



KUROYANAGI, TSUNEO

KUROYANAGI, TSUNEO, Japanese scholar of Persian language and literature (1925-2014; [Figure 1](#)). As a pioneering specialist in Persian studies in post-World War II Japan, he complemented and built upon the work of the first generation of Japanese scholars of Persian literature and Iranian culture. Kuroyanagi was born in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in 1925 and entered Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) in 1944. He learned [Urdu](#) from Reiichi Gamō (1901-77) in the Hindustani Department.

Urdu had been introduced into the university in 1908, after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Its significance as an important Asian language for the diplomacy of early 20th-century Japan became apparent at that time with the extended reach of imperial foreign policy. (See also [JAPAN xiii. TRANSLATIONS OF JAPANESE WORKS INTO PERSIAN](#).) Gamō was one of the early proponents of Islamic studies in Japan. He was a coworker of Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-93) in the Islamic Area Research Institute (Kaikyōken Kenkyūsho), founded in 1938, which remained active through the years of the Pacific war (1937-45; on the Institute, see Aydın, pp. 24-27). Izutsu, as a historian of Islamic philosophy, in later years would become well-known internationally. Gamō, in this period, was gradually focusing his interest on Iranian culture and Persian literature.

Persian literature, such as [Omar Khayyam's](#) *Robā'iyāt*, the *Šāh-nāma*, Nezāmi's *Haft Peykar*, plus pre-Islamic texts such as the *Avesta*, was introduced to Japan, in part, in the early 20th century through English and French translations (see [JAPAN xii. TRANSLATIONS OF PERSIAN WORKS INTO](#)



JAPANESE). Sa'di's *Golestān* already was known, due to its fame among Chinese Muslims as a work of ethics equal to Confucius. Shigeru Araki (1884-1932; see [JAPAN vi](#). [IRANIAN STUDIES IN JAPAN, PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD](#)), who had studied Iranian languages and Zoroastrianism under [A. V. Williams Jackson](#) in Columbia University, taught Persian in Tokyo University and translated the *Rubaiyat* from Persian in 1920. Ryōsaku Ogawa's later translation of the *Robā'iyāt* (1948; see [JAPAN xiii](#)) likewise is in the poetical style of early 20th-century Japan and retains high popularity in the present day. Eizō Sawa, a specialist in Urdu at Osaka University of Foreign Studies, translated the *Golestān* (1951) earlier than Gamō, and it too has an established reputation.

Gamō had started to translate the *Golestān* shortly after the end of the war but published only later (Gamō, 1964). Kuroyanagi learned Persian through reading the *Golestān* with him, as well as Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* (with reference to Ogawa's translation). Kuroyanagi also learned Arabic by himself and had close communication with Shinji Maejima (1903-83), a historian of the cultural exchange between East and West and the first translator of the *Thousand and One Nights* (see [ALF LAYLA WA LAYLA](#)) from Arabic into Japanese (Maejima, 1966-81). Gamō, Izutsu, and Maejima were among the few scholars who continued their research on the Islamic area in the early post-war period despite the postwar social disturbance as well as a lack of academic resources after the Islamic Area Research Institute (Kaikyōken Kenkyūsho) was burned down in the bombing of Tokyo in 1945.

Thus Kuroyanagi began his career in the scholarly atmosphere around these pioneers. Graduating from TUFs in 1947, he was employed as an assistant at the Hindustani Department in 1951. A few years later, by Gamō's arrangement, Kuroyanagi held a two-year temporary post at the Department of Oriental History of the University of Tokyo. In 1958-60, he studied Persian language and literature at Tehran University under *Ḍabih* Allāh Ṣafā (1911-99), Moḥammad Mo'in (1914-71), [Parviz Natel Khanlari](#) (q.v.; 1914-90), and other scholars. He extended his association and friendship with various Iranian Iranologists, especially with Iraj Afshar (Iraj Afšār, 1925-2011; [Figure 2](#)). As Kuroyanagi later reflected in a letter to Afshar, their deep friendship remained until the end of his life, and Afshar's mentorship and generous support profoundly influenced his academic life (Afshar, 2010). Their friendship is also noted by Afshar in the travel diary from his visit to Japan during 1972-73 (Afshar, 1975; 2014).



