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The Wonders of Words,
or the Role of Ḳhān-i Ārzū's *Navādir al-alfāẓ* in the Development of Urdu

Abstract

Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Ḳhān (?1688 – 1756 CE), known as Ḳhān–i Ārzū, is regarded as one of the towering figures of eighteenth-century Urdu literature. Surprisingly given this reputation, he did not write enough in Urdu for more than a few lines of his Urdu works to have survived. Instead he was praised by his contemporaries for his scholarship in Persian, and in particular for bringing the tools available for Persian literary criticism to bear upon the vernacular. That means that some of his theoretical works in Persian, all of which are nominally about Persian literature, should in fact be read to apply to Urdu as well. Ārzū's holistic view of language, such as the linguistic affinity [*tavāfuq*] between Persian and Indic vernacular languages like Urdu, allowed his work to bridge Persianate and Indian literary practices. The key primary source for this paper is Ārzū's *Navādir al-alfāẓ*, a Persian work which can be considered the first critical dictionary of the language that would later be called Urdu. It is worth contextualising *Navādir* within Ārzū's larger scholarly project, with reference to his other works like *Dād-i suḳhan* and *Muṣmir*. This paper argues, on the one hand, that Ārzū applied the scholarly tools available in Persian and Arabic to Urdu, providing a literary critical framework which had not yet been available for vernacular poetry. On the other hand, Ārzū invokes his understanding of the history of the Persian language to argue implicitly that a standard Urdu should emanate from the royal court in Delhi.

Who can say whether Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Ḵẖān (?1688 – 1756 CE), better known by his pen-name [*taḵẖalluṣ*] Ārzū, and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (b. 1935 CE) would have been fast friends if they had lived in the same century? I strongly suspect they would have been. In reading the works of both men, I am struck by their devotion to literature not just as an aesthetic pursuit but as a field of inquiry requiring careful, systematic research [*taḥqīq*]. Both have spent long careers wandering across such varied intellectual terrain that aspiring scholars like myself cannot help but be astounded when we survey the ground they have covered. I offer this article to Faruqi Sahib in recognition of his achievements and also in gratitude for his encouragement, particularly when he was in New York in September 2008, to write a dissertation on Ārzū.

The theme of this article is the eighteenth-century recognition that philological study was applicable to Urdu literature just as it was for Persian.[2] Specifically, I will address one milestone work that pioneered such research, Ārzū's Persian lexicon of Indic words, *Navādir al-alfāẓ* [Wonders of Words]. He wrote it sometime before 1165 AH (=1752 CE)[3] towards the end of an illustrious career as a Persian poet and lexicographer but also as a promoter of Urdu literature.[4] There is seemingly a

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[1] Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. My thanks to Prashant Keshavmurthy, Zirwat Chowdhury and Satyanarayana Hegde for reading the draft of this paper, and to Rajeev Kinra, Owen Cornwall and Chandershekhar Bhatnager for their advice.

[2] Although it is a key term, this is not the place to explore the meaning of "philology," especially given that there is no single equivalent term in pre-modern Persian or Urdu. Sheldon Pollock has defined it as follows: "Philology is, or should be, the discipline of making sense of texts. It is not the theory of language—that's linguistics—or the theory of meaning or truth—that's philosophy—but the theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning" (Pollock 2009: 934). If we keep in mind that some texts are oral (for example, the proceedings of a poetic gathering [*mushāʿarah*], where Ārzū's contemporaries would have honed their literary skills) then this is a serviceable definition.

[3] In cases where sources give the Hijrī year, the Common Era year is given in the format "(= XXXX CE)". The Common Era years have been calculated using a formula, so without an exact Hijrī date, they have a margin of error of +/- one year.

[4] The evidence for the date of composition is in the definition for "*baisākh*" (the second month of the Hindu calendar that falls in April-May). See *NA* 1951: 96; cf. Abdullah 1965: 46 and Faruqi 2001: 25; *pace* Faruqi 1990: 29, which gives "around 1743" and Faruqi 1998: 15 which gives "around 1747". However, according to the Noor Microfilm Centre's catalogue (vol 1, p 26) following the catalogue of the Habib Ganj collection, the manuscript of *NA* in the Habib Ganj collection at Aligarh (HG 53/42) is dated 1157 AH (=1744 CE). Upon examination, it appears to me that the manuscript is actually undated.

contradiction in Ārzū's legacy in that he is recognised as a towering figure in Urdu literature by his contemporaries and yet his extant work in Urdu consists of a few couplets that would not fill a page and whose attribution is uncertain anyway. What is the source of Ārzū's reputation in Urdu if not a collection [*dīwān*] of poetry such as the cherished volumes left to posterity by people like Shāh Ḥātim and Mīr? The answer to the riddle is not found in how Ārzū wrote Urdu but rather how he thought *about* Urdu. His ideas about Urdu were clearly passed down to other poets, who respected him because he was a great Persianist.

I will argue here that *Navādir al-alfāẓ* (henceforth *NA*) is the first critical dictionary of Urdu/*hindī*,[5] and that it represents an attempt to bring the tools available for Persian literary criticism to bear upon the vernacular.[6] I will discuss Ārzū's holistic view of language, such as the linguistic affinity [*tavāfuq*] between Persian and Indic languages like Urdu. That means that some of his theoretical works in Persian, all of which are nominally about Persian literature, should in fact be read to apply to Urdu as well.[7] It is especially important to remember that the definition of language in the eighteenth century in India and elsewhere was not held to quantitative criteria but rather to what we would call sociolinguistic criteria: A language was defined less by a set of formal characteristics than by its users and the contexts in which they used it.[8] For that reason, people who had good literary judgement in one language could apply it to another language. Furthermore, Ārzū—like modern sociolinguists—acknowledges that languages are fundamentally porous. He recognises that from ancient times Indic words had been entering into Persian, and that Urdu freely borrowed Persian

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[5] Where Ārzū uses the term "*hindī*" (lit. "having to do with India") in the context of language, I have generally left it untranslated so as not to imply that its meaning is equivalent to Modern Standard Hindi.

[6] "Vernacular" is a freighted term and here I use it neutrally to mean "northern Indian languages that are not Persian or Sanskrit." Persian fills the role of a cosmopolitan language (that is, it is a refined, learned language not tied to a place) but even though we contrast it with vernacular language, a vernacular can itself be translocal (Pollock 1998). Furthermore, although the etymology of "vernacular" brings us to the Latin word "*verna*" (a slave born in his master's house), we should not assume that vernacular implies popular as opposed to elite language use. In fact, the people using the vernacular for literary purposes were more often than not elites (Pollock 2000).

[7] A rigorous, though brief, account of Ārzū's thought can be found in Kinra (forthcoming). See also Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 26ff and Alam 2004: 135 passim, 2003: 168ff. In the mid-twentieth century, Sayyid Abdullah, the editor of *NA*, wrote some articles on Ārzū collected in Abdullah 1965. Lastly, see n. 11 below on Professor Khatoon's work on Ārzū.

[8] I have tried to theorize this for the Hindi literary dialect Braj Bhāṣā by looking at colonial-era misunderstandings of how language was used in India (Dudney 2010a). Sudipta Kaviraj has elegantly shown that in a pre-colonial society that did not have a census, there was by necessity "fuzziness" in language as social identity (Kaviraj 1992: 38ff).

