Unquiet City: Making and Unmaking Politics in Mughal Delhi, 1707-39

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a study of the elaborations of the cultures of politics in the Mughal capital of Shāhjahānābād – modern day Delhi – from the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 to the invasion of the Irānian warlord Nādir Shāh in 1739. While this period has frequently been imagined as one of imperial decline and political failure, this dissertation argues that these years of tumult saw instead the transformation of elite politics and the development of a language of popular politics within the space of the Mughal capital.

The transformation of politics as practiced by Mughal elites became dramatically evident in the second decade of the eighteenth century, in which two reigning emperors were violently removed from the throne. Through a close examination of the admonitory historical texts which describe these events, this dissertation suggests that such transgressive actions reflected a debate among the Mughal elite about the proper role of the emperor in an empire which had become unprecedentedly bureaucratic and routinized in its administration. Yet speculation about the place of the emperor did not remain the affair of the empire's elites who saw themselves as the traditional guardians of the realm. For now, an unlikely new party began to intervene ever more assertively in matters that had been considered the preserve of the empire's ruling nobility. This was the people itself, an entity that agitated vociferously in support or in criticism of elite acts of governance. In doing so, the people produced a new language of popular politics which directly addressed the powers-that-be.

Such a popular politics was produced within, and enacted upon the stage of the Mughal capital, itself built as a representation of the virtues of Mughal imperium. The emergence of the people as an increasingly visible mass in the city is the subject of the first chapter. The second, third and

fourth chapters then turn to an examination of the dramatic convulsions of elite politics which caused the bodies of slaughtered princes to be paraded in the thoroughfares of the Mughal city. Chapter four ends with a study of the popular response to one such incident, the deposition of the Emperor Farrukh Siyar in 1719, arguing that the event marks an instance of the city's masses making an explicit intervention in the politics of the imperial elite. Chapter five considers the means of communication by which such political solidarities were forged, arguing that poetry in particular was a powerful form of social communication which might activate political solidarities amongst the people of the city. Chapters six and seven offer a detailed account of other instances of popular political activity, focusing particularly on the Shoe-sellers' riot of 1729. Chapter eight turns to the invasion of Nādir Shāh in 1739, arguing that the resistance to his occupation of Delhi and subsequent events mark the limits of possibility of such politics. The conclusion examines the divergent trajectories of elite and popular politics through the end of the empire and the rise of the colonial state in the subcontinent.

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A Note on Transliteration

I have adopted a simplified transliteration scheme for the body of the dissertation. My aim has been to ensure that the Fārsī words cited are searchable in online resources like Steingass' Persian-English dictionary online. I mark long vowels, ain and hamza using diacritics; but do not use other diacritics, and render common names in their usual spelling. Similarly, I have not standardized the spelling or transcription of Persian or Urdu primary or secondary published sources, instead leaving them as they exist in online bibliographic resources such as WorldCat.

For Sudhir, Geeta, and Aparajita Kaicker

...همین عزلت است که باعث تالیف این نسخه شده ... تا لطیفهٔ غیبی رو نماید و فضل لاریبی رخ کشاید و شغلی دلخواه بدست افتد بدین مشغلهٔ دلکش در رفع بیکاری میکوشم پیداست که کلپترہ نویسی و لاطایل گوئی بیش نیست چون طبیعت را از آفات تعطیل میانت نموده و از ہجوم افکار ردیهٔ باطله باز داشته مقید وقت افتاده چه توان کرد که بطالت و عطالت بامتداد کشید شش سال قریب باختتام رسید

خمیازه سنج تهمت عیش رسیده ایم　　　می این قدر نبود که رنج خمار ماند

مآثر الامرا، ۳. ۷۲۷-۷۲۸

> The [Mughal] administration was concentrated in the provincial capital. It was city-government, not in the Greek sense of the term, but rather as a government living and working in cities and mainly concerning itself with the inhabitants of the cities and their immediate neighborhood. The Mughals — after due allowance has been made for their love of hunting and laying out pleasure gardens and their frequent marches,— were essentially an urban people in India, and so were their courtiers, officials, and generally speaking the upper and middle classes of the Muhammadan population here. The villages were neglected and despised, and village-life was dreaded by them as a punishment. No doubt, the villages were the place from which their food and income came; but that was their only connection with them. Life in a village was as intolerable to them as residence on 'the Getic and Sarmatian shores' away from 'the seat of empire and of the gods' was to a cultured poet of imperial Rome. This feeling comes out very clearly in a Persian couplet:
>
> *Zāgh dum su-yi shahr wa sar su-yi deh*
> *Dum-i ān zāgh az sar-i ū beh*
> The tail of a crow was turned towards the city and its head towards the village.
> Surely, the tail here was better than the head!
>
> – Jadunath Sarkar, *The Mughal Administration: Six Lectures*, p.40.
>
> The towns in the Mughal Empire would thus seem to have remained largely quiescent. The artisan and the labourer formed part of a sector which was parasitically dependent upon the revenue drained from the villages, and for which the Mughal ruling class directly or indirectly provided the market. Under such conditions the scope and intensity of protest by the urban poor was limited. The paucity of evidence we have about it is probably an accurate reflection of this limitation.
>
> – Irfan Habib, *Peasant and Artisan Resistance in Mughal India,* p. 30.[1]

INTRODUCTION: The Road to Delhi

In the early eighteenth century, you took the imperial Highway north from the old capital, the city that the emperor Akbar had renamed after himself. Leaving the cramped and twisting alleys of Akbarābād, you traveled up the shady road on horseback or in a palanquin, crossing fields and woods interspersed with little towns and villages. If the roads were safe, you traveled at the standard pace of about ten to twelve *kos* (fifteen to eighteen kilometers) daily, every unit marked

[1] Jadunath Sarkar, *The Mughal Administration: Six Lectures* (Patna: Superintendent, Government Printing, Bihar and Orissa, 1920); Irfan Habib, "Peasant and Artisan Resistance in Mughal India," *McGill Studies in International Development*, no. 34 (July 1984).

with unerring regularity by a tall, solid pillar which loomed over the landscape. Following the path from pillar to pillar, each one a testament to the durability, order and stateliness of the Mughal imperium, you would come to the little town and Inn at Badarpur, then to the Inn built by the Lady Juliyāna and Kishan Dās' pond, past the ancient ruins of Kilokhrī, and up to the Twelve-Pillared Bridge while straddled a little stream. On the other side you would see the majestic tomb of the emperor Humāyūn towering over the many other nearby domes, all rising above the verdant gardens which surrounded them. Now you were almost there: following the road through the buildings of Old Delhi (some ruined, some recent), past venerable graves and wandering mystics, you would finally walk up to the stone walls of the new city of Delhi that the emperor Shāh Jahān built in his own name. And just past the gate lay the great promenade of Saᶜd Allāh Khān Avenue, bustling with more people, more shops, more scents and sounds and smells and colors than you had ever seen before – if, that is, you were just another ordinary inhabitant of the realm.

Within the city lay the Exalted Fort, a massive complex of halls, offices, residences, workshops and gardens. For much of the first half of the eighteenth century, the Fort was inhabited by a Mughal emperor waited upon daily by his many noblemen, who collectively formed the ruling elite of the vast domains of an empire that now stretched across the subcontinent, from Kabul in the West to Bengal in the east, from Kashmir in the north to Hyderabad and beyond in the south. When the emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707 after almost three decades of incessant campaign on the southern frontier, the imperial center of gravity returned to the heartland in the north. In 1712, the newly crowned emperor Jahāndār Shāh marched into Shāhjahānābād – the New Delhi his great-grandfather had built some seven decades before – and a ruler remained on the throne in the Fort for much of the next five decades.

Why did the Mughal ruler reside in Delhi? Then, as now, Delhi existed in the ambiguity of symbolic excess. It was a great metropolis, to be sure, but it was also seen as something more. It was a city sanctified by tombs, a redoubt of Islam among unbelievers, and a site of sovereignty: a place where divine will was connected to the human realm through the body of a caliph seated on a throne. Shāh Jahān's the new city expressed the virtues of the Mughal imperium from every garden and bāzār. And it was on this stage that the dramas of eighteenth-century politics – dethronements, regicides, riots – were enacted.

What was the relationship between the Mughal polis and Mughal politics? What highway led to the vibrant and tumultuous politics of the Mughal metropolis in the last decades of imperial vigor? Such questions lie at the heart of the following inquiry, which traces the high road to Delhi as a political entity through the obliterated landscape of India's past. By the early eighteenth century, this dissertation argues, the prosperity and commercial vitality of the empire came to cause remarkable transformations in the city's political culture. On the one hand, Mughal elites – noblemen and bureaucrats – wrestled with the vexed and thorny question of the meaning and parameters of imperial succession and central control in a far-flung peninsular empire. Debates around the possibility of breaking with custom and re-engineering the relationship between the emperor and his nobility were proclaimed and enacted within the space of the Mughal capital. And it was in the same space of the city that an increasingly assertive and politically activated populace responded strongly to the changes in the implicit constitution of the empire. In their actions we glimpse the making of a new language of popular politics, the possibilities and limits of which became sharply apparent by the Persian ruler Nādir Shāh's devastating invasion and sack of Delhi in 1739.

The Question of Decline

Such matters of politics have long been seen as questions of Mughal decline. This was certainly the case in the writings of William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar, whose work inaugurated the field of eighteenth-century Mughal history and has remained authoritative ever since.[2] The broadly Marxist historians teaching at Aligarh Muslim University in the decades after Indian independence may well have disagreed vehemently on the causes of imperial decline, but they remained of the view that the process had begun under the reign of Aurangzeb in the late seventeenth century and culminated by the middle of the eighteenth century. Rather than assigning the causes of decline to the personal failings of the emperor and his nobility, however, the historians at Aligarh found fault with the empire's extractive character, and the increasing unavailability of military land-revenue assignments (*jāgīr*) which were seen to be the object of the Mughal state.[3] These works followed and were in accord with Satish Chandra's *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, which offered a significantly revised view of the political processes of decline from the death of the "Great Emperor" Aurangzeb in 1707 to the aftermath of Nādir Shāh's invasion of Delhi (1739).[4] Among Chandra's great contributions were his insistence on the primacy of economic factors over the "individual faults and failings of character" which had previously been imagined to be the cause of the Mughal end. In fact, even as early as 1959, Chandra went on to suggest that "the disintegration of the Mughal empire was

[2] William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & sons, 1921); Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & sons, 1949).
[3] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (New York,: Asia Publishing House, 1963); M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Bombay, New York,: Published for the Dept. of History [by] Asia Pub. House, 1966).
[4] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740* (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

not due to any absolute decline in the character and capabilities of the nobility of the Mughals".[5] The empire came apart because of a financial and administrative crisis, and because Chandra had concluded that Mughal despotism could not evolve into a limited government such as the English constitutional monarchy.[6]

Why was this the case? Chandra tells us that this was because "the leading nobles who could have helped to institute policies and measures designed to consolidate and strengthen the Mughal empire, became themselves a prime factor in its disintegration".[7] The prime mover behind such centrifugal forces, for Chandra, was the court faction ("Party"), already well-developed in its significance in the works of Irvine and Sarkar. In their view, the early eighteenth-century Mughal court was riven by faction between the major ethnic groupings of nobility – immigrants from the regions of Īrān and Tūrān – and increasingly assertive natives of Afghān, Hindūstānī or Rājpūt origin. Chandra disagreed with this characterization, suggesting instead that such formations were "based on clan and family relationships, or personal affiliations and interests".[8] Each faction was presumably seen as deriving internal coherence from solidarities of language, culture, patronage and regional origin, though it is noteworthy that Chandra does not offer a longitudinal dissection of any particular group by way of showing how a particular faction actually operated in practice. While historians might disagree with representations of this or that faction as "native" or "foreign", the primacy of the court as site of politics and faction as unit of

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[5] Ibid., 304, 300.
[6] Ibid., 296.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 293. Chandra however cannot help but lapse into the very ethnic categories he dismisses. Of the period between 1728-37 we hear, "While … far-reaching changes were taking place across the border of India, the Mughal court was engrossed in factional politics and narrow self-seeking". Only a little later we are told that "most of the nobles had mixed contingents of Mughals, Afghāns, Hindustānis etc. … Nevertheless, the testimony of contemporary writers shows that there was a certain degree of ill-will and and a sense of rivalry between the Mughals and non-Mughals, and that this sometimes led to an open conflict between them, and also affected relations between the nobles". Ibid., 280–281.

political maneuver remained central and virtually unchallenged in contemporary understandings of Mughal politics.[9] For the Mughal empire to have developed a "constitutional monarchy", therefore, its greatest elites were expected to abandon their mutual conflicts and institute systems of governance in enlightened self-interest.[10]

Notions of Oriental empires declining in the era of Euro-American ascendance are no longer seen as tenable across regional historiographies. The history of the Ottoman empire, once imagined as experiencing some form of decay from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, has been subjected to perhaps the most searching and comprehensive revision in this regard.[11] Similar reconceptualizations have transformed the history of Late Imperial China, turning away from both Eurocentric narratives of failure and Sinocentric accounts of national development.[12] Since the 1970s, writings on the history of South Asia have also questioned aspects of the paradigm of Mughal decline. While scholars such as John Richards argued persuasively against the notion of a shortfall in lands available for military assignation – a key component of the model of decline propounded by Aligarh's historians – Philip Calkins demonstrated that the economic powerhouse of Bengal saw not economic breakdown, but fiscal reconsolidation in the

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[9] See particularly Zahiruddin Malik, *A Mughal Statesman of the Eighteenth Century, Khan-I-Dauran, Mir Bakshi of Muhammad Shah, 1719-1739,* (Aligarh: Asia Publishing House, 1973), 57–58.

[10] In this context, Steve Pincus' recent re-evaluation of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 might offer room for much more nuanced comparison. Pincus in particular stresses the importance of popular participation in determining the course of events and the rapid displacement of James II. Steven C. A Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[11] To list only a few instances of scholarship that have been influential in this revision: Cornell H Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4 (98 1997): 30–76; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Donald Quataert, "Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes Towards the Notion of 'Decline,'" *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (2003): 2–11.

[12] For a lucid account, see William T Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

early eighteenth century.[13] Yet the overarching vision of decline itself remained virtually unchallenged, coloring thought on all aspects of eighteenth-century society.[14]

This picture changed with the arrival of two seminal works in the 1980s.[15] Turning away from the standard accounts of Mughal decay, Christopher Bayly instead used a variety of sources to suggest that dislocations at the imperial center did not cause serious or long-term disruptions to the economy of North India.[16] Behind the temporary desolation of the high roads of empire, suggested Bayly, lay the new and compact political formations built by local rulers with the help of intermediary groups of traders and scribes. Muzaffar Alam presented a related but distinct argument, showing how Mughal provincial governors responded to a variety of local and imperial political crises by establishing their own proto-states. These local political challenges, argued Alam, were the product not of immiserated landlords rebelling against a hyper-exploitative imperial center, but of groups that had become increasingly assertive because of the economic growth enabled by the empire over the preceding century. Bayly's argument has had perhaps the greatest impact in reformulating historians' understanding of the end of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century. While aspects of his argument remain open to discussion, its sway over historians of the eighteenth century has been great. Under its influence, since the

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[13] John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford [Eng.]: Clarendon Press, 1975); Philip Calkins, "Revenue Administration and the Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal: 1700-1740" (The University of Chicago, 1972).

[14] M. N. Pearson, "Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1976): 221–235; Naqvi Hamida Khatoon, "Aurangzeb's Policies and the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (1977): 191–192; Karen Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, no. 2 (1979): 151–167.

[15] C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[16] The scholarship of Athar Ali has offered an important counter-perspective from the vantage of the Aligarh School. See M. Athar Ali, "The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case," *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (1975): 385–396; M. Athar Ali, "The Mughal Polity: A Critique of Revisionist Approaches," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1993): 699–710; For a vigorous response, see "Introduction" in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Mughal State, 1526-1750* (New Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

1980s, historians have turned away from questions of imperial politics and have instead stressed the economic vitality of the regions of the empire through the period.[17]

Such focus, however, occludes the question of the end of the Mughal empire itself, since the economic vitality of the heartland and the formation of compact political units in the early eighteenth century does not explain *why* a stable political complex was suddenly and rapidly reconfigured in favor of smaller local organization. If the process operated in reverse – had, for instance, the early eighteenth century seen a rapid territorial and financial consolidation at the center, perhaps through the standard means of military action – historians would find it important to explain *how* and *why* an imperial form was built, and what its collaborators and victims had to say about the process. This is certainly true for an earlier period in the empire's history, in which recent fine-grained studies have opened new vistas for understanding the building of empire.[18] The question of the end of empire, however, is rather thornier. In the South Asian case, we are faced with a political unit which was widely perceived to be tremendously powerful by any index of economic, military or territorial comparison in 1707, but had functionally ceased to exist a mere six decades later. Indeed, by the middle of the century late-Mughal intellectuals had begun to seriously consider the possibility that the dynasty was near its end.[19] Yet the puzzle of such a seemingly rapid and total dissolution is only exacerbated by the fact that the dynasty did not in fact end, and that a Mughal emperor remained on the throne until the ultimate abolition of

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[17] For a representative sample see Seema Alavi, *The Eighteenth Century in India* (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); P. J. Marshall, *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?* (New Delhi ; Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[18] Allison Busch, "Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Kesavdas," *South Asia Research* 25, no. 1 (2005): 31–54; Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Cynthia Talbot, "Justifying Defeat: A Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 2–3 (January 1, 2012): 329–368; A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[19] Vasileios Syros, "An Early Modern South Asian Thinker on the Rise and Decline of Empires: Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi, the Mughals, and the Byzantines," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 4 (2012): 793–840.

the institution by the British in the aftermath of the sepoy rebellion of 1857. If the end of the Mughal empire is not explained by economic crisis, nor in fact is it explained by the commercial prosperity of little towns and Bazaars on the by-roads to Delhi. What then is the correct framework in which to understand the end of empire?

Polis and Politics

It is in the context of this unresolved problem of imperial dissolution that this dissertation turns the focus towards the question of politics at the heart of the empire. For our purposes, politics (or the formation of "the political") is defined as capaciously as possible, drawing on the Aristotelian sense of the practice of living together in the city and the state (*polis*). Such language would not be unfamiliar to a Mughal scholar or bureaucrat of the early eighteenth century or before, though it is important to note that in the Mughal context, scholars do not appear to have meditated directly on politics in abstract terms. Aziz Al-Azmeh's understanding of discussions of politics during the caliphate is perhaps equally illuminates the Mughal instance. In Al-Azmeh's opinion, "[w]riting politics is not theoretical discourse, but disquisition on practice and its skills. Politics is an art, learnt like all other arts through practice, imitation, and the creation of a *habitus*. Thus it consists of maxims and examples, not of general statements concerning a particular object of study."[20]

Certainly such a judgment would appear to apply to the case of a certain Yūsuf Mīrak, a provincial official of the Mughal empire who lived in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Mīrak, as Sajida Alvi has recently shown, wrote to critique imperial policy towards the western province of Sindh, far indeed from the lush heartland of the north, by drawing on a

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[20] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 114.

language of administration in which the concepts of justice and sovereignty occupied a central place.[21] Society, according to Mīrak, was composed of four classes, which corresponded with the four elements and the four humors. In this scheme, the nobility were fire, intellectuals were air, traders were water and farmers were the earth. Yet this social form, like the humoral body, was liable to imbalance and disorder, so that a wise sovereign ruler or doctor (*hākim, hakīm*) was required to maintain the balance. He did this by providing justice to all.[22]

Alvi demonstrates that Mīrak drew heavily on manuals of statecraft and ethics, particularly *Muhsin's Ethics* (*Akhlāq-i Muhsinī*), which circulated broadly throughout the Persian-speaking world as a guide for rulers and the officials who served them. This text, written by Husain Vāʿiz Kāshifī at the turn of the sixteenth century, in turn drew on the *Nasirian Ethics* (*Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*) of the thirteenth-century scholar Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī.[23] Tūsī's *Ethics* itself enjoyed great popularity in India before and during the Mughal reign.[24] Tūsī, himself following the tenth-century philosopher al-Fārābī, describes man as by nature a city-dweller, who requires social intercourse (*ijtimāʿ*) in urban civilization (*tamaddun*). This, shows Maria Subtelny, is the Aristotelian concept of man as political animal (*politikon zoon*). This is the subject who is to achieve human perfection (*kamāl-i insānī*) through the action of the "regulator of the virtuous city" (*mudabbir-i madīna-yi fāzila*), who, through his absolute wisdom (*hikmat-i mutlaq*), provides justice (*ʿadālat*) in order to keep each social element in its proper place.[25]

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[21] Sajida Sultana Alvi, "Mazhar-i Shahjahani and the Province of Sindh under the Mughals: A Discourse on Political Ethics," in *Perspectives on Mughal India: Rulers, Historians, "Ulama" and Sufis* (Karachi; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28–50.
[22] Ibid., 31.
[23] Maria E. Subtelny, "A Late Medieval Persian Summa on Ethics: Kashifi's Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 601–614.
[24] On Tusi's popularity in Mughal India see Muzaffar Alam, "State Building under the Mughals: Religion, Culture and Politics," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale*, no. 3/4 (October 1, 1997): 105–128; See also more broadly Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
[25] Subtelny, "A Late Medieval Persian Summa on Ethics," 604–605.

In this way, the obscure Mīrak's address to the imperial court drew on a language of politics that was based on intersecting ideals of city-state as site of the human highest good, of the ruler as a wise provider of justice, of bodies living and politic as constituted by the balance of humors and elements and classes. This was a language in which the Mughal rulers were well-versed: emperors saw and represented themselves as the ultimate providers of justice for their subject population.[26] But what was the task of "the people" in this conception? The single word "obedience" should suffice. Ethical treatises of the genre of the "mirror" texts, notes Patricia Crone, frequently interpreted the Qurʾānic verse "O you who believe, Obey God, the Messenger and those in command (*ulū ʻl-amr*) among you" (4:59) to mean an instruction to obey earthly rulers, "seemingly unaware that many religious scholars had gone out of their way to avoid this interpretation of the verse".[27] This was certainly true of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, whose death in 1707 inaugurates the period of this study, and who quoted this verse in this sense in his correspondence.[28] Indeed, such understandings diffused as widely as the texts which bore them to generations of students across the subcontinent.

Yet conceptions of the people as a passive and quiescent flock came under sharp challenge during a series of urban disorders in the early eighteenth century, particularly in the city of Shāhjahānābād. These events have until recently been seen as instances of administrative failure and have been considered symptomatic of imperial decline. But, as the preceding discussion has implied, instances of urban disorder should be seen more properly as acts of popular politics that

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[26] Linda T. Darling, "'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, no. 1 (2002): 3–19.
[27] Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 154–155.
[28] See for instance Hamid al-Din Khan, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib: English Translation of Ahkam-I-Alamgiri*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & sons, 1949), sec. 29 "Obey Orders First".

were informed by (and operated within) the context of the pervasive discourse of sovereignty and justice mentioned above.

Popular Politics and the Early Modern

To unearth the motives and forms of such popular politics is one of the central objectives of this dissertation. Such a language of politics, Aziz Al-Azmeh reminds us, is not to be thought of as belonging to "Islamic political thought" with some inherent "Islamic character attributed to it as its constitutive *differentia*".[29] But nor then should such forms of politics be seen as part of some equally homeostatic "Indic" category with its own unending continuities, permanent features and changeless truths. In what follows, therefore, I frame the transformations and elaborations of politics within the rather more flexible contexts of the space of the city on the one hand and of early modernity on the other. It is indeed no accident that the most spectacular eruptions of popular political assertion were to be witnessed in the city at the heart of empire. This was not only so because the city was seen as the ideal site of human existence, or because of the zones of indistinction between ideas of political community and urban civilization, or even because the new city of Shāhjahānābād might have produced subjective forms in inhabitants that were deeply suffused with the ruling ideologies of state. Most fundamentally, by the early eighteenth century Delhi was now a city larger than ever before, less the site of a "face-to-face" society than ever before. In thinking through this sense of scale, the historian may be liberated from insisting on otherwise tenuous and unprovable arguments of radical novelty.[30] Thus, all of the social and

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[29] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 207.

[30] Indeed, questions of scale in history have been the recent subject of historians interested in questions of transnational or longue-durée history. See Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris, and Jacques Revel, "Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History," *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (2011): 573–584; Sebouh David Aslanian et al., "AHR Conversation: How Size Matters: The Question of Scale in History," *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (December 1, 2013): 1431–1472.

political phenomena examined in this dissertation may have been familiar through experience or analogy to a resident of the city in the sixteenth century, or the thirteenth, or perhaps even the tenth. What can and will be demonstrated, however, is that such phenomena had acquired an intensity, frequency and regularity that was unprecedented because of the scale of global commerce, technological improvement and population increase: processes, in other words, which the historian John Richards considered to be characteristic of early modernity in South Asia and the world.[31]

Such statements should not be surprising to historians of the early modern period who have described the function and importance of popular political activity in other parts of the world.[32] Nor does any doubt remain about the capacity of early modern popular action to produce moments of political revolution of the sort that are seen as constitutive of the modern global political order.[33] In the South Asian case, Farhat Hasan has been perhaps the first to offer a granular, local account of the interpenetration of state and society through his examination of the controversies between urban functionaries, traders and non-elites.[34] Nevertheless, questions of early modern politics remain of central importance in the South Asian case, bearing as they do

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[31] John F. Richards, "Early Modern India and World History," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 197–209.

[32] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Tim Harris, ed., *The Politics of the Excluded, C. 1500-1850* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave, 2001); Ethan H Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, UK; New York; New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave, 2006); Peter Lake and Steven C. A Pincus, *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); ibid.

[33] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); William Beik, *Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution* (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William Beik, "The Violence of the French Crowd from Charivari to Revolution," *Past & Present* 197, no. 1 (November 1, 2007): 75–110; William Hamilton Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[34] Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, C. 1572-1730* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

both on contested understandings of the making of colonial modernity, and on the early modern as a constitutive period in determining the shape of the modern world.[35]

Partha Chatterjee has recently suggested that the early modern should be seen not as a unitary period, but instead as an agglomeration of tendencies (towards and against absolutism, for instance).[36] In a related vein, we might also think of local, distinct, interconnected and comparable early modernities, each the product of a particular configuration of specific historical forces. The value of early modernity as an era that permits the unearthing of the making of the second nature of our world as we know it should then be enhanced by taking seriously the conjunctural and contingent nature of its local instantiations.[37]

It is specifically in this context that this dissertation retells the story of Mughal politics during a period of putative imperial decline. The practice of politics, this dissertation argues, experienced a series of dramatic changes roughly from the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 to the invasion of the Persian ruler Nādir Shāh in 1739. On the one hand, elite politics were transformed by the sharp and painful emergence of the possibility of change in the rules of imperial succession – an emergence which threatened to rework the structure of the empire, relations between center and province, and the place of the sovereign vis-à-vis his nobility. On the other hand, the same period witnessed the elaboration of a popular politics through which an increasingly assertive populace came to intervene in affairs that had until then been seen purely

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[35] On this question, broadly defined, and more specifically on the colony as the site of a certain modernity under the auspices of global empire, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012); For a concise and programmatic statement on this, see the "Introduction" to Sheldon Pollock, ed., *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800* (Duke University Press, 2011) Pollock's argument, here confined to issues of intellectual history, is clearly applicable to other historical domains.

[36] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*.

[37] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1, 1997): 735–762; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A Tale of Three Empires: Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context," *Common Knowledge* 12, no. 1 (n.d.): 66–92, accessed September 9, 2013.

as elite affairs. While the crisis produced by Nādir Shāh's invasion may have revealed the limits of such politics and disrupted the sufficient conditions of their operation, the language of power forged during the years of the end of empire has proven to persist, albeit in mutated form, to the present day. Indeed, the particular nature of modernity as it appears in the subcontinent today is lineally just as much the product of the operation of precolonial regimes of state power and popular assertion as it is that of colonial modernity and postcoloniality.

Method and Argument

Readers expecting a novel and definitive account of the Mughal political world will surely be disappointed by the provisional, halting and uncertain nature of the argument which follows. This is not simply the consequence of the novitiate status of the author, but also the product of more pressing epistemic doubt about the object of our study. My frequent recourse to formulations including words such as "perhaps" or "may" or "could" or "would" are not the product of a diffidence in making judgments, but are, rather, a pointed assertion of the profoundly shaky basis of what we do in fact take as certainty for the later Mughal empire. The history of politics in the empire has received relatively little attention from historians precisely because it was articulated with such sureness and verve by our mythic ancestors of the previous century. But this has meant that we have laid aside the great chronicles and other historical sources from the era as either dry "statements of fact" or wild "fanciful exaggerations". In fact, as even a cursory examination will yield, the many works of '*tārīkh*' (what we translate as "history") from the Mughal period in South Asia cannot be safely placed in either category. They are, predictably enough, sophisticated texts produced by extremely capable litterateurs and historians, and which bear the traces of their complex motivations. It is perhaps because the genre of *tārīkh* is so much more ancient and venerable than the modern practice of history that

we continue to fall under its spell, limiting our skepticism to variation between texts rather than applying it to texts as wholes, and confidently reproducing as certitudes statements which were made merely as bald assertions of fact. Our practice of skepticism is further compromised by the broad absence of other forms of data – archaeological, zoological, botanical – as well as the almost complete absence of the archival and documentary records that were generated by the bureaucratic exercise of state power over the vast extent of Mughal time and space.

I should stress that this project offers no salutary lesson or correction to the scholarship on the Mughal empire as it currently stands. Historiography, as Peter Brown has remarked, should be an exercise in gratitude,[38] and in any case, the keen attention manifest in Jadunath Sarkar's marginalia on his private copies of Mughal manuscripts should put to rest any ambition of bettering the technical practices of his scholarship. In this context, my aim is simply to demonstrate that a greater skepticism applied to the sources of political history can yield richer rewards for the historian. To put this more sharply, the *tārīkh* texts which have served as the foundation of our knowledge about the empire can no longer be considered to be anything other than artefacts, produced with intention and craftsmanship by their authors to serve particular aims and purposes. Like other forms of contemporary historical writing, such texts conceal the very workings of power which historians seek to unveil. To uncritically reproduce the narrative accounts of such histories is therefore to reproduce the artifices of Mughal power. Yet to challenge such texts is to shake the edifice of our historical knowledge. By way of example, let us consider the case of the emperor Jahāndār Shāh, whose brief reign is the subject of a subsequent chapter. Because Jahāndār Shāh was *almost* universally reviled in the accounts of subsequent chroniclers, it has been assumed that he was a poor or incompetent ruler without

[38] Peter Brown, "The Study of Elites in Late Antiquity," *Arethusa* 33, no. 3 (2000): 328.

providing the supplementary proof about policies or actions that would be required to substantiate such an assertion. If such proof is not immediately forthcoming, we must therefore at the very least accept a position of ambiguity and uncertainty, uncomfortable though this may be for the historian accustomed to the factual certitudes of other histories.

The stage on which the dramas of Mughal power after the death of Aurangzeb were enacted was the Mughal capital of Shāhjahānābād, the new city of Delhi that the emperor Shāh Jahān (r. 1627-58) built in his own name in 1648.[39] Chapter One offers a view of the making of the city in Mughal discourse. The new city of Delhi represented the values of the imperial elite in brick and mortar. Idealizations of prosperity and abundance were instantiated in markets and squares built to serve and to awe teeming multitudes of nobility and commoners.[40] In constructing this great edifice, Shāh Jahān introduced the particular imperatives of Mughal power on a landscape that was already imbued with profound sacrality as the resting-place of generations of Muslim holy men. In building a city which emblemized material wealth, Shāh Jahān also unleashed forces he could not have foreseen. The power of commerce was one of these.[41] Silver, running through the avenues built to facilitate its uninterrupted movement, flowed beyond the city and shaped everything it touched. In doing so, I argue, it transformed not only the spaces of holiness which surrounded the city, but also changed their character. By the eighteenth century, these sites,

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[39] The best monograph on Mughal Delhi remains Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); For an important critique of this work, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Mughal state—Structure or Process? Reflections on Recent Western Historiography," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 1992): 291–321.

[40] The centrality of such discourses of prosperity in ruling ideologies and their implementation in urban building projects is discussed in Stephen F. Dale, "Empires and Emporia: Palace, Mosque, Market, and Tomb in Istanbul, Isfahan, Agra, and Delhi," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1/2 (January 1, 2010): 212–229.

[41] On the increasing prosperity of the Mughal domains during the seventeenth century, see John F. Richards, "The Seventeenth-Century Crisis in South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 1, 1990): 625–638; Muzaffar Alam identifies this very prosperity as the cause of rural revolts and trends towards provincial autonomy. Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48*; For an opposing view, see R. P. Rana, "Was There an Agrarian Crisis in Mughal North India during the Late-Seventeenth and Early-Eighteenth Centuries?," *Social Scientist* 34, no. 11/12 (November 1, 2006): 18–32.

always associated with powerful mystical figures who might contest or deny temporal sovereignty, were now becoming lands of earthly pleasure for the city's urbanites.

The figure of the miraculous mystic never vanished, of course, but it became increasingly hazy in the confusions and temptations of a world in which everything was for sale. At the same time, such spaces came increasingly to be marked by presence and practices of ordinary people – the nameless and generally faceless folks who sometimes served as the background in the stories that Mughal commentators wished us to know. The lives and the worlds of possibility which these multitudes inhabited were shaped by the markets and avenues that Shāh Jahān had built to ease their existence, to further their trades, to teach them awe, gratitude and deference. By the early eighteenth century, however, this multitude had begun to show the signs of a distinct identity. Yet such identities were not individual or unconnected, for high and low did not live in isolation. Their tastes, practices and preferences circulated within and about the space of the city, producing a social totality marked by an uneven interplay of difference and similarity.

It is in this hybrid urban world of a large ruling nobility and an increasingly visible urban mass that the political order of the empire received its first blows. In 1713, the procession of the recently crowned Emperor Farrukh Siyar marched into Shāhjahānābād. In his wake followed the head and the body of the previous incumbent Jahāndār Shāh, who had been captured and executed after his defeat. Then came the body of Zū'l-fiqār Khān, only recently the most powerful nobleman in the empire, now fastened by his feet to the tail of an elephant. Farrukh Siyar's own body suffered similar ignominy in 1719 when it was thrown outside the gates of the fort, its wounds testifying to the emperor's violent end.

While Mughal princes were invariably slaughtered in the wars which determined imperial succession, such acts of regicide were a profound novelty in the Mughal empire.[42] What was the significance of such an unprecedented action? What changes in the polity did such an event signify? In seeking to answer this question, Chapters Three and Four offer a detailed re-examination of some of the primary sources used to reconstruct the events of the period. Before this, however, Chapter Two offers a new approach towards the historical method by which Mughal sources have generally been read. Rather than reading such sources as literal representations of events from which facts must be extricated and accreted "untruths" discarded, Chapter Two suggests that such accounts can be read to reveal more than one set of truths or discourse. In order to demonstrate my method, I offer a reading of the account of the life of a little-known European woman named Bībī Juliyānā who held office in the Mughal harem.[43] Quite aside from matters of her own life and existence, all of which have much to reveal of the workings of power through gender in the Mughal world, I show that a central issue in such historical retellings is the problematic question of succession within the empire.

This question of succession is the focus of Chapters Three and Four. Building on the analysis of the life of Bībī Juliyānā, these chapters demonstrate that the texts which historians have treated as more or less historical accounts of regrettable political conflicts should instead be seen as elements in a vigorous debate between a variety of commentators seeking to judge the conditions under which it was feasible and appropriate for the nobility to replace an emperor. Such discussions, in turn, point to the emergence of an imagination of kingship, and an understanding

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[42] A recent analysis of the role of princes in the Empire is Munis Daniyal Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) Particularly noteworthy is Chapter 7, where Faruqui's conclusions anticipate mine.
[43] An important and comprehensive account of Juliyana's life is to be found in Taymiya R. Zaman, "Visions of Juliana: A Portuguese Woman at the Court of the Mughals," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 4 (2012): 761–791.

of the empire, that was no longer shackled by the familiar paradigm of an absolute sovereign. The violence done to the imperial body therefore marked the literal enactment of this debate over the meaning of sovereignty in an increasingly bureaucratized empire.[44]

Yet the proper form for the deposition of a ruler was not a question of exclusively elite interest. An unexpected but crucial intervention in this debate was made by a group which had no formal say in the matter: the mass of the governed themselves. In Chapter Four, I suggest that the "disturbances" in the city during the deposition of Farrukh Siyar in 1719 in fact had the hallmarks of a popular uprising against the deposers. While no sources recount the perspectives of the crowds who attacked the soldiers of the army which came to depose Farrukh Siyar, my reading of the accounts of the event shows that the people of the city indeed responded to preserve the political order in which the emperor remained sovereign and inviolable.

If the people did indeed rise up in concert to defend the emperor against the depredations of his own nobility, what networks facilitated their mobilization? Chapter Five offers one answer, by considering the satirical poetry that had become increasingly prominent during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. By analyzing the works of the high court poet Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī and his rather more coarse contemporary Jaᶜfar Zatallī, this chapter demonstrates that satirical poetry had the capacity to be both public and political. In other words, satire could be used to circulate political messages, and certain forms of satire were designed to circulate in public contexts. As a pervasive feature not only of literary culture, but also of the everyday life of the street, satire was at least one among other possible means by which numbers of people might come into common accord.

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[44] My thinking here is shaped in large part by Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Whether mobilized by the satirical word on the street or not, concerted mass political activity became increasingly evident during the period. Chapter Six offers a typology of such forms of popular political activity, ranging from mobilization under the leadership of nobility to more autonomous political action generated within ethnic, occupational or religious communities. This chapter shows that popular mobilizations could operate just as easily against the emperor as in his defense. Indeed, the city's people did not fear to rise up against the monarch if they felt that the compact which joined ruler to ruled was being broken. Chapter Seven offers an analysis of the most spectacular instance of such mass defiance, the so-called shoe-makers' riot of 1729. While this event has been generally treated as a picaresque instance of the volatility or bigotry of Delhi's townsfolk, I argue that the riot marks the emergence of a flexible and responsive urban politics of alliance, betraying the existence of deeply political urban subjects. This mass politics, arising out of the matrix of the popular described in Chapter One, was enabled by the structure of the city itself. In this way, it should be seen as one more unforeseeable consequence of the operations of Mughal power which resulted in the making of Mughal Delhi.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven together offer an account of the making of an urban politics in a Mughal idiom. Chapter Eight examines the limits of such politics by presenting a new vision of the invasion of Delhi in 1739 by the Iranian warlord Nādir Shāh. This chapter asks an obvious question: if Nādir Shāh defeated the Mughal empire, why did it continue to survive? The answer, I suggest, lies in the invader's monomaniacal focus on the Ottoman empire as his chief enemy. Nādir Shāh intruded into a domain with both a complex internal elite political dispensation and an increasingly robust tradition of popular dissent – including a riot in the city on his arrival which killed scores of his troops. While Nādir Shāh's invasion did not provoke any sort of revolutionary upsurge in Delhi, his departure suggests that the domains of India were no longer

susceptible to the sort of conquest which had produced the Mughal dynasty in the early sixteenth century.

Finally, in Chapter 9, I offer brief reflections on the immediate aftermath of Nādir Shāh's invasion, discussing the forms of politics discussed above. Nādir Shāh's assault – and the subsequent disasters which were to befall the city over the next several decades – certainly disrupted the sufficiency of the conditions for the operation of such political forms. In other ways, his invasion might be seen as revealing the divergent trajectories of elite and popular political forms, each with its own consequence for the future history of the region. Yet, despite the obliteration of the characteristic forms of elite politics and the depoliticization of the popular under colonial rule, the language of Mughal politics, with its idiomatic expressions of consent or coercion, persevered, inflecting the practices of power even up to the present day.

CHAPTER 1: Delhis Old and New

Introduction

Hazrat-i Dihlī sharaf har makān
Makka-yi khurd ast dar hindūstān

Delhi the Dignified, noble in every way
Is a little Mecca in Hindūstān

– Hunarwar Khān ᶜĀqil, *Jalwa-yi Dīdār,* f. 20a (marginal correction)

So began a poet his rhyming description of the glories of the city of Delhi one day in the first decade of the eighteenth century.[45] Very little can be said about this person, whose pen-name was ᶜĀqil ("the wise"), except that he appears to have served as a panegyrist, perhaps in the employ of the rising nobleman Chīn Qilich Khān. In conformity with the style of his era, ᶜĀqil dutifully produced a variety of metaphors which praised the city's beauties.[46] He noted that the city had been granted the title of "Abode of the Caliphate" by the emperor, who "owned the necks" of his slaves. The city was vast: when the architect raised his hand to build it, not even a particle of dust remained unused in the wilderness around it. He likened the city's alleys to the curving locks of the famously handsome Āyāz: these streets were as paths in a garden, and fountains and lights greeted the eye in every direction. The rows of the city's shops were lined with rubies in the place of lamps. When the sun and the moon espied the city, their faces became enveloped by halos. All sorts of people, from tradesmen to soldiers, could be found in Delhi. They were brave and gentlemanly, loyal and fast to their word. They appeared delicate and restrained in their appetite at the party, but were fast and violent in warfare. They were learned

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[45] Hunarwar Khān ⊂Āqil, "Jalwā-yi Dīdār," n.d., Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Tarnaka Ms. 130.
[46] On praise-filled descriptions of the city as a literary feature of early modern Indo-Persian culture, see Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 73–81.

and skilled, so that the pen and the sword were like deputies to their fingers. They were, of course, natives, but there were also immigrants from ͨIrāq and the Tātār lands: whoever did not find his nightly bread in his homeland lived here in great grandeur. In fact, rhymed ͨĀqil, it was not concealed from the wise that India was a sort of mirror which hid the defects of those who perused it. The land exercised a benevolently civilizing influence: whoever gazed into its mirror became a human, even if he had previously been only a lump of matter. Two communities comprised the land, but no one had any argument with another, so that infidels and Muslims all lived in a comprehensive peace (*sulh-i kull*); born of the same branch, what was the flower and what was the thorn? The land's prosperity was unimaginable, exampled in the beggar who became a great man overnight. So the poet had some advice for his reader: muss up your hair a little bit, and slant your hat at a jaunty angle, for no one would look at you with a troubled gaze. Hatred and strife did not weigh upon hearts in India, and so no one bothered anybody else.[47]

ͨĀqil's rhymes, which dwelt on a variety of other subjects, are not noteworthy because they are in any way exceptional – in fact, quite the contrary: if the poem is of interest, it is because it serves as a typical example of what were imagined to be the virtues of the land. Yet in representing these qualities, ͨĀqil telescoped freely from Delhi to India (*Hind*) and back again: India was a garden, and Delhi its flower; or India was a flagon and Delhi its wine.[48] Delhi, for ͨĀqil, stood as a metonym for a much larger social, cultural and political entity.

Scholars have on the whole been uncertain about the value of high literary accounts such as ͨĀqil's. Filled with vague generalities and stock metaphors, such accounts are of frustratingly little use for the historian who seeks to develop a social-historical understanding of the morphology of the city and its economy. Such poems tell us nothing about the character of

[47] ͨĀqil, "Jalwā-yi Dīdār," f. 20a–22a.
[48] marginalia, ibid., f. 21a.

neighborhoods, patterns of peri-urban trade, the accumulation of capital or the resolution of disputes. Historians have therefore relied on the descriptions of European visitors or on a limited range of Persian-language sources from the period which are more amenable to such investigation. Yet the vision of the capital as wine in the flagon of empire raises questions about the nature of the Mughal city as it was seen by its own inhabitants. What was the tripartite relationship between empire, city and populace – or between state, society and culture – which required the stereotypical representation of a panegyric poet? To put it another way, how did Mughal power create the space of the Mughal city and operate within it? And finally, how did the operation of this power within the space of the city shape the conditions for the emergence of the Mughal popular?

These questions are explored at length and from a variety of perspectives in the pages that follow. In order to understand the significance of Shāhjahānābād, the Mughal city of Delhi built at the emperor Shāh Jahān's command in 1648, it is first necessary to develop a sense of the relationship of this new city with the older urban formations in the region which until then had been "Delhi", and which would henceforth become "Old Delhi" (*dihlī-yi kuhna*). When Mughal intellectuals visualized the city of Delhi in its ideal form, they linked its existence and its beauties directly to the excellence of its royal founder. "Praise be to God!", marveled a writer of ornate prose. "What a feat of construction it is, luxuriating glory, that it sits radiating moist freshness on the sublime royal diploma of the earth like an imperial insignia (*tughrā*)". The same author went on to compare the city variously to an ornament that adorned the brow of a bride more beautiful than the world, or a seal affixed as a finale to the end of the text of the ground, or a crown of nobility placed on the element of the earth. Like the highest astrological mansion, it was the greater luminary – that is, the sun (*naiyir-i Aᶜzam*) – which augmented the splendor of

the spectacle among the humble lands of the earth. It was the site of the universal rule of the exalted and the capital of the reign of the great, so that the eyes of the celestial dome had beheld no more precious city on the field of the earth; and so no city amongst the cities of the six countries matched its glory or size.[49]

Repeated insistence on imperial insignia, seals and crowns should alert us to the direct discursive link between sovereignty and city, between political authority and the surface of the earth. In this vein, in the first part of this chapter I follow the metaphor of the city as an imperial insignia on the sublime royal diploma of the earth. But, as I will show, the space in which Shāhjahānābād was built was not a fresh sheet on which Mughal power could be inscribed: if anything, the older cities of Delhi were a palimpsest which continued to bear the traces of older models of power and authority.[50] In doing so, I distinguish between two senses of the city: the palimpsest of dispersed set of buildings, gardens, ruins and particularly tombs, all of which together gained the name of Delhi the Dignified (*hazrat dihlī*). On the other hand lay the imperial insignia of the new city of Shāhjahānābād, which was built to represent the values of the Mughal elite. In the section titled "Insignia", I therefore trace the emergence of Shāhjahānābād in elite discourse and suggest that this ideologically purposeful view of the city became disseminated through literate circles in the empire.

How and why did such views circulate? One of the central themes in elite ambitions for the new city, as indeed for cities in general, was the encouragement of commerce and a desire for a general increase in wealth and prosperity. I therefore make the case that the building of the new city should be seen as a concrete instantiation of the pro-commerce rhetoric which is so evident

[49] Haji Khayr Allah, "Tausif-i Dar Al-Khilafat Shahjahanabad," June 13, 1722, f. 75b–76a, British Library APAC I.O. Islamic 2678.
[50] A notion famously explicated in André Corboz, "The Land as Palimpsest," *Diogenes* 31, no. 121 (March 1, 1983): 12–34.

in the idealized descriptions of the urban fabric. In building the new city of Delhi, the Mughal state therefore contributed to the infrastructure of commerce and exchange which it idealized as a general good. Much more significantly, however, the imperial center lent its support and validation to a broad "template of action" which Mughal elites might use for their own purposes. This template of action pointed to the proper ways in which charity might be exercised and the people served. It enabled the building of gardens and inns, mosques and tombs, which transformed and improved the landscape around the Mughal city, re-inscribing the palimpsest of the older city with the values of the new. All these activities were in evidence well before the founding of the empire, but they were now particularly intensified under Mughal rule.

Having examined these literary descriptions of Shāhjahānābād, I then focus on the tombs and the ruins which were scattered densely about the new city. Together these sites produced Delhi as a center of Islam in India, creating the sense of Hazrat Dihlī – Delhi the Dignified – the city sanctified by the pious exhalations of the many Friends of God buried there. But this palimpsestic conurbation experienced great change from the founding of the new city and into the first decades of the eighteenth century. I trace these changes through a close reading of the *Recollections of the Friends in Delhi* (*Zikr-i jamīᶜ-i awliyāᵓ-yi dihlī*), a remarkable and under-utilized account of the tombs and graves of the city composed by a high-ranking Mughal official of the early eighteenth century.[51] The *Recollections* illustrates that Delhi the Dignified had been transformed by the forces of commerce which had been unleashed in the making of Shāhjahānābād. These forces did not merely shape the physical landscape of the region through the construction of ever more tombs, mausolea, gardens and inns; they also changed the workings of religious institutions, which in previous centuries had retained the possibilities of

[51] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, ed. Sharif Husain Qasimi (Tunk, Rajasthan: `Arabik aind Parshiyan Risarch Institiyut, 1988).

political mobilization by their ability to challenge and oppose the temporal ruler of the day. But in the briskly marketized world of the eighteenth century, I argue, such institutions had become dependent upon, and enmeshed with, the powers-that-be. The attenuation of previous capacities for political mobilization would mean that challenges to the authority of the ruling elite would no longer rally around the figure of a charismatic Muslim divine, as had once been possible.[52]

If the forces of commerce had steadily dissolved the capability of religious institutions to offer a political challenge to the ruling authority, they had also come to transform the spaces in which these institutions were based. While the pious author of the *Recollections* had almost nothing to say about the people who offered their prayers at the graves he indexed, another visitor to the city at about the same time had rather more to note. This was the young nobleman Dargāh Qulī Khān, who left a celebrated account of Delhi's pleasures, both sacred and worldly. Through a close reading of Dargāh Qulī Khān's reminiscences, I show that what the idioms of religious practice had elaborated into worldly contexts had little to do with the practice of piety. While High and Low might be united in their reverence for the grave of a departed holy man, the mass adoption of certain shrines or certain forms of practice now revealed the emergence of a formation of the popular in a realm which had previously been defined as elite. I demonstrate the existence of parallels to this process in the formation of distinct communities of faith around living holy men and in the forms of festivity that were integral to city life in the period. In Dargāh Qulī Khān's eyes, mass and elite together came to constitute the social totality he called the *jumhūr*: a word which in later usage would translate the philosophical ideal of "republic", and one which serves as an acknowledgement of the power and significance of the masses more

[52] Scholars have acknowledged the importance of holy men as oppositional figures who threatened the Emperor's authority in the Delhi Sultanate, but we know little about this history. See Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate : A Political and Military History* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 159–61.

traditionally visualized in the pastoral idiom of the herd (*raᶜīyat*). It is evident from Dargāh Qulī Khān's account, I argue, that by the early eighteenth century, a mass collective identity had emerged as a coherent formation, coming to inhabit and shape the space of the city in unprecedented ways.

In conclusion, I turn to an examination of the spaces of such encounter between high and low. While we presume distance between elites and common-folk, both encountered and intermingled with each other in a variety of urban contexts. Yet again, such encounters were animated by the forces of the market that had been integral to the imagination of the city itself. I therefore turn to an examination of two such sites of encounter: the first was the elite context of the social entertainment, which was sustained by a steady inflow of commoners. The second spatial context of such encounters was that of the main thoroughfares of the city, which had been built to produce the commercial vitality which Shāh Jahān had sought, and which, ninety years later, had become spaces of the popular in a way the monarch could not have imagined. And it is in these spaces that the masses would go on to interrupt the workings of high imperial politics – a process examined at length in following chapters.

The Cities of Delhi

Delhi, we recall, had been likened to an "imperial insignia" on the "sublime royal diploma of the earth" by an eighteenth-century prose stylist. If the surface of the earth was the site of imperial authority, the city served as the ornate royal inscription which confirmed the title of sovereignty. But why did the emperor Shāh Jahān (deposed in 1658) build a new Delhi on a landscape littered with the detritus of past urbanities? Shāh Jahān does not appear to have left us an account of his thoughts on the matter. A chronicler of his reign, however, ascribed the founding of the new city to the fact that the two other great metropolises of the region – Lahore and Akbarābād (Agra) –

had decayed over the years; their foundations had been worn away by the rivers on whose banks they were situated; constant rebuilding had left the cities' plains uneven, so that a desirable urban plan (*tarh-i marghūb*) could not be obtained. Also, we are told, the gates of the vitally important offices of the imperial Palace and its warehouses were very narrow and did not have large forecourts (*jilau-khāna*), which were seen as vital to the business of administration (*bī nihāyat dar kār*). This constrained easy access, causing injury to the indigents who were banqueted on festival days. And the general narrowness of these cities' thoroughfares and marketplaces caused distress and inconvenience to the multitudes who passed through them. So it was for such reasons that the emperor dispatched engineers "expert in the astrolabe and Euclidean in perception" to a piece of land between the two cities which was indicative of paradise in its perfect balance of air and earth.[53] It just so happened that this perfect piece of earth was located immediately to the north of the city of Delhi as it then existed.

The new city, therefore, was designed to rectify the constraints on imperial activity that made Akbarābād and Lahore unappealing: its wide roads and ample courtyards were to create a new axis of empire. The values of this imperial formation that were to be embodied in the new city were reflected in the qualities that made Agra and Lahore obsolete. The new city was to provide easy intercourse and make the beneficences of the emperor available to the needy; it was to facilitate the government by providing spacious forecourts in which imperial officials frequently worked; and it was to reflect, more broadly, the aesthetic values of the emperor, whose buildings provided repose and the pleasures of life (*firāgh, lazzat-i zindagī*) to his subjects.[54]

[53] Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh, *'Amal-i Ṣāliḥ Al-Mawsūm Bih Shāhjahānńāmah*, Ṭab'-i 2 (Lāhaur: Majlis-i Taraqqī Adab, 1967), III.18–19.
[54] Ibid., 20.

Yet this insignia of sovereignty was not placed at random on the patent of the sublime royal diploma of the imperial realm. Delhi was chosen because it already had a long history as the site of sovereignty in the land of India, and because its earth was sanctified by the presence of the many pious men of Islam who were buried there. This new Delhi, then, could be seen as an articulation of a discourse of imperial power in constant reference to the significations of its precursors.[55]

An early instance of this conversation between the hegemonic ambitions of the new and the powerful significations of the old is to be found in an undated and unnamed compendium that exists only in manuscript form.[56] Of interest in this manuscript are extracts from a *History* by a certain Mīr Ibrāhīm, which include descriptions of the cities of North India, perhaps from the middle of the seventeenth century. In the margins we find similar descriptions from a widely admired gazetteer, the *Seven Climes (Haft Iqlīm)* of Amīn-i Ahmad-i Rāzī (fl. 1593-1619), which had been produced at the court of Shāh Jahān's grandfather, the emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605).

Writing of the pre-Mughal city of Dihlī, Rāzī noted that it was considered above all the cities of India (*Hind*) because of its pleasant climate and the delicacy of its gardens and forests; and it was always held to be the city of rulers, as well as the center of the circle of Islam and an abode of the wise and the perfect. For these reasons, the city was called "Delhi the dignified" (*hazrat dihlī*). In the same marginal note we learn that in their histories, Indians averred that Delhi had been extremely populated for ages upon ages, but then been ruined and remained so until 952 AD when it was repopulated. For about 300 years, the Hindus bore dominion; but in the year

[55] On pre-Mughal Delhi, see Harish Chandra Verma, *Dynamics of Urban Life in Pre-Mughal India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986), chap. 7.
[56] Various, "Historical and Geographical Extracts," n.d., British Library APAC I.O. Islamic 611.

1192/3, it fell into the hands of Sultān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak, the slave of Sultān Muᶜizz al-Dīn Sām; and since that time, the Hindus never ruled it again.

We do not know if Mīr Ibrāhīm himself placed this description from the *Seven Climes* around his text. It is more likely that another copyist inserted these excerpts into the manuscript. But in either case, the excerpt does not include Rāzī's long and admiring description of the Qutb Minar, the grand twelfth-century tower which loomed over ancient Delhi (*dihlī-i qadīm*). This city, which Rāzī thought was populated in a former era, had been reduced to ruin by our author's time in the late sixteenth century. But a new Delhi (*dihlī-i nau*) had been built a *farsang* away on the banks of the Jūn by Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Khiljī in 1289/90. This New Delhi was famed for its gardens, redolent of paradise; and there were so many marvels in the city that it would take another book to describe them all.[57] The reduced description of the pre-existing city of Delhi thus excluded many of the symbols which signified pre-Mughal dominion in the region. In this way, the old features of urbanity and sovereignty were excised from the landscape in preparation for the coming of the new.

Mīr Ibrāhīm himself represented Delhi in broadly similar ways. He did not yet give it the name of the Abode of the Caliphate (*dār al-khilāfat*), as it would later be known; for him it was the Abode of Dominion (*dār al-mulk*), and the mother of the cities of Hindūstān. It was constructed by a Rājā Ānang Pāl Tunar, and it in its early years it was dominated by two tribes (*qaum*) of Indian infidels – the Tunars and Chawhāns. Then Sultān Muᶜizz al-Dīn Sām, who was known as Shihāb al-Dīn Ghawrī, seized it forcibly (*intizāᶜ namūda*) from Rāi Pithawrā Chawhān and promulgated the "Proclamation and Coin" (*khutba wa sikka*) of Islam over that territory; and

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[57] al-Razi Amin Ahmad and Muhammad Riza Tahiri, *Tazkirah-i Haft iqlim* (Tihran: Surush, 1999), 383–4.

then Qutb al-Dīn Aibak was given the parasol and staff of sovereignty (*chhatr wa ᶜāsā-yi saltanat*).

The history of Delhi was, in this sense, the history of the forcible seizure and conversion of a space of infidelity into a center of Islam. If traces of Hindu dominion remained, Mīr Ibrāhīm did not represent them. Moving rapidly and indeed vaguely from these foundational figures, our author mentioned the various urban complexes of Kilokhrī, Tughlaqābād and Firozābād, all of which had left their marks. Before the making of Shāhjahānābād, they were all considered to be Dihlī, but in Mīr Ibrāhīm's age they were now called "Old Delhi" (*dihlī-yi kuhna*). The city was regarded as the capital (*pāy-takht*) of previous dynasties, and it had always been the abode of all sorts of recluses and shaykhs, friends of God and wise men; of these, the first mentioned was Qutb al-Dīn ("Axis of the Faith") Bakhtyār, whose place of repose lay by the Illuminated Lake (*hauz-i shamsī*). Clustered around it were many other graves of many other luminaries, such as the magistrate Hamīd al-Dīn, who was remembered for his Sufi treatise entitled the *Horoscopes of Suns* (*Tawāliᶜ al-shumūs*).[58] On the edge of Old Delhi (*dihlī-yi qadīm*) stood also the tomb of another grandee: the Sultān of Shaykhs, the Proof of the Way and of Reality (*burhān al-tarīqat wa al-haqīqat*) the Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāᵓ, whose lineages and connections to the other great Sufi masters were recounted in loving detail. also mentioned was the grave of the famed fourteenth-century poet Amīr Khusraw, who was regarded as the greatest disciple of the Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn. Then Mīr Ibrāhīm turned to the third of Delhi's great sufīs, the Shaykh of Islam Nasīr al-Dīn Chirāgh Dihlī ("The Lamp of Delhi"), who was a disciple of the Sultān of Shaykhs Nizām al-Dīn and who had opposed Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq. The reason Nasīr al-Dīn was

[58] On this notable Sufi author of the fourteenth century, disciple of the Suhrawardī order and student of the famed Sufi master Bakhtyār Kākī, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978), 197–8.

called Chirāgh Dihlī, wrote Mīr Ibrāhīm, was because what could remain of the light (*raushanī*) after the extinguishing of his flame (*shamᶜ*)?

Surrounding these graves were those of the multitudes who sought proximity in the long wait to the day of resurrection, representing our author's vision of a certain spectrum of an idealized Islamic society: graves of the wise and the learned, of rulers and noblemen, of viziers and doctors, of pious mendicants and of recluses and the poor. The plenitude of these buried notables astounded our author, who beheld a vast necropolis which stretched out in all directions, so that but for three feet of clear space around the shrines, there was no earth to be seen. Everywhere there extended a forest of domes and buildings which testified to the greatness of their sanctity (*buzurgī-yi iᶜtibār*), tombs encompassed by rays of mercy, graves charged with benediction. And finally there was the tomb of the departed emperor Humāyūn on the bank of the river Jūn. This place, said Mīr Ibrāhīm, was circumambulated in veneration by the people, and it in turn copiously distributed rewards to seekers.

Having mentioned the presence of the mighty shaykhs whose graves sanctified the city, Mīr Ibrāhīm then turned to his own master, the great Shaykh Muhammad Bāyazīd of the Qādirī order.[59] In his worship of divine truth (*haqq*), the shaykh was a guide to the way of salvation for the people (*hādī-yi khalāᵓiq*) just as he cured those weakened by deviation or barbarism through his healing exhalations (*anfās-i girāmī*). His mantle was a place of guidance for seekers of the Way (*tarīqat*), and his truth-revealing tongue exposited on the subtle intricacies of the Truth (*haqīqat*). Whenever he visited the shaykh, Mīr Ibrāhīm found him showering his favors on the mendicants of Delhi. Amulets written in the shaykh's own elegant hand served to heal all illnesses and misfortunes. Mīr Ibrāhīm went on to give examples of esoteric questions couched

[59] On this figure, see Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India : 16th-18th Century* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2005), 130.

in poetic form which he had supposedly presented to the shaykh before returning ultimately to the decidedly more mundane matters of the goods available in the Delhi's markets. Of these, he noted, the local specialty was in chintzes and overcoats, as well a sort of dyed cloth that in the Indian language was called "*bāndhūn*". The melons, we are told, were also good.[60]

Mīr Ibrāhīm, we see, had curiously little to say about the new city of Shāhjahānābād, though he acknowledged its existence. His brevity may suggest the new city was being built or had just been completed when our author put pen to paper. But our author had rather more to say about Lahore, which he visualized as a sort of inland port connecting India to the lands of Īrān and Tūrān – the regions of the Iranian plateau and Central Asia. Lahore, said the Mīr, was an old city, much built in the reign of Sultān Muhammad Ghaznawī, and one of the largest in India. It was populated by the grandees and nobles of all each tribe, and was considered the "Abode of Islam" in India. All the rarities of Rome and Syria, Cathay and Khotan intermingled here, just as did Hindus and Muslims, Turks and Tājiks, Arabs and Persians. All sorts of tradesmen and experts produced food and drink which were marvels of the era and were delicious as if made from the sky itself. Similarly, all varieties of bread were available in the city's bakeries, and each loaf was like the face of a favorite beloved. Fruits, fresh and dried, were paradisiacal in their sweetness and delicacy, and to be found cheaply and in abundance. There were swift horses and strong camels, there were Frankish scarlet and woolen cloth, there were enclosed gardens. Perhaps more to the point, the weighty jewel of Beauty was mined in every neighborhood, and black eyes set in beautiful faces adorned every alley. The bows of the eyebrows of the Muslim ambushed lovers' hearts, and the nooses of the braids of the Indians fell about the necks of the people of the Faith and dragged them towards infidelity.

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[60] Various, "Historical and Geographical Extracts," f. 180b–181b.

In contrast with Delhi, the somewhat somber resting-place of saints and the grim center of sovereign authority, the Mīr thus saw Lahore as a city more exciting for the senses. In the stereotypical language of the seductive beauty who lurked in every nook and cranny of the city lurked the possibilities of a quintessentially urban amorous encounter. This particular masculine gaze was enabled by the proximity of strange women (or men) and their sexual availability in a context where the power of class and the possibility of anonymity or commercial transaction might permit liaisons unimaginable elsewhere. But Lahore was more than some infinite arena of unchained male desire. It was also a city of learning, where most of the forms of knowledge were taught, especially jurisprudence. Seekers of knowledge trod long paths to reach the city, and its denizens – even commoners – wagged their tongues (literally, "stretched their lips") on obscure matters of jurisprudence. By the Mīr's time, Lahore had apparently developed a population of non-elite folk who would have been expected docilely to follow the judgments of their betters, but had instead acquired a surprising expertise in matters of the law. This innocuous observation, we shall see, presages the making of a combative and confrontational urban political consciousness (discussed at length in Chapter Six). For the Mīr, however, this was but one more praiseworthy feature of an elegant metropolis where sensualists could achieve their heart's object and convivial folk could find their pleasure.[61]

This contrast between Delhi and Lahore is instructive. Lahore, not Delhi, was the north Indian metropolis in the early seventeenth century. It was Lahore where commerce flourished and beauty was to be found, sensual or otherwise. Delhi, on the other hand, had only some cloth and "good melons" to recommend it. Lahore, not Delhi, was emblematic of an Indo-Persian

[61] This may well refer to Shāh `Abd Allāh Biyābānī, a mystic of the Qādiri order of whom little is known. Ibid., f. 181b–182a.

imaginaire that reveled in the availability and abundance of the city's pleasures.[62] Before it was renewed as the capital of the Mughal empire, Delhi was famed only for its importance as a site of Muslim piety and for its sovereignty over the territories which comprised Hindūstān.

The Sepulcher and the mosque

So perhaps it is more productive to think of Shāh Jahān's new city as an insignia painted not on a "sublime royal diploma", but on a palimpsest, one that had only partially been erased to make room for the new. We might even go so far as to think through a distinction that Mughal authors would soon make between Shāhjahānābād, Shāh Jahān's new city, and *Dihlī-yi kuhna* – Old Delhi. The Delhi that would develop under Mughal rule was never a single, unified urban entity; it retained aspects of an older urbanity, one which signified through the power of piety. The spatial quantum of the city of piety was the sepulcher, and it was through the sepulcher that the power of the other world entered and shaped this one. Shāh Jahān's new city, on the other hand, was the city of the mosque, most notably the central mosque of congregation. That this mosque was named the *masjid-i jahān-numā* – the mosque which guided, or perhaps "revealed" the world as a microcosm – should indicate a different religious sensibility and intention from the intensely personal religiosity and sense of relationship which manifest in practice around the grave of a revered saint. Sepulchers were for the dead as mosques were for the living. If the old city was a space shaped by the power of the departed pious, the new city was a place made for the collectivity of subjects to lead flourishing lives at the heart of a mighty empire of Islam.

The distinction between the two cities of Delhi is more analytical than practical, for mosques were built in the parts of the Old City just as tombs inevitably sprouted in the New City. It is also

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[62] Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape"; See also, by the same author, "If there is a Paradise on Earth, it is Here: Urban Ethnography in Indo-Persian Poetic and Historical Texts" in Pollock, *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia*, 240–256.

important to stress that the New City did not supersede the Old Delhi; if anything, the planned urbanity of Shāhjahānābād was built to enable access to the most venerable of the subcontinent's sepulchers. Yet Mughal observers were certainly sensitive to the distinction between the two ideas or aspects of the city even if they did not dwell overmuch on it. This is why a poet like Mīr would passingly remark that the "Old City" was regarded as "a world of its own", as he described its sack in the mid-eighteenth century.[63] And it was not Shāhjahānābād, but this separate, older world that was evoked by the respectful name "Hazrat Dihlī" – Delhi the Dignified – when the pious thought of the city.

Insignia: The City that Shāh Jahān Built

The purpose and meaning of the insignia was that Shāh Jahān's new city rapidly became a core subject of discursive production at the imperial center. An important first articulation of the city's significance was provided by a high-ranking official and literary figure at the court of the emperor named Chandar Bhān Brahman. Chandar Bhān explicitly situated the new city within the symbolic complex of the Mughal imperium in his much-admired and widely reproduced *Foursquare Garden* (*Chahār Chaman*).[64]

In contrast with other authors of whose circumstances we know little, Chandar Bhān appears to have had significant access to the restricted spaces of the imperial establishment. His perspective, therefore, was that of an insider and a fervent ideologue. A sense of this proximity is evident, for instance, in Chandar Bhān's description of the illuminations organized within the palace: "Although every evening the lamp of this family, which is the cause of the illumination

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[63] Mir Taqi Mir, *Zikr-i Mir : The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet, Mir Muhammad Taqi `Mir', 1723-1810*, trans. C. M Naim (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 85.

[64] For a detailed study of this neglected figure see the recent important work of Rajeev Kumar Kinra, "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhan Brahman" (The University of Chicago, 2008); See also, Rajeev Kinra, "Master and Munshī: A Brahman Secretary's Guide to Mughal Governance," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 527–561.

of the inhabited quarters of this world, burns brighter than the lamp of the celestial dome, and every night the extent of light and radiance reminds one of the Night of Power[65] (*shab-i qadr*)…." This glowing exordium then leads to an account of the lights that were placed by the banks of the river, by buildings, gardens, ponds, lakes and canals, and in the internal and external parts of the palace complex. In the palace, these lamps were enclosed in special golden receptacles and in lanterns made of glass and gold, placed in their multitude around buildings and by channels of water, and hung from the branches of trees. By the river a sort of bamboo wall with towers was made, and lights were placed every few feet; and the imperial nobility took care in providing large boats with seats, all ornamented with engravings and colorful lights. And from all sides this happy noise resounded through the skies:

> *chirāg̲h̲-i shāh shud dar bazm chūn garm*
> *chirāg̲h̲-i māh shud dar parda-yi sharm*
> *dil-i ū ānchunān raushan-i chirāg̲h̲ ast*
> *ki har sū az furūg̲h̲-i ū farāg̲h̲ ast*
>
> The lamp of the emperor burnt so brightly in the gathering
> That the lamp of the moon retreated ashamed behind its veil
> His heart is so resplendent like a lamp
> That his brightness casts repose on all sides

The display of fireworks was so intense, wrote Chandar Bhān, that its star-like spark raised its head in the sky, while its noise twisted through the earth and the era.

By linking the metaphorical brightness of the exalted dynasty in this characteristic way to the actual practice of illuminations and fireworks, Chandar Bhān presents a compelling aesthetic assertion of the ruling family's sovereignty and of the lavishness of its beneficence on its subjects. All this illumination was centered upon the figure of the emperor Shāh Jahān and indeed emerged from his royal person, but its benefits radiated equally to all. It was precisely

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[65] The 27th night of the month of Ramazān, on the night of which the Qurʾān was sent from heaven down to earth.

because of this general provision of aesthetic, psychic and material amenities that Shāh Jahān was to be considered a great and worthy ruler. And it was in this spirit that Chandar Bhān regarded the making of the new city that would forever bear the emperor's name.

So Chandar Bhān began his description of the Province of Delhi, which he titled the Abode of Sovereignty (*dār al-hukūmat*). The city of Delhi was now known as the Abode of the Caliphate Shāhjahānābād – a title of the greatest possible precedence, reflecting its new and reinvigorated status as the premier metropolis in the domains, and the names of other regions and provinces were adjusted (Lahore received the secondary title of "Abode of the Sultanate"). Chandar Bhān painted a sweeping panorama of all the provinces and their uncountable villages, the empire's forts and its ports, and all the heart-attracting buildings and gardens in every domain. But amongst all these places of imperial splendor, the newly-constructed city of Shāhjahānābād ranked first. And first in the city came the fort, with its enchanting buildings and ravishing gardens, and the flowing water which sprayed in its fountains and coursed through many channels into its pools.

Beyond this all stood a large market with shops and coffeehouses, arches and porticos, with traders and merchants, jewelers and goldsmiths from every land, all of whom sold their diverse wares and lived in contentment.

> *ᶜirāqī wa khurāsānī zi hadd bīsh*
> *nihāda pīsh-i khud sarmāya-yi khʷīsh*
> *firangī az firangistān rasīda*
> *nawādir az banādir bīsh chīda*
> *chu shāh az mulk-i khud āgāh bāshad*
> *zi mashriq tā bi maghrib rāh bāshad*

> ᶜIrāqīs and Khurāsānīs more than counting
> Place before themselves their stock
> Franks have come from Frankistān
> Having plucked fineries from many a port
> Because the Ruler's aware of the state of his affairs

There's a path from East to West

The mark of the city was a pleasing cosmopolitanism that presented a dizzying variety of possibilities of gratifying the senses. In Chandar Bhān's vision of this ecumenical plenitude, the hallmark of the city of Lahore for Mīr Ibrāhim was now to be projected onto the new city of Delhi. Yet in doing so, Chandar Bhān pointedly incorporated a reference to the importance of imperial virtue in determining the economic vitality of everyday life in the city. The path that linked the East of the Mughal domains to the West of the foreign lands was enabled and sustained by a vigilant and alert ruler. Chandar Bhān continues with a whirling, vertiginous description of this newly created urbanity:

> Ample and plentiful delicacies, shops with chairs, filled to the brim with coin and jewels, merchandise and fabrics and delicacies and rarities of every land, and canals of flowing water, pools and step-wells and wells of sweet-tasting water, markets and alleys and inns and quarters and vegetable-markets and houses and suburbs have been built to the extremes of beauty for the rest of those coming and going, and there's social intercourse and spectacle on every particle of the ground, poets and singers and storytellers in every building, and connoisseurs of music and liveliness sit and stand about.[66]

Through this lavish profusion of a world oriented towards production, commerce and exchange bubbled the great beneficence of water.[67] Running through the streets and flowing into pools and step-wells, water lent its refreshing aura to every aspect of the city's urban fabric. Such widespread presence of water in the space of the city was something of a novelty: for earlier gazetteers such as those of Amīn Ahmad Rāzī or Mīr Ibrāhim had not mentioned its presence in this way. But Chandar Bhān understood well the significance of the water which flowed not only through the imperial fort, but also through the very center of the Moonlight Avenue and Saᶜd

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[66] Candar Bhan Brahman, *Chahar chaman* (Dihli-i Naw: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Farsi-i Rayzani-i Farhangi-i Jumhuri-i Islami-i Iran, 2007), 125.

[67] On the importance of hydrological mobilization and the making of gardens in the broader Indo-Persian context, see the incisive and important work of Maria Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin: aspects de l'histoire culturelle de l'Iran médiéval* (Paris; Leuven (Belgique): Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes ; Diffusion, Peeters Press, 2002), chap. 1, and particularly 4.

Allāh Khān Square, into the great park in the city. As the city was the product of imperial benevolence, so was the water which sustained and delighted its inhabitants. This control over water which lay at the heart of the physical infrastructure of the urban fabric of the city enabled its cultural pleasures, its poets, singers and story-tellers in the same way that one might think of water creating the verdance of a garden or the riches of a farm. And since it was built around the display and distribution of water on this hitherto-unprecedented scale, Shāhjahānābād, this newest of Delhis, was markedly different not only from its own previous incarnations, but also from any other city in the domains.

There was more to the city than its worldly pleasures, for Chandar Bhān also noted the new city's sacral attractions. For one, as our author remarks, there were a number of mosques in the city. The most noteworthy of this was the Grand Mosque (*masjid-i kalān*), admirable for its domes which stretched into the sky, as for its niches and alcoves, arches and doorways. Again, Chandar Bhān lavished special verbal attention on the pool (*hauz*) in the courtyard, the equal of which had never been seen by people who had seen the rest of the world. The whole, we are told, was constructed at the staggering cost of 1.2 million rupees.

In the face of this Delhi of clamorous markets and sonorous singers, previous habitations in the region came to be thought of as "old". Places of religious observance and auratic shrines such as those of Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī came to lie at the heart of Old Delhi (*dihlī-yi kuhna*). Chandar Bhān mentioned them respectfully but rapidly, listing their resting-places with the other undescribed ancient ruins (*ʿimārāt-i kuhna [wa] qadīm*) which served to bestow admonition and augment astonishment among observers.[68] But there was nothing natural about the making of this old Delhi: for the "Old City" was just as much a narrative construction as the "New City". Just as

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[68] Brahman, *Chahar chaman*, 126–28.

a New Delhi was constructed of bricks and mortar, the previous inhabitation too came to be rebuilt as a sight of religious significance divorced from political power: for we note now that Chandar Bhān had nothing to say about previous rulers or their constructions; the iconic Qutb Minar which loomed over the horizon of the older city was excluded from his account completely. A new Delhi was now the site of a greater sovereignty, universal in its aspirations – the articulation of an ambitious and self-confident dynastic heir who saw no limits to his power or the prosperity of his realm.

This expansive vision of the new Delhi came to be rapidly adopted and elaborated by Mughal authors through the realm. By the close of the seventeenth century, such sentiments had come to resound through a popular intelligentsia, circulating through manuscripts across the empire. Consider the attitudes of a certain Sujān Rāi, the literate and prolific author of a vast gazetteer of the Mughal domains. The horizons of Sujān Rāi's imperial panorama were hardly limited by the provincial Panjābī town of Batālā, from which he appears to have written his *Revelation of Histories* (*Khulāsat al-tawārīkh*). The author described his work as a mere compendium of previous histories – which he scrupulously named in his prolegomena – but assured the reader that he had not stolen idioms and usages from other works.[69]

Such modesty does little to veil the fact that the *Revelation* was much more than an agglomeration of previous gazetteers. Sujān Rāi wrote in order to praise and glorify his homeland, which he construed not in the parochial terms of his own province, but in the broader terms of the north-Indian imperial heartland of Hindūstān.[70] These encomiums were presented in sharp-edged contrast to the realms of Īrān, Tūrān and Vilāyat (modern-day Iran, Northern Iraq,

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[69] Sujan Rai Bhandari, *The Khulasatu-T-Tawarikh*, ed. M. Zafar Hasan (Delhi, 1918), 8.

[70] In this way his views appear to stand in some contrast to the rather narrow conception of local patriotisms in South Asia suggested in C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) esp. ch. 1-3.

and Central Asia), which the author viewed as wholly inferior in every way to his own homeland. Thus for instance when describing the flowers of India, which included the rose, the jasmine and the tulip, among others, Sujān Rāi noted that all the flowers present in Īrān, Tūrān and Vilāyat were all to be found in this domain; but the details of all the flowers that were the specialty of Hindūstān were more copious than the possibility of description. True to form, Sujān Rāi then goes on to list several such "unique" flowers, noting especially the delicacy and beauty of the *ketakī* flower (the screw pine, *pandanus fascicularis*). As each name in this list serves as a self-satisfied assertion of the generally special character of the Mughal domains, so do his other indexical observations of the fruits, food grains and animals to be found there.[71]

It is in this context of inter-imperial competitiveness that Sujān Rāi began his account of Hindūstān, the wonderful qualities of which had caused people from around the world to forsake their own countries and immigrate to the Mughal realm. Thus Ottomans, Africans, Europeans, Arabs, Īrānīs and Tūrānīs were all becoming Hindūstānīs, and paupers were becoming wealthy. And in Hindūstān, Sujān Rāi began with the first and the greatest of all cities, which was Delhi. While he listed all the previous cities of Delhi, our author's interest lay in Shāhjahānābād, which came to encompass all the other inhabitations. In making this case, Sujān Rāi offered a pithy but powerful metaphor: Shāh Jahān's Delhi absorbed all the other cities in the same way that various rivers took on the name of the Ganges upon their confluence with it.

Much of Sujān Rāi's description of the city is a gloss on Chandar Bhān's account – a testament to the tremendous rhetorical power and appeal of Shāh Jahān's courtly ideologue's narrative formation. But Sujān Rāi augments Chandar Bhān's vision in some ways and adds to it in others. Like the courtly litterateur, the provincial elite emphasized the presence of all sorts of foreigners

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[71] Bhandari, *The Khulasatu-T-Tawarikh*, 13.

in the city, mentioning among others the people of the exotic realms of England and Holland (*angrīz wa waland*) Khwārazm, Turkistān, Zābulistān, Khitā, Khutan, Chīn and Māchīn, Kāshgār, Qalmāstān and Tibet besides the people of other parts of the Mughal domains. All these foreign folk, we are told, had learned the manners and the speech of Hindūstān and were practicing their own trades. Like Chandar Bhān, Sujān Rāi wrote lovingly of the water which flowed into every alley, and of the goods available in the city's copious markets, which bustled every day with the clamor of sale and purchase, and in which the number of buyers and sellers was such that the items of luxury and clothes required for the imperial manufactories could be acquired in a single day (*hattā ki asbāb-i tajammulāt-i bādshāhī wa rukhūt-i kārkhānajāt-i saltanat dar yak rūz sar-anjām mī-tawānad shud*).

But where Chandar Bhān's focus had been unflinchingly confined to the court, Sujān Rāi had relatively little to say about the buildings of the exalted fort. His interest lay in the rather less elevated realm of the public bathhouse (*hammām-i bādshāhī*). This institution's warm-water baths (*garm khāna*) bestowed warmth to the atmosphere of amusement, while its cold-water baths produced ease in one's condition. The dome of the bath-house compared, inevitably, to the celestial sphere. While its gentle warm temperatures spread good health, its cool temperatures cooled the body and produced robustness. Indeed, for Sujān Rāi a visit to the bath-house had a distinctly medicinal aspect, since it cured mental disorders, heaviness in the members of the body, indolence and hangovers and slothfulness (*khamyāza vo khumār wa kasal-i badan*). On the other hand, it produced positive effects, such as cheerfulness in disposition, freshness in intellect (*tarāwat-i dimāgh*) and in the heart, and purity of the body besides. There was a deeper, elemental aspect to all this. The mixing of the elements of fire and water produced trouble and disorder; the bath-house, however, was a rare site where water and fire mingled, and that too

without the intrusion of wind and earth. In this way, the bath-house was the nadir of phenomena, a rare and perfect confluence of elements that could have only the most positive effects for those who visited it.

Like all other commentators, Sujān Rāi also described the intense sacrality of the city of Delhi produced by its uncountable mausolea of departed grandees and notables. Our author mentioned the rulers and saints noted in previous accounts, reproducing the strict order of precedence that ranked Bakhtyār Kākī first and Nizām al-Dīn second. For the latter, Sujān Rāi presents an unusual biography: according to our author, the young saint was born in Ghaznī and moved to Badāyūn for his education. Nizām al-Dīn, our author recalls, was of a distinctly disputatious bent; having defeated his enemies in the field of debate, he earned the sobriquet of the "Destroyer of Assemblies" (*mahfil-shikan*) before moving to Ajudhan to begin his spiritual apprenticeship with the great saint Farīd al-Dīn. Sujān Rāi does not explain this variant account of the life of Nizām al-Dīn, and moves instead to a description of the other saintly figures buried in the province of Shāhjahānābād. But the constant and unswerving focus on the great power of these revered saints is indicative of a larger truth about late-seventeenth-century perceptions of the region: Mughal commentators understood the nature of space to be shaped profoundly by the bodies of the pious departed which were buried within it.

Palimpsest: Delhi the Dignified

Nīst bi-juz dihlī-yi raushan-fazāʾ
Ānki buvad khwābga-i awliyāʾ
Ānchi dar ān khāk furū rafta-and
Bā dil-i bīdār bijā khufta-and

There is no place besides Delhi the radiant
Which might serve as the resting-place of God's Friends
Those who have gone into the earth
Lie in sleep with their hearts awake.

– Hunarwar Khān ᶜĀqil, *The Spectacular Sight,* f. 37b[72]

While imperial ideologues extolled the virtues of Shāh Jahān's construction, other imaginations of the city visualized Delhi the Dignified (*hazrat dihlī*) as an entity older and greater than the imperial metropolis.[73] A sense of this older Delhi, perfumed and sanctified by the pious exhalations of slumbering saints, emerges sharply in the *Recollection of the Community of Friends in Delhi* (*Zikr-i jamīᶜ-i awliyāᵓ-yi dihlī*) produced by a certain Shaykh Habīb Allāh in 1738.[74] In its structure, the *Recollections* conforms to the genre of the anthology or compendium (*tazkira*), containing as it does notices of particular individuals. Yet Habīb Allāh produced the text as an exercise in pious antiquarianism, assembling a comprehensive list of the dead holy men (and their resting-places, where known) who collectively gave Delhi the sacred aura to which other authors such as Sujān Rāi or Mīr Ibrāhim had alluded. In the following pages I present a brief biography of the shaykh, and then excavate the sacred geography implicit in his *Recollections.*

Though his great-grandfather had been honored at the court of Emperor Akbar and married the daughter of a nobleman, Shaykh Habīb Allāh himself appears to have had fairly modest beginnings.[75] He was born in 1671 in Akbarābād and given the usual primary education in Persian language, literature and orthography at school. He then joined the seminary of the Hanafī jurisprudential scholar Shaykh ᶜAtāᵓ Allāh in Delhi (whom he styles "the Ruler of the Learned") and undertook a course in the Arabic Sciences (*ᶜulūm-i ᶜarabīyya*). The shaykh's studies must have been exhaustive, because he received the "Prayer of Release" at the age of thirty. Habīb

[72] ⊂Āqil, "Jalwā-yi Dīdār," f. 37b. I am grateful to Jane Mikkelson for improving my translation of this verse.
[73] For a succinct description of the features of this older Delhi, see Raziuddin Aquil, "Hazrat-I-Dehli: The Making of the Chishti Sufi Centre and the Stronghold of Islam," *South Asia Research* 28, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 23–48.
[74] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*.
[75] I have assembled the following biography from the very valuable introduction by Dr. S. H. Qasimi, and the khatima of the text as published in this edition. See ibid., XXIV–XXVIII, 148–149.

Allāh was then married to the daughter of a certain Hāfiz Abū Ishāq in about 1700. He spent the next years teaching, though the work was unremunerative. His straitened circumstances forced him out of the schoolhouse and into the world of employment, where the bookish schoolmaster displayed an aptitude for social ascent.[76]

Habīb Allāh began by working in the offices of the Princess Zīb al-Nisāᵓ, where he was involved in the translation into Persian of the Arabic *Fatāwā-yi ᶜĀlamgīrī*, the voluminous compendium of legal guidelines compiled at the order of the princess's father, Emperor Aurangzeb (d. 1707). The shaykh now undertook a lexicographical project for Muhammad Yār Khān, the governor of Delhi, and also composed a commentary on the *Qāmūs*, a fourteenth-century dictionary of Arabic. Finally, our author also produced *An Essay on the Banishment of Errors* (*Risāla-yi muzīl al-aghlāt*), which he presented to Munᶜīm Khān, the vizier of the realm. For this last service Habīb Allāh received the rank of one hundred and fifty from the pious (*haqq agāh*) Emperor Bahādur Shāh (1707-12). The patronage of the vizier, whom the shaykh considered to be a "master of the sword and the pen", was instrumental in our author's rapid advancement: Habīb Allāh was now engaged to give instruction to the emperor (*tadrīs-i huzūr*), no doubt in the Hanafī jurisprudence in which he himself had been so thoroughly trained. Besides this great responsibility, Habīb Allāh was also appointed as the librarian of the vizier's personal library.

As an official of the court, Habīb Allāh accompanied the emperor on his expedition to the Deccan. Such travel seems to have done little to disrupt our author's ceaseless prolixity, for he composed his *Essay on The Seven Syllables* (*Risālā-yi hurūf-i sabᶜa*). This text passed before the

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[76] Perhaps on the basis of the text's khātima Qasimi concludes that the author arrived in Delhi in about the year 1700, having studied at the seminary of the Shaykh `Atā Allāh. Ibid., XXVI; However, in his khātima Habīb Allāh says only that he began his studies with `Atā Allāh after the age of twelve and received his leave at the age of thirty. In his account of his teacher, Habīb Allāh tells us that `Atā Allāh's first appointment was as the administrator of the daily stipendiaries (yawmiya-dārān) of Delhi, and apparently spent most of his time in Delhi (though accounts of his bravery in excursions in Mālwā and near Gwāliyar are noted). See ibid., 147–148; 112–114.

"religion-fostering" emperor's gaze at court; the ruler now granted our author robes of honor, the prize of a thousand rupees, and an increase of one hundred in rank. Habīb Allāh is silent about his place in the troubled reign of Jahāndār Shāh, but under the next emperor, the "martyred and forgiven" (*shahīd marhūm*) Farrukh Siyar, he was granted the safeguarding of the Royal Treasury of Delhi and the care of the sacred sepulchers of the city. Yet these duties did not prevent the scholar-administrator from completing the translation of the *Excellence of Secrets (Bahjat al-asrār)*, a foundational fourteenth-century biography of the great Sufi divine Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Qādir Jīlānī.[77] Such duties, nevertheless, would have aided our author in developing a thoroughgoing knowledge of the sacred places in the city.

Early in the reign of Muhammad Shāh (r. 1721-48), Habīb Allāh was named the imperial Legal Secretary (*vakīl-i sharᶜī*) and was granted the title of Khān, as well as the administration of the public kitchen (*bulghūr-khāna*) of the sepulcher of Chirāgh Dihlī. In 1735 he dedicated his translation of the great fourteenth-century Arabic dictionary popularly called the "Middle Ocean" (*Qāmūs*) to the reigning emperor. Habīb Allāh died in 1747.

The life of Shaykh Habīb Allāh offers us some insight into the career of a member of the theological-jurisprudential elite of the empire. While Habīb Allāh came from a worthy family which could claim some (past) connections to the imperial establishment, his initial circumstances were decidedly modest. His education appears to have followed the standard pattern of a thorough primary training in Persian language and literature, undoubtedly similar to the program described by his contemporary, Nīk Rāī.[78] Yet while Nīk Rāī's own advanced

[77] On the importance of this text in the Qadiryya Sufi order, see Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 95–96.

[78] A detailed account of Nik Rai's early education is presented in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 61–72.

training extended in the direction of the secretarial arts, Habīb Allāh followed a different track into the higher echelons of the imperial administration. The shaykh is woefully silent on the events of his own life in the cursory conclusion (*khātima*) to the *Recollections*, but even this suggests that he had lived a long and prosperous life, rising by dint of his intellectual talents from the lowest rungs of life at court to the title of a Khān. His life shows that even in the lean years of the empire, it was perfectly possible for a meritorious person to follow the standard trajectory of meritocratic promotion from insignificance to comfortable prominence.

While Habib Allāh had begun his scholarly career with an interest in lexicography, the *Recollections*, completed on March 17, 1738, betrays the concerns of a pious man now consumed with gathering rewards in the other world (*tahsīl-i muswib-i ukhrawī*), constantly seeking from God the opportunity to resign his appointments and make the pilgrimage to Mecca.[79] In his prolegomena, the shaykh tells us that he had often considered collating accounts of the lives of departed saints, the recitation of whose deeds served two important purposes. Firstly, such narratives strengthened his intentions and settled his heart. Secondly, if the listener had any consciousness at all, listening to the stories of past holy men would dispel all pride from his head. But the shaykh quailed from so great a task, considering the many other similar works by masters past and present. But then one night, just before dawn, an old man appeared in Habīb Allāh's dream. This was not unusual: in the Mughal world, the dream was the standard site wherein crises were resolved, or the inchoate motivations of interior subjective selves came to

[79] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 148.

cohere, frequently through the appearance of a guiding figure.[80] Very much according to script, this aged person addressed the shaykh:

> "Most exalted God has preserved you for forty years through his grace and kindness in the pleasure-grounds of Delhi the Dignified (*Hazrat Dihlī*), and by favoring you with books on the sciences (*kutub-i ᶜulūm*) and has arranged your affairs sufficiently with his material plenitude. In recompense for this great affluence, write in plain idiom an abbreviated history (*tārīkh-yi mukhtasar*) relating the conditions of the great men of Delhi, arranged by the date of their death, in the manner of the *History of the Rulers of Delhi* written by Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Haqq Dihlawī. The door of plenty is yet open: no one else has produced a work like this, and in the Manufactory of Fate (*kārkhāna-yi taqdīr*) this text has been included in your writings".[81]

The Shaykh followed these precise and programmatic instructions, assembling notices from previous works such as the *Reports of the Excellent* (*Akhbār al-Akhyār*) during the reign of the emperor Muhammad Shāh, who "drew the Hoop of Submission to the Radiant Law (*sharīᶜat-i ghurāᵓ*) through the Ear of Life, and dragged the rebellious into servitude". The emperor, says Habīb Allāh, honored God to such an extent that he outstripped his predecessors, and he opened the gates of treasures on the faces of the desirous; and among other things, he was the finest product of the wedding of Adam and Eve and the inheritor of the Kingships of Cyrus and Solomon.[82]

Our author's perspective, therefore, can be briefly described as that of a pious scholar who had risen successfully through the ranks by virtue of imperial favor to reach a middling official position. If his scholarly abilities equipped him for his antiquarian researches, service in the imperial administration of Delhi's shrines would also have enabled Habīb Allāh's investigations. The particular nature and intensity of Habīb Allāh's piety can be gleaned from his account of an

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[80] See for instance another contemporaneous description of such a dream in Prashant Keshavmurthy, "Khushgū's Dream of Ḥāfiẓ: Authorship, Temporality and Canonicity in Late Mughal India," in *"Non Momento Vastata": Essays in Honor of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (Provisional Title)*, ed. Alireza Korangy et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
[81] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 2.
[82] Ibid., 2–3.

experience at that all-important sepulcher of Bakhtyār Kākī. One day, he tells us, he began to tremble and shake upon seeing the tomb, and imagined that the departed saint was sitting within the enclosure and staring out at him. Habīb Allāh began to weep uncontrollably, wondering how such a contaminated sinner such as he could appear before the saint. Some of his companions investigated his condition and turned him away from the thought, and so God included him once again in his grace.[83]

A dense sacral terrain of Hazrat Dihlī – Delhi the Dignified – comes into view in Habīb Allāh's *Recollections*. There were, of course, the three tombs of towering importance: that of the Axis of Axes (*Qutb al-Aqtāb*), the khwāja Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī (d. 1236); the Sultān of Shaykhs (*sultān al-mashāʾikh*) Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ (d. 1325); and his disciple, the Lamp of Delhi (*Chirāgh Dihlī*) Nasīr al-Dīn (d. 1356). Bakhtyār Kākī, given pride of place as the first among them, had lived in the Delhi of the Kārākhitāī Turkish ruler Iltutmish (d. 1236). In 1229, Iltutmish excavated the massive Solar Lake (*hauz-i shamsī*), and three years later, in 1232, he erected the great tower that serves today as the modern city's icon.

The Delhi in which Bakhtyār Kākī, himself an immigrant from Ush in Ferghanā, had come to live and die in the thirteenth century was a city very much under construction. The traces of those who followed in his footsteps were scattered nearby. Just outside the gate on the path which led to the lake was the tomb of Khʷāja Mahmūd, the Furrier (*mūyina-dūz*), who had died sometime in the reign of the Sultan Nāsir al-Dīn Mahmūd (1246-66). The khwāja was still revered in the eighteenth century, for our author tells us that whoever has some important matter

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[83] Ibid., 7–8.

took a stone from his tomb and placed it in a niche. When the solution transpired, the grateful pilgrim gave away sugar in the same weight as the stone.[84]

Similar reverence was accorded to the equally old grave of Burhān al-Dīn Balkhī, who died at some point in the 1260s. His sepulcher on the eastern hillock called the "Plane of Light" (*takhta-yi nūr*) near the Shamsī Lake had been badly damaged, and not only by the ravages of time: for the area's inhabitants believed that their children made for better scholars having first ingested the dirt of the grave by way of discipleship (*tā sabab-i murīdī fath-i ᶜilm gardad*).[85] Another Sayyid Nūr al-Dīn was also buried nearby, and his grave had remained extant.[86] There was also the shaykh Najīb al-Dīn Firdausī, who once liberated his anointed successor, Shakyh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Munīrī by seizing an alchemical potion (*huqqa-yi aksīr*) from him and hurling it into the river. So remarkably unworldly were these divines that the pupil remarked, "Although this would make copper-dust into gold, it extracts a price from the heart. Praise be to God that I am relieved of it!"[87]

One could reflect on the obstinate embrace of poverty of these pious forbearers as one walked down the slope to the lake. Here you would encounter the Forty Bodies (*chihil tanān*) – nameless martyrs of the army of Islam, whose violent assault had quelled the flames of infidelity and insurrection and rebellion and affliction (*kufr wa fasād wa baghy wa ᶜanāᵓ*) and made Delhi habitable for the friends of God (*awliyāᵓ*). Our author was certain that their graves lay in the tomb, but his antiquarian researches had not unearthed the date of their martyrdom – so, in the

[84] Ibid., 20–21.
[85] Ibid., 14.
[86] Ibid., 16.
[87] Ibid., 24.

interest of scholarly knowledge, he asked the reader to add a date if it could be conclusively established in the future.[88]

While the battle against idol-worshipping infidels and the destruction of their sovereignty was a laudable enterprise, an overzealous and literal-minded adherence to the tenets of the True Faith was not to be encouraged. There was the illustrative case of two magistrates (*qāzī*) who unwittingly became disciples of Bakhtyār Kākī and now rested just west of the Solar Lake. Sᶜad and ᶜImād had initially been given to extreme bigotry (*kamāl-i taᶜassub*), and zealously attempted to shut down the ecstatic music (*samāᶜ*) that Bakhtyār Kākī so famously enjoyed. So when they heard that such a performance was in full swing, they rushed to stop it. But the minute they stepped into the circle of the performance, they lost all sense of themselves (*bī khud shudand*), and turned away from both the world of the present and that of the future.[89] And it was no doubt the enduring reverence for such spiritual power that attracted the great men of a later age to the banks of the lake. Of these we need mention only the great shaykh ᶜAbd al-Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawī (d.1642), who Habīb Allāh believed had helped Shāh Jahān to climb to power, so that the emperor rose to the throne holding his hand in one of his own (and the hand of Mīr Sayyid Muhammad Qannaujī in the other).[90]

Just a little way to the north of the lake lay the Victory Pavilion, ("*bajī* [*vijaya*] *mandal*"), built by Sultān Muhammad bin Tuqhlaq (d.1351). Following the path north, you would come upon the grave of Shaykh Ziyāᵓ al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1318).[91] But a little further on, the graves around the pavilion belonged to the more recent past. One was that of Shaykh Hasan Tāhir, spiritual

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[88] Ibid., 40.
[89] Ibid., 21.
[90] Ibid., 88.
[91] Ibid., 31.

descendant of Nizām al-Dīn, who died in 1504 and who had lived near the pavilion and was now buried there.[92] Close at hand was his son, the poet Shāh Khayālī.[93]

After Bakhtyār Kākī came Nizām al-Dīn, and his tomb too was surrounded by the graves of the pious. The power of this Sultan of Shaykhs was indisputable, and Habīb Allāh reverently offers us many instances of his charisma. Nizām al-Dīn was exemplary in his rejection of any connection to worldly power, though he clearly had the capacity to exercise it: this, as Simon Digby has demonstrated, caused no end of tension with the reigning secular authority of successive sultāns, who felt understandably threatened by the man.[94] Nizām al-Dīn had refused even to open a letter from the reigning Sultān ᶜAlāᵓ al-Dīn (r. 1296-1316), which detailed the affairs of the state (*umūr-i mamālik*). This was just as well, of course, since ᶜAlāᵓ al-Dīn wished to test the Sultān and would have arrested him had he tried to intercede. Instead, Nizām al-Dīn simply said, “What do dervishes have to do with advising kings? I am a dervish, and am engaged in praying for the kings of the Muslims. If after this you say anything more to me, I shall leave this place too, for God’s creation is ample”.[95] Nizām al-Dīn’s threat was blunt; he promised not to exercise his great powers in secular political affairs, instead devoting his energies to praying for the welfare of Muslims; divine disfavor would guarantee disaster for the luckless ruler who troubled him enough to cause his departure.

This was not so much pious quietism as it was the forceful assertion of a separate, higher sovereignty over the realm of the living. As the hallmark of true spiritual accomplishment, aloofness of this sort remained in practice through the ages. A striking and recent instance of this

[92] Ibid., 63–64.
[93] Ibid., 70–71.
[94] Simon Digby, “The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India,” *Iran* 28 (January 1, 1990): 71–81.
[95] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 37.

would come to mind if you walked on the path to the shrine and encountered the simple grave of Shāh Abū al-Maᶜālī, which lay in the shade of one of the tangled Arāk trees that covered the landscape around Nizām al-Dīn's sepulcher. The Shāh had arrived in Delhi in the early years of Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707), seated on a stick (*chūb*) that was carried by two servants, and from there had gone on to even greater outrages. He was usually to be found drinking table-wine (*sharāb-i mudām*) and would eat a tiny morsel of food in the evenings. So one day he was taken, his goblet in hand, to see the Caliph of the Era. Aurangzeb asked:

> "What's in the glass?"
> The dervish said, "There's milk in it." He poured the glass out, and indeed pure white milk fell out of it.
> The emperor reverently said, "O shaykhā! Please accept a little something from me."
> The dervish replied, "Whatever I request should be offered as a gift," and the emperor happily assented.
> Then the dervish said, "My request is precisely this, that the trouble of another such meeting should never again arise."[96]

Aurangzeb wisely never troubled the shāh again, and he lived in Ghiyāspūr near the tomb of Nizām al-Dīn until his death in 1669.

The ability to reject the trappings of worldly power were virtues to be lauded in others, but were certainly not an integral component of piety. The apragmatism of a Nizām al-Dīn or a Shāh Abū al-Maᶜālī, while to be revered, was hardly in everyone's capability. And indeed, as one walked on the road north to the city, one would see evidence of a piousness that did not however abandon the world completely. There was, for instance, the pretty dome and agreeable mosque which marked the resting-place of the Abyssinian nobleman Shirwān Khān. Shirwān Khān, writes our author, had been involved in the "management" of mendicants and indigents until his death in 1672. Habīb Allāh uses a telling word in speaking of this administration: *tīmārdārī*. The

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[96] Ibid., 93–94.

lexical range of the term *tīmār* continues from "sorrow, grief;" through "defence, custody" to "consideration, attention;" and finally to "a military pension".[97] It was the last of these meanings, the sense of a military stipend land-grant, which was most frequently indicated by the possession of a *tīmār;* in the bureaucratic jargon of the imperial administration, to engage in *tīmārdārī* was to manage the business of a rural estate. In Habīb Allāh's usage, however, the word of the financial bureaucracy had entered the realm of the spiritual administration. This represented not the bureaucratization of the spiritual sovereignty demarcated so sharply by Nizām al-Dīn, but rather the intermingling of state administration and the institutions of Sufic piety. So Shirwān Khān the Abyssinian could hold his title at court and yet contribute to the development of the urban infrastructure of Muslim piety: Habīb Allāh noted that a verse of his composition adorned the gateway of another important place of pilgrimage, the Shrine of the Holy Footprint (*qadam-i sharīf*):

> *Rahī gum kunān rahnumāī-yi Muhammad*
> *Hidāyat dihinda hudāī-yi Muhammad*
>
> Those lost are shown the way by Muhammad
> Those who guide are directed by Muhammad

We can be sure that Shirwān Khān's verse was prominently engraved not on account of its literary merits (which were scant), but because of his own financial contributions to the building of the structure. Shirwān Khān's dome and mosque were just by the Inn of Sīdī Yahyā, and across from the little garden of "the martyred" Sīdī Yāsīn. Gateway, dome, mosque, inn and garden were the collective contributions of an Abyssinian émigré community that had done well for itself in Mughal service. Yet their charity, expressed in the standard idiom of providing material welfare for the needy, came from success in a world of expanding opportunities. After

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[97] F. Steingass, Francis Johnson, and John Richardson, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary: Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to Be Met with in Persian Literature*, 1892, 343.

all, though Habīb Allāh is silent on the issue, the garden-building Sīdī Yāsīn had not been martyred in the defense of Islam against idolatrous fire-worshippers; he had died (on June 13, 1723) rather more prosaically at the hands of a certain Hājī ᶜUsmān the Arab and his companions while in attendance at the imperial Court.[98]

The third most important tomb in the agglomeration of urbanities which was Hazrat Dihlī was that of Chirāgh Dihlī, which lay southwest of Nizām al-Dīn's shrine. Again, our pious author expressed the usual reverence for the departed saint, noting among other things Chirāgh Dihlī's rejection of the practice of ecstasy and music (*wajd wa samāᶜ*), even though it was accepted in the Chishtī Way and was so enjoyed by Bakhtyār Kākī. As for the sepulcher itself, Habīb Allāh says only that it was a "place of pilgrimage for the people". Chirāgh Dihlī appears to have experienced a resurgence in popularity in the early eighteenth century, since a mosque and a meeting-room (*majlis khāna*) were built in the second decade of that century.[99] But Habīb Allāh does not record these details, telling us only that a fortalice (*qalᶜacha*) had been built around the tomb and surrounding buildings by the emperor's companion, Hāfiz Khidmatgār Khān. There is surely much more our author could have said: after all, we recall, he had himself served as the administrator of the public kitchen (*bulghūr-khāna*) of the tomb.[100] But Habīb Allāh's narrow antiquarian interests would not accommodate any diversion from the lives of the saints, and there do not appear to have been as many buried around Chirāgh Dihlī as elsewhere.

Old Delhi

Leaving this last great sepulcher and walking northeast, you would soon find yourself at the southern extremity of the Old City of Delhi, the "world of its own" that in Habīb Allāh's time

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[98] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 94; On the date and bare facts of Sidi Yasin's death, see Mirzā Muhammad, "Tārīkh-i Muhammadi," n.d., f. 254b, British Library APAC I.O. Islamic 813.
[99] Lucy Peck, *Delhi, a Thousand Years of Building* (New Delhi: The Lotus Collection, 2005), 72–77.
[100] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 45.

was still sometimes called Firozābād. Within the city, by its gateways and bāzār, in its graveyards and hospices and mosques rested yet more pious folk. The Old City would have been notable for the number of eccentric friends of God (*majzūb*) who were buried within the city's confines. When in the nineteenth century Orientalist scholars attempted to build a model of Islam in the subcontinent and the place of Sufis within it, they translated *"majzūb"* as "the abstracted" or the "holy fool". The learned scholar and missionary Edward Sell suggested that the *majzūb* was he who had become attracted to God; once he become devoted to God, he become the devoutly attracted (*sālik-i majzūb*) whose journey was now "fairly commenced".[101] In the ethnographer William Crooke's re-arrangement of the early-nineteenth-century East India Company-sponsored translation entitled *Islam in India*, Crooke superseded Herklot's notion of the *majzūb* with a rebuking quotation from the Orientalist Richard Burton. Burton thought that those devout people who observed the external forms of religious observance were called the "*sālik-i majzūb*", while others were called the "*majzūb-i sālik*", whom he described

> …[a]s being so affected by their mystical affection for the Deity and Gnosticism that they are dead to excitement, hope and fear. This class is of course rare, and requires a peculiar conformation of mind. The pretenders to it are common in proportion as the pretence is easy and its advantages great. A Majzub is usually a professed debauchee, and a successful beggar.[102]

To this Crooke added his own observations. The *majzūb* gave "regard to no sect or religion. Sometimes they speak, at other times remain mute. Sometimes they go about in a state of nudity, and lie down where they can, regardless of filth. Some are said to be such powerful miracle-

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[101] Edward Sell, "Sufism," *Calcuta Review* No. CLIV (1883): 330–331.

[102] Burton, *Sindh, and the Races That Inhabit the Valley of the Indus ; with Notices of the Topography and History of the Province. By Richard F. Burton.* (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 7, Leadenhall Street, 1851), 218; Ja`far Sharif, *Islam in India; Or, the Qanuni-Islam: The Customs of Musulmans of India, Comprising a Full and Exact Account of Their Various Rites and Ceremonies from the Moment of Birth to the Hour of Death*, ed. William Crooke, trans. Herklots (Humphrey Milford: London, 1921), 294.

workers that they can instantly effect what they please".[103] In a footnote appended to the "state of nudity" of the *majzūb*, Crooke hastened to add that "this is now prevented by municipal regulations in British territory".[104] Crooke appears to have been unaware of the much more succinct definition offered in a well-known nineteenth-century exposition of the Sufi's way: "there are two types of seekers. Those who go from stage to stage, and those who are suddenly pulled upwards by a hand from the unseen".[105]

Certainly Habīb Allāh would have thought this lattermost definition was most applicable to someone like Shāh ᶜAbd Allāh Qurayshī, an "impassioned devotee" (*sālik-i majzūb*) of the sixteenth century who was buried in Old Delhi. The Shāh so burned with love of God that he one day ordered his servants to bring out all his possessions and set them aflame. At this his preternaturally wise child Shāh Ahmad interjected, "It is so cumbersome to bring out everything one by one. So why not just give fire to the house and burn it all at once?"[106] Near Shāh ᶜAbd Allāh's tomb was that of his friend Hājī ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb, who had immediately departed from Delhi on a journey to Medina upon hearing from another great man that the Messenger of God was present in living form (*bi sifat-i hayāt*) in that city.[107] By the Kābulī Gate of the old city was the tomb of Shāh Bhīkā, another impassioned lover of God who had died in 1632.[108]

The most famous of such impassioned saints was Shaykh Hasan Būdila, who clearly embodied all the virtues of the true friend of God. The Shaykh, who had died in 1560 and was buried in the

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[103] Sharif, *Islam in India; Or, the Qanuni-Islam: The Customs of Musulmans of India, Comprising a Full and Exact Account of Their Various Rites and Ceremonies from the Moment of Birth to the Hour of Death*, 295.
[104] Ibid., 295 fn. 2; Outside the reach of British municipal regulations, however, the Majzub continued to run free. See Nile Green, "Transgressions of a Holy Fool: A Majzub in Colonial India," in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Princeton University Press, 2009), 173–185.
[105] Sayyid Shah Gul Hasan Qalandari Qadiri, *Solomon's Ring: The Life and Teachings of a Sufi Master (A Tranlation of the Tazkira-yi Ghausiyya)*, trans. Hasan Askari (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998), 14.
[106] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 64–65.
[107] Ibid., 66.
[108] Ibid., 87.

Old City's market, was a master of speech (*sāhib-lafz*), and often to be found naked. His private parts, wrote Habīb Allāh, never propagated, just like the bouquet of flowers that is clasped to a wall. Shaykh's Hasan's most obvious virtue was his complete lack of attachment to the material world and his mania for redistribution: so whatever he received by way of gold or cloth he gave over to the devotional singers (*qawwālān*) in his company. Despite his madness (*junūn wa dīwanagī*), he turned his gaze towards the face of beautiful young men (*amradān*) and took pleasure (*zauq-hā*) from them. It is possible that such behavior might have attracted the censure of the more orthodox learned folk, but some of them saw the impassioned shaykh waiting upon the Prophet in their dreams and helping him wash for his prayers. In the same way, said Habīb Allāh, it had also been written that some pilgrims returned from the holy cities and reported that they had seen the shaykh in the sacred enclosure at Mecca, even though he had never left Delhi. And finally, the shaykh's perfect purity was implied by the fact that his urine and excrement had no foul odor.[109]

While the old city thus derived a certain charm from the presence of these unworldly men of God, it was by no means bereft of the presence of the more usual sort of pious devotees. For instance, by the northern Narelā Gate of the old city lay the hospice of Mīr ᶜAzīz Allāh, an adherent of the Qādirī and Chishtī way. Mīr ᶜAzīz Allāh had died in 1673, but his son Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn went on to continue in his father's footsteps. Habīb Allāh knew Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn well, and had wrestled with him many times in the field of theological argumentation (*maydān-i bahs-i ᶜulūm*). Yet such disagreements were confined to the intellectual arena, and the author mourned

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[109] Ibid., 76–77; As Qasimi has described, Habib Allah closely follows his source in these accounts. See `Abd al-Haqq ibn Sayf al-Din Dihlavi, *Akhbar al-akhyar: ma`a maktubat* (Gambat, Zila` Khayrpur, Pakistan: Faruq Ikaydami, 1977), 290.

his passing also.[110] Perhaps so many of the impassioned were buried in the Old City because they had lived and died there, and did not possess the resources, ability or inclination that would secure a prime exurban burial spot. The centuries-old graves scattered around the cities represented urban and political arrangements of past eras. In Habīb Allāh's present, numbers of pious and devout men were buried where they had lived, in Firozābād, and increasingly in Shāhjahānābād.

Shāhjahānābād

Walking north along the river, you would soon see the stonework fortifications of the walls which surrounded Shāh Jahān's imperial capital. Entering through the city's southern Dihlī Gate, you would immediately find yourself in the hustle and bustle of the axial promenade of Chāwk Saᶜd Allāh Khān. But forsaking for the time its varied delights, you would try to head due east through the winding lanes and alleys of the city, or perhaps more easily just by the city's wall. If you walked by the walls, the first major landmark on your right would be the city's Turkmān Gate, named for the large sepulcher of Shāh Turkmān (*bīyābānī*) ("of the Desert"), who had died in 1240 and whose exurban grave had been incorporated into the New City. Other than a few stock phrases of reverence, Habīb Allāh had curiously little to say about this ancient place. But our author did note that the tomb was large, unadorned by a dome, and that a world of people went to pay their respects on every Friday.[111]

Heading northwest on the main thoroughfare that led to the magistrate's Pool (*Hawz-i Qāzī*), one would spy a magnificent dome, adorned with golden flowers, near the mansion of the Rājā Kishan Dās. Habīb Allāh knew this neighborhood as the market of the *sirkī-girān*, a term which

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[110] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 95.
[111] Ibid., 9.

probably refers to a place of sale of the sort of reed-mats which kept off the rain. The dome belonged to the tomb of the Shaykh Bāyazīd Qādirī, who had died in 1667. The shaykh was renowned for his many remarkable powers and miracles, including the resuscitation of a child given up for dead.[112] On a little mound nearby lay the grave of Shāh Pirā the Impassioned. Son of Mīr Khayālī the wandering singer (*mīrāsī*) and pupil of the shaykh Shams al-ᶜĀrifīn Kulawī, Shāh Pīrā could usually be found with a black cloth (*siyāh-galīm*, fig. "unfortunate") thrown over his back near the Rangīn Hattā, (?) near the gate or passage (*bahr*/*pahr*?) of the Confectioners (*shīrīnī-furūshān*). The words which generally trickled out of Shāh Pīrā's mouth were those of the impassioned in the manner of the insane (*harf-i majzūbāna bi taur-i dīwāna*). One day, however, the aforementioned shaykh Bāyazīd Qādirī happened to be passing by, and heard the usual debauched words (*harf-i rindāna*) from Shāh Pīrā's mouth. The shaykh turned to glare at him with the Eye of Admonition (*chashm-i siyāsat*) and said, "Observe the laws of etiquette and know the restraints of divine law to be compulsory on yourself!"

Shāh Pīrā fell into a terror and immediately stumbled behind the shaykh to the neighborhood of the reed-mat sellers, where he stood as a watchman at the shāh's threshold for three nights and days. On the fourth day, Shaykh Bāyazīd finally looked upon him with favor and told him to take his place on a little heap nearby. Shāh Pīrā did so, and developed the habit of distributing to nearby mendicants the considerable quantities of money and food that were presented to him. He died in 1678, eleven years after his master, and was buried not with his master (that privilege was reserved for Shaykh Bāyazīd's son, Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Hayy), but was merely buried on top of the heap on which he had lived.

[112] Ibid., 91–92.

Shāh Pīrā's encounter with the shaykh implicitly resulted in a conversion within the religion, from a lesser to perhaps a greater orthopraxy that required the mindfulness of the applicability of the law on the self, no matter how distracted. This meeting, however, is far indeed from the narrative typologies of encounter and challenge in Sufi accounts that Simon Digby has shown to be prevalent in earlier centuries.[113] Writing of recent historical figures, Habīb Allāh was careful to privilege the established shaykh who derived from noble lineages of birth and training (lineages which the author elucidated at length in the text) against an impassioned devotee who was the child of a wandering singer. Shāh Pīrā, it was true, might have been "pulled up by a hand from the unseen"; but in Habīb Allāh's world he was hardly likely to have been pulled up higher than one of the foremost shaykhs of his generation.

This did not mean that Shāh Pīrā was wholly without his own powers. Habīb Allāh tells us that a few years after the impassioned devotee's death, a military commander by the name of Tāhir Khān came to pay his respects at the shāh's graveside. Tāhir Khān had great faith in the shāh, and so begged for his intercession in his military affairs: it turned out that his area of operations was plagued by refractory Rājpūts who posed great obstacles for the khān's administration. Tāhir Khān pledged to raise a dome over the shāh's grave if he were to gain predominance over the Rājpūts; and indeed, so it came rapidly to pass. True to his world, the grateful commander presented four thousand rupees to an architect to build a tomb. But the architect defrauded his patron: using only a little of the money to build the tomb, he kept the rest for himself. God's

[113] Simon Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend," in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, ed. Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 99–131; Simon Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Sufi Hagiography" (Unpublished paper, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1970).

vengeance, says Habīb Allāh, fell swiftly upon the cheat: he became blind, and died in such indigence that not even a shroud was to be had for his funeral.[114]

Here again was a standard trope common among stories of famous Friends of God. To challenge or contest the power of the Friend was to bring God's wrath down on one's head. Digby for instance recounts a tale in which the seven-year-old great-grandchild of the famed Chishtī Gīsū Dirāz ("Unkempt locks") dispelled a "fierce but unnamed" lion-riding mystic by riding towards him on a wall which moved at his command. While the child might have imagined he was acting on his great-grandfather's behalf, Gīsū Dirāz was not amused by this wanton display of miraculous power: "He turned his eye on the boy, who fell ill with fever, and died on 21 Shaᶜbān 817 / November 1414".[115] Habīb Allāh too recounted blindings and deaths for infractions major or minor. But in the case of Shāh Pīra in the Shāhjahānābād of the late seventeenth century, matters were now more complex. In an urban world where money mattered, an older form of spiritual challenge had been rendered obsolete by the dangers of economic fraud (*khiyānat*) in the marketplace.

This did not mean the impassioned devotee faded away from the streets and markets of the city in the eighteenth century. There was for instance the Shāh Chirā ("Why"), who suffered from an unnatural swelling of the testicles (*bād khāya*). The Shāh, who died in 1716, was to be found near the Square of Tāhir Khān by the shop of the Abyssinian Sīdī Marjān, practicing the ascetic virtues: he distributed the many gifts given to him among those who were present. His popularity lay in the fact that his disjointed words were considered revelatory by the people. They came to him and extracted answers to their own questions by drawing auspicious omens from his words.

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[114] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 96–97.
[115] Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend," 124.

Habīb Allāh himself testified to Shāh Chirā's power, but he never tarried to speak to him personally, because "one must always stay on guard with the impassioned".[116]

The impassioned devotee may have been close to God, but he appears to be a marginal figure from Habīb Allāh's perspective by the beginning years of the eighteenth century. The most dramatic instance of this marginality was visible in the all-too-short life of Shāh Bīn of Sirhind. The shāh came from a noble and honorable (*asīl o najīb*) family, but he emerged impassioned out of his mother's belly. He came to Delhi in the throes of unearthly desires and settled down in the garden of Mīr Husām al-Dīn (the son of Khwāja Khurd) at the edge of the little hamlet of Jor Bāgh to the southwest of the New City. So smitten with love for the divine was Shāh Bīn, says Habīb Allāh, that he was utterly ignorant of food and drink and perfume. But perhaps our author is merely being charitable, for he tells us that in his distraction the shāh sometimes ate a clod of earth (*kulūkh*) in the place of bread.

Eventually, news of this person reached Mirzā Ahmad Baig, who Hābīb Allāh tells us built the Garden, the mosque, the Pool and the marble platform at the public thoroughfare (*shāriᶜ-i ᶜāmm*). Mirzā Ahmad Baig then brought Shāh Bīn with all courtesy to a little arch (*īwāncha*) by the mosque and settled him there, and assigned his own chamberlain (*khān-i sāmān*) as well as the manager of the Garden (*dārogha-yi bāgh*) in his service. Large numbers of people now flocked to hear Shāh Bīn. People must have believed that the Shāh's ravings contained hidden meanings, for they drew omens (*tafāᶜul mī-namudand*) from his words, and left large offerings of cash and food for him. Now the manager of the Garden started keeping the money for himself and distributing only the food and sweet amongst those gathered. But one day, when the manager was not present and large amounts of cash lay gathered there, the Dervish made a signal to the

[116] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 123.

people. So the assembled multitude fell upon the money, making excuses about paying off the landowner or giving to the poor.

The manager of the garden arrived just as the assembled folk had divided up all the cash amongst themselves. Profoundly upset by this act of wanton redistribution, the enraged manager lost his head. He went so far as to abuse Shāh Bīn and even to strike him. At this point, says the author, words emerged from the Shāh's mouth: "O madman! You've burned your own house and loosed the arrow of doom on your own life!" Indeed, the manager's house was incinerated on that very day, and all his worldly possessions were destroyed. Perhaps losing his senses at the literalness of it all, the manager emerged from his house in a state of grief and rage that turned to madness, so that he too began to utter impassioned words (*harf-i majzūbāna*), and then vanished without a trace. And then Shāh Bīn himself died on 1 October 1708 and was buried under the leafy shade of a Mūlsarī tree (Bullet wood, *Mimusops Elengi*) on the public path near his residence; in Habīb Allāh's time, the grave was marked by a red-stone gravestone (*taᶜwīz*).[117]

At first glance here again is the familiar tale of the powerful mystic, who wreaks a harsh vengeance on being insulted or abused. But the impassioned devotee at the center of this story is a curiously fragile figure. His powers are only spiritual, and are circumscribed by the agents of more worldly forces, whether they be the elite patron, his manager, or the visiting multitudes. In this vein, a sharper reading of Shāh Bīn's short life and his place in the world becomes possible. A cynical observer, for instance, might regard the prime mover in the whole affair not to be the mystic, but Mirzā Ahmad Baig, the figure who followed the standard template of Mughal charity in building the garden, the mosque, the pool and the platform around a sacred relic of ᶜAlī.

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[117] Ibid., 117–118.

This sacred relic had two noteworthy attributes. Firstly, it assumed the form of a footprint left by ᶜAlī on stone, thus fitting the form of Delhi's other prized relic, which was a footprint of the prophet Muhammad. Shrines housing the prophet's footprint could be found in many places in the lands of Islam, and were built across the subcontinent until the end of the eighteenth century; but the specimen in Delhi had a long and venerable history, having arrived from Arabia during the reign of the Sultān Firūz Shāh (r. 1351-88).[118] Habīb Allāh had himself described the careers of several worthies who were buried near the fortalice of the Prophet's footprint, a structure that remained had remained in continuous use from the fourteenth century to his own time.[119] By contrast, ᶜAlī's footprint near Jor Bāgh did not have the same storied provenance. If we are to believe Habīb Allāh, the structure came into existence at some unstated point before the death of Shāh Bīn in 1708, though other evidence complicates the picture somewhat.[120]

It is in this context that one might envision Mirzā Ahmad Baig as an active participant in a cultural milieu within which circulated a template for the transformation of the urban and exurban landscape, for it was he who built around the relic and he who sought the impassioned devotee to reside by it. The template from which Ahmad Baig drew was not only a nebulous cloud of shared aesthetic values. Rather, it derived in material form from prescriptive guidebooks such as the misleadingly named *Diary of Perfumes* (*Bayāz-i khushbūᵓī*), which confidently articulated (among other things) the requisite proportions "when it is desired to build a raised

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[118] On the veneration of the Prophet's relics in the subcontinent, see Perween Hasan, "The Footprint of the Prophet," *Muqarnas* 10 (January 1, 1993): 335–343.
[119] On the architectural aspects of the shrine, see Anthony Welch, "The Shrine of the Holy Footprint in Delhi," *Muqarnas* 14 (January 1, 1997): 166–178.
[120] Even this evidence is potentially contradicted by the author of the Sair al-Manazil, whose researches in the early nineteenth century led him to believe that the site was constructed by a Mirza Ashraf Bēg Khan. The earliest inscription in the site dates to 1137AH/1724AD. This does not preclude the existence of a complex that predated 1724 and was rebuilt then; inscriptions in the region detail further building activity through the eighteenth century. A "Mirza Ahmad Bēg", however, is nowhere mentioned. Mirza Sangin Bayg, *Sair al-manazil* (Aligarh: Adabi Akadmi, 1980), 89–90.

platform with a pool", or for that matter for arches, festival-grounds, baths, gateways to tombs and gardens – as well as the proper numbers of cows and gardeners for them![121]

Mirzā Ahmad Baig clearly followed this template of transformation more or less faithfully, though we might speculate on his motives for doing so. Having acquired control over a relic worth revering, and having built the infrastructure of piety around it, the mirzā could only profit from the presence of a distracted holy man who did not care at all for the "cash and food" showered on him by his admirers. Habīb Allāh had nothing to say about Mirzā Ahmad Baig and attributed all fault to the nameless manager, but it did not matter who was in charge. There had always been those who believed in the power of impassioned devotee to "know hearts", and doubters had been punished in exemplary fashion. But now, in the Delhi of the eighteenth century, money's golden lure had made it possible for at least some to imagine that the impassioned devotee's connections to the other world could be put to use in this one.

In fact, it might sometimes seem that the power of money had come to exercise itself even over God's more restrained lovers. There certainly remained dervishes who steadfastly rejected the allure of the world and the favors of the powerful, and Habīb Allāh knew them well. But there were also those who had a comfortable relationship with the powers-that-be. Consider the charismatic Shāh Makārim ᶜAlī, who followed the Chishtī way. He tended to the poor and provided food for mendicants and other deserving folk, all laudable activities conducted on the basis of a land-grant (*āltamghā*) from the state in the first place. After his death in 1707, the

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[121] Muhammad Aᶜzam, "Bayāz-i Khushbūᵓī," n.d., f. 108a–110b, British Library APAC I.O. Islamic 828; Simon Digby speculates that the manuscript's scribe could have been the "pleasure-loving" prince Muhammad Aᶜzam (d. 1707). The possibility is tantalizing but there appears to be no internal evidence to support the claim. Simon Digby, "Ganj: The Game of Treasure from Mughal India," *South Asian Studies* 22 (January 2006): 75.

grant supported his son, who continued in the father's virtuous ways along with the renunciant Muᶜazzam Khān, who had given up his place at court.[122]

By the eighteenth century, there was nothing ignoble in taking such a grant from the state. That, according to one conception, was why the state existed in the first place: to support and to protect the people of Islam. Of course, certain mystics had always felt a little uncomfortable consorting with the powerful or accepting their gifts. Others, such as Shāh Gharīb, did not seem to have such qualms at all. The shāh was not an unwashed mendicant from the streets of the city; he had come from an hereditary estate (*watan-i maᵓlūf*) to live in the suburban village of Shāhpūr. So it was not surprising, perhaps, that he was described as a *bon vivant* and an epicure, one who was always elegantly dressed and constantly rubbing on perfumes. The shāh was frequently to be seen wandering about the scenic environs of the Solar Lake and the Tower and the tombs of the elders and the forty bodies after paying his respects at the sepulcher of Bakhtyār Kākī. Eventually, he was invited to live in the mansion of Ghāzī Khān the Afghān, and he accepted the offer, while maintaining his customary "administration" (*tīmārdārī*) of mendicants, kindness to the rich (*mudārāt-i aghniyāᵓ*), mercy upon orphans and in rewarding devotional singers. And when he died in 1710, the beloved saint was buried not in the wilderness, but in the familiar confines of the courtyard of the reception-room (*dīwān-khāna*) of Ghāzī Khān's mansion.[123] Even more wealthy must have been the Hājī Muᶜizz al-Dīn. While he was praised greatly for his piety, had served as the superintendent of the public audience in the reign of Emperor Bahādur Shāh. His son, who held the same post in the time of the author, had erected a flower-garden and a guest-house (*mihmān-khāna*) by the grave and held an annual death-anniversary celebration.[124]

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[122] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 115–116.
[123] Ibid., 118–119.
[124] Ibid., 127–128.

Others, like the Shāh Qalandar Allāh, were harder to place socially: Shāh Qalandar himself sometimes appeared transgressively naked of head and foot, wearing only a red cloth. But on other occasions, he was to be seen enjoying the marketplace on foot or carried in a litter, and garbed in expensive Qādirī robes and fine, colorful trousers.[125] Then there was Shāh Nūr Allāh, who died in 1713 and was buried in his own hospice near the Prophet's footprint. The shāh had lived in great isolation and solitude, without wife or child, and had devoted himself to the instruction of students. But the most powerful testament to this reclusive mystic's power came from a Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān: "I never saw a dervish as uncaring and skillful (*sāhib-tasarruf*) a master of revelation as Nūr Allāh Qādirī. I had heard in detail beforehand from his excellency all the news which I later beheld myself". But what are we to make of the fact that this "old faithful" was none other the all-powerful vizier himself?[126]

All this did not mean that the age of the impassioned devotee, the reclusive anchorite, the poverty-embracing dervish had come to an end; Habīb Allāh repeatedly lauded several such figures from his own time. But there seemed to be no more men like Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn, who had refused to pronounce Sultān Muhammad bin Tughlaq a just ruler because it was not his practice to say that of tyrants (*zālimān*). The sultān had the conscientious divine hurled from the walls of his fort for this, and he was buried where he had fallen.[127] Nor were there too many like Mīr Hasīn, who on arrival in India fell afoul of Sikandar Lūdī because of "inappropriate conversation" (even though he retained the favor of noble ladies) and then spent the rest of his days distributing what he cultivated amongst mendicants.[128] Even in the recent past, the learned Maulawī Muhammad Yaᶜqūb had more than once offered stiff resistance to Emperor Aurangzeb.

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[125] Ibid., 128–129.
[126] Ibid., 120.
[127] Ibid., 43.
[128] Ibid., 68.

Initially appointed as a tutor to Aurangzeb's sons, the Maulawī refused to place his seal on a proclamation (*mazhar*) that declared the heresy (*ilhād*) of Aurangzeb's brother and arch-rival, Prince Dāra Shukoh. But Aurangzeb was far too sophisticated to throw the maulawī off the ramparts of the fort as the ruler of a previous dynasty had; and so the maulawī later made good with his employer and lived to a ripe old age, writing and teaching in the imperial Seminary behind the city's central world-revealing mosque.[129]

As a scholar who had done well in the service of the state, Habīb Allāh did not find the combination of such official, intellectual and spiritual pursuits in any way offensive. But such achievements in the rich world of opportunity might sit uneasily with the general valorization of poverty and quietism within the religious tradition, as one final instance should make clear. This is the case of the khwāja Muhammad Jaͨfar, the son of Khwāja Qāsim, and from among the noble and wealthy of Akbarābād. He was a dear friend, happy of countenance and speech and temper. Since his youth he played the backgammon of love-play (*nard-i ͨishqbāzī*) with mendicants and with the Divine Beloved (*mahbūb-i haqīqī*). At first he served Miyān Shaykh Ahmad, who transacted the milk of the love of God in the Bashiya (*Vaishya*?) Market (*bashiya mandī*).[130] After his death, he was attached to Sayyid Jalāl Dihlawī, the pupil of Lād Khān Mewātī, who was the student of Abū al-ͨAlāͻ Ahrārī. Then he spent some time in Delhi in the company of pious divines and famous devotional singers (*qawwālān*). He extended his hand freely in dispersing benefits and recommendations (*sifārish*) and in fulfilling the desires of God's creation. All this must have been enabled by the fact that he received eight thousand rupees every month from his brother, the great nobleman Nawwāb Samsām al-Daula as an "offering", (but still spent twice the sum on mendicants). He did not accept any assistance from the emperor

129 Ibid., 98–101.
130 A textual variant reads "southern market". Ibid., 140.

and did not go to the doors of the nobility or the royalty. He died on 14 August 1728 and was buried in the courtyard of his own reception-hall (*dīwān-khāna*).[131]

Habīb Allāh did not attribute any notable spiritual prowess to the khwāja, instead alluding to his distinctly unscholarly pursuits with his references to the amusements of games, the market and singers. Yet the khwāja found his place in Habīb Allāh's list of worthy divines even though the khwāja's teacher, Miyān Shaykh Ahmad, did not get an entry. Our author noted that Khwāja Jaᶜfar received a large monthly sum from his brother, who was one of the highest officials of state, but was then quick to point out that he spent even more than this sum; and finally, Habīb Allāh tries to suggest that the khwāja conformed in some way to the ideal of quietistic separation from the world because he did not visit with the nobility or accept the emperor's charity. But as we have seen, such sentiments were thoroughly undercut by what Habīb Allāh himself tells us of Khwāja Jaᶜfar's superb connections and powerful influence in the world. In this sense, it is evident that Habīb Allāh, himself enmeshed in the business of the state, could not but engage in what has elsewhere been called "historiographical nepotism".[132]

Habib Allāh's purely antiquarian enterprise was certainly compromised by the exigencies of the era and by his own trajectory as a scholar-official in service of the empire. In another sense, though, his account bears a guileless truth: the world of the devout and the pious had changed by the eighteenth century. No longer was the seeker of truth necessarily expected to garb himself in the coarse woolen cloth of mendicancy and retreat to the wilds. Nor indeed was he locked in a tense and volatile relationship with the agents of an emperor who depended on him for

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[131] Ibid., 140–41.
[132] Jonathan D. Spence, *The Death of Woman Wang* (Penguin Books, 1979), 61.

legitimacy and feared his political challenge. Wealth, power and religious attainment could all be achieved together in this world without waiting for the rewards of the next one.[133]

Glimpsing the Popular

The author of the *Recollections* inhabited a realm of piety that derived its strength from features of the city that, as we have seen, were mentioned in gazetteers and collections of prose. The space of the city and its environs were collectively sanctified by the exhalations of the holy men who rested there. Reflected and magnified by the domes erected above the graves of these friends of God (*awliyāᵓ*), spiritual puissance may have pulsated most strongly from particular sepulchers, but its ether was thickly diffused throughout a territory in which the graves of the uncountable pious had become lost over time. Indeed, sepulchers could be seen as nodes in a network of spiritual energy, their interlinks relaying and amplifying the power of each into a systemic whole greater than the sum of its parts.

The vector of this spiritual power was the pilgrim who traveled from grave to grave, offering prayers and seeking intercession. The rhythms of such ambulations structured the quotidian experience of the pious; in a city so densely populated by the saintly dead, every day provided an occasion for a special prayer in remembrance. If the day was marked by its five prayers for Muslims, so was the week shaped by special gatherings at particular tombs. Such at least was the experience of a young nobleman named Dargāh Qulī Khān (1710-1766(?)) who appears to have visited Delhi between 1738 and 1741 in the company of his master, the great nobleman Nizām

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[133] Tanvir Anjum's recent study of the Chishti order in particular suggests that this process of cooption began as early as middle of the fourteenth century. See Tanvir Anjum, *Chishti Sufis in the Sultanate of Delhi, 1190-1400 : From Restrained Indifference to Calculated Defiance* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 6–9.

al-Mulk.[134] Just as the aged Habīb Allāh was completing his *Recollections* of the city's departed pious folk, the youthful Dargāh Qulī Khān was visiting with its living spiritual masters. While Dargāh Qulī Khān's perspective is decidedly that of the ruling elite, he appears to have participated with gusto in the many events and rituals which punctuated the life of the city. Where Habīb Allāh occasionally gave terse mention of the existence of a weekly gathering at this or the other shrine, Dargāh Qulī Khān joyfully recounted the living pleasures he encountered in such events.

A well-off member of Delhi's society with pious inclinations like Dargāh Qulī Khān could have begun his long weekend with a visit on Wednesday to the blessed tomb of the Sultān of Shaykhs, the Beloved of God (*maᶜshūq-i ilāhī*), situated just half a *kuroh* from Old Delhi. Behind a wall and gateways that "exude the rays of its beneficences" lay the grave of the great Chishtī divine, Nizām al-Dīn. The building itself radiated the awesome power of the person who rested within, for "the resolute and powerful hauteur (*dūrbāsh*) of that doorway melts the pride of the arrogant, and the awesome majesty of that sublime place compels the desire to prostrate in those who raise their heads in obstinacy". More prosaically, the servitors (*mujawirān*) of the sepulcher lived in little houses nearby and made their livelihood from the offerings made to the saint by the pious. Happy and fortunate indeed were those who have their homes near this pure land, thought Dargāh Qulī Khān, for they always had the opportunity to pay their respects at the shrine.

So, fastening the garments of pilgrimage, one would go hear the devotional singers (*qawwālān*), who performed their vocal offerings to the departed master with all etiquette. This was especially true on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar, when a "rare and marvelous crowd" presented

[134] I rely on Nurulhasan Ansari's introduction to his critical edition of Dargah Quli Khan's text. Ansari does not provide a citation for these details. See Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, ed. Nurulhasan Ansari (Dihli: Shu`bah-i Urdu, Dihli Yunivarsiti, 1982), 39–41.

itself. Dargāh Qulī Khān tells us that Delhi's nobility were present on such occasions, bedecked in all their splendor; and after their ritual obligations were complete, there was always the opportunity to enjoy the gardens built nearby. Naturally traders also arrived to "adorn shops here and there, and display wares much desired and coveted by spectators".

