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Time of Historicism, Print Revival, and Parsi Patronage of Architecture, 1887–1936

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Abstract

Focusing on the decades between 1887 and 1936, this article examines the relationship between the Parsi-Iranian network of the printed text—often sustained by abundant visual evidence—and the built environment that then returned onto the published pages of printed books and periodicals. It examines several seminal Parsi and Iranian texts, all of which were published in the Bombay-based Parsi press, containing images of outstanding architectural edifices erected in Iran with Parsi financing to map the broader political discourse on modern reform through the strategy of an artistic revival. The piece foregrounds the codependence of Parsi patronage of print and built architecture. Architecture itself is treated as a text that aimed to ground the instability of language and identity in solid foundations. This codependent relation helped support a modernist discourse on Iranian nationalist rebirth.

Keywords: Parsi patronage; Parsi architecture; Iranian architecture; modernism; nationalist press; historicism; revivalism

On March 30, 2020, *The Hindu* (est. 1878)—only second to *The Times of India* in English-language circulation—published a small article informing its readers that Sepanta Niknam, the Zoroastrian municipal councilor in Yazd and the only religious minority elected to the City and Village Councils, had publicly thanked the Delhi Parsi Anjoman and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for their assistance in battling the COVID-19 crisis in the Zoroastrian community of Yazd.¹ Neither the generous charitable gesture of the Parsis of India toward their coreligious Zoroastrians in Iran, nor the Indian journalistic attention to this “tiny” community in a faraway Muslim land, nor the protecting role of Parsi institutions and individuals toward Iran’s Zoroastrians is a result of twenty-first-century globalist trends. These worldviews and networks reflect historical ties between Parsis and Iranians of the early modern empires of the Mughals and the Safavids, which intensified when Parsis were given a special status in the matrix of the British Raj. With the rise of nationalism in India and in Iran, the patronage of architecture had its ties to modern politics of mass media and public infrastructure, health and hygiene, and race and nation. Since the late eighteenth century, in such vibrant urban centers as Bombay, modern progress was measured and marked by, among other mechanisms, large and small infrastructural projects. Good architecture, its patrons trusted, would provide proper education to both sexes,

¹ Bhattacharjee, “Coronavirus.”

produce physically and mentally strong citizens, and create a holistic culture of high morals and taste.

Within the broader context of the British Raj, where Gothic, Classical, and Indo-Saracenic Revivals were at the forefront of debates, commissions in Persian Revival served as proxies for Parsi civilizational claims, particularly after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Via hundreds of grand Persepolitan facades scattered over West India, Parsis who saw themselves as Aryan Persians, heirs to the foundational civilization of Cyrus and Darius, aimed to distinguish themselves from the Hindu and Muslim subjects of the empire and transform economic profit into cultural capital. From the mid-nineteenth century, Parsi philanthropists applied the power of the Parsi-owned press and Parsi-sponsored architecture as effective modernist interventions in Qajar society. In the last few years, several studies have demonstrated the Parsis' pivotal role in Iran's modernizing processes.² This study goes further by foregrounding the codependence of print and edifice in making modern Iran. The semiotic codependence, where, as defined by Julia Kristeva, the architectural edifices gained the intended meaning of their Parsi patrons through their reappearance in publications produced by the Parsi press.³ The physical presence of these often-impressive structures, in turn, confirmed the revivalistic message of the published text. Contrary to Victor Hugo's desperate cry in 1831—that "le livre tuera l'édifice"—we witness an erudite strategic network between Parsi-subsidized print and architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴

Focusing on the decades between 1887 and 1936, this article examines the relationship between the Parsi-Iranian network of the printed text—often sustained by abundant visual evidence—and the built environment that then returned onto the published pages of printed books and periodicals. It examines several seminal Parsi and Iranian texts, all of which were published in the Bombay-based Parsi press, containing images of outstanding architectural edifices erected in Iran with Parsi financing to map the broader political discourse on modern reform through the strategy of an artistic revival. I foreground here the codependence of Parsi patronage of print and built architecture. Architecture itself is treated as a text that aimed to ground the instability of language and identity in solid foundations. This codependent relation helped support a modernist discourse on Iranian nationalist rebirth. This article, especially, puts into dialogue such art historical and/or illustrated texts as Jalal al-Din Mirza Qajar's Parsi-funded translation and reprint of *Nameh-ye khosravan* (Bombay, 1887), Kavasji Dinshah Kiash's *Ancient Persian Sculptures* (Bombay, 1889), Jivanji Jamshedji Modi's *The Bas-Relief of Beharam Gour at Naksh-i-Rustam* (Bombay, 1895), Mohammad Naser Forsat's *Asar-e 'ajam* (Bombay, 1896), and Pestanji Phirozshah Balsara's *Ancient Iran* (Bombay, 1936) with Parsi financed architecture in Tehran, Shiraz, Kerman, and Yazd.⁵ This triangulation seeks to draw a broader, and understudied, picture of the impact of Parsi capital in the workings of late Qajar and early Pahlavi modernization.

Several of these publications—significant works both in the sense of the art of the book as well as their novel use of art historical narration and visual technologies—deployed architecture—ancient and modern indiscriminately—as indisputable testimony to Iran's racial and civilizational merit, spanning a critical period of political revolutions and cultural transformations in Iran. This creatively conflated construction of Zoroastrian/Mazdaic art history in juxtaposition to late Qajar and Pahlavi edifices lends itself to this nationalist narration. Architecture was seen as the surest evidence of national progress, as well as its marker,

² On modern Parsi-Iran history in the last decade, see Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*; Marashi, "Patron and Patriot"; Ringer, "Reform Transplanted"; Ringer, *Pious Citizens*; Patel, "Caught between Two Nationalisms"; Sheffield, "Iran"; Vejdani, "Indo-Iranian Linguistic, Literary, and Religious Entanglements"; Jenkins, "Excavating Zarathustra"; Grigor, "Persian Architectural Revivals"; Rose, *Zoroastrianism*; and Grigor, *Persian Revival*.

³ See Kristeva, [*Sēmeiōtikē*] *Recherches pour une sémanalyse*.

⁴ In his seminal book, Hugo famously claimed that with the advancement of print, the role of architecture as the carrier of collective memory and the primary record of history will die. Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris*, book 5, chapter 2.

⁵ See Qajar, *Nameh-ye khosravan*; Qajar, *History of the Ancient Parsis*; Kiash, *Ancient Persian Sculptures*; Modi, *The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour*; Forsat, *Asar-e 'ajam*; and Balsara, *Ancient Iran*.

on the trajectory of the linear time of the nation. While elsewhere I have examined at great length the visual and aesthetic strategies deployed by the authors and artists of several of these publications in the service of the Persian Revival style, my aim in this article is to explore the codependence of two modalities of being modern: architectural print and inhabited architecture.⁶ The commission of specific architectural edifices, often loaded with rich Persian Revival facades, sustained the ideological underpinning of these and other such publications from the 1880s to the 1930s.⁷ Several major architectural landmarks were financed and erected by Parsi philanthropy in prime locations in urban Iran, enabling recycling back into the nationalist press as further evidence of ethnic purity and teleological progress.

Historicism and the Time of Modern Architecture

In modern Iran, an alliance between the built environment and the printed words/images helped shape what Walter Benjamin dubbed the “homogeneous and empty time,” applied by Benedict Anderson to “the nation” as “modular.”⁸ The revival of Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanian artistic forms, methods, and aesthetics was a cornerstone of Pahlavi royal ideology, which, while it mutated in its artistic expressions over the fifty-four years of reign, remained nevertheless a key validating cog in the machinery of that dynasty’s statecraft. The 2,500th-anniversary celebrations of the Persian monarchy in October 1971, meticulously choreographed on and next to the terrace of Persepolis as well as around the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, were the Pahlavi state’s most extravagant performance of political validation through the use of revival of spaces, fashions, ornamentation, and the rituals of gathering, greeting, and eating.⁹ The centrality of the political discourse on a revival of the mid- to late twentieth century—indeed, the discursive reenactment of the ancients in the case of Persepolis 1971—was an evolution, formalization, and perfection of the reformist struggles of the late Naseri and the Constitutional eras. Like the Gothic Revival, the artistic appropriation of Achaemenid and Sassanian forms and iconographies has a long history in both Iran and Parsi India. The Persian Revival was a versatile style with mailable and flexible sociopolitical meanings. Stretching a couple of centuries, the diverse entities that commissioned this style included Karim Khan Zand, various Qajar kings and aristocrats, affluent Parsi industrialists and reformists, secular Iranian reformists and private patrons, the Pahlavi state under Reza Shah, the commercial and tourist sectors, the Pahlavi state under Mohammad Reza Shah, and, today, the Parsi and Iranian diasporas in the West. For each, the Persian Revival signaled the grandeur of ancient Iran; beyond the power of the abstraction of that notion—i.e., the grandeur of ancient Iran—the sociopolitical meanings that these buildings projected at that time and over time varied radically. By appropriating and reviving Achaemenid and Sassanian art history, each of these agents returned to and recycled the same iconography to not only convey a diverse set of ideological meanings as “circular,” yet, at the same time, helped solidify a “linear” historiographical narrative from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis.

⁶ See Grigor, *Persian Revival*, 90–97, 163–72, 131–33. In this recent book, I have discussed and illustrated many of the edifices and their corresponding textual sources at length. In this short essay, I forgo their examination in place of other publications and edifices that were not foregrounded in the book. Similarly, as in the book I traced the architectural history of Parsi and Zoroastrian fire temples in both India and Iran, I only mention their names and dates here, instead of focusing on otherwise little-examined structures other than fire temples, such as schools, *dakhmas*, cemeteries, public monuments, and residential buildings.

⁷ During these decades, a disproportionate number of both print and built architecture were made possible by the Parsis. In many later state-sponsored publications, especially in the early 1970s, there was a similar surge of references to these same buildings and publications, which are outside the scope of this study.

⁸ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History”; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁹ See Grigor, “They Have Not Changed in 2,500 Years”; Daryaee, Mousavi, and Rezakhani, *Excavating an Empire*; and Abdi, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran.”

