Cosmopolitan Encounters: Sanskrit and Persian at the Mughal Court

Audrey Truschke

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2012

© 2012
Audrey Truschke
All rights reserved

Abstract

Cosmopolitan Encounters: Sanskrit and Persian at the Mughal Court

Audrey Truschke

In this dissertation, I analyze interactions between Sanskrit and Persian literary cultures at the Mughal court during the years 1570-1650 C.E. During this period, the Mughals rose to prominence as one of the most powerful dynasties of the early modern world and patronized Persian as a language of both literature and empire. Simultaneously, the imperial court supported Sanskrit textual production, participated in Sanskrit cultural life, and produced Persian translations of Sanskrit literature. For their part, Sanskrit intellectuals became influential members of the Mughal court, developed a linguistic interest in Persian, and wrote extensively about their imperial experiences. Yet the role of Sanskrit at the Mughal court remains a largely untold story in modern scholarship, as do the resulting engagements across cultural lines. To the extent that scholars have thought about Sanskrit and Persian in tandem, they have generally been blinded by their own language barriers and mistakenly asserted that there was no serious interaction between the two. I challenge this uncritical view through a systematic reading of texts in both languages and provide the first detailed account of exchanges between these traditions at the Mughal court. I further argue that these cross-cultural events are central to understanding the construction of power in the Mughal Empire and the cultural and literary dynamics of early modern India.

Table of Contents

Introduction, 1

Literary Cultures and Imperial Narratives, 3

New Methodologies: Sanskrit, Persian, and Multilingualism, 4

Imperial Culture: The Mughal Court 1570-1650, 9

Connected Histories in the Center of an Empire, 13

Historiography on Sanskrit and Persian in Mughal India, 15

Premodern Contexts: A Brief History of Cross-Cultural Encounters, 18

Mughal Contexts: Materials and Chapter Outline, 23

1. Sanskrit Literati and Literature at the Mughal Court, 29

Patronage, Associations, and Textual Sources, 30

A Social History of Sanskrit Intellectuals at the Mughal Court, 32

Establishing Relations: Jain and Brahmans Enter the Mughal Milieu, 33

Sanskrit Literati as Politicians, Intellectuals, and Religious Guides, 37

Divergent Paths: The Conclusion of Jain Imperial Relations, 46

Brahmans Flourish in Imperial Environs, 48

Sanskrit Literary Production for the Mughal Court, 56

Praising the Mughals in Sanskrit *Muktaka*s and Dedications, 57

Independent Sanskrit Panegyrics for the Mughals, 63

Enlightening Akbar in Śānticandra's *Treasury of Compassion*, 64

Rudrakavi's Poems to Khān-i Khānān and Jahangir, 72

Jagannātha's *Play of Asaf [Khan]*, 81

Sanskrit Grammars and Lexicons of Persian, 85

Kṛṣṇadāsa's *Illumination of Persian* for Akbar, 87

Kavi Karṇapūra's *Light on Sanskrit and Persian Words* for Jahangir, 92

Multilingual Titling Practices, 95

Conclusion: Multicultural Mughals, 105

2. Jain Accounts of the Mughal Court, 108

Historical Background and Nature of the Materials, 108

Representing Mughal Culture in Sanskrit, 113

Rewriting the Mughal Conquest in Padmasāgara's *Jagadgurukāvya*, 115

Imperial Milieus: Persianate, Islamicate, and Sanskrit, 129

Devavimala Allows Islam to Enter Sanskrit Discourse, 130

Siddhicandra's Vision of Sanskrit Culture at the Mughal Court, 135

Courtly Religious Practices Beyond Islam, 140

Sun Worship and Sectarian Gains, 141

Status and Power in a Jain Rite at Court, 145

Representing Themselves: Religious and Secular Authority, 151

Finding Authority for Jain Leaders in the Mughal Context, 152

Erudition and Flexibility in Jain Defenses Against the Charge of Atheism, 157

Religious Anxieties: Jain Asceticism within the Comforts of Court, 168

Conclusion: Beyond History, 175

3. Imperial Translation: The Persian *Mahābhārata*, 181

Centrality of the *Razmnāmah* and Previous Scholarship, 182

Translation Infrastructure and Social Collaboration, 186

Multiple Sanskrit Sources for the Strange Tale, 190

Making a Mughal Epic through Translation Practices, 200

Cultivating an Indo-Persian Register, 200

Acculturation and Anxieties in a Crowded Divine Landscape, 204

Introducing Poetry and Persian Aesthetics, 213

Rewriting the Rules of Politics and Kingship, 217

The Imperial Reception of the *Razmnāmah*, 227

Power Politics in Abū al-Faẕl's Preface to the *Razmnāmah*, 227

Aesthetic Revolution in Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat*, 239

Rewriting History in Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī's Abridged *Mahābhārat*, 244

Conclusion: Politics and Aesthetics, 250

4. Indo-Persian Receptions: Courtly Treatments of Sanskrit Knowledge and Literature, 253

Learning of India: Abū al-Faẕl's Formulation of Sanskrit Knowledge Systems, 254

Previous Scholarship on *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, 255

Contexts and Predecessors of the *Account of India*, 257

Framing the *Account of India* and *Learning of India*, 261

Content and Analysis in the *Learning of India*, 265

Elusive Sanskrit Sources, 266

Nine Philosophical Schools, 269

Sanskrit Aesthetic Theory in Persian, 273

Abū al-Faẕl's Political Project, 277

Many Mughal *Rāmāyaṇa*s, 279

Problems with Akbar's *Rāmāyan*: Authorship and Access, 280

Imperial Reactions to Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, 284

That Black Book: Badā'ūnī's Objection, 285

Getting it Wrong: Raḥīm's Take on Rāma's Story, 291

A Marvelous Tale: Jahangir's Interpretation of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, 294

Later Mughal *Rāmāyan*s, 297

The Impact of Sanskrit Literature and Knowledge Beyond Akbar's Court, 301

Firishtah: A Deccani Perspective on Sanskrit Learning in Indo-Persian Texts, 302

Firishtah on the *Mahābhārata* as a Source for India's Pre-Islamic Past, 303

Islamic Links: Firishtah's Version of Pre-Islamic Indian History, 307

Integrated History: Counting Kings in Shah Jahan's Court, 310

Conclusion: Incorporating Sanskrit Knowledge, 314

CONCLUSION, 317

The End of Sanskrit and Persian Encounters in the Mughal Milieu, 317

Beyond Legitimation: The Political Aesthetic in the Mughal Empire, 322

Building an Indo-Persian Polity, 327

Writings and Reticence in Multiple Sanskrit Traditions, 328

Internal Frontiers: The Intersection of Culture and Power in Mughal India, 335

World Frontiers: New Methods for Imperial History, 340

BIBLIOGRAPHY, 344

APPENDIX: FOUR SANSKRIT VERSES TRANSLITERATED IN THE *RAZMNĀMAH*, 369

Acknowledgements

I stand on the shoulders of many dedicated advisors, and my initial thanks are due to my dissertation committee members. First and foremost I thank Sheldon Pollock, who has challenged and supported me at every step of my academic work. I am profoundly grateful for his time, criticisms, and advice over the years. Allison Busch has likewise been formative to my work through countless enlightening conversations, her close attention to detail, and constant support. Muzaffar Alam patiently taught me to read Persian manuscripts and has always been eager to engage with my work. Sudipta Kaviraj and Rachel McDermott have provided me with valuable feedback, helpful questions, and encouragement.

In addition, I thank the many scholars, both near and far, who have helped at various stages of my research. At home, I am grateful to Hossein Kamaly for reading Indo-Persian texts with me, usually on his own time, and to Somadeva Vasudeva for his assistance with Sanskrit materials. Jack Hawley and Frances Pritchett have provided constructive feedback on my work over the years. Bindu Bhatt, the former South Asia librarian at Columbia, helped me procure certain elusive texts. From further afield, I thank the following scholars for providing materials, engaging in many fruitful discussions, and always being ready to field tough questions: John Cort, Paul Dundas, Francesca Orsini, S.R. Sarma, John Seyller, and Sunil Sharma.

I am honored and grateful to have received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant that funded my international research. During my year of research abroad (2009-2010), many people assisted with both the academic and practical aspects of my work. In India, I particularly thank Najaf Haider and Heeraman Tiwari for generously hosting me at Jawaharlal Nehru University and also Gulfishan Khan at Aligarh Muslim University for

her enthusiasm and support. S.K. Bharathi and the entire staff at the United States-India Educational Foundation were invaluable in facilitating my research. Surendra Bothra and Vipin Baj helped me track down *bhandar*s in Jaipur, and Yatin Shah ensured a smooth and productive visit to Patan. Suzanne Slesin and Michael Steinberg provided me with quite comfortable accommodations in Paris.

During my archival work in India, many institutions, temples, and libraries gave me access to their manuscript archives. Special thanks are due here to the Birla family in Kolkata for allowing me to view their *Razmnāmah* manuscript and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in Delhi. I also gratefully acknowledge the following institutions in India for allowing me access to their manuscript collections: Acharya Shri Kailasasagarsuri Gyanmandir in Koba, Allahabad Municipal Museum, Anandasrama in Pune, Anup Sanskrit Library in Bikaner, Asiatic Society of Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Mumbai, Baroda Oriental Institute, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune, Bharatiya Itihas Samsodha Mandal in Pune, Cama Institute in Bombay, Deccan College, Digambara Jain Bada Terapanthi Mandir in Jaipur, Hemacandra Jnana Mandir in Patan, Iran House in Delhi, Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna, LD Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad, Lucknow State Museum, Man Singh Pustak Prakash in Jodhpur, Maulana Azad Library in Aligarh, National Library in Calcutta, Oriental Manuscript Library at Osmania University, Rampur Raza Library, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in Jodhpur, Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, and the University of Mumbai.

I also benefited immensely from the resources and generous hospitality of the following archives in the United Kingdom and France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bodleian Library, British Library, Royal Asiatic Society in London, and Wellcome Library. I also extend special thanks to the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar and the Freer Gallery of Art

in Washington D.C. for assisting with my work on key manuscripts. My sincere and heartfelt gratitude goes especially to those institutions that allowed me to photograph manuscripts or provided copies, a necessary privilege for enabling serious textual work.

Several organizations provided support at various stages of my work that allowed me to pursue language study and present parts of my dissertation research. In this vein, I acknowledge the American Institute of Indian Studies and the American Institute of Pakistan Studies. I also thank the Andrew W. Mellon foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies for a dissertation completion fellowship that allowed me the time necessary to finish this project.

Numerous fellow graduate students assisted my work on this dissertation, as both colleagues and friends. They have read texts with me, helped me procure copies of manuscripts, opened their homes to me during my travels, and offered feedback on various stages of my work. Special thanks are due to Joel Bordeaux, Owen Cornwall, Victor D'Avella, Supriya Gandhi, Krista Gulbransen, Walt Hakala, Abhishek Kaicker, Katherine Kasdorf, Pasha M. Khan, Dipti Khera, Jon Keune, Anubhuti Maurya, Dan Sheffield, Hamsa Stainton, and Steve Vose.

Last but not least, none of this would have been possible without the unfailing love and support of my family, who have always encouraged me, often traveled to the subcontinent with me, and have graciously learned an incredible amount about India's past. I especially thank my husband for walking with me every step of this journey.

For my father, who would have been proud...

Introduction

During the sixteenth century, the Mughals rose to prominence as one of the most powerful empires of the early modern world. The Mughal kings extended lavish patronage to literature and the arts and fashioned their central court as a cultural mecca that attracted intellectuals who worked in Persian from across India and far beyond. In line with these developments, Emperor Akbar declared Persian the official language of the imperial administration in 1582. After this decision, scholars generally declare, little space was left for Indian languages to flourish in the Mughal milieu.[1] Accordingly, Indologists have typically framed the history of the Mughal imperium as exclusively Indo-Persian, with occasional appearances from Arabic and Turkish. Few have investigated the relationship of the royal court with any Indian languages. As a result, scholars have almost uniformly ignored the role of Sanskrit as a major component of Mughal political, intellectual, and literary activities.

This dominant narrative is inaccurate and misleading. At the same time that the Mughals promoted Persian as a language of culture and administration, members of the central court also began aggressively building ties with Sanskrit literati and engaging with Sanskrit texts. Beginning in the 1560s, Sanskrit scholars started to enter the Mughal milieu for political, cultural, and social reasons. By the 1570s, the Mughal kings directly supported Sanskrit textual production, bestowed titles on select Sanskrit figures, and performed Hindu and Jain religious rituals. Soon individuals started to produce a variety of Sanskrit and Persian texts as the result of their encounters. Acting under royal orders, Mughal literati composed Persian translations of Sanskrit literature and expositions of Indian knowledge systems.

---

[1] E.g., Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 148; Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 247; Thackston, "Literature," 84.

Sanskrit intellectuals authored Sanskrit grammars of Persian, accounts of Mughal history, and memoirs of their own experiences at court.

In these ways Sanskrit existed alongside Persian in the Mughal milieu as a language of literature and power. Moreover, when members of these two cosmopolitan traditions came to inhabit the same physical space, numerous cross-cultural exchanges occurred that resulted in innovative practices and texts. These events are important components of Sanskrit and Indo-Persian cultural histories that have serious consequences for how we conceptualize both traditions. The extensive literary and intellectual ideas that arose at the meeting points of these two communities also have powerful implications for the history of ideas in India and highlight the importance of dialogues across linguistic boundaries. Last, these diverse texts were forged at the crossroads of cultures and empire and offer vital insights into the articulation of power in India. The Mughals may have declared Persian the medium of government, but activities in the royal court reveal a much more complex picture of how imperial claims actually operated in early modern north India.

In this dissertation, I seek to document the role of Sanskrit at the Mughal court and to explore encounters between Sanskrit and Persian traditions at the imperial center that took place between 1570 and 1650. I argue that these literary events and the networks in which they were embedded are critical to understanding both the construction of power during Mughal rule and early modern Indian cultural history. These interactions are not mere curiosities in the literary landscape of South Asia. Rather, they are crucial moments when north India's two dominant cultures negotiated their aesthetic, social, and political roles. Moreover, they unfolded in the central Mughal court and involved multifaceted consequences for the formulation of empire. Thus, in addition to reconstructing this dense and fruitful series of

exchanges, I also seek to draw out its implications for understanding the development of literary cultures and the production and reproduction of imperial power.

In this introduction, I provide the necessary conceptual apparatus and historical background for properly analyzing this set of materials. I also hope to underscore the importance of this topic in modern times. First I discuss a series of terms and frameworks that are integral to the subject of my investigation, including literary categories, the Mughal court, and the notion of connected histories. Next I review the available scholarly resources on early modern Sanskrit, Persian, and the Mughal dynasty in order to highlight the impact of my work. Last, I briefly review the history of pre-Mughal encounters that bridged linguistic divides in India and offer an outline of the materials I present in the following chapters. Beyond the specifics of my topic, I further aim to develop new methods for understanding how at least one early modern empire was created and how different intellectuals responded with their own narratives of power. Mughal India provides a particularly rich case study of how kings and poets alike dynamically mobilized the aesthetic and political resources of multiple traditions in order to further their intertwined literary, intellectual, and imperial interests.

Literary Cultures and Imperial Narratives

My dissertation brings together cosmopolitan traditions and political history under a rubric of cross-cultural interactions. I contend that conversations across linguistic lines are foundational to properly conceptualizing the nature of the Mughal polity and the literary activities it encouraged. The formulation of this thesis posits several important contexts and categories that help articulate the precise contours of these encounters and the spaces in which they unfolded. First, I deliberately discuss relations between linguistic communities rather than religious groups because it was the category of linguistic-based culture, I argue,

that more accurately captures what was paramount in these exchanges. Second, I focus on events within the explicitly imperial setting of the central Mughal court over the reigns of three emperors. This framework demarcates a literary movement that was inextricably linked with Mughal political motivations without being exclusively tied to a particular ruler. Finally, this dissertation narrates a series of connected histories that involve two distinct cultural formations as well as literary, historical, and political trends. By drawing on materials from different languages and genres, I am able to reconstruct some of the politico-cultural innovations of early modern India.

New Methodologies: Sanskrit, Persian, and Multilingualism

Conventional discussions of exchanges across cultures in South Asia have prominently featured the problematic categories of *Hindus* and *Muslims*, which more recent thinkers have criticized. In the past few decades, scholars have contended that this religious-based dichotomy assumes conflict where there was often cooperation.[2] In addition, many have powerfully shown that the *Hindu-Muslim* division anachronistically projects two separate and individually coherent communities. Thereby we have clumsily labeled as either *Hindu* or *Muslim* individuals who would have chosen to describe themselves according to a variety of other religious and ethnic classifications.[3]

In response to such criticisms, some scholars have renounced any divide that follows religious boundaries in favor of emphasizing a joint composite culture. This framework conceptualizes early modern Indians as participating in a common social milieu that

---

[2] E.g., Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 5. Muzaffar Alam has criticized this dichotomy of peaceful or antagonistic as politically motivated on both accounts ("Competition and Co-existence," 37).

[3] Eaton, introduction to *India's Islamic Traditions*, 9-11; Thapar, "Tyranny of Labels."

incorporated both Indian and Perso-Islamic elements.[4] I too wish to emphasize a shared space that brought together members of different communities and allowed them to engage with one another. But the idea of a single joint realm fails to capture contacts as movements between discrete traditions.[5] In this vein, Shahid Amin warns that the modern tendency to focus on syncretism may cause us "to miss out on the creation of India's vaunted composite culture as a *process*."[6] A sort of collective milieu may emerge out of movements of people and ideas amid traditions, but it is circular analytically to assume precisely what one sets out to investigate.[7]

Other Indologists have suggested alternative paradigms to replace the troublesome dichotomy between *Hindu* and *Muslim*, the most useful of which is *Islamicate* and *Indic*. Marshall Hodgson introduced the term *Islamicate* in the 1970s in order to characterize aspects of Muslim civilizations that exceed the strictures of religion.[8] By this new coinage, Hodgson wished to encourage scholars to investigate non-religious, understudied aspects of different societies.[9] *Indic* serves as a nice parallel to *Islamicate* and allows multiple Indian religious traditions to be grouped under one umbrella while concentrating on their shared culture. I often employ both of these terms in the pages that follow (generally using the more common *Indian* in place of

---

[4] Asher and Talbot largely follow this approach in *India Before Europe*.

[5] In the case of vernacular cultures, Francesca Orsini has raised numerous problems with asserting any meaningful division between Hindi and Urdu in precolonial India (see introduction to *Before the Divide*). The model of speaking about separate traditions works significantly better for Sanskrit and Persian.

[6] "Retelling the Muslim Conquest of North India," 31 (italics in original).

[7] Tony Stewart attacks syncretism on similar grounds ("In Search of Equivalence," 261-62). However, whereas Stewart is troubled by the assumption of "institutional (ritual, theological, social) structures that are not yet present in any enduring way," I accept that Sanskrit and Persian were clearly defined (if often porous and shifting) literary cultures. For an approach that traces how a binary breaks down to become a more fluid plane of cultural choices see Aitken's analysis of Mughal and Rajput painting styles in *Intelligence of Tradition*, 35-41.

[8] *Venture of Islam*, 1:57-60; also see comments regarding some of the problems with this division in Eaton, introduction to *India's Islamic Traditions*, 13-14.

[9] E.g., see Hodgson's comments on non-*shari'a* based law (*Venture of Islam*, 1:57).

Indic). Moreover, I hope to contribute here to the ongoing scholarly project to highlight non-explicitly religious materials in the study of South Asia. Nonetheless, these concepts also have their limits. Modern scholars have often invoked *Islamicate* and *Indic* as ambiguous, porous categories that "suggest" rather then define modes of identity.[10] In such usages, these labels do not enable us to precisely characterize the distinct groups that interacted with one another in the Mughal court.

Linguistic categories, in particular Sanskrit and Persian, most accurately describe the literary communities and textual materials that I seek to analyze. By "Sanskrit intellectuals" I refer to people who wrote texts in Sanskrit or were known for their knowledge of that learned tradition. In Sanskrit, the term *śiṣṭa* (learned) has long been used to describe an elite class of people defined by their proper use of language (i.e., Sanskrit) and their location within India.[11] In the Mughal milieu, Persianate literati frequently employed terms for this group that are likewise predicated on their geographic locale and can be translated as Indian or Sanskrit depending on the context (e.g., *ahl-i hind*, *hindī*, and *hindū*). In terms of their constitution, Sanskrit intellectuals at the Mughal court were a diverse crowd. Jains and Brahmans were both represented, and literati hailed from Gujarat, Bengal, the Deccan, Kashmir, north India, and other regions. Sanskrit literati have always formed a fuzzy community in the sense that its members also possessed a series of other overlapping identities that were tied to region, caste, and trade.[12]

Notably, Sanskrit intellectuals as I use the term here do not include Indians or Hindus who joined the Mughal administration and thus became absorbed into Persian-speaking

---

[10] Gilmartin and Lawrence, introduction to *Beyond Turk and Hindu*, 2.

[11] Deshpande elaborates different uses of the term *śiṣṭa* in *Sanskrit and Prakrit*, particularly chapters 4-6.

[12] I borrow the idea of fuzzy communities from Kaviraj, *Imaginary Institution of India*, 13-14 and 193-94.

communities. Such individuals proliferated from Akbar's reign forward and tell a different story of cultural meetings and assimilation from the one I explore here.[13] When ethnic Indians who served as Mughal imperial secretaries (*munshī*s) and Hindu authors who wrote Persian poetry appear in this dissertation, they are classified as belonging to the Indo-Persian world because this is the linguistic milieu in which they operated.

Persianate intellectuals served as the primary interlocutors with Sanskrit literati in the Mughal court. The term *Persianate* denotes those who wrote in Persian and were affiliated with civilizations strongly influenced by Persian art and literature. Just as *Islamicate* divorces the cultures of Muslims from religious practices, so too does *Persianate* mean to separate an elective affiliation from the ethnic and geographical markers of Persia. Mughal Persianate civilization incorporated people from an array of ethnic backgrounds, including Central Asians, Turks, Persians, and Indians.[14] Whereas many of the Sanskrit figures I address here flow in and out of Mughal circles, I primarily speak of Persianate authors who had strong ties with the project of empire and so maintained a dual status as Mughal literati. In this sense, the political connections of elite members of the Indo-Persian world were frequently far stronger than those of their Sanskrit counterparts.

Once we admit linguistic categories as our primary terms of reference, we can conceptualize the Mughal court as a multilingual space. Even before they developed an interest in Sanskrit, the Mughals were never a monolingual dynasty. The founder of the empire, Babur, wrote in both Persian and Turkish and penned his memoirs in a dialect of the

---

[13] Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 128-33.

[14] Muzaffar Alam discusses Persian under the Mughals in "Persian in Precolonial Hindustan," 159-74.

latter.[15] Several generations of kings maintained some knowledge of the family tongue of Turkish and also spoke fluent Hindi beginning with Akbar on forward. The royal library housed texts in all these languages as well as several others, including Arabic, Kashmiri, and, of course, Sanskrit.[16] Among the plethora of tongues that thrived in the heart of Mughal power, Hindi deserves particular attention in relation to my project here.

Hindi was part of the ethos of the Mughal court in two distinct incarnations: as an intellectual tradition through the literary dialect of Braj Bhāṣā and as a common spoken language of communication. Braj Bhāṣā spread rapidly as a poetic and intellectual register across north India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Allison Busch has written extensively on this phenomenon and in particular has underscored the relationship of Braj to the Mughal court.[17] In this sense, Braj and Sanskrit literati followed parallel journeys of pursuing connections with the Mughals, and comparing these two literary cultures is a promising avenue for future research. Hindi also repeatedly arises as an intermediary language in Sanskrit-Persian exchanges. As I will discuss, virtually no intellectuals before the early to mid-seventeenth century (particularly outside of Kashmir) were fluent in both cosmopolitan tongues. As a result, Hindi was a crucial link language for transmitting texts and knowledge between these traditions. Thus while I investigate Sanskrit and Persian encounters, these events were enabled precisely by the multilingual (rather than merely bilingual) context of the Mughal court.

Despite the presence of Hindi, I emphasize Sanskrit and Persian as a pair here because of their shared characteristics as cosmopolitan languages in Mughal India. Both were

---

[15] For recent analyses of *Baburnama*, see Anooshahr, *Ghazi Sultans*, 15-37 and Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises.*

[16] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 96.

[17] See *Poetry of Kings*, particularly chapter 4.

expansive in time and space, politically engaged, and cut across religious, ethnic, and regional boundaries. In part, I strive to show how Sanskrit continued to function as a cosmopolitan tongue in the Mughal Empire, particularly in its participation in the construction of political power. As we shall see, the Mughals were drawn to Sanskrit in large part because of its ability to give voice to imperial intentions. Persian too was a far-reaching tongue that linked the Mughal Empire with a larger cultural world that included Safavid Iran, Ottoman Turkey, and much of Central Asia. But the Mughals also sought to recenter the Persianate world around the subcontinent and expressed this ambition through their attempts to create a distinctively Indo-Persian literary culture in which engagements with the Sanskrit sphere were a crucial component.

Imperial Culture: The Mughal Court 1570-1650

The central Mughal court constituted the physical, cultural, and dynastic space in which members of Sanskrit and Persian traditions met with one another and explored innovative literary possibilities. The court was defined first and foremost by the presence of the emperor. While there was a stable Mughal capital in Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, or Lahore during the period under consideration here, the true center of power moved with the king.[18] Indeed, many of the social relationships that I delineate in chapter 1 were forged on the road in different regions of the subcontinent because an entourage that included Sanskrit intellectuals traveled with the peripatetic court. Moreover, my use of *Mughal court* in the singular is no accident. Many regional and subimperial courts thrived in early modern India. Some of these make brief appearances here, primarily the courts headed by princes or senior

---

[18] On the peripatetic court under Babur and Humayun, see Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 69-102. John Richards discusses how Akbar used this tradition to concentrate authority in the person of the emperor ("Formulation of Imperial Authority," 136-39).

members of the Mughal elite. But my focus remains on the imperial core in order to investigate the high-stakes negotiation of aesthetics and politics in north India.

Within the court, several institutions facilitated different types of cross-cultural contacts. For example, scholars have often concentrated on Akbar's house of religious debate (*'ibādatkhānah*) that was established in the mid-1570s.[19] We remain unclear how long dialogues continued in the *'ibādatkhānah* proper, but religious discussions involving Muslims, Brahmans, Christians, and Jains persisted at least into Jahangir's reign. I discuss several such disputes involving Jains at court in chapter 2. Under Akbar, translation activity commenced, as I discuss in chapter 3, and was centered in the writing bureau (*maktabkhānah*). Furthermore, Akbar's library held Sanskrit texts, which is occasionally mentioned in discussions between the emperor and Sanskrit literati.[20] In addition to these spaces, Sanskrit-Persian encounters permeated many other areas of the court, often occurring in the midst of the different audience halls and in private conversations.

Culturally, the Mughal court fostered an intensely imperial ethos that was concerned with military, administrative, and aesthetic dominance. In this sense, I use culture to mean, as Edward Said wrote, "a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another."[21] Said distinguishes this definition from another common meaning of culture as a series of practices that aim to yield pleasure and remain relatively disconnected from

---

[19] Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 104-40 and Rezavi, "Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology." Also note the famous miniature painting of a diverse crowd in the *'ibādatkhānah* held in the Chester Beatty Library (mentioned in Rezavi, "Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology," 203).

[20] In *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Abū al-Faẕl notes that Akbar's library has Sanskrit works (Aligarh ed., 96). Akbar gave some Sanskrit books to Hīravijaya in the early 1580s, as I discuss in chapter 1.

[21] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii.

economic and political realms.[22] Here I investigate precisely the relationship of aesthetics and power in the Mughal milieu. Articulating and developing this intricate relationship stood at the core of Mughal concerns and also served as a major focal point for Sanskrit literati who entered into conversations with those in the Persianate world.

Last, the dynastic lineage of the Mughal kings was a defining aspect of Mughal court life, and my dissertation spans the reigns of emperors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. Akbar came to power as a minor in 1556 and spent the first five years of his reign under the control of his regent, Bayram Khan. Thereafter he expanded and solidified his territory and built a political formation that can legitimately be called an empire by the close of the 1560s. I begin the dissertation roughly in 1570 because that is when Akbar had both the leisure and volition to turn his sights to non-military ambitions and began to associate with Sanskrit intellectuals. Various other political changes, such as the institution of Mughal control over Gujarat in 1572-73, accelerated Sanskrit-Persian interactions, which reached their peak during the 1580s-90s. Akbar oversaw the initiation of most, although not all, types of cosmopolitan exchanges in the Mughal milieu. Nonetheless, the continuation and development of these social and literary practices under his successors attest that these activities were not due to the genius of a single man.[23] Rather these social and literary events were the result of much deeper literary, cultural, and political forces.

Jahangir took the throne after his father's death in 1605, and various literary ventures continued to involve both Sanskrit and Persianate intellectuals well into Shah Jahan's reign (r. 1627-58). I close my account of these affairs in 1650 for two major reasons. First, I deliberately

---

[22] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xii.

[23] Mughal historians have often unduly focused on the personalities of individual emperors, most notably Akbar and Aurangzeb, and attributed success and failure to the ruler's genius or incompetence (Alam and Subrahmanyam, introduction to *Mughal State*, 55-59).

excise a parallel set of Sanskrit-Persian encounters that expanded under the auspices of the Mughal prince Dara Shikuh. Dara Shikuh was Shah Jahan's eldest son and the heir apparent to the Mughal crown until he was outmaneuvered and subsequently put to death in 1659 by his elder brother, Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707). Dara Shikuh oversaw a fascinating set of projects, including a translation of select Sanskrit *Upaniṣad*s into Persian and a treatise on the confluence of Hindu and Muslim ideas titled *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* (*Confluence of Two Oceans*).[24] Dara Shikuh's endeavors are an important contribution to Indian intellectual history but emerged out of a different set of impulses from those in the imperial court. Accordingly they deserve a separate treatment from the earlier undertakings I detail here.

In addition, Sanskrit-Persian exchanges appear to taper off in the central Mughal court as we progress into the mid-seventeenth century. I suggest some reasons for this shift in my analysis, such as the rise of Hindi. Sanskrit literati continued to produce texts associated with the Mughals in various ways under Shah Jahan, but these intellectuals were increasingly affiliated with vernacular spheres rather than operating in a primarily Sanskrit milieu. Alongside this change, the Mughals may also have lost interest in Indian knowledge limited to the Sanskrit realm and increasingly looked to Hindi texts. Another possibility is that Shah Jahan and his successor, Aurangzeb, may have engaged with the Sanskrit sphere more than we know to date, and we remain ignorant because of the poor state of historiography on many aspects of their reigns.[25] I have not been able to fully resolve these issues here, but my research has uncovered a significant number of Sanskrit-Persian endeavors in the first two decades of

---

[24] For recent scholarship on Dara Shikuh's projects involving Sanskrit texts see "D'Onofrio, "Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads"; Ganeri, "Transmission of the Upaniṣads"; and Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā."

[25] While younger scholars have begun to correct this bias in more recent years, we remain woefully uninformed about many aspects of literature and culture during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. For criticisms of the standard Mughal historiography for this period see Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā," 166-67 and Brown, "Did Aurangzeb Ban Music."

Shah Jahan's reign that are included in the purview of this project. Such encounters did not immediately cease in 1650, but they began to change in ways that constitute a significant break with earlier activities and signal the advent of other types of politico-aesthetic interests.

Connected Histories in the Center of an Empire

My work on Sanskrit and Persian encounters puts forth a new type of connected history that is crucial to properly understanding early modern South Asia. To date scholars have frequently placed the Mughals in the framework of linked geographical regions. For example, historians have uncovered intellectual, literary, and social networks that traversed Mughal India, Safavid Iran, and the Ottoman Empire.[26] Others have productively explored Mughal ties with Central Asia and Europe.[27] In such formulations, "connected history is directed toward recalibrating the received cartographies deemed meaningful for capturing historical reality."[28] I build upon such studies in making intersections the axis of my narrative but also expand our vision beyond emphasizing links between distant regions. Instead, I give prominence to junctions in the center of an empire by introducing Sanskrit as a cultural formation with which the Mughals were tied through a series of networks, people, and texts.

Moreover, these connections prompt us to reassess how we integrate cross-cultural activities into histories of both textual traditions and empire in Mughal India. In terms of literary formations, scholars over the past decade have become increasingly interested in the final flourishings of Sanskrit in the few centuries before colonialism. Many have argued that

---

[26] E.g., Robinson, "Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals." For accounts of travelers who moved between empires in the early modern Persianate world see, e.g., Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels* and Dale, "Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness." For research that includes the Deccan within the bounds of the Persianate world see, e.g., Eaton, *Social History of the Deccan*, 59-77.

[27] On Central Asia: e.g., Faruqui, "Forgotten Prince" and Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*; on Europe: e.g., Subrahmanyam, *Mughals and Franks*.

[28] Pollock, "Comparison Without Hegemony," 188-89.

Sanskrit intellectuals pursued various types of new (*navya*) ideas and idioms during this time in their intellectual and aesthetic pursuits.[29] Following this line of thought, I contend that Sanskrit literati likewise engaged in unprecedented exchanges with Persian for a variety of reasons. That authors chose to reach out to a parallel cosmopolitan tradition challenges our image of Sanskrit as a closed literary system and prompts us to raise the question of the relationship between different types of novel behavior among early modern thinkers.

In terms of the Mughals, Sanskrit has never previously been admitted as playing any noteworthy role in imperial or cultural history. More broadly, historians of the Mughal period have tended to concentrate on economics and government administration at the expense of literature and the arts.[30] I offer a correction on both accounts by presenting new sources for conceptualizing the Mughal Empire and by reconsidering more familiar ones to show that literary encounters with Sanskrit ran through the heart of Mughal power. In part my argument advances the project begun by other scholars who have effectively introduced aspects of textual traditions, such as Persian literature and political thought, into our understanding of Mughal India.[31] Perhaps more strongly than others, however, I investigate aesthetics as a formative arena for enabling and developing imperial authority.

Last, I hope to expose the flaws in monolingual analysis of early modern India when contacts between cultures were pivotal rather than peripheral. We need to look more carefully at the relationships forged amidst different languages, traditions, and literatures in order to properly recover the dynamics of this period. A plethora of textual material survives that

---

[29] E.g., the *Sanskrit Knowledge Systems Project* and resulting articles (www.columbia.edu/sanskrit/).

[30] Rajeev Kinra discussed the scholarly biases of Mughal historians towards political and military history ("Secretary-Poets in Mughal India," 10-14).

[31] E.g., the work of Muzaffar Alam, Rajeev Kinra, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.

allows us to pursue this project, much of which has fallen into the category of "homeless texts" that we tend to overlook because they do not fit into modern categories and ideas.[32] I strive to capture the complexity of literary-cultural configurations in early modern South Asia by considering Sanskrit and Persian, above all, at their points of intersection.

Historiography on Sanskrit and Persian in Mughal India

My dissertation builds upon two bodies of scholarship that have developed in nearly complete isolation from one another. No scholar has previously paired the study of early modern Persian and Sanskrit, and part of my project is to unite the two under a new methodology. In this effort, I incorporate the work of a number of scholars of either Sanskrit or Persian who have addressed aspects of their respective traditions in early modern India.

Scholarship on Sanskrit texts that engage with the Mughals or Persianate culture in any historical context is quite sparse. In the 1940s-50s, Jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri self-published a pioneering series of thin books on Mughal patronage of Sanskrit authors and edited some important Sanskrit encomia to Mughal figures. Nobody followed in Chaudhuri's footsteps in focusing on literature until recently, although scholars such as David Pingree have investigated various adaptations and borrowings within the scientific realms, particularly astronomy. The last decade or so has witnessed a renewed interest in Sanskrit and Persian literary interactions. Several authors have written on specific instances of exchange between these traditions, and a few have noted the proximity of innovative texts to the expansion of

[32] Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 8-15.

Mughal rule.[33] Additionally, S.R. Sarma has published a series of articles focused on Sanskrit grammars and lexicons of Persian.[34]

However, most Sanskrit scholars lack knowledge of Persian, which has limited most work done to date, and no Indologist has examined Sanskrit culture at the Mughal court in any depth. Several vital texts remain unpublished altogether, and I have accordingly relied on manuscripts for multiple works addressed in this dissertation. Last, virtually nothing has been written on the socio-cultural practices that emerged out of Sanskrit contact with the Mughal court, most notably Mughal emperors bestowing titles on Sanskrit intellectuals. I offer the first account of this social practice and the first coherent treatment of Sanskrit at the Mughal court in chapter 1.

Sanskrit texts that detail Mughal history and court life have garnered some scholarly attention over the past century but remain largely unanalyzed for their commentaries on political events. As I discuss in chapter 2, these texts were authored almost exclusively by Jains and were typically centered on religious or lay Jain individuals. Most of these works have been published, and scholars have devoted substantial attention to the sections that recount spiritual moments in the lives of Jain leaders.[35] I draw on some of that analysis here and also benefit from a number of short articles and scholarly introductions that bring out different aspects of Jain-Mughal relations.[36] In chapter 2, I emphasize the sections of these Jain accounts

---

[33] E.g., Chatterjee, "Persianization of *Itihasa*"; Minkowski, "Nīlakaṇṭha's Instruments of War" and "On Sūryadāsa." Also see the online project *Perso-Indica* (http://www.perso-Indica.net/).

[34] "Sanskrit Manuals for Learning Persian" (1996), "From Yāvanī to Saṃskṛtam" (2002), "Teach Yourself Persian the Sanskrit Way" (forthcoming).

[35] E.g., the work of Paul Dundas and Phyllis Granoff.

[36] See citations in chapters 1 and 2; Mohanlal Desai is a particularly notable scholar in this regard.

that record activities in the Mughal court and consider their role in the creation of historical memories in Sanskrit.

Unlike their Sanskrit counterparts, scholars of Persian have long counted the Mughal Empire among their primary topics of interest and have produced many insightful studies. Nonetheless for decades Persianists sought to understand military and economic aspects of Mughal India above all else. While this trend has begun to shift, the rich archives of Persian histories and courtly texts remain largely unanalyzed in terms of cultural practices.[37] Accordingly, while many of the Persian histories that I discuss in chapters 3 and 4 will be known to Mughal historians, the particular contents on which I focus may be unfamiliar. A few scholars have provided serious reflections on the role of language and literature in the construction of Mughal power, particularly the creation of a Persian-medium court.[38] But the emphasis on Persian has too often led scholars to ignore Mughal ties with Sanskrit and deny Indian languages any meaningful role in politics. I aim to broaden our understanding of the Mughal court to allow room for Sanskrit and argue, more pointedly, that the Mughals formulated aspects of their imperial identity precisely through cross-cultural contacts.

At the same time, Indologists who focus on Persian works frequently rely on English translations of texts rather than editions in the original language.[39] This has led to persistent misunderstandings, particularly since English versions of numerous key sources date to the nineteenth century. By and large, printed Persian editions are available for major Mughal-

---

[37] See Alam and Subrahmanyam's discussion about the development of post-1950 Mughal studies in *Writing the Mughal World*, 11-32.

[38] E.g., Rizvi in *Religious and Intellectual History* and, more recently, Alam in *Languages of Political Islam* and Alam and Subrahmanyam in *Writing the Mughal World*.

[39] Recent examples of citing translations instead of original Indo-Persian texts, particularly for the Mughal period, include Asher and Talbot's *India Before Europe* (2006), Gommans's *Mughal Warfare* (2002), Richards's *Mughal Empire* (1993), and Wade's *Imaging Sound* (1998).

period historical works. I hope to demonstrate, among my more specific arguments, the necessity of returning to Indo-Persian texts in the study of early modern India.

The one exception to Mughal scholars' general indifference to Sanskrit is the interest they have shown in translations. Art historians have looked at the illustrations of Persian versions of the Indian epics, and textually oriented scholars have spilled much ink in repeatedly listing the known translations.[40] However, much of this scholarship is riddled with errors, and few scholars have examined the actual content of the translated texts.[41] More recently, a few scholars have analyzed Mughal translations as tools in the legitimation of political power.[42] While I share the impulse to place imperial translation in a theoretical framework, these recent accounts rely on a restrictive notion of legitimation that is inadequate in capturing the dynamics of South Asian polities.[43] Instead of subordinating aesthetic events to political objectives, I aim to develop an interpretation of Mughal translation that conceptualizes political and aesthetic elements working in tandem and further contributes to our rethinking of the structures and mechanisms of political authority in early modern India.

Premodern Contexts: A Brief History of Cross-Cultural Encounters

Cosmopolitan encounters at the Mughal court were preceded by a series of interactions in India across linguistic and cultural lines. In certain instances, earlier actors had generated frameworks for engaging with a parallel tradition that early modern Sanskrit and Persianate

---

[40] See citations in chapter 3. The most complete and largely accurate list is found in Shukla, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works."

[41] Translation has been relatively understudied in scholarship on South Asia as a whole, perhaps due in part to prevailing attitudes about this practice in the West (Cort, "Making it Vernacular in Agra.")

[42] Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 178-83.

[43] See critique in Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 511-24.

literati relied on for making sense of and writing about a cultural other. Intellectuals in both traditions even openly heralded some of these cases, particularly those involving royal courts, as forerunners of their own engagements. In terms of constructing an intellectual and cultural genealogy, these earlier connections also provide an essential background for fruitfully analyzing the intersections between Sanskrit and Persian in the Mughal milieu.

Indians came into contact with Muslims almost as soon as there were Muslims, beginning in the late seventh century, and interactions accelerated from the twelfth century onwards as successive waves of Islamicate, and increasingly Persianate, rulers entered the subcontinent. Some Sanskrit literati accepted patronage from Indo-Persian rulers, and particularly Jains were practiced in engaging with Islamicate courts for centuries before the Mughals entered on the scene.[44] Sanskrit intellectuals across the board wrote about the rise of Indo-Persian dynasties and quickly progressed from mentioning these new sovereigns in inscriptions to writing full texts that detail military exploits and describe court life. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya has collated many of these sources for the eighth through fourteenth centuries and reconstructs the Sanskrit intellectual apparatus for how to discuss Perso-Islamic rulers.[45] He argues that Sanskrit literati wrote both positively and negatively about Islamicate kings, but either way drew upon standard tropes of praising them as virtuous rulers or condemning them as destructive raiders.[46] Mughal-affiliated Sanskrit intellectuals followed these procedures in numerous ways and also introduced aesthetic and political innovations, as I discuss in chapters 1 and 2. Certain types of texts also arose as Sanskrit and Persian

[44] Samira Sheikh details some of this broader history in *Forging a Region*; also see citations in chapter 2.

[45] Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*; also see Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 29-37.

[46] *Representing the Other?*, 28-60.

intersected in medieval India that later appeared in the Mughal milieu, such as bilingual lexicons that first appeared in the fourteenth century.[47]

Islamicate kings likewise evinced an interest in Sanskrit well before the Mughal period. In certain respects, this curiosity predates the establishment of Islamicate kingdoms in India. The Sanskrit book of stories titled *Pañcatantra* was translated into Middle Persian even before the advent of Islam, in the sixth century. The *Pañcatantra* was then brought into Arabic, later into modern Persian, and subsequently reworked several times, including once at the request of Persianate kings based in north India.[48] In the early eleventh century, the Arabic scholar al-Bīrūnī also authored a series of translations and accounts of Indian knowledge. I discuss his famous *Kitāb al-Hind*, which draws upon numerous Sanskrit texts, in chapter 4, and he also rendered the *Yogasūtra*s of *Patañjali* into Arabic.[49]

Once we move into the period of the Delhi Sultanates, further instances arise of Islamicate interest in Sanskrit. For example, the medieval Indo-Persian poet Amīr Khusraw discusses Indian languages in his *Nuh Sipihr* (*Nine Skies*, 1318) and proclaims Sanskrit to be superior to courtly Persian (*darī*) and inferior only to Arabic, the language of the Qur'an.[50] Amīr Khusraw also describes Indian cultural life more generally in this same text, which constitutes a notable antecedent for Abū al-Faẓl's writings during Akbar's period (see chapter 4). More direct translations also arise intermittently, such as the Persian version of the sixth century

---

[47] Salakṣa completed his *Śabdavilāsa* in 1365; I discuss this text in chapter 1.

[48] I address the *Pañcatantra* briefly in chapter 3. Also see Marroum, "*Kalila wa Dimna*" and Riedel, "Kalila wa Demna."

[49] On al-Bīrūnī's translation of the *Yogasūtra*s see the series of articles in the 1960s-80s discussing and translating the text by Shlomo Pines and Tuvia Gelblum ("Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*"). On the relationship of his translations of the *Yogasūtra*s and his *India* see Lawrence, "Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Bīrūnī's *India*," 29-48.

[50] See exegesis of this passage in Gabbay, *Islamic Tolerance*, 35-36.

Sanskrit *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (*Great Compendium*).[51] Firuz Shah Tughluq underwrote this translation among others, which remains largely unanalyzed in modern scholarship but constitutes an important precedent for how Persianate translators approached foreign materials.[52]

Additionally, a much wider trend of cultural exchanges prospered in pre-Mughal India that involved numerous other social groups and also featured material items, such as goods, dress, and architecture. Barry Flood has skillfully demonstrated that objects and mechanisms of their circulation can provide a powerful way to capture networks in thirteenth century Asia and earlier.[53] Flood focuses on Hindu-Muslim exchanges broadly conceived while fully acknowledging the inadequacy of such anachronistic, narrow categories. He draws upon the circulation of items, shared social practices, and hybrid architecture to reconstruct some of the complex processes of transculturation that characterized relations between premodern Indic and Islamicate elites. Flood highlights shared practices in his reconstruction of the premodern world, which I touch upon in my analysis of titling in chapter 1. Flood also emphasizes the concept of translation as a useful way to investigate cross-cultural relations.[54] I attempt to diversify the types of interactions we identify beyond translations, but the movement of texts across languages continues to feature prominently in the Mughal court.

The fifteenth century court of Zayn al-Abidin in Kashmir provides a particularly clear precedent for Mughal-initiated encounters. Whereas previous Sanskrit-Persian interactions occurred more piecemeal, Zayn al-Abidin (r. 1420-1470) pursued an extensive series of engagements. He initiated translations of major works from Sanskrit into Persian (e.g.,

---

[51] See Jalali and Ansari, "Persian Translation of Varāhamihira's Bṛhatsaṃhitā."

[52] S.R. Sarma lists six Persian translations of Sanskrit texts produced under Firuz Shah's orders, only two of which are extant ("Translation of Scientific Texts," 70).

[53] *Objects of Translation*; particularly see his introduction for the concepts I discuss here.

[54] *Objects of Translation*, 6-9.

Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, *River of Kings*, and the *Mahābhārata*). He also sponsored chronicles (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*s of Jonarāja and Śrīvara) that develop an innovative type of historical consciousness in Sanskrit and provide detailed information about cross-cultural affairs.[55] One of his court poets, Śrīvara, would later pen one of the rare translations of a Persian text into Sanskrit (*Kathākautuka*, based on Jāmī's *Yusuf and Zulekha*). The Mughals were aware of at least some of these ground-breaking activities, and Akbar's court-sponsored *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (*Akbar's Institutes*) remembers Zayn al-Abidin as a wise man who "had many works translated from Arabic, Persian, Kashmiri, and Sanskrit."[56] The case of Zayn al-Abidin evinces an alternative model to Sanskrit and Persian encounters in the Mughal world and highlights different ways to dynamically combine the political and aesthetic resources of north India's cosmopolitan literary traditions.

Last, as we enter the sixteenth century, Sanskrit intellectuals increasingly formed patronage relationships and affiliations with a variety of Islamicate courts. For example, literati composed Sanskrit encomia that praise kings such as Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar (r. 1510-53) and Sher Shah Suri (r. 1540-45).[57] During the 1570s-90s, Sanskrit and Persian encounters exploded in the Mughal court on an unprecedented level. Interactions across these traditions exceeded earlier instances in both the quantity and variety of social and literary exchanges. What remains less clear, however, is whether this was exclusively a Mughal phenomenon. I argue in what follows that there were certain motivations behind these events that are specific to the Mughal milieu. But there were many contemporary sites of

---

[55] Slaje discusses the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*s in *Medieval Kashmir and the Science of History*, particularly 6-23. On Śrīvara, also see Slaje, "Śrīvara's So-Called 'Jaina-Rājataraṅgiṇī'."

[56] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 1:584.

[57] Cited in Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 101-9 and 111, respectively.

multilingual interactions throughout South Asia suggesting that larger cultural, literary, and imperial forces were also at work. Several Deccani kingdoms pursued similar endeavors, such as the Adilshahi dynasty of Bijapur and the Qutbshahi dynasty in Golconda.[58]

In addition, if we expand our purview beyond royal courts, cross-cultural activities can be seen throughout early modern Indian society in religious, social, and intellectual contexts. The Mughals themselves extended patronage to non-Muslim religious communities who remained outside of court.[59] Members of different religious groups also initiated their own exchanges in terms of texts and ideas. In particular, Sufi communities were often interested in yoga and other "Hindu" spiritual practices.[60] Finally, independent intellectuals often advanced projects that drew upon both Sanskrit and Persian in different ways and resulted in innovative works.[61] How such pursuits related to encounters in the Mughal milieu remains to be explored, but there were undeniably broader trends unfolding in early modern South Asia.

Mughal Contexts: Materials and Chapter Outline

The Mughal court housed meetings between members of Sanskrit and Persian traditions on both social and literary levels. I employ the term *encounters* to describe this assortment of connections and bring together textual materials previously treated separately from one another. Under this rubric, I include social links between Sanskrit literati and the

---

[58] E.g., Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627) patronized *Kitāb-i Nauras* (Gayani, "Kitab-i-Nauras"). A Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Kokaśāstra*, a sexual treatise, was dedicated to 'Abdullah Qutbshah, r. 1625-72 (see description of ms. British Library Persian Additional 17,489 in Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, 2:680).

[59] E.g., Ernst discusses Mughal patronage to jogi shrines ("Accounts of Yogis," 413-14).

[60] Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 32-33; Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies*, 243-47. A Sanskrit text on tantra and yoga, *Amṛtakuṇḍa* (*Pool of Nectar*), was widely known across the Islamicate world in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish versions (Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga," 203-7). Vernacular poets also played on religious identities (e.g., Zelliot, "Eknath's Drama-Poem").

[61] For example, there are numerous *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* translations produced independently of any direct patronage and scattered throughout European and Indian libraries.

Mughal court as well as literature that emerged as a result of these interactions. Texts occupy the center of my attention here and consist of Sanskrit works produced for Mughal consumption, Sanskrit accounts of Mughal history and court life, Persian translations of the Indian epics, and Persian explorations of Sanskrit knowledge systems.

My initial concern in my first chapter is the broad contours of relations between Sanskrit scholars and the Mughal elite. Direct patronage ties and looser forms of affiliation brought Sanskrit intellectuals to the Mughal milieu in a variety of roles ranging from political actors to translators to authors. This web of connections constitutes a forgotten aspect of the social history of the Mughal court and also sets the stage for the literary interactions at the center of my project. In the second part of chapter 1, I analyze two categories of Sanskrit texts that directly comment on the Persianate context of their composition: praise poems to Mughal nobles and Sanskrit grammars of Persian. Both genres make strong arguments for the political and cultural importance of Sanskrit in the Mughal context. I conclude this chapter with a description of multilingual titling practices forged by Mughal emperors and Sanskrit intellectuals. This practice crossed over linguistic and religious lines and demarcated new forms of early modern power dynamics.

In chapter 2, I examine Sanskrit accounts of engagements with the Mughal world authored by Jains, a religious minority in India with a particularly strong presence in Gujarat. I draw upon six works in order to see how the Jains represent the Mughals and themselves at the royal court. I analyze their largely imaginary accounts of the Mughal conquest of India and the hitherto unrecognized participation of the emperors in Jain religious rituals. In terms of self-representation, I investigate how these authors negotiated the demands of their imperial and religious affiliations and describe the difficulties they faced at court. Each of these Jain

texts explores the implications of writing at the meeting points of cosmopolitan cultures and empire in different ways. But all draw upon and often freely change historical occurrences in order to develop aesthetic ways of addressing the pressing questions posed by their close ties with the Mughals.

I turn to Persian materials in chapter 3 and offer an in-depth study of the translation of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (called *Razmnāmah* in Persian) under Akbar's sponsorship. I argue that the *Razmnāmah* was a core literary work for the Mughal court that directly informed Akbar's imperial ambitions. I present my analysis of the Mughal *Mahābhārata* in three sections, focusing first on the work's Sanskrit sources. I outline how the Mughal translators accessed Sanskrit materials and identify the Sanskrit texts that served as the basis for the Persian translation. This larger framework helps us to reconstruct the nature of the *Mahābhārata* as the Mughals knew it and offers both the conceptual and literary tools needed to conduct comparative textual analysis. In the second section, I examine the text of the *Razmnāmah* in comparison with its Sanskrit sources in order to highlight some of the Mughal translators' key strategies in reimagining the epic in Persian. This close reading traces several literary paradigms that provide insight into the crucial role the Persian *Mahābhārata* played in the creation of Mughal imperial culture. Last, I look at three interpretative frameworks offered by Akbar's court, including a preface to the translation and two later attempts to rework *Razmnāmah*. Taken as a whole, my analysis demonstrates that the *Razmnāmah* was a foundational component of the political ideology of Akbar's court, whereby the Mughals developed a new type of Indo-Persian imperial aesthetic.

In the fourth and final chapter, I address Indo-Persian reactions to the Sanskrit materials that the Mughals brought into the Persianate tradition. This broad category

encompasses Mughal accounts of Sanskrit knowledge systems, poetic reworkings of previously translated texts, and histories that incorporate Sanskrit-derived information. First, I look closely at Abū al-Faẓl's *Learning of India* (*dānish-i hindūstān*), which is contained within his imperially sponsored history of Akbar's reign. I try to explicate Abū al-Faẓl's often elusive interest in specialized Sanskrit discourses and seek to reconstruct his radical intellectual and political agendas. Next, I turn towards the multiple impacts of the Persian translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* sponsored by Akbar. This text garnered starkly different responses from readers both within and beyond the Mughal court in terms of marginal notes, comments, and retranslations that illustrate the diverse possibilities for how this epic could operate as an Indo-Persian story. In closing, I move beyond the courts of Akbar and Jahangir to consider two texts that emerge, respectively, from outside the Mughal Empire and post-1650. These works promulgate additional uses of Mughal-initiated Sanskrit translations and also help bring into focus particular features of engagements within the Mughal milieu from 1570-1650.

In this dissertation, I have typically omitted scientific texts from consideration, including treatises on astrology and astronomy. The Mughal court employed many Sanskrit astrologers, who in turn produced texts that gloss Persian astronomical terms and explain methods of converting dates between Indian and Hijri calendars.[62] Similar exchanges within the domain of science had also flourished in pre-Mughal India. For example, Sanskrit treatises on Islamicate astrolabes began to be produced under Firuz Shah Tughluq and continued to be

---

[62] These works include "Mlecchamatanirūpaṇa" of Sūryadāsa, *Pārasīprakāśa* of Vedāṅgarāya, *Pārasīvinoda* of Vrajabhūṣaṇa, and *Pārasīprakāśa* of Jāniprayāga (ms. Allahabad Municipal Museum 432/106). The first three have been discussed in modern scholarship but the fourth has not so I will give a few details here. Jāniprayāga's *Pārasīprakāśa* was previously listed as by Kṛtavīryātmaja, which is incorrect (*New Catalogus Catalogorum*, 12:38). Jāniprayāga dedicates his *Pārasīprakāśa* to "Glorious Mirza Sultan, the best son of Bhuya Salatin (or Sultan?) Khan," whose identity remains unclear to me. He covers zodiac signs, months, planets, and date conversion in the first chapter, which is the only part of the text to survive in the Allahabad manuscript. I have not identified any additional copies of the work.

composed for centuries.[63] Astrology and cosmography also proved to be fertile ground for bringing together multiple traditions, including Sanskrit and Persian, in the sixteenth century Deccan.[64] Moreover, particularly in the Mughal context, astrology was often intensely political.[65] Nonetheless, such scientific works have distinct interests regarding the articulation of kingship and fall outside of literary concerns as I have articulated them here.

In addition, while I have attempted to be comprehensive, certain methodological problems have proved daunting in this regard. First, many of the texts I discuss in this dissertation survive in single manuscripts and occasionally in fragmentary forms. In particular, many of the Sanskrit works I address did not circulate widely and so were rarely recopied. Also the amount of textual materials that I invoke in this project has forced me to read selectively. Each chapter addresses multiple texts that total thousands of pages combined. In particular the Persian materials tend to be lengthy. In order to avoid any pitfalls that might result from this sort of reading, I have attempted to clearly state my methodological approach to each set of materials.

In addition to outlining these social and literary events, I further seek to conceptualize the diverse stimuli that prompted Sanskrit and Persian intellectuals to forge dynamic relationships, particularly in the political center of north India. For the Mughals, making sense of and appropriating Sanskrit was a decisive part of formulating their imperial ambitions. Those ambitions were often defined in different ways, but Mughal actors cultivated interactions with the Sanskrit sphere as multilayered projects that engaged with live political,

---

[63] See Sarma, "Sulṭān, Sūri and the Astrolabe."

[64] Flatt, "Authorship and Significance of the *Nujūm al-ʻulūm*."

[65] Moin addresses the political implications of early modern astrology in Islamicate empires in "Islam and the Millennium," 13-17. On Akbar's horoscopes in particular, including one drawn up by a Sanskrit-trained astrologer, see Orthmann, "Circular Motions," 104-13.

religious, and literary issues in the expanding empire. For Sanskrit intellectuals, engagements with the Persian sphere had more complex causes, and we need to disaggregate what is usually seen as a monolithic entity into multiple, often highly divergent Sanskrit traditions. Jain literati sought to pair their religious values with an imperial mandate, whereas orthodox Brahmans tried to make sense of Mughal power by developing an intellectual account of Persian. In all cases, participants in Sanskrit and Persian literary cultures seized upon encounters across cosmopolitan formations as dynamic opportunities to reshape the contours of their changing world.

More broadly these interactions raise a series of larger questions concerning the nature of culture and empire. At the core of my concerns here is how power is formulated, and Sanskrit-Persian exchanges demonstrate that we ought to privilege literary resources in such queries regarding early modern India given that Mughal political claims were generated precisely through these cultural meetings. We also need to correct the longstanding assumption that aesthetic interests are always subordinate to political concerns and reevaluate how we understand the nature of political power more broadly. The materials I discuss in the following chapters challenge any view that would restrict literature to supporting authority and instead weave together culture and power in ways that suggest that this potent combination offered the Mughals the opportunity to act in truly imperial ways. Last, my work here exemplifies the value of historically-minded philology that strives to conceptualize the meaning of texts both in their multiple contexts and for us today. Sanskrit and Persian interactions in early modern India are not only a pivotal part of understanding the past, but also help us to articulate the larger implications and possibilities in thinking about imperialism, multicultural activities, and power in South Asia and beyond.

Chapter 1: Sanskrit Literati and Literature at the Mughal Court

Sanskrit intellectuals frequented the courts of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan in substantial numbers. Moreover, they produced a variety of texts as the result of their imperial affiliations and developed cross-cultural practices that interweave Sanskrit and Persian traditions. However, scholars of Mughal India have often misunderstood both the extent and nature of relationships between Indian intellectuals and the royal court, largely because they have failed to investigate the evidence for such connections within Sanskrit texts. Sanskrit scholars have made some serious attempts to chronicle Mughal support of Sanskrit literati.[1] But they have too often invoked an overly strict notion of literary patronage that precludes deeper inquiry into other types of possible relationships formed by members of Sanskrit and Mughal circles.[2] Despite the indifference scholars have shown, these associations are an important part of both cultural traditions and the intellectual history of early modern India. Sanskrit literati served the Mughal court in a wide diversity of capacities and addressed their royal, Persianate context at length in written texts. Together, Sanskrit leaders and the Mughal emperors also developed multilingual practices, such as awarding titles. Taken as a whole, Sanskrit authors, their texts, and relations with the imperial elite constitute vibrant aspects of Mughal court culture that revolve around the meetings of two cosmopolitan traditions.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the presence of Sanskrit-affiliated figures, their literary production, and activities at the Mughal court, with an emphasis on the imperial implications of these new connections. First, I outline the different roles that Sanskrit literati

---

[1] I am particularly indebted to J.B. Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*; M.M. Patkar, "Moghul Patronage to Sanskrit Learning"; and C. Chakravarti, "Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning."

[2] A notable exception is Desai's introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, which provides the most extensive account of Jain encounters with the Mughal court available to date.

from both Brahmanical and Jain communities filled in the royal milieu. These ties illustrate the depth and diversity of Sanskrit intellectuals' participation in court life and also explicate the social structures that facilitated various sorts of literary interactions. Second, I analyze two bodies of works closely linked with the courtly circumstances of their composition: Sanskrit encomia (*praśasti*s) of the Mughals and Sanskrit grammars and lexicons of Persian. Within these genres, authors explore some of the transformative possibilities for texts that link Persianate and Sanskrit modes of discourse. Last, I reconstruct to the extent possible the imperial practice of issuing titles that emerged at the intersection of multiple political, religious, and linguistic traditions. The Mughal kings gave Sanskrit intellectuals a range of informal titles in numerous languages and also involved themselves in managing the clerical hierarchies of one religious tradition, that of the Jains. Along with other social and literary innovations, these largely unprecedented titling practices unfolded on a truly multicultural stage that significantly impacts how we conceptualize the dynamics of the Mughal court.

Patronage, Associations, and Textual Sources

Before elaborating on the manifold roles of Jain and Brahmanical literati in the Mughal context, a few words of definition are necessary concerning the nature of these relations and the sources for such information. I employ here the partially overlapping terms association and patronage in order to cover a broad range of social and textual connections. Previous scholars have tended to focus exclusively on support that the Mughal crown personally extended to Sanskrit intellectuals, usually to produce written works. While direct literary patronage is certainly a constitutive part of the narrative of Sanskrit at the Mughal court, this history also features literati who forged royal connections by other means. Many Indian intellectuals entered imperial circles on behalf of specific communities or subsidiary rulers. In

such cases, we would locate an individual's source of sponsorship outside of the Mughal world, but he nonetheless participated meaningfully in the life of the central royal court. Moreover, the Mughals supported Sanskrit intellectuals for a variety of reasons other than generating literature. While in this respect the definition of a given person as a Sanskrit literatus can become slippery, it is crucial to include those who did not author texts under the Mughals but were nonetheless viewed as members of the Sanskrit learned tradition. By incorporating associations beyond direct patronage, I aim to draw attention to the wide range of opportunities open to Sanskrit intellectuals in the Mughal milieu.

Many diverse sources provide information concerning Mughal-Sanskrit connections, and I rely on Sanskrit, Persian, and vernacular texts in the account below. I often heavily emphasize Sanskrit materials because they offer the most detailed documentation, including names of courtly figures, locations, dates, and references to known events. Even given such precise information, however, many difficulties arise in attempting to accurately reconstruct this network of social relations. When sources from two or more languages concur about a particular occurrence, I take its veracity as relatively firmly established. But the majority of encounters I discuss are based on attestations in the Sanskrit tradition alone, not infrequently in a single work. While sometimes there are moments of obvious inaccuracy, for the most part Sanskrit literati offer fully credible stories of their interactions with Mughal figures.[3] Nonetheless they tend to record such meetings in genres that do not necessarily emphasize historical accuracy above other types of literary and religious concerns (e.g., *kāvya, carita,* and *rāsa* in vernacular texts). Given these factors, our knowledge of the imperial activities and

[3] A good example of clear exaggeration is when Siddhicandra describes Nur Jahan walking into the Mughal court completely unveiled, which would contradict everything we know about harem norms at the time (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.259-68).

intentions of Sanskrit literati remains tentative in many of its details. But the overarching narrative is authentic beyond a reasonable doubt and constitutes an important addition to our understanding of Mughal court culture.

A Social History of Sanskrit Intellectuals at the Mughal Court

Numerous Sanskrit intellectuals, primarily Brahmans and Jains, attended the Mughal court. These individuals all shared a cultural affiliation in that they either composed texts in Sanskrit or otherwise evinced familiarity with that language and tradition.[4] But beyond their mutual literary credentials, Mughal-affiliated Sanskrit intellectuals formed a diverse group. Geographically, they hailed from across India, from Gujarat to Bengal, and from as far south as the Deccan, but generally from areas within the Mughal polity or threatened by imperial military action. Those from Gujarat were overwhelmingly Jains of two Śvetāmbara sects, the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas, which thrived particularly in western India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[5] Jains visited the royal court in disproportionately large numbers primarily because the Mughal takeover of Gujarat in 1572-73 resulted in direct imperial administration of much of the region.[6] Those who came from elsewhere tended to be Brahmans and pursued royal affiliations for more varied reasons than their Jain counterparts. Rajputs and other Indians were also present at court, but they generally involved themselves more directly in Persianate culture by entering formal Mughal service. The Rajput elite

---

[4] Here I exclude substantial numbers of "Hindus" who became *munshī*s or otherwise entered the Persian-speaking imperial service. While these individuals also benefited from increasing Mughal comfort with Indian traditions, this assimilation is a separate phenomenon that deserves its own treatment (see Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India," 121-34).

[5] Digambara Jains were present in Agra during Mughal rule (Cort, "Tale of Two Cities," 40-50), but appear to not have visited the court (Abū al-Faẕl notes his unfamiliarity with Digambaras in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 478; Calcutta ed., 110). Overall, Digambaras also referenced the Mughals less than their Śvetāmbara counterparts in Sanskrit texts, although two notable exceptions are Rājamalla's *Jambūsvāmicarita* and, to a lesser extent, his *Lāṭīsaṃhitā*.

[6] I discuss the Mughal conquest of Gujarat and its implications for Jain literati in more detail in chapter 2.

commonly sponsored Sanskrit (and Hindi) textual production in their own courts, but left Sanskrit in the Mughal court largely in the hands of Jains and Brahmans.[7]

While Jains and Brahmans both brought Sanskrit literary culture into Mughal contexts, they would hardly have viewed their actions as a joint project. On the contrary, Jain texts that discuss events in Mughal circles often sneer at Brahmans and record conflicts between the two groups (see chapter 2). There were also major differences in how each community conducted itself at court, and certain roles were only filled by one group, as I elaborate on below. Nor were the demographic profiles entirely stable. Jahangir's reign witnessed a steep decline in the number of Jains at court, largely due to his troubled relations with monastic members of this tradition. In contrast, as best we can tell, Brahmans remained a relatively constant presence through Jahangir's tenure and waned in Mughal circles only during Shah Jahan's rule due to shifts in language patronage whereby increasing imperial resources were devoted to Hindi at the expense of Sanskrit.[8] Despite not acting cooperatively and following different trajectories, Jains and Brahmans nonetheless both developed an unprecedented diversity of roles for Sanskrit literati at a Persianate court. They served the Mughals in a variety of often overlapping capacities as authors, religious guides, intellectual informants, translators, and political negotiators.

Establishing Relations: Jain and Brahmans Enter the Mughal Milieu

Brahmans and Jains initially appeared in the royal Mughal milieu around the same time, in the 1560s. Early Brahman intellectuals often accompanied political embassies either to or from the imperial center or were associated with music, both legacies that would endure

---

[7] One individual who seems to have crossed this divide, at least briefly, is Ramdas Kachhwaha, who appears as a mouthpiece for Brahmanical views at the Mughal court in at least one Jain text (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.19-47).

[8] On Mughal patronage of Hindi see Busch, "Hidden in Plain View" and *Poetry of Kings*, 130-65.

through Shah Jahan's reign. Mahāpātra Kṛṣṇadāsa of Orissa is the first Sanskrit intellectual in Akbar's court for whom we have a rough date: he must have been in the imperial retinue by 1565 since *Akbarnāmah*, Akbar's official history, records that he joined an envoy to Orissa at that time.[9] *Akbarnāmah* further attests that Mahāpātra (*mahāpātar* in Persian) "had no rival in the arts of music or *hindī* poetry."[10] Indeed he is most well known in Sanskrit circles for composing a treatise on music titled *Gītaprakāśa* (*Light on Music*).[11] When he returned from Orissa in the late 1560s, Mahāpātra led a second Sanskrit author, Narasiṃha, from the court of Gajapati Mukundadeva into the ambit of Akbar's patronage. We lack detailed information about Narasiṃha's time at court, except that he claims to "have pleased the Lord of Delhi."[12] He also later authored several Sanskrit texts, most notably a *smṛti* titled *Nityācārapradīpa* (*Light on Obligatory Good Conduct*).[13] A series of Brahmans followed these two in entering the Mughal court from different regions, including at least one other musician who wrote a musical treatise in order to gain Akbar's favor.[14] Mahāpātra and Narasiṃha further initiated a trend of Brahmans moving between regional courts and the imperial center, although later

[9] *Akbarnāmah* of Abū al-Faẓl, 2:254-55 (all references are to the Persian edition unless otherwise noted). Badā'ūnī also notes Mahāpātra joining this embassy (quoted in Wade, *Imaging Sound*, 108).

[10] *Akbarnāmah*, 2:255. It is unclear whether *hindī* means Hindi or Sanskrit here. As I discuss below, Sanskrit intellectuals were simultaneously identified with vernacular culture from nearly the beginning of Sanskrit-Mughal interactions.

[11] *Geetaprakash* of Krishnadas Badajena Mohapatra. Edited by Sri Nilamadhab Panigrahi, Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sangeet Natak Academy, 1983.

[12] *Siṃhavājapeyīvaṃśāvalī* v. 31 quoted in Mahapatra, "Some Forgotten Smṛti-Writers of Orissa," 7.

[13] Mahapatra, "Some Forgotten Smṛti-Writers of Orissa," 12-16.

[14] Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala composed *Nartananirṇaya* (*Ascertainment of Dance*) "to please King Akbar" (*akabaranṛparucyarthaṃ*) before 1576 (introduction to *Nartananirṇaya*, 1:15-16; for patronage also see *Nartananirṇaya*, 3:4.2.675). He was also patronized by Madho Singh Kachhwaha, the brother of Man Singh of Amer (Gode, "Notes on Indian Chronology," 339) Given our lack of specific dates, it is also possible that Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala preceded Mahāpātra Kṛṣṇadāsa and Narasiṃha in visiting Akbar's court.

intellectuals also served the court in numerous capacities beyond musical and diplomatic realms.[15]

Padmasundara was the first Jain to frequent Akbar's court, likely in the 1560s, and his arrival marks the beginning of Sanskrit literary production for the Mughals.[16] We know nothing about why Padmasundara came to court or the duration of his stay. But Jain texts record that he participated in debates with Brahmans therein and left a small library of books behind upon his death.[17] By 1569 he had also crafted a treatise on Sanskrit aesthetic theory at the explicit request of Emperor Akbar titled *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* (*Mirror of the Erotic Passion for Emperor Akbar*).[18] Whether or how Mughal audiences may have understood such Sanskrit works is a question neither the Sanskrit nor Persian tradition ever directly addresses. It is entirely possible that the Mughals sponsored such texts with no intention of reading (or hearing) them, as presumably countless Indian kings before them had done. However, as I demonstrate in the following section, certain Sanskrit works were intended to engage Mughal figures in cognitively meaningful ways. Regardless of his precise intentions, Padmasundara

---

[15] E.g., Goviṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, also called Akbarīya Kālidāsa, frequented the courts of Ramacandra of Rewa and Akbar (Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 33-35; Raghavacharya, "Akbariya-Kālidāsa Alias Govindabhaṭṭa," 565-67); Padmasundara also served Maldeo of Jodhpur (Harṣakīrti's *Dhātutaraṅgiṇī* quoted in introduction to *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*, xxii). In the seventeenth century, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja wrote praise poems for both Jagatsingh of Udaipur and Asaf Khan in addition to spending time in Shah Jahan's court (Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 46-71).

[16] Padmasundara could have visited Akbar's court anytime between 1557, the year after Akbar's accession, and 1569, the date of *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*'s composition. Madhav Krishna Sarma, the editor of the text, argues that Padmasundara visited before 1561 since he does not mention Akbar's conquest of Malwa but does detail the military feats of Babur and Humayun (introduction to *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*, xxiv). However, others have pointed out that Padmasundara extols Akbar's military prowess more generally, which is only logically for a post-1561 date (Sharma, "The three earliest Jain Influencers of Mughal Religious Policy," 145). I find no evidence to settle his dates at court more precisely.

[17] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.91-93.

[18] On the date of composition see the introduction to *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*, xix. I discuss this text further in the following section.

initiated the dual long-standing practices, shared by both Jains and Brahmans, of composing texts under Mughal patronage and dedicating Sanskrit works to Mughal imperial figures.

The Sanskrit tradition proffered several responses to the inauguration of Jain-Mughal relations, which generally indicate discomfort with the novelty of such ties. As I discuss in chapter 2, later Jain authors often omit Padmasundara altogether and present Hīravijaya's arrival in Fatehpur Sikri in 1582 as the beginning of Jain contact with the Mughals. These texts also generally frame Hīravijaya's first visit to court within a recognized history of Jain monks initiating connections with secular, sometimes specifically Muslim, rulers. Padmasundara's own intellectual descendents likewise sought to place him within a known type of patronage relationship rather than standing at the beginning of a novel practice. Most notably, a younger contemporary of Padmasundara added several verses to the end of *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* that mention specific Jain thinkers patronized by both Babur and Humayun.[19] The historical accuracy of these claims is somewhat dubious, but the need to provide a precedent, whether actual or invented, signals a certain amount of anxiety with Padmasundara potentially acting outside of any established tradition.

Hīravijaya is the next Jain intellectual after Padmasundara known to visit Akbar's court, and he arrived at the direct invitation of the emperor in 1582.[20] Akbar viewed these two Jains as within a single lineage and even bequeathed Padmasundara's library to Hīravijaya.[21] However, these men demarcate distinct moments in the history of Jain-Mughal encounters.

---

[19] The additional lines claim that Jayarāja was patronized by Babur and Ānandarāya by Humayun (quoted in introduction to *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*, xx). While the identity (and indeed existence) of these two earlier intellectuals remains unclear, scholars have long taken these lines as fact rather than fiction (e.g., Sharma, "The three earliest Jain Influencers of Mughal Religious Policy," 146; Vrat, *Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahākāvyas*, 74).

[20] I discuss this meeting, which is recorded in numerous texts, in more detail in chapter 2 (e.g., Padmasāgara's *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 122-89; Devavimala's *Hīrasaubhāgya*, *sarga*s 13-14; and Siddhicandra's *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.78-128).

[21] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.93-94.

First, Padmasundara and Hīravijaya entered the royal assembly at notably different times in the growth of the Mughal Empire and accordingly interacted with courtly figures in dissimilar ways. Padmasundara met Akbar before the Mughals' major territorial expansions of the 1570s-80s and also well prior to the emperor's wide-ranging interests in Indian ideas became manifest in a variety of forms. In contrast, Hīravijaya cultivated his imperial connections subsequent to the Mughal victory in Gujarat and after the King had evinced a deep curiosity concerning Indian religious and intellectual traditions. Moreover, the two belonged to different sects of Śvetāmbara Jainism with Padmasundara being a member of the Nāgapurīya and Hīravijaya the leader of the Tapā Gaccha. After Hīravijaya, members of the Tapā Gaccha continued to visit the Mughal court in substantial numbers through Jahangir's reign, whereas the Nāgapurīya do not appear to have pursued any further relations. Thus, from a Mughal perspective in the 1580s, Padmasundara certainly offered Akbar an early model for Persianate associations with Jain intellectuals. But Hīravijaya marks the beginning of sustained Jain-Mughal relations.

Sanskrit Literati as Politicians, Intellectuals, and Religious Guides

Hīravijaya resided at Akbar's court during multiple extended stays stretching to several years and carved out numerous roles for himself. First and foremost he served as an ambassador of his regional and spiritual communities and obtained a number of imperial concessions favorable to Gujarat, Jains, and the Tapā Gaccha. Upon his first visit in the 1580s, Hīravijaya successfully solicited an imperial order (*farmān*) from Akbar that prohibited animal slaughter during a Jain festival and also gained the emperor's promise to lift certain pilgrimage taxes. He procured several additional *farmān*s from Akbar over the next few decades that

granted his sect of Jainism authority over contested religious sites in Gujarat.[22] Hīravijaya also participated in religious debates overseen by members of the royal inner circle, frequently explaining Jain beliefs.[23] Last, he acted in conjunction with Akbar in order to bestow on members of his community Sanskrit titles that denoted formal positions in the Tapā Gaccha's religious hierarchy, as I discuss later in this chapter. Particularly in these latter two capacities, the Persianate tradition remembers Hīravijaya as one of the learned men of the age and lists him as such in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, part of Akbar's officially-sanctioned history.[24] Hīravijaya also provided a rough blueprint for different ways that Jains, and also Brahmans, could engage with political, intellectual, and religious realms within the Mughal court.

Hīravijaya brought several other members of the Tapā Gaccha with him to court and also paved the way, perhaps unintentionally, for members of the rival Kharatara Gaccha to penetrate Mughal circles.[25] Jains from both groups followed Hīravijaya in petitioning Akbar, and later Jahangir, for assorted political concessions.[26] Sanskrit and Gujarati texts and inscriptions all attest to the resulting Mughal *farmān*s, often in the context of praising those who procured them, and several are also extant in their original Persian or in translation.[27]

---

[22] See citations in the following paragraph.

[23] I discuss Jain religious debates before the Mughals in chapter 2.

[24] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 218; Calcutta ed., 1:233 (note variant reading in n. 9).

[25] By Akbar's reign, the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas had developed a range of often bitter differences over theological issues and points of ritual practice (Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, chapter 4; Dundas, *The Jains*, 143-45).

[26] Several secondary sources describe these events (most thoroughly Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 1-75). For a briefer linear account that relies on primary sources see Krishnamurthi, "Jains at the Court of Akbar," 137-43; also incorporating vernacular sources is Prasad, "Akbar and the Jains," 99-108 and Sheth, *Jainism in Gujarat*, 263-80. For a broader perspective that also includes Jains acting in the Persianate or economics spheres see Gopal, "Jain Community and Akbar," 160-66.

[27] Desai collects several *farmān*s in his introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, Appendix 2, 77-91. Findly lists Jahangir's *farmān*s relating to Jains ("Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence," 253). Some relevant Tapā Gaccha inscriptions are given in *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:34-86 (Buhler, "The Jaina Inscriptions from Śatrumjaya").

Sometimes the royal decrees benefited Gujaratis widely, such as when Hīravijaya negotiated the release of prisoners captured during the Mughal conquest of Saurashtra.[28] Other times, monks lobbied for imperial policies that enacted Jain principles popular across sectarian lines. For example, numerous sources record *farmān*s against killing animals that were effective for varying lengths of time and assurances of freedom of movement, an important concern for peripatetic Jain monks.[29] However, the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas also regularly competed for Mughal attention and obtained royal orders directed against one another. One particularly contentious issue was which group possessed control over Shatrunjaya, a popular pilgrimage location in Saurashtra. Both sects secured *farmān*s ensuring their administration of the site on different occasions.[30]

Brahman intellectuals also entreated the Mughal crown for political favors, although less frequently and often on behalf of others. During the first years of Jahangir's rule, a Sanskrit poet called Rudrakavi lobbied the Mughals to cease military action against Pratap Shah, the independent ruler of Baglan in the Deccan. I will discuss Rudrakavi in more detail later since his appeal took the form of a Sanskrit panegyric. In terms of Brahmans acting in their own interests, few cases are recorded, particularly early on.[31] Most famously, Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī successfully convinced Shah Jahan to rescind the pilgrimage tax on

---

[28] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 164.

[29] See chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion.

[30] For the Tapā Gaccha see the *Ādīśvara* inscription in *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:#12; also note that multiple references in Siddhicandra's *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*. For the Kharatara Gaccha see Jayasoma's *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 397.

[31] A possible exception is Nṛsiṃhāśrama (separate from the great Advaita philosopher), whom V. Raghavan describes as having convinced Akbar to halt cow slaughter and pilgrimage taxes ("Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī," 159). A collection of praise verses for Nṛsiṃhāśrama, collected by his pupil Saccidānandāśrama, is described in Shastri, *Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts*, 4:81-85.

travelers to Varanasi and Prayag (Allahabad).[32] In celebration of this victory, his fellow scholars collected two sets of poems lauding Kavīndra, one in Sanskrit and one in Hindi.[33] These parallel encomia appropriately mirror Kavīndra's own bifurcated literary production.[34] Kavīndrācārya and his feats at the Mughal court were also part of a larger shift in literary patronage, as I detail later.

Members of the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas along with Brahmans also acted as religious and intellectual guides under Akbar and Jahangir, providing the Mughals with access to a variety of Indian texts, knowledge systems, and practices. In this regard, the Mughals treated both Brahmans and Jains as cultural ambassadors of the larger Sanskrit tradition and often called upon them to elaborate Indian ideas that were not necessarily their own. In this vein, Shaykh Bhavan, a Brahman convert to Islam, is a particularly colorful character. Shaykh Bhavan resided at Akbar's court in the 1570s and 1580s and appears several times in Mughal histories.[35] Akbar often requested Shaykh Bhavan, despite his having become Muslim, to articulate Brahmanical ideas and interpret Sanskrit texts. However, Shaykh Bhavan either had a shaky grasp of Sanskrit or no desire to assist the Mughals in this regard and often characterized Sanskrit texts in ways that surprised Hindus and Muslims alike. For example, he reported that the *Atharva Veda* permitted Hindus to eat beef in certain circumstances and required burial of the dead rather than cremation.[36] The Mughals quickly ascertained that

---

[32] Taxes may have been cancelled at other pilgrimage sites also (Raghavan, "Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī," 162).

[33] *Kavīndracandrodaya* (*Moonrise of Kavindra*, Sanskrit) and *Kavīndracandrikā* (*Moonlight of Kavindra*, Hindi).

[34] On Kavīndra's interactions with the Mughals as a Sanskrit intellectual see Pollock, "Death of Sanskrit," 407-8 and as a Hindi intellectual see Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 289-92.

[35] Shaykh Bhavan is mentioned in Mughal histories as attempting the *Atharva Veda* translation in 1575, and is also listed as one of the Sanskrit informants for the *Mahābhārata* translation in 1582-84.

[36] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:213.

Shaykh Bhavan's interpretations fell outside of mainstream Brahmanical beliefs, and the confusion he created partially prompted Akbar's desire for direct translations of Sanskrit texts. Indeed, translations from Sanskrit under Akbar began with the *Atharva Veda*.[37]

The Mughals also turned to other Sanskrit intellectuals for more reliable information concerning Indian beliefs and practices, including those that could inform an imperial agenda. Roughly between the years 1575 and 1580, an anonymous author, likely a Brahman, composed a strange but noteworthy Sanskrit text at Akbar's request titled *Allopaniṣad* (*Allah's Upanishad*).[38] This short work of ten verses identifies Allah as equipollent with all Hindu gods and praises Him as the source of the world. The author includes a number of Perso-Arabic words in the text and plays on the multivalence of "Akbar", which may mean great, particularly in reference to God, and is also the proper name of the Mughal king.[39] Emperor Akbar frequently drew upon the ambiguous meaning of his name, particularly by invoking the common Islamic phrase "God is great" (*allāhu akbar*) in contexts where it could also mean "Akbar is God."[40] The eighth verse of *Allopaniṣad* uses this phrase twice, and the brief work also directly references the reigning sovereign in two separate verses. These read identically: "Muhammad Akbar is Allah's messenger."[41] Here *Allopaniṣad* echoes the *kalima*, the Islamic statement of faith, but inserts Akbar's name in lieu of Muhammad's as the messenger (*rasūl*) of God. Akbar often

---

[37] See chapter 3 for a discussion of this (failed) translation attempt.

[38] *Allopaniṣad* is undated; my date estimate is based on the experimentation of Akbar's court with various politico-religious ideas at this time that were eventually largely abandoned (e.g., *'ibādatkhānah* in 1575-76, *maḥẓar* in 1579, and rewriting of *kalima* 1579/80).

[39] See the Sanskrit text of *Allopaniṣad* in *Light of Truth*, 721; Nath also discusses this work in *Islamic Architecture and Culture in India*, 109-19.

[40] Akbar minted coins with the phrase *allāhu akbar* (Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 72). He also often had the phrase placed at the beginning of texts and used it as a greeting among members of the inner imperial circle.

[41] *Allopaniṣad* vv. 3 and 10, Sanskrit quoted in *Light of Truth*, 721 (the Arabic word *rasūl[a]* is transliterated into Sanskrit).

ordered Persian authors to eschew praise of Muhammad in their texts and is even reported to have (unsuccessfully) attempted to emend the *kalima* in 1579/80 to read, "there is no God but God, and Akbar is his representative (*khalīfat*)."[42] Whether or how Akbar's court ever used *Allopaniṣad* remains unclear, but the text nonetheless evinces a striking cross-cultural register possible only with the active participation of Sanskrit intellectuals in the construction of Mughal political ideology.[43]

Jains also provided Akbar with access to Indian religious ideas both from their own tradition and those of others. In terms of Brahman-inspired practices, Bhānucandra taught Akbar how to properly recite a Sanskrit text titled *Sūryasahasranāma* (*Thousand Names of the Sun*).[44] Bhānucandra was one of Hīravijaya's disciples whom Hīravijaya sent to the Mughal court in Lahore in 1587.[45] Unlike Shaykh Bhavan, Bhānucandra transmitted sound knowledge of Brahmanical and larger Sanskrit ideas and quickly became a respected authority on such matters among the Mughal elite. He may even have served as Abū al-Faẕl's informant for a section of *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* titled *Learning of India*, a thorough account of Sanskrit knowledge that features nine schools of Indian philosophy.[46] Under Jahangir Bhānucandra's precise role is less clear, although he was the only Jain to remain at court when Jahangir expelled all others in

---

[42] For example, see Abū al-Faẕl's preface to the *Razmnāmah* ("Muqaddamah"), which lacks praise of Muhammad. On the change of the *kalima* see Badāʾūnī's *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:273.

[43] Likely Akbar's court did not use *Allopaniṣad* for long if at all since many of the emperor's other attempts to play on the ambiguous meaning of "Akbar" provoked significant outrage (e.g., see Badāʾūnī's comments on troubled responses to Akbar's revision of the *kalima* in *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:273).

[44] It is conceivable that Akbar was also inspired to seek out *Sūryasahasranāma* by his own interest in illumination philosophy, by his family connections with Shattari sufis, or by Zoroastrians who were present at court and impacted Akbar's personal and imperial behaviors in several ways (on the last point see Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, 27). But Siddhicandra notes that Akbar first requested this text from resident Brahmans before turning to Bhānucandra (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.67).

[45] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.32-33.

[46] Pollock, "New Intellectuals in seventeenth-century India," 20.

1611.[47] Thus, throughout his time at court, Bhānucandra was not primarily identified according to his religious affiliation but rather built a reputation in Mughal circles as a polymath Sanskrit intellectual.

Members of the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas also brought specifically Jain perspectives into Mughal circles at the requests of imperial figures. For example, one text tells how Jinacandra, the leader of the Kharatara Gaccha, spent a monsoon season in Lahore "because of the persistence of Akbar."[48] The king's desire, in his own words, was that "you will instruct me everyday in Jain beliefs (*darśana*) without interruption in order to increase my *dharma*."[49] Tapā Gaccha texts describe similar encounters and also emphasize Akbar's wish to speak with particular Jain leaders.[50] One Tapā Gaccha author further portrays the Mughals as submitting to Jain religious leaders, even describing Abū al-Faẓl, Akbar's vizier, as "acting like a student" and bowing to Hīravijaya Sūri.[51] The historical accuracy of the Mughal elite acquiescing to Jains in such a way seems dubious, although it's quite likely that certain types of behavior were misunderstood across cultural lines. Europeans at Akbar's court frequently misread the emperor's interest in western culture (particularly art) as willingness to adopt Christian theological precepts.[52] Furthermore, at least one Portuguese priest present at the royal court commented with dismay about the king's apparent affinity for the Jains.[53] Regardless of the

---

[47] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.335-36a.

[48] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 395.

[49] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 390.

[50] See my discussion of the initial meeting of Akbar and Hīravijaya Sūri in chapter 2.

[51] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.136.

[52] Ania Loomba summarizes much of this repeated misunderstanding in "Of Gifts, Ambassadors, and Copy-cats," 54-56. Also see Bailey, *Jesuits and the Grand Mogul*, 9-40.

[53] Father Pinheiro complained about Akbar's ties with Jains (quoted in Maclagan, "Jesuit Missions to the Emperor Akbar," 70).