If the liveliness of the chorus of singers and dancers and mimics (*naqqāl*) overwhelmed the senses every Wednesday, so much more was it amplified during the annual celebration of Nizām al-Dīn's "Wedding" (*ᶜurs*), the anniversary of the saint's death, when his soul processed like a newlywed bride to communion with God. This was a day when "angels exultantly fling up their caps of honor to the skies upon this opportunity to kiss this felicitous threshold".[135] The environs of the shrine were now swollen with the tents of pilgrims, shaykhs and Sufis fell into ecstatic trances (*wajd o hāl*), and a rare hubbub ensued all night long as some processed around the grave and others occupied themselves in reading the Qurᵓān or in meditating (*tilāwat*). The next morning was endowed with a special grace, and the morning prayers then offered had a marvelous delectability (*tarfa halāwatī*) to them.[136]

Thursdays provided a tough choice. One could go either to visit Delhi's greatest holy relic or the grave of its most important saint. The relic was the footprint of the Prophet Muhammad that had received only incidental mention in Habīb Allāh's account. Dargāh Qulī Khān certainly revered it: he directly attributed the liveliness (*āb o rang*) of the flower-garden that was Delhi to the spiritual power of the footprint. On its mantle, thought our author, lay the collyrium (*tūtiyā*) for the clear-sighted, and the dust of its path was capital (*māya*) for the intelligent. As in the case of Nizām al-Dīn's sepulcher, the relic's sanctity was expressed in the building's aura, for "the rays

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[135] This line is corruptly rendered in the original text as: *bi istilām-i saᶜādat āstān-i sidra nishān kulāh-i mafākhirat be hawā mīfarastādand*. I suggest amending the reading to remove the *izāfa* connecting *āstān* to *sidra*, and to change the reading of *sidra nishān* (the meaning of which is unclear) to *sidra nishīnān* ("Angels"). See Ibid., 54.
[136] Ibid., 54–55.

of miraculous power (*karāmāt wa aᶜjāz*) pour forth from its walls and gate". Equally, the pool situated in the courtyard before the Doorway to Mercy was filled with miraculous holy water (*māᵓ al-muᶜīn*), and the very fountain of life sprang forth from its fountain-head. Nevertheless, noble visitors such as Dargāh Qulī Khān might have shrunk a little from visiting the shrine on Thursdays, when the courtyard was crammed with masses of pilgrims. At such times it was only with a thousand difficulties that one might reach the relic; and in the month of Rabīᶜ al-Awwal, it remained crowded in the same fashion all day and night. These ardent pilgrims, says our author, came from distant cities and regions, and "cast garden upon garden worth of the flower of wishes into the hem of desires", eager as they were to procure a little of the healing water with which the footprint was washed.

The power of the footprint was such that the fortunate purchased a place for their own graves, seeking proximity to the trace of the prophetic in their long afterlife. But perhaps popular veneration for the relic was even greater, for we are told that the graves of the poor which surrounded the shrine lay "outside the ambit of estimation". Such popularity meant that during the Prophet's *ᶜurs,* the shrine was so filled with the multitudes of pilgrims that seating could not be found and people jostled for a place from daybreak, hungry not only for a vision of the relic but no doubt also for the great quantities of comestibles and sweetmeats presented as offerings by the wealthy.[137]

If on the one hand the great multitudes which thronged to the shrine were proof of its power, their considerable presence might render it somewhat less attractive than the scenic locales of other exurban shrines. For elite visitors such as Dargāh Qulī Khān, Thursdays might well be spent far from the madding crowds, in the scenic environs of the sepulcher of the saint Bakhtyār

[137] Ibid., 51–52; A valuable analysis of the architecture of this shrine is to be found in Welch, "The Shrine of the Holy Footprint in Delhi."

Kākī, the Axis of all Axes (*qutb al-aqtāb*) – indeed, we recall Habīb Allāh remembering his frequent sightings of the well-born Shāh Gharīb enjoying such perambulations. Certainly the sepulcher lacked nothing in spiritual aura; our author reported that in the mornings an inexplicable radiance (*tajallī bilā kaif*) was manifested in the air about the grave, and a sort of awe fell upon those who observed the phenomenon. And much like the holy footprint, Bakhtyār Kākī's grave was held in great esteem by pilgrims from across the land. Still, its distance from the city necessitated a degree of planning for the outing; Delhi's residents left the city on the night before, and were then free to enjoy the environs of the complex after their morning prayers. The grave itself was simple, though it had been adorned with tasteful carved marble screens a few decades before our author's time by the martyred king (*shāh-i shahīd*) Farrukh Siyar (r. 1712-19). The vast numbers of graves of God's Friends made the environs of the tomb the envy of paradise. For Dargāh Qulī Khān, however, these included not just the grave of the jurisprudent (*qāzī*) Hamīd al-Dīn Nagaurī, but also that of the temporal ruler Bahādur Shāh (r.1707-12). Visitors might also pray at the venerable Mosque of the Friends (*masjid-i awliyā*ʾ), where the experience of worship was imbued with sweetness; and, said our author, Sufic discourses (*malfūzāt*) asserted that Khʷājā Khizr, the mysterious wandering prophet in green garb, was known to appear at the nearby festival-ground. And of course there were also the buds (*tunzahāt*) that bloomed around the shrine and the spectacular reservoir nearby.

Dargāh Qulī Khān recorded no major event for Fridays, though Habīb Allāh had observed that crowds gathered at the intramural tomb of Shāh Turk.[138] On Saturday a visitor could go to see the footprint of Imām ʿAlī, which Habīb Allāh indicates was installed only a few decades before

[138] Habib Allah, *Zikr-i jami`-i awliya-yi Dihli*, 9.

our visitor's time.[139] But, as with the Prophet's footprint, Dargāh Qulī Khān did not mention the age or the provenance of the relic; using the same language of piety, our author tells us that the dust of its threshold was the means of the cure of the afflicted, and the pellucid water of the fountainhead of its mercy was the honor (literally, "face-water", *āb-rū*) of the indigent. Pilgrims came to the site in their masses on the appointed day, and on the twelfth day of Muharram, mourners carrying model shrines (*taᶜziya*) gathered here with "grieving hearts and weeping eyes" to perform the rites of mourning (*ᶜazāᵓ-parastī*). And yet again, the nobility (*sharīf*) were joined by the staggering masses of common folk (*wazīᶜ*), so that "there is as wide room on the roads as the eye of an ant". Whilst panegyrists (*manqabat-khʷānān*) loudly sang songs of mourning at the front entrance, tradesfolk gathered to tend to the spiritual wounds of pilgrims with the salve of alluring commodities. [140]

Finally, on Sunday, one might make another extramural visit, to the sepulcher of Nasīr al-Dīn, the Lamp of Delhi (*Chirāgh dihlī*): Habīb Allāh, manager of the sepulcher's public kitchen, had said almost nothing about the site, but the visiting Dargāh Qulī Khān had rather more to observe. Nasīr al-Dīn's tomb was a little different from the rustic grandeur of Bakhtyār Kākī's tomb or the hallowed buildings of Nizām al-Dīn's shrine. Our guide attributed a distinctly inter-communal character to the activities there, for we are told that at this shrine "Muslims and Hindus observe the enjoined rites of pilgrimage together". Of course, it is easy to imagine that such practices were frequent at other hallowed spots in the region at this time, so common as to not deserve mention; but Dargāh Qulī Khān's specific reference points to the notable and perhaps unusually intense character of such mixed forms at this sepulcher. A further indication of the potential

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[139] The inscription on the doorway to the footprint, recorded in the early nineteenth century, dates to 1724/5 (AH1137). Mirza Sangin Bayg, *Sair al-manazil*, 89.
[140] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 52–53.

heterodoxy of the tomb was the fact that the customary pilgrimage to the site was established not according to the Islamic calendar, but "the month in which [the major Hindu festival of] Diwalī happens to fall", when "a rare crowd assembles".

So perhaps one did not taste the same "sweetness" of prayer experienced at the most auratic of shrines, and perhaps there was no particularly awesome character to the tomb in the manner of Nizām al-Dīn or Bakhtyār Kākī. Instead, Dargāh Quli Khān remarked that when all the residents of the city made their pilgrimage to the tomb, they raised tents and cloth-enclosures around the nearby spring and bathed in it to find a total cure for chronic illnesses. The abilities of this water were similar to the water which washed the prophet's footprint, and so came to be endowed with healing qualities and was explicitly associated with the practices of popular veneration. In this instance too, a visitor might sense that the character and the experience of worship at the sepulcher were shaped not by the practices of the learned elite like Habīb Allāh, but by the reverence of the great numbers of common folk who visited it.

It is no doubt to accommodate the swell of such ardent devotees that the reigning Emperor Muhammad Shāh had raised a brick enclosure around the sepulcher, shaping a courtyard which had an amplitude "greater than perhaps any other tomb". This was a sagacious move, seeking to secure the favor of both the departed saint and the imperial subjects who formed the mass of his contemporary admirers. Dargāh Qulī Khān did not mention the large mosque that had been built in the recent past by the deceased emperor Farrukh Siyar (d. 1719).[141] He marveled instead at the spectacle of the caravans of townsfolk who came from daybreak until sunset, amusing

[141] On the Mosque, see Peck, *Delhi, a Thousand Years of Building*, 76. Peck also mentions a variety of other eighteenth-century buildings that testify to the popularity of this shrine during this period.

themselves on carpets spread in the shade of trees, while the sound of the jaw harp and the drum spread all around, and music and color (*rāg o rang*) was everywhere to be found.[142]

There is an instructive difference between Habīb Allāh's and Dargāh Qulī Khān's account of sepulchers such as that of Chirāgh Dihlī. With the scholar-official as the guide, one would be regaled with stories of the exemplary life and the great power of the departed personage. But walking with Dargāh Qulī Khān through the same space, one would see instead the city's shrines animated by the throngs of pilgrims and visitors. Although Dargāh Qulī Khān had come from the southern imperial redoubt of Hyderabad, nearly a thousand miles away from the capital, he found nothing alien or unrecognizable in the world he saw all around him. Only one aspect of the city's life excited repeated comment: the number of common folk who filled the places which drew our author's interest.

There was nothing sinister about this. It was to house and serve God's creatures that the template of imperial construction was built. This is why Farrukh Siyar had built the mosque by Chirāgh Dihlī's shrine, and why Muhammad Shāh had raised an enclosure around it; and this is why officials like Habīb Allāh were appointed to the service of mausolea and public kitchens. Yet one could not help but marvel at the numbers of ordinary folk who brought money for impassioned devotees and listened intently for the hidden significances of their words; who crammed into the enclosures on anniversary-days; or battled for precedence in seeking a few drops of the curative waters of the shrine. These commoners were in a way distant from the elites who endowed these spaces and wrote about them; certainly this is why Habīb Allāh had absolutely nothing to say about the Hindus who made their offerings at the tomb and presumably ate at the kitchen he supervised. Yet at the same time, these masses were proximate and unavoidable. Their practices

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[142] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 55–56.

and behaviors may have seemed alien or even unpleasant – we can imagine the pious Habīb Allāh wrinkling his nose in disgust at the heathenish practice of bathing in the spring near Chirāgh Dihlī – but their reverence and adulation for the figure of the friend of God, dead for half a millennium, animated the tomb. The categories of noble and commoner may have been held far apart in Dargāh Qulī Khān's mind; yet at the tomb of Chirāgh Dihlī or Nizām al-Dīn or the holy footprint, they all jostled and intermingled together.

Elaborations

It is perhaps the recognition of this proximity which led Dargāh Qulī Khān to use an unusual and striking phrase in his description of the crowds which came to Nizām al-Dīn's shrine. In describing Nizām al-Dīn's tomb, the author speaks of a "*jumhūr-i khāss wa ʿāmm*" who fastened the robes of pilgrimage to visit it on Wednesdays. The addition of the word *"jumhūr"* to the common phrase *"khāss wa ʿāmm"* (noble and commoner) is significant: in modern parlance, *"jumhūr"* most frequently translates as "republic", though the word certainly did not bear this meaning before end of the eighteenth century.[143] In this way, our author pointedly speaks of something akin to a "collective of nobles and commoners" heading off to the weekly extramural pilgrimage. Why did our author deploy this particular phrase where a simpler formulation would have been more innocuous and proper? While we can only speculate as to his motives, his conception of the social totality is rather more clear. The first implication of his usage is precisely that the author himself perceived a social totality which comprised both nobles and commoners. Another implication may be derived from the fact that the more common idiom in this situation would be to speak of the *khalāʾiq*, that is, those created by God and in his charge.

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[143] Bernard Lewis, "D̲jumhūriyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill), accessed July 5, 2013, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/djumhuriyya-SIM_2112.

Clearly the author meant something rather more specific than that: he was speaking of two broad categories of people – noble and common – who, while possessed of separate and distinguishing attributes could nevertheless be seen as a whole. But if they were distinct, what linked them? And what was the nature of the whole – the *jumhūr* – which encompassed them?

We have already encountered one answer to that question. In proceeding on pilgrimage to the tomb of a great Friend of God, the masses in their whole brought a distinct set of values, dispositions and practices to the shrine. Yet these were exercised in the same physical context of the normative practices of the elite. To speak of their unity under the *jumhūr* was then to acknowledge both the *separateness* of the collectivity of commoners encountered in the public arena and the *validity* of their practices. Let us test the soundness of this assertion by examining how Dargāh Qulī Khān saw the holy men who lived in the city who were alive in his time.

Several of the men our author found worthy of respect conformed to the general type of the holy man who served the people. There was for instance the Hāfiz Shāh Saᶜd Allāh, connected to the Naqshbandī way, who was acknowledged by the people (*khalāᵓiq*) to possess a spiritual dominion over the living (*wilāyat*); some even claimed that he had an axial importance (*qutbīyyat*). Like others on the Naqshbandī way, Shāh Saᶜd Allāh did not enjoy the music that sent others into states of spiritual ecstasy (*samāᶜ*), apparently preferring to spend his time in instructing students in the art of proper spiritual disposition (*sulūk*).[144] It would seem from this description that Shāh Saᶜd Allāh enjoyed a reverence that cut across the ranks of nobles and commoners alike.

If mystics like Shāh Saᶜd Allāh were content to minister to all, others embraced a more radical persona. Consider for instance Shāh Ghulām Muhammad of Dāwul Pura; while the locality is

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[144] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 63.

unknown, Dāwul appears to mean linseed-oil. This would suggest that the shāh inhabited a community of lowly oil-pressers (*telīs*) of uncertain religious affiliation, far indeed from gentle folk like Dargāh Qulī Khān.[145] Shāh Ghulām Muhammad appears to have practiced the punishing embrace of poverty, for our author felt that the hauteur of the majesty of his mendicancy (*faqr*) shook the insolence of the rich, and his lofty words threw the wealthy into tremors. A large company of mendicants and pious folk (*fuqarāᵓ wa sulahāᵓ*) and ranks of the indigent and the weak had all placed themselves under his care, and attended upon him from morn to night. A company of devotional singers (*qawwālān*) were constantly attached to him "in the way that a shadow is inseparable from a person", and so produced a state of ecstasy (*hangāma-i wajd o hāl*) all day long. Yet while others might lose their moral bearings because of all this public adulation, the shāh remained unshakeable in his reliance on God; and his manner remained firm and constant in gracefulness and ease despite his great material poverty. So steadfast was the shāh in his embrace of simplicity that he refused to hear the many offers of daily stipends made by the emperor and other noblemen. He behaved alike with rich and poor and with plebeians and gentlefolk (*wazīᶜ o sharīf*), and kept to a simple life, eating a humble rice-and-lentil stew (*khichrī*) with his contemporaries after the first watch of the night. The admiring Dargāh Qulī Khān considered this formidable holy man to be a great one of his era and unique in his deeply-held principles of proper conduct (*futūwa wa jawānmardī*).[146] The shah, we see, was no impassioned devotee of God, but he seems to belong to the type of individual who appeared with decreasing frequency in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century: a man who aggressively opposed the lifestyles of the rich and the famous and preferred the company of

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[145] On the low status of Telis, see William Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (Office of the superintendent of government printing, 1896), 371–5.
[146] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 63.

the meek of this earth. Yet Dargāh Qulī Khān reports no miraculous powers, and it would seem that the shāh's quietism also led him away from making the political statements which in previous centuries had led to executions.

Broadly similar, again, was Mīr Sayyid Muhammad. Like many of the renunciants encountered in Habīb Allāh's text, the mīr was a nobleman who had given up his rank several decades ago, but the gravity of his manner and speech still terrified his interlocutors. Firmly fixed in his fashion, the mīr's name was proverbial in his proclamation of the word of God (*kalimat al-haqq*) to (presumably errant) princes and nobility, from whom he refused also take any presents of charity lands (*suyūrghāl*). His sons and family were in the imperial service and wished for his recommendations (*farmāyish*) to progress through the ranks, but the mīr refused to perform such craven acts. Yet again, Dargāh Qulī Khān uses the word *"jumhūr"* in reporting that the "entire collective of the residents of Dihlī" (*jumhūr-i sakna-i dihlī*) were united in their approbation of him, and the tongues of high and low alike were employed in his praise. The servants of the great nobleman Nizām al-Mulk�し who was also Dargāh Qulī Khān's master, had once approached the mīr wearing the robes of servitude, but had to return because of "his lack of attention and kindness and his strict words of admonition".[147]

This stern renunciant could not be more different than the Shāh Rahmat Allāh, who was served extensively by both the nobility and commoners alike. For one, the shāh had four wives and spent a night with each one in turn; perhaps this was why Dargāh Qulī Khān perceived a youthful energy (*quwwat-hā-yi jawānāna*) in the shāh despite his great age. Then there was the question of the shāh's predilection for alcohol and his inclination towards the wine-seller, which sat uneasily with his wise pronouncements. Finally, the shāh's bountiful pen jumped

[147] Ibid., 65.

involuntarily to write letters of recommendation for deserving folks, and his fingers engaged in activating the ropes of the imperial offices (*dar tahrīk-i silsila-yi sadārat*). Despite this great variance in behavior from world-forsaking divines, our author considered the accomplished master to be worthy of respect. [148] The most striking contrast between Mīr Sayyid Muhammad and someone like Shāh Rahmat Allāh, we note, was the former's refusal to become ensnared in the "ropes" of the imperial bureaucracy that were manipulated by letters of reference. Shāh Rahmat Allāh had no such compunctions.

The Naqshbandī Shāh Muhammad Amīr, like Shāh Rahmat Allāh, did not spurn the city's elites. Dargāh Qulī Khān tells us that he was especially revered by the people of Tūrān, and by Kashmīrīs, and the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula and other noblemen were counted among his followers. Dargāh Qulī Khān's own master (*hazrat nawwāb sāhib-i mā*), the great nobleman Nizām al-Mulk, himself had conversed extensively with Shāh Muhammad Amīr. Such a conversation, we recall, had not been possible with Mīr Sayyid Muhammad. The city's Tūrānīs also favored the colorful Shāh Pānsad Manī ("Five-hundred-weight"), who was renowned for using an ass as his mount. The shāh was accompanied by mendicants of the Mughal ethnē, who actively took sums of money from his patrons to feed the poor. Among his followers, noted our author, was a dervish who sang benedictions and was renowned for his massive turban that had come to be an object of amusement for folks.[149]

Did one visit Shāh Muhammad Amīr to gain spiritual advice or to marvel at his companion's turban? Where was the line between the serious business of engaging with, and planning for, the "Realm of Permanence" and the enjoyment of the sensory pleasures of this world? The answer was not clear, for the city could provide for both interests in the same space. This was

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[148] Ibid., 69.
[149] Ibid., 63–64.

particularly evident in the hospice of Majnūn Nānak Shāh, built next to a point of ferry on the banks of the river Jamuna. For a visitor like Dargāh Qulī Khān, the hospice was certainly worth seeing, since it had been built and adorned with great pains. But at the same time, the ferry had its own attractions because of constant hustle and bustle, and the ensuing amusement it offered. There was also the matter of the beautiful women who left the privacy of their covered litters (*miyāna*) to meet the shāh and to "report the desires of chaste noble ladies and seek [his] help acquiring the means to fulfill them". Clearly these women did not have the same restrictive sense of personal honor that prevented noble ladies from venturing into an extramural space such as this; and they were certainly happy enough to enjoy the recreations and entertainments (*tafarruj*) of the spot. A visitor like Dargāh Qulī Khān might therefore want to visit Nānak Shāh and equally to chance upon a liaison in pastoral settings. A verse he presents as "prevalent on tongues" regarding the setting is apposite:

> *Shabī majnūn be laylī guft kay maᶜshūq-i bī-parwā*
> *Turā ᶜāshiq shawad paydā walī majnūn nakhʷāhad shud*

> One night Majnūn said to Layla, O uncaring beloved
> A lover may appear before you, but it won't be Majnūn

The ferry might have been a site of the excitements of encounter, romance, and betrayal, but none of this detracted from the saintly figure whose presence animated the gathering. His body, in its weakness and emiciation, "verified his name" as Majnūn, and the significations of his words "widely diffused blessings". But Nānak Shāh was quite unlike the dour Shāh Ghulām Muhammad. For one, Nānak Shāh appeared before the throngs of his Hindu and Muslim admirers at an appointed time, and his attendants solemnly held up bundles of peacock feathers as he sat at his designated place. The flowers and fruits and sweets placed before him were then distributed among those present. In this careful ritual of presentation lay obvious evocations of the symbols of Hindu spiritual authority: the peacock feathers and the distribution of sacralised

food (*prasād*) would have been familiar and comprehensible to a wide range of Nānak's devotees.

None of these obvious variations from the standard idioms of Muslim piety appeared to trouble Dargāh Qulī Khān in the slightest. He noted approvingly of the rapt silence which befell all after Nānak Shāh sat down, a silence produced not only by impressed devotees but also by the shāh, who limited his speech only to the utterly necessary. Such quietness left a powerful impression on our visitor, who concluded that it was proof of the divine's internal spiritual composure (*shughl-i bātinī*). The only discordant note was struck by the devotional singers (*qawwāl*), who ceaselessly presented themselves and could not be dispatched without the offerings of significant rewards (*inᶜām*). But most importantly, Majnūn Shāh had developed a language that spoke equally to immured noble ladies and to the wealthy Hindus who gave copious gifts to the divine and called him the "Nānak of the Era". Such a name struck Dargāh Qulī Khān as an instance of their perverse and seditious ways (*ᶜaqīda-yi fāsid*), perhaps because Majnūn Shāh appeared as a Muslim to Dargāh Qulī Khān, or because the figure of Nānak was a controversial one at a time during which the state was trying to quell the rebellion of his latter-day followers.[150]

It is clear from our author's account that the city's holy men did not form an undifferentiated agglomeration of the pious virtues. Shāh Ghulām Muhammad shared with Mīr Sayyid Muhammad a serious commitment to quietism and retreat from the world, though the shāh's embrace of poverty was clearly more severe than that of the high-born mīr. The shāh, in addition, had harsh words to offer the rich who encountered him, as did the mīr; though the mīr's more exalted social place meant that might have addressed the nobility rather more frequently than the shāh, who lived in the oil-seed pressers' quarter. Whatever the differences between them,

[150] Ibid., 66–67.

however, both these men stood quite apart from Shāh Muhammad Amīr or Shāh Pānsad Manī, who mingled happily with the city's elite and had no moral objections to participating in the affairs of the material world. And then there was the enigmatic Majnūn Nānak Shāh, who appears to have been beloved of the poor but also favored by immured ladies and wealthy Hindus. Dargāh Qulī Khān recognized all these figures as noteworthy, but it is evident that all of them had their own constituencies, not all of which were overlapping. Habīb Allāh had shown us the gradual attenuation of the political possibilities exemplified in Delhi's holy men over the years (but particularly in the last century) and the increasing irresistibility of the world of money and power and pleasure. Dargāh Qulī Khān's account, by contrast, revealed the many different constituencies that had emerged in the same sphere. While the outlines of such social forms remain hazy, it is clear that distinctions of class and faith could contribute to produce different communities around particular charismatic figures: Nānak Shāh's diverse adherents provide the sharpest example of this phenomenon.

We might see the creation of such communities of faith, varied among and within themselves by differences of class and ethnicity, as symptomatic of a larger social elaboration within the space of the city. But if on the one hand the social world of the city had developed a rich diversity in these practices of faith, such practices themselves had become intermingled with the pursuits of pleasure. Consider, for instance, Dargāh Qulī Khān's account of the religious ceremonies held on the twelfth day of Rabīᶜ al-awwal, at the Arabs' Inn (*sarā-yi aᶜrāb*), the residence of a number of Arab imperial stipendiaries. A large crowd would assemble on the day to watch the two-thousand-odd Arabs gather in the nearby mosque with the charming pool that had been established by Mukarram Khān. All night long the Arabs remained busy in celebrating the Prophet's birthday, singing Arabic songs that they had arranged in his praise in their melancholic

voices. Committed Sufis (*muhaqqaqīn-i sūfīyya*) – a term by which our author seems to refer to a distinct subset of worshipers – fell into an ecstatic state (*wajd o hāl*) on hearing the verse:

Kasānī ki yazdān parastī kunand
Bi āwāz-i dulāb mastī kunand

They who worship God
Are intoxicated by the sound of the water-wheel

The mood of the moment was defined by chants of prayer which emanated on all sides, and the Qurᵓān was recited all night long, finishing only at the break of dawn. Because all the reciters of the Qurᵓān had memorized it and were well-acquainted with the rules of the properly sonorous articulation of its words, to pray in that environment again provided a particularly special experience.

The event was thus a draw for the city's pious folk, who came to attain success in obtaining rewards in this world and the next, but also to experience the pleasures of taste, because the Arabs were peerless in their customs of hospitality (though perhaps more hospitable to a nobleman like our author than a common visitor). The leader of these excellent folk greeted one hospitably with moist dates at hand and ended the night with a delicious feast and the offer of large cups of coffee in which they sometimes put sugar. But because the coffee made one choke, the guest underwent a severe torment (*sakht azīya*) in accepting it. Dargāh Qulī Khān had experienced the Arabs' hospitality with the Sayyid Hashmat Khān, when the following verse had come true:

Rūzī bi khāna-yi ᶜarabī mihmān shudam
Chandān khurand qahwa ki man qahwa-dān shudam

One day I was a guest at an Arab's house
They fed me so much coffee that I became a connoisseur *or* a coffee-pot

Some went out of frank curiosity, to gawp at the dark-complectioned Arabs, but for our author their beauty was without warmth and their manners unattractive. The khān maintained an air of

stoicism in the face of these disappointing exotics: for a sincere practitioner of self-restraint (*mukhlisī-yi mustamsak*), it was as if

> *Muhaqqiq hamān bīnad andar ibil*
> *Ki dar khūbrūyān-i chīn o chigil*
>
> The philosopher sees the same in the species of camel
> What he sees in the beautiful faces of China and Chigil

Riding back to the city in the morning, one experienced the pleasure of the sky and the air, but perhaps the somber philosophical mood lingered on a while. The graves of the ancients and the ruins of once-exalted buildings presented a melancholic spectacle of admonition (*ᶜibrat*): their desolation spoke a portentous warning of the frailty of human enterprise, of the transience of the world and of the need for self-reflection:

> *In gumān-khāna iqāmat-kada-yi ulfat nīst*
> *ᶜibratī gīr zi kaifīyat-i bām o dar-i khʷīsh*
>
> This imaginary abode is not the residence of attachments
> Draw a lesson from the nature of your self's roof and doors

It was easy to dismiss such melancholic thoughts back in the hustle and bustle of the city, where the Prophet's birthday was celebrated with great fervor all around. Our author had special praise for the assembly hosted by the great nobleman Khān-i Zamān where "a rare spectacle and marvelous entertainment" ensued after the sunset prayers.[151]

Another such elaboration of religious celebration might be witnessed in the city-wide description of the spring-festival (*basant*). Dargāh Qulī Khān tells us that on the first day of whichever month contained the spring-festival, a large crowd gathered at the holy footprint, a relic which we have seen was already the object of popular veneration. Our author did not think it significant to mention the fact that the spring-festival fell at varying points in the Islamic calendar, because

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[151] Ibid., 74–76.

its date was fixed on the fifth day of the Hindu calendrical month of Māgh. On the morning of this day, however, all the residents of the city threw on their finest clothes, adorned the paths of the place with colorful carpets and decorated the buildings there. Devotional singers carried colorful glass bottles with perfumes of the rose, of orange-flowers (*ᶜaraq-i bahār*) and of the Egyptian willow (*ᶜaraq-i bīd-i mashq*), and sprinkled them on the pilgrims as they headed to the relic. There was something aesthetically delicate and sexually violent about the whole journey, for Dargāh Qulī Khān reported that the sight of these glasses of Chinese origin (*chīnī-nizhād*) in the hands of such fairy-faced beloveds was like a stone that shattered the glass-palace of the viewer's resolutions. As gaily-bedecked singers sang in separate rows near the relic, the sights and smells of the occasion caused an uncontrollable passion (*junūn-i bī-ikhtiyārī*) to descend on the viewer.

The festivities ended only at sunset and resumed the next morning, when the same sort of procession wended its way towards the sepulcher of Bakhtyār Kākī, with folks stopping to pay their respects at the grave of Chirāgh Dihlī on their way back. On the third day, the procession went on to the tomb of Nizām al-Dīn. Again Dargāh Qulī Khān speaks of the "collectivity of inhabitants" (*jumhūr-i khalāᵓiq*), which considered the tomb to be a key site (*marjaᶜ*) because of its proximity to the city. And again he speaks of the Sufis as a distinct group amongst the visitors to the tomb, winners of a sort of spiritual rugby who "stole away the ball of precedence" from their peers in attaining the state of ecstasy (*wajd o hāl*). On the fourth day, the crowds went to the tomb of Shāh Hazrat Rasūl Numā ("Showing the Prophet"), who lay within the city itself. The crowds in the confines of the city were so great that pilgrims had a dreadful time passing about. Numbers of wealthy folk (*ahl-i ghanāᵓ*) and of entertainers (*naqqālān*) caused the otherwise ample spaces around the tomb to become "tighter than an ant's eye". On the fifth day,

the scene moved to the tomb of Shāh Turk of the Desert. Because many of the renowned devotional singers lived close to this mausoleum, they put up a special show and gratified listeners.

Matters progressed seamlessly from the divine to the worldly, when the pilgrimage of the sixth day the people travelled in their masses to the house of the emperor and his nobility, propelled now not by sacred considerations but rather the desire for profit and worldly covetousness (*istijlāb-i munāfaᶜ wa hutām-i dunyāwī*). On the seventh night, matters took an even more bacchanalian turn, when a large number of dancers (*arbāb-i raqs*) went to the grave of "a beloved one" (*qabr-i ᶜazīzī*) in the neighborhood of Ahadīpurā and washed it with pure alcohol (*sharāb-i nāb*). Without care for any living creature, they threw themselves into dance and drink and considered their behavior a means by which to grant the departed one's soul some rest. Little by little, devotional singers gathered about them and a delightful entertainment ensued as beautiful people began to appear on the scene. In this way, says Dargāh Qulī Khān, pleasure-worshiping spectators gained a storehouse of a year's worth of entertainment in a single week.[152]

If in the case of the spring-festival religious observances extended naturally and imperceptibly into worldly celebrations, in other instances the idiom of religious celebration came to be applied in new contexts. Consider the celebration of the Death-Anniversary (*ᶜurs*), an event which we have seen was laden with pious connotations of the spirit of the departed proceeding for union with God. In Dargāh Qulī Khān's experience, however, such celebrations were now held for figures as Mirzā Bīdil, who was regarded as one of the greatest poets of the era. Bīdil's tomb, not considered worthy of mention in Habīb Allāh's list of Delhi's departed Friends of God, nevertheless attracted a gathering of the city's graceful folk (*mauzūnān*) on the anniversary of the

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[152] Ibid., 71–73.

poet's death. Now his *Collected Works* were passed through the circle that was arranged around the poet's grave, and verses were recited in turn. After this, the assembled poets offered specimens of their own verse, and, as in the case of other explicitly religious gatherings, "a rare sweetness ensues and a special pleasure befalls those present". The party was arranged by the dead poet's nephew Muhammad Saᶜīd, "who is a strange gentleman as a meaning is strange in relation to other meanings" (*ki chūn māᶜnī-yi bīgāna az nisbat-i māᶜnawī mirzāy-i bīgāna ast*). While Dargāh Qulī Khān seemed to imply that the nephew was unique in his alternative conformance to the ways of gentlemanliness, Muhammad Saᶜīd certainly played the good host, making sure that everyone was well-supplied with all the pastes and grains (*maᶜājīn wa hubūb*) which were "conducive to the gentleman" and were widely prepared and distributed in the city.[153]

In fact, by Dargāh Qulī Khān's time, the custom of the death-anniversary had been extended even to celebrate the lives of wholly secular figures, such as Emperor Bahādur Shāh (r. 1707-1712). The emperor's undistinguished grave lay close to the tomb of Bakhtyār Kākī, but was annually adorned with lamps on the order of his widow, the Princess Mihr Parwar. Built by imperial artisans, these lamps assumed varied and strange forms, and were arranged in the shape of a cypress tree; the surrounding groves were lit up, so that it seemed as if a sun-like flower bloomed on every branch. Dargāh Qulī Khān's contemporaries wandered in this scenic locale, arm in arm with their beloveds; hedonists sought out drunken oblivion without the slightest fear of the police-officer (*muhtasib*); and libertines busied themselves in worshipping beauty without an inkling of restriction. In fact, as our author continued describing in his hyperbolic fashion, the

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[153] Ibid., 57.

multitudes of beautiful young men, artful in love, struck constantly against the foundations of one's rectitude.

But this was no homosocial environment: the means of harlotry were so readily available that a world's worth of fornicators could attain their hearts' desires; the streets and markets of this locale brimmed with lords and khāns and resounded with the noise of rich and mendicant alike. If there was any downside, from our elite author's perspective, it was that two categories of annoyances were also regrettably present: the ubiquitous devotional singers and importuners outnumbered flies and mosquitos respectively: presumably both could only be ridded when a gift of money had been offered. To abbreviate the story, said Dargāh Qulī Khān, it was in this way that the residents of this land, high and low alike, fulfilled their bodily obsessions. In such an environment, added the khān unconvincingly, it was the apogee of intelligence to shut one's eyes.[154]

Although Dargāh Qulī Khān's language of pleasure fell very much within the generic conventions that had permitted Mīr Ibrāhīm to paint the portrait of Lahore's attractions a century before this time, there was an important difference not evident in older accounts. This was the fact that the pious occasion of the death-anniversary had in this instance mutated into a different sort of celebration altogether. Whatever the ambitions of the imperial widow, the local transformation of Bahādur Shāh's grave-site had here too produced an environment more conducive to the pursuit of earthly pleasure than otherworldly reflection. A ceremonial form with sacral connotations had now acquired a new, secular dimension.

The sexual encounters which marked such spaces and so enthused our author involved the acquisition of attractive beloveds (male or female) or the use of prostitutes. But these sorts of

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[154] Ibid., 58.

affairs were not the provenance of the city's elites alone. Dargāh Qulī Khān also reports of a custom which led the women of the city to visit the grave of a "master of perfection" (*sāhib-kamālī*) named Nāgul on the twenty-seventh of every month. Eyes filled with love and bedecked in their finery, the women of Delhi went to the Inn of Kh^{w}āja Basant of Asad Khān's era, again by way of pilgrimage. But this was merely a pretense, claimed our author, for in reality the women were busily engaged in enjoying themselves and meeting with the men to whom they were attached (*marbūt*). Many single men and people of strange appearance (*ahl-i tajrīd wa gharīb pīshagān*) adorned themselves with the colors of the flower-garden and presented themselves at the site of the spectacle hoping to be accepted by someone: and it was written, said our author, that one the specialties of the place was that if a stranger (*gharīb*) appeared there, he was immediately yoked to another (*be juft mīrasad*). Naturally, the place was packed, since folk started to pour in from the morning; and they returned in the evening, visiting the gardens which were built besides the public way with their lovers.[155] It is worth noting that even though our author appears to have based this description on other accounts that remain unknown, he dismissed the possibility of any act of pious observance taking place by Nāgul's grave; from his description, it appears to have served explicitly to bring together men and women in a city that had grown from a place dominated by face to face transactions into a metropolis of anonymous immigrants.

Spaces of Encounter

Such activity could not be described simply in terms of secularization, because the secular world and its pleasures had long existed in close proximity with the pursuit of the sacral. One might rather see in the spring-festival something akin to the process of *décloisonnement* that Shirine

[155] Ibid., 77.

Hamadeh has used to describe the mingling of groups and classes in the emergent public spaces of Istanbul in the early eighteenth century.[156] Similarly different classes and groups might well have mingled under various conditions at other times and places in the context of the subcontinent's history. But Dargāh Qulī Khān's account shows also shows us that nobles and commoners were now encountering each other in ways that were particularly shaped by the form of Shāh Jahān's capital.

Private Company

An important site of such encounters lay in the field of *suhbat*, a term whose range of meaning encompasses notions of speech, conversation and company. It is in this last and most broad sense that our author described the pleasures of the assemblies he frequented during his stay in Delhi. *Suhbat* in this elite context included the presence of good conversation, fine music, convivial surroundings and attractive company. The paradigmatic examples of such gatherings were the ones hosted by Latīf Khān, who our author thought was the "administrative manual" (*dastūr al-ᶜamal*) of entertainment and sociability. Latīf Khān belonged to the city's "aristocratic sons" (*umarāᵓ-zāda*), and his interests lay not in governance, but in the pursuit of the finer things of life. Latīf Khān's passion for music was described in metaphors of the passion for alcohol, and his connoisseurship could be estimated by the fact that Niᶜmat Khān, the most prominent vocal musician of the age, frequently performed at his gatherings. Latīf Khān's own company was just as attractive, for even first-time visitors were treated as if they were old friends; once you formed a connection with Latīf Khān, you would be subject to his favors and considerations for the rest of your life. His parties generally began in the second watch of the day and continued on until

[156] Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

the middle of the night. Every guest was presented with his own water-pipe and glasses, sweets and wine. Companions skilled in the musical arts gave proof of their excellence and skill in the arts, but this was not a stiff or serious assembly, for jests and witticisms and railleries also ensued.[157]

One of the great attractions of Latīf Khān's soirees was that a courtesan like Nūr Bāī might make an appearance. Nūr Bāi belonged to the low-born class of entertainers (*domnī*), but she had for all practical purposes become one of the nobility, so that high-born folk had to supplicate her for her company. Like the nobility, her house was filled with furniture (*sāmān-i hazār rang*) worthy of the court. Like the highest nobility, she frequently rode an elephant and her stately processions were accompanied by heralds and mace-bearers (*chāwūsh o chūb-dār*). She was joined in her assemblies by all her women, each of whom had a high-sounding suffix like "Begam" or "Khānum". On the rare occasion that Nūr Bāī appeared at the house of the nobleman, she was inevitably presented with a fee (*raqm*) of jewels as offered to a bride upon unveiling (*jawahir-i rū-namā*), and another gift on departure. And all this was after a large sum had already been sent to her house so that she would accept the invitation in the first place.

What accounted for Nūr Bāī's thrall? Nūr Bāī may have been beautiful, but it was not her physical appearance on which Dargāh Qulī Khān dwelt. Certainly her talents did not lie in the musical arts; while she performed in the style called *jangla* (which we are told was the reigning fashion in the city), our author said only that her singing "was not without its pleasures". Nūr Bāī's skills lay not in these conventional realms, but rather in the most valued of elite pursuits: the conversational arts of *suhbat*. For Nūr Bāī, we learn, was peerless in her understanding the subtleties of conversation (*sukhan-fahm*) and delightful in her intricate understanding of pleasant

[157] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 70–71.

discourse (*nukta-dān-i khush taqrīr*). This was why our author felt that to encounter her was the cause for the ruination of one's house, and why any mind that had been infected by the intoxication of her acquaintance was like "a whirlwind in the tumult of restlessness".

But refined conversation alone did not secure Nūr Bāī's place in elite society: she was also adept in her mastery of its social codes. Dargāh Qulī Khān claimed that her observance of etiquette was such that many tutors in politeness (*adīb*) and masters of refined manners (*sāhibān-i tahzīb*) could learn from her in cultivating proper dispositions (*akhlāq*). At the same time, Nūr Bāī was valued precisely because she came from a non-elite realm. So when Dargāh Qulī Khān tells us that Nūr Bāī's colloquial speech (*rūz-marra*) was just as charming as her polite idiom (*muhāwara*), he signaled that her otherness – the traces she bore of her origins and background – were in themselves a source of delight and pleasure.

While Dargāh Qulī Khān was effusive in his praise for Nūr Bāī's company, we cannot tell what Nūr Bāī herself thought of her elite patrons. Certainly she would not have forgotten her own menial origins. Now, at the peak of her success, she might ride an elephant and be accompanied by heralds, but Nūr Bāī's pleasures were the product of her labors. This is why our author also noted that "her conversation is available so long as the purse is full, and her companionship is available only until ready money remains". Nūr Bāī's company may have been delectable, but it was the market for conviviality to which she owed her success. This was not accidental or inadvertent. Nūr Bāī had sought power and had achieved it by trading in her skills. This is also why she did not hesitate to do what some high-born quietists shunned: as our author noted, she "writes letters of recommendation in patronage of whosoever. Because she is beloved everywhere, whatever she says is immediately accepted".[158]

[158] Ibid., 104.

Nūr Bāī was not the only one to profit from the commerce in conversation. According to our author, the singer Chamanī also counted as one of the celebrities of Delhi. Again, her company could not be had without great expense, but it was worth it because her tongue was "sharper than scissors" in composing witty melodies (*tarāna*). [159] Then there was Bihnāī the Elephant-Rider: she was another celebrity, and like Nūr Bāī she had mace-bearers lead her procession. She had for a while been associated with the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula. Iᶜtimād al-Daula expressed his favor by giving her the utensils of serving and consuming alcohol, all of which were adorned with jewels and worth seventy thousand rupees – favors, after all, could be measured in the exact denominations of the currency of the realm. Bihnāī would not have missed the condescension implicit in the present, for it was typical of the Mughal elite to reward inferiors with bejeweled representations of the tools of their trade: the gift at once signifying the wealth and power of the giver and the reinforcing the servile role of the recipient, at once signaling proximity through the value of the gift, and cementing distance through its form.[160] In any case, Bihnāī made no effort to hide her lowly origins and status: the word "Bihnāī" refers to "one who separates the seeds from cotton; cotton comber, cotton carder".[161] Yet here was a cotton-carder who rode an elephant, and who maintained relations of perfect equality (*ᶜain-i ham-chashmān*) with the nobility, and who again "pulled at the ropes of the imperial offices" by writing letters of recommendation, which we are told were accepted.[162]

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[159] Ibid., 104–105.

[160] Here lies for instance the significance of the gifts given to the British Doctor Hamilton upon his successful treatment of the Emperor Farrukh Siyar in 1715/16: the diarist of the Surman Embassy noted that Hamilton received among other things "all his Cases off [sic] small Instruments contained in one Pretty Large Box, all off solid gold". Charles Robert Wilson, *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal, Being the Bengal Public Consultations for the First Half of the Eighteenth Century: Summarised, Extracted, and Edited with Introductions and Illustrative Addenda*, vol. II, Part 2 (W. Thacker, 1911), 103.

[161] John T Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 192.

[162] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 105.

Much could also be said about the singers who played so crucial a role in animating the elite gathering. Music served as central aesthetic category for Mughal elites. For Dargāh Qulī Khān, the experience of musical performance was ideally generative of the emotional state of "*wajd o hāl*" – a term perhaps best approximated by ecstasy, retaining both connotations of pleasure and contact with divinity. The music of devotional singers at the gathering of a pious figure would therefore ideally induce ecstatic states, unless of course you happened to be in the company of followers of the Naqshbandī way, who generally frowned on such performances. Elite appreciation for music similarly valued the production of ecstasy, but also a certain contemplative melancholy.

It is in this context that our author expressed his appreciation for the spectacular musicians he encountered during his years in Delhi. There was Bāqir, the Tambūr player, whose melancholic music produced a delicate and compassionate state (*riqqat*) in his audience.[163] It was said of the music of Ghulām Muhammad, who performed on the sārangī, that the melancholy (*hazīnī*) of his music scraped hearts like a flint.[164] There was Husayn Khān, the hand-drum (*dholak*) player, who our author thought was a natural wonder of his time. We can estimate Husayn Khān's broader popularity by Dargāh Qulī Khān's comment on his stature: the people of India were supposedly all in agreement that no greater player of the hand-drum had ever arisen in Delhi before.[165]

Dargāh Qulī Khān remembered one particularly spectacular entertainment which tells us something of how music was most properly to be experienced. One day during the rainy season, there gathered Qāsim and ᶜAlī (students of the famed Niᶜmat Khān), Husayn Khān the hand-

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[163] Ibid., 92.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 96.

drum player, another Husayn Khān who played the lute (*rubāb*), and Ghānsī Ram the barrel-drum (*pakhāwaj*) player. Such a concert was a rare occasion indeed, for all the musicians were regarded as unparalleled in their own time. Their music in combination produced a paradise which rendered even the thunder inaudible, seemingly cleaving the ceiling as it rose up through the air. Years later, the khān remembered how the pleasure of the gathering had lingered on in his self for a long while thereafter.[166]

Such an gathering was the apotheosis of musical excellence, a moment of profound sensory pleasure shaped by the particular values of elite connoisseurship. It was elite, of course, because such refined musical sensibilities were not shared by everyone. Indeed, the tastes of non-elites might differ considerably from this rarified paradigm. Our author remembered one such painful moment of variance, at a gathering held around a certain divine named Shāh Kamāl, frequented by the devotional singer Burhānī. Here appeared a singer named Chulbul, who belonged to the folk minstrels called *Dhādhi*-s. We do not know what Chulbul sang or how she did it, but Dargāh Qulī Khān was repulsed by "the foreign harshness" of her voice, which sounded to his ears like the clamor of the ceremonial bass trumpet commonly used in processions (*āwāza-yi karranāy)*. The violence of Chulbul's dissonant voice made the hairs of those present stand on end. But clearly the music did not offend everyone equally, for those who had already achieved an ecstatic state (*hāl*) remained in unbroken rapture.[167] Chulbul's musical style clearly had its takers, though they may not have had the particular tastes and inclinations characteristic of the nobility.

And of course not everything about the elite soiree revolved around the pleasures of music conversation alone. The company of courtesans was prized also because they were the objects of sexual desire. Dargāh Qulī Khān did not speak of Nūr Bāī in the language of physical attraction.

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[166] Ibid., 93.
[167] Ibid., 94.

It may be that Nūr Bāī was simply out of his league, but it is more likely that women like Nūr Bāī had become public personalities in their own right. Dargāh Qulī Khān thought in a different way about the singers Zīnat and Bhajī, whose pleasant ways “cause the swelling of the parts of the desires for penetration, and whose delicate proportions are sureties for the excitations of lust”. Zīnat and Bhajī used their attractiveness to their fullest advantage: our author noted wistfully that they remained unavailable “because of the huge clamor of supplications for their company; would that a trail be found to lead to their door!” We do not know how precisely courtesans like these two leveraged their intimacy, but in the market of love, to walk arm in arm (*baghl-girī*) was “appropriate, and to be considered a prize”. [168]

It is clear, however, that sexual accessibility was not the best strategy for an ambitious up-and-comer. The distinctly low-born Rahmān Bāī, for instance, was clearly an object of great desire for a young nobleman like Dargāh Qulī Khān, who described her stillness as mingled with flirtation, and her movements as rippling disquiet. Rahmān Bāī was dark of hue, but this only added to her appeal: Dargāh Qulī Khān thought that her “inky complexion” reminded connoisseurs (*sāhib-nazrān*) of a fine painting in the black-ink style (*taswīr-i siyāh-qalam)*, and was pleasing to the gaze like the darkness of the night in Kashmīr. In this vein, the author presents a verse of double entendre that is both erudite in its references to famous artists and at the same time baldly sexual:

> *Khattesh na karda-yi mānī na naqsh-i bihzād ast*
> *Ki īn siyāh qalam kār-i chūb-i ustād [chūb istād] ast*
>
> Her Script is not the Work of Mānī, nor her Line that of Bihzād
> But this Black-Ink Painting is the Work of a Master’s Brush [a piece of work that erects the stick]

[168] Ibid., 107.

Our author was probably not the only person who felt overwhelming desire for Rahmān Bāī. Yet she managed to remain poised in every gathering she attended, so that she "strutted away secure from the victory of lust in the end". In fact, Dargāh Qulī Khān reported that it was said of the courtesan that "her missives are binding and her seal unbroken" (*muhr-ash nā-shikasta*).[169]

Without a doubt, women like Nūr Bāī or Rahmān Bāī were utterly exceptional in a world where girls were legally sold into slavery at brothels for a few rupees by their parents.[170] Yet women and singers were only one component of elite sociability. By our author's time, other performers appear also to have been regular fixtures in the lives of the city's nobility. Important among them were the entertainers known as *naqqāl*-s. The standard translation of "mime" or "mimic" for the term *"naqqāl"* only captures part of the role this figure. Certainly the *naqqāl* might recite poems and relate tales or witty anecdotes. The *naqqāl* was one who enacted a "*naql"* – he copied or imitated: yet such acts of imitation might easily bear a sharp, satirical edge. It is also clear that the *naqqāl* was a figure of popular entertainment, who had been imported from the street into the salon: to bring the *naqqāl* into the elite gathering was an act of the appropriation of popular culture. This was evident in the figure of a certain Shāh Dāniyāl (also named "*surkhī*"), who our author thought was a remarkably skilled raconteur, and expert at imitating the mannerisms of others (*naqqālī*). Shāh Dāniyāl also had a special skill in the arts of *kabit* and *khayāl* because he mixed among musicians, and so was respected by its maestros. But Shāh Dāniyāl thought himself a religious mendicant. Dargāh Qulī Khān himself would have none of it, since he slightingly noted that since the shāh's ancestors had considered themselves to be shaykhs (*ābā wa ajdād khud rā mashā⁾ikh mī-gīrad*), the people considered it obligatory to respect his

[169] Ibid., 108.
[170] See for instance the slave sale-deeds detailing the purchase of children for a few rupees each: NAI 2264, NAI 2313, Oriental Records Section, National Archives of India, Delhi; Doc. #610, Uttar Pradesh State Archive, Allahabad.

sanctity. In any case his expertise in reciting the verses of the ancient masters was without dispute.

All these laudable qualities provided the Shāh Dāniyāl with ready entry to the city's elite gatherings and helped him maintain his connections with the city's aristocratic sons (*umarāʾ-zādahā-yi shahr*). But the shāh was clearly an outsider from the lower orders who did not have the sense to comport himself in good company. With a certain horrid fascination, Dargāh Qulī Khān described the shāh as joining the tribe of hangers-on (*mughtanimān*) wherever he imagined he might gain the slightest profit. The shāh was a martyr to good food: in fact voracity itself was put to shame by his pure greed (*ishtihā-yi sāf*), and the pure dispositions (of the nobility, of course) were nauseated (*muqīʿ*) at the spectacle of his eating. The shāh awaited his food with a rare expectance and desired his water-pipe (*huqqa*) with a strange agitation. His mode of sleep was not without its appalling aspects, just as his awakening and expectorating (*takhakhakh*) in washing for the morning prayers were not without terrors. One would imagine that an individual so flagrantly in breach of the strictures expounded by the manuals of gentlemanliness would have no place in elite society.[171] Yet it turned out Shāh Dāniyāl was not expelled with kicks and blows from elite gatherings; for despite his many flaws of character and breeding, we are told, allowances were made on account his colorfulness and pleasant company. He was, in Dargāh Qulī Khān's final estimate, capable of the assembly and worthy of the party.[172]

Other *naqqāl*-s presented more attractive figures. The performers Khwāsī and Anūthā were patronized by the emperor himself, and received great admiration for their newly crafted

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[171] For a translation of one such manual of etiquette, see Aziz Ahmad, "The British Museum Mīrzānāma and the Seventeenth Century Mīrzā in India," *Iran* 13 (January 1, 1975): 99–110; In addition see Rosalind O' Hanlon's analysis of the codes of masculinity embedded in such prescriptive manuals: Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 1 (1999): 47–93.

[172] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 98.

performances (*nuqūl-i tāza-ījād*): imitations, after all, had to remain as current as the freshest targets. But Khwāsī and Anūthā were also well-versed in dance and in singing in the *khayāl* style, so that the mind buffeted by the waves of their exposition: and when they were accompanied by courtesans (*tawaᵓif*), the intoxication of the company was redoubled. Quite unlike the astonishing Shāh Dāniyāl, both these entertainers made for pleasant company, for their conversation was always on pleasing subjects and their comportment elegant (*qaddhā-yi īshān mauzūn*). Finally, both entertainers made for good boon-companions given their flirtations and amorous play. [173]

A variety of institutions enabled the rise of such non-elites into the formal contexts of the city's noble gatherings. One such institution was the man with the lowly name of Mīran. This fellow, we are told, was cursed (*matᶜūn*) with the job of managing the entertainers in the administration of the vizier of the realm. Because the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula was fond of quaffing wine, and of the company of beautiful folk and the masters of flirtation and coquetry, Mīran had instituted a monthly gathering at his own house (which was like that of the nobility) in order to select fresh faces for his master's pleasure. So on the eleventh of every month, musicians and dancers started arriving from the morning onwards and began performances which extended late into the lamp-lit night. In just the same way devotional singers and mimics (*naqqālān*) presented themselves. But these performances were not sequestered behind closed doors. Mīran would arrange for tents and carpets to be laid out, and there was an open invitation (*salā-yi ᶜāmm*) for people of the city. Our author thought it remarkable that an entertainment which would have cost an enormous sum to organize was in this way provided *gratis* to the people of the city. Just as with other such gatherings, artisans put up stalls to sell food and drink. Of course, eminent and distinguished

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[173] Ibid., 98–99.

(*mumtāz wa makhsūs*) people like our author did not have to jostle with the riff-raff: ever the good host, Mīran had prepared special tents and carpets for them, where food, drink and perfume were provided in abundance.[174] Mīran's monthly gathering was sponsored by a vizier who sought not only fresh and attractive faces but who also would have been well aware of the advantages of pleasing a broad swathe of the city's residents, high and low, with a spectacular entertainment. Here was a site created by elite power and privilege, designed to pull up humble but talented performers into elite circles and to provide entertainment for the masses besides.

Such an elite-driven event found its mirror opposite at a gathering like the one at the house of the four brothers Rahīm Khān, Daulat Khān, Giyān Khān and Haddū. The four brothers were excellent singers of the *khayāl* form, though Dargāh Qulī Khān was most admiring of Daulat Khān, whose delicate temper in the manner of the beloved (*nāzuk mizā-jhā-yi maᶜshūqāna*) wreaked havoc all around. On the twenty-fifth of every month, the four brothers held a gathering at their house attended by a large number devotional singers and vocal musicians. Because performance here was a sort of attested record of excellence, aspiring attendees sang first and were given a statement of confirmation by the masters present. The anticipation mounted until the brothers began their own performance, though people waited particularly for Daulat Khān.

Despite his importance, however, Dargāh Qulī Khān appears not to have heard his favorite singer very clearly: it was not only that Daulat Khān had a soft voice, but also that a multitude of common folk (*kasrat-i khalāᵓiq-i mardum*) were striving mightily to be close to him. So our author noted wistfully that it was really quite difficult to appreciate Daulat Khān unless one had truly sharp hearing. In fact, thought our author, most people simply followed the elite participants (*ashkhās-i mahfil*) in expressing words of praise without really following what was

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[174] Ibid., 73–74.

going on. Yet Dargāh Qulī Khān was not the only nobleman at this distinctly popular gathering, held in the poor acoustic environment of an ordinary home. All of Delhi's celebrities were present at this attractive company, and many noblemen longed to include the brothers in their own retinue. But in order to take them away, these grandees had to patiently suffer the artists' unseemly behavior (*harakāt-i nā-mulāyam*), which our author thought derived from the copious amounts of alcohol given to them at the occasion.[175]

If Mīran's gathering was an act of elite munificence *for* the people at large, then the event at Daulat Khān's house was an event *by* the people: it was they who arrived in their multitudes; they who refused to defer to the nobility present; they who expressed their approbation or disapproval of the singers, despite what someone like Dargāh Qulī Khān thought; and they who determined how the music was listened to, how the evening was enjoyed. The four brothers themselves were indifferent at best to the blandishments of the moneyed – if not actively hostile to their social betters under the supposed influence of alcohol. Yet the city's elites craved their company and sought them out nevertheless.

Conclusion

The comparison between these two gatherings gives us another insight into the nature of the social totality of the city which Dargāh Qulī Khān had called the *jumhūr*. Within the formation of the religious – namely, the complex of graves and gardens, hospices and holy men – we observed the emergence of common folk as a sizeable category. Their crowds could be seen as obstructing or hindering elite acts of devotion, but popular veneration exercised a definitive influence in many sites around the city. Acts of elite piety and benevolence might have encouraged proper forms of worship and constructed the spatial contexts of prescribed practice.

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[175] Ibid., 101.

Even here, it is important to disaggregate the impetuses to such action. If the dynastic center espoused a template of action that might range from the principle of building of hospices down to the ideal physical proportions of rooms and courtyards, elites acted within the form of such templates for their own local purposes. By the eighteenth century, however, it was the teeming populace which inhabited these spaces and shaped their character, their veneration and belief which exalted some and rejected others, their preferences which determined how worship operated outside the narrow confines of the five daily prayers. The mass of the popular, in other words, had come to stand cheek by jowl with the elite in the courtyard of the sepulcher; and while the people might bring their own behaviors and practices that elites may have thought beneath consideration, they were both united in their shared sense of the power of the grave. In this way, mass and elite mingled unevenly in the physical spaces of Delhi in its incarnation as a spiritual center.

In the same way we might think of the formation of the aesthetic, which in the case of music describes the processes of sonic production and aural sensation, of modes of performance, evaluative grids of connoisseurship and the experiences of pleasure. Certainly elites such as Dargāh Qulī Khān regarded themselves as the proper and just arbiters of taste, and it was elite patronage which might elevate a dancer or a courtesan and make her the equal of a khān. But here again, elites now valued the company and the casual language of people from humble backgrounds. At the same time, there was also a sense of popular taste and preference expressed in the gatherings of a musician like Daulat Khān. Such spaces and their inhabitants may have been of interest for noblemen, but the elite did not control them. United under the framework of the aesthetic, mass and elite remained separate, but were connected and intermingled through the

shared practices of connoisseurship. In this sense, mass and elite dispositions of devotion to God and devotion to music were formed and came to interact in parallel.

The forces which animated such encounters are evident in Dargāh Qulī Khān's description of the noblemen Aᶜzam Khān and Mirzā Mannū, who provided another way through which non-elite men found entrance into the city's most exalted assemblies. Aᶜzam Khān belonged to one of the greatest families of the land, and was noted for his colorful temperament and his excellent taste in music. But even more than this our author dwelt on the khān's inclination for young men (*āmārid*), particularly those of plain appearance (*sāda-rūh*). Aᶜzam Khān, says Dargāh Qulī Khān, expended all the incomes of his estates on this "sect" (*firqa*), because he would seek out any colorful young man of whom he had heard. Such men were not merely sexual objects destined for elite consumption: some we are told, had even been granted rank at court because the khān's exertions. The greater expert in the business of scouting for likely lads, however, was a certain Mirzā Mannū. Dargāh Qulī Khān noted in a distinctly sardonic vein that many of the other young noblemen of the city took lessons in the "essential rules of this science" from him and took pride in being his pupils.

In describing the mirzā's skills, however, our author used a telling metaphor. Every downy-cheeked fellow who had no connection with Mirzā Mannū's gatherings was a forgery, said Dargāh Qulī Khān, because the mirzā's gatherings were the assay where the flower-faced were tested. To go further, the defaced currency (*naqd-i qurāza*) of beauty could not be of perfect standard until it did not return to the mint (literally, "striking-house", *dār al-zarb*) of the mirzā's party; so what did it matter if it were the purest gold (*tilā-yi dast-afshār*)? Again, until the silver

of beauty was made to pass through the vessel (*kūza*) of his gathering it would not glitter like moonlight (*chāndnī*). So what if it happened to be pure silver?[176]

We might see in these words the same creeping influence of the language of the administrative bureaucracy that was in evidence in other realms. But the metaphor bears even greater significance. Dargāh Qulī Khān described a sexual economy in which young men circulated, their bodies stamped with the authorizing mark of elite approbation. Yet the circulation of such men was not just *similar* to the circulation of silver which powered the economy of exchange: it was in fact a direct result of the forces of commerce. This was not just a world in which people could be bought and sold: it was now also one where, more subtly, one could "cash in", marketize the self and trade symbolic capital for real.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the ideologues who served Shāhjahānābād's founder had loudly proclaimed the commercial vitality of the city as evidence of the emperor's excellence. Yet they could not have anticipated all the consequences of their success. Almost a century later, Dargāh Qulī Khān observed these effects in the two great avenues which had been laid out for the flow of silver and which in turn had now had been shaped by its irresistible power.

The greatest of these was the city's Moonlight Avenue (*chāndnī chawk*). The avenue's name itself proclaimed its purpose, for moonlight (*chāndnī*) in the water which ran through the street's canal and the pool in the square would have the alluring glitter of silver, which is almost homologously called *chāndī* in Hindi.[177] Moonlight Avenue, to our visitor's eyes, was certainly

[176] Ibid., 69–70.

[177] It is difficult to determine whether the squares had originally been given the name and the avenues were called the paths of the square, or whether the avenues themselves were named as *chawks*. It would seem that the word *chawk* came to refer to avenue and square; so *chandnī chawk* generally referred to the entire promenade while specific mention might be made of its central square (ᶜ*ain*).

more colorful than any other in the city. It was frequented particularly by the city's "well-balanced" (*mauzūnān*) – gentlemen as perfectly poised in their comportment and behavior as a perfectly metrical verse – and by those who sought the finest delicacies of the land. Doors opened invitingly through the colonnaded arches on either side of the street, everywhere revealing varieties of merchandise, particularly fine cloth. Exposure to such alluring objects of commerce was akin to the irresistible attractions of sexual desire: the sublimities of the age winked hotly at the consumer from every corner, while the delicacies of the era schemed to steal his heart away. Yet again, the market of the flesh now became one with the market of the commodity in language: Dargāh Qulī Khān's fevered description spoke of the confused inability to distinguish between the sensations of desire in the subject who encountered the market.

This power of the market could be seen in the figures of the jewelers who sat in their shops on one side of the sparkling canal. Their manner did not betray the cringing servility of the lower orders, but was marked instead by a disdainful independence (*istighnāʾ-yi tamām*); they sat aloof and rested on the words of procurers (*dallālān*) to seek their business. The sellers of cloth were not nearly so sophisticated: they lured buyers with their calls, crying out, "Whether you buy or not, at least let's talk!" The wafting odor of scents were a sort of vain conversation with perfumers just as the soft murmurings of procurers and agents (*wasāʾit-pishagān*) brought messages to the palate of the desirous. Even without the seller's efforts, the tide of the flirtations of every sort of commodity yanked at the cables of longing. Particularly attractive for a young man of means were the swords and daggers on display. There were also the products of the Manufactory of China (*kārkhāna-yi chīnī*): to see their variety, reported our author, was to have the glass-house of one's restraint struck by the stone of astonishment – just as he had said of the beauties who carried the glass bottles in the Spring-Festival procession. Glass water-pipes,

colorful flagons and cups, were all arranged so enticingly in front of shops that even a hundred-year-old ascetic would be moved by the lust for wine.

Tellingly, all these items, littered in such careless profusion, were perhaps of finer quality than what was produced in the manufactories of the nobility for their own consumption. The power of trade ensured that wealth, not status or taste, would unite the consumer with the commodity. Our author acknowledged as much, for he exclaimed that even if one had Korah's treasures, they might not suffice on this street. In support he offered a little tale: a nobleman's young son had the desire to stroll in this street. His mother, after offering her apologies, gave him a hundred thousand rupees from his father's estate. The fineries of the street could not be purchased with such a sum, she said, but since her dear son had insisted, their indigence would permit only the purchase of a few bare necessities.

Yet the *chawk* was not the exclusive preserve of the city's wealthy. The coffeehouses on the square catered to up-and-coming litterateurs (*mustaᶜiddān-i sukhan-sanj*), who gathered every day to give proof of their talents and to exchange witticisms. Such coffeehouses may have been the domain of commoners, but the highest nobility, despite their exalted status, could not resist such common attractions.[178] Another distinctly plebian attraction was the person named Miyān Hīngā ("vermilion"), who put up a performance every day at the gate of the Fort, on the eastern end of Moonlight Avenue. Miyān Hīngā, said our enraptured author, had the complexion of porcelain and wore garments of jasmine hue, so that people said it was as if the sun had arisen at midnight, or the moonlight flower (*gul-i chāndnī*) had bloomed in the garden. Nobility and commoners gathered alike to view Miyān Hīngā: the elite pretended to look at items on sale as they gazed in secret upon the performer, while an unthinkable multitude of commoners put off

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[178] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 61–62.

purchasing their necessities and wasted their money in enjoying the spectacle. Miyān Hīngā, however, steadfastly refused to cater to the elites who sought him. He performed all day in the midst of this panorama of people and elephants and horses, and went to his own home at sundown – always ignoring the pleadings of the noblemen who begged him to visit.[179] Miyān Hīngā did not need elite patronage; his talents had ensured that he could be sustained by the crowds alone.

If the experience of Moonlight Avenue was heavily inflected by elite tastes and desires, the city's other major promenade, named Saᶜd Allāh Khān Avenue, had a distinctly more demotic character. This did not dissuade a young nobleman like Dargāh Qulī Khān at all. Saᶜd Allāh Khān Avenue was a place where the gaze lost all sense of its head and feet, and where the objects of desire sat in the glass-palace of craving. As elsewhere, the street was crowded with comely young men (*āmārid*) dancing and the din of story-tellers. But among them were credible narrators (*rāvīyān-i muᶜtabar*), who had set up cane chairs here and there in the manner of pulpits. These folks were like theologians (*arbāb-i amāᵓim*), and they eloquently expanded upon the benefices of each month and each day: in the month of Ramzān they would speak of the benefits of fasting, and in Zū al-Hijja they would describe the ceremonies of the pilgrimage, so imprinting these matters in the consciousness of the people (*zihn-nashīn-i ᶜāwāmm*). Such popular preachers gained their recompense by producing a sense of shame or repentance (*riqqat*) in their audience. Urbanites may have disregarded such common harangues, for our author loftily states that rustics (*rūstā-mizājān*) attended these gatherings with great sincerity (*shaghaf-i tamām*) and idle fools (*khām-talabān*) surrounded the speakers, so that these sermons and homilies frequently extended into the second watch of the night.

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[179] Ibid., 102.

In Dargāh Qulī Khān's eyes, such popular preachers appear to have been barely different from the astrologers and geomancers who cast lots in the square and made their money by fooling the gullible. But the people, after all, were curious about their good fortune or bad, and such men provided a degree of intelligence about the future. Even this faint justification could not be offered in defense of the quacks who washed a bit of the ground in the square, laid down their carpets, and hawked medicines in colorful pouches, but which in reality contained nothing more than the dirt of the road. Dried medicines, laxatives, alcohols, electuaries, lozenges, grains and poultices: all were brought and sold, but particularly popular were remedies for sexual dysfunction or drugs to enhance pleasure. Just as important were medicines for venereal diseases such as the "little fire" (*ātishāk*), pustules (*khiyārāk*), and gonorrhea (*sūzāk*). Again our highborn gentleman had only contempt for these common and mean folk (*anfār wa pawwāj*) who pawned their lives and clothes to purchase these poultices. So medicine-men handed one man the prescription of a donkey's penis and gave another part of an elephant's, remarked the sardonic author, and so these silly cuckolds went home with a smile on their faces unaware of having been deceived.

But you could buy much more than medicines in Saᶜd Allāh Khān square: there were workshops where metals of all kinds could be purchased; there were sellers of arms, who brandished their wares and propounded their virtues; there were cloth-merchants who waved colorful pieces of fabric about, and vendors sold food and sweets they carried in either arm. So quick were they to make a sale that to stretch one's hand was just the same as putting a morsel in one's mouth. There were Iranian (*vilāyatī*) and Indian fruits, and there were wild beasts and bids of every description; and the numbers and varieties of *bulbul*-s and pigeons were beyond description except for someone who had read ᶜAttār's *Conference of Birds* (*Mantiq al-tayr*). So many deserts

and steppes were denuded every day to fill the market with these animals which were purchased by legions of attractive young men. In sum, said Dargāh Qulī Khān, this place right before the fort was filled every day with the clamor of the day of resurrection.[180]

Away from these avenues of commerce, people congregated at Mahābat Khān's sand-bank (*retī*) down by the river to watch wrestling-bouts on Sundays. All sorts of young men appeared to show off their strength and wrestled with whomsoever they found to be an equal, performing strange and remarkable maneuvers for the amusement of the audience, so that there was conversation in every corner and gathering and intermixture on every side. After the bouts had concluded, sweets were distributed and everyone went away, to return again on the appointed day. And it should come as no surprise now that Dargāh Qulī Khān said that wandering about this place was not without its delights, because attractive folk often appeared here and spectators took pleasure in observing them.[181]

Yet there is a certain darkness which hangs over this lively picture of the city's pleasures in the early eighteenth century. It was not just that Dargāh Qulī Khān barely mentioned Nādir Shāh's recent invasion, which had led to the extensive pillage of the urban spaces that the khān so lovingly described. Even more, Dargāh Qulī Khān did not comment at all on the fact that these very spaces had witnessed many gory bouts of political violence in the preceding decades. The city's main promenades around Saᶜd Allāh Khān Square and Moonlight Avenue had seen the grisly parade of the deposed emperor Jahāndār's headless corpse in 1713; the sand-banks to which the city's folk came for their amusements had also seen the corpses of the high officials Hidāyat Kesh Khān, Wizārat Khān and the city's Constable Sīdī Qāsim Khān, thrown there at

[180] Ibid., 60–61.
[181] Ibid., 77–78.

the emperor Farrukh Siyar’s command in the same year.[182] Farrukh Siyar’s own mutilated corpse was hurled before the fort in 1719, where pitched battles had taken place between city-dwellers and the Southern army of the sayyids of Barhā who had come to overthrow the emperor. Riots and disturbances threw the city into turmoil several times in the 1720s. And of course the corpses of the city’s dead had littered its streets for weeks even after Nādir Shāh’s triumphant armies, engorged with plunder, had begun the long return to Īrān.

What produced all of this tremendous political violence in the spaces of the city? Why were the heads of Shāh Jahān’s descendants being displayed atop pikes in a city built to assert the prosperity and durability of his dynasty’s rule? What explained these dramatic mutilations of the imperial body politic? These issues lie at the heart of the next three chapters, which argue that such political violence was not the symbol of “imperial decline” or “factional strife” as has commonly been assumed. Rather, such violence marked the emergence of, and engagement with, the fundamental question of imperial succession. Under what conditions might a Mughal emperor be replaced by another, and what might it mean to ask that question?

[182] Anonymous, “Dastūr Al-⊂Amal,” n.d., f. 164a, British Library APAC Or. 1690.

CHAPTER 2: The Problem of Succession in Elite Politics

In retrospect, it was clear to Mughal observers of the mid-eighteenth century that things began to go wrong shortly after Aurangzeb's death in 1707. At first, there was the semblance of normality: the prince Muhammad Muᶜazzam killed his brothers in the inevitable internecine war and so inherited the Mughal throne. Known now by his regnal name of Bahādur Shāh, the new emperor set about withdrawing from the never-ending wars in the southern peninsula and proceeded to the Mughal heartland of Hindūstān in the north. But the new ruler's reign was brief, and troubled by rebellion and political strife. In five short years Bahādur Shāh was dead, and the fratricidal wars for kingship began yet again. But it was only in 1712, when the prince Muᶜizz al-Dīn took the throne of Delhi under the name of Jahāndār Shāh, that a time of troubles truly befell the empire. As the new emperor left Lahore for Delhi, his nephew, Prince Farrukh Siyar, declared his own bid for the throne. In these claims he was supported by two prominent brothers who belonged to an illustrious clan named the sayyids of Barhā, a rich rural area not far from Delhi. Famed for their valor – and derided for their rustic coarseness – the sayyids propelled Farrukh Siyar from Bengal to Delhi, defeating first Jahāndār Shāh's son and then the emperor himself in battle. Not long thereafter, in 1713 the new emperor Farrukh Siyar marched into Delhi with Jahāndār Shāh's head carried aloft on a pike before him.

But Farrukh Siyar was not destined for an easy reign either. He immediately fell into quarrels with the two Sayyid brothers who had been his most important allies. Unable now to rid himself of these upstart nobles, Farrukh Siyar spent his troubled days on the throne ineffectually scheming and plotting way to free himself. Such turmoil went on until 1719, when the two Sayyid brothers dethroned Farrukh Siyar and had him executed. Two young princes were

plucked from the harem and placed on the throne, but both died in quick succession. Next came Muhammad Shāh, who proved a more durable ruler. He ascended the throne in 1719, and was liberated from the yoke of the sayyids by the machinations of another group of noblemen in 1721. His reign proceeded for the most part uneventfully until the Iranian warlord Nādir Shāh's invasion of India in 1739. Though Muhammad Shāh was defeated in battle, he was restored to the throne by the departing Nādir Shāh, and continued to reign until his death in 1748.

When the facts of Mughal politics are related in this fashion, they form an irrefutable narrative of Mughal decline. And indeed, this is how the tale of the end of empire was related by late-Mughal historians to the officials of the East India Company who enquired about the conditions of their own dominion that had been so firmly established by the end of the eighteenth century. Narratives such as Ghulām Husayn Tabātabāī's *View of Modern Times* (*Siyar al-Muta'ākhirīn*) (translated and published in English by an enigmatic resident of Calcutta named Haji Mustafā) in turn went on to form the basis of works such as William Irvine's and Jadunath Sarkar's magisterial *Later Mughals* at the close of the nineteenth century.[183] When historians such as Irvine and Sarkar beheld the sweep of the eighteenth century, they saw a series of worthless rulers following in the wake of the great Aurangzeb; their task was to enunciate in precise detail the follies and blunders of these poor rulers, the grasping avarice and ambition of their nobility, and the resulting disintegration of the empire in the face of vigorous external challenges. All of this naturally set the scene for the emergence of the enlightened despotism of British rule.[184]

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[183] Ghulam Husain Khan, *A Translation of the Sëir Mutaqherin; or View of Modern Times, Being an History of India, from the Year 1118 to Year 1194 (this Year Answers to the Christian Year 1781-82) of the Hidjrah, Containing, in General, the Reigns of the Seven Last Emperors of Hindostan, and in Particular, an Account of the English Wars in Bengal ... To Which the Author Has Added Critical Examination of the English Government and Policy in Those Countries, down to the Year 1783.*, trans. Haji Mustepha (Calcutta: Printed by J. White, 1789); Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*.

[184] It is thus unsurprising to see Sarkar comment on the benefits of contemporary British rule in India even as he published on the fall of the Mughal empire: Jadunath Sarkar, *Economics of British India,* (Calcutta: Sarkar, 1917).

To relate the story of Mughal political crisis, failure and decline in this way is to occlude the realities of the sources from which this narrative has been stitched together. After all, the Mughal authors who produced accounts of the political turmoil they experienced in 1712 or 1721 or 1739 were not writing so that future historians would be able to relate the sad tale of Mughal decrepitude. Their purposes in every instance varied according to their time and their position in the political world they described. Nor indeed were their histories designed to be the passive carriers of objective information, to be taken or discarded piecemeal by the "scientific" historians of the future. As the following chapters demonstrate, the Mughal intellectuals who described their world did so not only to enlighten posterity, but also to interpret the changing reality of their own time; to articulate ethical standards for judging and controlling such changes; and to convince others in their discursive world of the rectitude of their position.

Mughal intellectuals viewed their own political world and commented on it in ways that have now become unfamiliar to us. Having been accustomed to the search for truth and fact, for evidence and corroboration, we have approached Mughal histories seeking to sift the few grains of what must be true from the endless mountains of the chaff of falsehood. But in order to understand the ways in which they relayed information, presented an argument or challenged an assertion, we must recognize that Mughal texts are frequently polyvocal. In doing so, we see the many different frequencies of discourse on which a single text might relay information – information that we would miss if we focused purely on questions of historical veracity or falsehood.

In order to demonstrate this point, this chapter examines an instance of such a polyvocal history: a short account produced in 1778 about the life of a Portuguese lady in the Mughal harem by the name of Bībī Juliyānā. It should be clear at the outset that my concern is not with the "truth" or

the "falsehood" of the account; as I will show, the text in question can only make a historical claim or work through a problem using facts that are patently false. While the text lauds the role and the importance of this little-known lady in the Mughal court, it also grapples with a central problem in the politics of the later empire: the question of succession. I will therefore use the story of Bībī Juliyānā's life to lay out the problem of succession as it appeared to a commentator writing at a time when the star of East India Company was in the ascent.

The problem of succession was this: what constituted a proper, optimal succession to the throne? How was one to understand a situation in which a proper succession could not occur or did not take place? What were the conditions under which the institution of succession might change? What effects would that have on the polity as a whole? For the commentator writing on the life of Juliyānā, if the question of succession was troublesome, it was still one firmly in the past: a question of history. But for Mughal commentators during the years of the troubled successions in the first decades of the eighteenth century, such matters were the subject of contemporary and immediate importance. Having examined this late-Mughal perspective on succession and provided an instance of the way in which I suggest we might read Mughal history, the following chapters will then examine the troubled terminations of the reign of Jahāndār Shāh in 1712 and of Farrukh Siyar in 1719.

Polyvocal texts: the Life of Bībī Juliyānā

On December 4th, 1711, a Dutch Embassy approaching the Court of the emperor Bahādur Shāh I at Lahore received a signal honor from an unexpected visitor. Two miles from the city, a carriage covered in red silk met the Dutch procession to lead them into town. Inside sat Bībī Juliyānā, an European lady of great power in Bahādur Shāh's harem, and one who would subsequently play an important role in Dutch negotiations with the court. While Bībī Juliyānā was clearly a figure

of considerable power and importance, very little is known of her life and works, and her existence has made little dent in the historiography of the later Mughal Empire.[185]

We are fortunate to have some knowledge of this high-ranking Mughal female official who made such an impact on our European visitors. A late-eighteenth century historical essay of Bībī Juliyānā's life, written by a certain "Gastin Bruit", informs us that it was commissioned by none other than the Aristotle of the Age and the Plato of the Times, Monsieur Gentil, described here as a companion of the Grand Vizier Shujāᶜ al-Daula and a long-time resident of the provincial capital of Fayzābād.[186] Although perhaps of European descent, Bruit's high Persian idiom points to his ease and facility with the literary and cultural codes of the Mughal empire. Bruit modestly refrains from mentioning himself in this short work, noting only that Colonel Gentil had expressed an interest in this lady, "who had come to the Land of Hindūstān and had received a perfect degree of honor and rank and stateliness and dignity, and despite all this elevation and splendor and pomp and pelf, carried herself with a rectitude and probity unmatched by any perfectly virtuous Dervish".

Bruit's task, therefore, was to recount what had been learned from his own ancestors about Bībī Juliyānā's life and record it "by way of a memento on the page of time". Recalling an idea of the infinitude of historical time, represented by a book of uncertain length and always being written,

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[185] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 147–57; William Irvine and J. P. Val d' Eremao, "Note on Bibi Juliana and the Christians at Agrah," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, April 1, 1903, 355–8; Rev. H. Hosten, "The Family of Lady Juliana Dias Da Costa (1658-1732)," *Journal of the Panjab Historical Society* 7, no. 1 (1918): 39–49; Sir Edward Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1932), 181–90.

[186] Gastin Bruit, "Ahwāl-i Bībī Juliyānā," n.d., British Library, APAC, Add. 14,374 (Rieu II.823-4). The author's name is uncertain. Maclagan identifies him with the Father Augustine Bravette. Hosten, however, offers some evidence that the author should be identified with the family surnamed Bravette or Barbette. Their ancestor had arrived in India in the early seventeenth century, and they apparently lived in Delhi until the mid-eighteenth century. One Augustin Barbette is known to have been an advisor of the Awadhī Nawwāb Shujāᶜ al-Daula in Faizābād in 1766, where he would have doubtless encountered Gentil. Hosten, "The Family of Lady Juliana Dias Da Costa (1658-1732)," 40, fn. 1.The text reads كستين برويت.

each act of historical writing is designed to evoke a perhaps-unknown moment from the past in the same way and with the vividness that a physical souvenir or memento (*yādgār*) vividly evokes a memory. This stock phrase, common in the introductions of historical texts of the period, signals the author's intent to enter a historical mode of narrative description, in which claims to truth will reveal the reality of a past time. Of course, our expectations of historical veracity are frustrated by the complete absence of dates and the names of many principal actors in the narrative that follows. For this reason, it may be more productive to see Bruit's essay as a work of oral history, a compendium of the words of trusted "elders" (*buzurgān*), some of whom may have been associated with Bībī Juliyānā or her family. In Bruit's mind, the history of Bībī Juliyānā was completely dependent upon, and adjunct to, the history of the Mughal court during the period of the Lady's lifetime. Bruit attaches particular importance to Bībī Juliyānā's proximity to what he considered to be the fount of state power, which was the person of the emperor himself. But Bruit's account of Bībī Juliyānā's story also serves to illustrate the problem of Mughal succession and how it played out within his text. As we shall see, the ways in which one emperor succeeded another had profound material consequences for the course of Bībī Juliyānā's story. To tell the story of Bībī Juliyānā's years, then, was also to tell the story of the empire, its history and its trajectory.

Writing in 1778, some twenty years after the ascendancy of the East India Company in Bengal, Bruit framed the story of Bībī Juliyānā's life with a significant beginning: the tensions that accompanied the ascendance of Shāh Jahān in 1627 and the sad end of Jahāngīr, who, despairing of his son's refractoriness, "convulsed on the bed of helplessness, and at the appointed time left this transitory realm for the abode of permanence". At this time, a nameless foster-sister of Jahāngīr and aunt of the new ruler decided to undertake the Hajj due to the sorrow of her

brother's death. The departure of this august personage, ostensibly "due to the pain of the death of her brother", signaling a rearrangement in the structure of power within the harem, did not have an auspicious outcome. Catastrophe struck in the high seas, in the form of "Franks (*firangīs*) of the Portuguese Nation (*qaum*)" who raided her ship and plundered all the gifts and valuables on board. Not content with this, the Portuguese pirates took the royal personage captive and carried her off to the port of Goa, where they extracted some hundreds of thousands of rupees more from the lady before finally releasing her.[187] When the outraged royal "found release from that whirlpool of perdition", she returned to court with choice words for her nephew. Bruit tells us that the offended aunt took recourse to "much rough and admonitory speech by way of her seniority, and asked the emperor what sort of imperium and sovereignty he would have, if in the beginning of his reign Portuguese Franks displayed this sort of unbalancedness and willful obstinacy (*khīra-sarī*)". If the honor of Shāh Jahān's women was left unprotected in this way, then "how would the inviolability and order of the matters of state and the defense of the affairs of the sultanate fare in the hands of its enemies?"

Hearing these words, the emperor was moved to a rage and ordered the invasion of the port of Hugli near Goa, "so that vengeance would inexorably befall this factiousness and loose-handedness of the Portuguese Franks (*ki intiqām-i īn fitna-angīzī wa hurra-dastī az firangīyān-i purtugīz bāyad girift*)". But this move was necessitated by more than questions of honor. An invasion would also preserve the majesty of the state and "quarrels would find no place in the exalted ruling family", writes Bruit, neatly alluding to the unsteady and unsettled nature of Shāh Jahān's early reign and the considerable ability of offended royal women to challenge and upset

[187] Bruit, "Ahwāl-i Bībī Juliyānā," f. 1b–2a.

the new imperial order. Thus a royal proclamation was issued to assemble an army that would sack the "cruel and oppressive" ones, and to instruct that "every person from the tribe of the mischievous Franks who fell into the hands of the Fortunate Army should be captured and imprisoned and sent to his Royal Highness, and that imperial rules and regulations should percolate through that hostile territory." Reaching back more than a hundred years into the past of a now-crumbling empire, Bruit visualized "silently efficient Mughal armies" (*afwāj-i nasb shiᶜār*) acting with alacrity on the imperial order ("which is an instance of divine regulations") and their climactic battle with the Franks of Goa, in which many feats of bravery were displayed on both sides. In the aftermath of the Mughal victory, three thousand Franks were captured and brought on foot (*masīr āvardand*) before the throne. Here it is worth pausing to consider Bruit's vision of the Mughal sacking of Goa, in which he betrays no sympathy for the enslaved civilians of the port, who may well have been fellow Europeans and co-religionists for the author. Quite on the contrary, Bruit's loyalties lay firmly with the empire; his imagination exalted the valorous and efficacious Mughal armies, the ease with which they justly punished Frankish misdemeanors and the resulting incorporation and normalization of a hostile territory.

As a result of this military success, the young Bībī Juliyānā and her mother were taken to Delhi and, like the others, were assigned as slaves to "one of the exalted ladies (*begum*)", whom they served for the duration of that person's lifetime. We cannot determine whether this begum was an imperial personage who resided within the harem, or the wife of a high-ranking nobleman who lived outside the fort. But it is here that Bībī Juliyānā must have learned the skills essential for survival in elite society. When, some time later, "the maw of death gaped open within her condition and gained predominance (*marz-i maut bar tabīᶜat-ash ghalba wa istilāᵓ yāfta*)" that noblewoman manumitted her Frankish slaves and they exited her establishment (*mahal*). Both

women now entered the protection of a certain “Padri Antun Munkalyaun” (possibly a Syriac or Armenian Padre Anton Michaeleon/Mikaelian?), where they spent their time in “asceticism and piety” (*zuhd wa taqwī*). But soon thereafter Bībī Juliyānā’s mother passed away. Bībī Juliyānā, having attained maturity, was married by the Padre to a man of her own tribe (*kufū*) of the Frankish people.[188] While Bruit is vague about names or details, his narrative implies that the experience of domestic slavery did not result in the natal alienation one would expect befell imported slaves in a foreign land. The young Juliyānā and her mother’s transition to the Padre’s establishment, represented as seamless by Bruit, suggests that both women retained the ability to maintain connections with other Europeans and may even have participated in the city’s Christian community. Perhaps appropriately foreshadowing Bībī Juliyānā’s rise in the world of Mughal elite politics, there is no sign of sectarian tension, of ritual humiliation or of pressure to convert to Islam in Bruit’s historical narrative.

But Bībī Juliyānā was not fated for marital bliss. Her husband was killed in battle, and Bībī Juliyānā, “mourning for her mother and husband, spent her days in solitude and loneliness”. Yet, in Bruit’s account, there is something formulaic about Bībī Juliyānā’s response to the profound challenge of being a single woman in seventeenth-century Delhi: she completed (*munqazī*) some time in the proper manner (*minwāl*), and at the same time the emperor Shāh Jahān answered the call of heaven with a “Here I am!” Now, claims Bruit, the Prince Aurangzeb ascended the throne with the coronation-name of Ālamgīr (“World-seizer”) and renewed a worn-out old world with a new verdure and delightfulness.

This view of imperial transition omits the fact that Aurangzeb rebelled against his father and imprisoned him until his death after having taken the throne in 1657**.** But perhaps Bruit alludes to

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[188] Ibid., f. 3a.

the inherent contradictions and tensions implicit in the forms of Mughal imperial succession in his description of Aurangzeb having brought a new "delightfulness" to the world: for here our author uses the somewhat uncommon adjective "*khurram*", which was also the pre-regnal name of Shāh Jahān, and alludes to his own troubled taking of the throne – the story with which Bruit began the tale of Bībī Juliyānā herself. And indeed it is at precisely this point, when the world had been "refreshed" by Aurangzeb's sanguinary coup, that Bībī Juliyānā experienced the desire for happiness and prosperity (*tamannā-yi falāh*) and the lust for community (*hawas-i jamīᶜat*), and "it passed her mind that if the chance arose then one must find employment in the emperor's harem, so that the time of trials and tribulations (*asr*) would transmute to one of ease (*sair*)." Bībī Juliyānā made serious efforts to attain this position – perhaps using the contacts with nobility she must have established during her childhood of servitude – when "suddenly the design of wishes appeared on the mirror of manifestation", and she joined the service of a wife of Aurangzeb and her son the Prince Muhammad Muᶜazzam, the future emperor Bahādur Shāh. As an aside we note that Bruit glosses over Aurangzeb's imprisonment of his father and his murder of his brother and competitor Dārā Shikoh, presumably because these are to be seen as the normal workings of the most exalted realms of imperial politics.

Bruit does not describe Bībī Juliyānā's role in this establishment, but makes it clear that she rapidly became a trusted servant of the queen and prince, both of whom are always mentioned together: as in the Ottoman case, the operative political unit of the Mughal harem at this time appears to have been the pair of royal mother and son.[189] A further opportunity to strengthen these bonds presented itself during the failed rebellion of the Prince Muᶜazzam. Bruit represents this uprising as a completely impersonal act of inscrutable fate: "By chance," he writes, "due to

[189] This phenomenon has been detailed in the Ottoman case by Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the revolving of the chameleon-like skies and the deceptive magic of the ages, which at every moment assumed a new form, the prince rebelled against his father and contests arose between him and the imperial forces."[190]

Here Bruit hews closely to the conventional courtly rule of refraining from the criticism of an emperor (in this case, an emperor-to-be), which generates tensions in this account that cannot be discussed, except perhaps obliquely. As we see, Bruit's narrative is shot through with the problem of Mughal succession, its unjustifiable nature and its inexplicability according to any rules of conventional conduct. For, we recall, Bruit begins his narrative with Shāh Jahān's rebellion against Jahāngīr, and its unpredictable consequences; and continues to Aurangzeb's accession, which is not cast as a revolt at all. Given the legitimacy of Bahādur Shāh's succession in the Mughal lineage – some seventy years in the past from Bruit's own time – and his importance in the story of Bībī Juliyānā's life, the emperor's most reprehensible actions can only be attributed to the machinations of fate, incomprehensible to mere humans. Bruit was aware of the contradiction in the highly negative view of imperial unfiliality – until the point that such behavior produced a new regnal era. He ensures his readers share that awareness too.

Whether inspired by divine causes or earthly, Prince Muᶜazzam's rebelliousness was not looked at with condescension by his father. Both son and mother were subject to "imperial rebuking and censure" and were placed in detention; their retinue was disbanded and their servants were all expelled from the harem (*mahal-sarāy*). Bībī Juliyānā was also cast out, but the reciprocal obligations of servitude were so powerful that both Bībī Juliyānā and her masters found their enforced separation extremely disagreeable. Bībī Juliyānā at this time appears to have returned to the Padre who had originally sheltered her, where she spent "day and night in perfect sorrow, and

[190] Bruit, "Ahwāl-i Bībī Juliyānā," f. 3b–4a.

didn't experience any rest or relaxation … and remained in devotion and prayer (*nazr wa niyāz*) for the release of the begum and the prince. But the emperor had decreed that no one had permission to present himself before Prince Muʿazzam and his mother and to undertake their affairs. Without access to their retinue, both figures were effectively reduced to the status of imperial non-persons. But, claims Bruit, Bībī Juliyānā continued to administer their everyday affairs from the outside, despite not being formally in royal employ.[191]

In order to emphasize Bībī Juliyānā's proximity to power and indispensability to her patrons, Bruit presents us with a telling anecdote: when, three months after their imprisonment, Prince Muʿazzam's mother finally dared to write a petition to the emperor detailing the toils and headaches (*mihnat wa mushāqqat wa tasdīyyat*) of her efforts and services for the crown, the emperor's fatherly affections were aroused and he relented to the extent of permitting mother and son a newly purchased slave-child (*kanīzak-i nau kharīda*) to serve them – a wise choice, designed to disrupt the reformation of a retinue that might again support the Prince Muʿazzam's premature claims. The emperor's servant accordingly searched high and low for a slave, but since the army and the state (*dāʾira-yi daulat-i sultānī*) were in the Deccan, fighting the "base and factious Deccanis", no appropriate child could be found in the imperial camp. When the story of this search reached Bībī Juliyānā, that sincere lady decided to don the garb of a slave-child and sell herself, and thus transport herself to her mistress and master. So Bībī Juliyānā advertised herself as a slave-child; and when this news reached the ears of the emperor's men, they came to her and engaged her in questions and answers before eventually deciding on a price. It was agreed that the new slave would be entered into the harem in a preliminary way for three days, and retained beyond that period subject to the approval of her masters. On this basis,

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[191] Ibid., f. 4a.

a royal order was proclaimed permitting the slave-child to enter, but, says Bruit, switching briefly to the vivid present tense, imperial regulations for the residences of the royal family are so strict that everyone who enters or exits the harem is subject to the scrutiny of servants of the court of the Benevolent Caliph (*bārgāh-i khalīfa al-rahmānī*) to determine what is carried in or out. For this reason, we are told, there is a search on entering the harem, and whenever one exits there is another search so that anything is not removed from the premises.[192]

So Bībī Juliyānā mounted a litter and took an earthenware pot (*kūza-i gilī*) for water and went to the residence (*deorhī*) of the queen and the prince. When it was announced that the slave-child was in attendance, she was searched and the earthenware pot was also emptied. When Bībī Juliyānā finally entered the residence of the queen, she recognized her loyal retainer and was overjoyed, but did not disclose this due to her fear of the emperor. Instead, she gave her valuables and precious jewels to Bībī Juliyānā, and then declared, "I don't like this slave-child, for she is not capable of serving in the harem."[193] Bībī Juliyānā arranged and affixed the jewels in the pot, and carried it out of the harem after filling it with water. On the way out, when she was searched, the guards emptied the pot of its water and gave it back to her with the jewels safely hidden inside. In this way Bībī Juliyānā brought all the jewels out and buried them in a place previously decided upon, and stayed out of the harem for about a fortnight. Meanwhile the people of the palace searched fruitlessly for another slave-child, until the queen said that she would accept the servant recently found unfit for service. Thinking this a favor, the imperial servants returned to Bībī Juliyānā's house and said, "It is so hard to find a slave-child here, that although this one was found useless and unworthy, we'll take her back out of sheer necessity."

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[192] It is worth noting that European travelers speak of the security measures that prevent items going into the harem, but do not mention the measures that prevent items being removed from it, as our author does.
[193] Bruit, "Ahwāl-i Bībī Juliyānā," f. 5a–b.

Bībī Juliyānā then placed items used for sewing such as scissors and needles and arranged them in the earthen pot as formerly, and went back to the queen's residence, where she continued to serve her beloved masters in every conceivable way.[194]

There are many reasons to doubt the veracity of this story, not least because of several troubling absences and contradictions. Where, for instance, did the events mentioned take place? If the imperial establishment was supposed to be on the move in a place bereft of slave-children, how did Bībī Juliyānā manage to live in a house (*khāna*), and how did she manage to deceive the entire security apparatus of the harem? And why did the queen ask Bībī Juliyānā to secrete jewels out of the palace? No form of empiricist historical analysis can tackle these questions in any way except by rejecting the story itself. But there is a way in which this tale performs a narrative and even historical function. In narrative terms, the anecdote uses the devices of cunning, deception and subterfuge to convey the truth of Bībī Juliyānā's proximity to power and the nature of this closeness. Readers attuned to the literary codes of the Mughal world would not be compelled to believe the absolute factual truth of jewels and water-pots, but they would rightly gather the substantive reality of Bībī Juliyānā's stratospheric status at court, and the ties of loyalty and trust that bound her to her mistress. In doing so, this story, though likely false, nevertheless performs a historical function to the extent that it conveys a past reality with an attentiveness to logic and causation. Thus it does not matter why the jewels were removed, or where or why they were buried: what is more important is that Bībī Juliyānā was entrusted with objects of great value, and behaved faithfully. In the same way, the scissors and needles Bībī Juliyānā carried into the harem are markers of womanly work and domestic status, as we saw in the previous chapter: they represent familiar attachment and personal service in the idiom of

[194] Ibid., f. 5b.

female servitude. The mode of this historical statement is literary, and perhaps conveys its message more elegantly than any dry prosopography or study of minute but significant changes in rank at court.

And indeed, this chain of causation leads to a logically sound outcome: "Having tied the belt of service around her waist", Bībī Juliyānā performed all manner of services, pleasant and appropriate or otherwise, for her princely master. So it was natural that when the emperor Aurangzeb forgave his son and honored him copiously, and sent him to subdue the refractory inhabitants of the province of Kābul, Bībī Juliyānā continued to serve both Prince Muᶜazzam and his mother. In turn, the prince vowed that he would elevate his favorite servant above all others if he won the inevitable war of succession after the death of his father. When Aurangzeb died, all the four brothers prepared for war. Muhammad Muᶜazzam, the wise oldest brother, sent messages of peace to the others, saying "the territory that is given too each one of us by his Highness Aurangzeb is plentiful … and we should be humbly satisfied (*qāniᶜ*) and grateful in our own territories. We should all thus establish concord so that the ties of sincerity are not snapped." But Muhammad Aᶜzam Shāh, who was very brave and daring, nevertheless decided to gather troops and didn't listen the words of his elder brother, and replied, "Contentment is for dervishes, and rulership (*saltanat*) needs the strength of the arm: by the grace of God, whoever is fated to have it will be efficacious, and if God wills he will glance at me and army in the blink of an eye." Indeed, continues our author, that two rulers cannot coexist in a single clime (*iqlīm*), and although Bahādur Shāh was extremely God-fearing and aware of divine dictates, these rough words from his brother roiled his sense of honor. So he lit the flame of murders and plunders,

and eventually after much toil and trouble he defeated Aᶜzam Shāh's army, killed him and took the crown and throne of the sultanate.[195]

Yet again our attention is drawn to the irresolvable contradictions of Mughal succession, which permeate the subtext of this narrative: while on the one hand Bahādur Shāh advocates the partition of the empire, on the other hand our author admits, perhaps ruefully, that "no two rulers can share a clime". Even if sovereignty was seen as shared in the blood of the ruling dynasty, in the settled world of the Mughal imagination its pragmatic practice nevertheless remained absolute, unsegmented, indivisible.[196] And yet, as we shall see again, if the question of sovereignty could be framed as a problem, it was not the sort that demanded a final solution for "reasons of state". The problem, rather, was one of *realpolitik*, to be solved at every iteration of the crisis of succession. For Bruit, writing from a time when the current Mughal emperor was a stipendiary of the East India Company, no other way presented itself.

But of course the question of succession was not the primary issue for our author. Bruit was more immediately concerned with the fact that Bībī Juliyānā supposedly presented a lakh rupees to the emperor as a coronation-gift on the day of his accession, and he immediately fulfilled his promise; using metaphors of both elevation and proximity,[197] Bruit tells us that the emperor honored her with closeness and raised her higher than all his nobility, and granted her many villages and towns near the capital city of Shāhjahānābād by way of fief (*āltamghā*). Every petition she gave was accepted by the emperor, and the specialty of her proximity to the royal figure was such that nobles of rank 5,000 and 6,000 would walk in front of her mount. What then

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[195] Ibid., f. 7a.

[196] On these bodily conceptions of Mughal sovereignty, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Envisioning Power: The Political Thought of a Late Eighteenth-Century Mughal Prince," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 43, no. 2 (2006): 131–161.

[197] Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*.

could be said of other men, high and low alike, who came to her with supplications and were favored in their purposes?

But Bībī Juliyānā, despite this great exaltation, spent her days with perfect abstention and caution and probity and firmness. A great marker of this was in her rigid adherence to a daily routine (much like the great emperors themselves)[198], from which she never varied (*sar-i mū dar ān takhalluf namī-shawad*). Every day, after waking and purifying herself, she emerged at the fourth *gharī* (early in the morning) and sat by herself in a small alcove (*hujra*), throwing herself into the worship of the deity (*be ʿibādat-i māʿbūd-i haqīqī khud mī-pardakhtand*). Now her day entered a distinctly feminine and domestic time: after coming out of her place of worship (where she spent four *gharīs*), she sat down and the other bībīs came and presented themselves and sat before her. Then rice and *mung* (green gram, the seed of *Vigna Radiata*) was produced, and the other bībīs who graced that elevated and secluded (*rifʾāt wa ʿismat*) assembly spent their time in picking through the rice and selecting the bigger grains of gram for another four *gharī*s. Although all sorts of fancy meats were prepared, Bībī Juliyānā was unmoved by luxurious viands. She preferred her rice and gram, so much so that she had it prepared with great delicacy and also sent some of it as an offering to the emperor. Bahādur Shāh, himself of saintly temperament, also consumed it with great gusto.

After finishing with this work, she spent another four *gharī*s in the thread manufactory (*kārkhāna-yi sūt*), and then called for the implements of sewing such as scissors and needles and cloth, and spent four *gharī*s in these tasks. She sewed her own clothes of worship; if not, she wore a gown and pajamas and a headscarf (*chādar-i salāhatī*), but purchased that *salāhatī* for two or three rupees a yard (*gaz*). After all of these tasks so typically attached to the feminine

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[198] This appears to be a standard form of daily routine for officials of state. For the case of the Emperor Akbar see Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 152.

ideal, she donned her court clothes and presented herself to attend to the emperor's affairs. Nawwāb Murtazāᵓ and Murīd Khān, who were cast and created (*sākhta wa pardākhta*) by her, came before her, and she enquired about all the imperial affairs from the people around her. Then she rode (a litter) and presented herself to the emperor, the shadow of God, until four *gharī*s of the day remained, when she came out of the blessed fort and went to her own residence; but sometimes she spent two months at a time in the fort. An important mark of her status involved the bending of imperial rules that were otherwise rigidly observed. For instance, at nighttime the doors of the fort were closed, and even if a prince wanted to enter the fort, the doors would not open for him; but Bībī Juliyānā came out whenever she wanted and had the doors opened. Another symbol of her place in court was evident in how important noblemen would stand before her and answer her questions just as they did before the vizier of the Territories Nawwāb Asad Khān. All the princes called her "bībī"; and no one called her anything but that. The emperor gave her great respect and honor until he passed away.[199]

After this long interlude, Bruit resumes the political narrative. After the death of Bahādur Shāh, one of the sons by the name of Muhammad Muᶜizz al-Dīn came to the throne and ruled for a few months. This emperor, Bruit tells us, was so "in the hand" of a "dancer" by the name of Lāl Kunwar of the community of the sarud-players that he had no awareness of the realm or the sultanate.[200] His inefficacy was such that the "the doors of oppression and strife and evil and decline opened upon the peoples of God and the doors of well-being were closed". In fact, the entire universe (*ᶜālam*) was imprisoned in excruciating torture, when suddenly the fragrant wind of divine favor reached the people of the world and Prince Muhammad Farrukh Siyar contested

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[199] Bruit, "Ahwāl-i Bībī Juliyānā," f. 8a–b.
[200] Ibid., f. 8b. Bruit uses the term "*zangi*", but it can hardly mean "Ethiopian" in this context. Perhaps "*zang*" is used in the sense of "bell", referring here to a dancer by way of the bells on her feet.

the emperor near Shāhjahānābād. Muᶜizz al-Dīn was defeated and ran away, and having come to Shāhjahānābād, was "imprisoned by the paws of fate". The new emperor reigned for eight years, and Bībī Juliyānā remained important and powerful in this period. But, notes our author, many unworthy and unpleasant events and actions occurred in this period. These events caused the degradation of the state and damaged the hauteur of the emperor; and many of the nobles were remiss in their service.[201]

Foremost amongst these remiss noblemen were Qutb al-Mulk (The Axis of the State) ᶜAbd Allāh Khān and the Imām al-Mulk (Chief of the State) Husain ᶜAlī Khān of the sayyids of Barhā. One the vizier and the other chief paymaster (*mīr bakshī*), both were famed at the time for their bravery and daring, being masters of great armies and unrivalled in their force and strength by any other noble. For this reason they caused factiousness and strife and disregarded the honor of the emperor. In their disloyalty (*harām khʷāragī wa harām namakī*), they imprisoned that oppressed emperor and seated another prince on the throne. When his appointed time was up, they brought out another, and when he too was finished they brought out Muhammad Shāh, son of Jahān Shāh, son of Bahādur Shāh, and established him on the throne. There was rejoicing at this news in the territories of Hindūstān. But the aforementioned nobility were so overcome by extreme (moral) weakness (*ki bi martaba-yi aqsāᵓ al-ghāyat musallat būdand*) and had raised and deposed three or four princes that their offences had come to be bitterly resented by high and low alike. And the sayyids, because of the strength of their own forces and tribe, permitted no servant of the emperor to approach him, so that no one was able to equal or join them. Naturally

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[201] Ibid.

then, the esteemed mother of Muhammad Shāh feared what these tyrants, who had enthroned her son, would do with him in times to come.[202]

Breaking again from the political history, Bruit returns to Bībī Juliyānā. At this time of imperial crisis, Bībī Juliyānā was approached by the queen mother, who ordered her to beseech and make an offering to her "great ones" (*buzurgān*) so that the emperor would be delivered alive from the clutches of these oppressors. Bībī Juliyānā cast her grace on the emperor and said that he would be protected by her Master Yohanna, and if God by his own grace and kindness delivered the emperor safely to independence, then he too should make a dedication to the Master Yohanna. The queen mother agreed to this and beseeched God with all her heart. And indeed, when the emperor won the day and ascended the throne in complete freedom after having defeated his enemies, he made the aforementioned dedication to Yohanna. The rank and proximity of Bībī Juliyānā increased, and at the beginning of the reign, Bībī Juliyānā veiled herself in divine mercy. After her death, the Bībī Pasquale (*Paskūla*), who was one of those close to her, was given the title of Bībī Juliyānā, and performed the imperial tasks that the aforementioned had. This Bībī remained thus employed through the reign of the emperor Ahmad Shāh and maintained her power in that of Aurangzeb II (d. 1759).[203]

Bruit's remarkable and deft telling of Bībī Juliyānā's life may appear to offer an unmediated glance into the internal workings of Mughal power at the highest levels at first glance. But in fact there is great cause for wariness and skepticism in dealing with this narrative. If one were interested in questions of Bruit's credibility, it would be disturbing indeed to remember that Bruit begins his narrative on a patently false premise: for the Portugese port of Hugli that Shāh Jahān invaded is some 1600 kilometers away from Goa. Those historians, such as the Rev. H.

[202] Ibid., f. 9a.
[203] Ibid., f. 9b–10b.

Hostens, who nevertheless still wish to bend Bruit's account to an empiricist standard, must therefore convince themselves that the author must have been mistaken, and must therefore disregard the fact that Hugli and Goa are separated by the width of the subcontinent.[204] But Bruit was not mistaken in referring to Goa: for a Mughal lady traveling to the Hijāz would naturally leave from Surat, not Hugli. And if no peeved aunt of Shāh Jahān left from Surat, then she could also not have been intercepted by piratical "Franks of the Portuguese community" on the high seas, could not have provoked a war with the Portuguese and led to the coming of Bībī Juliyānā to court in the first place.

But for our purposes it does not matter that Shāh Jahān never invaded Goa, or that Bībī Juliyānā may have arrived in Shāhjahānābād before its construction was completed, or that she lived to about a hundred years of age sorting *mung* every day for the emperor's rice and lentils. Bruit's rendition of Bībī Juliyānā's life is telling in other ways, and bears a different sort of historical truth. Firstly, as we have seen, it presents a clear articulation of the structures of political power as it was seen to be available to women. Bībī Juliyānā's ethnic origins and her faith were irrelevant to her status at court; Bruit could not imagine them as hindering her rise in any way. Nor was her low-born slave status an insurmountable obstacle. Political power rightly came to those who displayed loyalty, virtue, and fidelity. That Bībī Juliyānā was a woman did not inhibit her power and importance either. Indeed Bruit makes it a point of telling us that Bībī Juliyānā was given tremendous respect, treated in the manner of the vizier himself, and had her own retinue of female and male followers, of whom some developed into notables in their own right. It is certainly true that Bībī Juliyānā was an exceptional figure. But the fluid and adaptive workings of Mughal power ensured that she was an exception which became the rule. Her name

[204] Hosten, "The Family of Lady Juliana Dias Da Costa (1658-1732)," 40.

became a title, her place an institution. This is the meaning of Bībī Pasquale *becoming* Bībī Juliyānā. And yet Bībī Juliyānā's power was coded in a distinctly and autonomously feminine idiom: she served her master with a pitcher of water (in which she concealed jewels). She prepared food and fed the emperor – a womanly gesture that derives from responsibility but signifies proximity, affection and influence. She prepared her own clothes, as virtuous women were expected to do. Her independent political authority did not impinge on, or transform, her femininity.[205]

The problem of imperial succession

Bruit's goal, as have seen, was to extol the virtues and the power of Bībī Juliyānā Juliyānā. But the story of Bībī Juliyānā presents also presents a neat overview of late-Mughal thinking about the fate of Empire and the question of succession which was so central to it. The chroniclers of the late eighteenth century, who saw around them the remorseless and inexorable expansion of the East India Company's authority, looked to the Mughal past in order to understand why a stable political formation had appeared so rapidly to have come apart. In doing so, they generated a standard or normal narrative of the history of the empire – one very much in evidence in Bruit's own abbreviated account. To Bruit's mind, the reigns of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb were a golden age in which an aging world was perennially refreshed. Bahādur Shāh's brief reign also fitted this template for our author. But then came a long moment of crisis in the reigns of Jahāndār Shāh (1712-13) and Farrukh Siyar (1713-19). Jahāndār Shāh, to whom Bruit significantly refers only by his pre-coronation name of Muᶜizz al-Dīn, destroyed the empire in the disastrous months he controlled Delhi. He was thankfully displaced by Farrukh

[205] For an insightful examination of the distinctiveness of women's work in the premodern era, see Ivan Illich, *Gender*, 2 Revised (Heyday Books, 1990).

Siyar in 1712, but that emperor himself became a pawn in the hands of the overweening sayyids of Barhā until the Muhammad Shāhī Restoration (1721) brought back a semblance of order to the empire.

With minor variation, this was the dominant view of the earlier part of the century in the minds of historians of the later half. This view has been profoundly influential in the making of Mughal history and has been reproduced, with its core assumptions and assertions unchallenged, in the works of later colonial and post-colonial historians such as William Irvine, his protégé Jadunath Sarkar and the epigones of the so-called Allahabad (broadly Nationalist) and Aligarh (largely Marxist) schools of what they continue to call medieval Indian history.

In part, this reproduction is justified because it presents us with the undeniable truth of the *de facto* dissolution of the empire by the late eighteenth century, though there remains room for disagreement on precise timelines and the meaning of dissolution itself. In another way, colonial and post-colonial historians cannot be faulted for succumbing to the tremendous and pervasive force of the genre of *tārīkh* itself one that arrogates to itself strong claims to truth and facticity. The texts commonly classified as *tārīkh* bear a profound intertextual coherency and a rhetorical power that serves as excellent material for the Rankean positivism championed by Irvine and embraced by his varied descendants. Works of *tārīkh* have proven themselves amenable to being judged for credibility and accuracy; those with a surfeit of dates and details, considered prime fodder for capital-H History, reproduce themselves essentially unmutated in the historiography of the late empire. Some, judged "gossipy" or "inaccurate", can be placed to a side. Of the many that bear characteristics of *both* accuracy and its opposite, the task of the historian has been to sift through "what happened", and what was merely a "mistake". It is in this light that we must see the good Reverend Hosten's contortions in accepting certain parts of Bruit's narrative as

"reliable" and others as "impossible".[206] But for Bruit, what linked events later judged "true" or "false" was something dear and familiar to modern historians too: causality over time.

In previous pages I have argued that we might consider Bruit's account to be a polyvocal text: while it speaks of Juliyānā's life and her achievements, it also reflects on what I have called the problem of Mughal succession. By lengthening Bībī Juliyānā's life to begin it in the early reign of Shāh Jahān (r. 1628-58), Bruit manages to encompass six instances of Mughal succession within his narrative. Shāh Jahān's early reign, it is implied, was not marked by universal joy, for it has caused a peeved imperial aunt to depart for the hajj with disastrous consequences. Aurangzeb's coming to the throne is described as a joyful event; Bruit could be sure that every literate person in his milieu knew quite well the odium that surrounded Aurangzeb, who imprisoned his father, murdered his brother in captivity and seized the throne. Next comes Bahādur Shāh, who, as Bībī Juliyānā's patron, is seen above doing any sort of wrong. His rebellion against his father need not be dwelt upon, because such matters are beyond the comprehension of mere mortals; but when he comes to the throne, he generously offers to divide the empire, so his main competitor Aᶜzam Shāh might rule on elsewhere. Aᶜzam Shāh brashly refuses, for "two emperors cannot live in a single clime". This is an important trope, and one we shall encounter again. But its significance should be clear. In an ideal world, Mughal emperors would not have to go about slaying their brothers; early dynastic predecessors such as Emperor Humāyūn (d. 1566) had certainly attempted to avoid the practice of fratricide. And so the ideal emperor would merely partition the domains granted to him, so that all lineal descendants could thrive peacefully side by side. Yet in the real world, it seemed, despite all the talk of sovereignty

[206] Hosten, "The Family of Lady Juliana Dias Da Costa (1658-1732)," 39–40.

shared in the blood, in practice it remained single, unitary, indivisible. Bahādur Shāh defeated his brother and took the throne: it was this act, presumably, that enabled him to rule.

But what then of his son and successor, the emperor Muᶜizz al-Dīn Jahāndār Shāh? Having defeated his brothers, Jahāndār Shāh had gained for himself the absolute right to the throne in the same way as his father. Yet Bruit, like many of the historians who preceded him, sought to deny this legitimacy to Jahāndār Shāh. A key way of doing this was to never use the emperor's coronation-name and continue to use his previous princely name. So Bruit insisted on calling the ruler Muᶜizz al-Dīn, as if he were still a mere prince among many contenders. A rebellion was organized against Jahāndār Shāh with the active participation of a section of the imperial elite. What could this mean? Were there in fact no rules to succession, so that an absolute realpolitik, embedded in the practice of imperial fratricide, was the only way to power? Surely this was not the case – for, as Bruit tells us, Bahādur Shāh himself attempted to share the empire with his brothers before he was forced to execute them all. But if there were rules, implicit or explicit, to the process of succession, then how could a revolt against a reigning emperor be justified?

One justification, frequently offered, is that the emperor fell into a sort of madness under the sway of his beloved but evil consort, the lowly entertainer Lāl Kunwar. Such justifications have been so powerfully and frequently offered that if Jahāndār Shāh is remembered in the historiography at all, it is as an aberrant and irrational monarch utterly under the sway of this scheming temptress. Historians of a positivist bent tell us that emperor and consort drank and debauched their empire away, thus paving the way for their own demise and the rise of Jahāndār Shāh's nephew, Farrukh Siyar. But Farrukh Siyar was himself dethroned and executed by the sayyids of Barhā. How was one to explain this novelty? Was it a legitimate move for the nobility

to dethrone an emperor? Were there conditions under which imperial succession could in fact be engineered?

These questions lie at the heart of the following chapters. Unlike in the comparable Ottoman case, we have neither a large number of detailed histories from the period, nor do we know yet of jurisprudential texts that might indicate theological or legal views on modes of succession.[207] Yet, as the preceding treatment of the account of Bībī Juliyānā has shown, even the most doubtful of histories can be read as representations of a reality, as articulations of questions, as statements of contention. In the following pages, therefore, we consider the two most important moments of imperial succession that were to have so great an impact on the politics of the empire. The next chapter (Chapter Three) examines the inauguration of the question of succession. In this first iteration, the issue of succession relates to the dethronement and execution of Jahāndār Shāh by Farrukh Siyar in 1713. Accordingly, we examine two important contemporary representations of this dethronement and one slightly later recollection from the settled years of the reign of Muhammad Shāh (1721-48). While Jahāndār Shāh's death was a source of some discomfort to contemporary observers, there was no mistaking the unambiguousness with which his successor Farrukh Siyar was deposed and executed by his nobility from Barha. In Chapter Four, therefore, we examine the full articulation of the question of succession in its most problematic form and the variety of responses it produced among the Mughal elite. But the Mughal elite were not the only ones to respond to Farrukh Siyar's death in 1719. The residents of the city of Delhi also rose up in indignation against the act. Their opposition to the regicide illustrates the emergence of a mass politics in the space of the city. We

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[207] For the Ottoman case, see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 72–75.

will present an examination of this uprising in 1719 before Chapters Four, Five and Six offer a more detailed view of the emergence of the mass political subject in the Mughal city.

CHAPTER 3: The Passions and the Death of Jahāndār Shāh

In 1712, Emperor Bahādur Shāh died only five years after having ascended the Mughal throne. His death threw the empire into tumult, as his sons immediately began preparations for the war of succession that would follow. The Prince Muᶜizz al-Dīn defeated and killed his brethren, and then was crowned emperor outside Lahore with the regnal name of Jahāndār Shāh. Very soon thereafter, as Jahāndār Shāh proceeded to Delhi, his nephew Farrukh Siyar rose up in rebellion. In this act he was aided by the two brothers from the sayyid nobility of Barhā, ᶜAbd Allāh Khān and Husayn ᶜAlī Khān. By 1713, in a stunning reversal, Jahāndār Shāh had been defeated and Farrukh Siyar became the emperor in Delhi.

Jahāndār Shāh's death raises some uncomfortable questions in the history of the Mughal empire. It would be easy to argue that, according to previous protocol, once an emperor had come to power, all the other colineal descendants of the dynasty who were at loose in the empire were to be imprisoned or executed. It therefore behooved the administrators of the province to take Farrukh Siyar in their charge and send him to Delhi in shackles. Instead, they supported his claim to the throne and eventually installed him on it. This presents something of a problem for the model of succession that had apparently worked so far for the dynasty. Once an emperor had been crowned, his name recited in the mosques and printed on its coins in mints across the empire, were the wars of succession over? Or was it legitimate for parties to support the contending claims of other imperial descendants?

It is important to stress that a juridical or theological answer to this question has not yet been discovered, and it is difficult to say whether it was posed in these terms or not. Historians of the Mughal empire have based their accounts on the surviving Mughal chronicles. In doing so, however, they have uncritically reproduced the prejudices of their sources, without paying

serious attention to the fact that the history which survives is the history of the victor. Mughal authors, as we shall see, were happy to describe Jahāndār Shāh as a debauched and incapable ruler who was destined to be defeated. This view has dominated the historiography of the later empire, obscuring the rather more fundamental questions of succession and structural change in the period in question.[208] In the following pages, therefore, I offer a critical re-appraisal of the sources of the reign and the death of Jahāndār Shāh. I begin by examining and describing the sources in question, and situate their authors within the very particular contexts of their own time. I then examine the accounts of Jahāndār Shāh's life, his supposed profligacy, excess and misrule, and his eventual death. Having examined the views of our authors on Jahāndār Shāh, I then turn to an examination of how these elites viewed their own place in the wars of succession and their place in the empire. Finally, I analyze some of the responses to the problem of succession raised by the death of that ill-fated ruler.

Sources

Irādat Khān's *History*

An important source for the history of the period are the memoirs of the high-ranking Mughal nobleman Irādat Khān "Wāzih' ("Resplendent"), the scion of a distinguished family whose members had successively served the emperors Jahāngīr, Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb. Since the rule of Jahāngīr, the title of "Irādat" ("Wish, Will, Desire") Khān had been passed from father to son by the consent of the emperor. The Irādat Khān with whom we are concerned was specially distinguished by his bloodline, if not necessarily by achievements on the battlefield. His father, servant of Shāh Jahān, had reached the apogee of success during his life. Early in the reign of

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[208] A similar approach has been recently advocated in Filip Van Tricht, "Robert of Courtenay (1221–1227): An Idiot on the Throne of Constantinople?," *Speculum* 88, no. 04 (2013): 996–1034.

Aurangzeb, he had risen to the governorship of the rich heartland province of Awadh and been granted the rank of 3,000 with a land-assignation for 3,000 cavalry. His crowning social achievement, not unrelated to his eminence in political affairs, was a second marriage was to the daughter of Zāhid Khān Koka, whose suffix (*Koka*) implies royal birth of inferior status. Indeed, Zāhid Khān's mother, Hūrī Khānān, was the nurse of Shāh Jahān's eldest daughter, Jahān Ārā Begam. "House-born" (*khāna-zād*) servants of the emperor, not acknowledged as princes because of the inferior status of their mothers, nevertheless derived a sense of hauteur from the fact of their royal birth. Zāhid Khān himself was remembered for his "unrestrained life of pleasure", and even more ominously, his "very outspoken" conversation; while the former might be accepted, the latter would hardly be tolerated at court unless the khān presumed a certain familiarity with the royal family. This sense of self-importance was transmitted to Zāhid Khān's son, Faiz Allāh Khān, who the author of the *Maᵓāsir* claims was raised by Jahān Ārā Begam herself. Like his father, Faiz Allāh Khān performed intimate functions for the emperor, serving as chief huntsman and chief falconer to Aurangzeb. He too is remembered in the mid-eighteenth-century Mughal biographical dictionary called the *Traces of Nobility* (*Maᵓāsir al-Umarāᵓ*) as "a good and independent man" who "did not pay court to anybody" and was much more interested in his zoological studies than politicking for imperial favor.[209]

The Irādat Khān with whom we are concerned was the product of this marriage between the provincial governor and the daughter of the proud Zāhid Khān Koka. Connection to the ruling family would certainly add to the honor and prestige of Irādat Khān and his descendants; yet despite his chosen *nom de plume*, our author's career exhibited only a faint luminosity when held against those of his ancestors. Born in 1649, he received the title of Irādat Khān only after an

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[209] Shah Nawaz Khan, *The Maāthir-ul-umarā* ..., ed. Baini Prasad (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1964), Iradat Khān: I.683–4; Zahid Khān Koka: II.1021–2; Faiz Allah Khān: I.512–3 .

elder brother had passed away; he was first given an imperial assignation in 1679 (the thirtieth year of Aurangzeb's reign) at the rather advanced age of forty. Ten years later, we find him languishing as the military commander (*faujdār*) of Aurangabad with the paltry rank of 700 and only a 1,000 assigned cavalry. From the available corpus of materials, we can safely conclude that Irādat Khān's interests placed him firmly in the category of the men who wielded the pen, and not the sword. Aurangzeb does not appear to have thought very highly of this illustrious father's second child, and treated him with a rather more grudging indulgence than that extended to more closely related houseborn servants. In any case, the emperor was unlikely to be interested in the poetic outpourings of junior military officials sinecured safely behind the frontline.

Life for Irādat Khān appears to have begun around sixty. At the very least, the years before the age of fifty-eight were not momentous or exciting enough to mention in his memoirs, for our author begins (as do many of his contemporaries) with the death of Emperor Aurangzeb a death that signaled the end of half a century of stable imperial rule and the beginning of a disturbing uncertainty and upheaval. In the contests that followed, Irādat Khān displayed an almost preternatural ability to pick the wrong side. He had very good reasons to dislike the regime of Jahāndār Shāh, and, as we shall see, many reasons to support Farrukh Siyar's cause. And yet, Irādat Khān's historical memoirs have been held up as a model of historical veracity; they were translated as early as 1786 into English by Captain Jonathan Scott as displaying the causes of "the very precipitate decline" of the Mughal empire.[210]

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[210] Irādat Khān, *A Translation of the Memoirs of Eradut Khan a Nobleman of Hindostan: Containing Interesting Anecdotes of the Emperor Aulumgeer Aurungzebe, and of His Successors, Shaw Aulum and Jehaundar Shaw: In Which Are Displayed the Causes of the Very Precipitate Decline of the Mogul Empire in India. By Jonathan Scott, Captain in the Service of the Honourable East-India Company, and Private Persian Translator to Warren Hastings, Esquire, Late Governor-General of Bengal, &c. &c. &c.*, trans. Jonathan Scott (London: Stockdale, 1786).

I use three versions of Irādat Khān's memoirs in this exercise. I rely primarily on the edited and printed *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, Scott's English translation and a manuscript version held at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad that was not available to Ghulām Rasūl Mihr, the editor of the published text.[211] The cataloguer of the Salar Jung Museum's archive claims that the text in their possession is the original manuscript and in the author's own hand. I am inclined to cautiously support this assertion on the basis some internal evidence in the manuscript, and of textual variants between this manuscript and the other versions of the text. The colophon of the Salar Jung manuscript bears the date of AH 1166, though there is good evidence to consider this a slip of the writer's pen. It is more likely that the year of completion is AH 1126 (no later than January 6, 1715). The later copies with their interpolations appear to have stabilized by 1786 at the earliest, when the English translation was published. We are thus dealing with an early, quite possibly autographed manuscript held at the Salar Jung Museum; an English translation from an unknown manuscript in 1786 bearing some variations from the manuscript; and a published text that reconciles several manuscript variants (excluding the Salar Jung version), and which varies from the Hyderabad manuscript but has much in common with Scott's edition. In essence, we may imagine an original text and a set of variant texts that appear to stabilize between 1715 and 1785. This is of some significance, for, as we shall see, the anonymous interpolations reveal something about the changing expectations and differences in social class in Delhi during the eighteenth century.

At the beginning of his text – missing from the supposedly autographed copy at the Salar Jang Museum in Hyderabad – Irādat Khān describes himself as the son of Kifāyat Khān, his administrative role signified by appellation: "writer of the broken (chancellery) script". This is a

[211] Mubarak Vazih, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khan* (Lāhūr: Idārah-yi Taḥqīqāt Pākistān Dānishgāh Panjāb, 1971); Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," n.d., Salar Jung Museum, AC 3808.

deliberately and altogether too humble description of an official who had ascended to the highest echelons of the Mughal administration. Irādat Khān tells us that when he finished a text he names the "Exalted Words" (*kalimāt-i ᶜālīyāt*), it passed his mind that he should "imprison by way of the pen" (*qalamband*) some of the conditions that he had experienced, for the thought of these past events left a strange impression on the heart. Looking back, such reminiscences seemed much more significant when reconsidered in memory than the time when they passed as words of discussion between friends. "For this reason," wrote the khān, "We have given many past conditions to the pen, so that every time we examine and peruse them, a special value and a great delight and an ecstatic and rare condition may manifest itself, and that they remain a memento for friends."

Yet conviviality, conversation and the wonders of memory were not the true subject of this disquisition. What Irādat Khān described as "the rarities of the ages and the wonders of the power of the maker of days and nights" were in fact pointed reflections on "the revolutions in the conditions of the world, and of commotion among reigns (*saltanat-hā*); of a multitude of princes mingling with dust, and the extinction of ancient estates and old families; of the debasing of esteemed ones and the elevation of the contemptible". What the analysts of events and affairs had never witnessed in the past millennium of Islamic time was observed by our author in the space of a single year. And indeed Irādat Khān was well-positioned to report on these events, because he had been an imperial servant, included in decision-making and given to the stewardship of important affairs. So, reverting to the haughty "we", the khān claimed that he was acquainted with the particularities and generalities of all sorts of affairs and so events that others would find difficult to learn about had in fact passed before his very eyes. Going further still, the

khān claimed that he himself was present at every place and so had written perforce of the difficulties and problems that he had encountered.[212]

But despite his reference to the historians and chroniclers of the previous millennium, the khān insisted that his words did not fall into the category of imperial chronicling (*bādshāh-nāma*), nor in that *belles lettres* (*inshāʾ*) or history (*tārīkh-nawīsī*): and unlike imperial historians, with their profusion of idioms and subtle ideas, Irādat Khān would write nothing save his own experiences. To the extent that the events and circumstances of the nobility (derived from the scribal diaries of events (*rūznāmajāt-i waqāʾiʿ*), were described, they were written in the idiom that one friend would use to inform another of the latest news. No doubt with the vast corpus of Persian-language literature before his mind's eye, the khān pointedly disavowed the use of rhythmical prose, overly long ideas or abstruse vocabulary.

It is certainly open to question as to whether our author delivers on these claims. Any expectations of prolonged insights into the khān's emotional disposition or thoughts and opinions are quickly dashed; the story of the wars of succession is told impersonally, and our author makes first-person appearances to occasionally describe an event and his own reactions. These reactions often have a stereotypical quality about them. Irādat Khān's own motivations or feelings are rarely if ever revealed.

Nūr al-Dīn Multānī Fārūqī's *Book of Jahāndār Shāh*

A rather more fine-grained view of Jahāndār Shāh's reign is to be found in the *Book of Jahāndār Shāh* (*Jāhāndārnāma),* written by a certain Nūr al-Dīn Fārūqī Multānī in perhaps two recensions

[212] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān* (Lāhor: Idārah-'i Taḥqīqāt-i Pākistān Dānishgāh-i Punjāb, 1971), 2–3; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 3–4. There are minor textual variants in evidence in this section.

between 1716 and 1721.[213] While modern cataloguers and historians have classified this text within the genre of *tārīkh*, our author would more likely call his work *waqāʾiʿ-nigārī* – the recording of incidents. Unlike Irādat Khān, Nūr al-Dīn Multānī comes from a distinctly lower echelon of the imperial hierarchy. Subaltern in the literal sense of the word, Nūr al-Dīn appears to have been cast briefly out of provincial obscurity during the tumults of Jahāndār Shāh's abbreviated reign. Nothing is known of him or his family besides what little we are told during the course of his text.

In his introduction, entitled "On the nature of changing conditions and the reason for writing these few pages", we learn that the primary object of Nūr al-Dīn's interest was the speed and unpredictability with which the world manifests its changes. Indeed, he launches immediately into a small discourse on the chameleon-like (*būqalamūnī*) ability of the world to rapidly alter the lives of its inhabitants; and, as we shall see, the short and unfortunate reign of the emperor Muʿizz al-Dīn Jahāndār Shāh is an excellent example of this sort of point. Looking at the recent past of the empire, Fārūqī beheld only turmoil. Thus he writes,

> after the death of *Hazrat* Aurangzeb Bādshāh *Ghāzī* [in 1707] who reigned for 60 years, revolutions appeared everywhere in the domains (*mamālik*) of Hindūstān, and variegated accidents and calamities have been witnessed in this period. Such problems have befallen the heads of god's people from the shock of king-making (*bādshāh-gardī*) that in their description the pen is on paper like a hair standing at end on the body, and the hand holds it quiveringly.[214]

Nevertheless, Multānī bravely sets forth, seizing the reins of Shabdīz (The legendary Khusraw's horse) of the pen and setting forth into the danger-filled valley of chronicling. But why would the act of writing historical reminiscences be a cause for danger? Our author coyly alludes to the fact

[213] Nūr al-Dīn Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," n.d., British Library, APAC, IO Islamic 3988. There are two different dates of completion present within the text, which appears to be the only known copy in existence. The British Library MS was copied from an unknown manuscript for a Mr. Nichols, to be sent to William Irvine in "*wilāyat*" by the scribe Muhammad ʿAlī.
[214] Ibid., f. 2a.

that "whatever befell Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī for the same cause is hardly a secret". While ᶜĀlī's life and works are the subject of later chapters, we can be sure that Multānī had been impressed by the product of this famous satirist's razor-sharp wit. And so, in his decidedly more modest way, Multānī chose as his subject the brief reign of Jahāndār Shāh, which he likens to "a happy dream in which the whole night passes like a minute and must pass [*biguzarad wa biguzasht*]". In contrast, our prosaic author sets his task: "I bring the traces of that dream for the eye of wakefulness of the world under the control of the pen".[215]

But before Nūr al-Dīn launches into his narrative, he must first establish his family's impeccable credentials. Thus we are told that the Fārūqīs hail from the homeland (*watan*) of Balkh in the clime (*iqlīm*) of Tūrān. One of Nūr al-Dīn's ancestors was the companion of a certain Bābā Qashqa Mughal, who was a senior leader in Bābur's army, and distinguished himself in the battle at Karnāl against Ibrāhīm Lodī. Although Bābur established "perfect domination over the provinces (*sūba*) of most of the domains" and opponents such as a "Rānā Chattar" and the Mewatis received "an agreeable (*hasb-i dil khʷāh*) conclusion", there was dissension among Bābur's ranks, because

> many of the well-known leaders, who were continually cheering each other with cups of the *nashā*[216] of manliness [poured] from the goblet of the wine of temerariousness on the carpet of bravery (*bar khʷān-i shujāᶜat az jam-i bāda-yi tahawwur nashā-yi mardānagī dar kāsa sar mī-dāshtand*) thought that establishment in Hind was incompatible with military leadership (*sipāhgarī*), and furtively returned to their own homelands without the permission of the emperor.[217]

So it was that Bābā Qashqa Mughal (whose status can be determined from the fact that his tent was next to the royal entrance to the imperial camp) also departed one night for Kabul, but not before leaving a cheeky verse at Bābur's entrance's tent-flap: "For it to be well with me, I'd best

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[215] Ibid., f. 2a–b.
[216] *Nashā*: Wine mixed with *bāng*, a liquid preparation of *Cannabis Sativa*.
[217] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," f. 2b.

be going / For I'll become a blackface in Hind's weather".[218] Our author's unnamed ancestor also preferred Bābā Qashqa's company, but when they reached Multān, the ancestor in question pulled aside and "married some woman of the Mewatis, and at the end of it all he settled there". Twenty-five years of presumed conjugal bliss were interrupted when the ancestor's "actual wife" (*zauja-yi aslī*) and the author's great-grandmother showed up in Multān after much toil and trouble. She produced a male child at the age of sixty-seven, and the author's respected great-grandfather died at the ripe old age of 103 during the reign of the emperor Jahāngīr and was buried in Multān. In this way, despite the rapid settling of local roots, our author could nevertheless claim the purity of his ethnically Mughal bloodline and his proximity to the founder of the dynasty, Bābur. Unlike Irādat Khān, whose confidence in the nobility of his name was so great that he barely mentioned his exalted ancestors, the distinctly provincial Nūr al-Dīn takes great pains to emphasize his highborn status, purity of stock and proximity to royal power.

Stressing the royal connection further, Nūr al-Dīn mentions that when the emperor Jahāngīr went to travel and hunt in Kashmīr, he would often call the great-grandfather into his presence and quiz him about the past times of the age of Shaykh Mirzā and Emperor Bābur, and, "impressing the seal of favor", would make gifts in cash and kind. In fact, once Jahāngīr even invited the aged relative to become a part of his retinue, but "he, due to his ripeness of age, did not accept and [instead] laid his head on the marsh-reed mat of contemplation and contentment". Nūr al-Dīn does not mention his family's achievements during the reigns of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb – perhaps they had faded into a genteel insignificance during the relatively quiet decades of the seventeenth century – but royal connections appear to have been re-established when Aurangzeb

[218] Ibid.

deputed his son Bahādur Shāh as governor of provincial governorship of Kabul with responsibility for Panjāb and Multān.

Our author's father, Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn, was a famed resident of Multān. When Prince Muᶜizz al-Dīn collected troops in support of his father's war against his brothers in 1707/8, the shaykh and his followers joined the royal person's train. Naturally, our author also became part (*ham-rakāb*) of the princeling's cavalcade. But Nūr al-Dīn does not provide an account of the battles that followed in his introduction. Instead, he writes, "the account of this battle has been given in the account of the poet of the sublime manuscript (*shāᶜir-i ᶜālī-darj*), and since no one is capable of matching that achievement, this incapable writer will refrain from telling it again, and I will withhold". Here Nūr al-Dīn uses a standard technique to allude again to Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī, by using his poetic pen-name (*ᶜālī*) as a descriptor of the man and the text he cites here: *The Contest* (*Jangnāma*), a highly ornate treatise on the war between Bahādur Shāh and his main competitor, the prince Aᶜzam Shāh, which culminated in the former's decisive victory and the latter's death at the Battle of Jajowan in 1707.[219] Deferring to his idol, Nūr al-Dīn presents us with a rapid foretaste of what is to come. Bahādur Shāh's victory was short-lived, for he died in only five years. The country fell into confusion, disorder and tumult, and all four imperial princes descended into the vortex of annihilation. But the wave brought only Muᶜizz al-Dīn to the shore of the desired wish – that is, the throne of Hindūstān. But Jahāndār Shāh's reign was even briefer than his father's: before those who had been saved from perdition could heal their wounds, the conjuror of fate revealed a different deception. The prince Farrukh Siyar, nephew of Jahāndār Shāh, sallied rebelliously forth (*khurūj namūda*) from Bengal with the aid of Husayn ᶜAlī Khān and Hasan ᶜAlī Khān, the two famous sayyids of Barhā. Yet although Farrukh Siyar

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[219] Munshi Baji Nath Figar, *A Faithful English Translation of Jang Namah of Nimat Khan-I-Ali with a Glossary of Difficult Words and Phrases, References to Allusions &c.* (Lucknow: Shukla Printing Press, 1928).

assumed sovereignty by minting coins in his name and beating the imperial kettle-drum, he found no respite from the sayyids. And so his era passed in subterfuge and conspiracy (*kajdār marīz*) and terminated in the humiliation of the dirt of insult (*khāk-i khiffat*). The world mourned again, and everyone was trapped in their own toils, worrying about what new trick was to be unveiled by relentless fate.[220]

Life had been better in the reign of Bahādur Shāh, before this time of troubles. Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn had enjoyed a life of perfect contentment, and the young Nūr al-Dīn had been presented in his father's sublime gatherings. Nūr al-Dīn learnt the art of *belles lettres* (*inshā*ᵓ) in the days when his idol Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī was writing the *Events of Bahādur Shāh*. A sympathetic reaction caused the passion of chronicling to become inflamed in our author's own heart, and he began to bring the passage of events under the control of his pen (*zabt-i qalam*). Again we encounter the principles of "event-writing", which are often described by this central metaphor of bringing order and control to the disorganized and unruly happenings of the past. The past, in other words, required careful disciplining in order to be comprehensible and of use to future generations.

