

region; it is largely from this work of his that we know at least something of the history and chronology of the (originally Arab) Yazidi Šarvānšāhs, hitherto known only sketchily from the Persian-language *Darband-nāma* (for which see DĀĠESTĀN i). This book of Minorsky had been preceded by his *Studies in Caucasian History* (London, 1953), in which Minorsky first utilized material from Monajjem -bāšipertaining to eastern Armenia, Arrān and northern Azerbaijan, and their local Muslim dynasties, and especially on the Shaddadids of Ganja and Āni in Arrān and their relations with adjacent Armenian princes and the Byzantine Empire. These Shaddadids were of Kurdish origin, and the third study in the book is devoted to uncovering the hitherto little-recognized origins of the Ayyubid Šalāḥ-al-Din/Saladin, in the Haḡbāni Kurds of the Dvin district; accordingly, we must now view Šalāḥ-al-Din as undoubtedly culturally and politically Arabized, but ethnically a Kurd. Further aspects of Caucasian history, specifically with information on Georgian and Armenian vassals of the Muslim presence in eastern Anatolia and Caucasia, were covered in a series of articles to which he gave the general title of “Caucasica I-IV” (*BSO(A)S* 13-15, 1949-53).

Minorsky’s interest here in a Kurdish dynasty, the Shaddadids, illustrates another of his wider concerns in the history of the Iranian world: an interest in its transition periods, often neglected in comparison with the more splendid and eye-catching achievements of states and empires. Hence he conceived one of his tasks as being that of bringing into the light of critical examination lesser-known peoples on the fringes of the Persian heartland, above all, these Kurds and the Jilites and Daylamites of the Alborz region. Quite early in his career he had produced a short monograph, *La domination des Dailamites* (Paris, 1932), which threw into relief what he called “the Iranian intermezzo,” the period of the 10th and 11th centuries, when local powers from peoples like Kurds, Lors and Daylamites dominated western and northern Persia, where Arab domination had preceded and Saljuq Turkish domination was to follow. He held that this interlude had a significance in the formation of Persian national culture and ethos which deserved to be highlighted as much as the better-known renaissance of New Persian language and literature under dynasties of the Iranian East like the Samanids, to which it was a sequel (see the section, “The Iranian *Intermezzo*,” in his *Studies in Caucasian History*, pp. 110-16).

Nevertheless, the well-known New Persian renaissance in Khorasan was not neglected by him, and in an important article on the old preface to the *Šāh-nāma* (1956a), he highlighted the role of the mid-10th century “marcher lord [of the East]” (*kanārang*) of Ṭus, Abu Maṣṣur Moḡammad b. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq (q.v.), who apparently commissioned translations of the Iranian national epic from the Pahlavi into New Persian, which Ferdowsi (who certainly in his early years knew Abu Maṣṣur) worked up into his *Šāh-nāma*. Minorsky’s view of Iranian culture was a whole one. His forays into art history have been mentioned above, but he had a great empathy for Persian literature, especially its poetry, and his publication in the field of literary history were not felt by him as marginal to his main concentration on history and historical geography but as part of a whole, the elucidation of the unfolding of Iranian life and culture in the widest sense. He wrote the article on ‘Omar Ḳayyām for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and wrote an important study on the notoriously difficult poet Afzal-al-Din Ḳāqāni Šarvāni of the late Seljuq period, whose verse Minorsky nevertheless found provocative and highly stimulating (“At the risk of being accused of heresy I confess that, after this full-blooded speech, the mellowed but emasculated vocabulary of the followers of Ḥāfiẓ loses some of its lustre”; Minorsky, 1943-46, p. 553). One can readily deduce that Minorsky liked a challenge and was attracted by authors and works that were away from the well-trodden mainstream of literary history, often thereby bringing fresh insights into the culture of the times in question. Thus in two articles he rescued from near-oblivion the obscure, mid-13th century satirist of Jām in Khorasan, Tāj-al-Din Pur-e Bahā, whose poetry shows how new Mongol administrative and financial practices affected the everyday life of the Persian people; also, their reflection of the ferment of new ideas and elements entering