PREFACE

This short history of Urdu Literature, completed in 1929, aims at describing Urdu and its literature down to the end of 1928. All writers who were alive then are excluded. The only living author to whom detailed reference has been made is Iqbal, whose fame seems to warrant his inclusion. The Bibliography shows what books are available for further study; there is very little in English.

The following are special features of this work:

(a) The views on the origin and early history of Urdu differ greatly from those of previous authors, particularly in the antiquity attributed to it and the importance attached to Panjabi and the Panjab in connection with its development. The remarks on the problem of the name 'Urdu' are new, and in explanation of the term 'Khari Boli' I have tried incidentally to correct prevailing misconceptions on the subject.

(b) Much of what has been said about the Deccan and Dakhni writers is new. The place of the Deccan in Urdu literature has not been fully understood, and many Dakhni authors are unknown even by name to people who live in the north of India. I have therefore endeavoured to make this section as full as possible, hoping that the mention of these little-known or unknown names will not only induce students to read Dakhni works already in print, but lead to the publication of those at present in MS., and to the study of the valuable material contained in them.

(c) New information has been given too about Tahsin's
A HISTORY OF URDU LITERATURE

Nau Tāra i Murāṣsā', Mir Amman's Bāg o Bahār, and Amīr Khurṣdān's supposed work Caḥār Darvēsh.

I would draw the attention of readers to certain points:

(i) Many authors are repeatedly referred to; the fullest treatment will be found at the place first mentioned in the Index of Persons, i.e. according to the consecutive number of each. Thus, 'Naṣīr, Valī M., of Āgra, No. 125: 4, 20, 32, 41, 42, 98, 100.' Here the account of Naṣīr is given under No. 125.

(ii) Names of persons and works, Urdu words, and nearly all names of places are spelt with full diacritical marks. A few well-known words, chiefly place-names, are printed in their usual forms, or in some cases first with diacritical and subsequently without. They are those in the subjoined list:

|  Āgra       |  Marāṭhā |
|  Deccan (Dakhān)  |  Marāṭhi |
|  Delhi (Dīhī)   |  Oudh (Ayadh) |
|  Gujārāt       |  Panjāb |
|  Gujārātī      |  Panjābī |
|  Hindī         |  Paṭnā |
|  Lahore (Lāhār) |  Turkī, Turkistān |
|  Lucknow (Lakhnāū) |  Urdu |

(iii) The majority of Urdu authors have called their works by Arabic names. I have transliterated most of these with Arabic vocalisation, but in a few cases have treated them as if they were Urdu.

(iv) The system of transliteration of Urdu words is that of the Royal Asiatic Society, except for 'ṣh' and 'ṣng', which I have allowed to stand without special marks, and ū to indicate a preceding nasal vowel. I have been unable to use the usual tilde, as the press did not possess it. A list of signs will be found on p. 108.

PREFACE

(v) The words 'religion' and 'religious' usually refer to Islam. Sometimes, as will be clear from the context, religion in general is intended.

(vi) The word 'Mugal' is employed in the usual conventional sense. The so-called Mugal emperors of India, Babur and his descendants, were actually Barāīs Turks.

In order to give an idea of Urdu poetry I have inserted translations of seven poems. These are all my own. Most of them have appeared in the Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, and I am under obligation to the Editor of that Journal for permission to print them here.

I wish to express my thanks to an old student of my own, Dr. Mohiuddin Qadri, of the Osmaniya University, for having read all the proofs of the volume and made valuable suggestions.

T. GRAHAME BAILEY.

London,
April, 1932.

ADDENDA

1. Page 7. The relationship of father, son, and grandson, said on p. 17 to have existed between Nos. 5, 6 and 8 (Shāh Mīrā Jī, Shāh Būrān and Amin ud Din Ālā), is according to popular report. Obviously one or two generations have dropped out.

2. On page 79, No. 184, line 1, for 'Urdu prose' read 'Urdu prose.' Āzād is the sole source of information about Saudā's prose, and his statements lack confirmation.