But our author's lofty intentions received a blow when he read *The Contest* – ᶜĀlī's highly ornate account of the victory of Bahādur Shāh over his brothers. "I read it with the gaze of utility," writes Nūr al-Dīn, "and weighed its idioms in the scales of my own talents. I found my own writing worthless in measure against that far heavier text, and I considered my own work without use." Only a little while later though, when Yūsuf Khān became famed for his own rendition of the events of Farrukh Siyar's reign, the bird of desire started fluttering once again in the hollow of our impassioned author's chest. Nūr al-Dīn presented himself before Yūsuf Khān,

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[220] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," ff. 4a–b.

and senior scholar and the aspiring historian developed a profound sympathy: a "conjunction of meaning", as Nūr al-Dīn has it. Yūsuf Khān encouraged our author, but warned him that ultimately no good would come of such work. Nevertheless, Nūr al-Dīn dove into the sea of effort, and hastened through the steppe of careful research (*tahaffus*), all in pursuit of one goal: the resurrection of the name of Jahāndār Shāh, which had been erased from the page of existence. To remember Jahāndār Shāh was to ensure that Nūr al-Dīn's own name would remain alive too, because our author had carried his head in the shadow of that emperor's benevolence, and even after his death Jahāndār Shāh's followers did not "release the hem of companionship from the grip of loyalty".[221]

In the pursuit of this task, Nūr al-Dīn spent some days in the city of Old Delhi, under the protection of that great Sufi Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāᵓ (d. 1325). Before he had begun his history, our author lived in the neighborhood of the Fārūqīs (*mahalla-yi fārūqīyān*), which had been populated with captives after the conquest of Burhānpūr by Emperor Akbar in 1600, and many other sorts of people besides. Perhaps Nūr al-Dīn, himself a Fārūqī, had relatives nearby; perhaps he simply felt comfortable amongst the people of his own *qaum*. Sadly, our author did not dwell on the history or society of the neighborhood; he merely practiced a form of quietism, turning away the eye of hope from the people of the world and pulling his feet into the skirt of resignation. The author's father, who had lately served the governor of Panjāb ᶜAbd al-Samad Khān, had then joined the victorious Husayn ᶜAlī Khān's entourage as it went to punish the refractory Rājpūt rājā Ajīt Singh. Having conveniently visited the shrine of the Sufi Muᶜīn al-Dīn Chishtī in Ajmer during this expedition, the aged shaykh had traveled back home to Multān with a convoy just as an uprising of the Sikhs erupted in the region.

[221] Ibid., f. 5b–6a.

From the perspective of the Panjāb's landed gentry such as Nūr al-Dīn, the Sikh leader performed all sorts of excesses on the poor and defenseless inhabitants of the region. The new vizier Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān deputed the capable ᶜAbd al-Samad Khān to suppress the Sikh insurgents, and other notables also joined in the imperial reaction. In those days, a patriotic love of the homeland (*hubb-i watan*) began to writhe in our author's mind, and a wish to serve his father also arose within him. Given his own military prowess and knowledge of the region, Nūr al-Dīn also joined the imperial force and headed to his homeland. At this point the author switches into a vivid first-person voice: "I returned after eleven years [to my homeland] and embraced my father. I found him paralyzed, and spent a month in managing the affairs of the military land-grant (*tīmārdārī*). On the 20th of the Second Month of Rabīᶜ, when my father's time had come, he passed away on the same sick-bed [on which he lay]." Continuing in this form, Nūr al-Dīn tells us he handed over the administration of capital and estate to other members of his family, and returned to Delhi with the love of his homeland still in his heart.

But on his arrival, our author found a much-disturbed city, in which the past and present discord between the vizier and the emperor had reached a boiling-point. Having retired from service and with no obvious prospects of employment, Nūr al-Dīn lived in mean and unbefitting quarters, and shared the city's state of dread and anxiety. On 11th of Zū l-Qiᶜda (November 8th, 1715), Nūr al-Dīn presented himself at the shrine of the sultān of the shaykhs, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāᵓ. He recited the *Fātiha* and earnestly beseeched the departed shaykh for his help. In response, Nūr al-Dīn heard the sound of the spirit of that great personage, filled with triumph: "Write history", said Nizām al-Din. At the end of the month, Nūr al-Dīn picked up his pen and began to write. In eighteen days he produced this history, which was a memento of himself. He wrote without complexity, but he didn't thread the pearls of secrets, as he said, on a threadbare style. He

refused to mention untrustworthy oral traditions, and he left his history as a memento for some friends who shared his temperament. But Nūr al-Dīn's motives were not those of a disinterested historian: for even though the author wrote in the reign of Farrukh Siyar, he pointedly ended his history with the death of Jahāndār Shāh and did not discuss the problems of the regime in power.[222]

Khush Hāl Chand's History of Muhammad Shāh

Khush Hāl Chand presents something of an enigma for the historian. Khush Hāl's history, variously called the *History of Bahādur Shāh,* (*Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī*), the *History of Muhammad Shāh* (*Tārīkh-i Muhammad Shāhī*) and the *History of the Rarities of the Age* (*Tārīkh-i Nādir al-Zamanī*) is to be found in many recensions, all of them incomplete, in many archives. But while Khush Hāl's history was clearly popular, the author appears to have received considerably less attention. Elliot and Dowson assert, presumably on the basis of internal evidence, that Khush Hāl was a bureaucrat ("writer") in the imperial Financial Office (*Dīwānī*). His father, Jīwan Rām, supposedly held other minor managerial roles in the administrations of Lahore and Delhi, as did his brother, Khūb Chand.[223] But besides this, nothing else about our author is known – even his date of death remains uncertain.[224]

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[222] Ibid., ff. 5a–6b; 61a–b.
[223] H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period: Ed. from the Posthumous Papers of H. M. Elliot*, 1867, Vol. VIII, 70; Several copies of this text have survived in India: A perfect copy of the Rarities of the Age was held at some point by the Nawwab `Ali Muhammad Khān of Jhajjar "which his heirs have lost". A smaller extract, belonging to the Library of the Nawwab of Tonk, is now held at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic and Persian Research Institute there. Other extracts are held at the Khuda Baksh Library in Patna, the Salar Jang Museum in Hyderabad, and the British Library in London. The longest continuous copy, missing an indeterminate number of pages at the beginning, is now held at the Staatsbibliothek Berlin. I use Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," n.d., Salar Jung Museum, AC 3632; Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Tonk)," n.d., Tonk Mss. Alwar 3385; Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Nādir al-Zamanī," n.d., Staatsbibliothek Berlin Ms. Or. Fol. 222 (Sprenger 495).
[224] William Irvine, "Two Proposed Corrections in the 'Catalogue of Persian MSS. in the British Museum' of Dr. C. Rieu," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (New Series)* 30, no. 02 (1898): 373–375.

Nevertheless, we know that Khush Hāl was writing during the reign of Muhammad Shāh, about twenty years after the events in question. That puts his recollections at some distance from the events of Jahāndār Shāh's reign. Khush Hāl's writing, as we shall see, is firmly within the genre of *tārīkh*: his text is designed to educate an audience versed with the world and codes of the bureaucracy about the past, and to provide the properly elegant codes of appreciation and understanding for it. At the same time, Khush Hāl presents a view that is closely aligned with the official perspective of the court, though it seems unlikely that the text was produced for the court. His reflections on the question of succession, therefore, maintain a stridently loyalist bent. At the same time, as we shall see, Khush Hāl is sharply critical of Jahāndār Shāh; but we cannot determine whether this can be taken to mean that Jahāndār Shāh received the official disapprobation of succeeding monarchs.

The Backdrop: Bahādur Shāh

In order to frame the story of Jahāndār Shāh, many historians of the period began with the death of Aurangzeb. All agreed that with his passing came the end of an epoch, and it was against the standard of this greatest of rulers that all subsequent emperors were to be judged and their actions evaluated. Consider the case of Irādat Khān. Despite having supported the prince Bīdār Bakht and his father Aᶜzam Shāh in the war of succession in 1707, our author appears to have approved of Bahādur Shāh, in part because he seems to have matched the high standard set by the previous emperor. The emperor is described as giving favors to high and low alike to the extent that his father Aurangzeb, the very shadow of God, was forgotten. Everyone copiously praised the new emperor for his generosity; in fact some people of weak faith, says Irādat Khān, claimed the emperor was behaving with excessive lavishness and liberality by way of slandering and seeking fault with him. But Bahādur Shāh honored and elevated every group and sect, so that

the learned and the wise, nobles and the mendicants all reached a degree never before witnessed or heard in the annals of time. Like his brother, Aᶜzam Shāh, the emperor was extremely brave, but without the former's paranoic dread of any person or matter. His four sons, endowed with large entourages and armies, were always at his back, yet the emperor never knew whether they were present or absent. Nor did he care if the great nobles attempted to develop close alliances with his children. He did not restrict the movements of the offspring of his slain brethren, permitting them to hunt with him with bows and muskets.

Now Irādat Khān paints a strikingly visual and deeply significant portrait of the court: at the center sat the emperor; at his right hand and therefore at the place of highest honor, the sits the Prince Muᶜizz al-Dīn (later to become the ill-fated emperor Jahāndār Shāh) with his three sons; on his left hand sits Prince ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn. Others follow on either hand in descending order of significance, including the (standing) children of the defeated rulers of Bijapur and Hyderabad. Prince Muᶜizz al-Dīn was clearly the preferred successor to the throne, as Irādat Khān suggests with his addition of the appellation "Eldest Son" (*mihīn pūr-i khilāfat*) to the prince's name.

Irādat Khān continues in his reminiscences of the departed emperor, now focusing on the question of Bahādur Shāh's piety. We are informed that despite the glory of his court, Bahādur Shāh wore the garb of dervishes and mendicants (*darwīshāna wa ghurba*) in his private quarters. An even more striking instance of the emperor's piety and humility was that he did not have the hauteur and aloofness to pray privately, far from the madding crowd. Instead, insists Irādat Khān, the emperor offered his prayers with the community "always and every time". Often, on Feast Days (*aᶜyād*) and Fridays, the emperor arrived on a pony and eloquently and accurately recited the Friday Sermon and he always personally led the congregation. He read the Qurᵓān so properly and accurately that the eloquent ones amongst the Arabs were astounded. He never

missed his late night prayers, no doubt because he spent his nocturnal hours in prayer and worship. The beginning of the night was spent in conversation with dervishes and religious scholars, and he himself interpreted the meanings of the Prophet's sayings. In fact, the emperor was a scholar of the Prophet's oral tradition and was extremely proficient at its discursive analysis (*muhaddisī būd ki dar martaba-yi ijtihād tawān guft*), and a legal scholar fully versed in the part and whole of traditions, contradictions, rebuttal and validation of all the legal systems (*mazāhib*). In these affairs he was so perfectly knowledgeable of every intricacy that in the matter of his inquisitive and revisionary scholarship (*ijtihādāt*), no jurisprudent dared to contest his judgments. "Some bigoted and evil-natured people merely introduced doubts about the confusion or intermingling of the religious path (*mazhab*) in his belief," says the khān, "but I have listened to him extensively, and heaven forbid that this be the case. For diligent seekers of the perfect and balanced truth he was brighter than the sun, and whatever he said was profoundly true, and what can one say of the degrees of his inquiries and investigations and scrutiny."[225]

In Irādat Khān's account, Bahādur Shāh was in the midst of reigning contentedly over his pacified subjects when fate drew a new pattern and time cast a fresh dye on his life. A poison like that of a murderous serpent fell upon his heart and his brain. "It is said," reports the khān, "that it struck such a heavy and piercing blow upon his vitals that there was no time to treat or diagnose or perceive the disease." In this rendering, the emperor fainted successively and ultimately died on the 21st of Muharram 1124 (February 29th, 1712).[226]

[225] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 77–80; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 48–50.
[226] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 105–6; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 64.

Jahāndār Shāh's Rise to Power

It is with Irādat Khān that we see the inauguration of a long and rich tradition of heaping contumely on the unfortunate Jahāndār Shāh. In sharp contrast to his saintly father, Irādat Khān represents Jahāndār Shāh as an utterly evil and dissipated ruler: in fact, the flaws in his character became manifest as soon as Bahādur Shāh died. When the emperor fell unconscious, the women of his establishment commenced to mourn and wail. Both Muᶜizz al-Dīn and ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn were both present near their father and approached his body. Irādat Khān was not present at the scene but reports it is said that ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn thrust his hand out towards his father's pillow and pulled something out: an ornamented dagger with an admirable water-pattern on the blade (*ābdār*) that was always kept beneath the sheet of the emperor's bed. ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn, according to Irādat Khān, wanted to see the jewels and the quality of the dagger's steel and so pulled it out of its sheath. Considering the exigencies of the time, the unarmed Jahāndār Shāh became acutely suspicious of his brother, and, "in a breach of good manners, astounded and senseless", departed with an unseemly rapidity. So great, indeed, was the prince's haste, that he performed the two signal tropic acts of dishonor: he neglected to put on his slippers, and he struck his head against the ropes of the tent, causing his turban to fall completely off onto the ground. The significance of these gestures can hardly be overstated, for to be seen bareheaded and barefoot was a mark of profound dishonor: instead of recovering these items himself, Jahāndār Shāh sent a servant to get them, and returned to his own house.[227]

This classic tale of predestination indicates clearly to the reader the fact that Jahāndār Shāh was neither fit nor fated to rule. Within the logic of the story, such as it is, we may nevertheless

[227] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 106–7; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 64–5. The shoe incident is attributed to ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn in Khafī Khān's *Muntakhab al-lubāb.* See V.2: 283.

wonder whether ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn's idle appreciation of a dagger by his father's body also construed a breach of etiquette. At any rate, Irādat Khān reports the story as hearsay, for he himself only saw Jahāndār Shāh leaving for his own quarters on an elephant. The khān himself pulled aside to avoid a sudden or unexpected meeting, for, as he now informs us, in truth he had a connection (*rabt b'il-fiᶜl*) with ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn. And so although Jahāndār Shāh sent a mounted mace-bearer (*yasāwal*) seeking Irādat Khān's presence, our author declined to attend.

At any rate, Jahāndār Shāh won the competition without Irādat Khān's help: he found relief from the business of his three brothers due to the efforts of the amīr al-umarāᵓ Zū 'l-fiqār Khān, and so ascended the throne free of fear and anxiety. But now the khān presents us with a long causative sentence that sets the tone for what follows:

Because he was an utterly negligent and inattentive (*ghāfil*), body-worshipping, ease-seeking man, and imprudently unaware of the affairs of independent rulership; and [because] he had in great quantity the base and worthless qualities that princes must not [have], and which had not emerged in his ancestors, he trifled away the entire hereditary empire (*saltanat*) of Hindūstān in the terror (*sharīk*) of a singer.[228]

Jahāndār Shāh, who had attracted no known negative commentary during several decades of rule and activity, is now described as a particularly vile specimen of the Mughal princely lineage. These accusations are deployed in order to explain a particular fact, which is the "trifling away" of empire. And this happens in the thrall of a person described with a contempt so great that Irādat Khān appears to forebear using her name: Lāl Kunwar. In other words, the perceived ascendancy of the "singer" can only be explained by a deep wellspring of error and weakness in the character of the prince himself. What will happen to Jahāndār Shāh, we sense, will not be the

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[228] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 129; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 80.

result of tactical error or of chameleon-like variations of fate. The prince's end is determined by the deficiencies of his own character, which severally lead to one damning endpoint: the love of an inferior woman.

While Irādat Khān tells us nothing of Jahāndār Shāh's early life, Nūr al-Dīn begins with the emperor's birth because the brief reign of the emperor is the sole focus of Nūr al-Dīn's recollections. Thus we learn that Jahāndār Shāh was born in Ramzān of 1071 (1660), the first offspring of a royal (*khāss*) child of Aurangzeb. This special occasion merited a large and joyous celebration, and Emperor Aurangzeb himself gave the infant toys made of gold and silver with which imperial children played. At the age of eight, the emperor personally took him to his side (*gami dar pahlū nishānīda*) and engaged him busily in that most important art of archery. This continued until the age of fourteen, during which time the emperor frequently tested him in his arts and skills. He was given precedence over royal offspring, and he faced and confronted (*muwāhija*) his contemporaries. Now an adult, the young Muᶜizz al-Dīn participated in the wars of the Deccan and performed many a manly feat against the Marathas. When Bahādur Shāh contested the throne at Aurangzeb's death, he and his brother defeated a large group of Afghāns near Kandahar when they had nothing more than a small contingent of light cavalry skirmishers (*dūrbāsh*). In doing so, Nūr al-Dīn says, he displayed the valor which was the specialty and hereditary trait of the family of Tīmūr.[229]

Like Irādat Khān, Nūr al-Dīn had picked the wrong horse in the battle for the throne in 1712. Nūr al-Dīn had sided with the doomed prince Rafīᶜ al-Shāᶜn – a fact that no amount of proven bravery would erase. Now, Nūr al-Dīn was at odds and ends. The new Vizier, Zū `l-fiqār Khān, proved to be a disappointment. Zū `l-fiqār Khān had himself once sided with Rafīᶜ al-Shaᵓn, and

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[229] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," ff. 7b–8a.

considered him to have all precedent among the brothers. Yet he now never asked about the condition or well-being of our author, and the other companions of the murdered princelings were given a clear and summary dismissal. If this was indeed the case, it may have been a severe mistake on the new vizier's part. The defeated nobility did not lay down their arms and submit to the new rule if their perquisites and incomes were threatened. Instead, they headed to the service of the nearest possible contender for the throne. So it is that Nūr al-Dīn tells us that two or three thousand old and loyal servants left the court and headed east, to Bihar and Bengal.[230] Nūr al-Dīn himself remained in the imperial camp, in the service of his father who was linked to Jahāndār Shāh's favored governor of Panjāb, ᶜAbd al-Samad Khān. But with something of a grudge against a regime that did not favor him in the manner he believed he deserved.

Writing many years later, Khush Hāl presents a lyrical prologue to the on the rule of Jahāndār Shāh with a long disquisition on the vagaries of fate. Evoking Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī's much-admired *Jangnāma*, Khush Hāl presents his reader with the proper way to reflect on the strife of imperial succession: one, we are told, is firmly established on the throne of rule (*kāmrawāī*), while another is paraded through the streets and Bazars of infamy; one goes to the street-market of the mud of ruin but creates a flower-lined promenade (*gulgasht*) on the avenue of happiness, while another is cast out of stupidity and idiocy and thrown to the bottom of the sea of evil and tumult; one emerges from the dungeon of barbarity into the pavilion of the sagacity of rulership, while another is hurled out of the fortress of favor and wisdom into the deep extremities of contempt. In fact, on the day of this event, the following verse came to our young author's mind: one wears the cap of happiness; another the woolen cloth of complaint. Elite contempt for woolen garments aside, our author tells us in a more prosaic vein that the new emperor ascended

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[230] Ibid., ff. 35b–36a.

the throne of Hindūstān at the age of fifty-two on the first day of Rabīᶜ al-Awwal 1124AH (April 8th, 1712), and according to the rules of that exalted family, his name was struck on coin and proclaimed loudly in the sermon. Zū `l-fiqār Khān was granted the high rank of the viziership, and of him a dear friend quipped, "The emperorship suits Jahāndār Shāh well / And the amīr al-umarāᵓ seeks its gifts".[231]

Khush Hāl was young at the time that Jahāndār Shāh came to power. But he recalls it as a time of widespread celebration, as nobles jockeyed for titles and favors from the new emperor and his vizier, Zū `l-fiqār Khān. The author's father, no doubt among many others, sought favor with the new vizier by offering a chronogram. Our author too represents himself as very favorably disposed towards the vizier and the emperor, presenting verses on the strategic acumen that led to the elimination of three contenders in a single battlefield (*yak sar-zamīn*). As was proper, exalted noblemen and commoners received appropriate increases in their ranks and military assignations. ᶜAlī Murād Khān, the imperial foster-brother, was granted the title of Kokaltash Khān, and Khʷāja Husayn Khān became the khān-i Daurān ("Khān of the Age"). A suitable chronogram was found for this event too, noting that Khān Husayn was like the Haydar (ᶜAlī) of the Age, blessed with victory like the victory at Khabayr (an early Islamic victory over Jewish defenders near Madīna); and that of this prosperous year people said that the khān destroyed three ranks. The chronogram's celebratory tone is left unmarred because it delicately refrains from mentioning that these ranks were in fact those of not common rebels but imperial princes. But at any rate, the victims of this wholesale fratricide were left unmourned at court insofar as

[231] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 65–8.

Jahāndār Shāh's followers gained in power and wealth, and the emperor seized the booty of his former competitors.[232]

The Reign of Jahāndār Shāh: Lāl Kunwar and *Kalāwant*s

Whether or not our historians were agreed on the rectitude of Jahāndār Shāh's rise, all agreed that things began to go quickly downhill once the emperor was established on the throne. The cause of this decline, all claimed, was the emperor's crazed love for the singer Lāl Kunwar, her great power in the affairs of the state, and the irruption of her low-born clan into the exalted ranks of the state's nobility.

The emperor debauched

For Irādat Khān, the result of this love was that the hearts of the houseborn servants of the dynasty (such as himself) were rendered into kabābs, a common stylized metaphor that evokes profound discomfiture through images of pureeing, skewering, and roasting. These heart-rending scenes of the dishonoring of elites were most directly due to the arrival of the tribe and caste (*aqwām wa qabāᵓil wa ashāᵓir*) of "that singer" into absolute dominion within the empire, the granting of elevated military commanderships and exalted titles to them. Furthermore, these indigent minstrels *were allowed to choose* (*intikhāb mī-burdand*) fertile grants of land from the imperial reserve (*khālisa*). The khān's verbiage here suggests on the one hand that the ordinary processes of state were completely subverted, for land held in the imperial reserve contributed to the emperor's personal income and was not meant to be distributed willy-nilly to other office-holders, and grants certainly not meant to be selected by the grantee. But at the same time, these "singers" were not as naïve as one would imagine, for they were able to supposedly access the bureaucracy of imperial landholding and revenue, and to identify the "choicest" (*jīd*) parcels of

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[232] Ibid., 68–9.

land for themselves. Besides all of this, an annual budget of twenty million rupees – an enormous sum, if we recall the prices of everyday items from the previous section – was assigned to "that singer", excepting expenses on her clothing and the assembly of her retinue (*daulat*). She traveled by cart (*rath*), and the emperor eschewed the appropriate litter or elephant or horse to instead accompany his lady-friend in that demeaning vehicle, pulled about by cows.

At this point we encounter a revealing textual variance in Irādat Khān's account. The Salar Jung Manuscript, supposedly the autographed original, tells us that in this shameful vehicle the emperor and his consort wandered about the markets and purchased cucumbers and gourds.[233] And indeed what could be more painful to imagine than the lofty figure of the emperor haggling with the foul-mouthed purveyors of vegetables like a common domestic in the streets of the city? From this image of imperial degradation, the khān moves to the emperor's adventures with his consort in the cart. The printed edition of the text now enters into a long and interesting digression completely absent from the Salar Jung Text, but present in the English version. Now we are told that the emperor and Lāl Kunwar wandered about the markets "and Chandni Chawk", where they purchased jewels and clothes and greens, even cucumbers and gourds. And it is at this point that a later hand appears to find the perfect venue to add a touch of embellishment and detail local to the city itself, for we are now informed of Zahrā, who is identified by the Urdu word "kanjadhī" (کنجڑی) – a seller of fruit, and a word quite disconsonant with the Arabicized high Persian of Irādat Khān. Lāl Kunwar, now freely named and racily identified as the paramour (*ma*ᶜ*shūqa*) of the emperor and Zahrā were almost the same for the emperor, and so the latter also reached a high rank and land-assignation as did her relatives. Zahrā, in this telling, then becomes a center of power in her own right, and began to dispense her

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[233] Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 134–5.

patronage. At this, the covetous and imitative ones (*harīs*) amongst the exalted abandoned their name and honor crowded in their litters before Zahrā's shop in the hope gaining the patronage of that "whore" (*qahba*). In fact the crowds outside Zahrā's humble shop were greater than in the imperial audience so that the public wayfare was completely blocked. "Because the bitch was naturally copious," writes the interpolator acidly, "the seekers were also fulfilled."[234]

Meanwhile, the emperor's wanderings with his lover in the alleys of the city reached the point that day and night both of them went to the cattle market (*nakkhās*), "which is more than two *kuroh* [~4 miles] from the fort", to consume beef stew (*nihārī).* Here they visited the renowned cattle-dealer and cook named Bhatiyārī ("Victualer") and an acquaintance of the aforementioned Zahrā. Emperor, consort and friend enjoyed this plebian fare so much that they lavishly rewarded the cattle-dealer, and spent all their days in gardens in that direction from the city, returning home drunk in the middle of the night, where the emperor of Hindūstān passed out in a stupor. Scott's translation has a slightly different story, in that the entire party went to a female distiller's house, became uproariously drunk and granted the woman a village as fief. Having done so, the party dispersed, with Lāl Kunwar taken to her own house but the emperor was left abandoned in the cart.

While the original Salar Jung manuscript has no mention of a Zahrā or the adventures in the cattle-market, all three versions are broadly agreed about what happened next: the carter, who also drank with the emperor and his consort, didn't pay any attention to what he was doing. He then took the cart to the cow-stables, which are "near the old ʿīdgāh and a *kuroh* [~2 miles] from the fort" – with the unconscious emperor in the back. At dawn, about the time of the *sahar*

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[234] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 130; The author uses the obscure term "Qanjaq", which is absent from the standard dictionaries but is stated to mean "a canine bitch" in a note in the Akbarnama. See Abū al-Fażl ibn Mubārak, *The Akbar Nāmā of Abu-L-Fazl: (History of the Reign of Akbar Including an Account of His Predecessors)* (Ess Ess Publications, 1977), 917.

prayers, people started worrying about the emperor's disappearance, prolonged even by his own libidinous standards. When Lady Lāl Kunwar was asked where he was, she replied vaguely that perhaps he was still in the cart. People ran to it and found the emperor indeed still fast asleep within it. The cart was taken to the fort, where it was let in after the requisite investigation by the fort commander and the superintendent.[235]

There are several striking features in this interpolation, not least the remarkable emergence of a voice that uses a vocabulary far less exalted than Irādat Khān's own verbiage. The notion of the emperor of Hindūstān proceeding in a cart to consume *nihārī*, that most plebian of foods, does not seem to have occurred to the exalted nobleman. But the nameless interpolator was clearly familiar with the geography and attractions of Delhi in the eighteenth century: he knew the distances to the sorts of places, such as a cattle-market, to which elites may not have frequently ventured. In his use of the anecdote of the emperor wolfing down *nihārī*, then, we see two imperatives at work. The first is to demean Jahāndār Shāh by showing him in the willing company of the lowest and most despised people such as butchers; in this context, we recall that the variant translated into English by Scott mentions not a victualer but a female distiller who is rewarded by the emperor – and distillers were held in similar contempt by more respectable folk. But at the same time, the interpolator knows, and cannot resist embellishing the narrative with the pleasures of the steaming stew of cow's head and feet.

The emperor's drunken collapse in the cart has more obvious import. In order to understand it, we must return to the image of the fort, which functions as normal until its administrators begin to realize that the Jahāndār Shāh has disappeared. Now begins a frenetic search, and the foolish emperor is found in the stables. But when the cart is taken to the fort, the fort's administrators

[235] Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 134–5; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 81–2; Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 129–31.

check it diligently and then let it back in with its prized cargo. The contrast could not be more jarring: an emperor who has literally descended into the "sleep of negligence" stands aside from the empire's loyal servants, who continue to diligently and routinely perform their tasks. We might contrast this image with the description in the account of Bībī Juliyānā, which tells us that Bībī Juliyānā's special perquisite was unrestricted access to the Red Fort. The fort commander, therefore, was merely doing his fulfilling his duties. While the empire functions without its head, it lies beyond Irādat Khān's horizon of consciousness to imagine this to be the normal or ideal state of political organization. But neither did the khān think that Jahāndār Shāh's ineptitude had caused the empire's terminal decline: the normal and proper functions of the empire could and should be resumed, but under new management.

If the emperor was passively at fault, Lāl Kunwar actively committed outrages in Irādat Khān's jaundiced eyes. We are told that she organized a system of procuring women (*bāzār-i zanāna*) for the harem in the central square of the city. This place, called the "center of the square of Delhi" in the Salar Jung manuscript is identified with greater precision by the anonymous interpolator as the square of the Moonlight Avenue (*ᶜain-i chāndnī chawk-i shāhr-i dihlī*) in the later printed text. Here, the women and daughters of Hindus of the neighborhood, and of the craftsmen used to be selected for the imperial seraglio. Such public implications of sexual debauchery were regarded with disapproval. Higher powers were also offended when Lāl Kunwar and the emperor began the practice of stripping down and bathing together, hidden only by a single cloth, in the pool (*chashma*) near the shrine of the Chishtī Sūfī Nasīr al-Dīn (the later variant refers to this site by its more popular name, "The Lamp of Delhi", *Chirāgh Dihlī*). Emperor and concubine bathed in the miraculous waters of this deeply holy site so that the sufi (d. 1356) would grant them a son. As an aside, the khān records a vicious pun which pivots on

the dual meaning of the word *ākhir* as "best" or "last": "They say," he notes acerbically, "that the best (or last) week was the very one in which his work was finished and he bathed in his own blood."[236]

But earthly retribution may have been a rather more proximate cause of Jahāndār Shāh's death than divine intervention. One source of this appears to have been Lāl Kunwar's tumultuous irruption into the settled order of the harem, and her conflict with the formidable daughter of Aurangzeb and great-aunt of Jahāndār Shāh, the Princess Zīb al-Nisāᶜ. Irādat Khān tells us that Lāl Kunwar used words and behaved in a manner that had never been employed by any riff-raff in front of a great person with the princess. In fact, she expected the princess to salute and prostrate humbly before her. Here again, the crucial symbolic significance of the gift of food is underscored as we learn that Lāl Kunwar prevented the emperor from eating food prepared under the supervision of his great-aunt, restraining him by the hand and telling him, "I don't want you to sit here and eat anything." When the princess heard that her great-nephew the emperor had indeed rejected her food in order to placate his lady love, she said ominously that a fatal calamity had befallen Jahāndār Shāh. While the princess' intentions about the sharing of food are vaguely alluded to in the Salar Jang manuscript, the later printed Persian text explicitly states that the emperor had been invited to dine with the princess, and his refusal caused the princess to marvel at the power of God that apparently compelled men to destroy themselves. And the khān makes the importance of these elite machinations clear, as he now rhetorically inquires, "How much does one have to describe these negligences and errors in order to reveal the state of the empire (*saltanat*) and the conditions of the world in the same way?"

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[236] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 130–31; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 134–5.

The health of the empire was represented in the actions of the court. By upending the protocols of the imperial establishment, Jahāndār Shāh and his consort threw the proper order of governance into tumult. The giving of food, then as now, served to make the hierarchy of the family coherent and the language of power intelligible. To feed, as in the case of Bībī Juliyānā, was to exercise a claim to authority. It is in this light that we must see the gravity of Jahāndār Shāh's rejection of his great-aunt's home-cooked meal, which our observers – both Irādat Khān and the later interpolator who clarified his words – thought was a representation of the upstart singer's insolence and transgressiveness. Lāl Kunwar's conflict with the old ladies of the harem, a center of power unto themselves, destabilized the emperor's network of support at the very beginning of his reign. To go further, Jahāndār Shāh's inability to manage intra-harem conflict, in contrast to Bruit's rendition of Shāh Jahān's anti-Portuguese operations to avenge the slight to his own aunt's honor, serves as one more indicator of the emperor's general haplessness.[237] Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that for Irādat Khān, writing at the end of his life under Farrukh Siyar's dispensation, these anecdotes did not point to the imminent dissolution of the a Mughal political order. But Irādat Khān opens the narrative possibility of the violent and unseemly displacement of the reigning emperor by an upstart nephew. It is critical to note that this act of narrative inauguration does not precede the actual overthrow of Jahāndār Shāh. This is instead an ex-post justification for the displacement of the reigning ruler.

Musicians out of control

Writing at about the same time, Nūr al-Dīn also had choice words to offer about Jahāndār Shāh's mad love for Lāl Kunwar. We are told that while on the banks of the river Sutlej in the early days of Rabīᶜ al-Awwal 1124 (May, 1712), Jahāndār Shāh gave Lāl Kunwar the title of "Imtiyāz

[237] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 131; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 135–6; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 83.

Mahal Begum". He granted her jewels from his own treasures, as well as those seized from his dead brothers, approximating the fantastic sum of 15 crore (150 million) rupees. The emperor also permitted her relatives to play the ceremonial music, a right reserved for the highest of the empire's grandees. Her brothers received the titles of Niᶜmat Khān (last held by the recently deceased satirist Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī) and Nāmdār Khān respectively.

As if Lāl Kunwar were not bad enough, there was also her tribe of musicians (*kalānwatān, kalāwantān*). While Irādat Khān, himself no fan of Jahāndār Shāh, barely mentions the musicians, Nūr al-Dīn represents this group as having seized power and captured the state itself. Nūr al-Dīn's masterful description in prose deserves close attention. In our author's recollection, these musicians wandered about drunkenly, carrying the instruments of their trade and the *duwālā*[238] flower in their hands adorned with imperial jewels. They brought only evil to the people of God (*khalq-i Allāh*) with perfect pride and arrogance. Every evening, writes Nūr al-Dīn, several thousand musicians would gather at the emperor's court, and they stripped and danced in a world of drunkenness. The emperor and Lāl Kunwar, who was often ecstatic in her intoxication, were known to join them in this pastime. In the midst of their wild drinking bouts (*bi-shikan,* lit. "Break! Break!"), the musicians were apt to cry out loudly and to go so far to treat the emperor's person roughly, sometimes even striking him on the head. Lest the reader grow suspicious of this amazing account, Nūr al-Dīn hastened to add that the emperor, who had been a wise and experienced administrator, and who had seen the revolutions of the ages from the eras of his father and grandfather, accepted and even approved of the breaches of etiquette and disproportionate acts (*bī-andāmī-hā*) of such base rabble. Not only did the emperor not pull his lips back from such forbidden activities, but he prided himself in participating in them. And

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[238] I have been unable to locate this plant, which Steingass identifies as a "sweet-smelling creeper".

when he arose from these parties, taking the hauteur and dignity of the ruler and hurling it into the archway of insult, he proceeded debauching with the musicians until they reached his private quarters where further rewards were distributed.[239]

Among these rewards were the mansions of Mahābat Khān and ᶜAlī Mardān Khān, which were supposedly turned over to the musicians. Zū `l-fiqār Khān received the buildings of Shāyista Khān Aurangzebī, and Kokaltāsh Khān those of the late vizier Jaᶜfar Khān. All the dependents and followers of these people, whinges our envious but deprived author, spread the carpet of ease, giving themselves up to liveliness and cheer, and bringing song and exhilaration to such a pitch and frenzy (*jūsh o khurūsh*), that in all the alleyways almost no sounds reached the ear but for the tunes of the singers and the "Hai! Hui!" of drunkards. If any other noises were heard, these were usually the lamentations and cries of those troubled by the oppression-worshipping musicians. These injured souls wandered aimlessly – fleeing with only a little life left and a little property – with bleeding hearts and weeping eyes. But while their cries reached the skies, no one ran to another's call. The prohibitions of the law were completely ignored, and everyone from emperor to soldier and from beggar to prime minister became more and more audacious in cheering each other on with the wine of error until they were rendered drunk and senseless, and night and day came to boil and roar with shamelessness.

For the reader stunned and dazed by this description, Nūr al-Dīn finally reveals his point. While the emperor became nothing more than the chess-piece of the king in the hands of the musicians, imperial awe and majesty began to evaporate from the hearts of high and low alike. So while Jahāndār Shāh remained engrossed in his debauchery and confident in his two-day reign, numerous people wandered without purpose in the steppe of futility. The musicians' disrespect

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[239] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," ff. 37b–38a.

towards the rulers and the oppression of the people reached such a point that the goblet of Jahāndār Shāh's rule was poured out, and the zephyr of advancement turned into the breeze of disaster, and the sword of retribution was pulled out of the sheath of the ages. This disaster, of course, was the coming of the news of Farrukh Siyar's mobilization in the east. Now elites and commoners alike sprang awake from their dreams of error, but it was too late.[240]

Unlike Irādat Khān, who stressed the personal debauchery of the emperor because of his love for the courtesan, Nūr al-Dīn represented an institutional collapse of the empire at the hands of the musicians. But Nūr al-Dīn was writing from the perspective of the unsettled days of Farrukh Siyar's reign which was a time that Irādat Khān probably did not live to witness. Nūr al-Dīn, despite his claims of being a partisan of the dethroned emperor, had nothing but the strongest disapprobation for Jahāndār Shāh's behavior. Yet Nūr al-Dīn does not reproduce the story of Jahāndār Shāh bathing with his consort near the shrine of Nasir al-Dīn Chirāgh Dihlavī – a site not without import for an author who placed such great importance on the shrine and person of Chirāgh Dihlī's spiritual preceptor, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāᶜ. The emperor's religious transgressions were non-existent or insignificant for Nūr al-Dīn, and nor was he certain that Jahāndār Shāh's replacement had resolved the problems at the center. The issue for the author was that the emperor was completely deprived of his own agency: he had become a "chess-piece of the king" in the hands of new, more powerful forces. To represent this weakness, Nūr al-Dīn turned to an image of the personal moral feebleness of Jahāndār Shāh. If the emperor's sovereignty lay in his body and blood, the musicians performed the cardinal sin of touching it. Again, we know that Nūr al-Dīn had already witnessed the humiliation exercised on Jahāndār

[240] Ibid., ff. 38b–39b.

Shāh's body, and perhaps that wrought on Farrukh Siyar. Events themselves had made it possible to imagine the imperial head desecrated by the musician's blows. The body politic would follow.

The sickness of love

Writing two decades after the events in question, Khush Hāl took a more sanguine view of Jahāndār Shāh's reign. We recall that the author's father had supported the new dispensation and sought its favors. As junior members of the bureaucracy, Khush Hāl and his father had neither the reason nor the place be personally unhappy about the turn of high imperial politics. But fate itself had turned against the emperor, so that everything that happened in this time of adverse beginning and difficult end was the cause of a hundred thousand dishonors and an equal number of failures. The first event of this sort, according to Khush Hāl, was the imprisoning of the group of princes and royal offspring, which was contrary to the established rules (*qāʾida*) of that noble family. Sultān ʿĀlī Tabār, the third son of Shāh ʿĀlī Jāh, and Sultān Humāyūn Bakht were blinded, lest the temperaments of the exalted turn towards a preference for themselves. The contrast with Irādat Khān's glowing court-portrait of Emperor Bahādur Shāh, surrounded without fear by his extended family, is obvious. Jahāndār Shāh's actions against possible contenders appears to have been treated with some revulsion by his elite subjects.[241]

But much more important for Khush Hāl was the fact that Jahāndār Shāh had been incapacitated by love, every breath of which was elevated within the emperor's constitution; love, which permitted a hundred thousand deceptions, and which unhinged him enough to issue fickle orders. Yet love was not an unambiguous evil, as Khush Hāl demonstrated with an extensive digression. The derangements of this passion were evidenced in the story of a famous lover in Baghdad, smitten by love for the tropically Christian other; a love that renders one an Infidel on the

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[241] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 69.

Muslim way; of love that cannot be cured save by death; and how it has ever been thus with Laylī and Majnūn, with Khusraw and Shīrīn, and Hasan and Gauhar, to name only a few.

Returning eventually to the matter at hand, we are told that it was just as this with the caliph of the age, Jahāndār Shāh: for some years previously he had fastened his heart to the plait of his beloved, a daughter of performers (*kalānwant*), seated on the veiled elephant-mount (*haudaj*) of sincere attachment and supported by special favor. And it was for the desirable blandishments and coquetry of this person that the besotted ruler sacrificed the empire of Hindūstān. Besides the goblet of wine and the display of his lover's beauty, the emperor gave attention to nothing else, and all the rules and orders and give-and-take of imperial affairs, and other matters in which obedience was necessary were all given over to this woman. In this way nothing was left of the emperorship (*saltanat*) with Jahāndār Shāh except its name, and Lāl Kunwar traveled on a camel in the imperial way, accompanied by a royal parasol and imperial drums.

Khush Hāl now presents us with some instances of the monumental follies that Jahāndār Shāh embarked upon in his impassioned state. The emperor ordered the deforestation of all the hunting-places from August Fort to the World-Revealing Chases (*rimna-yi jahān-numa*). Marked for destruction were the tall trees which held their heads up to the very top of the dome of the sky, and which offered refuge and asylum to world-traversing travelers and the birds of soaring flight and melodious speech. Due to this order, a calamity befell the trees in the entire city of Delhi and its environs. The trees which had been planted on either side of the canal by previous great emperors threw their heads down, and, weeping, found their existence terminated and fell into the dirt of disgrace.

Irvine, recounting this story, thinks it to be "a rare instance of an Indian taking notice of the beauty of natural objects".[242] But surely there is more to it than that. Why Jahāndār Shāh would give such an order remains unexplained, and the image of deforestation does not match other tropes of Jahāndār Shāh's excesses. Nor, it must be added, does this calamity find mention in Irādat Khān's memoirs, though that contemporary of Jahāndār Shāh could hardly be expected to pass up an opportunity to mock or belittle his deposed ruler.[243]

Other anecdotes are easier to interpret. In a story that approximates Irādat Khān's description of the emperor and his consort's lewd behavior at the pool near the shrine of Chirāgh Dihlī, we are told that Jahāndār Shāh visited the little mica hill near the shrine of Qutb al-Dīn where the children of commoners used to play (cf. "Religion and Popular Culture", Section I) and "due to the shining external beauty of his beloved object" (*az bahr-i khātir-i janāna*), he did exactly as the children did, and so frolicked for a while. Then we are treated to the same story of the emperor and his beloved seated in the same cart, drunk out of their minds, with the ruler eventually passing out in the stables. Everyone was profoundly astonished when the emperor was finally recovered, and of this it said that

> The drunkard is so happy that he says on the Day of Judgment
> Who am I? And who are you? And what's this place?

Here we see a slight variation on Irādat Khān's original anecdote, though with the main themes intact: the emperor, in his love of Lāl Kunwar disports himself in signally *déshabillé* fashion, ominously within the vicinity of a very sacred resting-place. Later, both figures publicly consume alcohol while mounted on the unbefitting ride of a bullock-cart, and the emperor is left unconscious in the stables, where he remains until his panicked servants recover him. In other

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[242] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 194.
[243] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 72–3.

words, the functionaries of state function on, while the ruler makes himself irrelevant: for he has literally fallen into the slumber of negligence in the corner of humiliation.[244]

It was at this time too that the emperor decided to embark on a costly spree of organizing illuminations for the city. He ordered imperial administrators to organize these lamps at the base of the fort facing the river, from the mansion of Raja Jaswant to that of Sayyid Salabat Khān at a length of some five or six *kurohs*. As was customary, thousands lamps were lit in tubes and on sticks and mounted on the walls and the Three-Arch Gate of the fort, and so many fireworks and illuminations were performed that it was as if a fiery horse had descended upon the earth and lit up the world. This display of "burning Lanka" (*hangāma-yi lankā sukhtan*) continued for several days, and the people of discernment perceived that this was a bad omen for the ruler. The result of this wanton consumption was that the price of lantern oil rose so that a rupee purchased one-and-a-half measures. Because bitter butter wasn't good enough (*wafā nakarda*), they used yellow butter and that became expensive too. In fact all foodstuffs became expensive, including grain, which was to be had for twenty-eight measures a rupee. So one day when the emperor and his consort were sitting to enjoy the spectacle from the window of appearance (*jharoka*) of the octagonal tower (*burj-i musamman*), they noticed porters carrying a load of grain on their head by the water below. The emperor hailed one of them and asked him, "How much did you give for this grain?"

The other replied, "Five or six rupees."

"Praise be to God!", exclaimed the emperor. "It's still so cheap! God Willing, I'll ensure for this price one will be able to buy only five or six measures."

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[244] Ibid., 73.

Now, wonders Khush Hāl, what remains to be said of the affairs of property and state on these pages? For wise and virtuous readers it is evident that "from one word the reality all around is obvious". But this story presents a classic literary inversion, since as we have seen previously, one of the chief normative expectations of the ruler was to manifestly ensure the abundant supply of the materials of life at reasonable prices. For Khush Hāl, the emperor didn't merely fail to manage the economy of the empire to the satisfaction of its weakest inhabitants: he caused a painful increase in prices out of sheer spite. His lavishness – the use of food-grade "yellow butter" for frivolous fireworks – was the direct cause of the misery of his subjects.[245]

Khush Hāl visualized otherworldly consequences for such mean-spirited and unbefitting earthly actions. The divine avenger provided every person with just desserts for his actions and enveloped him in the gifts of the two worlds – this transitory and the other permanent one – throwing him down from the seat of grandeur and favor into the dust of humiliation and failure. This general principle was especially applied to the exalted group of the world's rulers and commanders, who received the fruits of their actions (*sumra-yi aᶜmāl*) by their own hands. This logic of punishment for one's misdeeds emanating in one's own hands, for Khush Hāl, was evident in the last, most charged anecdote of the misguided emperor. One day, we are told, the emperor and his love, having abandoned their religion and faith, were happily enjoying a boat ride in the river. When they sighted some boats full of humans (*adamiyān*) crossing the river, his lover and boon-companion proffered the fact that "this helpless one had never seen a boat full of humans capsize". This one gesture had its effect and the imperial servants rapidly received an order that they did not have the temerity to disobey. When the boat full of innocent people was struck in the water, a rare state passed over those poor ones, exactly as:

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[245] Ibid., 74–5.

All sorts of words are uttered when one's life leaves the body
I saw with my own eyes that my life was departing

In sinking that boat, Khush Hāl pointedly wrote, "The emperor and his consort cast the boat of their own wishes and desires into the whirlpool of humiliation and sent the favor that accompanied their rule to the court of evil."[246]

At the beginning of his description of the reign of Jahāndār Shāh, Khush Hāl had laid particular emphasis on the great power of love over the emperor. This was expressed in standard terms in a society that had internalized the sufic theological value attributed to love. The disease of love was seen as a valid and efficacious way to gain proximity to divinity.[247] Earthly love for the downy-cheeked Turkish boy or the indifferent kāfir comfortably served as a metaphor for the radical alterity of God's reality. Personal discomfort and social unmooring was the inevitable experience of seeking union with God through love. This was a transgressive love, but not for all that, a form of evil. So what would make an emperor and his beloved consort descend to the wanton cruelty that Khush Hāl describes? Khush Hāl does not offer us a view into the departed emperor's interiority. Having once been told that Jahāndār Shāh was madly besotted with Lāl Kunwar, we are left with the static and stylized image, much like a Mughal miniature, of a royal figure frozen and unmoving in the act of debauch. Thus we are told that a "rare condition" passed over the helpless victims of Lāl Kunwar's necrophilic curiosity – but we are provided with no means to visualize or understand the feelings and the emotions of the royal figures at this sight.

But perhaps the internal selves of Jahāndār Shāh and Lāl Kunwar are not as relevant as one would think, for the import of this story may lie in quite another place: specifically the image of

[246] Ibid., 75–6.
[247] In the South Asian and specifically Chishtīyya context, see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

the boat and the river itself. Indeed, the anecdote becomes intelligible once we reflect on the deep cultural significance of the visual metaphor of the boat standing for earthly life and affairs. The opposite shore is the destination, the place of safety, salvation and liberation from earthly toil, and the river of life is raging and deep. Reaching the opposite shore is by no means a certain proposition; instead one must place one's full confidence in the expertise of the humble boatman, the figure of whom gains a profound mystical importance in this context. This vision, no doubt shaped by the untamable rivers of Hindūstān, retains its importance in a north Indian imaginaire and is embedded in current popular idioms for traversing danger to reach safety ("*naiyyā pār ho jānā*"). When the culturally attuned reader would have encountered Khush Hāl's anecdote, he would bypass questions of authenticity and drive to the meaning of what Khush Hāl argued: the emperor should have served as the captain of the ship of state as it navigated through the turbulent waters of the historical present. Instead, he cruelly disrupted the affairs of other innocent people and caused them unnecessary suffering. Fate, then, would take the necessary corrective measures. Even more so, one senses that by this anecdote Khush Hāl is on the cusp of suggesting the arrival of a novelty, not necessarily implicit in imperial precedent: where once Jahāndār Shāh had unequivocally gained the right to rule by eliminating his brothers, he now by his cruelties was abdicating that very inalienable right.

And yet Khush Hāl's purpose here was not to paper over an ugly moment twenty years and several reigns before the time of his current sovereign. His interest lay clearly in deriving the lessons of history for administrators in his own time from an important "teachable moment" in the past. This is why our author followed this grisly tale of imperial cruelty by matter-of-factly listing the various causes of the annihilation of stately families (*zuwāl-i daulat*) and the turmoil of state according to "the ancients" (*mutaqaddimīn*). The first cause was the debarring of earnest

and virtuous people (*nek khʷāhān*) from imperial favor and state service. The second was an innocence about which people should be denied access to state secrets. Thirdly, "*tund-khūʾī*" – a behavior that implies "hastiness" but also "harshness" and "severity". Fourth came the promotion of dissension and strife (*fitna*). Fifthly, heavenly disfavor (*balā-yi āsmānī*), manifested in frequent plagues, droughts and earthquakes, and too much "fire" and "water": urban conflagrations and flooding are implied. Sixthly, the most emphatically worse possible cause of the annihilation of royalty was to come under the sway of a woman.[248]

Khush Hāl clearly saved the most important cause of dissolution for last, but the other causes he mentions are strikingly vague and bear almost no relation to the anecdotes he provides. What, for instance, would be the heading under which we should classify Jahāndār Shāh's brutal deforestation, except the rather unsatisfactory notion of a general "harshness" directed against the arboreal? In other respects, Khush Hāl's causes are a pale gloss of prescriptive texts of the *akhlāq* genre that were popular among the empire's elites. By the time Khush Hāl had come to write his history, two decades after the death of Jahāndār Shāh, the troubled times of the empire had been replaced a period of stasis. No immediate crisis threatened Hindūstān, even though its affairs could have been considered precarious and its revenue may have been shrinking. But the seeming calm of the 1730s seems to have provided an opportunity to take stock of the recent past and to re-establish the firm footings of the regime. The perspectives of this era may have been shaped by the apocalyptic tenor of previous writers such as Nūr al-Dīn. But perhaps Khush Hāl did not see it fit to include Nūr al-Dīn's description of the emperor being physically abused by singers in an era in which a new emperor reigned unmolested on the Peacock Throne.

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[248] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Tonk)," ff. 48b–49a.

Jahāndār Shāh’s nobles: Zū `l-fiqār Khān and Kokaltash Khān

Besides the displacements effected by Lāl Kunwar’s tumultuous entry into the upper echelons of Mughal power, there was the separate question of the performance of the elite nobles of Jahāndār Shāh’s abbreviated reign. While every Mughal chronicler agrees that Lāl Kunwar’s very existence was an unmitigated disaster for the empire, opinions about the two most important nobles, the vizier Amīr al-Umarāᶜ Zū `l-fiqār Khān and the emperor’s foster-brother Khān-i Jahān Kokaltash Khān, were considerably more varied.

In Irādat Khān’s recollection, the emperor’s ineffectiveness was compounded by the evil and brutality of these two chief nobles. As in other respects, Irādat Khān is perhaps the earliest to suggest that Jahāndār Shāh’s authority was riven by conflict between these two great figures. The cause of the conflict, according to the khān, was the gift of that cherished position, the viziership. As a lifelong companion of the emperor, Kokaltash Khān is represented as having a sort of natal attachment to Jahāndār Shāh; indeed, we recall that in the previous century, imperial foster-brothers (*koka*) retained a certain hauteur and claimed a special relationship with their associated royal brother. Indeed, Kokaltash Khān’s attachment to Jahāndār Shāh had good reason: he was nothing without his royal brother. While other nobles may be able to switch sides in the event of Jahāndār Shāh’s defeat, the khān’s own source of power and his worth would evaporate.

Zū `l-fiqār Khān, son of the previous vizier Asad Khān, was not similarly lashed to the mast of the unsteady boat of the emperor’s fate. Irādat Khān represents him as inaugurating a reign of repression and terror, though our author managed to make peace with the new vizier and perhaps even serve him in some capacity. Such associations, considered in coming pages, are inevitably understated when recollected in the reign of Farrukh Siyar. Irādat Khān makes it clear that Zū`l-

fiqār Khān saved his life by interceding on his behalf with an emperor was dangerously indifferent to our author's fate; so we must note his ingratitude in the choice abuses he reserves for the new vizier. Zū `l-fiqār Khān is thus described as having ushered in a reign of great oppression, by torturing, imprisoning and killing nobles, and by insulting and degrading entire families in a way that had never happened in any preceding reign. This caused him to disliked and reviled by those great and small, near and far, aware and ignorant. Such a fear developed in the hearts of the people (*khalā꜀iq*) that mendicants and artisans, and Muslims and heathens cursed him and asked God day and night to cause the destruction of Jahāndār Shāh's sultanate and Zū `l-fiqār Khān's estate (*daulat*). It was as if:

> In the middle of the night the aged man cried out
> A hundred-year-reign was ground underfoot

Meanwhile, Kokaltāsh Khān had accompanied Jahāndār Shāh from his childhood. His wife and children had been "bound and mingled" (*makhlūt wa marbūt*) with that of the emperor. Kokaltash Khān had been promised the viziership by Jahāndār Shāh since the days of their childhood together, and now that Zū `l-fiqār Khān had been given this coveted post, the imperial foster-brother and his entire retinue (*ijmā꜁*) devoted themselves to overthrowing the new vizier. Because Kokaltash Khān's entire retinue were given large military-assignations, they openly contested the new vizier on account of his haughty conduct. Both nobles waited for an opportunity to unseat the other, and in this way an entire universe was ruined.[249]

It was in this situation that Irādat Khān encountered the new vizier Zū `l-fiqār Khān. Irādat Khān had picked the wrong prince to back in the war of succession, and now found himself in the difficult position of having no more losers to pick. Peace would have to be made with the new

[249] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 131–2. The text here may also be read as suggesting that Jahāndār Shāh and Kokaltash Khān awaited the chance to get rid of the vizier.

emperor Jahāndār Shāh and his peeved vizier. This must have been no easy task, given Irādat Khān's profound hatred of both men. But the literary expression of such hatred was spleen safely vented in the security of the new regime of Farrukh Siyar; during Jahāndār Shāh's brief reign, the khān by his own admission had been considerably more circumspect. For one, he fully expected to be executed at any time, because of his close association with the late Munᶜīm Khān Khān-i Khānān, whose son had rivaled Zū `l-fiqār Khān, besides his afore-mentioned support for the unfortunate ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn during the most recent struggle for succession. So Irādat Khān tells us that every time his name was mentioned in front of the new emperor, the new ruler would make a gesture indicating his desire that the khān be executed. In fact, claims Irādat Khān, he cannot understand why Jahāndār Shāh did not formally order his killing, given his intense hatred of this aged servant of departed princes. Of course, the khān does not consider the possibility that his life and affairs might be too insignificant to enter the consideration of the distracted ruler; nevertheless, within three days (spent in hiding in Lahore) after the death of the last contender Jahān Shāh, Irādat Khān had nimbly penned a sniveling poem to Zū `l-fiqār Khān:

> Our ancestors belong to exalted families
> There's been an exchange free of rancor
> For I'm of ᶜAlī's family, you're Haydar's Zū `l-fiqār
> You must see that without you I have no guardian
> I'm ashamed of my sins, great and small
> I come to your court, confused and abashed before you
> Today instead of my father and mother, it's just you
> Don't cause any more shame between this mad one and yourself
> Even if I'm bad and from everything worse that I've said
> It's because of you that I retain my family's name
> Today you're the marshall of that honor
> Don't look to me, look to the great ones.[250]

[250] Ibid., 134; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 85 Scott reads the `āli in line 1 as `ali though it would not rhyme with the following line's khāli. He also suggests without explanation that "`ali" here refers to the family of ᶜAzīm al-Shān. I have translated the term Khāndān-i `āli as "exalted families". This reading is also supported by the Salar Jung Mss. of the text.

We note that at this moment of crisis Irādat Khān's obsequies begin with a distinctly sectarian tone. The khān identifies himself as belonging to the family of ᶜAlī, and uses the meaning of his interlocutor's name to suggest that he is the sword of ᶜAlī. But in all other respects the khān prefers abject submissiveness rather than shared shiᶜī belief as a tactic of ingratiation. Yet despite its humble language, the letter received no response from the new vizier. When it was sent again, the vizier asked that Irādat Khān should visit him. In response, Irādat Khān said that he wished to know whether he was called to be assuaged and placed at ease, or whether he was to come in chains to be killed. If the vizier considered him dishonored (*khiffat*), then the khān would approach him wearing a shroud, bare-headed and bare-foot, naked and without weapons, so that there would be no more disgrace. And if the vizier intended to kill him, then he should seek him beheaded honorably on the very spot; in fact, the khān would his send own head himself, because he preferred death and had firmly decided this lest anyone deceived themselves into thinking that the khān was not ready for death, unlike others who lived with dishonor.[251]

Of course, we should not take the khān's embrace of death too literally, given the fawning poetry we have just encountered. What we now witness is the negotiation over honor and status in the new dispensation. The marks of honor in this society were covered feet and head; to bear a weapon was similarly to be honorable; without a weapon a person of status would see himself as without "shame", or "naked". While these symbols had a general relevance in society, the measure of honor or its absence was to be evaluated in this very particular case by the approbation (or lack thereof) of an overlord. If the vizier respected this old nobleman of an ancient and distinguished family, all was well. If not, then a state of dishonor had been incurred,

[251] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 134–5; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 85–6.

then the only technical cure for that was an honor-restoring death. Such a death, as we shall see in Chapter Five, was often attained by suicide.

But it would not do to pre-emptively kill oneself at every perceived insult or slight; altered circumstances and new dispensations were acceptable if an honorable life were possible within them. And in fact the khān makes it perfectly clear that he was received by the new vizier with all the appropriate marks of respect. When he went to his private audience with the vizier, says the khān pointedly, he carried a dagger at his waist as always. The vizier too met him with "stretched brows" and "eyes aware of previous meetings" (*kashīda jabīn wa chashm āshinā-yi mulāqāt-i sabqat*); expressing his regard through the language of bodily disposition, the vizier arose from his seat (*masnad*), embraced the khān, and took his hand in the fashion that he had learnt at a young age during the reign of Aurangzeb. These were significant gestures, for they mark the status of one personally trained in etiquette and in governance by the great emperor himself; the two experienced nobles had a frank but happy conversation, and the khān's rectitude made an impression on the vizier. That very day, according to Irādat Khān, the vizier went to the emperor and asked for Irādat Khān to be forgiven. Jahāndār Shāh spared the life of Irādat Khān as a favor to his vizier, but drew the line at employing him in his service. But what hope had our author of service? He considered being spared his life a huge favor in itself, and makes it clear that he had no intention of joining the emperor's retinue.

At the same time, the khān tells us that Zū `l-fiqār Khān extracted a promise from him demanding that he not approach the emperor except through him, and not to establish any connections with Kokaltash Khān or "the singer" (Lāl Kunwar). This, claims Irādat Khān, was because Zū `l-fiqār Khān remained suspicious of Irādat Khān and was fearful of his rise at court. But on the other hand, both nobles had been wayfarers of the same path in their service of Bīdār

Bakht and in the faction (*tarafdārī*) of Munᶜīm Khān Khān-i Khānān. And so the khān practiced a sort of quietism (*khāna nishīn*), though the amīr al-umarāᵓ Zū `l-fiqār Khān would seek his advice to dispel the evils which had befallen the empire as if by the conjunction of those two legendary tyrants Firᶜaun and Shidād. Because Zū `l-fiqār Khān himself understood human nature and the temperament of the age, he placed great trust in our author's wisdom, who as a trusted counselor always gave the right advice.[252] Though Irādat Khān is careful not to mention this fact directly, such advice transmuted into Irādat Khān's presence on the battlefield near Zū `l-fiqār Khān in the war between Jahāndār Shāh and his upstart nephew Farrukh Siyar.

While Irādat Khān followed a policy of engagement that he later represented as aloofness, Nūr al-Dīn was quite simply excluded from the new ranks of power. Nūr al-Dīn resented Zū `l-fiqār Khān for his refusal to grant ranks or honor to him (cf. "Jahāndār Shāh's Rise to Power", *supra*) but did not criticize him personally. Instead, Nūr al-Dīn tells us a brief story illustrating the rectitude of Zū `l-fiqār Khān's ways. This story, never mentioned by Irādat Khān, concerns itself with the elevation of Lāl Kunwar's brothers to high ranks in the empire. One received the title of Niᶜmat Khān (lately held by the litterateur and satirist Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī) and began striving for a plum imperial posting. When Niᶜmat Khān managed to get himself appointed to the provincial governorship of Multān, both Zū `l-fiqār Khān and Kokaltash Khān obstinately refused to confirm the appointment until they were given 10,000 drums (*dhol*) and 5,000 lutes (*tambūr*) as the dues of notification (*haqq al-tahrīr*). Lāl Kunwar finally brought the matter before the emperor, the bakshi and vizier prevailed upon him to cancel the appointment. Later we are told that Niᶜmat Khān approached Sarbuland Khān and had himself appointed to the

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[252] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 134–7; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 85–6.

governorship of Multān. But when he was dismissed he managed to get the governorship of Ahmadabad instead and considered himself fortunate.[253]

This abbreviated story finds much richer explication in Khush Hāl's narrative two decades later. The fears of the amīr al-umarāʾ's overweening power that form such a prominent *motif* of Irādat Khān's telling find no place in Khush Hāl's rendition of the history, given the favor with which he represents the vizier. The vizier, in fact, is seen as exerting superhuman efforts to keep the empire running. But, notes Khush Hāl ruefully, "How far can the sky be joined when it has cracked?" Despite Zū `l-fiqār Khān's efforts, the affairs of state and property began to take on a course of their volition in accord with divine purpose." [254] An instance of this is to be gleaned from the news-reports (*waqāʾiʿ wa sawānih*) of this period that had come down to Khush Hāl's time. They revealed that that many of these people of the singer Kalanwat occupation reached high degrees and were honored with exalted ranks and military assignations.

At this point Khush Hāl switches into a style of writing that is inflected with Mughal bureaucratese and emphasizes the administrative aspects of Zū `l-fiqār Khān's actions. So we are told that when Māhā Halī (name uncertain) and Nāmdār Khān, Lāl Kunwar's comrades and chums, were appointed to exalted posts, the document of the provincial governorship of Akbarābād (Agra) was prepared in the imperial administrative offices (*dafātir-i bādshāhī*) and sent to be imprinted by the seal of the vizier Zū `l-fiqār Khān. In the time-honored fashion of the Indian bureaucracy, the great vizier retained the document in his office. Whenever memoranda were received seeking it, "the seal hadn't been imprinted", says Khush Hāl with the aggressive passiveness with which bureaucratic disfavor expresses itself. This went on to the extent that whenever Lāl Kunwar's friend sent pleading messages to exalted assemblies, his efforts were

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[253] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," ff. 37a–b, 38a.

[254] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 69.

disrupted. Ultimately he carried his complaint to the presence of his highness, who spoke sternly to the amīr al-umarāʾ in front of the entire assembled court. The great vizier said that the petitioner should present the "customary dues of inscription" (*haqq al-tahrīr*). When asked what this should be, the vizier said that it was 500 stringed instruments (*tanbūr*) and 200 drums (*mirdang*).

The emperor asked, "What use are these for you?"

The vizier responded, "Refuge of the world, salutations! These will be distributed amongst the old house-born slaves so that they can perform services in this reign, [just as] the governorships of provinces are [granted] to these dear friends."

The emperor, says Khush Hāl wittily, applied the seal of silence to his tongue and didn't seal the document of governorship after all. In truth, says our author, there are many such "novel reports" (*sawānijāt-i badīʾ*) from that court, and two or three more have been written down.[255]

What exactly does Khush Hāl mean when he alludes to the many "novel reports" from this reign? In a purely literal sense, our author may simply refer to the strange doings of a court overrun by upstarts and an emperor in the last throes of the terminal illness of love. But perhaps Khush Hāl is attempting to communicate a certain skepticism to the reader: this story, as indeed the ones that we have seen previously, are "novelties": like other collections of tales of kings and viziers, alternatingly wise and foolish, they should not be seen as bearing a literal truth. Rather they are illustrations of what is proper, moral, just. Through them we are meant to see in our mind's eye the reality of imperial disorder in Jahāndār Shāh's reign.

Perhaps more importantly, in the later recollection of the bureaucrat, the figure of the vizier had been rehabilitated. Where Irādat Khān stridently disclaimed any affiliation or sympathy for the

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[255] Ibid., 70–2.

Zū `l-fiqār Khān, Khush Hāl was happy to remember him as a wise and efficacious administrator, though one saddled with an unworthy king. Some two decades after the events in question, the blame for the evils of the reign had come to rest upon the head of the deceased king alone.

Removing Jahāndār Shāh

It is this weighty blame that provided the means for historians to explain what happened next: the uprising of Farrukh Siyar, his invasion of Hindūstān with the support of the two sayyid brothers of Barha, and the overthrow of Jahāndār Shāh's regime. The emperor, we know, was seized and killed after being imprisoned by Asad Khān and Zū `l-fiqār Khān, formerly his supporters; and Zū `l-fiqār Khān himself was slain by Farrukh Siyar. But despite their claims about the propriety of the deposition, the dethronement and killing of the emperor posed a significant challenge to the early historians who attempted to describe, understand and justify what had happened.

A case of oversight?

Irādat Khān, for instance, was torn between the desire to display his knowledge of affairs on the inside, and to forswear any relationship of amity with the defeated regime of Jahāndār Shāh. So he provides us with a vivid description of the battle against Farrukh Siyar, during which the author claims to have been present in the vicinity of Jahāndār Shāh and Farrukh Siyar. As elsewhere, the khān's recollections take on a form palatable to readers in the new regime. He tells us, for instance, that he tended merely to stay in one spot on the battlefield, and if someone came to kill him, he was forced to fight back; but besides that, he really had no desire to kill anyone. Perhaps because of such pusillanimity, the tide of the battle turned against Jahāndār Shāh: a large enemy contingent from the enemy's left flank, led by the valorous Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān of Barha, descended directly upon the imperial center. This charge, says Irādat Khān,

broke Jahāndār Shāh's spirit and he disappeared from the battlefield leaving an immense amount of valuables and the canopied elephant-litters of his harem to be ravaged and plundered by the enemy. Jahāndār Shāh's forces struggled to contain the attack, and did so only at the cost of Kokaltāsh Khān's life and forces. But when Zū `l-fiqār Khān finally stabilized the situation, he discovered that Jahāndār Shāh was nowhere to be found; after searching for him fruitlessly all night, Zū `l-fiqār Khān was forced to retreat too.

Our author performed his own diplomatic exit. After all, protests our author, he had no desire to be on the battlefield, and he sought nothing, and nor was he on anyone's side or anyone's servant; he merely happened to be present in the decisive battle for the fate of the empire, he tells us, by coincidence (*az ittifāqāt hāzir būdīm*). So at the end of the battle, he left with his own friends and companions, numbering about a hundred people, to the tomb of his departed grandmother which is at mundvi suhna (not currently extant) and spent the night there, marveling at the power of God. The very next morning he wrote a letter to Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān. Again, by coincidence, the sayyid's path took him by our author's garden, and the new vizier was favorably inclined towards Irādat Khān. On this morning, which was a Friday, Farrukh Siyar triumphantly performed his prayers at the tomb of his venerated ancestor, the emperor Akbar. Irādat Khān accompanied Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān to Delhi in pursuit of the dethroned emperor. The theatrics of imperial legitimacy had begun.[256]

Meanwhile, Jahāndār Shāh, now called Muᶜizz al-Dīn again, had reached Delhi sans beard or moustache in the dead of the night and knocked on Asad Khān and Zū `l-fiqār Khān's door like some unexpected calamity. Here we see the first instance of the demotion of Jahāndār Shāh to his pre-coronation name; this represents our author's attempt to solve the problem posed by an

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[256] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 156–8.

illegitimate imperial succession by reducing it to the familiar terms of the fratricidal contest for kingship. In any case, he says, this news spread throughout the city immediately. The administrator of the province, Muhammad Yār Khān, the superintendent of the police, assorted functionaries, the emperor's prisoners who had been liberated from their dungeons, and the partisans of the deceased prince ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn all descended on the house with the intention of "asking hostile questions". There was no option but to arrest him, and although Jahāndār Shāh claimed he'd go himself (*hargāh iᶜtirāf bi āmadan kard*), it was necessary to imprison him. A letter was written to Farrukh Siyar saying that Jahāndār Shāh had been captured, and a reply was received saying that the detainee should be turned over to Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān.[257]

Here the story of Jahāndār Shāh ends with a startling abruptness. We would never know his fate from Irādat Khān's account except that he casually mentions that Jahāndār Shāh's body was thrown on an elephant in Farrukh Siyar's victorious cortege as it entered the city. This is a telling silence. However much Irādat Khān may have despised Jahāndār Shāh, he was simply unable to record the fact that we know from a variety of other sources: that Jahāndār Shāh was executed on the order of Farrukh Siyar. But why should Irādat Khān have such trouble with this event? Our author made it a point to downgrade the emperor to the status of a mere princeling by renaming him Muᶜizz al-Dīn in his narrative after the battle with Farrukh Siyar. Of course, Irādat Khān may have objected to the killing of Aurangzeb's descendants on principle. But it is far more likely that Irādat Khān did not himself believe the argument he put forward: that it was a proper and legitimate mode of succession to unseat a reigning emperor and replace him with another prince.

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[257] Ibid., 160.

Heaven's mandate lost

In Nūr al-Dīn's rendition of the same narrative, the emperor, sunk in debauch, ignored the threat posed by Farrukh Siyar until it was too late. Finally, the emperor was forced to march out in person against Farrukh Siyar's army. Asad Khān ordered that a certain Ahl Allāh Khān should be incarcerated, and that the imperial princes (*salātīn*) should be placed under guard. Hamīd Allāh Khān and Mahābat Khān, who had been forbidden from Imperial sight after the matter of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn, were placed in close confinement in the three-arch gateway of the fort. Many of the servants of the slain princes, who had waited at court for employment, were also handed over to the superintendent of police for imprisonment. When the city had been secured and the astrologers had appointed a suitable time, the army began to prepare for departure.

Nevertheless a variety of ominous signs and marks manifested themselves. For one, a rope securing an imperial drum on an elephant broke near the Delhi gate. The drum fell to the ground, and shattered to pieces. Next, the imperial canopy became entangled in a tree, and the pearls on its fringes fell off. Clouds obscured the skies and it suddenly and unexpectedly began to rain. A barrage of hailstones followed, so intense that it became impossible for one to stick one's head out of one's tent. At the same time, there was such fog and vapor that the desert itself became invisible and the people's hearts writhed with fear. Despite all these amazing climatic aberrations, when the emperor stopped at the first stage of the journey at the Khizrābād gardens, the imperial tents (*sarāycha*) caught fire and burnt to the ground in the blink of an eye.[258] We recall that all of these occurrences – particularly the "excess of water and fire" – are listed in Khush Hāl Chand's description of the signs of heavenly disfavor.

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[258] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," ff. 49b–50b.

The author and his father, in charge of a small park of artillery, were integrated into the force of ᶜAbd al-Samad Khān, who was also the greatest noble from the province of Panjāb in which Nūr al-Dīn's homeland lay. The battle became intense, and Zū `l-fiqār Khān had just descended from an enraged elephant when Lāl Kunwar appeared on the scene. While the reviled Lāl Kunwar is absent from Irādat Khān's description of the battle or subsequent events, for Nūr al-Dīn she was the direct cause of Jahāndār Shāh's ignominious flight. It is she who forced the emperor to retreat to Agra; and once there she began begging and pleading that they retreat further to Delhi. The king, unsettled by the weeping and wailing of his beloved, departed for the Capital, where Asad Khān imprisoned them in the fort. At the same time, Farrukh Siyar sent an imperial proclamation to Asad Khān and Ahl Allāh Khān (perhaps released from confinement by now) to imprison Jahāndār Shāh, and not to consider themselves forgiven if they erred in this matter. Nūr al-Dīn, who has until this point been eager to supply copious quantities of detail and verbiage alike, now becomes somewhat prosaic. Jahāndār Shāh was imprisoned in the three-arched gateway, and "after that whatever passed on his head was by the hands of Lāchīn Beg Qalmaq".[259] We see here a shift in emphasis in the process of Jahāndār Shāh's imprisonment: Farrukh Siyar himself demands that Jahāndār Shāh be captured and executed. But like Irādat Khān, Nūr al-Dīn too has great difficulty in describing what actually befell the emperor. Yet where Irādat Khān had represented Jahāndār Shāh as simply losing the battle against Farrukh Siyar and the sayyids, Nūr al-Dīn wished to emphasize that Jahāndār Shāh was defeated chiefly because he had lost divine favor, and because of Lāl Kunwar's actions.

[259] Ibid., ff. 49b–59b.

A Matter of Policy

Khush Hāl Chand, writing when the events in question had become a hazy memory, had no such scruples. In fact, Jahāndār Shāh's death had become a moment of high imperial drama, of a pathos that should be experienced by all those who studied the history of the era. So he tells us that while the emperor was engrossed in love, Prince Farrukh Siyar, the royal son of the deceased prince ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn, threw the country of Hindūstān into disorder from his own perch in the Eastern Territories of Bengal. When the noise of this tumult reached the ears of the guardians of the state (*awliyāᵓ-yi daulat*), the prince ᶜAzz al-Dīn was dispatched with a very large army under the guardianship of Khʷāja Husayn, the khān-i daurān. But because the nobility at Delhi had lost all sense, they seriously underestimated the threat and were contented with the size of the army they had dispatched and remained engrossed in song and wine (*nāy wa nūsh*). But defeat was not fated. The matter was one of prudent policy. So Khush Hāl adds his own personal opinion: at this point it was appropriate for his imperial highness to also march out to crush Farrukh Siyar's rebellion underfoot. But because the annihilation of his estate was imminent, the emperor did no such thing and instead remained involved in his counterproductive affairs (*umūr-i nā-bāyista*).[260] Khush Hāl would not have agreed with Nūr al-Dīn's views on Jahāndār Shāh's defeat. This was not a matter of fate but simply of sound tactics, though both observers criticized Lāl Kunwar's role in the defeat. According to Khush Hāl, the emperor didn't stay at his appointed place while the battle raged with Farrukh Siyar, but shaved his beard at the behest of Lāl Kunwar and fled to Delhi. While this was merely a fact for Nūr al-Dīn, it was an amazing and inexplicable decision in our author's eyes. Why did Jahāndār Shāh behave in this way? The emperor, Khush Hāl knew, was an expert leader. He was trained by the great emperor Aurangzeb, and unparalleled in

[260] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 72.

bravery in his own age. He had always performed manly feats (*kārnāma-hā-yi mardāna*) in the perennial battlefields of the Deccan and had quelled and disciplined two of the most powerful landowners of the province of Multān, each of whom had mustered a hundred thousand horsemen. And yet today he had been captured by lamentations and poor advice and so destroyed his rulership (*daulat*).[261] It is worth noting that while Khush Hāl suggests that Lāl Kunwar was responsible for this poor decision, our author appears to be somewhat unconvinced of his own argument. For how could the cries and wails of an upstart singer persuade the seasoned warrior to flee from the battlefield? Lāl Kunwar, one suspects, is now blamed by instinct rather than on the basis of evidence; in the moment of defeat, though, our author's sympathies begin to turn towards the defeated ruler, who is now downgraded in the usual fashion from Jahāndār Shāh to his former given name, Muᶜizz al-Dīn.[262]

When Muᶜizz al-Dīn and the vizier reached Delhi (arriving first at the mansion of the recently-slain Kokaltash Khān), the vizier's father Asad Khān fell into the cavern of error and imprisoned the defeated ruler. At this point, Zū `l-fiqār Khān wanted to elevate another prince to the throne. But this was not the right course of action in Khush Hāl's view. Indeed the vizier's father disapproved the independence (*mutlaq*) implicit in this course of action, considering it distant from the protocols of imperial servitude. It was better, Asad Khān imagined, to seek forgiveness for errors from the (new) emperor and join his service. Zū `l-fiqār Khān disagreed with his father, but did not consider it prudent to contradict him. He asked then to be given leave to proceed to the Deccan, but because Fate had now decisively turned him, he wasn't permitted to leave for the South. Perhaps because of his great wisdom, the khān now presciently noted that the string of fate had been fastened around his neck by the Sublime Hand (*dast-i sāmī*) – an

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[261] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Tonk)," f. 56a.
[262] The following description is based on Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 83–8.

elegant foresight predicting his distinctly inelegant death by strangulation. Here Khush Hāl thinks it is apposite to note the aphorism that an arrow sought from the quiver, a word uttered from the tongue, and time having left one's hand are all things that can never return.

Now Muhammad Yār Khān, the chief administrator of the province and commandant of the fort sent a message, saying, "This slave is the administrator of this place, and is responsible for all things good or bad; your highness should consider the wrath of the emperor greater than [other considerations], and should know it important to send that quickly send that royal prisoner [Jahāndār Shāh] to the fort." Asad Khān sent the de-titled Muᶜizz al-Dīn with the superintendents [*jamāᶜa-dārān*] of the fort. The commandant imprisoned him in the upper story of the three-arched gateway (*tirpulyā*) of the fort, which Khush Hāl says was a place of confinement. The deposed ruler's favorite consort, Lāl Kunwar, was also brought over from the house of Kokaltash Khān and imprisoned with her lover. Because Khush Hāl is sympathetic to the ideals of romantic love, despite the excesses of the ex-emperor and Lāl Kunwar, he cannot help informing us that lover and beloved sadly spent their final night of union (*wisāl-i ākhirīn*) in abominable conditions. [263]

After the killing of the amīr al-umarāᵓ, an imperial note (*shuqqa*) with the royal signature was sent to the commandant Muhammad Yār Khān by way of the people appointed in service of the city. The note asked simply that the exalted "top" (*tārik*) of Muᶜizz al-Dīn with his body should be sent to the emperor. Muhammad Yār Khān, who was fostered by the royal family and utterly faithful to them, poured tears of regret and contrition on the ground that the order given against the prisoner should be carried out, and the sanctity of the affair was such that Muᶜizz al-Dīn was to be rendered cold without the use of arms and then his head was to be separated from his body

[263] Ibid., 83.

and brought to his highness. When some person went to the top of the three-arched gateway and opened the chamber, the accursed consort began to lament and created a ruckus, shrieking "Alas! Woe is me!" (*wā-wailāh*), cast her hands around the neck of her comrade and companion and refused to let him go. But the men rudely and impudently began to separate life from body and body from life, and brought the accursed one down and blinded her. The executioners restrained the deposed ruler's arms and legs and wrung his neck, but his obstinate life refused to depart. The exalted and brave-hearted person raised his feet and kicked his opponents a few times and then died. A message was sent to the commandant, saying, "We've rendered him cold, now it is necessary to cut him." The commandant, who stood weeping with shame, said, "What does the cutting matter now? Cut his head and neck and take it to his highness." So his order was performed. The lifeless body was placed in a covered litter (*miyāna*) and the head in a tray, and two *gharis* of the night having passed, these were taken to the imperial army. "Let it never be," added our chronicler, "that this sort of event transpires in this elevated family, and that no emperor is ever humiliated in this way".

In this way, unlike Jahāndār Shāh's contemporaries, Khush Hāl produces a great pathos around the death of the emperor. In doing so, Khush Hāl produces a cleavage within the conflations which permitted Irādat Khān and Nūr al-Dīn to suggest that the emperor deserved his fate. Like the others, Khush Hāl is only too happy to provide examples of Jahāndār Shāh's many crimes. But despite these errors, Khush Hāl seems to suggest that the emperor did not deserve be murdered. Our author is also careful to represent Muhammad Yār Khān as the loyal servant who is forced into acting against his master, and does so only under great protest. In doing so, Khush Hāl re-asserts the values of loyalty and servitude to the master that find rather less room in the writings of Irādat Khān and Nūr al-Dīn. The most traumatic image for Khush Hāl concerns the

actual killing and decapitation of the emperor, reflecting again the great importance of the integrity of the body in conceptions of sovereignty. And the purpose of the deployment of all this rhetorical technique is to make a single point clear: Khush Hāl believes that there can be no valid reason for the execution of an emperor.

Having described the death, Khush Hāl adds a few more words about the coup, this time from his perspective as a witness of the events. On the morning after the murder, he tells us, the emperor left the camp at Khizrābād on the mobile throne, and then mounted an elephant, casting gold and silver coins, and golden and silver flowers on the assembled onlookers. In this way a golden flower, weighing eight māshā[264] fell into the lap of Khush Hāl ('this poor mendicant'), who was watching the imperial procession. A youth sat on elephant holding Muᶜizz al-Dīn's head aloft on a spear, and his headless body was thrown on another elephant. The third elephant brought Zū `l-fiqār Khān, his body fastened to its tail by the feet and head trailing, with both extremities uncovered – an added mark of dishonor. Those who witnessed the spectacle lost their composure, and their eyes filled with tears and their throats struck dumb from so much astonishment and sorrow. For two or three days both corpses lay at the gate of the exalted fort, after which they found a place in the burial-ground of the poor (*gūristān-i gharībān*) at the tomb of the emperor Humāyūn (d. 1566).

Khush Hāl's response to this horrific event, as we have noted, was straightforward. He did not think that Jahāndār Shāh deserved what came to him. He was clearly opposed to the idea that emperors could be unseated and executed by their own servants on the behest of rival princes. But the cause of these tragedies did not lie in changing political formations, the emergence of new groups or classes, or evolving external crises that threatened the empire from without.

[264] 8 māshā: ~8.74 grams, worth ~507USD at 2012 values

Khush Hāl did not think, as modern-day historians have, that a change in the systems of land-tenure, an increasingly commercialized economy, or natural disasters were putting new sorts of pressures on an ossified elite. None of these explanations would have appealed to our author. Instead he cut to the heart of the matter. The problem was in the innate nature of the world itself. The world was like an old man, and so to love it was as if to love an old man. In the same way it was like a whore (*qahba*), who you must never embrace with affection, or warm your heart by kissing her or drawing her near no matter how beautifully she presented herself. For the world, like the prostitute, made one insane with its color and scent and delirious with its beauty and grace. But then it rapidly threw you off the road of well-being, forced you to sip from the poisoned chalice, and dragged you into the perditions of the viper's trap. A wise man once said, "A crafty bride is the world / empty of beauty and of faith / many have lost their heart and religion to it / happy is he who wants her less".[265]

The Place of the Nobility

So far we have discussed the question of imperial succession. But as the previous pages have shown, by the ascent of Jahāndār Shāh, this question was no longer simply one to be decided within the dynasty. As Munis Faruqui has shown, wars of succession involved the activation of retinues and alliances that drew the nobility into the contest for the throne and in fact granted them profound importance in determining the structure of the empire.[266] By the time Jahāndār Shāh came to power, the highest noblemen were represented as determining the outcome of struggle for succession itself.

[265] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 88–9.
[266] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*.

We are provided unprecedented insight into the ways in which noblemen might seek to shape the outcomes of the war of succession in Irādat Khān's account. In the war of 1712, Irādat Khān had originally chosen to side with the prince ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn against Jahāndār Shāh. In this choice he showed again his remarkable skill at picking the wrong horse, though he had allied himself with an influential group which included the amīr al-umarāᵓ Zū `l-fiqār Khān, Mirzā Shāh Nawāz Safawī (a scion of the Persian ruling dynasty), and Mahābat Khān, who was the son of Munᶜīm Khān Khān-i Khānān, the vizier of Bahādur Shāh praised by our author elsewhere. ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn's closest advisor at this point appears to have been the politically influential but controversial divine Shaykh Qudrat Allāh. The amīr al-umarā entered into correspondence with the prince ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn through Mīr ᶜInāyat Allāh, the grandson of Irādat Khān, but received a dismissive reply in the handwriting of the aforementioned shaykh. Moved to a rage by the insult, the slighted Zū `l-fiqār Khān tearfully asked our author if he had in fact witnessed this act of speech. It is this event, according to Irādat Khān, that turned Zū `l-fiqār Khān decisively against ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn and towards Jahāndār Shāh.[267]

Despite his closeness to the amīr al-umarāᵓ, our author persisted in his support of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn. Perhaps the most important consideration in this regard was the fact that because at the end of the day, Irādat Khān had a "connection" (*rabt*) with Mahābat Khān and the khān-i khānān. Since these people had sided with ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn it was incumbent for author to do so too. This put Irādat Khān in a perilous situation, for it meant that he could not send the women of his family, his "honor" (*nāmūs*), to the safety of the city of Lahore because it was now controlled by the amīr al-umarāᵓ and the other three princes.

[267] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 107–8; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 65–6.

At the same time, Irādat Khān did not embrace ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn's cause whole-heartedly. When our author eventually paid his respects to the prince and received an increase in rank and revenue-assignation, he "accepted neither robe of honor nor made the obeisance of acceptance of station". For the khān had perceived the signs and symptoms of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn's imminent failure to win the sultanate from his analysis of the prince's first actions: it was as if "a sultry breeze blew through the most beautiful day of springtime". In a knowing play on words, the khān implies that the sediment and trace of the fruit was known by examining every old wine; and at the same time, the manifestation of the fruit (of previous actions) were visible to every person well-versed in history.[268]

This may explain why Irādat Khān remained unmoved by ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn's death on the battlefield despite having supported him. Yet again, the khān began a series of machinations to ensure that he landed on the right side of the new regime; and in wearyingly predictable fashion he yet again erred in his choice, this time by offering his services to the prince Jahān Shāh. We learn now that despite his allegiance to ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn, the khān had always enjoyed a strong connection to Jahān Shāh, and that the prince had trusted the khān and held him in special esteem. So Jahān Shāh excused Irādat Khān's previous connections with his slain brother, saying only that the exigencies of the age were such.[269] But Jahān Shāh too met his inevitable fate due to his excessive chivalry and his inability to behave in accordance with the principles of Mughal *realpolitik*. In this context we must recall Irādat Khān's later attempts to win the trust of Zū `l-fiqār Khān by means of his poem, and then of his switch to Farrukh Siyar when Jahāndār Shāh was defeated on the battlefield.

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[268] The pun operates on the dual meaning of the word *dihqan-i pir*, which means both "old wine" and "those well-versed in history". Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 112; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 68.
[269] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 118; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 73.

Irādat Khān's hedging and changing of sides were by no means exceptional actions: Zū `l-fiqār Khān himself was seen as having ensured Jahāndār Shāh's victory after having turned against ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn. In the messy world of imperial politics, what then was the proper form of behavior and comportment for a servant of the emperor? Technically, of course, there was a one-word answer: loyalty. To be disloyal to one's overlord was the ultimate cause of shame and dishonor, and so one was expected to follow one's betters on every heedless charge. But as we have seen, the practice of such affairs was different. Irādat Khān had picked the wrong side in the battles of imperial succession at every turn; and yet he routinely changed sides and accrued honors without attracting too much odium. How could this be?

Irādat Khān's Big Tent

The khān offered a powerful but oblique defense of such behavior through his discussion of the excellences of Bahādur Shāh's vizier, Munᶜīm Khān. Irādat Khān first raised the question of that section of the nobility which had supported contenders for the throne other than Bahādur Shāh in 1707. What now should be their fate? In response, Irādat Khān presents us with a long discursion by Munᶜīm Khān, here playing the role of the perfect vizier, to Bahādur Shāh. To begin with, Munᶜīm Khān acknowledged that the all nobles of exalted families of Aurangzeb's era who had sided with Aᶜzam Shāh were liable to be punished for every bad thing that may have been thought or said and now rankled in the emperor's heart. But, counseled the wise Munᶜīm Khān, these people should be excused, for they would loyally serve whichever inheritor of the sultanate who sat on the throne. On the one hand there was no option besides friendly companionship with these nobles, and on the other they too had sworn loyalty (*namak … khurdand*) to the emperor's father and grandfather. And as for "the other" nobility – presumably those who did not

participate in the internecine war – since there were no previously established accords or rights or promises with them, how could there be any notion of deception or fraud?[270]

In fact, continues the vizier sententiously, the Solomonic throne of the dynasty of the glorious realm of Hindūstān cannot be held up by one or two people alone: several elevated pillars and strong ropes are necessary to keep this tent erect and stable. And since the time of the emperor's father and grandfather, these slaves of the dynasty have taught and transmitted the norms of state, the etiquette of servitude, and the rules of ownership and property from father to son and from predecessor to successor. Until these people were not given great services to perform and fully trusted, it would never be possible to manage the regulations of state, the rules of property and the leadership of armies. And now that all these servants, old and new, had gathered to the imperial stirrup to scatter their lives in the emperor's service, it was necessary to elevate each to the appropriate rank and their desires be fulfilled with the gift of servitude.

Now Munᶜīm Khān introduces a new category, and here he begins to make some vital distinctions. This regards the group of people whose ancestors have merely served subordinate roles, and in fact often manage small towns for military commanders (*naukar-i qasbātīgarī-yi faujdārān*) and who by the grace of God have been reaching the rank of some services to the nobility and the princes: what could they possibly know of the procedures of the affairs of state, and of the rules of etiquette of the pomp and splendor of administering territory, and of the service of princes? For these are the qualities, declared the sagacious vizier in Irādat Khān's retelling, that are limited to, and dependent on, high birth and the leadership of elevated families.[271]

[270] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 75; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 45.
[271] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 75–6.

Irādat Khān makes a crucial, two-fold distinction through the words of the vizier. On the one hand, he presents us with the absolute reality of statecraft, which is to acknowledge the emergence and vital importance of the aristocracy *as a class*. There exist ancient families of high birth, and the scions of these families have something approaching a right to continue to exercise power by virtue of their origins, despite the nominal representation of an all-powerful sovereign. This reproduction of power is necessitated by the vastness and complexity of the affairs of Hindūstān; the tent of empire will collapse ignominiously without the willing cooperation of the pillars of state. But what happens when principles of pragmatic policy come into conflict with the idea of loyalty, that foremost value in Mughal politics? Irādat Khān gets around this question by pointing to the existence of two distinct compacts between ruler and nobility. The first is the private, personal, emotional and perhaps even mystical bond between an individual prince and his chosen servants. This notion acquires a crystalline clarity when the khān tells us that in considering the tensions between Aᶜzam Shāh and his son Bīdār Bakht, in truth the father and his followers were in the right – for even the contradictions of succession were ultimately transcended by the laws of patriarchy – since the son opposed his father and always thought of seizing power. But, the khān reminds us, he had never sworn fealty to Aᶜzam Shāh, and had no relationship of loyalty to anyone except Bīdār Bakht.[272]

Such a distinction is the only way to justify behavior that would be regarded as unfilial on the part of Bīdār Bakht and treasonous on the part of our upright author. And yet, says Irādat Khān, this intensely personal link between master and slave may be broken by the supposed dependent on the basis of the second, and subsuming, compact. This is represented as a relationship of loyalty between the ruling family and the nobility *as wholes*. In other words, the kaleidoscope of

[272] Ibid., 35; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 25.

sub-imperial politics may constantly assume variegated combinations; but nobles as individuals are best not held to strict account for actions that might be interpreted as disloyal or treasonous. There is an undertone of threat here. The nobility as a whole will always hold up the tent of empire, but if individuals are punished, if the rights of ancient families are taken away, then the cooperative energies of the ruling classes will be dissipated. Imperial dissolution, delicately phrased as the unstated opposite of the continued "management of affairs" (*nasq-i saltanat wa qawānīn-i mulkī wa mālī... bi dast āyad*) will follow. As an aside, it is worth noting that these general principles of statecraft serve to neatly exculpate Irādat Khān from at least two actions that might otherwise be considered odious: the incitement of Bīdār Bakht against his princely father Aᶜzam Shāh in 1707 and his distinctly half-hearted support of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn in 1712.

This is the implication of only the first of two distinctions. The second is perhaps even more crucial, for having defined the aristocracy, Irādat Khān now draws another distinguishing line, this to check the inflow of a variety of *homines novi,* newcomers from below. For the khān sees a group of people who have until recently played ancillary and subordinate roles, as petty military and revenue officials. Surely such men, coarse and untrained in the ways of courtly etiquette, cannot lay claim to imperial service in the same way that, say, a descendant of a royal foster-brother (albeit on the mother's side) could. And yet his very words signal a social churning, without doubt intensified by the internecine wars, that leads to the constant irruption of new individuals and groups into the ranks of power. This is a challenge to the status quo of an aristocracy that now represents itself as "old", and one perhaps all the more keenly felt by the relatively unillustrious scion of a great family.

Killing the nobility

The observers we have examined took it for granted that emperors were liable to punish their perceived enemies in sanguinary fashion. Such events happened quite frequently when regimes changed. While most historians of the period had recognized this right of the emperor to kill and punish their servants, they disapproved of the practice of that right, especially on the bodies of their own companions and friends. Irādat Khān, for instance, blamed Zū `l-fiqār Khān for the humiliation and killing of many nobles. The khān does not provide us with specific instances of such killings; instead, these vague horrors serve as the backdrop for his own celebration of Zū `l-fiqār Khān's death – one no doubt necessitated by our author's timely shift to the new regime.

With regard to Zū `l-fiqār Khān's own end, Irādat Khān is all too happy to provide details. When he reached Delhi after the disastrous battle of Agra, his father counseled obedience to the new authorities. This, we are told, was because the father believed in worshipping his betters, and saluting and respecting the royal family, unlike the son, who preferred to be disobedient and refractory. Although Zū `l-fiqār Khān was his father's son, he was nevertheless brash, impetuous, querulous, and fearless. He played with the heads of the royalty, and even put forward his own illegitimate claims. So while he resisted his father's counsel, he eventually gave in to his father's wise words. And the father also stopped thinking about the future and hoped for the best.

When Asad Khān and Zū `l-fiqār Khān were summoned for their interview with Farrukh Siyar, Irādat Khān writes from the perspective of one involved in the planning and affairs of the new Emperor's side – for we know that he had joined Sayyid ᶜAbd Allāh Khān's retinue after Jahāndār Shāh's defeat. We are told again that Zū `l-fiqār Khān was bold and accustomed to running the affairs of state, and *waqāᵓiᶜ-talab* – an event-seeker, a provocateur, someone who

desired that things should happen even when all was well. Furthermore he was responsible for the death of the martyred king (Farrukh Siyar's father) and the oppressed prince (Muhammad Karīm), so his preservation (*nigāh dāshtan-i ān*) was utterly unacceptable to the emperor.

For this reason father and son were both summoned and honored with robes and jewels. The father was dismissed and the son was retained. After a little while spent in consideration of his crimes, the son was called to a tent behind the hall of special audience (*dīwān-i khāss*) which had been erected specially for the purpose, and was there strangled by the cord. It was ordered that his soulless corpse should be thrown on an elephant and paraded en route to the city, and then thrown for a few days in front of the fort in insult and humiliation to admonish others, and to dissuade others from this sort of boldness, which had led to his hands being stained with the blood of royalty. And the family of the father and son and all their possessions were seized, and this much-trusted two-hundred-year-old family was ruined in an instant for a single error.[273]

Like Irādat Khān, Nūr al-Dīn disapproved of the executions by Jahāndār Shāh, though our author didn't have a very high opinion of the nobles who remained and found favor at court. As an example of this he presented the case of Fath Allāh Khān, who had abandoned his overlord on the day of battle and defected to the winning side before the accession of Jahāndār Shāh. One day, when the recently-crowned Jahāndār Shāh was hunting on the banks of the river Rāwī, he asked Fath Allāh Khān why the two slain princes had opposed him. Fath Allāh Khān said that the princes had been routed and were in no condition to fight, but were provoked into combat by Rustam Dil Khān and Mukhlis Khān. But even after Jahān Shāh was killed, Afzal Khān persuaded Rafīᶜ al-Shaᶜn to launch a night-ambush against Jahāndār Shāh. No surprise then, that Jahāndār Shāh ordered the execution of Rustam Dil Khān, Mukhlis Khān, Afzal Khān, and

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[273] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 161–63 A long paragraph follows enumerating Zulfiqar Khan's crimes, and is exlcuded here.

others.[274] Our author does not tell us whether Rustam Dil Khān and the others had in fact behaved treasonously with the new emperor, but there is no doubt that he disapproves of the practice of imperial revenge.

But unlike Irādat Khān, Nūr al-Dīn was not hypocritical about Zū `l-fiqār Khān's killing by Farrukh Siyar and maintained his disapproval of it. Nūr al-Dīn tells us that Asad Khān and Zū `l-fiqār Khān conferred when the latter returned to Delhi after his defeat by Farrukh Siyar. Nūr al-Dīn claims that Asad Khān now felt that all the mobilization of treasure and artillery had been wasted and caused terror and ruination among God's flock (*khalq-i Allāh*). Zū `l-fiqār Khān wished to escape to the Deccan to continue the fight, but Asad Khān told his son that they were obliged to be faithful to anyone of Aurangzeb's stock who wore the crown, and so it was appropriate to bind one's waist in their service. Asad Khān and Zū `l-fiqār Khān therefore set up tents at the Bārāpulla Bridge to welcome Farrukh Siyar to the city, while the two Sayyid brothers had already spent five or six days in the city, preparing the fort for the new emperor. When the interview with the new emperor transpired, Asad Khān was released, but Zū `l-fiqār Khān was questioned by Farrukh Siyar on the killing of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn. Here too Nūr al-Dīn maintains his laconic prose: "Unpleasant words about the right [*haqq*] of Farrukh Siyar were brought to the tongue [of Zū `l-fiqār Khān], and as a result he was killed."[275]

What could these unpleasant words have been? In the absence of any records, we can only speculate. But it is easy to imagine that Zū `l-fiqār Khān could have insulted or dismissed the new emperor by pointing out that he was a mere upstart prince, and would never be considered a fully legitimate ruler on the throne of Hindūstān. In other words, the departing Zū `l-fiqār Khān

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[274] Fārūqī Multānī, "Jahāndār Nāmā," f. 36a.
[275] Ibid., ff. 60a–b.

would not have had to rack his brains to find ways to question the legitimacy or "right" of the new emperor.

Such concerns persisted over the years. Even two decades after the reign, Khush Hāl did not disregard the deaths of the nobility under Jahāndār Shāh or consider them insignificant. So he tells us that while Jahāndār Shāh was at Lahore just after his accession, Rustam Dil Khān, the director of traveling court (*mīr manzil*), Sazāwār Khān the superintendent of cavalry (*tashīha-yi dāgh*) and Mukhlis Khān were executed for what our author defends as nothing more than "the small mistakes that happened in this sort of time of rise and fall, above and below, word and story". In this way, Khush Hāl Chand suggests that the punishment of nobles for choosing sides in the war was unnecessary and unfair.

But the killing of Zū `l-fiqār Khān was a crime of a different order altogether for Khush Hāl. So Khush Hāl presents us with a rich and developed narrative of that nobleman's death. We learn that Sayyid ᶜAbdullah Khān, vizier of the recently victorious Farrukh Siyar, entered the city and called Zū `l-fiqār Khān and his father Asad Khān to meet the new emperor who had camped a few miles to the south of the Shāhjahānābād at the gardens of Khizrābād. Zū `l-fiqār Khān said a few words that indicated the truth and the reality of the situation that lay before them, but these did not find a place in the ear of consciousness of his father. Instead, Asad Khān departed with his son and a train of servants to meet the new ruler. Was this a wise course of action? According to Khush Hāl, it was not, for "when perdition approaches, one's rendered a fool". But on the other hand, whatever Asad Khān did was according to the rules of servitude. Farrukh Siyar received them with appropriate civility, and granted them robes of honor. But as they were being dispatched, it was ordered that Zū `l-fiqār Khān should remain present so that some matters of property and state may be scrutinized. At this time, Zū `l-fiqār Khān again told his father, "This

is all a stratagem, and now nothing there is nothing left that I can do." But Asad Khān said, "O light of my eyes, piece of my liver, don't let these thoughts settle in you, and go forth and attend [upon the emperor] with your heart and soul and be prepared to serve." Running such soothing words off his tongue, the aged father sent his son off. Khush Hāl presents a series of verses to heighten the pathos of the moment, all to the effect that the father urges the son to serve the emperor. The father bid his son farewell and went his own way, and the son set his eyes on his father for the last time, and sat down contemplatively.

Now came another order asking Zū `l-fiqār Khān to approach the imperial prayer-room (*tasbīh khāna*) so that some private matters may be discussed. Understanding the import of this order, the amīr al-umarāᵓ proceeded to the room; when he went and sat there, he was asked why he killed Sultān Muhammad Karīm al-Din, brother of the current emperor. Zū `l-fiqār Khān heard the salutations of the ruler of death in his heart's ear, and presented his neck in willing submission, and the cord was wrapped around that great noble's neck and strangled him.

Khush Hāl is unequivocal in mourning the death of the amīr al-umarāᵓ. Zū `l-fiqār Khān, again, had been trained by the great Aurangzeb, yet today he had come to such an end. According to our author, Jahāndār Shāh's vizier had no equal in his bravery, his munificence, his justice and his knowledge of the administrative regulations (*dastūr al-ᶜamal*) of Hindūstān. The saintly Emperor Aurangzeb, or "resident of Paradise", as was his post-mortal title, had commanded the victory over many forts with the key of Zū `l-fiqār Khān's sword; and has for his liberality, he had once granted a hundred thousand rupees to the poet shaykh Nāsir ᶜAlī Sirhindī for an ode and then augmented his favors. But more pertinently, what could be said of the terrible suffering of Zū `l-fiqār Khān's aged father when he received the news of his son's fate? So, in amazement

at his son's fate, the aged father recited the following chronogram: "Ibrāhīm sacrificed Ismāᶜīl".[276]

Conclusion: A Solution to the Problem of Succession?

The question of succession with which this section opened lies at the heart of Bruit's short introduction to the life of Bībī Juliyānā. The blind spot of that narrative was the reign and the death of Jahāndār Shāh, which was indeed a problem and a challenge for contemporary and later Mughal historians too. In previous pages we have seen how various observers struggled to represent what they had seen in already existing frameworks of comprehension. Jahāndār Shāh's failure to hold the throne could be explained by his foolish love, or by the workings of divinity and fate. Yet there was no consensus on whether his final fate was an event to be lauded and celebrated or to be shamefully covered and disavowed. Was it proper to overthrow a ruler who behaved contrary to the norms and codes by which he was supposed to abide? Was it possible or correct to engineer an instance of succession among the sainted descendants of Tīmūr, even if by necessity such action would demand the desacralization of the body that itself was the repository of sovereignty? In the case of Jahāndār Shāh, no clear answer emerged. The situation would evolve with the next iteration of successions, beginning with the deposition of Farrukh Siyar in 1719 and ending with the coronation of Muhammad Shāh in 1720/21. But, as we shall see, it muddied the waters further: the possibility of creating a theoretical solution that might prove satisfactory receded even further into the distance.

This did not mean that there existed no ways to think about the process of succession. In these final pages, I discuss two forms of dealing with the problem of succession as they emerge in

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[276] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 83–6; Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Tonk)," ff 53a–54b.

Irādat Khān's memoir. Thinking in the following way was predicated upon, and enabled by, thinking of the aristocracy as a stable unit with clear boundaries and common interests, as Irādat Khān had begun to do.

By the eighteenth century at least, the idea of the constant killing of princes in internecine wars had begun to attract a certain disfavor among imperial intellectuals.[277] But besides such killing, always the product of internecine war, how were the claims of competing princes (each equally sovereign) to be adjudicated? Should the empire be partitioned among all brothers, with inevitable coparcenary fragmentation over the years? Or should the princes all battle to the death, with the last man standing most unsubtly the fittest to rule? Was the former a real possibility that would have resulted in the development of a new form of shared sovereignty and control over the vast and unwieldy realm? Or was it always nothing more than a false promise, a ruse to disrupt the enemy's decision-making process, a way of weeding out the most gullible and the least fit to rule?

Certainly there appears to have been much ambiguity over the issue of partition by the death of Aurangzeb, who, according to some versions of an alleged will, demanded that the empire be divided amongst the princes.[278] Aurangzeb's words may not have been taken with the credibility he hoped, since he himself had promised his siblings parts of the empire before slaying them during his own rise to power. Perhaps unsurprisingly, his son Bahādur Shāh raised the possibility of dividing the empire too.

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[277] See for instance the discussion in Lal Ram, "Tuhfat Al-Hind," n.d., vol. II, (Add. 6584) f.22b, British Library APAC Add. 6583/4.

[278] An early English translation of a supposed will of Aurangzib which proposes a Partition is to be found in James Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah, Formerly Called Thamas Kuli Khan, the Present Emperor of Persia, [James Fraser]. To Which Is Prefix'd, A Short History of the Moghol Emperors. At the End Is Inserted, A Catalogue of about Two Hundred Manuscripts in the Persic and Other Oriental Languages, Collected in the East.* (London, 1742), 36–7.

Irādat Khān tells us that Bahādur Shāh offered to parcel off provinces twice during the course of his successful extirpation of his brothers. The first instance was before the battle of Jājū, in which Aᶜzam Shāh and his son Bīdār Bakht were killed. Here, a dervish known to be a close companion of the emperor arrived with a message, saying, "By the grace of God, we have inherited from our father and grandfather an empire (*mulk*) which contains several sultanates. It is proper and fitting that we do not draw swords among ourselves and do not accept the spilling of Muslim blood. [Instead] we should divide the empire (*mulk*) amongst ourselves. Although I am the elder brother, I nevertheless leave the choices of division to you." Aᶜzam Shāh's reply to this, Irādat Khān tells us, was the blunt statement that he would respond to the proposal himself the very next day. The next day preparations for battle appear to have begun, since reports were received of Bahādur Shāh's army in array; but his intentions remained unclear.[279]

Irādat Khān considers Aᶜzam Shāh's decision to rudely dismiss this proposal to be that of a rash and deluded (*mathūr-i maghrūr*) person. But of course our author had already decided that Aᶜzam Shāh would make only errors, *because* fate had willed for him to die and for Bahādur Shāh to gain the throne. As elsewhere, narrative predestination summons and evokes predestination of quite another sort. It is because of this that Irādat Khān begins this section by saying, "Because God had decreed the sultanate in favor of Bahādur Shāh, the exalted lord had cast a sort of delusion on the head of Muhammad Aᶜzam" – to the effect that Bahādur Shāh would never face him in the battlefield.[280] This signals the arrival of the moment when laws of ordinary causation are suspended in the face of otherwise inexplicable happenings, and the logic of divine will must be followed through to its natural conclusion.

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[279] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 43; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 29.
[280] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 43.

But there is some internal evidence to suggest that perhaps Aᶜzam Shāh was not quite as deluded as our author wishes us to believe. This is to be found in Scott's English translation, but is missing from the printed Persian text, and exists in the form of a dialogue between Munᶜīm Khān and Bahādur Shāh before the latter's accession to the throne, and reported later to Irādat Khān.[281] Here the vizier asks Bahādur Shāh why he has spread the rumor that he would escape to Persia rather than engage in a battle for succession with Aᶜzam Shāh. The emperor-to-be presents his reasons: firstly, to not incite the wrath of his father Aurangzeb, who "on a mere suspicion of disloyalty, kept me nine years in close confinement", and would not hesitate to do so again; secondly, to calm the fears of Aᶜzam Shāh, who has now been "lulled into self-security". But, swears Bahādur Shāh, ("laying his hand on the Koraun by him") that even if alone he will nevertheless meet Aᶜzam Shāh in single combat.[282]

This image of a patient but ruthless prince, willing to dissimulate to any length in order to achieve his ultimate goals, sits in stark contrast with the benign but divinely-chosen ruler that Irādat Khān – and Gaston Bruit, seven decades later – was at pains to portray. It also suggests that it is possible to imagine a vision of Bahādur Shāh that would reduce his brothers to paranoid frenzy. But even if all this talk of partition were merely empty words, Bahādur Shāh did not desist from mouthing them again when he marched down to Aurangabad in the Deccan to confront Kām Bakhsh, the sole remaining opponent in the nearby city of Hyderabad. Again, Irādat Khān tells us, Bahādur Shāh wrote "salutary words of advice" to his sibling, saying,

"Our respected father has left you the realm (*mulk*) of Bijapur, and we also offer you Hyderabad in addition. These two great realms, the ruling families (*daulat-i farmān-rawāyān*) of which are

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[281] Ghulam Rasul Meher, the compiler of the Persian text, has consulted Scott's English translation approvingly but does not reflect on the absence of the following anecdote.
[282] Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 41.

honorable and famous, and together produce more than half the income of Hindūstān. We grant these to you without any discord or dissension and consider us dearer than our own sons. Take care that you do not accede to your own perdition, the spilling of Muslim blood or disorder in the realm. If you accept this advice with the ear of your heart, we will agree to let you retain this provincial governorship that you have held of old, and we will leave for Hindūstān after paying our respects at the tomb of Khuld Makān [Aurangzeb]".[283]

If the gratingly condescending tone were not reason enough to ensure Kām Bakhsh's eternal enmity, we must also consider the fact that Bahādur Shāh had accompanied this message of goodwill with a military force "a hundred, nay, a thousand times greater than seen since Aurangzeb". But yet again, Irādat Khān has nothing but scorn for Kām Bakhsh, that "ignorant, self-serving, wrong-headed child" who refused his brother's magnanimous offers and cast himself into oblivion.

At the same time, Irādat Khān clearly recognized that deceit and falsehood were an integral part of *realpolitik*, and that princes encumbered with moral qualms were harshly rewarded for their saintly naiveté. Such was indeed the case with the prince Jahān Shāh, who gave the scheming Zū `l-fiqār Khān fair warning instead of seizing and executing him. Although "jealously fostering of the religion", and endowed with the valorized qualities of chivalry, manliness and valor (*jawānmardī*, *murawwat*, *futuwwat*), Jahān Shāh was unworthy in the final instance: for the stewardship of the all-important matters of state (*amr-i saltanat*) – the very *raison d'etre* of rulership – cannot *in reality* (*aslan*) be conducted with "this sort of behavior". The truth of this matter could be succinctly summed up by two quotations: "the world of force is not achieved

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283 Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 85–6; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 54.

without force". Secondly: "If the thief awakens the sleeping ones, he cuts his own throat". Violence and subterfuge were necessary in winning the world.

Finally, Irādat Khān presents us with a curious statement of the inherent evils of the practice of power: good and beneficial works cannot coexist in the same place with evil actions; if the basis of an act is evil, as indeed is its endower (*madār alaihī*) and its recipient (*mauqūf alaihī*), one can be certain that it will destroy all that is good.[284] This focus on cause, action, and effect, expressed through terminology of administration is suggestive of our author's own juridico-philosophical training, and it offers us a valuable insight into the evaluative framework of a bureaucratic mindset. But more than that, we encounter again the tension that rends Irādat Khān's narrative: a good ruler is truly virtuous – Aurangzeb and Bahādur Shāh are portrayed as such; but at the same time, true virtue is incompatible with the exercise of power and authority, and so the truly virtuous are always eliminated in the quest for kingship.[285]

It is in this context that Nūr al-Dīn presents us with another alternative. When the war for succession after the death of Bahādur Shāh began, all three brothers unthinkingly chose to fight each other and departed on the path of seeking personal glory. Nūr al-Dīn implies that Asad Khān and most probably Zū `l-fiqār Khān had wished to prevent another round of debilitating warfare, and so had developed some sort of actual plan to divide the empire. But this wise course of action was cast aside by the principal antagonists, who chose to act upon historical precedent and instinct rather than the wishy-washy feelings of filial affection. But perhaps the nobility had begun to develop a distaste for regularly sacrificing themselves for imperial contenders, and other thoughts about the forms of imperial succession had entered the zeitgeist. Nūr al-Dīn

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[284] See M. Durga Prasad, *Guide to Legal Translations: Or, A Collection of Words and Phrases Used in the Translation of Legal Papers from Urdu to English* (E. J. Lazarus, 1874), 189.

[285] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 122; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 74.

certainly appears to think that Asad Khān's plan, whatever it may have been, was preferable to renewed internecine warfare. We may wonder whether Zū `l-fiqār Khān was himself enacting the stratagem of offering partition as a means of lulling his princely enemies into a false sense of security, or whether he had decided that the empire was best apportioned amongst three rulers, with himself as the vizier. To make this suggestion, of course, would require an act of tremendous imagination. And even if it were proposed, it was most certainly rejected by all the contenders.

Engineering Succession

But there was an even more radical alternative. That was the idea of engineering a succession where none was imminent. This question of engineering a succession emerges as a theoretical possibility for the first time in Irādat Khān's account. It all began one night, during a particularly charged interaction between the princeling Bīdār Bakht and Irādat Khān when the latter was in his retinue in 1707. Bīdār Bakht was operating in support of his father, Aᶜzam Shāh, who was seeking the throne against Bahādur Shāh. But Aᶜzam Shāh, according to Irādat Khān, also had a profound fear of his capable and ambitious son. On this night, when the prince and Irādat Khān stood alone privately, Bīdār Bakht approached him and threw both his hands around the courtier's neck. He brought his head near Irādat Khān's ear and said, "You know the question: whenever an imperial father will kill his son one way or another, and the son knows this for a fact, what's he to do?" In response, Irādat Khān produced a perfectly courtly answer: this was not a question worth asking, for who could know the question better than the prince's own exalted grandfather, the emperor Aurangzeb?

Aurangzeb, we are reminded, was known and renowned for imprisoning his father, attacking and slaying his brothers and taking the throne by force. Both prince and courtier seem to have

conveniently overlooked the fact that Aurangzeb was not threatened by imminent death by his own father, and could have been seen to act out of sheer rebelliousness; so perhaps the analogy does not quite hold. Irādat Khān now upped the ante from within the safety of (inapplicable) imperial precedent, proposing a variety of schemes by means of which the prince could "imprison" his father. At the same time, our author wisely disavowed any intention of sullying his own hand with imperial blood, except perhaps in an honorable combat in the battlefield, for abstaining from the assassination of royals, he claimed, was a sort of oath and custom of his family.[286]

So as far as Irādat Khān was concerned, it was acceptable for nobles such as himself to urge princes into violence against their fathers and brothers. But to attack and kill a royal was to go too far. Yet it is in Irādat Khān's memoirs, also, that we see perhaps for the first time an even more suggestive possibility. The khān tells us that in their quest to destroy the power of Zū `l-fiqār Khān during the short-lived reign of Jahāndār Shāh, the supporters of Kokaltash Khān managed to convince the emperor that Zū `l-fiqār Khān, his hands already stained with the blood of princelings, would not let Jahāndār Shāh continue in his reign. Zū `l-fiqār Khān, they claimed, would establish his own claim to the throne – or, failing that, he would place another prince on the throne. Irādat Khān has only contempt for Jahāndār Shāh's reaction: that great person, with a mind incapable of analysis, denuded of intelligence, developed a great paranoia. He was able to neither dispel his fears nor safely express them.

Yet it is precisely this fear, according to our author, that Kokaltāsh Khān persistently raised; he claimed that he was the emperor's only safeguard against Zū `l-fiqār Khān, and that were he to depart, the vizier would seize the emperor and either imprison him, or perhaps kill him. "And

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[286] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 35–7; Irādat Khān, *Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, 25–6.

they say," remarks the khān significantly, "that he [Kokaltash Khān] wasn't completely wrong either." Thus one day, the (nameless) daughter of Kokaltash Khān, who was very disrespectful and forward with the emperor and had many long-established public and private connections with him said, "The viziership was promised to us but it hasn't been fulfilled". The emperor snapped back at the foolish woman in the same coarse Hindi language (*alfāz-i rakīk-i hindī*) that was her formal idiom (*muhāwara*): "Shut up, lest your father and I are both thrown into a snare." As a side note, we note our Aurangzebī nobleman's contempt for the plebian speech that was beginning to invade linguistic realms previously secured by the Persian language: indeed, Irādat Khān presents the dialogue in Persian, presumably to prevent the contamination of his chaste prose by the "coarse Hindi language", however marginally present. But perhaps Irādat Khān is merely emphasizing the domesticity of this particular conversation, which takes place in an interior realm where "Hindi" might find greater usage. In either case, this homely interaction is suggestive of the profound fear of Zū `l-fiqār Khān that Jahāndār Shāh apparently endured during his scant months on the throne.[287]

This representation, accurate or otherwise, signals the emergence of a new option in the games of imperial politics. Irādat Khān introduces to the imagination a situation in which a Mughal emperor, descendant of Chinggiz Khān, Amīr Tīmūr, and, most recently Aurangzeb, might conceivably be removed from the throne by his own nobility. We cannot say whether this idea was born in Irādat Khān's own fertile mind, or whether his words only tell us of something in the air in Jahāndār Shāh's court. But we can be certain that these words mark a discursive opening that prepares the stage for the profound novelties of imperial politics shortly to follow. Irādat Khān himself would have the reader dismiss Jahāndār Shāh's fears as utter, deluded paranoia. It

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[287] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 132, 144; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 137, 148.

may be possible for Mughal princes to be slain on the battlefield; but it could not be that a Mughal ruler might be killed by his own subjects.[288]

This situation, of course, did not come to pass in Jahāndār Shāh's case; for it was obvious that he was deposed by Farrukh Siyar, himself a prince. But quite aside from the dubious propriety of such an uprising, we are faced with the conception of a new possibility before its occurrence. There was to be no avoiding the flowering of this possibility into an actuality in the killing of Farrukh Siyar by the Sayyid brothers in 1719 – well after Irādat Khān himself had died.

[288] Irādat Khān, *Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān*, 132; Irādat Khān, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khānī," 137.

CHAPTER 4: The Artificial Succession

Introduction

On the 28th of February, 1719, a group of noblemen led by the clan of the sayyids of Barhā entered the Mughal harem and took the Mughal emperor Farrukh Siyar into custody. Despite the resistance of his slaves, the emperor was roughly pulled out of the buildings of the harem and eventually imprisoned in the three-arched gateway in the fort. In his stead, a young prince by the name of Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt was removed from the confinement in which men of royal birth were held and placed on the throne. While verses were composed and coins were struck in the new Emperor's name, another imperial custom awaited the deposed Farrukh Siyar. The captive's eyes were blinded by a needle; and a few weeks later, he was killed by strangulation.

As Farrukh Siyar was dragged out of the harem, the city outside the imposing walls of the exalted fort erupted in tumult. Confused battles between loyalists and anti-imperialists, and between city-dwellers and military forces, took place on the central promenade of the city's moonlight avenue (*chāndnī chawk*). Later, when the corpse of Farrukh Siyar was removed from the fort and taken for burial to the emperor Humāyūn's imposing tomb, mendicants and artisans expressed their grief at his passing.

The death of Farrukh Siyar has rightly been considered to be a moment of profound significance in the history of the Mughal empire. This was the first time ever in which an emperor of the Mughal empire had been removed from the throne and executed by his nobility. While an earlier generation of historians have emphasized the momentousness of the dethronement in the narrative of Mughal decline, later scholars have argued that the conflict between emperor and vizier was the product of a systemic weakness within the empire. The empire, in this view, was

already in the process of falling apart because of economic, technological and institutional factors; but the disintegration manifested itself in the arena of high politics.[289]

In making their assessments, historians have relied primarily on the surviving corpus of chronicles, most in manuscript form, that report the events of the time. While they have long recognized that these histories are not transparent and objective assessments of past events by disinterested observers, historians of Mughal India have nevertheless been unable to resist the narrative power of Mughal texts. Preoccupied with the question of Mughal decline (from either colonial or nationalist-Marxist perspectives), historians have proven especially vulnerable to the logic and motivations of their late-Mughal interlocutors. This is why discussions of the politics of the period inevitably devolve into questions about the appropriateness of deposition and the personal characteristics of the emperors that might justify such action.

Almost without exception, every history that account of the death of Farrukh Siyar also describes the end of Jahāndār Shāh. in the previous section, we have examined perspectives on Jahāndār Shāh's rule by authors who did not live to see the end of Farrukh Siyar's reign; yet, the troubling possibility of an engineered imperial succession had emerged quite clearly in the writings of a nobleman like Irādat Khān. As we have seen in the previous chapter, contemporary authors appear to have despised Jahāndār Shāh though there was considerable nuance in the ways in which such disapprobation was expressed. I have previously argued that such dislike was expressed *ex post facto* under Farrukh Siyar's regime. Despite this dislike, Mughal authors remained ambivalent about the legitimacy of Jahāndār Shāh's reign and its termination, glossing over such troubling issues in a variety of ways. But no such diffidence was possible in the case of Farrukh Siyar. As we saw in the previous chapter, such acts of deposition had appeared in the

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[289] For the most prominent examples of the former and the latter, see Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*; Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*.

Mughal political *imaginaire* (in this case, in the history of Irādat Khān) even before the death of Farrukh Siyar. With this unprecedented novelty, however, a narrative opening blossomed into a historical event. No longer "unimaginable", the practice of the deposition of the emperor now became an option in the repertoire of political techniques available to an ambitious and resourceful nobleman. The first objective of this chapter, then, is to build on the analysis of Jahāndār Shāh's removal, to examine just how Mughal authors might understand or debate the development of this radically new political possibility.

The study of this deposition has been hampered by a formidable challenge, one that has to do with the narrative conventions and practices of Mughal *tārīkh* itself. When Mughal historians such as Khush Hāl Chand or Muhammad Qāsim Lāhorī write of the events they describe, the perspective of their narration is that of immediate proximity to the events at hand.[290] The force of this narrative form occludes the fact that none of the historians in question could possibly personally have known of the events they so confidently describe. When our historians sometimes prefix a statement with the phrase "it is reported that" (*riwāyat ast ki*) or "they say" (*gūyand*), they introduce a certain distance from their subject. This is rightly perceived as a method of separating known facts from unverifiable hearsay. But such verbiage should also be seen as a simulacrum for the reality that in fact almost nothing that our historians report was witnessed by their own eyes. This is the artifice of Mughal historiography, and it is one that has been most deliberately created by the authors we examine. One of my secondary purposes here is to pare back this artifice to its constituent elements, in order to show that the certainties of our knowledge about the Mughal world rest on shaky ground indeed.

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[290] This phenomenon is very similar to the narrative structures in chronicles which describe Ottoman political upheaval. See Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy History and Historiography at Play*.

In making this claim, I do not mean to suggest that all forms of writing and reportage are of equally little value in the Mughal world and that consequently nothing of our subject may truly be known. If we cannot know anything of the actual events in the palace on the day of the deposition, we may nevertheless understand something of the *mentalité* of our Mughal interlocutors. Their perspectives, as we will see, reflect a series of arguments about the meaning and forms of sovereign rule and political order. They reveal the horizons of thought of Mughal intellectuals who grappled with a shifting and uncertain political reality and the rectitude of particular courses of political action. To understand something of the contours of this debate, and of our authors' concerns, is another goal of this section.

Yet these concerns were shaped by a vision of the world with which we are barely familiar. A striking example of this lies in the "tumult" and "uproar" on the day of the deposition of the emperor: a phenomenon that barely merits a mention in either Irvine or Chandra's assessment of the event.[291] This scant regard is the product of the contempt and distaste with which our wellborn Mughal authors regarded the rowdy mob that populated the streets of the city on that day in 1719. The tumult of the masses was perhaps a piquant side note, but most certainly not the true subject of a discussion on politics. Those who participated in the uproar have left no record of their motivations and feelings for us. But their collective actions on the streets of the city were an expression of themselves as a whole. The historical texts we have are a representation of that representation. To read these texts in order to begin to understand the motivations and feelings of this mass across this dual chasm is the final objective of this chapter.

Accordingly, I begin this chapter by presenting a very brief outline of the political events under consideration and the sources from which this narrative has been derived. Having done so, I turn

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[291] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 383–6, 393–4; Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, 179.

to our sources' varied representation of the two particular events that are subject to intense focus in the chronicles at hand: Farrukh Siyar's tensions with his sayyid nobility and the process of his ensuing deposition and execution. I then turn to the question of descriptions of the uprising in the city during the sayyids' coup, asking how it was that the common people rose to the defense of their monarch. Their irruption into a matter of high politics provides us a glimpse of mass politics in a distinctively Mughal idiom. Such politics is examined more fully in chapters to come.

The Story

After the deposition of Jahāndār Shāh in 1713, Farrukh Siyar assumed the throne in Delhi. Two brothers from the provincial nobility of Barhā, a region in the heartland of the empire and about eighty kilometers from the city of Delhi, gained paramount importance in the new dispensation. Barhā was famed for its sayyid aristocracy. Though there remained persistent doubts about the authenticity of the sayyids' claim to descent from the Prophet and scorn for their supposedly rustic ways, the sayyids of Barhā were renowned for their exceptional prowess in combat. Sayyid Abdullah Khān, the elder brother, assumed the viziership of the empire and received the title of Qutb al-Mulk, "axis of the state". His younger brother became the amīr al-umarāʾ, "foremost amongst the nobles" and the chief paymaster of the empire (*bakhshī*). The sayyids negotiated a peace with the Rājas of Rājputānā (modern-day Rajasthan), causing a rapprochement with Rājā Ajīt Singh by marrying his daughter to the emperor. At the same time, they made a strong alliance with Chūrāman, the leader of the Jāt *ethnē* who inhabited the rural areas to the south of the city.

Tensions between the emperor and the vizier appear to have begun shortly after the beginning of the reign. The conventional historiography suggests that the sayyids were unwilling to share

power with other factions at court, leading to the alienation of other sections of the nobility. Some of these nobles jockeyed for power at court and instigated the emperor to seize and destroy the sayyids, who, they claimed, held their own interests over those of the empire. Notable players at court in this period included the Nizām al-Mulk ("order of the state"), who largely maintained a wary neutrality and refused to participate actively in the politics of the court; Muhammad Amīn Khān, who led the nobility identified as being of the "Mughal" ethnicity; Samsām al-Daula ("Flaming Sword of the State"), a cautious and prudent supporter of the king; the emperor's favorite but much-reviled Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī; the Rājā Ajīt Singh, ruler of Jodhpur, related to the emperor through his daughter, but a staunch ally of the sayyids; and his perennial rival and faithful loyalist, the Rājā Jai Singh.

In 1715 the amīr al-umarāᵓ left Delhi for the Deccan to settle its affairs in the face of resistance by Marāthā forces; here he clashed with, and defeated, the acting imperial governor Dāᵓūd Khān Pannī, who was rumored to have been ordered by the emperor to attack the Sayyid. By 1718, the amīr al-umarāᵓ had negotiated an agreement with the Marāthās; at the same time, tensions between the emperor and his vizier had peaked with the rise at court of Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī. It is claimed that abortive attempts were made on the life of Qutb al-Mulk in Delhi. in 1719 the amīr al-umarāᵓ returned to Delhi with a massive army from the Deccan. The reunited Sayyid brothers and Rājā Ajīt Singh deposed the emperor Farrukh Siyar and replaced him with the prince Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt while the city of Delhi erupted in uproar against the foreign army.

Sources

The most frequently used sources for the period in question are three texts, all probably near-contemporary, and all titled *ᶜIbratnāma*. The word *ᶜibrat* contains the ideas of "weeping; being sad and melancholy", "silent grief", but also "a miracle, prodigy, mystery, example, or

warning".[292] I most frequently translate ᶜ*ibrat* as "warning"; the texts are therefore titled *Book of Warning*. In addition, I use Khush Hāl Chand's *tārīkh-i muhammad shāhi* which we have already encountered.

Lāhorī's Book of Warning

The *Book of Warning* (ᶜ*Ibratnāma*) of Muhammad Qāsim Lāhorī is perhaps the most widespread and popular history of the period ranging from the death of Aurangzeb (1707) to the enthronement of Muhammad Shāh, and is the only one of the three to have been published.[293] We know an unusual amount about the life of Lāhorī because his diary (*bayāz*) has survived.[294] From this we learn that Lāhorī was the son of a certain Sayyid Burhān Allāh, and lived near the Shāh ᶜĀlamī Gate of the city of Lahore in the neighborhood (*muhalla*) of Sayyid Nizām Bukhārī. Lāhorī was apparently educated by his uncle, the learned sufī Shāh ᶜAtīq Allah; he mentions a brother by the name of Mīr Qudrat Allāh, who was slain in Nādir Shāh's invasion of Delhi in 1739. In 1717/18 Lāhorī came in the service of Sūrat Singh and his son Lālā Ānand Singh; the former served the chief financial administrator (*dīwān*) of the amīr al-umarāᵓ. The author was thus associated with the sayyids of Barhā until their downfall in 1721. By 1729, Lāhorī had returned to his native city, where a grant of 224 rupees from a fellow student allowed him to repair a ruined mosque and dig a well. This friend, named Rājā Khush Hāl Chand, is quite possibly the author of the *History of Muhammad Shāh* we have already seen. Lāhorī lived at least until 1757, serving as a scribe to the nobility of the city, but claims to have completed his *Book of Warnings* by 1722/3.

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[292] Steingass, Johnson, and Richardson, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 882.
[293] Muḥammad Qasim Lahorī, *'Ibratnāma* (Lahore: Idārah-i Taḥqīqat-i Pākistān, 1977).
[294] The following description is based on the introduction by Zuhur al-Din Ahmad, the editor of Lāhorī's ᶜ*Ibratnāma*. See the introduction to Ibid. Dr. Ahmad has based this account on Lāhorī's *bayāz*, Sherani Mss. No. 2280, Punjab University Library, Lahore. I have been not yet been able to access this manuscript.

Lāhorī was regarded as an important historian by his contemporaries. Thus the French traveler Jean-Baptiste Gentil had a portrait of "Mohamed Cassem, author of a general history of Hindūstān", included in his chronicle (1772) that was gifted to the king of France. [295] While its manuscripts bear different names, it has been published with good reason as the *Book of Warnings*. For one, Muhammad Qāsim's own penname is ᶜ*Ibrat* (admonition, repentance). For another, Lāhorī had a clear vision of the nature and purpose of history itself and what he hoped to achieve with his own words. This is evident in the prolegomena presented in the printed text:

> There is an ancient custom and a firmly established practice that whatever may acquire the marks of singularity and the ornament of rareness due to the revolutions of the ages and the wonders of eras, being bound by rules and linked by connection, is called history; so that the occurrence of rarity-revealing events by every person of God and the performance of great feats by perfectly wise communities become the cause of an expanding of tempers and the delight of selves. Whatever actions were executed by former masters and the people of the world are recorded after much research and thought by their followers, and are inscribed on parchment and called admonitions or sayings. And from among that storehouse of wealth, violent events and terrifying conditions that entered the field of perception are held apart and organized in books of rules and regulations. Brevity-minded authors and highly intelligent writers thread these together in poetry and tie them together in prose, and write works of history that increase experience as a favor to oncomers in the caravans of existence… [296]

Lāhorī presents his work as a collection of the rarities of ages – in other words, not the material of quotidian histories, but the exceptional events which cause the "expanding of tempers" and the "delight of selves". Despite this lofty philosophical statement, Lāhorī's historical practice closely matches other texts produced at the time: our author describes the political revolutions from the death of Aurangzeb to the ascent of Muhammad Shāh, with the intervening rise and fall of the sayyids of Barhā. But it is with the fate and reputation of this clan, respectfully called the "sayyids of exalted rank' (*sādāt-i* ᶜ*ālī darājāt*), with which Lāhorī is more concerned. Lāhorī

[295] Gentile, Jean Baptiste, *Abridged chronicle of kings of Hindustan or Mughal Empire by colonel Gentil, dated 1772*, BNF, Francais 24219 (f. D v°)). Accessed online at: http://www.e-corpus.org/eng/notices/72748-Portrait-de-l-historien-Mohammed-Kasim.html

[296] Ibid., 97. Cf. for instance ᶜ*Ibratnāma* BL APAC IO Islamic 252, where this introduction is not present.

displays a marked preference for ethnic categories in his analysis, and is particularly careful in emphasizing the bravery of the sayyids, in opposition to the Mughal *ethnē*, for which he has a certain contempt. Thus he writes:

> …And no matter how much honor and rank and perquisites and favors came to the Mughal group (*farqa-i mughalīyya*) due to the efforts of Mīr Jumla, the elevation of the status of the *sādāt* of exalted rank (as was the due of their astonishment-increasing bravery) belonged to another world altogether. And in reality, their strength and valor was equaled from no one amongst the Mughals and the Rājpūts. The thorns of envy scratched the lives of many of his highness' companions, and these companions also traveled to places outside the world of faithful obedience.[297]

We see here, then, a foretaste of Lāhorī's central assertion, which will serve an important role in justifying his assertions: one, that the period in question was one of profound ethnic rivalry; two, that such rivalry – that is, the "envy" of the sayyids – caused unworthy folk to cause disorders in the empire.

Mirzā Muhammad's *Book of Warning*

What little we know of Mirzā Muhammad is derived from two works held at the British Library. The first has no title, but has been called a *Book of Warning* because the author styles himself "the writer of this book of warning". In tone and substance, the work is very different from that of Lāhorī or Kām Rāj, discussed next. The author tells us that he was born in the city of Jalālābād, in the Province of Kābul, (modern-day Afghānistan) on April 4, 1687, in the thirtieth year of Aurangzeb's reign. The book is styled as a memoir that contains some mentions of one's conditions (*ahwāl-i khud*) by way of a journal (*rūznāmcha*) from the death of Aurangzeb (1707) to the martyrdom of the oppressed emperor Farrukh Siyar in a style that the author asserts is deliberately "informal, clear and plain". Indeed, at first glance Mirzā Muhammad's book appears

[297] Ibid., 179.

to be a journal or a log-book, replete with details of the author's own activities. But a closer examination reveals that the text was composed or assembled at a date later than it covers.

Mirzā Muhammad's historical sensibility and technical craft exhibit a great concern with empiricism and verifiability. These qualities are not readily apparent in the work at hand because it is deliberately designed to appear as a journal and so frequently reads as a first-person narrative of events as they happen. But in his introduction to the *History of the Muhammadans* (*tārīkh-i muhammadī*), of which only a fractional excerpt of 322 folios survives, the mirzā makes his methods clear.[298] He begins by acknowledging that although many books have described the lives of prophets, saints, rulers, and men of wisdom in the past, they have suffered from certain deficiencies. Although the great Khwānd Amīr and Hasan Beg Khākī have produced compendia in the past, those who have sought their words are greater in number than those mentioned in the texts. As for Muhammad Sādiq Isfahānī, although he has tried to be comprehensive, 'many errors come to one's eyes' from his book; and come to think of it, the same is true for Hasan Beg Khākhī.

It is with this in mind, says Mirzā Muhammad, that one must write a manuscript that would serve as an encyclopedic compendium of the notable people of Islam. The mirzā tells us that he began his work on Sunday, the first of August 1712 (28 Jumādā II 1124). For every year of the hijrī calendar, the mirzā says, he began by bringing all the events that occurred around the horizons and directions of the globe under the control of the pen; after that, all of each of those who died in that year from among the caliphs, rulers and princes, and holy and wise men, are mentioned. But more than that; above the name of every deceased person, Mirzā Muhammad wrote an abbreviation in red denoting the book from which he derived this information, "so that if anyone

[298] Mirzā Muhammad, "Tārīkh-i Muhammadi."

wanted to discern the soundness of my statement (*sihhat-i qaul*), he may turn to that book for the purpose of discovering the details of the person [mentioned].” Our author then lists the abbreviations for about sixty works that he cites in the making of this tome.[299]

Despite its seemingly casual presentation as a “memoir”, we know that a very powerful historical and chronological sensibility serves as the motor of Mirzā Muhammad’s *Book of Warnings*. Indeed, the book bears the same meticulous attention to dating and chronology that is evident in the *History of the Muhammadans* – except in the places, as we shall see, where Mirzā Muhammad tries to explain the causes and reasons for the events he witnesses.

Kām Rāj’s Book of Warning

The third *Book of Warnings* is that of a certain Kām Rāj, son of Nain Singh, and is markedly different from that Mirzā Muhammad.[300] This text, the only known manuscript of which is held at the British Library, also describes the events of the reigns of the emperors from Bahadur Shāh to Muhammad Shāh. The text has no introduction and is apparently the first of two sections (*daftar*); the second is not extant. Of the author’s life and circumstances we know nothing. Evident in his writing, however, are the literary and stylistic flourishes characteristic of the well-educated. Kām Rāj does not employ much poetry in his text, but frequently produces rhyming and rhythmical prose (*saj*ᶜ) through the masterful use of an extensive vocabulary. Quite unlike the dour Mirzā Muhammad with his chronological obsessions, we sense our author has aimed to produce a work of literary pretension. The lack of concern with dating leads inevitably to the absence of a date for the text itself: but because it was copied by a certain Sayyid Fiqr Allāh for the doctor (*Maulawī*) Sāhib Aslam Sāhib in 1769 it appears safe to suggest that Kām Rāj may

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[299] Ibid., f. 1–6.
[300] Kām Rāj, “⊂Ibratnāma,” n.d., British Library, APAC, I.O. Islamic 1534.

well have been a contemporary of the sayyids and had a personal affiliation with their cause. Kām Rāj, as we shall see, is the most strident defenders of the Sayyid brothers, and he is careful to present every action in the best possible light. This puts him at some variance with the other historians we examine.