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words and grammatical structures, a process which intensified in his own time.[9] The key difference between the cosmopolitan Persian tradition and the localized Urdu tradition was that the former had been constituted by centuries of both poetic practice and scholarship while the latter was based only on poetic practice. We see a parallel in early–modern Europe, where Latin existed alongside vernacular literatures, which had flourished for centuries but did not develop a critical tradition until they were influenced by Latin.[10] The techniques for classifying and assessing the literature (or rather the words, phrases and literary tropes) of the cosmopolitan language shaped the vernacular literature and standardised its usage. The twentieth-century critic Sayyid Abdullah refers to this process as "washing out the stain of lack of credibility [*be-iʿtibārī*]" that kept Urdu from being fit for serious writing, but such rhetoric implying shame over Urdu's undeveloped early state clearly represents a modern Urdu speaker's feelings projected onto the past (Abdullah 1965: 45).

Ārzū's career tracks closely with the widespread acceptance of Urdu as a courtly literary language. He was most likely born in Gwalior in 1688, though he spent part of his childhood in Agra.[11] He was already an accomplished Persian poet when he arrived in Delhi in the early 1720s, perhaps at exactly the same time that Valī Aurangābādī's Urdu *dīwān* [selected works] started making the rounds of Delhi's literary salons (Faruqi 2004a: 845). Ārzū would have witnessed the

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[9] Compilers of much earlier Persian dictionaries were aware of linguistic borrowings. Numerous individual lexemes in these dictionaries make reference to a language of origin, such as one surprising entry in *Majmūʿat al-furs* [A Persian Collection, 14th c.?]: "*land bah zabān-i hindī nām-i kīr ast*" (qtd in Baevskii 2007: 64). In homage to my Victorian Orientalist predecessors, I'll translate this racy entry into Latin rather than English: "*'laṇḍ' in lingua indica nomen membri virilis est.*"

Beyond individual entries, some prefaces note patterns of borrowing. For example, the Delhi Sultanate-period *Dastūr al-afāżil* [Canons of the Learned, 1342 CE] contains, according to the preface, "Arabic, Turkish, Mongolian, Pahlavi, Persian, Afghan [Pashto], Jewish [Judeo-Persian?], Christian [Aramaic?]; the tongues of the Magians, Syrians, philosophers and Tajiks; Hebrew; words from the dialects of Rayy, Hijaz, and Transoxania, poetical idioms from every city, scholarly coinages, and popular sayings" (qtd/trans Baevskii 2007: 81). See also the preface of *Burhān-i qāṭiʿ* [The Decisive Proof, 1652 CE], which has a similar list. This kind of multilingual consciousness also exists in the Arabic tradition, as in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (born 849 AH/1445 CE) *Mutawakkilī*, a lexicon of originally non-Arabic words found in the Qurʾān and arranged by presumed language of origin (Bell 1924).

[10] See, for example, Burke 2006. New Persian literature itself seems in the historical record to appear fully-formed in the tenth century but there was no well-established critical tradition in Persian until the thirteenth (Clinton 1989). Arabic has been a strong influence on Persian literature long before the Arabic-derived critical tradition began. This is a point that certainly would not have been lost on Ārzū and his contemporaries. Obviously Persian influenced Urdu literature long before people began writing critically about Urdu.

[11] The fact is that we know very little about Ārzū's early life because the *tażkirahs* [biographical dictionaries] that discuss it give contradictory accounts. Professor Rehana Khatoon's Urdu biography of Ārzū, the only published monograph devoted to him in any language as far as I know, attempts to cut through this thicket (Khatoon 1987: 13ff). The only comprehensive account in English of Ārzū's works is Prof. Khatoon's preface to her edition of Ārzū's *Muṡmir* (*Muṡmir* 1991).

sea-change in Urdu aesthetics that resulted from the popularity of Valī's verse. This was certainly a period of transition, in which Persian litterateurs in Delhi dabbled in Urdu rather than making a career of it as later poets would.[12] The colonial-era critic Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād states with brazen certainty in his history of Urdu literature *Āb-e ḥayāt* [The Water of Life, 1880] that "Ḳhān-e Ārzū was not an Urdu poet; nor did people of that time consider Urdu poetry to be an accomplishment." But nonetheless he credits Ārzū with having "pulled [Urdu poetry] into the Persian style and manner of expression."[13]

He also famously casts Ārzū in the role of a founder, writing that "as long as all logicians will be called the descendants of Aristotle, all Urdu-speakers will be called the descendants of Ḳhān-e Ārzū."[14] Earlier *tażkirah*s had similar hyperbole, for example referring to Ārzū as the "Abū Ḥanīfah" of Urdu poetry (Abū Ḥanīfah being the eighth-century CE founder of the Hanafite school of interpretation in Islamic jurisprudence).[15] Mīr Muḥammad Tāqī, known by his pen-name Mīr, writes in his *tażkirah Nikāt al-shuʿarāʿ* that "All teachers disciplined in the art of *reḳhtah* [i.e. Urdu][16] are classmates [who studied under] this great man [namely Ārzū]."[17] It is clear that Ārzū's standing as a teacher of Urdu composition is the key to his reputation. He hosted Urdu poetic gatherings—as Āzād implies (1907: 156)—though of course we cannot know how unusual he was in that regard nor

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[12] It should be noted that whatever the situation in Delhi, there had been a thriving literary tradition in Urdu in southern India and Gujarat for more than two centuries before this (Faruqi 2001).

[13] Translation by Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (Azad 2001)."*ḳhān-e ārzū urdū ke śāʿir nah the nah us zamānah meṅ isse kućh kamāl samajhte the ... isse khīnćkar fārsī kī ṯarz aur adā-ye maṭālib pare āye*" (Azad 1907: 116).

[14] "*jab tak kah kull manṭiqī arsṯū ke ʿiyāl kahlāʾenge tab tak ahl-e urdū ḳhān-e ārzū ke ʿiyāl kahlāte rahenge*" (ibid 115).

[15] For example, "On the basis that the Islamic Scholars are called [descendants of] Abū Ḥanīfah Kūfī thus it is fitting that they call poets of the *hindī* language [i.e. Urdu] descendants of Ḳhān-i Ārzū" [*ba-maṣābah-yi kah ʿulamāʾ-i ahl-i ḥaq rā ... imām hamām qiblah-yi inām abū ḥanīfa kūfī ... mī gūyand agar śuʿarā-yi hindī zabān rā ʿayāl-i ḳhān-i ārzū gūyand sazā-st*] from *Majmūʿah-yi naġhz* [A Delightful Collection, 1806 CE] by Qudratallah "Qāsim" (qtd in *NA* xii; Das 1991: 426)

[16] It is somewhat problematic to identify Urdu with *reḳhtah* (which means "mixed" from the Persian verb "*reḳhtan*" [to pour, scatter] and therefore in some cases referred specifically to macaronic verse that alternates Persian and Urdu lines). Irfan Habib asserts that because the entry on *reḳhtah* in *Bahār-i ʿajam* [The Spring of Persian], the famous dictionary by Ārzū's friend Ṭek Ćand Bahār, describes it as "mixed" [*maḳhlūṭ*], we must assume that it can refer only to macaronic verse and not to Urdu itself. But since there was a consciousness that vernacular poetry was born of a mixture of Perso-Arabic and Indic forms, Habib's reasoning just as strongly supports the position that *reḳhtah* can refer to a Persian-influenced Indian vernacular, namely what we now call Urdu (*pace* Habib 2009: 125).
Prashant Keshavmurthy has suggested the intriguing possibility that the very name *reḳhtah* could be a kind of *īhām* [pun], with both an immediate negative meaning and a subtler positive one. Whereas *reḳhtah* usually means "scattered" or "jumbled" (negative), "*miṣrāʿ-i reḳhtah*" also means an especially flowing or easily understood distich (positive). Vernacular poets may have taken a term of abuse hurled at them and appropriated it for their own purposes.

