

WHEN WORLDS ELIDE: MUGHAL TEXTS ON IRANIAN KINGSHIP, RELIGION,
AND CULTURE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

Mughal texts demonstrate a fundamental shift in official attitudes towards contemporaneous Iran from 1526 to 1605. While these texts initially presented a submissive imperial position, they later depicted the Mughals as superior to their Safavid neighbours. In the spheres of kingship and religion, Mughal texts promoted the padshahs as more just and tolerant. This aura of dynastic superiority also became a dominant feature of Mughal cultural production, where the Mughals boasted their status as generous patrons. The mass emigration of Safavid-Iranian figures (shaykhs, Sufis, and artists) to the Mughal court and the heterogeneous nature of Mughal imperial identity in the South Asian environment also contributed to this superior self-idealization. In this process, the Mughals gradually understood themselves as the ideological centre of the notion of the Persian cosmopolis, a concept bound by the use of a shared language and the mobility of texts and learned bodies across space.

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In his profound presentation of love, the 13th century poet Rumi wrote:

“ishq ast dar aasman paridan”

Love? It's to leap towards the heavens.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Persian language and culture has had a long-standing presence in India since the time of the Ghaznavids (eleventh to twelfth century), culminating with the height of the Mughal dynasty (sixteenth to seventeenth century). Persian was first introduced in northern India as a literary language, yet over the course of five hundred years it was patronized by multiple dynasties and officially became the administrative and courtly language of many Muslim South Asian polities, including the Mughal empire. A driving force behind this transformation was the use of Persian in communities, such as the Sufis, beyond the Mughal court and its circle of the emperor, nobles, and advisors.¹ Essential to this proliferation of Persian was the incorporation of both Iranian and non-Iranian (Indian, Turkic) poets, artists, and administrators. The collaboration of these different groups writing in Persian in the Mughal court raises some interesting questions regarding how the Mughals understood themselves in relation to Iran and Persian culture when they themselves were non-Iranian. To further complicate this dynamic, the Mughals were a foreign, Turkic dynasty (and descendants of Timur) from Central Asia that established power in northern India while drawing inspiration from Persian culture.

Sunil Sharma writes that with “the presence of the classical Persian past” in the region, the Mughals made “clear attempts to forge an identity.”² Inspired by the ideas set forth by scholars such as Sharma, Rajeev Kinra, Mana Kia, and Richard Eaton, this thesis is dedicated to exploring how the Mughals wrote about Iran and Iranian identity while

¹ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 133.

² Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 15.

simultaneously borrowing from Persian culture in the formation of their distinct dynastic identity.³ Specifically, I will consider how notions of Iranian identity were idealized and presented in a number of sources. More importantly, I will investigate how such constructions metamorphosed over the span of a specific period, 1526-1605, by considering three major themes: kingship, religion, and culture.

The idea of certain languages operating well beyond their original homelands is not uncommon. In the medieval Islamic world, the Persian language enjoyed a renaissance during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and emerged as a rival to Arabic in terms of poetry, administration, chronicles, and hagiographies across Anatolia, the Caucasus, Iran, Central Asia, and South Asia. Not unlike French in post-Reformation Europe, Persian became the dominant language of courtly culture and diplomacy in the post-Mongol eastern Islamic World. As Persian spread to places like South Asia, communities inherited ideas about historical Iran and this region as the motherland through the adoption of Persian literary culture. For example, the Ghaznavids (of non-Iranian, Turkic origins) imported Persian language and culture to northern India in the eleventh century by sponsoring and encouraging poetry, prose literature, Sufi hagiographies, historical chronicles, and political advice manuals. Continuing their legacy, the successors of the Ghaznavids patronized Persian literature in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and this culture of patronage continued to flourish during the

³ See Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (Stanford: University Press, 2020) and Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019).

later Mughal period. While we can discuss the indigenous production of ‘Persian-ness,’ it is also important to acknowledge Mughal India’s on-going economic, political and cultural relations with contemporaneous Safavid Iran. From this interaction we see a number of Iranian artists and scholars migrate to India which in turn influenced the Mughal understanding of Iranian identity and ‘Persian-ness.’

This thesis is inspired by recent scholarship on Persian identity. Of particular note is the work of Owen Cornwall and Mana Kia. In his Columbia doctoral thesis, “Alexander and the Persian Cosmopolis, 1000-1500,” Cornwall notes that some categories such as “Persephone,” the “Persianate world,” the “Iranian world,” “Turko-Persia,” and “Turko-Iranian world” has been used by scholars to describe aspects of this phenomenon.⁴ The problem with these categories is that they work for a particular place in a particular time. In other words, none of these terms encompass the “grand depth of the phenomenon without necessarily assuming its depth.”⁵ In search of a term that *does* encapsulate the expanse of the multi-regional nature of ‘the Persianate world,’ Cornwall opts for the idea of ‘cosmopolis.’ The notion of cosmopolis itself is borrowed from Sheldon Pollock’s seminal study *Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, but it should be noted that other scholars have used this idea of cosmopolis in their own studies of Persian identity in South Asia.⁶ Pollock’s idea of cosmopolis depends heavily on

⁴ Owen Cornwall, “Alexander and the Persian Cosmopolis, 1000-1500,” PhD diss. (Columbia University: 2016), 2.

⁵ Cornwall, “Alexander and the Persian Cosmopolis,” 2.

