Arthur Dudney

4. Persian-Language Education in Mughal India from *Qaṣbah* to Capital

Abstract. Although education was fundamental for someone's entry into the Persian-using public sphere in Mughal India, present-day scholars have devoted little attention to the mechanics of how Persian language and literature was taught. This chapter focusses on ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ Hānsawī (fl. late 17th c.), an educator active in Hansi, a town some 150 km northwest of Delhi. As a teacher (rather than a poet or a courtier) working outside the imperial centre, he is passed over in the usual sources for reconstructing Persianate intellectual history, but his works were nonetheless extremely influential: his Persian primer became one of the most widely used schoolbooks in eighteenth-century India. Within a generation, the philologist Ārzū revised ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's pioneering lexicon of Indic words, *Ġharāʾib al-luġhāt*, and inaugurated an important reappraisal of linguistic standards in what would come to be called Hindi-Urdu. This calls into question the oft-repeated notion that Persian was never properly integrated into the Indian lifeworld, and so was inevitably replaced by a 'native' Indic language.

Keywords. ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ, Hānsawī, Indo-Persian, Urdu, Lexicography, Pedagogy.

Whatever progress has been made by scholars in demonstrating the role of Persian in premodern Indian life, it is worth reflecting on the obstacles they must continue to battle to dislodge the preconception of Persianate culture as a perennial other in South Asia. Writing in 1963, the great linguist S. K. Chatterji described the aftermath of the arrival of the Urdu poet Walī from the Deccan to Delhi, itself an overdetermined event in the imagined history of Urdu literature, in the following words:

> Delhi Urdu as a Muslim language thus came into being. The Court circles, and the Persian and Arabic scholars, and particularly Muslims in Delhi of recent foreign origin, took to the new language with enthusiasm. Coteries of poets grew up, who became language-reformers; their zeal was for introducing Persian and Arabic words to saturation, to eschew Hindi and Sanskrit words as far as possible, and to forget in their compositions everything about India. . . . Urdu poetry, up to the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, was just a reflex of Persian poetry. . . . It was this mentality—an incapacity to

> appreciate or acknowledge their Indian heritage out of an excessive zeal for
> Arab and Irani Islam—which was largely responsible for half the sorrows of
> modern India, including her recent dismemberment.[1]

Several fascinating assumptions are at work here, including the implication that Persian at least indirectly caused the 1947 Partition of British India. Chatterji presumes a sectarian identity for Urdu which in turn derives from the irreducible foreignness of Arabic and Persian. Urdu poetry, he claims, was a mere imitation of Persian poetry and as such could not reflect Indian life. All of these assertions are questionable, and it is the present author's intention to continue to question such predetermined conclusions through a study of Persian-language education in India. The present article is intended more as a prolegomenon for research in progress rather than as a presentation of a polished thesis. The main figure of interest, the late seventeenth-century teacher ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ Hānsawī, has so far eluded any biographical certainty in the absence of any archival breakthroughs but he represents a class of person that needs to be better understood in order to understand Persian in South Asian society.

We should begin with some preliminary notes about Persian in premodern South Asia. Firstly, the framework that this article and all of the present author's work promotes is that of Persian as a cosmopolitan and therefore a learned language. Attention ought to be paid to the mechanics of teaching the language, including the various tools for handing down the tradition, which serve a variety of skill levels: these include *tażkirah*s (collections of brief biographies of poets generally with selections from their verses), lexicons (including the *niṣāb* genre, which is to say, rhyming dictionaries for children), literary set texts (for example, *Gulistān* and *Bostān*), commentaries on those set texts whether as free-standing works or marginalia (*ḥāshiya*), collections of *inshāʾ* or belles-lettres, and primers in grammar, prosody, accounting, and specialized subjects. The tools matter because of the pervasive misconception that learned language is necessarily synonymous with artificial language, and we need to trace how Persian was actually embedded in an Indian lifeworld.[2]

