"A turgid history of the Mongol empire in Persia"
Epistemological reflections concerning a critical edition of Vaşşâf’s Taşziyat al-amsâr va taşziyat al-aşâr

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The Taşziyat al-amsâr va taşziyat al-aşâr (‘The apportioning of lands and the passing of times’), a Persian chronicle written by the early 14th-century Ilkhanid historian and financial administrator Sharaf al-Din ‘Abd Allah b. Fuad Allah Vaşşâf (fl. 728/1328), covers much of the period of Mongol rule in the Middle East.\footnote{1} Despite the fact that the work encompasses the relatively short time span of seventy years (655-728/1257-1328),\footnote{2} Vaşşâf’s history has seen an extraordinary reception: There exist close to one hundred and sixty known manuscript copies of the Taşziyat al-amsâr in various libraries all over the world, with particularly carefully copied specimens in India and in the Ottoman Empire, where the form and style of the work were especially appreciated.\footnote{3} Not surprisingly, it is in Bombay that the first lithograph of Vaşşâf’s history was prepared in 1853.\footnote{4} This lithograph and its 1959 Tehran reprint represent the only complete printed version of the work that ever appeared, despite the vivid reception and the acknowledged value of Vaşşâf’s work as an historical source.\footnote{5}

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\footnotetext[1]{1}{On Vaşşâf, see Ricci 1879, vol. 1, 162; Huart 1913-36, 1133; Mercél 1984.}

\footnotetext[2]{2}{655/1257 (Vaşşâf 1269/1853, 10) is the first and 728/1327-28 (e.g., Blochet 1905-34, vol. 1, 182) the last given date in any known and carefully catalogued manuscript of the work; see also Ricci 1879, vol. 1, 161; Stoevy/Bregel 1972, vol. 2, 769-775.}

\footnotetext[3]{3}{See Stoevy/Bregel 1972, vol. 2, 769-774. The author of this paper has located about a dozen copies in manuscript catalogues from India published since the appearance of Stoevy/Bregel in 1972. Most of these are 19th century copies. -- While the history of the Chinggisid heritage in the Ottoman and Mughal environments has yet to be written, this paper shows that the aesthetic reception of Vaşşâf’s work was particularly intensive in the Ottoman Empire. See also Pfeiffer 2003, chapter iv, for the influence of the work especially on the Persian historiographical tradition.}


\footnotetext[5]{5}{The 1338/1959 Tehran reprint of the Bombay lithograph had a printrun of 1,000 copies, and is not available any more on the bookmarket in Iran. This version comprises 708 folio
al-amṣār is available. By elucidating the history of its reception, this paper hopes to encourage the preparation of a long overdue critical edition of this work.

Much of what is known about the author and his work derives from his own writings. Vasāṣāf intended to continue 'Alī al-Dīn 'Aṭā Mālik Juvayyīnī’s (d. 681/1283) history Jāhan-gūzbây, which breaks off at a crucial point in Islamic history, namely shortly before the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1258.2 Vasāṣāf began writing his history four decades after these events,3 and presented the first volume of the work to the Mongol ruler Ġūzan Khān (r. 694-703/1295-1304) on 13 Rabī‘ 702/3 March 1303, shortly before the Ilkhan’s death.4 By 1312, Vasāṣāf had completed three further volumes, which he presented to Ġūzan Khān’s brother and successor, the Ilkhan Muhammad Khudabandār Īlāyītū (r. 703-716/1304-1316). Persian was not the mother tongue of the sultan, who had to ask several times for the meaning of the passages that were read to him.5 Nonetheless, Vasāṣāf received an honorary robe and the honorific title Vasāṣāf al-Hādīrat, “His Majesty’s Panegyrist.”6 This incident has often been quoted as an argument in support of the view that this work is extremely difficult to understand.7 I will return to this point a little further down, when we come to Vasāṣāf’s later work.

Vasāṣāf’s work, Hammer’s death prevented him from publishing the remaining parts, which he had started preparing for publication and which are kept in Hamner’s Nachlaṭ in Vienna; see, Chagatai 1997, which features facsimile copies of the frontispiece and the first page of the German translation of Vasāṣāf’s second volume in Hamner’s handwriting (Ms. Schloss Hainfeld). In 1897, another lithograph of the first volume appeared in Tabriz (?), differing more from Bombay 1853 and Hamner 1856 than these differ between each other. Furthermore, there exist a 1914 print (325 pp., without place of publication, not seen), and a 1929 Lahore lithograph of volume one prepared by Muhammad Iqbal (excluding much of the poetry). All of these, while attesting to the ongoing lively reception of the work, must be considered as continuations of the manuscript tradition in a print medium, but are not "editions" in the full sense of the word. Storey/Bregel 1972, vol. 2, 773, mention a number of other printed versions of the work, presumably in the same fashion. I have not been able to locate and see any of the latter. On the value of Vasāṣāf’s work as an historical source, see, e.g., Fīlūg 1865, vol. 2, 178; John 1963, 202.

12 For several shorter samples of "ornate prose" from Vasāṣāf’s pen—some of these apparently independently copied extracts from his history—see Storey 1990, 245. Merççil 1964, 233b, ascribes with some reservation a "Rastiāyī atbākū al-sallānū" to Vasāṣāf, a treatise which was composed in 709/1309-14, and is extant in three copies in Tehran (see Mārnāvī 1300/1348/1926-1926/70, vol. 16, 223; nos. 568, 4023, 5037 in the catalogues). It should be investigated whether and to what extent this is identical with the epistles "Atbākū al-sallānū šī al-dīnū wa al-amūmīa," dedicated to the Ilkhan Iljāmi Khudabandā (Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 484-498), as well as further treatises of this genre integrated into the history, such as the "Tādāḥār fī thebātīr al-abīkhā" (for the latter, see Ashraf 1965, vol. 1, 181). Other pieces in the genre of mirrors for princes are found on pp. 281-281 and 339 of the Tājīyat al-amṣār, and a "tāṯumāt al-nawazīyā" by Vasāṣāf’s hand (dated 711/1311-12) is appended to the autograph of vol. iv; see Dānish-Pažūhī, 1349/1969, 41. He also composed various letters, among them one addressed to his contemporary Quth al-Dīn Shirāzī (Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 508). Note that contemporary inshā’ literature, such as Nāqšchīvānī’s Dastūr al-bātīkhū, does not mention Vasāṣāf’s authorship of any of the letters it contains. Vasāṣāf also composed quite a number of poems, which are as well preserved in his history, and which he ‘signed’ with his makhbūs (pen name) Sharaf, which is also part of his name Sharaf al-Dīn ("the glory of theologian"). See Hilāzān 1340/1961, 1448. For a collection of poetry ascribed to him by d’Herbelot, see below.

