

De-Persifying Court Culture

The Khanate of Khiva's Translation Program

Marc Toutant

Despite the expansion of Turkish-speaking populations and the efforts of several Turko-Mongol dynasties to promote the use of Chaghatai Turkish after the thirteenth-century era of the Mongol Empire, Persian remained a favored language all over Central Asia in chanceries and belles-lettres till as late as the nineteenth century.¹ Only a small proportion of the literature created in Central Asia was in Chaghatai Turkish (hereafter simply called Turkish), and Persian was the major medium of learned expression in all parts of the region, as Devin DeWeese's chapter 4 in this volume reminds us. And as Alfrid Bustanov's chapter 7 shows, even in distant Tatar villages of the Russian Empire, where there were no native speakers of Persian, the classics of Persian ethical literature were widely copied in local madrasas, where some students even tried to compose their own literary works in Persian.

Nevertheless, the status of Persian as *lingua franca* did not remain unchallenged in Central Asia. Over the course of the fifteenth century, cultural patronage under the Timurid rulers brought about the composition of numerous Turkish texts in diverse fields of learning. At the court of the last great Timurid ruler, Husayn Bayqara (r. 1469–70, 1470–1506), one of the most important corpora of Central Asian Turkish literature was written by Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i (1441–1501). Albeit largely based on Persian models, the works of Nawa'i can be regarded as an attempt to forge a culture that was specific to his Turkophone audience. It was also the most significant endeavor to challenge the supremacy of Persian in Central Asia.² Yet after the collapse of the Timurids, Persian recovered and indeed considerably strengthened its position in the literary field. Being of recent nomadic origin, successive new rulers attached importance to their public image; that is, to their complete conformity with the existing artistic and cultural canon, which expressed itself in Persianate models.

It was therefore not until the nineteenth century that the situation began to change. The three new Uzbek dynasties that emerged in the eighteenth century—

namely, the Qongrats (1717–1920) in Khiva, the Manghits (1753–1920) in Bukhara, and the Mings (1710–1876) in Khoqand—displayed a new interest in the Turkish language. That interest was most pronounced in Khwarazm, a large oasis region on the Amu Darya River delta in western Central Asia where an extensive translation program was sponsored by the Qongrat dynasty, a Turkified branch of a Mongolian tribe. Consequently, the Khiva khanate’s patronage of Turkish letters during the nineteenth century produced one of the largest bodies of literary materials in Central Asian Turkish.

Their translation program has been the subject of prior research, albeit mostly by Russian and Uzbek scholars.³ Among the latter, Najmiddin Komilov investigated the way Turkish translations were crafted from a stylistic point of view.⁴ Then, more recently, subsequent studies tried to contextualize the translations by placing them in their broader cultural environment and historical context.⁵ Building on these important contributions to understanding this turning point in the history of the Persianate world, this chapter, for its part, focuses on the significance of a policy that led to the replacement of a cosmopolitan language on a political and cultural level by a vernacular language. In other words, taking into consideration the new political and intellectual demands of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in what was one of the most Turkified of Persographic regions, the main contribution of this chapter lies in reconsidering the meaning of the major shift that brought to an end Persian as Central Asia’s main language of the arts and sciences.

PERSOGRAPHIA IN THE KHANATE OF KHIVA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It is still difficult to give an accurate picture of Persographia, or the use of written Persian, in the khanate of Khiva during the nineteenth century. The relationship between Persian and Turkish was more balanced in Khiva than in Bukhara and Kokand. Of the three precolonial Central Asian states, Khiva was the most Turkic. Khwarazm underwent the process of Turkification earlier than the other agricultural regions of Central Asia, presumably between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. A few centuries later, while the khanate was ruled by Turkish-speaking Uzbeks who were former members of the Qypchaq tribal federation, Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur Khan (r. 1603–63) supported the use of Turkish by himself writing two historical works in this language, the *Shajara-yi Tarakima* (Genealogy of the Turkmens) and the *Shajara-yi Turk wa Mughul* (Genealogy of the Turks and Mongols).⁶ Khiva was actually the only one of the three khanates where the use of Turkish had been increasing since the sixteenth century.