⁶ See Sheldon Pollock, *Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Press, 2006); Richard Eaton and Philip Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India’s Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Richard Eaton, “Revisiting the Persian Cosmopolis,” *The Asia Times*, July 19, 2013.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/SOU-01-190713.html; Muzaffar Alam, "A

Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities."⁷ Pollock, through Anderson, argues for the creation of a larger Sanskritic cultural identity through the study of Sanskrit grammar and poetry. In the same spirit, Cornwall presents some intriguing ideas regarding the creation of a greater Persian cultural identity through the analysis and popular use of Persian poetic prose and literature.⁸

Building upon Pollock's use of the term "Sanskrit cosmopolis," Cornwall investigates how Persian writers in South Asia understood themselves in relation to this "trans-regional cultural phenomenon extending from the Balkans to the Bay of Bengal" by using Persian epic traditions of Alexander the Great.⁹ Here, we must also acknowledge Mana Kia's recent book on the notion of the Persian cosmopolis entitled *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism*. In this study, Kia argues that communities in the early modern period abided by a more flexible understanding of belonging which was rooted in *adab* (courtly etiquette) and language instead of the modern nationalist emphasis on race and ethnicity. Kia proposes the idea of "collective affiliation," which comprised "far more important lineages, including those of service, learning, aesthetics, and practice."¹⁰ In other words, Kia presents the notion of *adab* as a way for communities to form relationships across geography. While

Muslim State in a Non-Muslim Context," in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, eds. Mehrdad Boroujerdi (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 182.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed (New York: Verso, 2006), 6-7.

⁸ Cornwall, *Alexander*, 13-16.

⁹ Cornwall, *Alexander*, 1.

¹⁰ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (Stanford: University Press, 2020), 25.

communities in this period were connected by their shared use of the Persian language, it was the circulation of specific types of ideas through literary culture which established their sense of belonging to the wider expanse of the Persian cosmopolis.

The Persian cosmopolis was not a fixed territorial space; it was determined by the type of ideas that were passed down generationally and shared across time and space. This was made possible by the mobility of Persian figures (such as poets, artists, scholars) which was an important feature in the establishment of the notion of the Persian cosmopolis in places such as South Asia.¹¹ Even this movement of communities was possible because of the presence of the Persian language in courts across the medieval Islamic world. In this way, literary culture assumed agency through mobility and linked different groups together ideologically. If we consider the case of South Asia, the subcontinent had been a home to multiple dynasties who actively patronized works of Persian literature and art. Because of this admiration for Persianate culture, non-Persian courts continued to welcome these émigré figures, and consequently Iranian ideas, into the fold of their courtly culture. This avid acceptance and employment of Persian figures was only exacerbated by what Kia refers to as “kinship without ethnicity,” where erstwhile loyalties were replaced by allegiance to their new patrons without conflict. In this thesis, I will use the ideas presented by Mana Kia in an effort to understand how the Mughals understood the idea of Iran and Iranian culture in Mughal texts. As the Mughals belonged to the experience of the Persian cosmopolis which was bound by the spread of shared ideas and language, their conception of Iran becomes particularly interesting and

¹¹ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 101.

complicated. Moreover, this thesis will also investigate how Mughal writers described émigré Iranian figures (such as shaykhs, poets, and painters) in official Mughal texts.

I intend to apply the term “Persian cosmopolis” in a similar way, where this term denotes the Mughal importation of Persian language and culture from Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. It also signifies the development of Persian language and culture in the Indian context which gave rise to a new category of non-Iranian and non-Muslim members fluent in Persian, a topic which has been discussed by scholars like Sunil Sharma and Rajeev Kinra.¹² In addition to ‘Iran’ itself, Persian culture had been developing in ‘non-Iranian’ spaces like India for centuries. In this thesis, I hope to examine how the Mughals, after establishing themselves in South Asia, expressed and understood their contributions to the concept of the cosmopolis. Moreover, I am interested in assessing how they referenced Iran, Persian culture, and ‘Persian-ness’ in this process. I also hope to explore the place of cultural syncretism in this experience, where long-standing Persian and Arab influences in the subcontinent were fused with Central Asian and Indian elements of governance.

The discussion of ‘Persian-ness’ in the ‘Persianate’ world is a lively and on-going one.¹³ Historians such as Ebba Koch, Lisa Balabanlilar, Said Arjomand, Alam Muzaffar,

¹² See Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017) and Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

¹³ See Richard Eaton, “Revisiting the Persian Cosmopolis,” *The Asia Times*, July 19, 2013; Owen Cornwall, “Alexander and the Persian Cosmopolis, 1000-1500,” PhD diss. Columbia University: 2016; Said Arjomand, “From the Editor: Defining Persianate Studies,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1 (2008): 1-3.

Anooshahr Ali, and Athar Ali have written on the Mughal construction of kingship in the Persianate world, whereby they largely focus on how Central Asian and Perso-Islamic notions of legitimacy circulated in the Mughal imagination. In the same vein, historians such as Allison Busch, Sunil Sharma, Catherine Asher, L.M. Rahman, and Jean Calmard have similarly focused on the presence of Persian literature and architecture in India.¹⁴ More importantly, some of these historians have studied the literary and scholarly exchanges between the Safavids and the Mughals, whereby culture served as a diplomatic currency at a time when both of these newly emerging empires sought to project legitimacy.¹⁵ Also notable is the work published by T.N. Devare, M. Siraj Anwar, L.M. Rahman, Phillip Wagoner, and Richard Eaton on Deccan India, where these scholars

¹⁴ See: Ebba Koch, "How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran in their Visual Construction of Universal Rule," in *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History*, eds. Peter Bang and Dariusz Kolodziejczyk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire* (London: I. B Taurus, 2012); Said Arjomand, "The Saliency of Political Ethic in the Spread of Persianate Islam," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1 (2008): 5-29; Alam Muzaffar, "Guiding the Ruler and the Prince," in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. Barbard Metcalf (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); Ali Anooshahr, "Shirazi Scholars and the Political Culture of the Sixteenth-Century Indo-Persian World," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 51 (3) 2014: 331- 352; Athar Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Allison Busch, "Poetry in Motion: Literary Circulation in Mughal India," in *Culture and Circulation: Literature and Motion in Early Modern India*, eds. Thomas de Bruijn and Allison Busch (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017); Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jean Calmard, "Safavid Persia in Indo-Persian Sources and in Timurid-Mughal Perception," in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture in Indian and French Studies*, eds. Muzaffar Alam, Francoise Delvoy Nalini, Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2000).

discuss the development of Persian culture on account of the commercial contact between the Persian Gulf and West India.¹⁶

While there is an abundance of scholarship on the Mughals' political accomplishments as members of the Persianate world, there is less literature on the Mughals' contributions to the ideological space of the Persian cosmopolis. This thesis ultimately aims to explore how the Mughals wrote about and understood the idea of Iran as well as Persian identity, and how this perception changed from 1526 to 1605 across the categories of kingship, religion, and culture. In this way, this study will also examine how this dynamic conception of Iran, in turn, impacted the articulation of Mughal dynastic identity. Moreover, as the Mughals were mentally connected to the notion of cosmopolis, a phenomenon inherently defined by the use of a shared language and *adab*, this thesis will also investigate how the Mughals understood themselves within the ideological hierarchy of the cosmopolis.

