

JAMAL MALIK (ed.)

**Perspectives of
Mutual Encounters
in South Asian
History
1760-1860**

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SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY 1760-1860

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PERSPECTIVES OF MUTUAL ENCOUNTERS IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY 1760-1860

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JAMAL MALIK



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An international workshop on the RECIPROCAL PERCEPTIONS AMONG DIFFERENT CULTURES IN SOUTH ASIA took its pattern from the main project "Transformation of European expansion from 15th to 20th century. Enquiries into the cognitive interaction of European and non-European cultures" financed by the German Science Foundation (DFG) and also the research project "Islamic scholarly culture between *qasbah* and colonial power: Khairabad from 1800 to 1900" affiliated to it. The workshop took place in December 1996 at Bonn and was organised with the logistic and financial support of the Oriental Seminar at Bonn, the Center for International Cooperation in Advanced Education and Research at the University of Bonn (CICERO), and the DFG. I am pleased to thank them for their generous support, particularly Hartmut Ihne, I am also deeply grateful to the members of the staff of the Oriental Seminar for the co-operation they extended to me in planning and organising the international workshop. Special thanks go to Melanic Miehl for her enduring work before, during and after the workshop and to Shobna Nijhawan who assisted in arranging the final draft. Finally, I also would like to thank Reinhard Schulze who constantly showed great interest in the topic and who encouraged me to publish this volume in the SEPSME series.

This edited volume presents some of the revised papers of this workshop in which a variety of subjects were raised and problematised, from theoretical as well as from empirical perspectives, and from different approaches and disciplines, including history, comparative religion, social anthropology, Indology, and Islamic studies. Most papers, though, concentrated on the 19th century, when the notion of colonializer and colonized was first emerging yet was already developing its respective stereotypes.

As far as the system of transliteration is concerned, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, and Sanskrit words which have become part of the English language (such as Mughal, Munshi, Pandit) have been written without diacritical marks. The various systems of transliteration employed by the individual authors have been standardized. Proper names have been transliterated using a slightly altered

version of the format in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New Edition), omitting the symbols under certain consonants and indicating long vowels with “^”. When citing from secondary sources, their authors’ usage has been retained.

Bonn, February 2000

JAMAL MALIK

PERSPECTIVES OF MUTUAL ENCOUNTERS IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY 1760–1860

INTRODUCTION

JAMAL MALIK

The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss
hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't
know what it means¹

An understanding of reciprocal perceptions across cultures has become especially crucial in the current period of world history, which is marked by globalisation and transcultural contact on the one hand, and by increasing ethnic and religious confrontation on the other. Many of these present-day cultural and political conflicts are based in distorted pictures and stereotypes whose roots are in 18th and 19th century historiography. The process of the transformation of this historiography and its results has been documented quite precisely by Edward Said at the level of literary theory.² Though Said's contribution has been criticised from different quarters, his theses have initiated a process of debate that directed the academic discourse on and with the "Orient" towards a new direction.³ Social and cultural anthropological studies followed whence historians tended

¹ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*. London, 1988, p. 343.

² Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York, 1978.

³ Compare *Journal of Asian Studies*, 39 (1980); Sadik Jalal al-'Azim, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse". *Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle East*, 8 (1981), pp. 5–26; Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered". In: Francis Barker (ed.), *Europe and its Others. 2 Vols.* Cholchester: University of Essex, 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 14–27; Harmut Fähndrich, "Orientalismus und Orientalismus. Überlegungen zu Edward Said, Michel Foucault und westlichen 'Islamstudien'". *Die Welt des Islams*, 28 (1988), pp. 178–186; John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995. Also Carol A. Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Philadelphia, 1993; Thierry Hentsch, *Imagining the Middle East*. Tr. Fred A. Reed. Montréal, New York, 1992. For further critical assessment of *Orientalism* see Wilhelm Halbfass, "Research and Reflection Beyond Orientalism? Reflections on a Current Theme". In: Eli Franco & Karin Preisendanz (eds.), *BEYOND ORIENTALISM*, Amsterdam-Atlanta 1997 pp. 1–25.

to keep some distance from this debate. Therefore, a socio-historically oriented inquiry seems to be appropriate in order to add to this debate and to question the stereotypes about "Orient" and "Occident" and make possible new perspectives.

At the core of the book therefore stands the interrogation of prevailing assumptions about the relationships and interactions and intellectual encounters among European and Non-European cultures in the crucial period of 1760–1860, focusing on South Asia. This period stands bounded by two military conflicts: the battle of Plassey of 1757 marked the first British military inroad in South Asia while the Rebellion of 1857 established the British colonial Raj in India. The period also marks fundamental intellectual changes in what gradually had become "Europe" and "Asia".⁴ Moreover, over these hundred years, the idea of a unilateral power structure, and hence of binaries like European ascent and Oriental decay, crystallised.⁵

The examination of the complex and sometimes ambivalent processes of cultural encounter and reciprocal perception serves to deconstruct the mirrored binary oppositions of a European Self and a Non-European Other or European Other and Non-European Self, with all their connotations for colonialism. Rather, colonialisng and colonialised people were mutually complicit and interpenetrated, rather than reducible to one-sided appropriations by Europeans versus resistance and self-assertion of colonialised people.⁶ Especially the binary view of the one-sidedness of European expansion and domination and Non-European reaction and submission is questioned, that is, the traditional subject-object relation. It is assumed that all parties, European as well as Indians, irrespective of their social, ethnic, religious, or political backgrounds, translated and re-translated, negotiated and re-negotiated their respective world-views and social embeddedness in new environments. They had the sensitivity to perceive and understand them. The precondition for this was, besides conditions of economic and cultural dependence, a certain degree of correspondence

⁴ See the seminal works by Wilhelm Halbfass, *Indien und Europa: Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung*, Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe & CoAG Verlag, 1981 and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche*, München, 1998.

⁵ These developments are documented in Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁶ See Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict. Encounters between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492–1800*. Tr. Ritchie Robertson, Oxford, 1989; Urs Bitterli, *Die "Wilden" und die "Zivilisierten"*; *Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäischen-überseeischen Begegnung*, München, 1991.

between European and South Asian discourses and cognition that kept changing in the process of encounter. Accordingly, culture is not regarded in essentialist terms but rather as a field of discourse, a field in which different social realities meet and contest while the respective repertoires operating in this field differ according to context, space, and time. They are functional and hence they also come with overlapping spaces. And these overlappings prove most crucial in the context of colonial encounter.⁷

Starting point for the processes of perception is the idea that one's own knowledge is grounded in each side's cultural perceptions, differing world-views as they were, which played a central role in the cross-cultural hermeneutic enterprise and conceptualisation of the respective other. Where the other was not understood, it was often translated by means of metaphors, i.e., known and accepted concepts and categories were deployed for describing the unknown. Through the application of one's own metaphors, the other was estranged; it was considered as known when translated into trusted categories of knowledge.⁸ These hermeneutically necessary prejudicial standpoints and translational processes also created a space in which the own personal experiences could be inserted.⁹ One's own knowledge therefore served as a resource or reservoir for classifications.¹⁰

However, in the 19th century, the colonial othering was to a large extent based in a hermeneutic monologue. The object could not be read and understood out of itself, in terms of the meanings of its own age, as some enlightenment thinkers postulated, rather the classifications were translated in an other and from an other context and hence represented the historical approach towards the production of knowledge about the other. This linguistic apparatus, these metaphors and taxonomies, then established new knowledge and new epistemological categories and, following that, a new power structure.¹¹

⁷ Thus, an attempt is being made to enlarge the subaltern perspective. For the important contributions of the subaltern historiography see Partha Chatterjee & Gyanendra Pandey, *Subaltern Studies VII*. Delhi, 1995.

⁸ Hans Peter Duerr, *Traumzeit: über die Grenze zwischen Wildnis und Zivilisation*. Frankfurt/M., 1978, p. 152, as quoted in Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, *Das Ende der Exotik: zur japanischen Kultur und Gesellschaft der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 199.

⁹ See Aleida Assmann, "Interkulturelle Übersetzung—Grenzen, Chancen, Aporien". In: Alois Hahn & Norbert Platz (eds.), *Interkulturalität*, (in press 1998).

¹⁰ J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, gives a splendid analysis of these various translational processes during 18th century cultural encounter.

¹¹ Compare Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*. Tr. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper, 1972.

Vitaly, in the dynamic and changing processes of constructing and re-constructing the otherness of the other, of projection and introjection, self-conception changed as well. Indeed, in this process of oscillation “British” as well as “Indian” self-concepts were questioned, thereby interrogating the idea of an autochthonous and homogenous self or natural national culture and establishing and re-establishing new identities. Thus, on both sides, a variety of identities with a growing complexity can be picked out, visible in social terms like garments and cuisine, in terms of language like code-switching, and religiously as can be seen in the processes of what has been called Christianization, Islamization, Hinduization, indigenization, accretion, as well as in education, architecture, and music, among others. Indeed, these cross-cultural development can be very productive since they present societal space for different levels of identity.¹²

Within this process of reciprocal perceptions and diversification of the self and the other one therefore must speak of “becoming” rather than “being”, contrary to the reifying and essentialising colonial and also nationalist historiographical stereotypes. This continuous process of becoming led to an acceleration and intensification of what has been called cultural hybridisation,¹³ which could only be overcome and re-purified through the establishment of a new and definite power-relationship that came about in a most complex procedure in the beginning of the 19th century. The construction of “purification”—discourse¹⁴—vis-à-vis the hybrid other—led to unilateral power-relationship that fostered a colonial global identity and culture, the core of which lay in Europe. The role of the market where culture, science, and economy interpenetrated and culture became a commodity, was crucial in the following colonial efforts at reception, appropriation, and obliteration of the colonialisised other.

Thus, in the period under review—1750–1850—through the reciprocity of perceptions dynamic forces, subtle and obvious shifts in

¹² For the category of societal space compare Pierre Bourdieu, *Sozialer Raum und >Klassen<. Zwei Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985.

¹³ See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. See the critical assessment by Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory. Classes, Nations, Literatures*. New Delhi, 1995 (2). A fine introduction to post-colonial theories is Peter Childs & R.J. Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. London etc.: Prentice Hall, 1997.

¹⁴ Compare the discussion in Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.

social, economic, and normative formations were stimulated. Analysing these reciprocities opens up new research perspectives, focusing on commonalities as well as on differences, on internal differences within cultures and common denominators between cultures, and what is most important, on newness and shifting, on in-between spaces. Looked at from this in-between position, it becomes apparent that South Asia has a great potential for generating theoretical insights applicable to other regions and times, such as contemporary Muslim Empires and also Europe, since intellectual constructs were partly formed in India itself and had a profound role to play for Europeans themselves.

While focusing on the reciprocities among Europeans and South Asians, most of what follows deals with exponents of the colonial process—scholars or administrators, informants or travellers—who oscillated between different social languages or consciousness, and were separated by social differentiation or by some other factor, but nevertheless addressed and related to each other in this discursive field,¹⁵ thereby making up to one cultural ensemble.

The volume does not sophistically discuss theories of such heterogeneous procedures which reciprocally construed the “others” as “others”. It does not contain an elaborated theoretical framework but presents different approaches explicitly and implicitly addressing for example post-colonial and post-modern theories. The main task of the book, therefore, is the empirical and innovative presentation of the procedures of these colonial encounters, such as misconceptions, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, adoption and adaptation as exemplified and illustrated by the concrete historical and complex hermeneutic processes of the Indian experience. The contributions differ in the grade of theoretical abstraction and can be considered as orientation points for further inquiries in this field rather than theoretical discussions on concepts like cross-cultural encounter and dialogue, that reflect not necessarily a balanced communication between different parties.¹⁶

¹⁵ M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination; Four Essays*. Trs. C. Emerson & M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 358, as quoted in R. Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 20.

¹⁶ For dialogue and cultural encounter compare also E. Franco & K. Preisenzanz (eds.), *BEYOND ORIENTALISM*, pp. XI–XVII, and the notes on “encounter” and “dialogue” by Wilhelm Halbfass, “Research and Reflection: Cross-Cultural Encounter and Dialogue”. In: *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 141–143, pp. 149–153.

The chapters have been arranged in three parts which reflect the foci of research interest. These parts assemble chapters dealing with “Themes”, “Persons” and “Texts”. Thus, three institutions of discourse are singled out and they offer enough empirical material to substantially fill these concepts with content towards an explanation of a “theory of encounter”. This essay will briefly introduce the contributions albeit in chronological fashion providing with some sort of hermeneutic approach and pointing out questions they raise. The names in brackets refer to the respective author of the chapters.

In the 18th century some scholars turned out to be European subaltern orientalists, grounded in their engagement at different layers of social contact and in their multilateral relationships with Indians, such as Francis Wilford, Captain Edward Fell, and James Ballantyne. In the holy city of Benares they looked for commonalities, especially in the fields of languages and mythologies, at a time when these sorts of knowledge in Europe had been fragmented and split into different realms and questioned as a product of the tradition of Enlightenment (Bayly). These European subaltern orientalists adopted Indian classical debates on faith and reason, at the same time Indians perceived and adopted European ideas and, having been acquainted themselves with these ideas, were now in the position to “subvert and challenge Western arguments from inside a system they now knew well . . . By historicising and revering the memory of Indian cultural heroes and heroines and by seeking analogies in Western thought for their own intellectual techniques, they powerfully contributed to the reinvention of Indian identities and to Indian self-confidence. More than this, though, the debates between European orientalists and the Indian learned constituted on both sides a real search for knowledge and broadening of human understanding” (Bayly). The dialogue and mutual appropriation between such indigenous and such non-Indian informants is of utmost importance in this context for their interaction could blur the subjective or manipulated knowledge and modify the designs of the European and Indian audiences both. Indeed, mutual appropriation and challenge occurred, as through Anglo-Muslim co-operation in Bhopal by which the Arab scene was opened as well (Preckel). The classic orientalist project, the European appropriation of Indian ideas, might have masked European colonialism in India, but it also dynamised European debates back in Europe (Malik). Some orientalists also tried to reinvent, or even rehabilitate, the indigenous European tradition which

had been shattered in the course of Enlightenment criticism (Gaboriau). In this process, different lines of tradition intermingled.

Hence there was an European search for commonality and other spaces of difference rather than mere binaries, at least in the 18th century. In such a process of reciprocity, the role of intermediaries, informants, and Eurasians became most crucial. They provided for another important strand in the multiple ways in which India and Europe perceived each other and themselves. Each person embodied a range of positions. Examples include the Muslim historian, Sayyid Ghulam Husain Khan Tabataba'i (1727–1815), and his translator, Raymond, alias Hajji Mustafa, an Armenian librarian who was an early 'Orientalist' turned Muslim. Each of these people add another dimension to the narrative. Ghulam Husain critically writes about the British regents, their role in the American colonies is documented and related to the Anglo-French rivalries in India. In a very subtle manner he then discusses the way in which the British govern the territories under their control; how their contempt for the Indians, their own inaccessibility, their greed for private trade and their ignorance of indigenous systems/customs have wrought "diminution of revenue and population all over Bengal." A further dimension is then added to this interesting narrative through Hajji Mustafa's translation technique. His footnotes serve as necessary explanatory device through which the translator, e.g., Hajji Mustafa, induces his own experiences, when he draws parallels between the "revolt idea" of the original Persian text written in 1783 and the Catholic versus Protestant revolts in 18th century Europe. In this way and because the English translation was published many years before the publication of the original text, the translator's sub-text became the basis for the dominant discourse (Khan).¹⁷

In a similar manner one can deduce the impact of writers who worked for European employees. Their self-location in "contact zones", e.g., "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination"¹⁸ made them transcultural or accultural

¹⁷ See Ghulam Husain Khan Tabataba'i, *Sair al-Muta'akkhirin*, I-II. Lakhna'û: Nawal Kishore, 1866. The ambivalent role of translators and the complex procedure of publication of such narratives in Europe is excellently documented by J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, pp. 129ff., pp. 176–208.

¹⁸ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalization*, London, 1992, p. 6.

men, who could select, absorb or reject from the dominant culture, and open up “counter-hegemonic energies”¹⁹ in order to make new historical perspectives respected.

Similar issues of reciprocal perception can be derived from auto-ethnographies, letters and debates of Indian travellers to Europe.²⁰ It was only in the negotiations with the other that these actors were able to establish the self, albeit in a constant fluid process, notwithstanding processes of othering when it was stated that their cultural articulation was utterly repugnant to English manners, or when European identity was ascertained and in some cases essentialised as industrious and superior by Asians writing for an Anglophone audience. Indeed, these 18th century actors, like the non-Christian Armenian Emin and the Muslim Dean Mahomet, contributed much to the development of their own but also of “English” culture and identity. Their “representations reveal the complexity and hybridity of the imperial process and the ongoing negotiations between Asians and Britons about European conceptions of both Asians and also European roles in India” (Fisher).

The same is true for the Franco-Swiss engineer of the 18th century, Antonie Henry Polier, who worked for the East India Company (Alam/Alavi). The reading of his Persian letters (written between 1773 and 1779) helps to reconsider the notion of an unadulterated and monolithic “Britishness”, for in the text British identity emerges as a constructed one, and the British self turns out to be a cultural hybrid. At the same time the text reflects the heterogeneity in the British construction of the Orient. These letters also display the struggle between Catholics and Protestants in Europe. In contrast to the French Orientalist, Garcin de Tassy (see below), however, Polier identified himself with Protestant tradition, probably because of politics and pragmatism, as can be read from his correspondence with Indians. As in other cases there is the question of different publics or visibilities addressed. This again has to do with code- and identity-shifting processes, i.e., the reciprocal translatability of symbols and conceptions that can enable action on different societal levels and set free new identity-formation and -transformation: For the

¹⁹ Dennis Porter, “Orientalism and its Problems”. In: Francis Barker et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Theory*. Colchester, 1983, pp. 179–193.

²⁰ A comparison between “Indian” and “European” travel literature would be worthwhile.

British Polier is European, for the Indians he is English, while his appropriating the phraseology of pre-colonial culture renders him even into an Indian native. However, at that time, English does not necessarily refer to nationality since many Company employees of diverse national backgrounds were considered to be English (*angrez*, *farangī*), and there were different constituencies among them. His interacting with Mughal ritual order is a questioning of British Self by British themselves, whose ethnic identity turns out to be very heterogeneous and fragile in the process of colonialism. In this context one may consider another layer of reciprocity, that is the genre of letter-writing (*inshāʿ*): in how far perceptions are reflected or blurred through a certain, normative way of writing, and how the *munshī* (the writer of the letters) himself is portraying the Europeans? Doubtless, these complex processes of translation intensify ambiguities and ambivalence.

This becomes even more crucial when these intermediaries have a close insight into different layers of society and the processes of translation. They seem to be more sympathetic and sensitive to Indian society than the upper echelons of the British administration in India or the Britons in England. For example, the Indian traveller to Europe Dean Mahomet differed in his analysis of the internal divisions within Indian society from most of his European contemporaries. He did not stress religious communalism, as many European writers would see it, and he did not use the concept of race or caste as his colonial European colleagues would have it. He preferred the concept of nationality (*qaum*) and sociological terms. Similarly, European travellers were quite sensitive to social stratification in India, but hardly mentioned caste and community. Instead, on the basis of Mughal categorisation of ethnicity, Polier's main distinctions were based in professional attributes. And he followed the conventions of 18th century Persian chronicles whence Muslims and Hindus were recognised by caste/race, e.g., *jāt/dhāt*, never by religion (Alam/Alavi). Yet, in another case, the Muslim scholar Ghulam Husain Tabatabaʿi corrects the notion of an harmonious encounter between Europeans and Indians. Writing in 1783 about "drain of wealth" he elaborates on one dozen causes that underlay British maladministration in India: "no love, no coalition can take root between conquerors and conquered" (Khan). Apparently, Indians and Europeans both disposed of receptive competence and perceptive faculty so as to recognise European respective Non-European institutions and ideas, they were

able to grasp them through their own cultural categories, to adopt and adapt them, and to make use of them in order to gain political and social compatibility.²¹

By the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, changes in reciprocal perceptions resulted from the power struggle between Europeans and Indians. Cultural contact turned into cultural collisions. In this change the translational process had an important role to play: in the form of a narrative a new, albeit traditional, image of India was constructed. In doing so, Europeans took individual cases concerning informants who had been accused for having mistranslated and manipulated information as proofs for their stereotypes. Indian knowledge was disparaged. And, through manipulating the local narratives, Hindu-Muslims quarrels were generalised. The European press, which was the forum of debate for these issues, was decisive in the proliferation of such images (Bayly, Khan, Gupta).

Yet another example of reciprocity are the categories of reciprocal encounter: taxonomy, i.e., the system which each side had for classifying the other as entirely knowable, as a form of knowledge representing and extending power (Hermansen). Europe in the 19th century had an obsession with taxonomies because of the huge quantity of information from overseas that needed to be codified and controlled. The inquiry into taxonomies shows that British attitudes toward India and Indian attitudes toward Britain were largely conditioned by the environment and intellectual outlook at home but also by that on the spot. It virtually shows how translational processes work, how experiences in local context were translated into specific context of the interpreter, such as *sati* (widow concremation) and witchcraft. Even more important is, how this knowledge through interaction reshaped and complicated the respective perceptions of themselves, as well as of the other, informed by their being interwoven in a cultural ensemble. For example, when British denounced the honour and thus the value system of the Rajput (which was

²¹ Compare the receptive capability for example of Mīrzâ Abū Tālib Khān Isfahānī, *Masīr-e Tālibī fī bilād-e afrañjī*, completed in AH 1219/AD 1804–05. Ed. Mīrzâ Husain 'Alī & Mir Qudrat 'Alī. Calcutta, 1812, reprint edition with introduction by Husain Khadīvjām. Tehrān: Kitābhā-ye Jībī 1352, esp. pp. 181ff., 303ff., 355ff. On the receptiveness of Arab travellers in the 19th century see Reinhard Schulze, "Schauspiel oder Nachahmung? Zum Theaterbegriff arabischer Reiseschriftsteller im 19. Jahrhundert". *Die Welt des Islams*, 34 (1994), pp. 67–84.

manifested in *satī*) as contingent, they set against this the principle of an universal ethos and their ethically motivated concern for the individual (Horstmann). Or, while for the British the term Wahhabi (see below) stood for the “pan-Islamic” other and for a political opposition, for the Muslims it meant a shift from genealogical to ideological distinction. The *faqīr* as another taxonomy represented a deviant Muslim religious role in British categories, or marginality which was difficult to control while the category of “other”—in colonial sources often stated as “*ʿIt*”—was the monstrous, which challenged the great narratives. These terms shifted back and forth among the British and the Indian Muslims, and through this oscillating process changed their meanings. This discursive interdependence resulted in mis- and re-interpretations on both sides. Not only did Europeans try to fit Sufis into European categories, there were also situations when some Indians considered the British to be some kind of Sufis. Moreover, Muslims although disposing of indigenous systems of taxonomy, such as different stages of mystical experience and *usūl al-fiqh* for Islamic law, themselves were not clear about categories. As a result of different cultural systems of perceptions some of them conflated and confused them all. This led reformist Islamic scholars to consider Islam in India as *kichrī* (a popular mixed dish made of mixed lentils and rice), indicating taxonomic overlappings (Hermansen) but also the misunderstanding of Islamic taxonomies by Muslims themselves. Thus, the trilateral categorisation of Islam developed by French scholarship, such as Garcin de Tassy (Gaborieau) soon was complemented from the Muslim side through the distinction of mystics into terms of *bā-sharʿ* and *be-sharʿ* (within and without the law). This all implied innovative terminology and a mixing of different fields of traditions.

The career of the term “Wahhabiyya” may give an insight into the dialogical creativity and translational deviations: Basically this metaphor was used purely by the opponents of this movement at the end of 18th century, in order to give a name to vague, exotic and plundering beduins deviated from Sunnite Islam and to reduce them to the personal conviction of one man—ʿAbd al-Wahhab (1703–92). First testimonies of these inner-Islamic debates soon were passed on by European travellers to Arabia,²² but the movement was given

²² See Esther Peskes, *Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–92) im Widerstreit: Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der Frühgeschichte der Wahhābiyya*. Stuttgart, 1993.

a religious connotation only much later—in India: When Europeans considered it to be a “pan-Islamic” Other and a political opposition, they began to document the doctrines of the—Arabic—Wahhabiyya. In doing so, the (Western) scholars involved quoted i.a. from a reformist tract written in Urdu in India in the first quarter of the 19th century. This was the case in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,²³ not the least because Indian Wahhabis are believed to have made use of the press and lithography in considerable amount.²⁴ Subsequently, Wahhabi mutated into a religious concept and transplanted into the Arabian experience. Arabian Wahhabis were interpreted through the reception of the ideas of Indian Wahhabis.²⁵ This was othering par excellence.

Similar translational process can be reconstructed when contextualising early French Orientalism. Despite never been to India, the orientalist writings of one of its representatives, Garcin de Tassy, had a profound impact on subsequent generations of French scholars. He hailed from Marseille, a port that was a centre of the 18th century Catholic movement. There, a main trend of traditionalising Catholicism against the tradition of Enlightenment became important in 1830s, when he started writing (Gaborieau). This Catholicism framed his perceptions of the object of his study: Islamic culture. Indeed, he seemed to be quite sensitive about pietist and puritan movements, for he started off his Islamological work with a translation of a well-known Ottoman-Islamic catechism which expressed the views of a revivalist fundamentalist.²⁶ In the Indian context, de Tassy dealt with similar issues, namely the veneration of holy men and the critique by the Indian Wahhabiyya of it. In his ethnographical study he came up with a trilateral distinction between esoteric (*sufis*), exoteric (*Wahhâbiyya*) and popular Islam (*faqîr*). He also compared Muslim holy

²³ Ed. by M.Th. Houtsma et al., Leiden, 1934, IV, pp. 1175–1180, here p. 1180.

²⁴ Op. Cit., p. 1180. Especially important was the text by Shâh Muhammad Ismâ‘îl *al-Sîrât al-Mustaqîm*. Soon after its publication the text was rendered into English. See Shah Muhammad Ismail, “Notice of the Peculiar Tenets held by the Followers of Syed Ahmad, Taken Chiefly from the *Sîrât al-Mustaqîm* . . .”. Tr. J.R.C. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1 (1832), pp. 479–498, and Shah Muhammad Ismail, “Translation of the Takwiyat-ul-Imân, preceded by a Notice of the Author, Maulavi Isma‘îl Hajjî”, by Mir Shahamat Ali. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 13 (1852), pp. 310–372.

²⁵ For the Indian *Wahhabiyya* see Qeyyumuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*. Calcutta, 1966.

²⁶ Compare Mehmed Birgili, *Exposition de la foi musulmane, traduite du turc de Mohammed ben Pir-Ali Elberkevi*. Tr. Garcin de Tassy. Paris, 1822.

men with Catholic saints. However, his sympathy for sufis and folk religion stood in contrast to most of his contemporaries who tended towards Protestant ideals. And here lies the hermeneutic bone of contention: The French scholar seemed to perceive the Wahhabiyya-saint-controversy in terms of a Protestant-Catholic-controversy. In imposing his own interests and perspectives, he seemed to traditionalise Catholicism against the tradition of Enlightenment whose thinkers he, in fact, did not much appreciate. Thus, he communicated with Islamic culture from a Catholic background, and used Islamic symbolism as a projecting field for his own Catholic perception. Moreover, through an Islamological frame, he was able to reintroduce his Catholic view into the French discourse. In his case, the interaction appeared to be so close and ambivalent that Islamic culture became more or less part of his own identification process: the Other, the peripheral, the excluded, re-emerged in the midst of structures of the meaningful. His reaction to the tradition of Enlightenment in Europe was a kind of re-invention of tradition²⁷ when he made use of non-European traditions and reinterpreted European reforms through non-European repertoires. For understanding these residuals in texts like the *Mémoire*²⁸ and the different discourses in it, some kind of inter-cultural hermeneutic and the juxtaposition of different social realities are necessary. This can help to create space for comparison and critical evaluation.

Similar re-contextualisations can be made out in reference to other scholars, such as Islamic mystics, whose repertoires reflect overlapping Hindu, Muslim, and Christian ideas in the xenological scene of Delhi (Masud). Here, the "Evangelical Orientalism" and radical reinterpretations of Islamic and Indian cultures by two Evangelical brothers, William and John Muir, based on their perceptions of culture through specifically Evangelical eyes, had a catalytic impact on Muslim and Hindu as well as European debates (Powell). For example, their attempt to re-classify and chronologise the life of Prophet Muhammad in the light of what they considered to be historical authenticity caused quite some reaction but also sympathy on all sides. Their perceptions became significant reference points in the

²⁷ Compare Terence Ranger & E.J. Hobsbawm (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983.

²⁸ M. Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur les particularités de la religion musulmane en Inde*. Paris: Labitte, 1869.

Indian context for all subsequent debate by evangelicals and their Muslim critics and even led to conversion among Muslims. In this, the genre of biography, especially the biography of the Prophet, became an important vehicle for expressing views in the dialogical process of colonialism: in the process of re-historicising and chronologising the Prophet's life, the genre of biography was enriched, other characterisations became part of the Prophet's biography, certain elements were satirised, and other values were stressed thus appealing to European audience but also in a way to the new Muslim audience. The Prophet became a Victorian gentleman so to speak. This was an example for response to other biography or "writing back".²⁹ The locus of these cross-communications, debates, refutations and overlappings was the commonly accessible cultural market which provided for metaphors, symbols, and imaginations, that could be activated as a strategy of ascertaining oneself. Commodification of culture made conversion and re-conversion, shifting and changing identities, and self-transformation possible. However, this interdependence gradually came to be dominated by Europeans.

For example, the process of appropriation of Delhi's architecture, as a kind of archeolisation and fragmentation of the Orient, became possible when the commodification of culture made the Indianesque accessible to Europeans, but also to Indians, through media such as books and post cards of old monuments (Gupta). It seems that Indians started considering architecture to be an autonomous branch of art only from the middle of the 19th century; iconography and monuments had been perceived primarily as anthropomorph. When in the colonial process the past and the cultural memory of Delhi was localised and monumentalised,³⁰ however, the archeolisation of the Orient was reflected in the Non-Europeans being separated from their pre-colonial past. A living city, it was argued, was thus turned into a monument, with the help of native informants. However, it is not clear whether this happened because of British monumentalisation of power alone, or because of the indigenous attitude towards self-exotisation³¹ or self-orientalisation. Probably native informants like

²⁹ This idea is taken from Bill Ashcroft & Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.

³⁰ For the process of monumentalization of history see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München, 1992.

³¹ For the strategy of self-exotisation see I. Hijiya-Kirschner, *Das Ende der Exotik*.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who produced the first scientific writings on the archeology of Delhi, took advantage of this forum and the potential of the market to display their expertise—especially in Urdu—at a time when some educational institutions provided “an atmosphere for harmonious cultural interaction between East and West, and in producing a group of men prepared to cooperate with British rule while not renouncing their own cultural allegiances” (Minault).

Along these lines, in the 19th century, Delhi College mediated between Europeans and Indians, and it did so in the vernacular, that opened up a new communicative space. All Indian religious groups were represented and its first principals were all non-British. In contrast to English utilitarians, one of these principals, the Austrian Aloys Sprenger, ranked the literature of Indian Muslims amongst the greatest of the world. His Urdu journal “Conjunction of the two planets” (i.e., Jupiter and Venus), was yet another commodified cultural item through which a variety of images and ideas were articulated, discussed and modified (Minault).

A similar important and influential group was that of Eurasians. They were of mixed parentage: The Eurasian “Other” was a category located ambivalently between the British “Self” and the colonised “Other”. It was a convenient colonial construct, selectively invoked when it was required politically. Thus the British “Self” appears to have been in continuous flux in the 19th century as it included within its ambit the “adulterated” Europeans. Indeed, Eurasians influenced British understanding of indigenous customs, political traditions and social groups. That the Eurasian view of the colonialisised “Other” was different from that of the British perception of Indian politics was itself important. But more crucial was the fact that the Eurasian construct of the colonialisised “Other” did find a space—albeit peripheral and tension prone—in the 19th century British political experimentations. And when by the 19th century, the country was tamed, there was no longer any use for Eurasians. However, the company re-invented Mughal tradition when it deliberately mythologised the performances of Eurasians. European figures like Alexander the Great were to play a crucial role for example in this process of embodiment of military strength.³²

The adoption of colonial stereotypes and their usage against the

³² Compare Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company. Tradition and Transition in Northern India 1770–1830*. Delhi, 1995.

colonialised clearly show the interactive character of the colonial process. Thus, these transcultural actors³³ are necessary correctives to colonial and also post-colonial designs and perceptions of history, as can be seen in the politics of "advice and admonition" (Horstmann); the colonialised is not only possessed by the colonialiser but also possesses him.³⁴ The issues of burning of Hindu widows and Muslim female rulers fit into the Orientalist cliché, and were observed with a mixture of fascination and suspicion (Preckel).³⁵ But this reciprocity and perspectives of mutual understanding established or better presupposed a discursive unity, whence the actors communicate with each other and share the same frame of reference. The question then is whether there were different discourses in this vacillating situation of 18th and 19th century colonial encounter (Malik) wherein two distinct partners were translating each other in their specific social setting. Perhaps they were already parts of a common, interactive culture, as the lives and works of Orientalists and intermediaries, of informants and men on the spot might suggest?

Apparently, the situation in 18th century differed from the 19th century, when polarities and binaries came into existence and were re-projected into the 18th century. It is precisely the discovery of this locus, where the shift from inclusion to exclusion takes place, and the analysis and ability to describe this procedure of transformation of reciprocal perceptions, that may help to move "beyond such stark dichotomies of identity between colonised and coloniser, Orientals and Westerners, "us" and "them" that have become the hallmark of both imperialist and nationalist/anti-imperialist discourse."³⁶

Indeed, this perspective shows that reciprocity in cultural encounter serves the process of becoming, rather than being. In so far the third space of in-between border conditions may help at least to enlarge and redesign the frame of reference and to elaborate upon the historical and present reality in new aspects. It seems to have the potential for a re-historicisation, when cultural signs can be translated and

³³ For the idea of transculturality see Aleida Assmann, "Zum Problem der Identität aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Sicht". In: Rolf Lindner (ed.), *Die Wiederkehr des Regionalen. Über neue Formen kultureller Identität*. Frankfurt a.M./New York, 1994, pp. 13–35.

³⁴ See H. Bhabha, *The Location*.

³⁵ Compare also the discussion on what was considered Oriental women in J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, pp. 349–374.

³⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, 1993, pp. xxiv–xxv.

re-read, re-written and re-worlded. For these intermediary actors or border-line people between the milieus, marginals, or intersections, do not, of course, represent closed societal formations or racial hybrids but are segments of different formations which overlap in different forms. It seems that it is the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications which open up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy", "a third space"³⁷ so to speak, where "newness" begins.³⁸ Here the dynamic and powerful residuals of the cultural ensemble in the European and Non-European encounter can be found.

Indeed, the whole issue of cultural ambiguities and hybridity has been dealt with in detail by the theorists of post-colonialism.³⁹ Salman Rushdie is one of its exponent representatives and himself stands for the thesis of inter-cultural hybridity—*hybridity, impurity, intermingling*—and for the idea of frontier-crossing.⁴⁰ But when he in the beginning of *The Satanic Verses* makes Gibril cite the popular Hindi film song:

O, my shoes are Japanese/These trousers English, if you please
On my head, red Russian hat/My heart's Indian for all that.⁴¹

he seems to define identity in terms of life styles, that can be chosen individually and are interchangeable, but also in terms of a fundamental national or cultural identity underlying them all. Here economic consumer goods and habitus are the superficial factors, not essentialism. Despite outward symbols of other cultures the singer is unalterably and essentially Indian.

To come to an end, one may argue for empathy in the conceptual imagination and for moral convictions of one's own tradition of enquiry that can initiate a dialogue across traditions and re-evaluate handed down historicity.⁴² What is necessary is an appropriate cultural and historical, diachronic and synchronic contextualisation, not only in terms of European—Non-European encounter but also

³⁷ H. Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 4.

³⁸ S. Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 8; *ibid.*, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London, 1991, p. 394.

³⁹ Compare Bill Ashcroft & Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post-colonial Studies Readers*. London, 1995; Childs et al., *Post-Colonial Theory*; Ansgar Nünning (ed.), *Literaturwissenschaftliche Theorien, Modelle und Methoden*. Trier, 1995.

⁴⁰ Compare S. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 15.

⁴¹ S. Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 5.

⁴² See Pnina Werbner, "Allegories of Sacred Imperfection: Magic, Hermeneutics and Passion in *The Satanic Verses*". *Current Anthropology*, 37 (Suppl.), 1996.

in terms of intra-European and intra-Non-European tensions. Contextualisation may help to overcome over-simplifying binaries, and there may be much more commonality in the colonial process, that can help deconstructing stereotypes of colonial subjectification without, however, simplifying or playing down the process of colonial expansion. Colonial transformation thus can be seen from a transitional, fluid and often ambivalent centrifugal and centripetal angle. Normative ambivalences and frictions for example in biographies and social settings are most intriguing, especially in the face of complex and shifting networks of social ties and alliances. The biographies and societal environments of the actors of the cultural encounter display these fascinating ambiguities and frictions, because the knowledge and appropriation of repertoires of different times, as well as social and cultural spaces were most important for the interpretation and management of social reality and self-statement, and for the steady reformulation of identity. The value of knowledge, though, depends on sensitivity to one's own positionality as a spectator. The spectator—as it were—is also the concerned, therefore he has to interpret the foreign code and simultaneously relate this code to his own system. This translational work can be done if the own standpoint, from where things can be related to each other is reflected.⁴³ With other words, do we have to deepen the knowledge about ourselves, in order to understand the other?

⁴³ Hijiya-Kirshner, *Das Ende der Exotik*, pp. 209–211.

THEMES

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THEMES IN RECIPROCAL ENCOUNTER

In the first section about themes in reciprocal encounter Hermansen analyses how explanatory systems and sets of categories interacted and reshaped but also complicated reciprocal perceptions between Indian Muslims and British. The British set up categories such as “Wahhabi” and “Faqr” which played “cognitive roles in systems of ordered rationality”. At the same time they subconsciously evoked “emotionally and psychologically charged dynamics of projection, repression, and desire”. Likewise, Indian Muslim categories are drawn on by analysing Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s (1746–1824) encounters with the British. Although power relationships were unequal, each side experienced the awareness or insight into its own self-representation, “allowing for a complication of the binary or totalising formulation according to which the colonists are active parties while the colonised are passive objects to be ordered and controlled”. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) for example, representing the “colonised” played an active part regarding the efforts of the British Government to identify, list and preserve Delhi’s historic architecture. This is explored in Gupta’s chapter on material culture as a fine reading of the semantics of architecture. She turns towards the writings of Thomas Metcalfe and Sayyid Ahmad Khan regarding the architecture of Delhi in the pre-revolt period. Metcalfe’s *Reminiscences of Imperial Delhi* (1844) could best be described as a Mughal illuminated manuscript, whereas Khan’s *Athâr al-Sanâdîd* (The vestiges of the Great, 1847), a book on Delhi’s architectural heritage, resembles English guide books. Gupta argues, that native informants such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan helped shaping the developments regarding the appropriation, commodification and salvation operations undertaken by the Government Department after British forces had recaptured the partly demolished and vandalised city in 1857–8. The Archaeological Survey of India, she argues, distanced older buildings from the symbiotic relationship between the people by labelling them as archaeology. Thus, a living city was turned into a monument.

A different situation can be traced out referring to the Native State Bhopal. Whereas the interests of the people and the aims of the Archaeological Society were opposed to each other, Preckel

observes shared common interests as basis of Anglo-Muslim co-operation in Bhopal. During the 19th century (lasting upto 1948) a state of friendship between Nawabs and British prevailed. The strong development of Islamic religious and cultural reforms in Bhopal throughout the 19th century focused on architectural projects, educational and literary efforts, economic as well as administrative reforms. They invoked a growing admiration in both Indian and British political circles. Since most of the Nawabs of Bhopal were female, inheriting the throne from their mothers, especially women's interests were intensively discussed. The British highly estimated and respected the reforms and modern ideas of the female rulers. They accepted Islamic scholars as personal advisors of the Begums. The Begums on their part demonstrated a pro-British attitude and at the same time clung to their Islamic orientation and independent political authority. The so called women's question was a common issue in the context of social reforms in 19th century colonial India, as seen in the case of Bhopal. Horstmann's research turns yet to another state of India. The chapter focuses the debate of Sati in the Rajputana agency and its influence on redefining knowledge and perceptions of each other. Banned in British India in 1829, the practice of widow immolation continued to be recognised as lawful until 1861 in Rajasthan. In discussing the correspondence between Maharana Svarup Singh of Mewar and the Political Agents as well as the Agents to the Governor General as reproduced by Shyamaldas Kaviraj in his *Virvinod* (1886), Horstmann aims to clarify, how the respective positions of Rajput and British protagonists in the issue of sati were presented and debated. The British denounced the value system of the Rajput (manifested in *sati*) and set against it the principle of a universal ethos focusing on the human rights of the individual. Yet, Horstmann suggests, this conflict of values could have virtually also occurred in the indigenous context, for example in the framework of the Bhakti tradition. Preckel's and Horstmann's chapters both deal with reciprocal encounters of higher social strata (Nawabs and Rajputs) with the British. This view is complemented by Hermansen and Gupta discussing themes regarding the reciprocal encounters between British and the Indian Muslim intelligentsia.

WAHHABIS, FAKIRS AND OTHERS: RECIPROCAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF INTELLECTUAL CATEGORIES

MARCIA HERMANSEN

Mister William Frazer, Member of the Delhi Board related, "Once I had to travel to the territory of Kabul by official order. Hazrat Maulana Sahib (Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz)¹ explained the condition of the road to me in great detail." Frazer Sahib wrote down all the particulars in English. In some place, at a far distance away, Hazrat Maulana had described some trees and a well. When Frazer Sahib reached that place there was no trace of the well. He asked people but they claimed no knowledge of such a thing. At the time of his return Frazer was able to halt at the same place and having called over the inhabitants of a nearby locality, he inquired from them. They told him about the well and said that it had become filled up with earth. Sahib then had that place dug up and found that in fact it was indeed a well.

When Frazer Sahib returned to Delhi and came to call on Maulana, Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz asked if he had found the road and its landmarks to be as he had described. "I found everything except I did not locate that well." Hazrat said, "Surely it is there, it must have become filled up with earth." Only then did Frazer recount the whole affair.²

In this chapter I aim to take seriously the proposed formulation that there existed at least at some levels, "reciprocal", if not mutual perceptions, operating among the British and the Indian Muslims during the earlier, pre-1857 period of interaction in South Asia. In articulating the aspect of "reciprocity" I wish to explore as one mechanism of exchange or reciprocity,³ the system which each side had

¹ Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz (1746–1824), a noted Muslim scholar.

² *Malfūzāt-e Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz*. Karachi: Urdu Pakistan Educational Publishers, 1960, p. 249.

³ Jonathan Z. Smith describes reciprocity such that X should look different when

for classifying the other, and how their respective sets of categories could, in fact, interact to reshape and complicate their self-perceptions, as well as their perceptions of the other. Even if the power relationships were unequal, an element of reciprocity or exchange can be traced through which each side experienced some new degree of awareness or insight into its own self-representation, allowing for a complication of the binary or totalling formulation according to which the colonists are active parties while the colonised are passive objects to be ordered and controlled.

As post colonial theorists have argued, the projection of the 'other' is always onto repressed aspects of the self. Relations between the colonised and the coloniser are characterised by a deep ambivalence, 'the other' is both an object of desire and derision, of envy and contempt, with the coloniser simultaneously projecting and disavowing difference in an essentially contradictory way, asserting mastery but constantly finding it slipping away.⁴

Taking this complication somewhat further, I propose that the comparison of categories engages not only competing rationalities and claims to authoritative knowledge, but also the construction of hegemonies of truth either within the ideologies of imperial state power or the articulation of groups competing for the religious centre, so that these competing realities exclude others while situating them as objects of "desire and derision".

I therefore intend to evoke both structural and post-structural approaches to understanding the dynamics of the inter-cultural encounter in the early colonial period in India by demonstrating how, on the one hand, categories such as "Wahhabi" and "Faquir" play cognitive roles in systems of ordered rationality, while at the same time they subconsciously evoke emotionally and psychologically charged dynamics of projection, repression, and desire.

interpreted from the perspective of Y, while Y should look different when interpreted from the perspective of X. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redescription of Canon". In: *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 36.

⁴ Catharine Hall summarising Homi Bhabha, "Histories, Empires, and the Post-Colonial Moment". In: *The Post-Colonial Question. Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Ian Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.). London: Routledge, 1996, p. 70.

Theories of Classification as a Form of Knowledge

The impulse to classification is associated with projects of 18th century knowledge in Europe such as the taxonomies of Linneaus' *Systema Naturae* (1735). Contemporary cultural theorists such as Mary Pratt, following Foucault,⁵ have characterised the "eighteenth century systematisation of nature as a European knowledge-building project that created a new sort of Eurocentred planetary consciousness. Blanketing the surface of the globe, it specified plants and animals in visual terms as discrete entities, subsuming and reassembling them in a finite, totalling order of European making."⁶

Pratt suggests a development of globalising projects or "planetary consciousness" which moved from circumnavigation, to map-making (of the world's coast lines)—and then in the second half of the 18th century these projects began to include studying the "internal contents of land and water masses." "These vast contents would be known not through slender lines on blank paper, but through verbal representations in turn summed up in nomenclatures, or through labelled grids into which entities would be placed."⁷

In the chapter on "Archive and Form" in his *Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire*, Thomas Richards discusses the science of form, morphology, and its role in imagining a unitary natural world where there would be no place for monstrosity.⁸ He traces a move from "taxonomy" in the 18th century to "morphology" in the 19th. The distinction is that morphology no longer aimed to derive a hierarchy of general forms but rather a lineage of specific ones.⁹

Within the broader colonial project of classification, then, several dynamics seemed to have influenced constructions of the other. One

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Chapter Five on "Classifying". New York: Vintage, 1994, pp. 125-165.

⁶ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 38. Pratt sees natural history as asserting an urban, lettered, male authority over the whole of the planet; elaborating a rationalising, extractive, dissociative understanding "which overlaid functional, experiential relations among people, plants, and animals."

⁷ Ibid., p. 30. "One by one the planet's life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order. The (lettered, male, European) eye that held the system could familiarize ("naturalize") new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language of the system." P. 33.

⁸ Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*. London: Verso, 1993, p. 45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

is the level of the encounter and its development from contact to relationship,¹⁰ from exploration to surveillance.¹¹ Another is the eventual replication of the state apparatus in the colony. This could only be instituted gradually and had to rely initially on local informants as mediators, and on native categories. Yet another element was the forms of scientific knowledge which shifted during the 18th to 19th centuries in ways broadly defined as being from an 18th century model of hierarchical taxonomy which sought for universal and replicable forms, to a nineteenth century interest in morphology and the development of phenomena and their continuity over time. This is not to say that only the British sorted their representation through categories. Indian Muslims had their own indigenous categories derived from Islamic legal rulings, from genealogy (the naming of ethnic groups, sects, heresies, and Sufi *tarîqas*, for example), and from criteria of truth and falsity, by which to sort their own and alien elements. One may trace the epistemological underpinnings of these indigenous categories according to canonic and genealogical formations.¹² There are thus two divergent forms of otherness constructed in these systems, for the Muslims the other as false, "bâtil", or infidel, "kāfir". For the British, the otherness was perhaps exotic, perhaps pagan. There was on their part a certain drive to include all phenomena within a new enlightened science, rather than within a religiously-bounded canon. At the same time, the classifying project facilitated imperial rule through appropriating the native categories in the interests of maintaining order.

The role of genealogies in these classifying systems is itself complex and merits further detailed consideration. Briefly, I could observe that genealogy serves as one ground for reciprocity. As Thomas Metcalf observes about a later phase of colonial rule, in governing the Punjab the British experimented with genealogy and the tribe as a structuring principle for administration. This was in part due to the

¹⁰ As described by Urs Bitterli in *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

¹¹ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 39.

¹² One should take into account here Michael Ryan's discussion of 16th and 17th century European understandings of peoples and cultures in terms of genealogies. He characterises this move, which in the European case was derived from the book of Genesis, as antihistorical, in which change "was accounted for in terms of physical contact rather than autonomous development." Michael Ryan, "Assimilating New Worlds in the 17th and 18th centuries". *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 4, 1981, p. 532.

perception of the Punjab as a Muslim majority area, so that in this case a principle other than caste was seen to be operative in its social and political relations.¹³

Nevertheless, Muslim concepts of genealogy were not simply based on blood lineage and tribal affiliation, as various types of fictive kin relations and initiatory loyalties could provide deep connections among individuals. Part of the ongoing internal modification in Muslim concepts of genealogy may be illustrated by Sufis in their sense of "affiliation" (*nisbat*) and its transformative effects on a person's very substance. The proliferation of multiple *ṭarīqa* affiliations in the later Mughal period reflected a decreasing concern with mixing the effects of varied spiritual practices and influences and in turn less assurance that these effects were real and significant.¹⁴ This may have been a reflection of altered social relations in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Mughal empire and the disruptions of the colonial occupation.

Otherness, within a genealogical system, is constituted by a divergent history or race, blood, and family; but still assumes a further shared essence beyond which such distinctions may be made.

Wahhabis, Fakirs, and Others

I'm not sure if my original formulation of "Wahhabis, Fakirs, and Others" works most skilfully to interrogate some of the processes involved, but for the time being, let me leave it in place as a heuristic framework, in order to explore some dimensions of the issues of naming, reciprocity, and the construction of categories within larger taxonomic systems. In fact, I will conclude by arguing that for the British the term "Wahhabi" can represent the shift from viewing Islam as situated in one exotic locale to a sense of a global or at least Pan-Islamic colonial "other", an organised ideological and to some extent political opposition. For the Muslims its uses map a shift from genealogical to ideological cartographies of distinctiveness. The second term, "fakir", is evoked in order to imply marginality and

¹³ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj: The New Cambridge History of India* III.4. Cambridge, 1994, pp. 128–129.

¹⁴ I comment on this development in Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams". *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology* 12, 1, 1992, pp. 52–77.

possibly transgression on both sides; while the third term, the marker for "others", is often found printed in the form, "&tc", in the contemporary texts. This can represent the British reaction to the monstrous, the sublime, and the variegation of forms of otherness which destabilise attempts to control and categorise. It may further represent the "othering" by both colonisers and Indian Muslims, of those who challenged projects of grand narratives, overarching symbolic realities, state or religious hegemonies.

In the case of the British, I contend that there was a greater necessity to take into account the complexities of the relationships among the subject peoples or natives, as an instrument of more efficient control and domination. In the dynamics of power the British could demand compliance with all canons of respect. In fact, it was a mark of British authority that their categories should both subsume and override any other ones, as illustrated in the famous anecdote about Mirza Ghalib refusing to serve as Persian master for the British, since according to their regulations he could not be properly greeted by the highest British official in charge. According to his canons of behaviour this was an inexcusable insult.

In their position as masters, the British wanted to be treated respectfully, not only in terms of their own standards, but in terms of what they understood to be "native categories". The following extract from Gilchrist's *Hindoostani Grammar*, is telling:

On the other hand we should require from the natives, not only those external marks of respect which our customs have rendered indispensable (particularly among our menials), but those also, however foreign to our ideas, which they themselves usually bestow on each other. Their wearing their shoes in our houses, as a mark of high disrespect for us, has been already sufficiently, I trust, discussed.¹⁵ While they are suffered to do so, all our other attention to impressive dignity so highly proper in our official as well as relative capacities, must, I fear, go for nothing in their estimation . . . We should enquire of the caste, or relative rank among themselves, of our servants of all descriptions; and be careful that none are admitted to attendance on us in capacities that may lower us in the estimation of the surrounding natives.¹⁶

¹⁵ In Gilchrist's other work, *The Anti-Jargonist* for example, the issue of wearing shoes is treated extensively, pp. xiv-xviii.

¹⁶ Gilchrist, *Hindustanee Grammar*, pp. xxv-xxvi. Bernard Cohn has commented extensively on Gilchrist, particularly on the "shoes" issue in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Knowledge of the other from the British side was thus conceived as being able to make distinctions from the more basic to the finer points, to be able to perceive according to the native categories in order to know if one were being properly ordered by the natives according to the indigenous system, as well as by the standards of one's own system. Ironically, the unrefined imposition of one's own culturally simplistic perceptions on the native landscape became in itself a cause for rebuke directed towards the oversimplistic newcomers by those British residents of India who felt that they had developed a more complex insight into the native way of perceiving and ordering.

Gilchrist commences his *Grammar of Hindoostani* with a preface alluding to those deeper structures which might elude those whose engagement with the new environment might be more passive or lazy. He chides those whose approach to language learning consists of the memorisation of standard dialogues since this is productive of indolence and ignorance. They will be the "drones" of the colony, in contrast to the "worker bees in the hive of oriental learning."

Continuing in Gilchrist's words,

Convinced that numbers of Europeans reside for years in India who have not enough local knowledge, even to distinguish a Hindoo from a Moosulman, I shall devote a portion of this work to directions, that may in some degree, prevent those disagreeable consequences resulting from confirmed ignorance; which is apt enough to confound two widely distinct classes of people, under the ungracious appellation of 'blackey'.¹⁷

We may thus imagine Gilchrist's model of classifying as a sort of "generative grammar" which allows nuance, creativity, and expansion. As the British official masters Hindustani, his own meanings will become translatable into the native system, and he will have an active rather than a passive relationship to the situation.

The move on the part of the British to classify India into more nuanced and productive categories ultimately manifested in extended reports and in turn gazetteers which collected useful information in all areas of life, both for scientific purposes of understanding the local flora and fauna, but also, in a time before the emergence of anthropology as a discipline, as an effort to conduct a sort of human

¹⁷ Ibid., p. vi.

geographical survey, to assess and compile how many people lived in a region, what were their professions, languages, religions, castes, habits, customs and so on.¹⁸

This ordering of human geography, however, naturally involved an interaction of outsider and insider categories—can you name and order people other than according to how they name themselves? If I use your categories do I by extension accept any larger system of authority in which they are embedded. This is at the centre of reciprocity and this is one arena in which reciprocal perceptions might develop.

This further valence of approval and disapproval, in turn engages another theoretical mode of construing the colonial encounter, that of impulses to desire and derision. For example, these elements of Muslim religion and culture which could evoke for Europeans admiration and nostalgia on the one hand, or condemnation and ridicule on the other. From the Muslim side, there are nearly parallel traces of wonder, admiration, or rejection of the European, Christian, other.

For the purposes of this essay, then, one can find structural elements of classification systems which define “Wahhabis” and “faqirs”. At the same time such terms may evoke more reactions more troubled than those to mere anomaly, a strangeness that destabilises, and a condemnation goes beyond intellectual or even political opposition.

The term Wahhabi

The category “Wahhabi”, has long been recognised as problematic in the Indian context, but still has a rather lively valence in colonial and post-colonial religious and political discourse in South Asia. It is not early, in fact it emerges not within ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s (1703–1787) movement in Arabia but probably as a derogatory use by the Turkish Ottomans who found themselves confronted with the power of ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s followers after his death as they sacked Kerbala in 1801 and captured the Hijazi Holy Cities in 1803 and 1804. These military successes attracted the attention of the British to the movement in the early 1800’s.¹⁹ Was it British officers in

¹⁸ This process of progressive compiling, classifying, and ordering has been pointed out by Cohn in *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*.

¹⁹ In 1805 an article appeared entitled “An Account of the Religious sect in Arabia, called the Wuhabees”. *Asiatic Annual register*, 7, by E.S. Waring. *Oxford English*

India, disturbed at the military activities of Shah Isma‘il Shahid (1781–1826) and Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786–1831) and their successors who extended the name from an Arabian to an Indian phenomenon?²⁰ Mir Shahamat ‘Ali in his 1852 article translating the *Taqwiyat al-Imân*, suggests that it was the movement’s Muslim opponents, Maulawis and Khadims and who first used it.²¹ The term was then later applied by both the British and the Indian Muslims in an oscillating series of moves to refer to groups with differing religious and political agendas. In the case of the successive British applications, the valence was negative due to a perceived threat of a Pan-Islamic political impulse to reject alien rule by armed resistance. Indian Muslims might acquiesce to, appropriate, use as a derogatory epithet, or resist the category.

Sometimes religious categories could be a little slippery, and this seems to have been the case with the term “Wahhabi”, appearing in British records in India sometime in the early 1800’s, but thereafter having a controversial history of employment in both sides. “Wahhabi”, for the British, evokes the Muslim concepts *jihād*, *Dâr al-Harb*, and *conspiracy*;²² for Muslims it evokes an internal Muslim critique against heretical innovation (*bid‘a*)-in many cases referring to local practice. The polemic application of this term meant that Wahhabis became conflated with the Ahl-e Hadith movement in the late 19th century. The term “Wahhabi” even finds its way into the later Indian gazetteers as the name of a Muslim sect “officially known as *ghair mukallid* (*ghair muqallid*), non-imitators or Ahl-e Hadith, people of the tradition”.²³

Dictionary, cites the same author’s “Tour to Sheeraz” in the early uses of the term “Wahhabi” in English.

²⁰ “The general spirit by which these were animated, (identical nearly with that of the tenets of the Arabian Wahhabis, of whom the sect of Syed Ahmed may perhaps be accurately termed an Indian imitation) was the ardent profession of Mahomedanism in its primitive simplicity and fervour, and the utter rejection of all idolatrous or superstitious innovations, whencesoever derived.” Shahamat ‘Ali, *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1, 1832, p. 481. “The followers of the reformer are nicknamed “Wahhabis” by their opponents, while the others are called “Mushriks,” or “associators of others with God.” The latter consists chiefly of the opposed Maulawis and Khadims, or attendants of the various tombs of the Muhammadan saints.” Shahamat Ali, *Royal Asiatic Society*, 13, 1852, p. 313.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²² *Dâr al-Harb* in Muslim legal categories is the “abode of war” or territory in which Muslims may legally prosecute a *jihād*. Notions of *jihād* and conspiracy are evident in the “Wahabee” documents of the British official correspondence.

²³ Khan Bahadur Fazlullah Lutfallah Faridi, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. ix

I will briefly explore the history of the term and its use in India to try and tease out how this category shifted back and forth among the British and the Indian Muslims, while tracing how a dynamic of reciprocal perception was involved in its successive constructions. At first the term applied only to the Arabian movement, but soon it filtered into the vocabulary of British colonial officials in India, perhaps as part of the perceived threat of a Pan-Islamic rising.

The so-called "Wahhabi movement" in India was said to trace back to the *jihād* of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and Shah Isma'il Shahid on the frontier. However, this was clearly a movement which was not anti-Sufi in the way which the Arabian 'Abd al-Wahhab's doctrine had stressed. While sharing an aversion to the interpolation of local practices into the Muslim cult of the saints, the Indian Mujahidin clearly persisted in many features of Sufi belief and organisation such as taking allegiance to a spiritual guide, believing in his charismatic and even miraculous powers, and tracing spiritual genealogy through the existing Sufi *tariqas*, alongside membership in the all-embracing *Tariqa Muhammadiyya*.

In the collections of official dispatches from Hyderabad to Fort William in the late 1830's, "Wahhabee" and "Wahhabecism" are used to imply a organised movement, corresponding to the Mujahidin and their successors.²⁴ Likewise in the 1840's, reports on activities in Hyderabad assume the existence of a Wahhabee sect and its connection to the Arabian movement as part of a broader Pan-Islamic threat.²⁵

This "Wahhabee" movement was implicated in the uprising of 1857 and in the 1860's a series of Wahhabi trials prosecuted those believed to be planning a new conspiracy against the British. "Into the 1860s and 1870s this aura of suspicion remained a powerful force shaping British conceptions of their Muslim subjects. Constantly on the alert for outbreaks of violence, the British saw above all in

pt. 2, Bombay, 1899, pp. 12-13. "Wahhabis—dissenters, now officially known as gheir mukallid, non-imitators or Ahl-e hadith, people of the tradition, though they do not form a separate class, have made considerable progress in Gujarat. The chief points of belief in which Wahhabis differ from Sunnis is their denial of the ability of the Prophet to intercede for his people with Allah and their rejection of the four Sunni Imams. The sect was brought to India in 1821 and rose to importance for the part its leaders played in the 1857 mutinies."

²⁴ India Office Records, P/Sec/IND/22, July 17, 1839.

²⁵ India Office P/142/2.

the so-called "Wahhabi" movement, which sought a return to purified Islam, evidence, as the Punjab government wrote in 1862, of the gathering together of 'the tribes of Islam' to 'wage a holy war against the Faringhi'.²⁶

W.W. Hunter in his work, *The Indian Muslims*,²⁷ projected the idea of a 'fanatic colony', the reformist enthusiasts of the Wahhabi movement who were identified with the 'fanatic masses'. Hunter therefore argued for British encouragement of the 'landed and clerical interests' who would oppose radical change in the status quo.²⁸

I might further refer to Saddiq Hasan Khan's 1870s defence of the Muwahhidin/Ahl-e Hadith in his work *Tarjumân-e Wahhâbiyya*, on the basis that they were loyal to the government, in British terms. Note that one goal of this work was to end the application of the term "Wahhabi" to the Ahl-e Hadith movement. In Khan's argument from Muslim categories he notes that according to the *shari'a*, freedom of religion, if granted by a ruler, defuses the rationale for *jihâd*, and that there has been a *fatwâ* by a Muwahhid (Ahl-e Hadith) *mufî* to this effect, thus constituting proof of the non-*jihâdist* position of the movement.²⁹

The *bad nâmî* or defamatory connotation of the term "Wahhabi" however, works both in British and Indian Muslim systems. For the British, because the Wahhabis are fanatic and *bad khwah* (disloyal and seditious), for the Indian Hanafi Muslims Wahhabis follow only the legal school of Ibn Hanbal and reject the mediation of the saints and the Prophet, for the Muwahhidin Ahl-e Hadith because they are *Ahl al-Râ'i* (people who privilege their own legal opinions) rather than going directly to the Qur'an and the Sunna.

Regarding the later contexts of controversies invoking designations such as "Wahhabi", Barbara Metcalf writes, "An urgent concern for the Ahl-e Hadith, as for the Deobandis, was that their religion be free of all customs that could be criticised by non-Muslims. Their formulations were born in an atmosphere of controversy and attack. Hence there was among them a desire to purify, to change, what now appeared as accretion and deviation. Muhasin al-Mulk wrote,

²⁶ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 140.

²⁷ W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Muslims*, 1871. Reprint. Lahore: Premier Book House, 1964.

²⁸ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 140-144.

²⁹ *Tarjumân-e Wahhâbiyya*. Agra: Matba' Mufid 'Amm, 1884.

“if we do not cleanse our religion of this sin (*taqlîd*) it is unjust for us to criticise those of other religions.”³⁰

Thus we can argue rather convincingly, it seems to me, that the term “Wahhabi” becomes constructed and reconstructed by both British rulers and Indian Muslim subjects with a degree of oscillation and response to the categories of the other. Initially set in motion in British discourse in India as a term evoking the spectre of Pan-Islamic sedition, it became negatively valenced among some reformist Muslims who rejected it as casting on them aspersions of disloyalty to the colonial power as well as associating them with an Arabian movement which stressed Hanbali literalism rather than *ijtihād* (using independent reasoning). Some Hanafi Muslims, later known as Bareilwis or Ahl-e Sunnat, focused on the identification of the Wahhabis with a religious agenda of devaluing the status of the Prophet and the Muslim saints, and used it as a derogatory way of referring to the Ahl-e Hadith and even the Deobandis.

The later uses show the term Wahhabi increasingly shifted for Muslims from a genealogical or initiatory category implying direct connection of individuals to a source and to each other, to an ideological one, bearing less and less relationship to a specific collectivity.

The term “faqir”

The term “faqir” is operative in Indian, Indian Muslim and British category systems. In Muslim categories “faqir” is a term with multivalence. It may indicate an extreme kind of asceticism and social deviance, or simply some form of *tarîqa* Sufism traceable to its original Arabic meaning of “poor person”. In a further dimension of its technical religious meaning the term implies a sort of nihilism and rejection of all worldly attachment.³¹ It also may be applied to Hindu ascetics by Hindus and Muslims. In the theoretical framework of mutual and conflicting desire and derision, *faqîrs*, especially those with *be sharʿ* (not following the Islamic law) orientations such as *madârîs*, *qalandars* and *malangs* challenge prevailing social and religious norms within the Muslim notion of a respectable community, yet

³⁰ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 273, citing Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, p. 16.

³¹ Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī, *al-Kashshaf fī istilāhāt al-funūn*, Calcutta 1862, pp. 11–56.

still may be incorporated within it. They are allowed a certain reality or space, although they reject or ignore such acceptance and situate themselves as the interstices of *malâmat* (being blamed or condemned) by the Muslim gaze. In later Sufi *tadhkiras* or hagiographic compilations, which are organised on principles of *tarîqa* (Sufi order) genealogy, there are separate sections at the back for women and *majdhûbs*,—those outside of canons of rationality or proper lineage. In fact, this is also representative of a legal or *sharî'a* space of defectiveness or irrationality according to which the defiance or transgression of *sharî'a* norms may be tolerable.

For the European, early encounters with faqîrs provoked resonance of desire and derision. Their behaviour was perceived as sexual, i.e., nakedness, cross-dressing, or having powers to grant fertility, and their bizarre behaviour also fascinated and repelled foreign observers.

The term “faqir” is fluid and difficult to get a fix on. As Cohn and others have observed, faqirs were among those marginal groups whose presence was constructed as disruptive, unstable, and difficult to control.³² In early dictionaries and travel accounts narrated from the European perspective, the faqirs were not specified as Hindu or Muslim. Their behaviour was depicted as grotesque, perverse and sexualised. Their practices and political activities were stressed. The idea of “faqir” then, represents a deviant religious role in British categories. I cite it in order to suggest how Indian Muslims may have similarly been influenced by the British representation of certain Sufi movements, and how in turn some Muslim Sufis encountered the British and what categories they used in representing them. Carl Ernst, in a recent work sees the construct “faqir” as typifying an “outsider’s view of Sufism”. Such terminology stressed “the exotic, the peculiar, and behaviour that diverges from modern European norms; in the context of colonialism, this terminology emphasised the dangers of fanatic resistance to European rule”.³³

³² Cohn observes, “There were, however, groups and categories of people whose practices threatened the prescribed sociological order. These were people who appeared by their nature to wander beyond the boundaries of settled civil society: sannyasis, sadhus, fakirs, dacoits, goondas, thugs, pastoralists, herders, and entertainers. The British constructed special instrumentalities to control those defined as beyond civil bounds, and carried out special investigations to provide the criteria by which whole groups would be stigmatized as criminal”. *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, p. 10.

³³ Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. New York: Shambhala, 1997.

In translating this aspect of South Asian Muslim culture, Europeans also tried to elaborate a category based on what they considered to be similar phenomena in their own religious sphere, for example, on the negative side Le Croix,³⁴ and Ovington who saw the clerical function of the local faqirs as "Romish" or exploitive of credulity.³⁵ More positively, we find traces of trying to fit Sufis into European categories. For example, as part of the linguistic history of the term "Sufi" in English cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find the following quotes. John Greaves, in his 1653 translation of *A Description of the Grand Signor's Seraglio* stated, "Those Turks which . . . would be accounted Soffees (marginal note Puritans) do commonly read as they walk along the streets" while another early author, J. Morse wrote in the 1796 *American Universal Geography*, "Some of them are called Souffees, who are a kind of quietists."³⁶

Some British officers who saw Sufism in a more philosophical light commented on its transcendence of regular religious law and ritual, its being like Greek philosophy, or in a positive sense, on its parallels to Christianity. Sir William Jones (1794) and Sir John Malcolm (1833) saw the Sufis as freethinkers who had little to do with the stern faith of the Arabian Prophet.³⁷ Elphinstone, writing from Kabul, also saw them primarily as free-thinking philosophers.³⁸

³⁴ Le Croix, *Dictionnaire Historique des Cultes religieux*. Paris 1770. This work lists a number of categories to apply to Muslim religious figures including, Dervis, p. 642, Santons, p. 67, Kalendries, p. 588, Faquirs, pp. 104–108. He notes that, "Faquirs are from India. They wear colored robes and travel in groups, each has a leader who is indistinguishable from the others. They wear iron chains attached to their legs which they rattle to summon people so that they can demonstrate their ecstatic transports of devotion. These hypocrites are very respected by the people. When they pass by people bring food for them and their disciples. These miserable vagabonds receive more honour from them than our clerics do from us. When someone approaches them he removes his shoes and humbly bows to kiss their feet. Gullible women come to them for assistance with having children, for love charms, etc."

³⁵ J. Ovington, on the "Faquirs near Surat", writes, "these philosophical Saints have since the first forming of their Order, assum'd a liberty of taking that by violence, which they find is denied by their civil requests, and sometimes force a Charity from the People, when Intreaties cannot prevail, especially in the Country Villages. For their numbers render them imperious, and upon pretension of extraordinary Sanctity, they commit a thousand Villanies unbecoming their profession. They imitate the Romish orders in Vows of piety and Celibacy, and in their Pretensions to a strange Intimacy, and prevailing Interest with Heaven." *Travels in Surat*, p. 212.

³⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. XVII, Oxford: Clarendon, 1989, p. 134.

³⁷ Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide*, p. 8.

³⁸ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caboul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India*, Graz, 1969 (first 1815), pp. 272–3.

James William Graham in a lecture originally delivered in 1811 to the Bombay Literary Society,³⁹ christianises Sufism with some apologies to his audience:

So many passages from the Holy Scriptures seem to speak in the language of Sufiism, that I hope I shall not be censured in having quoted and still quoting them, as Sufism is evidently the system of spiritualism, or nearly the doctrine of grace; I venture to say, though no mention is made of our Saviour by name, yet from Persian treatise I have, the Trinity appears pretty clearly informed and understood."⁴⁰

Remarkable is Graham's assertion that the natives consider the British to be a kind of Sufi!

It may not be unworthy of remark, especially in this place, that we are, generally speaking, at least in this country, looked upon a species or one kind of Sufi, from our non-observance here of any rites or forms, conceiving a worship of the Deity in mind, and adherence to morality sufficient. In fine, the present free-thinker or modern philosopher of Europe would be esteemed a sort of Sufi in the world, and not the one retired therefrom.⁴¹

Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, the British lady who spent much time in Lucknow with her Shia Muslim husband and his relatives, saw the Sufis sympathetically and seemed to believe that there were indeed genuine religious experience and spiritual powers possessed by some of their representatives.⁴² In their own words (by which the Natives distinguish them), "Every real Soofie is a Durweish but all Durweishes are not Soofies." It is clear where her sympathies lie in the confrontation between "rigid Mussulmauns" and the "mysterious knowledge of Soofies".⁴³

A further interesting case of reciprocal perceptions, faqirs, and the native informant is that of the *Qanoon-e Islam*, for which Jafar Sharif of Hyderabad collected information on Muslim customs for Herklots,

³⁹ James William Graham, "A Treatise on Mysticism". *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay* I, 1819, p. 104. "I have condensed the subject before us into the annexed table, to avoid prolixity; as in the original it is in the form of question and answer to a Derveish, or religious mendicant among the Mahomedans, generally called in India, "Fuqeer"."

⁴⁰ James William Graham, "A Treatise on Mysticism". *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay* I, 1819, p. 128.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India* II. London: Parbury Allen, and Co., 1832. Reprint, Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1973, p. 246.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 274, p. 268ff.

a doctor, who then saw the work as being particularly useful for British administrators who would use the book such as gentlemen in the service of the Honourable East-India Company generally, and in particular, all military officers serving in India.⁴⁴

A particular case cited for its utility is that of the issue of Muslim "natives" applying for leave. When the officer inquires of the reason for a holiday, "the only reply he receives is a strange name, which, though to a native may be very expressive and quite explicit, is to him, as a foreigner, altogether unintelligible". According to Herklots, the informers themselves often do not "even know the origin and nature of the feasts they are about to celebrate".⁴⁵

Herklots further observes that "the natives are very reluctant to impart information about their religious rites, ceremonies, &c. This arises perhaps from an unwillingness to expose themselves to the ridicule of persons of totally different national customs and religious faith; or from a wish simply to keep Europeans in the dark, under a vague apprehension that frankness would ultimately lead to their own detriment". At the same time, somewhat contradictorily Herklots observes that, "due to the comparative simplicity and rationality of the Mohummudan system of religion, its followers are far less accessible to the influence of conversion."⁴⁶

With reference to our discussion of the category of "faqir", we excerpt part of Sharif's data on "fuqeers" and "murceeds". His chapter XXVIII deals with the topic of making a "Mooreed" or disciple, and then in its second part he treats, "the manner of making a fuqeer (devotee)". His distinction between "fuqeers" and other types of Sufis is rather blurred, however. While he first describes special clothing, rituals, and so on, connected with a special category of "fuqeers", he then describes them as descending from four pirs and fourteen families.

"All have origination from char peer (or four spiritual guides) and chawda khan-wady (or fourteen households)." This is of course the traditional system, for example in Hujwiri's *Kashf al-Mahjûb*, of describing the organisation of Sufi orders. Sharif seems to confuse the fourteen Sufi lineages and the four peers with the Chishti *shajara*, but

⁴⁴ *Qanoon-e Islam or The Customs of the Mussulmans of India*, Jafar Sharif, trans. G.A. Herklots, New Delhi: Oriental Reprints, 1972.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the main point here is that in his descriptions the terms "Sufi", "mooreed", and "fuqeer" seem to become conflated. He then lists quite a number of *tarîqas* and distinctive features about them, for example, "Qadireea, Chishteea, Madareea, Maluung, Rufaee and others".⁴⁷

As an example, in his paragraph on the "Nuqsh-bandeea", he mentions that they carry a lighted lamp, sing verses, and that "they are generally eminent practitioners in the science of dawut, recazut, wîrd wuzaet, and zikkir"; and it is a highly respectable tribe, perhaps the word in the original was "qaum".

Then the categories strangely shift and we are further told that, "Fuqeers are of two classes: one termed *bay-shurra* (without law); the other class *ba-shurra* (with law)". Herklots adds in a note that "They do not act up to the shurra or the precepts of Mohummud, but are a kind of latitudinarians."⁴⁸

We are given an extensive list of the intoxicating substances they ingest: "The generality of them (fuqeers) are bay-shurra, and great debauchees. They indulge in the use of ganja, bhung, afeon (or opium), shurab (or wine), boza, mudud, churs, sayndhee, taree, and nariellee, &c."⁴⁹

Among these "fuqeers" are enumerated further classes such as "salik", "majzooob", and "qulundar", again briefly characterised by Sharif. If we may summarise the presentation of indigenous Muslim categories here, apparently from an informant, we can trace a mixing of category systems. It is possible that this arises from Sharif's trying to reconcile the textual heritage with its schema of fourteen families with further categories of adherence to the *sharî'a*, the genealogy of *tarîqas* linked with eponymous founders, and the observation of behaviour differentiating particular groups such as "Mullungs or Qalandars". Groups such as *qalandars* and *malangs* must have constituted a challenge not only to the mainstream but to the more "respectable" *tarîqas* adhering to *sharî'a* norms as well. Such marginal groups were a challenge to Muslim symbolic order, while they rejected the legal base, they were acknowledged as having real spiritual powers.

One may speculate as to whether the comments on the practices

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 190-196.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 195-196.

⁴⁹ Ibid. These latter are liquors brewed from dates, coconuts, and other plant substances.

of certain groups as defining their identity might have been generated in response to the interests of the British, represented by Herklots, and that this seeming confusion of taxonomic systems is in fact evidence of an overlay of different cultural systems of perception.

Others

The third term, the "others" in my title evokes of course the sense of difference which underlay representation on both sides, but also turns out to be encountered fairly frequently in the British discussions of Muslim categories, marked by the form of "&c.". I use it to designate space for "others" as being those conglomerations of persons or phenomena which will not fit into a neat category, because they are too difficult, too diffuse, too diverse or even too numerous and complex to be easily named.

"Others" can be the imagined or speculative products of a generative system of classification, or can refer to those on the margins, who are anomalous or beyond the schema of translatability, for whatever reasons.

For example, Elphinstone in *Caboul* observes that "besides the clergy there are many persons who are revered for their own sanctity, or that of their ancestors. Among the latter, the most famous are the Syuds, or descendants of Mahommed; and the former are called by the different names of Derweshes (Dervises), Fakeers, &c., either arbitrarily, or from some little difference in their observances".⁵⁰ Herklots notes that, "the natives are very reluctant to impart information about their religious rites, ceremonies, &c."⁵¹ In Rowlinson's annotations to Ovington's, in the note on the term, "fakir" one finds, "This term only properly applies to a Mahomedan religious mendicant, but it was loosely used of Hindu ascetics, properly speaking Yogis, Sanyasis, Sadhus, &c."⁵² Gilchrist, in attempting to distinguish between Hindu and Muslim appearances notes, "In other apparent or obvious circumstances of counting rosaries, the form of the hair, turbans, &c. it is no easy manner to distinguish them (Moosulmans) from the Hindoos: their names however being all significant".⁵³

⁵⁰ Elphinstone, *Caboul*, p. 288.

⁵¹ Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam*, p. viii.

⁵² Ovington, *Travels in Surat*, note 1, p. 210.

⁵³ Gilchrist, p. vii.

Thus "others" figures as the marker for the monstrous, destabilising proliferation of things in the native world, commented on by post-colonial critics of the encounter such as Suleri, Cohn, and Thomas Richards.

Within Muslim discourse there were also spaces for various sorts of otherness, the "ghair" of genealogical constructions⁵⁴ for non-related non-intimates; ones who remain beyond the fold of Islam, *farangîs* and *kuffâr*; and the non-rational, the *be-shar'*, *qalandars*, and *majdhûbs*. The thrust of the reformers was to purify at least the internal space of Indian Islam from cultural otherness as represented by local accretions, but this representation likely assimilated European constructions of popular religion.

Muslim Categories

In a discussion of reciprocal perceptions, one necessarily would wish to hear more from the side of the Muslim Indian categories. For example how were the British represented. Were there systems of Muslim knowledge into which they could be integrated, for example, the *sharî'a* categories for non-Muslims. Are they "named" as well as being the "namers", classified, as well as doing the classifying.

If we look into the systems of categories drawn on by Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz (1746–1824), in his encounter with the British, we may on the one hand see a certain human evaluation of figures such as Frazer, preserved, interestingly in his *Malfûzât*. He seems to take a particular interest in the individual characters, their strengths and weaknesses. The question is, to what extent might this have been a personal trait of 'Abd al-'Aziz, and to what extent could we attribute this to a background in Sufi character analysis. Mushir al-Haqq writes:

The British officers at Delhi were on good terms with Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz. Very often they visited him and, if necessary, helped him. In the *Malfuzat*, Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz mentioned three British officers, (Col. James) Skinner, (William) Fraser, and (Alexander) Seton. The way their names have been mentioned shows they must have been quite close to him. He describes Skinner as "a friend but rude", Seton as "a learned friend but rude and a flatterer", and Fraser as "well-mannered

⁵⁴ Richard Kurin, in Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

and a good friend, who has studied something under me.”⁵⁵ ‘Abd al-‘Aziz answered some of the questions of Fraser in the form of fatwas which were collected in *Fatawa Aziziyya* and must have been asked when Fraser was in Delhi in about 1805.⁵⁶

Another example of Muslim categories consists of the *fatwās* of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz which invoke the categories of *Dār al-Harb* and the legal implications of foreign and non-Muslim rule. The answers in these *fatwās* follow the form of stipulating categories which make the action fall under a certain ruling of the *sharī‘a*, for example the “shart” or condition, by which a territory may shift from being *Dār al-Islām* to *Dār al-Harb*.

In the case of questions of co-operating with and working for the British various types of service are ruled on as being allowable or forbidden according to the *sharī‘a* rulings (*ahkām*), or even in the case of specific types of service are declared *mubāh*, *mustahabb* (if the service involved performing useful actions for the community such as building bridges), *harām* (if it involved humbling oneself), or *kabīrah* (a great sin) or *kufr* (if it involved acting against Muslims).⁵⁷

In the well known case of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s response to Shah Ghulam ‘Ali concerning whether his nephew Maulawi ‘Abd al-Hayy should serve the British, *sharī‘a* and *tarīqa* reasons are invoked for the permissibility of such service.⁵⁸

Finally when asked about forms of contact or imitation such as dress, eating with foreigners, or learning the English language, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz invokes the position of intention in judging the action, again following a Hadith that “actions are judged according to intentions”.⁵⁹

The “science” or “symbolic reality” of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, if we can assume a continuity with the teachings of his father, Shah Wali Allah, whose metaphysical and historical schema may be traced in numerous works including *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, *Altāf al-Quds*, and *Hama’āt*, was based on an Islamicized version of Hellenistic thought, for example *tibb*, or indigenous medical theory based on humours, the belief in a world of ideal forms, *‘alam al-mithāl*, and the idea that

⁵⁵ Mushir al-Haqq, *Indian Muslims Attitude to the British in the early Nineteenth century: A Case Study of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz*. Unpubl. MA Thesis, McGill University, 1964, p. 28.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁸ Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azîz, *Fatāwā-ye ‘Azîzî*, Deoland, n.d., pp. 90–91 (Persian Text).

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 178–79.

there is a historical unfoldment of potentialities in which humans can participate, their main goal however being a spiritual awakening or recognition and fulfilment of inherent potentialities. Thus, on the one hand, you have a system of categories as signs for mapping the world, an idea of representation which portrayed reality as signs for some higher existence behind it, and the belief that these signs could be manipulated and penetrated in order to know their ontological status, their true meaning with God. Through such knowledge and specific spiritual practices the laws of the material world can be translated and an individual can transform/recover the true self. At the same time, the logical and legal categories of Muslim thought, structure the *fatâwâ* or legal opinions of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. The *fatwâ* is a rhetorical form which Shah Wali Allah did not use. It seems that in general, during this period the *fatwâ* comes more and more to define a new kind of legal, judgmental space located in theory without a particular case being required.⁶⁰

A rather odd mixture of categorising occurs in the anecdote which I cited at the outset of this chapter. It is drawn from the *Kamâlât-e ‘Azîziyya*, which is essentially a collection of minor miracle stories of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s dealings with the *jinn*, with some Hindu faqirs, and in the case cited, an account of his describing the road to Kabul in great detail to William Frazer before the latter embarked on a journey there. According to the anecdote, Frazer noted all of the description down in English translation and subsequently found the landmarks and sites all verified once he personally travelled there.⁶¹ In terms of reciprocal categories, one would like to untangle the implications of the story from both sides. Was Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz informing about a hidden topography, based on information gleaned from his supernatural powers—this seems to be the tenor of the other accounts in the same collection; or was he simply exceptionally familiar with the road to Kabul? Frazer rather benignly opens up the blocked well, but doesn’t immediately want to tell Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz immediately about its condition? Is there some kind of cognitive

⁶⁰ Mushir al-Haqq discusses the lack of practical consequences to Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s *fatwâ*, since he was not an official *mufti*, but this is not the point of such *fatwâ* discourses and partly accounts for their proliferation. On *fatwâs* generally, see Muhammad Khalid Masud & Brinkley Messick & David S. Powers (eds.), *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and their Fatwas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

⁶¹ *Malfûzât-e Shâh ‘Abd al-‘Azîz*. Karachi: Urdu Pakistan Educational Publishers, 1960, #50, p. 249.

power struggle going on between them. Will Frazer acknowledge the Shah's spiritual mastery as well as his learning? This, in fact, seems to be the tenor of at least some Sufi narrations of early encounters with the British which represent, if not religious conversion, at least some level of belief in the Muslim saints' spiritual powers. Notice that here our data is in fact a narration from which we must extrapolate what the basis of the reciprocal perceptions may have been. It does not offer us a list of terms or a table of categories which immediately sort out the underlying order and define an epistemological space.

Shah Isma'il Shahid presents in his writings a good example of mixtures of Muslim category systems. The *Sirât al-Mustaqîm*, said to have been composed by Isma'il Shahid for Sayyid Ahmad Bareilwi, combines both Sufi and reformist systems while his works *Abqât* and *Taqwiyat al-Imân* can be said to represent examples of metaphysical Sufism in the case of the former, and reformist ideology and the critique of existing beliefs and practices, in the case of the latter.

The *Sirât* contains on the one hand an anti-*shirk* and *bid'a* polemic which enumerates the forms of *shirk*, provides Quranic and Hadith texts to refute them, and criticises specific customs. With reference to the transgression of categories we have the telling quote, "In India Islam and kufr have become mixed like *kichri*".⁶² After all, *kichri* is a staple item of Indian cuisine, although not particularly prestigious or elegant. This is evocative of structuralist analyses of category systems which may be found in Claude Levi-Strauss and then continued in Jonathan Z. Smith. Both remark on the distinction between natural and cultural systems, say, of myths or classifications, in which the infinite possibilities of the natural are limited by cultural conventions. The relationship between the natural givens and their cultural elaborations then comes to acquire a sort of canonical or authoritative status, analogous to the relationship of "raw" to "cooked" or "edible food" to "cuisine".