[17] "*hamah ustādān maẓbūṭ-i fan-i reḳhtah hamśagirdān-i ān buzurgwār-and*" (qtd in Abdullah 1965: 43).

do we really have a sense of what happened at these events.[18] Likewise, Ārzū's very impressive list of students and associates is often trotted out but no one has, to my knowledge, given serious thought as to what views he passed on to his students.

Before I offer an analysis of *NA*, I would like to point briefly to two relevant sections in Ārzū's other treatises that give us some insight into his thinking on Urdu. Let us begin with *Dād-i suḳhan* ["Poetic Justice" or "A Poetic Gift"],[19] which on its face has nothing to do with Urdu. It is Ārzū's analysis of the poetics of three Shāh Jahān-period poets, Qudsī, Shaidā and Munīr,[20] all of whom wrote (as far as we know) exclusively in Persian.[21] However, the work's three prefaces freely make reference to the language use of Indians, indicating that Ārzū thought it was relevant for the discussion. In brief, the first preface discusses whether linguistic innovation is allowed in poetry (it is); the second whether Indians are allowed to innovate (they are, since Iranians themselves borrowed Arabic and Turkish vocabulary and changed it); and the third discusses the contrast between composing for the masses and composing for connoisseurs. The prefaces appear to be based on original thought because they cite no authorities other than poetic quotations, and because Ārzū uses the typical rhetoric of humbleness which often comes into play when one cannot anchor one's opinions to the work of great predecessors. He calls himself an "ignoramus" [*hīć madān*], states explicitly that he wrote the prefaces from his "own opinion" [*bah gumān-i ḳhʷud*], and entreats God to ensure their correctness (Dād 1974: 2, cf. the end of the prefaces on p. 14).

In the context of Urdu, a passage in the first preface is worth quoting at length. His topic in this section is generally how one tells the difference between an error and an acceptable shift in usage. The first preface ends like this:

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[18] Naim 1989 demonstrates how little we know of the anthropological niceties of a pre-twentieth century *mushāʿarah* (see also, in this volume, Vasilyeva 2010). What was the usual ratio of Persian to Urdu poetry at a gathering? Or were separate gatherings held for Persian and Urdu? Did people speak Persian at Persian gatherings or was the poetry in Persian but the discussion in the vernacular?

[19] *Dād-i suḳhan* was written sometime between 1156 and 1164 AH (=1743 – 1751 CE) (*Dād* 1974: xxi).

[20] According to Prashant Keshavmurthy, there may be a single ms. in Lahore of an unpublished work in Braj attributed to Munīr.

[21] Ārzū's other, earlier work that addresses Munīr's poetics, *Sirāj-i munīr* [The Illuminating Lamp], is interesting from the perspective of situating Indo-Persian literature in the Persianate world as a whole, but there is not, as far as I know, a similar passage relevant for Urdu. As a matter of historical curiosity, it is worth noting that Shaidā was rewarded for his composition with his weight in silver by Jahāngīr (1618 CE) and then by Shāh Jahān (1633 CE); Qudsī received the same honour, albeit just once (1636 CE), see Hasan 1998: 49-50, 55.

Thus in this regard, whatever we have come to call a mistake if it is [committed] by some person whose standing [in matters of literary judgement] is above repudiation and acceptance by others, it shall be a new idiom [*dākhil-i taṣarruf*],[22] not a mistake. [Arabic omitted.] And furthermore when considering that this occurs in the practice of the poets of *reḳhtah* of India (this is poetry in the *hindī* language of the people of the Court [*urdū*] of India, especially in the style of Persian poetry, and it is presently popular in Hindūstān [i.e. northern India] and formerly it was current in the Deccan in the language of that country), and I have seen many leaders [*muqtadā*] in this art [i.e. of composing in *reḳhtah*] who have made mistakes in their own idiom, and this made me aware that as the people who know *hindī* and Persian are equivalent in their circumstances so Indians' error[s] can be considered analogous to those of the Persians.[23]

pas dar īn ṣūrat ān ćah mā ān rā ghalaṭ guftah āmadīm agar az ćunān kasī ast kah pāyah-aś māfūq rad wa qabūl-i dīgarān ast, dākhil-i taṣarruf khʷāhad būd nah ghalaṭ. fa-tāmilu lānihi min mazāl aqdām al-āfhāmi wa nīz ba-dān kah naẓar-i īn majrā aḥwāl-i śuʿarā-yī reḳhtah hind ast wa ān śiʿrī ast bah zabān-i hindī-yi ahl-i urdū-yi hind, ghālibān bah ṭarīq-i śiʿr-i fārsī wa ān alḥāl bisyār rāyaj hindūstān ast wa sābq dar dakkan rawāj dāśt bah zabān-i hamān mulk, wa mā bisyār kas rā dīdīm kah maqtadā-yi īn fan būdand wa ghalaṭ dar muḥāwarah-yi khʷud kardah-and wa mā rā bar-ān iṭlāʿ ḥāṣil śudah, wa ćūn zabāndān-i hindī wa fārsī az ʿālam-i khʷud musāwī ast ghalaṭ-i hindiyān maqaiyas ʿalihi fārsiyān tawānad būd (Dād 1974: 7).

The argument is straightforward: Native speakers of the vernacular make mistakes in their poetry so native speakers of the cosmopolitan language (Persian) also make mistakes. Ārzū invokes the vernacular in order to make his case, which appears to be a new development in Indo-Persian intellectual history.[24] The first notable feature is that making a claim about the cosmopolitan language (Persian) with reference to the local language (Urdu) should even be possible. More study is obviously called for, but I think this must be a critical juncture in the relationship between Persian and the vernacular.[25] The second is Ārzū's description of Urdu poetry, namely that *reḳhtah* is a poetic practice of the people of the Court of India [*urdū-yi hind*]. This means that for him what we now think of as composing in the Urdu Classical tradition was an elite activity.[26] Of course, Urdu (by

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[22] Literally, "[something which has] entered into [accepted] usage"; an accurate paraphrase would be "included among authoritative poetic innovations."

[23] Thanks to Rajeev Kinra for his thoughts on *taṣarruf*, and to my colleague Owen Cornwall for his help with the Arabic phrase.

[24] There are some earlier claims of the vernacular on Persian such as the 13th/14th-c. poet Amīr Ḳhusrau's boast in *Nuh sipihr* [The Nine Heaves] and the preface to *Ghurrat al-kamāl* [The Full Moon] that India is great because its inhabitants can learn other languages, including Arabic and Persian, but outsiders can never master Indian languages (see the discussion in Gabbay 2010). The nature of *reḳhtah* as a mixed form invites some comparison between the vernacular and Persian such as the Dakkhanī poet Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī's (1600-74?) statement that "Some beauties of Hindi poetry cannot / Be transported to Persian properly" (qtd./trans. Faruqi 2004b: 33). I have not, however, come across any *rigorous* comparison between the two languages before Ārzū.

[25] There is an interesting chronological parallel for Braj literature. According to Allison Busch, the first text of *alaṅkāraśāstra* [literary aesthetics] to quote Braj and Sanskrit examples together is Akbar Shāh's *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* [Bouquet of Passion], which dates from the 1660s (Busch 2003: 155-6).