As has been stated, the Mughal dynasty in particular had issues of identity formation. These issues stemmed from the Mughal struggle to incorporate complex ideas from their Timurid past while simultaneously establishing a new, distinct dynasty in the

¹⁶ T.N. Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature: At the Bahmani, the Adilshahi, and the Qutbshahi Courts* (New York: Routledge, 2018); M. Siraj Anwar, *Mughal and the Deccan: Political Relations with the Ahmadnagar Kingdom* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2007); L.M. Rahman, *Persian Literature in India During the Time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan* (Baroda: University of Baroda Press, 1970); Richard Eaton and Philip Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Indian subcontinent.¹⁷ In particular, the Mughals drew inspiration from the Iranian past in this construction of a distinct Mughal identity: they looked to the ancient Iranian and Perso-Islamic notions of kingship and governance.¹⁸ More specifically, the Mughals employed the tradition of divine absolutism where the monarch was believed to be the representative of God or the “Shadow of God.” This notion of the king as God’s agent was developed in the medieval period by many Persian intellectuals and thinkers. For this reason, the second chapter of this thesis will focus on the Mughal articulation of political legitimacy. The Mughals were particularly invested in the articulation of their authority which in turn was contingent on notions of divine absolutism borrowed from Perso-Islamic and ancient Iranian traditions. This notion of authority was explicitly expressed in Persian advice manuals (written by court historians, *viziers*, and heads of administration) targeted towards young princes and new kings. Inspired by these advice manuals written in the 14-16th centuries, Mughal mirrors for princes also emphasized the importance of governance and hierarchy. In addition to advice manuals, this chapter will also consider court chronicles and other texts (such as the *Qanun-i Humayuni*) to explore how the Mughals constructed and presented notions of political legitimacy and authority. As well, this chapter will also consider how the Mughals understood the idea of ‘Persian-ness’ all the while borrowing from the Iranian political past in the presentation of a dynastic identity.

¹⁷ Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire* (London: I. B Taurus, 2012), 18-19.

¹⁸ Ebba Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran in Their Visual Construction of Universal Rule,” in *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History*, eds. Peter Bang and Dariusz Kolodziejczyk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 198.

The third chapter will focus on the Mughal conception of religion. Religion was an important category in the sixteenth and seventeenth century as categories of confession became more defined. In the preceding period, Islam had less definitive boundaries, whereby divisions between Shia and Sunni communities could be porous. However, with the early modern period, and the establishment of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, we begin to see increased and more rigid confessionalization. As the lines between empires hardened, there was more pressure for communities to self-identify as either Shia or Sunni. In this dynamic landscape, we also see the rising popularity of Sufism and its myriad of brotherhoods. Specifically, we see an increased involvement of Sufi brotherhoods (Chishtiyya, Shattariyya, Naqshbandiyya) with the Mughal state which itself had a broadly Sunni orientation. Of course, at this time the Safavid dynasty to the west, in the ‘homeland’ of Iran, had officially promulgated Shi’ism as its state religion. It also became necessary for the Mughals to further distinguish themselves from their Safavid neighbours. This chapter aims to explore how the Mughals navigated religious categories and how émigré religious figures were treated in Mughal texts in this period. As well, I hope to explore how Mughal writers understood and wrote about the distinctions that came with ‘Persian’ and ‘Shia’ identities.

The fourth chapter will focus on the theme of culture. The Mughals were avid patrons of art and literature, and they sponsored miniatures, paintings, court chronicles, poetry, prose, buildings, public works, and architectural monuments. In this thesis, I am using the rubric of ‘culture’ in an effort to simplify the wide range of artistic, literary, and architectural production under the Mughals. As a foreign dynasty in South Asia, the Mughals came to cultivate a rich and amalgamative cultural environment. Namely, they

drew inspiration from their Timurid past, their Perso-Islamic inheritance, local Indian influences and contemporary Safavid cultural production. It is important to note that South Asia boasted a rich historical legacy of producing Persian literature and art, but the arrival of Iranian émigrés at the Mughal court reinforced this presence. In particular, the direct artistic and literary contributions of Iranian-Safavid artists impacted the Mughal conception of Iran. This movement of figures from Iran to South Asia reaffirmed the ongoing Mughal contribution to the notion of the Persian cosmopolis. In this chapter, I will explore how Mughal authors understood ‘Persian-ness,’ and how Mughal chroniclers and poets depicted Iranian artists and their contributions to Mughal cultural production.

1.1 Historical Context: South Asia and its Myriad Dynasties

The presence of Persian literature and language can be traced back to the tenth century, where the Ghaznavids, initially a group of Turkic slave commanders, conducted raids into South Asia. They first rose to prominence in the region of Afghanistan after they wrested political control from the Samanids, a Perso-Islamic dynasty of the ninth and tenth centuries, and officially conquered the city of Ghazna. As tribal leaders who did not have an independent literary tradition, the Ghaznavids developed a culture of active patronage inspired by the courtly culture of the Samanids. They sponsored *both* Arab and Persian writers and poets, thus creating a syncretic literary tradition in their court.¹⁹ Their courts housed renowned Persian literary figures like Farrukhi Sistani, Manuchihri, and Muizzi who were highly celebrated for their lyrical prowess.²⁰ Additionally, famous

¹⁹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern India 994-1040* (New Delhi: Taj Press, 1992), 134.