Secondly, our terminology for South Asian multilingualism is inevitably anachronistic: in describing the linguistic environment, one can either refer to Persian as opposed to something called 'the vernacular,' or one can refer to Persian as opposed to a named language or literature (for example, Hindi/Urdu/Reḵẖtah/Bhāṣā). These approaches are both unsatisfactory. The former implies

---

1 Chatterji (1963), pp. 146–147, with two obvious typos fixed.

2 Literary scholars have a similar distaste for early modern *rīti* Hindi (as laid out in Busch (2014), for example), which was supposedly unable to address Indian life because it was mannerist and courtly. Of course, Hindi literature is discussed without the overtones of 'foreignness' that have often structured the debate around Persian in India.

a binary in which Persian is the cosmopolitan language and the vernacular in its various forms is by definition non-cosmopolitan, and thus local, less valued, unstandardized, liable to corrupt other languages, and so on, as Persian floats magisterially above it. Such a fundamentally structuralist logic in which it is assumed that only one language can fill one role suffers from a double imprecision, in that it is difficult to define the language varieties in question as well as to delineate the boundaries of the roles to be filled. The absolute division of cosmopolitan and vernacular in the South Asian context has been effectively questioned for more than two decades.[3] However, even if we grant the so-called 'vernacular' its cosmopolitan roles, scholars are perhaps less willing to allow Persian to be seen as a properly Indian language and have bracketed it off in various ways that have no basis in historical texts, as we saw in the context of Chatterji's description of Urdu above, but rather reflect present-day language ideologies. The second possibility for terminology, Persian set against a named language/tradition, is if anything worse because we have to commit to a name for that language or literary tradition. Is it '*hindī*'? That is the term used in most Persian sources to refer to what is 'not Persian,' but of course it means 'Indic language and not Modern Standard Hindi. We could call it Urdu but that name would not be used until the 1780s and has its own politics. Reḵẖtah seems like a neutral compromise but it too is anachronistic, laden with socio-political assumptions, and perhaps not even strictly speaking correct by contemporary definitions.[4] Bhāṣā, construed either broadly or specifically as the literary dialect Brajbhāṣā, is not Reḵẖtah, but clearly some Indo-Persian writers were thinking about it as 'the Indic language that is not-Persian.' Here the issue is literarized versus non-literarized language, a distinction for which we have almost no feeling today because every language that most of us come into contact with is literarized. To avoid complexities in terminology, this article refers to 'the vernacular' but uses it in the narrow sense of the language variety spoken natively around Delhi by elites which was being to some degree literarized by ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's time. It is Khaṛī Bolī, which is to say grammatically like modern Hindi and Urdu, but it has a fuzzy relationship with what would be standardized into Punjabi that deserves to be better understood.[5] (By way of conjecture, we can observe that this linguistic situation commonly

---

3 Pollock (1998), (2000); Busch (2010), etc.; Orsini and Sheikh (2014).

4 Before the nineteenth century when it became largely synonymous with Urdu, Reḵẖtah (literally meaning 'poured' and thus mixed together) referred not to a language but a literary style that drew upon both Persian and Khaṛī Bolī. Viewing it as a language identity in the eighteenth century is therefore problematic.

5 The touchstone work on Urdu as it was used west of Delhi is Shirani's *Punjāb meṁ urdū* (*Urdu in Punjab*), but a great deal of discussion on Shirani's argument is a kind of nationalism played out on a regional basis.

used a number of words that were later defined as standard Punjabi at the same time as they dropped out of use in Hindi and Urdu.)[6]

The first part of this article sketches what we know about Persian education in premodern South Asia, and the second discusses what little the present author has so far been able to glean about ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's life, finally considering what a figure like him might mean for our understanding of the relationship between Persianate intellectuals in the urban centre and in the *qaṣbah* (a town that served as a local centre).

Persian in South Asia

The teaching of Persian in South Asia was like the teaching of Persian elsewhere in the early modern Persian-using world that stretched from Anatolia, across Central Asia to Khotan on the Chinese frontier, and down to nearly the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. It depended on several years of schooling to master a set of classical texts. We know what students who had private tuition studied because there are several extant reading lists, the most notable being the one given by Chandarbhān Brāhman to his son.[7] Chandarbhān's reading list encompasses virtually the whole of Persian literature from the greats to relatively minor poets, and given its staggering length, was probably aspirational rather than descriptive of a typical upper-caste Mughal administrator's education.