Mughal attitude towards Jainism as a formal creed, Akbar at least showed significant interest in learning about Jain rituals and philosophies.

Moreover, Jains diversified the imperial cultural landscape by introducing certain Indian intellectual and religious practices to the court. For example, Nandivijaya, a Tapā Gaccha monk, demonstrated before the Mughals his powers of *avadhāna*, a difficult mental feat of focusing on multiple (often eight, but sometimes as many as a hundred or even a thousand) things at once. This achievement greatly impressed Akbar and particularly his poet laureate, Fayẓī.[54] On numerous occasions, Jains attempted to convince the Mughal emperors of the value of non-violence towards living beings, particularly animals. While this mainly resulted in decrees banning animal slaughter for periods of time, the kings also changed their personal behavior on occasion. Most notably, Akbar abstained from meat on particular days of the week, and Jahangir vowed to refrain from hunting and consuming meat for approximately four years of his reign, likely as the result of Jain influences.[55] Moreover, in at least one case, Kharatara (and, in one version, Tapā) Gaccha members designed and conducted an elaborate religious ceremony on Akbar's behalf that involved both Akbar and Prince Salim giving offerings to Jain idols. Several Sanskrit and vernacular texts in the Tapā and Kharatara traditions describe this ritual and leave no doubt of the Mughals' direct participation.[56] Jains may not have converted any Mughal kings, but they certainly brought their own practices into courtly circles and occasionally inspired new modes of imperial conduct as a result.

---

[54] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.68-70. According to Siddhicandra, Nandivijaya also invoked the jealousy of the Brahmans (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.17-19).

[55] On Akbar: *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 51. On Jahangir: Findly, "Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence," 252-56.

[56] I discuss Jain descriptions of this event and its probable truth in chapter 2.

Jains also introduced their beliefs into Akbar's court in the context of religious debates where they were obligated to defend themselves against Brahmanical and Islamic attacks. Here they ensured their continued participation in court life by proving themselves to be theists and also gained a prominent platform for their convictions. The core issue in these discussions was generally whether or not Jains believed in God (*parameśvara*, *paramātma*), and there was an understanding that being an atheist (*nāstika*) was outside the pale of acceptability in Mughal circles. Several such debates are recorded in the Tapā Gaccha tradition, generally featuring Hīravijaya or his successor, Vijayasena, as the major spokesperson for Jain theism. I elaborate on the forms and intellectual implications of these debates in chapter 2, but it is worth noting here that these events involved high political stakes. If the Mughal emperor became convinced Jains were atheists, they would lose their influence and possibly even their ability to attend court. Exile is precisely what their Brahman and Muslim interlocutors desired when they accused the Jains of denying the existence of any god, and they often stated this goal explicitly.[57] Thus, the Jains answered theological questions to protect their coveted position in the royal milieu.

The celebrated Gujarati poet Samayasundara, a Kharatara Gaccha affiliate, combines these religious, intellectual, and political interests in a text he presented to Akbar in 1592 titled *Artharatnāvalī* (*The String of Jewels of Meaning*).[58] In this work, Samayasundara interprets an eight-syllable Sanskrit sentence (*rājāno dadate saukhyam*, kings bestow happiness) to have eight hundred thousand separate, linguistically viable meanings. Partly he intended this work to demonstrate to Muslim and Brahman challengers in the Mughal court how the Jain tradition

---

[57] E.g., Hemavijaya's *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.145.

[58] Samayasundara was a learned monk in the upper levels of the Kharatara Gaccha's hierarchy and often a spokesperson for the sect (Balbir, "Samayasundara's *Sāmācārī-śataka*," 255). He traveled extensively and wrote a variety of important works in Gujarati (Yashaschandra, "From Hemacandra to *Hind Svarāj*," 571-74).

allows multiple interpretations of its scriptures (including theistic readings) without treating them as imprecise texts. Samayasundara also creatively provides Vaishnavite and Shaivite readings of his short sentence, thus displaying a pan-Indian aspect to Jain precepts that likely appealed to Akbar given his interest in multiple religious traditions.[59] Samayasundara attests that he presented this work in Kashmir before the Mughal king and learned Brahmans. Akbar was so pleased that,

> With multifaceted mental amazement born from an overflowing, novel joy arising from hearing these meanings, glorious Shah [Akbar] offered high praise and said, "Let [this book] be read, taught, and brought everywhere." He grasped this book with his own hands and, having placed it in my hand, held this text to be authoritative (*pramāṇīkṛto*).[60]

To further ensure Akbar's favor, Samayasundara ended his work by embedding the Mughal king within the Jain tradition and pronounced the final interpretation of his single sentence to mean, "Akbar bestows happiness."[61] While Samayasundara convinced Akbar of both the reliability of Jain scriptures and their relevance to his rule, Jain-Mughal relations would come unraveled over the next two decades, after Jahangir took power.

Divergent Paths: The Conclusion of Jain Imperial Relations

Jains populated Mughal circles early in Jahangir's reign but lost any clout or even presence at court by the end of his rule. Even before he ascended the throne Jahangir upset Jain leaders by reviving animal slaughter and pilgrimage taxes in Gujarat before Akbar ordered him to act otherwise.[62] Despite such youthful indiscretions, several Jain intellectuals patronized by Akbar, most prominently Bhānucandra and his pupil Siddhicandra, continued as

---

[59] For discussions of this work see Apte, "Artharatnavali of Samaya sundaragani," 89-91; Vrat, *Studies in Jaina Sanskrit Literature*, 180-81.

[60] *Artharatnāvalī*, 65.

[61] *Artharatnāvalī*, 65-66.

[62] Findly, "Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence," 253-54.

active figures at court when Jahangir took power. In 1610 the Tapā Gaccha appeared to be in good imperial standing, and the group's leader, Vijayasena, secured a *farmān* from Jahangir that banned animal slaughter during a Jain festival. This particular *farmān* was accompanied by a lavish scroll illustration that was executed by the celebrated Mughal painter Śālivāhana and survives today.[63]

The next year, Jahangir not only banished nearly all Jains from his court, but also forbid Jain ascetics from entering populated centers across the entire Mughal Empire. He issued this severe proclamation because Siddhicandra, a still young monk, disobeyed his imperial order to take a wife.[64] As I mentioned above, Jahangir allowed Bhānucandra to remain at court despite the ban because he was viewed as a broad Indian intellectual more than a specifically Jain scholar. However, Bhānucandra was likely not particularly prominent in later years since Jahangir refers to him around the time of this clash as having "served under Akbar" and someone "whom I used to know."[65] The initial expulsion affected both the Kharatara and Tapā Gacchas, and each group reports that they played a crucial role in persuading Jahangir to rescind his order so that Jains might again move freely about the Mughal kingdom.[66] After the order of eviction was canceled, Jains again frequented Jahangir's court but less and less as time went on. Jahangir notes in his memoirs that he exiled all Jains again in 1618 and has nothing

---

[63] Sastri, *Ancient Vijñaptipatras*, 19-42; Chandra, "Ustād Sālivāhana," 25-34.

[64] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.237-337.

[65] *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, 111.

[66] On the side of the Tapā Gaccha, Siddhicandra records that he and Bhānucandra were responsible for Jahangir rescinding the banishment order (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.338-58). But the Kharatara tradition widely claims that Jinacandra appeased Jahangir (Mitra, "Jain Influence at Mughul Court," 1070 n. 24; Gujarat texts quoted in Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 119). Last, a Persian *farmān* attests that Vivekhaharṣa, Vijayadeva, and Nandivijaya (all Tapā Gaccha affiliates) ensured the free travel of all Jains in 1616 (Commissariat, "Imperial Mughal Farmans in Gujarat," 26-27 and Plate 1).

positive to say about them after that date.[67] In fact this second prohibition did not remain in force for any length of time, but 1618 nonetheless marks the last known direct communication between Jain intellectuals and Jahangir.[68] Jain merchants, however, came into contact with royal figures during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.[69] Vernacular sources detail a few isolated instances where Aurangzeb granted land and *farmān*s to Tapā Gaccha representatives.[70] But Jains never regained the variety of influential positions and consistent presence at court they maintained under Akbar and Jahangir.

Brahmans Flourish in Imperial Environs

The trajectory of Brahmans in Mughal circles was substantially different from that of their Jain counterparts. Before proceeding into how the royally affiliated Brahmanical community fared under Jahangir and Shah Jahan, we should note two further capacities in which they participated in Akbar's court above and beyond the functions they shared with Jains. First, Brahmans assisted with Mughal translations of Sanskrit texts into Persian. As I discuss in chapter 3, approximately fifteen Sanskrit works were translated under the direct orders of Akbar or Jahangir. All of these projects required Sanskrit intellectuals to verbally communicate the original text to the Mughal translators who invariably lacked working knowledge of Sanskrit.[71] Most of the translations do not bear the names of their Indian

---

[67] Findly, "Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence," 254-55.

[68] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 197-99; Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 119-21.

[69] Cort, "Who is a King?" 106 n. 3; Chandra, "'Alamgir's Tolerance in the Light of Contemporary Jain Literature," 270; Dundas, *The Jains*, 147.

[70] Bhim Vijaya secured imperial relief for multiple monasteries in 1679, and Saubhāgyavijaya records that Lal Vijaya obtained a monastery from Aurangzeb (Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 236).

[71] See my discussion of translation methods in chapter 3.

informants; however, the few that do record that Brahmans assisted with the translations.[72] Notably, the Sanskrit tradition is completely silent on Brahmans' roles as co-translators under Mughal orders. Brahmans are reticent in general to describe their imperial experiences, as I elaborate on in chapter 2. But while they occasionally provide bits of information on their other activities at court, translating Sanskrit texts was something they chose never to write about and so we can only infer their anxiety from their silence.

The second unique function of Brahmans in the Mughal court was as astrologers for the royal family. Beginning under Humayun, the Mughals had their horoscopes cast according to both Indian and Persian systems. Akbar instituted the position of *jyotiṣarāja* (or *jotik rai*, royal astrologer) in order to have a scholar versed in Indian astrology present at court, and several Brahmans served in this role into Shah Jahan's reign.[73] Some of these astrologers also wrote texts for the Mughals, such as Paramānanda, who composed a Sanskrit work on Indian astrology "for the pleasure of Akbar's son, Jahangir."[74] More frequently, these Brahmans cast horoscopes and were handsomely rewarded for their work, often receiving their weight in gold or silver. Other cross-cultural astrological activities also took place in the imperial court during this period, and a bilingual Sanskrit-Arabic astrolabe is extant from Jahangir's court

---

[72] E.g., see the *Razmnāmah* colophon that I discuss in chapter 3. Note that Jains likely provided Sanskrit texts to the Mughals for translation, even if they did not actually read them with the Persianate translators. This is suggested by Muṣṭafá Khāliqdād 'Abbāsī's translation of *Pañcākhyāna* (*Five Stories*) that probably comes from the Jain-influenced *tantrākhyāyika* family of *Pañcatantra*s (English introduction to *Panchākhyānah*, 10-11).

[73] For a more detailed discussion of the office of *jyotiṣarāja* and the individuals who filled it see Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology*, 84-85 and 92-93; Sarma, "Jyotiṣarāja at the Mughal Court."

[74] *Jahāṅgīravinodaratnākara* v. 10 quoted in Pingree, *Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit* [CESS], Series A 5:211.

that was crafted by a Brahman pupil of an Islamic astrologer.[75] In the 1630s Asaf Khan commissioned Nityānanda to translate a Persian horoscope of Shah Jahan into Sanskrit.[76]

In contrast to their position as translators, the Brahmanical community felt considerable pride in being royal astrologers for an Islamicate court. This may be partly due to the cross-cultural nature of astrology for several hundred years preceding Mughal rule that had normalized the association of Islamicate ideas and patrons with this science.[77] Akbar's *jyotiṣarāja*, Nīlakaṇṭha, is named in Sanskrit texts authored by his son and grandson as an honored member of Akbar's entourage.[78] One of Jahangir's court astrologers, Paramānanda, openly proclaims that he received the title *jyotiṣarāja* and is thus revered by the Brahmanical community.[79] Brahmans outside of the royal court also acknowledged the important connections between Sanskrit astrology and the Mughals. For example, in 1583, Sūryadāsa offered a short Sanskrit-Persian lexicon of astrological items within a chapter titled "Mlecchamatanirūpaṇa" (Investigation into the Views of the Foreigners).[80] At the beginning he specifies, "Now I will give the technical terms used in the science of the foreigners (*yavana*) for things such as the constellations, etc. The meanings of these terms will be useful in royal courts and for astrologers."[81] Sanskrit intellectuals within the Mughal milieu also produced

---

[75] Sarma, "Bilingual Astrolabe," 82-105.

[76] Pingree, "The *Sarvasiddhāntarāja* of Nityānanda," 269.

[77] Pingree outlines this history in *From Astral Omens to Astrology*, 79-90. Jains had previously engaged in astrological/astronomical exchanges with the Persianate tradition in Islamicate courts (e.g., see Sarma's discussion of Jains and manuals on astrolabes in Firuz Shah Tughluq's court ("Sulṭān, Sūri and the Astrolabe, particularly 140-44).

[78] Sarma, "Jyotiṣarāja at the Mughal Court," 365-66.

[79] *Jahāṅgīravinodaratnākara* v. 11 quoted in Pingree, CESS, Series A 5:211.

[80] This is a chapter in a longer work titled *Siddhāntasaṃhitāsārasamuccaya* (*Compendium of Essential Points Concerning the Siddhāntas and Saṃhitās*); on this text see Minkowski, "On Sūryadāsa," 329-30.

[81] Quoted in Minkowski, "On Sūryadāsa," 330 (translation is my own).

innovative texts, and Shah Jahan's Indian astrologer, Malājit Vedāṅgarāya, authored a text that explains date conversion between the Islamic and Indian (*śaka*) systems in addition to offering a Sanskrit lexicon of Persian astronomical terms.[82]

Brahmans overall experienced no falls from favor such as plagued Jains during Jahangir's rule. Nonetheless, we lack evidence that Jahangir actively promoted new relations with Brahmanical intellectuals with the same amount of vigor as his father. Lack of information is not proof of an absence of activity, and so a certain amount of unclarity remains. One exception is that Jahangir reports in his memoirs at least six separate encounters from 1617-20 with Gosain Jadrup, a Brahman ascetic.[83] The Mughals knew Jadrup at least by name even during the late years of Akbar's rule, but his precise identity and whether he was affiliated primarily with the Sanskrit tradition at that time is uncertain.[84] However, Jahangir mentions that Jadrup was versed in the science of Vedānta, which he likens to Sufism.[85] Modern scholars have often been surprised by this comparison, although this type of equivalence became increasingly common in the seventeenth century.[86] Interestingly, Jahangir sought out Jadrup for conversation by reversing Akbar's method of calling Sanskrit intellectuals to court and instead traveled personally to visit him in Ujjain and later Mathura.

---

[82] Sarma, "Jyotiṣarāja at the Mughal Court," 369-70. Many manuscripts survive of Vedāṅgarāya's *Pārasīprakāśa*, and excerpts are printed in Bendrey, *Tārīkh-i Ilāhī*, Appendixes A and B.

[83] *Jahāngīrnāmah*, 202-3 is the most detailed; also see 284, 286, 316, 317 (two meetings), and 318 (this last one may or may not be a separate encounter).

[84] Jadrup is mentioned in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* as one of the learned men of the age in the second of five groups, "masters of the heart" (Aligarh ed., 218). He may be the same as Chitrarupa discussed in *Dabistān-i Maẕāhib* but this identification remains tentative (Ali, "Pursuing an Elusive Seeker," 268; Moosvi, "Mughal Encounter with Vedanta," 16).

[85] *Jahāngīrnāmah*, 203.

[86] Dara Shikuh's thinking often equates Hindu and Muslim ideas (Chand, "Dārā Shikoh and the Upanishads," 403-12). More specifically, other Indian intellectuals also paired Vedānta and Sufism; for example, see the Persian notes on copies of the Sanskrit *Bhagavadgītā* that identify the text as part of "the science of Vedānta, i.e, Sufism" (*fann-i bidānt yaʿnī taṣavvuf*; ms. British Library, India Office Library Sans 2244 and Sans 2387). Also see Ernst's discussion in "Fayzi's Illuminationist Interpretation of Vedanta."

Under Shah Jahan the Brahmanical profile at the Mughal court became more pronounced with the entry of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja. These two intellectuals interacted with the Mughals in different ways that demonstrate continuities with earlier Mughal patronage of Sanskrit literati but also important changes in cross-cultural relations. Kavīndra initially approached Shah Jahan in order to negotiate the relinquishment of taxes on certain Brahmanical pilgrimage sites, most notably Varanasi and Prayag. The exact chronology of what occurred is murky because no direct narrative accounts of Kavīndra's time at Shah Jahan's court are known in either Sanskrit or Persian. However, information gleaned from Sanskrit and Hindi verses praising Kavīndra attests that he spent time in Mughal company teaching Sanskrit texts to both Shah Jahan and Dara Shikuh. Among other works, he instructed them in Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya*.[87] Kavīndra also persuaded Shah Jahan to rescind a pilgrimage tax, much to the joy of the Brahmanical community.[88] Kavīndra followed Jain strategies cultivated under Akbar and Jahangir in numerous ways in his endeavor, such as mobilizing his role at court as a Sanskrit intellectual to enact political gain for his community. He also insisted on an imperial concession in lieu of financial compensation from the Mughals, a tactic also evidenced in Jain experiences at the Mughal court.[89]

Kavīndra's encounter with the Mughals also marks crucial shifts in both the constitution and orientation of seventeenth-century Sanskrit intellectuals. First, Kavīndra served the Mughals as a Hindi intellectual and singer in addition to being a Sanskrit pandit. He

---

[87] *Kavīndracandrodaya* v. 92. This emphasis on Sanskrit philosophy makes good sense given Shah Jahan's interest in the *Yogavāśiṣṭha* and Dara Shikuh's attraction to the *Upaniṣad*s.

[88] *Kavīndracandrodaya* and *Kavīndracandrikā* both commemorate this event, but Persian histories do not mention it. Allison Busch has pointed out that this omission is unsurprising given the tight control Shah Jahan exerted over his public image ("Hidden in Plain View," 291).

[89] *Kavīndracandrodaya* v. 58; on Hīravijaya's rejection of the wealth offered by Akbar see *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 172.

composed several works in Hindi, including *Kavīndrakalpalatā* (*Wishfulfilling Vine of Kavindra*), in which more than half of the verses are dedicated to Shah Jahan.[90] Among these verses are a series of *dhrupad* songs (a musical tradition based in Hindi texts).[91] Kavīndra is reported to have accepted monetary rewards in the Mughal court in his capacity as a musician.[92] Furthermore, the Persian tradition remembers Kavīndra for his Hindi compositions and talents as a singer of *dhrupad* rather than for his Sanskrit skills. Kavīndra expands upon the trend of cosmopolitanism largely established by Bhānucandra in being an Indian intellectual conversant in many fields. However, Kavīndra's emphasis on Hindi as opposed to Sanskrit in the Mughal milieu is a noticeable change, also echoed by Jagannātha, as I discuss below.

Moreover, in the 1640s-50s Kavīndra moved outside of the central royal court and joined the retinue of a Mughal noble, Danishmand Khan, and later of the French traveler, Francois Bernier.[93] For reasons we do not yet fully understand, Sanskrit intellectuals shifted away from the central imperial context during Shah Jahan's reign and found new homes in regional and subimperial courts.[94] Additionally, Kavīndra's association with Europeans reflects wider changes in the cultural landscape of early modern India. Europeans had been present in India since before the establishment of Mughal rule, but the early seventeenth century witnessed expansions of their numbers and interests in the subcontinent.[95] Kavīndra's ties

---

[90] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 289.

[91] Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 150-51.

[92] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 291-92; Raghavan, "Kavīndrakalpalatikā of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī," 338 (citing Tara Chand). On *dhrupad* connections with Hindi see Wade, *Imaging Sound*, 80-81.

[93] Gode, "Location of the Manuscript Library of Kavindracharya Sarasvati," xlvii-lvii; more recently, Pollock, "Death of Sanskrit," 407.

[94] This transition has yet to be traced systematically, but Ernst mentions some scholars who frequented Dara Shikuh's court in "Mughal Studies of Hinduism?" 183-184. Also see D'Onofrio, "Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads."

[95] Asher and Talbot, *India Before Europe*, 205-7; Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 286-88.

with a Frenchman are part of this larger process whereby India became ever more integrated into global networks of knowledge.

Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja is the other major Sanskrit literati to have spent significant time at the court of Shah Jahan, and his imperial career mirrors similar changes in his literary affiliations. Jagannātha claims to have "passed the prime of youth" in the Mughal court and therein authored a number of works considered masterpieces in the Sanskrit tradition.[96] But he also operated in other capacities under the Mughals that drew him into Indian vernacular culture. Most notably, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja was an Indian vernacular singer, highly regarded as such by Shah Jahan. *Bādshāhnāmah*, an official history of Shah Jahan's reign, contains three references to Jagannāth *kabrāy* (later *mahākab rāy*) and praises his skills as a singer (*kalāvant*) of *dhrupad*.[97] The work's author, Mullā 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhawrī, describes Jagannātha as "[among] the chief of composers at this time, who is filled with pleasure and decorated with joy" and testifies that he was handsomely rewarded for his talents.[98] A second Persian history of Shah Jahan's reign, Amīn Qazvīnī's *Bādshāhnāmah*, contains a similar description of the singer Jagannāth *mahākab rāy*.[99]

As I noted above, the dual role of Sanskrit poet and Hindi singer is not unattested during this era. Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī also performed both functions, and Brahman Sanskrit scholars served the Mughals as musicians dating back to their first entry to court under Akbar.

---

[96] *Bhāminīvilāsa*, 106, v. 44.

[97] *Bādshāhnāmah* of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhawrī, 2:56, 2:163, and 3:5. Also see references in Qanungo, "Some Side-lights on the Character and Court-Life of Shah Jahan," 49-50.

[98] Hindustani musicians were generally well remunerated by the Mughal courts (Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," 498, based on Seyller's work in "Inspection and Valuation"). Also, Jagannātha may have been particularly prized as a singer by the imperial elite because he came from the south (see Schofield's discussion of how Mughal connoisseurs believed south Indian musical traditions to be authoritative, 499-501).

[99] Ali, *Apparatus of Empire*, #S884.

Moreover, a Braj Bhāṣā work that details Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja's ancestry and life attests that he was well versed in Hindi music and was known in this capacity as *kavirāy* (King of Poets).[100] In a sense, Jagannātha serves as the height of Mughal patronage of Sanskrit authors in being the most highly regarded intellectual within Sanskrit literary culture to accept Mughal support. However, that he was so influential in Sanskrit and yet only remembered in Persian circles as a vernacular singer suggests the relative unimportance of Sanskrit in the imperial center by the end of Shah Jahan's reign. Jagannātha is also one of the last Sanskrit literati known to be present at the central Mughal court.

Beyond Kavīndra and Jagannātha, Shah Jahan patronized only a few other Sanskrit authors, and we lack evidence for the other types of imperial associations initiated by Akbar and Jahangir.[101] Shah Jahan's court instead increasingly employed Hindi intellectuals who filled similarly varied roles as their Sanskrit predecessors, particularly composing texts and involving themselves in political negotiations.[102] By the time Aurangzeb took power in 1658, imperial associations with Sanskrit intellectuals had already largely ceased, and Sanskrit literati themselves were increasingly drawn to vernacular traditions and subimperial courts.[103] Like Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb patronized Hindi poets, but he cut the few remaining ties between the central court and Sanskrit pandits.[104] Sanskrit authors continued to write favorable verses about the reigning Mughal king and date their works by his reign, both practices common

---

[100] Athavale, "New Light on the Life of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha," 419-20.

[101] Vaṃśīdhara Miśra, a Sanskrit poet, appears to have spent some time at Shah Jahan's court (Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 77).

[102] E.g., Sundar (Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 285-89).

[103] For example, Caturbhuja served Shaysta Khan, Aurangzeb's maternal uncle (Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 78-80).

[104] On Aurangzeb and Hindi poets see Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 295-97 and Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 156-62. Aurangzeb appears to have halted Shah Jahan's stipend to Kavīndra, which prompted him to seek out Danishmand Khan's assistance (Gode, "Location of the Manuscript Library of Kavindracharya Sarasvati," liv-lv).

from Akbar's time forward.[105] These gestures do not necessarily indicate any direct relationship but nonetheless reveal a thriving imperial consciousness within the Sanskrit tradition. However, sustained relations between Sanskrit scholars and the central Mughal court had more or less faded away by the end of Shah Jahan's tenure on the throne.[106]

Sanskrit Literary Production for the Mughal Court

In addition to their many social and political activities in the Mughal milieu, Sanskrit intellectuals composed a variety of texts in connection with their imperial affiliations. The majority of these works make no reference to the Perso-Islamic culture of the royal milieu other than the names of Mughal figures. This lack of contextualization follows a longstanding Sanskrit tradition of obscuring rather than foregrounding one's particular historical circumstances. However, two genres of Sanskrit texts comment more directly on the interplay between Sanskrit and Persian traditions in the Mughal Empire: encomia (*praśasti*s) of Mughal figures and Sanskrit grammars and lexicons of Persian. These works either arose from direct Mughal support or were crafted outside of the royal court but intended for imperial consumption.[107] Both groups of texts are severely understudied, especially regarding their potential reception within a Persianate court. Careful text-based examinations of Sanskrit praises of Mughal figures and language analyses of Persian highlight the dynamic ways in which Indian intellectuals addressed the Persianate world through Sanskrit modes of discourse.

[105] See citations in Patkar, "Moghul Patronage to Sanskrit Learning," 174-75; Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 234; Patkar, "Muhūrtaratna," 83.

[106] I hesitate to assert that Sanskrit-Mughal associations ceased altogether because unresearched Jain materials may still prove otherwise (e.g., see comments in Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 235-37). Whether we would identify later Jains as "Sanskrit intellectuals" given the increasing popularity of vernacular mediums remains uncertain.

[107] Here I exclude Sanskrit texts that include favorable descriptions of the Mughals but were not intended for Mughal consumption in any way (e.g., Rājamalla's *Jambūsvāmicarita* 1.5 ff and *Lāṭīsaṃhitā* 1.59-62).

Sanskrit literati formulated praise poems to Mughal figures as independent verses (*muktaka*s), portions of longer texts, and independent panegyrics. All three types of works generally incorporated the Mughals into pre-existing Sanskrit formulas for constructing royal praise as Sanskrit authors had been doing with Islamicate rulers for centuries.[108] Allison Busch has uncovered a similar inclination among Braj literati eulogizing Persianate figures who are roughly contemporaneous with the materials under consideration here. Busch also teases out a number of subtle but telling allusions to Indo-Persian culture in Braj praises of Mughal rulers.[109] Likewise Sanskrit literati generally follow standard literary practices in extolling Mughal kings but sometimes offer striking admissions of their cross-cultural context.

Praising the Mughals in Sanskrit *Muktaka*s and Dedications

Sanskrit praises of the Mughals begin with the first intellectuals to arrive at court and from the start reveal leanings towards both convention and innovation. As I mention above, Padmasundara authored a work on Sanskrit aesthetic theory in 1569 at Akbar's direct orders titled *Mirror of the Erotic Passion for Emperor Akbar*. For the bulk of the text, Padmasundara analyzes the nine modes of aesthetic experience in Sanskrit, focusing overwhelmingly on the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), and makes few explicit references to his Mughal environment. However, he opens with ten verses in praise of Akbar, including brief mentions of Babur and Humayun, that explore innovative ways to accommodate aspects of the Mughal world in Sanskrit literature.[110] In the opening verse, Padmasundara offers an atypical prayer in which he entrusts Akbar's protection to the Islamic God, here called "Rahman":

The entire world shines with his splendor such that it blinds the eyes.

---

[108] On this tendency in Sanskrit, see Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, 28-60.

[109] E.g., "Hidden in Plain View," 290-91.

[110] *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* 1.1-10 (see 1.2 for Babur and 1.3 for Humayun).

Our welfare rests in him like a genuine jewel, always and forever.
He stands beyond the darkness and is called *Rahman*, the highest point.
O Akbar, Crown Jewel of Shahs! May that light always protect you.[111]

Raḥmān (*rahamān* in Sanskrit) is a Qur'anic name for God that means "the Gracious" and is commonly invoked at the beginning of Islamicate texts, whether secular or religious.[112] While much of Padmasundara's verse is well within Sanskrit conventions, the identification of an Islamic chosen deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) in the third line is an arresting evocation of Islam within Sanskrit literary culture that, while not wholly unprecedented, is exceedingly rare.[113] Sanskrit intellectuals generally did not recognize Islam as a religious tradition with which they could engage on similar terms as Jainism, Buddhism, and the multiple Hindu schools of thought. Rather, Sanskrit authors generally treated different Muslim communities as cultural or ethnic traditions, often redeploying Sanskrit terms previously used for other foreign groups.[114] Against this staunch rejection of Islam as such, Padmasundara stands out as a fresh, early voice in the history of Mughal Sanskrit-Persian encounters who explores, ever so cautiously, the possibility of melding Islamicate and Indian worldviews.

In his subsequent acclaim of the Mughals, Padmasundara transitions into a more standard mode of incorporating non-traditional figures into Sanskrit literary conventions wholesale. He lauds Babur, Humayun, and Akbar in full accordance with accepted tropes, albeit tinted with a Jain emphasis on non-violence and renunciation. For example, invoking each of the aesthetic moods (*rasa*s) as present in Akbar, he writes:

---

[111] *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* 1.1.

[112] *Raḥmān* appears in the common Arabic phrase: *bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (In the name of God, most Gracious and Merciful).

[113] Salakṣa defines *Raḥmān* (*rahamān*) in his Sanskrit-Persian lexicon titled *Śabdavilāsa*, which he composed in 1365 (ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 995, fol. 1a, v. 11). In the fifteenth century, a Sanskrit text written in Gujarat also employed the term (cited in Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 32-33).

[114] Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, 28-43.

> A lover (*śṛṅgārī*) in youth, a soldier in battle, and compassionate (*kṛpāluḥ*) with a smile towards the world. Possessing astonishing (*adbhuta*) fame he focuses on curious sights, and he fears (*bhīru*) the violation of order. He is disgusted (*bībhatso*) by hunting, fierce (*raudra*) in destroying enemies, and tranquil (*śamī*) in power. Glorious Shah Akbar even now was created by fate with all the aesthetic *rasa*s.[115]

Here Padmasundara draws the Mughals into the realm of Sanskrit literary discourse by mapping traditional categories of aesthetic experience onto Akbar. He continues to treat his patron in this way at various points throughout his introductory encomium. For example, he compares Akbar's discerning powers to that of a *haṃsa* bird, to whom Sanskrit poets attribute the ability to separate milk and water.[116] But after his opening lines Padmasundara leaves the Mughals behind altogether and offers an account of Sanskrit aesthetics that, like so many Mughal-patronized Sanskrit works, is devoid of references to its production context.

After Padmasundara, most Sanskrit intellectuals supported by Akbar followed the well-trodden path of composing Sanskrit praises not tailored to a Muslim or Indo-Persian ruler, although a few offer glimpses of their position at the crossroads of cultures. On the more conservative side, the aptly named Akbarīya Kālidāsa (Akbar's Kālidāsa) dedicated verses to the Mughal king that draw heavily on Sanskrit tropes, such as:

> Your forearms are like a tiger's, your broad shoulders like a rutting elephant's, your pillar arms like an elephant's, your voice like a cloud's, your waist like a lion's, your hair like pure blackness, your mind like an ocean, and your eyebrows like the staff of Death. In truth, O Jewel of the Family of Great Humayun, you are terrible beyond terrible.[117]

Other literati likewise invoked Sanskrit cultural knowledge in order to place the Mughals in line with earlier kings and royal practices. For example, Samayasundara lauds Akbar by

---

[115] *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* 1.5. Compare to his list of nine *rasa*s in 1.11; the only one missing in the praise verse is *hāsya*, the comic, which would be inappropriate to attribute to a king.

[116] *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* 1.7.

[117] Quoted in Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 36.

comparing him to the legendary Indian ruler Vikramāditya.[118] Paramānanda, one of the royal astrologers, describes Akbar as the protector of Brahmans, cows, and the unfortunate.[119] Authors sometimes admit particularities of the Mughal figures they praise, but generally on a small scale. In one instance, directly after mentioning the king's good Indian virtues, Paramānanda references the imperial practice of sun worship by noting that Akbar "desires the lotus feet of the sun." Sūra Miśra also plays upon the emperor's interest in light imagery in his *Jagannāthaprakāśa* (*Light of the Lord of the World*) by cleverly transliterating Akbar's name as *arkabala*, meaning "powerful as the sun."[120]

As time passed, Sanskrit literati became more reserved in their textual treatments of the Mughals, often in inverse proportion to the amount of time they resided in imperial circles. For example, Bhānucandra and Siddhicandra spent more time at the Mughal court than any other Jain intellectuals, with Siddhi even speaking fluent Persian and teaching the Mughal princes by the end of his imperial tenure.[121] While neither admits to composing texts under royal decree, they jointly authored a commentary on Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* while at court. Both authors mention Akbar in the introductions to their respective portions of the commentary but dispense with any praise fairly quickly. Siddhi is far more interested in emphasizing the political concessions Bhānucandra gained from the Mughal king than glorifying his benefactor.[122] Siddhicandra also composed our most comprehensive account of Jain

---

[118] *Artharatnāvalī*, 66, vv. 2 and 4.

[119] *Jahāṅgīravinodaratnākara* v. 3 quoted in Pingree, CESS, Series A 5:211.

[120] Quoted in Patkar, "Moghul Patronage to Sanskrit Learning," 167-68; Harkare points out this play on words ("Sanskrit under Mohammedan Patronage," 57).

[121] On Siddhicandra's Persian skills see his *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.90 and 4.104-5.

[122] *Kādambarī*, 483, vv. 3-6 of *ṭīkā*.

experiences at the Mughal court (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita*) and therein offers exceedingly conventional descriptions of imperial figures (see chapter 2).

Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja followed Bhānu and Siddhi in spending decades at court but employing strictly standard formulations in his tributes to the Mughals. For example, he praises Jahangir thus:

> Why is your sacred thread black? From touching black powder? From where has it come? How did the water of the Narmada river become mixed with collyrium? It became so because of the confluence of rivers born from showers of tears from a hundred thousand beautiful-eyed ladies of kings who are enemies of angry Nuruddin (*nūradīna*, i.e., Jahangir).[123]

Here Jagannātha invokes the image of the wives of Jahangir's enemies weeping so much that their mascara runs and forms a blackened river. This scene presumes that Jahangir has been victorious over their husbands and the women now mourn the loss of their kingdoms and families, a common trope in poetry showcasing the heroic sentiment (*vīra rasa*). In addition to relying on typical imagery, Jagannātha further severely restricted the number of verses extolling his Persianate patrons, offering only a handful of lines in his extensive oeuvre.[124] Scholars have theorized that there are also indirect Persianate influences in Jagannātha's work, such as Persianate images of the beloved and a new sort of subjectivity.[125] But these traces of innovation are noteworthy precisely because Jagannātha generally studiously avoided such mixing, particularly when speaking directly about his Mughal patrons.

Many praise verses are found within texts designed for Mughal consumption, which brings up the crucial question of reception. Of the eight Sanskrit authors I discuss in the preceding paragraphs, four of them composed full texts that they explicitly claimed were for

---

[123] *Rasagaṅgādhara*, 2:812.

[124] All together, Jagannātha has four independent verses in praise of the "king of Delhi" in his *Rasagaṅgādhara* (quoted in L. R. Vaidya's introduction to the *Bhāminīvilāsa*, 8), plus his *Āsaphavilāsa*.

[125] Pollock, "Death of Sanskrit," 408-12.

the reigning Mughal king if not directly sponsored by him.[126] It is tempting to dismiss assertions that Sanskrit texts were meaningfully received in Mughal contexts as mere bluster since nobody in the imperial court (outside of Sanskrit literati) could understand unmediated Sanskrit.[127] However, we should not rule out the presence of interpreters who would loosely translate the works (or parts thereof) into Persian or, more likely, into Hindi for the enjoyment of the court.[128] Especially since we know that Mughal translators had Sanskrit texts orally rendered into Hindi before they were written in Persian, it is quite reasonable to posit a similar system of verbal translation for solicited works. This method of transmission would also make sense of the multiple testimonies on the parts of Sanskrit intellectuals instead of dismissing them outright. For example, as I mentioned above, Samayasundara posits that he presented his *Artharatnāvalī* before Akbar and received honors from the emperor who was greatly impressed with its contents. Sanskrit authors also attest that Kavīndrācārya read Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* to Shah Jahan and Dara Shikuh.[129] Especially as later Sanskrit literati became increasingly valued in Mughal circles for their Hindi skills, the Sanskrit author and Hindi translator may very well have been the same person. More difficult to explain, however, are the full panegyrics addressed to imperial figures that make more complex claims regarding their receptions within the Mughal court.

[126] The four are Padmasundara (*Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa*), Paramānanda (*Jahāṅgīravinodaratnākara*), Samayasundara (*Artharatnāvalī*), and Sūra Miśra (*Jagannāthaprakāśa*).

[127] I elaborate on the Mughals' lack of linguistic knowledge of Sanskrit in chapters 3 and 4. But it is worth noting here that even Abū al-Faẓl, who authored the extensive *Learning of India* section of *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* claimed to be ignorant of Sanskrit. A notable exception, however, may be ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān, as I discuss below.

[128] Hindi was familiar to the Mughal kings and the court more widely from Akbar's time forward (Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 273-74).

[129] *Kavīndracandrodaya* v. 92.

Independent Sanskrit Panegyrics for the Mughals

Three authors dedicated six full Sanskrit encomia to members of the central imperial courts of Akbar through Shah Jahan. Śānticandra composed his *Kṛpārasakośa* (*Treasury of Compassion*) in the late 1580s in praise of Emperor Akbar. Rudrakavi authored four panegyrics beginning in 1603 and stretching into Jahangir reign; these were devoted to Akbar's son Danyal, ʻAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān, Jahangir, and Prince Khurram (i.e., Shah Jahan).[130] Last, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja wrote *Āsaphavilāsa* (*Play of Asaf*) between 1628 and 1641 in praise of Asaf Khan, the royal vizier.[131] Beyond being Sanskrit praise poems addressed to Mughal figures, these texts share one further defining feature: none were commissioned by the Mughals themselves. Rather all were composed at the insistence of regional figures that were negotiating their political relationship with the Mughal crown. Beyond that, the panegyrics diverge greatly, demonstrating the wide range of concerns that different political actors felt they could best pursue through the medium of Sanskrit. These works are important both for the political claims they extend concerning the active role of Sanskrit in Mughal circles as well as the aesthetic claims in how they treat the subjects of their praises. Here I examine four works in further detail in order to elucidate some of the potent possibilities for the choice to address the Mughal elite in Sanskrit.

---

[130] The titles are respectively: *Dānaśāhacarita*, *Khānakhānācarita*, *Jahāṅgīracarita*, and *Kīrtisamullāsa*. Three are printed in *Works of Rudra Kavi* whereas *Jahāṅgīracarita* is only available in a single fragmentary manuscript (ms. Baroda Oriental Institute 5761).

[131] Here I do not include *Jagadvijayacchandas*, which Kunhan Raja attributes to Kavīndrācārya and identifies as a praise poem to Jahangir (introduction to *Jagadvijayacchandas*, xxix-xxxiv). Kunhan Raja's reasoning regarding the addressee is certainly plausible but by no means convincing, especially since Jahangir is not explicitly mentioned in the extant manuscripts. Even if Kunhan Raja is correct, then quite unlike the six encomia I discuss here Kavīndra is likely intentionally ambivalent concerning the addressee of his poem (one manuscript claims it is directed towards Śiva). I am not the first to doubt Kunhan Raja's reasoning in this regard (Chakravarti, Review of *Jagadvijayacchandas* ed. Raja, 321).

Enlightening Akbar in Śānticandra's *Treasury of Compassion*

Śānticandra composed the first full Sanskrit encomium dedicated to a Mughal figure, namely Akbar, during the height of Jain relations with the court. Śānticandra was himself a fairly prominent Tapā Gaccha monk and had joined several of his contemporaries on a political delegation to Akbar's court in the 1580s. During this mission, the Jains obtained a series of *farmān*s beneficial to Tapā Gaccha interests, and, according to Śānticandra, a key reason was the presentation of his text, *Treasury of Compassion*.[132] He addresses the short poem of one hundred and twenty-eight verses directly to Akbar and therein details the emperor's life and military conquests. Moreover, Śānticandra's panegyric threads together praise of the Mughal king with Jain political objectives in order not only to flatter Akbar but also to recast him within a Sanskrit, Jain mold.

In the first half of the text, Śānticandra details Akbar's lineage, conception, birth, and childhood. Overall, he follows standard Sanskrit methods of praising kings, although he simultaneously articulates a more contemporary context in subtle ways. For example, early on he describes the Mughal ancestral lands of Khurasan and notes that walnuts, dates, and horses abound there.[133] He also lavishes praise on the city of Kabul and may even nod towards Islamicate sensibilities in describing the purity of Babur's harem:

> In Khurasan is a lovely city by the name of Kabul
> that ought to be described as foremost among cities.
> A tall wall shines in its ramparts as a line of beautiful,
> slender women are resplendent in the harem (*avarodhe*).[134]

---

[132] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 125-27. The work itself is undated, but based on context the late 1580s-1590 is a reasonable estimate (Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 58).

[133] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 8-12.

[134] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 13. Women are often included in typical Sanskrit descriptions of cities (*nagaravarṇana*) as well.

In treating Babur and then his son, Humayun, Śānticandra relies on established Sanskrit tropes, portraying Babur as formidable on the battlefield and dwelling on Humayun's beauty in his youth.[135] When Humayun assumes the throne, the poet compares him to Rāma, "fit to rule in every way," and proclaims that Akbar's mother, here called Coli Begam, "...receives the riches of love. She is to the king as Lakṣmī is to Viṣṇu."[136]

After these introductory lines Śānticandra focuses on the conception and birth of Akbar, which unfold on a Sanskrit and, increasingly, a specifically Jain stage. During her pregnancy, Coli Begam experiences intense pregnancy cravings (*dohada*s), which incite her to play with a lion on her lap and mount a mad elephant without reins.[137] Such irrational actions, done without fear on the part of the expectant mother, frequently augur the birth of a great hero in Jain stories.[138] Once Akbar is born, Śānticandra further incorporates him into the Sanskrit linguistic and literary realm in several verses. In his retelling of Akbar's naming ceremony, he explains the king's name as if it were a Sanskrit word:

> Born of the glorious shah, he was named "Akavara" (Akbar)
> *aḥ* means he is the Lord of All, *ka* he has a pure soul,
> and *vara* that he is the best among all.[139]

After bringing Akbar the Great within the purview of the Sanskrit language, Śānticandra details Akbar's acquisition of knowledge during childhood. He emphasizes the pure speech of the young king, leaving it unclear whether he means Sanskrit or Persian.[140] He also notes that

---

[135] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 18-20 on Babur, vv. 21-25 on Humayun.

[136] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 25-26.

[137] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 37.

[138] Claus et. al., *South Asian Folklore*, 163.

[139] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 43b-44a.

[140] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 60-61.

Akbar's "tongue revives the sages that have been bitten by all kinds of evil snakes" by inaugurating a new reign of justice (*nyāya*).[141]

In the second half of the poem, after Humayun dies and Akbar becomes king, Śānticandra turns his attention to more political concerns but maintains a largely Sanskrit cultural framework. Until this point in the text Śānticandra has not discussed any Mughal land acquisitions, leaving his readers wondering if the kingdom is still based in Babur's Kabul. Śānticandra gives all credit for building the Mughal Empire in India to Akbar.

> Even though enjoying his father's kingdom,
> [Akbar] desired greater victory in all directions.
> There was no restraint in that yearning
> since the son has exceeded the father in fame.[142]

Over the course of the next thirty verses, Śānticandra narrates Akbar's conquests according to the traditional Sanskrit conception of the four cardinal directions and prefers to reference mythological tales, mountains, and rivers, rather than any contemporary kingdoms.[143] To the East, "the skillful forest on the banks of the Tāpī river did homage and served him with buds while he reclined" while to the North, "like Kubera himself, that lord of wealth pursued the direction of Kubera's dwellings."[144] Śānticandra draws vivid pictures of several battles and the royal army, but in a detached manner that offers no historical details. Contemporary Jain texts tend to portray Akbar's conquests in much more concrete terms, naming specific places, battles, and enemies. Some authors even go so far as to give numbers of those in different regiments in a given conflict.[145] However, Śānticandra prefers a Mughal conquest within the

---

[141] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 59.

[142] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 67.

[143] On the political import of the *digvijaya* (conquering of the four directions) see Pollock, *Languages of the Gods*, 240-49.

[144] *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 77 and 84, respectively.

[145] E.g., *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 51-52.

framework of a Sanskrit poetic landscape before returning to contemporary geography with several verses that celebrate the establishment of Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's city of victory.

In his description of Fatehpur Sikri, Śānticandra again invokes specific aspects of Mughal rule and also emphasizes the impact of Akbar on Indian culture. In contrast to his earlier treatment of Akbar's name in terms of Sanskrit etymology, the poet explains the naming of "Fatehpur" according to its meaning in Persian as "city of victory":

> Thinking, *I who live in this city have conquered*
> *the entire circle of the earth with my own two arms*,
> [Akbar] entered the city called "Fatehpur,"
> a name given according to the sounds of his own language.[146]

Here Śānticandra expresses the multifaceted power of the Mughal Empire as it simultaneously alters the Indian urban landscape and calls for the introduction of Persian, even in a limited way, into a Sanskrit poem. In this section, he also recounts how Akbar married the daughters of local kings, a well-known Mughal practice that sought to consolidate imperial control of certain regions and ensure ongoing political loyalty.[147] Last, he hints at Akbar's influence in religious matters, saying: "Khan-i Khanan and other Khans took a vow of firm devotion (*ūrdhvadīkṣāvrata*) / and turned towards that king like pupils to a teacher."[148] This last line likely refers to *dīn-i ilāhī* (also called *tawhīd-i ilāhī*), Akbar's discipleship program that bound those closest to him together according to a code of ethical conduct.[149] From Śānticandra's perspective, the mention of Akbar's potency to act in religious matters was likely an important precedent since he goes on to discuss Akbar's actions regarding questions of Jain ethics.

---

[146] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 89.

[147] Frances Taft discusses the political implications of Mughal marriages to Rajput women as well as the frequency of this practice during Akbar's reign ("Honor and Alliance," particularly 218-23).

[148] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 94.

[149] *Āʼīn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 145-48.

After his description of Fatehpur Sikri until the end of the poem, Śānticandra elaborates the nature of Akbar's rule and frames him as a Jain king in two senses. First, he portrays Akbar as extending various benefits to Jains within his kingdom. Second, he claims that the Mughal sovereign expresses Jain religious inclinations himself.[150] Śānticandra frequently unites these two approaches to cast the specific *farmān*s obtained on his trip to the Mughal court as ethically motivated on the part of Akbar. For example, he hyperbolizes that even the cranes were moved to obey Akbar's ban on fishing in a particular lake because of the king's personal devotion:

> In consideration of the virtue (*puṇya*) of Akbar, Great Moon of the Earth,
> cruel cranes that have captured fish with their beaks
> sympathize, and their hearts fill with wonder.
> Even though fish are their only food, the cranes abandon them at once.[151]

Śānticandra further emphasizes that Akbar is a Jain king in both senses of the term by comparing him to Kumārapāla, a twelfth century Chaulukya ruler who converted to Jainism and quickly became the poster child in the Jain community for a personally devout and publicly generous ruler.[152] In an imaginary conversation, Śānticandra allays the concerns of compassion (*kṛpā*) by assuring her that Akbar is just like Kumārapāla:

> Lady, who are you?
> *I am compassion.*
> Why are you troubled?
> *King Kumāra[pāla] is gone.*
> What of it?
> *I am banished now day after day by hostile, violent men. I desire to be reinstated.*
> Then, O Pure Compassion, go to the one who possesses the earth.
> Now, after a long time, Akbar is the sole king; he will cause you no distress.[153]

---

[150] John Cort presents the idea of a continuum of Jain perspectives on kingship that range from a non-Jain king who patronizes the community to a king such as Kumārapāla who converted ("Who is a King?" 85-106).

[151] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 111.

[152] Devavimala's *Hīrasaubhāgya* also draws a parallel between Akbar and Kumārapāla (Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 60; Granoff, "Authority and Innovation," 55).

[153] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 113. Also see the comparison of Akbar to Kumārapāla in v. 98.

While Śānticandra relies heavily on Jain references and sensibilities in crafting his image of Akbar, he also does not shy away from framing the king as a good ruler for Indians who belong to multiple religious traditions. At times Śānticandra even appears to allude to an Islamic context by referencing a monotheistic deity, even if the end result is still fully in line with Jain values.

> *The Lord of All, to whom I am second, now*
> *rules over the worlds with all their living beings.*
> Thinking this, [Akbar] was filled with kindness (*sānugraha*)
> for all living beings and therefore gave up hunting.[154]

Śānticandra more explicitly avers that Akbar's reign benefits Indians beyond Jains when he proclaims:

> Surely this joyful wishing tree enacted a measure surpassing even his nature
> by relinquishing taxes for the sake of all Indians (*hindūbhyaḥ sakalebhya eva*).
> Thinking, *how can I become the crown jewel at the head of all shahs*, that wise man,
> in whom overflowing compassion (*kṛpā*) arises, grants life to all cows.[155]

In the late sixteenth century, *hindū* had a fluid meaning in Persian and commonly denoted Indians as a vague ethnic or spatially defined group.[156] Even when the term carried a religious meaning, it was generally quite broad. For example, writing in Sanskrit in the early seventeenth century, Kavi Karṇapūra defined *hindū* as a Persian word that denoted "theistic Indians."[157] Regardless of the precise meaning here, Śānticandra includes as "Hindus" those who promote non-violence towards cows, while still drawing upon the Jain values of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) more broadly. In short, Akbar is a favorable Indian emperor for many communities, but above all according to Jain standards.

---

[154] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 107.

[155] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 100.

[156] On *hindū* as an ethnic/geographic description in early modern India, see Talbot, "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self," 700-1. For the ongoing debate about when the term gained a more specifically religious connotation see Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?"

[157] *hindū viprādir āstiko lokaḥ* (*Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* v. 222).

Śānticandra frames his *Kṛpārasakośa* at both the outset and close as a work composed "for the sake of enlightening glorious Shah Akbar."[158] After listing the specific *farmān*s Akbar granted to his Jain delegation, Śānticandra attests in his penultimate verse to the crucial role his Sanskrit text played in securing imperial favors: "Among the causes of the arising of such decrees / this book was a chief reason."[159] A contemporary Sanskrit text confirms that Śānticandra recited *Treasury of Compassion* to Akbar.[160] One of Śānticandra's pupils also records that his teacher instructed the Mughal king.[161] If we take these writers at their word, we are left with the question: how did Akbar understand praises and solicitations in a language he did not know? As I suggested earlier, perhaps Śānticandra or somebody else provided a simultaneous translation of the verses into Hindi. We know that verbal recitation of texts was a common feature of early modern Islamic societies, and recently Ronit Ricci has even suggested that we speak of "audiences" instead of "readers" for texts in order to capture this prevalent oral dynamic.[162] Additionally, those fluent in an Indian vernacular could often understand substantial portions of recited Sanskrit texts, and Akbar was proficient in Hindi.[163] Or perhaps we should not take the tradition quite so simply at face value and instead consider other possible audiences for this work. Śānticandra himself says in his closing verse:

> *The Treasury of Compassion*
> is to be examined, recited, followed,
> and cherished by those who have

---

[158] *śrīmadakabarabādaśāhapratibodhakṛte* (*Kṛpārasakośa*, pp 1) and *pātasāhiśrī-akabara-mahārājādhirājapratibodhakṛte* (21).

[159] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 127b.

[160] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.271.

[161] *Kalpasutrāntravākya* of Ratnacandragaṇi, ms. Ahmedabad, LD Institute of Indology 11654, fol. 82.

[162] *Islam Translated*, 3.

[163] On understanding recited Sanskrit texts, see the analysis of Bengali literary culture in Kaviraj, "Two Histories of Literary Culture in Bengal," 510-13.

abandoned malice and know good conduct.[164]

Here "those who know good conduct" are certainly Śānticandra's fellow Jains, and one can easily imagine them welcoming a text that celebrates Jain successes at the Mughal court.

It is tempting, then, to postulate that it was more important for Śānticandra to represent himself to his own community as writing a text for Akbar rather than to actually speak in Sanskrit to the Mughal emperor. Moreover, this shift in audience would account for the slight oddity that Śānticandra claims to compose *Kṛpārasakośa* in order to convince Akbar to grant the Jain community particular concessions while the work itself celebrates those measures as if they were already in effect. This explanation would place Śānticandra's work within a sizeable body of contemporary Jain Sanskrit texts that detail experiences at the Mughal court and are explicitly addressed to a monastic community. Nonetheless, it would be uncritical to assert that *Kṛpārasakośa* was not also intended for Mughal consumption based on the presumption that it seems unusual to address a Persianate court in Sanskrit. Several texts I discuss above are directed towards the Mughals and lend significant credibility to Śānticandra's claim that Akbar experienced this work in some sense. Moreover, Śānticandra was renowned for his oratory skills, which makes verbal transmission a plausible option.[165] We may not be able to fully resolve the question of *Kṛpārasakośa*'s intended and actual audiences. Fortunately, Rudrakavi's panegyrics more directly address the question of whether and how some Sanskrit works were intended to be read, understood, and acted upon by Mughal figures.

---

[164] *Kṛpārasakośa* v. 128.

[165] According to Sheth, "In A.D. 1576-7, [Śāntichandra] defeated Vadibhushana, a Digambara monk, in the Court of Nārāyana of Idar. He won another victory over Digambara Gunachandra at Jodhpur." (*Jainism in Gujarat*, 273)

Rudrakavi's Poems to Khān-i Khānān and Jahangir

Unlike Śānticandra, who wrote on behalf of a religious community, Rudrakavi composed his Sanskrit panegyrics to the Mughals at the instigation of a regional ruler. Rudrakavi worked under the direction of Pratap Shah, head of the kingdom of Baglan near Nashik in modern-day Maharashtra.[166] Rudrakavi became a court poet in Baglan during the reign of Pratap Shah's father, Narayan Shah, and is best known for his poetic account of the Baglan dynasty, completed in 1596.[167] He subsequently composed four Sanskrit encomia for Mughal elites, beginning with *Dānaśāhacarita* (*Acts of Generous Danyal Shah*), in praise of Danyal, Akbar's son, in 1603.[168] In 1609, Rudrakavi wrote *Khānakhānācarita* (*Acts of Khan-i Khanan*) for ʻAbd al-Raḥīm, an important literary and military figure often known by his title, the Khan of Khans.[169] Sometime later, likely before 1620, he authored two undated works, *Jahāṅgīracarita* (*Acts of Jahangir*) and *Kīrtisamullāsa* (*Brilliance of Fame*) for Emperor Jahangir and Prince Khurram (i.e., Shah Jahan) respectively.[170] Of these four works, I analyze two in detail here to illustrate Rudrakavi's approaches and intentions in addressing Sanskrit praise poems to Mughal imperial figures. *Khānakhānācarita* stands apart from Rudrakavi's other three poems and indeed all other known Sanskrit works addressed to the Mughals in containing a specific request for military action on the part of its recipient. This appeal forces us to reconsider the potential of

---

[166] During Akbar's time, Baglan was attached to the *ṣūbah* of Gujarat but treated as a separate territory (Habib, *Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, #7A).

[167] *Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya* (printed in Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1917).

[168] In the title, *dānaśāha* is a *śleṣa* with the double meaning of both Shah Danyal, the name of the recipient, and the shah of generosity. On the date see *Dānaśāhacarita* 4.11 (note that Chaudhuri misprints the *śaka* date here as 1515; the correct reading is 1525 as printed in Sharma, "The Poet Rudra and his Works," 242).

[169] For a brief biography of Raḥīm see Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 45-48.

[170] 1616 has been suggested a date for *Kīrtisamullāsa* based on fairly light evidence (Sharma, "The Poet Rudra and his Works," 243-44). I propose a pre-1620 date here based on the last mention we have of Pratap Shah as the ruler of Baglan in 1620 (Naravane, *Short History of Baglan*, 38).

Sanskrit as a communicative medium in a Mughal context. Second, *Jahāṅgīracarita* survives in a single, fragmentary manuscript and has never been explored by modern scholars. Accordingly, I provide an overview of this work here and briefly analyze it in comparison to Rudrakavi's other panegyrics.

Rudrakavi 's *Khānakhānācarita* is a dense *campū*, a mixture of poetry and prose, that entreats 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān to intervene in an armed dispute between Pratap Shah and the Mughal army. In 1609, Jahangir attempted to take Pratap Shah's small kingdom by siege, a tactic tried without success by Akbar a decade earlier.[171] While holding off Mughal forces militarily, Pratap Shah called upon Rudrakavi to pursue more diplomatic channels.[172] In the resulting *Khānakhānācarita*, Rudrakavi takes a two-fold approach to enlisting the assistance of Khān-i Khānān. First, he heavily flatters Khān-i Khānān throughout the work in terms that make the general appear to be no less than a king himself. Second, towards the end of the text, Rudrakavi offers a direct appeal for Raḥīm's mediation that describes the current military situation and his proposed solution. As I discuss below, the second approach strongly suggests that Pratap Shah intended Raḥīm to comprehend the contents of this work. In light of this, the panegyric is striking for its heavy reliance on Sanskrit literary knowledge and complex linguistic constructions. Whereas *Kṛpārasakośa* is written in a series of relatively short and easily understandable verses, Rudrakavi is a much more sophisticated poet who introduces long strings of compounds, complex imagery, and a myriad of cultural references. It seems that Rudrakavi not only intended for Khān-i Khānān to understand a basic appeal for help in Sanskrit but also expected him to appreciate a nuanced display of Sanskrit poetic skills.

---

[171] *Works of Rudra Kavi*, Appendix 2, 38.

[172] It is also possible that Rudrakavi composed *Khānakhānācarita* after Raḥīm helped Pratap Shah to end the siege. The poem nonetheless presents itself as soliciting Raḥīm, and so I read it here accordingly.

In the first three chapters of the text, Rudrakavi eulogizes Khān-i Khānān in a series of highly learned allusions that offer virtually no direct admission of contemporary politics or a Mughal context. He exaggerates Khān-i Khānān as the one true king who has strong military control over the entire earth. But the lesser rulers who bow down to Raḥīm's authority are not the kings of Gujarat and Mewar, the true subsidiaries of the Mughal Empire. Rather the Hindu gods serve the Khan of Khans, here called simply "Navab":

> Indra with power, Fire with rage, Death with a sword, Destruction with brutality
> in battle, Varuṇa with waters of destruction, Wind with the speed of his steed,
> Kubera with his cache of wealth, Śiva with his cruel eye set on an adversary,
> the lords of all directions, who rule everywhere, serve glorious Navab.[173]

Rudrakavi also employs verses that play cleverly on known Sanskrit conventions to express Khān-i Khānān's prowess in battle. For example:

> From seeds that are pearls sliding down the bursting temples of elephants
> abandoned on battlefields soaked with enemies' blood and torn-up by beasts,
> the lovely creeper of Khan's fame is blooming. Its roots strangle Śeṣa, it gives
> rise to stars, and bears the fruit of the moon as it oozes Ganga nectar.[174]

In prose, Rudrakavi develops similarly detailed images and describes Raḥīm according to a variety of epithets that proclaim him "a temple of all virtues," "leader of the entire earth," and the like.[175]

In one particularly notable prose section, Rudrakavi draws on the cataloguing tendencies of Sanskrit literature to introduce an array of deeply culturally specific information. He says that when King Khān-i Khānān is ruling over the earth, a series of good things flourish. Many of these characteristics are considered negative in general life but positive in respect to specific intellectual and literary standards. He lists around seventy items in this vein, of which I offer a sampling here:

---

[173] *Khānakhānācarita* 1.6.

[174] *Khānakhānācarita* 1.4.

[175] *Khānakhānācarita*, pp. 8 and 15.

> Debate (*vivāda*) among the six philosophies,
> imagination and censure (*utprekṣākṣepau*) among poetic ornaments,
> deceptive war in the *Mahābhārata*,
> deceit in the crooked glances of southern Gujarati (*lāṭa*) women,
> languidness in the charming movements of Mathura women,
> despair among women separated from their lovers,
> rashness among women going to meet their lovers,
> [all these things] flourish when Khan-i Khanan rules over the earth.[176]

In this praise, Rudrakavi draws upon a vast range of Sanskrit learning, including philosophy, poetics, and *nāyikā-bheda* (types of heroines). Without some grounding in these traditions, the items would make little sense to a reader or listener. Far beyond the issue of linguistic intelligibility, such references suggest that Rudrakavi deemed it desirable to address Raḥīm as someone conversant with Sanskrit literature and knowledge systems.

'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān had a deserved reputation as a connoisseur of Indian literary traditions, and Rudrakavi appeals to these skills when addressing him in Sanskrit. Raḥīm's patronage to a range of languages, including Persian, Arabic, and Hindi, was well documented during his lifetime, and he also personally wrote in Hindi.[177] Whether he had command of Sanskrit is more dubious, although there are Sanskrit poems attributed to him as well as an astrological text in Sanskrit mixed with heavy Persian vocabulary.[178] Given this context, Rudrakavi may have spoken to Raḥīm in an Indian tongue in order to render his praise particularly appealing to a lover of Indian literature. In the third chapter of *Khānakhānācarita*, Rudrakavi explicitly notes that wise men and the goddess of speech populate

---

[176] *Khānakhānācarita*, pp. 6-8.

[177] On Raḥīm's patronage in general see Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 48-58 and Schimmel, "Khān-i Khānān Abdur Rahīm as a Patron." While Raḥīm always gave far more support to Persian poets, he also sponsored Hindi authors (Naik, *Literary Circle*, 463-97). On Raḥīm's Hindi production see Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 282-84 and Busch, "*Riti* and Register," 108-14.

[178] Rahim's purported Sanskrit verses are collected in *Rahīmgranthāvalī*, 171-74. The mixed astrological text is titled *Kheṭakautuka.*

Khān-i Khānān's abode, which signals that he was familiar with Raḥīm's polymath reputation.[179]

The fourth and final chapter of the panegyric, comprised of five verses, soundly demonstrates that Rudrakavi intended his work to be linguistically and poetically understood by Khān-i Khānān. In this closing section, Rudrakavi launches his work and patron into the constellation of Mughal politics to solicit Khān-i Khānān's intercession in the situation at hand. First Rudrakavi outlines Pratap Shah's historically good relations with Akbar and Raḥīm:

> How is this Pratap not worthy of your affection, O Khan-i Khanan?
>
> Previously the Glorious One gave me [Pratap] the title of son,
> and I enjoyed the food of Shah Akbar, the jewel of the earth.
> This Pratap was thoroughly delighted at the feet of the Navab.
> Therefore now, O King Khan-i Khanan, do the right thing![180]

After another verse extolling Raḥīm, Rudrakavi outlines his patron's precise wish:

> Like Viṣṇu with Bali, victorious Khan-i Khanan checks powerful kings.
> His two sons, Mirza Iraj and Darab, are two Kamadevas fighting the Śambara-
> like demon [Malik] Ambar (*ambaraśambaramadanau*).
>
> Heroic Shah Jahangir has become attached to the deer-eyed lady
> of the South who is agitated by the fierce glory of his rising passion.
> If Khan-i Khanan, ruler of the entire earth, extends his hand
> to touch her garments, she will be pleased.[181]

Here Rudrakavi makes a series of crucial political plays through the language of poetics.

In the initial verse, he invokes both classical and contemporary references to extol Raḥīm's military resources. First, he exalts Raḥīm as able to control the maniacal tendencies of rulers, just like Viṣṇu in his dwarf incarnation who rescued the heavens and earth from the grip of the demon Bali (*balinṛpabandhanaviṇṇur*). Next Rudrakavi mentions Raḥīm's sons, Mirza

---

[179] *Khānakhānācarita* 3.1.

[180] *Khānakhānācarita* 4.1d-2.

[181] *Khānakhānācarita* 4.4-5; read verse 4.5 with variants given in Karambelkar, "Nabābakhānakhānācaritam," 245.

Īraj (better known as Shāhnavāz Khān) and Dārāb.[182] Both sons often performed well on military campaigns, particularly in the Deccan, and are remembered in the Indo-Persian tradition as fierce warriors.[183] Mirza Īraj was also renowned for successfully repelling Malik Ambar, a powerful minister in the state of Ahmednagar, in a battle at Telangana in 1602.[184] Rudrakavi also compares this feat to the legendary battle between Kāmadeva (Pradyumna) and the demon Śambara.[185] Next Rudrakavi articulates that Pratap Shah wishes Raḥīm, perhaps with his sons, to intervene on behalf of the Baglan ruler. Poetically put, Raḥīm should touch the garment of Pratap's kingdom that is being threatened by Jahangir's army. Presumably this direct plea, expressed in the discourse of Sanskrit poetics, was effective because Jahangir did not invade Pratap Shah's kingdom at this time and later received him amicably at the Mughal court.[186]

While the appeal in these final verses of *Khānakhānācarita* certainly attests to the relevance of the *contents* of this section of the poem, it also has significant bearing on how we read the rest of the panegyric. Previous scholars have denied this connection, and V. W. Karambelkar proposes that: "We can therefore say by way of conclusion that, Rudra's NKC [*Navab-Khānakhānācarita*] was a mere covering, a pretext to hide the petition of succour appended to it in the five verses of the post-colophon, sent by Pratāpa Shah of Baglan to

---

[182] Īraj Khān was titled Shāhnavāz Khān by Jahangir after the composition of this text.

[183] *Ma'āṣir al-Umarā*, 2:645-48, and 2:14-17, respectively.

[184] In the mid-1610s, both of Raḥīm's sons participated in a major defeat of Malik Ambar's forces in the Deccan and the subsequent burning of his capital in Khirki (i.e., Aurangabad). But, based on the date of *Khānakhānācarita*, Rudrakavi must refer to the earlier 1602 engagement here.

[185] I am grateful to Phyllis Granoff for her assistance interpreting this verse. Note that Pradyumna would have been familiar to the Mughals from the *Mahābhārata* translation, although he was not always portrayed in a positive light (e.g., *Razmnāmah*, 4:252-53).

[186] Karambelkar, "Nabābakhānakhānācaritam," 245-46. A Dutch chronicle from the first quarter of the seventeenth century confirms that Pratap Shah and the Mughals were on good terms (quoted in *Rudrakavi's Great Poem*, 129).

Khānkhānā…"[187] This conclusion, namely that the first three chapters of Rudrakavi's work are unimportant, is problematic on several levels. First, it dismisses Raḥīm's fame even during his lifetime as an aficionado of Indian languages based on an unwarranted assumption that Sanskrit had no meaningful place in the Mughal world. Second, Karambelkar's explanation does not account for several verses in the poem's earlier chapters that hint at Pratap Shah's intentions in underwriting this work. For example, nestled between two verses that draw on Sanskrit mythology, Rudrakavi asserts: "The ocean might transgress the shore, the moon could burn, and golden Mount Meru might move. But we all know that a promise of security, furnished by Khan-i Khanan, will never falter."[188] Rudrakavi further emphasizes the firmness of Raḥīm's promise in other verses and also uses *śleṣa*, a Sanskrit rhetorical device that plays on the double meaning of certain words, to remind Khān-i Khānān that Pratap Shah has served him in the past.[189] In one line he proclaims: "the flames of glory of the great Khan's strength consume all," which can also be read as, "the fire of Pratap [Shah] that is the great Khan's strength consumes all."[190] These subtle references hardly rival Rudrakavi's closing petition, but nonetheless the earlier portions of the encomium constitutes an important aspect of how *Khānakhānācarita* was intended to operate.

While Rudrakavi planned for Raḥīm to linguistically and literarily comprehend *Khānakhānācarita*, this was not his approach in his other Sanskrit panegyrics for Mughal figures, such as *Jahāṅgīracarita*. *Jahāṅgīracarita* is dedicated to Emperor Jahangir and, in its original form, was substantially longer than *Khānakhānācarita*. As it survives today, the first

---

[187] "Nabābakhānakhānācaritam," 248. Karambelkar does not include the sixth verse printed in *Khānakhānācarita* as edited by Chaudhuri; the inclusion or exclusion of this verse does not impact my argument here.

[188] *Khānakhānācarita* 1.7.

[189] Yigal Bronner discusses the widespread use of *śleṣa* during this period (*Extreme Poetry*, 122-54).

[190] *khānaśrīprabalapratāpaśikhino niḥśeṣamedhāyate* (*Khānakhānācarita* 3.2a); also see 2.4.

three chapters (*ullāsa*s) are missing, save the third chapter's final verse and mini-colophon.[191] The text continues for one and a half more chapters before breaking off in the middle of a prose section in the fifth chapter.[192] Because it is incomplete, all conclusions about *Jahāṅgīracarita* must remain tentative. Nonetheless several striking literary and historical features are apparent in the preserved sections of the text.

Rudrakavi relies heavily on reused verses and prose in his *Jahāṅgīracarita*, and approximately sixty percent of the extant portion of the praise poem is repeated in his other works.[193] He follows this pattern in his other three Sanskrit panegyrics to the Mughals as well, including *Khānakhānācarita*, and also in his dynastic history of the Baglan rulers. For example, he offers the following verse with small variations in four of his five known works, substituting the appropriate names and titles in otherwise identical lines (here given as it appears in *Jahāṅgīracarita*):

> When swords flash in glorious Jahangir's army, like streaks of lightning in a
> cloud, they release showers of arrows and burn the glory of hidden enemies.
> The river of blood rises, the passion of celestial women is calmed,
> and enemy women cease to part their hair.[194]

Such verses are broad enough to address any imperial figure, particularly given the Sanskrit tradition's proclivity to treat Indo-Persian kings within established literary conventions. But Rudrakavi also used these lines for lower ranked members of the Mughal court, including a

---

[191] *Jahāṅgīracarita*, ms. Baroda Oriental Institute Acc. No. 5761. I based my assessment of its original length on the folio numbers of the Baroda manuscript, which begin with 52.

[192] In addition, fol. 70 is missing.

[193] In chapter 3, 3.18 is from *Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya* (6.8) and 3.19 is from *Khānakhānācarita* (1.10). In chapter 4, at least eleven of seventeen verses are recycled, and all the prose is reused (vv. 4.1-9, 4.12, 4.16 and prose fol. 55b-59b and fol. 61a–63b). In chapter 5, at least four of ten surviving verses are repeated (5.1 and 5.3-5), but the final prose passage appears to be primarily new (fol. 69b-74b). It remains unclear whether Rudrakavi composed his poem for Jahangir or Khurram first. Several verses overlap between these two and are included in my calculations here.

[194] *Jahāṅgīracarita*, fol. 53b-54a, v. 4.3. With the appropriate name changes in the first line, this verse is also found in *Dānaśāhacarita* 3.4, *Khānakhānācarita* 2.15, and *Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya* 11.36.

general and royal princes. Would the Mughals appreciate such overlap, particularly over four works addressed to people of different status? Would Jahangir have been flattered to be lauded with the same verses that were originally used to proclaim one of his nobles the true world conqueror? It was a long-standing practice among Sanskrit literati to recycle lines in panegyrics.[195] Nonetheless, in order for *Jahāṅgīracarita* to dispose Jahangir favorably to Pratap Shah, the Mughal emperor would need to read it independently of Rudrakavi's earlier poems to Raḥīm and Danyal.

Rudrakavi also composed original verses for his *Jahāṅgīracarita*, as well as for his other panegyrics, that lend more specificity to these works. In the fifth chapter of *Jahāṅgīracarita*, he describes the king's harem as full of beautiful women and also offers several lines praising Jahangir's urban development. In the most overt admission of his historical circumstance, he mentions that *faqīr*s (dervishes, *phagira* in Sanskrit) are revered in Agra, the Mughal capital at the time.[196] Such allusions add some context but nonetheless rarely diverge from accepted literary approaches, particularly descriptions of cities (*nagaravarṇana*), and none seem to refer to specific political situations. Elsewhere in *Jahāṅgīracarita*, Rudrakavi praises the Mughal emperor even more conventionally. For example, in prose in his fifth chapter, he compares Jahangir to various Hindu gods and describes how the Mughal king is "a great scourge to all enemies just like Pṛthu" and has "conquered Love like Śiva."[197] It is not inconceivable that Jahangir would have culturally understood such cultural references, especially in light of

---

[195] E.g., compare Jagannātha's *Prāṇābharaṇa* and *Jagadābharaṇa* (see analysis in introduction to *Pandita Raja Kavya Samgraha*, viii-x).

[196] *Jahāṅgīracarita*, fol. 68a-b, v. 5.7.

[197] *Jahāṅgīracarita*, fols. 72a and 72b respectively.

translations of the epics and other Sanskrit texts into Persian under Akbar.[198] However, Jahangir lacked Raḥīm's reputation as a connoisseur of Indian culture, and so it remains unclear what Pratap Shah hoped to gain by sending a Sanskrit poem as opposed to a message in Persian or Hindi. In this case and indeed for his other two panegyrics for Mughal princes, Rudrakavi and his patron may have intended the praise poems to act more as objects, perhaps received as gifts in court, rather than be apprehended through their linguistic meanings.

Jagannātha's *Play of Asaf [Khan]*

Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja followed Rudrakavi in directing an encomium to a Mughal noble at the petition of a regional ruler. Jagannātha wrote from within the Mughal court in a certain sense as he was patronized by Shah Jahan. But, between 1628 and 1641, Mukunda Raya, a chieftain in Kashmir, commissioned him to compose a Sanskrit work in praise of Asaf Khan, the royal vizier.[199] As it survives today *Āsaphavilāsa* is a short literary treatment, primarily in prose, of a visit Asaf Khan paid to Kashmir in the company of Shah Jahan. Some scholars have postulated that the text is incomplete because of its brief nature and abrupt ending, but this claim is somewhat doubtful given that the text contains a full colophon.[200]

Of the texts considered here, *Āsaphavilāsa* is the most elusive in terms of its purpose and how it operated in a Persianate milieu. Other than giving the names of Asaf Khan, Shah Jahan, and Mukunda Raya, Jagannātha admits no historical details into his encomium. He does not reference any political events, unlike Śānticandra's celebration of recently procuring *farmān*s. Nor does he appear to allude to any particular historical circumstances, such as Pratap Shah's

---

[198] E.g., The story of Pṛthu is told in the *Śānti Parvan* (*Book of Peace*) of the Persian *Mahābhārata* produced under Akbar (*Razmnāmah*, 3:34-37).

[199] *Āsaphavilāsa*, pp. 96 (*rāyamukundenādīṣṭena...paṇḍitajagannāthenāsaphavilāsākhyeyam ākhyāyikā niramīyata*).

[200] Introduction to *Pandita Raja Kavya Samgraha*, viii.

desire to enlist Raḥīm's military assistance. In fact the poem scarcely addresses its named subject at all, only devoting a brief section in the middle of his text to Asaf Khan. Instead, Jagannātha prefers to focus on the beauty and mythology typically associated with Kashmir in Sanskrit.

Jagannātha opens with several verses commending the emperor, even directly addressing him at times, in lines replete with dense Sanskrit imagery:

> Many kings—resplendent with bows that buzz with lines of bees swarming
> to meet the liberal rivers of juices oozing from the lobes of dense legions
> of elephants that are blind with madness and shaking the city gates—
> rely upon your eye, shining, intoxicated, lovely, and brilliant as a lotus.
> You [Shah Jahan] are the sun that pierces the darkness of destitution.[201]

Jagannātha continues to eulogize the Mughal ruler in several similar verses and then narrates in prose that the king once came to Kashmir. Here he dwells for several lines on the splendor of the region and the Himalayas before turning to the purported subject of his work: Asaf Khan.

Jagannātha first characterizes the vizier as a wise man to whom the rulers of the earth bow down. At the end of this concise praise, the poem offers an aesthetically compelling passage that draws Asaf Khan beyond Kashmir and into the broader framework of Sanskrit literature:

> If all the neighboring kings who rule the earth are said to be made of speech,
> then among them he [Asaf Khan] is literature (*kāvya*). If they are literature, then
> he is poetic suggestion (*dhvani*). If they are poetic suggestion, then he is
> aesthetic emotion (*rasa*). If they are aesthetic emotion then he is erotic love
> (*śṛṅgāra*).
> Navab Asaf Khan, who bathes in the essence of all *śāstra*s, is esteemed as the
> sweetness and greatness that stirs the hearts of all sensitive critics.[202]

---

[201] *Āsaphavilāsa* v. 1. Shah Jahan is named in the preceding prose passage, which leads into the verses with "and also."

[202] *Āsaphavilāsa*, pp. 95.

Here Jagannātha projects Asaf Khan as knowledgeable in Sanskrit learning and further inscribes the hierarchy of Sanskrit poetics onto the Mughal vizier. But Asaf Khan, like Jahangir, lacked Raḥīm's fame as well-versed in Indian traditions. Also, unlike Rudrakavi's esteem of Jahangir that was based on mythological allusions and stories that had been translated into Persian in the Mughal court and were often widely read, Jagannātha here invokes the technical vocabulary of Sanskrit poetics. Some aspects of *rasa* theory were available in Persian through Abū al-Faẓl's *Learning of India* and also in Hindi through various literary and musical texts.[203] But if Asaf Khan was aware of such things, then knowledge of traditional Sanskrit learning was far more widespread among Indo-Persian elites than modern scholars have generally acknowledged. Even if we assume that *Āsaphavilāsa* was translated in order for Asaf Khan to understand it, only someone already familiar with Indian poetic conventions could understand the import of "if they are *rasa*, then you are *śṛṅgāra*."

After his short treatment of Asaf Khan, Jagannātha dedicates the remainder of his poem to elaborating myths and stories associated with Kashmir. He draws heavily on the adventures of Kāmadeva who uses Kashmir as his playground for various dalliances. He also narrates how Indra came to Kashmir to worship Śiva and became ashamed of himself in comparison with a truly illustrious deity. In his final remarks, Jagannātha refers again to Asaf Khan to say that the vizier considers him a favored poet. Returning in closing to the subject of Shah Jahan, Jagannātha claims to have received the title *paṇḍitarāja* (King of the Learned) from the Mughal ruler.

---

[203] Abū al-Faẓl covers Sanskrit aesthetic theory at some length in his *Learning of India*, part of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, but it remains unclear whether this would have been widely known in Persianate circles (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 496-500). In addition to literary treatises, several musical treatises that draw on Sanskrit aesthetics were available in both Hindi and Sanskrit by the mid-seventeenth century (e.g., *Kitab-i Nauras* by Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II, see introduction to *Kitab-i Nauras*, 57-58; on Indo-Persian interest in Hindustani music more broadly see Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," 495-503).

Like most other texts addressed to Mughal figures, we have no evidence of whether or how the imperial court actually understood *Āsaphavilāsa*. The work makes no appeal for direct action, and thus it may have served a symbolic purpose of generally pleasing a high political official instead of communicating information to its recipient. Perhaps precisely because he wished this panegyric to be recognized as a gesture more than a direct appeal, Mukunda Raya thought it prudent to engage a known Mughal court poet as its author. Jagannātha's name would certainly have been recognizable to the imperial elite, although his Sanskrit works were not typically read within Persianate circles. It is also possible that Mukunda Raya expected Jagannātha to translate the work into Hindi when he actually read the panegyric to Asaf Khan, an idea at least tangentially supported by Jagannātha's role as a Hindi singer at Shah Jahan's court.

Taken as a whole, the praise poems of Śānticandra, Rudrakavi, and Jagannātha attest that numerous contemporaries of the Mughal Empire felt that the language of the gods and the idiom of Sanskrit poetics in particular were well suited to serve as political vehicles in Mughal India. These works also suggest interesting possibilities for how to understand the reception of Sanskrit texts among Persianate audiences. For starters, we need to expand the notion of what it meant to understand Sanskrit beyond mere linguistic comprehension and presuppose familiarity with literary and cultural conventions as well. Given the cultural registers of these encomiums, can we read such features as evidence that the Mughal court was more familiar with Indian knowledge systems and Sanskrit poetics than we might otherwise know from Indo-Persian histories? On the other hand, we might conclude that these panegyrics were simply insignificant works, failed attempts that were in fact never consumed in a royal context and circulated only outside of courtly circles if at all. All six panegyrics

survive in relatively few manuscripts copies today, although that may not reflect anything more than their increasing irrelevance as their recipients faded into history. Whether their named recipients read (or heard) them or not, all the poems directly address Mughal figures and make strong claims about the power of Sanskrit in the Mughal court as conceptualized by Sanskrit poets and their Hindu patrons. At the very least, the linguistic, literary, cultural, and political lines of Mughal culture were not so strictly drawn as to exclude Sanskrit.

Sanskrit Grammars and Lexicons of Persian

Sanskrit lexicons and grammars of Persian explore the implications of bringing two cosmopolitan languages into a shared milieu in a different way than panegyrics. These works draw upon the vast intellectual resources of the Sanskrit tradition in order to develop language analyses of Persian. Numerous such texts were produced between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries in South Asia and consist of lexicons that pair synonyms in the two languages and full grammars of Persian.[204] These treatises constitute important attempts on the part of Sanskrit intellectuals from a variety of communities to grapple with the cultural impact of Persian on the subcontinent. Akbar and Jahangir underwrote the production of two such works in which literati attempt to analyze Persian within a Sanskrit linguistic construct. These Mughal-sponsored texts emphasize the imperial milieu of their production and also offer the first (and only known) full grammars of Persian available in Sanskrit.

Sanskrit lexicons of Persian date back to centuries before the advent of Mughal rule. Although later authors may not have been familiar with any earlier works, this history is important to properly contextualizing the Mughal-patronized projects. In 1365, Salakṣa completed the earliest known bilingual lexicon of Sanskrit and Persian, titled *Śabdavilāsa* (*Play*

---

[204] See Sarma, "Teach Yourself Persian the Sanskrit Way," "Sanskrit Manuals for Learning Persian," and "From Yāvanī to Saṃskṛtam."

of Words, also called *Pārasīnāmamālā*, *Garland of Persian Words*), on behalf of a Gujarati patron, Haribhrama.[205] Salakṣa situates his work firmly in a courtly environment and appeals to the need for intellectuals to cater to India's growing multilingualism, particularly given the increasing number of Indo-Persian rulers. In his opening lines, he says:

> Who among the best of men does not desire fluency in all languages?
> Since surely he whose wealth is knowledge flourishes in a royal court.
> Those who are well known in all places and skilled in all *śāstra*s,
> they are certainly not ill-educated in any language.[206]

Salakṣa next offers specific precedents for his claim that learned men ought to be familiar with both Sanskrit and Islamicate traditions. He applauds a few bilingual figures, including Varāhamihira, the sixth-century author of a compendium of Sanskrit knowledge (*Bṛhatsaṃhitā*), who "spoke of the well-known Arabic astrological signs by foreign names in order to gain the favor of men."[207]

Salakṣa's lexicon itself provides a list of common terms in both languages, roughly styled on *Amarakośa* (an exceedingly popular Sanskrit thesaurus). While the text has yet to be more closely analyzed, Salakṣa's work speaks to the new needs of Sanskrit intellectuals working in increasingly multicultural contexts in Islamicate India. The framework of *Śabdavilāsa* exhibits several features that persist throughout Sanskrit intellectuals'

---

[205] Also spelled Haribrahma (*Śabdavilāsa* of Salakṣa; ms. Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 995, fol. 1b, v. 6 and fol. 14a; also quoted in Shah, "Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā," 32, vv. 7 and 4). On the date see colophon printed in Shah, "Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā," 32. Scholars have often asserted that a similar text directly preceded Salakṣa's work, namely Vidyānilaya Kavi's *Yavananāmamālā* (*Garland of Foreign [Persian] Words*), allegedly composed in 1364 (Sarma, "From Yāvanī to Saṃskṛtam," 84-85; Vogel, *Indian Lexicography*, 380 n. 261). In fact, this text is identical with Salakṣa' *Śabdavilāsa*. Scholars appear to have been mislead by the work's multiple titles and have misread *vidyānilaya*, an adjective describing Haribhrama's capital, as a separate poet's name (Ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 995, fol. 14a; quoted in Shah, "Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā," 32).

[206] *Śabdavilāsa* vv. 3-4 (ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 995, fol. 1b; ms. Ahmedabad LD Institute of Indology 8311, fol. 1a; and quoted in Shah, "Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā," 31).

[207] *Śabdavilāsa* vv. 5-6 (quoted in Shah, "Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā," 31). Verse 5 is missing in ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 995, fol. 1b and ms. LD Institute 8311, fol. 1a. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* was also translated into Persian on the orders of Firoz Shah sometime 1351-88 (Jalali and Ansari, "Persian Translation of Varāhamihira's Bṛhatsaṃhitā," 161-69.)

engagements with the Persian language, including Salakṣa's connection with polyglot courts and his lexicographic methods. Mughal-patronized authors followed Salakṣa in composing basic bilingual lexicons under courtly patronage but also pursued both the intellectual and political implications of their works in new and exciting ways, first and foremost by developing full grammars of Persian.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's *Illumination of Persian* for Akbar

Kṛṣṇadāsa composed his *Pārasīprakāśa* (*Illumination of Persian*) on Akbar's orders in two parts: a lexicon and a grammar. Some scholars have suggested that he originally penned the sections as two separate, although related works.[208] There is some evidence for this, including that the lexicon and grammar often circulated independently of one another in manuscript copies.[209] But an equal number of manuscripts pair the texts together so that, even if these were once discrete works, Sanskrit readers early on considered them tightly linked.[210] Kṛṣṇadāsa expresses his textual intentions in two verses at the beginning of his lexicon that appear to equally apply to his grammar.

> A collection of some Persian speech is laid out by me, for the sake of my own enlightenment, according to my knowledge of Sanskrit meanings.
> For those who desire to dive into the great ocean of the Persian language, Kṛṣṇadāsa will bind the floods of speech.[211]

---

[208] E.g., Scharfe, *Grammatical Literature*, 196.

[209] The following manuscripts include only the lexicon portion: Ahmedabad LD Institute 28547 (dated 1654/5), Bikaner Anup Sanskrit Library 5469 (dated 1677), Anup 5470, Anup 5471, Asiatic Society of Bengal [ASB] 4622, Jodhpur Man Singh Pustak Prakash 626c, and Pune Bharatiya Itihas Samsodha Mandal 29/1858. The following manuscripts include only the grammar portion: ASB 4622A, Pune Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute [BORI] 92 of 1907-15, and BORI 687 of 1891-95. Note that many of the grammars begin with a brief invocation to Ganeśa to ease the rough transition of the text as printed in *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 25. Jodhpur Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute [RORI] 28478 and Jodhpur RORI 28486 contain only the *ākhyāta* and *kṛt* sections of the grammar.

[210] Manuscripts that contain both portions include: LD Institute 4, LD Institute 355 (dated 1869/70), LD Institute 2860, Anup 5468, and Bikaner RORI 19965 (text partially lost). Also note the texts on which the Varanasi printed edition is based (introduction to *Pārasīprakāśa*, 7).

[211] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa vv. 5-6. All citations refer to the Varanasi edition published in 1965; Weber also published the lexicon portion of text in 1887 ("Über den Pārasīprakāça des Kṛishṇadāsa").

Kṛṣṇadāsa thus promises to teach Persian, and indeed he offers a thorough list of basic Persian terms and accurately describes the grammatical contours of the language. But particularly his grammar seems more interested in extending an intellectual claim over Persian than providing basic language instruction. I will elaborate on this point below, but first it is worth noting that Kṛṣṇadāsa underscores the courtly context of his text's production, and his *Pārasīprakāśa* often further reflects its imperial environs.

Kṛṣṇadāsa emphasizes Akbar's patronage throughout his text and places his work both within the conventions of the Sanskrit thought world and Indo-Persian political culture. The lexicon opens with several conventional verses that cast Akbar within a strong Hindu idiom as an incarnation of Viṣṇu come to earth. In these lines, Kṛṣṇadāsa evades any semblance of Persianate or Islamicate political norms in favor of eulogizing Akbar as a distinctively Indian king.