²⁰ G.E. Tetley, *The Ghaznavid and Seljuk Turks: Poetry as a Source for Iranian History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1, 43, 91.

scholars such as Bayhaqi and Biruni were also in Ghaznavid employ.²¹ As the Ghaznavids conquered parts of northern India and slowly established loci of power in Delhi and Lahore, they transported this syncretic literary tradition into their Indian courts and sowed the seeds of the Persian cosmopolis.

In 1186, the Afgani Ghurids raided Lahore and displaced the Ghaznavids. In this process, they inherited their predecessors' cultural legacy and sponsored poets, writers, and historians from the Ghaznavid court. Among these figures was the prolific Ghaznavid poet Nizami Aruzi, who penned the advisory work *Chahar Maqala* (or Four Discourses).²² Besides the *Chahar Maqala*, there are a number of Persian prose works from this period, with the most important compositions being the *Bhar al-Ansab*, a genealogical treatise, *Tabaqat i-Nasiri*, a detailed political history of the Ghurids, and *Labab al-Albab*, an extensive biography of contemporaneous Persian poets.²³ With the patronage of Persian literature, the Ghurids continued and consolidated the presence of the Persian cosmopolis in South Asia. In fact, C.E. Bosworth refers to the Ghurids as essential conduits of the Persian language and Persian literature for future dynasties.²⁴

After the Ghurids, the Slave Kings of Delhi came to rule northern India in the 13th century. Three noteworthy individuals reigned in the period from 1206 to 1290: Qutb al-

²¹ C. Edmund Bosworth, "Ghaznavids," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 9, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ghaznavids>.

²² Tetley, *Poetry as a Source for Iranian History*, 43.

²³ J. Matini, "Awfi, Sadid al-Din," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 18, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/awfi-sadid-al-din>.

²⁴ See C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay, the Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040-1186* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992).

Din Aybak, Iltutmish, and Balban.²⁵ During this period, the Delhi Sultanate suffered at least a dozen minor Mongol invasions into the Punjab, and as a result the Slave Kings became more focused on preserving their territory in North-Central India. Despite being embroiled in constant warfare, the patronage of the arts did not dwindle in the Delhi Sultanate.²⁶ Aybak (r. 1206-1210) continued the patronage of many Ghurid poets and historians and is most renowned for building two mosques that stand in India to this day: the Quwwat al-Islam in Delhi and the Adha i-Dinka Jhomara mosque in Ajmer.²⁷ Cultural production heightened under his successor Iltutmish (r. 1211-1236) whose court “became a haven for refugees” from Central Asia and Iran in the wake of the Mongol invasions.²⁸ These émigrés “included renowned maliks and amirs, vizirs, traders, artists, craftsmen, and learned elites, poets and Islamic devotees and many others.”²⁹ As a result, the court of the Slave Kings in Delhi became saturated with poets and literati from Iran, a characteristic we see extend into Balban’s reign (r. 1266-1287). In addition to his employment of Iranian poets, there was an increase in the number of local Indian literary

²⁵ Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *The Sultanate of Delhi (711-1526): Including the Arab Invasion of Sindh, Hindu Rule in Afghanistan and Causes of the Defeat of the Hindus in Early Medieval Age* (Delhi: Shiva Lal Agarwala, 1959), 88.

²⁶ See Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); M.A. Ali, “Capital of the Sultans: Delhi During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.” in *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture*, ed. M. A. Ali (Delhi, Oxford University Press: 2006); S. Kumar, “Courts, Capitals and Kingship: Delhi and its Sultans in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” in *Court Cultures in the Muslim world: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. A. Fuess and J.P. Hartung (London: Routledge, 2011); S.M. Latif, *Lahore: Its History, Architectural Remains and Antiquities* (Lahore: New Imperial Press, 1892); Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

²⁷ C. Edmund Bosworth, “Ghurids,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 9, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ghurids>.

²⁸ Wink, *Al-Hind II*, 191.

²⁹ Wink, *Al-Hind II*, 191.

figures writing in Persian. The most notable of these writers are the renowned poets Amir Khusrow and Amir Hasan, whose reputations extended beyond the boundaries of South Asia in their lifetime and even centuries after their death. Persian poetry recitations were also common in this period, where passages from the *Shahnama* and poetry by the Iranian poets Khaqani (d. 1199) and Sanai (d. 1141) were read aloud and enjoyed.³⁰

After the collapse of this dynasty in 1290, the political history of the Delhi Sultanate became more fluid and a series of dynasties (Khalji, Tughluq, Sayyid, and Lodi) ruled northern India. For the most part, the Khaljis continued their predecessors' focus on maintaining their Indo-Gangetic empire. They later expanded southwards and incorporated the Deccan as a vassal state.³¹ With this conquest, they also imported Persian culture and literature to the south. However, the cultivation of a Persian cosmopolis truly flourished in the south when Sultan Muhammad Tughluq declared Devagiri (located in the modern-day state of Maharashtra) the secondary capital of his empire in 1328. He ordered the transfer of most of his Muslim subjects in Delhi to the secondary capital to increase Muslim influence in the region. With this mass movement of "poets, scholars, litterateurs, artists, mystics, and divines," Persian literature was also imported to the court culture of southern India.³² Historian T. N. Devare calls this transfer

³⁰ Colin Mitchell, "Balban," in *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Religions: Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism*, last accessed on August 26, 2019.