In art history, the fragmented artistic manifestations of the Persian Revival during these pivotal decades were numerous in the form of architecture commissioned by the Qajar court and aristocracy, Parsi philanthropists and industrialists, and later, the Pahlavi state: large-scale buildings with either a Persepolis-inspired central pillared hall (*talar*) elevated on a platform (*takht*) or a Sassanian-informed dome on a square base (*chahar-taq*), as well as some thirty high reliefs using the Sassanian rock-cut technique. The daily life of ordinary Iranians in bazaars, coffeehouses, and homes was, furthermore, saturated with myriad small-scale commercial objects and artisanal artifacts adorned with iconography originating in such archaeological sites as the terrace of Persepolis (550–330 BCE), the palaces at Pasargadae (559–29 BCE), the Achaemenid tombs and Sassanian reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam, Naqsh-e Rajab, and Bishapur, the Sarvestan palace built by Bahram V (r. 420–38), the Palace of Ardeshir I at Firuzabad (450), and Taq-e Kasra (third to sixth centuries), and the massive Sassanian barrel vault palace at Ctesiphon. A standing Achaemenid soldier, Shapur I on his majestic horse, the iconography of the lotus flower and other plants from Persepolis, the *faravahar* (Zoroastrian winged good spirit), Persepolitian bulls and unicorns, and other Zoroastrian/Mazdaic decorative motifs began to appear on Qajar tiles, carpets, trays, vases, waterpipes, jewelry, pens, and penholders. Some were sold as “fakes” in the booming art market, while most became permanent fixtures in modern Iranian lifestyles and cityscapes.¹⁰ Later on, this iconography reappeared in public spaces and royal ceremonies and celebrations, for instance, on the triumphant arches erected for the coronations of Ahmad Shah, Reza Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah, and Empress Farah.¹¹

As several scholars have demonstrated, the nineteenth-century Parsi conception of their identity as an ancient Aryan Persian race, exiled in the British-ruled Indian subcontinent, had much to do with the formulation of a brand of Iranian nationalist narrative that handled artistic return to antiquities as a successful path for national renewal and reform.¹² Parsi discursive strength derived from Parsi proximity to and intimacy with British racial, linguistic, pedagogical, diplomatic, archaeological, and artistic institutions. In their abundant creativity and agency in maneuvering the machinery of empires, Parsis were, in effect, the model for Homi Bhabha’s “mimic man,” instrumental in shaping an Iranian brand of “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.”¹³ The Persian Revival artistic movement, thus, as I have traced elsewhere, had two distinct brands and branches: Zand-Qajar-Pahlavi and Parsi.¹⁴ Each evolved, first separately in their places of birth—predominantly Shiraz and Tehran in the case of the former and principally Bombay and Surat in the case of the latter. By the turn of the twentieth century, these distinct artistic movements, with their separate sociopolitical priorities and design principles, merged and fused into a single style described by later orientalist and locals alike as the true “national style” (*sabk-e melli*).¹⁵ Parsi patronage of revivalistic architecture aimed to signal reformist politics from 1906 to the mid-1920s. Yet, at the zenith of Iranian nationalism in the 1930s, it was appropriated as the official artistic style of the Pahlavi state.

The production of knowledge on ancient Iranian art and architecture by either Parsis or Iranians, however, was not about the past alone. Revival, as practiced by the Iranian patrons,

¹⁰ See Lerner, “Three Achaemenid ‘Fakes.’”

¹¹ In his memoir, Shahrokh writes that Ahmad Shah insisted that he head the coronation ceremonies in 1914 and that “about thirty victory arches had to be erected, some based on models of Persepolis, and illuminated.” Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 71. See also “Coronation of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925),” nineteen gelatin silver process photos of various sizes, 6 x 5 inches, etc. in Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University; and Druck and Offenburg, *Coronation in Tehran*, 24.

¹² See note 2.

¹³ Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126.

¹⁴ See Grigor, *Persian Revival*, 133–34, 136–37.

¹⁵ See, for example, Ouseley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East*, 2:434–35; and Gluck and Siver, eds., *Surveyors of Persian Art*, 557.

was a modernist strategy to push back Europe's colonial pressures and mend the anxiety of the shrinking Qajar map. For the Parsi patrons, revivalism was a colonial strategy to fully participate in and benefit from the systems of the mighty British Empire, while maintaining the privileges of belonging to a small and special community in exile in the case of the Parsis. Intentional misreading and imitational mistranslations were secure strategic maneuvers of revival. To misread was to outflank the colonizer's discursive reading of the role of ancient Iran in history. Often, copies were copies of copies, not originals, intentionally. Large architectural edifices were erected in Tehran and other major Iranian and Indian cities, with exquisite decorative programs that were designed and crafted not based on such ancient sites as Persepolis or Pasargadae, but rather from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century illustrated travelogues, photographs, postcards, and scholarly publications. Copies were invented to shape modern impressions of the originals. Having been a witness and a partner in the making of the British Empire, the Parsi economic and intellectual elite were well versed in these colonial games, particularly when it came to the workability of print culture and its manifold transformations into contemporary architecture.¹⁶

The Parsi modernist project of socioeconomic interventions in Iran was guided by historicism—the treatment of history not as lived experience, but rather as a historical timeline that did not distinguish between the peculiarity between past, present, and future events—and thus needed tools to resolve its internal tensions and contradictions. In his critique of historicism in the seminal essay “On the Concept of History” (*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, 1940), Benjamin contended that historicism seals historical progress to the “concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time,” which he elusively described as having three essential characteristics: First, the progress of history is not merely material, technological, and epistemic, but rather it is the progress of the whole of humanity, the “progress of mankind itself.”¹⁷ Second, the process of this progress is without culmination; it is rather about the “infinite perfectibility of mankind” without end. And third, it is an advancing process that is “irresistible” and “automatically pursue[s] a straight” path.¹⁸

In mapping the dialectical dependence of Parsi-sponsored texts and buildings, these three attributes of the homogeneous, empty time were operational. Parsi charity invested in Iran was not meant to merely ameliorate the lot of the Zoroastrian minority communities; it was rather a modernist project that aimed to systematize institutions of minority rights, education, and civil society for the sake of the linear, Hegelian “progress” of the whole of the Iranian society, and by philosophical extension, the whole of humanity.¹⁹ Parsi philanthropists imparted their charity in the continuum of a universal Iranian time from the Achaemenids to the bright modernist future that was upon them and that was to come. By employing print and architectural patronage, Parsis were contributing to a new modality of manufacturing and experiencing Iranian time. When in March 1976, Mohammad Reza Shah decreed the replacement of the Muslim Solar Calendar at the year 1355 with the Royal Calendar at the year 2535—counting Iranian time from Cyrus the Great—Prime Minister Fereydoun Hoveyda reassured the public that, “this is indeed a reflection of the historic fact that during this long period, there has been only one Iran,” further adding that, in the continuum of the homogeneous, empty time of the nations, “they [1976 Europe] would

¹⁶ On print history, see Marashi, “Print Culture and Its Publics.”

¹⁷ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” xiii. The anonymous reviewer of this article noted further that, “This double movement—the combination of architecture and textual description that both institute ‘historicism’ but also provide its demise through an experience of the here and now—could be part of a ‘dialectic at standstill’ (Walter B. Benjamin) but this would imply a re-arrangement of the elements presented. The author seems to suggest that such countermove is offered by the contemplation of the monuments themselves (as opposed to their textual correlates) but they also suggest that monuments are made sense via the books that provide the discourse to interpret them.”

¹⁸ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” xiii.

¹⁹ See Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence”; Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies*, 209–40; Palsetia, “Parsi Charity”; and White, “From Crisis to Community Definition.”

look forward to us [2565 Iran].”²⁰ The arguments for these temporal leaps and collapses were brewing in historicist narratives, book and edifice, at the end of the previous century.

Through the mechanism of artistic appropriation and replication onto architectural facades, the revivalistic texts and images served as Benjamin’s *jetztzeit*: the “here-and-now,” the “presence of the now” that occasion “moments of immediacy,” which then allow “history” to “happen.”²¹ Revival architecture, in dialectical relationship to this revivalistic visual literature, functioned to fix modern experience in a specific moment of immediacy. Against historicism, Benjamin observed that lived “history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now,” adding, “Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate.”²² At the zenith of both Parsi patronage of architecture in Iran that overlapped with the erection of Persian Revival public landmarks under Reza Shah, Benjamin published “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (*Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, 1935) in which he noted in modern societies “every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.”²³ Iranians and Parsis, with their revivalistic books and edifices, similarly blasted out of the continuum of Iranian history moments that were celebrated as filled by the presence of the now, while at the same time shaping the homogeneous time of the nation. Appropriating the mimetic, this was, in effect, a creative act.

The reproduction of modern architecture as evidence of progress allowed temporal leaps and collapses, fixing and mending the much-lamented historiographical “decline” of Iran after the fall of the Sassanian dynasty at Ctesiphon in 651, after the Safavid downfall in Isfahan in 1722, and after the humiliating treaties signed by Fath Ali Shah Qajar in 1813 and 1828. Or, rather, the rise and decline model of art historiography was now completely appropriated by native writers as historical truth. Pedagogical art history and built architecture at the service of the nation could, it was believed, and not just in Iran and India, return to the “straight” path of “perfectibility of mankind.” The constant oscillations between the national past and future—lamented, promised, and fulfilled—read in print and the spaces experienced in cities, filled the empty time of the nation with meaningful moments; it made it happen. The architecture confirmed and validated the realization of modernity’s promise, the nation’s “here-and-now.” The homogeneity and emptiness of the time of mechanical clocks, paper calendars, school bells, and traffic lights were grounded by the lived experience of the functioning edifices.

While the study of ancient Iranian art history imposed a notion of a pristine universal timelessness to the project of historicism, its corresponding revival architecture confirmed the timeliness—and urgency—of that historicism. Lamenting the historical time between 1722 and 1925 became a common and repeated practice in scholarship. In 1926, Ebrahim Purdavud (1886–1968) described the fall of the Sassanians as “the dark day of Yazdegird III,” while eight years later, Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh assured his Royal Society of Arts audience in London that the Pahlavi “order” was the “dawn of a renaissance of that Golden Age” in Iran.²⁴ For Parsi authors—many of whom were early and prolific producers of ancient Iranian history, including Dosabhoy Framjee’s *The Parsees: Their History, Manners, Customs, and Religion* (1858) and Iran’s longtime Parsi representative Manekji Limji

²⁰ Reza Shah’s government had replaced the Muslim Lunar Calendar with the Muslim Solar Calendar. Hoveyda, *Fall of the Shah*, 203. See Taghizadeh, *Old Iranian Calendars*. On the calendar change, see Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 444; and Zonis, *Majestic Failure*, 82, 289.