[26] I am telegraphing the argument somewhat. It is picked up in the third preface in more detail. The claim is that poetry functions on two levels, namely one comprehensible to commoners and one intended for elites with an appreciation of subtleties (cf. Abdullah 1977: 142-7, *Muṣmir* 1991: 33).
As I have argued recently (Dudney 2010c), it is a reasonable assumption that Ārzū's scheme influenced Shāh Ḥātim, who wrote in the preface to *Divānzādah*, which appeared just a few years after *Dād-i suḳhan* in

whatever name) was probably the mother tongue of most people in Delhi but the poetry that interests Ārzū is that of the court. As such—and this is the key to understanding why the time for a work like *NA*'s time had come—it was open to the same kind of assessments of aesthetic worth as the well-theorized Persian tradition. This in turn required its usage to be defined in rigorous works like *NA*. In its carefully reasoned application of standards, *NA* fits perfectly into Ārzū's larger aesthetic project for Persian in which research [*taḥqīq*] and cross-lingual comparisons take centre-stage.[27] Furthermore, it is interesting to note that he hints at the Deccan provenance of Urdu composition that later Delhi-centric literary chauvinists sought to minimise.[28]

A similarly notable section appears in *Mus̱mir* [Fruitful], a richly theoretical work which draws upon the most sophisticated ideas in the Arabic philological tradition as well as from the Persian and arguably Indic traditions. Its model is *al-Muẕhir fī ʿulūm al-lughah wa anwāʿihā* [The Luminous Work Concerning the Sciences of Language and its Subfields] by the Egyptian polyglot and theologian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṯī (born 849 AH/1445 CE).[29] Perhaps its most radical notion is that of "*tavāfuq*" [linguistic concordance], which appeared first in *Muẕhir*. Ārzū though expands it to support the idea of a historical connection between the languages of what we now call the Indo-Iranian family (which includes Persian, Sanskrit and most languages in modern northern India)—this concept appears not only in *Mus̱mir* but in several of Ārzū's other works, including *NA*, so I discuss it below (al-Suyuti 1998: v. 1, p. 209ff).

1755 CE, that he composed poetry to be understood by the masses and appreciated by the elite ("*ʿām faham wa k̲h̲āṣ pasand*").

[27] One quick example is the preface to his (unpublished) lexicon *Sirāj al-luḡhāt* [The Lamp of Words, 1147 AH = 1734 CE]. Ārzū makes a case about lexicography in general when he runs down a previous lexicon, *Burhān-i qāṭiʿ* [The Decisive Proof, 1063 AH = 1652 CE], for being capacious but uncritical. On *Sirāj*, see Blochmann 1868: 25-7 (which includes an English translation of the passage in question); on *Burhān*, ibid: 18-20.

[28] Faruqi 2001: 118ff. However, there is another possible reading. In his preface to the taẕkirah *Nikāt al-shuʿarā* [Subtleties of the Poets, 1752], Mīr also invokes the Deccan's contribution to Urdu literature—but only to denigrate it. He writes that the poets of the Deccan "didn't compose a single inter-connected distich [*shiʿr-i marbūṯ*]." Likewise we could read Ārzū's reference to vernacular poets in the Deccan as writing "in the language of *that country*" (i.e. in Dakkhanī Urdu) to be meant as a judgemental contrast with those who write the "proper" Urdu of Delhi. (Thanks to Prashant Keshavmurthy for the suggestion.)

[29] *Muẕhir* is undated but was probably finished late in Suyūṯī's life since it is not mentioned in his autobiography (Sartain 1975: 107). Suyūṯī's work is arguably the peak of the pre-modern Arabic linguistic tradition (Cantarino 1975). *Muẕhir* remained so influential that it is even a source used by Edward Lane in compiling his lexicon of Arabic (Lane 1968: vol 1, vi). It is worth noting that Suyūṯī's philology and therefore Ārzū's was rooted in scholarship on *hadīs*, the collected sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions. Suyūṯī writes (in Loucel's French translation), "J'ai imité les sciences du *hadīs* dans ses divisions et ses categories" [I have followed *hadīs* scholarship in its divisions and categories] (qtd. Loucel 1963-4: 69).

I follow Faruqi Sahib in noting the importance of *Muṣmir.* In *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, he cites a critical passage on linguistic standards in discussing the origin of the language name "Urdu" (*Muṣmir* 1991: 13; Faruqi 2001: 26). I want to further contextualize this section in *Muṣmir,* which defines Persian and Persianate literature (pp. 1-20), because its conception of literary Persian is rigorous enough and capacious enough that it serves as a model for Urdu as well. For Ārzū, literary Persian is defined by the imperial court. At the same time, it is a cosmopolitan language that the whole Persianate world holds in common, notwithstanding the very different spoken dialects that people use in their daily lives. The enunciation of a standard for Urdu by the *ahl-i zabān* [litterateurs] of the royal court at Delhi seems very much to have been Ārzū's project if we think about it in terms of what sociolinguists rather unappealingly call "language planning."

This section of Ārzū's text is confusing because it is multi-layered, and includes detailed and impartial discussions of ideas that he in fact disagrees with. The first layer belongs to the long tradition of Arabic thinking on language that smacks of an Islamicate equivalent of Rousseau's philosophy of the Noble Savage. Basically, the spoken Arabic of city people [*ahl al-madar*] was considered less linguistically pure [*faṣīḥ*] than that of the Bedouins [*ahl al-wabar*, lit. "people of tents"], who usually won the annual oratorical contest at Mecca, because urban Arabic had supposedly been adulterated both by the luxury of city life and by contact with non-Arabs (Suleiman 1999: 22). Ārzū dutifully cites this discussion and does not comment on its truth value, but then complicates the idea of a pure language throughout his works, including pointedly noting that Persian as we know it came into existence after extensive contact with the Arabs who conquered Persia (*Muṣmir* 1991: 9). He historicizes the idea of "linguistic purity" [*faṣāḥat*], maintaining a constellation of Arabic linguistic concepts but filling them with local content. The second layer of the discussion is specific to Persian and depends on the idea that Persian has seven dialects of which three are current and four are extinct [*matrūk*]. This is derived from Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Injū's *Farhang-i jahāngīrī* [Dictionary for Jahāngīr, 1017 AH = 1608 CE], which is copied verbatim in some places.[30] The three living dialects are "*fārsī*", "*dārī*" and "*pahlavī*," names which are, of course, familiar to us today. Previously, Ārzū

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[30] *Muṣmir* 1991: 4; Inju 1975: 15ff; context at Naqvi 1962: 81ff. A poet cannot write in these extinct dialects but if a single word from one of them appears in a verse, it is allowed [*ravā*].

writes, people assumed that Dari is the language of "the people of the hill and valley" [*mardum-i kūh-o darrah*] and that Pahlavi is the language of the city, specifically of the Persian-speaking people on the frontier [*pahlū*, lit. "side"] of Arabic-speaking Iraq. Or perhaps far from being a rustic language, Dari was actually the dialect spoken at the court [*dar*] of various kings while Pahlavi is the language of the royal court [*urdū*].[31] The discussion is a bit more nuanced but this suffices for our purposes. The third layer is Ārzū's own intervention in this debate.