13 See Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 498-508, a passage which deals mainly with Ilkhanid enmities to China.

14 Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 580-81; see also Kempinkin 1988.

15 Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 309-313, 526-532, and 646-650. See also Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 300-309, for the correspondence, in Arabic, between Malik Fākhr al-Dīn Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm and Sultan ‘Alī b. Hizār al-Dīn Mu‘āyad, dated 700/1300-1301, and Vasāṣāf’s account on the conquest of the Buddhist temple of Sinmar (pp. 447-449). Thus, there is to be found a long entry on the island of Qays (Kūh), the Bani Qayāy, and the town of Sūrā, which, according to Vasāṣāf, had traditionally been part of the lands of Sind and Sind etc., whereas in his day it belonged to the dominions of Pān. On the Bani Qayāy, see Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 169-177; 196; on Hormuz, 296-300. See also Ouseley 1846, 232-35.

16 Apart from the documentary evidence scattered throughout the book in the form of copies of correspondence between the Ilkhans and the Mamluk sultans (in Arabic), there is a particular emphasis on the "Atbah al-Malikū Mūwāzi,” including a long qasid in Arabic (pp. 352-354) as well as a "fāthūn-namā,” dated 691/1291-92 (p. 354). For other accounts dealing specifically with Mamluk-Ilkhanid relations, see, pp. 350-358; 373-382; 409-413; 532-537; 552-554.

17 Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 149-151; 190.

18 Vasāṣāf 1269/1853, 249-256.
many of these and other issues Vaṣāl’s history contains unique information, and he always writes independently from his patron and towering historian of the time, Rashid al-Din.23

While known and categorized both self-referentially24 and by later historians primarily as a work of history,25 the Taqījāt al-amāṣsār has also been held in high esteem for its literary value.26 Indeed, I would like to posit that it was due to its literary qualities that the Taqījāt al-amāṣsār found what is a rather large audience for a history work in general, and a ‘local history of Iran’ in particular.27 In fact, Vaṣāl’s is also known as the adīb Vaṣāl,28 i.e. the ‘literateur’ Vaṣāl, as well as the mutassassīl Vaṣāl,29 literally the ‘man of letters.’ His work contains a great number of copies of actual letters that were exchanged between the Ilkhans and the rulers of their time, most of them in Arabic.30 It also includes a number of treatises and epistles, often of allegorical nature, treating topics such as the polo game,31 backgammon and chess,32 differences between the lunar and the solar calendars,33 ice and snow,34 prosody,35 omete,36 and ethics.37 Of notice is also an “Epistle on the allegories through which the book was rarefied,”38 as well as a number of other epistles on various topics, most of which have yet to be identified,39 read, and adequately translated.

The way the 19th century author of the British Museum catalogue of Persian Manuscripts Charles Rieu dealt with these epistles, classifying them as “several rhetoric digressions, and other extraneous matters,”40 is just one example how Western scholars have tended to interpret Vaṣāl’s work, namely as a work of history — “history” being defined as a genre which, after the invention of historical