There is also a practical critique by Shah Isma'il of pilgrimages to saints tombs, beliefs in intercession, offerings of lamps, *fâtîhas*, etc. At the same time there is a doctrinal critique of associating other things with God.⁶³

⁶² *Kichri* is a popular South Asian dish made of mixed lentils and rice.

⁶³ This is similar to the critique of Shah Wali Allah in *The Conclusive Argument from God: Hujjat Allâh al-Bâligha*. Trans. M.K. Hermansen. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, pp. 184–189, pp. 361–367.

Summarising the relationship of all this to our argument about categories, it is clear that *tarîqa* and *sharî'a* categories are simultaneously operational within terms of the Indian Muwahhidun movement, whereas in subsequent movements which incorporate the Wahhabi category into British and Indian Muslim discourse, the *tarîqa* element increasingly drops out. The British preserve echoes of the conspiratorial "fakir" as Sufi circulating on the margins, carrying obscure coded messages and talismanic codes. The reformists increasingly identify Sufism with "popular" religion and "superstition".

In Muslim discourse, elements of *tarîqa* category systems might be initiation, affiliation, genealogy, and proofs through miracles and dreams. *Sharî'a* categories would include textual pronouncements (*nass*), logic, conditions, rulings, etc. It is interesting that the scholars of the Wali Allahi family up to the time of Shah Isma'il Shahid had tended to operate within both systems but had kept them more or less separate in their writings, generally reserving Persian language writings for *tarîqa*-related subjects.

In *Sirât al-Mustaqîm*, an Urdu work, I would propose that there is a contention of the *sharî'a* categories with *tarîqa* ones within the same text. Here the critique of *shirk* and *bid'a*, is not yet presented in the language of rulings or *fatâwâ*, although it is presented in the traditional language of textual proofs. It signals a trend towards the sort of mode of religious polemic which becomes increasingly favoured by Indian Muslims during the colonial period whereby religious movements signalled their identity and legitimacy through defining acceptable doctrine and practice and then taking certain issues as boundaries to differentiate themselves from others, initially from Shia and Hindus, but later from other Sunni groups such as Deobandis and Barelwis.

While *fatwâ* compilations such as *Fatâwâ-ye 'Alamgîrî* were being translated by the British into the category of native law, these other ideological writings were untranslatable for any practical British application. They were strange to the British, and therefore were on some occasions presented as curiosities,⁶⁴ while on others they were secretly translated and circulated among officials as evidence for the Wahhabi threat.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ As in the *Royal Asiatic Society* article entitled "Peculiar Tenets" by Shahamat Ali.

⁶⁵ India Office Sec. P/142/2, Appendices "F", "G".

Conclusion

The development of British categories and perceptions was naturally related to British public opinion, and their constructions of religion and political interests.

The systems and attitudes which shaped representation of the other were subject to shifts on both sides. For example, British attitudes to both scientific knowledge and religion, changed during this period. British conceptions of the location of Islam also moved from primarily an association based on confrontation with and knowledge of the Turks, to that of the Pan-Islamic threat implied by Wahhabism.

Categories of race, ethnicity, and language could make the "other" correspond to the familiar in England. The grammarian Gilchrist, for example, sets out a table according to which we have the analogies:

Saxon: Hinduwee (the language of the Hindus before the Muslim invasion); Latin: Arabic; French: Persian; and English: Hindoostanee, "(a comparatively recent superstructure, composed on Arabic and Persian, in which the two last may be considered in the same relation that Latin and French bear to English)."⁶⁶

British categories may have interacted with indigenous ones to reify elements such as specific Sufi *tarîqas*. Since participants in, for example, the Naqshbandiyya were organised around institutions of learning, and had a literate leadership and dealings with the colonisers; they tended to attract more political and scholarly interest, consequently they have been given a history. Other groups such as *madâris*, *qalandars*, *faqîrs*, and the *be-shar'* orders were marginal.⁶⁷ In Sufi discourse itself the erosion of traditional distinctions between the orders, their particular spiritual practices, and belief in their capacity to effect individual transformation is already evident in writings of Shah Wali Allah⁶⁸ and continues among his successors within the Muwahhidin movement where eclecticism prevailed and charismatic license was given to modify *tarîqa* tradition.⁶⁹ The support and patron-

⁶⁶ Gilchrist, iv. See Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

⁶⁷ Juan Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh*. Berkeley: University of California, 1988.

⁶⁸ For example, see M.K. Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams". *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology* 12, 1, 1992, pp. 52-77.

⁶⁹ As is clear in Sayyid Ahmad's work *Sirât al-Mustaqîm* where he modifies practices of the Chishtî *tarîqa*, for example.

age of shrine culture and the co-opting of hereditary lineages through feudal grants made by the British also may have encouraged a blurring of the indigenous categories for Sufi lineages.

The Indian Muslim categories arose out of religiously based system which created a closed canon or topography of groups within the universe of Islamic norms—insider/outsider, lineage/unknown, correct/incorrect. The connotations associated with British use of categories such as “faqir” and “Wahhabi” came to have this kind of meaning for the Indian Muslims, in other words, a kind of judgement occurred according to reciprocal systems of classification, so that lineage became less important while ideologisation increased. This seems to have been an incipient trajectory of 18th century Muslim thought in any case, but it was exacerbated by British classifications and surveillance and by new technologies such as printing and by novel forms of social encounter such as debates and mutual condemnations, which occurred with increasing frequency during the colonial period.

More difficult to assess is whether reciprocity influenced the embedding of categories in emergent formations of language, law, taxonomy, and science. The first three are based on cultural choices, while science and a scientific theory of categories claim to be natural rather than cultural. Central to Jonathan Z. Smith’s discussion of the role of canons in cultural taxonomies is the role of the expert, the interpreter needed to apply the system in novel or ambiguous situations.⁷⁰ On the European side during this period of the cultural encounter, early botanical and collecting expeditions democratised the process of knowledge gathering by allowing the categories to become sufficient guidelines, without the need for an individual’s particular expertise or knowledge.⁷¹

For the South Asian Muslims the status of expertise was already being renegotiated before the colonial encounter, with the breakdown of the integrative *hikmat* system combining law, theology and mysticism.⁷² The marginalisation of Sufism as authoritative knowledge which may be represented by the connotations of “faqir” is evidenced by the proliferation in the 18th century of multiple *tariqa*

⁷⁰ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion; from Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

⁷¹ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 27–30.

⁷² On the breakdown of the synthesis of these disciplines see Shah Wali Allah, *The Conclusive Argument*.

affiliations and the dissemination of *ma'mûlât* works (manuals of Sufi spiritual exercises) at the popular level, which signals the opening up to the public of what had been esoteric domains of knowledge and practice.⁷³ This again, did not arise solely due to the colonial encounter but was likely accelerated by the reception by Muslims of British perceptions of native religious categories.

Is it too adventurous to suggest that today's Muslim ideologues benefit from the dislocation of insider expertise which had previously permitted only the traditionally trained hermeneut to divine within the broader hegemony of traditional categories? According to this scenario an ideologised Islamic modernist or Fundamentalist taxonomy, even if claiming traditional textual grounding, appeals to rationality and universality is a way reminiscent of the global narratives of nineteenth century science, thus enabling the democratisation of the interpretative process while rigidifying and contesting the truth of its results.

In addition to the competing realities along with competing rationalities which are signalled by the constructions of categories and taxonomic systems, I should at least briefly signal the area of canon, and its implications for further contact, contestation, and conflict of desire and derision located within the attempts to enforce state and religious hegemony.

It should be obvious how the term "Wahhabi" connotes challenges to British hegemony, both locally in India and in an imperial sense, while the terms "fakir" and "Wahhabi" evoke the responses of Muslims both in terms of challenges to their insider categories of respectability and obedience to the *shari'ā* and to the incursions of European systems of knowledge, science, and rationality. These taxonomies and canons overlap in symbolic, epistemological, and ideological formations which in turn are continually becoming destabilised by the "others" and then rigidified through attempts to name and control them.

⁷³ Arthur R. Buehler, "Charisma and Exemplar: Naqshbandi Spiritual Authority in the Panjab, 1857–1947". Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1993, pp. 378–9.

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO ARCHAEOLOGY: THE 'MONUMENTALISING' OF DELHI'S HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

NARAYANI GUPTA

This chapter revisits the time and manner in which the buildings of Delhi came to be perceived as closely linked to its history. This happened in the early nineteenth century when some of the inhabitants of Delhi, Indian and European, sought to commemorate and appropriate Delhi's historic architecture. The process was stymied by the Counter-Revolt of 1857–58, when many specimens of this architecture were destroyed or vandalised by the Indo-British army. Salvage operations began in 1862, not by a people's movement but by a government department which distanced older buildings from the people by labelling them as 'archaeology'.

I

Historic architecture can be read in many ways—as emblems of sanctity, as narrators of history, as milestones in art, as picturesque ruins, as interruptions in the process of laying out a new town. Parts of its can be appropriated by individuals,¹ by local residents,² by a larger community,³ or by an 'alien' community.⁴ They are saved from becoming ruins and are elevated to the status of 'monuments' when they are clearly distanced in time and location from present settlements.⁵

The history of the Delhi area had not been perceived as homogeneous or unbroken. It was seen by Ferishta, in his classic *Tarikh* (written in the 16th century) as well as by chroniclers of individual

¹ E.g., the Jami' Masjid at Delhi by the Imam.

² E.g., the shrine of Makhdum Sahib at Delhi by the Mayfair Gardens residents.

³ E.g., the Nizamuddin shrine by devotees from across the country and the world.

⁴ E.g., Buddhist shrines in India by Sinhalese and Japanese Buddhists.

⁵ Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*. London, 1989, Chapter 2 'The Mastery of the Past: The British and India's Historic Architecture'.

reigns before and after him, as that of a *series* of dynasties each seizing power from an earlier one. Each happily recycled or destroyed structures of conquered rulers, sometimes building their citadels at new sites nearby. This history was punctuated with hit-and-run spoiliations, those of Timur (1398) and of Nadir Shah (1739) being the best known. The moral came across strongly—of ephemeral regimes and vanished glory.

By contrast, in *architecture*, Delhi has a unique tradition which is continuous from the twelfth century till today. No town anywhere in the subcontinent has anything to match. This very continuity—hence the *absence* of the distancing in time and place—has been detrimental to the texture of the structures. Many of them continued to be in use, and many are periodically repaired or renovated in a manner which would be unacceptable to modern professional conservation experts.

The 'conservable' buildings of Delhi today are what survive from those of which Carr Stephen, an administrator-turned-antiquarian, wrote in 1876: "There is hardly another forty-five sq. miles of ground on earth of more interest to the students of history than that which has supplied the materials of this work".⁶

Also, as against the broken political *history*, the Delhi area has had the permanence of a Sufi *geography* from the thirteenth century. It has three major shrines—of Bakhtiyar Kaki, Nizamuddin Auliya and Roshan Chiragh Delhi—as well as numerous smaller ones. These, in particular the first two, had over the centuries acquired the added lustre of expensive architecture. A calendar of regular feast-days brought people from all over the country to these shrines. They became the *raison d'être* for royal tombs to be built near them, and for the travel-itineraries of rulers to include them in their *ziyarat*.⁷ Thus even when Agra was the capital, there were individuals who preferred to build grand funerary structures at Delhi. These then became objects of 'tourist' interest.

The city was not fixed in place, which meant that the inhabitants had no *long-term* sense of loyalty to or identification with any one of the sites. In the late eighteenth century there was a change. By then,

⁶ Carr Stephen, *Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*. London, 1876, p. vii.

⁷ Ebba Koch, "The Delhi of the Mughals Prior to Shahjahanabad as reflected in the Pattern of Imperial Visits". In: A.J. Qaiser and S.P. Verma (eds.), *Art and Culture*. Jaipur 1993.

triumph and travail had combined to give Delhi a 'Mughal' identity—the triumph of Shahjahan's passion for architecture, the travail of his successors who did not have the resources to indulge in building a new capital. The poets of the 18th century who extolled the beauty of Shahjahanabad and mourned the attacks to which it had been subjected made a distinction between their *shahr* (city) and the *khandarât* (ruins) of former Delhi.⁸ Architecture was not seen in isolation. Buildings connoted a sum of things—the people they commemorated or who had built them, the inner spaces, calligraphy and ornamentation, links with water bodies and vegetation. In describing a town, it was not so much its buildings that were commented on, as the atmosphere, with *raunaq* (animation) and *virânî* (desolation) as opposite poles. Amir Khusro had waxed lyrical about the animated city, Mir and Zauq lamented the pillaged one. In speech and in writing, metaphor was free-wheeling—natural landscape, works of handicraft, feats of engineering and architecture, facial features, were all linked by metaphor. Muhammad Saleh Kanbu compared the water of the canals of the gardens at Delhi to the silver border on a page. "Its water, like mercury, was like a *jadval* (border) of pure silver running over a page of stone".⁹ The lament for the city (the poetry of the genre of *Shahr-e ashûb*) can be read at two levels—that of the city, and of the beloved—an anthropomorphic vision missing in European languages, except in the writings of Calvino.

As for Europeans, comparisons with places nearer home came naturally. Delhi was often compared to Rome ("the plains round Delhi, studded with ruins more thickly than even the Campagna of Rome").¹⁰ The imperial past of Rome had been explored, documented and viewed during the 16th century. Rome was seen as something to be reclaimed. Its historic architecture had been boosted by being given a canonical place in the history of *European* architecture, complimented by being repeatedly copied, and by forming the major attraction in the Grand Tour that became fashionable for the rich from the 18th century.

⁸ Ralph Russell and Khurshid Alam, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan*. London, 1969, *passim*.

⁹ Y. Porter, *Paintings and Books*. Delhi, 1994, p. 61.

¹⁰ Minute by Governor-General-in-Council, 22 January 1862, Preface to Archaeological Survey of India, *First Report*. Delhi, 1972 (reprint). G.R. Hearn in: *The Seven Cities of Delhi*. London 1906, writes "Delhi has well been described as the Indian Rome . . . The seven hills of Rome are represented by the Seven Cities of Delhi".

Mirza Abu Talib Londoni/Isfahani was baffled in 1799 by the Europeans' fascination with ruins and broken statuary.

Although Europe . . . statues of stone and marble are held in high estimation, approaching to idolatry . . . It is really astonishing that people possessing so much knowledge and good sense . . . should be tempted by Satan to throw away their money upon useless blocks.¹¹

By contrast, Delhi's architecture was distanced not by time but by culture. Interest in it was part of the new curiosity about 'oriental' and other 'exotic' historic architecture. Less than a century after the rediscovery of Pompeii (1748) Egypt was becoming known through the work of archaeologists after 1815 ('the monumentalist reinvention of Egypt' in the words of M.L. Pratt), Mesopotamia from 1845, soon after the important 'discovery' of South American cultures by Humboldt (1814–25). These explorations were taking place at the same time. For Egypt, Sumer and the Aztecs, "the European imagination produces archaeological subjects by splitting contemporary non-European people off from their precolonial, and even their colonial, pasts. To revive indigenous history and culture as archaeology is to *revive them as dead*".¹² By contrast "India is a cosmos to itself . . . Every problem can be studied here more easily than anywhere else . . . every art has its living representative, and often of the most pleasing form".¹³

The drawings and paintings of Indian monuments that started to enter the European market, after the Daniells' return in 1793 with bulging portfolios were the equivalent of today's picture postcards and posters. These satisfied the needs of those seeking 'the picturesque', and Joshua Reynolds' praise of the "Barbarick splendour of those Asiatick buildings" seemed to presage a phase of the 'Indi-anesque' in British architecture.¹⁴ In any event, "since Agra and Delhi became practically British cities, their buildings have been described, drawn and photographed till they have become almost as well known as any found in Europe".¹⁵

Travelogues preceded treatises on architecture, in India as earlier

¹¹ Mirza Abu Talib, *Travels of Mirza Abu Talib Khan in the Years 1799–1803*. Delhi, 1972 (reprint), p. 53.

¹² M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. London, 1992, p. 134.

¹³ J. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. London, 1876, Vol. I, p. 4.

¹⁴ Raymond Head, *The Indian Style*. London, 1986, Chapter 2, 'A Pleasing and Tasty Style'.

¹⁵ J. Fergusson, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 283.

in Italy. As more and more of India came under British rule, a leisurely journey 'up-country' became a variation on the Grand Tour. In Delhi, morning picnics at the Qutb Minar were followed by visits to Safdarjung and Humayun's mausolea. The Mughal Palace and the home of Begum Samru (a spirited woman of property whose social interaction with Europeans was as an equal) provided the human elements. A formal visit to the Badshah and the Queen and a meal at the Begum's house on Chandni Chowk were highlights of the tour. Emma Roberts, in the 1830s, prefaced her account of Delhi with a complacent sermon. "There is no place in British India which the intellectual traveller approaches with feelings more strongly excited than the ancient seat of the Mogul empire. The proud towers of Delhi, with its venerable reliques of Hindoo architecture, its splendid monuments of Moslem power, and its striking indications of Christian supremacy, cannot fail to impress the mind with sensations of mingled awe, wonder and delight".¹⁶ Shortly after, Emily Eden gazed at the Qutb Minar and exclaimed "Well, of all the things I ever saw, I think this is the finest . . . [It] looks as if it were finished yesterday, and it stands in a wilderness of ruins, carved gateways, and marble tombs, one more beautiful than the other".¹⁷ Venuti's and Varsi's measured drawings of Italian buildings, prepared for those embarking on the Grand Tour, had trained even laymen to scrutinise historic architecture in technical terms as well as aesthetic.¹⁸

Delhi's architecture came under the scrutiny of scholars¹⁹ and the engineers²⁰ at the same time, from the 1810s to the 1840s. The Asiatic Society in India encouraged research in historic architecture as much as in other arts.²¹ In the Presidency towns, where the Asiatic Society held its meetings (Indians were admitted as members after

¹⁶ Indira Ghose (ed.), *Memsahibs Abroad*. Delhi, 1998, pp. 22–3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁸ Emily Eden and her sister Fanny both wrote about their visit to the Qutb, Fanny on 21st February and Emily on the 23rd. Fanny noted its height as 290', and Emily as 240', and while Emily said it was 'between six and seven hundred years old' Fanny wrote that 'nobody knows when it was built! Cf. Fanny Eden, *Tigers, Durbars and Kings*. London, 1988, p. 133.

¹⁹ Pushpa Sundar, *Patrons and Philistines*. Delhi, 1995, Chapter 4, 'Priests in the Temple of Duty'.

²⁰ John Kcay, *India Discovered*. London, 1981.

²¹ O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past 1784–1838*. Delhi, 1988.

1829), the architecture of Delhi was as distant to Indian scholars as to the British.

The Jantar Mantar, the Asoka columns, the inscriptions on the Qutb were subjects of study. Above all, Delhi had a special attraction because as Metcalf remarks, 'Islamic' architecture was familiar to Europeans while 'Hindu' styles seemed more exotic; there was also something reassuring in being able to admit its grandeur while knowing that it no longer connoted political power.²²

In the older buildings at Delhi, some necessary repairs were done by the military and civil engineers. The Qutb called for special attention, since it had been damaged by an earthquake the day before the decisive Battle of Patparganj in 1803. This was done most enthusiastically by the artist-engineer Major R. Smith, in 1820. Twenty years later his work was to be criticised by a fellow-engineer, General Cunningham. He had visited Delhi while serving as A.D.C. to Lord Auckland (1836–40). Auckland had set aside funds for repairing the Qutb Minar. Significantly, Cunningham faulted Smith for not adhering to the 'original' design, while Smith protested that was just what he *had* done. Unfortunately, he had not been able to resist the temptation of adding his signature by building a cupola on the Qutb Minar.²³ For a half century from the 1830s Cunningham the engineer, and Fergusson, an indigo planter manque, were to combine the enthusiasm of artists and writers, the research of scholars and the painstaking work of engineers, in the great salvage operation for India's historic architecture.

II

In the 1840s, when this movement was getting under way, there were four scholarly 'happenings' which were crucial in the history of Delhi's architectural history—Thomas Metcalfe compiled his album entitled "Reminiscences of Imperial Dehlie" (1844),²⁴ Sayyid Ahmad

²² Thomas R. Metcalf, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–8.

²³ This was removed in 1848 after Governor-General Hardinge expressed disapproval, cf. Narayani Gupta, "The Cities of Delhi". In: Sten Nilsson (ed.), *Aspects of Conservation in Urban India*. Lund, 1994.

²⁴ Thomas Metcalfe, 'Reminiscences of Imperial Dehlie' incorporated into M.M. Kaye (ed.), *The Golden Calm*. Exeter 1980. For an excellent discussion of the different approaches to architecture by Indian and British artists in the 19th century see

wrote and published his *Athâr al-Sanâdîd* ('Vestiges of the Past', 1847),²⁵ the Archaeological Society of Delhi was formed (1847)²⁶ and a detailed map of Shahjahanabad was painted (date not known, but before 1850).²⁷ The first remained in private hands, the second was not translated into English, the third did not survive the 1857 Revolt and the last found its way to the India Office Library. The magnificent *Kotah Painting*, a large picture on cloth with a bird's-eye view of Shahjahanabad, centered on Chandni Chowk, was also painted in 1842, for Maharao Ram Singh II of Kotah.²⁸

Earlier, a 'guide book' to Delhi in the form of a street directory had been compiled—Sangin Beg's *Sair al-Manâzil* ('A tour of the buildings of Delhi'). Sangin Beg, a Moghul, had worked under Charles Metcalfe. He wrote his manuscript in 1819. The traveller was directed around Delhi; *katras* (enclosed precincts), *kûchâs* (deadend lanes), *havelîs* (mansions) *masjids* and 'miscellaneous' buildings were categorised separately. Written in Persian, it remained a manuscript, never printed (it was translated into Urdu in 1980).²⁹

Thomas Metcalfe, member of a family with strong Delhi ties, had a pattern of behaviour not very different from that of an Indian ruler. He built a mansion where he indulged his passion for acquisition and collection. The lands of the villagers of Chandrawal was acquired by him to lay out a stately home, set in rolling grounds.³⁰ He appropriated the tomb of Quli Khan near the Qutb to which he added an enclosed circular verandah and which he used as a weekend home. He patronised local artists, and plundered and appropriated from the 'vestiges of the past' whatever caught his fancy. From the Mughals' cemetery at Mehrauli he 'appropriated the marble screen of a tomb'.³¹ Some miles north of Shahjahanabad lay the spacious Shalimar Gardens. Metcalfe used this as a picnic-resort. Fergusson was to comment wryly.

G.H.R. Tillotson, "Painting and understanding Mughal Architecture". In: G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), *Paradigms of Indian Architecture*. Delhi 1998, pp. 59–79.

²⁵ Sayyid Ahmad Khân, *Athâr al-Sanâdîd*. Delhi, 1966 (reprint).

²⁶ Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires 1803–1931*. Delhi, 1981, p. 8.

²⁷ E. Ehlers & T. Krafft (eds.), *Shahjahanabad/Old Delhi*. Stuttgart, 1993.

²⁸ Stuart Cary Welch, *India: Art and Culture 1300–1900*. New York, 1985, pp. 429–33.

²⁹ Sangin Beg, *Sair al-Manâzil*. tr. into Urdu by Na'im Ahmad, Aligarh 1980.

³⁰ Narayani Gupta, "Delhi and its hinterland in the 19th and 20th centuries". In: R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi Through the ages*, Delhi, 1986.

³¹ F. Wyman, *From Calcutta to the Snowy Range*. London, 1866, p. 208.

It is a fortunate circumstance that the British station was not, as at Agra, placed in the midst of the ruins, since it is to this that we owe their preservation. But for the distance, marble columns would doubtless have been taken for all purposes for which they might have been available, without regard to their beauty, and the interest of the ruins thereby annihilated. Even as it is the buildings belonging to the celebrated Shalimar Gardens, which were the only buildings of importance in the neighbourhood of the English station, have long since disappeared.³²

This appropriation, for 'better use', might have been seen by Metcalfe as legitimate since, as he writes in his 'Reminiscences': "In these degenerate times, the walls (of the arcades around the Diwan-e-Aam in the Palace) are bare, and the buildings themselves used as stables or lumber-rooms". Shame to the Ruling Power whether it be the King as immediate or the British Government as Lord Paramount."

He comments, sententiously, "The natives of India, though willing to erect expensive edifices to perpetuate their own name, are not equally liberal in repairing the public works of their predecessors".³³ Metcalfe also added to the quantum of 'ruins' at Delhi by building his "follies"—quaint pseudo—Norman stone structures, on the hills of Mehrauli.

Metcalfe's 'Reminiscences' is a commemoration of Delhi's architecture, with great praise for the craftsmanship, but with no effort to trace a chronology. It is written around the paintings—in the same way as illustrated manuscripts like the *Pādshāhnāma* were written. The artist was Mazar 'Ali Khan, of the family of painters descended from Mansur, a court painter of Jahangir. He had obviously been commissioned by Metcalfe.³⁴ The Album includes sketches of animals, processions, and portraits of the Mughals. Metcalfe created his own map of Delhi, with Metcalfe House at the centre and Shalimar and 'Dilkusha' (his Mehrauli tomb—turned cottage) marking its northern and southern extensions. It does not in any way lay claim to being a comprehensive account of Delhi's monuments. Only about forty buildings were covered, with beautiful 'long shots' and some close-ups. The moral is clear—of empires which crumbled and decayed, or were destroyed by invasion and pillage. There is a detailed account of Nadir Shah surveying the massacre in Delhi from

³² J. Fergusson, *op. cit.*

³³ M.M. Kaye, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings*. London, 1992, p. 129.

a vantage point in the Sunehri Masjid of Chandni Chowk. This story is something compulsively included in every book in English describing Delhi written to date.³⁵ (Sayyid Ahmad's *Athâr* does *not* carry this story). Contrast this with the 'British Peace'—the first illustration in the Album is of St. James' Church, the last a distant view of the Mughal Palace from the terrace of Metcalfe House, where lived members of the British dynasty of Delhi.

Metcalfe's interest in history and spectacular architecture did not extend to the study of style. In the years that he was putting together his Album, James Fergusson was touring India (1835–45) on the first lap of an exploration that was to culminate in the masterly *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* in 1876.

'What I have attempted to do' he was to write later, 'has been to apply to India's architecture the same principles of archaeological science which are universally adopted . . . in every country in Europe. Since the publication of Rickman's "Attempt to discriminate the styles of Architecture in England" in 1817, style has been allowed to supercede all other evidences for the age of any building . . . I believe these principles are even more applicable to the Indian styles than to the European.'³⁶

For Delhi, Bishop Heber's phrase (in 1828) about 'the Pathans' "who built (in Delhi) like giants and finished like jewellers"³⁷ would indicate that Delhi's political history from the 12th to the 18th century was seen as divided neatly into two periods—the 'Pathan' and the 'Mughal'. This must have been due to the reading of Ferishta's *Tarikh*, (Book II), 'The pre-Mughal kings of Delhi' had been translated into English by Colonel A. Dow in 1768, and the whole work (in four volumes) was translated by Briggs in 1829.³⁸ Thirty years later, this periodisation was transferred to architectural history and used by Fergusson to differentiate 'styles'—Sultanate architecture is described in Volume 2 of his *History* (Book VII, Chapter III) as of the 'Pathan Style'.

³⁵ Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*. London, 1850, Vol. 2, pp. 200–201.

³⁶ Fergusson, *op. cit.*, xii.

³⁷ R. Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*. London, 1828.

³⁸ John Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India, till the year 1612*. 4 Vols. Delhi, 1989 (reprint). Book II is on the Kings of Delhi. Edward Thomas published his *Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi* in 1871; this drew on the *Athâr*. The term 'Pathan' was changed to 'Turco-Afghan' in the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 3, London, 1928.

Metcalf was almost fifty when he put together the 'Reminiscences'. At the same time a young Delhiwala, not quite thirty, was completing a manuscript, with the help of a senior Persian scholar (Imam Baksh Sehbai), on the architectural heritage of Delhi. Sayyid Ahmad had joined the service of the British in 1837, at the age of twenty, just after the death of his father, and was posted away from Delhi. He returned in 1845 on his brother's death, to take charge of the Urdu weekly journal he had been editing. The *Sayyid al-Akhhâr* had begun publication in 1837, one year after the first Urdu newspaper in Delhi, the *Delhî Urdû Akhbâr*, had been launched.

What became the *Athâr al-Sanâdîd* (The Vestiges of the Great) was compiled by Sayyid Ahmad at the suggestion of Sprenger, an Austrian who was then the Principal of Delhi College. The book was printed at the *Sayyid al-Akhhâr* press in Daryaganj in 1846–47, and was illustrated with woodcuts (since they had to be black-and-white) by Faiz Ali Khan of the Mansur family, and Mirza Shah Rukh Beg, a grandson of Bahadur Shah 'Zafar' (reigned 1837–58) who had married into that family.³⁹ The author had the satisfaction of including compliments not only from Sehbai, but also from Bahadur Shah's Minister Sadr al-Din 'Azurda', and the poet Ghalib. Sayyid Ahmad, significantly chose to dedicate his work not to the Emperor Bahadur Shah but to Thomas Metcalf.⁴⁰

Athâr was not an architectural history. The book, published at the same time as vernacular accounts of Orissa, Assam and 'India' was not carved up in terms of chronology or dynasty or style. It created a *homogenised past* for Delhi, where the 'Hindu' buildings—which to Sayyid Ahmad included the main story of the Qutb Minar—continued into 'Islamic'/'Saracenic architecture' (the author did not use these adjectives, as Fergusson was to do). Some British buildings including St. James' Church and Metcalf House were described. His survey included about a hundred buildings. The present was described in terms of people—the divines, the poets, artists, writers and musicians—as well as of the built environment. "The accounts of important men gave the book a great liveliness".⁴¹ The style of writing was ornate and literary, and not burdened with factual details.

³⁹ Information kindly supplied by M. Firoz al-Din, a descendant of the family.

⁴⁰ C.W. Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: *Athâr al-Sanâdîd*". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1972.

⁴¹ S.K. Das, *History of Indian Literature 1800–1910*. Delhi, 1991, p. 175.

In April 1847 was constituted the Archaeological Society of Delhi, with Indian and European members. This must have been in response to James Tod's appeal for "station branch committees of the Asiatic Society"⁴² to promote field archaeology, and the letter of the Court of Directors (January 1847) urging the collection of information on monuments as a preliminary step before forming an archaeological commission.⁴³ A similar plea for local committees was to be made by the Delhi Archaeological Society in 1853.⁴⁴ The members in 1850 included officials—R.N.C. Hamilton, A.A. Roberts, W.H. Sleeman, and A. Sprenger and F. Taylor of the Delhi College, Ibrahim Khan Bahadur, Mohun Lal and Nawab Zia al-Din of Loharu. In 1852 Thomas Metcalfe was President of the Society, and would have continued to be involved but for his sudden death in November 1853. He did not live to see the major modifications that Sayyid Ahmad made in his book. The second shorter edition, published in 1854 was prompted by the encouraging reception to the book from the Royal Asiatic Society in London, whose members asked for a translation. Mr. A.A. Roberts, District Magistrate at Delhi, began to help him but went on to suggest major modifications. A brief history was introduced, an account of forts other than Shahjahanabad was added, the descriptions of buildings were rearranged in chronological order, and all the inscriptions on buildings were transcribed. Sayyid Ahmad shed the poetry and the account of Delhi's prominent individuals, and adopted a style more like that of scholarly articles written for the Asiatic Society.⁴⁵

Thus, if Metcalfe's album was like a Mughal illuminated manuscript, Sayyid Ahmad's work became not very different from English 'guide books'.

Athâr was translated in large part into French by the scholar Garcin de Tassy in 1860–61, but not into English as had been planned by Roberts. It was reprinted with further rearrangements in 1876, and, after Sir Sayyid's death, in 1904, 1965 and 1996. Both Roberts and Sayyid Ahmad left Delhi for postings elsewhere, and the Archaeological Society seems to have been dissolved. But it had not been in vain. The decade when Indians and Europeans in Delhi collaborated in

⁴² F.R. Allchin, "Ideas of History in Indian Archaeological Writing". In: C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*. London, 1961.

⁴³ Pushpa Sundar, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁴ F.R. Allchin, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ C. Troll, *op. cit.*

an effort to identify, list and preserve the locality's historic architecture culminated with a Note from Governor-General Dalhousie to the Court of Directors in 1856.

The attention of the Government is drawn to the fact that the noble arches and other remains of ancient architecture in the immediate vicinity of the Kootub at Delhi were in such disrepair that there was danger of their falling in, and of their being thus lost to the world. Immediate orders were issued for their preservation. General instructions were issued to officers of government . . . that all such interesting and instructive monuments of former people and former days should be carefully preserved.⁴⁶

Dalhousie was not the first person to express concern about the Qutb—we have seen that military and civil engineers had helped with the preservation of old buildings. In 1850s, with the *Athâr* serving as a reference-work, and Cunningham excavating and Fergusson documenting architecture all over India, the chances of a new deal for Delhi's historic buildings seemed bright. That buildings other than the Qutb were being repaired is borne out by later reports, and by Thomas Metcalfe's comment that the occupants of Masjid Kalan (a Tughluq monument of Shahjahanabad) were surprised and indignant when evicted before the mosque was repaired. But before more could be done, Delhi's history was thrown off-course by the events of 1857–58.

III

What happened to Delhi after the British forces recaptured the city in 1857 reminds one of ancient rituals of flattening and ploughing over conquered cities.⁴⁷

The members of the Archaeological Society of Delhi could not have imagined a situation when most of the buildings in the Delhi Palace would be deliberately blown up,⁴⁸ Zinat al-Masajid used as

⁴⁶ F. Wyman, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*. Princeton, 1976, pp. 70–71; also see Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*. Delhi, 1985, pp. 193–196.

⁴⁸ Fergusson was livid at this. It is clear that his first acquaintance with the Palace was after the Revolt, for he describes it as it had been from a 'native map' he consulted. This citadel, more than twice the area of the Escarole, could have been

a bakery and the Jami' Masjid occupied by the army, when the members of the royal family would seek sanctuary at the Qutb and at Humayun's mausoleum. The spoliation was of three kinds—demolition or occupation by government order, looting by prize agents, and furtive desecration of marble tombstones.

From the 1860s a salvage operation was begun, led by Cunningham (who had the satisfaction of seeing the creation of the Archaeological Survey he had wanted, with himself as Director) and Carr Stephen. The latter was a judge at Delhi, who published his *Archaeological and Monumental Remains of Delhi* in 1876, a work which, as he acknowledged, owed a great deal to Sayyid Ahmad Khan: "He who undertakes to write the archaeology of Delhi must constantly seek for light in the pages of Syed Ahmed Khan's interesting work".⁴⁹

In 1865 Cunningham prepared a memorandum on the "old Muhammedan buildings of Delhi". He wrote that he was "sorry to see the dilapidated state of most of the finest examples of old Pathan architecture and the magnificent Mughal buildings in the Palace".⁵⁰

When in 1872 a "list of the principal objects of interest in Delhi" was drawn up by the Survey, it was again acknowledged that "Sayyid Ahmad Khan's great work on Delhi is the completest one that has yet been published".⁵¹

'restored' wonderfully. "Taste was, no doubt, at as low an ebb inside the walls of the palace during the last 100 years as it was outside . . . but all the essential parts of the structure were there, and could easily have been disencumbered from the accretions that had been heaped upon it. The idea, however, of doing this was far from entering into the heads of our governors. The whole of the harem courts of the palace were swept off the face of the earth to make way for a hideous British barrack, without those who carried out this fearful piece of vandalism thinking it even worth while to make a plan of what they were destroying or preserving any record of the most splendid palace in the world" (Fergusson II, 312). He went on to suggest that the army garrison could have been accommodated *outside* the palace walls, and the stores within. "The engineers it would seem, perceived that by gutting the palace they could provide at no trouble . . . a wall round their barrack yard" (*ibid.*, p. 313).

Carr Stephen, writing in 1876, the same year that Fergusson's book was published, emphasised the decline in morale after Nadir Shah's sojourn in Delhi, which accounted for the dilapidated appearance of the Palace. The British 'modifications' are described in two bland sentences, with a footnote condemning Fergusson for his "opinions which, in a learned treatise of Architecture, are much to be regretted, even if it were possible for us to endorse them" (Carr Stephen, p. 241).

⁴⁹ Carr Stephen, *op. cit.*, p. iii.

⁵⁰ A Cunningham 'Memorandum about the old Muhammedan Buildings of Delhi', File 19 of 1865, Delhi Archives.

⁵¹ Archaeological Survey of India, *Report for the Year 1871-2*, 'Delhi' by J.D. Beglar. Varanasi, 1966 (reprint).

But the bond forged in the 1840s was broken. Not only did Sayyid Ahmad leave Delhi for Aligarh, but the sense of sharing in the discovery of Delhi's past could not be continued in a landscape scarred by vicious marks of retribution. The desecration of its buildings was only a part of the travails of the people of Delhi. The banishing of the frail Bahadur Shah 'Zafar' to Rangoon seemed a far worse act of retribution than the destruction of the Palace buildings. They had lost much more—many had been hanged or killed, hundreds of houses had been destroyed to make railway tracks and to clear a shooting range, the army was in occupation of the Palace. Nadir Shah's cruelty was nothing in comparison to this. Delhi's poets wept for the city despoiled. Sayyid Ahmad in anguish wrote a book on the causes of the Revolt, *Asbâb-e Baghâwat-e Hind*, seeing it as the act of misguided people, fed on misconceptions about British rule. Delhi's well known writer Nazir Ahmad, was to write a caustic novel (*Ibn al-waqt*—The time server) about Sayyid Ahmad as he saw him. The fraternity of Indian scholars and British officials in the 1840s was not revived. In 1865, a Delhi Society was set up—a sedate club of officials and local inhabitants, who included Ghalib and Sayyid Ahmad. Its range of interests was wider than that of the Archaeological Society—literature, history, social reform and education.

In the *First Report* of the Archaeological Survey of India (A.S.I., 1862) the Governor General had remarked that "all that has hitherto been done towards the illustration of ancient Indian history has been due to the unaided efforts of private individuals" and that "it is not to our credit . . . if we continue to allow such fields of investigation as . . . the plains round Delhi, studded with ruins more thickly than even the Campagna of Rome . . . to remain without more examination that they have hitherto received".³²

The A.S.I. did good work in keeping the monuments of Delhi in good repair. But the symbiotic relationship between the people of Delhi and its historic architecture was broken. Not till after Curzon had pumped new vigour into the Archaeological Survey, did anyone feel inspired to undertake work in Urdu which amplified what Sayyid Ahmad had done, *Wâqî'ât-e dâr al-hukûmat-e Dehlî* (1919) by Bashir al-Din Ahmad, son of the novelist Nazir Ahmad, can be regarded as the Urdu version of the English compilation by Zafar

³² Archaeological Survey of India, *First Report*, 1862, by A. Cunningham. Delhi, 1962 (reprint).

Hasan (*Hindu and Mahomedan Monuments of Delhi*, 1919) by contrast to Sayyid Ahmad's work which had been the basis for that of Carr Stephen.

Delhi has always been a city of immigrants. But where earlier immigrants identified with the 'magnificent city' (*'Alam main intekhâb—Mir Taqi Mir*), after 1857 and, even more, after 1947, people have increasingly tended to distinguish between 'home town' and 'town of residence'. The interest in Delhi's history and its historic architecture has become attenuated, particularly after Partition, when thousands of citizens left Delhi never to return, and strangers occupied their homes and the monuments.

To the first generation of independent Indians, Delhi's *new* buildings were more exciting than either its monuments or the *shahr*, now patronizingly called 'the old city'. But there is hope once again. Students of architecture, from the 1980s, have started to examine historic buildings and pre-Independence styles, following on their disillusionment with some aspects of the modern.

It may still be possible to present the subject of Indian architecture in such a form as to be interesting . . . It seems well worthwhile that an attempt should be made to interest the public in Indian architectural art . . . architecture in India is still a living art, practised on the principles which caused its wonderful development in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries; and there . . . alone the student of architecture had a chance of seeing the real principles of the art in action. "Few amongst us are aware how much *education* has had to do with their admiration of classical or medieval art, and few, consequently, perceive how much their condemnation of Indian forms arises from this very want to gradual and appropriate education.

This was Fergusson, writing in 1876.⁵³

Though the modestly-subsidised Archaeological Survey has found it difficult since the 1970s when land values in Delhi have taken such a quantum jump, to keep track of the 150 monuments and 'complexes' which were entrusted to its 'protection' in more tranquil days (in the 1920s) others have stepped in to help. INTACH (the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) in 1996–97 has listed 1200 buildings of architectural interest in Delhi, including the ones under A.S.I. 'protection'. These have been indicated on the zonal maps, and the Delhi Development Authority has promised to

⁵³ Fergusson, *op. cit.*, I, 5 and II, 68.

include 'conservation' on its agenda. It remains to be seen whether the people of Delhi wish it to be seen as an incipient Los Angeles or as a Heritage City.

Crowds flock to the major 'monuments' of Delhi for tours and picnics just as they did over a century ago. This saves them from becoming ruins, and from the possibility of being bulldozed to lay out yet another neighbourhood. They are seen as icons of past grandeur, but they have little connection with present-day lifestyles. But while no one is like to write about them with the "first fine careless rapture" of Sayyid Ahmad, or have 'views' of them made up into beautiful albums for a family's delight, as Metcalfe did, they *can* be made significant as Fergusson would have wished—as milestones in artistic and engineering history, as achievements to be cherished by students of architecture and by laypeople.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The constitution in 1997 of a Heritage Foundation by the Delhi Development Authority (which cynics see as a case of a poacher-turned gamekeeper) is a hopeful portent.

THE ROOTS OF ANGLO-MUSLIM CO-OPERATION AND ISLAMIC REFORMISM IN BHOPAL

CLAUDIA PRECKEL

The Islamic principality of Bhopal¹ held an extraordinary position among the so-called "Native States" of India during the 19th century. First of all this is shown by an almost uninterrupted chain of female Nawabs inheriting the throne from their mothers. Four remarkable women reigned the state of Bhopal for more than a century: 1. *Qudsiyya Begum*, 1819–1837, 2. *Sikander Begum*, 1843–1868, 3. *Shah Jahan Begum*, 1868–1901, 4. *Sultan Jahan Begum* 1901–1926.²

Secondly, no serious conflicts between the rulers and the British arose during the period mentioned above. On the contrary, both sides were bound by what was called "a friendship which has never been broken, and which, genuine on both sides, has operated to the advantage of both".³ This friendship was established when the British came into conflict with the Marathas in 1798. It was further strengthened when Sikander Begum gave full support to the British troops during the "Mutiny" of 1857 and stood loyal to them.

¹ For the history of Bhopal see the article "Bhopal" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam: new edition*. Leiden, 1954ff.—Vol. 1, pp. 1194–1196; William Hough, *Brief history of the Bhopal principality*. Calcutta, 1845; Sayyid Ali Ashfaq, *Bhopal past and present, a brief history of Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh from the hoary past upto the present time*. —3rd edition. Bhopal: Jai Bharat Publishing House, 1986; Kamla Mittal's book *History of Bhopal state: development of constitution, administration and national awakening 1901–1949*. New Delhi, 1990 also contains a useful summary on the local history of Bhopal since its foundation.

Some accounts on the history of Bhopal were written by the female rulers, e.g., Shah Jehan Begum, *The Taj-ul Ikbal Tarikh Bhopal; or the history of Bhopal*/translated by H.C. Barstow. Calcutta: Thacker, 1876 and Sultan Jahan Begum, *An account of my life: Gohur-i Ikbal*. 2 vols., Vol. 1 translated by C.H. Payne. London, 1912. Vol. 2 translated by Abdus Samad Khan. Bombay, 1922.

² For the period of women's rule in Bhopal see W.A. Sāhiba, *Begamāt-e Bhopāl*. Lahore, 1912 and Muhammad Amin Zubairi, *Tarikh-i Begamat-i Bhopal*. Bhopal, 1919. These books could not be traced in European library. An interesting survey of the century of women's rule was written by 'Abida Sultan, Sultan Jahan's granddaughter: Abida Sultaan, "The Begums of Bhopal". *History Today* 30, 1980, pp. 30–35.

³ G.B. Malleeson, *An historical sketch of the Native States of India in subsidiary alliance with the British Government*. London: Longmans, 1875, p. 199.

The third aspect of Bhopal's unique position within 19th-century India was a strong development of Islamic religious and cultural reform which lasted throughout the century. Understandably this Islamic revival has been regarded with a certain disapproval by the British authorities. Nevertheless all these activities, which included huge architectural projects, educational and literary efforts and economic as well as administrative reforms caused a growing admiration for these rulers in both Indian and British political circles.

The roots of this rather unexpected combination of Anglo-Indian co-operation and Islamic reformism in Bhopal which lasted even beyond the end of the 19th century can be traced to specific dynastic and cultural conditions which prevailed in the principality since about 1810.

Dynastic struggles

The principality of Bhopal was founded at the end of the 17th century by Dost Muhammad Khan, an Afghan belonging to the Mirza'i Khel group. Being first in the service of the Mughal Emperor in Delhi, he was appointed supervisor of some districts in Malwa. By his military successes he was able to build up political control over this territory. After Aurangzeb's death (1707) he assumed the title of Nawab. Though he was permanently fought by several enemies he managed to secure a hereditary *masnad* for his descendants. However, after his death the power struggles within the ruling family continued for several generations. Finally, the succession to the throne became restricted to the family of Nadhr Muhammad Khan (1816–1819). By his military exploits he was able to set aside the claims of Ghauth Muhammad Khan (1808–1809), the entitled descendant of the founder. Nadhr Muhammad Khan married Qudsiyya Begum (Ghauth Muhammad Khan's daughter) so that the two branches of the family seemed to be united. But quarrels lingered on, leading repeatedly to serious succession disputes.

It was Nawab Nadhr Muhammad Khan who concluded a political treaty with the British (1818).⁴ It was agreed that the territory of Bhopal should be guaranteed to his heirs and successors, under the condition that the Nawab provided military support against the

⁴ The complete text of the treaty is given in Shah Jehan Begum, *Taj ul-Ikbal*, p. 41.

Pindaris⁵ and acted in "subordinate co-operation" with the British Government. The approval of the British Political Agent at Sehore further became required for the succession to the *masnad* and the marriage of the heir apparent. The agreement left a Muslim dynasty which was ruling over a predominantly Hindu population permanently dependent on British support.

For these reasons it is quite understandable that from now on all parties at the court of Bhopal tried to secure British backing for their aims. Nadhr Muhammad Khan's descendants took full advantages of this new situation. They got rid of all the enemies they had been fighting for more than a century. With the support of the British the four female rulers were able to consolidate their own power and to develop enormous religious and cultural activities.

Religious and cultural activities

When Qudsiyya Begum⁶ rose to power she laid the foundation for a growing involvement of the Nawabs in religious affairs. She initiated one of the greatest architectural projects of Bhopal, a huge new Friday Mosque. A munificent religious endowment (*wagf*) was attached to it which promoted Islamic education in Bhopal. In addition, various Sufi activities gained public significance, for example the *mawlid* of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1088-1166), the founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhood which was lavishly celebrated under her patronage.⁷ Her reign also marked the beginning of an era of increasing interest in Arabic culture and language.

The British regarded Qudsiyya Begum with a mixture of fascination and suspicion. The fact that she was not veiled when she appeared in public was noticed with astonishment. Her activities in the field of sports and her military skills caused even more astonishment. She was said to ride horses as well as camels and elephants, taking full part in hunting and martial activities. Being confronted with this overly self-confident woman, the Political Agent Colonel

⁵ For Bhopal's struggle against the Marathas and the Pindaris see Stewart Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders, and state formation in eighteenth-century India*. Delhi, 1994.

⁶ For a biography of Qudsiyya Begum see the following book which was written by her great-granddaughter Sultan Jahan Begum: Sultan Jahan Begum, *Hayat-i Qudsi: Life of Nawab Gauhar Begam alias the Nawab Begam Qudsiya of Bhopal*/translated by W.S. Davis. London, 1918.

⁷ Shah Jehan Begum, *Taj ul-Ikbal*, p. 48.

Wilkinson could nothing but express his discomfort over this female ruler: "But the Begum now begins to manifest frequent symptoms of furious passion approaching to insanity. At times she became quite frantic; and as one of the soldiers observed, more terrible to approach than a tigress."⁸

Perhaps Colonel Wilkinson could not overcome his reservations about female rulers, if not about strong women in general. One should note that in Great Britain a conduct like that of Qudsiyya Begum would have been regarded with even more bewilderment. Qudsiyya Begum surely did not fit into the cliché of the mild and servile Indian woman which Europeans in general would have cherished during that period. Later on the relation between Qudsiyya Begum and the British improved. Several accounts on her were written depicting her as a pious and charitable woman. William Hough characterised her with the following words:

distinguished by an abhorrence of debt, to discharge which she was ever ready to dispose of her jewels and make other personal sacrifices. She was liberal to her troops and friends, and a severe judge of such of her servants as were convicted of a breach of faith, or oppression to her poorer subjects.⁹

Activities of that kind were clearly more conceivable for female public commitment in pre-Victorian British eyes. Sign of Qudsiyya's acceptability to the British was a decoration with the *Order of the Imperial Cross* in 1877.

After a short reign of a male Nawab (Sikander Begum's husband Jahangir Muhammad Khan) it was Qudsiyya Begum's daughter Sikan-der Begum¹⁰ who ascended the throne. She enacted a wide range of reforms and made Bhopal one of the most reliable states in the eyes of the British. Especially her support for the British troops during the "Mutiny" guaranteed the British backing of her policies.

After her accession to the throne she initiated a considerable number of reforms in her state. She divided up the state into new administrative units which were connected with the capital by newly designed roads. The tax system was centralised and the *jâgîrs* were

⁸ Ashfaq, *Bhopal past and present*, p. 43.

⁹ William Hough, *History of the Bhopal principality*, 20.

¹⁰ For Sikander Begum and her activities see Uma Yaduvansh, "Administrative system of Bhopal under Nawab Sikander Begam (1844-1868)", *Islamic Culture* 41 i, 1967, pp. 205-231.

brought under closer control of the ruler. Army and police forces were entirely remodelled. The judiciary was reshaped and the laws codified. This reform seems to have aimed at a different jurisdiction for Hindus and Muslims, i.e., the introduction of the Muslim *shari'a*.

These reforms were far-reaching and effective. Sikander Begum was remarkably successful in transforming Bhopal from an Afghan warrior principality into a centralised state along Islamic patterns. One of her most effective instruments for this purpose was the establishment of new schools. She chose to base her educational system on a renewal of the *madrassa*. The *Madrasa Sulaymāniyya* established by her offered the traditional Islamic curriculum but also instruction in Urdu, Persian and English. Sikandar Begum apparently even made Urdu the official language of Bhopal. But she also took care that her daughter Shah Jahan Begum and her granddaughter Sultan Jahan Begum took private lessons in English with her secretary Munshi Husain Khan. She realised that only the command of English and other abilities like arithmetic could secure her own as well as her descendants' position.

Being a well-informed and educated ruler with good contacts to the British she was fully aware of the British expansion. The French traveller Louis Rousselet who became quite familiar with her described her political views as follows:

Everything relating to the public health, industry, and commerce interested her far more than political questions; which to her were limited to the fact of two powers, England and France, exercising their supremacy over all the countries of the globe, with the exception, however, of Turkey, whose sovereign was the recognised lord of all Islam.¹¹

For all her insight into her political dependence Sikander initiated her reforms on her own initiative. The hegemonic presence of the British can rather be seen as a stimulus for her own Islamic reform and modernisation which was carried out by her own subjects. She was always keen on presenting the results of her efforts to European visitors.

Sikander Begum based her reforming activities on a co-operation with both the British and a new elite group of Islamic scholars who were personally loyal to her. The quotation given above also shows

¹¹ Louis Rousselet, *India and its native princes: travels in Central India*. Delhi, s.t. [Reprint], p. 461.

her particular esteem of the Ottoman Sultan as head of the international Islamic community.¹² This gives an early example of the pro-Ottoman sentiment of the Indian Muslims which was to play such an important role in Indian politics later on. Islam itself became for Sikandar Begum an important element of royal legitimacy. She invited several prominent or promising Islamic scholars to Bhopal to serve her in different fields. One of them was Jamal al-Din Khan (died 1299/1881) from Kutana who was given the post of the *wazîr*. He was deeply influenced by some of the sons and grandsons of Shah Wali Allah (1703–1762) with whom he had studied in Delhi. He was also said to have taken part in the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786–1831) who is often regarded the founding figure of the so-called Wahhabiyya in India.¹³ When Jamal al-Din came to Bhopal he was already well reputed for his religious commitment and known for his experience in the handling of religious affairs. He later founded an Arabic school in Bhopal with his own money.

Two other scholars invited to Bhopal during Sikander Begum's reign were Yamanis: Zayn al-ʿAbidin b. Muhsin al-Hudaydi and his brother Husain.¹⁴ While Husain worked as a teacher in one of the local *madâris*, his brother Zayn al-ʿAbidin was appointed state *qâdî*. They brought many works and ideas of Yemenite scholarship to Bhopal. Two authors should be especially mentioned in this context: Muhammad b. Ismaʿîl al-ʿAmir al-Yamani¹⁵ (died 1768) and the

¹² For its most famous expression, the Khilafat-movement, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat movement: religious symbolism and political mobilization in India*. New York, 1982.

¹³ See e.g., Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi movement in India*. New Delhi, 1994. For a biography of Sayyid Ahmad see the article "Ahmad Barelwi" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam: new edition*, Vol. 1 and the article "Barelwi, Sayyid Ahmad" by Barbara D. Metcalf. In: *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World*/edited by John L. Esposito. Vols. 1–4. Oxford, 1995, Vol. 1, p. 200.

Whether the Wahhabiyya label is appropriate for Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and his followers would still seem to be an unsettled question. Both his contacts to the Arabian movement and his own religious teachings which clearly show some sufi-elements would require further classification.

¹⁴ For a biography see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*. 2nd ed. Leiden, 1943–1949, 2nd supplementary Volume, p. 862.

¹⁵ Muhammad b. Ismaʿîl b. Salah al-Amir al-Saniani, born in Kahlan, spent the major time of his life in Sanaa but also travelled to Mecca and Medina where he studied hadith. He recommended *ijtihād* and rejected *taqlîd*. For a biography see Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khân, *Al-Tâj al-mukallal min maʿâthir al-tirâz al-âkhir wa-l-awwal*. Bombay: al-Matbaʿ al-Hindiyya al-ʿArabiyya, 1383/1963, pp. 414ff. and Muhammad ʿAlî al-Shaukânî, *al-Badr al-talîʿ bi-mahâsin man baʿd al-qarn al-sâbiʿ*—Juzʾ 1–2. al-Qahira, 1348/1929 (Reprint), p. 133.

reformist Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Shaukani¹⁶ (1760–1834) who was famous for his insistence of *ijtihād* in legal and religious matters and the criticism of the *taqlīd*.¹⁷

The third and perhaps most important scholar who came to Bhopal was Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan al-Qannauji¹⁸ (1832–1890). First invited to supervise the state archive and to compile a history of the state,¹⁹ he soon gained influence and married Jamal al-Din's daughter. He even became the private secretary of the heir apparent, Shah Jahan Begum who later as a widow made him her husband in 1871, after her accession to the throne. Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan had been under the influence of the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barclwi as well as of the family of Shah Wali Allah. When he came to Bhopal he studied with the two Yemenite scholars mentioned above. Through them he became familiar with the works of Muhammad 'Ali al-Shaukani. The influence of Shaukani even increased when Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan went on his pilgrimage to Mecca. From the Hijaz he brought many books to Bhopal. The major part were Shaukani's works but there were also those of Ibn Taimiyya (born 1263). Both mark the reformist direction of his interests. After his return he started writing his own commentaries on these works.²⁰

¹⁶ Shaukani spent his whole life in his hometown Sanaa where he was appointed *qādī*, a position which he fulfilled until his death. From 1807 until 1813 he was the *imām*'s private secretary and thus came to know the ideas of the Arabian Wahabiyya. Like the Arabian Wahhabis Shaukani criticised the cult at the Sufi shrines and denounced those practices as *shirk* (idolatry). But he never condemned Sufism in general. Although belonging to the Zaidi branch of the Shia, Shaukani had great influence on several Sunni groups, for example the Ahl-e Hadith. The extent of this acceptance and the influence on the Indian reformist groups has to be further assessed. For a biography of Shaukani see, e.g., the introduction of his work *Nayl al-awtar bi-sharh Muntaqā al-akhbar*.—Juz' 1–2. al-Qahira, s.d., and Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khān, *Abjad al-'ulūm*. Juz' 3: *al-Rahiq al-makhtūm min tarājim a'immat al-'ulūm*. Lahore 1403/1983, pp. 93–94.

¹⁷ For general remarks on the *ijtihād-taqlīd* controversy see Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the gate of *ijtihād* closed?". *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 i (1984), pp. 3–41 and Rudolf Peters, "Idjihad and taqlid in 18th century and 19th century Islam". *Die Welt des Islams*, 20 iii–iv, 1980, pp. 132–145.

¹⁸ For Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan see e.g., the biography written by his son 'Ali Hasan Khān, *Ma'āthir-e Siddiqī*. Lucknow, 1924; Saeedullah, *The life and works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, Nawab of Bhopal (1248 1307/1832–1890)*. Lahore, 1973; Radiyya Hamid, *Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan*. New Delhi, 1983.

¹⁹ Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan is said to have written a work *Ta'rikh-e Bhopāl*, but the manuscript could not be found later. It is possible that Siddiq Hasan's enemies have destroyed it.

²⁰ Muhammad Siddiqi's works *al-Tarīqa al-muthlā*. Qustantiniyya 1296/1879, and

The educational and scholarly activities of Jamal al-Din, the Yemenis and of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan made Bhopal a major centre of Islamic reformist teaching, contributing to the emergence of the Ahl-e Hadith²¹ ("People of the Prophetic traditions") movement of which Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan is regarded a founding figure. Viewed from its development in Bhopal, this movement can now be seen as a scholarly network²² linking Indian, Yemenite and other Arabian strands of reformism. It has to be stressed that their former commitment to the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilwi and their general reformist orientation were at that time not seen with suspicion by the British, as these scholars fully co-operated with them within the framework of the Begum's policy. Only at a later period were their credentials to create problems for them, when their criticism of Sufi practices and innovations (*bid'a*) and of the *taqlid* of the Schools of Law (*madhâhib*) and the religious practices of the Shia, but also their growing political influence in general earned Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan and his followers the dangerous label of Wahhabism which was then turned into an accusation against them. It can be clearly seen that the label Wahhabi was applied to the members of the Ahl-e Hadith by their Muslim opponents as well as by the British authorities.

Apart from the mentioned figures other scholars and poets came to Bhopal from Lucknow and Cawnpore. With their literary activities they established a multilingual literary culture at the Bhopal court. Nawab Sikander Begum herself was deeply interested in literature. She wrote an account of her pilgrimage to Mecca (*Safarnâma-ye Hijâz*) in 1864 which was even translated into English²³ and handed out to some British representatives. The poems she composed were viewed

al-Iqlid li-adillat al-ijtihâd w- al-taqlid.—s.l., s.d. are both commentaries on Shaukani's works.

²¹ For this movement see *Encyclopædia of Islam : new edition*, Vol. 1, pp. 259–260 and Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India. Deoband, 1860–1900*. Princeton, 1982, pp. 268–296. The movement was also known as *ghair muqallidîn*, i.e., those, who do not follow the *taqlid*.

²² For the importance of religious and political networks in the Islamic context see Roman Loimeier & Stefan Reichmuth, "Zur Dynamik religiös-politischer Netzwerke in muslimischen Gesellschaften". *Die Welt des Islams*, 36 ii, 1996, pp. 146ff.

²³ Sikander Begum, *A pilgrimage to Mecca*/preceded by a letter from Shah Jahan Begam and translated by E.L. Willoughby Osborne. Calcutta: Thacker and Spink, 1906.

with favour by European readers, especially by the French orientalist Garcin de Tassy.²⁴

The considerable number of religious reforms which were initiated by Sikander Begum testified to a revival of Islamic culture that seems to have aimed at a kind of "Mughal Renaissance". This ambition of the Begum is still reflected in the autobiography of Sikander's grand-daughter Sultan Jahan: "Nawab Sikandar Begum holds the same place in the history of Bhopal that the emperor Akbar holds in the history of India."²⁵

Sikander Begum's "Neo-Mughal" cultural policy went well along with "westernisation" in some fields in which she imitated the British, as for example the plans for a railway system in Bhopal, and a medical system based on European methods of treatment show. Her daughter Shah Jahan Begum²⁶ was to pursue these literary and architectural enterprises with even more vigour. It was under her supervision that the largest mosque ever built in India, the *Tāj al-masājīd* ("Crown of the mosques"), was built in Bhopal.

The British reaction

First Sikander Begum like her mother had to fight against prejudices against female rulers. For example it was stated by Col. J. D. Cunningham, Political Agent at Sehore, that "she laboured under the disadvantage as a ruler of being a woman, and as a woman, of possessing some violence or at least impatience of temper".²⁷

The development in Britain, however, had been to her favour as, since in 1837 a female ruler, Queen Victoria, had ascended the throne of the British Empire.

Sikander Begum's reign marked the beginning of an era in which women's interests were discussed and differently regarded by each Begum. She refused to veil in public whereas her daughter Shah Jahan Begum kept the *parda* after she married her first husband Baqi Muhammad Khan. Her mother did not regard this with favour and

²⁴ Joseph-Heliodore Garcin De Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie*. 2.ed. Vols. 1-3. New York: Franklin, 1968 [Reprint], Vol. 1, p. 397.

²⁵ Sultan Jehan Begum, *An Account of my life*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

²⁶ For a biography see Sultan Jehan Begum, *Hayat-i Shahjehani: life of Her Highness the late Nawab Shahjahan Begum of Bhopal*/translated by B. Ghosal. Bombay, 1926.

²⁷ Uma Yaduvansh, "Administrative system", p. 229, citing the *Foreign proceedings* No. 108 dated 29th April 1847.

Rousselet reported the events which followed the death of Baqi Muhammad Khan in 1861. One day after his death Sikander Begum commented this by the words: "I mourn for Oumra Doula because I lose in him a faithful friend and counsellor, but why should my daughter mourn? Does the prisoner regret his gaoler?"²⁸

Rousselet comments this: "Strange words these from the lips of an Asiatic! They are the condemnation of the worn-out custom of the sequestration of women, which Mussulmans persist keeping up in spite of the constant progress of civilisation among them".²⁹

The British authorities regarded Sikander Begum's reform with favour and even admiration. Though being a female ruler was seen as a disadvantage it was generally remarked that Sikander Begum did the best of it. Especially her administrative skills were highly estimated and she was given the title "Sikander Begum Lady of 'amal".³⁰

After her loyalty during the "Mutiny" she was able to secure British support for nearly every project. Lepel Griffin directly addressed Sikander during a *darbâr* in 1866 with the following words: "There is no state in India which Her Majesty the Queen and His Excellency the Viceroy regard with more friendly interest than the State of Bhopal, which whether in peace, or in adversity, has always remained the true friend of the British Government."³¹

It is obvious that the British, too, had many advantages from their close co-operation with the Nawabs of Bhopal. In their eyes the ruling elite, ready as it was to modernise and reform their state, opened a promising prospect for the British to gain grassroot support in this region. As they saw it the population of Bhopal would follow the line given by the Nawab.

As the British wanted to strengthen the co-operation with loyal elements, these partners were given the feeling that they were needed and respected. Therefore great *darbârs* were organised in which all representatives of the British and many heads of Indian principalities were brought together. During these *darbârs* both partners affirmed mutual friendship and help. In 1861 Sikander Begum was decorated during a *darbâr* with the order of the Star of India of which she was given the rank of a Grand Commander. Interestingly enough Sikan-

²⁸ Louis Rousselet, *India and its native princes*, p. 468.

²⁹ Louis Rousselet, *India and its native princes*, p. 468.

³⁰ See Yaduvansh, "Administrative system", p. 226.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

der Begum did not simply accept this order but asked her *qâdî* Zayn al-‘Abidin about the lawfulness of it because it showed the portrait of a living being, namely Queen Victoria.³² He answered that “the use of gold and silver ornaments by women was lawful, but that the use of portraits of kings and others in jewellery was a distraction at prayer time.”³³

This episode illustrates Sikander Begum’s insistence on an Islamic legitimisation for her public actions. It also shows the interplay of her firmly pro-British and at the same time Islamic orientation. Needless to say that the Nawab by her action was also able to demonstrate her independent political authority.

Bhopal under Shah Jahan Begum

The developments initiated under Sikander Begum were continued by her daughter Shah Jahan Begum. Like her mother she developed considerable interest in the administration of the state. She took special care of the educational and religious sector. Several new schools were established, for example the *Madrasa-ye Bilqîsiyya* and the *Prince of Wales Schools*. The Islamic religious disciplines were taught as well as the Western sciences. Literacy and education were promoted in all their forms. For example Shah Jahan Begum established a *Khatam Khâna* which meant a house for the recitation of the Qur’an. Like her mother she wanted to legitimise her reign by patronising Islamic scholarship at her court. For this reason she encouraged and supported scholars who wanted to study in Mecca and Medina. She spent enormous amounts of money for those pilgrims to the Hijaz. Within a few years the centralisation of the state along Islamic patterns took another great leap. This was mainly orchestrated by her husband Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan. After his marriage with Shah Jahan Begum a state press named *Shâhjahânî* was established beside the existing ones, so that many books were printed and published in Bhopal. They were distributed free in Bhopal’s schools. Of course even Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan’s own works whose estimated number is ca. 200 were published by this press. Publication and distribution of his books made him a well-known personality in the Islamic world. His works in Arabic, Persian and Urdu

³² Shah Jehan Begum, *Taj-ul Ikbāl*, p. 79.

³³ Shah Jehan Begum, *Taj ul-Ikbāl*, p. 80.

were also published in the major centres of Arabic scholarship, for example in Egypt, in Constantinople, and in Mecca. Bhopal became famous as a centre of the Ahl-e Hadith. The rise of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan and the Ahl-e Hadith was regarded with ill favour by all parties at the court of Bhopal and also by Hanafi scholars and Sufis who rejected his non-*madhhabism* as well as his ban on *mawlid* celebrations in the state. In 1881 rumours occurred that the Nawab had published seditious material against the British Government and was preaching the *jihād* against them. Finally he was accused by the British to be a "Wahhabi" and to encourage religious fanaticism. These accusations were not substantiated by official inquiries.³⁴ as some documents of the Political and Secret Home Correspondence clearly show.

The Nawab tried to defend himself by writing the work *Tarjumân-e Wakhâbiyya*³⁵ which was even translated into English.³⁶ He strongly emphasised that he did not regard Bhopal as *Dâr al-Harb* and that therefore a *jihād* against the British would not be justified according to the principles of Islamic law. He also claimed not to be a follower of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Najdi³⁷ (1703–1793) who was a Hanbali, whereas the Ahl-e Hadith only regarded the Qur'an and the Sunna as their proper guidance. Although Siddiq Hasan Khan was strongly defended by his wife, he was finally deposed in 1885 by the British, losing his Nawab title and retiring into privacy. He died soon after in 1890.

How could this unpleasant event happen after all these years of Anglo-Muslim co-operation in Bhopal?

One of the possible reasons for the sudden change of attitude can be seen in the activities in the Islamic world, especially in the Sudan where the Mahdist revolt had begun in 1881. The British had become

³⁴ Lord Dufferin wrote to the Political Department, "We have given the matter our close attention and have come to the conclusion that we had better not taken any action against the Nawab on ground of seditious writings." See Saeedullah, *Life*, p. 69, citing the *Political and Secret Home Correspondence*, 1885, LXXVIII, p. 1147.

³⁵ Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khân, *Tarjumân-e Wakhâbiyya*. Agra, 1883.

³⁶ Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *An interpreter of Wahhabism*. Calcutta, 1884. An (English) summary is given in Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Affairs in Bhopal: a defense of the Nawab-Consort*. Bombay, 1887 (Supplement to the "Advocate of India").

³⁷ For the Arabian Wahhabiyya see Esther Peskes, *Muhammad b. Abdalwahhab (1703–1792) im Widerstreit: Untersuchung zur Rekonstruktion der Frühgeschichte der Wahabiyya*. Stuttgart, 1993.

afraid of any pan-Islamic activities, and so they even feared that the works of the Nawab could provoke pan-Islamic feelings leading to a *jihād* in India. The British were also suspicious of the correspondence of the Sharif of Mecca³⁸ with some heads of Islamic states in India, among them the Begum of Bhopal. Some letters which were written by Siddiq Hasan Khan to the Turkish Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid were also looked upon with distrust.³⁹ But to withdraw the accusations against the Nawab would have meant according to their view to weaken their own position and to encourage any militant Islamic movement elsewhere in this highly volatile period.

Conclusion

The example of Bhopal shows a remarkable co-operation between the British and the Nawabs which had become possible because both parties involved shared a considerable range of common interests. The British who had strategic interests in that part of Central India were quite impressed by the reforms enacted by the strong female rulers of Bhopal. The Begums on the other hand took full advantage of their relations with the British. They could silence their enemies within the ruling family and set aside the claim of every male pretender to the throne in the clan of the Mirza'i Khel. Islam in this context served to strengthen the authority of otherwise vulnerable rulers and provided a base for the centralisation of the state structures. The British who normally took a neutral stand on religious matters gave the Begums a free hand in choosing Islamic scholars as their personal advisors. When accusations of pan-Islamic propaganda against the Nawab-consort arose within the context of a conflict within the ruling family, the British finally chose to intervene. With her decision to depose Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, the British intervened on the side of the heir-apparent Sultan Jahan Begum who had been attacking her mother's husband for a long time, especially alleging that he had forced the Begum to retire behind the *purda*. Her attacks brought her into a lasting conflict with her mother, the Begum.⁴⁰ Although the accusations of an alleged

³⁸ The British authorities considered the Sharif of Mecca to be a person whose "fanaticism and hostility to the Christians and England was well-known". See Saeedullah, *Life*, p. 56.

³⁹ See Saeedullah, *Life*, p. 211.

⁴⁰ The Begum had written a book on women's moral conduct in which she

hostility against the British were not central to her own attacks, Sultan Jahan Begum activated the press for her private fight against Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, which even led to the publication of one article against him in the London "Times".⁴¹ By her close contacts to key figures of the British administration (e.g., Lepel Griffin, the Political Agent), and by making skilful use of the British media, Sultan Jahan Begum managed to win the British public on her side. The current image of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan and of the history of Bhopal has been permanently shaped by her own writings. This has blurred his works from the close view of European scholarship up till the present. It still remains difficult to assess the parties and the outcome of the conflict on the basis of the available sources. Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, already a famous figure in the Islamic world and perhaps himself not without dynastic ambitions, fell victim to a highly complicated situation. It has to be added, however, that the model of a reformed modernised Islamic state which was created with his advice survived this crisis. The daughter of the Begum, Sultan Jahan who succeeded her mother in 1901 closely followed her mother's pattern of government and reform. Although she had criticised Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan for his imposition of *purda* on her mother, she, too, later wrote a book on Islamic norms of dress for women.⁴² This went perfectly well with her otherwise strong anglophile leanings. Her public appearance was fully accepted by the British.⁴³ The Anglo-Muslim co-operation in Bhopal continued until 1948 with the full approval and support of the British.

stressed the necessity of the veil for women. In her eyes women in *purda* had the opportunity to take actively part in all fields of society and therefore. The veil was seen as a sign of the emancipation of women. See Shah Jahan Begum, *Tahdhīb al-niswān wa-tarbiyat al-insān*. Lahore, 1970.

⁴¹ "An episode in Indian Government". *The Times* (London), 27.12. 1886, pp. 7-9.

⁴² Sultan Jehan Begum, *Hijab, or: Why Purdah is necessary*. Calcutta, 1922.

⁴³ See the sketches and pictures of Bhopal painted by Ada Ranken who lived for some years in Bhopal. After her return to London she received several letters by Sultan Jahan. Mrs. Ranken even wrote an article about Sultan Jahan, *The veiled ruler* (dates of publication unknown). See the *Ranken Papers (MSS)* in the India Office Library, London.

THE SATI DEBATE IN THE RAJPUTANA AGENCY

MONIKA HORSTMANN

Whereas sati¹ had been banned in British India in 1829, in Rajasthan the practice continued to be recognised as lawful until 1861. The princely states of Rajasthan had come under British Paramountcy in 1817–18. In 1832 the territory comprising those states became the Rajputana Agency. The treaties which had been concluded with the states had stipulated non-interference of the British in the internal affairs of the states.² This precluded direct interference through legislative and administrative measures which is why in internal matters, which they found objectionable, the British tried to prevail upon the rulers of the states by “advice and admonition”.³ How reformist measures were to be enforced by these indirect measures was, however, much debated amongst the authorities, namely, the Agents to the Governor General (A.G.G.) and the Political Agents (P.A.) in the various states of Rajputana. Finally, after 1857, direct pressure was exerted, indeed, which in the beginning of the 1860s resulted in the legal ban on sati in the whole of Rajputana.

For the sati issue, the British authorities were, of course, under the impact of its precedents in Bengal, to which they naturally affirmed, whereas the Rajput princes reacted with utter reticence to all British remonstrations in this matter. For the British, the sati debate had, at least on the plane of ideas and legislation, been conclusively solved in Bengal and the arguments that had evolved there were applied by them to the issue that continued to prevail

¹ In this chapter “sati”, when written in roman characters, refers to the custom or rite, whereas when the word refers to a widow engaged in the execution of the rite, it is written in italics and with the diacritical mark.

² Vashishtha, “Abolition of sati in the states of Rajputa”. *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress, Third Session, Udaipur*. 1969, p. 232. Vashishtha’s study of 1969 is a carefully documented historical treatment, whereas Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency, 1832–1858*, Jaipur, 1978 provides a wider, equally meticulously documented historical perspective, which is also relevant to the problem of sati.

³ Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, p. 233.

in Rajputana. As we know, the intellectual scenario had been determined by two protagonists, Lord William Bentinck and Ram Mohan Roy, who had integrated in his own thinking the western and especially the Unitarian discourse and became the champion of new religious issues, which were concerned with the ethics and the social aspects of religion.

As for sati, the arguments, as they had been put forth in Bengal, had been largely arrayed along the line of the historicity of the custom and on its ethical aspects. Sati was declared as historically ill-founded or at least not unanimously accepted by the ancient authorities and as unethical, because it was performed for its karmic fruits and not for redemption. The ethical value of sati was also put into doubt by the claim that a virtuous life in widowhood would rank superior to ending one's life by self-immolation. The debate brought to the fore also considerations of social welfare, for in case a woman found herself not only berobbed of her husband but also of her livelihood, to save her would call for charitable measures.

In Rajasthan, sati had been a common practice, mainly among Rajputs, who considered it an ideal not only for the individual woman but for her entire group. The Rajputs had, for a couple of centuries, found themselves dependent on the Mughals. Dependence was represented politically and symbolically. Rajput symbolic self-assertion was certainly complex, but one of its highly charged symbols was sati. The more precarious the political position of the Rajputs became, the more would symbolic self-assertion become essential to them. In 1832 the continuity between the Mughal and the British Paramountcy was demonstrated in a comprehensive manner to the Rajput princes in a highly symbolically charged political incident. For when the Rajputana Agency was established in that year, the Governor-General, Lord Bentinck, held a *darbâr* at Ajmer.

The holding of a Darbar or calling upon the rulers for a meeting was the regal prerogative enjoyed by the Mughal Emperors. The Governor-General meeting a number of rulers and receiving their representations, therefore, demonstrated that in practice he had begun to enjoy the regal privilege of the Mughal Emperor. The visit of the rulers of Rajputana to Bentinck at Ajmer belittled them, generally in the estimate of their subjects. Specially, the subjects of Mewar were greatly disappointed, when they saw Maharana Jawan Singh rushing to Ajmer to attend upon the Governor-General, whereas his ancestors had observed tenaciously their marked indifference to the Darbars of the Mughal Emperors. (Vashishtha 1978:38-39)

In this situation of subservience the Rajput princes, pressed to abolish sati, entered a tense dialogue with the British which not bridged by a mediating discourse.

The present contribution is based on the Mewari and Urdu correspondence between Maharana Svarup Singh (Sarup Singh) of Mewar (r. 1842–61) and the P.A.s and the A.G.G.s to the extent in which it was reproduced in 1886 by Shyamaldas Kaviraj in his *Virvinod*.⁴ These papers are discussed in the context of additional sources. The focus is not on the ethno-religious complex of sati which was discussed in a magisterial way by Weinberger-Thomas (1996) or on the ideological critique of sati which has been proffered abundantly in the aftermath of the Rup Kanwar case.⁵ The sole object of this paper is to clarify how the Rajput and British protagonists in the issue of sati represented their respective positions and reacted on those of the opposite party.

In the late 1830s there had been a spate of sati cases among the Rajput nobility. Therefore, it was quite exceptional that at the death of Maharana Sardar Singh of Mewar only one concubine committed sati. When Sarup Singh had succeeded him, the P.A.⁶ approached the new Maharana directly, for the first time, it seems, because hitherto “He . . . [had], through the medium of the Minister, conveyed to the Maharana the sentiments of the Governor-General and the latter’s anxious desire to see the extinction of a practice so revolting to humanity”.⁷ Major Thoresby, the P.A., in his address to Svarup Singh, which is dated 19 December 1842,⁸ confronted the Maharana with the following: He said that he was sorry to observe that so far in some of the regions of Rajasthan the sati custom had not been abandoned although it was “proscribed and unbecoming”, which held also true for jumping from a precipice or into a well.⁹ These

⁴ VV II.3, pp. 2016–40.

⁵ Cp. for example John Stratton Hawley (ed.), *Sati, the blessing and the curse: The burning of wives in India*. New York, 1994, with references to much of the relevant literature in this field.

⁶ Mewar had a P.A. of its own who was, however, to follow the advises of the A.G.G.

⁷ Vijay Kumar Vashishtha, “Abolition of sati”, 1969, p. 131 referring to a letter from Lt. Col. Thomas Robinson, the P.A., to Captain James Ludlow, then P.A. to the Harauti Political Agency, dated 11 February 1839.

⁸ VVV II.3, pp. 2016–17.

⁹ For jumping from a steep hill etc. cp. Catherine Weinberger-Thomas, *Cendres d’immortalité: La crémation des veuves en Inde*. Paris, 1996, pp. 80–81.

customs, which were proscribed in British India but not in Rajputana, the P.A. castigated as being against the *shâstras* of Manu, Yajñavalkya etc. He called them deliberate fabrications and identical with the crime of suicide. This, he urged, was why the Maharana had to ban sati and to discourage candidates and those of their families who lent support to them. A widow observing her *sati-dharm* whilst remaining alive would morally surpass a widow who would ascend the funeral pyre which was clearly the argument which had evolved in the course of the debate in Bengal.

Until 1848 the correspondence kept either pending or did not survive. In that year, however, the Maharana replied to a letter from [Lt.] Col. Thomas Robinson, P.A. of the Mewar Political Agency since 1839.¹⁰ In order to appreciate the contents and style of his rather brusque letter, we need to recall that in 1846 Robinson had been instrumental in reducing Mewar's tribute to the British by quite a noticeable amount and hence was expected to be *persona grata* with the Maharana.¹¹ The Maharana wrote,

... the Sahib's letter, written on Pos s. 7/12 January 1848 and referring to the issue of sati, has been received and its contents taken notice of. The reply [to the issue] had, in fact, been given [to you] earlier, namely, that the situation in this state is totally different from that of the rest of Rajasthan, and that it has come down by tradition and is [practised] for the sake of the redemption of [the *sati*'s] husband. As for what the Sahib writes about the authority of the *shâstras*, the rite of sati has been laid down in the *shâstras* of which copies have been forwarded [to you] which you may let the pandits read out to you. It is God who gives the *sat* as she does it, as was correctly observed for this region by the Sahib (Tod – MH). He has described this in [his] book, with which the Sahib (Robinson – MH) is acquainted ...".¹²

Svarup Singh's assertion was nourished by several ongoing discourses. The first one was that authored by Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, first published in 1829–32, where Tod emphasised the superiority of the Sisodias in age as well as in rank and where he treated the sati rite. The second discourse was that which had been

¹⁰ Vashishtha, "Abolition of sati", 1978, p. 104; Robinson held this office until his death in June 1850, *ibid.*, p. 112.

¹¹ Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, pp. 108–9.

¹² VV II.3, pp. 2017–18.

conducted in the neighbouring State of Jaipur, where it had led to the official ban on sati.¹³ The third one was that on the authority of the *shâstras* which had been conclusively debated in Bengal and with regard to which no fresh evidence seems to have been produced in Mewar, for whenever it was referred to in the correspondence, it was treated summarily.

The emphasis in Mewar lay on a self-assertive identity of the kin group, the Sisodia Rajputs, which was tremendously reinforced by Tod's account, which had assumed quasi-scriptural authority. The formation of the Rajput identity in the time preceding Tod had been rather a product of the exposure of the Rajputs to the Mughals and to groups with which they contested.¹⁴ Amongst the salient passages in which Tod emphasised the uniqueness of the Sisodias, the ruling clan of Udaipur/Mewar, there are the following,

Méwar exhibits a marked difference from all the other states in her policy and institutions. She was an old-established dynasty when these renovated scions were in embryo. We can trace the losses of Méwar, but with difficulty her acquisitions; while it is easy to note the gradual aggrandisement of Marwâr and Ambér, and all the minor states.¹⁵

and

These (the princes of the state of Mewar—MH) are styled *Ranas*, and are the elder branch of the Sooryavamsi, or 'children of the sun.' Another patronymic is Raghoovamsi, derived from a predecessor of Rama, the focal point of each scion of the solar race. To him, the conqueror of Lanka, the genealogists endeavour to trace the solar lines. The titles of many of these claimants are disputed; but the Hindu tribes yield unanimous suffrage to the prince of Méwar as the legitimate heir to the throne of Rama, and style him *Hindua Sooraj*, or 'Sun of the Hindus.' He is universally allowed to be the first of the 'thirty-six royal tribes'; nor has a doubt ever been raised respecting his purity of descent.¹⁶

¹³ Cp. Vashishtha, "Abolition of sati", 1969, pp. 133-34; Adolphe Joanne, "Abolition des suttees dans l'Inde". *Illustration, journal universel*, 27.12.1851, p. 31, col. 2-3.

¹⁴ Cp. for the issue of the history of a distinct Rajput identity Norman Ziegler, "Marvari historical chronicles: Sources for the social and cultural history of Rajasthan". *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 13,2, 1976, pp. 219-50.

¹⁵ James Tod (1929-32), *Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan*. 2 Vols. New Delhi, 1978 (reprint), Vol. 1, p. 113.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Tod's perception of sati,¹⁷ stripped of its critical overtones, was implicitly quoted by Svarup Singh. The passage, which he must have had in mind, runs thus,

Female immolation, therefore, originated with the sun-worshipping *Saivas*, and was common to all those nations who adored this the most splendid object of the visible creation. . . . Could we assign the primary cause of a custom so opposed to the first law of nature with the same certainty that we can prove its high antiquity, we might be enabled to devise some means for its abolition. The chief characteristic of *satim* is its expiating quality: for by this act of *faith*, the Sati not only makes atonement for the sins of her husband, and secures the remission of her own, but has the joyful assurance of reunion to the object whose beatitude she procures. Having once imbibed this doctrine, its fulfilment is powerfully aided by the heroism of character inherent in the Rajpootni.¹⁸

The second strand of discourse, which had an impact on Svarup Singh's attitude, was the sati issue as it had, then recently, been settled in Jaipur. That incident prevailed on the Maharana in a clearly negative way and, if anything, helped stiffen his position. Jaipur ranked third after Mewar and Marwar and this very ranking had been endorsed by the A.G.G. in 1842.¹⁹ This alone would have made it unlikely that the Maharana would have readily befriended any precedent decision made at the Jaipur court. The ranking, as it was authenticated also by the British, was a precious capital of symbolic power. The Sisodias, and quite likely other Rajputs, too, also looked down upon Jaipur as the *jūthā darbār*, "the lying court".²⁰

This was what had happened in Jaipur in 1846: the state had been under minority regency since 1835 which was to continue until 1851. The Council of Regency was presided over by the P.A., who from January 1844 to January 1848 was Major John Ludlow, a seasoned officer who had been P.A. of the Harauti Political Agency from 1837 to 1839, after which he became P.A. of Jaipur.²¹ Inspired

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 502-04.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 503.