Most people educated in Persian in India would have been taught in a class-room setting. The most comprehensive account of public education in Persian comes from a colonial-period study conducted by the missionary William Adam in Bengal in the 1830s.[8] He describes a four- to eight-year elementary curriculum that begins with basic Arabic, namely the *basmalah* ('In the name of God, the Beneficent the Merciful') and the thirtieth *juz* of the Qurʾān (the final section that is easy to read since the *sūrah*s (chapters) are particularly short), continuing with

---

6 It is noteworthy that Punjabi tends to use informal and immediate words when com-pared to the Hindi/Urdu equivalents so, for example, *bolī* which typically means 'dialect' in Hindi/Urdu is 'language' in Punjabi, or in the case of the pronouns, in which *tū* serves as both the Hindi/Urdu *tū* and *tum* while the formal *tusī* (the equivalent of the Hindi/Urdu *āp*) in its form suggests a construction formed from below rather than from above. Is it possible to read something sociolinguistic into observations like these? For Chatterji, the explanation is to be found in a cavalier dismissal that has not worn well: 'The people of the Punjab were more practical and straightforward than intellectual and subtle' (Chatterji (1963), p. 255). The issue of multilingual sources around Delhi is no doubt similar to the situation in medieval Iberia described in Gallego (2003).

7 Alam and Subrahmanyam (2004).

8 Reissued as Adam (1941), see particularly pp. 148–ff and pp. 277–ff.

the *Pundnāmah* of Saʿdī (a collection of moral sayings which at this point are read without necessarily being understood), the *Āmadnāmah* (a primer on verb conjugations) then the *Gulistān* and *Bostān* of Saʿdī. At this stage, the students would also learn short sentences relating to daily life and begin to write. When the students reach a sufficient age, the instruction becomes an all-day affair, stretching (with breaks) from six in the morning to nine in the evening. The advanced curriculum involves further readings in both verse and prose from classics like *Laila-Majnūn*, *Yusuf-o Zulaikhā*, Abū'l Faẓl's letters, and various more recent poets like ʿUrfī Shīrāzī (1555–1591). Adam does not discuss the importance of commentaries on all of these works, but given the amount of effort that went into preparing commentaries, their role is obvious.[9] Some commentaries were advanced analyses meant for scholars, but others were simple and aimed at young readers. The Persianate world was held together by such educational efforts, which allowed textual interpretation to be transregional. Dictionaries served a similar function.[10] From several brief biographies of teachers that Adam provides, it is clear that even small-town Persian teachers wrote educational works themselves, and these works represent a genre that has apparently never been studied by historians. Such works might also reveal new perspectives on print culture since the traditional Persian schools, according to Adam, exclusively used manuscripts instead of published texts, even though these were widely available at the time of his survey.[11]

The colonial state did not abandon the traditional curriculum when it came to teaching Persian to its employees, but its transmission was greatly modified.[12] By the 1820s, the British in India were learning Persian from a suite of texts that were parallel to ones used by Indians but which had been adapted (in some cases with accompanying translations) by orientalists. Several East India Company figures, particularly Francis Gladwin (d. 1812), made lucrative careers out of turning traditional educational texts common in manuscript into published editions. At the same time, once the British had more direct access to Persia (for example, after Sir Gore Ouseley's diplomatic mission in 1811 to Shiraz),[13] they stated a preference for 'authentic' Iranian Persian over the supposedly degenerate Indian Persian. It is outside the scope of this article, but the present author believes that this British reorientation was a more important factor in the Indian loss of faith in the quality of their own Persian than has ever been acknowledged. There was a linguistic