Ārzū concludes that Dari and Pahlavi are both courtly languages (rather than the former serving as the language spoken in some godforsaken mountains), but more importantly that they are two names for the same thing (ibid 12-3). Pahlavi is the old name for the dialect [*ʿibārat*] later called Dari. Furthermore Pahlavi was the language in which Zoroaster, the prophet of ancient Iran, wrote a letter to the Emperor of India. The source of this historical assertion is unclear but its rhetorical function, namely establishing a connection between ancient India and ancient Iran, is quite significant. Ārzū concludes that "the source [*aṣl*] of these languages is Pahlavi and after that Dari, as is clear at the end of [this] research, and today it is no longer used."[32] The phrase "these languages" is ambiguous, but because the text has just mentioned correspondence between Zoroaster and the Emperor of India, it is a reasonable inference that "these languages" refers to modern Persian and Indic languages. In other words, Ārzū implies that Pahlavi/Dari is what we would think of as proto-Indo-Iranian, the common ancestor of Persian and Indic languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and so on.

Thus, having dispensed with the bygone Pahlavi and Dari, Ārzū has pruned the three modern dialects of Persian to just one, standard Persian itself [*fārsī*]. But Ārzū does not conceive of Persian as a language but as a kind of linguistic system in which a single cosmopolitan literary standard exists alongside a number of local dialects. Interestingly, he compares linguistic diversity in greater Persia with that of northern India, even noting that the *hindī* of Gwalior and Braj (i.e. Braj Bhāṣā) are the

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[31]*Muṣmir* 1991: 8. Our current usage of these terms is not particularly relevant. For us, "Dari" refers to the modern dialect of Persian spoken in Afghanistan while "Pahlavi" refers to a Middle Persian chancellery script (derived from Aramaic) in which Zoroastrian texts came to be written.

[32] "*asl-i īn zabān-hā pahlavī ast wa baʿd az ān darī sipas mutaʿārif haża ākhir al-taḥqīq wa ān bi-al-faʿil matrūk al-istiʿmāl ast*" (*Muṣmir* 1991: 20).

dialects used for Indian poetry.[33] Even though every place in the Persianate world has its own spoken usage [*k͟hāṣah, sabq*], the local peculiarities cannot be considered eloquent in literary writing (Musmir 1991: 4-6). But then where does this standard Persian-without-place come from? Ārzū writes that "the truth established by research is that the most authoritative language is the Persian of the Imperial Court" [*wā ḥaq-i taḥqīq ān ast kih zabān-i muʿtabar fārsī zabān-i urdū-yi pādishāhī ast*] (ibid 9). It is notable that Ārzū uses the term "*urdū*" throughout to refer to the royal court—this is of course what would give Urdu its name decades later (see Lelyveld 1993 and Faruqi 2001: 23ff). He reiterates that there is no special poetic dialect for each place but rather everyone, no matter where he comes from,[34] composes poetry in "the established language which is none other than the language of the court" [*ba-hamān zabān-i muqarrar ḥarf zadand wa ān nīst magar zabān-i urdū*] (*Muṣmir* 1991: 13). By analogy the same should be true for vernacular poetry, and so Urdu poetry should be based on the usage in the royal court rather than on other dialects (exactly how this works will be explored below). Indeed, Ārzū implies that the royal court is a locus for linguistic transformation since, for example, the word "*barsāt*" [the rainy season] came into being in the royal court because, he argues, it is an Indic word plus the Arabic plural suffix "-āt" (*Muṣmir* 1991: 212).

Nonetheless, in *Muṣmir*, as well as in *Sirāj al-Luġhāt* (qtd. *Muṣmir* 1991: 5 fn 2) and *NA* (qtd. Abdullah 1965: 59, cf. 62), Ārzū refers to the language of his own childhood home, Gwalior, ("Gwālyārī" i.e. some literary dialect rather like Braj) as the "most eloquent" [*afṣaḥ*] sort of *hindī*. He is clearly aware of Braj poetry and apparently respects its tradition even if it cannot serve as a standard for the Urdu poetry he is promoting.

. . .

Faruqi Sahib has written that "with his vast erudition in comparative philology, considerable wit and elegance of style, Khan-e Arzu left a model in *Nawādir-al-Alfāẓ* which our later lexicographers unfortunately did not follow closely" when they applied themselves to writing dictionaries of

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[33] "People write *hindī* poetry in the language of Braj and Gwalior and no other" [*wa shiʿr-i hindī ba-zabān-i braj wa gvāliyār gūyand lāġhair*]. Ārzū mentions the estimate that there are 10 or 12 "divisions" [*fāṣalah*] of Indian languages (the footnote rightly connects this number to Āmīr K͟husrau's *Ġhurrat al-kamāl* preface) but Ārzū claims that there are actually fewer dialects than this (*Muṣmir* 1991: 5). In praising India, K͟husrau marvels that Indian dialects change every 100 kos [≈350 km] (see Habib 2009: 119).

[34] He provides a list of poets which ends with "K͟husrau from Delhi."

Urdu in Urdu (Faruqi 1990: 29). In my discussion of the work, I will make two related arguments. Firstly, I will show that Ārzū consistently places Urdu into the same linguistic and cultural frame as Persian, most explicitly through the concept of *tavāfuq* (the idea laid out in *Muṣmir* that there is an underlying genetic relationship between Persian and Indian languages). Although he never argues for it specifically—I assume in part because it would have been obvious to his readers—this means that Persian discursive practices could be applied to Urdu poetry just as Arabic practices had been applied to Persian. The rich canon of Persian literary theory could be brought to bear on Urdu because even if Urdu criticism is underdeveloped at this point, the deep linguistic bonds between the languages means that Persian theoretical work is not foreign to Urdu. Secondly, I will claim that Ārzū is trying to establish a Delhi-centred standard for Urdu poetry along the lines of the above discussion of standard Persian in the context of *Muṣmir*. While he is content to record non-Delhi usages, he rejects any that would not meet with approval in the capital. His approach is therefore comprehensive in its research but considerably narrower in its conclusions.

Although its methodology is original, *NA* is a correction of Mīr ʿAbd-ālwāsiʿ Hānswī's *Ġharāʾib al-luġhāt* [Rarities of Words, late 17th/early 18th c.] (henceforth *ĠhL*) with a considerable number of additional entries. Ārzū often invokes quotations from the previous work with the phrase "*dar risālah...*" [In the treatise...], and sometimes full-throatedly disagrees with Hānswī's interpretations, many of which are indeed simplistic. Some manuscripts of *NA* lack the new title and just call it *ĠhL* or "a correction" [*taṣḥīḥ*] of *ĠhL*.[35] As he states in his preface, Ārzū has kept all of the words that appeared in *ĠhL*, even though he occasionally questions Hānswī's reasons for including some of them (see, for example, *takiyā* mentioned below). Although he praises Hānswī in the preface as "one of the successful learned men and famous scholars of heaven-blessed India" [*yekī az fuẓalā-yi kāmgār wa ʿulamā-yi nāmdār-i hindostān jannat-nishān*], it is clear that he finds the man's scholarship lacking because he then uses four synonyms for "mistake" to describe *ĠhL*.

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[35] For example, the British Library's copy, Ms. Or. 12,015, is catalogued as *Ġharāʾib al-luġhāt*, and indeed even has enclosed a letter from one Zulfishan Noor who wrote on 3 Feb. 1938 that *ĠhL* is by Ārzū (with no mention of Hānswī) and "is a recognised book among research workers." He urged Sir Gerard Clauson, who later presented this copy to the British Library, not to bear the expense of publishing the work because it is widely available in manuscript. The mss. of *NA* at Aligarh Muslim University are catalogued similarly.

