

Maneckji Limji Hataria from Edward G. Browne's Viewpoint

Sara Molaie
JSIS 700
04/17/2018

This paper examines how the British orientalist, Edward Browne (1862-1926) describes the Zoroastrian reformist, Maneckji Limji Hataria, known as Maneckji Sahib (1813-1890), in a negative, even condescending portrait. Given that Browne and Maneckji shared several modern ideas such as universal brotherhood and sympathy with Iranian reformist and nationalist movements, Browne's unsympathetic depiction of Maneckji is puzzling.

The paper concludes that Browne's depiction of Maneckji is a sign that, despite their common ideologies (including Maneckji's personal investment in Iranian reform as well as Browne's active role in the constitutional movement in the 20th century), there seems to be an unbridgeable gulf between them, which is inseparable from larger problems in Iranian nationalism. Browne's view of Maneckji primarily as an outsider rather than a fellow global citizen and reformer raises the question: if Browne was so sympathetic to Iranian reformists and Zoroastrians as a religious minority, why did he have such strong feelings against Maneckji? As this paper will show, Browne's problems were rooted in his commitment to a particular form of Iranian reform, while Maneckji represented a rival view.

To demonstrate the problems in Brown's portrait of Maneckji, the paper is broken down into four parts. The first examines Browne's life, including his training in Near Eastern languages and the medical fellowship which brought him to Iran. The second details his reporting of Maneckji, including excerpts from the travelogue he published about his adventures. The third section discusses Maneckji's background and the many contributions he made to the Zoroastrian culture, both practically and intellectually. Finally, the fourth section revisits Browne's version of the narrative in light

of what we can know of Iranian reform movements at the time and offers an analysis of Browne's motivations.

As the historian Shireen Mahdavi notes, 19th century Iran was already hosting a number of Westerners, including Western missionaries and medical doctors with medical and non-medical purposes.

By the mid-nineteenth century the impact of the West was felt in many walks of life in Persia...The main agents of this [medical] impact were the European doctors of the Qajar Shahs and the nobility, the doctors assigned to diplomatic missions...the role of the foreign powers and missionaries in introducing Western medicine into Persia was not entirely altruistic but related to non-medical objectives... All travelers' account bear witness to the fact that whether they were physicians or not, throughout the country people flocked to them in the hope that they might be a *hakim-i farangi* (foreign doctor) They believed that all foreigners were doctors, to such an extent that travelers resorted to distributing harmless pills as medicine...E. G Browne relates how on numerous occasions ordinary people gathered to see him, believing in the extraordinary power of Western medicine.¹

At the same time that Europeans were taking a renewed interest in Iran, some Parsee philanthropists in India took steps to re-establish the ties with their coreligionists. In the meantime, improving Iranian Zoroastrians' conditions quickly merged with the goal of reforming the Iranian Zoroastrian community and consequently forged links with Iranian reformists, aiming at revising their legal status under Islamic rule.² Approving Zoroastrians' citizenship was important because since the Islamization of Iran in the 7th century, Persian Zoroastrians – along with other religious communities in Iran such as Jews and Christians - have experienced discrimination for belonging to a non-Islamic tradition. The prejudices and intolerance of Muslims towards Zoroastrians led to a mass

¹ Shireen Mahdavi, "Shahs, Doctors, Diplomats and Missionaries in 19th Century Iran," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (November 2005): 169-191 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30037691>

² Monica Ringer, "Reform Transplanted: Parsi Agents of Change amongst Zoroastrians in Nineteenth Century Iran," *International Society of Iranian Studies* 42, no. 4 (September, 2009): 549-560 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25597581>

migration to India between the 7th and the 9th centuries CE. This migration shaped a diasporic Zoroastrian community, known as Parsees.³ The persecution of Zoroastrians drove them to become reformers and make common cause with members of the new movements in 19th century Iran.

One of the instances of this trans-regional attempt for the reformation of Iran in the 19th century is the meeting between the British physician and orientalist, Edward G. Browne and the Zoroastrian reformer, Maneckji Limji Hataria, also known as Maneckji Sahib.⁴ The intersection of these two critical figures in Iran and particularly their brief relationship represents a tremendous missed opportunity for trans-national cooperation, but the reason why Browne's relationship with Maneckji was so poor has never been fully explored.

I. Edward G. Browne

Edward Granville Browne (7 February 1862 – 5 January 1926) was born in Stouts Hill, in Uley, Gloucestershire, England to a wealthy family.⁵ Despite the efforts of his father, Sir Benjamin Browne, to educate him in science, Browne ultimately followed his personal passion and entered the Near Eastern studies field. His Oriental studies started with learning Islamic world languages (first Turkish, and soon Persian, and Arabic).

³ Jamsheed K. Choksy, a distinguished professor of Religious Studies narrates that for the remaining Zoroastrians, the persecutions in Iran increased over centuries until it culminated under the rule of Qajar monarchies. Some of the discriminations included Zoroastrians' second class citizenship, forced conversion to Islam, demolishment of funerary towers and temples, forced relocation and labor work, the outlawing of intermarriage between Muslims and Zoroastrians, restrictions on socio-economic relations with them, the jezya "poll tax", and public humiliation. "From around the year, 750 onward, Zoroastrians were required to wear yellow colored caps, shawls, belts and badges so that Muslims could easily identify members of that religious minority." The persecution of Zoroastrians drove them to become reformers and make common cause with members of the new movements in 19th century Iran.