²¹ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” xv.

²² *Ibid.*, xiv.

²³ Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 223, III.

²⁴ Purdavud, *Khorramshah*, 16, quoted in Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 179. Taqizadeh, “Modern Persia,” 974.

Hataria's (1813–90) *Travels to Iran* (1865)—that historical time of decline was much longer and more desperate.²⁵ From their power base in Bombay—where examples of magnificent grand edifices commissioned by Parsi families or institutions were intentionally conspicuous—Parsis spread their artistic patronage globally as a (teleo)logical feature of their cosmopolitan engagement with the trade and charity networks of the vast British Empire and their ancestral land, Iran.

Parsi Patronage of Art History; of the Book

In 1871, the reformist Qajar prince and fifty-fifth son of the extravagant Fath Ali Shah, Jalal al-Din Mirza Qajar (1827–1872) published the last of his three-volume, beautifully illustrated, *Nameh-ye khosravan* (The book of kings, 1869–71). Its fame was immediate as it fully deployed the visual strategies of modern print culture with the well-distributed images of “Iranian” kings throughout its text and its simplified Persian language. Artist Mirza ‘Abd ol-Mottaleb Esfahani had produced, from various archaeological, numismatic, and travelogue sources, portraits of fifty-five rulers of Iran, either in full or half figure, displayed in fifty-two illustrations. It became a favorite blueprint for architects and craftsmen as it was easily reproducible and transportable. The copy of *Nameh-ye khosravan* immediately reached the Parsi translator and Persian teacher Ardeshir Dosabhai Munshi (1811–95) in Bombay, who in the English preface to the second edition of his *A History of the Ancient Parsis from the Original Persian Work* (1887) wrote, “When a copy of this work came to my hand some sixteen years ago, I found that it contained a history of the ancient Parsee Kings of Persia. I was so struck by the ungarbled and unbiased account given there by a Prince [sic] writer of a different persuasion.”²⁶ Dosabhai Munshi “at once undertook its translation” into Gujarati. The first edition was published in the same year, 1871, with the patronage of Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy and soon was sold out. As the director of the well-funded Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institute from 1861 to 1884, Dosabhai Munshi was well placed in the large web of Parsi print and charity networks.²⁷

By popular demand, the second edition appeared in 1887 with the support of Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit (1823–1901), who is credited with financing an early reiteration of the fire temple building of Yazd. On the list of “Parsi charity in Iran” during the years between 1871 and 1937, carefully provided and analyzed by John Hinnells, the Petit family were common donors for Iran's Zoroastrian infrastructure. In 1898, D. M. Petit funded a “Government orphanage” in Tehran. He was the younger brother of Manekji Nasarvanji Petit (1827–91), whose wife, Dinbai M. N. Petit, was listed to have offered, a year after his death, “Rs 12,000 for Tehran DiM and Rs 700 for Kerman At. Bahram.”²⁸ The brothers were cofounders, among others, of the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia (known in Iran as Anjoman-e akaber-e saheban/parsian). While the Tehran adaran temple was realized in 1916, the desire for Kerman to acquire a costly Atash Bahram never materialized. West India, to this day, boasts eight out of the nine highest grade Zoroastrian fire, housed in elaborate temples, worldwide, while the Adur Farrobay Atash Bahram of Yazd (fire 1790, current temple 1932–34) remains not only the only one in Iran but also the only one erected in the twentieth century. That except for one (i.e., the

²⁵ Framjee, *The Parsees*; Hataria, *Resale ezhar-e siat-e iran*. For analysis of these two texts, see Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, 155–61.

²⁶ Ardeshir Dosabhai Munshi spelled his name in this publication as “Ardaseer Dossabhaee Moonshee”; see Qajar, *History of the Ancient Parsis*, “Preface to the Second Edition,” 47.

²⁷ My deepest gratitude to Murali Ranganathan for the difficult-to-find biography of Ardeshir Dosabhai and his father, the leading Persian teacher and prolific translator in Bombay from the 1820s to the 1860s, Munshi Dosabhai Sohrabji (1786–1870). See Dosabhai, “A Sketch of the Life of Dosabhai Sohrabji, Munshi,” i–vii; and “Ardeshir Dosabhai Obituary,” 522. Further on the history of the Indian press, see Murali Ranganathan's articles: <https://scroll.in/author/16921>.

²⁸ Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 316.

Dadyseth Atash Bahram, fire and temple 1783, which is an eighteenth-century structure) all seven remaining edifices of Atash Bahram temples were erected in nineteenth-century West India through Parsi patronage speaks not only to the zenith of Parsi affluence in the nineteenth century but also to the generosity with which they dispensed it.

Illustrating Naser al-Din Shah's portrait, to whom "the Zoroastrian community is indebted," Dossabhaee Moonshee wrote, in a rather utopian tone, that "the rapid growth of civilization has sunk all former differences and established a complete harmony" between Muslims and Zoroastrians.²⁹ He noted that during Naser al-Din's "benign regime" not only "modern culture and arts have received their just appreciation" but also "photography" and "several useful arts from Europe" have been "introduced for the first time" into Iran.³⁰ Faithful to the typesetting format of the original Persian edition, the Gujarati translation reproduced the same drawings of the 54 "Iranian" rulers on 51 full-page illustrations fitted into the 44 pages of introductory translator's text followed by 141 pages of core translated content. In addition to the hand-drawn portraits of mythical figures from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, historical Achaemenid and Sassanian kings, two Sassanian queens as well as Alexander III of Macedon, Dossabhaee Moonshee included the portrait of Jalal al-Din at the start of the core content, while the portraits of Naser al-Din, as well as the translator himself, adorn the introductory sections.

Two years after *History of the Ancient Parsis*, Parsi journalist and historian Kavasji Dinshah Kiash (1848–1910) published his masterpiece, entitled *Ancient Persian Sculptures, or The Monuments, Buildings, Bas-Reliefs, Rock Inscriptions, Belonging to the Kings of the Achaemenian and Sassanian Dynasties of Persia* (1889).³¹ While by then he had toured in Iran for two years and had published several works on Iranian topics, the 234-page *Ancient Persian Sculptures* was truly a remarkable art historical work: the first compressive native survey of Achaemenid and Sassanian architectural sites that relied on (Western) art historiography and art historical methods and visual strategies.³² The descriptive text in English, Gujarati, and Persian was typeset in such a manner that three separate but identical descriptions spatially matched the corresponding drawing. Ninety-six full-page plates and other small-scale drawings documented, in great detail and accuracy, most of the then-known Achaemenid and Sassanian landmarks, monuments, reliefs, inscriptions, some coins, floor plans, and elevations/sections.

Asar-e 'ajam (1896), written and drawn by Mirza Mohammad Naser Hosayn Shirazi (pen name Forsat al-Dowleh, 1854–1920) and printed by a Parsi press in Bombay where Forsat published most of his work, was the Iranian answer to Kiash's *Ancient Persian Sculptures*, although *Asar-e 'ajam* chiefly focused on the architectural heritage of Fars and Shiraz, both ancient (Achaemenid and Sassanian) and contemporary (Qajar). Forsat had embarked on his first expedition for the production of *Asar-e 'ajam* in October 1889, in the same year that *Ancient Persian Sculptures* arrived in bookstores. Both projects were a result of Parsi patronage, as Hataria had funded Forsat's research trips. Within 603 large lithographic pages, *Asar-e 'ajam* contained a narrative and descriptive architectural history of most of the Achaemenid and Sassanian sites available to Forsat. His comparatively rudimentary perspectival drawings and sketches were, nevertheless, foundational to the advancement of native knowledge production on antique art history. That the second section—entitled "Shiraznameh" to which some 100 pages were devoted—traced the architectural history of modern Shiraz and its 36 Persian Revival residential gardens spoke to Forsat's commitment to historicism and temporal shortcuts. Qajar aristocratic mansions in Shiraz, such as Afifabad (1863–67), Narenjestan-e Qavam (1879–85), and Eram (1875–97), were now cast as renaissance projects, fixing historical decline and mending national time. Like *Nameh-ye khosravan*

²⁹ Qajar, *History of the Ancient Parsis*, portrait between 44 and 47; quotation, "Preface to the Second Edition," 47.

³⁰ Ibid., "His Majesty Shah Nussur-oodeen," 48.

³¹ Kiash, *Ancient Persian Sculptures*.

³² See Kiash, *Gulistan of Shaik Sadi*; and Kiash and Jijibhoy, *Travels in Persia*.

and *Ancient Persian Sculptures*, Asar-e ‘ajam deployed innovative visual strategies to foster a new, modern mode of reading and seeing not only the antiquities but also the presence of the now.