¹⁹ Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, p. 55.

²⁰ James Tod, *Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan*, 1978, Vol. I, p. 520. Issues relevant in this connection may have been the affair of Ajit Singh of Marwar and Jaipur's allegedly especially shameless fraternization with the Mughals. Cp. G.D. Sharma, *Rajput polity: A study of politics and administration of the State of Marwar, 1638-1749*. New Delhi, 1977, pp. 233-41.

²¹ Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency, 1832-1858*, Jaipur, 1978.

by Lord Bentinck's achievement, Ludlow recruited two important court dignitaries for his battle against sati. One of them was Jaipur's Minister of Finance, Seth Manik Cand, an Oswal Jain and, by religious persuasion, averse to the sati custom. The other was the *rājguru*, Bhatt Sukhram Pandit.²² Ludlow, the *seth* and the *rājguru* managed to move the nobility to consent to the ban of sati. On 23 August 1846 the declaration of abolition was brought to the attention of all office-holders.²³ In it the custom was called "unbefitting and wrong (*ajog* and *beṽājabī*)" and a widow opting for sati "bad and sinful". Anyone abetting the self-immolation of a widow would be held guilty of a capital crime.

It seems that the Jaipur precedents had a sharper edge than the publicised declaration would readily disclose. Details of the debate were reported in contemporary papers.²⁴ Apart from adducing the by then well-established reasoning that the custom was not sanctioned by Manu and that a *sati* would act selfishly, because she would burn herself for the sake of the fruition of *karma* and hence with an unethical motive, one more argument was put forth by the reformers, namely, that the custom had been invented by a degenerate race who feared that their women might go astray and therefore had to be hindered by a means so sinister. Would Rajputs be really compelled to take resort to this, it was asked. Would they not lose their honour by suspecting that their women might falter?²⁵ This argument denounced the honour which was the corner-stone of their purported superior status of the Sisodia Rajputs. The edge of it could only be taken away by claiming that with the people concerned the state of affairs was entirely different from the rest of the Rajputs which was also the point made by Tod.

It was, of course, not only Mewar that was under pressure to abolish sati. The other states gave in one after the other until only Mewar was left. In Kota as much as in Bikaner the reaction on the part of the rulers was different from that of the Maharana. In 1854 Bikaner, without losing face, made a strategic retreat in the face of

²² Ibid., p. 246.

²³ Bhādrapada, s. 3, V.S. 1903; VV II.3, pp. 2019-20.

²⁴ *Quarterly Review*, on which Adolphe Joanne, "Abolition des sutties dans l'Inde". *L'Illustration, journal universel*, 27 December 1851, based his own report. I am grateful to C. Clémentin-Ojha for drawing my attention to and providing me with a copy of Joanne's article.

²⁵ A. Joanne, "Abolition des sutties dans l'Inde", 1851, p. 31, col. 1.

political superiority.²⁶ The Maharaja forbade and penalised the custom for which he gave the reason that the British, who considered it identical with suicide and capital crime, respectively, were averse to it. This happened after the A.G.G. had threatened the Maharaja that he would suspend the political relations with his state, a measure also used with the other recalcitrant states. In Kota, as much as in other states of the Harauti Political Agency, the P.A. had tried to talk the Maharao round to his cause as early as 1840. The prince had promised to try his best to stop sati, but in fact did nothing, so that the custom was only penalised much later, at a time when all states except Mewar eventually yielded to the British pressure.²⁷

The debate with Mewar went on. In 1856²⁸ the Maharana issued a decree which was addressed to all office-holders. Under the pressure exercised by the British authorities, he made a move which would document that he was prepared to comply with the British request and yet would save his honour. He achieved this by espousing the argument of social welfare. The decree runs as follows,

If a woman wants to become a *sati* out of love for her husband, because of quarrels with her family, because she is worried for her sons' or daughters' marriages, because of debts, because of excessive household expenses or because she cannot feed [her family], then this is a matter of emotional disturbance. In this matter the following order is given to all of Mewar's nobles, brothers, sons, *thākurs*, officers, administrators, *patels*, *patvārīs*, *senās*, *bhomiś*, ordinary men and everyone else, namely: If she causes trouble, you must hinder her. If this happens out of love for her husband . . . (here follows the same casuistic enumeration as above—MH), you must carefully explain to her that the above was decreed so that the rights which she enjoys be strengthened, that what she wants to be done will be granted, and that the Court will provide for her livelihood. And after having explained it to her carefully, you must not detain her, for this would be an offence against the woman who was about to create the problem. This order has been given to the authorities of the *parganā*, dictated, written and authenticated on Wednesday, Shrâvana s. 12, V.S. 1913.²⁹

The offer to procure relief to destitute widows, who would not range in the category of genuine *satis*, was thus a subterfuge for ignoring

²⁶ Mâgha s. 13, V.s. 1911; VV II.3. pp. 2020–21.

²⁷ Vashishtha, "Abolition of Sati", 1969, p. 131; Joanne, "Abolition des sutties", 1851, p. 31, col. 1.

²⁸ Shrâvana s. 12, V.S., 1913.

²⁹ VV II.3, pp. 2022–23.

the issue as it was at stake in the eyes of the British. When they expressed their displeasure at the missing efficacy of the Maharana's decree, he contended that his nobility would not agree to the abolishment of the custom. In fact, the entire question had been tied up with the internal power contests between the Maharana and an important Mewar chief and his faction and was thus politically and ideologically exploited. The rift between the British and the Maharana's positions was further widened by the fact that the sati issue had in the course of the debate become mixed up with the issue of witchcraft. The persecution and torture unto death of witches was endemic in Rajasthan and especially in the Bhil tracts of Mewar, and it met with Rajput support.³⁰ The common denominator of both customs was, in the eyes of the British, that they were superstitious and barbarous. Though considered powerful, witchcraft was not really an issue of Rajput honour. However, confounded with issues of honour, one suspects that the defence of the custom was pursued with disproportionate tenacity on the part of the Maharana of Mewar.³¹ In fact, ideology turned a lever of immediate political power with the conflicting parties in Mewar itself. The power constellation in Mewar was governed by the Maharana opposed by the Thakur of Salumbar, who had been the hereditary premier of Mewar until the death of the then Thakur in 1849, when the Maharana decided to cut this privilege of the Salumbar chief. This triggered a conflict of prestige and power between the chief's successor and the Maharana in which the Maharana was supported by the British.³² The conflict dragged on, and it does not come as a surprise that finally in 1857 the Salumbar faction sided with the rebels. In any case, the issue of sati and witchcraft came in handy. The nobility charged the Maharana of 'ingratiating himself with the British "at the expense of his ancestors"'.³³

After 1857 the British were in a position to enforce their will. The Maharana was compelled to issue another notification, which has survived in a memorandum of 1859.³⁴ Once again he circumvented

³⁰ VV II.3, p. 2039; Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, p. 248.

³¹ The Maharana resisted the prohibition of the persecution of witches until well after it had been proclaimed by the British authorities in Mewar. Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, pp. 251–52.

³² Vashishtha, *Rajputana Agency*, 1978, pp. 109–11.

³³ Vashishtha, "Abolition of sati", 1969, p. 137.

³⁴ Kārūka b. 5, V.S. 1916; VV II.3, pp. 2029–30.

the central issue which would have affected his notion of Rajput honour. He gave advice on how to proceed if a widow was determined to commit sati. Here he was concerned with genuine *satis*, that is, with women prompted by *sat*, the divine gift of "truthfulness" which enabled them to become *satis*. The woman should be persuaded, threatened or be hindered by the state officials. If she refused to comply, resorted to fasting (or rather hunger strike) and nothing would prevail on her, she should be allowed to undergo the ordeal which would prove the sincerity of her wish (locking in, fire ordeal). If the ordeal proved that her *sat* was genuine, she was to be allowed to immolate herself on a pyre appropriately prepared so as to ensure fast cremation. If she changed her mind, panicked and tried to escape she was not to be forced back on the pyre, but be freed from her anguish, lest the judicial officer would step in to redress the case. A widow faltering to fulfil her *sat* was to be sent to a pilgrimage site where she was to engage in religious pursuits while being sustained by her relatives.

The P.A., Eden, was quick to observe the moot point in this and made an elaborate rejoinder, namely,³⁵

The letter which you sent in reply to my letter of 21 July 1859, re. the problem of fresh incidents of sati etc., has been received. In this you reply with regard to some particulars that you had answered to the letters of the Honourable Sahibs by enclosing appropriate copies of the assertions given by the *shāstras*. [You put forth] that the customs of your state were often quite different often from those of other states, that in your state the custom of sati had come down from ancient times, and that in order to prohibit it you could only resort to persuasion and to the promise of providing sustenance. However, if despite this the *sati* wanted to join her [deceased] husband, [you asserted that] in that case you would be helpless for reasons of religion (*dharm*), and that this then would not be considered suicide, and that this would hold good for all the four *yugas*, and that in the notification, which was endorsed by Your Highness, it had been ordained that there should not be interfered with the religion of other people. The text [of your letter] is perfectly clear. However, considering the various aspects of its contents, the reasons [which you gave] seem surprising, because—grace be to God!—you have a good sense of what the present time requires; you are a discriminating, intelligent and wise chief. It is also obvious that there exists a great difference between former times and the present. For men of today face issues which they

³⁵ Urdu translation of a Persian letter, 22 November 1859; VV II.3, pp. 2031–32.

would have hardly faced in former times. Consequently, it is quite clear that the British authorities want to stop this custom only out of compassion and with the desire to save human lives. In your letter Your Highness mentions the precedent that in your notification you said that you would not interfere with anyone's religion and that you thought that it ran against the contents of the decree to stop the practice. This letter here is a commentary on the contents of your notification. In your notification you wrote the following, namely, that no faith must be considered having precedence over another and that there must not happen interference with anyone's religious customs. This here is the appropriate place to consider that as for the prohibition of sati, there cannot be drawn any conclusion against it from the two above-mentioned arguments, for neither would it mean giving one faith precedence over another nor would it bring about misery on anyone. On the contrary, the entire deliberation intends to avoid misery and to save human lives. For the same reason, the prohibition [of sati] is also not against what the *shāstras* assert in various ways. It is greatly surprising that you understand that act (sati—MH) to be different from suicide, for in this matter there can by any good reason be no doubt that it is suicide, indeed, and it is unnecessary to argue over this. Moreover, as for the injunctions of the *shāstra*, there can be no doubt that that very *shāstra* subsumes the case of sati in that of suicide. Finally, you argue that according to the various *shāstras* it is rightful to surrender one's life in that way, but by this the argument that [sati is] suicide is not proved false. Also according to the *shāstra* there is a strong argument in favour of asserting it as suicide, for after the performance of sati the *nārāyanabali* has to be executed in consequence of such incidents of death as imply great sin or suicide or cases related to this kind of killing and that the *nārāyanabali* has to be carried out after each incident of this kind of death.³⁶ At any rate, there can be no doubt that [sati] is, indeed, suicide and the above-mentioned arguments provide ample scope to make them the basis for the abolishment of sati. However, from your letter, which, according to you, you wrote as a well-wisher of the Government and while therefore it would have been befitting that you follow the right course as had been desired by the Honourable Government, it becomes quite clear that you have no intention whatsoever to prohibit the custom, but that your views run opposite to this . . .”

As a footnote to this it may be quickly added that in summer 1861³⁷ the Maharana decreed that from now on sati would be banned and

³⁶ The *nārāyanabali* is described by the *Mitāksharā* on *Yājñavalkyasmṛiti* III.6 as a rite of atonement of the guilt of suicide which has to be performed before the *shrāddha* is offered for the sake of the deceased; Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmashāstra*. Poona, 1973, IV, p. 302, p. 532.

³⁷ *Shrāvana* b. 1, V.S. 1918; VV II.3, pp. 2037–38.

penalised. He did so under the pressure from the British which had reached its peak in 1860, when the A.G.G. had visited Udaipur and, because of the pending conflict about sati, had declined to see the Maharana.³⁸

William F. Eden's letter epitomises a conflict between two social and ideological concepts. The Rajputs, here the Sisodias, represented a kin group within a hierarchically structured society. In the words of Peter Berger "in such groups honour is a direct expression of status, a source of solidarity among social equals and a demarcation line against social inferiors".³⁹ In such a group honour is also the value which induces an individual to risk his life for the sake of his group. Risking or sacrificing one's life also stabilises the entire group because such an act confirms the group's central values. This is also why honour and fight are twins.⁴⁰ This concept, as recently underscored by Stagl,⁴¹ is a prime factor of stability with groups which are organised on the basis of kin, locality and hierarchical status and in which a person asserts himself by asserting his group. Honour, which comprises the self-sacrifice of widows, in a Rajput group falling under this description, is naturally religiously legitimised by calling it eternally valid. The *sati* of the sati candidate is what essentially constitutes honour. It is "truthfulness", divinely bestowed and a fire internally consuming her, an attribute which is complementary to the male Rajput's truthfulness and valour.

In Svarup Singh's views there are also reflected two modern arguments, both of which, however, did not affect his basic position. One was that of welfare which would anyway only apply to cases which did not range as genuine. A *sati* would be the holder of *sati*, divinely inspired and set ablaze by that very *sati*, while a widow in despair would commit a mundane act of suicide. The other modern argument was that of non-interference which figured prominently in the relationship between the British and the Rajput princes. Here it was applied by the Maharana in order to declare himself unauthorised to intercept sati.

The opposite party was in superior power. In this position and

³⁸ Vashishtha, "Abolition of sati", 1969, p. 138.

³⁹ Peter Berger, "On the obsolescence of the concept of honor", *Archives européennes des sociologie*, 11, p. 340.

⁴⁰ Justin Stagl, "Die Ehre des Wissenschaftlers". In: Ludgera Vogt & Arnold Zingerle (eds.), *Ehre: Archaische Momente in der Moderne*. Frankfurt, 1994, p. 38.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 39.

hence in a threatening manner, it articulated a concept debunking that of the Rajputs. The British denounced the honour and thus the value system of the Rajputs as contingent and set against this the principle of a universal ethos and their ethically motivated concern for the individual, for they asserted that they acted out of compassion and in order to save lives. This ethos was also presented as the value of modernity superseding tradition. Individual concern and ethos appeared thus at once as universally and absolutely valid and as both eternal and modern against honour which, especially in its rather sinister ramifications, was seen as contingent and outdated. This stance is to some extent also apparent in Tod's treatment of sati. He admired the *sati*'s perfect compliance with her institutional role but saw the custom as "opposed to the first law of nature", which is just another way of emphasising that human dignity and the right of the individual to life are eternally valid. This is also why he was convinced that the custom of sati could be abolished if only we were able to trace its historic origin, hence the reason which had caused the eternal law to be overshadowed.

The root conflict between honour and ethos is not one which could be produced exclusively in a colonial society. It is well known that, for example, the Indian tradition of Bhakti in principle denounced sati. The value system as it was conceived by Bhakti was supposed to transcend caste, creed and group loyalties. The ties of kinship would be superseded by the Bhakti covenant of faith. Partly this is also why certain Bhakti groups were so anxiously engaged in replacing blood by spiritual relationship. In a pre-modern setting this attitude conflicted radically with the given social system and met with serious difficulty to gain momentum. It is thus that the colonial situation actuated a conflict of values virtually also possible in the indigenous context. In the colonial context the conflict was however, much more existentially threatening than it could have been ever before, because the very foundations of locally restricted groups were now shaken by a politically powerful opponent who presented himself as the champion of modern, catholic values shared by the totality of civilised mankind.

The plight of the representatives of the obsolescing social system is pathetically exemplified by Shyamaldas's, the chronicler's, own concluding commentary on the issue of sati. Using a modern statistical argument which comes in handy to belittle the impact of problematic phenomena, he said that in any case only one or at the

most two percent of all widows had committed sati. As a witness of several incidents of sati he said that he could not help admire these women, "for be it as it may, the courage of women, who burn themselves out of love, has to be ranked even higher than that [required] at the time of battle".⁴² By drawing this comparison he effortlessly tied sati to the wider notion of Rajput honour.

⁴² VV II.3, pp. 2038–39.

PERSONS

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PERSONS AS INTERPRETORS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

The second section deals with different scholar-administrators and their respective roles as interpreters of Indian society. British, French and Scottish Orientalists as well as Indian scholars living as immigrants in Britain, all shaped different perspectives of cultural colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Bayly analyses the work and activities of two British subaltern Orientalists, Major Francis Wilford (resident of Benares from 1788–1822) and James Robert Ballantyne (Superintendent of the Benares College from 1845–1861). Their re-interpretations of texts from puranic and western mythology and debates “in search for Humanity’s ancient knowledge” not only responded to but also helped shape intellectual concerns. Bayly focuses the intellectual history of the Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia associated with pre-British administration and places of learning in the Benares region. How did the debates between European Orientalists and Indians contribute to the reinvention of Indian tradition and to Indian self-confidence? In spite of the imbalance of power, generated by colonialism, Bayly maintains the thesis, that “the Anglo-Indian encounter could encompass a series of creative and critical debates taking place in an emerging public sphere which drew on both indigenous and western forms of logical argument and learned communication”. Another way of locating colonial knowledge in the context of intellectual and social history, is presented by Gaboricau in his narrative of French orientalism. In the framework of Western perceptions of the religious and social practices of South Asian Muslims, he discusses the cult of Muslim saints, *fakîrs*, common pilgrims and festivities vis-à-vis the Wahhabi as described by the French Orientalist Joseph Eliodore Sagesse Vertu Garcin de Tassy (1794–1878). Garcin de Tassy’s ethnographic view on South Asian Islam focused an exotic and picturesque perspective and developed a sympathy for Sufis and folk religion. His trilateral categorisation of Islam in esoteric, exoteric and popular Islam was soon complemented by Indian Muslims. Moreover, Garcin de Tassy’s Catholic background influenced his perception of Islamic culture, which can be envisaged in his comparison of Muslim and Christian saints.

Turning towards Indian perceptions and representations of Indian and British society Fisher argues, that Indians under British rule and cultural domination retained some scope for negotiation in both Asia and Britain. The literary genre “written by himself”—a form of legitimising narrative common in the late 18th and early 19th centuries—stands as important counter-example to otherwise one-sided perceptions of Europeans observing the colonised through “imperial eyes”. The respective autoethnographic and autobiographical narratives by two immigrants from Bengal, the Armenian Emin Joseph Emin (1726–1809) and the Muslim Dean Mahomet (1759–1851) were mainly written for an anglophone audience. The authors resisted European statements of cultural hegemony and asserted their own representations of Asian as well as British culture and identity. “These representations reveal the complexity and hybridity of the imperial process and the ongoing negotiations between Asians and Britons about European conceptions of Asian and European roles in India”. Returning to the perception of Islamic and Indian cultures in Muslim, Brahmin and European debates, Powell focuses reciprocal relationships developed between European and Indian scholar-administrators. The Scottish and Evangelical John Muir (1810–82) and William Muir (1819–1905) made significant contributions to Orientalist knowledge about the sources of Indian religious and social systems, e.g., rehistoricising and chronologising the biography of the Prophet. At the same time they served as transmitters for continental Orientalist scholarship to an English readership in India and Britain. The reciprocity is evident in new explanations of Hinduism and Islam expressed by Indian scholars, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan or Nilakantha Goreh or the north Indian and Muslim Maulawis Karim al-Din (c. 1822–79) and ‘Imad al-Din (1831–1900) in response to the writings of the Muir brothers. Thus, Orientalist interpretations of Hindu, Muslim and British cultures initiated a dialogue marked by reciprocity.

ORIENTALISTS, INFORMANTS AND CRITICS IN BENARES, 1790-1860

C.A. BAYLY

This chapter focuses on the work and Indian connections of two lesser-known British orientalists, Francis Wilford, who resided in Benares from 1788 to 1822, and James Robert Ballantyne, who was Superintendent of the Benares College from 1845 to 1861. As a study of British interpretations of Indian society it follows in the tradition of G.D. Bearce, Eric Stokes, Ranajit Guha, David Kopf and other historians of the ideology of Empire. Recently, interest in the intellectual history of British rule in India has been reawakened by the debate about orientalism in anthropology and literary studies. Ronald Inden's *Imagining India* (1990) tried, for example, to give a comprehensive overview of British intellectual constructions of the subcontinent. This work has all been of high calibre, but one problem with much of it has been that it tends to apply a relatively simple model of intellectual genealogy in which great metropolitan thinkers influenced the policies of powerful Europeans in the periphery. It sometimes gives too little agency to intellectual constructs formed in India itself out of the day-to-day collisions of colonial politics and the rulers' observation of specific indigenous phenomena.

In another sense, however, some of the most recent contributions have been too little metropolitan because they have obscured the extent to which debates about the East were built on the foundation of distinctions and differences already generated in the context of the study of European history and sociology. This over-concentration on the European stereotyping of India with reference to caste and religion in particular, has recently been critiqued by Nigel Leask, Javed Majeed, Susan Bayly and Norbert Peabody.¹

¹ Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*. Cambridge, 1992; Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings. James Mill's History of British India and Orientalism*. Oxford, 1992; Norbert Peabody, "Tod's Rajasthan and the boundaries of imperial rule in nineteenth century India". *Modern Asian Studies*, 30, 1, 1996, pp. 141-70; Susan Bayly, "'Caste' and 'race' in the colonial ethnography of India". In:

Here we seek to highlight the ideas and projects of two subalterns of orientalism whose creative re-interpretations of European master texts in the context of local circumstances both responded to, and helped shape the intellectual concerns of their Indian environment. The chapter stresses what Eugene Irschick has called the dialogical element in their thought and programmes.² Wilford, Ballantyne and their comperes remained responsive to the ideologies and methods of their Indian informants and critics even at times when they disparaged them. The chapter consequently also concerns the intellectual history of the Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia of the Benares region, their perceptions of each other and their view of the British. It forms part of an attempt to locate the study of "colonial knowledge" in a more precise context of intellectual and social history. And it also suggests that, despite the inequalities generated by colonialism, the Anglo-Indian encounter could encompass a series of creative and critical debates taking place in an emerging public sphere which drew on both indigenous and western forms of logical argument and learned communication. What happened in these debates can sometimes be seen as a process of mutual teaching and learning. It need not always be not be squeezed into the procrustean beds represented by the concepts of colonial domineering and Indian resistance.

Context: the search for Humanity's ancient knowledge in Benares

Between 1400 and 1700 several Indian cities established themselves as symbolic centres with reputations which spread beyond their home regions. Delhi and Agra became exemplary political models for the north, while Nayaka Kumbakonam has recently been interpreted a symbol of reinvented imperial power in south India. Benares, for its part, became for many Hindus and some Muslims, an icon of universal knowledge and enlightenment.³ The magnetic power of Benares

P. Robb (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia*. Delhi, 1995, pp. 165–218; Lynn Zastoupil, *James Mill and India*. Berkeley, 1995.

² Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History. Constructing South India, 1795–1895*. Berkeley, 1994; another excellent example of "dialogic" history is Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*. Richmond, 1993.

³ Benares is a city with a fine historiography and sociology. I have used, among many other works, Motichandra, *Kāshī kā Itihāsa*. Bombay, 1963, esp. pp. 420–29 on Pandits; Diana Eck, *Benares City of Light*. London, 1983; J. Parry, *Death in Benares*. Cambridge, 1994; Nita Kumar, *The Artisans of Benares*. Princeton, 1988; S.A.A. Rizvi, *Shah Wali Allah and his times*. Canberra, 1981, pp. 89, 90, 183, 387–88; S. Freitag

or Kashi (the "Illustrious") transcended its ancient celebrity as one of the most important of the holy places on the river Ganges. It began to outrank the cities of Gaya and Allahabad which had once claimed higher status in their *mahâtmayâs* or pilgrimage chronicles. In broad terms, this was a result of the unification of India under the Mughals. Benares was ideally placed to act as a crossroads between different linguistic regions. Pilgrims could now actually make the journey recommended in the medieval *purânic* cosmologies and epics. The Benares *pândas* (bathing priests and genealogists) now reached out westwards for custom amongst the kings of Rajasthan and late, Maharashtra, while newly rich Bengalis came from the east to make their home in the holy city.

In the course of the sixteenth century Pandits learned in the major schools of philosophy came to Benares from southern and western India to mingle with the local Kanyakubja and Maithila Brahmins already resident there. These learned men were established in the gardens of the merchants of a city which was already an important commercial centre well before the decline of Agra, Delhi and Lahore in the eighteenth century. Among the classical sciences, *Vyākaraṇa* Grammar and the *Nyāya Vaisheshika* branch of philosophy were particularly cultivated in Benares. Both systems were characterised by strict structures of logical distinction; and while neither can be regarded as an administrative science in a modern sense, adepts of both disciplines seem to have been welcome as counsellors at the regional Hindu courts of the north. The development of these logical sciences was indirectly connected, therefore, with the growth of Indian state power.

Being a centre of ritual, Benares had also developed a strong intellectual tradition in the Hindu astral sciences, or *jyotiḥśāstra* and particularly in the precise medieval schools of Siddhantic astronomy. Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur, a senior noble of the Mughal Empire, established one of his four observatories in the city in the early eighteenth century.⁴

The reputation of Benares as a place of learning spread well beyond the circles of orthodox Brahminism. Precisely because it was

(ed.), *Culture and Power in Benares. Community, performance and environment, 1800–1989*. Berkeley, 1989.

⁴ W. Hunter, "Some account of the astronomical labours of Jaysinha, Raja of Amhere or Jaynagar". *Asiatick Researches*, 5, 1798, pp. 177–86.

a centre of ritual, it attracted the attention, of those in the devotional Bhakti tradition who worshipped the transcendent deity through service of incarnated gurus. Ironically, even those who came to denounce ritual established themselves in its heart, as the Christian missionaries were to do in the nineteenth century. So sectarians such as the followers of Kabir, Sadhs, and Nanakpanthi Sikhs settled in or near the city between 1500 and 1700.

For similar reasons and also because large communities of Muslim weavers congregated in the Madanpura locality of Benares, the city also became the home of Sufi teachers, particularly members of the Qadiri order. These saints commonly counted Hindus amongst their pupils. Lying across the route from Delhi to the Mughal Empire's richest province, Bengal, Benares inevitably received many learned Muslim visitors. The eighteenth century Persian mystic, Shah Muhammad Hazin settled there. He had once denounced India as a "dunghill", but still wrote that "all Brahmins in Benares were Ram",⁵ anticipating the poet Ghalib's comment of the following century that Benares was the "Mecca of India."⁶

Even before the time of the Emperor Akbar, some Muslims in India had come to believe that the Shastras contained both practical knowledge and traces of antique virtue which predated the prophetic tradition. This was particularly likely to be the case if they adhered to the idea of the "unity of being" in the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabi. The attention paid to the city by Akbar and later by the latitudinarian Mughal prince, Dara Shikoh, strengthened the mutual regard between adherents of the two traditions. One of the most celebrated of the seventeenth-century Hindu learned men, Kavindracharya, was enlisted as an informant in Abul Fazl's project of translating the knowledge of the Brahmins for the use of the Mughal court. Thereafter broad-minded of the Muslim scholars continued to come to discourse with the Pandits on history, cosmology and the early history of mankind as did the administrator historian, Khair al-Din Khan, in the eighteenth century.⁷

Benares and its lore continued to exercise a degree of fascination

⁵ F.C. Belfour (tr.), *The Life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin written by himself*. London, 1830, p. 279; cf. Rizvi, *Shah Wali Allah and his times*, p. 188.

⁶ S.A.I. Tirmizi, *Persian Letters of Ghalib*. Delhi, 1969, p. 23; Ralph Russell & Khurshidul Islam, *Ghalib, 1797-1869, Life and Letters*. London, 1969.

⁷ F.C. Curwen (tr.), Khairuddin Khan Illahabadi, "Tuhfa-i-Taza", entitled *The Bulwuntnamah*. Allahabad, 1875, pp. 87-8.

for the Muslim administrators who served the Bengal regime of Alivardi Khan and later that of the English East India Company. These men, sometimes Shias of the Usuli tradition, were practised in rationalistic natural philosophy (*hikmat*). An important mentor of several of these administrative families was Muhammad Reza Khan who was a Deputy-Governor of Bengal under Robert Clive.⁸ Himself born into an Iranian medical and administrative family, Muhammad Reza Khan drew on Akbar's traditions of dispassionate statecraft and instructed his British masters in good government. The pupil-teacher relationship in administrative law and natural philosophy was continued by his pupil, 'Ali Ibrahim Khan, who was appointed by Warren Hastings to be Chief Judge of Benares in 1783. A Persian scholar who wrote a collective biography (*tadhkirah*) of the literary men of eastern India, 'Ali Ibrahim was in turn "master and teacher in government" of Maulawi 'Abd al-Kadir Khan, a diplomat for the Company in Nepal and central India. As "Maratha a expert" 'Abd al-Kadir Khan became an intermediary between the British and Amrit Rao, the Maratha Peshwa's brother who resided in Benares.

Early British commentators on the Sanskrit language and literature, such as Josiah Holwell, Alexander Dow and William Jones learned Hindus through Persian translations and the good offices of their Persian secretaries (*munshîs*). This tri-lateral relationship of interpretation and mutual enlightenment survived into the later eighteenth century in upper India. Taking a cue from his Muslim informants, Jones himself regarded Benares as the leading "university" of the East, and coeval in wisdom with the schools of Memphis, Alexandria and Athens. He pondered the idea of seeking information on Hindu law from its "rectors".⁹ It is striking that it was from 'Ali Ibrahim Khan, and not directly from the Pandits, that Jones acquired his first copy of the Laws of Manu, the key classical political text. 'Ali Ibrahim himself had also long been in search of what Jones called "the pure spring of Hindu law". The learned discussion that Jones held with 'Ali Ibrahim in the Judge's House, Patna, during

⁸ Abdul Majeed Khan, *The Transition in Bengal 1756-75*. Cambridge, 1969; "Jaghare of Moolvy Abdool Kadir Khan". *Board's Collections* 1323/52452, Oriental and India Office Collections, London; I have traced these political genealogies in some detail, in *Empire and Information. Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*. Cambridge, 1996, pp. 78-89.

⁹ Jones to C. Chapman, March 1785, Garland Cannon (ed.), *The Letters of Sir William Jones*. Oxford, 1970, ii, p. 667.

March 1788 was a critical moment in the encounter between British orientalism, Muslim rationalism and the Hindu sciences.¹⁰

While we do not know what 'Ali Ibrahim said to Jones, something of the rationalistic approach to Hindu knowledge which he and his circle favoured can be recovered from a paper which he wrote for the first volume of Jones' *Asiatick Researches* on the practice of trial by ordeal among the Hindus of Benares.¹¹ He states that he believed in the supremacy of reason and not in superstition. But logic demanded that he allow the trial by ordeal to proceed in his court. First, he reasoned, both sides agreed to such a trial. Secondly, Hindu law books which he respected allowed such trials on occasion and, thirdly, it was plain that no decision could be reached in the case otherwise. Trained in "natural philosophy" (presumably *hikmat* in the original Persian), he did not initially believe that a man could hold a red hot ball in his hands for several minutes without being burned. But he had to accept the evidence of his senses. True to his training in Greco-Islamic medicine and factual observation, he stated that he had given an account of the event so that learned men might be able to repeat and verify the experiment in the future.

Eighteenth century Bengal and upper India were the scenes of rapine, pillage and exploitation by the British and by Indian powers. Yet, as these incidents indicate, this era also witnessed a degree of ecumenical debate and philosophical engagement between different learned traditions which, though distinct in logical method and cosmology, still believed they retained some knowledge and assumptions in common. By the mid-nineteenth century, the terms of debate had altered radically as this chapter will show. The reception of European historicist, evangelical and utilitarian texts certainly legitimated these changes. They were given meaning, however, by specific local conflicts in the politics of knowledge. One paradigmatic example of the encounter and "mutual perceptions" of the British, their Muslim informants and the Pandits in the later eighteenth century occurred in Benares itself. This was the strange case of Francis Wilford, the *purānas* and the drunkenness of Noah.

¹⁰ Jones to Warren Hastings, 7 January, 1785, *ibid*, 658; cf. p. 664.

¹¹ 'Ali Ibrahim Khan, "On trial by ordeal among the Hindus". *Asiatick Researches*, 1788, pp. 395–6.

Wilford, the Pandits and the universality of knowledge

Major Francis Wilford (1751, or 1761–1822) is said to have arrived in India as an ensign of the Company's army in 1781.¹² There was a persistent but unproven belief among his contemporaries and later commentators that he was of Hanoverian or Swiss descent, and that he had later changed his name. His unusually wide linguistic range might indeed point both to the earlier age of birth and to a continental European connection. Wilford was assistant to the Surveyor-General, 1786–90, surveying and creating military route maps in Bihar before he later moved with his section to Benares. During this period he met the learned Muslim, Mughal Beg, whom he later described as his "friend". Mughal Beg appears to have been an aide for the Survey and he was later to carry out large scale exploration for Wilford in north-western India.

Wilford also became a novice member of the circle of Sanskrit scholars and orientalists associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal which included William Jones, H.H. Wilson, Charles Wilkins and H.T. Colebrooke. In 1794 Wilford retired from the army but was allowed to settle in Benares where he became Secretary to the Committee of the Sanskrit College, recently founded in the city by the British Resident, Jonathan Duncan. Wilford continued to exercise great influence in the College, and just before his death he was still trying to get his own nominee the position of Chief Pandit there. He married an Indian woman, Khanum Bibi Sahib, and their daughters in turn married Company officials and soldiers.

Wilford's establishment in Benares aroused much comment. He employed a large staff of Pandit copyists and translators and had become "brahminised" according to a later reformist Hindu traveller. He procured and sent many manuscripts and manuscript copies to H.H. Wilson and other orientalists. Wilson's own researches into the Sanskrit grammarians, especially Panini, were largely built upon the findings of Wilford. He also built up his own large library. After his death in 1822, Edward Fell another scholar of Panini and Superintendent of the Sanskrit College wrote to Wilson in irritation "Mother

¹² V.C.P. Hodson, *List of Officers of the Bengal Army, 1758–1834*. London, 1947, pp. 467–8; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1823, i, p. 568; R. Phillimore, *Historical Memoir of the Survey of India*, i. Dehra Doon, 1948, pp. 395–7; Antoine de Monserrate, *Mongolicae Legationis Commentarius, or the First Jesuit Mission to Akbar*. Ed. H. Hosten. *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1914, p. 526 n. 4; pp. 693–6.

Wilford [Khanum Bibi] is forming a catalogue of her books (the Mss. are reckoned too sacred for any inspection, excepting from her Mahommedan paramours!!)".¹³

Wilford, an eccentric subaltern in the army of orientalism, has had rough treatment from contemporaries and historians. Bernard Cohn notes him only as a military engineer and commentator on Benares' unpleasant drainage system. Garland Cannon blames him for misleading his hero, Sir William Jones, and implies that his Indian languages were poor which seems to be untrue. Joseph Schwartzberg recognises Wilford's importance in the history of Indian cartography but denounces his "gullibility".¹⁴

At least in one sense, that gullibility was also recognised by his contemporaries. In 1788 Wilford had published a long text of baroque complexity in the *Asiatick Researches* in which he claimed to have found innumerable references in the *purâṇas* to Ancient Egypt, its kings and holy places.¹⁵ He came to the conclusion that a group of Indians had settled on the Nile, that Egyptian and Hindu learning had been linked, and that western learning transmitted through the Greeks was consequently of partly Hindu origin. If not today's "Black Athena" he would certainly have recognised "Asian Athena". Later, however, Wilford was forced to admit in a long and humiliating note in the same journal that between 1793 and 1805 he had been systematically duped by his head Pandit.¹⁶

The importance of the incident of the deception of Wilford is that it became the theme of a general campaign by European intellec-

¹³ Fell to Wilson, 6 June 1822, Wilson Papers Mss. E. 301-1, OIOC.

¹⁴ J. Schwartzberg, "Traditional south Asian Cartography". In: J.B. Harvey & David Woodward, *A History of Cartography*, ii, i. Chicago, 1992, pp. 299-300, esp. n. 28 (I should add that, notwithstanding this, I regard Schwartzberg's work as one of the high points of South Asian scholarship in the last generation); since completing this chapter I have also seen Nigel Leask, "Francis Wilford and the Colonial construction of Hindu Geography 1799-1822". Unpubl. Ms. Leask interprets Wilford as a "romantic geographer" and applies Homi Bhabha's notion of "hybridity" and "mimicry" to his texts. I am most grateful to Dr. Leask for his comments on my contribution.

¹⁵ F. Wilford, "On Egypt and Other countries adjacent to the Coli River or Nile of Ethiopia from the ancient books of the Hindus". *Asiatick Researches*, iii, 1799, pp. 295-9ff.; for background, Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*. Cambridge Mass., 1959, and for the deeper deist tradition, R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*. London, 1678; David Hume, *Natural History of Religion*. Edinburgh, 1757.

¹⁶ F. Wilford, "An Essay on the Sacred Isles in the west and other essays connected with that work". *Asiatick Researches*, viii, 1805, pp. 246-376.

tuals to disparage Indian learning, which had previously been regarded with some respect, even if contemporary Indians were felt to be unworthy inheritors of it. The *cause célèbre* of Wilford was broadcast by the evangelical former Company official, Sir John Shore, Lord Teignmouth, in his life of Sir William Jones.¹⁷ It was taken up by the early Anglo-Indian press and led to a flurry of other claims of deception by Indian informants in the fields of medicine, astronomy and literature.¹⁸ Wilford fanned the flames of this disenchantment himself. In failing health, he constantly complained to his correspondents. He wrote to Wilson that he was “really disgusted with the blunders, anachronisms, contradictions, etc., of the *purānics* [Pandits versed in the Puranas] and their followers.”¹⁹ Wilford gradually retreated from the study of Sanskrit literature in general where he felt he was in danger of “splitting upon slocks [*ślokas*, verses]” to a study of geography. At the end of his life he was comparing “five or six geographical texts in Sanskrit” with the corpus of classical Greek and Latin literature. This much leaner and less speculative later work on “the geography of ancient India” was published posthumously.²⁰

Wilford’s head Pandit did indeed “impose” upon him, and indirectly upon Jones, who made use of some of Wilford’s early findings, despite an initial scepticism about them. The Pandit had apparently sacked the staff of subordinate translators which Wilford had hired and diverted their salaries into building a luxurious palace for himself on the banks of the Ganges. Required to undergo a regular Research Assessment Exercise at the hands of his employer, the Pandit began to insert forged pages into the *purāna* manuscripts while changing *purānic* place names into ones which corresponded to Egyptian or Greek words. On one occasion he heroically composed 12,000 completely new Sanskrit verses himself. Having been a *purānic* specialist for a major Maratha prince these inventive efforts came to him naturally.

¹⁷ Lord Teignmouth, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings and Correspondence of Sir William Jones to which have been added some autobiographical letters addressed by Sir William to Charles Wilkins, Esq.* London, 1804, preface p. xii; a copy with the original letters is in Mss. Eur. C227, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.

¹⁸ Treated more fully in my *Empire and Information*, pp. 268–71.

¹⁹ Wilford to Wilson, 3 April 1819, Wilson Papers 1, OIOC.

²⁰ F. Wilford, “On the Ancient Geography of India”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, xx, 1851, pp. 227–72; pp. 470–86.

Wilford's case is more than a story of duplicity in Anglo-Indian relationships; it tells us much about the mutual perceptions of the learned of Europe and Asia at a crucial point in the history of orientalist learning. Wilford has been stigmatised as "gullible" by Schwartzberg because he was looking for classical, Biblical and Egyptian place names in the Puranas and failed to recognise that these texts were not "scientific" so much as "cosmographical". But it is also naive of a modern commentator to expect western intellectual history to be a linear progression in the history of scientific rationalism. Men of Wilford's generation understood human knowledge not as something to be discovered by progress into the future. They felt that almost everything was once known by the Ancients and that Humanity's common store of knowledge was implanted by Providence at the beginning of time, before the Flood fragmented its pristine unity. Wilford certainly believed in a rational Providence and, in common with many eighteenth century Company men, he may well have been a deist, or unitarian Christian, who put much less emphasis on the figure and divinity of Christ than later evangelicals. Not only were intellectuals of this stamp sympathetic to Islam, but many of them believed in that Indians had been deeply knowledgeable at the beginning of history.

Wilford expected to find three types of link or analogue between the ancient Indian wisdom of the Vedas and Puranas and the knowledge of the ancient Egyptians, Israelites and Greeks. First, of course, he believed he would discover traces of an ancient Indo-European mother language, as confirmed by his mentor Jones. Secondly, the inheritance of a common store of sacred lore, albeit degenerated following the Flood, was expected to attest to underlying unities in human mythology, Biblical and classical. So, for instance, Wilford thought he saw a link between the stories of Bacchus, Osiris and the Hindu *Purusha*, all gods or heroes whose legends involved dismemberment and sacrifice.²¹ This desire for mythological analogies was in some ways Wilford's undoing. It was his unlikely "discovery" of the story of Noah's drunkenness in the Puranas which first led him to suspect a forgery by his head Pandit. Thirdly, because ancient Eurasian and African society had developed complex links of trade to complement the ancient patterns of pilgrimage, Wilford believed that many historic peoples had physically migrated over large dis-

²¹ Wilford, "On Egypt", pp. 360-1.

tances. It was not surprising, then, that groups of Indians had found their way to ancient Egypt and Ethiopia.

Speculations like this were not unusual in eighteenth century scholarship. The Ossian legends (another forgery with an Indian connection) were thought to prove the common origin of Celtic peoples.²² Writing somewhat earlier William Jones poured scorn on the works of Col. Charles Vallancey who had satisfied himself that the ancient Irish were of Iranian origin.²³ There was a clear political aim here. Vallancey wanted to provide an ancient foundation legend for Irish culture at a time when Irish patriotism was in the ascendant. He was arguing against the views of extreme Protestant and English commentators who had been claiming that the whole corpus of ancient Irish language and myth had been manufactured by seditious Catholic priests in modern times.

Political agendas were not, of course, altogether absent in Wilford's own works. His type of reasoning could be applied to the history of all Humanity and much of it was not specifically generated in order to further the British conquest of India. But some particular stories and legends narrated by Wilford undoubtedly did have the effect of "naturalising" the British presence in the subcontinent.²⁴ In a famous article on the "Sacred Isles of the West" in Hindu tradition, Wilford claimed that the Isles concerned were the British Isles and that the ancient Hindus had venerated them. Though he reckoned that Britain did not need any "added lustre" that this antique veneration might have bestowed, his discovery did help further strengthen the idea that the connection between the two countries was somehow providential and ancient and should be renewed in order to rescue the Indian branch of Aryan culture from the consequences of its own degeneration.²⁵

Despite his theological free-thinking, Wilford was not uninterested in the history of Christianity either. Drawing on the findings of the seventeenth century Jesuit Father, Antonio Monserrate, as well as

²² Clare O'Halloran, "Irish re-creations of the Gaelic past. The challenge of Macpherson's Ossian", *Past and Present*, 124, 1989, pp. 69–95.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 82, cf. Cannon, *Letters of Jones*, ii, p. 768; Charles Vallancey, *A Vindication of the Ancient History of Ireland*. Dublin, 1786. Jones (himself of partly Celtic origin) was particularly worried that he should cease to be "Indian Jones" and become "Irish Jones"!

²⁴ Kate Teltcher, *India Inscribed. European and British writing on India 1600–1800*. Oxford, 1995, pp. 192–228.

²⁵ Wilford, "Sacred Isles", p. 247.

on reports of tombs and rock-carvings with supposedly Christian iconography observed in north India by Mughal Beg, Wilford began to assert that primitive Christianity had been established in the sub-continent. He argued that a branch of the Manichaeian creed had spread over northern and western India in the early centuries after Christ.²⁶

Here again Wilford's supposed findings were politically charged. Protestant Christians were at this very time preoccupied with Syrian Christianity which had been indigenous to India for more than a thousand years. In 1802–3, as Wilford was publishing his papers, ancient Christian crosses had allegedly been unearthed in Kerala. The Bombay Government had become concerned because the Hindu and Muslim learned were in uproar. They appeared to view these reported findings as an assertion of the foundational status of Christianity in India and a threat to their own authority.

Wilford's researches represented a colourful extension of attitudes which were widely held by this generation of European scholars in India. By contrast, the role of Indians in this intellectual contact remains much more shadowy, though something can perhaps be recovered. In the first place, the Company's Muslim servants were perfectly conversant with the idea of the quest for ancient knowledge. Mughal Beg himself had gone, under Wilford's auspices, in search of traces of ancient kings, Mughal Emperors, Sufi saints and Christian bishops to northwest India and central Asia.²⁷ The Indo-Muslim notion that the landscape was a sacred one, scattered with the traces (*âthâr*) of great and godly men was perfectly compatible with the Christian free-thinkers' search for the ancient unities of Humanity's knowledge. Both traditions venerated the Judaic tradition of prophecy and had inherited the Greek tradition of anthropological description associated with Aristotle and Herodotus. The European idea that divine wisdom was implanted in all men before the Mosaic revelation was not dissimilar to the catholic outlook of a Mirza Jan-e Janan or a Khair al-Din Husain Khan, Muslim believers in the "unity of being", who felt that Lord Ram or the mythi-

²⁶ F. Wilford, "The origin and decline of the Christian Religion in India". *Asiatick Researches*, x, 1808, pp. 69–75.

²⁷ "Majmua Walford", "being a general report made to Lieut. Col. Wilford by Moghal Beg, son of Muhamad Beg Khan on the topography, state of the roads and statistics of the Northwest of India", c. 1790, Mss. Eur. F22, OIOC.

cal *Pândavas* of the Hindu tradition might have been godly precursors to the prophetic tradition.

For Muslim thinkers in the tradition of the mystic Nizami, moreover, the chain of Prophecy included not only Jesus but Iskander, or Alexander the Great. The Greek conqueror had traversed the known world in search of knowledge, revealing himself to be a true messenger of God. One of Alexander's most important sources of wisdom had been the Indian sages and Brahmins. The legend was recounted in Firdausi's *Shâhnâmâh* and had become a particular favourite with the Mughal rulers.²⁸ It provided a model for the Emperor Akbar's discussions with the Pandits and for many such contacts between learned Muslims and Hindus thereafter.

Alexander was also an iconic figure in western mythology and was often in the thoughts of the British conquerors of India. On the one hand, he seemed to offer legitimisation for the conquests of "their" civilisation in the East. On the other hand, since the time of Palladius, Bishop of Hellenopolis (d. 430 CE), Alexander's interview with the Brahmins, like his meeting with Diogenes the Cynic, had epitomised the contrast and contact between divinely-ordained kingship and mystical asceticism. Francis Wilford's works were filled with "traces of Alexander" and with references to Arian or the conqueror's other chroniclers. This the Muslim learned would have fully understood.

The contacts between Wilford and the Pandits can also be interpreted in a way which suggests that they consisted of more than greed for valuable documents, on the one hand, and for silver rupees, on the other. Wilford's preferred method was to sit in the company of a group of Pandits and other Hindus and to recite together with them stories from *purânic* and western mythology, scripture and history, finding matches and points of similarity. The key to these correspondences was a linguistic fit between similar words: thus "*Misra*" in the *purânas* was "*al-Misr*", the ancient semitic name for Egypt. While Jones had already pioneered comparative grammar, most of his contemporaries, including Wilford, continued to use these cruder means of linguistic correlation. This method, however, would have

²⁸ See Firdausi, *Shâhnâmâh*, written for Akbar by 'Abd al-Rahim, Lahore 1595, Add. Mss. 12208, ff. 280b-281c, British Library. These folios illustrate the scene where Iskander meets the Brahmins. Cf. notes for the British Library's 1996 exhibition "The Mythological Quest."

seemed perfectly familiar to the Pandits. They believed deeply that the Shastra contained all knowledge: to find an echo of such stories in the barbarians' legends was only to be expected. Since Sanskrit, the beautifully-wrought language, was itself an expression of the mind of Brahma, it was not at all surprising that these sacred sounds had found their way into barbarian speech. The very recitation of the Shastra, as commanded by and heavily subsidised by the luckless Wilford was, after all, a sacred performance: the barbarian learned had come, willy-nilly, in search of true knowledge, to the sacred city.

It is possible to go further. Even if Wilford's devious Pandit represented an extreme example, the Benares Brahmins and pandas did not really constitute a priesthood or a kind of legal practitioner in an ecclesiastical court as the British widely held them to be. They were a body of commercial specialists, selling their services to a highly developed market. Moreover, as Jonathan Parry has observed,²⁹ the relationship between money and enlightenment was mutually supporting, rather than exclusive as, in Protestant Christianity. God needed Mammon to work His will. No householding (*grihasta*) Hindu was forced to choose between one and the other; that was the purpose of the Renouncer, not the worldly Brahmin priest in the Hindu tradition. By accepting the money of the vilest, the priest could "eat" their sin. This principle was never really understood, or at least accepted by northern European Protestants who believed that money could only corrupt knowledge and debase worship. This, incidentally, is why Kashinath Sharma, the orientalist Wilkins' former Pandit was ejected from the headship of the Benares Sanskrit College by the British for taking money from his pupils over and above his salary.³⁰ Such practice would have been perfectly acceptable, indeed necessary, in the indigenous system of education.

Many conquerors of low origins, most recently the armed Maratha princely pilgrims who had once supported Wilford's Pandit, had come to Benares to expunge their sins and to find new genealogies for themselves. As Veena Das³¹ has shown, the adjustment of the spe-

²⁹ Jonathan Parry, *Death in Benares*.

³⁰ George Nicholls, Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Benares Patshalla or Sanskrit College, Now forming the Sanskrit Department of the Sanskrit College. 1848, pub. Allahabad, 1907, pp. 10-20, cited in Vasudha Dalmia, "Sanskrit scholars and Pandits of the old school. The Benares Sanskrit College and the constitution of authority in the late nineteenth century". *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 24, 1996, pp. 321-37.

³¹ Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition*. Delhi, 1982.

cialist caste *purânas* to give rising groups a more exalted pedigree continues to be a method by which the relationship between power and purity is negotiated in the contemporary Hindu world. What more natural thing could there have been to the Pandits than a search of their scriptures by the British officers to find a justification for their own faltering steps upward from the vile status of an out-caste to that of a rather dubious warrior Rajput? When Wilford's Pandit was confronted by his wrong-doing he "called down the most violent curses on himself and his family",³² protesting his innocence. While doubtless perfectly aware of his deceit, he would also have known that genealogical and cosmological *purânas* were constantly being "adjusted" to give legitimisation to up-and-coming families and dynasties. Historical authenticity could not have been an overriding principle for those who recited, memorise and wrote these texts. subscribed. Since all knowledge was immanent in the Shastra a degree of flexibility was easy to justify. But the British were increasingly on the lookout for discrepancies. At the same period as Wilford's humiliation other orientalisists were claiming that the Pandits had inserted modern allusions to the practice of vaccination into the "medical" Vedas.³³

Transitions in mutual perception, 1810–40

Between 1810 and 1850 the "reciprocal perceptions" of different traditions in Benares underwent subtle but significant change. By mid-century, the epistemological, if not yet the social bases were present for scientific racism, religious modernism, communalism and nationalism. These changes, moreover, were not generated simply, or even predominantly by the power of the colonial centre or by the master texts of orientalism. Rather, they arose from the collisions between ideas originating in the metropolis and local understandings of community and knowledge. These latter emerged from the play of interests and perceptions in critical locales such as Benares.

On the British side, of course, evangelical and utilitarian ideology strengthened by reformist currents in domestic politics attained some influence over officials of the East India Company. Indian culture was increasingly disparaged and the search for antique human knowledge in the Sanskrit texts came to be regarded as whimsical. Most

³² The whole incident is recounted in detail in Wilford, "Sacred Isles", pp. 246–53.

³³ C. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, passim.

important of all, the generation of officials who rose to influence under Lord William Bentinck emphasised the need for public instruction. Adept in the different systems of knowledge represented in the subcontinent were no longer to influence and draw from each other on an *ad hoc* basis. Instead, superior western knowledge was to be deliberately on to Indian knowledge, which was to be its inferior carrier.

It was in locations such as Benares, however, that the substance of these arguments were generated and not simply from the studies of Macaulay, Mill, Bentham or Hegel. The growing hostility to Indian knowledge was evidently given powerful impetus by the Wilford case. Medical men and the orientalist of the Bengal army, jealous of their new and vulnerable professional status in India responded with attacks on the medical Vedas and the *Rasayanashâstra* ("chemical" texts). Local officials attempting to impose standard time on Indian cities and to regulate the great bathing festivals ridiculed the astronomical learning of the Benares astronomers³⁴ which had been venerated by the philosophical generation of Voltaire. They found external support in the acerbic works of evangelical polemicists such as J. Bentley³⁵ who hated the *Siddhântist* astronomers because their texts had been used to undermine the orthodox date of biblical Creation.

In Benares, again, the deistic search for a primeval structure of myth and history typical of Wilford's period gave way to this search for "useful knowledge". James Prinsep, Assay Master in the city during the 1830s, a chemist and epigrapher, was typical of the new breed. His aim was to provide an authentic chronology of Indian history through the study of hard facts, in his case, coins.³⁶ Prinsep constructed some of the earliest accurate regnal tables of Indian dynasties. The records of the romantic journeying of a man like Wilford were superseded by archaeological charts and massive efforts of empirical description. Coins, once stores of royal legitimacy became "bytes" of information for the Assay Master. The world of George Elliott's Mr. Casaubon gave way to that of Charles Dickens' Mr. Gradgrind.

³⁴ E.g., *Benares Recorder*, 20 Apr. 1847; *Bengal Hurkaru*, 23 Jan. 1823.

³⁵ J. Bentley, *An Historical View of Hindoo Astronomy*. London, 1799.

³⁶ James Prinsep, *Essays on Indian Antiquities, Historical, Numismatic and Paleographic*. 2 vols. London, 1858; cf. O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past*. Delhi, 1988.

Racism, distantly legitimated by the rumblings of a Mill or a Macaulay, was also directly generated in the bazaars of the colonial towns. Here an embattled European business community found itself under pressure from a tenacious Indian commercial class and the new generation Indian subordinate officials introduced under Lord William Bentinck's reforms of the 1830s. In fact, the classic Anglo-Indian statement on native corruption, *Panchkouree Khan, Or Memoirs of an Orderly* was specifically written about Benares and its region and first published in the *Benares Recorder* in 1847.³⁷

Amongst Indians, too, this period marked significant shifts in cultural perceptions which were rooted in social changes. The ecumenical debates between adepts in Hindu and Muslim learning which had characterised Benares in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had arisen in a particular social context. Muslim and Islamised Hindu administrators schooled in natural philosophy and the rational sciences moving between Delhi and Murshidabad had encountered *Nyāyiks* and *Siddhāntists* who had flourished in the region under the patronage of Hindu notables of the later Mughal court. After 1770, however, the Mughal administrators and land-revenue intermediaries of Patna and Benares went into steep decline. 'Ali Ibrahim Khan, saved from dismissal from his judgeship by the personal intervention of Cornwallis against the patronage of the Prince Regent, was almost the last of his kind. The steady economic rise of the Benares Raja's family and their *bhūmihar* kinsmen eroded the influence of the Muslim officials and notables.

Ideological and political changes contributed to a shift in attitudes which put more weight on Islamic separatism and a more closely-defined Hindu community. The inclusive Sufi traditions still remained important in Benares, but Muslim purism in the tradition of Shah Wali Allah became more prominent. The most prominent of the Islamic radicals, Shah Ahmad Bareilwi preached in nearby western Hindustan in the 1820s.³⁸ These revivalists were not necessarily hostile to Hinduism as such, but they certainly emphasised cultural and intellectual separateness, in contrast to the more catholic tradition of the eighteenth century learned such as Muhammad Hazin or Mirza Jan-e Janan.

³⁷ Benares Recorder, Nov. 1847.

³⁸ K.H. Prior, "British administration of Hinduism in north India, 1780-1900". Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge, 1990, pp. 188-10.

So too, after 1820 more self consciously Hindu styles of life and knowledge were promoted by incoming royal princes, such as the Rajas of Vizianagaram and Nepal, and by Bengali landowners and business people who were becoming increasingly prominent in the region. The Pandits' own conflicts with newly strident Christian missionaries helped to entrench an orthodoxy which insisted on the inviolability of the *Shashtra* and the strict caste rules enjoined by classical texts such as "the Laws of Manu". Rich lay pilgrims, ascetic *mahants* and Pandits came together in orthodox associations, modelled on the Calcutta Dharma Sabha (Calcutta Religious Association). These neo-orthodox magnates opposed the Benares steamer company, which was deemed insulting to the holy Ganges, and violently objected to missionary activities in the town.³⁹ Printed works helped to confirm such attitudes. The Maharaja of Benares began printing sacred works in the 1820s. In the 1840s and 1850s Raja Shiva Prasad printed a version of the "Laws of Manu", the *Manasara* in Hindi. He also sold (under Government patronage) large numbers of a pamphlet called *Vāmāmanoranjana* (tales for women) which guilefully stereotyped Muslims as oppressors and violators of Hindu womanhood.⁴⁰

Such changes in perception and relations between communities were thrown into sharp relief by outbreaks of public disorder. These included the communal riots of 1776 in Jaunpur and those in Benares in 1809–10. Later, in 1816, there was conflict over cow-slaughter at the city's Aurangabad Sarai and in 1852 and 1856 anti-Christian disturbances in the city.⁴¹ No doubt the Hindu-Muslim riots were used by colonial officials as an archive from which they could construct a particularly essentialised version of communalism, as Pandey argues. But a dispassionate reading of the petitions and remonstrances sent up by the self-styled representatives of the two communities on these occasions indicates that an indigenous "construction of communalism" preceded and informed the official one. By 1809, at the very latest, Hindus in the city had elaborated a myth of ancient rights once violated by the Emperor Aurangzeb and

³⁹ *Benares Recorder*, 28 Sept. 1847, 28 Aug. 1848.

⁴⁰ Shiva Prasad, *Mānava Dharmasara*. Benares, 1856; Shiva Prasad, *Vāmāmanoranjana*. Benares, 1849, see especially the story of "Rani Bhawani".

⁴¹ R. Heitler, "The Varanasi house-tax hartal of 1810–11". *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, ix, 3, 1972, pp. 239–57; G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. Delhi, 1990, pp. 24–50; S. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community. Public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India*. Berkeley, 1989, pp. 19–52.

presently under threat from the turbulent poor Muslims of the city, especially the weavers. The self-styled leaders of the Hindu community asserted that under British government their rights could finally be reclaimed. If Muslims wished to protect holy places, one petition said, they should go to Karbala in Mesopotamia and protect the mosques and tombs recently sacked by fellow Muslim Wahhabis.⁴² This is a line of argument which directly anticipated recent cries in Hindu-Muslim riots which assert that Hindus should leave India and go permanently to Pakistan. Naturally, the former British colonial rulers eagerly seized on and generalised these perceptions, but in this they were manipulating local narratives, not simply applying generalised orientalist differences.

Intellectual progress and national knowledge: 1840–6

These changes in Anglo-Indian perceptions and Indian practices form the context for the work and attitudes of James Robert Ballantyne, principal of the Benares College from 1845–61.⁴³ Anglicists such as T.B. Macaulay and C.E. Trevelyan have been persistently attributed with too much importance in Indian intellectual history. Ballantyne is much more representative of the later stages of constructive orientalism. For Ballantyne classical Indian knowledge and language remained valuable. It was at a lower stage of development than European knowledge, but could serve as a useful medium through which to impart science and, ultimately, true religion.

Like Wilford, Ballantyne has had a bad press both from contemporaries and recent historians. Anglicists of the time denounced as archaic his attempt to teach Indians European science through Sanskrit. Two modern historians have noticed his importance. But they have viewed him as wholly unsympathetic to the Pandits on the basis of an article he wrote in the *Benares Magazine*⁴⁴ which was later

⁴² "Memorial of the Hindoos of the City of Benares, 20 Nov. 1809", "Disturbances at Benares", Board's Collections 365, OIOC.

⁴³ C.E. Buckland (ed.), *Dictionary of Indian Biography*. London, 1906, p. 24; apart from articles in the *Benares Magazine*, Ballantyne's main published works included *Aphorisms of the Mimamsa Philosophy by Jaimini*. Allahabad, 1851; *Lectures of the Nyaya Philosophy embracing the Text of the Tarka Sangraha*. Benares, 1848; *A Grammar of the Hindustani Language*. Edinburgh, 1838; *Lectures on the Subdivisions of knowledge and their mutual relations*. Mirzapur, 1848–9; *A Synopsis of Science in Sanskrit and English, reconciled with the truths to be found in the Nyaya Philosophy*. Mirzapur, 1856.

⁴⁴ *Benares Magazine*, 2, 1849, pp. 353–9.

excerpted in Sanskrit College's magazine, the *Pandit*. Ballantyne's jocular reading of some Sanskrit literature and its teachers must, however, be set against his often stated and practically demonstrated respect for Sanskrit linguistics and *Nyāya* philosophy. His views need to be recovered from the large volume of his publications and letters which argue for a creative grafting of European on to Indian learning. This was the man who wrote to Wilson in 1848, perhaps over optimistically, about his intellectual contacts with the Pandits, "They are too well aware of my profound admiration for their exquisite language, and their often admirable speculations, and their unfailing acuteness to feel suspicious of me." By contrast, he raged against the expatriates: "how stupidly ignorant is the contempt with which Europeans here look on the Hindus."⁴⁵

James Ballantyne (1813–64) was a product of the last stages of the Scottish Enlightenment. His modes of thought were substantially different from those of the generation of Wilford, Jones and Colebrooke, who had been influenced by the earlier enlightenment and by deism. Born in Edinburgh,⁴⁶ he was educated in classics at Kelso College, going on to Edinburgh New Academy and College where he studied geology and natural history. He later tackled oriental languages which he began to teach at the Naval and Military Academy in Edinburgh. Even before leaving for India in 1845 he had produced a grammar of Hindustani (his interests were never confined to classical languages). After retirement, he spent the last two years of his life as Librarian of the India Office.

Ballantyne's understanding of Indian knowledge and its production was considerably more sophisticated than that of the earlier orientalists. He was aware, first, that the Shastras represented to the Pandits and their pupils a single system of thought. Secondly, he understood that in its written form this learning was organised as a system of short *aides memoire*. The full range and flexibility of the Sanskrit canon could only be understood, he realised, by taking into account the inherited memorised knowledge that the individual aphorisms summoned up in the mind of the reader.⁴⁷ It was their very

⁴⁵ Ballantyne to Wilson, 14 Aug. 1848, Wilson Papers, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Buckland, *Indian Biography*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ J.R. Ballantyne, *A lecture on the Vedanta embracing the text of the Vedanta-Sara printed for the use of the Benares College, by order of the Government of the North-Western Provinces*. Benares, 1851, pp. 5–6, on aphorisms; cf. *A Lecture on the Sankhya Philosophy embracing the text of the Tattwa Samāsa*. Mirzapore, 1850; *A Synopsis of Science*, pp. vi–vii.

laconic nature which was the strength of the texts, but to ignorant European observers this was simply the proof of their obscurity. Thirdly, Ballantyne realised that this knowledge was a progressive system of thought which started from first principles. There was little point in trying to teach the Pandits European geography or geology, unless one had first demonstrated the principles of ontology and reasoning on which they were based. Plunging into a discrete branch of science would not work because, in the mind of the Pandits, any study of, say, physics, led “slap into the depths of metaphysics”.⁴⁸ To the Hindu learned the physical sciences were simply one branch of metaphysics, as they had been for Renaissance Europeans.

Ballantyne's response to the comprehensiveness of Indian learning was “to give a Cyclopaedic course of lectures and thus to oppose to the *niyayiks* a complete *sastra* of my own.”⁴⁹ This he achieved over the next few years in an extraordinary but largely forgotten effort of oriental (and, of course, orientalist) scholarship. He developed the method of rational engagement with the arguments of the Pandits pioneered by another eminent Sanskritist, John Muir, C.S., who was briefly his predecessor at the College and is the subject of Dr. Powell's chapter in this volume. Ballantyne produced a series of lectures which worked from the first principles of *Nyāya* philosophy towards modern western sciences, comparing the basic categories of thought one with the other. In order to take account of the different schools of thought in the city he also produced dialogic treatises in Sanskrit and English on the other great philosophical systems, the *Sāṃkhya* and *Mīmāṃsa*. Finally, he moved on from metaphysics to divinity, explaining and refuting Hindu religious belief by reference to Christianity.

Ballantyne supplemented these theoretical debates about the common elements between European and Indian science with practical scientific experiments. R.N. Cust, an evangelical official who visited Benares in 1852 recorded some of these demonstrations in his diaries. In one experiment, a Pandit had his hands immobilised in a vacuum chamber: Cust wrote that the professor of *Nyāya* proclaimed: *Humara nyaya utta ho gaya* [sic, ? “Our *Nyāya* is finished/vanished”].⁵⁰

Before moving on to examine some aspects of this approach in

⁴⁸ Ballantyne to Wilson, 14 Aug. 1848, Wilson Papers, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Robert Needham Cust's journal for 28 Aug. 1852, Cust Papers, Add. Mss. 45394, f. 12; cf. f. 10, British Library.

greater detail, it is important to mention the other major vector of Ballantyne's thought. While he recognised the comprehensiveness and "acuity" of Brahmanical metaphysics, Ballantyne also believed that it ranked at a very specific level on the scale of the evolution of the human mind. The generation of deists such as Wilford had believed that Indian learning was part, though a damaged part of universal human knowledge. The learned of Ballantyne's generation believed, however, that they could assign the best of the Pandits' learning to a precise stage of human evolutionary history.⁵¹ Following the scheme of the Scottish Enlightenment this was held to be was both a stage of mental history and a stage in the history of the evolution of commercial society.

The Pandits were trapped according to Ballantyne precisely at the stage of the Greeks of the time of Plato and Aristotle. While this was the ultimate justification of the British civilising mission in India and ranked Indians well below modern European nations, it certainly did not expose them to the charge of being mere savages. Since "our" own knowledge was ultimately dependent on Aristotle and Plato, Indian learning should still command a degree of humility and respect in the western observer. The sarcasm which Ballantyne expressed, in the only piece of his huge corpus which has been widely cited, derived from his chagrin that this pristine learning had been debauched by the erotic themes of medieval Indian poetry, and by a decline in teaching methods, just as pure and original Vedic monotheism had been corrupted by "phallic" cults. This was also one of the key themes of later Hindu reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj.

This "scientific" approach to Indian evolution past and future also represented a considerable development on the mentalities of the founding generation of the Serampore Baptist missionaries of the 1800s. Whereas these pioneers in Sanskrit and Bengali grammar had believed that simple translations of the Christian scriptures into Indian languages would lead to conversion and civility, Ballantyne and his small band of contemporaries felt they needed to mount a much more sophisticated exercise in persuasion. In addition to preparing a Shashtra which mimicked the comprehensiveness of Sanskrit learning, they believed they would also have to educate the Indian mind

⁵¹ Anon. (Ballantyne), "The Benares Sanskrit College". *Benares Magazine*, 5, 1850-1, p. 103ff.; cf. *A Synopsis of Science*, pp. vi-ix.

through the very same stages through which the European one had apparently passed.

Ballantyne therefore set to work to translate and explain the representative figures of those stages into Sanskrit and English. He translated Aristotle and Ptolemy from Greek and St. Thomas Aquinas from Latin into Sanskrit. Next he moved on to Bacon's *Novum Organum*. Bacon's work was of particular importance to this generation of thinkers because it was taken to represent the first assault of the "modern" mind in the west on precisely the sort of scholastic thinking which they perceived to be perpetuated in the East. Finally, Ballantyne introduced into his classes and publications contemporary European, especially Scottish logicians and scientists.

In the course of their education the Pandits were therefore to be teased up the evolutionary ladder of the human mind where at its highest rung they would be confronted with Christian revelation. Ballantyne's plan, therefore, encompassed a quite strict attempt to realise the stage theories of the Scottish Enlightenment within public instruction and the civilising mission in India. Scottish philosophers such as John Millar, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith and William Robertson had been major influences on his education in Edinburgh. He believed firmly with Millar that "There is thus in human society a natural progress from ignorance to knowledge, and from rude to civilised manners, the several stages of which are usually accompanied with peculiar laws and customs."⁵² According to Adam Smith, societies accordingly passed through the stages associated with hunting, herding, and agriculture to the age of commerce and "moral independence".

Robertson himself had explicitly incorporated India into this pattern of human advance. Primitive society was monotheistic, he thought, out of credulous fear of the supernatural. The division of labour to satisfy natural needs was accompanied by a "division of worship", as in India, Egypt and Ancient Greece, where particular gods and goddesses had dominion over the different facets of life. So, "as their knowledge continued to extend, the objects of their veneration multiplied."⁵³ At its highest level of development, Ancient society in both

⁵² Cited in Jane Rendall, *The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment 1707-76*. London, 1978, p. 145.

⁵³ William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*. Dublin, 1791, p. 302.

East and West, was tending towards a philosophical universalism just as its trade was becoming international; for Egypt and Syria, and later Rome, had tried to "secure to their subjects all the advantages of the India trade."⁵⁴ But luxury and barbarian invasion led to the decline of both virtue and commerce, and an accompanying polytheistic degeneration in Europe and India. Only now, since the Venetians and Portuguese had once again brought down the price of eastern commodities, were both Eastern and Western civilisation again ascending to their former level, with Europe in the lead this time. Yet even in India, some traces of the earlier advance had persisted: caste, for instance, was "better adapted to [peace and happiness for the majority] . . . than, the careless observer, on past view, was apt to imagine."⁵⁵

Robertson was a leading figure in the Moderate Wing of the Church of Scotland during the previous century. His views of the role of Christian revelation are significant in the light of Ballantyne's. Christ's message rightly understood in its Protestant form appears to Robertson to be one of those influences which fixes a commercial and virtuous society at its proper level and allows further advance.⁵⁶ To the present day reader, though, revelation appears almost superfluous to the scheme of the Scottish philosophers, whose naturalistic development theory appears to lead towards a benevolent, "advanced monotheism", without the intervention of revelation or a personal saviour of any sort. I feel that the relationship of Christian theology to natural philosophy was, indeed, an ambivalent and dangerous zone for European intellectual hegemony, which Pandits, Maulawis and Indian rationalists were quick to note and to exploit.

Ballantyne's pedagogy foundered upon this contradiction. His rendering of natural philosophy into Sanskrit aphorisms seemed to work well and he adapted the *shâstrârtha* type of classical debate to the teaching of Newtonian astronomy.⁵⁷ When he reached religion, however, the effort appears to become confused and to verge on disintegration. It is at this point that we see within the orientalist corpus the fractures which Indians could begin to exploit in their effort to "write back" against the foreigner.

⁵⁴ Robertson, *Disquisition*, p. 39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302ff.

⁵⁷ Anon. (Ballantyne), *Chandra Brahmana Vichar [Does the Moon rotate?] A Question argued in Sanskrit and English by the Pandits of the Benares College*. Benares, 1857.

For one thing, Ballantyne was fighting on two fronts. He was confronting evangelical Anglicans, Baptists and radical Presbyterians (such as Alexander Duff of the Church of Scotland) who argued for an aggressive missionising which would evoke the hearer's leap of faith. The debate crystallised around the person of St. Paul. The Apostle had preached in the main to the civilised inhabitants of the Greek cities, and the enlightenment rationalists took this to mean that reason must precede faith. Critics argued, however, that Christianity was first propagated by "a few unlettered fishermen of Galilee."⁵⁸ Ballantyne was firmly in the rationalist camp and argued that evangelisation which thrust aside indigenous knowledge simply bound people more closely to their faiths.⁵⁹ By contrast, "sound learning and just argument will triumph over fanaticism and error" so that ultimately "belief would descend from the more intelligent to the comparatively ignorant."⁶⁰

At the same time, Ballantyne's works represent a complex attempt to refute the sophisticated philosophical objections constantly thrown at him and other less learned missionaries by the adepts of *Nyāya* and *Sāṃkhya* philosophy in particular. We get some idea of the arguments from the text of Ballantyne's *Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, from the journals of missionaries around Benares, and from some later indigenous pamphlets. The key debate turned on the value of testimony to scripture.⁶¹ Why should the Bible be truer than the Vedas? Both the *Nyāya* system of accounting for "what is" and the Christian cosmogony could be constructed as a series of logical inferences, but only when the testimony of the Apostles, on the one hand, or the *rishis*, on the other, had been accepted as true *a priori*. Without such acceptance there was no reason why the vedantic assertion that Creation and Creator were one, or that matter was eternal and existed in the perduring form of atoms should be rejected in favour of the Christian view of an omnipotent Creator.

⁵⁸ Ballantyne, J.R., *Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy and essay in five books, Sanskrit and English with practical suggestions tended to the missionary among the Hindus*. London, 1859, pp. x-xi; since completing this chapter, I have been referred to the important study of Robert F. Young, *Resistant Hinduism. Sanskrit sources on anti-Christian apologetics in early nineteenth-century India*. Vienna, 1981, which deals in detail with the Hindu response to Christian arguments, especially those deployed by Ballantyne's predecessor, John Muir. This book deserves to be used much more widely by south Asian historians.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

Ballantyne tried to argue that the testimony of the Christian saints was superior because their, suffering unlike that of Hindu renouncers, was undertaken on behalf of others and not for the advancement of their own spirituality as it supposedly was in the Hindu tradition. But this position only makes sense if one had already accepted the Christian doctrine of sacrifice and this itself is, of course, based on a belief in the separation of the Creator from his creation. Hindu apologists and publicists had a field-day not only with these circular arguments, but also with the internal inconsistencies of Christian scripture and poor earlier translations. The Serampore Sanskrit Bible of about 1810 had, for instance, translated the phrase "And God made the Heavens and the Earth" using the Sanskrit/Hindi words *ākāśh* and *prithwī*.⁶² The problem according to Ballantyne is that according to *Nyāya* philosophy these were simply words meaning two of the five elements cognised by the senses. When the next biblical verse goes on to say that God created the waters upon the face of the earth, the Pandit asks why God needed to create them again.

The Christian drive for intellectual hegemony was also fatally flawed by the internal conflicts of different groups of Christians. It is clear from Ballantyne's text that his Pandits and scholars had also learned quite quickly to exploit the differences between the texts that he had caused them to read. They knew, for instance, that Sir William Jones had rejected as "barbaric" the idea of eternal punishment for sinners. More to the point, Jones had written about the "vulgar notion of material substance", concerning which "we know this only, that we nothing know." The Pandits put together Jones' and Bishop Berkeley's doubts about the human mind's ability to perceive the universe and thought they saw a link with the a-theistical cosmology of Kapila, the leading *Sāmkhya* commentator.⁶³ In reaction, Ballantyne vainly spent many pages of complex argument in Sanskrit trying to return free-thinkers such as Jones, Berkeley and the German idealist philosophers to the orthodox Christian fold in order to refute the Pandits.

Broadly, then, the vast intellectual effort of Ballantyne and his associates was a failure. European natural philosophy might convince them through the sort of experiments with gas pumps and gun-

⁶² Ibid, pp. v-vi.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 41-3.

powder which were described above. But no superior testimony could be adduced for belief in the Christian revelation. Indeed, Pandits and Hindu reformers quickly saw that a sophisticated European science was conjoined with a naive and self-contradictory Christian theology, and they rapidly moved to exploit the breach. It is true that the Europeans had learned as quickly to ridicule Hindu idolatry, but the Benares philosophers had been used from the time of the seventeenth-century French and Italian travellers to deploy the notion of *mâyâ* in debates with Christians.⁶⁴ That is, under intellectual pressure they could argue that the Hindu gods were themselves illusions and beat a tactical retreat into the redoubt of monotheistic pantheism. By contrast, Christians of Ballantyne's generation, unlike the earlier deists, were stuck with a belief in the literalness of Christ's incarnation.

We see in Ballantyne's experiment in Benares an example of the first failures of the European intellectual invasion of India. Studies of orientalism and of Indian resistance must take religion more seriously than they have. But conversely students of South Asian "religious polemic" will need to note its connection to debates about the rational sciences and knowledge more generally.

For the generation of Wilkins and Wilford, the Pandits were a general resource of oriental learning to be plundered for their manuscripts or for the testimonies of antique human wisdom they could provide. In so far as personal relationships were involved at all, they were confined to the patrimonial relationship between an enlightened official and "my pundit", who was rarely graced with a personal name. It is revealing that Wilford referred to several of his Muslim informants by name as his "friends", but no Hindu was thus honoured, as far as I can see. For their part, the Pandits apparently viewed the Europeans best as at best testators to the completeness of Sanskrit learning, or at worst as polluted barbarian magnates to be plundered of their rupees.

By the later 1840s, the concept of state education had modified these mutual perceptions and changed the relationship. To the British the Pandits and other high status Indians were clay to be worked on by the moulding wisdom of western public instruction. They were a future hybrid intellectual elite who would lead India to Enlightenment

⁶⁴ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire AD 1656-1668*, Constable's *Oriental Miscellany*. London, 1891 (reprint), pp. 341-2.

and, hopefully, to Christianity. The individuals selected out by men such as Ballantyne were to be the conduits down which trickled knowledge to the Indian masses.

By the same token, the newly subordinated representatives of oriental knowledge were in a position to subvert and challenge western arguments from inside a system they now knew well. The resistance of the generation of Jones had taken the form of concealing knowledge or of claiming that everything the Europeans had to tell them had already existed in the scriptures whether it was the story of Noah or the practice of vaccination. Forty years on, men from Pandit families trained in Indian and western modes of reasoning were in a position to challenge the metaphysical lacunae in the West's religion and appropriate its secular learning.

Pandit Bapu Deva Shastri, a traditional astronomer and mathematician of Maharashtrian origin, provides a good example of this dual role. Bapu Deva was to become Professor of Mathematics at the Benares College and a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He was at the forefront of an effort among learned Indians to rescue the reputation of medieval Indian astronomers, Bhaskaracharya and Brahmagupta, and make them into icons of a newly conceived Indian (and explicitly Hindu) inheritance of specialist learning.⁶⁵

Bapu Deva first appeared as an informant and monitor in Ballantyne's classes. He had progressed so well in English by the summer of 1848 that Ballantyne employed him when he was translating the books of his European Shastra into Sanskrit. Bapu Deva was given charge of the second part of the course which dealt with arithmetic, algebra, calculus and mechanics.⁶⁶ Ballantyne remarked "The clear-headedness of Bapu Deva is a perfect luxury. How little do hundreds of the English here dream how incomparably inferior they are (except in point of salary) to such a man." When Ballantyne's classes moved on from material and mechanical subjects to mental philosophy, logic, modern science and the study of Bacon's conflict with the European scholastics, Bapu Deva's value became even clearer to him.

The atmosphere in the classes was delicate because it was plain to all that Ballantyne intended a direct analogy to be made between

⁶⁵ Bapu Deva Sastri, *The Surya-Siddhanta, an ancient system of Hindu astronomy; with Ranganatha's exposition, the Gudhartha Prakasaka*. Ed. F. Hall, with the assistance of Bapu Deva Sastri [sic], *Biblioteca Indica*, 25, Calcutta, 1854-9.

⁶⁶ Ballantyne to Wilson, 14 Aug. 1848, Wilson Papers, p. 11.

the pedantic schoolmen of the European past and the obstinate Pandits of the present. Indeed, "the boys in the English Department, when reading them [Bacon's aphorisms], wink at one another and cram their shawls in their mouths to stop their laughter."⁶⁷ Bapu Deva, monitor of the class, helped Ballantyne to teach the basics of geology while saving the pride of the Pandits who had been brought into the English classes. For instance, Ballantyne had been trying to show that the existence of fossils in the marshy Sunderbans of Bengal proved that living beings existed on earth before man. A student interrupted to say that this was only because human bones decayed first and it did not prove that man had not existed from the beginning of time. Bapu Deva told the student equably that he ought first hear the whole course of lectures before rejecting this evidence.

As Bapu Deva's standing in Benares rose over the following years he received barbed plaudits from several Europeans including Revd. M. Sherring, now senior Anglican missionary in the city. Sherring, who composed the two volume work *Hindu Castes and Tribes as Represented at Benares* advertised Bapu Deva as an example of how the "curse" of caste could be overcome by proper learning.⁶⁸ S.R. Owen, who had been a military officer at Benares, took his fame back to London. Mathematics and astronomy, Owen observed, were an early battlefield of enlightenment in Europe. Now the poor Hindu was "making an effort" to free himself from the "mental slavery" of the "phallic worshipper . . . bound down by superstition."⁶⁹ Owen recorded that under the enlightened patronage of the Maharaja of Benares the "Hindu Society of Benares" had been founded with sixty-four members to discuss science and philosophy. Bapu Deva was singled out in Owen's account because he was determined to show Hindus "the astronomical errors in their ancient scriptures" by using the Sastras as well as western texts "in his own vindication and support."

Bapu Deva was certainly trying to purge Indian learning of error and his attempt to circulate an accurate calendar brought on him the wrath of the city's ritual specialists who had already vigorously

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes as represented in Benares*. London, 1872, p. 90.

⁶⁹ Major Samuel R.I. Owen, "On Hindu Neology". *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society of London*, ii, 1865-6, p. 202; cf. Bapu Deva Sastri, "The Sidereal and Tropical Systems". Ibid., pp. 205-15; this was drawn to my attention by Susan Bayly, cf. her "'Caste' and 'Race'".

rejected Ballantyne's tampering with the Shastra. What Owen failed to recognise, however, was the way that Bapu Deva was building up the reputation of the medieval Hindu *siddhāntic* astronomy and its practitioners at the same time. Bapu Deva resurrected the arguments of the eighteenth century French philosophers, such as Bailly, le Gentil and Voltaire, to the effect that Indians had made the earliest accurate calculations of the heavenly bodies. Accordingly he refuted Colebrooke and the evangelical, Bentley, who had accused the ancient Pandits of fraud or at best plagiarism most from the Greeks. He also refuted the charge of error and inconsistency laid at the door of the astronomical sage, Bhaskaracharya, in the more recent translation of the astronomical text *sūrya siddhānta* by Lancelot Wilkinson and his follower, Subbaji Bapu.⁷⁰ Most important, Bapu Deva published an article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in which he tried to show that Bhaskaracharya had a complete knowledge of differential calculus more than a thousand years before the European discovery of the technique. W. Spottiswoode, a London mathematician, remarked with lofty condescension that Bapu Deva's statement "was not correct to its whole extent yet it does full justice to Bhaskaracharya's penetration and science."⁷¹

Conclusion

Even in the 1850s and 1860s, Indians in Benares still attempted to subvert attempts by Europeans to assert the superiority of their learning in well tested ways. Riots broke out in the face of missionary conversions. Pandits concealed texts or denied them to the gaze of the foreign barbarians with redoubled orthodox fervour. Many of the older ideas about the role of the city as an "ocean of knowledge" also retained their potency. Ballantyne himself reported a popular rumour to the effect that many supremely learned "German Pandits" were embarking to settle in Kashi, presumably to displace the less learned British ones!⁷²

⁷⁰ E.g., Bapu Deva, *A Translation of the Surya-Siddhanta*. Calcutta, 1861, p. 126, note.

⁷¹ Bapu Deva Shastri, "Bhaskara's Knowledge of the differential calculus". *JASB*, 27, 3, 1858, pp. 213–16.

⁷² Note on the supposed discovery of the principle of differential calculus by an Indian astronomer. By W. Spottiswoode, Esq. Communicated by the Director [Wilson]. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3, 1858, p. 221.

What is striking, though, is the vigour and speed with which bodies of learned Indians, usually drawn from the traditional intelligentsia, responded to the western challenge not only in the matter of religion itself, but across the broad range of humanistic and scientific studies. Despite their apparent medieval rigidity, the logical and ontological forms of both the Hindu and Muslim traditional intelligentsia could be adapted to fight for the integrity of Indian knowledge in the battles which surrounded the invasion of western astronomy, medicine and mathematics. Many of the Indian protagonists, such as Bapu Deva Shastri, adopted large elements of western learning. But theirs never was simply a "derivative discourse", nor did it limit itself to religion or the domestic sphere.⁷³ The intellectual history of the nationalisms of South Asia have a much deeper lineage than its historiography yet allows. The old intelligentsia associated with pre-British administration and places of learning had begun to mount sophisticated and successful defences of Indian cultural knowledge early in the nineteenth century. They drew on a living tradition of scholarship and learning which was regarded as a civilisational if not yet a national resource. Their defence of the sages of the past and their understanding of the universe was more than a reaction of religious conservatism, it represented a cultural patriotism, which was later to root and inform Indian nationalism in some circumstances. By historicising and revering the memory of Indian cultural heroes and heroines and by seeking analogies in western thought for their own intellectual techniques, they powerfully contributed to the reinvention of Indian identities and to Indian self-confidence. More than this, though, the debates between European orientalisks and the Indian learned constituted on both sides a real search for knowledge and broadening of human understanding. It marked a further stage in the evolution of a series of Indian critical publics whose concerns transcended the immediate constraints of colonial politics. There was more to nineteenth century India than a simple story of oppression, hegemony and resistance.