Whereas the Qongrats were descended from these Uzbek nomadic tribes, there was another population, known as Sarts, that belonged to older settled groups. In Khiva in the nineteenth century, like everywhere in Central Asia, the term “Sart”

in Khiva was used to denote urbanized merchant-elites of various pedigrees. They even held important positions in the khanate's civil administration, for we know that a Sart vizier (*mehter*) was executed in 1857.⁷ Yet, it is still hard to identify all the characteristics that distinguished Sarts from Uzbeks. According to the Anglo-Hungarian explorer Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), who travelled across the region between 1862 and 1864, the idiom spoken by Sarts at that time was a variety of Turkish that differed from the Uzbek spoken by the Qongrats.⁸ A century later, the scholar Yuri Bregel identified the Sarts as Turkicized descendants of the older indigenous Iranian population, suggesting that they would have had an interest in the preservation of Persian at a time when Turkish became the main administrative language in the late 1850s. Until this date, for instance, numerous deeds of sale for real estate in the southern districts inhabited by Sarts were written in Persian. When they began to write such deeds only in Turkish, Bregel noticed that numerous annotations were still made in Persian by the secretaries (*diwans*) who kept the record books. Bregel accordingly concluded that these secretaries were probably of Sart origin, and that, even though the Sarts were not native speakers of an Iranian language, Persian remained a convenient written language for them.⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know whether Sarts perceived themselves as heirs of a population of Iranian origin, for we lack conclusive evidence that could support such claim.¹⁰ Given the current state of knowledge it is therefore difficult to suggest that Sarts were in some way as the last defenders of Persographia, especially against Uzbeks who favored the adoption of Turkish. What we do know is that until Turkish became the main administrative language, Persian was still used by jurists to produce legal documents. A document kept in one of the present-day manuscript libraries of the region reveals, for example, that in 1799–1800, an endowment document (*waqfiya*) issued by a member of the dynasty was written in Persian.¹¹ Persian was therefore used for notarial output related to Shari'a, as well as for correspondence with pastoral nomads such as the Turkmens.¹²

As far as belletristic literature is concerned, sources of various types show that Persian remained a major medium of cultural expression among the Turkish-speaking Uzbek elite. Some of the khans seem to have been well versed in Persian poetry. For example, the famous poet and historiographer Muhammad Riza Agahi (1809–74) wrote of Muhammad Rahim Quli (r. 1842–46) that “he knew all the difficult rules of writing poetry, knew by heart the dates and stories of all the men of past generations from the beginning of the world till our time, and in royal assemblies could easily interpret any difficult verse that puzzled the men of learning.”¹³ Moreover, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the library of Sayyid Isfandiyar Khan (r. 1910–18) boasted no fewer than eighteen manuscripts of the works of the Persian poet Jami (d. 1492) as well as three of the Indo-Persian poet Bidil (d. 1720).¹⁴ Several copies of the quatrains (*rubaiyat*) of ‘Umar Khayyam (d. 1131) were also produced in Khiva during the nineteenth century.¹⁵ At the royal court, even such members of the Turkish-speaking literati as Munis (1778–1829),

his nephew Agahi, Kamil Khwarazmi (1825–99), and the renowned vizier and poet Ahmad Tabibi (1868–1910), wrote some of their works in Persian.¹⁶ Anthologies of poems (*bayaz*) that were composed for the khan or high officials also included pieces written either in Persian or Turkish. Among one hundred and forty-six *bayaz* from Khiva kept at the Al-Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies in Tashkent, seventy-four are mostly in Persian, or are at least bilingual.¹⁷

The numerous notices left by the readers of the manuscripts that are conserved today at the regional museum of Nukus also show that in the nineteenth century, Persian was still largely used among provincial scholars of Khwarazm. The explanations and translations they wrote in the margins or between the lines of the Arabic texts are for the most part in Persian. Besides, the copyists' formulas that were added at the end of the texts were also mostly Persian, if also sometimes in Arabic and, very rarely, in Turkish. The holdings of manuscript libraries in Nukus thus confirm that Persian maintained its role among Khivan scholars.¹⁸

The translation program into Central Asian Turkish that was conducted throughout the nineteenth century serves as additional evidence of the importance and prestige that Persian literature long enjoyed in this early Turkified region. For among the many works that were translated into Turkish, some 85 percent were originally composed in Persian, the remainder having been written in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish.¹⁹

TRANSLATING FOR “THE COMMON PEOPLE” OF KHWARAZM?

The cultural efflorescence in Khwarazm that began in the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan (r. 1806–25) and continued under his successors was reflected in the development of a more intense literary life. Translation played an especially important role in this. Indeed, a large proportion of Turkish classical literature consists of translations from Persian. But what was new here was the quantity of translations being made. For instance, during the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan II from 1864 to 1910, which marked the peak of this cultural revival, more than a hundred works were translated, mostly from Persian into Chaghatai Turkish.²⁰ From the beginning of the nineteenth century till the demise of the khanate in 1917, we can identify at least eighty-two different translators at the court of Khiva.²¹ Unfortunately, we have little information about these translators.²² Aftandil Erkinov and Shadman Vohidov published an article about the *Fihrist-i Kitabkhana* (Library Catalogue), a handwritten record of all of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish works to be found in the library of Muhammad Rahim Khan II. It mentions the names of forty-seven copyists and thirty-one translators, as well as art commissioners, most of them members of the khan's family.²³ According to the *tazkira* ('anthology') of Hasan Murad Laffasi, “There were always thirty-four poets and worshippers of literature in the service of Muhammad Rahim Khan II, some of them dealing with books and translations.”²⁴



FIGURE 13. The last khanate: Kalta Minaret, Khiva, left uncompleted in 1855. Photograph by Nile Green.