> Brahma, who was described by the Veda
> as changeless and beyond nature (*prakṛteḥ*),
> that same one was born as Akbar, great ruler of the earth,
> in order to protect cows and Brahmans.
> His virtuous name is celebrated throughout the ocean of *śāstra*s
> and among *smṛti*s, histories (*itihāsa*), and the like.
> It is firmly established in the three worlds, and
> therefore with his name this work is composed.
> It is no surprise that cows were protected by Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Gopāla
> and the best of the twice born guarded by the *rāma*s, gods of the Brahmans.
> The Lord descended (*avatīrṇa*) in a family of foreigners
> whose affections are overpowered by cows and Brahmans.
> Akbar protects cows and Brahmans; he is Viṣṇu in a wondrous form.[212]

To speak of Akbar as part divine invokes both known Sanskrit royal discourse and a specifically Hindu religious context, which is enhanced here by recurring references to cows and Brahmans. In a more neutral register, Kṛṣṇadāsa also repeatedly reminds his readers of his

[212] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, vv. 2-4; in v. 2 read *pratīyate* with Weber edition ("Über den Pārasīprakāça des Kṛishṇadāsa"), 24 and Jodhpur, Man Singh Pustak Prakash ms. 626(c), fol. 1a.

imperial sponsorship at the end of many subsections of the text.[213] This strong association with Akbar's court is also remembered throughout the vast reception of his *Pārasīprakāśa*, and most manuscripts retain these continual mentions of Akbar's name.

Mughal culture surfaces more explicitly in the contents of Kṛṣṇadāsa's treatise, particularly his grammar. Most prominently, he exemplifies different uses of eight distinct cases (the seven standard Sanskrit cases plus the vocative) with phrases repeated in both Sanskrit and Persian that more often than not feature the reigning Mughal king.[214] For example, Kṛṣṇadāsa gives the following sentence to demonstrate the nominative case: "Long Live glorious Shah Akbar!"[215] For the vocative case, Kṛṣṇadāsa calls out, "O glorious Shah Jalaluddin, come to my aid in all things!"[216] Typically themes such as service and kingly power are also on display in sentences such as: "He devotes himself to the work of Akbar" and "Glorious Akbar made the Kali Age into the Era of Truth (*satyayuga*) by his own justice."[217] Kṛṣṇadāsa also alludes to specific courtly practices, such as the full prostration (*sijdah*) instituted by Akbar and Akbar's sun worship.[218] Last, he includes a number of names for Central Asians in his explanation of a Persian linguistic construction that signifies a person's

---

[213] Kṛṣṇadāsa notes Akbar's direct patronage in mini-colophons throughout the grammar section that proclaim the given section is now finished "in *Pārasīprakāśa*, which was written by Vihāri Kṛṣṇadāsa at the instance of glorious Shah Akbar, ruler of the earth" (e.g., *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 39, 42, 45, 51, 91, and 97). He also names his courtly location at the beginning of his lexicon as "in the assembly of the paramount King Shah Jalaluddin" (*Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa v. 1; in Sanskrit *jalāladīndra* is a play on the king's name where *indra* also means lord).

[214] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 42-45.

[215] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 42.

[216] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 42; correct the Persian version of the sentence to read *hajarati śāhi* with an *ezafah* (*Pārasīvyākaraṇa*, ms. Punjab University of Lahore 1225, fol. 4a; Pune BORI 92 of 1907-15, fol. 7a).

[217] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 43; these sentences exemplify the dative and accusative, respectively. Interestingly, Kṛṣṇadāsa adds in the Sanskrit version of the latter sentence that Akbar is "very dharmik" (*atīvadhārmmikaḥ*).

[218] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 49 and 43 respectively. Also note that Kṛṣṇadāsa opens his grammar with a verse praising the sun god (v. 1). Scholars have suggested that Kṛṣṇadāsa may be a māga Brahman, which would provide a nice confluence with Akbar's interest in sun worship (Scharfe, *Grammatical Literature*, 196; Weber, "Über den Pārasīprakāça des Kṛishṇadāsa," 24 n. 1).

origin, such as *kābulī* and *khurāsānī*.[219] In his lexicon, Kṛṣṇadāsa also incorporates references pertinent in the Mughal world, but they generally invoke Indo-Persian culture more broadly rather than Akbar's court in particular. For example, he equates *kalima* (the Islamic statement of faith) with *mūlamantra* (the foundational formula) and *khutbah* (the Friday sermon read in the name of the reigning king) with *rājyārambhābhiṣeka* (initial consecration of kingship)."[220]

While Kṛṣṇadāsa foregrounds his location in a courtly milieu throughout his work, his precise intentions are difficult to grasp, particularly for his grammar. Kṛṣṇadāsa models his exegesis of Persian on the *Kātantra* system of Sanskrit grammar, an alternative method to the better-known *Pāṇinian* system.[221] While the *Kātantra* approach is generally considered more accessible, it hardly makes for an easy introduction to Persian. Kṛṣṇadāsa proceeds by outlining different Sanskrit grammatical formations and then slotting in the equivalent Persian construction where appropriate, along the way noting the many forms that Sanskrit possesses but Persian lacks. Much of the work is written in terse aphorisms (*kārikā*s) that require a solid grounding in Sanskrit grammatical terminology to understand. At the beginning of his grammar, Kṛṣṇadāsa openly proclaims that he assumes readers already have a firm grasp of technical Sanskrit grammatical terms: "Here there is no collection of [Persian] grammatical terms because the accomplishment of grammatical operations will be expressed through Sanskrit technical terms alone in reference to given things."[222] Kṛṣṇadāsa indeed provides a full linguistic account of Persian. But given the density of technical words and his emphasis on meticulously addressing every Sanskrit grammatical formation (whether or not

---

[219] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 47-48.

[220] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, vv. 125 and 168, respectively.

[221] I am indebted to Victor D'Avella for this insight and for reading this text with me.

[222] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 25.

an equivalent exists in Persian), one wonders if straightforward language instruction was his primary goal.[223]

Instead, it seems more plausible that Kṛṣṇadāsa sought to construct a politico-intellectual account of Persian through a grammatical analysis. Indian grammarians had developed a long tradition of theorizing Sanskrit that far exceeded straightforward language instruction and instead participated in intellectual and political agendas.[224] Kṛṣṇadāsa appears to adapt this type of approach to conceptualize Persian through the structures of the Sanskrit grammatical tradition. In short, rather than simply teaching Persian, Kṛṣṇadāsa sought to make sense of Persian and its associated power structures through the intellectual tools of Sanskrit.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's *Pārasīprakāśa* was widely read after its initial composition and initiated a cascade of similar texts in Sanskrit. The treatise is extant today in dozens of manuscript copies distributed widely across the subcontinent, including some that traveled as far south as Tamil Nadu.[225] One curious manuscript at the Punjab University of Lahore provides an interesting insight into the later history of the grammar. This undated copy is titled *Pārasīvyākaraṇa* (*Grammar of Persian*) and has long been erroneously confused as a distinct text.[226] In fact, the manuscript is an abridged copy of Kṛṣṇadāsa's grammar section that simplifies his presentation of Persian, excising much of the original theoretical linguistic framework. *Pārasīvyākaraṇa* is too cryptic to explain its own intentions, but it seems reasonable to posit that this adaptation was created by somebody more interested in feasibly explaining Persian

[223] Scharfe also questions Kṛṣṇadāsa's self-articulated goal of teaching Persian (*Grammatical Literature*, 197).

[224] For example, see Pollock's discussion of the role of grammar in courtly milieus in *Language of the Gods*, 162-84.

[225] For a partial list of manuscripts see *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, 12:38. Ms. Pune BORI 92 of 1907-15 contains a line of Tamil on the final page of the manuscript, which suggests it traveled deep into South India.

[226] See *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, 12:38.

than accounting for it according to an existing Sanskrit intellectual model. This adaptation also reinforces my earlier suggestion that Kṛṣṇadāsa prioritizes conceptualizing Persian instead of clearly outlining the language. Furthermore, the author of *Pārasīvyākaraṇa* is not the only later intellectual to desire a different formulation of Persian in Sanskrit. The second Sanskrit lexicon and grammar produced under Mughal patronage by Kavi Karṇapūra quickly offered an alternative to Kṛṣṇadāsa's project.

Kavi Karṇapūra's *Light on Sanskrit and Persian Words* for Jahangir

Kavi Karṇapūra composed his treatise on Persian, *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* (*Light on Sanskrit and Persian Words*), in the early 1600s within the ambit of Mughal patronage. He attests to receiving royal support in his opening verses: "Having taken the blessing of Jahangir, great king of the earth, in the form of a command, poet Karṇapūra composes this *Light on Sanskrit and Persian Words*."[227] Karṇapūra's text is structurally quite similar to Kṛṣṇadāsa's work in that it is comprised of discrete lexicon and grammar sections.[228] Additionally, Karṇapūra may have conceptualized the two sections of his text as distinct (although clearly connected) and offers separate praise and introductory verses to begin both the grammar and lexicon.[229] Nonetheless, Karṇapūra does not saturate his work with references to his imperial context like his predecessor and conceptualizes his project quite differently from Kṛṣṇadāsa.

Karṇapūra constructs his work as useful to both Sanskrit and Persian intellectuals. In his opening verses he writes:

> Knowledge of Persian will come for those who know Sanskrit,
> knowledge of Sanskrit for those who know Persian,

[227] *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* v. 2.

[228] Whether the two sections of Kavi Karṇapūra's work circulated separately is unclear. We know little about the circulation of Karṇapūra's text, primarily because few manuscripts survive.

[229] *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* vv. 1-2 and vv. 327-28.

and knowledge of both for those who know both.
Thus this book is to be studied.[230]

After noting a few details of his text he reiterates, "From knowing one, the other will be understood. From knowing both, both will be understood."[231] In these lines, Karṇapūra acknowledges the existence of people who know both Sanskrit and Persian, despite the fact that we possess little concrete evidence of bilingual individuals during this period. Such people were certainly rare or unknown in Akbar's court because Abū al-Faẕl bemoans his inability to find anybody fluent in both tongues.[232] But, by Jahangir's time, at least a few individuals capable in both languages had emerged, and Kavi Karṇapūra expresses a strong interest in producing more such cross-cosmopolitan intellectuals.[233] Moreover, his grammar lacks the technical terminology that pervades that of Kṛṣṇadāsa, and, particularly with the assistance of an able teacher, it seems far more plausible that one could learn Persian from this text.[234]

Intriguingly, Karṇapūra concludes his opening verses by expressing the value of his treatise for Persian literati in particular. He writes, "For *yavana* cows that are drowning in the mud of the lack of treatises (*anibandhapaṅkamadhye*), glorious Karṇapūra will pull them up with the rope that is this composition."[235] Taken in the larger context of Jahangir's court, this comment could plausibly be interpreted in two ways. Karṇapūra could be speaking of the lack

---

[230] *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* v. 3.

[231] *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* v. 6b.

[232] *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 360. Of course the presence of Kṛṣṇadāsa in Akbar's court would seem to contradict this claim. Perhaps Kṛṣṇadāsa and Abū al-Faẕl were not at court at the same time or the two simply never crossed paths.

[233] Besides Kavi Karṇapūra himself, Siddhicandra knew Persian, as I mention above.

[234] Sarma, "From Yāvanī to Saṃskṛtam," 85; also see discussion in Sarma, "Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa: ek viśleṣaṇātmak paricay," 194-99.

[235] *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* v. 7; read *yavana*- as in ms. ASB 24327, fol. 1b and printed in Sarma, "Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa: ek viśleṣaṇātmak paricay," 190.

of Persian grammatical treatises available to date.[236] Perhaps more likely, Karṇapūra may intend to remedy the ignorance of Sanskrit prevalent among Persian literati. A natural obstacle to the latter reading is that Karṇapūra's text is itself in Sanskrit and so presupposes precisely what it claims to teach. Interestingly, however, three of the four copies I have located of *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa* are written in regional, non-Devanagari scripts.[237] Indo-Persian speakers often picked up vernacular tongues, although whether any could read regional scripts remains unclear. Nonetheless, knowledge of an Indian vernacular combined with Karṇapūra's simple language may have made his text accessible to Persian speakers seeking to learn Sanskrit. Even if this was Karṇapūra's goal, his project appears to have largely failed as the paucity of manuscripts extant today hints at a relatively low (if broad in its regional extent) circulation for his work.

After Karṇapūra, no more Sanskrit grammars of Persian were written at the Mughal court. Instead, patronage shifted to supporting Sanskrit treatises on Persian astronomy and astrology that often included specialized bilingual lexicons.[238] With Kṛṣṇadāsa and Karṇapūra as the two Mughal options, perhaps the most telling contrast between them lies in their respective receptions. As I mention above, Kṛṣṇadāsa's text was widely read and even reworked for centuries after its composition. In contrast, Karṇapūra's text survives in only a handful of manuscript copies and shows little evidence of having been popular among either Sanskrit or Persian intellectuals. One way to read this discrepancy, particularly given

---

[236] A number of Persian dictionaries and grammars were produced in India during this time, most famously *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī* (*Jahangir's Dictionary*). For a discussion of the lack of early grammars in Persian see Windfuhr, *Persian Grammar*, 10-11.

[237] Ms. Pune BORI 1502 of 1891-95 is in Śāradā, ms. Varanasi Sarasvati Bhavan Library 43704 is in Bangla, and the printed edition is based on a manuscript in Nepali script (introduction to *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa*, i).

[238] E.g., Vedāṅgarāya composed his *Pārasīprakāśa* for Shah Jahan.

Kṛṣṇadāsa's intellectual approach to Persian grammar, is that Sanskrit intellectuals were more interested in pursuing philological versus practical knowledge of Persian. Certainly many Indians learned Persian during Mughal rule, and yet, for those operating within the realm of Sanskrit discourse, the primary importance of Persian remained on an intellectual plane.

Multilingual Titling Practices

In addition to texts, Sanskrit intellectuals and the Mughal Emperors engaged in several cross-cultural practices that dynamically fused both cosmopolitan traditions. I mention some activities above, such as sharing religious rituals and exchanging intellectual knowledge. But the issue of titling across linguistic and cultural lines merits additional discussion because it operated in a truly multicultural milieu and played a central role in Mughal relations with Sanskrit literati. The Mughal emperors bestowed a myriad of appellations on Jain and Brahman intellectuals who visited their courts. The titles ranged from personal compliments to formal ranks within a religious hierarchy. They include Sanskrit, Persian, and vernacular formulations and were generally highly prized by their recipients. To date, no scholars have compiled all the available information about Mughal titling of Sanskrit intellectuals, much less analyzed this practice. Here I offer the first comprehensive account of these multilingual activities and how they shed light on relations between the Sanskrit and Persian cultural spheres in the Mughal court.

Our sources on cross-cultural titling in the Mughal milieu emerge overwhelmingly from Sanskrit and vernacular traditions, which indicates some of the dynamics at work in this practice. Early modern Sanskrit intellectuals strongly associated the Mughals with titling and attest to the impacts of this cross-cultural custom. In his *Pārasīprakāśa*, Kṛṣṇadāsa offers as one of his example bilingual sentences, "Great Shah Akbar gives titles (*khiṭāb*, *padavīm*) to

important people."[239] Moreover, Sanskrit intellectuals who received appellations from Mughal rulers frequently trumpeted this honor in their writings. Religious and genealogical descendents of these individuals also celebrated Mughal-bestowed titles as a noteworthy heritage while sometimes hinting at the tensions in being marked by a Perso-Islamic king. However, the Mughals note few instances of cross-cultural titles in their court histories. This omission likely communicates little about the value the Mughals placed on titling Sanskrit literati but rather signals that they conceptualized such activity to be outside of the Persianate sphere. Indeed, aside from naming astrologers *jyotiṣarāja*, titles given to Sanskrit intellectuals appear to have never been associated with Mughal courtly hierarchies and so are mentioned primarily in Sanskrit, the cultural realm in which they operated.[240]

Akbar and his successors granted two major types of titles, honorary and official, that demonstrate their vibrant engagement with the Sanskrit cultural milieu. Honorary appellations were issued in both Sanskrit and Persian and signaled no formal position in any religious, political, or cultural community. Formal titles were exclusively in Sanskrit and denoted ranks within Jain sects. Akbar granted significantly more titles overall than either Jahangir or Shah Jahan, but both later kings actively continued this multicultural practice.

Akbar bestowed at least four honorary Sanskrit titles that all carried significant imperial cachet but also triggered certain cultural anxieties. Most prominently, after meeting Hīravijaya Sūri in the 1580s, Akbar named him *jagadguru* (Teacher of the World). This name appears prominently in the title of the first of two Sanskrit hagiographies of Hīravijaya (*Jagadgurukāvya*, *Poem on the Teacher of the World*). Devavimala, Hīravijaya's second Sanskrit

---

[239] *Pārasīprakāśa* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, 44. In other texts different titles are called *padavī*, *biruda*, *pada*, *nāma*, and *ākhyā*.

[240] Occasionally such titles are also mentioned in vernacular texts, usually in Hindi or Gujarati. While I have tried to incorporate vernacular sources here, more work remains to be done on this front.

biographer, also mentions the appellation, but he draws attention to the Jain community's concerns with having their leader linked to a Muslim king by placing the honorific in a long line of titles given to Jains by kings and Islamicate figures:

> Just as Pious Ascetic (*tapā*) was given by the ruler of Āghāṭa to Jagaccandra,
> the Lord of Ascetics who performed particular austerities for twelve years;
> just as Skilled Among Orators (*vādigokulasaṅkata*) was given by Zafar Khan
> at Sthambhatīrtha to Munisundara, the moon of Sūris;
> so the title Teacher of the World (*jagadguru*) was given by [Akbar]
> to Lord Hīravijaya, an ocean of jewels that are good qualities.[241]

Interestingly, a fifteenth-century lineage of the Tapā Gaccha also names the initial title granted to Jagaccandra but does not mention that it was bestowed by a king.[242] Phyllis Granoff has convincingly argued that in this passage Devavimala references a series of monks becoming involved in royal circles in order to justify Hīravijaya's role as companion to a king.[243] As I discuss in chapter 2, the Tapā Gaccha in particular record their discomfort with monks frequenting the opulent Mughal courts. Certainly this is the case here where Devavimala names precedents for Jains accepting titles from rulers, including Persianate figures such as Zafar Khan, so that Hīravijaya is seen as continuing a tradition rather than forging unprecedented imperial affiliations.

The three other honorary Sanskrit titles given by Akbar are likewise celebrated by Sanskrit literati, although not by their recipients. Again this suggests a bit of the anxiety, but also the cultural value, associated with this imperial practice. Akbar awarded the title *vādīndra* (Lord of Debaters) to Sādhukīrti, a member of the Kharatara Gaccha who vanquished an

---

241 *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.203-5.

242 Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 37 and 41.

243 Granoff, "Authority and Innovation," 51-57.

opponent in a debate in Akbar's presence.[244] In this case, the title (*biruda*) is deeply tied to the specific circumstances of its bestowal and might as accurately be translated as "Winner of the Debate." Sādhusundara, Sādhukīrti's pupil, records the title with pride on behalf of his teacher. In another case, Akbar conferred on Nṛsiṃha, a Brahman, the title of *jyotirvitsarasa* (Elegant among Astronomers) in 1600/1, which we know through Nṛsiṃha's son.[245] Often these titles were particularly meaningful in the Sanskrit sphere precisely because they were given by Indo-Persian kings.

Last, in a slightly unusual case, Akbar also issued a Sanskrit title to Abū al-Faẕl. In 1599, Akbar sent Abū al-Faẕl south to assist Prince Murad who became ill while promoting Mughal military interests in the Deccan.[246] Siddhicandra provides eyewitness testimony to Abū al-Faẕl's report of his success in the Deccan campaigns upon returning to court. He concludes, "Having heard that news, the king's eyes gleamed with joy, and he named [Abū al-Faẕl] Pillar of the Army (*dalathambana*)."[247] Abū al-Faẕl never claims this title in his Persian writings, but awareness of it survives within the Sanskrit cultural realm. It is particularly noteworthy that Siddhicandra documents this appellation because he otherwise only details titles given to Jains.[248] Here Siddhicandra celebrates Mughal-bestowed titles, even of behalf of others, in order to draw imperial power into the Sanskrit cultural sphere.

---

[244] Sādhusundara's commentary on *Dhāturatnākara* as quoted in Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 14 n. 17 and Peterson, *Fifth Report*, 159, v. 17.

[245] Raghunātha's *Muhūrtamālā* as quoted in CESS, Series A 5:376; also see Sarma, "Jyotiṣarāja at the Mughal Court," 367. It is unclear whether or not Nṛsiṃha held any official position at court at this time (Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology*, 92). Nṛsiṃha's son, who documents his father's title, says that it was granted during the siege of Asirgarh fort, which occurred 1600-1601.

[246] Siddhicandra does not mention the date, but Murad died in May 1599.

[247] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.77. As printed *dalathambana* appears to be a Prakrit form. Unfortunately I could not consult the original manuscript to verify this.

[248] I expand upon this point in chapter 2.

Akbar also granted Persian and vernacular titles to Jain intellectuals, which constitutes the entry of Mughal words and cultural references into the Sanskrit sphere. Siddhicandra records that Akbar conferred the Persian appellation *khūshfahm* (Wiseman) on Nandivijaya and later on Siddhicandra himself for performing similar intellectual feats.[249] Such honors are distinctively Persian additions to the Sanskrit landscape of Siddhicandra's text. As I discuss in chapter 2, Siddhicandra studiously avoids admitting elements of the Persianate world, including language, into his account of life at the Mughal court. In this broader context, his two mentions of *khūshfahm* constitute some of the only inclusions of Persian in his entire oeuvre and attest to the weight of such terms within otherwise strictly Sanskrit circles. Siddhicandra also reiterates his title in his commentary on *Kādambarī*, and his teacher does likewise on behalf of his student in his commentary on *Vasantarājaśākuna*.[250]

Akbar also conferred at least one vernacular title on a Sanskrit intellectual, which further indicates the slippery lines between linguistic traditions emerging in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He granted Vijayasena the title of *savāī* (One and One-Quarter), a vernacular honorific later common in Rajput circles to mark those superior to any single man. Devavimala describes the occasion thus: "Shah [Akbar] gave the title *savāī* to the Moon of Sādhus, Vijayasena, just as he did 'Teacher of the World' to Hīra[vijaya] Sūri."[251] Here Devavimala juxtaposes Vijayasena's vernacular title with Hīravijaya's Sanskrit one, indicating that he viewed these as part of the same multilingual practice.

---

[249] On Nandivijaya's title, see *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.18 and *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.135. On Siddhi's title, see his *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.85.

[250] Siddhicandra and Bhānucandra use the same verse to name this title (Siddhi in *ṭīkā* of *Kādambarī*, 483, v. 5; Bhānu in *ṭīkā* of *Vasantarājaśākuna* 1, v. 9). Note that in both cases the verse is misprinted due to confusion over the Persian title; for correct printing see excerpts in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, Appendix 1, pp 58 and 53 respectively).

[251] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.294.

Last, Akbar meted out several formal Jain titles that changed the ranks of individuals within both the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas. This practice constituted a potent fusion of Persianate imperial power and Indian religious practices in the Mughal Empire. Earlier kings, including Indo-Persian rulers, had interfered with Jain succession practices to a limited degree.[252] Akbar takes up this earlier tradition with exceptional vigor, even as he often found it necessary to consult with Jain leaders and perform joint rituals to officially confirm the given raise in rank.

Within the Tapā Gaccha, Akbar awarded the Sanskrit status of *upādhyāya* (Instructor) to Bhānucandra, which launched an involved series of negotiations. Initially, Akbar attempted to title Bhānucandra on his own authority and failed. Siddhicandra relays this story, beginning with Akbar asking Bhānucandra one morning at court: "In your tradition (*sampradāye*) what is the most illustrious title for a person who possess all virtues, like my title of Universal Ruler (*sārvabhauma*)?"[253] Bhānucandra replied, "*ācārya* (Teacher) is predominant and then *upādhyāya*."[254] Akbar inquired which rank Bhānucandra held, and the answer was neither since such positions were accorded only by the leader of the Tapā Gaccha (Hīravijaya) who was currently far away.[255] Akbar initially appeared keen to circumvent Hīravijaya's authority if the Jains would permit it: "Having heard that response, the King of the Earth said over and over, very determinedly, 'Then let me bestow upon you the title *ācārya*'."[256] But Bhānucandra

---

[252] E.g., Balibhadra (Granoff, "Biographical Writings Amongst the Śvetāmbara Jains in Northwestern India," 144 n. 20). John Cort also discusses royal involvement in internal Jain issues ("Who is a King?" 89-91).

[253] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.172. To date, I am unclear regarding whether *sārvabhauma* refers to a particular Persian title. Writing in the seventeenth century, Veṇīdatta glosses "dillīpati" as "sārvabhauma" (*Pañcatattvaprakāśa*, fol 1b, v. 18).

[254] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.173a. Abū al-Faẓl also explains this hierarchy in his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (Aligarh ed., 476).

[255] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.173b-75.

[256] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.176.

steadfastly refused to accept this honor without Hīravijaya's approval, and Akbar closed the discussion for the moment, being more impressed than ever with the monk's virtue.[257]

After an unspecified period of time, Abū al-Faẓl largely took over as negotiator on behalf of the king and orchestrated the successful titling of Bhānucandra through a melding of Mughal and Jain authority.[258] He began with an unexplained desire to impart the lesser rank of *upādhyāya* on the Jaina teacher and effectively prevailed upon Akbar to authorize this shift. Here the Mughals conceded, albeit silently, some limits to their power in the Jain realm by following the standard promotion through the Tapā Gaccha hierarchy. At first, Abū al-Faẓl attempted this advancement on Akbar's authority alone. He announced the royal decision to the Jain community, at which point a Jain leader again brought to the attention of the Mughals that the proper custom was to only accept titles affirmed by the Tapā Gaccha leader. Abū al-Faẓl took the objection well and penned a *farmān* on the matter to Hīravijaya Sūri. Hīravijaya promptly sent a letter granting permission and the appropriate physical accoutrements needed to assume the new position. Later, in chapter 4 of *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, Siddhicandra describes the consecration ceremony performed for Bhānucandra's ascension to *upādhyāya* and crucially notes that Hīravijaya himself instituted the new rank. It seems that this ceremony occurred some time after the original granting of the title, but it followed the same pattern as before in that Akbar initiated the ceremony but Hīravijaya had to come to perform the actual ritual.[259] Thus, the Mughals carved out a striking measure of authority for themselves within the Tapā Gaccha, but also shared their power with the sect's traditional leadership.

---

[257] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.177-78.

[258] Throughout this paragraph I am closely paraphrasing *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.179-86.

[259] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.48-67.

Akbar also granted formal ranks to Kharatara leaders in similar circumstances. Most importantly, in 1593, Akbar named Jinasiṃha *ācārya* and Jinacandra *yugapradhāna* (Primary Man of the Age). Neither of these titles involved the drawn out negotiations that surrounded Bhānucandra's raise in status (at least so far as we know), but they abided by the same model of requiring validation and the proper ceremonies from the Kharatara community.[260] Akbar was careful to obtain authorization to raise Jinasiṃha's rank from Jinacandra, the current head of the Kharatara Gaccha.[261] Later, he received consent for both titles from Karmacandra, a lay Kharatara and politician during Akbar's reign. It is unclear why Karmacandra's approval in particular was obligatory, but the appeal to the Jain community accords with Akbar's experiences with the Tapā Gaccha. Akbar did not alter Jinacandra's rank since he was already the head of the Kharatara Gaccha, but *yugapradhāna* was a further signifier of his position that is later lauded in Kharatara religious lineages (*paṭṭāvalī*s).[262] Akbar further requested Karmacandra to orchestrate the appropriate Jain rites to celebrate both Jinacandra and Jinasiṃha's new titles, which he gladly did.[263] In these ways Akbar deeply involved himself in Jain religious hierarchies and found Sanskrit intellectuals willing to assist him in uniting political, cultural, and religious forms of power through new social practices.

Jahangir succeeded Akbar in issuing honorary titles to Sanskrit figures as well as promoting individuals to official Jain ranks. For example, Jahangir reportedly gave Guṇavinaya the informal appellation *kavirāja* (King of Poets).[264] Additionally, he granted at least one formal

---

[260] See description in *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* vv. 426-64.

[261] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* vv. 431-32.

[262] *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:37.

[263] At the same time as these two titlings, a series of lesser but still formal titles were also given to other members of the Kharatara Gaccha but not by Akbar it seems (*Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* vv. 465-67).

[264] Marshall, *Mughals in India*, 1:#553; I am not entirely confident of Marshall's source for this attestation.

Jain title to Jinasiṃha, who had earlier been fashioned *ācārya* by Akbar. Jahangir promoted him to *yugapradhāna* when he became the head of the Kharatara Gaccha, thus providing him with the same Mughal-sanctioned status marker as his predecessor.[265]

Jahangir also developed a particular interest in titles that included his name and distributed at least two of this sort. First, he named Vijayadeva Sūri, Vijayasena's successor as head of the Tapā Gaccha, *jahāṅgīramahātapā* (Jahangir's Very Pious) after hearing his views on the benefits of austerities.[266] In part this title seems designed to cleverly play on the title of *tapā* given to Jagaccandra centuries earlier that eventually became the namesake of his entire community. As Vijayadeva's biographer reports, "[Jahangir] said, 'Before you always held the title of Ascetic (*tapā*). Therefore you are always to be known by me as Jahangir's Great Ascetic (*jahāṅgīramahātapā*)'."[267] Second, Jahangir bestowed on Siddhicandra two further titles, both Persian: *nadīrah-i zamān* (Wonder of the Age) and *jahāngīr-pasand* (Favorite of Jahangir).[268] Siddhicandra claims these appellations in Sanskrit commentaries that he authored on various texts, curiously avoiding them in his account of Jains at the Mughal court. The only Mughal precedent for titles involving the king's name is Akbarīya Kālidāsa who I mentioned above as composing praise verses for Akbar. While we lack any account of how Akbarīya Kālidāsa received his intriguing name (Akbar's Kālidāsa), Jahangir clearly had a penchant for projecting his specific authority within the Sanskrit sphere through titles.

---

[265] Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 121.

[266] *Vijayadevamāhātmya*, chapter 17.

[267] *Vijayadevamāhātmya* 17.32; also see 17.42 where the title is given as *pātiśāhi-jahāṅgīra-mahātapā*. The title is listed simply as *mahātapā* in Meghavijaya's *Devānandamahākāvya* (2.127).

[268] Siddhicandra claims these titles in his *Anekārthopasargavṛtti* and *Jinaśatakaṭīkā* (Desai's introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 65).

Shah Jahan continued cross-cultural titling practices even as Mughal interests increasingly shifted from cosmopolitan to vernacular Indian cultures. He crafted titles for both of the major Sanskrit intellectuals to grace his court: Kavīndrācārya and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja. Shah Jahan named Kavīndra *sarvavidyānidhāna* (Treasure House of All Knowledge) in recognition of his extensive learning.[269] Shah Jahan also fashioned Jagannātha *paṇḍitarāja* (King of the Learned), the name by which he is often known today. At the conclusion of his *Āsaphavilāsa*, Jagannātha himself claims: "This narrative has been composed by Learned Jagannātha... who was illuminated by the title 'King of the Learned' obtained by the grace of glorious World Ruler Shah Jahan."[270] In addition to *paṇḍitarāja*, Jagannātha also secured the titles *kavirāy* and *mahākavirāy* in his capacity as a vernacular singer in the Mughal court, as I mention above. Allison Busch has noted several other instances of Mughal emperors beginning with Akbar bestowing similar honors on vernacular poets and intellectuals.[271] These cases are likely deeply linked to the Mughal-Sanskrit connections I have outlined here, but sketching out a broader history of Mughal titling practices awaits further study.

Indeed many other relevant practices must be incorporated in order to properly understand multilingual titling practices in early modern India. In addition to vernacular intellectuals, the Mughal emperors also granted titles to political figures such as Birbal, Man Singh, and Ramdas Kachhwaha.[272] They also exercised their authority in religious realms beyond Jain communities and certified the leaders of particular Vaishnava temples in

---

[269] Sarma and Patkar, introduction to *Kavīndracandrodaya*, iv.

[270] *Āsaphavilāsa*, 96. In manuscripts Jagannātha's title is sometimes given in a slightly vernacularized form as *paṇḍitarāya* (e.g., the title is given in both forms in ms. Pune BORI 732.iii of 1886-92, fol. 23b).

[271] For example Akbar gave Birbal the title *kavirāy* (Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 276). In the same article, Busch also notes several other instances of titling.

[272] On Ramdas Kachhwaha see Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 39 n. 54.

Brindavan and Mathura.[273] Beyond the royal court, Sanskrit literati received appellations from subimperial and Deccani figures.[274] In a reversal of standard patterns of authority, Ibrahim ʻAdil Shah II even received the title *jagadguru* from his subjects.[275] It remains unclear how these practices were related to one another. Regardless, the Mughal emperors imagined themselves dispensing titles to Sanskrit literati in a multilingual context, drawing actively from Sanskrit, Persian, and vernacular traditions. In the process, Mughal patrons and Sanskrit recipients together negotiated different configurations of spiritual and imperial authority made possible at the intersection points of cultural spheres.[276]

Conclusion: Multicultural Mughals

Sanskrit intellectuals and Mughal imperial figures developed a wide range of cross-cultural associations and activities centered in the courtly milieu. Both Brahmans and Jains began attending the Mughal court in the 1560s and performed various functions as musicians, religious guides, literati, translators, and astrologers. Many also pursued political ambitions on behalf of themselves, subsidiary rulers, and specific communities. In addition to serving the court, Sanskrit intellectuals also composed numerous texts that claim either to have been produced under Mughal patronage or project their intended consumption into that imperial locale. Sanskrit encomia articulate different but complementary claims that Sanskrit was an active, dynamic part of Mughal court life. Last, Mughal kings and Sanskrit intellectuals jointly

---

[273] Chatterjee, "Cultural Flows and Cosmopolitanism," 155-56.

[274] In the seventeenth century, Hussain Khan gave the title *kaṇṭhābharaṇa* (Garland or Necklace) to an author who composed a poem in mixed Sanskrit and Prakrit (Chakravarti, "Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning," 181-82). Man Singh is reported to have bestowed the title of *kavicandra* (Moon of Poets) on Viśvanātha and later sent him to Akbar's court, although the sources for this information are unclear (Mohanty, *Colonialism and South Asia*, 155).

[275] Gode, forward to *Kitab-i Nauras*, 6.

[276] Stewart Gordon also emphasizes the agency of both givers and receivers in his discussion of *khilʻat* practices (introduction to *Robes of Honour*).

fashioned a series of titling practices. Particularly this last form of cultural interaction is perhaps best conceptualized as neither Mughal nor Sanskrit, but unfolding precisely at the place where the two cultural traditions merged to form a shared multilingual and multicultural sphere.

Sanskrit intellectuals exited the Mughal court at different times, and here we need to consider different religious communities on their own terms. Jain literati found it difficult to negotiate their religious values with imperial expectations under Jahangir and had left the court by the end of his reign. In contrast, Brahmans did not cease relations with the imperial center but rather shifted during Shah Jahan's rule from operating primarily within the Sanskrit thought world to identifying with vernacular culture, at least from the Mughal perspective. During their tenure in the Mughal milieu, Jains and Brahmans also exhibited a number of disparate interests that illustrate their specific motivations in pursuing overlapping cross-cultural engagements. Jains most frequently acted on their own accounts or as representatives of their religious communities whereas Brahmans often approached the court on behalf of other patrons (Kavīndrācārya being a serious exception). Brahmans also generally preferred not to comment overtly on their time in a Persianate court, and as a result we lack their perspectives on many of these cross-cultural ties. In a notable exception, at least two Mughal-affiliated Brahman literati tried to make sense of their changing world by constructing an intellectual account of Persianate culture using the tools of Sanskrit grammar and lexicography. Jains devised their own literary methods of working through the implications of their encounters with the imperial Mughal world, to which I turn in the following chapter.

The social and textual practices that I detail here are far more extensive than scholars have previously recognized and significantly complicate the dominant scholarly view of a

Persianate Mughal court. There is no doubt that Persian was the official language of the Mughals from the 1580s onwards, but the evidence presented above raises the question with new seriousness: Was Persian the only language of culture and empire under the Mughals? I do not wish to suggest that Sanskrit ever rivaled Persian in Mughal circles, but the two languages and cultures undeniably coexisted and interacted in vibrant ways. My analysis shows that Mughal involvement in the Sanskrit sphere permeated the top levels of courtly life, and the emperors themselves actively participated in cross-cultural literary and social activities. Given this, it may be unhelpful and inaccurate to continue conceptualizing the Mughal court as a space dominated by Persian and in which all other languages were outliers. The Jain texts that I explore in the next chapter further confirm our need to rethink Mughal historiography by offering hitherto unexplored perspectives on the multicultural landscape of the central court.

Chapter 2: Jain Accounts of the Mughal Court

Jains from western India recorded their experiences at the courts of Akbar and Jahangir in a series of Sanskrit biographical works. Scholars have long acclaimed the more well known of these texts as unparalleled resources for Mughal history, particularly regarding events that tend to be elided in Persian sources.[1] I concur that Jain materials have much to contribute to our Persian-centered narrative of the Mughal Empire, and several episodes that I analyze below have indeed been left out of contemporary chronicles in early modern India. However, in addition to filling gaps in our historiography, these Jain accounts of life at the Mughal court attest to crucial moments of cultural innovation within the Sanskrit literary tradition. In these texts, authors transform what already existed as a phenomenal reality, namely Jain-Mughal relations, into literature and thereby address a range of issues concerning how to conceptualize and represent their cross-cultural practices. Jain intellectuals develop multiple, often conflicting perspectives on the meeting of Mughal India's dual cosmopolitan traditions, Sanskrit and Persian, in the center of an empire. In their reflections, Jain authors not only document the interactions that occurred, but also offer accompanying commentaries on the cultural and political implications of these exchanges for their Sanskrit participants.

Historical Background and Nature of the Materials

Jain accounts of interactions with the Mughals emerge from two communities: the Tapā Gaccha and the Kharatara Gaccha. These competing traditions both identify themselves as Śvetāmbara Jains and were based in western India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The two groups became interested in the Mughal court at the same historical moment: when Akbar conquered Gujarat and instituted direct administrative control over much of the region

---

[1] Jinavijayamuni, preface to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, vi-vii. Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 75; Choudhury, *Critical Exposition of Siddhicandragaṇi's Kāvyaprakāśakhaṇḍana*, 48-49.

in 1572-73.[2] Shortly thereafter, Tapā and Kharatara representatives began to lobby the Mughal crown for *farmān*s that ensured tax cuts, land grants, the right to worship freely, permission to build new temples, and other political concessions. But what began as a profitable enterprise to curry favor with the new ruling power quickly grew into a much fuller series of exchanges between cultural formations. Jain and Mughal figures collaboratively pursued initiatives that brought the Sanskrit and Persianate spheres into dialogue in dynamic, largely unprecedented ways. They engaged in religious debates, shared texts and ideas, forged titling practices across linguistic boundaries, and crafted joint religious rites. Many of these activities continued into the first half of Jahangir's reign (1605-27) until the Jains largely fell out of imperial favor in the later 1610s.[3]

Members of both communities described Jain experiences at court within a variety of textual genres.[4] The works often date to slightly later than the actual interactions, and authors continued to write about such events well into the later half of the seventeenth century, long after substantial Jain-Mughal relations had ceased. The accounts differ from one another significantly in form and content, but most place power and culture at the forefront of their concerns. Partly, this emphasis arose from the conceptual framework of Sanskrit literature, which had long privileged authority and representations of power among its chief interests.[5] Additionally, Jains frequently promoted political aims through texts and had written about

---

[2] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 32-33.

[3] See chapter 1; Findly also details the Jains' fall from imperial favor ("Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence," 253-55).

[4] For an analysis of how historical writing had become fluid across various genres by this time in Indic writing see Ali, "Indian Historical Writing," 4-7.

[5] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, particularly chapters 3 and 4.

their relations with Islamicate polities in particular since at least the twelfth century C.E.[6] In relation to these intertwined legacies, early modern Jain authors largely followed in the footsteps of their predecessors in detailing encounters with the Mughals in a Sanskrit medium. But, in contrast to their contemporaries in the Sanskrit intellectual sphere, the Jains were startlingly innovative in transferring their experiences in the imperial milieu to writing at all.

The Jain narratives of interactions with Mughal figures are framed by a strong reticence to produce any comparable records on the part of other Sanskrit participants, most notably Brahmans, involved in similar cross-cultural exchanges. Persianate figures explored their engagements with the Sanskrit sphere in a variety of texts (see chapters 3 and 4). Thus, even if these works are marked by their own silences, we can access many of their perspectives. But the overwhelming majority of Sanskrit intellectuals who frequented the Mughal court did not write directly about their experiences in any meaningful way. Brahmans outside of the imperial milieu investigated the Mughal world in Sanskrit in numerous other ways, as I discuss in my conclusion. But, despite far outnumbering Jains as recipients of Mughal patronage, Brahmans overwhelmingly decided that extended reflections such matters could not be brought into the Sanskrit literary tradition. Thus, we have dozens of Brahmanical works that bear the Persian names of their Mughal patrons but otherwise offer no trace of the culturally charged environment of their composition. The Brahmanical silence is deafening in its declaration that while Sanskrit intellectuals could participate in the imperial Persianate sphere, they could not allow such interactions to permeate their literary world. The nature of this conviction prohibited Brahmans from ever elaborating its logic in writing. But Jain-

---

[6] For the political nature of a range of Jain materials see Granoff, "Politics of Religious Biography." Concerning Islamicate polities, Jains composed *prabandha*s that discuss the Khalji and Tughluq dynasties (respectively, Sreenivasan, *Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 26 and Granoff, "Jinaprabhasūri and Jinadattasūri").

authored texts testify to a plethora of alternative possibilities that were explored by other Sanskrit participants in such events.

Here I rely primarily on five in-depth accounts of Jain-Mughal relations composed in the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. In addition, a few religious lineages (*paṭṭāvalī*s) and inscriptions contain useful but briefer mentions of Jain contact with the imperial court.[7] This group of Jain works differs in two substantial ways from the larger body of Sanskrit texts produced in connection with the royal milieu that I discuss in chapter 1. First, the Jain materials focus decidedly on Jain-Mughal interactions, at least for substantial portions of each work. Second, none of these texts were patronized by the Mughal court or intended for consumption in Persianate circles.[8] Rather, these accounts were all directed primarily towards sectarian Jain audiences.[9]

The five texts under consideration here are each devoted to the life of one prominent ascetic or lay leader and fall into the genre of either *mahākāvya* (great poem) or *prabandha* (narrative literature). Three biographies feature the successive leaders of the Tapā Gaccha from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries: two biographies of Hīravijaya and one of Vijayasena.[10] In addition, a work putatively dedicated to Bhānucandra, a prominent

---

[7] Most useful are Dharmasāgara's *Tapāgacchapaṭṭāvalī* and the *Ādīśvara* inscription, respectively (the latter is given in *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:#12). Granoff divides sectarian (*paṭṭāvalī*/*gurvāvalī*) and non-sectarian (*prabandha*) biographies rather strictly, but the *prabandha* materials under consideration here appear to be largely sectarian ("Biographies of Siddhasena," 331).

[8] Dundas effectively dispels the surprisingly resilient myth that *Hīrasaubhāgya* was intended for consumption at the Mughal court (*History, Scripture and Controversy*, 60-61).

[9] A few texts from the later half of the seventeenth century also address relations with the Mughals, but I mostly exclude them from consideration here because of their later dates and often-briefer analyses. Most notably, I do not consider *Vijayadevamāhātmya*, a biography of Vijayadeva, composed in 1652/3. I also largely leave aside Meghavijaya's late seventeenth-century *Digvijayamahākāvya* that contains a briefer treatment of the Mughals (pp 30-31) and his *Devānandamahākāvya*.

[10] *Jagadgurukāvya* and *Hīrasaubhāgya* detail Hīravijaya's life, and *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* is devoted to Vijayasena. Hīravijaya was the *paṭṭadhara* from 1544-96 (Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 53); Vijayasena succeeded him and died in 1615 (Commissariat, *History of Gujarat*, 2:263 n. 22).

Tapā Gaccha monk active during the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, deals with Jain-Mughal interactions more broadly.[11] Last, an account of Karmacandra, a lay Kharatara and politician during Akbar's reign, represents the Kharatara side of the exchanges.[12] These works range in length from a few hundred verses to multiple volumes that rival the longest of Sanskrit *mahākāvya*s, and their foci also vary greatly from nestling episodes set at the imperial court within a much fuller life narrative to centering upon Jain-Mughal interactions virtually exclusively. Certainly, an entire book and more deserves to be devoted to this rich body of materials as well as complementary narratives in vernacular languages.[13] However, my purposes here are more narrowly devised both linguistically and conceptually, and so I will concentrate on the points in these Sanskrit texts where the authors probe a set of shared concerns: namely Jain-Mughal encounters.

In order to capture Jain perspectives on their courtly activities I will proceed thematically. First I investigate how the authors depict the culture of the Mughal court and then turn to how they characterize members of their community within that imperial space. In both cases, the issue of representation was key to Jain intellectuals, sometimes irrespective of empirical truth, because of the power of texts to shape both memory and future realities. In this regard, the Jains and Mughals thought more alike than either fully cognized. Akbar carefully cultivated his identity through texts, images, architecture, and other imperial practices in order to bring into being a certain type of Indo-Persian polity. As a result, he was

---

[11] I.e., Siddhicandra's *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*.

[12] Jayasoma's *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha*. Vallabha Pāṭhaka's *Vijayadevamāhātmya*, which deals extensively with the Mughals, was also written by a Kharatara, although the work features a Tapā Gaccha leader.

[13] Many *prabandha*s that touch upon interactions with the Mughal court were composed in Gujarati (see references in Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* and Mehta, "Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat").

quite successful in building a stable political system that was grounded not only in military subjugation but also in well-articulated modes of Persianate culture and authority. Jain writers lacked the political means of the Mughal king, but they intuited the vitality of representation all the same and articulated innovative possibilities in Sanskrit literature for how to live in the Mughal Empire. Their written visions demonstrate a wide range of conceptual models that were open to Sanskrit thinkers in terms of how to engage with the imperial and literary worlds of their time. Certainly much of what they say is historical fact that has been omitted from the Persian record and hence most modern historiography on Mughal India. But I am more interested here in understanding how these texts develop a Sanskrit historical consciousness in response to the linked rise of Mughal power and Persianate culture in early modern India.[14] The authors offer no unanimous verdict, but rather exhibit a series of options for making sense of and thereby reformulating the nature, meanings, and implications of Jain-Mughal encounters.

Representing Mughal Culture in Sanskrit

In their retellings of cross-cultural interactions, Jain intellectuals faced multiple concerns regarding how to portray their Mughal, Muslim interlocutors in the literary tongue of classical India. While Sanskrit literati mentioned Muslims in inscriptions beginning in the eighth century and started to posit them as major figures in full-length texts as early as the late twelfth century, nearly all authors showed a decided predilection for eliding overt religious references.[15] Accordingly, Islam was rarely described at all in Sanskrit literature, and

---

[14] Trying to understand a different form of historical consciousness can often be a more fruitful analytical approach rather than attempting to parse out historical truth according to modern standards (Pollock, "Pretextures of Time," 377-78).

[15] One of the earliest full-scale texts to prominently feature Muslims is *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*, perhaps composed in the 1190s (Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, 43-44). Van der Kuijp explores a potential early exception to the

authors generally refer to Muslims using ethnic rather than theological terms.[16] Philosophers likewise overwhelmingly declined to admit Islam into Sanskrit discourse as a viable tradition. Persianate culture fared little better as writers preferred to replace Persian conceptions of kingship with time-honored Sanskrit versions and to retain untranslatable terms, such as Sultan and *farmān*, only in "Sanskritized" versions (*sūtratrāṇa*/*sūratrāṇa* and *sphuramāna*, respectively).[17] Thus, depicting the Mughals in Sanskrit was no light undertaking, and Jain authors developed creative, innovative approaches to their taboo task.

Three central themes allow me to pointedly interrogate Jain images of the Mughals: military conquest, court culture, and religious practices. In terms of conquest, the authors all wrote within a firmly established Mughal Empire but generally reference military feats briefly and formulaically or not at all. Here I explore one deviation from that tendency where Padmasāgara describes early Mughal victories in vivid detail and credits the empire's military strength with stimulating Indian cultural efflorescence. Moreover, Padmasāgara's vision compels him to rework the history of Mughal conquests and offer a strategically revised redaction of the recent past. Multiple Jain authors address Mughal court life in some depth, and here I analyze disparate depictions of cultural and religious knowledge among the imperial elite. Two authors in particular reveal starkly opposing views regarding how to appropriately delineate the Mughals' cultural framework in Sanskrit. Last, portrayals of religious practices at court illustrate an environment that revels in cross-cultural contacts. No Jain authors that I have found recount any explicitly Islamic practices, but several detail the

---

general tendency to not discuss religious markers of Islam in Sanskrit ("Earliest Indian Reference to Muslims," 169-202).

[16] Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, 28-43.

[17] In their Sanskrit incarnations, these Persian words both retain their original reference (a particularly type of king and his accompanying royal decree, respectively), but are also endowed with a new Sanskrit meaning (thread-bearer and something that goes forth).

emperors participating in Jain and pseudo-Brahmanical religious rites that are rooted in the Sanskrit tradition but significantly altered in their Mughal environs. Here we glimpse an alternative picture of Mughal culture that questions the primacy of Persian and Islam.

Rewriting the Mughal Conquest in Padmasāgara's *Jagadgurukāvya*

Under Akbar, the Mughal Empire expanded exponentially through a series of military victories, and Persianate and Islamicate cultural influences rose in step on the subcontinent. Many Tapā and Kharatara Jains found themselves literally engulfed in Mughal India from 1573 onwards, when Akbar gained control over Gujarat. Most Jain authors who address encounters with the Mughal court mention Akbar's conquest of Gujarat, their homeland. Yet, they tend to cite this feat and perhaps a few others cursorily within routine praise of the king.[18] Only one writer of those analyzed here dwells on Mughal military successes for more than a few lines: Padmasāgara. In contrast to his contemporaries, Padmasāgara describes at length the establishment of the Mughal Empire and several subsequent expansions of its boundaries. Moreover, he consistently ties the coerced, bloody establishment of Mughal rule to the flourishing of Indian cultural and religious traditions. This link between political and cultural success was so crucial in Padmasāgara's view that he even rewrites early Mughal history in order to strengthen his picture of a prosperous, diverse India.

Padmasāgara composed his *Jagadgurukāvya* (*Poem on the Teacher of the World*) in 1589 as a biography of Hīravijaya Sūri, the Tapā Gaccha leader at the time. The text is the shortest of the Jain accounts of the Mughal court, numbering 233 verses, and the earliest by at least a decade.[19] The work focuses on Hīravijaya's life and the establishment of the Mughal Empire in

---

[18] E.g., *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.64; also see *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* v. 3.

[19] Padmasāgara gives the date of composition in his colophon (*Jagadgurukāvya*, pp 34); he expresses his desire to write an account "in memory of Hīra[vijaya]" (*hīrāhvasmṛti*) in the first verse of the text.

near equal proportions. Padmasāgara begins with Hīravijaya's birth and in the first forty verses quickly speeds through the events of his childhood, turn towards an ascetic Jain lifestyle, and rise to religious leadership as the head of the Tapā Gaccha.[20] The author then shifts to the Mughal conquest of India, using the fame of Hīravijaya Sūri as his transition.

> One time, Hīravijaya Sūri, ornamented by a multitude of ascetics,
> stayed in the city of Gandhara for the duration of the rainy season.
> I will narrate all this: how the king of Delhi heard about him, and he was called
> and received by good people devoted to non-violence towards all life.[21]

Padmasāgara eventually relays the story of how Akbar was so impressed by Hīravijaya's reputation that he summoned the sage from Gandhara to Fatehpur Sikri, where their initial meeting took place in 1582. This event is recorded in several other Sanskrit texts as well, and Hīravijaya is also mentioned in Akbar's official court history.[22] But rather than immediately tell how this critical encounter unfolded, Padmasāgara first digresses from his named protagonist at length in order to explain how the Mughals came to control much of northern and central India. According to Padmasāgara, the first two Mughal kings, Humayun and Akbar, dominated the subcontinent through a quick succession of brutal, but soundly victorious battles.

Before delving into Padmasāgara's version of Mughal military history, a glance at contemporaneous Persian historiography will help to contextualize Padmasāgara's project and point up its radical nature. The basic trajectory of the early Mughals is well known from a variety of sources. Coming from Central Asia, Babur established the Mughal Empire in India in 1526, and his son, Humayun, ascended the throne in 1530. Humayun lost all Mughal holdings in India in 1540 and was exiled by Sher Shah Suri, an Afghan rival whose descendents ruled from

---

[20] On the rank of *sūri* see Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 13-14.

[21] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 40.

[22] Abū al-Faẓl lists Hīravijaya as one of the learned men of the age (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 218; Calcutta ed., 1:233).

Delhi for fifteen years. In 1555 Humayun reclaimed Delhi, but his death a short year later left the newly reestablished kingdom in the hands of his teenage son, Akbar. With the help of advisors and generals, Akbar solidified Mughal control over strategic areas during the 1550s and 1560s and took Gujarat in 1572-73, which gave the Mughals access to western India's bustling industries.

This sequence of events was very much alive in Indian historical memory when Padmasāgara wrote his *Jagadgurukāvya* in 1589, a mere sixty-three years after the initial establishment of a Mughal presence in Delhi. Mughal politics and battles were often common bazaar talk in early modern South Asia, and many texts written within a decade or two of Padmasāgara's work document the empire's martial history.[23] Nevertheless, Padmasāgara admits none of the shifts and setbacks actually experienced by the early Mughals but instead envisions a smooth, swift triumph that ushered in an Indian cultural renaissance.

Padmasāgara opens by describing the Mughals as an Indian dynasty, even before they enter the subcontinent. In reality, the Mughals claimed ancestry from Chingis Khan, a thirteenth century Mongol emperor, and Timur, a late fourteenth century Turkish ruler. For Padmasāgara the Mughals may have originated in central and western Asia, but that land was included within the geography and culture of India:

> In the glorious land of India (*bhārata*)—where more than twenty-five
> lands exist that have been graced by incarnations of the best of men such as
> the great, illustrious Jina and Viṣṇu—the wonderful middle region contains
> shining palaces, idols, great libraries, and is inhabited by worthy people.
> Here lies a great city called Kabul, near the good land of Khurasan,
> that is filled with kings and known as the dwelling place of heroes.

[23] Richards points out that the public avidly followed Mughal succession struggles (*Mughal Empire*, 162). Contemporary narratives from European travelers also attest that Mughal events were frequent topics of conversation.

> In Kabul, a hundred thousand Mughals, their power unbroken and a terror to demonic Hindus (*hindvāsuratrāsakaṃ*), feast with great pleasure upon hundreds of delicacies at will.[24]

Thus, the Mughals hailed from Kabul, which is itself in the heartland (*madhyadeśa*) of India and home to temples, incarnations, and idols. This description is unconventional in comparison to both contemporary Sanskrit and Mughal conceptions of "India." While there were Hindu villages and rest houses in connection with merchants further north than Kabul during this period, Sanskrit authors from Akbar's time generally imagined Kabul and Khurasan as outside of *bhārata* and part of a culturally distinct land, often characterized by exotic fruits and horses.[25] Persianate historians likewise conceived of Kabul and surrounding areas as a homeland that the Mughals left in order to conquer *hindūstān*, which literally means "land of the Indians" in Persian and was by definition a foreign place.[26] Padmasāgara erases this history of migration by portraying the Mughals as physically and culturally within India from the beginning.

While projecting the Mughals as Indian, Padmasāgara nonetheless posits a strong dichotomy in this verse between the Mughals and "demonic Hindus," which requires some explanation to properly understand. *Hindū* is an originally Perso-Arabic word that commonly referred to people from a particular area or civilization in early modern usages rather than a religious group.[27] The term first entered Sanskrit in the mid-fourteenth century in a curious

---

[24] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 41-42.

[25] E.g., *Kṛpārasakośa* of Śānticandra vv. 8-17. On Hindus in central and western Asia, see Alam, "Trade, State Policy and Regional Change," 203-5 and 211-12.

[26] Babur sets the tone for understanding India and Central Asia as discrete places in his memoir, which is divided according to place and quite explicitly frames the first Mughal king as a foreign conqueror of Hindustan (Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 149 and chapter 6). On how their ancestral lands played vividly in the minds of Mughal rulers through Shah Jahan see Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, chapter 7. Akbar retook Kabul in 1585, but it remained a frontier rather than the center of Mughal India (see Faruqui, "Forgotten Prince," 487-523).

[27] Ernst discusses the nuances of *hindū* in Perso-Islamicate conceptions of Indian religions in *Eternal Garden*, 22-29.

title claimed by the Vijayanagara kings: "Sultan among Hindu Kings" (*hindūrāyasuratrāṇa*).[28] Scholars have persuasively argued that the Vijayanagara rulers invoked this appellation to signal their participation in an Islamicate culture of rulership in contrast to merely Indic kings.[29] Padmasāgara follows in this tradition of employing *hindū* to indicate a particular type of Indian kingship, as opposed to Mughal imperial norms, and later in his text specifically narrows "demonic Hindus" to Rajput rulers in central and western India.[30]

After introducing the Mughals as the preferable alternative to Rajputs, Padmasāgara tells how Humayun set out from Kabul to establish the geographic contours of his empire. He begins with the acquisition of Delhi:

> One time, [Humayun] placed the burden of kingship on his eight-year old son Akbar, whose ascension was undisputed, and went to conquer land up to the ocean with an army that was itself an ocean of utter destruction.
> First he approached the city of Delhi, whose impenetrable borders were lined with soldiers and which was home to wealthy men.[31]

The subsequent verses feature a clash between Humayun and an unnamed "Sur king."[32] Padmasāgara recounts the battle in meticulous detail, including the numbers of troops, wings of the army, and military strategies. He mixes such historical information with literary tropes that make for beautiful, informative poetry, such as at the opening of the Humayun-Sur clash:

---

[28] Talbot, "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self," 700; Wagoner, "Sultan among Hindu Kings," 861-62.

[29] Wagoner, "Sultan among Hindu Kings." Talbot concurs with this interpretation ("Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self," 700-1). Cf. to some more religiously twinged fourteenth-seventeenth century uses of *hindū* in Indo-Persian (Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 25-26).

[30] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 87 (*hindvāsurakṣmāpānāṃ*). Dundas also draws attention to this passage in "Jain Perceptions of Islam," 36. Note that while Padmasāgara condemns Rajput kings as militarily and morally inferior to the Mughals, his characterization of them as "demons" (*āsura*) appears to stand apart from this criticism. Elsewhere, he praises Humayun as "a demonic incarnation among enemies" (*daityāvatāro 'riṣu*; *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 43). Thus, the descriptor "demonic" may simply mark both groups as non-Jain (particularly to a Jain readership) or perhaps is used to highlight their formidable military might.

[31] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 44. The comment on Akbar's ascension being assured likely references the earlier capture of Akbar by Mirza Kamran and Humayun's subsequent rescuing of the prince (*Taẕkirat al-vāghi'āt*, 138-41 in English and 164-67 in Persian).

[32] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 45-58.

> When he saw the Lord of the Earth come to the battlefield, King Humayun ordered two thousand heroes into battle. Thinking to himself, "how can two or three sparks not turn to ash many bundles of grass?" he stood ready with a detachment of his own troops. He caused those nine lakh of incomparable soldiers to become engulfed in confusion and overwhelmed by scores of warriors who were releasing arrows like heavy clouds pouring forth rain. How can two or three proud lion cubs not ward off the pride of crores of elephants, and how can two or three drops of immortal nectar not banish a tough, incurable disease?[33]

Next, the Sur King joined his troops briefly before he and Humayun faced one another like the Sun and Rahu on earth. Soon the Mughals routed their opponents, and Humayun triumphantly seized Delhi and its treasury.

While Padmasāgara's narration of the Humayun-Sur battle remains historically grounded insofar as Humayun did fight a Sur ruler in order to (re)gain Delhi, he nonetheless alters several features of the conflict to create an event that is difficult to square with contemporary Persian accounts. Most glaringly, Padmasāgara identifies Akbar as eight years old when Humayun marched to Delhi, which dates this campaign to 1550-51. But multiple Persian sources attest that Humayun was fully occupied during this time with intra-family skirmishes around Kabul.[34] Humayun only definitively wrested Kabul from his half-brother Kamran in 1553 and did not find an opportunity to reenter India until the death of Islam Shah Suri in 1554. We might excuse Padmasāgara as merely confusing Akbar's age at the beginning of the journey to Delhi, but he correctly states it when the royal prince assumes the throne.[35] Moreover, Padmasāgara provides several further indications that his intention was to elide completely the temporary forfeiture of Mughal India to the Sur dynasty.

---

[33] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 51-52.

[34] Ray and Beg, *Bairam Khan*, 98-101. Akbar was born in mid-October, 1542.

[35] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 82.

Padmasāgara muddles the identity of Humayun's opponent in this conflict to transform what was actually a defeat for the Mughal king into a victory. There were as many as seven Sur rulers in their fifteen-year reign over parts of north India.[36] Padmasāgara does not name Humayun's foe beyond "Sur" but does specify that this ruler defeated Maldeo of Jodhpur, a feat that Persian sources attribute to Sher Shah Suri in 1543.[37] Sher Shah died in 1545, and Humayun retook Delhi in 1555 from a different Sur King altogether, Sikandar Sur.[38] In the Persian record, Humayun's only direct encounter with Sher Shah Suri was in 1540 when the latter usurped the Mughal throne. Mughal authors generally speak of this event quite openly and even treat Sher Shah, whom they call Sher Khan, with a measure of respect, as he was a former Mughal general and a strong adversary.[39] As Gulbadan Begum, Humayun's own sister, plainly states during her discussion of Humayun's retreat from Hindustan, "Finally, God's will was done. [Humayun's men] were caught off guard as Sher Khan poured down on them. The army was defeated."[40] But Padmasāgara turns a battle that ended in disgrace for Humayun into the foundational moment for Mughal rule from Delhi. Moreover, he omits all mention of this fifteen-year gap, as if the so-called Sur Interregnum never happened.

After this initial battle, Padmasāgara continues to rewrite history to further his vision of an uninterrupted beginning to Mughal power in India. He includes two further stories involving Humayun: his capture of Gujarat and Malwa from Bahadur Shah and his untimely

---

[36] Discrepancies in numbers arise depending on how one calculates the short and disputed tenures of some of the later Sur kings.

[37] Siddiqui, *Shershah Sur and His Dynasty*, 100-1; *Tārīkh-i Shīr Shāhī*, 654-57.

[38] *Taẕkirat al-vāghiʿāt*, 169-70 in English and 207-8 in Persian; *Tārīkh-i Humāyūn*, 93-94 in English and 117-18 in Persian.

[39] I am indebted to Catherine Asher for this observation, particularly with reference to *Akbarnāmah*.

[40] *Humāyūnnāmah*, 29 in English and 27 in Persian (Thackston's translation).

death. According to multiple Persian sources, the former event unfolded in 1535-36 and the latter in 1556 with Humayun's exile from Hindustan separating the two.[41] Padmasāgara's versions of these affairs match those of contemporary Persian sources in nearly every detail, including the precise geography of the Gujarat/Malwa expedition as the action moves from Chittor to fort Mandu to Champaner to Cambay.[42] He narrates Humayun's death with significant poetic embellishment of how "fate, thinking that [Humayun] was his match, cast him down," but nonetheless accurately captures the story that, for one reason or another, Humayun fell down the stairs.[43] But Padmasāgara portrays these two events as occurring in rapid succession after Humayun conquered Delhi for the first and only time.

Moreover, since the Humayun-Sur battle is presented as the initial Mughal conquest outside of Kabul, *Jagadgurukāvya* expunges Babur from the record altogether. Other Jains who wrote about the Mughal court frequently include Babur as a praiseworthy figure, particularly in the genealogies of subsequent kings.[44] But in choosing a later, indeed largely imagined point to begin Mughal rule in India, Padmasāgara condenses the trajectory of Mughal domination. According to *Jagadgurukāvya*'s internal dating of events based on Akbar's age, only four years (as opposed to the actual thirty) separated the Mughals' first and only conquest of Delhi from Akbar's enthronement. As we will see, Padmasāgara wanted a strong Mughal Empire for several reasons, and so he imagined it as such from the beginning.

Throughout his streamlining of Humayun's victory over India, Padmasāgara consistently emphasizes the link between forceful Mughal expansion and broad cultural

---

[41] For an overview of Humayun's conflict with Bahadur Shah see Hasan, *State and Locality*, 16-20.

[42] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 60-74. Compare to *Humāyūnnāmah*, 27-28 in English and 25-26 in Persian & *Taẕkirat al-vāghi'āt*, 75-78 in English and 81-84 in Persian.

[43] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 75.

[44] E.g., Śānticandra's *Kṛpārasakośa* vv. 18-20 and Padmasundara's *Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa* v. 2.

flourishing. For example, at the close of the Humayun-Sur clash, he praises Humayun for his ability to ensure freedom and wealth in the newly minted Mughal Empire:

> When the Sur King had been defeated, [Humayun] made the Sur warriors his own servants who, free from punishment and happy, remained in that land. Then he established a kingdom without fear where elephants, horses, oxen, camels, and men traveled on the road between Kabul and Delhi and millions of houses on tall mountains were adorned with heaps of pearls, gems, and gold.[45]

As Padmasāgara notes, the security of the Kabul-Delhi road was good for economic prosperity and individual travelers. Both were active concerns for the Gujarati Jain community, which had long been involved in trade and also sought to ensure safe travel for monks and those on religious pilgrimages.[46] Indeed, after he concludes his account of Mughal battles, Padmasāgara details Hīravijaya's journey from town to town along Mughal roads on his way to meet Akbar. More generally Padmasāgara asserts that Humayun also brought prosperity to Gujarat and Malwa upon their inclusion in the empire:

> Having established prosperity in the great lands of Gujarat, Malwa, etc., the Mughal ruler, abounding with a hundred virtuous qualities, returned to Delhi. He possessed the best kingdom, united, free of enemies, and happy; for when good fortune itself is watching, who does not obtain everything he desires?[47]

After Humayun passed away in Delhi, it fell to his son Akbar to fortify imperial control. Padmasāgara portrays Akbar as first matching and then far exceeding his father in terms of both military prowess and the associated benefits to Indian communities, particularly Hindus and Jains. First Padmasāgara devotes several verses to how the young king warded off the still threatening remnants of the Sur elite and proved his worth in battle.[48] During this period, Akbar acted largely under the direction of Bayram Khan, a vicegerent (*vakīl*) who commanded

---

[45] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 59.

[46] Sheikh, *Forging a Region*, particularly 139-43 and 153-54.

[47] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 74.

[48] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 77-83.

troops in the name of the adolescent ruler.[49] But Padmasāgara gives no indication of this split in power and portrays Akbar as a ruthless force on his own account:

> There, the king of the earth, even though only twelve years old, surrounded by the heroes of that army, came flying at the Sur's army like the star Canopus headed towards the ocean. Amazingly, he caused those warriors to wither from merely hearing a syllable of his name, and he established his own ocean of immortal nectar consisting of troops filled with the taste of victory.[50]

Soon, "Fragments of the Sur forces went to the house of the god of death, others to a mountain cave, some to the ocean, and more to the deep forest; none remained."[51]

Padmasāgara next relates how, having vanquished his foes, Akbar built the crown jewel of Mughal India's cultural-imperial map: Fatehpur Sikri. Fatehpur Sikri, a newly erected city built largely of red sandstone not far from Agra, served as the Mughals' capital 1571-85 and was part of Akbar's project to cultivate a new imperial identity.[52] For Padmasāgara, Fatehpur embodied the potent unity of Mughal strength and Indian cultural prosperity:

> When the king achieved total victory over that land, he established Fatehpur (*phattepura*), a beautiful name in the Mughals' language, just as Kṛṣṇa established the city of Dvarika full of large, beautiful palaces; for the establishment of a city in the place of victory is a royal prerogative. Victorious Padshah Akbar rules in Fatehpur, the best of cities that is inhabited by the community of traders and is resplendent with houses of the four Hindu castes, Jain temples, the homes of those engaged in the six philosophies, and the best palaces that are inhabited by the feet of Sufis, virtuous dervishes, and Mughals.[53]

Here Akbar's accession created a new urban space in which a diverse population of Hindus, Jains, and Muslims all thrived.

---

[49] Bayram Khan's regency lasted 1556-60 (Husain, *Nobility under Akbar and Jahāngīr*, 16-20).

[50] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 82.

[51] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 83a-b.

[52] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 29-30.

[53] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 84-85. *Śōphī* is Sufi and *daraveśa* dervish; both of these readings are confirmed in manuscripts of *Jagadgurukāvya* (ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 2859, fol. 6a; ms. Patan Hemacandra Jnana Mandir 17474, fol. 14a).

Padmasāgara's vision stands in stark contrast to other roughly contemporary images of what social cohesion looked like under Mughal rule. For example, a Persian Sufi text composed over twenty years between 1635-54 offers a starkly different image of the peace brought by Mughal domination. Muzaffar Alam summarizes this work's depiction thus:

> As word of the justice of Shāh Jahān spread, the people of all communities came to his lands. Even Hindus and fire-worshippers became so obedient to Islam that in each street and bazaar, the cow would be slaughtered and they would have no objection to it and even gave their daughters willingly in marriage to the emperor and his nobles. No one challenged the sovereignty of the Mughal ruler.[54]

In contrast, Padmasāgara celebrates that the Mughal conquests enabled people of different traditions to live together in peace and practice their own traditions.[55] But once again Padmasāgara modifies the timeline. He follows the above verses with a description of a battle over Chittor that took place in 1567 whereas Fatehpur Sikri was not founded until 1570. It seems that Padmasāgara preferred to depict Akbar, like his father, as marching out from a definably Indian city to expand his kingdom.

Akbar's siege of Chittor is the final military encounter relayed in *Jagadgurukāvya* and, in Padmasāgara's retelling, provides a rich commentary on the perceived relationship of power and culture in Mughal India. Padmasāgara provides a socio-political framework for the struggle over Chittor that references Akbar's strategy of marrying the daughters of Rajputs as a means of ensuring loyalty to the Mughal crown. He introduces the practice in a series of three verses.

> Having lifted-up a metal chain weighing hundreds of pounds[56] with his bare hand, he hurls it into the sky quickly as if it were a small ball.

---

[54] Alam, "Debate Within," 150.

[55] It can be tempting to see this type of rhetoric as continuing the unhelpful modern glorifications of Akbar's rule as a time of great religious harmony, but the two are not connected.

[56] Literally "weighing thirty-two maṇas," likely taken from Persian *man* (maund).

> That man is glorious Akbar who effects wonder in the hearts of
> every demonic Hindu king on earth and reveals their weakness.
> Hearing about his strength, some of the unimpaired Hindu kings
> give him their own daughters with a strong request to protect their kingdoms.
> Others give him presents such as arrangements of moonstones and fall before
> his feet, while others act like his servants. But all are subservient to him.
> It is said that because of shining good fortune he has thousands of lovers, the
> daughters of Hindus and foreigners (*mleccha*), who exceed goddesses in beauty.
> The fruits of his pleasures with those women are three lovely, favorable sons.
> Even the smallest beings, due to having a son, become lords of the earth.[57]

Here Padmasāgara returns to his *hindū*-Mughal dichotomy and delights in describing how Akbar forced Rajput rulers to consent to his will. Such assertions of conflict that happen to fall along religious lines have long distressed modern readers who fear political uses of these ideas in ongoing communal tensions.[58] But we must guard against reading modern sensibilities into this passage. For Padmasāgara, the unadulterated strength of the Mughal king in comparison to Rajput rulers has nothing to do with religious-based conflict and instead serves his poem's larger framework of illustrating absolute Mughal authority.

Padmasāgara next relates how Rai Uday Singh of Mewar rejected imperial demands for his daughter. Uday Singh defiantly proclaimed: "My ancestors did not give their daughters to a foreigner, and so I too will not give mine."[59] Akbar sent a minister to negotiate, but neither appeals to common sense nor threats of disastrous consequences persuaded the Rajput.[60] An armed encounter ensued, which culminated in Akbar's siege of Uday Singh's fort at Chittor and the slaughter of most the soldiers within along with many civilians who allegedly assisted in

---

[57] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 87-89. *Mleccha* is not meant in a negative sense here, which is a usage also seen elsewhere during this period and earlier (Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*, 50-54).

[58] E.g., Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism*, 201-3. Also see Pollock's analysis of various invocations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in "Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination," 261-97.

[59] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 90b-c.

[60] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 91-95.

the defense.[61] Despite the reasons given for beginning this battle, Padmasāgara makes no mention of marriage at its conclusion and instead returns to his consistent theme: elaborating the advantages of Mughal supremacy. After taking Chittor, "King [Akbar], who possessed great concentration (*samādhi*) and was surrounded by his troops, spread excellent rule (*śāsanam uttamaṃ*) throughout the Rāṇa's land with his own steps."[62]

Rajput chronicles and oral legends also remember Uday Singh's refusal to marry any women of his family to the Mughals. By the nineteenth century, this Mewar policy had become proudly memorialized as an act of rebellion against the degradation of Hindu women compelled to marry Muslim rulers.[63] During colonial rule, newly hardened ideas about Hindu and Muslim identities had begun to emerge that made it politically powerful to juxtapose the two communities, particularly in violent ways. But in the late sixteenth century, Uday Singh likely pursued this course of action as part of a strategy to negotiate inter-Rajput rivalries rather than for ideological reasons.[64] Padmasāgara certainly emphasizes a Mughal-Rajput clash over the marriage issue and ignores the influence of any politics between Rajput groups, but he does so for different reasons than later historiography. Padmasāgara found this dichotomy to be a useful rhetorical tool in framing a conflict that demonstrated the awe-inspiring power of Akbar's army and resulted in superior rule for all of society.

But one detail complicates Padmasāgara's image of a clear Mughal victory in Chittor, which is that Uday Singh lived. He fled from Chittor before Akbar seized the fort and remained

---

[61] *Akbarnāmah* also notes that Mughal troops killed scores of civilians during the Chittor campaign (2:321-24). For a description of this battle in secondary literature see Streusand, *Formation of the Mughal Empire*, 57-61.

[62] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 120a-b.

[63] Talbot, "Mewar Court's Construction of History," 24.

[64] Taft, "Honor and Alliance," 230-32.

at large for the rest of his life.[65] However, perhaps feeling a need to explain this slight caveat to a total Mughal triumph, Padmasāgara adjusts the circumstances surrounding his escape. According to Padmasāgara, Akbar caught Uday Singh but decided to free him because Akbar "feared sin" (*pāpabhīrukatayā*) and "having sinned once was afraid in his heart of doing so again."[66] Just before this, Padmasāgara briefly notes the devastation that followed Akbar's sack of Chittor, including the massacre of so many that rivers of blood flowed everywhere. According to Padmasāgara, Akbar "became filled with compassion (*kāruṇya*)," which had long been a mark of a Jain king.[67] Akbar then repented of the destruction he had caused, particularly the slaying of civilians, and berated himself, saying, "Alas! Have I done something worse than the action of an outcaste (*caṇḍāla*)?" Here Padmasāgara briefly transitions from presenting Akbar as beneficial for Jain community interests to characterizing him as an actual religious adherent. In addition to recasting Uday Singh's escape as a merciful release, this strategy may have had the added benefit of justifying Padmasāgara's positive portrayal of the Mughals to skeptical Jain readers, and later authors pursued this tactic more aggressively.[68] For Padmasāgara the image of Akbar as a Jain sovereign constitutes a short digression from his more consistent discourse on the beneficial results of Mughal rule.

To close his account of Mughal victories, Padmasāgara offers a final assessment of India's prosperity:

> Thus, having conquered the ruler of Gujarat, whose wealth was Mewar and Malwa, King Akbar happily returned to his own city. Shrewd in all ways and

---

[65] Uday Singh died in 1572.

[66] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 120c-d.

[67] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 118a-b.

[68] See, e.g., Śānticandra's *Kṛpārasakośa* and Devavimala's *Hīrasaubhāgya*.

> skilled in the means of rule, he protected his kingdom and offered respect to learned men with correct views because he desired to hear their teachings.[69]

This image of a golden age brought about by imperial might and exemplary rule sets the stage for Hīravijaya's entry into the Mughal court. I analyze his meeting with Akbar in more detail below, but here it suffices to emphasize that Padmasāgara presents favorable social and economic conditions as the direct consequences of Mughal military actions. Padmasāgara frames the Mughals as a constructive force that sweeps across India leaving gold and cultural opportunities in its wake. Moreover, in Padmasāgara's view, history is flexible and can be reimagined in literature to support a particular cultural agenda of closely linking Mughal expansionism with widespread prosperity.

Imperial Milieus: Persianate, Islamicate, and Sanskrit

As with conquest, Jain writers dealt with the cultural and religious frameworks of Mughal figures in ways that reveal deeper issues at play in their texts. As a matter of historical fact, the Mughals made wide-ranging contributions to Persianate and Islamicate traditions during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. However, a few issues complicate depicting such cultural milieus in Sanskrit texts. First, Jains often had a limited view of courtly life because their encounters were, by their very nature, across cultural boundaries. Jains were often called upon precisely in order to introduce non-Persianate ideas and practices to the court, and authors accordingly feature members of their tradition acting as conduits of Sanskrit knowledge to Mughal figures. Even when Jains glimpsed Persianate aspects of the imperial court, the literarization of such features in Sanskrit was imbued with significant challenges. As I discuss above, early modern Jains inherited a tradition that had negotiated the representation of Islamicate and Persianate cultures in Sanskrit literature for centuries and

---

[69] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 121.

concluded that elision was generally the best option. Even when pre-Mughal Muslim and Persianate figures were admitted into the world of Sanskrit, the conventional approach was to avoid elaboration on their religion and culture.

Jain accounts of events at the Mughal court develop complex reactions to this received approach that indicate increased anxieties concerning how to portray the imperial milieu. In their respective works, Devavimala and Siddhicandra present an interesting comparative study of how Jain authors chose to reformulate Mughal court culture in Sanskrit. Both authors address the intellectual framework of Abū al-Fażl, Akbar's chief vizier, and of Akbar himself in passages that highlight the concerns involved in writing across cosmopolitan boundaries. Devavimala constructs a portrait of Abū al-Fażl that allows for an unprecedented admission of Islam into the world of Sanskrit, albeit only to be contradicted by Jain beliefs. For Devavimala, Abū al-Fażl's cultural context was largely religious knowledge, a frame of reference that tells us a great deal about how the author conceptualized Jain-Mughal interactions. In contrast, Siddhicandra conceived of Jain-Mughal encounters as meetings of broader cultural traditions in his depictions of Akbar and his vizier. This perspective indicates an intense concern with Persian as a cosmopolitan rival to Sanskrit that prompts Siddhicandra to elide the former to a notable degree given the specific context of his work.

Devavimala Allows Islam to Enter Sanskrit Discourse

Devavimala composed his *Hīrasaubhāgya* (*Good Fortune of Hīravijaya*) around the turn of the seventeenth century as an account of Hīravijaya Sūri's life from birth until death. *Hīrasaubhāgya* is by far the longest of the texts that detail Jain-Mughal interactions, stretching

to seventeen lengthy chapters, and is accompanied by an auto-commentary.[70] Contemporary scholars have generally treated this work either as an exemplar of the Sanskrit *mahākāvya* genre or as a formative step in the Tapā Gaccha's postmortem deification of Hīravijaya.[71] Devavimala certainly intended his text to operate on both literary and religious levels, but he also dedicates several chapters to the time that Hīravijaya spent conversing with the Mughal elite. Multiple Sanskrit texts recount these meetings, particularly Hīravijaya's first visit with Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri in 1582. However, Devavimala uniquely devotes attention during his narration of this initial encounter to a religious discussion between Hīravijaya and Abū al-Faẓl that communicates a growing concern with Islam in India.

According to Devavimala, when Hīravijaya first arrived at court, Abū al-Faẓl greeted the sage and quickly initiated a debate about the merits of Islam versus Jainism. Devavimala presents both men as wise leaders within their respective traditions and emphasizes their theological erudition. He describes the vizier as "seeing the far edge of the ocean of Islamic learning" (*turuṣkaśāstrāmbudhipāradṛśvā*) and knowledgeable "in the true meaning of Islamic scriptures such as the Qur'an" (*kurānādiyavanāgamānām upaniṣadi*).[72] Hīravijaya is copiously praised throughout the text but here in particular highlighted as someone that Abū al-Faẓl recognized as a wise discriminator "regarding both Islamic and Jain creeds."[73] Abū al-Faẓl gathered a crowd of people to act as an audience for the exchange and began by asking Hīravijaya's opinion of Muslim beliefs.

---

[70] *Hīrasaubhāgya* is undated; for estimates see Vrat, *Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahākāvyas*, 92 and Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 59. References to the Mughals span *sarga*s 10-17, and *sarga*s 13-14 contain the central story of the Akbar-Hīravijaya meeting.

[71] For a literary analysis see Vrat, *Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahākāvyas*, 91-108; for a more religiously focused interpretation see Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 58-72.

[72] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.120 and comm. on 13.130 respectively.

[73] *svīyatadīyaśāstre*; glossed in commentary as *yavanajātisaṃbandhi* and *sūriśāsanasaṃbandhi* (*Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.135).

At this point in the story Devavimala breaks from traditional Sanskrit wisdom and includes Abū al-Faẕl's exposition of Islam along with Hīravijaya's response. As I mention above, many Jain writers recount Hīravijaya's initial visit with the king, but no others detail this particular conversation.[74] Several texts narrate a later religious discussion between Akbar and Hīravijaya and therein describe Jain beliefs in varying degrees of detail.[75] But Devavimala alone chooses to give Islam a substantial platform within a Sanskrit text. The passage appears to be based largely on common Sufi ideas of the time and is worth quoting at length for its astounding admission of Islam into Sanskrit as a cogent system of belief. In Devavimala's account, Abū al-Faẕl said:

> O Sūri, this was laid out by the ancient prophets in our scriptures—all Muslims (*yavana*) who are deposited on earth as guests of the god of death will rise at the end of the earth and come before the court of the Supreme Lord called *khudā*, like they come to the court of an earthly king. He will cast good and bad qualities onto his own pure mind as if onto a mirror and bring about pure ways there, having refuted the false construction of mine versus another's. Having reflected, he will bestow the appropriate result of [the *yavana*s'] virtues and vices, like the fertile soil generates plentiful grain from different seeds. Some will be brought to heaven by him, just as boats are led to the edge of the ocean by a favorable wind. Then they will live pleasurably, overflowing with floods of suitable, amazing enjoyments. Others will be sent to hell by him on account of sin. Like birds being crushed by hawks and pots being fired by potters, they will suffer great agonies at the mercies of hell's guards. O Sūri, what is the validity of this Qur'anic speech (*kurānavākyaṃ*)? It is true, like the speech of great-souled people or is it false like a flower in the sky?[76]

This passage employs several Perso-Islamic religious terms transliterated into Sanskrit, such as *paigambar* (*paighāmbar*) for prophet, *doyaki* (*dūzakh*) for hell, and *bhisti* (*bihisht*) for heaven. Thus, conceptually and linguistically, Abū al-Faẕl's speech is coded as decidedly Islamic.

---

[74] E.g., *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.111-28 and *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya*, chapter 9.

[75] E.g., *Hīrasaubhāgya*, chapter 14; *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 173-74; *Vijayadevamāhātmya* 3.48-66.

[76] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.137-43. Cf. to translation of the same passage in Dundas "Jain Perceptions of Islam," 38.

In response to this speech, Hīravijaya methodically supplanted Abū al-Faẕl's worldview by questioning the logic of a creator god, heaven, hell, and judgment day. In lieu of Allah, Hīravijaya argued for the supremacy of the Jain doctrine of *karma* (action) as governing all things:

> He—who is free of dirt like a shell, devoid of defects like the sun, made of flames like fire, and without a body like the god of love—is the Supreme Lord. Taking on what kind of form does he attend court like a living being that adopts many appearances in his wanderings through existence? There he sets a person on the path to heaven or hell on the basis of what reason? A previous action, once ripened, has the power to grant both joys and sorrows. Thus, let action (*karma*) alone be recognized as the creator of the world, since otherwise [God] has no purpose.[77]

After listening to Hīravijaya's reasoning, Abū al-Faẕl quickly reformed his misguided suppositions and pronounced: "That book [commentary: Qur'an] is recognized as false just as inconsistency is recognized in the speech of a garrulous, vile person."[78] Hīravijaya then offered an additional contention that a creator could never bear to destroy the world he brought into being and therefore concludes that *karma* explains reality better than the Islamic God.[79] In closing, Devavimala declares that through this exchange Hīravijaya placed *dharma*, whose basis is compassion (*dayā*), within the heart of Abū al-Faẕl.[80]

In this anecdote (however dubious its accuracy), Devavimala establishes Jainism and Islam as comparable, although highly unequal, systems of belief. This comparison may hardly seem revolutionary in the modern day given that we also categorize Islam and Jainism together as religions. However, Devavimala departs drastically from his predecessors and

---

[77] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.145-47. The literal translation of the last half line is, "Thus, let [*karma*] alone be recognized as the creator of the world, otherwise what is the purpose of a god who is like a female goat's neck nipples (i.e., any useless thing)?"

[78] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.148b.

[79] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.149-50.

[80] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.151 and commentary. See Dundas, "Jain Perceptions of Islam," 39 for a full translation of the passage.

contemporaries in allowing Islam to permeate the boundaries of Sanskrit literature at all, much less as an alternative to Jain beliefs. Furthermore, he deploys Abū al-Faẓl, a highly prominent figure and a leading intellectual of his day, as the mouthpiece for the Islamic tradition. He even allows Islam a fairly full hearing, equivalent in length to Hīravijaya's winning rebuttal. Nonetheless, in the end, Devavimala reveals Islam to be thoroughly inferior to Jain convictions, and Hīravijaya's reasoning easily trumped that of Abū al-Faẓl, who himself became disposed to Jain ways of thinking. In this sense, the Jain victory appears all the more potent for the authority and substance allocated to Islam.

Even beyond this passage, Devavimala projects Jainism and Islam as the major operating categories through which to make sense of other cross-cultural events narrated in *Hīrasaubhāgya*. Most notably, he characterizes the meeting between Hīravijaya and Akbar as a religious teacher instructing a pupil. Hīravijaya is "the teacher of pure *dharma*" and even compared to an "image of the Supreme God."[81] Akbar accordingly treated the Tapā Gaccha leader with great respect, and their conversation revolved around Hīravijaya's ascetic practices and commitment to non-violence.[82] Later on during their visit, Akbar even directly requested Hīravijaya to instruct him in Jain philosophy, which resulted in the king granting the monk the title *jagadguru* (Teacher of the World).[83] Devavimala also compares the relationship between Hīravijaya and Akbar to imperial connections forged by earlier Jain leaders.[84] Such stories would have been familiar to Jain readers and cement the projection of

[81] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.155 and 13.125, respectively.

[82] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.156-227.

[83] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.203-5.

[84] Granoff, "Authority and Innovation," 53-55.

Hīravijaya and Akbar relating to one another as a pious monk leading a king to proper religious practice.

This religious framework and the victory of Jainism over Islam fit well into Devavimala's larger project to deify Hīravijaya Sūri. Paul Dundas has written at length about this aspect of *Hīrasaubhāgya*, which primarily takes place within portions of the text that do not address contact with the Mughals.[85] Nonetheless, presenting Hīravijaya as a spiritual teacher who influenced Islamic figures advances an argument that is particularly relevant to a Jain sect located within the Mughal imperium. If Hīravijaya was so wise, holy, and powerful as to merit being worshipped after his death then perhaps he could stand-up to Islam as no member of the Sanskrit tradition ever could before. In this reading, Hīravijaya and his version of Jainism could allow Islamic views to be admitted into Sanskrit without the risks perceived by their predecessors precisely because of the matchless strength of Tapā Gaccha claims to theological certainty. In this virtuous circle of reasoning, Hīravijaya had nothing to fear, and so he could debate Islam, along with its most esteemed spokesman, once and for all. But most Jain literati, foremost among them Siddhicandra, responded quite differently to the cultural impact of the Mughals by creating a conservative Sanskrit sphere deliberately purged of Islamic and Persianate elements.