⁴ Sahib is an honorific term meaning sir or master. In India, it is a term of respect used, especially during the colonial period, when addressing or referring to a European. Dictionary.com, "Sahib"

⁵ G. Michael Wickens, Juan Cole, and Kamran Ekbal, "BROWNE, EDWARD GRANVILLE," [http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/browne-edward-granville - pt1](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/browne-edward-granville-pt1) (December 30, 2012).

Upon his graduation in the Cambridge Natural Sciences in 1882 and despite his father's cajoling to stay in medical field, in 1884 Browne took up "Indian" languages on his own initiative. Finally, in 1887 his passion bore fruit. That year, he was awarded a medical fellowship, which enabled him to travel to Iran and spend a year among the Persians. *A Year Amongst The Persians* is a remarkable book on his observations during his time in Iran (1887-1888).⁶

After his return to Britain in 1888, he took an academic post in Persian and Near Eastern studies. He was first University Lecturer in Persian and not only contributed extensively to Persian Studies scholarship, but also played a key role in the study and translation of some classical Persian texts. "He promoted 'Oriental' studies at Cambridge in various ways, especially by encouraging academic training for candidates in Levant Consular Service and Egyptian, Sudanese, and Indian civil services and became the central figure in categorizing the Islamic collection in Cambridge."⁷

Browne's interest in Persian language and culture on the one hand, and his concerns about social and political issues of developing countries- especially Iranians' right to self-determination- on the other, must have strengthened his burning passion for pursuing a lifelong career in Oriental studies. His *A Year Amongst the Persians*, which is considered to be a classical type of travelogue, was first published in 1893. Sir E.

Denison Ross has described this work as

one of the world's most fascinating and instructive books of travel. . . It is, however, more than a mere record of travel, and goes far beyond the ordinary limits of such works, for apart from its lively and entrancing descriptions of Persia and its people, it is an infallible guide to modern Persian literature and thought, and as such should always find

⁶ *Encyclopædia Iranica*, "BROWNE, EDWARD GRANVILLE."

⁷ *Ibid.*

its place on the student's shelf beside the author's monumental *Literary History of Persia*.⁸

R. P. Dewhurst, the British scholar of Persian studies commented, "[O]f this book as a whole it may be said that it reveals an astonishing memory, a knowledge of the language and literature of the country phenomenal in a young man, and a wonderful sympathy with all that is best in the culture and mental outlook of the Persian people."⁹

In the description of his journey, Browne goes along with the caravans and visits the metropolitan cities in different provinces of Iran, including Tabriz, Shiraz, Yazd, Kerman, Isfahan, and Tehran. In his narratives, he provides vivid descriptions of lands and peoples and highlights the cultural and sub-cultural elements of 19th century Persia. He is genuinely concerned with topics such as natural and urban environments- perhaps due to his natural scientific lens- but devotes most of his attention to customs, traditions, and people's beliefs and perspectives.

It is important to mention that Browne's observations of Persian culture are not confined to language and literature or the daily matters of Persian life. His desire for democracy, justice, liberty and toleration drove him to keep a keen eye on the political and social affairs of his region of study. This desire ultimately led him to identify himself with the reform movement but at the same time, like many other contemporaries, Browne admired pre-Islamic Iran because he believed that it exemplified a balance of religious coexistence and justice. Wickens states,

[Browne] admired the 'stability of national type, and power of national recovery' of Persia throughout its long history and was fascinated by such ideals as the 'interdependence of all mankind' and the 'obligation of tolerance towards those of other

⁸ Denison Ross, "A Memoir," in *A Year amongst the Persians*, ed. Edward G. Browne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), vii

⁹ R. P. Dewhurst, "A Year Amongst the Persians," review of *A Year Amongst the Persians*, by E. G. Browne, *Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, no. 3 (July 1928): 695-697

religions' that he discovered in the classical Persian epics.¹⁰

Comparing Iran to European countries, in particular to Britain, Browne called for liberty and democracy in Iran and was highly intrigued by the new reformist movements in the society. His attraction to Babism and Baha'ism was spurred in no small part from his interest in the modern notions of the principle of "the universal brotherhood of human family."¹¹ Browne found this idea very cosmopolitan and humanitarian in its European form, and believed it was being applied by contemporary reform movements in Iran. As a result, he tended to focus on the role of minorities in society and used his book as a way to give them a voice.

In *A Year Amongst The Persians*, for example, he not only describes his visit to the Zoroastrian community and includes the ancient Iranian roots of their customs, beliefs and theology but also touches on their interaction with the broader Muslim society. Browne was impressed by their perseverance under the persecutions and restrictions by Qajar dynasty. He provides his readers with detailed information on the interrelations between Muslims and Zoroastrians. For example, he recorded his conversation with a Zoroastrian man named Iran on this crucial topic,

Often it happens that one of us Zoroastrians, either through mere ignorance and heedlessness, or because he is in love with a Muhammadan girl, whom he cannot otherwise win, renounces the faith of his fathers and embraces Islam. Such not infrequently repent of their action, and in this case we supply them with money to take them to Bombay, where they can return, without danger, which they would incur here, to their former faith. Often their Muhammadan wives also adopt the Zoroastrian religion, and thus a whole family is won over to our creed. 'I was not aware,' I remarked, 'that it was possible under any circumstances for one not born a Zoroastrian to become one. Do you consent to receive back a renegade after any lapses of time?' 'No,' answered Iran, 'not after six months or so; for if they remain Musalmans for longer than this, their hearts