⁷³ Cf. P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*. Princeton, 1993.

MUSLIM SAINTS, FAQUIRS¹ AND PILGRIMS IN 1831 ACCORDING TO GARCIN DE TASSY

MARC GABORIEAU

The years 1831 and 1832 were crucial for the Western Perception of South Asian Muslims; and at that for two reasons. First there appeared three books which led the foundations of the study of their religion and of their social practices; they were written independently by a French oriental scholar, Garcin de Tassy,² by a British Lady, Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, who had been married to a Muslim gentleman in Lucknow³ and by a Dutch surgeon in the service of the East India Company, G.A. Herklots;⁴ Garcin de Tassy published detailed reviews of the later two books.⁵ Secondly in November 1831 in Bengal, not far from Calcutta, Titu Mir (1782–1831), a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786–1831), lead the revolt of Muslim peasants against

¹ I use the spelling “faqir”, admissible but now seldom used in both French and English, because it was the spelling used by Garcin de Tassy himself.

² Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités de la religion musulmane en Inde d'après les ouvrages hindoustanis*. *Journal Asiatique*, n.s., VIII, 1831, pp. 81–107, pp. 161–220 and pp. 308–332; reprinted in book form, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1831; second revised edition, Paris, Adolphe Labitte, 1869; the later version was reprinted in Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran, l'enseignement doctrinal et la pratique*. Paris, Maisonneuve and Co, 1874, pp. 289–403. All references to the French text (FT) are to the 1869 edition. An English translation of the 1831 edition, along with Garcin de Tassy's reviews of the books of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations...* and Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam...*, was published by M. Waseem under the title *Muslim Festivals in India and other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 28–122; it is referred to in the notes as the English text (ET); but the translation of the quotations in this paper is mine.

³ Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*, London, 1832 (new annotated edition by William Crooke, London, Oxford University Press, 1917; reprint Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴ G.A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam, or the Customs of the Moosulmans of India...* London, 1832 (new annotated edition by William Crooke, London, Oxford University Press, 1921; reprint Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1972).

⁵ Garcin de Tassy, 'Review of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*'. *Journal Asiatique*, n.s. IX, 1832, pp. 539–560; Review of G.A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam, or the Customs of the Moosulmans of India*. *Journal des savants*, pp. 449–458 and pp. 539–548. An English Translation of these reviews is found M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals...*, pp. 123–142 and pp. 143–170.

Hindu landlords;⁶ more than the death of Sayyid Ahmad in May 1831, in a remote corner of the Sikh kingdom on the North West Frontier, this affray near the seat of the East India Company made the general British public in India aware of the recent cleavage between traditional Muslims and the reformers whom their Muslim opponents and later the British had nicknamed "Wahhabi". A British Magistrate, James Russell Colvin,⁷ who conducted the enquiry into the revolt of Titu Mir, wrote a report which remained rather confidential;⁸ he also published a paper on the life and doctrine of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilwi which moulded the Western perception of the Wahhabis, and of the cleavage between traditionalists and reformers.⁹

The following chapter aims at defining and explaining Garcin de Tassy's perception of South Asian Islam at that precise moment by replacing it in its historical context. In order to delimit the scope of this chapter, I will focus on the cult of Muslim saints, which is the central theme of his already mentioned first book on Indian Islam, his *Mémoire sur quelques*¹⁰ *particularités de la religion musulmane en Inde d'après les ouvrages hindoustanis* (i.e., "Memoir on some peculiarities of the Muslim religion in India according to the Hindustani books"). After sketching the career of Garcin de Tassy to explain his interest in Indian Islam, I will analyse his description of the Muslim saints, and of the faquirs and pilgrims who haunt their tombs. The contribution will end with a reflection on the characteristics and on the origins of his views: was his perception influenced or not by the propaganda of the reformist Wahhabis? How far do his views differ from those of contemporary and later British authors? In which intellectual traditions were his views grounded?

⁶ Muin al-Din Ahmad Khan, *History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal (1818-1906)*. Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1965, pp. lxi-lxviii (2nd ed., Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh).

⁷ M. Mohar Ali, 'Hunter's *Indian Muslims*: an examination of its background'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1980, p. 31.

⁸ Muin al-Din Ahmad Khan, *Titu Mir and his Followers in British Indian Records (1831-1833 AD)*. Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1980, pp. 132-161.

⁹ J.R.C. (= James Russell Colvin), 'Notice on the peculiar Tenets held by the Followers of Syed Ahmed, taken chiefly from the "Sirât-ul-Musta'qim", a principle treatise of that Sect written by Moulavi Mahomed Ismail'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I/11, 1832, pp. 479-498.

¹⁰ "quelques" ("some") is the wording of the first publication in the *Journal asiatique*. In its reprint in a book form in 1831, one finds "des" (meaning also "some") instead of "quelques". The second edition of 1869 and its reprint of 1874 have "les" ("the").

1. CAREER AND SCHOLARSHIP OF GARCIN DE TASSY

1.1. *A typical French orientalist*

Garcin de Tassy (1794–1878)¹¹ was born in Marseille in 1794 during the French Revolution from a family engaged in trade with the Middle East. Garcin is the surname of his father, and Tassy, the surname of his mother; he was given, in the fashion of the revolutionary period, the following four first names (usually not mentioned in his publications): Joseph, Eliodore (sic), Sagesse, Vertu. He first learned common Arabic in his native town with two Egyptian teachers who were most probably Copts from 1814 on. Three years later he went to Paris to study Arabic, Persian and Turkish with the famous Sylvestre de Sacy (1758–1833) who greatly helped him making a career in oriental studies. He first got an administrative appointment in the Collège de France in 1822; he was one of the founding members of the Société Asiatique in the same year and got appointed as its librarian and its assistant secretary; he contributed regularly to its journal, the *Journal Asiatique*, up to his death. He then learned Hindustani through grammars and dictionaries published by the British; and he was eventually appointed in 1828 as the first teacher of this language in the School of Oriental languages; he was thus the first in France to teach a vernacular Indian language, a bold step which aroused a controversy; he occupied this position up to his death fifty years later in 1878. He was kept informed of events in India, and of the publication of Indian books and journals through correspondents in England where he went thrice, and in India where—in the fashion of the French orientalisks of his time and of much later times—he never travelled. Several of his students came from England and other European countries, among whom the famous G.A. Herklots mentioned above.

He left no children. His library¹² was auctioned so that, as he said in his will, “his students and friends of every country could profit

¹¹ Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy. Biographie et étude critique de ses œuvres*. Pondichéry: Institut Français d’Indologie, 1962; Alain Désoulières, ‘Hindustani et langues modernes de l’Inde (1828–1963)’. In: Pierre Labrousse (ed.), *Langues’O, 1795–1995. Deux siècles d’histoire de l’École des langues orientales*. Paris: Éditions Hervas, pp. 202–214.

¹² Garcin de Tassy, *Catalogue des livres orientaux et autres composant la bibliothèque de feu M. Garcin de Tassy... rédigé par M.F. Deloncle*. Paris: Adolphe Labitte, 1979.

on his work and own some souvenirs from him".¹³ The teaching of Hindustani at the Ecole des langues orientales was discontinued for some time; it was later taken up from 1886 to 1921 by Julien Vinson (1843–1926), a professor of Tamil and Hindustani. The two languages were also taught by his two successors: Jules Bloch (1880–1953), the famous linguist, who was in the school from 1821 to 1938, and by Pierre Meile (1911–1963).

Garcin de Tassy published many books, translations, articles, discourses and reviews: the list of his publications¹⁴ has 155 entries dealing mainly with oriental languages and literatures (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindi and Urdu). His second focus of interest was the study of the Islamic religion. In addition he wrote about Islamic history and Indian ethnography. We will be interested here in his writings about Islam and about Indian ethnography.

1.2. *Garcin de Tassy and the study of Islam*

The contribution of Garcin de Tassy to the Western knowledge of Islam has been important in his time.¹⁵ It has been quite forgotten since: he is not mentioned in Edward Said's *Orientalism*,¹⁶ a book which incidentally ignores the scholars of South Asian Islam who contributed to the growth of Islamology, like the Austrian Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893) who is not even mentioned, and the British administrator William Muir (1819–1905) who gets only seven lines.¹⁷

When Garcin de Tassy started his career, orientalism was still a young science; Islam was not yet well known. And even at the end of his life much work remained to be done, as we can judge from a passage added in 1869 to the second edition of his *Mémoire*: "It seems that 'Abd-ulcadir Guilani is revered in the whole of the Muslim world, among other countries in Algeria where the famous 'Abd-ulcadir may well have been so named in allusion to the name of this saint."¹⁸ The global extension of the Qadiriyya order, which is so well known today, was not yet part of common knowledge.

¹³ Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy* . . . , p. 17.

¹⁴ Sayida Surriya Hussain, *op. cit.*, pp. 207–214.

¹⁵ Sayida Suriya Hussain, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–148.

¹⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New-York, 1978 (quoted here from the French translation by Catherine Malamoud, *L'orientalisme. L'Orient créé par l'Occident*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1980).

¹⁷ *op. cit.*, p. 176.

¹⁸ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, pp. 86.

A sizable proportion of the work of Garcin de Tassy, particularly in the beginning of his career, has been devoted to the task of making better known to the Western educated public the Islamic religion, which he called "islamisme" as it was labelled in France since the 18th century.¹⁹ He was interested in all the aspects of this religion, both "esoteric and exoteric" as he emphasised.²⁰

On the esoteric plan he first worked on allegorical mystical Persian poetry. He cites as an early example his translation of a book called *Les oiseaux et les fleurs*²¹ an allegorical poem by 'Izz al-Din al-Muqaddasi (d. 1279²²). His *opus magnum* on esoteric Islam was his work on the great Sufi parable of a 12th century Persian poet, Farid al-Din 'Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr*, which he edited and translated under the title: *Le langage des oiseaux*.²³ He announced its publication in an article in which he stressed the importance of the mystical tradition in Islam.²³

But his early work was mainly on exoteric Islam. He published in 1822 the translation of a Turkish catechism by Birgewi (c. 1520–1573) entitled *Wasıyyet-nâme* or *Risâle*, a text which incidentally expressed the views of the revivalist fundamentalist doctrine of the Kadizadeli movement in the Ottoman empire.²⁴ This austere view was compounded by two other pamphlets he published together in 1826.²⁵ The first one, *Doctrine et devoirs de la religion musulmane*, is an original work in which Garcin de Tassy gives a synthesis of the beliefs and of the religious observances of Islam he drew from his reading of

¹⁹ "Islamisme" in the sense of "Islam" is long obsolete in French. It has recently come back with the new meaning of "radical Islam".

²⁰ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire* . . . , FT, p. 2; ET, p. 29.

²¹ Garcin de Tassy, *Les oiseaux et les fleurs, allégories morales d'Izz-Eddin El-Mocadessi, publiées en arabe avec une traduction et des notes*. Paris: G. Dutourd, 1821; see Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy* . . . , p. 101.

²² Garcin de Tassy, *Mantiq ul-tayr ou Langage des oiseaux, poème de philosophie religieuse par Farid Uddin Attâr*. Persian Text, Paris, 1857; French Translation, Paris, 1863.

²³ Garcin de Tassy, "La poésie philosophique et religieuse chez les persans". *Revue contemporaine*, tome 24, livraison 93, 1856, pp. 86–114.

²⁴ Garcin de Tassy, *Exposition de la foi musulmane, traduite du turc de Muhammad Ben Pir-Ali Elberkevi, avec des notes*. Paris/Amsterdam: G. Dufour, 1822 (reprinted in Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran* . . . , pp. 129–206). On this text and the movement it represented see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 1960, art. "Birgewi"; Madeline Zilfi, 'The Kadizadeli: Discordant revivalism in seventeenth-century Istanbul'. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, 1986, pp. 251–269.

²⁵ Garcin de Tassy, *Doctrines et devoirs de la religion musulmane, tirés textuellement du Coran, suivis de l'Eucologe musulman traduit de l'arabe*. Paris, 1826 (Revised ed. 1840; Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran* . . . , pp. 27–128 and pp. 207–288).

the Qur'an. The second one, *Eucologue musulman*, is a much more technical work: it is the translation of a prayer-book ("eucologue") containing the texts of prayers and invocations in Arabic, with Urdu translations; such a book could be compared with modern collections such as the *Muslim Devotions* of Constance Padwick;²⁶ it is called *Hidāyat al-Islām* ("A guide to Islam"). It was published in Calcutta at the Hindustani Press in 1804; its author, Amanat Allah Shaida (d.1845–1846)²⁷ had worked for John Gilchrist (1759–1841) in Fort Williams College in Calcutta and had been commissioned with other scholars for an Urdu translation of the Qur'an, the publication of which was abandoned.²⁸ At the end of his life Garcin de Tassy collected these three works on Islam, together with his *Mémoire* of 1831, in one book which he called *L'islamisme selon le Coran, l'enseignement doctrinal et la pratique* ("Islam according to the Qur'an, doctrinal teachings and practice").²⁹

From this volume and its preface—which reproduces in the main the preface to his translation of Birgevi published in 1822—we can deduce his general attitude to Islam which does not appear to have fundamentally changed in the course of his career. He made no mystery that he remained a Catholic and that Christianity was for him "the only true religion"³⁰ and that "he deplored the blindness of the Muslims".³¹ He refused to put Islam on the same plane as Christianity. He was also very critical of the spread of Islam by the sword, while Christianity, he believed, was propagated peacefully.³² Nevertheless in the main his tone is not hostile; it is rather sympathetic, and even apologetic. He stresses that he wants to clear Islam of many of the accusations which were brought against it: "One has conceived the falsest ideas about this religion".³³ Islam should not be considered as a pagan religion;³⁴ Muhammad should not be regarded as an impostor (contrary to what Voltaire did), but as a

²⁶ Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions. A study of Prayers Manuals in Common Use*, London: S.P.C.K., 1961.

²⁷ M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16.

²⁸ Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shāh 'Abd al-ʿAzīz. Puritanism, Sectarianism, Polemics and Jihād*. Canberra: Ma'rifāt Publishing House, 1982, p. 62.

²⁹ Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran, l'enseignement doctrinal et la pratique*. Paris: Maisonneuve & C^o, 1874.

³⁰ Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran* . . . , p. vii.

³¹ *op. cit.*, p. v.

³² *op. cit.*, pp. xi–xii.

³³ *op. cit.*, p. vii.

³⁴ *op. cit.*, pp. viii–ix.

righteous and sincere personage.³⁵ Although Garcin de Tassy was interested in the propagation of Christianity in Asia, he did not adopt the stance of a missionary as William Muir for instance did; he was first and remained a scholar.

1.3. *Garcin de Tassy as an ethnographer*

Garcin de Tassy's interest in Islam was not limited to the religious aspects. From the time of his *Mémoire* published in 1831 his work acquired an ethnographic dimension which was confirmed by his long reviews of the above mentioned books of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali and Herklots which laid the foundation of the ethnography of the Indian Muslims.³⁶ This interest in ethnography never died.³⁷ He published an article on Hindu festivals;³⁸ he also collected and translated "popular songs" of both Hindu and Muslims,³⁹ a work in which he affirms his interest in ethnography: the last part of this publication is called "Ethnological songs".⁴⁰ When commenting a song for the Spring festival of *holî*, in which women behave improperly toward their husbands, he writes: "I reproduce here this song because it offers some ethnological details".⁴¹ His researches on Muslim names and titles—which had been sketched in his *Mémoire* of 1831⁴² and which were developed later in a long article⁴³—remain to this day a very important work for those interested in ethnography as well as in onomastics.⁴⁴ He became a member, and later the Vice-Chairman

³⁵ *op. cit.*, p. ix-x.

³⁶ Garcin de Tassy, Review of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*, in *Journal Asiatique*, n.s. IX, 1832, pp. 539-560; Review of G.A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam, or the Customs of the Moosulmans of India*. *Journal des savants*, pp. 449-458 and pp. 539-548. An English Translation of these reviews is found M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . , pp. 123-142 and pp. 143-170.

³⁷ Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy* . . . , pp. 125-128.

³⁸ Garcin de Tassy, 'Notice sur les fêtes populaires des hindous d'après les ouvrages hindoustani'. *Journal asiatique*, n.s., February March 1834, p. 48. in the separately paginated off-print.

³⁹ Garcin de Tassy, 'Chants populaires de l'Inde'. *Revue contemporaine*, Septembre 30, 1854, p. 59.

⁴⁰ *op. cit.*, pp. 38-42.

⁴¹ *op. cit.*, p. 40, n. 3.

⁴² Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, pp. 21-23; ET, pp. 38-39.

⁴³ Garcin de Tassy, 'Mémoire sur les noms propres et les titres des musulmans'. *Journal Asiatique*, 5th series, III, 1854, pp. 422-510 (reprinted as a book, Paris, 1878).

⁴⁴ See Marc Gaborieau, 'L'onomastique musulmane moderne chez les musulmans

of the Société d'ethnographie de Paris. A speech he delivered to this learned society in 1867 has been preserved; at the end of it he announces the forthcoming publication, under the auspices of the British Government in India, of "400 photographs of inhabitants of India classified according to their races and castes, with their diverse dresses, and with the representation of their customs, way of life and handicrafts".⁴⁵ This book by J. Forbes Watson and John Wilson Kaye with the title *The People of India* marked the beginning of systematic colonial ethnography in India.⁴⁶

1.4. *The Mémoire of 1831 in Garcin de Tassy's work*

The *Mémoire* of 1831 on the Indian Muslims is thus at the junction point of three of the main interests of Garcin de Tassy. It is first a continuation of his translation of Hindustani (Urdu) texts since it is mainly based on seven such texts.⁴⁷ Second it is an important step in his study of Islam on two counts. Up to then he had put emphasis on exoteric religion and had stopped short of entering into the mystical side: for instance in the translation of the *Eucologue musulman* he had left aside the prayers in the name of the saints called *fâtiha* after the name of the first Surah of the Qur'an; here he fills up this lacuna by giving a translation of these prayers which will be also added to the last edition of the *Eucologue*.⁴⁸ More generally through the biographies of the saints and the descriptions of the festivals in their honour, the *Mémoire* serves as an introduction to Indian Sufism and as a gateway to esoteric Islam. This text is an important step in the study of Islam on a second count: Garcin de Tassy up to that time had written about Islam in general, or about Turkish Islam; now for the first time he spoke specifically about Indian Islam; this is, as indicated in the title, the main object of the book

du sous-continent indien'. *Cahiers d'onomastique arabe, 1982-1984*, Paris, Éditions du CNRS, 1985, pp. 9-50.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy...*, p. 126.

⁴⁶ J. Forbes Watson & John Wilson Kaye, *The People of India*. London: Indian Museum, 10 vol., 1868-1875. On this book see David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation. Muslim Solidarity in British India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978 (2nd ed., Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 4-6.

⁴⁷ These texts are described in Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités...*, FT, pp. 3-6; ET, pp. 29-31.

⁴⁸ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités...*, FT, pp. 5-6; ET, p. 31; Garcin de Tassy, *L'islamisme selon le Coran...*, pp. 262-267.

which remains important in this field up to now. Finally the *Mémoire* represents the transition from literary or islamological studies to ethnography. It would not perhaps be an exaggeration to say that with this book Garcin de Tassy found his way as an ethnographer.

2. GARCIN DE TASSY'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CULT OF MUSLIM SAINTS

We now set to characterise Garcin de Tassy's approach of Indian Islam in his *Mémoire* of 1831. To do so we will quote or sum up the main parts of this text; and in order to define his approach we will compare it and contrast it with the approaches of his two contemporaries, Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali and G.A. Herklots, as well as that of colonial and more recent ethnography.

2.1. *Scope of Garcin de Tassy's ethnography*

Garcin de Tassy clearly states in the beginning of his *Mémoire* that its aim is to "describe . . . the festivals which are peculiar to Muslim India as well as those which are solemnised in Persia or even in the whole Muslim world, but which are distinguished by peculiar ceremonies".⁴⁹

As he adds in the second edition,⁵⁰ he skips over the canonical ritual of the prescribed prayers of the day and of the week which are celebrated in the same way all over the Muslim world; in both editions he mentions only rapidly the 'id, or annual festivals of both Sunni and Shia Muslims.⁵¹ "By contrast, he insists on "some superstitious practices which were born from the contact of the Muslims with the Hindus"; and he gives "the biographies of several Muslim saints who are very famous in India, but unknown outside her frontiers and some of whom are venerated by the Hindus as well as by the Muslims".⁵² The canonical festivals of both Sunnis and Shia, he remarks, are very few and

⁴⁹ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, pp. 6-7; ET, p. 31.

⁵⁰ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 7.

⁵¹ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 9-10, pp. 68-72; ET, p. 32, pp. 78-81.

⁵² *op. cit.*, FT, p. 7; ET, pp. 31-32.

are not enough for countries used to a multiplicity of Hindu festivals. Therefore they (The Indian Muslims) have established new ones which both Sunnis and Shia hasten to celebrate and in which the Hindus often participate. Such are among others the celebrations devoted to the memory of the *pîrs* or saints, who are for the Muslims of India what the *Déotas* are for the Hindus; such are also the regular visitations to their tombs, particularly on Thursdays, and on Fridays for some of them.⁵³

In brief the main topics of the *Mémoire* are the festivals in honour of the saints and the pilgrimages to their tombs. Two other minor theme are the personality and the biography of the saints, and the mention of the brotherhoods of faquirs who organise their cult; we will consider them separately. As Garcin de Tassy counted in his conclusion,⁵⁴ the *Mémoire* contains about twenty full notices of saints; and equal number of saints are mentioned in passing. But these were selected, he adds, out of a total of more than a hundred interesting ones he found in Hindustani books. He more generally regrets that up to his time not enough attention was given to the saints and their biographies, and that Lt. Col. John Briggs in his translation (published in 1829) of the history of Firishta (*c.* 1570–*c.* 1625)⁵⁵ has omitted to translate the chapter on the saints of India.⁵⁶

Other themes are briefly mentioned in the “preliminary observations”: the divide between Sunnis and Shia,⁵⁷ social stratification of the high class Muslims or *ashrâf* as they are called in India⁵⁸ and Muslim names and titles as I have mentioned above.⁵⁹

2.2. *Sources of Garcin de Tassy*

To understand the *Mémoire* let us reflect on the sources used to compile it. What is announced in the title, “according to Hindustani books”, is both vague and incomplete: vague because the Hindustani books fall into different categories; incomplete because Hindustani books other than those mentioned in the beginning⁶⁰ of the

⁵³ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 10; ET, pp. 32–33.

⁵⁴ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 106; ET, p. 116.

⁵⁵ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. II, article “Firishta”.

⁵⁶ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités...*, FT, p. 19; ET, p. 36.

⁵⁷ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 9–13; ET, pp. 32–33.

⁵⁸ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 21–22; ET, p. 38.

⁵⁹ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 22–23; ET, pp. 38–39.

⁶⁰ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 3–6; ET, pp. 29–31.

Mémoire as well as other non Hindustani books have been used. They all fall into the following categories.

First come religious books. As indicated in the beginning of the *Mémoire*, Garcin de Tassy relied mainly on two of them: the already mentioned (§ 1.2) prayer-book called *Hidāyat al-Islām* by Amanat Allah Shayda (d. 1845–46),⁶¹ the story of the Shia Imam by Mir Haydar Bakhsh Haydari (1768–1826).⁶² To these must be added many Arabic and Persian books Garcin de Tassy knew personally or through the works of orientalists like Barthélémy d'Herbelot and his own master Sylvestre de Sacy; only a few of them are explicitly mentioned as for instance the poems of Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Second come books of poetry. Two Hindustani books described in the beginning were most important for the composition of the *Mémoire*: the *Bāra Mâsâ*, or "Twelve months" by Mirza Kazim 'Ali Jawan (d. 1816)⁶³ which provided the literary model for the composition of the *Mémoire* (see below §2.5) as well as much of the material it contains; and a much older book of poetry, the *Diwân* of Wali (c. 1667–c. 1707), the first great Urdu poet of Northern India, whom Garcin de Tassy liked much (he produced the first printed edition of his poems in 1833 as well as a French translation in 1834).⁶⁴ He also used Fayd, an early 18th century Urdu poet.⁶⁵ He quotes also two other Urdu poets: Mir Taqi Mir (1722–1810) and Mir Hasan (1727–1786).⁶⁶

The third class consists of what was called in the 19th century "Statistical books", i.e., books which provide systematic descriptions of a country or a province. The most important of them is the Hindustani *Arâ'ish-e mahfil* ("The ornament of the Assembly") written by Mir Sher 'Ali Afsos (1736–1809) who was the head Munshi for Hindustani at Fort William College in Calcutta; he was commissioned by his English patrons to write, adapted from a Persian history of the late 17th century by the Hindu Sujan Rai, a compilation on the history and famous places of Hindustan. The *Arâ'ish-e mahfil* was published in Calcutta in 1808.⁶⁷ In addition to this modern work, Garcin

⁶¹ See M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . , pp. 15–16.

⁶² *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶³ *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ See Sayida Surriya Hussain, *Garcin de Tassy* . . . , pp. 71–74.

⁶⁵ See M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . , p. 13.

⁶⁶ See Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu literature*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 94 and p. 108.

⁶⁷ Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie*. 2nd ed., Paris,

de Tassy often quotes a most famous Persian model, the *â'in-e akbarî* of Abu'l-Fadl 'Allami (1551–1602).⁶⁸ He also draws on Western erudition, quoting for instance Joseph Reinaud's *Monuments musulmans*. Finally in this category, the most often quoted source, after Afsos, is Hamilton's *East India Gazetteer*!

Garcin de Tassy also used in translation two Persian autobiographies: that of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) quoted from the translation by D. Price; and that of the Iranian writer Hazin (1692–1768), who died and is buried in Benares, quoted from the translation by F.C. Balfour published in 1830. And as we have seen above (§2.1) he mentions the chronicle of Firishta from Briggs' translation.

Another important class of books often quoted are the account of travellers. Some of them are Eastern, like 'Abd al-Karim Kashmiri (d. 1784), whose travels were published in an abridged French translation by L. Langles in Paris in 1797 under the title *Voyages de l'Inde à la Mecque*. But Garcin de Tassy most often quotes Western travellers either directly, or through a French edition by Langles: the authors most commonly cited are Bernier, Tavernier, Chardin, Paulin de Saint Barthelemy, William Hodges, Lord Valentia, Abbé Dubois . . .

Last but not least come Western orientalists. First the French scholars of the Muslim world, whose heir Garcin de Tassy was: Barthélémy d'Herbelot with his *Bibliothèque orientale*, Joseph Reinaud, Georges Sale, his master Sylvestre de Sacy and Langles. He also used, for specialised points, the *Tableau de l'empire musulman* by d'Ohson, and one *Dictionary of Muhammadan Law* by a certain Rousseau (?). But, as expected in a work on India, British scholars working in this country are most often quoted for their grammars and dictionaries (Gilchrist, Shakespear), for a collection of proverbs (Thomas Ruebuck), and more generally for their work on religion and history: seven papers are cited from the *Asiatic Journal* and from the *Asiatic Researches*, the most important of them being *A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus*, of H.H. Wilson, quoted in the notice on Kabir.⁶⁹

In the final analysis, although the *Mémoire* is presented in its title

1870, 3 vol. (reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), vol. I, pp. 120–136; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden, E.J. Brill, vol. I, 1960, article "Afsûs"; M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . , p. 16.

⁶⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed., Leiden: E.J. Brill, vol. I, 1960, article "Abû 'l-Fadl 'Allâmî".

⁶⁹ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, p. 99.

as being based on “the Hindustani books”, it does not only reflect vernacular views, since many works by Western travellers and Western orientalisists are also used. And even the vernacular books which are used are not totally independent from British sources; Professor Waseem has remarked that eight of the main Hindustani authors used by Garcin de Tassy were associated with John Gilchrist (1759–1841) at Fort William College in Calcutta.⁷⁰ It has long been noted that the British presence in Calcutta did influence the growth and evolution of several genres of Hindustani literature, from popular stories to reformist religious literature.⁷¹ The understanding of Muslim India by Garcin de Tassy—although grounded on a large knowledge of Islamic texts, particularly vernacular Indian texts—was also substantially linked with the establishment of British rule in India.

2.3. *What is a Muslim saint?*

The greatest contribution of Garcin de Tassy is perhaps to have given a rigorous definition of what is a Muslim saint. The greatest part of the “preliminary observations” of the *Mémoire* is devoted to this task:⁷²

One of the most remarkable practices in the cult performed by the Muslim in India—on which it is useful to dwell a little—is the external signs of veneration which the people show to their saints whom they generally call *pîr* or *walî*. They replace for the Muslims, as I said above, the numerous deities of the Hindus. In every town, in every village, nay, in the religious capital of Pagan India, Benares itself, are buried one or several saints who are the protectors of the place, but are often unknown elsewhere.⁷³

As several people before or after him, Garcin de Tassy had very well perceived the ubiquity of the saints and their role as protectors. By a careful analysis of the terminology and of the rituals he went further into the definition of their nature. He was aware that the

⁷⁰ M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals* . . . , p. 13.

⁷¹ Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu literature*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 210–212; Annemarie Schimmel, *Classical Urdu Literature from the beginning to Iqbal*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1975, pp. 211–215; Rizvi, *Shâh ‘Abd al-‘Azîz*, pp. 62–63.

⁷² Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, pp. 15–29; ET, pp. 35–49.

⁷³ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 15; ET, p. 35.

proper term is the Arabic *walī*, but he does not dwell on its exact meaning as somebody who is near to God.⁷⁴ He is aware that *pīr*, literally “an old man”, is only an equivalent title; and that it means both somebody who is venerated, and a spiritual guide, i.e., a *guru*.⁷⁵ He makes also clear that this word applies both to a living saint who is respected, and a dead saint who is venerated⁷⁶ He has also given precise definitions of the way their tombs are constructed, of the particular institutions which grew around them, and of the wide range of individual and collective ceremonies which are performed there.⁷⁷ All this is so precise that when about twenty years ago I was commissioned by the *Journal Social Compass* to write a general paper about the cult of Muslim saints, I got most of my clues from the *Mémoire*.⁷⁸

One point of this description is particularly important: the definition Garcin de Tassy gives of the prayers which are recited in the name of the saints. When reading the rather vague descriptions written by other authors during this period, one would think that the Muslims would address directly the saints, while, as Garcin de Tassy points out, they in fact address only God.⁷⁹ He was thus able to show that that Muslim saints could be compared to Christian saints, anticipating some way the work of Peter Brown as we shall demonstrate below (§3.2.2.).

2.4. *Faquirs and Sufi orders*

He also perceived that the saints who—as we have seen in the foregoing paragraph—acted as spiritual guides, were most often linked to mystical orders. The first edition is not much explicit about the formal definition of these orders, stating only in the “preliminary observations”:

⁷⁴ On this point see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le sceau des saints. Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabī*. Paris: Gallimard, 1986, pp. 13–22.

⁷⁵ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, p. 23; ET, p. 39.

⁷⁶ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 23–24; ET, p. 40.

⁷⁷ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 24–29; ET, pp. 40–43.

⁷⁸ Marc Gaborieau, “The Cult of Saints among Muslims in Nepal and Northern India”. In: Stephen Wilson (ed.), *Saints and their Cults. Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 (revised version of a paper first published in French: “Le culte des saints chez les musulmans au Népal et en Inde du Nord”. *Social Compass*, XXV, 1978, n° 3–4, pp. 477–494).

⁷⁹ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, p. 26; ET, p. 41.

Several saints are distinguished by a patronymic name (*Padbî*) which they share with the whole of the religious family. Such is the name of *Chishtî*, which will be mentioned later. Each *pir* belongs to a known religious lineage; and he gives to his disciples, when he initiates them to contemplation, the genealogical tree, *schajar Nâma*, of the individuals who compose his religious lineage; and each spiritual family constitutes a king of monastic order which has a head or chairman, *masnad* or *sajjâda nischîn*. Succession to this chairmanship is indicated by the handing over of the turban, of the stick and of the mantle the deceased chief.⁸⁰

In the notice about 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani he speaks about "Sufism (*taṣawwuf*)".⁸¹ Sylvestre de Sacy is quoted as his main source for the study of Sufism.

These definitions are completed in the second edition by a passage⁸² providing a more detailed description of the Sufi institutions which is taken from Colvin's paper⁸³ and from the *Awadh Akhbâr* (23 June 1868). In this addition, the alternative terms "religious order (*tarîqa*)" and "religious corporation (*gurûh*)" are used.

From the whole text it is clear that Garcin de Tassy is familiar with three of the great Sufi orders: Qadiriyya, Chishtiyya and Suhrawardiyya;⁸⁴ Naqshbandiyya is mentioned only in the second edition.⁸⁵

Garcin de Tassy is also important because he seems to be the first to have made a hierarchical distinction between the respectable orders mentioned above, and a series of lower ones the members of which are properly called faquirs. This distinction is introduced in the notice on Shah Madar where he quotes the following sentences of Afsos (1736–1809): "This personage is generally much venerated, especially by the low-born people; for the faquirs who belong to his religious lineage can also be placed in this class, since most of them are very ignorant".⁸⁶

Such a distinction between higher and lower order was legitimised one year later by Herklots who couched it in the legal language of

⁸⁰ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 23; ET, p. 39.

⁸¹ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 85 n. 3; ET, p. 117, n. 3.

⁸² *op. cit.* FT, p. 16, which would have come in ET in p. 36 after line 12.

⁸³ J.R.C. (= James Russell Colvin), 'Notice on the peculiar Tenets...' *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 85–86, p. 63 and p. 103, p. 93; ET, p. 101, p. 74 and p. 114, pp. 118–119.

⁸⁵ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 16.

⁸⁶ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 56; ET, p. 69.

the opposition between orthoprax (*bâ-shar'*) and heteroprax (*be-shar'*).⁸⁷ The origin of this terminology, which is not attested before that time, is obscure;⁸⁸ it is used as a synonym of *malâmiyya* or *malâmatiyya*, and can be applied to a large variety of faqirs according to a wide range of criteria.⁸⁹ One of these is social status: it is nowadays beyond doubt that most of the *be-shar'* faqirs are considered socially inferior to the respectable *bâ-shar'* orders.⁹⁰ In addition to the already mentioned *madârîs*⁹¹ on whom he dwells at length, and whom he also calls Tabaqatiyya in the second edition,⁹² Garcin de Tassy mentions in passing the Jalalis, whom he calls *malangs*.⁹³

He knew probably more than he said about the faqirs. But his account remains sketchy. It is only in the book of Herklots that one finds for the first time the precise and detailed nomenclature of the mystical orders which is used by social scientists up to this day.

2.5. *Calendars and festivals*

The largest part of the *Mémoire* is devoted to a description of the festivals. The order followed is that of the calendars used in India. A choice that is not an innocent one: we may reflect on it. Garcin de Tassy here is at the junction point of several traditions. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the presentation of ethnographical material according to two kinds of cycles: life-cycle and year cycle. Life-cycle is totally absent from the *Mémoire*, but became pre-eminent one year later in the books of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali and more systematically

⁸⁷ G. A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam*... *op. cit.*, p. 294.

⁸⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, article "Bî-Shar'".

⁸⁹ See Marc Gaborieau, 'Hétéropraxie et hiérarchie; les ordres mystiques musulmans dits 'hétérodoxes' dans le sous-continent indien'. In: Serge Bouez (ed.), *Ascèse et renoncement en Inde. Ou la solitude bien ordonnée*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992, pp. 89-103; Marc Gaborieau, 'Le concept de *malâmatiyya* en Inde: hétéropraxie et hiérarchie'. In: Nathalie Clayer & Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone (eds.), *Melâmis and Bayrâmîs. Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans*. Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1998, pp. 37-49.

⁹⁰ Marc Gaborieau, 'Les ordres mystiques dans le sous-continent indien. Un point de vue ethnologique'. In: Alexandre Popovic & Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Les ordres mystiques dans l'Islam. Cheminement et situation actuelle*. Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1986, pp. 120-123; Marc Gaborieau, *Ni brahmanes, ni ancêtres. Colporteurs musulmans du Népal*. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 1993, pp. 298-300, p. 354, pp. 378-379.

⁹¹ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 52-59; ET, pp. 67-76.

⁹² *op. cit.*, FT, p. 52.

⁹³ *op. cit.*, FT., pp. 65-66; ET, p. 76.

in that of G.A. Herklots.⁹⁴ The yearly cycle of festivals on the contrary, was not systematically treated by Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali; and even Herklots does not follow carefully the chronological order.⁹⁵

What is striking about the *Mémoire* is that it presents the cycle of the festivals exhaustively in the strict chronological order of the calendar. He does not seem here to follow a modern or a Christian model: his inspiration is clearly oriental. But from where? Indian Muslims are used to compose calendars with the festivities of each month: "The great traditionalist of the 17th century, 'Abd al-Haqq Dihlawi (1551-1642), wrote a book which deals with prophetic traditions concerning each month."⁹⁶ Sufis used to compose "calendars of saints, which, like the Roman Catholic Calendars, list for each day of the year the Sufis whose festival are to be celebrated then according to the Islamic lunar calendar."⁹⁷ But here again this does not fit exactly the pattern followed by Garcin de Tassy who divides his *Mémoire* into two parts, the first one concerning the Islamic purely lunar calendar; and the second one dedicated to the festivals the date of which was fixed according to the Hindu luni-solar calendar. This model was neither Christian, nor purely Islamic: our author had to take into account the adaptation of the Indian Muslims to the Indian calendar;⁹⁸ he undoubtedly followed an indigenous literary genre, the *bâra mâsâ* (i.e., "Twelve months") poems in which the peculiarities of each month are listed chronologically.⁹⁹ Garcin de Tassy chose as his closest model a modern *bâra mâsâ* written and

⁹⁴ Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, op. cit., chap. VI and XII-XV; G.A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam* . . . op. cit., chap. II-IX; on life cycle ceremonies among Indian Muslims see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980, pp. 110-118; Marc Gaborieau, *Ni brahmanes, ni ancêtres* . . . op. cit., pp. 163-240.

⁹⁵ Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans of India*, op. cit., chap. I-IV and VIII-XI; G.A. Herklots, *Qanoon-e Islam* . . . op. cit., chap. XIV-XXV. On the yearly cycle see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, op. cit., pp. 118-123.

⁹⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, op. cit., p. 120.

⁹⁷ Carl W. Ernst, 'An Indo-Persian Guide to Sufi Shrine Pilgrimage', in Carl W. Ernst & Grace M. Smith (eds.), *Manifestations of Sainthood*. Istanbul: Isis Press, pp. 43-67.

⁹⁸ Marc Gaborieau, 'Le culte des saints musulmans en Inde'. In: Henri Chambert-Loir & Claude Guillot (eds.), *Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman*. Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, 1995, pp. 202-204; Marc Gaborieau, 'Les saints, les eaux, les récoltes en Inde'. In: Muhammad Ali Amir Moezzi (ed.), *Lieux d'islam. Cultes et cultures de l'Afrique à Java*. Paris: Autrement, pp. 245-246.

⁹⁹ Charlotte Vaudeville, *Barahmasa. Les chansons des douze mois dans les littératures indo-aryennes*. Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1965.

published under the auspices of the East India Company in 1812 in Calcutta by Mirza Kazim 'Ali Jawan (d. 1816).¹⁰⁰ He choose, he said, this recent one because it described the present state of the Muslim religion in India.¹⁰¹ The calendar model was also used by Garcin de Tassy when he wrote three years later a "Notice on the popular festivals of the Hindus according to the Hindustani books".¹⁰²

2.6. *Common pilgrims and festivities*

The choice of the literary model of the calendar is important. For the fact that most of the sources of Garcin de Tassy are literary explains the tone of his *Mémoire*: the authors he quotes are in search of picturesque and unusual features; they insist on curious things one would not find in religious books.

This is particularly evident in the descriptions of the fairs throughout the book. Each notice contains a biography of the saint, the way one prays at his tomb which often the text of the *fātiha* to be recited . . . ; finally the pride of place is given to literary descriptions of the fair (*melâ*) held around the tomb. This interest in the fairs can be best summed up by quoting what Garcin de Tassy says about them in his "preliminary observations":

Melâ is not exactly a fair in the sense we understand it: it is the name given to gatherings of pilgrims and merchants who, out of devotion, or to earn money, or for both purposes, go to places considered as sacred to attend the festivals of some Hindu gods, or some Muslim personages who are reputed to be saints. Merchants, finding there an opportunity to sell their goods by providing to the needs of the crowd, set up a market. Therefore, the word *melâ* is almost confused with the word *ziyarat*, "pilgrimage", among the Muslims; and with the word *tîrth* among the Hindus. In addition to those who are attracted there by devotion or interest, many people come here for the sake of curiosity, or of pleasure; finally thieves and swindlers do not fail attending these fairs in the hope of exercising their peculiar arts. These gatherings thus comprise faquirs, devotees of every description, musicians, jugglers, dancing girls and courtesans, eccentrics and libertines, rascals and thieves.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ See M. Waseem, *Muslim Festivals . . . op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, p. 3; ET, p. 29.

¹⁰² Garcin de Tassy, 'Notice sur les fêtes populaires des hindous d'après les ouvrages hindoustani'. *Journal asiatique*, n.s., February March 1834.

¹⁰³ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, pp. 27–28; ET, p. 42.

This description is summed up from Afsos, Jawan and Hamilton's *Gazetteer*. It is characterised by an interest in what is picturesque.

It is also coloured by the condescending attitude of the writers quoted toward the pilgrims they describe. They are themselves literate people belonging to the higher classes, and they despise the pilgrims they describe. For instance Afsos says: "The custom to go on pilgrimage (for Shah Madar) in Makanpur is fairly old; we do not know at all who established it. However it can be presumed it was started by ignorant and low born people, as is evident from the despicable crowd which goes there and imagines that this pilgrimage is preferable to that of Mecca".¹⁰⁴

A last feature of these literary texts is that they condone eccentricities, and even obscenities which one would not find in later texts. This last point may be illustrated by the description of the festival of Ghazi Miyān in Bahraich: compared to later standard accounts,¹⁰⁵ Garcin de Tassy's one is alone in insisting on two features. The first one is hook-swinging which he quotes from Afsos: "Around the chapel which encloses the tomb of Maçud Gazi (sic), there a certain number of trees from where fanatics hang themselves by their feet, hands and necks with the hope that, through this vain act of penance, they will get their desires fulfilled".¹⁰⁶

The second one is the insistence on the erotic aspects of the cult. He first quotes from Afsos: "People again, among the vulgar, call this great person *gâjnâ dulhâ* (happy bridegroom); and the women devotees call him *sâlâr chinâla* (libertine general). The reason for these appellation is that the woman who enters the shrine falls down fainting and imagines that the saint has sucked her".¹⁰⁷

Garcin de Tassy later quotes from the *bâra mâsâ* of Jawan a passage which describes how the guardians of the tomb sell the water in which they have soaked the loin-cloth of the saint.¹⁰⁸ More generally, if we take into account in addition the mock marriage of the

¹⁰⁴ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 57; ET, p. 70.

¹⁰⁵ Marc Gaborieau, 'Légende et culte du saint musulman Ghâzî Miyân au Népal occidental et en Inde du Nord', *Objets et Mondes*, vol. XV/n° 3, 1975, pp. 289-310; Marc Gaborieau, 'Les saints, les eaux, les récoltes en Inde'. In: Muhammad Ali Amir Moezzi (ed.), *Lieux d'islam. Cultes et cultures de l'Afrique à Java*. Paris: Autrement, 1996 (Collection Monde HS, n° 91-92), pp. 239-254.

¹⁰⁶ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, p. 74; ET, p. 82.

¹⁰⁷ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 74; ET, p. 82.

¹⁰⁸ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 78-79; ET, p. 85.

saint, we can safely say that, in the festival of Ghazi Miyan, the emphasis is laid on fecundity.

2.7. *Garcin de Tassy, his contemporaries and later ethnography*

Although he had read more vernacular and classical texts about the saints than his contemporaries, the overall tone, with its complacency on picturesque aspects, does not fundamentally differ from theirs. His vernacular sources were mainly compiled under the auspices of the East India Company. Like most of the Western travellers and the first ethnographers, he is keen on giving a description of Indian Islam which is exotic in comparison with Europe, and even with Near Eastern Islam. In the "preliminary observations" and all along his descriptions he insists on features which are specifically Indian and allegedly borrowed from Hinduism: "When reading the description I will presently give of each of these festivals, one will often believe that they are Hindu festivals".¹⁰⁹

He differs from contemporary authors on two points. His picture, limited to twenty festivals, is much less comprehensive than, say, those of Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali and G.A. Herklots. Second his grounding in classical Islamic studies makes him more profoundly aware of the theological and liturgical debates involved.

Before turning to this last point in the third part of this chapter, let us assess the relevance of the work of Garcin de Tassy for present day scholars. We have of course nowadays much more complete descriptions of the cult of Muslim saints; they are based on a more extensive knowledge of written sources.¹¹⁰ In spite of this the work of Garcin de Tassy is not completely outdated, and it is still worth reading and quoting for he mentions, as we saw, forgotten aspects of the cult of the saints, he gives original insights into neglected aspects of the ritual, notably the texts of the *fātiha*,¹¹¹ and thirdly he shows an ecumenical acceptance of Muslim saints as substitute of

¹⁰⁹ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 10; ET, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ See for instance Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India. Their Character, History and Significance*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979; W. Chambert-Loir & Claude Guillot (eds.), *Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman*. Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, 1995 (particularly the papers by Denis Matringe and Marc Gaborieau).

¹¹¹ Marc Gaborieau, 'Le culte des saints musulmans en tant que rituel: controverses juridiques'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, n° 85, 1994, pp. 85-98; see also above §2.3 and below §3.2.2.).

Hindu gods.¹¹² More generally he remains worth reading for the ethnology of Indian Muslims, notably on names and titles and on social stratification.¹¹³

3. GARCIN DE TASSY AND THE 19TH CENTURY DEBATES ON MUSLIM SAINTS

3.1. *Garcin de Tassy and the Wahhabis*

In order to characterise more precisely his perception of Muslim saints, let us see where he stood in the controversy about the liceity of their cult which raged in India in the beginning of the 19th century.¹¹⁴ Launched by Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi in 1818 and possibly twenty years earlier by his associate Isma'il Shahid,¹¹⁵ this controversy had been foreshadowed in India at the end of the preceding century by Shah Wali Allah (1703–1762) who was himself inspired by his readings of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328, Damascus).¹¹⁶

The first publication of Garcin de Tassy on Islam in 1822, we may recall, was his translation of the catechism of Birgewi.¹¹⁷ This author was a fundamentalist: "Like Ibn Taymiyya he set himself firmly against all innovations in order to protect the sacred law".¹¹⁸

¹¹² See below §3.2.1.

¹¹³ Marc Gaborieau, 'Typologie des spécialistes religieux chez les musulmans du sous-continent indien. Les limites de l'islamisation'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, n° 55/1, 1983, pp. 29–51; Marc Gaborieau, *Ni brahmanes, ni ancêtres...*; Marc Gaborieau, 'L'onomastique musulmane moderne...?'

¹¹⁴ Marc Gaborieau, 'A nineteenth-century Indian 'Wahhabi' Tract against the Cult of Muslim Saints: *Al-balagh al-mubin*'. In: Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India. Their Character, History and Significance*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 198–239.

¹¹⁵ Rizvi, *Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz...* pp. 471–539; Marc Gaborieau, 'Criticizing the Sufis: the Debate in Early-Nineteenth-Century India'; Frederick de Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.), *Islamic Mysticism Contested. Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999, pp. 452–467.

¹¹⁶ J.M.S. Baljon, 'Shah Waliullah and the Dargah'. In: Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India. Their Character, History and Significance*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 189–197; Michel Chodkiewicz, 'La sainteté et les saints. Prophétie et sainteté en Islam'. In: Henri Chambert-Loir & Claude Guillot (eds.), *Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman*. Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, 1995, pp. 22–32; Marc Gaborieau, 'Tarīqa and orthodoxie'. In: Alexandre Popovic & Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Les Voies d'Allah. Les ordres mystiques dans le monde musulman des origines à aujourd'hui*. Paris: Fayard, 1996, pp. 195–202.

¹¹⁷ See above §1.2; Garcin de Tassy, *Exposition de la foi musulmane...*

¹¹⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. I, article "Birgewi", p. 1235.

We could therefore expect that, when studying Indian Islam, he would turn to the Indian school most akin to Birgewi, the "Wahhabis". In fact he had chosen this catechism because it was very popular in the Turkish world; he does not seem to have been aware of its fundamentalist character which is not evident at the first reading: for instance, speaking of the saints, Birgewi only says in chapter IV: "One must also acknowledge the excellency of the saints, whose rank however is inferior to that of the prophets".¹¹⁹

There is not even a sentence about their cult. Garcin de Tassy does not seem either to have been interested in the Indian reformers before the publication of Colvin's article in 1832,¹²⁰ that is one year after his *Mémoire*; the first edition of the latter does not contain any allusion to them. Neither Garcin de Tassy in 1831, nor Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, nor Herklots in 1832 made a case of the Wahhabi objections to the cult of the saints.

Garcin de Tassy first wrote about the Wahhabis in 1836 when he reviewed Shah 'Abd al-Qadir's Urdu translation of the Qur'an printed in 1829 by a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad in Calcutta.¹²¹ He went into the details of the career of the latter in 1838 in a curious article about a magical dress inscribed with Qur'anic verses and incantations which was believed to have been worn by Sayyid Ahmad himself;¹²² if true this would have run contrary to his strict prohibition of magic.¹²³ Garcin de Tassy's account is founded on two sources, Colvin's article and the book of Henry T. Princep on the *Origin of Sikh Power*. . . .¹²⁴ He introduces Sayyid Ahmad as the man "who was in India the founder of the new Muslim sect called *tarîca-i muhammadiya*, i.e., the Mahometan way. He was an ardent man, full of esoteric doctrines, who wanted to establish in Muslim India a reform similar to that which the Wahhabi chiefs established in Arabia".¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Garcin de Tassy, *Exposition de la foi musulmane* . . . , p. 14.

¹²⁰ J.R.C. (= James Russell Colvin), 'Notice on the peculiar Tenets . . . *op. cit.*

¹²¹ Garcin de Tassy, 'Review of *Muzih-i Qur'ân*, c'est-à-dire l'exposition du Coran (texte et traduction interlinéaire en hindoustani)', Calcutta 1929'. *Journal des savants*, 1836, pp. 435-442.

¹²² Garcin de Tassy, 'Notice sur des vêtements avec des inscriptions arabes, persanes et hindoustani'. *Journal Asiatique*, 3rd series, V, 1838, pp. 331-350 = 2 plates.

¹²³ See Marc Gaborieau, 'L'ésotérisme musulman dans le sous-continent indo-pakistanaï: un point de vue ethnologique'. *Bulletin d'études orientales*. Damas: Institut Français, tome XLIV, 1992, p. 204.

¹²⁴ Henry T. Princep, *Origin of the Sikh power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Runjeet Singh with an Account of the Present Conditions, Religion, Laws and Customs of the Sikhs*. Calcutta: G.H. Huttman, Military Orphan Press, 1834.

¹²⁵ Garcin de Tassy, 'Notice sur des vêtements . . . , p. 332.

Later in the two editions of his history of Hindustani literature, he goes into details about the life and doctrine of Sayyid Ahmad and his main disciples.¹²⁶ Finally in 1869, he introduced a mention of the Wahhabis in the second revised edition of the *Mémoire*; in addition to the sources mentioned above, he quoted the English translation of Isma'il Shahid's *Taqwiyat al-imân*.¹²⁷ This passage, which is absent from the first edition, is introduced in the "preliminary observations".¹²⁸ It read as follows:

There indeed arise from time to time in India reformers who want to bring back their co-religionists to the true doctrines of the Qur'an. the most famous of them, Saiyed Ahmad, perished a few years ago while fighting to defend his renovating ideas (...) Finally the sect of the Wahhabis, or Muslim puritans, penetrated into India and progressed especially during the recent years.¹²⁹

See below a very interesting note of Mir Shahamat Ali who gave a translation of the *Tacwiyat uliman* (sic), a famous religious treatise, written in Hindustani by Maulawi Ismail, one of the chiefs of the Wahhabi sect in India:¹³⁰

The commonality of Mussalmans, and especially the women, have more regard for the memory of Hasan and Husain, than for that of Muhammad and his khâlifs. The heresy of making Ta'ziyas, on the anniversary of the two later imams, is most common throughout India; so much so that opposition to it is ascribed by the ignorant Mussalmans to blasphemy. Their example is followed by many Hindus, especially the Mahrattas (...) The observance of this custom has so strong a hold on the mind of the commonality of the Mussalmans, that they believe Muhammadanism to depend merely in keeping the memory of the imâms in the above manner. The preaching of Maulavi Isma'il has recovered many a Mussalman from this heresy.

¹²⁶ Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindoue et hindoustanie*. 2nd revised ed., 3 vol. Paris, 1870, vol. 1, pp. 76-79, 81-87; vol. 2, pp. 52-57; vol. 3, pp. 32-37 (1st ed., Paris, 2 vol., 1839-1847).

¹²⁷ Mir Shahamat Ali, 'Translation of *Taqwiyat-ul-imân*, preceded by a notice of the Author, Maulavi Isma'il Hajji'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XIII/1, 1852, pp. 310-372.

¹²⁸ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités...*, FT, pp. 8-9; this passage would come between the last two paragraphs of p. 32 in ET.

¹²⁹ An allusion to the "Wahhabi trials" of the 1860s.

¹³⁰ The quotation is here copied directly from the original: Mir Shahamat Ali, 'Translation of *Taqwiyat-ul-imân*...', p. 369.

3.2. *Garcin de Tassy's view of the Muslim saints*

Was Garcin de Tassy's view of Muslim saints coloured by a similar fundamentalist approach? One could believe so when one reads his first accounts of Sayyid Ahmad's reforms. For instance he wrote in 1838:

One must say that probably in no country the Muslim religion is more in need of a reform than in India. Surrounded by idolaters, the Muslims adopted most of their usages. The antique simplicity of Islam gave way to festivals and pagan ceremonies; ignoble masquerades defile the observances of the cult of the disciples of Mahomet. The Muslims, who must pray for their Prophet, dare there invoke personages of very dubious sanctity and offer them sacrifices. They even have no scruple imploring Hindu saints and Brahmanical deities.¹³¹

Garcin de Tassy seems here to share the ideas, and even the tone of the Wahhabis. But when we compare the foregoing quotation with earlier and later documents, it becomes clear that he is here carried away by the tone of the reformer he is speaking about; he is expressing the feelings of Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Isma'il, not his own. Elsewhere, and particularly in the *Mémoire*, his tone is much more temperate.

3.2.1. *Muslim saints and Hindu gods*

This moderation should not however be taken as a full approval of all the aspects of the cult of the saints. He makes first a clear distinction between original, canonical Islam and later accretions:

For the cult established by Mahomet was too simple for a country where dominates an allegorical and idolatrous religion which appeals to the senses and to the imagination rather than to the spirit and to the heart; therefore Muslim festivals in India got overburdened with pagan ceremonies, and have taken on a lavish appearance. Pilgrimages (in India) are not marked with the severity which characterizes the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina; it looks as if they were the pilgrimages of the Hindus.¹³²

A similar statement occurs in the *Histoire de la littérature*... in the article on Isma'il Shahid where Garcin de Tassy agrees in principle with the Wahhabi doctrine: "The doctrines which are presented in

¹³¹ Garcin de Tassy, 'Notice sur des vêtements...', p. 332.

¹³² Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités*..., FT, p. 8; ET, p. 32.

the books of Isma‘il are in fact, I believe, the true doctrine of Islamism. Generally on this point the dogma is not clearly enough distinguished from the abuses introduced in the course of time”.¹³³

Our French author did believe that pure original Islam did not include anything like the cult of saints.

On the second hand he insists on the fact that these accretions are specifically numerous in India:

The following features are the most striking in the external cult of the Indian Muslims: the alterations it was subjected to, so that it acquired an indigenous countenance; the accessory ceremonies and usages which conform little to the spirit of the Qur‘an or are contrary to it, but got imperceptibly established through the contacts of Muslims with Hindus; and finally the numerous pilgrimages to the tombs of holy personages, some of whom are not even Muslim, and the semi-pagan festival instituted in their honour.¹³⁴

For instance he compares the ten days celebration of *Muharram* with the *Durgâ pûjâ*, the autumn festival in honour of the great Hindu goddess,¹³⁵ a comparison, incidentally very often made by the Muslim reformers themselves.

But what distinguishes Garcin de Tassy from the Wahhabi authors is that he rather describes such borrowing from the Hindus than condemn them. At most he makes ironic comments on peculiar features: some he finds “ridiculous” like the worship of apocryphal saints and of relics;¹³⁶ he emphasizes that some of the saints, like the Persian poet Hafiz and the Indian saint Ghazi Miyan are licentious saints.¹³⁷

Two reasons make the accretions of Indian features acceptable to Garcin de Tassy. First they fulfil a religious need of the local convert population: “Pirs or saints are for the Indian Muslims what the *Déotas* (deities) are for the Hindus”.¹³⁸ “The saints are generally called pir or wali. They replace for the Muslims, as I said, the numerous gods of the Hindus”.¹³⁹

¹³³ Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature . . .*, 2nd ed., vol. II, p. 56.

¹³⁴ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, pp. 7-8; ET, p. 32.

¹³⁵ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 10-11; ET, p. 33.

¹³⁶ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 13-14; ET, p. 35.

¹³⁷ *op. cit.*, FT, pp. 21-74; ET, pp. 38-82.

¹³⁸ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 10; ET, p. 33.

¹³⁹ *op. cit.*, FT, p. 15; ET, p. 35.

It would not be too anachronistic to describe this view as a kind of prefiguration of the functionalist anthropology which developed later.¹⁴⁰

3.2.2. *Muslim saints and Christian saints*

The second reason which makes the cult of the saints acceptable to him is more peculiar to Garcin de Tassy. Contrary to what superficial observers may think, and contrary to the imputations of the Wahhabis, he could ascertain, by analysing the prayers called *fātiha* recited near the tombs, that the devotees do not invoke directly the saints, but address only Allah: "These prayers are not precisely addressed to the saints; they could not be better compared than to the collects of the mass on the Catholic fêtes of the saints, in which the latter are not directly prayed. Thus in spite of the great devotion the Indian Muslims have for their saints, one cannot say that they really address prayers to them".¹⁴¹

A contemporary observer, after studying carefully "Muslim devotions" all over the world, arrived to a similar conclusion: "The direct petitions to the saints for their help and intercession represent an extreme usage. A less direct way of seeking their mediation is by offering one's own prayers to God 'through the reverence due to them'".¹⁴²

In order to understand Garcin de Tassy's argumentation let us compare one Muslim and one Christian prayer for the saints. On *Shab-e barât*—a festival for the dead celebrated on the 14th of *Sha'bân* by the Indian Muslims who light lamps on the tombs—the following prayer is recited after offering a lamp: "Oh! God, through the merit of the light of the apostolate of our lord Muhammad, may the lamps that we keep burning during this holy night be for the dead a guarantee of an eternal light on them. Oh! our God, deign to admit them in the abode of the unalterable happiness".¹⁴³

If one substitutes the name of a particular saint for the collective mention of the dead found here, one gets a typical *fātiha* for that saint. This way of making offerings in the name of a saint, and of praying Allah to transfer the merits of this offering to this saint, is traditional and perfectly orthodox in Islam; for instance an eighteenth-century "Indo-Persian guide to Sufi shrine pilgrimage" recommended

¹⁴⁰ Marc Gaborieau, *Ni brahmanes, ni ancêtres . . .*, pp. 410–411.

¹⁴¹ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, p. 26; ET, p. 41.

¹⁴² Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions . . .*, p. 242.

¹⁴³ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités . . .*, FT, p. 66; ET, p. 76.

such offerings with the recitation of the first Surah of the Qur'an which is precisely called *fātiha*, and from which the prayer for the saints takes its name.¹⁴⁴

Let us now compare this Muslim prayer with the Catholic liturgy as it was in the time of Garcin de Tassy. In the beginning of the mass, before the reading of the Scripture, a prayer was recited which was called "collect". For the sake of comparison with the Islamic example given above, let us cite a collect recited on November second for the dead: "Oh! merciful God, grant to the souls of your servants the abode of refreshment, the happiness of rest and the splendour of your light. . . ."¹⁴⁵

Here again, if one substitute the name of a particular saint for the collective mention of the dead, one gets a standard collect for a saint. There is only one difference: Muslim only pray to transfer the merits of the offerings to the dead without explicitly mentioning the rewards they of course expect for themselves in return; on the contrary Catholic liturgy does mention the benefits which are expected.

One can now see the specificity of Garcin de Tassy's approach. It is grounded in the milieu in which he grew: he was raised as a Catholic and remained such; his personal library counted books pertaining to Catholic theology.¹⁴⁶ His interpretation differs from that of the Wahhabis who, contrary to the evidence of ritual, accuse the Muslim devotees of addressing directly the saints, and of committing thus an act of idolatry, or *shirk*, by attributing to created beings powers which are unique prerogatives of Allah.¹⁴⁷

To sum up, although Garcin de Tassy admitted that the Wahhabis were theologically right in claiming that the cult of saints did not exist in primitive Islam, he did not follow them in their crusade against this cult: he convincingly proved that the prayers recited on the tombs were perfectly orthodox. Moreover he provided excuses for the adoption of intercessors in order to feed the religious needs of the common people. He finally found the prayers for the saints congenial with the Catholic liturgy he was used to. The devotions of the Indian Muslims for their saints were for him exotic, picturesque, but not shocking.

¹⁴⁴ Carl W. Ernst, 'An Indo-Persian Guide . . .', pp. 55-57.

¹⁴⁵ Dom Gaspard Lefèvre, *Missel vespéral romain*. Bruges: Desclées De Brouwer, 1946, p. 1377.

¹⁴⁶ Garcin de Tassy, *Catalogue des livres orientaux* . . .

¹⁴⁷ Marc Gaborieau, 'A nineteenth-century Indian 'Wahhabi' Tract . . .', pp. 210-211, pp. 221-222.

3.3. *Garcin de Tassy contrasted to Protestant Missionaries*

His attitude differed from that of Protestant missionaries who found the Wahhabi crusade congenial. There are several examples of missionaries who adopted the stance of the Wahhabis. For instance as early as 1814 the convert 'Abd al-Masih said near the tomb of a Muslim saint, that he came "not for the dead, but the living".¹⁴⁸ Baptist missionaries in Bengal would preach against Muslim superstitions.¹⁴⁹ With the considerable development of protestant missions after 1830, Christians became more involved in the controversy about the saints. A typical case is that of the famous William Muir (1819–1905) who admired a Wahhabi tract by Khurram 'Ali (d. 1855), *Nasîhât al-muslimîn* ("Counsels for the Muslims"), which had been printed in Calcutta in 1848;¹⁵⁰ he considered it could serve as a model for missionary books. Like many of his fellow countrymen in the 19th century, he called the Wahhabis "the Protestant of Islam".¹⁵¹

An extreme example of reappropriation of Protestant preaching by Muslim reformers is even attested:

A curious incident in Southern India suggests that a few Muslims had discovered a common reform program in Christianity. A Venerable Maulavi from Kabul created a commotion in a Madras Mosque in 1836 when he began preaching from the Bible against worshipping saints and prophets . . . Although this example is unique, it does underline the similarities in the reformist programs of the Protestant Christians and the Muslims.¹⁵²

This incident was known to Garcin de Tassy through the *Asiatic Journal*,¹⁵³ he mentions it in the second edition of his *Mémoire*.¹⁵⁴

These examples show the affinity between the message of the Wahhabis and some preoccupations of Protestant missionaries who were bent on eradicating all Indian superstitions, including the cult of

¹⁴⁸ *Missionary Register* 2, Sept. 1814, quoted in Harlan Otto Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: the 'Tariqa-i Muhammadiyya'*. Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis: Duke University, p. 179.

¹⁴⁹ *Missionary Register* 16, 1928, p. 355, quoted in Harlan Otto Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*, p. 190.

¹⁵⁰ Marc Gaborieau, 'Late Persian, Early Urdu: The Case of 'Wahhabi' Literature (1815–1857)'. In: Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye (ed.), *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies*. Delhi: Manohar, p. 177 and p. 189.

¹⁵¹ Harlan Otto Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*, p. 191.

¹⁵² *op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹⁵³ *Asiatic Journal*, n.s., 21, 1836, p. 150.

¹⁵⁴ Garcin de Tassy, *Mémoire sur quelques particularités* . . . , FT, p. 8.

Muslim saints. Their attitude is in contrast with the more ecumenical view of Garcin de Tassy.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The perception of the Muslim saints by Garcin de Tassy owes much to his times and the religious and scientific milieu in which he grew. Like the European travellers he is interested in the exotic and the picturesque. Much of his work, even the one founded on Hindustani texts, was done in the orbit of the British presence in India. He owes much also to the orientalist tradition in which he was raised as a disciple of Sylvestre de Sacy.

But he stands apart from many of his contemporaries who wrote about Indian Muslims by two features. First he was much more learned in Islamic lore through his knowledge of Arabic and Persian and of classic Islamic texts. Second—and this is the point on which I want to insist most in this conclusion—he had his own ideas about the importance of Muslim saints. For him, the devotions to the saints, even if they did not belong to primitive Islam, constitute a separate tier between canonical Islam and the pagan substratum from which the converts constantly borrow. This third intermediary tier is made legitimate by a comparison with the cult of the saints in the Catholic liturgy. In this Garcin de Tassy contrasts with some of his Protestant contemporaries; a contrast which has been exemplified above by studying the divergent attitudes adopted toward Indian Wahhabism. For the Protestants as for the Wahhabis, the intermediary third tier is illegitimate and the cult of saints is a kind of idolatry.

To speak the language of some recent islamologists—who took their lead from Peter Brown—Protestant missionaries follow what has been called a two tier model, while Garcin de Tassy adopted a three tier model.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le sceau des saints* . . . , pp. 21–27; Marc Gaborieau, 'Pouvoirs et autorité des soufis dans l'Himalaya'. In: Véronique Bouillier & Gérard Toffin (eds.), *Prêtrise, pouvoirs et autorité en Himalaya*. Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1989 (Collection Purushartha n° 12), pp. 216–217; Marc Gaborieau, *Ni brahmanes, ni ancêtres*., pp. 405–407.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS BY ASIANS IN LATE 18TH CENTURY BRITISH SOCIETY

MICHAEL H. FISHER

Overview

During the first century (1750–1850) of extensive interactions between the peoples of India and England, all parties struggled to establish the terms of their relationships. As the military, political, and economic balance of power shifted in favour of the British, many Indians came under British cultural domination as well. Some scholars of “orientalism” and “the imperial gaze” have pointed to the European monopolistic “power to narrate, [and] to block other narratives from forming and emerging . . . From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself.”¹ Nevertheless, British cultural domination was never hegemonic. Indians always retained some scope for negotiation in both Asia and Britain about representations of Asia. This chapter demonstrates how two Asians in Britain resisted European assertions of cultural hegemony over representations of Asia and themselves, through publishing their own autoethnographic narratives directly for British readers. Nonetheless, the power imbalances inherent in the colonial process meant these Asian representations had limited authority over developing European notions about imperialism and “the Orient.”

A range of Asians circulated from India to Britain during this period, against the dominant flow of imperialism. The influence of British “nabobs” on England has been explored.² Less attention has been hitherto paid to the substantial stream of Asians of all classes

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1978, pp. xiii, 283. Cf. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993; Mary L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

² Holden Furber, *John Company at Work*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948; James Mayer Holzman, *Nabobs in England*. New York: The Author, 1926; Percival Spear, *Nabobs*. London: Curzon, 1963; Lucy S. Sutherland, *East India Company in Eighteenth Century Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

into British society.³ The two most numerous classes were Asian sailors and servants—both men analysed in this paper belonged, at times, to these classes but became “gentlemen” while in Britain.⁴ Despite British efforts to isolate Asian sailors and servants and to ship them out of England as quickly as possible, a substantial number remained for considerable periods, often marrying British women and affecting “English” culture. Similarly, an extensive number of Indian men and women of the middle and upper economic classes lived in England. Also important, but less relevant here, were various Asian dignitaries and travellers who visited and wrote about England.⁵ Writing in Persian, their intended audience was Asian so they reached an Anglophone audience only via a European translator, who thereby appropriated their representations.⁶

This chapter examines two late 18th century Asian immigrants from Bengal to Britain. Both wrote autoethnographic and autobiographical books which they published in English in Britain to assert their own representations of both Asian and British cultures: Emin Joseph Emin (1726–1809) *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin, An Armenian, Written in English by Himself* (London: The Author, 1792) and Dean Mahomet (1759–1851) *The Travels of Dean Mahomet, A Native of Patna in Bengal . . . Written by Himself* (Cork: The Author, 1794).⁷ While many of their experiences were common among early Asian immigrants, each has left us a distinct legacy in these books. These and other Asian representations reveal the complexity and

³ Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes*. London: Pluto, 1986; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*. London: Pluto, 1984.

⁴ London newspapers contained advertisements from Europeans seeking Indian servants and Indian servants seeking employers. William Hickey, *Memoirs*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1919–25, Vol. 3, pp. 150–1; J. Jean Hecht, *Continental and Colonial Servants, Smith College Studies in History*, 40, 1954.

⁵ Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West during the Eighteenth Century*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998; Harihar Das, “Early Indian Visitors to England”. *Calcutta Review* 3rd series, XIII, 1924, pp. 83–114; Simon Digby, “An eighteenth century narrative of a journey from Bengal to England: Munshi Isma’il’s *New History*”. In: Christopher Shackle (ed.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*. London: SOAS, 1989, pp. 49–65.

⁶ E.g., Abu Talib, *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe . . . 1799 . . . 1803; Written by Himself in the Persian Language*. Tr. Charles Stewart 2 vols. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810; 1814.

⁷ Reprinted as Joseph Emin, *Life and Adventures of Emin Joseph Emin*, 2d ed. Ed. Amy Aparcar. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1918, and Michael H. Fisher, *First Indian Author in English*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. Dean Mahomet also published *Cases Cured*. Brighton: The Author, 1820, and *Shampooing* Brighton: The Author, 1822, 1826, 1838. I am currently studying other Asians resident in Britain.

hybridity of the imperial process and the ongoing negotiations between Asians and Britons about European conceptions of both Asians and also European roles in India. Nonetheless, the degree of agency available to these and other Asians proved less in the colony than in the metropolis and, while never ceasing, diminished in both sites over this period.

Issues of Representation of Asians

Since most formative ethnographies about India (and the world outside Europe generally) were written by Europeans during the colonial period, many critics have identified this genre with colonialism. Observing the colonised through "imperial eyes", Western explorers and ethnographers supported the colonial state's goals: "territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources, and administrative control."⁸ Certainly, much of the impetus for enumerating and classifying "indigenous peoples" came from colonial institutions like the Government of India's Census, and Anthropological, Archaeological, Geological, Geographical, and Linguistic Surveys.⁹ In this sense, "The conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge."¹⁰ Some commentators argue that ethnographers need not be formal colonial officials in order to carry out their "orientalist" projects. Asad and Spurr see anthropology and the colonial state as distinct, yet mutually supportive. They both held positions of power over their subjects to objectify and shape the representation of the local population, both in the metropolis and the colony.¹¹

⁸ The classic statement of this position is Said, *Orientalism*.

⁹ See Gerald N. Barrier (ed.), *Census in British India*. Delhi: Manohar, 1981.

¹⁰ Bernard S. Cohn, "Command of Language and the Language of Command". In: *Subaltern Studies IV*. In: Ranajit Guha (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 276. See C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

¹¹ Asad writes that anthropology is rooted "in an unequal power encounter between the West and Third World... It is this encounter that gives the West access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated, and thus not only generates a certain kind of universal understanding, but also re-enforces the inequities in capacity between European and the non-European worlds (and derivatively, between the Europeanized elites and the 'traditional' masses in the Third World)." Talal Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanities, 1973, p. 16. Cf. David Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, esp. pp. 25–6 and Talal Asad, "Afterward". In: George W. Stocking (ed.), *Colonial Situations*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, p. 315.

Out of such projects of defining and representing the colonised, ethnographers helped determine the attitudes of their home audiences toward the colonial process. Pratt notes: "books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world went (and go) about creating the 'domestic subject' of Euroimperialism; [and] . . . have engaged metropolitan reading publics with (or to) expansionist enterprises whose material benefits accrued mainly to the very few."¹² Thus, ethnographers induced people of the metropolis to support the colonial process, even against their own interests.¹³

The continued cultural dominance of Western ethnographers, and the predominance of Asians and Africans among their subjects, means that the interpretation and representation of the latter has remained largely in the hands—and has been funded by—the former. Even when ethnographers reproduce the words of their informants, the selection, contextualisation, and organisation of those words have left the power of authorship in the hands of the ethnographers. Said, among others, argues that the Western "orientalist" appropriates the non-Western culture and redefines it, even for non-Westerners themselves.¹⁴

Other critics, however, warn us against underestimating the power of the "native informant" over the anthropologist. Lewis argues informants are more than just dupes; they shape anthropology, even in the colonial setting. By undervaluing the subjectivity of informants we exhibit "the same tendency towards a position of ethnocentric superiority . . . implicit in the fashionable if rather overworked view of anthropology as the spoilt child of Western imperialism. Here those anthropologists who carried out research in the colonial territories are depicted as the deliberate, or more charitably, unwitting, instruments of imperialism. . . . I find the condescending implications of this interpretation repugnant."¹⁵ Many anthropologists agree with

¹² Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4.

¹³ Cf. J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism*. New York: J. Pott, 1902; Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Class*. Tr. Heinz Norden, ed. Paul Sweezy, New York: A.M. Kelly, 1951.

¹⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. Cf. Nirad Chaudhuri, *Autobiography of a Unknown Indian*. New York: Macmillan, 1951, Sara Suleri, *Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, and Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

¹⁵ Ioan Lewis, *Anthropologist's Muse*. London: LSE, 1973, p. 11. Cf. Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Lewis that they are “plagiarists, bricoleurs, living parasitically upon our ethnographic sources.”¹⁶ Beyond even the words, the best ideas are often taken from the informant, while the anthropologist garners the credit. This debate about who is “really” speaking—the informant or the anthropologist—goes thus two ways. On one hand, to point to the informant as the ostensible author, is to overlook the distorting power of the editor. On the other hand, to deny the voice of the informant is to underestimate his or her agency, attributing all power to the editor.¹⁷

Some anthropologists have sought to relinquish their editorial power through a “interpretative”, “dialogic”, or “discursive” model of shared authorship and readership.¹⁸ In this approach, the informant and the anthropologist both have clearly explicated roles. “Thick description”, in which the ethnographer represents as extensively and uninterruptedly as possible the words and actions of the informant, tries to move to co-authorship by the investigator and the informant. Nevertheless, some critics point to the power that the editor and the intended audience have to shape even such “thick description” and “dialogic anthropology.” Even if the words are entirely those of the informant, the orchestration remains in the hands of the anthropologist.¹⁹

This chapter takes up the rarer but still complex condition of autoethnography: where the “native informant” and the ethnographer are the identical person. While editorial power is thus in the hands of the subject of the text, dialogue and negotiation with patrons and audience nevertheless remain. As in autobiography, in autoethnography the author must distance him or herself from the subject in order to describe it to outsiders. Thus, while Emin and Mahomet wrote directly for a European audiences in English about themselves and their Asian natal cultures, they did so with the presuppositions of their European readers in mind. They could maneuver their audiences toward acceptance of their representations, but only if they did so in subtle, negotiated ways.

¹⁶ Lewis, *Anthropologist's Muse*, p. 10.

¹⁷ See Liz Stanley (ed.), *Dairies of Hannah Culwick*. London: Virago, 1984, and Julia Swindells, “Liberating the Subject?” Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 24–38.

¹⁸ E.g., James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1988; Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981; Akos Ostor, *Play of the Gods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

¹⁹ See Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*.

Autoethnographic Work by Asians for European Audiences

During the 18th century, the act of writing by Asians—particularly the act of writing autoethnography and/or autobiography—had powerful implications for the on-going debate about the very nature of Asians relative to Europeans. Despite the unquestionable fact of Asian authorship of such works in English, many Westerners of that day believed Asians incapable of authoring such literature. Their books received little attention in the metropolis at the time—and for over two centuries since—indicating the marginality of their positions.²⁰ Even today, some readers may cling to similar doubts and look for a British hand behind their pens.

While these Asian authors clearly imitated or even—in today's terms—plagiarised concepts and even whole passages from European authors, they nonetheless clearly retained their own voices throughout. Unlike many of their British contemporaries, these authors presented themselves and other Asians as human beings, worthy of respect in their own terms. They had virtues, superior in some ways to—albeit different from—those of Europeans. Few European works of their day took these positions. Even sympathetic European authors tended to romanticise Asians, almost out of humanity.²¹ Thus, these books by Asians stand as important counter-examples to any one-sided view of European literature, especially ethnography, about Asia during the age of imperialism as the sole preserve of Europeans.

Bhabha, Gates, Said, and other scholars have shown that Asians and Africans themselves regarded their power to narrate and represent their own experiences in their own terms as powerful modes of resistance to European cultural domination.²² For example, ex-slave Olaudah Equiano (and other anti-slavery activists) explicitly argued that his autobiographical book, *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano . . . The African, Written by Himself* (1789), proved the humanity of Africans and hence the immorality in trafficking in

²⁰ Thus, while elite journals in London knew of Emin's and Mahomet's books, they did not accord them reviews (although they reviewed many books about India by Europeans). E.g., *Willis' Current Notes*, 1851, pp. 22–3; Review of John Henry Grose, *Voyage*, 1757, in *Monthly Review*, 1757.

²¹ E.g., the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).

²² E.g., Bhabha, *Location of Culture*; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "James Gronniosaw and the Trope of the Talking Book". Ed. James Olney. *Studies in Autobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 51–72; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

such humans as if they were mere property.²³ The existence of such non-European perspectives on, and participation in, the imperial process exposes its multilaterality. Nevertheless, while books by Asians demonstrate the existence of long-neglected Asian voices in the colonial process, the limited long-term impact of these books on British attitudes toward Asia suggests the powerful cultural effects of expanding imperialism during the 19th century.

Some modern readers may expect that these non-European authors would have produced accounts radically—instead of subtly—different from their contemporary European writers. Such an anachronistic expectation of an Asian nationalist stance misinterprets their position and circumstances. We must move beyond such stark dichotomies of identity between colonised and coloniser, Orientals and Westerners, “us” and “them” that have become the hallmark both imperialist and nationalist/anti-imperialist discourse.²⁴ Rather, each person embodied a range of positions, as Emin, Mahomet, and other Asians demonstrated in their writing and their lives. They wrote for the British elite, on whom they depended and among whom Mahomet and others married. In their works, they assessed the virtues and flaws of both British and Asian cultures, each of which did much to shape their identities. They wrote from a position between European and Asian cultures, rather than as wholly part of either.

These Asian authors chose fashionable English literary genres for their presentations of their cultures. During the 18th century, a number of diverse writers chose to write autobiographically, including “by himself” or “by herself” in their book titles. Some elite authors, like Charles de Montesquieu (1698–1755) in his *Persian Letters*, were actually writing fiction, but attributing those words to others, in this case Asians. With the spread of the print medium, however, a few lower-class authors found the power to represent their lives directly.²⁵ Similarly, Asians, like Equiano, Emin, and Mahomet, were in fact

²³ While there are parallels between Asian autobiographies and Equiano's and other former slave's narratives, there are fundamental differences as well. For example, none of these Asian authors ever experienced slavery nor mentioned their conversion to Christianity, two vital elements in former slaves' works. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), *Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: Penguin, 1987.

²⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. xxiv–xxv. Cf. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

²⁵ E.g., John Macdonald, *Travels, in Various Parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, During*

asserting their own authorial voice against the dominant culture, yet they did so using European developments of the print medium and autobiographical genre.

Since this autobiographical genre was largely unknown in their natal culture, their choice recapitulated their self-location as intermediaries, drawing upon an English form to represent their Asian backgrounds to an Anglophone audience. Pratt uses "transculturation" to describe how subordinated or marginalised groups select from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they determine to varying extents what they absorb, and the uses they put it to. Rather than totally assimilating into the host culture, they retain elements of the natal culture, while adding new elements, to produce a distinctive culture of their own, often denigrated as Creole, but increasingly recognised in its own terms.²⁶

These Asians' deliberate use of an autobiographical voice also bears on the current debate over differences between conceptions of the self in Asia as opposed to Europe.²⁷ Some scholars argue that the concept of the individual as an historically minded being, and hence autobiography as a literary genre, emerged only in post-Enlightenment Europe; more recent scholarship has questioned this assertion as ethnocentric.²⁸ Although the term "autobiography" would first appear in English print only in 1809, both Emin and Mahomet clearly presented themselves as individuals, with passages which show their self-awareness—imagining how others perceived them.²⁹ Their

a *Series of Thirty Years and Upwards*. London: The Author, 1790. Republished as *Memoirs of an Eighteenth-Century Footman*. London: Century, 1985.

²⁶ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 6.

²⁷ E.g., Sudhir Kakar, (ed.) *Identity and Adulthood*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, and Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981.

²⁸ See Karl Weintraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness". *Critical Inquiry* 1, 4, June 1975, pp. 821–848; Stephan F. Dale, "Steppe Humanism: The Autobiographical Writing of Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, 1483–1530". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22, 1, February 1990, pp. 37–58 and "The Poetry and Autobiography of the *Babur-nama*". *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 3, August 1996, pp. 635–664; and Gustav E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953.

²⁹ Lejune defines autobiography as "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality." See Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*. Tr. Katherine M. Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 4; Robert Folkenflik (ed.), *Culture of Autobiography*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

years living in Britain prior to writing distinguished their accounts from those of Muslims and Asians who visited Europe but who did not remain there long.³⁰

Unlike transient travellers and dignitaries, who might be treated by British society as brief exceptions to social norms, immigrants who settled as members of British society would have different interactions and relationships with indigenous Britons. While prejudices on the basis of gender, colour, class, and a multitude of other ascribed features of identity occur in all societies, in order to assess degrees of agency, we must look at larger patterns. Two of the most significant measures of agency are class mobility and interethnic/interracial marriage patterns, where the initiative and accomplishments of an individual as well as the relationship of that individual to the larger society become manifest. By examining each of these case studies in terms of class and gender relations, we can assess their changing agency in, and reception by, British society.

British society relegated most Asians in Britain at this time to the lowest social classes. Nevertheless, both Emin and Mahomet rose into the professional class, as gentleman officer and surgeon respectively. Further, both men had particularly close relationships with British women. Emin carried on extensive, affectionate, and highly personal correspondence with several women in the British gentry and aristocracy. Mahomet married an elite European woman. The ease of these relationships suggests that British society up to the mid-19th century did not demand racial segregation or condemn (what would later be called) interracial attachments, including sexuality involving "White" women and "Black" men. Indeed, a number of other Asian and African men married or moved freely through society with European women during this period.³¹ Such marriages and

³⁰ Cf. Susan Gilson Miller, *Disorienting Encounters*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; Jonathan D. Spence, *Question of Hu*. New York: Knopf, 1988; Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

³¹ Abu Talib Khan and Mirza 'Abd al-Hassan Khan, among other travellers, wrote about their free social intercourse with elite English women. Abu Talib Khan, *Travels*; Mirza 'Abd al-Hassan Khan, *A Persian at the Court of King George, 1809-10*. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988. "Interracial" marriages within the lower classes in Britain also appear to have been relatively common. For example, of the 61 families that left Britain to settle the British colony of Sierra Leone in 1786, 44 were interracial: British women and men of African descent. Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978.

such social acceptance stand as warnings against simple projections backward of later English racial or class categories or exclusions.

Overall, these Asians' lives and writings reveal much about cultural interactions within the imperial process, a process that created what Pratt terms "contact zones": "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."³² Each of these men lived for decades in colonial India, where the dominant British used force of arms to try to impose their rule and culture on the indigenous peoples. Yet these British impositions proved far from hegemonic, as the self-expressions of Emin, Mahomet, and other Asians indicate. Throughout their lives in Europe and India, they made themselves men transculturated: neither fully assimilated into the dominant English colonising culture nor fully integrated with the subordinated, colonised one. By recuperating their lives and writings, we can move toward an understanding of the hybridity of the imperial process and a measure of the agency of Asians within it.