Siddhicandra's Vision of Sanskrit Culture at the Mughal Court

Siddhicandra wrote his *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* (*Acts of Bhānucandra*) shortly after Devavimala, in the early seventeenth century, and focuses on Jain-Mughal encounters from the 1580s through the 1610s. The title marks the work as a biography devoted to Bhānucandra, Siddhicandra's teacher and a prominent ascetic in the Tapā Gaccha. However, this named

---

[85] *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 58-72.

protagonist features in the text by and large only when he is engaged in contact with the Mughal court. Siddhicandra expresses his more specific interests at the beginning of the first chapter: “Bhānucandra, the protector of sages, gained fame and good fortune by enlightening glorious Shah Akbar, the best of men. The Jain teaching flourished as a result, and so let this part of Bhānucandra’s story be heard in full detail.”[86] Siddhicandra also relays imperial episodes throughout his work that feature Jains other than Bhānucandra. He begins with the infamous first meeting of Hīravijaya and Akbar, ends with an argument involving himself and Jahangir, and in-between records events that feature nearly a dozen different Jain intellectuals who operated in the Mughal milieu. In other words, Siddhicandra treats Jain-Mughal encounters as a discrete set of experiences, worthy of consideration in their own right, and is perhaps the first and only Sanskrit author to do so. Thus, his *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* is a new type of cross-cultural phenomenon in itself that explicitly seeks to map intersections between Jain and Mughal worlds within Sanskrit literature.

While Siddhicandra describes the Mughal court in detail, he avoids Persianate ideas and terms throughout his work. He likewise uses no words for Islamicate concepts, unlike Devavimala. He fills in the gap left behind by his erasure of Persian and Islamicate contexts with Mughal figures that are vastly knowledgeable about the Sanskrit tradition—and only the Sanskrit tradition—in multiple respects. For example, in his opening verses Siddhicandra characterizes Abū al-Faẓl as neither Muslim nor Jain but rather as well versed in a plethora of Sanskrit sciences:

> The wisdom [of Shaykh Abu al-Fazl] extended to all the *śāstra*s, including Jainism, Mimamsa, Buddhism, Sankhya, Vaisesika, Carvaka, Jaiminiya, literature (*kāvya*), yoga, Vedanta, lexicography, music, drama, aesthetic tropes, mythology (*purāṇa*), metrical works, the science of omens, astrology, mathematics,

[86] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.12.

> physiognomy, political science, erotics, veterinary sciences, and guardianship. In terms of writing (*vāñmaya*), there is nothing that he has not seen or heard.[87]

Later in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, Siddhi claims that Abū al-Faẕl studied particular Sanskrit texts, such as the Jain compendium on Sanskrit philosophical schools titled *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (*Collection of the Six Schools*).[88] Such claims of Abū al-Faẕl's interest in Sanskrit are not wholly unreasonable given that he authored the *Learning of India* (*dānish-i hindūstān*), which covers an astonishing array of topics similar to the above list.[89] But quite notable in comparison to *Hīrasaubhāgya* is Siddhicandra's omission of Islam from Abū al-Faẕl's extensive range of learning. Here, instead of a vizier familiar with the Qur'an and a spokesman for the Islamic faith, we perceive a paragon of traditional Sanskrit learning.

In his depiction of Akbar, Siddhicandra simultaneously expands the Sanskrit cultural repertoire of the Mughals and continues to exclude the Persian tradition. One paradigmatic episode is the first meeting between Akbar and Bhānucandra, narrated at the beginning of chapter 2 of *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*. When Akbar saw Bhānucandra for the first time, the king offered a series of conjectures (*vitarka*) about this incredible, almost inconceivable man.[90] Speaking "like one fluent in logic (*tarkādhītīva*)," Akbar exclaimed:

> Is he embodied perfection among all things, a second hare-marked moon, or even a third eye? Could he be a fourth among Brahma, Śiva, and Viṣṇu or a fifth Veda or even a sixth wishing tree? Is he the seventh season, the eighth ocean, a ninth regent of the directions, or a tenth treasure storehouse? Could he be an eleventh incarnation of Viṣṇu, a twelfth Rudra, or a thirteenth sun? Is he the fourteenth among the world gods in the three worlds or even a fifteenth among the fourteen gems? Perhaps he is the sixteenth hidden digit of the moon, the ocean for earthly rivers, or an indestructible treasure trove among intellects?

---

[87] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 1.68-71.

[88] 2.58-60. It is unclear whether Siddhicandra intends to reference Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* or Rājaśekhara's later work of the same name.

[89] *Learning of India* is part of the *Account of India* (*aḥvāl-i hindūstān*) in the fourth book of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*.

[90] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.38.

> Could he have a mind of white fame, be a divine tree, or possesses all virtuous qualities?[91]

This passage is designed to extol Bhānucandra to the utmost degree, but crucially it does so through a display of familiarity with Sanskrit literary conventions on the part of Akbar. Here the emperor is conversant with stock poetic tropes, such as that fame is white and the moon is hare-marked. Moreover, he also often delves into more detailed points of cultural knowledge, such as the number of world gods (*viśvadeva*), wishing trees, and Kubera's treasure houses. Siddhicandra never explains how Akbar came by such information but rather presents this as the norm for a Mughal ruler whose world is permeated exclusively by Sanskrit culture.

Siddhicandra appears to closely model this particular praise of Bhānucandra on a standard formula in vogue among Jain authors. For example, Devavimala crafts a similar passage in *Hīrasaubhāgya* when Akbar met Hīravijaya for the first time and wondered to himself (rather than asked aloud) if the Jain monk is the extraordinary addition to sixteen sets of sequentially numbered items. Jain authors frequently invoked established patterns in narratives of multiple events, and so the differences rather than the repetition are significant in these two passages.[92] Devavimala names alternative items for numbers ten through twelve; eleven and twelve read, "Is he an eleventh among the ten virtues of Jain ascetics or a twelfth of the eleven great disciples of Mahāvīra?"[93] These rhetorical questions play on specifically Jain ideas rather than Sanskrit cultural knowledge more widely construed. Particularly when read in comparison to Devavimala, Siddhicandra seems to indicate an interest in a larger Sanskrit context that resonates beyond Jain circles. Indeed, throughout *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*,

---

[91] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.39-45.

[92] Cort, "Genres of Jain History," 476-77.

[93] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.170b.

Siddhicandra precludes detailed discussions or even allusions to Jain doctrines and prefers to situate his work within a broader Sanskrit literary world.[94]

Siddhicandra's rejection of Perso-Islamicate culture is highly conspicuous, in part, because of his unique position in Mughal society. Siddhicandra was raised in the Mughal court and, by his own admission, knew Persian: "Siddhicandra learned all the *śāstra*s in only a few days, and thus Shah [Akbar] encouraged him to also quickly become fluent in Persian."[95] Moreover, in a commentary on another text, Bhānucandra lauds Siddhicandra as famous for knowing all virtuous Persian books, and Siddhicandra also relays that he was employed by Akbar to read Persian books to the royal princes and even the king himself on a daily basis.[96] We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of these claims, particularly given the rising numbers of Indians who learned Persian under Akbar and Jahangir. Especially after Akbar established Persian as the language of empire in the 1580s, many "Hindus" entered Mughal service, produced Persian literature, and otherwise acted within a Perso-Islamicate cultural ambit.[97] Yet, Siddhicandra stands alone among his contemporaries in participating so deeply in Persian circles while maintaining an active affiliation with the Sanskrit sphere. This unparalleled access to the dual cosmopolitan cultures of north India suggests a plethora of possibilities for innovation in Siddhi's writings.[98] Yet, despite his familiarity with Persian culture and literature, he rejects any depiction of these within his Sanskrit narrative.

---

[94] An exception to Siddhicandra's general avoidance of religious exegesis is his somewhat cryptic account of a religious debate between Jain and Brahman leaders (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.20-47).

[95] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.90.

[96] *Vasantarājaśākuna*, 1, v. 9 of *ṭīkā*; *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.104. Siddhicandra also references his Persian skills in his commentary on *Kādambarī*, 483, v. 5 of *ṭīkā.*

[97] Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India," 120-34.

[98] Some such possibilities seem to have come to fruition; e.g., see Pollock's discussion of Siddhicandra's claimed newness in his other writings ("Death of Sanskrit," 406-7).

Siddhicandra imagines a dominant Sanskrit cultural realm that encompassed all Mughal figures and makes sense only in opposition to Persian. Perhaps precisely because of his extensive experiences in imperial circles, Siddhicandra felt the threat of Persian as a competing cultural tradition more palpably than his fellow Jain intellectuals and so sought to more vigilantly exclude it from the Sanskrit literary world.[99] In another sense, he was part of a larger cohort of early modern Indian intellectuals who found themselves relating to their tradition in fundamentally different ways from their predecessors.[100] We can only hazard guesses at the reasoning behind Siddhicandra's precise innovations, but two things are noteworthy about his literary worldview. First, in contrast to the religious framework adopted by Devavimala, Siddhicandra conceptualized Jain-Mughal encounters through wider cultural lenses that we might now identify as the Sanskrit and Persian traditions. In so doing, Siddhi offers an early modern precedent for understanding these two traditions in tandem, as comparable types of cultural formations. Second, Siddhi felt that the only way for Sanskrit elites to successfully respond to Persianate knowledge was to vigorously incorporate members of the latter's cultural elite into a Sanskrit world. The Persianate Mughal court could not be allowed to stand as such, at least in Sanskrit texts, and instead needed to be recast according to alternative cultural norms.

Courtly Religious Practices Beyond Islam

In addition to describing the overall ethos of the court, Jain authors also delineate an array of religious practices that add further depth to their often quite distinct images of the Mughals. These imperial rituals also pinpoint some additional (in this case, sectarian) aims that

---

[99] Earlier Jains who knew some Persian, such as Jinaprabhasūri, seem to have had no problem allowing the language to seep into their Sanskrit works (Jain, "Persian of Jain Hymns," 47-49; Balbir, "A propos des hymnes jaina multilingues," 39-61).

[100] Pollock, "Problem of Early Modernity," 8-9; Ganeri, *Lost Age of Reason*, 4-5.

Sanskrit literati pursued in writing about their adventures in the Mughal milieu. No Jain authors that I have found record explicitly Islamic practices in any form, even though prayers, pilgrimages, and the like were part of the royal routine during the visits of at least some Jains.[101] In this regard, Jains perhaps felt constrained by the general Sanskrit disinclination to portray Islam as a substantive tradition. Nonetheless, they do not avoid discussing Mughal religious activities altogether, and several show the emperors participating in pseudo-Brahmanical and Jain rites.[102] Most notably, Jain intellectuals narrate two major instances when the Mughal rulers took part in Sanskrit-related religious practices: Akbar's recitation of *Sūryasahasranāma* (*Thousand Names of the Sun*) in Sanskrit and a Jain ritual related to the *mūla* constellation that involved both Akbar and Jahangir. Both episodes paint the Mughal court as profoundly multicultural and also highlight the sectarian benefits gained by Jains who facilitated such activities.

Sun Worship and Sectarian Gains

The *Thousand Names of the Sun* episode is one of the few Jain-Mughal interactions documented in both the Persian and Sanskrit traditions. Writing in Persian, Abū al-Faẕl refers to the practice briefly in his *Āʼīn-i Akbarī* (*Akbar's Institutes*), within a discussion of Sanskrit names for the planets and the sun.[103] Badāʼūnī, a notorious critic of Akbar in his unofficial history of the era, offers a more elaborate description of the emperor's sun worship, which he

---

[101] Imperial religious practices, particularly those of the emperor, changed substantially during the course of Akbar's reign (for a recent discussion, see Pirbhai, *Reconsidering Islam*, 71-91).

[102] Although, at least in Sanskrit, Jains may not record all claims of Mughals participating in Indic religious traditions. For example, in *Jahāngīrjascandrikā*, Keshavdas depicts Jahangir burning incense and performing *āratī* (worship) to Hindu gods (Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 60).

[103] *Āʼīn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 367.

characterizes as indulging Indian religious groups.[104] Neither historian mentions where Akbar learned the practice other than from *hindū*s, a Persian term that can refer to Hindus as a religious community but more often simply means Indians in Mughal texts. A few Sanskrit works and even one European source also remark on this imperial interest.[105] Siddhicandra alone tells the story of how Bhānucandra played a crucial role in introducing sun worship to Akbar's daily routine. Like the Mughal historians, Siddhicandra emphasizes the cross-cultural nature of this exercise, but he also simultaneously mobilizes the exchange to promote the rather narrow interests of the Tapā Gaccha.

Siddhicandra shows great interest throughout his text in proving the superiority of his sect over the Kharatara Gaccha and Brahmans. Although this type of rivalry commonly features in Tapā Gaccha works of this period, Siddhicandra's standards for competition are noteworthy. Whereas other Jain authors, such as Devavimala, portray the Mughals as near converts to Jainism as a way of demonstrating the ascent of the Tapā Gaccha, Siddhicandra identifies serving the burgeoning Mughal interest in Sanskrit texts and practices as the new benchmark for sectarian success. In this vision of Mughal India, Jain monks promoted their own relative standing precisely by being purveyors of a wide range of Sanskrit cultural traditions rather than merely Jain beliefs. Siddhicandra celebrates the "rise of Jain teaching," meaning the elevation of the Tapā Gaccha in particular, no more so than when Bhānucandra teaches Akbar a Brahmanical religious practice.

---

[104] Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:260-261, also 2:322.

[105] See the colophon of Siddhicandra's commentary on the second part of *Kādambarī* (711); also see the discussion of this colophon and a separate note at the conclusion of a manuscript of *Sūryasahasranāma* in Sastri, "Akbar as a Sun-Worshipper," 138-39. European travelers also mention Akbar's predilection for sun worship (Xavier letter quoted in Subrahmanyam, *Mughals and Franks*, 4).

Siddhicandra begins the tale with Akbar, seemingly unprompted, requesting access to the desired text from the Brahmans at court: "One time, the ruler of the earth repeatedly sought the *Thousand Names of the Sun* from the Brahmans, but they could not find it anywhere."[106] By chance the Brahmans finally managed to produce the work and delivered it to the king, but this only provided the perfect set-up for Bhānucandra to enter the plotline:

> By a stroke of luck [the Brahmans] located some wise man. He gave [the text] to them, and they presented it to the illustrious shah. Having seen it, the glorious shah said to them delightedly, "Who among good people can teach me this? Let him be called forth." They replied, "Who has subdued all the senses, sleeps on the ground, and bears Brahma, he alone is qualified in the matter at hand." When he heard this, the shah said, "Only you [Bhānucandra] possess such qualities here. You, venerable one, will teach this to me every morning."[107]

Thus, the text for Akbar's sun worship was unequivocally Brahmanical in origin, but Bhānucandra alone was judged capable of teaching Akbar its proper use.

After a lengthy interlude that delves into poetic descriptions of the early morning, Siddhicandra describes Akbar reciting the Sanskrit text as Bhānucandra had instructed him. He represents Akbar as devoted to the ritual of sun worship even to the exclusion of any other religious practices:

> The glorious shah diligently learned the *Thousand Names of the Sun*.
> He forgot any other taste and recited the names there.
> He devoted his mind, stood in the correct direction facing the sun, and went before [Bhānucandra] with his folded hands pressed against his forehead.[108]

Siddhicandra does not explain further this "other taste" (*anyarasa*) for which sun worship eliminated any need on the part of the Mughal emperor. But it seems most logical to take it as a covert reference to Islam, especially since the recitation of the thousand names at sunrise

---

[106] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.67.

[107] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.68-71.

[108] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.106-7.

must have kept Akbar from the first Islamic prayer of the day.[109] Moreover, Siddhicandra carefully mentions that Akbar faced the correct direction and used his head and hands properly, both important concerns in Islamic prayer as well. However, in addition to the concealed dismissal of Islam, this passage also implies that Akbar did not embrace any regular Jain religious practices.

Even while excluding any possibility of spreading the Jain teaching through imperial endorsement, Siddhicandra ends his account of Akbar's sun worship by directly tying this Brahmanical-Mughal practice to the rise of Bhānucandra's fame and the Jain tradition:

> After reading every morning in the assembly of great men, increased good fortune and rays of brilliance radiated from the glorious guru [Bhānucandra]. Thus, the exaltation of the Jain teaching flourished, and the fame of the glorious guru danced like a dancer across the three worlds.[110]

The crucial link that enables Bhānucandra to transition from imparting Brahmanical practices to promoting "the Jain teaching" (*tīrthakṛcchāsana*) is effectively serving the wishes of the Mughal king. Even while not encouraging Jain practices in the imperial milieu, Bhānucandra nonetheless advanced the standing of the Tapā Gaccha sect by gaining the emperor's esteem.

This dynamic pairing of a multicultural custom and sectarian concerns allows us insight into a few of the larger issues in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*. First, for Siddhicandra, cross-cultural interactions do not supersede local politics. Many scholars have spoken laudably of progressive trends in the Mughal court of reaching out to diverse traditions in the interest of promoting tolerance across religious communities.[111] Yet it would not be going too far to say

---

[109] According to Badā'ūnī, Akbar had the names of the sun recited four times a day, including at sunrise and noon, which both conflict with the times of Islamic prayer (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:322). Note, however, that Jahangir argued that such practices were designed to control rather than exalt the sun (Alam, "Debate Within," 149).

[110] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.108-9.

[111] E.g., Shukla, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works," 176 and 179; Habib, "Introduction: Commemorating Akbar," xv. Rizvi also advocates this view to a great extent (*Religious and Intellectual History*, 203-22).

that a significant part of what interested Siddhicandra in engagements with the Persianate court is precisely the ability of these events to glorify the Tapā Gaccha. In this configuration, multicultural activities do not transcend interreligious disputes so much as they frame and adjudicate these contests. Second, Siddhicandra does not feel forced to choose between these two modes of engaging with the Mughals and neither should we in interpreting his text. In one sense, *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* constitutes the first piece of literature to conceptualize Sanskrit-Persian interactions as such in the Mughal milieu. Yet, within this metaframework, Siddhicandra maintains his decidedly narrow focus of demonstrating the supremacy of the Tapā Gaccha above rivals for Mughal attention, such as Brahmans. Siddhicandra links these cosmopolitan and local objectives by engaging with both against the backdrop of a Sanskrit Mughal court.

Status and Power in a Jain Rite at Court

In at least one instance, the Mughals commissioned a Jain religious rite to be performed on their behalf, and retellings of this affair add considerable depth to our understanding of Jain perspectives on their imperial ties. Unlike with Akbar's sun worship, this episode, which is associated with the *mūla* astrological constellation, is not mentioned in Persian histories and remains largely unrecognized by modern scholars.[112] Nonetheless, two Sanskrit authors narrate the event. Jayasoma, a Kharatara Jain, first recorded the episode in 1594, and Siddhicandra later gave a revised version of the ceremony. Jayasoma wrote his *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* (*Account of the Genealogy of Minister Karmacandra*) as an account of Karmacandra, a Kharatara layman and member of the Osval jati that was involved

[112] Among the few, quite brief references in secondary literature are Andhare, "Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism," 223-224 and Mitra, "Jain Influence at Mughul Court," 1066.

in Rajasthani politics during Akbar's reign.[113] The text's first section explicates Karmacandra's activities as a minister under Rāja Kalyāṇa of Bikaner. After some time, the minister fell out of the rāja's favor and moved to Merta and shortly thereafter to the Mughal court at Akbar's request. In the second portion of his work, Jayasoma details Karmacandra's time in the Mughal milieu, during which he served the emperor in various capacities while gaining political concessions for his community. Jayasoma and Siddhicandra agree on the basic plot of the *mūla* constellation story, but contextualize the event in quite distinct ways that provide different interpretations of its meaning for the Jain participants. For Jayasoma, the religious rite presents an opportunity to establish a particular Jain, Karmacandra, as a preeminent member of Akbar's inner circle. In contrast, Siddhicandra crafts a much more elaborate version of events and frames the affair as a robust union of Mughal power and Sanskrit culture.

Jayasoma places his version of the *mūla* constellation story shortly after Karmacandra arrived at the Mughal capital of Lahore. First Akbar warmly received Kalyāṇa's recently dismissed minister and granted him a piece of land.[114] Jayasoma soon focuses on the centerpiece of Karmacandra's time at court: he recommended that the king summon Jinacandra, the leader of the Kharatara Gaccha, and the monk came with due pomp and circumstance. But between Karmacandra's initial introduction and this celebrated development, Jayasoma offers a small vignette that demonstrates how the minister established his rapport with the emperor:

> One time, a daughter who was bound by the curse of the *mūla* constellation was born in the beautiful house of glorious Sultan Salim (Jahangir). Thereafter, glorious Shah [Akbar] engaged wise men led by Shaykh [Abū al-Faẕl] in order to

---

[113] Jayasoma's student, Guṇavinaya, added a commentary to the 539-verse work in 1599. Osval Jains were often involved with politics during this period (Sreenivasan, *Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 78-80).

[114] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 358.

> counteract that curse. Then the king called minister [Karmacandra] and directed him thus, "Perform whatever is the purifying rite in the Jain philosophy!" Honoring the instructions of the shah with perfect injunctions, [Karmacandra] directed the purifying bathing with pots made of gold.
> At the time of lighting the auspicious lamp, Shaykhū jī (Jahangir), the son of the shah, came and was hospitably received with 10,000 silver gifts. [The minister] placed water from the purifying bathing on the two eyes of the glorious king, surrounded by his harem, to alleviate [the curse].[115]

With the curse avoided, Jayasoma notes that the king was overjoyed and concludes the episode with a rhetorical question to his readers, "Who is not pleased with the removal of the inauspicious and the nourishing of good fortune?"[116]

In this narrative, Jayasoma connects the rise of Karmacandra as a powerful member of Akbar's court to the prominence of Jain practices. First, he equates Karmacandra with Abū al-Faẓl as an advisor to the king. When Akbar sought advice from his official vizier regarding the cursed birth, he likewise solicited the opinion of Karmacandra. Jayasoma does not explain why Akbar requested astrological advice from a Jain on this particular occasion given that Akbar typically employed Brahmans in this line of work. Regardless, emphasizing Sanskrit astrological customs at court appears less important to Jayasoma than showcasing Karmacandra's desire to please the emperor. The poet hardly needs to draw the obvious link between the king's satisfaction and increased standing for the minister. However, the subsequent episode opens with Karmacandra being singled out in an assembly of learned men in Akbar's court as "a receptacle for the four types of intelligence, wise, and singularly devoted to the illumination of the glorious Jain teaching."[117]

---

[115] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* vv. 359-64.

[116] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 365b.

[117] *Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha* v. 369. The commentary defines the four types of intelligence as those based on intuition, discipline, practice, and maturity (*autpātikī, vainayikī, karmajā, and pāriṇāmikī*).

In addition to Karmacandra's new eminence at court, this event also features a startling case of imperial participation in a Jain ceremony. Even in the ranting of Akbar's fiercest critics, court historians generally leave out such direct engagements with Indian religions.[118] In contrast Jayasoma portrays this behavior openly, even emphasizing moments when the Mughals actively participated in the religious observance, such as when Jahangir accepted gifts and Akbar received water on his eyes. In fact, aside from moments of royal involvement, Jayasoma is notably quiet about the content of the ritual itself. When Siddhicandra retells this incident a few decades later, he likewise dwells on the importance of Akbar and Jahangir's personal involvement.

Siddhicandra narrates the *mūla* constellation story with considerable poetic flourishes and additional details that underscore the event as a crucial moment in Jain-Mughal relations. As I argue above, Siddhicandra conceptualizes cross-cultural meetings in the Mughal court as a coherent set of events and articulates the meaning of such actions through a variety of lenses. Accordingly, he imagines the *mūla* episode as unfolding on a cosmic stage and frames it as an opportunity to explore the large-scale cultural and political implications involved in Sanskrit-Persian encounters. Yet, despite his grand vision, Siddhicandra opens with a sectarian jibe and replaces the Kharatara Karmacandra with his own Tapā representative as Akbar's Jain advisor in this affair. As with his depiction of the Sanskrit culture of the Mughal court, Siddhicandra sees no contradiction in cross-cultural events serving more narrow purposes. Thus, in his telling, upon learning of the *mūla* constellation's curse on his granddaughter, Akbar implored

---

[118] Most notably, Badā'ūnī mentions nothing about Akbar worshipping Jain images in his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*. *Ma'āṣir al-Umarā* also notes a variety of Indian practices adopted by Akbar but falls short of Jayasoma's account (e.g., see description under the entry on Abū al-Faẓl in 2:619-20).

Bhānucandra, "Take some countermeasure to alleviate this difficulty."[119] The Tapā Gaccha representative responded by naming the precise ritual he would organize, the 108-bathings oblation (*aṣṭottaraśatasnātra*), and noted that is should be performed in a Jain temple. Next Akbar articulated his intention to attend, saying that he would come along with Prince Salim.

Siddhicandra describes the preparations for this Mughal-Jain ritual in ways that highlight the importance of the act as a landmark moment in relations between the two groups. First, unlike his other stories and Jayasoma's version of the affair, Siddhicandra features Tapā and Kharatara Gaccha representatives (Thānasiṃha and Karmacandra, respectively) as joint overseers of the rite. Such a complementary pairing of normally bitter rivals marks this event as a fundamental encounter across a wider cultural gulf.[120] Second, Siddhicandra imagines a vast audience for the purifying bathing. In order to house the crowds, he attests, a temporary pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) was erected. Slipping into fantastic hyperbole, Siddhicandra describes how even the personified universe (*trilokī*) was drawn to the unending beauty of the lavish pearl and gold decorations and herself came to behold the occasion.[121] Additionally, throngs of people from across the Mughal kingdom poured into the pavilion, attracted primarily by Bhānucandra's charisma, and in so doing further enhanced the importance of the impending ceremony:

> That [*maṇḍapa*], even though vast, overflowed with people from innumerable cities who came as if drawn by the immense good fortune of the illustrious, glorious [Bhānucandra]. The structure, filled with people from all different

---

[119] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.142a.

[120] Additionally, Siddhicandra may include members of both sects because he could not elide Karmacandra from an event that was well known among Gujarati Jains. But this explanation fails to account for why Siddhicandra describes the occasion at all. He was hardly comprehensive in his *carita* and declines to comment on a number of encounters known from other sources. Thus, it seems that the *mūla* episode offered him an opportunity to explore an aspect of Mughal-Jain relations not fully articulated elsewhere in his text.

[121] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.149.

> places and towns who had gathered for the great ritual, shone like the night sky laden with stars.[122]

Within this crowd that included representatives from two major Śvetāmbara sects, the personified universe, and throngs of the masses, Siddhicandra relates the arrival of the imperial patrons.

When Akbar himself graced the place, Siddhicandra draws attention to the potent introduction of political power into a Jain holy space:

> The great king of the earth—whose path was filled in all directions by the sound of great musical instruments clamoring forth, who covered the surface of the earth with weapon-bearers from his four-limbed army, and who was served by lesser lords on foot—even he came there.[123]

Here Siddhicandra describes Akbar in the idiom of classical Indian kingship as a true world conqueror, complete with his drums, servants, and four-limbed army that overruns the world. The imperial edge of this religious rite becomes even more evident when Siddhicandra begins to recount the actual ceremony, focusing on its impact on the royal participants:

> In the dense space pervaded by swirling aloe wood smoke, Thānasiṃha and others performed the bathing oblation with the best pots. After that, the great praise poem, *Bhaktāmarastotra*, was recited by the gurus for Shah [Akbar], who was standing with glorious Shaykhū jī (Jahangir) before the glorious Jina. Then the shah came from the inner sanctum to the outer *maṇḍapa* like the sun rising from a cave in the eastern mountain into the wide sky. The king and his son stood before the teacher and grew brilliant there like the sun and moon.[124]

After the king and his son heard the Sanskrit *stotra*, saw the idol, and experienced an expansion of their own glory, the ritual ended much like in Jayasoma's account: Akbar's eyes were sprinkled with water, Jahangir accepted gifts, and the curse was alleviated.

This story includes several thematic features that Siddhicandra repeats elsewhere in his text, such as reference to a specific Sanskrit work and a strong imperial interest across

---

[122] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.150-51.

[123] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.153-54.

[124] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 2.155-58.

traditions. Yet, no other event in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* pairs royal power and cultural practice in such a dramatic fashion that it captured the attention of the world. Here, Jains served the Mughal court by introducing the king to an aspect of Sanskrit culture that he desired. However, the emperor and his son also fundamentally altered the nature of this public performance through their active roles. They caused the Jina image to share the stage with the royal army, and an important result of the ceremony seems to have been enhancing the status of Akbar and Jahangir in the eyes of the watching crowd. Thus, Mughal power and Sanskrit culture combined to produce a type of imperial Jain rite that the world had not witnessed before. Here Siddhicandra has moved far from Jayasoma's image of the simultaneous rise in the prominence of an individual and his tradition and instead probes the mutually enhancing power of culture and empire.

Representing Themselves: Religious and Secular Authority

Jain intellectuals also faced the charged question of how to characterize themselves and their own traditions in their Sanskrit works. While earlier Jain leaders had often forged ties with both Islamicate and other Indian polities, such ties between spiritual and political realms had also long been a source of controversy in the Jain community. With the introduction of the Mughals, the potential concerns involved in religious figures engaging with imperial power became all the more urgent for the Tapā Gaccha in particular. In the Kharatara sect, such matters had been explored in great depth in their close relations with the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century.[125] But the Mughals offered the Tapā Gaccha the opportunity to exercise political influence on a scale they had never before experienced. Particularly given that Jains were the primary audience for their records of endeavors at court,

---

[125] See Granoff, "Jinaprabhasūri and Jinadattasūri," 1-96.

self-representation held the potential to significantly impact the development of this sectarian tradition. Here I look at three places where members of the Tapā community probe the negotiation of spiritual and political authority in the royal court: meetings between Jain and Mughal leaders, Jain defenses of their religion against Mughal accusations of atheism, and imperial challenges to Jain ascetic practices.

Finding Authority for Jain Leaders in the Mughal Context

Akbar and Jahangir met with the leaders of both the Tapā and Kharatara Gacchas on several occasions. Sanskrit texts generally describe these affairs with great relish, including detailed accounts of the monks' travels for months to reach the court, how the entire imperial army was sent out in greeting, and elaborate formalities throughout the conversations. The encounters are often highly stylized in their written versions, but the authors were far from constrained by such literary conventions and rather worked through them to explore the potential implications of bringing together the heads of different spiritual and political worlds.[126] For the Tapā Gaccha, such events were particularly crucial moments in the establishment of their own religious tradition.

While the Tapā Gaccha traces its lineage back to Mahāvīra himself, the group only emerges as a distinct community in the thirteenth century with a teacher by the name of Jagaccandra Sūri. Little concrete is known about Jagaccandra from contemporary sources, and sectarian texts over the next few centuries gradually add specificity to his story.[127] The Tapā Gaccha appears to have remained relatively limited until the second half of the sixteenth

---

[126] Narrations of the meetings between Akbar and Hīravijaya, Vijayasena, and Jinacandra all share the same basic outline, along with some virtually identical sentences and praise formulas in particular texts.

[127] Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 34-42.

century when it came into prominence under the leadership of Hīravijaya.[128] All biographies of Hīravijaya, arguably the true founder of this sect, centrally feature his encounters with Akbar in the Mughal court. Their first engagement in particular lends great insight into the self-conception of this sect of Jainism as its members entered for the first time onto a wider historical stage. Through this episode, Tapā Gaccha intellectuals developed an image of their leader and community in direct comparison to Akbar and the Mughal Empire.

Hīravijaya Sūri, the leader of the Tapā Gaccha until 1596, first met with Emperor Akbar in 1582. All Tapā Gaccha texts I discuss here relay this event and agree on the basic outline of events: Akbar called Hīravijaya to court, they exchanged some pleasantries, the monk taught Akbar about Jain *dharma*, and the king granted him a few political favors.[129] Strikingly these four accounts carefully frame Hīravijaya as the equal or better of the Mughal king. However, what ought to draw our attention is not only that Tapā Gaccha authors frequently conceptualized fluidity between the characteristics of spiritual and imperial authority, but also more pointedly that their paradigms were often Mughal political power in particular. Many of the standards of comparison between Hīravijaya and Akbar reflect this specificity, as do other details of their initial meeting. Contemporary sectarian works argued for the Tapā Gaccha's authority on detailed theological grounds,[130] but writers on events at the Mughal court seem keener to elaborate a sort of Jain imperial authority in Mughal India.

---

[128] At the end of the fifteenth century, the Tapā Gaccha numbered 428 members (Darśanavijaya quoted in Flügel, "Demographic Trends," 317).

[129] See Padmasāgara's *Jagadgurukāvya* (vv. 122-89), Devavimala's *Hīrasaubhāgya* (*sargas* 13-14), Hemavijaya's *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* (chapter 9), and Siddhicandra's *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* (1.78-128). The *Ādīśvara* inscription also relays this meeting, although in less detail (*Epigraphia Indica*, 2:#12, vv. 14-24).

[130] See Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, chapter 4.

Shortly before the meeting commences, Padmasāgara and Devavimala signal the lofty nature of Hīravijaya by comparing him to God. Writing first, Padmasāgara narrates how the Sūri declined to accept gold from a Mughal vassal in Gujarat while on his way to visit the emperor at Fatehpur Sikri. Praising this self-restraint, Padmasāgara invokes the Persian name of God (*khudā*): "[Hīravijaya], that foremost among the dispassionate, best of ascetics, who had the form of glorious (*śrimat*) *khudā*, was seen there, the likes of whom had not been seen anywhere else on earth."[131] In other words, Hīravijaya stands on the highest level of the Islamic hierarchy, one step above the king and analogous to God himself. One could hardly imagine a more obvious appeal to Mughal standards than comparing a Jain leader to Allah, particularly considering the general reticence of Sanskrit intellectuals to admit Islam. Akbar himself is often eulogized in Persian texts as the image of God, or more specifically in Persian, the "shadow of God."[132] Here the transfer of royal, Islamic-based authority to the Jain monk is unmistakable and introduces strong Mughal cultural standards into the Sanskrit tradition.

Devavimala shies away from naming the Islamic God as such and instead compares Hīravijaya more ambiguously to the Supreme Lord. He places this high praise in the mouth of Akbar and describes how, after hearing of Hīravijaya's arrival in Fatehpur, Akbar "provided purifying water with his own flowing tears of joy and performed venerations with his hair standing on end."[133] The emperor explained himself to Abū al-Faẕl by proclaiming, "Now, in accordance with fate, I am about to see the moon-like lord of sages, like an image of God

---

[131] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 139a-b.

[132] *Ẕill-i allāh* or *ẕill-i khudā* was a common epithet for Islamic kings, and the phrase comes up several times in Abū al-Faẕl's writings, including in his recorded sayings of Akbar in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*.

[133] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.123a. Hemavijaya also depicts Akbar bowing to Hīravijaya (*Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 9.30).

(*parameśvara*)."[134] In his commentary, Devavimala glosses *parameśvara* as *paramātma*, which is used in Jain texts on the Mughal court to refer to a monotheistic being more generally.

During the meeting itself, all four authors repeatedly place the two men on equal ground, often in the context of Akbar being impressed with Hīravijaya's religious convictions and teachings. Here Mughal standards are mixed with Jain conceptions of spiritual leadership and more closely resemble formulations previously evidenced in Jain Sanskrit literature. For example, Devavimala writes that Akbar was astonished by the Sūri's commitment to non-violence to the extent that he would not even risk killing a small insect. As a result, "Then the king understood that just as he is the sole king of earth, guru [Hīravijaya] is the lord of unparalleled compassion. Bearing this utmost wonder in his mind, the king praised him over and over."[135] An inscription at Mt. Shatrunjaya in Gujarat that also details this event further notes that Akbar, his soul purified, was thus inspired towards daily religious meditation.[136] Devavimala also overtly links Hīravijaya's instruction of Akbar to earlier Jain history by citing precedents for monks teaching kings about *dharma*. As Granoff notes in her analysis of this section of *Hīrasaubhāgya*, Devavimala appears uncomfortable with a Jain monk instructing a Muslim ruler and so seeks to place both well within an accepted Jain tradition.[137] Yet it seems that Devavimala and his fellow Jains take a dual tack of justifying the presence of monks at the Mughal court because they again return to the theme that their Sūri is above Akbar according to the latter's own measures.

---

[134] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 13.125a.

[135] *Hīrasaubhāgya* 14.10.

[136] *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:#12, v. 21.

[137] "Authority and Innovation," 53-55. Also see *Epigraphia Indica*, 2:#12, v. 22.

After the discussion about *dharma*, the texts all depict Akbar as quite impressed with Hīravijaya's erudition and signal the Sūri's greatness by according him the marks of an emperor. Several authors record that Akbar bowed before the monk after hearing his enlightening words, an astonishing measure for a king who controversially instituted full-length prostrations to himself at court.[138] All note that because of Hīravijaya's learned words, Akbar granted a variety of political concessions that essentially allowed the Sūri to impose laws as if he were a king, such as bans on animal slaughter for certain days across the empire.[139] At the conclusion of the meeting, Padmasāgara articulates the strongest statement on how Hīravijaya co-opted the symbols of Mughal royalty in his procession from court:

> Then the Protector of the Earth [Akbar], following on foot, bowed down at [Hīravijaya's] feet, and stood again. From his own home, he sent all his soldiers to [Hīravijaya], ordered musical instruments to be played stridently by men sitting on top of elephants, and had his own splendor (*svaśriyam*)—complete with chariots, horses, and elephants—go before [Hīravijaya].[140]

Here Akbar sent his own royal accoutrements, those things that announced to the world that he was the Mughal sovereign, to accompany Hīravijaya. Subsequent verses revel in the image of the Tapā Gaccha king who paraded through crowds of people that tossed expensive clothes and jewels on the ground before him.[141] In these ways, Padmasāgara casts Hīravijaya as an authority figure in a definably Mughal sense who is the equal or superior of Akbar.[142]

---

[138] E.g., *Jagadgurukāvya* as quoted below. On prostration (*sijdah*) at Akbar's court see Mukhia, *Mughals of India*, 91-92.

[139] Persian sources corroborate that Akbar banned animal slaughter, at least near Jain temples, in deference to Hīravijaya's request (see *farmān* printed in introduction to *Kṛpārasakośa*, 35-38).

[140] *Jagadgurukāvya* v. 189.

[141] *Jagadgurukāvya* vv. 191-93. These images follow closely on the model of earlier monk-king pairs in the Jain tradition (see Cort, "Who is a King," 89-94 on Jayasiṃha Siddharāja's relations with Kharatara monks and 96-102 on Hemacandra and Kumārapāla).

[142] John Cort argues that depicting kings as lending monks their symbols of royalty demonstrates "the Jain view of the king as inferior to the true mendicant" ("Who is a King?" 91).

The precise nature of Mughal sovereignty upon which the Tapā Gaccha seeks to model depictions of their own leader varies by author, but all emphasize the scale of the Mughal Empire and its benevolent nature. As discussed above, Padmasāgara makes this case quite strongly in using decisive Mughal battles as a way to link the wide scale spread of the empire to its cosmopolitan character. In light of my analysis here, such battle imagery also outlines a course for the Tapā Gaccha to follow. Just as Akbar and Humayun methodically conquered northern India to ensure widespread prosperity so to does the Tapā Gaccha wish to win over the land for the benefit of all. Indeed Padmasāgara offers a lengthy account of Hīravijaya's route to court that carves out a vision of Jain geography that complements the boundaries of the Mughal Kingdom.[143] Devavimala and Siddhicandra offer similar visions of Hīravijaya's travels modeled on a martial *digvijaya* (conquering of the four directions).[144] Subsequent Tapā Gaccha texts adopt the strategy of describing their order as a dynasty and even represent the sect's leaders as Mughal-like warriors accompanied on their conquests by armies of monks.[145] As these authors mix ancient Jain and newer Mughal standards, one meaning of the Sanskrit-Mughal encounters for their Jain participants was an opportunity to develop a sectarian identity that was relevant to their contemporary world.

Erudition and Flexibility in Jain Defenses Against the Charge of Atheism

When Jain monks operated in secular courts, they found great potential for the growth of their religious traditions in conversation with political modes of being in the world, as I

---

[143] *Jagadgurukāvya*, particularly vv. 137-59.

[144] Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 24. Later in his work Siddhicandra also evinces an interest in gaining Mughal permission to build new temples as a way to express Tapā Gaccha control over the subcontinent's physical and spiritual landscapes (*Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.114-18, 4.134-47, and 4.163-67).

[145] Most notably the seventeenth-century scholar Meghavijaya in his *Digvijayamahākāvya* (Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 24; see 188-89 n. 29 for references to similar depictions in other texts).

discuss in the previous section. But such ties also placed Jains in potential danger when their viewpoints clashed with those of the Indo-Islamic political elite. Jain authors explore how to productively answer and write about such threats in Mughal accusations that Jainism is an atheistic belief system. The Mughals were generally tolerant of different religious convictions, but atheism placed groups beyond the limits of tolerance and into the realm of *kāfir*s (non-believers). Tapā Gaccha intellectuals record multiple occasions when Hīravijaya and Vijayasena were called upon to prove the theistic nature of their tradition before Akbar. Here I will analyze one such exemplary debate: Vijayasena's defense of Jainism in 1593 that is relayed in starkly dissimilar versions in two texts. In depicting how Vijayasena responds to Mughal horror at the prospect that Jains deny the existence of God, his biographers invoke variant perspectives within Jain philosophy to refute this charge, including completely different identifications of the Jain "God." In so doing they demonstrate erudition and flexibility to be two of the great strengths of the Jain tradition that allowed its followers to flourish in Mughal environs and perhaps even enabled them to literize their experiences.

Vijayasena's rebuttal to allegations of atheism at the Mughal court is detailed in Siddhicandra's *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* and Hemavijaya's *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* (*Great Poem in Praise of Vijayasena*). Hemavijaya composed his twenty-one-canto poem in the first part of the seventeenth century, and shortly thereafter Guṇavinaya added a commentary.[146] Hemavijaya and Siddhicandra begin with the same frame story where Jains won attention and praise from Akbar. The king had called Vijayasena to court in 1592, and the monk arrived after lengthy travels in 1593, accompanied by several students who performed impressive intellectual feats.

---

[146] Hemavijaya only completed sixteen chapters of his twenty-one-chapter work; Guṇavinaya wrote the remaining five chapters in addition to a full commentary, which he completed in 1632 C.E. (introduction to *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya*, 2-3).

The Jains and Akbar mutually rejoiced in this unfolding of events, much to the chagrin of certain Brahmins at court who became jealous. Here, Siddhicandra and Hemavijaya diverge in their accounts and situate Vijayasena's defense in different historical contexts that highlight the variant political and intellectual stakes of such debates. They each also draw upon different points in the Jain tradition where similar discussions had arisen and together demonstrate how the emphasis on multiple perspectives within Jain thought worked well in a Mughal courtly environment.

Hemavijaya frames his version of events with the Jains hoping to retain good standing in an Islamicate court that presumed belief in a monotheistic God. Trouble began when, upon seeing the Tapā Gaccha rise in Akbar's esteem, a nameless Brahman articulated a rather detailed case against the sect that resonates with basic Islamicate theology. He exclaimed:

> Those idiot Jains do not believe that there is a pure one, without a physical form, changeless, sinless, emancipated from rebirth, free of emotional agitations, passionless, independent, the slayer of all sins, and the maker of all happiness, namely God (*parameśvara*). The path of those foolish ones who do not believe God (*parameśvara*) is the source of the world is always in vain like a fixed point without coordinates. Therefore, O Sun of the Courts of Shahs, the sight of those people is not good for kings like you, anymore than the sight of menstruating women.[147]

Here the Brahman's objections revolve around the concern that Jains deny a God who is above this world and in fact the source of it. Unlike Devavimala in his *Hīrasaubhāgya*, Hemavijaya declines to elaborate Islamic beliefs explicitly, but they lurk behind the cunning Brahman's words. His early points are direct attacks on idol worship, a practice strongly condemned in Islam but practiced by the Tapā Gaccha.[148] His later accusations reference Islamic belief in a God who annuls sins and created the world. Certainly many of these contentions make sense

---

[147] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.142-45; *darśana*, here translated as "sight" is likely a *śleṣa*, also meaning the Jain philosophy.

[148] The Tapā Gaccha and Kharatara Gaccha were both image-worshipping (*mūrtipūjaka*) sects (Cort, "Genres of Jain History," 483-84).

from a Brahmanical perspective as well, but the resulting anger of the Mughal king signals their importance within an Islamic worldview.[149] Moreover, reference to a strong monotheistic entity in an Islamic sense seems to be indicated by the use of *parameśvara* (Supreme God) here and throughout this passage.[150]

As the Brahman intends, his accusation infuriated the Muslim emperor with an anger that was "like the submarine fire in the ocean."[151] Next Akbar put this severe charge to the Jains themselves, but in simpler terms: "'These great-souled cheats of all mankind with hoards of worldly practices certainly do not believe in God'—O Guru, Let this doubt be banished from my mind by your words just as oil is removed from water by a cloth."[152] Here Akbar omitted several specific claims that characterized the Brahman's statement, most notably the issue of a creator god, and asked more generally about Jain sensibilities regarding a supreme deity. This shift allowed Vijayasena to defend Jains as theists without contradicting his inherited beliefs. Jains had long maintained that they were not atheists (*nāstika*) and, in fact, had devoted a great deal of energy over the centuries to defining the nature of God in their system of belief. However, they consistently deny any God or gods the role of being creators and instead contend that individuals have control over their own fate within the world (*loka*), which has no beginning or end.[153] As we shall see below, Siddhicandra presents Vijayasena as twisting the logic of a creator god in an ingenious way in order to answer the Brahman's objection. But Hemavijaya prefers to avoid this long-standing point of contention between Jains and

---

[149] Also see Mughal criticisms of atheism more generally in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:113-14; Aligarh ed., 481-82.

[150] Note that *parameśvara* is also the term used by Devavimala when discussing Islamic beliefs in *Hīrasaubhāgya*.

[151] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.147.

[152] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.148-49.

[153] Dundas, *The Jains*, 90; also see Guṇaratna's elaborate arguments on vv. 45-46 of Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, 112-36.

Brahmans altogether, and his mechanism for doing so is to introduce a more basic query in the voice of a Muslim ruler. In so doing, Hemavijaya removes this encounter from the history of religious debates between Indian traditions in favor of emphasizing a possible dissonance between Islamic and Jain worldviews. Thus, he places this exchange more firmly within its current circumstances as a moment of political peril for the Jains in Akbar's court.

With the stage set for possible heresy that could result in the expulsion of the Jains from court, Vijayasena defended his political alliance by drawing on different aspects of his philosophical tradition. Hemavijaya records the response in sixty-one verses as the Jain leader weaved eloquent descriptions of God with more pointed statements about Jain theistic belief. In the middle of his speech, Vijayasena offered his most direct answer to the king's challenge:

> The Shaivas worship him as "Śiva" and the Vedantins as "Brahma." The Buddhists who are sharp in logic worship him as "Buddha" and the Mimamsakas as "Karma." Those who ascribes to the Jain scriptures worship him as "Arhat," and the Naiyayikas as "Creator." May that Hari, the Lord of the Three Worlds, give you whatever you desire.[154]

Thus, the God of the Jains is Arhat, also known as Jina or an enlightened human teacher and is comparable to a range of deities in other Indian philosophies. This formulation of comparing Arhat to the gods of a myriad of other systems mirrors approaches evidenced in Jain philosophical compendiums where each belief structure has an identifiable *deva* (usually Arhat for the Jains).[155] Hemavijaya clearly found his tradition's penchant for compiling and comparing different ideas useful in articulating Vijayasena's response. But he also seems to have found this approach inadequate on its own merits and punctuates this statement with a wish for Akbar's well-being that invokes the name of Viṣṇu, who was perhaps more familiar

---

[154] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.178.

[155] See Haribhadra's *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* vv. 45-46 and Merutuṅga's *Ṣaḍdarśaṇanirṇaya*, 7.

than other Indian gods as a monotheistic deity among the Mughal elite.[156] In having Vijayasena directly address the emperor, Hemavijaya reminds his readers of the Mughal king's centrality in this affair and indicates that Akbar alone will determine the Jains' fate.

In Hemavijaya's telling, Vijayasena devoted the other sixty verses of his reply to elaborating the intricate Jain imagery surrounding Arhat, a two-fold deity. Here Hemavijaya speaks to his Jain audience quite directly about the multiplicity of perspectives built into their worldview and the potential advantages of such a legacy in Mughal India. He spends the first half of his speech describing a formless, eternal God "whose essence is knowledge and whose nature is inconceivable."[157] Hemavijaya also proclaims in the closing line of his speech: "We always say that in this aspect, God has no beginning, no birth, is free of a soul that links him to this world, is made of thought, and is without equal."[158] In this view, Arhat is suitably vague and unqualified as to be palatable to Islamicate sensibilities, and one wonders if Vijayasena wished the Mughal king to see something of his own ideas reflected in such words.[159] Yet, such syncretic possibilities do not preclude the second half of his analysis that is more specifically situated within Jain thought. Here Vijayasena portrays Arhat as a man on earth, focusing on his first sermon as an enlightened individual that is much celebrated in Jain literature.[160] His imagery follows traditional Jain ideals to the letter, and even if these precise words were uttered in the Mughal court, it is nearly impossible to believe that Akbar understood the

---

[156] Akbar's court had ties with Vaishnava communities dating back to as early as the 1560s (Entwistle, *Braj*, 157-58).

[157] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.174a.

[158] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.211.

[159] Also see Jahangir's emphasis on persuading Brahmans to admit to a higher power that is without form or attributes (*Jahāngīrnāmah*, 19).

[160] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.180-210; for a brief discussion of the place *samavasaraṇa* in Jain thought see Dundas, *The Jains*, 35.

plethora of references. Instead it is more reasonable to posit that Hemavijaya wished to demonstrate to his readers the fitness of their religious system for the current political climate by balancing its diversity of theological formulations with specific beliefs.[161]

At the end of Vijayasena's elaborate defense, Hemavijaya returns to the metaframe of the political risks in this debate and narrates the return of the Jains to a place of pride in Akbar's estimation. First, he proclaims that the emperor's doubts were fully allayed. As for the Brahmans, "When the Brahmans were defeated by the Sūri, they became so emasculated it is amazing the town people did not lust after them as if they were women."[162] The Jains, on the other hand, were praised by the Mughal king, and their fame grew immeasurably as Vijayasena exited the court in triumph to return to his ascetic way of life. Hemavijaya describes how Vijayasena shone like the sun and commends his wisdom in this exchange that resulted in increased political clout for the Tapā Gaccha.[163] Thus, for Hemavijaya, Mughal political power defined the accusation of atheism and its implications at court. Jain leaders were able to respond to Islamic concerns without compromising their beliefs precisely because their tradition understands God as possessing multiple aspects.

Siddhicandra relates a rather different version of events than Hemavijaya, including changing the audience for the debate, the course of Vijayasena's argument, and the identity of the Jain God. Siddhi's account is far more grounded in traditional Indian debates and draws the Mughals into a Sanskrit context rather than inserting the Jains into the Mughal world. In both respects, Siddhicandra follows his larger project in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* of reconstituting the

---

[161] See Wagoner's discussion of "essential ambiguities" and "fortuitous convergences" that had long characterized cross-cultural relations in India and beyond ("Transcultural political elites," 259-60).

[162] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.216.

[163] *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* 12.220.

nature of the Mughal Empire as Indian, often definably Sanskrit. Within his image of the Sanskrit Mughal court, Siddhi represents Vijayasena as rapidly moving through a sequence of condensed arguments that had been worked out by his predecessors over many centuries. He draws heavily on Jain philosophy, and, even more than Hemavijaya, Siddhi writes here for a Jain readership that is edified by reviewing some of the more complex arguments within their tradition. For Siddhicandra, Vijayasena's defense of Jainism was an opportunity to reformulate pointed Jain arguments in a longstanding debate with other philosophical schools, and the Mughal court is primarily a stage for the exchange.

Siddhi opens with an objection that is a mix of Brahmanical and Mughal concerns. He places the accusation in the voice of a protagonist called Ramdas Kachhwaha, a Rajput in the service of the Mughals, who said to Akbar: "These [Jains] reject the Veda, do not worship God (*paramātma*), and do not even do obeisance before the king."[164] Here Ramdas surrounded the central charge of atheism with affronts to Mughal courtly procedure and Brahmanical sentiments. Siddhicandra does not elaborate on the alleged Jain denial of either Mughal authority or the Vedas in the subsequent debate, but this initial mention invokes two larger contexts to frame the exchange. First, like Hemavijaya, Siddhi recognizes that the Jains risk losing Mughal favor if they do not admit some concessions to imperial expectations. Second, Siddhicandra emphasizes that other Indian traditions take issue with the Jains beyond their place in the Mughal court. The Jains had long argued that the Vedas were of human origin and texts of questionable ethics to say the least, but it is not immediately obvious why this issue

---

[164] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.20; the full debate is 4.19-47. Ramdas Kachhwaha is here called Rāmadāsa Mahārāja; for more details on his relationship to the Mughal court see Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 39 n. 54; *Ma'āṯir al-Umarā*, 2:155-57. He appears again in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* as serving Jahangir in 4.218.

would matter to a Mughal king. Indeed, it probably did not, but the dispute was of great relevance for ongoing philosophical debates in the seventeenth century.[165]

Upon being questioned by Akbar regarding these allegations, Vijayasena initially refuted everything, briefly stating, "We all believe. They spoke out of jealousy." Here Siddhicandra appears to elide part of the conversation since the Jains never admit the validity of the Vedas. Thus, we must supply Akbar's narrower question as posed in *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya* of whether or not the Jains believe in God. According to Siddhi, this pointed response prompted Bhaṭṭācārya, a Brahmanical leader and seemingly more learned individual in religious affairs than Ramdas Kachhwaha, to intervene and posit: "It may be assented by them verbally, but nothing of the kind is found in their scriptures."[166] Once an actual Brahman and written documents were called into play, Akbar asked his vizier, Abū al-Faẓl, to settle the debate and retreated from the scene. As noted above, Siddhicandra presents Abū al-Faẓl throughout *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* as a learned Sanskrit pandit. Here the vizier exercised that role to facilitate a consolidated tour of old Jain-Brahman debates. Additionally, unlike in Hemacandra's version of events, the standard of victory was not convincing a royal patron but rather consistency within Jainism's own philosophical system.

The ensuing exchange between Bhaṭṭācārya and Vijayasena is rather cryptic and difficult to follow because it assumes familiarity with frequently rehearsed arguments. To further complicate matters, Siddhicandra leaves the Brahmanical perspective largely unarticulated and focuses on the Jain side of the debate. Bhaṭṭācārya began by stating that Śiva

---

[165] Writing in 1652/3, Vallabha Pāṭhaka also contextualizes this debate in terms of Jain-Brahmanical disputes and characterizes Akbar as asking Vijayasena, "Why do you not believe in Rāma and mother Gaṅgā?" (*Vijayadevamāhātmya* 6.28a).

[166] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.23b.

is God because he is the creator of the world.[167] Vijayasena objected by drawing upon a multitude of Jain arguments, which also find echoes in the Mimamsaka world, that the idea of a creator God is preposterous.[168] He reasoned analogically that a creator must have a body, but that possessing a body would render God under the control of other things and hence not God at all. Moreover, God by definition has no reason to create, especially not the mix of happiness and sorrow that we see in the world, and so the doctrine of a creator god can hardly account for reality as we know it. In summary, Vijayasena put forth: "If one who was dependent on action (*karma*) created, then he would not be independent and [instead] would be just like us. And given that all sorts of things are born from action (*karma*), then what need do we have of Śiva?"[169] Thus, *karma* is God for the Jains in the sense of accounting for the cycle of cause and effect in the world, and all individuals are creators because they initiate actions.[170]

In *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, Vijayasena closed by turning the entire logic of the Brahmanical objection on its head and argued that requiring belief in a creator god in order to be considered theists is ridiculous. He said,

> Given this line of reasoning, because of not assenting to the state of being a creator in respect to man but in respect to natural matter that is insentient, how would the Sankhyas be considered believers of God? And saying that "this world arose unprecedented, born from a sacrifice recorded in the Vedas," how are the Vaisesikas believers in God? And believing that "this world is an illusion, without God as a creator," how are the Vedantins believers in God?[171]

---

[167] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.27. There was a long history of Jain-Shaivite competition in medieval Gujarat before Mughal rule (Cort, "Who is a King?" 87; Sheikh, *Forging a Region*, 166).

[168] For a summary of Jain arguments against the concept of a creator god see Singh, *Encyclopaedia of Jainism*, 52-107. Note the similarity of some arguments here to Kumārila in *Ślokavārttika*.

[169] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.35.

[170] Also see *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.37 ("all beings are creators," *sarvabhāveṣu kartṛtvam*).

[171] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.39-41.

Thus, if the Brahmans would deny that *karma* accounts for God within Jainism, then they must also deny the theism of a variety of other Indian schools of thought. With this "powerful ocean of reasoning," Vijayasena rendered the Brahmans speechless.[172] Such logic would not appear to be particularly convincing to someone who ascribes to an Islamic-based conception of Almighty Allah, but here we are far from a Persianate Mughal court and deeply engulfed in the world of Sanskrit philosophy. In case his readers doubt Vijayasena's intellectual victory in the slightest, Siddhi next narrates that Abū al-Faẕl attested to Akbar that the Jains "spoke in accordance with their own teachings" and celebrations broke out in the street.[173]

Thus, Siddhicandra and Hemavijaya agree on the basic argument that Jains are theists but individually emphasize distinct nuances within Jain thought. Taken together, one is struck by the ability of the Tapā Gaccha to articulate consonant ideas in such different manners. Far before Mughal times, Jains had also withstood attacks in courtly settings for lacking belief in a deity and defended themselves through well-developed argumentation.[174] Later encounters with Mughal figures also demonstrate substantial flexibility in the Jain perspective. For example, when Abū al-Faẕl writes about Jainism in his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, he names Arhat as the founder of Jainism and also describes God as *nirguṇa* or without qualities.[175] The lesson for Jain readers of the works of Siddhicandra and Hemacandra seems to be that while political alliances may give rise to religious challenges, the Jain system is well equipped to transform such threats into opportunities for even greater gain precisely because of its multiplicity of perspectives. Perhaps the sophisticated ability to articulate congruent perspectives is also part

---

[172] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.42.

[173] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.43-47.

[174] For example, see Hemacandra's defense of the Jains as sun worshippers and his subsequent worship in a Shaivite temple (*Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, 81-86).

[175] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 467.

of what rendered Jains capable of writing extensively about their experiences at the Mughal court while others remained tongue-tied.

Religious Anxieties: Jain Asceticism within the Comforts of Court

Tapā Gaccha authors were also attuned to the perils court life presented to monks in terms of maintaining their ascetic lifestyle and spiritual obligations. Earlier writers had frequently expressed such concerns. As one fourteenth-century Kharatara monk who attended Firoz Shah's court bemoaned to a non-political monk: "I have failed to observe the strict life of a monk, night and day traipsing after the Sultan! I have no independence any more. You follow the correct behavior of a monk. The true behavior appropriate to a monk is preserved in your monastery."[176] Jain intellectuals who wrote about interactions with the Mughals were likewise uneasy about potential degradations of religious practices. Moreover, they were aware that whether or not such laxity actually came to pass, lay followers and members of other Jain sects might perceive this to be the case. Siddhicandra felt this anxiety of secular patronage above all others, probably because he was the most closely affiliated with the Mughal court. In the closing episode of his work, Siddhi relates a seemingly true (although embellished) story about his steadfastness in asceticism against the wishes of Jahangir and his wife, Nur Jahan.[177] This episode reveals some of the weightiest objections to Jain relations with the Mughals.

Siddhicandra's ordeal began when Emperor Jahangir demanded that he take a wife and the monk refused. After a lengthy debate, Jahangir threatened Siddhi with being crushed to death by an elephant, but the monk stood firm in his convictions before the mad beast and the

---

[176] Quoted in Granoff, "Jinaprabhasūri and Jinadattasūri," 36 (her translation).

[177] Based on Kharatara inscriptions and texts about interceding in the aftermath of this event, the argument and exile seem to have actually occurred (Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 119). Later vernacular texts also corroborate the episode (Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 57 n. 88). Nonetheless, Siddhicandra's narration of certain details, such as Nur Jahan's appearance at court, appears to be exaggerated.

king. In reward for his resoluteness but in punishment for disobeying the crown, Jahangir settled on merely exiling him to the forest, and Siddhi departed having upheld his ascetic vows. This episode allegedly took place in 1611 and, in part, functions as an example par excellence of a public glorifying (*prabhāvanā*).[178] Jain authors often employ such *prabhāvanā*s whereby secular ties actually enhance the prestige of the Jain tradition in order to justify the involvement of ascetics in political affairs.[179] Jain accounts of the Mughal court offer many such stories of monks refusing money, remaining committed to non-violence, and persevering in their vows. The tale of Siddhicandra's near crushing by elephant only to be saved by exile is an extreme and hence a particularly powerful example of a courtly monk's fervent dedication. But the episode also articulates a number of strong objections to monks at court, both in the voice of the emperor and in the broader construction of the narrative. These criticisms allow us insight into some deep-seated apprehensions of the Tapā Gaccha community regarding their cross-cultural relations.

The episode commences with an exchange in which Siddhicandra is portrayed as occupying the moral high ground and Emperor Jahangir a slave to his passions. Jahangir initiated the discussion by poignantly observing that in both age and nature, Siddhicandra is ill suited for an ascetic way of life. He commented to his Jain companion:

> You possess marks that show you capable of being an earthly king.
> O friend, you are resplendent with the radiating beauty of youth.
> Given that your age is suited for pursuing fiery young women, why do you abandon the pleasure of sensual desires and give yourself to austerities?[180]

---

[178] Siddhicandra doesn't record a precise date, but since he refers to Nur Jahan as Nur Mahal, the episode likely occurred between 1611 and 1616 (Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 54 n. 86).

[179] Cort, "Genres of Jain History," 487-88.

[180] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.238-39.

Siddhicandra chided Jahangir for poking fun at his serious commitment and retorted that the transience of the world makes people of all ages well advised to consider asceticism. Moreover, "austerities are like the sun for good people and, by extinguishing darkness, grant purity in the form of seeing truth and falsity in respect to the eye of knowledge."[181] In rather poor form, Jahangir, "his eyes rolling about from the influence of drink," asked Siddhi straight up how he could help himself from thinking about sex.[182] In response, Siddhicandra discoursed eloquently about the benefits of being detached from worldly things. Jahangir then quieted down for a period of time in amazement at Siddhi's reasoning, perhaps mixed with an alcohol-induced stupor, until Nur Jahan (here called Nur Mahal) entered the scene.

According to Siddhicandra, Nur Mahal, Jahangir's favorite wife, walked into the assembly hall and inserted herself into this strange debate. At this point, Siddhi's narrative slips into the realm of fantasy considering purdah restrictions in the harem.[183] But the value of this particular encounter for Siddhicandra is far less its historical viability than its promise as a potent illustration of a Tapā Gaccha monk upholding his religious commitments while pursuing influence at court. Thus, Nur Mahal entered the assembly hall, which ironically prompted Siddhi to meditate on her physical beauty for several verses. She then joined the discussion at hand and tried to undermine the monk's authority by positing: "Wherever there is youth, speech that reflects soundness of mind is impossible."[184] Siddhicandra took this accusation of rashness rather seriously and offered a defense that drew upon a Mughal cultural reference, a unique step beyond the generally Sanskrit-prescribed realm of his work.

---

[181] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.246.

[182] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.247-48.

[183] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 89-90.

[184] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.269.

Siddhicandra responded to Nur Mahal by citing the example of the king of Balkh who gave up everything in order to become an ascetic in his youth. Although *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* does not include the name of the ruler, this appears to be the story of Ibrahim ibn-Adham, a figure renowned for his denial of all earthly things, including his crown.[185] Siddhicandra further departs from his normal Sanskrit framework by offering the lone Hindi verse in his text to say: "16,000 palaces, 18 lakh horses, and the city of Bilakkh (Balkh) were given up for the sake of his Lord."[186] This brief foray into the Mughal cultural sphere indicates the great risks of this debate. The danger shakes even Siddhicandra out of his Sanskrit framework and calls for the invocation of an idea designed to hit close to home for his Mughal interlocutors.

Nonetheless, after his mention of a Perso-Islamic cultural reference in order to provide a precedent for young renunciants, Siddhicandra promptly steers the conversation back into his own tradition and frames both himself and Jahangir as speaking in Jain terms. Here, Siddhi articulates his strongest objections to the participation of Jain ascetics in imperial affairs in the voice of Jahangir, who has transformed from drunkard into a skillful philosopher without explanation. After Nur Mahal's contribution, Jahangir announced that while he has heard Siddhicandra's strong arguments he maintains that asceticism is not appropriate at such a young age. The king employed a plethora of fanciful images to pose rhetorical questions, such as: "Is it acceptable to cast fire on a jasmine bud? Is it ever proper to split a lotus-stalk with a saw?"[187] He then directly contended that being a householder is the highest of the four stages of life, begging is demeaning to the sage, and youthful asceticism is contrary to the God-given

---

[185] Rūmī famously relays this tale in his *Maṣnavī*. Oddly, Niccolao Manucci, a traveler to India during Shah Jahan's reign, seems to have picked up a quite different version of this tale (*Storia do Mogor*, 2:469-70).

[186] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.271.

[187] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.286; similar queries continue through 4.289.

order of the world.[188] Siddhicandra offered a brief rejoinder to the "wise, appropriate speech of the sultan" that such appeals only speak to worldly people.[189] But Jahangir came back with an even more forceful retort that the Jain doctrine of manysidedness (*syādvāda*) makes Siddhi's obstinacy untenable and that he should adopt a more relativist understanding of the universe as trumpeted by his own tradition.[190]

Siddhicandra complimented Jahangir on his argument as well as his "grasp of Jain doctrine" and seemed to acknowledge that there is some disconnect between his personal position and religious precepts. He argued that a vow, once made, should not be broken and that avoiding temptation altogether is the best method of resistance. But he was unable to refute Jahangir's argument about *syādvāda* and attacked the doctrine itself as dogmatic rather than defending its implications for his current life choices.[191] At this point in the narrative, the debate ceases, and it is not entirely clear who has carried the day in terms of the intellectual exchange. However, especially in the latter portion of the discussion, Siddhicandra portrays Jahangir as more in tune with Jain doctrine than himself and acknowledges that the Mughal ruler makes several compelling arguments against asceticism in one's youth. Of course, if Siddhicandra were not at the Mughal court, this argument would not arise, but nonetheless there appears to be an admission here of weakness in Jain doctrine.

Finished with debating, Jahangir next flatly ordered Siddhicandra to take a wife. When the monk refused, the king's anger flared, and he shouted:

Do you dare to show me contempt! Do you not know my power?

---

[188] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.290-97.

[189] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.298-99.

[190] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.301-5.

[191] See *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.311 on *syādvāda* in particular and 4.307-13 for Siddhicandra's response. No doubt Jahangir's interpretation could be said to be misconstruing *syādvāda*, but Siddhicandra does not make this case.

> When angered, I am the God of Death (*kṛtānta*) before your eyes,
> but when happy I am a wishing-tree of paradise.
> Now you will reap what you have sown with your obstinacy.[192]

Jahangir then ordered an elephant brought in to be the instrument of the monk's demise. When Siddhicandra rejected Jahangir's command to marry one last time, the elephant and the crowd together roared, but the monk stood still, undisturbed. Impressed, Jahangir's anger dissipated slightly. He directed that the elephant be pulled back and imposed exile on the Jain ascetic instead of execution.[193] In addition, the shah issued a *farmān* that: "Other renunciants that wander my kingdom are to dwell in the forest since it is not appropriate that ascetics who are free of desires reside here."[194] The moral of this story remains murky at best, however. Siddhicandra stayed true to his vows despite immense pressure from the throne and staggering consequences for himself and all other renunciants who hoped for imperial alliances. Accordingly he glorified his religion, but whether he justified his presence at court is a far more open-ended question.

In narrating his exile, Siddhicandra seems to convey a serious warning about the consequences of being an ascetic in a Mughal courtly context, if not an injunction that monks are best served by staying out of politics altogether. Even if we grant that Siddhicandra defended himself admirably, he lost everything he had gained in the political sphere during this argument, which hardly renders the entire exercise worthwhile. Moreover, he caused great hardship and restrictions of movement for other renunciants. The Persian tradition offers corroborating evidence that bans forbidding Śvetāmbara ascetics to enter any cities were indeed imposed during this time. A contemporary Indo-Persian history attests that

[192] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.316-17a.

[193] Here I summarize *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.317b-33.

[194] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.334.

during Jahangir reign: "...it was also ordered that he not allow the *sīvarah* (Śvetāmbara) to enter the city [of Khambhat] and that he tell the governor of that district that if a *sīvarah* other than an elderly person appeared in the city, he will be guilty of perversions."[195] Thus Siddhi's tribulation in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* was no mere exercise in literary tropes or exaggeration but rather involved all too real consequences for the Tapā Gaccha community.

However, Siddhicandra offers his readers one more story in *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* that at least partially redeems the notion of monks at court in a sort of second ending for this troubled tale. In brief, one day Jahangir noticed that Bhānucandra, the lone Jain ascetic allowed to remain at court, looked forlorn. Jahangir asked why, and Bhānucandra responded that he missed his star pupil, at which point the emperor repented of his earlier harshness and called Siddhicandra back to court in a jubilant procession. Having reinstated the monk, Jahangir decreed that all ascetics could again go where they please, and with this the text closes. Given this finale, it seems that the hazards of life at court are worth the trouble of monks who will be vindicated, perhaps after significant hardship. Siddhicandra even puts a positive gloss on the entire affair by noting that Jahangir's anger and order of exile afforded him the opportunity to work off some bad *karma*.[196] But even at this second conclusion, the well-worded objections of Jahangir continue to percolate in readers' minds. The king's *farmān* articulates an especially potent, time-honored position within many Jain sects, namely that monks belong in the forest rather than at court.

Jain intellectuals vividly perceived the threats they faced by entering into a sphere where Mughal authority reigned supreme. But many were too attracted to the potential for

---

[195] *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, 272.

[196] *Bhānucandragaṇicarita* 4.352.

advancement and influence to refuse the invitation. In transforming their anxieties into writing they ensured that such concerns would be known to future generations. As guides for correct behavior, Jain accounts of the Mughal court leave themselves open to a variety of interpretations, but all urge thoughtful consideration of relations with political entities. In this light, perhaps one way to read the contrasting Brahmanical silence is as a suggestion that future Brahmans should not follow the path of their ancestors in accepting patronage from Persianate rulers. For the Jains, attractive if risky possibilities abounded in terms of allying themselves with Mughal power while continuing to live religious lives. But the Brahmans at the court may not have held such optimistic views and so declined to articulate probing commentaries on such questions.

Conclusion: Beyond History

Overall, Jains were acutely interested in the implications of encounters with the Mughal court for themselves and posterity. Thus, just as they recreated aspects of Mughal culture in Sanskrit, they likewise reinvented their own traditions through interactions with the Indo-Persian world. While the actual content of these representations and imaginations differs substantially from text to text, all feature relatively in-depth accounts of exchanges between Jain and Mughal figures and often tell versions of the same stories, even across sectarian lines. Also crucially, these biographies were all composed in Sanskrit, a cosmopolitan tongue whose cachet was not yet lost in Mughal India. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Jains also frequently wrote about events involving the Mughals in Gujarati, a vernacular tongue that had been used for literary purposes for several centuries already.[197]

---

[197] On literary Gujarati in early modern India see Yashaschandra, "Gujarati Literary Culture," 571-73 and Dundas, *History, Scripture and Controversy*, 7-8. On Gujarati texts that address encounters with the Mughals see Mehta, "Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature of Gujarat"; Desai, introduction to *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*, 32 n. 39; Marshall, *Mughals in India*, 1:#817 and #938.

Certainly there is much promise in considering Sanskrit and Gujarati texts that address encounters with the Mughals together, as two halves of a shared phenomenon, but such an approach remains outside of my purview here. Moreover, the choice of Sanskrit over Gujarati was not an arbitrary one but rather indicates how these intellectuals conceptualized their social and literary locations. These authors all intended a specifically Jain audience for their texts, but they nonetheless signal a cosmopolitan agenda or at least a cosmopolitan possibility by participating in the Sanskrit literary realm.

Jain intellectuals developed the cosmopolitan aspects of their works in strikingly different ways, most poignantly demonstrated by the contrast between Siddhicandra on the one hand and Devavimala and Hemavijaya on the other. Siddhicandra frames the imperial milieu as a Sanskrit realm that is closed to outside influence. In articulating a pure, all-encompassing Sanskrit world, he develops a cultural construct that never really existed before and that makes sense only in comparison to a Persian rival. For Siddhicandra, Sanskrit was intensely relevant in Mughal India as a viable alternative to the Persianate sphere, and the two cultural idioms, while being ultimately commensurable, remained utterly incomprehensible to one other. However, Devavimala and Hemavijaya tell a different narrative of the potential for Sanskrit culture to more directly encounter aspects of the Mughal milieu based on specific strengths of the Jain tradition. For Devavimala, the theological truth claims of the Tapā Gaccha and particularly of Hīravijaya allowed for Islamic beliefs to be admitted into the Sanskrit textual universe without threat. Devavimala further imagines the royal court as a pertinent environment in which to prove Jainism's superiority over Islam. For Hemavijaya, the combination of multiplicity and specificity in Jain belief structures ensured success in an identifiably Perso-Islamicate milieu.

Other Jain intellectuals add their own twists to these two main modes of interpreting relations with the Mughal court. Padmasāgara follows Devavimala in representing aspects of the Mughal world without hesitation, in his case stressing the military prowess of Humayun and Akbar. But instead of a narrative wherein Jain structures conquer Persianate or Mughal ones, he frames Mughal power as working in favor of Jain interests. Taking another approach altogether, Jayasoma remains more focused on relations between Jain sects and the social standing of particular individuals as opposed to any translocal issues involved in cross-cultural interactions. All these authors agree that the stakes of encounters with the Mughal court were high in the sense of being potentially greatly beneficial or thoroughly disastrous. But they diverge greatly in how they chose to conceptualize and present for all posterity these meetings of cultures. As a result, perhaps the greatest legacy of this collection of texts is its multifaceted diversity that attests to many Sanskrit ways of understanding Mughal India, particularly Mughal relations with Jain communities.

The most important value of these various encounters for my purposes here is not their historical truth but rather their place in different, often competing narratives. In other words, whether particular episodes actually happened or not, Jains posit that they did and chose to write about them in thoughtful ways that afford insight into how they envisioned relations with the Mughal world. Nonetheless, situated as we are in the twenty-first century with particular ideas regarding what qualifies as history, the question of veracity cannot be fully ignored. Moreover, Jain sources on the Mughals characterize their stories as historical in many respects, including offering a certain level of facticity, and were mostly composed relatively soon after the events they describe. In this sense, they stand a bit apart from the more

explicitly hagiographical tales of Akbar meeting different *bhakti* saints that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[198]

We can say with reasonable certainty that some aspects of Jain-Mughal encounters actually happened because of corroborating evidence, particularly when they are noted in both Sanskrit and Persian texts. Foremost here are Akbar's sun worship, some of the military history recorded by Padmasāgara, and the temporary banishment of ascetics from Jahangir's empire. For other episodes, the basic narratives are reasonably assured to have taken place but many of the details therein are surely imagined, such as Akbar's meetings with Hīravijaya and Siddhicandra's debate with Jahangir and Nur Mahal. Last, certain events occupy a liminal zone where they are attested in multiple Sanskrit sources but merit no mention in Mughal texts, such as the *mūla* episode and the defenses of Jain theism.[199] One might object to admitting such cases into the realm of history: can we really imagine Jahangir bowing before a Jain idol or Akbar understanding Vijayasena's eloquent speech on Jain beliefs? If we are too hasty with a negative response, I would suggest that our assessment is based on an exclusive emphasis on Persian texts and invalidates the potential of Jain works to enhance our understanding of Mughal India before we have even seriously considered them.

Modern thinkers have long privileged Persian sources in reconstructing early modern Indian history. While this preference is sometimes grounded on solid analysis it is too often derived from the dual assumptions that Persian writers were better fact-keepers and that all

---

[198] Sangari, "Tracing Akbar," 61-71.

[199] Allison Busch discusses this historiographical issue and others in her research on Braj poets in the Mughal court (*Poetry of Kings*, 130-33 and 162-65).

we care about are such facts.[200] Thus, an unintended but valuable lesson of the Jain works I discuss here is highlighting the selective and peculiar nature of Indo-Persian Mughal histories, like all premodern histories.[201] History in the western sense of the term did not exist in India before the colonial period, but members of various linguistic communities produced works that operated according to premodern and early modern modes of historical consciousness. More recently, scholars have begun to analyze these different approaches to recording the past and how events were told and retold in different literary and social contexts.[202] However, by and large, Indo-Persian studies remains focused on historical truth rather than proposing that such texts may have been composed with ambitions other than accuracy in mind. In contrast, if we conceptualize Indo-Persian histories as undeniably distinct from modern ways of thinking about the past and analyze whole texts instead of mining them for facts, we can greatly enhance our ability to conceive of the Mughal Empire as acting in multiple ways.

Moreover, once we investigate premodern histories in accordance with their own literary and cultural conventions, we can begin to appreciate the value of historical imagination just as much as what occurred in real time several hundred years ago. In many ways, history has always been prized not because of minute facts in and of themselves but because people cared about particular pasts. Thus, what is to prevent us from seriously examining what people literarily brought into being regardless of brute accuracy? What

---

[200] For a critique of Indo-Persian historiography see Mayaram, *Against History*, 78-96. For elaborations of the former point in Indian contexts see Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 304-5; on the latter point see Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, 9-10.

[201] As Sreenivasan points out, memory is no less contrived than history (*Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 6).

[202] E.g., Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*; Sreenivasan, *Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*; and Thapar, *Somanatha*. For a discussion of Jain historical consciousness in particular, see Cort, "Genres of Jain History." Prachi Deshpande exhibits a similar approach for materials that bridge the early modern to colonial periods (*Creative Pasts*). For a brief overview of modern historiographical approaches to South Asian materials see Guha, "Speaking Historically," 1084-90.

actually occurred on the ground regarding Jain-Mughal relations will never be fully known, but this was less important to contemporary Indo-Persian and Sanskrit actors alike than the possibilities for creating historical memories made available by such encounters. In a sense, we might say while the *mūla* episode did not happen in Persian, it did in Sanskrit. Whether Akbar ever actually viewed a Jain idol matters less than that Jains remembered that he did. Like the Jains, members of the Persianate tradition also recorded select aspects of their cross-cultural encounters. Thus, many Sanskrit-Persian encounters only come down to us from the Persianate tradition, such as Persian translations of Sanskrit texts and Mughal accounts of Sanskrit knowledge. These exchanges, which occupy my attention in the following chapters, offer crucial tools for reconstructing not only a lost part of Mughal history but also the role of Sanskrit in Mughal imperial ambitions.

CHAPTER 3: IMPERIAL TRANSLATION: THE PERSIAN *MAHĀBHĀRATA*

The Mughal court sponsored a series of translations from Sanskrit into Persian beginning in the mid-1570s that continued steadily throughout Akbar's reign. The centerpiece of these literary exchanges was the translation in the 1580s of the entire *Mahābhārata*, called the *Razmnāmah* (*Book of War*) in Persian. The court poured many resources into producing this translation, and the *Razmnāmah* remained a seminal work in the Mughal court for decades. While scholars have long been aware of the *Razmnāmah* and its centrality in imperial circles, nobody has offered an account of this text as a cross-cultural literary event. Some scholars tried to account for Akbar's translation project as a whole and framed his endeavors as enlightened religious policy or acts of political legitimation.[1] The *Razmnāmah* has drawn particular attention from Indologists who have analyzed the illustrations of its many manuscripts and Abū al-Faẕl's preface to the work.[2] Yet scholars have so far failed to provide any substantial textual analysis of Akbar's *Mahābhārata*, the methods of its translation, and its influence on Mughal literary culture. Here I offer an in-depth study of the *Razmnāmah* in comparison with its Sanskrit sources and trace its courtly reception in order to articulate the importance of the *Mahābhārata* to Mughal imperial objectives. The *Razmnāmah* constitutes one of the key events in Mughal encounters with Sanskrit literature through which Akbar's translators shaped a new Indo-Persian epic of deep relevance to the imperial court and polity.

---

[1] On broader translation activity under the Mughals, see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 203-22. On the translations as religious activities see Vassie, "Persian Interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the Mughal Period," 17 & Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 140 and 146. On the translations as primarily serving political ends see Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 179-83.

[2] On Abū al-Faẕl's preface see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 209 and 212-14; Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 180-82. Much has been written on illustrations of the *Razmnāmah*, but particularly see Das, *Paintings of the Razmnama*; Das, "Daswant"; Seyller, "Model and Copy," 37-66; and, most recently, Rice, "Persian Mahabharata," 125-31.

Centrality of the *Razmnāmah* and Previous Scholarship

The *Razmnāmah* was part of a surge in Mughal translation activity during the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries and yet stands apart from this much larger group of texts in its imperial potency. Only three translation attempts preceded the *Razmnāmah* in the royal Mughal court: the failed project to bring the *Atharva Veda* into Persian and two renderings of *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā* (*Thirty-Two Tales of the Throne*).[3] After the *Mahābhārata*, imperial support for translations abounded. Akbar patronized Persian renderings of various technical works, including astronomical and mathematical treatises.[4] He also liberally underwrote several additional literary translations, including narrative texts such as *Pañcatantra* (*Five Tales*) and *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*Ocean of a River of Stories*), historical chronicles like *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (*River of Kings*), and India's other great epic, *Rāmāyaṇa*. Jahangir and Shah Jahan each ordered several of these texts retranslated and also commissioned Persian versions of more philosophical works, such as *Yogavāśiṣṭha* (*Vaśiṣṭha's Treatise on Yoga*). During all three emperors' reigns, the Mughal court also produced Persian versions of texts from other languages, including Arabic, Turkish, European languages, and, increasingly in later years, Hindi.[5] Last, translations did not merely come out of the royal court but also entered into it as individual authors generated translations of their own accord and dedicated their works to the

---

[3] In 1575 Badā'ūnī attempted to translate the *Atharva Veda* with the assistance of Shaykh Bhavan and failed due to the latter's incompetence (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:212-13). Around the same time, Badā'ūnī claims to have produced a translation of *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā* (renamed *Nāmah-i Khirad Afzā'*), but this version has not yet come to light and in fact was noted as missing from the imperial library even during Badā'ūnī's lifetime (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:377). Chaturbhuj Das also produced a separate translation of *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā*, titled *Shāhnāmah* (Sachau and Ethe, *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Pushtu Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*: 1:#1324).

[4] See Shukla "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works," 179.

[5] Rizvi outlines Mughal translations from various non-Indian languages in *Religious and Intellectual History*, 220-22. On Christian works that Akbar's court translated from European languages, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations."

reigning Mughal king.[6] Akbar was no doubt the most ambitious in terms of procuring and initiating translations, and he even entreated King Phillip II of Spain to send translations of Christian texts to India.[7]

Typically, Indologists have treated this diverse group of Mughal translations as a unified whole, divided by patron, genre, or language at most. This approach has led to numerous lists of Mughal translations of Sanskrit works.[8] Such cataloguing tendencies have been quite useful in terms of outlining the nature and extent of this form of exchange between Sanskrit and Persian literary traditions. Unfortunately, to date scholars have rarely moved beyond enumerating the translations to actually analyzing them. Even the few scholars who have tried to account for Mughal translations more conceptually have been compelled by the sheer mass of their textual materials to treat the works as symbolic acts rather than as meaningful pieces of literature.[9] In effect, by always framing this large body of texts as a cohesive group, Indologists have long prevented themselves from deeply investigating any Mughal translations.

I propose instead to breakdown Mughal translation activity into a series of discrete, although interconnected, cross-cultural literary endeavors in order to more fruitfully investigate the nature of this broad phenomenon. The Mughals themselves did not

---

[6] E.g., Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan*, produced during the reign of Jahangir.

[7] Letter quoted in Flores, *Firangis in the Mughal Chancellery*, Appendix A, 87.

[8] E.g., Ali, "Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court"; Husayn, "Mughaliyah Daur Meiḥ Sanskrit"; Modi, "King Akbar and the Persian Translations of Sanskrit Books"; Mujtabai, "Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht," 137-55; Naini, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works"; Rahim, "Akbar and Translation Works," 109-17; Shukla, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works."

[9] A few notable exceptions regarding Akbar-era translations are Roderic Vassie's work on the *Bhagavadgītā* section of the *Razmnāmah* ("Persian Interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā*," 262-76) and John Seyller's attention to textual issues in his analysis of the illustration of Raḥīm's *Rāmāyan* (*Workshop and Patron*, particularly 65-80). For later translations, Tara Chand's work on Dara Shikuh's *Upaniṣad*s translation is useful ("Dārā Shikoh and the Upanishads"), and more recently Svevo D'Onofrio has offered a useful intervention ("Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads").

conceptualize their translation activity as a unified project. No contemporary Persian text treats the translations as a single, consistent trend nor are they homogeneous in method, style, or intent. We remain unclear even today about the precise number of translations that were initiated under Mughal support because no contemporary author prepared a complete list.[10] The translations sponsored by Akbar and his successors overlap in many ways and share certain similarities. Moreover, all these literary endeavors unfolded in the larger milieu of multicultural social relations that I describe in chapter 1. Nonetheless, once we admit a diversity of purposes into this body of works, we are free to consider particular translations on their own terms as speaking to specific issues of culture and power in cross-cosmopolitan encounters.

In this disaggregated view of Mughal translation activity, the *Mahābhārata* emerges as one of the key texts of Akbar's reign that impacted imperial culture for decades. As I hint at above, the court poured unparalleled resources in terms of people, attention, artists, and money into producing a Mughal *Mahābhārata* that they would never match again in a translation from Sanskrit. First, the *Razmnāmah* drew the participation of some of the greatest literary stars of the time, most obviously Abū al-Faẕl, Akbar's vizier and architect of his political philosophy, who personally composed an extensive preface to the epic that is a masterpiece of *inshā'* (stylized prose) in its own right.[11] Naqīb Khān, an important court historian, and later Fayẕī, Akbar's poet laureate, also played key roles in fashioning the *Mahābhārata* in Persian. In contrast, nearly all other translations from Sanskrit into Persian

---

[10] Our two main secondary sources from Akbar's court that discuss the translations are Badā'ūnī's *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh* and Abū al-Faẕl's *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*. Badā'ūnī mentions several of the translations, particularly the ones he worked on, piecemeal as they come up chronologically. Abū al-Faẕl lists several all together but omits many texts known to be brought into Persian under Akbar's sponsorship (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 96-97).

[11] On the genre of *inshā'* see Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India," 16-17.

involved only a single Mughal translator.[12] Second, Persian histories uniquely situate the *Mahābhārata* in the center of court life by depicting Akbar as personally maintaining an active interest throughout the translation process. In his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, Badā'ūnī attests that Akbar consulted with the *Razmnāmah* translators regularly and even challenged certain parts of the new Persian text.[13] Whether or not this is a fully accurate record of events, the significance of the *Razmnāmah* to the imperial concerns of the Mughal court mandated that official histories closely associate the epic with the king. Third, after the translation was completed, royal manuscripts were heavily gilded and illustrated by some of the more highly regarded Mughal artists.[14] Additionally, the *Razmnāmah* was frequently read out in the central court, and lower courts avidly copied and illuminated the text.[15] Last, Mughal literati reworked parts of the epic into two additional Persian *Mahābhārata*s later in Akbar's reign, as I discuss in the final section of this chapter.[16] In many of these respects the *Razmnāmah* stands apart from the larger group of Mughal translations as a markedly valued imperial work. Accordingly I focus in this chapter on Akbar's *Razmnāmah*, returning to other Mughal translations of Sanskrit texts in chapter 4.

---

[12] Akbar's *Rāmāyan* may also have involved multiple translators, as I discuss in chapter 4.

[13] Respectively, Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:320-21 and 399-400.

[14] On the illustration of the imperial *Razmnāmah* see Das, "The Imperial Razm Nama and Ramayana of the Emperor Akbar"; most of the pictures have been published in Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition*, vol. 4. A heavily gilded manuscript is the Lucknow State Museum's *Harivaṃśa*, likely produced in Akbar's court, which has burnished gold between every line of text (ms. A.N. 57,106).

[15] On the Mughals' continued engagement with the *Razmnāmah* see the notes of perusal and valuation on the colophon page of the Jaipur manuscript (discussed and translated in Chaghatai, "Illustrated Edition of the Razmnama," 286-92). In terms of sponsoring new copies, many more manuscripts of the *Razmnāmah* are extant today than for most other Mughal-sponsored translations. Scholars have detailed some of the subsequent major efforts to illustrate the text (Seyller, "Model and Copy," 37-66; Das, *Paintings of the Razmnama*).

[16] I.e., Fayẓī's *Mahābhārat* and chapter 4 of Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī's *Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn*.