---

9 On marginal commentaries as valuable, see Saleh (2013); Ahmed and Larkin (2013).
10 Baevskii (2007).
11 Adam (1941), p. 148. However, in contrast to the 'constant use' of manuscript texts in the Persian schools, Bengali-medium elementary schools had neither printed nor manuscript textbooks (ibid., p. 142).
12 As the present author will argue in more detail in a forthcoming article.
13 The prefatory material in Price (1823), for example, makes the link between travel to Iran and access to supposedly authentic material explicit.

mission civilisatrice in which the British felt they were freeing Indians from the shackles of their defective Persian. This colonial disapproval of actual Indian usage should be understood as parallel to the Anglicist/Orientalist controversy in East India Company education policy. The Persian-specific aspects of the debate became largely irrelevant with the fading of indigenous patronage for Persian as English won out, but they clearly resurface in mid-nineteenth-century hand-wringing over the fact that formal Urdu was often being written in a style that was fundamentally Persian with some Urdu verbs thrown in.[14] We should not accept the colonial state's attitudes towards Persian as embodying either Indian attitudes or being free from the kind of intellectual violence that postcolonial scholars have identified in other supposedly benevolent colonial policies.

What we know about ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ

ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ is always known as Hānsawī, that is from Hansi in Haryana (today about two hours' drive north-west of Delhi). Hansi is a very old town (it had probably been settled many centuries before it was conquered by Masʿūd, the son of Maḥmūd of Ghazni in 1038) and its fortunes rose and fell at times during the Sultanate, Mughal, and Colonial Periods. It was on Delhi's periphery but was obviously quite separate from Delhi.

The mystery of ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ is that we know almost nothing about him and yet his Persian primer was probably the most popular such work in the eigh-teenth century, and his scholarship was cited and revised by the important Indo-Persian scholars of the eighteenth century, most notably Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Ḳhān Ārzū (d. 1756). The easiest explanation for this blank in the historical record is the fact that he was apparently not a practising poet, and in the case of poets, we are fortunate in having obvious source material in the form of *taẕkirah*s.[15] It is easy to extract traces of a network of poets and patrons from *taẕkirah*s because that is not too far off the function for which they were written, namely communal memory. Mere teachers, however, are haphazardly mentioned and break into the historical record generally only if they teach the son of someone important. To the present author's knowledge, ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ did no such thing.

Later writers do not help us either. Ārzū, for example, who corrected and reissued a whole book by ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ, namely *Ġharāʾib al-Luġhāt* (*Oddities among Words*) retitled by Ārzū in the revised edition as *Nawādir al-Alfāẕ* (*Wonders among Words*, 1743), refers to him in the preface as 'one of the most

---

14 See Bayly (1996), p. 286.
15 Ārzū (1951), p. iv.

accomplished learned men and famous scholars of blessed Hindustan'[16] but, strangely, does not mention his name. Was ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ such a household name that Ārzū did not feel the need to mention it explicitly or is some other politics of memory at work here? Perhaps the fact that Ārzū takes issue with so many of ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's conclusions meant that it was impolite to name him. There is no way of knowing. Indeed, we can only presume at this stage in the research that ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ spent most or all of his life in Hansi (which every other scholar who has considered him has also assumed) through negative evidence: his name does not turn up in any sources related to Delhi. We can only establish his dates based on the fact that he extensively used material from the dictionary *Farhang-i Rashīdī*, which was completed in 1654, and manuscripts of his works date to the 1730s.

It is an open question whether he wrote Islamic tracts or in other genres as well as other educational texts.[17] The prefaces to his extant works offer no biographical and bibliographical information. The present author has been able to trace six works likely to have been authored by him:

(1) *Ṣamad Bārī* is a *niṣāb* attributed to him.[18]

(2) He wrote two commentaries on standard teaching texts, namely Saʿdī's *Bostān* and Jamī's *Yusuf-o Zulaikhā*.[19] A cursory reading suggests that neither is particularly sophisticated, which implies that they were teaching texts rather than scholarly endeavours.

(3) He wrote *Zawāʾid al-Fawāʾid* and Ārzū wrote something called *Zāʾid al-Fawāʾid* (whose title is perhaps just a misreading for *Zawāʾid al-Fawāʾid*), which discusses Persian infinitives (*maṣādir*) and abstract nouns (*mushtaqqāt*) derived from them.[20] The two works are presumably related, but the present author has not been able to compare them.