¹⁰ Jamsheed K. Choksy, "ZOROASTRIANISM ii. Historical Review: from the Arab Conquest to Modern Times"

¹¹ R. A. Nicholson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS Belonging to the Late E.G. Browne*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), viii

are turned black and incurably infected by the law of Islam, and we cannot then receive them back amongst us.¹²

Browne also points to the interactions between Zoroastrians and non-Iranian men of government,

Of the English, towards whom they look as their natural protectors, the Persian Zoroastrians have a very high opinion, though several of them, and especially Dastur Tir-andaz, deplored the supineness of the English Government, and the apathy with which it regards the hands stretched out to it for help. 'You do not realize,' said they, 'what a shield and protection the Englishman is, else you would surely not grudge it to poor unfortunate for whom no one cares, and who in any time of disturbance are liable to be killed or plundered without redress.'¹³

Despite sweeping comments about society as a whole, Browne also got to know several individuals personally, including Dastur Tir-andaz, the Zoroastrian man mentioned in the above quote:

Old Dastur Tir-andaz was to me one of the most interesting because he was one of the most thoroughgoing and least sophisticated, of the Zoroastrians. He appeared to be in high favor with the governor, Prince Imadu'd-Dawla, from whom he was continually bringing messages of goodwill to me. In three of the four visits, which I paid to the Prince, he bore me company, standing outside in the courtyard while I sat within.¹⁴

Browne's discussion of religion and politics in his account of the city of Yazd is strikingly different than his contemporary Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson's travelogue, *Persia Past And Present*. Jackson (1862-1937), as an American pioneer in Iranian studies and Zoroastrianism, visited Iran in the early 20th century¹⁵ and contrary to Browne, Jackson's narrative focuses solely on the internal affairs of the Zoroastrian community rather than their role in society as a whole.¹⁶ Browne's account on Zoroastrianism and the city of Yazd reveals his broader interest in political and reform

¹² Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 416

¹³ *Ibid*, 417

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 418

¹⁵ William W. Malandra, "JACKSON, ABRAHAM VALENTINE WILLIAMS."

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jackson-abraham-valentine-williams> (August 24, 2012).

¹⁶ A. V. Williams Jackson, *Persia Past and Present* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1906), 353-400

matters. His discussions are inspired by his sensitivity to the external affairs of the community and their connections to the social and political settings. As Geoffrey Nash addresses in *From Empire to Orient*, it was in fact Browne's humanitarianism rather than the theory of nationalism that led him to involve in the liberal movements. As an independent intellectual and fearless speaker, Browne found himself mostly in opposition to the British government colonialist policies. His antipathy to imperialism was due to his belief in plurality of nations. He believed that while nations would preserve their independent characters, they all have the potential to co-exist and cooperate with each other. This way he dedicated to the Persian cause.¹⁷

Browne's sensitivity to liberty and social justice is in parallel with the religious coexistence in Iran sought and promised by reformists. Throughout his account, he is highly aware of figures associated with reform – especially if he meets those people in person. “He was not only acquainted with Jamal-al-Din Afghani and Mirza Malkom Khan but also knew many of the nationalist leaders who had been exiled to France and England after the bombardment of Parliament by Mohammad-Ali Shah in 1908.”¹⁸

II. Edward Browne's Meeting with Maneckji Sahib

It was during his travel from Tehran to Isfahan that Browne stopped in the city of Kashan and had a conversation with his host about Babism, the new religious movement. He had many correspondences with Azalis and later met with Baha'u'llah and his son, Abdul Baha in Akka, Palestine.¹⁹ In Kashan, he was told, “the new religion was making

¹⁷ Geoffrey P. Nash, *From Empire to Orient* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 139-168

¹⁸ *Encyclopædia Iranica*, “BROWNE, EDWARD GRANVILLE.”

¹⁹ Baron Victor Rosen, “Some Remarks on the Babi Texts,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, no.2 (April 1892): 259-335

great progress even amongst Zoroastrians,²⁰ which Browne later witnessed in Yazd in 1888. He devoted rich discussion to the theological and eschatological concerns of Zoroastrians in his Travelogue. In Kashan he met Mirza Huseyn Khan, “the chief of the customs”²¹ and “the most admirable conversationalist”²² he ever met. Browne was invited by Mirza Huseyn Khan to supper along with Maneckji Sahib. Browne’s first impression of Maneckji is based on this supper. He narrates,

You must know, then, that when he was appointed by the Parsees at Bombay to come and live in Persia and take care of the Guebres,²³ and try to influence the Shah in their favour, he knew nothing about Persia or Persians; for, though of course the Parsees are really Persians by descent, they have now become²⁴ more like Firangis.²⁵

In *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1893), Browne reports an anecdote that in transition from Bombay to Iran in 1854, Maneckji and his fellows stopped in the hot weather of Hormoz Island, in south of Iran. Browne narrates, before taking rest, Maneckji’s Isfahani friend brought him some raw cucumber to eat. Maneckji had never seen this dish before and became suspicious, assuming that his companion wanted to poison him in this lonely spot, and take his money. Thus, Maneckji initially refused to have the food with the rest of the fellows, but he eventually relented, ate some and he had some water afterwards to quench his thirst.