The Reign of Farrukh Siyar

Unlike the brief reign of the preceding Jahāndār Shāh, Farrukh Siyar's reign had little to trouble a reader in itself. The emperor was not obviously besotted with a woman of low status. Nor in fact did he go about oppressing all and sundry, though his reign was marked by several summary executions. For these reasons, most of the contemporary historians of the time had little by way of comment on the reign itself, and attention veered towards the spectacular and dramatic crises between the emperor and his sayyid nobility. In doing so, however, the historians of the era willfully compressed a reign that lasted seven years, mostly uneventful, into an action-packed story of crisis after crisis.

Though he could not be depicted as either malevolent or insane, historians nevertheless agreed that Farrukh Siyar was an ineffectual Emperor. This was certainly identified as one of the most important causes of the tensions between the sayyids and their overlord. Mirzā Muhammad's *Book of Warning* provides a clear and concise statement of these causes.

As the mirzā saw it, problems between the sayyids and Farrukh Siyar were implicit in his coming to power. Everyone who observed the situation knew that the emperor had gained the throne only because of the help of the sayyids. It was true that the emperor too rewarded them with very great titles and ranks, but the sayyids wanted yet more. They wished that all offices of state be assigned to their followers, and refused to accept the interference of any other group in their quest for power. But this alienated the emperor's retinue – the people who had been with Farrukh

Siyar since his childhood and mixed with him freely and without any formality – and had hoped that they would receive the rewards of the emperorship. Because they weren't strong enough to compete with the sayyids militarily, these followers convinced the emperor that the sayyids did not have his best interests in their hearts. These people suggested that the important offices of state such as the administration (*dīwānī*) and chief paymastership (*bakhshīgarī*) should be gradually taken away from the sayyids; if they relinquished power, so be it. If the sayyids responded with the barbarity (*jahālat*) for which this branch from Barhā were famous, then it would be better to be firm. Under no account, however, should war take place; rather, it was better to wait for the opportunity to seize both brothers "in the way that Zū `l-fiqār Khān had been dealt with"; and if they caused dissension, then they must be executed. Because the emperor was incompetent at strategizing, and thought this advice was the height of rectitude and in his best interest, he assented to this plan.[301] Mirzā Muhammad does not tell us why this was not a reasonable strategy, or what were the other options available to the emperor.

But a writer like Kām Rāj saw it very differently. He certainly didn't think that the sayyids behaved in an overweening fashion. The problem with Farrukh Siyar's reign, according to Kām Rāj, was that imperial servants began to be assigned inappropriately (*nā-munāsib*) exalted titles and land-grant assignations. Lowly vagrants (*harza gard-i mu⊂āsh*) from the distant provinces of Bihar and Banglā (Bengal) and other neighboring regions and served the imperial Stirrup (*rikāb*) and found a place from which to ascend (*murtaqā⊂*). Looking back at the empire's history, Kām Rāj asserted that in the reign of his sublime highness Jannat Āshiyānī (Humāyūn d.1566) imperial assignations (*manāsib*) matched land-grants (*jāgīr*) in the territories of Hindūstān. But at the beginning of the reign of Khuld Makān (Aurangzeb, r.1658-1707) the rampart of the

[301] Mirzā Muhammad, "⊂Ibratnāma," n.d., f. 122a–123a, British Library, APAC, IO Islamic 50 (2).

regulation of this rule was breached, and increases were offered without a place of employment, except to the imperial Guard (*wālāshāhī*). And then, in the time of Khuld Manzil (Bahādur Shāh, r.1707-12) this rule was not held to high and low alike, so that the charger of station could not be urged on in the field of the exaltation of ranks (*samand-i imārat dar ᶜarsa-yi uluwī-yi manzilat na-rānad*). In the "age of barbarity" (as the reign of Jahāndār Shāh was officially called), the ranks of the elite were given over to the musicians (*kalāwantān*) of low status and vocalists; and in the happy reign of Farrukh Siyar, the number of people from small towns and villages (*qasbāt wa dihāt*) was greater than estimation, and their ascent to the ranks of leadership crossed all limits.[302] This criticism, we recall, mirrors Irādat Khān's fears about the entry of incapable and boorish new men from the provinces into the imperial establishment.

At this point, Kām Rāj reflected on the manifold revolutions had occurred due to the rapidly spinning heavens; during the reign of Firdaus Āshiyānī (Shāh Jahān, r.1628-58), his subjects were populous and nobility happy. But in the reign of Aurangzeb, the world became a place of trouble and astonishment due to the rebelliousness of the malignant infidels of the Deccan and the uprising of the worthless Rājpūts, and thoughts of equaling the emperor of emperors spread amongst many; and so the people were greatly afflicted by the adversities and accidents which befell them. Then came the new spring of Bahādur Shāh's reign, in which all rules and regulations fell from administration and no means of disciplining the rebellious were effective. When Jahāndār Shāh came to power, he utterly destroyed the empire (*daulat*) of his grandfathers with the worst practices and observances, and the rivalry between Zū `l-fiqār Khān and Khān-i Jahān (Kokaltāsh Khān), and so the bride of the God-given state (*saltanat*) pulled herself away from the embrace of desire. In the same way Farrukh Siyar was seduced from the wise path of

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[302] Kām Rāj, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 54a–b.

proper policy by unclean and evil companions, men with shaven beards and seekers of strife, and so undertook actions that were selfish and unwise.[303] It hardly needs be pointed out that this particular story of imperial declension is not a general and impartial reflection on the empire; rather, it serves as the foundation of the conflict between the emperor and his smooth-cheeked lackeys on the one hand, and the righteous and virtuously-bearded sayyids on the other.

Tensions with the sayyids of Barhā

While the historians under consideration all viewed the reign in different ways, they agreed that matters began to deteriorate severely after the amīr al-umarāʾ fought an defeated Dāʾūd Khān Pannī in the Deccan. But the events that led up to the return of the amir's army were portrayed with great variety by the authors under question.

Lāhorī and the compressed narrative

Consider the example of Lāhorī. To our author's mind, the great confrontation began at the moment of the amīr al-umarāʾ's victory over the Afghān nobleman Dāʾūd Khān Pannī in Burhanpur. The amīr al-umarāʾ was celebrating this great success in the name of the emperor when an imperial order (*farmān*) regarding action against him was discovered in the seizure of that nobleman's possessions. The amīr al-umarāʾ was enraged by this and wrote to his brother in Delhi about the event. At this point Qāsim cannot restrain an authorial interjection: "By the grace of God, this text gives proof of the fidelity and faithfulness to the court!" Perhaps this is to defend the sayyids' actions in the rapid souring of the atmosphere at court, where the author's attention now returns. These courtiers opposed to the sayyids, seeing the qutb al-mulk alone in Delhi, now proposed all sorts of schemes to the emperor. As a result of such vague machinations, the qutb al-mulk did not come to court for a month or two and did not hold his court of affairs

[303] Ibid., f. 54b–55a.

(*kachehri*). Meanwhile the emperor's courtiers suggested that the pencase of viziership (*qalamdān-i wazīrī*) should be taken away from one qutb al-mulk and given to another. If the sayyids were to resist this, then the imperial artillery could be directed at his mansion without compunction. Or perhaps the sayyids could be invited to court and then imprisoned when he appeared in the imperial Washroom (*ghusal khāna*). But none of these schemes were implemented because no nobleman dared to face the sayyids' grandeur and ferocity (*shaukat wa saulat*). So the emperor went to the qutb al-mulk's house to dispel his internal anxieties and ate his food and rested there, says Lāhorī, now painting Farrukh Siyar in a distinctly subordinate status to his vizier. The qutb al-mulk, for his part, often attempted to resign his duties but the emperor refused to accept this; for strangely enough, the emperor too did not wish to be separated from his vizier.

As all this information reached the amīr al-umarāᵓ, he boiled over with rage and decided to head to Delhi. For his purposes he chose a man of the Deccani region's wellborn folk, and gave out that he was a son of Sultan Muhammad Akbar, who was a son of Aurangzeb and had fled to Iran to escape his father's wrath after a failed rebellion. The significance of this move was obvious to any Mughal reader: a person of royal blood, discovered outside the prison in which such minor collateral descendants were guarded, provided an opportunity for others to rally to the pretender's cause. Indeed it could be argued that Farrukh Siyar was himself such a prince, who had been used to overthrow the legitimate regime of a reigning ruler. Because sovereignty was seen as shared among the ruling family, a missing grandson, returned from Iran, was perhaps just as good a ruler as a more immediate descendant.

So in December 1718, the amīr al-umarāᵓ marched to Delhi by way of the Rājput dominions (*Rājputānā*). Besides his Hindūstānī troops and the people of Barhā, he also brought a Marāthā

army with contingents of the Tilangā and Bhīl and other peoples of the Deccan. When this horrific news reached the emperor, he ordered the governors and landowners of the regions of Malwā and Bundelkhānd to obstruct the oncoming army. Every day the news of the army's approach caused fresh turmoil amongst the dissidents and strife-seekers of Shāhjahānābād. When the force finally arrived at the inn (*sarāy*) of ᶜAlī Wardī Khān, the emperor dispatched his new favorite Iᶜtiqād Khān to meet the returned sayyid with all decorum. The emperor's loyal servants, such as Ghāzī al-Din Khān and Rājā Jai Singh requested the emperor to proceed out by way of his usual travel and hunting and so to meet the amīr al-umarāᵓ. But the emperor did not consider the advice of his faithful servants equal to that of the utterly deceptive Iᶜtiqād Khān. In fact, in Lāhorī's view, too much intercourse with this Kashmīrī and his tribe and family of unknown origins (*nā-mᶜlūm al-nasb*) had caused the qutb al-mulk to be pushed to a side and the amīr al-umarāᵓ to be forced to Delhi. Iᶜtiqād Khān, therefore, pushed the emperor into a place of profound conflict with the sayyids.

This plausible and compelling narrative suffers from a single problem. That is the fact that the amīr al-umarāᵓ defeated Dāᵓūd Khān on September 6, 1715. But despite his rage at the furtive imperial message discovered in the possessions of the vanquished, the sayyid did not leave the South for another three years. Lāhorī offers no comment on this discrepancy. In fact, the amīr's three-year-long campaign in the Deccan occupies a brief ten pages in the printed text of the *Book of Warnings*. The amīr's absence in the south is, in narrative terms, a nuisance. It serves only to sap the vividity of the oncoming conflict between the emperor and the sayyids and to render Lāhorī's assignation of blame to Iᶜtiqād Khān suspect. And so we learn that in a few short pages the amīr al-umarāᵓ has returned to Delhi with his army.

Lāhorī tells us that the sayyids' forces were stationed in the imperial chases around Fīrūz Shāh's pillar (*lāth-i Fīrūz Shāh*), near the residence of the vizier and both brothers met there. Now the sayyids again offered their services to the emperor, who accepted all the proposals that were presented to him. On 25 February 1719, they met the emperor for a second time and held discussions with him. During this meeting, the imperial order that had activated Dāūd Khān was presented before the emperor. The shaken ruler contorted his lips in apology and declared the order a forgery. He fastened the blame for this action around the necks of others. The conversation about fixing the affairs of state were ended by the amīr al-umarāᵓ stating that the "prince" who had been brought from the Deccan, as well as the continued loyalty of the sayyids, were both available only if Iᶜtiqād Khān and some others were expelled from court and so did not annoy the minds of the nobility any more. Furthermore, the sayyids demanded the right to make appointments to the elevated offices of the administrator of the washroom and the superintendent of the artillery. These were significant positions, because both of these officials determined control over the Red Fort. Having heard these proposals, the emperor gave the sayyids leave and they returned to their own tents.

The loyal Rājā Jai Singh and others now wrote petitions to the emperor saying that the water of despair (*yaᵓs*) had not passed one's head yet; it was imperative that the emperor come out of the fort and show himself to be in control (*dastburd*) of his faithful servants. But this was utterly unacceptable to the emperor, and the Rājā Jai Singh was ordered to return to his own territories. The well-wishing Rājā was helplessly forced to depart, but he wisely stationed himself twenty *kos* (40 miles) from Delhi and awaited news of events there. In the same way, Sar Buland Khān, who was wearing the garb of mendicancy and had retired to Farīdābād (near Delhi) was summoned to court and packed off to the governorship of Kābul the very same day to settle the

affairs of the Afghān and Mughal tribes (*ālūs*).[304] The emperor having irrationally expelled all his loyal servants had now set the stage for the coup against him.

Kām Rāj: The blundering emperor

In Kām Rāj's view, the problem began elsewhere. The first crisis between the emperor and the sayyids was precipitated by the malign workings of the nobleman Mīr Jumla, though he provides us with no dates to contextualize this information. While there had been some doubts and suspicions between the two parties, Mīr Jumla, "offensive to well-being" (*khāyr hamla*, a rhyme with Mīr Jumla of which the author is inordinately fond), agitated the controversy for his own ends. But the emperor, the shadow of God, did not awaken to the trap of the crafty fox and instead considered it a species of help and succor. Even more strangely, writes the author wonderingly, deceitful people surrounding the emperor took great pains to ensure that the matter remained secret. But, asks Kām Rāj in a line of verse paraphrasing Saᶜdī, "How can one who holds a daily audience in the hall of special assembly keep a secret?" We understand that this must refer to the time before the amīr al-umaraᵓ's departure for the Deccan in 1715, since both the brothers are mentioned together.

So the two faithful followers of ᶜAli came trustingly in the emperor's control by visiting him in the fort, the emperor now ordered the nobleman Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān that the group of armed slaves (*qullār*) should be called forth so that the affairs of the two nobles could be brought to a conclusion. But the aforementioned khān thought the emperor referred to the "*farqa-yi qūr*"- the group of servants who carried the emperor's personal weapons and standards. Summoned generally to lead an imperial march, the *qūr* officials created such confusion in their noisy wake that the sayyids managed to exit the premises. This comic misunderstanding ensured

[304] Lahorī, *'Ibratnāma*, 202–8.

that the scheme was to no effect. And so over time the smoke of envy arose from the roaring fire of hatred. Both brothers decided together to withdraw from court and instead remain at their own mansion so as to protect their honor, which, as Kām Rāj reminds us, is the most valuable jewel for the people of dignity (*arbāb-i harmat*).[305]

But this defense was far from passive. The brothers gathered long-serving soldiers and hardened veterans (*sipāh-i qadīm wa mardum-i ᶜamīm*), and the emperor, deceived by his cunning courtiers prepared a defense of the Fort, going so far as to mount cannon on its ramparts. Kām Rāj tells us that things had reached such a pass that the sound of a single shot would have incited the "event-seeking, uncultured mob" (*aubāsh-i wāqiᶜa-talab-i bī-farhang*) to lay their grubby hands on the lives and possessions of the city's residents: a narrative foretelling of the events that were to occur with Farrukh Siyar's death, but also perhaps an indicator of the disapproval of the populace for the actions of the sayyids. Meanwhile, the two sayyids wrote to the emperor asking him to resume his routine of hunting and Friday prayers in the metropolitan mosque, and asked him why he had lost faith in his utterly loyal servants. The emperor wrote back, saying what fears had settled in his heart, and why. This exchange of letters brought back joy and gladness to both parties, and the emperor conferred favors on the sayyids; but while he maintained a semblance of external benevolence, the emperor thirsted for their blood within himself. This reconciliation, mediated by Samsām al-Daula, led to the amīr al-umarāᵓ being deputed to the Deccan to settle its affairs. Now Kām Rāj stresses that the amīr al-umarāᵓ could have rebelled at this point had he so wished; but the salt of the royal family coursed through every vein and fiber of the sayyids' bodies, and so they could not even conceive of revolt against the emperor.[306]

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[305] Kām Rāj, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 56a; See William Irvine, *Army of the Indian Mughals: Its Organization and Administration* (South Asia Books, 1998), 226, 205 for "qullar" and "qur" respectively.
[306] "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 57a–b.

These much-professed feelings of benevolence and loyalty did not last. While Kām Rāj does not provide any dates, we understand that after the amīr al-umarāʾ's clash with Dāʾūd Khān Pannī in the Deccan, matters between Qutb al-Mulk and the emperor worsened again. Since the emperor found that loyal servant separated from his brother, he wished to imprison and kill him, until Qutb al-Mulk became aware of the plot and retreated to his mansion in self-imposed house arrest as formerly. Matters reached a stalemate, as both parties were filled with dreadful suspicions about the other, and "neither was able to drive the polo-ball of precedence in the field of contention". But when the emperor consulted his servants, they all informed him frankly that the two Sayyid brothers had made no errors in their desire to sacrifice themselves for the imperial cause, and so were in the right, and that the emperor must not cause strife and dissension within the state. In fact, Qutb al-Mulk even wrote to the emperor, saying, "I wasn't jesting about sacrificing my life for you. In the name of God, seat me on a horse and see the sight of your servants' sacrifice". In response, the emperor tried to win over Hindu Rājas to his cause, granting them unprecedented ranks and favors, but only the Rājadhirāja Jai Singh Kachwaha supported the emperor. The rājā did this not out of any sense of loyalty, says Kām Rāj, but only due to his youth and inexperience. Mahārājā Ajīt Singh, the "landowner" (*zamīndār*) of Jodhpur (as Kām Rāj dismissively calls him) was not entangled by the emperor's blandishments even though his daughter was married to the ruler, and maintained a sort of concord with Qutb al-Mulk.[307]

This is a far more robust criticism of the emperor than that which Lāhorī offered. In Kām Rāj's mind, the two Sayyids were utterly loyal and simply incapable of doing any wrong. On the other hand, the emperor was hell-bent on finding a cause and means to get rid of his loyal servants. While Kām Rāj blames Mīr Jumla for the initial conflict, where in Lāhorī's account it had been

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[307] Ibid., f. 62a–63a.

Khān-i Daurān and later Iᶜtiqād Khān who placed "high and low and good and bad" in the heart of Farrukh Siyar.[308] In Kām Rāj's telling too, the emperor managed to find a lackey to serve his purposes in the figure of Muhammad Murād Iᶜtiqād Khān, the Kashmīrī who received rapid elevation at court as a supposed counterbalance to the power of the sayyids.

Like Lāhorī, Kām Rāj disapproved of the importance granted to this upstart; while he preserved the right of emperors to quickly grant high rank to people of mean stature – citing extensive examples of the impressive powers of discernment of Emperors such as Akbar, Shāh Jahān and particularly Aurangzeb – our author was convinced that Farrukh Siyar did not fit in this category, and Muhammad Murād in any case was unworthy of such favors. Nevertheless, Iᶜtiqād Khān managed to gather around him a force of villains (*pājīyān*) and even more ominously, shaven-cheeked (*rīsh tarāsh*) men, and so managed to be despised and reviled by all the other pillars of state. While the *homo novus* set strict injunctions in his shameless debaucheries (*war ghaltānīdan*), in the field where manhood was tested, he was capable of only flattery ("fat-tonguedness") and decanting gold where necessary. By contrast, only the two Sayyids had the qualities requisite of manhood: an internal force and strength of the liver (*quwwat-i jigarī*), steadfastness and firmness in battle. These, concludes Kām Rāj, are the real principles (*usūl-i aslī*) of the brave.[309]

Now Kām Rāj presents us with several reasons that precipitated the amīr al-umarāᵓ's return from the Deccan to Hindūstān. His disingenuity here is stunning. First of all, claims Kām Rāj, the amīr al-umarāᵓ had no idea what was happening in Delhi and had not heard from his brother apparently because the ways and paths of the south were so thoroughly obstructed that not even a bird could soar away, and thousands of couriers were unable to relay messages. Yet the amīr al-

[308] Lahorī, *'Ibratnāma*, 188.
[309] Kām Rāj, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 63a–64a.

umarāᵓ had realized that Rājā Ajīt Singh and Jai Singh and others were marching on Delhi, and so felt that some sort of crisis was on hand. Also, says Kām Rāj, a certain Sultan Muᶜīn al-Din, son of Prince Muhammad Akbar, (who had rebelled against Aurangzeb and decamped to Iran), appeared in the south with red tents – a symbol of royalty – and the stated intention of "traveling to Hindūstān". Kām Rāj seems to indicate that this person, a pretender, was merely the son of a local judge (*qāzī*) and had an astonishing resemblance to the exalted family (*tabaqa-yi wālā gauhar*), but the sayyid took charge of him to bring him to court on an elephant – both with honor and under guard.[310] We see here that Kām Rāj has already taken an extreme position in defense of the actions of the sayyids well before their most controversial actions must be described.

Khush Hāl: Ailments in Bodies Royal and Politic

Writing in the reign of Muhammad Shāh, Khush Hāl presents us with a very different view of the origins of the crisis, from a reign that had been both stable and lengthy. Farrukh Siyar's crisis, we are told, had its root not in any corruption of the body politic, but a malignant distemper in the emperor's person. The author tells us that in the third year of the emperor's reign he fell victim to an unspecified illness. Although the doctors of India treated him, there was no improvement in his condition. In the end, docile and obedient ("carpet-kissing") Europeans (*firangīs*) petitioned the exalted court that now there remained no remedy but to "pierce it". By the excellence of the doctor the wound healed rapidly, but there was one loss, namely that the emperor was rendered impotent by the operation. In this way it was a mortal wound, but since life is dearer than all things, the emperor somehow found life again after this tragedy. But from

[310] Ibid., f. 64a–b.

this point on, notes Khush Hāl significantly, the emperor became the object of the scorn of elite and commoner alike, and the subject and object of abuse.

This remarkable story is verified to some extent by the mythology of the early East India Company in India. We know in fact that the hero of the British in the reign of Farrukh Siyar was a “chyrurgeon” by the name of William Hamilton, who had accompanied the British Embassy to Farrukh Siyar’s court. The embassy sought trading privileges but was obstructed at every turn, until William Hamilton had the chance to treat the emperor’s “malignant distemper”. Imperial favors and munificence followed in copious measure, even if Hamilton did not live long to enjoy his rewards. Hamilton’s gravestone, already obscure by the late eighteenth century, was preserved and reproduced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a moment of glorious origin in the prehistory of British rule in India (fig. 1).

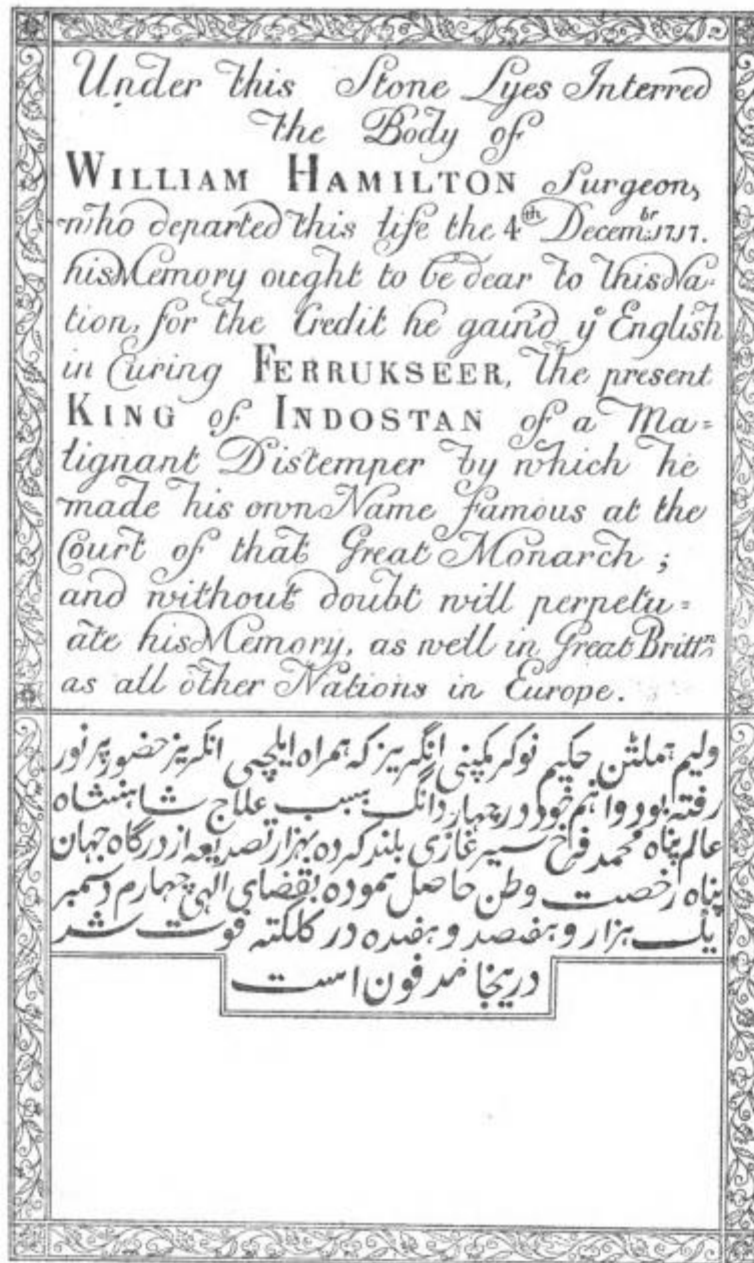

Fig. 1: William Hamilton's Gravestone.[311]

[311] George Smith, ed., *Alexander Grant, Physician and Friend: His Autobiography and His Letters from the Marquis of Dalhousie* (Murray, 1902), 6.

Even more intriguingly than all of this, Khush Hāl suggests that the emperor's disability became the cause of the meteoric ascent of Muhammad Murād Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī. Iᶜtiqād Khān had been in the employ of Jahāndār Shāh, and since his reign had eked out a living among the multitude of the fallen (*zumrā-yi uftādigān*). But he became a companion of the emperor and received the title of Iᶜtiqād Khān, and became privy to the private and even connuptial secrets (*rāz-i khilwat o jalwat*) of the emperor. In this way he achieved unexpected eminence (*daulat*), and by offering a special bed that belonged to the emperor Jahāngīr, found repose and miraculous power. But because he spoke a little obscenely, he would say with a loud cry, "Any friend and companion of this slave who does not join me now, a curse upon him! And if I don't gratify those who do join me, a curse apon me!" And indeed many joined him at that time, and he gained power over all the affairs of the emperor and displaced the sayyids [of Barhā] from every path they were on.[312]

Khush Hāl does not specify what hold the reviled Kashmīrī had over the emperor, though his connection with the impotence of Farrukh Siyar and the gift of a previous emperor's bed appears to present a sexual allusion. Our author certainly holds Iᶜtiqād Khān responsible for instigating the emperor to seize the qutb al-mulk at court. This was a convenient action, especially because the amīr al-umarāᵓ was currently distant, and it found favor among the "faction of hypocrites" (*jamāᶜat-i nifāq*) at court. So the emperor turned to his trustworthy servant Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān Khān, and told him, "Today I'll be sitting in the prayer room (*tasbīh khāna*) and Qutb al-Mulk is at court according to ordinary protocol. Let it be that the imperial slaves (*qullārān-i bādshāhī*) are ready and prepared. When that faithful friend (*yār-i wafādār*, a title of Qutb al-Mulk) is under control before me, I will signal that your slaves (*qūl*) should cause that

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[312] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 130–2.

group to pass so that they can take the right hand of the state (*yamīn al-daulā*, another title of the Qutb al-Mulk) in their hands and imprison him."

Now when Qutb al-Mulk came to court, his highness sat in the room of prayer with a few selected companions, and at the proper time signaled to Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān. But this courtier, insinuates Khush Hāl, understood the proclivities and declivities (*nishīb o farāz*) of the time at hand better than others, and so did not see it wise and foresighted to imprison so great a nobleman. Where Kām Rāj had detected a comic misunderstanding, Khush Hāl detects the purposeful mishearing of a minister acute and wise. So the Samsām al-Daulā said "*qūr*" instead of "*qūl*", and the difference this single sound made was as great as that between the earth and sky. The group of the *qūl* remained in place and the *qūr* entered the audience. At this time, many of Qutb al-Mulk's people, who had presumably feared an attempt against their leader's life, also entered the audience. Now the meeting assumed a different character and the conversation became miserable and melancholic in accordance with Saᶜdī's line of verse that had been quoted by Kām Rāj. Qutb al-Mulk became aware of what was going on, and wrote to his brother; while his highness took great exception to Samsām al-Daula, and threw utensils, or according to some, a spittoon, at the courtier's breast. Until now the fire of hypocrisy had blazed in the oven of interiors selves, says Khush Hāl, but now suddenly flared out. Unlike Kām Rāj, Khush Hāl does not believe the sayyid enjoyed a fortuitous escape; rather, it was the wisdom and sagacity of Samsām al-Daulā that saved the qutb al-mulk. This interpretation, of course, also absolutely contradicts the assertions of Lāhorī, who we recall blames the khān-i daurān for the controversies at court in the first instance.

Qutb al-Mulk wrote to his elder brother the amīr al-umarāᵓ, who had just vanquished Dāᵓūd Khān Pannī and was now quailing before an even more formidable opponent: that Afghān's

ferocious widow. Here Khush Hāl's narrative takes a comic turn. In fact, says Khush Hāl sardonically, after killing Dāᵓūd Khān, the amīr al-umarāᵓ considered the Deccan to be like sweet porridge (*halwa*) without milk but now found vermicelli of stone (*falūdā-i sang*) in his teeth. At the same time, the amīr al-umarāᵓ had intercepted letters between the officers of court that were hostile to him, and which made him writhe within himself like a serpent. So he announced himself in the name of one of the princes, assembled a massive army of Hindūstānīs and Deccanīs, and marched on Delhi. But for Khush Hāl, a major cause of the sayyid's departure was the steady stream of sarcastic and threatening challenges from Dāᵓūd Khān's widow. Khush Hāl, in other words, presents a direct challenge to the narrative of the bravery and honor of the sayyids that was seen as bringing them into conflict with the emperor. Khush Hāl's attitude is at some remove from a loyalist like Kām Rāj: but then, Khush Hāl wrote when the issue of Farrukh Siyar's reign had been settled decisively and the sayyids of Barhā themselves had been destroyed as a political power.

Nevertheless, Khush Hāl bemoans the ineptitude of his historical subject: "What can I say of the imprudence of that man whose head's caught in the claws of fate?" asks our author. While one might be forgiven for thinking that Khush Hāl criticizes the sayyid, in fact the historian's ire is directed against the emperor himself, who despite such selfish behavior (*sulūk pasandīda-yi khud*) and the heedlessness of his servants, reigned thoughtlessly in the Blessed Fort. When the amīr al-umarāᵓ finally reached Delhi with pomp and grandeur, Rājā Ajīt Singh and Jai Singh ("who are the leaders of all the Rājas in Hindustān") advised the emperor that the arrival of the nobleman in this way was not empty of [the signification of] rupture. Thus they said, "You should leave the fort by way of traveling and hunting, and visit the amīr al-umarāᵓ's tents. If the amīr al-umarāᵓ does indeed wear the yoke on his neck and the saddle-cloth of obedience on his

back, how could he not offer his obeisance? But if he has corrupt or perverse desires, then we'll see what the extent is."[313]

Having presented the emperor with this stratagem, Khush Hāl now emphasizes the emperor's innocence and sincerity. For the servant-fostering and pure-hearted emperor now said that the amīr al-umarāᵓ had no spite for him, and it was impossible for the sayyid to do anything improper in the future either. For Khush Hāl the subject was not the malignity of the emperor's intentions – as is most fully the case with Kām Rāj – but the ways in which the emperor failed to manage the escalating crisis at his court. Nevertheless, those who served him faithfully remained loyal. So Rājā Jai Singh sought leave to depart and headed to his own lands; and on his way out of the city, he parked his tents near those of the amīr al-umarāᵓ, who'd sent a message to court saying, "This slave has come out of his way to offer the present that has been captured, and so is hopeful that these petitions will be approved so that he can personally express his loyalty." The sum of these various exchanges, according to Khush Hāl, was that the emperor's forces should be removed from the fort and arrangements should be made to deploy the servant's forces instead.

The three literary histories of the reign converge and diverge in various important ways on the subject of the tensions at court. Lāhorī, Kām Rāj and Khush Hāl are all in agreement that the emperor was caused to make missteps because of the self-interested motives of the oleaginous toadies who surrounded him at court. Significantly, Iᶜtiqād Khān is the recipient of universal disapprobation: the epithet "Kashmīrī", a standard regional designation, is not used in the case of the other nobility at court – as if Iᶜtiqād Khān, despite his high rank, could not live down the fact of his Kashmīrī origins. In this sense he serves as the paradigmatic example of a fear voiced first

[313] Ibid., 132–7.

in Irādat Khān, and more strongly yet in Kām Rāj: the person of unknown family from the periphery of the empire who rises to power but has no connection those who see themselves as the rightful and proper aristocracy. Iᶜtiqād Khān, of course, was hardly a nobody: he had served as an agent of Prince Jahāndār Shāh before 1712, and his rise through the ranks had been a steady progression, not an immediate ascent to the top.[314]

Another feature of the criticisms leveled against Iᶜtiqād Khān is their unified disapproval of his forms of speech: while he is represented as persuading the emperor to embark on foolish ventures in Lāhorī and Kām Rāj, Khush Hāl regards his speech as "somewhat obscene". This accusation is sharpened in a later Mughal biographical dictionary, which found the khān notable for his "outspokenness", and "lacking circumlocution" despite his "long tongue". In the final assessment, the biographer notes that "[t]hough he was notorious for his feeble intellect and meanness yet he had abundant knowledge, and in a short time made his fortune. Yet all men speak ill of him". This remarkably contradictory statement is followed by an elucidatory verse: "Success in the world's riches does not lessen one's sins, / For gold does not remove blackness from the touchstone / rather it makes them conspicuous".[315]

But this unity of perspective breaks down in the face of other troubling contradictions. Were the sayyids at fault in any way, as Khush Hāl implies, or was it merely the emperor's ineptitude that led to his downfall? Or was it, as Kām Rāj suggests, the irrational hatred of perfectly loyal servants that caused such turbulence in the empire? Even more importantly, when were the processes of dethronement set irrevocably in motion?

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[314] On this point, see the introduction in Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat us-Salatin Chaghta: a Mughal chronicle of post-Aurangzeb period, 1707-1724*, ed. Muzaffar Alam (Bombay: Asia, 1980), 20–2.
[315] Khan, *The Maā͟thir-Ul-Umarā ...*, 708–14.

Mirzā Muhammad's scrupulous history

In order to consider these questions from a rather different perspective, we now turn to the *Book of Warning* of Mirzā Muhammad. For historians seeking the solid ground of empirical fact after the airy generalizations of historians such as Kām Rāj and Lāhorī, Mirzā Muhammad's *Book* is at first sight a welcome relief. Riddled with personal observations and news-reports, all meticulously dated, the mirzā seems to offer a reliable, and indeed indisputable perspective on the activities of the city's political elite.

On the 17th of August, 1718, the rather dejected mirzā left the small rural settlement of Jalālābād for his home in Shāhjahānābād, the capital. The excursion to the countryside had been fruitless and unpleasant. The monsoons had arrived and so it rained copiously but erratically. The mirzā had also become severely unwell; a painful bout of stomach illness had provoked nausea and indigestion, forcing our mirzā to medicate himself and eat nothing for days. But the personal discomforts were only part of it. The affair of the seizure of the estates of a deceased Afghān nobleman had proved to be more complex than expected; his recalcitrant offspring had proven wily foes and thwarted our mirzā at every step. The mirzā had incurred unavoidable losses in this fruitless exercise, but he refused to accept the benevolences that the Afghāns offered him. Under ordinary circumstances one might have expected the local garrison to ride by and enforce Delhi's claims at spear-point – and indeed, the mirzā had been deputed by no less an august personality than the great courtier ᶜInāyat Allāh Khān himself.[316]

But then these were hardly normal times. For just as the mirzā lay writhing on his sick-bed, so too was the body politic convulsing with fresh disorders. Letters from his brother in the city had informed our author that tensions had soared between the emperor and his vizier. There was no

[316] Mirzā Muhammad, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 190b–191a.

hope of any support from the forces of the state; in fact the local military commander (*faujdār*) of the nearest town had just been called by the vizier to Delhi. This was not surprising, for the mirzā himself was then at the edge of the region of Barhā, the homeland of the Farrukh Siyar's sayyid ministers.

A few days later, the mirzā recorded his joy of kissing his father's feet and embracing his brother and other members of the family. But times in Delhi were hardly normal. For just as the mirzā began to return to his usual routine of noting prominent occurrences at court, an astonishing event shook the city. On the 28th of August, which was the 1st day of Shawwāl and the day of the ᶜ*Īd al-Fitr*, the emperor and the vizier proceeded to the festival-ground (ᶜ*īd-gāh*) as was customary. Because Qutb al-Mulk did not feel at ease with the emperor, however, he went after having made great preparations. But first it is necessary to note the facts of the case, says the mirzā. The emperor was always trying to suppress the good fortune of the two sayyids, and its design was marked on the slate of his interior.

The reasons for the emperor's anger were not difficult to discern for Mirzā Muhammad. First, there was the matter of Chūrāman the Jāt, who had been responsible for the security of the vital corridor between Delhi and Agra. Chūrāman had rebelled and retreated to his fort, and the Rājā Jai Singh had been sent to chastise him. But the siege had dragged on, and at last Chūrāman was brought to court by the vizier, who interceded on his behalf. But the emperor had not in reality wished to forgive Chūrāman's crimes; and Jai Singh had submitted that he was very close to finally bringing the recalcitrant Jāt to his knees. In fact, said the rājā, the surrender of Chūrāman was orchestrated by the vizier to thwart the rājā's imminent success.

The emperor, who considered the sayyids as a hindrance to the management of *his* territories, agreed with this assessment. The emperor's advisor Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī was not a

seasoned soldier, so he decided that brave and experienced Sar Buland Khān would be recalled from Patnā, where he had just been deputed. Sar Buland Khān, it was expected, would serve well to chastise the sayyids in any open conflict. Sar Buland Khān believed he would receive the viziership after this, so he set out happily at once for Delhi, where the news of his coming was taken as a sign by the people that war with the sayyids was imminent. Sar Buland Khān arrived in the month of Shaᶜbān (two months before the present) and was honored with an increase in rank and title. But the ever-vigilant (*hūshiyār*) Qutb al-Mulk also appointed three or four thousand extra cavalry and came to court with perfect caution. Meanwhile, Sar Buland Khān angled for the viziership but the emperor, who wasn't particularly cunning, naively informed him that Iᶜtiqād Khān was to receive the post when the qutb al-mulk had been dispatched. Sar Buland Khān was understandably more than a little upset to hear this news and grew sullen at the prospect of being denied this plum posting. At the same time, Rājā Ajīt Singh was headed to court, and the emperor expected him to be his help and support in the oncoming battle. But Farrukh Siyar was unaware that Ajīt Singh was in league with the sayyids and did not have the imperial cause at heart.

And so, after this long digression on the political maneuverings of the highest nobility of the realm, the mirzā returned to the mode of reporting events "as they happened". But it is of great importance to note that the issues which troubled the relationship between the emperor and the vizier which Mirzā Muhammad mentions do not go back much before the latter part of 1717. The mirzā had remained in Delhi and had claimed to be present on the day that Zū `l-fiqār Khān was killed in court in 1712, so he was certainly a position to note tensions in the city as they occurred. While the mirzā does not express surprise on the receipt of the news of tensions at court, he does not convey a growing sense of unease at the increasing dysfunction at court. The

entries for the years in Delhi do not indicate a constant sense of tension: instead, they mention far more quotidian events, from the birth of monstrous children to the spectacles of illumination which delighted its inhabitants on many occasions. Instead, the mirzā presents the crisis as fully formed, and one that requires retroactive explanation rather than chronological progression.

It is with this rather sudden increase in tensions, then, that we turn to the happenings of the Day of ᶜĪd. Those who controlled the state (*ahl-i hāl o ᶜaqd*) realized that on the day of the festival, a large number of imperial servants would be present at the festival-ground, but the qutb al-mulk would be accompanied by only a few companions and retainers. Because they would all be unarmed, it was at this very place that they must be attacked, for the reason that "a decapitated head does not cry out". But divine will ensured that Qutb al-Mulk caught a whiff of this plot. So the night before the planned ceremonies, the sayyid Khān-i Jahān, also of the Barhā clan, went with his children and people to the festival-ground and spent all night there. As other Barhā retainers poured in, the grounds were filled by the morning of the festival.

When the emperor's retinue arrived at the festival-ground in the morning, they saw it was full of Qutb al-Mulk's men. Now they fell silent and decided it was inadvisable to act. Qutb al-Mulk himself visited the festival-ground after the sun rose, and then went to greet the emperor with the same multitude that had waited for him. When the emperor saw Qutb al-Mulk and his mob, he realized that the task of getting rid of this turbulent minister was too great for him and became extremely dejected. Both the vizier and the emperor then proceeded to the festival-ground and offered their prayers together, after which the emperor returned to the fort. But the qutb al-mulk stayed behind and inspected his followers. Even though the imperial procession and its group of

spectators (*mardum-i tamāshā*) had left, there were so many supporters of the sayyid in the festival-ground that one couldn't tell whether the crowd had diminished in the least.[317]

Given that no other detailed descriptions of the ᶜĪd are available, we cannot tell whether the mirzā's account is the statement of an actual conspiracy against the sayyids, or whether it reflects a popular reading of tensions in the city cast onto the events of the day. But other ominous events continued to illustrate the profound tensions that racked these most stratospheric realms of imperial politics. Rājā Ajīt Singh returned to Delhi, but refused to break with the sayyids. When he was enticed to come to the fort by Iᶜtiqād Khān, says the mirzā, he would not proceed beyond the gates of the fort without the company of Qutb al-Mulk. When told that the vizier on his way, the rājā proceeded to enter the fort, but stopped again before entering the chamber of public audience (*dīwān-i ᶜāmm*). Here he resolutely refused to proceed any further without the vizier, until persuaded yet again to proceed. He finally stopped outside the chamber of special audience (*dīwān-i khāss*) and did not move until the vizier personally came to him and took him to the emperor. The emperor was highly displeased by this sort of behavior but perforce said nothing. After this strained encounter, both the vizier and the rājā did not make an appearance at court for twenty days.[318] It is noteworthy that this incident, described by the mirzā in such detail, and with such apparent verisimilitude, finds mention in none of the other texts under consideration.

The mirzā tells us that faltering attempts were made to reduce tensions. On 1 October 1718 the emperor planned to visit Qutb al-Mulk, but discovered that Rājā Ajīt Singh "coincidentally" happened to be visiting him. Much annoyed by the presence of this "bastard", the emperor refused to visit the qutb al-mulk. The visit was repeated with greater success on 4 October 1718. But even after this the vizier remained very suspicious; when he next planned to come to court,

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[317] Ibid., f. 192a–194b.
[318] Ibid., f. 196a–b.

he heard through the khān-i daurān that the emperor would try to capture him. In a striking variance from his usual style, Mirzā Muhammad does not provide the date for this occurrence. Instead he, writes, "so it is said that the vizier arrived for audience with five hundred armed footmen".[319] This would suggest that while the mirzā was personally aware of the ᶜĪd day plot, he had only hearsay to account for this later event.

In any case, the mirzā continues, on 24 December 1718 the emperor visited Ajīt Singh's mansion. There was lavish gift-giving from this point on, so that it was clear to all onlookers that the enmity between the vizier and the emperor had finally ended. We are told that the emperor was very pleased with the sayyids now, and that increases in rank and land-grants were distributed all around, but here again Mirzā Muhammad strikingly omits to provide dates. Relations worsened again between the two parties when the sayyids discovered that Muhammad Amīn Khān had been recalled to court. Qutb al-Mulk asked why Muhammad Amīn Khān was en route to Delhi, and the emperor said that the servant had moved disobediently of his own accord. This created huge controversies and renewed tensions – but again, Mirzā Muhammad remains vague about the dating of these events.[320]

The inconsistencies between the narratives of the events so far are too great to be resolved by attributing them to the natural variance in memory and perception between authors. None of the sources we have examined so far provide us with the sort of detail that might permit an accurate reconstruction of the mounting tensions at court. The reasons for this are so evident as to be almost banal. Lāhorī, and to a far greater Kām Rāj, are interested in providing a robust defense of the actions of the sayyids that will follow their description of what happened during the period in question. Considered in terms of history – *tārīkh* – it would be easy indeed to dismiss the work

[319] Ibid., f. 202a–203a.
[320] Ibid., f. 210b–214a.

of a Lāhorī or a Kām Rāj as partisan, factional, bigoted, insufficiently historical, and instead prefer the more conventional account of Mirzā Muhammad. But, as we have seen, the mirzā's *Book of Warning* is carefully constructed to operate in two modes: a chronological account quite possibly based on a journal is craftily interspersed with discursive political judgments based on *ex post facto* assessments. In this sense, the mirzā is not necessarily better suited for use in empiricist analyses of the Mughal past. To use these sources in a positivist manner would then leave the historian with the unpleasant and in fact impossible task of constantly sorting "fact" from "fiction".

The *Books of Warning* are a product of a moment of temporary fissure: an axis of opposition that transmuted into other forms as the sayyids themselves were extirpated. To treat such texts as historical accounts is to freeze them as considered judgments on a delimited and separate past. But we recall that the works of Kām Rāj and Lāhorī are never portrayed by the authors as *tārīkh*: the texts, after all, are works that reflect or are meant to promote ᶜ*ibrat,* both in the sense of "warning" and "grief". If this is the case, we should then see the ᶜ*ibratnāma* texts not as history, but as polemical interventions in contemporary debates; not as a recollection of things past, but as parts of a struggle to shape and fix the public memory of a recent and contentious event. This, in part, explains the curious compressions of time in narrative, the exercising of extreme selectivity in marshaling facts, and the periodization implicit in framing the time under discussion with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. The intended reader of the ᶜ*Ibratnāma* was not expected to learn and discover some feature of the unknown or dimly remembered past, but instead to think through or perhaps re-think the events of his own time, events with which he was already intimately familiar. Quite naturally, Khush Hāl's *History of Muhammad Shāh* stands

aside from this paradigm, for it looks back with a different goal, which is to examine the recent past of the dynasty from a perspective allied to the interests of the center.

The Death of Farrukh Siyar

We might push this argument further still, and suggest that all writing on conflict between the sayyids and the emperor served primarily as a rhetorical superstructure to direct the reader's understanding of that momentous and unavoidable event: the dethronement of Farrukh Siyar. The issue was not an easy one. For no matter how one felt about the crimes and misdemeanors of either nobility or emperor, to unseat a sitting ruler in contravention of all past practice was now to face the problem of succession in its fullest articulation. It was easy in comparison to dismiss the case of Jahāndār Shāh, who had been posited as a shameless wretch, a ruler unbefitting the throne and one to be speedily replaced by another member of the dynasty. These bare facts, abstracted from the broader issues of the nobility's role in such actions, might make it possible to accept some variation in the institution of succession without too much disruption of the settled order of the state. But now two noblemen took upon themselves to capture the emperor of the Mughal empire, throw him into prison, replace him with another prince, and finally execute him. How might this be considered a justifiable act?

A Conservative View

Mirzā Muhammad was certainly of the opinion that the dethronement of the emperor was an unforgiveable sin. In order to make this point, the mirzā describes the treacherous behavior of the sayyids. He tells that on the 25th of February, 1719, a large Marāthā army, led by the amīr al-umarāʾ, entered the vicinity of the city of Delhi. The army was so vast, says Mirzā Muhammad, that it stretched from the gates of the fort to the chases of Fīrūz Shāh, several miles to the south. Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh went to the fort and expelled the emperor's people from it, and

set up their own men within it. Our author emphasizes the size of the crowds who are witnessing these events; indeed, his perspective appears to be from the vantage-point of a spectator and not a participant, though he also speaks freely of happenings within the walls of the fort. So he relates that because of the size of the army and the accumulated people (*khalq*), the sayyid could only enter the fort at the third watch (mid-afternoon). The people of the city, we note, were already gathering, but we know nothing of their mood or intent.

While paying his obeisance to the emperor, the amīr al-umarāᵓ also took care to push aside the special servants and eunuchs around the emperor, so that besides the two sayyids and Rājā Ajīt Singh, no one else remained with him. There now occurred a set of delicate conversations (*mulāqāt-hā-yi riqqat-ha*) followed with excuses and apologies on both sides, and a concord was yet again established. In a sign of his desperate favor, the emperor gave the amīr al-umarāᵓ a special turban, and in fact even the jewels he wore on his person. Such pleasant intercourse continued till the first watch of the night. After this the everyone went home to their own places, convinced that the strife had ended at last. On the third day, when the emperor was completely at ease, he decided to go hunting as was his custom. But, writes the mirzā, some say that he intended to use the opportunity to flee to the loyal Jai Singh, who was encamped nearby. In any case, when Nawwāb Qutb al-Mulk heard about this, he sent a message saying that the amīr al-umarāᵓ wanted to present the prisoner brought from the Deccan before the imperial gaze today. So the emperor put off his hunting-expedition and Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh stationed their men at the fort. The sayyids stationed the captive at their own mansion in the city and entered the fort.

On that day no one suspected any opposition between both parties until between the ᶜasr and maghrib (afternoon and sunset prayers), when it was heard that Iᶜtiqād Khān had exited the hall

of special audience in an astounded state and had run away to his own mansion in an ordinary and inconspicuous (*maflūkī*) palanquin. After that a letter from Karam Chand the agent (*wakīl*) was received. It said that today the sayyids of exalted rank have received whatever they have desired, such as the service of the administration of the hall of special audience for Sayyid Najm al-Dīn Khān and the artillery for Sayyid Khān-i Jahān Khān, and that Iᶜtiqād Khān's rank was reduced to that which he held in the reign of Bahādur Shāh. All night long, Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh stayed in the fort and the amīr al-umarāᵓ in his own mansion.[321] This would suggest that the mirzā was not at court himself, but received the news from either his own agent or that of another person.

But the mirzā also describes events within the court that he has not himself witnessed. So he tells us that when the tumult began in the city on the 29th, the vizier established himself in the octagonal tower in the fort and took charge of all the keys of the buildings in the fort, even those of the harem. The helpless emperor had no option but to accede to this request. At that point, Iᶜtiqād Khān said that "your highness, it is not prudent to give the keys". Farrukh Siyar was upset at this and turned to him and snapped, "Oh you little man (*mardak*), this entire catastrophe has befallen me because of you". The emperor then ordered that Iᶜtiqād Khān be expelled from the fort and went to the harem. Here he entered a room with some Turkish and Qalmak slaves, with sword and shield, and hid himself. They say, writes Mirzā Muhammad – now directly identifying information as hearsay – that in the night Qutb al-Mulk sent several letters to his younger brother saying that since they had now taken control of all the high offices of state, perhaps it was not necessary to depose the emperor. But the younger brother sent back messages saying that if Qutb al-Mulk could not do the needful, then he would do it himself. Rājā Ajīt

[321] Ibid., f. 219–221.

Singh was also very much in favor of deposing the emperor. This would suggest that in later discussions of the event, some distinguished between the role of the two brothers. In this exchange we also see the possibility of a non-violent replacement, in which Farrukh Siyar might be simply removed to confinement and replaced by another. But another group clearly felt it necessary to kill the emperor in order to consolidate their safety.

Further such possibilities emerged in the confusion of these initial events. The sayyids had apparently decided that Prince Bīdār Dil would be seated on the throne and some sayyid servants were sent off to fetch him. But when this group reached the mansion where the princes and children of the deceased Prince Rafīᶜ al-Shaᵓn were to be found, the women feared that since Farrukh Siyar had been imprisoned, the sayyids wished to eliminate the entire family and seat themselves on the throne. So they kept the door locked from within and hid the prince in a small chamber (*hujra*). However much the group protested that they had come merely to take the prince away and make him emperor, the women refused to listen, and bought forth sticks and stones in his defense. Because time was short, the servants of the sayyids broke the door and sought the prince so they could make him emperor. But the prince's mother wailed and lamented to such an extent and the keys to the room could not be found, so the sayyids stalked off and took a son of the deceased prince Rafiᶜ al-Shaᵓn by the name of Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt. Although Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt was younger than his brothers, they found him better in intelligence and temperament, and so swept him away to Qutb al-Mulk. The nawwāb and the rājā took his hands and put him up on the Peacock Throne, which, our author notes, which for the past two days had been taken out for Farrukh Siyar's birthday. The great importance of this description lies in the range of options it presents. The mirzā suggests that the sayyids had already chosen a successor and perhaps even felt confident that there would be little opposition from any other party. Yet they were unable to

contend with the women in the harem, who put up a stiff resistance against the interlopers. It is significant also that Rafīᶜ al-Shaᶜn was judged on his "intelligence and temperament": perhaps the new emperor was not intended to be an absolute puppet in the hands of the nobility. But at the same time, Mirzā Muhammad is clear about where the power now lay. Prince Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt was "taken up by the hand" by the sayyid and the Rājpūt and placed on the Peacock Throne. In so doing the ceremony of coronation, so pregnant with significations of sovereignty and divine favor, was reduced to an utter abstraction. Imperial succession had become a secular affair.

Yet this did not mean that the mystique of the imperial body had been completely destroyed. For we learn that it was only after this act of installation that Dīndār Khān and three or four hundred others were sent to find Farrukh Siyar. In other words, it is not technically true to say that Farrukh Siyar was dethroned; rather, he was imprisoned after another prince had been enthroned. This distinction suggests that even those who were to remove Farrukh Siyar were unable to take action against him until another sovereign had come into existence. After this inauguration, however, the sayyids' people disrespectfully went into the harem. Here they were set upon by the women who were prepared to fight them, and several were killed or injured. Dismissing this final act of resistance, the sayyids broke into the chamber where the emperor was hiding. That poor one, writes the mirzā, washed his life off his hands, took up his sword and shield, and advanced. But he landed only a few blows on his stone-hearted and disloyal servants before he was cornered and surrounded on all sides. His opponents grabbed him by the hand the collar and in the signal mark of dishonor, took off his turban and dragged him out in great disgrace. Mirzā Muhammad names those who became infamous by this action. He tells us that it is said that Hāfiz Allāh Khān, who is currently Murtazā Khān, and Murīd Khān, famous amongst those

disloyal ones, went to welcome Qutb al-Mulk in the palace. In doing so he shattered the obligations (*huqūq*) of a hundred years of loyalty, and forgot his companionship and nearness to Farrukh Siyar. So these people treated that master of crown and throne and memorizer of the word of God (*hāfiz-i kalām Allāh*) in a way that one cannot not treat even an enemy infidel (*kāfir-i harbī*). And then they behaved so disgracefully with the protected ladies of the harem that it cannot be written about.

Mirzā Muhammad's vivid narrative conveys the confusions and contingencies of the moments of dethronement. For instance, our author makes it clear that despite the presence of the amīr al-umarāᵓ's army in the city, there was no widespread expectation of a coup against the ruler. According to the mirzā, the decision to remove the emperor and replace him with another prince had been taken by the sayyids. In fact it appears that the sayyids may have planned to choose the *eldest* prince available, for Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt was chosen "*even though* he was younger". This choice raises a host of intriguing possibilities: was it possible, for instance, that the principle of seniority would have emerged within the logic of dynastic succession, as in the Ottoman empire, had Prince Bīdār Dil's fortune been as awake as his heart? No matter the case, Mirzā Muhammad was clearly appalled at the treatment of the emperor; and he responded to this event, tellingly, from within the position of an Islamic orthodoxy.

After this event, the mirzā tells us that on the second day that poor prisoner was blinded in both eyes and sent him to the three-arched gateway, a place "which used to be a gracious assembly". Iᶜtiqād Khān was taken to the house of the amīr al-umarāᵓ and imprisoned, and his house was seized, but everyone else was left intact. In fact all the grantees and office-holders were confirmed in their positions, even including the imperial guard of Farrukh Siyar: the sayyids did this, we are told, to soothe hearts. Rafiᶜ al-Darājāt came to the throne, and coins were struck in

his name. The mirzā ends his narrative with the phrase: "After this it must be seen what shape things take" (*ba*ᶜ*d az īn bāyad dīd bād tā chi sūrat gīrad*).[322] The text, it appears, must therefore have been composed at some point after the emperor's dethronement and replacement, but before his execution some weeks later.

While this phrase of fearful expectation adds to the immediacy and vividness of the mirzā's narrative, but the effect is tarnished somewhat by the fact the section's title promises to tell us about the rise of Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt *and* Rafiᶜ al-Daulā; but by the time the latter came to power, Farrukh Siyar had long been executed. It could be that the title was mistakenly appended later to a complete text, but it seems more likely to be a slip of the author's pen. In other words, the mirzā knew quite well "what shape things take" after the ascension of Rafiᶜ al-Darājāt, but wished to leave the reader with the impression of suspense and anticipation for his own purposes. While it is difficult to sense why the mirzā ends where and how he does, we can be sure that the ending heightens the disapproval and disgrace with which the author clearly viewed the entire proceedings.

Reasons of State

Lāhorī too appears to have witnessed some of the events in question, but his is a rather more polished account that eliminates the elements of contingency which mark Mirzā Muhammad's account. For Lāhorī, the central question is that of the killing of the emperor – one which the mirzā refuses to tackle by terminating his account right after the deposition. Lāhorī, despite his advocacy of the sayyid cause, exhibits deeply conflicted emotions about the emperor's end: as the narrative progresses, our author's tone becomes increasingly sympathetic with the plight of the soon-to-be-deposed Farrukh Siyar. Lāhorī implies that the dethronement was a carefully

[322] Ibid., f. 221b–224a.

planned affair, but does not celebrate this fact. So he tells us that the sayyids did not include Khān-i Daurān and Zafar Khān in the plot, but were insulated from the tumult and discord of the Mughal force (*fauj-i Mughal*) because their leader Muhammad Amīn Khān had come submissively. Then there was Rājā Ajīt Singh, with all his proximity and relation that came from marriage of his daughter to the emperor, and her preeminence as queen (*mahārānī*) in the harem. In addition he enjoyed the profound hereditary trust of the emperor. But he too joined in the scheme that followed. Finally, there were the two Sayyid brothers themselves, who maintained all the observances of fraternity and had broken their gaze from all things filled with felicity and copious with grace (*qatᶜ-i nazar az hama chīz wufūr-i daulat wa kasrat-i niᶜmat*). Having gathered all the disloyal ones to them, the sayyids set up their forces all around the fort.

Sayyid Ghulām ᶜAlī Khān was appointed to the superintendence of the artillery (*tūpkhāna*) and the imperial offices. Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh had the happiness of performing the salutation (*kornish*) and gained an audience with the emperor. Farrukh Siyar imagined that the amīr al-umarāᵓ was bringing the nameless prince to be handed over to his guards, but in reality the amīr al-umarāᵓ was seated with his forces in the mansion of Shāyistā Khān the deceased, which we are told is to one side of the imperial canal, facing the Lāhorī Gate. These forces took great care that that they were armed and prepared (*muslah wa mukammal*) so as to remain safe on the public thoroughfare. They were instructed that if any from amongst the Mughals or Hindūstānīs made an aggressive move (*harakat-i mazbūhī*), his head was to be cut off at that very moment and shown to all in indignity.

Inside the fort, Qutb al-Mulk continued to prevaricate about the appearance of the amīr al-umarāᵓ with the prince until the day began to end and the emperor perceived that the "introduction of this affair was the conclusion of his rule". The emperor departed the chamber of

audience by crossing to the other side of the curtain that separated the private quarters, and did not realize that those daring villains had remained standing where they had been and could hear every word he said. Farrukh Siyar vented his spleen at length, presumably to his servants on the other side of the curtain:

> I have always treated these pseudo-sayyids well and have rewarded their words with increased rank, but they have not restrained themselves at all from their shamelessness and have not tried to soothe my fears. If, God willing, I'm left with my head and I emerge from these four walls and can hold an audience with the group of my faithful old retainers… I'll send them off in the most wretched condition to Kābul and the Hazārājāt with their wives and children and set hunting dogs loose on them.

Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh and other brothers heard all this and whatever else the emperor said in his bitter anger. They feared, says Lāhorī, lest the clouds of imperial rage that had accumulated over seven years shower lightning on their harvest of hope. So they sent a continuous stream of messages describing the conditions within the fort to the amīr al-umarāᵓ, who sat with Ikhlās Khān and Muhammad Amīn Khān. These two advised the amīr al-umarāᵓ that control of the situation would never be achieved again if relinquished now; and although it was an error to imprison the emperor at this time, if this was not done then one's life and property and in fact honor would be considered forfeited in the days to come. Lāhorī now adds his own justification in the midst of this narrative: and in reality, he says, the emperor had become insensible of the realm (*bīgāna-yi riyāsat*), so that he did not have any restraint in the expenditure of monies and the acquisitions of unworthies. In any case, the amīr al-umarāᵓ advised his brother to do whatever was necessary in the fort, and that the forces outside were ready and alert.

The minute this missive was received, Sayyid Najm al-Din ᶜAlī Khān ran with some Afghāns to the imperial residence (*deorhī*) and besought the emperor to emerge with in rough tones. Farrukh Siyar, that brave young man had not the courage to come forward, but instead he hid in corners

in the fear of his life. Dīndār Khān the faithless (*bī-dīn*), son of Jalāl Khān the Ruhelā from the mountains of near Sirhind, was shameless enough to cross the great threshold and to grab his highness and pull him to a side and rudely bring him out.

Up till this point, Lāhorī has attempted to defend the actions of the sayyids as prudent policy shaped by changing circumstances: acts that are not be construed as a matter of policy. In this context, his editorial aside about the emperor's irresponsibility can and should be read as the deployment of *raison d'état* in the justification of deposition. In the stories of Jahāndār Shāh's drunken escapades in a cart and his admittance into the fort after "proper verification" by its officers, it was implied that the state would continue to function in normal bureaucratic ways even if the emperor was absent. Now, Lāhorī tells us God's "shadow" and his vice-regent on earth was subject to replacement if incomes did not match expenditures.

But despite all of this, the moment in which Dīndār Khān set his hands on the imperial person was incredible, unforgiveable transgression. And so the anguished Lāhorī writes:

> The sky lurched within itself. The ground cleaved its liver. The door and walls cried out. Royalty (*daulat*) and pomp drank their own blood. The legs of the throne of the caliphate shattered. The ripped cap of leadership was sewn to the body. The crown burnt a wound on the heart with its jewels. In this most wretched of conditions that is not worthy of being mentioned, the emperor was removed to the three-arched gateway. The especially trusted ones, who were in fact disloyal and insincere, sent guards and water and food was to be given with permission.[323]

The sayyids now took control of the entire fort; its workshops, its buried treasures, its offices of finance and administration came under their direct control. But even as Lāhorī states this painful truth, he regains a measure of composure. He now quickly points out that whatever the sayyids did, they did out of fear for their life and the protection of their honor. But on the other hand, in truth the commission of all these errors and actions against etiquette caused them to draw the

[323] Lahorī, *'Ibratnāma*, 208–11.

needle of infamy into their own eyes, and so they saw the result of their mischief. At the same time, whatever befell Farrukh Siyar was due to the company evil-spirited people, and the killing and mistreating of exalted princes and obedient servants. Yet Farrukh Siyar did not manage to alienate all his servants: Rājā Jai Singh in particular left court and retreated to his desert fastness in Amber. Here, Lāhorī tells us, he was joined by a large number of Farrukh Siyar's imperial guard (*wālāshāhī*) and some of the gentlemen (*mīrzāda-hā*) who were protective of their honor (*ghairat-parwar*) and gave up on living in Delhi.

The royal prisoner was given water and tasteless food day and night. Lāhorī says that Farrukh Siyar spent his remaining days sighing and lamenting at the unfaithful heavens, and reciting appropriate verses to boot:

> What have you done to me, Oh heavens, what have you done?
> Into the horizons you've set my sun
> Don't place any trust in the toils of this world
> And if you must, for no more than two days or four
> Don't fasten your heart to the world, if you're a man
> For the world is absolute pain and grief

Besides all these torments, the emperor was blinded, so that "the morning of his eyesight turned into the night of blindness". But Lāhorī relates this calamity to a past action: when, at the behest of Mīr Jumla, Farrukh Siyar had his younger brother Humāyūn Bakht and other princes blinded, retribution was readying this black day for him behind the curtain of the night of punishment. And similarly at the very moment that Muᶜizz al-Din (Jahāndār Shāh) and other obedient servants were being stabbed and throttled, fate was writing the notation of equal exchange on Farrukh Siyar's brow. At this point it is pertinent to note that Lāhorī's chronicle mentions the death of Jahāndār Shāh, but has very few criticisms to offer of the departed ruler. By maintaining a silence about the rectitude of Jahāndār Shāh's removal, Lāhorī can now attribute Farrukh Siyar's own removal to his own previous actions.

At this point, Lāhorī's elegiac mourning begins to seem a little dissimulative. For what he suggests is that there is something greater at stake in the death of Farrukh Siyar than the principle of loyalty violated. This is the retributive power of inexorable fate. To ram this point home, Lāhorī presents us with another piece of verse, which explores the possible consequences of a crime as great as the killing of Farrukh Siyar:

> I've heard that a lamb said to the butcher
> At the time when its head was to be cut off with a sharp sword:
> "I saw the revenge of the grass and hay I've eaten
> But what will he see who eats my fatty side?"

To mourn for Farrukh Siyar was all well and good. But, says Lāhorī, the laws of the caliphate and administration (*jahāndārī*) come from God and do not permit a plurality of rule or even the name of polytheism (*shirk*), seeming to imply that the existence of a former emperor in prison would be inadmissible under the most fundamental tenets of Islam.

A certain Hāshim ᶜAlī Khān proposed other logics that militated in favor of killing the imprisoned emperor. In a private conversation with the amīr al-umarāᵓ, this advisor used a medicalized metaphor in suggesting policy for the health of the state: "There are two sorts of cure for a disease. Either one assuages the disease with medication, or one removes by tearing out the root. Here where the corruption of the condition of the world has passed medication, until it is pulled out by the root, the health of the temperament of the realm cannot be expected." But, adds Lāhorī, the helpless emperor should be dispatched in the same way that Aurangzeb had killed his brothers: by using legal arguments (*Daᶜwa -yi sharᶜa*) from people without restraint or caution. In other words, the private reason of the health of the state should be enacted by cunningly taking public recourse to the advice of rash jurisprudents.

In order to achieve this end, the sayyids tried to use Sidi Yasīn Khān, the son of Sidi Qāsim Khān, the Abyssinian superintendent of police who had supposedly been unjustly executed by

Farrukh Siyar. When Sidi Yasīn Khān was offered the chance to avenge his innocent father's pointless death through the legally enjoined principle of retribution, that "man of happy fortune" replied that "we have been servants of the throne for several generations and remain so. Even if the master kills a slave without reason, it is not a necessity to kill the master". Sidi Yasīn, in essence, turned the legal tables on the sayyids in defense of that great and fundamental virtue of loyalty. But not all were equally loyal. When no other candidates could be found, it was decided that a follower (*chilā*) of low rank who'd decided to ruin his future *(ᶜāqibat khud rā tabāh*) should go and finish off that forgiven emperor's travails with two stabs of the knife.[324]

The fundamental conflict which rends Lāhorī's narrative thus lies between two concepts. One is the revered and honored virtue of "faith to the salt" (*namak halālī*)*:* loyalty to the master's salt. This notion permeates every analysis and provides the correct form of response to every political dilemma. At the same time, the frequent occurrence of the opposite (*namak harāmī*) in this text shows us the virtue of loyalty was a flexible one, and that it was certainly possible to survive, and even thrive, in its breach. As an ideal virtue, however, it faces contest from another compelling necessity that in Lāhorī is beginning to be articulated as the reason of state. Under the lamentable circumstance in which this becomes necessary, all forms of action are ultimately legitimate. It is best that, in public, reasons conforming to religious piety be provided and accepted by an obedient mass; likewise, readers too should understand radical political change as nothing more shocking than the well-known fickleness of the heavens above. But beneath the plethora of literary and religious affect lies the fact that the health of the body politic may sometimes require the removal of its head.

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[324] Ibid., 216–19.

The workings of fate

The unease and conflict that marks Lāhorī is absent in Kām Rāj. Here we find the fullest explication of the rectitude of the sayyids' actions. So we are told that even as the amīr al-umarāʾ's gigantic army wended its way towards Hindūstān, the emperor continued to lavish favors on the evil Iʿtiqād Khān, going so far as to attach the prefix "*nawwāb"* ("lord") to the name of the "uncultured wretch". In the company of that "shameless Kashmīrī" Farrukh Siyar osmotically acquired the questionable morals that the great emperors of the ages must not embrace. Upon arriving near the capital, the amīr al-umarāʾ encamped with his army at the ruined complex of the pre-Mughal emperor Fīrūz Shāh, called "Fīrūz Shāh's staff' (*Lāt-i Fīrūz Shāhī*) after the sandstone pillar erected there dating to the third century BCE. The court's nobles came to pay the returned sayyid a friendly visit, while a rather more sour message arrived from court, informing the returnee that to play the music of victory (*shādiyāna, naubat*) without the permission of the emperor was in breach of propriety and against the precepts of houseborn servitude (*khāna-zādagī*). Responding to this dishonor, the sayyid said in his defense that he was merely playing music to signify the safety of the captive Sultan Muʿīn al-Din. The emperor, correctly hearing the note of rebellion in both words and music, fell into a rare anxiety, and summoned his father-in-law Rājā Ajīt Singh for advice in this catastrophe.

After a flurry of communication, it was decided that the amīr al-umarāʾ would return to the Deccan after paying his respects and handing over the impostor Sultan Muʿīn al-Din. He would also receive among other positions the superintendence of the hall of special audience and the "group of the special"[325] (*firqa-yi khawāss*), and the provincial governorship of Akbarābād. But the emperor and his henchmen also planned that they would delay the meeting by a day and

[325] Perhaps this refers to the people of royal extraction who lived in the confines of the fort. Control of this group would give the amīr al-umarāʾ ready access to potentially legitimate claimants to the throne.

pretend to go hunting, and having thus lulled the sayyid into a false sense of security, would attack him in his own camp. Accordingly the emperor announced his intention of going to hunt and to admire the flowers in springtime, but one of the servants of the palace revealed the conspiracy to the two brothers. So in response, the sayyid replied that the next day was a particularly auspicious one to meet and depart, and so the emperor should postpone his hunting-party. The amīr al-umarāᵓ then stayed at a state of high alert all night.[326]

Now began the endgame. The amīr al-umarāᵓ stationed Rājā Muhkam Singh, a trusted retainer, at the Lāhorī Gate of the fort with orders to rendezvous with Qutb al-Mulk. On February 27th, 1719, Qutb al-Mulk approached the fort with Rājā Ajīt Singh, Sayyid Khān-i Jahān Bahādur, Sayyid Najm ᶜAlī Khān Bahādur, and thousands of dismounted retainers of the Barhā clan, armed and ready. A select group along entered the fort with Qutb al-Mulk and the rājā, and encountered Iᶜtiqād Khān's loyal force as well as the palace's musketry and armed retainers. These were cast aside as a mere inconvenience, and the sayyids' own troopers took control around and about the fort. The rājā's force surrounded the fort from the outside, and the rājā remained at the ready himself. Meanwhile, a Barhā retainer by the name of Sayyid Sayf al-Dīn ᶜAlī Khān took the imposter Sultan Muᶜīn al-Din to the mansion of Shāyista Khān, which was in front of the Lāhorī Gate of the fort. Qutb al-Mulk then sent a message to the emperor, telling him that the amīr al-umarāᵓ was ready to perform his obeisance, and the emperor should grant him robes of favor so that the sayyid could depart for the Deccan immediately. At this the emperor flew into a terrible rage, saying that it was well known that requests of this sort were unwise and impolite. "If I am a son of ᶜAzīm al-Shaᵓn and of the family of Sāhib QĪrān [Shāh Jahān]", shouted Farrukh Siyar in incensed rhyme, "I will repair this unhappy affair and set right this

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326 "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 65a–b.

boundless temerity! I will have Barhā ploughed by asses and put mice in your women's pajamas!" Qutb al-Mulk bore this patiently (lit., "bit into his liver"), but he writhed like a snake within himself (*mār bar khud pīchīda*). He replied, "My loyalty and fidelity is more bright than the day and manifest than the moon. But your highness has shown no deficiency in seeking our ruin to the fullest."[327]

With these words, the sayyid left Farrukh Siyar's presence. Iᶜtiqād Khān's cavalry exited the fort through the Khizrābād Gate, and Zafar Khān said to the emperor, "The entire fort is under the control of Qutb al-Mulk. Which group is left now for you to give ranks and titles? With your foul tongue you've given up the empire (*saltanat*)". So in the end the emperor gave all the titles that were demanded of him to the people that the sayyids had chosen, and who were all related to them. It seemed that things had come to a peaceful pass, and Qutb al-Mulk and Rājā Ajīt Singh spent the night in the fort, waiting for the amīr al-umarāᵓ's meeting with the emperor the next morning. But that night, at the advice of the "Kashmīrī fox", the emperor penned a note in his own hand to all the nobility, who were insincere and discordant, saying that Mahārājā Ajīt Singh was killing or capturing Qutb al-Mulk, and so all should attack the amīr al-umarāᵓ outside the fort. But none of the nobility fell for this foolish gambit and joined in this difficult affair.

After describing the accession of Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt, Kām Rāj returns to the affair of Farrukh Siyar. We are told how the new emperor ordered that Farrukh Siyar be blinded, and that Iᶜtiqād Khān be arrested and all his possessions seized. Muhammad Farrukh Siyar was given food and water for a month. At this point, for the first time, Kām Rāj acknowledges a lack of certainty in the narrative he has so confidently presented: according to different traditions, he says, the fallen emperor was strangled by a cord (*tasmā*) and sent to his death with a glittering knife, and male

[327] Ibid., 66a.

and female mendicants of the bāzār and the streets accompanied his coffin in utter grief and sorrow.[328] For Kām Rāj, it was as if the heavenly dome (*falak*) had sought revenge for the strangulation of Jahāndār Shāh, Zū `l-fiqār Khān, and the killing of Sīdī Qāsim, Raimān, Qudrat Allāh the Dervish, Hidāyat Allāh Khān and Hidāyat Kesh Khān in the quickest time. The heavenly dome, having given, took back to itself.[329]

Kām Rāj posited the fundamental cause of Farrukh Siyar's dethronement to be the workings of fate. It was because fate had arrived at this unpleasant affair where fortune (*daulat*) whipped its face away from him and the result was insult.[330] Like Lāhorī, Kām Rāj would agree that divine retribution was the cause of Farrukh Siyar's downfall, and that actions against Jahāndār Shāh determined this outcome. The narrative invocation of fate, we have seen, occurs with especial frequency when our observers encountered facts and events that contradicted the narratives which they sought to build. Kām Rāj presents the most extreme version of this phenomenon. His support of the sayyids means that cannot share any of Lāhorī's doubts (however faint), and completely rejects the charge of sayyid disloyalty. But in order to make these claims, Kām Rāj has to make certain telling omissions. For one, he does not mention the actual violation of the harem – he barely mentions the imprisonment of Farrukh Siyar at all. Secondly, he suggests that Farrukh Siyar's execution was at the orders of Rafīᶜ al-Darājāt: a figure that a weaker proponent of the sayyid cause such as Lāhorī regards as a nominal ruler.

The Shame of Disloyalty

As we have seen, the three *Books of Warning* provide rather different interpretations of the deposition and death of Farrukh Siyar – perspectives that cannot merely be sorted as either pro-

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[328] There is an indecipherable phrase here because the manuscript is damaged.
[329] Kām Rāj, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 67b.
[330] Ibid., f. 62b.

or anti-sayyid. How these were received in later years and reigns still remains to be studied. But in at least one influential analysis – the *History of Muhammad Shāh* of Khush Hāl – the answer was unequivocal. When Khush Hāl came to the subject of the imperial deposition, he delivered his readers a stern warning: “Now is the time to make manifest the events of the sublime court, however ugly; and it is without fault to make things clear before the gathered assembly.” We are to understand that the ugly lessons of the reign must be made clear for the edification of the audience.

Khush Hāl tells us that because the enmity between the emperor and the vizier had reached so advanced a stage, Qutb al-Mulk held a meeting at his own house of the great nobles who opposed the emperor and made some meaningless accusations against his divine grace (*khudāwand-i niᶜmat*). So they fastened the belt of faithlessness and disloyalty and decided that “we will [depose] this ruler (*sultān*) from the imperial throne.” “Here the whole honor of the gathering / is the liver’s blood and the heart’s fire”, rhymes our author to indicate the unsparing ferocity of the anti-royalist party. And, adds Khush Hāl, the group of nobles formalized their commitment to this proposition by dishonoring (“blackening the face”) of “that paper” (*ān kāghaz*) with their own seals, while a select few of them held back to a side. Unlike the authors of the *Books of Warning*, Khush Hāl indicates the participation of a large group of the nobility; he suggests that a collective decision was made; and most significantly, he indicates the presence of an agreed document – a bureaucratic instrument that formalized the move. While no such document survives, the parallels with the Ottoman *sened-i ittifak* are again obvious: Khush Hāl wishes to indicate that the sayyids engineered a formal and bureaucratic move. This remembrance is in sharp contrast to the fears expressed in Mirzā Muhammad’s text of the sayyids seizing the throne for themselves.

This formal agreement gave the amīr al-umarāᵓ greater confidence, and he advised Qutb al-Mulk of the example of Mahābat Khān, the reign of Jahāngīr, saying that they would behave as he had. This too is a crucial example: Mahābat Khān had revolted against the great power of Jahāngīr's wife Nūr Jahān in 1626. He appears to have held the imperial family captive for about a hundred days before his attempt failed and Jahāngīr was freed. Khush Hāl seems to suggest the sayyids wished exert complete control over the emperor or depose him, and had considered the precedents and procedures that might make this possible.

But, says our author, the naïve emperor who fostered his nobility did not understand that they had resolved on disloyalty. So the servants of the emperor left the fort and those of the amīr al-umarāᵓ entered it. Chūrāman Jāt, the local notable (*zamīndār*) of the region between Delhi and Agra, was stationed below the alcove of presentation (*jharokā-i darshan*) of the fort. This well-wisher of the empire (*saltanat*) repeatedly suggested that the emperor should come to him so that he could whisk him away by night to the fort at Agra, where Rājā Jai Singh would be brought to serve him, and whatever the emperor desired could be achieved. But because the time was opposed and the age that of ruination, these suggestions were not welcomed. This information was transmitted to the amīr al-umarāᵓ by way of spies, and Chūrāman was replaced at his post by one of the sayyids' own clan.

Now Khush Hāl sets the state for the final *dénouement*, listing the places of the actors on that fateful morning of March 12th, 1719 – a date some weeks later than those provided in the *Books of Warning*. The amīr al-umarāᵓ was in the twelve-sided pavilion of Shāyista Khān, in the mansion of the same name, near the Lāhorī Gate of the fort. Qutb al-Mulk was in the life-bestowing gardens (*bāgh-i hayāt-bakhsh*) inside the fort. Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī had been appointed the administrator of the palace in the place of Darbār Khān, against the opposition of

Qutb al-Mulk, who wished that position to remain with a eunuch. But the emperor was further urged and so the position was transferred to Mahaldār Khān. Then the keys of the imperial residences were sought from him. This official too was disloyal, and considering his personal safety a blessing, he turned over the keys and escaped in a palanquin. The Mahārāja Ajīt Singh was stationed in the courtyard of the fiscal administrative buildings (*dīwānī kachehri*) with his own men, and the matchlockmen of the sayyids were stationed in all the guard-posts (*bānkhāna*) of those buildings with guns primed. At this time, the same document (*mahzar*) was produced to be witnessed by the rājā and be imprimed by his seal. Because the rājā had lost his senses and his powers, he had no option but to set his seal on it.

When the sayyids had completed all of these procedures, they sent a message to the emperor to come out of his quarters. But that oppressed one was in the hall of prayer and began to loudly abuse his captors. Qutb al-Mulk sent a message to his brother, outside the fort, reporting this occurrence. Iᶜtimād al-Daula Muhammad Amīn Khān asked the amīr al-umarāᵓ loudly what formalities there were left to observe. So the amīr al-umarāᵓ sent a message to his brother saying that another sort of time had now arrived, and there was no pity or kindness left; one should take whatever path that was available. After this communication, the sayyid ordered Dīndār Khān the son of Jalāl Khān and Sayyid Ghulām ᶜAlī Khān the son of Sayyid Khān-i Jahān Khān, along with some other oppressors and tyrants to enter the court of place and power and to capture that oppressed one. Those who bear these names, in an act of error and fault that had never been heard before, entered the auspicious apartments (*mashkū-yi iqbāl*) and came face to face with the emperor.

As the tyrannized ruler lost control of his tongue and abused his captors, many Turkish and Abysinnian slave-children came running from all sides; but because the time to take action had

passed, they could do nothing. So the slaves quickly seized the emperor and dragged him by the sleeves towards the harem. In this palace the daughters, born under laudable stars, tried their best to preserve his life, but it is well known just how that flower, who was the rosebud of the garden of felicity, was plucked. In the struggle, the disloyal ones extended their hands to snatch his diamond necklace and many jewels and so rendered their very hands worthy of being destroyed. "Hāyhāyāt!" mourns Khush Hāl, "On that evil day that an event so terrible befell a family as noble as this!"

So, grabbing him by the hand and the collar, they carried off that oppressed one to the prison.

> Did you see what they did to that weighty emperor?
>
> They enacted a hundred violences and oppressions because of their immaturity
>
> What a shame from this, *Hāyhāyāt, Hāyhāyāt*!
>
> That the sons of the sayyids were disloyal to their salt

The shāh of Hind fell in this terrible condition and not a blade of grass moved without the permission of the sayyids.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Saᶜādat Khān and ᶜAtāᵓ Allāh Khān, Salābat Khān (brother of the emperor's wife) and Ahmad Beg Khān (who was called Ghiyāz al-Din Khān in this reign), all came with their cavalry contingents onto the Moonlight Avenue and wrung their hands from astonishment. When the emperor fell into the prison, the amīr al-umarāᵓ sent conciliatory words to them, asking them what enmity they had with the state (*saltanat*). The implication, Khush Hāl notes pithily, was in the direction of employment, and not the question of rulership. And Khush Hāl expresses his acceptance of this pragmatism by means of a pithy line of verse, "Whoever sticks his neck out beyond the boundaries / strikes at his own neck".[331]

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[331] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 137–42.

Writing from the long reign of Muhammad Shāh – a period that had seen no more of the high political drama associated with the reigns of Jahāndār Shāh and Farrukh Siyar – Khush Hāl noted the possibilities implicit in the sayyids' actions, and dismissed them. His position, it appears, was a traditionalist one, fitting the moment of the concerted re-articulation of the standard model of imperial sovereignty. That this case was made during a reign which marked the unprecedented decentralization of power underscores the complexities of Muhammad Shāh's time on the throne. But for Khush Hāl, at least, the tragedy of the event overwhelmed any other possibilities of thinking about the proper formation of political authority.

Conclusion: The Popular Intervention

The murders of Jahāndār Shāh and Farrukh Siyar will remain obscure events for the modern historian. We have neither juridical documents, nor the diaries of common folk, nor the accounts of travelers, nor even very many Mughal historical events from which to derive an understanding of how such novel events shaped the Mughal polity. But our examination of some of the surviving texts has traced the narrative emergence of a possibility that then found its realization in an event – the deposition and killing of Farrukh Siyar. In the previous pages I have asserted that the central concern here, as in many other Mughal texts of the eighteenth century, was the question of imperial succession. Mughal intellectuals of the early eighteenth century might reasonably have expected not to deal with such issues very often – after all, the emperor Aurangzeb had reigned for half a century before the events in question. Yet the question of succession presented itself to the highest political actors in the state and demanded solution. We do not have the sources to allow us to speculate about the motives of these actors: while most of the historians we have studied were happy to relate the most secret deliberations within the Red Fort, they could not possibly have enjoyed access to such private spaces and exalted dignitaries.

So we cannot yet gain a precise understanding of the self-conception and motivation of the highest of political actors such as Zū `l-fiqār Khān or the Sayyid brothers. The histories we have examined, however, do present us with representations of the highest politicians of state. These representations, in turn, give us an insight into the changing political culture of elites in the empire. Here we have seen the growth of a discourse that makes it possible to think about the removal of a ruler. This discursive possibility, in fact, is already enunciated very clearly in the works of Irādat Khān, who died without ever seeing the deposition of Farrukh Siyar. This possibility could be articulated along a variety of axes. It could be claimed that the ruler had lost the mandate of heaven, or had become the victim of divine retribution; that he had become afflicted by the madness of love, which prevented him from carrying out his duties; or for the even more important "reasons of state". Yet the practice of emperor-killing did not become a standard institution in the empire, despite further instances in the second half of the eighteenth century which remain outside the purview of this exercise. Why was this?

The obvious explanation for such a development might be to say that the long reign of Muhammad Shāh (1721-48) provided an alternative model for high politics. The nobility as a class now felt free to invest their energies in a variety of local and regional political projects without threat of interference from the imperial center. Rather than constantly changing the emperor, they merely hollowed out his powers. The emperor might continue to reign, but so long as he did not rule, the nobility could go on as they pleased.

In these final pages, however, I wish to raise an alternative possibility. My aim here is to suggest that the nobility may have been dissuaded from their actions by the vocal assertion of an unexpected and certainly unwelcome group: namely, the people themselves. From the perspective of the elite, the intervention of the people was seen as a strange, rare calamity: a

disorderly tumult, and certainly an occurrence that attracted disapprobation and censure. Concerned with their own affairs, our elite authors were systematic in their elimination of any consideration of the unwashed masses. Yet, as we shall see in coming chapters, by the death of Farrukh Siyar, Mughal elites had some reason to be afraid of the people of the streets and the bāzārs. In the case of the events surrounding the deposition of Farrukh Siyar, we find the barest mentions of a popular uprising that asserted its disapproval of the regicide before the officials of state. But even so, the main targets of the populace appear to have been the Deccani Marāthā troops who had accompanied the amīr al-umarāᵓ. Our Hindūstānī authors are united in their disapprobation of these foreigners and welcoming of the slaughter inflicted upon them: a violence that is portrayed in chillingly humorous terms.

The People, Absent

Let us begin with Kām Rāj, who simply does not notice the presence of non-elites on the street; a chorus off-stage, they are present only by implication, and act only in passive, ancillary and obstructive ways. The people are mentioned only so far as they fell upon the Marāthā presence in the city: for these Marāthā warriors were to be loathed even though they were in the employ of the virtuous sayyids. So the Marāthās fled at the sight of the bloodthirsty army of Mughals, and the people of the city fell upon them and seized their arms and accoutrements. The Marāthās came under such heavy assault of stones and swords that, despite being armed and armored, they pleaded "don't, don't" (*"nakko, nakko"*), and made a supreme gesture of submission: they took pieces of hay in their mouths and crawled on all fours like cattle. But even having done so, gloats the author, they fell into the dust of perdition. It does not appear to have been a common cultural notion to answer these pleas for mercy favorably, or to show sympathy for the vanquished: instead, says the unpitying Kām Rāj, several leaders and four hundred of the infidels (*kuffār*)

were killed in this fight. Meanwhile, Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān and Saᶜādat Khān, fighting in the city's central Bāzār of Abundance, also known as Moonlight Avenue, suffered a defeat and retreated. But all this while, claims Kām Rāj, the amīr al-umarāᵓ and Qutb al-Mulk were only concerned about the protection of their life and honor (*jān wa nāmūs*) and truly did not have the *intention* of disloyalty or quarreling and rioting (*futūr*).[332] At the very least, this would suggest that unlike Kām Rāj, there were some who looked back at the behavior of the sayyids and thought it to be precisely an issue of disloyalty and tumult. Yet Kām Rāj does not read the "obstructions" encountered by the sayyids as acts of popular resistance in defense of the emperor.

Nevertheless, says Kām Rāj, the amīr al-umarāᵓ was profoundly disturbed by all this tumult and uproar, and sought the advice of Iᶜtimād al-Daula Muhammad Amīn Khān in this affair. But Muhammad Amīn Khān was full of impetuosity and sedition and baldly counseled imprisoning the emperor as a way of ending the turmoil. So Sayyid Fīrūz ᶜAlī Khān was stationed at the west-facing Lāhorī Gate and Dilāwar Khān at the south-facing Delhi Gate, and there was tumultuous warfare for two *gharis*. But in the end, says Kām Rāj, those sorts who sought to be loyal did not see any advantage in moving from their places and the crowds of the common soldiery were "unable to endure" (*tāb-i hujūm-i asākir-i umūm nayāwarda*). And so everyone went safely and soundly to their own homes. This would suggest that the common people mobilized into a military force. But since they were unable to contest the professional army facing them, they dispersed after scattered resistance. On February 28th, 1719, Qutb al-Mulk selected a special detachment of two hundred men to go and fetch the emperor by force from the

[332] Kām Rāj, "ᶜIbratnāma," f. 66b.

harem (*mahal-sarā*) and imprison him in an unhappy and unfortunate (*manhūs*) apartment. On this occasion, says Kām Rāj, no one was troubled by the people of the city and the bāzār.[333]

The People, Xenophobic

Mirzā Muhammad, on the other hand, situates the conflicts here as a contest over the shared public space of the city. Our author tells us that on Thursday (Which would have been the 29th of February) there was a rare tumult (*shūrish*) and a strange uproar (*ghulghula*) in the city because Muhammad Amīn Khān Chīn Bahādur and Zakaryā Khān went to seek the amīr al-umarāᵓ with an army of Mughals in order to resist the deposition. We note not only the variance in date with Kām Rāj's account, but also the fact that Muhammad Amīn Khān in this instance is seen as opposing the dethronement of Farrukh Siyar. Because the paths of the bāzār were obstructed by a multitude of the infidel Marāthās who had come with the sayyids from the Deccan, the Mughals wished to shove them to a side and pass by, and so pushed a way through for their leaders.

The mirzā judges the actions of the Marāthā troops from the perspective of a Hindūstānī soldier who had served under Aurangzeb attempting to subdue the Deccan. Those accursed ones, says the mirzā, turned their faces to flight because they'd tasted the drubbings of Mughal fists in the Deccan for quite some time before. They ran in such haste and confusion and disorder that they lost all their horses and spears to the *lucchā*-s and *shāhdā*-s of the marketplace. This is mark of great dishonor: for the *lucchā* is a quintessentially urban figure, a depraved and contemptible inhabitant of the bāzār (the term *shāhdā* is unidentified). In the end, even the *bhattari* (*bhatiyārī*?) victualing women of the Mughal Quarter (*mughalpurā*) grabbed the bridles of five or ten horsemen each, and struck them with sticks and bricks and bamboo, until they were toppled from their horses and were finally killed. This again is a sign of profound contempt,

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[333] Ibid., f. 67a.

given the menial status of the *bhatiyārī* as a figure in Delhi's landscape: we recall, for instance, that the emperor Jahāndār Shāh had lowered himself by supposedly befriending one in the city's cattle-market. The "God-smitten" Marāthās were entirely paralyzed. They fled like mice wherever they found a way, into every alley and at the gate of every mansion, where, notes the mirzā sanguinely, they were killed like dogs and cats. Two or three of their leaders, including one named Santājī who master of 15,000 horse and two elephants, were killed in the city. From the gate of the fort to the entry (*bhātak* = *phātak*?) to the chases, and the salt market and the shrine (*takiya*) of Majnūn, which is about three or four kurohs (eight miles) away, all the alleys and markets were filled in every direction with the corpses of those dogs, and more than three or four thousand of the infidels (*kāfir*) were killed.

In the midst of that great tumult and hubbub, news was received that when Qutb al-Mulk decided to imprison the emperor, Rājā Ajīt Singh stabbed him twice or thrice with a dagger. The minute high and low realized that the emperor was alone with the people of the Barhā nobility and there were no others to protect him, Farrukh Siyar's faithful nobles headed towards the fort; while from the other side, Iᶜtiqād Khān, Mīr Musharraf, Islam Khān, Mukhlis Khān, Munᶜīm Khān and Sayf Allāh Khān, the imperial guards (*wālāshāhī*) and Khān-i Daurān's people were sent from "that side"; and from "this side", Ghāzī al-Din Khān and Saᶜādat Khān proceeded towards the fort. "This side" suggests that the author viewed the proceedings from somewhere in the vicinity of the Moonlight Avenue, since Saᶜādat Khān had reached the city constabulary (*kotwālī*) present there when he was wounded by bullets and swords and so forced to return. Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān proceeded more carefully, but because he didn't have his contingent, and the few who were with him had run away, so he also retreated to his own residence. And then even when it was known that Farrukh Siyar had been seized, and another prince had been "made to sit" (*julūs*

dādand) on the throne, the leaders from "this side" continued to fight hotly for three watches of the day. But in the end when they saw that the matter had departed their hold, and further efforts were of no use, they too retreated to their own homes. In this uproar, from Saᶜd Allāh Khān Square to the Delhi Gate (in the south), and the imperial stables (*tuwabil*) were all sacked. But besides these places, says the mirzā, the rest of the city was protected by the grace of God.[334]

The People, Poetic

The mirzā's account draws a separation between the popular and the elite actions which happened on the same day. While the nobility clashed over the question of deposition, the common people attacked the foreign soldiery who were from outside the city. This narration denies the possibility of political motivation in the actions of the common folk of the city. Lāhorī, by contrast, draws no such distinction in his extensive account of the fighting. Lāhorī states that when the news of the deposition finally spread through Delhi, a heavy mourning fell upon the city. But no one had the heart or strength to expose their perturbation. Qamar al-Dīn Khān and Zakariya Khān, sons of Muhammad Amīn Khān (a supposed conspirator, according to this account) and ᶜAbd al-Samad Khān respectively, and a group of other Mughals reached the entryway of the fort and fell upon many of the Telingā and Marāthā soldiers with their swords in order to reach the mansion of the amīr al-umarāᵓ and attack him. But when this news reached Muhammad Amīn Khān, he forbade his children's participation; calling his sons, he said, "Children – what has got into you? Sit down and don't indulge in trifling affairs. For we are the sincere servants of his Highness with our lives and hearts. If the Lord Vizier decides to augment the throne, I'll be the first to salute the newcomer – and after that, who among the Mughals

[334] Mirzā Muhammad, "⊂Ibratnāma," 219b–221b.

would dare defy orders?” Muhammad Amīn Khān, says Lāhorī, did not really have the motives of state at heart.

Meanwhile the Mughals rapidly routed the Deccanis and plundered them. At that time the gentry and the lower classes (*ashrāf o asāfil*) of the city from among the artisans and traders (*ahl-i harfa*), who were deeply upset by this event, exposed the unhappiness (*khār*) in their hearts and fell upon the lives and property of these isolated travelers (*musāfirān-i bī-khānumān*) in the city. Swords and arrow fell upon the Deccanis from all sides. In that popular tumult (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*) a leader of the Deccanis who Lāhorī thinks was called “Mantā Jī”, and who was a master of twenty thousand horses, fell from his elephant under a hail of arrows. His life, as well as the jeweled ornaments on his neck and hand, were lost. The Deccanis, for all their skill in warfare and pride in their bravery, were stuck dumb and astounded. Saying “*Ai Bāp Ai Bāp*” (“Oh Father, Oh Father!”), they threw down their swords and shields and taking clumps of hay in their mouth, represented themselves as cattle. But, as we saw in Kām Rāj’s account, these pleas for pastoral care went unheard: from the Mītāī Bridge to the Lāhorī Gate, through the Moonlight Avenue, to the foot of the walls of the fort, rows of these helpless ones lay wounded and dead, and were kicked by the populace.

In the midst of all of this popular tumult, news was received that Ghāzī al-Din Khān the beardless (*kusā*), “who in the language of the people (*zabān-i mardum*) is known as a *lucchā”* and Saᶜādat Khān were proceeding down the Moonlight Avenue with a select group of cavalrymen towards the mansion of the amīr al-umarāᵓ and the fort. Whoever from among the men of the Barhā and the Deccanis was encountered was attacked with arrows and guns and hurled into the dust of obliteration. It was falsely said that Iᶜtiqād Khān the Kashmīrī was also heading to the mansion to attack it “from the other side”, but he was unable to cross over from

Saᶜd Allāh Khān Square due to his extreme fear. A force was sent under Sūran Dās, the manager of Sayyid Dilāwar ᶜAlī Khān to deal with the loyalist Ghāzī al-Din Khān and Saᶜādat Khān. The poor Hindu gamely followed orders and confronted these two great lions, writes Lāhorī, who clearly has a low opinion of the ability of timid Hindu bureaucrats to contest the field with the valiant lions of Islam. But in this case, both sides fought well. In the end Saᶜādat Khān was wounded, and doubled the reins of his horse to flee. His son, who was a handsome young man and endowed with unparalleled qualities, was captured by the people of the sayyids. Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān and his people fought on, but were not aided by any other loyalists. The imperial forces reached as far as the front of the alley of Hamid al-Din Khān the *Chīlā* and then were turned back; the captured son of Saᶜādat Khān was received with honor by Qutb al-Mulk, who, impressed by his bravery, gave him a robe of honor. All night an astonishing uproar and rare tumult fell upon the condition of the people. Some hoped that early in the morning Rājā Jai Singh would arrive and that Sar Buland Khān, who was nine *kos* away at the Sarāy of Mahr Parwar, would return and free the emperor.[335]

We might think that Lāhorī's account implies a distinction between the common rabble, who fell upon the Marāthā outsiders, and the nobility who went to Farrukh Siyar's aid. But in fact Lāhorī makes it clear that the common people were resolutely opposed to the removal of Farrukh Siyar. Until the deposed ruler lived, the city's event-seekers (*waqāᵓiᶜ-talabān*) watched the spectacle with their heads on their knees, scraping the phantom poppy of news (*khayāl-i kūknār-i akhbār wazᶜi mī-tarāshīdand*) in the hope that Tahawwur Khān of the imperial guard and Rūh Allāh Khān, son of Khānāzād Khān, and others of Rājā Jai Singh's group would come with a large army and free his highness. A particularly afflicted group (*gurūhī-yi zamāna ashob*) even went

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[335] Lahorī, *'Ibratnāma*, 211–14.

on to think that his highness was an ocean of perceptiveness and so was in control of the situation the whole while. Because these two nobles would soon be ashamed of what they'd done, on such-and-such a day they'd resign their posts out of their crimes and penitently return to Barhā in mendicant garb or go to the House of God (Mecca and Medina). This sort of idle and fanciful chatter (*bahr-gūʾī*), conducted without fear or restraint, was the talk of the time amongst the common people.[336]

The popular agitation did not merely end with the failed resistance against the coup. Perhaps in response to this, the emperor's body was brought out and thrown on a mat outside the fort for the city's event-seekers (*waqāʾiʿ talabān*), so that people could regard him with the eye of admonition (*ʿibrat*). From the swelling of the body and the darkness of color, it was evident that at first he had been strangled or poisoned and the bird of his soul had soared away from his body. Finally there were a few wounds near the throat and near the chest, at the place where the heart and the liver are situated.

In the end, notes Lāhorī mournfully, they furnished a shroud and took him to the final destination. The cortege was accompanied by all the eunuchs and the minor servants (*rīza*) of the nobility, who carried some of the things required by regulation (*asbāb-i tuzak*). At this moment, Lāhorī seems to forgive the emperor all his supposed errors. So he tells us that Farrukh Siyar's good qualities remained in the memory of the people because that faultless emperor meekly surrendered his life and property to those who'd sinned against religion. Those who accompanied his funerary procession did so in great tumult (*ghuluw*), and yelled with sighs and cries (in literary and articulate Persian):

> Oh woe that the cypress of the garden of the caliphate has fallen
> The rose garden of time has fallen away from thriving

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[336] Ibid., 218–9.

The moment that the moon at the apex of grandeur set
The firmament wore black and fell from grace (*safāʾ*)

Especially the group of mendicants who are called "*luccha"* in the language of the people of the Urdu, says Lāhorī, went crying and uttering the most grave and severe words of abuse:

The moment that this terrible event showed its face
Why didn't vengeance grab time by the throat?

They buried him in clean earth in the mausoleum of the emperor Humāyūn, where the big and small folk of this family are buried, and so freed him from the punishments and tortures of the few days of life. This generous emperor was so beloved of the people of scarce means (*kam istiʿdad*) that for a period of time indigent mendicants and wayfarers (*ibn al-sabīl*) absolutely ceased to beg from the mounts of the nobility. They refused to accept bread and sweets (*halwa*) from the wealthy folk such as Turra Bāz Khān and others who were supposed to distribute them. In fact they said that

> The hand and mouth that knew the taste of the rewards of that martyred emperor, who had been dispatched with such torture and pain from the oppression of disloyal and cowardly ones (who'd come to a bad end) also knew that poison would be the fate of a person who offered hot food, or a wound on the body for he who offered a fragment of gold or a dirham.

With such words and actions, these true believers and mendicants (*ghurba-yi masākin wa aqīdatmandān-i sāhib-yaqīn*) prepared the water and stew of the "Thursday" ceremony at the gate of Humāyūn's tomb, distributing this food amongst the worthy and deserving (*arbāb-i istihqāq*).

This resistance, according to Lāhorī, did not die down quietly. It continued in intense form for a quite a long while. So, writes our author, now with diminishing sympathy for the masses (*mardum-i ahad al-nāss*), whenever they encountered a person of rank in the pathways of the marketplace or outside the court, they would disrespectfully and odiously flap their tongues and say things "bitter and swift" (*talkh o tond*) in a loud voice without the slightest care for their life

or property. Such abuse was especially directed towards people in Rājā Ajīt Singh's army, who had to take out-of-the-way routes to enter and exit the court. "Let no human endure such insults!" earnestly wished our author: these words made the Rājpūts seethe within themselves (lit., "drink the blood of their livers") and grip their daggers and swords; but how much could they argue (*jawāb o sawāl*) with the populace (*khalq-i khudā*) and the massed crowds of commoners (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*)? This went on to the extent that some Kashmīrī spoon-sellers and a group of lazy peddlers (*chamchā* furūsh ... *dallālan bilā kūsh*) were killed for the crime of being foolish (*safāhat*) due to the absurdity of their speech about the rājā, and [their remains were] shown publicly in contempt. And yet, concludes Lāhorī, these people did not refrain from such activities.[337]

The Memory of Farrukh Siyar

From the distance of two decades, Khush Hāl does not appear to recall a popular mobilization. He tells us merely that Deccani and Hindūstānī soldiers who were stationed around the fort were discomposed by the fisticuffs and kicks they encountered. They tried to escape through ever alley and marketplace but were instead tormented and persecuted at the hands of urbanites (*shāhriyān*) and fell into the pit of the well of death.

But Khush Hāl does take pains to mention the love that the people felt for the emperor. This is expressed in Khush Hāl's memorialization of the long-departed ruler, perhaps as a way of recovering and normalizing his place in the dynasty. Khush Hāl records two personal characteristics: one, that he was greatly inclined towards horses: horses of pleasant character, quick-witted and intelligent, of appealing color and fast as lightning. Because of this passion, several thousand such horses had been gathered in the imperial stables. So much did he love

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[337] Ibid., 219–221.

them, that the stables of the most special ones were placed near his sleeping quarters, and from time to time he would watch over these creatures from the roof of the palace. He even knew them by name and could distinguish amongst them by sight. Switching to a distinctly mythic rhyming voice, Khush Hāl now relates the following anecdote: A horse fidgeted a bit in contrast with its usual habits on a dark night while the ruler slumbered in his bed. He awoke immediately and inquired personally of the horse and its groom. The imperial steward (*khān-i sāmān*) was given free rein in deciding on the feeding of these animals. When Muhammad Yār Khān was appointed to this position, he sent a petition to the king that when he examined the dossiers of records, it was noticed that the horses were being given more food than permitted by regulation (*ziyāda az dastūr*). So the emperor decreed that the most special horses could receive feed worth up to a gold coin (*ashrafī*) daily and to make a petition if it went beyond that. And in this vein, what could be said of his highness's equestrian prowess, so that he was painted only at the bridle of his horse?

The other thing about Farrukh Siyar, say Khush Hāl, was that he wore clothes trimmed with gold and embroidered silk (*zarī*) and lace (*kinārī*) and gold-and-silver threadwork (*bādila*), which were perhaps not worn in the reign of any previous ruler. The nobility came to emulate the ruler in this regard. And although the event of the tragedy (*hā^ɔila*) of that world-creating emperor has been trodden underfoot by calamities (*hawādis*), nevertheless the lace-sellers held a severe mourning for him. And an even heavier sorrow fell apon the lives of the orphans (*yatīmān*) who form a great crowd of the dispossessed (*zumra-yi nā-dāshtahā*). This was because on the days of imperial procession they found that the skirt of desire was filled to the brim with just a flick of his jewel-bearing hand.

On the third day after his death, despite many efforts to prevent them (*dūrbāsh-i bisyār*), the sellers of cloth (*bazzāzān*) gathered at the fort, at the foot of the three-arched gate, under the apartment in which the emperor was imprisoned, and performed the funerary rites and rose only after having recited prayers for the deceased (*fātiha-yi surūd*). Other writers, notes Khush Hāl, have described what befell that emperor and to where the conditions of the state (*saltanat*) descended. "Of the emperor even the name didn't remain / and the era of the sayyids is past too."[338]

The memory of the city's "common folk" protesting against Farrukh Siyar's execution is refracted through Khush Hāl's vision of proper social roles. The city's artisans, we learn, were aggrieved because of his death – but only due to purely economic motives, and only due to the previous munificence of this particular emperor. In themselves, the people of the city had no role to play, no way in which to act, no form to think about the structure of the powers that exercised remote pastoral care from above. In this way, Khush Hāl contracts the vision of "excess" that Lāhorī recorded to merely one of pious and passive memory. But perhaps Khush Hāl undercuts the effectiveness of this narration through the deployment of one telling detail about the funerary acts: for while Lāhorī describes the popular mobilization at the site of the emperor's burial, Khush Hāl recalls an obstinate act of remembrance at the site of the killing itself. Such an act would in itself be difficult to perform, since the three-arched gateway was built within the fort, and not at its edge; in order to access it, Khush Hāl's mourners would have to pass the moat and walk through the fort's gates. This makes Khush Hāl's act of memory, inadvertent as it may be, even more significant. For where Lāhorī indicates the people mourned the loss of an emperor,

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[338] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Bahādur Shāhī (Hyderabad)," 142–145.

Khush Hāl would seem to indicate that what the people resented was the act of killing an emperor in itself.

In the writings of Lāhorī and Khush Hāl we have glimpsed the traces of a popular subjectivity in action. The assorted faceless people on the street, humble “spoon-sellers” and “lace-makers” gathered in their multitudes to fearlessly hurl invective at the parties they held to be responsible for the death of the emperor. But how did such people mobilize? How did they develop a shared sense of the political order, and in what idioms did they assert their views? In the next chapter (Chapter Five), we will examine the role of satiric poetry in serving as a public and a political form of expression. Chapter Six will build on that understanding to develop a model of popular political action, and in Chapter Seven we will use that model to analyze the shoe-sellers’ riot, another massive public uprising in Delhi a decade after the death of Farrukh Siyar.

CHAPTER 5: The Pen is Mightier than the Sword

One day in the 1688 – perhaps it was 1689 – the refuge of the faith Aurangzeb received a formal petition from Lord Kāmgār Khān, chief steward (*khān-i sāmān*) of the imperial establishment. Kāmgār Khān's petition would have seemed something of an oddity among the great torrents of the routine correspondence of state, the reports of spies, and the never-ending requests for money, soldiers and promotions which the emperor was forced to daily endure. The khān wrote:

> Mirzā Muhammad Niᶜmat Khān, whose malignant nature is accustomed to satirising, has published certain verses on my marriage, saying, "The object of it (i.e., marriage) is lawful movement, but in this case there is a coupling of two quiescents." And he has besides introduced into them other disgraceful remarks about me, so that I have been put to shame before high and low (*ruswā-yi khāss wa ᶜāmm shuda*). I hope that your Majesty will so punish him that he may not again venture to compose such idle tales. What was appropriate has been related.[339]

We can be sure the emperor read this epistle with his customary attention, because the collator of these anecdotes reports that Aurangzeb crossed out the standard bureaucratic phrase "what was appropriate" and instead scribbled "what was inappropriate". The imperial pen then traversed to the upper margin of the petition, where it wrote:

> Punishing him will cause greater disgrace [to you than before]. This naïve (*sādah-lauh*) hereditary servant wishes to make me his sharer in this humiliation, so that Niᶜmat Khān may say and write about me whatever he likes and fame it through the world (*shuhrat-i ᶜālam sazad*). Formerly, too, he had not spared me [in his satires]; in return, I had increased his reward, that he might not do it again; yet in spite of this [favour] he had not on his part been less [satirical]. It is not possible to cut out his tongue and sever his neck. One must burn and accept it (*bāyad sūkht o bāyad sākht*). *He is a friend, who neither clings to thee nor separates himself from thee*.[340]

Who was Niᶜmat Khān, and what did he write that so provoked the chief steward, and even the august personage of the Mughal emperor himself? More importantly for the purposes of this

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[339] Hamid al-Din Khan, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib: English Translation of Ahkam-I-Alamgiri*, 127.

[340] Ibid. Quranic quotations in italics. I have amended the translation according to the Persian text provided.

chapter, why would the all-powerful emperor of Hindūstān restrain his desire to cut out the tongue and sever the neck of an impudent poet? The basis of the conflict, we see, lay in Kāmgār Khān's sense of humiliation – of a shame before high and low" that was the product of Niᶜmat Khān's poem. But it was not merely the poem which caused such embarrassment: to be precise, it was the circulation of these verses that troubled the khān the most. Niᶜmat Khān's satirical words had traveled in written form or oral, and had been shared amongst people whose opinions mattered to Kāmgār Khān.

If the saintly Aurangzeb inhabited a lofty realm far above such earthly concerns, it was because he had striven to rise above them. He too had been the butt of the arrows of Niᶜmat Khān's outrageous words; and he had by his own account wished to punish the poet in dramatic and sanguinary fashion. But Aurangzeb knew such a course of action to be unwise. If the emperor chastised the satirist for his unkind jests, it would only serve to give Niᶜmat Khān all the leave he needed to make further mockeries of the ruler. Implicit in Aurangzeb's understanding of Niᶜmat Khān's place in the world of the Mughal empire in the late seventeenth century was the sense that there existed a realm beyond the emperor's control. This site of infamy – the "world" – had to be managed with particular and politic care: to advocate violence in attempting to control the fickle opinions of the "high and low" was the course of the simple-minded. Aurangzeb could only dissuade Niᶜmat Khān through kindness; and when that course of action failed, the silently seething emperor had nothing to do but grin and bear it.

What, then, were the features of this wider public world of the later Mughal empire? We glimpsed a view of it in the popular uprising against Farrukh Siyar's death in Delhi in 1719. The crowds that angrily protested the execution of the emperor and the common folk who assaulted the Marāthā cavalry in the avenues and lanes of the city were certainly activated by political

intent, by grievance against those who had upset the proper and harmonious order of the world. But how did these folk come together? What pathways of exchange generated the bonds of solidarity that enabled people to gather and to represent themselves as a collectivity? We know that contemporary observers identified the subjects of popular action by their ethnic background ("the women of Mughalpurā"), their profession ("lace-makers") or their status as religious folk ("pious mendicants"). We know also that our authors viewed the self-assertion of such folk with emotions ranging from indifference to alarm. Beggars and mendicants, after all, were not neither the proper subjects of political action, nor indeed the objects of historical recollection. The moments at which such folk erupted into the historical record were moments of profound tension and anxiety for our memoirists.

But, as ᶜĀlamgīr's cautious approach to Niᶜmat Khān reveals, the links that cohered the popular and came into view during moments of crisis existed in a latent fashion through the everyday life of the empire. Moments of mass political action, seemingly spontaneous, depended in fact on long-standing, widespread and persistent networks of interchange within the "public" – that, in fact, gave the public its very form and character. If information was shared across these networks, it was carried in widely intelligible agglomerations of data, fastened together by stable and secure structures that resisted degeneration into misunderstanding and incoherency. One might imagine many forms of interface with these networks of popular exchange: rumor, or bāzār gossip, for instance, was certainly an important mechanism, extensively used, noticed and commented upon as it was by European visitors. But the mode of social interchange with which we are particularly concerned is that which Aurangzeb felt most incapable of controlling: that of satire.

Satire, I contend, can be seen as a ubiquitous and particularly flexible protocol of political interchange in the late Mughal world. While in its everyday form satire may have served to bring entertainment to folk, it was equally capable of voicing and sharing political critique. In the first part of this section, therefore, I make a two-pronged argument about Mughal satire. To begin with, I explore elite forms of satire and make the case that such satire makes political claims in the way that it articulates a shared sense of norms and values – one which binds high and low to each other – and that it could provide the form to criticize those who were seen as violating this shared sense. Then, in considering the works of Mīr Jaᶜfar Zatallī, I turn to forms of satire that were not necessarily elite, and show how such satire was situated within, and addressed, the "public" of the city. Satire, I shall show, could be public and could be political. Perhaps this was why many of the elite commentators who later anthologized the figures we examine here took pains to point out the low and the base nature of satirical poetry. Mocking words produced discord and dissension: they were a source of constant danger to the honor of the rightful guardians of the social order.

An awareness of the this dangerous power of poetry reveals itself in Lāhorī's description of the tumult after the death of Farrukh Siyar that has been described in the previous section. We recall the beggars and mendicants who accompanied the funeral cortege of the emperor, wailing and reciting poetry together. That Lāhorī places rhymes of a high Persianate idiom in the mouths of this rabble is not so relevant here as the fact these ruffianly sorts expressed their feelings in rhyme itself. Every lowly fellow felt free to hurl the worst abuse against the army of the sayyids and their Rajput ally, Rājā Ajīt Singh; the flow of invective stopped only after some such folk were put to the sword. Poetic exchange and satirical poetry in particular should thus be seen not only as undergirding the basis of the public, but also as the matrix of the normal and the urban

everyday, from within which the exceptional act of mass assertion so frequently arose. Finally, we shall see how the moment of transition from satirical words or harsh mockery to physical violence lies in the crucial intermediary stage of open abuse; so that a commonly recognized gradient of escalation would serve to structure the manner in which people acted against each other, either as individuals or as masses. But before we turn to the instances of such mass assertion, we must first understand the workings of satire itself. To do so, let us return to the satirist Niᶜmat Khān.

The Exalted Satires of Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī

In this section I examine the satires of Niᶜmat Khān, one of the pre-eminent litterateurs of the Mughal empire in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Beginning with accounts of the poet's life reproduced in biographical compendia (*tazkīrāt*), I turn to his satirical oeuvre, particularly his satire against the nobleman Kāmgār Khān mentioned above, and his critique of the emperor Aurangzeb.

Of Niᶜmat Khān (henceforth referred to by his poetic penname *ᶜĀlī,* "the sublime"), there remain few traces in the textual record of the early eighteenth century. The *Traces of the Nobility* (*Maāsir al-umarāᵓ*), a Mughal biographical compendium from the mid-eighteenth century, does not record an entry for ᶜĀlī, though the author quotes ᶜĀlī's jests and *bon mots* disapprovingly. ᶜĀlī finds greater recognition in mid-century biographical compendia (*tazkīrāt*). Writing about 1734, Bindrāban Dās Khushgū tells us that ᶜĀlī came to eventually acquire the title of Dānishmand ("the Knowledgeable") Khān, and that his origins lay in Mashhad [in modern-day Iran].[341] ᶜĀlī, says Khushgū, had a perfect knowledge of the branches of learning, both cogitated

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[341] Bindraban Das "Khwushgu," *Safina-I-Khushgu*, ed. S. M. Ataur Rahman (Patna: Institute of Post Graduate Studies & Research in Arabic & Persian, 1959), 59–61.

(*ma^cqūlāt*) and narrated (*manqūlāt*), of medicine, and could not be contested in his authoritative knowledge of the sciences. The poet came to India at the beginning of the reign of ᶜĀlamgīr, and the discerning emperor bestowed upon him the rank of five hundred and the title of Niᶜmat Khān. In the reign of Bahādur Shāh he had the rank of three thousand and the title of Dānishmand Khān. Till the fourth year of that reign he remained engaged in writing the *History of Victory* (*Zafarnāma*) of Bahādur Shāh with great erudition and eloquence. This work is famed, as indeed his allegorical tale entitled the *Story of Beauty and Love* (*Qissa-yi husn o ᶜishq*), which presents a "head-to-toe" (*sarāpā*) description of a woman in which many new meanings (*maᶜnīhā-yi tāza*) – that most desirable of qualities representing the literary fashion of "fresh speech" (*tāzā-gūᵓī*) – are to be found.

While Khushgū acknowledges that ᶜĀlī was a man of great ability and regarded as a master by other masters, he was crippled by a prominent vice: the fault of satirical speech (*hajw-gūᵓī*), which was leavened (*mukhammar*) in his disposition, occluded his virtues. This was to the extent that Delhi's reigning poet, intellectual and mystic Mirzā Bīdil attached title of the "satirical pilgrim" (*hājī-yi hajwī*) to ᶜĀlī's name whenever he brought it to his tongue. As proof of such this shameful defect, Khushgū offers a tale from the brief period in which Aᶜzam Shāh had declared himself the emperor in Ahmadnagar after Aurangzeb's death in 1707. At this time, relates Khushgū, two people by the name of Mirzā Sultān Nazar and Shaykh Sultān became extremely powerful, and whoever entered in their service found success. These two prevented ᶜĀlī from receiving promotions at court. ᶜĀlī complained to the vizier Asad Khān that the love of these people of royal birth (*salātīn*) was throwing the state into disarray. Such tattling had its consequence, when, some time later, ᶜĀlī went to a *salon* at the home of one of the aristocrats' sons (*umarāᵓ-zādagān*). The host at first behaved with the requisite politeness towards ᶜĀlī, but

gradually turned his back towards the poet and began to converse with another person. Rendered "senseless" by this grievous insult, ᶜĀlī sought his pen-case from one of his own men and wrote the following poem, which he deposited at the corner of his seat before saying, "I'm going home; I've written something; you will see it". The poem read as follows:

> *ᶜĀlī zi gham-at ashk na rīzad chi kunad*
> *Vaz hamchu tu shūkhī nagurīzad chi kunad*
> *Pīr ast wa tu mī-kunī kafl jānib-i ū*
> *Insāf bidih ki bar na khīzad chi kunad*

> ᶜĀlī, no tears fall from this great grief, what's one to do?
> And cheekiness doesn't leave you, what's one to do?
> One's old, and you turn your back
> But give me justice – for if one doesn't arise, what's there to do?

Besides a double meaning in the first line, the expected sting in the tail lies in the last two lines, which could also be read to suggest that the host had turned his rear towards Niᶜmat Khān, the aged guest; and that he should now position himself passively for he was incapable of sexual action himself.

Khushgū tells us that ᶜĀlī died in 1710/11 in Lahore during the reign of Bahādur Shāh; copious selections are excerpted from his *Collection* (*Dīwān*), which the compendiarist admired immensely. Bindrāban generally excludes satirical verses from his selection, instead preferring specimens of the sort that reiterate the core values of the poetic tradition, which include rejections of orthodox religiosity in favor of the experiental knowledge of God:

> *Majhūl rā inshāᵓ makun maᶜlūm rā ruswā makun / mullā bar ū ghūghā makun, biguzār qīl-o-qāl-hā*

> Don't write what is only pronounced, don't defame what is known / Mullā don't make a to-do about it, let idle chitter-chatter go.

Another standard form, often encountered, is the poetry of love, specifically exploring the forms and possibilities of the ecstatic love of God:

Chun fitād ātish-i rukhsār-i tu dar shahr-i wujūd
khuftagān-i ᶜadam az ghulghula bīdār shudand

When the fire of your face fell upon the city of existence
the sleeping ones of non-existence were awoken by the tumult.

Amongst these safe examples, Khushgū quietly slips in one final instance of the poet's satirical bent, where ᶜĀlī manages to deprecate both the speech and manners of Indians:

Harf-i bajā kas nashanīdam dar ahl-i hind
ghayr az kasī ki guft bi mutarrab bajā bajā

I've never heard a proper word from Indians
except when they say to the musician, "Play! Play!"[342]

While Khushgū disapproved of ᶜĀlī's wit, other compendiarists took a more sanguine view of the poet's headstrong and straightforward humor. A certain Qāzī Mubārak bin Muhammad Gopāmāwī, for instance, had only unqualified praise to offer for the author's daring jests.[343] Thus in his *Extremities of Thought* (*Natāyij al-afkār*) the judge writes that ᶜĀlī's father was a doctor (*hakīm*) who emigrated here and the young Mirzā Muhammad was born in the pleasure-house (ᶜ*ishratkada*) of India. The young mirzā traveled with his father to Shīrāz, and after being educated, returned to India. His exalted intellect acquired awareness (*āshnā*) through the pursuit of significations, writes the judge, and his temperament explored concordant subtleties and minutiae. His moist (*ābdār*) poetry rendered the garden of poetry verdant, and his artful prose ornamented the mansion of literature. But with all these exaltations, he also gave place much place to satire (*hajw*) in his words and overstepped the bounds of propriety. In support of this, Qāzī Mubārak presents us with a tale that emphasizes ᶜĀlī's literary virtuosity and social deftness. Once, we are told, ᶜĀlī sent a jeweled head-piece (*jīgha*) for sale to the Princess Zīb al-

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[342] Ibid., 62.
[343] This account is included in Siraj al-Din `Ali Khan Arzu, *Majma` al-nafayis: bakhsh-i mu`asiran*, ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddis (Tihran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2006), 189–194.

Nisāᵓ ("The Adornment of Women"), daughter of ᶜĀlamgīr. But when there was an inordinate delay in the evaluation of its price, he wrote the following quatrain and offered it to the princess.

az bandagīyat saᶜādat akhtar-i man
dar khidmat-i tu aiyān shuda jauhar-i man
gar jīgha kharīdanī ast pas ku zarr-i man
war nīst kharīdanī bizan bar sar-i man

In bondage to you my fortune has shone
And in your service my jewel [met. "of fidelity"] has been appraised
So if you want to buy the head-piece, then where's my gold?
And if you don't, then just strike [it] on my head.

The princess, presumably amused by this effrontery, rewarded the impudent poet with five thousand rupees and the jeweled head-piece in question, and no horrific imperial wrath befell the poet. In fact, in Qāzī Mubārak's telling, ᶜĀlī's rise to the upper echelons of the Mughal empire was unbuffeted by the winds of adversity: the poet was first rewarded with a robe of honor on presenting a chronogram on the conquest of Hyderabad. Soon thereafter he became the superintendent of the imperial Kitchens (*bāwarchī khāna*) with the title of Niᶜmat Khān in 1692 – a fitting title since the word includes in its meanings "gracious", "delicate", and "delicacy". At the end of the reign of ᶜĀlamgīr he received the title of Muqarrab ("The Intimate") Khān and superintendence of the repository of jewels (*jawāhar khāna*) and custody of the imperial seal (*nagīn-i daulat*). After the emperor's death, he served Aᶜzam Shāh, but remained at the fort in Gwāliyar to safeguard these treasures. Upon the death of master he presented himself to the victorious Bahādur Shāh. Here he received great imperial favor and the title of Dānishmand ("The Knowledgeable") Khān and was appointed to writing the imperial *Book* ("*Shāhnāma*"), but his death prevented its completion. Qāzī Mubārak notes the poet's date of death to have taken place in the year 1709 instead of 1711. Finally, we are told that in his own *Collection* ᶜĀlī wrote in the introduction that at first he adopted the poetic *nom de plume* of "Doctor" (*hakīm*) in

reference to the hereditary occupation of his ancestors. But an orthographical mistake that rendered "Doctor" to "What should I do"[344] prevented him from continuing with this name. So, with the permission of his poetic master the previous Dānishmand Khān, the our satirist adopted the penname of "ᶜĀlī".[345]

In his *Collection of Delicacies* of 1751, the great poet and lexicographer Sirāj al-Dīn ᶜAlī Khān Ārzū also has an extensive entry on Niᶜmat Khān, though his tone is distinctly less celebratory.[346] Ārzū tells us that ᶜĀlī achieved the title of Dānishmand Khān, and concurs with others commentators on ᶜĀlī's great knowledge of the sciences. ᶜĀlī's origins were from among the physicians of Shīrāz, says Ārzū, and was related on his mother's side to the chief imperial Physician (*hakīm al-mulk*) in the reign of the emperor Akbar, more than a century ago. From his speech one could discern that ᶜĀlī was from the Persian-speaking world (*wilāyat*), but that he had been raised in the heartland of India (*Hind*), and some even said that he was born in Hindūstān. In any case, he had produced good poetry, and was an used words with great care (*bisyār bi diqqat harf mī-zadand*). Most importantly for Ārzū, as for Khushgū, ᶜĀlī often produced new meanings (*maᶜānī-yi tāza*) in his works. But, notes the biographer, ᶜĀlī had a perfect mastery over the art of satire, to the extent that the nobility of his era feared his tongue, and the poet himself suffered injury from his words repeatedly. Of ᶜĀlī's works, Ārzū did not hold the *Siege of Golconda* in high esteem; though it was famed far and wide and the excellence of its poetry was evident, Ārzū felt that it paid no heed to the restraints of loyalty and sincerity and its disrespectful words were in breach of good etiquette.

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344 "Doctor" (*hakīm,* حکیم) can be rendered "What should I do?" (*chekonam,* چکنم) with the displacement of a few dots.
345 Arzu, *Majma` al-nafayis*, 189–191.
346 Ibid., 99–101.

It is for this reason, notes Ārzū, that the emperor ᶜĀlamgīr expelled ᶜĀlī from the imperial army (*urdū*); but because the emperors of India (*hind*) are merciful and gracious, no damage accrued to the offending satirist's life or property. And with his Sufic morals (*mashrab-i tasawwuf*), the orthodox author sniffily notes that ᶜĀlī had gone beyond the pale into Shīᶜism. This is why, says Ārzū, "we call him 'ᶜ⁾Ālī the hyperbolic' (*ᶜĀlī-i ghālī*)"; and just as his satires were humorous, his encomiums and panegyrics were weak. This reference of straying into the error of Shīᶜī heterodoxy is missing from Khushgū's recollection, but it was another grave failing in ᶜĀlī's character for Ārzū. To buttress these failings, Ārzū sniffily presents a vague story about the humiliation of ᶜĀlī at a soiree. Accordingly Ārzū tells us that a witty sophisticate at a distinguished salon (*majlis-i akābir*) once encountered ᶜĀlī and politely said, "You are worthy of veneration". ᶜĀlī asked why. The other said, "For the reason that they call you a pilgrim" (*hājī*). "But I've never been on the pilgrimage!" protested the confused poet. The other person said, "Then perhaps you're a *hājī* with the other *aitch* (*hai hawāz*)!" A *"hājī"* thus spelled is a satirist, and ᶜĀlī was supposedly profoundly offended by this raillery.

In any case, says Ārzū, ᶜĀlī composed a long poem in the meter of the Maulawi of Rūm (Rūmī); although it was shorter, it was well-composed but not bereft of cheekiness and jest (*shūkhī wa namak*). Later, in the reign of Bahādur Shāh, ᶜĀlī was greatly in the company of the vizier Munᶜim Khān. For this reason he was assigned the task of writing the imperial history (*bādshāhnāma*) of Bahādur Shāh; but because of the rivalry between Munᶜim Khān and Zū 'l-fiqār Khān, ᶜĀlī repeatedly portrayed the latter in a poor light. The result of this partisanship was that when the manuscript (*nuskha*) came into view, it became known that ᶜĀlī had no ability in the art of writing history. The biographer however ascribes to ᶜĀlī the chronogram for Zū 'l-fiqār

Khān's death, as well as others on the birth of Kāmgār Khān's son.[347] This would suggest that ᶜĀlī survived into the reign of Farrukh Siyar – a fact which Ārzū asserts, but one unsubstantiated in any other source. Despite his critical view of the poet's talents, Ārzū also presents us with choice specimens of ᶜĀlī's poetry:

> *Bī-khudī fursat-i taswīr bi naqqāsh na dād*
> *jān kashīd az tan wa janān nā-kashīda ast hanūz*
>
> Ecstasy did not give the painter the leisure to draw
> it drew life out of the body and only the beloved remains undrawn.

Yet not all later commentators agreed with Ārzū's stern judgment of ᶜĀlī's works and abilities. Take for instance Amīn al-Daulā Azīz al-Mulk Khān Bahādur Nasīr Jang ᶜAlī Ibrāhīm Khān, who collated the vast poetic compendium, *The Scrolls of Abraham* (*Suhūf-i Ibrāhīm*) before his death in 1793.[348] Like the others, Ibrāhīm Khān tells us that ᶜĀlī was unparalleled in his age in his quick-wittedness and his understanding of subtleties, and had a perfect expertise in the customary sciences such as astronomy, astrology, logic, disputation and philosophy. In the reign of Aurangzeb he had the rank of three thousand and the title of Dānishmand Khān; Munᶜim Beg, the vizier of Bahādur Shāh, prevailed upon his master to instruct ᶜĀlī write the *Book of Victories* (*Zafarnāmā*); the khān worked on this task till the fourth year of the reign with great erudition and eloquence, and was rewarded with the sobriquet of "ᶜĀlī" ("sublime"). Although he was an accomplished poet, ᶜĀlī really excelled in prose-composition – an art in which he surpassed his contemporaries. As with the others, the compendiarist notes that the taste for satirical prose and poetry was deeply imprinted in ᶜĀlī's personality. Yet he regards *The Chronicle of Hyderabad* with great admiration. It is a rare text and a wonder of the ages, says Ibrāhīm Khān, and is

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[347] Ibid., 62.
[348] \`Ali Ibrahim Khan Khalil, *Suhuf-i Ibrahim: bakhsh-i mu\`asir ta\`lif-i \`Ali Ibrahim Khan Khalil Binarisi dar 1206 H. Q.*, ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddis (Tihran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2006), 31.

common amongst great and small alike, famed for its with excellent poetry, colorful implications and witty ("salty") allusions. The discerning emperor did not harm ᶜĀlī's life for writing this work, but merely had him expelled from the imperial army.[349]

We have thus seen that ᶜĀlī's poetry provoked complex and ambivalent reactions in his epigones. All commentators appear to agree on ᶜĀlī's intellectual prowess and his literary genius, but such consensus breaks down when it comes to his satirical poetry. It is striking that no single collator would go so far as to claim that ᶜĀlī's satire was enjoyable or worthy of reproduction; and all those who criticized ᶜĀlī's railleries also stressed the forgiving and merciful nature of India's rulers. But we know most certainly – as indeed did these commentators – that ᶜĀlamgīr forgave ᶜĀlī (and grudgingly at that) for reasons of good policy and statesmanship rather than some inherent tendency towards mercifulness. In other words, ᶜĀlī's satire, like all good satire, continued to provoke unease and anxiety for much time to come.

Despite the discomfort of later commentators, ᶜĀlī's writings found vast popular appreciation. They provided the model to which other would-be litterateurs aspired, such as the author of the *Jahāndārnāma* we encountered in the previous section: we recall that Nūr al-Dīn Fārūqī Multānī explicitly referred to the great power of ᶜĀlī's *Chronicle*, which had caused the desire to write history to beat in his own breast. Indeed even a glancing survey of the manuscript collections of the eighteenth century reveals that the *Chronicle* was one of the most reproduced – if not the most reproduced – text from the period. We must therefore balance the formal condemnation of satire in the eighteenth century in the literary realm with its constant reproduction in the social.

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[349] Ibid., 188.

The popularity of ᶜĀlī's works has meant that historians are fortunate to have many copies of his *Chronicle*, and many of the other texts attributed to the author remain extant. Most of these remain in manuscript form, but the *Chronicle* was published several times in the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries, as indeed was ᶜĀlī's poetic *Collection.*[350] On the basis of these texts, we can date and reconstruct the controversies which led Aurangzeb to pen his sharp response to Kāmgār Khān: ᶜĀlī appears to have produced the *Chronicle* soon after the capture of the fort of Golconda in 1687; this text contains the "words that breached good etiquette" in their mockery of Aurangzeb and in all probability are the cause of the imperial rage to which Aurangzeb refers in his response to Kāmgār Khān. Kāmgār Khān's wedding, the occasion for ᶜĀlī's satirical verses, is dated to 1688 by internal and other evidence.[351] The devastating effect of ᶜĀlī's assault on Kāmgār Khān's honor was derived in part by the fact that the satirical verses in question were formally offered as a chronogram recording the date of the khān's second wedding. In other words, some of the power of the verses lay in the fact that their genre formally celebrated events such as weddings. Any discussion of this poem must first consider the place of the chronogram in Mughal literary culture, and what ᶜĀlī's chronograms reveal of his own life and conditions.

Chronograms

In this context, the term *tārīkh* is translated as "chronogram" when it refers to a poem which encodes a date within its line. Such encoding is performed by use of the *abjad* scheme, which assigns a set of numerical values to each letter of the Arabic alphabet. The skillful poet thus provides verses, which, while appropriate to the topic at hand, also reveal the date to which the

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[350] Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Divan-i `Ali* (Lakhnau: Naval Kishor, 1881); Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Waqai`-i Ni`mat Khan `Ali.* (Lakhnau: Munshi Naval Kishur, 1928).
[351] See Hamid al-Din Khan, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib: English Translation of Ahkam-I-Alamgiri*, 159 fn.

poet alludes in the sum of their assigned values. The importance attached to chronograms demonstrates an aspect of a historical sensibility that was widespread within the culture of literate elites in the empire. This sensibility was derived from the Perso-Arabic literary canon, in which the use of chronograms became popular in the fifteenth century.[352] Poets at the Mughal court routinely provided chronograms for important victories, birthdays, coronations and deaths.[353] The ability to generate skillful, literary, and allusive chronograms was one of the most prized qualities in a court poet because it facilitated the preservation and retrieval of the dates of events deemed important. But chronograms served more than a commemorative purpose: they were also powerful engines of ideological conformance. Because they expressed the most appropriate way to remember an event, chronograms shaped and reinforced the views that the court believed should be held with regard to the events in question. This, for instance, indicates why a much-lauded chronogram recorded the date of the death of Shivājī – a mortal enemy of the empire – in the laconic phrase "The Infidel Went to Hell" ("*kāfir bi jahannum raft*").[354]

But the use of chronograms or other commemorative poetry was not limited to the court alone. ʿĀlī, as we have seen, was remembered as an expert fashioner of chronograms of all sorts, and a section of his poetic *oeuvre* contains several such distiches and quatrains. There are of course the standard laudatory chronograms, such as those presented on Aurangzeb's victory over Bijapur (1687 AD/1098 AH); the capture of a famous cannon called the "Master of the Battlefield" (*malik-i maidān*); and the killing of the "accursed Santā", which exalts Aurangzeb as the ideal Islamic ruler who revivified the Faith by the decapitation of the infidel fire-worshipper (*kāfir wa*

[352] J. T. P. de Bruijn, "Chronograms," *Iranica*, October 20, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/chronograms-pers.

[353] A small but representative sample is to be found in Hadi Hasan, *Mughal poetry: its cultural and historical value* (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2008), 22–23.

[354] Muḥammad Hāshim Khāfī Khān, *Muntakhab-Ul Lubab* (Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2006), 111.

zindīq). ᶜĀlī expressed his gratitude to the emperor for the title of Niᶜ`mat Khān Khān in a poem, (the last line of which records the date 1693 AD / 1105 AH) and he also produced chronograms celebrating the promotions of courtiers, marriages among the nobility, and the births of sons.[355] Besides these, ᶜĀlī also provides us with chronograms that mark his progression on the standard track of imperial service. A chronogram records the construction of a stately residence at an unknown location in 1682 (AH1092), telling us that the author "fastened an ornament with earth and water", and concealed the date of completion in the wish "would that this house may remain forever populous". Some years later, in 1689 AD/1100AH, ᶜĀlī records the establishment of a garden with the following verses:

> *sad hazārān shukr kaz altāf-i shāh-i ba karm*
> *bagh-i ᶜĀlī dar zamīn-i sālihi bunyād shud*
> *ghuncha-yi dil bahr-i tārīkhash chu gul khandīd wa guft*
> *niᶜmat ābād az ᶜatāᵓ-yi haqq chū rūd ābād shud*[356]
>
> A hundred thousand thanks for the favors of the emperor
> Which laid the foundations of an exalted garden in befitting land
> The bud of the heart blossomed like a flower and spoke the excellence of its date:
> Delicacy flourished from the gift of God as a torrent poured forth.