In a similar aim to collapse historical time, other authors incorporated architectural narratives into their revivalistic Iranian-Parsi histories. One such author was the prolific Parsi intellectual and community leader Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1854–1933), whose extensive scholarship argued for a Zoroastrian/Iranian historicism from multiple disciplinary approaches.³³ In his arguments in defense of Iran-India ties, the histories of art, architecture, and archaeology were often the focus of Modi’s scholarship. His work was pivotal in bridging core art historical disputes, such as the Vienna-centered “Orient or Rome debate” and the Parsi-Iranian discussion of ancient Iran. Although Modi rarely used images, his arguments in such works as *The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour at Naksh-i-Rustam* (1895, republished *Asiatic Papers* in 1905 under the new title of “The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour (Behrâm V.) at Naksh-i-Rustam, and His Marriage with an Indian Princess”), *Masonic Papers* (1913), “Ancient Pataliputra: Dr. D. B. Spooner’s Recent Excavations at Its Site and the Question of the Influence of Ancient Persia upon India” (1917), and *Papers on Indo-Iranian and Other Subjects* (1930) incorporated art historical evidence, analysis, and method.³⁴

Other influential authors who advocated ancient revival similarly deployed art historical methods and visual strategies in their Bombay-printed publications to compress not only the time between the Achaemenids and the Sassanians and modern Iran but also the space between West India and Iran. As Afshin Marashi argues, Purdavud’s 100-page account of the Zoroastrian migration to India in his *Iranshah* (1926) was laced with “more than fifty pages of photographs, which visually represented the principal figures and key institutions of the Parsi community of Bombay.”³⁵ The images of Iranshah Atash Bahram (officially the Athornan Anjoman Atash Bahram, fire 941, temple 1742, 1830, and 1891) in the village of Udvada, Gujarat, or the Sanjan memorial column (known as the Sanjan Stambh, completed on August 6, 1917, and inaugurated on February 5, 1920) were included as solid evidence of historical ties. The photographs of modern disciplinary edifices—i.e., schools, hospitals, and factories—as well as those of middle-class leisure—i.e., hotels and national monuments—confirmed the horizontal ties between modern Parsis and Iranians and at once showcased the already fulfilled promise of Parsi modernism under British rule.

At the zenith of Iranian nationalism, backed by the Pahlavi state, Parsi authors continued to produce art historical scholarship to solidify the homogenous, empty time of the nation. In his *Ancient Iran: Its Contribution to Human Progress* (1936), the young Parsi lawyer Pestanji Phirozshah Balsara launched his history on ancient Iran’s role in “human progress” with an architectural argument.³⁶ “The true history of architecture in India,” he insists, “begins only with Ashoka when the change from wood to stone was suggested by Persia.”³⁷ The transition from wood to stone in human history had been examined by Europe’s architectural historians in the nineteenth century. Praising the “Zoroastrian spirit of functionality,” influential German architect and art critic Gottfried Semper, in his seminal book, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics* (1860–63), not only credited this epic wood-to-stone passage to the Achaemenids but to Cyrus, personally.³⁸ Viennese art historian Josef Strzygowski had carried the mantel farther. In his theory of “ancient Aryan migrations,” he attributed to Iranians the pivotal role of transporting and transforming primitive

³³ See, for instance, Modi’s religious argument in Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, 100, 116–19. See also my analysis of his architectural historicism in Grigor, *Persian Revival*, 90, 97–99.

³⁴ *The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour* was published by the Education Society’s Press, which had done an outstanding job with Kiash’s *Ancient Persian Sculptures* in 1889; Modi, *The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour*; Modi, “The Bas-Relief of Beharâm Gour (Behrâm V.)”; Modi, *Masonic Papers*; Modi, “Ancient Pataliputra”; Modi, *Dr. Modi Memorial Volume*.

³⁵ Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 181–82; and see Purdavud, *Iranshah*.

³⁶ Balsara, *Ancient Iran*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁸ Semper, *Der Stil*, 1:358; Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts*, 760.

wooden structures into monumental masterworks such as Persepolis, with a decisive influence upon the development of architecture.³⁹

In his book published by the Iran League in both English and Persian, Balsara evokes the authorial voice of eminent scholars such as Sir Henry Rawlinson, who had published the four volumes of *The Persian Cuneiform Inscription at Behistun* (1846–51); Scottish-born architectural historian of India James Fergusson, whose *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored* (1851) had situated Achaemenid Persia at the beginning of global art history; English art historian Ernest Binfield Havell, who in his *Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India: A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation* (1915) had argued for the Aryan ties between Iranians and Indians; and French art historian and archaeologist Alfred Charles Auguste Foucher, whose *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art* (1917) had argued that the Greek influence in Buddhist art was thanks to the arrival of Iranian artists to India.⁴⁰ Balsara's historicist argument underpins concrete architectural relations or artistic "influences" that were invented in Iran (the original) and terminating in India (the copy). Ashoka (r. ca. 268–232 BCE) of the Maurya dynasty, according to him, "imitated the style of Darius" for his empire's most foundational architecture features: stone as the raw material for royal constructions; "propagating the Dharma by means of inscribing on rocks"; "monolithic pillars" exemplified by the hypostyle halls at Persepolis; and "bell-shaped capitals with figures of lion and bull."⁴¹

Balsara's narrative then moves to modern archaeological evidence to show how ancient architectural exchanges confirm not only racial brotherhood but also the one-way artistic flow between Iran and India. Here, he devotes several pages to the archaeological excavations of King Ashoka's capital (the site of Kumhrar and Bulandi Bagh) at Pataliputra (present-day Patna) by the American archaeologist and graduate of Stanford University David Brainerd Spooner (1879–1925). Although Balsara wholeheartedly endorsed Iranian nationalist sentiments throughout the book, he takes issue in this section with Spooner's argument on "The Zoroastrian Period of Indian History" (1915).⁴² In 1931, Balsara had published the article "Did Parsis Rule in India?" in *The Hindu Illustrated Weekly*, which undermined the claims that "not only Buddha [was] a Persian, but Chandragupta and Asoka were also Persians."⁴³ Spooner, according to him, had "carried his reasoning too far and put certain facts . . . not sound in any way."⁴⁴ Causing later art historical disputes, Spooner's excavation at Pataliputra was launched in 1912 because Ratanji Jamsetji Tata (1871–1918) committed 20,000 rupees per year (totally 75,000 rupees) to the Archaeological Survey of India.⁴⁵ He was the youngest son of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata (1839–1904), the pioneer industrialist, the founder of the Tata Group, and the giant in philanthropy whose nineteenth-century legacy remains prevailing.⁴⁶

³⁹ Strzygowski, *Origin of Christian Church Art*, 59, 127; originally published in German as *Ursprung der christlichen Kirchenkunst: Neue Tatsachen und Grundsätze der Kunstforschung*.

⁴⁰ See Rawlinson, *Persian Cuneiform Inscription*; Fergusson, *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored*; Havell, *Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India*; and Foucher, Thomas, and Thomas, *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*.

⁴¹ Balsara, *Ancient Iran*, 36–7, 40.

⁴² Spooner, "The Zoroastrian Period of Indian History." Other works by Spooner advocating Iran-Parsi-Indian artistic ties include "Buddhism and Parseeism," "The Fravashi of Gautama," "The Iranian Element in Ancient India," "The Iranian Element in Early India," "Merv and Meru," "Origin of Indian Art," and "Mr. Ratan Tata's Excavations at Pataliputra"; see David Brainerd Spooner Papers, 1899–1925, M0011, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, California.

⁴³ Balsara, *Ancient Iran*, 49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* See also Banerjee, *Hellenism in Ancient India*, 57–81.

⁴⁵ See Oldham, "Obituary Notice"; and Stewart, "D. B. Spooner at Kumhrar."

⁴⁶ On the 2021 EdelGive Hurun Philanthropists of the Century, J. N. Tata ranked by far the first, "leaving behind" familiar names such as Melinda French Gates and Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, George Soros, John D. Rockefeller, and Edsel Ford; see Singh, "Tata Group's Jamsetji Tata." Tata is the only non-Westerner on the list. Among these top ten, the self-lionized Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, and Jeff Bezos are nowhere to be found. The last chairman of Tata Group, Ratan Naval Tata (b. 1937), adopted son of R. J. Tata, has upheld the charitable creed of his family and religion in the patronage of the arts and healthcare. In September 2013, he joined India's prime minister, the Aga Khan, and

Parsi Patronage of Architecture; of the Edifice

When Dadabhai Naoroji, the eminent Parsi reformist and first Asian member of the British Parliament, was consulted on whom to represent Zoroastrianism during the first World's Parliament of Religions at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he proposed the controversial reformist Parsi scholar Sheriarji Dadabhai Bharucha (1843–1915).⁴⁷ During his talk, entitled “Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs,” Bharucha had underscored that “Charity is one of the fundamental precepts of Zoroastrianism,” adding an architectural contingency: “It is notable that charity of a *permanent character* and directed to the general weal of the community such as schools and hospitals and waterworks is favored more highly than objects of private charity of casual and temporary utility.”⁴⁸ Parsi artistic patronage, like Parsi charity, was generous in its sum, global in its reach, and universal in its outlook. Either through family endowments, community organizations, or Freemasonic lodges, it appeared as far as Singapore and London. Parsi charity included, then as well as now, the whole of humanity in the modernist tradition and probably saw a turning point in privileging “permanent” outcomes such as public structures at the closing of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

Parsi philanthropy of architecture gave rise to several modern institutional infrastructures. Modernist preoccupation with healthy bodies (hygiene, medicine/healthcare, architecture, urbanism) and healthy minds (education, the fine arts) underpinned not only the function of these structures (hospitals, hospices, asylums, universities, libraries, printing presses) but also utopian built communities and neighborhoods called Parsi colonies, designed on the most recent urban design principles and exclusively reserved for Parsis.⁵⁰ Wider social engineering projects, particularly disease management through hygienic spaces and forms, constituted the core of modernist architectural discussions from the late nineteenth century to World War II.⁵¹ Parsis were at the heart of these discussions through their active engagement with and commitment to the shared burden of helping run the British Empire.⁵² Architecturally, an overwhelming number of the most magnificent Gothic, Classical, and Persian Revival structures and urban spaces in Bombay were commissioned and/or designed by Parsis as have been traced by art historians.⁵³ While the Parsi patronage of Gothic and Classical Revival styles in Bombay and other Parsi-populated cities aimed to showcase Parsis as outstanding citizens of the empire, the use of the Persian Revival in West India served to insert Parsis into the taxonomies of universal histories as

the head of the Archaeological Society of India to inaugurate the restoration of the mausoleum (1560–70) of the Mughal emperor Humayun in Delhi; see Verma, “Grand Makeover for Humayun’s Tomb.” The design of the tomb structure, set in a *chahar bag* garden after Safavid urbanism, is credited to the Persian architects Sayyad Mohammad and his father, Mirak Mirza Ghiyas; see Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, 43–46; and “Humayun’s Tomb, Delhi, India.” Recently, on March 28, 2020, R. N. Tata tweeted the news of the donation of around \$70 million in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, describing it as, “one of the toughest challenges we will face as a race. The Tata Trusts and the Tata group companies have in the past risen to the needs of the nation. At this moment, the need of the hour is greater than any other time” (<https://twitter.com/rmtata2000?lang=en>). He too, like his father, holds an affinity for architecture, having been trained as an architect at Cornell University and serves as a jury member on the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize.