So far from being able to rest, he found himself attacked by a strange feeling of oppression, and his thirst soon returned twofold. So he got up and took another drink of water and then lay down again, but now his state was really pitiable: he could hardly breathe, his stomach swelled up in a most alarming manner, and he was tormented by thirst. Then his suspicion returned with redoubled force... while he was rolling about in agony, tormented by these alarming thoughts, he suddenly became aware of a strange

²⁰ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 189

²¹ *Ibid*, 190

²² *Ibid*

²³ In Iran, Zoroastrians are called Guebres as well by Muslims

²⁴ Firangi is the Persian term for foreigner

²⁵ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 191

looking winged animal sitting on a wall close to him, and apparently gloating over his suffering.²⁶

Browne continues the anecdote by telling how Maneckji became certain that the animal was an angel of death and so was tremendously frightened, till his friend reassured him that the animal was an owl, not an angel of death. Soon after, Maneckji recovered from the stomachache.

Browne characterizes Maneckji in this story as an ignorant Zoroastrian rustic, a Parsee who knows nothing about Persia or Persians, someone who puts himself at risk of indigestion because he was unaware of common habits.²⁷ As a result, Browne paints Maneckji's personality as naïve, frightened, melancholic, and uncertain. In the later chapters in the travelogue, Browne would still remember Maneckji, but does not make even a slight effort to include any further facts about him – unusual especially in light of his interest in reform and his natural curiosity.

In contrast, many historians have described Maneckji with far different characteristics. Not only was Maneckji known as a wealthy merchant among Iranian traders and a governmental link between Great Britain and India, but his accomplishment in abolishing the jezya law in 1882 was a striking action in the eyes of reformists. In addition, Maneckji had been living in Iran since 1854, for about three decades, and prior to his migration to Iran, he used to inform himself about Iran through his voyages to the surrounding regions. Here a brief review of Maneckji's social and religious life will provide us with more knowledge about Maneckji than Browne supplies.

III. Maneckji Limji Hataria

²⁶ Ibid, 193

²⁷ Perhaps having raw cucumber and water one after the other and lying down afterwards

Maneckji Limji Hataria (1813-1890) was born to an Indian Zoroastrian family near Surat in northwestern India. He began working as a Parsee commercial agent at the age of fifteen; as Juan Cole has noted, this was a common path for young Zoroastrians at the time. He also cultivated close connections with the British Raj, beginning a career in the administration of the presidency of Bombay. In 1838, he was awarded increasing responsibilities for the “treasury of tax revenues” until he resigned working for the government in 1840-41. Maneckji’s lengthy service for the British administration indicates his capabilities in meeting the government’s standards in detailing financial reports.²⁸ During the years that followed, Maneckji Sahib traveled as a merchant, again in Sind, which was under British rule and incorporated into the Presidency of Bombay. In 1846, he worked as the manager and agent in the trading enterprise of the Bombay Parsee.²⁹

By the time he came to Iran in 1854, Maneckji was a wealthy and well-connected merchant, well-placed to begin a series of actions for the betterment of the Zoroastrian community. He founded schools, restored the Zoroastrian houses of worship in the cities of Yazd, Kerman, and Tehran, and organized several circles for the removal of segregation and impoverishment of the Iranian Zoroastrian community.³⁰ Historian Juan Cole narrates,

In 1964, Manakji went back to India, and there he reported on the strained conditions of Zoroastrians in Iran to his co-religionists. In British India, where Bombay spun a web of international commerce, the Zoroastrians had emerged as a wealthy community of merchants, agents, go-betweens and investors, enjoying

²⁸ Rashid Shahmardan, “Farzāna-ye Mānekji Hātaryā,” in *Tāriḳ-e zartōštiān. Farzānegān-e zartōšti* (Tehran: 1983), 617-43

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Juan Cole, “Tablet to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Concerning the Questions of Manakji Limji Hataria,” Baha’i Library Online, accessed April 15, 2018 http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_cole_questions_manakji

religious freedom. Manakji Sahib ('Sahib' being an Indian honorific) convinced the Parsis to send him back to Tehran as their Philanthropical agent.³¹

His familiarity with the broader world and capacity in handling distinctive governmental projects soon became apparent.³² After a decade residing in Iran as an emissary, in 1864, he returned to India, to raise the awareness of his co-religionists of the chaotic political atmosphere in Iran and the depth of the hardships and persecutions towards Zoroastrians there. Maneckji finally convinced the Parsees of Bombay to support this project by charity and got permission to reside in Tehran, so he could centralize his projects and ease his access to the houses of government. Although he was unfamiliar with Iranian royal protocol, Maneckji was familiar with the British ambassador to the court of Qajar, Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, who played a role in the abolition of jezya law in 1884. More importantly, in 1882, Maneckji led a diplomatic gathering at the British mission and expressed his gratitude for the shah and the Great Britain.³³

Like Browne, Maneckji also corresponded with the leaders of other contemporary movements, either religious, nationalist or reformist, and built relationships with the members of these movements. They both were in touch with the pioneering Iranian modernists, including but not limited to Mirza Malkom Khan, Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh, and Prince Jalal al-Din Mirza. Thanks to his secretary, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpayegani – a former Shi'ite clergyman and later a Baha'i - Maneckji also corresponded with Baha'u'llah³⁴ and even posed personal theological questions.³⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² Moojan Momen, "The Bahā'ī Faith," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 505-16.