Emin Joseph Emin (1726–1809)

Our first case study highlights the complexity of the flows of peoples and ideas throughout the burgeoning British empire and the danger of dichotomising European coloniser and Indian colonised. As a youth in 1744, Emin fled civil war in Iran to join his family as part of the Armenian community in Calcutta. During his years in Bengal, he determined to study English culture and use it to reshape his life. In 1751, Emin managed to immigrate as a sailor to England. Over a decade in Europe, he used his ethnic identity and limited English education to move from status as a servant and unskilled labourer to that of a gentleman officer attached to the English Royal Army. His success came from his self-presentation as an Asiatic outsider and freedom fighter in training, an alien but respected identity which his British patrons fostered. He argued that Armenians, due to their love of political freedom (albeit frustrated) and (non-Catholic) Christianity, stood next to Englishmen and far superior to Muslims, Hindus, Africans, Jews, and even some Europeans, especially the French. After a decade in Europe, he went off to liberate Armenia by force of arms, only to withdraw in frustration to Cal-

³² Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 4.

cutta again in 1770. In India, where Armenians had long been established as a trade diaspora community and boundaries between cultures were more enforced—by both colonial and indigenous social formations—than in England, he had less capacity to reshape British perceptions of him.³³ Despite his powerful English patrons in London, Emin never proved able to establish his credentials as a gentleman officer in Calcutta, where he received only a marginal appointment as temporary officer in the Bengal Army. He remained in Bengal for the last 20 years of his life, dying in 1809, largely excluded by British society in Calcutta but a prominent member of the Armenian community there. We will draw upon Emin's correspondence and 640 page book to analyse his ongoing negotiations with Britons in England and India over the nature of his Asian identity.

Emin published his memoirs in English in 1791 in London, primarily for a British audience, but with a secondary goal of improving Anglophone Armenian readers by his example. As he narrated his life, he retrospectively described himself in the third person, making himself as author an intermediary between his readers and his subject: himself and his culture. His explanations sought to make Armenian culture comprehensible to Britons and worthy of their empathy. Emin presupposed in his readers a shared knowledge of English geography and social norms. Yet he located himself as an outsider to the culture of his British audience. While authorial modesty was conventional in the English publications of the day, Emin differed from his contemporary British authors in consistently stressing the "Asiatic" nature of his inadequacies, including his "wild Asiatic temper."³⁴ As Emin explained to an English patron: "I am proud that you think I retain my English, but sorry that I cannot avoid mixing an Asiatic tincture in my writing, I endeavour much to naturalise my sentiments to the English."³⁵ Yet, Emin also implied his just pride in his own accomplishment: writing "his own history, which is a novelty never before attempted by any of his [Emin's] richest [Armenian] countrymen."³⁶ Indeed, this work was apparently the first book written in English and published by an Asian.

³³ Abner Cohen, "Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas," *Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*. Ed. C. Meillassoux. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

³⁴ E.g., Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xxix–xxx, 2, 41.

³⁵ Emin to Mrs. Montagu, 15 August 1791, reproduced in Emin, 1791, pp. 493–6.

³⁶ Emin (Apcar edition), p. xxxii.

In Emin's several representations of his life-story, he recounted how he rejected a comfortable life as a merchant within the Armenian community in order to struggle to gain access to English culture as an individual. While negotiating with his father about the direction of his education, Emin described how he manoeuvred so as to be able to study English, rather than Portuguese or French.³⁷ Emin thus indicated his prescience, since this reported incident took place about a decade prior to the capture of Chandernagore and battle of Plassey (both in 1757) which established English supremacy in Bengal over the French and Nawab respectively. Then, defying his father, Emin determined to ship as a seaman and thus immigrate to England.

Emin reported to his readers his diligence, in the face of numerous hurdles, in gaining access to a ship and therefore to English culture. He approached one English captain "and kissed his Feet a Hundred Times to let me work for my Passage to Europe", but in vain.³⁸ Another English captain demanded that he give up his national costume—a "Turkish black turban and long clothes"—for those of the English.³⁹ This he did, but still failed to be accepted. Finally, there remained only "the last ship of that season, [Emin] thought of no other remedy than to throw himself on his knees at the feet of the captain, like a deplorable captive desirous to be set free."⁴⁰ Responding grudgingly to this plea for emancipation, Captain Fox of the East India Company ship *Walpole* took him and a fellow Armenian youth on as sailors and they sailed for England (February–September 1751). Thus, Emin clearly sought to demonstrate to his readers both the value he placed on English culture and also his capacity to win deserved access to it, despite all obstructions placed in his path by the Armenian community and also English colonial authorities.

Once on board, Emin faced rejection from the European crew. They expressed hostility to him as a competitor, reportedly calling Emin and his companion "lousy slavish Armenians . . . you are not better than our enemies the French . . . to come to England like beggars, to take the bread out of the mouths of Englishmen."⁴¹ When

³⁷ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 18–19.

³⁸ Emin to Northumberland, reproduced in Emin, 1791, pp. 58–60.

³⁹ Emin (Apcar edition), p. 20.

⁴⁰ Emin (Apcar edition), p. 21.

⁴¹ Emin (Apcar edition), p. 24.

one giant sailor in particular bullied Emin, Emin beat his huge harasser. In boasting of his triumph over this initial hostility, Emin represented his own manhood but also made sure to identify the bully as "a foreigner" rather than an Englishman, and then to highlight the new esteem which he gained among the English crew as a result of his pluck and pugnacity. Emin would repeatedly express his appreciation of (what he saw as) the English virtue of respecting a worthy opponent; much of his writing sought to demonstrate his own right to that respect.⁴²

Once in England, Emin repeatedly found that his Asian identity enabled him to gain the sympathetic support of European men and women of all classes. One of his earliest attachments was

with the maid-servant of the house, the beautiful Sally . . . like to an angel, . . . 'What will you please to have? (said she). Give me some money, I will go to market, buy you some meat, and dress it myself for you . . . don't be uneasy at having but little; God will provide for you . . .' fetching a very deep sigh.

Emin . . . [was] surprised to find in a week's time so much goodness, and truth of love, in the females of that blessed Island . . . The reader may very well suppose that the author was in love; and he owns it; and so would any one else of a well-meaning heart have been, to find so great fortitude and virtue in a poor innocent servant—the genuine produce of a famous country he is really in love with . . .⁴³

This emotional relationship with an English woman therefore evoked in Emin national, rather than sexual, love.

Similarly, one of Emin's longest-standing attachments remained with Elizabeth Robinson Montagu (1720–1800), an English aristocrat to whom Emin wrote numerous passionate letters over four decades, addressing her devotedly as "My Queen of Sheba."⁴⁴ This form of address suggests that each of them adopted "Oriental" symbolism for their relationship, but such terminology also "orientalised" Mrs. Montagu, not just Emin. Further, while Emin used extravagant amatory phrases for her, he displaced any personally erotic implications by concluding most epistles to her by articulating his respects to her fortunate husband.

⁴² E.g., Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xxxi, 24, 58–60.

⁴³ Emin (1791), pp. 56–58.

⁴⁴ E.g., Emin to Mrs. Montagu, May 10, 1757, in Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, *Elizabeth Montagu, the queen of the bluestockings; her correspondence*. Ed. Emily J. Climençon and William Blunt, 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1906, 1, p. 102.

Nowhere in the surviving correspondence by European men or women about Emin do they explicitly express any fear that Emin's relations with European women threatens "interracial" sexuality. It was not that these Europeans regarded Emin as a-sexual, only that his appropriate beloved were Asian women.⁴⁵ Thus, Emin and his European patrons constructed the role for him as saving his nation from non-Christian demons: an Asian knight errant empowered by platonic love for various Englishwomen, who stood as the embodiments of English virtue rather than sexual objects.

While they considered Emin's Asian identity to make him different from Europeans, that very difference empowered him with virtues that Europeans should emulate. His male and female supporters in Britain depicted Emin as "full of Asiatick fire & figure," as being elevated by "Savage eloquence."⁴⁶ As one patroness extolled: "there must be a nobler seat that the Persian throne reserved for that fine spirit [Emin] which, born in slavery and nurtured in ignorance, aspired to give liberty, knowledge, and civil arts to his country. To compass this he risked his life, and endured the greatest hardships, and ventured all dangers and uncertainties in [England] a country whose very language he was a stranger to; how different from so many of our [English] countrymen, who . . . in spite of their pride of birth and advantage of a liberal education . . . will hazard enslaving us to [France] a nation our forefathers despised."⁴⁷ Overall, therefore, Emin and his British patrons concurred about his identity and his mission.

In contrast to English people whom Emin consistently lauded for the nobility, he usually portrayed Armenian people as oppressed victims of their own leaders, including most religious, political, and social elites. One of Emin's early patrons in London, Stephenus Cogigian of the London Royal Exchange, first aided Emin but then betrayed him when Stephanus converted to Roman Catholicism. By showing in his book that Catholicism was to blame, Emin was thus appealing to his Anglican readers for sympathetic understanding for

⁴⁵ Mrs. S. Scott (sister) to Mrs. Montagu 5 July 1793(?) in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 497-98.

⁴⁶ Mrs. Montagu to her Husband, March 1758; E. Montague to her sister (1758-9), reproduced in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 42, 85-7. Letter from Edmund Burke, 20 September 1769 in Montagu, 1:228.

⁴⁷ Mrs. Montagu to Dr. Stillingfleet, 7 August 1757, in Montagu, 2:114-15.

his condition, at a time when England's national identity was taking form in opposition to the Catholic French.⁴⁸

During the 1750s in London, Emin found many lower-class Britons with whom he dealt had no preconceptions about his ethnicity. One of his potential employers at first mistook Emin for a Frenchman and cursed him for it. When Emin denied being French and began to explain what being an Armenian meant, the man identified him as German. Finally, the man accepted Emin, concluding "Well, well, Germans and Armenians are all alike, as long as you are not a Frenchman."⁴⁹ Emin's foreign identity helped him cross several class boundaries. He worked as a servant, an unskilled labourer (a grocer's porter in the City and a bricklayer in Drury Lane), and then a law clerk copying cases for Mr. Webster, an Attorney in Cheapside. His literacy thus enabled him to rise by his personal accomplishments into the petty bourgeoisie.

Some more educated and politically progressive Britons, however, regarded his Armenian identity as a mark of distinction. In 1755, Edmund Burke met Emin while strolling in St. James Park; their chance encounter developed into an enduring friendship. Both Burke and Emin recorded that Burke guided Emin's education and that they held long political discussions, as well as played chess and drank together.⁵⁰ In this warm personal relationship, Emin found Armenian nationalistic sentiments gained him Burke's respect and continued sponsorship.

Emin also responded warmly to the sight of others like himself. Soon after his initial meeting with Burke in 1755, Emin "met a young man in a Turkish habit" and, addressing him in Turkish, "found him to be an Armenian. Emin, after inquiry, was informed that the man had been sent over with an Arabian horse, as a groom, by the English merchants of Aleppo, for his Grace the late Duke (at that time Earl) of Northumberland."⁵¹ Emin used this entree provided by his fellow Armenian to gain access to the Duke, but then discredited that Armenian in order to displace him in the Duke's favour.

⁴⁸ Cf. Linda Colley, *Britons*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

⁴⁹ Emin (Apcar edition), p. 34.

⁵⁰ Burke to Emin ca. 7 August 1757 and 29 March 1789 in *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*. Ed. Thomas W. Copeland, 10 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958-78, vol. 1, pp. 120-122, Vol. 5, pp. 455-7; Emin, p. 51.

⁵¹ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 54ff.

Emin reportedly relinquished an offer from his own father of reconciliation (and a passage back to Calcutta) in order to pursue his burgeoning relationships with his British patrons. The Duke of Northumberland elicited Emin's story of his militant ambitions as an Armenian nationalist, encouraged him to write it up in letter, and then circulated this autobiographical epistle among 300 of the British social and political elite, including the Duke of Cumberland.⁵² Out of the negotiations between Emin and his elite British patrons, Emin presented himself as having immigrated to England, even at the cost of accepting employment beneath his true nature, as a way of gaining access to English sciences, particularly military sciences: he told William Pitt "I was a Porter for Learning not for Livelihood, and I was honest in that low way."⁵³ Northumberland promised: "Ameen, it is very hard to live in this country without friends and without money, [yet you did so for] almost four years, therefore the Lord is with you, be contented, I will from this time provide and furnish you with all necessities. . . . I will mediate to [Cumberland,] the son of our King, and after you will have learned the art of war, I will send you to your Father and your Uncles . . ."⁵⁴ Subsequently, the Duke of Cumberland enrolled Emin as a cadet officer in the Royal Military Academy at Woolich. He and his patrons agreed that he was not to be a career officer in the English Royal Army but rather a commander in training for Asian freedom fighters.⁵⁵ One patron envisioned Emin campaigning in India, not on behalf of the British, but rather to create an oriental empire, inspired by his English patroness: "I presume he will go to some Indian Nabob or Rajah, and then you may have the pleasure of tracing his marches on the banks of the Ganges, and over many regions *where the Gorgeous East showers on her Kings Barbaric Pearls and Gold*; and if he his successful, large tribute of those pearls and gold will come to you."⁵⁶ Thus, Emin worked out with his British backers a favoured but marginalised role: an Asian, and therefore different from them, but nonetheless admirable.

⁵² Montagu, 2, p. 101.

⁵³ Emin to Mr. Pitt, March 1758, reproduced in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 91–2.

⁵⁴ Northumberland to Emin, 1756, reproduced in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 58–60.

⁵⁵ Burke to Emin ca. 7 August 1757, in Burke, 1:120–122.

⁵⁶ Italics in original. Lord Lyttelton to Mrs. Montagu, 5 November 1760 in Montagu, 2:214.

In all, Emin served about five years as a gentleman officer attached to the English and Prussian royal armies, periodically fighting on the continent against the French. In his description of the battle of Hastenbeck (1757), Emin likened the French to Indians in their elaborate panoply and lack of substance: "The Enemy begun to advance with their Musick, and Drums, making a very great noise, more like Indians than Europeans . . . [The French] are vastly like black Indians, [they both] fire at a great distance and run away."⁵⁷

With British moral support, Emin travelled to Armenia, where he fought unsuccessfully, under Heraclius II, Prince of Georgia, for its liberation from the Persian and Turkish empires. Emin made this period of futile military struggle the centrepiece of his book, uniformly representing himself as empowered above other Asians by his European military training. To Emin, these European military arts meant: logical appraisal of the terrain and disposition of forces, systematic preparation of military equipage, and cool detachment in battle. In contrast, Emin denoted Asians (both his enemies and his allies) as bombastic, ill-prepared, and pusillanimous in the face of European-style disciplined courage. Nevertheless, Emin's eight years of campaigns in Georgia and Armenia failed to rouse Armenians as a united people. Emin returned in frustration to India in 1770.

After Emin rejoined his family in Calcutta, he ran up against stronger social barriers than those he had overcome in London. As the British empire came into being, it gradually changed the rules of social intercourse and political participation, to the detriment of non-Britons. Further, "racial" distinctions and barriers arose earlier in the colonies than in the metropolis. Thus, despite Emin's powerful supporters in England, his prestigious military training at Woolich, and his considerable martial experience in battlefields in Europe and Armenia, nevertheless his ethnic identity put him outside of the power structure in Calcutta. The East India Company maintained strong racial barriers for its regular commissioned officer corps.⁵⁸ Therefore, Emin could gain access to the Bengal Army only at the most marginal officer's rank: as most junior brevet ensign attached to the Turksowars (i.e., a temporary appointment at the lowest rank among

⁵⁷ Actually, this battle was a defeat for Emin's patron, the Duke of Cumberland, at the hands of the French. Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 78–81.

⁵⁸ Cf. Rosie Llewlyn-Jones, *A Very Ingenious Man, Claude Martin* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); Seema Alavi, *Sepoys and the Company*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.

officers in the irregular “native” cavalry).⁵⁹ Although Emin sought to be officially nationalised as British, and therefore able to gain an officer’s commission, not even his ducal patrons in London could arrange this.⁶⁰ Burke lamented that “a man once countenanced by the first people of this kingdom as well as of Germany, should . . . pass his life in misery and contempt in an English settlement. I know many think him an impostor, but I can bear witness to the truth of what he asserted . . .”⁶¹

Emin spent only a single paragraph in his book on his two years of ignominious service in the Bengal Army, mostly passed in garrison. Further, due to his irregular status, he had to petition the Company for years afterwards in order to receive his pay and pension.⁶² Eventually, he was transferred to the Third European Invalid Regiment in Calcutta.⁶³ Seeking advancement for himself and his people, Emin took leave from his regiment and journeyed as a volunteer officer to support an unsuccessful British expedition to Basra (March 1775).⁶⁴ For a time, he settled near Isfahan where he had (an arranged) marriage with a member of the Armenian community there.⁶⁵ After his return to India in 1783 (leaving his wife behind in Iran for a decade), he spent the remainder of his life largely among the Armenian community in Calcutta.

Emin’s autobiography stands as his last major act of assertion of his identity, and that of his community, with respect to his British patrons. Having written the draft of this book, Emin sent a copy to Sir William Jones in Calcutta, requesting his advice on revisions. In response, Jones urged Emin to make the tone of his work less “Asiatick”, at least as far as an Asian was able: “strike out every passage that may favour of self-approbation. . . . [D]iscard forever the Asiatick style of panegyrick, to which you are too much addicted . . . [T]he Asiatick style . . . is utterly repugnant to English manners,

⁵⁹ General Return of the Troops under the Command of the Presidency of Fort William 1770–78; List of the Bengal Army, National Archives of India. V.P.C. Hodson, *List of the Officers of the Bengal Army 1758–1834*, 4 vols. (London: Constable and Phillimore, 1927–47), 2:137. Emin called his rank *rasaldar*, Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 439, 483.

⁶⁰ Northumberland to Emin, 17 May 1771 in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 440–41.

⁶¹ Burke to John Stewart, 30 October 1772 in Burke, 2:359–60.

⁶² Emin (Apcar edition), p. 483.

⁶³ Emin (Apcar edition), p. 479.

⁶⁴ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 441–55.

⁶⁵ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 455–77.

which you prefer, I know, to those of Persia." Nevertheless, Jones himself made only minor corrections, in the mistakes that he presupposed an Asian would be incapable of getting right: "I have corrected only these errors in language and orthography, which were unavoidable in an English work written by a native of Hamadan . . ."⁶⁶ Emin used the authority of Jones and his other subscribers to show his approach to, and yet distance from, English culture: "My guardian Angel Sir William Jones has been so good as to correct the wrong spelling and false English of it . . ."⁶⁷ Thus sponsored largely by Britons, Emin published his autoethnographic memoirs in London in 1791.

The central argument that runs throughout Emin's book reveals the position which he and his British patrons in London had worked out, in many ways reflecting those of the English themselves, but with modifications due to his own particular perspective. While Emin presented himself as proudly coming from his own community, he also argued that his extensive contact with the English distinguished him personally from other Armenians. He alone studied English military science, fought to awaken his sleeping nation, and wrote his memoirs, using English. While Emin's accomplishments would not be outstanding in an Englishman, they were his marks of distinction as an Armenian: "The singularity of his sufferings would, in his opinion, scarce excite curiosity had he been an Englishman; for there are many private soldiers and daring mariners in England, whose excessive hardships and dangerous lives, in dreadful storms at sea, and hazardous battles by land, are an hundred times superior to whatever he has undergone: but, considering that he is the only Armenian, out of several thousands, and in thousands of years, who has had an inexpressible thirst for improvement and liberty, it is natural that the world should wish to know the particulars of his life."⁶⁸

Emin also accepted the English perception that English striving for learning—history, science, and particularly military science—marked their superiority over other cultures, including his own: "if Europeans had not been industrious in point of learning, and that in their smallest quarter of the world, they could not have stood

⁶⁶ Sir William Jones letter to Emin 10 August 1788 in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xix–xx).

⁶⁷ Emin to Mrs. Montagu, 15 January 1789 in Emin (Apcar edition), pp. 490–2.

⁶⁸ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xxix, 91–2.

against Asia and Africa, nor have found America to civilise.”⁶⁹ Emin also asserted that the English appreciate and are willing to accept the best in others. In contrast, throughout Asia, xenophobic cultures closed themselves off from aliens. Thus, cultural solidarity—to the exclusion of respect for outsiders—marked Asian but not English culture: “whereas in all other foreign countries, which the author has observed in all his travels, if such an affray [between a native and a foreigner] should happen, the Lord have mercy on the poor wretch who should affront any one of the natives; the whole multitude would rise to crush him under their feet, as if he were guilty of murder.”⁷⁰

Emin located his community as standing between the English and less accomplished cultures including Catholics, other Asiatic, and Africans.⁷¹ This was a time when the Church of England was becoming the basis for the British nation, over and against the Catholics of the world. Emin stresses both his anti-Catholic struggles and also his membership in a collective non-Catholic Christianity which both Armenians and the English shared. Further, opposing both Armenians and the English were Muslims and other non-Christians: “wild and barbarous nations.”⁷² Nevertheless, he accepted that Armenians, and therefore he himself, lacked the full virtues of the English and fit into an intermediary status.

Asians would rise up when they assimilated English civil and military culture. As he concluded his work, he hoped his book would not only address European audiences but also serve as a model for: “young Armenians . . . Who knows but [Emin’s book] may throw some light into their minds, if they communicate the substance of it to others, or translate it into their own language? In time to come it may be of service to them, and rouse them from their slumber, till they open their eyes by degrees, and understand the true meaning of liberty; of which all Asia, from the creation of the world to this moment, have been, and are blindly ignorant; witness the many vast regions in that quarter of the world which have been ruled by the will of a single tyrant, who, like a savage beast, has devoured his subjects . . . Since the Orientals know not what freedom is, the author could not have learned the meaning of it in Asia; but he

⁶⁹ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xxix, 2, 58–60.

⁷⁰ Emin (Apcar edition), p. xxxi.

⁷¹ Emin (Apcar edition), pp. xxxii, 431.

⁷² Emin (Apcar edition), p. xxix.

went to improve himself in the knowledge of European manners, and happily found at last, that liberty is the source of all the comforts of life."⁷³

During his lifetime, therefore, Emin circulated within the growing British empire, with his ethnic, class, and racial identity subject to negotiation in several locations. His writings reveal his own self-image and his efforts to project that image on British society. While his autoethnographic assertions may have had subtle effects on the Britons he encountered or those who read his work, these effects proved largely overwhelmed by the cultural assertions inherent in British imperialism.

Sake Dean Mahomet (1759–1851)

The writings and life of our second subject, Dean Mahomet, reinforce some of the patterns we have established for Emin, but extend the period of our study until the mid-19th century. He too managed to create a respected place for himself in Britain, rising from servant to gentleman. His representations of Asia, and his authority over those representations due to his identity as an Asian, empowered him. Over time, however, British culture ultimately absorbed his contributions and marginalised him.

Mahomet came from the service elite of Asian society—like Emin neither at the top of society as rulers nor in the lower ranks as shopkeepers, artisans, or peasants. Mahomet, born into a Muslim military and administrative service elite family of Nawabi Bengal, left his widowed mother and attached himself at age eleven to an Anglo-Irish officer, Godfrey Evan Baker, in the Company's Bengal Army. He served Baker as a camp-follower and then subaltern officer (1769–1783). Like Emin, who was also in the Bengal Army during this period, Mahomet found insurmountable barriers between European officers and Indian subordinates, including even senior Indian officers.

After Mahomet resigned from the Bengal Army and emigrated to Ireland in 1784, he proved able to create a respected place for himself in Cork. Sponsored by the wealthy and politically powerful Baker clan, he finished his education in English language and literature. In 1786, he married a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry, Jane

⁷³ Emin (1791), pp. 639–40.

Daly—an interracial marriage that seems to have been accepted by others of her class. As a demonstration of his learning, and the sponsorship accorded him by over 320 of the elite of Ireland, he wrote and published in English his autoethnographic book, *Travels of Dean Mahomet*, just two years after Emin's book appeared in London.⁷⁴

While at the start of his book, Mahomet reflected late 18th century European thought about India and Europe being characterised by nature and art respectively, he developed these ideas from his own point of origin within Indian culture. In Mahomet's view, Indians (including himself) were essentially natural and artless, filled with "sincerity," part of an ancient and innocent society (D).⁷⁵ In contrast, he represented European society as artful: epitomised by "cultivated genius" (D): sophisticated, highly refined philosophers and polished littérateurs.

Although his initial characterisations romanticised and essentialised the two cultures, as Mahomet proceeded in *Travels*, he expanded on these characterisations to describe the less admirable extremes of these models. The sophistication of Europeans led some of them not only to "boasting" but also to scepticism toward India's more sincere faith. He generalised that less tolerant Europeans on occasion displayed "a narrowness of judgement and confined speculation, [and] are too apt to profane the piety of their fellow-creatures, merely for a difference in their modes of worship" (VIII). Mahomet illustrated his judgement with his narrative about a scoffing European officer who contemptuously urinated on the grave of a revered Indian saint; Mahomet revealed his distance from such European scepticism by asserting that the irreverent lieutenant immediately had a fit and expired (VIII). We can only speculate about the response of Mahomet's European patrons to this moral argument about the superiority of Indian sanctity over European rationalism. Similarly, when Mahomet mocked the pretentiousness of Calcutta, both European society and its Indian imitators (XXXVII). He directly contrasted this with Indian villagers, living innocently and harmoniously with nature (XXXVII).

Nevertheless, in Mahomet's account, Edenic India also contained less admirable extremes. Its naiveté tended among its less restrained

⁷⁴ For a full biography of Dean Mahomet and a republication of his book see Michael H. Fisher, *The First Indian Author in English*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁷⁵ I will indicate references to *Travels* by noting (D) for Dedication and roman numerals for his chapters.

people to savagery. Mahomet recounted repeatedly how the Company's Army had to ward off unwarranted attacks by "merciless savages" (VI) and "sanguinary and rapacious . . . lawless aggressors" (IX) among India's mountaineers, tribals, and marauders, particularly Marathas. Mahomet condemned such lawless people's torture of helpless animals in stronger terms than their attacks on the Bengal Army which he served. Nevertheless, even such unrestrained people retained a spark of humanity; Mahomet recounted acts of generosity even among looters and prostitutes (VI, XV). The prevailing innocence of most Indians, however, made them victims of the overly sharp among them: gamblers, conjurers, and counterfeiters (XVIII).

For Mahomet, the essence of Indian society revealed itself through its holy-men and ascetics, both Hindu and Muslim. While Mahomet provided great detail about various of these seers and renouncers, he never identified them by religious community, sect, or personal name. Rather, they appeared as variations on a type, with superficial differences but an essentially identical message of a transcendent harmony with the divine. Mahomet stated that Europeans failed to get past the superficial differences of dogma and practice to understand this inner core of meaning (XVII). In the depth and direction of his analysis of the internal divisions within Indian society, thus, Mahomet differed from many of his European contemporaries. His was not a world of hostile religious communalism, as many European writers would cast it.

In late 18th century England, concept "race" had not yet solidified into a strong social boundary. During this period, interracial marriages (to use today's terms), especially marriages between White women and non-White men, were not common within the gentry (like his wife), although they seem to have been fairly frequent among servants.⁷⁶ Since neither Mahomet nor his wife ever remarked upon their marriage, we can only speculate about their feelings about it.⁷⁷ To my knowledge, none of the many European descriptions and anecdotes about Mahomet during his sixty-six years in Britain criticised his marriage, although a passing Indian dignitary exhibited great interest in his Anglo-Irish wife's social status.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Hecht, *Continental and Colonial Servants*.

⁷⁷ For a European woman's view of her husband's elite Muslim family in the early 19th century see Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmans*. 2 vols. London: Parbury, Allen, 1832.

⁷⁸ Abû 'Tâlib Khân, "Masîr Tâlibî fî Bilâd Afranjî". Vol. 1, fols. 97-98, Add 8145, British Library.

Mahomet used the English term “race” only thrice in *Travels*. In two instances, he referred to the descent groups of Indian rulers: the Nawabs of Bengal (in which he located his father, I) and the Mughal Emperors (XXII). In the third instance, he quoted a European commentator’s gloss about people of mixed Portuguese and Indian descent: “Topasses—a tawney race” (XVI). Mahomet used the English terms “white” and “black” only slightly more frequently. He classed as living in the “white” section of Calcutta: “the European Gentlemen, of every description,” consisting of “English, French, Dutch, Armenians, Abyssinians, and Jews” (X). While he uniformly identified himself as Indian, he never called himself “black.” Mahomet published portraits of himself as quite dark in complexion yet he applied the term “black” only to others. When describing south India, Mahomet frequently used the term “black” to refer generally to the local people, including poor fishermen, Indian soldiers and officers in the Company’s Madras Army, and prosperous townsfolk (XXXVIII). In his depiction of Madras, however, he identified Armenians with Portuguese, as well as south Indians, as living in the “black town” (XXXVIII). At one point, he did describe a Muslim bride marrying one of his relatives as a “sable Dulcinea” (XIII), but his adding of colour to this literary allusion to Cervantes does not appear to suggest that he viewed himself as “sable” or black. During the course of his life, Mahomet would have had to negotiate his own racial identity in light of the contemporary expectations of different classes in Ireland and England.

Mahomet presupposed in *Travels* a world made up of social groups and classes, none of which was he a member. In analysing the sociological typology which Mahomet used both explicitly and implicitly, I argue that he is in each case representing a concept he grew up with: *qaum* (“nation” or “ethnicity,” from his Persian/Urdu vocabulary). This term would have been used by his parents to identify the various “nations” around them: Arabs, Iranians, Afghans, Hindus who had converted to Islam, Bengalis and other regionally-identified Indians, and each of the European nationalities. Also in common use among Mahomet’s natal culture would have been the term *jāti*: a more Hindu concept, meaning “genus” or “birth” and often translated as “caste.”⁷⁹ When Mahomet described churches and temples,

⁷⁹ For discussion of Brahmins as “native ethnographers” see Richard Burghart, “Ethnographers”. In: Richard Fardon (ed.), *Localizing Strategies*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academy Press, 1990, pp. 260–279.

he identified them not by a race or creed, but rather by the name of the nationality that patronised them.

By identifying himself occasionally with the perspective of Europeans, therefore, Mahomet was not joining their *qaum*, but he was perhaps tying himself to their interests. The term '*asabiyyat*' ('group interest', an idea so central to the classical sociology of the fourteenth century Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun) might reflect the concept that Mahomet implicitly applied to his situation.⁸⁰ Therefore, Mahomet's typology used a person's birth but also a person's identification with the interests of a particular group (even a group that one was not born into) as the basis for classification. Thus, Mahomet distanced himself from the *qaum* of his birth but associated himself with the European officers of the Company's army in India, and the British audience for his *Travels* as well.

Throughout *Travels*, a main point of orientation for Mahomet was the East India Company's Bengal Army, with which he remained in various capacities for fifteen years. He repeatedly contrasted this army, with its European-style military discipline, with the rest of Indian society, particularly with the "undisciplined rabble" against whom it fought (IX, XX, XXXIV). While European-trained Indian soldiers (sepoys) thus appeared as superior to the Indian warriors, bandits, and villagers who were their opponents, sepoy did not seem, in Mahomet's view, to quite match the European soldiers of this army. He wrote: "The Scapoys, who are in general well disciplined in the use of arms, serve as a strong reinforcement to a much less number of Europeans, and on many occasions, display great firmness and resolution" (XVI). The words "on many occasions" would seem to qualify his assertion that sepoy fully matched Europeans in discipline and courage.

Despite his powerful identification with the army, Mahomet hinted at his understanding of the cost to his natal society of its conquest by the Company. Particularly in the sections of *Travels* which describe the battles in which he himself fought, the violence and destruction of war evoke pity (Letters XVII and XXXIV). Clearly, Mahomet showed his sensitivity to the costs of living on the Company's military frontier for many of the innocent people of India. His own sense of personal loss and mixed feelings about serving the colonial army may also be apparent here.

⁸⁰ See Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*. Tr. Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Complaints by Indian villagers that Baker had used force to extort money from them led to his recall in disgrace and subsequent resignation.⁸¹ Whether these charges against Baker were justified or not, the situation must have proved particularly traumatic for Mahomet. He also resigned from the Bengal Army and emigrated from India following his participation in this suppression of Indian villagers.

Images in Cork of Indians and Muslims

The people of Cork were not innocent of images of India and Islam before Mahomet appeared in their midst. Many of the Anglo-Irish elite had personal experience of Asia, as officers, officials, or merchants. Some had an Indian mistresses and Anglo-Indian children. Indian sailors and servants passed through or lived in Cork. Additionally, entertainers of all varieties played with images of India and Islam to make a profit. Mahomet had to maneuver within the limits on his capacity to recreate himself and define India for his neighbours. Further, English attitudes toward non-English people generally were going through a hardening process at this time.

One image of India prevalent in Cork during these years remained that of the exotic. The year after Mahomet arrived, a travelling carnival advertised its display of "A most Curious Animal, called the Grand Lionphant Tartar, or, Indian Camel." This creature, allegedly 17 feet long and 8 feet high, could be viewed for the price of 1 shilling admission. Its owners validated its existence by reference to Dr. Goldsmith's *History of Animated Nature*.⁸² Thus, Mahomet's inclusion in his *Travels* of descriptions of camels, elephants, and rhinoceros (XXIX) might have been a response to the attention he saw paid by the people of Cork to such exotic creatures. Another circus visited Cork exhibiting living human exotica: Indian Chiefs (the north American variety) and "Happy Africans."⁸³ Although Mahomet did not comment in print on such displays, his account of Indians like

⁸¹ Hastings Letter 15 July 1782 in Warren Hastings, *Memoir*. Ed. G.R. Gleig, 3 volumes. London: Richard Bentley, 1841, Vol. 2, pp. 584–87. Hastings to Doorbijey Sing 15 July 1782, Persian Correspondence, Translations of Issues, 1781–85, 26, pp. 1–18, No. 38, National Archives of India. Baker Letter 27 November, 1783, Bengal Public Consultation, 18 December 1783 and Minutes of Court of Directors 10 September 1784, India Office Library.

⁸² *Hibernian Chronicle*, 20 June 1785.

⁸³ *Cork Gazette*, 12 December 1795.

himself stood in strong contrast to such exploitative images. For Mahomet the challenge was to present a more "authentic" account of the religions and wars in India; his words found an eager audience but were in implicit dialogue with such other images.

In some ways, the anecdotes about Indian types in *Travels* paralleled those in the popular press of Cork. Mahomet deployed anecdotes illustrating, for example, the simplicity (but ultimate triumph) of a sepoy confronting a counterfeiter (XXVIII), the tenacity in adherence of an Indian merchant to religious principle (XXXVI), and the (proverbial) generosity of a courtesan saving her lover from bankruptcy (XV). Similarly, Cork newspapers included anecdotes illustrating the extreme pride and sense of honour of Indians: a Rajput servant who, hit unjustly by his master, committed suicide rather than accept the shame of either being struck or betraying his master; Grenadier sepoys who claimed the right to be executed first among "mutineers," since Grenadiers always had the honour of entering battle first.⁸⁴ Indeed, Mahomet may have been the source of such newspaper stories designed to illustrate the exceptional virtue of Indians.

Most newspaper accounts, however, advanced negative views of Islam, and other non-Britons as well. Political alignments appeared in terms of stereotypes, in which Islam was a standard against which to measure immorality. For example, in 1791, Iberians received negative press: "The vapouring Spaniard had scarcely begun hostilities, when he pulled in his horns and made friends with the Moors—Such dastardly nations are fit to pay tribute to the Sons of Mahomet."⁸⁵ Catholics and Jews appeared as inferior even to "the blind and reprobate Sons of the Heathen and Mahomedan worlds."⁸⁶

Literature also presented images of India and Islam that clashed with those of Mahomet's writings and persona. Cork newspapers extracted and republished "The Life of Mahomet" from Edward Gibbons' influential *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1786), a work quite dismissive of the Prophet's revelation.⁸⁷ During Mahomet's years in Cork, two plays proved particularly popular, staged repeatedly with a professional lead but with townspeople in the other roles.

⁸⁴ *Cork Gazette*, 17 August 1791.

⁸⁵ *Cork Gazette*, 26 October 1791.

⁸⁶ *Cork Gazette*, 25 February 1795.

⁸⁷ Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall* (1776–86), Chapter 50. *Cork Gazette*, 11 June 1791.

Citizens of Cork staged (1788, 1796) the Reverend Mr. Miller's translation of Voltaire's *Mahomet, The Impostor: A Tragedy*. This play presented the Prophet Mohammed as a religious tyrant, using the faith of his followers to advance his corrupt personal agenda.⁸⁸ Another popular play was a farce: "The Sultan; or, a Peep behind the Curtains [or into the Seraglio]" by Isaac Bickerstaff, performed in Cork in 1791, 1804, and 1807.⁸⁹ In this play, a plucky English slavewoman resisted the sexually and physically subordinated role specified for her by Islam and the Turkish state, thereby winning over the Sultan, becoming Queen, and freeing the rest of the harem from bondage. This theme of an English Christian woman converting a Muslim to higher principles and then marrying him may have seemed to the people of Cork to be particularly relevant to Jane and Mahomet. Other plays and works of literature also contained similar themes in dialogue with Mahomet's words.⁹⁰

When Mahomet determined to write a travel narrative about India, studied earlier travel narratives and paraphrased parts of them, including Jemima Kindersley's *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe . . . and the East Indies* (1777) and—most particularly—John Henry Grose's *Voyage to the East Indies* (1766).⁹¹ Kindersley and Grose present unsympathetic pictures of India and Indians. Nonetheless, Mahomet found aspects of their work worthy of emulation, since he paraphrased or directly lifted material from them without attribution. Grose's work found a popular audience but high literary critics condemned his egotistic violation the conventions of the genre. Fashionable journals dismissed Grose as too limited in experience, base in character, and opinionated to produce fine literature or ethnography: "a young man

⁸⁸ Many saw the play as a veiled attack on the immorality of all office holders. This play was first performed in England in 1744 and remained quite popular through the end of the century. Citations from this work appeared repeatedly in the press. *Hibernian Chronicle*, 20 November 1788, 24 March 1796, 11 February 1799.

⁸⁹ *Cork Gazette* 1 October 1791; *Hibernian Chronicle* 31 August 1804; *Cork Advertiser*, 31 March 1807.

⁹⁰ E.g., "A Voyage to India, An Operatic Performance." *Cork Advertiser*, 16 July 1807.

⁹¹ Jemima (Mrs. Nathaniel Edward) Kindersley lived in Allahabad, 1767–68; two paragraphs in Dean Mahomet's Letter XIX paraphrase her *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and the East Indies*. London: Norse, 1777, pp. 251–3. Grose first published his book in 1757 with expanded editions in 1766, 1767, and 1772; part appeared in John Knox, *New Collection*. London: The Author, 1767, Vol. 2, pp. 474–496.

who does not pretend to have seen more than one or two sea-ports of an extensive continent . . . his remarks are often trite or frivolous."⁹² While Mahomet took a number of words from Grose and Kindersley, significantly, he reconstructed them in his own way.⁹³

Mahomet and his Family in England

Mahomet's *Travels* seems to have been well received by the society around him in Ireland. Nevertheless, after two decades in Cork, Mahomet and his family emigrated to London and then Brighton. In each of these places, he reshaped his autobiography in light of his position in British society. As England developed its national identity, it largely did so over and against the people of its colonies. Thus, Mahomet and his family, combining as they did both Indian and Irish identities, would have had a particularly difficult time establishing their place in London. Nevertheless, over his forty-five years in England, Mahomet's entrepreneurial skills enabled him to market his Indian identity with some success. He began and operated The Hindostance Coffee House (1809–12), purveying Indian cuisine, *hookahs*, and ambience to the elite of London.⁹⁴ Later he sold "INDIAN TOOTH POWDER," and CULEFF [*kalaf*, hair dye]."⁹⁵ He created his greatest success, from 1814 onward, self-proclaimed as the "Shampooing Surgeon," i.e., using *châmpi* (therapeutic massage) and his

⁹² E.g., Review of first edition of Grose in *Monthly Review* 17 (July–December 1757), pp. 301–306.

⁹³ In all, Mahomet took about 7% the words in *Travels* from Grose and two paragraphs from Kindersley. We should also keep in mind that such extensive copying from earlier works remained quite common in the 18th century. Indeed, Grose himself only added his Glossary in his later editions of his book, taking much of it from the 1761 travel narrative by Richard Cambridge, who himself copied parts of it from yet earlier works. Richard Owen Cambridge, *Account of the War*. London: T. Jefferys, 1761, glossary of "Indian and Persic Terms." Robert Orme lifted entire sections of his authoritative *History* from John Dalton. *Memoirs of Captain [John] Dalton, H.E.I.C.S., Defender of Trichinopoly, 1752–1753* edited by Charles Dalton. London: W.H. Allen, 1886.

⁹⁴ Rate Books for Marylebone, 1808–14, Marylebone Public Library. Victualler's Licence (1812), Greater London Record Office. *Epicure's Almanack*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815, pp. 123–24; Charles Stewart, a veteran of India, called it the "Hooka Club" in his 1814 (but not 1810) translation of Khan, *Travels*, 1:124. *Times* (London) March 27, 1811. There were then some 2,000 coffeehouses and 5,000 public houses in London.

⁹⁵ Newspaper advertisement (early 1815), in John Ackerson Erredge, *History of Brighton*. Brighton: E. Lewis, 1862; grangerized edition, 4, p. 149.

unique “Indian Medicated Vapour Bath.”⁹⁶ For a time, he proved able to claim, as an Indian, exclusive authority over these methods. His medical skills and persuasive advertising brought many of the British middle classes and elite—including various members of the Royal Family—into his professional care.

Through his medical career, Mahomet argued that, as an Asian, he was uniquely able to provide his patrons with access to “oriental” medical knowledge. He thus could pre-empt his rival European bath house keepers who sought themselves to represent “the Orient.” Nevertheless, as his fame grew, various competitors moved to confiscate the terms and methods “Indian Medicated Bath” and “Shampooing” for themselves.

By the 1830s–40s, Mahomet’s control over the genres of “shampooing” and “Indian medicated vapour baths” slipped badly. Due to his advanced age, and—probably more significantly—a growing British sense of imperial supremacy over Asia, he proved no longer able to block British appropriation of these genres. After his death in 1851, his “shampooing” became a name for hair-wash and the Turkish Bath—under British management—displaced his Indian Vapour Bath.⁹⁷ Thus, British society absorbed Mahomet’s creations with little recognition of his role.

The Legacies of Joseph Emin and Dean Mahomet

Overall, Emin and Mahomet illustrate the wide circulation of people and ideas brought about by European imperialism. During each of their lives in Britain, they proved able to negotiate respected places for themselves and for their representations of Asia among the British of the metropolis. The images of Asia they created were not ones divided along communal lines. They crossed class lines and encountered no apparent hostility to their social intercourse with European women.

⁹⁶ *Cases Cured by Sake [Shaikh] Deen Mahomed, Shampooing Surgeon, And Inventor of the Indian Medicated Vapour and Sea-Water Baths . . .* Brighton: The Author, 1820. *Shampooing, or, Benefits Resulting From the use of The Indian Medicated Vapour Bath, As introduced into this country by S.D. Mahomed (A Native of India)*. Brighton: The Author, 1822, 1826, 1838.

⁹⁷ Shampooing came to mean hair-wash only from the 1860s. For various assertions about the British origins of the Turkish Bath see: Charles Bartholomew, *Turkish Bath*. 6th edition. Bristol: The Author, 1871; David Urquhart, *Pillars of Hercules*, 2 vols. London: Richard Bentley, 1850, *Turkish Bath*. London: David Bryce, 1856, and *Manual of the Turkish Bath*. London: John Churchill and Sons, 1865.

In the colony of India, however, they were less successful in shaping European attitudes toward Asians and Asia. Over the course of the 19th century, European attitudes hardened further against Asians. While later immigrants and visitors from Asia proved able partially to shape their roles and their representations of Asia in Europe, the growing forces of imperialism meant that Europeans came to these relationships with stronger presuppositions and stereotypes.

The autoethnography and autobiography constructed by Emin and Mahomet reveals some dimensions of their agency. That their books received wide sponsorship among the British aristocracy and gentry suggests European elite acceptance of them as authors. Like other emerging classes of authors of the 18th century, their "written by himself" books fit into a developing acceptance of non-elite authors. That both these books soon faded from public view and had limited evident impact on burgeoning British ethnography about Asia suggests increasing British solidarity within the imperial process.

For us, their writings and lives allow access to these formative years in the development of the British empire in India and Britain. "[T]o ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which coloniser and colonised co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world..."⁹⁸ The production of knowledge about Asia thus proved highly contested during the late 18th century.

⁹⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xx.

RECIPROCITIES AND DIVERGENCES CONCERNING RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN TWO FAMILIES OF SCHOLARS IN NORTH INDIA¹

AVRIL A. POWELL

Brothers in India and Indian brothers

The objective of this chapter is to examine the roles played by two sets of brothers, one Scottish and evangelical, and the other north Indian and Muslim, in the processes through which ideas, mainly religious, were presented and responded to in centres of traditional religious scholarship in mid nineteenth-century India.

William and John Muir, the Scottish pair, were archetypal scholar administrators, men who in their leisure time during their service under the Company and the Raj, devoted themselves to the study of the Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit languages, and to the historical origins of the religions of India. John Muir (1810–1882) arrived in the North-Western Provinces (NWP) in 1829, from where he retired to Scotland in 1853, after serving rather inconspicuously in various district posts. His most significant post was one year (1844–45) as principal of the Benares Sanskrit College. His youngest brother, William (1819–1905) joined him in India in 1837, then remained in NWP until 1874, spending his last six years as Lieutenant-Governor of the province, after which he served on the Vice-Roy's Council in Calcutta (1874–76), and on the Council of India in London (1876–85). He too spent his last years in Edinburgh, but in a second active career, serving until his eighty-fourth year as principal of Edinburgh University (1885–1903).² Apart from a contrast in career

¹ A version of this study was first delivered in the Imperial and Commonwealth History Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, on 18 November, 1996, under the auspices of the North Atlantic Missiology Project, co-ordinated by the University of Cambridge and financed by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The opinions expressed in this contribution, which have been substantially revised since the seminar, are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Pew Charitable Trusts. I am grateful to Salim al-Din Quraishi, Curator of modern South Asian languages at the OIOC, British Library, and to Khalid Iqbal, for assistance with the identification and translation of some of the Urdu tracts.

² *Dictionary of National Biography*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1894, XXXIX, pp.

patterns between John who disliked administration, and William who progressed slowly but steadily up the provincial civil service ladder, there were other more significant differences between the two which became increasingly important, especially in the religious dimension. Yet, in the 1830s, they and their two other brothers, who both died shortly after arrival in NWP, would have been easily recognisable as representatives of a new generation of evangelicals in the Company's service whose presence was particularly influential in this particular province. It was the fervency of their evangelical convictions, combined with their skills in the classical languages used by the Hindu and Muslim élites of the region, which created a situation in which a number of Brahmin Pandits and Muslim *'ulamâ* (some well known in their own religious milieu), eventually felt impelled to respond to the stream of publications in the vernacular and the classical languages which were written by both brothers between the mid-1830s and the end of the century. 'Evangelical Orientalism' is a fitting term for their literary output, at least in the early years.

A number of north Indian scholars came in close and sustained contact with the Muir brothers, some of whom, like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Pandit Nilakhanta Goreh, have been the subjects of considerable attention in recent years. Although both Sayyid Ahmad and Goreh are important to this study too, attention will centre here on the scions of a less prominent *'ulamâ* family from Panipat, near Delhi, whose educational activities and contributions to religious debate have so far passed almost unnoticed. Two of these Panipati brothers, Maulawi Karim al-Din (c. 1822–79) and Maulawi 'Imad al-Din (c. 1831–1900) became well known in the mid nineteenth-century in scholarly circles in Delhi, Agra and Lahore. On encountering the Muir brothers' challenge to their religious faith and identity they took divergent stances. Whereas the younger brother, 'Imad al-Din, eventually became a convert to Christianity and a writer of evangelical tracts on the same themes as William Muir's own publications, the elder, Karim al-Din, maintained his Muslim identity. On the face of it, the history of this family seems typical of many middle-ranking Muslim families long settled in north India in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. After migration from Persia in the sixteenth century their ancestors had enjoyed,

according to 'Imad al-Din, 'fairly prosperous circumstances' during Shah Jahan's reign, having 'ample revenues and estates' in various parts of the Punjab.³ The explanations of the two brothers (they both wrote autobiographical accounts) for their family's fall from grace differ in detail, while agreeing that by the time of their own births, some twenty to thirty years after the East India Company's annexation of the Delhi region, their father was impoverished. Both agreed that the unworldliness of their grandfather, Maulawi Muhammad Fazil, had led him to play his cards unwisely when the British arrived in the region and the *jâgîr* lands remaining to him were confiscated.⁴ Opting for a life of religious contemplation and teaching, Muhammad Fazil had then settled as Imam of a mosque in Panipat.

Certainly, by the mid-nineteenth century the family was considered to be 'Panipati', and 'Imad al-Din remained proud, even after his baptism, to emphasise his own birthplace as a centre of Islamic and Sufi scholarship and devotion. According to 'Imad al-Din, their grandfather had been valued, and supported as a scholar, by a local Afghan chief. Yet by the time Karim al-Din, 'Imad al-Din and their siblings were born in the 1820s and early 1830s the elders of the family had recognised, like many other learned Muslim families similarly placed, that prospects of service for their sons must entail some compromise with British cultural agendas. The eldest brother, Karim al-Din, therefore went to Delhi to seek appropriate education and employment. In 1840 he was admitted to the Oriental Department of the Delhi College, after which he was appointed as Urdu teacher in the Anglo-Oriental college at Agra, recently established by the Company by grafting on to a Hindu endowment, sufficient revenues to open an English department to complement existing classes in Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic and Persian. The younger brother, 'Imad al-Din later joined Karim al-Din in Agra, to benefit from religious teaching from the *'ulamâ* of that city, but also to study at his brother's college. It was while studying and teaching at the Delhi and Agra Anglo-Oriental colleges in the late 1840s that these Panipati brothers first encountered both William Muir in person, and evangelical publications of the kind then being written and patronised by both the Muir brothers.

³ Rev. Imad al-Din, *A Mohammedan brought to Christ; being the Autobiography of a Native Clergyman in India*. London, 1870, p. 5.

⁴ 'My grandfather mistook his own interests, and our property was all confis-

The Muir contribution to evangelical scholarship

John and William Muir were products of the sound education available to boys of all classes in Scotland's post-Enlightenment years. Study at Glasgow and Edinburgh universities followed enrolment in various academies in their native Ayrshire. Their evangelicalism probably resulted from their father's contacts in Glasgow as a merchant and city magistrate, which coincided with the preaching activities there of a Presbyterian evangelical, Thomas Chalmers, who later had some influence on the vocations of some notable missionaries to India, including Alexander Duff. Their father's sudden death in 1821 resulted in all four sons entering the East India Company's service. From Haileybury, to which they were nominated by a wealthy relative, they won awards for performance in the vernacular and classical languages of India. All four brothers then proceeded to the North-Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency.⁵

The family's link with missionary agendas was established as soon as they arrived in the north-west, John in 1829, and William in 1837. The Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), which already had a station in Benares when John arrived, and, on William's arrival, was on the point of re-establishing itself in Agra, initially received their main support, expressed in tract writing, visiting mission schools, and the writing of scholarly, yet what they perceived to be 'popular' works on the subject of Hindu and Muslim religious systems, history and practices. Over the next twenty years John Muir produced a series of religious tracts, mainly in Sanskrit and often in poetic form. In 1839 he published the first of three editions of his Sanskrit, *Mâtâparīkshâ*, subtitled, *A Sketch of the Argument for Christianity*

cated', *ibid.* p. 6. In several such accounts which 'Imad al-Din wrote after his baptism (1866), British confiscation of the family property was emphasised, whereas Karim al-Din, in a brief autobiography written in 1848, stressed the invasion of Nadir Shah (in 1739) as the starting point of the family troubles. See *Tarikh-e shu'arâ-ye Urdû*. A History of Urdu Poets. Delhi: Matba'a al 'ulum, Delhi Madrassah, 1848, pp. 467-8. J.H. Garcin de Tassy is an important source for the careers of both brothers, but based his accounts mainly on their own publications. See Garcin de Tassy, 'Troisième Discours, 5 Dec. 1852', p. 15. In: *La Langue et la Littérature Hindoustanie de 1850 à 1869*. 2nd ed. Paris: Librairie orientale de maison neuve, 1874; *Histoire de la Littérature Hindoue et Hindoustanie*. 2nd ed. 1870, reprinted 1968, II, pp. 166-77. The most recent, authoritative work on the family is Muhammad Ikram Chughtai's discussion of the correspondence between Maulawi Karim al-Din and Aloys Sprenger, 'Aik nâdir majmû'a mukâtib'. *Urdu*, 60-62, 1984-6.

⁵ See note 2 above; Supplement to the *Kilmarnock Standard*, 11 Dec. 1886.

and against Hinduism.⁶ William, in his early years at least, was more wary of addressing controversial issues as directly as his brother did, and commenced instead by reviewing the contributions of others, both missionary and Muslim, to the evolving debate on the claims to 'truth' of Christianity and Islam. His reviews were published from 1845 onwards in the *Calcutta Review*.⁷ By this date their diverse, but complementary qualifications for the evangelisation of the high caste and *ashraf* Hindus and Muslims of north-west India had been recognised locally, and it was at this juncture too, the mid-1840s, that John was asked to be principal of the Benares Sanskrit College, and William was posted to Agra, to become Secretary to the Board of Revenue, where he was to stay in various posts until the suppression of the rebellion which swept this province in 1857–58. These two cities became the foci of their respective scholarly concerns.

The major scholarly publications of the Muir brothers consisted of two multi-volume histories of religious origins or roots. The first volumes of each were published in London in 1857–58, the subsequent volumes appearing during the following decade. John Muir thus published in 1858, volume one of his five volume, *Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and Progress of the Religion and Institutions of India*, (subsequently retitled 'Origin and History' rather than 'Origin and Progress'), while William completed, while besieged in the Agra fort in 1857, the first two volumes of his four volume, *Life of Mahomet and History of Islam*. Both these histories went through several editions, reprints and abridgements during their authors' lifetimes, and throughout the remaining colonial period, and have recently been reprinted in India.⁸ Their success made the Muirs well known in literary circles in Britain as the first to synthesise in readable form in the English language, recent continental, mainly German scholarship, on Vedic India and pre-and post-Islamic Arabia. There was,

⁶ Bishop's College Press, Calcutta.

⁷ E.g., 'The Mohammedan Controversy', *Calcutta Review* (henceforward *CR*), IV, Dec. 1845, pp. 418–75; 'Biographies of Mohamed for India and the Mohammedan Controversy', *CR*, XVII, Jan. 1852, pp. 387–421.

⁸ The first edition of the original Sanskrit Texts was published in London and Edinburgh by Williams & Norgate. The first edition of *The Life of Mahomet* was published in London by Smith, Elder & Co. (1858–61). There have been a number of one-volume abridgements since Muir's death, including T.H. Weir's 'new and revised edition' of 1912. Ram Swarup reprinted the 3rd, 1894 edition in 1992 for propaganda purposes during the build-up of communal tension in India. New Delhi: Voice of India, 1992. Muir also wrote a separate, more 'popular', *Mahomet and Islam: a Sketch of the Prophet's Life*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1884.

in both cases, a considerable original input also, the significance of which will be discussed below. In John's case, his purpose was by 1858 much less 'evangelical' than in his earlier spate of Sanskrit tracts on gospel themes. 'Its object', he wrote, 'is popular utility', it being 'mainly intended for the use of those Hindus who wish to become critically acquainted with the foundation on which their ancestral religion reposes'. His target readership he later identified mainly as 'students' who were then, as in the Benares Sanskrit College, beginning to study English alongside Sanskrit.⁹ William's purpose was more overtly evangelical, for he mentioned in his preface that he had been urged by a local missionary to write, 'in the Hindoostanee language', a scholarly history of Muhammad, based on Arabic sources, and 'suitable for the perusal of his followers', in order to satisfy the local *'ulamâ* that the missionary criticisms of Islamic belief and practice were justified. His *Masihî kalîsiyya kî tarîkh*, published in 1848, the first part of which took the form of a biography of Jesus, had already established his credentials in the Urdu language.¹⁰ While his subsequent long sustained concern with the historical circumstances of Muhammad's mission and the early success and expansion of Islam grew out of this missionary request, it is nevertheless surprising that William Muir never subsequently turned his attention to the 'Islamic' era of north Indian history, but preferred instead, in subsequent publications, to follow the course of Islamic history in its Arab heartlands, through his *Annals of the Early Caliphate* (1883), and *The Caliphate: its Rise, Decline and Fall* (1891).

My purpose is to identify more specifically, the catalytic processes through which the two Muir brothers achieved a scholarly response to their evangelical and historical publications among Hindus and Muslims in north-west India, and in the case of William Muir to comment in more detail on the consequences of the evangelical influence exerted by him and other Europeans in Agra, and later in the Punjab, on the younger Panipati brother, Maulawi 'Imad al-Din, who meanwhile transposed himself from public preacher of Islam to public preacher of Christianity. Just as John Muir serves as a foil

⁹ *Original Sanskrit Texts*, part one, London, 1858, p. 1.

¹⁰ *The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam, to the era of the Hegira*. London, 1858, vol. 1, p. iii. Muir wrote his *History of the Christian Church* with the help of Maulawi Ahsan Allah, a *sarishtedâr* who was subordinate to William while he was Deputy Collector in Fatehpur District. It was published by the Sikandra Orphan Press.

for William Muir in showing the spectrum of perceptions on religion formed by members of one Scottish family, so too the close interaction of Maulawi Karim al-Din, 'Imad al-Din's eldest brother, with British orientalists and educationalists, yet continued adherence to Islam, shows a parallel diversity of responses to evangelical and cultural challenges from within one family of north Indian Muslims.

John Muir and the Pandits of Benares

Evangelical activity had begun in Benares almost as soon as the Company permitted missionaries to reside and preach in the Bengal Presidency. The city was regarded by mission boards as a centre of Brahmanical tradition, where it was hoped to influence high caste circles. However, the Anglican presence remained weak until the posting to Benares in the early 1830s of two missionaries, William Smith and Charles Leupolt, who would both remain there until the 1870s, and who were jointly responsible for one of the first tracts in Urdu comparing the claims to truth of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.¹¹ By this time John Muir, though serving elsewhere in the province, was showing an interest in both Benares city and its missions.

His physical presence in Benares was to be very short-lived, less than a full year, from April 1844 to January 1845, during which period he was appointed temporary principal of the Benares Sanskrit College, for the very specific purpose of directing the proposed amalgamation of the Sanskrit and English departments to form a new 'Anglo-Oriental' college, subsequently renamed the 'Queen's' or 'Victoria College'. Most histories of Benares scarcely mention John Muir: his tenure was very short, his temperament reclusive, and he was succeeded by men of undeniably stronger character and impact, notably James Ballantyne.¹² Yet Richard Fox Young has shown that Muir's brief connection with Benares was very significant in terms of his relationships with local Pandits, both inside and outside the college.¹³

¹¹ *Dîn-e haqq kî tahqîq*. Allahabad: Mission Press, 1842.

¹² George Nicholls, *Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Benares Patshalla or Sanskrit College, now forming the Sanskrit Department of the Benares College*. Allahabad: Government Press, 1907.

¹³ Fox R. Young, *Resistant Hinduism: Sanskrit Sources on Anti-Christian Apologetics in Early Nineteenth-century India*. Vienna: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1981,

The first indication of John Muir's contact with the college was his offer of a prize, in 1838, for the best student essay on the subject, 'on the power, wisdom and goodness of God as displayed in the creation', on which occasion he distributed some evangelical tracts among the competitors.¹⁴ Though the proposed essay title was carefully phrased, it carried the same Christian assumptions that he was simultaneously expressing more overtly in a tract comparing Christianity and Hinduism, the *Mâtâparîkshâ*, to which various Pandits would subsequently respond. Yet when he was invited to take up the principalship of the college some five years later, John Muir understood the limitations which responsibility for a government institution would place on his evangelical activities. In his lectures on Mental Philosophy, which were subsequently printed, he noted that his main source, John Abercrombie's textbook on philosophy, 'touches on the evidences of the Christian faith, and on its doctrines as the only proper consummation of moral Philosophy. To such portions of his Treatises my position necessarily precluded me from advertising'.¹⁵ There are several other such cautionary notes about appropriately 'neutral' behaviour, yet his reports on the college, both before and during his appointment, show that, like many other evangelicals in government service he was seeking ways to reconcile his own strong religious convictions with gradual modifications to a traditional syllabus which would ultimately reflect Western moral, and even specifically Christian values. While he wished to 'omit all recognition' of astrology, on the grounds that it was fallacious, he considered it wiser to 'prescribe that so much time should be devoted to the acquisition of other branches as should leave no time for its study'.¹⁶ More positively, Muir recommended a reconstruction of the syllabus in other departments such as philosophy and law, so that European modes of rational thinking might be introduced, the students be encouraged to debate with each other, and a western corpus of

contains a detailed examination of the impact of the *Mâtâparîkshâ*, and other works of John Muir, on a number of Pandits. The following discussion draws on Fox Young's study, with some additional material from missionary and private papers, and from the government education proceedings and reports.

¹⁴ Nicholls, *Sketch*, p. 79.

¹⁵ J. Muir, *Brief Lectures on Mental Philosophy and other subjects; delivered to the Students of the Banares Sanskrit College*. Allahabad: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1845.

¹⁶ 'Memorandum on the state of the Sanskrit College at Benares, and the means of its improvement', Agra, 2 April 1844. In: *General Report on Public Instruction in NWFP, 1843-44*, Agra, n.d.

knowledge be gradually 'engrafted' on to the morally innocuous aspects of the traditional curriculum. The gradual introduction of English, side by side with Sanskrit, would, he felt, assist these processes. Important tools were to be Sanskrit translations of European texts, a number of which he had written himself, notably the *Itihâsa-dîpika*, a history of India in Sanskrit verse.¹⁷

John Muir was reticent about his relations with the scholars who helped him with his Sanskrit studies, both at the college, and subsequently. In spite of his own modest roots, he was élitist in his attitudes both to Indian and to Scottish education, paying lip service to the currently popular formula of long-term downward filtration of knowledge, but concentrating his own efforts very specifically on the Brahmin caste, and directing his major work, the *Original Sanskrit Texts*, to the enlightenment of Indian students in that stratum. His teaching methods indicate a considerable degree of 'team teaching' with the college Pandits, for he would require a group of Pandits to correct the drafts of his own lectures before they were delivered in Sanskrit. He clearly had some favourites among them, and significantly, had quickly recognised a young Maratha mathematician from Nagpur, Bapu Deo, as the rising star of the mathematics department, visualising that once he had acquired sufficient English he would, with his acceptance of rational thinking, act as the desired transmitter of the precepts of the European scientific revolution to the Pandits of Benares. Little is known about the identities of those Pandits who worked more closely with him as translators. He gave hints about co-authorage in books 'compiled under my care', but apart from a vague reference to his own 'man' as being a pupil of one Kashinath Shastri, also a Pandit at the Benares College, the identities and networks of his Brahmin assistants remain unknown.

Some insight into the process of John Muir's interaction with Brahmin scholars is provided, however, by the accounts of initial resistance to Christianity, yet subsequent conversion, compiled by a Benares scholar, one Pandit Nilakhanta Goreh. Goreh had been privately educated in Benares, but, in spite of his family's distaste, soon became aware of missionary activity in that city. In 1844, the year

¹⁷ Described as 'a sketch of the history of India, in Sanskrit verse, of which the earlier part is chiefly founded on Professor H.H. Wilson's "Manual of history and chronology"'. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1840. Muir expressed reservations about using this text in the college unless 'many remarks on the Hindee writings' were first removed. *General Report on Public Instruction... for 1843-44*, p. cv.

of Muir's principalship of the college, he first approached William Smith, of the CMS, the co-author of a recently published comparison of the claims of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, with some written questions about Christianity. When he received Smith's answers, he wrote in Hindi querying the explanations he had been given. He was perturbed, particularly, by the Christian understanding of sin and salvation. The missionary then gave him a copy of John Muir's *Mâtâparîkshâ*, published in Sanskrit a few years earlier, and by then in a second edition. Goreh replied the next day, objecting to Muir's treatment of the origins of 'evil'. The opportunity for a face-to-face meeting seems to have been missed while Muir remained in Benares, for the missionaries heard nothing more from Goreh for nearly a year. Goreh then produced a counterblast to evangelical Christianity, namely *Sastrapattavinirnaya/A Verdict on the Truth of the Sastra*, written in Sanskrit, together with a tract in Hindi, on *Doubts concerning Christianity* which, according to Smith, then circulated widely in Benares.¹⁸ John Muir had returned by this time to administrative duties in nearby Azamgarh, but he nevertheless played a role in the next stage of Nilakhanta Goreh's religious evolution. For Goreh then experienced a troubled stage of uncertainty and spiritual crisis, at the end of which he accepted baptism.¹⁹ Although the nature of his contact with Muir can only be gleaned at second-hand through various missionary accounts, it seems that Goreh had written to 'Muir's Pandit' in Azamgarh for reassurance, because, as reported by Smith, 'many doubts have arisen in my mind with regard to Hinduism'.²⁰ The unidentified Pandit so addressed, though scathing about Goreh's doubts, put him in touch with Muir. The exact nature and extent of Muir's influence upon him has not been ascertained, but it is known that Muir and Goreh met several times, and that Muir gave him a copy of his own recently published *Glory of Jesus Christ*, published in Calcutta in 1848 in Sanskrit verse. After baptism, when he took the name 'Nehemiah', Goreh became, like his Muslim counter-part,

¹⁸ Rev. W. Smith, *Dvij: the Conversion of a Brahman to the Faith of Christ*. London: James Nisbet and Co., 1850.

¹⁹ For further discussion of Goreh's conversion see, Fox R. Young, *Resistant Hinduism*, pp. 169–72; A.A. Powell, 'Processes of conversion to Christianity in Nineteenth Century North-Western India'. In: Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800–1900*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997, pp. 18–24.

²⁰ Smith, *Dvij*, p. 94.

Maulawi 'Imad al-Din, whose conversion he in turn later influenced, a well known figure among the small band of highly educated north Indian Christians. He contributed to its missionary programme both by preaching among, and writing for his former co-religionists, addressing his lectures particularly to fellow Brahmins and to adherents of the recently formed Brahmo Samaj. He kept in touch with John Muir, against whose tracts he had first reacted strongly, but with whose help he had then reached the point of seeking Christian baptism. Muir later introduced him, during Goreh's first visit to England, to the Oxford Sanskritist, Max Müller.

It might be assumed from these comments on his role both at the college, and in liaison with local missionaries, that John Muir's perceptions of non-European civilisations, and of the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism, were typically and consistently 'evangelical'. That this was not actually the case helps to put his youngest brother's staunch and unbending views on the same issues in sharp perspective. Although he was critical of the current state of both civilisation and scholarship among Hindus, and regarded the Brahmins as both the agents for decline, and the hope for any future 'progress', John Muir's perception of 'Vedic civilisation' was positive, even admiring, in many important respects. In lectures at the Sanskrit college he urged his students to emulate their ancestors, and reminded them that in the age of Vedic achievement, Europe was 'still peopled by barbarous tribes'.²¹ Eulogy of this kind was designed to serve the immediate pedagogic purpose of encouraging emulation of the 'past', but similar views were repeated in a more scholarly form some years later in the five volumes of his *Original Sanskrit Texts*, which while seeking to correct some misconceptions current among Brahmins about their past, nevertheless implicitly reiterated an equally positive evaluation of many aspects of Vedic civilisation. Although several other influential Sanskritists of his generation also eulogised the 'Vedic past', John Muir's tone and judgements mark a significant contrast with those expressed by his evangelical contemporary, the Reverend John Wilson, a missionary Sanskritist, who in his *India Three Thousand Years Ago*, published in 1858, the same year as Muir's first volume, put forward a much more derogatory view of 'the social

²¹ J. Muir, 'An Address to the Students of the Benares College', Azimgarh, 10 Feb. 1845, in *Selections from the Records of Government, North-Western Provinces*, 2nd series, vol. 1. Allahabad: Government Press, 1869, pp. 21-2.

state of the Aryas on the banks of the Indus in the times of the Vedas'.²² Muir's more appreciative assessment became explicit in the final pages of the last volume, in which he summarised his verdict under the title, 'Brief notes on Society and Life in the Vedic Age, as represented in the Hymns'. Although he was ostensibly merely putting forward, and for the first time in English, a representation of the views of the authors of his sources, the evidence of 'many signs of a considerable progress in civilisation' which he found in the Vedic age sources certainly also carried his own understandings as interpreter, as well as mere translator.

It may seem difficult to reconcile the evangelical young author of the first tracts on the relations between Hinduism and Christianity, written in the 1830s, with the historian of the Vedic era of the 1860s. Yet during the period he was preparing the *Original Sanskrit Tracts*, in the 1840s and early 1850s, John Muir, influenced by ongoing continental Biblical criticism, had come to doubt his boyhood certainties concerning the composition and authorship of some of the books of the Bible. As a result, he would spend his final years of retirement in Edinburgh re-situating himself within the Protestant tradition. He no longer saw the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity in the stark terms of his youth, and certainly not of his own first evangelical Sanskrit tracts. The process of studying Vedic civilisation from its own sources, in order initially to criticise it, in the usual evangelical fashion, had gradually had an impact on him. The published responses of those Pandits who had taken up his criticisms, and his face-to-face discussions with his own Pandit assistants, had no doubt played some part in his metamorphosis. He thus came to appreciate, in his forties, many aspects of Indian civilisation and thought which he had initially criticised as a young district officer in his twenties. In his retirement years he no longer tried to engraft 'Christian morality' on to an indigenous base, as in his Sanskrit College days. He endeavoured instead, to persuade a mainly British readership, through the translation of Vedic and Buddhist texts, to appreciate the moral and ethical rewards he was now finding in

²² Wilson's book was based on a lecture he had given to the Mechanics Institution in the town hall, Bombay, in 1858. Romila Thapar has commented recently on the role of both Muir and Wilson as significant transmitters of views about the origins of the Aryans in: 'Some Appropriations of the 'Theory of Aryan Race Relating to the Beginnings of Indian History'. In: Daud Ali (ed). *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 18.

some carefully chosen 'Eastern' sources.²³ After his return to Scotland in 1853 he engaged with Broad Churchmen in Britain, and with continental biblical critics, such as the Dutch scholar, Abraham Keunen, whose Pentateuchal studies he translated into English. Just before his death he showed open support for Professor William Robertson-Smith, when, in 1881, he was removed from his chair in Oriental languages and Old Testament exegesis at Aberdeen, on the charge that his publications undermined belief in the inspiration of the Bible. John Muir's, by now, open sympathy for the form-critics caused some evangelical Christians to distort his evolution within Christianity to that of 'heretic'.²⁴ The rift with his brother, William, over his changed perceptions both of 'Christian truth', and of Indian cultural values, had, however, remained a private matter, on which there are only the merest hints in their private correspondence. William's experiences in Agra, in contrast, far from triggering the re-orientation experienced by John, had meanwhile served only to reinforce the evangelical certainties inculcated in their shared family upbringing.

William Muir among Muslim scholars in Agra

The catalyst for Muslim scholars in Agra was the activity of the recently established CMS mission in deliberately inviting responses to evangelical Christianity through the distribution of Persian and Urdu tracts, accompanied by visits to leading scholarly figures among the local Muslim community.²⁵ William Muir's role in this emerged gradually through his willingness to lend his services to missionary causes wherever he was posted in NWP between 1839 and 1845.

²³ Representative of such late publications is his *Religious and moral sentiments metrically rendered from Sanskrit writers*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1875. In an article written in 1871, 'Asita and Buddha or the Indian Simeon', he had drawn parallels between Buddhism and Christianity. Reprinted in *Pandit Revisited*, Part One. Varanasi, 1991, pp. 148–54.

²⁴ J. Muir to W. Robertson Smith, Edinburgh, 18 Dec. 1880, in Robertson Smith papers, Cambridge University Library: Add. MSS 7449/D487. For a fuller examination of John Muir's response to, and role in, controversies over Biblical inspiration see Fox R. Young, *Resistant Hinduism*, pp. 166–9; 'Revelation in Hinduism and the rise of heretical views about Biblical inspiration among mid-Victorian Broad churchmen', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 67, 1983, pp. 237–45; pp. 296–305.

²⁵ A.A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993, esp. pp. 132–71.

From 1845 he started to contribute regularly to the *Calcutta Review*, in the pages of which he coined the term, 'the Mohammedan Controversy', and in which he summarised and criticised the growing corpus of English and Urdu contributions to both sides of the argument. At a later stage, and while he was president of the Agra Tract and Book Society, he edited an Urdu account of one of the religious debates which had occurred in Delhi.²⁶ When he was invited by the missionaries to provide them with a vernacular history of the Prophet, he first tried out his drafts in the form of journal articles, and also corresponded about linguistic problems he encountered with some continental Orientalists, and with his brother, John, after the latter's retirement to Edinburgh in 1853. In a letter to his brother he confided the difficulties he was experiencing in re-categorising the Meccan Suras of the Qur'an, finding that in attempting to establish a chronology, 'much is dark and incomprehensible'.²⁷ A number of other scholar-administrators in India were also engaged in researching and interpreting the Islamic past. This is the period when Henry Miers Elliot (1808–1853), senior to Muir in the NWP administration, was collecting the manuscripts concerning medieval India under Muslim rule which would be published posthumously as *The History of India, as told by its own Historians*. Other contemporary historians of Islamic India included William Erskine, Henry Keene, and the numismatist, Edward Thomas.²⁸ Another scholar who was close at hand, and was already engaged in the same project of writing a life history of the Prophet, was Dr. Aloys Sprenger, principal of the Delhi Anglo-Oriental College.²⁹ Personally and intellectually these two Islamists would have had little in common, and plenty to disagree on, but what they did share was a similarly strong command of Arabic,

²⁶ W. Muir, *Bahthi mufid al-'amm fi tahqiq al-Islâm*. Agra: Orphan Mission Press, 1852.

²⁷ W. Muir to J. Muir, Nynic Tal, 8 July 1854. Edinburgh University Library, 'Special Collections': Add. Wm Muir papers, Gen. 2020–2.

²⁸ William Muir succeeded Henry Elliot at the Sadr Board of Revenue in Agra in 1848. Although he completed a preface to the work in 1849, Elliot's *History of India* was not completed and published by John Dowson until 1867. A study on the early Mughals by William Erskine (1773–1852), a Bombay civilian, was also published posthumously: *A History of India under the Two First Sovereigns of the House of Taimur: Babur and Humayun*. 1854.

²⁹ I am grateful to Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, op. cit., and Ursula Neumayr for information about recent interest in Dr Sprenger in his homeland of Austria. See, *inter alia*, Norbert Mantl, *Aloys Sprenger, der Orientalist und Islamhistoriker aus Nassereith in Tirol*. Nassereith: Gemeinde Nassereith, 1993.

Persian and Urdu, and a determination to work from the Arabic sources which the *‘ulamâ* used themselves. Sprenger probably had the advantage over Muir in his position at the Delhi College, where some of the leading Muslim scholars of the region were either teaching or examining in the 1840s. But according to Muir, it was Sprenger who helped him to procure some of the rare manuscript copies of the early Arabic biographies of the Prophet, which they both then used as their main sources for their respective biographies, and which in turn, Sprenger had borrowed from his scholar-friends, including Maulana Sadr al-Din ‘Azurda’, a renowned poet who was also examiner of Arabic at the Delhi College.³⁰ Yet their later histories of Islamic civilisation, as well as their biographies of Muhammad, show that Sprenger and Muir were poles apart in their religious and intellectual stances. Neither made any efforts to maintain contact after leaving India.

If Muir was in less direct contact with leading Muslim scholars than Sprenger, he nevertheless did have considerable knowledge, as his *Calcutta Review* articles show, of some of the lawyers and teachers in Agra who were coming forward to challenge the missionary interpretations of Islam. Through his attendance at the religious debates in the city he had come face to face with the leading *‘ulamâ* disputants, and he certainly had knowledge of the Royal Mosque circle from where Muslim disquiet first emanated. Through his responsibilities as secretary to the provincial government he dealt with correspondence concerning issues dividing local Muslim opinion, such as a quarrel over the succession to the Chishti *dargâh* at Fatehpur Sikri, and was familiar, through the vernacular press reports which passed through his hands, with a new focus in local Urdu journalism on the life of the Prophet.³¹ He also knew Mufti Sadr al-Din ‘Azurda’, the Delhi scholar and poet, whose manuscripts he had borrowed from Sprenger. Zaka Allah Khan, a Persian scholar, mathematician and historian, who twenty years later, would be appointed to William Muir’s aptly named, ‘Muir Central College’, which he

³⁰ For recently ‘discovered’ correspondence between Sprenger and Muslim scholars see Chughtai, op. cit. Subsequently, Muir ensured that the MSS of the biographies of the Prophet fell into his hands during the recapture of Delhi in 1857. After making further copies and synopses in English, he deposited them, annotated in his own hand, in the India Office and Edinburgh University Libraries.

³¹ ‘Native biographies of Mohammed’, sub-section of Muir’s article, ‘Biographies of Mohammed for India’. *CR*, XVII, Jan., 1852, pp. 387–421.

established in Allahabad, was also known to him from the 1850s. His relationship with such scholars was normally that of an increasingly influential patron rather than a close friend. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, however, who was posted at nearby Fatehpur Sikri in the early 1840s, was always afterwards claimed as Muir's '*dost*', sometimes his 'dear friend', terms of formal endearment which Sayyid Ahmad reciprocated.³² It seems probable that this particular relationship, scholarly at first, but embittered later on mainly because of the tone of Muir's publications on Islam, had been initiated in Agra when both were on lowly rungs of the Company's service ladder, when, as with Sprenger and his Delhi 'Muslim friends', the common ground was linguistic, literary and historical interests.

The Life of Mahomet and History of Islam

William Muir's own efforts at writing a biography of the Prophet may have been hastened by Aloys Sprenger's somewhat satirical *Life of Mohammad, from Original Sources*, which was published in Allahabad in 1851. However, that he was already moving in the same direction is proved by pencil annotations he made on the copies of the Arabic biographies he had borrowed, which show that he had already finished reading and abridging the manuscript copy of Ibn Hisham's late second century biography by the time Sprenger's book was published. His feeling that Sprenger had made many 'erroneous assumptions' about both pre-Islamic society, and the character of Muhammad then intensified his resolve, and from 1853 he started publishing instalments of his own biography in various English journals, published both in Calcutta and Britain. That his longer term goal was a biography written in the local vernaculars, notably Urdu, is shown by an early *Calcutta Review* article, entitled 'Biographies of Mohammad for India', in which he reviewed the recently published 'Lives' of Muhammad published by Sprenger, by Washington Irving, and by various evangelical tract societies, but only to dismiss them as unscholarly and inaccurate. In this article he also commented on a

³² In private correspondence Muir and Sayyid Ahmad addressed each other with the familiar, '*aziz-i man . . .*', the latter specifically differentiating between occasions when he was addressing the former as a 'friend' ('*ek dost ki haisiyat se*') and occasions when, in contrast, he used the more formal '*janab-i man . . .*' in official letters to Muir. See Muhammad Nadeem Panipati, *Letters to and from Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*. Lahore, 1993.

spate of books and articles in Urdu, currently issuing from newly founded vernacular 'native presses' in Agra and Delhi on the subject of Islam, but in particular on the Prophet's *maulūd*, or 'nativity'. 'It is, indeed, high time', Muir commented, to 'give to our native fellow subjects a Vernacular life of the prophet of Arabia', in order to offset 'the veriest inanities' of the popular vernacular press.³³ In the event, he never managed to complete an Urdu translation of his own lengthy *Life*, and it was left to a Christian convert from Islam, Maulawi 'Imad al-Din Panipati, the brother of Maulawi Karim al-Din and well known to Muir from his boyhood, to complete that task nearly twenty years later.

Discussion will be limited here to those aspects of Muir's methodology and conclusions which bear first, on his own perceptions of the nature of Islamic civilisation, and the relationship of Islam to Christianity, and second, on the subsequent Indian Muslim response. Both Muir and Sprenger called into question 'historical method' as practised by Muslim biographers and historians, and then proposed alternative methodologies, which not only differed between them, but were then strongly rejected by north Indian Muslim scholars. Muir's credentials as an Islamicist were seemingly high. He had carried out his own translation of parts of the Qur'an, as well as of the manuscript biographies recently discovered in Delhi, before commencing writing. He also made extensive use of the interlinear Urdu translation of the Qur'an by Shah Wali Allah's son, Shah 'Abd al-Qadir, as well as of various other Latin and English translations, including the well known *Alcoran of Mohammed* by George Sale, which had gone through many editions by the 1850s. Muir was always confident enough to propose a new reading of his own. His conclusion was, in a literal sense, very favourable to the Qur'an, for he maintained, 'there is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text'.³⁴ However, his readings from this 'pure text' of the Qur'an, which he called the 'key-stone' for a biography of the Prophet, were then used to condemn what he concluded was a humanly contrived religion which fell short both of its founder's claims, and of 'divinely inspired' Christianity. Adjuncts to this conclusion were his views on the historicity of two other important categories of Arabic sources, the corpus of *hadīth* (traditions),

³³ CR, XVII (Jan. 1852), p. 400.

³⁴ *Life of Mahomet* (1858), I, pp. xiv-xv.

and the *sīrat*, the early biographies of the Prophet. As these biographies were based largely on the *hadīth*, both Muir and Sprenger considered it their duties as historians to press the need for discrimination between 'reliable' and 'unreliable' traditions. Both therefore proposed 'tests' for establishing transmission over time, and categories of 'purity', and hence reliability. They disagreed with each other, and in turn Muslim scholars would criticise the criteria they proposed, and also the particular verdicts they reached on specific *hadīth*. Muir criticised, in particular, the Muslim scholars' emphasis on the *isnād*, or 'chain of narrators', calling this a 'pseudo-critical canon',³⁵ for he preferred instead to place each event in its appropriate context of time and place, and then to adjudge, from internal evidence, the common-sense 'likelihood' of its occurrence in the form related several centuries later. For this reason he always preferred 'earlier' to 'later' accounts. Unlike Sprenger, however, he was disinclined to reject an entire *hadīth* as 'spurious', feeling that even if later elaboration had taken place there was usually a 'kernel' of truth, or a 'grain' of fact, particularly in the earliest traditions, which deserved, first, examination, and then separation from the 'husk of overlying fiction'.

The problem with this seemingly sound process of historical reconstruction was that 'informed conjecture' of this kind left much to the individual interpreter. Given William Muir's strong evangelical convictions, the reconstruction of the Islamic past became subject to perceptions of probability and possibility which were already ideologically conditioned: his history would certainly not be received by Muslim scholars as the objective, open-minded reconstruction which he believed himself to have achieved for the first time on the basis of sources hitherto inaccessible to Orientalists. Indian Muslim scholars would query, in particular, Muir's insistence that the three 'early' biographers and historians, al-Waqidi, Ibn Hisham and Tabari, the fourteenth century copies of whose manuscripts he had borrowed in Delhi, were the only reliable authors. He drew on them extensively, as the sources for his physical and character portrayals of Muhammad, his wives and the Companions, and also as a basis for calling into question some of the miraculous events recounted in *maulūd*, or 'nativity' literature. Convinced that his access to these manuscripts gave him an insight denied to others, he asserted dogmatically that,

³⁵ Ibid. p. xli.

'after the era of our three biographers, the springs of fresh authority absolutely fail'.³⁶ He scarcely modified his views in the forty years between his first *Calcutta Review* article on 'sources' in 1853, and the last edition of his *Life* to appear during his own lifetime, in 1894, a contrast indeed with the spiritual and scholarly evolution of his brother, John, whose changing perceptions of the Vedic corpus of knowledge have already been noted.

Muir's biography was directed against both mid nineteenth-century Western admiration of Muhammad, notably Thomas Carlyle's portrayal of 'the Prophet as hero', and the outpouring of *maulūd* eulogy from north Indian presses at the exact time when he was beginning to collect his Arabic sources. Sprenger, in contrast, had played down the significance of Muhammad's agency in the establishment of Islam, convinced that 'the successful prophet of the Arabs, in founding a new religion, did nothing more than gather the floating elements, which had been imparted or originated by others, in obedience to the irresistible force of the spirit of the time'.³⁷ Muir, disagreeing with all current interpretations, distinguished between the Meccan and Medinan stages of Muhammad's life, to give 'a clearer view of his mental and spiritual progress'.³⁸ In the Meccan stage, he portrayed a man of many admirable personal qualities pursuing a genuine spiritual quest, marked by moments of crisis brought on by a congenitally depressive temperament. The turning point came, he considered, when Muhammad faced temptation from the devil at the time of the alleged first prophetic call: 'at this crisis, the fate of Mahomet and of Islam trembled in the balance. It was his hour of trial, and he fell'.³⁹ Thereafter, according to Muir, Muhammad used, especially at Medina, the worldly power his false claims drew to him in order to fulfil his own material ambitions. Using the characteristically evangelical imagery of 'light' and 'darkness', and making direct comparisons with the person and status of Christ, he asserted that, 'in the life of Rule, of Rapine, and Indulgence, led by Mahomet at Medina, there is absolutely no feature whatever in common with the life of Jesus'.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid, p. ciii.