The case of Muhammad Riza Agahi, one of the most prominent figures of this period, is illustrative. In the preface to his *diwan*, he gave the total number of his translations as nineteen (including one from Ottoman Turkish). Among them there are such prominent classical Persian works as Sa'idi's *Gulistan*; Jami's *Yusuf*

wa Zulaykha, *Salaman wa Absal*, and *Baharistan*; Hilali's *Shah wa Gada*; Nizami's *Haft Paykar*; Muhammad Waris's *Zubdat al-Hikayat*; Kaykawus's *Qabus-nama*; Husayn Kashifi's *Akhlaq-i Muhsini*; Mahmud Ghijduwani's *Miftah al-Talibin*; Amir Khusraw's *Hasht Bihisht*; and Wasifi's *Bada'i' al-Waqa'i'*. Six translations of historical works also appear in this list: Mirkhwand's *Rawzat al-Safa*, of which Agahi translated the second part of the second volume and the whole of the third volume; Riza Quli Khan's *Rawzat al-Safa-yi Nasiri*, of which he translated only the third volume; Mahdi Khan Astarabadi's *Tarikh-i Jahangusha-yi Nadiri*; Sharaf al-Din Yazdi's *Zafar-nama*; *Tabaqat-i Akbarshahi*; and *Tazkira-yi Muqimkhani*.²⁵

This impressive list gives an idea of the variety of works that were translated in Khiva. When looking at the *Fihrist-i Kitabkhana* catalogue, we notice that not only literary and historical works were translated, but also texts pertaining to medicine (such as *al-Aghraz al-Tibbiya*), pharmacology (such as *Tuhfat al-Muminin*), jurisprudence (such as *Mukhtasar al-Wiqaya*), hadith (such as *Sharh-i Dala'il al-Khayrat*), and Sufism (such as Jami's famous *Nafahat al-Uns*). Agahi's example also reveals that one work could be translated by several different people. This was the case with the translation of the historiographical works *Rawzat al-Safa* and *Tarikh-i Kamil*, the latter's twelve volumes being translated by a team composed of no fewer than eleven people. The translation of one text could thus turn into a collective endeavor that had to be continued from a reign to another. For example, while the first volume (*daftar*) of *Rawzat al-Safa* was translated by Munis at the behest of Muhammad Rahim Khan I, the other volumes were translated by Agahi, Muhammad Yusuf Raji, Muhammad Nazar, and Kamil Khwarazmi during the reigns of Allah Quli Khan (r. 1825–42), Rahim Quli Khan (r. 1842–45), Muhammad Amin Khan (r. 1845–55), Sayyid 'Abdullah Khan (r. 1855), and Muhammad Rahim Khan II (r. 1864–1910).

Another feature of Khiva's translation program is that the same work could be translated several times over. There are at least five Turkish translations of *Mahfi-lara*, and three translations of Wasifi's famous memoirs of Timurid Herat, *Bada'i' al-Waqa'i'*.²⁶ This reminds us of the fact that there were several different ways to translate any given work: the word *tarjuma* covers a much wider idea of transferring a text, or elements of it, into another language than is suggested by the modern English term "translation."²⁷ Thus, if we compare several translations of the same text, we find that none of them recreated the integral character of the original Persian work. Indeed, over the long term there seems to have been a clear trend toward simplification.²⁸ By way of illustration, the researcher Najmiddin Komilov compared three translations of *Bada'i' al-Waqa'i'*. The first was made in 1826 by Dilawar Khwaja; the second in 1860 by Agahi; and the third in 1917 by Muhammad Amin Tora. Komilov found that the 1826 translation was the closest to the original. The 1860 translation by Agahi shows that the latter took an interest in unusual words and refined expressions but nonetheless shortened a significant part of the

book. And the 1917 translation went even further in representing a very simplified version of the Persian original.²⁹ Over the years, the need for linguistic accessibility evidently became more and more important. The first translations produced Turkish texts that looked very close to the Persian originals both from a grammatical and a lexical point of view, whereas after the second half of the nineteenth century, translators tried to “de-Persify” their translations as much as they could. When Muhammad Yusuf Bayani (1858–1923) crafted a new Turkish translation of *Tarikh-i Tabari*, for example, he replaced Persian and Arabic words with their Turkish equivalents, or at least included only Arabic and Persian words that were widely understandable to his readers at the time.³⁰