Despite its shortcomings, *ĠhL* is an achievement because it seems to be the first Persian dictionary of Hindi/Urdu other than *niṣāb*s [rhyming, multilingual dictionaries for schoolchildren], and possibly the appendix [*ḳhātimah*] of *Tuḥfat al-hind*, described below.[36] For the editor of the published edition of *NA*, Sayyid Abdullah, the primary cause of the difference in sophistication between *ĠhL* and *NA* is that Hānswī was a schoolmaster while Ārzū was a philologist writing for other scholars. Unfortunately, Hānswī is a historical cypher to us because services to education did not merit inclusion in poetic *tażkirah*s of the time (*NA* 1951: iv). He composed popular educational texts, including a *niṣāb*, some Persian grammar books, and at least two poetic commentaries [*sharḥ* pl *shurūḥ*].[37] Indeed, he wrote the most popular Persian grammar in India, three copies of which can be found even in a single library.[38] As his name implies, he is connected with the town of Hānsī in present-day Haryana (about 130 km NW of Delhi), and Ārzū occasionally hints that his usage is provincial. *ĠhL* itself is undated and the two manuscripts I have seen give dates of copying that are decades too late to give any indication of the date of the original composition.[39]

One other text, the late seventeenth-century *Tuḥfat al-hind* ["A Gift from India"] by Mirzā Ḳhān (fl. 1675), is worth mentioning. It is notable because it appears to be the only Persian treatise on *hindī* grammar from the pre-colonial period.[40] Some manuscripts, such as Bodleian Ms. Elliott 383, include an appendix [*ḳhātimah*], which is about the same length as the rest of the work and might be the oldest lexicon of an Indic language in Persian (other than *niṣāb*s, which were after all

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[36] On some famous *niṣāb*s, see Baevskii 2007: 101, 123-4. The most famous Indian *niṣāb, Ḳhāliq bārī*, is attributed to Amīr Ḳhusrau but internal evidence suggests it was written centuries after his death by someone else named Ḳhusrau, possibly in the tenth century AH (≈sixteenth century CE) (NA 1951: ii).

[37] On Hānswī's *Niṣāb-i sih zabān* [*Niṣāb* of Three Languages] see Abdullah 1965: 92-3. In the Aligarh Muslim University library, his commentary on the *Bustān* of Saʿadī is Ms. J Per. 301 and two copies of his commentary on *Yūsuf and Zulaiḳha* are Mss. J Per. 240 and J Per. 302.

[38] It was based on *Farhang-i Rashīdī*, which was "the first critical dictionary" of Persian and was completed in 1064 AH = 1653 CE (Blochmann 1868: 24). The copies of the grammar at Aligarh Muslim University are Ahsan 891.5521/1, Univ. 234 Per. 3 Prose, and Univ. 234; a further Persian grammar attributed to him is Univ. 296 Per. 3 Prose.

[39] Rampur Ms 2543 gives 1205 AH (=1790 CE) and Ms 2544 gives 1281 AH (=1864 CE)

[40] Tuḥfat 1935: 8. The author does not identify the part of the work dealing with phonology and grammar (the introduction) or the work as a whole with any of the traditional Arabic linguistic disciplines (Rampur Ms 2543 ff. 2a-3b). I am therefore using "grammar" as a shorthand description of the work rather than defining its genre as "ṣarf wa naḥv," the usual Perso-Arabic term for "grammar."

not dictionaries of Urdu but rather Urdu-medium teaching aids for Arabic and Persian).[41] It is of little interest for us as a dictionary because despite having some three thousand entries, most of them are just a spelling followed by a single word Persian gloss. A comparison of a few of the entries suggests that none of the definitions appear to match up with any in *ĠhL* or *NA*. Furthermore, its system of describing Indic sounds is unique.[42] It therefore appears not to have had any direct influence on either *ĠhL* or *NA*.

Perhaps a cautionary note is warranted here. Although I have been referring to *NA* and *ĠhL* as dictionaries of Urdu, they are not dictionaries in the modern sense of being comprehensive and general-purpose lexicons. Instead their contents are selective and are meant to serve as a tool for literary composition. The preface of *NA* states (in relation to *ĠhL*'s purpose) that the goal is to define "Indic words that people of the provinces say rather than the Persian, Arabic or Turkish [synonym]"[43] (oddly Ārzū's description of *ĠhL*'s function is more clearly articulated than Hānswī's own rambling explanation).[44] Both *ĠhL* and *NA* spell out Arabic and Persian synonyms, implying that their purpose is as much about helping the reader build his Persian and Arabic vocabulary as defining Indic words, and *NA* frequently quotes Arabic and Persian dictionaries, including Ārzū's own *Sīraj al-luġhāt* [The Lamp of Words, 1734-5 CE]. Hānswī only rarely quotes dictionaries.[45] Indeed, many of Ārzū's corrections have to do with Hānswī's Perso-Arabic synonyms rather than expressing any doubt about the Indic word being defined. For example, Ārzū rejects Hānswī's inclusion of *takiyā* [pillow], arguing correctly that it is itself an Arabic word (and therefore out of place in a

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[41] A very short section of it is published with a translation and some useful context as *Tuḥfat* 1935. I have consulted the two Bodleian manuscripts. The complete appendix (a dictionary of Indic words) has been published as *Tuḥfat* 1983.

[42] *Tuḥfat al-hind*'s transliteration scheme is an awkward admixture of Arabic terminology for degrees of "heaviness" and appears to point to an erroneous understanding of Indic phonology in some cases. It is described at *Tuḥfat* 1935: 11-2. The terminology used in *ĠhL* and *NA*, as well as Ārzū's other works, is both simpler and more accurate. I recently addressed the treatment of Indic sounds in Persian texts in a paper given at Delhi University (Dudney 2010b).

[43] "*luġhāt-i hindī kah fārsī yā ʿarabī yā turkī-yi ān zabān zad ahl-i diyār kamtar būd*" (*NA* 1951: 3). Neither *NA* or *ĠhL* appears in the most comprehensive list of Persian dictionaries compiled in South Asia (Naqvi 1962: 333ff).

[44] *ĠhL*'s preface is excerpted in *NA* 1951: iv. I have compared it to Rampur mss. 2543 and 2544. I am very grateful to Walt Hakala for providing me with his photographs.

[45] For example, for "*rāʾitā*" he cites a variant from *Farhang-i jahāngīrī* (NA 1951: 260). As far as I can tell, he has only used that dictionary.

dictionary of Indic words), and then gives the *hindī* synonym, *geṅḍwā*.[46] Although a lot of Indic concepts are described in it (such as the Hindu months), *NA* is not primarily a dictionary of Indian cultural practices. For example, the word *Diwālī* [the famous Hindu festival] is carefully defined in *Muṣmir* but does not appear in *NA* itself, as it certainly would have if Ārzū had thought of the work as a lexicon of Indian traditions (*Muṣmir* 1991: 174).

Besides adding entries and correcting Hānswī's Arabic and Persian, Ārzū has made other fundamental improvements. Since *ĠhL*'s entries are grouped into chapters by first letter but are randomly arranged within each chapter, it is difficult to find words. Ārzū himself notes this shortcoming in the preface to *NA*, and has organised *NA* according to the more usable system of chapter by first letter and subchapter by the second letter. Secondly, Ārzū incorporates a great deal of learned sources and highlights Hānswī's lack of research in matters of practical knowledge, such as zoology or botany, or more precisely how words for animals and plants had been used in literature.[47] Furthermore, with the possibilities opened up by the concept of *tavāfuq*, *NA* is able to make much more sophisticated observations about language than *ĠhL*. By acknowledging that Persian and Sanskrit are genetically related, Ārzū can discuss the origins of words and trace their meanings through history.