³³ Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund, "News from Persia," *Proceedings and Reports* (1883):69-73; <http://www.fravahr.org/spip.php?article84>

³⁴ It is noteworthy that in one of the correspondences, in regard to his question of the value of Persian and Arabic languages, Baha'u'llah states "both Arabic and Persian are laudable. That which is desired of a

Among both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian Iranians, Maneckji has been primarily remembered for his foundation of the Iranian Amelioration Fund (1854), his writing *Risale Ezhar-Siat-e Iran*, his role in the abolition of *jezya* in 1882, and his significant endeavors for the unification of Iranian Zoroastrians and Indian Parsee communities. Malcolm Deboo, a prominent interfaith activist working with the Zoroastrian Centre in London, has referred to him as the “Martin Luther King of Zoroastrianism.”³⁶

As an international merchant and active Parsee, Maneckji was very well connected with men of the Qajar government as well as European diplomats. In Tehran, he either communicated or met with different European missionaries.³⁷ Besides the British ambassador, he knew the French diplomat and orientalist Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, and the Japanese envoy Masaharu Yoshida.³⁸ The Prussian Heinrich Brugsch referred to Maneckji as “the Yazd Zoroastrians’ wise leader, very familiar with European customs and practices.”³⁹

language is that it convey the intent of the speaker, and either language can serve this purpose. And since in this day the Orb of divine knowledge hath risen in the firmament of Persian, that tongue deserveth every praise.” Shoghi Effendi, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, 15-54

³⁵ For instance, in one of his correspondences, Maneckji asks “the latter Prophets such as David, Abraham, Moses and Jesus confirmed the truth of the Prophets gone before them, but said: ‘Such was the law in the past, but in this day the law is that which I proclaim,’ The Arabian Prophet, however, hath said: ‘Through My appearance every law hath proven to be unsound and no law holdeth but Mine.’ Which of these creeds is acceptable and which of these leaders is to be preferred?”

Shoghi Effendi, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, 15-54

³⁶ Malcolm Minoo Deboo, "Seth Maneckji Limji Hataria, The Martin Luther King of Zoroastrianism & The Struggle for Zoroastrian Civil Rights in Iran,"

[http://www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Seth Maneckji Limji Hataria.htm](http://www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Seth%20Maneckji%20Limji%20Hataria.htm) (2006).

³⁷ Maneckji was a native Gujarati speaker and was fluent English speaker because in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, under the rule of British Raj, Parsis learned English.

³⁸ Daniel Sheffield, “Iran, the Mark of Paradise or the Land of Ruin” in *On the Wonders of Land and Sea*. ed. Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma (Boston: Trustees for Harvard University, 2013), 37.

³⁹ Heinrich Brugsch, *Reise der K. Preussischen Gewandtschaft nach Persien 1860 und 1861 I*, Leipzig, 1862.

Maneckji's legacy, in other words, is anything but the rustic bumpkin Browne depicts in his travelogue; on the contrary, he appears cosmopolitan, well-connected, and competent in achieving tangible political gains. Nor was he ignorant. He contributed to the cultural identity of the Parsee community by producing several kinds of publications which were powerfully influential.⁴⁰ Overall, Maneckji either authored or sponsored the publication of many books: 1) historical books, such as the history of royal dynasties, a Persian language dictionary with ancient Persian words, a social history of the Sassanid Period, a chronicle of the kings of Iran, nationalist history, a history of Babism, 2) a compilation of legal and religious texts, such as the Avestan and Pahlavi Vandidad, apocryphal religious literature: letters of his questions to Baha'u'llah, collections of moral precepts attributed to ancient sages, and 3) commentary on contemporary events, like folios of a Middle Persian text and speeches and correspondences between Zoroastrians of Iran and India.⁴¹

Maneckji's reputation as a 19th century nationalist "along with other prominent figures in reshaping Iranian national identity," is undeniable. Not only religiously, but also socially and politically, Maneckji was an influential figure in the history of both modern Iran and modern Zoroastrianism.

IV. What is Behind the Misrepresentation of Maneckji in Edward G. Browne's Travelogue?

The documents of 19th century Iran reveal a portrait of Maneckji far different than Edward Browne's. It is hard to believe that Browne's curiosity and keenness about the

⁴⁰ Some of these works are: Introduction to *Nāma-yi Khusrawān*, *A History of the Parsis in the honor of the Qajar prince*, Jala al-Din Mirza Qajar *Farāzistān* - a mytho-historical narrative of ancient Iranian history, *Āthār-i 'Ajam* - the result of the archeological activities of his time, *Risāle Ezhār-e Siāt-e Irān* ("a treatise expounding upon a trip to Iran") are some of them.

⁴¹ *Encyclopædia Iranica*, "HATARIA, MANEKJI LIMJI."

ongoing ideologies and the figures associated with them, as well as his desire for liberty and social justice, especially with his sensitivity to religious minorities and in particular Zoroastrians, had missed the significance of a well-known Zoroastrian activist like Maneckji who was very familiar with British administration, diplomats, customs, and voyages. In fact, it was Edward Browne and Maneckji's common socio-political concerns that linked them to each other. Hence, it is remarkable that his travelogue hardly mentions Maneckji, except in unflattering terms, despite his influential role in shaping the history of 19th century Iran.