³⁷ A. Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*. Allahabad: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1851, p. 44.

³⁸ Letter to brother, John, 8 July 1854, loc. cit.

³⁹ *Life of Mahomet*, II, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 273.

Muir considered that he had reconstructed the 'historical' Muhammad on the basis of a necessary re-classification of both the Qur'an and the *hadīth*. Although he envisaged his readers as learned Muslims, who might be prevailed on to take any such advice proffered to them about source criticism, he was aware that, to have any influence in other social circles, he would have to ridicule the popular *maulūd* literature associated with the later collections of *hadīth*, which, in his view, reflected mainly 'feverish imagination'. He therefore condemned as 'credulous beyond belief', not only the highly popular and widely disseminated, *maulūd sharīf*, whose compiler, the *wakīl*, Ghulam Imam Shahid, was familiar to him from contact in the Agra courts, but also what he called the 'late Persian' biographies, the *Madārīj al-nubūwah*, and the *Raudat al-ahbāb*, which, compiled in India during the Mughal period, were currently being lithographed in the Urdu presses of north India. As a Christian, he believed very firmly in the possibility of 'miracles', but dismissed the *maulūd* miracles as 'puerile fabrications', based, in some cases, on incidents which had actually taken place, but on to which 'pious imaginations' had engrafted allegedly supernatural occurrences.⁴¹

If William Muir's perception of the Prophet was seemingly predicated on firmer scholarship than that of most contemporary Western writers, it nevertheless amounted to a condemnation which would certainly anger those Indian Muslims who had earlier been his colleagues in Agra, some of whom, like Sayyid Ahmad Khan, he had long addressed as his 'friends'. His perceptions of Islamic society were even more forthrightly critical than his view of the Prophet. He again proposed a two-stage process, in this case comparing society in pre-Islamic Arabia with Islamic societies which had later emerged under *sharī'at* rule. Pre-Islamic Arabia he defined as 'barbaric', characterised as 'grossly idolatrous' and superstitious in religion, and harsh in its social codes, particularly in the practices of slavery and female infanticide. Islam, as many contemporary Western writers, Thomas Carlyle among them, agreed, had resulted in important improvements in certain spheres. First was the preaching of monotheism and the prohibition of idolatry, the price for this

⁴¹ For Muir's views on *maulūd* literature and its authors see *CR*, XVII, Jan. 1852, esp. pp. 76–89, where he summarised and gave a critique of Ghulam Imam Shahid's recently published *Maulūd Sharīf*. Lucknow 1843; Kanpur, 1845; Agra, 1852. One of the two main sources for the nineteenth century *maulūds* was the renowned Shaikh 'Abd al-Haq Dehlawi's early seventeenth century *Madārīj al-nubūwah*.

being, however, in Muir's view, the loss of 'freedom of thought'. Some social benefits, he allowed, had flowed from the inculcation of 'brotherly love', notably the banning of female infanticide. The question of slavery provoked in Muir some mild praise for Muhammad's protection of slaves, but round condemnation for the continuation and consolidation of the practice. Other 'radical evils' which continued to rouse Muir's ire when he was in a position of administrative authority in north-western India in the 1870s, stemmed from the subordination of females to patriarchal family laws, especially those governing polygamy, concubinage, divorce, and the practice of seclusion. His yardstick for evaluating all religious and social processes, was always his perception of 'Christendom'. For he was convinced that in the long term the benefits gained over 'barbarism' in the dynamism of Muhammad's early years, had been afterwards lost to a static social code, and in terms of 'civilisation' the record showed Islamic societies as always wanting, for, "when I speak . . . with praise of the virtues of the early Mussalmans, it is only in comparison with the state and habits of their heathen countrymen. Neither their tenets nor their practice will in any respect bear to come in competition with Christian, or even with Jewish, morality."⁴²

In spite of paying lip-service to the necessity for 'religious neutrality', Muir continued to publish further editions of his works on Islam during his six-year Lieutenant-Governorship of the volatile North-Western Provinces. The Muslim élite of this region, which was becoming increasingly conscious of its 'Islamic' origins and identity, would scarcely perceive him as demonstrating the conciliatory stance in his historical judgements which he claimed was his priority in governing the province.

Indian Muslim 'modernist' responses

There were, however, no immediate Muslim responses to Muir's biography of the Prophet, partly because of its initial publication during and immediately after the 1857 rebellion (most *ʿulamâ* who were neither killed nor fled chose to keep their heads down for nearly a decade afterwards). Yet when Muslim concern to counter evangelical publications resurfaced in the late 1860s a number of schol-

⁴² *Life of Mahomet*, II, p. 272; see also his later *The Caliphate: its Rise, Decline, and Fall*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1891, chap. 74, 'Review'.

ars then chose to concentrate their attention on the life of the Prophet. Muir's *Life* suddenly became an object of interest, indignation, and eventually refutation. Two particularly well publicised critiques were penned by men of *ashrâf* background, one by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the 'friend' who had known Muir since their service days together in Agra in the late 1840s, and another by Sayyid Amir 'Ali, a rising young lawyer. Both were interested in the 'Islamic past', Sayyid Ahmad in the more immediate 'Mughal past', and Amir 'Ali, like Muir, in the impact of Islam on the history of its Middle Eastern heartlands. Both, later to be considered the first of the 'Islamic modernists' in India, were admirers of certain aspects of Western civilisation and society, which they had experienced at first hand in London while engaged in the studies on which their own publications on the Prophet were based. Both, although holding different views on the relations between Islam and Christianity, were also conciliators in the religious sphere, and therefore all the more deeply concerned by the implications of William Muir's perceptions of the Prophet and of early Islamic history. Sayyid Ahmad, in particular, played a key intermediary role in some ensuing contacts between William Muir and other leading Muslim scholars in this region, and the two, though initially 'friends', as well as colleagues, maintained an uneasy but symbiotic relationship during subsequent differences, particularly over education policy. Yet, on first reading Muir's *Life of Mahomet*, Sayyid Ahmad recorded that 'it has burned my heart; his injustice and bigotry has cut my heart to pieces'. His own, *A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammad and subjects subsidiary thereto*, was then written and published in London, in 1869-70, primarily in response to Muir's provocation.

The Bengali barrister, Sayyid Amir 'Ali, whose family had recently migrated from Awadh to Calcutta, also detected in Muir's writing, a lack of 'perfect freedom from bias against Islam', which he felt reflected his earlier role in the missionaries' 'controversial war with the Moslems in India'. In his *Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*, which he published in London while studying there in 1873, he criticised Sprenger and Muir among other Western scholars for conveying 'false impressions and false prejudices' to their readers. His own book was intended both as a corrective to such Western biographies, and also to Muir's views on 'Islamic society' by refuting and reassessing his critique of methods of conversion, slavery, and the role of women in Islam. He preferred to counter

Muir with ironically dismissive comments, noting that 'Muir's life of Mohammed has not the fault of being over-philosophical', rather than by engaging, as Sayyid Ahmad was doing, in detailed refutation of his views.⁴³ Nevertheless, his subsequent works on historical and Islamic themes, notably his *History of the Saracens*, coincided in moment of publication with the later nineteenth century pronouncements of William Muir on themes of Arab history to a degree which suggests he perceived himself to be responding to, among other Orientalists, Muir's critique of Islamic civilisation.

The Panipati brothers' responses to Orientalist scholarship on Islam

Both Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Sayyid Amir 'Ali, leading spokesmen on Islamic history and society in their own lifetimes, have recently been the subjects of considerable scholarly attention.⁴⁴ In contrast little attention has yet been paid to the several members of a much less prominent Panipati family of scholars who were also studying, teaching and writing in Delhi and Agra on various literary, educational and religious subjects central to Islamic civilisation at the time when Muir and Sprenger were collecting their Arabic source materials and preparing their first publications on Islamic themes. Simultaneously with Sayyid Ahmad and Sayyid Amir 'Ali's biographical efforts, one of the younger sons of this family, Maulawi 'Imad al-Din, took up, following his own baptism and ordination into Muir's own Anglican Christian community, William Muir's unfulfilled intention of writing a life of the Prophet in Urdu. His eldest brother and boyhood mentor, Maulawi Karim al-Din, continued, meanwhile, his career in the British educational service, seemingly unswayed by the rest of his family's adoption of Christianity. Karim al-Din continued to publish in Urdu on neutrally 'ethical' themes,

⁴³ Syed Ameer Ali, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed*. London & Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1873. Preface, pp. vi–viii; p. 57.

⁴⁴ Among the many studies of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Sayyid Amir 'Ali the following are particularly relevant to the issues raised here: Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: a Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978; Martin Forward, *The Failure of Islamic Modernism? Syed Ameer Ali's Interpretation of Islam*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 1999. Some further discussion of these two scholars' responses to Muir's *Life*, which was included in the original workshop paper, will be published separately in, A.A. Powell, 'The place of the Prophet in cultural interactions in the Urdu-speaking milieu of north-west India'. In: J. Brown and R.E. Frykenberg (eds.), *Cultural Interactions: Christianity and South Asia's Religious Traditions* (forthcoming).

suitable for the moral edification of children enrolled in government schools. Though there was little direct communication with the Muir brothers in these later years, both had earlier witnessed William Muir's Agra salvos against Islam, and 'Imad al-Din resumed contact with him in the late 1860s through participation in Bible translation programmes to which Muir continued to lend assistance.

The History of Muhammad as represented by a convert from Islam

'Imad al-Din's years at the Agra College (c. 1852–57) had been crucial in his evolution as a pivotal figure in the formation and transmission of insider-outsider perceptions of Islamic and Christian culture. His eldest brother, Maulawi Karim al-Din, by then employed as a language teacher in the Oriental Department in the Agra College, no doubt saw himself as a protector of his young brother from any undesirable influences in that increasingly British-dominated city. It was Karim al-Din too, who introduced him to the influential circle of *'ulamâ* associated with the royal mosque in Agra, who were beginning to respond to the evangelical challenges in the city. At the request of these local *'ulamâ*, 'Imad al-Din, while still a student, began to preach in the mosque against Christianity. On one occasion Karim al-Din brought two British school inspectors to see the mosque, yet 'Imad al-Din continued his diatribe against Christianity in spite of their presence, and no doubt to the discomfiture of his more discreet elder brother.⁴⁵ He became very actively committed to this group of Muslim scholars who now regarded retaliation to the missionaries as obligatory, and it is known that he attended the religious debates in the city in the mid-1850s in the entourage of the Muslim spokesmen who declared the Christian scriptures to be 'corrupt'. Through the college, where government officials appeared at pricegivings, and through attendance at the religious debates, 'Imad al-Din acquired close face-to-face knowledge of the key evangelical figures in the city, including William Muir. Significantly, Muir also acted during these years as examiner for the Urdu classes which 'Imad al-Din attended in Agra College, which were taught from

⁴⁵ Rev. Imaduddeen, *A Mohammedan brought to Christ*, pp. 14–15. A fellow student later described him as having been at this time, 'a vehement preacher in the mosques'. Maulawi Safdar 'Ali, 'An Urdu Review of an Urdu Commentary'. *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Aug. 1898, p. 598.

1848 until the mid-1850s by his own brother, Maulawi Karim al-Din. Both brothers were under Muir's 'inspection', either as teacher or pupil.

When rebellion spread to Agra in July 1857, 'Imad al-Din had just been appointed third teacher in Urdu at the Agra College, and was now also addressed as '*maulawî*'. His movements during the rebellion are uncertain. British education officers assumed at the time that he had deserted his post to rejoin his family in the Punjab. However, according to his later autobiographical accounts, it was at this time that he wandered around northern India in a state of spiritual unrest, seeking satisfaction by practising various forms of physical austerities among hermits and dervishes living in the jungle margins in the north of the province. Like many other '*ulamâ*', he was already initiated into various formal Sufi orders, including the Chishtiyya, but according to his later accounts (written after baptism), he had begun to experience doubts about the capacity of any of these orders to satisfy his needs. He insisted, however, that the debates with the Christians, which he had earlier attended, far from undermining his conviction that he would eventually find the answers he sought within the parameters of Islam, strongly confirmed at this stage his certainty that Islam was a superior religion to Christianity.⁴⁶

He was eventually adopted as their Shaikh by some Sufis in Rajasthan. A former Muslim class-fellow later described him as having reached during these years the advanced spiritual state of *sukr* (intoxication). Yet 'Imad al-Din later declared himself to have been engaged in a hopeless quest for spiritual satisfaction within corrupted Sufi circles. He finally returned, still in despair, to his father's home in Panipat. The family reaction to his homecoming is not known. It was probably the credentials of his eldest brother, Maulawi Karim al-Din (by then highly regarded by his superiors in the Punjab education service), that obtained a teaching post for him in 1864 at a newly established normal school in Lahore, for which he was anyway well qualified by his own Agra College education.⁴⁷ There, with the encouragement of the British headmaster, he re-read the Gospels he had rejected in Agra, sought baptism in 1866, and was ordained unusually rapidly in 1868. He immediately took up a leadership role

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 8–16. For further discussion of this stage of his experimentation with various Sufi forms of meditation see Powell, 'Processes of Conversion', pp. 36–42.

⁴⁷ *Mohammedan brought to Christ*, p. 16.

in the Punjab Church, published many evangelical tracts in Urdu, debated against those *‘ulamâ* he had formerly assisted, and participated, as will be shown, in the controversy over the life of the Prophet Muhammad which, unleashed by William Muir’s *Life*, had become a matter of widespread Muslim scholarly concern by the early 1870s. Significantly, he attributed his final decision to accept baptism to the influence of a class-fellow from the Agra College, one Maulawi Safdar ‘Ali, who had also openly opposed Muir and the missionaries in the 1850s, but who had come in the meantime under Nehemiah Goreh’s influence. Goreh, it has been shown, had owed his own decision for baptism partly to John Muir’s influence during his Benares College principalship.⁴⁸ If both the Muir brothers continued to show ‘godfatherly’ interest in this group of converts from *ashrâf* and Brahmin circles, ‘Imad al-Din only subsequently met William Muir in person on rare occasions such as missionary conferences.

Yet when the Reverend Maulawi ‘Imad al-Din’s *Tawârikh-e Muhammadî* (History of Muhammad)⁴⁹ was published in Lahore in 1871 it seemed to fulfil the request, originally made to Muir for a ‘Hindustani’, rather than an English biography, which would be based on the Arabic sources which the *‘ulamâ* valued themselves. Yet it was also an integral part of a publishing agenda, drawn up by ‘Imad al-Din himself, as a result of his own experiences of preaching to Muslims in the Punjab in the short period since his baptism in 1866.⁵⁰

That this was the case is supported by ‘Imad al-Din’s introductory remarks in the preface to the *Tawârikh*, in which he reiterated that it was the ignorance of Arabic and Persian of the ordinary ‘Muslims-in-the-bazaar’, which caused them to offer ‘absurd objections’ to Christianity. Such men, he wrote, were usually literate only in Urdu, yet there were no biographies of the Prophet in that language. Although the Maulawis had supplied some *maulûds* in Urdu, he felt they did not qualify as ‘biographies’, as they were so pretentious in

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 16–17. See also Maulawi Safdar ‘Ali’s account of their relationship and conversions in ‘Urdu review’, pp. 598–9.

⁴⁹ See the catalogue of Garcin de Tassy’s library for details about the first Lahore edition. The 2nd edition, published in Amritsar in 1878, has been used here.

⁵⁰ Among other controversial tracts on Islam by ‘Imad al-Din during this period were, *Hidāyat al-Muslimîn* (1866); *Ta’lîm-e Muhammadî* (1873). On his perceptions of Christianity see, Avril A. Powell, ‘Pillar of a new faith: Christianity in late nineteenth century Punjab from the perspective of a convert from Islam’. In: R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Missionary Challenges in India: Cross-cultural Communication, Conflict and Consequence*. (forthcoming).

style, and so full of praise of the Prophet, that the reader merely became stupefied.⁵¹ He also criticised such Maulawis for limiting their attention to pedantic legalistic and linguistic points, so that the ignorant common folk never hear about the doctrinal essentials, which the so-called learned *‘ulamâ* had never actually investigated in a scholarly way for themselves. He described them as being willing to get their reference books out of the closet only to consult a particular historical point, which done, they would return them to safekeeping, and refuse any further consultation of the sources. Throughout his life, ‘Imad al-Din added, he had seen Maulawis behaving in this manner.⁵² In the *Tawârikh*, as in the introductions to his other books, this former Maulawi frequently provided an ‘insider’, yet by now critical ‘outsider’, perception of the characteristics and alleged shortcomings of the *‘ulamâ* circle in which he had been reared and educated.

In addition to writing for the purpose of educating Urdu-literate, but otherwise unlearned Muslims, including Maulawis, in the essentials of their own religion, ‘Imad al-Din also had in mind those converts from Islam who were currently being baptised without sufficient knowledge of the religion they were leaving, and who were therefore open to abuse in the bazaars about both their motives and their convictions, and under such pressure, might easily be tempted to return to Islam.⁵³ This ‘popularising’ objective was certainly reflected in the style of his own biography of the Prophet, for which he adopted, as in most of his other religious tracts, a very simple Urdu style, taking care to translate Arabic quotations from the Qur’an and the Hadîth into Urdu, and avoiding the high-flown Persianised idiom of many earlier *‘ulamâ* contributions to religious controversy. Like William Muir, he felt he had to reconcile accessibility and intelligibility with the conflicting need to base his conclusions on the Arabic sources which were valued by the learned *‘ulamâ*. He compromised by consciously rejecting all of the early classical Arabic biographies, over the comparative merits of which Muir and Sayyid Ahmad Khan were currently disagreeing, but which, in ‘Imad al-Din’s view, apart from the disadvantage of being in an inaccessible language, were unavailable to the general public.⁵⁴ He used instead, his own Urdu

⁵¹ Pâdrî Maulawî ‘Imâd al-Dîn Lâhiz, *Tawârikh-e Muhammadî*. Amritsar: Christian Press, 1878, pp. 4-5.

⁵² Ibid, p. 5.

⁵³ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 7.

translations of some Persian biographies, compiled in the Mughal period, notably by the leading Hadith scholar, Shaikh 'Abd al-Haqq Dehlawi, which had earlier formed the basis of Ghulam Imam Shahid's *Maulūd sharīf*. This *maulūd*, although first published during 'Imad al-Din's student days in Agra, in the 1840s, was being republished in multiple editions from numerous presses all over north-west India and Bengal at the juncture in the late 1860s when 'Imad al-Din was preparing his own biography for the press, and had probably prompted his own decision to prepare a counter-history, based on the same sources. William Muir had ridiculed the *Maulūd sharīf*, and its Persian sources, the *Madârij*, and the *Raudat*, in the *Calcutta Review* in 1852, as being merely translations 'mostly from the late and credulous Persian biographers of Mohammed, whose narratives are possessed of no historical weight whatever.'⁵⁵ Yet twenty years later, 'Imad al-Din attempted to reconstruct the Prophet's life for a mass market, using the same easily accessible sources which Muir had derided. He justified his choice on the ostensible ground that reputable Muslim scholars had compiled them from Arabic and Persian books, such as those of the Mughal theologian, 'Abd al-Haqq, which 'can be obtained in every town' in the Urdu-speaking regions of India.⁵⁶ Thus, he concluded, tongue in cheek, his own book would be safe from any objection that he had used sources which Muslims themselves did not respect as authoritative, a charge being made at this time by Sayyid Ahmad Khan about Muir and Sprenger's choice of Arabic authorities. Although Muir expressed no open criticism of 'Imad al-Din's biography, he was no doubt unhappy about such choice of sources. Instead of the hoped-for Urdu rendering of his own scholarship, based on early Arabic sources, the discourse was now to be extended to a mass readership only at the level of claim and rebuttal of unaccredited miracle accounts, the target of Muir's own youthful criticism of *milād* ceremonies. It was left to a missionary reviewer, writing shortly after the deaths of both Muir and 'Imad al-Din, to comment on the latter's biography,

He has written for Indian Muslims and has therefore presented in a popular way what he found in native histories. This accounts for some stories, which cannot bear the light of historical criticism. . . . This book, however, is the only Biography of Muhammad in the Urdu

⁵⁵ *CR*, XVII, Jan.-June. 1852, p. 411.

⁵⁶ *Tawārīkh*, pp. 7-8.

language, and for this reason is very important. . . . [It] will be needed until some one writes a better Life of Muhammad.⁵⁷

‘Imad al-Din’s biography of Muhammad therefore continued to be published in North India, side by side with further editions and reprints of Muir’s *Life of Mahomet*, and of Sayyid Amir ‘Ali’s *Life and Teachings of Mohammed*, the latter revised in 1890 and published with the new sub-title, *The Spirit of Islam* by which it was to be well known during the rest of the colonial period. Such perceptions about the sources of Islam, the life of the Prophet, and the nature of Islamic civilisation, first articulated during the period 1850s to 1870s, thus became significant reference points in the Indian context for all subsequent debate by evangelicals and their Muslim critics.

Maulawi Karim al-Din and universal morality

The life of ‘Imad al-Din’s eldest brother and childhood mentor, Maulawi Karim al-Din, provides a counterpart in some of its aspects, to the distance which developed on spiritual matters between the two Muir brothers. Their very elderly father, Maulawi Siraj al-Din, and a younger brother, Maulawi Khair al-Din, together with the latter’s wife and children, had followed ‘Imad al-Din into baptism. Yet Maulawi Karim al-Din remained aloof from Christian influence in spite of having developed very close relationships with several European Islamists in a career which was entirely dependent on the British educational hierarchy.

After his boyhood education in Panipat, Karim al-Din had studied in Delhi where he maintained himself by copying manuscripts.⁵⁸ He entered the Delhi College at the age of about eighteen, benefiting from a British scheme to attract poor but promising boys through scholarships. Although Karim al-Din enrolled in the Oriental Department he also learned English sufficiently well to be asked to assist with the translation of textbooks from English into Urdu for which purpose a ‘Vernacular Translation Society’ was established. After about five years at the college he married and set up a press, the *Rafâh-ye ‘amm*, in order to continue the publication of Urdu transla-

⁵⁷ E.M. Wherry, *The Muslim Controversy*. London, Madras & Colombo, 1905, p. 29.

⁵⁸ Karim al-Din’s autobiography, in *Tarikh-e shu‘arâ-ye Urdû*, Delhi, 1848, pp. 467–9; cf. T.H. Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire*, II, pp. 166–8.

tions of English and Arabic works. Garcin de Tassy represented his purpose as being to spread 'useful knowledge' among his compatriots.⁵⁹ When Aloys Sprenger took over as college principal in 1846 he engaged Karim al-Din to assist in carrying out various literary commissions. He also embarked on some original compositions in Urdu, including a treatise on women's education. The late 1840s were crucial years for establishing his subsequent reputation, which was based mainly on his *tadhkirahs* of Arabic and Urdu poets.⁶⁰ He was also well known for the *mushâ'irahs* he held twice monthly at his house. However, when Sprenger left Delhi for Lucknow in 1848 Karim al-Din seems to have suffered from the loss of a sympathetic and influential patron. Although he almost immediately obtained a post as second Urdu teacher in the Anglo-Oriental College at Agra, he had hoped, on the basis of his acknowledged publications on Arabic poetry, for advancement in the more prestigious, and better paid, field of Arabic teaching.⁶¹ In spite of promotion in 1850 to head Urdu teacher, he resigned his post for an appointment in the Punjab educational service just before rebellion hit the Agra region in 1857. There he held a series of posts, first in Jallandar district, then as *sarishtedâr* to the Punjab Director of Public Instruction, where he was responsible for many of the Urdu textbooks commissioned for use in the Punjab's schools. He was later appointed Deputy Inspector in the Lahore educational circle, finishing his career as District Inspector for Amritsar's schools at the same time in the late 1860s that his younger brother 'Imad al-Din, having accepted baptism and ordination, was attached to the CMS mission in that city.⁶² Throughout these years he had continued to write, translate and publish, and to earn golden opinions from his British superiors in the education

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 166; see Karim al-Din's own statement in *Tarikh-e shu'arâ-ye Urdû*, Delhi 1848, p. 468.

⁶⁰ *Tadhkirah musammî farâ'id al-dahr*. Delhi, 1847; *Tarikh-e shu'arâ-ye Urdû*, Delhi 1848. The latter was compiled in association with F. Fallon, a teacher at the Delhi College, and ostensibly based on the first edition of Garcin de Tassy's *Histoire*, but was actually an original work, incorporating much new material, especially concerning Karim al-Din's contemporaries.

⁶¹ He was appointed to Agra College on 30 rupees per month in January 1848; promoted to 1st Urdu teacher in Feb. 1850 (50 rupees). *General Report on Public Instruction... for 1847-48; 1849-50*. Agra, 1849; 1850. He was overlooked twice for transfer to the professorship of Arabic. See letters of Maulawi Karim al-Din to Aloys Sprenger, in Chughtai, op. cit.

⁶² His career can be followed in the Education Proceedings, and Reports on Popular Education in the Punjab for the 1860s-70s.

service. If he never again had an employer and patron of Sprenger's calibre, he was nevertheless particularly valued by Captain Abraham Fuller, a Director of Public Instruction, whose sudden death in 1868 removed a scholar-administrator of promise from the ranks of the neo-orientalist Persian enthusiasts of the Punjab service.⁶³ While Karim al-Din's literary talents, so valued by Sprenger and others in Delhi in the 1840s, might seem to have been wasted in the 1860s and 1870s on the repetitive and thankless tasks of school textbook writing and inspection, some of his publications in this Punjab phase provide significant clues about his perceptions of his own, and of his employers', cultural and religious outlook and ethos.

Karim al-Din was always addressed as a '*maulawi*', but it seems that this ascription marked his background in a locally respected '*âlim*' family and his public role in the Punjab as a secular educator, rather than any particular status as a religious teacher. Although he was known to be close to those '*ulamâ*' who in the 1850s had retaliated to Christian proselytism, it seems that he was probably among those who kept their heads down during the rebellion of 1857, his transfer from Agra to Lahore just before the outbreak perhaps tipping the balance from active participation, along with many others among the Agra '*ulamâ*', to anonymity and a 'waiting on events'. While the patronage of some highly placed British officers such as Thomason, Sprenger and Fuller had been responsible for his education and subsequent employment, he never rose beyond a merely subordinate role in the translation and inspection projects of his British employers. In Lahore he carried out the day-to-day work of school inspection over a wide area, and was regarded as the most useful and experienced Indian subordinate in the entire Punjab inspectorate. His superiors urged his promotion, which he received up to the modest ceiling open to Indians in the education service.⁶⁴ Given that his family had lost most of their estates either shortly before,

⁶³ 'Moulvie Kurreem-u-deen, my Serishtadar, has written a couple of original tales in Urdu, which are likely to prove very popular, and has done excellent work as usual in compiling other vernacular treatises and translating', Capt. A.R. Fuller, DPI, Punjab, *Report on Popular Education in the Punjab . . . for the Year 1861-62*. Lahore: Government Press, 1864, p. 72. A few years later C.W.W. Alexander, his immediate superior, referred to him as, 'an officer who has grown old in the service of the Department, and contributed not a little to its progress', *Report on Lahore circle*, in *Report on Popular Education . . . for 1868-69*, p. 99.

⁶⁴ He earned R150 per month in 1871-72. *Report on Popular Education . . . for 1871-72*. Simla, 1872.

or as a consequence of the British conquest, the colonial education service nevertheless guaranteed him a living and some security. Whatever private grievances he may have harboured, he seemingly adapted, at least publicly, to the constraints of the colonial situation.

Yet, alone among the males in his own immediate family, he did not follow his brother into baptism, even though 'Imad al-Din suggested in his autobiography that in 1870 Karim al-Din was on the point of baptism, and a missionary source claimed that local newspapers carried rumours about this.⁶⁵ However, Garcin de Tassy, writing at the same time, considered that Karim al-Din remained firmly 'indifferent' to the conflicts between Islam and Christianity which had surrounded him both in Agra and Lahore, even though he had assisted his brother, in 1866, with a work intended to demonstrate 'the vanity of Islam'.⁶⁶ No conclusive evidence has been found for any inclination towards Christian conversion on his part. Indeed, his published works of this period suggest rather the contrary: a wish to propagate a strong sense of morality untied to any particular religious system, yet acceptable to all regardless of community. Suggestive of this stance was an Urdu novel, published in 1864, at the time of his brother's baptism, entitled *Khatt-e taqdîr* (Line of Destiny), which recounted in allegorical form the worldly temptations faced by a 'prodigal son' who in the end realised the folly of his ways and resumed the pursuit of knowledge rather than the ostentatious living which had earlier tempted him.⁶⁷ The moral lesson was explicitly addressed very inclusively to all the 'inhabitants of Asia', and advice was given to fulfil religious obligations, whether *pûjâ* or the required pillars of Islam, according to inherited community identity.⁶⁸ How far this novel reflects any deep sense on Karim al-Din's part of a universal or natural morality, which should override religious community, and how far a merely pragmatic need to conform to the Punjab Education Department's guidelines on appropriate ethical teaching of a religiously 'neutral' flavour is difficult to judge.

⁶⁵ Shortly after his own baptism 'Imad al-Din wrote of Karim al-Din that 'his religion is that of Islam; but still he is, to a certain extent, inquiring after truth'. The Amritsar Mission Report for 1868 recorded that 'his expected baptism was openly spoken of many months ago in one of the English newspapers at Lahore'. *Mohammedan brought to Christ*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire*, p. 177. 'Imad al-Din was probably Garcin de Tassy's main source for these events.

⁶⁷ *Khatt-e taqdîr*. Lahore: Government Press, 1864.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3; 36.

Certainly his discussion of the reasons why Indians seemed unable, in the mid-nineteenth century, to emulate the Europeans in inventiveness showed an admiration for recent applications of science to social purposes in India, notably in communications. A plea that the habit of foreign travel and the learning of languages, which had led in earlier centuries to intellectual exchanges between Indians, Greeks and Arabs, should now be resumed in order to reawaken a thirst for knowledge for its own sake, suggests an inclusive universality possibly influenced by his earlier study and translation alongside his first European mentor, the 'Enlightenment' educated Austrian, Aloys Sprenger.⁶⁹ If, on the other hand, he was merely adopting a pragmatic stance, mirroring the views of his superiors, as befitted a subordinate employee in the British education service, then he occasionally miscalculated, as is shown by the publication, a year before the novel, of a history textbook in Urdu which caused such dissension among British education officers that the Lieutenant-Governor was obliged to intervene to reprimand his use of some epithets deemed derogatory to Rama and Sita, which some of his superiors deemed offensive to Hindu schoolchildren in the province. Significantly, his immediate British superiors defended him in the ensuing controversy, reiterating again his sterling qualities as a useful intermediary between all communities in the Punjab.⁷⁰ While none of the evidence so far available is conclusive, it seems to point to a quiet personal adherence to Islam, coupled with efforts, which occasionally misfired, to adhere to the British government's 'neutrality' policy in his public role by urging common ethical and moral standards while encouraging the observation of practices particular to specific religious communities. Long maintenance of just such a stance seems to have enabled Maulawi Karim al-Din to resume, after an appropriate interval, a degree of communication, if not his previous close relations, with those members of his own family who had sought Christian baptism.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 76–83.

⁷⁰ *Wāki'āt-e Hind*. Anarkali, Lahore: Government Press, 1863; Educational Proceedings of the Government of the Punjab... for Feb. 1865, Nos. 34–37; Aug. 1865, Nos. 4–5. See Powell, 'History textbooks and the transmission of the pre-colonial past in North-Western India in the 1860s and 1870s', in Daud Ali, *Invoking the Past: the Uses of History in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 91–133.

Conclusions

What does study of these two pairs of brothers contribute to wider understandings of the reciprocal and diverse relationships which developed between European and Indian scholar-administrators in this particular region? William Muir was certainly a catalyst, who became ever more deeply entrenched, over the sixty year period of his publishing career, in his evangelical conviction of the 'truth' of literal, Bible-based Christianity, and of the 'falsity' of all other religious systems, especially Islam. Although his support for missionary activities was limited during his period of high office to aiding already existent Indian Christian communities, he took up later, in London and Edinburgh, the writing and translation of homiletic tracts on the theme of conversion from Islam to Christianity. He was still writing, and also republishing the contributions to the 'Mohammedan controversy' of his youth, up to his death in 1905. The responses of Indian Muslim scholars to his views seem to have had no effect on him whatsoever. John Muir, in contrast, was changed over time partly by his experience of the Indian cultural systems he had initially criticised, and partly by his receptivity to European theological and historical scholarship in the mid-nineteenth century. He remained a 'Broad Church' Christian believer, hardly the 'heretic' his evangelical critics claimed, but no longer a Christian proselytiser, and his significance in the Indian context might be better considered in terms of the late nineteenth century emergence of notions of equivalence or fulfilment relationships between religious systems. John Muir therefore provides a corrective to over-simplistic views of 'evangelicalism', and a foil against which to set an evaluation of the influence of his brother, William, whose direct impact on the political life of north-west India, and particularly on its Muslim population during his Lieutenant-governorship, was much the more significant.

Both brothers had chosen to study what they perceived to be the 'original sources' or 'roots', of the religious systems of India, which they believed it to be their evangelical duty to reveal in their 'true' nature, as scholarly aids to missionary agendas for the conversion of the learned classes. In the course of their researches, they made significant contributions to Orientalist 'knowledge' about the origins of the belief and social systems they criticised, and served at the same time as transmitters of continental orientalist scholarship to an English readership in both India and Britain. This study shows that while

their views were perceived in India as challenges, which then provoked new explanations of Hinduism and Islam from Indian scholars (Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Amir 'Ali and Nilakantha Goreh among them), initial rejection and even 'apology', was in two significant cases, followed by conversion to the Muirs' evangelical premises, and then by the adoption by erstwhile Pandits and Maulawis of a pastoral or proselytising role on behalf of Christianity. Two of these converts, Goreh and 'Imad al-Din, whose perceptions of Indian religions and of Christianity, both before and after baptism, provide unusual cultural insights, were linked through a third convert, Maulawi Safdar 'Ali, whose comments about their pre- and post-conversion states of mind help to elucidate the process of changing identities.

A related issue concerns those Indian inquirers (such as Goreh), and teachers and translators (such as 'Imad al-Din's eldest brother, Maulawi Karim al-Din and the Pandits at the Benares Sanskrit College), who acted as informants to the Muirs and their missionary colleagues during the preparation of their books and tracts. Although little is known about specific informants, it is clear that the new Anglo-Oriental colleges of NWP provided the main institutional meeting point and channel of information and communication. Both John and William Muir deliberately targeted the educated high caste and *ashraf* groups who sought education in these institutions, and encouraged the establishment of new institutions for their education in both the 'oriental' and English languages. Even when scholarly responses originated outside the physical walls of the Benares, Delhi and Agra colleges, such scholars as Nilakhanta Goreh and Sayyid Ahmad Khan were within their orbit, and had close relationships with teachers and students belonging to these colleges. Such colleges, unique to north-west India between the 1820s and 1850s in seeking cultural 'engrafting' rather than an 'Anglicist' agenda, might provide many other examples of reciprocal processes which were set in motion in the educational interface between European administrators or teachers, and Indian pupils and teachers. In the reasons for the divergence in perceptions on religion, society and culture between two such 'Anglo-Oriental' college pupils and teachers, the brothers Karim al-Din and 'Imad al-Din, lies an enigma to complement the ultimately divergent understandings of their Indian experiences which were received and transmitted for 'popular' edification both in India and in Britain by the brothers, John and William Muir.

TEXTS

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TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

The last section turns towards personal accounts in Persian and their English translations as well as institutional engagements in translation work of standard texts from Indian philosophy, literature and religion. *ʿĪjâz-e Arslânî*, the Persian letters (1773–79) of Antoine Henry Polier, a Franco-Swiss military diplomat in the service of the East India Company are analysed by Alam & Alavi. They reconsider the notion of an unadulterated “Britishness” and question the view, “that the British alone were at the vanguard of imperial expansion in India”. Polier referred to himself as well as to other Frenchmen as English (*angrez*) and thus constructed “Englishness” motivated by the political power of the British Company. His texts also reflect the heterogeneity in the British construction of the “Orient”. The British “self” came out as a cultural hybrid as observed in the different approaches to Indian people or to the Mughal regime (cf. Polier and Warren Hastings). Whereas Hastings identified Indians in terms of caste and community lines, Polier’s orientalist perceptions refused these classifications. It must be taken into consideration, that the letters were drafted by Munshi Kishan Sehail, whose reading of Polier’s texts affected their authenticity regarding people and politics in India. Similarly, cultural interactions can be observed in institutional surroundings, such as Delhi College. Minault focuses the role of Delhi College during 1827–57 in two aspects: First, the successful cultural interactions between Hindu, Muslim and a few Christian students, non-British Orientalist scholars and principals (i.e., Dr. Aloys Sprenger and Felix Boutros), British administrators and the local literates and nobles. Second, the development of new literary forms and styles of Urdu language and literature. Delhi College played a leading role in translation, publication and popularisation of literature, the educational patronage consisted of Muslim endowments for the encouragement of religious learning and tax revenues by the East India Company. Thus, two different styles of learning co-existed: Eastern and Western curricula as well as different styles of teaching (the *ustâd-shâgird* relationship as well as the vision of the individual scholar, deriving his knowledge from books or scientific observations) and two modes of transmission of knowledge (oral and textual). In her account

of Sprenger's journal, Minault points out, that the two categories can themselves be seen as constructions of cultural debates. Nevertheless, the turn from cultural contacts to collisions preceeded this period of harmony. Are there possibilities to explain cultural collisions? Khan's effort in this context turns towards a text affiliated to the early indigenous discourse on colonial rule. *Sair al-Mula'akhhirîn* (Overview of the Modern Age) by Ghulam Husain Khan Tabataba'i (1727–1815) was originally written in Persian (c. 1783) and published in English in 1788. Tabataba'i's 12 causes of the distortions in the relations between British and Indian analyse the maladministration of the British in India and point to the British "ignorance of Indian norms of governance and their perceptions of themselves as merchants and not enough as rulers". In his translation, the French Creole Raymond, alias Hajji Mustafa had added a large number of footnotes, explaining the "Eastern other" and therewith formed another perspective to the reciprocal perceptions of different agents in early Modern India. Although numerous native informants dealt with historical and eyewitness accounts regarding the condition of various post-Mughal states, none of them seem to have had such an analytical view and knowledge of the situation combined with intellectual critique as Ghulam Husain.

In the issue of perceptions of the 'other' through texts, Masud argues, that they are based on one's world view and may change during the various phases of encounter with the 'other'. He suggests a new reading of legal advices contextualised in an intellectual milieu which before 1857 was still based on reciprocal construction of otherness. Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's perceptions of the British in India as described in his *Fatâwâ* are the subject of Masud's analysis. Whereas William Hunter (1840–1900) cited a passage from the Shah's *Fatâwâ*, stating to wage war against the British, Masud has not found any such passage. He explains this with the circumstances under which Hunter interpreted the *Fatâwâ*, concerning the context of political relations between English and Muslim Indians after 1857—a context, that had not existed in the Shah's period. As the political worldview changed in the 20th century, Hunter's version gained acceptance in the context of the history of freedom movement and Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's statements too, were understood from that new perspective. The last chapter makes observations on mutual perceptions in colonial India, exploring the role of native informants in the context of

cultural colonialism. Malik suggests, that Indians and British were equivalent opposites, perceiving and defining each other in oscillating processes. The hegemony of the East India Company had been made possible because of transfer and transformation of knowledge that took place between Indians and British. He explores the origins of the perception of one-sidedness and scans the role of native informants as the functional elite in service of the East India Company, who mainly influenced colonial knowledge. The process of colonial encounter is distinguished in four stages: The culture touch expressed through dialogue and respect followed by culture contact, in which the British gradually began to dominate the Indians. The culture clash culminated in the revolt of 1857 and was proceeded by culture assimilation, when colonialisers adopted Persianite norms and—at the same time—declared anglicisation as state policy. In focusing this active participation of the natives, Malik aims to present a view which may help in re-evaluating sources from colonial times and re-interpretating history consisting of “indigenous potential buried under the burden of colonial and nationalist historiography”.

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NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES: PEOPLE, CULTURE AND POLITICS IN AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY INDO-PERSIAN TEXT

MUZAFFAR ALAM AND SEEMA ALAVI

This chapter examines issues pertaining to the colonial “Self” and “Other”, drawing principally on the Persian correspondence of Antoine Louis Henri Polier, a Franco-Swiss engineer and military diplomat who served the English East India Company in the eighteenth century. These letters collected and compiled as *‘Ījâz-e Arslânî* were drafted by Polier’s Munshi Kishan Sehai of Azimabad, Patna.¹ The title echoes Polier’s Mughal title, *Arslân-e Jang*, which was given to him by the Mughal Emperor Shah ‘Alam and means the ‘lion of the battle’. The text comprises of over 700 folios consisting of about 1500 letters addressed to a variety of people in North India. The addressees range from the Mughal Emperor, the Nawab Wazirs, down to ordinary craftsmen. The correspondence spans over a period of eight years (1773–80) which were of critical importance to the Company’s political career in India.

The *‘Ījâz-e Arslânî* makes us reconsider at one level the notion of an unadulterated “Britishness”. It questions the view that the British alone were at the vanguard of imperial expansion in India; and it qualifies the reified image of the British that is emerging from the new research on the making of the British identity. At least in India British imperialism depended on and derived from a range of Europeans of which Polier was a representative category.

Secondly, while highlighting the critical continental underbelly of the English Company the text addresses the question of colonial identities in the early part of British rule in India. Interestingly, the text reflects an amazing thrust on the part of Polier towards an identification with the English. Not only does he refer to himself as *angrez*

¹ The only known manuscript copy of this work is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Cf. E. Blochet, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Persans de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Tome I, nos., 713–14, Paris, 1905. Supplement Persan, 479 et 479A. An English translation of the work with a critical introduction is to be published by the Oxford University Press, Delhi in 2000.

(English), the other French men like Claude Martin are also identified as *Sardârân-e angrez* (Englishmen). Polier's thrust towards an English identification may have been motivated by the advantages entailed by such an association in view of the political power the English Company had acquired in the region. Thus the British identity in the text emerges as a constructed one which despite its ethnic heterogeneity was both being projected as well as popularly perceived as unadulterated.

The *'Jâz-e Arslânî* is crucial also because it reflects the heterogeneity in the British constructions of the "Orient". This was understandable since in this text the British "Self" itself comes out as a cultural hybrid. In this context the analysis of the buyers and sellers of oriental manuscripts in the 18th century book bazaar of India offers interesting insights. Here also European buyers, like Polier, stand in sharp contrast to British Sanskritist orientalists who saw the bazaar neatly divided into Hindu and Muslim texts. In contrast Polier displayed a greater sensitivity to the varied cultural influences which went into the making of the indigenous intellectual tradition. This was clearly reflected in his choice of manuscripts in the bazaar which he did not see as compartmentalised into Hindu and Muslim learning slots. Also, unlike the British Sanskritists, who identified the Sanskrit texts exclusively with the Hindus, Polier did not have any linguistic definers for delineating Hindu and Muslim identities. Here, the difference in approach between Polier and his close friend and master Warren Hastings to Indian people and politics assumes special significance. For instance, in contrast to Warren Hastings who identified people on caste and community lines Polier's text does so on the basis of their professional attributes. In the text vocational identities are the primary identifiers of people. Both the appreciations as well as reprimands to people are coached in the elitist, urbane but caste and community neutral vocabulary which had gained currency under the Mughals. Thus "gentlemanly" behaviour, "candour" and "loyalty" are phrases preferred which occur in the text and as in the Mughal times here also they connote proper conduct. In this context Polier appears to be continuing the pre-colonial cultural value code which the British understood differently and eventually transformed.²

² B. Cohn, "Representing authority in Victorian India". In: B. Cohn (ed.), *An Anthropologist among the historians and other essays*. New Delhi, 1987.

The difference in Hastings' and Polier's constructions of indigenous societies is informed by their varied perceptions of the Mughal regime. Hastings' relationship with the Mughals was clearly dictated by the political and strategic considerations in the context of the critical transition period in the history of upper India. This was best reflected for instance in the politics that went around the Mughal Emperor's transfer, at the behest of the English Company, of Kora and Allahabad to the Nawab of Awadh. Whereas Hastings and his British subordinates found it strategically expedient to project the Mughals as despotic and rapacious, in Polier's text they emerge as humane and benevolent. This difference in perception was not only a question of differing personal opinions expounded by Hastings and Polier. It also indicated the formers negation and the latters recognition of the impact of Mughal rule on the pre-colonial political processes and their relationship to identity formations. The caste and community transcending politico-cultural identities that the Mughals had encouraged suffered a set-back at the hands of 18th century British orientalists who began to re-define society and codify rights and privileges in primordial terms. In contrast Polier's text reflects a remarkable sensitivity to and a continuation of the processes of identity formations unleashed by the Mughals.

Finally, the chapter highlights the *'Ījâz-e Arslânî's* sensitivity to the Eastern work ethic. In the text Polier not only appears to have appropriated the cultural phraseology of the East but he also uses it at appropriate places. The internalisation of the Eastern work culture is corroborated by the English letters of Polier as well. This dilutes the emphasis on the agency of the Munshi being solely responsible for the inclusion of a language which connotes a power hierarchy based on socially defined bonds of intimacy and friendship. However, the text does open the possibility of reconstructing Munshi Kishan Schai's reading of the European mind.

I

Polier's activities in India highlight the critical continental underbelly of early British rule in India. In the 18th century India, the Anglo-French rivalries notwithstanding, an informal network of Europeans—predominated by Frenchmen—operated in an interactive relationship with the English Company furthering its imperial projects. These

men included engineers, architects, watch makers, mechanics, painters, traders and surveyors who often worked in tandem with the English Company's officials. An even larger number of Europeans worked for the indigenous politics, often hopped jobs and swapped information between native rulers and the Company. According to an English military officer Colonel Galliez there existed around 200 Europeans in Awadh alone in the year 1775.³ The large French presence in no way implied a tension free relationship between them and the English. At the level of official policy there was complete animosity for the French and a desire to cleanse them out of India. In fact one of the important points of dispute between the English Company and Nawab Shuja' al-Daula of Awadh was the large French presence in his Nawabi.

Immediately after the battle of Buxar as Company inroads into upper India took priority and the erosion of the military organisation, arsenals and factories of the indigenous rulers became central to its political agenda the presence of Frenchmen commanding critical military set ups in Awadh became the target of its fury.⁴ For instance, pressure for the dismissal of the military commander Monsieur Gentil, in the service of Nawab Shuja' al-Daula of Awadh, picked up.⁵ Gentil was called the "secret agent" of the French Company and his continuous service with Shuja' al-Daula was seen as "inconsistent" with the latter's friendship with the English.⁶ In 1774 under pressure from the Company Shuja' al-Daula was forced to dismiss Gentil from his service.⁷

In 1771 Gabriel Harper, the British commandant in Awadh, complained to the Company administration about Nawab Shuja' al-Daula maintaining Frenchmen in his service despite repeated requests to discharge such a set of useless people.⁸ Harper perceived the French presence in Awadh as a point of "Dispute" between the English Company and Nawab Shuja' al-Daula. He was incensed at the

³ Gen. Galliez to Fort William (FW), 12 Feb. 1775, Secret Consultations (SC), 24th Feb. 1775-8.

⁴ S. Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company. Tradition and Transition in North India: 1770-1830*. New Delhi, 1995.

⁵ SC 67, ff. 387 and 385.

⁶ President to Shuja' al-Daulah, 15 May, 1772, SC 1772-73, pp. 164-5.

⁷ Persian Correspondence 1772-75, 1 June, 1774, pp. 347-8. Enclosed a copy of the *parwana* written to Monsieur Gentil.

⁸ G. Harper to Fort William, Faizabad, 16 Dec. 1771, SC 1772-73.

Nawab's reply stating that "he knew of no disputes between the English and the French nations; and that if there was any I should acquaint him, that the latter were admitted by the former to reside in many places of the Company districts".⁹ Harper was angry that at the time the Nawab became an ally of the English, Monsieur Gentil was the only Frenchman with him and he had been pardoned by the English *sardars* for his various crimes because of his association with the Nawab. But subsequently the number of French in Awadh had swelled.¹⁰ He appealed to the Company to come up with a solution to put a stop to such tribes of these Frenchmen remaining in the service of an ally whose fidelity ought always to be suspected.¹¹ The following year the President of the Select Committee of the Company reinforced Harper's views castigating Frenchmen—in particular Monsieur Gentil—as "secret agents of the French Company" who needed to be turned out.¹²

It was again with the intention to monitor the movements of Frenchmen in upper Indian that the Company resolved in 1771 to issue passports to officers who were proceeding up country on service. The commanding officers were to apply for such passports to the Company.¹³ At the same time the Select Committee of the Company also decided to block fresh inflow of the French from Bengal into Awadh by making it mandatory that "no Europeans shall be allowed to pass out of the province to the westward without the *parwanah* of the country government". Orders to this effect were issued by the Naib Subedar Maharaja Sitabroy to the officers of the government.¹⁴ From 1772 the Company moved in the direction of making inventories of Frenchmen in the service of Nawab Shuja' al-Daula.¹⁵

With the curb on fresh inflows of Frenchmen into Awadh and upper India the Company mounted pressure on Nawab Shuja' al-Daula to discharge those he already nurtured in his service. Veiled threats of snapping of the English alliance with Shuja' al-Daula were issued in case he continued to encourage the "natural enemies" of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² President of SC to Shuja' al-Daula, 15 May, 1772, SC 1772-73, pp. 164-5.

¹³ Champion to R. Barwell, Bankipore 29 Dec., 1771, SC 1772-73, ff. 14-15.

¹⁴ R. Barwell, Patna to A. Champion, 26 Dec., 1771, SC 1772-73, ff. 13-15.

¹⁵ Fort William to G. Harper, 10 Jan., 1772, SC 1772-73, f. 11.

the English.¹⁶ However, the French menace in upper India continued. N. Middleton, the British resident in Awadh, continuously reported to Hastings about the Nawab's reluctance and hide and seek over the dismissal of Frenchmen like Monsieur Gentil and Madec. On being informed of the presence of the Frenchman Madec in Awadh Hastings wrote to Middleton making the position of the English Company on the issue of Frenchmen in the service of Indian rulers very clear. He said:

I desire you will inform the Vizir that you had it in strict injunction from me to remonstrate against every instance of such encouragement given to the subjects of the French nation, especially such as have been guilty of treachery towards ours and to declare to him that while he betray that attachment to enemies of the English, I consider my engagements to assist him against his as suspended.¹⁷

In Benares, Mirzapur and the eastern provinces French networks operated much to the annoyance of Company administrators. In 1768, Raja Balwant Singh, of Benares, reported that one Monsieur Cononje was resident in Mirzapur for the sale of French merchandise and carried on a lucrative trade from there. The raja allowed his goods to pass without duties and his French *gumâshtas* were allowed to stay because of the approval of the Nawab of Awadh Shuja' al-Daula. A *dâstak* of Shuja' al-Daula forbade the raja to make any interruptions in the trading activities of the Frenchmen.¹⁸ Balwant Singh promised the Governor General that now that he had Company order for cleansing out the French he would execute it and have the man seized. In the 1790s Jonathan Duncan, the British Resident at Benares, reported on more such French networks in the region. He further tightened the Company's surveillance on the Frenchmen and began to restrict Europeans from taking contracts for indigo, establishing vats within 4–7 miles of existing ones, and forbade the construction of new vats without the permission of the Company.¹⁹

Despite the English Company's panic over Europeans and particularly French presence in India its officers never hesitated to use to the political advantage of the Company any information on sur-

¹⁶ Fort William to R. Barber, SC 1772–73, f. 31, 10 Jan., 1772.

¹⁷ W. Hastings to N. Middleton, 30 Sept., 1774, Hastings Papers, Ad. Ms. 29135.

¹⁸ Balwant Singh to Governor General, 22 March, 1768. Tr. of Persian letters received, 1767–68, no. 98, p. 336.

¹⁹ J. Duncan to Barlow, 21 June, 1795. Residents Proceedings of Benares, Basta no. 42, Register no. 9, June 1795.

vey, cartography, topography of the region that he could gather from them. In 1791 Jonathan Duncan transmitted to Edward Hay, Secretary to the government, a map and a reference to a Journal which he managed to extract from a French resident in Mirzapur—Monsieur Devil Maublin. He wanted to know if the Board desired him to take further notice on this subject.²⁰

Interestingly, Duncan was no exception in his ambivalence towards the French in Benares. Ever since the battle of Buxar, Hastings and his subordinates at one level created a hype over the danger to British national interest because of the continued residence of Frenchmen in the courts and camps of India, and at another level they did not hesitate to make selective inroads into the French political espionage, and trading networks operating in India. It was perhaps for pragmatics or governance that the British appreciated the need of an embrasive continental presence in the early phase of their rule in India. A necessity which may have accentuated in the face of reverses across the Atlantic. But administrative need created a praxis between theory and practice in the English Company's relationship with the French in India. In 1778 Middleton—the most vocal opponent of the French presence in India—found it politically expedient to recommend the Frenchman Claude Martin's continued residence in Awadh.

Another important case in point was the Frenchman A.H. Polier—engineer, architect, surveyor and soldier. At the onset the Company's ambivalence towards him was evident when he was used as a spy to supply Hastings with information about Frenchmen residing in India.²¹ However, at the same time British residents, like Middleton, were angry at the role Polier played in encouraging the trading and espionage activities of the Frenchmen in India. Middleton had complained that a Frenchman—Dejardou—was staying clandestinely on Polier's *jâgîr* to escape the Company's legal ambit.²² Again Hastings personal attacks on Frenchmen, like Madec, were carefully conveyed to his subordinates "lest they should hurt Major Polier".²³ Also, by 1777 Middleton appeared reconciled to the idea of not only having Polier assist the Company but also being allowed to operate through

²⁰ J. Duncan, Resident Benares, to E. Hay, Residents Proceedings of Benares, Basta no. 31, book no. 42, March 1791.

²¹ Ad. Ms. 29135, W. Hastings to N. Middleton, 30 Sept. 1774.

²² Ad. Ms. 29138, N. Middleton to W. Hastings, 25 March 1777.

²³ Ad. Ms. 29135, W. Hastings to N. Middleton, 30 Sept. 1774.

a range of other Frenchmen who worked in tandem with him. In fact in a letter to Hastings on the killing of one such French Commandant of Polier—Lauzun—who was killed on duty when he attempted to subjugate a *pargana* for Polier which was part of his *jâgîr* Middleton refers to the episode as a “very heavy misfortune” for Polier.²⁴

Polier through his French and European friends in India helped the Company in a variety of different ways. During his long albeit chequered career in upper India he supervised the Company’s survey and commercial operations. He supplied Hastings with crucial information about the political plans of indigenous rulers like Najaf Khan, Zabita Khan and others.²⁵ He also commissioned paintings, collected rare manuscripts and wrote the histories of various important social groups: the Sikhs, the Jats etc. Thus he actively aided the Company’s project of “knowing” the people and politics of India.

Polier with the assistance of his agents indulged in political espionage for the Company. In 1774 Hastings was informed by Polier about the Nawab of Awadh having employed Frenchmen, like Madec, despite the Company’s order prohibiting such recruitments.²⁶ Polier spied for the Company’s indigenous allies, like the Nawab of Awadh, even while he continued to report about their political activities to the Company. The reports that he sent to Nawab Shuja’ al-Daula from Akbarabad (Agra), where he had been dispatched to assist Najaf Khan lift the siege of the fort, were remarkably detailed and perceptive. They include not only the military and technical details of the fort but also a scientific assessment of its vicinity.²⁷

From Akbarabad Polier transmitted daily to Nawab Shuja’ al-Daula copious information about the transactions and negotiations between Najaf Khan and the Jat leaders who had set the siege of the fort. To safeguard against the leakages of confidential matters he often dispatched his trusted agent Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan to the Nawab so as to have news narrated verbally.²⁸ A letter to Nawab Shuja’ al-Daula illustrates very vividly the meticulousness with which every minute detail of political developments in Akbarabad (Agra) were reported.²⁹

²⁴ Ad. Ms. 29139, N. Middleton to W. Hastings, Lucknow, 2 Nov. 1777.

²⁵ Ad. Ms. 29138, vol. vii, ff. 34–36.

²⁶ Ad. Ms. 29135, f. 250.

²⁷ *‘Jâz-e Arslânî*, ff. 45b, 46a, 47a, 48a, 56b, 64b, 65b, 66b, 67a, 71a, 72a, 75b, 76b.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 75b.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 76a.

Again, Polier played a key role in informing the Company of political developments at the Rohilla quarters and negotiating a political settlement at the time of the 1774 Rohilla war. In this war the English Company and Nawab Shuja' al-Daula were pitted against the Rohilla leader Hafiz Rahmat Khan. In a letter to Hafiz Rahmat Khan he reiterates with the Rohillas.³⁰

Polier collected for the Company vital information about the movements of the Rohillas. For this purpose he altered his agents stationed in the friendly territory of the Nawab of Awadh. In a letter to one such agent Mir Wali Allah Khan he says: "I noted with appreciation that the mischievous Rohillas have advanced further, the Nawab has deputed a contingent for their chatisement, and that the battle is about to commence. Keep writing to me and continue to send the reports about the army and the Nawab's camp without fail."³¹

Once again in Benares he exhorts Raja Chait Singh to keep him regularly informed of his well being. In a letter to the raja he makes his political intent clear: "You should be rest assured that my aim is to work for the betterment of your affairs. You should entertain no doubts about my intentions".³² While in the Benares region he regularly collected information about passable and unpassable bridges over rivers, and also the feasibility of military surveys and campaigns.³³ Finally, Polier assisted the Company surveyors, like Captain Cartier, who had been deputed to survey land in the Benares, Jaunpur, Phulpur, Faizabad sector. In a series of letters of Chait Singh, the raja of Benares, and to other local *zamîndârs* and *faujîdârs* of the raja he demands their cooperation in the survey operations of Company officials.³⁴

Most of Polier's European contacts were in the service of Shuja' al-Daula but they were also close to him. Many of them owed their positions in Awadh to him. Khwaja Don Pedrose de Silva, a Portuguese physician in the service of Raja Pratap Singh of Jaunpur was one such agent.³⁵ Pedrose transacted in Awadh solely through Polier. The latter made full use of Pedrose's fluency in both Persian as well as English and got several books in Persian translated into

³⁰ Ibid., f. 29a.

³¹ Ibid., f. 129a.

³² Ibid., f. 5b.

³³ Ibid., f. 9a.

³⁴ Ibid., ff. 8b, 14a, 15b, 18a.

³⁵ Ibid., ff. 12b, 59a.

English.³⁶ There was a general demand for Portuguese transcribers in 18th century India.³⁷ Polier often bought books from collectors and passed them on to Pedrose for translation.³⁸ Oshra Gora Mistri was another important agent of Polier in the service of Shuja' al-Daula. He looked after Polier's commercial interest in his establishment and supplied him with bridles, saddles and kept track of the goods that Polier sent back to be stored in his *sarkâr*. The other important agent, spy and friend of Polier was the French Jesuit Padre Wendel. Wendel was also in Shuja' al-Daula's service and thus in close contact with Polier. Polier obtained for him a village as *altamghâ* from Najaf Khan, and saw to it that he was able to effectively combat the difficulties in getting revenue from the *jâgîr*.³⁹

Padre Wendel and Khwaja Pedrose worked in together spying for Polier and supplying him clandestinely with vital political information from upper India. They generally wrote to Polier in Persian. However, strategically whenever they passed very confidential information they switched to the European language. This is evident from a letter from Polier to Pedrose: "I received your letter on the 19th. You have written that since it was not appropriate to write certain things in Persian you wrote in a European language to Padre Wendel, and that he would write to me accordingly. I will try to do his work at my convenience whenever he will write to me".⁴⁰

Very often, perhaps for similar reasons, Polier wrote letters in English to his agent Oshra Gora Mistri.⁴¹ That this network of espionage was geared towards helping the English was evident in 1761 when Shuja' al-Daula's plan to march towards Bihar was leaked to the English by Padre Wendel.⁴²

Polier was also friendly with the well known Frenchman in Awadh Monsieur Gentil. He instructed Ijaz Raqam Khan, his agent in Awadh who had complained about the slackness in the preparation of the newspapers, to take advantage of Gentil's presence and "make it a point to record the daily news and hand them over to Mon-

³⁶ Ibid., f. 245b.

³⁷ Ad. Ms. 45432, f. 17, Anderson Papers; also Ad. Ms. 16265, f. 14.

³⁸ *Ījâz*, f. 245b.

³⁹ Ibid 156b, 215a, 245b.

⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 87a.

⁴¹ Ibid., f. 39a.

⁴² A.L. Srivastawa, *Shuja' ud-Daulah, 1754-1775*. 2 Vols. Agra, 1961, 1974, I, pp. 107-8, 148.

sieur Gentil so that they reach here without delay".⁴³ Finally, the non-British friend of Polier who assisted the Company the most was Claude Martin—the French soldier—surveyor in the service of the Company. The text is replete with instances of Martin's survey operations and his efforts to draw the map of the Agra fort so as to assist the Company in fighting the Jats. Besides these more well known Frenchmen working with Polier there was also a spattering of European cooks, watch makers, organ mechanics and soldiers whose services were constantly made use of by Polier.⁴⁴

Polier's European contacts often made him suspect in the eyes of British Residents like N. Middleton. In a letter to Hastings, Middleton expressed his suspicion about Polier's role in the event of an Anglo-French war. He said he had intelligence reports suggesting Najaf Khan's offers to Frenchmen to join his service which he thought was a clear indicator of Khan's tilt towards the French. Middleton was particularly concerned because one such Frenchman in Khan's service—Dejardou—was clandestinely residing on Polier's *jâgîr* with a monthly emolument of Rs. 1000/-. This put Polier in a spot in the Najaf Khan issue.⁴⁵

The British unease over using Polier and his European contacts for their political advantage was best reflected when they denied him the rank of Lieutenant Colonel because of his French origins.⁴⁶ This was given to him very late in his career though the efforts of Hastings for which he earned a lot of flak from his enemies.⁴⁷ Polier was forced to leave India later in 1780s when Hastings had fallen from grace and his opponents Philip Francis and others reigned supreme.

II

Polier's French origins notwithstanding his loyalty with the English Company was unquestionable. Indeed he gave an exemplary display of this when he landed in India in the thick of the Anglo-French war and started his career fighting the French for the English armies

⁴³ *Ījâz*, ff. 64a, 58a.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 49b, 400b, 402a; Ad. Ms. 2913, f. 254.

⁴⁵ Ad. Ms. 29138, ff. 257–263.

⁴⁶ Georges Dumezil, "Preface". *Le Mahabharat et le Bhagavat Gita of Col. de Polier*. Paris, 1986 (reprint), p. 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

on the coast of Orissa.⁴⁸ Again, he constantly supplied vital information to the Company about the activities of his other French friends in India: Madec, Sombre and Gentil.⁴⁹ However, the loyalty to the English did not mean that he was not conscious of his European background and the distinctive perceptions about India that derived from it. This was most clearly evident from the compilations and notes on Hindu texts that he put together. Here, he emphasised the distinction between his understanding of these texts and that of the British orientalist sanskritists.⁵⁰ On the part of the English Company the fact of his French origins was never entirely forgotten. The most glaring instance of which was the denial to him of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on account of his French origins.

Yet in the *ʿĪjāz-e Arslānī* Polier's identification with the English is complete. This suggests that the identification is constructed not so much in terms of national identity but as a professional and perhaps linguistic identity. Polier, like the English, could both speak and write English language. Both he and the English were learners of Sanskrit and the Urdu, and often shared the same Pandits and Munshis. Polier refers to himself as *angrez*—a term which literally connoted only the English. In a letter to Nawab Shuja' al-Daula complaining about the delay in the issue of instructions granting him permission of audience at the Lucknow court, he says.

O Lord, I have covered a long distance and have lived here on the instructions of Nawab Imad al-Daula Hastings for five months, but I am still deprived of your kind attention. All the Englishmen who came here have been fortunate enough to be blessed with your farmans, but you did not enquire about my welfare. My English comportment does not bear with this. It is difficult for me to stay here now even for a moment.⁵¹

Polier does not stop at merely identifying himself culturally and politically with the English. He extends the ambit of this overarching English identity to include his other European associates and friends as well. For instance, the Frenchman Claude Martin is continuously referred to by Polier as an English Sahib. This is evident in several letters of complaint that he writes to Najaf Khan about an episode

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁹ Ad. Ms. 29135.

⁵⁰ Georges Dumezil, "Preface", 1986.

⁵¹ *ʿĪjāz*, f. 17b.

in which Martin, on his arrival at the Agra fort to draw its map, was humiliated by Najaf Khan's men. Polier expressing his anger at the treatment meted to Martin despite the fact that he had taken prior permission from Najaf Khan about the latter's visit describes him as "an English Sahib from Calcutta" who was unsuccessfully troubled despite Najaf Khan's "relation of faith and confidence with the English". The reference to Martin as an Englishman is once again repeated in all the letters of complaint sent to Najaf Quli Khan—the principal military chief of Najaf Khan: Martin is addressed as "Captain Martin Bahadur *sardâr-e angrez*". In these letters Polier is of the view that the humiliation of the "Englishman" Martin Sahib has sullied the dignity of the English as a whole.⁵²

Polier's identification with the predominantly Protestant English may have been informed by his being of a similar faith but born in a family living in Catholic France. The Catholic—Protestant tension characterised 18th century Europe and gave a religious slant to the Anglo-French wars of the period. The hostility against the Protestants within the predominantly Catholic France aggravated in the era of the Anglo-French wars. Polier's family too felt the crunch of this animosity and had earlier migrated to Switzerland.⁵³ In this context the English Company's friendly overtures towards Polier and the latter's reciprocation of the same appears comprehensible.

But more importantly, Polier's identification of himself and his continental associates as "English" appears to be a politically considered move. The English had acquired considerable political power in the region and it was always beneficial to function under their overarching political and cultural umbrella. An identification with the English would most certainly further Polier's own private trade and political transactions with indigenous rulers. This logical explanation for the drive to identify with the English is brought out most clearly in one of Polier's letters to Shuja' al-Daula. Here, to ensure for his own self the special care of the Nawab he reminds him of the cordial relations that the Nawab maintains with the English officers in which category he includes himself as well:

It is absolutely necessary for me to submit to you, even though I can't say it elegantly because I do not know Hindi, that there is a strong

⁵² Ibid, f. 163a.

⁵³ Guy Deleury, "L'ingenieur Polier". *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October & November, 1986, p. 1.

bond of cordiality and friendship between you and the English officials. I have been here in service for the last 9 months and the Governor has asked you to take special care of me. Obviously we derive strength from your favours. If we receive your favours we gain in strength and if, God forbid, we are deprived of them we loose our stature. I hope that I will continue to be in your service and it will be my privilege to excel in executing in all humility the order of your Highness.⁵⁴

The recourse to an identification with the English Company and its economic and political interests is evident once more when Polier exhorts Najaf Khan to act against his officials who despite his orders were creating hurdles in Polier's trade interests in the region. An irate Polier asking for help from Najaf Khan writes: "Just consider the labour put into escorting the things to you. And in this there was no personal interest involved except considerations of friendship. Above all nothing belongs to either of us—but the reputation of the English is the link between us. In such a case such treatment was not appropriate".⁵⁵

The personal and political motive for such an identification is reinforced by the fact that the overarching "English" identity which emerges in the text appears to be selectively exclusionary in character even as far as all Europeans are concerned. For instance, the Frenchman, Madec, is never identified in the text as "English". In fact, Polier is not on good terms with Madec.

Interestingly, the trend towards an English identification figures mostly in letters written to indigenous rulers and ordinary people. This further reinforces the pragmatic motivation for the projection of the English identity. However, at this stage we may speculate that for many of the Frenchmen working for the English Company the British Empire was perceived as the substitute for the French Empire that they had probably dreamed of in the sub-continent. This seems to be the case from a significant passage by Monsieur Gentil where he makes a direct link between Hastings and the French General Dupleix. He fears that the former's recall to England would be detrimental to the interest of the British empire in the same way as the return of the latter had extinguished French imperial designs in India: "His recall is the ruin of the British dominion in India as was the case of the great man Dupleix whose example he followed and whose

⁵⁴ *Ījāz*, f. 39a.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 186a.

recall had also lost the crown of France its dominion in that country.⁵⁶

Significantly, in his letters to the British officials Polier is careful to express his distinct ethnic moorings. In his correspondence, particularly the English letters, to Sir William Jones, Warren Hastings and Sir Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society and a trustee of the British Museum, he makes a distinction between the English and the Europeans and identifies himself with the latter.

This is most clearly brought out in his covering letter to Joseph Banks on the occasion of his gifting the Vedas—which he had obtained from the Raja of Jaipur to the British Museum. Describing the discussions between his friend Don Pedrose, whom he had sent to finalise the deal, and the Raja of Jaipur he writes:

Since the English by their conquests and situations have become better acquainted with India and its aborigines—the Hindoos—the men of science throughout Europe have been very anxious of learning something certain of these sacred books which are the basis of Hindoo religion and are known to India and elsewhere under the name of the Baidas . . . I made it also my business, particularly to inquire for those books, and the more so, as I found that doubts had arisen in Europe of their very existence.⁵⁷

Polier once again identifies himself as a European when he reports on the Raja of Jaipur's surprise at his request of acquiring the Vedas. He writes that the raja said, "what use we Europeans could make of their holy books". Polier goes on to write that the raja was subsequently informed by Don Pedrose who had gone to transact the deal that: "It was usual with us to collect and consult all kinds of valuable books of which we formed in Europe public libraries".⁵⁸

This letter to Sir Joseph Banks ends with the reassertion that the gesture in presenting the Vedas to the British Museum should be viewed "as a small token and tribute of respect and admiration from one who though not born a natural subject, yet having spent the best part of his life in the service of this country, is really unacquainted with any other".⁵⁹

On the one hand these English letters of Polier to British officials reinforce the argument that the drive towards an English identity in

⁵⁶ Ad. Ms. 39903, f. 38.

⁵⁷ Ad. Ms. 5346.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the *‘Ijâz-e Arslânî* was basically for the consumption of indigenous rulers and local population. On the other hand we cannot discount the fact that the thrust towards an all encompassing English identity may well have been the popularly perceived image of the Europeans in the 18th century which was being articulated by Munshi Kishan Sehail.

However, it is important to note here that not all the Persian writers of the 18th century perceive Europeans as *angrez* or English. In fact many of them are aware that there is a group of people from Europe—*frangîs*—and within them there are varied constituents. Each component deriving its name that of its country. Khwaja ‘Abd al-Karim Kashmiri, the author of the 18th century text *Bayân-e Wâqî‘* distinguishes between different Europeans. According to him there existed in India the French, the English, the Dutch, and the Portuguese. Kashmiri also describes that the sound “za” indicates the connection with their country.⁶⁰ Kashmiri further observes that “the Europeans dress and live in accordance with the customs of their own country. Here also they have built churches, they are good craftsmen and many Bengalis have learnt their crafts from them”.⁶¹

Thus even though the text certainly opens up the possibility of further explorations on the role of the Munshi as an agency in the formulation of views on the people and politics of India there is need for caution. For Polier’s Munshi does not appear to reflect even the basic level of consciousness about the nature of European presence that the 18th century Persian writers like Kashmiri revealed.

If the text highlights the making of an ethnically heterogenous “English” identity in the 18th century it also reflects the cultural interface of this constructed “Englishness” with the indigenous society. Interestingly, in the constructions of the people and politics of India by the “English” Polier is very different from that of his British friends Warren Hastings, William Jones and others. Polier and his European ilk whom the text refers to as “*angrez*” sahibs represent a distinct strand in the orientalist perceptions of India.

⁶⁰ Khwaja ‘Abd al-Karim Kashmîrî, *Bayân-e Wâqî‘*. Ed. K.B. Nasim, Lahore, 19970, p. 161.

⁶¹ Ibid.

III

It is significant that the text does not classify or stereotype people on religious, caste or community lines. Polier's political and trading agents are a nice mix of Christians, Hindus and Muslims from upper north India and Bengal. The absence in the text of even a faint allusion to their religious, caste or community identity gives an impression of Polier being oblivious of the differences that may have existed between them on these lines. For instance, Diwan Manik Ram, Polier's trusted agent, is a Bengali. But the text nowhere refers to his linguistic, ethnic, regional or religious identity. In fact his professional title of Diwan is always prefixed to his name so as to establish his identity in vocational terms. The same is true of Ras Bihari Sarkar and Nidniram Sarkar, his agents in Awadh and Faizabad. In the text Shiv Prasad, the *gumashṭā* of the *kothī* of Awadh, and the *gumashṭās* Ram Sundar Datt and Kali Prasad of Faizabad and Mayachand Sahu of Akbarabad are as much trusted, appreciated or reprimanded as his Muslim trading agents: Mir Muhammad 'Azim in Awadh, Mir Sulaiman Khan in Azimabad, Mirza 'Abd Allah Beg Kumaidan in Akbarabad (Agra) and Mir Muhammad Husain Ata Khan and Mir Wali Allah Khan in the Farrukhabad area.

Indeed Polier stereotypes the local people in caste and community neutral terms: "There is nothing new to write about; but the people here are not trustworthy—when they observe someone rising in fortunes they hold him by his hand, and praise him keeping their hand on the head. But when someone is cursed with divine wrath the whole world puts its foot on his head."⁶²

It is significant that Polier's image of the local people is based on their observed relationship to success and power and not on the *vama* hierarchy. Again, reporting to Nawab Shuja' al-Daula from the Agra fort where he is exasperated by the local people not keeping to the deadlines in preparing entrenchments, he expresses his anger in a European (us) versus Hindustani (them) category.⁶³

Interestingly, Polier's preferred language of appreciation or reprimand used for these workers is couched in a vocabulary which identifies them in terms of the professions they pursue and relates to them on these professional grounds. Their conduct is judged using

⁶² *Ḥjāz*, f. 35a.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, f. 51a.

the urbane and upper class reference points of "proper conduct" which the Mughals had popularised in the region: gentlemanliness, trustworthiness, loyalty, intelligence and honesty. Dereliction of duty to Polier is projected as violative of the norms of "intelligence", "candor" and "gentlemanliness" that constitute "proper and good" conduct. There is no reference in the text to the primordial affiliations of individuals and its corresponding conduct ethic. People are identified, and their work appreciated or denounced on the basis of their expertise and performance.

Thus in the text Polier reprimands a craftsman of Lucknow, for the undue delay in the preparation of the orders placed for various goods: "I sent to you several letters but none of them have been acknowledged by you, nor has there been any information regarding the preparation of anything [that was order]. This is not commensurate with your intelligence".⁶⁴

Polier's agent who dispatched to him a substandard consignment of orders is told: "The goods that you sent were useless. I had thought that you were a clever person, and to prepare such useless things is far from your intelligence and wisdom".⁶⁵ Again the delay in the preparation of the *amari* and the *hauda* prompts Polier to lash out at the concerned craftsman. The text identifies the craftsman with his vocation and he is abused: "The *naqqâsh* (decorator) is a bastard and will be punished accordingly".⁶⁶ Polier recommends a harsh punishment to a gardner who is reportedly "doing mischief" and is "negligent in his duty". In a letter to his agent Polier says: "Ask the gardener from Akbarabad (Agra), who is indifferent to his work, as to why he accepted it in the first place and availed in advance a month's salary. Now that he is doing mischief and is negligent in his duty beat him with a stick 10-12 times and dismiss him".⁶⁷

A more severe punishment is issued as a warning note to the *gumashtâ* Ram Sundar Datt and Kali Prasad of Faizabad for obtaining money "out of greed and wickedness" from the dealers and merchants who arrive in their city. Polier views their improper conduct as an act of "faithlessness".⁶⁸ Perhaps the most clear link between the professional conduct and the elements of candor and upright-

⁶⁴ Ibid., f. 52b.

⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 135a.

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 86a.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., f. 97a.

ness that constitute "good conduct" for Polier is brought out in his admonishment to Mayachand Sahukar who delayed the preparation and dispatch of some of his orders. An angry Polier writes: "There can not be any justification for the delay in getting ready such a small order. Clearly, then, you are issuing false statements which does not behove a *mahājān*".⁶⁹

In a similar vein he admonishes his agent in Benares, for reporting to him about the sale of some elephants almost one month after the transaction. An incensed Polier views his behaviour as a contravention of the "gentlemanly" ways: "It is not appropriate that you reply to me after a month. This is not a gentlemanly and honest way".⁷⁰ At the same time a *mutasaddī* is recommended to Najaf Khan for a job because, "he is a clever and useful man".⁷¹

Significantly, the Jats and the Rohillas are the only social tow groups which are identified in ethnic categories and stereotyped according to their racial/community type. Even though early British ethnographers in India, like Robert Orme, did begin to discuss ethnic stereotypes as early as the mid 18th century yet they based and classified their ethnic types on climatic and dietary factors.⁷²

However, in the text war and battle fronts constitute the context in which the Jats and Rohillas are as a community stereotyped as "cheats" and "plunderers". This categorization emerges when Polier is assisting Najaf Khan to break the seige of the fort of Agra which has been taken over by the Jats.⁷³ In another letter to Manik Ram he calls the Jats robbers and disrupters who had blocked a road leading to Delhi. Polier similarly castigates the Rohillas, who are fighting the armies of his master Shuja' al-Daula in 1774, as the "mischievous *shaqâwat pazoh* Rohillas" and "doomed" and "accursed" Rohillas.⁷⁴ Their leader Hafiz Rahmat Khan is also portrayed disapprovingly as the "insecure Hafiz".⁷⁵

Significantly, this categorization of the Jats and the Rohillas is similar to the Mughal image of these social groups. *Bayân-e Wāqī'*, the

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. 127a.

⁷⁰ Ibid., f. 209b.

⁷¹ Ibid., f. 214a.

⁷² R. Orme, *Historical Fragments of the Moghul Empire, of the Marattos and of the English concern in Indostan from the year MD CLIX*. Repr. 1974, p. 303.

⁷³ *Ījāz*, f. 72a.

⁷⁴ Ibid., f. 359b, 129b, 165b.

⁷⁵ Ibid., f. 163b.

18th century Persian text of Khwaja Kashmiri, brackets the Jats with the robbers⁷⁶ and calls them the “misguided community”.⁷⁷ They are also referred as the “accursed ones”, betrayers and robbers and plunderers.⁷⁸ Similarly, the Rohillas are also bracketed with the robbers and referred to as the “faithless ones”.

It is significant that Polier makes a break from his vocational categorization of people and opts to continue with the Mughal classification of the Jats and the Rohillas as ethnic types only when he joins the service of Shah ‘Alam in Delhi. Once in Delhi Polier clearly indicates his preference for continuing with the classificatory pattern the Mughals had fashioned for certain social groups. In a letter to Manik Ram reporting on the affairs of the Delhi court he writes: “Here in Delhi the Kashmiris are in control. And I have neither a Kashmiri nor Bengali. If you find people like that who can manage my work then send them”.⁷⁹

Polier appears to have appropriated the 18th century Mughal categorisation of the Jats, Rohillas, Bengalis and Kashmiris as distinct ethnic types. He also seems to have continued with the indigenous image of these communities in which the Bengalis and Kashmiris are projected as diligent and the Jats and the Rohillas as plunderers and robbers. The image of the Jats and the Rohillas as plunderers appears to have entered Polier’s psyche through his close association with the armies of Shuja’ al-Daula and Najaf Khan which he lead against the Jats and the Rohillas. This categorisation appears in the letters relating to the seige of the Agra fort by the Jats. Thus Polier like the Mughals seems to be aware of the clan and community based social stratification of Indian society.⁸⁰ But in the manner of the Mughals he too preferred to transcend these primordial identities for his own political advantage and did not make them central to his understanding of local society.

Indeed Polier’s sceptic about the rigidly defined caste and community classification of indigenous society that the British oriental-

⁷⁶ Kashmiri, *Bayân-e wâqî‘*, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 235, 338a, 341.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 226, 235.

⁷⁹ *‘Ijâz*, f. 369a.

⁸⁰ The awareness of indigenous rulers about the caste and ethnic stratification of rural society is also revealed in the observations of the Awadh *‘amils* and officials posted in the Rajput *zamîndâris* of Benares. Sec. C.F. Curwen, tr. of *Bahwanhawah*, Allahabad 1857.

ists like Jones and Hastings had initiated is brought out in his letter to Sir Joseph Banks. Here, he reports about his experiences in locating and obtaining the Vedas from the Raja of Jaipur and argues that his encounter with the Brahmins contravened the image of a caste defined behavioural pattern that is associated with the *varna* hierarchy. Polier writes that contrary to the view that the Brahmins were conservative about communicating their knowledge to all and sundry he found at Lucknow Anandram, a learned Brahmin, who was very forthcoming. He goes on to say that Anandram not only validated the authenticity of the Vedas but also at his request separated it into manageable volumes so as to facilitate its preservation. Polier reports that Anandram also numbered the pages and titled each section in Persian for his [Polier's] convenience.⁸¹

Shifting the focus once again to the importance of professional knowledge and vocational expertise as the referent of social identity and good conduct Polier writes that Anandram's episode shows that

How little a dependence is to be placed in the assertion of those who have represented the Brahmins as very averse to the communication of the principles of their religion—their mysteries and holy books. In truth I have always found those who were really men of science and knowledge very ready to impart and communicate what they know to whoever would receive it, and listen to them, with a view of information, and not merely for the purpose of a thing to ridicule.⁸²

In the same letter Polier also wonders how the religious books were handed over so easily to a European and the transaction sanctified by Anandram in a society where according to the texts only the Kshatriyas are permitted to hear them being read. His questioning of the rigidity of the *varna* hierarchy which the British orientalisks were constructing and projecting as the ideal type is left unresolved in his own explanation for the anomaly: "To this the Brahmins readily reply—this being now in the Caljog or fourth age in which religion is reduced to nought it matters not who sees or studies them [Vedas] in these days of wickedness—since by the duress of the Supreme being it must be so".⁸³

The emphasis on professional attributes and an expected code of conduct deriving from one's vocation rather than religious or caste

⁸¹ Ad. Ms. 5346.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

identity makes Polier's text stand in contrast to the writings of his British friends and contemporaries Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones. From the 1780s the British administrators under the patronage of Warren Hastings and William Jones were collecting and translating the religious and legal texts of the Hindus and the Muslims so as to understand these people through their written traditions as separate religious categories.⁸⁴ Hastings employed Pandits and Munshis to prepare the *Gentoo Law Code* and translate the *Hidâya*.⁸⁵ But Polier and British orientalists showed marked variations not only in their attitude to the Pandits who helped in the location, translation and reading of indigenous texts but also in their perceptions of society as gleaned from this literature. Polier's description of getting the *Ramayana* and *Gita* translated reviewed that his was not a mere curiosity on the banal and literal contents of the text, rather, he was more keen to know how the beliefs and practices enshrined in them were practiced.⁸⁶ This attitude resulted in Polier striking a very intimate relationship with the Pandits who read out the texts to him. As he says, "I took Ramchand home, he never left me. I plunged into the work and I wrote under his dictation. . . . the complete system. What it was originally, its variations very different from the ideas of it that one forms in Europe".⁸⁷ This was in contrast to Hastings' more restrained relationship with his Pandit, which did not reflect the ease of intimacy, breaking all class and ethnic barriers, that Polier's links with Ramchand revealed. In a letter to general Elijah Impey, he introduced his Pandit as follows: "Be so good as to allow him a chair, as I treat him with a respect which I do not commonly show to gentlemen wither (sic) shirts and jackets".⁸⁸

IV

The British orientalists' understanding of Indian people and politics on caste and community lines was structured mainly on their image

⁸⁴ J.C. Brockington, "Warren Hastings and Orientalism". In: C. Carnall & C. Nicholson (eds.), *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, 1989, pp. 92–93.

⁸⁵ E/4/4, Bengal letters received, from W. Hastings to Court of Directors, 21 Feb. 1784.