---

16 *yakī az fuẓalā-yi kāmgār wa ʿulamā-yi nāmdār-i hindūstān jannat-nishān* (ibid., p. 3).

17 A defence of Islamic revelation held in the Bodleian Library (Sachau-Ethé 1816 = MS Ouseley Add. 86) is attributed to an ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ but is undated and does not refer to its author as Hānsawī. It is unlikely to be his.

18 It has also been called *Niṣāb-i Sih Zabān* (*Niṣāb of Three Languages*); see ʿAbdullah (1965), pp. 92–93. On *niṣāb*, see Hakala (2015).

19 *Bostān* commentary: McGill University, MSS Blacker-Wood Iwanov 52 and 53; National Archives of India, Fort William College collection, MS 140; Aligarh Muslim University, MS J Per. 301. *Yūsuf-o Zulaikhā* commentary: British Library, Delhi Persian MSS 1249 and 1251; Aligarh Muslim University, MSS J Per. 240 and J Per. 302. The work is dismissed by the mid-twentieth-century scholar Sayyid ʿAbdullah as worthless (Ārzū (1951), p. vi).

20 Storey (1953), 1.2, p. 837.

(4) ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's *Risālah* (*Essay*), which is also known by other titles like *Qawāʾid-i Zabān-i Fārsī* (*Rules of the Persian Language*), was, as the title suggests, a Persian primer. It was his most influential work in terms of its circulation: in Aligarh Muslim University alone there are eight copies, the earliest of which dates to 1734–35/1147.[21] In compiling the text, ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ draws upon the standard fare of dictionaries (from the sixteenth century, *Madār al-Afāẓil* and *Muʿīd al-Fuẓalā*,[22] and from the seventeenth century, *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī*, *Farhang-i Surūrī* (also called *Majmaʿ al-furs*), and *Farhang-i Rashīdī*), works on *maʿānī* (semantics), and commentaries.[23] We see in this list the range of texts that an Indo-Persian writer was expected to master. One can easily understand, even at a remove of 300 years, the appeal of this book as a straightforward digest of these various sources. ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ depends particularly on *Farhang-i Rashīdī's* preface in its account of phonology and on *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī* in its summary of the history of Persian dialects.[24] The student could learn indirectly from these touchstone books without acquiring them. (We know, for example, that the parts of *Farhang-i Rashīdī* and *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī* that discuss grammar were often copied separately from the dictionaries themselves.)

(5) ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's lexicon *Ġharāʾib al-Luġhāt* is a thought-provoking text and the only one of his works that has received much scholarly attention. It has been claimed, anachronistically, as 'the first dictionary of Urdu,' but as the present author has argued, it was not a lexicon of an Indic language in the modern concept of a dictionary so much as a record of Indic words frequently used on the margins of Persian.[25] ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ provides no clear indication as to its purpose, but Ārzū summarizes it as a record of 'Indic words of which the Persian, Arabic or Turkish [synonyms] were less common in the speech of the people of the provinces.'[26] Why was such a text written? Unlike the dictionary that is the appendix (*khātimah*) to the roughly contemporary *Tuḥfat al-Hind*, which clearly fits into that text's goal of explaining Indic poetic

---

21 That one, Ahsan 891.5521/2, was copied by someone called Muḥammad Sardār Hānsawī, so it might have been locally made.

22 Baevskii (2007), p. 155.

23 Hānsawī (1872), p. 2. The works on semantics listed include '*Baḥr al-Daqāʾiq*, *Nuzhat al-Ṣanāʾiʿ*, *ʿUmān al-Jawāhir*, *Khazāʾin al-Maʿānī*, and so on.'

24 Ārzū likewise uses *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī* in his analysis of the history of the Persian language (Ārzū 1991).