Due to the lack of evidence about Browne's intentions, it is hard to judge his motivations accurately. Part of the reason, ironically, may be that Maneckji was fascinated with the West and had such a strong rapport with the British government. This put him at odds with Browne, who was himself fascinated with the East and strongly opposed his country's policies and foreign diplomacy. At the age of only fifteen, Browne's interest in the Middle East was aroused by the Russo-Turkish War, where, swimming against the tide of British public opinion, he sympathized with the Turks. Later in life, Browne opposed the British government on the "Persian Question"⁴² and their direction in Middle Eastern diplomacy in general, as well as on issues in Ireland, South Africa, anti-Germanism and concomitant pro-Russian and pro-French policy.⁴³

In short, Maneckji may have appeared too Europeanized, not sufficiently Iranian, for Browne's imagination. Browne secretly believed that he had become more authentically Persian than Maneckji, although the latter was from Persian descent. On

⁴² World Digital Library, "Persia and the Persian Question."

⁴³ Christopher Buck, "Edward Granville Browne," Baha'i Online Library, Accessed April 14, 2018, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/buck_browne_british_writers.pdf

one occasion, he even referred to Maneckji as a “firangi,” meaning foreigner, the term that is used to address “Westerners.” Ironically, one of the crucial points in Browne’s account of Maneckji shows that he was not quite as Persian as he believed himself. At the moment that Maneckji was suffering from a stomachache, Browne relates that Maneckji saw an owl and thought of an angel of death and was tremendously frightened, till his servant assured him that it was only an animal. Browne’s report of Maneckji implies that Maneckji was totally lost in his own mind. However, he is missing a very important point: the owl symbolism in Indian and Iranian culture.

In Indian, Iranian and Arab cultures, the owl is the animal of death. Th. Emil Homerin, the American scholar of religion have shared some words on this matter.

The owl, associated with death and afterlife, is an ancient and important religious symbol... The depth of the psyche with its nocturnal fears and fantasies is like the dark realm of the night, full of lurking creatures and sinister things; night, dark like death and the grave... If an owl landed on a house, it was believed to announce the owner’s death or that of a family member.⁴⁴

This belief exists even in modern days. In contrast, in the West, inspired by the Greek and Roman mythologies, owl is the animal of wisdom, brightness and courage.⁴⁵ Hence, Browne’s comments on Maneckji’s fear in fact reveals *his* unfamiliarity with the Persian world rather than Maneckji’s.

Besides Browne’s egotistical attitude, there seem to be two reasons behind his

⁴⁴ Emil T. Homerin, “Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arab Poetry,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3, (1935) 165-184

⁴⁵ Homerin indicates, “The owl’s representation in ancient Greece was less metaphorical, revealing its occult origins, it was a fetish animal in many regions of the peninsula and first appears on Athenian coins in the late seventh century B.C. but without the goddess Athena. The enormous eyes of the depiction suggest that the coinage also served as a talisman against malevolent forces. The Greek word for owl, *glauks*, is related to *glaukos*, an adjective which can modify the moon, stars, dawn, the sheen of an olive leaf, and the sea. The owl then, was probably named for its bright, piercing eyes, and *glaukos* describes other frightening eyes like those of the dragon and the glittering eyes of a lion about to charge.”

misrepresentation of Maneckji: first, the thoroughness of the information he provided, and second, the fragmented, disunified visions of modernity that swirled among the reformist camp. The first reason requires reviewing R. P. Dewhurst's words of praise about Browne's travelogue:

Of this book as a whole it may be said that it reveals an astonishing memory, a knowledge of the language and literature of the country phenomenal in a young man, and a wonderful sympathy with all that is best in the culture and mental outlook of the Persian people.⁴⁶

Despite the accuracy of the materials presented in the Browne's travelogue, there is still a considerable doubt as to their actual insight. One of the instances that suggests this characteristic is Browne's interest in religious minorities. Despite Browne's deep interest in the religious movements and minorities and despite his visit of Zoroastrians in the city of Yazd, he does not touch on the interactions between different minorities.⁴⁷ His reports merely reflect how the Zoroastrians interacted with the government and the larger society. Although in many instances he describes circles that Babis and Zoroastrians share, his reports lack information about any connections between these two groups.

Browne claims that despite his Persian heritage, Maneckji seemed more like a foreigner rather than an Iranian because of his limited Persian skills. Browne considers himself more equipped than Maneckji in Persian customs, even though he was coming from a much more distantly foreign background. On the other hand, Maneckji was well-versed in British and European customs, because of his multiple positions in Indian government and his travels to Europe.

⁴⁶ Dewhurst, "A Year Amongst the Persians," review of *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 695

⁴⁷ Susan Stiles, "Early Zoroastrian Conversions To The Baha'i Faith In Yazd, Iran," in *From Iran East And West*, ed. Juan R. Cole and Moojan Momen (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984), 67-91

The second and more likely hypothesis is that though the various modernist trends in 19th century Iran might seem to be natural allies at first sight, they were not compatible with each other either practically or ideologically. Mangol Bayat, and recently, Zia Ebrahimi have revealed these incompatibilities within the modernization of Iran.