In this chronogram we see the expression of a range of cultural values. The poet thanks the emperor for his favor, which was directly responsible for the employment and financial ability required to undertake a project of this sort. But while imperial munificence was seen and represented as the prime mover of this public work, the poet did not hesitate to record his own titles – "*niᶜmat"* and "*ᶜĀlī"* – in the dedication; in this way the second line should be read to refer to both a sublime garden and the Garden of ᶜĀlī. The poet is also careful to use the appropriate metaphors for the description of a garden, using the image of the heart as a flowering bud. In the last line, ᶜĀlī suggests that the garden is a zone of aesthetic refinement – *niᶜmat* –

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[355] Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Divan-i `Ali*, 229–34.
[356] Ibid., 234.

which is the result of the gift of God, or perhaps the granting of rights (*haqq*). For the reader of this chronogram – which was customarily inscribed at the gateway of the garden – a further productive ambiguity is to be experienced in seeing that the delicacy of the garden is the product of favors pouring forth, but also the direct product of the flow of water; as the water begins to flow, the garden itself flourishes with delicacy and refinement.

In the next year of 1690 AD / 1101 AH, ᶜĀlī records the construction of a hall of audience at his residence:

zi khurshīd fazl-i khudā jallu shānu hu
bar ahwāl-i īn zarra uftād partuw
az mulk-i dakkan āmadam sū-yi dihlī
chu az zulmat āyad kasī zanib-i zū
banā kardam īnjā wa tārīkh guftam
ilāhī mubārak kuni khāna-yi nau.[357]

From the sun of the grace of God, exalted be his power,
A ray fell on the condition of this particle
I came from the land of the Deccan towards Delhi
As someone approaches the light from the darkness
I built here and uttered the date
Divinity, bless this new building.

In contrast to the public dedication for the garden in the previous year, ᶜĀlī does not credit imperial favor for the building of his hall of audience – perhaps because the structure was for private use while the garden was a contribution to the public realm. In this simple chronogram, ᶜĀlī uses illuminationist metaphors to express his thanks to God and his relief in returning to his *patria* after the ordeal of the campaign in the Deccan. ᶜĀlī notably expresses a similar sense of patriotic affection elsewhere:

Khāk-i malīh-i hind namaksāz-i ᶜālam ast
tukhmī ki sabz gashta dar ū tukhm-i ādam ast

The dark earth of Hind is the origin(?) of the world

[357] Ibid., 235.

a seed that sprouts in it is the origin of mankind.[358]

Besides an expression of gratitude for his safe return, the chronogram also presents a statement of ᶜĀlī's increasing prominence among the nobility of the era; the son of a Shīrāzī émigré had arrived at the heart of the empire. He now considered himself important enough to require a special place in which to host and entertain his peers or meet with inferiors. This spree of construction terminated with the addition of a private hall (*khilwat khāna*) in 1692AD / 1103AH. Again, the residential space was marked with the wish for eternal populousness and divine beneficence for its inhabitants.

ᶜĀlī's Verses on the Wedding of Kāmgār Khān

But chronograms could be put to far less benign purposes than these expressions of pleasant sentiment. ᶜĀlī's satire *On the Wedding of Kāmgār Khān (Wedding),* with which we began this section, is perhaps one of the most prominent examples of the genre being employed with malicious intent. This poetic assault, only thirty couplets in length, ensured the everlasting ridicule of its victim and the fame – or perhaps infamy – of the satirist. The increasing ambiguousness with which ᶜĀlī has been regarded through the ages is also to be seen with regard to this poem. ᶜĀlī's eighteenth-century commentators frequently mentioned this satire, though they did not dwell overlong on it; in most places only the inoffensive first two lines are mentioned. Later commentators have ignored it completely, so that it has received neither translation nor commentary in the last century. Yet, as M. U. Menon has noted, the *Wedding* was regarded a literary masterpiece in its own age; densely allusive and difficult to comprehend, the poem attracted considerable commentary and explication from scholars in the eighteenth

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[358] Arzu, *Majma` al-nafayis*, 195.

century.[359] It is therefore doubly useful for the historian. On the one hand it reveals the literary, artistic and philosophical qualities valued by intellectuals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and on the other, the contours of masculinity and honor, reaching and perhaps transgressing as it did the limits of what was socially permissible. Given its complexity, the poem appears to have been misunderstood and incorrectly amended by later reproducers. The following version is a preliminary attempt at the reconciliation of this unstable text.[360]

1 Kadkhuda shud bār digar khān-i wālā[361] *manzilat*
Bā kamāl-i azz o tamkīn o wiqār o zeb o zīn
2 Az sar-i nau-i nard waslī chīd tā naqshī zanad
Bāzi charkh-i dughābāzish nasāzad gar sunayn[362]
3 Muhra dar shashdar nayuftad gar kashādī rū dahad
Mīzanad bar takhta az tars-i harīfān kabatayn
4 Zād-i rāhī dar safar bardāsht az sāq-i ᶜurūs
Mānad ān ham hamchunān bar gardanish manand dayn[363]
5 Nafaqat wa kaswat bi sar uftād nagirifta jahāz
Qadd rajaᶜ min janib al-balda mā khuf-i hunayn
6 Az maqūlāt-i ᶜashr shud bahs dāmād o ᶜurūs
Ū zi kam o kaif in mati mīguft wa ᶜayn
7 Ū sanad az jabr āward īn dalīl az ikhtiyār
Īn sukhan ham dar miyān mānad ast amr bayyin bayyin
8 Guft bahr-i man jihāz āwarda-yi kāyad bi kār
Guft ārī ham chakash āwarda-am ham kalbatayn
9 Zan taraf khuftan nabāshad zīn taraf bar khāstan[364]

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[359] M. U. Menon, "ʿĀlī, Neʿmat Khan," *Iranica*, August 1, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ali-enmat-khan.

[360] Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Divan-i `Ali*, 235–6; Mir Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami, *Sharh-i Qit`a-i Ni`mat Khan-i Ali* (Delhi?: Unknown, 1844); and Anonymous, "Commentary on 'Verses on the Marriage of Kāmgār Khan'", n.d., British Library, APAC, I.O. Islamic 1359, ff. 188a-196b. I rely on the British Library "commentary", which appears to be the most correct version of the poem, and consult the published Divan and Azad's commentary, both of which appear to have numerous errors. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Hossein Kamaly and Dr. Muzaffar Alam for helping me understand and translate this abstruse poem.

[361] Anonymous, "BL Commentary," f. 188a subsitutes the word "Ālī" here.

[362] *Azad's Commentary*, 4 lists no less than four possible meanings of the term; more concisely, the "BL Commentary," 188b says that a "sunayn" is a person whose tokens are completely trapped, is in a hopeless situation, and cannot win.

[363] This is a very doubtful reading. The *Dīwān* reads "*dayn*", but the *BL Commentary* appears to read "*wayn*" or "*dayn*": The latter text is damaged at the point where this is explained and so cannot be deciphered. Therefore I suggest the word be read as "*dayn*" and translated as "debt".

[364] The last word is rendered differently in each version of the text: the *BL Commentary* has "*bar khʷāstan"*, the *Dīwān* has *"bar khāstan"*, and Azad has *"bar dāshtan*"; I believe *bar khāstan* ("to rise") is the logically correct form here).

Sharthā shud waqt-i ījāb o qabūl az jānibayn
10 Guft Khān al-sabr miftāh al-farj rā sākinast
aksar isticmāl maftūhash kunad ai nūr-i cain
11 Guft zan shud jazm pīsham nist madd o shadd-i zabar
Dar mahālātast fath al-yās ahdi[365]*al- rāhatayn*
12 Guft dakhlī mīkunam bishanūd o qism āmad halūl
Hast saryānī o taryāni bina bar mazhabayn
13 Guft to shakal-i curūs az hindsa gar khwānda[366]
Zca camudā fi al-maslas qacima ba'l-naqtatayn
14 Guft man dar intizār sācatam mcāzūrdār
Shams-i tālic zāhra rājic māh bayad dar batayn
15 Guft pas shud sācat injā macni yaum al-qayyām
Yaum-i bāqī gūyī wa mustaqbil kon az harf-i atayn
16 Guft nazdīkast ānham īn hama tcājal chīst
Guft insān az ajal shud khalq ai ahal al-farayn
17 Guft man az raml pursīdim maᵓāl kar guft
Dākhil o khārij shud waqti ki bashad nasīratayn
18 Az tabībī ham dawāī khwāstam nā dīd o guft
Az barūdathā-yi to paidā ast zacf-i kalbatayn
19 Sakht zarcaunī zi khūlanjān o jūz o zanjabīl
To darī o dar falfal sacd o qast o bahamnayn
20 Guft zan inhā namī ayad bi kār az man shanū
Chara-at fisad-i wadājīn ast wa kī sadghatayn
21 Hijla ast ai khānā ābādān bigū yā madarsā[367]
Ham zabān āmad bi dard az guftagū ham lūzatayn
22 Dakhlhā dar mū-shikafī kār-i mullā zādā ast
To be taht al-lafz wāciz gasht chu mullā Husayn
23 Shud darāz īn bahs ilāhi tajjārī az zīrbād
Hujjatī muhkam be ārad rafca sāzad shor o shayn
24 Bā khirad guftam sukhan rā dastgāhī shud wasic
Pish ahl-i dil bud tārīkh guftan farz-i cain
25 Jamca gashtan shud bi khān dushwār bar man tasniya
Qāfiya tang wa na mānda har du hāzir hissatayan[368]
26 Harf-i madd rā sākht madgham pīr-i aql āngāh guft
Nahw jaᵓiz gard injā iltiqā-yi sākinayn
27 Bi har cazl az khān sāmānīst tarīkh-i dīgar
cAzl bidahish az rifāqish hamchu az nāzāda-yi qayn[369]

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[365] BL: 'bcadi'; *Divan*: 'ākhiz'.
[366] Varying in all versions; I use Āzad here.
[367] The *Dīwān* and *Āzād* render this line: *Hijla am ra madarsa kardī to ai khānā kharāb*. I have preferred the BL Commentary's variant in this instance.
[368] Azad has V. 25 before V. 24; I follow the order presented in the BL Commentary and the Diwan. Azad also presents a different initial line and places the first line ("jamaca…tasniya") in the second line, thus distorting the rhyme scheme. I believe this is an instance of misformatted text in the printed edition, and so use the form presented in the Diwan and the BL Commentary.

28 Kh^w^āstam az Khān sila guft az sukhan fahmān talab
Man zi kh^w^āndan ājizam dar bi suwadi nist mayn
29 Har ki kh^w^ānad ayiha al-nāss az shoma in qit^c^ā rā
Dar khud-i hālat sila bakshad z hamza ta ^c^ain

1 A second time was married the khān of exalted station
With perfect dignity and grandeur and grace and beauty
2 He pulls the backgammon board out again, this time to win
If the deceitful heavens don't deceive him and trap his tokens again
3 So his pieces don't get trapped hopelessly if a move opens up,
He strikes his dice on the board from the fear of his opponent
4 He takes wedding-bread as his traveling provisions
And they hang about his neck like a debt unpaid
5 He's had to pay for her clothes and expenses but can't claim the dowry,
Like he's come back from town with nothing but Hanin's shoes
6 Over the ten categories did quarrel bride and groom,
They spoke of quantity and quality and identity and location
7 He spoke of predestination, she of free will
These words went on and on, the matter between them was clear
8 He asked, have you got any dowry that might be useful for me
Yes, a hammer and tongs have I brought for you, replied she
9 On this side one couldn't sleep, on this one couldn't rise
These conditions were made and accepted by both parties
10 "Patience is the Key to freedom from sorrow, it is established
So don't you worry for it'll be used a lot, my dear one" said he,
11 "It's clear I'm faced with no diacritic of enunciation,
In barrenness, giving up hope is the only relief" retorted she.
12 "Listen you now, I'm to enter in the way of the *Halūls*
Either according to the Complete or Intermingled Way" said he,
13 "If you were to draw a geometric diagram,
Place the column solidly between the two sides of the triangle!" said she.
14 "I'm waiting for the right time, so excuse me"
The sun ascending, Venus returning, and the moon in second place" said he,
15 "But the time you mean is the day of judgment,
You say the day is still awaited so why not plan from the letters A.T.I.N.[370]?" said she,
16 "That's close enough, so what's all this hurry?" said he,
"Humanity was made of impatience, O Calf-Husband!" said she.
17 "I asked an Omen about the conclusion of this work,"
It says, "Inside and Outside lies victory but in the future" said he.
18 "Then I asked a doctor for medicine, but without even looking,
"Your weakness is apparent from your coldness", said he.
19 "He made a drug from galangale and nut and ginger,

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[369] Azad*: nikbat-i dāmād pish māzūl kard o bāz guft / ghazal-i bād pish az zifāfish hamchū az māzada-i jayn*; not present in the *BL Commentary.*
[370] The *BL Commentary* tells us these letters symbolically refer to the future.

Sumac, Long-Pepper, galangale, and salvia root."
20 "These are of no use, so hear this from me",
What you need is to bleed the jugulars and the temples" said she.
21 "Is this a bridal bed or a school, O Happy man tell me,"
"My tongue hurts from this prattle just as much as my throat" said she.
22 "Indulging in Splitting hairs is the work of Mullas' spawn",
"You just preach literally like Mulla Husayn".
23 May God bring a merchant to quieten this dispute twixt husband and wife
From Zīrbād, ideally, with a firm argument, to settle this trouble and strife
24 And so I gracefully said that speech is an ample storehouse,
and making chronograms is the primary duty of good folk
25 But conjugating in the dual is hard for the Khan, and for me the plural
The meter's constrained and no rhymes remain
26 The short vowel was stretched long and a wise old man said at that,
"grammar against its rules demands here the conjoining of quiescents".
27 For every failure of the khān, there's material for another history
The unsatisfactory parting from his companion is like a blow unstruck[371]
28 I sought reward from the Khān but he said, "ask those who know poetry,
He was incapable of pronouncing them, so what's the question of understanding them?[372]
29 O you people who read these verses, from amongst you
May each reward me according to his own ability.[373]

The poem serves as a chronogram of the date of the khān's wedding, but is mostly set as a verbal exchange between the aged khān and his presumably younger wife on their wedding night. ᶜĀlī represents the khān as being unable to perform in the bridal bed, to the great exasperation of new spouse. As a result, the khān pompously makes excuses for his failure, while his wife showers him with humiliating insults and cutting repartees. Most verses in the poem are capable of being interpreted in a variety of different ways; they present difficult allusions to a variety of the branches of knowledge, which in turn repeatedly stress the sexual incapacity of the khān. The following explication is based largely on the anonymous and undated commentary on the poem

[371] This is an uncertain reading, given its exclusion from the *BL Commentary*. The phrase here would literally mean: "a hammer[smith] still to be born." I am grateful to Dr. Muzaffar Alam for interpreting this verse.
[372] This verse is not included in the *BL Commentary*.
[373] This last line is uncertain because it does not appear to be in the *BL Commentary* and the published *Dīwān* may offer an incorrect reading.

that is present in manuscript form at the British Library which I have used to present the rectified text and translation above.

The poem begins on an innocuous note, telling us only that a nameless “khān of exalted stature” (Verse 1) was marrying again. It is as if the khān chooses to play backgammon with fate again; in the previous game of his first marriage, suggests the British Library *Commentary*, God won and took away the khān’s shame. But now the khān shamelessly has decided to challenge the heavens again, though he fears the possibility of humiliating and catastrophic defeat if the “exchange” (*kashādī*) does indeed happen. So afraid is the khān of this exchange or intercourse and the possibility of the immobility of his “pieces”, that he throws his dice on the board – a custom, the *Commentary* tells us, of backgammon-players who throw their dice on the board before they roll them in order to get the outcome they desire. Next we are presented with the image of travel (verse 4); the khān has embarked on the journey of union; here we are told that it is customary amongst the elite to travel wearing garments that are covered with the writing of protective incantations and with a certain sort of special “traveling bread” (*nān-i rāhī*). In the same way, the khān departs for this new journey with not “traveling bread” but “wedding bread” – the customary two pieces of hollow bread – one made with flour and roasted with butter and filled with crushed almonds, the other filled with crushed sweets. For this journey, then, the khān’s traveling bread is in fact wedding bread, and he hangs the both around his neck, swearing to remove them only if his journey succeeds. But since union is not to be achieved, these breads hang about his neck just as his unpaid debts do. This quick jab at the impecuniousness of the khān is thereafter amplified (verse 5): the expenses of the wedding trousseau and other such items have befallen the khān, but he cannot recoup them in the dowry – because, it is implied, the wedding has remained unconsummated and the dowry has humiliatingly been withheld. So

the khān returns empty-handed like a certain proverbial desert Arab who lost all his possessions in greedily trying to acquire a pair of shoes.

Perhaps such tensions led the quarrel between the newlyweds (verse 6). Indeed, notes the *Commentary*, when a man and his wife have fought long enough, they will eventually argue about the ten categories, and so it was with Kāmgār Khān and his wife; except that the khān kept harping on about "quality" and "quantity" – that is, an abstract discussion about sexual intercourse, while the wife asked instead about "identity" and "location": specific questions about the whereabouts and conditions of the khān's male organ. In response the khān began to speak loftily of the question of predestination (verse 7), implying that what would be would be; his newlywed interlocutor however took the position of supporting the notion of free will, and so urging her husband to strive harder. While ʿĀlī thus uses the language of philosophy in verses 6 and 7, in the next instance he switches to an allusion to ironsmithy. The khān, exasperated by all this heated argumentation, demands of his wife anything she may have brought that would help the matter. Yes, replies the scornful woman, I've brought you a hammer and tongs. To explain this allusion the *Commentary* describes at length the role of a sledge-hammer (*tapak*) and a hammer (*chakas*) and their respective use by the apprentice and master of the forge; all of this is to demonstrate that for the wife only the drastic application of a hammer and tongs could now produce the requisite shape and strength of her husband's organ. A secondary meaning, says the *Commentary*, is that tongs are also of use for the wife so that she may extract her prattling husband's teeth and so cease his nonsensical chatter.

So continues the matter in verse 9; while the wife couldn't sleep, Kāmgār Khān remained unable to rise, and so the conditions made before the wedding remained unfulfilled. Meanwhile the khān pompously comforted his wife by presenting her with an Arabic proverb to the effect that

patience is the key of remedy (verse 10): this double entendre hinges on the fact the Arabic word (*farj*) means "freedom from sorrow" but also refers to female genitalia. In response, the despairing wife notes that in terms of proper pronunciation she is faced with an impossible situation, and that the best course of action for her is to simply give up all hope. The khān continues on undeterred. He promises imminent entry, but in the way of the *halūlī* sect, either "completely penetrating" (*sarayāni*) or "unexpectedly arriving" (*taryāne*). This obscure allusion is comprehensible only to those who have more than a smattering of education in rare heresies and serves as yet another way for Niᶜmat Khān to display his virtuosity in the fields of knowledge. The *Commentary* helpfully explicates:

> The Halūliya are a community (*jamāᶜati*) whose believe in the transmigration of God into human reality, that is, they believe that God is present in man and has descended into him. Thus there are two paths in this community; some say that transmigration occurs discretely (*taryāne*), so that the entire nature of God enters into man; but others say it is intermingled (*sarāyānī*), namely that some traces of Himself are left by God in human nature. Because Niᶜmat Khān was by nature utterly insolent and fearless, he jested on this topic too, making Kāmgār Khān say soothing words to the woman, telling her, "do not despair, for I will enter, but hear that the "entrants" (*Halūl*) are of two types – one, the *sarāyānī* ("partial or half entry") and the other is the *taryāne* ("complete entry"), and the only delay now is just that I'm thinking which way is best."

Not to be outdone, the woman presents a rather more bold repartee from the field of geometry: if Kāmgār Khān knows anything, she suggests, all he has to do is to firmly descend the column between the two sides of the triangle. But Kāmgār Khān again begs off, this time claiming that the astrological conditions are unfavorable (verse 14): rather, the khān prefers to wait until the moon has moved to the second of ten possible stages, which is considered prosperous; and Venus, which signifies strength, has returned to its former auspicious position; and the sun has arisen. The wife is rightly skeptical of such foolish mumbo-jumbo, and retorts that in this case her new husband might as well wait for the day of judgment. The aged khān counsels patience – for in his advanced years he is close to the grave and long sleep before resurrection. But the fires

of ardor burn brightly in his young wife, who seeks not eternal slumber but earthly gratification. This satisfaction Kāmgār Khān can only promise at some point in the distant future, if ever. Having covered astrology and the occult, Kāmgār Khān now begins to provide medical excuses: the doctor, for instance, diagnosed the coldness of his body without even looking at him and prescribed an aphrodisiac. Here the author of *Commentary* produces his own story about the weakness of Kāmgār Khān:

> It has already been indicated that that Kāmgār Khān had a perfectly delicate temperament and cold temper, to the extent that it has been written that sometimes when once a month he'd summon a woman for intercourse, he would first ensure that there was a little bit of long pepper (*dār filflil-i darāz*) ("which in Hindi is called pilpil") that had been crushed and twisted up in a piece of paper and kept ready in a pocket or a napkin (*dastār*). After ejaculation (*anzāl*) he would throw this preparation into his mouth post-haste, so that this, due to its heat, would prevent him from falling unconscious. By chance on the day of his wedding he forgot to prepare the pepper. So when he had copulated with his wife and the aforementioned medicine came to his mind, he yelled to his servants saying "bring the *pilpil*!" But because of his extreme torpor his tongue wouldn't even form the words properly; and he didn't tell them to crush it, and so fell unconscious.

Kāmgār Khān's wife too had a sharp response for her husband, also in the language of the medical sciences (Verse 20); she recommended a course of bleeding of the two veins on either side of the head and the temples. Men of medicine would immediately recognize this as the prescribed cure not for impotency, but for the removal of the "black blood" of melancholia, diseases of passion, and assorted madnesses (*mākholyā, amrāz-i saudā, junūn*). In other words, suggests the wife, Kāmgār Khān needs not a cure for a disorder that is not sexual but mental. But the wife doesn't just stop at this prescription. She goes on to ask her husband (verse 21) whether he thinks he's in a bridal bed-chamber or a seminary: her throat aches from such ridiculous wrangling over obscure and trivial matters. Such pathetic erudition and silly pomposity, she says, is the work of the offspring of theologians (*mullāzāda*) (verse 22). The phrase can be read as a euphemism, however, for "hair-splitting", since sexual intercourse is the work of the "Little

Mullā” (*mullāzāda*): work beyond the abilities of Kamgār Khān, for clearly even at this late hour of the night he remains unable to achieve congress. The reference to Mullā Husayn is an allusion to a famed commentator of the Qurᵓān which was important in Sunnī theology; since ᶜĀlī followed the shīᶜī path, he opposed such literal (*taht al-lafz*) interpretations, and so happily dragged the exalted theologian's name into the muck he was engaged in raking.

ᶜĀlī ends the argument between the spouses here (verse 23), reverting to the narrative voice with the observation that only a "firm argument" could resolve this endless dispute, and may God send a merchant from Zīrbād to the provide it to the couple. The *Commentary*, which sheds light on this otherwise incomprehensible allusion, is worth quoting at length on this issue:

> By "the firm argument" (*hujjat-i muhkam*) the author refers to a thing that was is made in the land of Zīrbād, which is called a *Kīrkāsh*; and traders have taken it to other countries. In the palaces of emperors and noblemen where there are many singing and dancing girls, and since besides the master of the house no one else is permitted within, those women buy this merchandise at great prices. And one woman ties it around her waist and has intercourse with another and in this way satiate they their lust. Because the argument between husband and wife had gone beyond the limit, and proceeded for too long, the poet says that may God will that a merchant from Zīrbād bring a *Kīrkāsh* and with it settle the affair of the bride.

ᶜĀlī then alludes to his own difficulties in maintaining the rhyme scheme because the rhyme ending with –āyn signifies a plural and the author is running out such plurals to use; this is in contrast to the khān, whose problems with conjugation lie in the realm of the dual. In the same way, the "short vowel" of the khān had to be enlengthened, and a wise old man – no doubt the author himself – remarked that in this case grammar had to go against its own rules; two "passive" or "quiescent" consonants cannot normally be joined, but in this marriage they were of necessity yoked together. We recall that it is this verse that Kāmgār Khān quoted as objectionable to the emperor, though it is hardly the most severe imputation of sexual passivity in the satire. ᶜĀlī meanwhile has graciously offered this chronogrammatic poem to Kāmgār

Khān and now seeks his customary reward (verse 24, 28), but the khān refuses; not on account of niggardliness, but because of his own freely acknowledged illiteracy and mental incapacity. Reveling in his dazzling literary sophistication, ᶜĀlī concludes with a request to all his broader community of readers; may they reward him according to their own appreciation of the poem.

Despite its great virtuosity and referentiality, there is no profound complexity to the charge borne by ᶜĀlī's verses. They are designed to insult an aged grandee of the empire by proclaiming one central failing for all to see: that of his sexual incapacity. In this context, each verse serves as a shattering blow against the masculine self-delusion of competent sexual performance even in old age. More than that, the poem demonstrates that the core of what might be termed a Mughal masculinity was not centered in the values of bravery or daring, though it often found expression in such terms; at its heart, to be a man (*mard*) was to be able to perform the sexual function. To go even further, merely to partake in sexual activity was no indicator of manliness: rather, manliness itself was defined and maintained by the activeness of the male during the sexual act. To be sexually passive, the recipient of sexual action, was to relinquish claims on manliness.

Yet the laughing way in which ᶜĀlī treats the whole affair suggests that the attack is not without nuance, and in fact has some measure of restraint to it. ᶜĀlī does not violate the last vestiges of Kāmgār Khān's honor by going so far as to name his wife or to shame her. Nor for that matter, we should note, is Kāmgār Khān ever named in the poem; there is merely a single allusion to the position of the chief stewardship (*khān-i samān*, verse 27) throughout the text. Besides this, the satire is tempered by a certain gentility, which is evident in the role assigned to Kāmgār Khān's nameless wife. She is given an active voice and an active sexual role, but she does not reject her husband, humiliate him, or bemoan her fate. Her saucy repartees are expressed not from the fear of a miserable life with an old man, but instead from the position of a sexually aroused and

desiring partner. More than an intellectual match for Kāmgār Khān, the wife presents her husband with astute and cutting rejoinders, and is skeptical and dismissive of her husband's superstitions. Where Kāmgār Khān makes excuses on the basis of mystical speculation, or the alignment of the stars in the sky, his wife baldly rejects these as mere dissimulation. For the purposes of the poem, ᶜĀlī represents Kāmgār Khān's no-nonsense wife as inhabiting a highly secularized realm in which she demands sexual satisfaction and refuses to believe that the sacred or the otherworldly has the slightest influence on the situation. And beneath all of this lies the sense that to fail sexually is indeed a shameful failing, but it is an everyday failing. The poem, it could be argued, therefore serves, however weakly, as a form of social criticism too. It laughs at those aged dandies and fops who continue to visit the doctors and purchase aphrodisiacs and those who hope that the alignment of the stars will solve all earthly problems. It amusedly accepts the reality, far indeed from the idealized structure of the patriarchal household, of female domination and domestic querulousness.

As the last line of ᶜĀlī's poem makes clear, the purpose of the poem was not to deliver a secret if mortal insult to Kāmgār Khān. Formally offered as a chronogram for a private event of great joy, ᶜĀlī had in fact purposely designed his satire for widespread circulation. Of course, in this broader context the poem served not only to mock Kāmgār Khān, but also to seal the author's own reputation as virtuoso and a wit. At the same time, the poem's complexity and difficulty radically limited its audience. Filled as it is with Arabic phrases and the technical terms of geometry, philosophy, and the medical sciences, the poem stands far from the everyday and familiar world of the *ghazal* poem with its usual moth and flame. Even in a highly mnemonic culture such as that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such a poem would not spring

readily to the lips of most participants in social gatherings. Those who appreciated it in full measure were a select group indeed.

Nevertheless, in its intention and its circulation, the poem was a literary act destined for a broader world. Commentaries, such as the one cited here, explicated its meanings simply to non-experts. The commentary itself references other collections of information about important figures; it is from such a textual collection, for instance, that the commentator summons the story of Kāmgār Khān's dependence on chilies to keep him conscious. In this context, ᶜĀlī's poem too referred to and reinforced the prevailing views and opinions of the chief steward of the imperial household. Transcending its immediate context, however, the poem came to serve as a marvel of the form that was worthy of being preserved and understood even though much of the cultural milieu in which it was comprehensible would vanish within a century of its creation. This, perhaps, is why the great literary scholar Āzād Bilgrāmī felt compelled to present his own commentary on the poem though he was perhaps unable to interpret some of its nuances from the distance of a century. But while these verses may have been written to demonstrate a dazzling intellectual virtuosity to a select audience in the late seventeenth century, they had come to circulate with increasing velocity and density in the broadening horizons of the world of the early eighteenth century.

ᶜĀlī and Aurangzeb: Events of the Siege of Golconda

The very forces which propelled ᶜĀlī's *Verses* beyond their limited domain swept his *Chronicle on the Siege of Golconda Fort* to the position of serving as the standard of an eighteenth-century conception of literary ability. The *Chronicle* was produced in response to the emperor Aurangzeb's actions in the Deccan but, as later commentators noted, it produced no lasting damage to ᶜĀlī's life and property. Aurangzeb maintained his *sang-froid* in the face of ᶜĀlī's

misbehavior. In his courtly robes of honor, ᶜĀlī the consummate courtier rose through the ranks of aristocracy – an ascent that was predicated on the personal favor and good-will of the emperor. But on the other hand, ᶜĀlī the satirist indiscriminately raked his contemporaries with the grape-shot of his satire. While he praised the emperor and his victories, ᶜĀlī did not desist from criticizing the emperor just as he pleased. Some of this criticism may well have been expressed in poetic form and circulated in that way. The literary scholar Nurul Hasan Ansari presents us with an example from ᶜĀlī's unpublished *Collected Works*:

> *Tā chand kisī dast-i duᶜā bar dārad*
> *kā in zālim az in gulgula pā bar dārad*
> *Binashasta chunān qawwī ki bar dāshtanesh*
> *kar-i digarī nist khudā bar dārad*[374]
>
> …so that several raised their hands in supplication
> that this tyrant remove his feet from this sphere
> But he's planted so firmly, that his removal
> Is the work of none but God.

ᶜĀlī's most dramatic literary assault on the emperor's person took place in the *Chronicle*, the widely-circulated literary masterpiece for which he was most renowned. While it nominally conforms to the form of the *waqāiᶜ* or *rūznāmcha* – the plain and unadorned reports of daily events that agents routinely dispatched to their masters – the *Chronicle* is an abstruse, allusive, and multivalent work of stylized prose. The *Chronicle* is thus divided into eight daily reports from Aurangzeb's siege of the fort of Golconda and his pyrrhic victory over that mighty fort; each report is an extended and digressive essay on the happenings of the siege. In the report of the eighth and final day, which was the first of Ramzān of the 35th regnal year (1687), ᶜĀlī finally turns his "event-describing pen" to the displeasure of the soldiery with the vice-generalship of Salābat Khān. Because this day was a Friday (and indeed, 1 Ramzān 1098 was

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[374] Nurulhasan Ansari, *Farsi adab ba`ahd-i Aurangzib,* (Dehli: Indu Prshain Susaiti, 1969), 133.

Friday, July 11th, 1687), a proclaimer (*khatībī*) mounted the pulpit (*mimbar*) and delivered the appointed proclamation (*khutba-yi muqarrari*). But after this standard speech the the proclaimer proceeded to deliver a novel oration. ᶜĀlī innocently tells us that it has been penned down because it was presented with such a remarkable eloquence of the tongue (*talāqat-i lisān wa zalāqat-i zabān*). This sermon begins with a long Arabic invocation warning all men to know well that God has granted them incomparable bounties and to thank God for the appointment of a just ruler who is their leader in all rectitude.[375]

> "O Muslims," cried the The proclaimer, "Our emperor is the refuge of the faith, and according to the injunction '*And worship our Lord until there comes to you the certainty [of death]*'[376] it is certain that the interior selves of superintending rulers and pure temperaments are directed towards the enactment of divine wishes, and improving the current conditions of servants according to the evidences of the Holy Qurᵓān in conformance with the significations of the traditions of the dear and blessed Prophet. In this bountiful era, many commentaries and analyses (*tāwīlāt o tamsīlāt*) have explicated the difficult and intricate verses of the Qurᵓān (*ayāt-i mutashabih*) and a majority of divine injunctions have been interpreted by imperial strength and power. Among these, due to the limitless favors of his excellency the caliph of the age, infinite happiness and abundant mercy have been the lot of the servants of the threshold: they have been excluded from the love of God, because He has decreed that "*God does not love those who rejoice*".[377]

ᶜĀlī's strategy is clear from the outset. The The proclaimer begins in the expected manner, reminding his audience about the perfect congruence between the intentions of the ruler and the wishes of God as manifested on earth. We are told this is a 'bountiful era' because the emperor has taken it upon himself to interpret divine injunctions: a task that is ordinarily the work of the scholars of religion. Aurangzeb's self-serving interpretations have yielded God's favor in a way that can only be described by a Qurᵓānic quotation that itself has been chosen egregiously out of

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[375] The following extract is translated from Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Waqai`-i Ni`mat Khan `Ali.*, 136–146; See also the much-abridged translation in Ni'mat Khān-i-'Ālī, *Chronicles of the Seige of Golkonda Fort: An Abridged Translation of the Waqā'i' of Ni'mat Khan' 'Āli*, trans. Nurulhasan Ansari (Delhi: Idarah-i Ad, n.d.).
[376] Quᵓrān 15:99: وَٱعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ ٱلْيَقِينُ
[377] Qurᵓān 28:76: إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْفَرِحِينَ

context. God is happy, we are told, insofar as the empire's Muslims are suffering the effects of a never-ending war.

> Now this distressed group – far from homelands, deprived of families, despairing of the birth of sons, subsisting on bread and water, continually in mortal fear – has seen the slightest glimpse of repose; and wherever they have drawn a breath of joy, they are inevitably understood to be in opposition to the Beloved of God (*mahbūb-i haqīqī*, sc. Aurangzeb). Besides, with regard to those who with happy news of plentiful signification are most worthy of forgiveness among God's worshippers, *God also said* '*And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labor's] fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity; who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return". It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path!*'[378]

God, as Aurangzeb represents him, appears only to wish misery and suffering on his subjects. The emperor himself is not unaware of the miseries he brings in God's name to his people, and these severe tribulations are not accidental:

> *Brighter than the sun, and clearer than yesterday* is the reality that the Benevolent Stirrup, conjoined with Victory, has been aware of these catastrophes - for how many years it has been since for the reason of plague and murder and drought his tongue [has repeatedly uttered] '*Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return'.* [379] Now by the guidance of the Shadow of Divinity, we have been led to God's blessings and mercies. Now may He of Pure Rank (*zat-i taqaddus āyāt*), in conformance with the order to '*moralize yourself with the morals of Allah*',[380] cast us ingrates (who are puffed up with pride and good fortune) into the calamity of suffering and endurance by way of retribution for our lack of gratitude. How it was in the leisurely reign of Shāh Jahān, when we were at perfect ease and in repose in the harems and mansions of Shāhjahānābād, rejoicing in its canals and gardens, feasting on viands and quaffing cups (*akl o sharb wa atᶜima o āyāgh mīnamūdand*) – "*indeed, in [the luxuriant beauty of] their homeland, the people of Sheba had an evidence [of God's grace] two [vast expanses of] gardens, to the right and to the left, [calling out to them, as it were:] 'Eat of what your Sustainer has provided for you, and render thanks unto Him: a land most goodly, and a Sustainer much-forgiving!*'"[381]

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[378] Quᵓrān: 2:155-7: ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ * وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَىْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَنفُسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَٰتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُهْتَدُونَ * قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ

[379] Quᵓrān 2.156: إِنَّا لِلَّـهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

[380] This appears to be a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadīth*) though I have been unable to identify the collection to which it might belong.

[381] Qurᵓān 34:15: لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

In the reign of Shāh Jahān, says the the proclaimer, the residents of the empire were happy in lives of leisure and pleasure and the general availability of wine, woman and song. Like the people of Sheba they lived in great contentment, but had clearly become arrogant and ungrateful. This, to Aurangzeb, was clearly a regrettable condition, and one which deserved divine retribution enacted through his own royal person. But perhaps Aurangzeb did not bring divine punishment: the Qurᵓānic quotation suggests that Aurangzeb *was* in fact God's punishment inflicted on the people of the world:

> But after that, we displayed ingratitude for the favors granted to us, so that His Highness the shadow of the caliphate cast a proportionate pall on the condition of [us] his servants, making them a bulls-eye for the arrow of recompense (*tīr-i mujāzāt*) and impaling them on the spear-head of retribution. So now it is that if there's any water to be had, it's the sort that passes one's head, and wherever verdure appears to the sight, it turns out to be infernal cactus or mimosa or the lote-fruit of the desert which the crows eat. Verily says God, '*But they turned away [from Us], and so We let loose upon them a flood that overwhelmed the dams, and changed their two [expanses of luxuriant] gardens into a couple of gardens yielding bitter fruit, and tamarisks, and some few [wild] lote-trees: thus We requited them for their having denied the truth. But do We ever requite [thus] any but the utterly ingrate?*'[382]

From the pleasant gardens of Shāhjahānābād to the cactus-strewn wastelands of the Deccan: it was a indeed a punishment of Qurᵓānic proportions. Yet whenever it seemed that these tortures might abate, Aurangzeb prolonged them. In this he acted not out of malice, but piety and far-sightedness:

> By the grace of God – and God is great! – what stewardship of the faith has the emperor! Hail the Renunciant! Whenever some hope of the overcoming of these rebels arose and approached, and the trifling rubbish of the existence of these accursed ones, having fallen into the fire of killing and the flame of pillage, transformed into the scouring ashes to cleanse the mirror of the heart of the heart-burned holy warriors, [the emperor's] gaze would fall on a prudent stratagem. For let it not be the conflict (*jihād*) draw to a close and the residue of one's life pass without holy war (*ghazā*). At that very moment, the world-adorning perspective, which seeks good works and rectitude, with the firm logic of the intellect of providential policy, which examines the mirror of the interior self and

[382] Quran 34:16-7: فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَيْ أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ ذَٰلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوا ۖ وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ

> considers that an impromptu decision should be made to appoint a child innocent of the ways of war to the head of the army and an old man (*tālī*) to help the army in flight so that the result was the inversion [of what is desired].

In other words, the gracious ruler purposely appoints incompetents to lead his army so that everyone in his train accrues the merit of perpetual and unending holy war, whether they like it or not. But the final responsibility for the setbacks of the campaign were Aurangzeb's fault alone:

> It is possible to perceive that if his Highness' Gaze – which is a proof of sanctity – had not been raised onto this joke that is stranger than a miracle, the resulting cycles of events would not have reached their conclusion. For it is obvious to the dwellers of this world that the galloping of the rein on the plain of battle and the bridle of the control of military affairs lies within ability and control. Every imperial servant to whom this task may have been granted would have brought the wish to fruition in just a little while.

If Aurangzeb stubbornly refused to let advisors more competent than himself win the war, it was because he preferred the most difficult course of action. Again, this was not due to obstinacy or mulishness. No, such apparent vices were in fact the virtues borne of the monarch's great piety, illustrated and supported by another stream of cherry-picked Qurᵓānic quotations that were interpreted in the most ridiculous manner possible (as Aurangzeb, it was implied, did himself):

> Of course one is aware that *the greatest works are the hardest,*[383] so surely the turning of the rein of intention from the easy and appropriate path towards the direction of the most difficult of ways is solely for the purpose of increasing beneficences. God be thanked that He [Aurangzeb] is constantly engaged in the pursuit of beneficences and recompenses by engaging in impossibilities, so as to atone for the past victories that were achieved with such ease. In relation to these virtues of his prayer, the great achievements of war have demonstrated many times that *the good deeds of the pious are the evils of the saints*.[384] *"Verily, Good deeds drive away evil deeds*."[385]

Aurangzeb's gratitude for easy victories in former times was now expressed in deliberately inflicting defeat on himself. But these were merely good deeds cloaked as evil. And if the ruler

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[383] أفضل الأعمال أحمزها

[384] On this Sufi saying, see Annemarie Schimmel and Carl W. Ernst, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2011), 204.

[385] Quᵓrān 11:114: إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

was merciful, he was merciful in preventing his generals from experiencing the troubles of combat that would come from actually engaging and defeating the enemy.

> The generals of the conquering army and the leaders of the resplendent forces are not assigned to the greatest and best tasks and works but according to '*those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another*'.[386] We do not turn our vehicles towards wherever our opponents appear, so that they themselves fall to wandering aimlessly in the desert of adversity and the Muslims of pure faith are not confounded. *O ye People, give thanks for the increase in your honors in the service of this emperor and the daily increase in beneficences and improvement in conditions, and peace be upon he who chooses the way of refuge and tranquility.*[387]

ᶜĀlī then turns to a critique of Mīr ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb Māzandarānī Astarābādī, who is the official news-reporter of the reign, and so attacks his character in a fitting fashion; he attributes all manner of orthographical errors to the Mīr, accusing him of mistaking "mercy" (*rahmat*) for "oppressiveness" (*zahmat*), and so forth. We are told among other things that the stone-hearted Mīr's literary disabilities are such that whenever he stretches his lips open, the hearer is destroyed by a rain of rocks; in his lexicon of his syntax "speech" means "slaughter" and in the dictionary of his idiom "heart-pleasing" translates to "bad temperament". But all these things are merely the side-effects of the failure right at the top. So, carps ᶜĀlī, by the grace of God, the flower-garden of the imperial State (*sarkār-i khāssa-i sharīfa*) has displayed the handiwork of such a color-mingling gardener, the pestilential wind (*samūm*) of whose breath spreads melancholy by its burning questions that discolor the rose-buds of hearts. In the same way, the captain of the boat which sails the sea of government so wantonly hurls it into the four waves of the storm that the oar of his inverted temper leads the prow of the completion of affairs into the whirlpool of stupefaction.[388]

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[386] Quᵓrān 48: 29:أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ
[387] Ni`mat Khan `Ali, *Waqai`-i Ni`mat Khan `Ali.*, 142.
[388] Ibid., 145.

While ᶜĀlī's *Verses on the Wedding of Kāmgār Khān* mocked that high grandee for his private or personal faults, his satire in the *Chronicle* presented above is clearly a devastating political critique of the reigning Emperor. ᶜĀlī homes in on Aurangzeb's representations of his piety and adherence to religion as central to his identity as a ruler, and these then become the target of his assault. Through back-handed praise and literary exaggeration – particularly poisonous forms precisely because of the ubiquity of well-meaning panegyric expressions directed at the emperor – the satirist suggests that the emperor manipulates and perverts Islam in order to do just as he pleases. He has cast the empire into a long, painful and unnecessary war that he cannot win because of his own incompetence, and from which he cannot withdraw because of his stubbornness. ᶜĀlī also undermines the basis of Aurangzeb's legitimacy, lampooning his instrumental use of the Qurᵓān by using quotations from the holy book in sarcastic and counter-productive ways.

As we know already, Aurangzeb was mightily displeased with ᶜĀlī's satire. Indeed, the emperor had expressed an earnest desire to "cut out his tongue and sever his neck". But even this most puissant ruler whose rule saw the ruthless destruction of neighboring kingdoms and a perpetual war against the Marathas felt constrained to act against the poet. Nor did Aurangzeb get the chance to represent himself or offer any protestations in the court of public opinion. ᶜĀlī's work, on the other hand, came to enjoy wide admiration and was circulated extensively through the Mughal domains. There is no doubt that it voiced and shaped the opinions of not only ᶜĀlī's contemporaries, but also generations to come. The foremost example of this is to be seen in the emperor Bahādur Shāh's embrace of the aged nobleman after the death of Aurangzeb. This must be seen in the context of Bahādur Shāh's return from the Deccan to Hindūstāni heartland, which was without doubt a repudiation of his father's policies. ᶜĀlī's *Chronicle*, then, presents us with

not only a vivid example of the depth and ferocity of political critique possible under the stern and somber reign of Aurangzeb; it also illustrates the existence of wide literary cultures in which satirical texts might circulate and become literary models for the educated and ambitious. In this sense, the *Chronicle* carried its political critique well beyond the limited circle of the court to educated non-elites across the realm.

If the *Chronicle* thus represented political satire traveling from on high to the lower reaches of Mughal society, the next chapter examines the movement of another strain of political satire that circulated both in high arenas and low. Like the *Chronicle,* such satire could carry political content. Such satire, as we shall see, gives us a glimpse of politics from a decidedly subaltern perspective.

Zatallī

In the previous pages we have seen the popularization of high satirical texts, some of which conveyed sharp political criticism. In the following section, we turn to the satirical works of Mirzā Jaᶜfar "Zatallī". Mirzā Jaᶜfar's poetic *nom de plume* "Zatallī" means "the chatterer", referring to the idle prattle and foolish nonsense of loose talk. Like ᶜĀlī, Zatallī remains an obscure and enigmatic figure. His work has been noted by a variety of commentators over the past decades, and has been reprinted several times in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. But perhaps a certain post-Victorian squeamishness has prevented a serious appraisal of the poet's *oeuvre* until very recently. This scholarship on the poet's work has been enabled in large part by Rasheed Hasan Khan's excellent and comprehensive reprint of Zatallī's works.[389]

[389] Mir Ja'far Zatalli, *Zatal Namah*, ed. Rasheed Hasan Khan (Na'i Dihli; [Aligarh]: Anjuman Taraqqi-i Urdu (Hind), 2003).

A full and careful reconstruction of Zatallī's life and *weltanschauung* remains yet to be done, and is outside the scope of the current exercise. In the following pages, therefore, I present a limited argument about the era in which Zatallī lived, and his place within it. In essence, I suggest, Zatallī's prose and poetry reveal the horizons of possible criticism from within the Mughal world. These are views of the contours of Mughal hegemony as perceived from within, and, as I will show, they are thoroughly shaped by it. Ignoring for the time much of the poet's pornographic production, I make a two-pronged argument about Zatallī's satirical commentary in the following pages. On the one hand, I make the case that Zatallī's multivalent satire is capable of voicing political criticism, and often does so. On the other hand, I suggest, this political satire implies the existence of, and in fact depends upon, the existence of a wider politically aware and active public. The resonance of Zatallī's satire, therefore, depends on its ability to express points of view that might easily be shared by a large number of his readers.

Zatallī was remembered as a person of stature by his later contemporaries, though perhaps too vulgar to be mentioned by others. The great poet Mīr, writing some forty-odd years after Zatallī's death in 1752, considered him to be a famous poet: a rarity and a marvel of his own age, and respected by high and low alike. Whenever Zatallī went to someone's house, says Mīr, he took two pieces of paper with him. One paper contained a satire (*hajw*) of the master of the house, and the other contained an encomium (*madh*). If he was treated with courtesy, he read out the encomium; but otherwise he gave the "wing of circulation" (*bāl-i shuhrat*) to the satire.[390] Mīr's account reveals the essential outline of the figure of the satirist and the extent of his power. He is as capable of praising as of mocking, just as the great panegyrist Firdausī (d. ca. 1020) who, scorned, could produce a vicious satire of the ruler Mahmūd of Ghaznī. But Zatallī in this

[390] Mir Taqi Mir, *Tazkirah-yi Nikat al-shu`ara* (Lakhnau: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akadmi, 1984), 31.

account is seen as having darkened the doorways of a more pedestrian clientele; yet it was nevertheless one which feared the circulation of shaming verse enough to pay off the unwanted satirist. Just as importantly, we also see that Zatallī's satire traversed circuits of popular connection which existed already and could easily convey information among the masses.

The later poet Shorish reproduces the same account in 1777, which indicates that further details about Zatallī had been considered too onerous to unearth in the intervening years.[391] Zatallī finds no mention in the other major anthologies of the period such as those of Khushgū or Ārzū. A later record of Zatallī is to be found, however, in the manuscript of the Mirror of the Pure (*Mirāt al-Safā*), written and re-written between 1740 and 1765 by a certain Mīr Muhammad ᓚAlī.[392] The author tells us that Zatallī was of an immigrant family (*gharīb-zāda*) of Tūrānian stock, though some claimed that his father was from Hirāt. He wrote many poems in "Rīkhta" – that is, Persian mixed with Hindi, and Hindi with Persian. But unlike the earlier commentators, Mīr Muhammad ᓚAlī thought that Zatallī was of base temperament (*tab*ᓚ*-i mazmūm*) and that his satires crossed the line; so he was executed on the order of Farrukh Siyar for writing a satire of the coronation-verse with which the reign's coins were stamped.[393] This is the earliest account of Zatallī's execution yet encountered – if Mīr, a closer contemporary, was aware of this fact, he did not consider it worth mentioning in his own anthology. Noteworthy indeed is the fact that Zatallī enters a certain historical memory as a transgressive satirist at the moment when the story of his execution emerges in the record. Yet it is important to stress that Zatallī was not always seen as a poet beyond the pale.

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[391] Ghulam Husain Shorish, *Tazkirah-yi Shorish: rumuz al-shu`ara*, ed. Mahmud Ilahi (Lakhnau: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akadmi, 1984), 279.
[392] Mīr Muhammad ⊂Alī, "Mirāt Al-Safā," copied in 1783, British Library, APAC, Add. 6539, Add. 6540.
[393] Ibid., f. 231a.

Zatallī has left us with a variety of autobiographical poems that tell us something of his interior self and his life. These remain to be analyzed, but a bare perusal suggests that Zatallī came from a background quite different from that of the high Persianate elite such as ᶜĀlī. Zatallī claimed as his origin not the gracious realm of Īrān, but in the somewhat less romantic region on Narnaul (present-day Haryānā). His expertise in Arabic and Persian suggests that he received a thorough education, and so was by no means from the lowest strata of Mughal society. But, as much of his poetry clearly indicates, Zatallī was aware of his distinctly subaltern place in the social order and indeed reveled in it. Zatallī thus writes in a celebratory fashion about his poverty and the virtues of simplicity in general. Nevertheless, we know that Zatallī sought the patronage of high officials and imperial figures, most particularly Prince Kām Bakhsh (d. 1707); in doing so, Zatallī converted the weakness of his non-elite origins into a strength. By readily mixing *hindawī* speech within his Persian poetry, Zatallī brought a taste of the rural to an eighteenth-century elite that was quite prepared to be charmed by it. Zatallī's mobility may have been based on the social churning that took place during the period of internecine conflict, but his poetry and prose found admiration on its own unique merits. Zatallī's ready usage of the earthy and rustic everyday speech of the rural peasantry was far removed indeed from the courtly and unadulterated Persian of someone like ᶜĀlī. But its popularity should be seen an expression of the force of a "popularization from below" where ᶜĀlī's increasingly-circulating texts might be seen as operating under the pedagogical impulses that produced a "popularization from above".

Despite his decidedly lowly origins and crude language, Zatallī inherited ᶜĀlī's mantle in at least one way. We have already seen how ᶜĀlī presented his satire in the format of a daily diary of events (*rūznāmcha*) – a standard form in which happenings at a particular place were recorded by agents for their masters. Zatallī continues in this tradition by using the standard bureaucratic

forms of writing produced by Mughal governance as a vehicle for his own satirical assault. But where ᶜĀlī increased violated the form by increasing the prolixity of its language, Zatallī adheres faithfully to the standard bureaucratese, so presenting us with the "news of the orders of the exalted court' (*akhbārāt-i siyāha-yi darbār-i muᶜallā*). This standard title leads the unfamiliar reader to expect an innocuous account of everyday happenings at court; indeed, voluminous news-reports (*akhbārāt*) have remained one of the best sources for the history of the court for later historians. Zatallī serves us with such news from the court, but with something of a twist:

> At one kiss (*chumma*) and half a gasp (*siskī*) of the day, [the emperor] emerged and held an audience in the imperial washroom (*ghusal khāna*). It was submitted that although Zū 'l-fiqār Khān had participated in the rebellion with Prince Kām Bakhsh, he nevertheless was ready to sacrifice his life and property on the name of the emperor.
> The emperor responded: "Friendship with the arse, but picking a fight with the tail" ("*gāndh sē dostī, dum sē bayr*").[394]

The humor in this formulation, perhaps not immediately apparent to the modern reader, lies in Zatallī's mocking take on the staid protocols of court reportage. The practiced eye of the bureaucrat stutters to a halt at seeing playfully erotic words replacing the precise and routine times at which the emperor gave audience – as if Zatallī imagined days at court were to be measured in kisses and gasps rather than hours and minutes. We are then presented with the usual sort of statement at court about the fidelity of one or another noble, in this case, Zū 'l-fiqār Khān (last encountered in his later incarnation as Jahāndār Shāh's wise if overweening vizier). To this, the emperor retorts not in the chaste literary Persian for which he was renowned, but in the coarse and earthy *rīkhta* or *hindī*, which, we recall, produced shudders of disgust in noblemen of an earlier generation such as Iradāt Khān (see section 2).

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[394] Zatalli, *Zatal Namah*, 59.

Zatallī uses the form to provide us with a clear statement of his own motivations (which are pecuniary) and observance of the codes of morality (which are honored almost exclusively in the breach). The author represents himself as an inveterate idler.

> It was reported to the emperor that Mīr Jāᶜfar Zatallī, the poet who wrote the *Zatal-Nāma*, was sitting uselessly and engaged in producing curses and imprecations.
> The emperor responded: An idle tradesman sits about weighing his testicles (*thhālā baniyān peladh tolē*).[395]

If not given proper employment, threatens Zatallī, he will revert to his shameful and lewd behavior. What such proper employment might constitute is never clear. Ideally our poet was to be showered constantly with money, but Zatallī's needs were apparently great.

> It was reported that Mīr Jāᶜfar Zatallī had uttered an encomium for the amīr al-umarāᶜ, and received a thousand rupees in reward.
> The emperor responded: "A cumin-seed in a camel's mouth!" ("*Ūnth kē munh mē zīrā*!")[396]

The author does not tell us what in his lifestyle required such massive unilateral transfers of silver. But he does it make it clear that it was in the interest of Zatallī's patrons to keep him well-fed.

> The emperor emerged at one *jarīb* and four *tasū*[397] of the day and held an audience for the elite. It was reported that loyal servants of the state (*daulatmandān*) successively favored and rewarded Mīr Jāᶜfar Zatallī so that he didn't proclaim his complaints and utter satires.
> The emperor responded: "A dog's mouth is sewn up only with morsels." ("*Dahan-i sag bi luqma dūkhta bahe."*)[398]

Mercenary, foul-mouthed and faithless, Zatallī also portrayed himself as outside the conventions of domesticity.

> It was reported that Mīr Jāᶜfar Zatallī spent little time at home on account of the calamity of quarrels with his discordant wife.

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[395] Ibid., 69.
[396] Ibid., 70.
[397] These are measure-words of weight for grain.
[398] Zatalli, *Zatal Namah*, 70.

> The emperor responded: "Foreign lands are better than a house without conversation. (*sambat*)."[399]

Language, Skepticism, Social Critique

Many events in Zatallī's faux-*akhbārāt* mock social conventions through the judicious application of ribaldry. A striking instance of such mockery is to be found in Zatallī's use of Arabic. Where ᶜĀlī used Arabic quotations from the Qurᵓān to mock Aurangzeb's narrow-mindedness, Zatallī appears to mock the language of religion itself:

> It was offered that in the reign of his Sublime Highness [Shāh Jahān], vaginas were rarely to be found and penises plentiful; but in the present reign penises are few and vaginas many.
> The emperor responded: "A shortage of dicks and a plenitude of pussies is a marker of doomsday (*qillat al-lodāt wa kasrat al-chūt min asār al-qiyāmat*)."[400]

Here, Zatallī frames the topic in the common variety of discussion at court that compared previous reigns to the present, usually in order to rectify a situation and bring it into accordance with past precedent. But the emperor's comment is uttered in a sort of Arabic, where eschatological concerns – one of the proper subjects of theological language – are expressed through the vividly impolite phrases of popular speech.

Faux-Arabic serves as the vehicle of lewd humor, but it also attacks other targets:

> Bībī Harmat (Sanctity) Khānum reported that she had a suckling infant which wailed day and night, and so she should be favored with a charm (*taᶜwīz*).
> The emperor responded: "The following incantation should be uttered as you breathe on the child, and he will be pacified."
>
> *Yā walid al-harām! Ummak wa ammak chud garh*
> *Abbuk bhadwā wa khāluk pad garh*
> *Uthrab labnī la khāyr fi bakāyak*
> *Ākh thū ākh thū fī gāndh ābāyak*[401]

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[399] Ibid., 71.
[400] Ibid., 63.
[401] Ibid., 66–67.

Zatallī's audience would instantly recognize the incantation's bawdy intentions, given the frequent placement of Hindi curse-words (*chud*, *bhadwā, gāndh*) within a phraseology that would sound recognizably Arabic to those who encountered words, phrases and prayers in the language without necessarily understanding their content. This effect is heightened by Zatallī's clever incorporation of the onomatopoeic phrase of expectoration (*ākh thū*) into the incantation, mocking the sounds of Arabic that would seem guttural to an audience not familiar with it.

The language of Islamic piety is not the only target here; Zatallī is also mocking the practices of popular Islamicate religiosity, and the reliance of gullible mothers on soothsayers and purveyors of amulets and incantations to much the same end as Kāmgār Khān's wife rubbishes her husband's astrological excuses. In his way Zatallī desacralizes the language of prayer – indeed, he renders it thoroughly profane. But his targets are not just those of popular religiosity. More established figures of the religious hierarchy do not escape Zatallī's scorn either. The judge (*qāzī*) of the Deccani town of Nanded, is singled out for light ribbing:

> Due to the representation of Mirzā Bacchū Beg the mace-bearer, the qāzī of Nanded was appointed to the superintendency (*tawallīyat*) of the mausoleum of Shaykh Chillī, and the emperor ordered that a robe of honor of pajamas should be cast on the qāzī's head.[402]

Yet this is perhaps not so much the product of Zatallī's irreligiousness as it is of his thoroughgoing skepticism. Consider for instance the following news-report, supposedly offered by the Khān-i Jahān, one of Zatallī's favorite targets:

> Khān-i Jahān Bahādur submitted that a rare instance of divine power was observed today, when a watermelon was unearthed. When I cut it open with a butcher's knife, an Iraqi steed leapt out and shot away and so disappeared from view. And all the seeds of the watermelon were scattered, so I told a servant to peel them. When he peeled them, a hen's egg emerged from every seed, and the sound of a drum (*mridang*) emanated from each egg and awoke the sleeping ones. This old servant was amazed. I said, "Break these open". When they were broken, nothing emerged from each egg except an elephant's penis.

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[402] Ibid., 68.

> The emperor responded: “The curse of God upon false reporters!”[403]

Here Zatallī pokes fun at not only the unfortunate khān, but also the bearers of tall tales and the distributors of incredible events, and the foolish who believe in such miracles. Zatallī’s skeptical humor should be counterposed in this case to the sorts of strange stories that are occasionally presented as news in historical chronicles. Accompanying his skepticism of the overly religious or the overly gullible is Zatallī’s sense of the profound unfairness of the world in which he lives.

> Lālā Kachundar Nāth reported that when Mukhtār Khān was afflicted with a cold every last rich person went to pay him a visit. And when the son of his neighbor Shaykh Muhibb Allāh the Dervish died, no one went even for the formalities of condolence.
> The emperor responded: “When the rich woman was pricked by a thorn, thousands ran to her aid; but when the indigent fell from a mountain, no one asked after him (*dhanvantī kē kāntā lagā, daurhē log hazār; nirdhān girā pahād sē, koī na pucchē bāt*).”[404]

We could see in this news-report a simple vehicle to introduce a homely country proverb, with its strikingly non-Perso-Arabic words, to an elite audience. But Zatallī pointedly expresses his awareness of the profound and painful reality of wealth and power and the misery of this world’s have-nots. In this instance, Zatallī represents an ugly reality that is implicit in human nature and beyond the power of human rectification. But that certainly does not mean that Zatallī believed all social conditions were caused by divine will and had to be borne as such. There was much that was wrong in the world, and a ready target for blame presented itself – the elites and the administrators of the realm.

> Jufta (“buttocks”) Bānū Begum petitioned the emperor, saying that Prince Kām Bakhsh sought a half-sleeved shirt (*nīma astīn*) from the hall of Clothing (*tosha khāna*), and what the imperial order was in this case.
> The emperor responded: “Not even a thread in the house, and this naïf wants a robe” (*ghar mē nahīn tāgā, albelā māngē bāgā*).[405]

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[403] Ibid., 67–68.
[404] Ibid., 72.
[405] Ibid., 59–60.

In this instance Zatallī begins by rudely sexualizing a figure who stands in for an imperial lady of high status, who reports a particularly petty request by the Prince Kām Bakhsh. The emperor, however, offers a witty refusal, which by its rhyme sounds like a rustic saying. Here is classic satire by inversion, for Zatallī describes the treasury as empty when it should in fact be full. Here then was one symptom of what was wrong with the times: there is here an aspersion towards imperial ineptitude, implicit in the penury of its stores. This accusation is further sharpened in another event at court:

> The Refuge of Chastity, Bībī Charkhā Chūtī ("Spinning-wheel vulva") proffered that his Highness is so engrossed in subduing the territory of the Deccan that he is unaware of the ruination of the territory of Hind.
> The emperor responded: "When one's placed his head in the pestle, why worry about the blows? (*okhlē mē sar diya to dhamkon sē kyā darnā?*)"[406]

Again, the emperor is confronted by an imperial lady, whose generic identity is expressed through allusions to gendered domestic roles, economic and sexual. Here Aurangzeb faces a specific criticism that is of a piece with the nameless preacher's harangue in ᶜĀlī's *Events of the Siege of the Fort of Golconda*. But where ᶜĀlī's preacher mouthed literate sarcasms with extensive quotations from the Qurᵓān, Zatallī is far more direct. The emperor, says the lady, has driven the homeland of the empire to ruin. In response, he can now do no more than patiently endure the consequences of his foolhardy excursion into the Deccan. Zatallī goes on to represent this sense of despair as a virtual abdication of rulership by Aurangzeb:

> Kuchkuchāhat Khān stated that the time his Highness had been in the Deccan and not seen the Blessed Footprint was increasing day by day, let it not be that Prince Muhammad Akbar or some other person assault the hereditary domains (*mulk-i maurūsī*) and dream of causing strife.
> The emperor responded: "The king has left the city; let him who wants it take it (*rājā chhodē nāgarī, jis bhaē tas lē*)". [407]

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[406] Ibid., 61.
[407] Ibid., 65.

Aurangzeb's wily courtiers attempted to lead their ruler back to the North by appealing to his religious sensibilities and his justifiable paranoia about the legions of his upstart descendants. The ruler's apathetic resignation in this context would appeal to Zatallī's patron, Prince Kām Bakhsh, who was presumably preparing for the upcoming struggle of succession. But Zatallī's criticisms went beyond the inability of the ruler himself:

> The administrator of Safā Safā ("Wiped clean") reported that there were many rebels (*mufsidān*) in the countryside near Akbarābād, and this was why they raided the city (*bar shahr dākā mī-ayad*).
> The emperor responded: "A little tree survives by the river [only] until it is uprooted (*nadī kinarē rū khada nat uth hoyē binās*)."[408]

Here the emperor responds with a metaphor of despair that no doubt is meant to reflect on the state of the whole empire: the state is no mighty banyan, but a mere sapling by the side of the raging torrent of events; the slightest change in fortunes will wreak havoc on settled order. But just as frequently the emperor utters such phrases of helplessness in rather more everyday matters of governance:

> On Thursday, at the second minute of the fourth watch the emperor emerged and held an audience in the imperial washroom. Bībī Uthal Puthal ("upheaval") reported that the mansion of Mīr Nizām al-Dīn the Secret Reporter (*Khūfiyā nawīs*) in Delhi had been looted, and all possessions in cash or kind were stolen.
> The emperor responded: "A sinner's goods are taken by others, left stale and untouched by dogs (*pāpī kā māl parāpat jaē, na bāsī rahē na kutta khaē*)."[409]

We cannot determine whether Zatallī here offers his views on a specific incident; by his use of a non-satirical name, it would seem that Zatallī in fact refers to an actual contemporary. On the other hand, the identity of the "secret reporter" would be protected so the significance of the anecdote remains somewhat obscure. The secret reporter, who was required to clandestinely send news of the happenings in a given place to the court belonged to a structure that was by design in

[408] Ibid., 63.
[409] Ibid., 76.

competition and conflict with the official hierarchy of news-reportage in the empire. A corrupt local administrator would therefore seek to coopt both the reporter (*waqai nawīs*) and the secret reporter, presumably through favors and gifts in cash and kind. It would seem in this context that Mīr Nizām al-Dīn's goods had been acquired through illegitimate means in the first place. The emperor's remark in this context should be taken to imply the corruption not only of an individual but the insidious corrosion of a vital tool of governance. Yet such sophisticated and high-level venality was matched by simpler and cruder acts of willful misgovernance.

> It was offered that ᶜAbd Allāh Khān, the fort-commander of Akbarābād (Āgrā) dispensed alms to daily stipendiaries and pensioners (*yaumiya dārān wa wazīfa kh*ʷ*ārān*) after much toil and trouble.
> The emperor responded: "The *dom*, the footman, the opium-eater – all three are faithless (*dom, piyāda, pūstī, tīnon bī-īmān*)."[410]

This sort of petty corruption in the lower reaches of the state, particularly in its zones of interface with the populace, was certainly not beneath imperial attention. Aurangzeb responds to it in predictable fashion, given the hopelessness of effective oversight over such petty bureaucratic functionaries. At the level of an urban locality like Akbarābād, a number of individuals had a direct relationship with the state as such: they depended on it for their livelihood and sustenance. For this constituency, good governance meant that grants were delivered regularly, promptly, and without fuss. The smooth fulfillment of the state's obligations to the various constituencies of its subjects was one index of the functioning of imperial rule – and, as Zatallī shows us, it was an index shared by ruler and ruled. When these proper conventions of governance were not followed or enforced, the emperor and his ruling elite became the targets of direct criticism. An even sharper instance of this is to be found in a self-implicating report, supposedly from the Khān-i Jahān to the emperor:

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[410] Ibid., 63.

> The essence of the affair is that due to the enterprise of this old servant, besides jackals and foxes and mongooses and scorpions and venomous serpents, there remains not even a trace of man in the city of Lahore, and the price of grain equals that of ornamental jewels. In the same way, the pleasure-increasing parks and gardens in the surrounding regions and environs have been burnt, and for a hundred *kuroh*-s the populousness on both sides of roads and paths (*turuq wa subul*) has been entirely cleansed (*safā safā wa dakkā dakkā namūda*). The interior of the city has been rendered a specimen of the desert of Karbalā, and every brick of the fort has been flung to the skies with grief. Commoners and nobility (*raᶜāyā wa barāyā*), drunken and intoxicated on the dregs of their own wishes, were sent to hell. And of the city's group of the mobile and the settled, the pious and the saintly, have chosen the escape of burial (*rah-i taht al-sarā*). But despite all this toil, his highness withholds his favor from this old servant.
>
> The emperor responded: "*Thakī dārhī, phittē mū*." [411]

In this context we recall again the criticisms of Jahāndār Shāh, most notably in the later chronicler Khush Hāl Chand: the besotted emperor was accused of cutting down trees and purposefully raising the prices of essential commodities. The inept Khān-i Jahān proudly implicates himself in similar fashion. Indeed, this satirical news-report neatly summarizes all the duties of the just and virtuous administrator. A region flourishing in ideal terms is heavily populated, and grain is cheap and freely available. Suburban gardens and parks are frequently present for the amusement of the region's inhabitants. The city which lies at the center of the region is also teeming with settled inhabitants and visited by traders or travelers. The city, in this conception, serves as the home of the pious and the saintly. Serving and protecting them is one of the most important duties of the State.

Zatallī's critiques of the state in his *News-Report* could in a sense be considered to be an abstract or theoretical elucidation of the dysfunction of the empire. His vision of the government working under ideal conditions, visible in the obverse of many of the instances presented above including the last, thus closely reflects the official ideological positions of the Mughal state. Yet this commitment to the ideals values of statehood are balanced in Zatallī's case by a thorough and

[411] Ibid., 67.

clear-eyed knowledge of the workings of the administrative machine. This understanding is reflected in Zatallī's playful misuse of a variety of other bureaucratic genres: the author routinely fills standard documents such as imperial orders, bonds of surety, wedding contracts with unusual and astonishing contents. But perhaps the best and most revealing understanding of this is Zatallī's extended satire that operates within the paperwork generated by a rural conflict which comes involve the officers of state. The reader is presented with a variety of bewildering documents; his perspective then becomes that of the observer who is left to piece together a sequence of events from the routine documents generated by the workings of the bureaucracy.

The first document is relatively straightforward:

> ***Judicial Order*** [412]
> With great favor and imperial grace let the hopeful ones know that Eggplant son of Okra Bēg son of Snake Gourd (*chachindā*) brother of Little Gourd (*kundurū*) Khān, and Spinach Dās and Ridge Gourd son of Carrot have lived for a long time in the house of Grape. Cumin Seed used forcible measures (*zur āwarī*) and uprooted them for their place, and scattered them like grain and chaff, and so disturbed their settled inhabitance. Therefore the least of the servants importuned the authority of the Refuge of the Law the Chief Qāzī Beetroot.
> Therefore the order, obeyed by the world and resplendent as the Sun found the honor of enactment, that the Sanctuary of Shaykhs Turnip the Mufti of the Criminal Court, Grapefruit Bēg the constable, Refuge of Bravery White Cucumber (*bālam*) Bēg and Sugar (*ni? Shakar*) Khān the Garrison Commander should set the matter right, thinking of the basis of the affair (*fiqr bar asl numāyand*) so that after this no one exercises force or oppressiveness on the populace.

The humor of this story, comprehensible within a contemporary North Indian habitus, lies in the replacement of humans by vegetal matter, or the animation of human characteristics and actions in vegetables. The situation is simple: the settled order of a rural place has been disturbed by a certain Cumin Seed (metaphorical for its insignificance). Instead of employing judicial procedures to enforce his claim, Cumin Seed resorts to the temptations of force. The aggrieved parties petition the local magistrate, who directs local judicial and military officials to take action

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[412] Ibid., 81.

as they see fit. The imperatives of the state in this simple case are defined quite clearly. Peace and order should be maintained, and under no circumstances should force be exercised on the populace.

In another such satire, Zatallī represents a much more complicated event. The first document represents the administrator's moment of first contact with an evolving situation on the ground:

> A supplication on the matter of Stew[413]
>
> The servant of the court Pumpkin Pandit son of Ridge Gourd (*torī*) Pandit, belonging to the village of Soya (*sūyā*), in the sub-district of Spinach, district Fenugreek, Province Amaranth (*chaulāī*), sends a report to the higher echelon from the servants of his Highness Taro (*pindālū*).
> Nourisher of the Poor, Greetings!
> Bitter Gourd Pandit, son of Snake Gourd (*chachindā*) Nāth, grandson of Ivy Gourd Dās, had a financial relation (*taᶜalluq*) with Skinny Cucumber, resident of Palwal [both a village near Delhi in North India, and a variety of snake gourd], village Cucumber. He behaved dishonorably at the border of Mustard Stew (*gāndal, sarson kā sāg*) with a daughter of Bottle Gourd. He killed Ginger and Onion and fled the scene, having ruined Mint, Lettuce and all other herbs.
> At this time it has been heard that Mirzā Melon Bēg and Shaykh Watermelon threw Colocasia Root (*kachālū*) Singh the Rājput in between [this affair] so that by villainy and deceit he would be quickly implicated in the murder.
> It is hoped that the Chief Judge (*qāzī al-quzzāt*) Mīr Tangerine, Turnip Bēg the Commissioner (*amīn*), Nutgrass Dās the tax-collector (*karorī*), Carrot Mal the Manager (*kārkon*), and Eggplant Nāth the accountant (*qanūngo*) would be ordered to present themselves before Hill Cucumber Khān the Garrison Commander (*faujdār*) so that no one engineers any deception. Rice-Pudding (*khirnī*) the news-reporter should be informed that Chillie Singh the footman and Salt Singh the Rājpūt are watching over the landowners (*zamīndāran*) Jackfruit and Cauliflower and the lands of Yam and Sweet Potato.
> What was relevant has been related.

Here, a local bureaucrat – Pumpkin Pandit – sends a report from a certain local notable (His Highness Taro) to his superior. He notifies the recipient of an act of violence performed by a certain Bitter Gourd Pandit (probably a clansman). This act of violence involved the honor of a woman of the same community (of Gourds) at the border of two different local administrative

[413] Ibid., 79–81.

units, and resulted in the killing of two other people, Ginger and Onion, and the ruination of minor herbs. This would suggest that Bitter Gourd was a himself a vegetable of local stature; the extent of his violence suggests both considerable ability and malice aforethought. This earthy, misshapen, local, and Hindu vegetable appears to have been acting on the behest of two plump and juicy foreign Muslim imports: the mirzā Melon Bēg and the Shaykh Watermelon. Having performed this act of violence, these notables now seek to implicate the innocent Colocasia Root, identifiable as a minor local landowner by his caste (Rājpūt). In response, the local functionary requests the administrative apparatus of the local state be deployed to stabilize the situation so that a judicial intervention may take place. He requests that the garrison commander of the region initiate inquires and summon the chief judge and the commissioner, who are important local officials. But he also requests the tax-collector, the manager, and the account to present themselves, presumably because the act of violence here involves the financial interests of the area's notables. The news-reporter – a refined sort of official by his name ("Rice Pudding") should be told that the matter is under hand so that authorities outside the province are not disturbed overmuch. For this purpose the footman or constable and the Rājpūt who is also presumably part of the local apparatus of enforcement, have been deployed to keep the local landowners under observance. The name of these constabulary officials (*namak*, *mirch*) indicates their common and even fundamental importance at the level of the locality; as servants of the state they now monitor the local men of influence (*zamīndārān*) who have long-established tenurial rights over the area in question.

The next report is that of the provincial governor Pudding Khān to the imperial court, detailing his findings and the action taken in response to a request for information from imperial officials:

> The least of the servants of the exalted court, Pudding Khan, (son of Coconut Khan, foster-brother's son of the Lady Raisin), the governor of Vegetable City (*sabzābad*) et

> cetera, and the administrators of Jackfruit and Cauliflower [landowners], on the basis of the petition of the attendants of the Apricot Court (*bi mauqif-i arz-i baryaftagān-i bargāh-i khūbānī*), the cause of peace and tranquility and the ease of life, His Highness Pineapple Jiv *Adam Allah Sultanahu* reports that:
> On the basis of an exalted imperial proclamation, in accordance with the group of administrators (*jami-yi mutasaddiyān*), especially Banana the Superintendent of Finance (*Dīwān*) and Lime (*sadāphāl*) Bēg the Accountant of the Household (*buyūtāt nawīs*) (and Grandson of the Lady Orange, daughter of Lady Semolina Pudding (*amritphal*)), Lemon Quli Khan, Mirzā Ginger Bēg the Superintendent of Police, (foster-brother's son of Onion), Āghā Garlic Khān the Superintendent of the Law-Court, and Mirzā Apple Quli Samarqandī, (grandson of the Lady Pear and foster-son of Guava the breast-feeder (*atkā*) of the Prince Mango), the legal superintendent Starfruit Bēg, (maternal uncle's son (*tughāi zāda*) of Cherry and Sister's son of Peach), and the gentlemen-cavalry of the State (*ahdiyān-i sarkār*): Fig Bēg, Pomegranate Bēg, Cluster Fig Khān, (grandson of the Lady Berry) and Mirzā Grewia (*Fālsā*) Bēg (the son-in-law of Shaykh Java Plum (*jāmun*), (son of Sugar-Apple), the commander of a hundred Grewia (*Fālsā*), the artilleryman Lemon (son of Citron, son of wild-berry Bush), with the contingent of the State's infantry (*piyadagān-i sarkār*) were sent so that with all effort a judicial examination would be conducted (*dar maᶜraz-i khitāb āwarda bāshad*).

It is evident that the court-officials of the emperor Pineapple (perhaps an appropriate vegetal metaphor given its crown of leaves) had taken an interest in the matter. In response, the provincial governor assures the emperor that a diligent and thorough investigation had been performed. High-ranking financial, judicial and military officials were dispatched with artillery and infantry to conduct a judicial investigation at the site at the conflict. These high officials of state, who are repeatedly named after fleshy or valued fruit now report on their investigation of the local notables of the district who, in stark contrast, are named for gnarly yams and tubers.

> It was investigated and discovered that Eggplant and Pomelo, who are rebellious village-heads (*dihqān*) and generally held under suspicion (*tuhmatgīr-i rūzgār*) were brought for testimony. Both of these liars, having gone to the land-assignation (*jāgīr*) of Melon Bēg, wanted to give false testimony, although both of these liars are not in Melon Bēg's land-assignation.
> Melon Bēg the land-assignation holder of Cucumber Town in the aforementioned territories held as estates (*dar milkiyat-i ārāzī-i mazkūr*), requested the testimony of Shaykh Water Chestnut, who is a man of prayer and spends his day and night by the water, and the Refuge of Rights Shaykh Nutgrass (*kaserū*) the Dervish who is a black-wearing renunciant. Both these elders came and testified that the aforementioned territories are in the assignation of Melon Bēg, and those two village-heads were falsely accusing on that helpless one and molesting his servants.

The judicial examination that began with the dishonor of a woman of the Gourd clan has now turned into a larger investigation of a disputed landholding between Melon Bēg and an unnamed other party – perhaps the Rajput Colocasia Root who had been unsuccessfully implicated in the murder by Melon Bēg in the very beginning. The examination rapidly determined that the villains of the piece were Eggplant and Pomelo. We recall that a certain Eggplant Nāth is mentioned in the initial report as a tax official (*qānūngū*), but it is not clear if this is the same figure in two different guises. We notice that the issue of the issue of the killing of Eggplant and Garlic has been sidelined. The issue has now become one of land-holdings: where, in the initial event Melon Bēg was named as an aggressor, he is now a "helpless" one whose servants were being molested and whose territory is being infringed on. As a defendant, Melon Bēg seeks permission to provide the testimony of two local worthies. It is no accident that these are two Muslim religious figures of the very sort that the state is supposed to serve and protect: one the prayerful Shaykh Water Chestnut, the other the Black-Clothed Dervish Shaykh Nutgrass, (who is distinct from the local Hindu official Nutgrass Dās). The testimony of these two divines is found trustworthy, sentence is pronounced, and judgments are handed out:

> It was therefore established that the right lay with Melon Bēg. For this reason Date Quli Beg the constable (*muhtasib*) was instructed to punish this calumny so that it would serve as a warning to others. The aforementioned Constable uprooted Eggplant from his place and killed him with a variety of tortures (*anwāh-i ᶜuqūbat*), and having cut him into four pieces, boiled him in a cauldron and having made a delicious meal of him, sent it to the houses of the community of Muslims to eat with wheat bread and boiled rice. This became the cause of peace and tranquility (*amn o āmān*) in the whole district.
> May the favor of the State remain resplendent.

This punishment, we notice, has nothing to do with the killing of Onion and Garlic; it punishes the misdeeds and lies of the rebellious Eggplant. Justice, in this case, assumes not retributive but minatory form. Peace is to be re-established by the public and sanguinary execution of Eggplant, and the subsequent post-mortem infliction of somatic defilement and disintegration. And finally,

Zatallī tells us, the state demonstrates its ideological obligations have been fulfilled by sending this executed wretch or delicious meal to its primary constituents in the countryside: the community of Muslims. Yet, as we see, Zatallī mocks every step of the process by replacing the names of the participants. Important figures, puffed up on their own nectar, grandly enact their tasks and in so doing make them ridiculous. The state routinely performs its formal actions, but the mechanical process of justice is worthy of derision. Finally, while the state officially distinguishes between Hindus and Muslims in this instance, Zatallī effaces such bureaucratic categories from his telling of the story on the ground.

The Satire of Sābhā Chand[414]

Having examined Zatallī's satires of the state as an abstraction, we now turn to his personal attacks on known figures. Zatallī has left us with two satires on the high Mughal official Sābhā Chand, encountered in the previous section. We recall that Sābhā Chand was one of the victims of Farrukh Siyar's ascent, and had the misfortune of having his tongue pulled out by the servants of the new emperor, apparently for displaying an unwise loyalty to the deceased Zū 'l-fiqār Khān and the deposed Jahāndār Shāh by extension. Indeed, some manuscripts refer to this person as "Sābhā Nand [sic] the financial administrator (*dīwān*) of Lord Zū 'l-fiqār Khān, court-writer of the administration (*chawkī-nawīs-i sarkār*) who was sometimes disrespectful of Mīr Jaᶜfar Zatallī".

Zatallī's satire apparently predates those events by some time; here, the poet writes a mock petition to a certain Qāzī Hayder, presenting himself as the "encomiast and well-wisher Jaᶜfar Zatallī, sometimes a man and sometimes not". Zatallī's complaint is unclear, but is directed against Sābhā Chand's wives, who among other things are described as "bare-legged" (*birahna*

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[414] Ibid., 90–91.

sāq), with “genitals wide open” (*kūs farākh*). Apparently these two women stole some money owed to Sābhā Chand from the author’s house when he was traveling to Kābul and distributed it amongst their friends and neighbors and lovers. Their husband, to whose name Zatallī insultingly affixes the ugly *nomen gentile* of “chandāl” – the lowest Hindu “caste” – then demanded the money from the author with a legal accusation (*muttaham sākhta*). Of course, says Zatallī, Sābhā Chand remained quite unaware of his wives’ “companion-worship and drunken misbehavior” (*yār parastī wa bad mastī*); so Zatallī kindly attaches an addendum in “prolix rhyming prose” (*bahr-i tawīl*) detailing the improprieties of Sābhā Chand’s wives. The accusations here are familiar and predictable: Zatallī tells us that Sābhā Chand’s wives are possessed of sexual appetites volcanic and indiscriminate; and that these ladies spent two hundred gold pieces (*muhr*), while the cuckolded Sābhā Chand cluelessly accuses other folk.

One hypothesis that might explain this diatribe involves the possibility of Zatallī having borrowed money from Sābhā Chand. When Sābhā Chand demands it back and employs legal action, Zatallī refuses to pay. This satire may then have served as a form of preemptive blackmail. The context of this satire cannot be determined: we do not know if Zatallī had the audacity to actually present such a petition to a local judge. Its public context therefore remains unclear. And we should note that while Sābhā Chand was clearly an official of high standing, Zatallī’s dispute with him was not related to his official capacities. Zatallī’s satire, therefore, could be seen as having a broadly interpersonal character here. But if in this way it is perhaps similar to ᶜĀlī’s *Verses* on Kāmgār Khān, the resemblance must end there. For Zatallī is direct in imputing shamelessness of the worst sort to this worthy official’s wives and declares him a cuckold.

Zatallī also produced a more direct satire (*hajw*) of Sābhā Chand. This was served in poetic form, and is translated in full below:

The Satire of Sābhā Chand[415]

Sābhā Chand jī tum badē dhīng ho
Ke Garhpankh aur bel ke sīngh ho
    Kahīn Sīngh atkāē khadh-khadh karo
    Kahīn pankh phelayē phadh-phadh karo
Tujhē dē khudā darab andhēr kā
Landorī bichadhyā wa dharh shēr kā
    Darīn chawk jūn [chūn?] ghawk dagtē raho
    Kakodhon Makodhon ko chagtē raho
Nazar mat karo sāt aur pānch par
Mabada pade bojh-i ab kanch par
    Kachehri mē dankā karo sānch kā
    Na jo bhus pe tangā karo ānch ka
Hamāri nasīhat rakkho gush bīch
Japo Rām mālā raho hosh bīch
    Tumhārē talē chhēd hai faiz kā
    Na jī balki surākh hai haiz kā
Mujhē Khān sītī darao matī
Chatur chētī dhakao matī
    Manam jaᶜfar andar zatal nām dār
    Chughal ki uchhal gāndh phadūn pichād

01 Dear Sābhā Chand, you great big fatso
02 You're a huge old bird and an Ox's horn
03   Go shove your horn somewhere and rattle it
04   Go spread your wings somewhere and flap 'em
05 May God give you the gift of blindness
06 ….*garbled*
07   Just keep flailing about like a frog on this square
08   Just keep pecking at bugs and worms
09 Don't think about wrangling this or that
10 For God Forbid you end up straining your bowels
11   Beat the drum of the truth in the court of law
12   And don't throw a lit match into a haystack
13 Keep this my advice between your ears
14 Fondle your rosary for Rām and keep to your senses
15   You've a got a hole beneath you bleeding abundance
16   Oh no sir, it's a pipe spewing menstrual blood
17 Don't try and scare me with your talk of the khān
18 Don't try and show off how smart and cunning you are

[415] Ibid., 164–165.

19	I'm Jaᶜfar, and hold the name of "the Chatterer"
20	I leap up and rip sneaks' rears apart.

Unlike the mock-petition, this poem is relatively straightforward. It is presented mostly in the local Hindawī dialect, not in the Persian of written documentation. In the same way it presents simple and vivid images in a scheme of rhyme that is easily comprehensible and memorable. We notice that this poem declares the context of its recitation (Line 07): Sābhā Chand is asked to flail about like a frog "in this square" (*chawk*); in Line 11 he is asked to "beat the drum of truth" in the "court of law" (*kachehri*). If these are the same sites, then Zatallī surely refers to the enclosed squares with relatively unrestricted access that were built in the mansions of elites, in which officials of state conducted their business or distributed justice. In this context, we can imagine this poem is designed for oral recitation within the site of the courtyard or the court of law. Certainly the poem refers to a dispute, the subject remains obscure. But Zatallī accuses Sābhā Chand of being too clever by half and trying to pull a fast one (Line 09, 18). He also rejects the threat of involvement of "the khan" (line 17), and contemptuously counsels the financial administrator to quietly continue to pray to his God and leave the dangerous Zatallī alone.

Here, then, we are presented with a satire of a high official but within the confines of a private dispute. Yet there is strong evidence to suggest that this poem was designed to be performed orally in an open context, and so to attract the attention and sway the opinions of bystanders and onlookers.

A somewhat more formal poem works in a very different way to satirize the head constable of the city. Its intentions are also obviously directed towards shaping and enunciating popular opinion.

The Satire of Mirzā Zū ‘l-fiqār Bēg the Head Constable (kotwāl) of Delhi

Badī(n?) khuslat o mumsak o nābkār
Shuda khillat-i Mirzā Zū ‘l-fiqār
Sag-i Lendī az way nīkūtar bud
Ki az uf-uf-ash duzd rā dar bud
Na in Zū ‘l-fiqār ast bar ru-yi kār
Kanīzast nāmash daddā sāzwār
Az in pas be ᶜizzat makhʷān nām-i ū
Ki rīm ast wa khūn ast dar jām-i ū
Bi har jā ki bāshad chunīn kotwāl
Muhal ast budan dar ān jā muhal
Bi har sū kashākash lutalūt hai
Chhanā-chhīnī hai aur katā-kūt hai
Bi har simat dar shahr sharr ast o shor
Bi har kunj o ku dāku o chor chor
Rabūdānd aspān nakkhās rā
Bikushtand ham chunnī dās rā
Mabādā chunīn hākim andar-i jahān
Jufā pīsha khūn khʷār aur sag dahān
Hirasat riyasat nayāyad az gurg
Ki har chand bāshad musann o buzurg
Agar khūk dar bāgh yābad majāl
Kunad shākh o barg o bun har nihāl
Sukhan na shanūd mardak az ablahī
Nadārad bi kūrī dilash āgahī
Az bīhūshī-ash har tarf shud fitūr
Zi gur-i gūshesh shūr o ghal dūr dūr
Thakā thak thak ast bar hāl-i ū
Phatā phat phat ast bar chāl-i ū
Zi mastī nadārad khabar gāndh kī
Na jī, balke yeh nasl hai bhānd kī
Biyā Jaᶜfar alhāl chup bāsh chup
Rawad mīkh dar kūn-i namard ghup

01 With great entanglement and filth and vileness
02 Have Mirzā Zū ‘l-fiqār’s robes of office been soiled
03 A filthy cur is nobler than he
04 For at least its bow-wowing scares thieves
05 He’s no Zū ‘l-fiqār in his field of work
06 He’s a slave-girl, his name’s ‘Sweet Granny’
07 So in this way don’t utter his name with respect
08 For blood and puss are intermixed in his wine-cup
09 Wherever there may be a Constable such as this
10 Is a place where it’s just impossible to live
11 There’s grabbing and stealing on every side

12 There's snatching and pulling and cutting and beating
13 In every path of the city there's evil and tumult
14 In every corner and square there's ruffians and "Stop! Thief!"
15 Cattle-rustlers go about stealing horses
16 And they murdered Chunnī Dās too
17 Let there not be such an administrator in creation
18 Oppressive, bloodthirsty, and with a mouth like a dog
19 The state cannot by a wolf safeguarded be
20 However aged and gray be he
21 For if a pig dares to enter a garden
22 It uproots every branch and root and blossom
23 A silly little man stupidly ignores advice
24 He hasn't wisdom in his heart because he's blind
25 His unconsciousness has produced disorder everywhere
26 His deafness had caused noise and tumult far and wide
27 His condition is just about "thakā thak thak"
28 He runs about spryly with a "phatā phat phat"
29 In his drunkenness he doesn't know where his rear's at
30 No sir, this is the trait of the line of minstrels
31 Come now, hush, Jaᶜfar, be you silent
32 For "Ghap" goes the nail up the not-man's behind

Employing a rather more Persianate register than the previous example, Zatallī nevertheless keeps his words brutally simple. The mirzā has soiled his robes of honor with his shameful performance. He has failed more completely at his task of maintaining law and order in the city than even the vilest of dogs; for even such a lowly creature gives thieves momentary pause in the way that the head constable cannot (Lines 03-04). The mirzā's origins and high-born status are attacked (Lines 06, 30); his sexuality is derogated (Lines 06, 29, 32); and he's compared to that filthiest and most repugnant of creatures, the pig – besides being called a dog and a wolf (Lines 18, 19, 21). His failures, caused by stupidity and old age, have prevented him from taking good advice and acting as he should (Lines 20, 23-26). The result is widespread disorder, rendered in standard tropes (Lines 11-14). But Zatallī also appears to allude to a specific instance: the murder of a certain Chunnī Dās (Line 16). While Zatallī has elsewhere attacked the mirzā by heaping abuse on the name of his daughter (suggesting the possibility of a personal conflict), it is tempting to imagine the poet rendered into a state of outrage at a decline in urban safety and so

giving voice to the opinion of his neighbors and companions. It is noteworthy that Zatallī's criticisms are directed against the mirzā's incompetence and "unconsciousness", and that he does not impute either malice or venality to the official. We notice also that Zatallī does not petition for the khān's replacement or for imperial intervention. Despite its florid language, this satire therefore should be seen not as slander. It is instead a narrow and limited form of professional criticism, directed at an official's performance that does not hold up to the standards of his constituency – the people who he governs, and whose lives and property he safeguards. Zatallī's critique is voiced from a position that considers the responsibilities of this official to lie not above – in maintaining peace for the emperor, but below – to the city's residents.

Let us recapitulate the contexts of the satires presented above. First come the satires of bureaucratic documents such as the news-letters and the official reports. These mocked and subverted the language of the administrative elite, but were quite possibly circulated within this relatively exalted sphere. We know that during this period large numbers of administrative manuals and collections of sample documents were produced to educate those who aspired to a bureaucratic or scribal position; no doubt such manuals circulated widely within sub-elite society not only in Delhi but also in smaller provincial cities. Zatallī's satires of court-reports and other such documents would therefore have traveled easily through the very circuits which also distributed the sorts of scribal manuals and handbooks mentioned above.

Zatallī's satirical poetry, however, may have circulated in different ways. I have argued that the poetic satire of Sābhā Chand was probably designed as an oral performance for a public arena. This was therefore an assault that derived from a private conflict and was expressed publicly. On the other hand, the satire directed against Mirzā Zū 'l-fiqār appears to have been a critique of his public role, though it is not clear whether the poem would have been circulated orally or recited

in a public context. In either case, though, Zatallī's satires would have circulated widely through the city. While the court-report satires presumed a degree of literacy and familiarity with the workings of the institutions of state, Zatallī's poems, filled as they are with simple Hindawī and onomatopoeic phrases, would have been well within the grasp of people in the bāzār.

From Fighting Words to Fighting

The satires we have seen above, particularly those of Zatallī, bear a violence in their words. Yet it seems that their utterance did not often result in physical violence. As we shall see in the next chapter, in situations of confrontation, harsh words were invariably exchanged before actual fighting began. Satirical speech and poetry, with all its bloody exuberance and excess, appears to have served as part of an everyday urban sociality. An instance of this is to be found in Zatallī's oeuvre, and is reproduced below. Since it is a literary artifact, its contents should not be taken as representative of an actual everyday conversation. This position is confirmed when we learn that the antagonist is a certain Mullā Sāhū; Sāhū is a word that carries connotations of trade or finance, and so Zatallī's use of the name almost certainly indicates a satirical reference to the sort of teacher who was more concerned with matters pecuniary than scholarly.

On a Conversation with a Mullā

Zatallī tells us that the mullā Sāhū ("Moneylender") had been engaged to teach the author's unnamed son, but his unpaid wages had begun to pile up because of the author's own penury. One day, when indigestion had caused Zatallī to eat a serving of betel-leaf (*pān*), the mullā appeared with inauspicious appearance and resentful mien (*sūrat pur kudūrat wa mūrat-i bad mahūrat*). The mullā then began to carp on annoyingly about the evil and ruin that came from consuming the betel-leaf, indicating that not only was it a bad habit and a cause of ruin, but also a waste of money. Zatallī protested that eating a single serving (*bīdā)* of *pān* did not make him

rich. "I have no possessions besides a nose and two ears," declared the poet, "and besides two or three of these green leaves I have no cheer".

> "I don't believe you," replied the mullā. "Your military stipend (*mansab*), and all the gold you used to pour over singers, where's all that today?"
> "Haven't you heard what they say?" asked Zatallī, "'Fortune's gone, and I'm high and dry'. Now where's the sustenance and where's the music and the spring festival and the wife? Give me some time, so that I may strive and toil and throw some money in your sack."

But the mullā didn't appreciate Zatallī's excuses at all and was greatly offended, for how could a heartless man be expected to understand the suffering of another? In an exchange of proverbs, the mullā accused Zatallī of stealing from him and demanded his wages; the author retorted that this was just like ignoring whether the dead man went to heaven or to hell, and thinking only of the sweets offered at the funeral. Such idiomatic conflict continued, but the mullā remained unrelenting even as Zatallī abased himself.

> "If you'd like to kill me, what's of it," said the penniless poet, "but it'll be the same as the saying goes, 'The crane struggles against the hand with wings.'"
> O ignorant one! I am Mullā Sāhū," shouted the enraged man of God, "I flay mosquitos and drink the blood of fleas! What are cranes and sparrow-hawks before me? I'm not falling for your tricks. The wealthy folk of the age love you and consider you worthy of reward. All this hanging about them is not without profit".
> "You're wrong; the poor get praised and blamed alike, there's nothing else to it".
> "No, it's you who's wrong; take me with you too so I become acquainted with the courtesies they pay you".
> "But I can't go for conversation with these folk without any cause; so how could I take you with me?"

Nevertheless, the mullā remained unrelenting in the way, Zatallī says, that a dog's tail can never be straightened. Zatallī wished that he could quieten the mullā and sit in peace, never having to set sight on the preacher's vile features again, but he remembered the proverb: a soft stick is

eaten by termites (*narm chūb rā kirm mī-khurad*). So instead he fell to vehemently abusing and threatening to have him beaten by his children until at last the man retreated unpaid.[416]

It is words of abuse such as these that signaled the transition to actual violence. In the instances of popular mobilization we study in the next chapters, such words are invariably seen as preceding actual physical engagements, though our fastidious chroniclers do not mention the words they deem most offensive for our edification. While this chapter has examined the ways in which popular opinion might be shared and find expression, in the next chapters we turn to actual instances of popular mobilization in the empire's cities during the first decades of the eighteenth century.

[416] Ibid., 82.

CHAPTER 6: Popular Protest in the Early Eighteenth Century

One Wednesday evening in March, 1729, a dispute erupted between the retinue of a minor nobleman and a group of shoemakers in Saᶜd Allāh Square near the congregational mosque. What would perhaps have ended at the exchange of harsh words turned instead to a matter of fists and blows. But this was no ordinary conflict; within the space of a scant few days, this minor quarrel erupted into a full-scale riot in the city of Delhi, leading to pitched battles in the courtyard of the city's central mosque and the deaths of many participants.

The "shoemakers' tumult", as it came to be known, was exceptional only in its scale and ferocity. While those who witnessed it professed amazement at the spectacle, the riot was hardly an isolated instance of public conflict in the a city which saw a variety of acts of everyday violence during the early eighteenth century. Such violence could be conceived in two ways. The first, as previous pages have suggested, traces the individual performance of violence as the climax of an elaborate series of verbal gestures of aggression. In a society in which males of military age regarded the bearing of arms as integral to their masculinity and honor, acts of physical violence were anything but random. In its performative and symbolic qualities, therefore, we discern a continuum of personal expression, as Zatallī's telling account of a conversation with a mullā indicates (see previous chapter). Such expressions were not necessarily political, though they certainly held the potential to convey political statements – as Zatallī's critique of the city's constable indicates.

But we might also think of violence as one of the means by which mass political assertions could be made. The visible and public practice of violence was one of the hallmarks of the Mughal state. Such practice served to enact two deeply intertwined but perhaps distinct claims. The first claim was that of the dynasty's exclusive rulership, of its total authority over the realm. This was

expressed not just in the lofty rhetoric of the court chroniclers who emphasized the climes and tribes that fell under the bountiful reign of the Shadow of God, the Caliph; there was also the more earthy rejection of the idea that groups within the well-protected domains might have their own structures of power. This was why Mughal bureaucrats and litterateurs routinely referred to Marāthā chieftains as "*nā-sardārān*" – these "not-leaders" had no business in refusing to accept Mughal suzerainty, organizing vast rebel armies, and demanding taxes of their own from Mughal subjects. The regime denigrated the status of powerful Rājpūt chieftains by sometimes referring to them as mere "z*amīndārs"* or petty land-holders. In the same way the increasing assertiveness of the Sikhs was treated as the eruption of a degenerate cult; regarded as vagrants (*āwāra*), the routine epithet for the Sikhs was the word "dog", and their spiritual leader was called the "accursed gurū".

This exclusive claim to rulership and authority was matched and enforced by an accompanying claim to violence. The Mughal state formally discouraged the use of force against its subjects in very strong terms. The state's restraints on the use of force was rooted in the ideological predisposition of the empire as the pastoral caretaker of its subject "flock" (*raᶜāyā*), and a world-view in which the practice of tyranny (*zulm*) delegitimized the ruler. A measure of the ubiquitousness of this philosophy is its frequent appearance in routine bureaucratic documents of the sort that Zatallī mocked in his satire on the disorderly actions of vegetables (cf. Chapter Five). A collection of sample appointment-contracts for administrators contains this injunction in the contract for the position of a regional garrison-commander (*faujdār*):

> If malefactors have become unruly and seditious in any particular village from among the villages of those subdistricts [under his administration], and the revenue collector has given a written statement concerning their punishment, he (the *faujdār*) must first seize a number of them (the rebels). (He must) attempt to reform them so that they may repent of their stubborn and refractory ways, agree to pay their taxes, and submit to authority. Upon successful reform (of these persons) he must obtain a certificate of satisfaction

> from the revenue collector. However, if due to their inherent deceitful villainy they will not reform, he may attack that aforesaid village and punish the malefactors. Yet he must not harm the smaller cultivators (in this process)… He should not take captives save in the land of war (*dār al-harb*).[417]

The local agent of force, in other words, was required to use his might only as the last resort, after all other measures had failed and the "inherent deceitful villainy" of the rebel's interior self could not be ameliorated by recourse to the gentle application of reason. Even then, he was forbidden from its indiscriminate application. On the other hand, the state did not formally accept the possibility that its subjects might express their legitimate grievances outside the established framework of appeal; they most certainly were not permitted to exercise any sort of violent protest.

Violence was the preserve of the state alone. Imperial power thus found its most dramatic enactment on the bodies of rebels; in accordance with the practice of the dynastic forbearer Tīmūr, towers were built throughout the Mughal realms to display the heads of those who ran afoul of the state.[418] While the state has been regarded as a "patchwork quilt" of variegated arrangements with local forces across its length and breadth, there was nothing flexible about the way in which it treated those who "raised their heads" (*sar-kashī*) or "stretched their necks" (*gardan-kashī*).[419] For the Sikh rebels who were brought in the aftermath of their failed uprising to Delhi in 1716, the perennial academic controversy over "structure" and "agency" had been most painfully resolved; having first exercised their free agency in acts of rebellion, they were *literally* imprisoned in an iron cage of state power. Adorned with "caps of mockery" (*kulāhhā-yi*

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[417] John F. Richards, *Document Forms for Official Orders of Appointment in the Mughal Empire: Translation, Notes and Text* (Cambridge: Trustees of the E.J.W. : Gibb Memorial, 1986), 35–36.
[418] Catherine B. Asher, "Sub-Imperial Palaces: Power and Authority in Mughal India," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (January 1, 1993): 97–98.
[419] For a persuasive assertion of the former case, see the "Introduction", Alam and Subrahmanyam, *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*.

mazhaka), they were paraded and humiliated in front of city dwellers before their gruesome public executions.[420] In this context too we might return to the spectacle of the mutilated body of a deposed emperor such as Jahāndār Shāh or Farrukh Siyar. Here was the involution of state power within itself. A dead body was a stark statement designed to provide "admonishment" (ᶜ*ibrat*) to all spectators, though the admonitory message became confused and incoherent when the body was that of the king himself.

The state's insistence on being the sole legitimate agent of violence suggests that this role was not passively accepted by a quiescent population. If fact, as the following pages demonstrate, the unquiet masses asserted themselves with increasing frequency and regularity during the early eighteenth century. In so doing, they violated the paradigm of governance which enforced social tranquility through the apparatus of disciplinary urban institutions (described in Chapter One) by forcefully illustrating the fact that their grievances were not ordinary matters of law and order. But, as we shall see, the very forms of transgressive opposition to the authority of the state were shaped and bounded by the superstructure of Mughal hegemony. In other words, the activation of a stridently oppositional subjectivity did not draw from some autonomous subaltern identity that remained untainted by the episodic intrusions of a distant governmental authority. Nor in fact did instances of protest or rebellion seek to "overthrow the Mughal order": in the Mughal capital, the world-view of its fractious urbanites was shaped by the workings of governmental power and the distinctively Mughal fabric of the city itself. Within the family of political language, the dialect of poetic satire and that of riotous violence were comprehended and spoken by ruler and ruled alike. One of the aims of the following pages is to illustrate the increasing fluency of the masses in the demonstrative dialect of violent self-assertion.

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[420] Mirzā Muhammad, "⊂Ibratnāma," f. 147a.

There is a further objective to this analysis. Aristotle, we recall, defined of politics as the art of living in a city with the end of the greatest good for all, and of the city as the highest and best form of human community. If politics were indeed the art of living together in the city, then its basic unit would be the community; for as we have seen earlier, the Mughal realms were frequently visualized as an agglomeration of many diverse *ethnes*, all under the rule of a single benevolent monarch. The work of politics, therefore, would be the work of adjudicating between communities and providing justice to all. But the city is not merely the sterile site of interchange between communities; something else happens within its space. It is within the city that another sort of community develops that is qualitatively different from other previous communities, that summons other affiliations and produces a new subject. The practice of urban politics, therefore, could be seen as the production of new subjectivities. Through the analysis of mass political activity, therefore, this section seeks to trace the emergence of new forms of urban subjectivity.

In the following pages, therefore, I show how the emergence of such subjectivities can be glimpsed in an event such as the shoemakers' uprising. But in order to understand the precise workings of that riot, we must examine the conventional forms of public disorder that were so frequent in the early eighteenth century. First, I present a typology of such forms of tumult; I begin with the commonly-recognized phenomenon of "factional warfare" (*khāna jangī*), turning then to the disorders that followed a perceived denial of justice to an individual and by extension to a community. I then examine the forms of religious dissension and strife endemic to the city in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century. It is in this rich context of tumult in the city that I finally turn to the shoemakers' riot itself.

Factional Warfare

The most commonly understood standard form of mass violence in peacetime was that of the warfare that erupted between the contending parties of two noblemen. Mughal sources frequently describe such conflict as "*khāna jangī*" – "warfare between houses", and it appears that such conflict was a periodic unpleasantness that arose due disputes between the great. Such conflict could not be resolved by the judicial apparatus of the state, for the simple reason that the combatants might frequently outrank the city constable or magistrate and would most certainly not yield to his authority.

Consider the account of the historian Mirzā Muhammad, who described a well-known outbreak of such fighting in 1716.[421] On Monday, March 30th, 1717 the emperor Farrukh Siyar had gone for a long hunting trip in the vicinity of Molī, which was a hunting-ground reserved for the exclusive use of royalty. On Thursday, May 18th, Mirzā Muhammad rode out to join the imperial army (*lashkar-i bādshāhī*), which was encamped near the Shalamar gardens. After meeting some of the grandees (*aᶜyān*), says the mirzā, he proceeded to the house of Saᶜd al-Dīn Khān Jīv, who came forth and explained something to our author (*chizī ta'awwul namuda*) there. The verb here suggests that Jīv had perhaps interpreted a dream for the mirzā, who then went on to have a siesta (*qīlūla*) at the spot. After the noon prayers, when less than a watch of the day remained, the mirzā decided to return to the city. But just as he was preparing to take his leave, the noise of cannon and musket came to be heard. When the mirzā enquired about its causes, he learnt that a fight had broken out between the people of Nawwāb Iᶜtimād al-Daula Muhammad Amīn Khān

[421] Ibid., f. 148b–150b.

and those of Nawwāb Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān Khān. The noise of the fighting intensified even as Mirzā Muhammad remained at the spot.[422]

The mirzā, who describes this event in the first person, finally began his return to the city when only four *gharīs* of the day remained. The entire way he saw folks who had heard of the fighting and had emerged from the city ready for battle, and who were now heading towards the encampment of the army. But most of these people were those of Nawwāb Muhammad Amīn Khān and a smaller number were the retainers of the khān-i daurān. From this the mirzā inferred that the khān-i daurān's contingent was with him and most of the army of Nawwāb Muhammad Amīn Khān had been stationed in the city. By the time the mirzā reached the vicinity of the Red Mosque and the "stone horse", the latter's son Qamar al-Dīn Khān was to be seen racing with his cavalry in the direction of the army.

Two or three *gharīs* of the evening after Mirzā Muhammad reached his home, more news was received from those coming from the army encampment. It was now learnt that Amīn al-Dīn Khān and a group of others had interceded on the basis of the imperial order and brought about a truce between the combatants. The cause of the fight was also learnt. It was said the procession (*sawārī*) of Nawwāb Muhammad Amīn Khān was returning from court to home, just as the harem (*mahal*) of Khān-i Daurān Khān was coming from the city. In the middle of the road the heads of both processions encountered each other and there was the great apprehension of a clash (*ihtimām-i pur khāsh*) between the two. But apparently both passed each other and reached their destinations. After this the people of Khān-i Daurān gathered (*hujūm namūda*) and went to Muhammad Amīn Khān. The latter's retainers, despite their paucity of numbers, prepared to defend themselves in skirmish formation (*tarradudāt numāyān kardand*) and so a fight of arrows

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[422] Ibid., f. 148b.

and muskets went on between them for five or six *gharīs*.[423] A person named Nāmdār Khān and others among the feuding parties were killed, and a different group of the people of the bāzār who happened to be near the field of battle were wounded. As punishment for this gross indiscipline, the presumably incensed emperor reduced a thousand horsemen each from the assignations of these two great nobles. As further censure, the military commandership of Murādābād was transferred from Muhammad Amīn Khān to the peacemaker Amīn al-Dīn Khān, and ᶜInāyat ᶜAlī Khān the uncle of the latter was appointed as his nephew's deputy and sent off to that place.

It may be a symptom of Farrukh Siyar's ineffectual rule that for two or three days after this event neither of the involved parties arrived at court. But the emperor may equally have displayed astuteness in personally writing notes seeking the return of both grandees which were carried by the palace eunuch Iᶜtimād Khān. Some days later, says Mirzā Muhammad, the emperor gave victuals (*āshī*) to both the great nobles together, and after returning to the city they entertained each other. In so doing, says the mirzā, they transformed external hatred into purity (*safā*ᵓ).[424] In saying so, our author implies that both nobles maintained their rancor against each other; but as a mere spectator, the mirzā was not privy to the intricacies of the relationship between the two feuding parties. While his interpretation of the conflict may thus be less than trustworthy, his eye-witness reporting is nevertheless of value. From it we may conclude that that it was popularly believed that the cause of fighting involved the honor of the khān-i daurān, since his harem was precariously exposed on the open road. At the same time, it appears unlikely that either of the two nobles sought this fight or prepared for it, for it was the people (*mardum*) of Khān-i Dauran who appear to have gathered unbidden and fallen upon Muhammad Amīn Khān.

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423 Ibid., f. 149a.
424 Ibid., 149b.

This would suggest that the retainers of the nobleman regarded the honor of their patron as their own. But a fight to preserve honor amongst retainers was not regarded with sympathy by the emperor himself. From his perspective, such combat reflected impropriety and indiscipline within the contingents of his servants, and demanded strict punishment for that reason. His almost equal application of punishment likewise suggests that he regarded the matter to be one of discipline and order rather than the honor of a noble family.

Another instance of such factional warfare confirms the imperial disapproval of such reckless behavior. Here, Mirzā Muhammad tells us that in the middle of May 1718, Shākir Khān, the son of Shukr Allāh Khān deceased and the grandson of ᶜĀqil Khān "the pardoned", was killed by a Mughal named Yaka Tāz Khān. As the descendant of ᶜĀqil Khān, the long-standing governor of Delhi province, Shākir Khān was no doubt regarded as the scion of an illustrious family: he held the military-commandership of the subdistrict (*chakla*) of Mewāt and the environs of the city of Shāhjahānābād, and his murder was a serious crime. The murderer Yaka Tāz Khān was the deputy of Zafar Khān Turra (later known as Raushan al-Daula Turra Bāz Khān) and was appointed to the charge of some of the places in the imperial holdings (*khālisā*). Yaka Tāz appears to have been immediately slain at the hands of Shākir Khān's retinue. While the cause of the conflict is unknown, we can be certain that it was not regarded as a mere breach of law and order. When news of the affair reached the emperor, 2,000 rank and 1,000 horse were reduced from the assignation of Zafar Khān, and the service of the paymastership and the Qūrbegī were transferred from him to Salābat Khān the son of Sādāt Khān. But this serious disciplinary action was mitigated by the intercession of Qutb al-Mulk; because he was the patron (*hāmī*) of Turra Khān he persuaded the emperor to restore his ranks within the very next few days.[425]

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[425] Ibid., 184a.

Justice Denied

A common form of public assertion in the urban spaces of the empire involved the gathering of a crowd on the behalf of an offended party and their public importuning the organs of justice. This was not a new form of protest; during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign, crowds are recorded as having gathered in Delhi to protest the imposition of the poll-tax on the Friday when the emperor was on his way to the congregational mosque.[426] Mass protests by shopkeepers and merchants appear to have been a common feature of imperial cities, and are particularly well-documented for the "blessed port" of Sūrat in the early eighteenth century.[427] Concerned with maintaining the stability of prices and the supply of essential commodities to urbanites, imperial authority was in general very receptive to the complaints of such communities. We know of at least one instance in which the emperor Bahādur Shāh personally took charge of a taxation dispute between local authorities and butter-sellers (*roughan-furūshān*). The emperor's strict injunctions preventing double taxation were motivated as much by pragmatic concerns about preventing the dearness of butter as by the lofty principles of administering justice to all subjects, however lowly they may have been.[428]

Mirzā Muhammad, the conscientious chronicler, provides us with the detailed record of one an event concerned with the question of justice from May 1718, just days after the killing of Shākir Khān. The crux of this strange incident was that a jeweler's boy (*jauharī-baccha*) vanished into thin air. We are told that the jewelers of the city expended great efforts in investigating this

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[426] See the oft-cited Abū al -Fazl Māmūrī, "Unnamed Mss.," n.d., f. 149a–b, British Library, APAC, Or. 1671.

[427] Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat: C. 1700-1750* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979); M. P. Singh, *Town, Market, Mint, and Port in the Mughal Empire, 1556-1707: An Administrative-Cum-Economic Study* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1985); Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, C. 1572-1730*.

[428] Anonymous, "Akhbārāt-i Darbār-i Muᶜallā, Bahādur Shāh RY5-6 Part II.," n.d., sec. Rajab 5, 10, 13, Sri Natnāgar Shodh Samsthān, Sitamau.

matter. It was finally ascertained that the nameless jeweler’s boy had not been seen since he had disappeared into the mansion of a certain Kh^{w}āja Khalīl Khān, who was the nephew of Kh^{w}āja Husayn Khān, who had held the title of Khān-i Daurān in the brief reign of Jahāndār Shāh. Mirzā Muhammad notes that the jewelers “assembled at his house for a day or two” but when they saw that their efforts were fruitless they importuned the emperor. In doing so the jewelers took advantage of the fact that the emperor happened to be in the city; but it also suggests that Kh^{w}āja Khalīl Khān’s family retained a significant measure of social standing and power despite any imperial disfavor that might have come from association with the previous regime. Kh^{w}āja Khalīl, it appears, was far too important a person to be hauled away to the city magistracy (*kotwālī*) like a common criminal. It was perhaps in recognition of this fact that the emperor dispatched the people of the imperial artillery (*topkhāna-i bādshāhī*) to the mansion of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl. But the khwāja fortified himself in his house and prepared for combat with the intention of giving up his life if necessary.[429]

At this moment of impasse, we are told, “an assembly” (*jam⊂ī*) interceded and gave the khwāja to understand that ‘it was not possible to wage war against Emperors’. Instead, it was better to obey the imperial order, and whatever was the decision of the emperor must be enacted. The khwāja accepted these wise words, on the condition that his honor (*ābrū*) should not be impinged on. After agreeing, he went with that group to the house of Sayyid Salābat Khān, the commander of artillery, who treated him with consideration. But the commander also stated, “The order is that you should stay in this very place until the conclusion of this affair.” So the khwāja spent the night in the house of the commander of artillery. The fragile stability imposed on this state of affairs shattered the very next day, when the men of Sayyid Salābat Khān erroneously

[429] Mirzā Muhammad, “⊂Ibratnāma,” f. 184b.

unsheathed a dagger before the detainee (*jamdhar az pesh rū bar dāshtand*). Kh^{w}āja Khalīl Khān apprehended the imminent loss of his honor and secretly told one of his men to give him a vial of poison; having received it, he consumed it and so ended his own toils.

Unlike the case of the murder of Shākir Khān, our author is here able to provide us with a cause for this unseemly fracas. While the mirzā had not mentioned the death of the jeweler's boy, we are now told that the reason for his murder was heard from "those who knew": apparently the jeweler's boy had been lingering about the door of the daughter of Kh^{w}āja Husayn, the former Khān-i Daurān named Sāliha ("chastity") Bāno, who was married to Kh^{w}āja Muhammad Sādiq, the younger brother of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl Khān. The jeweler's boy had privileged access to these private quarters because he was always coming and going for the buying and selling of jewels to the ladies of the house. This behavior aroused the suspicions of Muhammad Nasīr, the son of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl and Kh^{w}āja Nizam al-Dīn, the father of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl and Kh^{w}āja Muhammad Sādiq. And so, one night grandfather and grandson murdered the jeweler's boy; according to one report, says the author, although the killers hid the corpse in an underground chamber, the secret of the murder could not remain hidden and became public (*bar malā uftād*). It was also rumored that improper relations were suspected by some between Muhammad Nasīr and his aunt Sāliha Bāno. But, says the mirzā, God alone knows best.[430]

This unusual tale provides us with significant insights into the workings of justice in late-Mughal Delhi. As in the previous instance, the conflict was fundamentally about the honor of the family, encoded within the chastity and sanctity of its elite females. But the matter here could not solved by factional warfare, for the bereaved jeweler had no faction. As a non-elite, his place in society was formally subordinate to that of the exalted family from which a patriarch had once held,

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[430] Ibid., f. 185a–b.

however briefly, the stratospheric title of “Khān of the Era”. Yet the jeweler himself was far from helpless. He belonged to an important and powerful community of men whose services were required by nobles. We do not know whether the nameless jeweler was recognized as an honorable individual; but at this moment of crisis the form of community that activated in his defense was that of his fellow craftsmen. In this activation lay the recognition that the constable and judge would not be able to adjudicate in what would under other circumstances have been the straightforward legal matter of a kidnapping and murder. Despite the size of the city, community and neighborhood organizations seem to have established rapidly that culpability for the disappearance lay at the door of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl. In publicly gathering before his house, the jewelers therefore enacted a solidarity that was based on a visualization of common interest that lay above their quotidian competition as individuals.

All of this was to no avail. Kh^{w}āja Khalīl’s initial strategy appears to have been that of retreating into his home as his castle; and perhaps this would have been successful had not the emperor been available for direct recourse to the jewelers. Once the matter was presented to the emperor, however, events acquired a momentum outside the limited dynamic of the city’s judicial organs. Kh^{w}āja Khalīl may have been above the law of the magistracy, but he was not above the emperor’s justice. The ruler in this situation is represented as an utterly disinterested and just authority. Yet it is noteworthy that he did not animate the city’s judicial mechanisms, instead preferring to use his personal armed forces. Equipped with gunpowder weapons, the men of the imperial artillery would have been able to overwhelm the defenders of the mansion, and it is with this intention that they were dispatched to encircle it. In their deployment we see another important feature of Mughal urban governance, which in this case seems to have privileged local exigencies over jurisdictional niceties. But it is also clear that the emperor himself recognized

that the city's governmental agencies would not be able to resolve the affair even though it fell under their purview. This was the proper moment for him, then, to exercise his arbitrary and despotic authority in its most proper role: to dispense justice when the mechanisms of justice themselves had been outmatched.

The khwāja however remained obstinate, prepared to fight to the death in the defense of his honor even against the king. Such behavior is in marked contrast to the proper norms of complete submissiveness to imperial command that are so frequently mentioned in the texts of the period. It suggests that despite the expansive claims of court panegyrists, individual families maintained a robust sense of their own honor that was not subordinate to the emperor. With respect to the question of his family's name, Khʷāja Khalīl did not necessarily consider himself hierarchically inferior to the emperor himself.

Despite this act of naked self-assertiveness, the troops sent to Khʷāja Khalīl's house did not apply force bluntly. For at this moment of high conflict, we see the appearance of an interceding "community", of which no details are provided. By reiterating the common and obvious truth known to all – namely, that one could not war against one's ruler – it managed to convince the haughty nobleman to submit to imperial justice. Here we see the intertwining of state power and the workings of the local community, a phenomenon described by Farhat Hasan in Surat during the same period.[431]

But the presence of a mediating community did little to allay the accused khʷāja's suspicions of the harm that might befall his honor from the detention: nor indeed does the community have sought to protect the khwāja. As the narrative implies, he was accompanied by his retainers, and had prepared for any exigency by equipping his entourage with a vial of poison. But what

[431] Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, C. 1572-1730*.

exactly precipitated his suicide? Of this we cannot be sure: our author tells us only that the artillery commander's men acted in error and that they "drew a dagger before him". This vague sentence seems to imply that the men of the commander threatened the khwāja with violence, most probably in order to make him disclose the facts of the matter. The khwāja however preferred to end his life rather than accept responsibility for the death of the jeweler's boy. The mirzā is careful to tell us that he reports hearsay from this point on, so the accusation of improper contact between the jeweler's boy and Sāliha Bāno, though plausible, may not necessarily be accurate.

What we can say with certainty is that the khwāja chose to commit suicide at the moment when events began to take on the color of the standard judicial process. We recall that the khwāja had stoutly refused to present himself before his public accusers, and that he demanded his honor (*ābrū*) remain untarnished. The bodily connotations of *ābrū* (as opposed to metaphors of exaltation like ᶜ*izzat* or of seclusion and sanctity, such as *hurmat* or ᶜ*ismat*) may indicate that the khwāja feared not so much the humiliation that might result in the aftermath of the judicial process, but the physical acts and enactments of the process itself. For a nobleman of high standing, coming into physical contact with the judicial apparatus of the state would itself be humiliating, precisely because that apparatus existed to discipline the common masses. In this context, the appearance of a dagger could be interpreted as not only the threat of violence, but the deceitful destruction of honor: one that led to being equated with the common masses and becoming an object of popular rumor and gossip.

It is in preparation for this perhaps predictable contingency that the khwāja had kept a vial of poison handy. In this context, the khwāja's suicide may be seen as the final act of elite resistance to the inexorable encroachments of a judicial process that did not recognize social status in his

terms. Because the mirzā ends his account of this incident at this point, we cannot say what further consequences ensued for either the khwāja's family or the bereaved jeweler. But the structure of the narrative suggests that this stage marked the application of justice and was the final outcome of the process.

What was the nature of this justice? The life of the khwāja seems to have served as the price for the murder of the jeweler's boy. The khwāja himself may not have been the murderer – we recall that Mirzā Muhammad thought the khwāja's son Muhammad Nasīr was responsible for the action – but then the matter was not strictly one of individuals. A jeweler had been wronged, and many jewelers had taken the grievance upon themselves; on the other hand, a family had acted to preserve its honor, and one of its members had given up his life. Here the matter could rest. Justice, in this conception, was a matter of determining equilibria and restoring balance between communities.

There was a third interested party in the conflict. That was the state itself, embodied in this case in the person of Sayyid Salābat Khān the commander of artillery. It was the stated mandate of the regime to provide justice and to prevent tyranny. But the abstract provision of justice was not the goal or intention of the state. In local disputes, what the sate sought above all was order and the return to the status quo. The commander's mandate was to investigate the situation, punish the guilty, and re-establish order. This is why the death of Kh^{w}āja Khalīl marks the narrative termination of the event and appears to serve as the end-point of the story itself.

If order was the principal object of the state in matters of urban governance, then the act of disorder was a powerful tool of negotiation in the hands of any group that sought to influence or appropriate the functioning of government. In this case, the demand for justice on the part of the aggrieved coincided neatly with the state's desire to reimpose order in the public realm: action

against the khwāja caused the jewelers to end their protest; his death ended the affair. But the relationship between order and justice was not always so simple. A pattern recurring conflict between these ideals and principles appears to emerge from the late eighteenth century, and it is to such forms of conflict that we now turn.

Religious Dissension

Just as the urban body politic could be wracked by factional conflict within elite groups, or that between a mass group and an elite, so did it suffer from strife that assumed overtly religious characteristics. Take for instance the case of a certain Rāmjī, whose conversion to Islam in 1725 precipitated disorder in the city. Rāmjī's story is obscure and does not find mention in most sources from the period. The most detailed rendition of events is to be found in William Irvine's *Later Mughals*.[432] Irvine's telling of the event bears the sarcastic title "Muhammad Shah as an Indian Solomon", which succinctly conveys his opinion of Mughal justice. Irvine tells us that three or four years before Rajab 1137 (March-April 1725), a clerk in the imperial bureaucracy named Rāmjī had converted to Islam, but his wife and daughter had refused to convert with him. He now placed a complaint before the magistrate (*qāzī*) Mustafid[h] Khān saying that because his daughter was a minor when he had converted to Islam, she should by rights have been involuntarily converted to Islam as his dependent. The girl in question denied this and was sent to custody while the matter was inquired. She finally admitted that "signs of puberty" had appeared three months after her father had converted. On this basis, the magistrate concluded the girl had been a minor at the time of her father's conversion and so was perforce a Muslim. This decision caused the "Hindus of the Urdu Bāzār" to seek redressal below the emperor's "lattice

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[432] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, Vol II. pp. 126–127 Irvine's version is based on a manuscript of the Tazkirat al-Salatin al-Chaghta of Kāmwār Khān that extends to AH1137; I have not been able to locate this manuscript; all available versions, including Muzaffar Alam's edited text, cease before this date .

window”. The dispute was assigned for resolution to the Mīr Jumla, who was the chief jurisprudent (*sadr al-sudūr*). This inquiry, held within the palace’s wooden mosque, hinged on the Mīr Jumla’s assertion that menses were not the only sign of puberty; it was therefore within the realm of possibility that the girl had attained puberty before her father’s conversion. The girl was now given over to the custody of a Hindu cloth-merchant by the name of Jīwan Dās, though this decision provoked furious dissent from a jurisprudent (*mufti*) named Daulat.

This decision caused sixty thousand Muslims to gather in the congregational mosque on the next day, which was a Friday. The unruly mob hindered the recital of the emperor’s proclamation (*khutba*); next, two or three Hindus were seized and forcibly circumcised. Since a great riot was about to break out, the emperor deputed the high nobleman Raushan al-Daula to bring the judge and the jurisprudents around; Irvine presents us with the fate of the girl in a direct quotation: “To make a long story short, she was killed, otherwise there would have been many headaches and vexation.” The poll-tax (*jizya*) which had been abolished earlier in the reign, was re-instituted; but in a week the judge was removed and new jurisprudents ere appointed. Irvine’s analysis of the event is terse: “[t]he life of the poor young girl was as nothing compared to the ease and comfort of the emperor and his advisers!”[433]

Another version of the same event is preserved in the *History of India* (*Tārīkh-i Hindī*) of Rustam ᶜAlī Khān Shāhābādī from 1741.[434] Rustam ᶜAlī Khān’s history, written as it is with a breezy lack of attention to details, nevertheless provides us with an illuminating variation on Irvine’s narrative. According to Rustam ᶜAlī Khān, various reports from the period noted that a person from the community of the Hindus (*qaum-i hunūd)* expressed the desire to convert to

[433] Ibid., 127.

[434] Rustam ⊂Alī Khān Shāhābādī, “Tārīkh-i Hindī,” 1741, 402–403, Sri Natnāgar Shodh Samsthān, Sitamau, Mss. 1641, copied from British Library APAC Or. 1628.

Islam. But the judge and jurisprudent (*sadr wa muftī*) of the city forbade it due to the instigations (*ighwāͻ*) of the companions of Mīr Jumla. In order to protect the honor (*ghairat*) of Islam, the magistrate Mustafiz Khān gathered a group of the people of Islam and went to the congregational mosque. There, he prevented the recital of the Friday proclamation; due to the extent of the throng (*izdihām*), there was a popular commotion (*balwā-yi ͨāmm*), so that people from the great nobles to the common multitude gathered around the magistrate.

Rustam ͨAlī Khān tells us on the day of this crisis there were no servants around the emperor save a chosen few. The helpless emperor came to agree with the magistrate at the recommendation of the amīr al-umarāͻ Khān-i Daurān Khān and forgave his transgressions. The Hindu was made a Muslim at that very moment and that jurisprudent who was resolved to protected Hindus (*ān muftī hāmī-i hunūd maͨhūd*) was excused from his position. Tāj Mahmūd Khān, one of the shaykh-born of the town of Dewī, was appointed to the rank of the jurisprudent and the magistrate relinquished his post.

Rustam ͨAlī Khān too has his own perspective on the event, one markedly different from that of Irvine. Our author is firm in his support of the magistrate Mustafiz Khān and opposed to the jurisprudent subordinate to Mīr Jumla. So our author tells us, "Yes, it's certainly true that the judge was appointed due to the decree of the judge of disputes to guide the world, and was appointed to the high position of guidance to established the illumination [of the law] with legal injunctions". This was in stark contrast to the jurisprudent who was replaced during the tumult. This person, who was 'sworn to defending Hindus', was a jurisprudent of baseness (*zalālat*). He led the way against the law due to the bribery (*irtishāͻ*) of gold and silver from the chambers of hell (*darakāt-i jahīm*) and so asserted himself (*lā ū bālī gasht*). The victory of Islam for our

author was at best bittersweet, since both the righteous magistrate and the venal jurisprudent fell from power.

Rustam ᶜAli Khān's narrative excludes all mention of the Hindu's daughter and in fact fails to record even the Hindu's name. While it may therefore be less reliable than the version Irvine presents, it still offers a rare glimpse of how justice was thought to work during the reign of Muhammad Shāh. The matter, for our author, was a simple one: a Hindu had sought to convert to Islam but had been thwarted by the corrupt companions of the Mīr Jumla, though we are not told why and under whose influence senior jurisprudents would prevent such a conversion. It may be, of course, that the author prefers to dismiss all objection to conversion as motivated by only the most base and venal impulses; but it is also worth noting that the issue of conversion in both narratives is fully judicialized. In both cases, the conversionary impulses of the formal Islamic empire so manifest in the reign of Aurangzeb appear to have been eclipsed by an Islamic legalism that in other comparable contexts has been described as essentially conservative.[435] The embrace of Islam, as presented in both narratives, seems to have little to do with the transformation of an interior self; rather, it appears to belong to a category of social transactions that by the early eighteenth century were under the everyday administration of the state.

In comparison with the story of the murdered jeweler's boy, however, the desires for "justice" and "order" diverge dramatically here. If we accept Irvine's version of the tale, then the "Hindus of the Urdu Bāzār" appear as a community and replicate the gesture of petitioning the emperor (in this case, at the specific site of the "latticed window"); the emperor Muhammad Shāh acts in the same way as his forbearer Farrukh Siyar by ordering senior officials of state to see to the complaints of the aggrieved. But unlike in the case of the jeweler's boy, in this instance the

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[435] For an Ottoman parallel, see Leslie P. Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) Ch. 8.

judicial investigation provokes a response from another constituency; both nobles and commoners rally to the defense of Islam, as Rustam ᶜAlī Khān puts it, by gathering in the congregational mosque on Friday and disrupting the recitation of the imperial proclamation. Both narratives are agreed in pointing to the dangers inherent in the gathering and the need to defuse the situation; Rustam ᶜAlī tells us also that the emperor concedes only reluctantly to the conversion of the Hindu, because of the coincidental absence of many of his servants. In this particular case, the state's vision of justice appears to be bifurcated; for both narratives perceive the presence of an Islamic legal opinion that prevents conversion, though Irvine's account credits Mīr Jumla and Rustam ᶜAli Khān's account blames a nameless jurisprudent in that nobleman's camp. There is equally present the narrative of "Islam in danger"; one easily buttressed by the fact that infidels could be prevented from embracing the true Faith in the heart of an Islamic empire with a Muslim ruler. Both narratives suggest that the judicial processes of the state arrived at a conservative decision and sought to prevent the conversion. But the coagulation and activation of an Islamic community and the local absence of disciplinary force caused the rulers to make a pragmatic decision that flew in the face of their own reasoned approach.

It could be argued, then, that a particular activation of community in this moment of conflict secured a victory against another form of solidarity. Indeed the mass gathering at the mosque was a conscious manipulation of the symbols through which the regime articulated its power and legitimacy. This victory, then, was based on a form of arm-twisting against the state. Such coercion, expressed not in the language of supplication but that of defiance, did not sit well with the ruling elite. Their response was to unseat and expel those who were responsible for stoking the popular agitation.

This pragmatic response to questions of justice and order is witnessed again in an incident that occurred on October 9th, 1769. Again, only a single brief mention is to be found in a chronicle from the period.[436] We are told on this day the doctor (*maulawī*) Nazr Muhammad gathered the Muslim people (*mardum-i musalmān*) in the Congregational mosque and caused a disturbance (*balwā*) on the affair of a woman of the Khatrānī community (*qaum*) who had a relation with a certain Rādhā Chaudharī. The disturbance continued from the morning of the next day: At the third watch the Superintendent (*nāzir*) Bakhtāwar Khān sent Radhā with the magistrate (*qāzī*) to the mosque of Nawwāb Bahādur. Fractious folk (*mardumān-i balwā*) broke the wooden gate (*darīcha*) of the mosque and brought him out, and took him before the doctor. The doctor took Radhā to his residence at the seminary (*madarsa*) of Nizām al-Mulk and chastized (*tambīh*) him severely. The aforementioned woman, who was hiding in the mansion of Rāī Dhandān (?) was also pulled out and taken to the house of the maulawī and forcibly made a Muslim (*bi zabardastī musalmān sākhta*). Rādha Chaudharī was freed from prison and the shops of the bāzār which had been closed for three days due to this affair were made to open.

On Monday, Jumādā al-Sānī (16 October 1769), Nawwāb Najīb al-Daula, on hearing this aforementioned news, sent a written order (*parwāna*) to the turbulent doctor saying, "You are not in the service of the city, and the disorder you raised was not a good action (*khūb na sākhta*). Now you must get up and leave". Thus the people of Qāsim the fort-commander went to expel the doctor.

From this compressed account we can discern the contours of another religious conflict, again regarding the issue of conversion. While the cause of the tension is not stated, the forcible conversion of the *Khatrānī* woman appears to have resolved the matter. Rādhā's suffix

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[436] Anonymous, "Delhi Chronicle," n.d., 221–222, National Library of India, Jadunath Sarkar Collection #37.

Chaudharī probably implies a position of prominence in his community, and the shops of the bāzār appear to have remained closed in protest during the action. This would suggest that Rādhā Chaudharī had some previous affiliation with the trading community of the city which rallied to his defense. But the object of agitation here was the Khatrānī woman, after whose conversion Rādhā was released from the custody of the doctor Nazr Muhammad. It is noteworthy again that the formal judicial apparatus of the city appears to have acted in protection of the Hindus, for it would seem that the superintendent sent Rādhā with the judge to the mosque for his own protection. This would imply a previous action in support of the claims of the Chaudharī and the woman which provoked the ire of the doctor in the first place.

On the other hand stood the doctor Nazr Muhammad; his residence at the seminary of Nizām al-Mulk indicates his knowledge of theological and judicial matters. No doubt these skills helped him engineer the public accord which caused a "mob" to act his support, though we can only speculate on its size and composition. The doctor's adherents were bold enough to defy the administrator and the magistrate. They gathered to express their dissent on the 9th of October, which was a Monday, and then escalated their agitation by breaking into a mosque and seizing the hapless Rādhā Chaudharī. In the same way, the Khatrānī woman was pulled out a private residence and brought before the doctor. The woman was converted to Islam while the Chaudharī suffered "chastisement" and imprisonment, though it is significant to note that in this case no sanguinary consequences ensued. Half a century before, Khwāja Khalīl had taken poison rather than being subjected to the indignity of judicial investigation; but both the individuals in 1769 appear to be non-elites and may not have shared that prickly nobleman's touchy sense of honor. In any case, here the events were led by a private party – a doctor who had for some

reason become personally concerned with the ”danger to Islam” that necessitated such extreme action.

Exactly two weeks after the beginning of events, the city’s administrator expelled the turbulent doctor from the city. The city’s administration waited just long enough for tempers to cool before it acted. But the nobleman Najīb al-Daula made his reasons for acting clear: the doctor, no matter how zealous a defender of Islam, was not in the service of the city. He therefore had no right to take matters of urban governance in his own hands or to adjudicate the disputes of the city’s dwellers – that was a privilege reserved for the formal bureaucratic establishment. In this case, as in both the previous, restitution does not appear to have been granted to the parties which had been encroached upon – or, more accurately, no mention of restitution is to be found since there is no further mention of either Rādhā Chaudharī or the Khatrānī woman. In any case, it is not clear if the nobleman Najīb al-Daula had concluded that an act of injustice had taken place; it is obvious, however, that the nobleman’s condemnation of the doctor was not for his practice of activist jurisprudence, but for hurling the city into disorder.

The preceding examples all suggest the dominance of Islam as the official religion of state in the empire, and this certainly appears to be the case. The state and the emperor, it could be argued, exist solely to nourish and protect Islam – an argument made with some enthusiasm by the imperial establishment. But this should not occlude the fact that this translated into the social dominance of a religious group. Such visions of social dominance were ideals to which theologians aspired, especially as imperial power waned in the middle of the eighteenth century;

while they find clear enunciation in the writings of figures such as Shaykh Walī Allāh, their popularity remained limited at best.[437]

An instance from earlier reign of the emperor Aurangzeb (remembered for his orthodox Sunnī piety), is illustrative in this context. On the 29th of March 1694, Aurangzeb learned from a secret reporter that a community of Bairāgī religious mendicants had been worshiping idols in the city of Shāhjahānābād. In accordance with his mandate, the superintendent (*muhtasib*) of the abode of the caliphate arrested these Bairāgīs and seized their idols, which he transported to his own residence. At this, "the people of the Rājpūts" gathered at the house of the superintendent and attacked him. Overwhelmed and helpless, the desperate official released the Bairāgīs and moved the idols to the custody of ᶜInāyat Khān the administrator of the place. The emperor's only recorded response to this infidel outrage was to ask of ᶜInāyat Khān why he had not aided the superintendent at the time of battle.[438] Even though the emperor had more pressing matters at hand, the equanimity with which he appears to have accepted this blatant transgression is worth noting. Aurangzeb's acceptance of this situation, as well as the efforts of his forbearers, point to a governmental understanding of the fickleness of religious sentiments and the paramountcy of a doctrine of pragmatic management which far outweighed other concerns, including the religious.