⁸⁶ Guy Deleury, "L'ingenieur Polier". *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October & November, 1986.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁸⁸ Ad. Ms. 16262, f. 169.

of the Mughals. 18th century British historians, revenue officials, ethnographers and cartographers shunned the Mughal regime as despotic and abstracted from Indian society. They negated the social and cultural impact of 300 years of Indo-Persian rule. In fact the ills of Indian society which the British were all set to "correct" were attributed to the rapaciousness of the Mughals.

The British military officer and scholar Robert Orme who arrived in India in 1742 and wrote the *Fragments of the Mughal Empire* was one such case in point. Orme based his account primarily on the Persian manuscripts and histories of the Mughal historians. Yet in the *Fragments* the Mughals are projected as "licentious", "corrupt", "pleasure loving" and "cruel".⁸⁹ Such images of the Mughals proliferated in the British accounts of the late 18th early 19th century.⁹⁰ British officials like Philip Francis and James Grant while deliberating on the Company's revenue policy further reinforced this image in their reports.⁹¹

The image of the Mughals as callous and despotic provided a justification for Company rule. By the early 19th century British orientalisists began to translate selected passages from Persian manuscripts to reinforce further their portrayal of the Mughals and cement their rule in India. Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as told by its own historians*, exemplified the culmination of this trend. Elliot's preface attached to volume I of the series makes the British motive very clear: "Tyranny and capriciousness of the despotic rulers of medieval India was discussed; in that way it would make the Indians shudder at their past and hail the British regime as a blessing".⁹² Elliot and Dowson while selecting passages from the Persian and Arabic texts concentrated on tales of intrigue, woe, deception, war, fire and famine. There are no references to the cultural and social life in medieval India in these volumes. For instance, from the *Kitâb al-Hind* of al-Biruni, we have an extract of less than four pages and this too relates to the Kings of Kabul only.⁹³

⁸⁹ R. Orme, *Of the Government and People of Indostan*. Repr. Lucknow, 1971, p. 17.

⁹⁰ Home Misc/191. This file has another account by Robert Orme entitled "A History of the military transactions of the British nation in Hindostan from 1745"; also see W. Francklin, *The history of the reign of Shah Alam, the present Emperor of Hindustan*. London, 1798.

⁹¹ W.K. Firminger (ed.), *Fifth Report, analysis of the finances of Bengal*, pp. 172-3, 475-6. Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1917.

⁹² K.A. Nizami, *Supplement to Elliot and Dawson, History of India as told by its own historians*. Vol. II, Delhi, 1981.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

It is also significant that a vast majority of authors chosen by Elliot and Dowson to be included in their series are Muslims. The 8 volume series has only 5 non-Muslim authors. Thus an image of the decadence of pre-colonial India is built around Muslim authors of predominantly Persian manuscripts. It is as if non-Muslims and non-Persian texts were separate from the cultural and political tradition of the period covered in these volumes. This understanding of indigenous society on religion and community lines was in contrast to that of Polier's nuanced and more encompassing feel about Indian people and politics. The best manifestation of Polier's sensitivity to the complexity of Indian society is manifested in the fact that for him there existed no contradiction in his interest in the Vedas on the one hand and on the other hand his fascination for the elitist urbane Indo-Persian culture.

But more importantly the image of the Mughals that emerges in Polier's narrative on Shah 'Alam II⁹⁴ and in the *Tjâz-e Arslânî* is that of a humane, benevolent, sensitive regime entrenched in Indian society and politics. It is interesting to note that neither the text on Shah 'Alam nor the *Tjâz-e Arslânî* were "official reports". Polier wrote the history of Shah 'Alam at his own behest. The text has an extremely intimate narrative style, obviously written by one who was personally acquainted with the people and the issues he wrote about. Probably also playing a part in the story he related.⁹⁵ The history of Shah 'Alam II was based on information collected by Polier during his stay at the court of Delhi. Much of this information he passed on to his friends on request.⁹⁶

Polier's tone in the Shah 'Alam narrative is mild and lacks the derogatory punch of contemporary British historians. Thus the Emperor is projected as "gracious", "grave", "reserve in public" and "benevolent".⁹⁷ Again, the Marathas in their numerous forays against Shah 'Alam are always referred to as "insolent" and the humiliation of Shah 'Alam at their hands condemned.⁹⁸

Polier does not project Shah 'Alam as a perfect King. He is said to have faults but these are attributed to "his fondness of flattery,

⁹⁴ Pratul Gupta (ed.), *Shah Alam and his Court*. Calcutta., 1989 (reprint).

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

however gross, and the too unreserved confidence he places in his ministers". Infact Polier discusses the politics of intrigue at Delhi with reference to Shah 'Alam's minister 'Abd Allah Khan and his Chief advisor Ahsan al-Daula.⁹⁹ These two Mughal officials and Polier were always at cross purposes. 'Abd Allah Khan had regarded Polier as a threat to his power during the latter's brief employment at the court of Delhi. He had dissuaded the Emperor from allowing Polier to raise a contingent of troops¹⁰⁰ and had deliberately given Polier a *jâgîr*, in lieu of salary, in the recalcitrant *pargana* of Khair in the Agra *sûba*. This had caused immense hardship for Polier.¹⁰¹

In fact the only time Polier detracts from his reverential stand towards Shah 'Alam is when he is reminded of the great influence his personal enemies, i.e., 'Abd Allah Khan and his colleagues have over the Emperor.

Polier's account of the political transactions in Awadh are similarly hinged on the image of a benevolent Nawab circumscribed by a rapacious court. Polier views the court intrigues as the source of all problems in the region while he eulogises the person of the Nawab.¹⁰² The same trend is reflected in Polier's account of Najaf Khan. It was significant that Polier wrote the history of this unsuccessful 18th century regional power. This was a break from the British norm of history writing which was obsessed predominantly with the Mughals and the more important regional principalities like Awadh.

Polier's text not only constructs a humane image of the Mughals but also views the Emperor as the cultural representative of a bygone era. The hyperbolic phraseology used exclusively for addressing the Emperor is one indicator of what his person connotes for Polier. In the *arzdashts* to the Emperor Polier addresses the Emperor invariable in the accepted conventional style.¹⁰³ Polier has a similar reverential tone in his description of the Awadh Nawabs whom he views as the "*khânazâds*" (for generations in the service of the Mughals).¹⁰⁴ The use of this expression indicates Polier's unusual familiarity with and appreciation for the Mughal values and tradition. His letters to the Nawabs follow the pattern of his *arzdashts* to the Emperor. Each

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 30-31.

¹⁰⁰ Ad. Ms. 29138, f. 34.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., ff. 35-36.

¹⁰² Orme Mss. OV. 91, pp. 8994.

¹⁰³ *Tjâz*, f. 130a.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., f. 253a.

letter is prefixed with compliments and the expression of pride at being in correspondence with the exalted Nawabs.¹⁰⁵

One of the reasons of the humane construct of the Mughals and their successors was that Polier had created a niche for himself in Indian society. He lived like a Mughal noble with a *jâgîr* in the *par-gana* of Khair in the Agra district.¹⁰⁶ He was also involved in lucrative commercial activities in Agra, Delhi and Awadh.¹⁰⁷ and had a sprawling house in Lucknow and Faizabad.¹⁰⁸ He viewed any threat to his little world with concern. The activities of Shah 'Alam's nobles, the intrigues of Asaf al-Daula's courtiers and the raids of Najaf Khan at different points of time impinged on Polier's personal status and fortunes. Thus he felt the need to eulogise them to safeguard his interests in the region.

Indeed Polier's identification was not only with the Mughal court culture but with the entire Indo-Persian ethos that the court represented. In his letters to his agents stationed in a range of towns and *gasbas* of North India Polier places orders for household items, food and clothing which reflect an acquired urbanite elite taste of the Indo-Persian culture. Almost every item listed in his demand slip was associated with the upper echelons of indigenous urban society: silver vessels, betel leaf holder,¹⁰⁹ huqqa,¹¹⁰ amari and palanquins.¹¹¹ Also included in this list of social signifier were rings made of engraved precious stones,¹¹² gold and silver laces¹¹³ and *ashmîna* shawls.¹¹⁴ Polier also incessantly required food items which are associated with the upper crust of urban society. These included items like sweet pickle,¹¹⁵ green mango pickle in oil¹¹⁶ cinnamon and other Indian spices, vinegar, Indian berries,¹¹⁷ and different kinds of tobacco.¹¹⁸ Polier needed these goods for both his personal use as well as for gifts and private trade purposes.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., ff. 363a and 363b.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., f. 39.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., ff. 35–36.

¹⁰⁸ R.L. Jones, *A very ingenious man. Claude Martin in Early Colonial India Delhi*. 1992.

¹⁰⁹ *Ijâz*, f. 118a.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., ff. 22a–24a.

¹¹¹ Ibid., f. 23a.

¹¹² Ibid., f. 5b.

¹¹³ Ibid., f. 20b, 21b, 35b.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., f. 359a.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., f. 177a.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., f. 99a.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f. 177a.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., f. 33a.

Polier's drive towards a Persianate lifestyle was complete with his two Indian wives. Also noteworthy was his preference for the indigenous *unânî* system of medicine for the treatment of his son.¹¹⁹ He adhered to this alternate system of treatment with sensitivity to the cultural nuances which shaped social conduct towards these indigenous practitioners of medicine.¹²⁰ Finally, he displayed an appreciation for the indigenous dance and singing forms and got his sons tutored by professional teachers in these art forms.¹²¹

Polier's image of the Mughals derived not only from his identification with the Indo-Persian culture but also from his recognition of their regime as a culturally constituted political category which was all encompassing: It included within its ambit all kinds of castes and communities to create a transcendent Mughal political identity. Polier had a sensitive finger on the process of Mughal identity formations and their relationship with political power that had set in during the hey days of the Mughal Empire.

The Mughals recognised the variety of social and religious groups in society yet their policy was geared to transcend their cultural differences so that the predominant equations remained between those politically and culturally integrated to the Mughal conqueror and the others constituting the non-Mughal vanquished. This power equation was reason enough for the establishment of the superiority of the Mughal dictum. A Persianised literate class, the *kâyasthas* and the *khatris*, was created to ensure that Mughal administrative and political norms were communicated to all, and a rural class with superior rights in land was identified and improvised upon to guarantee that Mughal dictum was followed. This political process began to reformulate social identities in the Empire which increasingly transcended religious and community referents. The politico-cultural identity of individuals began to be defined in reference to their relationship with the Mughal power. Over a period of time the evolving Mughal identity began to connote a social "code of conduct" of its own. This code derived from an elitist and urbane connotation of concepts like "loyal" and "gentlemanly" behaviour in which performing one's duty in the interest of the political master was sacrilegious.

Polier's appropriation of the elitism inherent in pre-colonial identity formations was also spelt out in the package of social etiquette

¹¹⁹ Ibid., f. 141b.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., ff. 147b, 248b, 249b.

that he advocated to his wives and family members. These were reminiscent of the value systems that 600 years of Indo-Persian rule had set up in India. In a letter that Polier wrote to the mother of the senior wife over the issue of an altercation between the junior and the senior wife, in which the latter physically manhandled the former, he made the cause of his anger very clear: "She [your daughter] calls her [the junior bibi] "her slave". [Imagine] what honour will be left if I call your daughter her slave. It is loathsome for women to come out of their seclusion, not to speak of running out from their own house to that of others and raising a commotion shame".¹²²

In keeping with the customary ways in which such problems related to breach of elitist conduct were resolved in the Indo-Persian context Polier adds: "It seems that you have not understood my nature. I swear that if there is any harm [done] to the junior bibi I will finish both of you there and then and will never see your faces again. It is in your good that as soon as you receive this letter you take her [junior bibi] immediately to the place where she was. Otherwise in the event of any negligence you will face the consequences".¹²³

The susceptibilities of Polier to Mughal cultural norms and political rituals were in sharp contrast to his British contemporaries who misunderstood, obliterated and eventually transformed the precolonial understanding of indigenous groups, notions of rights and privileges and political rituals.

V

Phrases like "I will make you happy" or "looking after" the interests of someone were commonly used in the work culture of Eastern societies. These connoted certain extra-economic exchange patterns between individuals based on personal friendships, family associations, previous indebtedness, and past gratitude. These networks of social and cultural relationships, in which each individual had a relative power position, intermeshed with the cultural patterns of social behaviour percolating down from the court. Bernard Cohn has admirably shown how the Mughal political rituals of *nazr* and *khilat*

¹²² Ibid., f. 106b.

¹²³ Ibid.

served to integrate the individual and his prestige value into that of the court culture. He however, contends that the British reduced the intermesh of these cultural patterns of behaviour to economic exchanges.¹²⁴

In contrast, Polier's text not only has an abundance of the above mentioned phraseology of the pre-colonial work ethic and political rituals but also its correct usage at the appropriate places. In the text the phraseology connotes the cultural meaning that it is meant to connote in the Eastern context. For instance, Polier in the instructions issued to Raso Sarkar, his trading and political agent in Faizabad, sends reminders of being careful in the dealings of his business. Almost as an incentive he adds, "I have told him [Mr. Lloyd] about you. He will be very kind to you".¹²⁵ This could have a range of meanings: obligations, money, favours etc. The text is replete with such ambivalent phrases such as "He will be kind to you", or "I will make you happy"¹²⁶ and the often mentioned phrase "the work of Mir Sahib [is like] my own work",¹²⁷ or his letter to Nawab Majd al-Daula where he says he is privileged to hear that "I consider your exalted house as my own and as the one for myself and my people".¹²⁸

These phrases indicate the functioning of a social hierarchy in which each individual has a prestige and a relative power position confirmed by others. This social hierarchy constitutes an alternate social structure which may or may not correspond to the economically defined power hierarchy. But it is nevertheless integral to the political process and facilitates its functioning. The *ʿIjāz-e Arslānī*, in contrast to 18th century British official writings, is sensitive to this social configuration. Again, the commonly used phrase "your associates are my associates" which connotes the intimacy of social bondage between individuals and conveys an assurance of fulfilling a commitment because of this bondage figures in the text. Polier uses this phrase in his replies to Najaf Khan regrading the case of the latter's servant Mir Imam Baksh.¹²⁹ Finally, to stay on and "pursue" the matters is an advice which Polier often gives to people who

¹²⁴ B. Cohn, "Representing authority in Victorian India". In: B. Cohn (ed.), *An Anthropologist among the historians and other essays*. New Delhi, 1987.

¹²⁵ *ʿIjāz*, f. 95b.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 159b.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 258b.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 362b.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 53b.

approach him with problems in their areas and for whom he puts in a word to the concerned authorities.¹³⁰

Polier's text not only appropriates the cultural phraseology of the East and uses it at appropriate places, it also reflects his sensitivity to the primacy of the "oral world" that characterised transactions in pre-colonial India. In a long drawn out case regarding the payment of elephants purchased from Mir Sulaiman Khan for Najaf Khan Polier writes to his agent Sayyid Niyaz 'Ali Khan: "Najaf Khan is expected to be back soon from the imperial court. If you are free you can come here and talk to him personally so that the matter is settled soon. Direct conversation settles matters in a way in which correspondence can never do." The letter ends with a commonly used phrase connoting intimacy: "I reiterate that the work of Mir Sahib is [like] my own work".¹³¹

The English letters also supplement the evidence of the *'Ijâz-e Arslânî* which points towards the primacy of *sifârish* or "to put in a word" as an act of favour or good will for an old friend, acquaintance or family member or business partner to assist in the accomplishment of his work. Polier, in a letter to one Johnson, pleads for his favour in seeking the pardon of one young man, Redman, from the Governor General.¹³²

Interestingly, the usage of reassuring phrases like, "I consider you as one of my own people", or "There is no difference between you and me" transcend caste, community and ethnic identifications. It connotes an identity based on the reciprocity of respect for the interest and prestige which each individual wields in the power hierarchy. That Polier uses it in a similar vein and not to denote racial conflation is apparent from the fact that he is very conscious of the racial and cultural divide between his own European style of functioning and that of the East.

The text is replete with examples which indicate that Polier is aware that he is narrowly treading two different cultural patterns of work ethic. In a letter to Shuja' al-Daula complaining about his inability to recover any money from the *tankhwah jâgîrs* assigned to him at Allahabad and Benares he clearly flaunts the distinct cultural world to which he belongs: "The realisation from there also is post-

¹³⁰ Ibid., f. 87b.

¹³¹ Ibid., f. 159b.

¹³² Ad. Ms. 29193, f. 482.

poned. Therefore I have earned a bad name in my own people since I had assigned the *tankhwah* in both places to Mr. Scott and there has been a discrepancy".¹³³

The correspondence around the siege of the Agra fort reveals best Polier's efforts to demarcate himself from the East. In the seige of the Agra fort Polier assisted Najaf Khan at the behest of Shuja' al-Daula. But he was disgusted at the working style of Najaf Khan's soldiers and people which he continuously contrasts with that of his European people. In a letter to Nawab Shuja' al-Daula he complains about the inability of Mir Sayyid 'Ali, the Nawab's agent at the battle front, to keep up to his promise of supplying the 100 bel-dars he had promised. Polier perceives this as a case of "false statement of the Hindustani people" and their "lies". An angry Polier clearly states his distinct Europeaness when he writes to Shuja' al-Daula: "I can calculate to finish a task within a given stipulated time only in the case when the things are done like the way we [the Europeans] do amidst our own people. Nobody cares for orders here; everyone is in conflict with the other; nothing is done in a coordinated manner".¹³⁴

¹³³ *Īfāz*, f. 192b.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 50b.

QIRAN AL-SA'ÂDAIN: THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN LEARNING AT DELHI COLLEGE

GAIL MINAULT

Qiran al-Sa'âdain is an Arabic astronomical term denoting the conjunction of the two fortunate planets, Jupiter and Venus.¹ It is also a metaphor for an auspicious occasion or successful collaboration. It is fitting, therefore, that when Delhi College established a scholarly journal, it was entitled *Qiran al-Sa'âdain*, referring to the interaction of two cultures, eastern and western, in the intellectual life of the college.²

Delhi College, that flourished in the Mughal capital city in the generation before the 1857 revolt, was a mediating institution between East and West in a number of ways. It brought together two forms of educational patronage: *awqâf* (sing.: *waqf*) or Muslim endowments for pious purposes, such as the encouragement of religious learning; and patronage by the state—in this case the expenditure of tax revenues by the British East India Company to support education—and the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists in the administration that accompanied such patronage. From this, it follows that the college also brought together two traditions of learning: “oriental” and “western”, although these categories are themselves constructions of cultural debates that began in the late eighteenth century, continued during the career of Delhi College, and are by no means over in our time.³ Roughly defined, the oriental curriculum involved the study of the classical languages of India: Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian, and the texts and branches of knowledge associated with their

¹ John T. Platts, *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 789.

² First published in 1845, *Qiran* . . . was short-lived and few issues have survived. It was succeeded a few years later by another Delhi College periodical, *Muhibb-e Hind*, discussed below.

³ For an addition to the post-Saidian debate about Orientalism, see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, “Orientalism’s Genesis Amnesia”. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 16, 1 (1996), pp. 1–14.

literatures and religions. The western curriculum at that time was a humanistic one, in transition from its own classical and clerical past, toward a greater emphasis on science. It included grammar and composition in modern languages (though Latin and Greek had not been dethroned in Europe), readings in history, philosophy, and such sciences as "natural philosophy", various branches of mathematics, and astronomy.

The college also incorporated two styles of transmission of knowledge: The first was the *madrassa* tradition, based on the teacher-student (*ustâd-shâgird*) relationship and emphasising oral transmission of set texts. The texts may have been copied out, but the reproduction of knowledge was chiefly via memorisation and oral exposition as vs. the printed word. In the western curriculum, the emphasis was increasingly on printed textbooks that could be accurately reproduced mechanically and hence be readily and cheaply available for students to read. Orality was being replaced by print, consequently, and the teacher-student relationship, while still important, was challenged by the vision of the individual scholar, deriving his knowledge from books or scientific observations. Such an individual style of scholarship might, ideally, lead to more original ideas, but also necessitated the exchange of ideas via print, published in the journals of scholarly societies.⁴

Important in the dialogue between different curricula, styles of teaching, and modes of transmission of knowledge was a common language in which the debate might be carried out. At Delhi College, that language was Urdu—as opposed to Persian (on its way out as the Mughal language of administration), or English (on its way in, but not yet established, as the British language of governance). For the later Mughal emperors, Urdu had already become a mediating language, between Persian and regional Indian languages, and between the imperial court and various regional powers. For the British, too, Urdu (or Hindustani) filled the need for an Indian vernacular that was more generally understood than Persian, but that nevertheless had an association with government and administrative

⁴ See e.g., Dale Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction". *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, 4 (Oct. 1978), pp. 485–516; various articles in N. Grandin and M. Gaborieau (eds.), *Madrassa: La Transmission du Savoir dans le Monde Musulman*. Paris: Edns. Arguments, 1997; and Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print". *Modern Asian Studies* [MAS] 27, 1 (1993), pp. 229–51.

terms and concepts. It is important to keep in mind that, as part of the process that resulted in the establishment of English as the language of higher administration in India in the nineteenth century, the vernaculars also achieved new recognition, utility, and importance.⁵

Patronage and its Discontents

The British government in India first began to take responsibility for the education of Indian elites following the revision of the East India Company's charter in 1813, when a sum was set aside from a projected surplus in the annual revenues for the support of education. The particular clause in the revised charter also brought to a head the debate between Orientalists and Anglicists within the British Indian administration, for it called not only for the "revival and improvement of literature [presumably oriental] and the encouragement of the learned natives of India", but also for "the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences [presumably western] among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."⁶ In any case, this provision in the law remained a dead letter until the 1820s, when a revenue surplus actually materialised, and when the General Committee of Public Instruction [GCPI] was established in Calcutta, followed by local committees in urban centres around India, including Delhi.

Even with the decline of Mughal power and the establishment of British control over the Mughal heartland, Delhi remained an important centre of revived Islamic learning, particularly *hadith* studies. Personified in the early nineteenth-century by Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz and his sons and disciples, this scholarship owed its existence to a line of scholar-Sufis dating back to Shah Wali Allah in the eighteenth century, or perhaps earlier to Shah 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi in the seventeenth.⁷ As Mughal state patronage diminished, institutions of religious learning in Delhi became more dependent on private endowments. The Delhi Committee of Public Instruction, which

⁵ Muzaffar Alam, "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics". MAS, 32,2 (1998) pp. 317–49; David Lelyveld, "*Zuban-e Urdu-e Mu'alla* and the Idol of Linguistic Origins". *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 9 (1994), pp. 107–17.

⁶ H. Sharp (ed.), *Selections from Educational Records*, Pt. I (Reprint. New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965; 1st pub. 1920), p. 22.

⁷ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 35–45.

included both British officials and local notables, investigated the state of learning in the Mughal capital in the early 1820s and reported that there were a number of *madrasas* and many smaller schools in the city, but that many of them were in a state of serious decline.⁸ Among them was the Madrasa of Ghazi al-Din Khan, built in the early eighteenth century just outside Delhi's Ajmeri Gate. The Madrasa was a handsome late Mughal edifice, in the familiar red sandstone of Shahjahanabad, consisting of a mosque and a two-storied arcade, which contained rooms for the teachers and students and enclosed a courtyard, entered by a massive gateway. Adjacent to the mosque was the marble tomb of the founder, Ghazi al-Din Khan Firoz Jang, a nobleman who had served the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the Deccan and who was the father of the man who became the first Nizam of Hyderabad. In his will, Ghazi al-Din had established a *waqf* for the support of the *madrasa*. Like many such endowments, it provided stipends not only for the teachers but also the students.⁹

By the early nineteenth century, the income from the original *waqf* of Ghazi al-Din Khan had declined, as had the student body, and the *madrasa* was in disrepair.¹⁰ About this time, the Delhi Committee of Public Instruction took an interest in the institution. In the mid-1820s, they obtained a grant from the general education fund for the support of oriental learning at the *madrasa*. In 1827, the government sanctioned an additional sum, supplemented by funds raised locally, to start English classes and teach astronomy and mathematics "on European principles" at the school. About this time, the Madrasa of Ghazi al-Din Khan began to be called Delhi College, with an oriental section (the *madrasa*), where Arabic and Persian grammar, literature, and other Islamic subjects (*'ulûm*) were taught, and an anglo-vernacular section (or institution), where western subjects were taught. In both sections, the medium of instruction was Urdu.¹¹

Then in 1828 or 1829, Nawab I'timad al-Daula, a minister at the court of Awadh, established a new *waqf*, specifying that the

⁸ Board Collections [BC] #s 25694-25695, 1826-27, Vol. 909, pp. 487-91, 540-53, 565. Indian Office Library & Records [IOLR].

⁹ J.A. Richey (ed.), *Selections from Educational Records*, Pt. II, (Reprint. New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965; 1st pub. 1922), pp. 252-53.

¹⁰ BC, #s 25694-95, Vol. 909, p. 565ff. IOLR.

¹¹ 'Abd al-Haqq, *Marhûm Delhi Kālej*. Karachi: Anjuman-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu, 1962, pp. 22-23, 32-33 [hereafter cited as MDK]; cf. Sharp (ed.), *Selections*, Pt. I, pp. 188-89.

income from the endowment should go to the support of oriental learning in his native city, Delhi. He asked the East India Company to administer this endowment, indicating that—less than a decade before the Anglicist triumphalism of Macaulay's famous Minute on Education—North Indian notables felt no cultural threat from the British administration's educational policies. The GCPI thanked the Nawab for his "munificent donation" and suggested that—rather than found another institution—the income from his endowment could best be spent supporting the existing Delhi *madrasa*. The local committee in Delhi applied the funds from the Nawab's *waqf* to the account of the oriental section of Delhi College, and reassigned part of the government funds to the anglo-vernacular section of the institution.¹²

By the 1830s, power on the GCPI in Calcutta had shifted definitively in favour of the Anglicists, leading to Macaulay's Minute that has been quoted ever since:

... it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degree fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.¹³

He also opined that the government should cease printing Arabic and Sanskrit books, and even at those oriental institutions that survived this change in policy, stipends to students should cease.¹⁴

In Delhi, the new policies emanating from Calcutta resulted in the cancellation of a number of student stipends. What's more, the Principal of Delhi College, J.H. Taylor, using some creative book-keeping, had been using funds from the Nawab's *waqf* to meet expenses in both sections of the college, resulting in further damage to the oriental section. The local committee, fighting what amounted to a rearguard action against Calcutta's policies, protested that the state had "greatly injured the interests of the institution." It also

¹² Home (Public), File # 8-14 & KW (15 July 1840), National Archives of India [NAI].

¹³ Sharp (ed.), *Selections*, Pt. I, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

investigated Taylor's actions, expressing doubts that "the wishes of the Nawab have been fulfilled", and reprimanded him for damaging "one of the few public colleges left to the people in which Oriental Literature is still being taught under the patronage of the British Government."¹⁵ Sir James Thomason, who later became Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwestern Provinces and who is usually thought of as an Anglicist, emphasised Delhi College's unique character: "The Oriental College in Delhi . . . occupies a prominent part in the eyes of a large and influential body of the native community, whom it is most important to convince of our liberality and sincerity. Great and successful exertions had been made [by those connected with the college locally], and these it would be unjust and unwise to disappoint."¹⁶ Among the local notables who supported the college was Mufti Sadr al-Din "Azurda," the *Sadr al-Sudûr* (chief judge) of Delhi, a member of the local committee of public instruction, and a poet who hosted one of the most illustrious literary salons of the city. Azurda's *mushâ'iras* regularly featured the artistry of Ghalib, Momin, and other poets.¹⁷ The local government had no desire to offend public figures of such eminence.

The wrangle over the management of Nawab I'timad al-Daulah's *waqf* continued. Offended by the apparent mismanagement and the changes in government policy was the son-in-law and heir of the Nawab, Sayyid Hamid 'Ali Khan. He was incensed by the cancellation of student stipends, and petitioned the East India Company government to allow him to administer the *waqf*, but that, the Company pointed out, went against the Nawab's original bequest. The local authorities proposed making Hamid 'Ali Khan a permanent member of the local committee of public instruction, which was done. He remained a constant critic of the financial administration of his uncle's *waqf*, no doubt in an attempt to gain control of it. That did not happen, but he did succeed in having a separate Arabic teacher appointed to teach the Shia students.¹⁸

¹⁵ Letter from Lt. Robinson to JH Taylor, d. Delhi, 15 March 1839. Home (Pub), 8-14 & KW (15 July 1840), NAI.

¹⁶ Richey (ed.), *Selections*, Pt. II, p. 257.

¹⁷ 'Abd al-Rahmân Parvâz Islâhî, 1977. *Muftî Sadr al-Dîn Azurda: Hayât, Shâkhsiyyat, 'Ilmî aur Adabî Kârnamê*. New Delhi: Maktaba-ye Jâmi'a, 1977, pp. 33-38, 47-51.

¹⁸ Home (Pub), 8-14 & KW (15 July 1840), NAI; Report of the GCPI, Bengal, 1836, pp. 105-06, IOLR, V/24/946. The government clearly regarded Hamid 'Ali Khan as a troublemaker, but a necessary one, and thus acceded to his desire, and his candidate, for a Shia Maulawi. As a coda to this story, during the 1857 revolt,

The government in Calcutta ultimately relented and changed its policy on oriental learning. The Governor General, Lord Auckland, issued a minute on native education in 1839 that mitigated somewhat the effects of the Macaulay pronouncement. Auckland's prose, however, lacks the ringing cadences of Macaulay's, and hence it is little remembered. Amidst the muddle of his phraseology is the possibility that some funding for "efficient" oriental learning might still be forthcoming:

... The plain meaning of the proceedings and the professions of the Government seems to me to have been that, stipends having been everywhere discontinued, it would do nothing towards the abolition of the ancient seminaries of Oriental learning, so long as the community might desire to take advantage of them... [W]hile I see at the same time nothing but good to be derived from the employment of the funds which have been assigned to each Oriental Seminary, exclusively on instruction in, or in connection with, that seminary. I would also give a decided preference, within these institutions, to the promotion in the first instance of perfect efficiency in Oriental instruction, and only after that object shall have been properly secured in proportion to the demand for it, would I assign the funds to the creation or support of English classes.¹⁹

The government in Calcutta also replaced J.H. Taylor as Principal with an Orientalist scholar, Felix Boutros, who had the advantage of knowing the languages he was supposed to be supervising. Boutros is mentioned in the sources a French scholar of Arabic, but his name suggests that he was an Arab Christian from either Egypt or the Levant who had been educated in France.²⁰

Curricular Creativity

Under Boutros and his successor as Principal, Dr. Aloys Sprenger, Delhi College developed a high reputation as a centre of learning

S. Hamid 'Ali Khan joined the forces in the palace. He escaped when Delhi fell to the British and was captured. A debate ensued about whether to execute him, during which Hodson (responsible for shooting the Mughal princes) revealed that S. Hamid 'Ali Khan had been a British informer from within the palace. A necessary troublemaker, indeed! He survived, and in the early 1860s, he once again petitioned the government to appoint a Shia Maulawi at the revived Delhi College. Delhi Residency & Miscell. Files #s 4-5 re Hamid 'Ali Khan, 29-30 October 1857; File #3 re Delhi College, 24 May 1861, Delhi States Archives [DSA].

¹⁹ Sharp (ed.), *Selections*, Pt. I, pp. 150-51.

²⁰ MDK, pp. 154-55; cf. Home (Pub), 8-14 & KW (15 July 1840), NAI.

in the Mughal capital, and as an arena of dialogue between eastern and western learning, carried out in Urdu. This was a phenomenon that Macaulay's grandiloquent minute did not foresee. The Orientalist-Anglicist controversy envisaged either traditional, religiously-based literary learning or else western learning in English, but not a combination of the two with instruction in a modern Indian language. This successful experiment was made possible by the many learned men of talent who participated as teachers, students, and administrators. Mufti Sadr al-Din Azurda balanced Sayyid Hamid 'Ali Khan on the local committee, and served frequently as an examiner of students and a recruiter of teachers. The local committee originally hoped to employ a disciple of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz as the head Arabic teacher,²¹ showing that there was no animosity between at least a part of the Shah's lineage and the British administration. By the early 1830s, the Arabic teacher was Mamluk 'Ali Nanautawi, a distinguished Islamic scholar from a lineage that later produced the founder of the Deoband school.²² As Persian teacher, the committee hired Imam Bakhsh "Sehbaï," who had distinguished himself as a tutor to a number of leading families. Even Sayyid Hamid 'Ali Khan admired his erudition and had employed him to tutor his sons, in spite of the fact that Imam Bakhsh was a Sunni.²³

The poet Ghalib was also a candidate for the Persian post at Delhi College, but failed to get it because of a famous misunderstanding. Ghalib arrived for the interview in his palanquin, but when Thomason, who was conducting the interviews, failed to come out to the curb to receive the poet—did not greet him, in other words, in the way Ghalib felt befitting—he did not go through with the interview, but left in a huff.²⁴ Thomason explained to the poet that he was bound by regulations. If this were a *darbâr*, a formal welcome would be in order. In such courtly rituals, the British still held to Mughal forms, but not in interviews for employment.²⁵ This anecdote could simply be an amusing reflection of the poet's problematic

²¹ This was Maulawi Rashid al-Din Khan. The records are incomplete in the 1820s, and he may have been employed at the Madrasa in that period. BC #s 25694-95, Vol. 909, pp. 551-52, IOLR.

²² Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 74-75.

²³ Khwāja Md. Hamid, "Imām Bakhsh Sehba'ī". *Nawā-ye Adab*, 14, 1 (Jan. 1963) pp. 14-33.

²⁴ Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Ghalib: Life and Letters*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1969, pp. 62-63.

²⁵ For a description of one such *darbâr*, see Bishop Heber, as quoted in Percival

relationship with the British. It was not an easy one, and Ghalib never fully received what he felt he was due. His pride, but also a disjunction between what he and his British interlocutor felt was proper etiquette, got in the way of his securing a post at the college.²⁶ Imam Bakhsh was presumably more accommodating.

Notwithstanding such episodes, the fact remains that Orientalist scholars, British administrators, and local literati and notables were all part of making Delhi College what it was. Delhi College's creative role included not only instruction, but also translation, publication, and popularisation. By teaching both oriental and western subjects in Urdu, the college not only opened lines of communication between its two sections, but also facilitated the development of Urdu as a vehicle of scholarly prose and public discourse. The literary career of Urdu until the early nineteenth century had been as a medium of courtly poetry, but that was beginning to change. The printing press, in lithograph form, made possible the printing of works in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu calligraphy. Presses in Delhi printed newspapers, the *Delhī Urdū Akhbâr* and the *Sayyid al-Akbâr*. In the realm of religious reform, the Mujahidin leaders—another branch of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's lineage—lithographed their writings in pamphlet form for popular distribution.²⁷ Delhi College was only a part of a complex of literary and intellectual currents in the Mughal capital at the time. The climate of creativity was facilitated by *Pax Britannica*, but inspired by a desire on the part of local elites to tap sources of renewal from the Islamic and Indian classical pasts as well as ideas from the West. In contrast to the crepuscular portrait painted by Spear,²⁸ this was a period marked by renaissance and revival. Vernacularisation, that would make more knowledge available to more people, was essential to this process.

Macaulay had disparaged the "vernacular dialects" as being unfit "vehicles for conveying knowledge." His opinion, both uninformed and condescending, nevertheless foresaw the need for translation and

Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*. Delhi: Oriental Reprints, 1969; 1st pub. 1951, pp. 69–71.

²⁶ Cf. Peter Hardy, "Ghalib and the British". In: R. Russell (ed.), *Ghalib, the Poet and His Age* London: Allen & Unwin, 1972, pp. 54–69.

²⁷ David Lelyveld, *Zuban-e Urdu-e Mu-alla*; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 67–68; Marc Gaborieau, "Late Persian, Early Urdu: The Case of 'Wahhabi' Literature (1818–1857)". In: Francoise Delvoye (ed.), *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies*. New Delhi: Manohar, 1994, pp. 170–96.

²⁸ In *Twilight of the Mughals*.

adaptation. In the development of textbooks and other forms of scholarly prose, Delhi College was at the centre of a major effort of translation, further evidence of its mediating role. Its linguistic mediation involved translating texts into Urdu out of Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit for its oriental section, and out of English and other western languages for its anglo-vernacular section. Translation, however, is an inexact science, dependent on the skill of persons who may know one language better than the other, on varying interpretations of meaning, and upon teamwork that is sometimes in short supply. Translation can betray, as well as convey, meaning. What concepts were translated and what was understood by readers of the texts are matters that are not easy to decipher. Nevertheless, to obtain adequate textbooks, the college had to initiate the task.

In the early 1840s, the Principal, Mr. Boutros, started the Vernacular Translation Society, following the earlier example of the Calcutta Book Society but at a more advanced level. The society translated textbooks in medicine, law, science, economics and history from English into Urdu. Teachers and students both participated in the work of translation, creating their own textbooks in the process—an interesting melding of the oral and written traditions. Individual local benefactors helped finance the first translations and publications; then sales of texts helped the effort along. Publications appeared from a number of local presses and eventually from the college's own press, the *Matba' al-'Ulûm*. The government also agreed to finance the translation of math and geometry texts in order to bring western sciences to students in the oriental section.²⁹ The list of the society's publications includes basic textbooks such as Euclid's geometry (which had been part of the Arabic as well as the western curriculum), and histories of England, Greece, and Rome, and the geography of India. Science texts included both "natural philosophy" and *yunânî tibb* (also from Arabic). Translations of oriental classics from Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit included Sa'dî's *Gulistân*, selections from *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Laila and Majnun*, and the *Dharma Shastras*.³⁰ The Vernacular Translation Society, therefore, made it possible for students

²⁹ MDK, pp. 127–47; Khwāja Ahmad Fārūqī, *Dhauq o Justajū* (Lucknow: Idarah-ye Farugh-e Urdu, 1967), pp. 233–91; Intizār Mirzā, "Qadīm Dehlī Kālej kī adabī khidmat kā tanqīdī jā'iza". Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, Delhi University, Dept. of Urdu, 1984.

³⁰ MDK, pp. 148–53; Report of the GCPI, Bengal for 1840/41–1841/42, App. XV by Boutros, d. Delhi, 1 July 1842, IOLR, V/24/948.

of Delhi College to participate in both "the revival and improvement of literature" and "the promotion of a knowledge of the sciences," without any apparent conflict between the two goals. Although the two sections of the school remained discrete, the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy seemed to be much less salient in the Mughal capital than it did in the chambers of government in Calcutta.

The study of western sciences such as astronomy and calculus was in great demand among students of the college, including those in the oriental section. Delhi College students were cognisant of the Copernican revolution,³¹ even though most did not study English literature or western philosophy. There are several reasons for this that have little or nothing to do with religious prejudice or cultural resistance. The main reason was simply that in Delhi at that time, a knowledge of English was not a requirement for government service. Even after Persian was disestablished in the mid-1830s, Urdu was officially used in the local courts. Knowledge of Persian remained the mark of a man of culture, Urdu the language of everyday discourse and, increasingly, of government and public business. Hence a traditional literary education, plus—to be sure—some personal connections, were sufficient to gain access to government service. Many Delhi College students, of whatever religion, were willing to learn to speak some English, if only as a useful means of communication with their rulers. If they pursued literary studies, however, they usually did so in the classical languages of Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit.

The curriculum at the college shows that the distinction between Oriental and English learning, while maintained organisationally, was less clear in practice. Indeed, Boutros hoped to make the annual exams comparable in all subjects—except literature—for the students of both sections of the college. In the Oriental *madrasa*, senior Arabic students of Maulana Mamluk 'Ali were examined on the *Diwân* of Mutanabbi, the *Maqâmât* of Hariri, and excerpts from *Alf Laila* (The 1001 Nights), on grammar and composition, and on their abil-

³¹ In fact, Newton's *Principia* and other works of European mathematics and astronomy that supported the heliocentric view of the universe had already been translated into Arabic and Persian in India in the late 18th century by Maulawi Tafazzul Husain Khan of Lucknow. He is mentioned in the *Asiatick Annual Register* of 1803, pp. 1–8; and in Abu Talib Khan, *Ma'âthir-e Tâlibî* (personal communication between the author and Md. Tavakoli-Targhi). Cf. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Orientalism's Genesis Amnesia" and CA Bayly, "Colonial Star Wars: The Politics of the Heavens in India" (draft, courtesy of CA Bayly, in author's possession).

ity to translate Arabic works into Urdu (some of which were then published by the translation society). Students of Persian studying with Maulawi Imam Bakhsh were examined on the *Inshâ-ye Abû'l Fazl* (a manual of correspondence by the Mughal historian), the *Sikandarnâma* of Nizami (Tales of Alexander the Great), plus grammar, composition, and translation into Urdu. In history, they read the *Tarîkh-e Timûrî* (History of Timur), in geography, the *Mir'at al-Aqâlâm* (A Reflection of the Climes), both in Urdu. In law, Sunni students read the *Hidâya* (a digest of Hanafi *fiqh*); and Shias (studying separately at the insistence of Sayyid Hamid 'Ali Khan) read *Sharî'at al-Islâm* and *Nafat al-Imân* (digests of Shia *fiqh*). In math, the *madrasa* students studied the Urdu translation of Brown's arithmetic, a standard textbook of the day, and in geometry—predictably—Euclid. In the Sanskrit classes, an experiment to teach math via the *Lilavati* (a mathematical portion of Bhaskara's *Siddhanta Shiromani*) did not succeed. Students complained that it was too difficult to learn both Bhaskara's Sanskrit and math simultaneously; the teachers agreed and turned to math textbooks. Other subjects included logic, principles of natural philosophy, principles of legislation and of political economy, and the history of India.³²

The curriculum of the English institution included many of the same subjects. The students learned English and Urdu grammar and composition, and read literary selections. Urdu classes included instruction from Platts' grammar of Hindustani, and readings from Mir Amman's *Bâgh o Bahâr* (Tale of Four Dervishes) and *Anwâr-e Suhailî* (Animal Fables). In English, lower classes read from Richardson's *Selections* of poetry and prose, Bacon's *Essays*, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*. Upper classes tackled Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Richard III*, more of Bacon's *Essays*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Apart from the English classes, the textbooks were Urdu translations of basic texts of that time: Goldsmith's histories of England, Greece, and Rome, Marshman's history of India, Mill's political economy, Macnaughton on Hindu and Muslim law, principles of social legislation—*Usûl-e Qawâ'id al-Akhilâq*—compiled from the works of Bentham, Prinsep's abstract of civil regulations, Whately's

³² MDK, pp. 81–102; Report of the GCPI, NWP for 1843–44, App. N and R by Boutros; Report of the GCPI, NWP for 1844–45, pp. 73–76, App. A, IOLR, V/24/905.

logic and rhetoric, and general works on geography and agriculture. In mathematics, Brown's arithmetic textbook, Euclid's geometry (a constant), the principles of algebra, calculus, and plane trigonometry were taught to various classes. The lower classes were also instructed in drawing and surveying. In science, in addition to general natural philosophy and physiology, other textbooks on the list of translations included Herschel's astronomy, a manual of chemistry by O'Shaughnessy, and Goldsmith's animated nature (zoology).³³

The Impact of Print

In the generation between 1827 and 1857, hundreds of students, Hindu, Muslim, and a few Christians,³⁴ attended Delhi College. They studied with the teachers already mentioned, and many went on to become teachers at the college themselves. They worked under the aegis of the various principals: J.H. Taylor (whom we encountered above), Felix Boutros (who replaced him and who was the moving spirit behind the translation effort), and then Dr. Aloys Sprenger, a medical doctor from the Tyrol who had joined the Bengal medical service in order to pursue his other, more compelling interest—Arabic and Persian philology—via a career in India. Dr. Sprenger was especially influential in the development of publications at the college press. In 1845, he founded the journal *Qiran al-Sa'âdain*, mentioned above as summarising—metaphorically—the mission of the college.³⁵

Qiran al-Sa'âdain was only one of the journals published by the college, and it did not survive for long. Another, that enjoyed a longer run, was the *Khairkhwah-ye Hind* (renamed the *Muhibb-e Hind*), edited

³³ *Ibid.*, in comparing lists of works in MDK and reports of the GCPI, it is not always clear whether lists of works translated by the Vernacular Translation Society, as reported by Boutros, represent aspirations or accomplishment. MDK's lists of curriculum seem more definite; these reflect the GCPI reports, with modifications over the years.

³⁴ Enrollment figures taken from GCPI reports are cited in MDK. In 1845, for example, there were 460 students, 215 in the Oriental section (75 studying Arabic, 109 Persian, and 31 Sanskrit), and 245 in the Anglo-Vernacular section. Of these, 299 were Hindu, 146 Muslim, and 15 Christian (p. 46). In 1853, there were only 320 students, 121 in the Oriental section (Arabic 39, Persian 57, Sanskrit 25), and 199 in the Anglo-Vernacular. Of these, 217 were Hindu, 93 Muslim, and 10 Christian (p. 55).

³⁵ On Sprenger, see MDK, pp. 155–56; Obituary in JRAS (April 1894): 394–95; and M. Ikram Chaghatai, "Dr. Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893): His Life and Contribution to Urdu Language and Literature". *Iqbal Review* 36, 1 (1995) pp. 77–99.

by Master Ramchandra. Ramchandra, a *kâyastha* who eventually converted to Christianity, was a math professor at Delhi College and intellectually one of its leading lights.³⁶ He wrote an original treatise on algebra that received favourable notice in Europe and ultimately earned him an award from the government. In his writing and editing of *Muhibb-e Hind*, Ramchandra gave evidence of a voracious and eclectic mind that, in addition, reflected the ideas that were being discussed at Delhi College and in intellectual circles in Delhi in the 1840s.³⁷ Some of the titles of articles written by Ramchandra that appeared in the pages of *Muhibb-e Hind* exemplify the range of topics: "The Divisibility of Matter—a Strange Description from the Resarches of European Scientists and Scholars" [*Aik 'ajīb hâl, hukû-manâyân o 'âqilân-e Yûrap kî tahqîqât men sê*]; "A Description of a Diving Bell by which means Things Sunken in the Sea may be Retrieved" [*Dhikr-e Dâ'iwing Bell, jis sê dâba hû'â asbâb samundar men sê nikal saken*], articles on astronomy, on the work of Sir Isaac Newton, and a discussion of human reason [*Insân kî 'aql kâ bayân*]. Ramchandra also included articles about ancient Greece ("On Demosthenes"), and about other Asian cultures ("On Confucius," and serialized translations of Lane's *Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and a biography of Shah Abbas of Iran). Other serializations included Vernacular Translation Society publications such as "The History of England" [*Tarikh-e Inglistân*] and Elphinstone's *The Kingdom of Caboul*, and original publications of the college press, such as *Tarikh-e Yûsufî*, the travels of Yusuf Khan Kambalposh to England. Ramchandra even took on the scholarship of pandits in "A Discussion of the Mistakes that Indian Scholars have made in Various Studies of the Shastras" [*Hâl un ghaltîyon kâ jo keh fâzilân-e Hind ne 'ulûm-e mukhtalifah Shastar men kî hain*]. One of the regular features in this periodical, devoted largely to dissemination of new knowledge about East and West, was a selection of Urdu poetry derived from accounts of local *mushâ'iras*. This was evidence that relations between the college and local literati were

³⁶ On Ramchandra, see MDK, pp. 168–72; Edwin Jacob, *A Memoir of Professor Yesudas Ramchandra*. Kanpur: Christ Church Mission Press, 1902; Sadiqur Rahman Qidwai, *Master Ramchandra*. Delhi: Department of Urdu, Delhi University, 1961; and Sayyida Ja'far, *Mâster Râmchandra aur Urdû Nâthr ke Irîqâ' men unkâ hissa*. Hyderabad: Abul Kalam Azad Oriental Research Institute, 1960.

³⁷ Ramchandra, *A Treatise on Problems of Maxima and Minima Solved by Algebra*. London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1859; cf. Dhruv Raina and S. Irfan Habib. "Cultural Foundations of a Nineteenth Century Mathematical Project". *Economic and Political Weekly*: 24, 37 (16 Sept. 1989), pp. 2082–86.

still good. Ramchandra also discussed new technologies of agriculture and irrigation, and summarised works of history and popular science.³⁸

Some of the dialogue between East and West at Delhi College occurred thanks to personalities associated with the college, directly or indirectly. Essential to this dialogue was the development of Urdu as a language of public discussion and the transmission of knowledge in print. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh College, is sometimes erroneously named among the graduates of Delhi College, perhaps because his first scheme for Aligarh was patterned after the two sections, and the Urdu medium, of the Delhi institution. He did not study there, but he did collaborate with Maulvi Imam Bakhsh, Persian professor at the college, on a study of the topography of Delhi, the *Athâr al-Sanâdîd*, which remains a leading account of the old city before much of it was destroyed during and after the 1857 revolt.³⁹ Maulana Mamluk 'Ali Nanautawi, Arabic professor at the college, had among his students and descendants scholars who eventually helped found the Madrasa at Deoband.⁴⁰ Delhi College was thus, in no small measure, the precursor of the two supposedly opposing centers of Indo-Muslim cultural revival and reform in the late nineteenth century: Aligarh and Deoband.

The role of the college in the literary life of the Mughal capital was significant. The relationship of Mufti Sadr al-Din Azurda to the local college committee has already been noted. The Mufti took part in examining advanced students in Urdu and Persian, and the more skilled among them gained access to his literary salon. The college press and its publications were respected in the city. Maulawi Muhammad Baqir, founder in 1836 of one of the first Urdu newspapers in Delhi, the *Delhî Urdû Akhbâr*, printed a number of the Vernacular Society's translations on his press and sent his son, Muhammad Husain Azad, to the college.⁴¹ Mohan Lal Kashmiri, who studied surveying at the college and was one of its earliest graduates, accom-

³⁸ S.R. Qidwai, *Master Ramchandra*, app., pp. 178–94; Khwâja Ahmad Fârûqî, *Dhauq o Justajî*, pp. 233–91; S. Irfan Habib and Dhruv Raina, "The Discourse on Scientific Rationality: A Study of Master Ramchandra". In: T. Niranjana & P. Sudhir & V. Dharshwar (eds.), *Interrogating Modernity*. Calcutta: Seagull, 1993, pp. 348–68; *Muhibb-e Hind*, #s 14–37 (some missing #s), (Sept. 1848–Aug./Sept. 1850), IOLR.

³⁹ Christian W. Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: *Asar al-Sanadid*". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1972), pp. 135–46.

⁴⁰ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 74–75.

⁴¹ MDK, pp. 159–79; David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 124–28.

panied Burnes to Bukhara and contributed to the accounts of those explorations. Other graduates of the college included Maulawi Nazir Ahmad (1833–1912), whose father sent him from Bijnor to Delhi to study traditional Islamic sciences. When Nazir Ahmad was offered a stipend at Delhi College, his father agreed, on one condition: that he would not learn English. He did so only later in life, became a Deputy Collector in the British administration, and helped translate the Criminal Code into Urdu. He is best known as the author of numerous didactic novels, some of the first works in that form in Urdu. His first novel, *Mir'at al-'Arūs* (The Bride's Mirror, 1869), written originally for the instruction of his daughters, won a prize from the British Indian government as a "useful work of literature in the vernacular."⁴² Another early graduate was Pyarey Lal "Ashub", known both as an Urdu poet and author of the ethnography, *Rusūm-e Hind*.⁴³

Muhammad Husain Azad (1830–1910), the originator of literary criticism in Urdu, was another graduate of Delhi College. His father, Maulawi Muhammad Baqir, mentioned above as the proprietor of the *Delhī Urdū Akhbār*, later supported the 1857 revolt and was executed by the British. Muhammad Husain had worked for his father's newspaper and fled Delhi after the revolt. He was later able to join government service in the Punjab and there wrote his major work, *Ab-e Hayāt*, a history of Urdu literature. His judgements on the literature of the past bear the stamp of his education, and his loss. As a great prose stylist, he often misjudged or disparaged the poetic muse of others, although when evaluating poets, he tended to glorify the poets of Delhi over all others. He served as the Secretary of the *Anjuman-e Panjāb*, a literary and educational reform association in Lahore. Together with W.R.M. Holroyd, the Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab in the 1870s, and Hali, another Urdu poet with ties to Delhi, Azad helped institute a series of *mushā'iras* in Lahore that promoted a new style of poetry, more topical and "natural" (according to English standards of the day) than the lyrical *ghazal*.⁴⁴

⁴² Ifitkhār Ahmad Siddiqī, *Maulwī Nazir Ahmad Dehlawī: Ahwāl o Athār*. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-ye Adab, 1971; C.M. Naim, "Prize-Winning Adab". In: Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 290–314.

⁴³ Pyāre Lāl Ashūb Dehlawī, *Rusūm-e Hind*. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-ye Adab, 1961; 1st pub. 1868.

⁴⁴ C.M. Naim, "Mughal and British Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A Comparison". In: Barbara S. Miller (ed.), *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*. Delhi: Oxford

Yet another well-known graduate of the college was Maulawi Zaka Allah (1832–1911), scion of a Delhi family that had served as tutors to the Mughal house. Zaka Allah taught mathematics and wrote prodigiously during his long career as an educator. Among his works, in addition to a large number of mathematics textbooks, was a laudatory history in Urdu of Victoria's reign, the *Viktorîa Nâma*. He is the subject of a respectful biography by C.F. Andrews.⁴⁵

In providing an atmosphere for harmonious cultural interaction between East and West, and in producing a group of men prepared to co-operate with British rule while not renouncing their own cultural allegiances, Delhi College was remarkably successful. The British, while mainly concerned to patronise education in order to produce a cadre of capable Indian public servants, nevertheless showed sympathy for local cultural sensitivities. In the persons of Boutros and Sprenger, the principals of Delhi College in the 1840s, they found capable men to bridge cultural differences. Not everything went smoothly, however. The dispute over the management of Nawab I'timad al-Daulah's *wagf* was only one symptom of cultural and political differences. Ramchandra's conversion to Christianity caused a scandal and prompted the withdrawal of great numbers of students in the early 1850s. Principals who succeeded Sprenger, Messrs. J. Cargill and F. Taylor, were neither culturally as sensitive nor intellectually as capable as their predecessors. The college was attacked and its library sacked during the 1857 revolt. Taylor was killed; Ramchandra fled. Maulawi Imam Bakhsh, though innocent, was executed in the vengeance that followed the British retaking of the city. Delhi College was reinstituted in the early 1860s, but it was never quite the same. Delhi was attached to the Punjab for administrative purposes and the government decided to concentrate its educational patronage in Lahore. The Madrasa of Ghazi al-Din Khan at Ajmeri Gate became an anglo-vernacular secondary school in the late nineteenth century. After independence, Delhi College—renamed Zakir Husain College of Delhi University—was housed at the Madrasa, but later moved out to new, larger buildings. The Madrasa is once again an anglo-vernacular secondary school; its buildings, recently

University Press, 1992, pp. 259–76; for a discussion of Azad and Hali's poetry and the changing canons of taste, see Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, espec. pt. 3.

⁴⁵ C.F. Andrews, *Zaka Ullah of Delhi*. Lahore: Universal Books, 1976; 1st pub. 1929, pp. 57–66.

restored, have received a prize for historic preservation from the Delhi municipality.

In the long run, one of the greatest accomplishments of Delhi College was its contribution to Urdu language and literature. Through its teaching, sponsorship of translations, and the writings and publications of its teachers and students, Delhi College contributed to the development of Urdu prose as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge. It encouraged the development of a scholarly prose style, more direct than the flowery court prose of old, and contributed to the development of new literary forms, such as the novel, the short story, the essay, and literary criticism. New literary forms and styles encouraged the exchange of ideas in an emergent periodical literature, including newspapers and the periodicals published by the college and other presses. Delhi College was thus an institution that mediated between eastern and western cultures and mentalities, and did so in the vernacular, contributing to an Urdu-speaking and reading elite in North India, composed of individuals of all religious persuasions.

A BOOK WITH TWO VIEWS—GHULAM
HUSAIN KHAN'S "AN OVERVIEW
OF THE MODERN TIMES"

IQBAL G. KHAN

This voluminous book bearing the rather grandiose title *Sair al-Muta'akkkhirîn* or "An Overview of the Modern Age" by Sayyid Ghulam Husain Tabataba'î Hasani (b. 1727) has been chosen for analysis and contextualisation in this chapter because of its profound relevance to the theme of 'reciprocal perceptions of different cultures' in early modern India. Ghulam Husain who wrote when Clive, Hastings, et al. were taking over Eastern India, made a number of precise and profound observations about the way in which the early British Company administration was causing distortions in the traditional relations between the ruler and the ruled, an indirect reference to the phenomenon we now call 'Colonialisation'. Interestingly enough, the rulers were never berated by Ghulam Husain for being white or foreign; the fault lay in their ignorance of Indian norms of governance and their perception of themselves as merchants and not enough as rulers.

Were all these criticisms a part of a Mughal bureaucrat's search for the order he had known under the Pax Mughalica, or was it a subtle critique of the foreigners who had replaced the Mughals in Bengal?¹ Whatever the 'mentality' involved, this history has descriptions of a glorious past, a sad narrative of Mughal decline, a unique history of the later Mughals and their final succumbing to the military-diplomatic supremacy of the British Company. What makes this book unique is the critique it contains of early colonial rule, mostly of the Company under the predecessors of Warren Hastings, as well as under Hastings himself. This particular part of the book also contains an impassioned appeal to Hastings because, in the eyes of

¹ For a discussion on this hypothesis, see Kumkum Chatterji, "A View of our Times; The Construction of a Bureaucratic Tradition in the late 18th Century Eastern India". In: Richard Barnett (ed.), *Re-examining Early Modern South Asia*. New Delhi, Forthcoming. See also I.G. Khan, "Technology and the Question of Elite Intervention in 18th C.N. India". In: R. Barnett, *Re-examining . . .*, passim.

Ghulam Husain, only he with his respect for Indian wisdom could somehow correct the 'mistakes' of the Company. Once this was done, the English Company would become as effective and popular as the Mughal governors of the early 18th century.² It is perfectly possible that Ghulam Husain failed to realise that the intention of the East India Company in Calcutta was not to acquire popularity but to extract profit and tribute.

The original Persian version of the *Sair* was written in c. 1783 and was published much later by Munshi Nawal Kishore's Press in 2 volumes in August 1866. This latter edition by Nawal Kishore has been used as the primary informer here. The English translation, rather accurate in itself, was done by a French Creole named Raymond—probably a Turkish Christian attached as translator to Robert Clive of Bengal. This Raymond converted to Islam and took on the name Hajji Mustafa—as well as the nom de plume 'Nota Manus' for this book. His variegated identity, his translation and footnotes, all constitute another parallel discourse by a European 'other'. A discourse which is as interesting as the original Persian text.

Mustafa's translated version bore the rather long and self-explanatory title i.e., *The Seir Mutaqherin or Review of Modern Times being an History of India, From the year 1118 to the year 1194 Hejirah. Containing in General, the Reigns of the SEVEN LAST EMPERORS OF HINDOSTAN, and in particular, AN ACCOUNT OF THE ENGLISH WARS IN BENGAL, with a circumstantial detail of the rise and fall of the families of SERADJ-ED-DOWLAH and SHUDJA-ED-DOULAH, THE LAST SOVEREIGNS OF BENGAL AND OUD; To which the Author has added A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ENGLISH GOVERNMENT AND POLICY IN THOSE COUNTRIES, DOWN TO THE YEAR 1783. The whole written in Persian by SEID-GHOLAM-HOSSEIN-KHAN, An Indian Nobleman of High Rank, who wrote both as Actor and as Spectator.*

In fact prior to the shattering defeat of the Mughal governor at Plassey in 1757, this same 'Indian Nobleman' had been a clerk for the Mughal officers in Bihar and Bengal, such as the Nazim of Bengal, 'Ali Vardi Khan. He then joined the forces of the Company under Major Carnac. He was of use to the Company as a *Munshi*

² This kind of opposition seems to anticipate almost a hundred years, the tactic of the Nationalist Press, when, to circumvent Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, most attacks on the British administration were in the form of 'friendly advice' to the imperial rulers. Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*. Delhi: OUP, 1990.

(clerk) to General Goddard and his fortunes were rather turbulent throughout this period. Nonetheless this man as well as his translator were ardent optimists when it came to Warren Hastings, and hence the dedication. "This History of India by MIR HOSSEIN-KHAN IS HUMBL Y INSCRIBED TO THE HONORABLE WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ., Two years after his departure from Bengal", i.e., 1787.

This was the year when Mustafa finished the translation and sent the final draft to the printers. The first edition of the translation was printed in 1788 at Calcutta in three volumes quarto. The large number of explanatory footnotes by the translator would be quite helpful for a western audience and a copy of this edition was hurriedly shipped to London so that it could be used as evidence in defence of Warren Hastings whose trial had begun in 1786 and had gone on till 1795; but the entire set was lost at sea—though whether Hastings could have been saved by the testimony of a sympathetic Indian writer and his French translator is open to serious doubt. Hastings was sentenced to stay back in England—to a life of luxury on his country estate. By 1802 only two sets of this translated version were circulating in London—one was with Richard Johnson and the other was gifted to the Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones.³

The book was re-set and reprinted as *The Seir Mutaqherin* by Nota Manus in 4 volumes at Calcutta in 1789 and then in 1902; a 1990 Pakistani reprint of this set was published and this copy has been consulted for this chapter. Although from the author's preface in the Persian original it would seem to have been written to pander to the 'Orientalism' of the East India Company's officials, it is in fact a set of brief histories which highlight the decadence and petty politics of the Indian princes—and then of the Company officials. On going through the complete history it emerges as a sincere attempt to correct the lacunae in the historical as well as administrative information base of Warren Hastings who appeared to the author as a 'White Nawab' sincerely trying to clean up the corrupt Company administration in Bengal. The author believed that once the company officials were chastised for their mistakes and were made aware of the disastrous impact they were having on India's economy and

³ Anon., "A View of the Political State of Bengal . . . previous to the year 1780". *Asiatic Annual Register*, 1802, p. 101. I am indebted to Dr. Gulfishan Khan, Research Associate at AMU, Aligarh, for this reference.

society, then, under the “excellent guide Warren Hastings”, this same company could restore order and prosperity to the once flourishing provinces of Bengal and Bihar. This idea is best expressed in the words of Ghulam Husain and Hajji Mustafa—because no one could have said it better. Ghulam Husain strongly felt that:

Books of history, and a review of the different stations and various successions of men are of manifold conveniency, and produce an infinity of advantages, as if an inspection of the historical page afforded an insight into the phenomena of the Almighty Artist’s full powers and a glimpse into the most glorious part of the Creator’s performance . . . On the other hand, men by such an inspection of the meanness of insolence, and of the turpitude of oppression, are often put upon their guard, and often reclaimed from their shameful conduct. It is with this view that I decided to furnish to some intelligent man [presumably Warren Hastings], the means of giving the public at some distant time hereafter, an idea of the preceding reigns; and to prevent his being stopped short, as by a chasm, on discovering that links are wanting from the chain of past events, therefore I wrote of the period 1118 to 1198 Hijri . . . (c. 1705–1785 AD).¹

What we have here is therefore an outstanding example of early indigenous discourse on early colonial rule expressed with the sincerity of an erstwhile Mughal bureaucrat who is trying to come to terms with his changed situation and of seeking work under people who had always been ‘mere merchants’. This is the discourse of the erstwhile Mughal nobility because Ghulam Husain’s father was an Irani noble in Mughal imperial service named Hidayat ‘Ali Khan who was charged with the upkeep of Nizam al-Mulk’s estate in Bareilly while the latter was busy trying to establish the Hyderabad Nawabi far in the south. Following the continuous decline in the authority of the Imperial authority in and around Delhi, Hidayat Khan moved to Patna² from where his son Ghulam Husain was absorbed into the service of ‘Ali Vardi Khan, the Nazim of Bengal who was also related to his mother. By 1773 he had acquired enough *jâgîrs* and lands to have been in a position to stand surety for a *zamîndâr* friend. As was bound to happen in those days of overbidding for their ‘*yâradârî*’ revenue farms, the *zamîndâr* was unable to

¹ Ghulam Husain, *Sair* (Persian), I, pp. 2–3; see also translation by Nota Manus, *Seir*, Calcutta, 1902, Vol. I, pp. 1–3. Strangely though, the laudatory references to Hastings in the Persian original are not to be found in the English edition of 1902.

² *Seir*, Tr. Vol. III, pp. 264–74.

pay the Company's dues and absconded. Ghulam Husain lost his entire estate to the Company on account of his trust in human honesty. His poor state and his skill with the pen attracted the attention of General Goddard who gave him a job as a *Munshi* or writer in the Governor's office in Chunargarh. He was later employed by Nawab Asaf al-Daula of Awadh.⁶

The other narrative that is before us is that of the translator of this very book, a refugee from the other 'great empire in decline', namely the Ottoman empire.⁷ Hajji Mustafa started life in India as a translator to Col. Clive. He was probably a French Creole brought up in Istanbul and who became a Muslim and adopted the name of Mustafa. His fluency in Persian and English enabled a very good translation into 'broken and unintelligible English'. Once the critical importance of the *Sair* became widely known, this text was sought to be labelled as 'an English fabrication by the Frenchman of the name of Mustafa'. However a second translator of the critical part of the *Sair*, who mysteriously signs himself as "T" in the Asiatic Annual Register of 1802, firmly rejects this view and quotes Sir William Jones who not only ruled this out but also considered Ghulam Husain an important and impartial resource for the writing of the history of 'modern India'. From his footnotes it is clear that this 'Mustafa'/Raymond/Nota Manus too was worried about the fate of Hastings whom he admired, but literally hated the Company he was keeping.⁸

Before going into the details of the critique written by Ghulam Husain, an important question that one could ask at the outset is whether the *Sair al-Muta'akhhirîn* (the original Persian version) is a modern history in the western sense of the term? It has references to the sources of its information, there is some semblance of chronological discipline and there is a critical objective stance by the author. However, on the basis of such internal evidence it cannot be placed among works such as Gibbons' *Fall of the Roman Empire*. In fact in

⁶ *Seir*, Tr. Vol. IV, pp. 86-92.

⁷ On the synchronicity of the decline of these great Islamic empires, see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago 1979 esp. Vol. III, *passim*; see also numerous theories on the Mughal decline by M. Athar Ali & Irfan Habib et al., "Introduction". In Richard Barnett (ed.), *North India between Empires*. Berkeley, 1980.

⁸ The full import of this remark is evident from the numerous footnotes that Hajji Mustafa has inserted in the text of his translation. See *Seir-ul Muta'akherin*, Vols. I-IV, *passim*.

comparison to earlier Indo-Persian historiography it is largely traditional with its emphasis on the history of emperors and religious personages—Ghulam Husain picks up large chunks of information from 16th and 17th century Persian histories such as the *Ain-e Akbari*, the *Razmnâma*, ‘Abd al-Qadir Badayuni’s *Muntakhab al-Tawârîkh* and Khafi Khan’s *Muntakhab al-Lubâb*, Sujân Rai’s *Khulâsat al-Tawârîkh*, all of which he acknowledges—as modern historians do; but then it was nothing new to the indigenous methodology.⁹

However, this history is modern in the sense that it contains an analytical description of a modern political-economic power, namely the British East India Company. The author is aware of their political system and is conscious of the impact of western civilisation as it tries to establish its hegemony in Eastern India. This history of the mid 18th century and later is based on the author’s personal observations and his access to the main players on both sides. Most importantly, this is an alternative source of information on the period when the East India Company assumed complete control over Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and its hegemony over Awadh and Rohilkhand (1757–1783). It is also ‘modern’ in the sense that it has an argument running through its volumes on the 18th century; the thesis is that the post-Mughal era of the state-building by the Nawabs and Nizams was successful only as long as they followed the administrative tools and standards established by the Mughals. The British were now taking control through a variety of devious means. This deviousness was destroying not only the post-Mughal processes of state-formation, but also the political elites, who with all their administrative and technical skills had retrieved and redeployed the vast economic resources once controlled by the Mughal empire; the possibility of rebellion is also implied.¹⁰

The few good native rulers are praised in this book, but the majority are taken to task. One wonders how different this history would have been had the British not arrived with such obvious success.

⁹ On Mughal historiography, see Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography in Mughal India*. New Delhi, 1978; see also writings on the subject by Mohammad Habib, Irfan Habib, Peter Hardy, et al.

¹⁰ *Sair* (Persian) III, pp. 28–30, on the point about utilisation of 18th century technical resources, see I.G. Khan, *Technical Knowledge and the Elite in N. India C. (1750–1800)*. Ph.D. Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1990 (book in press). This discussion is in response to the objection raised by Prof. Reinhard Schulze of Bern University to my suggestion that the *Sair* is a modern history. I am grateful to Prof. Irfan Habib for enhancing the level of this discussion.

Would the native kings and others of their ilk have escaped the censure that Ghulam Husain lays at their doorstep? Criticising the elite was not alien to the premodern traditions of Indo-Persian historiography and there certainly was a lot to be critical about if a political elite simply let go of the reigns of power and became a mute spectator while a centralised and lucrative imperial system such as the Mughal empire broke up into myriad 'Successor States'.

True to bureaucratic form, when Ghulam Husain realised that Company supremacy had become a reality in Bengal, he pinned his hopes on Warren Hastings (appointed Governor-General of Bengal in 1772) who, he believed, understood and respected the Old System and its practitioners—how far he was successful in using them is another matter.¹¹ The *Sair al-Muta'akhhirîn* therefore sought to present Hastings with a comparative critique of the Company rule ever since it was granted the *diwânî* (right to collect all taxes) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 and had acquired a number of other concessions from the 'native states' up to the time of the completion of the book in 1785 (1198 Hijri).¹²

The author hoped that the "Enlightened Sahibs" especially "Mr. Hushtin" would, in the face of such a closely-argued case, immediately order changes in the company administration and the British would model their rule on that of the Mughal Governors and the Company would co-exist 'peacefully ever after' with the Mughal in Delhi.¹³ Such was the naïvete of a Mughal penman even as the Crown, Parliament and Company took over the largest empire in South Asia.

Ghulam Husain's predicament seems to predate by about 200 years, the problem faced by the contributors to the second volume of the *Cambridge Economic History of India*, i.e., that of "studying a colonial economy without perceiving colonialism".¹⁴ Obviously the needs

¹¹ See his experiments with the *ijâradârî* (revenue farming) system in Bengal. Sushil Chowdhury, *From Prosperity to Decline. The Economy of Bengal, 1750-1850*, Delhi, 1994, passim.

¹² See texts of these grants in C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sunnuds relating to India*, Vol. II (out of 10 volumes in all), Calcutta, 1892, pp. 64-65. The *Regulating Act* of 1773 and the Pitt's *India Act* of 1784 were attempts at creating a code of law over an empire which in the words of Dodwell's *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, 'had come into existence'. Another example of delayed naïvete?

¹³ For details, see Ghulam Husain, *Sair* (Persian) II, p. 823; For the English version, see *Nota Manus, Sair*, III, pp. 156-221.

¹⁴ See critique of this volume in Irfan Habib, "Studying a Colonial Economy

of empire were more important for the Company than the redressal of native issues. Ghulam Husain's hopes were soon belied because Hastings, the man who tried to use indigenous systems of administration was recalled in 1785 and impeached in the British Parliament by politicians who wanted more control over the Company and a more Western style system of government. This led to the appointment of Cornwallis who arrived in India in 1786.

What the early British readers of this text failed to discern was that despite his reconciliatory discourse, what Ghulam Husain was implying all the time in his critical comparison of Mughal versus Company rule was that just as the Indian people accept rulers from all cultures and religions, they can also reject and destroy those who failed to rule with justice and moral authority.¹⁵

Thus the true importance of this history lies in the fact that it is the originator of intellectual critique and ideological hostility to British Company rule in India. It confronts the rulers with the facts about their maladministration and how they were draining the wealth from out of India's economy and the concomitant oppression which had resulted in the threat of revolt. This idea of rebellion which began with the Ruhela War in 1774, continued to assert itself in Chait Singh's "Revolt" at *Benares* in 1781;¹⁶ it was manifest in Tipu Sultan's Anglo-Mysore wars which ceased only with Tipu's death in 1799, in the Faraidi movement of the Bengal peasantry against forced indigo cultivation and against the Permanent Settlement of 1793. It took on religious connotations in the *jihād* of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and his "Wahhabi" followers (1786–1831); people who believed that after the fall of Delhi to the British in 1803, India had become *Dār al-Harb* (land open to conquest and conflict). Such outbursts continued until the "revolt idea" assumed its most potent form in the Revolt of 1857.¹⁷ In fact, this "revolt idea" was immediately picked

without Perceiving Colonialism". *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 1985 pt. 3, pp. 355–381 see also the protests in Dharma Kumar, "The Problem of Manichaeism". *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, pt. 3, pp. 382ff. For a later version of Habib's critique, see Irfan Habib (ed.), *Essays in Indian History, Towards a Marxist Perception*. New Delhi, 1995, pp. 336–366.

¹⁵ For an understanding of this concept see B.D. Metcalf (ed.), *Adab and Moral Authority in South Asia*. Berkeley, 1984.

¹⁶ Chait Singh invited Haider Beg Khan to come to his help as they could together wipe out the British from the face of India. 'Ali Ibrahim Khan's Eyewitness Account in "*Sawanih-i Raja Chait Singh*", vide Shayesta Khan, *A Biography of 'Ali Ibrahim Khan*. Patna, 1972, pp. 155–56.

¹⁷ See details of this thesis in Iqbal Husain, "Elements of the Ideological Background

up by the translator Hajji Mustafa who was quite alarmed at its implications. He cites many experiences of his own and reminds his readers about the Catholic versus Protestant revolts in 16th century Germany. He thus devotes several pages to the reality of this threat in his translation of the *Sair*.¹⁸ The English historians and policy-makers were impressed but unmoved. Several decades later, a false sense of complacency remained evident in the reviews that this book received at their hands. As late as in the 1830's John Briggs' introduction to his abortive translation of Vol. I of the *Sair* (published 1832) contains the following patronising praise:

"It [the *Sair*] is written in the style of private memoirs in the most useful and engaging shape which history can assume nor, excepting in the peculiarities which belong to the Muhammadan Character and creed, do we perceive throughout its pages, any inferiority to the historical memoirs of Europe. The Duc de Sully, Lord Clarendon or Bishop Burnet need not have been ashamed to be the authors of such a production". Similarly according to James Mill "The author of *Seir ul Mutaqherin*, whom, as better informed, I follow in all affairs relating at the period to the Court of Delhi etc., etc".¹⁹ Another backhanded compliment comes from the great pioneer of Persian-to-English translations, Sir H.M. Elliot who felt that "The author treats these important subjects with a freedom and with a force, clearness and simplicity of style very unusual in an Asiatic writer, and which justly entitles him to pre-eminence among Muhammadan historians. This work is well known to English readers from the many quotations and extracts which Mill has made from it in his "History of India" and Ghulam Husain is the 'Muslim historian of those times' whom Macaulay has quoted and spoken of with approval in his Essay on Clive".²⁰ However the most honest review is to be found in H.G. Keene's *The Fall of the Mughal Empire* where the causes of

to the 'Rebellion' of 1857". *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1989-90, Gorakhpur, pp. 424-438.

¹⁸ See *Seir*, Tr. I, pp. 6-12.

¹⁹ *The History of British India*, London.

²⁰ *A History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vols. I-VIII, 1867-1875; this is a monumental compilation with passages which seem to deliberately highlight Hindu-Muslim antagonism during the Mughal period. This entire 8-volume compilation needs to be analysed and contextualised. On Macaulay's mentalite and ideological context, see P.R. Ghosh, "Macaulay and the Heritage of the Enlightenment". *The English Historical Review*, London, April, 1997, pp. 358-395.

the revolt idea are acknowledged. "This celebrated history is a work of surprising industry and contains many just reflections on the position of the English and the feelings of the people towards them, which are as true now as they were when written".²¹

This aloofness toward the threat of Rebellion among contemporary British historians is all the more difficult to comprehend because alarming speeches were being made in Parliament in the 1770's when India loomed large in British politics. The 'India Question' caused the fall of the coalition government of Fox and North, gave George III an opportunity to effect a daring coup d'état, which doomed Fox to a lifetime of opposition and put Pitt in power for almost the rest of his life. Cobbett's *Parliamentary History* is an excellent source for looking at the discourse on the impact of Company rule on its expanding Indian territories. The speeches were driven by British politics at home as well as by the jealousy of seeing wealthy nabobs returning from Company service in India; and all the while the British Crown was continually being asked for loans to bail out this very Company.²²

The passionate arguments in Parliament in the 1770's and 1780's were for closer controls over the East India Company. Hence the passage of the *Regulating Act* of 1773, and of Pitt's *India Act* of 1784. The stars of the anti-Clive and anti-Hastings lobby, Fox, Edmund Burke, Lord North, Burgoyne were brilliant and are worth quoting in extenso. For example in April 1772, Burgoyne had to literally beg for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into "that chaos where every element and principle of government and charters, and firmauns, and the rights of conquests, and the rights of subjects and the different functions and interests of merchants, and Statesmen, and lawyers, and Kings, are huddled together into one promiscuous tumult and confusion." He ends his call for redress with the choicest example of the White Man's Burden-type of oratory. Thus:

The fate of a great portion of the globe, the fate of great states in which your own is involved, the distresses of fifteen millions of people, the rights of humanity are involved in this question—Good God! What a call—the native of Hindustan, born a slave—his neck bent from the very cradle to the yoke—by birth, by education, by climate, by religion,

²¹ Quoted in *Seir*, Tr. I, Frontpiece.

²² Cobbett, *Parliamentary Papers*, passim; see also Dodwell, *Cambridge History of India* (CHI), Vol. V, passim.

a patient submissive, willing subject to eastern despotism, first begins to feel, first shakes his chains under the pre-eminence of British tyranny.²³

There was even concern over the destruction of the local elite and the usurpation of territories by Hastings (which was actually proving more of a financial burden for the Company). Burke said "There is not a single prince, state or potentate, great or small, in India with whom they have come into contact whom they have not sold, not a single treaty they have ever made, which they have not broken, there is not a single prince, or state, who ever put any trust in the Company, who is not utterly ruined".²⁴

They even highlighted the most important issue for the poor natives, namely the Drain of Wealth and Burke, on 18th November, 1783 on a bill moved by Fox calling for further reforms, picked on the private trade and greed of the Company servants whom he described thus:

Animated by all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another; wave after wave; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting . . . and the cries of India are given to seas and winds to be blown about in every breaking-up of the monsoon, over a remote and unhearing ocean.²⁵

There are many such speeches which would lead an uninformed reader to suspect a sudden change of heart within the British ruling class—a desire to withdraw from India and to allow them to recover. However when viewed in its entirety, these are simply pleas for closer controls over, or even the complete subsuming of the Company by the British Crown.

The Native Discourse on the Drain of Wealth

Coming back to the 'native discourse' we find a much more clearly enunciated thesis on the very crucial question of "the Drain of

²³ Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, Vol. XVII, pp. 454–9, vide Dodwell, *CHI*, V, p. 186.

²⁴ *Parliamentary History*, Vide Dodwell, *CHI*, Vol. V, p. 197.

²⁵ Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, XXIII, pp. 1334, vide Dodwell, *CHI*, Vol. V, p. 198. See also J.W. Copeland, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, Chicago, 1958, Vol. I, passim.

Wealth". Writing almost three years before Burke spoke on this Drain, Ghulam Husain put the entire problem in perspective. The natives' grievances were summed up thus:

It was observed that money had commenced to become scarce in Bengal; whether this scarcity be owing to the oppressions and exaction committed by the rulers, or to the stinginess of the public expense, or lastly to the vast exportation of coin which is carried every year to the country of England; it being common to see every year five or six Englishmen or even more, who repair to their homes with large fortunes. Lacs piled upon lacs have therefore been drained from this country; nor is the cheapness of grain to impose on the imagination. It arises from nothing else but the scarcity of coin, and the paucity of men and cattle (consumers). Nor are these deficiencies anything else, but the natural consequences of the non-existence of that numerous Hindian cavalry, which here to force used to fill up the plains of Bengal and Bihar, and which could not amount to less than seventy or eighty thousand effective men; where as now a horseman is as scarce in Bengal as a Phoenix in the world. The decrease of products in each district, added to the innumerable multitudes swept away by famine and morality, still go on augmenting the depopulation of the country; so that an immense quantity of land remains untilld and fallow, while those that are tilld cannot find vent for their productions. And this is so far true that were it not for the purchases of saltpetre, opium, raw silk and white Piece-goods which the English yearly make throughout Bengal and Bihar, probably a Rupee or an Eshreff would have become in most hands as scarce as the Philosopher's Stone.²⁶

Thus we have it all in one polite paragraph—lack of specie due to the stoppage of bullion exports to India, the extraction of private fortunes, in cash from India's economy, the fall in prices due to the absence of demand arising out of indigenous unemployment, the abandonment of agriculture due to forced cultivation of indigo, opium, cotton, (crops that starving peasant could not eat) and the depopulation of towns and villages.²⁷

²⁶ *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 32, and *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 250.

²⁷ For a more quantified appraisal see Irfan Habib, "Colonialization of India's Economy". *Social Scientist*, 32. See also Dharma Kumar (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History of India*. Vol. II, Cambridge, 1983 and Irfan Habib's review of this book entitled "Studying a Colonial Economy . . .". In: I. Habib (ed.), *Essays in Indian History*. New Delhi, 1995. According to Sayera, I. Habib quoted in this above article, the total value of this 'drain' constituted nearly 2% of the annual national saving of Britain in the last decade of the 18th century, see her paper, "Colonial Exploitation and Capital Formation in England in the Early Stages of the Industrial Revolution". *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Aligarh Session, 1975.

More detailed is Ghulam Husain's critique of the British Company rule in Bengal and Bihar over the entire period when it was under his personal observation i.e., 1769 to 1785. Quite firm in his faith in the Mughal system, he begins by giving a detailed description of the officials and nobles who managed the vast Mughal Empire under the watchful eyes of the emperor. Having thus fashioned a backdrop, Ghulam Husain begins to parade before it each and every official, every office, every official procedure that the Company and later the Governor Generals were following forcing the flaws to stand out even more vividly.

The basic problem that Ghulam Husain identifies about Company rule is the aloofness of the officials stemming from their aversion and disdain for the Indian:

Therefore no love, no coalition can take root between conquerors and conquered; and as we see that the very reverse is taking place, so we may rest as sure that the distresses of the people and the depopulation and desertion of the land, will go hand in hand, until they are come to their height, and the desolation is become complete and general. Such a state may be deduced from several causes, which I hope to be able gradually to unfold.²⁸

And unfold he does. Ghulam Husain goes on to expand on the "twelve causes" which he feels underlay British maladministration in India. For the first cause he quite astutely goes to the failure of the Company's officials to understand the local methods of assessing and collecting land revenue and methods of remuneration. The second cause is linked to the first in the sense that their systems of information gathering are defective. Comparing it with the elaborate Mughal system, Ghulam Husain points out how the Company's information was gleaned from corrupt informants or from "beardless and inexperienced" Company servants who have no view "but that of their own benefit, and think only of pleasing their English masters. Those men never fail to show a deal of revenue matter in every institution and custom; and they are so firm in that opinion that one would be compelled to believe that the setting up of this or that institution was for no other view, but that of scraping together a few pence; not that it could have any other intent, but that of hooking

²⁸ *Seir*, Tr. III, pp. 161-62. This compares well with the Persian original, vol. II, p. 823 onwards.

in some more; and in reality there is no other (option) for men of such sordid dispositions".²⁹

The problem of language is also linked to the defective information-base of the Company's administration and one cannot help quoting Ghulam Husain verbatim: "the tongue, which is the key of the treasures of the heart and mind and which serves as a medium to strengthen the bounds of society, as well as an organ to unlock the secrets of the heart, happens to be deprived of its office between the Hindostanies and the English but as the Indians are always the petitioners, they always prove the greatest losers".

Ghulam Husain then throws in a very basic reason behind the distress of the artisans who he says suffer because the English are the only ones with the money to support the crafts; but all their needs are met through imports from Britain and therefore the artisans now beg or have taken to thievery.³⁰

The third cause that hinders tranquillity of the country and proves a bar to the happiness of the people, may be found out in the endless variations in the person appointed to posts of trust and charges of importance. The insecurity of tenure in Company service is compared with the security that an officer enjoyed under the Mughals; the problems he so correctly identifies is in the selection procedure. In India the capabilities were first assessed and only then was the man appointed; in the British Company men were appointed on the basis of recommendations or at pleasure or on seniority of rank (this puzzles him a lot), and then when he fails at his job, he is transferred and a similarly recruited person is brought in. Thus a low morale and an obsession with personal fortunes was bound to follow.