The incompatibilities included, but are not limited to, choosing whether to embrace religion, modify it, or reject it, eliminating or preserving the Arabic elements in Persian language and culture, reviving pre-Islamic Iran or secularizing the Qajar government and unifying Iranians under the banner of religion or language. In such a context, the miscommunication between Browne and Maneckji would become more understandable. They were not the only reformers who took opposite views on policy questions; it was a recurring problem in the reformist camp in general, who tended either towards the highly-idealized West, as Maneckji did, or the mythical past, as Browne did. The followers of the first idea were the modernists or reformists, who had pragmatic approach towards the transformation of Iran and attempted to adapt European models of states.

The second idea shaped a group of nationalists, which Zia-Ebrahimi calls “dislocative” nationalists.⁴⁸ Under the influence of the European orientalism, especially with the development of comparative philology and Aryan race theory, this group believed that Iran was originally part of Europe. They believed that the pre-Islamic past was utopian and that the Achaemenid Empire, the first Persian dynasty in 6th century BCE was

⁴⁸ Reza Zia Ebrahimi, “The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism,” interview by, interview by John Ghazvinian, NewBooksNetWork.com, April 15, 2018
<http://newbooksnetwork.com/reza-zia-ebrahimi-the-emergence-of-iranian-nationalism-race-and-the-politics-of-dislocation-columbia-up-2016/>

the ideal civilized model of a nation. There did not exist any poverty or superstition among the citizens, and Iranians benefited from a non-religious state.

Parallel to antiquity, pre-Islamic Iran was understood as the age of science and a non-religious civilization. In their attempts to revive the pre-Islamic Persian utopia, the dislocative nationalists emphasized the theory of race and found their ways to eliminate the Arabic elements from Persian language and culture. Zia Ebrahimi discusses that Arthur De Gobineau, the French ambassador of the Qajar dynasty had racist ideas. He basically believed that only a pure civilization can become a great civilization. When races mix with each other, it results in degeneration of that civilization. Likewise, being mixed with Arabs, Iran lost its purity and nobility as a race or civilization. To restore the purity, Iran had to eliminate the Arabic elements.⁴⁹

Below is a list of five influential 19th century figures who believed in Iran's need of renewal and transformation and took important steps towards implementing their ideas of change, but disagreed strongly among themselves. These figures are

- Fath Ali Akhundzadeh known as Akhundov (1812-1878)
- Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1854-1897)
- Sayyad Jamal al-Din Asadabadi - known as Afghani (1838-1879)
- Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908)
- Abdul-Rahim Talibzadeh known as Talibov Tabrizi (1834-1911)

These central figures had some shared concerns but shaped their own individual ideologies depending on their personal perceptions, beliefs, backgrounds and preferences.

The following pages briefly present their ideological standpoints.

Fathali Akhundzadeh was a writer-journalist who was committed to a self-appointed mission of awakening people from ignorance. He was strongly anti-Islamic and

⁴⁹ Ibid.

condemned *taqlid* (imitation) and *ijtihad* (Islamic legal jurisdiction) and instead admired France and England as ideal secularized societies.⁵⁰

Among these modernist elites, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani had strong ideas about the Aryan race and Persian language. He became a religious and political activist for a while and joined many different modernist movements. Later, as an anti-religious figure, he blamed Arabs and Islam for causing the decline of Iranians and asserted that the study of Arabic grammar and vocabulary had corrupted Persian language.

Sayyad Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, known as Afghani, was a modern Muslim philosopher who believed that no reform was possible unless religious leaders would renew their approach towards knowledge in favor of the “true sciences.”⁵¹ It is noteworthy that Mirza Malkum Khan tried to combine modern ideas with religious ones in his own idiosyncratic way. Under the influence of August Comt es, Malkum made up a new religion called *Adamiyat* (religion of *l’humanit e*), in which he combined Judeo-Christian and Muslim teachings. More significantly, Malkum Khan promoted the law to change the royal system to a democratic or republican one (*mashrut*).⁵²

Like Akhundzadeh, Abdul-Rahim Talibzadeh, known as Talibov, was a writer who had pluralistic religious views but was strongly anti-clerical. He characterized the *ulama* as those ones responsible for the Iranian’s corruption and backwardness.⁵³

Among these intellectuals, Afghani, Talibzadeh and Malkum Khan attempted to preserve the religious aspects of the Iranian identity for different purposes while Kermani and Akhundzadeh rejected religion altogether and insisted on restoring the pre-Islamic

⁵⁰ Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent* (N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 152-156

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 143-48

⁵² *Ibid*, 149-52

⁵³ *Ibid*, 152-56

cultural legacy in hopes of restoring a pristine ancient Iran. Similarly, Kermani, Akhundzadeh, Afghani and Talibzadeh, all emphasized a single national language as a stronger bond than religion, while Malkum Khan believed that religion was vital to secure the nation as a single unit.