⁴⁷ On Dadabhai Naoroji, see Patel, *Naoroji*.

⁴⁸ Bharucha, *Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion & Customs*; Bharucha, *Zoroastrian Religion and Customs*, 52 (my emphasis).

⁴⁹ See JamaspAsa, “Bharucha, Sheriarji Dadabhai.”

⁵⁰ See Chopra, *Joint Enterprise*, chapters 3–5. For the long lists of Parsi charity to education, health, and housing see, Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 302–17.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Colomina, *X-Ray Architecture*.

⁵² For instance, half of the members of the Justices of the Peace Group consisted of Parsi men when the plague arrived in Bombay in 1896–97. See Wadia, *History of Lodge Rising Star*, 178; and the photographic album at the Getty Research Institute (96.R.81), Los Angeles, California.

⁵³ See photographic album at the Getty Research Institute (91.R.5, album 8), Los Angeles, California. On Bombay architecture, see Chopra, *Joint Enterprise*.

Aryan Persians, heirs to the foundational civilization of Cyrus and Darius. Parsi architectural patronage quite literally stabilized and grounded in solid foundations the uncertainty of in-between and wordily identities. Style—old, revived, and trending—was a strategy of post-colonial engagement that enabled the universal, while securely owning the local.

Before his premature death at the age of forty-seven in 1918, R. J. Tata was a fine art connoisseur whose collection of European art entered the Prince of Wales Museum (building 1915, opening 1922), itself located in Bombay's Parsi-populated Fort area and partially funded by the charity of Sir Cowasji Jehangir. When he died in London, he was buried in the Zoroastrian section (1862) of Brookwood Cemetery, Woking, near London, in the small but impressive Persian Revival necropolis erected by the Tatas, the Wadias, and the Camas as their final resting place far from either their home in India or their avowed ancestral land, Iran.⁵⁴ Similar to the Safavid Perso-Armenian merchants of New Julfa from 1605 to 1747 and other such "trade diaspora" communities of the Indian Ocean, Parsis relocated to geographies far from home and buried their dead in these places in exclusive cemeteries such as Macau (1829), Hong Kong (1852), Shanghai (1854), Huangpu in Guangzhou (n.d.), Darjeeling (n.d.), London, and New York.⁵⁵ At Brookwood, Jerbai Wadia, the widow of Nowrosjee Nashirwanjee Wadia, had "consulted the Orientalist and polymath, Sir George Birdwood" about the "Persian features" of the more elaborate mausolea.⁵⁶ The free-standing mausoleum of her husband (1901) bears an uncanny resemblance to the rather proportionally inaccurate isometric drawing by Kiash of the mausoleum of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae (Figs. 1–2).⁵⁷ Kiash's drawing, itself, is a faithful copy of Robert Ker Porter's plate 14 from his outstanding two-volume travelogue, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &c. &c. During the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820* (1821–22).⁵⁸

Of white polished porcelain, "The Oriental Gateway" of two Persepolitian columns at Brookwood, with elaborate double bull-headed capitals, awkwardly holding up an entablature of heavy crenellations, was erected by Shirinbai Dalal, the widow of Meherwanji R. Dalal in his memory (Fig. 1). In various contemporary presses and ceremonies, it was repeatedly noted that these landmarks were "built on the style of Persepolis palace."⁵⁹ Yet, the three elaborate tomb chambers of the Tata family lined next to each other—those of Sir Dorabji (1859–1932) and Lady Meherbai Tata, J. N. Tata, and R. J. Tata—replicated a typically nineteenth-century eclectic amalgam of ancient Egyptian, ancient Greek, Etruscan, and Achaemenid architectural and decorative elements and spoke to the displaced, cosmopolitan identity of their patrons. The Persian Revival as an artistic movement was therefore a mailable, interchangeable, transportable visual discourse that went wherever Parsis settled as fitted and fixed ambivalent identity categories into solid foundations. Even when the Persian Revival arrived in Iran—its place of origin—it often took its aesthetic cues from print, from copies of copies in print.

Parsi design and patronage of the Art Deco Style were put on display on Bombay's Marine Drive that lined multistory residential buildings such as Kapur Mahal, Zaver Mahal, and Keval Mahal (designed by Parsi architect P. C. Dastur, 1937–39) or in Bombay's leisure architecture including Regal Cinema (commissioned by Parsi entrepreneur Framji H. Sidhwa, 1933) and Eros Cinema (designed by architect Parsi Sohrabji Bhedwar, 1938). At the height of the radical International Style, Parsi patrons also participated in modernists' architectural discussions and practices. A member of a different branch of the Tata family, Bejan Dadabhoy Tata arrived in Shanghai in 1904 and, with his wife, Lydia Tata, commissioned British

⁵⁴ See "The Parsee Cemetery Just Consecrated at Brookwood," *The Sphere* (July 13, 1901), reproduced in Morgan, "West Is East & East Is West"; Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, 134–37; and "Obituary." See also Schmitt and Stolper, "An Old Persian Cuneiform Inscription"; and Rose, "Passages in India."

⁵⁵ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, 6–7. See also Hussian, "The Armenians in India."

⁵⁶ Stewart, "The Zoroastrian Burial Ground at Brookwood Cemetery," 7.

⁵⁷ See Kiash, *Ancient Persian Sculptures*, plate LII, across from p. 158.

⁵⁸ See Porter, *Travels*.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*, 135.



Figure 1. Photos of a mausoleum, a memorial gate, and the chapel from the Zoroastrian section of the Brookwood Cemetery, London, United Kingdom, reproduced in *The Sphere* (July 13, 1901). Photo: public domain.

architects Davies Brookand Gran to design a large, multipartite residential home.⁶⁰ Known as the *Avan Villa* (1926–35) at 458 Wulumuqi North Road, the one main and four detached sections of the complex embodied the tenants of the International Style, at the zenith of the Modern Movement: minimalist white walls, a flat roof topped with a garden, deep balcony held up on piers and flanked by large openings, cantilevered patio, and open floor plan and elevation. During these decades, too, artistic reference to ancient Persian figures, especially Zoroaster's life-size sculptures, began to appear on public spaces in the West, including Edmund T. Quinn's on the Brooklyn Museum (ca. 1900) in New York, Lee Lawrie's at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel (1928) in Chicago, and Edward Clark Potter's on the Appellate Division Courthouse of New York State (1950) embodying the ancient wisdom of Persian religion and philosophy, now inherited (and ostensibly salvaged) by Western civilization.⁶¹ So much of that global visibility of ancient Iranian culture had to do with the successful and strategic Parsi patronage of the arts since the mid-nineteenth century.

In the early modern period, Parsis also revived and disseminated a modern version of the architectural typology of the *dakhma* (popularly known as towers of silence) with a tall circular wall of about twenty-five feet, erected with either stone or brick, for the exposure of corpses in or near Zoroastrian-populated centers. Prominent examples included Bombay's Malabar Hill designed by Modi Hirji Vatcha (1674), several smaller *dakhmas* in Mahuva (1733, 1833, 1885), Bilimora (n.d.), Hyderabad (1940), Bengaluru (1940), Karachi (1847), and in Iran, in Qanat Ghesan and Ray (1865), Kerman (1867), Yazd, and Sharifabad, several of which were constructed under the direction of Hataria.⁶² Their design, construction, and patronage raised nineteenth-century debates about science, engineering, hygiene, medicine, environmentalism, and urbanism. The pre-industrial wisdom as to how to dispose of a dead body joined engineering feats in construction techniques as well as modernist architectural disputes in disease management. Sixteenth-century visual evidence reveals that Parsis

⁶⁰ See Saran, "A House for Mr. Tata" (*Travelling In, Travelling Out*); Saran and Ke, eds., *Stray Birds on the Huangpu*; Saran, "A House for Mr. Tata" (*Quartz India*); and Saran, "Parsis."

⁶¹ See Cooper, Rider, and Hopkins, *Rider's New York City*, 426; and New York (N.Y.) Department of Parks, *Annual Report*, 358.

⁶² On *dakhma*, see Wadia, "Evolution of the Tower of Silence"; and Grigor, *Persian Revival*, 74–77, 153–54.

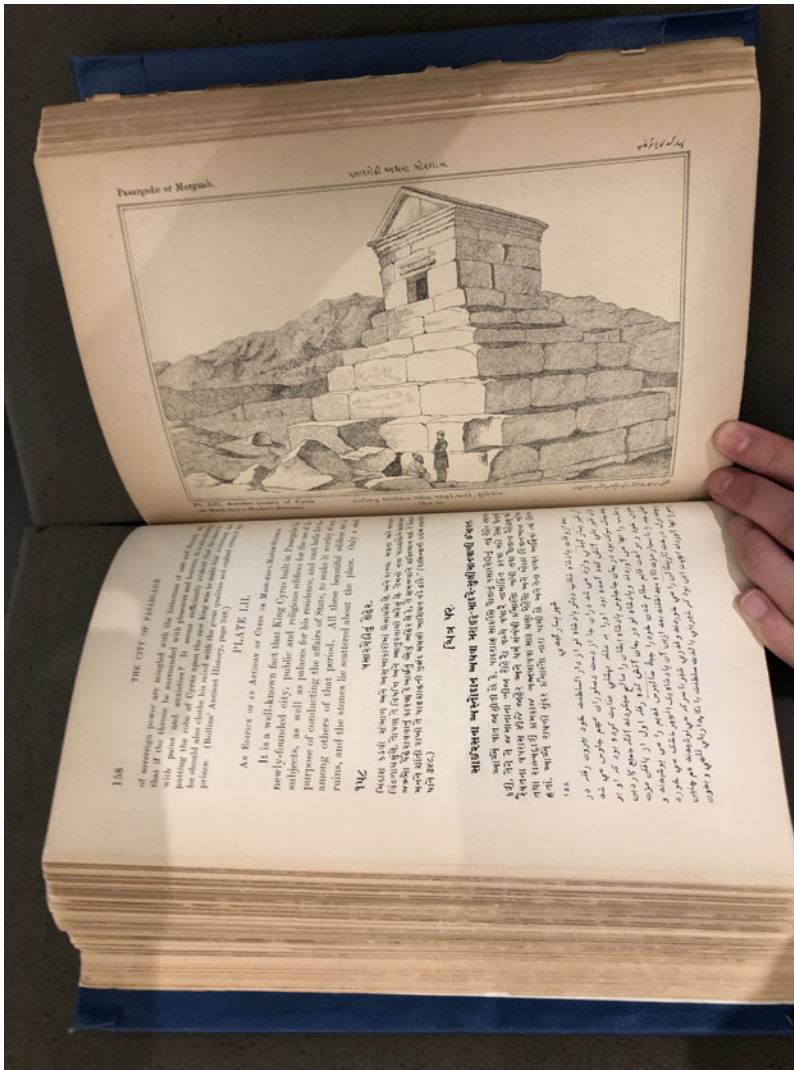


Figure 2. Drawing of the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae from Kavasi Dinshah Kiash's *Ancient Persian Sculptures* (1889), pp. 158–59. Photo: public domain.

produced scientific drawings of the floor plans of *dakhmas* (especially, a floor plan that indicated the position of nails for consecration) that deployed the same early modern architectural language of discipline and geometry with which Jeremy Bentham, for instance, represented his notorious panopticon prison (1791).⁶³ The debates about the *dakhma* remained within “scientific” and architectural language throughout the twentieth century.