The first Persian Department in Japan had been established in 1961 at Osaka University of Foreign Studies and was chaired by Ei'ichi Imoto (1930-2014). He was an Iranologist and linguist of pre-Islamic Iranian languages, who inherited the scholarly tradition of Atsueji Ashikaga (1901-1983) and Gikyo Itō (1909-1996; see [JAPAN vi](#)). TUFS, however, contrary to Gamō's lifelong hope, lacked a Persian Department until 1980, and so, during the 1960s and 1970s, Kuroyanagi was devoted to the teaching of Persian within the Urdu Department. In this period, he published introductions to Persian grammar (1973a; 1978a; 1982a) and Arabic grammar (1976) with coauthor Kasuke Imori (1937-2012), translations of the *Šāh-nāma* (1969a), the *Qābus-nāma* and *Čahār maqāla* (1969b), Nezāmi's *Haft peykar* (1971a), and *Hafez's Divān* (1976a). He also wrote a history of Persian literature (1977) as a concise introduction to post-Islamic Persian literature, based on the works of orientalists such as [E. G. Browne](#) (1862-1926) and [Jan Rypka](#) (1886-1968), as well as those of Iranian Iranologists, including Šafā, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Zarrinkub (1923-99), and others.

With the establishment of the Persian Department at TUFS in 1980, Kuroyanagi further dedicated himself to teaching Persian until his retirement in 1989. He published diverse teaching materials, including Persian literature readers (which sample, e.g., the *Golestān*, *Rubaiyat*, *Šāh-nāma*, and Ḥāfeẓ's *Divān*). He also compiled a series of dictionaries—Persian-Japanese (1988), Japanese-Persian (1992), modern Persian (1995), a “new lexicon of Persian” (2002b) containing over 80,000 entries, and a thoroughly revised edition of the Japanese-Persian dictionary (2010a). These are almost the only Persian dictionaries available in Japanese. The three-volume dictionary (1976-79) by Tetsuo Nawata (1936-2013; a linguist of modern Iranian languages) and the translation of Yuri A. Rubinchik's Persian-Russian dictionary (1970) by Yuriko Furushima (1993), are not accessible for most learners.

Kuroyanagi's tireless endeavor, continued until his end of life, was to translate Sa'di's *Bustān* (2010b) as well as *Aṭṭār's Manteq al-tayr* (2012). These pioneering dictionaries and translations, while organized with an educational purpose, also display an exquisite literary style of Japanese.

Starting his career as a student of Gamō, the specialist in Urdu as well as Persian, Kuroyanagi's early interests naturally extended to the influence of Persian literature in India, as well as, e.g., the works of [Biruni](#) (1965a), those of [Jāmi](#) (1979), *Kalila wa Demna* (1970d), and [Muhammad Iqbal's](#) (1877-1938) Persian *maṭnawī Jāvid-nāma* (1968). He also compiled a comparative



grammar of Persian, Arabic, and Urdu (2002a) and a comparative dictionary of Persian, Arabic, and Urdu (2008). Gamō's and Kuroyanagi's pioneering dedication to Persian literature, during what might be called the "golden age" of Urdu education in Japan in the 1950s, was based on their awareness of the predominant influence of Persian language and literature on Urdu and on India and its culture more generally. Kuroyanagi contributed to broadening the Japanese people's acquaintance with the Persian language and Persian classical literature as well as the historical and literary background, and his series of translations achieved wide popularity among Japanese literati.

It is worthwhile to note that Kuroyanagi continued Toru Haneda's (1882-1955) study of a Japanese document dated to the early 13th century, which was dedicated to a Japanese Buddhist priest in China and traditionally is considered to be a Buddhist sutra (Haneda, 1910). It records a few verses of Persian poetry, and Kuroyanagi (1987) identified one of them as a verse from the oldest manuscript of the *Šāh-nāma*.

Thus, Kuroyanagi's lifelong effort concentrated on promoting education in Persian language and literature in Japan. He received recognition of his work in the form of the twelfth literary and historical award of the Mahmud Afshar Foundation (Tehran) in 2003. He was a member of the International Advisory Committee of *Encyclopædia Iranica* from 2008 until his death in 2014.

Kuroyanagi's endeavor has been continued at TUFU by Emiko Okada (1932-), his coworker and the translator of *Ḳosrow o Širin* (1977), *Leyli o Majnun* (1981), *Vis-o Rāmin* (1990), the *Šāh-nāma* (1999), *Rubaiyat* (2005), and *Yusuf o Zolaykā* (2012), and by Morio Fuji (1954-), Kuroyanagi's student and the translator of Aṭṭār's *Tadkerat al-awlā'* (1998). However, in Japan, the expansion in fields of study focused on post-revolutionary Iran has occurred mainly on the side of the historical and political sciences. By comparison, Persian literature has unfortunately remained as a minor field, retaining a mere handful of specialists.

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Abbreviations.



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[JIBS] *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū/Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* (Nihon Indogaku Bukkyōgakkai/Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies).

[Oriento] *Oriento. Bulletin of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan.*

[TUFUS] *Tōkyō Gaikokugo Daigaku/Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.*

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