³² Colin Mitchell, "Delhi Sultanate," in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Religions: Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism*, consulted on August 29, 2019. See also Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 35; Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Peter Jackson, "The Mongols and the Delhi Sultanate of Muhammad Tughluq (1325-1351)," *Central Asiatic Journal* (1975): 118-157.

an “unexpected blessing,” as the Deccan then became a cultural haven.³³ Even when local sultanates in the Deccan expelled the Tughluqs from the south in 1365, Deccan dynasties like the Bahmanids continued to sponsor Persian literature in the region by patronizing historical works, court poetry, and Sufi literature.³⁴ The Lodis also sponsored the use of Persian literature: they patronized the translation of Hindu texts into Persian and encouraged the use of Persian as a literary language.³⁵ In fact, the last Lodi ruler (Ibrahim Lodi) was so enamoured by Persian literature that he himself wrote verses in Persian under the *nom de plum* ‘Gul Rukh.’³⁵ However, by 1526 the Lodis submitted to the newly arrived Babur. Babur established his control over the Delhi Sultanate, thus laying the foundations for a dynasty that would continue to prosper for another two centuries.³⁶

In South Asian history, there have been a number of dynasties that promoted Persian as a literary language, and it was through this avid patronage that the Persian cosmopolis became nuanced and complicated. The purpose of this thesis is to ultimately investigate how the Mughals wrote about Iran across the categories of kingship, religion and culture. I also hope to explore how this complex notion of ‘Persian-ness’ shifted and transformed during the reigns of Babur, Humayun, and Akbar, and how these ideas related to the Mughals’ overall understanding of the Persian cosmopolis. As such, this

³³ Devare, *Persian Literature*, 36.

³⁴ Carl W. Ernst and Priscilla P. Soucek, “Deccan,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 18, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/deccan>.

³⁵ Srivastava, *The Sultanate*, 238; See also Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: the making of the Indo-Islamic World II* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); I.H. Siddiqui, “Rise of the Afghan nobility under the Lodi Sultans (1451-1526),” *Medieval India Quarterly* 4 (1961).

³⁶ Catherine B. Asher, “Delhi Sultanate,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 21, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/delhi-sultanate>.

thesis is concerned with how the Mughals textually navigated and presented these changes in the course of their dynastic history.

CHAPTER TWO: IMAGINING IRAN

As the Mughals consolidated power in parts of northern India under the Timurid banner, they established a Perso-Islamic state which included their Central Asian inheritance of Iranian notions of kingship. However, the Mughals also encountered and adopted local Indian practices which were integrated with Iranian ideas introduced to the subcontinent by earlier Indo-Islamic dynasties, such as the Ghaznavids, in the eleventh century. Over the span of five hundred years, courtly culture in northern India developed its own unique and independent understanding of kingship which also drew from historical and mythical Iranian ideals. The Mughals contributed to this process by incorporating local Indian, Central Asian and Iranian strands of Perso-Islamic governance into their articulation of a distinct imperial identity. While the Mughals forged and revised their expression of authority, they also actively interacted with their Safavid Iranian neighbours during the sixteenth century. This chapter will assess the symbols the Mughals implemented in their articulation of legitimacy and prestige, and it will also focus on how Mughal court literature depicted the land and culture of Iran with this expression in mind.

2.1 Babur's Career as a Timurid Prince

Before we embark on a discussion of the formation of Mughal identity, it would be helpful to understand the political culture of Central Asia as presented in Babur's memoir, the *Baburnama*. During his career as an exiled Timurid prince, Babur's political identity was notably tied to his ancestors Timur and Chinghiz Khan, two of Central Asia's most renowned conquerors. Because patrilineal lineage was significant in Central

Asian political culture, Babur primarily considered himself to be a Timurid.³⁷ However, Babur's matrilineal connection to Chinghiz Khan was also important, whereby he integrated both Timurids and Mongols into his army and inner circle. With such shadows of greatness looming over his life, Babur sought to seize the territories that Timur and his ancestors had previously conquered. As Timurid political culture did not recognize hereditary accession laws nor follow laws based on primogeniture, Babur faced his first challenge as a ruler upon his father's death. Babur vied with other Timurid princes for territory in Central Asia, and in 1494 he emerged as the ruler of Ferghana.³⁸

Soon after, he prepared to conquer the cities of Samarqand and Kabul. Babur made several attempts to thwart the Uzbek forces in Samarqand from 1494 to 1513, succeeding on three different occasions (1496, 1500, and 1511), but he was unable to maintain lasting control.³⁹ Samarqand had a significant place in Babur's imagination because it was a city "founded by Alexander, conquered by Arabs in the reign of the third caliph Usman, and made into his capital by Timur."⁴⁰ However, after his third failed attempt, Babur cited Timur's attack of Delhi (1398) and re-adjusted his ambitions to include the conquest of his hereditary right over "Hindustan." Babur and his forces conducted a total of six raids into India, and in 1526 he conquered parts of northern India and began to lay the foundations of what would become the Mughal empire.

³⁷ Stephen F. Dale, *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India (1483-1530)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 17.

³⁸ Fritz Lehmann, "Babor," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 19, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/babor-zahir-al-din>.

³⁹ Akhtar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 70.

⁴⁰ Zahir al-Din Mirza Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. W.M. Thackston (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 55.

With his conquest of India, Babur also brought with him Timurid ideals of kingship and government. As nomadic Turks, the Timurids began a process of sedentarizing their rule soon after Timur's death in 1405. More specifically, this process began with Timur's son Shahrukh, when he shifted the "centre of the empire from Central Asia (Transoxiana) to Khorasan (Iran)."⁴¹ With this move, the Timurids came to rule over a bifurcated society comprising the Turko-Mongols and the Tajiks (Persians). These two groups developed specific roles over time: the first group was exclusively part of the military sphere (*ahl al-saif*, or men of the sword) while the latter comprised civilians and bureaucratic figures (*ahl al-qalam*, or men of the pen). In the attempt to create a more centralized and sedentary empire, the Timurids focused on implementing two major changes: establishing an agrarian-based society and implementing features of the Perso-Islamic bureaucratic state. Part of the implementation of Perso-Islamic culture relied upon the integration of specific administrative practices like tax collection and the acculturation of the Persian language in both the bureaucratic and cultural spheres.⁴²

When the Timurids adopted Perso-Islamic bureaucratic traditions, they also incorporated Perso-Islamic notions of authority into their understanding of kingship. These ideas of kingship originated from ancient Iranian traditions which had been absorbed in the medieval period by Islamic jurists and thinkers. Inspired by the Sasanian integration of religion and the state, Muslim intellectuals in the seventh century adopted the ancient Iranian dictum "religion and kingship are two brothers" into their system of

⁴¹ Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (London: Brill, 2007), 39.