Along with these practices of simplification and Turkification, the need to produce commentaries and explanations also emerged. A case in point is Mulla Babajan Sana’i’s translation of *Haft Kishwar*, a treatise on ethics written by Fakhri Harawi at the beginning of the sixteenth century, made in 1859 during the reign of Sayyid Muhammad Khan (r. 1856–64). A comparison of the original and its translation reveals a notable difference in volume between original Persian passages and their Turkish versions.³¹ What is particularly interesting are the instances where Sana’i added words and sentences because he felt the need to further explain the meaning to his readers. For example, a sample Persian segment of the text can be translated as:

In ancient times [*dar zamani*], there was a wise sultan named ‘Adil Shah. He was the king of all the earth and the master of the seven climes. In the land of Mashriq, he erected a city and succeeded in building it in a short amount of time, thanks to his many efforts. Since the grace of both worlds was found in the city, it was called Kawnayn.³²

Sana’i’s rather more prolix translation reads as follows:

In the days of yore [*zaman-i madi*], that is to say, in bygone days [*ya’ni ötgân ayy-ama*], there was such a just king, such a munificent king of the kings, that people gave him the name and title the wise sultan ‘Adil Shah. . . . One day, this king imagined beholding his kingdom and showing one particle of the sun of his greatness and his majesty to the people of the world. In the land of Mashriq, he built such a city that the grace of the two worlds and the marvel of the two worlds became resplendent and apparent in it. Since in this auspicious time and propitious day, wise and learned men—whose wisdom, piety and eloquence were above all—were very numerous, and because in this blessed age, thanks to their instructions and indications, the buildings of the aforementioned city were shaped and fortified, for all of these reasons they named the city Kawnayn.

Obviously, such translation practices aimed at giving much more than a mere translation. Translators wanted to make their texts fully accessible to their readers. And they used various methods in order to provide readers with this kind of easy accessibility. They would translate verse passages into prose, for example, add synonyms and comments, or even change the structure of a passage.³³

In the prefaces to their translations, Khiva's translators often stated this purpose explicitly: they wanted to produce a text that could be read by everyone. This was in fact an express demand of their patrons. When Khan Muhammad Amin Inaq and the high official Niyazbek entrusted Muhammad Qasim with the translations of *Abu Muslim* and the *Shah-nama* respectively, Muhammad Qasim was required to work with "the common people" (*khass u 'awam*) in mind.³⁴ Similarly, the ruler Muhammad Rahim Khan II asked Agahi to translate many passages of Nizami's famous poem *Haft Paykar* into Turkish prose for the same reason. This desire to produce texts that could be not only technically readable but also broadly intelligible was not new in the history of Central Asian Turkish literature. In one of the epilogues of the five narrative poems (*masnawi*) he composed between 1483 and 1485, Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i told his readers that he had begun to rewrite in Turkish Nizami's famous medieval Persian poem *Khamasa* because he wanted the "Turkic people" (*Türk eli*) to benefit from it, "for nowadays in the world many Turks have a good nature and a clear mind."³⁵ Almost two centuries later in Khiva, the ruler Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur similarly stated in the first pages of his *Shajara-yi Turk wa Mughul* that he had "tried to use a Turkish that is easily understandable even by a five-year-old child."³⁶ And as shown by Alexandre Papis's chapter 8 in this volume, when the high administration of Eastern Turkistan commissioned translations of Persian classics into Chaghatai Turkish from the late eighteenth century on, translators were also asked to continuously simplify the meaning of the text for a "general readership" (*khass u 'awam*).

At the end of the nineteenth century in Khiva, not only translators but also historians had to produce simplified versions of earlier Persian works. When in 1863 Hasan Murad Qushbegi instructed Sana'i to write a history of the khanate of Khiva, Sana'i was required to produce a text that could be intelligible even by the "common people" (*'awam ahli*). Even though the history of the Qongrat rulers had already been written by previous poets and scholars, these earlier chronicles had been written in such a refined style that they were barely understandable by their readers. While dominant, this was not an entirely uniform policy. Simplification was evidently less required under Allah Quli Khan (r. 1825–42), and translators had sometimes to keep the style of the original works. Nevertheless, during the subsequent reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan II, the demand for simplified translations regained momentum.³⁷ Talib Khwaja, who was asked by Muhammad Rahim Khan II to translate *Hikayat al-Salihin* from Persian to Turkish, wrote in his preface that its translation would be profitable for "all the people" (*jami'-i khala'iq*).³⁸ In fact, most forewords to translations mention the importance of providing access to culture to the "Turkic people of Khwarazm."³⁹

We know that such literary translations could be appreciated by the khans of Khiva and high officials who belonged to the educated part of the Khiva society and were often engaged themselves in literary activity. But what about "the common people" of Khwarazm? To judge from the very small number of existing

copies, the historical works translated by Munis, Agahi, and others did not enjoy wide circulation. It seems that they were read mostly at court, so that expressions like “the common people” should not be understood too literally. We might therefore wonder what really lies behind this claim of public outreach. That is, who did patrons, translators, and historiographers have in mind when they talked about “the common people” of Khwarazm?

