How is adab (aesthetic form and proper conduct) related to transregional mobility at a time when Persian, a language of learning and power, linked West and South Asia? I explore this question by thinking through the relationship between the circulation of Persian texts in the early modern period and the way in which various kinds of commemorative texts represent transregional mobility. Texts were products of social interaction, of the proper conduct of Persians in the world. They represented the mobility of Persians between Iran and India for audiences who did not travel. Texts were also traveling objects, bringing the Persian sensibilities contained within to various societies, binding them together through a broadly shared mode of cultural imagining. In contrast to a proto-nationalist logic of early modern belonging, adab as mobility outlines sensibilities shared across transregional Persianate places, enabling historicization of belonging, and of regional specificities. It also offers a different way of thinking of the relationship between text and practice, one that collapses the distinction between a literary work and its contexts of production, its reception and meaning.

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