My analysis of the *Razmnāmah* is comprised of three sections. First, I reconstruct the translation practices by describing the method of transmitting the epic into Persian via a verbal medium and identifying the Sanskrit sources. This analysis provides insight into the nature of the *Mahābhārata* as the Mughals understood it and also furnishes the tools necessary to proceed with deeper textual analysis. In the second section, I examine the text of the *Razmnāmah* in comparison with its Sanskrit sources in order to highlight some of the Mughal translators' key strategies for reimagining the epic in Persian.[17] In the final section, I trace the life of the *Razmnāmah* after its initial translation, particularly the imperial reception of the work as represented by three attempts to reframe and rework the Persian text in Akbar's court. Here I highlight the crucial role of the *Razmnāmah* in the production and reproduction of Mughal imperial culture. The *Razmnāmah* was a central part of the politico-cultural self-fashioning of Akbar's court through which the Mughals developed a new Indo-Persian imperial aesthetic.

Translation Infrastructure and Social Collaboration

The *Razmnāmah* was a collaborative effort that drew Sanskrit and Persian intellectuals into a common task. Nobody involved in the project knew both languages (bilingualism would not, it seems, be widespread for another few generations), and as a result two teams of translators were assembled.[18] On the Persian side, Naqīb Khān led the effort and was assisted by Mullā Shīrī, Sultan Thānīsarī, and Badā'ūnī.[19] These men served Akbar's court in a variety of

[17] Portions of these first two sections appear in Truschke, Audrey. 2011. The Mughal *Book of War*: A Persian Translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata. Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31 (2):506-20.

[18] As I discuss later in this chapter, manuscript evidence indicates that some later readers of the *Razmnāmah* were familiar with both Sanskrit and Persian.

[19] Abū al-Faẕl mentions three translators as assisting with the *Mahābhārata* and names Mullā Shīrī separately as having translated the *Harivaṃśa* (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 96-97). Badā'ūnī mentions all four without specifying

other capacities: Naqīb Khān was a historian, Mullā Shīrī a poet, Sultan Thānīsarī a fiscal administrator, and Badā'ūnī a secretary.[20] Multiple histories from Akbar's court mention the Persian translators but tell us less about the participants on the Sanskrit side of this exchange. A colophon of a 1599 *Razmnāmah*, now housed in the British Library, serves as the main source of information on these Brahmans:

> Naqīb Khān, son of 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥusaynī, translated [this work] from Sanskrit into Persian in one and a half years. Several of the learned Brahmans, such as Deva Miśra, Śatāvadhāna, Madhusūdana Miśra, Caturbhuja, and Shaykh Bhāvan... read this book and explained it in *hindī* to me, a poor wretched man, who wrote it in Persian.[21]

Mughal histories also recognize two sets of translators, and Badā'ūnī uses separate terms for the Sanskrit interpreters (*mu'abbirān*) and the Persianate translators (*mutarjimān*).[22]

Beyond the existence of two discrete groups of translators, we know little about how the many participants actually divided the work of bringing the epic into Persian. Badā'ūnī testifies that he translated two out of the eighteen books that comprise the *Mahābhārata*, which suggests that the Persian-speaking translators were each responsible for different

---

which portions individuals translated (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:319-21). Elsewhere in his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, Badā'ūnī also reiterates the key roles of Naqīb Khān and Sultan Thānīsarī (3:80-81).

[20] Naqīb Khān contributed to *Tārīkh-i Alfī* (Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*, 451) and is described by Francis Xavier, a visitor to Akbar's court, as one "whose office is to read [the King] histories" (quoted in Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Frank Disputations," 482). He was the son of Akbar's tutor and grandson of celebrated historian Mīr Yahyā (Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 86). Badā'ūnī describes Mullā Shīrī as an Indian poet (*shā'ir-i hindī*; *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:55), and he is known to have composed verses in Persian (Naik, *Literary Circle*, 400; *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 3:171-73). Mullā Shīrī died in 1586 along with Birbal in Kashmir (Husain, "Translations of the *Mahābhārata* into Arabic and Persian," 271; *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 3:173). Sultan Thānīsarī was the financial officer in charge of Thānīsar and Karnāl, despite some tensions with Akbar that 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān helped to smooth over (Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 3:80-81; Schimmel, "Khān-i Khānān Abdur Rahīm as a Patron," 207). Badā'ūnī is most well known today for his unofficial history of Akbar's reign, *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh.*

[21] Ms. BL (British Library) Persian Add. 5642, fol. 481b; ms. BL Persian Or. 12076, fol. 138b; and ms. BL IO Islamic 1702, fol. 411a. The colophon is also translated in Ali, "Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court," 41. This colophon is available in later manuscripts as well, although often lacking "*bih hindī*" (in Hindi; e.g., Delhi National Museum Persian 63.47). I have corrected the names here and in all further quotations in this chapter to reflect the original Sanskrit forms, except in cases where there were no Sanskrit forms to begin with (e.g., Barbarīk).

[22] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:321.

sections of the epic.[23] In later translations, the Mughals follow a similar method of assigning parts of each text to individuals.[24] The finished *Razmnāmah* exhibits some unevenness in its different books, such as in the use of quoted poetry, as I explicate below. Nonetheless, overall the text employs a relatively standard Persian register, and so it is difficult to confirm the precise breakdown of labor. Regardless, the larger social framework of two communities communicating across linguistic lines had several noteworthy implications in terms of the translation process and the Mughal understanding of the epic.

Most notably, as Naqīb Khān's colophon specifies, the Mughal and Brahman translators communicated orally via their shared tongue of *hindī*, in this case certainly a form of Old Hindi. Most Mughal translations from Sanskrit through Shah Jahan's reign employed a vernacular means of transmission. Badā'ūnī specifically notes the existence of Sanskrit interpreters in relation to at least three other translations in which he participated at Akbar's orders, and other translators also refer to hearing a given story from Indian informants.[25] In the *Razmnāmah*, this transmission method is reflected in phonetic changes in transliterated Sanskrit words, as well as a quoted line of Old Hindi in the fourteenth book of the epic.[26] Additionally, the vital role of Hindi in Mughal translations complicates the framework I have laid out in this dissertation of Sanskrit and Persian encounters. These cosmopolitan spheres often required an intermediary, which then introduces a third tradition to these cross-cultural

---

[23] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:320.

[24] E.g., Dara Shikuh's *Sirr-i Akbar* (D'Onofrio, "Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads," 538-39).

[25] Badā'ūnī mentions Sanskrit interpreters assisting with his translations of the *Atharva Veda*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā* (see citations in Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, 565). Also see Fayẕī's mention of an Indian storyteller (*afsānah-pardāz*) as the source for his retelling of the tale of Nala and Damayantī (*Dāstān-i Nal va Daman*, 35).

[26] For the quotation in Hindi see *Razmnāmah*, 4:389.

interactions. In the case of the *Razmnāmah*, both the Sanskrit informants and Persianate translators utilized this oral component of textual transmission in dynamic ways.

The Sanskrit informants viewed this method of communication as an opportunity for oral materials to enter the Persian *Mahābhārata* and occasionally provided access to non-written traditions. For example, the Persian *Śānti Parvan* (*Book of Peace*), book 12 of the epic, opens with the tale of Barbarīk, which is unknown in the Sanskrit textual tradition of the *Mahābhārata* but common in oral folk retellings of the epic stretching from Tamil Nadu to Himachal Pradesh.[27] Interestingly, the *Razmnāmah* gives no indication that Barbarīk's story is in any way distinct from the rest of the text, which raises the question of whether the Persianate translators were aware of the multiple origins for the *Mahābhārata* as their Indic counterparts presented it to them. Certainly the Sanskrit informants knew the non-textual provenance of the tale, but it remains unclear how much the Sanskrit pandits communicated across cultural lines regarding the sources of their rendition. The Sanskrit participants are silent about their role in the translation process as a whole, and no known Sanskrit text mentions the translation of the *Mahābhārata* into Persian. As a result we will likely never pinpoint the precise amount of knowledge and control exercised by the Indian translators, but nonetheless verbal transmission opened the door for oral stories to enter the Mughal *Mahābhārata*.

For the Mughals, verbal transmission prompted the Persianate translators to write the Brahman narrators into the *Razmnāmah* itself. Thereby they framed the entire Persian *Mahābhārata* in terms of a story being told across cultural lines. The *Razmnāmah* consistently repeats slight variations on the expressions "then the narrators of the story said…" and "then

---

[27] On Barbarīk's story in folk tellings, see Hiltebeitel, *Cult of Draupadī*, 302 and Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics*, 414-38; for the story in the *Razmnāmah*, see 3:3-5. I elaborate on Barbarīk's tale later in this chapter.

the Indian story-tellers relayed…" Such formulations occur at the beginning of most of the eighteen books of the epic and many times throughout each section. The *Razmnāmah* also preserves the various other narrative frameworks of the *Mahābhārata*, in which a bard tells the story as he heard it at the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya and so forth. Therefore, the Indian storytellers who are omnipresent throughout the *Razmnāmah* are certainly the additional layer of Sanskrit pandits who narrated the epic in the late sixteenth-century Mughal court. In illustrated manuscripts, this verbal storytelling is also articulated in a visual medium that depicts the two groups of translators conversing at court.[28] Here the Mughals begin a process that they continue to develop through various translation strategies: namely, reframing the *Mahābhārata* as a work that belongs in an Indo-Persian imperial context.

Multiple Sanskrit Sources for the Strange Tale

Despite the attention paid to hearing the *Mahābhārata* tale, Mughal records contain no mention of what Sanskrit texts they used as the basis for their translation. We are left to infer the source materials from the numerous clues within the Persian translation itself. No scholar has yet attempted to identify the *Razmnāmah*'s sources, although this is a necessary step to any comparative textual analysis. By the late sixteenth century, the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* textual tradition consisted of at least a dozen different versions that are typically defined by discrete scripts and associated with particular regions.[29] Thus, the Kashmiri *Mahābhārata* is written in Śāradā, the Tamil version in Grantha, etc. The regional versions can be loosely grouped into two grand recensions, the northern and the southern, that differ from one another primarily in their inclusion or exclusion of particular episodes and ordering of the stories. Within the

[28] Rice, "Persian Mahabharata," 127.

[29] For a discussion of *Mahābhārata* recensions and sub-recensions see Sukthankar, introduction to *Mahābhārata*, 1:vii-cvii; also Edgerton, introduction to *Mahābhārata*, 2:xxxi-l. All *Mahābhārata* citations are to the critical edition.

northern and southern recensions, each regional version is further defined by its own additions to the text and variant readings.[30] If we can identify the version of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* within this corpus used to produce the *Razmnāmah*, then it becomes possible to analyze Mughal translation strategies by reading the original and translation side by side.[31] Determining the Sanskrit source texts for the *Book of War* might also reveal some key features of the Mughal interest in this Indian epic.

Overall the Sanskrit informants communicated the text accurately and in detail to the Mughal translators. The *Razmnāmah* contains all eighteen books of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, plus the *Harivaṃśa* appendix, and the storyline is largely unchanged, complete with many of the smaller side stories and digressions.[32] In fact, the episodes selected for illustration in the imperial manuscript copy have even prompted scholars to propose that the Mughals preferred the side stories to the main narrative of the epic.[33] The Persian translation is not a line by line rendering of the Sanskrit original, and it certainly abridges portions of the text. But Akbar's translators rarely exclude sections of the narrative altogether and provide a close to literal rendering of many passages. A nineteenth century manuscript of the *Razmnāmah* contains a series of verses from the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* written in the margins intermittingly

---

[30] Pollock discusses the nonregional nature of the different recensions in *Language of the Gods* (229-33).

[31] While it is beyond my purposes here, the *Razmnāmah* may also hold important implications for the constitution of the critical edition of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. Sukthankar mentions that the Persian text, which was unedited at the time, was not consulted for the critical edition (introduction to *Mahābhārata*, 1:xxviii).

[32] Milo Beach has argued that we should view the *Harivaṃśa* as a distinct project from the *Razmnāmah* because Abū al-Faẓl mentions it separately as translated by Mullā Shīrī (*Imperial Image*, 71). However, Abū al-Faẓl recognizes the *Harivaṃśa* as an integral part of the epic in his preface to the translation ("Muqaddamah," 40). Furthermore, the Jaipur *Razmnāmah* contains the *Harivaṃśa* as do many later manuscript copies.

[33] Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition*, 4:3.

throughout the initial part of the *Ādi Parvan* (*Book of Beginnings*), the first book of the epic.[34] These Sanskrit citations match the content of the Persian text and attest that the *Razmnāmah* translation follows the original Sanskrit so closely in many parts that later readers who were familiar with both traditions would match the Persian and Sanskrit with little difficulty.

Contrary to such evidence, however, Indologists have long asserted that Mughal-era translations stray so far from their Sanskrit originals that the Sanskrit is best forgotten altogether. This erroneous idea dates back to William Jones, who proclaimed: "...my experience justifies me in pronouncing that the Mughals have no idea of accurate translation, and give that name to a mixture of gloss and text with a flimsy paraphrase of both."[35] Scholars through the twentieth century agreed with Jones and postulated that: "It may be worth while to sound a note of warning regarding the exactness of these Persian translations [from Sanskrit]: it is futile to expect a close approximation to the original text."[36] Following such logic, modern thinkers have rarely bothered to consult Sanskrit sources in work on Mughal-era translations, and accordingly the assumption that incorporating such materials would yield little insight has not been seriously challenged. There is no doubt that many Mughal renderings of Sanskrit works employ a looser approach to translation than we usually practice today. But, nonetheless, the translations are frequently closer than commonly believed, and in fact it is

---

[34] Ms. Srinagar ORL (Oriental Research Library) Persian 188, fol. 11b, 12b-13a, 14a, 16b-18a, 19a, 23a, 24a-25b, 27a, and 30b.

[35] Quoted in Habibullah, "Medieval Indo-Persian Literature relating to Hindu Science," 167. Also note a similar pronouncement by Francis Gladwyn that the *Razmnāmah*, "was nothing more than an extract, very indifferently executed" (quoted in Sarma, "Translation of Scientific Texts into Sanskrit," 72).

[36] Habibullah, "Medieval Indo-Persian Literature relating to Hindu Science," 167.

not only possible but quite constructive to identify the Sanskrit sources for many Mughal-sponsored translations, beginning with the *Razmnāmah*.[37]

The ordering of the stories and inclusion or exclusion of particular episodes attest quite clearly that the majority of the *Razmnāmah* follows the northern recension of the *Mahābhārata*.[38] A northern recension source is unsurprising given the location of Akbar's court, but this identification allows us to concentrate more narrowly within the northern recension to address the slightly trickier question of which regional version of the epic the Mughals utilized. Beyond its broad storyline, the *Razmnāmah* contains further internal evidence that indicates the regional source version, primarily by faithfully reproducing the *Mahābhārata*'s long genealogical lists and names of various gods. Such lists have substantial variants among regional *Mahābhārata*s, and thus, we can use the *Razmnāmah*'s transliterations of these sections to see which version must have been in front of the Sanskrit pandits who read the names to the Mughal translators. This mode of analysis, however, presents some difficulties since the Mughals did not adopt any standardized transliteration system and the names often vary between *Razmnāmah* manuscripts. Moreover, the master copy of the translation produced for Akbar's court, while extant, is now held in the collection of the Maharaja of Jaipur and inaccessible to scholars.[39] Finally, the Sanskrit manuscripts of the northern recension are themselves rarely as old as the Mughal translation, and therefore a certain amount of temporal

---

[37] Svevo D'Onofrio makes a similar point in relation to *Sirr-i Akbar*, a rendering and reworking of certain *Upaniṣad*s into Persian under Dara Shikuh ("Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads," particularly 534-35).

[38] I have checked key components of all eighteen books of the translation against the critical edition of the Sanskrit text in making this determination as well as Abū al-Faẓl's preface in which he summarizes the epic based on the *parvasaṅgraha* (table of contents given in the opening of the *Mahābhārata*). Note that since the books of the *Mahābhārata* often circulated separately, checking each book individually is important. I have not determined the *Harivaṃśa* recension because the text has not been printed. Book 14 is the exception in not following the northern recension, as I elaborate on below. For Abū al-Faẓl's summary, compare "Muqaddamah," 37-40 and *Mahābhārata* 1.2.

[39] For a description of the Jaipur manuscript see Seyller, "Inspection and Valuation," 307-8.

dislocation taints any reliance on the critical edition of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* for such precise analysis. Despite these obstacles, a comparison of several lists of names in the Sanskrit text with both the printed *Razmnāmah* and select sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century manuscript copies reveals that the *Razmnāmah* consistently corresponds most closely with the Devanagari version of the *Mahābhārata*.[40]

On its own, the Devanagari version yields little insight into the Mughal encounter with the *Mahābhārata* since it was the most eclectic and widespread of all the versions of the epic, often drawing extensively on other regional traditions. This flexibility accords well with the inclusion of folk stories that I reference above. Also the Devanagari version had gained widespread currency across north and central India by the late sixteenth century, and so it appears that the Mughals did precisely what we would have expected and found the most easily available, popular redaction of the story to render into Persian.[41] However, the *Razmnāmah* deviates from its overall reliance on the Devanagari version in one case that provides deeper insight into the particular Mughal interests in this Sanskrit epic: the fourteenth book is drawn from a separate text altogether.

---

[40] In addition to a variety of shorter checks, I have analyzed three lists of names in detail, selected for their length, variants, and distribution: the snake names in book 1 (*Mahābhārata* 1.52.5-17; *Razmnāmah*, 1:52-53), the names of Śiva that are not present in the critical edition but appear in book 12 of much of the Devanagari corpus (*Mahābhārata*, 16:app. 1, no. 28, lines 160-346; *Razmnāmah*, 3:394-408), and a list in book 13 (*Mahābhārata* 13.151.2-50; *Razmnāmah*, 4:211-13). Chief among the early manuscripts I have consulted are BL Persian Add. 5641/5642 (dated 1598-99), Aligarh Muslim University, University Collection No. Persian/Ikhbar 2 (1604-5), and Birla *Razmnāmah* (1605). In addition BL Or. 12076, which contains books 14-18, is dated 1598-99, and the Lucknow *Harivaṃśa* A.N. 57,106 likely dates to the 1590s (Skelton, "Mughal Paintings from Harivaṃśa Manuscript," 52). I have not determined the recension of the *Harivaṃśa*.

[41] Sukthankar, introduction to *Mahābhārata*, 1:lxii-lxiii.

This book, the *Aśvamedha Parvan* (*Horse Sacrifice Book*), is based on the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*, an alternative and starkly different Sanskrit retelling of this section of the epic.[42] The *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* is an anonymous work, likely composed in the twelfth century, which proved popular both in Sanskrit and in vernacular translations.[43] The Sanskrit text remains understudied but survives in at least two hundred manuscript copies on the subcontinent that are clustered in northern India and predominantly written in the Devanagari script.[44] Most crucially for the Mughals, the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* is a much more exciting and vivid tale than its canonical counterpart. In its fourteenth book, the *Mahābhārata* tells the story of Yudhiṣṭhira's decision to perform the horse sacrifice in order to solidify his kingship. However, the sacrifice quickly gets put on hold as Kṛṣṇa digresses into a long discourse on philosophical ideas, often characterized as a rehashing of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In short, it's a lot of talk and no action. In contrast, the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* omits Kṛṣṇa's speech altogether and instead narrates Arjuna's adventures as he travels around India following the sacrificial horse. He stumbles upon a kingdom where only women live, visits a place where all men are born from trees and die within the same day, and has his head cut off and reattached. Arjuna also fights his own son in a dramatic battle, and the middle of the book contains a digression into the wars and dramas of

---

[42] Art historians have known for well over a century that the fourteenth book of the *Razmnāmah* follows the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*, but have not commented on the implications of this beyond the illustrations (Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition*, 4:29; more recently see Seyller, "Model and Copy," 46).

[43] J. Derrett dates the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* between 1100-1200 CE on the basis of its textual references ("Greece and India," 22-27). On the work's popularity and vernacular versions see Koskikallio and Vielle, "Epic and Puranic Texts," 71-74. Gita Press has published the Sanskrit text, and the critical edition also summarizes its contents in comparison to the canonical version (Karmarkar, introduction to *Mahābhārata*, 18:xxiv-xliv).

[44] Koskikallio and Vielle, "Epic and Puranic Texts," 73-74.

the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[45] In Persian, these lively and bizarre narratives fall easily into the category of *dāstān* (narrative literature) that was often full of fantastical elements (*‘ajā’ib*).

‘Ajā’ib qualities featured prominently as a mode of interpreting the Indian other within the Mughal imagination. This emphasis was part of a widespread interest in marvelous, strange tales that manifested itself in various forms, including traveling stories, throughout Asia and Europe.[46] Islamicate encounters with Indian cultures had also long featured a strong emphasis on *‘ajā’ib*.[47] Akbar’s court in particular demonstrated its penchant for fantastical stories with the labor devoted to illustrating the *Ḥamzanāmah* (*Tales of Amīr Ḥamza*) for several years preceding the *Razmnāmah* illustrations.[48] In his preface, Abū al-Faẓl even compares the *Razmnāmah* to Amīr Ḥamza’s story and exclaims how the former is even more astonishing than the latter, bordering on unbelievable.[49] Moreover, Akbar’s translators encountered Sanskrit texts through the framework of *‘ajā’ib* elements from the very beginning. When the Mughals initially decided to engage with the Sanskrit tradition they selected the *Atharva Veda* as the first text to be translated, a work that contained largely spells and charms as the Mughals understood it. Badā’ūnī, the first translator to tackle the text, describes the *Atharva Veda* in his

---

[45] The references for these stories are as follows: the kingdom of women (*Razmnāmah*, 4:292-94), tree-born men who live a single day (295), Arjuna’s head problems (354-56 and 365-66), Arjuna’s conflict with his son (350-56), and adventures from the *Ramayana* (309-50). On the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*’s description of the *strīrājya* (kingdom of women), see W.L. Smith, “Strīrājya,” 471-75.

[46] Flores, “Distant Wonders.”

[47] Behl, “Magic Doe,” 197-99; Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 19; Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 25.

[48] Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 205; Beach, *Imperial Image*, 58-59. For an in-depth analysis of the *Ḥamzanāmah* see Seyller, John. 2002. *The Adventures of Hamza: Painting and Storytelling in Mughal India*. Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. There were several smaller imperially illustrated manuscripts between *Ḥamzanāmah* and *Razmnāmah* (see the list in Wade, *Imaging Sound*, 208-9; note that Wade’s date for the Freer *Rāmāyan* is too early).

[49] “Muqaddamah,” 34. Previous scholars have suggested, incorrectly I think, that the *Razmnāmah* represented a turn away from “fantastic or mythological narratives” (Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 48).

history of Akbar's reign primarily by noting some oddities of the work.[50] *Dabistān-i Maẕāhib*, a mid-seventeenth century Persian work on Indian religions, explicitly articulates the Indo-Persian opinion that "…spells, incantations, magic, devices, and deceptions are contained in the [*Atharva Veda*]."[51] After exhausting three translators, the Mughals ultimately declared the *Atharva Veda* too difficult to understand and abandoned their inaugural translation project. But they continued to emphasize an *'ajā'ib* framework in their encounter with subsequent Sanskrit texts, including the *Mahābhārata*.

In his preface to the *Razmnāmah*, Abū al-Faẓl summarizes the contents of the epic and frequently remarks on the wondrous nature of its stories. He often lapses into hyperbole to express his astonishment, exclaiming, "I see such agitation in myself from hearing these stories that what can I write?" and "In this book, such extraordinary things are on every page, in every section, in every chapter."[52] Mullā Shīrī, one of the translators, is also reported to have characterized the epic as containing "rambling stories that are like dreams of a feverish man hallucinating."[53] In a letter to Prince Murad, Akbar himself describes the *Mahābhārata* as "containing strange stories."[54] As I discuss in more detail below, the *Razmnāmah* often exhibits *'ajā'ib* features that frequently appear in *dāstān* tales, such as magical spells (*afsūn*). The Mughal court seems to have celebrated the marvelous quality of the *Aśvamedha Parvan* in particular by

---

[50] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:212-13.

[51] *Dabistān-i Maẕāhib*, 1:139. On this work see Behl, "Pages from the Book of Religions."

[52] "Muqaddamah," 24, 24-25.

[53] Badā'ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 3:173; also cited in Naik, *Literary Circle*, 401.

[54] [*Mahābhārat*] *qiṣṣahhā-yi gharīb dārad* (*Akbarnāmah*, ms. BL Persian Add. 27,247, fol. 403b; also see Moosvi, *Episodes in the Life of Akbar*, 94).

disproportionately illustrating this section in the first illuminated manuscript.[55] At one point in the *Aśvamedha Parvan*, one of the epic characters even exclaims upon hearing about the sacrificial horse changing shapes into different animals: "This speech is full of strange things (*'ajā'ib*)!"[56] In light of these numerous emphases, *'ajā'ib* features are likely what drew the Mughals to the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* instead of its more standard counterpart and even, in some ways, to the *Mahābhārata* as a whole.

However, this argument is complicated by the possibility that the Mughal translators may not have been aware of the multiplicity of Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*s and thus may not have made a conscious choice to translate one version over another in the fourteenth book. The translation flows seamlessly from the earlier thirteen books based on the Devanagari version into the fourteenth book based on the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*, and no Mughal work ever frames the fourteenth book as different from the rest of the epic as a single, strange tale. Later Indo-Persian literati were aware of the source for the Mughal *Aśvamedha Parvan*, and a colophon to a 1729 manuscript notes its affiliation with Jaimini.[57] At some point a Persianate translator also went back to the Sanskrit tradition and rendered the canonical *Aśvamedha Parvan* into Persian, which survives in a few manuscript copies today.[58] But, as with the oral folktale of Barbarīk, we lack evidence Akbar's court was aware of the particular origins of its Sanskrit source materials. Nonetheless, if not the Mughals themselves, then most likely the Sanskrit informants, who

---

[55] Despite not being the longest, book 14 is the most heavily illustrated *parvan* of the Jaipur *Razmnāmah* (Seyller, "Model and Copy," 46). For a comparison of illustrations of the *Aśvamedha Parvan* among the earliest illuminated manuscripts see Das, "Notes on Four Illustrations," 74-78.

[56] *Razmnāmah*, 4:291.

[57] Colophon of ms. Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Suleman Collection 35/22, reproduced in Zaidi, *Hinduism in Aligarh Manuscripts*, 22.

[58] To date, I have found two: ms. Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Suleman Collection 27/14 and ms. Royal Asiatic Society of London, Persian #15, fol. 1b-37b.

surely provided copies of the *Mahābhārata* to Akbar's court, presented the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* for translation because they thought the Mughals would appreciate its captivating, lively narrative. Regardless of the agency involved, reliance on the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* highlights '*ajā'ib* elements as an important characteristic in Mughal courtly translations, either by their own choice or the perception of their Sanskrit informants.

An additional possible explanation for selecting the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha* is that the Sanskrit collaborators were drawn to the text's focus on Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* (devotion).[59] But this reasoning is less likely because the Persian *Razmnāmah* does not evince any consistent agenda to deify Kṛṣṇa.[60] I elaborate below on the *Razmnāmah*'s treatment of religious elements, including Indic gods, but it is worth noting here that theological interests do influence later translations from Sanskrit in the Mughal courts. Svevo D'Onofrio has persuasively argued that we can identify the sectarian affiliations of the Sanskrit collaborators who worked on a certain translation under Dara Shikuh precisely because their interpretations of the texts were thoroughly shaped by their religious precepts.[61] But the *Razmnāmah* exhibits no parallel impact, and thus it is more consistent with the evidence presented above to identify narrative reasons as the primary motivation for the translation of the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*. The Mughals outline their understandings of the *Mahābhārata* much more precisely in the translation itself, to which we can now turn armed with the ability to compare the Persian and Sanskrit texts.

---

[59] Koskikallio and Vielle mention this aspect of the text in "Epic and Puranic Texts," 67; also see discussion in Sen, introduction to *Jaiminiya Ashvamedha Parvan*, 40-44.

[60] E.g., see my analysis of the *Bhagavadgītā* below.

[61] D'Onofrio, "Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads."

Making a Mughal Epic through Translation Practices

The Mughals employ multiple translation strategies throughout the *Razmnāmah* in order to produce an imperially relevant text. Four types of literary practices offer particularly valuable insight into how the Mughals fashioned their *Mahābhārata*: the preservation of Sanskrit words in translation, the overlay of different religious traditions, the insertion into the text of Persian poetry, and the distinctive treatment of political advice. First, the transliteration instead of translation of Sanskrit words enabled the Mughals to develop a Sanskrit-inflected linguistic register throughout the *Razmnāmah* that highlights the foreign, Indic nature of the *Mahābhārata*. Second, in attempting to make sense of the religious aspects of the epic, the translators incorporate their own Islamic notions, most prominently a monotheistic God, while simultaneously retaining Indic gods and spiritual elements. Third, the translators sprinkle hundreds of verses of Persian poetry throughout the *Razmnāmah* that express the sentiments of the *Mahābhārata* in a way culturally relevant to a Persian-speaking elite while also developing areas of the epic that address kingship. Last, in addition to heavy use of poetry, the Mughals further alter much of the content of the epic's political sections in order to design a work that offers pertinent kingly advice. Together these four translation practices participate in the creation of a Mughal imperial aesthetic and designate the *Razmnāmah* as an Indo-Persian epic.

Cultivating an Indo-Persian Register

The Mughal translators employ Sanskrit words and phrases in several different ways in the *Razmnāmah* that develop a web of associations between the epic and Indo-Persian forms of knowledge. First, the *Razmnāmah* preserves a wide range of transliterated Sanskrit terms that lend a heavy Indic register to the Persian text. At times this register builds upon the *'ajā'ib*

framework of emphasizing strange Indian features, but it also adds significant substance to the *Razmnāmah* as an *Indo*-Persian text. Many such terms denote culturally specific concepts, such as *gandharb* (*gandharva*), a class of mythical beings, *narak* (*naraka*), the underworld, and *pūrān* (*purāṇa*), a specific genre of ancient tales. Other times, the translators invoke Sanskrit words even when there are readily available Persian equivalents, such as *chakar* (*cakra*), *nachhatar* (*nakṣatra*), and *pitar* (*pitṛ*), meaning discus, constellation, and father respectively. Through the consistent and liberal use of Sanskrit vocabulary on nearly every page of the *Razmnāmah*, the Mughal translators craft a literary texture that defines the *Razmnāmah* as a cross-cultural epic.[62] Certain words, such as *Veda* (*bīd* in Persian), might strike us as untranslatable, but the Mughals make an important choice in forgoing approximate terms. *Naraka* could be reframed as *dūzakh* (hell), a *ṛṣi* (sage) referred to as a *dānā* (wise man), and *purāṇa* transformed into *tārīkh* (history). Such loose translations would change the meaning and resonances of the *Mahābhārata*, but so too did transliterating and thereby transforming Sanskrit words into a crucial component of the *Razmnāmah*'s cultural idiom.

The Mughals also actively cultivate a body of detailed Indian knowledge in the text's readers. In the case of many individual Sanskrit words, the translators clearly intended for readers to learn the Sanskrit vocabulary used in the Persian text in order to understand the story. The translators further include many passages that detail specific types of Sanskrit knowledge, such as different genres of Sanskrit texts, information concerning the caste system, and lists of social groups. On certain occasions, the Mughal translators even elaborate beyond the source text to clarify the specific information eluded to therein. For example, a passage early in the *Śānti Parvan* references six types of forts. Whereas the Sanskrit leaves the

---

[62] On Indic literary registers that draw from both Sanskrit and Persian traditions, see Busch, "*Riti* and Register."

names of the different types unarticulated, the Persian fills in the proper Sanskrit names for all six fort classifications, presumably based on knowledge solicited from the Sanskrit informants.[63] The Mughals also occasionally update Sanskrit knowledge in order to reflect their modern context. For example, a list of ethnic and tribal communities in the *Śānti Parvan* retains original Sanskrit classifications, such as *uśīnara* and *kāmboja*, but also adds Sikhs, a new religious sect in early modern India.[64] In such instances, the Mughals viewed Sanskrit knowledge as worth elaborating and revising to clarify its pertinence to their contemporary situation.

In some instances, this process of outlining new vocabulary prompts the Mughals to replace or translate Sanskrit words with other Sanskrit words that had long ago entered Indo-Persian parlance. Here the Mughals both draw upon and simultaneously redefine the contours of Indo-Persian culture through their encounter with the *Mahābhārata*. For example, Agastya, a sage in the epic whose name denotes the star Canopus, is appropriately renamed Suhayl, the Persian term for the same star, in the *Razmnāmah*, an equivalence that had been established as early as the fourteenth century.[65] More interestingly, in book 5 of the text, a *purohita* in Sanskrit, a Brahman family priest, becomes a Persian *brahman* (from the Sanskrit *brāhmaṇa*).[66] *Brahman* had been used in Indo-Persian poetry for several centuries preceding the Mughal Empire in the Persianate sense of an individual devoted to idol worship. The *Razmnāmah* redefines this term once more by resituating it within an Indian context and explores Brahmans not as a typology or a Persian literary trope, but as individuals within elaborate

---

[63] Compare *Mahābhārata* 12.56.35 and *Razmnāmah*, 3:26.

[64] *Razmnāmah*, 3:86; Cf. to *Mahābhārata* 12.102.4-5.

[65] The words are listed in synonyms in Salakṣa's fourteenth-century lexicon of Sanskrit and Persian, titled *Śabdavilāsa* (Ahmedabad LD Institute of Indology 8311, fol. 1a, v. 14).

[66] *Razmnāmah*, 1:470; *Mahābhārata* 5.20.1. See also *Razmnāmah*, 3:59, where *purohita* is defined as a *brahman*.

narratives. In this sense, the Mughal translators both tap into an existing framework of Islamicate views of the Indian other as well as introduce new cultural specificity to an Indo-Persian register.

The *Razmnāmah* also contains a few extended quotations of Sanskrit that operate more as literary signals than linguistically meaningful text. The most noteworthy case occurs in the *Ādi Parvan*, where the translators insert several full Sanskrit verses during a scene replete with *'ajā'ib* features. In this section, the sage Āstīka saves the snakes from demise during the sacrifice of Janamejaya. The snakes offer Āstīka a boon in thanks, and he requests a spell (*afsūn*) that will protect the speaker against venomous bites. The grateful snakes then, "agreed that no snake will come to the home of anyone who says this spell and that wherever he says it, every snake there will flee. The magic is this..."[67] Then the *Razmnāmah* produces several full Sanskrit verses transliterated into Persian. The linguistic meaning of these lines is irrelevant to the Persian translators who offer no further explanation or gloss but are interested in the magical powers contained in the Sanskrit sounds.[68] The verses quickly became corrupt in later manuscripts of the *Razmnāmah*, but the Sanskrit was never lost or translated. Three later copies of the text contain separate reconstructions of these verses in Devanagari script in the margins by later readers but still no translation, as some Sanskrit expressions cannot be put into Persian words.[69]

Last, the *Razmnāmah* contains a number of lengthy lists of Sanskrit names and titles, often in genealogies. Most books of the Persian translation have several such lists, whether

---

[67] *Razmnāmah*, 1:53-54.

[68] I have reconstructed these verses in Sanskrit and translated them in the Appendix.

[69] Ms. Patna Khuda Bakhsh Persian 2714, fol. 29b; Srinagar ORL Persian 1294, fol. 31b; Oxford Bodleian Ouseley 239, fol. 55b.

epithets of Sūrya (the sun god), names of gods and learned sages, or the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.[70] Such catalogue-style information accurately reflects the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, but it had also long been crucial to the Islamicate tradition's encounter with India. Al-Bīrūnī carefully preserved lists of place names from the *purāṇa*s in his eleventh-century account of the subcontinent.[71] In the early sixteenth century, Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty, detailed the local names of Indian animals, flora, and fauna in his memoirs.[72] The *Razmnāmah* expands on this trend in the sheer number of Sanskrit lists it retains in its retelling of the epic story. In the early manuscript tradition, scribes were often careful to write out diacritic marks for these names so that their pronunciation was clear in the Persian script (which does not normally indicate short vowels).[73] Later manuscripts, often copied by Persian scribes without input from Sanskrit intellectuals, frequently forget the diacritics and bungle the words, but all retain the lists nonetheless. Some even continued to emphasize their importance by overlining the names or numbering them.[74] Even when intelligibility ceases, the idea remained current that cataloguing Sanskrit names and foregrounding foreign, *'ajā'ib* qualities in the text was an essential aspect of the Mughal *Mahābhārata*.

Acculturation and Anxieties in a Crowded Divine Landscape

Whereas the Mughals treat Sanskrit terms largely within an Islamicate tradition of how to understand an Indian other, they act more liberally in respect to religious elements of the epic. The Mughal translators render much of the *Mahābhārata*'s religious framework intact, but

---

[70] Respectively, *Razmnāmah*, 1:269-72; 4:211-13; 1:122-25.

[71] *Alberuni's India*, 1:299-303.

[72] *Baburnama*, 335-50.

[73] E.g., ms. Birla *Razmnāmah*, 2:fol. 481a-82a.

[74] For example, ms. Patna Khuda Bakhsh Persian 2718, fol. 49a-51a (dated 1770 CE).

also frequently overlay it with Islamic concepts.[75] The Mughal translators employ many Sanskrit terms for divine beings, including *dīv* (*deva*), *dīvat* (*devatā*), *nārāyan* (*nārāyaṇa*), and *bhagavān*.[76] They also articulate the Sanskrit concept of *avatāra*s (incarnations of gods) and mention many specific deities. Yet, at other points the translators interpolate Islamic phrases, often in Qur'anic Arabic, in praise of a monotheistic deity that is no other than Allah. While for the most part these two religious frameworks comfortably coexist in the *Razmnāmah*, the Mughals signal two types of discomfort with the potential religious implications of their *Mahābhārata*. First, they attempted to elide the perceived Hindu message of the *Bhagavadgītā* by drastically shortening and reframing this section. Second, the Mughals sought to avoid writing their own detailed theology, if not a basic monotheistic framework, into the *Mahābhārata*. Overall, the Mughals draw freely on religious sentiments as a means of loose acculturation for a new audience while definitively precluding any theological reading of the epic.

The Mughal translators sometimes replace Indian gods in the *Mahābhārata* with a monotheistic God. For example, the opening of the *Mahābhārata* tells of its own recitation, which begins with the narrator praising the Hindu god Brahma. The *Razmnāmah* retains this meta-framework but recasts Brahma as *khudāvand* (God): "When the *Sūtapūrānik* (narrator, from the Sanskrit *sūtapaurāṇika*) knew that Śaunaka and the others desired to hear this story, he began the tale. He first invoked the name of God, Great be his Glory and Magnificent his Bounty (*jalla jalālahu wa ʿamma nawālahu*)."[77] This monotheistic God who prompts Arabic praises appears frequently throughout the *Razmnāmah*, but not always at the expense of Hindu

---

[75] Here I avoid the thorny question of what religious view or views the *Mahābhārata* may actually express. The Mughals understood the text as representing a more or less cohesive tradition.

[76] Note that some later manuscripts, generally written by Hindu scribes, replace mentions of *khudāvand* with *bhagavān* (e.g., *Tarjumah-i Razmnāmah*, ms. Hyderabad Oriental Manuscript Library Tarikh 266).

[77] *Razmnāmah*, 1:2.

gods. Instead, the translators more often place Allah alongside his polytheistic counterparts, sometimes in haphazard ways. For example, during the great war Duryodhana boasts about his veneration of an Islamic God described as Creator (*āfarīdgār*) and *khudāvand*. After Duryodhana reminds the cosmos of his monotheistic piety, flowers and *gandharva* songs, which are both typically associated with Hindu deities, issue forth from the sky.[78] Shortly after the end of the war, Gāndhārī asks *khudāvand* to curse Kṛṣṇa because of the latter's instrumental role in the recent slaughter.[79] Elsewhere in the epic, during a digression into the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma's son, Lava, praises Sūrya by saying, "Whatever people ask of *khudā*, you serve as the mediator and petition *khudā*."[80]

The story of Nala and Damayantī presents a striking case study for the thoroughly mixed religious landscape of Akbar's *Mahābhārata*. In the tale, Nala attends Damayantī's *svayaṃvara* where she will choose her husband. Damayantī desires Nala, but four *devatā*s disguise themselves as Nala in an attempt to trick her into choosing one of them as her husband. In the Sanskrit text, Damayantī appeals to the plethora of gods causing trouble to desist from their deceit.[81] But in Persian, in the midst of *devatā*s who all look like Nala, Damayantī prays to God, "God, May He be Exalted and Glorified!" (*khudā-yi 'azz wa jall*).[82] She then addresses God, beginning: "O Solver of Obstacles and Leader of the Lost (*ay gushāyandah-i kārhā-yi bastah va ay rāhnamā-yi gumshudigān*)."[83] Here the Qur'anic reference is unmistakable as

---

[78] *Razmnāmah*, 2:475.

[79] *Razmnāmah*, 2:502.

[80] *Razmnāmah*, 4:334.

[81] *Mahābhārata* 3.54.16-20.

[82] *Razmnāmah*, 1:300.

[83] *Razmnāmah*, 1:300.

Opener (*gushāyandah*) and Leader (*rāhnamā*) correspond to two Qur'anic names for God.[84] The Islamic notion of a single God apart from the world stands in stark contrast to the multitude of physically present, often devious Hindu deities. Yet, for the most part, these two worlds seem to meld together happily in the *Razmnāmah*.

On occasion, however, the translators more drastically rewrite the religious framework of the *Mahābhārata*, such as when they truncate the *Bhagavadgītā* and alter the nature of Kṛṣṇa and his message therein. Here too cultural intelligibility seems to trump any interest in ideology, and the treatment of the *Bhagavadgītā* signals a strong Mughal interest in avoiding theology in their retelling of the epic. In the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavadgītā* offers the final attempt to address the deep moral ambiguities of war before the slaughter ensues. Time seems to stand still with armies arrayed on both sides of the battlefield as Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna that he must fight by way of a philosophically dense discourse about the nature of the universe, *dharma*, and human action. In comparison to seven hundred or so verses in Sanskrit, the *Bhagavadgītā* occupies a mere few pages of the *Razmnāmah*.[85] The Persian translation provides a barebones sketch of the conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, including the basic teaching that Arjuna is not morally culpable for killing his kinsmen and should participate in the impending war. However, the *Razmnāmah* eliminates any further abstract reflections on the different types of yoga and other concepts so that the focus remains on the battle itself rather than providing an ethical climax of the epic.

---

[84] *Al-fatāḥ* and *al-hādi*, respectively. I am grateful to Hossein Kamaly for this insight.

[85] In their edition, Naini and Shukla replace the *Razmnāmah*'s meager *Bhagavadgītā* with the fuller version attributed to Dara Shikuh (introduction to *Razmnāmah*, 2:3; Dara Shikuh's version can be found in *Razmnāmah*, 2:11-110). The *Razmnāmah Bhagavadgītā* is available in Vassie, "Persian interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā*," 265-68, corresponding to *Mahābhārata* 6.23-40. Also see *Mahābhārat-i Fārsī: Bhīkham Parb*, 7-10.

In other contemporary works the Mughals show substantial interest in explicating Indian religious ideas, but they seemed to feel that such topics did not belong in the *Razmnāmah*. In his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (*Akbar's Institutes*), Abū al-Faẕl provides an extensive account of Sanskrit knowledge systems, detailing the positions of nine Indian philosophical schools and various religious ideas and practices.[86] Other Mughal translations, such as Dara Shikuh's version of the *Upaniṣad*s, address religious questions quite directly.[87] The *Bhagavadgītā* itself was even rendered into Persian several times during Mughal rule, and the first translation may have been in Akbar's court.[88] But these independent *Bhagavadgītā*s tell us little about how the Mughals conceptualized the *Mahābhārata*, except that they understood the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavadgītā* as separate (or separable) texts. Some modern scholars have asserted that Naqīb Khān omitted the *Bhagavadgītā* out of respect for Akbar's poet laureate, Fayẕī, who had previously translated the work.[89] However, there is no evidence for this reasoning nor are we certain that Fayẕī ever translated the *Bhagavadgītā*, much less before the completion of the *Razmnāmah*.[90] Rather, the abridgment of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the *Razmnāmah* is more simply explained as an indication that the Mughals did not wish to halt the story for a religious reflection, particularly a quintessentially Hindu one. Akbar's translators also truncate a section

---

[86] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 433-556; see my analysis in chapter 4.

[87] D'Onofrio has effectively argued that *Sirr-i Akbar* reflects the Advaitic leanings of the Sanskrit pandits involved in the translation ("Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads").

[88] There are multiple early modern translations of the *Bhagavadgītā* into Persian, several of which are attributed to either Fayẕī or Abū al-Faẕl. More manuscript work is needed to sort out the dates and correct authors of these texts (see Ahuja, "Some Aspects of the Persian Prose Translation of the Gita Ascribed to Abu'l-Fazl," 20-27; Dayal, introduction to *Gita in Persian*, xi-xiii).

[89] Introduction to *Razmnāmah*, 3:32.

[90] Additionally the Mughals had no qualms with retranslating texts, and Akbar commissioned multiple translations of the *Mahābhārata*, *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā*, and *Pañcatantra*.

on pilgrimage locations and their associated stories in the ninth book of the *Mahābhārata*.[91] Yet, in other sections, most notably in the *Śānti Parvan*, the translators step back from the narrative in order to offer lengthy political advice, as I discuss below. Thus, it seems that the Mughals wished to avoid the theological content in particular of certain sections of the text.

This understanding of the *Bhagavadgītā* as theologically awkward for the Mughals is confirmed by how the translators rewrite the content of the shortened *Bhagavadgītā* to reflect a much stronger Islamic framework than is present in the *Razmnāmah* as a whole. The *Razmnāmah Bhagavadgītā* opens like the Sanskrit with Arjuna positioning his chariot between the two armies ready for war.[92] When Arjuna has his crisis of confidence, the Sanskrit Kṛṣṇa speaks to him not only as a teacher, but also as an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu, and articulates a series of ideas about *dharma*, *karma*, and other Indian philosophical concepts. In contrast, the *Razmnāmah* Kṛṣṇa is the teacher of truth, but not a divine figure, and he speaks of God's will as external to himself throughout his discourse. In the *Razmnāmah*, Kṛṣṇa articulates the distinction between himself as a messenger and God quite clearly at the close of the *Bhagavadgītā* in explaining why he became involved in the war at all:

> So long as I am ignorant of what God Exalted (*khudāvand-i ta'ālá*) has ordained, I do not interfere. If I had not known the state of the Kauravas and the wrath of God Exalted towards them, I would not have come to the battlefield and encouraged you in this matter. But I knew that they all must be killed and that therein is the happiness of God Exalted.[93]

The strong religious content of the *Bhagavadgītā* may have compelled the Mughals to thoroughly rework this section of the epic, but they were not consistent in their vision of an Islamic, almost prophet-like Kṛṣṇa. Elsewhere in the *Razmnāmah* Kṛṣṇa is portrayed as an

---

[91] *Mahābhārata* 9.29-53.

[92] Vassie, "Persian interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā*," 265; *Mahābhārata* 6.23.20-25.

[93] Vassie, "Persian Interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā*," 268. Elsewhere in the *Razmnāmah*, Kṛṣṇa and God are also explicitly depicted as separate (e.g., the curse of Gāndhārī referenced above in *Razmnāmah*, 2:502).

Indian *deva* and even equated to *khudā*, the Islamic God.[94] Thus, rather than accurately representing Indic beliefs or consistently overwriting them with Islamic ideas, the Mughals strike a middle ground approach that accommodates multiple positions while erasing any deep Hindu theology.

In light of this varied approach to religion, we can most fruitfully understand the treatment of religious elements in the *Razmnāmah* as part of a cultural accommodation for a Mughal, predominantly Islamic audience rather than tied to any specifically theological objectives. The translators themselves may have had no other way of understanding religious aspects of the text than by some rough parity with their own tradition.[95] Thus, they developed a dynamic equivalence that renders an overly Hindu *Bhagavadgītā* within a monotheistic framework while truncating the text to avoid devoting too much time to either Hindu or Islamic theology. Where possible the translators also strive towards some conception of faithfulness to the text, and so in other sections, such as Damayantī's *svayaṃvara*, God and the gods share the stage.

The Mughals followed a long-standing Persianate tradition in their willingness to alter theological aspects of Sanskrit texts. Earlier translations frequently evaded Hindu religious ideas to a much greater degree. For example, in the fourteenth century Firuz Shah Tughluq sponsored a translation of Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* into Persian. The translator, 'Abd al-Azīz Shams Bahā-yi Nūrī, excised eight out of one hundred and four chapters "because of the heresy" (*sabab-i kufr*) contained therein.[96] Most of the expunged sections featured Hindu idols

---

[94] E.g., on the latter point, *Razmnāmah*, 1:240.

[95] Aditya Behl explores some of the complexities in such equivalence exercises ("Premodern Negotiations," 89-92). Also see Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence."

[96] *Tarjumah-i Barāhī*, ms. BL IO Islamic 1262, fol. 2a-b. The author is also known as 'Abd al-Azīz Shams Thānīsarī (Jalali and Ansari, "Persian Translation of Varāhamihira's Bṛhatsaṃhitā," 162-63).

and other specific religious practices.[97] Akbar's translators evinced a greater interest in textual accuracy than their predecessors in this regard and at one point in the *Razmnāmah* even detail the origins of idol worship.[98] But nonetheless, the Mughals treated religion as a largely malleable component of the *Mahābhārata* that could be changed and elided as prudent for cultural intelligibility.

Despite the fact that the *Razmnāmah* expresses many basic Islamic ideas, the Mughals were aware of the danger of writing their own theology into the *Mahābhārata* and sought to avoid such practices. One of the few-recorded incidents concerning the actual translation process addresses precisely this concern about imposing Islamic ideas on the Indian epic and demonstrates the Mughals' troubled relationship with the notion of a faithful translation. Badā'ūnī, one of the translators of the text and an independent historian, describes Akbar's vehement accusation against him in this vein:

> [Akbar] called me forth from the *jharoka* in the public and private audience hall and said to Shaykh Abū al-Faẕl, "We imagined that this person [Badā'ūnī] was a young, unworldly adherent of Sufism, but he has turned out to be such a bigoted follower of Islamic law that no sword can slice the jugular vein of his bigotry."[99]

Here the king couched his complaint within the language of Sufism versus jurisprudence, an often cited conflict that dates back to the early days of Islam.[100] Akbar next specified that the text prompting his outburst is the *Razmnāmah* and that Naqīb Khān had personally testified on the matter. At this point in the narrative, Badā'ūnī has not named his actual offence and first defends himself before he specifies the charge: "I am no more than a servant, a translator.

---

[97] 'Abd al-Azīz Shams Bahā-yi Nūrī does not list the titles of the excised sections, but they can be reasonably inferred by comparison with the Sanskrit text.

[98] *Razmnāmah*, 3:36-37.

[99] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:399. Badā'ūnī also incurred this type of questioning regarding to his contribution to *Tārīkh-i Alfī* (Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 256).

[100] Alam, "Debate Within," 144-45.

Whatever the Indian wise men have explained, I have translated precisely."[101] Badā'ūnī then relays the particular line that had stirred up so much trouble, a hemistich located in the fifth book of the *Razmnāmah* and authored by Ḥāfiẓ: "Every action has its reward and every deed its recompense."[102]

The addition of Persian poetry to the *Razmnāmah* was an established, accepted practice, as I detail below, but this verse was singled out as problematic for its alleged covert reference to Islamic beliefs. According to Badā'ūnī, Akbar understood the line to refer to the Islamic Day of Judgment, complete with Munkir and Nakir, two angels who judge the newly dead. In order to defend himself, Badā'ūnī argued that the ideas of reward and punishment are also present in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* because everybody spends time in both heaven and hell at the conclusion of the epic.[103] In the end, Badā'ūnī successfully convinced the emperor that the line stood in accordance with Indian ideas, and it remained in the *Razmnāmah*.

This episode demonstrates the deep problems of cultural comprehension that the Mughal translators faced, particularly regarding religion, and also the strong imperial insistence on avoiding theology in the *Mahābhārata* where possible. As mentioned above, direct Islamic references to Allah run throughout the *Razmnāmah*. If we consider the translation along with Abū al-Faẓl's preface to the text, the Islamic context becomes even more apparent because his introduction is replete with Islamic language and praise of God. Given this, Akbar is unlikely to have been upset over an indirect Islamic reference in a single line of poetry. Rather, the emperor was more likely concerned about the possibility that specific Islamic theological ideas, such as the Day of Judgment and its accompanying angels, might have

---

[101] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:399.

[102] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:399. Also see *Razmnāmah*, 1:478 and *Safīnah-i Ḥāfiẓ*, 192.

[103] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:400.

entered what was supposed to be an Indian tale. Thus, like the other varying treatments of religious elements throughout *Razmnāmah*, this dispute seems to be a highly interesting (if only moderately successful[104]) attempt to make sense of a complex, different world while keeping any substantial discussion of Indian or Islamic religions out of the text as much as possible.

Introducing Poetry and Persian Aesthetics

While the Mughal translators and their patron may have been concerned about writing their religious beliefs into the *Razmnāmah*, they show no hesitation in adding a decidedly Persianate, courtly context to the epic by incorporating quotations of Persian poetry. The majority of the *Razmnāmah* is written in prose, but the translators insert poetic verses throughout the text.[105] These verses recast the literary framework of the *Mahābhārata* for an Indo-Persian audience in three distinct ways. First, such quotations inlay the *Razmnāmah* with a rich set of intertextual literary associations from the Persian tradition. Moreover, the verses frame crucial moments in the *Mahābhārata* according to a quintessentially Persian aesthetic, drawing on established poetic tropes and particular modes of expression. Last, the poetic quotations serve as a vehicle for a subtle political commentary by highlighting certain passages on kingship.

The *Razmnāmah* contains hundreds of lines of Persian poetry, largely quoted from the great masters of Persian literature, such as Niẓāmī, Ḥāfiẓ, Sa'dī, Sanā'ī, Anvarī, Rūdakī, and Mu'izzī. The translators almost certainly quote from Indo-Persian and lesser-known poets as

---

[104] The *Razmnāmah* also refers to other specific Islamic concepts, such as the *ka'ba* and the "angel of death (*malak al-mawt*)" (respectively, 1:464 and 2:467).

[105] These poetic lines are original to the *Razmnāmah* translation and not the result of later marginal notes being drawn into the text. Badā'ūnī's being called to Akbar's court to account for his choice of a particular line demonstrates that the poems were included in the original translation, and the verses are included in our earliest manuscripts of the work from the late sixteenth century.

well, but identifying all the sources of poetry in the *Razmnāmah* remains an unfinished project. The poems are not attributed in the translation, but an educated reader would have been expected to recognize such verses and their literary resonances.[106] In drawing from their rich literary heritage, the Mughal translators participate in a long-standing Persianate method of using quoted poetry to enhance the weight and appeal of a new prose work.[107] This strategy is also seen in a more limited way in other Sanskrit-Persian translations sponsored by Akbar, such as the *Panchākhyānah* (*Five Tales*), a translation of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*, which quotes from Ḥāfiẓ and Sa'dī.[108] Additionally, the interpolation of intertextual references was not uncommon in premodern translation projects more broadly.[109] Such a strategy lends a newly translated text authority by embedding the work within its target culture, in this case the Persian literary canon.

In the *Razmnāmah*, these poetic quotations often serve to epitomize the core of particularly emotional scenes according to Persian aesthetic sensibilities. In many cases, the translators follow the conventional Persian method of deploying verses to summarize the main moral lesson of a story.[110] In other cases they incorporate the verses into the actual narrative of the *Mahābhārata* and insert them into the mouths of the epic heroes. A powerful example of the latter approach, in which the Sanskrit epic's characters speak in the language of Persian poetics, occurs at the start of the fourteenth book. Vyāsa goes to see King

---

[106] On reader expectations regarding interpolated poetry see Meisami, "Historian and the Poet," 119. That readers met such expectations is demonstrated when they added further lines onto the quoted verses (e.g., bracketed verses in *Razmnāmah*, 4:220; also see BL Or. 12076, fol. 2b).

[107] On the weight of verse in Persian literature and how it functions when mixed with prose see Meisami, "Mixed Prose and Verse," 295-319.

[108] *Panchākhyānah*, e.g., 24 for Ḥāfiẓ and 19 for Sa'dī.

[109] For example, see Chinese translations of Sanskrit texts from the third century CE (Boucher, "Gāndhārī and the Early Chinese Buddhist Translations Reconsidered," 497-98).

[110] Meisami, "Historian and the Poet," 99. Also note the example of Badā'ūnī's use of a Ḥāfiẓ line discussed earlier.

Yudhiṣṭhira after the war is over, and Yudhiṣṭhira laments the deaths of his many relatives, particularly Karṇa, the Pāṇḍavas' elder half-brother who nonetheless fought on the side of the Kauravas and lost his life during the war:

> Now I have regained the places that my ancestors held. But one thing that deeply saddens and distresses me is that Bhīṣma, our lord and benefactor, Dronācārya, everyone's teacher, and Karṇa, our elder brother, have passed away. Without them I will gain no enjoyment or pleasure from this kingdom and rulership. I see Karṇa's houses—where learned men always used to recite the Vedas and where religious men and scholars always used to gather and where great alms used to be found—now those houses are empty. The place where if a needy person came, he found so many alms that he would cry out of pure happiness...[111]

In order to capture the true emptiness of Karṇa's house and his own grief, the *Razmnāmah* Yudhiṣṭhira next utters the following lines from a famous *qaṣīdah* by Mu'izzī:

> I see a land devoid of the face of my beloved.
> I see a meadow empty of the stature of that upright cypress.
> That place where that beloved used to wander in the garden with friends
> Is now the dwelling of the wolf and fox, the domain of wild asses and vultures.[112]

These four lines invoke the Persian image of a lost beloved, expressed through a description of her now deserted camp after the caravan has moved on. Persian literature possesses rich imagery associated with the beloved and abandoned places that has no connection to Sanskrit. Yet, these lines constitute the most poignant expression of the *Razmnāmah* Yudhiṣṭhira's pain as an aestheticized emotion that resonates within Persian literary culture.

The Mughal translators use poetry elsewhere in the *Razmnāmah* at intensely tragic moments. For example, at the beginning of *Droṇa Parvan*, the seventh book, great sorrow engulfs both the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava armies because Bhīṣma has fallen in battle. The soldiers

---

[111] *Razmnāmah*, 4:219-20.

[112] *Razmnāmah*, 4:220; *Dīvān* of Mu'izzī, 597.

lament to each other about the great loss by reciting a series of verses by Sanā'ī.[113] Similarly, the death of Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, later in the war compels the *Razmnāmah* translators to insert poetic lines. Abhimanyu knew how to penetrate the Kauravas' superb lines of defense but sadly not how to exit safely and so knowingly sacrificed his own life in order to advance the Pāṇḍavas' military position. In meditation on his untimely death, all those who witnessed the event mourn because, as the *Razmnāmah* poignantly summarizes: "If an old man of 90 years dies it is not strange. / What is tragic is when they say a young man has passed."[114] Such lines reformulate key narrative and emotional moments in the *Razmnāmah* in a Persianate idiom.

Beyond invoking a Persian aesthetic, the Mughals further redefine their version of the *Mahābhārata* as an imperial text by singling out the *Udyoga* and *Śānti Parvan*s, the fifth and twelfth books respectively, to heavily adorn with poetry. Both books address at length the topic of political power (*rājya*). The *Udyoga Parvan* (*Book of Effort*) focuses on negotiations to avoid civil war, and the *Śānti Parvan* presents extended teachings on how to reconstruct an empire after a bloody conflict. A substantial section of each book shows a striking density of poetic quotations in comparison to the rest of the *Razmnāmah* where entire books often lack any poetic citations.[115] In the *Śānti Parvan*, poetry particularly marks the first two of three sections, which address kingly ethics (*rājadharma*) and ethics in times of emergency (*āpaddharma*). The Mughals also translated the third and final section in full on ethics of spiritual liberation (*mokṣadharma*), but they do not adorn this portion with poetry as with the earlier, more directly political sections. The localization of classical Persian poetry in the

---

[113] Compare *Razmnāmah*, 2:172 and *Dīvān* of Sanā'ī, 376-77. There are also several lines of poetry given in footnotes on the following page of the *Razmnāmah* that may have been included in the original (2:173).

[114] *Razmnāmah*, 2:198.

[115] Respectively *Razmnāmah*, 1:462-547 and 3:45-203.

Razmnāmah highlights these two passages and their commentaries on kingly rule as central to the Persian transformation of the *Mahābhārata* and the concerns of the royal court. The Mughals further rework the actual content of certain political portions of the epic, most notably the *Śānti Parvan*, in order to produce a text that spoke to their particular imperial needs.

Rewriting the Rules of Politics and Kingship

Persian literati held a deep interest in the nature of kingship that stretched back to the inception of their literary tradition and often drew from Indic texts for political advice. Persian writers explored this theme through a variety of textual genres, including *ma̱snavī*s such as the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*), histories that were often thoroughly didactic, and prose treatises akin to European mirrors for princes.[116] These texts reached new heights of prominence in Akbar's court. The emperor had Persian classics on kingship read out to him regularly, and the major court-sponsored history of his reign relies upon these works to frame Akbar as a just ruler.[117] Persian political wisdom had been associated with the Sanskrit tradition stretching back to translations of the *Pañcatantra* into Middle Persian in the sixth century.[118] Akbar evinced a strong desire to access the Sanskrit roots of the *Pañcatantra* stories in particular and sponsored two further versions of the text in his court.[119] However, he also sought out fresh

---

[116] Hanaway references a wide range of genres covered by advice (*andarz*) literature in "*Amīr Arsalān* and the Question of Genre," 57-58; on advice (*pand*) literature conceptualized as a genre unto itself see Utas, "Genres," 238. For an overview of advice texts, including those produced during the Mughal era, see Alvi, introduction to *Advice on the Art of Governance*, 2-11; for a more in-depth discussion, see Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, chapter 2.

[117] Darling, "Do Justice," 8-9.

[118] Riedel details the *Pañcatantra*'s transmission into Islamicate languages in "Kalila wa Demna." Also see the useful genealogical table that includes the story's Indian versions in Grube, *Mirror for Princes from India.*

[119] *Panchākhyānah* of Muṣṭafá Khāliqdād ʻAbbāsī and ʻ*Iyār-i Dānish* of Abū al-Faẕl, based on *Anvār-i Suhaylī.*

political resources within Sanskrit literature, previously untapped by the Persianate tradition, by translating the *Mahābhārata*.

The Mughals understood bringing the *Mahābhārata* into Persian as a deeply political project. In his preface to the *Razmnāmah*, Abū al-Faẕl characterizes the entire text as a history and names advice for kings as a crucial motivating factor for the translation:

> Likewise, the minds of most people, particularly great kings, yearn to listen to histories (*tavārīkh*). All-encompassing, divine wisdom has made the science of history, which offers examples to the wise, dear to their hearts so that having taken advice from past events and counted it advantageous for the present, they pass their cherished time in things pleasing to God. Thus rulers need above all others to listen to the tales of their predecessors.[120]

In a sense, the *Mahābhārata* overall concerns kingship and offers political advice throughout its narratives. This passage further emphasizes the *Mahābhārata*'s political importance by placing the work in the genre of *tārīkh* (history), which had long been associated with imperial objectives in the Persian tradition. Later in his preface, Abū al-Faẕl reiterates this classification when he speaks more directly about the nature of the *Mahābhārata* and describes it as a text of "advice, guidance, stories, and descriptions of war and feasting," or, more concisely, kingship.[121]

Within the larger epic, the Mughal translators also understood the *Śānti Parvan* as particularly pertinent to imperial aspirations and communicate this in several ways. First, they frequently position poetry therein to poignantly encapsulate a moral lesson, and this section of the epic comes to approximate an *akhlāq* work from such usages. Second, later retranslators of the text in Akbar's court describe the *Śānti Parvan* as "advice and counsels" (*pand ū naṣā'iḥ*).[122]

---

[120] "Muqaddamah" of Abū al-Faẕl, 19-20.

[121] "Muqaddamah" of Abū al-Faẕl, 40.

[122] *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* of Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī, ms. Oxford Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 447b; also see ms. Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Suleman Collection 15/2(b), fol. 182a. Ṭāhir Muḥammad also describes book 5 as containing

Last, in his preface, Abū al-Faẕl explicitly describes the twelfth book as separate from the rest of the *Mahābhārata* because it contains notably compelling political advice. He argues that segments of the *Mahābhārata* vary in credibility, and as a result readers must treat the text critically, often rejecting what they find therein. The exception to this guideline is "the advice, guidance, and manners for clear and meaningful rulership narrated by wise (*ḥakīm*) Bhīṣma that are generally approved by the intellectuals and liked by the wise."[123] Perhaps mirroring this admiration, Akbar's translators rendered the *Śānti Parvan* into Persian at disproportionate length to the rest of the epic so that the book comprises nearly twenty-five percent of the Persian *Razmnāmah*.[124] The Mughals followed the Sanskrit tradition in identifying the *Śānti Parvan* as the crux of the *Mahābhārata*'s commentary on rulership and indeed an important foundational text of Indian political advice more broadly. But they also substantially changed its framing and content so that the Persian version became a definitively Mughal mirror for kings, particularly relevant to Akbar.

While the Mughal rewriting of the *Śānti Parvan* significantly alters much of the Sanskrit text, the basis for its credibility rested firmly on it being a translation. Ronit Ricci discusses this seemingly paradoxical relationship between textual fidelity and authority in her book on Tamil, Malay, and Javanese translations of Islamic works. She points out that twelfth-century Latin renderings of Islamic texts were painstakingly faithful precisely because they were designed to discredit Islam. In contrast, for South and Southeast Asian translations of the same materials, "distancing from the source in the form of creativity and poetic freedom was part of

---

"counsel and advice" (*mashvarat ū maṣlaḥat*; ms. Oxford Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 435b and ms. Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Suleman Collection 15/2(b), fol. 147b).

[123] "Muqaddamah" of Abū al-Faẕl, 21.

[124] In contrast, *Śānti* and *Anuśāsana parvans* together comprise just under twenty-five percent of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (Fitzgerald, introduction to *Book of Peace, Part 1*, 82).

a powerful array of tools used to accredit earlier sources and present them as legitimate."[125] In the same way, the Mughal translators adopted a somewhat loose approach to representing the content of the *Śānti Parvan* as part of their project to present this book as a crucial work of political advice.

The Mughals began their refashioning of the *Śānti Parvan* by starting the book with the martial story of Barbarīk.[126] In the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, the *Śānti Parvan* opens with a series of laments as Yudhiṣṭhira grieves for the dead, particularly his half-brother Karṇa, and expresses his distress at the costly victory of the Pāṇḍavas.[127] In contrast, the story of Barbarīk showcases Yudhiṣṭhira taking pride in the recent military triumph and thereby reframes the narrative with a positive view of war.[128] The tale opens with the Pāṇḍavas fighting among themselves regarding who had ensured victory in the recent battle. After much bickering, they pose the question to the head of Barbarīk, which had been cut off by Kṛṣṇa and positioned above the field of Kurukṣetra for the entire war.[129] The still living head replies that he witnessed only three things that he had never seen before, all of which are attributed to Kṛṣṇa's intervention. After hearing Barbarīk's descriptions of key battle motifs and events, including Kṛṣṇa's all-destroying *cakra* and the defeat of the elephant-mounted Bhagadatta, the Pāṇḍavas fall at

---

[125] Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 65.

[126] Unsurprisingly, the *Razmnāmah* version is closest to renditions of story prevalent in central and north India (e.g., see the relevant section of the Marwari version recorded in Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics*, 432). The *Razmnāmah* preserves some memory that this story was popular in the south by identifying Barbarīk's homeland as near Lanka (3:3).

[127] For an analysis of this framing, see Fitzgerald, introduction to *Book of Peace, Part 1*, 81-94.

[128] The following description is a brief summary of *Razmnāmah*, 3:2-5.

[129] The *Razmnāmah* explains that, before the war, Barbarīk had approached Kṛṣṇa and promised to win the upcoming battle with only three arrows. Kṛṣṇa tested his archery skills on a tree and was terrified by such unparalleled skills. Because Kṛṣṇa knew that the Pāṇḍavas would win the war anyways, he decided to spare the world Barbarīk's destructive power. Kṛṣṇa first prevailed upon Barbarīk to grant any wish that Kṛṣṇa desired and then requested no less than his head. Barbarīk complied on the condition that he be allowed to watch the full battle, and so Kṛṣṇa put an immortal leaf in his mouth, chopped off his head, and placed it in a tree.

Kṛṣṇa's feet. Kṛṣṇa then orders Barbarīk's head removed and burned with the rest of his body before the narrative resumes. The Mughals' overall emphasis on *'ajā'ib* aspects of Sanskrit stories largely explains the appeal of this somewhat bizarre tale. But the story also allows for a reprise of central battle moments, which was perhaps particularly appealing to Akbar as a king engaged in consistent military activities to expand his kingdom.

After the odd tale of Barbarīk, the Mughals next turn their attention to the story of Karṇa and give Karṇa's history with significant detail, often beyond the parallel portion of the Sanskrit text.[130] The Mughals show a strong interest in Karṇa throughout the *Razmnāmah*, likely because of Akbar's fascination with illumination theory and the resulting potential to affiliate Akbar with the son of Sūrya. For example, early in the epic, the translators alter the story of Karṇa's conception in order to mirror Akbar's claim to be the manifestation of a light conceived by a Mongol ancestor.[131] While still unmarried, Kuntī receives a spell (*mantra* in Sanskrit; *afsūn* in Persian) from a sage that enables her to call upon any god to impregnate her. Out of curiosity, she calls upon Sūrya, and their union results in the birth of Karṇa, whom she promptly abandons in order to conceal her shame. The *Mahābhārata* explicitly notes that before Sūrya returns to heaven he reinstates Kuntī's virginity.[132] The *Razmnāmah* alters the tale so that Kuntī conceives via a ray of light. As a result, the text simply states: "she did not lose her virginity."[133] A conception via divine light featured prominently in the story of Akbar's ancestors and has been identified by modern scholars as a crucial component of Mughal

---

[130] *Razmnāmah*, 3:5-11; compare to *Mahābhārata* 12.1.20-5.15.

[131] *Razmnāmah*, 1:117-18; compare to *Mahābhārata* 1.104.

[132] *Mahābhārata* 1.104.12.

[133] *Razmnāmah*, 1:118.

imperial identity.[134] In the opening of *Akbarnāmah*, Abū al-Faẕl tells the story of how Ālanquvā, a Mongol princess and ancestor of Chingis Khan, conceived triplet sons via a ray of divine light. According to Abū al-Faẕl, the divine light was passed on in a concealed form through the generations until it manifested itself visibly in Akbar.[135] The *Razmnāmah* overtly references this Mughal legend in the modified story of Karṇa's birth, which links Akbar's political identity with the Sanskrit epic story.

The Mughal translators do not maintain a parallel between Akbar and Karṇa throughout the text, but they dwell on Karṇa wherever possible.[136] In the *Śānti Parvan*, the Persian Nārada says to Yudhiṣṭhira, "Karṇa is like you in wisdom, knowledge, familiarity with correct codes of kingly conduct (*ādāb-pādshāhī*), and compassion towards people."[137] The Persian Nārada also compares Karṇa to Kṛṣṇa, whom the Pāṇḍavas found absolutely central to winning the war, saying that, "In the protection and defense of friends and the army in war, he was like Kṛṣṇa."[138] Perhaps Akbar had a soft spot for Karṇa's position as an exiled half-brother due to his own clashes with Mirza Hakim, his half brother based in Kabul.[139] Additionally, Akbar's interest in divine illumination and sun worship likely drew his translators to a character fathered by the sun god.

After dwelling on Barbarīk and Karṇa, the Persian translators reduce the twenty-seven chapter Sanskrit debate over whether Yudhiṣṭhira will ascend the throne, the final framing

---

[134] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 146-49. For the Mughals' Timurid ancestors, Ālanquvā's story referenced the Qur'an, but Abū al-Faẕl does not emphasize this connection (Moin, "Islam and the Millennium," 57-58).

[135] *Akbarnāmah*, 1:12. Asher discusses this story in "A Ray from the Sun," 170.

[136] E.g., as I mention above, the translators also express Yudhiṣṭhira's grief at losing his elder brother particularly poignantly by quoting Mu'izzī.

[137] *Razmnāmah*, 3:6.

[138] *Razmnāmah*, 3:6.

[139] See Faruqui, "Forgotten Prince," 487-523.

section of the *Śānti Parvan*, to a mere two pages.[140] In so doing, the *Razmnāmah* elides several powerful criticisms of war and kingship given in this section of the Sanskrit epic. The Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* describes Yudhiṣṭhira's disinclination to take the throne at length as a series of sages and family members try to convince him otherwise. Yudhiṣṭhira finally relents but not before putting forth a number of compelling arguments against his own coronation and elaborating the destructive horrors of warfare, a central theme of the *Mahābhārata*.[141] In contrast, the Persian Yudhiṣṭhira quickly becomes convinced by Arjuna's argument that "if you want to worship, there is no worship equivalent to the justice of *pādshāh*s," and preparations begin for the coronation.[142] Here Yudhiṣṭhira's brief hesitation merely moves the storyline forward as opposed to being part of the *Mahābhārata*'s larger commentary on the perils of kingship.

In addition to significantly adjusting the framing, the Mughal translators also reformulate the content of Bhīṣma's wisdom in order to speak to specific Mughal interests. Two examples, namely the stories of Māndhātṛ and Manu, provide further insight into the Mughal penchant for inserting their viewpoints and even themselves into the Indian epic. In the story of Māndhātṛ, an ancient king who once approached Viṣṇu to ask about *dharma*, the Mughal translators significantly rework the Sanskrit *Śānti Parvan* in order to outline a changed set of royal values. The Sanskrit and Persian texts open in parallel with Viṣṇu appearing to Māndhātṛ in the form of Indra. Māndhātṛ, unaware of the god's true identity, requests to see

---

[140] *Razmnāmah*, 3:12-13.

[141] *Mahābhārata* 12.6-38.

[142] *Razmnāmah*, 3:12.

Viṣṇu, and "Indra" replies that nobody can see Viṣṇu, "not even I."[143] In Sanskrit, "Indra" offers to grant any other wish of the king, and Māndhātṛ responds humbly, entreating:

> Certainly I will not see the first god (*ādideva*), lord. Having bowed my head and having abandoned pleasures I desire *dharma* and wish to go to the forest on the straight path frequented by people. From the vast, immeasurable *dharma* of a *kṣatriya*, the worlds are gained and my own fame established. I do not know how to enact that *dharma*, the oldest in the world, which flows from the first god.[144]

In Persian, "Indra" promises no alternative wish, but Māndhātṛ presses on regardless:

> I also know that nobody can see Viṣṇu, but I have increased kingship (*pādshāhī*) in this world and brought the entire earth under control. Everyone in the world rests because of the security of my justice and equity. Now I desire to go to that world where all just, important, lofty kings have gone.[145]

Māndhātṛ has shifted from a humble renunciant in Sanskrit to a proud monarch in Persian demanding his due. Following these divergent turns, in the subsequent lines the Sanskrit text narrates the establishment of *dharma* in the world whereas the Persian elaborates on the virtues of a *pādshāh*. This elevation of earthly kings is well in line with Akbar's project to fashion himself as an absolute sovereign and suggests a purposeful rewriting on the part of the Mughal translators to comment favorably on the contemporary Mughal political situation.[146]

Following the story of Māndhātṛ, the Mughals next tell the story of Manu and here step outside of the narrative to explicitly address Akbar. This is the only named reference to the Mughal emperor that I have found in the Persian *Mahābhārata* and exhibits a dynamic fusion of Sanskrit and Mughal worlds. The *Razmnāmah* translates Manu's story with its own Perso-

---

[143] *Mahābhārata* 12.64.10-17; *Razmnāmah*, 3:42.

[144] *Mahābhārata* 12.64.18-19.

[145] *Razmnāmah*, 3:42.

[146] Elsewhere in the *Razmnāmah*, the Mughals similarly alter the *Mahābhārata*'s political advice. For example, in the Sanskrit *Udyoga Parvan*, a Pāṇḍava messenger criticizes Duryodhana for depriving his cousin-brothers of their proper inheritance (*paitṛka*), but in the *Razmnāmah*, Duryodhana has violated divine fate (*taqdīr-i khudā*) (*Mahābhārata* 5.20.4-6; *Razmnāmah*, 4:470, based on the oldest variant in n. 2). In the case of Duryodhana's crime, Akbar's process of empire building and the frequent lack of a clearly established successor for the Mughal throne may have prompted the rejection of inheritance as a sacrosanct foundation for rulership.

Islamicate slant, which ends with a positive evaluation of Manu that is closely tied to good wishes for Akbar:

> Rāja [Manu] showed compassion and mercy to the entire world and spoke to everyone with visible joy. Day by day, his majesty and pomp increased, and many years passed on earth in his rule and good fortune. Because of his virtuous conduct, God Exalted granted him a long, generous life. It is hoped, according to the magnificence of God, Praised and Exalted, that the shadow of the justice and compassion of his most exalted majesty, King Akbar—under whose justice, compassion, and grace all people in the world rest—would be perpetual and ever-lasting so long as the world exists.[147]

Here the translators draw upon an earlier teaching in Manu's story that "the first responsibility of subjects is to pray for the king" and apply it directly to their own political situation.[148] The passage concludes with verses quoted from Sa'dī:

> O God! This king, a friend to those in need,
> in whose shadow lies the refuge of the world,
> may you grant him long life on this earth.
> May you enliven his heart through obedience to God.
> So long as there is day and night, may the king be on the throne,
> and may prosperity reach the zenith of the sky.[149]

The voice that articulates these good wishes remains unclear. The speaker is either Bhīṣma, who addresses Akbar across the reaches of time after concluding the story of Manu, or the Mughal translators, who step outside of the narrative framework of the text to offer a few kind words to their patron. Either way, temporal and narrative boundaries are broken to directly celebrate the eminent kingship of Akbar and to immortalize him through inclusion in one of India's great epics. This passage furthermore puts Manu and Akbar in close proximity and frames Akbar as a just, praiseworthy Indian king.

---

[147] *Razmnāmah*, 3:45.

[148] *Razmnāmah*, 3:44.

[149] *Razmnāmah*, 3:45; first four lines from *Būstān-i Sa'dī*, 18, lines 4-5. I am unclear about the origin of the last two lines. Note that lines 3 and 4 are missing in many manuscripts of the *Razmnāmah.* Nonetheless, I do not think their addition or subtraction significantly alters the meaning or tone of the passage.

In light of the continual emphasis on kingship in the *Razmnāmah* and particularly Akbar's appearance in the ancient Indian world, it is tempting to agree with scholars who have suggested that this translation was primarily designed to promote Mughal political objectives.[150] For many premodern Indian kings, patronizing a Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* had been a mode of articulating imperial claims, particularly through appropriating the epic's geography that often overlapped with the actual spaces over which such rulers sought control. In regional translations, Indian rulers often adapted the storyline and its spatial mapping of India to speak to their specific political needs.[151] Akbar's translators did not seize upon the same aspects of the epic that had occupied earlier Indian rulers. Nonetheless, the Mughals too saw immense politico-cultural potential within the *Mahābhārata* and accordingly produced a Persian translation in order to enact particular types of imperial power.

However, it remains unclear how we ought to more precisely articulate the relationship between Emperor Akbar and the *Mahābhārata*. We might rely on the empty language of legitimation theory and say that the *Razmnāmah* was intended to legitimate Akbar as a king. But then we assume a need for the Mughals to justify their rule through the discourses of Sanskrit (and Persian) aesthetics without specifying the impetus, means, or audience for such a justification. In addition we would preclude more interesting lines of inquiry: why the Mughals considered Sanskrit to be a valuable political resource in the first place, how they negotiated fusing its cultural tradition with their own, and precisely what such a union looked like in its finished textual form. Moreover, legitimation theory leaves little room for other considerations that were also at play in the translation, such as the redefinition and

[150] Most importantly Rizvi (*Religious and Intellectual History*) and Ernst ("Muslim Studies of Hinduism?").

[151] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 223-37.

cultivation of Sanskrit knowledge in Persian, the blending of religious traditions, and intertextual literary associations with the Persian tradition. Instead it seems more fruitful and in the original spirit of the translation to postulate that precisely the mix of political and aesthetic modes of discourse is what made the *Razmnāmah* an imperially meaningful project in Akbar's court.

The Imperial Reception of the *Razmnāmah*

After Akbar's translators completed the *Razmnāmah*, the text underwent three further modifications. First, Abū al-Faẕl added a preface that outlines a much more direct political application of the epic than can be gleaned from the translation itself. He frames the *Razmnāmah* as a decisive intervention in a specific set of Islamic debates in Akbar's court concerning the nature and limits of royal power. Several years later, Fayẕī reworked the first two books of the original translation by liberally mixing in his own poetic verses and thereby develops the aesthetic potential of the Persian *Mahābhārata* in new directions. Last, in 1602 Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī, a historian in Akbar's court, abridged the *Mahābhārata* and included it as part of India's pre-Islamic past within his larger world history. Neither Fayẕī nor Ṭāhir Muḥammad shows any sign of having returned to Sanskrit sources in their respective *Mahābhārata*s and instead engage the *Razmnāmah* as their sole source and textual interlocutor. These three Mughal retreatments of the *Razmnāmah* formulate the imperial potential of the text in different directions, often far beyond the scope of the initial translation, and carve out strikingly ambitious roles for Indo-Persian encounters with Sanskrit literature.

Power Politics in Abū al-Faẕl's Preface to the *Razmnāmah*

In 1587, Akbar requested his vizier, Abū al-Faẕl, to compose a preface to the newly minted *Razmnāmah* that thereafter accompanied the translation as it was disseminated

throughout the empire.[152] I have referenced this work several times already but a brief description is helpful here. Abū al-Faẓl's preface is comprised of three discrete sections: an elaborate encomium of Akbar, an exegesis of the imperial motivations for sponsoring the *Razmnāmah*, and a synopsis of Brahmanical beliefs and the *Mahābhārata* story. His panegyric and plot summary constitute the majority of the work, but the most crucial segment for my purposes is the more succinct passage on why Akbar sponsored the translation. Here Abū al-Faẓl offers the most direct contemporary exposition available of the intellectual framework that sustained translation activity under Akbar and frames the *Razmnāmah* as relevant to current imperial disputes. Scholars have long recognized the importance of this passage, but nobody has placed Abū al-Faẓl's comments in their wider literary and courtly contexts in order to explicate their full meaning.[153] When read in tandem with the rest of the preface and against the background of court politics, we can see that Abū al-Faẓl places the *Razmnāmah* at the center of specific contestations about the nature of knowledge and the extent of Akbar's authority.

Abū al-Faẓl articulates a series of reasons behind the royal sponsorship of the *Razmnāmah*. Above I detail his last claim, namely that the *Razmnāmah* is a book of political advice for kings. Additionally, he identifies several religious and intellectual tensions that the *Razmnāmah* will bring to an end. He begins:

> When, with his perfect perception, [Akbar] found that the disputes between Muslims and the denials of the Hindus had become excessive and their rejection of one another appeared to be beyond all measure, [his] insightful mind decided to translate the canonical books of each group into other tongues. The holy one of the age [Akbar] did

---

[152] On the date, see "Muqaddamah," 22. Later manuscripts do not always carry Abū al-Faẓl's preface, but early copies generally do.

[153] For previous translations and discussions of this passage, see Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 180-82 and Husain, "Translations of the *Mahābhārata* into Arabic and Persian," 278-80; Alam also translates part of the section in *Languages of Political Islam*, 65-66.

> this so that by the blessing of his words both sides would abandon fault-finding and rebellion in favor of becoming seekers of Truth (*haqq*) and, after having become aware of each other's virtues and faults, would make commendable efforts to correct themselves.[154]

Modern scholars have often emphasized communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims when interpreting this passage.[155] Many have further posited that Akbar intended mutual understanding to result in peaceful coexistence and greater appreciation of one another's religious traditions.[156] Abū al-Faẕl indeed addresses discord between the two religious communities ("their rejection of one another"), but he first mentions "disputes between Muslims" (*nizā'-i farā'īq-i millat-i muḥammadī*) and "the denials of the Hindus" (*juḥūd-i hunūd*) discretely. As we will see, in these separate references Abū al-Faẕl's concerns stretch far beyond the bounds of religion to also encompass intellectual and political controversies. Furthermore, his solution to such disagreements is far more radical than modern scholarship has recognized. Here we must look closely to the rest of the preface and larger courtly debates to understand Abū al-Faẕl's politico-intellectual agendas.

Early in his preface, Abū al-Faẕl outlines a specific dispute between Muslim factions that intersects with the imperial interest in the *Razmnāmah*. After he finishes his opening praise of God, Abū al-Faẕl commences his eulogy of Akbar by proclaiming that the new

---

[154] "Muqaddamah," 18. I follow Ernst in amending *juhūd ū hunūd* (Jews and Hindus) to read *juḥūd-i hunūd* (the denials of the Hindus; "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 182 n. 27). This emendation is supported by the reference to *dū farīq* later in the same passage. The manuscript tradition is confused on this point, and, in addition to the two variations already mentioned, several copies read *junūd-i hunūd* (Hindu troops) or *junūd ū hunūd* (soldiers and Hindus). Regardless of the correct reading, the use of *juhūd/juḥūd/junūd* appears to be primarily aimed at creating a rhyme rather than adding substantial content and does not significantly alter the meaning of the passage (note, however, that scholars have adduced evidence for a Jewish presence at Akbar's court; see Fischel, "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors," 145-48). For translations of the passage that retain *juhūd ū hunūd* see Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 65 and Husain, "Translations of the *Mahābhārata* into Arabic and Persian," 278. Also note an interpretation of *junūd* as infidels in Alam, "*Aḵẖlāqī* Norms and Mughal Governance," 85.

[155] Rizvi, "Dimensions of *Ṣulḥ-i Kul*," 15.

[156] Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 65-68.

Razmnāmah ensures the king victory over Islamic jurists. He begins broadly by explaining that in the past people have been ignorant and intolerant of the few who grasped real truth:

> For the entirety of recorded human history, the soul has been unenlightened and sight blind... If sometimes good fortune grabbed some poor soul by the collar of existence and showed him hidden secrets... then good men in the world from their innocence and pitiful hearts and bad quarrelsome men from their bad inner nature and sedition sent [the poor soul] on the road of non-existence and towards the house of oblivion and annihilation.[157]

Next, Abū al-Faẕl describes how kings have typically left matters such as the rejection of the wise in the hands of Islamic jurists, who have proven themselves unworthy of their positions:

> Exalted kings—who are the pillars of the world and are usually expected to order the affairs of ordinary creatures—have typically not paid attention to the secrets of religious leaders in this matter [the rejection of the wise]. If by chance this reached their sublime ears, then [kings] have necessarily counted it among the affairs of religion (*dīn*) and entrusted it to religiously-affiliated men who have taken over the office of issuing appropriate decrees, are connected with issues of Islamic law, and are leaders of the lords of traditional imitation (*taqlīd*). Even though [religiously-affiliated men] are ignorant and stupid warlords, [kings] have kept themselves from slander and speaking ill [of them].[158]

While saving Akbar from maligning the ulama, Abū al-Faẕl himself hurls a number of insults in this passage. In addition to openly disparaging the ulama ("ignorant and stupid warlords"), he more subtly denies their status as men of religion and legal arbitrators by merely conceding that they are "affiliated" with such matters.[159]

Abū al-Faẕl declines to elaborate further at this point in his preface, but Akbar had been engaged in a power struggle with a group of traditional Islamic leaders, comprised of the ulama and jurists, since the 1570s.[160] Akbar clashed with the ulama on a range of issues, including tax laws, the number of his marriages, and the proper character of an Islamic empire

---

[157] "Muqaddamah," 3.

[158] "Muqaddamah," 3.

[159] Also see his treatment of the ulama in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* (Hardy, "Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah," 122).

[160] For overviews of these tensions see Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 36-41 and Rizvi, "Dimensions of *Ṣulḥ-i Kul*."

in India. The members of this opposition tended to have a more conservative interpretation of Islam than Akbar and, perhaps more importantly, desired to maintain direct influence in the expanding Mughal Empire. Akbar soon began to curtail the authority of Islamic jurists by claiming an enhanced definition of the bounds of his own kingship and even persecuted individual members of this group directly.[161] By the mid-1580s, the Mughal king had formulated a decisive answer to this imperial problem that Abū al-Faẓl articulates well in his preface to the *Razmnāmah*: Akbar removed powers previously exercised by the jurists, notably their ability to define the bounds of Islamic knowledge, and invested them in himself as emperor.[162]

After criticizing the ignorance of the ulama, Abū al-Faẓl declares that Akbar will no longer allow the supposedly learned of Islam undeserved authority and prestige. Instead the king offers himself as a superior replacement and introduces a new type of knowledge.