3. Page 60. Gālib probably did not hold the opinion attributed to him on p. 60. His phraseology is, however, sometimes like that of Lucknow writers.
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## INTRODUCTION

Information about the early Urdu poets is ultimately derived from old Persian anthologies; the great majority of which are unpublished. The earliest known are *Nikāt ush Shu‘arā* by Mir (1752), and *Taqī karen e Gurdas* (1752). Other famous anthologies are *Makhaan-i Nikāt* by Qāʾim (1754); *Gulsār-i Ibrāhīm* by ‘Ali Ibrāhīm Khān Khāhil (1783); *Taqī karen e Hasan* by Mir Hasan (1776); *Taqī karen e Shu‘arā e Hind* by Muṣḥafi (1794). The first anthology in Urdu is ‘Ali Lutf’s *Gulshan e Hind* (1801).

There are several special difficulties in the study of Urdu literature:

1. Very little early literature has been published. Thus, the extant poetry written before 1800 is nearly all in MS. If we except Vāli, Sa’dī, Mir, Dard and Qāʾim, all the writers whose works have been published with any completeness were men who lived till after 1825. Many published works, especially those which were first printed in magazines, are not now obtainable.

2. It is often impossible to get access to original MSS., and we have to depend upon quotations in books. The anthologies are often inaccurate and their information is meagre. This accounts for the similarity between the various remarks made by modern authors about old writers; their authorities are the same.

3. There is considerable doubt about dates, particularly the earlier ones. The anthologies frequently omit dates, and often differ in the dates they give.

4. It is nearly impossible to be sure of the genuineness of early Urdu poetry.

Libraries in Great Britain and in some of the Feudatory States of India possess important Urdu MSS.; if these could be published, most of our problems would be solved.
Urdu Metre depends on quantity, not accent. Compared with Greek or Latin it has a fondness for long syllables. Thus among the commonest metres are

\[ u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o} \]

and \[ u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o} \]

and \[ u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o} \]

The Principal Forms of Urdu Poetry are:

Gazal, usually a short love lyric, sometimes a poem on a general subject. Strictly speaking it should have the same rhyme throughout. Urdu gazaís are for the most part artificial and conventional.

Qasida, a kind of ode, often a panegyric on a benefactor, sometimes a satire, sometimes a poem dealing with an important event. As a rule it is longer than the gazal, but it follows the same system of rhyme.

Maṛsiya or elegy, nearly always on the death of Hasan, Husain and their families, but occasionally on the death of relatives and friends. It is usually in six-lined stanzas with the rhyme saaadd. The recitation of these elegies in the first ten days of Muharram is one of the great events in Muslim life. A fully developed marsiya is almost an epic.

Mauvnā, in the majority of cases a poetical romance. It may extend to several thousand lines, but generally is much shorter. A few mauvnās deal with ordinary domestic and other occurrences. Mir and Saudā wrote some of this kind. They are always in heroic couplets, and the commonest metre is bacchic tetrameter with an iambus for the last foot, \[ u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o}/u-\bar{o} \].

Tagkira, biographical anthology, almost always of poetry alone. This is often a mere collection of names with a line or two of information about each poet, followed by a specimen of his composition. On the other hand it may be a history of Urdu poetry with copious illustrative extracts. There are no really good tagkiras. The best give biographical details, but fail in literary criticism, and we get little idea of style or poetical power, still less of the contents of poems. Even the large anthologies do not systematically review an author's work. Most of them have the names in alphabetic order, but one or two prefer the historical order. The majority quote only lyrics, and the quotations, usually chosen at random, do not really illustrate the poetry.

Divān, a collection of poems, chiefly gazals.

Kulliyāt, literally a complete collection of poems, but often applied to any collection containing poems of various kinds. Thus Ákbār Ilāhābādī published three kulliyāts.

Tagkullus, the name under which a poet writes. Every Urdu poet takes a special name by which he is generally known. It is introduced into the last line of all his gazals. Sometimes it is part of his personal name. Thus in the case of the poets Babār ‘Ali Anis and Salāmāt ‘Ali Dābīr, Ants and Dābir are the takhallus. Examples of poets using part of their ordinary names are Mir Taqi Mir and Mir Ḥasan Ḥasan.