21 Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 421-425 (the pages 423-426 are inverted in the Tiberian print consulted for this paper).
22 Thus, Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 383-384 provides the text of an inscription (in Arabic) from Ghārān Khan’s building complex Afsāl al-bhr in Tabriz, which, to my knowledge, constitutes unique epigraphic evidence, as the complex has long since disintegrated into rubble. Other striking and potentially unique historical information is contained in the lists of the taxes collected during Vaṣāl’s term in specific regions, together with the copy of a tax register from the time of Hābrān al-Rashīd (d. 1393/1878) from the “hāhar al-ma’il al-badr al-khālī al- rashīdīyya Hābrān b. Muhammad al-ḥalī,” with an appended tax table for the time after the year 204/819-20, taken from the “Aḥbaṣīr Qudāmā b. Ḥāfar b. Qudāmā,” and another tax table dated 303/915-16, to all of which Vaṣāl probably had access due to his position in the Ilkhanid administration. Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 443-444. See also the detailed section on the introduction of paper money in Iran, and the reasons for its failure, pp. 271-276, and an astrological chart as a commentary on and explanation of the Ilkhanid failure vis-à-vis the Mamlūks (pp. 356-359).
23 Elliott (1867/77, vol. 3, 6; 24) stated that in the Jāmī’ al-sanānī’s chapter on the sultanate of Delhi, Rashid al-Din copied Vaṣāl’s account in several instances. To which degree this is accurate is a question that requires an investigation of its own. On Vaṣāl’s independence from Rashid al-Din, see Barthold 1968, 49.
24 See, e.g., Vaṣāl’s foreword; 1269/1853, 3. When describing his audience with the Ilkhan Oljeitū, Vaṣāl calls his work a “žīābīr tīrīkī, ‘a history book,’ (544, line 9); and “Tīrīkī Vaṣāl,” Vaṣāl’s history, (551, line 23).
25 Examples are abundant; the categorization of Vaṣāl’s work among history works in the sources and catalogues cited throughout this paper is representative.
26 Ouseley 1836, 230.
27 I am extrapolating a wide reception of the work from the rather high number of copies extant in libraries all over the world; for comparative numbers, see Storey/Bergel, Periplothis linea- teria 1972.
29 Al-Malik al-Nāṣir [Yūsuf] Sayf al-Dīn b. Yāhūmīr (c. 634-59/1236-1240-61); Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 43-44, and the response to it; 44-45. To my knowledge, Vaṣāl is the first witness to this correspondence, which, apparently with various mutations, has subsequently been related by al-Maqrīzī (Eddé 1999, 172, fn. 300) and Ibn ‘Arabshāh (d’Ossun 1832, vol. 3, 303-305, fn. 4), and was translated into Persian in the early 14th century by Aṣṣār‘ī
20 (1999, 55-57; 57-60, and 51-53; 53-55 for the Arabic version). For the correspondence between the Ilkhan Ahmad Tegūd (c. 681/1282-84) and his Mamlūk counterpart al- Manṣūr Qalī (c. 678/1281-90), see Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 113-118; for the adīb ‘Ali (Friday sermon) read al- ‘Abbās Khudābāndā at his accession to the Ilkhanid throne, see Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 450-459. See also Holt (1986) and Allouche (1990’s recent studies on the Ilkhānid-Mamlūk correspondence, for whose arguments Vaṣāl’s evidence is crucial.
21 See the Maqāla-yi Gāri-y-i Shamsī; Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 551-552.
23 For the very interesting Risāla fi ‘ibdāl al-sanānīs, see Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 402-404. As Vaṣāl explicitly stated, he inserted this epistle — in Persian — in his history in order to explain not only the time difference of nine years between the Muslim lunar and solar calendars applied in the Ilkhanate during his time, but also the differences between the accounting in Baghdad and that of the rest of the Ilkhanate, where in one area one counted the year 701 and in the other the year 702 of the lunar calendar. When discussing this matter with the educated men in the domain, they mentioned that [the Bayad astronomer and secretary] Abū ʿIraq al-Sabī (d. 384/994) had written an epistle discussing a similar issue in the reign of the Caliph al-Mustsīr al-Allāh for the years 350/151. Of this treatise Vaṣāl presented a Persian summary, adapting the text to his own time (Bombay 1269/1853, 403). This is a fine example of intertextuality embedded in an explanatory narrative and an historical context. — For the Arabic original, compare al-Sabī 1666, 305-314.
24 For the Risāla-yi hadīyya (in Arabic, thymede), written in connection with the description of the Mongol winter camp in Moghān, see Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 473-474.
26 This epistle is entitled Bāṭl al-nībā; see Ashraf 1965, vol. 1, 180; see also Storey 1990, 245, for his “Quidem, prœce, and blame of the pen in prose internixed with verse.”
29 Just like the poetry included in the work, a large number of these epistles were apparently taken from other sources, which Vaṣāl often, but not always, identifies. In the case of al-Sabī’s letter, mentioned above, a comparison has shown that Vaṣāl’s rendering of the epistle is rather close to the phrasing of Sabī’s epistle in the publication by Shakhāb Arslān [1966]. The preparation of a critical edition of Vaṣāl’s work will substantially enhance our knowledge of the corpus and to which extent other material preserved here has not been preserved elsewhere, and will contribute to the greater picture of the transmission of knowledge, including that about the arts of writing and rhetoric.
30 For examples, see Ashraf 1965, vol. 1, 181. There are also parts of the work that are written in the two of the genre of minaks for princes; see, e.g., Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 489-494. It also contains a nādiraye with a certain Abū ‘Ali Vaṣāl 1269/1853, 509-551 (in Arabic).
31 Rieu 1879, vol. 1, 163.
criticism, did not leave much space for rhetoric figures, or dissertations about such.

In addition, the work contains a rather high amount of poetry both in Persian and in Arabic, from Vāsīj's own pen and from others. As these contain a high percentage of Mongol and Turkic vocabulary,42 Vāsīj's work is a treasure mine for linguists as well as historians. The appended glossary in the Bombay lithograph, numerous scholia in the manuscripts, and the very existence of a number of glossaries and exegetic works on Vāsīj's history are also a reflection of the high number of Turko-Mongol words included in this work. However, due to the absence of an accessible edition of Vāsīj's work — or of its glossaries, for that matter — this extensive vocabulary has yet to be sifted.43

In Vāsīj's own eyes, much of the importance of his work was probably to be sought in his literary achievements; Vāsīj saw his work as the culmination of the efforts of a long chain of "literary ancestors." The models he names among the historians — "Uthī,44 and Juvānī45 — are rather a minority next to the long list of

42 The Vāsīj-commentator Nāznī-zāda makes this very explicit in his Sīra-ye Vāsīj, see nσ. Vienna Fligel 962, as cited in Fligel 1865, vol. 2, 186. Note that this early 16th century Vāsīj-commentator established a much more careful distinction between these languages than the 20th century literary critic Bahār, who declared all non-Persian and non-Arabic words without distinction to be 'Mongolian'; Bahār [1942] 1337/1958, vol. 3, 104-105. It is worthy of note that the Tārijat al-amrit of Vāsīj contains a full line of "Turkic long before Turkish of any kind became a literary language in the Middle East. This line of poetry has been claimed at times as an early witness to Azeri Turkish (Tegān 1981, l. 272; Hofmann 1969, 98), and at times as a prototype of Chaghāturk Turkish (e.g., Köprülü 1945, 278). The poem is: "Men cen əhənəan allım əsən * qım men nurəxən, men əlayen" — "I take the life of [a man] for gold; my work is to hit and to take; Vāsīj 1269/1853, 363. See Tegān 1981, l. 277, for the transliteration and interpretation. I am indebted to Ifler Evrim Bınbaş for the references on the interpretation of this line of poetry. The (indeed abundant) use of single Turkish and Mongolian terms both in prose (e.g., in Rashid al-Dīn's Īmān al-tarāsīkh) and in poetry (e.g., in Pārā Bahār's "Mongol" Ode), was rather common among Vāsīj's contemporaries. See, Minorvsky 1956.