On the other hand, the cases discussed above demonstrate that by the early eighteenth century, local communities had developed a sophisticated vocabulary of gesture through which they expressed their desires and demands to the organs of the state. When community was activated in the Islamic framework – that is, when people came together *as Muslims* – a specific idiom came into employ. This idiom demanded massness: those who were representing themselves did so

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[437] Irfan Habib, "The Political Role of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Session of the Indian History Congress, 1960* Part I (1961): 209–223.
[438] Anonymous, "Transcripts from Jaipur State Archives, Years 36-40 of Aurangzeb's Reign," n.d., 125, Sri Natnāgar Shodh Samsthān, Sitamau.

personally and publicly, and not by proxy or in private. The standard site of this assertion appears to have been the mosque: in Delhi, the congregational mosque served this role. In both the cases of the convert Rāmjī in 1725 and the Khatrānī woman in 1769, mobs assembled at the mosque to present their demands. When community was activated in the form of artisanal or trader solidarity, however, the mosque was not used: traders, as we have seen, shut shop in the gesture of the *hartāl* – one that retains its fundamental resonance in political gestures in contemporary India. When the target was an individual, the community asserted itself by visibly entering his physical presence *en masse*, though we know almost nothing of the specific gestures employed in these situations. But what is of crucial importance here is that in moments of protest forms of community appear to have been perceived as absolute, exclusive, and distinct. When people were activated as Muslims at the mosque, their other identities were temporarily subsumed in the process of representation. But when individuals gathered as jewelers, their religious identities were completely excluded from consideration. The activation of a particular form of community was therefore determined by a prior political situation and enabled a distinct range of responses. The import of all of these gestures was understood well by the city's administrators, who treated them as the prelude to a verbal negotiation about an issue of governance. In this way, such mass performances were inherently political and recognized as such.

The Proclamation Controversy under Bahādur Shāh I

In previous pages it has been suggested that the interaction between the state and a community was based around the axes of justice and order. But not all instances of disorder can be classified in these terms. Some disputes were clearly religious in nature, and, in at least one prominent case, appear to have been provoked by the emperor himself. This was the controversy over the

Friday Proclamation (*khutba*) that convulsed parts of the empire between 1710 and 1711. The basic outline of the story is recounted in many chroniclers of the period and reproduced in the conventional historiography of the empire. It is asserted that Bahādur Shāh had developed secret shīᶜī inclinations and so ordered the inclusion of the designation "heir" (*wasī*) in the appellations of ᶜAlī during the Friday proclamation, which was in theory recited every week in all the mosques of the empire. This designation was regarded as a heresy by sunnī theologians, who rejected ᶜAlī's claims to succeed the prophet Muhammad's mantle.

Shortly after this, we are told, Bahādur Shāh lost his mind. He ordered, among things, the killing of dogs in the city of Lahore. Thus in his *History of Muhammad Shāh*, Khush Hāl Chand reports that in his final days, the emperor's temperament was afflicted by an extreme intensity of capricious or unsettled thoughts (*khayālāt-i mutalauwin*). He perceived the sublime palace to be filled with the dogs of the bāzār and so ordered strict injunctions for their dispersal, so that in a little while their name and trace was obliterated from the imperial army.[439] Because accounts of Bahādur Shāh's dog-slaying or madness are not to be found in the three contemporaneous accounts of Mirzā Muhammad, Irādat Khān or Qāsim Lāhorī, it would seem that these stories were appended later to make a larger point about the emperor's shīᶜī tendencies and madness in general. But why would the appendage of a single word in a standard proclamation arouse such powerful animosities among the denizens of the empire's cities? The answer, as we shall see, was not a matter of popular religious zeal or imperial madness; it concerned instead a popular struggle for the constitution of the state itself.

[439] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Nādir Al-Zamanī," f. 90b.

Kh^{w}āfī Khān

In his compendious *Refined Selections* (*Muntakhab al-lubāb*), the historian Kh^{w}afī Khān tells us that in the fourth year, the court heard troubling news from Lahore. It was learned that after the order to include the word “heir” (*vasī*) among the titles of his excellency the leader of the faithful ᶜAlī in the Friday proclamation (*khutba*), a certain Jān Muhammad and Hājī Yār Muhammad, who were amongst the great learned men of Lahore, led a great procession of commoners (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm namūda*) to the house of the magistrate and the chief judge (*qāzī o sadr*). Joined in agreement with other learned men (*fuzalāᵓ o ᶜulamāᵓ*) they refused to pronounce the word “heir” in the Friday proclamation. In the same way, the learned and holy men (*fuzalāᵓ o mashāyikh*) of the seat of the caliphate (Delhi) and the abode of the caliphate (Agra), refused to read the proclamation and caused a tumult (*shūrish*) in concord with a group of Muslims (*jamᶜāī az musalmānān*). Similar reports were received from the news-writers of other cities. From Ahmadābād in the western province of Gujarāt it was learnt that the the proclaimer (*khatīb*) of the central mosque (*masjid-i jāmiᶜ*) was murdered by a group of the people of orthodoxy and community (*ahl-i sunnat wa jamāᶜat*).

Our author also relates that he had personally traveled to Ahmadabad and so investigated and collated various reports about the uprising there, though Allah knew best what had actually transpired. After receiving the order to recite the word “heir”, says Kh^{w}afī Khān, the chief judge of Ahmadabad for receiving the permit went to the wait upon Governor Firoz Jang with a petition for a confirming permit. The governor responded with a handwritten note, saying that the proclamation should be recited in accordance with order of the reigning caliph. The next day, which was a Friday, when the word “heir” was proclaimed in the central mosque, a number of individuals of the people (*mardum*) of Panjāb and the excellencies (*hazrāt*) of Tūrān fell into

uproar (*shūrish*). They addressed the the proclaimer and reproved him, saying, "We excuse you for what you've uttered on this Friday, but don't say this on the coming Friday." In response, the the proclaimer said that he had spoken in conformance with the Order of the emperor and the administrator and the chief judge.

On the next Friday, when the the proclaimer ascended the pulpit, one of the Mughals said, "Don't say the word "heir"!" They tried to hinder the the proclaimer but could not restrain him. At the very moment that the the proclaimer uttered the word "heir", a Punjabi arose, grabbed the hem of his robe, and dragged him down from the pulpit and confronted him in a rude and vulgar (*bi zajr o tashnīᶜ*) manner. The Tūrānī Mughals jumped up from their place and stabbed him in the belly with an Uzbek Knife (*kārd-i uzbikī*) and threw him beneath the pulpit and caused a general tumult and commotion (*hangāma o ghulūw-i ᶜāmm*) in the mosque. They dragged the half-dead the proclaimer into the courtyard of the mosque and struck him so with daggers and slippers (*pā pūsh*). He gave up his life in the absence of the slightest mercy; his heirs could not dare to approach his corpse for a day and a night and prepare it for burial. On the second day the children of the murdered,) went lamenting (*nauha-kunān*) to Firoz Jang, demanding that they be permitted to bury their father. Firoz Jang gave some rupees to the heirs from the government for the shroud and burial and dismissed them. Finally, we are told that on the third day, Mahr ᶜAlī Khān the paymaster and news-reporter (*bakshī wa waqai-nigār*) was taken from his house, humiliated, and sent to prison for some faults that he had committed against the principles of news-writing. But he was freed after three or four days.[440]

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[440] Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-lubab of Khafi Khan*, ed. Ghulam Qadir, Kabir al-Din Ahmad, and Wolseley Haig (Calcutta: College Press, 1869), 663–665.

It was about the same time when the theologians of Lahore refused to recite the proclamation as long as it had the world "heir" within it. The emperor therefore summoned Hājī Yār Muhammad and Muhammad Murād along with three or four other learned men to the hall of prayer (*tasbīh khāna*) in the palace and ordered them to sit. Here they conversed a while with ᶜAbd al-Qādir Khān and others. The emperor himself perused books that contained the sayings of his highness the great imām and others to prove the necessity of using the word "heir" in the proclamation. There followed a heated discussion, in which Hājī Yār Muhammad used improper and fearless words in rejecting the emperor's assertions. The enraged emperor said, "Do you not fear the anger of emperors that you speak against the rules of etiquette in an Imperial assembly?" The obstinate Hājī responded, "I sought four things from God; the first, learning (*tahsīl-i ᶜilm*); secondly, memorizing the words of God; thirdly, the pilgrimage; and fourthly, martyrdom. The first three have been granted to me by the grace of God, and now I am hopefully that the emperor's grace will grant me the fourth." These disputations went on for a few days, and a mob comprising the city's populace and Afghān leaders gathered in defense of the Hājī Yār Muhammad; even the prince ᶜAzīm al-Shāᵓn, claims our author, secretly rallied to the Hājī's defense. At the end of the month of Shawwāl, the sadr went to the emperor with the request to order a recital of the proclamation. Bahādur Shāh wrote in his own hand that the proclamation should be read in accordance with the form used during the reign of the preceding emperor Aurangzeb. The word "heir" may not be used, but because there are so many ruffianly sorts wandering about, all precautions were to be taken to ensure that provocateurs (*waqaᶜi-talab*) did not enter the mosques when the proclamation is recited. But this decision was not widely circulated amongst the populace or even the people at court; and so thousands of people, all proclaiming their own opinions, gathered at the mosque and sought an opportunity to enact their

seditious thoughts. When the proclamation was read according to the custom, the tumult died down; but it was also heard that in the end the emperor sent Hājī Yār Muhammad to some prison or the other.[441]

As Khʷafī Khān makes clear, an ad-hoc religious decision made from on high received stiff resistance all across the empire. Protest in Ahmedabad took the form of obstructing the recital of the offending proclamation, though it is noteworthy the protestors were not locals but "Panjābīs" and "Mughals". The the proclaimer in Ahmadabad had clearly foreseen trouble and so had demanded explicit sanction from the local administrator. The idea of this turbulence foretold is emphasized in the second iteration of the recital, when the the proclaimer could be certain he would face resistance. Khʷafī Khān presents him in this account as a faithful functionary of the administration, intent upon following his instructions without brooking interference from any members of the audience. In this sense, the the proclaimer represented a bureaucratic and administrative ethos. At the same time, the Punjabis, who it is implied worshipped together as an ethnic community, had come to the mosque with the willingness to use their weapons in defense against this outrageous imposition. The impasse between a state imposing a novelty and a defiant group was represented in corpse of the the proclaimer, which lay inaccessible and untended until the situation normalized. Though Khʷafī Khān tells us in a seeming non-sequitur that the paymaster and reporter was briefly arrested, we can be sure his detainment was related to the disorder at hand. But in this instance, no punishment is recorded for those who violated the imperial order.

In Lahore, our author represents an even simpler narrative: the emperor ordered a change in the proclamation, which was rudely and publicly rejected by the Sunnī theologian Hājī Yār

[441] Ibid., 681–683.

Muhammad. Thousands gathered to his defense, and the emperor was forced to withdraw. Only the reading of the proclamation as formerly calmed the city down. Here was a straightforward story of imperial power checked by popular assertion.

Yahyā Khān

In his *Memory of Rulers,* Yahyā Khān presents a looser but more complex narrative of the event.[442] Since the author claims to have served as the chief writer (*mīr munshī*) of Farrukh Siyar, it would be expected that the khān would have a precise and personal recollection of the events he mentions. Instead he tells us vaguely that at the beginning of the fifth year, some companions turned the imperial temperament from the disposition of orthodoxy and community (*ᶜaqīda-yi tarīq-i sunnat wa jamāᶜat*) and wanted to proliferate some matters that ran against the law (*sharīᶜa*). Therefore the emperor sought the company of the learned doctors (*ᶜulamāᵓ*) of Punjab and recited some traditions of the Prophet that were in favor of the rights of the leader of the faithful ᶜAlī Murtazā. Then he said, "Are these correct? Try to recall."

The doctors said, "These are correct, and there are also many traditions and examples in the favor of the rights of other companions. There is no shortage in number of such traditions in favor of the rights of the Meccan."

Then the emperor uttered other traditions from which the inheritance of the Leader of the Faithful could be inferred. He asked, "Are these also correct or not?"

The doctors said that these were correct.

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[442] Yahyā Khān, "Tazkīrāt Al-Mulūk," n.d., f. 115b–116b, British Library APAC I.O. Islamic 1147. While I have consulted Irvine's translation, the one presented here is my own.

The emperor said, "In that case, the leader of the faithful ᶜAlī (may God be pleased with him) must be called the heir of Mustafā in the proclamation (*khutba*)".

Having vividly related the conversation, our author switches to the perspective of the doctors of Lahore. Entering their minds, Yahya Khān tells us that the pious scholars found themselves in a bind. It had previously been heard that Bahādur Shāh had chosen the way of the shīᶜa people. So they thought, "If we straightforwardly accept this situation, in the future it will be said in some other way that we should preach so. It is better that we do not accept this." In this delicate situation, the doctors offered a diplomatic solution:

> There is no doubt in the inheritance of ᶜAlī. But the way in which preceding scholars and ecclesiasts have established the proclamation is the way that they knew to be better. So the matter of not calling him [the heir] is also better, though not saying the word "heir" in the proclamation is not to deny his inheritance. Thus in the Qurᵓān, the word "companion" (*sāhib*) is in favor of the leader of the faithful … but this word is not used in the proclamation; yet it does not deny his companionship.
> Although the emperor found these sorts of responses to be reasonable, he nevertheless was profoundly discontented with them. So he said, "If you all do not obey our decree, we will order that you be fed in one corner with our hound!"
>
> The doctors heatedly responded, "This joke of yours doesn't scare us; what we're worried about is that you won't feed us with yourself in the corner."
>
> The emperor flew into a tremendous rage on hearing these words. When he'd sent them away, he said, "This entire group of the doctors of Lahore must either be imprisoned or killed. Tomorrow I will decree that they should be tied up and imprisoned, and then executed. And I'll rename Lahore to "the abode of war"!"

But, says the author, the emperor was forced to abandon this dream (*khayāl*) when the prince Jahāndār Shāh declared that he would join any doctors so persecuted with all the cavalry and artillery at his disposal. Nevertheless after a few days, he sought and arrested eight individuals and had them sent to Gwāliyar. He decreed also that the proclamation he desired should also be recited in Delhi. But when Asad Khān Āsif al-Daula saw this decree, he said, "Such a matter cannot be transacted in Hindūstān and will never transpire." On the Friday, when the the

proclaimer asked him what he ordered, Asad Khān responded: “You must recite the khutba as formerly, because this is Hindūstān, and not Iran. I will describe this matter to the emperor in a petition, but for now you should recite the proclamation as the old one.”

When the emperor realized that this order had not been enacted, and that the proclaimers were murdered in places where the new proclamation had been read (such as Gujarāt and Kashmīr), he was deeply confounded (*khijālat bisyār kashīd*). Yahya Khān tells us that this humiliation produced a sort of madness in the emperor; disturbed by the unpleasant cries of dogs on rainy nights (*shabhā-yi bārān rasīda*), he ordered that anyone who encountered a dog anywhere in the imperial army should kill it, and so the high nobles of state went about killing dogs.

Worse even than this ludicrousness, Yahyā Khān tells us that in in the month of Zū ‘l-Hijja, the order reached Shāhjahānābād that no one would offer the prayers of the ᶜEid al-Zuhā anywhere except the ᶜeidgāh, which is on the mount of the hunting-lodge (*kūh-i shikār-gāh*). No explanation was given for this act, which could only be the outcome of a profound madness within the emperor that now expressed itself as religious arbitrariness or perhaps even a hatred of his Muslim subjects. Now Yahyā switches into a distinctly lyrical vein: on the aforementioned ᶜEid, thousands and thousands of folks were unable to offer their prayers, except for those who had been present at the ᶜeidgāh. All the mosques, new and old, fell empty on that day; everyone who came to them with the hope of offering their prayers saw them abandoned and so wished evil upon the emperor. Thousands upon thousands of such evil wishes coursed through the air of hope (*hawā-yi tawaqquᶜ*) and found their mark on the target of heavenly response (*ijābat*).

In the same way, says Yahyā Khān, it has been heard that the aforementioned doctors who had been transported to the fort of Gwāliyar, also began to pray for the annihilation of the reign

(*zawāl-i saltanat*). By the time they reached Akbarābād, Bāqī Khān Chēla the fort-commander called these pious men before him and treated them with great hospitality before giving them leave to proceed to Gwāliyar. He begged them to discontinue their prayers against the emperor, saying that he would write to Bahādur Shāh for their release. But these men did not desist, and when a few days passed after they had reached Gwāliyar, the emperor fell ill and died. In closing, our author adds that "some say that an inverted abscess (*dambal-i mā͗kūs*) developed in his belly; and some also have said other things, which are neither fit for me to relate or appropriate for his honor."

Yahyā's account confuses the picture presented by Kh^{w}afī Khān. For one, Yahyā puzzlingly neglects to name the sunnī theologians, even though the later Kh^{w}afī Khān is able to identify them. Where Kh^{w}afī Khān had portrayed the emperor as having taken a personal interest in the religious proceedings, Yahyā presents him as a devious and scheming shī͑ī who was subtly attempting to incorporate his heretical beliefs into the proclamation. He attributes to the emperor the desire to extirpate the defiant people of Lahore and impose his beliefs by force, which was only thwarted by the intervention of Jahāndār Shāh (and not ͑Azīm al-Sha͗n, as Kh^{w}afī Khān asserts). His decrees are rejected by the great nobleman Asad Khān only because the country is "Hindūstān, not Iran". Iran, in this representation, is the land of shī͑ī fanaticism and forcible conversion, while the Sunnī populace of India is distinctly unaggressive – for Yahyā, we note, does not mention the popular disturbances in Lahore at all.

Yahyā goes so far as to link Bahādur Shāh's ostensible madness with his religious zeal. The emperor who had been thwarted in his desire to make the doctors of Lahore compete for scraps with his kennel came to transfer his rage from metaphorical canines to actual ones. So he ordered the execution of all the dogs in camp, and then interfered with the performance of ͑Eid prayers in

Delhi. The evil wishes that followed were responsible for his precipitous decline, as were the prayers of the learned men who had been dispatched to internal exile in Gwāliyar. Yahyā's account is completely stripped of any role for the masses, unless the curses of frustrated prayergoers are taken to count for popular action.

The Proclamation of Bahādur Shāh

But what of Bahādur Shāh's proclamation that caused such controversy? Kh^{w}afī Khān tells us that vast numbers of folk had gathered in Lahore to hear it, and various groups were in attendance determined to cause mischief at the slightest given opportunity. It was only when they heard the proclamation was recited as formerly that they dispersed. This popular investment in the proclamation might seem implausible given that it was read out in Arabic, which was a language with which most residents of the city and indeed the empire would have been unfamiliar. On the other hand, long exposure to the proclamation would have accustomed mosque-goers to its general forms and familiar terms. We are fortunate in that a version of the proclamation is recorded in original and interlinear translation in a history written for the orientalist James Fraser by his teacher the Shaykh Muhammad Murād of Cambay (Khambāyat).[443] While the present manuscript is undated, it cannot be later than 1748, when Fraser returned from his second trip to India; it may indeed date from his return in 1740 from the first voyage, for the manuscript ends with an account of Nādir Shāh's actions about 1738/9.[444]

The proclamation itself begins with an exhortation in praise of God with a description of his qualities and his attributes. It then praises and felicitates Muhammad the Prophet of God, and the four righteous Caliphs who are: Abū Bakr, ᶜUmar, ᶜUsman, and ᶜAlī "the heir" and son of the

[443] The proclamation is recorded in Shaykh Muhammad Murād, "History of Aurangzeb," n.d., f. 85b–92a, Oxford Bodleian Persian Mss. Fraser 122.

[444] See A. A. Macdonell, "Fraser, James (1712/13–1754)," ed. P. J. Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10107.

uncle of the Prophet. All four caliphs are designated as leaders of the faithful (*amīr al-mu*ᵓ*minīn*). Next are praised the two sons of the great imāms, Hasan, the father of Muhammad, and Husayn, the father of ᶜAbd Allāh. Next praised is Fātima the illumined, the wife of ᶜAlī and mother of Hasan and Husayn, and the Prophet's uncles Hamza and ᶜAbbās.

The prayer to God ensues then, seeking mercy and grace for Abu al-Muzaffar Shihāb al-Dīn Muhammad Sāhib QĪrān Sānī Shāh Jahān Bādshāh Ghāzī (Shāh Jahān) and Abū al-Zafar Muhyī al-Dīn Muhammad ᶜĀlamgīr Bādshāh Ghāzī (Aurangzeb). Then are listed the attributes of the monarch which are granted to him by God, of which only a selection is presented below. The ruler is excellent, perfect, the leader (*al-imām*), the dispenser of justice, humble and in fact very humble, penitent, prostrating, appealing, knowledgeable in the way and the book of God, and cognizant of the subtleties of the truths of his speech; he speaks to the people with truth and virtue, and is given companionship of victory by God, and rendered special and great by him. He has been endowed with mercy and power and greatness; his every action is conducted with the assent of God and the Prophet who is the last of the Prophets; he smites rebels and infidels with the naked sword of God. And by God's grace he has been endowed with bravery and munificence and justice, and he is the manifestation of greatness and goodness. He rules with virtue and prohibits from evil and refreshes the faith as is predicted in the sayings of the Prophet. He provides the benefits of justice and leadership according to the law of the prophets. He is the caliph of God and his shadow on the earth, the son and the grandson of an emperor. He is, in short, Abū al-Nusrat Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad Muᶜazzam Shāh ᶜĀlam Bahādur Shāh al-Ghāzī: and may God extend his life and preserve his body so that he lives for a hundred and twenty years, in fact even longer, much, much, much longer than this, and may his ending be better than his beginning. Because God has appointed him to perform the works sacral and secular (*al-dīn*

wa al-dunyā), may his dominion be rendered strong in the way that it is of fortunate rulers, and his honor and dignity endure. The proclamation finally concludes with further pleas to God and the acknowledgement of His greatness.

In sum, the proclamation makes a variety of claims before its audience. Its substance resists easy classification into any particular sectarian category. While Bahādur Shāh's variant designates ᶜAlī the heir of Muhammad, it regards all four caliphs as commanders of the faithful. In its praise of the Prophet and his family – including wife, children, and uncles – the proclamation cleaves unambiguously to a sunnī orthodoxy. Rather than being considered an act of creeping shīᶜī infringement, the proclamation may instead be seen as striking a maximalist position, incorporating both sunnī and shīᶜī claims into the religious framework of the state.[445] In any case, the bulk of the proclamation is concerned with the qualities and attributes of the ruler himself. In this form it presents a powerful assertion of the absolutist Islamic state. Its listeners are told that the emperor, who is the descendant of emperors, has perfect dominion over earth which has been granted to him by the direct and explicit consent of God; in fact, he is the renewer of faith (*mujaddid*) promised in the traditions of the Prophet. This perfectly godly emperor is fully acquainted with the ways and the will of God, and so to oppose any of his commands is just the same as rebelling against Him. And indeed the proclamation makes clear that the emperor wields God's naked sword to strike down "rebels and infidels" – in that order. His tasks are only to rule, which is to lead and command, and to give justice. The proclamation, in other words, presents a perfectly formed and fully consolidated statement of the rights and the powers of the emperor. What, in this absolutist conception of the monarch, is the role of the

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[445] I am grateful to Professor Hossein Kamaly for making this point to me.

populace? They are enjoined only to obey and to pray earnestly for a hundred-and-twenty-year lifespan for their ruler.

While it is difficult to assess just how widespread this proclamation was or how frequently it was read, Mughal commentators stressed fundamental importance of the proclamation in constituting the most basic marker of sovereignty. Indeed, the establishment of rule was generally referred to by the pithy phrase of "*khutba o sikka*", alluding to the ruler's act of issuing a proclamation and minting coin. Considering the wide distribution of standardized Mughal coinage and its rapid updating during even the briefest reigns, if Mughal administrators took the second half of this formulation of sovereignty as seriously as they did the first, then the recital of the proclamation was widespread indeed.[446] Khʷafī Khān, as noted previously, has emphasized the importance attached to the proclamation; and, as we have seen, the disturbance over the conversion of Rāmjī in 1725 involved the disruption of the Friday proclamation in the congregational mosque. This suggests that we should view the Friday prayers and proclamations as not merely an important religious obligation, but a profound and repeated statement of the authoritarian assertions of the state at the core communal site of the mosque. The proclamation is then the primary act of the state's self-legitimation in the hearts and minds of its populace: the frequent repetition of these overweening claims is designed to imprint a passively obedient and unpolitical subjectivity in its listeners.

It is in this context that the true significance of opposition to the proclamation emerges into plain view. In hindering and obstructing the proclamation, in dragging down the the proclaimer from the pulpit, in stabbing him and pummeling him dishonorably with shoes, the riotous mob did not

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[446] Rafīᶜ al-Darajāt's brief reign of three months and nine days nevertheless saw the minting of coin in his name from Kabul, Lahore, Multān, Delhi, Agra, Gwaliyar, Itawa, Muazzamabad, Kora, Patna, Burhanpur and Sirhind. Irvine remarks, "It is curious that in such a short reign a distant province like Kabul should have issued any coin…." See Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 418–419.

act so much to express its religious zeal as to demonstrate its violent opposition to the claims of the ruler. If the proclamation was the language of state power, then the beating administered to the the proclaimer served as the language of opposition to it. With this understanding in mind we turn to the court news-reports of the disturbances in Lahore during the fifth year of Bahādur Shāh's reign.

Court News-Reports

The court news-reports present us with a view that is radically different from the perspectives of historians such as Khʷafī Khān or Yahyā Khān. There are several important caveats that guide their use in this case. The most commonly employed version of the reports, also used here, consists of twentieth-century transcriptions of the original texts, which were dispatched by news-writers to their masters in the local Rajput courts. Presented serially by date, such transcriptions do not give us the context of the original records, their order or filing. It is difficult to discern what has been excluded from these transcriptions, and what the reasons for such exclusions might be. Some repetitions in the transcriptions indicate that these excerpts may have been made from several distinct sets of reports (perhaps for separate courts) that were later merged; or perhaps they represent separate writers at court providing information to a single authority. In any case, these are not the internal records of the court, but news-dispatches by agents at court. They should therefore be taken not as complete or perfect accounts of transactions at court, but as single frames of complex processes.

The court news-reports tell us that on Tuesday, September 22nd, 1711, it was ordered that macebearers should ensure that Hājī Yār Bēg, the learned man (*fāzil*) who was the head of the learned men of the city of Lahore, and who had procrastinated (*taʾkhīr*) in the recital of the blessed proclamation (*khutba-yi mubārak*) should be taken from this place to Amīr Khān in

Akbarābād [Agra].[447] No doubt this was because of Yār Bēg's "procrastination" in reciting the proclamation in the recent past.[448] On Wednesday September 30th, Islām Khān Bahādur offered a petition stating that in order to enact the imperial order, a personal royal proclamation (*dast-khatt*) should be issued to the effect that Shād(?) Khān Bahādur and Mahābat Khān Bahādur and the military magistrate (*qāzī ᶜAsākir*) and the metropolitan magistrate (*qāzī-yi shahr*) and the high chancellor (*sadr-i jahān*) and the metropolitan judge (*sadr-i shahr*) and the metropolitan the proclaimer (*khatīb-i shahr*) and the people of the fifth guard (*panj chawkī*) and their armed retainers (*musāyir wa ahshām*) would go [to the congregational mosque] and would recite the proclamation in to the traditional form (*dastūr-i qadīm*), as is the practice at court. Unruly folk (*mardum-i aubāshān*) were not be allowed to enter and the people of the city were also to be barred from going to the congregational mosque; instead they were to recite their prayers at another mosque.[449]

This would indicate that despite the exile of Hājī Yār Bēg, troubles with the recital of the proclamation continued; the emperor appears at this stage to have desired the proclamation be read in "the traditional form" which would remove any references that considered ᶜAlī the heir. While the urban police force does not find mention in this proclamation, the entire judicial apparatus of the imperial camp and the city is to be deployed with a special unit (the fifth guard) that appears to have served as a an elite bodyguard for the emperor.[450] The fact that the

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[447] Anonymous, "Akhbārāt-i Darbār-i Muᶜallā, Bahādur Shāh RY5-6 Part II.," sec. : Sha⊂bān 9.
[448] That Yār Bēg is called "Yār Muhammad" by Khafī Khān serves as added caution in taking that historian's account as an accurate statement of facts.
[449] Anonymous, "Akhbārāt-i Darbār-i Muᶜallā, Bahādur Shāh RY5-6 Part II.," sec. Sha⊂bān 17.
[450] The text reads "*panj chawkī"* (fifth guard), which is unusual. Mughal sources from the period frequently mention the "*haft chawkī"* (seventh guard). The composition, nature, and function of this unit remains shrouded in mystery. Irvine thinks of it as a personal guard for the emperor. Sarkar on the other hand considers it to be a personal bodyguard that rotated every day of the week, thus accounting for sevenguards. The existence of a "fifth guard" might imply instead the existence of cordons of guards, this being the fifth of seven. See Irvine and Sarkar, *Later*

population of the city was barred from going to the Congregational mosque while the officials of state were to recite the proclamation there underscores the deep ritual importance of the act. It is perhaps a pale echo of this moment of exclusion that we heard in Yahyā Khān's account of the strange restrictions put on ᶜEid prayers by the crazed Bahādur Shāh.

In any case, the emperor emerged at the first watch with further orders on the next morning (Thursday, October 1st). He now instructed Islām Khān Bahādur, the commander of the artillery, Hamīd al-Din Khān Bahādur, Mahābat Khān Bahādur, Sar Burāh Khān, the chief constable (*kotwāl*), Amjad Khān the judge (*sadr*), Sharīᶜat Khān, the deputy of the magistrates, and Zakī Allāh Khān the jurisprudent (*muftī*) to proceed to the congregational mosque in the city of Lahore; to recite the proclamation; and not to exercise any force (*taᶜddī*) on the residents. As for the forty individuals among the learned men (*fuzalā*ᵓ) of the city, who had been imprisoned in the city constabulary (*kotwālī*) it was ordered that the deputy constable should whip them a few times and keep them under observation (*chasm numāī numāyad*) to ensure that they did not refer to his highness ᶜAlī Murtazā the lion of Allāh as the heir of Mustafā (may God bless him and peace be upon him).

In response, it was stated that although these men had been chastized (*tanbīh*), they did not accept this. And one person from the city had gone to the constabulary and made allegations (*izhār mīkard*) of tyranny (*zulm*). The staff of the constabulary had wanted to also arrest him, but he pulled out a dagger (*jamdhar*) and made the mistake of gathering a crowd of commoners (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*) around the staff of the constabulary. In the city too the people ran out of their houses, and artisans (*ahl-i kasb*) did not open their shops; and there was a disturbance at the time of prayer. The emperor ordered that in accordance with the custom of his highness Aurangzeb,

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Mughals, II.331; Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib, Based on Original Sources* (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & sons, 1919), V.87.

the names of the four companions and his own fortunate name should be read with the addition of "axis of the faith" as Shāh ᶜĀlam Bahādur Shāh Bādshāh Ghāzī in the old tradition.[451]

This intriguing entry indicates that the emperor had ordered the imprisonment and torture of forty learned men who appeared to insist, even in the face of corporal punishment, on proclaiming the inheritance of ᶜAlī in their Friday proclamations. From this perspective, the emperor appears as a conservative defender of a traditional constitution that was subject to the innovations of a particular faction. This group, however, appears to have enjoyed the support of a large community; one which had the temerity to criticize officials of the city's constabulary for their "tyranny", to threaten them with violence, and to encircle them with a large and tumultuous crowd.

In any case, the emperor appears to have been quite unfazed by this disorder; for the next day – which was a Friday – he held audience as usual, granting robes of honor to Islām Khān, a certain Mullā Āftā and a Muhammad Shafīᶜ, who had recently arrived from Iran (*wilāyat*) and offered a book of his own authorship unsubtly entitled *A Gift to the Ruler*. Finally, no doubt taking advantage of the disturbance that had suddenly increased their importance at court, the soldiers of the Artillery also came before the emperor to plead for their unpaid wages.[452] But there is no account of disorder in the city on this Friday – it appears the massive imposition of imperial force ensured the proclamation had been read successfully in the old fashion on October 2nd.

From the emperor's perspective, a rather more troubling event took place some days later on the night of October 6th; for the next morning it was reported that two *gharīs* of the night having passed, musicians (*mardum-i kalāwantān*) entered the rocket-store (*rahkula bār*) carried by the khān-i jahān and played the surūd. The noise reached the blessed ear and it was ordered that

[451] Anonymous, "Akhbārāt-i Darbār-i Muᶜallā, Bahādur Shāh RY5-6 Part II.," sec. Shaᶜbān 18.
[452] Ibid., sec. Shaᶜbān 19.

these people should be expelled from the rocket-store. Since the noise of hand-cymbals (*khartāl*) had also been heard during the affair, it was ordered that the cymbalist also be expelled from the rocket-store.[453] Nothing more is known of this incident, but we can be sure that the aged and cranky emperor was a light sleeper and annoyed by the nightly gatherings of these insouciant singers, who themselves were unmoved by the religious convulsions of the city. Similarly, a month later, the noise of donkeys parked near the palace-tents offended the imperial ear, and so it was ordered that these animals be expelled from camp. On this very day (November 8th, 1711), Hindu mendicants (*fuqarāᵓ-yi hunūd*), and jogīs, sanyāsīs and bairāgīs were reported to be secretly sending information to the "accursed guru" of the Sikhs who was fomenting trouble in the region. The emperor ordered that the constable Sar Burāh Khān should execute whomever was proven of indulging in such espionage; and the constable was further ordered to expel Hindu mendicants from the camp.[454]

Two days later, the new moon of the ᶜEid was sighted. Hādī Khān was ordered to prepare the ᶜeidgāh in Lahore for the ensuing ceremonies.[455] On November 12th, 1711, Hamīd al-Dīn Khān Bahādur, the chief judge (*sadr al-sudūr*), Sharīᶜat Khān the deputy of judges (*nāᵓib-i quzzāt*), the superintendent, Sar Burāh Khān the constable and others were instructed to go to the ᶜeidgāh mosque and offer the appropriate prayers. When this order was enacted, the the proclaimer stood on the pulpit and began to recite the pure proclamation. As he began to praise Hazrat ᶜUmar (may God be pleased with him) and referred to him as the "leader of the faithful" (*amīr al-muᵓminīn*), a Mughal Tūrānī approached the pulpit brandishing his sword. The the proclaimer fell from his pulpit, and the assembled Muslims (*jamᶜ-i muslimīn*) yelled at the Mughal that the

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[453] Anonymous, "Akhbārāt-i Darbār-i Muᶜallā, Bahādur Shāh RY5-6 Part II.," sec. Sha⊂bān 23.
[454] Ibid., sec. Ramzān 27.
[455] Ibid., sec. Ramzān 29.

proclamation was being recited according to the custom of the reign of Aurangzeb. The Mughal said that he knew that the name of His Highness ᶜAlī the lion of Allāh was to be recited first. So the Mughal sheathed his sword and left the mosque. When Hamīd al-Dīn Khān Bahādur rose, a person pulled a dagger (*jamdhar*) on him. The officials of the constabulary arrived and wished to take the Mughal into custody. He pulled out his sword and wounded a military rank-holder (*mansabdār*) by the constable. In the end the Mughal was apprehended and arrested.

The emperor's punishment for this crime was swift and unflinching: the arrested Mughal was to be "cut apart at the joints" (*band az band judā sāzand*); the person who pulled the dagger on Hamīd al-Dīn Khān Bahādur was also to be located and imprisoned.[456] On the next day, notes the news-report, the emperor ordered that the people of Tūrān (*mardum-i Tūrāniyān*) were to be expelled from the city.[457] On November 14th, 1711, the constable reported that the Mughal who had come to the ᶜeidgāh and caused mischief (*shūkhī*) had been executed and "parted limb from limb". His Highness asked Qilīj Muhammad Khān which community this person belonged to, and whose retainer he was. It was reported that he belonged to the ruffians of Kābul and lived in Lahore in the service of no one.[458] Three weeks later, on the 5th of December, the constable reported that the person who had pulled the dagger on Hāmid al-Dīn Khān had also been found and imprisoned. The emperor ordered that he be sent off to the fort at Kāngra. But the khān Bahādur requested that he hoped that this person might be released, and the emperor consented.[459] Finally, on the 7th of January, the emperor dispatched a number of noblemen to the mosque of Sharīf Khān to commemorate the birthday of his father the previous emperor Aurangzeb. This was particularly appropriate, since Sharīf Khān had once been the deceased

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[456] Ibid., sec. Shawwāl 1.
[457] Ibid., sec. Shawwāl 2.
[458] Ibid., sec. Shawwāl 3.
[459] Ibid., sec. Shawwāl 24.

ruler's teacher. Accordingly the nobility went to the mosque, giving 2,000 rupees in cash for perfume (*khushbū o* ᶜ*itr*). Prayers were said for the deceased emperor and food was offered to the learned men of the city.[460]

It is not easy to reconcile the account of the proclamation controversy as it appears in the court-records with the histories examined above. Most obviously, the emperor does not appear to be in favor of changing the description of the state, its genealogy, or forms of legitimation that appear in the proclamation. Bahādur Shāh appears as a cautious and conservative figure, whose only desire is to ensure that the proclamation was read as formerly. It is possible that Bahādur Shāh had encouraged the placing of the word "heir" in the description of ᶜAlī and then retreated to a conservative position in the face of sunnī opposition; but this would hardly require him to flog forty learned men in the constabulary in order to make desist from that practice and still fail to convince them of the rectitude of the sunnī position. In any case, the proclamation itself occupies a "maximalist" theological position as argued above, because it reinforces sunnī orthodoxy without denying or slighting the place of ᶜAlī. Its contents therefore resist classification according to a simple shīᶜī-sunnī dichotomy in the first place. It is rather more likely that Bahādur Shāh and his court became entangled in a pre-existing theological quarrel among the doctors of Lahore, during which a shīᶜī group asserted its claim to be represented in the proclamation and provoked a backlash from a competing sunnī community. In this model, Bahādur Shāh would be seen as attempting to extricate himself from this crisis by returning to the default form that had been perfected under Aurangzeb and apparently enjoyed widespread consensus among the sorts who cared about such theological matters in the first place. This

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[460] Ibid., Zū 'l-Qadda 28.

would explain his severe reaction when faced by shīʿī opposition through not only the city's learned men but also its denizens.

Lahore's residents participated in this controversy using the language and tactics of mass action that are by now familiar to us. On the one hand, the tradesmen of the city refused to open their shops, expressing their opposition through the suspension of normal and everyday intercourse. On the other hand, a remarkable individual approached the constabulary where the theologians were being whipped, unsheathed a dagger, and accused the authorities of "tyranny": a loaded charge that challenged the basis of the governors' legitimacy and which was delivered outside the language of obsequy and deference. The reaction of the constabulary officials is telling, for they sought in response only to arrest this voice of opposition and no doubt subject it to the same tender mercies granted to the imprisoned shīʿī theologians. But this they were unable to do, given the "commotion of the commoners" that had assembled to assert itself. All Bahādur Shāh could do was to punish the supposed heads of the agitation and have the proclamation read in the previous form until the city's residents recognized the return to the status quo.

While the forms of community protest that were employed in resisting this state encroachment were in common employ during our period, they did not in this instance concern themselves with a matter of justice. From the limited evidence that is available to us, the conflict in Lahore was a religious matter and seen as such; it activated sentiments and produced a zeal that was quite outside the realm of administrative tussles or political struggle. This was most evident in the case of the nameless Mughal who whose zeal left him spoiling for a fight even when there was none to be had. Convinced of the precedence of ʿAlī's name in the proclamation over that of ʿUmar – a precedence not established in the copy of the proclamation analyzed above – this person from Kābul dared to disrupt a ceremony under the watch of the high officials of state; without any

thought of his own safety he attempted to strike down the the proclaimer from his pulpit; and having left the mosque did not submit meekly to arrest. Bahādur Shāh recognized the challenge implicit in these actions and his response was decisive; he required the malefactor to be torn limb from limb. Yet this action too was not so much an instance of the personal wrath of the emperor as a canny instance of political theater, performed on the bodies of those who dared to rebel. The words of the constable indicate that the Mughal's limbs were torn after he was killed: this would suggest a quick and perhaps even painless execution followed by the gruesome public spectacle of the body's dismemberment and defilement. In this way the harsh sentence assigned to the Mughal echoes the judicial administration of *lingchi* as a punishment for rebels in the early Ming period in China.[461] It was designed not to punish the victim through pain, but to disrupt his somatic integrity for the admonishment of those who watched.

Bahādur Shāh too was restrained and cautious in his application of punishment; for when the second assailant was arrested and about to be deported to Kāngrā, the emperor instead had him released on the recommendation of the khān involved in the incident. It could be that this assailant was let off lightly because he had someone to speak for him, while the unfortunate Mughal was alone and "a retainer of no one". But it is more likely that the emperor preferred to abjure corporal punishment whenever possible, because the ideal social outcome involved the transgressed forgiving the transgressor. In this context, the khān's actions closely echo Ānand Rām's politic forgiving of the Mughal who stole his horse (cf. Chapter One). A return to equilibrium was always better than any possible result of interference or intervention.

If the proclamation controversy of Lahore illustrates that questions of faith as such could animate and convulse the body politic, such matters of religion were rarely detached from political

[461] Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

questions. To go even further, it could be argued that religious matters were already political matters: if the proclamation envisioned and enunciated the qualities of God, the nature of faith, the proper relationships and hierarchy of his followers, and the mandate assigned to the ruler, then changes in the proclamation were political matters. If different theological groups staked competing claims to what was in theory recited on every Friday in every mosque in the domain, then the basis of the controversy was inherently political, and the workings of this politics produced profound reactions in those who were shaped in their everyday forms.

In the late-Mughal case, this indistinction between the domain of politics and the domain of religion can be understood in the constituent basis of community. Urban politics in the empire was conceived only in terms of the activation of community; religious practice and belonging, shīᶜī, sunnī or other, could only be articulated through community. It was not that the "separate" categories of "religion" and "politics" shared a set of practices in working through "religious" or "political" conflicts; these categories, after all, exist only insofar as they are imposed by the historian to bring order to her sources. It was rather that social conflict mutated freely into forms that we might today judge as "religious" or "political"; in the shifting environment of the Mughal city, conflict expressed itself through the variable activation of solidarities and oppositions.

Take the example of a Mīr Qawām al-Dīn, recounted in the mid-eighteenth-century biographical dictionary called *Traces of Nobles*: this nobleman had been appointed as the governor of Lahore in 1678/9, at a time when the traditional equilibrium of state affairs had become slightly unsettled. This, says the author, was due to "the emperor's desire to uphold the canonical law": a situation in which the magistrates (*qāzīs*) of urban areas "had acquired so much influence that they contended on an equality with the officers and governors of the[se] areas". This was particularly true of Sayyid ᶜAlī Akbar Ilāhabādī, the magistrate of Lahore, "who on account of

his inherent rectitude and prestige did not bend his head to anyone". The new governor, meanwhile, "regarded himself as one of the premier men of Iran in regard to lineage and ability", and quickly discerned the "exact position" of the magistrate. Their first meeting resulted in a "misunderstanding[,] and this gradually developed into dislike". The setting of this stage is in marked contrast to the dispensation under Bahādur Shāh; for we recall that during the proclamation controversy the magistrates and judges served essentially as handmaidens of imperial power and were distinctly subordinate to the noble administrators of the city.

In the midst of this uncordial atmosphere burst a certain Sayyid Fāzil, who, in ironic contrast to his name, was a "tyrannical and insolent" person and wearied the patience of the city's constable, Nizām al-Dīn Mirzā Beg. This Sayyid Fāzil was a nephew of the magistrate, and when the constable finally went to arrest him in 1681 for his many crimes and misdemeanors, the magistrate "fortified his house, and made a huge outcry". As we have seen in the case of Mirzā Khalīl Khān and the jeweler's boy above, to fortify one's house signaled extreme stubbornness in defense of one's honor; and unlike the case of Mirzā Khalīl no intercessionary community appeared to defuse matters this time. In the ensuing tumult, both the magistrate and his nephew were killed. This would have settled matters to Mīr Qawām al-Din's contentment and served as an unexceptional if distasteful instance of the intra-elite examined already, but for an unexpected intervention. The agents of this intrusion were none other than the people of Lahore, for whom the chronicler displays an unmitigated dislike. The common folk of this city, writes this eulogian of Delhi, "pretend by exhibitions of their religious-mindedness to be defenders of Islam and are intriguers while in the marketplace"; while the educated, "who have read a few words call themselves ᶜulamāᵓ…are really worse than ignorant". Both groups now gathered in their multitudes and there was a "general riot", which now caused the governor and the constable to

shut themselves up in their own houses and ready for battle. The tumults went on and the streets remained empty for quite a while, until Prince Muhammad ᶜAzām was dispatched to take charge of the province. The imperial court ordered that the constable be made over to the descendants of the slain magistrate, who promptly extracted their legally-enjoined revenge.[462]

As the *Traces of Nobles* makes clear, what might be regarded as a factional conflict deviated from its set script and spiraled out of control. It came to involve high and low alike, and both appear to have rallied, however ignorantly, to the "defense of Islam". What inspired this zeal is unknown, though it is quite possible that here was another instance of shīᶜī-sunnī disputation. But it is noteworthy that the author of the *Traces* itself saw not sectarian dispute or hurt sentiments, but only hypocrisy. That which our late-Mughal commentator ascribed to ignorance and spite indicates to us the rapidity with which forms of urban contestation could shift shape.

The events we have surveyed so far thus provide a general model of popular politics in the cities of the Mughal empire during the period of its supposed political decrepitude. A space for such politics had emerged within a regime that formally prized administrative efficiency and the upholding of Islamic orthodoxy. This site of mass politics lay in an imaginaire that was not governed by the state, since the state asserted that all matters of justice and equity could be resolved within the confines of its bureaucratic framework. But exceptional situations arose constantly. Sometimes these were generated by the impetuous actions of a disorderly and fractious aristocracy; at other times they were produced by conflicts between groups of urbanites over questions of justice that were beyond the ken of the city's administrators. And sometimes, as we have seen, religious zeal appears to have motivated mass collective action. In all such situations, questions of politics began where the possibility of administration were exhausted.

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[462] Khan, *The Maā͟thir-Ul-Umarā ...*, 518–520.

The figure of the emperor looms over many such instances of exceptional disorder and tumult. This was not only because the ruler felt responsible for ensuring the peace and tranquility of his domain. But it was also because when an exceptional event occurred, it produced two powerful impetuses. Firstly, a situation that could not be resolved by the regular system of administration caused communities to represent themselves in massive form. Secondly, such communities would seek to represent themselves to the emperor, because his own power as the vice-regent of God was in theory absolute, unregulated and subject to no restraint. The wise and perceptive Emperor could thus provide justice in situations when the regular apparatus of governance had stumbled to a halt. The singularity of the emperor and the totality of "God's creatures" (*khalq-i allāh*) were thus bound together in a vital relationship.

As we have seen, this relationship began to change in the early eighteenth century. The most important cause of this, I have argued, lay in the fungibility of community identity, which also implied an open political subject. By referring to this fungibility we mean not the fact that communities were porous, poorly defined, or broadly inclusive; in fact, as the many disturbances from Lahore indicate, sectarian religious identities were sharply defined, exclusive, and produced great and persistent tension. Instead, I have argued that forms of community themselves could change shape and shift form, so that a "religious" conflict was not in practice so very easy to distinguish from a "political" conflict. It is in the space of this indistinction, situated spatially within a distinctively urban cityscape of squares and alleys, markets and mosques, that mass political identities emerged in a form which began to transgress the normal model of the state sketched above. Such transgression developed a common language of challenge to the state and the emperor, stereotypically involving a mass procession to the mosque; words of abuse and contumely; interruption of the ritual reproduction of the form of state through the proclamation;

and physical violence directed against officials of state. This formed an important part of a broader repertoire of political microtechniques which also might include physical demonstrations around particular "sites of oppression"; the closure of markets and the disruption of urban life; and the manipulation of corpses as symbols of oppression. As we have seen, the state correctly recognized such assertiveness as a challenge to its own prerogatives of governance; but for officials of state, when a situation had generated mass political activity, there was no vocabulary or process by which to subdue the people. Instead the authorities had to act with diplomacy and studied pragmatism, by assenting to local demands while preventing the erosion or absorption of their authority by this unexpected entrant into the world of politics and goverance: the people themselves.

CHAPTER 7: The Shoemakers' Riot of 1729

In the previous chapter, we developed a general model for the workings of mass politics and the development of this political subjectivity among urbanites through an argument about the fungibility of community and the zone of indistinction between "religion" and "politics" in the practice of urban life. In this chapter I complete this argument by showing the elaboration of an oppositional mass political subjectivity that was forged in the crucible of an event which crucially depended on the strategic activation of community discussed above. The best example of such kaleidoscopic transformations of identity and production of community was the shoemakers' riot which wracked Delhi in 1729.

Here is how the historian Rustam ᶜAlī Khān tells the story: there was a popular commotion (*balwā-yi ᶜāmm*) in the congregational mosque during the month of Shaᶜbān in revenge for the killing of a Muslim by a Hindu named Subhkaran, who had been protected by imperial administrators. As a result there ensued a great battle in the courtyard of the mosque at the time of Friday prayer, and some seventeen people were killed. Sher Afkan Khān, the lord chamberlain, was wounded and left the battlefield with Raushan al-Daula.[463] True only in the broadest sense of the word, this narrative fails to mention its central actors, the shoemakers themselves.

Khush Hāl Chand, in his *History of Muhammad Shāh*, recounts this rare popular commotion (*ghuluw-yi ᶜāmm*) in greater detail: although its description was unpalatable, it was nevertheless among the marvelous events of the era. Although looking back with the clarity of the distance of a few years, the historian was unsure about how to classify the uprising; it was perhaps "a sort of

[463] Shāhābādī, "Tārīkh-i Hindī," 415.

factional warfare" (*khāna jangī*), but as we shall see, sat uneasily in that category. The conflict occurred between the jeweler Subhkaran, who was a resident of the thoroughfare of the Darība and the shoe-sellers of the moonlight avenue, when one of these latter folk was calamitously killed by a retainer of the former. As a result, a "mass of commoners" (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*) descended on the jeweler.[464] Since this matter could not be resolved by the judge and the constable, it was represented at court, where his highness' all-seeing eye and his all-knowing intellect discerned that the pleading group (*gurūh-i khazlān parwa*) had acted with transgressive compulsion (*taᶜaddī*). Khush Hāl certainly believed in the overriding wisdom of the emperor, who could judge where the right lay even though he was presented with an incomplete picture of the situation.

So it was out of this sense of rectitude and sincerity (*sadq*) that the emperor ordered Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khān proceed towards all that tumult and disorder and settle it. The protesting masses were meanwhile accusing his highness the shadow of god of retreating from the faith of Muhammad and fostering infidelity. Due to this they prevented the the proclaimer from reciting the blessed proclamation in the Congregational mosque on Friday. While a few words are illegible in this badly-damaged manuscript, it is clear that Khush Hāl recalled that there existed a group, whose work is dissimulation (*sukhan-tarāshī*) and who now set about rumor-mongering. They claimed that the vizier Jumdat al-Mulk Madār al-Mahām supported the shoe-sellers, due to the fact that Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khān frequently intruded into the affairs of the viziership. Due to this rancor, he secretly sided with the refractory shoe-sellers, so that the great nobleman would be humiliated in his dealings with them. For all these reasons, a large multitude gathered in the congregational mosque on Friday, and many of the great nobles and servants of the people

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[464] Khush Hāl, "Tārīkh-i Nādir Al-Zamanī," 156a.

(*mulāzim-i ᶜāwāmm*) were also present. His highness now wished to head there with the intention of offering the Friday prayer at the mosque with the congregation; and, puns Khush Hāl darkly, the emperor also had the intention to punish anyone who asserted himself (*khud sarī*) by lifting the weight of his head (*sar*) from his shoulders. In this context, our author presents some verses apropos of the awesome power of emperors:

> *Sukhan bih ki bā midhat tāj o takht*
> *Bigūyand pukhta nagūyand sakht*
> *Chu az kīna bar firozand chahr*
> *Bi farzand-i khud nayārand mahr*
>
> Those words are better which praise crown and throne
> Say what's solid but don't say what's hard
> Because if you lift your face with rancor
> It's not favors which will accrue to your son

Meanwhile Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān reported the extent of the disorder that had risen to the emperor and deferred the imperial procession to the mosque. Forearmed with this news, Jumdat al-Mulk, Raushan al-Daula, ᶜIzzat al-Daula Sher Afkan Khān, Aᶜzam Khān and the Divine Faqīr Shāh ᶜAbd al-Ghafūr proceeded to the mosque and were the greatest nobles present; but, says our author, to what extent can the rest of the populace be described?[465]

It was at this moment, when movement was impossible because of the thronging commoners, that the hands of one of these vile folk (*yekī az pawāj*) rose in boldness; after that it became extremely difficult to preserve not only one's honor and sanctity (*āzarm o harmat*) but even one's life. Khush Hāl belieed at this point in the midst of this stupefying (*hāyrat-andūz*) event Sher Afkan Khān the lord chamberlain and Raushan al-Daula were attempting to settle matters, while the vizier was motivated by another sort of desire altogether, for why else would one witness the sort of dishonor (*bī-ghāyratī*) that ensued? But our chronicler couldn't quite believe

[465] Ibid., f. 156b.

that this might be the case, and that such a high official of state as the vizier might truly have the capacity to behave in so underhanded a way. In any case, the battered Raushan al-Daula was led away from the battlefield by Sher Afkan Khān to his home. In a fitting finale, the rather generically-named Aᶜzam ("Great") Khān did not have the luxury of such easy egress. He was forced to leap ignominiously from a wall, which by divine decree had the shop of a potter at its foot. Due to the heavy weight of that great man, writes the author, many jars and pitchers were shattered. So the poor man uttered many plaints and lamentations; the vizier also retreated to his own quarters but the tumult went on until the afternoon prayers, after which things settled down. The group which created the tumult, says Khush Hāl, refused to bury the corpse but at the mansion of Subhkaran; and so it was enacted.[466]

In Khush Hāl's view, the shoemakers' riot began with the killing of a shoemaker in a conflict that was ultimately the fault of the shoemakers themselves; their fault was recognized by the wise emperor, and so nothing more needed to be said about the affair; but the shoemakers agitated in the mosque and turned their wrath against the nobility, with the support of the vizier, who used the opportunity to cut his rival Raushan al-Daula down to size. The result of this selfishness was that the imperial nobility was dishonored en masse. For Khush Hāl, Aᶜzam Khān's sad descent into a potter's shop reflected the general conditions of dishonor that forced elites to suffer the blows of menials. The author's discomfort in the discussion of such an event is palpable, but even from these limited details we can discern his sense that a small conflict (in which Subhkaran was in the right) assumed religious aspects that caused folks to go so far as to call Muhammad Shāh a cherisher of infidelity.

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[466] Ibid., f. 157a.

Wārid

Writing some years later in 1733-4, Khush Hāl's contemporary Wārid took a far more jaundiced view of things. Wārid did not share Khush Hāl's strict scruples about categorization, and so considered the events a straightforward matter of factional conflict (*khāna jangī*). But he did agree with Khush Hāl in that the riot marked a humiliation of the nobility so complete that they would be unable to raise their heads due to the shame (*sharmsārī*) of it all. For Wārid, the cause was murder of a Panjābī shoe-seller who had performed the pilgrimage (*hājī*) by the servants of the appraiser of the imperial jewel house. The aggrieved shoemakers sought vengeance and took their case to the emperor. But the hājī's murder was not so much a matter of religion as that of urban governance. For Wārid the hājī's violent death was just one more among the daily murders (*khūnhā-yī har rūza*) that were witnessed during this reign "conjoined with negligence". The emperor wanted this incident to be trampled and crushed under the foot of forgetfulness.[467]

Diverging briefly from the topic at hand, Wārid placed much of the blame for such criminality at the door of that unhappy Shāh ᶜAbd al-Ghafūr, who, despite his claims of being a dervish, was included in the ranks of the pillars of the state (*arkān-i saltanat*). This was obviously a position of power soundly rejected by those true renunciants who actually practiced religious austerities. Nevertheless the charlatan ᶜAbd al-Ghafūr was protected by the emperor and supported by the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula, who regarded him not only as his spiritual preceptor but indeed his departed father. This so-called divine fell upon the settled and mendicant poor with the sword of injustice every week, nay, at most times of the day, and could be stopped by no person. In fact, says Wārid, speaking in the present tense of his own time, the custom of man-slaughtering has become a sort of tradition in the abode of the caliphate Shāhjahānābād Dihlī, so that there will be

[467] I am grateful to Dr. Muzaffar Alam for clarifying a point here.

few weeks, in fact few days, without news being heard of the killing of five people or ten people. But in these ten years of the reign (*saltanat*) of Muhammad Shāh, says our author, one has not heard on even a single day that the sword of imperial justice may have killed the murderer in recompense. The emperor remains unaware of the traces of the sighs of the oppressed and so over time there have come to be murders every day.

It is for this reason of utter negligence at the very top that certain people tried to conceal the murder of the Punjabi shoe-seller hājī under kicks and blows. For this reason the murdering appraiser, who belonged to the Hindu community (*qaum-i hunūd*), was hidden in the fort, and the settlement of the case was left to Sher Afkan Khān Panīpati the Lord Chamberlain. Because the fox-like Sher Afkan Khān was completely acquainted with the internal intentions of the emperor, he wished to divert the heirs of the murdered from their seeking the murderer onto the avenue of confusion and deceit.[468]

So, Wārid tells us, on March 12th, 1729, there was a mass disturbance (*balwā-yi ᶜāmm*) at the congregational mosque. The standard forms of protest with which we have been previously acquainted were used yet again: the tumultuous folk prevented the imperial proclamation (*khutba-yi sultānī*) from being recited. Matters quickly took a turn for the worse. The magistrate, who Wārid claims "is the leader of the gang of thieves (*sar-gurūh-i duzdān*) of the city of Palwal", had sought by subtle and ingenious measures to reduce this great legal disputation. But now the daring hands of the shoe-sellers reached suddenly across the threshold of fearlessness and grabbed him by the collar; they also seized his son, who was his accomplice in these matters. The magistrate was ensnared in the claw of their power and dragged down feet over head from the pulpit. His affairs, says the author sardonically, were settled according to the law, so that no

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[468] Muhammad Shafi Wārid, "Mīrāt-i Wāridāt," n.d., f. 172b, British Library APAC Add. 6579.

more than a few various hairs were left of his beard, and the clothes which he wore on his back were also shredded and taken away as sacred relics (*tabarruk*).

Wārid saw the hindrance of the proclamation and the assault of the magistrate as a direct act of the humiliation (*ruswā⁾ī*) of Muhammad Shāh and his vizier Qamar al-Dīn Khān I⁽timād al-Daula, who had been dispatched to quench the flames of disorder at the time by when it had become impossible to do so. Qamar al-Dīn reached the mosque with a small retinue, perhaps no more than twenty five cavalry in number, and correctly perceived the delicacy of the situation. But just as he had begun to diplomatically assuage the frayed tempers of the irate masses, the admonitions of heaven and fate sent Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khān Turra Bāz Rustam Jang and Sher Afkan Khān of rabbit-like ferocity and fox-like grandeur with their whole retinues to the southern façade of the mosque, on the other side of the courtyard from the vizier. Besides their retinues, these two nobles were accompanied by the other pillars of state. Many of them held high ranks of 7,000 and 6,000 and 5,000, and when their soldiers entered the mosque, they prevented the entry and exit of anyone from its courtyard. But the two leaders failed to perceive the situation (*ghalat-fahmī-yi ambā-yi rūzgār*) and the level of popular discontent. This, claims Wārid, was despite the vizier's dispatch of a message to the effect that today because of the predominance of the gathering of the tumultuous, and their utterly querulous frame of mind, the desired outcome would not be achieved except through delicacy and conciliation. The two nobles, however, looked to the strength of their own forces and artillery and imagined the vizier's courteous missive to be a sign of his inimical stance towards them. So they responded aggressively – with astringency and harshness (*tundī wa nahīb*) towards the people pleading for

justice. It was only to be expected that the oppressed, having witnessed this utter hypocrisy (*ittifāq-i sarāpā nifāq*) decided to humiliate these two nobles.[469]

Although the shoemakers had no other weapons than the shoes in their hands, they began to assault the high officials present. In describing this action, Wārid presents elaborate punning metaphors. He tells us that the shoemakers took to hurling the shoe of long-handedness, and the eagles of these shoes flew in such a way that the heron of the turban did not keep its feet in the nest of distinction on the heads of the nobility.

> *Sāybān rūzī ki sang-i hadisa az āsmān rasad*
> *Awwal balā bi murgh-i buland āshiyān rasad*
>
> On the day that the cloud rained the stones of calamity
> The first misfortune befell the bird with the highest nest

The particular charge of these words lies in the Mughal conception of the body as the site in which honor resided. Honor, of course, did not permeate uniformly through the body; it lay particularly in the head and the face, and was notably absent from the feet. The turban, by extension, was the most concentrated expression of honor. Indeed, conceptions of honor and dishonor continue to be expressed through idioms of "cutting the nose" or "flinging the turban" even in the present day. Similarly, shoes and slippers, while necessary for one's own personal honor, communicated the dishonor of feet to other bodies they might encounter. It is in this context that Wārid communicates the profound bodily dishonor that befell the honor of the nobility from the hands and the feet of a pious but broadly dishonorable community of artisans.

So our author notes that the turban of these wretched great nobles had become the doormat for the shoe of the predominance (of the lowly). This occurrence caused the servants of Raushan al-Daula, many of whom were Afghāns, to raise the hand of punishment from the mantle of

[469] Ibid., f. 173a.

celerity, and to pull the sword of rancor out of its sheath. But heaven witnessed the spectacle of the spark-scattering luster of the sword and led some of the Abyssinians of the imperial government (*habshīyān-i sarkār-i pādishāhī*), who were present in this multitude, and were maddened by the trampling of the unjustly-spilled blood of Muslimness (*musalmānī*) and the protection of infidelity, to pull out the small firearms (*tabānchāhā-yī bandūq-i khurd*) they carried on their waists. Whenever the servants of Raushan al-Daula attempted to approach Iᶜtimād al-Daula with their naked swords, the Abyssinians sought to strike them down. At this moment of impasse, Wārid presents Raushan al-Daula Turra Bāz Khān, who now appeared wearing the shoes of the people of the bāzār instead of the crest (*turra*) on his turban. Our author sarcastically places a profoundly pompous monologue in this nobleman's mouth, who is said to have cried out from the path of wisdom and far-sightedness:

> "O Companions! Under no circumstances does Exalted and Praiseworthy God, who is the sole ruler of all, grant estate (*daulat*) to anyone by mistaken grace (*ghalat karāmat*). Be certain that although perfect intelligence and intellect and senses are not visible in this infirm slave, he has not reached the apogee of stateliness and leadership, which is the inhabiting of high office of the imperial administration, by way of street-walking (*kūcha-gardī*) and trembling (*pā-darī*). Of this there is no doubt, and so my nature (*fitrat*) must be of the same quality as the nature of Aristotle the vizier of Alexander. To this effect it is established that whenever one of the four humors (*khilti az ikhlāt-i arbaᶜa*) in the bodies of the tribe of Noah raises the standard of rebellion, it overshadows the flag of the good life (*rāyat-i zindaganī-yi nekū*). What I am witnessing now are the elements which are the real mother (*asl māda*) of the creation of humanity (*ījād-i basharīy*) and are rising in opposition to each other. Thus the autonomous wind of fate (*bād-i bī niyāzī-i taqdīr*) has come into opposition and is sprinkling shoes clotted with the dirt of desolation on one's head and face, and the watermark of the sword is so close as to pass the head, and the fire-spurting gun and the life-taking rocket (*bān*) are hotly engaged in shooting forth lightning. *Verse*:
>
> *Bi har taraf ki kashāyim nazar balā paida ast*
>
> Calamity is manifest to whichever side our gaze sweeps.
>
> Due to the faithlessness of this condition, for sensible folk to remain here is just as to give one's head to the wind of annihilation. This slave gives thanks that it is not from the stock of ready money of wisdom and discrimination that blood should be spilled in the house of

> God, which is the place of worship by his slaves. Therefore it is necessary that under all circumstances you all transport my life, which has no equal or match and is regarded as an invaluable prize among the people of name and honor, from this ocean of bloodlust to the beach of safety."[470]

After delivering this soaring oration, the khān turned to flee from the mosque. The Afghāns who accompanied him made themselves a prisoner of this unexpected calamity and became the victims of every situation that the time presented, and entered the house of Dilīr Dil Khān, the elder brother of the foxlike Sher Afkan Khān, which had been established just under the walls of that mosque.

> *Ānchi bar farq-i zafar khān az qazā uftāda ast*
> *Man chi guyam maᶜnī-yi ān pīsh pā uftāda ast*
>
> That which has befallen Zafar Khān from on high
> What can I say when its meaning has fallen before my feet?

But, says Wārid, about fifty of Raushan al-Daula's men were hurled into the winds of annihilation; and besides that, a majority of the nobility threw themselves from the mosque, which has been built on a great height on the top of a hill, in the fear of their lives, and sought to hide themselves in the shops of the people of the bāzār. At the end of it all they stealthily escaped with running feet (*taktak-i pā*) and saw the faces of their families again.[471]

Wārid's description of the uprising of the shoe-sellers is filled with the unmitigated praise for subjects righteously rejecting their oppression. The author's approval derives from the his assertion that the present reign of Muhammad Shāh was illegitimate because of its degeneration into tyranny and injustice. This was a radical, even novel position; for while deceased emperors were fair game for blame or censure, in no other chronicle do we find a critique of the reigning emperor himself. We recall that Khush Hāl had written that disorders or imbalances in natural

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[470] Ibid., f. 173b–174a.
[471] Ibid., f. 174a.

circumstances signaled imminent catastrophe, but Khush Hāl maintained a fervently loyalist attitude towards the reigning Muhammad Shāh. The shoe-sellers' riot, which had been nothing more than an unfortunate manifestation of the rivalry of high officials for Khush Hāl, turned into a damning indictment of the ruler in Wārid's hands.

The story of the shoemakers' riot for Wārid is merely one in a litany of complaints directed against the occupant of the Peacock Throne. Thus the author pointedly describes an epidemic which swept the empire, coming from Bengal (situated on the shores of the "Sea of Tumult", *daryā-yi shūr*) to cause mass sickness among the cities of the empire, eventually reaching Kashmīr and Kābul according to the reports from those parts. As if this were not sign enough of heavenly disfavor, there were other calamities. For instance, there was the burning of the houses of the people, which had never been seen to this extent in any previous era. Now every year this custom had become established that every day in the summer a neighborhood caught fire, so that most the houses of the people were rendered to ashes and ruined by the wind of annihilation. Most of the residents of the city, who did not have the capability to build their houses with stone, and instead sought refuge from the sun and the rain in the shadow of sticks and hay and lived there contentedly, at this time for the period of five months – of which four were summer and the one after until the time the rains came – lived in the mortal fear of this world-seizing fire.[472] Wārid does not detail any measures to alleviate these recurring catastrophes, for he wishes to make it explicit that all such calamities were the fault of the ruler himself.

But Wārid also offers another insight into possible elite perceptions of the disorder. Raushan al-Daula's grandiose speech illustrates how humoral understandings of the body translated into the image of a humoral body politic. Just as the human body functioned normally in its balance of

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[472] Ibid., f. 174a–174b.

the humors, so did the body of society survive with its four humors in balance. Our author does not present us with exact analogues between social classes and humors, but it is clear that the class of the commoners could be seen as a humor that had to be governed and kept in check by the "physician" (*hakīm/hākim*) of state. In the absence of sovereign rule, the four humors clashed and collided, producing a state of primal disorder – very much like the clash in the mosque itself.

In fact Wārid had a few more things to say about the disorder in the mosque, because it belonged to the strange among events and the astonishing among happenings; and so a few more words of reflection had to be offered. First, the Friday mosque was the place where God's slaves offered prayers, not the sword-wielders' field of slaughter. Second, the congregation of the nobles of great dignity and plentiful servants had entered the mosque in their perfect magnificence and splendor on that day due to the agitation of the riff-raff of the marketplace (*waswās-i ijtimāᶜ-i aubāshān-i bazār*); but at that time the extractors of retribution made it the place of the public judgment of their injustice (*mahshar-i bīdādī-i āshkārā*), so that no second of the time of shame and no degree amongst the degrees of dishonor remained unexperienced from the world of insult and humiliation.

Taking great joy in this shaming of the great, our author waxed eloquent about the marvelousness of the fact that a few unprepared shoemakers entered the fray without any stock-in-trade of battle but their tongues; and besides that, they loudly sought the justice of the resplendent law from the beginning of the dispute; but in the end, says Wārid, they disappeared without trace (*māᶜdūm al-izhār wa mafqūd al-asār*) due to their ephemeral nature and the violence of the battlefield. Although he espoused their cause, the sudden manifestation and the equally sudden disappearance of the shoe-sellers confounded our author. For even with investigation in every universe and inquiry in every world the identities of the shoemakers could

not be revealed, and it could not be independently identified if the preparation for all this disturbance and tumult (*shūr o ghūgha*). Despite the fact that this event caused fifty of the servants of Raushan al-Daula and other present nobles to offer their prostrations to the threshold of non-existence, the leadership of this minor day of resurrection (*kār-farmā-yī īn qayāmat-i sughrā*) remained traceless.

Wārid's great personal interest in the event thus led him to a conclusion that had eluded Khush Hāl. The shoemakers gathered spontaneously and acted autonomously. Their violence was not precipitated by the vizier against Raushan al-Daula; rather, they behaved of their own accord; once their objectives were achieved, the form of community was de-activated as naturally and easily as it had come into being. So, with a touch of wonder, Wārid informs us that no other explanation reflected itself on the mirror of perception but that of the negligence and haughtiness of these nobles. They had become so distant from justice and drunk on the wine of pride that they ascended to a station wherein neither the existence of the creator (*hastī-yi khāliq*) had any certainty in their evil thoughts, nor had they any regard for the existence of the created (*wujūd-i makhlūq*). Thus when they did not deign to witness the existence of the created world besides themselves, a profound shame befell them out of the blue. The independent judge (*ᶜādil-i mutallaq*) flowered the bud of this enchanted garden in such a color that the color of trust on the cheeks of their honor was sprinkled with the dirt of humiliation and trampled underfoot by the shoe-sellers and suffered the blows of the nameless and traceless folks of the marketplace (*bāzāriyān bī nām o nishān*).[473]

With this botanical metaphor of humiliation Wārid concludes his description of the humiliation of the empire's grandees. There emerges in this analysis the spiteful tone of a literate and

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[473] Ibid., f. 175a–175b.

culturally elite scholar who nevertheless was not included in the gatherings of "nobles of great dignity and plentiful servants". In this sense Wārid appears as a figure akin to Mustafā ᶜĀlī, the Ottoman historian who bewailed the decline of the dynasty as the early promise of his own career evaporated.[474] Unlike Rustam ᶜAlī Khān, however, Wārid did not see a religious issue at the heart of the matter, though he did think that the emperor was guilty of cherishing infidelity and turning away from Islam, as some also did in Khush Hāl's recollection.

The Felicitous Pages

Filled as it was with acerbic judgments and bitter schadenfreude, Wārid's history was unlikely to have reflected the official perspectives of the court or the refined tastes of its favored literati. Given the protestations of Khush Hāl and Wārid about the unapalatability of the shoemakers' riot, one might imagine that the event was excluded completely from the conversation and writing of the polite folk whose collectively dignity came under such withering fire in the mosque. But the most literary evocation of the tumult is to be found in a prolix compendium of court event named the *Felicitious Pages* (*sahīfa-yi iqbāl*).[475] The unnamed author of the *Pages*, an ardent devotee of the reigning emperor, makes his own stance perfectly clear in a long marginal comment to the side of his description.

> This is presented in accordance with the indication of the Khāqān, obeyed by the world, that the servant has, the veiled virgin of the desired object (*mukhaddara-i maqsūd*) in a fresh style, a new disposition and a special arrangement. Although the serious viewer (*shāhid-i jadd*) discerns the clothes of levity (*libās-i hazl*), litterateurs know that this well-directed articulation which bears a veil of a new style (*tarz-i jadīd*) on its face pure reality… The object of signification (*bab-i maᶜnī*) of the writer of this happy register is not denuded of the robe of universality.
>
> Speech counts among the varieties of vexation
> Speech gives me my portion to me.

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[474] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*.
[475] Anonymous, "Sahīfa-yi Iqbāl," n.d., f. 48a–53b, British Library APAC Or. 1900.

> And because the sides of seriousness and levity of words, which are the sites of the examination of the writers of prose, come to the full standard (*tamām-ᶜiyār*) to the touchstone (*mahk*) of complete trust, it is possible to discern that in this narration there are two sides and the writing in that regard is easy and coming to the former way will conjoin with approbation.[476]

As this marginalia indicates, the essay on the shoemakers' riot in the *Pages* was produced at imperial wish, and specifically written in the "fresh" style that was very much the literary fashion of the era. The author defended himself against writing of the riot in the garb of levity, for, as he tells us, the levity only clothes a "pure reality", and that the composition meets both the exacting standards of literary levity and serious intent. Having made this serious literary claim in appropriately technical language, the skillful author of the *Pages* reports that among the novel occurrences of these tumultuous times is the frightful event of the battle of the shoemakers (*kafash dūzān*); of which "the fitting of the shoe of description and narration on the foot-mold of writing is too tight, and the foot of the pen of the shattered tongue is lame in the field of detailed description". By crafting metaphors that relate the act of description to the activities of shoemakers themselves, the author provides us with an immediate example of his integration of the opposition between "levity" and "seriousness". In accord with the standard claims of other historians and writers of events, the author tells us that this this dispute so made of peculiarity and mingled with oddity counts as a rarity of the age; and is left as a memento for those are yet to enter the field of experience. But behind this generic assertion lies the author's intent to not only record the event but to aestheticize its novelty.

So our author tells us that earlier this year, due to a series of fortuitous coincidences, which have found enumeration in the account of the dispute between night and day, the first half of the month of Shaᶜbān coincided with the time of the Holi of the Hindus. The nights of Shaᶜbān are

[476] Ibid., f. 48a.

the season of the performance of the ceremonies of Barāt, in which the commoners among the people of Islam spend their nights by burning in the flames of play and amusement (*lahw o la*ᶜ*b*) and being engrossed in the obligations of lighting fireworks and merriment. In this fashion, a gathering of exuberant people were occupied in their established activities and customary rituals in the lanes and the markets of the city. At this point a of a heavenly decree suddenly manifested itself. On the eighth of Shaᶜbān in the eleventh year of the exalted reign, Subhkaran, an appraiser (*muqīm*) in the jewelry department of the exalted administration, emerged from the house of the superintendent of the jewel-house Hāfiz Jawāhar ("Jewel-Protector") Khān and headed to his own home through the market of the shoemakers of Saᶜd Allāh Khān Square.[477]

The sects (*farīqāyn*) of Hindus and Muslims were happily amusing themselves in the observance of their religious customs of lighting firecrackers and throwing colors when a strange magic and a rare tumult came afoot. God only knows whether at first the rocket of dissension was launched from side of the clog-making Muslims and the flame of this incident leapt up, or whether first this strife was scattered about by the disaster-sprinkling hand of the Hindus accompanying the aforementioned Subhkaran. At first, events followed the standard script with which we have already become familiar. According to various testimonies, a fierce exchange of words (*guftagū-yi shadīd*) came to pass, and the affair progressed from contumely and abuse to fists and blows (*masht o litām*). At the end of it all, one of the aforementioned Subhkaran's companions managed to have his sword and shield taken from him by the shoemakers in the midst of the give-and-take. Seeking revenge for what had transpired, he returned on that very pitch-black night with his companions with the permission of his employer.

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[477] Ibid.

Here this group contended with a shoemaker, who, says our author, wore the shoe of long-standing steadfastness on the path of rectitude, and the turban of probity and devout observance on his head. Subhkaran's men mingled his blood with the dust of the road, and in so doing the origin of this strife fell into the hands of the age. The shoemakers, putting on the clog of the honor of the faith (*al-hamīyat min al-dīn*) with the assistance (*dastyārī*) of the barbaric rabble (*aubāsh*) of various kinds (*farq*) of the Muslims, that is the Arab and the ᶜAjam and Turk and Tājīk and the Habshī and Rūmī and Hindūstānī arose to seek revenge, and sought trade in the law of just retribution.[478] Due to their excessive endeavor (*fart-i mubālighat*) in this matter of a life in exchange for a life, there was prolonged upheaval. But the murderer had absconded, the principal was confounded and in hiding (*mutawārī*), and the guardians (*hāmīyān*) considered the affair to be an opportunity for bribery (*irtishā*) and sided with the jeweler, having accepted his words at the price of weighty jewels. Now the author of the *Felicitious Pages* uses a metaphor that attributes deliberate strategy to the aggrieved shoemakers, for he tells us that they unrolled a chessboard of another kind: throwing the body of the slain at the door of the murderer's patron Subhkaran, they set themselves on beseeching the imperial court.

From this perspective the matter is seen as unfolding in a way quite different from the previous accounts. The first cause of the riot, we are told, was the simple coincidence of calendars, which led to the simultaneous occurrence of Holi and Barāt. This, in turn, enabled the next chance exchange of words which led to the death of a pious Muslim shoemaker by the hand of a Hindu jeweler's retainer. But at this point matters took an unusual turn. The shoemakers were confronted with a member of the imperial elite whose person lay outside the workings of the standard judicial order in practice if not in theory, much as the jewelers had confronted Khʷāja

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[478] Ibid., f. 48b. Qurᵓān 2.179: وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

Khalīl about a decade earlier. In this instance, the shoemakers activated another solidarity – that of Islam and its defense. They donned the clog of the "the honor of the faith", says the author, revealing precisely what he thought of this religious invocation, and so enabled an alliance with the barbaric and the turbulent: a flotsam of various ethnicities led by the drifts and eddies of unknown lives and circumstances to come to wander about the Mughal capital, fragments who had come to agglomerate in a community seen only as riff-raff by the more settled residents of the city.

Our anonymous author supplies us with another crucial detail not narrated by Khush Hāl or Wārid. The shoemakers and their allies refused to bury the corpse of the deceased, and instead placed it at the door of the murderer. Just as in the instance of the slain the proclaimer of Ahmadabad during the reign of Bahādur Shāh, the corpse of the deceased served as a potent political symbol, embodying within itself the reproach of the wronged and the desire for vengeance: a reminder that in the thriving visual economy of necropower, the mutilated body of a shoemaker could speak as loudly that of a deposed ruler. Until this point, the shoemakers represented their dispute with the jeweler in the language of those seeking justice, though now they sought it in the idiom of the defense of Islamic law.

On the next day, which was a Thursday, matters initially continued in this vein. Those seeking justice for the deceased intercepted the emperor's procession as it returned to the palace from the garden of Jaᶜfar Khān. The emperor ordered that the vizier of the domains (*wazīr al-mamālik*) Iᶜtimād al-Daula Bahādur, who had been granted the office of the superintendence of the palace because of his dependability and distinction (*iᶜtimād o ikhtisās*), was to deploy a severe slave (*qullārī-i shadīd*) to bring the transgressor to court under the authority of the pure law (*sharᶜ-i sharīf*) so that his affair might be expeditiously settled according to the injunctions of the

resplendent law (*hukm-i sharīᶜat-i ghurā*). No great efforts were made in this regard however, because the aforementioned jeweler was the appraiser (*muqīm*) of the harem. Much as in the case of Khʷāja Khalīl, the emperor enforced the observance of a judicial process that applied only in name to the elite; but, our author suggests, Subhkaran's proximity to the imperial harem secured him from the stringent enforcement of this action. If this were true, it would explain Wārid's assertion that Sher Afkan Khān protected the jeweler on the implicit instructions of the ruler. In either case, Subhkaran's connections protected him for another night.

On the next day, which was a Friday, the community seeking redress (*taifa-i mustaghīs*) brought about a mass movement (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*) and carried their insolence and fearlessness (*shūkhī o bī-bākī*) beyond the limit of estimation. In this they were assisted by the words of the chief of scholars (*malik-i ᶜilām*) who quoted the Quᵓrān in their support: "*Hence if anyone has been slain wrongly, We have empowered the defender of his rights.*"[479] With this theological opinion in its support, the shoemakers wanted to prevent the communal Friday prayer; they expressed disobedience (*pīchish*) and impertinence (*nā-sazā*) with the magistrate and jurisprudent and the other officials of the high court (*ᶜadalat al-ᶜāliya*) who remonstrated with them to prevent any error in this act of praise.[480] It is at this point that our author's sympathies begin to become apparent. For while he agrees with the technical jurisprudential claim of the aggrieved, he disapproves of the "mass movement". This agitation drew from what had by now become a standard repertoire of political techniques: they prevented the recital of the proclamation that expanded upon the legitimacy of the claims of the king and the subordinate place of the ruler. But while the author disapproved of their boldness, he could not help but be a little amused by the sight of state functionaries being set upon by enraged shoemakers. So he tells us that his

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[479] Quᵓrān 17:33: وَمَن قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا
[480] Anonymous, "Sahīfa-yi Iqbāl," f. 49a.

highness the magistrate faced such a liberal opposition in his endeavors that he received his promised recompense in the form that has been assured, namely martyrdom. The the proclaimer too by way of his fate had a taste of this banquet of choice viands, but having eaten his fill, he quickly drew himself away from the edges of the spread of the mosque. In this way, even though our author would have disagreed with Wārid's interpretation of the shoemakers as righteous victims, he nevertheless shared that author's sense of pleasure at the sight of these pious guardians of the Resplendent Law take a beating at the hand of their inferiors.

But it was no laughing matter. When the news reached the hearing of the servants of the exalted throne, the necessity of strong action was evident. An imperial letter ordered that the vizier of the domains Iᶜtimād al-Daula Bahādur Nusrat Jang, and the paymaster of the domain Raushan al-Daula Bahādur Rustam Jang should go to the mosque of congregation and settle the strife and tumult and offer the Friday prayers in accordance with the lustrous faith (*millat-i baizaᵓ*). At this point in the narrative, the author lapses into a bizarre aside, telling us that Raushan al-Daula is popularly (*bayn al-jamhūr*) known as "Rauzan al-Daula", for verily "*raushan*" (bright) in Arabic means "*rauzan"* (hole) in Persian; and so, claims our author, Raushan al-Daula, the "luster of the state" was snidely called "the Rauzan al-Daula", or the "Orifice of the State".

Thus those two pillars of state, that is the prudent counselor, the vizier of the domains and the abovementioned nobleman "of illuminated intellect" reached the mosque and became engaged in dousing the flame of strife and discord and ceasing the contumacy and rebellion. The author now sarcastically commends the "Orifice of the State", who he says was greatly engaged in supervising the settlement of this crucial affair on the basis of proper policies, who thought of this affair in a far-sighted and right-thinking manner, and who had applied himself in closing the

doors (*sadd-i ābwāb*) of the house of God.[481] This sarcasm is made explicit by the verse which follows:

> *Guft sad afghān bi har dar-i fiqr dar-bandī kunand*
> *Qafl-i īn waswās nabud az in bihtar kalid*
>
> He said, "A hundred Afghāns are to close every door of thought
> To unlock this tumult evil there's no better key"

In other words, the "Orifice of the State" precipitated what was to follow by foolishly stationing soldiers at the door of the mosque, when a more prudent crowd-control policy would have required a less obtrusive armed presence. The two nobles began to search for the the proclaimer and the prayer-leader (*pīsh-namāzī*) who had fought back in manly fashion and so self-sacrificingly risked their lives for the state. At the same time, the mixed and turbulent multitudes who had come to the central mosque in defense of the shoemakers in the impetuosity of their barbarism were now engaged in readying themselves for the second round of the fight. They had matchlocks and muskets in their hands; and crossbows with arrows nocked (*tapanchāhā-yi bandūq o tufang dar dast wa sūfārhā-yi nawak o khidang dar shast*). It appears that the shoemakers and their supporters had anticipated that the authorities would try and force the reading the proclamation and so had girded themselves for combat before the soldiers of the nobility arrived. Indeed, the multitudes were so bent on obstructing the proclamation that they had situated themselves near the alcove and the pulpit (*mihrāb o minbar*); so that when the the proclaimer displayed the intention of reciting the proclamation, they would make his chest a target for the arrow of divine decree and the bolt of calamity. No one, at least initially, had the courage to undertake this course of action. But when the common masses of the shoemakers (*ᶜāma-i kafashdūzān*) perceived that the great nobleman was preparing to disperse this evil, they

[481] Ibid., f. 49b.

received reinforcements. Those who were not present, says the author, now came to the assistance of those who were present, and their masses processed in serried ranks (*khayl khayl*). Their columns were like those of the birds who came to attack the elephants assaulting the Kāᶜba, as the Qurᵓān describes in "The Elephant" (Sūra 105: *Al-fīl*); and their very first charge was fittingly directed against the honor of the state Sher Afkan Khān Bahādur Safdar Jang.[482]

To recapitulate, a large group of shoemakers and their equally lowly allies proceeded en masse to the mosque, where they slaughtered the magistrate and almost killed the the proclaimer. As the nobility proceeded to the mosque to ensure the recital of the proclamation, the tumultuous crowds prepared for further conflict with their weaponry; and they were joined through the day by the arrival of further supporters. While the shoemakers were unarmed, the same was not true of those who rallied to their defense; and the first target of their assault was the lord chamberlain Sher Afkan Khān. At this point the author launches into a description of the great braveries of the khān, who among other things was a leopard made of fire while in battle; we learn also that no other such crocodile had ever risen from the ocean of the land of Pānīpat. But, says the author, the people had developed a strange fancy – absolutely untrue – that the aforementioned jeweler had in fact found refuge in Sher Afkan Khān's house, and so they began to riot (*ᶜarbada*). Such accusations were a slander against the precious jewel of chivalry (*futuwwat*), which is the very principle of nobility (*manzil-i amīrī*) and is held in the heart. But the fires of strife had had now been lit so thoroughly that the water of prudent intellectual stratagems was insufficient to quell them. So it was that:

> *Sū-yi masjid āmadand wa kafash bālā-yi kafash*
> *Dar hawā khayl-i kabūtar wār yekdam dar parīd*

> Towards the mosque they came, shoe atop shoe

[482] Ibid., f. 50a.

Into the air they suddenly flew like a rank of pigeons

Just as pigeons suddenly rise up together in a flock, so flew the shoes hurled by the irate shoemakers at the nobles who they regarded as their oppressors. What could be said of this signal dishonor of the rough shoes of the people striking the faces of the empire's greatest nobles? Our author offered only a succinct and literate paraphrase of a line by Sāᶜdī: *az dast [o] zabān ki bar āmad / kaz uhda-i wasf-ash bi dar āyad*: who is capable in word and deed / of producing their description?[483]

The assaulting rioters fell upon the men of the "Orifice of the State" and ᶜIzzat al-Daula. These two nobles were so closely allied that they were together called the rhyme and meter (*qāfiya o radīf*) by the witty and subtle; now they sat on one side of the mosque, squeezed together like some ungainly poem. Meanwhile the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daulā had entered the mosque from another side and stationed his forces near the pulpit, and so was situated at one side of this battlefield. Those present considered him to be on the side of the foreigners (*jānib-i ājānib*). But of course in this instance the foreigners were on the side of the masses and arrayed against the nobility. So the shoemakers extended their feet beyond the boundary of excess and the shoe of contention and impudence (*sitīza o waqāhat*) passed the estimate of the foot of villainy. Those warlike Afghāns braves of fiery disposition and the bravehearts filled with daring and strength, who were united with one heart and one soul under the leadership of those two strong-armed lords, found it beyond their ability to bear the abominable and shallow taunts of the shoemakers and witness those base and shameful actions; now they set about dissuading that foolish and unthinking (*nā ᶜāqibat andīsh*) group of shoe-sellers.

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[483] Ibid., 50b; I am grateful to Professor Hossein Kamaly for pointing this out to me. See Sa`di, *The Gulistan, rose garden of Sa'di: bilingual English and Persian edition with vocabulary*, trans. W. M Thackston (Bethesda, Md.: Ibex Publishers, 2008), 3.

But turbulent and rowdy men of every sect (*firqa*) were in support of that community (*taifa*) denuded of rectitude and probity. The flames and embers of discord leapt high and the smoke of strife and evil poured forth. Yet even until this moment of high drama both parties attempted to prevent the degeneration of matters into violence though they sought to display their steadfastness and readiness for battle. In the end, though, the affair escalated in the standard way: Matters, we are told, progressed beyond harsh language (*sukhanān-i durusht*) and in fact even beyond cuffs and blows (*lakd o musht*); and it came to the use of swords and arrows and guns, and the market of warfare warmed with the activity of both sides.

Fatilā damādam bi gūsh-i tufang
Hamī guft garm ast bāzār-i jang

The wick, in the musket's ear, often
Was saying, "Hot's the market of war!"

Our author now describes the opponents of the assembled nobility. First a blackguard of the *ethnē* of the Abyssinians (*qaum-i habsh*), black within as without, fired his musket from the pulpit in the direction of those two intrepid worthies and their companions; then followed vicious, furious hand-to-hand combat.[484] This account matches Wārid's description of the participation of the Abyssinians, except that our nameless author adds a casual ethnic insult against them. But then, as the fighting progressed, a strange thing happened. The battle, says our author, slowly turned into one between the Mughals and the Afghāns. This, it is worth noting, was the third mutation of the conflict. What had begun as a quarrel between a jeweler and a group of shoe-sellers and turned into an instance of Hindu-Muslim tension had now become an inter-ethnic battle.

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[484] Anonymous, "Sahīfa-yi Iqbāl," f. 51a.

The struggle assumed war-like proportions in its latest incarnation. The camels loaded with gunpowder (*masālih-i ātishbāzī*) which had accompanied the elephant-mount of the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula were brought to the external courtyard (*sahn*) of the mosque; a rare spectacle of fireworks then ensued, and from the shock of the *bādalich* artillery, "an earthquake shook the pillars of the mosque" (*tazalzal dar arkān-i masjid fitāda*).[485] The common and the barbaric amongst the Mughals, and the provocateurs and the leaders of the wicked mouse-eating Arabs (*khāssa-i ashrār-i ᶜarab-i mūshkhor*), who are an instance of Qurᵓānic expression that "*the Arabs are more obstinate in their refusal to acknowledge the truth and in their hypocrisy [than settled people]*"[486], now appear to have joined cause: for when rockets ("little mouse", *mushāk*) flew from every side and set the battlefield aflame, this group engaged in the ritual (*rasm*) of Afghān-killing. Given that the Mughals suffered from this barbaric deficiency of character, and the fact that the followers of Sher Afkan Khān and Rauzan al-Daulā were mostly Afghān, the Mughals and Arabs attacked and killed them from every side until they were exhausted from the bloodshed. They took the group of shoemakers and placed them in the rear, and positioned themselves in in the courtyard and continued to fight. In all this battle and affray, Sher Afkan Khān Bahādur was wounded, and that wound was received by the hand of one of that rank of the tumultuous ones of the era .[487]

After this the matter slipped from the hand, and because of predominance of those of the Mughal ethnē, the firm feet of the Afghān tribe became unsteady and they took to weeping and lamenting. The great and small of that people (*taifa*), tired and wounded, resisted these contemptible folks, who, we are reminded, were after all the helpers and assistants of the riotous

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[485] Nothing is known about this form of artillery. See William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration.* (London: Luzac, 1903), 129–30.
[486] Qurᵓān 9.97: الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا
[487] Anonymous, "Sahīfa-yi Iqbāl," f. 51b.

Shoemakers. For in truth, asserts our author, the shoemakers were not capable of displaying valor and steadfastness in the face of the Afghān braves; so their leaders took charge of the affair; taking pity on the shoemakers, they gave them respite. After the sanctity of the treasure of the mosque was destroyed, the Afghāns saw no way out, and so in the end they took the path to the nearby house of Dilīr Dil Khān, brother of Sher Afkan Khān. The Afghāns considered it the alleyway of safety and dragged themselves to its security from the harassment of the mosque. The author offered a succinct poetic evaluation of this retreat:

> *Gurīz-i bih hangām sar bar bi jāy*
> *bih az pahalwānī wa sar zīr pāy*
>
> To run away in time with your head in place
> Is better than playing tough – and your head at your feet.

Despite the defeat, the author looked to the bright side. He thought that the brave Afghāns deserved a thousand commendations; for despite the overwhelming superiority of the Mughals, they did not give up and showed such bravery in bringing their leader to safety and security.[488] This was in contrast to many other great men, from whose cries and laments every breath was an instance of the day of resurrection. Finding no escape, they hurled themselves in chaotic fashion from the domes around the courtyard of the mosque, which is known for its great height and extent, and considered it a great bounty to drag away the little life that remained, and so fled in every direction.

While the Afghāns were worthy of praise and the nobility of pity, the same could not be said of other groups, such as the bystanders who were just as useless as the ornamental sword carried by a the proclaimer. But stranger than all this was the "heavily contaminated" (*shadīd palīd*) community of the shoemakers, for whom our author reserves the full brunt of his criticism.

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[488] Ibid., f. 52a.

These unworthy men of base employment, who did not raise their hands (*dast afrāz*) but to make shoes (*pā afrāz*) used those very objects for the very first time against spectators; with that very blow of the hand became unable to distinguish head from toe, and the discipline (*sar-rishta*) to fight fell from their hands, and fled headlong (*sar rās*t) by confusedly (*sarāsīma*) throwing their feet into the valley of escape. The magnitude of this event was expressed in verse:[489]

> *Hamānā ki tā rastakhīz īn sukhan*
> *myiān buzurgān nagardad kuhan*
>
> Until the Day of Judgment this matter
> Will not become old news for the great

Having described the event, the author now turns to its aftermath. The first thing he notes is the proliferation of poetry about it. A famous verse of hidden origin (*mashhūr-i lisān al-ghayb*) and was offered by one of the persons of refined temperament; it is said that the verse manifested itself on his tongue from the beyond (*gūyā az ghayb bar zabān-ash dādand*). Because it captures the event (*sūrat-i qaziya*) and is appropriate here, it is related here:

> *Jang-i Pāpūsh firoshān chūn masjid dīdam*
> *Misra-yi Hāfiz Shirāzī marā yād āmad*
> *Zi bam o kafash o lakad bar sar-i arkān-i daghal*
> *Hālati raft ki mihrāb bi faryād āmad*
>
> When I saw the war of the shoe-sellers in the mosque
> A verse of Hāfiz Shirāzi came to my mind
> From the kicks and blows to the heads of the pillars of villainy [the nobility]
> They became so that the very alcove cried out

The author then tells us that many poems about this event circulated far and wide in rumor and report (*alsan wa afwāh sāyir o dāyir shuda*) in the vocabulary in Persian, Hindi, and the "mixed" (*rīkhta*) language. In the final assessment, however, whatever happened was the fault of those

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[489] Ibid., f. 52b.

curs, the shoemakers. In his condemnation he presents us with an enigmatic line, the import of which is however unambiguous :

Sag dānad wa kafshgar ki dar ambān chīst

A dog and a shoemaker know what's in the leather bag.

In conclusion, the author expresses the earnest desire that may God preserve our contemporaries from the evil of the tongues of the masses, who are like beasts (*sharr-i zabān-i ᶜawāmm-i kālā-naᶜm*), so that 'The doors of infamy may close … and the mouth of enemies may close'.[490] Finally, we are told that the vizier of the domains Iᶜtimād al-Daulā Bahādur was quite scared and agitated due to the occurrence of this unpleasant event, which had happened without [anyone's] desire or intention. But his highness, because of his perfect kindness and grace, did not withdraw his regard from the vizier and remained generous in his favors. The vizier related the particularities of the event in minute detail, without any omissions or prevarications, and the paymaster of the domains Samsām al-Daula and Amir al-Umarāᵓ Khān-i Daurān Khān were present in the palace with their entire retinues in perfect obedience. The emperor took no sides (*tarf-i hīch tarf nagirafta*), in every case in accordance with the injunction *"Judge between men and justice"*[491] and so this dissension (*fitna*) finally settled down.[492]

The *Felicitous Pages* provide a remarkable insight into a vision of the shoe-sellers' riot, articulated from a perspective that is in the proximity of imperial power. Our author is happy to utter veiled critiques of the behavior of a nobleman as high as Raushan al-Daula, though his own views cannot be classified according to the neat categories of "ethnicity", "faction", or "religion". While his frequent quotations from the Qurᵓān and the traditions of the Prophet

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[490] Ibid., f. 53a.
[491] Qurᵓān 38:26: فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ
[492] Anonymous, "Sahīfa-yi Iqbāl," f. 53b.

strongly suggest that our author was a highly educated Muslim, his writings bear a profound distaste for his low-class co-religionists and do not portray the events in a religious light. In a similar fashion, he appears to hold Raushan al-Daula, "the Orifice of the State", in some contempt, but heaps praises on his subordinate ally Sher Afkan Khān. He disapproves of this lower-class uprising but offers witty metaphors in describing the thrashings administered to the magistrate. In all these respects, his writing stands in sharp contrast to Wārid's wild accusations and splenetic exultation at the humiliation of the nobility. The *Felicitious Pages* exhibits the very political conservatism of which Wārid disapproves.

Perhaps most intriguingly, the author of the *Felicitous Pages* presents an aestheticized literary evocation of a subject that had until now fallen under the purview of the chronicle. In this regard, it might be seen as belonging to a literary culture that emphasized the importance of not only the novel, but also the everyday; not only the abstract, but also the real. The fact that it belonged to this wider culture of engagement with the social and material aspects of everyday life did not engender friction with the conservative attitudes of the author, whose most fervent wish was to not become the subject of public discussion, just as Khʷāja Khalīl must have desired only a decade earlier. But through this aestheticization the author nevertheless recorded and formalized the novelty of a popular action that had transgressed all limits hitherto known.

The author of the *Felicitious Pages* dismissed the question of religious sentiment as having played a material role in the events of March 1729, just as Wārid had done. To this end, both authors terminate their account with the suppression of the conflict and the restoration of order. In so doing, they neglect to mention a detail that is presented without comment in Khush Hāl's account: "The rioters refused to bury the corpse except at the house of Subhkaran, and so it was enacted." This strange gesture cannot be understood except within the zone where religious

sentiment and political order blur and merge. No surprise, then, that Wārid and the author of the *Felicitous Pages* excluded this detail, for it violated the narrative of the search for justice within the established legal framework espoused by the former, or that of bold-faced subaltern impudence employed by the latter. But to ignore this perspective is to fail to understand a fundamental part of the process of mobilization that led the shoe-sellers into the mosque; it is, in other words, to reject a part of the narrative of the uprising that the rioters created for themselves.

Ashob

While we do not have unmediated access to the sensibilities and motivations of the shoemakers, a view from the perspective of an Islamic orthodoxy is preserved in the *History of the Martyrdom of Farrukh Siyar and the Reign of Muhammad Shāh* of Muhammad Bakhsh Ashob. Born in 1716 in Shāhjahānābād Delhi, Ashob is forthright in stating his personal witnessing of some of the events he describes. The author, who would have been thirteen years of age in the year of the riot, certainly presents a detailed account of the events of the riot. But there are reasons to be cautious about accepting the veracity of his narration at face value.

First of all, Ashob was not among the rioting masses; his perspective, like all the others we have surveyed, was that of Delhi's literate elite. Secondly, the *History* was written in 1782 at the behest of Captain Jonathan Scott – the British Orientalist who had translated Irādat Khān's *Memoirs* into English. Ashob's writings therefore were produced under the unequal conditions of British interest in Mughal Decline at the very moment of the rapid extension of British Imperial rule in the subcontinent. Perhaps most importantly, while Ashob's version of the shoemakers' riot may have been derived from his personal recollections of the event, his writing drew heavily on the *Felicitous Pages* encountered above. This was not an influence that Ashob acknowledged;

indeed, as we shall see, Ashob's text reproduced the some of the elegant phrases of the *Felicitious Pages* verbatim, but with a different narrative spin altogether.[493]

Where the original text had first informed us of Subhkaran as an appraiser (*muqīm*), Ashob adds the epithet "a Hindu", who was said to have enjoyed a long association with Raushan al-Daula; the influence of this official, says Ashob, led Subhkaran to the exalted position of trust of the royal jewel-house by his knowledge of the dignified and profound culture of the imperial court (*farhang-i masabb-dār-i bādshāhī*) which had also led him to proximity with the lord chamberlain (*khān-i sāmān*). In his capacity as an employee of the royal jewel-house, Subhkaran had reason to visit the houses of the high nobility, and so had traveled from the residence of the eunuch Hāfiz Jawāhar ("Guardian of Jewels") Khān to the home of Hāfiz Khidmatgār Khān, who was the superintendent of that the jewel-house. Subhkaran was traveling from the south side of the city, and so passed through the market of the shoe-sellers (*kafash firoshān*) in Saᶜd Allāh Khān Square.

While the anonymous author of the *Felicitous Pages* writes for an audience he imagines is thoroughly familiar with the city, Ashob provides added local detail: he tells us this market is situated on the southern path of the exalted fort, and the people of "that community" (*jamāᶜat*) are all Panjābī Lāhorīs; they collect in a multitude on the Friday and adorn large shops on both sides of the street. All of these people, says Ashob, are Muslims, devout (*dīndārān*), and pray according to stipulation. This was especially true of the elders (*kalāntarān*) and leaders (*mihtar*), who are bearded and of jolly appearance (*pur khush zāhir*). Many of them have memorized the words of God (the Qurᵓān) and are versed in jurisprudential affairs (*masla o masāyil-i fiqhī*). Having provided this ethnographic context to accentuate the coming conflict, Ashob tells us that

[493] On Ashob, see Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1st ed. reprinted. (London: British Museum, 1966), III.943–5.

the palanquin of the aforementioned Subhkaran reached this lot during the nights of Barāt, when the sects of the Muslims (*musalmānān*) and the Hindus (*hunūd*), were busily engaged in lighting firecrackers such as "the parrot" (*tota*) and "the mole" (*chachundhar*), as well as those which produce a large amount of light and noise and are called "little mouse" (*mūshak*) in Persian.[494]

It seems that both communities were participating in the lighting of these firecrackers, to the extent that there was no thoroughfare for passersby. Ashob himself seems to have little sympathy for these popular traditions, for he tells us that according to reports it was one of these "infernal" (lit., "world-burning", *ᶜālam-soz*) little-mouse squibs that fell into the palanquin of Subhkaran, burning his court-robes (*libās-i fākhir*) like the inciting sort of fire that is used on hornet's nests, or rather that on rodents' lairs. Subhkaran's servants ran to punish those responsible, and there was a "harsh exchange of words" (*guftagū-yi shadīd*) between the two parties. Again we encounter the standard pattern of escalation to violence: the matter proceed from contumely and abuse (*sitam o dushnām*), says Ashob, to fists and blows and pushing and shoving (*musht o lakad o kashmakash*). Although Subhkaran's servants were armed, they were outnumbered by the multitude of shoemakers, and the sword and shield of one of the footmen of the vanguard was taken away. But unlike previous accounts, Ashob tells us that Subhkaran bore the stain of this dishonor and humiliation (*bī harmatī o bad nāmī*) on his heart as he returned to his own house. There he summoned his servants with words of censure and reproof (*zajr o malāmat*) in order to find out who had started the fighting. These servants replied convincingly that they had not begun the conflict and produced the footman who had so unceremoniously been deprived of his

[494] Mirzā Muhammad Bakhsh Ashob, "Tārīkh-i Shahādat-i Farrukh Siyar Wa Julūs-i Muhammad Shāh," n.d., f. 56b, British Library APAC Or. 1832.

weapons and battered in face and body by the shoemakers' blows. This person returned on the same night and stoked up the flames of the conflict. People from each side gathered widely.[495]

Accentuating the role of Subhkaran's men more than in the other narratives, Ashob tells us that all sorts of impudent villains (*pawāj-i khīra sar*), resolved on revenge, thronged in great numbers and began to search the houses [of the shoemakers] seeking recompense for what had passed. Fate brought a small child (*kudakī*) of the community of shoemakers into the hands of that unworthy mob, who beat it to death with fists and blows. This senseless act was the evidence of the mob's cowardice (*buzdilī*), but it was not enough: for these villains then went on to accost an elder of that community (*taifa*). This white-bearded personage, says Ashob, had been long famed for his steadfast piety and religiosity, made the pilgrimage and memorized the Qurᵓān, and was commonly (if generically) called Hājī Hāfiz. This respected elder, having heard the cries of the unfortunate child, arose from his string-bed and went forth bare-footed to rescue him from the tyrannical multitude. He too was murdered and martyred by the God-rejecting infidel sword; and those prideful ones were utterly convinced that they had found proper recompense for their humiliation. They left the body of the leader (*sardār*) of that community (*firqa*) in the very place where they killed him, and there remained the corpse, lying in the dust and blood of martyrdom. The mob returned to their own homes, not knowing that a day would dawn again after the injustice (*nā-haqq*) of the night, and that a great tumult was just around the corner.

Writing in 1782, the aged Ashob deviated in this way from the script presented in the other accounts before him as he recalled the events a half-century in distance; our author remembered not just an unfortunate quarrel but an act of Hindu persecution and a moment of Muslim victimization. But the Muslims of Ashob's youth did not suffer passively at the hands of their

[495] Ibid., f. 57a.

Hindu tormentors. For when the sun rose and the day was bright, the shoe-sellers of these two paths and in fact those of the entire city came and sat by the corpse of the martyr, which was soon to become the symbol of oppression to which the community would rally. Around the corpse they came to the accord to seek blood and vengeance, and decided that until the murderer and his employer were not killed, the body would not be lifted or buried. Where the author of the *Felicitous Pages* had dismissively stated that the city's riff-raff joined the shoemakers out of a misguided or even malicious desire to "defend the faith", for Ashob the corpse was the truly potent symbol of Hindu oppression and the matter of the defense of Islam a serious affair. For it is at this point, says the author, that a large group of the barbaric and vulgar (*jihāl wa aubāsh*) Muslims also gathered, and considered joining these men in their thirst for vengeance from the infidels to be an obligation of the defense of the Faith and the protection of Muslims.[496]

Among them, Ashob lists the various groups of itinerant idlers (*farq-i mukhtalif o tawayif-i bīkār*) of the Arabs, ᶜAjamīs, Turks, Tājīks, and Abyssinians, Rūmīs, Mughals, Hindūstānīs and [*illegible*]: the same ethnic groups from across the wider Muslim world that represented the pleasing diversity of the glorious capital (cf. Chapter One) now appeared as dark figures who plunged the city into disorder. These rootless cosmopolitans joined the shoe-sellers in seeking to enact lawful retribution (*qisās*) on that faithless infidel oppressor. They threw the corpse on a string-bed, and with cries of "The faith! The faith!" (*dīn dīn gūyand*) they threw it down at the door of Subhkaran. Despite his espousal of a cause that Ashob has already typecast as a Muslim one, our author considers this action to be illegitimate: it was because of the vileness (*qabāhat*) of this action that Subhkaran fled to the house of the lord chamberlain ᶜIzzat al-Daula Sher

[496] Ibid., f. 57b.

Afkan Khān Safdar Jang, without regard for the fact that he and his servants were implicated in the murder.

Subhkaran's flight to Sher Afkan Khān's house was no accident. A complex set of ties bound these men together. First of all, Sher Afkan Khān's son was married to the daughter of Raushan al-Daula Zafar Khān Bahādur Rustam Jang, so that two men were closely connected, sharing common origins and ties (*ham shahrī wa ham dilī wa ham nisbatī*). Subhkaran too had strong ties with Raushan al-Daula and his position as the appraiser of the jewel-house was dependent on the lord chamberlain. Now he had arrived in secret, seeking succor from this sudden and unanticipated calamity, and the Muslims who were in uproar and tumult. It is worth noting that Ashob's view of the initial conflict as a religious one does not cause our author to suspend his historical analysis, which in this case requires the examination of the chains of honor and loyalty that bound the actors together in ways that determined their actions. While the author of the *Felicitous Pages* had protested that the accusation of protecting the jeweler was a stain on the honor of Sher Afkan Khān and contrary to the laws of noble conduct, Ashob presents a more subtle argument of cultural determinism: Sher Afkan Khān, says our author, observed the customs of valorous honor of the Hindūstān-born (*pās-i nāmūs-i shujāᶜat-i Hindūstān zāy*), and so girded his waist to protect he who had arrived unbidden at his house and sought refuge. For this reason he dismissed the great dissension and gave no heed to those who were complaining of the injury and injustice. Those protesting also lost hope of redress from this quarter and the corpse of the martyr continued to lie unburied at the door of the murderer.[497]

Ashob thus sets the scene for the conflict in three distinct moves. The first is that of the accidental quarrel in the streets, though its trajectory is significantly inflected by an act of Hindu

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[497] Ibid., 58a.

high-handedness. The second is the desire of the shoemakers and their allies for justice and their desire to punish this transgression against Islam. These are natural and legitimate motivations, though Ashob they should be held in some restraint: certainly they do not provide an excuse for the city's ruffians to act as they please. The third involves the precise links that bound Subhkaran, Sher Afkan Khān and Raushan al-Daula, and the cultural world of the "Hindūstān-born", which is seen as ruled by established codes that it is impossible to violate.

The combination of these three factors ensured that the dispute could not be solved except by recourse to the emperor, and so the crowd proceeded to the house of the emperor (*khāna-yi bādshāhī*) to plead with him. His highness the shadow of God was returning at that time from the garden of Jaᶜfar Khān where had gone to visit Nawwāb Qudsiya (his mother)[498] when his procession was interrupted in the middle of the road by cries of "Faith! Faith!" and "Justice! Justice!" and the reality of the oppression of that tyrannical infidel (*kāfir*) was reported to him. The emperor ordered the vizier to send a slave to find the accused and enact justice. But, says Ashob, the emperor's order and the vizier's enactment had no effect because the jeweler was an appraiser of the harem (*maᶜman*), which is impenetrable to all injunctions. The jeweler's protectors did not awake from the dream of negligence and evil and persevered in their own barbaric concealment of his crimes. And so the whole of the Thursday was spent in these questions and answers and the case was not resolved. The complainants and the people of tumult and strife collected every one from their own houses and the corpse of the dead man still remained at the door of the murderer and was left unburied. The next day was a Friday. This,

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[498] Ghulam Husain Khan, *A Translation of the Sëir Mutaqherin; or View of Modern Times, Being an History of India, from the Year 1118 to Year 1194 (this Year Answers to the Christian Year 1781-82) of the Hidjrah, Containing, in General, the Reigns of the Seven Last Emperors of Hindostan, and in Particular, an Account of the English Wars in Bengal ... To Which the Author Has Added Critical Examination of the English Government and Policy in Those Countries, down to the Year 1783.*, 219.

adds Ashob helpfully for those who may not know, is the day of the congregation of the Muslims. Now the shoe-sellers escalated the conflict.[499]

Our author notes the role of common mendicants (*faqīr-i ᶜāmm*), who resounded their popular to the people of Islam. In response Muslims girded their waists in protection of the steadfast faith and headed towards the congregational mosque from every place and every neighborhood. These tumultuous folk (*ghūghāyān*) crowded into it to such an extent that there was no place for the preacher to lead the prayers and the alcove and the pulpit were surrounded. But the number of the mob continued to swell every second, especially the crowd of the Arab community (*firqa*) and the Abyssinians and Rūmīs. These men, Ashob tells us, were the fellow-travelers (*hamrāhīyān*) of Rūmī Khān and the clan (*biradarī*) of Sayyid Arab ᶜAlī Khān Baghdādī, who were the head gunners (*mingbāshīyān*) of the imperial artillery and the grizzled sergeants (*jamāᶜadārān-i qadīm*) of the regiment (*risāla*) of Haydar Qulī Khān the master of artillery (*mīr ātish*). All of these men were brave and daring.

Besides this group, Ashob acknowledges that "event-seeking" (*waqai-talab*) soldiers were present; but he protests that they had absolutely no desire or wish to cause evil or tumult or strife or discord. Instead they listened closely (*gūsh bar āwarda*) to the call to holy war (*ghaza o jihād*) in that battlefield, and considered it to be one of the greatest such places of battle. So they came with equipped with appropriate arms and accoutrements, and came to stand side by side with the tumultuous folk and surrounded the alcove and pulpit. they prevented the prayer-leader (*namāzbān*) and the the proclaimer from leading the prayer or uttering the proclamation with great roughness, and accused the magistrate and jurisprudent (*qāzī wa muftī*) of protecting the infidels. The irate mob took pains to teach and chastise the officials of state and attacked them

[499] Ashob, "Tārīkh-i Shahādat-i Farrukh Siyar Wa Julūs-i Muhammad Shāh," f. 58b.

mercilessly. Even now, though, the mob appears to have behaved with a modicum of restraint: though they did not pull out the sword of murder and blood-spilling, they left nothing undone in actions worse than killing. The magistrate and his son were beaten almost to death by fists and blows and the Jurisprudent and the proclaimer were dragged from the pulpit and thrown to the ground and beaten to unconsciousness.[500]

Unlike the contemporary chroniclers who derived enjoyment from the spectacle of pious officials being dishonored, Ashob remained ambivalent about their humiliation; he noted the participation of foreign-born imperial servants, though he did not attribute to them motives save the abstract desire to "protect Islam". He adds a further group of soldiers who were looking for trouble to the mix, but makes it clear that they collectively thought the situation was one of "holy war". But, strikingly, Ashob does not spell out the basis of this autonomous decision – one which essentially enabled the lowly inhabitants of the city to conduct a "holy war" to "protect Islam" within the greatest mosque in the capital of a Muslim empire against the forces of its reigning sovereign.

We can be sure that the reigning sovereign did not share the crowd's perception of an imminent danger to Islam and the essential infidelity of his reign. In Ashob's account, as indeed in Khush Hāl's, the emperor acted in a regular and sensible fashion. He ordered that the vizier of the domains Iᶜtimād al-Daulā and the paymaster of the domains Raushan al-Daula Rustam Jang were to proceed with their forces and settle that disorder, so that the Friday prayer may be offered and the proclamation be read in accordance with the shining community (*millat-i bayzā*). Furthermore, the rioters should be treated in such a fashion that no one else should dare to obstruct the prayer and proclamation; and if any anyone were to oppose the aforementioned

[500] Ibid., f. 59a.

order then they should be chastized. Both nobles headed with their forces to the mosque on the basis of this command. The vizier entered the mosque from the northern side first and engaged himself in calming down the tumult.

Ashob suggests that the vizier took a very diplomatic tack. In this account, matters were still amenable to some sort of resolution, for the vizier heard the claims of those who sought righteous vengeance on behalf of the "martyred and oppressed" Hājī Hāfiz from the oppressive infidel. Again, Ashob the historian provides details and analysis absent from the *Felicitous Pages*. He reports that the vizier heard the pleaders' account and declared himself in favor it, so joining himself with the Muslims. This eloquence ("fat-tonguedness", *charb zabānī*) threw some water on the flame of tumult; some of the protestors who had extended their hands against the judge and the proclaimer expressed contrition and shame at their actions; but in reality, says Ashob, an alliance with such a cunning nobleman merely increased the dissensions within their own ranks.

This succinct description provides us with a clue to the motives of the crowd. It had assembled to combat an injustice, though the nature of that injustice had transmuted in the past two days from a matter of criminal activity to the question of the defense of religion; the breadth of the solidarity which brought a multi-ethnic crowd, armed to the teeth, to the mosque was possible because the injustice was not articulated as inflicted by high on low, but by Hindu on Muslim – a perspective to which Ashob himself was sympathetic. The strategy of the crowd was now to argue that a state which did not provide justice to Muslims could not be a Muslim state. The activities by which the state ceremonially reproduced itself in the minds of its subjects therefore had to be ritually thwarted. Such interference had become so enmeshed in the language of everyday politics by the first part of the eighteenth century that each side anticipated and planned

for the moves of the other. If the forces of the state were watching the events in the mosque, the rioters made a large show of brandishing their muskets and swords; when the the proclaimer attempted to recite the claims of the ruler and the duties of the ruled, he was physically assaulted: a mark of contempt and opposition, but not a signal of homicidal intent. When the nobility responded and attempted to convince the mob that the apparatus of state recognized and validated their claims within the framework of the dominance of Islam *as the mob recognized it*, a section of the crowd withdrew its opposition to the legitimating activities of the ruler's employees. But, at the same time, the nobility had arrived in force, with their armed contingents and their artillery and powder in good order. Past precedent had no doubt taught the high nobility of state about the unpredictability, fractiousness, and power of the mob.

Now, says Ashob, at the very moment that the situation had begun to stabilize, Raushan al-Daula burst into the scene with his own escort and forces. These were composed entirely of barbaric Afghāns of Khurja and Sikandra and other districts near Delhi, and of Shāhjahānpur, Shamsābād and Farrukhābād, which, we are told, is the Afgānistān of Hindustān. All of these Afghāns were puffed up on their own bravery. There were troops from the small towns (*qasbāt*) near Thanesar and the dependencies of Sirhind, who were extremely loyal; they were in perpetual wait for the day when they might display their faithfulness. Arrayed before their master, they entered from the eastern entrance, which is the imperial gate.[501]

Now Ashob reminds us of Sher Afkan Khān, his Hindūstāni origins and links to Raushan al-Daula and Subhkaran. Because the khān sought to protect the accursed Subhkaran who was hidden in his house, he wished that the murdered traders' kin should consent to accepting blood-money and so release the murderer. When he heard that Raushan al-Daula and Iᶜtimād al-Daula

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[501] Ibid., f. 59b.

had hastened to the mosque, he too left quickly with his entire contingent, all of whom were Hindūstāni high-born troops (*hindūstān-zāyān wa shurfa-yi nāmūs o daulat*) and had long been faithful to the khān. This party now entered the mosque from the southern gate.

With the rioters hemmed in on all sides, Raushan al-Daula now ordered the Afghāns with him to close the gates of the mosque and not to let any others enter it. The Afghāns were armed and sealed off the gates, but the rioters (*ahl-i ghūghā*) were waiting for just such an action. So they began to cry "The faith! The faith!" They said "Strike the infidels on the face!" (*dahān-i kāfĪrān ra bizanīd*) and used other rough and unwise language in uttering curses and abuse, and girded themselves for combat. The shoe-sellers who sought blood in vengeance for the murdered considered these two noblemen to be their enemies for protecting the murderer. Even though they had no arms or accoutrements, they extended the hand of bravery to the foot of daring and resolution and took their shoes (*pāy-afrāz*) off. But the shoemakers also had other weapons: they had previously secreted metal implements (*na*ᶜ*lī-hā*)[502] into the mosque and hidden them there; and they had been gathering bricks and stones wherever they could find them and holding them in the hems of their long shirts. They hurled these projectiles in a disorderly fashion from every side at the heads and faces of these two great nobles. The first attack was directed against ᶜIzzat al-Daula Sher Afkan Khān who was renowned for his bravery in the field. Where the author of the *Felicitious Pages* had enjoyed the application of force against the magistrate, Ashob crowed happily about the assault on the nobility. Discarding that author's Qurᵓānic reference, Ashob used imagery reminiscent of that employed by Wārid, telling us that some of those high-flying birds (shoes) preferred to perch on the head and turban of Sher Afkan Khān. Others passed him

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[502] This word is obscure. Steingass explains it as "[i]n the form of a horse-shoe"; perhaps it refers to the metal implements or ingots used in the making of clogs and shoes. Irvine, drawing from the same text, perhaps reads the word as *na*ᶜ*līn* and translates it as "iron-heeled shoes".

by and took up Raushan al-Daula's turban's golden crest (*turra-yi zarrīn*) and its trailing strings (*jhalar-i chira-yi muqāysh*) as the sticks and straws with which to make their nests.[503]

As the dignity of these two nobles came under fierce assault, the vizier remained ensconced near the pulpit and to the side of all combat, and watched this battlefield from the sidelines. The Afghān servants of Raushan al-Daula were not the sorts to patiently forebear such treatment, and so they tightened their fists around their swords and shields and went forward to dissuade that imprudent lot. This provoked the event-seeking braves of every community (*firqa*) to step forward to defend the shoe-sellers, particularly the community of the Arabs and the Abyssinians and the Rūmīs of the regiment (*risāla*) of Hāyder Quli Khān; and the accompanists of Rūmī Khān and Sayyid Arab Ali Khān, and the captains of artillery (*mingbashiyān-i topkhāna*).[504] These soldiers were prepared with weapons of war: with flintlocks (*bandūqhā-yi chaqmakī*), Ottoman pistols (*rūmī pistūlhā*) and European guns (*tabānchahā-yi firangī*) in their hands, all of which were loaded and primed (*tīr-band wa sāchma-dār*), and with drawn swords, they now advanced to meet the Afghāns. The group of the Mughal-born from the Mughal Quarter (*mughalpura*), who, notes Ashob, are by nature are turbulent and factionalists (*shūra-pīshī wa khāna-jangī*), were ready on one side with their swords and arrows drawn on their bows. One of the fearless Abyssinian race (*habshī nizhād*) fired a gun in the direction of the two exalted nobles, to whom the Afghāns had rallied. Both ranks intermingled and contended. Slowly the Afghān assault, with its greater numbers and strength, began to put the unarmed shoe-sellers to flight.[505]

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[503] Ashob, "Tārīkh-i Shahādat-i Farrukh Siyar Wa Julūs-i Muhammad Shāh," f. 60a–b.
[504] On this, see Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, 157.
[505] Ashob, "Tārīkh-i Shahādat-i Farrukh Siyar Wa Julūs-i Muhammad Shāh," f. 61a.

Where the author of the *Felicitous Pages* had told us that the fight "slowly" became one between Mughals and Afghāns, Ashob provides a more detailed explanation. He tells us that the vizier was accompanied by his Mughal troops, who were also prepared for battle. These men had not the temerity to step forward because of the vizier's strict discipline (*qadghan*). But they lost their restraint as they saw the shoemakers and the Mughal rabble of the marketplace being worsted by the Afghāns. So they employed their bows and arrows against the Afghāns; meanwhile the other Mughal cavalry which was stationed outside the mosque in the avenue of the bāzār now ascended the stairs to the doors, and quickly wresting their control from the Afghāns, entered the mosque. The vizier's elephant and camel corps also followed, and a rare spectacle of enflaming and burning (*raushan-sūzī*) followed as the shoe-sellers and the unarmed rioters became irrelevant to the fight. The work of battle and honor (*nāmūs o nang*) fell upon the Mughals and the Afghāns, who engaged in a fierce fight with copious shedding of blood. At the end of it all the Afghāns put up a stiff resistance but some of their leaders and many of their soldiers fell victim to this Afghān-killing; so they were forced to step back, and circled around the two noblemen in their defense.[506]

Despite the Afghāns' heroic defense, Sher Afkan Khān received a wound to his right hand and his sword fell from his grasp; and some of his close companions were slain and wounded. The remainder did not have the capability to resist and so fled through the southern gate of the mosque. The Afghāns had formed a "shield of bodies" (*sīna sipar*) around and in front of Raushan al-Daula, and so protected him; but when they saw that Sher Afkan Khān had routed from the battlefield they too realized the necessity of retreat. Because the corpulence of their leader had rendered him incapable of spry or rapid movement, they lifted him on their shoulders

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[506] Ibid., f. 61b.

and backs and retreated broken and exhausted from the Southern gate too. When both the leaders had safely retreated, the others saw no point in standing their ground. So they left the mosque and went to the mansion of Dilīr Dil Khān the elder brother, which was just a few steps from the stairs of the mosque.[507]

Although Ashob believed in the rectitude of the shoemakers' cause, he reproduced the praises bestowed on the Afghān soldiers in the *Felicitous Pages* word for word. Like that author, he noted that the Mughal soldiery were busily engaged in "Afghān-killing" – a phrase which evokes the barbaric practices of pre-Islamic societies – but he added that they did so despite the injunctions and restraints of the vizier Qamar al-Dīn Bahādur. The Mughals, however, did not leave off blood-spilling; they wished to run to the mansion of Dilīr Dil Khān; to burn, break and demolish it; and capture and kill their opponents. In the end, they were made to desist after much severity and firmness, and so sheathed the Afghān-killing sword. Some other great nobles, who were old companions of Raushan al-Daula and were also present that day, ran out any which way they could from the battlefield, which had assumed the proportions of the desert of resurrection, where no one cared about any one else's pleas for aid. Because the exits from the mosque were intermittently shut, they hid in the arches around the mosque and in the corners and niches of its building. When the heat and noise of the event passed all limits, they ducked into the domes around the courtyard.[508] But when the tremors rocked that exalted building in its foundations, these helpless ones found no succor here either, and so they followed the 'custom of the ancient practice' (*bī-mahābā bi rasm-i ᶜādat-i qadīm*) and chaotically threw themselves down from the high arches which are to the east of the path of the Bāzār and fifteen feet above the level of the surface of the alley.

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507 Ibid., f. 62a.
508 Ibid., f. 62b.

In this connection Ashob reproduces the story of Aᶜzam Khān, which was excluded from the *Felicitous Pages* but found mention in Khush Hāl and Wārid. Aᶜzam Khān, says Ashob, belonged to the older gentry, and his corpulent frame was bedecked in the clothing of that era. When he jumped, he fell onto the thatching of the roof of a potter's large shop, which had countless items of earthenware within it; due to his great weight, the roof collapsed and the khān himself hung down from the rafters. The potter, who was master of the shop, was shocked at the breaking of his wares. He ran in with a bamboo cane that he had in his hand, and proceeded to beat the khān about the feet, so that the khān's soles were swollen and cracked and forbade sitting or rising from the cushion of greatness and exaltation. Ashob took this story and made its metaphorical meaning explicit. He explains that in this way, whenever the great ones of the age are reduced from exaltation to the humiliation of baseness and affliction, they witness the retribution for their protection of infidelity and the infidel in this very world with their own eyes. Looking back at the empire of his youth, the aged Ashob saw not an event that evoked the desirable literary qualities of astonishment and wonder, but an admonitory tale about the effects of deviating from religion. It should be noted that where the chronicler Wārid exulted in the humiliation of the nobles because of their pridefulness and vanity, Ashob thought their punishment was due to their neglect of religion. Ashob, in other words, could not help but see the conflict from a quintessentially sectarian perspective in a way that even the most sympathetic of the riot's contemporary chroniclers did not.

But this was not the end of the affair for Ashob. Ever the careful historian, he continued his analysis to the effects of the event. As a result of all of this unsought victory, the vizier achieved fame and renown as a great man and a vanquisher (*bi fīrūz-kāmī o nīk nāmī mashhūr o mārᶜūf*) especially among the common people (*khalq-i allāh*). Similarly, the image of the greatness and

intrepidity and braveness of the Mughal *ethnē* (*qaum*), their toil and efforts in preserving the honor of the steadfast faith, and their aid of the Muslims was etched in the consciousness of the common and the special alike. The matter was related in great detail to his highness by truth-telling news-reporters, which led to an increase in the honor (*ᶜizzat*) and trust accorded the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula.[509]

If the vizier had gained popularity because of his unexpected "protection of Islam", then the emperor too wanted his share of the affections of the masses. It is no doubt for this reason we are told that his highness instructed a eunuch that a special turban should be tied, which approximated the turban that was worn on the blessed head instead of the crown in those days. This was to be dispatched to the vizier, who was also to be presented with a sword and brought before the emperor with great kindness. After it was made perfectly clear to all and sundry that the emperor and the vizier were united in their protection of Islam, the vizier proceeded with all ceremony and care to the mosque, which was filled with corpses and the blood of the wounded. The vizier instructed Mughal macebearers (*yasāwālān*) that not even a single one of the rioters should not be given the courage to exist or stay, and the doors were handed over to strict guardians (*muᵓkalān-i shadid*). The *ᶜasr* prayer was offered in the enclosure of the sacred traces (*āsār-i sharīf*), and there was a thanksgiving prayer for an unexpected victory (*fath-i ghāybī*). Not content with this, greetings were expressed to the Prophet by ceremonies of presenting and offering (*īsār o nisār*) to the caretakers of the sacred enclosure of the holy footprint (*makān-i sharīf*).[510]

In looking back at the riot, Ashob shared the surprise of the other chroniclers who described the sudden and violent eruption of the masses. But unlike the others, Ashob was not shocked by the

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[509] Ibid., 63a.
[510] Ibid., 63b.

savagery of the unwashed. For him, the strangeness of the matter lay in the fact that in a thousand books of prose (*daftar-i inshāᵓ*) and diffused writings and poems, the capital of admonition for the people of intelligence (*ahl-i basīrat*) could be used in the manufactory of the recouping of pleasure (*dastgāh-i intiᵓāsh-i ᶜishrat*) by frivolous enemies to seek mirth and joy in conversation with a variety of topics of partisan blame (*malāmat*) and schadenfreude (*shamātat*). So, he noted, it had been for a long while now that the aforementioned event had served as the material for sweet-worded literature (*sukhan-i shīrīn kalām*). Frivolous folk had produced varieties of poetry in the forms of *ghazal* and *qasīda* and *masnavī* and *qitᶜa* and *rubāᶜī* in Persian and Hindī and had given evidence of their sweetness of speech (*dād-i shīrīn sukhanī*) with all sorts of colorful words and expressions. To this end, Ashob reproduced the verse about the alcove of the mosque crying out at the humiliation of the nobles. He attributed these words to the doctor of the domains Shaykh Husayn Shīrāzī, who was famed in the uttering of witticisms and railleries and bore the poetic nom-de-plume of "fame" (*shuhrat*). This attribution is doubtful, since the poet Ārzū tells us that Shuhrat died "four or five years" after the accession of Firdāus Ārāmgāh Muhammad Shāh.[511] But it is clear that such verse belonged to the expansive culture of satire that came to prominence with Niᶜmat Khān-i ᶜĀlī, who was himself a doctor. But if the *Felicitous Pages* served as a fine example of that culture of humor and literary aestheticization, it had already begun to fade in the minds of late-Mughal writers such as the rather more dour Ashob himself.

Before he expressed his sense of wonderment at these literary and partisan evocations of what should have been seen as a victory of Islam, Ashob provided a detailed account of the outcomes of the riot. We are told that the vizier happily dismissed the shoemakers from the mosque, and

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[511] Arzu, *Majma` al-nafayis*, 95.

this group returned "victorious and triumphant and happy and laughing". The three-day-old corpse of the martyr was prepared for burial, and the mansion of the murderer was demolished – though the murderer himself was not captured. The martyred victim was buried in that very place, says Ashob, and after a little while that quarry of infidelity became a habitation of Islam. A mosque was built firm and strong at his sepulcher with the bricks and rubble of that very mansion. A pool was also made within its limits, and it became a place of rest (*āb-kh*ʷ*urd*) and ablution for worshippers. So far, writes Ashob, despite the passage of uncountable years since the event, that mosque and pool remains a place of worship for the people of Islam and a place of ablutions (*mutawazza*ᶜ) for the common and the special, and also the mendicant author himself: for Ashob had passed through and crossed that alley, and washed in the pool and prayed in the mosque and recited the *fātiha* seeking forgiveness on the grave of the martyred hājī as others did. This, then, was Ashob's end to the narrative of the shoemakers' riot. An incident that had begun with an accident precipitated Hindu aggression against Islam. This was obviously unacceptable under the conditions of Islamic sovereignty. The formal re-establishing of sovereign order therefore required the literal demolition of the abode of infidelity. In the subcontinent, such actions were generally taken against temples; their destruction was seen as validating the falseness of Hindu gods, which were formally seen as in fact nothing more than lowly demons worshipped by the deluded. Such actions are not ordinarily read as having a political nature, and are instead firmly placed within the category of the (Muslim) religious, requiring justification or explanation in the individual or collective bigotry of an unenlightened ruler or the entire community of coreligionists. But in this instance, the vocabulary of "religious" action was used to utter a statement that many contemporaries construed as political. This is not to deny the religious sentiments of the proletarians of multifarious ethnicities who rose up against their

betters in the mosque: to the contrary, the defense of Islam was perhaps the only cause that might rally the fragmented communities of foreigners who had few other bases of identity or networks of support in the metropolis.

But Ashob's mythic prose, reminiscent of the "sword of Islam" hagiographies of warrior-saints such as Ghāzī Miyān, dealt ultimately with a decidedly mundane matter: a quarrel between a jeweler and a shoemaker gone wrong. In this form it was no different from other similar disturbances, such as those between the jewelers of the city and Kh^{w}āja Khalīl. But unlike that case, the very forms of conflict changed rapidly; so rapidly, in fact, that the matter was outside the comprehension of its observers, who recorded it for its "wonder", "novelty" and "rarity". A normal form of urban conflict, ideally resolved by the city's judicial apparatus, created an opposition between an elite and an artisanal community. In their quest for justice, the shoemakers became part of a broader alliance, rendering the issue one between the status of infidelity in a place where Islam was said to rule. By the third day the riot had turned into a challenge thrown in the face of the ruler, and then into a battle demarcated along the lines of "Afghān" and "Mughal". But it was not that the conflict changed from a criminal dispute to a religious and then an ethnic one. It was that each step of the conflict demanded the activation of a different form of community and the production of a different solidarity.

If this is indeed the case, the shoemakers' riot demonstrates that in the world of the late-Mughal city, forms of community were not stable; no one form predominated, no one form of identity was regarded as definitive. Indeed, all such forms changed rapidly in tune with the demands of the practice of urban politics. In this formulation, therefore, to be a Muslim was no more fundamental than it was to be a shoemaker or a nobleman or an Afghān or a Habshī. Islam, in this world, was just a form of community, no different than any other. There was a time and a

place to be a Muslim just as there was one to be a maker of shoes or a divinely-appointed ruler. And the rapid change between these forms of identity and community was the product of the condition of living in a city, of the relentless requirements of the practice of politics and the necessities of seeking justice or safeguarding interests.

There is another implication of this argument. If Islam in this context was nothing more than a form of community, then the act of the destruction of Subhkaran's mansion must be examined in another light. If Islam was the officially-sanctioned form of community, then the physical establishment of the sites of Islam on the "quarries of infidelity" were the defense or the assertion not of a community, but a *form* of community. In other words, that which appears to the modern reader as religious experience or sacral passion would in our period not always be distinguishable from the frenzy of secular political machination. The destruction of Subhkaran's mansion and the making of place of Islamic piety and proximity to God was certainly about the "defense of Islam": but the protection applied here was of a structure of community, the defense of which was the stated and supposed basis of the existence of the state itself.

It is in this context, therefore, that we see the emergence of a new subjectivity that is distinctively shaped by the forms of Mughal power as it exerted itself in the urban spaces of the empire. In a space formally demarcated as Islamic, among the blurring whirl of shifting communities, the shoemakers' riot reveals to us the emergence of a political subject that is marked by many identities but which belongs to none of them; and which can produce many solidarities but is tied to none of them. The subject on which these forms are cast is essentially neutral, defined by its potential to engage in a rich world of options and possibilities without being bound to any. In this way, perhaps, forces of Mughal politics, both centripetal and centrifugal, themselves generated a form of subjectivity we might recognize as modern.

Conclusion

The form of this subjectivity as it appears in the events of March 1729 is a signally neutral one. It is traced in the texts we have examined as an absence, a flexibility, or something external to known and predictable categories. While this should hardly be taken to suggest that there these were empty subjectivities which manifested form without content, their traces remain fleeting and their internal structures difficult to pierce. The shoemakers, after all, did not record their thoughts and feelings and opinions for us; though they were willing to question, to mock, and to obstruct the ruling order, they did not lead a revolution to overthrow it.

Despite its fleeting existence and thwarted development, the outlines of this interior self can be glimpsed in the poetry of the period. Ashob, we recall, had expressed amazement at the proliferation of popular poetry in Persian, Hindī, and the "mixed language" of *rīkhta* about the event; and even the exalted author of the *Felicitous Pages* had remarked on the rapid dispersal of poetry about the riot in orbits less stratospheric than his own. Of course, this should come as no surprise to us: for just as satire and poetry expressed opinions and provided the network by which to share them and to conjoin them into solidarities, so too might poetry serve to fix the memory of a political event, itself becoming the basis for further elaboration in later iterations.