The topic of the use of *dakhma* for the disposal of corpses instead of the use of burial grounds was not just a conservative versus progressive conflict; it was about how to mandate modern society through spatial order as well as how to retrieve a medieval practice and translate it into these very concerns: hygiene, health, and discipline. The first Zoroastrian representative to the Iranian Parliament and one of the key players in Tehran-Bombay relations, Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh (1874–1941), dedicated several pages of his memoirs to

⁶³ For the floor plan of the sixteenth-century *dakhma*, see Wadia, “Evolution of the Tower of Silence,” 329, figure 4c.

his objection to the “system” of the “unhygienic” *dakhma*, which, for him, is contrary not only to the “doctrines of prophet Zarathushtra” whose teaching and philosophy is “based on logic and cleanliness . . . essential for the health of human beings.” He based his religio-hygienic argument on architectural evidence. “There is evidence from the remains of ancient buildings,” Shahrokh argued, “that the dead were buried in covered places: the Tomb of Cyrus, Darius, and those at Persepolis, Pazargad [sic], Naqsh-e Rostam.”⁶⁴ The Bombay-based Iran League and Irani Zoroastrian Anjoman, as well as the Zoroastrian Ladies’ Association of Yazd, lost no time to print a protest pamphlet in 1936, endorsing the modern rationale behind the design of *dakhmas*. The pamphlet was entitled, “Dokhma: A Scientific Method of Disposal of the Dead among Zoroastrians.”⁶⁵

A close look at the infrastructural philanthropy in Hinnells’ list of “Parsi charity in Iran” reveals an interesting pattern that supports my broader argument here. Parsi philanthropy of immovable objects in Iran, from the 1850s to 1923, largely focused on erecting fire temples based on the Bombay open-plan prototype; this was a philanthropic priority set by Hataria as of his 1854 arrival in Iran. He directed the construction of several temples of different grades of consecration in Yazd, Kerman, and Sharifabad, financially backed by the Amelioration Society. Similarly, in 1892, Dinbai D. N. Petit donated 12,000 rupees for an adaran in Tehran as well as 700 rupees for, probably, the establishment of an Atash Bahram in Kerman, which was never realized as the only highest grade of consecrated fire in Iran is located in Yazd (fire 1790, current temple replacing Hataria’s, 1934). In Tehran, Anjoman Adaran, or the Bhika Bahram *atash-kadeh* (1913–16), was inaugurated with great ceremonies by both Zoroastrian community leaders and Qajar state officials.⁶⁶ The temple was made possible by the charitable donation of two Parsi sisters, E. R. Dubash and R. B. Dubash, for 10,000 rupees in 1913 along with an additional Parsi subscription of 11,000 rupees.⁶⁷ According to these records, the last of these temple donors was Navajbai Tata for the small amount of 2,200 rupees for a Kerman adaran in 1923.

Starting in 1898 and intensifying after 1923, however, Parsi patronage in Iran was dominated by educational structures (schools, libraries, and school-adjacent orphanages and dormitories), and to a lesser degree health/hygiene architecture (*dakhmas*, hospitals, water tanks, and maternity homes). This phase of intense patronage of architecture also coincided, not so accidentally, with the equally intense production of art historical knowledge about Iran’s antiquity, which then circulated back into new publications, where these very same modern edifices bore witness to the linear progress of the nation’s time. Two political factors, as Hinnells notes, contributed to the intensification of Parsi investment in Iranian infrastructure: “the militantly Hindu” turn of the Indian National Congress in 1907 in India and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–6 in Iran. These persuaded many Parsis “to turn increasingly to their Iranian fatherland.”⁶⁸ The result was visible in the form of permanent charity: K. M. R. Irani’s obituary record of a 1907 charitable donation for a school in Yazd coincides with the 1285 Islamic Solar establishment of Dinyari Elementary School in Yazd. This is followed, two years later, by Arbab K. Shahjahan’s obituary record of two girls’ schools in Yazd, for which I did not find an extant or functioning school today, although Hinnells—as well as Shahrokh in his memoirs—lists a dozen other schools, hospitals, and built properties sponsored by the Parsis, most of them in the province of Yazd.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 12–13. On Shahrokh’s role in Iranian nationalism, see Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, 184–95; and Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 21–54. For his role in Pahlavi architecture, see Grigor, *Building Iran*.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Fischer, “Zoroastrian Iran,” 157. On *dakhma* dispute, see also Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, 144, 153, 188–92; and Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 11–12, 38–39.

⁶⁶ See Grigor, *Persian Revival*, 127–34.

⁶⁷ See Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 316, 323. Shahrokh mentions a “Zarbai Soonabai of the Dubash family” and “the Dubash sisters”; see Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 21.

⁶⁸ Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 282.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 317, and see 283n50. Shahrokh writes also about schools that were funded by Iran’s Zoroastrian individual patrons or community; see Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 18–20.

Bundled in their adaran patronage, Shahrokh wrote that the Dubash sisters also erected, in 1913, a “girls’ school adjacent to one another.”⁷⁰ Costing the sisters 6,000 rupees, it was named Iraj, in the memory of their brother. In 1922, Lady Meherbai Tata funded Yazd’s Sir Ratan Tata Medical Hall to serve the needs of “all communities.”⁷¹ In the following two years, Ardeshir Edulji Reporter (1865–1933) sponsored a reading room, named after Ferdowsi in Tehran, while R. K. S. Kuchbiyogi paid for a “madressa” for Zoroastrian girls in one of the villages of Yazd. The same family returned in 1937 to open Yazd’s Bahman Maternity Home.⁷²

The official establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty deepened Parsi engagement with Iran; this is reflected in the increased architectural patronage. In November 1925, a month before Reza Shah was appointed as Iran’s monarch by the National Assembly, Parsi subscribers presented 11,988 rupees for the erection of Ferdowsi’s statue in Tehran. The gesture was both collective and highly symbolic. Between then to the end of Reza Shah’s reign when the relationship soured, Parsis became committed partners in shaping the educational infrastructure of the early Pahlavi state.⁷³ At this point of the closest contact between Parsis and Iranians, however, some also expressed concern about Parsi adoption of “a more autocratic attitude” toward Iranians, while “more orthodox and fanatical Parsi benefactors” simply “withheld their payments.”⁷⁴ Still, Parsi capital continued to pour into Iran. In May 1927, A. K. Irani of Gholvad, a coastal town in Maharashtra, opened a school near Yazd, and at the end of the following year, he funded Khoramshah village’s Ardeshir Girls’ School (1929) with 81,000 rupees, adding 13,000 rupees as educational support under the name of Girls’ Educational Fund. A certain S. Behram stepped in with 8,000 rupees in 1929 and erected a rest house and a water tank for the same village.⁷⁵

As Reza Shah’s Ministry of Education centralized and systematized Iran’s secular education starting in the early 1930s, several of the largest Parsi-sponsored schools were erected in Tehran. One of these must have been Shapur High School (1930–34) in Shiraz, in an elaborate and well-constructed Persian Revival style, about which I could only find a photograph.⁷⁶ In 1931, a relative of the Dubash sisters, Bahram Bhikhaji of Khandala, visited Iran. While serving in the British Navy, his son, Firuz, had perished during World War I when his vessel was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. Shahrokh had persuaded Bhikhaji that since “his real country was Iran,” he should divert the 60–70,000 rupees reserved to fund a school in Afghanistan to erect one in Tehran.⁷⁷ Now officially partnered, the foundation stone of Firuz Bahram Boys’ High School (1932), a Parsi-sponsored Zoroastrian school in Persian Revival icons and symbols, was laid by the Pahlavi minister of education on December 23, 1932. The extant plaque reads:

This high school that has been established on the ground of Zoroastrian Anjoman from the donation of decent (*radmanesh*) Bahramji Bikaji in the memory of his son, Firuz, bless his soul (*ravanshad*), who was born at the beginning of *Shahrivar* of 1274 Solar year equal to the 22nd of August 1895 in Bombay and who gave a farewell to his world on the 8th of Day 1294 equal to the 29th of December 1915 [it is] named Firuz

⁷⁰ Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 21. In Hinnells’ list, the Dubash sisters are listed as only having donated 10,000 rupees for the Anjoman adaran in Tehran; see Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 316.

⁷¹ Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 316.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 316–17.

⁷³ See Arasteh, *Education*; Berberian, “Armenian Women”; Matthee, “Transforming Dangerous Nomads”; Menashri, *Education*; Rostam-Kolayi, “The Tarbiyat Girls’ School”; Koyagi, “Moulding Future Soldiers”; and Zirinsky, “A Panacea for the Ills of the Country.”

⁷⁴ Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 18, 22. On the souring Parsi-Iran relations in this period, see Patel, “Caught between Two Nationalisms.”