The published edition (*NA* 1951), compiled by Sayyid Abdullah, is unfortunately not satisfactory for the purpose of determining exactly what Ārzū added to the original work. The problem is that it contains a symbol "[=]" indicating, according to an editor's note, that a particular entry in *NA* incorporates Hānswī's full definition. But when one consults a manuscript of *ĠhL*, it becomes clear that a number of the entries marked "[=]" either do not exist in the earlier work or

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[46] NA 1951: 149-50. Platts and the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* (McGregor 1993) both give this word with dental 'd' rather than retroflex 'ḍ' as Ārzū has. Another example is the entry for "*tikkā*" which Ārzū notes is just a misspelling of Arabic and Persian "*tikkah*" [small piece, as in a meat dish] (ibid. 150). For "*ṭhag*" [robber], Ārzū corrects Hānswī's gloss "*muśtag*" to "*muśtang*" [robber] (ibid. 164).
[47] For example, Hānswī tries to identify the *papīhā* [a kind of cuckoo], which "is a small, sweet-voice bird" [*murġhī ast kūćak wa k̲h̲ʷuś āwāz*], with the *śuk̲h̲iś* bird even though the *papīhā* itself is not found in Persia [*dar vilāyat maḥl-i naẓar ast*] (*NA* 1951: 105). The problem, as Ārzū notes, is that there are many species of "small, sweet-voiced" birds that can be analogised to the *papīhā*. Ārzū also throws in a learned reference to the tenth-century poet Rūdakī's use of *śuk̲h̲iś*. He concludes that the *papīhā* is actually a *ṣaʿwa* [finch]. See also the entry on "*totā*" [a kind of parrot], which includes a discourse on which birds are represented in poetry as eating sugar (*NA* 1951: 156).

are in fact completely different. Compare the entry in *ĠhL* and *NA* for "*ajwāʾin*," which is marked

with "[=]" in the printed edition. *ĠhL* has the following:

> *tukhmī bāśad kah ānrā bar rūʾī nān rekhtah pazand dar dafaʿ-i burūdat wa nafkh ba-ġhāyat mufīd ast b.f. [= "bah fārsī"] nān-khʷāh.*[48]
>
> It is a seed that is mixed into bread and baked during the cold period and is useful for ending flatulence. In Persian: Aniseed.*[49]*

And now Arzu's definition:

> *nām-i dānah-yi maśhūr nānkhwāh wa zinnyān ba-kasrah zāʾī maʿjmah wa taśdīd nūn wa taḥtānī ba-ālif-i kaśīdah wa nūn wa īn lafz nīz muśtarak ast dar fārsī wa hindī balkah dar fārsī 'jiwānī' wa "jiwāʾin' badīn maʿnī āmadah bar mutaʾammil pośīdah nīst kah aṣl lafz-i hindī ast chirākah bah maʿnī-yi zindah kunandah navaśtah-and* (10).
>
> The name of the well-known seed, aniseed [both *nānkhwāh* and *zinnyān*] (spelled "*zi-nn-yā-n*"), and this word is actually cognate [*muśtarak*] in Persian and Hindi although in Persian it is "*jiwānī*" and "*jiwāʾin*" with the same meaning. On reflection, it is no secret that the source is the *hindī* word because people have written it in the meaning "life-making."

It is clear from an entry like this that the focus is entirely different in the two works. Ārzū gives two

synonyms—it is a "well-known seed" so there is no reason to define it any more carefully than that

or indeed to mention indigestion—but then he makes a linguistic argument that the Persian word is

originally Indic because it is related to the Indic word for life, "*jīwan*."[50] This sort of reclamation of

an Arabic or Persian word as Indic appears across scores of entries, such as on *pān* [a kind of leaf

chewed in India] both of whose "Persian" synonyms, namely *taṅbūl* and *tāṅbūl*, are originally, in fact

Indic ["*har do lafz dar aṣl hindī ast*"] (1951: 104). Furthermore, references to *tavāfuq* frequently appear

and they are often accompanied by a statement to the effect of "as I have noted in *Sirāj al-luġhāt*."[51]

Ārzū's project in *NA* is therefore fundamentally linked to the project in his Persian lexicographical

works. One such example, a lexicographical tour-de-force, is "*tan sukh*" (1951: 153). Ārzū traces

phonetic and semantic variations through *hindī*, Arabic and Persian. He makes reference to the fact

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[48] Rampur Ms. 2543: f. 12.

[49] Steingass writes, "خواه نان *nān-khwāh*, Aniseed (in some places it seems to mean caraway-seed), which frequently is baked in bread on account of its flavour and stomachic qualities; bishop's weed; one who begs his bread."

[50] In fact, it seems more likely (as Platts notes) that it is related to Sanskrit "*yavānī*" which refers to a similar plant.

[51] See, for example, the entry on "*kes*" [i.e. *keś*, hair] which he connects by *tavāfuq* with the Persian *gesū* [lock of hair] (*NA* 1951: 358).

that "dictionaries note" [*dar kutub-i luġhāt marqūm ast*] that in both *hindī* and Persian "*tan*" means "body" and "*sukh*" means "happy," but also that it can mean a kind of fine robe from Bengal.[52]

The best example of Ārzū's attention to language at its most basic level is the entry for "*ast*," which does not appear in *ĠhL* and for which there is absolutely no reason to provide a definition except to make a case about language:

> *ast rābṭ-i kalām 'ast' dar aṣbāt ćunānkah dar fārsī 'nāst' ba-nūn muqābil ān lihāżā nāstik ba-maʿnī-yi nāfī wa mankar-i khudā ast dar hindī pas az tavāfuq-i lisānain bāśad wa 'hast' dar fārsī mubaddal-i 'ast' bāśad ćirākah alif ba-har do zabān mubaddal bah hā śavad* (*NA* 1951: 23).

> "*Ast*" is connected with "*ast*" [i.e. "is"] as proven by the Persian "*nāst*" [i.e. "is not"] with 'n' as the first [letter] like "*nastik*"[53] meaning "atheist" and "denier of God" in *hindī* because of linguistic concordance [*tavāfuq-i lisānain*], and "*hast*" [i.e. emphatic "is"] in Persian is a variant of "*ast*" because the 'a' in both languages has changed into 'h'.