43 Thus, Gerhard Doerfer consulted Vāsīj only in a few cases for his important Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen. As the explanation for his "cautious" use of Vāsīj in the preparation of the TME, he stated that Vāsīj was only available in "badly edited versions" (1963, vol. 1, 1). Not only the prose, but also the poetry of the Tārijat al-amrit abounds in Turkic-Mongol words; for an example of one of Vāsīj's ghazals, which Bahar sharply reprimanded for the high amount of Turco-Mongol vocabulary contained in it, see his Sūkh-e Shiḩānī 1337/1958, vol. 3, 104-105. For further examples and a strong response to Bahār, see Gundeli 1958.

44 al-Uthī (f. 412/1021), whose Kītab-i Yāqūtī is likewise famous for his "very ornate and verbose" style, see Nazım 1913-16, 1060. al-Uthī was a popular author during the early 14th century; see, e.g., al-Asqārī 3/1999, 290, who cites him at length. Vāsīj calls him as-tād-i īddā Abū Naṣr al-Ṭūbiti ... ki khanum-yi Mīr-i nasab-əch jāyti-yi shakar-khāyī-i Hindistanī-balabat ast" Bombay 1269/1853, 447, lines 9-10. "The outstanding master Abū Naṣr al-'Uthī ... whose reed of Egyptian descent is a sugar-chewing parrot of Indian eloquence." On the affinity between Vāsīj and al-Uthī, see also Kāthī Chelebi 1941, 309; Elliot 1867-77, vol. 3, 266; Dorn 1832, 284, Fligel 1865, vol. 2, 182.

45 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 4-5. In fact, Vāsīj visited the Juvānī tomb in 692/1293; Vāsīj 1269/1853, 142. See also an ode (1269/1853, 80) dedicated to the historian's brother Shams

orators and litterateurs, Arabic and Persian, whose particular skills Vāsīj sought to emulate, if not to outdo, including 'Abd al-Hamīd,46 al-Jāhid,47 and al-Zamakhshāri,48 as well as a large number of other well known grammarians, rhetoricians, and literati.49 Even the 'historian' Uthī he cites more for his literary values than the importance of the historical contents of his history. It is thus not without reason that the 20th century Iranian author of the influential Persian literary history Sākh-Shināsī Malīk al-Shu'ara' Bahār regarded Vāsīj as the apex and "the seal of the masters of artistic prose."50 Vāsīj himself expressed explicitly that he wanted to create a model work of Persian literature:

The purpose of blackening these white [pages] is not merely to record the traditions and annals of memorable events [...] The opinion [of the author] is that this book should be a compendium of all the arts of learning, a register of the marvels of literary attainments, a model of eloquent style and a canoon of examples of excellence, [and that] narratives and traditions which are the object of the science of history be presented in it so that the erudites [...] after sound deliberation, may judge that in terms of the graceful-ness of expression, the concatenation of meaning, the beauty of the placement of [letter] included, and the charm of adroitsion of adornment and ornamentation there has not been a precedent of this kind among the Arabs and Persians.51

Vāsīj, who cited a rather illustrous variety of Arabic-writing authors among his models, was in turn emulated by a number of Timurid, Safavid, and Ottoman chroniclers.52 Vāsīj's reception was especially intensive and long lasting in the Ottoman Empire: The 15th century Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (1444-46; 1451-81) had a particularly beautiful copy made, which found its way al-Dīn Juvānī, based on the same rhyme as Rūdakī's famous poem "Bāy-e jāy-e Mālyān əyad hasti..." which Vāsīj cites in extenso. This is further example for Vāsīj's attempts to present himself as the continuator of a living literary legacy.

46 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 5.
47 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 7.
48 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 7.
49 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 7.
50 These include Sahīb Bahā'ī, Qāb b. Sā'id, Ibn 'Abīdār, and others; Vāsīj 1269/1853, 5-8.
51 "Khudāja hāyāt Vāsīj rā khudānandā hukhmā-nastā fānī [...] shomrūnā." Bahār [1942] 1337/1958, vol. 3, 106, praises Vāsīj for his balanced use between Persian and Arabic poetry, but reprimands him for his use of too much poetry from his own pen, which he believes to be easier than citing poetry from other people's works in the appropriate place.
52 Vāsīj 1269/1853, 147. See also Kāthī Chelebi 1310/1892-94, 235, and 1360/1941, 309, who renders the passage in an 'edited' way. Hammar translated this passage apparently [rather freely] from Kāthī Chelebi's citation, not directly from the copies of Vāsīj on the basis of which he later prepared the edition. See Hammar 1818, 244-45. Note that the caligrapher who prepared the Bombay lithograph understood and rephrased Vāsīj's purpose in writing this work, including its literary aspects and aspirations, very clearly in his "Khudārūsā" Vāsīj 1269/1853, 708.
to the private collection of the Austrian Orientalist Hammer (1774-1856), and is now part of the holdings in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.53 The 16th-century Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520), himself the author of a collection of poems in Persian, is said to have held Vashaf in such high esteem that when his personal copy of Vashaf was lost during his Syrian campaign, he had a velocity scribe copy the entire work in 25 days. The man, who was known to be able to copy the Koran and the Divan of Hafiz in eight to ten days each, achieved this miracle, not without being visited by a saintly apparition.54 The historian, poet, and state official Meñhedi-t-Deferi (d. 927/1520-21) translated the work into Ottoman in the 16th century.55

The work continued to be read in the original Persian in educated Ottoman circles well into the 19th century: A number of glossaries, scholia, and commentaries were prepared in order to explain the elaborate, often hyperbolic language. Among these is a commentary and a glossary by Bagdadli Nazimi-zada Husceyn Efendi (fl. 1130/1717),56 and a commentary by Abî Bakr b. Rûstem Ñîrvî.