⁷⁵ Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 317.

⁷⁶ The entire block was demolished probably during Shiraz’s urban renewal project in the 2000s.

⁷⁷ Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 23.



Figure 3. Western portion of the main elevation of Anushirvan Dadgar High School, Tehran, Iran, 1934–36. Photo: public domain by P. M.

Bahram High School on the 18th of Ordibehesht 1311 Solar year and has been built under the supervision of insightful—Ardeshir Kiamanesh and with the direction and assistance of this person from the beginning to end and has been opened on the 2nd of Day 1311 Solar year for use of children and their eternal survival, it has been administered to the Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran. Keikhosrow Shahrokh.

In the following year, Ratanbai K. Minocherhomji of Bombay opened a library, while B. B. Patel funded a middle school in Tehran. Yet, the most conspicuously prestigious architectural statement was the erection of Anushirvan Dadgar High School for girls (1934–36, Fig. 3) on the northern side of Shah Reza Avenue. It was financed by Ratanbai Bamji, the sister of J. N. Tata, for the sum of 100,000 rupees. Designed by Russian architect Nikolai Markov (1882–1957), who had built the impressive building of the American College (1924, renamed Alborz College), this time the keystone was laid by Iran’s prime minister Mohammad Ali Foroughi on August 25, 1934.⁷⁸ At the request of the patron, a committee of both women and men was formed to administer the funds and secure a property, ideally from the Pahlavi state. Several members were the usual suspects: Shahrokh, Taqizadeh, Reporter, and Rezagholi Khan Hedayat, while others, like Mastureh Afshar, Shirin Edulji, and Manijeh Shahrokh, were a show of a reformist-feminist maneuver.

With its massive Persian Revival southern facade of bull-headed columns and capitals, Persepolitian crenellation, and a large *faravahar*, the school was the manifest statement about the already fulfilled promise of modernity (Fig. 4). The tile panels dispersed on this rich elevation contained not the reproduction of images from Persepolis and Pasargadae, but rather copies of the fantastical reconstructions from various art historical sources, including Charles Chipiez’s reconstruction of the “The Hall of a Hundred Columns” from *Histoire de l’art dans l’antiquité* (1890) and the Dieulafoy’s rendering of life inside Persepolis

⁷⁸ Shahrokh writes that it was Markov who was hired, yet in the architectural publications on Markov’s work in Iran, Anushirvan Dadgar High School does not appear. See Shahrokh and Writer, eds., *Memoirs*, 24; and Daniel, Shafei, and Soroushiani, *Nikolia Markov Architecture*.



Figure 4. Tile panel on the south elevation of Anushirvan Dadgar High School, Tehran, Iran, 1934–36. Photo: public domain by P. M.

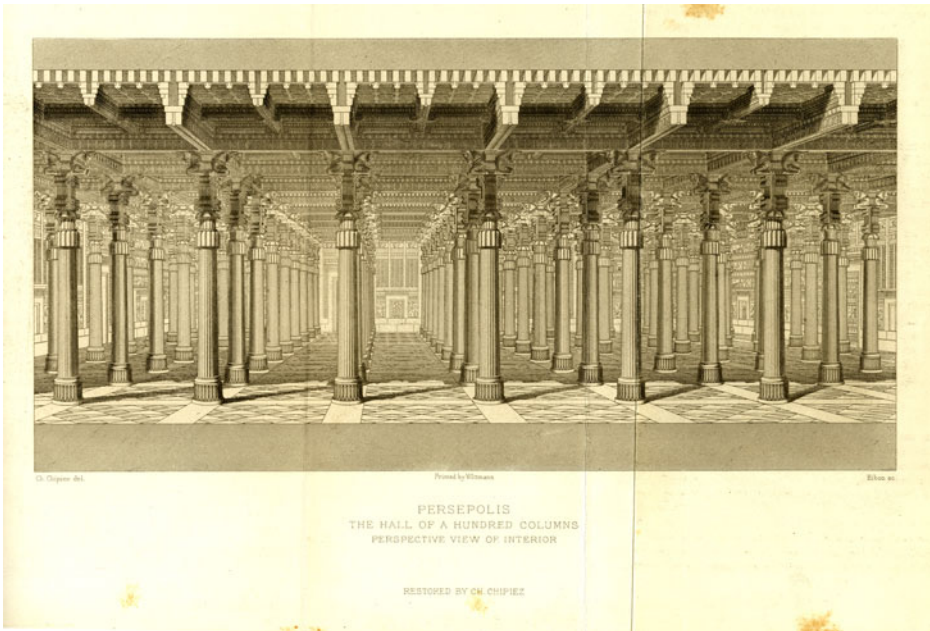


Figure 5. Charles Chipiez's reconstruction of the "The Hall of a Hundred Columns" from *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité* (1890). Photo: public domain.

from *L'art antique de la Perse* (1884–85) (Figs. 5–6).⁷⁹ In 1955, when Iran's ambassador to India Ali Asghar Hekmat delivered a lecture in Delhi, he noted that "Anushirvan Dadgar Women's College" is "so well-reputed that many Muslim families prefer to send their wards to these institutions to study along with their Zoroastrian sisters."⁸⁰ After listing the number of students in major Parsi-funded schools, he thanked the "Parsi Community of India" for the

⁷⁹ See Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*; Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Persia*, 328; and Dieulafoy, *L'art antique de la Perse*, plate IX.

⁸⁰ Hekmat, "The Parsis of Iran," 38.



Figure 6. Jane and Marcel Dieulafoy's rendering of life inside Persepolis from *L'art antique de la Perse* (1884–85), plate IX. Photo: public domain.

“considerable monetary aid towards the building and furnishing of the Zoroastrian schools in Iran.”⁸¹

As a part of the global discussions about modern architecture in Europe and its satellite centers in the colonies, good architecture was to provide a cure to the many ills of industrialized society from tuberculosis to influenza, from poverty to shortage of housing, and from public ignorance to religious superstition.⁸² In erecting schools, hospitals, sanitariums, villas, and stadiums, modernist architects argued that the use of new materials (i.e., concrete, glass, iron), clean lines, minimalist surfaces, and open spaces would heal the nation in toto. The Parsi-sponsored educational and health architecture between 1923 and 1938 precisely aligned with and buttressed Reza Shah’s broader modernist ambitions and programs. The vast infrastructural projects undertaken by the different ministries and municipalities were driven by the urban reforms of the late 1920s and 1930s, most of which underpinned considerations of systematizing and regulating society, of health and sanitary conditions, and efficient circulation of people, objects, products, as well as, in the Haussmannian style, the national army.⁸³ Employed by the technical offices of the various new ministries

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸² See Colomina, *X-Ray Architecture*.

⁸³ During the reign of Emperor Napoleon III, and as Prefect of Seine from 1853 to 1870, Baron Haussmann carried out massive urban renewal and public work projects in Paris.

as well as such new institutions as the National Bank, Iranian and European architects designed and erected Iran's modern educational and health infrastructure, which were many.⁸⁴

As the 1930s drew to a close, Parsis continued to endow schools and other structures despite the active constructions carried out by the state. The name of the Elphinstone-educated lawyer PeshotANJI Dossabhai Marker (1871–1965) stands out in the list of educational patrons. Moved by the lifework of Hataria in Iran, he undertook the patronage of a series of educational structures in Yazd. Between 1923 and 1934, his philanthropy made possible the erection of a large complex, dubbed Markerabad, at the historical heart of the city. Flanked by protective lands and gardens on the southwest and northeast, the core of the property saw the erection of two large winged brick structures where the orphanage and dormitories were housed in the southwestern section and the elementary and high schools in the northeastern section. These two colossal structures were then connected with two colonnades—a succession of brick columns elevated on a walkway and joined on the top by an entablature—that form an enclosed but open-air courtyard.

In the northern courtyard, the main entrance facade to the schools was richly decorated with the typical Persian Revival decorative program with four stylized Persepolitian columns with double bull-headed capitals and a *pish-taq* that carries the hovering *faravahar* (Fig. 7). This later reproduced Kiash's drawing of a stylized *faravahar* (1889, Fig. 8). A very similar version was also during this time recreated to flank the main elevation of the Bhagarseth Anjoman Atash Bahram fire temple (1925, Fig. 9) in Navsari, India. Marker made several trips to Iran to observe the construction of these edifices. His visits and inspection of the structures of his patronage constituted the lived experience of modern progress; as *Iran Bastan* would later put, the actual, in situ "experience" of "more and more progress."⁸⁵ In 1924, like many wealthy Parsis at this pivotal moment in Iran-Parsi relations, Marker is reported to have visited Persepolis, which was not a mere form of tourism, but rather an ethnoreligious pilgrimage, facilitated by the "considerable success" of "economic infrastructure of Parsi travel to Iran."⁸⁶

Marker's philanthropic commitment to the Zoroastrians of Yazd was long term and almost exclusively to educational institutions: in 1923 in the amount of 50,000 rupees, in 1925, 100,000 rupees, and again in 1934, when he financed a clock tower in the name of

⁸⁴ Iranian Armenian architect Vartan Hovanesian's (1896–1982) Girls Academy of the Arts (Tehran, 1935–38) as well as later Namazi High School (Shiraz, 1949) were forceful statements against revivalism and the healing ethos of the International Style. Berlin-trained Iranian architect Karim Taherzadeh Behzad (1888–1963) designed Shah Reza Hospital (Mashhad, 1934) and Shah Reza High School (Mashhad, 1931) among such pivotal landmarks as the Persian Revival facade of the Parliament (Tehran, 1935), Ferdowsi Mausoleum (Tus, 1934), and several of the Railway stations (1938–46). After Alborz College, Markov designed Teachers' College (Tehran, 1928), the new building of the Dar ol-Fonun School (Tehran, 1924–35), Razi Institute (Tehran, 1931–33), the gates and entrance to Amjadih Stadium (Tehran, 1935), Pahlavi Primary School (Hamadan, 1935), and Pahlavi High Schools (Zanjan and Hamadan, n.d.). French architect Roland Dubrulle (1907–83) was prolific in designing the School of Fine Arts (Isfahan, 1937), the dormitories on Tehran University campus (1939), the diving boards and swimming pools, stadium and fire-holder podium, and viewing structures at Amjadih complex (Tehran, 1940), the Fine Arts School on Tehran University campus (1941), and the Farabi Hospital (1943). After Dubrulle was appointed as the chief architect of the Technical Office of the Ministry of Culture and Education, the state built a dozen large-scale schools after his designs in the dense urban fabric of central Tehran between Takht-e Jamshid Avenue in the north and Mowlavi Avenue in the south. In the iconic International Style of horizontal minimalist lines, they include Hafez School (1939), Ferdowsi School (1939), Nurbakhsh School (1940), Razi School (1940), Firuzkuhi Primary School (1940), and Sa'adi School (1941). In partnership with Andre Godard, French architect Maxime Siroux designed Shapur School (Kazerun, 1936), Sa'adi High School (Isfahan, 1934–37), Iranshahr High School (Yazd, 1936), and Pahlavi High School (Burujeerd, n.d.). See Soroushiani, Daniel, and Shafei, *Vartan Hovanesian Architecture*; Soroushiani, Daniel, and Shafei, *Taherzadeh Behzad Architecture*; Daniel, Shafei, and Soroushiani, *Nikolia Markov Architecture*; Daniel, Shafei, and Soroushiani, *Andre Godard Architecture*; and Shafei et al., *Roland Dubrulle Architecture*.