> But today is the time of the expression of the hidden name and the moment of overflowing, all-inclusive compassion. In accordance with divine inspiration and God's will, the chosen of mankind and the best of the children of Adam, the world of the soul and the soul of the world, meaning the king of the age, is guiding my loyal pen with a mere trace of his generosity. His insightful eye and discerning heart endorse the resources of lofty perception and the ascertainment of subtleties of knowledge (*taḥqīq-i tadqīqāt-i dānish*), and [thereby] he brings good fortune to the public and elite.[163]

Abū al-Faẓl's dense writing style could easily cause a non-initiated reader to miss much of the real force of his argument here. He proposes that the king supplant the role of the ulama by redefining the nature of knowledge. A wider intellectual context helps explicate this dual claim of Akbar's ability to claim such power himself and alter the delineation of learning.

---

[161] Pirbhai, *Reconsidering Islam*, 71-76; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 141-74.

[162] For an in-depth discussion of Akbar's ideology in the second half of his reign, designed primarily by Abū al-Faẓl, see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, particularly 339-73.

[163] "Muqaddamah," 3-4.

Abū al-Faẕl signals the framework of demarcating innovative knowledge through the vocabulary of *taqlīd* versus *taḥqīq*. For the ulama of the day, knowledge was *taqlīd*, which Abū al-Faẕl viewed as a negative type of imitation that limited one's intellectual purview to blindly following previous Islamic thinkers.[164] In contrast, under Akbar, knowledge will now be *taḥqīq*, meaning an active inquiry that allows for new sources of wisdom, including Sanskrit texts. In a 1602 letter from Akbar to Prince Murad, the king himself draws upon this language and mentions the *Mahābhārata* specifically as dissuading its readers from crass imitation:

> Murad asks: If one or two volumes of books were sent that are recommended by [Akbar's] exalted mind and might promote the intellect and discourage blind imitation (*taqlīd*), they would enhance my education.
> Akbar replies: In the marshland of *taqlīd* such a book is rarely found. But for Murad the translation of the *Mahābhārat*, which is a strange tale, has recently become available and been sent.[165]

Only later in his preface does Abū al-Faẕl explicitly discuss the *Mahābhārata*'s function of providing access to a previously unknown intellectual tradition.[166] He first turns to the role of Akbar in initiating this era of innovative learning in the form of an extensive tribute to the king.

Abū al-Faẕl praises his patron with dozens of different formulas that largely focus on the emperor's erudition and perfect comprehension. He is the master of arts ranging from carpentry to philosophy who "ends the impenetrable night of false knowledge (*taqlīd*) and inaugurates the morning of discernment."[167] In this vein, later court texts often characterize Akbar as the Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmil*), engaged in a constant quest for new sources of

---

[164] Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 341.

[165] This letter is contained in an earlier version of Abū al-Faẕl's *Akbarnāmah* (ms. BL Persian Add. 27,247, fol. 403a-403b). Also see Moosvi, *Episodes in the Life of Akbar*, 94.

[166] Abū al-Faẕl also employs the language of *taqlīd* and *taḥqīq* when discussing Brahmanical leaders ("Muqaddamah," 19).

[167] "Muqaddamah," 17-18; see pp 9 for the mention of carpentry and other arts. Hardy discusses similar ideas expressed by Abū al-Faẕl in his *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* ("Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah," particularly 119-20).

learning that enhance his own perfection.[168] Akbar's identity as the Perfect Man was tightly linked to his interest in Sanskrit texts in particular, and Abū al-Faẕl accordingly notes in his preface that Indian learning is a key part of Akbar's revolution of knowledge. Speaking of the king, he says:

> He is a potent speaker who, having gained knowledge of different languages of people in the world, speaks with all types of men about their customs and the subtleties of various tongues. Particularly regarding the languages of India that are far from the road of those born of the Turks, having become a true master, he discourses on innovative meanings and esoteric topics.
>
> Ask him to decipher the secrets of subtle speakers
> since other than Solomon he alone knows the language of the birds.[169]

The implication in this passage that Akbar knew Sanskrit is more flattery than historical fact. But Abū al-Faẕl's larger point here stands: the king desired access to Indian classical learning. In contrast, more traditional Islamic scholars in his court often criticized Muslims for reading the books of other religious traditions, including those on Brahmanical beliefs, because such works may mislead the faithful.[170]

We must consider Abū al-Faẕl's declaration that the *Razmnāmah* should settle "disputes between Muslims" precisely in this larger context of contestations over the proper sources of Islamic knowledge and the appropriate leadership role of imperial figures. Indeed, liberating Muslims from traditional Islamic beliefs is precisely what Abū al-Faẕl had in mind as one of the primary purposes of the *Razmnāmah*. After his initial mention of Akbar's desire to alleviate religious frictions in the passage quoted above, Abū al-Faẕl accuses Muslim theologians of willfully deceiving their own followers and offers the *Mahābhārata* as the solution to such

---

[168] Even Badā'ūnī mentions *insān-i kāmil* (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:259). On the role of *insān-i kāmil* in Akbar's wider political image see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 356-61 and Asher, "A Ray from the Sun," particularly 170-71.

[169] "Muqaddamah," 13.

[170] E.g., Badā'ūnī's *Najāt al-Rashīd*, 113-15.

ruses. Focusing on a specific contention about the age of the world, he posits that "common people among the Muslims... believe that the beginning of humanity was some seven thousand years ago." As a result:

> The beneficent mind [of Akbar] decided that [the *Mahābhārata*], which contains the explanation of the antiquity of the universe and its beings, and is even totally occupied with the ancient past of the world and its inhabitants, should be translated into a readily understood language, so that this group favored by divine mercy should become somewhat informed and retreat from this distasteful belief [in the recent creation of the world].[171]

Here Abū al-Faẕl explicitly imbues a non-Islamic, Indian text with the authority to overturn juridically affirmed Islamic beliefs.[172] Moreover, the ulama are no longer able to decide such matters, but rather Akbar wishes to empower "common people among the Muslims" to judge for themselves, based on texts that Akbar was wise enough to make available to them.

Abū al-Faẕl wishes to impose some limits on using the *Razmnāmah* as an authoritative text, however. Later in his preface, he discusses the variable credibility of the *Mahābhārata*'s content explicitly and how he expects all wise readers to rebuff parts of what they read therein. A case in point is the text's thirteen conflicting accounts of creation:

> But a person of sound judgment does not rely on the falseness of those different ideas. There is a part that the wise will examine and throw out of circulation. There is [another] part that the intellect will not be able to understand. And there is a portion of it that the wise will agree to accept or consent to after much study and a penetrating glance.[173]

Expanding this logic to nearly the entire epic, Abū al-Faẕl proclaims, "This strange division is not specific to this chapter, but rather (all) chapters include many designs of this book of rarities except for the advice, guidance, and manners for clear and meaningful rulership narrated by wise (*ḥakīm*) Bhīṣma that are generally approved by the intellectuals and liked by

---

[171] "Muqaddamah," 19; translation closely based on Ernst, "Muslims Studies of Hinduism?" 181-82.

[172] On the importance of Indian ideas in Indo-Persian thought, also see Fayẕī's comments as quoted and discussed in Ernst, "Fayzi's Illuminationist Interpretation of Vedanta," 358-59.

[173] "Muqaddamah," 20-21.

the wise."[174] The Mughals also use the narrative framework of the epic to signal their hesitations about its overall truthfulness. In their continual mentions of the Indian storytellers who transmit the epic, the translators typically use the verbs *āvardan*, *nivīshtan*, and *akhbār kardan* (to relay, to write, and to tell) to communicate the status of this work as reported (rather than actual) history.[175] Nonetheless, court histories attest that Akbar himself claimed to have faith in certain Indian-inspired religious concepts, such as sun worship, against the counsel of the ulama.[176] Here the religious and intellectual implications of recalibrating the range of the Islamicate learned tradition to include the *Mahābhārata* go hand-in-hand with promoting Akbar's political interest in suppressing the influence of Islamic jurists.

In addition to contestations between Islamic groups, Abū al-Faẕl also elaborates on problems within the Hindu community. He defines *hindū*s to mean primarily Brahmans and identifies the *Mahābhārata* as "containing most of the principles and beliefs of the Brahmans of India."[177] In his exposition of Akbar's motives for sponsoring the translation, he accuses Indian religious leaders of leading the masses into false convictions and having "faith in their own religion beyond all measure."[178] Akbar's proposed corrective was to translate Indian texts such as the *Mahābhārata* with "clear expressions" in a language intelligible beyond elite Brahmanical circles. He then hopes that, once enlightened about the content of their tradition, "simple believers will become so ashamed of their beliefs that they will become seekers of

---

[174] "Muqaddamah," 21. See my discussion above on the exception of Bhīṣma's teachings.

[175] Abū al-Faẕl in his court history similarly uses *guyand* (they say) when he repeats potentially unreliable information (Alam, "Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," 164).

[176] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:322.

[177] "Muqaddamah," 18.

[178] "Muqaddamah," 19.

Truth (*haqq*)."[179] In short, Abū al-Faẕl suggests that in learning more about the theological tenets of their faith Brahmans should reject at least portions of their beliefs.[180]

Abū al-Faẕl also explicitly enjoins Brahmans to be more open to Islamic learning. When Abū al-Faẕl claims that he wishes Brahmans to pursue "Truth," he plays on the multivalence of the word *haqq*, one meaning of which is God. Furthermore, he argues that Indian religious leaders "regard the group of those who are connected to the religion of Muḥammad (*dīn-i Aḥmadī*) as utterly foolish, and they refute this group ceaselessly, although they are unaware of its noble goals and special sciences."[181] Abū al-Faẕl gives little indication that he intends Hindus to embrace Islam wholesale rather than accept parts of its intellectual and religious traditions as having considerable merit, as he encouraged Muslims to do with respect to Sanskrit texts. However, other Mughal intellectuals take Abū al-Faẕl's logic a step further and praise full-scale conversion.

In a colophon to the translation, Naqīb Khān, one of the *Razmnāmah* translators, lauds Shaykh Bhavan, an Indian collaborator for the project, for having accepted Islam under the influence of Akbar.[182] Badā'ūnī, Akbar's most prolific translator, echoes the language of Abū al-Faẕl's preface when he attests in another text to having personally drawn Hindus away from their religion: "On this matter [reincarnation] I have, on different occasions, debated at length with [Hindu] learned authorities and, with divine blessing, made them see their errors, such

---

[179] "Muqaddamah," 19.

[180] Whether the *Razmnāmah* ever actually prompted this type of introspection is an open question. While knowledge of Persian was not particularly widespread among Brahmans in the late sixteenth century, Hindus were beginning to learn Persian in substantial numbers and enter into Mughal service. Manuscript evidence attests that Hindus read the *Razmnāmah* widely, even those who also had access to the Sanskrit tradition, but mainly in the mid-seventeenth century and later.

[181] "Muqaddamah," 19; translation from Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 181.

[182] Translated in Ali, "Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court," 41 (also see citations to numerous manuscripts above).

that some of them turned away from their own religion."[183] Shantanu Phukan has argued that we ought to understand conversion in the Mughal imagination as just as much a literary trope as a historical process.[184] This idea certainly invites us to highlight the intellectual and aesthetic stakes involved in such negotiations. But individuals such as Badā'ūnī appear to speak of genuine changes in religious affiliation. Even Abū al-Faẕl undeniably celebrates the *Razmnāmah* for its humbling influence on Brahmanical arrogance.

After explicating these larger issues, we can more clearly see Abū al-Faẕl's vision of how the *Razmnāmah* could alleviate the rejection of Muslims by Hindus and vice-versa by encouraging them to adopt portions of one another's intellectual traditions. Later in his preface, Abū al-Faẕl summarizes this aim:

> Speech of this extent and breadth, with these strange things and wonders, is not present in the other various histories (*tavārīkh*) of the world. There is no trace of this amazing speech in the accounts (*ṭabaqāt*) of the world... Although the lords of the circle of truth do not hesitate to refute the details of this story, nonetheless it is right that the mind of an intelligent person with discerning vision should reflect and place the essence of these reported things in the realm of possibility.[185]

Modern scholars have often invoked Akbar's policy of tolerating diverse religious practices in order to succinctly encapsulate his vision of the *Mahābhārata* promoting kingdom-wide harmony.[186] However, my analysis here clarifies that, at least according to Abū al-Faẕl, Akbar intended individuals—Hindus and Muslims alike—to discard some of their own ideas and be willing to adopt aspects of each other's beliefs. For Abū al-Faẕl, translating the *Mahābhārata* into Persian promoted imperial objectives because the epic disproves particular Islamic and

---

[183] *Najāt al-Rashīd* quoted and translated in Moin, "Challenging the Mughal Emperor," 397.

[184] "Ecology of Hindi," 54.

[185] "Muqaddamah," 34.

[186] Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 140.

Brahmanical ideas while simultaneously promoting a more perfect truth. Crucially, Akbar trumped the ulama by recognizing the *Mahābhārata*'s manifold wisdom and so had the text brought into the Persian literary tradition.

Abū al-Faẕl's preface quickly became a constitutive part of the *Razmnāmah* that served as an important lens through which readers encountered the Persian translation. As the preface circulated with the text, Abū al-Faẕl also became personally associated with the *Razmnāmah*. In 1609, less than thirty years after the *Razmnāmah* was completed, Firishtah was able to mistakenly assert, "Abū al-Faẕl translated [the *Mahābhārat*] from Sanskrit (*hindī*) into Persian during the time of King Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar."[187] This misattribution continues throughout the reception history of the *Razmnāmah*, which suggests that Abū al-Faẕl's preface and the translation itself were often viewed as inseparable and also signals the broader authority of Abū al-Faẕl as an intellectual leader of Akbar's period.[188] The preface to the *Razmnāmah* also exerted substantial influence on other translations from Sanskrit in the Mughal context and beyond. For example, many later translators follow Abū al-Faẕl's example concerning what types of information to include in introductions to Indian works.[189] However, later prefaces are often silent about Abū al-Faẕl's political goals that were after all quite specific to the 1580s. Perhaps Akbar's court too realized the narrow import of Abū al-Faẕl's imperial agenda in his preface and so returned to the *Razmnāmah* to explore other possibilities for the epic two further times in the next twenty years.

---

[187] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:6.

[188] I reference Abū al-Faẕl's reputation as a master of *inshā'* above. Additionally, Persian musical treatises often harkened back to Abū al-Faẕl's section on *saṅgīt* in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (Schofield, "Reviving the Golden Age Again," 499-500.

[189] In particular, later translators follow Abū al-Faẕl en masse in detailing the nature of cyclical time in much Indic thought and the theory of the four eras (*yuga*s).

Aesthetic Revolution in Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat*

In the late 1580s, Fayẕī began the first of two Mughal retranslations of the *Mahābhārata*.[190] Fifteen years later, in 1602, Ṭāhir Muḥammad bin ʻImād al-Dīn Ḥasan Sabzavārī completed the second subsequent rendering. To my knowledge, no scholar has explored either of these unprinted works in any detail, and thus, this treatment must be considered only preliminary. Fayẕī wrote his *Mahābhārat*, "a story from the kingdom of Hind," in a mixture of prose and verse.[191] He takes his prose directly from the *Razmnāmah*, and, while he adjusts the language and vocabulary at times, he overall follows the translation quite closely. He personally composed all the verses and deploys them liberally throughout the text. At the end of his reworking of the *Ādi Parvan*, Fayẕī expresses his intention to "complete all eighteen books of the epic"[192] and claims:

> In these eighteen I will depict the tumult of battle
> as eighteen thousand sights to behold.
> I will enliven the events of old
> to poetically narrate story by story.[193]

Despite the intentions articulated here, Fayẕī declined to continue his retranslation after completing the second book of the epic, and his two *parvan*s survive today in numerous manuscripts copies.[194] Although incomplete, Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat* compellingly explores the potential of Indo-Persian aesthetics to articulate Mughal imperial claims.

---

[190] Fayẕī completed his first *parvan* in 1588/9 (ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171a). For a brief biography of Fayẕī see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Travels with Faiẕī in the Deccan," 272-75.

[191] *sarguẕashtī zi mulk-i hind…* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 1b; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 1b).

[192] *bipāyān baram hizhdah daftar tamām* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b; ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171a).

[193] *dar īn hizhdah hangāmah-i gīr ū dār / nimāyam tamāshā-yi hizhdah hazār // kunam garm hangāmah-i pāstān / bigūyam sukhan dāstān dāstān* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b; ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171a-b).

[194] Badā'ūnī notes that Fayẕī only completed the first two books (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:321). I have viewed manuscripts of Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat* from the following collections: Asiatic Society of Bombay, Bibliothèque Nationale (France), Bodleian Library (Oxford), British Library (London), Maulana Azad Library (Aligarh), Khuda Bakhsh Library (Patna), Oriental Research Library (Srinagar), and Raza Library (Rampur). Note that Fayẕī's text is

Fayẕī emphasizes his strong connections with both Indian and Persian literary traditions in order to articulate the aesthetic impact of his work. He speaks of the fresh quality of his poetry as the result of being connected with an Indian story:

> With a hundred charms I am bringing an ancient book
> from Hindi into Persian, the language of the court (*darī*).
> I stroll to see with friends
> the idol temple of Hindustan.[195]

In his larger oeuvre, Fayẕī often foregrounds his predilection for innovation, which participates in a larger trend in Indo-Persian poetry of this time towards *tāza-gū'ī* (freshness of speech).[196] In the next line of his *Mahābhārat*, however, Fayẕī also carefully notes, "I remain based in the fire temples of Persia."[197] In another poem that is also a Persian retelling of a Sanskrit story, *Nal va Daman*, Fayẕī brings these two worlds together by proclaiming that the Persianate tradition will affirm the superb quality of his definitively Indian work:

> I have became exceedingly tipsy
> because I have wine from the sugar of India.
> When I sprinkle draughts across time
> "Well done!" will pour out of the wine and cup.[198]

In the case of the *Mahābhārat*, Fayẕī asserts that his version of the epic so stretches the limits of expression so that the wise will proclaim to him, "you have brought Persian literature (*sukhan*) to a new end."[199]

---

often miscataloged as the *Razmnāmah*. I have seen no dated manuscripts of Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat* before the eighteenth century, manuscripts are often incomplete, and variant readings abound. As a result, I rely here on several manuscripts and cite to multiple copies wherever possible.

[195] *kuhannāmah bā ṣad afsūngarī / zi hindī biram dar zabān-i darī // zadam gām-i naẓārah bā dūstān / bih butkhānah-i dayr-i hindūstān* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b; ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171b).

[196] See Sunil Sharma's comments on Fayẕī's emphasis on originality ("Nau'īs *Sūz u Gudāz*," 256). On freshness in Indo-Persian poetry more broadly see Kinra, "Fresh Words for a Fresh World," 125-39. Kinra also suggests that *tāza-gū'ī* may be a useful framework for capturing the aesthetics of Mughal translations of Sanskrit texts (138).

[197] *bar ātashgah-i fārs māndam asās* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b; ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171b).

[198] *īn nashā' az ān ziyādah dāram / kaz shikar-i hind bādah dāram // chūn jur'ah fashān shavam bar ayyām / aḥsant bar āyad az may ū jām* (*Dāstān-i Nal va Daman*, 39). On this work see Muzaffar and Subrahmanyam, "Love, passion and reason in Faizi's Nal-Daman."

Lest we overemphasize Fayẕī's poetry, he specifically draws attention to the equal importance of his prose: "I have wet the pen with the blood of the heart / so that my prose is not less than my poetry."[200] Fayẕī subtly rewords the *Razmnāmah*'s prose in many places to make the language more elegant. For example, the *Sabhā Parvan* (*Book of the Court*) begins with the oft-repeated phrase, "then the narrators of the events of this tale have relayed...." Fayẕī transforms this standard line to indicate the status of his *Mahābhārat* not as reported history but rather as a literary masterpiece, writing "The caretakers of this garden of poetic speech and the interpreters of this ancient story have relayed...."[201] It is difficult to see the importance of such subtle variations, but over the course of Fayẕī's work they cultivate a perceptibly lyrical tone in contrast to the *Razmnāmah*'s framing of reported history.

Fayẕī further adds a Persian register to his *Mahābhārat* by translating Sanskrit words that were left untranslated in the *Razmnāmah*. For example, where the *Razmnāmah* speaks of a *rikshir*, a Persianized rendering of the Sanskrit *ṛṣi* (sage), Fayẕī instead inserts the Persian *tajarrud-nizhād* (one belonging to a lineage of ascetics).[202] The *Razmnāmah* retains the Sanskrit word for a place of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*) whereas Fayẕī replaces it with a Persian equivalent literally meaning a place of worship (*'ibādatgāh*).[203] Fayẕī nonetheless maintains some of the heavier uses of Sanskrit in the *Razmnāmah*, such as the quoted Sanskrit verses that appear in

---

[199] *kih awṣāfash nagunjad dar 'ibārat // banāmīzad ay fikrat-i tīz raw / kih dādī sukhan rā saranjām-i naw* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 235a).

[200] *qalam rā bikhūn-i dil āghashtah'am / kih nas̱rash kam az naẓm nanivishtah'am* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b; ms. BL IO Islamic 3014, fol. 171b).

[201] *nakhlbandān-i būstān-i sukhan va ramzdānān-i īn dāstān-i kuhan chunīn āvardah'and...* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 189b; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 83b, which reads *...īn asrār-i kuhan chunīn rivāyat kardah'and*). Ms. BNF (Bibliothèque Nationale France) Supplément Persan 1038 has *dayr-i kuhan* in lieu of *dāstān-i kuhan* (fol. 86a).

[202] Ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 2a-b; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 2a (Cf. *Razmnāmah*, 1:1)

[203] Ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 3a; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 2b has *ziyāratgāh*.

the *Ādi Parvan* and multiple long lists of names.[204] Without deviating from this crucial aspect of Mughal translation practices, Fayẕī nonetheless writes his *Mahābhārat* in a more consciously Persian register than the *Razmnāmah*.

Fayẕī also features Akbar prominently in his *Mahābhārat* and directly praises the king in his opening and closing verses to each book. Notably, Fayẕī does not emphasize an account of the king's lineage, a common feature in later versified Persian translations of Sanskrit texts.[205] Rather he focuses on Akbar, glorifying him as just and his capital as a "place of delight."[206] He also gives Akbar direct credit for envisioning this new Persian *Mahābhārat*, proclaiming, "The poetry is mine and the design the shah's."[207] When Fayẕī begins the epic story he continues to reference the king with verses that can equally be interpreted as commenting on the story or praising Akbar. For example, Fayẕī commences his tale by introducing the narrator:

> They say that in days past there was an ascetic called Lomaharṣaṇa who had set his heart in search for a true purpose out of exalted desires and lofty ambitions. He had a son dear to him called Ugraśravas who had learned the arts of wisdom and virtue from the wise men of the age and had mastered the knowledge of the Ved and Puran. Because of this, he had received the title of *sūtapūrānik*.[208]

Fayẕī then offers a few verses:

> Glory to that mine of water and dust
> that produces so many glittering jewels.
> May it be a happy day at the court
> that has such a star to illuminate the night.[209]

---

[204] E.g., compare the list of snake names (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 49a; *Razmnāmah*, 1:52-53) and the names of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons in the *Ādi Parvan* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 108a-b; *Razmnāmah*, 1:122-25). For the Sanskrit verses see ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 50b and *Razmnāmah*, 1:54; like nearly all manuscripts of the *Razmnāmah*, Fayẕī only offers the final two verses as quoted by the Tehran editors.

[205] E.g., Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan*, dedicated to Jahangir (ms. BL Persian Or. 1251, fol. 3b-4a).

[206] *'ishratgāh* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 2a; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 2a).

[207] *sukhan az man ū himmat az shāh būd* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 186b).

[208] Ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 2a; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 2a.

[209] *sitāyish bar ān ma'dan-i āb ū khāk / kih zāyad chunīn gawhar-i tābnāk // bar ān āsitān bād farkhundah rūz / kih dārad chunīn akhtarī shab furūz* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 2a; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211, fol. 2a reads *āsmān* for *āsitān*).

In its immediate context, these lines praise the epic's narrator, but in a broader courtly setting they may very well have been understood to extol Akbar. At the very least, such poetry reflects the cultural and literary discourses of the Persianate Mughal court.

Fayẕī also further plays upon the few oblique references to the Mughals contained within the *Razmnāmah*. For example, I describe above how the *Razmnāmah* reformulates the story of Karṇa's conception to mirror Akbar's claim to be the manifestation of a light passed down through his Mongol ancestors. Fayẕī relays the Mughal-inflected story of Kuntī and Sūrya as told in the *Razmnāmah* and emphasizes the connection to Akbar by introducing a few lines in praise of the sun that extol it with the Persian honorific *haẕrat*.[210] Here Fayẕī expands the *Razmnāmah*'s reference to Akbar's royal light (*farr*) to also invoke the king's well-documented practice of sun worship.[211] In short, Fayẕī viewed part of his task in composing a *Mahābhārat* in literary Persian to more closely link the epic with Akbar and Mughal courtly practices. As he succinctly puts his intentions in his closing verses to the first book, "I am the eulogizer of the throne of the King of Kings."[212]

Fayẕī may not have completed the full eighteen books of his *Mahābhārat* due to his death in 1595 and indeed left other projects unfinished, such as his *khamsah* in imitation of Niẓāmī.[213] But he may also have abandoned his rewriting of the epic because the Indo-Persian tradition ultimately decided that the *Mahābhārata* did not possess the same aesthetic potential to become Persian literature as did other Sanskrit texts. The Mughal court never patronized

---

[210] Ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 105a; ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 175, fol. 61b

[211] Akbar's sun worship is one of the few courtly practices recorded in both Persian and Sanskrit texts (see my discussion in chapter 2).

[212] *s̱anākhvan-i awrang-i shāhinshaham* (ms. BL IO Islamic 761, fol. 187a; ms. Aligarh Muslim University, University Collection No. Persian/Ikhbar 129, fol. 269b).

[213] Desai, "Life and Works of Faidi," 12-13.

another versification of the *Mahābhārata* after Fayẕī's attempt, and few post-Akbar reworkings of the tale in Persian have come to light.[214] In contrast, poets produced around two dozen Persian versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, many of which were versified, well into the nineteenth century.[215] Despite never being imitated, Fayẕī's *Mahābhārat* remained popular among Indo-Persian readers, although they often confused both its contents and authorship. Fayẕī's work was frequently reabsorbed into the *Razmnāmah* in later manuscript copies, offered in lieu of the original translations of the *Ādi* and *Sabhā Parvan*s.[216] Many manuscripts do not attribute Fayẕī's translation properly whereas other manuscripts will ascribe the entire *Razmnāmah* to the poet. Additionally, later copies often omit many of Fayẕī's verses, and the majority of manuscripts either heavily abridge or exclude altogether his opening and closing lines to both *parvan*s.[217] In short, Fayẕī continued to be associated with the *Mahābhārata* in the Indo-Persian tradition. But, as with Abū al-Faẕl's preface, the contours and impact of Fayẕī's precise project were lost over time.

Rewriting History in Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī's Abridged *Mahābhārat*

Regardless of Fayẕī's limited success in reworking the epic in a new literary form, intellectuals in Akbar's court continued to be intrigued by the *Mahābhārata* and returned to the text for a third time before the end of Akbar's reign. Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī retells the *Mahābhārata* as part of his history of the world, *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* (*Garden of the Pure*), completed

---

[214] There are a few later reworkings of individual chapters of the *Mahābhārata* in Persian (including books 4, 5, and 14) and some prose abridgements of the entire epic. Fathullah Mujtabai lists some of the abridgements in "Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht," 141-42.

[215] Mujtabai, "Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht," 137-41.

[216] E.g., *Razmnāmah*, ms. Asiatic Society of Bombay A.N. 143693 contains Fayẕī's *Ādi Parvan*, and ms. BNF Supplément Persan 1038 contains his *Sabhā Parvan*.

[217] E.g., ms. Srinagar ORL Persian 211 and ms. Asiatic Society of Bombay A.N. 143693 (*Ādi Parvan*) omit many of the verses within the text. Of the manuscripts I have consulted, BL IO Islamic 761 offers the fullest set of both opening and closing verses, although some of the final verses in the *Sabhā Parvan* have been damaged.

in the early seventeenth century. Ṭāhir Muḥammad was the son of ʻImād al-Dīn Ḥasan, the governor of Khambhat (Cambay) under Akbar. Ṭāhir Muḥammad entered royal service in 1579-80 and thereafter performed a number of tasks on behalf of Akbar and his successors.[218] He composed his history while employed at the Mughal court and provides a detailed account of Akbar's reign while placing the Mughal emperor within a larger historical framework.[219] The *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* covers a broad range of events in five books, beginning with pre-Islamic Persia as recorded in texts such as the *Shāhnāmah* and ending with contemporary Indian and Portuguese relations. As part of his agenda to situate Akbar within a longue durée of history, Ṭāhir Muḥammad also provides an account of India's pre-Islamic history in the fourth book of his *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn*.[220] Here Ṭāhir Muḥammad draws upon the ability of the *Razmnāmah* and other Sanskrit texts to provide a record of kingship in pre-Islamic India.

Ṭāhir Muḥammad pairs the *Mahābhārata* with additional Sanskrit materials in order to construct the fullest possible report of the royal history of Brahmanical India. In the introduction to his *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn*, Ṭāhir Muḥammad divides the contents of his fourth book into two sections that detail the avatars of Viṣṇu and the story of the *Mahābhārata*, including the *Harivaṃśa*, respectively. He describes the first section as "a record of the events of the

---

[218] Ṭāhir Muḥammad began his *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* in 1602-1603, as recorded in the title's chronogram (Beveridge, "Rauẕat-uṭ-Tāhirīn," 269). On the date of Ṭāhir Muḥammad entering Akbar's service see *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn*, ms. Oxford Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 626a. For highlights of his employment with the Mughals see Marshall, *Mughals in India*, 1:#1768 and Zaidi, *Hinduism in Aligarh Manuscripts*, 11.

[219] So far as I am able to determine, Ṭāhir Muḥammad does not claim direct imperial patronage for his history overall or for the fourth chapter in particular. Note that Hermann Ethe appears to misread his claim that the *Mahābhārata* was translated under Akbar's orders as Ṭāhir Muḥammad claiming that he abridged the text at the king's request (*Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, 1:#1955). On *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn*'s broader political implications see Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 67.

[220] I have viewed copies of Ṭāhir Muḥammad's fourth chapter of *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), British Library (London), and Maulana Azad Library (Aligarh).

rulers of Hindustan who preceded the appearance of Islam and are called Brahmans."[221] Several scholars have identified the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the source text for his account of Viṣṇu's incarnations. This follows a colophon in a mid-eighteenth century manuscript copy that names "*śrī bhāgavat*" alongside the *Mahābhārata* as the texts contained therein, but it is worth noting that this claim has yet to be verified by looking at the actual content of *Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn*.[222] Further comment on *Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn*'s *Bhāgavata* section is beyond the bounds of this chapter, but it is important that Ṭāhir Muḥammad places Viṣṇu's incarnations, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Harivaṃśa* as sequential events in India's pre-Islamic past. Furthermore, he prefaces both sections with a description of the larger progression of cyclical time as understood in Indic thought, complete with its four eras (*jug* in Persian, *yuga* in Sanskrit) that each last hundreds of thousands of years.[223] Before introducing Viṣṇu's first incarnation as a fish, he also describes how God created Brahma and Brahma in turn designed the world and its inhabitants, which leads into the beginning of Indian history.[224]

Throughout his treatment of the pre-Islamic subcontinent, Ṭāhir Muḥammad maintains distance from the stories he repeats in two ways and thereby voices some of the larger concerns of Muslims who participated in Akbar's translation projects. First, he often invokes caveats about the credibility of such tales and characterizes them as "the beliefs" or

---

[221] *ẕikr-i aḥvāl-i farmān-farmāyān-i hindūstān kih qabl az ẓuhūr-i islām būdah'and brahmanān mīgūyand...* (ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 11b). Ṭāhir Muḥammad describes the *Mahābhārata* in a similar fashion (fol. 421b).

[222] Ms. BL IO Islamic 753, fol. 118b (dated 1759 CE). While the *Bhāgavata* was rendered into Persian multiple times, we lack evidence that any translations were completed as early as Akbar's reign (for an overview of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* translations, see Shukla, "Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works," 182). Much confusion surrounds the Persian *Bhāgavata*s, not least because manuscript catalogues often mislabel translations as *Bhagavadgītā*s. There were partial Braj translations available by the end of the sixteenth century (McGregor, *Hindi Literature*, 156). Ṭāhir Muḥammad is silent about his source(s) for information about Viṣṇu's *avatāra*s.

[223] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 387b-88a and fol. 421b-22a.

[224] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 388a. Ṭāhir Muḥammad follows the *Razmnāmah* in reading a monotheistic framework into Brahmanical beliefs.

"the learning" of Brahmans to indicate that he is merely reporting rather than endorsing these narratives.[225] Ṭāhir Muḥammad also offers a short defense of treating Brahmanical history at the beginning of his fourth book. He says that the Brahmans have written their own histories apart from Muslims. He then asserts "the narration of heresy is not itself heresy" (*naql-i kufr kufr nīst*).[226] Here he echoes Badā'ūnī, who writes the same defense word for word in his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh* regarding his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Ṭāhir Muḥammad is comfortable simply stating that he is not assenting to the heresy he reports, but Badā'ūnī goes on to write out the Islamic statement of faith and begs Allah to forgive him for translating a cursed book.[227] Later Mughal translators of the *Rāmāyaṇa* even include entire sections in their texts that justify the decision to bring an Indic, non-Muslim story into Persian.[228] As I mention above, pre-Mughal translators had felt even more uncomfortable with their proximity to Indian beliefs and excised certain chapters of Sanskrit texts precisely because of their heresy (*kufr*).[229] It is clear that reading Sanskrit texts was fraught with anxieties for many members of the Indo-Islamic cultural sphere, not least because of the challenges to their intellectual and religious traditions that Abū al-Faẓl encourages. However, these concerns do not prevent Ṭāhir Muḥammad from drawing on the Sanskrit tradition in order to compose a narrative of Indian history with Akbar at its culmination.

Ṭāhir Muḥammad begins his *Mahābhārata* by linking the work closely with the *Razmnāmah* and Abū al-Faẓl's conception of the epic as beneficial for kings. After a few lines

---

[225] E.g., see the beginning of the three major sections: ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 388a, fol. 422a, and fol. 459a.

[226] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 387b.

[227] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:366.

[228] E.g., see the "*dar maẕammat-i ḥussād*" section of Masīḥ Pānīpatī's *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī* (24-27).

[229] E.g., a translation of *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira done in the 14th century under Firuz Shah omits eight chapters because of the heresy therein (*Tarjumah-i Barāhī*, ms. BL, IO Islamic 1262, fol. 2a-3a).

offering praise to God, Ṭāhir Muḥammad introduces the *Mahābhārata* as an imperial text meant for Akbar's edification. He announces:

> It has not remained hidden from the luminous, generous hearts of the wise lords that the minds of men, particularly great kings, yearn to listen to histories. The most honorable one has made this knowledge beloved to hearts so that the people of the age will take advice from listening to it and not forget noble times.[230]

Ṭāhir Muḥammad next names the *Mahābhārata*, particularly the Persian version of the text as translated under Akbar's orders, as the direct source for his abridgement. While he does not name Abū al-Faẕl's preface directly, he draws heavily from it in his description of the eighteen *parvan*s of the *Mahābhārata*, often repeating Abū al-Faẕl's words exactly.[231] However, Ṭāhir Muḥammad does not appear to follow Abū al-Faẕl and indeed the *Razmnāmah* in highlighting the *Śānti Parvan* as a particular source of political advice. He gives the twelfth book no special treatment and shortens the text drastically. Whereas the *Śānti Parvan* comprises roughly one-quarter of the *Razmnāmah*, it consists of only a few pages, around four percent, of Ṭāhir Muḥammad's *Mahābhārat*. Instead Ṭāhir Muḥammad identifies the *Mahābhārata*'s political promise as more tightly linked with its status as a purported historical record.

In his *Mahābhārat*, Ṭāhir Muḥammad pares down the epic to its core story with an emphasis on enumerating the reigns of kings. He opens by tracing kingship back to the *dvāpar jug*, the third of four eras, and says that King Bharata ruled in Hastinapura, which is now called Delhi.[232] Beginning in such a manner highlights the center of Indo-Islamic power on the subcontinent and provides a direct link between Akbar and ancient Indian kings. In his conclusion to the *Mahābhārata* proper, he briefly traces Yudhiṣṭhira's successors and notes the

---

[230] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 421b.

[231] Compare ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 423b-24b and "Muqaddamah" of Abū al-Faẕl, 37-40.

[232] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 422a.

length of their reigns.[233] He then subdivides the *Mahābhārata*'s appendix, the *Harivaṃśa*, according to royal dynasties and individual rulers.[234] After the end of the *Harivaṃśa*, Ṭāhir Muḥammad continues his history in his fifth and final book with the Islamic rulers of India that build-up to Akbar. The placement of the *Mahābhārata* and ancient Indian history directly before this section positions Akbar at the pinnacle of a long line of Indian predecessors, Brahmanical and Islamic alike.

Thus Ṭāhir Muḥammad presents his *Mahābhārat* as a record of long-standing, diverse kingly rule in India upon which Akbar could build the Mughal Empire. Contemporary and later Indo-Persian intellectuals further cultivate this connection between ancient Indian kings and the reigning Mughal emperor by composing Persian *rājāvalī*s (kingly lineages) that place Mughal rule at the end of a long chain of Hindu and Muslim kings. Whether any *rājāvalī* writers were inspired by *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* remains to be explored, but the lineages often begin with none other than the kings of the *Mahābhārata*.[235] Other historians follow Ṭāhir Muḥammad in repeating stories from the *Mahābhārata* and other Sanskrit sources within chronicles of pre-Islamic India.[236] The fourth chapter of *Rawẕat al-Ṭāhirīn* also came to have a life of its own in later years as the text circulated independently. In this form, Ṭāhir Muḥammad's *Mahābhārat* became associated with other translations from Sanskrit and lost much of its original political

---

[233] Ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 458b-59a.

[234] See his table of contents in ms. Bodleian Elliot 314, fol. 12b-13a.

[235] For example, *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* (dated 1657) begins with the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira (ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha 46, fol. 2b), and Banvālī Dās does likewise in his *Rājāvalī* (ms. Hyderabad Salar Jung Tarikh 244, fol. 10a). Curiously, one author combines excerpts from the summary of the *Mahābhārata* given in Abū al-Faẕl's preface with an account of Indo-Islamic kings, which is appended to a manuscript of Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan* (ms. BNF Supplément Persan 18, fol. 231-52).

[236] E.g., Firishtah's *Tārīkh-i Firishtah* and Sujān Rāī Bhandārī's *Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh* (on the latter, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Witnesses and Agents of Empire," 403-4). Also the anonymous *Bahāristān-i Shāhī* written in the early seventeenth century begins with an account of pre-Muslim kings drawn from the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*s (I am indebted to Dean Accardi for this information). Other Persian histories of Kashmir continued to propagate this Sanskrit-derived information well into the nineteenth century (Zutshi, "Translating the Past," 10).

edge.[237] But Ṭāhir Muḥammad's intention was to cast the *Mahābhārata* as a pre-Islamic, most crucially a pre-Akbar, history of India.

Conclusion: Politics and Aesthetics

The *Razmnāmah* played a major role in the advancement of Mughal political claims, both in its initial translation and by facilitating a series of subsequent imperial framings and reworkings of the Indian epic in Persian. The four textual projects discussed above each explore different ways for the *Mahābhārata* to participate in aspects of Akbar's kingship. The *Razmnāmah* translators attempted to fashion a work of political advice directed at Akbar, both by accurately translating the text where possible but also by reformulating sections to be culturally and politically relevant to the Mughal court. In later treatments, Abū al-Faẕl invoked the potency of new sources of knowledge to settle contemporary power disputes; Fayẕī created fresh poetry to articulate innovative types of imperial claims; and Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī dramatically altered how his contemporaries would understand the present. These authors, despite their diverse aims, agreed that Sanskrit texts have the power to reshape Mughal realities and do not merely reflect but actually produce political power.

The Mughal treatments of the *Mahābhārata* also actively engage with aesthetic concerns at multiple points, which ought to be equally emphasized alongside their political implications. The *Razmnāmah* translators develop an Indic register, craft interesting religious depictions, and embed their text in the Persian poetic tradition. Abū al-Faẕl's preface employs a specialized style of literary prose that elevates Akbar and his imperial claims. Fayẕī in particular develops the epic's aesthetic power by claiming that as an Indian text the

[237] Independent manuscript copies include Aligarh Sir Suleman 15/2 and BL IO Islamic 753. There is also a purported copy in a private collection in Pune (Chaghatai, "Illustrated Edition of the Razmnama," 323, #41). Ms. BL Or. 2016 contains, in order: *'Iyār-i Dānish*, Ṭāhir Muḥammad's *Mahābhārat*, and a Persian translation of *Prabodhacandrodaya.*

Mahābhārata has a unique ability to inspire truly revolutionary Persian poetry. Last, all four works discussed here are, at their core, works of literature. It would dishonor these texts to subsume their aesthetic qualities within some form of legitimation theory that privileges political power above all else. We might transport our language for political hegemony into the aesthetic realm and posit that Akbar also attempted to conquer Indian literature or wished to appropriate Sanskrit modes of literary discourse. But we would fall short of apprehending or describing the subtle ways that literature wields its aesthetic and rhetorical power. The Mughals did not so much colonize as dynamically interact with different aspects of Sanskrit and Persian aesthetics in their engagements with the *Mahābhārata*.

The reception history of the *Mahābhārata* in Persian continued actively for more than two centuries after Akbar's reign. Akbar's immediate imperial successors received his various *Mahābhārata*s enthusiastically while still preferring the *Razmnāmah* overall. Several subimperial illustrated *Razmnāmah*s were produced during the first half of the seventeenth century, and the translated text was voraciously copied and recopied. Illustrated manuscripts began to decline after Jahangir's reign, but subimperial courts continued to engage with the text in numerous ways.[238] Most notably, during Aurangzeb's reign in the late seventeenth century, Basant Rae, a Hindu *munshī* in the retinue of Shaysta Khan, produced a table of contents for the *Razmnāmah*.[239] This work also illustrates a major shift during Shah Jahan's tenure: the readership of Sanskrit-Persian translations began to include large numbers of

[238] Early-seventeenth-century illustrated manuscripts include the Birla *Razmnāmah* (dated 1605) and the 1616-1617 *Razmnāmah* (now dispersed; for a reconstruction of the paintings see Seyller, "Model and Copy," Appendix B, 62-65). A variety of more crudely and sparsely illustrated later manuscripts (largely nineteenth century) are extant in the Srinagar ORL and one each in the Bombay Asiatic Society, Delhi National Archives, and Delhi National Museum.

[239] See ms. BL Persian Add. 5641, fol. 7b-14b and ms. BL IO Islamic 2517, fol. 1b-8b. The table of contents is dated 1686-87 CE (1688 in ms. BL IO Islamic 2517) and does not include the *Harivaṃśa*.

Hindus. The eighteenth and nineteenth century receptions of the *Razmnāmah* and other Mughal *Mahābhārata*s await a separate study. Returning to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I direct my attention in the following chapter to additional translations and accounts of Indian knowledge produced in the courts of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan.

Chapter 4: Indo-Persian Receptions: Courtly Treatments of Sanskrit Knowledge and Literature

In addition to direct translations, imperial actors also incorporated Sanskrit literature and knowledge systems into Persian through numerous other types of texts. Such works include syntheses of Indian learning drawn from multiple sources, Indo-Persian chronicles that assimilate the pre-Islamic history of the subcontinent, and responses to translations in the forms of reworkings and reader comments. This array of projects illustrates the complex reception dynamics that emerged as the Mughal court introduced an increasing number of Sanskrit materials into the imperial realm. In many instances, Persianate intelligentsia explored potential impacts of engagements with the Sanskrit sphere beyond those pursued through the model of translation. Additionally, the sustained (if not necessarily consistent) focus on Sanskrit knowledge over the course of roughly seventy years from 1580-1650 shaped Indo-Persian culture far beyond the royal court. Several key works allow us insight into how intellectuals beyond the emperors' immediate circles, frequently in other political contexts, envisioned the political potency of Indian ideas. The Mughals pursued diverse interests in accessing Sanskrit literature and learning, and their cross-cultural endeavors transformed the possibilities available to other Indo-Persian intellectuals.

Abū al-Faẕl's account of Sanskrit knowledge systems, reactions to the Akbar-sponsored translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and later Persianate applications of Sanskrit-based information are three such domains in which those who operated in the Persianate world cultivated different uses for Sanskrit knowledge. First, I focus on one of the most extensive Mughal expositions of Sanskrit learning that is not a direct translation: Abū al-Faẕl's *Account of India* (*aḥvāl-i hindūstān*) in his *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* (*Akbar's Institutes*). *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* is a much-cited text that has still not been given its due in modern scholarship. A careful analysis of this work that

considers its substance, structure, and motivations suggests that Abū al-Faẕl pursued cross-cultural interests in order to formulate a politico-intellectual claim over India on behalf of his Mughal patron. In the second section, I turn to the entry of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in particular, into Persian literature in order to access how the explosion of imperial interest in Sanskrit stories affected readers. The *Rāmāyaṇa* prompted comments from key members of its courtly audience and numerous retranslations. Both of these responses demonstrate some of the central issues at play in bringing Sanskrit materials to the attention of an Indo-Persian audience. In the third section, I address two Persian texts that were produced, respectively, beyond the confines of the Mughal court during Jahangir's tenure (*Tārīkh-i Firishtah*) and later during Shah Jahan's period (*Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*). Both works build upon Sanskrit and Persian encounters in Akbar's court and allow us to trace the legacy of introducing Sanskrit knowledge into the Indo-Persian thought world. The latter two sections also broaden our perspective temporally beyond Akbar's reign and address cross-cultural activities under Jahangir and Shah Jahan in a more substantial manner. Collectively, the diverse texts in this chapter sketch out the early history of how courtly intellectuals attempted to integrate the Sanskrit tradition into Indo-Persian culture.

Learning of India: Abū al-Faẕl's Formulation of Sanskrit Knowledge Systems

Abū al-Faẕl composed a wide-ranging *Account of India* as part of his *Āʼīn-i Akbarī*, which is itself the final section of *Akbarnāmah*, the official history of Akbar's reign. Within his *Account of India* he delineates a wide assortment of information related to the subcontinent, including a systematic exposition of Sanskrit knowledge systems titled *Learning of India* (*dānish-i hindūstān*). While scholars have often referenced Abū al-Faẕl's explanation of Sanskrit (often mischaracterized as Hindu) erudition, the text and its import remain poorly understood.

Indologists have frequently offered descriptive overviews of his exegesis but rarely any in-depth treatment. Here I investigate the context, framing, and content of the *Learning of India* in order to reconstruct Abū al-Faẕl's methods and projected intentions, to the degree we can infer these. Furthermore, I situate this text within both the literary milieu of the Mughal court and the larger tradition of Islamicate inquiries into Indian knowledge. Abū al-Faẕl presents his *Account of India*, particularly his *Learning of India*, as a revolutionary contribution to both the Persianate intellectual tradition and Akbar's political agenda.

Previous Scholarship on *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*

A number of scholarly works inform my treatment of the *Account of India*, particularly research on Abū al-Faẕl more broadly and his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*. Scholars have devoted significant effort to analyzing the effect of Abū al-Faẕl and his multiple writings on the construction of Akbar's imperial identity. S.A.A. Rizvi remains the preeminent theorist in this field, primarily due to his 1975 book that argues Abū al-Faẕl was the primary visionary of the religious and intellectual ideologies that characterized the second half of Akbar's reign.[1] Several earlier and later authors have also fruitfully explored Abū al-Faẕl's ideas.[2] While many of their works have quite usefully outlined Abū al-Faẕl's role in articulating Mughal claims, they are generally too broad in scope to look closely at his *Account of India*. Nonetheless, a few articles have examined this section of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, such as Athar Ali's "The Evolution of the Perception of India: Akbar and Abu'l Fazl."[3] Other scholars have traced the *Account of India*'s textual genealogy, including

---

[1] *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign: With Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl (1556-1605)*. Rizvi also has several later articles on Abū al-Faẕl and his formulation of Akbar's imperial ideology.

[2] E.g., Hardy, "Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah"; Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography*, 58-88; Nizami, *History and Historians of Medieval India*, 141-60; O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body." particularly 897-904; Richards, "Formulation of Imperial Authority." More recently Alam discusses Abū al-Faẕl at various places in his *Languages of Political Islam*.

[3] E.g., also see Khan, "Al-Bīrūnī and Abul Fazl."

identifying the influence of different Islamicate texts on Abū al-Faẓl and a number of the Sanskrit works upon which he relies in the *Learning of India*.[4]

I build on the foundation of this secondary scholarship but also try to move beyond merely reconstructing Abū al-Faẓl's intellectual apparatus. I seek to uncover how he conceptualized his project in the *Learning of India* and his intention in placing this work within a court-sponsored history. To date, few scholars have ventured to explicate the relationship between Abū al-Faẓl's interest in Sanskrit knowledge systems and his imperial ideology. I aim to combine the political analysis of those who have discussed Abū al-Faẓl more broadly and the textual focus of scholars who have concentrated on his *Account of India*. Thereby I am able to glimpse Abū al-Faẓl's larger ambitions precisely through a close reading of one of the most groundbreaking sections of his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī.*

In addition to secondary scholarship, Indologists have also translated Abū al-Faẓl's *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* into English, which has served the field both well and ill. In the late nineteenth century, Henry Blochmann translated the first two books of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* and H. S. Jarrett the final three, which include the *Account of India* (book 4 of five total books).[5] In the twentieth century, D.C. Phillott revised Blochmann's work, and Jadunath Sarkar reworked Jarrett's text. These amended translations have been reprinted numerous times and have been instrumental in making *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* available to an English-speaking audience. But they are also riddled with ambiguities and questionable readings. As with so many Indo-Persian works, scholars today are far too comfortable citing the early translations of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* without accessing the

[4] I cite these works below.

[5] These translations are now available online: http://persian.packhum.org/persian/. In 1800, Francis Gladwin published a translation of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (*Ayeen Akbery*).

Persian text.[6] An absence of serious philological work on *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* has allowed many misleading interpretations to be perpetuated for decades, a situation that I begin to redress here.

Contexts and Predecessors of the *Account of India*

Abū al-Faẕl's *Akbarnāmah* as a whole glorifies Akbar, and *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* gives expression to the king's majesty by charting his imperial customs and institutions.[7] Abū al-Faẕl opens his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* by paying brief tribute to Allah before announcing his intention to worship in a different manner: "I, Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak, give thanks to God by singing the praises of kingship and stringing the royal pearls on the intertwining thread of description."[8] Having announced his aim to exalt Akbar, Abū al-Faẕl next outlines two more earthly reasons why he is embarking on this project. First, he desires to give his contemporaries a demonstration of "the deep learning, vast forbearance, and great works of [Akbar]."[9] In short, he seeks to impress the ruling emperor's magnificence upon a courtly audience. Second, Abū al-Faẕl wishes to leave a legacy for the future. Thus he proclaims, "I record some thoughts on the institutions of the ruler of the world and leave for everyone far and near a standard work of wisdom."[10]

Ā'īn-i Akbarī contains five books that outline different aspects of Akbar's empire. Abū al-Faẕl begins with the central court and works outward, in a loose concentric fashion, until he

---

[6] Even scholars who work in Persian frequently cite the translation of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* instead of the Persian text (e.g., Lal, *Domesticity and Power*). *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* is available in several Persian printed editions, and the *Account of India* section is available online in multiple versions.

[7] On the unity of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* and *Akbarnāmah* see Hardy, "Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah," 114.

[8] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 2; Calcutta ed., 1. Throughout his *Akbarnāmah*, Abū al-Faẕl develops the argument that he praises God by praising Akbar. Hardy discusses the theological and political implications of this logic in "Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah," 114-15.

[9] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 2-3; Calcutta ed., 1.

[10] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 3; Calcutta ed., 2.

considers the whole of Hindustan.[11] Book 1 addresses the royal household and courtly practices. Abū al-Faẕl then broadens his purview in book 2 to detail the army and other imperial groups, such as nobles. Book 3 discusses Mughal domains, primarily by focusing on different regions and important cities. Book 4 features the *Account of India*, which covers Indian history, beliefs, and knowledge systems (including the *Learning of India*). Last, book 5, by far the shortest section of *Āʼīn-i Akbarī*, records the sayings of Emperor Akbar and thus returns the text, and indeed the whole of *Akbarnāmah*, to its focal point, namely the king himself. It is difficult to place *Āʼīn-i Akbarī* in a single Persian genre, and the text reads at different times as a history (*tārīkh*), ethical treatise (*akhlāq*), and administrative manual.

Abū al-Faẕl's larger project in *Āʼīn-i Akbarī* was to describe the institutes of an illustrious ruler in order to map his empire in words. Such an endeavor was part of a Persianate tradition stretching back to Sassanian times when similarly titled texts had been written.[12] Many of Abū al-Faẕl contemporaries also participated in this longstanding practice but expressed the nature of Akbar's imperium quite differently. For example, Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad authored his *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* in the 1590s and therein traces the history of Islamicate rule over different regions in India.[13] Several years earlier, Akbar appointed a team of authors to compose *Tārīkh-i Alfī* (*History of the Millennium*) in order to celebrate the first thousand years of Islam, which concluded in 1592. *Tārīkh-i Alfī* celebrates Akbar as the "Renewer of the Second Millennium" within an Islamic-centered history that commences with the death of the Prophet

[11] I draw here on the work of O'Hanlon, who discusses the Mughal political philosophy of different spheres all revolving around Akbar in her analysis of *akhlāq* texts ("Kingdom, Household and Body," particularly 892-93).

[12] E.g., *Āʼīn-nāmah* (Shamma, "Translating into the Empire," 72). Parts of *Āʼīn-nāmah* appear to be preserved in Ibn al-Nadīm's *ʻUyūn al-Akhbār* (see discussion in Latham, "Ibn Muqaffaʻ and Early ʻAbbasid Prose, 54-55).

[13] Firishtah would later organize his history, *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, also called *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, in a similar fashion.

Muhammad.[14] Both these texts sought, like *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, to portray Akbar as a central figure within a larger historical framework, but Abū al-Faẕl incorporates a far wider range of materials, such as Indian learning, into his text. Moreover, he not only presents Islamicate history as culminating with the rule of Akbar but also frames the Mughal Empire as a distinctively Indian entity that emanates outward from the king himself.

Within *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, book 4 stands slightly apart from the other books because it does not address the Mughal polity directly but rather concentrates on the land of India, its people, and their beliefs that largely predate Mughal rule. For Abū al-Faẕl, this is an important aspect of Akbar's kingdom that must be embraced within his expansive vision, as I discuss below. But first it is worth noting that in analyzing India and Sanskrit traditions, Abū al-Faẕl was preceded by many earlier Islamicate thinkers. These works provide an important context for understanding Abū al-Faẕl's innovations, and some authors also directly informed his *Account of India*.

First and foremost, in the early eleventh century, Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī composed an extensive Arabic treatise on Indian religions and philosophy. This text, commonly known as al-Bīrūnī's *India*, was unprecedented in the Islamicate world in terms of its depth and use of Sanskrit sources.[15] While al-Bīrūnī's *India* was not popular among early modern readers, the work was known to Abū al-Faẕl, who draws on it in a number of passages in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*.[16] In addition, Abū al-Faẕl follows al-Bīrūnī frequently in terms of his

---

[14] Moin, "Islam and the Millennium," 206. On millenarian movements in Akbar's court and other Islamicate empires see Subrahmanyam, "Turning the Stones Over."

[15] Al-Bīrūnī's text is also commonly known as *Kitāb al-Hind* (*Book of India*). On Islamicate texts that predate al-Bīrūnī and address Indian religious beliefs see Habibullah, "An Early Arab Report on Indian Religious Sects."

[16] Scholars have long posited a connection between al-Bīrūnī and Abū al-Faẕl (e.g., Ali, "Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court," 38; Jarrett, preface to *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* [English translation], 3:viii-ix; Khan, "Al-Bīrūnī and Abul Fazl," 42-43).

arguments and methods. Both compare Sanskrit knowledge to the Greek tradition, emphasize discord between communities as a reason for producing their respective works, and stress the importance of accessing Indian texts.[17] Despite many similarities, the social implications of the two treatises remain quite distinct. Al-Bīrūnī wrote his *India* outside the confines of direct royal patronage, and scholars have typically read the work primarily as an intellectual endeavor.[18] In contrast, Abū al-Faẓl's *Account of India* is a crucial part of the defining text of Akbar's reign and is deeply embedded in imperial interests.

After al-Bīrūnī, several Persianate literati discussed Indian religious and philosophical ideas within larger world histories. When considering Abū al-Faẓl's predecessors scholars have often dismissed these texts because the authors generally did not engage with any Indian traditions for their information and instead relied on earlier Islamicate accounts of the subcontinent.[19] Nonetheless, these works are important for understanding Abū al-Faẓl's project because he names such world histories as his intellectual antecedents. In the opening of the *Account of India*, he suggests the inadequacies of these works as one reason for producing his own:

> I do not know whether affection for my birthplace, an investigation into truth (*haqq-pizhūhī*), or describing reality (*haqīqat-guzārī*) has strongly inclined me towards this, because Banākatī, Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, and other ancients have constructed false visions and written down fictitious stories (*khiyāl-parastī nimūdah'and va dāstānhā-yi nābudah bar nivishtah*).[20]

---

[17] Halbfass discusses some of these features in al-Bīrūnī's work in *India and Europe*, 25-28; also see Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 176-77 and Lawrence, "Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Bīrūnī's *India*."

[18] Al-Bīrūnī wrote under the larger auspices of the Ghaznavid court, but we lack evidence of direct patronage for his *India* (Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 25).

[19] Halbfass discusses a few examples in *India and Europe*, 28-30; also see Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions," 216 and Lawrence, *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions*, 17-29.

[20] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:1; Aligarh ed., 360, read *guzārī* with Aligarh edition.

Banākatī completed his vast history of the world for a Mongol patron in 1317, and Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū wrote his *Majmaʿ al-Tavārīkh* (*Collected Histories*) for the Timurid court in the early fifteenth century. Both writers drew heavily on Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh* (*Collection of Histories*, c. 1300) in their sections on India.[21] In rejecting the works of earlier authors as unreliable, Abū al-Faẕl signals his intention to pursue innovative methods and to draw upon new sources with respect to Sanskrit learning.

Nonetheless, several Indo-Persian authors chronicle aspects of India in works that serve as antecedents for specific sections of Abū al-Faẕl's *Account of India*. In this vein, scholars have drawn attention to the third chapter of Amīr Khusraw's *Nuh Sipihr* (*Nine Heavens*, d. 1318), which describes Indian cultural life.[22] Additionally, Babur's memoirs may provide a precedent for Abū al-Faẕl's larger project in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* to craft a detailed administrative record of Mughal India.[23] Tracing these various connections gives us a sense of how Abū al-Faẕl situated his *Account of India* within established Persianate and Islamicate traditions of writing about India, even while he distinguishes himself in many respects. Abū al-Faẕl unites painstaking attention to the subcontinent's traditions, a commitment to accessing Sanskrit sources, and an ambitious political agenda.

Framing the *Account of India* and *Learning of India*

Abū al-Faẕl structures his fourth book of *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* as a description of the subcontinent and, within that, of Indian, particularly Sanskrit, learning. Despite several attestations in the text regarding his geographical and linguistic interests, Abū al-Faẕl's nineteenth-century translators have misled countless readers by repeatedly claiming his

---

[21] Jackson, "Banākatī"; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 204 n. 1.

[22] Ali, "Evolution of the Perception of India," 81-82; Sharma, *Amir Khusraw*, 84-85.

[23] Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 43.

project was religiously defined. They translate the title of his *Learning of India* (*dānish-i hindūstān*) as *The Learning of the Hindus*, and the Persian word *hindī* is inaccurately rendered as "Hindu."[24] In early modern Indo-Persian, *hindūstān* denotes the geographical region of the subcontinent,[25] and *hindī* has a range of meanings, including Hindi, Sanskrit, and Indian.[26] *Hindī* rarely refers to a religious community in sixteenth century Indo-Persian and certainly lacks that sense in the usage of Abū al-Faẕl, who frequently employs alternative designations for those we might identify as "Hindus," such as *brahman*.[27]

Furthermore Abū al-Faẕl clarifies several times in his *Account of India* that his intention is to analyze a geographical area and the people therein. He opens the book with the following statement: "For a long time, my curious heart desired to spend some time on the nature of this vast land and record the learning of the wise among the Indians (*hindī-nizhād*)."[28] Here he unambiguously defines "Indians" by reference to their homeland. The diverse contents of his *Account of India*, including a topographical description of the region and Islamicate figures who have traveled to India, confirm a regional rather than religious focus. Finally, when Abū al-Faẕl begins his exposition of the Indian sciences (*Learning of India*), he details not only ideas that we might categorize today as Hindu, but also includes Jain, Buddhist, and non-theistic perspectives. He additionally covers a variety of Sanskrit knowledge systems, such as music (*saṅgīta*), that are not exclusively tied to any particular theological tradition.

---

[24] The title is also given in some manuscripts as *Dānish-andūzān-i Hindūstān* (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 433). The mistranslations cited here go back to Blochmann and Jarrett.

[25] I.e., wider cultural India and not the boundaries of the modern nation state.

[26] E.g., *hindī* likely means Sanskrit when listing the languages represented in Akbar's library (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Aligarh ed., 96), but refers to Hindi in Naqīb Khān's colophon to *Razmnāmah* (chapter 3).

[27] E.g., "Muqaddamah," 18.

[28] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:1; Aligarh ed., 360.

Instead of a religious endeavor, then, Abū al-Faẓl embarks in his *Account of India* on a politico-intellectual project to describe the Indian traditions that existed within the Mughal Empire. After he mentions the inadequacy of earlier Persian discussions of India, which I cite above, he articulates a second, thoroughly imperial reason for composing the fourth book of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*:

> When I emerged from the privacy of isolation and discovered some of the ignorance of mankind and the discord of beings, I set about promoting peace and establishing friendship... Although my pen had already composed an account of the administrative areas (*ṣūbah*s) and elaborated some of the condition of India, my heart's intention [now] reached the time of realization. Being discontented with my prior knowledge I began begging hearts and solicited fresh instruction from impartial, learned men.[29]

This language of encouraging social harmony builds upon Akbar's ideology of *ṣulḥ-i kul* (universal peace), which was heavily promoted by Abū al-Faẓl and encouraged open-mindedness to the beliefs of others. Scholars have frequently conflated *ṣulḥ-i kul* with modern ideas of toleration that prioritize respecting different positions without assenting to them.[30] In contrast, *ṣulḥ-i kul* encouraged individuals to seriously consider ideas from different traditions and adopt new perspectives if they proved to be more reasonable than one's own.[31]

In the *Account of India*, *ṣulḥ-i kul* contributes to the political interests of the Mughal Empire through both its practical and intellectual dimensions. Modern scholars have often emphasized the potential of *ṣulḥ-i kul* to reduce sectarian strife, and Abū al-Faẓl addresses this aspect in his *Account of India*. At the conclusion of his section about Jainism, he states:

> A Brahman prefers to encounter a mad elephant or a roaring lion rather than to meet with one of [the Jains]. [But] in his search for truth in the world, King

---

[29] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:1-2; Aligarh ed., 360.

[30] No doubt many definitions of tolerance are at work in modernity, but non-interference is generally a crucial component (e.g., see Talal Asad's analysis in *Formations of the Secular*, 205).

[31] I elaborate on this logic in my analysis of Abū al-Faẓl's preface to the *Razmnāmah* in chapter 3. For an overview of *ṣulḥ-i kul* as invoked in Akbar's political philosophy, see Rizvi, "Dimensions of *Ṣulḥ-i Kul*."

> [Akbar] has partially dispelled the darkness of the age with the light of universal peace (*ṣulḥ-i kul*). The different groups of mankind have ceased their conflict and revel in the establishment of concord.[32]

In reference to the *Account of India* more broadly, one scholar has suggested that the desire to promote social harmony explains the infrequency of negative comments regarding Indian beliefs.[33] But *ṣulḥ-i kul* was far more to Abū al-Faẓl than a pragmatic device to avert conflict. He also saw it as an intellectual project whereby one continually sought new sources of knowledge in an attempt to improve oneself. In the *Account of India*, Abū al-Faẓl discusses numerous causes of discord that *ṣulḥ-i kul* might cure, including superficial treatises, intellectual laziness, and false teachers. He proposes that the world needs an inquisitive king "like Anūshīravān" and a minister "like Buzurjmihr," who are both celebrated in the Persian tradition for having sought out Indian knowledge and texts.[34] Most notably, Buzurjmihr (Burzui) is credited with translating the *Pañcatantra* into Middle Persian.[35] Having found suitable precedents from the earliest days of Persian kings, Abū al-Faẓl then proceeds on his and Akbar's joint quest to offer a fresh elaboration of Sanskrit learning.

When he begins his *Learning of India* section, Abū al-Faẓl offers one further intellectual framework for his project by expressing his unfulfilled desire to compare Sanskrit learning to the traditions of ancient Greece and Persia. Here he borrows from al-Bīrūnī, who also places his treatment of *India* in a comparative context. Without naming his predecessor directly, Abū al-Faẓl states: "If I were not distressed and my heart not adverse to leisurely discourse, then I would have compared Indian learning (*hindī-dānish*) with the Greek tradition. [But] now,

---

[32] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:111; Aligarh ed., 479.

[33] Firoze, "Abul Fazl's Account of Hindu Mythology," 114-15.

[34] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:2; Aligarh ed., 360.

[35] Among other places, this story of Burzui appears in the *Shāhnāmah* (7:361-73) and in Pahlavi and Arabic translations of the *Pañcatantra* (Shamma, "Translating into the Empire," 74-75; Marroum, "*Kalila wa Dimna*," 524-27).

according to my intention, I compose this felicitous book thus and write what time permits."[36] In his conclusion to the *Learning of India*, Abū al-Faẕl issues a similar statement of regret and also includes the Persian tradition: "Because time was pressed and my heart weak, I did not write out proofs for this [account of India] nor did I compare it to Greek and Persian philosophies."[37] In his discussion of India's cosmography, which precedes the *Learning of India*, Abū al-Faẕl references Greek, Persian, and Arabic ideas on several occasions, which further confirms his interest in pursuing a comparative project. In lieu of further developing this endeavor himself, he encourages his audience to pursue it of their own accord. At the beginning of his exegesis on the nine schools of Indian philosophy, for example, he urges readers to "deeply study and compare [the precepts of the nine schools] with the traditions of Ishrāqīs, Sufis, Aristotelians (*mashshā'ī*), and theologians (*mutakallim*)."[38] As for Abū al-Faẕl himself, it seems that he could realize his primary intellectual and political ambitions through a non-comparative analysis of Sanskrit knowledge.

Content and Analysis in the *Learning of India*

In his *Account of India*, Abū al-Faẕl covers a variety of topics related to South Asia's past and its learned traditions. The *Account of India* contains four major sections: a combined geography and cosmography of India, a description of Sanskrit knowledge (*Learning of India*), the stories of Islamic figures who traveled to the subcontinent, and a record of Indo-Islamic saints. The first half of the book draws primarily upon Sanskrit learning whereas the second half relies on Islamicate traditions and texts. I focus here on the sections associated with Indian knowledge, particularly the *Learning of India*, which features Abū al-Faẕl's systematic

---

[36] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:62; Aligarh ed., 434.

[37] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:225; Aligarh ed., 582.

[38] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:61; Aligarh ed., 433.

delineation of Sanskrit intellectual traditions. Nonetheless, the pairing of this section with Islamicate history is important, as we shall see. First, I briefly outline the contents of the *Learning of India* and speak to the question of Abū al-Faẕl's sources. Then I look closely at his treatment of Sanskrit philosophy and literary theory in order to more precisely capture his purposes and objectives. In his *Learning of India*, Abū al-Faẕl conceptualized Sanskrit as housing a series of knowledge systems with which the Mughal elite needed to engage in order to pursue their imperial interests.

Elusive Sanskrit Sources

Abū al-Faẕl surveys a wide range of subjects within his investigation of Indian learning, and it becomes apparent early on that he primarily uses Sanskrit texts for his information. He begins with an extensive explication of nine philosophical schools, which include the six standard Brahmanical schools, as well as the thinking of Jains, Buddhists, and atheists (*nāstika*).[39] He then offers shorter descriptions of dozens of branches of Sanskrit learning, including the *Veda*s, *vedāṅga*s (six auxiliary disciplines), and various types of *śāstra*s (knowledge systems). In this final section, literature and music receive fairly prolonged considerations before Abū al-Faẕl turns his attention towards a series of religious beliefs, including the *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu and Hindu theological precepts. He closes by describing sartorial and social practices such as acceptable clothing and marriage and death rites. Overall Abū al-Faẕl's *Learning of India* is remarkably detailed, and modern scholars have been duly

---

[39] Abū al-Faẕl identifies the *ṣaḍdarśana* (six schools) as Brahmanical, noting that Brahmans reject the validity of the other three (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:62. Aligarh ed., 434). The six schools are *nyāya*, *vaiśeṣika*, *mīmāṃsā*, *vedānta*, *saṅkhyā*, and *yoga* (called *pātañjala* in *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*).

impressed by the scarcity of errors therein.[40] Nonetheless, identifying many of Abū al-Faẕl's precise Sanskrit sources remains an elusive goal.

Abū al-Faẕl himself names no specific texts upon which he relies and openly professes his ignorance of Sanskrit at the start of the work. But he also attests that he called upon interpreters to assist him with using original sources: "Because I was not familiar with the terms in the Sanskrit language (*zabān-i hindī*) and a desirable translator could not be found, laborious work went into repeated translations. [But] by a good turn of fate and the strength of my own will, my purpose was obtained."[41] The identities of Abū al-Faẕl's Sanskrit informants have not been conclusively proven, and both sides are silent about the names or any other details concerning these individuals. Scholars have suggested the Jain intellectual Bhānucandra as one probable choice.[42] This is a reasonable proposition since he spent considerable time at Akbar's court and was renowned by the Mughals as erudite in Sanskrit knowledge systems.[43] Given the breadth and length of his *Account of India*, Abū al-Faẕl likely drew upon additional native informants as well.[44]

Regarding texts, several scholars have attempted to identify Abū al-Faẕl's source materials on the basis of similarities between specific Sanskrit works and the *Account of India*. Select verses in the section on literature (*sāhitya*) can be traced to particular texts, most notably Bhānudatta's *Rasamañjarī* (*Bouquet of Rasa*), a popular literary treatise in early modern

---

[40] E.g., Firoze, "Abul Fazl's Account of Hindu Mythology."

[41] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:2; Aligarh ed., 360.

[42] E.g., Pollock, "New Intellectuals in seventeenth-century India," 20.

[43] I discuss Bhānucandra's affiliation with the Mughal court in chapters 1 and 2.

[44] A wide variety of Sanskrit intellectuals were present at the Mughal court, as I detail in chapter 1. Furthermore, Abū al-Faẕl was at least aware of if not personally acquainted with various other Sanskrit literati, as is evidenced by his listing of many Indian names among the most learned men of the age in the second book of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (Aligarh ed., 218; Rizvi also mentions this in *Religious and Intellectual History*, 128-29).

India.[45] Additionally, Abū al-Faẕl quotes at least one verse from Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (*Mirror of Literature*).[46] But most other proposed connections remain rather tenuous because the information presented in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* was available in many Sanskrit sources. Additionally, because Abū al-Faẕl went through oral intermediaries, uncovering his textual sources may actually mean reconstructing the intellectual apparatus of his Sanskrit assistants. Regardless of the precise texts used, however, the information presented in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī* offers a window onto what Sanskrit ideas were taken as authoritative in late sixteenth century north India.

Moreover, Abū al-Faẕl leaves little doubt that he thought it critical to base his exposition on Sanskrit texts. He lists the titles of many Sanskrit works when he details Indian knowledge systems and explicitly refers to his use of translations several times.[47] Further research may yet yield more of Abū al-Faẕl's sources, but a careful reevaluation of scholarly methods used to deduce such links is needed. Too often scholars have postulated identifications without considering that multiple Sanskrit sources may proffer a given piece of information.[48] Here I take a different approach altogether and do not attempt to discern the particular Sanskrit bases for ideas within the *Learning of India*. Instead I closely analyze select portions of the Persian text in order to understand Abū al-Faẕl's agenda in constructing what is explicitly not a translation but rather a Mughal synthesis of Sanskrit learning.

---

[45] Scholars have identified several direct quotations from Bhānudatta's *Rasamañjarī* in Abū al-Faẕl's account of *sāhitya* (Pollock, introduction to *Bouquet of Rasa and River of Rasa*, xix and xl-xli n. 1).

[46] Jarrett recognized this in his translation of *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, 3:255 n. 2; compare *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:130 and *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 64-66.

[47] For titles of texts: *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:114-17; Aligarh ed., 482-85. On Abū al-Faẕl's use of translations: *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:2; Aligarh ed., 360.

[48] E.g., Rizvi posits Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* as a potential source for unarticulated reasons (*Religious and Intellectual History*, 273). Mukhia sees *Manusmṛti* as a possible source based on a few passages (*Historians and Historiography*, 68). Taking a more measured tone, Halbfass notes that Abū al-Faẕl's list of eighteen *vidyā*s corresponds to the pattern in Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Prasthānabheda* (*India and Europe*, 33).

Nine Philosophical Schools

Abū al-Faẕl inaugurates his *Learning of India* with a nuanced treatment of nine philosophical traditions that he carefully frames in both Sanskrit and Mughal terms. He explores many core arguments and theories in detail and introduces his readers to extensive Sanskrit terminology. He defines at some length concepts such as the *śakti* (power of signification) of a *śabda* (word) and the *pramāṇa*s (grounds of knowledge) admitted by different schools of thought.[49] But once he defines a Sanskrit word or phrase, he often uses it again without any gloss, evidently expecting his readers to have thoroughly assimilated the Indic material. As a result, many passages contain so much Sanskrit as to be unintelligible except to those who have meticulously mastered every term defined previously in the *Learning of India*.[50]

For example, a typical passage from the section on *mīmāṃsā*, the third philosophical school discussed, invokes substantial Sanskrit vocabulary introduced during his earlier discussion of *nyāya*.

> According to [Kumārila] Bhaṭṭa and [Murāri] Miśra, there are six *pramāṇa*s, four of which were described under *nyāya*....They do not acknowledge *kevalānvayin* or *kevalavyatirekin*, and they do not admit *guru* or *mithyājñāna*. They admit *saṃśaya* and *viparyaya* as correct forms of knowledge. *Nyāya* thinks that air is perceived through inference but this group through touch. The fifth [*pramāṇa*] is *arthāpatti*, which is observing the effect and positing the cause. The sixth is *anupalabdhi*, which is ignorance of things. They say that knowledge of the non-existence of things arises from the non-existence of knowledge of those things. [Murāri] Miśra, like *nyāya*, takes [*anupalabdhi*] as part of *pratyakṣa*.[51]

Abū al-Faẕl continues with a similarly dazzling density of Sanskrit vocabulary throughout his description of the nine philosophical positions and rarely attempts to unpack Sanskrit

[49] E.g., see his accounts of *nyāya* and *mīmāṃsā*.

[50] Jarrett frequently adds his own glosses of these Sanskrit terms in his translation, which obscures the original effect in Persian but does have the virtue of making the text intelligible to non-Sanskritists.

[51] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:78-79; Aligarh ed., 449.

concepts in intelligible Persian. This style suggests that Abū al-Faẕl wished to educate his readers not only in Sanskrit ideas, but also in Sanskrit discourses for exploring those ideas.

Furthermore, Abū al-Faẕl meticulously spells out each Sanskrit word upon its initial usage. This attention confirms his interest in the language, in addition to the content, of Sanskrit philosophy. Few other Persianate writers show much precision in their transliteration of Indian terms. Even the direct translations done in Akbar's court employed no standard system for expressing Sanskrit words in Perso-Arabic script, and as a result transliterated terms often become illegible very quickly in manuscript copies. In contrast, Abū al-Faẕl employs a type of Persian longhand that specifies the letters in each Sanskrit term as a safeguard against careless copyists. For instance, when he introduces the term *mīmāṃsā*, he says it is spelled with "an *m*, a long *ī*, an *m*, a long *ā*, an *n*, an *s*, and a long *ā*."[52] Abū al-Faẕl also details the science of *vyākaraṇa* (grammar) in his *Learning of India*, and there employs a similar descriptive method to explain the Sanskrit alphabet.[53] On occasion, he even signals his interest in Sanskrit above other Indian languages by distinguishing proper Sanskrit terms from common (*'ām*) vernacular shortenings.[54]

Abū al-Faẕl also situates his discussion of Indian philosophy deep within the Mughal context and its attendant Islamicate assumptions. He offers an overall neutral rendering of the nine schools' viewpoints but freely condemns the one tradition that is unacceptable from an Islamic perspective: atheism. His general intention, in his own words, is to "present the

---

[52] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:77. The Aligarh ed. omits this particular spelling (447).

[53] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:117-19; Aligarh ed., 485-86. Jarrett's translation somewhat misleadingly publishes the Sanskrit letters here in Devanagari. In the original, for example, the Sanskrit vowels *a* and *ā* read: *a hamzah-yi maftūḥ* and *ā hamzah-yi maftūḥ va alif* (Aligarh ed. leaves out the second *maftūḥ*).

[54] E.g., his comments on Śākyamuni (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:111; Aligarh ed., 479). Nonetheless, like nearly all Mughal intellectuals, Abū al-Faẕl spells Sanskrit terms in ways that reflect vernacular pronunciation.

precepts of each [of the nine philosophies] without disputation (*bī ḥujjat*)."[55] But Abū al-Faẕl rejects the atheist (*nāstika*) perspective from the start by labeling its founder, Cārvāka, an ignorant (*nāshināsā*) Brahman.[56] He then outlines *nāstika* beliefs in a few sentences as compared to his far lengthier descriptions of most of the other schools of thought. After noting that followers of this system do not believe in God or incorporeal beings (*īzad va mujarradāt*), he concludes: "They have written extensive books in contempt of others that serve as memorials to their own idiocy."[57] Atheism was beyond the limits of acceptability in Mughal circles, a reality that also plays into other cross-cultural interactions in the Mughal court.[58] Here Abū al-Faẕl offers a rare glimpse into his evaluation of what types of Sanskrit learning do not qualify as Persian *dānish*.

Abū al-Faẕl's analysis of Sanskrit philosophy also mirrors the Mughal court's ongoing encounters with Indian intellectuals. Most notably, Abū al-Faẕl treats Jainism at greater length than any of the eight other schools.[59] This choice likely echoes the heavy Jain presence at the Mughal court and hence the easy availability of information about this particular path. Abū al-Faẕl's elaborate commentary on Jain beliefs may also reflect the biases of his Sanskrit informants, whether Bhānucandra or one of the many other Jains who frequented Akbar's court.

---

[55] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:61; Aligarh ed., 433.

[56] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:113; Aligarh ed., 481. Note the alliterative wordplay of *nāstik* and *nāshināsā*.

[57] *Kam-bīnī-yi khūd rā yādgārī guẕāshtah* (*Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:114; with variant spellings in Aligarh ed., 481-82).

[58] See my analysis in chapter 2 of debates in which Jains defended themselves against charges of atheism.

[59] The *nyāya* section is nearly as long as the Jainism account, but *nyāya* also covers much of the *vaiśeṣika* perspective (*[bayshīkhik] bā nukhustīn [nyāyī] yiktā'ī dārad*, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:76; Aligarh ed., 447).

But the Mughals were not unaware that Jainism was a minority perspective in India, and Abū al-Faẕl frames it as such in his *Learning of India*. He opens his section on Sanskrit philosophy by grouping the six Brahmanical schools of thought together and the final three (Jain, Buddhist, and atheist) as not accepted by mainstream opinion.[60] Moreover, in his section on Jainism, Abū al-Faẕl includes types of information that he does not address within the six Brahmanical traditions. For example, he discusses the Jain view of different tiers in this world and the underworld and also describes religious practices associated with both monks and lay people. Abū al-Faẕl presents Brahmanical perspectives on such matters within his cosmography of Hindustan that precedes the *Learning of India* and his following account of religious practices. In short, Abū al-Faẕl understands Brahmanical ideas as dominant, standard Indian beliefs, and others as deviant. Abū al-Faẕl also treats Buddhism similarly to Jainism and mentions aspects of its cosmography along with its philosophy, although with far greater brevity than his elaborate presentation of Jain ideas.

Throughout his Mughal contextualizations of the nine philosophies, Abū al-Faẕl treats these systems as dynamic thought traditions. He carefully identifies the founder of each philosophy, such as Gautama for *nyāya* and Kapila for *saṅkhyā*.[61] He further mentions the chronological growth of the traditions in relation to one another where appropriate. Hence he notes that the *vaiśeṣika* system precedes *nyāya* even though he addresses the two in the opposite order.[62] When there are important later expositors in a given school, he often takes note and mentions figures such as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa by name, as noted above. Last, Abū al-Faẕl brings the progression of these systems into Mughal times by observing several later

---

[60] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:62. Aligarh ed., 434.

[61] For Gautama: *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:62; Aligarh ed., 434. For Kapila: Calcutta ed., 2:84; Aligarh ed., 453.

[62] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:76; Aligarh ed., 447.

developments that reflect the state of affairs in his day. In this vein, he remarks on the disappearance of Buddhism from most of India.[63] He also on occasion comments on his specific cultural context vis-à-vis Sanskrit knowledge systems, such as when he discloses that he has no personal knowledge of the Digambara branch of Jainism.[64]

Sanskrit Aesthetic Theory in Persian

Abū al-Faẕl further displays his interest in technical Sanskrit knowledge in his account of literary theory. In this section, he also puts forward a radical agenda for the continued relevance of Sanskrit in Indo-Persian intellectual culture. He implores readers to supersede his own research and go back to original Indian sources in order to learn more about aesthetics themselves. Here Abū al-Faẕl makes a strong argument for the potential of repeated Sanskrit-Persian encounters to consistently redefine the nature of Indo-Persian knowledge.

In his treatment of literature (*sāhitya*), Abū al-Faẕl primarily details the major types of *nāyikā*s (heroines), which had become a topic of substantial interest among early modern Sanskrit thinkers.[65] Because we can identify the Sanskrit sources for at least parts of this section, it is possible to pursue comparative work as a means of probing Abū al-Faẕl's project. First he briefly covers some basic vocabulary for understanding Sanskrit poetry, including the different types of signification in poetry and the nine *rasa*s (aesthetic moods). He omits *alaṅkāra*s (figures of speech) and instead devotes his attention to the types of Sanskrit *nāyikā*s and, more briefly, *nāyaka*s (heroes). By way of explanation he asserts, "In this excellent

---

[63] *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:111; Aligarh ed., 479.

[64] *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:110; Aligarh ed., 478.

[65] E.g., Bhānudatta's *Rasamañjarī* (*Bouquet of Rasa*), on which Abū al-Faẕl draws in his *sāhitya* section.

knowledge they describe relations between men and women and address the tumult of passionate love."[66]

Throughout his elaboration of *nāyikā-bheda* (types of heroines), Abū al-Faẕl elides the larger social contexts in which these figures were originally understood. In Sanskrit poetry, a series of conventions and known storylines enabled authors to invoke an entire scene with a single verse. Frequently familial relations and marital expectations played crucial roles, such as when Bhānudatta offers the following lines to illustrate the secretive (*guptā*) *nāyikā*:

> Mother-in-law can rant, and friends
> condemn, and sisters-in-law reprove.
> How am I possibly to sleep
> another night in that house?
> That cat of theirs is forever
> springing out of a corner niche
> to catch a mouse, and you see what all
> she's done to me with her sharp claws![67]

Abū al-Faẕl quotes part of this verse in the *Learning of India* to exemplify the same secretive *nāyikā*, but he alters certain parts of the plot.

> *Guptā* conceals her conduct, covers her offenses, and skillfully hides her future intentions. She offers credible excuses such that if she has been scratched by her lover's fingernail, she says, "I cannot stay in this bedroom. A cat is running after a mouse and scratched me in the chase."[68]

Here Abū al-Faẕl explicitly mentions that the woman's scratches are the result of lovemaking, which is merely implied in Bhānudatta's verse and would have been understood by all educated Sanskrit readers. Yet Abū al-Faẕl does not name the family situation in which the woman need answer for her scratches, thus erasing the social context. Perhaps these subtle adjustments helped the scenario translate smoothly across cultural lines. In other quoted

---

[66] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:131; Aligarh ed., 497.

[67] Bhānudatta's *Bouquet of Rasa*, 24-25, v. 22 (Pollock's translation).

[68] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:132; Aligarh ed., 498.

verses, Abū al-Faẕl leaves out more specific cultural references that perhaps would not register with many Indo-Persian readers, such as mentions of Kāma, the god of love.[69]

Interestingly, Abū al-Faẕl makes no attempt to render any Sanskrit examples of *sāhitya* into either Persian verse or poetic prose. Instead of capturing the aesthetic beauty of the Sanskrit lines, he remains focused on accurately reproducing the catalogue-style information contained within this system. Accordingly he lists the Sanskrit names for dozens of *nāyikā*s, much as he does earlier for different philosophical concepts. But more often than not Abū al-Faẕl forgoes any examples and instead offers only a brief description of each type of woman. For example, in Sanskrit the cunning (*vidagdhā*) woman is best known for communicating with her lover by means of speech or actions that are interpreted as harmless by everybody else. Depicting this woman, Bhānudatta gives an example where she artfully sets up a rendezvous with a lover in front of others by discussing the weather:

> Traveler, it's wise to rest now—the sun's
> so hot—by the river where the jasmine blooms
> and the vines twine tightly around
> dense thickets of *tamála* trees.[70]

Describing this same type of *nāyikā*, Abū al-Faẕl merely says "*vidagdhā* empowers herself with charming speech and becomes secure with honorable actions."[71] Later Indo-Persian authors who wrote about *nāyika*s conjured up compelling examples by quoting liberally from Persian poets, crafting their own verses, and translating Hindi lines.[72] But Abū al-Faẕl appears most concerned with reporting on *nāyikā-bheda* as a knowledge system rather than exploring its poetic appeal or any other aspects of this classificatory structure.

---

[69] Compare Bhānudatta's *Bouquet of Rasa*, 14-15, v. 13 and *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:132; Aligarh ed., 498.

[70] Bhānudatta's *Bouquet of Rasa*, 24-25, verse 23 (Pollock's translation).

[71] *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:132; Aligarh ed., 498.

[72] E.g., Āzād Bilgrāmī (Sharma, "Translating Gender," 98-100).

At the close of his section on literature, Abū al-Faẓl intriguingly directs his audience to Indian traditions to learn more about this branch of learning. After listing dozens of types of *nāyikā*s and *nāyaka*s, he writes: “In this art, they explain all the behaviors of the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* in all different ways and offer many delightful stories. Everyone whose heart yearns, should read the books of this [art], and he will find his heart’s desire.”[73] This enigmatic comment seems to call for *Ā’īn-i Akbarī* readers to return to Sanskrit materials in order to unearth further texts on this topic. Of course, given Abū al-Faẓl’s own ignorance of Sanskrit and his trouble locating competent interpreters, one wonders whether he honestly thought that this was a reasonable suggestion. Allison Busch has proposed that given the literary context of Indo-Persian intellectuals at this time, Abū al-Faẓl must be referring here to Hindi texts.[74] This quite plausible reading again introduces Hindi, the often-silent third party, as a crucial part of Sanskrit and Persian encounters.

Abū al-Faẓl’s endorsement of Hindi or Sanskrit texts has intriguing implications for his intellectual project in the *Learning of India*. As I mention above, Abū al-Faẓl describes his *Account of India* as a much-needed correction to the Persianate tradition of recycling information about the subcontinent. But he intended his *Learning of India* to serve as a starting point for Persianate encounters with Sanskrit knowledge systems rather than the definitive treatment of the subject. Thus, Abū al-Faẓl sought to revolutionize the Indo-Persian tradition by placing cross-cultural projects and a consistent return to original Sanskrit texts at its very core. To some extent he offers his text as a template, and yet he simultaneously encourages his

---

[73] *Ā’īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:134; Aligarh ed., 500.