Browne and Maneckji fall into a similar divide; united in their aspirations for a new Iran, they parted company when it came to what that Iran should look like. To Browne, the highly educated romantic who had learned about Iran through books, meeting Maneckji, who had set his gaze towards to the West, must have been quite a shock. He was simply not the kind of reformer that Browne was hoping for; not a *real* Iranian at all. Likewise, considering Browne's opposition to Britain, it is possible that he might have thought that Maneckji, being in the service of British India, was a sell-out to the very culture Browne had just left. That Maneckji was inspired by the British reforms in Bombay – reforms that Browne hated – was possibly the final straw. Browne's depiction of Maneckji, in other words, shows the fissures that were running all through the reformist movements in Iran at that moment and were preventing them from becoming fully unified. It was the inverse of the unlikely alliances that had brought Zoroastrians, Baha'i, and seculars together in the first place. Even though the two men had so much in common in their attitudes, goals, and aspirations for Iran, when it came to their meeting, the differences were still too much to overcome.

Bibliography

Books

A. V. Williams Jackson. *Persia past and Present; a Book of Travel and Research, with More than Two Hundred Illustrations and a Map*. 2nd ed. New York.: Macmillan Company, 1906.

Bayat, Mangol. *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran*. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982.

Brugsch, Heinrich. *Reise der K. Preussischen Gewandtschaft nach Persien 1860 und 1861* I. Leipzig, 1862.

Cole, Juan R. I. and Momen, Moojan. *From Iran East and West*. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984.

Nash, Geoffrey. *From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East, 1830-1926*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

Nicholson, Reynold A. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Mss Belonging to the Late E.G. Browne*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932.

Ross, Sir E. Denison. "A Memoir." In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, edited by Edward G. Browne, vii-xxii. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926.

Stausberg, Michael, Vevaina Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw, and Tessmann, Anna. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza. *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Articles

Deboo, Malcolm Minoo. "Seth Maneckji Limji Hataria, The Martin Luther King of Zoroastrianism & The Struggle for Zoroastrian Civil Rights in Iran." *ENGLISH ZOROASTRIAN*. [http://www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Seth Maneckji Limji Hataria.htm](http://www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Seth_Maneckji_Limji_Hataria.htm) (2006).

Dewhurst, R. P. "Review: A Year Amongst the Persians By Edward Granville Browne. With a Memoir by Sir E. Denison Ross." *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 3 (July 1928): 695-97.

Homerin, T. Emil. "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (1985): 165-84.

Mahdavi, Shireen. "Shahs, Doctors, Diplomats and Missionaries in 19th Century Iran." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (Nov, 2005),169-191

Momen, Moojan. "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran (1848–53): A Preliminary Analysis." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15, no. 2 (1983): 157-83.

Ringer, Monica. "Parsi Agents of Change amongst Zoroastrians in Nineteenth Century Iran." *International Society of Iranian Studies* 42, no. 4 (Sep, 2009), 549-560

Rosen, Baron Victor. "Some Remarks on the Bābī Texts. Collections Scientifiques De L'Institut Des Langues Orientales De Saint-Petersbourg." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 24, Vols I & II. no. 2 (1892): 259-335.

Sheffield, Daniel. "Iran, the Mark of Paradise or the Land of Ruin" in *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing*. Ed. Micallef, Roberta, and Sunil Sharma. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Encyclopedia

G. Michael Wickens, Juan Cole, Kamran Ekbal."BROWNE, EDWARD GRANVILLE." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/browne-edward-granville> (Dec 15, 2012).

Malandra, William W. "JACKSON, ABRAHAM VALENTINE WILLIAMS." *Encyclopædia Iranica*. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jackson-abraham-valentine-williams> (Dec15, 2007).

Jamsheed K. Choksy, "ZOROASTRIANISM ii. *Historical Review: from the Arab Conquest to Modern Times*," <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zoroastrianism-02-arab-conquest-to-modern> (January 22, 2015).

Firoze M. Kotwal, Jamsheed K. Choksy, Christopher J. Brunner, and Mahnaz Moazami, "HATARIA, MANEKJI LIMJI," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hataria-manekji-limji> (May 09 2016)

Primary Sources

Browne, Edward Granville. *A Year amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character and Thought of the People of Persia, 1887-1888*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926.

Effendi, Shoghi, trans. *The Tabernacle of Unity: Baha'u'llah's Responses to Manikchi Sahib and Other Writings*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Baha'i World Centre, 2006.

Shahmardan, Rashid. "Farzāna-ye Mānekji Hātaryā." in *Tāriḵ-e zartoštiān. Farzānegān-e zartošti* edited by anonymous, 617-43. Tehran, 1983

Online Sources

Buck, Christopher. "Edward Granville Browne." Baha'i Online Library, accessed April 14, 2018, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/buck_browne_british_writers.pdf

Cole, Juan R. I. trans. "*Tablet to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Concerning the Questions of Manakji Limji Hataria: Baha'u'llah on Hinduism and Zoroastrianism.*" Tablet to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Concerning the Questions of Manakji Limji Hataria. [http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_cole_questions_manakji\(1995\)](http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_cole_questions_manakji(1995)).

Dictionary.com. "Sahib." Accessed April 15, 2018. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/sahib>

World Digital Library. "Persia and the Persian Question." Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17540/>

Social Media

Zia Ebrahimi, Reza. "The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism." Interview by John Ghazvinian. *New Books in Middle Eastern Studies*, NewBooksNetWork.com, April 15, 2018. <http://newbooksnetwork.com/reza-zia-ebrahimi-the-emergence-of-iranian-nationalism-race-and-the-politics-of-dislocation-columbia-up-2016/>

Edward G. Browne



Maneckji Limji Hataria