One such poem, written in the "mixed" language from which Urdu descends, is preserved in the writings of Hafiz Mahmud Shirani.[512] In these final pages I present its translation in order to see what it might reveal about the internal selves of the riotous shoemakers themselves. Sherani tells us that it was written by the poet who held the nom-de-plume of Bī-Nawā ("The Unfortunate"), who had migrated to Delhi from the small Punjabi town of Sunām. Shirani's examination of the

[512] Mahmud Shirani, *Maqalat-i Hafiz Mahmud Shirani*, ed. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani (Lahaur: Majlis Tarraqi-yi Adab, 1966), 130–145.

poetic biographies of the later eighteenth century suggests that Bī-Nawā appears to have been a marginal figure in Delhi's literary scene during the early reign of Muhammad Shāh, and his memory did not endure long after his death. But it is significant that the poet was remembered as a witty and ingenious (*shūkh-chasm wa zarīf*) personage who produced "jests" (*latīfa*). He was, in other words, precisely the sort of middling and commonplace poet who was not considered to have any particular literary merit but achieved a limited fame for writing a poem that expressed the zeitgeist of that particular moment. Indeed, Shirani tells us that the poet Shauq, writing about 1785, noted that Bī-Nawā's poem was still on the lips of people in his day – a testament not only to the enduring memory of the event but the popularity of the perspective enshrined in the poem.[513] Bī-Nawā's poem, it is obvious, does not express the sentiments of the shoemakers or represent their subjective view of the events at hand. In a much more limited fashion, however, it can be safely argued that what the poem does represent is a perspective that was popularly seen as expressive; it acquired a velocity and frequency in the networks of political interchange discussed in in previous pages. In this way the poem fixed a memory in the popular imagination long after the actual political circumstances and possibilities of the event had become impossible to conceive. This was no accident: Bī-Nawā was clearly a competent poet in Persian, and had deliberately produced the poem in the "mixed" tongue because he sought a popular audience in a wider ambit than the elite literary poets of the era. In doing so, he was precisely the sort of versifier the author of the *Felicitious Pages* mentioned, without of course deigning to name him or to bring his lowly language into his own more rarified production.

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[513] Ibid., 131–133; For Shauq, see C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (Psychology Press, 2002), 877.

Mukhammas in censure of Turra Bāz Khān

Mukhammas dar muzammat-i turra bāz khān
01 Yeh kyā sitam hai ai falk-i harza nābkār
02 Marīkh phir kē tez kiya hai khanjar kī dhār
03 Jutē farosh mard-i musalmān dīn dār
04 Subkaran Jauharī nē liyā hai sitam se mār
05 Sang-i jafā se chūr kiya laᶜl-i ābdār

06 Mochī aur lucchē ikatthē allāh ko karēn yād
07 Qāzī o kotwāl son kartēn phirēn faryād
08 Kahtēn hai bādshāh sē dilāo hamārī dād
09 Ikatthā ho jor [zur] bāndh kufr par karēn jihād
10 Tā hashr dīn dīn muhammad ho bar qarār

11 Lucchē o mochī ikatthē masjid mēn jā kē baith
12 Habshī arabī ikatthē ho mimbar ghēr baith
13 Tarwār tīr tarkash bandūq sab samaith
14 Qāzī kā kādhā halwa mufti ka kuchlā paith
15 Mēniᶜ huē namāz ko uth baithe kaī hazār

16 Nawwāb Turra Bāz nē sun kar ye mājrā
17 Masjid ko ho sawār shitābī se ā chadhhā
18 Bolā karo namāz karo tāᶜat-i khudā
19 Qāzī nabī kā naᵓib harmat rakhho rawā
20 Dangal mē khāss o āmm sē jab ye kahā pukār

21 Jūtē farosh bīch padē ā kē khalbalī
22 Kēton kē kanē dhīlē huē aur ᶜaql talī
23 Be hadd shumār marhala sē jūtīyān chalī
24 Kyā nayī kyā purānī ganwārū o ghitlī
25 Lāhorī saif khānī charan manda bhatta dār

26 Tab zar libās bola abas kot chhātī hai
27 Yāron burē samīn kā na koī sanghātī hai
28 Izzat gayī to jūtē se ab jān jātī hai
29 Ab bāt kuch na banatī hai aur ban na ātī hai
30 Ab mujh ko sīdhiyon sē shitābī liyo utār

31 Dastūr-i bādshāh nē pīl o piāda sāth
32 Nawwāb turra bāz ke ūpar chalāyē hāth
33 Do sar padē ladāyī [wa] chhūyē fath kē hāth
34 Bandūq lāgī bājnē hoyī din ko chāndnī rāt
35 Masjid mē ā pukārē farishtē ke mār mār

36 Bhidh gayē <u>abas</u> kē bīch mughal aur pathān sab

37 Pājī nafar sipāhī [wa] nawwāb o khān sab
38 Lē kar salāh hāth mē dhayē nadhān sab
39 Talwār tīr tarkash jamdhar kon bāndh sab
40 Girijā gagan ladāyī kā barsē lahū kī dhār

41 Lalkār khēt bīch padē jo najīb thē
42 Kītē hoyē shahīd jo haq kē habīb thē
43 Zakhmī hoyē pathān jo jang kē mujīb thē
44 Ghat gayē lambī shān ladē jo gharīb thē
45 Yeh fath dād-i haqq sē jisē dēwē kardigār

46 Kītē gharīb ghurbā tamāshē mē phas gayē
47 Kītē namak harām ladāyī mē khans gayē
48 Kītē hī kūd phānd o hān kānd ghans gayē
49 Mardon pē bojh dāl kē nā mard jas gayē
50 Afsos kītē zāʾiʿ hoyē mard ahl-i kār

51 Kīton ko jīv sē mār qazā nē girā diyā
52 Tārīkh bē nawā nē raqam par chadhhā diyā
53 Balwā-yi ʿāmm malik-i zafar khān uthā diyā
54 Likhtā hai mār jūtiyān turra uthā diyā
55 Tā hashr har zabān pē rahēgā yeh yādgār

01 What sort of injustice is this, O vile and frivolous orb
02 Mars has revolved to sharpen the daggers' blade
03 The shoe-sellers, Muslim and manly, devout of faith
04 Subkaran the Jeweler has taken (given?) a violent blow
05 Oppression's stone has ground [bravery's] ruby resplendent

06 The Cobblers and vagabonds gather and remember God
07 So they go about pleading the judge and the constable
08 They say to the emperor, "Give us our justice!"
09 They gather together and gird up to declare war on infidelity
10 So that until the resurrection day may Muhammad's faith remain firm

11 Vagabonds and cobblers together go and sit in the mosque
12 Abyssinians and Arabs sit surrounding the Pulpit
13 Gathering Sword, Arrow, Quiver and Gun all together
14 They stir the judge's *Halwa* and crush the Jurisprudent's *Peth*
15 Refusing to pray, sit determined several thousands

16 When Lord Turra Bāz heard of this affair
17 He rode towards the mosque and quickly climbed up
18 He said, "Recite your prayers and submit to God,
19 The magistrate is the vice-regent of the prophet so keep his dignity!"
20 When in the crowd he called this out before High and Low

21 The shoe sellers dived in the midst of the commotion
22 How many lost their head and forgot their senses
23 An uncountable number of shoes were launched from the batteries
24 What of the new and what of the Old, Ganwārū and Ghitlī
25 Lāhorī, Saif Khānī, Charan Manda, Bhatta dār

26 Then Golden Robes said "Nothing's to be gained here
27 Comrades, there are no companions in bad times,
28 Honor's gone, and now life too departs by these shoes
29 Nothing works anymore and won't work either
30 So quickly now, carry me back down the stairs!"

31 The King's Law sent elephant and footman who
32 Also fell upon the Nawwāb Turra Bāz
33 A great battle between them and victory fell from grasp
34 The guns began to play, day turned to moonlit night
35 Angels descended on the mosque, saying "Strike! Strike!"

36 Now clashed in between Mughals and Pathāns all
37 Villainous soldiers and Nawwābs and Khāns all
38 Taking weapons in hand, fell in at last all
39 Sword, arrow, quiver dagger fastened all
40 The thundering cloud of battle rains rivulets of blood

41 Uttering battle-cries fell in all those who heroic were
42 How many who loved God martyred there were
43 Wounded the Pathans who granted the battle were
44 Murdered the poor who so valorously fought were
45 To whom this victory of justice was given by God above

46 How many poor folk trapped in the spectacle were
47 How many disloyal ones running from the fight were
48 How many leaping over the walls and escaping were
49 Putting the burden on men fleeing the not-men were
50 Alas how many men of battle smitten down were

51 How many struck from life and thrown down by heaven were
52 And noted down into unfortunate history were
53 The commoners' tumult destroyed the estate of Zafar Khān
54 He writes the blows of shoes knocked his fringes off
55 Until resurrection on every tongue will this remain

The popular perspective enshrined in this poem shares the details of the event with the elite Persian-language accounts examined so far. The initial event is seen as an act of malevolent fate, and Subhkaran is clearly the oppressor who has tyrannically victimized the lowly. In response the shoemakers, here called by the Urdu-Hindi word *mochī* instead of the Persian *kafash-dūzān,* petition the magistrate and the emperor. They are joined in this act by the "vagabonds" of the street (*luccha*) – another category of people who do not find mention in the Persian accounts of the riot. Significantly, in this remembering there is no place for the emperor's sympathy for the shoemakers' cause: both he and the magistrate are petitioned together and then dismissed as inefficacious. The emperor finds no further mention in this account; instead it is the vagabonds and shoemakers, their conjoined efforts stressed, who go sit in the mosque in order to defend the faith. Again we notice that the actual dispute with Subhkaran is not mentioned, and nor is there any pausing to mourn over the body of the slain hājī; the matter is one of preserving Islam, and the Abyssinians and Arabs are noted as ready for violence in the mosque. This account shares the amusement evident in the *Felicitous Pages* and the narratives of Wārid and Ashob at the spectacle of the beatings of the city's officials, using metaphors of food encountered in other contexts to express both the forcefulness and deliciousness of the chastisement inflicted on them.

The form of protest in this view is also rendered in stark and unsubtle terms. The populace gathers in the mosque in large numbers and refuses to pray. Nawwāb Turra Bāz – that is, Raushan al-Daula – presents a lofty and imperious command, telling the audience that the magistrate (and by extension the order he represents) is appointed by the Prophet himself, and that the people must recite their prayers and submit meekly to God and the city's functionaries. The audience is unmoved by the great rhetorical power of these theological pronouncements, perhaps because they see themselves as "true" defenders of the faith against a corrupt and venal

secular government that only invokes religion in opportunistic fashion. They hurl shoes, and the poet lists several varieties that no doubt add local color and evocation for those who hear and recite the poem; meanwhile "Golden Robes" (*zar libās*) is cowed by this fusillade and asks to be evacuated.

The fight which follows is seen as one between the king's law (*dastūr-i bādshāhī*) and Raushan al-Daula, though no explanation is given as to why this might be. More pertinently, the fight is seen as all-encompassing; Mughals and Pathāns, high and low all descend into melee combat in the courtyard of the mosque. The poet now projects two powerful sentiments. On the one hand he glorifies the fighting itself, and the "rain of rivulets of blood" which ensue. On the other hand he laments the death of the brave and the helpless and unarmed poor and condemns the cowards who fled without fighting. Only once in this latter part of the poem are we told that some of those who died were martyred for God (42); the emphasis is very much on the commemoration of the death of the brave and by extension the martial culture to which they subscribed; a final parting shot at Raushan al-Daula does not obscure the fact that the author seeks not so much to criticize the great as to valorize the low. It is also worth noting that this martial ballad does not contain any references to Subhkaran, or the demolition of his mansion, the making of a mosque, and the eventual victory of Islam. From this perspective, the battle may have been precipitated by Subhkaran, but its meaning lay elsewhere: at least in the terms of this poem, the one way in which the people of the city wished to remember the riot was in the heroic and obstinate resistance of cobblers and vagabonds to the demands of the powers that be.

While the first decades of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of this robust idiom of political assertion among the city's lowly inhabitants, so scorned and despised by those who considered themselves to be the proper arbiters of political affairs, no equilibrium appears to

have been established between the two. The city's shoemakers and jewelers would not go on to sit in a representative assembly; nor indeed would they go on to storm the red fort and establish a king of their own. In this sense we might see their world of politics as fundamentally limited. But the limits on the new politics of the city were not endogenous to its inhabitants, produced by some inability to think or conceive of alternatives to the usual political dispensation. Rather, the fundamental constraints on such politics came from historic circumstances and forces outside the control of emperor, nobility or people. Such constraints would go on to produce a divergence and ultimately a partial dissolution of the language of urban politics still in development in the early eighteenth century. One such constraint is exemplified by the crisis produced in Nādir Shāh's invasion, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 8: Nādir Shāh and the Ends of Mughal Politics

Standing before an audience gathered at the Patna University in 1922, Jadunath Sarkar, the preeminent historian of Mughal India, began his assessment of Nādir Shāh's invasion of the Mughal realm in 1739. Having unearthed and examined reams of Persian manuscript, many of which were stored in the recently founded Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library just next to the University, Sarkar spoke over the course of six lectures with the authority of the professional, scientific historian. Indeed, Sarkar had recently contributed to the definitive account of Nādir Shāh's invasion as the editor of his deceased mentor's *Later Mughals*. In it, Sarkar had described in painful detail how the Persian warlord marched rapidly through the empire's western provinces almost up to the gates of Delhi while a divided Mughal elite failed to rise to the occasion. The climactic battle near Karnāl, only a short march from Delhi, was a disaster for the Mughals. Soon thereafter Nādir Shāh entered Delhi in triumph, accompanied by the defeated Mughal ruler Muhammad Shāh. The next day, rumors of Nādir Shāh's execution within the Red Fort caused a popular uprising in the Delhi, which the invader put down with a general massacre of its inhabitants.

Now the historian pronounced his opinion of the events of 1739 before the people. The invasion, said Sarkar, "involved the Mughal Empire in disgrace, spoliation, and dismemberment". But, he asserted, it did not cause the decline of the empire; it merely revealed what imperial decline had already wrought. If the recently deceased Ottoman empire had been popularly regarded as the "sick man of Europe", Sarkar thought the Mughals suffered from a rather more extreme malady, for Nādir Shāh "broke the spell under which men had been regarding a gorgeously dressed

corpse as a strong man".[514] This decline had begun in the century before the arrival of Nādir Shāh; according to Sarkar, the emperor Aurangzeb's bigotry and religious zeal had alienated the multitude of his loyal Hindu subjects. Perhaps unconsciously, Sarkar echoed the language of Gandhi, who had just halted a non-cooperation movement that had shaken the foundation of the British Raj: "At the end of the seventeenth century, they [the Hindus] had come to regard the Mughal Government as Satanic and refused to co-operate with it."[515] Because the Mughal empire had never a greater ambition than serving as a "police government", the lack of cooperation and indeed open rebellion of various Hindu groups and shīᶜī Muslims threw it into disarray.[516] "[D]isgraceful inefficiency, amounting to imbecility" was thus to be witnessed at the imperial center while Nādir Shāh marched into the imperial heartland.[517]

Indian imbecility and failure lay at the heart of the matter for Sarkar, who spoke at length of the shameful defeat of the Mughals on "the fatal Tuesday", the 13th of February 1739.[518] The story was one of predictable disorder, factiousness and confusion on the Indian side, versus the racial superiority of Nādir Shāh's hearty Turkic tribesmen, prominent among whom were his scarlet-capped Qizilbāsh gunners. The enemy were seasoned warriors while the Indians "cultivated sword-play and fancy riding, as if war were a theatrical show", said Sarkar, before cuttingly equating the decadent and outmoded chivalry of the Mughal court to that expressed by "English writers during the last war … in speaking of German soldiers, who did not stand up to receive the bayonet charges of the British Infantry".[519]

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[514] Jadunath Sarkar, *Nadir Shah in India [six Lectures Delivered in 1922, Compressed and Re-Arranged]* (Patna: Patna University, 1925), 1.
[515] Ibid., 3.
[516] Ibid., 8, 4–5.
[517] Ibid., 30.
[518] Ibid., 37.
[519] Ibid., 47.

Yet for all that, Sarkar did not address an elementary question, one that has received little attention from later historians of the period. Why, if Nādir Shāh was so successful and the Mughals nothing more than a "gorgeously dressed corpse", did the victorious invader not found a new dynasty in South Asia? Such an act, as Sanjay Subrahmanyam has recently shown in an intriguing counterfactual speculation, would have had great and obvious rewards both for Nādir Shāh and the disordered affairs of the Mughal realm itself.[520] How could Nādir Shāh leave this rich prize at his feet and return to the austerities of the Iranian plateau? This deceptively simple question animates the following inquiry, which revisits Nādir Shāh's invasion in order to forge a new account not only of the meaning of Nādir Shāh's victory, but also that of his return.

Central to this retelling of Nādir Shāh's visitation upon India is an act of forgotten popular resistance. By this I refer to what is generally described as the "general massacre" (*qatl-i ᶜāmm*), a sanguinary assault on the lives, property and honor of Delhi's defenseless residents by Nādir Shāh's army. In contemporary and later accounts, this act of mass violence tends to eclipse its most proximate cause: the riotous disorder on the preceding night, in which Delhi's residents attacked and killed some number of Nādir Shāh's occupying army. Despite the city's history of frequently violent public protest, the uprising of 1739 has not been considered by scholars to have had any particular political significance; indeed, the massacre in the city has itself been treated as an appendix to the supposedly more significant fact of the Mughal defeat at the hands of the invader. But before we turn to the substance of the argument which follows, it is important to consider the significance that historians, foremost among them Sarkar, had ascribed to the massacre in Delhi.

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[520] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Un Grand Dérangement: Dreaming an Indo-Persian Empire in South Asia, 1740-1800," *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, no. 3–1 (January 1, 2000): 337–378; In the following pages I cite the version of this essay published as "Dreaming an Indo-Persian Empire in South Asia, 1740-1800" in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 7.

Sarkar's tragic narrative, foundational for later historians, veered strangely off course when he turned to the question of the massacre of Delhi's civilian populace. One might have expected lamentations for the innocent multitudes which were murdered because of the sins of their rulers. But Sarkar instead blamed the people of Delhi for what befell them. According to him, no one cared to verify the story of Nādir's death that was said to have galvanized the people of the city. Instead, "hooligans and low people" took up arms and attacked the Persian soldiers wherever they were encountered. The "murderous attack" of the "rioters" raged for a night, finding its crescendo on the 13th day of the Hindu calendrical month of Fālgun, when the festival of Holi commenced, and "when the lower classes of Hindus are particularly excited and often intoxicated".[521] Sarkar discounted the lone source which had reported that the city's residents rioted because of a sudden increase in the price of grain. All his other sources, he noted, represented the city-dwellers as the aggressors. "The higher classes and all good men held aloof," announced Sarkar, but government was autocratic, the gentry divided, and no forms of "corporate action and municipal self-government" were available to repress these unworthy folk. Previous chapters have demonstrated that it was precisely these "hooligans and low people", derided by Mughal chroniclers and ignored by modern historians, who had come to participate in a robust culture of self-assertion. Such forms of participation, we have seen, were deeply political, for they enabled the rapid mobilization of diverse solidarities and a wide range of popular action – whether in defense of the ruler in 1719 or in opposition to him in 1729. For Sarkar, however, the absence of the forms of "corporate action" played a crucial role in generating the vision of an Indian history as the long story of despotic Muslim rule over a Hindu population in South Asia; while Sarkar's methods embodied the most scrupulous Rankean

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[521] Sarkar, *Nadir Shah in India [six Lectures Delivered in 1922, Compressed and Re-Arranged]*, 62–63.

positivism, his imagination of the rise and fall of empire across the vast terrain of the subcontinent rested upon a Gibbonian vision of degenerate imperial centers forever unable to staunch the flow of virile barbarians from beyond the pale. And beneath all this lay Sarkar's sense that the story of India's history was the slow and uncertain march of its Hindus towards a nationhood of their own. Despite his profound admiration for many aspects of what he regarded as Islamic or Persian culture, Sarkar believed that Aurangzeb's supposedly harshly puritanical regime had only reverted to a normal type of Islamic regime of rulership. Muslim decline was the consequence of the effeminacy of the slothful and sedentary nobility of the empire when they had lapsed from bigoted zealotry into oriental indolence. It is within this frame of view that Sarkar situated Nādir Shāh's invasion: the total victory of a militarily and politically superior force over a hollow regime that was already crumbling due to its own internal contradictions.

Jadunath Sarkar's view of the events of 1739 was certainly distinctive, but it drew on a venerable lineage. Nādir Shāh's meteoric career appears to have been followed with some interest in European circles in the mid-eighteenth century, and his victory in Delhi was recounted in a series of rapid publications in England the early 1740s.[522] The definitive account of these events was published by James Fraser, who had been resident in the Mughal port-city of Surat in the preceding decade, and who had been in some contact with Mughal elites in the city.[523] In its

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[522] Anonymous, *The History of Thamas Kouli Kan, Sophi of Persia. Translated from the French.* (London, 1740); J. M. Price, *A Genuine History of Nadir-Cha, Present Shah or Emperor of Persia, Formerly Call'd Thamas Kouli-Kan. With a Particular Account of His Conquest of the Mogul's Country. Together with Several Letters between Nadir-Cha and the Great Mogul, and from Nadir-Cha to His Son. Translated from the Original Persian Manuscript into Dutch, by Order of the Honourable John Albert Sechterman, President of the Dutch Factory at Bengal, and Now Done into English. With an Introduction by the Editor, Containing a Description and Compendious History of Persia and India.* (London, 1741); On Dutch interest in Nadir Shah in particular see Manjusha Kuruppath, "Casting Despots in Dutch Drama: The Case of Nadir Shah in Van Steenwyk's Thamas Koelikan," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 241–286; Such interest was no doubt fueled by Dutch trading interests in in Iran, a sense of which may be ascertained by the newsreports of the warlord's exploits, collected in Willem M Floor, *The Rise and Fall of Nader Shah : Dutch East India Company Reports, 1730-1747* (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2009).

[523] Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah*.

attention to Persian phrases and verse and its many explanatory footnotes, Fraser's text marks a precocious Indological effort; but the author's interest lay clearly in the extent of damage that Nādir Shāh inflicted on Delhi and the vastness of his plunders. As such early European accounts described the warlord's extraordinary military abilities with great admiration, they pointed also to the profound weakness of the domains of the "Great Mogul".[524] By the early nineteenth century, the sense of the decline of the Mughal empire as having been precipitated by Nādir Shāh had become a commonplace amongst Orientalist scholars.[525]

Sarkar's account of Nādir Shāh's invasion, with its dismissal of any possibility of popular action shaping the events in the city, enabled a solid scholarly consensus about Nādir's attack as the exemplary moment of Mughal decline. Later historians added a good deal by way of source analysis without substantially revising their opinion of the events of 1739. Even those few who did turn anew to study of the attack nevertheless continued to dismiss the general massacre in Delhi as "a story … only too well known".[526]

The understanding of the invasion as a whole derived substantially from a particular interpretation of the Battle of Karnāl, at which a large Mughal army was defeated by Nādir Shāh's smaller attacking force only a little distance from Delhi. The 'objective facts' of the battle – themselves construed by Sarkar through his reading of a variety of contemporary and later accounts of the conflict – produced a cascading rhetoric that led seamlessly from defeat to

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[524] In this sense the figure of Nadir Shah appears to have enjoyed a certain popularity in his exemplification of the ideal Muslim despotic ruler, finding an obscure place in Dutch theater just as Aurangzeb had become the object of Dryden's attentions some sixty years before: Kuruppath, "Casting Despots in Dutch Drama: The Case of Nadir Shah in Van Steenwyk's Thamas Koelikan."

[525] For a particularly undistinguished example, see the "IMPERIAL TRAGEDY" promised in Thomas Maurice, *Short Account of a New Tragedy, Intitled, The Fall of the Mogul.* (Cleveland-Row, St. Jame's [sic] (London?): W. Bulmer and Co., 1806) Maurice appears to have derived his knowledge and interest in India from his employment at the British Museum. The acidic derision and ridicule directed against him from the literary establishment of the day may have thwarted this project. For an instance, see Lord George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Works* (Baudry's European Library, 1837), 63.

[526] Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, 290.

humiliation to massacre to restoration: a historical process that culminated with a diminished empire ruled again by an impotent ruler. It is important to note that Sarkar did not invent the facts of his narrative: on the contrary, his scholarship set a standard in citational scrupulousness that many of his successors would not match. Yet Sarkar's understanding was colored by ideas of the decisive battle in an era before John Keegan's powerful critique of the "rhetoric of battle history".[527] Keegan masterfully unveiled the artifices of the literary techniques which cast so wide a halo of significations – of senses of racial or national superiority, heroism or cowardice, inevitability, decisiveness, and historic importance – around the incomprehensibly confusing, uncertain and disorderly act of mass violence. Sarkar's historical vision, driven by a sense of the failure of Indian society, amplified the critical language of his sources to produce an overdetermined narrative of Mughal decline.

Though it is beyond the scope of this exercise to situate Nādir Shāh's invasion in the statist and nationalist historiography of post-colonial India, it should be clear that attention to the resistance to Nādir Shāh in Delhi in 1739 has obvious implications for the *longue duree* history of the subcontinent, from the Mughal empire to the present.[528] One set of such implications are evident in Subrahmanyam's counterfactual essay.[529] Subrahmanyam situates the warlord's actions within the framework of a "lopsided quadrilateral" of the four polities which ruled over a vast swath of the south-central Eurasian expanse: the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Transoxanian Sultanates and the Mughals. Subrahmanyam makes the counterfactual "switch" at the point when the shāh

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[527] "Introduction", John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).
[528] More broadly, on the sterilization and incorporation of the troubling historical event into nationalist historiography, see Shahid Amin, "Un saint guerrier," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 60e année, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 265–292.
[529] See Chapter 7, "Dreaming an Indo-Persian Empire in South Asia, 1740-1800" in Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks*, 179–182.

occupied Delhi, proceeding to speculate on the range of possibilities that might have emerged had the shāh terminated the Mughal lineage and founded an Afshārid dynasty in its place.

The possible results of an Afshārid dynastic takeover, in Subrahmanyam's opinion, would have involved a functional alliance with Nizām al-Mulk, who already ruled with a high degree of autonomy in the Deccan. Nādir Shāh's forms of rule would have been familiar to the administrative classes of North India; the provinces of Bengal and Gujarat would have to be re-integrated into the new formation with more or less difficulty as the case may be; and it would have been necessary to forestall Nādir's futile military actions against the Transoxanian Sultanates. What would then emerge could be described as a consolidated formation stretching from Tabriz in Iran to Bengal in the east, with a subordinate Deccani buffer-state supported by the new regime. But how might this counterfactual be used? For Subrahmanyam, the question is whether such a "military and political system" would have "deterred the English East India Company in its territorial adventurism".[530] He makes clear the fact that to raise this question is not a "'last chance' counterfactual to 'stop the west' in its conquest of South Asia", because other counterfactual exercises might plausibly envision a roll-back of the British advance in 1799 (during the wars against Tipu Sultan) or 1857 (in the Sepoy Rebellion).[531]

Subrahmanyam's essay, built around an eminently plausible counterfactual, can be read as a note of caution against the facile assumption that Nādir Shāh's invasion was indicative of some terminal decrepitude in the empire. Equally it is worth reflecting that had Nādir himself been slain by an errant round during the battle, historians would be forced to revise their entire view of the imperial weakness implied by his successes in India. While we will have occasion to return to this counterfactual in the conclusion, my objectives in this chapter are to offer an explanation

[530] Ibid., 202.
[531] Ibid., 208.

for why it might be that Nādir Shāh did not go on to end the Mughal dynasty and establish himself on the throne in Delhi. Although by its nature this is not a question that can be answered to any degree of satisfaction, through its exploration I aim to reflect on the limits of the politics, both high and low, which have been the subject of this dissertation.

The Plan

Because of the centrality and importance of the Battle of Karnāl in shaping the significance of Nādir Shāh's invasion, my first goal in this chapter is to revise its narrative. By a close study of the ways in which the battle of Karnāl was depicted in Mughal sources, I seek to reintroduce some sense of the great contingency through which supposedly-decisive battles are in fact won or lost. In doing so, I aim to disrupt the teleology which overdetermines historical understandings of the battle and so tightly binds notions of Mughal political incompetence to fated military defeat and to accelerating political decline. In order to do so, I turn to the heretofore-unused account of a certain Shākir Khān, a Mughal intellectual and official of the mid-eighteenth century. Shākir Khān offers a unique perspective on Nādir Shāh's invasion because his father Lutf Allāh Khān was a high official at the imperial court in the years before Nādir Shāh's invasion but was subsequently disgraced. Furthermore, in his account Shākir Khān claims to have been present at many of the high council meetings before the battle and was indeed present on the battlefield though he did not engage in combat. Driven by the desire to exonerate his father, Shākir Khān's account might well be regarded as self-serving and untrustworthy. Yet it nevertheless offers unprecedented insight into the events before and after the battle of Karnāl.

Accordingly, I begin with Shākir Khān's perspectives on the years preceding Nādir Shāh's invasion, which the nobleman described not as ones of decline but rather rejuvenation. Shākir Khān's account up to the eve of the invasion, unparalleled in its detail, provides a vivid sense of

the uncertainty before the battle, indicating that the imperial establishment could not decide whether to pay off Nādir Shāh or fight him. Shākir Khān also offers a first-hand account of the Mughal war-council immediately before the battle, offering new insights into why the Mughal forces launched a disorganized attack. I then turn to the influential account of the late-eighteenth-century scholar Har Charan Dās. While Har Charan's history played an important role in Jadunath Sarkar's narrative of Mughal failure, my reading of Har Charan Dās's analysis offers a substantially revised view of the battle. While some commentators such as Shākir Khān might be moved to imagine a fated Mughal defeat at Karnāl, I demonstrate the existence of a more cool and nuanced perspective on the battle that acknowledged the closeness of the defeat even as it sought its causes. I then return to Shākir Khān's detailed account of his departure from the army in the aftermath of defeat, which is suggestive of both the anarchic conditions that arose in the confusion of defeat and the fundamental durability of the Mughal order at the local level to which our author belonged.

Having offered a review of the standard view of the Battle of Karnāl, I now turn to Nādir Shāh's negotiations with the Mughal party and the subsequent occupation of Delhi. Despite Mughal lamentations about the defeat, I show that its immediate outcome was hardly conducted with the principle of *vae victis* in mind. From the start Nādir Shāh desisted from exulting in his victory and humiliating the defeated Muhammad Shāh. On the other side, Muhammad Shāh's high nobility strove to collaborate with Nādir Shāh to the best of their abilities. What produced this delicate equilibrium in elite politics so rapidly after the chaotic disruptions of the war? The answer, I suggest, is two-fold. If on the one hand Nādir Shāh cannily subverted the possibility of resistance by refusing to challenge the Mughal claim to rule, on the other hand members of the Mughal elite felt that an accommodation with Nādir Shāh was entirely possible to achieve. This

Mughal perspective, I argue, was the product of a view of elite politics in India first expressed by Irādat Khān in his memoir (see Chapter Three, “The Place of the Nobility”): the affairs of India were likened to a big tent, supported by the many pillars of its reigning nobles. In this way, it did not matter who sat on the Peacock Throne in Delhi, for its occupant’s power in any case would be sharply circumscribed by the vastness of his domains and the independence of his servants.

As is by now predictable, this delicate accommodation was disrupted by an unexpected party: the common folk of Shāhjahānābād. Just as they had intervened to preserve the emperor Farrukh Siyar in 1719 and to oppose Muhammad Shāh in 1729, the people now attacked the hapless members of the occupying army in the streets of the city. The perspectives, thoughts and opinions of these urbanites are difficult to reconstruct in the absence of sources recording their views. I therefore read three elite perspectives on the riot in order to gain some sense of the causes and the consequences of the riot. Our elite commentators, welcoming of the possibilities opened by accommodation, were broadly united in their condemnation of the city’s rebellious inhabitants. I conclude this chapter with the examination of a text that I suggests reflects perceptions of Nādir Shāh’s invasion in a broader public realm beyond Delhi’s walls. Finally, in the conclusion to this dissertation, I discuss the significance of the divergence between mass and elite politics in the years after Nādir Shāh.

Imperial Reconsolidation

While observers such as Rustam ᶜAlī Khān and Wārid had bewailed the disorder of Muhammad Shāh’s reign, Shākir Khān remembered the years before Nādir’s arrival as halcyon days, when things were going well with the empire. Shākir Khān was the descendant of a family that had acquired prominence only recently during the reign of Muhammad Shāh. His father Lutf Allāh Khān, noted the author of the mid-eighteenth-century Mughal biographical dictionary, *The*

Traces of Nobles, belonged to the Ansārī Shaykhzādas of Pānīpat. This was the very community of the "Hindūstān-born" to which the historian Ashob had assigned Sher Afkan Khān, the nobleman implicated in the shoemakers' riot of 1729. In fact Lutf Allāh Khān was the brother of Dilīr Dil Khān and Sher Afkan Khān, and appears to have ascended to the position of the chief steward (*khān-i sāmān*) held by his brother at some point after the events of 1729. The family was also connected to the sayyids of Bārha, whose ancestral homeland lay immediately east of Pānīpat. Lutf Allāh Khān, says the author of the *Traces*, first sought service in the reign of Bahādur Shāh and achieved the rank of a nobleman in that reign. But he was punished in the brief reign of Jahāndār Shāh and his home was confiscated. So he fled and joined Farrukh Siyar's uprising; proximity to the Bārha nobility enabled him to attain the administration of the capital, and to the financial administration of the crown lands (*dīwānī-yi khālsa*). Despite his connections with the Bārha nobility, Lutf Allāh managed to survive the violent transition to the reign of Muhammad Shāh, gaining high titles and rank besides the abovementioned office. But, says the biographer, Lutf Allāh performed some acts which were disapproved by the emperor in the days after the invasion of Nādir Shāh, and so was censured.[532]

We will have further cause to examine Lutf Allāh Khān's actions in the coming pages. Shākir Khān, of course, vehemently disagreed with contested of his father's behavior in the course of his voluminous meanderings in the massive tome he entitled the *Garden of Perspicacity and the Treasury of Sincerity* (*Hadīqa-yi hādiq wa ganjīna-yi sādiq*). In fact it would seem that Shākir Khān's long description of Nādir Shāh is driven by his desire to exonerate his father from the

[532] Khan, *The Maāthir-Ul-Umarā ...*, 840.

crimes he was said to have committed.[533] The author's revered father Nawwāb Shams al-Daula Lutf Allāh Khān Sādiq Bahādur Nik Nām ("The Honorable") Mutahauwir Jang became the emperor's chief steward (*mīr-i sāmān*) on October 30th, 1730 in the fourteenth regnal year, in lieu of his brother Sher Afkan Khān. In the eight years during which he continued in this post, claimed the son, Lutf Allāh Khān produced a liveliness in this staid bureaucratic office that it had never experienced n any previous reign.

These transformations began innocuously enough. It was an established custom of the court to spend a hundred thousand rupees on festivities for the ᶜEid festival which marks the end of the Ramazān fasts. This vast sum was expended on the imperial procession, with its signs and standards, and its drummers and other items such as the umbrella and the throne, the saddle and the saddle ornaments and the officers of the court known as the red-robed and the yellow-robed. Lutf Allāh Khān reported to the emperor that the time of the festival was drawing near, and so money was needed for the treasury of expenditures (which was the name of the portion of the treasury appointed for the chief steward); he asked for orders to gather this money from wherever the emperor decided. The emperor smiled and responded with a couplet:

> *Gar jān talabī mazayiqa nīst*
> *Zar mītalabī sukhan dar īn ast*[534]

> If you'd asked for my life I'd give it to you happily
> But it is your seeking gold of which we speak

The chief steward politely responded that this task would accomplish itself if it received imperial favor, noting that there must be at least four or five million rupees in the treasury alone. Surprised at this revelation, the emperor turned over his estate (*khāna*) to his officer so that

[533] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," n.d., f. 140a–166a, British Library, APAC, I.O. Islamic 1781 The text bears both Persian page numbers and english page numbers every five pages. For the sake of convenience I refer to the Persian page numbers unless specifically noted elsewhere.
[534] Ibid., f. 140a.

hidden wealth could be brought to light. The chief steward for his part offered token resistance, saying that his work was merely to spend, albeit with prudence and caution. Nevertheless the emperor ordered that the khān should examine the reports of the imperial manufactories, which had not fallen under the purview of the steward since the reign of Shāh Jahān in the previous century. And so this old servant of the emperor, tasked with spending money, was now set about accumulating tens of millions for his sovereign, so that the treasury would be filled by the coming ᶜEid. The emperor ordered that instead of waiting for the next ᶜEid, it was better if the lord chamberlain took a sale-loan (*dast-gardān*) from the lord Raushan al-Daula to finance the celebrations.

Now Lutf Allāh Khān began to inspect the reports of the manufactories. Shākir Khān's recollections indicated that this process should be seen as the confluence of the interests of a ruler seeking to increase his financial strength and a clever and efficient minister loyal to the throne. Therefore inspections were conducted under imperial oversight and by the direct command of Muhammad Shāh, who appended the duties of the privy finances (*buyūtāt*) to the steward's customary management of the imperial wardrobe and the imperial court. This drastic reorganization was communicated to all by the emperor's dispatch of special food from the royal kitchens (*ālūsh-i khāss*), which was always accompanied by a stamp of the imperial seal that bore the Qurᵓānic injunction "for God is indeed self-sufficient whereas you stand in need."[535] Food from the king's table was regarded as a special mark favor and a powerful signal to the bureaucracy about imperial support for the khān's mission. The khān also received the honor of being appointed to the imperial guard (*rūz chawkī*); so he was appointed the head of the guard for the day of Thursday, at the head of the other nobility, another symbol of his ascendance. The

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[535] Qurᵓān 47:38: وَاللَّـهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ

khān himself viewed the papers of the sublime jewel-house (*jawāhir khāna-yi ᶜālī*) and assigned the reviews of all thirty-six workshops to his various companions. This inspection produced a wonderful burst of activity in the fort, with courts held in every corner, floors swept with brooms and cleaned with water, robes of honor, increases in rank and prizes all round, but also disputes and litigation (*shiltāqī*) and auditing (*chashm numāī*) and giving and taking and unbinding and fastening. The author himself spent a year in this lively bureaucratic environment, examining reports and producing new ones: yet only a little ground was covered, given that the managers of the warehouses themselves had no idea how much was contained within them.[536]

Lutf Allāh Khān initially desisted from examining the manufactories held by powerful nobles such as Jawīd Khān, Hāyāt Khān and Jawāhir Khān. When the emperor asked him why these departments had not been surveyed, the khān said that he had not the temerity to even bring the names of these grandees to his lips. The emperor then explicitly commanded him to go forth and examine them too. The chief steward consented to do so, but only on condition that if any losses were discovered to have accrued to the government, then there would be no obstruction made in recovering the amounts lost. The emperor summoned these grandees and made them take an oath to this effect, and the khān commenced his work. He brought jewellers and goldsmiths and jewel-setters (*jauharī wa kundan wa jariya*) with him. Shākir Khān offered an example: let us say there is a diamond hookah, or a rose-vase (*gulāb bāsh*) or another item, which was priced at a hundred thousand rupees or less, and its value had been lost (*raqmī az ān rafta*); the item was re-appraised and a proper value was assigned to it. This meticulous process was conducted in all other departments.

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[536] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 140b.

These inspections, says Shākir Khān, led to the deposit of twenty million rupees in the treasury from the khāns and other elites (*khaniyān wa mutaghallibān*). The managers and accountants of the workshops which were found to be in good order were rewarded with increased ranks and grants of military assignation. But five million rupees were recovered from the financial administration of Khidmatgār Khān; the son of Bhog Chand the manager of the crown lands yielded two-and-a-half million; Shāh ᶜAbd al-Ghafūr gave up twenty million; Koki Jiv, the emperor's foremost female advisor, produced ten million. Twenty millions of the money assigned for the expenses of the strategically important fort of Kābul were also recovered. Since a hundred thousand were appointed for its monthly expenses, we may surmise that the province had not received any support for sixteen-and-a-half years if we choose the khān's figures.

Other sources tell us that all of these noblemen had been extremely powerful in the previous decade of the emperor's reign, and all of them were audited and fell from grace. Shākir Khān merely writes that men and beasts alike placed the finger of astonishment into their mouths. The emperor, he tells us, used to frequently utter the line, "Who under the heavens has a lord chamberlain such as the one I possess?" No doubt armed with Lutf Allāh Khān's paperwork, the emperor commented on Raushan al-Daula's wealth, which was disproportionate even by the standards of the highest noblemen. When jealous noblemen like Samsām al-Daula and Amīr Khān criticized Lutf Allāh Khān, the emperor said there were only two men in the whole empire who remained as a memento of his departed father: the first was Lutf Allah Khān and the other was the artillery-commander Saᶜd al-Dīn Khān. It was only from the clothes of these two noblemen, declared Muhammad Shāh, that the stench of the draper's urine did not offend the imperial nose (*az pārcha īnhā bū-yī baul-i bazzāz [bi] man narafta bāshad*). They had truly

illuminated (*raushan*) the house of the emperor whose birth-name was the "bright-augured" (*raushan akhtar*).[537]

Even though Shākir Khān's numbers may appear to be exaggerated, his account should give us cause to reconsider the historian Zahir Uddin Malik's opinion that Muhammad Shāh, while he was "no figurehead", nevertheless "lacked both training and vision, and had neither the will nor the capacity to face up to the immense problems confronting the government".[538] Muhammad Shāh's fiscal revivification and dramatic consolidation of power in the 1730s has been overshadowed by Nādir Shāh's invasion; but in the early 1730s the emperor had gathered the financial wherewithal to undertake any number of ambitious political reconfigurations or military campaigns and demonstrated his indubitable mastery over his court. At the same time, however, this rosy vision must be tempered by the fact that Shākir Khān's account is not unexpectedly self-serving: our author was at pains to demonstrate that the empire prospered so long as his father Lutf Allāh Khān had been granted free rein over its finances.

Prelude to Battle

On this harmonious portrait of great imperial appreciation and loyal administrative diligence fell the dark shadow of Nādir Shāh. Shākir Khān suddenly shifts topic to discuss Nādir Shāh's irruption into India, pointing out at the very beginning that divine fate performed a great revolution that began with the arrival of a few envoys. Because of his foresight and wisdom, the author's father repeatedly importuned the emperor that these envoys should be promptly handed ten million rupees and packed off to Nādir Shāh, so averting the terrible calamity surely to follow: in fact Lutf Allāh Khān offered to carry the money himself and to make peace with Nādir

[537] Ibid., f. 140a–14`b.

[538] Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1717-1748* (New Delhi: Icon Publications, 2006).

Shāh. But the emperor's temperament had veered off course; he wanted to provide a robust response even though the imperial Armies had not the opportunity of maneuver, let alone that of warfare, since the death of Bahādur Shāh some twenty-seven years ago. Meanwhile the other side had subdued Īrān and Turān, so it was impossible to win against them. Lutf Allāh Khān therefore thought it would be the greatest of mercies if the water of prudent policy might be the medicine for this raging conflagration.

On the other hand stood the advisor of state and property Samsām al-Daula, whom our author slightingly calls Samsām the Bungler (*samsām-i khām*). This councilor considered Nādir Shāh's words as offensive to the dignity of the Mughals and thought that his friend the great Rāja Jai Singh and his fellow Rajputs would suffice to dissuade or defeat the invading army. In the event, notes Shākir Khān, Jai Singh did nothing at all, and the people of the world chanted:

> *Kāfir o kāfir-parast o hāmī-yi kuffār-dīn*
> *Khān-i daurān bakhshī-yi hind ibn jai singh laᶜīn*
>
> The infidel and the infidel worshipper and the protector of the infidel faith
> Is the Khān-i Daurān the paymaster of India, son of Jai Singh the accursed

Meanwhile Āsif Jāh and Burhān al-Mulk, respective Governors of the vital provinces of the Deccan and Awadh, wanted to displace Samsām al-Daula from his position of influence at court. In the midst of these internecine squabbles it was decided to contest the enemy at the battlefield of Karnāl. Now fate sent unpleasant signals: the battle-standards which had been brought out erect fell and broke the minute they passed before the exalted fort – an occurrence, we recall, had also supposedly befallen the unfortunate Jahāndār Shāh on his procession to battle Farrukh Siyar in 1712. Although there had already been doubts in the minds of the wise about the campaign, these omens caused greater fear all around. The procession left Delhi for Karnāl on February 7th, 1739 (27 Shawwāl 1151), establishing the first stage at the Shālamār Gardens just outside the city. Morale was not helped by the emperor's unrelenting gloom; during the procession

whenever someone spoke confidently of victory, Muhammad Shāh despondently removed his turban in his hands and in great wretchedness silently beseeched the impassive skies above. This depressing lack of spirit too had its effect on the men, so that the eyes of the world were moistened with tears. But in Shākir Khān's opinion, it was this very humble submissiveness which retained the rapidly-receding dominion for Muhammad Shāh, since Nādir Shāh later treated him with the greatest honor.[539]

Lutf Allāh Khān, the Būtāt and Jawāhar Khān were ordered to take charge of the imperial workshops while the emperor prepared for battle in Karnāl. Lutf Allāh Khān was also given the charge of the province of Shāhjahānābād and the responsibility of safeguarding the captive persons of royal blood and the imperial harem (*salātīn wa nāmūs*) with a contingent of some three-hundred-odd cavalry and twenty thousand rupees. He was also entrusted with the care of Nādir Shāh's envoy Muhammad Khān Turkmān, who was a scion of the old Safāwī nobility. The party left for the garden established by Lutf Allāh Khān's deceased elder brother Sher Afkan Khān. In the congenial environs of this much-adorned park, Muhammad Khān appears to have become somewhat besmitten of our author, for in its privacy he asked Lutf Allāh Khān about the beautiful youth he had seen. It appears such appreciation could be expressed within the bounds of polite intercourse, for Lutf Allāh Khān told the envoy that the youth was his son. The enraptured envoy waxed eloquent about our author's comeliness and beauty (*wajāhat o sabāhat*), to which Lutf Allāh Khān said, "If like the leader of the faithful [ᶜAlī], I had a hundred such sons to be of use to the emperor I consider that the acme of happiness. But it is supplicated of his lordship that if the victory is that of the friends of this state (*awliyāᵓ-yi daulat-i mā*), I would not be dislodged from my loyalty in the service of his lordship, and without dishonoring my other

[539] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 140a–142a.

obligations would seek favor for him from my master. And if divine intention leads to the stupefaction of this side then his highness must remain faithful to this compact, and keep these discussions under consideration". That exalted personage, after a mournful sigh, declared his own inability to intercede with Nādir Shāh.[540]

In his memoirs Shākir Khān insisted that no other words were exchanged besides this innocuous conversation, which went on for only about two *gharīs* – about 48 minutes – of the day in the privacy of the garden. Yet he acknowledges that even at the time this secretive exchange was not regarded well by folks: tongues immediately began to wag about Lutf Allāh Khān's intentions. Despite his protestations of loyalty and good conduct, private conversations with the detained emissary of an enemy on the eve of battle could hardly be taken in sanguine fashion. Nothing loth, the party proceeded on to Pānīpat. Their first course of action was to visit the graves of the great followers of the Chishtī way that Shākir Khān would have known from his youth as part of the local nobility. They went first to visit Hazrat Qudrat [?] al-ᶜĀrifīn Shams al-Dīn Turk Sāhib-i Wilāyat, and from they walked on foot to the shrine of Shāh Sharaf al-Dīn Qalandar; then they went on the shrine of Kabīr al-Awliyāᵓ Hazrat Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Chishtī some three or four *kurohs* away. Finally, having met with a nameless but aged notable, they spent the night in the town and distributed their munificence and largesse to the local grandees. The next morning they left to join the emperor, whose army had camped near Karnāl. Towards the end of the day, Lutf Allāh Khān met Aslam Khān, a former financial officer (*būtāt*) of Kābul, who had become an ambassador of Nādir Shāh after the warlord captured the city. During the course of their discussions Lutf Allāh Khān reprimanded the defector, reminding him of his long service to the royal family (*dūdmān*) and the impropriety of arriving as an envoy of the opposing side. For his

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540 Ibid., f. 142b.

part Aslam Khān plaintively responded that because not a single one of the ambassadors sent to Delhi had returned, the eminences of Nādir Shāh's troops refused the assignment en masse and so it was forced upon him. Had he refused, said Aslam Khān, he would have been executed. Shākir Khān was ordered report the arrival of Nādir's reluctant envoy to the emperor.[541]

Aslam Khān's arrival on the eve of battle could have been no accident. Nādir Shāh might reasonably have imagined a former Mughal official would know how best to approach the court. As we have seen, Aslam Khān was merely the last of a series of envoys who were sent to the Mughal court and did not return. This tardiness could represent the temporizing and equivocation of an elite who were resistant to the idea of dispatching an enormous tribute to an upstart threat beyond the border. But Shākir Khān equally indicated that the emperor had at least initially sought to make a robust response to the invading army. Nādir Shāh on the other hand clearly was amenable to negotiation even until the eve of battle: a reasonable attitude, given that Nādir would clearly not relish battle on unfamiliar terrain broadly advantageous to his enemies. Despite the support and organization that the general had mobilized during his brief and bloodless occupation of Lahore, to approach Delhi was something of a gamble with profoundly high stakes on both sides. Aslam Khān's arrival therefore suggests that Nādir Shāh was keen until the very last moment to avoid a military confrontation with the full force of the Mughal army.

In any event, Shākir Khān proceeded to the hall of prayer (*tasbīh khāna*), where he found the emperor seated on a chair while Jāwid Khān stood face-to-face with him holding a staff. This imperial favorite was comforting the emperor with words to the effect that now the *āwāy* had begun, and the fight would go in the same way. When the *āwāy* was easy, his highness' servants would fight in just the same way, so easily that it would barely be experienced, for it was famed

[541] Ibid., f. 143a.

that: *āwāy thāmī ladāī mārī.*[542] Meanwhile, after Shākir Khān finished performing his obseisances and looked up, he beheld a court in turmoil, demoralized and abject. After Shākir Khān's missive was reported to the emperor, he was presented to the imperial gaze, but the emperor averted his eyes. Our author said to himself that a flower of a different sort had evidently blossomed here; and even stranger, the emperor said: "I know for myself that the khān Sādiq [Lutf Allāh Khān] is deceiving me. He is always saying that everything is ready but nothing has been done". In response, the ready-witted Shākir Khān claims he defended his father to his sovereign with a line of verse from the great poet Saᶜdī:

Hargiz nayāyad zi parwarda ghadr

Rebellion can never spring from the fostered[543]

Shākir Khān offered to produce both Aslam Khān and the letter. In response the khān received an imperial order telling him to proceed into the Privy Council (*dīwān-i khāss*) where Aslam Khān was already present. Such exchanges appear to have been taking place on paper, for when Shākir Khān conveyed this message to the doorman of the privy council he was admitted again to the imperial presence. To be conveyed to this most exalted of councils was a special honor which the lowly Shākir Khān could not dare to dream of. It was only because his brother Fākhir Khān had already received permission to move freely without escort up the door of the imperial Harem that Shākir Khān was now permitted entry. Secondly Bihrūz Khān, who held an important position at court, had fostered Shākir Khān like a son. But when Lutf Allāh Khān and

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[542] While the import of these words is not clear, they appear to refer to a divinatory practice apparently employed before battle.

[543] The author was apparently not mindful of the same poet's dictum in the *Rose-Garden*: "You may get through the worst temptations of yourself, but you will never stop the tongues of people". Sa`di, *The Gulistan, rose garden of Sa'di*, 111–112.

his son ᶜInāyat Khān Rāsikh appeared in the council, the emperor again repeated his accusations.[544]

Lutf Allāh Khān now protested his innocence, but the palace eunuchs, harem officials and doorkeepers and assorted onlookers began to obstruct him. Shākir Khān was confounded by this fresh development when Bihrūz Khān came to his aid. Bihrūz Khān grabbed the author and whispered in his ear, "Why was it necessary for your father to meet with the Iranian envoy in private?" At last Shākir Khān understood why the people of the court were obstructing him. So he responded: "My father does not think whatever people seem to imagine." Now the envoy's terms were produced and read aloud. Shākir Khān's father again said that the request of this old slave were the same as previously: that is, to make peace and offer ten million rupees to cause dissension among Nādir Shāh's generals. Whatever was learned from Aslam Khān was reported and the defector himself was produced. The emperor appears to have been convinced by the protestations of father and son, for he ordered that a colored robe be presented to Lutf Allāh Khān for his services.

But the Lord Chamberlain's reinstatement in the emperor's good graces provoked another round of vocal dissent from the palace Eunuchs, whom the author contemptuously calls "the castrated" (*khasī*). This, says Shākir Khān, was because every one vied for control of affairs at this critical juncture and were opposed to each other. But the emperor heard Lutf Allāh's Khān suggestion to make peace, and wanted to hear Samsām al-Daula's opinion too. Samsām "the bungler" arrived in court at the first watch of the night and was presented with Nādir Shāh's terms. He too said that whatever Lutf Allāh Khān had said was sound policy and thought it better to make peace. But now it was said at court that Āsif Jāh, the greatest nobleman in the empire and the governor

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[544] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," 143b.

of the Deccan, should also be consulted; his beard was white and he had seen the world, and, as the poet Hāfiz said, the pious traveler was not utterly unaware of the customs and ways of reaching the desired goal. So now it was ordered that Āsif Jāh and Iᶜtimād al-Daula should both be summoned.[545]

Both these eminences grises arrived in the night. A large crowd of the greater and lesser nobility now assembled in the Privy Council: the armies were ready and all the nobility of the province were waiting to see what the council decided. Āsif Jāh approached his highness and read the letter and then said, "Your Highness, these Īrānīs have always been fodder for our sword." When he heard that Samsām al-Daula and Lutf Allāh Khān proposed peace, he said, "Tomorrow at dawn I'll strike them with such ferocity of God's power that it will may serve as a memento (*yādgār*)." Buoyed by these confident words from his grizzled general, the emperor changed his mind. Lutf Allāh Khān was given leave to attend to the affairs of Delhi, because the city was unguarded and filled with the harems (*nāmūs*) of the assembled nobility. He was immediately granted a six-piece robe, a sword, a jeweled headpiece, and an elephant and packed off with these marks of favor to prevent him from somehow engineering a peace before the battle began.

The author's father now came to his son with tears in his eyes, saying that Shākir Khān had as yet seen nothing of the world but had now seen all of these proceedings at court and the dismissal of his father. Now his father told Shākir Khān to accompany him to Delhi and consider it a merciful dismissal from the scene of impending disaster. But because our author had at that time received the greatest favors from the emperor, he preferred to stay near his person. So Shākir Khān stayed on with his contingent, while Lutf Allāh Khān departed at dawn for Delhi with three hundred thousand rupees for the administration of the city. Before departing the khān

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[545] Ibid., f. 144a.

gave his son two elephants, twenty thousand rupees for the salary of his contingent and five thousand more for expenses at court.[546]

As we have noted before, Shākir Khān's retrospective vision of the events preceding the battle were colored by his desire to exonerate his father from any charges of wrong-doing. His account nevertheless offers an unparalleled insight into the conditions of the Mughal court on the eve of battle. From this we may conclude that two opinions held sway. The party for war, which seems to have primarily been led by Nizām al-Mulk, expressed confidence in the capabilities of the army and its advantages on the battlefield. The party for peace, to which Lutf Allāh Khān appears to have belonged, thought on the other hand that it was wiser to buy off the invader, though we note that Lutf Allāh Khān's advocacy of offering money to Nādir Shāh was to spread dissension in his ranks.

Besides the existence of these two views, let us turn briefly to the question of Lutf Allāh Khān's behavior. Lutf Allāh Khān, in his son's recollection, behaved with courtesy towards a noble prisoner given to his charge. A less charitable view would have that the aged and loyal servant of the emperor had initiated contacts with the other side and was hedging his bets against an uncertain outcome. In doing so the nobleman had acted in his own interest, not in that of his master. Such behavior immediately recalls the speech made by the vizier Munᶜīm Khān to the emperor Bahādur Shāh in the memoirs of the historian Irādat Khān. Munᶜīm Khān had sagely advised his master that the affairs of Hindūstān were like a big tent that could not be held up by a one or two people alone: instead it was held aloft by "several elevated pillars and many strong ropes". Lutf Allāh Khān was indeed a pillar (*rukn*) of the state. By preparing a private channel of communication with Nādir Shāh, was he acting in his own interest, in that of the emperor, or

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[546] Ibid., f. 144b.

in that of the big tent he held up? Such questions, we shall see, would become more intensely acute in the immediate aftermath of the battle.

24 February 1739

Jadunath Sarkar's description of the battle of Karnāl, the centerpiece of his account of Nādir Shāh's invasion of the Mughal domains, was meticulously crafted to shine a light on the disastrously poor condition of the Mughal armies in the face of Nādir Shah's offensive. Using all the available sources, Sarkar suggests that the Mughal camp was preparing for battle as it had received reinforcements from the arrival of Saᶜādat Khān Burhān al-Mulk, the governor of Awadh. But Burhān al-Mulk's bag and baggage were raided by Nādir Shāh, and Burhān al-Mulk impetuously entered the fray. The other nobility were then sent to support him. The Mughal armies were routed. Burhān al-Mulk was captured, Samsām al-Daula was wounded, and Nizām al-Mulk did not participate in combat.[547] In his *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh* (1933), Sarkar's protégé A. L. Srivastava notes the existing of conflicting accounts of the battle which either blamed Burhān al-Mulk for the debacle or absolved him of guilt. Srivastava himself decided that Burhān al-Mulk was blameless; had he been reinforced in time, the tide of the battle would have turned.[548]

Shākir Khān's account, unavailable to either Sarkar or Shrivastava, modifies this picture somewhat. The khān reports that a private meeting between the highest nobility and the emperor took place on the morning of the 24th. Present were Āsif Jāh, the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula, Samsām al-Daula, Muhammad Khān Bangash, Sar Buland Khān and Burhān al-Mulk. In the midst of this meeting, word arrived that Burhān al-Mulk's baggage had been raided. Burhān al-

[547] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, 341–352.
[548] Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, "The First Two Nawabs of Oudh; a Critical Study Based on Original Sources," (Upper India Pub. House, 1933), chap. 6.

Mulk arose on hearing this terrifying news, but Āsif Jāh and Samsām al-Daula restrained him with words to the effect that the day the attack must not be launched on this day because there was not enough daylight left. What of it if Burhān al-Mulk's baggage had been lost? Tomorrow they'd attack and defeat the whole army and take their material back. On hearing this advice the nobleman sat down again. Then further news arrived: Sher Jang, Burhān al-Mulk's dear nephew, had also been captured and taken away. Now Burhān al-Mulk became agitated and arose again, and again was restrained: it was too late to fight on that day; the army had not been informed, and it would be best to fight tomorrow. Burhān al-Mulk became very upset at hearing these words. He said, "Why have I whitened my beard when here they've carried away this piece of my liver?" Then, saying "You sirs keep saying 'tomorrow!'" he arose and mounted his ride along with a select escort. When they were armored and in formation, people like Murīd Khān and Murtazā Khān and Ahmad Qulī Khān told him that he would not be able to engage in combat.[549]

Burhān al-Mulk's urge to attack, described as irrational in many later historic accounts, thus seems rather more explicable when we imagine him riding off to save his beloved nephew. Shākir Khān now presents a description of Samsām al-Daula's bravery in combat and Burhān al-Mulk's treasonous surrender to the enemy, though he himself was personally not involved in the battle. Our author interrupts his narrative recollections to lay his cards on the table. What really happened, says Shākir Khān, was that Āsif Jāh and Burhān al-Mulk wished to push Samsām al-Daula aside and become the vizier and the chief paymaster respectively; therefore they purposely spoiled the fight. Burhān al-Mulk had no less than thirty thousand horse; Āsif Jāh had even more

[549] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 145a.

than this number, but they brought only two thousand each to the fight. And so they say, "Our mischievous labors assumed the form of Nādir."[550]

This appears to be the only way in which Shākir Khān might explain the scale of the Mughal defeat some years after the fact. There was certainly nothing lacking in the army, which the khān thought to contain more than a hundred thousand horse, two hundred thousand infantry, and an uncountable number of servants and retainers. The size of the park of artillery could be estimated by the fact that it was placed around an army this vast; and several times when the author stood on his elephant he saw the army extending on all sides as far as the eye could possibly behold. But the army and the artillery were rent apart by dissimulation and hypocrisy (*nafāq*) and a lack of vigilance (*bī-ᶜismatī*) so that modes of advance and retreat (*haiyāt o naiyāt*)[551] assumed a different form altogether, and so the Gurgānī estate of three hundred years was ruined in the blink of an eye. Otherwise how could the Īrānī and Tūrānīs be capable of opposing Tīmūrid Princes, since all of them were created and fostered by this family? [552]

Har Charan Dās

Quite a different answer is to be found in the *Foursquare Garden of Bravery*, a history by a certain Rāi Har Charan Dās, written about 1786.[553] Har Charan's account is marked by a certain distance from the events – perhaps because by 1786 so many more calamities had befallen the empire that the importance of Nādir Shāh's invasion had been essentially eclipsed. Har Charan thought that the emperor felt that Burhān al-Mulk might act with a sense of closer community (*qaumiyat*) with Nādir Shāh because he too was an Iranian. The emperor asked Burhān al-Mulk to swear his loyalty and Burhān al-Mulk did so, for he was in fact pure of heart (*sīna sāf*). Har

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[550] Ibid., 145a–145b.
[551] CF. Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, 241.
[552] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," 146b.
[553] Har Charan Dās, "Chāhar Gulzār-i Shujāᶜī," n.d., British Library, APAC, Or. 1732.

Charan also recounted the meeting of the council of war on the 24th of February, at which Nizām al-Mulk – the most experienced of the lot – noted that the present day was a Tuesday and fell under the astrological sign of Mars (*rūz-i mirrīkh*). It was inadvisable to start battle on such a day. If Nādir attacked on the next day, it would be wise to pass the entire day in skirmish (*jang-i qarāwālī*), with proper battle reserved for Thursday. This plan had been agreed upon when news came of Burhān al-Mulk's baggage being raided. Har Charan also does not mention the capture of Sher Jang, and so attributes the desire to preserve face to Burhān al-Mulk, who in this view feared dishonor from either attacking or not attacking. So he decided to run off into battle, leaving today and tomorrow to God, determined that this was his day to die.[554]

Such "arguments from fate" would indicate that Har Charan Dās may not have been present at the deliberations of which he writes. The author had nevertheless expended some effort in analyzing the battle itself, and divine intervention played little role in the outcome. Burhān al-Mulk raced off into battle with five hundred each of horse and foot, dispatching his scouts (*naqab-bān*?) to his army to urge them into battle. But the army, which had just marched to the imperial camp, was fatigued: reinforcements did not follow promptly. Eventually about four thousand soldiers joined him. But just then a Qizilbāsh vanguard party which was arrayed in the same region appeared and began to fire at Burhān al-Mulk's cavalry. The skirmish escalated rapidly. Burhān al-Mulk was intrepid in battle, and the Qizilbāsh initiated a cunning maneuver: they began to flee from direct combat and reform at some distance in a field. But Burhān al-Mulk's cavalry, already bold, grew bolder still at the sight of their seemingly-routing enemy and pursued them to this field, which was about three or four *farsang*-s – a considerable distance –

[554] Ibid., 162–164.

from the imperial camp.[555] Messengers began to carry tidings of victory to the imperial camp, though Burhān al-Mulk realized that he had only encountered a skirmish unit and that the main force was yet to come. So he pleaded for further reinforcements, and the emperor forwarded his requests to Nizām al-Mulk, Samsām al-Daula and Qamar al-Dīn Khān.

But the three had already decided that it was not wise to engage in battle today, and so they ignored the opportunity to help Burhān al-Mulk. Samsām al-Daula was the most loyal of these three, while Nizām al-Mulk was the most senior. In Har Charan Dās' opinion the consequences of the battle were in fact determined by his actions, for the historian noted pointedly that Nizām al-Mulk had brought only three thousand of his fifty thousand cavalry from the Deccan. But when Burhān al-Mulk's pleadings became more desperate, it was decided that Samsām al-Daula should go forth, because he was assigned the northern direction and the fighting had happened in that sector. So Samsām al-Daula was ordered forth by the emperor, and he went forwards with his men, including his brother Muzaffar Khān, ᶜAlī Khān Koka, Shahdād Khān Afghān, and ᶜĀqil Beg the "blanket-wearer" (*kambal-pūsh*).[556] While Har Charan lists the noblemen who were proceeding as reinforcements, he does not mention the size of their contingents.[557]

The emperor and his accompanying nobles also ascended their mounts in preparation for combat. Meanwhile on receiving reports of the Indians entering the battle-ground, Nādir Shāh rapidly deployed his own forces and readied for battle. Thus setting the scene for the battle, Nādir deployed forty thousand soldiers, and the Mughals had equivalent or perhaps slightly smaller number in the field. This view is significant, for it implies that the Mughals had been unable or

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[555] Har Charan's use of the Iranian *farsang* as a marker of distance instead of the standard Mughal *kuroh* may reflect his usage of an unmentioned Persian account of the battle.

[556] Irvine regards the blanket (*kambal*) as referring in a secondary sense to "a kind of cuirass". See Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, 44.

[557] These men were: Sar Buland Khān, Muhammad Khān Bangash, `Azīm Allāh Khān, Muhammad Sa`īd Khān, `Ināyat Yār Khān, Husain Khān Koka, Aslah `Alī Khān the Eunuch, Sābit Khān, Muhammad Sa`d al-Dīn Khān and Mīr Musharraf. Har Charan Dās, "Chāhar Gulzār-i Shujāᶜī," 166.

unwilling to commit the entirety of their forces to the battle. Such a decision would further suggest that the Mughal leadership on the field did not expect this first battle to have the decisive character later attributed to it.

Har Charan now went on to present eulogistic verses, praising the bravery of the people "from this side" who rode out with swords drawn and shields hanging. His description of the battle, however, was quite vague. We learn only that the Mughals first launched a volley of cannon-fire, and then arrow and bullet were employed. This ranged exchange eventually descended into pitched close combat. Since both sides fought so valorously, the entire field of battle came to be covered in the blood of combatants. Har Charan singles out the special bravery of ᶜĀqil Beg the Blanket-wearer, whose unit descended from their mounts as was traditional among the Hindūstānī cavalry.[558] These "braves of India" (*mubārizān-i hind*) hoisted their skirts up and took their swords and shields and charged the enemy. This was not "a vain sacrifice"[559] as Sarkar would have it, for Har Charan tells us that the focus of this charge was directed at Nādir Shāh's position at the center of his formation and scattered his armies.

This effort failed. Samsām al-Daula's brother and ᶜInāyat Yār Khān were struck by bullets from handguns (*jazāyir*) and died immediately. Then ᶜAlī Hāmid Khān Koka, Shahdād Khān Afghān – who was Samsām al-Daula's chief commander – and Aslah ᶜAlī Khān besides a few other leaders were shot in the back by a sudden volley from a concealed group of enemy soldiers.[560] Samsām al-Daula was also wounded and was forced to retreat from the field. It was at this point the "wings of the Hindūstānī army broke"; everyone lost their senses and many of them turned to flee. And it was now, in the midst of this disorderly retreat, that a large number of soldiers were

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[558] Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, 237–238.
[559] Cf. Sarkar, *Nadir Shah in India [six Lectures Delivered in 1922, Compressed and Re-Arranged]*, 43.
[560] Har Charan Dās, "Chāhar Gulzār-i Shujāᶜī," 167–169.

killed by the enemy. Burhān al-Mulk was surrounded and captured and taken away. All in all, about twenty thousand were killed on both sides. Nādir Shāh considered the battle to be a divine gift and returned to his tents in victory.[561]

While Har Charan Dās had extolled the bravery of combatants on either side, he had a detached view of the causes of the Mughal defeat. According to him, the Hindūstānīs had two disadvantages in battle. The first was that their leaders were mounted on elephants and so became the targets of the enemy gunners. Secondly, the Indians dismounted in battle, and were determined on close combat with the enemy, so that they could kill him with valor and be killed in the process. But, remarked the historian, in Īrān (*wilāyat*) and "other places" they use ranged weapons in a sustained fashion (*bi khud-dārī mī-kunand*), and either attacked or waited to receive the enemy (*gurbuz*) depending on what they thought was appropriate for the situation.[562] Har Charan's reference to "other places" is significant. Writing in the Awadhi city of Faizābād in 1786, he would have had had many opportunities to witness the European way of war, and to appreciate the subtleties of infantry drill, massed fire and decapitation strikes – a greater appreciation, certainly, than other contemporary accounts, which do not discuss the cultural aspects of the battle. Har Charan did not conclude, as Jadunath Sarkar did, that the Īrānians enjoyed an absolute superiority in their deployment of gunpowder weaponry – though Sarkar certainly noted and amplified Har Charan's observations about the vulnerability of elephants on the battlefield. From this account, however, it would seem that the battle had been more vigorously contested than historians following Sarkar have believed. If we are to accept Har Charan's words, those participating in the Mughal charge against Nādir Shāh's center certainly hoped and expected to carry the day. His history provides ample evidence (if any were needed)

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[561] Ibid., 169–70.
[562] Ibid., 170.

that the vast majority of the Mughal forces were not rendered "imbecile" at the very outset of a battle they would have quite logically hoped to win.

Shākir Khān's War

As we have noted previously, Shākir Khān rather anti-climactically did not participate in any fighting on the day. Rather he was with the nobility at the rear of the army, by the canal which lay behind them. Nizām al-Mulk came to his position at the end of the day and told him that Burhān al-Mulk was with Nādir Shāh and Samsām al-Daula was dead. Returning to the camp, our author noticed that it appeared convulsed as in the day of resurrection. All the troop (*misl*) of Samsām al-Daula and Muzaffar Khān had been plundered by the dissolute hangers-on (*luccha-hā*) of the army, and a funereal pall hung over the camp as everyone prepared to flee. The author himself was exhausted and hungry when he reached his tent and encountered the doctor (*maulawī sāhib*) Muhammad ᶜĀlam Khān who was the teacher (*ustād*) and advisor to his house. The doctor and had thrown together a quick meal of kabābs, braised meat (*roghan josh*) and roasted rice-and-lentil stew (*khicharī biryān*). A *gharī* of the night had passed, and our famished author and was in the midst of his meal with his waist-band (*band*) unfastened when his elder brother ᶜInāyat Khān Rāsikh arrived in a state of evident agitation (*muztarib namūda*). ᶜInāyat Khān asked, "Sir, how is it that you are sitting here? The emperor and the vizier are leaving for the Deccan with Āsif Jāh and a night-assault is beginning now!" The elder brother had just articulated these very words when a great volley was heard from the artillery, so thunderous that it was heard 20 *kurohs* in every direction.[563]

ᶜInāyat Khān wished to leave the camp at once, but Shākir Khān decided to stay with the emperor. His brother lost his mind at that and departed without him. Having proceeded a

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[563] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 146b.

distance, however, ʿInāyat Khān sent the family tutor (*atāliq*) ʿAtāʾ Muhammad Khān, who had been left behind to counsel the brothers and now returned to seduce (*war ghaltānīda*) Shākir Khān away from this self-destructive course of action. The khān had been in conversation with his table-companions about how well he had done to not go with his brother and how he intended to present himself before the emperor. Everyone approved of his idea except for ʿAtāʾ Muhammad who now began to whinge about how the author by this action would blacken his face (*rū siyāh*) before the lord and the lady his parents. Now he had upset his brother and thrown himself into ruination (*tahalka*). So with what face (*bi chi rū*) could he go before the author's mother? And where was the reign (*saltanat*) and where was the realm (*mulk*) and where were people such as ʿAtāʾ Muhammad and Shākir Khān? It was instead best to extricate oneself from this wretchedness (*makhamsat*) by any means available.

Yet Shākir Khān persisted in his desire to serve the monarch. He washed his hands and emerged from the tent to see what was going on. He saw that the moon was at the extremity of its lustrousness and the wind was at the limit of coldness, and no one remained of his troop (*misl*); Most people had fled having eaten only a little, their abandoned tents, still erect, remaining a mute testament to their haste. On the one side lay the encampment of Muhammad Khān Bangash, whose army (*fauj*) was in complete disarray (*sarāsīma*); on the other edge Sar Buland Khān was proceeding away with his companions in turmoil, and the rest of the people were retreating towards Delhi troop by troop (*jauq wa fauj fauj*). It was as if a voice from heaven proclaimed (*manādī nidā dāda*) the Qurʾānic verse: *"All that Lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away: but forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self, full of majesty and glory."*[564] The

[564] Qurʾān: 55:26-27: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿٢٦﴾وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

world fell into ruin, with the despairing cries of "Āī! Āī!" to be heard from the tongues of high and low alike.[565]

Shākir Khān's elephant-driver led his elephant before him, so that he could proceed before the emperor and find out the reality of the situation. But a certain Khwāja Mīr Khān (who was associated with the deceased Lord Raushan al-Daula and who had been wounded in the field with Samsām al-Daula) was standing with his contingent to the khān's right flank and had espied his elephant. So he sent a man over to ask who now wished to ride an elephant to battle. When our author heard the name of Mīr Khān, who was a respected elder, he also sent a man over informing him of his intentions. Mīr Khān sent a message back saying, "Bābā, where's the emperor? A great calamity has befallen us. I also want to head in his direction; if you are able, spend the night in Karnāl; at dawn tomorrow you can act according to whatever is best." At last Shākir Khān realized the benefits of spending the night in the town, the nobility of which were relative: whatever was in one's fate could wait to manifest itself in the next morning.

Now the party heard the distant cries of someone calling the names of Shākir Khān and his servants. The khān instructed his servants to yell back, and the other party sent a man over. It turned out to be Gul Muhammad, known to all as Kallū ("Blackie"), a servant of ᶜInāyat Khān, who had already gone ahead. ᶜInāyat Khān had joined up with Mīr Wilāyat Sāhib and Hashmat Khān Sāhib, sons of Mīr Bāqī of the imperial guard (*Ālā Shāhī*), and Mīr Sayyid Muhammad Khān. There were also the junior officers (*jamdār*) of Samsām al-Daula, who had gathered about two thousand horse and three thousand foot and were all waiting for the author on the promise of ᶜAtāᵓ Muhammad. These were men who had been beaten by Nādir Shāh, and morale was perilously low. High and low alike were united in the opinion that the Mughal reign had ended

565 Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 147a.

and Nādir Shāh had triumphed. There could no longer be any point in continuing to fight. So the author and his brother decided to spend the night in Karnāl and to hold council at dawn. A large number of soldiers had also gathered about them: Since the brothers they belonged to this domain (*mulk*), it would be safest to accompany them in these parts.[566] So Shākir Khān took his materiel, his tent, five thousand rupees and two carts (*chhakṛā*) filled with foodstuff for the two elephants whose baggage-loads were also filled with bread (*nān*). He told the accompanying doctor Muhammad ᶜĀlam Khān to join him in the town at dawn if he hadn't returned by the morning.

Anarchy reigned in the night. When Shākir Khān and his company first reached Karnāl, they found its gates fastened shut; behind them quivered the terrified townsfolk who feared that the large party of armed men might belong to the other side and try and take the city. So no matter how much they tried and called and clamored, the gates remained closed. Eventually they despaired of persuading the terror-struck townsmen, and headed towards Phurlak, a village near the near the Qasba [of Ghauranda?], which was included in ᶜInāyat Khān's land-grant (*jāgīr*).[567] The party decided to spend the night in the village and discuss matters in the morning, but when they reached the old inn on the way, they saw about two hundred horsemen standing by to plunder wayfarers. At their feet lay the material from camel and horse the food of Rāja Bahādur and Qalandar Khān, whom they had just looted. These brigands espied the immense crowd, and vanished into the night. This was a providential escape for the khān and his party: had even a few of these brigands lingered, they would have realized that there was nothing left in his party now except for fear and dispiritedness (*hirās o bīdilī*). Whatever military discipline had once existed

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[566] Ibid., f. 147b.

[567] This village, situated 15.6 kilometers SSW of Karnāl, is still extant. In the eighteenth century the distance would have been an easy day's journey under ordinary conditions.

also vanished as the shadow of the dynasty receded. Ignoring the khān's remonstrations, the footmen in his party saw a moment of advantage in the confusion and fell upon the foodstuff and horses and camels that the highwaymen had abandoned.

When they finally reached Phurlak, the local notables (*zamīndārān*) came forward and offered their service and placed the company's baggage in their depot. But they had just been sitting for a little bit when the notables returned in uproar and tumult, saying "Sir, you must not sit here. Highwaymen have gathered nearby and wish to plunder this village." There was no question of offering resistance in this *bellum omnium contra omnes*, when all men apparently had again equal right to all things. Booted by their own dependents, the party arose and decided to proceed further south, to Pānīpat. So the men wearily trudged all through the cold of the February night, reaching the city's gate of plenitude at the time of the morning prayers. The doors were shut here too, but this was Shākir Khān's own town: the superintendent Sīdī ᶜAmbar appeared at the rampart in response to their cries and recognized them.[568]

Shākir Khān did not consider it possible to go to his own mansion, though he does not tell us why. Instead he went on to the house of Khʷāja Najm al-Dīn, who was an Ansārī clan-brother (*birādar-i ansārī*) to our author, while the horses and men were sent on to be kept in the town's military quarter (*sālār ganj*). Now Shākir Khān realized just how utterly exhausted he was: he had never ridden so long after dinner in his whole life. Throwing his shield to the floor he went to sleep and was oblivious to the world for two watches of the day. When he awoke, he discovered that his elder brother had sent for food from the house of their accountant (*mutasaddī*) Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Wahīd, and dispatched a letter describing what had passed to Nawwāb Fath Allāh Khān. News of the defeat had already spread widely by now. Many of the

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[568] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 148a.

men of the Ansār and the Shaykhzādas et cetera had sent their families to Kairāna, on the other side of the river, while a select number of the local grandees remained alone in town.

Our author roused himself and ate what was at hand. Just when he'd washed his hands, a basket (*bhakkī*?) arrived. It was filled, recalled the khān with relish, with *shākh-i ᶜurūs*, rice-pudding (*shīrnī*), other confections made from almonds and "Frankish sweets" (*nuql-i firang*). There were also apples and pears, grapes and pomegranates; but best of all there was also a letter, sent by the lovely companion (*marghūba*) who had Shākir Khān's heart. "From these happy tidings," said he, "I expanded within myself so that the garments on my body became tight." In his joy, the khān handed over all the eight gold pieces he had in his little purse as a reward to the bearer, besides a letter of his own. [569]

Lest one might conclude that Shākir Khān had childishly forgotten yesterday's debacle, it is useful to compare the khān's account with Cemal Kafadar's evocative analysis of the diary of the Sayyed Hasan, an otherwise unremarkable Ottoman Sufi of the seventeenth century. That Sayyed Hasan could move easily between descriptions of his sorrow on the death of his wife and the exquisite taste of the *halwa* prepared thereafter, suggests Kafadar, should be seen as signs of an "inner harmony or of a stoic sensibility".[570] Such characterization would appear to be broadly applicable in the case of our author, with the caveat that Shākir Khān was clearly concerned with representing the sense of his own experience of these momentous times.

Shākir Khān's description of the small joys of the morning after the defeat yields novel insight into the *mentalites* of the Mughal elite and the durability of Mughal order at the local level. Because Mughal authors focused so greatly on activities at court, we might be tempted to assume

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[569] Ibid., f. 148b.

[570] Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica*, no. 69 (1989): 146.

that the hall of public audience was the sole locus of all life and experience for the empire's inhabitants. Yet even among high noblemen such as Shākir Khān there existed a realm of subjectivity at far remove from the throne. Two hundred years of Mughal rule might just have ended, and no doubt further catastrophes would ensue. But how much did it really matter what happened at the highest levels of imperial politics? The highwaymen who waited to plunder the khān last night would return as farmers or soldiers in Shākir Khān's contingent tomorrow. Delhi's politics might change, a new emperor might come to the throne, but Shākir Khān and his Ansārī clan-brothers would still have Pānīpat. To be in one's hometown, surrounded by kin, close to one's beloved, and with the familiar taste of the land's eternal bounty in one's mouth – how could these pleasures of life be taken away?

The Delicate Balance of Elite Politics

Perhaps it is this sense of attachment to the land and confidence in the durability of their entrenchment in the locality that led the Mughal nobility to seek an accommodation with Nādir Shāh. Indeed Shākir Khān's own account shows that a delicate choreography began soon after the defeat. The usual historiography tells us that the emperor and Nizām al-Mulk enjoyed a pleasant meeting with Nādir Shāh on the 26th of February, and at this time it was hoped that Nādir Shāh would return to Īrān with a tribute of five million rupees, to be disbursed in stages as he departed. On the 5th of March another and rather less pleasant meeting took place between the emperor, Nādir Shah and Nizām al-Mulk, when Nādir Shāh decided to proceed on to Delhi and extract a greater ransom than previously planned. Camp was broken on the 12th of March, and Nādir entered the city on Friday, March 20th. The uprising in the city began on the night of the

21st of March, and Nādir Shāh's retributive massacre was conducted on Sunday, March 22.[571] But it is important to note that as of yet there are no detailed accounts of the events for the ten crucial days between the first meeting on the 26th of February and the second on the 12th of March. Most of the historical narratives blame the captive Burhān al-Mulk for acting in jealousy against Nizām al-Mulk and inciting Nādir Shāh to stay in India. As the memory of the battle coagulated into the understanding of a comprehensive Indian defeat and an Iranian victory, the sense of the possibilities of the ten days narrowed to nothing. We shall see, however, that some accounts suggest that there was no second meeting between Nādir Shāh and the emperor: a fact that, if true, would have grave consequences for our understanding of the events in question. We will explore the significance of such a profound discrepancy in coming pages. But first let us examine how Mughal historians viewed the negotiations which led to Nādir's occupation of Delhi.

ᶜAbd al-Karīm

Nādir Shāh certainly did not play the part of the triumphant victor immediately after the battle. According to the historian ᶜAbd al-Karīm, Nādir Shāh acted with profound courtesy towards the defeated emperor. Why was this the case? While Subrahmanyam reads Khʷāja ᶜAbd al-Karīm's account as "partly apologistic", it could be that the khʷāja accurately captured the sentiment of uncertainty that appears to have pervaded the aftermath of the battle. Nādir Shāh may well have seen the fighting of the first day not as a definitive victory but perhaps only a favorable first encounter. Certainly the khʷāja noted that Nādir Shāh had witnessed the bravery and obduracy (*jānbāzī wa sābit qadamī*) of the Indian troops even when they were not supported by their artillery. He therefore feared another battle with the Indians who might now bring the full force

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[571] Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1717-1748*, 158–167.

of their ranged support into play. This would be an entirely legitimate and rational worry for an experienced and careful commander who had penetrated the Mughal heartland, well beyond the point of no return and had just fought a bloody battle.[572] It is for this reason, says the khʷāja, that Nādir Shāh dispatched a message of peace. It was eventually agreed that Muhammad Shāh would come to meet the regent of Īrān and not withhold from paying a tribute, retaining in return his honor and position as the emperor of India.

ᶜAbd al-Karīm tells us that when these agreements were made, Āsif Jāh went first to meet Nādir, and having confirmed the terms of the compact, consented to let his sovereign come. The next day Muhammad Shāh went to meet Nādir Shāh, who greeted him with every sign of respect. When the coffee-bearer first gave a glass of coffee to Nādir Shāh, he presented it with his own hands to Muhammad Shāh, declaring the senior status of the emperor by this gesture. But, says the khʷāja, a breach of protocol occurred after this auspicious first encounter. Nasr Allāh Khān Mirzā, son of Nādir Shāh, had remained standing during this time. Rūz Afzūn Khān the superintendent (*nāzir*) indicated to Muhammad Shāh that he should give the young man permission to sit or ask his father to instruct him to do so. Muhammad Shāh perceived his indication but ignored it. When Rūz Afzūn Khān later asked why the emperor had feigned ignorance of his signal, Muhammad Shāh replied, "These men were of the people of Īrān, and the boy was beardless and handsome (*amrad*). It was inappropriate for me to show him kindness or favor." In telling this little story, the khʷāja paints a subtle but important cultural difference between the Hindūstānīs and the Īrānīs; while in India it would be considered normal to treat the

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[572] Khvājah ʻAbd al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqiʻ: sarguzasht-i aḥvāl-i Nādir Shāh va safarhā-yi muṣannif Khvājah ʻAbd al-Karīm ibn Khvājah ʻĀqibat Maḥmud Kashmīrī* (Idārah-'i Taḥqīqāt-i Pākistān, Dānishgāh-i Panjāb, 1970), 33; Cf. Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks*, 190, fn. 39.

child of an acquaintance kindly, such a gesture would not be appreciated by the Īrānians because of their own proclivity for seeking sexual encounters with attractive lads. It hardly needs to be added that such telling details describe not a social reality but only the perspective of the viewer: we need only recall Dargāh Qulī Khān's description of the widespread prediliction for pretty young men in Delhi's elite circles as proof of this.

We can be therefore be sure that the khwāja wanted his reader to understand that despite the proximity of cultures, there were profound and potentially dangerous differences between the people of Īrān and India. The potential for misunderstanding and conflict was great; and in telling this little story, the khwāja adds a dash of tension to the narrative at hand; despite firm agreements and the overwhelming politenesses of etiquette, the fact of the matter was that Nādir Shāh had intruded into the Mughal domains and humiliated the emperor; the subordinated ruler could not afford to let any doubt or differences arise at this most delicate of moments. The reader was not to mistake the outward courtesies of the invader for anything other than a cover for the harsh logic of force and plunder.

Negotiations continued once Muhammad Shāh returned to his own camp. In the end it was agreed that the emperor of Hindūstān would disband his army to return to wherever they liked. The emperor and some two-thousand odd persons were to join the Nādir's camp and proceed after three days to Shāhjahānābād. The regent of Īrān would be a guest of India for two months after which he would return to his own dominions. Apropos of the situation, the khwāja presented only a single line of verse which was to describe the "inner reality" of the events:

> *Murgh-i zīrāk ki bidām uftad tahammul bāyadash.*
>
> Forbearance is necessary for the little bird fallen in a snare.[573]

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[573] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqi'*, 32–34.

Shākir Khān

ʿAbd al-Karīm's recollections thus make his point about the ensnaring of the emperor and of his helpless passivity in the snare of fate. But again Shākir Khān's more prolix and perhaps immediate account offers us another view of the events before Nādir's arrival in the city. Shākir Khān suggests the possibility of resistance to Nādir Shāh was not extinguished with the first encounter on the battlefield. In the aftermath of the battle, the emperor was advised to flee by boat down the Jamuna, past Delhi to Akbarābād (Agra). The local Jāts and Rājpūts could be useful in another battle: and further south in the Deccan there were many Marāthās and Nizām al-Mulk's armies and treasures, who might all be harnessed in regaining the empire. But the emperor refused this course of action. Muhammad Shāh felt that if he had been worthy of the throne God would not have raised another to replace him; and now that Nādir Shāh had arisen it was only folly to tempt fate by resisting him. Instead of causing more slaughter and bloodshed, said Muhammad Shāh in this account, he would submit to Nādir Shāh and see what the future held. While there are reasons to doubt the veracity of Shākir Khān's description (not least because the emperor is also represented as sadly wishing he had listened to Lutf Allāh Khān's advice in the first place) his theory of imperial power is worth considering. On the one hand, recalled the khān, the emperor felt that he had lost the mandate of heaven, and so now wisely prepared to be replaced. But on the other hand, he thought that his father's proposals to make peace had been the wisest course of action, for now it was acknowledged the matters of administration were not in the grasp of "every weaver and cotton-carder" (*har bāfinda o hallāj*) – a pointing and scathing criticism of lowly folk who might now consider themselves to be equal to the old nobility.[574]

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[574] Shākir Khān, "Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq," f. 149a.

Shākir Khān repeats the same conventional wisdom, attributing the conflict on the Indian side to the supposed breach of obligations that led the captive Burhān al-Mulk to give up the empire to Nādir Shāh. Burhān al-Mulk had convinced Nādir Shāh to turn about immediately and leave the Mughal domains upon appointing him as the paymaster of the domains (*bakhshī*) and confirming Nizām al-Mulk in his viziership of the domains. But Burhān al-Mulk also dissuaded Nādir Shāh from establishing a new dynasty in India, and Shākir Khān paints a fascinating portrait of the disorderly realm that Burhān al-Mulk supposedly described. India, according to Burhān al-Mulk, was as vast as the four corners of the globe. The realm was wracked by disorder. It contained greatly powerful rebels (*mufsidahā-yi ᶜazīm*) who might perhaps never be subdued. Burhān al-Mulk himself had been "going about smiting" (*shamshīr-zanī*) for the last twenty years in the east (*pūrab*) and had spent tens of millions in the process. In the south the Nizām al-Mulk had similarly been fighting and slaughtering for fifty years, but apparently all to no effect. Sedition raged in every direction due to the Jāts, Rājpūts, Bundīlas, Chandīlas, and Sikhs. So if Nādir Shāh were to take over the domain, for how long would his exalted highness go about smiting?

Shākir Khān's description of the rebellious domain reflects a counter-vision to the idea of the peaceful and prosperous domains imagined by imperial ideologues like Chandar Bhān and Sujān Rāī of the previous century. At a stroke he destroys that harmonious portrait, presenting instead a vast land of strife, on which benevolent administrators might pour infinite amounts of men and money without any hope of pacification. Yet it is important to remember that this anarchic vision was just as purposeful an act of imagination as that of the ideologues of Shāh Jahān's court. Now Burhān al-Mulk recommended that Nādir Shāh extract vast amounts of tribute from Delhi and then return to his own lands – a wise policy which the invader cannily accepted. He decided to visit Delhi because it was an imperial capital (*takhtgāh-i salātīn*) and because it was auspicious

to do so. Its residents would also be expected to pay a few tens of millions for his troops. All this, we are told, is because the emperor insisted on granting the robe of the paymastership to Nizām al-Mulk in the aftermath of the battle, to which the Nizām only reluctantly acceded. Had this not occurred, says Shākir Khān, the massacre in Delhi would not have ensued.[575]

So while Shākir Khān does not give the dates, it is clear that on the Nizām's visit he was informed of the revised terms and conditions drawn up by a Burhān al-Mulk furious that the robe of the paymastership had been granted to Nizām al-Mulk. Now the Nizām was informed that Nādir would return, but only after his son married a daughter of the emperor. In addition the Mughals were to cede half of the province of Multān and the entirety of the westernmost provinces of Kābul and Thattā. Burhān al-Mulk would be accompanied by Nādir Shāh's right-hand man Tahmāsp Khān Jalāyir to Delhi, where preparations would be made for the extraction of tribute.

Unlike ᶜAbd al-Karīm, Shākir Khān curiously only recalls a single meeting between Nādir Shāh and Muhammad Shāh. He tells us that Muhammad Shāh left to meet the invader and forbade most of the nobility from joining him. He was accompanied only by Amīr Khān Bahādur and Ishāq Khān, who had both recently risen at court. In addition there were the palace eunuchs, the Nāzir Rūz Afzūn Khān, Bihrūz Khān, and Jawīd Khān. This single meeting, as Shākir Khān recalls, was conducted with exquisite ceremony. When Nādir Shāh heard of the emperor's coming, he sent his son Nāsir Mirzā some kurohs to greet the defeated ruler. The son was told to welcome Muhammad Shāh with the ceremony due for an emperor (*dāb-i bādshāhāna*): when the emperor's mount approached him he dismounted from the horse and performed the *kurnish*. The emperor too had his traveling throne stopped, and embraced the prince and kissed him on his

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[575] Ibid., f. 149b.

head and his eyes. In response Nādir Shāh's son offered the *ādāb* and rode his horse before the traveling throne to the tents. When they approached Nādir Shāh's camp, the latter greeted him at the door to his own tent. Muhammad Shāh was given the place of honor on the cushion (*masnad*), while Nādir Shāh himself sat at the foot. These were all crucially important gestures, since they affirmed Muhammad Shāh's superiority to Nādir Shāh, and clearly indicated the victor's desire to not upset the existing order. Nādir Shāh's formal submissiveness in this encounter was to set the tone for the rest of his stay in the country.[576]

Nādir Shāh was as polite in words as in deeds. Describing himself humbly as "this mendicant", the Shāh noted that he had sent several ambassadors with pleading letters to the threshold which sought to remind Muhammad Shāh of the ancient connections between the exalted Tīmūrid transmission (*silsila-yi ᶜāliya-yi tīmūrīyya*) and the rulers of Isfahān.[577] These letters had requested help for dispelling the accursed Afghāns, who were a thorn in the path of both states, but Nādir had awaited a response for several years. It was only out of despair that Nādir had at last acted in this fashion but otherwise he would under no circumstances deviate from the established rules of friendship. There were no other hidden motives of any sort, and all these errors of negligence were unworthy of princes of exalted temperament.

Muhammad Shāh for his part responded only that these errors had permitted the happiness of offering service, though it is not clear who exactly was the primary recipient of such joys. On hearing these words, however, Nādir Shāh manifested delight and praise. Growing exultant, he expressed the wish that his exalted highness (*ᶜālī hazrat*) be blessed with the estate of rulership, for this robe of honor behooved the garments of this dynasty. For his own part, declared Nādir Shāh, he was but a guardsman of this throne (*man yasāwal-i in masnad am*). Nādir Shāh was at

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[576] Ibid., f. 150a.
[577] Ibid.

the service of his exalted highness, ready to punish whoever raised his head against him. For several *gharīs* there was pleasant conversation and great politeness was observed. Nādir Shāh placed a water-pipe before the emperor with his own hand. Besides "his exalted highness" no other title was used to refer to Muhammad Shāh, and Nādir Shāh strictly ordered his own nobility that none other should ever be used. He went so far as to declare that he was a "lesser brother" (*barādar-i kamtar*) of the defeated monarch, and asked his greater sibling to spend the night in comfort with him so that both parties might relax together in viewing the elegant merrymakers in Nādir's employ. But Muhammad Shāh demurred, because he knew of the importance of his person in maintaining order in his camp: spending the night in Nādir's camp would cause perturbation amongst the servants of the Mughal establishment and the people would fall into discord. Nādir Shāh knew that what the emperor said was true, and so he consented.

Muhammad Shāh thus returned to his own tents happy and pleased at Nādir Shāh's conduct. At the time of his return the people complained about the high prices of grain and it was ordered that they were to loot (*lūt*) it wherever they could find it. The entire camp (*ganj*) which would have sufficed for several days was therefore plundered in the blink of an eye, and the high prices shot up even more, so that even a measure of broken rice (*birinj-i kunda?*) could not be had for five rupees. The people of the town of Karnāl made thousand-fold profits from the selling of grain. But Shākir Khān did not bewail such wanton acts of war-profiteering. Rather he bemoaned the fact that he too could not profit from the defeat: for the doctor Muhammad ᶜĀlam Khān, who was in the family employ and had been entrusted with two carriages of grain, sold the food for thousands and kept the money for himself.[578] So too of the five thousand rupees that Shākir Khān

[578] Ibid., f. 150b.

had left him, of which the doctor returned only three thousand, claiming that those who had been sent to recover the rest from where it had been buried had defrauded him of the rest. But there was no point crying over spilt milk, said the regretful khān, for, as the Arabic expression went, "*God moves in mysterious ways*".[579]

Shākir Khān's account of the meeting poses a certain puzzle for the historian, for he does not recall two separate meetings between Nādir Shāh and the emperor. This is despite the fact that the khān was present at camp on the day of battle and bore an otherwise vivid memory of the events in question. If the second meeting served to illustrate Muhammad Shāh's humiliation, Shākir Khān's act of omission indicates either that a second meeting never happened, or that our author was at pains to deny his monarch's humiliation. This narrative of non-humiliation would suggest that the meaning of Nādir Shāh's invasion was not immediately obvious as it unfolded.

Nādir Shāh certainly took great pains to produce a rhetoric that avoided bald statements of conquest, victory, or domination. This is evident in a proclamation that Nādir Shāh issued to Lutf Allāh Khān in his capacity as the acting governor of the province of Delhi. The missive is dated to 17 Zū al-Qaᶜda, of the twenty-first regnal year. According to the regnal calendar of Muhammad Shāh, this would secure the date of February 26th, 1739. This would indicate that Nādir Shāh had decided to proceed on to Delhi as early as two days after the battle of the 24th of February, on the day of his first meeting with Nizām al-Mulk. In turn this would suggest that no long period of time elapsed in indecision, leading to a further round of meetings at which Nizām al-Mulk and the emperor were subject to harsh treatment, strengthening the possibility that perhaps only one meeting took place. The letter reads as follows:

Copy of the Exalted Order of Nādir Shāh:

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[579] الغيب عند الله Ibid., 151a.

> Lutf Allāh Khān Sādiq Bahādur of exalted place, expectant of imperial favors, may you know that we elevate you, who are sublime of glory and impregnable of station, and known as among the old nobility of the Tīmūrid state and a confidante of the Gurgānī establishment, to the governance of the Abode of the Caliphate Shāhjahānābād, which is the greatest of territories of Hindūstān, and the protected quarters of the noble Princes on the face of the earth. The sincerity of your service, and the jewel of worshipful probity and protectiveness of that first of the most excellent of the Era [i.e. Lutf Allāh Khān], has been praised by approved by the report of the loyal and unflinchingly faithful Burhān al-Mulk Bahādur Jang, who has represented our poverty to his Highness. It is necessary for you, impeccable of dignity, to reassure the residents of that city and render them expectant of the miracles and generosity of the God-given State (*daulat-i khudādād*). You should act so that the subjects both of the flock and nobility may carry their heads in tranquility. Treat the powerful and the helpless equally; let it not be that the strong dominate the weak. Consider the imperial workshops and buildings and the custody of the princes in your charge. The keys to the Blessed Fort, along with all the workshops, are to be turned over to the Captain Tahmāsp Khān who accompanies Burhān al-Mulk. In this context a special imperial note in the has been issued in the Old Tongue (*bi zabān-i qadīm?*). Action is to be taken on the basis of these writings, and consider us oriented towards your condition. Know that there are strict injunctions in these matters. Inscribed on the 17th of the month of Zū al-Qaᶜda in the twenty-first Regnal Year conjoined with prosperity.[580]

This is a remarkable letter, one that only a victor over a great empire might write. It bears no reference to Nādir Shāh or to his achievements in the battlefield, except for one standard reference to the "God-given state" as Nādir Shāh's administration was known. Projecting supreme self-confidence, Nādir Shāh reconfirms Lutf Allāh Khān in his post and gives him broad orders to ensure that peace and justice are maintained under his charge. Commitment to preserving the tranquility of the flock could be seen as part of the rhetorical window-dressing of literary exchange, but acquires a greater significance in light of the great upheavals which would follow Nādir Shāh's arrival. Despite all these flourishes, however, Nādir's import was direct: Lutf Allāh Khān was to turn over the fort to Nādir's agent and await further orders.

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[580] Ibid., f. 151a.

Accompanying this missive was a rather less prolix imperial note (*shuqqa-yi khāss*) in the hand of Muhammad Shāh:[581]

> Burhān al-Mulk of longstanding service and Tahmāsp Khān Bahādur are arriving with a patent (*manshūr*) of governance for the old servant from the court of the King of Kings (*shahanshāh*). It is necessary to hand the keys to all the workshops to the captain and consider the princes in your own charge. The Fort is also to be opened to them. There are strict injunctions in this matter.

Muhammad Shāh passively confirmed Nādir Shāh's commands. While his letter is not dated, Muhammad Shāh regarded Nādir Shāh's letter as a "patent of governance" (*manshūr*), indicating that he regarded Nādir Shāh as now established in a position of superiority to him. This is reinforced by Muhammad Shāh's use of the phrase "king of kings" which was favored by Nādir Shāh. But, tellingly, Muhammad Shāh did not see his autonomy completely over-written by Nādir Shāh's fiat: for while he tells Lutf Allāh Khān to hand over the keys to the imperial workshops to the representative of the invading army, he is clear in stating that Lutf Allāh Khān was not to relinquish charge of the Princes (*salātīn*) – the collineal descendants of royal blood who were confined in the fort. For the emperor, retaining control of these individuals was more important than the treasures of his workshops: it was from this pool that a strong figure might select a replacement for the reigning emperor. Indeed Muhammad Shāh himself had been selected in precisely such a fashion during the last imperial crisis in 1719. The further significance of this injunction will become apparent in the following pages.

Finally, there was a letter from Burhān al-Mulk, which was dated to 15 Zū al-Qaᶜda, which was February 24th – the date of the battle itself – and delivered by the hand of a certain Āghā Hasan Kāshī:

> My Lord, dear friend and administrator, protected by God, on the date of 15 Zū al-Qaᶜda the estate which kisses the dust of the threshold of the King of Kings has received a

[581] Ibid., f. 151b.

> patent of administrative authority for the gracious recipient with a note by the beneficent master (*khudāwand-i niᶜmat*) [Muhammad Shāh]. Thus Āghā Hasan brings it. Consider the custody of the Princes to be your responsibility. Tahmāsp Khān Bahādur and this mendicant, bearing the carpet of peace (*taslikh-i sulh*) are entering the city. Please arrange baggage and conveyances and establish the regulations of welcome (*tuzak-i istiqbāl*) until as far as the step-well and take the keys from the Fort-Commander. These will be handed over along with the charge of the workshops at the very beginning of the meeting with the captain. I will also be in accompaniment. Greatly desirous [of seeing you] and greetings (*ziyāda mushtāq wa al-salām*).[582]

Before the arrival of these letters, Shākir Khān's father had intended to raise defensive positions (*murcha*) outside the city. Lutf Allāh Khān was equipped with an escort of five or six thousand horse and foot who had been hurriedly gathered and were prepared for battle. After receiving these letters, however, that intention was dismissed and the khān instead prepared the apparatus of welcome until the step-well as ordered. From this site the three eminent nobles proceeded to the garden of Kamgār Khān, which was near Majnūn's hospice, and spent a few hours there. The party then entered the city through the Kashmīrī gate and headed towards the blessed fort. The fort-commander engaged the group in a bit of back-and-forth, but when he saw the imperial note he opened the fort up and offered himself for service. Everyone proceeded to the hall of special audience. Tahmāsp Khān now announced that the fort had to be emptied from the hall of special audience to the Asad tower and handed over to his men.[583]

Tahmāsp Khān Jalāyir decided that the imperial harem and the Hāyāt Bakhsh garden to the Shāh Tower would be reserved for the servants of his sublime highness Muhammad Shāh. Thus Lutf Allāh Khān spent two days and nights in the fort, arranging the quarters in the way that he had been instructed. Even at this time, says Shākir Khān, Lutf Allāh Khān kept up a subterranean resistance against the Iranian party, seeking to preserve the fort's treasures as best as he could. So he ensured that the queen of the era (*Nawwāb Malika-yi Zamānī*) was assigned a special

[582] Ibid.
[583] Ibid.

quarter in which the treasures of the interior residences of the palace (*andarūn-i mahal*) had been buried: it was hoped that no one would search these quarters by virtue of the queen's presence. The ploy was successful, and more than ten million rupees of the interior residences were preserved in this way. But the queen remained ignorant of the secret, and so complained greatly to the emperor about the discomforts of this tiny apartment.

Lutf Allāh Khān was however unable to preserve the imperial workshops he had so painstakingly reorganized. Ghulām Mustafā Khān, Nādir Shāh's superintendent (*nāzir*), was deputed to deal with them. Shākir Khān explains that the nāzir, in the idiom of the people of Īrān, is what they call the khān-i sāmān; thus his father was called the superintendent of India (*nāzir-i hind*). This act of bureaucratic equivalence made Mustafā Khān Lutf Allāh Khān's "opposite number". Both proceeded to inspect the individual warehouses (*kotha*). Mustafā Khān would ask, "What sort of material is this? Does this belong to the imperial wardrobe (*tosha khāna*) or to the jewel-house or the goldsmith's office? Is it among the items inlaid with precious stones, or among those made of gold or silver? Does it belong to the hall of perfumes or the library or the office of coin-engravings (*sikka saj khāna*) or the horse-smithy?" Behind Mustafā Khān's queries masked a barbarism that horrified the gentle bureaucrat so accustomed to procedure and protocol. Mustafā Khān did not call before him the manager of the warehouse, and nor did he seek the papers through which it might be comprehended. Instead, in brutally direct fashion, he struck at the locks of the warehouses with his axe and dragged their material out. He selected the finest wares and gave the khān a receipt for them. The rest was replaced and in the warehouse and placed under both his seal and that of Shākir Khān's father.[584]

[584] Ibid., 152a.

Shākir Khān's account therefore suggests that despite Nādir's victory and his magnanimous language, a quiet contest raged on. Beneath the kind words and courtesies, Nādir Shāh's objective was to loot and plunder the accumulated treasures of the empire. That Nādir was so successful in this enterprise, however, also suggests that Muhammad Shāh's regime, in turn, was hardly caught in the financial precarity attributed to the era of decline. In Shākir Khān's memory, unimpeachably loyal officials such as his father were far from passive: they strove to vigorously protect the interests of the Mughal dynasty even in this moment of its greatest crisis.

Jugal Kishor

In an eighteenth-century biographical dictionary, Lutf Allāh Khān was recalled as having fallen from imperial favor because of unwise actions that remained undescribed. As we have seen above, many of Shākir Khān's recollections serve to highlight his father's probity and sincerity. What supposed crime, then, provoked such protestations? An answer might be found in an important but much-neglected account of events in Delhi in the days after the victory of Nādir Shāh, left to us by a certain Rājā Jugal Kishor.

Like his famed contemporary, the litterateur Ānand Rām Mukhlis, Jugal Kishor was a Hindu bureaucrat who had risen to the upper echelons of the Mughal bureaucracy. But there was little other resemblance between the two. While Ānand Rām was an eminent figure in Delhi's intellectual establishment, the Rājā Jugal Kishor was seen as a boorish upstart. Ānand Rām counted cultural elites such as the litterateur Ārzū amongst his friends, and was a noted poet in his own right. Rājā Jugal Kishor also aspired to the virtuoso demonstrations of literary elegance, but was rebuffed with contempt by the era's literati. The great poet Mīr, for instance, was invited by the rājā to serve as his literary preceptor (*ustād*). But Mīr records in his account that when he went to inspect Jugal Kishor's attempts at versification, he was simply appalled: "I didn't find

them worthy of correction and scrawled a line across most of them."[585] No doubt this was because Jugal Kishor was one of the upstart new arrivals at the Mughal court: he was recorded to be a lowly *bhāt* by caste, and a seller of alcohol by trade.[586] Yet by 1739 Jugal Kishor had risen to an extraordinary rank at court. His influence is evident in a letter written by him to his master Shujāᶜ al-Dīn Muhammad Khān, the governor of the province of Bengal.[587] As Shujāᶜ al-Dīn's agent, Jugal Kishor represented his master's financial interests at court and was no doubt intimately involved with the annual flow of tax revenues from the province to the center on which the empire ran. The historian Syed Hasan Askari, who first brought this letter to light, discovered it by chance "at the end of an old copy of *Yūsuf o Zulaykhā*".[588]

In his letter, Jugal Kishor began by describing the invasion of the "king of kings' (*shahinshāh*), as an unforeseen disaster and a heavenly catastrophe. Certain ill-starred folk who were limitless in their material greed and shameless in thought provoked the typhoon of Nādir Shāh's rage, though Jugal Kishor did not name them. Instead he tersely described the causes of the recent military defeat. The amir al-umarāᵓ had been slain in battle, and Burhān al-Mulk had not arranged his forces properly; he had engaged in a war of battle-lines (*jang-i safūf*) without having arrayed his ranks (*durust nakarda*) in dealing with a hardy and battle-tested enemy. The Qizilbāsh leaders sent a few detachments of heavy and light musketeers (*jazayirchīyān wa tufangchīyān*) who aimed for the leaders (*sardārān*) of the Mughal forces. After this they turned their guns against the elephant-riders. In this account, the Nizām al-Mulk Āsif Jāh had just set

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[585] Mir, *Zikr-i Mir*, 76.

[586] For these and other details see, Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 414–5.

[587] Syed Hasan Askari, "Raja Jugal Kishore's Despatch Regarding the Sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah," *Indian Historical Records Commission: A Retrospect, 1919-1948* 25 (December 1948): 107–115.

[588] Ibid., 107; While I have consulted Askari's translation of the letter, my account is based on a fresh translation using the text preserved at the National Archives of India: Rājā Jugal Kishore, "Ruydād-i Nādir Shāh," n.d., National Archives of India, Ac. 324.

out to reinforce the armies in the field when the amīr al-umarāᵓ received three wounds from the guns and was brought back unconscious to the camp. This presumably halted the assault and led to the rout. The army was paralyzed by the plundering of two or three leaders and the scarcity of grain, and demoralized by the prowess and intrepidity of the Qizilbāsh. So Āsif Jāh performed the *kornish* before Nādir Shāh on the advice of Burhān al-Mulk and negotiated a truce which was sealed with the gift of thirty million rupees (three crores) by way of the "tribute for re-cladding horse-shoes" (*naᶜlbandī*). After it was agreed that the servants of the two rulers should meet, Āsif Jāh brought the emperor with a select escort to Nādir Shāh's tents. The emperor was received with the pomp appropriate in such a welcome, and after a lively conversation (*garmjūshīhā*), Nādir proposed that the emperor remain in his camp, so that they may continue the conversation in an atmosphere of trust. But because the emperor was filled with fear (*az bas-i wāhima*) he produced excuses, and this produced a certain displeasure (*girānī*) within Nādir. On the death of the amīr al-umarāᵓ, Āsif Jāh took the mantle of chief paymastership (*mīr bakhshīgirī*) upon himself and appointed the land-grants of the deceased and Muzaffar Khān to himself. This caused Burhān al-Mulk to despair of achieving these services and grants, and so set his tongue wagging before Nādir Shāh.[589]

As many other sources have suggested, it was Burhān al-Mulk who presented Nādir with the thought of ascending to the throne of the abode of the caliphate for a little while. He was to take tribute from the residents of the city and the landowners of the surrounding regions and environs, and then to establish Muhammad Shāh firmly on the throne. Burhān al-Mulk then turned over twenty millions and a little more in writing to Nādir Shāh, saying that if he, who had no appointment in imperial affairs and ruled over a turbulent and disturbed province (*wilāyat*) could

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[589] Rājā Jugal Kishore, "Ruydād-i Nādir Shāh," f. 1.

provide this sum, then ten times this could be extracted from Āsif Jāh, who ruled over several climes. He also accepted the undertaking of producing forty million rupees from the residents of Shāhjahānābād, thus receiving the title of deputy of the empire (*nā*ᵓ*ib al-saltanat*) and the ability to conduct all affairs of state. He was then sent with Tahmāsp Qulī Khān Jalāyir, in whom Nādir reposed complete trust. It is at this juncture that Jugal Kishor fleetingly mentions that Lutf Allāh Khān, who was the governor of the province, turned over the entire royal descendants (*salātīn*) to Nādir Shāh in the expectation that he would be appointed manager (*pīshkār*) to Burhān al-Mulk, the deputy of the empire. Given the importance of the confined princes in matters of princely succession, and given Muhammad Shāh's strict injunctions to Lutf Allāh Khān about safeguarding these figures, the act of turning over their charge to the enemy would appear utterly treasonous. To turn the princes over to Nādir Shāh would indicate that Lutf Allāh Khān had lost faith in the continued existence of the Mughal domains and was now preparing to serve a new master. This would serve to explain why Lutf Allāh Khān fell from grace after Muhammad Shāh was restored, and it is not surprising that this issue finds no mention in Shākir Khān's otherwise extensive account.

But Lutf Allāh Khān was not the only person who decided to cooperate with the invader. This was seen as a sound course of action by all the defeated party, including Rājā Jugal Kishor himself. The rājā claimed that he acted with the aim of keeping the eastern domains (*mamlakat-i mashriqī*) of his master Shujāᶜ al-Dīn Khān safe from the depredations of this evil, and so "sacrificed his honor in the service of faithfulness". While Jugal Kishor waited for a letter seeking his presence at court, he cannily established a connection with his sublime highness (*janāb* ᶜ*ālī jāh*, probably Tahmāsp Qulī Khān Jalāyir), who the rājā thought was a great man, a

worthy friend, perceptive, inspiring of awe (*sarāpā ghazb*), with the qualities of an elder (*pīr*) and in very much in the spiritual tradition (*tarīqa*) of Nādir Shāh himself.

The rājā ingratiated himself with this personage by the gift of shawls and valuable multi-colored cloth (*kimkhāb*) worth about twenty thousand rupees, besides a thousand rupees in cash. Meanwhile the emperor had been respectfully and honorably brought back to the city in a procession led by solemnly marching (*ihtiyāt kunān*) sargeants and guards (*yasāwalān wa nasaqchīyān*). The emperor was accompanied by his personal servants Amīr Khān, Muhammad Ishāq Khān, Kh^{w}āja Jawīd Khān and Bihrūz Khān. Burhān al-Mulk had readied the fort, preparing the halls of general and reserved audience and other central buildings with Turkish and European (*rūmī o firangī*) curtains. If Nādir Shāh was awed by the pavilions and gardens of the sublime fort, he did not let it distract him or his men from their main objective. On the very next day, which was Saturday, the 10th of March (10 Zū ‘l-Hijja), the process of readying the city for exactions began with an accounting of neighborhoods (*mahalla shumārī*). Superintendents began to take down names for appointing the amounts of tribute (*peshkash*). Meanwhile Burhān al-Mulk died, most probably of his long-standing illness.[590]

Jugal Kishor’s account confirms our sense that Nādir Shāh’s occupation of Delhi began with the same careful messaging that had characterized his interactions with the defeated Mughal ruler thus far. We learn from ᶜAbd al-Karīm that in the classic gesture of sovereignty, he minted a coin in his name (called the Nādirī) and which bore the verse:

> *Hast sultān bar salātīn-i jahān*
> *Shāh-i shāhān nādir sāhib qirān*
>
> He is ruler above the rulers of the World
> King of Kings, Nādir, the Lord of Conjunction[591]

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[590] Ibid., f. 2–3.
[591] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqi‘*, 42.

These words were not empty bombast. In this verse we see his confident but careful assertion of his place and stature. Nādir acknowledged the presence of other rulers in the world and the validity of their claims. But he stated that he was a King on a different plane, above them all. All our sources referred to Nādir Shāh with the title of "shāhinshāh" ("King of Kings", *shāh-i shāhān*), an honorific not in the common Mughal fashion. This too was no accident: ᶜAbd al-Karīm tells us that Nādir instructed his imperial writer (*munshī al-mulk*) that great and small, near and far should all refer to him as king of kings in speech and writing.

By choosing this name, Nādir Shāh did not contest or disparage Muhammad Shāh's claim to the empire; he simply elevated himself above it. Similarly, Nādir proclaimed himself divinely ordained to rule in such glorious fashion; for he was a lord who was born under the sign of a heavenly conjunction. In giving himself this appellation, however, he immediately evoked Amīr Tīmūr, the Tamerlane who as the "scourge of God" had terrified Europe, but was revered by the Mughals as a venerable ancestor. Drawing on this legacy, the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān had been titled *sāhib-qirān-i sānī* – a second lord of the conjunction, claiming descent from the first. But surely it is not only for reasons of metrical harmony that Nādir did not consider himself a third lord of the conjunction. To do so would expose him to questions about his lineage, which most certainly did not include the blood of the illustrious descendants of Tīmūr. So he too was a lord of the conjunction, with the same claims to universal sovereignty that Tīmūr might have expressed, without however any tenuous claim of familial relation.

A final glimpse into Nādir's public persona comes from his seal, which says our author was imprinted on every paper of expenditure or requisition, and on imperial letters and orders. It read:

Nagīn-i daulat wa dīn rafta būd chūn az jā

Bi nām-i nādir-i Īrān qarār dād khudā

Because the Seal of Imperium and Religion had been displaced
God established the name of Nādir of Īrān[592]

Nādir's imperium had been expressed in his letters as God-given (*saltanat-i khudadād*). This was a message reinforced by his seal, which described his role in the world. Religion and imperium had been thrown into disequilibrium in the world. It was given by God to Nādir Shāh to restore the natural order of things and not further disrupt them. It is within the context of this restoration, therefore, that Nādir Shāh's seal found its frequent imprint in Delhi on papers demanding the extraction of vast sums of money.

Riot

Shākir Khān

It is in the context of these appropriations that Lutf Allāh Khān first learnt of the outbreak of violence in the city. Shākir Khān describes the event in curious fashion. He tells us that "one day" when Lutf Allāh Khān and Mustafā Khān were examining the papers of the jewel-house in the public council (*dīwān-i ᶜāmm*), the Persian said, "*Ai* Lord, in the past night the people of India (*hind*) have brought a calamity down on their own heads." This, Shākir Khān tells us, was because Sayyid Niyāz Khān the kinsman (*khʷīsh*) of the vizier, the superintendent (*nāzir*) Rāī Mān and Shahsawār Khān and "other rowdy folks" had spread the rumor that Nādir Shāh had been killed in the fort. Lutf Allāh Khān could hardly have been unmindful of the day (it was the morning of the Sunday, two days after Nādir Shāh entered the city), just as he could hardly have been unaware of the tumults outside the fort, where "Mughals and Qizilbash were being killed

[592] Ibid.

wherever they were found”. Yet it would seem he had only now learned that an angered Nādir Shāh had ordered a general massacre (*qatl-i ᶜāmm*) to quell the insurrection.

Lutf Allāh Khān, however, was not surprised that such an event had happened. He said to Mustafā Khān, “Sir, what doubt is there of the wretchedness (*kam-bakhtagī*) of Hindūstān? But aside from that, my wife and children and house are all in the city, and here I am on imperial business. What condition might they be in?”[593]

In response, Mustafā Khān said that this was no time to approach Nādir Shāh, and whatever was fated would happen. They were conversing in this manner when Nādir Shāh himself appeared at the latticed door (*dar-i jālī*). Mustafā Khān and the Mughals and Qizilbāsh and the nobility and captains of all sorts who were in the public council crept away into the corners and left the council so that was totally emptied. Two imperial guards (*nasaqchī*) stood before him in scarlet robes with yellow head-ornaments. The shāh’s son, Nāzir Mirzā, a tall young man of pleasant disposition and mien, stood at a distance of fifty feet. After him stood a great throng of guards and the leaders of various detachments. Shākir Khān’s father got up agitatedly and approached Nādir Shāh face to face. He registered astonishment on the faces of the two bodyguards who stood by the Shāh and were wondering who might have the temerity to approach. Since Lutf Allāh Khān had presented himself in service on the day Nādir Shāh had entered the city, he had been granted the favor of wearing a precious cloak, embroidered with gold and worth three thousand rupees, which had been worn by the shāh himself.

The shāh said (in the familiar, rude register), “Your face is white (*safīd*). Of which place’s people are you? And how dare you approach?” Completely forgetting for the moment his home in the rustic environs of Pānīpat, Lutf Allāh Khān responded, “This aged servant is from Herāt,

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[593] Shākir Khān, “Hadīqa-yi Hādiq Wa Ganjīna-yi Sādiq,” f. 153b.

and of the full Herātī stock (*nasl pur hirātī*); and present in the service of the emperor. Due to the infamy (*shāmat*) of the people of India a general massacre has been ordered, and my family is in the city. Whatever is ordered in this matter…." Nādir Shāh immediately ordered a nearby guard that peace was decreed (*āmān*) on the house of the administrator (*nāzir*), and twenty imperial guards were assigned for it security. Then the Shāh said, "Compose yourself. I'll take you with me and make you the administrator of Herāt." The senses flew from Shākir Khān's father's skull on hearing these words, for Nādir could not be dissuaded and the khān imagined being parted from his family in his old age. In the end, however, Nādir was prevented from inflicting this kindness on Lutf Allāh Khān with a "fine" (*musādira*) of five hundred thousand rupees. Lutf Allāh Khān never met Nādir Shāh again except at his departure, when he granted a six-piece robe in the Īrānian style, a sword and a jewel-encrusted dagger.

Lutf Allāh Khān apportioned the twenty guards assigned to him to members of his family. Five went to the house of Shākir's great-uncle; five to his uncle's house; five to the foster-brother of Jānī Begam, and five to their own door. Because of these five guards, remembered our author, the entire stretch from the three-arched gateway to the Kashmīrī Gate in the North remained safe. But the path from the Fort along the Moonlight Avenue to the Fathpuri Mosque was ravaged, as was the extent from Delhi Gate to the salty stepwell (*khāri baolī*). Some forty-two thousands were killed and plundered in all. It was ordered that until the vizier and Nizām al-Mulk came bare-headed crying "Peace! Peace!" to Nādir Shāh's position at Raushan al-Daula's mosque (which is near the constabulary and opposite the three-arched gateway) the killing would go on. When the nobles came crying for peace, the killing stopped the minute Nādir issued the command – even the swords raised to smite halted in mid-air.[594]

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[594] Ibid., f. 154a–b.

Shākir Khān's account makes it clear that at the moment of the riot, Lutf Allāh Khān's first concern was for the sanctity and the security of the family. That the region from the three-arched gateway to the Kashmīrī gate remained undamaged because of the presence of the guards assigned to him was an entirely fortuitous beneficence. Shākir Khān, we see, blamed the people at large for the riot, which his father had attributed to their *kambakhtagī* – a term that implies wretchedness, insolence, recalcitrance over and above its literal meaning of "ill-fortuned condition". In Shākir Khān's account of his father's actions we discern the operation of a complex form of individual or family identity. Lutf Allāh Khān might consider the rural environs of Pānipat to be his homeland, but at a moment of crisis he could summon a connection to the distant Afghān town of Herāt. This was more than a canny move in a situation where the khān might well imagine a furious invader predisposed against requests from treacherous Hindūstānis; it points, rather, to the multiplicity of affiliation which served as one basis for the Mughal elite's flexible attitude towards matters of high politics. At the same time, this very flexibility in generating affiliation for political purposes does not appear to have extended downwards, towards the masses of urbanites who were now rising in rebellion against Nādir Shāh. Shākir Khān might well have disapproved of Nādir Shāh's harsh actions but he does not appear to have entertained, even for a second, the idea of joining the city's uprising. This was perhaps because in the greater scheme of things a victorious Persian-speaking warlord was a more familiar and comprehensible entity than the city's faceless, unruly throng.

Jugal Kishor

Yet it would be a mistake indeed to imagine that such attitudes were borne of a sense of Muslim religious solidarity, or of an ethnic difference between "foreign" Mughals and "native" Hindus. Very similar attitudes are to be detected in Jugal Kishor's description of the uprising. Writing to

his superior in the aftermath of the invasion, Jugal Kishor provides greater detail to his master. Although the rājā tells us that all was well until Sunday evening, it is easy to imagine the factors that would have aggravated the city's population: a recent military defeat, compounded by the presence of identifiably foreign soldiers; the occupation of the fort by an enemy leader who appeared to have the emperor in his control; and, to top it all, the immediate preparations for the extraction of an unforeseen tax. Jugal Kishor tells us that Nādir Shāh's Artful Army (*fauj-i funūn*) was dispersed through the "marketplace" (*bāzār*) by the evening. On the basis of a request (*hasb al-ᶜarz*), says the rājā, it was ordered that they be taken into charge – suggesting that the city's administration may have noted the emergence of a potentially explosive situation in the mingling of a resentful and armed populace and a large body of enemy soldiery. Such an administrator would only have to think back to the events of two decades before, in which an angry mass of urbanites had attacked an occupying army from the Deccan when the emperor Farrukh Siyar was rightly perceived to be in danger (1719); or even of the events of a decade before, when a mob of shoe-sellers and others had fallen upon the assembled nobility seeking to dissuade them from their protest (1729). There was, in other words, much cause for concern on all sides.

Jugal Kishor's letter offers significant insights into the nature of the uprising. He tells us that when Nādir Shāh's sargeants (*nasaqchīyān*) came to effect the withdrawal of his soldiers, some ill-fated provocateurs (*waqaiᶜ-i talab*) began to spread erroneous words that should never be expressed on any tongue. They said that that the sudden retreat of the artful army was due to the fact that a person had attacked Nādir Shāh with a gun or a bow and then seated Muhammad Shāh on the throne. In fact, a multitude of people associated with the palace (*qabīl-i harmhā*) spread these rumors upon being denied entry to the fort during the day. There ensued a satanic tumult,

with the noise and disorder (*shūr o ghūghā*) greater than the day of resurrection itself. Jugal Kishor is doubtless speaking for the upper echelons of his society when he says that the people, despaired of their lives and contemplated the calamity that was sure to follow. Yet his account offers us insight into the process by which the riot began.

To begin with, there were rumors that Nādir Shāh had been killed by a person at court and Muhammad Shāh had been re-established on the throne. It is important to note that such widespread rumors, whether true or not, reflected what the people of the city wanted and desired. In this they might have diverged from their elite counterparts like Jugal Kishor, who worked hard to come to amicable terms with the emerging order as rapidly as possible. The power of such words was compounded by the fact that they were uttered by people associated with the palace (*qābil-i harmhā*). As we have seen in previous chapters, the visibility and the integrity of the imperial body was essential for the normal functioning of the political order. The emperor himself knew this perfectly well. This is why he had insisted on returning to his own camp after his meeting with Nādir Shāh: had he been absent, rumors about his absence would have agitated his army further. Now, locked up in the fort with the invader, inaccessible to the people, his body became the object on which the desires of the multitude could be projected. For Muhammad Shāh to be enthroned again would mean that it was now possible to set right the political order that had been misconfigured by the arrival of a foreign ruler. That would be achieved by hunting and killing the members of the Iranian army in just the fashion as had happened in 1719.

Nādir Shāh, however, had not been killed. On the next morning, he rode out to the compound (*katra*) of Raushan al-Daula, which lay near the mid-point of Moonlight Avenue, and established himself on the upper story of the structure. This building, facing the square of the avenue, happened to be right next to Jugal Kishore's massive house. When it was learned that some of

the sargeants and outsiders (*khārijiyān*) had been killed by the luckless people of Shāhjahānābād, Nādir's rage flared up and he ordered that the people and children, cows and horses, sheep and camels – whatever there was in the city – should be killed or taken captive. The minute he uttered these words – which were like the trumpet of the archangel Israfel, signaling the day of resurrection – the Qizilbāsh used their rope-ladders (*kamand*) to ascend to the top of the building. Because Jugal Kishor's house was nearby and its wall adjoined that of the compound of Raushan al-Daula, more than five hundred Qizilbāsh climbed into his house and began to raid it within the blink of an eye. Their intention was to clearly to kill everyone they encountered, and it seemed to the rājā that he and his family would all be extinguished in a single instant.

But God interceded in producing his new friend Mustafā Khān Sāhib, who had just recommended Jugal Kishor the previous day to Nādir's Lieutenant Tahmāsp Qulī Khān Jalāyir. This Mustafā Khān was almost certainly the same Mustafā Khān who worked with Lutf Allāh Khān and perhaps had exercised some influence in ensuring protection for him. Now Mustafā Khān appeared at the rājā's door. On hearing of his arrival, Jugal Kishor knew that any delay in meeting Nādir Shāh would ensure his death at the hands of Nādir's men; so, with the intention that his name might live on as a memento in the world, he stepped out a little bit and to visit Nādir Shāh, passing through a street that had become a battlefield where swords were being brandished and Indians were being killed without the slightest restraint. Jugal Kishor met Nādir Shāh and said that he was an agent of Shujāᶜ al-Daula. Just As Lutf Allāh had claimed he was a "full-born Herātī", Jugal Kishor claimed that his master Shujāᶜ al-Daula was also of the Afshār tribe, and so was hopeful of Nādir Shāh's favors.

It turned out that at the very time that Nādir Shāh had given the order to kill everyone, he also ordered Mustafā Khān to proceed to Jugal Kishor's house and to keep him and his family safe.

So Sālih Beg the seal-keeper (*muhr-dār*) was appointed to this task and Mustafā Khān caused the Qizilbāsh to withdraw. Fifty heavy gunners (*jazāyirchīyān*) were appointed under the command of the Sālih Beg to protect the rājā's house. It is in fact a measure of their relative importance that Jugal Kishor received fifty guards unprompted while Lutf Allāh Khān had to ask for twenty. In any case, while the rājā was spared, nothing remained of a single person's possessions between the gate of the fort to the Lahori gate of the city. The men were all killed; the women were carried off; and the houses burnt. From the neighborhood of the jewelers (*dariba*) to about the house of Qamar al-Dīn Khān, and from the three-arched gate of the fort to the Kashmīrī gate of the city there was a general massacre until half the paths were also burnt over by fire. This latter region to the Kashmīrī gate of the city, which Jugal Kishor says was burnt, is precisely the region that Shākir Khān remembered as preserved by the five guards assigned to him.

In Jugal Kishor's estimation, there was no counting the number of those killed in the massacre. But he could not help including his own personal tragedy in these general lamentations: for goods worth two hundred thousand rupees which had been stored in his shop were burnt, and fifty thousand rupees in cash were taken as plunder. On the bright side, some clothes and jewelry and four thousand gold coins (*asharfī*) remained thankfully unharmed in his cloth warehouse (*toshakhāna*). Orders to cease the killing were finally given in the third watch of the day. Not even a trace of the former population remained in the new city except in the alley of Khush Hāl Chand, which had been protected by the sargeants on the rājā's recommendation. The houses of Shaykh Abū Bakr, Jīvan Dās and Bhikham Sen the head of the money-changers (*chaudharī-yi sarrāf*), and the compound of ᶜĀlam Chand and other neighborhoods were destroyed by fire. Yet the damage was hardly all-encompassing: for while Muhammad Hasan was wounded, the dear

Shaykh himself remained unscathed. The mansion of Imtiyāz Khān similarly escaped destruction.[595]

ᶜAbd al-Karīm

ᶜAbd al-Karīm broadly confirmed the account that Jugal Kishor presented to his master. Like Jugal Kishor, our author had no sympathy for the city's masses, though he did describe a slightly different rumor. The night after Nādir Shāh's entry into the city, a group of the frivolous and vulgar loudly proclaimed that the emperor of India (and not one of his servants) had finished the affairs of Nādir Shāh and parted his head from his body. By this excuse there was a mass commotion (*hujūm-i ᶜāmm*), says the khʷāja, using the phrase which we have already encountered to signify a large popular disorder. This crowd fell upon the Qizilbāsh soldiery and they killed whoever they could. Even more than Jugal Kishor, ᶜAbd al-Karīm's description of the fate of Nādir's soldiers on this night mirrors that of the Marātha troops in Delhi two decades before: Nādir's warriors were utterly demoralized on hearing the news of their master's death, so that even the lowest of the low of Hindūstān could strip an armed Qizilbāsh of his life and his robes. The khʷāja estimates that perhaps three thousands of these people of Īrān lost their lives to the glisteningly-watermarked swords of these tumultuous provocateurs (*shūra-bakhtān-i waqaiᶜ talab*). In the middle of the night Nādir's administrators fearfully and stumblingly related the news to their leader. At first Nādir blamed his own troops: he thought that they had tried to plunder the people of the city and so this trouble was the product of their own innate evil nature (*sharārat-i nafs-i khud*).[596]

But after a while the news began to trouble him, and he sent out a mace-bearer (*yasāwāl*) to ascertain the true state of affairs. That poor man was killed the by the rioters the minute he

[595] Rājā Jugal Kishore, "Ruydād-i Nādir Shāh," f. 3–4.
[596] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqiʿ*, 33–37.

stepped out of the fort's gateway. A second mace-bearer suffered the same fate. After this Nādir was certain of the trouble afoot, and ordered that a thousand musketeers go forth to dispel these strife-seekers. Even the dispatch of this force was futile, and the city did not return to order until the end of the night. But in the morning it was "again the same stew in the same pot". In this way, ᶜAbd al-Karīm suggests that Nādir was left with no choice other than to produce a sanguinary massacre. So Nādir emerged from the fort in the second or third hour and proceeded to the seminary of Nawwāb Raushan al-Daula the deceased, which adjoins the courtyard of the constabulary. Again our author adds unexpected details: he tells us that the commanders of the Īrānian and Indian artillery (*topchībāshī*, *mīr ātish*) Yār ᶜAlī Sultān and Saᶜd al-Dīn Khān were dispatched with the musketeers and three thousand others, and told to kill anyone who was wearing Indian clothes (*libās-i hindī*) and to plunder the city with the necessary unmercifulness and hard-heartedness. Diverging from previous accounts, ᶜAbd al-Karīm therefore claims that not just Nādir Shāh's soldiers were mobilized in suppressing the disorder: Muhammad Shāh's own soldiery supposedly participated in the massacre and targeted civilians on the basis of their clothing.

The result was that the tongues of the flame of murder and plunder wagged freely until the afternoon, and predominated over the group of Indian ruffians who had started up all this tumult and strife. ᶜAbd al-Karīm's sympathies were reserved, as with all other writers without exception, for the innocent elites who were only trying to get by peacefully. These helpless decent folk (*shurafāᵓ-yī bīchāra*), who possessed houses and dependents, and the honor of whose women (*sharm-i nāmūs*) was connected with their pride, became the victims of Nādir's Qizilbāsh soldiery. According to the constable Faulād Khān's later investigations, twenty thousand were murdered and an uncountable amount of treasure and money fell into the hands of the Īrānian

soldiers. Although this calamity occurred in only a few neighborhoods near the imperial fort, ᶜAbd al-Karīm believed its impact was disproportionately great. The residents of other places had considered the center of the city to be the safest and so sent their possessions there, and now the trouble and strife befell those very places that had been thought the most secure. The first neighbourhood to be plundered without resistance was that of the residences and shops of the jewelers and money-changers.

So many houses caught fire, sadly noted our author, that thousands of Hindus and Muslims were burnt in them. Had the same slaughter continued till the evening, he thought, not a single person would have been remained as a specimen the city's residents. Yet ᶜAbd al-Karīm defended Nādir Shāh: although the Regent of Īrān had not really intended that such a massacre should take place, the flame of sedition would not have been settled without chastisement because the city's rebellious inhabitants were "like a breeze of corruption" (*bādī-yi fasād*): and in such conditions it was difficult to distinguish between the corrupt and the innocent. For as it is said,

> *Chu az qaumī yakī bī-dānishī kard*
> *Na ki rā manzilāt mānad na marā*
>
> When one of a community acts ignorantly
> Neither great retain their dignity nor do the small

So while the massacre was to be lamented, it would never have occurred had the vicious menials of the city not blundered into such a course of action. In fact, says ᶜAbd al-Karīm, the city's folk had been spoiling for a fight from the minute Nādir Shāh's troops entered the city. This was especially true of the lowly "people of the bāzār". These urban sophisticates had mocked and ridiculed the Qizilbāsh soldiers, because many of whom were guileless nomads and villagers (*sahrāī wa dihqānī*). In fact ᶜAbd al-Karīm could not resist paying these rustic warriors a back-handed compliment of his own: he thought that such quantities of cash and kind and jewelry

would never have fallen into their hands without the massacre, because these simple folk could not have imagined that such enormous amounts of gold and silver existed in the world. After this, when hundreds of thousands were taken from the houses of people, their greedy eyes became sharpened, and so they extracted money from others in the same way, thus leading to the ruination of the city.

Certainly many were killed. A sense of the destruction is evident in the historian Rustam ᶜAlī Khān's account of his acquaintances who were plundered or killed in the massacre. The house of Bū ᶜAlī Khān Koka, and that of Tarbiyat Khān, who was one of the great nobles, were sacked. The doctor Imām al-Dīn, who was a master of medical sciences, attained martyrdom with his dependents. According to a report, Hakīm ᶜAlawī Khān, who was like a Jupiter (*ᶜulwī*) of the age in his knowledge of the sciences, suffered the same fate. Many of the wise and the pure and memorizers of the Qurᵓān all reached the stature of martyrdom. ᶜAlī Wardī Khān the imperial falconer (*qarāwal beg*), who was one of the old nobility and held the grant of a thousand, killed himself due to the roughness of exactions levied on him.[597]

The fate of the city's ordinary inhabitants was of course generally not recorded for posterity. It is only in ᶜAbd al-Karīm's narrative that we find the slightest mention of the urban poor, who might as well not have existed for Shākir Khān or Jugal Kishor. Indeed, ᶜAbd al-Karīm sympathetically noted that the destruction fell hardest on the poorest. Because many of the grandees had connections with Nādir Shāh's guards (*nasaqchīyān*), they sought them to ensure the safety of their own houses. In this way some of the poor who were their neighbors remained protected from the slaughter. But many were not so fortunate, particularly the indigents (*ghurbā*) who lived from the gates of the imperial fort to the old festival-ground in the west; in the north,

[597] Shāhābādī, "Tārīkh-i Hindī," 286b–289b.

as far as the Hindu Pillar; to the south, beyond Delhi Gate. The real trouble had started in Pahār Ganj, where people who hoped to stir up trouble came to the banks of the river Jūn and began their assault. Finally, like Jugal Kishor, ᶜAbd al-Karīm was also struck by the fact that the Qizilbāsh stopped their killing at the very first instruction from their master.