⁴² Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 39- 40.

governance.⁴³ The Sasanian dynasty (224-651 CE) primarily adhered to Zoroastrianism, an ancient Iranian religion which, among other things, assigned sacral value to fire.⁴⁴ Social stratification was a vital component of Zoroastrianism, and because kingship and religion were intertwined, the ideal of hierarchical social organization manifested in the Sasanian circle of justice. This model divided society into four distinct classes (kings and warriors, artisans, peasants, and warriors), and the only way to achieve justice and peace was to enforce a society-wide adherence to these divinely-appointed roles.⁴⁵ More importantly, the king was at the focal point of this circle where he reigned as a vicegerent of God, or the “Shadow of God.”⁴⁶ The king would then emanate a “glow” or “light” (*farr* or *farr*) which, as a syncretism of Hellenistic and Kayanian⁴⁷ religious systems, came to signify divine favour, good fortune, and charismatic kingship in Sasanian tradition.⁴⁸ As the ordained representative of God on earth, this ‘king of kings’ (*shahinshah*) was then responsible for meting out justice and preserving social order. However, as noted by Linda Darling, the Sasanians primarily understood and defined justice as “the protection of the realm and the deliverance of its people from ruin either by oppression or natural disaster.”⁴⁹

⁴³ A.K.S. Lambton, “Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962), 96

⁴⁴ Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 92.

⁴⁵ Lambton, “Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” 96.

⁴⁶ Lambton, “Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” 119.

⁴⁷ An ancient Iranian dynasty mentioned in the *Avesta* (Zoroastrian text).

⁴⁸ Gherardo Gnoli, “Farr(ah),” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 15, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/farr>.

⁴⁹ Linda Darling, “The Vicegerent of God, from Him We Expect Rain”: The Incorporation of the Pre-Islamic State in Early Islamic Political Culture,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3 (2014): 415.

To be properly just, God's representative was responsible for administering and observing the circle of justice, a notion which valued the promotion and success of agricultural society. Tasked with cultivating crops, the peasantry's role in this circle of justice was to provide sustenance for the army, which in turn enforced social order and stratification on the king's behalf. As agricultural production was the cornerstone of the circle of justice, the king was responsible for maintaining ideal conditions for agricultural output. Equity was pivotal to this process, where avoiding over-taxation and political unrest were among the king's foremost priorities.⁵⁰ This model of ancient Iranian justice ultimately emphasized the primacy of strong agricultural output in producing political stability and equilibrium.

These ancient Iranian notions of kingship were then modified and used by Muslim intellectuals after the Arab conquest of parts of Central Asia and Iran in the seventh century. Muslim rulers first attempted to govern following the caliphal and tribal models, but they soon realized that this system was inadequate for controlling a multicontinental and ethnically diverse empire.⁵¹ At this time, a number of Pahlavi texts were being translated by Muslim intellectuals into Arabic (such as the *Ahd-i Ardashir*, the *Tansarnameh*, and the *Khwadaynamag*) which were crucial in transmitting ancient Iranian ideals of hierarchy and justice into the Islamic understanding of kingship.⁵² The permeation of the Sasanian model of governance led to what Louise Marlow refers to as the "taming of egalitarianism" in the medieval Islamic articulation of power.⁵³ Because

⁵⁰ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 104.

⁵¹ Darling, "The Vicegerent of God," 417.

⁵² Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 72.

⁵³ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 96.

ancient Iranian practices of kingship were fundamentally flexible and adaptable, medieval Islamic intellectuals merged these concepts over time into the category of Perso-Islamic kingship and governance. During this medieval process, the Iranian notion of justice merged into the Islamic idea of *adalat*, “a state of moral and religious probity.”⁵⁴

These ideas, then, were articulated in a genre of ethico-political advice literature targeted towards kings and young princes in the Islamic world, often referred to as “mirrors for princes,” in both Arabic and Persian.⁵⁵ Advice literature was an important part of the Iranian tradition of kingship (dating back to the Sasanian works of advice called *andarz*) and focused on the importance of an agricultural-based society and the administration of justice.⁵⁶ These mirrors for princes were “oriented towards the practical and ethical aspects of government in the present [with] an eye to remaining on the right side of God.”⁵⁷ This genre flourished across Central Asia and Iran in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and “provid[ed] a channel for the continuing transmission of the Iranian tradition to the courts of Muslim rulers.”⁵⁸ These manuals advocated for the implementation of Perso-Islamic tradition and culture, often drawing inspiration from Iran’s historical past to establish examples of ideal governance for young rulers. Invoking the idea of historical Iran, medieval Muslim scholars looked to iconic figures like

⁵⁴ Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam; An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 89.

⁵⁵ Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shahnama as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 2.

⁵⁶ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 77.

⁵⁷ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 128.

⁵⁸ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 128.

Ardashir I (founder of the Sasanian dynasty) and Khusraw Anushirvan repeatedly. In such literature, both of these ancient monarchs were portrayed as the paragons of justice and the harbingers of peace and equilibrium. More specifically, Ardashir is glorified as a king who “made water flow in every desert and established towns and village settlements in ways not achieved four thousand years before him.”⁵⁹ Similarly, Anushirvan is hailed as the upholder of just rule as he “hung a bell outside his palace so that any of his subjects who might require royal intervention could easily gain the attention of the king.”⁶⁰

In addition to historic figures, didactic court literature also referred to mythical rulers such as Jamshid and Faridun, both of whom appear in the legendary section of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings). Patronized by the Ghaznavids in the early eleventh century, Firdawsi composed this epic poem with the aim of preserving Iranian history and legend.⁶¹ With this objective, Firdawsi included a section on “pre-Persia,” a period of legend that is believed to have preceded historical Iran. Here, Firdawsi depicted Jamshid as the ideal monarch who was preoccupied with the division of the classes and instituting agricultural reforms.⁶² Faridun is depicted in a similar light, where he is also lauded for enforcing justice.⁶³ In the portrayal of these figures, Firdawsi affirmed the importance of the quadripartite model of social classes and cites this type of social stratification as a

⁵⁹ Quoted in Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 105.