25 Dudney (2010).

26 *luġhāt-i hindī kih fārsī yā ʿarabī yā turkī-yi ān zabānzad-i ahl-i diyār kamtar būd* (Ārzū (1951), p. 3). Neither *Nawādir al-Alfāẓ* nor *Ġharāʾib al-Luġhāt* appears in the most comprehensive list of Persian dictionaries compiled in South Asia, so modern editors have considered them outside the mainstream of Persian lexicography (Naqvi (1962), pp. 333–347).

conventions and vernacular language to a Persian-reading public, it is diffi-
cult to see *Ġharāʾib al-Luġhāt* having any application outside of its imme-
diate context, a level of usage where both Persian and Indic vernacular lan-
guage coexisted. Was the goal to show Indic words that are incorrect in proper
Persian so that careful writers could avoid them? That seems unlikely because
he goes to the trouble of defining and classifying the vernacular words. There
were always different registers of Persian available, and this is the glimpse
of a vernacular Persian that existed—indeed that only could exist—where the
two languages came together.[27]

Ārzū's edited and expanded edition of the lexicon is called *Nawādir al-
Alfāz* and it was completed in 1156/1743. Tracing the manuscript tradition is
a bit difficult because this text is rare in ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's original edition and
common in Ārzū's corrected version (cataloguers have haphazardly used the
old and new titles).[28] What is clear is that Ārzū reconfigures ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's
vernacular aesthetics around the imperial court. This is in line with his theo-
ry of how authority over literary usage is vested in an imperial court, or (in
the case of a court that has been destroyed) in the people who represent its
scattered remnants.

The *qaṣbah* and the centre

What is significant about ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's being in a *qaṣbah* like Hansi?[29] In the ab-
sence of archival work at this stage, the question evades an answer but the present
author's hope is to be able to read local histories alongside texts that have circulat-
ed beyond the town to build a picture of what the literary and spiritual community
was like and how it was connected with wider networks.[30] In the most general
terms, we can say that Hansi was a typical medium-sized North Indian town that
saw its fortunes rise and fall over the centuries. It seems to have been more suc-
cessful during the early Sultanate period than at any later time since it was eclipsed

---

27 Roger Wright's understanding of the relationship of Classical Latin, so-called Vulgar
Latin, and Romance is useful for considering the intersection of traditions that were later
understood as very different (Wright 2011).

28 A readable copy, which appears to be the only one in a Western library, is held at
Cambridge University: MS Eton Pote 107 is undated but must be mid- to late-eighteenth
century because it was in the library of Antoine Polier (d. 1795).

29 Recent studies of the *qaṣbah*, such as Rahman (2015), which builds in part upon Bayly
(1993), relate to a much later period; 1870–1920 in the case of the former and 1770–1870
in the case of the latter.

30 As is being explored by Francesca Orsini (2012) and Purnima Dhavan (forthcoming),
among others.

by Hisar when that town (some 25 km to the east) became the administrative centre of the area in 1356.[31] It was in sharp decline during the eighteenth century when Nādir Shāh and the Sikhs overran it. Well after ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's time, its fortunes turned again when the English adventurer George Thomas established his headquarters there in 1797 and, although briefly held by the Marathas, it remained an important centre for the British Indian military. The British took direct control of the region in 1818. There appears to have been a long Chishti presence in Hansi, but scattered references in recent memory to the thirteenth-century saint Bābā Farīd having spent several years there cannot as yet be textually substantiated.

A contrast could be drawn between ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ and Ārzū since Ārzū too came from a provincial town, but Ārzū, unlike ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ, built a courtly career for himself. Ārzū grew up in Gwalior (which was in Agra's orbit just as Hansi was in Delhi's), completing his early education under his father Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn (known by his poetic pen name Ḥusāmī), learning the *Gulistān*, *Bostān*, and *Pandnāmah*, and memorizing one or two hundred couplets of the modern poets. He studied Arabic until age fourteen. He completed his schooling and poetic training in Agra, and eventually came to Delhi.[32] Ārzū was proud of his home town, which was known both for its devotional poetry in '*hindī*' and for the Shaṭṭārī Sufi saint Muḥammad Ġhauṣ (d. 1653), who was Ārzū's ancestor through his maternal line. It would be useful to map how similar people were pulled from the provinces to the centre. Were Ārzū's spiritual ancestry and the fact that his father was a *manṣabdār* (salaried imperial officer) advantages that ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ lacked? Or perhaps Ārzū's poetic ambition, which apparently began at age fourteen, was what drew him to Agra and then Delhi.