⁸⁵ *Iran Bastan* (June 29, 1933): 10, quoted in Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 224.

⁸⁶ Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 223. On Parsi tourism in Iran, see Patel, "Caught between Two Nationalisms," 780–82.



Figure 7. Main entrance of Marker School, Yazd, Iran, 1923–34. Photo: courtesy of Cyrus Samii.

Ferdowsi on the occasion of his millenary celebrations under the auspices of the Society for National Heritage (*anjoman-e asar-e melli*).⁸⁷ The healthy bodies and minds of young Iranians cultivated in the classrooms and courtyards were to also experience the scientific passing of modern time. Known as the Marker Clock Tower (sponsored 1934, inaugurated 1942, Fig. 10), the simple, two-partied square structure was stationed at the center of the Marker

⁸⁷ On Marker, see Patel, “Caught between Two Nationalisms,” 765–66; and Hinnells, “Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence,” 316–17. On the tower, see Fitter, “Firdawsi Memorial Clock Tower in Yezd.” On the Society of National Heritage and the 1934 Ferdowsi celebrations, see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*; and Grigor, *Building Iran*, 17–43.

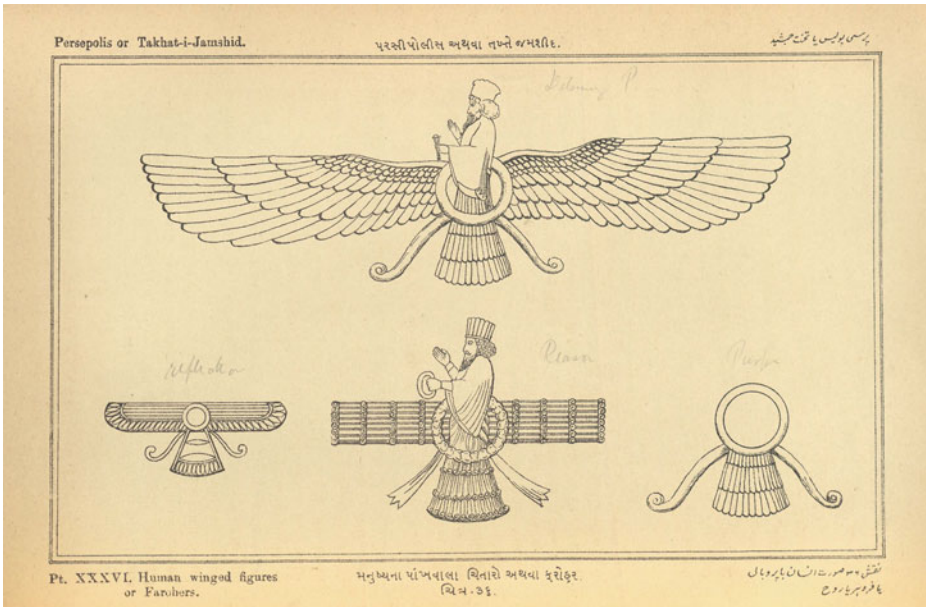


Figure 8. Drawing of “human winged figures” at Persepolis from Kavazji Dinshah Kiash’s *Ancient Persian Sculptures* (1889), p. 33, plate XXXVI. Photo: public domain.



Figure 9. A part of the main elevation of the Bhagarseth Anjoman Atash Bahram fire temple, Navsari, India, 1925. Photo: author.

roundabout, northeast of Markerabad. Fabricated by J. Smith & Sons Ltd. (est. 1780) of Clerkenwell, the clock itself was brought from London to map and mark—with modern geographic precision—the central coordinate of Iran. Adorning the four facades of the tower, the poetic inscription on tile praises both Ferdowsi and Marker. Experiencing Benjaminian



Figure 10. General view of Marker Square and Marker Clock Tower, Yazd, Iran, 1934–42. Photo: author.

homogenous and empty time, the viewer was specifically instructed to read the poems clockwise. Marker's patronage did not end with architecture; he also extended his support in publishing Purdavud's translations and publications on Zoroastrian culture and religion.⁸⁸

Parsis built modern secular schools that by design reproduced Benjamin's homogenous empty time. Disciplined pupils inhabited the incremented empty spaces of the homogenous classrooms, dividing modern time into identical modular and homogeneous subject matter: poetry and chemistry, history and mathematics, all were taught in the same exactly parsed meters and minutes. Eating, playing, and socializing in the remaining spaces. Designed on the modernist principles of symmetry, modular, and equal spatial arrangements, these schools also reproduced the homogenous space of the nation. All classrooms, again, regardless of subjects taught, contained the same spatial configuration. When all missionary and ethnic schools were nationalized in 1934–38, the Benjaminian homogeneity and emptiness of these educational spaces enabled the mixing and mingling of all Iranian children regardless of their religious affiliations: Muslims, Jews, Christian Armenians and Assyrians, Bahais, and Zoroastrians side by side on the same rectangular benches, in the same white classrooms with big windows and black chalkboards. The nationalist recycling of the edifice into the book came quickly. In the footsteps of Murzban Muncherji Murzban's *The Parsis: Being an Enlarged and Copiously Annotated, Up to Date English Edition of Mlle. Delphine Menant's "Les Parsis"* (1917), who had relied on the photographic reproduction of modern edifices of Iranshah and Anjoman Atash Bahram for his editing of Menant's narrative on "Parsi progress," André Godard's 1938 issue of *Athar-e Iran* published the photo of the main elevation and floor plans of Tehran's Anjoman Adaran to elaborate on the long history of Zoroastrian fire temples and their modern reproduction.⁸⁹

Pushing further, when in December 1936, the special issue of Abdulrahman Saif Azad's intensely nationalist and fascist periodical, *Iran Bastan*, appeared, the large pages were

⁸⁸ See Hinnells, "Flowering of Zoroastrian Benevolence," 283.

⁸⁹ See Murzban, ed., *The Parsis*, 392A, 329B, 394A, 394B; and Godard, "Les Monuments de Feu."

laced with hundreds of photographs of old and new architectural edifices.⁹⁰ Printed on the occasion of the millennial Ferdowsi celebrations, it was essentially a thick photo-essay about the fully fulfilled promise of reform-as-revival. Small, side-by-side photos of all the Parsi- and Pahlavi-sponsored architecture were showcased: the Persian Revival Atash Bahram temples in Navsari, Udvada, Surat, and Bombay; the Sanjan tower; the Gothic Revival hotels, mansions, and university buildings of Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, the Tatas, and the Wadias; the Classic Revival of the Tata mansion; the Persian Revival of the National Bank, the Shah Reza hospital and school, the Post Office, and the Baharestan (the Parliament). The inaugural rituals of the Ferdowsi Mausoleum, the Ferdowsi conference in Tehran, along with the group visits to Khayyam's stele and the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, occupy multiple photographic pages with a narrative caption that recounts these nostalgic leaps back into history and a return to the future, now realized. Other pages were devoted to the inaugural ceremony of the Anushirvan Dadgar School. Lady Tata was among the many Parsi philanthropists portrayed. Buildings flanked patrons and scholars, male and female, Indian and Iranian. Juxtaposed images of factories and turbines testified to the giant temporal leaps made by Parsi-Iranian modernists since Persepolis, Pasargadae, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Taq-e Bostan.

The evidence of modernist progress was made visible in the very architecture depicted and duplicated. Young men, schoolboys, were captured during exercise in the courtyard of newly built schools. They were depicted as healthy, disciplined, and enlightened. Measuring and marking modern time grounded in architecture had become normative. In the tracks of Hugo's forewarning of how the invention of modern print would eventually eradicate the role of architecture as the carrier and marker of collective identity and homogeneous time, Parsi philanthropists deployed the combined soft power of both print and edifice in their revivalistic engagements with modern Iran. The dependence of the print culture and the practice of architecture were honed by individual Parsi donors, authors, and architects to help shape a linear and universal path for modernist progress in Iran. When, in the mid-1930s, the relationship between the Parsi leadership and Reza Shah's increasingly pro-Nazi government soured, the discourse of the Parsi return to the ancestral home lost its allure. As the political tension between Germany and Britain intensified, Parsi philanthropists began to distance themselves from the Iranian state. During the decade following the king's exile by the Allies in 1941, Parsi architectural charity and investments incrementally decreased as Pahlavi Iran moved into the economically prosperous decades of the 1950s and the 1960s. With it, architectural revivalism as aesthetics of reform was also abandoned by leading Pahlavi architects. While modernist architecture continued to play a key role in Iranian nationalist progress and national time until the dawn of the Iranian Revolution of 1977–79, Parsis' engagement with the motherland—either through the book or the edifice—never again occupied such a pivotal role in state and identity politics.

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⁹⁰ Abdulrahman Saif Azad, *Iran Bastan*, special issue on the occasion of the millennial Ferdowsi celebrations (December 1936). For a comprehensive analysis of Saif Azad, see Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, chapter 5.

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