

the Persian language of the time made these poems significant, so Minorsky thought, in that they were “a discreet warning against too abstract an approach to Persian poetry” (Minorsky, 1956b-c). Most important of all, however, in this literary field was Minorsky’s studies (which may be characterized as detective work) of the long narrative poem by Fakr-al-Din As’ad Gorgāni (q.v.) on the love between the queen Vis, wife of the king of Marv, and her brother-in-law Rāmin. The poem (which is vaguely reminiscent of the Celtic romance of Tristan and Isolde set in Cornwall and Brittany, but can hardly have any connection with it) has a background of the northern parts of Persia, and by a detailed and searching analysis of the poem and its setting, Minorsky concluded that, from its generally pre-Islamic atmosphere, the geographical background and the personal names in it, the tale went back to Parthian times and that its characters had origins in known personages of the Arsacid royal house and nobility.

Moving onwards chronologically and into the mainstream of Persian history, he added two further articles on the period of Mongol domination in Persia (13th and early 14th centuries) to his two articles on Pur-e Bahā poetry, collectively called “Mongolica 1-4”; the first of these, “Mongol Place-Names in Mukri Kurdistan,” drew, as noted above, on topographical material collected in the field four decades previously.

The domination of the Mongol Il-Khanids merged into that of the Timurids and various provincial powers across Persia. Minorsky devoted particular attention to these of the later 14th and 15th centuries as a rather neglected period of Persian history sandwiched between the upheavals of the Saljuq and Mongol periods on one side and the eventual consolidation of a Persian national state and a Shi‘ite religious institution and ethos under the Safavids on the other. On analogy with the earlier “Daylami intermezzo,” he styled this the “Turkmen interlude,” and he produced from 1938 onwards a series of eleven articles on this period with the overall title of “Turkmenica.” Several of these articles dealt with the administrative and military organization of the Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu lines, who dominated the Persian lands and extensive territories further west after the death of Timur. He considered the culmination of this series to be his abridged translation of Fażl-Allāh Kōnǰi’s *Tārik-e ‘ālamārā-ye amini* (as *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490*, London, 1957), which he did at the age of eighty. Thirty-five years later, his translation provided the basis for John E. Woods’ impressive edition of the Persian text of Kōnǰi’s work and his revised and annotated version of Minorsky’s original (London, 1992).

From the Aq Qoyunlu of the “Turkmen interlude” in Iranian history to the succeeding Safavids was but a short step, and Minorsky in fact termed this last “the third stage of the Turcoman dominion in Persia” (*Tadhkirat al-mulūk*, p. 30). Concerning the new dynasty, he wrote on the Turkish verse written by the Safavid founder, Shah Esmā‘il I (q.v.), under the pen-name of Kaṭā‘i (with the Turkish text written out again in his own Arabic script). His main work on the Safavid period, however, was a facsimile edition and translation of Mirzā Sami‘ā’s *Tadkerat al-moluk*, a work written for the Ghalzay Afghan leader Ašraf, who ruled Persia in the years 1725-29. Regarding as of little use a translation pure and simple of this text, written in a rather indifferent, jerky Persian style and bristling with technical terms of the administrative departments (*divāns*) and the army, which were largely absent from the standard dictionaries, Minorsky conceived his task here as the elucidation of these terms, with the aid of the rather exiguous Persian historical sources and the body of travel accounts left by European visitors to the Safavid lands in the 17th and early 18th centuries. The result is a solid edifice, not only of administrative and military practice (rather than of theory, such as what the “Mirrors for Princes” provide) but also of the social and economic structures underpinning the Safavid state. For some time after Minorsky’s work, the *Tadkerat al-moluk*, supplemented by the surviving archival material of the period, has formed the basic source for our knowledge of how the Safavid state was constructed and functioned, and was extensively utilized by such scholars as Hans Robert Roemer, Heribert Busse, Klaus Röhrborn, Roger M. Savory, and John R. Perry.