ᶜAbd al-Karīm named the same elites blamed in other accounts for the troubles. These were Sayyid Niyāz Khān the son-in-law of the vizier Qamar al-Dīn Khān, Shāh Sawār Khān (elsewhere called Shah Sawār Khān) the son-in-law of Qarrā Khān the head of the Tūrānī Mughals, Rāī Mān the servant (*khidmatīyya*) of the emperor, and Rāo Theka Singh the colonel (*hazārī*) of the artillery. Unlike the others, however, ᶜAbd al-Karīm defended these well-born people, saying they had only acted in order to protect the honor of their dependents and children, and so dispatched a large number of the Qizilbāsh who attacked their houses to "the mountain-ranges of oblivion" (*kūhistān-i fanā*) with bullets from their muskets (*jazāyir*). These leaders of the resistance were produced before His Highness; shawls were thrown around their necks, and they were freed from the prison of shame and honor with a squeeze or two by the violent and oppressive.[598] Rustam ᶜAlī Khān adds the name of Khush Hāl Rāī, the inspector (*mushrif*) of the court to the list of the dead, and says that the bellies of the executed were slit open.[599]

It is striking, however, that the names of these elites mark not their high-born status, but their recent or tenuous proximity to the emperor. Both Sayyid Niyāz Khān and Shāh Sawār Khān must have come from decent backgrounds but are described not as sons but rather sons-in-law of more prominent men. Shāh Sawār Khān's name means "mounted by the king", signifying that the khān's ascent to the cavalry was the direct result of imperial favors and not previous position. Rao Thekā Singh, as a hazārī, would have been a mid-ranking officer in the artillery which was

[598] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqiʻ*, 37–39.
[599] This gesture, as we have seen elsewhere, was one of public warning. Shāhābādī, "Tārīkh-i Hindī," 289a–289b.

directly responsible to the emperor. Finally, Rāī Mān's case is the most interesting. Her name and title (*khidmatīyya*) suggests she was a woman in the personal service of the imperial harem. She would appear to belong to the category of women who were apparently capable of protecting the emperor in life-threatening situations. One such woman, of Qalmāq[600] origin, had protected Jahāndār Shāh against assassins who had entered the harem during the war of succession in 1712. This person, named Shādmān, killed one assassin and suffered slight wounds herself. She was rewarded for her bravery with the title of Rāī Mān "the Rustam of India" (*rustam-i hind*) when Jahāndār Shāh came to the throne.[601]

While this Rāī Mān was executed on the orders of Farrukh Siyar, other Qalmāq women protected Farrukh Siyar himself when his own deposition drew near.[602] We know from other instances that titles granted to individuals within the palace acquired an institutional status and were granted to later successors.[603] The Rāī Mān executed on Nādir Shāh's orders in 1739 was therefore quite possibly the occupant of an institutional role concerned with the close protection of the imperial person. Her execution, never explained in the sources, would therefore raises the possibility that some sort of attempt had indeed been made on Nādir Shāh's life upon his entry into the fort. Such an action would have been perfectly consistent with the role of the emperor's own bodyguards, who might well have feared his deposition at this most sensitive moment, especially given the past precedent of the Sayyid brothers against Farrukh Siyar in 1719.

While ᶜAbd al-Karīm painted the massacre as a terrible calamity inflicted on a helpless population, he also presents a striking example of resistance in the figure of Nawwāb Oguz

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[600] The reference of the term "Qalmāq" here is unclear, referring perhaps here to Siberian Junggar Mongols who appear to have been particularly recruited for the Mughal harem.
[601] Irvine and Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, I.170–171.
[602] Ibid., I.281, 387.
[603] See the case of Bībī Juliyāna, discussed in Chapter Two.

Khān, who is mentioned separately from the ill-fated instigators of the riot who appear to have been executed soon after the event. On the day of the massacre, the khān remained in his own mansion in the neighborhood called Kathrā-i Loī outside the Lāhorī gate, to the west of the city. The khān had remained to protect his house and his honor, and he sallied forth with his Oguz Mughals (*mughalān-i aᶜghazz*) and Turkish slaves determined to repel the raiders. Because all his men were expert (*sang-shikāf*, lit., "stone-splitting") archers, and he himself was a brave and illustrious hereditary leader, they resisted valiantly. By the time they ran out of arrows, a large number of the Qizilbāsh had been sewed up (*dūz namūda*) and dispatched to non-existence, and many of the Oguz had been killed too. The khān now took his wife and draped a cloth around her head (*chādarī bar sar pūshānīda*) and took her with him on a horse and rode away, wounding those who pursued him with arrows. So he and his wife arrived safely in the suburb of Mughalpura. After the end of the massacre, he was sought by Nādir Shāh, with whom he conversed in bold and manly fashion in Turkish. The shāh was very pleased with him and said, "Your face is white, and you've performed feats like a Turk (*kār-i turkāna namūda*)!" As a reward he granted him a robe of honor, a sword and a dagger, and an ᶜIrāqī horse. We note again that Nādir's words of praise for the Oguz Khān, as for Lutf Allāh Khān, complimented the fairness of their complexion.[604]

Fraser

A final account of the disturbance in the city is provided by James Fraser in his *History of Nādir Shāh*.[605] Fraser's account is particularly interesting because he was not an eyewitness to the events in question. Rather, he derived his account from "the Journal of his [Nādir Shāh's] transactions in *India*, with the letters of the cession of the Provinces" sent by the "secretary" of

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[604] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqiʻ*, 40–41.
[605] Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah*.

Sar Buland Khān in Delhi to a certain friend of the author named Mirzā Mughal.[606] From Fraser's descriptions it is clear that the journal which was his source matches the format of the *akhbār* news-reports in form and substance. Such news-reports served as the framework of the communicative network which bound the empire together; they also served as the basis for the histories that Mughal authors produced, which was precisely the manner in which Fraser himself employed them. Fraser in this sense is an important authority not because of his perspective as an outsider but as an insider: while we can safely discount his fanciful exaggerations of the numbers killed in the riot, his narrative is valuable in that it yields insight into the Mughal reports which constantly transmitted news of the event across the realm.

Fraser tells us that Muhammad Shāh returned to the city on Thursday, the 19th of March with all the marks of his sovereign authority: royal litter, canopy, umbrella, standards. The emperor was accompanied by 4,000 Qizilbāsh cavalry. Nādir Shāh had also reached the outskirts of the city in the previous evening but "did not care to enter [the city] in the nighttime" because he had already learnt that its inhabitants were "of a seditious and turbulent temper".[607] Now he marched in after Muhammad Shāh "with all the caution imaginable" and forcefully instructed his sargeants (*nasaqchis*) to ensure his troops did not molest the city's people.[608]

The festival of ᶜĪd al-Zuha fell on Saturday, the 21st of March. According to Fraser, the price of grain had risen because of the crisis, and so Nādir's official Tahmāsp Khān sent nine sargeants to the granaries at Pahār Ganj, just outside the city. They "caused them [the granaries] to be opened" and wheat was sold at the rate of ten seers a rupee. This, it would appear, was a very high price; according to a nineteenth-century statistical essay on the price of wheat in Delhi

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606 Ibid., iv–v.
607 Ibid., 178.
608 Ibid., 178–179.

described by Sourin Roy, the foodstuff sold for less than 20 seers a rupee in only eight years between 1763 and 1835.[609] Yet the price Fraser mentions was that *after* the granaries had been opened, suggesting that it sold even more dearly before. In Fraser's estimation, because even so astronomical a price "did not turn to the Proprietors['] account", these merchants "assembled a mob" by the evening, who were subsequently joined by thousands of "disaffected people". It is curious that Fraser, who could hardly have been unaware of the many grain riots in England (including one in 1741), nevertheless did not describe the event in such terms, blaming instead the grain merchants who "assembled" the mob.[610] Once assembled, however, the mob killed Nādir's sargeants and then began to spread rumors. It was said that Nādir Shāh had been poisoned, or captured; and now "the Mob and Tumult exceeded all Bounds, all the idle Vagabond and disaffected People joining from all Quarters, with what arms they could most readily find, poured like a Torrent towards the Castle".[611]

This mob pursued the occupying soldiers who were parked outside the fort, chasing some to the banks of the river and killing them there; other Qizilbash retreated to the large mansions of the nobility and to the Fort, firing cannon, arquebuses and muskets from these places "to keep the mob at a distance". Yet its numbers only increased and appeared more infuriated. It was also reported that Sayyid Niyāz Khān, son-in-law of the vizier, set fire to a room where he had confined several of Nādir's Sargeants. The tumult crescendoed at eight in the morning on the next day. A furious Nādir Shāh now rode out of the fort, only to see a large number of the corpses of his slain soldiers lying about the city. Nādir now deployed more troops, telling them

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[609] Sourin Roy, "A Rare Document On Delhi Wheat-Prices 1763-1835," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 91–99.
[610] E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, no. 50 (February 1, 1971): 76–136.
[611] Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah*, 181.

to deal with combatants only but to spare the innocent. These troops "at first proceeded gently"; but this, instead of calming the people, only made them "more bold and insolent". When Nādir arrived at Raushan al-Daula's mosque on the square at the heart of Moonlight Avenue, the people who lived nearby climbed to their terraces and threw stones at his party. And it was from one of these terraces or windows that "a musquet was designedly shot at Nādir Shāh, which missing him, killed one of his Officers who stood next to him." It was only under the strain of all this grave provocation that Nādir Shāh "gave way to his passion" and ordered the massacre.[612]

Like his Mughal informants, Fraser also believed that the true villains of the piece, who had incited the mob, "disappeared in an instant" at the outbreak of the massacre, leaving "innocent Shopkeepers, *Bazaris*, and many honest Families, to be butchered by the inraged [sic] Kuzzlebash".[613] From this perspective, it was impossible to imagine that the mob might perhaps have consisted of the very honest families who later bewailed their fate. Yet it was clear that the uprising against Nādir Shāh had been of a general character, for Fraser also tells us that the resistance against him continued after the massacre: Three days after the event, Nādir had to send "a strong Body" to the inn of Rūh Allāh Khān near the Mughal quarter (*mughalpura*) to suppress "Tartar Moghols" and locals. The three hundred of these resisters who were captured belonged to the "Ordnance, also the *Hazaris* and Head Officers" – military officers of the artillery who we recall had also participated with gusto in the shoe-sellers' riot a decade before. These prisoners, we are told, were brought bound from the inn and were publicly beheaded. The fact that their headless corpses were thrown onto the sand-banks of the river, a customary place for such spectacles (and also a place where gentlemen such as Dargāh Qulī Khān would witness

[612] Ibid., 181–183.
[613] Ibid., 186.

wrestling-bouts), suggests that Nādir Shāh was operating through the city's own administrative apparatus, which shaped the forms of punitive power.

It was not thus not coincidental that the city's constable (*kotwāl*) Sīdī Faulād Khān was confirmed in his title by Nādir Shāh at just the same time that the executions took place.[614] On Thursday, the 26th of March, civilians were impressed into ridding the city of the corpses which still lay everywhere and gave off "a very offensive stench": some were dragged to the river, while those "imagined" to be Hindus were burnt, forty or fifty at a time, with the timber of demolished buildings.[615] On Monday, the 30th of March, Shah Sawār Khān and Rai Mān were beheaded and disemboweled respectively. Sayyid Niyāz Khān, on the other hand, was strangled with a shawl – perhaps the less dishonorable death serving as a concession to his father-in-law, the vizier.[616] Yet things still did not return to normal, for Nādir's exactions led to another wave of deaths. The constable's adopted son ᶜAlīm Allāh "having been ill used, and publicly disgraced… cut open his own Bowels" on the 14th of April.[617]

It would seem that the account employed by Fraser was written on the 3rd of July. Fraser's account makes it clear that the massacre and the subsequent exactions in the city were extremely severe. Yet even as Fraser, presumably repeating his informant, bemoaned the continuing "Lethargy of Indolence … Pride, and self-conceit" of Delhi's nobility, he also described another strange phenomenon. The citizens of Delhi, he noted, were "quite stupified" by their trauma. Yet the "indecent Expressions and beastly Actions" of Nādir's troops "are the constant subjects of Discourse, in all Companies, related with a seeming Satisfaction and Pleasure, and by Way of

[614] Ibid., 187–188.
[615] Ibid., 189.
[616] Ibid., 195.
[617] Ibid., 199.

Jest and Drollery".[618] Fraser's informant here echoed the Mughal historians who had lamented the mocking and humorous ways in which people had similarly discussed the humiliation of the Mughal nobility during the shoe-sellers' riot in 1729. From his words, we might infer that Nādir's invasion and its attendant horrors were similarly the subject of popular discourse.[619]

Despite their variations, all the accounts above are agreed on certain features of the uprising against Nādir Shāh. Firstly, the violence had something of a spontaneous character, since it occurred on Saturday, the first full day of Nādir Shāh's occupation. Secondly, the uprising shared characteristics with previous incidents, most particularly the disorders of 1719 – though it is noteworthy that our authors did not allude to the previous incident. Thirdly, the occupying army was broadly resented by the mass of Delhi's common folk, and that these city-dwellers were the primary aggressors in the conflict to follow. Acting in this way, the residents of the city broke the implicit rules which governed the relationship between victor and defeated. Fourthly, while there might have been some elite participation in the riot, it appears that only a small segment of the nobility which was particularly attached to the reigning emperor joined in. In strangling them, slitting their bellies open, and placing their corpses in "public admonition", the admiration of the occupied city later acted *as if* the violence was directed by these noblemen. But this was certainly an act of wishful thinking, for all our accounts are agreed: the violence was produced by the masses, which acted on the basis of a rumor. But how are we to understand the workings of this rumor?

In her study of rumor and history in colonial Africa, Luise White disagrees with Tomatsu Shibutani's understanding of rumor as an instance of "collective problem-solving" by groups in ambiguous situations who sought to "construe a meaningful interpretation … by pooling their

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[618] Ibid., 216.
[619] al-Karīm, *Bayān-i vāqi'*, 41.

intellectual resources”.[620] As against this, White follows Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel in suggesting that rumor “reveals wider terrains of belief and history”. Rumor, she argues, derive their strength from their embeddedness in history, and are given new significance in changing circumstances.[621] But White’s critique of Shibutani does not consider the possibility that rumors themselves might have very different characteristics in varying spatial and temporal contexts. Certainly Shibutani’s interpretation is applicable to the case of the uprising in Delhi, when the inhabitants of the city were confronted by a crisis which threatened the entire political order of the empire. The rumor, then, was what permitted the mass activation of the city’s inhabitants, allowing them to act in concert at that very moment to defend the figure of the Mughal emperor.

Yet White is not wrong in pointing to the fact that rumors are founded in shared beliefs and views of the historical past. Whether or not our elite commentators were willing to acknowledge the fact, by 1739 the inhabitants of the city had many previous instances of their own mobilizations to guide them through the moment of crisis. And even in its barest form, the rumor reveals strong opinions about the proper order of the world, in which the Mughal emperor sat on the throne and punished those who rose up against him by every means at his disposal. To this we must add the possibility of an actual attempt made against the life of Nādir Shāh within the fort. Such an action, however, would only have served to encourage sentiments that were already present and widely shared. Yet a gaping chasm was now evident between this popular view of absolutist sovereignty and the accomodationist desires of an aristocracy that saw the realm’s affairs as a big tent which they alone held up.

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[620] Shibutani, quoted in Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (University of California Press, 2000), 81.
[621] Ibid., 82.

The Aftermath

Indeed, the city's nobility acted quickly in the aftermath of the massacre to establish a *modus vivendi* with the occupying forces. After the suppression of the uprising, our sources represent Nādir as placing a series of financial demands on the people of the city. High officials in the financial bureaucracy of the state such as Jugal Kishor were intimately involved in organizing these exactions and in fact served Nādir Shāh with zeal. In his letter to his master, Jugal Kishor recounted that he was summoned to Nādir Shāh's presence on the day after the massacre. Nādir asked the rājā to give a written account of his wealth of his own accord. He also accepted four thousand gold coins, perhaps the very sum that had been preserved in the rājā's house the day before. Nādir then ordered him to pay a hundred and twenty-five thousand rupees, and Jugal Kishore accepted this demand, asking only for a little while to arrange the sum. Nādir appeared to appreciate the rājā's ready acceptance of this demand. In that morning he also presented eight elephants to Nādir, who also gave permission to Jugal Kishor to write to his master and his son in Bengal.

Nādir was apparently toying with the possibility of sending an army to claim his tribute from the governor of Bengal, which Sar Buland Khān had thought should be about twenty million rupees. In this connection, the warlord mentioned that the deceased Burhān al-Mulk had said that the long-time governor of Bengal Jaᶜfar Khān had withheld payments of tens of millions of rupees from the emperor. It would seem Nādir might have wished to represent himself as acting on Muhammad Shāh's behalf: a position of formal subordination he had already employed to great effect during his tenure as the "regent" of the Safawid monarch in previous decades. In any case, Jugal Kishor refuted this aspersion against his patrons in the strongest terms. He pointed out that whatever had been gathered in taxes had been sent without any subtractions or omissions to the

imperial treasury from the time that the administration (*nazm o nasq*) of Bengal was assigned to Jaᶜfar Khān the deceased, and even unto to the present day. The defraudation of even a single particle (*habba*) had never been discovered in all this while, so that whatever remained after the province's own expenses was routinely sent with perfect integrity as tribute to his highness. Having defended his master, Jugal Kishor went on the offensive against Burhān al-Mulk, who had been the administrator of Awadh for a while, had never sent even a *dirham* from that province to the emperor's house. He had taken charge of the grant-assignations of the nobles and military grantees. He had killed many of the rich land-holders (*zamīndārān-i mutamauwil*) and gathered all their wealth. The accusations of fraud that he had leveled against Shujāᶜ al-Daula were wholly due to his sense of enmity towards this loyal imperial servant. In fact, said Jugal Kishor, he was willing to give a personal bond (*muchulka*) that his master had no more than five million rupees in his possession; the person assigned to take Nādir's letters to him might also be charged with investigating the truth of these statements. [622]

While Jugal Kishor's bracing defense of his master's probity was in part possible because Burhān al-Mulk had just passed away and so was unable to defend himself, Nādir appeared to have been convinced by this statement. In fact he said kindly that "your words have the signs of truth. Since we will not send the army, we appoint you to investigate and bring our letters; appoint whoever you know to be best for this task". Yahyā Khān the Mīr Munshī was appointed to this task but the emperor could not spare him, so Murīd Khān was appointed instead.

Jugal Kishor also presented Nādir with cash and material worth two hundred and fifty thousand rupees. In his letter he alluded briefly to the difficulties and debts that this entailed. Yet this indicates that even in the aftermath of great looting and pillaging, the market for loans in cash

[622] Rājā Jugal Kishore, "Ruydād-i Nādir Shāh," 4–5.

remained active. The rājā saw this speedy payment as a shrewd investment in the good graces of Nādir Shāh; but the immediate reward was not unmixed with bitterness, for the rājā was instructed to serve Sar Buland Khān and ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān in gathering tribute from the city. Jugal Kishor heartily despised both these men, whom he denounced as not only malicious, but perhaps even worse, as incompetent. Sar Buland Khān suffered from delusions of his efficiency, while ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān did not bother to investigate the actual conditions of the people; instead, he foolishly assigned them fanciful sums to pay based on the documents that detailed their official assignations and positions. He acted with such ignorance in his assessments that he failed to distinguish between those who were alive and those who had already died. In this way the piece of paper on which he wrote his assessments caused the ruination of untold numbers.[623]

It is difficult to gauge the intrusiveness of these searches and exactions. It would appear that Nādir sought a thorough and comprehensive reckoning of the city's inhabitants. The rājā tells us that when it was ordered that the names of the inhabitants of every neighbourhood were to be compiled, Sar Buland Khān did not show any tardiness in his investigations and sent his list of contributions (*qabūliyāt*) to Nādir Shāh. But ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān remained incapable of marking most of the residences and inspecting their possessions. He had therefore to be assisted by Jugal Kishor; and when "this insignificant particle" was ordered to assist him, notes the rājā proudly, he investigated the people in the forecourts of their residences (*jalau-i makān-i budan*) in just two days, receiving praise for his industriousness. While the rājā's language is unclear, it would seem that the most appropriate metric of wealth was not the formal income of a person based on government records, but the state of his house and belongings perhaps estimated from personal visits and interrogations in residential courtyards. The gentlemen-bureaucrats of the imperial

[623] Ibid., f. 5.

office (*mirzāyān-i daftar-i muᶜalla*) presented the rolls (*tūmār*) of investigation and identification created by Sar Buland Khān and ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān to Nādir Shāh. By the many of the names on this list these ill-natured folk wrote "a hundred" for "one" which they put in the final copy (*sāf niwishtand*).

Despite the zeal of men like Jugal Kishor, Nādir Shāh was apparently unsatisfied by the yield from this first estimate of the "contributions" that were to be made. It was decided that Nizām al-Mulk, the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula, ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān and Jugal Kishore, and thirty others from the group of Hindus and Muslims were to be produced before Nādir. Now Mirzā ᶜĀlī read each of their names and Nādir Shāh made additions to each person's tribute. Thus Jugal Kishore was now asked to pay another hundred thousand rupees. The poor indigent Nand Kishor (the author's brother?) was asked to pay fifty thousand more, and the author's managers were all asked to pay eight thousand rupees. The total sum demanded now rested at 21.2 million rupees, and it was divided in five parts between Nizām al-Mulk, Iᶜtimād al-Daula, Sar Buland Khān, ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān and Murtazā Khān.

It was also on this day that matters took a more threatening turn. Majlis Rāī, the financial administrator (*dīwān*) of the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula was asked why the vizier had only deposited three hundred thousand rupees while people said that he had tens of millions secreted away; and now Majlis Rāī was asked to give a list of the vizier's possessions. He was also told to give a bond (*muchulka*) to the effect that if after investigations there was any variance between his figures and the actual sums, then his wife and children would become liable to execution. Due to the terrible awe of Nādir, says Jugal Kishor, the aforementioned administrator did not give an intelligent response to this demand. Although the author had made Majlis Rāī understand that he should not refuse to provide the bond, he did not listen to these words of wisdom. Pointedly

punishing this seeming act of wilful deafness, Nādir Shāh had Majlis Rāī's ear cut off before his master Iᶜtimād al-Daula in the gathered assembly.

Majlis Rāi clearly acted to resist Nādir Shāh. In doing so he swam against the tide. Jugal Kishor, on the other hand, was a rather more wily and ingratiating servant. He pleased Nādir Shāh so much that the warlord said that he would give him a present of his choice (*dar haqq-i to riᶜāyat khʷāham kard*). But, reported Jugal Kishor to Shujāᶜ al-Dīn, he told Nādir that his desires were contented with Nādir's letter and robe of honor sent to his master and his son in Bengal. Nādir, doubtless pleased with the way things were going, expansively offered Jugal Kishor another favor. Now the author said that he was the houseborn slave of Samsām al-Daula (who had perished in the battle of Karnāl), had been trained by him, and bore the weight of his favors about his neck. So he hoped that the son of the deceased would be granted a military contingent and a land-grant. Nādir was profoundly pleased to hear this request that so reeked of loyalty and the lack of self-interest. So Nādir, in his usual coarse way of praise, said "Your face is white, and it appears faithful!"[624]

The five noblemen mentioned above had been ordered to raise the sum from designated areas of the city. Jugal Kishor now worked for Nizām al-Mulk, and succeeding in raising 1.5 million rupees of the 3.3 millions demanded. As the appointed date neared, word came that Nizām al-Mulk and Firoz Jang and their other companions would pay the balance out of their own pocket. The vizier acted similarly in the case of the contribution assigned to him. Sar Buland Khān had been assigned the *chūrāt* and the suburb of Wakīlpura, and sent the demanded sums after the liberal application of the scourge and other tortures. But many hundreds of thousand rupees remained uncollected by Murtazā Khān and ᶜAzīm Allāh Khān, perhaps because of their reckless

[624] Ibid., f. 6–7.

padding of the first list of exactions. They were responsible for 1.6 million rupees, because they had assigned the sum of 2.2 millions to the names of Fakhr al-Daula and Lutf Allāh Khān but extracted barely 200,000 from them.[625] For all of these reasons, the houses of many were plundered.

Majlis Rāi had been assigned the wild sum of 1.5 million rupees by the blundering ʿAzīm Allāh Khān and Murtazā Khān. The helpless Rāī, recently mutilated in court, now turned over 900,000 rupees and then killed himself for the shame of it all (*tamah*). Har Narāyan, the agent of the recently-deceased Burhān al-Mulk and the sons of the Rāī Khush Hāl Chand were made to pay 800,000. So in the end, of the 21.2 million rupees demanded 2.2 millions remained unpaid. Of that 1.5 millions assigned for the expenses of Muhammad Shāh were classified as "difficult to extract" and Amīr Khān was ordered to raise that sum. The remaining 900,000 rupees would be gifted to the emperor. In return for this, Nādir's lieutenant Tahmāsp Khān Jalāyir scourged the merchants and nobles of the princess's quarter (*katra-yi begam*) and the imperial guards (*wālāshāhiyān*) and jewelers. Some of the imperial guardsmen were killed under the bastinado, and some ran away.

The contrast between Jugal Kishor and Majlis Rāi is instructive. Majlis Rāi was placed in a more difficult situation than Jugal Kishor, and did not handle Nādir Shāh with the requisite tact. Majlis Rāi's commitment to the ideals of loyalty was severely tested; he passed the test and lost his life. Jugal Kishor, on the other hand, did not see himself in violation of such norms even as he collaborated enthusiastically with the invader. Some would have called Jugal Kishor disloyal, but he only went on to rise to greater positions of prominence in the few years he lived after the

[625] We recall however that Shākir Khān states his father gave five hundred thousand rupees in fines.

invasion.[626] This loyalty, however, did not extend to his sovereign, but instead only to those elites with whom he was already enmeshed in relations. This was another way in which Jugal Kishor's actions conformed to the aristocratic codes which rejected the primacy of loyalty to the emperor and had been enunciated in Irādat Khān's memoirs (chap. 2). Jugal Kishor's decentered sense of loyalty was produced by the same phenomenon which had animated Irādat Khān's discussion of the place of the nobility: because the nobility were truly indispensable in running so vast a realm, they might happily serve any sovereign who sat on the throne without insecurity to their own position.

Sovereignty Returned

Such widespread notions of decentered loyalty might give a leader like Nādir Shāh some pause. Did Nādir Shāh worry that the noblemen who rushed to serve him in 1739 would only turn against him at some inopportune moment? While it is true that Nādir might have had limited objectives, Nādir Shāh did not make any dramatic alterations in the political structure of the empire. He appears to have removed no great person from his position or elevated another. In this context, his careful observance of the sovereign status of the Mughal emperor suggests that Nādir Shāh was profoundly conscious of his inability to make any kind of real political impact on an empire in which the nobility were too independent and the populace too rebellious.

Nādir's limited conception of his role is evident in the events arranged for his departure, which bore a symbolism which was entirely consistent with Nādir Shāh's earliest declared intention, which was to not disrupt the sovereignty of the Mughal ruler. The main ceremony took place on a Thursday in the special council (*dīwān-i khās*) in the fort. Nādir Shāh began by granting robes

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[626] See for instance the footnotes Askari presents from the memoirs of a contemporary historian in Askari, "Raja Jugal Kishore's Despatch Regarding the Sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah". The memoirist describes Jugal Kishor as "cursed by high and low" for his role in the extractions. Askari's text, which he identifies as the Bayāz-i Yūsufi, cannot at present be located.

of honor to the leading nobility, which they were to put on before they presented themselves to Muhammad Shāh. It was now that a large number of jewels and the Peacock Throne were all handed over to Nādir Shāh by way of the "expenses of brotherly hospitality" (*hisāb-i ziyāfat-i barādarāna*).

At the same time, said Jugal Kishor, jewels worth seven million rupees were granted to Muhammad Shāh. This was a considerable sum, equaling a third of the financial exactions from the city and the nobility, though perhaps a smaller fraction of the total amounts raised from the royal treasury. We must add this sum to the unstated amounts which were raised from the city for Muhammad Shāh's treasury – the 1.5 million rupees that Jugal Kishor mentions as "difficult to extract" and made the responsibility of Amīr Khān. It is therefore clear that Nādir Shāh had begun with the intention of raising money to stabilize Muhammad Shāh's rule, though the state of Mughal finances were quite evidently a secondary priority for the invader. Yet despite the bitterness of the process of exactions, Nādir Shāh did nothing to weaken the emperor's position. As a symbol of his respect, he ordered the Qizilbāsh nobility to stand as a guard of honor in the courtyard of the public council (*dīwān-i ᶜāmm*); the servants of Muhammad Shāh led his palanquin past them, up to the entrance of the special council. After the initial exchange, Nādir Shāh behaved with exquisite courtesy, stepping forward a few steps to welcome Muhammad Shāh. In a marked display of equal status, both rulers then proceeded to sit on the same cushion; if there was any hint of superiority it may have been expressed in the fact that Nādir sat on the right and Muhammad Shāh on the left. While Nizām al-Mulk and Iᶜtimād al-Daula sat to the left, on the right sat Tahmāsp Khān Jalāyir, Lutf ᶜAlī Khān, Mirzā Zākī, Mullā Māshī, and two or three others.

A lively company ensued, with music in the Īrānian style. First trays of assorted sweets and dainties were presented before those sitting at the inferior places in the assembly, and then trays of food and drink, dressed and adorned to perfection, were produced for the rulers. Both ate together in perfect friendship and evidently enjoyed the meal. After the trays of food were removed, Nādir Shāh took his own jeweled turban-ornament, to which was attached the feather of an eagle, and placed it on Muhammad Shāh's turban. He then tied an ornamented sword to the emperor's waist. These acts were loaded with significance: Nādir Shāh did not subordinate Muhammad Shāh by granting him a robe of honor, however ornate. Rather he employed the special gestures of equality, linking the acme of his honor – his jeweled headpiece – to the honor of Muhammad Shāh. In granting the sword to Muhammad Shāh he signaled the ruler's right to rule had been re-established.

Just in case the significance of such gestures was not obvious to some particularly dim-witted nobleman, Nādir Shāh proceeded to make his desire for the stabilization and consolidation of the Mughal realm explicit in words. Jugal Kishor reports that Nādir Shāh said,

> In light of the greatness of the Gūrgānī family, I preserve his Sublime Highness, my worthy brother over the empire of Hindūstān. It behooves you to withdraw your hands from misappropriations and expenditures, and not to be avaricious in seeking your profits. Devote all your energy (*himmat*) to increasing the treasury, and gather all your art and ability to perform the dues of service. If even a single one of you acts against the wishes of my worthy brother, I will return to punish that act without any delay, even if I am in Anatolia (*Rūm*).[627]

Besides this warning, Nādir also was kind enough to dispense other sundry advice. He proposed a set of rules for maintaining the imperial establishment, saying that no more than five millions should be expended on rewards and the upkeep of the people of the harem and the royal family. Asāf Jāh, Iᶜtimād al-Daula and Sar Buland Khān were to have limited emoluments, as were the

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[627] Rājā Jugal Kishore, "Ruydād-i Nādir Shāh," f. 8.

other nobility. A body of forty thousand cavalry was to be raised, and of that ten thousand were to be kept in the imperial service, while the three other nobles were to lead the remaining to various parts of the empire and to chastise whoever dared to raise his head in disobedience. Provincial governors were also to act in the same way. On the next day, Nādir received further tributes to the tune of 18.6 million rupees from the treasury of the deceased Burhān al-Mulk by way of his nephew Sher Jang. Finally, Jugal Kishor noted that the treaty signed between the two rulers stipulated that the territories transferred to Nādir Shāh were to be under his control for only three years. Jugal Kishor ended his letter to his master on a complacent note: Everyone was pleased with Jugal Kishor's service, including the Mughal emperor and his vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula; by the grace of God, the rājā also developed a connection with Nizām al-Mulk, who was now the most powerful advisor in all imperial affairs.[628] For an astute nobleman like Jugal Kishor, even this greatest of imperial crises could be turned into a sort of victory.

Conclusion: A Popular View?

As far as Jugal Kishor was concerned, everything had worked out fairly well in the end. The Mughal elite to which he belonged and found a way to establish a modus vivendi with a similarly accommodating Nādir Shāh. While the invader's motivations remain unclear, it would appear that Nādir Shāh's monomaniacal desire to do battle with the Ottomans took precedence over the possibilities inherent in establishing a new dynasty in the subcontinent. Unlike Bābar, the last such potentially foundational figure, Nādir Shāh appears to have shown no interest in the subcontinent, its plants, animals, peoples or religions. Indeed, as the previous pages have shown, Nādir Shāh displayed a consistent desire to avoid undermining the foundations of the Mughal empire. In this he may have been guided by his own expertise in ruling from behind the throne –

[628] Ibid., f. 9.

after all, he had served to drive affairs in Īrān while representing himself as nothing more than a servant of the Safawid Shāh Tahmāsp for many years before eventually overthrowing the dynasty itself.

But our sources have suggested the existence of another possibility: namely, that Nādir Shāh perceived – or was made to perceive – that the form of political arrangements under Mughal dispensation could not be easily overthrown. India, as Shākir Khān had imagined Burhān al-Mulk telling the victorious invader – was a vast land, a world unto itself, filled with an infinite variety of recalcitrant rebels. While the emperor ruled in Delhi, his servants struggled vainly to impose his authority all over the far-flung empire. It was another matter that these noblemen strengthened their own little sub-states in the process. Muhammad Shāh's most powerful grandees had all turned away from Delhi, preferring instead to consolidate their strengths in the Deccan, or in Awadh, or Punjab or Bengal. If none of these great noblemen lacked in ambition or strength, then why had the empire's energies assumed this particular form?

One answer, I have argued, lay in the nature of Delhi itself. The city that Shāh Jahān built had grown in a manner without precedent into a creature of its own, beyond the taming of the empire's nobility. If, as Lutf Allāh Khān had observed, there was no doubting the wretchedness (*kam-bakhtagī*) of the people of Hindūstān, then surely such recalcitrance was particularly concentrated in Delhi, with its vast crowds of itinerants, idlers, provocateurs, ruffians and scoundrels – all of whom seemed to come together at the slightest pretext to throw the normal workings of the state into turmoil. Nādir Shāh had himself witnessed the capabilities of Delhi's multitudes. From the perspective of the ruler as the doctor tending to the body politic, the spread of the sickness could be judged by the amount of bloodletting Nādir Shāh had prescribed. Could this vast, troublous domain be ruled by an outsider? Could the innumerable commoners of Delhi,

all of whom seemed to have their own ideas about the proper form of sovereign power, even be charmed or coerced into accepting a new dispensation? Were even the riches of India worth the trouble?

Seen from this perspective, Nādir's decision to re-establish the emperor and retreat to a more cohesive and comprehensible political formation in the Īrānian highlands makes much more sense. If there was a "pull" back to the familiar country and its familiar battles with the Ottomans, there was certainly a "push" from not just the Mughal nobility, but also, in his own direct experience, the people of the country. Many sources, as we have seen, noted Nādir praising individuals for their "white" (*safīd*) faces, no doubt in contrast to the perceived general color of the land's inhabitants. Nādir may have been ambitious, but perhaps he was not ambitious enough to deal with all the variegated challenges that India posed. Such a conclusion appears consistent with the prevailing historiographical sense of Nādir Shāh as seeking to "establish a broad political framework that could tie him, more closely than his Safawid predecessors, to both Ottomans and Mughals".[629] More than that, however, Nādir Shāh's actions suggest an understanding of the existence of three established domains – the Rūmī, the Īrānī, and the Hindūstānī – which were ideally stable at the center because they were undergirded by logics of culture, ethnicity and geography. In this sense, if Nādir's troubled border lay to the west, against the Ottomans, it was in his best interests to have a stable but non-threatening entity in the east. Only in this way might the three come to equilibrium among themselves.

This interpretation offers a way to make sense of Nādir's actions. The Mughal elite, of course, would have seen it quite differently. In the aftermath of the battle men like Shākir Khān could

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[629] Ernst Tucker, "NĀDER SHAH," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 15, 2006, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nader-shah.

well be seen thinking that the two-hundred year old dynasty had come to an abrupt, juddering end. Even Lutf Allāh’s supposed attempt to hand over the confined princes to Nādir Shāh was a perfectly logical move before it was clear that Nādir Shāh himself had no intention of remaining in India. Nādir Shāh himself did everything he could to lessen the humiliation of his invasion even as he relieved the Mughal nobility of their massive hoards of gold and silver. And yet on his departure Jugal Kishor had cause to feel sanguine. He had personally lost much money but gained in the specie of politics, receiving greater favor from all the nobility. And the seasons would continue, crops would grow, peasants would be made to yield taxes, goods would be made and brought and sold, and coffers would fill again. The tendencies that had already driven the nobility out of Delhi, toward compact local domains, were of course further exacerbated. But Delhi remained.

And what of the people of Delhi? We do not yet have sources that speak of the city’s grief and mourning, of the forced exactions, of the rape and violence, of the re-establishment of normal life. No poems have yet been found that praised of the heroic resistance of the people to Nādir Shāh in the way that the balladeer sang of the shoemaker’s battle against the nobility in 1729. But something of a popular perspective might be discerned in a short anonymous account of events that is to be found in several manuscript collections in India. A relatively large number of copies of this work are preserved under a variety of similar titles; many of these copies appear to be concentrated in Hyderabad.[630] The many similar names and variant openings of this text suggest that it may not have been identified with a particular public author. Furthermore, occasional inexactitude in describing the names of places raises the possibility that the author

[630] In the following pages I use two copies: Anonymous, “Waqā⊂i⊃-yi Kharābī-yi Dihlī,” n.d., #779, Dākhilā number 12152, Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscripts Library; Anonymous, “Hādisa-yi Nādir Shāhī,” n.d., #777, Dākhilā number 12150, Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscripts Library.

was unfamiliar with Delhi. This history, which we might style the *Account of Nādir Shāh* on the basis of its various titles, appears to have been written for consumption within a sphere of popular commentary and discussion; its prosaic and unembellished style stands in stark contrast to the florid Persian of the era's elites. We might compare it to the political pamphlets which played such an important role in shaping public opinion in the Europe of the same era.[631] Unlike some such works, however, the *Account* does not advocate a particular course of action beyond lauding its hero, the nobleman Nizām al-Mulk. Instead, it seeks to shape the memory and significance of the events of 1739 for an interested audience across the Mughal realm.

The anonymous author makes his opinions about the Mughal elite perfectly clear in the opening lines of his essay by promising the reader an account of the "cluelessness" (*bī-khabarī*) of the caliph Muhammad Shāh, and the "humiliation" (*bī-wiqārī*) of the collective nobility at the hands of the hat-wearing Īrānīs who are of apelike appearance and wolf-like temperament. What could be written of an event that caused the quill to be depressed in abjectness on the territory of the sheet, while a torrent of tears of regret fell upon the face of the page? The lachrymose author recalled the ancient past of the dynasty: from the beginning of the Tīmūrids up to recent days, the awe of the absolute dominion (*tasallut*) of Mughal emperors ensured that other kings were unable to imagine resisting them. And if anyone unthinkingly produced evil desires in his head, he was punished so fittingly that that he forever kept his head in prostration and never dared to think in that manner again.

But in the present era, things had gone awry. The servants of his radiant majesty (*hazrat-i pur-nūr*) had become too proud of their pelf and power. Chief among these intoxicated grandees were

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[631] For instances see Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Femke Deen, David Onnekink, and Michel Reinders, *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic* (BRILL, 2010).

the vizier of the domains (whom the author erroneously styles Iᶜtimād al-Mulk instead of Iᶜtimād al-Daula), Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān Khān and others. The lethargy of the administration and the decreasing sovereignty (*tasallut*) and awe (*dabdaba*) of his highness, the pharaoh of the age, could be attributed to the fact that these nobles had no occupation but to engage in forbidden acts and drink intoxicants. The emperor could not escape this criticism. He may have been the shadow of God, but Muhammad Shāh was innocent of the affairs of state. His knowledge was confined to the fort of Shāhjahānābād, and he considered it a bounty to tour Mussaman Tower and Grape Garden. So he too was perennially engrossed in drinking alcohol and pederasty (*baccha bāzī*) and whoremongering (*zināᵓ-kārī*). Perhaps worse than this, and certainly equally telling in our outraged author's eyes, was the emperor's supposed proclivity for tight and narrow garments in the feminine fashion, and the foppish self-adornment of a shaved beard. All of these things contributed to his misrule. If the ruler slackened, the empire crumbled.[632] In the words of Saᶜdī of Shīrāz:

Bi nīm bayza ki sultān sitam rawā dārad
Zanad lashkaryānash hazār murgh bi sīkh

If the King overlooks the extortion of half an egg
His soldiers impale a thousand birds on the spit[633]

The utter dissolution of the emperor, claimed our author, was also to be evidenced in the residents of the city which had grown to forget God. The author was particularly disapproving again of urbanites' sartorial tastes, which symbolized their degeneration. High and low had chosen womanly garments: having renounced their prayers and fasts, they unrestrainedly engaged in forbidden acts, such as drinking alcohol and committing sodomy. Such practices had become so utterly customary that if, God forbid, anyone might have remained aloof from this

[632] Anonymous, "Waqāᶜiᵓ-yi Kharābī-yi Dihlī," 1–3.
[633] Ibid., 3.

pleasure of the great (*ni^cmat-i ^cuzamā^ɔ*), his community (*birādarī*) laughed heartily at him. In sum, thought the author, the emperor's servants, all his nobility, and indeed the residents of the city had forgotten the power of the Almighty's vengeance. They were convinced that days and nights would continue to pass in the same way forever, said the author, surely unaware that he was echoing the bon vivant Muhammad Nadīm, who Dargāh Qulī Khān had remembered as frequently reciting the couplet:

> *Dar harīm-i bazm-i mastān daur-i subh o shām nīst*
> *Gardish-i jām ast īnjā gardish-i ayyām nīst*
>
> In the sanctuary of the drinking-party day does not follow night
> It is the wine-cup which circles here, not the eras of time[634]

Our author, in other words, disapproved of precisely the things that someone like Dargāh Qulī Khān had most enjoyed in his years in the city. While Dargāh Qulī Khān had represented these pleasures in sardonic and ambivalent language, the outraged author of the *Account* offered blanket condemnation. Dargāh Qulī Khān would not have found so shrill an author "worthy of the assembly". In the author's righteous disdain we can discern a non-elite perspective that would have been denied the pleasures that came so effortlessly to the empire's aristocratic sons.

The author of the account claimed that when Nādir Shāh heard about the ruination of the empire of Hindūstān and the discord of its nobility, he immediately decided to head there. He gathered a great multitude resembling ants and locusts and besieged the fort of Qandhār, which was the border (*sarhad*) of Hindūstān. When the news reached court, his highness was a little vexed and sought advice from the pillars of state, asking what policy must be adopted now. His nobility, who were always languidly sitting about the shade of their summer apartments (*khās khāna*) and did not find the ability to exert any effort in themselves, said

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[634] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa`-i Dihli*, 71.

> …the empire of Hindūstān is not of the sort that any petty prince of the era would have the strength to entertain corrupt ambitions against it. The regent of Īrān is acting out of ignorant short-sightedness and naiveté. But he won't be able to manage the tasks of even a petty landholder (*zamīndār*); he will be ashamed of his own accord and depart in disgrace, and consider his rout from the field to be a blessing.[635]

Soon thereafter an ambassador arrived bearing an ominous missive from Nādir Shāh. The shāh declared that he had just tamed the king of Tūrān and the princelings of surrounding regions, who had raised their heads in tumult because of their evil pride. This was after letters and missives had been sent by way of counsel pointing out that the evil pride, which had settled in their minds and caused them to oppress the people, was not a good thing. Nevertheless they pridefully stuffed their ears with the cotton of error and feigned negligence (*khʷāb-i khargūsh*). Since Nādir Shāh himself was perpetually engaged in ensuring the tranquil repose (*rifāh*) of all created beings (*khalāᵓiq*), who were the marvelous products of divinity (*wadāᶜiᵓ-yi badāᶜiᵓ-i dargāh-īzadī*) and entrusted in his care, he now considered it appropriate and necessary upon himself to lift the tyranny and oppression on them. He had therefore gathered a victorious army of daring holy warriors and war-hardened braves to punish these prideful rulers of the world, so it was better if they themselves approach him: for otherwise they would be obliterated. But they did not listen, and so their entire well-protected domains had been reduced to ashes. Nādir pointed out that a large amount of gold had been expended in this process. He therefore found it appropriate to seek a great sum which was taken as a loan to previous Mughal rulers, and for which Muhammad Shāh was now indebted. Besides that, an annual tribute had not been remitted for a while now. It would be best, therefore, that all this gold – and twenty million rupees in cash

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[635] Anonymous, "Waqāᶜiᵓ-yi Kharābī-yi Dihlī," 6.

besides – should be should be sent with all haste and dispatch, or Muhammad Shāh might count himself among the princes who bear vile pride and should know Nādir Shāh would arrive post-haste.[636]

The author tells us that the terror-struck Muhammad Shāh therefore sought the council of his ministers. Now only Nizām al-Mulk advocated action, while everyone else heartily opposed any movement whatsoever. But the emperor and his fawning courtiers were filled with secret suspicions about the guiltless Nizām al-Mulk. In fact, thought the author, there was an ethnic dimension to such rivalries: Samsām al-Daula represented to the emperor that Āsif Jāh and his ilk were all Tūrānīs and were speaking out of malevolence and perverseness. They only wished to expel his highness' servants from the city and where they would go on to slaughter them all: and who knows how they might behave with the emperor? But our author thought that this logic of ethnicity was patently false, a canard designed to produce inaction. Such dithering went on when it was learnt that Nādir Shāh had conquered Qandhār and was now at the gates of India. The emperor's servants, who were untried and untested in war – and in fact had never even dreamed of it – but considered themselves unparalleled in debauchery and adultery (*fisq o fajūr*) were cast into terror by this news.[637]

Indeed the author of the *Account* wrote of the invasion with a military sensibility that is somewhat different from the accounts of the non-combatants that are generally used to describe the encounter. The *Account* is scathingly critical of the military performance of the imperial nobility before and during the battle. It asserts that the Persian high command discussed ways of neutralizing the numerical superiority of the Indian forces and chose to enact a series of raids across the countryside, blockading supplies of grain to the market in the Indian camp. All the

[636] Ibid., 7–8.
[637] Ibid., 9–14.

Indians, says the author, crept like foxes and mice into their burrows while the enemy plundered of food and property from Sonīpat and Pānīpat, which our author imagined were "esteemed towns" (*qasbahā-yī muᶜtabar*) in which merchants and traders kept their millions. That these small towns appear to have been untouched by the battle while the author asserts they were "utterly depopulated" should remind us that the *Account* was a work of polemic even though it loosely conformed to the generic forms of history.[638]

If on the one hand Muhammad Shāh's courtiers were deluded with a sense of ethnic rivalry, on the other the emperor himself was utterly incompetent. Now the author introduced a new character –Lady Mahr Parwar, who was the widow of the emperor Bahādur Shāh, to make this point by way of a thorough talking-to she supposedly administered to the Shāh. Mahr Parwar blamed the hapless ruler for "inexperience" and "ignorance", and for spending all his time since his youth in conversation with riff-raff (*aubāsh*). How, after all, could a monarch who spent all his time in the company of women be expected to perform in the field of battle? Because of his innocence and sloth, the nobility had taken charge of the imperial estate (*mulk-i bādshāhī*) and gathered uncountable jewels and treasures. No one followed imperial orders, she said, while you as ruler imagine these very four walls of the fort to be the empire, wander about the gardens and chat with ruffians, and remain utterly ignorant of the well-protected domains. As Muhammad Shāh stayed in the fort, enjoyed trips along the Jamunā river, and conversed with women, the nobles in whom he had such confidence similarly reclined in the shade of their summer apartments, for as the Prophet had said, "The people follow the religion of the ruler".[639] The critique of the emperor, the nobility and the city now culminated in its integration in the

[638] Anonymous, "Hādisa-yi Nādir Shāhī," 37–40.
[639] الناس على دين ملوكهم

language of masculinity and femininity, now made all the more damning by coming from the mouth of an arch imperial matriarch.

From this list of complaints we see that the ideal ruler for the author of the *Account* was one like Aurangzeb, who took no repose and "chastised rebels till his last breath". Such a ruler had no time to rest. Abjuring the company of women, he spurred the nobility out of their palaces and gardens and on to the campaign. All of this was a more jaundiced and perhaps less nuanced view of Muhammad Shāh than one saw in the words of a high courtier like Shākir Khān. But the author of the *Account* did not revel in complexity. Mahr Parwar's fusillade was just the opening salvo, and now she fired for effect: why did Muhammad Shāh consider the Nizām al-Mulk to be an enemy, and imagine flatterers and sycophants to be friends? What errors had the he committed in loyalty and servitude that made the Shāh so suspicious of him and hurt him in this way?[640] Which hereditary houseborn servant in the whole empire was as wise a maker of policy, as knowledgeable of customs and practices, and tested in battle in the empire as the Nizām? This was why Mahr Parwar thought that the affairs of state should be granted to his charge, so that he might conduct them with proper order and discipline.[641]

In praising the Nizām al-Mulk the author was drawn into the all-consuming question of loyalty to which so many commentators of imperial politics were inexorably drawn. The touchstone for this issue, as we saw in Chapters Two and Three, had been not the deposition of Jahāndār Shāh, with all its messy ambiguities, but the rather more cut and dried case of Farrukh Siyar. So our author now asked through the figure of the imperial matriarch of the sort of loyalty that the

[640] Our author would doubtless have disagreed vehemently with Rustam Ali Khan's ludicrous assertion that Nizam al-Mulk got rid of Burhan al-Mulk by arranging a sort of suicide-pact after Nadir's invasion; Burhan al-Mulk innocently went home and consumed his poison while Nizam al-Mulk did not. See Shāhābādī, "Tārīkh-i Hindī," f. 289a.

[641] Anonymous, "Waqāᶜiᵓ-yi Kharābī-yi Dihlī," 14–18.

sayyids of Barha had displayed towards that martyred monarch. When the overwhelming power of the sayyids had subdued all the other nobility, claimed the author through Mahr Parwar's long disquisition, it was only the Nizām al-Mulk who destroyed them with his sound policy and bravery and so maintained the realm of the Deccan under the control of the stern guardians of the state (*awliyāʾ-yi daulat-i qāhira*). This novel interpretation of the crises of 1719 had no basis in fact as such, since the Nizām al-Mulk remained aloof from participating in the actions which led to the overthrow of the sayyids. But it was important in advocating for Nizām al-Mulk against Samsām al-Daula. Mahr Parwar grudgingly accepted that in truth there was no fault Samsām al-Daula's sincerity and loyalty. But he was among the newly elevated (*nau daulat*) and so was inexperienced. The pre-Mughal ruler of Hyderabad (a marginal annotation tells us this was Tānā Shāh) spent his time in the company of untested men and so lost his dominion in the blink of an eye. An ignorant friend, as they say, is worse than a wise enemy.[642]

To ram this point home, Mahr Parwar reminded the emperor of a famous story about an emperor who reposed complete faith in an ape (*būzīna*) – that is, a slave (*maimūn*) – and had appointed him as a boon-companion and a chum. The slave was also perfectly loyal to the emperor: when the ruler relaxed, the slave would shoo away flies with one hand. One day, when the emperor was snoozing in his bed, and the slave was in attendance, a thief crept into the imperial harem. He saw that while the emperor had been stolen away by the dream of negligence, and a fly would alight on his chest and the slave would drive it away. Eventually the slave tired of constantly shooing away the fly. In despair, he reached for a sword which lay behind the emperor's bed and unsheathed it, seeking to slice the fly in half. The fly had meanwhile alighted again on the emperor's chest, and the ignorant slave did not realize that a blow from the sword would hurt his

[642] Ibid., 16–18.

own master. But in this case, the aforementioned thief, who was a wise enemy, did not fear for his own life and realized that the emperor of the era was about to be slaughtered by the hand of this ignorant friend. So the thief snatched the sword out of the slave's hand.

The startled slave rushed to attack the thief and created a tumult. Hearing his servant's cries, the emperor awoke from his slumber and saw that an intruder had entered the harem with a naked sword. Now other servants ran in from all four sides and tied up the thief and produced him before the emperor. The emperor sought an explanation from the thief, asking, "Who are you, who has no fear for your own life and have entered the harem of emperors?" The thief responded, saying, "I had come with the intention to steal, when I saw that an ignorant friend was about to act like an enemy towards His Highness. So I ran forth to remove the sword from the slave's hand without fearing for my life. Now whatever his Emperor pleases to do with this sinner must be enacted and punishment must be given". The impressed emperor immediately cast the slave aside and gave a large amount of gold to the thief and set him free.

The point of all of this, said Mahr Parwar, was that this sort of stupid loyalty was what one might expect from Samsām al-Daula. And this was why Nizām al-Mulk deserved to be given the rein of all the affairs of the imperial administration, and all actions must be taken on the basis of his advice. And so moved was Muhammad Shāh by this edifying tale, that the immediately did grant Nizām al-Mulk such untrammeled powers. It was another matter that things eventually came to naught because of the continued inaction of the emperor, the folly of Samsām al-Daula, and the treachery of Burhān al-Mulk.[643]

While the *Account* presents a narrative almost exactly the same as those we have encountered elsewhere – listing for instance two meetings between the emperor and Nādir Shāh instead of

[643] Ibid., 19–22.

one – it does not go so far as to counsel a course of action for the empire after the invasion. Nor indeed does it betray any sympathy for the ruffians and louts (*aubāshān wa lucchāhā*) who gathered like "ants and locusts", clamoring that Nādir Shāh had been opportunistically murdered by the emperor's Qalmāq and Abyssinian guards. True, he does relish the massacre of the "hat-wearers": demoralized at the news of the death of their leader, they were slaughtered like sheep they were by all the common people of the city in every alley and corner they were found.[644]

Certainly it was regrettable that one hundred and fifty thousand women and children, the helpless and infirm, the young and innocent, were all put to the sword and that the entire city was plundered and burnt.[645] But the people of the city did not follow the ways of military valor, and so in a sense they had brought this tragedy upon themselves. Nādir Shāh was brutal as a skinner (*jallād*), but he had a point in his desire to kill the people of the city because, as the *Account* claimed, "they had forgotten God and are utterly shameless and honorless (*bī-hayāī wa bī-ghairatī bi khud girifta*) because they prefer to flee at the time of battle and come to fight in the time of peace". And it was not improper that Sayyid Niyāz Khān and Shahsawār Khān and Iᶜzāz (Oguz?) Khān "who were established in their factiousness" were paraded in the city with their bellies ripped open.[646] In a world before nationalism, all men of military honor were agreed that there could be no excuses and no mercy to restrain the force applied against non-combatants or insurgents who raised arms against the victor.

Let us end, however, with the question that is buried in Mahr Parwar's tale of the slave and the thief. If the buffoonish slave was Samsām al-Daula, then who was the thief who had crept inside the sanctity of the harem? Following the analogy, we can only conclude that this transgressive

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[644] Anonymous, "Hādisa-yi Nādir Shāhī," 63–65.
[645] Ibid., 67–68.
[646] Ibid., 71–72.

but ultimately helpful figure was Nādir Shāh himself. By upsetting a seemingly peaceful order that was in fact on the verge of disaster, Nādir Shāh's disruption could turn out to the emperor's advantage. The author regrettably did not follow this line of inquiry, for his artless concerns were only with the glorification of Nizām al-Mulk. Such a possibility, however, is implicit in the story. To our author's robust military mind, the empire could be set right simply by vigorous actions in the field against rebels and the assistance of wiser ministers. Despite its disastrous appearance, Nādir Shāh's invasion sounded not the death-knell of empire but perhaps the conch-shell of its rebirth. And if Delhi's empire would work no longer, there were other empires yet to be built.

CHAPTER 9: The Roads from Delhi

In 1739, Nādir Shāh's army, engorged on the Mughal empire's tribute, began to wend its way back to Iran. Life in Delhi began to return to normal, but it was clear to all that things were no longer the same. Nādir Shāh's procession was but one divergence from the high road to Delhi that has been the subject of this dissertation. That historical pathway, which culminated in the making of the city's cultures of politics, high and low, might at this time be seen as beginning to split; in the aftermath of the event, the forces of causation would begin to diverge and the webs of historical contingency would assume new configurations. But all bore the shape of the intense historical conjuncture which produced city, emperor, nobility and people in relation to one another. So we might see the road from this Delhi leading in many directions. We will briefly discuss a few of these below.

Bharatpur

The first, most obvious pathway of Mughal power led away from the city. We might imagine this road leading away from Delhi, one hundred and thirty-seven odd miles south, to the town of Bharatpur. Bharatpur, we shall see, is the local terminus of a strand of narrative that spun out of Nādir Shāh's occupation of Delhi. But first we recall that when writing of the shoe-sellers' riot in 1729, commentators had varyingly professed delight or amazement at the rapid proliferation of textual descriptions of the event. They had noted the circulation of many Hindawī poems – some satirical, others written in more epic vein – and remarked on the widespread discussion and analysis of the riot all around them. Whether or not such forms of discussion were new and specific to the particular forms of the public spaces of the empire in the late eighteenth century, they appeared again, with greater vividness, in the aftermath of Nādir Shāh's assault. It was true,

of course, that the invasion was an earth-shaking political event, one which could hardly go unremarked by those who had borne its brunt. But news of Nādir's attack diffused far and wide throughout the realm, far beyond the assemblies of the Persianate intelligentsia in the mansions and gardens of the empire's cities and towns. Two such accounts in poetic form illustrate the path of Mughal power away from Delhi to Bharatpur.

In 1897, the historian William Irvine published his translation a long epic poem on the invasion of Nādir Shāh by a certain Tilok Dās that had only recently been discovered among the papers of Muftī Sultān Hasan Khān of Bareilly.[647] Scrupulously noting the help of his native assistants, the Maulwī ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz and C. Rustomjee (the district judge of Bareilly), in obtaining the text of this poem, Irvine considers its language "to show affinities both to the dialect of the upper part of the Ganges-Jamnā *dūābā* and to that of the country between Farrukhābād and Qannauj". While it may thus have a certain value for linguists as a specimen of a poem "written in the Braj variety of the Hindi tongue", its worth for academic history was somewhat less certain. In fact, writes Irvine, "it must be confessed that it is of no historical value", though it could be of use if "no other account of Nādir Shāh's invasion had come down to us". In sum, says the historian, "this poem shows us how rapidly in the East, even in modern history, fact and fiction are blended. We see, as it were, myth in the making".[648]

Tilok Dās' poem was not the only one of its kind. Another specimen, produced by a certain Amar, and entitled the *Conditions of Nādir Shāh* (*Hālāt-i Nādir Shāh*), was also discovered in a book in Bareilly with the help of "Mister Cutts Sāhib".[649] On the basis of the order of the commendable sāhib, a copy was sent to "his highness of exalted virtues, the glorious benefactor

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[647] William Irvine, "Nādir Shāh and Muhammād Shāh, a Hindi Poem by Tilok Dās," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1897, 24–62.
[648] Ibid., 24–25.
[649] Amar, "Hālāt-i Nādir Shāh," n.d., British Library APAC Or. 4008.

of the virtuous of these cities, his excellency, the bounteous William Irvine Sāhib Bahādur' (*huzūr sāhib bahādur ᶜālī munāqib wālā-shaᵓn muhsin-i shurafāᵓ-yi in balād janāb faiz-maᶜāb walīm ārwayn sāhib bahādur*) in the January of 1896.[650] While this text too was dispatched by Muhammad ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, resident of Batherī (?) Sayyidpur, in the district of Ghāzīpur, it does not appear to have merited inclusion in Irvine's historical narratives.

Yet both texts are a crucial link in the conceptual chain by which we might join the high-Persianate accounts of Nādir's invasion to a popular set of perceptions and assertions which lie at some remove from Delhi, geographically and culturally. Tilok Dās' poem might plausibly be considered to exist somewhere in the hazy space between an oral performance and a written poem that was circulated on paper. In this sense it would not be unlike Bī-Nawā's poetic account of the shoe-sellers' riot which employed a common Persianate poetic form (the *mukhammas*) but was written in "Hindawī". While both poems first entered our historical discourse as recorded on paper, they would be clearly amenable to oral circulation in public contexts: and, as we shall see, Tilok Dās' poem is designed for public and oral use just as was Bī-Nawā's *mukhammas*.

The *Conditions*, however, is presented in a very different structure. It consists of Persian prose in which "Hindī" verses are interspersed. Unlike the works of the poet Zatallī, who mixed Hindī words and phrases within the structure of Persian sentences and vice versa, the *Conditions* maintains a strict separation between the languages: changes are signaled in the text by the words 'fārsī' and 'hindī' where appropriate. In this way it is not dissimilar from the writings of Shākir Khān, with whose works it was most probably produced in contemporaneity, and who also presented verse in Hindī in the midst of his otherwise unadorned Persian text. Yet while Shākir Khān may have been quoting verse he had encountered elsewhere, in the case of the *Conditions*

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[650] Ibid., f. 9a–b.

we can only remain agnostic on the question of the relationship between the two languages. It is difficult to determine, in other words, whether the Persian text serves as a commentary on a poem in a popular balladic tradition that has been "bleached" into a higher literary sphere; or whether the text was produced as a whole by a single author who observed the fashion of interlinear linguistic switching.[651]

Despite these differences, Tilok Dās' poem and Amar's *Conditions* present a broadly similar narrative. The *Conditions* begins with an extremely brief and indeed bald statement of the empire's history over the preceding decades. We are told that Aurangzeb ruled for fifty years on the throne of Delhi, and his son Bahādur Shāh ruled for eight years and went to heaven; after that Muᶜiz al-Dīn the "khohadha" ruled for six months; Husain ᶜAlī killed him and seated Farrukh Siyar on the throne. At this time all of Hindūstān was ruined (*wīrānī gardīd*). Then Muhammad Shāh became the emperor. He thought of nothing but pleasure and relaxation and dance and drink all day and night. When Āsif Jāh the governor of the Deccan came to meet him, the emperor foolishly said, "Āī Āsif Jāh, at this time your face seems to me like that of a monkey". Āsif Jāh was the ruler of six provinces in the Deccan, and was very ambitious (*irāda bisyār dāsht*). So he said responded, "Āī Emperor, by the order of God and the assistance of Āsif Jāh, monkeys will run about in all of India and in your fort and will seize your reign." Saying these words he left the court (*kachehrī*) and went to his own camp. Meanwhile the emperor remained engrossed in leisure and pleasure and didn't give the slightest thought to his insulted servant's words. But Āsif Jāh immediately wrote a letter offering his service to Nādir Shāh, the regent of Īrān.[652]

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[651] On the question of the entry of the popular or folklore into high-cultural texts, see Amin, "Un saint guerrier."
[652] Amar, "Hālāt-i Nādir Shāh," f. 1b–2a.

These simian mockeries are elaborated at greater length in Tilok Dās' poem. As Āsif Jāh enters, the emperor remarks on his unusual gait (*anokhī chāl*), noting its resemblance to that of an ape; indeed the great noble's face looks like that of a black monkey (*siyāh būzīna*).[653] Āsif Jāh returns to his tents in a rage and pens a letter to Nādir Shāh inviting him to take charge of the empire. In both accounts, Nizām al-Mulk pointedly identifies the throne of Delhi as "vacant" (*khālī*). While the *Conditions* stresses the formidable strength of Nādir Shāh's army, with Afzal Khān and Ahmad Khān its able commanders, Tilok Dās' poem segues rapidly into Nādir's arrival at Lahore. According to Tilok, Zakariya Khān wisely made peace with Nādir through his agent Sūrat Singh the *Dīwān*.[654] Nādir plundered the Punjab extensively, but Tilok Dās takes pains to point how the wise and sagacious Sūrat Singh preserved as much life and property as he could through his tact and his diplomatic gift-giving.

But the *Conditions* mentions Nādir's conquests in the Punjāb only briefly, and indeed does not mention Sūrat Singh. Before it describes Nādir's passage through the Punjāb, it focuses on the exchange of letters between Nādir Shāh and Muhammad Shāh when the former was at the frontiers of India. In his letter, Nādir compares his arrow to that of Arjun, the famed archer of the *Mahābhārata*. He boasts of his conquests of Balkh, Bukhārā, Kāshghar, Qandahār, Peshāwar and Kābul. Now, says the shāh menacingly, he has come to find out about Muhammad Shāh, who should come and meet Nādir if he knows what's best for him.[655]

Instead of reflecting on this danger, Muhammad Shāh thinks about the glories of his ancestors: his "grandfather" Akbar, who had sent his general Mān Singh to loot Kābul, and make Khurāsān part of the saffron line (*kābul lūte khurāsān kesar kī kyārī*), and knock ᶜAzīm Shāh's turban off,

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[653] Irvine, "Nādir Shāh and Muhammād Shāh, a Hindi Poem by Tilok Dās," 27, 48.
[654] Ibid., 28–29, 49–50.
[655] Amar, "Hālāt-i Nādir Shāh," f. 3b.

forcing him to wear instead a Mughal cap. And there was the fame of the Mughal domains, which had percolated as far as Īrān and Tūrān, Rūm and Shām. On this basis Muhammad Shāh considered Nādir Shāh's threats beneath him. In the Persian accompaniment, the emperor declares that it is best if Nādir Shāh returns to rule Īrān. Otherwise, he adds as warning, our domains extend up to the Saffron Line (*kesar kī kyārī*).[656]

Nādir did not heed these warnings and headed through the Punjāb, with looting and plunder in his wake. Eventually, says Amar, he reached the town of Karnāl and set about ruining all of Hindūstān. The emperor dispatched his nobles "Samsām Muzaffar Khān", ᶜAlī Ahmad Khān, Kokā Hasan Khān, "Kallū", Shah Sawār Khān and Saᶜādat Khān. With a blare of rockets and cannons the Indian forces approached the Qizilbāsh, the "Batalbāsh", and the Uzbeks. ᶜAslī Khān the eunuch (*khoja*) rose up and swung his spear; the Jews and the Armenians (*yahūdī wa armanī*) prepared their daggers (*khandā*); *Zanjabīl* and *Zambūr* guns, rockets and heavy artillery spewed forth; bullets flew out raising smoke and dust. Saᶜādat Khān and Samsām Khān were stuck by their volleys. Mother Earth (*dhartī mātā*) shook and the heavens (*indar lok*) trembled. Samsām's head was split open by the Qizilbāsh; Saᶜādat Khān surrendered in abject prostration (*māthā jod*). Such a battle occurred in the field (*khet*) of Pānīpat that uncountable numbers of corpses were piled one on another.[657]

For Amar, this climactic battle resulted in an unambiguous and epic victory for Nādir Shāh, who captured Saᶜādat Khān and forced Muhammad Shāh to pay tribute (*nazrāna*) to the order of forty crore rupees (four hundred million) in tribute. But Burhān Khān went and snitched to Nādir Shāh, saying there were greater treasures to be had, and so Nādir ordered his troops to plunder

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[656] Ibid., 4a. The meaning of the phrase used here is obscure. Does it indicate the fact that Mān Singh made Khurāsān part of the Rājput domains, thus pulling it into the *kesar kī kyārī*? The Persian text seems to suggest this.
[657] Ibid., f. 4a–6a.

Delhi. Nādir Shāh himself went to the city and sat on the throne. But when "for four or five days" there was no news of him from within the fort, the people of the city spread the words that Nādir Shāh had either died or been murdered. Nādir's army was looted and a great hubbub was created (*bahut shor machāya*). When Nādir heard this news he unsheathed his dagger. Iron rained for one-and-a-quarter watches and there was widespread murder.[658]

Meanwhile Tilok Dās' *Poem* stresses the role of the wise and sagacious Sūrat Singh in checking, albeit in limited fashion, the depredations of Nādir Shah until the warlord reached Pānīpat. At this point the renowned noble Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān was dispatched to deal with the matter. While the *Events* of Nādir Shāh (examined in the previous chapter) had heaped the greatest scorn on Samsām al-Daula's military ineptitude, Tilok Dās sings of his extreme bravery in the face of battle. Delhi's army fell upon the enemy, their nine hundred and eighty men standing firm before nine hundred thousand of the enemy like a mountain, while their leader was preserved by God (*bhagwant jī*) himself. In the end, however, they yielded before the enemy's bows; their vital organs burst open and they gained nothing. The Indians fell into uncountable numbers of graves and they were dispersed powerless like the breeze.[659]

While the battle bloodied the Indian side, in Tilok's mind it appears to have been inconclusive. Samsām al-Daula left the battlefield, and Nādir too retreated to the distance of some miles. Having braved the valor of the Indians, Nādir wrote to Āsif Jāh, asking him why he had been invited to this country to engage in battles that disgraced him. The latter promised Nādir that he would ensure Samsām al-Daula was neutralized. Again, while many histories of the period had blamed Nizām al-Mulk for precipitating the conflict, Tilok Dās takes his criticism of the nobleman to an unprecedented level. Though Amar shared Tilok's sense that the emperor's

[658] Ibid., f. 6a–7b.
[659] Irvine, "Nādir Shāh and Muhammād Shāh, a Hindi Poem by Tilok Dās," 53, 32.

simian similes had caused Nizām al-Mulk to become alienated, the traitorous nobleman drops out of the *Conditions* after his initial invitation to Nādir Shah. But Tilok adds further treacheries to Nizām al-Mulk's name: as Samsām's broken forces returned, he says, Nizām al-Mulk blew them all up with his cannon. They flew into the sky like a pillar (*lāth*), writes the poet, and then Nizām al-Mulk persuaded the king to go make peace with Nādir Shah.

Tilok Chand then moves to the massacre at Delhi but makes no mention of the uprising which caused it. He depicts it merely as an unwarranted and gratuitous act of violence. Nādir Shāh "gave the order with his own lips" and "then was Delhi slaughtered"; it went on, says Tilok, until sunset and stopped only when the Shāh said "enough".[660] Now he tells us that Nādir Shāh pressed Muhammad Shāh for his treasures, and Muhammad Shāh feigned ignorance of their whereabouts, pointing to his dīwān Majlis Rāī (who, we recall, was in actuality the vizier's dīwān). Nādir threatened Majlis Rāī, who asked for three days' leave to gather his financial documents. When the clever and faithful Rāī found no way out of the conundrum, he stabbed himself with a dagger. Muhammad Shāh appreciated this act of loyalty too late; asking Nādir to spare the lives of these men, he offered himself to Nādir.

In response, says Tilok, Nādir demanded the emperor's submission through the culturally central gesture of incorporation through the investiture of robes.

> Then said Nādir Shāh, "List, O King, apparel yourself like me,
> "Behold, then will I grant you this realm from Delhi to Atak."
> Then did Muhammad Shāh change his raiment,
> Put on a coat and light cap, and adopted Durrānī ways.[661]

To put on a coat and a light cap, in Tilok's mind, was to adopt the ways of the Durrāni Afghāns. Nādir Shāh was not a Durrāni Afghān; but his lieutenant Ahmad Shāh ᶜAbdālī, who led repeated

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[660] Ibid., 54, 33.
[661] Ibid., 56, 34 I have made slight changes to the translation.

raids into the subcontinent in the middle of the eighteenth century, belonged to the Durrānī tribe. The poet Tilok Dās may well have been confused Nādir Shāh for Ahmad Shāh Durrānī; but in this confusion we see a broader sense that Mughal sovereignty had been fatally compromised in the era of repeated plunder and warfare which was inaugurated by Nādir's raid.

If the sovereign awe of the Mughal emperor had been struck so fateful a blow, then where might true power and dominion lie? Tilok Dās provides one answer. Five days after this ceremony, says the poet, both kings went to visit Delhi, where they visited an ascetic named "the intoxicated" (*al-Mast faqīr*) who lived in a small shelter (*kutī*). Nādir Shāh demanded to see proof of the ascetic's spiritual prowess (*karāmāt*). But al-Mast countered by demanding proof of Nādir's own powers. So the warlord bade him shut his eyes; and when he did so, he saw Nādir's army from Delhi to Attock. Now al-Mast asked Nādir to shut his own eyes whereupon he saw all his soldiers lying headless. The awed Nādir was told to return to Kābul posthaste if he did not wish this fate to actually befall his army. In his final verses, Tilok Dās tells us of Nādir's return with captive women and jewels and other folk, including Amar Singh, the rājā of Patiyālā. All of these people, says Tilok, were released before Nādir reached Kābul; and in the year 1160 he was murdered by his nobleman Muhammad Khān.[662]

Irvine, who published and translated Tilok Dās' poem, considered it to be a result of the Oriental inability to maintain a separation between history and myth, a specimen of the process of such transmutation. It is in fact certainly true that Tilok Das' objectives in composing these verses were not those of an elite Mughal historian. Yet the category of "myth" is perhaps not the most useful way of thinking about such a poem. Much like Bī-Nawā's verse, which celebrated the violent resistance of cobblers to the agents of the state, Tilok Dās' rhymes also valorized the

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[662] Ibid., 34–35, 56–57.

heroism and bravery of those who were ultimately defeated. In doing so, it reflected the common and shared circulation of ideals of great battle and doomed resistance, and of a blood-shedding that was portended and mirrored by natural phenomena.

Yet the author shifts the emphasis within his account in ways that present a striking divergence from the forms of narrative authorized by the conventions of the era's historians. Muhammad Shāh's alleged defection to "Durrānī" ways does not appear to serve any purpose other than to highlight the fact of his subordination; the humiliations inflicted on him are of little concern to the poet. In similar fashion, Tilok Dās gives very little attention to the general massacre. Much as a historian, he dutifully records the occurrences that constitute the historical event; but he does not conclude that Nādir's invasion was caused by the infighting of its nobility. Samsām al-Daula Khān-i Daurān, widely considered to have been an ineffectual warrior amongst the elite chroniclers we have examined, emerges here as a heroic figure. Nizām al-Mulk, on the other hand, is painted as the instigator of the invasion in the poems of both Tilok Dās and Amar. Irvine points out that the story of the Nizām al-Mulk being compared to a monkey was in widespread circulation very early after the invasion, and was reproduced in the English accounts of both Fraser and Hanway.[663] In reproducing it, both poets do something more than introducing their tale with a salacious anecdote of mortal insult and revenge; they inform their audiences that a political dispensation has altered at the very highest levels of existence. There had been a breach between the emperor of Delhi and his most powerful noble who ruled the vast territories of the Deccan. The empire itself had changed as a result.

What was the nature and outcome of this change? Despite the military defeat of the Mughal army, the Indian side exacted a far greater spiritual victory. In telling the story this way, Tilok

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[663] Ibid., 58.

ends a little off-kilter; Nādir was defeated, he left with his treasures, and he died. But he has nothing to say about the Mughal emperor, or the fate of Delhi or the empire itself. In the humiliation of defeat, Tilok Dās returns to an old ideal: true power lies with God and his faithful friends on earth. So he only reaffirms for his audience the idea that the spiritual domain, which is invisible but proximate, is of greater import than the earthly.

We have seen thus far that Tilok Dās' and Amar's poems both follow a broadly similar narrative, even if they vary in emphasis. But Amar's *Conditions* veers away from Tilok Dās' staid end. The *Conditions* elaborates the story of the mystic in the interlinear Persian text, not in the register of historical narration, but in the vivid simplicity that marks the many descriptions of spiritual contests between Sūfīs and Jogīs in a common genre of religious treatises.[664] Amar tells us that after Nādir Shāh had extensively plundered the treasuries and jewels (*ganj o gauhar*) of the city, he asked of the emperor: "Āī Muhammad Shāh, if in your reign there was some friend of God (*walī*), would you have borne this sort of humiliation (*pashīmānī*)?"

Muhammad Shāh replied, "There is a friend of God present in Delhi".

When Nādir Shāh asked about his condition, and what sort of clothes he wore, Muhammad Shāh said, "He brings firewood (*sūkhtanī*) to Moonlight Square, and subsists on selling it".

Nādir Shāh came to Moonlight Square and looked at all the people there. All the men and women in the city were hiding in their own homes in fear of Nādir, but that friend had remained standing in the square. Nādir walked up to him; and although he presented his appearance in a fearsome manner, the friend took no notice of who was standing before him.

Nādir Shāh began to contest him (*āzmāyish girifta*). First, Nādir Shāh – who also had greatness (*karāmāt*) in him – raised a finger, and the guide saw before him Īrān and Hindūstān and an

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[664] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Sufi Hagiography."

uncountable Īrānian army. The friend realized that Nādir would not leave Delhi without a contest. So the friend said, "Āī Emperor, you do that again once more with your eyes covered." Nādir did just that, and what did he see? That every army that the friend had been shown now lay all headless.

Nādir Shāh apologized for his mistake. He said, "Āī Great Guardian (*hazrat awliyā*ᵓ), if you had this great power (*karāmāt*), then why did you permit the ruination of Hindūstān?"

The friend said, "Āī Nādir Shāh, no one has any say before divine power and will. But just as you too are the emperor of Wilāyat, and Muhammad Shāh will be on the throne of this place. Leave this place quickly, or else the sort of thing you saw will come to pass."

When Nādir Shāh came back to the fort after the words of the friend, he seated Muhammad Shāh on the throne, and took a *hīrā* – that is, a diamond (*almās*) –, the Peacock Throne and other uncountable amounts of gold and elephants and horses and camels, and other imperial possessions that were worth taking, and left for Wilāyat.

Here, Amar presents us with an explicit explanation for the troubling question of why it was that Nādir won and the emperor of India lost. First of all, while some might be led to think that the domains of India lacked a spiritual protector, they were mistaken. There was in fact such a protector, and he was rather more powerful than Nādir Shāh (himself of no mean achievements in this regard). The matter of the ruination of Hindūstān was one of divine will, which was not to be questioned. At the same time, it had been decided that Nādir Shāh was to be ruler of Īrān and Muhammad Shāh was to be the ruler of India (*hind*) by heavenly decree. The extreme foolhardiness of challenging this divine dispensation was made perfectly clear by the ascetic's act of conjuration. In other words, even as the poet affirmed the sanctity and security of the domains of India despite their ruination, he elided every trace of the notion that Nādir Shāh

might uproot the Mughal dynasty and establish his own – which, as we recall, had been a matter of some concern to the inhabitants of Delhi during the actual period of Nādir's occupation. Far though Amar's poem might be from Shākir Khān's literate recollections, it refracts a theme present in the latter: namely, that the Mughal emperor was the head of a domain that had been assigned to him by the lord above. The realm of India was a distinct entity, and under his particular charge. Furthermore, even if heaven's unknowable machinations required this land's destruction from time to time, that was not to imply that outside parties were welcome to step in. In this way, the *Conditions* presented a message at odds with the *Account of Nādir Shāh*, which had sought to portray Nādir Shāh as a wise enemy preferable to the faithful but foolish friends. In this way, the Hindi verses which joined the Persian narrative went on to name the friend of God and protector of Delhi as a Samrūn Sāhib, who used his power as he wished. And it was through his power that Muhammad Shāh was seated on the throne and, in the classical gesture of declaring sovereignty, the umbrella was twirled about his head (*sar chatr pharāyā*).

Yet Nādir Shāh still had uses of his own. In fact, in Amar's account, Nādir did not retreat to Persia. Following the ascetic's injection to "leave this place quickly" more in the letter than the spirit, Nādir proceeded from Delhi on to the town of Mathura, which he sacked. He caught hold of the Brahmans of the city and forced them to recite the *kalima*, thus converting them to Islam. He demolished many temples (*gin gin dhae diye*) and dispersed the deception of "*hare Rām*" (*dhūrī harīrām chhudāyā*). The Persian text now resumes, telling us that when Nādir Shāh reached Mathurā, he had it cleansed of all the demons (*dewallhā*) and he imprisoned the male and female Brahmins and destroyed their faith (*az dīn bī dīn sākhta*) and took the throne and reigned himself.

But just as one might begin to think that Nādir now acted in the mold of the traditional Islamic warrior who was joyfully cleansing the earth of all traces of idolatry and infidelity, he received a certain Badan Singh with great favor. The Hindi poem tells us that this this Badan Singh had learned that the shāh had come to reign in Mathura. This rājā came to give tribute (*nazrāna*) to the shāh and to touch his feet. He was happy only when the emperor embraced him, and also when he gave him a robe of honor. If this bodily gesture of incorporation through the giving of the robe had the even the slightest of negative charges in the account of Tilok Dās, it is certainly absent here: for this was precisely the favor that Badan Singh sought. The rājā now presented a petition: "Dear Shāh, come to Bharatpur; I've come to fetch you." He led the shāh out of Mathura's gate (*phātak*) to Bharatpur, where the royal drums (*naubat*) were beaten. Both figures spent ten days together in Bharatpur and found great contentment (*sukha*), and the emperor confirmed Badan Singh's reign, after which he went off for further battles in Khurāsān.

The Persian text now recounts the previous words, telling us that Nādir Shāh reached Mathura, plundered the precious ornaments of the platforms of its idols (*jori-i takhta-i deol*) and went to Bharatpur with Rājā Badan Singh, where he personally confirmed his rule. The concluding Hindi verses tell us that Amar, the poet, tells this story of Nādir Shāh and Muhammad Shāh and the tyrannical Turks (*zālim turkānī*) of Rūm, Shām and Khurāsān. These events were a product of the power of God (*qudrat rabbānī*), says Amar, using an Islamic expression; then he notes that the eyes of the Nāth Kabīr shed tears of nectar (*amrit pānī*), and may he continue to watch over the town of Chanderī.[665]

[665] Amar, "Hālāt-i Nādir Shāh," 7b–9a.

The Badan Singh of this account refers to the historical personage who was the successor to Chūrāman Jāt.[666] Chūrāman Jāt had been an active if somewhat distant participant in the wars of succession in 1712 which led to the enthronement of Jahāndār Shāh and then of Farrukh Siyar. He had been loathed as a barbaric Jāt bandit and a petty brigand by the chroniclers of his age, but he does not appear to have expressed kingly ambitions of his own. When, in 1722, Chūrāman was finally crushed by the Mughal loyalist Rājā Jai Singh, Chūrāman's nephew Badan Singh was installed as the rulers of the Jāts. Badan Singh occupied this subordinate position peaceably enough until his death in 1756; Jadunath Sarkar describes him as never claiming any title greater than that of "thākur" (which the historian, typically, likened to the lairds of Scotland).[667]

In Amar's account, written sometime after 1739, the humble Badan Singh is represented as having approached the person who had overthrown the Mughal emperor, who goes on to grant him robes of honor. Nādir Shāh is supposed to have enjoyed his hospitality in the provincial stronghold of Bharatpur, and to have confirmed his reign. Muhammad Shāh is conspicuously absent from this discussion. His power, the power of Delhi, was no longer productive or relevant. Amar's last twist serves neatly to bolster a mythical foundation for a Jāt micro-state in the Mughal heartland, one which in the event did not survive the turbulence of the eighteenth century. Neither its short life, nor indeed the fictive nature of its origins as represented in Amar's account, should obscure the fact that Nādir Shāh's invasion presented not a few local groups with the opportunity to imagine a sovereignty of their own. In this way, Bharatpur was one destination on the path of Mughal politics and power after 1739. It is certainly the road most commonly traversed by historians, who have found a fluid eighteenth-century ecumene of little

[666] Shail Mayaram, *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (Columbia University Press, 2003), 30; *Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series* (Superintendent of Government Printing, 1908), 374.
[667] Jadunath Sarkar, *A History of Jaipur: C. 1503-1938* (Orient Blackswan, 1994), 171.

principalities, peripatetic intermediaries and learned men, small new towns and markets flourishing even as Delhi would go on to be sacked again and again. But we must remember that this road terminated in a cul-de-sac of history, for the Mughal empire did not end in tens or hundreds of states, each of which were destined for a sovereignty and nationhood of their own.

Why was this not so? We have seen that Nādir Shāh was motivated by some combination of inability and unwillingness in his refusal to establish a dynasty in India. But why then did the Mughal empire not fall apart into many little states, or reconsolidate either under renewed central leadership (as in the Ottoman case of the nineteenth century) or by the agency of powerful subordinate groups (as in the Meiji restoration)? In order to understand this we must turn our attention to the other roads through which Mughal power was channeled away from its capital.

Bengal

One road led from Delhi to Bengal. This was the road on which tax-payments had once proceeded to Delhi in enormous convoys of carts filled with newly-minted silver every year: the fruits of the trade which had enabled the prosperity of the realm in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century.[668] But by the middle of the eighteenth century, as imperial power waned, so did the flow of silver to the imperial center – though our understanding of the precise changes in this relationship remains scant.[669] Instead, new generations of Mughal elites, trained in the arts of administration, emigrated eastwards: to Faizābād and Lucknow, where the regional court of the province of Awadh might make good use of their services; and increasingly in the second half of the century towards Calcutta, where the East India Company had ascended to great power after

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[668] On the importance attached to these revenues at the imperial center, see Mehta Balmukund and Satish Chandra, *Letters of a King-Maker of the Eighteenth Century (Balmukund Nama)* (Aligarh: Dept. of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Asia Pub. House, 1972).
[669] Christopher Alan Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 19.

its victories against the French and the provincial governor of Bengal in 1756-7. Indeed, not a few of the historians cited in this dissertation had produced their Fārsī-language histories for European patrons. Muhammad Bakhsh Ashob, who provided us with his memory of the Shoemakers' Riot of 1729 was one of them.

Ashob was raised in elite culture characteristic of Mughal Delhi in the period of our study. In a fairly lengthy autobiographical account, Ashob tells us that he was born in Delhi during the fourth year of the reign of the "Martyred Emperor" Farrukh Siyar (ca. July/August 1716). The son of a minor nobleman named Mirzā Muhammad Ghats, he spent his youth in the city, but "changes and revolutions" (*tasārīf wa inqilābāt*), bodily afflictions, and a lack of assistance from fate prevented him from learning the Arabic sciences; instead Ashob contented himself, in his youth, with the customary education in Persian prose and poetry. The author claimed to later regret this lack of education, but was trained after the death of his father by a noble relative. This person happened to be none other than Mirzā Muhammad, the author of the *Book of Admonition* (ᶜ*Ibratnāma*) which described the political upheavals of the period discussed in preceding chapters. Mirzā Muhammad, recalled Ashob, rescued him from barbarity, pride and hedonism (*jahal wa ghurūr wa khud parastī*), by teaching him idiomatic and casual speech (*muhāwara wa rūzmarra*), the arts of conversation, and granting him the power to read and understand Arabic phrases from the books of history. More than that, Mirzā Muhammad inculcated in Ashob the proper dispositions (*zahan-i mustaqīm, munāsibat-i mizāj*) which Ashob adds "is a gift and not something learnt at school". Modestly alluding to his own youthful brilliance, Ashob goes on to

describe the affection with which Bedil, Delhi's greatest intellectual of the era, regarded him – even though Ashob was only five or six years old at the time of that grandee's death.[670]

What we have so far is a fairly conventional self-representation of one of Delhi's eighteenth-century intellectual elite. Essential to this conception for Ashob was the fact that he regarded himself not as a "houseborn slave" (*khānazād*) of the dynasty but rather as belonging now to the *race* of servants who had attended to the Tīmūrid Dynasty for three hundred years (*khāna-nizhadī-yi sīsad sāla*) – a servitude preserved lineally from the time of Amīr Tīmūr to the time of Muhammad Shāh. This relationship continued until the catastrophe of Nādir Shāh, when Ashob says he joined in companionship with the vizier Iᶜtimād al-Daula and then his descendants, the Nawwābs Khān-i Jahān Bahādur and Mu'īn al-Mulk. Our author served them valiantly, after their family became extinct (*inqirāz*), Ashob accepted the requests of the new Vizier ᶜImād al-Mulk, who was related by marriage to his previous patrons. From time to time Ashob had thought of renouncing the world and in fact retreated to his house for a while, just as everyone else claimed to do over the course of a public career. And as is the usual story, he was brought of his voluntary retirement by the pleadings of officials of state, to begin his meteoric ascent in ᶜImād al-Mulk's establishment, where he trained and taught the new vizier and was appointed to the high administrative post of the chief paymastership.[671]

Ashob served ᶜImād al-Mulk for fifteen years until he was struck down by a sickness which had spread through the joint army of the vizier and the Maratha leader Malhār Holkar Sindhiyā, and so was forced to retire to Kol (present-day Aligarh). From there he traveled to Farrukhābād, where his sickness intensified and he spent much time unconscious or in delirium until

[670] Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashob, "Sawānih-i ⊂umrī-yi Mirzā Muhammad Bakhsh Mutakhallis Bi Ashob Wa Khāndān-i Ū," n.d., 1a–5a, British Library APAC Or. 4034.
[671] Ibid., f. 1a–7a.

eventually he was left incapacitated. Presumably now in his early fifties, Ashob convalesced at Farrukhābād for a year, but there was no question of returning to Delhi, which he regarded as his true and only homeland (*mautin wa mawlid wa muskin-i ᶜaslī*). Delhi had been "utterly ruined" (*bi'l-kull kharāb*) in the years since Nādir Shāh's invasion by the attacks of his Afghān lieutenant Ahmad Shāh Durrānī. Anyway, years of homelessness and wandering now meant that it was unimaginable to ever return. But hope returned in the midst of despondency, for Ashob's cousin, Mirzā ᶜAbd al-Qādir (generally called Mirzā Makkhū) the son of Mirzā ᶜAbd al-Rahman had joined the service of Mirzā Ammān, who would go on to become the Nawwāb Āsif al-Daula of the semi-independent principality of Awadh. This august personage invited Ashob to the provincial centers of Lakhnaū and Faizābād, and Ashob served him for five or six years. However, disputes at court with the nobleman Mukhtār al-Daula caused Ashob to retire again, until he met a respected elder from Isfahān, who in turn brought him to the administration (*sarkār*) of a Mr. Johnson the Englishman (*jānsīn angrīz*), who was an important leader of that tribe (*tā'ifa*). Ashob spent some five or six months in Johnson's company, until he forsook the people of Hindūstān and returned to Calcutta, which we are told is a city at the extreme end of Bengal and the "refuge" of this community. A few years were spent in this way, until the sayyid from Isfahān recommended Ashob (without his knowledge) to another famous Englishman (identified by Rieu as the Orientalist Jonathan Scott), who evinced great interest in meeting him.[672] Willingly or unwillingly, claims Ashob, he accompanied this person to Allahabād and Benaras, and spent five or six months in great happiness with him, so that the two became inseparable friends.[673] That person eventually decided to return to the territory of the English (*wilāyat-i angrīz*), and so Ashob wished to accompany him as far as Calcutta, for it was not

[672] Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vols. iii.943–5.
[673] Ashob, "Sawānih-i `umrī," f. 10a.

possible for the people of India to go to that place, but the Englishman said that even the journey to Calcutta would be too arduous for him. Thus after a few days there was an unwilling separation between these two companions, and Ashob proceeded to Lucknow, falling sick again along the way. Convinced of his impending mortality, Ashob retired again from public life and gave himself up to pious quietude.[674] He died in 1785.[675]

Ashob's life thus encompasses what might without facileness be called the long eighteenth century of the Mughal empire. For our purposes two features of Ashob's account of his life are particularly noteworthy. Firstly the Mughal emperor appears to have faded from Ashob's consciousness after Nādir Shāh's invasion. Ashob does not even mention the names of Muhammad Shāh's successors, let alone the gory fates which befell them in Ashob's lifetime. There is no conception of the emperor as master and overlord: Ashob's allegiance now was only to the vizier and his descendants. Nevertheless Ashob continued in the standard language of elite politics, in which quietist impulses are routinely thwarted by eager noblemen, and with whom our initially reluctant author nevertheless acquires great proximity and influence. Such sentiments, we recall, are part of the standard set of self-representations of elites such as Irādat Khān, who fervently disavowed the material world whilst joyously participating in its political rough-and-tumble. It is significant, however, that Ashob extends the language of this politics to include the high nobility of the tribe of the English whom he encountered in North India. Just as he had for a while served Nawwāb Āsif al-Daula, becoming his confidante, guide, advisor and teacher, so too he was happy to work with the nameless British patrons who had come to gain political power in the second half of Ashob's life.

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[674] Ibid., f. 11a.

[675] Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (Oxford: Printed for the India Office by H. Hart, 1903), vol. ii.800.

Did Ashob imagine that the newly-ascendant British could be placed on the throne, beneath the Big Tent of India's affairs that he and his fellow noble administrators had held up for so long? Would this elite, who had served the Tīmūrid dynasty for "three hundred years" equally happily serve a new Nādir Shāhī dispensation or a British one? Certainly Ashob's account does not display the slightest foreshadowing of the fact that the cooperation of the Mughal elite with the British would result only in the former's rapid slide towards irrelevance and extinction. Ashob may have come from an important noble family and kept scrupulous records of his ancestors, but we know nothing about his descendants, who were not fated to occupy high administrative positions under the colonial regime.

Shākir Khān's nephew Muhammad ᶜAlī Khān Ansārī also followed the road to Murshidabad, the seat of the power of the native administration under the early colonial dispensation in Bengal. He went to produce a history entitled the *The History for Muzaffar* (*Tārīkh-i muzaffarī*) for his patron Muhammad Rizā Khān Muzaffar Jang. Perhaps the scholarly Muhammad ᶜAlī had hoped to emulate his uncle Shākir Khān in writing history and so restore the family's fading fortunes by serving in the new locus of power. If so, writing for Muzaffar Jang was not, on the face of it, a bad idea: he was the most important native nobleman under the British administration of Bengal in the second half of the eighteenth century. Yet to place one's hopes even in the late-Mughal aristocracy who worked with the British was soon to prove futile. As his biographer has so masterfully shown, Muzaffar Jang's early successes were ground to the dust by a trial engineered by his opponent Warren Hastings. Even though he was ultimately acquitted of all charges, Muzaffar Jang spent twenty-three months in arrest, of which fourteen were in close confinement. In 1778 Hastings managed to remove him from power completely. Even though he was restored to his position as "Deputy Administrator" (*nāᵓib-i Nizām*), Muzaffar Jang was a broken man: he

clung to post and life with increasing tenuousness until Cornwallis abolished the former and he abdicated the latter in 1791. Nor were his descendants ever to amount to anything under the emerging colonial regime: we learn that of his five offspring, his second son Dilāwar Jang "became the founder of Chitpur Nawab family" and so forged himself a hollow crown.[676] Of Muhammad ᶜAlī Khān Ansārī's descendants nothing is known.

A similar example is offered by the early-nineteenth century nobleman Intizām al-Mulk ("Order of the State") Mahārājā Kalyān Singh Bahādur.[677] Kalyān Singh's name, combining both a Mughal administrative title and the honorific granted to high-ranking Hindus serves as an instance of hybridization at the last light of the regime of Mughal governance that would probably not have been witnessed in the early eighteenth century or before. His name alone should therefore compel us to remember that the development of the languages of elite governance continued well after the formal structure of the empire became broadly nominal. Yet under the British dispensation, this language signified nothing. For Kalyān Singh too produced a history given the same title as Sujān Rāī's voluminous gazetteer: the *Revelation of Histories* (*Khulāsat al-tawārīkh*). Kalyān Singh's grandfather, the Rāi Himmat Singh, was a "Dehli Kāya[s]th" who had served as the financial administrator of Samsām al-Daula, Muhammad Shāh's faithful nobleman who had been killed fighting Nādir Shāh at the battle of Karnāl. Rāi Himmat Singh's son, Shitāb Rāī, was the well-known administrator of the region of Bihār. When he died in 1773, his son Kalyān Singh took his place. In the preface to his history, Kalyān Singh "boasts… of having been the first of the noblemen of India who took office under the

[676] Abdul Majed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal, 1756-1775: A Study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan.* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 337, 349, fn. 3; On the peculiar fate of the petty kingdom under colonialism see Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).
[677] These details are drawn from Rieu's description of Kalyan Singh's history. See Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vols. I.283–4.

English".[678] Yet it brought him no fortune, for in 1781 he was taxed 3.4 million rupees by Warren Hastings for the revenue of Bihar. Hastings took no account of the shortfall in revenue caused by the rebellion of Chait Singh and of other local notables, so Kalyān Singh had to pay the balance by his own means. The author then proceeded to Calcutta "a ruined man", where he lived for twenty-four years before being permitted to return to Patnā, the provincial capital of Bihār. Aged and blind, Kalyān Singh found himself bereft of any means of sustenance except to write this history of the Mughal emperors and the governors of Bengal – one which he produced by memory, since he could no longer read his notes – at the request of a certain Mr. Abraham Welland. His descendants remain nameless.

One final, emblematic instance should suffice to make the point. Take the case of Ghulām Husain Tabātabāᵓī (1728?-1798?). While Tabātabāᵓī's *Processions of the Moderns* (*Siyar al-mutaᵓākhirīn*) has been frequently employed by historians of early modern India, Tabātabāᵓī's own life has received rather less attention – to say nothing of Hājī Mustafā, his even more obscure and enigmatic translator.[679] Since the issues raised by Tabātabāᵓī's account are so complex as to merit separate attention, here let us consider the merely the broad outlines of his life.[680] Tabātabāᵓī's father, named Hidāyat ᶜAlī Khān, served ᶜAlī Wardī Khān, who would go on to be the governor of Bengal. Ghulām Husain was born in Delhi in 1727-8, and his family moved to Murshidābād, the provincial capital of Bengal, in 1732 and from there to Patnā in

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[678] Ibid., I.283.

[679] M. A. Rahim, "Historian Ghulam Husain Tabatabai," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 8, no. 3 (1963): 117–130; Kumkum Chatterjee, "History as Self-Representation: The Recasting of a Political Tradition in Late Eighteenth-Century Eastern India," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 4 (1998): 913–948; Iqbal Ghani Khan, "A Book with Two Views - Ghulam Husain Khan's 'An Overview of Modern Times,'" in *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History, 1760-1860*, ed. Jamal Malik, n.d., 278–97; Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, chap. 3.

[680] These are derived from Rahim, "Historian Ghulam Husain Tabatabai"; Khan, "A Book with Two Views - Ghulam Husain Khan's 'An Overview of Modern Times.'"

1733. Ghulām Husain accompanied his father to Awadh and to Delhi for a period before returning to Bengal. Ghulām Husain too made much of his friendship with the English, which led him in the opinion of a recent historian to “gross faithlessness and foul treachery … to his master and country”.[681] In any case friendship with the English did not eventually serve him well. In 1773, Ghulām Husain foolishly placed his considerable properties and land-holdings as collateral for a local notable who was a friend. When the local notable was unable to pay, Ghulām Husain lost his lands to the new, inexorable overlord, the East India Company. Reduced to these straitened circumstances, Ghulām Husain was forced to take on the humble position of a scribe (*munshī*) first in the offices of General Thomas Wyndham Goddard, and later in administration of the province of Awadh.[682]

Ghulām Husain’s voluminous history was completed by 1781. In an extended commentary on this text, Partha Chatterjee has recently suggested that the “crucial early modern question” at the heart of Ghulām Husain’s oft-quoted disquisition was that of “ethical politics”. The author espoused a new politics in which “ties of loyalty and kinship no longer meant anything”. The contrast of such politics with the outdated values of the Mughal regime, according to Chatterjee, was clearly to be witnessed in a conversation between Ghulām Husain and his Hidāyat ᶜAlī, in which the son “tried to instruct his father in the new morality of politics, but without success”. He did so by counseling his father to in effect betray the Mughal prince ᶜĀlī Gauhar – a proposal which the aged Hidāyat ᶜAlī flatly rejected.[683] In this contrast between the traditionalism of the father and the adaptability of the son, as indeed in Ghulām Husain’s broader analysis of the British rise to power, Chatterjee finds a “characteristically early modern moment where the

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[681] Rahim, “Historian Ghulam Husain Tabatabai,” 128.
[682] Khan, “A Book with Two Views - Ghulam Husain Khan’s ‘An Overview of Modern Times,’” 282–3.
[683] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 80–81.

collapse of empire and older forms of political virtue led to a … new statecraft, which is strongly absolutist". Ghulām Husain, in essence, searched for a new absolute ruler who might defend the state against encroachments or incursions even if he was "devoid of any traditional legitimacy".[684]

There is a both a past and a future to Ghulām Husain's account. As this dissertation has shown, questions about the nature and proper arrangements of empire, the requirements of a ruler, his place and role in the world were all beginning to be debated very soon after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Ghulām Husain's "new politics" of a world in which loyalty meant little was expressed through recensions of histories and accounts produced in Delhi in the first part of the eighteenth century, which had themselves squabbled grievously over very similar questions. Irādat Khān's "big tent" theory of Mughal administration could be seen as posing a challenge to the usual theory of absolutist authority that was re-invigorated in a very different context by Ghulām Husain seven-odd decades later. In this sense, the "absolutist early modern tendency" which Chatterjee ascribes to the late-eighteenth century crisis of contact with the East India Company had its roots in Mughal political debates that are also recognizably early modern in the same sense. Within the Mughal context, this conversation did not end with Nādir Shāh's invasion: if anything, it was revitalized by figures such as Shāh Walī Allāh, great scholar and resident of Delhi, who produced extensive disquisitions on the proper organization of the state and the place and role of the king.[685]

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[684] Ibid., 83.

[685] Of the considerable literature on this figure see particularly Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and His Times : A Study of Eighteenth Century Islam, Politics, and Society in India* (Canberra: Marifat Pub., 1980); Muḥammad Ikrām Cug̲h̲tā'ī, *Shah Waliullah (1703 - 1762): His Religious and Political Thought* (Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005); Syros, "An Early Modern South Asian Thinker on the Rise and Decline of Empires."

Although a study of Shāh Walī Allāh's political thought is beyond the purview of these comments, we note that the shāh also sought a ruler who would "compel obedience by taking vengeance on the one who rebels against him"; those who were treacherous in any way were to have their pay lowered and rank reduced. These were of course merely restatements of the standard behaviors demanded of the ruler in the ethical treatises so popular in the Mughal empire. They do not appear to be greatly dissimilar from the prescriptions that Ghulām Husain had in mind, with one notable exception that perhaps reveals Ghulām Husain's novelty: where Ghulām Husain would have been happy with a ruler of whatever provenance, Shāh Walī Allāh pointedly required that "[t]he people must agree on his nobleness and the nobility of his ancestors… the king must establish a place of honor for himself in the hearts of his subjects and preserve it, and he must see that his good reputation is perpetuated through appropriate means".[686] This perhaps explains the continued existence of a Mughal emperor until as late as 1857: even though his powers were nominal, no imaginable party could compete with the "nobility" or discursive centrality of the lineage.

Though Ghulām Husain's absolutist early modern vision might thus have had a rich past, Chatterjee shows it was to have a bleak and abbreviated future. The last echo of a state organized in resistance to the British – Tipu Sultān's Mysore – was crushed by the dawn of the nineteenth century. Tipu Sultān's descendants were sequestered by the British in Calcutta, pensioned off, and vanished into obscurity.[687] Need we even mention, then, that if Ghulām Husain had any descendants, their names remain unknown to us today? It is of course true that families rose and fell over the centuries of Mughal rule, their prosperity and its vanishing attracting much commentary from Mughal observers who lamented the changing of the times. But the journey

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[686] Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi's Hujjat Allāh Al-Bāligha* (Brill, 1996), 132.
[687] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 99–104.

which led the bearers of the Mughal high political tradition and administrative ethos down the road to Calcutta was qualitatively different. Ashob, Muhammad ᶜAlī Khān Ansāri, Kalyān Singh and Ghulām Husain may all have imagined the new English sāhibs, as malleable rulers, could be assimilated to their own practices of power. But it was instead their ways and their lineages which vanished in the emerging order of colonial modernity.

Back to Delhi

In 1803, General Lake led his army of British and Native cavalry from his staging-post in the town of Kannauj, recently acquired by the East India Company as a "ceded district" from the governor of Awadh in lieu of an unpaid debt. Lake's troops had begun their drills in the stifling August heat of this little town up the Ganges, hundreds of miles away from Fort William in Calcutta. But there was no time to lose: soon they would march in battle order towards Etāh, further up the river and ever closer to the Marāthā armies who held Delhi and the person of the Mughal emperor. In a few short weeks the British Grand Army, comprised of units of both the King's Army and of the East India Company, reached Delhi's walls. On the 11th of September, 1803, the British fought their way out of an expertly-executed Marāthā artillery ambush and managed to seize their large park of artillery.[688] The Marathas were soon to be defeated and Delhi, like so many other "native states", would go on to host a British Resident who took control of the city.

Much could be said of the complex relationship between the resident, the emperor, his nobility, and the people of the city in the decades preceding the Rebellion of 1857 which led to the final abolition of the EIC and the formal incorporation of its holdings into the British Empire. For our

[688] On these engagements, see the excellent account in Randolf G. S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India: The Struggle for Control of the South Asian Military Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), chap. 4.

purposes, however, we need only to consider the "uprising" of 1807 detailed by Margrit Pernau in her recent social history of the nineteenth-century city. From the British perspective, riots broke out in the city on the first of May 1807. Crowds of Muslims ransacked the city for what seemed like a trivial reason. A "native banker" named Har Sukh Rāi planned to celebrate the anniversary of a revered Jain figure, the *tīrthānkara* Pāras Nāth by parading his statue through the town. The Resident Archibald Seton feared that this "new act might displease the Muslim population" and so advised Har Sukh Rāī to tone down his celebrations. The banker acquiesced to this request, and so Seton went off with the emperor Akbar Shāh the Second to a visit to the tomb of Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī, still revered in these years as it was in the early eighteenth century. But Seton had misjudged the situation, for his deputy Charles Metcalfe received news of the unrest and sent a detachment of troops to disperse the crowds. Seton returned in haste to the city's central mosque, where he found that "the green flag of Islam had been raised". Perhaps standing not far from where Qamar al-Dīn Khān and Raushan al-Daula had faced off against the enraged shoemakers of 1729, Seton engaged in long talks with a variety of parties in order to discover the identities of the instigators of this violence. Yet he found that he was to be opposed in this aim by none other than the emperor Akbar Shāh himself. Eventually a doctor of law (*maulawī*) named Rafīᶜ al-Dīn was identified as the cause of the violence. Seton learnt from three separate newsletters (*akhbārāt*) that Rafīᶜ al-Dīn had written to Akbar Shāh and advised him to favor "the Mussulmans throughout", to restrain Har Sukh Rāī, and to require him or his brother "to attend the Mussulmans and make a public apology". In response, Seton had Rafīᶜ al-Dīn exiled from the city.[689]

[689] Margrit Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18–19, 22.

Many features of this narrative are familiar from our glimpses into the forms of urban protest visible in the turbulent Shāhjahānābād of the eighteenth century. While we do not hear of them, it is certain that Seton and Metcalfe were being guided and instructed by the officers who staffed local administrative and disciplinary institutions. It is they who would have provided information of the coming clash to Seton, recommended the remedy, discovered the perpetrator, and suggested that he be exiled – a standard course of action we have witnessed repeatedly over the course of the preceding period. Pernau unpacks the further significance of the encounter, pointing out that Har Sukh Rāī was no ordinary banker: he had been the Residency's treasurer since it was established in Delhi. He financed the Company's army's operations in nearby regions, ensuring that the troops were paid on time while on campaign. Pernau therefore concludes that "[q]uestions of religion were therefore not at the foreground of this conflict. Rather the dispute was primarily controlled with the control of the public sphere by social communities, and consequently, with the nature and distribution of power".[690]

Pernau also shows us that Rafī al-Dīn was no ordinary doctor of law. He was the son of the same Shāh Walī Allāh who had written extensively on the ways by which imperial power might be restored in the midst of the troubles which followed Nādir Shāh's invasion. Rafīᶜ al-Dīn's elder brother, the Shāh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz, continued in his father's analytic vein in trying to determine whether British control of the city meant that the realm's judicial status had shifted from an abode of Islam (*dār al-Islām*) to an abode of warfare (*dār al-harb*). Shāh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz noted that Delhi was now administered by Christians; but even in this unfortunate situation, it was still possible for the conditions that enabled a place to have the status of an abode of Islam: a Muslim could be appointed to lead the Friday prayers, to act as the father in arranging the marriage of

[690] Ibid., 19.

under-age orphans, and to settle inheritance disputes in accordance with religious law. Because these conditions existed even under British rule, the domain still counted as an abode of Islam.[691] We cannot say whether Rafīᶜ al-Dīn espoused this mild perspective in the city's central mosque or whether he advocated a more direct course of action against upstart idol-worshippers. It is clear, however, that Shāh ᶜAbd al-Azīz's subtle analysis of the legal situation of the city served as only one of the possible set of views that arose in response to Har Sukh Rāī's decision to parade an idol through a city sanctified by the graves of generations of pious Muslims and venerated as a compass of Islam in India. In any case, Har Sukh Rāi had no doubt summoned the temerity to hold his celebration precisely because of his connection with the British establishment, and his own perception that the balance of political power in the city was shifting and could be exploited. The argument of this dissertation would suggest that we recognize Har Sukh Rāī's action as essentially political in nature. A section of the city's inhabitants responded to this threatened disequilibrium by mobilizing in accordance with a perspective they found persuasive – that of the doctor Rafīᶜ al-Dīn – and the city's disciplinary apparatus acted to expel him from its gates. In other words, all parties behaved in precisely the manner consistent with the routine symbolic strategies of political negotiation which had been established over the course of the preceding decades.

There was, however, a difference from the period we have examined in previous pages. Now, in addition to the emperor, the nobility, learned jurisprudents and the people there also existed the Company's resident, whose job it was to ensure peace and justice was provided and taxes were paid. Through his person and that of his administrative establishment the Company came to direct increasing influence in the life of the city and the other domains it came to control. One of

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[691] Ibid., 21.

the primary avenues of this intervention was through the law. For the first years after the Company acquired the right to collect the revenues of the Mughal province of Bengal in 1765, judges of Islamic law (*qāzī*-s) continued to perform their usual functions. From 1772 onwards, the Company began to build a new system of justice which separated “civil” and “criminal” courts in which the *qāzī* was reduced to assisting British magistrates. With the birth of the Penal Code of 1862, Islamic law was shut out of public existence altogether, its domain immured to the realm of Muslim “personal status” – relating to issues of marriage, divorce, children and inheritance.[692] The operation of this process is visible in Delhi through the history of the family of the noted scholar Fazl-i Imām Khairābādī. Fazl-i Imām had occupied the Mughal office of the chief judge (*sadr al-sudūr*) – granted, of course by the Company.[693] His son Fazl-i Haqq however served as the Chief Clerk at the civil court in Delhi, but complained of the “lack of respect the British showed for him”, and resigned soon after his father’s death in in 1829.[694] Fazl-i Haqq left Delhi and enjoyed a chequered career around North India until the Rebellion of 1857, in which he was implicated, and for which he was deported to the political prison on the Andaman Islands.[695]

Fazl-i Haqq’s break with the British was no doubt precipitated by the reduction of his powers, occasioned by the colonial administration’s increasingly strict demarcation between what would go on to be constituted as the religious and the political, the sacred and the secular. The widening of this rupture was of profound importance for the practices of urban politics which we saw had emerged in the preceding century. One example of this lies in the question of cow-slaughter. The

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[692] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam Custodians of Change* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 21–3.
[693] Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 186.
[694] Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, 187.
[695] Ibid., 229–232.

ritual killing of cows during the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice, as Najaf Haider has shown, had already existed as a contentious act within the Mughal administrative imaginaire.[696] Describing an outbreak of violence apparently precipitated on one such occasion in Ahmadābād, the capital of the western coastal province of Gujarat, Haider concludes that "commercial rivalry appears to have lain at the heart of the conflict and signs of it were manifest also in subordinate cases of dispute cutting across religious lines".[697] From the perspective of this dissertation, however, such violence could be seen as an essentially political dispute – one so serious that involved parties traveled all the way to Delhi for resolution before the court. Cow-slaughter, then, in the pre-colonial regime was one symbol among many of political affirmation, a public statement, and an act of intervention in the set of relations which ordered the flows of power in the everyday life of the city. In that sense it was of a piece with the destruction of temples and the building of mosques, the ostentatious worship of idols, the parading of a corpse and the refusal to bury it in timely fashion – in other words, a revealing idiom from a language of politics spoken both by high and low.

It is in this context that we must see Thomas Metcalfe's decision in 1822 as a magistrate of the city to ban the slaughter of animals within its walls. Metcalfe's rule, as Pernau shows, was not applicable to the exurban festival-ground where the emperor performed the sacrifice (which in his exalted case involved camels, not cows). His decision was overturned by the higher authority of the land in that era, the Company's board of revenue. The board permitted such sacrifices as long as they were committed inside the houses of Muslims and performed "without provocation". This decision was accepted by Hindus and Muslims, but not by "Hindus of the

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[696] Najaf Haider, "A Holi Riot of 1714: Versions from Ahmadabad and Delhi," in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, ed. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127–44.
[697] Ibid., 144.

lower classes”, who went on to attack the emperor Akbar Shāh’s procession to the festival-ground. We note that the categories of “Hindu” and “Muslim”, only episodically activated within conflicts in the city, had now become central to the very act of judicious governance, and Metcalfe was nothing if not judicious. “I considered that the rights of the Muslims would in no way be infringed by the prohibition”, he wrote in defense of his opinion, “for as far as it regarded them, it was merely a matter of convenience, whereas the religious feelings of Hindus would be violently agitated by witnessing the slaughter of their favorite idol”.[698] Tensions over the matter arose again in 1854, when a person named ᶜAbd al-Qādir presented a petition to Bahādur Shāh, who was to be the last Mughal emperor, and who would shortly be deported to Burma after the rebellion in 1857. ᶜAbd al-Qādir produced a traditionalist argument: the “imperial city” of Delhi had been built by a Muslim emperor. Muslim religious rites had always been performed there without any hindrance, and so it was not the place of Hindus to interfere. The response to this perspective, however, was not that of a Muslim jurisprudent. It was instead forty-one of the city’s Hindus who now responded from a subject-position implied by half a century of colonial law: they praised the British for “having rescued them from the tyranny of the Muslims” and aligned themselves with the colonial power against seditious Muslims whose Afghān brethren were even then threatening the western frontier of the Company’s holdings.[699] Under the auspices of colonial law, cow-slaughter was becoming an issue of only religious significance, which now required the delicate management of bigoted, idolatrous and superstitious natives. In this way we see the depoliticization of a certain practice, of its reduction under colonial governmentality from gesture to rite. This was certainly the broad impetus of colonial governmentality, which Gyandendra Pandey has observed “would leave to the local community

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[698] Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, 192–3.
[699] Ibid., 195.

nothing but its existence as a geographical, anthropological, to some extent economic, entity, by assimilating to the colonial state structure every trace of political initiative".[700]

Yet even as they responded to the state from this new perspective of Hindu appeal against Muslim tyranny, the actions of the city's agitating merchants are noteworthy. Like their predecessors appealing to Mughal power more than a century before, these merchants "organized a demonstration in front of the office of the magistrate" and the city's traders "closed their businesses".[701] In so doing, these petitioners employed the traders' language of petition and protest which was described in eighteenth-century newsletters with the same word that is used in twentieth-century newspapers: *hartāl*. And indeed, while many of its meanings have been obscured by historical change, this language of popular politics, forged in the mosques and markets of the imperial city, has not vanished. The post-colonial state continues in the trajectory of its colonial ancestor in seeking relentlessly to identify and demarcate what is now seen as properly religious activity from that all-too-frequent contaminant of politics. Yet in the versified satirical text message on the phone, the neighborhood shop shuttered, the shoe thrown, the body left unburied or uncremated, the tense Friday prayer or aggressive religious procession, and in countless other practices besides, we see that the language of a Mughal popular politics continues to be articulated and re-articulated all around us in Delhi and indeed across the subcontinent even today.

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[700] Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 110.
[701] Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, 195.

CONCLUSION

All that Lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away: but forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self, full of majesty and glory.

Qurʾān, 55:26-7

It seems appropriate to conclude with the verse from the Qurʾān which sprang to Shākir Khān's mind on the night of the Mughal defeat, when it might well have seemed that the dynasty was doomed forever. This dissertation has presented an argument broadly in consonance with the first part of the verse even if it offers no position on the second. In contrast with the standard teleology of Mughal decline, the preceding pages have offered a conjunctural account of the making – and unmaking – of practices of politics in the Mughal empire during the last decades of its vigor. The making of a distinctively Mughal politics in a popular idiom, we have seen, was the unintended consequence of an act of imperial assertion: when Shāh Jahān ordered the building of a grand new capital in his own name in the mid-seventeenth century, he could not have anticipated its denizens rising against his descendants in the eighteenth. With its axial commercial avenues, its markets, inns, and gardens, Shāhjahānābād was designed to bring the virtues of plenitude to all.

In this way the city served as an assertion of a Mughal sovereignty over a landscape that was densely littered with the detritus of previous regimes. Such declarations of sovereignty were enunciated by court ideologues like Chandar Bhān Brahman, and were adopted and circulated through the empire by later authors among whom Sujān Rāī was an important figure. The widespread circulation of these manuscripts, attested by their ubiquity in archives across the subcontinent, suggests that court-centered visions of Delhi as a prime site of imperial sovereignty rapidly became hegemonic amongst a broader audience of literati across the empire.

As a bastion of Islāmic sanctity for centuries before the establishment of Mughal rule, the older cities of Delhi had been the resting-place of many pious worthies who were engaged in a mutually constitutive relationship with the temporal rulers of their day.[702] The culture of piety of these earlier divines, however, was as capable of generating political challenge to the reigning Sultān as it was of valorizing a quietist apragamatism that shunned earthly power. But this potential tension was successfully defused under the aegis of Mughal imperium: by the early eighteenth century the figure of the recalcitrant anchorite, hostile to the powerful of the earth, was becoming supplanted by the worldly mystic who was not at all immune to the charms of wealth and power in this life.

While renunciant and heteropraxic religious figures never faded from the eighteenth-century city, they were now becoming supplanted by divines who were intimately connected with the high nobility of the state. Should we see the increasing visibility of such worldly divines as the cooption of the potential threat of what had once been an alternative center of political power, or simply one more effect of the markets which Shāh Jahān's city had been built to house? Perhaps it is more accurate to note that in this instance, economic exchange served to buttress and expand the reach of Mughal hegemony even as the state's capability for the mobilization of resources had begun to diminish.[703] But the increase and intensification of commerce had also come to transform the sacral landscape of the city, creating an environment in which pleasure and piety became increasingly intermingled.

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[702] Blain Auer, "The Intersection between Sufism and Power: Historiography and Sacred Biography of the Delhi Sultans and the Shaykhs of Northern India, 1200-1400," in *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800*, ed. John J Curry and Ohlander Erik (London; New York: Routledge, 2012).

[703] For a similar process in the Ottoman context, see Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); the decreased ability of the state to mobilize economic resources is vigorously illustrated in Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48*.

It is in the city's peri-urban sites of religious activity, and in the frequent fairs, processions and gatherings which dotted the calendar that we glimpse the emergence of an urban non-elite mass. The crowds who served as the backdrop for accounts of the attractions of the city may have shared some of the values and beliefs of the elites who noted their presence. But the large numbers of common folk brought their own speech, behaviors, and practices to these sites: through their practices of veneration, the city's multitudes claimed the spaces built according to the template of imperial munificence for themselves.

High and low may have led separate existences in the city, but they came together in many arenas. There were of course the contexts of pious veneration, already mentioned: but again, the forces of the market that Shāh Jahān's works had stimulated increasingly propelled numbers of people of modest backgrounds into the orbit of the city's elite. Delhi's resident aristocratic sons were of course always seeking the freshest face, the wittiest coquette, the sweetest voice, the most quick-tongued raconteur or devastating mimic. From Dargāh Qulī Khān's accounts it is clear that ambitious non-elites could parlay their talents into financial success and social rise. Such ascent brought popular culture to the elite just as much as elite tastes and demands shaped the city's masses.

This rich, vibrant world of the city was not created by design. If anything, the particular characteristics of early eighteenth-century Delhi, the growth of its masses, the proliferation of their practices of piety and pleasure, and the intermingling and circulation which gave a distinctiveness and coherence to the social totality of its city – all were the unintended and indeed unforeseeable consequence of the forces unleashed by the articulations of Mughal sovereignty. The crises of this sovereignty in the decades following the death of the emperor

Aurangzeb in 1707 in turn went on in turn to produce similarly unanticipated results, which were performed, again, in the very streets of the capital city.

This crisis of sovereignty was manifested in the thorny question of imperial succession. What was to happen if for some reason the established practice of succession through fratricidal warfare did not culminate in a stable political order? For that matter, what was the role and place of the emperor in an empire that depended not the king's gaze or touch but rather the impersonal stroke of the faceless bureaucrat's pen? To the elites who occupied the highest echelons of a realm run by routinized administration, imperial successions offered just as many opportunities for greater power and wealth as sudden downfall and execution. It is this question which animates the admonitory accounts (*ᶜIbratnāma-s*) that detailed the turmoil which befell the empire as its rulers were repeatedly strangled and mutilated before Delhi's residents in the second decade of the eighteenth century.

This dissertation has argued that such admonitory accounts should not be seen merely as written for posterity's edification. Rather, these histories were produced with one eye fixed firmly on the present. In seeking to stabilize various narratives of these high political machinations, and in seeking to defend certain actors or malign others, the partisan authors of the era enacted a debate about the nature of sovereignty within the communicative arena of the Mughal literary public. This debate was not waged over abstract issues or affairs of state, though we would do well to remember that even in the France of the same period, fevered by the Enlightenment, opinions about the state of the body politic were frequently mediated through speculative discussions about the moral and sexual disposition of the royal body.[704] If, as in contemporary Europe, such debate was circulated in Delhi's coffee-houses through pamphlets, manifestoes, and little scraps

[704] Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), chap. 2.

of paper bearing anecdotes or songs, no police archive from the city remains extant to tell us anything of it. But such historical accounts certainly circulated within the literary stratum of the educated bureaucrat that Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have called "the Indo-Persian 'republic of letters'".[705]

In order to understand the terms of the debate, however, I have suggested that historians need to bring the critical attentiveness embodied in the techniques of cultural history to such historical texts. This dissertation has offered an instance of such technique through the close reading of the account of the life of the Bībī Juliyānā in Chapter 2. In doing so, I have argued that a richer practice of reading the sources of Mughal history minimally requires a practice of skepticism regarding the assertions made by historians (who were, after all, writing to influence and persuade their contemporaries). It also requires a practice of generosity, which recognizes that even accounts that do not conform to our vision of modern history or properly factual Mughal precursor (*tārīkh*) might nevertheless be doing the work of history: that historical consciousness may still be buried in accounts that in an earlier era would have been summarily dismissed for being insufficiently factual.

My reading of the account of Bībī Juliyānā also suggests that one of the central questions of political discourse within the Mughal empire of the early eighteenth century was that of imperial succession. Within the 'admonitory accounts' examined in Chapters 3 and 4, the successive depositions of Jahāndār Shāh in 1712 and Farrukh Siyar in 1719 serve to illustrate the process of working out the terms and conditions whereby one sovereign might be replaced by another. The basic preconditions for imagining such acts of succession are perhaps best represented by the historian and nobleman Irādat Khān's imagined conversation between the emperor Bahādur Shāh

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[705] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 411.

(d. 1712) and his Vizier. Here, we recall, the wise Vizier counsels his ruler to make peace with the noblemen who had opposed him during his own rise to power. While the emperor is seen as having the right to punish anyone he pleases, it is inexpedient to chastise the imperial nobility, who the Vizier regards as the ropes and pillars who prop up the great tent which is the political administration of the realm. Irādat Khān's Big Tent signals the emergence of a conception of the nobility as an autonomous group that, while assertive of its own rights and privileges, was in some ways indifferent to who sat on the throne or how he got there.

The origins of this consciousness among the nobility remain yet unclear: was it forged in the many decades of Aurangzeb's reign, as the empire's vast resources were directed towards conquering the southern part of the peninsula? Or had it always been present, albeit latently, in the structure of Mughal rule? In either case, it is this sense which drove the chorus of condemnation that was directed towards Jahāndār Shāh. This dissertation does not support the view that Jahāndār Shāh was a particularly feckless ruler, or had become mesmerized by the beauty of his consort Lāl Kunwar and her entourage of musicians. Instead, as I have shown, the wild accusations directed against Jahāndār Shāh were rarely in consonance: they varied widely depending on who was writing, and when. It would appear that at least some of the shrillest critics of Jahāndār Shāh were folks who had once supported his establishment and had been caught on the back foot by an unexpectedly successful coup that placed Farrukh Siyar on Delhi's throne.

Jahāndār Shāh's displacement from the throne in 1712 was a novelty and certainly upset at least a few of his supporters who lived on after his execution. But it was still possible to frame this deposition in terms of a standard inter-imperial succession contest, and many authors did so. But this possibility vanished with Farrukh Siyar's own deposition: it was no longer possible to ignore

the fact that at least one section of the empire's highest nobility considered it legitimate to replace a sitting emperor on the throne. In reaction to this event, and in casting blame or censure on Sayyids of Barha who engineered this artificial succession we see a wide variety of responses. While the most conservative response declared nothing but abhorrence at the assault on the emperor's person, others simply attributed the removal of the emperor to working of fate and left it that. A more interesting perspective – that presented by the historian Lāhorī – suggested that the emperor's continued existence was as a sickness that had infected the body politic. In this situation the ailment was seen by some as beyond the reach of medication and required "tearing out the root": an argument recognizable in the terms of the doctrines of reason of state.

Thus Farrukh Siyar's deposition and execution in 1719 represents the discursive unfurling of a political possibility that had been heretofore unimaginable. But, as this dissertation has shown, the regicide was not merely the business of the empire's elites alone. Even the most glancing of references to an uprising in Delhi during Farrukh Siyar's deposition have offered us some insight into a sustained popular mobilization directed against the forces which sought to remove the emperor. Reading these accounts against the grain, we can see that Delhi's inhabitants, broadly identified as common folk – petty traders and artisans in particular – fell upon the army of southerners which accompanied the Sayyid nobility. In this action they were supported by a section of a loyalist nobility, but it is by no means the case that the latter led the former. In fact, all accounts indicate that the popular uprising preceded and was distinct from the limited elite efforts to protect Farrukh Siyar. Nor did the agitation die down once Farrukh Siyar had been imprisoned and executed: his funeral had a distinctly popular character, and the city's rebellious inhabitants continued to verbally abuse the nobility they perceived as disloyal to the throne.

All of this shows us that by the early decades of the eighteenth century Delhi's inhabitants had already gained the capacity for mass political activity that could address itself to the highest authorities in the state. Such a capacity implies both a consciousness of, and opinion on, the exalted affairs of state among the sorts of folk who, we recall, were merely expected to enjoy the fruits of Shāh Jahān's self-represented magnanimity. This capacity was expressed through a repertoire of techniques – a language of popular politics – that allowed for a creative engagement with Mughal hegemony, permitting the expression of assent, ambivalence, and dissent.

One of the idioms which linked the language of popular politics to that of the elites was satire. In its elite incarnation, satires such as those of Aurangzeb's courtier ᶜĀlī ruthlessly mocked imperial servants, and on occasion the emperor himself. Despite their abstruseness, ᶜĀlī's satires were copied and re-copied. They circulated rapidly and widely through a realm of literate readers, ever more tightly connected across time and space now by the markets and institutions which had proliferated across the empire in the previous century. This Mughal public is of course the same 'Indo-Persian republic of letters' in which a variety of other books were produced and consumed by eighteenth century readers, and it is one that Aurangzeb saw outside his control. Imperial authority could go about building markets and inns, mosques and gardens, canals and suburbs: but it could not restrain the sharp verses and mocking laughter which came to resound through these places.

Indeed there is evidence that less circumlocutive satires also traveled in textual or oral form through the city's streets. We have seen how the poet Zatallī expertly combined pornographic insult with petty political criticism and directed against inefficient police officials. Equally he might mock the abstract workings of the state through his satires of bureaucratic documents in which the names of individuals were substituted for comic effect with those of plants and

vegetables. Evidence from within Zatallī's verses seems to indicate that at least some of his poetry was designed for memorization and oral recitation, possibly in public contexts. Zatallī's poetry would certainly have circulated on paper through the city; but it is entirely possible that it was recited and repeated from person to person, that lived not only in books but also on the "tongues of the people" that have been repeatedly encountered in previous pages.

Such poetry gives us an idea of what sorts of insults the obstinate crowds of the city might have hurled against the regicidal nobility in 1719. Poetry of this sort might have brought people together, shaped their opinions, and helped produce the solidarities necessary for mass action. But the techniques of mass action derived their idiom from varied sources. Many of the causes of such mobilization might be explained in structural terms of pre-existing relationships between nobles and commoners. The very notion of "factional warfare" (*khāna jangī*), a recognized phenomenon among Mughal commentators, no doubt predated the eighteenth century: when noblemen quarreled, retainers were all too keen to take up the cudgels on their master's behalf. But other forms of violent and public mass assertion were becoming more apparent. The crowds which had wailed motionlessly at the public procession of the Prince Dārā Shukoh's corpse in 1659 were, half a century later, were politically activated at the dramas of imperial politics half a century later.

What caused this change? Certainly the massive crowds who gathered in eighteenth-century Delhi must have been just as aware of their own nature and their relation to the elites of the city as were the noblemen like Dargāh Qulī Khān who employed them and occasionally wrote about them. But another source lay in the increasing knowledge of Islamic law amongst artisans, traders, and urbanites – the mean and petty sorts – who were generally described as the "flock" to be tended by rulers and protected by armies. Perhaps it was true of cities across the Mughal

realm, but the people of eighteenth-century Delhi were demonstrably more concerned with issues of justice than ever before. Now, armed with a confidence in their opinions about what was just, such common folk would more freely contest the decisions that had been made for them by the traditional guardians of Islamic law. So it is no surprise that questions of justice were debated and discussed in terms of conformance with the precepts of Islamic law.

We need not be surprised at the frequent indistinction between "the religious" and "the political" in the conflicts which erupted in Mughal cities from the late seventeenth century onward. The Mughal commentators we have encountered certainly drew distinctions between the sacred and the worldly (even if the guardians of piety were themselves now enmeshed in worldly affairs). But questions of religion and politics was perhaps not as sharply demarcated in their eyes as in those of us who believe a secular politics to be the cornerstone of our modernity. All the commentators of the period, generally irrespective of their religion, would have agreed that the emperor and by extension the state existed for the protection of the Islamic faith, its practitioners and exemplars. Thus political questions of the management of state could frequently be seen as questions of religion, or vice versa. This is certainly not to suggest that a special feature of Islamic (or Islamicate) states in general is their inability to make rational or liberal or enlightened decisions in a non-religious frame. It is rather to point out that in an empire which formally privileged an Islamic idiom of power, questions of what we (and not they) demarcate as "religion" and "politics" were frequently subsumed within and mediated through each other.

It is therefore from this Islamic idiom of power, and very much in response to it, that a language of popular politics was forged. Given that the purpose of the ruler was to provide justice to his subjects, perceived acts of injustice were now contested through claims derived in Islamic law. Yet such demands challenged the authority of the usual administrative order of judges and

jurisprudents who had been appointed to provide these very services. Disputes among Muslims, or between Muslims and Hindus were frequently cast in the language of religious infringement or right. But such representations again should be seen as strategies to seize or consolidate places of power within a general field of urban politics that was demarcated in the language of Islam. Such "religious" conflicts, generally seen as a sign of the benighted bigotry of secular India's citizens-in-waiting, should instead be understood as symptoms of the everyday shifts of political power in a dynamic urban environment.

Such political techniques could also be put in service of larger claims. The religious dissensions which wracked Lahore in the reign of Bahādur Shāh, we saw, appear in the remaining Mughal official sources as gestures of defiance against imperial authority. While a full understanding of the riots in Lahore continues to elude us, it is nonetheless clear from our sources that the addition of a single word as an appellation for ᶜAlī in the Friday Proclamation produced something like a minor rebellion against the reigning emperor. Such disorder was not the product of the "bigotry" and "intolerance" of the city's residents, for to cast it in these terms is already to introduce our separation of religion and politics onto the eighteenth century. But the Friday Proclamation was a crucial site for the articulation of an imperial discourse that legitimized the authority of the ruler and reproduced the state. Repeated in time and space, the Proclamation is perhaps best understood as combining the overarching framework of a Constitution with the repeated avowal of loyalty inherent in a Pledge of Allegiance. Thus even a very slight change in the language of the proclamation, real or perceived, would suggest tectonic shifts in the arrangements of power and privilege in the state – ones that would certainly provoke opposition from one constituency or another. And by opposing the recital of the proclamation, the inhabitants of the city presented

a powerful challenge to the very institution that formally reproduced the legitimacy of the dynasty.

The clearest instance of this emerging political capacity, it has been argued, was to be witnessed in the Shoemakers' Riot of 1729. Here again we saw a conflict over justice: when the city's administrative apparatus failed to provide justice to the aggrieved social inferiors and instead protected the wealthy jeweler associated with the court, the city's shoemakers mobilized to escalate their challenge to imperial authority. The humiliating assault against the emperor's servants during the Friday prayer was of course only possible because the shoemakers had rapidly activated a series of alliances with other groups in the city, including its diverse population of well-armed Ottomans and Abyssinians as well as its many residents of the "Mughal" ethnē. That a dispute which began between Shoemakers and a Jeweler on Wednesday could transmute into a battle between Mughals and Afghāns on Friday should tell us that the cry for legally-enjoined vengeance (*qisas*) and the desire to protect the Faith (*dīn*) served as the matrix within which conflicts over justice could be articulated, solidarities forged, and demands enforced. Far from being an instance of a "religious riot", the Shoemakers' uprising was a quintessentially political action by a group that in its own day was seen as only capable of being ruled. Perhaps most significantly, in their capacity to make a diverse set of alliances within the space of the city, Delhi's Shoemakers' betray a subjective form, that, in its neutrality and flexibility, is distinctly recognizable from the vantage of the modern.

The rich political possibilities implicit in the Shoemakers' Riot lay at the end of a long and complex chain of unintended causation which in our narrative began with Shāh Jahān's decision to build a new capital for his empire. How these possibilities might have developed if the empire had not collapsed in the manner that it did is probably too large a counterfactual exercise to bear

scholarly merit. It is important to recognize that a series of contingent factors produced the possibilities of mass politics in the Mughal empire during the early eighteenth century. As those factors changed, the conjunctures which enabled this nascent but distinctively Mughal idiom of mass politics pivoted to produce new historical outcomes. Nādir Shāh's unprecedented and unexpected invasion, his contingent victory against the Mughals outside Delhi – and his equally contingent survival in Delhi in the face of a popular rebellion – was one important factor in producing these changes. Yet even here Delhi's urbanites might have played a far larger role than has been traditionally ascribed to them. Their turbulence might have convinced Nādir Shāh it was not worth the trouble to establish a new dynasty in India just as much as Mughal elites might have indicated to him the danger of being coopted into an imperial dispensation that now functioned with great local autonomy.

Nādir Shāh's invasion might well have been a crucial factor in transforming the political landscape of the Mughal empire. But many others, not discussed in this dissertation, might have been significant in their own right. Changes in long-distance trade, the rise of Marāthā capability in the south, the collapse of the Safāwid order and the permanent destabilization of the Afghān frontier no doubt all contributed to the apparent dilution of the empire's capabilities after 1739. While there is no substantiating evidence for the following assertion yet, it would also seem that the very disorder of the empire after Farrukh Siyar's death in 1719 – and the bellicosity of Delhi's population – might have convinced the imperial nobility of the inadvisability of meddling in the imperial establishment, and spurred them to carve out provincial strongholds while maintaining nominal allegiance to the emperor in Delhi.

But, as the final chapter of the dissertation suggests (if only obliquely), it may well be that the single most important factor in the end of these forms of politics, high and low, was the East

India Company's conquest of Bengal in 1757. It was this event which ensured that the Mughal emperor in Delhi would never again receive the sort of revenue that would enable him to remain a viable entity in the politics of the subcontinent. As the harbinger of colonial domination and dismantlement of the precolonial order in the region, the rise of the company provides a useful means to think through the ends of the Mughal empire's politics. It would seem, for instance, that the educated elites of the empire flocked to serve the East India Company in its period of ascendance, perhaps assuming it was no more resistant to assimilation into the Big Tent of their administrative practice than Nādir Shāh had been. In this assumption, however, they were mistaken. Under the company's rule, Mughal elites and the political world they had crafted became subsumed and reduced in an administration that operated according to its own logic, and was indeed proverbially incapable of hearing the clamor of the governed. Yet it is perhaps the case that the practices of popular politics under Mughal rule persevered through colonial rule and indeed into the present day, despite the unceasing efforts of the colonial and postcolonial state to depoliticize popular action through its enforced separations of the domains of religion and politics.

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