54 Diez 1811, 273-77, based on the anonymous Tarih-i Sultan Selim, no. 79 in Diez’s private catalogue. The same story is found in the “Selim-name” in the contemporary Tací-i Tevârîh (Ispuhanî Efendi 1254/1837, ed. Mapûkarî 1931). The general language might indicate the “anonymous” ms. in Diez’ collection might be part of this history. Its author was, probably not incidentally, one of those mid- to later 16th century Ottoman historians for whom historiography was as much a literary as an historiographical venture; for a general discussion of this literature, and Vashaf’s position in it, see Fleischer 1986, 235-245.
55 The manuscript of the Hülüs-i Tarîhi Vâshafl (copied in 952/1546) is part of the All Emlâ Collection (Miller Kütüphanesi) no. 619 (not seen). According to Karatay (1954-45, 198-91), this translation is a rather free rendering of Vashaf. The language was simplified, the events arranged in chronological order, and, unlike the original, this “translation” starts with Chinggis Khan’s times (574/1178) and continues down to Timur’s death (807/1405). Apparently, the famous Vashaf commentator Nazimi-zada prepared another translation (Tarîhname-i Tarîh-i Vâshafl; ms. Velayutî Efendi Flügel 4204-20) two centuries later; see Merçî 1984, 233a. Diez (1811, 273-74, fn. 1) indicates the existence of another Turkish translation, entitled “Tarîh-i Mustafî” in his private collection (Quarto Nr. 109).
56 According to Hammer (1818, 244, fn. 1), three copies of Nazimi-zada’s commentary and glossary existed in Vienna during his time, one in the Library of the Austrian Emperor, copied by “Herr von Hussa,” one in the Library of Hammer’s patron Graf von Rezewsky, and one in Hammer’s private collection. These should be the nos. 961, 963, and 964 in Flügel’s Catalogue, 1865, 183-188. For copies held in Istanbul, see Merçî 1984, 233. See also Süreyya Bey 1308-1315 [1891-97], vol. 4, 560; Babinger 1927, 230, fn. 1; Tahir [1914-1928], vol. 3, 153, for the glossary Shâhî-i baghî-i Tarîh-i Vâshafl, located in the Beşir Ağa Library in Istanbul. On Nazimi-zada’s commentary, see also Hamrer 1820, 50. A copy of Vashaf held in the collection of the Oriental Institute in St. Petersburg merits special attention: Baron Rosen pointed out that this manuscript had been copied by “Abûyîn b. Muhammad al-Nuzî al-shâhir bi-Nazimi-zada,” i.e. the same Nazimi-zada who had compiled a glossary and written a detailed commentary on Vashaf’s work. The copy in question contains many vocalizations and glosses, and comprises all five mujâhâds. Rosen 1886, 52, no. 5 in the catalogue, no. 268 in the collection. (fl. 1139/1726-27),57 which were complemented by Ahmed b. Mirzâ Meñhedi b. Hâbib Nâzî-i Efendi (1104-1161/1653-1748),58 Ibrahim Hanî (fl. 1174/1760),59 Resmi Ahmed b. Ibrahim (d. 1197/1783),60 Ahmed Vâshaf Efendi (d. 1806)61 and Meñhedi-t-Deferi (d. 1243/1828)62 composed commentaries on Vashaf’s work as well, and the 19th century Ottoman poet, playwright, and journalist Namk Kemal (1840-1888) wrote a novel on the Mongol Amir Navruz in 1884, which he explicitly stated as being based on Vashaf’s history.63 Moreover,58

57 The Tarih-i Vâshafl, ms. Bagdadli Vehbi Efendi 1139 (73 fols), which covers only a small part of Vashaf’s History, is a commentary following the classical structure of Koran exege- ses, beginning with a citation of the very first phrase of Vashaf’s History, followed by a paragraph explaining this phrase, followed by another citation from the original, and so on. See also Hämmer (1818, 244, fn. 2), who mentions the existence of a commentary of the same title (Hüdâbi Efendi) in Vienna; similarly 1835, 32.
58 The Tarih-i Vâshafl, ms. Mihrâb 3171/2 (fols. 32b-644a), held in the Süleymaniye Li- brary in Istanbul, is what seems to be an alphabetically arranged encyclopaedia-style glossary, often with rubrics/entry heads in the margins, referring to the beginning of the arti- cles. Such headings are more frequent at the beginning of the work than towards the end of it. Hämmer (1818, 244, fn. 2) describes this author, about whom otherwise not much seems to be known, as “Kasikâr Mirza Memlûma Namû.”
59 Aunuer [1866] 1870, 118-119. I have not seen a separate copy of this commentary. How- ever, as the rear inscriptions on the frontispiece of Vashaf’s autographs (ms. Nuruosmaniye 3207, fol. 2a) and an 890/1485 copy (ms. Nuruosmaniye 3203, fol. 1a) of Vashaf’s History indicate, a person named Ibrahim Hanî (d. 1189/1775), who is also known as the author of other works (see Aunuer) who employed the endowment administration of the Sanâti Nâsirî and in the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (t. 1574-1575), founder of the Nuruosmaniye Library, where the abovementioned manu- scripts are still in place. Ms. Nuruosmaniye 3203 contains extensive commentaries in the margins (in Ottoman), which may actually be the first ‘version’ of Ibrahim Hanî’s commentar- y. Both manuscripts also bear the seal “Bu’ânâ-i la‘if Ibrahim Hanî.” Ibrahim Hanî must thus have had ample access to Vashaf’s manuscripts, which explains the extensive work he was able to do on Vashaf’s work. This information would have to be added to Cemil Aşkar’s biography on “Hanîf Ibrahim Efendi,” who mentions Ibrahim Hanî’s duty at the Sanâti Nâsirî, but not the work on Vashaf that he undertook; on Ibrahim Hanî, see also Süreyya Bey 1308-1315 [1891-97], vol. 2, 258.
60 Hammer 1835, 32, mentions a commentary by a certain “Resmi Ahmed” without further information on this author or his work; it can be assumed that this is Ahmed b. Ibrahim known as Resmi, who as diplomat at the Sublime Porte was a somewhat early colleague of Hammer. He undertook journeys to Vienna (in 1725) and Paris (in 1763), and wrote re- ports about these, which Hammer translated into German (in 1809). Hammer’s rival Diez claimed to have met Resmi in Istanbul; see Babinger 1927, 309-312, who does, however, not mention Resmi’s commentary on Vashaf.
61 See Merçî 1984, 233.
62 Hammer 1835, 32, does not provide any further information on the “jüngst verstorben Chodsha Arif Efendi” or his work. On his life — but without mention of the existence of a commentary — see Babinger 1927, 349. For the Istanbul locations of a copy of this and other works described above, see Merçî 1984, 233.
63 Namk Kemal 1308 [1884], 14. The account on Amir Navruz (“Dhâbi-i Amir Navruz”) can be found in Vashaf 1269/1853, 313-325 and 343. — Namk Kemal learned Persian early in his life and was at some time (1867-68) a member of the Chamber of the Sublime Porte and in this sense a late colleague of Hammer-Purgstall. In his historical novels, of which his Vashaf-based story on Navruz is one, Kemal “used artistic prose ... and
according to 19th century Western accounts, Vassaf figured on top of the agenda for the education and examinations in the mastery of Persian language and literature in Ottoman curricula, particularly for civil servants, well into the 19th century. In fact, in these curricula Vassaf held the position in the education in Persian language and literature that Ibn Khaldun held in the science of history. About the status of Vassaf in early 19th century Constantinople, Hammer wrote:

The Lesung Waliāt’s is in Konstantinople für gelehrte Türken die Vollendung ihrer persischen Sprachstudien, wie die Lesung Ibn Chaldün’s die Vollendung ihrer historischen und politischen Bildung. Dennoch lesen sie denselben nur mit Hülfe von eigens darüber verfertigten Commentaren und Glossarien. Thus, Ottoman readers were fascinated and inspired by the work throughout the centuries for various reasons, and they devised the requisite tools — commentaries and glossaries — to make it accessible.

This enthusiasm as well as some of these tools reached the Austrian interpreter to the Sublime Porte and Orientalist Joseph von Hammer (1774-1856), who first introduced Vassaf to a larger European audience in 1809. Hammer compared Vassaf’s style to that of Hariri’s Maqāmāt, and his historical achievement to that of the French historian Bossuet. For Hammer, the 14th century Persian poet Hafiz stood for the highest flowering of Persian poetry, and his contemporary Vassaf for that of rhetorics, as “the unmatched example of Persian rhetorical art,” and the work that is “most certainly the work that is most difficult to understand for Europeans, since it does not only require a solid knowledge of Persian as well as Arabic, but also the most intimate acquaintance with all sciences of the Orient,” requiring more industriousness and study than Tacitus.

was convinced that no one adhering to the detestable literature could write a ‘parallel’ to it.” (Tansel 1978, 877).  

64 Hammer 1818, 244; similarly ibid 1825-37, vol. 8, p. 235: Vassaf 1856, “Vorrede,” ii (unpaginated). On the reception of Ibn Khaldun in the Ottoman environment, see Fleischer 1983.

65 On Hammer see Bietak 1948, and Fück 1955, 158-166. On Hammer’s importance as a mediator in the study of Ottoman, Arabic, and especially Persian literature in Europe, see Solbich 1992; for his role as a mediator (in both directions) between Ottoman and German historians of the Ottoman Empire, see Keiser 1998 [1963]. Note that Dier (1751-1817), one of Hammer’s sternest rivals on the academic scene, was as well a civil servant (“Königlich Preussischer Geheimer Legations-Rath und Privat, ehemals auserordentlicher Gesandter und bevollmächtigter Minister des Königs am Hofe zu Konstantinopel”) at the Sublime Porte in Constantinople.

66 Fundgruben 1809, 113, footnote.

67 Hammer 1818, 244; Vassaf 1856, “Vorrede,” i (unpaginated). Similarly ibid, iii (unpaginated).


69 Within his Geschichte der schönen RedeKünste Persiens, a literary history composed of translated passages of Persian-writing authors, Hammer situates Vassaf, together with his contemporary Hafiz, at the apex of Persian poetry and rhetoric.

70 Hammer 1818, 220; similarly Fundgruben 1809, 113, footnote.

71 Hammer 1818, 244.
It was especially d’Ohsoun (1779-1851) who used Vaṣāf extensively before the Bombay lithograph became available. In a sense, however, the Tāzīyat al-amrār was really ‘discovered’ and made available in Europe by Hammer (1774-1856), who probably became acquainted with the work during his stay in Istanbul through his contact with Ottoman colleagues, who, as mentioned, studied Vaṣāf extensively during their preparation for the exam in Persian language and literature. Hammer acquired a copy for himself, together with a copy of the Ottoman glossary by Naṣīr-ṣadīq, and a copy of the Ottoman commentary by Na’īlī. He bought “a very beautifully transcribed copy of the original for 250 piasters, and the commentary and glossary together for the same sum.” Marks and stamps show that the beautifully ornamented volume, which Flügler later called a “Prachtcodex,” had originally been copied for the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet Fāṭih (r. 1444-46; 1451-81). In his edition of the work, Hammer attempted to capture some of the beauty of this illuminated manuscript, whose Arabic passages are all vocalized, and whose titles and subtitles are written in red and gold. With beautiful taṣīḥ printing characters especially created for this occasion for the “k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei” in Vienna, and with the help of Naṣīr-ṣadīq’s glossary and Na’īlī’s commentary, he printed and translated into German the first of the five volumes of Vaṣāf’s work in 1856. Unfortunately, Hammer did not indicate whether he prepared this preparation solely on the basis of his own copy, or whether he also used the other two manuscripts of the work that existed in Vienna during his time. He seems to have used at least one other manuscript: While the Persian text does not contain any apparatus at all, the German translation is footnoted. In one of the footnotes Hammer refers to a discrepancy between “the two manuscripts” he used regarding the translation of the title of the work, without, however, disclosing the identity of the additional ms. which he referred to.