While entries like "*ast*" point to a philosophical linguistic project, Ārzū is also obsessed with observed details. He has an astonishingly precise entry on *ćhatrī*, which Hānswī has defined both as a trellis [*baram*] for growing vegetables and a particular kind of bird perch, a meaning which, according to Ārzū, it never has in *hindī* ["*dar hindī īn rā ćhatrī na-gūyand*"] (1951: 198). He goes on to define its construction precisely as a kind of wooden frame made of small pieces of wood lashed together. It does not matter whether you put pigeons or vegetables on it, but the key is the way in which it is constructed. And, he helpfully adds, if you put birds of prey on the perch, then it is called "*patwāz*." Similar erudition is on display in his discussion of *chapātī* [flat-bread], which he turns from a common foodstuff into a historical concept.[54] Another odd example is *lāṭh*, which Ārzū defines in the general meaning of a wooden or stone pestle in *hindī* but further notes that in Delhi it refers specifically to the stone columns on two buildings constructed by the fourteenth-century ruler Firoz Shāh.[55] As in the example of *lāṭh*, careful observation often reveals a stark

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[52] This begs the question of which dictionaries he means in relation to *hindī*. Presumably he is talking about the kind of literary manuals available in Braj Bhāṣā or Sanskrit, such as "the grammar books of the Hindus" [*kutub-i nahw wa ṣarf-i hinduyān*] (*Muṣmir* 1991: 173). To my knowledge, however, he never mentions any of these by title. Allison Busch has noted that in Abu'l Faẓl's chapter on Indian literature [*sāhitya*], he instructs his interested readers to consult "works on this subject" implying that there was a corpus of reference materials in Persian or perhaps in Braj itself (Busch 2010: 284). Nonetheless, Ārzū might simply be referring to Persian dictionaries, since, as mentioned in n. 9 above, these do contain stray references to Indic words.
[53] This same word is also adduced as evidence in *Muṣmir* (1991: 213).
[54] *NA* 1951: 194. Thanks to Prashant Keshavmurthy for his exegesis on the humble *chapātī*.
[55] Hānswī had incorrectly defined it as a structural beam. The word in fact refers to the two Ashokan pillars brought by Firoz Shāh to Delhi from Meerut and Topra (Haryana). My thanks to Zirwat Chowdhury for

contrast between a broad, common [ʿām] meaning and a specific [ḵẖāṣ] meaning. The gap presents an obstacle for either understanding the *hindī* word or providing an accurate Persian gloss for it (cf. editor's remarks *NA* 1951: vii). In the entry for "*ḍanḍ*" [fine, penalty], for example, he constructs a historical argument demonstrating that Hānswī has chosen an overly specific kind of fine in Persian to translate "*ḍanḍ*," which is a more general concept of punishment (ibid 253).

Ārzū relies on two different kinds of data, written sources and personal observations. The works he cites suggest he was very well read both in lexicography and other subjects, and more importantly that he considers these texts able to shed light on Indic concepts. He uses Persian dictionaries (primarily his own *Sirāj al-luġhāt* but with reference to others like *Burhān-i qāṭiʿ*, *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī*, and *Farhang-i Surūrī*), "credible books" [*kutub-i muʿtabarah*], and some important Arabic lexicons.[56] He also refers to technical works like Imām Damīrī's *Ḥayát al-ḥaivān* [Animal Life] (ibid 156). Sometimes he quotes Persian poets, like Rūdakī or Saʿadī (e.g. ibid 106, 199). Other entries, especially ones where Ārzū's objection hinges on Hānswī's usage in *hindī*, depend on personal observation. For example, Hānswī gives "*chanīl*" as a headword and Ārzū sputters "no one knows where this word comes from! We who are among the people of India and who are in the Royal Court have never heard [it]!"[57] Often he cites himself as a source. For example, in the entry on *ćhatrī*, mentioned above, he writes, "I haven't heard" [*na-śinīdah-am*] the word used in a particular meaning. There are a number of entries in which Ārzū directly criticises Hānswī for his Haryana dialect.[58] One 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 Hānswī], it is perhaps the usage of the editor's homeland.
>
> *lekin ānćah gupćup maśhūr-i fuṣaḥā-st bah maʿnī śīrīnī ast nāzuk kah ba-ḵẖwurdan-i ān āwāz dahan bar nayāyad, bah ma ʿnī kah āwardah śāyad mustaʿmal-i vaṭan-i muṣannif bāśad* (ibid 363).

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clarifying the reference. The text says: "*sang-i kalānī darāzī rā kah bar do ʿimārat az ʿimārāt-i sulṭān feroz śāhī dar dihlī naṣb kardah būdand ān rā lāṭh ḵẖwānand*" (ibid 388).

[56] The phrase "credible books" appears, for example, in the fascinating entry on *ćaudharī* (*NA* 1951: 217). The Arabic dictionaries include *al-Qāmūs* [The Ocean, 14th-15th c. CE], *Muntaḵẖāb al-luġhāt* [Selection of Words, 1046 AH = 1636 CE], and *Kanz al-luġhāt* [Treasure of Words, 9th c. CE] (see Rieu 1879-83: vol 2, 503 & 510-1). All three dictionaries are cited in, of all things, the entry on *panīrwālā* [cheese-monger] (*NA* 1951: 121-2).

[57] "*malʿūm nīst kah luġhat-i kujā ast; mā mardum kah az ahl-i hind-īm wa dar urdū-yi muʿallā mī bāśīm na-śinīdah-īm*"(*NA* 1951: 214). Likewise, "*rajwāṛā*," defined by Hānswī as a brothel, which Ārzū notes is a meaning used in Imperial Delhi ("*rajwāṛā badīn maʿnī iṣṭlāh-i śāhjahānābād ast balkah ahl-i urdū-st*") even though the original meaning is a king's [*rājah*'s] territory (ibid 261). Ārzū opines that there is probably a connection between prostitution and the personal needs of the soldiers in *rājāhs*' armies.

[58] The editor Sayyid Abdullah gives references for several such entries (ibid ix).

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 Hānswī. This can be fruitfully connected to the discussion of *faṣāḥat* [linguistic purity] in *Muṣmir*, 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.

Let us end this discussion here. By contextualising *NA* through Ārzū's other works, I have tried to demonstrate that Ārzū was developing Urdu for literary use. His method, which should be counted as a major breakthrough in Indo-Persian intellectual history, fused a sophisticated historical understanding of language and literature with keen cultural observations. But it remains to trace his influence up to the present day through dictionaries and other critical works. The first important guide to Urdu usage, *Daryā-yi laṭāfat* [A Sea of Pleasantries, 1807] by the poets Inshāʾallāh Ḵẖān Inshā and Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥasan Qatīl, comes more than half a century later.[59] The usage in *NA* also needs to be compared to modern Urdu, a project whose scope far exceeds this article. It is difficult to assess the correctness of Ārzū's definitions because the language had changed greatly before the standard Urdu-English dictionary by John T. Platts was compiled in 1884. When one of Ārzū's definitions seems a little too pedantic, what can we do? For example, *dādā* is defined by Hānswī as "paternal grandfather," the meaning that it has in modern Hindi/Urdu, but Ārzū corrects that to "maternal and paternal grandfather" [*jadd-i mādarī wa padarī*] on the basis of the dictionaries *al-Qāmūs* (Arabic) and *Burhān-i qatiʿ* (Persian) (*NA* 1951: 232). Was Ārzū's meaning current in the contemporary vernacular or had he retreated into "the ethereal land where Etymology reigns"? It is important to remember that Ārzū, despite invoking the conventions of the royal court, was not a modern anthropologist content to record usages as they appear in society, but rather was making an intervention in the language that juggled things as they were and things as he thought they should be. The process of language standardisation is inevitably about exercising power, because a standard is arbitrarily defined by those with the power to define a standard. It would be anachronistic for us to criticise Ārzū for being an elitist (in the sense of narrowing the criteria for

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[59] Concerning Ārzū's possible influence on that work, see *NA* 1951: xxxviii *passim.*

writing good Urdu and limiting it to a small group of litterateurs) because, of course, much intellectual history is the study of the inner lives of the literate elite of a society. Furthermore, given that Ārzū conceives of Persian as being originally anchored to the royal court but then available in a standard form across the Persianate world, perhaps Urdu, namely the vernacular literary practices of the royal court, would have had the same kind of portability.

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