[74] Busch, “Hidden in Plain View,” 284. Shantanu Phukan discusses Hindi-Persian bilingualism in terms of seventeenth century poetry in “Ecology of Hindi,” 38-43. On Hindi-Persian bilingualism in the eighteenth century in respect to *nāyikā-bheda* in particular, Sunil Sharma notes that Āzād Bilgrāmī gives the Sanskrit/Hindi names for *nāyikā*s in his Persian treatment of the subject but not in his Arabic version (“Translating Gender,” 98).

successors to access Indian learning in a far more direct manner than his capabilities allowed. This long-term plan helps to explain why he introduces such heavy Sanskrit vocabulary and names dozens of Sanskrit texts. More importantly, this vision offers a notably radical interpretation of Sanskrit-Persian encounters as the new mode of producing truly interesting, valuable contributions to Indo-Persian thought.

Abū al-Fażl's goal to reformulate the Indo-Persian intellectual world met with mixed success at best. Several writers over the next few centuries would bring Sanskrit and other forms of Indian learning into Persian. But whether any were inspired to do so by the *Learning of India* remains unclear.[75] Regardless, Abū al-Fażl's intention was not only to outline Sanskrit ideas and modes of discourse in Persian. He also desired to initiate future encounters between the Sanskrit and Persian intellectual traditions and make cross-cultural interactions the central mode of inquiry in the Indo-Persian tradition.

Abū al-Fażl's Political Project

Abū al-Fażl's intellectual objectives in his *Learning of India* are a venture unto themselves and deserve recognition as such. But in order to fully understand his multi-faceted endeavor, we must also address why he places a treatment of Sanskrit knowledge systems within an imperial history and thus imbues the entire project with a significant political hue. As Edward Said reminds us, "All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them."[76] My interest lies in unpacking the precise contours of the relationship between culture and imperialism in Abū al-Fażl treatment of the Sanskrit intellectual world, which he characterizes as relevant to the core concerns of the

---

[75] I have found little serious scholarly discussion of the impact of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*. Hardy offers a few thoughts but not regarding the *Learning of India* in particular ("Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah," 135-37).

[76] *Culture and Imperialism*, 100.

Mughal court. Here it is helpful to return to the broader context of the *Learning of India* in book 4 (*Account of India*) of *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*. Abū al-Faẕl presents Sanskrit as a pillar of Indian learning that is complimented and completed by Islamic knowledge.

As I mention above, after his account of India's geography/cosmography and the Sanskrit sciences, Abū al-Faẕl offers two more sections to complete the *Account of India*. First he traces Islamic figures who have journeyed to India beginning with Adam, continuing through the early Indo-Persian kings and Ghaznavids, and culminating in Babur and Humayun. Taken as a whole Abū al-Faẕl draws a long, continuous line that moves from the Sanskrit through the Islamic tradition and thereby connects traditional Indian learning with the Mughal Empire. He thus frames the entire history of Hindustan, both Indic and Islamic, as the inheritance of Akbar. Abū al-Faẕl then closes his *Account of India* with a list of Indo-Islamic saints stretching back to the late eleventh century. This list concludes with several mid-sixteenth century individuals and ultimately Khizr and Elias, two archetypal Sufi figures who are also said to have traveled to India in some versions of their stories.[77] Here Abū al-Faẕl completes the circle of Indo-Islamic knowledge with Sufi saints, a truly hybrid tradition.

This larger framework helps to explicate some of Abū al-Faẕl's political ambitions, but it does not account for the precision and detail in his *Learning of India*. Here it is useful to turn to a far better studied period and briefly compare Abū al-Faẕl's project with parallel efforts initiated under the British Empire in India. The British colonists avidly pursued different types of systematic knowledge as a means of colonizing the subcontinent, such as sponsoring grammars of vernacular languages and conducting the first census.[78] Through these efforts,

---

[77] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:223-25; Aligarh ed., 580-82.

[78] Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination" and Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, chapter 2.

the British created new types of information that were previously unavailable to either Indians or Europeans. They used these innovative ways of redefining the subcontinent to create an India that they could control and conquer.

In contrast, in the *Learning of India*, Abū al-Fażl does not generate novel types of information but rather confines himself to describing established Sanskrit learning to a fresh audience. But he is sufficiently interested in details for us to propose that he may seek to conquer India through articulating its knowledge systems. In subsequent centuries, the British created their own modes of colonial discourse that ultimately altered the nature of knowledge in India irrevocably.[79] In contrast, Abū al-Fażl imports Sanskrit modes of discourse wholesale into Persian and intends for Sanskrit to alter the nature of Indo-Persian learning. Here an approach more nuanced than appropriation was at work as Abū al-Fażl attempted to make cross-cultural intellectual inquiries a necessary part of ruling over Hindustan.

Several later authors would ultimately follow in Abū al-Fażl's footsteps and offer their own investigations of Indian learning in Persian, including the Mughal prince Dara Shikuh in the mid-seventeenth century and Āzād Bilgrāmī in the eighteenth century. But the more immediate reactions to Sanskrit knowledge brought into Persian under Mughal patronage were significantly more varied. The different imperial receptions of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* illustrate this point particularly well and also allow us to access multiple, roughly contemporary responses to the movement of a story across cultural lines.

Many Mughal *Rāmāyaṇa*s

In the late 1580s, Akbar supported the translation of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian. Once completed, Akbar's *Rāmāyan* provoked a series of comments and rewritings that

[79] See Kaviraj, *Imaginary Institution of India*, particularly chapter 2.

illustrate the multiple tensions and possibilities embedded in making Sanskrit stories available to Indo-Persian readers. Badā'ūnī, the self-proclaimed translator of the work, loathed its potential religious and political repercussions and worried that he had committed blasphemy by having dared to translate it, as I discuss below. Badā'ūnī's condemnation notwithstanding, Akbar's *Rāmāyan* proved to be quite popular in courtly circles. In at least two copies, members of the Mughal court penned curious remarks addressing the content of the text. These manuscript notes, authored by 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān and Jahangir, prompt critical questions concerning the perceived literary value of the work. Last, Akbar's *Rāmāyan* helped reshape Indo-Persian literary culture far beyond his court and marks the beginning of a series of retellings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story in Persian that continued to be produced well into the nineteenth century. Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, its various receptions, and later courtly retellings of the epic illustrate the multiple meanings of translations from Sanskrit for different Mughal political and intellectual figures.

Problems with Akbar's *Rāmāyan*: Authorship and Access

Before delving into Akbar's *Rāmāyan* a few words are necessary on the text's disputed authorship and problems of access. According to Badā'ūnī, a secretary and frequent translator in Akbar's court, he worked alone to render the *Rāmāyan* into Persian verse over the span of four years. In his unofficial history of Akbar's reign, Badā'ūnī states:

> In March/April 1589 I completed the translation of the *Rāmāyan* after four years. I wrote it out in *maṡnavī* verse and put at the end—
>
> I wrote this story. Who will take it to the Sultan?
> I burned my soul. Who will take it to the beloved?[80]

Badā'ūnī's claims here are complicated by both manuscript evidence and other contemporary attestations. Extant copies of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* are written in prose (not *maṡnavī*) and bear no

[80] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh,* 2:366.

trace of any substantial verses, much less the specific end lines cited in the above passage.[81] Moreover, two members of Akbar's inner circle attribute the prose *Rāmāyan* differently from both Badā'ūnī and one another. 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān, a generous patron of the arts and one of Akbar's chief ministers, credits the full Persian text to Naqīb Khān, a historian in Akbar's court who headed the Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata*.[82] In his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Abū al-Faẕl names Naqīb Khān, Badā'ūnī, and Sultan Thānīsarī as co-translators of the *Rāmāyan*.[83]

These different declarations of authorship are easier to resolve than the discrepancy between Badā'ūnī's attestation to have composed his *Rāmāyan* in verse and the fact that the surviving manuscripts are in prose. It was not uncommon for Mughal writers to give sole credit to one member of a translating team even when there were other individuals involved. In the case of the *Mahābhārata*, I quote a colophon to the *Razmnāmah* in chapter 3 that showcases Naqīb Khān taking responsibility for the full Persian rendering even though we know from other sources that additional Persianate translators also participated. However, it is more difficult to explain why Badā'ūnī would falsely assert to have produced Akbar's *Rāmāyan* in verse. Badā'ūnī wrote his highly critical history of Akbar's reign in secret and without access to the imperial court records, which may result in some inaccuracies. But it is odd for an author to misstate the literary form of one of his own prior works. The extant text of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* itself designates no translator, but is written in a simple prose style that is

---

[81] I have personally examined the following manuscripts of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*: Bibliothèque Nationale France [BNF] Supplément 17, British Library [BL] IO Islamic 1979, BL Persian Or. 5087, BL Persian Or. 1248, Freer Gallery 07.271, and copy at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar (see comments below).

[82] Flyleaf printed and translated in Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 73-74.

[83] Aligarh ed., 96. Sujān Rāī also repeats this information in the late seventeenth century (*Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh*, BL Persian Add. 5559, fol. 7b).

consistent with that evidenced in the Persian *Mahābhārata*, a project worked on by both Naqīb Khān and Badā'ūnī.[84]

One potential solution to these contesting statements is that Akbar commissioned two different Persian versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*: one in prose by Naqīb Khān (and possibly also Sultan Thānīsarī) and one in verse by Badā'ūnī.[85] Two translations would nicely resolve our conflicting evidence, but this duplication is highly unlikely given our knowledge of Mughal-sponsored translations. First, no contemporary or later writers mention two separate *Rāmāyan*s commissioned by Akbar. Moreover, in this scenario we would be forced to posit that Abū al-Fażl, the official court historian, collapses the two versions into one for no obvious reason. Last, based on the dates offered by different individuals, the translations would have been done simultaneously.[86] While the Mughals frequently underwrote retranslations of texts previously rendered into Persian, we lack any other examples of Akbar financing simultaneous translations of the same work.[87] Despite these objections, if there were two Akbari *Rāmāyan*s, then Badā'ūnī's poem appears to have been lost to time, as no manuscripts of it have yet come to light.

Rather than inventing a conveniently lost text, it seems more reasonably to concede that Naqīb Khān and Badā'ūnī (possibly with the assistance of others) rendered the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian prose. This solution makes sense of Abū al-Fażl's comments on the translation and

---

[84] Most of my work on Akbar's *Rāmāyan* is based on the Freer manuscript in Washington D.C.

[85] Dihlavi articulates the opinion that Badā'ūnī indeed penned a versified *Rāmāyan* that has now been lost (introduction to *Rāmāyan*, 39).

[86] The imperial prose *Rāmāyan* was completed in 1588 or 1589 (see Seyller's discussion of the dates in *Workshop and Patron*, 77 n. 3; also Das, "Akbar's Imperial Ramayana," 74). Compare to Badā'ūnī's dates in the passage cited above (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh,* 2:366).

[87] Although multiple translations and retranslations at different times were not uncommon; *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Pañcatantra* were all translated more than once under Akbar.

accords with the extant manuscript evidence. Moreover, it does not require the unlikely proposition of two simultaneous translations and leaves only Badā'ūnī's mention of *maṡnavī* verses to be explained. In this scenario, we must posit that Badā'ūnī either misremembers the nature of this particular translation or perhaps knowingly misrepresents it (although his motivations for doing so remain obscure to me). We cannot settle this issue conclusively with the information available. But, in the interest of leaving open the question of authorship, I will break precedent with previous scholars who have spoken almost uniformly about Badā'ūnī's *Rāmāyan* and instead speak of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*.

Akbar's *Rāmāyan* presents us with a further set of knotty textual issues that are compounded by lack of access to key manuscripts. Akbar's *Rāmāyan* has never been published, and the imperial copy of the text (i.e., the Jaipur *Rāmāyan*) has long been unavailable to scholars.[88] The second known copy (dated 1594) is currently held in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar and likewise has not been published.[89] As a result, my work here is primarily based on the third extant copy of the translation (c. 1600), held in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.[90]

Despite certain manuscript copies being difficult to access, we know this translation is at least somewhat fluid. Small bits of the text of the Jaipur *Rāmāyan* are available because they

---

[88] Our major source for information about this manuscript to date is Das, "Akbar's Imperial Ramayana."

[89] I obtained a copy of this manuscript too late to incorporate detailed analysis here, although I have provided citations to this manuscript where possible. I am currently working on the Qatar manuscript, and my research will appear as a chapter within John Seyller's forthcoming book on the manuscript's lavish illustrations (provisionally titled *The Ramayana of Hamida Banu Begam, Queen Mother of India*).

[90] There is some uncertainty regarding this date because of conflicting inscriptions on the Freer *Rāmāyan* (see discussion in Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 75-76).

are visible in the few illustrations from the manuscript that have been published.[91] Even based on the extremely limited comparative work possible with these folios, John Seyller has noted differences between the Jaipur *Rāmāyan* and the Freer *Rāmāyan*.[92] The Qatar *Rāmāyan* also exhibits some variant readings as compared to the Freer copy.[93] Whether later copies of the translation also differ from one another remains unknown because nobody has collated the numerous manuscripts.[94] Access to the Jaipur manuscript is necessary before serious work can be done on the text of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, at least as it was constituted upon its initial rendering into Persian.[95] I seek to avoid these thorny textual concerns here by focusing on reactions to the *Rāmāyan* instead of the original translation.

Imperial Reactions to Akbar's *Rāmāyan*

Akbar's *Rāmāyan* met with several responses within the court that interpreted the import of this translation in strikingly different ways. Here I consider three attempts to grapple with the text: Badā'ūnī's objection to participating in the project, Raḥīm's comments on his copy of the translation, and Jahangir's cryptic note on the imperial manuscript of the work. Badā'ūnī worried that Akbar's *Rāmāyan* could follow the Mughal *Mahābhārata* in

[91] Eighteen illustrations from the Jaipur *Rāmāyan* are published. Ten are in Das, "Introductory Note on the Emperor Akbar's Ramayana and its Miniatures" and another eight in "Akbar's Imperial Ramayana" (cited in Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 248 n. 2; see his Appendix A for a list of the illustrated subjects and artists).

[92] Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 65.

[93] Based on the limited reading possible at the time, Seyller postulated that the Qatar *Rāmāyan* and the Freer *Rāmāyan* appear to be identical (*Workshop and Patron*, 77 n. 4). More recently, with access to the full Qatar manuscript, I have found several minor variations, including more detailed explanations of Indic ideas in the Qatar text and the addition of Islamic references.

[94] Multiple later copies of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* are extant in Bibliothèque Nationale (France), Bodleian Library (Oxford), British Library (London), and Cambridge Library. It is difficult to assess whether any copies (aside from the Jaipur *Rāmāyan*) remain in India because often Persian manuscript catalogues only list *Rāmāyan* without specifying the precise translation. In ten months of manuscript research in India September 2009-July 2010, I found no copies of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*.

[95] This argument does not apply to Akbar's *Mahābhārata*, the imperial copy of which is also inaccessible to scholars in Jaipur, because it does not appear to be a fluid text. Additionally, the Mughal *Mahābhārata* is extent in a far greater number of manuscript copies as compared to Akbar's *Rāmāyan* and so is easier to collate.

becoming instrumental in contemporary political debates and wanted no part of such developments. In contrast, Raḥīm appears to have not read the translation, despite commissioning his own illuminated copy, and remains ill-informed about the basic outline of the epic. This ignorance raises the question of how imperial readers engaged with Akbar's translations of Sanskrit texts. Last, Jahangir highlights the narrative of the epic above all else and leaves open the question of whether he reads the work as an imperial text or simply a good story. Taken together, these treatments of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* demonstrate wide diversity, even within the inner imperial circle, in how members of the Persianate world understood and interacted with Sanskrit texts.

That Black Book: Badā'ūnī's Objection

Badā'ūnī was Akbar's most prolific translator and rendered several Sanskrit texts into Persian under royal orders. Badā'ūnī generally found translating Sanskrit materials distasteful and offers several disparaging remarks about such work in his history of the period.[96] But he reserves his harshest comments for the *Rāmāyaṇa* or "that black book," a phrase that highlights the potentially threatening nature of this work. Badā'ūnī's disapproval of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, however, is hardly straightforward. When we situate Badā'ūnī's comments in a wider imperial context, we can more precisely unpack the intertwined religious and political challenges he perceived in producing a Mughal *Rāmāyan*. Particularly when considered in tandem with Abū al-Faẕl's preface to the *Razmnāmah*, Badā'ūnī's protests demonstrate the coercive force he viewed as defining Akbar's Sanskrit-Persian translation projects.

After the completion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* translation, Akbar ordered Badā'ūnī to compose a preface to the work. This request serves as a catalyst for Badā'ūnī to vehemently condemn the

---

[96] E.g., Badā'ūnī's comments in respect to the *Mahābhārata* (*Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:320).

Rāmāyaṇa while expressing his own angst in having translated the epic. He recollects the incident thus:

> [Akbar] ordered me to also write a preface in the style of the authors. Because I found little benefit and also had to write the *khutbah* without praise of the Prophet (*bī na't*), I desisted. I seek refuge in God from that black book [the *Rāmāyan*], which is as rotten as the book of my life. The narration of heresy is not itself heresy, and I utter the declaration of faith against heresy. Why should I fear—God forbid!—that this text, which was written against my will and by the force of imperial command, carries a curse?[97]

Badā'ūnī then calls out in Arabic to God to save his soul and proclaims the Islamic statement of faith, "there is no God but God and Muhammad is his Messenger." Finally he closes with, "My penitence is not a fearful penitence and is accepted in the court of the Merciful and the Generous!"[98]

Prior to this outburst of angst, Badā'ūnī had been calmly describing the practicalities of how he brought the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian. He relates how long the translation took to complete and its length. However, whereas Badā'ūnī was willing to translate the text because of a monarch's command, he felt that he must resist the emperor's directive to add a preface, a work of original composition. According to Badā'ūnī, his reasons for refusing were two-fold. First, providing an introduction would not have improved his personal standing at court ("I found little benefit"). Second, the preface would have had to be written without praise of Muhammad, which would go against his religious beliefs when he had already come close to heresy in engaging with the *Rāmāyaṇa* at all. Badā'ūnī's two objections both stem from politico-religious tensions in Akbar's court and poignantly illustrate some of the motivations he perceived behind Akbar's translation activity.

---

[97] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:366.

[98] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:366.

First, Badā'ūnī's pragmatic assessment of his place in contemporary politics references a larger set of conflicts between the ulama and the Mughal emperor. Badā'ūnī had a reputation in court for adhering to hardline Islamic views that Akbar denigrated. Badā'ūnī himself records that Akbar once called him a "bigot" (*muta'aṣṣib*) in contrast to an "adherent of Sufism" (*ṣūfī-mashrabī*).[99] Moreover, Akbar distrusted the quality of Badā'ūnī's translations from Sanskrit and on one occasion openly accused him of interpolating Islamic theology into the *Mahābhārata*. These individual instances are part of a power struggle between Akbar and traditional Islamic leaders that I discuss in more detail in chapter 3.

Despite such frictions, however, Badā'ūnī was also Akbar's most productive translator and was assigned to render at least five separate Sanskrit texts into Persian.[100] There were perhaps practical reasons why Akbar gave the task of bringing texts across cultural and linguistic boundaries to someone he did not trust, such as the dearth of other writers who could accomplish the mission. Nonetheless, the emperor's repeated selection of Badā'ūnī as a translator seems strange. As I mention in chapter 3, Akbar called upon his vizier, poet laureate, and other members of his inner circle to actively participate in cross-cultural affairs. Badā'ūnī certainly projects himself as outside of this elite group, but nonetheless finds himself at the center of translation activity at court.

In his preface to the *Mahābhārata*, Abū al-Faẕl provides an important clue to explaining this apparent asymmetry when he states that one major goal of that translation (and presumably others) was to prompt conservative Muslims to reconsider their beliefs.[101] This

---

[99] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:399.

[100] In addition to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Badā'ūnī's translation oeuvre includes portions of the *Mahābhārata*, *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā*, and *Rājataraṅgiṇī*. Additionally, Badā'ūnī was asked to translate the *Atharva Veda*, but failed to complete the work.

[101] See my discussion of Abū al-Faẕl's preface in chapter 3.

objective was partially a theological intervention, but it also had a strong political edge. Akbar sought to wrestle power away from the ulama and invest it in himself by establishing a new intellectual era that highlighted the contributions of Sanskrit knowledge. Akbar included Badā'ūnī in this broader imperial project and apparently sought for translations to open peoples' minds beginning with the translator. Badā'ūnī's second objection to crafting a preface for Akbar's *Rāmāyan* speaks to these theological and political stakes.

When Akbar commanded Badā'ūnī to compose a preface "in the style of the authors" (*rasm-i muṣannifīn*) he no doubt referred to Abū al-Faẕl's preface to the Persian *Mahābhārata*. Abū al-Faẕl wrote this preface in 1587 as a masterpiece of literary prose that quickly became an integral component of the Mughal *Mahābhārata* and circulated with the main text (see chapter 3). This introduction also provided a guide for conceptualizing Sanskrit-Persian translations as a cross-cultural activity in Akbar's court and was often referenced in other translations. Badā'ūnī resists this model, in part, because Abū al-Faẕl omitted the conventional praise of Muhammad. Moreover, Badā'ūnī opposed Abū al-Faẕl's preface for other reasons as well and references it disparagingly elsewhere in his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*. These remarks further elucidate the likely reasons for Badā'ūnī's reluctance to write a similar introduction for the Persian *Rāmāyan*.

Badā'ūnī volunteers two comments in his discussion of the *Mahābhārata* preface that indicate deep discomfort with Abū al-Faẕl's religious and political agendas. First, he attacks the *Mahābhārata*'s character as bizarre beyond comprehension by parodying a verse quoted by Abū al-Faẕl. While discussing his own participation in the project, Badā'ūnī says that in the span of three or four months, he "translated two out of the eighteen fabricated, worthless books [of

the *Mahābhārat*], which baffle the eighteen thousand worlds."[102] In his mention of "the eighteen thousand worlds" Badā'ūnī plays off the opening verses of Abū al-Faẕl's preface where he praises God with the lines:

> O You, for whom the eighteen thousand worlds are drunk with yearning,
> heads on the path of searching and souls in the palm of their hand.
> So many writing tablets have been blackened and so many pens broken.
> Yet they have not drawn so much as a line comparable to your creation.[103]

These verses became emblematic of the *Mahābhārata* in Persian, and later redactions of the translation often quote them, even when they exclude the rest of Abū al-Faẕl's preface.[104] For Badā'ūnī, the hyperbole of such praise supplied a way to lampoon the outlandish *Mahābhārata* as confusing rather than enlightening God's creations.

A few lines later in his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, Badā'ūnī speaks explicitly about Abū al-Faẕl's preface and notes that it contradicts an earlier commentary by the same author on the Qur'an, presumably because of the different theological leanings of the two texts. Badā'ūnī then calls out to God in Arabic saying, "We flee to God for refuge from infidelities and unprofitable words!"[105] Following this sentiment, the text of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* often invokes the phrase "God knows best" (*allāh a'lam*) at the end of certain chapters to signal a desire to guard against rather than celebrate the content of this epic.[106]

In another work titled *Najāt al-Rashīd* (*Salvation of the Rightly Guided*), Badā'ūnī clarifies that his rebuke of non-Islamic books stems from the prospect that they could alter the beliefs

---

[102] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:320.

[103] "Muqaddamah," 1.

[104] E.g., *Intikhāb-i Mahābhārat*, ms. Srinagar ORL (Oriental Research Library) Persian 176, fol. 1b. Also, a translation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also cites these verses (ms. BNF Supplément Persan 20, fol. 130b).

[105] *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*, 2:321 (translation Lowe, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, 2:331).

[106] In the Freer *Rāmāyan*, such invocations occur at the end of chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5. Currently I have no way of knowing whether these phrases occur in the original imperial copy.

of Muslims. Badā'ūnī puts forth two arguments for avoiding Hindu and other non-Muslim books, the first of which is that they may incite doubt in the minds of Muslims.[107] He describes how a weak believer, when exposed to false theological ideas, may mistakenly wonder if such notions are actually the word of God and offer guidance for how to live one's life. Second Badā'ūnī contends that non-Muslim texts are best shunned because they lack the miraculous and inimitable nature of the Qur'an and so may contain interpolations that even the learned cannot sort out.[108] Abū al-Faẕl agrees with Badā'ūnī about both possibilities, but he also embraces the potential of Indian texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, to disprove certain conservative Islamic beliefs.[109] Here we can clearly see the contours of a theological struggle between Badā'ūnī and Abū al-Faẕl on the appropriate role of non-Islamic knowledge.

In addition to having implications for the treatment of Sanskrit materials, this disagreement also highlights a question of authority and who has control over the learned texts of Islam: traditionally educated Islamic scholars or the ruling emperor? Badā'ūnī was intensely uncomfortably with royal authority that extended beyond certain limits, particularly into religious domains. Ali Anooshahr has documented how Badā'ūnī condemns both Akbar and other kings who attempted to propagate religious traditions of their own invention throughout his *Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh*.[110] Likewise, Badā'ūnī strongly opposed any vision of divine kingship and even rewrote the stories of pre-Mughal kings to elide such suggestions.[111]

---

[107] *Najāt al-Rashīd*, 114-15; also see Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 450-51.

[108] *Najāt al-Rashīd*, 115.

[109] I address this idea in detail in chapter 3.

[110] Anooshahr, "Mughal Historians," 290-94.

[111] Anooshahr, "Mughal Historians," 289-90 and 293.

Thus, disagreements over power in addition to theology lay behind Badā'ūnī's unwillingness to write a preface to Akbar's *Rāmāyan* and his unease with having translated the text in the first place. Badā'ūnī had already granted Akbar access to potentially transformative knowledge with far-reaching implications by creating a Persian *Rāmāyan*. But he desists from composing an introduction that would have endorsed the king's claims regarding the imperial value of this new source of information. Such a work would have made Badā'ūnī not merely complicit but also an active participant in promoting Akbar's vision of royal authority as transcending religious boundaries. While Badā'ūnī does not elaborate further in his history, presumably refusing the king's order was no light matter and signals the high stakes of this politico-theological conflict. Perhaps precisely the combination of imperial and theological threats is what prompted Badā'ūnī to openly disobey Akbar's command. Badā'ūnī appears to have abided by his decision, and Akbar's *Rāmāyan* as we have it today lacks a preface.

Getting it Wrong: Raḥīm's Take on Rāma's Story

After the initial translation, important members of the royal court sponsored additional, often illustrated copies of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*. Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān commissioned one such text in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries and also had the manuscript lavishly illuminated. Moreover, this copy contains an interesting note written in Raḥīm's own hand on an opening flyleaf. In this comment, Raḥīm offers insight into the impact of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* and the difficulties of transforming a Sanskrit story into a meaningful part of Persian literature. The note is worth quoting here in full:

> This book, which is known as the *Rāmāyan*, is among the esteemed books of India. It is an account of Rāmacandra, who was one of the great kings of India (*pādshāhān-i buzurg-i hind*). His external and spiritual graces were exemplary, being manifestations of divine attributes. According to Vālmīki, who was among the greatest darvishes of India, it is said that he [Rāmacandra] is the son (*pisar*)

> of Mahādeva [Śiva].[112] [These] discourses are an account of his graceful attributes, pleasing virtues, great victories, and conduct, which show the magnificence of his being. At the order of the officials of His Majesty Akbar, Naqīb Khān of Qazwīn, who was among the high-ranking lords and became exalted in the companionship and service of the king of kings, was honored and made eminent by the love of the king. He translated [this book] into Persian from the Sanskrit language (*zabān-i sanskrit*), in which Indian learning (*'ulūm-i hind*) was recorded at the time. There was a Brahman by the name of Deva Miśra who would interpret the meaning of the *śloka*s and Naqīb Khān would translate [that] into Persian. The desire of the king, who possessed Jamshid-like magnificence, on this occasion was that paintings be executed in this book. Upon completion of that [work], this slave reared by the kindnesses of the emperor, 'Abd al-Raḥīm, son of Bayram Khān (may he rest in peace), requested that as I had the privilege of seeing this book, I be allowed to have a copy made. By royal favor, permission was granted. This work was prepared and illustrated by the scribes and painters of this well-wisher of the king. Thus, it may be viewed by people. This work was completed in the year A.H. 1007 [A.D. 1598-99]. The beginning of the work and illumination of this work was made in the year 996 Hijra [A.D. 1587-88]. The total number of paintings is 135 and the number of leaves is 349 leaves. It was completed under the term of the supervision of the loyal and gracious Mullā Shakībī Imāmī and reached completion by the mercy of God.[113]

This comment contains a substantial amount of information but offers more questions than answers concerning the reception of the Persian *Rāmāyan*. Most crucial in this regard are Raḥīm's puzzling assertion regarding Rāma's parentage and his need for permission to copy the imperial text.

Raḥīm's declaration that Rāma is Śiva's son is a particularly noteworthy error because of both its context and source. This slip raises genuine doubts concerning what precisely Indo-Persian readers understood of Sanskrit texts. As Seyller points out, Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, which is itself based on Vālmīki's text, repeatedly emphasizes that Rāma is an incarnation of Viṣṇu.[114]

---

[112] *Mahādīv* is a common term for Śiva in Indo-Persian texts (e.g., Abū al-Faẕl refers to Śiva as *mahādīv* in his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (Firoze, "Abul Fazl's Account of Hindu Mythology," 106).

[113] Freer *Rāmāyan*, fol. 1a; the translation is borrowed from Seyller with a few emendations (*Workshop and Patron*, 73-74).

[114] Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 74. This is clearly laid out in the first book of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* (ms. Freer *Rāmāyan*, fol. 25a-25b.

Moreover, this fact was widely known among Akbar's inner circle. Abū al-Faẕl details the *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu in his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* and therein notes Rāma's earthly and divine origins.[115] Rāma's worship of Śiva was an integrated part of *Rāmāyaṇa* lore, but worshipper and son are quite different things. It seems that Raḥīm was unclear about even the general outline of Rāma's relationships with different gods, even though he just spent significant money and effort to produce an illustrated copy of the *Rāmāyan*.

Despite the confusion he displays here, Raḥīm had a reputation as a polymath of Indian languages and was a patron (and author) of Hindi poetry.[116] It is difficult to reconcile these interests in Indian traditions with his pronouncement that Śiva is Rāma's father. If we turn to the miniatures paintings that adorn Raḥīm's *Rāmāyan*, we find similarly basic mistakes in terms of Hindu iconography, such as Rāma's coloring. The illustrations also often bungle basic narrative elements, such as the number of Daśaratha's wives.[117] One can easily imagine an artist in Raḥīm's workshop muddling the details of an unfamiliar story. For Raḥīm, however, there remains the pressing question of why someone reputed to be a cross-cultural intellectual appears to know so little about a popular Indian narrative?

Raḥīm's flynote indicates that the content of translations from Sanskrit did not constitute their only value in the Indo-Persian sphere. But if not as a relevant story, then what was the importance of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* for Raḥīm and potentially other Indo-Persian readers? Raḥīm situates his copy of the translation in a political context by mentioning Akbar and the central Mughal court several times in his note. Perhaps Raḥīm sought to reflect some of the imperial court's prestige onto himself by gaining permission to reproduce a royal manuscript.

---

[115] *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, Calcutta ed., 2:168.

[116] On his Hindi patronage, see Schimmel, "Khān-i Khānān Abdur Rahīm as a Patron," 216-17.

[117] Seyller discusses the prevalence of errors in *Workshop and Patron* (83).

In this scenario, the exact text may not have been as relevant to Raḥīm as the fact that the Persian *Rāmāyan* belonged to the emperor.

Raḥīm also discloses that he necessarily applied to Akbar to "be allowed to have a copy [of the *Rāmāyan*] made." This reference reminds us that Akbar, like his successors, tightly controlled who was able to see royal texts, which in turn shaped the impacts of translations from Sanskrit. The Mughal court initially did not intend for translated works to be widely read and thought of these cross-cultural projects as operating within clearly demarcated royal spaces. Scholars have often been misled on this point and have interpreted Mughal texts, particularly Abū al-Faẓl's preface to the *Razmnāmah*, as outlining a broader role for translations in Indian society.[118] Akbar certainly desired Mughal encounters with Sanskrit to be revolutionary in his project to build an empire. But he designed their effects to fall squarely within an imperial milieu. Raḥīm's comment about needing authorization to replicate the text highlights precisely how limited access to Sanskrit-Persian translations actually elevated the value of these works and sparked interest within the second tier of Mughal courts.

A Marvelous Tale: Jahangir's Interpretation of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*

After Raḥīm, our next clue concerning how imperial actors interacted with Akbar's *Rāmāyan* comes from Emperor Jahangir. In 1605, Jahangir inscribed a brief comment on his father's copy of the translation, which reads:

> On the fifth of Azar during the first regnal year, this book entered the library of this supplicant at the divine court. Written by Nur al-Din Jahangir Shah, son of Akbar Padshah Ghazi in the year 1014 [November 1605]. This book, the *Rāmāyan*, is one of the celebrated books of the ancients of India. My father ordered that it be translated into Persian. It contains strange and incredible stories (*'ajīb ū*

[118] I discuss this mistaken view in chapter 3.

> *gharīb*) that are truly incomprehensible to the intellect (*'aql*), particularly in the first part of [book] three.[119]

Just below this, what appears to be a later hand has written, "and in the second part of [book] five."

First and foremost, Jahangir calls attention here to the crucial role of Akbar in transporting the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Persian. He recognizes the translation as a vital imperial text, at least from the perspective of his father's cultural politics. But it bears mentioning that Jahangir initiated few translations from Sanskrit during his tenure on the throne. Most of the translations associated with him were either completed while he was still a prince or were dedicated to Jahangir rather than directly advanced by him.[120] Once he became king, Jahangir was apparently not invested in translations from Sanskrit as political texts. Accordingly, in his note on the imperial *Rāmāyan*, rather than elaborate on the translation's possible political implications, he instead remarks on the bizarre nature of the epic's tales.

Jahangir's mention of the *Rāmāyan*'s "strange and incredible stories" draws attention to the narrative of the text within the common Indo-Persian framework of fantastical elements (*'ajā'ib*). Indo-Persian authors in particular explored this mode of describing the Indian Other, even as that other was increasingly present in the center of the royal court. As I discuss in chapter 3, Mughal translations revel in imaginative scenes and bizarre moments in their rendering of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a strange story indeed from a Persianate

---

[119] Note on flyleaf of Jaipur *Rāmāyan*. I borrow heavily here from Seyller's translation of this note ("Inspection and Valuation," 308) but alter his rendering of the end of this passage.

[120] Niẓām al-Dīn Pānīpatī made a translation of Abhinanda's *Laghuyogavāśiṣṭa* for Jahangir while he was still a prince (Mujtabai, "Persian Translations of Hindu Religious Literature," 20-21). As emperor, two translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and one of the *Yogavāśiṣṭa* (by Sufi Sharif Qutbjahani) were dedicated to Jahangir (I discuss the *Rāmāyan*s later in this chapter; on the *Yogavāśiṣṭa*, see Mujtabai, "Persian Translations of Hindu Religious Literature," 21). Additionally, Bharimal produced a translation of *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā* during Jahangir's reign, although whether it was patronized or dedicated to the royal court remains unclear (Ethe, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, 1:#1988).

perspective and includes many features that would easily concur with an *'ajā'ib* framework, such as talking animals and superhuman feats. Even more so than other Mughal emperors, Jahangir is well known for having a taste for the odd and exotic, which is attested at several places in his memoirs and confirmed by foreign visitors to the royal court.[121]

While Jahangir clearly understood Akbar's *Rāmāyan* overall as an outlandish and exciting tale, his closing comments specify one section of the work as notably peculiar. As I noted in the passage above, Jahangir proclaims that marvelous stories occur particularly "in the first part of [book] 3" and, a later hand adds, "and in the second part of [book] 5." Previous scholars have not noticed that these two comments are separated on the manuscript flyleaf and likely written by different individuals.[122] As Akbar's *Rāmāyan* is copied in later manuscripts, there are no divisions beyond the seven books of the epic.[123] In terms of the story, the abduction of Sītā as well as other adventures in the Daṇḍaka forest may have caught Jahangir's imagination in the first part of book 3.[124] The middle of the fifth book features Hanuman's burning of Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa's capital, and Indo-Persian audiences were also likely amazed by Hanuman's leap across the ocean, which occurs at the beginning of the same book.

After Jahangir we lack further Mughal reflections on Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, and in fact manuscripts of the text drop off rather drastically after the early seventeenth century. In

---

[121] Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India," 480-81.

[122] I am grateful to Sunil Sharma for this suggestion. Earlier scholars have translated this passage differently as "particularly in chapters three and five" (Das, "Akbar's Imperial Ramayana," 74; Seyller, "Inspection and Valuation," 308, note that Seyller mistakenly prints four where he means five). The Persian here is ambiguous and reads: *dar avval-i 3* / *duyyum-i 5* (or *dar avval 3* / *duyyum 5*). Nonetheless, these earlier translations do not account for *avval* and *duyyum*.

[123] It is possible that there are divisions in the Jaipur manuscript, but we currently have no way of pursuing this line of questioning.

[124] The abduction of Sītā occurs closer to the middle of the third book, but the later hand may intend to refer to the attempted abduction by Virādha and the subsequent battle with Rāma, a subject illustrated in both the Jaipur and Freer *Rāmāyan*s (Seyller, *Workshop and Patron*, 175). Alternatively either of the incidents featuring Śūrpaṇakhā or Mārīca could be referred to by "the first part of book 3."

contrast to the dozens if not hundreds of *Razmnāmah* copies that survive today, only a handful of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* remain.[125] In part this discrepancy may signal that the *Rāmāyan* was not a particularly popular translation, at least in its first attempt. However, whereas the *Mahābhārata* was only reworked in Persian a few more times after Akbar's initial translation, the *Rāmāyaṇa* quickly became a defining Indo-Persian narrative that was retold in many different versions. Nobody has yet managed an exhaustive count of the discrete Persian *Rāmāyan*s produced in early modern India, but scholars have identified at least two dozen separate renditions.[126] Hundreds, likely thousands, of manuscripts of these Persian redactions of Rāma's tale exist today. Together they testify that many Indo-Persian readers followed Jahangir in finding the *Rāmāyaṇa* strangely compelling.

Later Mughal *Rāmāyan*s

Poets began composing new Persian *Rāmāyan*s as early as Jahangir's reign, and new redactions continued to be generated through the end of the Mughal Empire. These fresh *Rāmāyan*s were often based on versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sanskrit, vernacular languages, or simply oral knowledge of the tale rather than the Akbari translation. We lack evidence that any of these Persian *Rāmāyan*s were directly financed by the Mughal court, but many insert themselves into that imperial milieu through dedications to the reigning Mughal king. Such works illustrate how courtly culture exerted a strong influence on Indo-Persian literature, so much so that poets continued to imagine Persian incarnations of Rāma's story as belonging within the Mughal court.

---

[125] Manuscripts of Akbar's *Rāmāyan* are primarily in Europe, as I detail earlier in this chapter.

[126] See list in Mujtabai, "Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht," 137-41.

Here I will briefly examine two adaptations of this epic that were dedicated to Jahangir: Saʻd Allāh Masīḥ Pānīpatī's *Dāstān-i Rām ū Sītā* (also known as *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī*) and Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan*. Both works are written in *maṡnavī* verse and based loosely on Vālmīki's telling of the epic. But they develop their respective narratives in dissimilar ways. Masīḥ crafted his *Rāmāyan* as a love story, whereas Giridhar Dās cast his text as a heroic tale. Both explore visions for Sanskrit-derived materials different than those of literati working within the Mughal court, and together they demonstrate the vivacity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Persian.

Masīḥ Pānīpatī constructed his *Rāmāyan* as a versified Indo-Persian romance. He titled his work the *Tale of Rām and Sītā* (*Dāstān-i Rām ū Sītā*) and emphasizes that his poem is valuable because it expresses a truth grounded in love. In the opening section, he states:

> I must speak eloquently of Hindustan
> because the dust of this land is infused with love (*ʻishq*).
> From that I spoke the tradition (*ḥadīṡ*) of Rām and Sītā
> It is not a legend (*afsānah*) but history (*tārīkh*) here.[127]

A bit later, he again clarifies that: "This love (*ʻishqī*) of which I speak is not a legend (*afsānah*). / Every pearl I pierce [shines] like the sun."[128] Masīḥ Pānīpatī's insistence that the *Rāmāyaṇa* possesses some sort of legitimacy echoes the understanding of translations produced in the Mughal court. But whereas Akbar's translators labeled texts such as the *Mahābhārata* as a record of India's past, Masīḥ Pānīpatī emphasizes the emotional truth of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative as a love story. Masīḥ further recast this Indian tale within the particular Persianate framework of a romance. As one scholar has put it, "Masih canonizes the Rama story among the other Islamicate legends as a tragedy of love. Rama and Sita come to embody the similar

[127] *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī*, 24. For another translation of this passage, see Phillips, "Garden of Endless Blossoms," 81 (on the final two lines, cf. Aggarwal, "Rama Story of Brij Narain Chakbast," 153). The Persian of the final line is a bit ambiguous, although the context supports Phillips's reading.

[128] *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī*, 26.

trope of a lover and beloved who must surmount numerous obstacles."[129] In recasting the Indian tale within an Islamicate framework, Masīḥ may also have intended to provide ethical or even spiritual instruction to his readers and listeners, although his precise goals here remain a bit murky.[130]

In contrast, Giridhar Dās reimagines the epic as Rāma's story more exclusively and sets out to write an account of an Indian hero. He authored his *Rāmāyan* in 1623/4 and describes his work as the "book of Rām" (*nāmah-i rām*).[131] When Giridhar Dās offers an introductory overview of the events he will address at length within his poem, he mentions only the feats of Rāma and does not refer to Sītā at all.[132] He follows Vālmīki's version quite closely and so includes the story of Sītā within the text. But when Giridhar Dās sketches an initial table of contents, he outlines Rāma's good nature, his exile, and war with Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā with no mention of Sītā. He identifies Lakṣmaṇa in one brief verse as Rāma's companion during exile. But even when it seems he must name Sītā in order to explain the reason for war with Laṅkā, he prefers a vague reference to how "disaster suddenly befell" and "countless soldiers prepared for war."[133] Giridhar Dās ends his prologue by focusing on Rāma's glorious rule in Ayodhya (Oudh) after he returns triumphant over Rāvaṇa.

> After the promised time of fourteen years,
> the crown and good fortune together returned to Oudh.

---

[129] Aggarwal, "Rama Story of Brij Narain Chakbast," 154.

[130] Phillips, "Garden of Endless Blossoms," 82-84.

[131] There has been some confusion on the precise date of the text because, while Giridhar Dās dates his text according to both the Hijri and Vikrama Saṃvat systems, the two dates are a few years apart in some manuscripts (see ms. BL Persian Or. 1251, fol. 242a). This discrepancy may be the result of a scribal error (see discussion in Sharma, "Little Known Persian Version of the Ramayan," 674-75). For Giridhar Dās's characterization of the text as *nāmah-i rām*, see ms. BL Persian Or. 1251, fol. 6b.

[132] Sharma discusses some of the details of Giridhar Dās's narration in the only article I have found to date that contains substantial analysis of this work ("Little Known Persian Version of the Ramayan").

[133] Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan*, ms. BL Persian Or. 1251, fol. 5a.

> The world was full of equity and justice.
> He delighted the world with righteousness.[134]

In the closing line of his summary, Giridhar Dās reiterates that he is going to narrate "[Rāma's] adventures."

Giridhar Dās's subtle excising of Sītā mirrors Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, which also includes a brief summary of the epic at the beginning of the translation and likewise characterizes the tale as a story of Rām with no trace of Sītā. This synopsis in Akbar's *Rāmāyan* reads:

> It has not remained hidden from the hearts of the lords of truth that this is a book famous among the Indians (*ahl-i hind*) and called *Rāmāyan* in Sanskrit (*zabān-i hindī*). It is an account of the adventures of Rāmchand from the time of his birth until his death. He was an Indian king and sovereign lord of an empire. The majesty and splendor of the city of Ayodhya, which is now known as Oudh, is famous. Among Rāmchand's stories is that he build a bridge over the salt ocean and vanquished Lankā, a well-known city among islands, with total strength and composure. He killed Rāvan, a strong demon with ten heads, whose line had held sovereignty over that land for so many thousand years, and he destroyed that lineage. Vālmīki, a Brahman who was very learned and an ascetic, versified this story (*afsānah*) from beginning to end in Sanskrit (*zabān-i hindī*) and become famous in this land.[135]

We do not know whether Giridhar Dās was familiar with Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, but regardless these descriptions parallel one another in describing a hero's tale.

Full treatments of Masīḥ Pānīpatī's *Dāstān-i Rām ū Sītā* and Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan* remain outside of my purview here. Nonetheless even this cursory glance at their texts illustrates how Sanskrit stories proved to be quite successful as creative materials in Indo-Persian literature. Those outside of the central royal milieu formulated new Persian *Rāmāyan*s, but they nonetheless sought to give such works a Mughal reception. Whether and how Jahangir received these texts (both were dedicated to him) is unknown, but Masīḥ Pānīpatī's

---

[134] Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan*, ms. BL Persian Or. 1251, fol. 5b.

[135] Ms. Freer *Rāmāyan*. fol. 1b.

poem was quite well-liked by Indo-Persian readers according to the extant manuscript evidence.[136]

Overall the *Rāmāyaṇa* prompted a notably diverse set of reactions from readers both within and beyond the Mughal court. Badā'ūnī perceived Akbar's *Rāmāyan* as a severe politico-religious challenge, whereas Raḥīm may never have read the translation even though he financed an illuminated copy. Jahangir was most taken by the epic's strange stories, whereas Masīḥ Pānīpatī and Giridhar Dās developed its poetic potential as a romance and a heroic tale, respectively. These varying receptions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Persian represent larger trends of how Sanskrit stories spread throughout Mughal India and lent themselves to numerous interpretations and retellings. They further demonstrate the wide-ranging influence of Sanskrit-Persian encounters on Indo-Persian culture. In order to further probe such effects, I turn in the following section to a parallel set of attempts to negotiate Sanskrit-derived knowledge outside of its original imperial milieu.

The Impact of Sanskrit Literature and Knowledge Beyond Akbar's Court

Mughal translations and accounts of Sanskrit knowledge systems impacted Indo-Persian culture far beyond their initial contexts. I have touched on instances above where Mughal nobles within subimperial courts engaged with translations from Sanskrit and authors beyond the court retold Sanskrit stories. Here I broaden my perspective both geographically and temporally in order to investigate texts that were either composed outside of the Mughal milieu altogether or in Shah Jahan's court. While much of the wider reception of Sanskrit-Mughal activities falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, select texts speak eloquently to my larger questions concerning the relationship between centers of power and cross-cultural

[136] The popularity of Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan* is harder to gauge, but far fewer manuscript copies appear to survive today.

activities in early modern India. The opening of Firishtah's seventeenth century history of India elucidates how Sanskrit texts translated under the Mughals were mobilized in other Indo-Persian imperial cultures on the subcontinent. A Persian chronology of Indian kings attributed to Chandar Bhān Brahman, a Persianate intellectual in Shah Jahan's court, exemplifies a later incarnation of the trend to combine Sanskrit and Persianate materials to construct Mughal claims of power. Both of these authors initiate us into how Sanskrit knowledge operated within broader Indo-Persian literary culture principally by exploring the politico-historical potency of India's pre-Islamic past.

Firishtah: A Deccani Perspective on Sanskrit Learning in Indo-Persian Texts

Firishtah wrote his *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī* (*Ibrahim's Rose Garden*), also known as *Tārīkh-i Firishtah* (*Firishtah's History*), in the early seventeenth century. He worked under the auspices of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1627), an independent ruler of Bijapur in the Deccan. Nonetheless, *Firishtah's History* follows the model of chronicles composed by intellectuals in Akbar's court by focusing on Islamic rulers in India, beginning with the Ghaznavids and concluding with contemporary Indo-Muslim kingdoms.[137] Firishtah's overarching project was to trace the rise of Indo-Islamic power, and he promotes his work as "containing the events of Islamic kings and anecdotes about great *shaykh*s who are [respectively] known as the external and internal rulers over the countries of Hindustan."[138] As part of this endeavor, Firishtah opens his history with an extended introduction on "the beliefs of the Indians (*mu'taqadāt-i ahl-i hind*), an account of the Hindu kings (*rāyān*), and a detailed description of the appearance of

[137] Anooshahr, "Mughal Historians," 278.

[138] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:4.

Islam in that land."[139] In this section, he presents two competing histories of pre-Islamic India, one of which is drawn from Sanskrit materials introduced into Persian at the Mughal court.

Scholars have typically paid little attention to this prefatory section of *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, partly because modern sensibilities condemn it as historically inaccurate. In addition, the major English translation of the text severely abridges Firishtah's treatment of pre-Islamic India.[140] However, Firishtah offers a useful viewpoint on Mughal cross-cultural activities in two respects. First, he directly relies on texts that emerged out of Mughal interactions with Sanskrit literature, above all the *Mahābhārata*, and thereby provides insight into how these works were circulated and perceived beyond the Mughal court. Second, he worked under royal patronage, which imbues his text with a set of political concerns at once parallel and contrasting to those of Mughal authors. In order to flesh out Firishtah's commentary on cross-cultural encounters in the Mughal court, I first outline his treatment of the *Mahābhārata* as a major source for India's ancient past. Then I examine how he rejects the *Mahābhārata* and constructs a second, altogether different narrative of early Hindustan.

Firishtah on the *Mahābhārata* as a Source for India's Pre-Islamic Past

In the opening of *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, Firishtah recounts the basic story of the *Mahābhārata* and also covers a series of later kings who ruled over Kanauj, Malwa, Udaipur, and other regions of India. At the beginning of this section, he names one of his major sources as Akbar's *Mahābhārata* and attaches a significant but highly qualified importance to that translation. First, he highlights the centrality of this Sanskrit epic to Indians (*ahl-i hind*) and

---

[139] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:6.

[140] General J. Briggs translated the bulk of Firishtah's history in the early nineteenth century, and this remains the version Indologists most frequently cite today. Briggs abridged and excised several portions of Firishtah's text as he saw fit and accordingly heavily abbreviated the introductory chapter on India's pre-Islamic past. Elliot and Dowson later offered a nearly full translation of this section (deleting only the verses and the introductory praise of God) in *The History of India,* 6:Note E.

writes, "There is no more comprehensive and authoritative work than that [*Mahābhārat*] in this age and among this group."[141] Having lauded the epic, Firishtah notes that the text was translated under Mughal sponsorship and subsequently, "The author of these lines has undertaken the work of making an abridgment and offers it here."[142] Firishtah then commences his overview of the *Mahābhārata*, starting with the nature of Indian cyclical time that is divided into four ages (*yuga*s). He relates the basic plot of the epic, including the main characters' royal lineages, how the Pāṇḍavas lost their kingdom, and the great war. Firishtah next discusses Kṛṣṇa's story because, as he explains, Kṛṣṇa is a particularly famous character among Indians. He concludes with Vyāsa writing the *Mahābhārata* at the request of Arjuna's grandson.[143]

Despite his claims to rely on Akbar's *Mahābhārata* throughout this summary, Firishtah seems to draw on Abū al-Faẓl's preface to the Persian text rather than the Akbari translation itself. Firishtah reproduces Abū al-Faẓl's wording exactly at times, including his quoted verses of Persian poetry.[144] He also unwittingly points to his true source by mistakenly attributing the entire Persian *Mahābhārata* to Abū al-Faẓl when in fact only the preface can be rightfully ascribed to him.[145] Firishtah provides no indication that he read the text of the Persian *Mahābhārata* and appears to rely exclusively on Abū al-Faẓl's introduction.

Firishtah's dependence on Abū al-Faẓl's preface suggests that he found it unnecessary to engage with the actual translated epic, at least in constructing his history. In a sense, this

---

[141] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:6.

[142] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:6.

[143] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:6-14.

[144] E.g., compare *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:7 and "Muqaddamah" of Abū al-Faẓl, 21; *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:8 and "Muqaddamah," 23.

[145] Beveridge also notes Firishtah's reliance on Abū al-Faẓl (*Akbarnāmah*, 1:151-52 n. 3).

assessment parallels how Raḥīm conceptualized Akbar's *Rāmāyan* as a text to be acquired and invoked rather than seriously read. But unlike Raḥīm with regard to the *Rāmāyan*, Firishtah actively (and accurately) relays the story of Akbar's *Mahābhārata*. At the end of his summary, he even claims some original research in evaluating its Sanskrit title:

> [Vyāsa] called this book *Mahābhārat*. I have heard that the reason for this title is that *mahā* means great and *bhārat* means war. Because this book records great battles, he called it *Mahābhārat*. But this is wrong because *bhārat* does not mean war in the vocabulary of the Indians (*lughat-i ahl-i hind*). Clearly because this book contains tales of the illustrious offspring of Rāja Bharat, it was given his name, and in usage the –a was lengthened. God knows best![146]

His comments concerning the mistranslated title aside, Firishtah's presentation of the Persian *Mahābhārata* as mediated through Abū al-Faẕl's introduction signals the qualified importance of this work in his historical apparatus.

In addition, while Firishtah uses the epic's Persian preface in his *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, he does not subscribe to Abū al-Faẕl's interpretation of the *Mahābhārata*. In particular, he discards Abū al-Faẕl's postulation that the text contains intellectual truths that supersede particular Islamic notions. In contrast, wherever Firishtah finds any conflict between the Sanskrit record and Islamicate (including Persian) sources, he declares the former incorrect. As I discuss in chapter 3, Abū al-Faẕl gives the example of how some Muslims erroneously believe that the earth is only seven thousand years old, which the *Mahābhārata* controverts by sketching out a much longer history. In contrast, Firishtah holds that: "From the age of Adam until the time of writing these lines, not more than seven thousand years have passed. What the Indians (*hindū'ān*) say about hundreds of thousands of years is an exaggeration and a pure lie."[147] The *Mahābhārata*'s lack of reliability does not prevent Firishtah from using the epic to reconstruct

[146] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:13-14.

[147] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:15.

ancient Indian history according to the Indians. But, perhaps because of the text's fallibility, he falls short of actually integrating the epic story into his broader historical narrative.

After Firishtah finishes his retelling of the *Mahābhārata* based on Abū al-Faẓl's preface, he launches into a new version of India's pre-Islamic past, which he disconnects from the Sanskrit epic's depiction. He transitions to this second narrative with the straightforward claim: "The reality (*taḥqīq*) is that Hindustan was populated by the descendents of Adam, just like the rest of the habitable world."[148] He then elaborates the story of the great flood and the subsequent dispersal of Noah's children around the world, including to India. Firishtah does not outrightly state that the *Mahābhārata* story is false, but he dismisses its embedded timeframe, as noted above. Moreover, he brackets the epic within the realm of reported history rather than admitted fact and then replaces it with a tradition based on a Muslim prophet. Many of Firishtah's predecessors had written about India's past by exclusively drawing on Islamic narratives, as Abū al-Faẓl laments in his *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*. Given this precedent and his decision to frame a second version of pre-Islamic Indian history as the truth, it is curious that Firishtah chose to include the *Mahābhārata* at all in his *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*.

Firishtah signals the long-reaching effects of Mughal encounters with Sanskrit texts on Indo-Persian literary and historical sensibilities by presenting the *Mahābhārata* as his initial source of information about Indian history. The epic may not be "comprehensive and authoritative" for Firishtah as it is for many Indians, but the text had by now become an essential part of the Indo-Persian tradition. As such it demanded to be included in a history of ancient India, even if it must ultimately be overwritten by another past.

---

[148] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:15.

Islamic Links: Firishtah's Version of Pre-Islamic Indian History

After discussing the *Mahābhārata*, Firishtah puts forward a history of pre-Islamic India that ties India's past to those of ancient Persia and the wider Muslim world. Here he constructs an important counter vision to the *Mahābhārata* that situates the subcontinent as already accounted for in the Perso-Islamic tradition.[149] In some cases, Firishtah incorporates India into familiar religious stories that had long purported to explain the entire known world. Early on, he records that all Indians are descended from Hind, the son of Ham and grandson of Noah. In this deft move Firishtah casts Indians as the progeny of a known Islamic prophet and also provides an etymology for the Perso-Arabic name for India (*hind*).[150] He further postulates that Hind had four sons, who gave rise genealogically and linguistically to the different regions of India. Accordingly, Bang populated Bengal, Dakhin established himself in the Deccan, and so forth.[151]

Firishtah also draws parallels between ancient India and Persia that present both lands as following a similar trajectory of cultural development. For example, Firishtah lists a king called Kishan as the first to rule over Hindustan.[152] After describing his reign as a time of prosperity, Firishtah identifies Kishan as contemporary with Tahmurasp (also known as Tahmuris), one of the earliest Persian kings recorded in the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*). After establishing this temporal equivalence, Firishtah narrates the histories of India and Persia as

---

[149] Other Persianate authors in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also dealt with similar issues of how to write the pre-Islamic history of Iran. See Tavakoli-Targhi's discussion in "Contested Memories."

[150] In the late eighteenth century, British thinkers posited a similar lineage whereby Indians are descended from Ham (Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 129-30).

[151] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:16. Firishtah also articulates this vision of Islamic history in respect to the rest of the known world and says that Noah's other two sons and their offspring gave rise to the Persians, Turks, Chinese, etc.

[152] Not Kishan (Kṛṣṇa) from the *Mahābhārata*, as Firishtah is careful to note (*Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:16). Likely, this refers to Pṛthu, often named as the first Indian king and credited with the cultivation of agriculture.

parallel with one another and frequently mentions the Persian kings contemporaneous with various Indian rulers. He also portrays social changes in India as mirroring those of the same period in Persia. In one telling instance, Firishtah says that Kishan's son Mahārāj allotted jobs to different groups of Indians: "[Mahārāj] designated the descendants of Pūrb as rulers and government officials. He gave Brahmans the work of advising, writing, astrology, and medicine. He appointed one group to farming and one group he assigned to conduct various trades and crafts."[153] Here Mahārāj closely follows the model of Jamshid, his contemporary Persian counterpart given Firishtah's timeline for Kishan and Tahmurasp. Jamshid is likewise celebrated in the *Shāhnāmah* for dividing up men according to their trades in Persian society, including religious leaders, soldiers, farmers, and craftsman.[154]

Firishtah also establishes religious parallels between India and Persia. In these cases, he often attempts to explain away as corruptions some of the more troublesome aspects of Indian society from an Islamic perspective. Accordingly, he contends that revering idols was a vice introduced only later in Indian history. He states that around the era of Rustam, a hero in the *Shāhnāmah*, a man named Suraj was on the throne in India. At that time, a Brahman from Jharkhand converted Suraj to idol worship.[155] Firishtah presents this event as prompting Indians to turn away from their true religion.

> It is said that Hind, just as he had seen and heard from his father Ham, the son Noah, obeyed and worshipped the incomparable Creator. His children, generation after generation, followed his example. Until, during the time of Mahārāj, someone came from Iran who introduced sun worship. That became popular, and many became star worshippers and also fire worshippers. But when the practice of idol worship (*rasm-i but-parastī*) appeared, most became followers. This is because that Brahman told Suraj that whoever made a

---

[153] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:17.

[154] *Shāhnāmah*, 1:42-43.

[155] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:19.

> representation of his own predecessor in gold, silver, or stone and worshipped it would find the road to salvation. As a result all kinds of people formed large images of those who had come before and worshipped them.[156]

Here Firishtah paints Indians as originally monotheists and also presents Persia's fire-worship as a crucial step along the road to perdition that ends in idol worship. Firishtah does not comment further on the difference that Persia had shed all but traces of its fire-worship days by the early modern period, whereas venerating images remained widespread in India in the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, this vision that multiple world areas were privy to pure knowledge in ancient times was well-attested in Islamic thought, and the eighth-tenth century 'Abbasid translation movement drew upon this idea in order to lend credence to newly-introduced Greek materials.[157] Moreover, in *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, linking India's religious evolution with that of ancient Persian at the very least allowed for the possibility that Islam would one day restore India to its idol-free roots.

Last, Firishtah attempts to demonstrate how India's past is intricately bound up with that of the larger Islamicate world through the actions of several key individuals. In some cases, Firishtah relays what we consider to be accurate history today, such as Alexander the Great's entry into India.[158] In other cases, Firishtah's stories are a bit more dubious, such as when he records that the legendary figure Rustam visited the subcontinent and placed a new king on the throne.[159] As Firishtah progresses closer to the advent of Islam in India, connections increase between India and its western neighbors. His account of pre-Islamic India

[156] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:19.

[157] Yücesoy, "Translation as Self-Consciousness," 538-45.

[158] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:22.

[159] *Tārīkh-i Firishtah*, 1:19.

predictably ends with the rise of Muslim dynasties on the subcontinent, which casts Firishtah's version of India's ancient history as the backdrop for the primary topic of his work.

Thus, for Firishtah, India's history revolves around Islam. Indians are descended from Noah, originally monotheists, and are ultimately bound to be ruled by Muslims. Even in the intervening centuries when idol worship and non-Muslim sovereigns prevailed, India was always connected to the wider Islamic world through both parallel politico-cultural developments and cases of actual contact. Whereas Akbar's court often conceived of the Mughals as heirs to a distinctively Sanskrit tradition, Firishtah depicts India as part of Islamic history. The *Mahābhārata* does not fit easily into this perspective, but nonetheless Firishtah opens his history by discussing this text and devotes several pages to relaying its contents. He firmly treats the *Mahābhārata* as a work that must be addressed as part of the Indo-Islamic tradition, even if it is ultimately rejected in favor of a different story.

Integrated History: Counting Kings in Shah Jahan's Court

Later Indo-Persian authors also recognized the capacity of Indian knowledge to provide access to India's past and increasingly perceived Sanskrit-derived information as legitimate history. One particularly notable trend in this direction is the appearance of *rājāvalī*s (royal lineages) in Persian. These texts feature lists of kings, typically based in Delhi, that begin with pre-Islamic rulers and continue through the lines of Indo-Islamic sovereigns to conclude with the reigning Mughal emperor. They chronicle the length of each king's rule and offer short anecdotes. Persian *rājāvalī*s begin to crop-up in the seventeenth century, and here I will take as an exemplar *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* (*History of the Kings of Delhi*), which was penned during Shah Jahan's rule (1627-58). While this work (dated 1657) moves us slightly beyond the temporal limits of my project, it demonstrates the political deployment of Sanskrit knowledge brought

into Persian during the preceding century. Building upon earlier activities under Akbar and Jahangir, *rājāvalī*s realize the imperial interest in constructing an integrated history of India that culminates with the Mughals.

Before continuing, it is worth acknowledging that the authorship of *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* remains uncertain. The work survives today in a single known copy that is dated to 1851 and is ascribed to Chandar Bhān Brahman.[160] Chandar Bhān Brahman was a Hindu secretary in Shah Jahan's court who ultimately rose to become Shah Jahan's chief secretary (*mīr munshī*) and produced a number of important literary works.[161] But, to my knowledge, there is no external mention of this text in any of Chandar Bhān's other works, and the writing style is too cryptic to offer supporting evidence for his authorship.[162] However, the date of the text is reliable because the author ends with Shah Jahan's reign. Regardless of its authorship, *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* places itself in the Mughal milieu and offers insight into the later imperial reception of Sanskrit-derived history.

Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī is a combined chronicle of pre-Islamic and Islamic kings who have ruled from Delhi and promotes a succinct vision of the Mughal Empire as the culmination of a long series of Indian dynasties. Approximately half of the work is devoted to kings who predate the dawn of Islamic rule, from Yudhiṣṭhira until Prithviraj Chauhan. The entries on pre-Islamic kings are brief, typically detailing only the length of each one's tenure on the throne, often down to the precise number of days. For example, the description of some of the earliest kings after Yudhiṣṭhira reads: "Rāja Aśvamedha ruled for eighty-three years. Rāja

---

[160] *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha 46, fol. 19b and fol. 1a.

[161] Rajeev Kinra has written at length about the literary, imperial, and historical contexts of Chandar Bhān in his dissertation, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India."

[162] For doubt about this attribution see Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India," 263.

Uttamacanda ruled for a period of eighty-eight years, eight months, and twenty-four days. Rāja Manjulayata was engaged in ruling for eighty-one years, eleven months, and twenty-three days."[163] The author also occasionally marks dynastic changes and other crucial historical events, particularly the further forward he moves in time.[164]

The work highlights the transfer of power from pre-Islamic to Islamic rulers while still maintaining the continuity that all are Delhi-based Indian kings. The author describes how Shihab al-Din Ghori and Prithviraj Chauhan battled for the throne, which ended with the establishment of *pādshāh*s who rule India.[165] The text then goes through various Indo-Islamic dynasties. For the Mughal kings, the work even gives an overview of the intrigues for the throne, including the brief reigns of Shahriyār and Dāvar Bakhsh Bulāqī before Shah Jahan was able to secure his position as emperor with the help of Asaf Khan.[166] Overall, the author allocates nearly equal amounts of space to pre-Islamic and Islamic rulers of north India.

Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī follows an established tradition of incorporating Indian knowledge into Persian for imperial purposes but also demonstrates a significant development beyond previous works in two respects. First, the text links Mughal history to ancient Indian history in a concise format. As I have discussed already, Abū al-Faẕl, Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī, and Firishtah all pursue similar goals of presenting Islamic rulers as inheritors of India's pre-Islamic past. But these projects each run thousands of pages and were truly intended for elite audiences. In contrast, *History of the Kings of Delhi* is a short, readable work

---

[163] *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha 46, fol. 3a. The name Manjulayata is unclear to me; the same king is named in an post-Aurangzeb Sanskrit lineage of kings as Mañjulapāya (*Rājavaṃsavarṇana*, fol. 2b, v. 12).

[164] The author pays increasing attention to events beginning with the reign of Rāja Vikramāditya, who seized power from a minister that defeated Rājapāla (*Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha 46, fol. 7a).

[165] *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha, fol. 11b.

[166] *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha, fol. 18b-19a. For a modern account of these events see Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 116-18 and, in far more detail, Nicoll, *Shah Jahan*, 145-60.

that numbers a mere twenty folios in rather large handwriting. In this sense, the author imagined a quite different audience from the learned, necessarily patient readers envisioned by earlier literati. This later author, whether Chandar Bhān or somebody else, succinctly argues that Indo-Persian knowledge now offers a comprehensive view of India's entire past that reaches its pinnacle with the Mughals.

Second, unlike its predecessors, *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* treats Sanskrit sources as accurate, reliable texts that are comparable to Arabic and Persian works. In a brief introduction, the author names his sources as both Indian and Persianate, stating that he used "Indian books (*kutub-i hindī*) and other histories, such as the *Majmū'* of Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān."[167] Abū al-Faẕl, Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī, and Firishtah likewise identify Indian, particularly Sanskrit, sources but treat these separately from the rest of history, which was by definition Islamic. In contrast, this slightly later writer unites Sanskrit (and possibly also Hindi) and Islamicate works in order to build a synthesized vision of India's past. The line of kings beginning with Yudhiṣṭhira no longer constitutes a separate chapter in Indian history but rather is a direct antecedent to Mughal rule, connected with the lineage of Indo-Islamic rulers.

After *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, literati such as Banvālī Dās, a *munshī* in Dārā Shikūh's retinue, composed further *rājāvalī*s in Persian.[168] Additionally, later Rajputs likewise incorporated Persianate sources into their lineages by, for example, invoking *Shāhnāmah* characters among their ancestors.[169] This later history lies beyond what I can analyze here, but nonetheless the ongoing production of such royal chronicles hints at the continued relevance

[167] *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, ms. Gujarat Vidya Sabha 46, fol. 2a.

[168] Banvālī Dās's *Rājāvalī* is extant in many manuscript copies today.

[169] Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 297 n. 228.

of Sanskrit knowledge in the Indo-Persian world. *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* is a fitting end to my consideration of Persian texts that engage with the Sanskrit sphere because it underscores some of the major features of the imperial Mughal reception of Sanskrit knowledge while signaling that a new mode of cross-cultural encounters was on the rise by the mid-seventeenth century. Writing in 1657, its author advances the imperial agenda of formulating India's long history as a precursor to Mughal rule that had occupied Mughal writers for around seventy years before him. In so doing, he attests to the enduring appeal of invoking Sanskrit knowledge for political ends.

Conclusion: Incorporating Sanskrit Knowledge

In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Sanskrit literature and knowledge systems increasingly pervaded Indo-Persian milieus as the result of Mughal cross-cultural activities. Imperial Persianate actors offer varied reactions to this trend. In his *Learning of India*, Abū al-Faẕl formulates a stunning interpretation of Sanskrit-Persian encounters as revolutionizing the topics and methods of Persianate intellectual inquiry. He attempts to educate his readers in the language of Sanskrit discourses by providing Sanskrit words and paradigms for a wide breadth of ideas. As a result of his heavy reliance on Sanskrit terminology, his Persian is almost unintelligible at times. Nonetheless Abū al-Faẕl insists that he intends for Indo-Persian readers to not only understand his work but also be inspired to investigate various branches of Sanskrit knowledge of their own volition. Here he presents a vision beyond what he can personally achieve where Indo-Persian intellectuals are fluent in the ideas, discourses, and languages of both Sanskrit and Persianate traditions. He imagines his *Learning of India* as superseding the previously shoddy work available in Persian and indeed

promulgates a highly ambitious model for placing cross-cultural contacts at the center of Indo-Persian intellectual culture.

Politically, Abū al-Faẕl's *Learning of India* articulates ideas that a series of later texts also develop in slightly different ways. Abū al-Faẕl characterizes India's learning as the inheritance of the Mughals much as Firishtah and the author of *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* conceived of India's past as culminating in Islamicate rule on the subcontinent. Both Abū al-Faẕl and Firishtah also explicitly connect Sanskrit traditions to those of other ancient civilizations. Abū al-Faẕl articulates his wish to compare Sanskrit learning to Greek and Persian, whereas Firishtah shapes a sweeping intertwined history in which ancient India is tied to events further west. While the details of each particular text are distinct, all three share an interest in incorporating the Sanskrit tradition into a vision of Islamicate rulership over India.

However, not all Indo-Persian intellectuals followed in the course established by Abū al-Faẕl and instead constructed a variety of other possible roles for Sanskrit learning in Persian. The diverse imperial interactions with Sanskrit are well illustrated by reactions to Akbar's *Rāmāyan*. Badā'ūnī, who translated the text, condemns the epic on religious and political grounds. The translation was dispersed in imperial circles, although how and even to what extent it was read remain unclear given Raḥīm's enigmatic flyleaf note. Last, many understood Rāma's story in different ways, and some reworked the tale according to various interpretations. Jahangir thought of the epic as a fantastical tale, Masīḥ saw the potential for a romance, and Giridhar Dās crafted the narrative into a martial story. The new Persian *Rāmāyan*s also articulate a notably dissimilar type of literary impact from that Abū al-Faẕl had in mind for his *Learning of India*. Abū al-Faẕl wanted to introduce Indo-Persian intellectuals to Sanskrit ideas and import their means of expression, complete with Sanskrit vocabulary, into

Persian. In contrast, Giridhar Dās and other later authors of Persian *Rāmāyan*s transculturate the epic story by liberally drawing on existent Persian genres and literary tropes.

As we move outside of the space-time frame of the Mughal courts of Akbar and Jahangir, Firishtah and the author of *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* offer perspectives as individuals who had inherited (rather than helped create) the presence of Sanskrit materials in Persianate knowledge. In his *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, Firishtah remains ambivalent about the place of Sanskrit knowledge in Persian. He acknowledges the *Mahābhārata* as the starting point for ancient Indian history but ultimately brands the text unreliable and disconnects it from the rest of his narrative. *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* envisions equality and fluidity between the Sanskrit and Persian traditions and outlines how the former leads into the latter through the dynastic lines of Delhi-based kings. In so doing, the work reveals an important shift in terms of the status of Sanskrit knowledge in the Indo-Persian community and also attests to the continued importance of Sanskrit-Persian encounters in the Mughal milieu through at least the mid-seventeenth century.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined a diverse array of connections and exchanges between the Sanskrit and Persian traditions that flourished in the imperial center of Mughal India. With this detailed analysis, we now stand well poised to consider several larger questions concerning the nature and implications of these events. In this conclusion, I first investigate the cessation of these imperially located encounters, at least in the forms I have described here, in the mid-seventeenth century. This termination enables us to more precisely pinpoint the motivations behind this particular model of cross-cultural interaction and also involves larger consequences for how we write the history of the Mughal Empire. Second, I excavate the meanings of these courtly encounters for the different communities involved and show how these events were critical to the development of both Mughal political claims and early modern Sanskrit and Persian literary cultures. In closing, I articulate the frameworks suggested by this specific set of intersections in terms of how to more accurately conceptualize imperial and aesthetic discourses in Mughal India. In addition, for the early modern world more broadly, the case study of Sanskrit and Persian in the Mughal milieu demonstrates the value of privileging internal frontiers between cultural traditions in the analysis of power.

The End of Sanskrit and Persian Encounters in the Mughal Milieu

Indian and Persianate literati did not altogether discontinue meeting one another and exploring cross-cultural literary possibilities in the mid-seventeenth century Mughal court. Rather, Indian intellectuals in the royal milieu shifted from being principally affiliated with the Sanskrit tradition to primarily locating themselves in a vernacular milieu. In this vein, I discuss in chapter 1 several individuals who were celebrated in Shah Jahan’s court for their

vernacular musical skills rather than their Sanskrit expertise.[1] In part, this trend reflects the much broader transition from Sanskrit to vernacular languages that was well underway in India at this time. For reasons that remain heavily debated, in seventeenth century north India, speaking locally in languages such as Hindi superseded the value perceived in discoursing in a cosmopolitan tongue that could be widely understood in learned circles across the subcontinent.[2] In other words, Sanskrit intellectuals on the whole were declining during this period, and so their shrinking prominence in the Mughal court was symptomatic of more comprehensive changes. In line with this emphasis on locally intelligible languages, it is noteworthy that by Shah Jahan's time if not earlier, Hindi, unlike Sanskrit, was a language accessible to a solid cross-section of Mughal elites and so allowed Indian intellectuals to speak directly with their imperial interlocutors.

Shah Jahan's court evinced a growing interest in Hindi that paralleled these widespread early modern cultural dynamics. Shah Jahan sponsored a variety of Indian singers, far beyond the few who doubled as Sanskrit poets, which expanded the presence of vernacular musical traditions in the Mughal milieu.[3] He also commissioned particular Braj Bhāṣā texts, such as the *Sahasras,* a collection of more than one thousand Hindi verses attributed to Nayak Bakshu.[4] Last, Hindi writers began to fill multiple roles in the mid-seventeenth century Mughal court, much like their Sanskrit counterparts had during Akbar's time. For example, Sundar, a Braj poet from Gwalior, composed a text on *nāyikā-bheda* (types of heroines) for Shah Jahan and also

---

[1] E.g., Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja and Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī.

[2] Pollock, *Languages of the Gods*, chapter 10.

[3] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 285; Qanungo, "Some Side-lights on the Character and Court-Life of Shah Jahan," 49-51. On music more generally in Shah Jahan's court, see Wade, *Imaging Sound*, 163-65.

[4] Delvoye, "Dhrupad Songs Attributed to Tānsen," 409.

served as a Mughal ambassador to subsidiary rulers.[5] In these ways, individuals who operated primarily in vernacular milieus began to fill the social, intellectual, and imperial places formerly occupied by Sanskrit literati.

Under Shah Jahan, the Mughals continued to value Sanskrit-derived knowledge in both Persian and Braj, which further suggests that cosmopolitan encounters in the royal court did not cease so much as transform. As I show in chapter 4, Mughal-patronized literati, such as the author of *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī*, authored Persian texts in the mid-seventeenth century that draw heavily on earlier Persian accounts of Sanskrit learning. Additionally, Shah Jahan supported translations of Sanskrit texts into Braj Bhāṣā, such as *Siṃhāsana-dvātriṃśikā* (*Thirty-Two Tales of the Lion Throne*).[6] The Mughals may very well have viewed Sanskrit and Braj Bhāṣā as part of a continuous tradition and so would not have imagined themselves as terminating one set of cross-cultural activities in favor of new formulations. Accordingly, I do not wish to suggest that the Mughals halted exchanges with Indian Sanskrit traditions, but rather that the nature of both their precise interests and language dynamics changed in crucial ways. Rather than culminating in a definitive finishing point, then, Sanskrit and Persian interactions appear to have transitioned into Hindi and Persian connections in the Mughal imperial context.

Aurangzeb came to power in 1658, and during his nearly fifty-year rule Hindi thrived in the Mughal milieu. Scholars have frequently ignored or blatantly mischaracterized the presence of Indian languages in Aurangzeb's court in order to sustain an outdated image of

---

[5] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 285-89.

[6] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 287. There are also unconfirmed reports that Shah Jahan sponsored a poet by the name of Jān Kavi to produce a Braj version of the *Pañcatantra* (Talbot, "Becoming Turk the Rajput Way," 230 n. 55; Busch, "Hidden in Plain View,"287 n. 54).

this king as an intolerant, fanatical oppressor.[7] But more recently Indologists have begun to correct this tired trope by explicating evidence of the rich and varied cultural activities that thrived during his reign. For example, Aurangzeb encouraged a vibrant tradition of Indian vernacular music at court, both in performance and textual production.[8] Throughout his tenure on the throne, members of the royal family also sponsored Braj Bhāṣā poetry.[9] Although the extent of Aurangzeb's personal patronage for Hindi literature remains understudied, the emperor sent letters to Indian yogis soliciting medical advice, which signals that he valued at least some types of non-Islamicate learning.[10] Aurangzeb, like his predecessors, found great merit in accessing Indian traditions, but identified vernaculars rather than Sanskrit as preserving the information he sought.

The politico-intellectual projects fostered by the Mughal prince Dara Shikuh may also have informed Aurangzeb's predilection towards vernacular languages instead of Sanskrit. As I discuss in the introduction, Dara Shikuh was Shah Jahan's eldest son and pursued numerous projects involving both Sanskrit and Persian in the 1650s. He commissioned translations from Sanskrit into Persian as well as treatises that purport to tease out deep connections between Hindu and Muslim beliefs. Aurangzeb ascended the throne at the expense of all his brothers, chief among them Dara Shikuh, who had been Shah Jahan's selection for the next Mughal king. Given this tension, Aurangzeb had a strong incentive to distance himself from the previous

---

[7] Katherine Brown gives an overview of this perspective in "Did Aurangzeb Ban Music?" 78-82. Also see the critique in Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 10-11.

[8] Brown, "Did Aurangzeb Ban Music?" 82-116.

[9] See Busch's discussion of Braj during Aurangzeb's tenure in "Hidden in Plain View," 294-300.

[10] Ernst, "Accounts of Yogis," 414.

heir apparent's modes of engaging with Indian cultures.[11] Indeed, as I discuss in chapter 1, Aurangzeb cut off Shah Jahan's patronage to Sanskrit literati, and we remain ignorant of any new ties he forged with members of Sanskrit traditions. Other members of the royal family may have continued to explore the Sanskrit realm, such as Shaysta Khan, Aurangzeb's maternal uncle and an important military leader who allegedly composed several verses of Sanskrit poetry.[12] For their part, Sanskrit literati name Aurangzeb as a figure of praise and dedicate their works to him in line with the standard treatment of his predecessors.[13] While Aurangzeb himself may have turned to Hindi to avoid following too closely in the footsteps of his elder brother, whom he had executed in 1659, he nonetheless sought interactions with Indian traditions as a mode of imperial articulation.

This move from Sanskrit to Hindi as the primary interlocutor with Persian in the Mughal court needs to be further researched before its precise mechanisms and implications can be discerned. Allison Busch has demonstrated that the Mughals were involved with Hindi through patronage ties going as far back as Akbar's reign.[14] Other scholars have highlighted Hindi-Persian exchanges in fifteenth and sixteenth century India, before the advent of Mughal rule.[15] The relationship between these earlier events and the rise of Hindi in place of Sanskrit in the Mughal milieu remains to be worked out. Nevertheless, even without fully grasping the exact means by which Sanskrit-Persian encounters ended in the central Mughal court, we can

[11] Rajeev Kinra discusses the political nature of Dara Shikuh's projects involving Sanskrit in "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā," particularly 173-74 and 187-89.

[12] Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*, 90.

[13] I make this point in chapter 1. See, e.g., citations in Patkar, "Moghul Patronage to Sanskrit Learning," 174-75; Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 234; Patkar, "Muhūrtaratna," 83.

[14] Busch, "Hidden in Plain View," 273-84.

[15] Sufis spearheaded many of these early explorations into combining Hindi and Persian elements (e.g., Behl, "Magic Doe"; Digby, "'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi"; Orsini, "Krishna is the Truth of Man").

fruitfully discuss the meanings of these exchanges for those who promoted and participated in them.

Beyond Legitimation: The Political Aesthetic in the Mughal Empire

The Mughals interacted with Sanskrit literati and texts primarily in order to cultivate their imperial ambitions. Too often scholars have explained such political actions through the uncritical language of legitimation theory.[16] In this framework, we would propose that the Mughals incorporated Sanskrit intellectuals into court life, became involved with the Sanskrit social sphere, and commissioned translations in order to justify their right to rule. But this formulation problematically ascribes a series of political and moral needs to the Mughal kings without first establishing the relevance of such concerns in early modern India. Furthermore, the framework of legitimation presupposes several aspects of Mughal-Sanskrit relations that ought to be emphasized in making sense of this history. Foremost here is that the Mughals, who are typically thought of as a Persianate dynasty, identified valuable political resources in Sanskrit. Last, legitimation theory allows little possibility for the growth of imperial objectives through such encounters and instead assumes that the Mughal elite always possessed clear means and goals in engaging with Indian cultures. In contrast, I would suggest that the Mughals developed their political ambitions in conversation with Sanskrit intellectuals and modes of discourse. The Mughals created (rather than merely justified) real power through their connections with the Sanskrit sphere, which we can best understand if we abandon the concept of legitimation altogether and instead cultivate other ways of analyzing Mughal interests in Sanskrit traditions.

---

[16] My critique here borrows heavily from Sheldon Pollock's discussion in *Language of the Gods*, 511-24.

In large part, legitimation theory fails to capture the dynamics of Mughal culture because it anachronistically assumes that the relationship between the government and the people was of paramount importance. Sheldon Pollock has challenged the cogitative possibility of premodern Indians doubting the legitimacy of kings given that in India, "there had always been kings who had always exercised power in a given way."[17] In terms of the intellectual realm, Sudipta Kaviraj has argued that premodern Sanskrit thought "failed to form serious curiosity about society and the state" and instead analyzed other aspects of the construction of power.[18] There remains little debate that the Mughals, like their predecessors in India, saw a need to fashion themselves as just rulers. But we must seriously query how they pursued this objective and to whom they spoke. Particularly regarding Sanskrit, the Mughal kings envisioned a set of elite exchanges that were directed towards limited groups who, in any case, were not concerned with relations between rulers and the ruled. If we forgo the assumptions of western theory and instead work through the textual and social events located in the central court, a very different picture emerges of how power was formulated in Mughal India.

First and foremost, Sanskrit and Persian encounters reveal the centrality of aesthetics in the Mughal endeavor to build an Indian empire. Akbar devoted substantial state resources to supporting the translation of major literary works, such as the Indian epics and narrative texts, which doubled as imperial projects. Within these profoundly political works, however, the Mughal translators repeatedly paid close attention to aesthetic concerns. They quoted Persian poetry in the *Mahābhārata*, for example, and crafted a Sanskrit-inflected Persian register. When Fayẕī reworked the first two chapters of the *Mahābhārata*, his major additions

[17] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 522.

[18] *Imaginary Institution of India*, 77.

were self-authored verses that sought to expand the poetic potential of the epic. In his *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Abū al-Faẕl carefully relays detailed knowledge concerning Sanskrit literary theory, such as the numerous types of heroes and heroines. During Jahangir's reign, poets refashioned the *Rāmāyaṇa* within the genre expectations of Persian poetry to present Rāma's story alternatively as a heroic tale and a romance.[19] Through these assorted projects and others, Mughal actors established the importance of literary possibilities in the creation and articulation of imperial power.

What remains to be explained is precisely how aesthetics and politics worked together in these various texts in pursuit of empire. One way of formulating this relationship is to point out that the interest in aesthetics was itself political.[20] In other words, the Mughals saw literary pursuits themselves as a crucial part of building a successful imperial formation. In some cases, the Mughals sought to claim parts of Sanskrit literature as their own. For example, when the Mughals acculturated the *Mahābhārata* for Islamicate religious and literary sensibilities, they remade an ancient Sanskrit text as part of the Persianate tradition. In other instances, they imported Sanskrit terms and ideas into Persian in order to capitalize on new modes of expression. Accordingly, both Abū al-Faẕl and the *Mahābhārata* translators carefully introduced reams of Sanskrit vocabulary to Indo-Persian readers. Without having a single unified agenda, the Mughals nonetheless consistently negotiated the resources of the Sanskrit and Persian literary traditions in order to make specific politico-aesthetic claims.

A narrow band of Mughal elites served as the audience for these literary texts and were considered the true makers of empire. As I discuss in chapter 4, when ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Khān-i

---

[19] Respectively, Giridhar Dās's *Rāmāyan* and *Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī*.

[20] Pollock, *Languages of the Gods*, chapter 3.

Khānān desired a copy of Akbar's *Rāmāyan*, he was required to gain specific permission from the crown. Moreover, our extant manuscript evidence suggests that the Mughal-sponsored translations were only read outside of elite Indo-Persian circles starting in the mid-seventeenth century. In fact, evidence from the translations themselves indicates that the primary audience was, above all, the Mughal emperor.[21] This select intended readership, however, in no way hampered Mughal ambitions to craft such cross-cultural projects as transformative political interventions. On the contrary, the cultivation of power in premodern and early modern India was itself an enterprise largely limited to the elite, headed by the reigning king.[22]

In addition to cultivating power through aesthetics, the Mughals also sought fresh political resources in Sanskrit by accessing India's pre-Islamic past. The Mughals approached the *Mahābhārata* largely as a historical text, and Abū al-Faẓl identifies it as such in his preface.[23] Later writers both within and beyond the Mughal court continued to rely on the translated epic and its preface for knowledge about Indian rulers who preceded the establishment of Islamicate dynasties. Firishtah presents the stories of the *Mahābhārata* as false history but feels compelled to include them in his account of India's past regardless. A few decades later, the author of *Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī* envisioned a line of continuous Indian kings that stretches from Yudhiṣṭhira to Shah Jahan. A crucial shift is visible from the 1580s when Abū al-Faẓl casts the Indian epic as other peoples' record of earlier events to the 1650s when similar Sanskrit-

---

[21] E.g., in chapter 3, I discuss specific mentions of Akbar and references to Mughal legends in the *Razmnāmah*.

[22] Kaviraj discusses the more limited role of political authority in precolonial Indian polities (whether Hindu and Islamic) and the existence of different social classes of elites (*Imaginary Institution of India*, 214-16). On the centering of Mughal authority in the king under Akbar see Richards, "Formulation of Imperial Authority." Alam analyzes how this shift related to Mughal ties with different Sufi orders (Alam, "Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," 159-62).

[23] "Muqaddamah," 34.

derived materials were treated as an unquestionable chronicle of the Mughals' direct predecessors. Indo-Persian thinkers transitioned from a heavily qualified interest in India's pre-Islamic days to adopting such history as their own. Even in Akbar's translation of the *Mahābhārata* in the 1580s, however, the translators evince an interest in connecting Akbar with a lineage of just Indian kings.

Last, the Mughals cultivated new forms of power through social connections with Sanskrit literati. In particular, the innovative practice of cross-cultural titling allowed the Mughal kings to bring into being a previously unknown type of imperial space in which they featured as central figures within an Indian framework. In a decidedly multilingual milieu, the Mughals bestowed titles on Jain religious figures and notable Brahmans, as I outline in chapter 1. In part these events drew on existing notions of power as Mughals took over the role of granting official increases in rank to Jain monks. The Mughals also brought their own authority and traditions into play with Persian titles and unofficial Sanskrit appellations. Perhaps most intriguingly, Mughal and Jain elites jointly fashioned a novel type of authority through titling rituals that were neither Persian nor Sanskrit but emerged precisely where members of the two traditions met.

Thus, the Mughals pursued multiple connections with the Sanskrit sphere that centered on aesthetic, historical, and social possibilities. No dominant agenda emerges out of these varied interactions except continual engagement with Sanskrit traditions. Perhaps it seems redundant at this point to stress that the Mughals found it fruitful to interact with an Indian cosmopolitan culture. Nonetheless, this point is worth emphasizing given the extent to which scholars of early modern India have consistently denied Sanskrit any substantive literary or historical, much less imperial, role in the Mughal Empire. Moreover, these cross-

cultural activities were part of a larger literary realm that served as a crucial arena for projecting and formulating claims of authority.