The fourth cause underlying British failure to rule was the Council established by the *Regulating Act* of 1773, in which majority was everything. "Such a system," according to Husain "gives rise to an infinity of disturbances and confusions, and perpetually impedes the wheels of government". This was plea for more powers to Warren

²⁹ He gives the piquant example of prostitutes being allowed to ply their trade even on Fridays (*Seir*, Tr. III, pp. 165-66).

³⁰ *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 193. This compares exactly with the passage in *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 836. See also Irfan Habib, "On Studying a Colonial Economy . . .". In: Habib (ed.), *Essays*, passim. For an excellent analysis of this phenomenon, see Sushil Chaudhuri, *From Prosperity to Decline, The Economy of Bengal in the 18th Century*. New Delhi, 1994.

Hastings who was being impeded by Philip Francis, Clavering and Barwell.³¹

The fifth cause that Ghulam Husain identified was the inaccessibility of the English masters and their being surrounded by corrupt ministers and officers who kept them isolated from the people. This was contrasted with the Mughal practice of every officer, from the Mughal emperor downwards, giving daily audiences to their subjects. This factor also impacted adversely against the provisions of a Supreme Court at Calcutta in 1773.

In this extensive critique, Ghulam Husain was also able to identify another cornerstone of British economic policy in India—namely the establishment of monopolies in trade and commerce. The Mughals, he reminds the Company officials, gave *jāgīrs* (tax estates) to their high officials and left trade and commerce for the subsistence of the masses. The British on the other hand destroyed the traders and artisans via monopolies because “no matter how hard they may try to appear as aristocratic rulers they were in reality merchants”.³² In fact their stinginess had forced soldiers and horsemen to become marauders and thieves, due to the disbanding of armies and military. Almost all the northern Indian states were under some sort of military treaty with the Company which prevented them from taking independent decisions.

The seventh cause contains a very perceptive comparison of the English landlords with the Indian *zamīndār* whom he explains are very different species and how wrong it was for the Company to bestow the former's powers on the latter. They ought to be kept under close watch and military threat, as the Mughals had done, because they would otherwise inflict torment and extortion on the peasantry. His words were not heeded, and the Permanent Settlement of 1793 bestowed revenue-collection rights on *zamīndār* in perpetuity. The British were forcibly trying to create the counterpart of the English improving land-owner in rural India—the consequences were disastrous and resulted in the impoverishment of the peasantry and led to famines.³³

³¹ *Sair* (Persian) II, p. 838. For details of this conflict, see Dodwell, *CHI*, V, pp. 195–220. See also G.R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of Rt. Hon'ble Warren Hastings*. 3 Vols., London, 1941.

³² *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 840.

³³ *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 841, see also *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 204. A long debate had taken place between John Shore, Charles Grant, Lord Cornwallis, et al. prior to the Per-

The eighth cause responsible for the growing disaffection among the people of India were the enormous delays that petitioners had to put up with in case they were faced with an urgent grievance. The Governor and the Council were extremely busy either in defending themselves against intrigues within their ranks or with an overload of public business leading to delays "which ruin and overwhelm everyone who has the misfortune to have any business with them."³⁴ Ghulam Husain adds that ever since these lines were written, Hastings had appointed a committee to hear the more common cases. This was probably a reference to the *Diwani Adalats* established by Hastings in 1772 to deal with civil disputes at the local level. A *Faujdari Adalat* (military court) was also established under English judges to dispense criminal justice to the natives.³⁵

The ninth cause which Ghulam Husain identified had already been referred to by him, namely the incorrect criteria for appointing or promoting officers to important positions in the Company's administration. Instead of choosing men with the requisite skills and commitment, emphasis was laid on seniority and even after this was done, the officer was open to corruption because his tenure at that job was insecure. Furthermore the vesting of power in the majority of the supreme governing body or the Council that came into existence in 1772, led to "a profusion of authorities and hence confusion in business because to be on good terms with so many masters is impossible for poor people."³⁶ And an officer, in the Mughal-oriented mind of Ghulam Husain, will only perform if his superior is open to complaints heard directly from the people.

The tenth cause that he rather perceptively pinpointed was something that the British Parliamentarians had barely finished complimenting each other about, namely the efficacy of the Supreme Court established as a part of the Regulating Act in 1772. This highly humane gift of British justice according to which natives could lay charges against their British masters was attacked as being too alien and complex for the poor natives. Only those laws, says Ghulam

manent Settlement. On the impact of the Permanent Settlement see Irfan Habib, "Colonialization . . .". In: I. Habib (ed.), *Essays*. . . New Delhi: Tulika, 1995.

³⁴ *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 841, and *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 206.

³⁵ Dodwell, *CHI*, Vol. V, pp. 415, 438–40. However, appeals against all judgments lay with the Governor in Council which then acted as the Sadr Diwani Adalat or Sadr Nizamat Adalat.

³⁶ *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 207. See also *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 84.

Husain, are suitable for a people as those which are nurtured by the customs, religious beliefs and norms of that land. This Supreme Court was meant to help the poor Indians, who could not in fact afford the time and money needed for travel to Calcutta where this Court was based, nor could they pay for the translation of their complaints into English, nor the cost of the security deposit if damages were being demanded and if one did manage to get to Calcutta after leaving one's family in the lurch, then perhaps the Sahib had gone for a change of air to the hills. Besides "the English laws and statutes are so enormously voluminous, that were a man to spend his whole life on them, still the attaining of a full knowledge would be impossible. And then after all these miseries how painful it must be to remain in the dark about the outcome, and all the while in cruel suspense about his fate".³⁷

Finally Ghulam Husain comes to the twelfth and mercifully the last barb in his quiver which he aims at the system of investigation followed by the British officers in their criminal procedures. He cannot accept the fact that instead of listening to the complainant and the accused in open court like the Mughal governors, or even like the Mughal emperor himself, not too long ago, the British governor passed on these inquiries to lowly officials who were open to corruption; the investigations were therefore jeopardised, the deliberations were rendered private, and the judgements therefore were no longer based on their own high wisdom, nor on the commands of God. He ends this critique with the following verse from Sa'di: "And now after having said so much, we recommend you to God and are gone. But should there be no inclination in any ear to listen to our message, then the messengers have done their duty, and there lies no reproach against them. Nor is anything obligatory on us but the task of pointing out the right with the finger."³⁸

The date at the end of this critique is given as 24th Moharram 1195 (20 January, 1782).

There were voices of indignation from the English readers. There was a response in the *Asiatic Annual Register* but it came very late and the political line was clear.³⁹ Ghulam Husain's hero Warren

³⁷ *Sair* (Persian) II, p. 843, and *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 211.

³⁸ *Seir*, Tr. III, p. 212. Compare with *Sair* (Persian), II, p. 843.

³⁹ See AAR, 1803, Calcutta. Reference courtesy Gulfishan Khan, Research Associate, Aligarh.

Hastings did not stay long enough to correct these evils and the question is whether the British East India Company or the British Parliament would have let him. The discourse in the British Parliament was essentially the same, the correctives it legislated, namely Pitt's *India Act* of 1784 and the instructions to Cornwallis, were clearly aimed at strengthening British Colonialism in India, not at loosening its bonds.⁴⁰

Apart from the writings of Ghulam Husain and the speeches of the British Parliamentarians there is a third narrative that is important for the contextualisation of this history; and this was the translator's desire for accuracy which created problems for him vis-à-vis his British readers in Calcutta, preceded by the unusual nature of problems with his printers.

Raymond alias Hajji Mustafa alias Nota Manus inserts a rather long preface at the beginning of Vol. I, wherein he voices his concerns about the relations between the rulers and the ruled. Then he adds an account of his troubles with his critics and his publishers at the end of Vol. IV. His translation is very accurate and this was due to his having been in the company of native Persian-speakers for several decades during all his years in Calcutta. His footnotes explaining Mughal technical terms, Islamic historical allusions, and Indian racial traits are remarkably correct. His footnotes are an explanatory device as well as an indicator of the existence of another level of Orientalism; another facet of the Eastern "other" or even the Western "self"? Here I refer to the Eurasian players in the period of early colonialism, like James Skinner.⁴¹ This confusion of identities and hence the benefit of another narrative comes into existence because firstly Hajji Mustafa wished to participate in events which were close to his experiences in India and his footnotes are an entity in themselves. Furthermore he was incensed because the British scholars, alarmed at being confronted by an accurate English translation of Ghulam Husain's critique, began to fault Mustafa's translation in an attempt to discourage him from publishing all four volumes of the *Sair*. They openly questioned this Creole's ability to correctly

⁴⁰ For the impact of these reforms and the Permanent Settlement of 1793, see Irfan Habib, "On Studying a Colonial Economy . . .". In: Habib, *Essays*, pp. 336–366. See also his article, "The Eighteenth Century in India's Economic History". *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Calcutta session, 1995.

⁴¹ Cf. Seema Alavi, *Sepoys and the Company. Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770–1830*. Delhi, 1995.

express the English version of the *Sair*. Mustafa hit back with one of the finest surveys of non-British literature in English simply to refute the British assertion that a French Creole could not have expressed himself clearly enough in English. He then writes of his printer who constantly tried to correct his English saying that "this is not the English of Europe but of Bengal" and would go ahead and print the pages after putting in his own corrections!⁴² It was Mustafa's perseverance that enabled the British historians such as Mills, Keene, Elliot and others to correct their views about the Company's and the Crown's administration in India.

For the benefit of the 'discourse-wālas', it is hereby pointed out that there were numerous native informants writing in the 18th century about the crises within Awadh and in the other smaller post-Mughal states which constitute another genre of 'discourse'. These men wrote about the prosperity of the new states and then as they felt the impact of colonialisation, they wrote about their decline. In all these histories and eye-witness accounts, some of the writers were also important actors just like Ghulam Husain Tabataba'i. There was Abu Talib Londoni who wrote his travelogue about his trip to London as well as a book entitled *Tafzîh al-Ghâfilîn* (The Advice to the Unconscious) which was addressed to the nobles at Asaf al-Daula's court. Then there was Karam 'Ali's *Muzaffar Nâma* on early British rule in Bihar,⁴³ and Muhammad 'Ali's *Tarikh-e Muzaffarî*. Another prolific writer was 'Ali Ibrahim Khan whose letters on behalf of the Company and whose *tadhkirahs* and historical notes on the Marathas, *Benares*, the British are remarkable in their expressions of loyalty to his employers.⁴⁴ Yet none of these authors had the broad vision of Ghulam Husain to pepper his view of the British with criticisms culled from his own experiences in the Mughal past. However, even more interesting is the first account of a trip to England by a clerk of the Company Munshi Itisam al-Din in his *Shigarfnâma-ye Wilâyat* (1767–69) in which a counter opinion of European society and economy (he waxes eloquent on the Industrial Revolution even as it is taking shape) was made available to the eastern readers.⁴⁵

⁴² *Seir*, Tr. I and IV, Calcutta, 1902.

⁴³ Translated by Shayesta Khan, Patna, 1993.

⁴⁴ See details in Shayesta Khan, *A Biography of Ali Ibrahim Khan. A Mughal noble in the Administrative Service of the British East India Company*. Patna, 1992.

⁴⁵ Munshi Itisamuddin, *Shigarfnama-i Vilayat*. Tr. Ameer Hasan Noorani, Patna, 1991. He was in fact sent to take a gift of 100,000 rupees and some jewels to the

Another interesting view which would be useful in the current debate on Orientalism, especially in Edward Said's own search for East-East perceptions, are the observations of Indian courts and society under early colonialism—by an Iranian traveller Ahmad 'Ali Behbahani who was in India c. 1800–1805.⁴⁶ All the contradictions of a colonised people are reported by another Muslim Asian and the aspects which Braginsky has wished for can be reconstructed for understanding early colonialism in India from these sources.⁴⁷

British monarch. The cash and jewels were taken from him and were later brought in by Clive as a gift from him to George III! The clerk was meanwhile requested to stay on and paraded as an Indian Prince—much to Munshi Itisamuddin's anger.

⁴⁶ Behbahani, *Travelogue*. Compiled by Shayesta Khan, Patna, 1991.

⁴⁷ V.I. Braginsky, "Orientalism Reconsidered . . .". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 60, pt. 3, 1997. See also Edward Said, interview in *Times of India*, 7th Nov. 1997. In this interview he expressed his fears over the lack of an east-east discourse in comparison to the growing east-west exchanges.

THE WORLD OF SHAH 'ABD AL-'AZIZ (1746–1824)

MUHAMMAD KHALID MASUD

Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz once stated that it transpired from the *Ahadith* that towards the end of the world Christians would rule the earth. One of the disciples asked whether the Christians ruling India those days were the same [as in prophecy] or there were some others [still to come]. Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz said that they were probably the same because injustice [*zulm*] reigned supreme among the Muslims. A country [*mulk*] can survive disbelief [*kufir*] but it cannot do so with oppression and injustice.¹

Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's² above comments reflect his perception of the English, almost welcoming their arrival in India. On the contrary, referring to Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's *Fatwâ* declaring India as *Dâr al-Harb*, William Hunter (1840–1900)³ and most modern Indian Muslim writers claim that the Shah called Muslims in India for *jihad* against the British.⁴ This chapter argues that this latter view stems from anachronistic interpretation of Shah's *Fatwâ*. Hunter and others have read the *Fatwâ* in the context of political relations between the English and the Muslims in India after 1857, a development that

¹ Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz, *Malfûzât-e Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz*. Karachi: Pakistan Educational Publishers, 1960, p. 96.

² Recently, two studies on the life of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz have appeared: Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizwi, *Shah 'Abd al-'Azîz, Puritanism, Sectarian Polemics and Jihad*. Canberra: Ma'rifa, 1982, and Surayyâ Dâr, *Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz Muhaddith Dihlawî aur un kî 'ilmî khidmat*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1991; the latter presents a more balanced view of the Shah. His *Fatâwâ* and *Malfûzât* were collected and published after his death.

³ William Hunter, *The Indian Muslims*. Lahore: Premier Book House, 1964, first serialised in *The Pioneer* and later published from London in 1871. Sir Sayyid wrote a Review on Dr. Hunter's *Indian Muslims*. Lahore: Premier, N.D.

⁴ See for instance, 'Ubayd Allâh Sindhî, *Shâh Walî Allâh aur un kî siyâsî tahrik*. Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1965, first published in 1941; Ghulam Rasûl Mihr, *Sayyid Ahmad Shahid*. Lahore: Kitab Manzil, n.d.; Sayyid Muhammad Miyan, *'Ulamâ-ye Hind kâ Shândâr Mâdî*. Delhi: Maktaba Burhan, 1963; Abû'l Hasan 'Alî Nadwî, *Sirat Sayyid Ahmad Shahid*. Lucknow: Majlis Tahqiqat-o Nashriyat-i Islam, 1986, first published in 1939; H.B. Khân, *Barr-e Saghîr Pâk-o Hind kî siyâsat men 'ulamâ kâ kindâr*. Islamabad, 1967; Ishtiâq Hussain Qureshî, *Barr-e 'azîm Pâk-o Hind kî millat-e Islâmiyya*. Karachi, 1967.

did not exist in Shah's period. Such interpretations produce contradictions in Shah's perceptions. Further, the chapter proposes that perception of the 'other' is a function of one's worldview and changes during the various phases of encounter with the 'other'. The anthropologists define 'worldview' as a sum of ideas that a group, or an individual in a group, has of the universe. It is not an objective scientific view but is rather a subjective, personal and insider perspective. They usually focus on its cognitive aspect but they also recognise its normative and affective role in defining social relations. Cultural anthropology uses the concept of worldview as a tool to compare different cultures. Robert Redfield (1941)⁵ employed the concept of worldview to explain the evolutionary process of socio-cultural change. He argued that the primitive cultures were pure, more oriented toward harmony and peace that was disturbed by the tendency of the modern technological order to take supremacy over the moral order. Redfield saw a normative role of the worldview in social relations. Sol Tax⁶ distinguished worldview from social relations. He found that the primitive worldviews sometimes continued even after social relations were modernised. E.M. Mendelson⁷ suggested the importance of the normative role of religion in the primitive worldview. Clifford Geertz⁸ clarified further that religion provided a coercive effect and objectivity to the set of social values in a worldview. Geertz's observation is particularly helpful in understanding the role of *sharī'a* (Islamic law) in Shah's worldview. The chapter offers a construction of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's worldview to study his perception of the English.

Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz (1746–1824) received his religious and spiritual education from his father Shah Wali Allah whom he succeeded on his death in 1762. Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz spent almost all his life in Delhi teaching and writing. Among his several books the following became quite well known: *Tuhfa Ithnā 'Ashariyya*, *Tafsīr 'Azīzī*, *Bustān al-Muhaddithīn*, *Ujala Nafī'a* and *'Azīz al-Iqtibās*. The main source for

⁵ Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1941.

⁶ Sol Tax, "World View and Social Relations in Guatemala". *American Anthropologist New Series*, 43 (1941), pp. 27–42.

⁷ E.M. Mendelson, "World View". In: *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968, pp. 576–579.

⁸ Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World views and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols". *Antioch Review*, 17 (1957), pp. 421–427.

the following construction of the Shah's worldview in this chapter are *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*⁹ and *Malfûzât-e Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz*.¹⁰ *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî* is a collection of letters, small treatises and answers given by Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz to the questions asked from him on a variety of Islamic subjects. The *Fatâwâ* was written largely in Persian language with citations in Arabic from original sources. The collection also contains a number of short monographs, longer statements, about issues of topical importance. The *Malfûzât* is a collection of Shah's oral statements on similar subjects. These statements were recorded during 1817–1824¹¹ and cover the last days of the Shah. These two collections are significant also because they preserve as well the texts of the queries that provide an insight into inquirer's perceptions of the problem and its environment.

Essentially, Shah's worldview was not much different from that of the other Muslim scholars of the medieval period. We find a similar worldview in Shah Wali Allah's *Hujjat Allâh al-Bâligha*.¹² In this worldview religion plays a central role. *Sharî'a*, the main expression of religion as Divine law provides normative values in it. As to his sources, Shah sometimes refers to *Ahadîth*, generally referring to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, but often meaning Islamic tradition. There are also vague references to Jewish tradition (*Isrâ'îliyyat*) and Greek sciences (*Falsafâ*).

⁹ These *Fatâwâ* were first collected and compiled by Maulana Khalil al-Rahman Burhanpuri on the request of Mawlawi 'Abd al-Ahad, the owner of the Muhtabai Printing Press in Delhi. They were first published in 1311–14/1893–6 by the Muhtabai press in Delhi in Persian. Further two editions by the same press appeared in 1322/1905 and 1341/1924 in two volumes. These *Fatâwâ* were later translated into Urdu by Mawlawi Muhammad Nawab 'Ali and Maulawi 'Abd al-Jalil and published by the Kanz al-Ulum Press, Hyderabad, Deccan, and Muhtabai Press, Kanpur, in early 1313/1895. Another Urdu translation by Maulawi 'Abd al-Wajid Shahjanpuri was published by the Majidi Press Kanpur in 1322–23/1905–06 in two volumes under the title *Sarîr-e 'Azîzî al-Ma'rûf Tarjuma Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*. A completely re-edited version was published in 1980 by H.M. Saeed and Co. in Karachi in one volume. A critical addition of the *Fatâwâ* is still awaited. For further details see M.K. Masud, "Fetava-yi-'Azizi". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Istanbul, 1995, Vol. 12, pp. 439–440.

¹⁰ The name of the compiler of the *Malfûzât* could not be known. These *malfûzât* were compiled in Persian language and were first published in 1896 by Muhtabai Press in Meerut. Second edition in Urdu translation was printed next year in 1897 by the same press. Another edition, thoroughly edited, translated and annotated with a scholarly introduction by Mufti Intizam Allah Shahabi and Maulawi Muhammad 'Ali Lutfi, was published by Pakistan Educational Publishers, Karachi, in 1960.

¹¹ Ibid., Preface.

¹² Shâh Wali Allâh, *Hujjat Allâh al-Bâligha*. Lahore: Maktaba al-Salafiyya, n.d., see vol. 1, chapters 1–8.

Cosmos

According to Shah, sky consisted of seven spheres. Each sphere, lying at a distance of one month, belonged to the following planets: Moon, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. These spheres, also called seven skies, revolved around the earth, while rotating around each other in the above order.¹³ The sun and the moon revolved from East to West, always keeping an equal distance from each other. These celestial bodies performed two types of movement: regular and special. The special movement circular was completed in a fixed period. The moon completed it in one month; the sun in one year and some planets did so in 5020 years.¹⁴ About the Natural Phenomena Shah believed that earthquakes occurred to jolt the people out of negligence and to ease the earth from the burden of human sins. God ordered angels to move a part of the earth by blowing wind into it.¹⁵ According to Shah, clouds were formed by the vapours arising from the surface of the earth and rivers. Complying God's command, the angel called *Ra'd* piled them to make them thicker. He then changed them into another formation, which created energy that turned them into water. This water was poured on to earth through the holes formed in the clouds in this process. The clouds were driven from one place to another by a whip called *barq* (lightning). The noises of thunder were in fact produced by the commands of the angels and by their chanting the hymns glorifying God. Shah distinguished two types of lightening: *barq* and *sā'iqā*. The latter was the lightening that struck the earth.¹⁶

The Earth

The earth, Shah explains, is completely round like a pearl (*marwârîd*). It has seven levels; the innermost is called *sijjîn* that lies next to Hell. "According to oral traditions, *Ahadîth* and *Isrâ'iliyyat*, the seven levels of the earth are separated by water, the uppermost consisting of rocks".¹⁷ About poles and human habitat, Shah explained that the countries lying underneath the two poles have six months long days

¹³ *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*, Vol. 2, p. 126.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 127.

¹⁵ *Mal'ûzât*, p. 120

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

and nights. The duration between dawn and sunrise is approximately seven days. It is significant to note that Shah's knowledge of geography extended beyond the limits of the Muslim traditional scholarship. He also refers to his contemporary recent discoveries. For instance, he remarked that "The New World of the Franks, therefore, is situated at a difference of one day and night. On the globe of the earth, the point lies opposite to Baghdad. Earlier it was known that the earth was inhabited only up to sixteen degrees but now the Franks [the English?] claim that it is inhabited up to twenty five degrees."¹⁸ This statement may not be accurate but he is apparently more update than his contemporaries are as he was probably referring to the discovery of Americas.

Life on Earth

Shah divides earth into seven regions, each differing from the other in religion, polity, social customs and practices, flora and fauna. Each region is inhabited by humans of different colours and races, one belonging to the black people like the Berbers [sic], the Zangis or the Habashis, the others to Hindus, Chinese, Turks, Franks, Arabs and Persians, respectively.¹⁹ Shah's world was inhabited also by invisible creatures, *jinn*s and spirits. We find this worldview also reflected in Shah's contemporary Urdu literature.²⁰ Shah explained that in ancient days, *jinn*s and humans used to live together and married among themselves. Consequently there were different races produced by this crossbreeding, some were hybrids of animals and humans, and some of *jinn*s and humans. He clarified that this practice of intermarriages discontinued after the Deluge of Noah. Shah believed that *jinn*s could be subjugated but denied that this skill had anything to do with Islamic mysticism.²¹

¹⁸ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 142; *Malfûzât*, p. 175.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁰ For instance see Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1985. Chapter 7 and 9 analyses *mathnawis* by Mir Hasan (d. 1788) and Daya Shankar Nasim (d. 1843), both telling stories about humans marrying fairies.

²¹ *Malfûzât*, p. 29

Social and Political Relations with Others

According to Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz, God provides guidance to mankind in various ways, depending on the local perception and understanding of Divinity. In the Arab [Semitic] world, God communicated the knowledge about the unseen through messengers (prophets) who brought written texts (scriptures). This form of communication is comparable with the royal messengers who carried with them royal edicts (*farmân* or *shuqqa*). In the Hindu world, this form of communication was not familiar, as the people there regarded unusual or supernatural signs as manifestations of God.²² Unlike the monotheist people of the Book, the Hindus began to worship the signs of divine manifestation as gods.²³ The religious communities who received revelation through scriptures were called *Ahl al-Kitâb* (the people of the book), e.g., Jews, Christians and Muslims. Social and political relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were, therefore, defined on the basis of this distinction. The English were *Ahl al-Kitâb* and were, therefore, closer to Muslims than Hindus.

The Hindus

Generally, Muslim scholars in India regarded Hindus as pagans (*mushrikîn*, the idol worshippers). A few scholars, like al-Biruni (d. 1048)²⁴ and Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Janan (1780), believed Vedas, the Hindu scriptures, to be divinely inspired and considered Hindus as People of the Book who had prophets like other revealed religions.²⁵ Shah disagreed with this view. He did not call Hindu *avatâras* like Krishna prophets, but considered them *walî* (friend) of God. He did not object to calling God by Hindi names like *Parmeshwara*, explaining that God may be called by any name that was used in a language exclusively for God, His Essence or for His Attributes.²⁶ Shah justified Hindu caste system saying that, like any other society, it was based on a system of privileges allowed by the religious laws. Shah compared it with special privileges allowed by Islamic laws to

²² *Falâwâ*, I, p. 133.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Abu Riḥan al-Biruni, *Kitâb al-Hind*. English Translation E. Sachau. London, 1910.

²⁵ Vide Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969, p. 138.

²⁶ *Malfūzât*, p. 44.

the Banu Hashim who were forbidden to receive *zakât*, or the privileged right of the Quraysh to caliphate and the exemption of the Arab idolaters from paying poll tax (*jizya*).²⁷

The English

Some local Muslim and Hindu scholars speculated that the English race was a hybrid of apes (*bandar*) and humans, produced by mutual marriages in Sri Lanka (*Sarandip*).²⁸ Shah refuted this theory. According to him, they were Christians, and, therefore, people of the Book. The Qur'an allowed marriage with their women and made their food lawful to eat (5:5). The *Fatâwâ* mentions several controversies about the permissibility of sharing food or even eating on the same table with the English. Generally, such an act was believed to border on unbelief (*kufîr*).²⁹ In 1821, Shah was consulted in a similar controversy. He clarified that such food, except if it was specifically prohibited, like pork, was lawful to eat.³⁰ Indian Muslims also regarded employment with the English and education in their institutions, even wearing English dress and learning English language, as sinful. Shah made it clear that learning English language was lawful like learning any language.³¹ On the question of employment with the English, Shah explained that if the employment did not consist of duties aimed at harming Islam or Muslims, or did not involve activities forbidden by Islam, it was lawful.³² Shah's attitude toward social relations with the English was significantly different from his contemporary scholars. This point is sufficiently illustrated in the correspondence between Shah Ghulam 'Ali and Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz. Shah Ghulam 'Ali, the Sufi master of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz was immensely revered by the people in Delhi. He protested when Shah 'Abd al-Hayy, a nephew of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz, accepted the position of a *muftî* with the English. He feared that 'Abd al-Hayy would indulge in prohibited matters like taking food with them or would compromise in reli-

²⁷ *Fatâwâ*, p. 133.

²⁸ *Malfûzât*, p. 24.

²⁹ See Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Food and the Notion of Purity in the *Fatâwâ* Literature". In: Manuela Marin & David Wains (eds.), *La Alimentacion en las Culturas Islamicas*. Madrid, 1994, pp. 89–110.

³⁰ Vide Mushîr al-Haq, "Shâh 'Abd al-'Aziz". *Al-Ma'ârif*, April–June 1994, p. 19. *Fatâwâ*, 2, p. 117.

³¹ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 104.

³² *Fatâwâ*, 1, pp. 107–108.

gious matters under their influence. Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz explained that this position did not involve the evils that Shah Ghulam ‘Ali feared.³³ In fact, Shah had close personal friendship with certain English officials. They came to visit him at his residence. James Skinner (1802–1840), a Eurasian military officer, came to seek amulets for his sons.³⁴ Shah recalled that Skinner was a friend, but a rustic (*jāhil*) person. His five children had died and though he did not believe in amulets, yet he came to the Shah. Shah stated that later he got four sons who survived. Similarly, William Fraser, Secretary to General Ochterlony in Delhi in 1805, came often to consult Shah on various Islamic matters.³⁵ Alexander Seton, the first British Resident in Delhi, was also a close friend of the Shah. He helped restore Shah’s estate to him. Shah remembered him as a well versed and a good friend, but an ignorant flatterer. This remark probably refers to the following incident. Once Seton came to Shah and desired to visit Shah’s birthplace in the old city. They visited the place. Seton ordered to build a memorial building there,³⁶ but Shah disapproved the idea. Shah admired the English for their military strategies and organisational skills. He was impressed so much with their warfare technique that he used their examples to illustrate various Sufi terms. Once he compared the Naqshbandiyya Sufi practices with the English military technique in its efficiency.³⁷ On another occasion, he remarked that “The soul (*nafs*) fights skilfully like the English fight against the Marathas in a very organised manner”.³⁸ Shah’s impressions about the English military efficiency show that he was probably

³³ *Fatāwā*, 1, pp. 85–87.

³⁴ *Malfūzāt*, p. 117. Also see Mushir al-Haq, op. cit., p. 23, Percival Spear, *The Nabobs*. Oxford, 1963, p. 13, referring to Baillie Fraser, *Military Memoirs of Col. James Skinner*.

³⁵ *Fatāwā*, 1, pp. 141–145; *Malfūzāt*, p. 117. Mushir al-Haq provides further details about Fraser’s friendship with the Shah and his interest in Islam, and that he had become so indianised that his fellow officers disliked him for that. “Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz”, op. cit. p. 24.

³⁶ *Malfūzāt*, p. 117. Mushir al-Haq suggests that flatterer here refers to Seton’s temperament for which his fellow officers criticized that he was too gentle with the Mughal emperor. “Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz”, op. cit., p. 24, referring to Phillip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India: The Founders*. London, 1954, p. 268. W. Hunter calls it the policy of East India Company of pretending to serve the Mughals going to farcical limits. *Indian Musalmans*, op. cit. Surayyā Dār (op. cit. p. 130) states that the estate of Haveli Palam that originally belonged to Shah’s family was restored to him in 1807 by Seton as Resident of Delhi.

³⁷ *Malfūzāt*, p. 63.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

very hopeful about the restoration of peace and order in India. Shah regarded English interest in technology as a sign of their inferior intellectual attainment. He elaborated that every human race has a particular mental aptitude for a certain art or science. "The Hindus have a special inclination for mathematics. The Franks [English] have a special aptitude for industry and technology. Their minds, with a few exceptions, cannot grasp the finer points of logic, physics and theology".³⁹ We find that, though essentially medieval, Shah's worldview was more enlightened and liberal compared to his contemporaries. He was fascinated by the military skills of the English but did not regard them highly as intellectuals.

Shah's Contemporary Delhi

The political and economic instability, combined with a supernatural and superstitious worldview led the people of Delhi to holy men and graves in the hopes of miracles. They turned to shrines in times of affliction. Visiting graves and shrines was a popular practice in Delhi, almost an institution, with detailed rules and rites.⁴⁰ Whether due to economic insecurity or political instability, Delhi society became more attached with death than with life. They celebrated the deaths, not the birth of the saints. The *'urs*, literally meaning wedding, of saints were celebrated on their death anniversaries. Instead of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad as is common today, in Shah's days people celebrated his death anniversary. Shah was himself in favour of visiting graves and justified it as the Sunna of the Prophet. He did not find fault even with such contemporary practices as Qur'an recital and distribution of sweets at the graves, even though he believed that such practices did not exist in early Islam. He, however, considered fixing days for visiting graves as *bid'a*. He also did not allow prostration, circumambulating or praying at the graves. He refuted the practice of *istimdād mawta* (calling upon the dead to help), as it resembled idol worship.⁴¹ It is important to note that the reformist Deobandi scholars, followers of the Shah, later rejected most of these practices as *bid'a*. At Shah's residence, two functions were held regularly every year: one on 12 *Rabī' al-*

³⁹ *Malfūzāt*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ Dār, op. cit., pp. 64–66.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 88–90.

Awwal and the other on 10 *Muharram* to commemorate the deaths of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Husain respectively. Four to five hundred persons gathered at his residence. Recital of the whole Qur'an, or its parts e.g., *fātiha* (the opening chapter of the Qur'an) or *pañj āyat* (selected Qur'anic verses), was followed by chanting *salām* (to praise the Prophet) or *marthiya* (elegy to Imam Husain) according to the occasion.⁴² At the end, food and sweets were distributed. Dargah Quli Khan, writing an account of Delhi after the sack of the city by Nadir Shah in 1739, describes that the city was dominated by spiritualism. *Lâl Qil'a kī aik Jhalak*, an account of Delhi based on personal narratives of Shah's contemporaries, shows that people in Delhi shared Shah's worldview in general. They lived in constant fear of *jīns*, evil spirits and calamities. They visited graves regularly to ward off these afflictions.⁴³ Shah stands out in these writings as a commanding figure in Delhi. The people believed that these *jīns* and evils feared only Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz and thronged to him for amulets and prayers. When Delhi was jolted by an earthquake and flooded by rains, the people in Delhi, including the Mughal king, approached Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz for help.⁴⁴ That was probably also the occasion when people asked Shah to explain these natural phenomena, as mentioned above. Although the people in Delhi shared with Shah a medieval worldview, yet the Shah often took a puritanist view about the current social practices. He believed that *sharī'a* and the early history of Islam provided comprehensive guidance for all times.

Dâr al-Harb

Islamic law, especially according to the Hanafi School that Shah followed, divided the world into *Dâr al-Islâm* and *Dâr al-Harb*. Only *Dâr al-Islâm* was governed by Islamic laws. The legal status of a country could change from a *Dâr al-Islâm* into *Dâr al-Harb* under following conditions:

1. When the laws of infidels (*kuffār*) are promulgated openly and laws of Islam (*sharī'a*, *hukm al-Islâm*) are no longer in force.

⁴² *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 104.

⁴³ Sayyid Nasir Nadhîr Firâq Dihlawî, *Lâl Qil'a kī aik Jhalak*. Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1987, p. 57.

⁴⁴ Firâq Dihlawî, *Lâl Qil'a* . . . , p. 57; *Malfūzât*, pp. 73-75.

2. When *Dâr al-Islâm* becomes surrounded by *Dâr al-Harb* in such a way that no other land of Islam stands between *Dâr al-Islâm* and *Dâr al-Harb*.
3. No Muslim or infidel *dhimmî* enjoys the original assurance of protection [*aman awwal*] granted earlier.⁴⁵

When a *Dâr al-Islâm* turns into *Dâr al-Harb* there is always a possibility of its restoration as *Dâr al-Islâm*. However, Muslims living in *Dâr al-Harb* become obliged to migrate (*hijrat*) from there to a *Dâr al-Islâm* to wage war (*jihâd*) against this *Dâr al-Harb*. The Muslims who stayed behind in *Dâr al-Harb* were exempted from certain obligations relating Islamic public laws (e.g., *hudûd*, penal laws). Friday prayers were also not obligatory in *Dâr al-Harb*. Other prohibitions such as against usury were also suspended.⁴⁶ Relations between the countries, and the people living therein, were defined on the basis of this division. The person and property of the people living in *Dâr al-Harb* became violable for Muslims living in *Dâr al-Islâm*. It was lawful for a Muslim in *Dâr al-Islâm* to enter into *Dâr al-Harb*, capture a person or his property and carry it back to *Dâr al-Islâm*. Similarly, the person and property of a *harbî*, entering *Dâr al-Islâm* was also violable, unless he was granted *aman*, a formal declaration of safety and protection from the Muslim ruler. Such a person was called *musta'mîn*.⁴⁷ A *musta'mîn* enjoyed full rights and freedom.⁴⁸ Shah distinguished the legal position of a Muslim living in *Dâr al-Harb* from the one entering *Dâr al-Harb* temporarily. Shah did not allow the Muslims in *Dâr al-Harb* to take the property of the *harbîs*, except with their consent.⁴⁹ In pre-modern Islamic law books, a *musta'mîn* refers normally to a *harbî*, mostly a non-Muslim. The term received new meanings in the nineteenth century India as it was also applied to Muslims. Hunter used the term *musta'mîn* almost as a synonym to the Islamic legal term *dhimmî*, which meant non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state. This meaning supported his argument for the justification of introducing English law in India as a process of British colonisation. He argued that instead of being owners of the country, suddenly deprived of their rights and bound to regain them,

⁴⁵ *Fatâwâ*, p. 65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 67.

⁴⁸ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 109.

⁴⁹ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 109 (usury), and p. 67 (slaves).

they [Muslims] have become what is technically called *musta'min*, or seekers of protection. In return for this fair amount of religious and civil liberty, they accept, as their forefathers during the past fifty years have accepted, the position of subjects.⁵⁰ Refuting Hunter's interpretation, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), argued that the term *musta'min* suggested a third category of *Dâr al-Aman*, different from, and in addition to, *Dâr al-Islâm* and *Dâr al-Harb*. All the citizens in *Dâr al-Aman* enjoyed equal rights based on a pact [*ahd, aman*] between them and the state.⁵¹

Shah's *Fatâwâ*

Fatâwa-ye 'Azîzî contains fifteen *fatâwâ* relating to the subject of *Dâr al-Harb*.⁵² Except for a longer *fatwâ*, entitled *Risâla bai' Kanîzan* dealing with the trade of female slaves, Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz wrote all the fifteen in answer to actual queries. In other words, they were initiated by the inquirers and they reflect their anxiety and perception of *Dâr al-Harb* as it existed in the then Muslim society. These queries, as shown in the following table, reflect diverse concerns, but none about waging *jihâd* against the British. The following analysis of the subjects of Shah's *Fatâwâ* shows that these were the commercial implications of *Dâr al-Harb* that prompted the queries.

(S) SUBJECT	(N) NUMBER OF <i>FATAWA</i>	(V) VOLUME AND PAGE NUMBERS	(R) REMARKS
S The permissibility of the sale and purchase of slaves	N 4	V I/16; I/39; I/40; I/67	R The subject is not mentioned in query, but the <i>fatwâ</i> deals with it.
S The legitimacy of employment and association with the English	N 4	V I/86; I/107; II/117; II/119	
S The permissibility of usury	N 5	V I/26; I/32; I/109; I/109; I/122	

⁵⁰ W. Hunter, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 102.

⁵¹ Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Review on Hunter's Indian Muslims*. Lahore: Premier Book House, N.D., p. xv.

⁵² *Fatâwa-ye 'Azîzî*, Vol. 1, pp. 16, 26, 32, 39, 40, 67, 86, 107, 109, 122, 154; vol. 2, pp. 117, 119.

- S Legitimacy of commercial transactions
 N 2
 V I/154; I/154
- S Legitimacy of Friday prayers
 none
 R Mentioned in *fatwâs*, not in queries
- S Obligation of *hijrat*
 none
 R Mentioned in *fatwâ*, not in queries
- S Obligation of *jihâd*
 none
 R Mentioned neither in queries, nor in *fatwâ*

We find that none of these *fatâwâ* dealt with the subject of *jihâd*; neither the inquirer asked permission for *jihâd* against the English, nor the Shah mentioned it. There are two *fatwâs* that are frequently cited to claim that Shah issued a call for *jihâd*, neither of them, however, refers to *jihâd* or *hijrat*. William Hunter cites the following passage from one of Shah's *fatâwâ*:

When infidels get hold of a Muhammedan country [*Dâr al-Islâm*], and it becomes impossible for the Musalmans of the country, and of the people of the neighbouring districts, to drive them away, or to retain reasonable hope of ever doing so; and the power of the Infidels increases to such an extent, that they can abolish or retain the ordinances of Islam according to their pleasure; and no one is strong enough to seize on the revenues of the country, without the permission of the infidels; and the (Musalman) inhabitants do no longer live so secure as before; such a country is politically a country of the enemy [*Dâr al-Harb*].³³

Hunter says that he was quoting the "decision word for word", but we have not found this text in any of Shah's published *fatâwâ*. It either means that Hunter's cited text is not included in the printed editions, or, that he was only reporting it in his own words. This passage simply defines *Dâr al-Harb* and elaborates how a *Dâr al-Islâm* turns into a *Dâr al-Harb*. There is no clear declaration of war. Hunter has built his argument on a possible implications of this text. Other authors cite another *fatwâ*, specifically the following paragraph that explains why Shah considered India had become *Dâr al-Harb*. "In this city [Delhi], the rule of Imam al-Muslimin is not in force, while

³³ *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*, Delhi: Mujtaba'i, 1322 H., Vol. 1, p. 155. Translation by W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 105.

the rule of the Christian officers [*hukkâm-e nasâra*] is in force with impunity. The enforcement of the orders [*ahkâm*] of *kufî* means that the Infidels are acting as rulers in administration and management of the affairs of the subjects, in the collection of revenues and taxes on commerce, in checking highway robbery and theft, settlement of disputes and in enforcing penalties for crimes. It is of no significance if they do not interfere in the performance of some rites of Islam, like Friday and 'id prayers, call to prayers and sacrifice of cows, because these things do not hold any value in their eyes. They demolish mosques without any hesitation. No Muslim or *dhimmi* [Hindu ?] can enter the city or its environment without their permission. In addition, if they do not object to the entry of visitors, travellers and the traders, it is because of their own interest. Other distinguished persons like Shuja' al-Mulk and Walayati Begum cannot enter in these cities without their permission. The Christian rule is in force from this city to Calcutta, although, in view of their own interest, they are not enforcing their laws [in the cities of] Hyderabad, Lucknow and Rampur, lying to the right and left."⁵⁴ This *fatwâ* also does not mention *jihâd*, clearly or vaguely. This *fatwâ* was written in answer to a query whether a *Dâr al-Islâm* could turn into *Dâr al-Harb*. Shah replies in the affirmative. First he explains the theoretical basis of his opinion with reference to the *Hanafi* texts *Durr Mukhtâr* and *al-Kâfi*. The passage cited above provides justifications for the application of the conditions mentioned in these texts. This passage is followed by references to evidence from early Islamic history on this point. The rest of the *fatwâ* expounds the legal implications of *Dâr al-Harb*. Significantly, the Shah treats only one of these implications: sale and purchase of slaves. It is therefore not possible to date this *fatwâ* exactly, as no dates are mentioned. Most probably, it belongs to the period when the English abolished the royal status of the Mughal Emperor in 1803.⁵⁵ Quite logically, therefore, all the *fatâwâ* about the declaration of *Dâr al-Harb* should belong to the period after 1803. The *Malfûzât*, where Shah's comments, that we cited in the beginning of this chapter, appear, belong to still a later period, i.e., 1817–1824. It is therefore not possible to interpret Shah's

⁵⁴ *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*, Delhi: Mujtaba'i, 1322 H., Vol. 1, p. 16. Translation with slight amendments by the present writer by Mushîr al-Haq, "Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz", op. cit. p. 32.

⁵⁵ This date is given by Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*. Delhi: Government of India, 1967, p. 23.

fatwâ about *Dâr al-Harb* in isolation from his perception of the English that we find in the *Malfûzât*. India in this period was suffering from a complete disorder. Sikhs, Marathas and Rohillas had destroyed the political and economic peace. The Mughal kings played a puppet in the hands of one or the other. Although Shah was not happy with the situation, but the declaration of *jihâd* would have been ineffective at that time. Regarding the question of migration subsequent upon the declaration of *Dâr al-Harb*, Shah explained that the obligation for the *hijrat* and *jihâd* was not absolute; it was contingent on certain conditions.⁵⁶ In fact, Shah refers to *hijra* in only one *fatwâ* as a comment on a *fatwâ* by another *mufî* who had declared the territory ruled by a Shia ruler as *Dâr al-Harb* and had asked his inquirer to migrate from that territory. Shah first clarified that the territory was not a *Dâr al-Harb* and then explaining the conditions for *hijrat* declared that it was not obligatory.⁵⁷ We have already explained that Shah was not in favour of exempting Muslims in India from the performance of Friday prayers. Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz, stressed on the performance of Friday prayers in India because the ruler, i.e., the British, did not interfere in Muslim religious freedom. Freedom of religion existed when a non-Muslim ruler appointed a Muslim officer (*hâkim*) for the Muslim community with whose permission the prayers could be held. It also existed when the Muslims were allowed to perform their religious duties. The Muslim community could select their own leader (*ra'îs*) with whose permission the prayers could be held. Shah, however, clarifies that that leader had no authority in political affairs (*umûr mulkî*).⁵⁸ Shah's inquirers were concerned with economic implications of *Dâr al-Harb*, because since 1784 the English administration had begun conferring titles of lands to new owners. The awardees of these titles were worried whether these titles were legally valid and whether these titles would continue to be legally valid if the status of *Dâr al-Islâm* was restored. W. Hunter and others interpreted these *fatâwâ* from political perspective. He used Shah's *fatwâ* for two purposes: first, to argue that revolt of 1857 was masterminded by the Muslims because they were

⁵⁶ See for details Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Obligation to Migrate: Formulation of the doctrine of Hijrah in Islamic Law". In: Dale F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1990.

⁵⁷ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 154.

⁵⁸ *Fatâwâ*, 1, p. 32.

religiously obliged to rebel, and secondly, to justify the enforcement of English laws for Muslims. In his book *Indian Muslims*,⁵⁹ Hunter described the *jihād* activities of what he called a "Rebel Camp" in the North India, founded by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1786–1831), a disciple of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz, in 1826. This camp initially fought against the Sikhs. Hunter argued that the Camp soon turned into an enemy camp supporting the uprising against the East India Company in 1857. It fought continuously against the English with an ever-increasing supply of cash, arms and volunteers from Muslims in other parts of India until 1870. Hunter collected reports of various Muslim uprisings and narrated them as a continued account of a rebel movement. He also linked it with the Wahhabi *jihād* in Arabia, giving the story a pan-Islamic touch, so much feared by the British. It is significant to note that Hunter frequently refers to Roman Empire to compare the British enterprise in India. This empire world-view compels him to think in universal terms. He universalises the characteristics of people he is dealing with. In India, he finds only two peoples; Hindus and Muslims. Hindus were the natives of India and Muslims were the foreign rulers whom the British defeated. The British could not expect loyalty from the Muslims. He treats Muslims in India as one ethnicity but such as is governed by religion more fanatically than other ethnic groups. This is also the religious fervour that had given birth to reformation movement in Islam. He compares Wahhabism with similar reform movements in Christianity whose puritanism had led them to fanaticism. He would have welcomed this development among Muslims, had this fanaticism not been aimed against the British government. He remarks: "It is one of the misfortunes attendant on the British rule in India, that this Reformation should be inseparably linked with hatred against the infidel conquerors".⁶⁰ Hunter concluded that Muslims would be religiously obliged to obey English laws with clear conscience if India was declared *Dār al-Harb*.⁶¹ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and others vehemently denied Hunter's story about Muslim *jihād*. Later, however,

⁵⁹ William Hunter, *The Indian Muslims*. This section consists of a summary of the main points of this book.

⁶⁰ Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that in a recent study Peter Hardy also looks at Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz's *fatawā* from a similar perspective: "But this was an academic ruling by an academician to ease the conscience of those obliged to live under non-Muslim laws administered by non-Muslims" (*The Muslims in British India*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 51).

due to changed political worldview in the twentieth century, Hunter's story gained acceptance as a history of freedom movement, even receiving a nationalist tinge. Shah's statements, particularly his *fatwâ* on *Dâr al-Harb* was understood from that new perspective. Mushir al-Haq has brought this point out more forcefully in his recent studies.⁶² One finds a similar varying perception of the 1857 uprising in Muslim literature between nineteenth and twentieth century. Writings closer to the event treat it as riots, rebellion etc., but not a *jihâd*⁶³ nor nationalist struggle for independence as most of the later writers do.

⁶² Mushir al-Haq, *Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz and Fatwa Dar al-Harb*. M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1966; "Unnîswîn Sadî ke Hindûstân kî Shar'î Haythiyyat: Shâh 'Abd al-'Aziz ke Fatâwâ *Dâr al-Harb* kâ aik 'ilmî Tajziyya". *Burhân*, 63 (1969), pp. 221-243; *Madhhab aur Dihn-e Jadîd*. New Delhi: Jami'a, 1974, pp. 46-71; *Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz: His Life and Times, A Study of Indian Muslim Attitude to the British in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1994.

⁶³ See for instance, Fadl Haq Khayrâbâdî, *Al-Thawrat al-Hindiyyah*, Urdu translation by 'Abd al-Shâhid Sherwânî. Lahore, 1974; Mirzâ Akhtar Gurgânî, *Sawânih-ye Dihlî*. Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1981, originally circa 1881; 'Abd al-Latîf, *1857 kâ Tarîkhî Ruznâma*. Ed. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. Delhi: Nadwat al-Musannifin, 1958; Ja'far Thanêsârî, *Hayât-e Sayyid Ahmad Shahîd*. Karachi: Nafis Academy, 1968, original Persian text published in circa 1884; Nawwâb Siddîq Hasan Khân, *Tarjuman-e Wahhâbiyya*. Agra, 1300 H, pp. 65-66; *Taqsar Juyûd al-Ahrâr min Tadhkar Junûd al-Ahrâr*. Bhopal, 1289 H, p. 19; *Mawâ'id al-'Awâ'id*. Lucknow, 1882, p. 34; Abû Nasr Muhammad 'Alî Hasan, *Ma'âthir-e Siddiqî*. Lucknow, 1924, Vol. 3, pp. 137-139 for the writings closer to 1857.

ENCOUNTER AND APPROPRIATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

JAMAL MALIK

Introduction

Some questions in the context of cultural encounter turn out to be resistant to analysis. Basically one can be concerned with questions such as the following: why were a few foreigners able to rule a vast subcontinent; how did foreign and native groups perceive each other; which ideas were represented in the discourse in South Asia; could they have corresponded to the discourse in Europe; why and how were these ideas perceived and what roles did natives play; which images of the other side developed gradually, changed, and eventually prevailed in this interaction?

Initially one can be guided by the impression that the colonial engagement was not a result of a far-sighted policy but was determined by momentary circumstances and thus was quite often contradictory. The ambiguities of early colonial encounter notwithstanding, once this engagement started changing from approximately 1790s it gradually began to aim at the restoration of the type of *universal dominion* that had existed under the Mughals. However, the following successful colonial expansion and rule was not at all possible without the active participation of Indian natives and especially not without a detailed knowledge of the new territory—thus Europeans were compelled to become experts. I would suggest that during this transfer of knowledge there inevitably occurred different projections, interjections, misunderstandings, and errors, which through various reciprocal processes finally led to European domination. And from the 19th century the dominant paradigms of colonial historiography have constructed the relationship between what has become Occident and Orient in such a way, that traces of “Oriental” agency and creativity have been obliterated and agency been given to Europeans: one speaks about colonialists and colonized peoples, about subject and object. Again one may ask how and where this perception of one-sidedness came about and who were its instigators.

Did not collective customs and norms display similarities in the fields of semiotics, social and cultural knowledge, institutions, and even sensitiveness in both regions? Shouldn't one speak of equal partners who perceived and defined each other and who stood in mutual relationship, which gradually were constructed into one-sided categories of domination and dependency?

In the following, I wish to scan briefly the role of native informants, of the discourse in South Asia, the traditionalisation and parallel to that the modernisation of India from the 1750s to 1850s. In doing so I am also concerned with Orientalism and victimology as it were, in so far as to show that this period was not primarily characterised by one-sided relations between culprit—victim but that Europeans and Indians were equivalent opposites who perceived each other, defined and identified each other and thus stood in a mutual discourse. There was an exchange and interrelationship between representatives of different regions, and a necessary transfer, a mutual appropriation of knowledge, which was only interpreted in terms of European domination after a period of cultural counter in which native informants played a decisive role.

The native informant

Curiously enough, the representatives of the East India Company were hardly conversant with Indian languages until 1780. Only fragmentarily they had access to information on local social structure. However, expansion needed the appropriation of extensive knowledge about the new and mostly unknown region. Of course, there had been a number of European travellers, who were mostly stationed at the courts, a few of them also travelled around the countries and who have left behind a number of travel-reports that were most important for the making of European identity in a variety of forms.¹ But it seems that until the first half of the 18th century there was hardly any personal contact between Europeans and Indians in the hinterlands. Encounters during that period were mostly limited to trade-interactions, the life of English traders was confined more or less to the *mufassals*—stations in the country as opposed to principal stations or towns. Since they were not conversant with the native language, contacts were limited to their equals, e.g., traders

¹ Compare now also the seminal work of Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche*. München: Beck, 1998.

and representatives of the court who used to visit the factories in the mercantile settlements. Although cultural differences were recognised and although there was a certain ignorance and prejudice, nevertheless in the process of cultural interaction one can hardly detect ideas of subordinating Indian culture—indeed, most European travel-reports bear testimony to that approach. On the contrary, the English showed great respect towards the Indians in the 18th century. This phase of *culture touch*²—which can be regarded the first of four basic types of cultural interaction, namely 2) *culture contact*, 3) *culture collision* and 4) *culture assimilation*—was thus characterised by limited meetings, by uncertainty, fear and curiosity and also by the fascination for what was thought of as an archaic culture: The noble savage was born in the European mind.

With growing foreign interests by the end of the 18th century, more and more Europeans, especially Englishmen had come to India—and Indians had also gone to England. The economic and social contacts between Europeans and Indians increased. It was with this fluctuation that mutual perceptions changed, e.g., during 1790 and 1820. Since the newcomers from Europe came to dominate the economy, they started to demand English and thus finally imperial manners upon the sphere in which they operated. This second phase of cultural interaction—*culture contact*—was reflected among other things in the colonial efforts starting gradually about 1790—under Charles Cornwallis (1738–1805). Since these had to be legitimised, every Indian was imputed to be corrupt by nature.³

By assigning this collective identity to Indians the colonialists generated their own identity by manufacturing an image of the notable or “significant Oriental other”. This negative characterisation of Indians by the English went hand in hand with the understanding that knowledge of the indigenous people who would guarantee access to the local society was required. After all, without their support and help, the foreigners would remain foreign and helpless.

² According to Urs Bitterli there are four basic forms of cultural interaction. I would like to stretch them approximately from 1750 to 1900. The first phase can thus be considered roughly from 1750 to 1790. This is followed by the phase of *culture contact* (app. 1790–1830), followed by *culture collision* (app. 1830–1860) and by *culture assimilation* (roughly 1860–1900). See Urs Bitterli, *Die “Wilden” und die “Zivilisierten”*; *Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäisch-überseeischen Begegnung*. München: Beck, 1991 (reprint).

³ See Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 80ff., 127ff., 137.

The native informants (*munshīs*, *mehmāndārs*, etc.) usually hailed from higher social groups—the Muslim gentry or *ashraf*.⁴ This functional elite worked for the East India Company, and thus enabled the foreigner to function in a world that otherwise would remain alien in several respects.⁵ Privileged through these assignments, this elite also influenced colonial knowledge to a considerable degree and was received eagerly. However, in this way the social status of the Indian functional elite gradually decreased from that of being *ashraf* of the Indian society to that of *ajlāf*—the barbarians—of the British.

Deliberately the manifold information was soon processed systematically and scientifically by the Europeans, namely linguistic contributions and orientalist studies,⁶ complemented by demographic inquiries.⁷ Back in England the state had been able to support its claim of legitimate agency with the help of technical and scientific achievements and social data.⁸ India turned out to be an appropri-

⁴ For the informants during Mughal era see Momin Mohiuddin, *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals: From Babur to Shahjahan (1526–1658); a study in Inshā', Dār al-Inshā', and Munshīs, based on original documents*. Calcutta: Iran Society, 1971. For their relevance in colonial times see Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1764–1857*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.

⁵ See Bernhard Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command". In: Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 276ff.; Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive". In: Carol A. Breckenridge & Peter van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1993, pp. 279–313; Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁶ See the contributions by Sheldon Pollock, "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Beyond the Raj". In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 76–133, Vinay Dharwadker, "Orientalism and the Study of Indian Literatures". In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 158–185, and Rosane Rocher, "British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government". In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 215–249.

⁷ For the census see for example B.S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia". In: B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987; Gerald N. Barrier (ed.), *The Census in British India: New Perspectives*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981; David Ludden, "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge". In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 250–276; Arjun Appadurai, "Number in the Colonial Imagination". In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 314–340; Peter Robb (ed.), *Rural India: Land, Power and Society under British Rule*. London: Curzon Press, 1983.

⁸ See Richard Lawton (ed.), *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretative Guide to Nineteenth Century Censuses for England and Wales*. London and Totowa, NJ: F. Cass,

ate location in which to undertake similar legitimising projects, albeit in a different form: Unlike the collection of demographic data in the colonial motherland, which concentrated on territories and professions, in India the indigenous people were primarily categorised according to race, caste and religion⁹—the traditional relation between what is considered to be caste and profession might have been a starting point for this perception. This “orientalist empiricism”¹⁰ had a control function and was needed for reform, and by assigning and consequently creating new racial and religious identities, this orientalist empiricism helped to translate the colonial situation in a manner that made the other comprehensible at home in England. After all, one could claim to be operating in the name of progress, e.g., modernity, the more the colony appeared to be backward, e.g., traditional. This construction of an imagined Oriental identity does in fact say less about the peoples in the colonies than about the colonialists themselves, since the construction of the other can only be based on projections of elements of the self.

There is no doubt the fact that for a productive translation of the information gained by local informants knowledge about the Islamic/Hindu discourse was indispensable. Again, for that purpose the support of local scholars was necessary, and they in turn were accorded an important mediating position, however, their intellectual contributions were marginalised soon. Naturally, it was them who enabled access to the controversial debates, that dominated the public in South Asia.

The discourse in South Asia and the role of scholars

Currently it is quite difficult to reconstruct these debates because of the supposed illegibility of the sources of the 18th century—there seems to be a lack of specific historical and material contextualisation and inquiry.¹¹ The following generalisations about social basis, institutions and ways of articulation have to be scrutinised for individual

1978; D.V. Glass, *Numbering the People, The Eighteenth-Century Population Controversy and the Development of Census and Vital Statistics in Britain*. London: D.C. Heath, 1973.

⁹ See A. Appadurai, “Number”; Henry Scholberg, *The District Gazetteers of British India: A Bibliography*. Zug, Switzerland: Inter-Documentation Company, 1970.

¹⁰ D. Ludden, “Orientalist Empiricism”.

¹¹ Indeed, this alleged illegibility is another case in point for the colonial hermeneutic monologue.

cases.¹² However, an important aspect of these discussions was the criticism of contemporary reformers and pietists of their own Muslim/Hindu society. Parallels can be found in other regions of the heterogeneous Islamic world—the Hijaz being a kind of emporium for new ideas¹³—at a phase of historical transition from the disintegration of empires to new territorial states in the 18th century, that is, at a time when society was in a far-reaching process of socio-economic and cultural transformation. The reformers postulated doing away with folk-religious rites and appropriating God's message individually and independently through the revealed text. This meant emancipation of the self from immediate and direct ties of authority on the one hand and reconstruction of Islamic society by laypersons on the other, thereby referring to early Muhammadan time. This was *ijtihād* in the widest sense,¹⁴ and expressed a desire for newness. The past that was referred to was, however, not a heroic era that would return but a political and social utopia, which was to be lived and translated into reality. Thus, memory was to be transferred into powerful expectation.¹⁵ Needless to say that this stood in contrast to the traditionally bound compliance with—state—law and thus the tying to authority—*taqlīd*. One of the well-known reformer in India was Shah Wali Allah (died 1762).¹⁶ His deliberations seemed to be based in the idea of performance with its revolutionary, anti-traditional explosive effect that contrast with the aristocratic patrician thinking in terms of privileged hierarchy based on birth related estates.¹⁷

¹² For more details on the following see Jamal Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien. Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997, pp. 168–186.

¹³ See John Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1982, pp. 72ff.; Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840*. Texas and London: University of Texas Press, 1979, pp. 49ff., 112, 139. I do not mean that there was one “Islamic” centre in Arabia which would inspire all other movements. Scholars in Mecca and Medina did not dispose of a programme, rather there were loose connections characterised by a network of social relations.

¹⁴ See Reinhard Schulze, “Das Islamische Achtzehnte Jahrhundert; Versuch einer historiographischen Kritik”. *Die Welt des Islams*, 30 (1990), pp. 140–159.

¹⁵ Compare Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: Beck Verlag, 1992, p. 80.

¹⁶ He was favourable to the new social groups, he criticised the old prebendal system and its representatives, and designed a new education system, which was cut to the needs of the rising forces. The dynamic urban traders, whose profit thinking needed legitimisation, were his main supporters.

¹⁷ For this change of perception in 18th century Europe compare Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Aus der Geschichte lernen?*. München: Beck, 1988, p. 222.

Analogous to the claims of the reintroduction of *ijtihād*, the theoretical elaboration upon the ethical concept called the Muhammadan Path (*Tarīqa Muhammadiyya*)¹⁸ seemed to give a new meaning and function to the individual—mystical piety changed into prophetic or action piety.¹⁹ Quite in accordance with these developments there was a new rise in the study of prophetic tradition, the *hadīth*, or traditional transmitted sciences.²⁰ Moreover, through shortening of the traditionally accepted ascription of the chain of authorities (*sil-sila/isnād*) a quick and effective affiliation with Prophet Muhammad—the perfect man—became possible; hence *imitatio muhammadi*. In this context the legendary Khidr, the immortal patron of the traveller, who could initiate the mystic into the path, increasingly played the role of a joker or trickster. The era thus called for a sunnatisa-tion of life.

At the same time a developing anthropocentric world view and a new conscience of the equality of all human beings found expression mainly in the vernacular literature, particularly in Urdu poetry; morality and sensitiveness emerged as a new concern, while a new level of interpersonal relations and disclosure implied societal equality.²¹ The metamorphosis of name as manifested in the nom de plume (*takhallus*)—or the freeing oneself from, e.g., traditional bondage—seemed to have played a crucial role for the process of individualisation.²²

¹⁸ For general remarks on *Tarīqa Muhammadiyya* see R.S. O'Fahey & B. Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered", *Der Islam*, 70 (1993), pp. 52–87; for the Indian context see Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*. Chapel Hill, NC, 1985; S.A.A. Rizvi, *Shāh Walī Allāh and his time*. Canberra, 1980. Out of this early pietist ideas of a *Tarīqa Muhammadiyya* there soon emerged hierarchically structured mass organisations that found their substratum mainly in the nomadic and agrarian societies.

¹⁹ See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

²⁰ *Hadīth* studies did not only mean a traditionalization of scholarship, it also had the potential of newness—as the Arabic term *hadīth*, e.g., news, itself suggests.

²¹ "The ideal is so to develop your sensitivity that you feel another's pain as though it were your own." Ralph Russell & Kurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 190. Similarly in Cairo: "the poet wrote about his own feelings with obvious sincerity." P. Gran, *Islamic Roots*, p. 57. The Sufi Mir Dard concentrated on "tenderness" which he considered to be the codex of ideal conduct, combining sensitiveness with virtue and ratio—a kind of inward-enlightenment.

²² *Takhallus* meant interrogating or even abandoning traditional order. At the same time the performer dissociates himself from the self, thus suggesting a new identity. This fictional person, e.g., *takhallus*, could then be used as projection field

A new public is seen to constitute itself as articulating their interests in particular institutional spaces and patterns—the literary salons: the *mushāʿira*—sensible circles of friendship as it were. Here different societal groups found a rank-free communication zone which could function as an alternative to the court; here critical and receptive competence could be acquired and here class and intellectual heterogeneity prevailed.²³ Sufis like the Naqshbandi Mir Dard (died 1785) were in the forefront of these developments. Thus, the growing popularity of Urdu ideally, linguistically and societally expressed the cultural emancipation process from the prestige culture languages, Persian and Arabic.²⁴

These ideas found resonance especially among new urban trading groups²⁵ that had been able to establish themselves during the contacts with European traders in the course of the crisis of Mughal empire along the borders of the national markets of the successor states.²⁶

As we can see, the individual becomes a subject. He alone was to create with his own hands and imaginatively a new order. But the process of becoming a societal and political subject was rejected

for difference. In this way feelings could be explored and the subject or ego thus reconstructed.

²³ Religion and politics were hardly debated, confessional and political antagonisms could be transcended. Focus was laid on feelings and sensitiveness. And since the ego was at the centre of discourse, these *mushāʿiras* often became fora not only for polemics. Compare C.M. Naim, "Poet-audience interaction at Urdu *mushāʿiras*". In: Christopher Shackle (ed.), *Urdu in Muslim South Asia; Studies in the honour of Ralph Russell*. London, 1989, pp. 167–173; 'Alī Jawwād Zaidī, *Tārīkh-e mushāʿirah*. Delhi, 1989; Brian Q. Silver, "The Urdu *Mushāʿirah*". In: Alma Giese & J. Christoph Bürgel (eds.), *Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit*. Bern etc., 1994, pp. 363–375; Farhatullah Baig, *The Last Mushāʿirah of Delhi*, transl. with an Introduction, Notes, Glossary and Bibliography by Akhtar Qamber. New Delhi, 1979. An academic work on the complex issue of *mushāʿira* as a cultural and social institution is still to be written.

²⁴ This coincides with the intensified conflict between Persian poets of Indian and Iranian descent. It is at this time that Siraj al-Din Khan Arzu ascertains the affinity of Persian and Sanskrit and in such a way authorises Indians to use Persian words and Hindi concepts.

²⁵ Compare also Fernand Braudel, *Sozialgeschichte des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts: Der Handel*. München, 1990, pp. 56ff.

²⁶ For early contacts and intellectual debates as well as European imaginations of India see the seminal work of Wilhelm Halbfass, *Indien und Europa: Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung*. Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe & CoAG Verlag, 1981; compare now also Eli Franco & Karin Preisendanz (eds.), *BEYOND ORIENTALISM. The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies*. Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997.

by the major part of the functional elite. This elite tended to pursue traditionally bound compliance with—state—law and thus *taglîd*. This does not, however, imply drawing a strict line between different social groups, certainly there were societal overlappings, but it gives a clue to the diverse cultural articulations.

This emancipative approach of urban traders grounded in sound economic and societal interests: they wanted to get rid of the traditional social hierarchy and status, they pleaded for more morality and virtue:²⁷ increasingly, personal value of the individual became to stand in contrast to status value. In turn, this implied equality which was most important for the rising trading communities. This is because they wanted to be credit-worthy and to organise their income in a precise way and in a calculating manner. Thus, the “organised control of capital stood in contrast to the un-professionality of the gentry and their use of representative wealth and opulence. Functionality stood in contrast to enjoyment as it were. It seems that the new norms revealed the changing social background: common and untitled property was produced with hard labour, it was not inherited in a nonchalant way; it was not self-evident family tradition, and did not consist of secure landed property but of monetary and commodity assets, which, in order to increase, had to be risked, again and again. The civilian was eager to acquire and maintain wealth, the aristocrat was fixated at its waste and application.”²⁷

What we find then are at least two competing groups: The first subjected individual aspects of cultural practice to a dominating discipline of dogmatism and ideology as a principle of cultural heteronymy as was the case with the functional elite that fostered the study of *kalâm* and law, both being based in logic that was most congruent with state law. The latter seemed to stand for cultural autonomy and fostered particular discourses whence calling for independent reasoning and stressing the role of vernaculars; while the first recurred to power hierarchy, the latter was based on evidence and consensus.²⁸

Their debates were carried out passionately and seized the major

²⁷ See Klaus P. Hansen, “Bürgerliche und unbürgerliche Empfindsamkeit in England”. In: Klaus P. Hansen (ed.), *Empfindsamkeiten*. Passau, 1990, pp. 43–62, here p. 50 (my translation).

²⁸ Compare also Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 117.

part of the Islamic world—even the Shiite took part in them.²⁹ Therefore it is most plausible that these debates became the starting point for the colonial reception of Oriental society; and it is even likely that the later colonial masters willingly took possession of this indigenous pietist criticism and revaluation, at least partly. After all, they were well conversant with pietist ideas in England—one may think of the unitarians and deists and their postulates of rational religion and morality.³⁰ This would mean that the debates of contemporary Indian scholars corresponded with the Europeans' own perceptions. Indeed, Muslim and Hindu pietists such as Naqshbandis and Ramandis were popular among the rising urban trade communities and seemingly closer to colonialists who were looking for reliable trade partners, rather than traditionalist and what has been called obscurantist worshippers of holy men and shrines. The access to these debates potentially made possible an intercultural understanding of the "other" towards *cultural contact*, the second phase of cultural interaction.

As it stands, British officials in India felt themselves heavily inclined toward these and later reformist scholars and Sufis; they even paid them their respect, took their advice in religious questions, and made them the tutors of their children, like in the case of Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz (1746–1824). I would suggest that the understanding, co-operation and also the flow of information between officers of the East India Company and indigenous pietists was cultivated due to mutual reform interests and a common semantic household until the end of the 18th century. To paraphrase William Halbfass: At the beginning of the 19th century the interpretation and appropriation of traditional Indian concepts and terms was used by a number of experts and theoreticians of mission and colonialism as a medium to proclaim Christianity.³¹

The flow of information and co-operation seemed to be bound-

²⁹ Etan Kohlberg, "Aspects of Akhbari Thought in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", In: N. Levtzion & John O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*. Syracuse, 1987, pp. 133–160; Andrew J. Newmann, "The nature of the Akhbârî/Usûlî dispute in late Safawid Iran. Part 1 and 2", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, LV (1992), pp. 22ff. and pp. 250ff.

³⁰ E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959; S.N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968; C.P. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525–1618*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972.

³¹ Halbfass, *Indien und Europa*, p. 66.

less, so that when in 1803 the British occupied Delhi, the well-known Islamic scholar and Sufi Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz issued a legal opinion, according to which India was no longer an Islamically ruled territory.³² However, the main issue of the *fatwâ* was to legitimise economic transactions and social interactions between Muslims and Non-Muslims—that is, British conquerors—rather than calling for *jihâd*. This kind of integrationist legal opinion fostered colonial thrusts and appropriation: Colonial officials concluded from the aforesaid *fatwâ* that in territories not dominated by Islam the implementation of British law made sense and was necessary since Muslims would accept the law of the present regent. Therefore they, such as William Hunter, gathered corresponding legal opinions, had them written, and published them. In this way the implementation of British law was greatly facilitated.

Other Muslim dignitaries, such as Ghulam 'Ali (1743–1824), refrained from any kind of interaction with Europeans, thereby perpetuating an exoticised image of the *farangî* “other”, e.g., occidentalism. The following quotation is a case in point. It shows the ambivalent and hybrid character of the colonial process—of desire and disavowal. Ghulam 'Ali describes the encounter with Charles Metcalfe, the Resident at Delhi:³³

Metcalfe, the European (Mitkâf Farangî) who was the ruler of Delhi also came there on the occasion. All of those present stood up out of respect for him, and I remained seated. When he sat down, I turned my back to him so that my eyes would not fall on his face. He asked from those present (who he was). They said he is such and such. He stood up and came near to me to kiss my feet. When he came close, the smell of alcohol came to me from his mouth. I became disgusted, and forcefully rebuking him, I drove him away from myself like a dog. He attacked a second time. Again I spoke to him sternly and didn't allow him to come near. When he returned to his own house he said to one of his servants, 'In all India I have seen this one true Muslim.'

Men like Ghulam 'Ali were concerned with urban artisans and weavers, who suffered under colonial economy. They brought them together in guild-like organisations and thereby strengthened the Sufi orders,

³² See Shâh 'Abd al-'Azîz, *Fatâwâ-ye 'Azîzî*. Karachi: Sa'îd Kampanî 1412 h. (reprint), pp. 454ff., 475, 581f., 582–586.

³³ See W.E. Fustfeld, *The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750 to 1920*. Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1981, p. 166.

like a branch of the Naqshbandis in Delhi.³⁴ A transfer of knowledge through them was hardly possible, they used to have their own realm of discourse which again could only be furnished to Europeans through *integrationist* scholars and informants.

In contrast to this there were some relations between colonialists and representatives of the rising order called *Tarîqa Muhammadiyya*—not to be confused with the 18th century ethical concept of the same name. Interestingly, many other contemporary “Muhammadan Paths” spread quickly and widely in Africa, Central Asia and South East Asia and the Hijaz. They all stood for a type of catharsis, fell back upon their own reform traditions of the 18th century, usually adhered to the wide network of the Naqshbandiyya and often became active in the anti-colonial struggle.³⁵

About the Indian version of *Tarîqa Muhammadiyya* there are still major gaps in our information which have to be filled in, so that we can round off both colonial as well as nationalist historiography. The colonialist wrongly identified this order with the Arabic puritan movement of the 18th century, the Wahhabiyya. This identification and false interpretation were based in widespread colonial ignorance about other cultures and religions and fomented fear of a *pan-Islamic* militant anti-colonial movement, as can be derived from the *Literature de Surveillance*.³⁶ This might testify to a lack of dialogical understanding and corresponded with the contemporary hermeneutic monologue, which now had become engraved in foreign images. Many Muslim nationalists on the other hand unconditionally regard the “Muhammadan Path” as their forerunner.

Just like Christian missionaries who were officially allowed to preach publicly in 1813,³⁷ the reformers of the *Tarîqa Muhammadiyya* made

³⁴ This points to a connection between handicraft, guilds and mystical orders, which is quite prevalent in the Near East. Compare Jamal Malik, “Islamic Institutions and Infrastructure in Shâhjahânâbâd”. E. Ehlers & Th. Krafft (eds.), *Shâhjahânâbâd/Old Delhi: Tradition and Colonial Change*. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1993, pp. 43–64.

³⁵ See f.e. Shah Muhammad Ismail, “Notice of the Peculiar Tenets held by the Followers of Syed Ahmad, Taken Chiefly from the *Sirât al-Mustaqîm* . . .”. Tr. J.R.C. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1 (1832), pp. 479–498; Shah Muhammad Ismail, *Support of Faith*. Tr. Mir Shahamat Ali. Lahore, 1969.

³⁶ See O’Fahey & Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered”.

³⁷ Some representatives of the East India Company were sceptical towards Christian missionary zealots in the 18th century, but with a parliamentary degree dated 1813 (*East India Company’s Charter*) they had to allow missionaries to work in India. See Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*. London: Curzon Press, 1993.

use of the emerging printing press. It was during this time that the first Urdu translations of the holy Qur'an were produced.³⁸ The media—especially in the vernaculars—supported the development of a diversified Islamic public which competed with each other, gradually became literate and emancipated by imagining their communities, and soon was to become active nationalistically.³⁹ These efforts were yielded mostly by mystical orders which at the same time represented new social organisations. But this increasing emancipation did not correspond to colonial interests. Thus, a traditionalisation⁴⁰ of India became necessary for the British to hinder a further self-conscious development and ease foreign domination. It was partly based on the insight into the discourse in South Asia. The turn from dialogue and cultural encounter to appropriation was thus completed.

The traditionalisation of India

This traditionalisation of India was a product of the academic engagement with the new region and the reception and selective appropriation of ideas of Indian pietists on the one hand and the obliteration of all traces of Indian creativity on the other. For example, European studies in textual criticism and comparative religion of that time were built upon the intellectual achievements of Mughal India, at a time, when authorship emerged as a principle of textual attribution and creditation.⁴¹ In this way agency was taken away from Indians, and the developments calling for emancipation gradually fell into oblivion. This blurring culminated in the notion, that 18th century

³⁸ See Muhammad Ayyûb Qâdirî, *Urdû Nathr ke irteqâ' men 'ulamâ' kâ hissah*. Lâhaw: Idârah-ye thaqâfat-e islâmiyya, 1988.

³⁹ For the identity-giving role of the media see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1983.

⁴⁰ See C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 (2), pp. 155ff.

⁴¹ The case in point are Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) and Sir Williams Jones (1746–1794), when Orientalism had not yet emerged as a discourse of domination but was still in form of reciprocal relation between European and Indian scholars. While Siraj al-Din Khan Arzu (1689–1756) had ascertained the affinity of Persian and Sanskrit already a few decades before Jones, Anquetil-Duperron was highly influenced by Dara Shikoh's (1615–1659) Persian translations. Both Europeans appropriated the works of their Indian informers without however mentioning their contributions; see Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Orientalism's Genesis Amnesia". *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, XVI/1 (1996), pp. 1–14, here pp. 4–6.

Orient produced nothing but chaos, its sources, it was proclaimed, were illegible.

After all, once all the different informations on and about India were available, the British could classify them in taxonomies and analyse them. Counting, essentialisation and appropriation of the social landscape all exclusively served colonial utilitarianism.⁴² In this way an epistemological hierarchy was also established which is still very present,⁴³ and which determines the image of the Orient: India gradually had become the counter pole of the bright and enlightened Europe: an obscurantistic, romantic and especially deficient India, which offered enough space for projections, yearnings, traumata.⁴⁴ Hence, the new and subjected region became, according to European superiority complex, not only a vicious country but also one which could never be improved,⁴⁵ and which therefore needed guidance.

The existing empirical data and informations as well as the mediated knowledge about the discourse in South Asia were basis enough for the following colonial criticism. This was further developed into a comprehensive intellectual attack on the Orient which was now constructed as the counter pole of bright and enlightened Europe. The aim was to legitimise colonial power and push through its notions of modernisation or anglicisation. The savages had be civilised.⁴⁶

I would postulate that the colonial construction and interpretation of the Orient and especially of Islam were linked with existing indigenous perceptions and valuations. This means that the colonial masters were not by force the catalysts for development and modernisation; the dynamic moment was already available.

This hypothesis leads to further questions: Did the colonial perception take the same course at the same time in other Oriental regions, or did India occupy a unique position in this regard?⁴⁷ Was the "other" discourse appropriated only there—at least at first—,

⁴² See E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*; A. Appadurai, "Number" In: Breckenridge et al. (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 314–340.

⁴³ See B. Cohn, "The Command of Language".

⁴⁴ Compare W. Halbfass, *Indien und Europa*, pp. 75ff.

⁴⁵ See P. Spear, *The Nabobs*, pp. 136ff.

⁴⁶ The invention of a backward Orient was most important for an European enlightenment. See U. Bitterli, *Die "Wilden" und die "Zivilisierten"*.

⁴⁷ For Europe the idea of India as a unique and original culture region has a long tradition; see W. Halbfass, *Indien und Europa*; J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, esp. pp. 211–234 and pp. 271–309.

taken over, revalued and transplanted? If this was the case, e.g., the uniqueness of India—as can be derived from the career of the term Wahhabiyya⁴⁸—then this European reception had to be of particular vehemence; after all, as has been pointed out, India was styled the alter ego par excellence. And only an extreme and overdone critique was favourable to a process of prototypisation, which could then be applied with graduations to other subjected Oriental regions.

Modernisation of India

Thus, traditionalisation was programmatic and corresponded to the perceptions of the Victorian spirit, which had just begun to modernise an imagined stagnant India subdivided in castes, religions and races.⁴⁹ This ethnifying policy was based on “scientific” findings and eventually was to become very popular;⁵⁰ rebellions were crushed down with military aid, whilst reference to caste, religious affiliations and to chaotic situations as well as to the despotic character of Indian rulers served as legitimisation.

Viewed from this angle, it was deemed proper to reform and guide the traditional and orientalist region, such as during the period of William Bentinck (1828–35). Even a radical anglicisation was demanded, especially since it was opined that one single book-shelf of a European library would represent more knowledge than all the wisdom and writings of the Orient together.⁵¹

In contrast to that, there is another focus, e.g., that colonialisers found themselves increasingly in a position in which they questioned their own culture, adopted and adapted Indian norms and patterns of behaviour—hence, ambivalence and ambiguity: Some European enlightenment figures had gone as far as to use the Orient as a

⁴⁸ Compare the Introduction to this volume.

⁴⁹ See Ronald Inden, “Orientalist Constructions of India”. *Modern Asian Studies*, 20 (1986), pp. 401–446; similarly in other regions; see Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa 1860–1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Syed Hussein Alatas, *The myth of the lazy native*. London: Frank Cass, 1977.

⁵⁰ The conceptualisation of society in terms of ethnicity and religion was reproduced in demographic data from 1871 onwards. Indian nationalists adopted this ethnification and used it for their own purposes. See S.B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990; G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990; B. Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984.

⁵¹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

didactic background to criticise their own urban societies thereby setting out the frame of reference for their own identities.⁵² Yet others called for mimicry like Thomas Macaulay (1800–1859) in his famous *Minutes on Indian Education*, when he suggested the need to form a specific group of interpreters.

The English presence and identity was not only interrogated by Indians; Europeans also interrogated their own colonial identity when they problematised their own claim of agency and exposed their cultural hybridity during the colonial encounter. Therefore it can be argued that both colonial and colonised identities were not sets of rigid identities but were indeed actors of mutual encounters in an oscillating process. There was much of a process of—rather uncontrollable—cultural transformation, appropriation and complementarity on both sides, at least until the Orient was “demystified”.⁵³ In this sense the distribution of roles between active and passive based on what became the ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident is not as definite as it has been held so far. We can no longer defend the exclusive euro-centric view that the Occident expanded whereas the Orient merely reacted.⁵⁴ It is important to question this encrusted and still dominant image of an Oriental canon.

However, the colonial reordering (settlement, new cultivation technologies, prohibition to migrate etc.) fostered existing inter-societal antagonisms, which in connection with British centralising policy and the successive annexation of large regions led to the Rebellion of 1857. This *culture collision*—and this is the third phase of cultural interaction—was part of a chain reaction rather than a mere reaction to European expansion.⁵⁵

After the crushing down of the rebellion the colonial historiography created a new official history: the British were portrayed the liberators of Hindus from Muslim tyranny.⁵⁶ On the one hand the rebel-

⁵² In fact, this technique of textual alienation became quite popular. Compare J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, pp. 68ff., pp. 275–296 et passim.

⁵³ Compare J. Osterhammel, *Entzauberung Asiens*, esp. pp. 375–382.

⁵⁴ See H.L. Wesseling (ed.), *Expansion and Reaction. Essays on European Expansion and Reaction in Asia and Africa*. Leiden, 1978.

⁵⁵ See C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the making of the British Empire (The New Cambridge History of India, II.1.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 (2), chapter 6.

⁵⁶ This view corresponds with James Mill's (1773–1836) periodisation of Indian history as Hindu, Muslim and British epochs (*History of India*, 1806–1818). Mill's

lion was interpreted in terms mutiny, considered to be worst crime against authority—interestingly, the metaphor of mutiny was, after 1858, assigned to the whole Islamic world.⁵⁷ On the other hand the rebellion was interpreted as a restoration of Mughal *universal dominion*, a perspective that accorded with British imperial interests. For that reason after 1858 the colonial masters re-adopted many of the Persianite norms, as a ritual expression of British power in India, e.g., Queen Victoria accepted the title of Empress of India—*Kaiser-e Hind*—in 1876,⁵⁸ the Governor General became Vice Roy.⁵⁹ This “invention of tradition” or *culture assimilation* may be considered the fourth phase of cultural interaction. At the same time anglicisation was declared state policy, and an “official nationalism” was introduced which enabled the colonialists to retaliate legally, thereby establishing a definite power-relationship.⁶⁰

Conclusion

To sum up: From the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century, different phases in cultural encounter and reciprocal perceptions can be made out between Europeans and non-Europeans in South Asia: Culture touch—characterised by mutual scanning, dialogue and respect—was followed by culture contact at the end of the 18th century which gradually came to be dominated by Europeans. This second phase of cultural interaction was based on the intensification of contacts: utilisation of native informants, orientalist empiricism and particularly the knowledge of contemporary debates in South Asia. I presume that this discourse had much in common with that in Europe; hence the colonial receptivity to Indian pietists’ reform postulates, which—in the hybrid situation of the colonial

tradition of a discourse of stagnation was transferred by Elliot and Dowson (*The History of India as told by its own Historians*, 1867) into a discourse of decline, and later was replaced by contemporary historiography into categories such as antiquity, middle ages and modernity. This fostered the impression, that communalism was the main power in politics and consequently in historiography.

⁵⁷ See Reinhard Schulze, “Die Islamische Welt in der Neuzeit”. In: Albrecht Noth & Jürgen Paul (eds.), *Der islamische Orient – Grundzüge seiner Geschichte*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 1998, pp. 363f.

⁵⁸ This title was proposed by the German Orientalist G.W. Leitner; see B.S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”. In: T. Ranger & E.J. Hobsbawm (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983, pp. 165–209, here p. 201.

⁵⁹ See B. Cohn, “Representing Authority”, esp. pp. 179ff.

⁶⁰ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

process—were not only perceived but also appropriated and reconstructed by colonialists. Thus armed for a *culture collision* they then could afford some kind of *culture assimilation* from 1850s onwards. In the course of these relations several interpretations and reinterpretations of the self and the other occurred, through reciprocal processes of projection and introjection.

Cultural interaction was thus reflected in several ways, in imitation, in appropriation and also in turning away. In any case its effects were innovative, since its agents were representatives of societal transition. They were dynamic elements that created impulses for processes of reciprocal perception. They played a crucial role in imagining the self and the other because their transitional and hybrid state—between different spaces and time—enabled them to reconstruct both historical and present realities. Probably it is the view from this perspective—points of societal and historical intersection—that may help in re-evaluating source material and reinterpreting history, questioning established patterns of interpretation like the domination-submission-relationship and finding indigenous potential buried under the burden of colonial and nationalist historiography.

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