Apart from the question of how and why people could move between towns and cities, textual circulation and the movement of ideas and aesthetic norms needs to be considered. Ārzū engaged with at least two of ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's works, after all, including completely transforming *Ġharāʾib al-Luġhāt*. Another question to be raised, but that can only be answered indirectly here, relates to the development of the vernacular as a medium for poetry: was it a movement that came from the provinces to the centre or from the centre to the provinces, or was it created in dialogue between the two? What we know about ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's own interest in the vernacular comes solely from his dictionary. There is seemingly nothing in the text that suggests that his relationship with languages other than Persian was different from that of people in Delhi. What is clear, however, is that Ārzū has no qualms about attacking ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ for usage he considers ineloquent on the basis of its being unknown or contrary to the usage at the centre. For example, ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ gives *chanīl* as a headword and Ārzū sputters, 'no one knows where

---

31 Burton-Page (2012).
32 As detailed in Dudney (2013), pp. 31–38.

this word comes from! We who are among the people of India and who are in the Royal Court have never heard [it]!'[33] Often, Ārzū cites himself as a source. For example, in the entry on *ćhatrī* he writes, 'I have not heard' (*na-shinīdah-am*) the word used in a particular meaning. There are a number of entries in which Ārzū directly criticizes ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ for local usage.[34] One particularly withering example appears for *gupćup*. Ārzū writes:

> But what is known as *gupćup* to the eloquent has the meaning of a delicate sweet, eating which one is struck dumb; in the meaning given [by ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ], it is perhaps the usage of the compiler's homeland (*waṭan*).[35]

The usages appearing in standard texts, such as Persian dictionaries, and the knowledge of people in the court, including Ārzū himself, necessarily trump the definitions offered by ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ. This can be fruitfully connected to the discussion of *faṣāḥat* (linguistic purity) in Ārzū's other works, namely that members of the courtly elite refine a language by pruning local usages. The refined language, although originally the language of a place, becomes a translocal literary standard through this process in which the local is reclassified as the universal. Delhi usage, even in an as-yet-unstandardized vernacular, is by definition superior to the usage of Hansi in Ārzū's opinion.

Clearly the attitude of one courtly intellectual towards an intellectual from the *qaṣbah* is contempt. Ārzū is one of the most exacting scholars that premodern Persian literary culture produced, and it is unsurprising that he found ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's haphazard method insufficient, but we are left to wonder how ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ's books came to Ārzū's notice in the first place and what else we might learn if we knew the answer to that question. Furthermore, it is worth asking whether there is a larger pattern that can be found in other intellectuals' biographies of patronage for educators being available in humble towns where patronage for poets was not. This article necessarily leaves the reader with more questions than answers, but hopefully a deeper engagement with sources that relate to Persian-language educators can eventually paint a clearer picture of Persian in the *qaṣbah* and how someone might move from the *qaṣbah* to a courtly city.

---

33 *malʿūm nīst kih luġhat-i kujā ast; mā mardum kih az ahl-i hind-īm wa dar urdū-yi muʿallá mī bāshīm na-shinīdah-īm* (Ārzū (1951), p. 214).

34 The editor Sayyidʿ Abdullah gives references for several such entries (ibid., p. ix).

35 *lekin ānćah gupćup mashhūr-i fuṣaḥā-st bah maʿnī shīrīnī ast nāzuk kih ba-ḳhwurdan-i ān āwāz dahan bar nayāyad, bah maʿnī kih āwardah shāyad mustaʿmal-i waṭan-i muṣannif bāshad* (ibid., p. 363).

References

ʿAbdullah, Sayyid. 1965. *Mabāḥiš*. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu.