NEW FRONTIERS OF CULTURAL LEGITIMACY

Even though ethnically all three of Central Asia’s khanates remained highly heterogeneous, Khiva was the most Turkic in terms of population compared to the khanates of Khoqand and Bukhara. In Khiva, Uzbeks constituted a majority of almost 65 percent, with the similarly Turkic Turkmens forming a large minority of about 25 percent (roughly the size of the Tajik minority in Bukhara). Khiva thus had the greatest proportion of Turkish-speakers anywhere in the region, whereas Bukhara had the greatest percentage of Persian-speaking Tajiks. But were these Turkish-speaking people, who in demographic terms certainly did mostly constitute the “people of Khwarazm,” the true target of this cultural policy, which eventually led to the replacement of Persian by Turkish? Given the fact that only 5 percent of the population lived in towns, there is no doubt that the number of those in the Khiva khanate who could read even translated works was very limited. The translators’ claim that they worked for the common people who did not know Persian may be therefore considered as a *topos* and, as such, should not be taken at face value.

Further evidence confirms that the call for popular access to literary culture was more a motto than a true policy objective. In 1874, Muhammad Rahim Khan II, an ardent admirer of the West, established a court printing office in Khiva with a lithographic press, but beyond the court, its impact on intellectual life in Khiva was minimal. Its publications were available neither for sale nor for general distribution, but were solely for the use of the court. The principal subject matter was poetry, much of it written by the khan himself. The Russian orientalist A. N. Samoilovich observed during his visit to Khiva in 1908, “The press does not have a permanent home; it does not accept outside [i.e., commercial] orders, and works irregularly. . . . Its publications do not go on sale, but are given out as gifts by the Khan.”⁴⁰ At the time of Samoilovich’s visit, the press was housed in a pavilion in a royal garden. Two years later, after Muhammad Rahim Khan’s death in 1910, the printing office was closed. This shows that rather than being a tool for popular enlightenment, Khiva’s pioneering printing press was merely, in Adeeb Khalid’s words, “an instrument of royal pleasure.” As Khalid further explains, the press was used solely “to present the elegant courtly culture in a new form.”⁴¹

The translation program reached its peak between 1864 and 1910 during the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan II, who wrote poetry himself under the pen

name Firuz and patronized poets and historians, promoting a vibrant literary life at court, in which more than thirty poets participated.⁴² Restricted politically, especially in foreign policy, Muhammad Rahim Khan focused on regal court culture as the only means he had to voice his protest against the Russian protectorate. The Uzbek scholar Aftandil Erkinov has argued that the Russian invasion of 1873 was responsible for this cultural effervescence favoring Turkic culture, and that Muhammad Rahim Khan cultivated his court library as a means of resistance to the Russian Empire.⁴³

Yet whatever impact Russian colonization may have had on the cultural life of the Khiva khanate, the translation program had certainly begun long before the coming of the Russians, as shown for instance by the translation of *Rawzat al-Safa* under way since the reign of Muhammad Rahim Khan I. We should thus not overstate the impact of the Russian invasion on the evolution of the khanate's culture. Russian occupation may have been the accelerator, but the turn of Khiva's court life toward Turkification, in which the translation program played a major role, was probably rooted in the new political situation that emerged in Central Asia during the eighteenth century with the disintegration of the traditional polities that had existed since the Uzbeks originally took over the region in the early 1500s. New tribal forces challenged central authority and ceased to recognize the charisma of the Chinggisid dynasts. Although none of them belonged to the house of Chinggis Khan, for the first time in Central Asian history, the rulers of the three new Uzbek dynasties that emerged in the eighteenth century adopted the title of "khan."⁴⁴ The "tectonic shift" of the eighteenth century ended the Chinggisid period and launched that of the Uzbek khanates' "introversion," as Paolo Sartori has put it.⁴⁵

After Muhammad Amin Inaq, the leader of the Qongrats, defeated and banished the Yomut Turkmen in 1770, he continued to enthrone puppet khans from the Kazakh Chinggisids, while ruling himself only as the *inaq* ("intimate") of the sovereign. It was his grandson, Eltüzer Inaq who was the first to discard these Chinggisid figurehead khans and have himself proclaimed khan in 1804 so as to rule in his own name, thus founding the new dynasty of the Qongrats. Like the two other khan dynasties established by the end of the eighteenth century in Bukhara and Khoqand, the khanate of Khiva enjoyed a certain degree of stability. This in turn led to internal centralization and administrative robustness as compared with the previous two hundred years.

However, since these Uzbek dynasties were theoretically deprived of ruling privileges—the old Chinggisid imperial legacy in Central Asia prescribed that only descendants of Chinggis Khan had the right to the throne—in order to facilitate their rule they had to sanction certain modes of legitimation. We might imagine that the Qongrats' cultural policy played a part in these efforts, promoting a specific culture that would help legitimize their power. In the beginning of the

nineteenth century, the changes that affected politics in Central Asia also affected the cultural sphere. With the Qongrat dynasty asserting its own values, Persian no longer had the legitimacy it had once had.