In order to avoid unnecessary Urdu terms in the text, certain English words have been used with a particular sense except where the context requires another. Thus:

- Lyric (or love lyric) = Gazal
- Ode = Qasida
- Elegy = Marṣiya
- Romance (or poetical romance) = Mauvānī
- Anthology (or biographical anthology) = Tagkira

Rekhtā is a Persian word meaning 'poured.' In Persia it has no literary significance, but in India it was used for the Urdu literary language, i.e. the language of poetry, or for Urdu poetry itself. Often it had the sense of gazal or couplet in a gazal. In the time of Nāsik, d. 1838, Lucknow poets gave up the word rekhtā and began to use 'Urdu' for the language, and 'gazal,' a word occasionally found in the eighteenth century, for the poem. In Delhi rekhtā continued in use down to the Mutiny. Various explanations of rekhtā are given.

1. It meant 'verse in two languages,' e.g. one line Persian and one Arabic, or one Persian and one Urdu. The earliest verse in north India was sometimes of this kind and was called rekhtā. The name once given remained.

2. It meant 'fallen,' and Urdu, supposed to be fallen and worthless, received the name,
3. Urdu was called rekhta because it consisted of Hindi into which Arabic and Persian words had been poured.

4. It is a musical term introduced by Amir Khusrau to mean a harmonising of Hindi words with Persian melodies.

5. It means a wall firmly constructed of different materials, as Urdu is of diverse linguistic elements. This is the opposite of (2).

The Most Important Urdu Poets. Urdu poetry is such a maze, that a useful purpose may be served if the leading poets are indicated. There will be diversity of opinion about such a list, for people differ in temperament and in attitude towards modern thought. No finality is claimed for the views here expressed, but they may be a guide. The names of poets from the Deccan may occasion surprise, for their greatness is not realised in North India. The old tazkira writers say little about them and only Vali is generally known.

1. The greatest poets: The groups are in order of rank, the names within each group in order of date. (a) Mir, Gālib, Anis. (b) Vali, Sādū, Naṣir of Agra, Iqbal. (c) Dard, Mir Dātā, Dāg, Hālī, Akbar.


3. The best qasida writers in order: Sādū, Zauq, Nuṣratī.

4. The best marsiya writers in order: Anis, Dabīr, Mūnis, Khalīq, Zāmīr; and the Dakhnī writers Hāshim 'Ali, Mirza.


6. Poets who excelled in general poetry in order of date: King Qalī Qutb Shāh, Naṣir of Agra, Hālī, Akbar, Kaifi of the Deccan, Iqbal. During the past 50 years perhaps the best, apart from poets already mentioned, have been Azād, Jalāl, Taslim, Ismā'īl, Shād.

The greatest poet of the last 100 years is probably Hālī's Musaddas, unless we regard Anis's Elegies as one poem.

How Urdu Began. Much has been written on the origin of Urdu. The word "urdu" itself is Turkish and means "army" or "camp"; our English "horde" is said to be connected with it. The Muslim army stationed in Delhi from 1193 onwards was known as the Urdu or Urdu e Mu'allā, the Exalted Army. It is usually believed that while this army spoke Persian, the inhabitants of the city spoke the Braj dialect of Hindi. There is no reason however to think that Braj was ever the language of Delhi. The people of the capital spoke an early variety of that form of Hindi now known as Khariboli, which is employed to-day in all Hindi prose and in most Hindi poetry. The idea that the army spoke Persian also requires reconsideration.

Māhāmūd of Gāznī annexed the Panjab in 1027 and settled his army of occupation in Lahore. The famous scholar, Alberuni of Khīvā (973-1048) lived there for some time while he studied Sanskrit and prosecuted his researches into Hinduism. Māhāmūd's descendants held the Panjab till 1187, when they were defeated by their hereditary foes under Muhammad Gōrī who had already sacked Gāznī. The first sultan of Delhi was Qutb ud Din Aibak, a native of Turkistan, but a servant of Muhammad Gōrī and afterwards his chief general. He captured Delhi in 1193 and on the death of his master in 1206 took the title of Sultān. From that time foreign troops were quartered in

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1 As I have explained in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, October, 1926, pp. 717-23, the word kharī, feminine of kharī, means standing, and kharī Bōli means the standard, current or established language. The word was first used during 1103 by Sādāl Mīr in Nāthābāt-khāyāt and by Lālī Lāl in Prem Sāgar. Kharī has nothing to do with kharī, pure.