⁶⁰ Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 145.

⁶¹ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 80.

⁶² Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Jamshid ii. In Persian literature,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on September 10, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/jamsid-ii>.

⁶³ Aḥmad Tafāẓzōlī, “Ferēdūn,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 26, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/feredu->.

precursor and necessity for just rule.⁶⁴ Guidance manuals for kings and princes, with its borrowed elements of social division and divine kingship, reveal a genre of didactic literature heavily influenced by ancient Iranian texts.

In the fourteenth century, as Timur conquered Central Asia and Iran, he became the legate of this rich and diverse culture of kingship and governance.⁶⁵ His descendants, the Timurids, inherited this Perso-Islamic cultural and bureaucratic legacy which was likewise passed down to Babur. His memoir (*Baburnama*) serves as an example of the long-lasting integration of Iranian notions of kingship that permeated the projection of Timurid authority. Through his Timurid upbringing, we see Babur implement and exercise various symbols of kingship that are consistent with Perso-Islamic practices of government. During his career, Babur relied on multiple symbols of kingship, which were drawn from his Central Asian upbringing and the Perso-Islamic model of statecraft.

2.2 Central Asian Symbols of Kingship

Before Babur's conquest of northern India, he heavily relied on his Timurid lineage to establish legitimacy. Throughout his memoir, references to Timur far outweigh the mention of his Mongol ancestor, Chingiz Khan. Descended from two of Central Asia's most powerful conquerors, Babur impressed his connection to Timur as a means of establishing political legitimacy. As Stephen Dale observes, Babur "assert[ed] dynastic claims by equating his family with Timur's line," and thereby justified his pursuit of Timur's former territories (namely Samarqand and Delhi).⁶⁶ In the case of Samarqand, Babur lamented that the city "had been in [his] family" before the Uzbeks (aka "the

⁶⁴ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 80.

⁶⁵ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 101.

⁶⁶ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 159.

foreign foe”) dominated the region.⁶⁷ Another instance of Babur’s assertion of his Timurid claim takes place during his visit to Herat in 1506.⁶⁸ Disgruntled by his cousin Badiuzzaman Mirza’s welcome, Babur writes:

“When we returned for a second visit, Badiuzzaman Mirza did not do me the courtesy he had before... although I was young in years, my rank was nonetheless high. Twice by dint of the sword I had *recaptured and sat on my ancestral throne in Samarkand. Who had fought with foreigners and rebels for the sake of this dynasty as I had done?* To delay in honouring me was inexcusable (emphasis mine).”⁶⁹

It is clear that Babur strongly identified with his Timurid ancestral ties, and he recognized the importance of bolstering and emphasizing this connection for the sake of legitimacy. He considered himself the defender of the Timurid line, and in that vein, Babur saw himself as the inheritor of his ancestor’s territories. Babur’s connection to Timur motivated Babur to establish a kingdom, and both Central Asia and India were excellent candidates. With his conquest of India, Babur was able to begin laying the foundations for the revival of this empire.

Regarding India, Babur placed considerable emphasis on the sack of Delhi by his ancestor Timur. Babur writes that “[e]ver since Temur Beg entered Hindustan, the several districts of Bhera, Khushab, Chenab, and Chiniot had been under the control of his sons and their followers and dependants.”⁷⁰ Additionally, Babur notes that “there was no pillage and plunder” in territories like the Bhera fortress “[s]ince we regarded the territories occupied by the Turks as ours.”⁷¹ Babur considered himself the rightful

⁶⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 100.

⁶⁸ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 159.

⁶⁹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 224.

⁷⁰ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 272.

⁷¹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 274.

inheritor of Timur's former territories, and he highlighted this right by invoking the memory of Timur in his memoir.

Babur also used the notion of *ghaza* (religious warfare) to revive his army's support for further attacks into India. His self-styling as a *ghazi* ("holy warrior") appears in the text soon after an assassination attempt, an event which shocked Babur and convinced him "to renounce wine" in an effort to inspire his army on the eve of battle against the non-Muslim Rana Sangha.⁷² A few pages later, Babur attributed the success of the Battle of Khanua to his public repentance. Of course, Babur's disavowal of wine did not necessarily signify the degree of his religious observance. Rather, public piety can be seen as a performative act of kingship where Babur re-asserted his role as God's chosen vicegerent in his conquest of India. By renouncing wine and consequently associating his success to his repentance, Babur created the vision of a model ruler which would inspire his army.

It is worth noting, however, that Babur did not refer to himself as a *ghazi* prior to his campaigns in India: this rhetorical shift is striking. After his conquest of Delhi and Agra, Babur described his success against the Indian forces as raising "high the buttresses of Islam through the assistance of his rightly guided." More interesting is Babur's complete abandonment of such language in the later pages of his memoir which suggests that Babur's understanding and use of *ghaza* rhetoric was primarily for political reasons.⁷³ Lisa Balabanlilar argues that it is imperative to "recognize the value and power

⁷² Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age: 1000-1765* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2019), 204.