The fact that the Qongrats fostered the Turkification of courtly life to a significantly greater degree than their counterparts in Khoqand and Bukhara could be explained by the particularities of Khwarazm. Since, as noted earlier, this region was one of the most Turkified, the Turkic component of its identity had always played an important role. Vámbéry remarks that “the Khivite has a legitimate pride in the purity of his ancient Özbek nationality, as contrasted with that of Bukhara and Kashgar.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Khiva’s connections with other Turkish-speaking regions of the Russian Empire inhabited by Muslim communities, such as Tatars, at least since the late eighteenth century, were another manifestation of the khanate’s “Turkicness.”⁴⁷ By contrast, the relative remoteness of the region, which is separated from Transoxiana and Iran by deserts and steppes, helped preserve the Turkic cultural specificity of the Khiva oasis as compared to more Persianized regions.⁴⁸ Turkish was still dominated by Persian in the khanates of Bukhara and Khoqand at the end of the nineteenth century, and the Qongrats khans of Khiva therefore used Turkish as a visible sign of their power and distinction. This sense of their distinctiveness was so pronounced that the Uzbeks of Khwarazm looked upon the khanate of Bukhara as “Tajik country.” They would even refer haughtily to the troops of Bukhara, which were actually composed mainly of Uzbek soldiers, as “the Tajik army.”⁴⁹ Several decades earlier, Vámbéry had already noticed that Khiva and Khoqand were regarded “as the constant enemies of Bukhara.”⁵⁰ According to what Mary Holdsworth has called these “old patterns of internal rivalries,” the external political relations of the three khanates should be considered first in relation to each other, and only secondly to Russia.⁵¹ “The enduring rivalries” among the Central Asian khanates had prevented the formation of a united front against the Russian invader and created a cultural competition in which the translation program may have played its part. Tellingly, the animosity between Khiva and Bukhara was exacerbated in the literary sphere, especially in chronicles.⁵² These rivalries may have “cultivated local feelings of belongings [*sic*], perhaps a kind of early ‘patriotism,’” James Pickett observes.⁵³ The “de-Persification” process that occurred on a courtly level was another means for the Qongrats khans to distinguish their own court from those of their rivals in Bukhara and Khoqand. By promoting Turkish as the main cultural language at the expense of Persian, the dynasty gave a distinguishing significance to its royal imagery within the context of “a Central Asian vernacular century.”⁵⁴ Well before the coming of the Russians, the numerous translations carried out throughout the nineteenth century show that the Qongrats wished to take over all the official signs of power in their khanate, including the language through which this power could be culturally articulated.

CONCLUSIONS

From the beginning of the nineteenth century on, the Qongrats khans of Khiva decided to implement a cultural policy that aimed to make Central Asia's literary legacy accessible to Turkish-speakers. Nevertheless, contrary to what the prefaces of many of Khiva's translations would suggest, the translations probably responded less to the demands of a Turkish-speaking readership than they contributed to forging a virtual reading community. The policy of translation from Persian to Turkish, along with the desire to compose new works in Turkish, was undertaken with the aim of establishing a vernacular literary culture. In Khwarazm, as well as elsewhere, the primary stimulus for vernacularization was provided by the royal courts; it was a "top-down" policy rather than a "bottom-up" process.⁵⁵ This cultural policy served a broader political project. For by reshaping the boundaries of their cultural universe, the Qongrat rulers contributed to the forging of a new political community: that of the Turkic people of Khwarazm. The new linguistic boundaries, within which a vernacular (Turkish) was called on to supersede a lingua franca (Persian), reflected a new way of ordering the political universe.

The role of these new cultural frontiers was therefore to offer a new vision of vernacular political space. The local Qongrat dynasty distinguished itself from its regional Manghit and Ming rivals by cultivating its own type of cultural legitimacy, in which Persian no longer had its former role or prestige. Khiva's translation program thus became "one of the means by which a new nation 'proves' itself, shows that its language is capable of rendering what is rendered in more prestigious languages." In the case of Khiva, as in others, the many translations amounted to a real "seizure of power."⁵⁶ In this way, the Qongrats' translation program illustrates the fact that the delimitation of frontiers, be they linguistic or cultural, remains a political act par excellence. It was a choice of the prince, or, in this case, of the khan, and his court. Not surprisingly, the delimitation of linguistic frontiers became a major issue several decades later with the Soviet policy on nationalities, leading to the definitive contraction of Persian throughout Central Asia.

NOTES

1. "Turkish" in this chapter refers to the Turkic language as spoken and written in Central Asia from the thirteenth century to the early twentieth, also known as "Eastern Middle Turkic" or "Chaghatai Turkish."

