the 1990s. Examples are ‘Abbās Mašhadi’s *Kastadelān dar Žāpon* (1997) and Ḥamid Mobini’s *Man az Žāpon āmada-am* (1977). Mašhadi’s is a fascinating work of fiction based on a new image of Japan which took shape among tens of thousands of Iranians, mostly unemployed young men, who in the 1990s adventured to Japan, traveling on tourist visas in search of temporary jobs (see above, iv). The references made in the work to things Japanese, locations, and place names, however, suggest that the writer himself has not lived in Japan, at least for a long time. Mobini’s work is a typical and factual diary of an educated young man who has experienced the hardship of living and working in Japan as an illegal worker.

Publications on Japan and Japanese arts translated into Persian include books on Japanese drama and the classical theatrical genres of Nō (Noh), Kabuki, and Kyōgen. Some works related to Japanese films also have been translated, including *Sinemā-ye Yāsujirō Ozu* (Yasujirō Ozu’s [1903-63] films) compiled by A. Ṭabāṭabā’i, which presents the oeuvre of a director noted for his moving depictions of family life, its close bonds and its tensions. In the field of fine arts, *Šiša-ye Irani* is Ārmān Šišegarān’s translation (from the English version) of Shinji Fukai’s *Persian Glass*.

In the area of philosophy and religion, translated works mostly relate to Zen Buddhism, an example of which is Delārā Qahramān’s *Šad hekāyat-e Zen*, a translation of one hundred selected Zen stories. Hashem Rajabzadeh rendered in Persian the *Bukkyō seiten* (Teaching of Buddha), compiled by the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), as *Čonin goft Budā* (1984).

A number of Japanese travel accounts and memoirs of Japanese who traveled in Iran from 1880 on have been translated by Rajabzadeh, some with the collaboration of Japanese researchers. These include works by Masaharu Yoshida (traveled 1880-81) and his traveling companion Nobuyoshi Furukawa, Atsueji Ashikaga (1934 to 1964), Iwatarō Uchiyama (1926-27), Akiyo Kasama



(1929-32), and Eiji Inoue (1934 to 1984). (See also, above, iii.)

Other non-fiction works include Morio Ono's account of Iranian agriculture, translated by Rajabzadeh as *Ḳayrābād-nāma* (1988). Rajabzadeh has also translated a number of articles by Japanese scholars who are engaged in Iranian studies, including part of Seichō Matsumoto's work on the introduction of Persian art into Japan in ancient times. For the benefit of the Persian-speaking community in Japan, Yoshifusa Seki did the Persian translation in a conversation guide (one of a series) for foreigners with Japanese doctors (Ōnishi and Masumo). A few textbooks used in teaching Japanese to non-Japanese students also have been translated into Persian; the original sources are mainly in English.

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