Building an Indo-Persian Polity

Another way to encapsulate the importance of Sanskrit for the Mughals is to consider these developments as part of their larger struggle to become an Indo-Persian empire in a meaningful sense. Both parts of this formulation deserve careful consideration, and I discuss the characterization of the Mughals as an empire below. The term *Indo-Persian* is a relatively modern one and has been used by Indologists to describe "a distinctive new culture that melded Perso-Islamic and Indic forms."[24] Modern historians have traced this process back to as early as the late tenth century and often emphasize the formative role of Amīr Khusraw in the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century in fashioning a Persianate culture based culturally and geographically in the subcontinent. But what is too often elided in this narrative is that the Mughals felt the need to remake the Indo-Persian tradition anew and thereby claim it as their own. Earlier groups had emphasized different aspects of India in their formulations of Indo-Persian culture. For the Mughals, the interest in becoming Indian manifested itself as a desire to engage with Sanskrit intellectuals, texts, and knowledge systems.

In this sense, we ought to perceive the Mughal interest in Sanskrit as closely related to Akbar's decision to declare Persian the official language of the empire in 1582. In choosing Persian, Akbar integrated his court into a cosmopolitan tradition that connected India, Turkey, Persia, and Central Asia. Sanskrit certainly appealed to the imperial elite for its similar ability to place them within a broad intellectual tradition. In many ways, the pairing of Persian and Sanskrit complemented each other nicely as the former stretched across space whereas the

[24] Gabbay, *Islamic Tolerance*, 3.

latter stretched across time and allowed the Mughals to become Indian in a definable sense. Certainly many other factors also played into the Mughals' ambitions to become an Indian polity, but, as I have shown, Sanskrit was a crucial component of the Mughal imperial self-conception.

Writings and Reticence in Multiple Sanskrit Traditions

Sanskrit literati entered into the Mughal, Persianate sphere for varied reasons and shaped and reacted to their involvement therein in notably different ways. Here it is helpful to disaggregate two major groups of Sanskrit-affiliated intellectuals according to the loose religious affiliations of Jains and Brahmans. Jains from western India wrote about their active relations with the courts of Akbar and Jahangir in a series of texts. Through these literary works, members of different Jain communities articulated a plethora of potential meanings of Jain-Mughal encounters for the Sanskrit sphere. In contrast, Brahmans developed an intellectual mode of addressing the growing influence of Indo-Persian culture under the Mughals by producing Sanskrit grammars of Persian and bilingual lexicons. Brahmans, along with Jains, authored numerous texts for Mughal consumption, including panegyrics and works on literary theory. But throughout their diverse textual production in the Mughal milieu, Brahmans are noticeably restrained about directly examining and in many cases even admitting their imperial connections. In a sense, one major distinction between the responses of Jains and Brahmans to relations with the Mughals is that the former chose to write about such events whereas the latter remained mute.

Jains composed many texts that elaborate Mughal history and different aspects of their own cross-cultural endeavors at court. I analyze five of these works in chapter 2 and note the existence of still further Sanskrit materials in this vein. In these texts, Jains investigate how to

represent both the Mughals and themselves in an appropriate Sanskrit register and narrate a variety of episodes that often diverge from one another and historical reality. For example, Padmasāgara revises the early military history of the Mughals to support a particular cultural vision of early modern India. Siddhicandra and Hemavijaya record the same tense moment when the Jains are accused of being atheists at court but make different arguments for why they are actually believers in a monotheistic God. Several authors, such as Devavimala, take great liberties and depict Jain religious leaders as equal to the reigning Mughal king. For the Jains, writing in Sanskrit about their experiences in the Mughal milieu was a valuable exercise precisely because they were able to replay and reimagine real-world events in literature.

This approach to reformulating reality in poetry served multiple Jain community interests relating to the articulation of a relevant group identity, as I demonstrate in chapter 2. A similar interest in narrating historical events within literary frameworks is also evidenced in several vernacular communities during this period. For example, *Prithvīrāj Rāso*, a sixteenth century Hindi work, celebrates the exploits of Prithviraj, a late twelfth century Rajput ruler, and his battle with Muhammad Ghori. *Prithvīrāj Rāso* changes several major facets of this story so that Prithviraj is the king of Delhi in addition to Ajmer and kills Muhammad Ghori rather than never getting his revenge and simply fading from sight. Despite these emendations being inaccurate, they filled acute needs in the emerging self-identity of the early modern Rajput community.[25] Another useful comparison to Jain texts is the story of Padmini, an early fourteenth century Rajput queen in Mewar who, legend has it, was sought after by Alauddin Khalji. Padmini's plight inspired numerous retellings, particularly from the late sixteenth

---

[25] Talbot, "Mewar Court's Construction of History," 25.

century onwards, that frequently differed from one another.[26] Likewise, Jain accounts of the Mughal court explore modes of historical consciousness in Sanskrit that utilize the flexibility of literature to allow for multiple versions of the past.

Despite this burgeoning early modern interest in historical memory, Brahmanical communities exhibited much more taciturn inclinations regarding their interactions with the Mughals. Overall, Brahmans declined to literize their imperial experiences in Sanskrit, and we possess no Brahman-authored body of materials that parallels the Jain accounts of the Mughal court. The overarching preference for silence in writing, however, did not preclude Brahmans from accepting Mughal patronage, composing texts for Mughal consumption, and participating in court life. Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan all developed ties with Sanskrit literati from Brahmanical communities, the most famous of which is probably Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja. Other intellectuals wrote Sanskrit works that were sent to the Mughal court. Most notably, Rudrakavi crafted multiple encomia for imperial figures at the request of a regional ruler in the Deccan who thought it politically advantageous to appeal to the Mughals in Sanskrit. Last, Brahmans contributed to various aspects of imperial court life in step with (and even above and beyond) their Jain counterparts and served the Mughals as political negotiators, astrologers, and translators.

In Mughal India more broadly, Brahmans were often adept at crafting social innovations in response to changing circumstances. Rosalind O'Hanlon has drawn attention to how the Mughals brought increased communication, courtly connections, and wealth to Brahmanical communities. As a result, Banaras became a new center of Brahmanical authority during the early modern period. She argues that, "Whatever the complexity of their

---

[26] Sreenivasan, *Many Lives of a Rajput Queen.*

intellectual approaches to innovation in their own disciplines, these scholars were highly inventive in their practical engagements with the novel opportunities and pressures of their own times."[27] However, for many literati, such flexibility did not extend to recording their experiences in Sanskrit.

This lacuna of any written documentation means that we lack concrete knowledge about many aspects of Brahman-Mughal relations. The story of Madhusūdana exemplifies this problem. Oral legend posits that Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, an influential sixteenth-century Advaita Vedānta scholar, met with Akbar in order to discuss the correct Mughal response to some ascetics (*sanyāsin*s) who had taken up arms against Muslim foes.[28] This story is intriguing because Persian sources concur that Akbar met with militant ascetics (although they were fighting among themselves) but do not mention Madhusūdana by name.[29] Nonetheless, a Madhusūdana appears in the list of learned men in *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, which scholars have debated may or may not be the famous Vedāntin.[30] Thus, living memory recalls a relationship between Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Akbar's court that is suggested but far from proven in available documents.[31] The Brahmanical Sanskrit tradition offers us little help in sorting out such tantalizing possibilities.

The Brahmanical constraint on writing about their behavior in the Mughal milieu is difficult to explain given a lack of evidence regarding the logic behind this cultural choice. But

---

[27] O'Hanlon, "Brahman 'ecumene' of Mughal India," 268.

[28] Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*, 30-32; also see Divanji, introduction to *Siddhāntabindu*, 18.

[29] Pinch details references to yogis in Mughal texts and Mughal interest in yogis more generally in *Warrior Ascetics*, 28-58.

[30] Bhattacharyya, "Sanskrit Scholars of Akbar's Time," 31-32 and Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*, 54.

[31] John Hawley notes similar difficulties in connecting vernacular poets and singers with brief mentions in Persian texts (*Memory of Love*, 21-23).

we can gain some insight from noting parallel instances of substantial reticence in the Sanskrit tradition.[32] Most notably, Sanskrit intellectuals had come into contact with Muslims in at least parts of India since the eighth century, and yet incredibly few ever admitted Islam into Sanskrit discourse as a religious and philosophical tradition. Writers operating well outside of any royal courts or in vernaculars occasionally mentioned religious concepts such as the Qur'an and *kalima* (the Islamic statement of faith).[33] But, particularly when writing in Sanskrit, intellectuals studiously avoided any treatment of Islam that would place it on par with recognized philosophical systems.[34] Perhaps Mughal-affiliated Brahmans similarly felt compelled to maintain the closed and largely artificial structure of the Sanskrit thought world.

To the extent that Brahmans responded in Sanskrit to their new imperial connections, they created full grammars and lexicons of Persian. These texts reflect important intellectual endeavors, but they are notably devoid of extended records of experiences at court. In his *Pārasīprakāśa*, Kṛṣṇadāsa invokes the culture of the Mughal milieu through example sentences that mention Akbar and court procedures. Nonetheless, we find no direct discussion of cross-cultural interactions in his work. It seems that outside of conventional discourses, Brahmans had nothing to say in Sanskrit about their encounters with the Mughal, Persianate world or at least nothing they were willing to commit to writing.

Nevertheless, Brahmans outside of the Mughal milieu produced a variety of texts that touch upon imperial history in numerous ways and that I have not discussed here. These

---

[32] Aitken takes a similar approach in turning to Bikaner in order to understand the Mewari reluctance to adopt aspects of Mughal paintings in the seventeenth century (*Intelligence of Tradition*, 25-35).

[33] E.g., Vṛndāvanadāsa's *Caitanyabhāgavata* and Kṛṣṇadāsa's *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* (O'Connell, "Vaiṣṇava Perceptions of Muslims," 297-300 and 305-8).

[34] Devavimala is the exception to this rule and describes some Islamic beliefs in his *Hīrasaubhāgya*, as I discuss in chapter 2.

works emerged in regional courts and other contexts, and they frequently describe military encounters involving the Mughals that are relevant to the given author's regional interests. For example, Rudrakavi, who we met in chapter 1, authored a late-sixteenth century history on behalf of his Baglan patron, Narayana Shah, titled *Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya* (*Great Poem on the Rastraudha Dynasty*). Therein he describes Humayun's battle with Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and Shah Murad's engagements in the Deccan.[35] Rajput figures who entered into Mughal service also became the subjects of Sanskrit biographies that necessarily touched upon the Mughal world. This body of texts includes works such as Murāridāsa's *Mānaprakāśa* on Man Singh of Amer, which survives in a fragmentary form, and Raṇachoḍa Bhaṭṭa's *Amarakāvya*, which covers battles with multiple Islamicate figures, including Akbar.[36]

Additionally, a few texts address Mughal history as a topic unto itself, although these are few and far between. Maheśa Ṭhakkura (possibly late sixteenth century) composed an abridged translation of portions of *Akbarnāmah* in Sanskrit, titled *Sarvadeśavṛttāntasaṅgraha* (*Collection of Events across the Land*).[37] In the eighteenth century, Lakṣmīdhara penned two Sanskrit accounts of post-Aurangzeb Mughal history (*Nṛpatinītigarbhitavṛtta* and *Ābdullacarita*). The anonymous and undated *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* also describes the line of Mughal kings through Shah Alam II (d. 1806) and includes a 97-verse section titled "Description of Padshah Akbar" (*akabarapādaśāhavarṇana*).[38] In future research, I intend to analyze this wide range of texts and try to understand why their authors felt comfortable addressing the Mughal world at a distance not afforded to the Sanskrit intellectuals who received direct imperial support.

---

[35] *Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya*, chapters 6 and 19-20.

[36] Kishanlal Dube, the editor, discusses the fragmentary nature of the text in his introduction to *Mānaprakāśa*, 3. On *Amarakāvya* see Sharma, *Rajasthan Studies*, 30-33.

[37] On date, see introduction to *Sarvadeśavṛttāntasaṅgraha*, viii-xi.

[38] *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, 2:269-83. Also see comments in Naim, "Popular Jokes and Political History," 1460.

Ultimately, however, Sanskrit as a whole was unable to respond to the changing world of early modernity. Vernaculars were somehow better suited to the concerns of intellectuals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and so Sanskrit eventually became obsolete.[39] In the Brahmanical reaction to Persian, we can glimpse a microcosm of the danger in not being able to adapt to changing circumstances within a cosmopolitan formation. Here members of the Sanskrit tradition found themselves faced with a difficult negotiation of continuity and rupture, the fundamental dynamic of any tradition that wishes to go on living.[40] For Brahmans, cultural interactions with the Mughal court could generally not be explored in Sanskrit, even though the tradition and its practitioners were deeply involved in the royal milieu. But the voracious Jain response to a similar set of events decisively shows that this restraint, while nearly unanimous among Brahmans, was a meaningful decision. The Sanskrit literary tradition could have been adapted to comment on the meetings of two cosmopolitan traditions, and it did so in Jain hands.

In terms of understanding Sanskrit literary culture more broadly, one major implication of my research is to highlight multiplicity in the Sanskrit sphere. It may often be more useful to speak of plural Sanskrit traditions rather than a single monolith in discussions of early modern India. Sanskrit scholars have already begun to tease out this idea when addressing regional differences among literati and individual texts that complicate any overarching theories about Sanskrit as a cultural tradition.[41] My work here demonstrates that religiously and regionally delineated communities also cultivated very different types of

---

[39] Pollock sketches out this theory of vernacularization in "Death of Sanskrit." In respect to responding to Mughal power, it is notable that numerous Hindi texts survive that purport to describe meetings between Akbar and various Hindu figures (some of these are detailed in Sangari, "Tracing Akbar," 61-71).

[40] Squarcini, "Tradens, Traditum, Recipiens," 30-32.

[41] E.g., Bronner and Shulman, "Cloud Turned Goose."

responses to similar sets of circumstances. We may find the complexities of early modernity in South Asia more comprehensible if we replace a model of orthodoxy and deviance with a series of parallel and overlapping Sanskrit cultures in which individuals made informed and competing choices.

Internal Frontiers: The Intersection of Culture and Power in Mughal India

The story of Sanskrit and Persian interactions in the royal milieu opens up new modes of inquiry into other sorts of imperial activities in Mughal India. I have argued throughout this dissertation that we must consider the diverse histories of Sanskrit in the Mughal milieu if we are to properly understand the creation and extension of power in early modern India. My methodology suggests several promising ways to probe the inner workings of the Mughal imperial formation far beyond the central court's interest in Sanskrit by focusing on overlapping configurations, diverse environments, and literary texts. This emphasis on a series of internal frontiers and the cultural spaces of the court offers fruitful ways to investigate power structures and recover frequently elided aspects of the Mughal past.

As I mentioned in my introduction, earlier scholars have often drawn attention to the borders of the Mughal kingdom and examined how this polity expanded in relation to other political regimes. This type of inquiry privileges military conflicts and the physical areas under imperial control. In large part, such a methodology has been dictated by the western definition of an empire as "formed, most often by conquest, out of a dominant 'core' and a dominated, often economically exploited 'periphery'."[42] The Mughal polity certainly exhibited particular characteristics, such as its size and administrative structures, that render it worthy of being

[42] Howe, *Empire*, 18.

labeled an "empire."[43] Nonetheless, scholars have often focused on expansionist battles at the expense of cultural developments without bothering to query how power was actually constituted in early modern India.

On the contrary, I have shown that the Mughals were intensely interested in articulating their imperial claims through various methods available within Indian cultures and were particularly attracted to the cosmopolitan opportunities of Sanskrit. There is no doubt that the Mughals pursued control over a geographical area, but the central court also operated on literary, social, and intellectual planes. Particularly once we grant that cultural practices cannot be satisfactorily explained as legitimating the government in the eyes of the masses, then it becomes easier to see the immense importance of cultural spheres in the Mughal imperial project. In order to understand how the Mughals built a multifaceted imperium, we must take their concerns seriously, and literary engagements feature among their primary interests. Accordingly we need to understand power as delineated not merely by armies but also by texts and cross-cultural relationships.

In order to focus on internal points of contact, we ought to conceptualize imperial spaces as polyglot arenas that brought different traditions and diverse people into communication with one another. In the case of Mughal India, the royal court was more multilingual and multicultural than has traditionally been admitted in modern accounts. Scholars have habitually been misled into thinking that the center of empire was also the stronghold of a unified (if not always uniform) imperial culture. Mughal histories have no doubt played a significant role in this misperception because they only describe aspects of court life that were appropriate to write about in Persian. Since the colonial period, scholars

[43] On the basic features of "empire," as the term is generally used in western scholarship, see Howe, *Empire*, 9-22.

have generally taken Mughal *tārīkh*s to be "full" and "accurate" histories and not adequately accounted for the inbuilt biases and agendas of these highly politicized texts.[44] In reality, life in the Mughal court was far more complex, and recent scholarship has drawn attention to how regional rulers often perceived imperial culture to be a blended of multiple traditions.[45] In this slightly wider perspective, it becomes increasingly plausible to suggest that cultural pluralism was the norm rather than the exception at the Mughal court.

Moreover, we have only begun to scratch the surface of our resources for uncovering cross-cultural encounters in the Mughal Empire. I have focused on the ability of underutilized Sanskrit and Persian materials to shed light on the astonishing variety of conversations between members of different social and literary traditions in the Mughal milieu. Many other languages and narrators remain to be explored. Vernacular materials, particularly in Hindi and Gujarati, have great potential to add further nuance to how we understand the cultural landscape of the court. In addition, I have left untouched most materials outside of the central royal milieu and have only alluded to the numerous types of political and intellectual exercises advanced by the courts of nobles, princes, and regional rulers. Last, texts that exceed the timeframe of this dissertation also explore activities between various traditions that flourished under Mughal rule.[46] Further work in these areas promises to help us to gain a more complete understanding of cultural and literary trends in early modern India and their relationships to the Mughal imperium.

---

[44] See Elliot's remarks in his introduction to excerpts from *Akbarnāmah* (*History of India*, vol. 6). Also see Lal's discussion of how certain texts have been privileged in modern historiography, particularly from Akbar's period (*Domesticity and Power*, 54-56).

[45] Chatterjee, "Cultural Flows and Cosmopolitanism," 177.

[46] E.g., Lakṣmīdhara's two texts, cited above.

Despite the preponderance of cross-cultural activities in Mughal India, some scholars have criticized the tendency to assume that these promoted syncretism. They point out that always looking for points of contact may well produce a false picture that reveals only what we want to see.[47] I would suggest that we can begin to counter such anxieties by not presupposing that cross-cultural interactions reflect liberal, tolerant perspectives. Scholars have repeatedly framed Akbar in particular as a progressive, proto-nationalist ruler who possessed "a pre-modern vision of modernisation of India."[48] In addition to the blatant anachronism of such characterizations, the evidence I have presented here does not accord with such a notion. On the contrary, we saw in chapter 3 how Akbar envisioned a Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata* as a way to compel both Hindus and Muslims to abandon parts of their religious beliefs. Others viewed Sanskrit-Persian encounters as pertinent to ongoing competitions. For example, I argue in chapter 2 that Jains mobilized Sanskrit accounts of their time at the Mughal court in order to promote narrow sectarian interests.

The sheer expanse of materials that attest to cross-cultural interactions convinces me that there is much value in favoring a framework of encounters above positing the dominance of any single tradition. Nonetheless, we must guard against presuming to know what different models of exchange meant to each particular group of participants. Instead, the Mughal milieu prepares us to expect no predetermined meanings for engagements across cultural lines. Nonetheless, as a mode of political and social action in early modern India, cross-cultural interactions are a central and promising area of future research.

---

[47] I discuss this issue in more depth in my introduction. For a more general critique, see Pollock, "We need to find what we are not looking for," 3-5.

[48] Ali, "Evolution of the Perception of India," 84. Also see Habib, "Introduction: Commemorating Akbar."

Last, the case study of Sanskrit-Persian encounters at the Mughal court demonstrates the value of integrating literature into history in several senses. For starters, many of the Sanskrit texts that I discuss in chapters 1 and 2 have traditionally been labeled as "literature," by both modern and traditional commentators. While these texts invoke tropes and literary norms in numerous ways, they also contain historical information about how intellectuals conducted themselves within the Mughal milieu and chose to remember their experiences. Second, many of the Persian texts I have addressed, such as translations from Sanskrit, acted in history themselves. For example, the Persian *Mahābhārata* constructed claims to power on behalf of Emperor Akbar. Finally, literature itself has a history, and we are still exploring the contours of literary cultures in South Asia and their internal mechanisms. The cross-cultural encounters I have described here occurred during the crucial period of early modernity in India when Sanskrit and Persian were both still active traditions. We glimpse some of their final, highly innovative flourishings in how they interacted with one another.

While hopefully the value of my work is by now apparent for those who work on the Mughal period, my findings also have important repercussions for those interested in later developments during the colonial era. As Sheldon Pollock has repeatedly argued for the past fifteen years, "we cannot know how colonialism changed South Asia if we do not know what was there to be changed."[49] Scholars of early modern India have been slowly sketching out what this very different world looked like before the extension of European power. My analysis here has implications for understanding the period of company rule when the official language of administration was Persian. British officers frequently accessed Sanskrit texts through their Persian translations and commissioned their own translations of particular

[49] Pollock, introduction to *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia*, 1.

works. These later translations remain largely understudied, but hopefully future work on these materials can identify the points of continuity and break with earlier traditions of Mughal translation.[50] More broadly, my analysis here may serve as a starting point for work on how linguistic and religious identities shifted during the colonial period as well as the operating frameworks for cross-cultural phenomena.

World Frontiers: New Methods for Imperial History

In addition to their importance within India, the Mughals are also a crucial and underutilized resource in comparative studies of empires and modern conceptual history. After experiencing a period of decline, empire has been a growing topic over the past few decades across academic disciplines as far ranging as political science, religion, anthropology, literary studies, and history.[51] This emphasis has become so profound in recent years that it has even prompted one scholar to exclaim in relation to empire and its partner, colonialism: "'Imperialism', as a word, has gone imperial; 'colonialism' has colonized our languages."[52] The renewed prominence of empire studies no doubt reflects contemporary political concerns, but it also has the ability to further our understanding of the past. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper remind us that "for most of human history empires and their interactions shaped the context in which people gauged their political possibilities, pursued their ambitions, and envisioned their societies."[53] My work here offers several methodological strategies and conceptual tools to those seeking to explore imperial histories in different times and places.

---

[50] Ernst gives an overview of these texts in "Muslim Studies of Hinduism?" 187-91.

[51] Hirschhausen and Leonhard make this point in "Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall," 10-11.

[52] Howe, *Empire*, 10-11.

[53] *Empires in World History*, 3-4.

First, we need to search for empire far beyond the conventional domains of military conquests, administrative systems, and land control. In many ways, culture offers the most dynamic field on which to see political discourses at work, particularly how large-scale polities integrated and represented different social, religious, and ethnic communities. The story of Sanskrit at the Mughal court evinces the importance of accounting for literature in particular when trying to reconstruct the creation and extension of political authority. Edward Said drew attention to the interplay between literature and imperialism consistently throughout his work, and so perhaps this point is not particularly new.[54] Nonetheless, Mughal India offers a compelling case study for this dynamic that focuses on the precolonial world, before the introduction of western power and colonial mindsets. Here I have engaged with two separate types of literature that are crucial to understanding the project of empire: texts sponsored by the empire itself and works that are produced in a wider cultural milieu but engage with imperial discourses.

Moreover, the interplay between cultures stood at the very core of many polities, and activities across traditions often deserve extensive attention if we are to understand the processes of empire building. In modern times, empires are often defined, frequently in contrast to nation-states, as polities that incorporate different groups without homogenizing them.[55] Certainly this type of loose integration was the norm in early modern India where a variety of overlapping ethnic, religious, and social groups were brought together under the umbrella of the Mughal polity. We glimpse these larger processes in how members of different communities met in the center of imperial activity, the royal court, and encountered one

---

[54] In addition to his famous *Orientalism*, see his *Culture and Imperialism*.

[55] E.g., Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8.

another's literary and intellectual traditions. Accordingly, I have argued that the imperial placement of many Sanskrit-Persian interactions under the Mughals reflects their central importance for investigating the development of political power in early modern India.

In our search for both of these phenomena—interactions between culture and empire and across cultural lines—we must be aware of our sources. In this dissertation, I have carefully read several canonical sources and provided new interpretations. But I have also repeatedly drawn upon texts and traditions previously considered to be irrelevant to the study of the Mughal Empire, such as Sanskrit works assumed to be disconnected from real-time political affairs and Mughal translations of the Sanskrit epics that were taken to be strictly religious or literary endeavors. In the study of other empires, documents may also prove insightful that were produced outside of the standard languages, courts, and genres typically deemed pertinent.

Last, the Mughal Empire is well positioned to speak to questions concerning the defining characteristics of empires, particularly insofar as such categories play into recent analyses of early modernity. Some scholars have criticized extensive definitions for which states qualify as an "empire" and instead propose minimalist definitions that invoke only loose size and ideological qualifications.[56] Nonetheless, a nuanced consideration of what we mean by "empire" remains important, particularly for academics who have explored the idea that India participated in a shared early modernity that was also experienced in East Asia and Europe. This topic has drawn contributions in recent years from both social scientists and humanities scholars who emphasize different aspects of this common movement towards modernity, including industrialization, cultural shifts, trade connections, and the rise of vernacular

---

[56] E.g., Subrahmanyam, "Written on Water," 42-43.

languages.[57] Such work engages directly with imperial questions when scholars propose that this period in Asia was partly characterized by the rise of large-scale, multicultural, and multiethnic empires.[58] In this regard, my work offers a detailed picture of how the central court in one of the largest early modern empires cultivated multicultural activities and intertwined them with political ambitions.

In short, the study of empire involves all kinds of other topics, chief among them literature, aesthetics, and cross-cultural exchanges. I have argued in multiple forms throughout this dissertation that the Mughals produced and reproduced their imperial power in conversation with Sanskrit literati and the Sanskrit thought world. The actual operation of politics within these transcultural endeavors remains to be fully fleshed out, but I hope at the very least to have prompted rethinking about the nature of the Mughal Empire, the role of Sanskrit and Persian in early modern India, and connections between literature and imperialism. Perhaps because we live in an increasingly multicultural world, parsing the possibilities of prior exchanges between traditions seems to be a rising priority to many scholars. The Mughals offer a wealth of detailed resources for exploring how narratives of power unfolded across cultures.

---

[57] E.g., see articles in 1998 summer issue of Daedalus.

[58] Howe makes this point for the definition of "empires" more broadly (*Empire*, 30).

Bibliography

Manuscript Sources

Akbarnāmah of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. British Library, London, Persian Additional 27,247.

Āsaphavilāsa of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, 732.iii of 1886-92.

Bhagavadgītā. British Library, London, India Office Sans 2244.

Bhagavadgītā. British Library, London, India Office Sans 2387.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Persian). Bibliothèque Nationale France, Paris, Supplément Persan 20.

Harivaṃśa (Persian). Lucknow State Museum, Lucknow, A.N. 57,106.

Intikhāb-i Mahābhārat. Oriental Research Library, Srinagar, Persian 176. (All Srinagar manuscripts accessed at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Delhi).

Jagadgurukāvya of Padmasāgara. Hemacandra Jnana Mandir, Patan, No. 2859.

Jagadgurukāvya of Padmasāgara. Hemacandra Jnana Mandir, Patan, No. 17474.

Jahāṅgīracarita of Rudrakavi. Oriental Institute of Baroda, Vadodara, No. 5761.

Kalpasutrāntravākya of Ratnacandragaṇi. LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, No. 11654.

Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh of Sujān Rāī Bhandārī. British Library, London, Persian Additional 5559.

Mahābhārat of Fayẕī. Maulana Azad Library at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, University Collection No. Persian/Ikhbar 129.

Mahābhārat of Fayẕī (books 1 and 2). British Library, London, India Office Islamic 761.

Mahābhārat of Fayẕī (books 1 and 2). British Library, London, India Office Islamic 3014.

Mahābhārat (Persian, book 2 by Fayẕī and rest *Razmnāmah*). Bibliothèque Nationale France, Paris, Supplément Persan 1038.

Mahābhārat (Persian, books 1 and 2 by Fayẕī and rest *Razmnāmah*). Oriental Research Library, Srinagar, Persian 175.

Mahābhārat (Persian, books 1 and 2 by Fayẕī's and rest *Razmnāmah*). Oriental Research Library, Srinagar, Persian 211.

Pañcatattvaprakāśa of Veṇīdatta. Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, Orientali 172. Facsimile printed in *The Sanskrit Grammar and Manuscripts of Father Heinrich Roth S.J. (1620-1668)*, edited by Arnulf Camps and Jean-Claude Muller. Leiden: Brill, 1988.

Pārasīprakāśa of Jāniprayāga. Allahabad Municipal Museum, Allahabad, No. Sanskrit 432/106.

Pārasīprakāśa of Kṛṣṇadāsa. Man Singh Pustak Prakash, Jodhpur, No. 626(c).

Pārasīprakāśa of Kṛṣṇadāsa. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, No. 92 of 1907-15.

Pārasīvyākaraṇa. Punjab University Library, Lahore, Sanskrit 1225.

Rājāvalī of Banvālī Dās. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, Tarikh 244.

Rājavaṃsavarṇana. Sastra Bhandar of the Digambara Jain Bada Terapanthi Mandir, Jaipur, No. 1751.

Rāmāyan (Persian). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., No. 07.271.

Rāmāyan of Giridhar Dās. British Library, London, Persian Oriental 1251.

Rāmāyan of Giridhar Dās. Bibliothèque Nationale France, Paris, Supplément Persan 18.

Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn of Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Elliot 314.

Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn of Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī (*Mahābhārat* section). Maulana Azad Library at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Sir Suleman Collection 15/2(b).

Rawẓat al-Ṭāhirīn of Ṭāhir Muḥammad Sabzavārī (chapter 4). British Library, London, India Office Islamic 753.

Razmnāmah. Maulana Azad Library at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, University Collection No. Persian/Ikhbar 2.

Razmnāmah. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ouseley 239.

Razmnāmah. British Library, London, Persian Additional 5641-5642.

Razmnāmah. British Library, London, India Office Islamic 1702.

Razmnāmah. British Library, London, India Office Islamic 2517.

Razmnāmah. British Library, London, Persian Oriental 12076.

Razmnāmah. Birla Family's Private Collection, Calcutta, bound in three volumes.

Razmnāmah. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, Persian 2714.

Razmnāmah. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, Persian 2718.

Razmnāmah. National Museum, Delhi, Persian 63.47.

Razmnāmah. Oriental Research Library, Srinagar, Persian 188.

Razmnāmah. Oriental Research Library, Srinagar, Persian 1294.

Śabdavilāsa of Salakṣa. Hemacandra Jnana Mandir, Patan, No. 995.

Śabdavilāsa of Salakṣa. LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, No. 8311

Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa of Karṇapūra. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, No. 24327.

Tārīkh-i Rājhā-yi Dilhī of Chandar Bhān Brahman. Gujarat Vidya Sabha, Ahmedabad, No. 46.

Tarjumah-i Barāhī. British Library, London, India Office Islamic 1262.

Tarjumah-i Razmnāmah. Oriental Manuscript Library at Osmania University, Hyderabad, Tarikh 266.

Primary Sources

Ā'īn-i Akbarī of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. Edited by Sir Sayyid Ahmad. Aligarh: Sir Sayyid Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, 2005.

Ā'īn-i Akbarī of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. Edited by H. Blochmann. 2 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867-77.

Ā'īn-i Akbarī of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. Translated by Colonel H. S. Jarrett, revised and further annotated by Jadunath Sarkar. Vol. 3. Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948.

Akbarasāhiśṛṅgāradarpaṇa of Padmasundara. Edited by K. Madhava Krishna Sarma. Bikaner: Anup Sanskrit Library, 1943.

Akbarnāmah of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. Translated by Henry Beveridge. 3 vols. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2010. Original edition, 1902-1939.

Akbarnāmah of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. Edited by Maulawi Abd-ur-Rahim. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1873-87.

Alberuni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India, about A.D. 1030. Translated and edited by E. C. Sachau. 2 vols. London: Trubner, 1888.

Artharatnāvalī (also called Aṣṭalakṣārthī) of Samayasundara. In *Anekārtharatnamañjūṣā*, edited by Hiralal Rasikdas Kapadia. Bombay: Jivanchand Sakerchand Javeri, 1933.

Āsaphavilāsa of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. In *Pandita Raja Kavya Samgraha: complete poetical works of Panditaraja Jagannatha*, edited by K. Kamala. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University, 2002.

Ābdullacarita of Lakṣmīdhara. Edited by Jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri. Calcutta: Pracyavani, 1947.

The Baburnama: memoirs of Babur, prince and emperor. Translated and edited by Wheeler M. Thackston. New York: Modern Library, 2002.

Bādshāhnāmah of ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd Lāhawrī. Edited by Maulavis Kabir al-Din Ahmad, Abd al-Rahim, and W.N. Lees. 3 vols. Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1867-72.

Bhāminīvilāsa of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. Edited by Lakshman Ramachandra Vaidya. Bombay: Bharati Press, 1887.

Bhānucandragaṇicarita of Siddhicandra. Edited by Mohanlal Dalichand Desai. Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1941.

Bhaviṣyapurāṇa. Edited by Shriram Sharma. Bareli: Sanskriti Samsthan, 1968-69.

Bouquet of Rasa and River of Rasa of Bhānudatta. Translated by Sheldon Pollock. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Būstān-i Saʻdī. Edited by Nur Allah Iranparast. Tehran: Danish, 1973.

Dabistān-i Maẕāhib. Edited by Rahim Rizazadah Malik. 2 vols. Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tahuri, 1983.

Dānaśāhacarita. See *Works of Rudra Kavi*.

Dāstān-i Nal va Daman of Abū al-Fayẕ ibn Mubārak Fayẕī. Tehran: Fardin, 1956.

Devānandamahākāvya of Meghavijaya. Edited by Pandit Bechardas J. Doshi. Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1937.

Digvijayamahākāvya of Meghavijaya. Edited by A. P. Shah. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1945.

Dīvān of Mu'izzī. Edited by 'Abbas Iqbal. Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Islamiyah, 1940.

Dīvān of Sanā'ī. Edited by M. Razavi. Tehran: Shirkat-i Tab'-i Kitab, 1941.

Hīrasaubhāgya of Devavimalagaṇi with his own gloss. Edited by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sivadatta and Kashinath Pandurang Parab. Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1900.

Humāyūnnāmah of Gulbadan Begum. See *Three Memoirs of Homayun*.

Jagadgurukāvya of Padmasāgara. In *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya*, edited by Hargovinddas and Becardas. Benares: Harakhchand Bhurabhai, 1911.

Jagadvijayacchandas of Kavīndrācārya. Edited by Kunhan Raja. Bikaner: Anup Sanskrit Library, 1945.

Jahāngīrnāmah. Edited by Muhammad Hashim. Tehran: Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1980.

Jambūsvāmicarita of Rājamalla. Edited by Jagdish Chandra Shastri. Bombay: Manikchandra Digambar Jain Granthamala Samiti, 1936.

Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and his son (Bhuṣaṇabhaṭṭa) with the commentaries of Bhānuchandra and his disciple Siddhichandra. Edited by Kashinath Pandurang Parab. Bombay: Pandurang Jawaji, 1940.

Kavīndracandrodaya. Edited by M.M. Patkar and Har Dutt Sharma. Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1939.

Khānakhānācarita. See *Works of Rudra Kavi*.

Kīrtisamullāsa. See *Works of Rudra Kavi*.

Kitab-i Nauras of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II. Edited by Nazir Ahmad. New Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Kendra, 1956.

Kṛpārasakośa of Śānticandra. Edited by Muni Jinavijaya. Bhavnagar: Sri Jain Atmanand Sabha, 1917.

Light of Truth or an English translation of the Satyarth prakash, the well-known work of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, fourth edition. Edited by Chiranjiva Bharadwaja. New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1994.

Lāṭīsaṃhitā of Rājamalla. Edited by Pandit Darbarilal. Bombay: Manikchandra Digambar Jain Granthamala Samiti, 1927.

Ma'āṣir al-Umarā of Shāhnavāz Khān. Edited by Maulavi Abdur Rahim and Maulavi Mirza Ashraf Ali. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888-91.

Mahābhārat-i Fārsī: Bhīkham Parb. Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1880-1910.

The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited [Mahābhārata]. Edited by V.S. Sukthankar, S. K. Belvalkar, P. L. Vaidya, et al. 19 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-1966.

Majālis-i Jahāngīrī of ʻAbd al-Sattār ibn Qāsim Lāhawrī. Edited by ʻArif Nawshahi and Muʻin Nizami. Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhuhishi Miras-i Maktub, 2006.

Mānaprakāśa of Murāridāsa Rāya. Edited by Kishanlal Dube. Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 1991.

Mantrikarmacandravaṃśāvalīprabandha of Jayasoma with the commentary of Guṇavinaya. Edited by Acharya Muni Jinavijaya. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980.

Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh of ʻAbd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī. Edited by Ahmad ʻAli and Tawfiq Subhani. Vol. 3. Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2000.

Muntakhab al-Tavārīkh of ʻAbd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī. Edited by Captain W. N. Lees and Munshi Ahmad Ali. Vol. 2. Calcutta: College Press, 1865.

Muntakhab al-Tawarikh of ʻAbd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī. Translated by George S. A. Ranking, Sir Wolseley Haig, and W.H. Lowe. 3 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1884-1925.

Muqaddamah of Abū al-Faẕl ibn Mubārak. In *Mahābhārata: The Oldest and Longest Sanskrit Epic. Translated by Mir Ghayasuddin Ali Qazvini Known As Naqib Khan (D. 1023 AH)*, edited by S. M. Reza Jalali Naini and Dr. N. S. Shukla. 4 vols. Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tavuri, 1979-1981.

Najāt al-Rashīd of ʻAbd al-Qādir Badā'ūnī. Edited by Sayyid Muʻin al-Haqq. Lahore: Idarah-ʾi Tahqiqat-i Pakistan, Danishgah-i Panjab, 1972.

Nartananirṇaya of Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala. Edited by R. Sathyanarayana. 3 vols. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Nṛpatinītigarbhitavṛtta of Lakṣmīdhara (also known as Lakṣmīpati). Edited by Jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri. Calcutta: Pracyavani, 1959.

Panchākhyānah of Muṣṭafá Khāliqdād ʻAbbāsī. Edited by Tara Chand, Jalali Naini, and Dr. Abidi. Tehran: Eqbal Printing, 1984.

Pandita Raja Kavya Samgraha: complete poetical works of Panditaraja Jagannatha. Edited by K. Kamala. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University, 2002.

Pārasīprakāśa of Kṛṣṇadāsa. Edited by Vibhuti Bhushan Bhattacharya. Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1965.

Prabandhacintāmaṇi of Merutuṅga. Edited by Jinavijaya Muni. Shantiniketan, Bengal: Adhisthata Singhi Jain Jnanapitha, 1933.

Rahīmgranthāvalī. Edited by Vidyanivas Mishra and Govind Rajnish. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 1994.

Rāmāyan-i Masīḥī of Saʻd Allāh Masīḥ Pānīpatī. Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1899.

Rasagaṅgādhara of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. Edited by Kedaranath Ojha. 2 vols. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1977-81.

Rāṣṭrauḍhavaṃśamahākāvya of Rudrakavi. Edited by Embar Krishnamacharya. Baroda: Central Library, 1917.

[Razmnāmah] Mahabharata: The Oldest and Longest Sanskrit Epic. Translated by Mir Ghayasuddin Ali Qazvini Known As Naqib Khan (D. 1023 AH). Edited by S. M. Reza Jalali Naini and Dr. N. S. Shukla. 4 vols. Tehran: Kitabkhanah-i Tahuri, 1979-1981.

Rudrakavi's Great Poem of the Dynasty of Rāṣṭrauḍha, cantos 1-13 and 18-20. Edited and translated by Jenny Leonora de Bruyne. Leiden: Brill, 1968.

Ṣaḍdarśaṇanirṇaya of Merutuṅga. In *Jainadārśanikaprakaraṇasaṅgraha*, edited by Nagin J. Shah. Ahmedabad: LD Institute of Indology, 1973.

Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya of Haribhadra with *Tarkarahasyadīpikā* commentary of Guṇaratna. Edited by Luigi Suali. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1905.

Safīnah-i Ḥāfiẓ. Edited by Mas'ud Janati 'Ata'i. Tehran: Chapkhanah-i Haydari, 1968.

Sāhityadarpaṇa of Viśvanātha. Edited by Durga Prasad Dvivedi. New Delhi: Panini, 1982. Original edition, 1922.

Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa of Karṇapūra. Edited by Hariharanath Yogi. Kashi: Goraksatilla Yogapracarini, 1952.

Sarvadeśavṛttāntasaṅgraha: Being an abridged Sanskrit rendering of the Persian Akbarnāma of Maheśa Ṭhakkura. Edited by Subhadra Jha. Patna: Patna University, 1962/63.

Shāhnāmah of Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī. Edited by Jalal Khaleghi Motlagh. 8 vols. New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1987-2008.

Storia do Mogor or Mogul India, 1653-1708 of Niccolao Manucci. Translated by William Irvine. 4 vols. London: J. Murray, 1907-1908.

Tārīkh-i Firishtah of Muḥammad Qāsim Firishtah. 2 vols. Pune: Dar al-Imarah, 1832.

Tārīkh-i Humāyūn of Bāyazīd Biyāt. See *Three Memoirs of Homayun*.

Tārīkh-i Shīr Shāhī of 'Abbās Khān Sarvānī. Edited and translated by Brahmadeva Prasad Ambashthya. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1974.

Taẕkirat al-vāghi'āt of Jawhar Āftābchī. See *Three Memoirs of Homayun*.

Three Memoirs of Homayun [including *Humāyūnnāmah*, *Tārīkh-i Humāyūn*, and *Taẕkirat al-vāghi'āt*]. Edited and translated by Wheeler M. Thackston. Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2009.

Vasantarājaśākuna with *ṭīkā* of Bhānucandra. Mumbai: Khemraj Sri Krishnadasa Sreshthina, 1987.

Vijayadevamāhātmya of Vallabha Pāṭhaka. Edited by Bhikshu Jinavijaya. Ahmedabad: K.P. Modi, 1928.

Vijayapraśastimahākāvya of Hemavijaya with the commentary of Guṇavijaya. Mumbai: Shri Jinashasan Aradhana Trust, 1988.

Works of Rudra Kavi [including *Dānaśāhacarita, Khānakhānācarita, and Kīrtisamullāsa*]. Edited by Jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri. Calcutta: Pracyavani, 1959.

Secondary Sources

Aggarwal, Neil Krishan. 2007. The Rama Story of Brij Narain Chakbast. *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 22:146-161.

Ahuja, Y.D. 1960. Some Aspects of the Persian Prose Translation of the Gita Ascribed to Abu'l-Fazl. *Indo-Iranica* 13 (3):20-27.

Aitken, Molly Emma. 2010. *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Alam, Muzaffar. 1989. Competition and Co-existence: Indo-Islamic Interaction in Medieval North India. *Itinerario* 13 (1):37-60.

———. 1994. Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, c. 1550-1750. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37 (3):202-27.

———. 2000. *Aḵẖlāqī* Norms and Mughal Governance. In *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, edited by M. Alam, F. N. Delvoye, and M. Gaborieau. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. 2003. The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan. In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, edited by S. Pollock. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

———. 2004. *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2009. The Mughals, the Sufi Shaikhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation. *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (1):135-174.

———. 2011. The Debate Within: A Sufi critique of religious law, *tasawwuf* and politics in Mughal India. *South Asian History and Culture* 2 (2):138-159.

Alam, Muzaffar, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. 2001. A Place in the Sun: Travels with Faiẓī in the Deccan, 1591-1593. In *Les sources et le temps, Sources and Time: a Colloquium*, edited by F. Grimal. Pondicherry: Institut Francais de Pondichery, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient.

———. 2006. Love, passion and reason in Faizi's *Nal-Daman*. In *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*, edited by F. Orsini. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007. *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2009. Frank Disputations: Catholics and Muslims in the court of Jahangir (1608-11). *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46 (4):457-511.

———. 2010. Witnesses and Agents of Empire: Eighteenth-Century Historiography and the World of the Mughal *Munshī*. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53:393-423.

———. 2011. *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics.* New York: Columbia University Press.

———. eds. 1998. *The Mughal State, 1526-1750.* New Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ali, Daud. forthcoming. Indian Historical Writing, c. 600-1400. In *Oxford History of Historical Writing, 600-1400*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ali, M. Athar. 1985. *The Apparatus of Empire: awards of ranks, offices, and titles to the Mughal nobility, 1574-1658*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 1992. Translations of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court. *Social Scientist* 20 (9/10):38-45.

———. 1996. The Evolution of the Perception of India: Akbar and Abu'l Fazl. *Social Scientist* 24 (1/3):80-88.

———. 1999. Pursuing an Elusive Seeker of Universal Truth – the Identity and Environment of the Author of the *Dabistān–i Mazāhib*. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Series 3, 9 (3):365-373.

Alvi, Sajida Sultana. 1989. Introduction. In *Advice on the Art of Governance: an Indo-Islamic mirror for princes: Mauʿiẓah-i Jahāngīrī of Muḥammad Bāqir Najm-i S̱ānī*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Amin, Shahid. 2002. On Retelling the Muslim Conquest of North India. In *History and the Present*, edited by P. Chatterjee and A. Ghosh. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Andhare, Shridhar. 2004. Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism and Jain Painting Activity in Gujarat. In *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, edited by R. Crill, S. Stronge, and A. Topsfield. Ahmedabad: Mapin.

Anooshahr, Ali. 2006. Mughal Historians and the Memory of the Islamic Conquest of India. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43:275-300.

———. 2009. *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A comparative study of the late medieval and early modern periods*. New York: Routledge.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1993. Number in the Colonial Imagination. In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament Perspectives on South Asia*, edited by C. A. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Apte, Prabhakar. 1989. The Empire of Polysemy as evidenced in Artharatnavali of Samaya sundaragani. In *Kośa vijñāna: siddhānta evaṃ mūlyāṅkana*, edited by S. K. Rohra and D. Pitambar. Agra: Kendriya Hindi Samsthan.

Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Asher, Catherine B. 2004. A Ray from the Sun: Mughal Ideology and the Visual Construction of the Divine. In *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, edited by M. Kapstein. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Asher, Catherine B., and Cynthia Talbot. 2006. *India Before Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Athavale, R. B. 1968. New Light on the Life of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 48/49:415-420.

Azad, Mohammad Akram Lari. 1990. *Religion and Politics in India During the Seventeenth Century*. Delhi: Criterion Publications.

Bailey, Gauvin A. 1998. *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580-1630*. Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

Balbir, Nalini. 2003. Samayasundara's *Sāmācārī-śataka* and Jain Sectarian Divisions in the Seventeenth Century. In *Essays in Jaina Philosophy and Religion*, edited by P. Balcerowicz. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

———. 2007. A propos des hymnes jaina multilingues (sanskrit, prakrit, persan). In *Indica et Tibetica: Festschrift für Michael Hahn*, edited by K. Klaus and J.-U. Hartmann. Vienna: Working Group for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna.

Beach, Milo Cleveland. 1981. *The Imperial Image: paintings for the Mughal court*. Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

———. 1992. *Mughal and Rajput Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Behl, Aditya. 2002. Premodern Negotiations: Translating between Persian and Hindavi. In *Translation, Text and Theory: The Paradigm of India*, edited by R. B. Nair. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

———. 2003. The Magic Doe: Desire and Narrative in a Hindavi Sufi Romance, circa 1503. In *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, edited by R. Eaton. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2011. Pages from the Book of Religions, Encountering Difference in Mughal India. In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, edited by S. Pollock. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bendrey, V.S. 1933. *Tārīkh-i Ilāhī*. Poona: G.B. Nare.

Beveridge, H. 1918. The Rauẓat-uṭ-Tāhirīn. *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14:269-277.

Bhattacharyya, Dineshchandra. 1937. Sanskrit Scholars of Akbar's Time. *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 13:31-36.

Boucher, Daniel. 1998. Gāndhārī and the Early Chinese Buddhist Translations Reconsidered: The Case of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (4):471-506.

Bronner, Yigal. 2010. *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bronner, Yigal, and David Shulman. 2006. 'A Cloud Turned Goose': Sanskrit in the vernacular millennium. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43 (1):1-30.

Brown, Katherine Butler. 2007. Did Aurangzeb Ban Music? Questions for the Historiography of his Reign. *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (1):77-120.

Burbank, Jane, and Frederick Cooper. 2010. *Empires in World History: power and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Busch, Allison. 2010. Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court. *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2):267-309.

———. 2010. *Riti* and Register: Lexical Variation in Courtly Braj Bhasha Texts. In *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, edited by F. Orsini. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

———. 2011. *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chaghatai, M.A. 1944. The Illustrated Edition of the Razmnama (Persian Version of the Mahābhārata) at Akbar's Court. In *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute: V.S. Sukthankar Memorial Volume*, edited by V. M. Apte and H. D. Sankalia. Poona: Deccan College.

Chakravarti, Chintaharan. 1946. Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning. In *B.C. Law Volume, Part II*, edited by D.R. Bhandarkar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, B.M. Barua, B.K. Ghosh, and P.K. Gode. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

———. 1946. Review of *Jagadvijayacchandas* ed. Raja. *Indian Historical Quarterly* 22:320-322.

Chand, Tara. 1943. Dārā Shikoh and the Upanishads. *Islamic Culture* 17:397-413.

Chandra, Jnan. 1958. 'Alamgir's Tolerance in the Light of Contemporary Jain Literature. *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 6 (1):269-272.

Chandra, Pramod. 1960. Ustād Sālivāhana and the Development of Popular Mughal Art. *Lalit Kala* 8:25-46.

Chatterjee, Kumkum. 2008. The Persianization of *Itihasa*: Performance, Narratives and Mughal Political Culture in Eighteenth-Century Bengal. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (2):513-543.

———. 2009. Cultural Flows and Cosmopolitanism in Mughal India: The Bishnupur Kingdom. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46:147-182.

Chattopadhyaya, Brajadulal. 1998. *Representing the Other?: Sanskrit sources and the Muslims (eighth to fourteenth century)*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Chaudhuri, Jatindra Bimal. 1942. *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning*. Calcutta: Pracyavani.

———. 1954. *The Contributions of Muslims to Sanskrit Learning*. Calcutta: Pracyavani.

Choudhury, Pratima. 1990. *A Critical Exposition of Siddhicandragaṇi's Kāvyaprakāśakhaṇḍana*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

Claus, Peter J., Sarah Diamond, and Margaret Ann Mills, eds. 2003. *South Asian Folklore: an encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge.

Cohn, Bernard S. 1996. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Commissariat, M. S. 1938-1980. *A History of Gujarat, including a survey of its chief architectural monuments and inscriptions*. 3 vols. Bombay and New York: Longmans, Green.

———. 1940. Imperial Mughal Farmans in Gujarat. *Journal of the University of Bombay* 9 (1):1-56.

Cort, John. 1995. Genres of Jain History. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 23 (4):469-506.

———. 1998. Who Is a King? Jain Narratives of Kingship in Medieval Western India. In *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, edited by J. E. Cort. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 2002. A Tale of Two Cities: On the Origins of Digambar Sectarianism in North India. In *Multiple Histories: Culture and Society in the Study of Rajasthan*, edited by L. A. Babb, V. Joshi, and M. W. Meister. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications.

———. forthcoming. Making it Vernacular in Agra: The Practice of Translation by Seventeenth-Century Digambar Jains. In *Tellings Not Texts: Singing, Story-telling and Performance in North India*, edited by F. Orsini. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

D'Onofrio, Svevo. 2010. A Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads: Dārā Šikōh's *Sirr-i Akbar*. In *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World during the Early-Modern and Modern Periods*, edited by D. Hermann and F. Speziale. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag.

Dale, Stephen. 2003. A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness: The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani. *Iranian Studies* 36 (2):197-212.

———. 2004. *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Bābur and the culture of empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India (1483-1530)*. Leiden: Brill.

Darling, Linda T. 2002. "Do Justice, Do Justice, For That is Paradise": Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22 (1/2):3-19.

Das, Asok Kumar. 1983. The Imperial Razm Nama and Ramayana of the Emperor Akbar. In *An Age of Splendor: Islamic Art in India*, edited by K. Khandalavala. Bombay: Marg.

———. 1986. Introductory Note on the Emperor Akbar's Ramayana and its Miniatures. In *Facets of Indian Art: a symposium held at the Victoria and Albert Museum on 26, 27, 28 April and 1 May 1982*, edited by R. Skelton. London: Victoria and Albert Museum.

———. 1994. Akbar's Imperial Ramayana: A Mughal Persian Manuscript. In *The Legend of Rama: Artistic Visions*, edited by V. Dehejia. Bombay: Marg.

———. 1998. Daswant: His Last Drawings in the *Razmnama*. In *Mughal Masters: Further Studies*, edited by A.K. Das. Mumbai: Marg.

———. 2004. Notes on Four Illustrations of the Birla *Razmnama* and their counterparts in other *Razmnama* Manuscripts. In *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, edited by R. Crill, S. Stronge, and A. Topsfield. Ahmedabad: Mapin.

———. 2005. *Paintings of the Razmnama: The Book of War*. Ahmedabad: Mapin.

Dayal, Parmeshwar. 1995. Introduction. In *Gita in Persian*. Lucknow: Prakashan Kendra.

Delvoye, Françoise 'Nalini'. 1994. The Thematic Range of *Dhrupad* Songs Attributed to Tānsen, Foremost Court-Musician of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. In *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers, 1988-1991 presented at the Fifth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, held at Paris - École Francaise d'Extréme-Orient, 9-12 July 1991*, edited by A. W. Entwistle and F. Mallison. New Delhi: Manohar.

Derrett, J. Duncan M. 1970. Greece and India again: the Jaimini-Aśvamedha, the Alexander-romance and the Gospels. *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte* 22:19-44.

Desai, Mohanlal Dalichand. 1941. Introduction. In *Bhānucandragaṇicarita*. Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka-Singhi Jain Granthamala.

Desai, Z.A. 1963. Life and Works of Faidi. *Indo-Iranica* 16 (3):1-35.

Deshpande, Madhav. 1993. *Sanskrit and Prakrit, sociolinguistic issues.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Deshpande, Prachi. 2007. *Creative Pasts: historical memory and identity in western India, 1700-1960.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Digby, Simon. 1975. ʻAbd al-Quddus Gangohi (1456-1537 A.D.): The Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi. *Medieval India--A Miscellany* 3:1-66.

Dihlavi, Abd al-Vadud Azhar. 1971-2. Introduction. In *Rāmāyan: Kitāb-i Muqaddas-i Hindū'ān.* Tehran: Intisharat-i Bunyad-i Farhang-i Iran.

Divanji, Prahlad Chandra Shekhar. 1933. Introduction. In *Siddhāntabindu of Madhusūdana.* Baroda: Oriental Institute.

Dundas, Paul. 1999. Jain Perceptions of Islam in the Early Modern Period. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 42 (1):35-46.

———. 2002. *The Jains*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

———. 2007. *History, Scripture and Controversy in a Medieval Jain Sect.* London and New York: Routledge.

Eaton, Richard M. 2005. *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: eight Indian lives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———, ed. 2002. *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Elliot, H. M., and John Dowson. 1867-77. *The History of India, as told by its own historians.* 8 vols. London: Trübner and Co.

Entwistle, A. W. 1987. *Braj, Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*. Groningen: E. Forsten.

Epigraphia Indica. 1891/92. Vol. 2. Delhi: Archaelogical Survey of India.

Ernst, Carl W. 1992. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 2003. The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amrtakunda* Translations. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 13 (2):199–226.

———. 2003. Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages. *Iranian Studies* 36 (2):173-195.

———. 2007. Accounts of Yogis in Arabic and Persian Historical and Travel Texts. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33:409-426.

———. 2010. Fayzi's Illuminationist Interpretation of Vedanta: The *Shariq al-maʻrifa*. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30 (3):356-364.

Ernst, Carl W., and Bruce B. Lawrence. 2002. *Sufi Martyrs of Love: the Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ethe, Hermann. 1903. *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office.* Vol 1. Oxford: India Office.

Faruqui, Munis. 2005. The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48 (4):487-523.

Findly, Ellison B. 1987. Jahāngīr's Vow of Non-Violence. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (2):245-256.

———. 1993. *Nur Jahan, empress of Mughal India*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Firoze, M. 1986. A Note on Abul Fazl's Account of Hindu Mythology. *Indo-Iranica* 39 (1-4):100-119.

Fischel, Walter J. 1948-49. Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India. *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 18:137-177.

Fitzgerald, James L. 2004. Introduction to *The Book of Peace, Part 1*. In *The Mahābhārata*. Vol 7. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.

Flatt, Emma. 2011. The Authorship and Significance of the *Nujūm al-'ulūm*: A Sixteenth-Century Astrological Encyclopedia from Bijapur. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131 (2):223-244.

Flood, Finbarr Barry. 2009. *Objects of Translation: material culture and medieval Hindu-Muslim encounter*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Flores, Jorge. 2007. Distant Wonders: The Strange and the Marvelous between Mughal India and Habsburg Iberia in the Early Seventeenth Century. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 (3):553–81.

———, ed. 2003. *Firangis in the Mughal Chancellery: Portuguese Copies of Akbar's Documents (1572-1604)*. New Delhi: Embassy of Portugal.

Flügel, Peter. 2006. Demographic Trends in Jaina Monasticism. In *Studies in Jaina History and Culture: Disputes and Dialogues*, edited by P. Flügel. London and New York: Routledge.

Foltz, Richard. 1998. *Mughal India and Central Asia*. Karachi and New York: Oxford University Press.

Friedmann, Yohanan. 1975. Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (2):214-221.

Gabbay, Alyssa. 2010. *Islamic Tolerance: Amīr Khusraw and pluralism*. New York: Routledge.

Ganeri, Jonardon. 2009. Dārā Shukoh and the Transmission of the Upaniṣads to Islam. In *Migrating Texts and Traditions*, edited by W. Sweet. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

———. 2011. *The Lost Age of Reason: philosophy in early modern India 1450-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gayani, B. G. 1945. Kitab-i-Nauras. *Islamic Culture* 19:140-152.

Gilmartin, David, and Bruce Lawrence, eds. 2000. *Beyond Turk and Hindu: rethinking religious identities in Islamicate South Asia*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Gode, P.K. 1932. Notes on Indian Chronology. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 13:337-340.

———. 1945. Some Evidence About the Location of the Manuscript Library of Kavindracharya Sarasvati at Benares in A.D. 1665. In *Jagadvijayacchandas*, edited by K. Raja. Bikaner: Anup Sanskrit Library.

———. 1956. Forward. In *Kitab-i Nauras*, edited by N. Ahmad. New Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Kendra.

Gommans, Jos J. L. 2002. *Mughal Warfare: Indian frontiers and high roads to empire, 1500-1700*. New York: Routledge.

Gopal, Surendra. 1999. The Jain Community and Akbar. In *Akbar and His Age*, edited by I. A. Khan. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

Gordon, Stewart, ed. 2003. *Robes of Honour: khil'at in pre-colonial and colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Granoff, Phyllis. 1989. The Biographies of Siddhasena: A Study in the Texture of Allusion and the Weaving of a Group-Image. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 17 (4):329-384.

———. 1990. Authority and Innovation: A Study of the Use of Similes in the Biography of Hiravijaya to Provide Sanction for the Monk at Court. *Jinamanjari* 1:48-60.

———. 1991. The Politics of Religious Biography: The Biography of Balibhadra the Usurper. *Bulletin d'Etudes Sanskrites et Indiennes* 9:75-93.

———. 1992. Jinaprabhasūri and Jinadattasūri: Two Studies from the Śvetāmbara Jain Tradition. In *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in Asia*, edited by P. Granoff and K. Shinohara. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press.

———. 1994. Biographical Writings Amongst the Śvetāmbara Jains in Northwestern India. In *According to Tradition: Hagiographical writing in India*, edited by W. M. Callewaert and R. Snell. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Grube, Ernst J., ed. 1991. *A Mirror for Princes from India: Illustrated Versions of the Kalilah wa Dimnah, Anvar-i Suhayli, Iyar-i Danish, and Humayun Nameh*. Bombay: Marg Publications.

Guha, Sumit. 2004. Speaking Historically: The Changing Voices of Historical Narration in Western India, 1400-1900. *The American Historical Review* 109 (4):1084-1103.

Habib, Irfan. 1982. *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: political and economic maps with detailed notes, bibliography and index*. Delhi: Centre of Advanced Study in History.

———. 1999. Introduction: Commemorating Akbar. In *Akbar and His Age*, edited by I. Habib. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

Habibullah, A.B.M. 1938. Medieval Indo-Persian Literature relating to Hindu Science and Philosophy, 1000-1800 A.D. *Indian Historical Quarterly* 14 (1):167-181.

———. 1976. An Early Arab Report on Indian Religious Sects. In *History and Society: Essays in Honour of Professor Niharranjan Ray*, edited by D. Chattopadhyaya. Calcutta: KP Bagchi and Company.

Hadi, Nabi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

Halbfass, Wilhelm. 1988. *India and Europe: an essay in understanding*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

———. 1991. *Tradition and Reflection: explorations in Indian thought.* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

Hanaway, William L. 1991. *Amīr Arsalān* and the Question of Genre. *Iranian Studies* 24 (1):55-60.

Hardy, Peter. 1985. Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah: A Political Philosophy for Mughal India—or a Personal Puff for a Pal? In *Islam in India, studies and commentaries*, edited by C. W. Troll. Vol 2. New Delhi: Vikar.

Harkare, Gunde Rao. 1952. Sanskrit Under Mohammedan Patronage. *Islamic Culture* 26:54-62.

Hasan, Farhat. 2004. *State and Locality in Mughal India: power relations in western India, c. 1572-1730.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hawley, John Stratton. 2009. *The Memory of Love: Sūrdās sings to Krishna*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hendley, Thomas Holbein. 1883. *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition.* Vol 4. London: W. Griggs.

Hiltebeitel, Alf. 1991. *The Cult of Draupadī: On Hindu Ritual and the Goddess.* Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1999. *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hirschhausen, Ulrike von, and Jörn Leonhard. 2011. Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall: Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century. In *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by U. von Hirschhausen and J. Leonhard. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. 1974. *The Venture of Islam: conscience and history in a world civilization.* 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hodivala, Shahpurshah Hormasji. 1939. *Studies in Indo-Muslim History: a critical commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India as told by its own historians.* Bombay: A.F. de Sousa.

Howe, Stephen. 2002. *Empire: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Husain, Afzal. 1999. *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahāngīr: a study of family groups.* New Delhi: Manohar.

Husain, Shaikh Chand. 1944. Translations of the *Mahābhārata* into Arabic and Persian. In *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute: V.S. Sukthankar Memorial Volume*, edited by V. M. Apte and H. D. Sankalia. Poona: Deccan College.

Husayn, Muhammad Bashir. 1971. Mughaliyah Daur Meiḥ Sanskrit aur 'Arabī kī Fārsī Tarājum. In *Tārīkh-i Adabiyāt-i Musalmānān-i Pākistān va Hind.* edited by M. Badakhshani. Vol 4: Fārsī adab 2 (1526-1707). Lahore: Punjab University.

Jackson, P. 1988. Banākatī, Abū Solaymān Dāwūd b. Abi'l-Fażl Moḥammad (d. 1329-30), poet and historian. In *Encyclopaedia Iranica.* http://www.iranica.com/.

Jain, Banarsi Das. 1950. The Persian of Jain Hymns. In *Siddhabhāratī, or the Rosary of Indology, Part One*, edited by V. Bandhu. Hoshiarpur: V.V.R. Institute, P. & P. Organization.

Jalali, S. Farrukh Ali, and S.M. Razaullah Ansari. 1985. Persian Translation of Varāhamihira's Bṛhatsaṃhitā. *Studies in History of Medicine and Science* 9 (3-4):161-169.

Karambelkar, V.W. 1952. Nabābakhānakhānācaritam. *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 28:240-248.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 2003. The Two Histories of Literary Culture in Bengal. In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, edited by S. Pollock. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

———. 2010. *The Imaginary Institution of India: politics and ideas.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Khan, M.S. 1985. Al-Bīrūnī and Abul Fazl: A Comparative Study of the Two Humanists and Historians. *Indo-Iranica* 38 (3-4):36-50.

Kinra, Rajeev. 2007. Fresh Words for a Fresh World: *Tāza-Gū'ī* and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry. *Sikh Formations* 3 (2):125-149.

———. 2008. Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhān Brahman. University of Chicago.

———. 2009. Infantilizing Bābā Dārā: The Cultural Memory of Dārā Shekuh and the Mughal Public Sphere. *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2:165-193.

Koskikallio, Petteri, and Christophe Vielle. 2001. Epic and Puranic Texts Attributed to Jaimini. *Indologica Taurinensia* 27:67-93.

Krishnamurthi, R. 1944. Jains at the Court of Akbar. *Journal of Indian History* 23:137-143.

Kugle, Scott Alan. 2007. *Sufis and Saints' Bodies: mysticism, corporeality, and sacred power in Islam.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lal, Ruby. 2005. *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latham, J.D. 1990. Ibn Muqaffa' and Early 'Abbasid Prose. In *'Abbasid belles-lettres*, edited by J. Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant, and G. Rex Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence, Bruce B. 1975. The Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Bīrūnī's *India* with Special Reference to Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras. In *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayhan al-Bīrūnī and Jalal al-Din al-Rūmī*, edited by P. J. Chelkowski. New York: New York University Press.

———. 1976. *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions.* The Hague: Mouton.

Lefèvre, Corinne. 2007. Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605-1627) in his Memoirs. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50 (4):452-489.

Loomba, Ania. 2009. Of Gifts, Ambassadors, and Copy-cats: Diplomacy, Exchange, and Difference in Early Modern India. In *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: mediation, transmission, traffic, 1550-1700*, edited by B. Charry and G. Shahani. Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Lorenzen, David N. 1999. Who Invented Hinduism? *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (4):630-659.

Maclagan, E.D. 1896. Jesuit Missions to the Emperor Akbar. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 65 (1):38-113.

Mahapatra, Sri Kedarnath. 1953. Some Forgotten Smṛti-Writers of Orissa: (2) Narasiṃha Vājapeyī. *The Orissa Historical Research Journal* 2 (1):1-16.

Marroum, Marianne. 2011. *Kalila wa Dimna*: Inception, Appropriation, and Transmimesis. *Comparative Literature Studies* 48 (4):512-540.

Marshall, D. N. 1967. *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey*. Vol. 1—Manuscripts. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Mayaram, Shail. 2003. *Against History, Against State: counterperspectives from the margins.* New York: Columbia University Press.

McGregor, Ronald Stuart. 1984. *Hindi Literature From its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Mehta, Shirin. 1992. Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat. *Social Scientist* 20 (9/10):54-60.

Meisami, Julie Scott. 1997. Mixed Prose and Verse in Medieval Persian Literature. In *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, edited by J. Harris and K. Reichl. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

———. 2000. The Historian and the Poet: Rāvandī, Nizami, and the Rhetoric of History. In *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric*, edited by K. Talattof and J. W. Clinton. New York: Palgrave.

Minkowski, Christopher. 2004. Nīlakaṇṭha's Instruments of War: Modern, vernacular, barbarous. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 41 (4):365-385.

———. 2004. On Sūryadāsa and the Invention of Bidirectional Poetry (*vilomakāvya*). *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124 (2):325-333.

Mitra, Kalipada. 1939. Jain Influence at Mughul Court. *Indian History Congress* 1061-1072.

Modi, Jivanji Jamshedji. 1925. King Akbar and the Persian Translations of Sanskrit Books. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Institute* 6 (1):83-107.

Mohanty, Pramod Kumar. 2007. *Colonialism and South Asia: Cuttack, 1803-1947*. Kolkata: R.N. Bhattacharya.

Moin, Ahmed Azfar. 2009. Challenging the Mughal Emperor: The Islamic Millennium according to 'Abd al-Qadir Badayuni. In *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, edited by B. Metcalf. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 2010. Islam and the Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran. University of Michigan.

Moosvi, Shireen. 2002. The Mughal Encounter with Vedanta: Recovering the Biography of 'Jadrup'. *Social Scientist,* 30 (7/8):13-23.

———, ed. and trans. 1994. *Episodes in the Life of Akbar: contemporary records and reminiscences.* New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.

Mujtabai, Fathullah. 1973. Persian Translations of Hindu Religious Literature. In *Anquetil Duperron Bicentenary Memorial Volume*. Tehran: Anjuman-i Farhang-i Iran-i Bastan.

———. 1976. Muntakhab-i Jug Basasht or Selections from the Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha attributed to Mīr Abu'l-Qāsim Findiriskī. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Mukhia, Harbans. 1976. *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar*. New Delhi: Vikas.

———. 2004. *The Mughals of India*. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Naik, Chhotubhai Ranchhodji. 1966. *'Abdu'r-Raḥīm Khān-i-Khānān and His Literary Circle*. Ahmedabad: Gujarat University.

Naim, C.M. 1995. Popular Jokes and Political History: The Case of Akbar, Birbal and Mulla Do-Piyaza. *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 (24):1456-1464.

Naini, S.A. Reza Jalali. 2008. Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works. *Journal of the Indo-Iran* Special Issue on the Occasion of 50 Years of the Agreement of Indo-Iranian Cultural Relation:68-86.

Naravane, M. S. 1997. *A Short History of Baglan*. Pune: Palomi Publications.

Nath, R. 1982. *Islamic Architecture and Culture in India*. New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation.

New Catalogus Catalogorum: an alphabetical register of Sanskrit and allied works and authors. 1949-. Edited by V. Raghavan, K. Kunjunni Raja, and T. Aufrecht. Madras: University of Madras.

Nicholson, Andrew J. 2010. *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nicoll, Fergus. 2009. *Shah Jahan*. London: Haus Publishing.

Nizami, Khaliq Ahmad. 1983. *On History and Historians of Medieval India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

O'Connell, J.T. 1983. Vaiṣṇava Perceptions of Muslim in Sixteenth Century Bengal. In *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, edited by M. Israel and N. K. Wagle. Delhi: Manohar.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind. 2007. Kingdom, Household and Body: History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar. *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (5):889-923.

———. 2011. Speaking from Siva's temple: Banaras scholar households and the Brahman 'ecumene' of Mughal India. *South Asian History and Culture* 2 (2):253-277.

Orsini, Francesca. forthcoming. "Krishna is the Truth of Man" Mir 'Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's *Haqā'iq-i Hindī* (*Indian Truths*) and the circulation of *dhrupad* and *bishnupad*. In *Culture and Circulation*, edited by A. Busch and T. de Bruijn. Leiden: Brill.

———, ed. 2010. *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu literary culture*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Orthmann, Eva. 2005. Circular Motions: Private Pleasure and Public Prognostication in the Nativities of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. In *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: essays on the*

history of astrology, edited by G. Oestmann, H. D. Rutkin, and K. von Stuckrad. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Patkar, M.M. 1938. Moghul Patronage to Sanskrit Learning. *Poona Orientalist* 3:164-175.

———. 1938. Muhūrtaratna: A Religio-Astrological Treatise, Composed in the Reign of Aurangzeb. *Poona Orientalist* 3:82-85.

Peterson, P. 1896. *A Fifth Report of Operations in Search of Sanscrit mss. in the Bombay Circle April 1892-March 1895*. Bombay: Government Central Press.

Phillips, Robert Lowell. 2010. Garden of Endless Blossoms: Urdu *Rāmāyans* of the 19th and Early 20th Century. University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Phukan, Shantanu. 2001. 'Through throats where many rivers meet': The Ecology of Hindi in the world of Persian. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38:33-58.

Pinch, William R. 2006. *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pines, Shlomo, and Tuvia Gelblum. 1966. Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*: A Translation of his First Chapter and a Comparison with Related Sanskrit Texts. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29 (2):302-325.

———. 1977. Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*: A Translation of the Second Chapter and a Comparison with Related Sanskrit Texts. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40 (3):522-549.

———. 1983. Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*: A Translation of the Third Chapter and a Comparison with Related Sanskrit Texts. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 46 (2):258-304.

———. 1989. Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic Version of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*: A Translation of the Fourth Chapter and a Comparison with Related Sanskrit Texts. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52 (2):265-305.

Pingree, David. 1970-1994. *Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit: Series A*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.

———. 1997. *From Astral Omens to Astrology: From Babylon to Bīkāner*. Roma: Istituto Italiano Per L'Africa et l'Oriente.

———. 2003. The *Sarvasiddhāntarāja* of Nityānanda. In *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*, edited by J. P. Hogendijk and A. I. Sabra. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pirbhai, M. Reza. 2009. *Reconsidering Islam in a South Asian context*. Leiden: Brill.

Pollock, Sheldon. 1993. Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination in India. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (2):261-297.

———. 2001. The Death of Sanskrit. *Comparative Study of Society and History* 43 (2):392-426.

———. 2001. New Intellectuals in seventeenth-century India. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38 (1):3-31.

———. 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, culture, and power in premodern India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

———. 2007. Pretextures of Time. *History and Theory* 46:364-381.

———. 2007. The Problem of Early Modernity in the Sanskrit Intellectual Tradition. *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* 43:8-9.

———. 2007. We need to find what we are not looking for. *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* 43:3-5.

———. 2010. Comparison Without Hegemony. In *The Benefit of Broad Horizons: Intellectual and Institutional Preconditions for a Global Social Science: Festschrift for Björn Wittrock on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, edited by H. Joas and B. Klein. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2011. Introduction. In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, edited by S. Pollock. Durham: Duke University Press.

Prasad, Pushpa. 1997. Akbar and the Jains. In *Akbar and His India*, edited by I. Habib. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Qanungo, K. R. 1929. Some Side-lights on the Character and Court-Life of Shah Jahan. *Journal of Indian History* 8 (9):45-52.

Raghavacharya, E.V. Vira. 1945. Akbariya-Kālidāsa Alias Govindabhaṭṭa (16th century). In *Bhārata-Kaumudī: Studies in Indology in Honour of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji.* Allahabad: The Indian Press.

Raghavan, V. 1940. Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī. In *D. R. Bhandarkar Volume*, edited by B. C. Law. Calcutta: Indian Research Institute.

———. 1953. The Kavīndrakalpalatikā of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī. In *Indica: The Indian Historical Research Institute Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume*. Bombay: St. Xavier's College.

Rahim, M. A. 1965. Akbar and Translation Works. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 10 (1):101-119.

Raj, Kapil. 2007. *Relocating Modern Science: circulation and the construction of knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Raja, Kunhan. 1945. Introduction. In *Jagadvijayacchandas of Kavindracarya*. Bikaner: Anup Sanskrit Library.

Rao, Velcheru Narayana, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. 2003. *Textures of Time: writing history in South India, 1600-1800*. New York: Other Press.

Ray, Sukumar, and M. H. A. Beg. 1992. *Bairam Khan*. Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi.

Rezavi, Syed Ali Nadeem. 2008. Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar's *Ibadatkhana*. *Studies in History* 24 (2):195-209.

Ricci, Ronit. 2011. *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rice, Yael. 2010. A Persian Mahabharata: The 1598–1599 *Razmnama*. *Manoa* 22 (1):125-131.

Richards, John F. 1993. *The Mughal Empire*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1998. Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir. In *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, edited by M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Original edition, 1978.

Riedel, Dagmar. 2010. Kalila wa Demna: Redactions and circulation. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. http://www.iranica.com/.

Rieu, Charles. 1879-1883. *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*. 3 vols. London: British Museum.

Ringer, Monica M. 2011. *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbar. 1975. *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign: With Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl (1556-1605)*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

———. 1999. Dimensions of *Ṣulḥ-i Kul* (Universal Peace) in Akbar's Reign and the *Ṣūfī* Theory of Perfect Man. In *Akbar and His Age*, edited by I. A. Khan. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

Robinson, Francis. 1997. Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8 (2):151-184.

Sachau, Ed and Hermann Ethe. 1889. *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Pushtu Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*. Part 1: The Persian Manuscripts. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Said, Edward W. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf.

Sangari, Kumkum. 2000. Tracing Akbar: Hagiographies, Popular Narrative Traditions and the Subject of Conversion. In *Mapping Histories: Essays Presented to Ravinder Kumar*, edited by N. Chandhoke. New Delhi: Tulika.

Sarma, D.D. 1986. Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa: ek viśleṣaṇātmak paricay. In *Saṃskṛta sāhitya ko Islām-paramparā kā yogadāna*, edited by R. Tripathi. Sagara: Sanskrit Parishad.

Sarma, Sreeramula Rajeswara 1996. Sanskrit Manuals for Learning Persian. In *Adab Shenasi*, edited by A. D. Safavi. Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University.

———. 1998. Translation of Scientific Texts into Sanskrit under Sawai Jai Singh. *Sri Venkateswara University Oriental Journal* 41:67-87.

———. 2000. Jyotiṣarāja at the Mughal Court. In *Studies on Indian Culture, Science and Literature: being Prof. K.V. Sarma Felicitation Volume presented to him on his 81st birthday*, edited by N. Gangadharan, S. A. S. Sarma, and S. S. R. Sarma. Chennai: Sree Sarada Education Society Research Centre.

———. 2000. Sulṭān, Sūri and the Astrolabe. *Indian Journal of History of Science* 35 (2):129-147.

———. 2002. From Yāvanī to Saṃskṛtam: Sanskrit Writings Inspired by Persian works. *Studies in the History of Indian Thought* 14:71-88.

———. 2011. A Bilingual Astrolabe from the Court of Jahangir. *Indian Historical Review* 38 (1):77-117.

———. forthcoming. Teach Yourself Persian the Sanskrit Way: A Survey of Sanskrit Manuals for Learning Persian, AD 1364-1764. In *Shri Hazari Mull Banthia Felicitation Volume*.

Sastri, Hirananda. 1933. Akbar as a Sun-Worshipper. *Indian Historical Quarterly* 9:137-140.

———. 1942. *Ancient Vijñaptipatras*. Baroda: Baroda State Press.

Scharfe, Hartmut. 1977. *Grammatical Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1992. A Dervish in the Guise of a Prince: Khān-i-Khānān Abdur Rahīm as a Patron. In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, edited by B. S. Miller. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Schofield, Katherine Butler. 2010. Reviving the Golden Age Again: "Classicization," Hindustani Music, and the Mughals. *Ethnomusicology* 54 (3):484-517.

Sen, Shekhar Kumar. 2008. Introduction. In *Jaiminiya Ashvamedha Parvan*, translated by S. K. Sen and edited by P. Bhattacharya. Calcutta: Writers Workshop.

Seyller, John. 1985. Model and Copy: The Illustration of Three *Razmnāma* Manuscripts. *Archives of Asian Art* 38:37-66.

———. 1997. The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library. *Artibus Asiae* 57 (3/4):243-349.

———. 1999. *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India: the Freer Rāmāyaṇa and other illustrated manuscripts of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm*. Washington, D.C.: Artibus Asiae Publishers.

Shah, Umakant P. 1972. Śabda-vilāsa or Pārasīnāmamālā of Mantrī Salakṣa of Gujarat. *Vimarśa: A Half-Yearly Research Bulletin of Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan, New Delhi* 1 (1):31-36.

Shamma, Tarek. 2009. Translating into the Empire: The Arabic Version of *Kalila wa Dimna*. *The Translator* 15 (1):65-86.

Sharma, Dasharatha. 1944. The three earliest Jain Influencers of Mughal Religious Policy: Padmasundara, Ānandarāja, and Ajayarāja. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 25:145-146.

Sharma, G. N. 1970. *Rajasthan Studies*. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal.

Sharma, Har Dutt. 1940. The Poet Rudra and his Works. In *Woolner Commemoration Volume*, edited by M. Shafi. Lahore: Mehar Chand Lachhman Das.

Sharma, Sri Ram. 1933. A Little Known Persian Version of the Ramayan. *Islamic Culture* 7:673-678.

Sharma, Sunil. 2005. *Amir Khusraw: the Poet of Sufis and Sultans*. Oxford: Oneworld.

———. 2009. Translating Gender: Āzād Bilgrāmī on the Poetics of the Love Lyric and Cultural Synthesis. *The Translator* 15 (1):87-103.

———. 2010. Novelty, Tradition and Mughal Politics in Nauʿīs *Sūz u Gudāz*. In *Necklace of the Pleiades: studies in Persian literature presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th birthday, 24*

essays on Persian literature, culture and religion, edited by F.D. Lewis and S. Sharma. Leiden: Leiden University Press.

Shastri, Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad. 1923. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the care of the Asiatic Society: History and Geography*. Vol. 4. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Sheikh, Samira. 2010. *Forging a Region: sultans, traders, and pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200-1500*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sheth, Chimanlal Bhailal. 1953. *Jainism in Gujarat (A. D. 1100 to 1600)*. Bombay: Shree Vijaydevsur Sangh Gnan Samity.

Shukla, N.S. 1974. Persian Translations of Sanskrit Works. *Indological Studies* 3 (1-2):175-191.

Siddiqui, Iqtidar Husain. 1995. *Shershah Sur and His Dynasty*. Jaipur: Publication Scheme.

Singh, Nagendra. 2002. *Encyclopaedia of Jainism*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.

Skelton, Robert. 1970. Mughal Paintings from Harivaṃśa Manuscript. *Victoria and Albert Museum Yearbook* 2:41-54.

Slaje, Walter. 2004. *Medieval Kashmir and the Science of History, Madden Lecture 2003-04*. Austin: South Asia Institute, University of Texas.

———. 2005. A Note on the Genesis and Character of Śrīvara's So-Called 'Jaina-Rājataraṅgiṇī'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125 (3):379-388.

Smith, W.L. 2001. Strīrājya: Indian Accounts of Kingdoms of Women. In *Vidyārṇavavandanam: Essays in Honour of Asko Parpola*, edited by K. Karttunen and P. Koskikallio. Helsinki: Studia Orientalia.

Squarcini, Federico. 2005. Tradens, Traditum, Recipiens: Introductory Remarks on the Semiotics, Pragmatics and Politics of Tradition. In *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*, edited by F. Squarcini. Firenze, Italy: Firenze University Press.

Sreenivasan, Ramya. 2007. *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Pasts in India c. 1500-1900*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Stewart, Tony K. 2001. In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory. *History of Religions* 40 (3):260-287.

Streusand, Douglas E. 1989. *The Formation of the Mughal Empire*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 2001. Written on Water: designs and dynamics in the Portuguese Estado da India. In *Empires: perspectives from archaeology and history*, edited by S. E. Alcock. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2003. Turning the Stones Over: Sixteenth-century millenarianism from the Tagus to the Ganges. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 40:129-161.

———. 2005. *Mughals and Franks, Explorations in connected history*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sukthankar, V.S. 1933. Introduction. In *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited [Mahābhārata]*, edited by V. S. Sukthankar et. al. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Taft, Frances H. 1994. Honor and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal-Rajput Marriages. In *The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity*, edited by K. Schomer, J. L. Erdman, D. O. Lodrick, and L. I. Rudolph. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Manohar.

Talbot, Cynthia. 1995. Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (4):692-722.

———. 2007. The Mewar Court's Construction of History. In *The Kingdom of the Sun: Indian Court and Village Art from the Princely State of Mewar*, edited by J. G. Williams. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum.

———. 2009. Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative. *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (1):211-243.

Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. 1996. Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History. *Iranian Studies* 29 (1/2):149-175.

———. 2001. *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography*. New York: Palgrave.

Thackston, Wheeler M. 2002. Literature. In *The Magnificent Mughals*, edited by Z. Ziad. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thapar, Romila. 1996. The Tyranny of Labels. *Social Scientist* 24 (9/10):3-23.

———. 2005. *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*. London and New York: Verso.

Utas, Bo. 2006. "Genres" in Persian Literature 900-1900. In *Literary Genres: An Intercultural Approach*, edited by G. Lindberg-Wada. Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter.

Van der Kuijp, Leonard W.J. 2006. The Earliest Indian Reference to Muslims in a Buddhist Philosophical Text of *Circa* 700. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34:169-202.

Vassie, Roderic. 1988. Persian Interpretations of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the Mughal Period: with special reference to the Sufi version of ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Chishtī. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Vogel, Claus. 1979. *Indian lexicography*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Vrat, Satya. 1994. *Studies in Jaina Sanskrit literature*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers.

———. 2003. *Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahākāvyas*. Jaipur: Raj Publishing House.

Wade, Bonnie C. 1998. *Imaging Sound: an ethnomusicological study of music, art, and culture in Mughal India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wagoner, Phillip B. 1993. *Tidings of the King: a translation and ethnohistorical analysis of the Rāyavācakamu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

———. 1996. "Sultan among Hindu Kings": Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55 (4):851-880.

———. 1999. Fortuitous convergences and essential ambiguities: Transcultural political elites in the medieval Deccan. *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 3 (3):241-64.

Weber, Albrecht. 1887. Über den Pārasīprakāça des Kṛishṇadāsa. In *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*. Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Windfuhr, Gernot. 1979. *Persian grammar: history and state of its study*. New York: Mouton Publishers.

Yashaschandra, Sitamshu. 2003. From Hemacandra to *Hind Svarāj*: Region and Power in Gujarati Literary Culture. In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions From South Asia*, edited by S. Pollock. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Yücesoy, Hayrettín. 2009. Translation as Self-Consciousness: Ancient Sciences, Antediluvian Wisdom, and the ʻAbbāsid Translation Movement. *Journal of World History* 20 (4):523-557.

Zaidi, Shailesh, ed. 1994. *Hinduism in Aligarh Manuscripts: Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Mss. of Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U., Aligarh on Hindu Legends, Philosophy & Faith*. Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library.

Zelliot, Eleanor. 2003. Medieval Encounter Between Hindu and Muslim: Eknath's Drama-Poem *Hindu-Turk Saṃvād*. In *India's Islamic Traditions 711-1750*, edited by R. Eaton. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Original edition, 1982.

Zutshi, Chitralekha. 2011. Translating the Past: Rethinking *Rajatarangini* Narratives in Colonial India. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70 (1):5-27.

APPENDIX: FOUR SANSKRIT VERSES TRANSLITERATED IN THE *RAZMNĀMAH*

I have reconstructed the quoted Sanskrit verses from the Persian transliteration, which correspond closely with the Devanagari recension variations cited in the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. The editors of the *Razmnāmah* also transliterate the verses into Roman script. But they appear to follow an unidentified Sanskrit version of the epic, not the Persian text.

Reconstructed Sanskrit Verses[1]

asitaṃ[2] cārtimantaṃ ca sunīthaṃ cāpi yaḥ smaret
divā vā yadi vā rātrau nāsya sarpabhayaṃ bhavet

yo jaratkāruṇā jāto jaratkārau mahāyaśāḥ
āstīkaḥ sarpasatre ca pannagān yo 'bhyarakṣata
taṃ smarantaṃ mahābhāgā na māṃ hiṃsitum arhatha

sarpāya sarvabhadraṃ te dūraṃ gaccha mahāviṣa
janamejayasya yajñānte āstīkavacanaṃ smara

āstīkasya vacaṃ śrutvā yaḥ sarpo na nivartate
śatadhā bhidyate mūrdhni śiṃśavṛkṣaphalaṃ yathā
janamejayasya yajñānte āstīkavacanaṃ smara

English Translation

Whoever remembers Asita, Artimant, and Sunītha,
whether day or night, will have no fear of snakes.

When I remember that illustrious Āstīka, who was born to Jaratkāru by Jaratkāru and
protected the snakes at the snake sacrifice, let you, fortune ones, be unable to harm me.

All blessings upon you snake! Go away great poisonous one!
Remember the words of Āstīka at the completion of Janamejaya's sacrifice.

Whichever snake does not flee when he hears the words of Āstīka,
his head will be split into a hundred pieces like the fruit of the Śiṃśa tree.
Remember the words of Āstīka at the completion of Janamejaya's sacrifice.

---

[1] *Razmnāmah*, 1:54. These verses are all available with slight variations in the Sanskrit critical edition. The first verse is 1.53.23. The first two lines of the second verse are 1.53.22 and the final line is the first line quoted in note 463* in Volume I of the *Mahābhārata*. The third verse offers the second and third lines in note 463*. The first two lines of final verse correspond to lines four and five in note 463*, and the final line repeats line three of note 463*.

[2] This name is unclear; the Persian reads Astīn whereas the Sanskrit reads Asita or, in a variant, Astīka. I have used the canonical Sanskrit Asita in my reconstruction.