2. Marc Toutant, *Un empire de mots: La culture des derniers Timourides au miroir de la Khamsa de Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī (1441–1501)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

3. Apropos of Uzbek studies here, we should acknowledge the work of Yuri Bregel, one of the most important heirs of the Russian Oriental School regarding Central Asian history and culture and the author of several articles about major historiographers at the Khivan courts, who were also known for their translation activities. See Bregel, "The *Tawārīkh-i Khōrazmshāhiya* by Thanā'ī: The Historiography of Khiva and the Uzbek Literary Language," in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization II: Proceedings of the XVIII PIAC, Bloomington, June 29–July 5, 1975*, ed. L. V. Clark and P. A. Draghi (Bloomington, IN:

Asian Studies Research Institute, 1978), 17–32; “Tribal Tradition and Dynastic History: The Early Rulers of the Qongrats according to Munis,” *Asian and African Studies* 16, 3 (1982): 392–97. Bregel is also the editor and translator of the *Firdaws al-Iqbal*, a critical source for the history of Khwarazm; see Shir Muhammad Mirab Munis and Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbal: History of Khwarazm*, ed. Yuri Bregel (Leiden: Brill, 1988), and *Firdaws al-Iqbal: History of Khwarazm by Shir Muhammad Mirab Munis and Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi*, translated from Chaghatai and annotated by Yuri Bregel (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

4. Najmiddin Komilov, “Khorezmskaja shkola perevoda (problemy tipologii i sopostavitel’noe issledovanie istorii perevoda)” (PhD diss., University of Tashkent, 1987); id., *Bu qadimiy san’at: Risola* (Tashkent: G’afur G’ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san’at nashriyoti, 1988).

5. Aftandil Erkinov and Shadman Vahidov, “Une source méconnue pour l’étude de la production de livres à la cour de Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II (Khiva, fin XIXe s.),” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 7 (1999): 175–93; Aftandil Erkinov, “A. N. Samojlovich’s Visit to the Khanate of Khiva in 1908 and His Assessment of the Literary Environment,” *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* 14 (2010): 109–46; id., “How Muḥammad Raḥīm Khān II of Khiva (1864–1910) Cultivated His Court Library as a Means of Resistance against the Russian Empire,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2 (2011): 36–49.

6. The Qypchaq confederation had begun to migrate to Transoxiana under Shibanid leadership since the early 1500s.

7. The *mehter* was “a sort of officer who has the charge of the internal affairs of the court and country” who “must always be from the Sart ancient Persian population of Khiva,” according to Ármin Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia; Being the Account of a Journey from Teheran across the Turkoman Desert on the Eastern Shore of the Caspian to Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarcand Performed in the Year 1863* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), 385. See also Yuri Bregel, “The Sarts in the Khanate of Khiva,” *Journal of Asian History* 12, 2 (1978): 127–38.

8. The Sarts “are called Tadjik in Bokhara and Khokand, and are the ancient Persian population of Kharezm. Their number here is small. They have, by degrees, exchanged their Persian language for the Turkish. The Sart is distinguishable, not less than the Tadjik, by his crafty, subtle manners. He is no great favorite with the Özbek, and in spite of the Sart and Özbek having lived five centuries together, very few mixed marriages have taken place between them” (Vámbéry, *Travels*, 400).

9. Bregel, “Sarts in the Khanate of Khiva,” 149–50.

10. About Sarts and the way Soviet historiography approached this issue, see Sergey Abashin, *Nacionalizmy v Srednej Azii: v poiskakh identichnosti* (Saint Petersburg: Aletejja), 101–76.

11. Ashirbek Muminov, Maria Szuppe, and Abdusalim Idrisov, *Manuscripts en écriture arabe du Musée régional de Nukus* (Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente C. A. Nallino, 2007), 37.

12. For a discussion of Bregel’s hypothesis for this change of administrative language at the end of the 1850s, see Paolo Sartori, “Introduction: On Khvārazmian Connectivity: Two or Three Things That I Know about It,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2016), 148–49.

13. See Bregel’s translation of the *Firdaws al-Iqbal*, 407.

14. Aftandil Erkinov, “Manuscripts of the Works by Classical Persian Authors (Hafiz, Jami, Bidil): Quantitative Analysis of the 17th–19th c. Central Asian Copies,” in *Iran: Questions et connaissances*, vol. 2: *Périodes médiévale et modern*, ed. Maria Szuppe (Paris: Association pour l’avancement des études iraniennes, 2002), 216.

15. These copies are now kept at the Al-Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies in Tashkent.

16. Munis and Agahi devoted sections in their *diwans* to poems in Persian; see H. F. Hofman, *Turkish Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey*, § 3, pt. 1, vol. 4 (Utrecht: Library of the University of Utrecht, 1969), 199–205. Ahmad Tabibi wrote five *diwans*, two of them in Persian; see F. G’anixō’jaev, *Tabibiy (hayoti va ijodi)* (Tashkent: FAN, 1978).