About a decade after Hammer became acquainted with Vaṣāf’s work, he seems to have still only read parts of it, as some critical information it gives in his Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens (1818) contradicts the actual information provided in the work. On the other hand, when Hammer finally set out to translate the Tāzīyat al-amrār, he imitated Vaṣāf closely, rendering poetry by poetry, rhymed prose (ṣūr) by alliterating stanzas, and elegant prose by what was perceived as elegant prose on the height of German romanticism.

Hammer’s death prevented the publication of the remaining four volumes, and what he had seen as beauty and elegance turned sour soon after the romantic discovery of the Orient had passed its peak: the disappointing comments on Vaṣāf’s style by most European scholars of the later 19th and early 20th century have become a topos in evaluations of this work, which has become known primarily for its difficult language and bombastic style. Thus, the Keeper of the Oriental manuscripts at the British Museum and composer of its catalogue, Charles Rieu, stated in 1879:

The Tāzīkh i Vaṣāf … contains an authentic contemporary record of an important period, but its undisputed value is in some degree diminished by the want of method in its arrangement, and still more by the highly artificial character and tedious redundance in its style. It was unfortunately set up as a model, and has exercised a baneful influence on later historical compositions in Persia.

Rieu, who is just one example for latter 19th and early 20th century evaluations of Vaṣāf’s work, was echoed by E.G. Browne in his influential Literary History of Persia.

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86 See Vaṣāf 1856, 22, fn. 1. A comparison of passages from the 1856 published version and the RIIAS microfilm of Hammer’s Vienna manuscript has yielded slight differences which would support the suggestion that Hammer used more than one manuscript for the preparation of his version of the text.

87 Thus, Hammer points out that Aḥā Sa’īd was the seventh Ikhān (p. 219), even though Vaṣāf, unlike Rashīd al-Dīn, does include the short reign of the Ikhān Baydū (April-October, 1295) in his history, which makes Aḥā Sa’īd the eighth or even ninth Ikhān, depending on whether Ḥūlīgūn is counted as the first Ikhān or not. On the same page, Hammer points out that Ghuţān Khān was the first among the Ikhāns to convert to Islam – despite the fact that Vaṣāf describes at length the Ikhān Ahmad’s conversion to Islam some fifteen years before Ghuţān (p. 219), etc.

88 For an example of a passage translated into rhymed prose, see Vaṣāf 1856, 12-13. Fick 1933, 160-61, notes in particular that the German-speaking circles of Orientalists who were inspired by Hammer’s publication and translation projects during the Romantic movement tended to translate verse into verse, or at least blank verse.


90 Similar judgements can be found in Quatremère 1836, 68, d’Ohsoun ("Le style de Vaṣāf est poétique à l’excès," 1852, vol. 1, p. XXXI; similarly pp. XXXII-XXXIII); Rieu 1879, vol.
Persia, who stated: "We could forgive the author more readily if his work were less valuable as an original authority on the period (1257-1328) of which it treats, but in fact it is as important as it is unreadable."91 Ruef and Browne were followed in their judgment by the not less influential C.A. Storey, who dismissed Vasáj's account as "a turgid history of the Mogol empire in Persia and of some contemporary rulers from A.H. 656/1258 to 712/1313. ...92 Both Browne and Storey's verdicts had multiplying effects, and the image they have created has not left the anglophone scholarship since.93 Almost a century after Ruef, Jan Rypl reprimanded Vasáj for his "excessive tendency to arabizing, his monstrous bombast, unbearable florishness and dallying [with which] Vasáj did tremendous harm to Persian prose, on which he exercised a lastingly bad influence," though the same author also admitted "that from the practical point of view his historical work contains a great deal of extremely valuable material."94

The tenor of all these citations is that the work is both extremely useful and extremely difficult to read.95 Given the rather vivid attention it attracted over time and the efforts that were put into understanding it, expressed in the composition of glossaries and commentaries, and taking into account that other Persian histories of the period have long been edited and/or translated, one might wonder whether the decision about whether and how to publish this work has not largely been one of taste. In fact, it seems as though the want of a critical edition of the Tajzaniyat al-umārī until today is as much related to the plethora of existing manuscripts as it relies on matters of personal and communal predilections, the lack of a critical edition of the work, and the opinion that the "flourishing style" used by Vasáj is inappropriate for the genre of historiography.96

On the other hand, however, the work's historical contents, the independence with which it was written, and the existence of much unique information that cannot be found elsewhere, has always been recognized. This is why in 1963, the Iranian scholar 'Abd al-Muḥammad Aṣ̄ātī prepared a simplified version by straightening out the language, stripping the work of almost all of its extensive poetic content and summarizing if not dropping Arabic passages in poetry and vernacular altogether.97 The drawbacks of such a simplification are obvious: Aṣ̄ātī's omissions include several long letters in Arabic which are rare samples of documents from this period. A close reading and comparison of one of these letters with its counterpart as preserved in Baybars al-Manṣūrī's (d. 725/1325) Manṣūrīč chronicle Zaḥbat al-fikrī reveals that the accuracy of documents preserved in narrative sources at least in this particular instance is very high, as the copies of this letter in the two very different sources is almost entirely identical.98 Other letters contained in Vasáj's work may not have been

91 See, explicitly, d'Ohsson 1852, vol. 1, ali: "La cadence et les consonances ajoutent au charme de ce style poétique, oû l'auteur [i.e., Vasáj] s'est plaî à répandre des trissons de la langue arabe, mais qui convient si peu au genre de l'histoire." By contrast, he praises Rashīd al-Dīn's style for its "noble simplicity suitable to historical writings." (1852, vol. 1, XXXIII). Similarly Mohl 1856, 55, who regards the work rather favorably both for the refinement of its language and its historical value, but thinks that its form is "peu appropriée au sujet." Flügel's (1865, vol. 2, 182) sensitive evaluation of Vasáj's style is rather an exception: "da sie [i.e. die Geschichte] der Verfasser nicht bloß unter historischem, sondern auch vorwiegend unter rhetorischem Gesichtspunkt schreiben und betrachten wissen wollte, so ist sie auch nach diesem zu beurteilen. Was 'Uthī mit seiner Geschichte Jumān ad-daula's als rhetorisches Meisterwerk im Arabischen bezeichnet, dasezte Vasāj im Persischen, ohne dass dadurch ihr historischer Werth zu sehr herabgesetzt werden soll." On the role of etiquette in medieval Persian chronicles, including Vasáj's, see Pedalioukova 1994.

