serious regional crises by converting them into advantageous opportunities for a further strengthening of the regime`s strategic position in the region.

Continuing the analysis of Iran`s foreign policy behavior, Saikal further notes that the country's relations with major powers remain in line with the two-pronged *jihadi-ijtihadi* concept. Thus, the Islamic regime shows "perseverant but flexible resistance" in relations with its enemies but leaves room for developing pragmatic friendships, especially with major powers that display a certain degree of flexibility (p. 207). Iran's relations with world powers have been heavily defined by its relations with the United States, which most of the time have been explicitly antagonistic. The isolated stance of the Islamic Republic, caused by sanctions, mostly imposed by the United States, has forced the country to develop tighter relations with other major players such as Russia and China.

Saikal concludes that the *jihadi-ijtihadi* modus operandi will continue to play a major role in Iran`s politics and society in the foreseeable future and that the understanding and acknowledging of this combative/reformist paradigm by the outside world would help in better dealing with the Islamic Republic. Iran Raising represents a valuable reading for students and researchers interested in understanding contemporary Iran, a country that constantly surprises and intrigues the international community, by portraying a strong survival force capable of resolving inner crises and deterring outside threats.

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Gould's work is the first monographic study in the English language devoted to Persian prison poems (*ḥabsiyyāt*) with particular attention to the crystallization of political theology in this transgressive genre. The thesis of the work is that with the gradual disintegration and desacralization of caliphal authority throughout the twelfth century, a new political theology emerged in Persian prison poems that exposed the corruption and hypocrisy of the sultanates that aspired to fill the power vacuum. This book connects Sunil Sharma's seminal monograph dedicated to the most significant early practitioner of Persian prison poetry called Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān with Alireza Korangy's intertextual inquiry into Khāqānī's multi-layered works in whose pen the genre reached its zenith.[1] Enriched

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[1] Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān of Lahore* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000); Alireza Korangy, *Development of the Ghazal and Khāqānī's Contribution: A Study of the Development of Ghazal and a Literary Exegesis of a 12th c. Poetic Harbinger* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013).

by several astonishingly creative and meticulous translations and by numerous fresh interpretations, this monograph will be an indispensable reference point for scholars of Islamic literary cultures and specialists of the multi-lingual and multi-confessional empires of the Ghaznavids and Shirwanshahs.

Ernst Kantorowicz in his groundbreaking *The King's Two Bodies* stressed the centrality of the doubly constituted (mundane/immortal) body of the ruler in medieval European political theology. Gould traces the genesis of the bodily bifurcation of Islamic sovereigns in medieval Persian prison poems. The trajectory of the genre can be divided into two halves. The first phase was spearheaded by the poet Masʿūd Saʿd who, inspired by his prolonged imprisonment, infused prison poetry with a lyric tone. In the second phase, the genre migrated from South Asia to the Caucasus where K̲h̲āqānī conferred prophetic authority onto the poet's body.

Viewed from the perspective of genre, the Persian prison poem occupied an anomalous position, an anomaly that was central to a new discourse on politics and power. Chapter 1 highlights the fact that pre-modern genre systems were taxonomized primarily on the basis of formal qualities, whilst modern systems were based predominantly on themes and topoi. Gould employs a syncretic method that takes the formal, topical, and thematic aspects into account equally (p. 46). Chapter 2 is devoted to the early prison poets including Masʿūd Saʿd, Naṣrullah Munshī, Jūzjānī, and their medieval literary critiques including Niẓāmī ʿArūẓī, Waṭwāṭ, and ʿAufī.[2] Through the analysis of literary rivalries, Chapter 3 places prison poems in an intertextual framework. These simulacrum rivalries took place in an institutionalized setting that formalized the interdependence between poets and patrons and in which the composition of poems became a political act. In the course of his rivalries, K̲h̲āqānī appropriated literary devices from Maʿsūd Saʿd and absorbed his prison poems to prove his literary preeminence (pp. 87-91).

The second half of the book focuses on the political theology of prison poems. Chapter 4 examines poetry's affinity with magic and the subsequent sacralization of poetic utterance that conferred a new source of authority on prison poets. A key component in the birth of this political theology was the association of poetry with magic – poetry was also known as "licit magic" or *siḥr-i ḥalāl* – which was conducive to a new, indirect critique of the sultan's power. The second phase of this political theology was characterized by the elevation of the poet to prophetic status and the formation of a new carceral aesthetic. Building on Gould's earlier work on K̲h̲āqānī's poetry, Chapter 5 offers a study of his "Christian" and "Ayvān" *qaṣīda*s. The former recreates an eighth-century theological debate over the merits of Islam and Christianity and, despite its nearly heretical undertones, clearly flashes out K̲h̲āqānī's identification with Jesus. Gould stresses the significance of a politically charged sartorial artifact, the *zunnār* (i.e. belt) worn by non-Muslims. K̲h̲āqānī's perception of the belt, which made the oppressive and discriminatory measures against *dhimmī*s culturally visible, was in all

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2   For another recent study on the subject see Shahzad Bashir, *The Market in Poetry in the Persian World: Elements in the Global Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

likelihood shaped by a pseudo-epigraphic text known as *ʿUmar's covenant* that sharpened the religious and social distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. The "Ayvān" *qaṣīda* with its exposure of the moral and bodily corruption of the sovereign, transmuted the prison poems of political resistance into a source of spiritual authority. Chapter 6 analyzes the subversion of the sovereign's power in the *Four Discourses (Chahār Maqāla)* and the *Conduct of Kings (Siyār al-Mulūk)*, both of which recorded the separation of power and authority, and engages with modern scholarly works on the conceptualization of medieval Islamic sovereignty.

Despite the numerous merits of this book, the body political context in which prison poetry emerged has not received sufficient attention. In his *Objects of Translation,* Flood explores the symbolism of the body politics of the early Ghaznavid period during which robes marked hierarchical relationships in the Islamic and Indic regions.[3] In 999, when Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna publicly donned the caliphal robe (*khiʿla*) he became part of the symbolic body of the caliphate and subsequently gifted robes to Indian rulers himself to symbolically incorporate their dominions. This point is overlooked in Gould's analysis on page 240, where mention is made of the gift of robes to "a rebellious Indian ruler." The symbol-laden body politics of the early Ghaznavid period, which assumed a constitutive relationship between the integrity of the ruler's body and his polity, is the context in which the significance of the corporeal aesthetics and political theology of Persian prison poems can best be illuminated. Beyond that, the view that Khāqānī turned prison poems into "an anti-panegyric challenge to the sovereign" as opposed to the panegyrics of ʿUnṣurī and Farrukhī, who extolled their patrons to ensure their patronage, needs to be nuanced (p. 231). In early panegyrics, "Islamic monarchy is being praised, not an Islamic monarch" and Ghaznavid court poets not only noticed the discrepancy between the ideal and the real sovereign but also obliquely criticized their sponsors.[4] Nevertheless, with its vivid and scrupulous translations and refreshing intertextual approach, Gould's monograph is sure to spark further investigations into the peculiarities and history of prison poems.

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[3] Finbarr Berry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 74-86.

[4] Jerome W. Clinton's unpublished paper quoted by Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 43-4.