Adam, William. 1941. *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 and 1838)*. Ed. Anathnath Basu. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

Ahmed, Asad Q., and Margaret Larkin. 2013. 'The *Ḥāshiya* and Islamic Intellectual History,' *Oriens*, 41 (3–4): 213–216.

Alam, Muzaffar, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. 2004. 'The Making of a Munshi,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 24 (2): 61–72.

Ārzū, Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Ḳhān (ed. S. ʿAbdullah). 1951. *Nawādir al-alfāẓ*. Karachi: Anjuman-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu.

——— (ed. R. Khatoon). 1991. *Muṯhmir*. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, University of Karachi.

Baevskii, Solomon I. (trans. N. Killian). 2007. *Early Persian Lexicography: Farhangs of the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Centuries*. Rev. and upd. John R. Perry. Folkestone: Global Oriental.

Bayly, Christopher A. 1993 [1983]. *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* [expanded Indian edition]. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

——— 1996. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burton-Page, John. 2012. 'Hānsī,' in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *Second Edition*. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/*-COM_0265>. (Accessed 30 July 2018).

Busch, Allison. 2010. 'Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 44 (2): 267–309.

——— 2014. 'Poetry in Motion: Literary Circulation in Mughal India,' in T. De Bruijn and A. Busch (eds), *Culture and Circulation in Early Modern India*, pp. 186–221. Leiden: Brill.

Chatterji, Suniti Kumar. 1963. *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*. Calcutta: Bengal Publishers.

Dhavan, Purnima. Forthcoming. 'Persian Scholarly Networks in Mughal Punjab,' in N. Green (ed.), *Frontiers of Persian*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dudney, Arthur. 2010. 'The Wonders of Words, or the Role of Ḳhān-i Ārzū's *Navādir al-alfāẓ* in the Development of Urdu,' in S. Hegde (ed.), *An Informal Festschrift in Honor of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi*. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/srffest>.

——— 2013. 'A Desire for Meaning: Ḳhān-i Ārzū's Philology and the Place of India in the Eighteenth-Century Persianate World.' Ph.D. Dissertation. Columbia University.

Gallego, María A. 2003. 'The Languages of Medieval Iberia and Their Religious Dimension,' *Medieval Encounters*, 9 (1): 107–139.

Hakala, Walter N. 2015. 'On Equal Terms: The Equivocal Origins of an Early Mughal Indo-Persian Vocabulary,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 25 (2): 209–227.

Hānsawī, ʿAbdul Wāsiʿ. 1872. *Risālah-yi ʿabdul wāsiʿ*. Kanpur: Naval Kishore.

Naqvi, Shariyar. 1962. *Farhangniwīsī-i fārsī dar hind wa pākistān*. Tehran: Idarah-i Kull-i Nigarish-i Vizarat-i Farhang.

Orsini, Francesca. 2012. 'How to do Multilingual Literary History? Lessons from Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century North India,' *Indian Economic Social History Review*, 42: 225–246.

Orsini, Francesca, and Samira Sheikh. 2014. 'Introduction,' in F. Orsini and S. Sheikh (eds), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*, pp. 1–44. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1998. 'The Cosmopolitan Vernacular,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57 (1): 6–37.

——— 2000. 'Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History,' *Public Culture*, 12 (3): 591–625.

Price, William. 1823. *A Grammar of the Three Principal Oriental Languages, Hindoostanee, Persian, and Arabic*. London: Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen.

Rahman, M. Raisur. 2015. *Locale, Everyday Islam, and Modernity: Qasbah Towns and Muslim Life in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Saleh, Walid A. 2013. 'The Gloss as Intellectual History: The *Ḥāshiyah*s on *al-Kashshāf*,' *Oriens*, 41 (3–4): 217–259.

Shirani, Hafiz Mahmud Khan. n.d. *Punjāb meṅ urdū*. Lahore: Maktabah-yi Muʿin al-Adab.

Storey, Charles A. 1953. *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*. Vol. 1, Part II. London: Luzac.

Wright, Roger. 2011. 'Romance Languages as a Source for Spoken Latin,' in J. Clackson (ed.), *A Companion to the Latin Language*, pp. 59–79. Oxford: Blackwell.