92 Vasāj 1346 hah.1676. Similarly, the version published in Lahore in 1929 under the auspices of Muhammad Iqbal was prepared "after the extraction of the unnecessary Arabic poems and expressions" ("자라 izlahehū an-šarâ‘i‘atul-Isbâ‘iyya ghamū‘i darrī‘atul-

93 As a sample, I compared the Ilkhan Ahmad Tegzār's letter to the Malik Sultan Salyf al-Dīn Qal‘alān (dated Jumādā I, 681/August-September 1282) as given by Baybars al-Manṣūrī (1998, 219-223) with Vasāj's rendition of the same letter as preserved in the following printed and manuscript editions: Vasāj 1269/1353, 113-114; Vasāj 1386, 231-234; Vasāj ms. Aya Sofya 3108 (copied in 1378/1383), fols. 163b-164a; Aṣ̄ātī ms. Aya Sofya 3108 (copied in 1385/1400), fols. 83a-84a; Aṣ̄ātī Tābrīz 71987, pp. 181-185. Differences which separate the Malik rendering of the letter from the sum of the chronicles of Vasāj are: a) the insertion of the name of the carrier and allegedly composer of the letter ("Kamal al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān") in the Malik version, a device the author of the Zaḥbat al-Fikrī may have used in order to make the letter more explicit; this phrase is absent from the letter given by Vasāj. The second difference is more significant, as the choice in wording may have been an ideological one, namely b) the use of the term μωσαϊκος, "kings," (by Vasāj) where the contemporary Malik historian Baybars al-Manṣūrī has the term μαρουμιος, "Muslims" in a passage dealing with the "kings/Muslims" in the regions not under Mongol control. This issue needs further investigation, though here again the wording suggests a rephrasing in the Malikut context, where a clear distinction between "Muslims"
preserved in any other source at all. 99 While Ayâti's merit is to have made Vassâ'î's work more widely accessible, it can, as Ayâti himself readily admits, by no means replace a critical edition of the original.

These three factors – the reception that the work has received over the centuries, its importance as a source for historical, cultural, and literary information; and the value it has in its own right as a model for later writers and as one of the foremost specimens of Persian adab literature – should warrant the edition of this work, regardless of the changing tastes of readers, including today's. Making clear and being conscious about the motives behind the statements about the difficulty or inappropriateness of Vassâ'î's language may help dissipate the reluctance of scholars to use this work, and it is hoped that it will encourage the publication of a critical edition.

We are fortunate to possess an autograph of volume IV of the work (Ms. Nu-ruosmaniye 3207, copied in 711/1312), as well as a number of excellent early copies scattered in various libraries. 100 The task of seeing through these manuscripts, of establishing which groups of copies exist, and deciding which specimens should be taken as the basis of an edition, is part of a project that has yet to be undertaken. 101 This paper is an attempt to draw the attention again to a work that deserves publication, despite and because of its difficulties. It will require the common efforts of a group of specialists from different fields to make Vassâ'î's history available in a critical edition.

Postscript: Since the symposium where the present paper was presented, the digitalization and publication of Hammer's hitherto unpublished German translation of volumes 2-5 of the Taǔşay al-ansâr, of which the original autograph copy and a typescript are extant in the archives of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, was undertaken at the Institute for Iranian Studies in Vienna under the supervision of Dr. Sibylle Wenzler. The project is still in progress, and its results are certainly something to look forward to. See: http://www.oeaw.ac.at/iran/ (under "Projekte").

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99 I am not able to judge for all the letters rendered by Vassâ'î to which extent they were (or were not) preserved in other media. This issue certainly deserves further investigation.

100 Though the earliest known copy containing the fifth volume seems to date from as late as 686/1462 (Vienna, N.P. 220a Flügel Il, Nr. 995), there are earlier copies extant particularly of vols. 1, 2, and 4, among them Aya Soylâ 3109 (vols. ii, copied in 718/1317); D.M.G. 14 (vols. ii, copied in 740/1339); Tehran, Ardâbîyet 81/25 (vols. i, copied in 750/1349); Tehran, Malîk 4093 (end of vol. iii, copied in Muhammâd 857/1453); Tehran, Malîk 3900 (vols. ii, copied in 858/1454); Êrû Osmanîyâ 3204 (3) (vols. iv-v, copied in 871/1466); Bodcîian 147 (copied in 885/1481); Mağlî 660/10 (copied in 886/1481); Êrû Osmanîyâ 3203 (copied in 890/1485). See Storey/Bregel 1972, vol. 2, 769-775, and Afâhât/Dânish-pazhuh 1973, vol. 2, 98-100.

101 As Flügel pointed out in 1865 (vol. 2, 188), the various existing glossaries and commentaries on this work would facilitate such a task.


"A TURGID HISTORY OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE IN PERSIA"


Ms. Istanbul, Nurusosmaniye 3207 (vol. iv, autograph, copied in 711/1312).

Ms. Istanbul, Aya Sofya 3109 (vols. i-ii; copied in 738/1337).

Ms. Vienna N.F. 220a (= Flügel II, Nr. 959) = RIIAS microfilm no. Vienna 4 (all 5 vols.; copied in 866/1462).

Ms. Istanbul, Aya Sofya 3108 (vols. i-ii; copied in 885/1480).

Ms. Istanbul, Nurusosmaniye 3203 (all 5 vols.; copied in 890/1485).