17. There are no fewer than 134 Persian *ghazal* poems in the *Majmuat al-Shu’ara-i Mumtaz* (Al-Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies, Tashkent, MS no. 7081).

18. Muminov, Szuppe, and Idrisov, *Manuscripts en écriture arabe*, 37.

19. Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 25.
20. Komilov, "Khorezmskaja shkola perevoda," 75.
21. A. Nosirov, *Xorazmga oid materiallar: Qo'lyozma*, quoted by Komilov, "Khorezmskaja shkola perevoda," 112.
22. One of our major sources remains the *tazkira* composed by Hasan Murad Qari Laffasi (1880–1945) in 1920, "Khiwa shâ'ir wa adabiyâtchilarining tarjima-i hållari," MS, Fond. IV AN O'zSSR, no. 9494. See also P. Babajanov's edition: Laffasiy, *Tazkiratush Shuaro* (Urganch, Uzbekistan, 1992).
23. The manuscript is kept at the Uzbek Academy of Science. See Erkinov and Vahidov, "Une source méconnue," 178.
24. Quoted by Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 15.
25. Muhammad Rizâ Âgahi, *Ta'wiz al-Ashiqin*, ed. Rahmat Majidiy (Tashkent: O'zSSR Fanlar akademiyasi nashriyoti, 1960), 38–39.
26. *Mahfilârâ*, a work composed by Barkhurdâr Turkmen Mumtâz, is also known by its other title, *Mahbub al-qulub*.
27. See esp. Mona Baker, "The History of Translation: Recurring Patterns & Research Issues," in *Translations: (Re)Shaping of Literature and Culture*, ed. Saliha Paker (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002), 5–14.
28. Komilov, "Khorezmskaja shkola perevoda," 131–44.
29. *Ibid.*, 145–61.
30. Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 70.
31. The original Persian text and the Turkish translation are both given in Komilov, "Khorezmskaja shkola perevoda," 214–16.
32. "Kawnay" means "the two worlds." All translations are mine.
33. A good illustration is the way Muhammadniyaz translated Kashifi's *Anwar-i Suhayli*. See Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 75–76.
34. Quoted by Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 60.
35. This verse is taken from the prologue of *Layli-u-Majnun*. See the manuscript kept at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Special Collections Library, Isl., no. 450), 345.
36. Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur, *Histoire des Mongols et des Tatares par Aboul-Ghâzi Bêhâdour Khân*, ed. and trans. Petr I. Demaison (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Philo Press, 1970), 36.
37. Komilov, *Bu qadimiy san'at*, 58–59.
38. Quoted by Komilov, *ibid.*, 68.
39. *Ibid.*, 19–20.
40. Quoted by Adeeb Khalid, "Muslim Printers in Tsarist Central Asia: A Research Note," *Central Asian Survey* 11, 3 (1992): 114.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Several poetic anthologies were printed for the court. See Aftandil Erkinov, "Timurid Mannerism in the Literary Context of Khiva under Muhammad Rahim-Khan II (Based on the Anthology Majmu'a-yi Shu'ara-yi Firuz-Shahi)," *Bulletin of International Institute for Central Asian Studies* 8 (2008): 58–65.
43. See esp. Erkinov, "How Muhammad Raḥīm Khān II . . . Cultivated His Court Library."
44. "The first [principle of the Uzbek state] was that only an agnatic descendant of Chinggis Khan was eligible to rule. The second was [that] the right to govern the state resided in the entire Chinggisid ruling clan (among the males who had reached the 'age of discretion') and not in an individual" (Robert D. McChesney, "Waqf at Balkh: A Study of the Endowments at the Shrine of 'Alībn Abī Tālib" [PhD diss., Princeton University, 1973], ix).
45. Sartori, "Introduction," 140.
46. Vámbéry, *Travels*, 396–97.
47. See Sartori, "Introduction," 150–51.
48. Certain narratives tended to exaggerate this isolation; see Sartori, "Introduction," 138.

49. Yuri Bregel, "Central Asia vii. In the 18th–19th Centuries," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. 5, fasc. 2, 193–205.
50. Vámbéry, *Travels*, 481.
51. Mary Holdsworth, *Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century: A Brief History of the Khanates of Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva* (Los Angeles: Central Asian Research Centre in association with St. Antony's College (Oxford) Soviet Affairs Study Group, 1959), 3.
52. Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia. Bukhara and Khiva 1865–1924* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4, and James Pickett, "Enemies beyond the Red Sands: The Bukhara-Khiva Dynamic as Mediated by Textual Genre," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2016): 168.
53. Pickett, "Enemies," 159.
54. Sartori, "Introduction," 148.
55. Sheldon Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," in *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 15–53.
56. *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (New York: Pinter, 1990), 8.