⁷³ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 204.

of multiple models of sovereignty,”⁷⁴ where Babur must have “found it useful, even necessary, to evoke well-known heroic idioms in an effort to seize the moral and spiritual high ground.”⁷⁵ He was, after all, leading his troops into battle against a larger and well-organized Hindu army. As Babur increasingly controlled more territory in northern India, he incorporated more Hindus into his army and his memoir ceases to employ religiously charged rhetoric.⁷⁶ Babur’s apparent disassociation from *ghaza* rhetoric suggests that the padshah acknowledged the challenges of ruling over a diverse non-Muslim population. However, Babur’s descendants would later use this type of language, although occasionally, when it was beneficial for their political aspirations.⁷⁷

2.3 Iranian Symbols of Kingship: The Appeal of a Sedentary Empire

Like the Timurids, Babur looked to the notions and symbols of ancient Iran in his quest to consolidate a sedentary Timurid state. The most important of these ideas was his understanding of the circle of justice and its promotion of agriculture as the cornerstone of social and political equilibrium.⁷⁸ This emphasis on agriculture is unsurprising as the success of medieval Iran’s economy, like all medieval Middle Eastern societies, was rooted in the success of agricultural output. For this reason, earlier ruling dynasties such as the Ilkhanids and Timurids engineered irrigation networks to compensate for Iran’s arid climate. The construction of such infrastructure required capital investment which then necessitated the involvement of either the government or a powerful individual.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 43.

⁷⁵ Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 41.

⁷⁶ Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 43.

⁷⁷ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 215.

⁷⁸ Darling, “The Vicegerent of God,” 415.

⁷⁹ Maria Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin: aspects de l’histoire culturelle de l’Iran medieval* (Paris: l’association pour l’avancement des études iraniennes, 2002), 49.

Although the “origins of the intricate system of water sharing by individual villagers and farmers was rooted in local custom,” irrigation projects were complex and required diligent supervision. Maria Subtelny notes that the success of these intricate developments was contingent upon a number of factors, such as capital investment, records of agriculture yields, and tax assessments, which required centralized control.⁸⁰ These advice manuals ultimately emphasized the critical role of irrigation and successful agricultural output in the implementation of the circle of justice. More importantly, as Maria Subtelny observes in her more recent study of post-Mongol Persian advice literature, the major qualifier of a ‘just’ king was his role in the development and management of irrigation networks.⁸¹

Babur, having inherited the Timurid appreciation of irrigation projects, similarly understood the importance of optimal agricultural production. In the *Baburnama*, Babur extensively recorded his appreciation for gardens and horticulture and even experimented with growing fruits in gardens such as the Bagh-i vafa (Garden of Fidelity):

“[the garden] “yield[ed] many oranges, citrons, and pomegranates. [In 1524], the year I defeated Pahar Khan and conquered Lahore and Dipalpur, I had a banana tree brought and planted. It thrived. The year before that, sugarcane had been planted, some of which was being sent to Badakhshan and Bukhara. The ground [was] high, with constant running water, and the weather mild in winter. In the middle of the garden [was] a small hill from which a one-mill stream always flows through the garden.”⁸²

While gardens held aesthetic value for the Timurids (discussed in chapter three), Babur also recognized the construction of gardens as an opportunity for agricultural production.

⁸⁰ Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin*, 50.

⁸¹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 104-105.

⁸² Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 157.

Stephen Dale has noted that gardens were salient in the Timurid and Mughal imagination for their “experimental agricultural” value, and this conception of garden spaces emanated from Perso-Islamic traditions which were established and adopted by the Timurids well before Babur’s time.⁸³ In this particular example from the *Baburnama*, Babur admires the range of produce cultivated in the garden, and he celebrates his successful re-plantation of Indian banana trees in Kabul’s climate. In fact, Babur notes that the garden’s bounty was so immense that his “soldiers ate pomegranates to excess” for “three or four days.”⁸⁴

In addition to his experimentation with horticulture, Babur also attempted to “spread the use of improved water-lifting devices for irrigation.”⁸⁵ James Wescoat observes that Babur imported three important Timurid and Central Asian influences into northern India upon his arrival in 1526.⁸⁶ First, through Babur’s upbringing in Ferghana where “streams rush down mountain valleys, irrigating small floodplain villages and gardens along the way,” Babur came to understand gardens as primarily “productive.” In other words, gardens were pockets of land which were also treated as microcosms of agricultural experimentation. Second, because of Babur’s attachment to Samarkand and the memory of Timur, gardens were also understood as venues for feasts and a place where kings could receive visitors in a display of “elaborate courtly protocol.” Third, Babur was inspired by the gardens of Herat and their expansive network of irrigation

⁸³ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 310.

⁸⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 297.

⁸⁵ Lehmann, “Babor.”

⁸⁶ James L. Wescoat Jr., “The Changing Cultural Space of Mughal Gardens” in *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, eds. Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2015), 207.

canals and aspired to develop similar irrigation projects that matched its sophistication and efficiency.⁸⁷

It is also important to note that there were pre-existing hydraulic works implemented by Delhi Sultanate dynasties of a mixed Turkic and Persianate heritage.⁸⁸ Wescoat observes that many Mughal emperors (including Babur) “repaired Sultanate canals and reservoirs during their rule while building their own smaller-scale gardens.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, according to Richard Eaton, Babur “established gardens nearly everywhere that he could, recreating in India the same green, symmetrical and carefully laid-out spaces that might recall a Central Asian oasis.”⁹⁰ In fact, soon upon his conquest of Agra, Babur immediately set out to build a garden:

“I always thought one of the chief faults of Hindustan was there was no running water. Everywhere that was habitable it should be possible to construct waterwheels, create running water, and make planned geometric spaces...[I] scouted around for places to build gardens, but everywhere looked so unpleasant and desolate that [I] crossed back in great disgust... Thus in unpleasant and inharmonious India, marvellously regular and geometric gardens were introduced. In every corner were beautiful plots, and in every plot were regularly laid out arrangements of roses and narcissus.”⁹¹

The circle of justice would be incomplete without the administration of *adalet* (justice), and Babur exercised his role as the upholder of the social order in the *Baburnama*. Although Babur did not refer to Anushirvan or Ardashir directly in his memoir, he emphasized the notion of justice by equating justice with legitimate rule. An example of his understanding of the association between just rule and kingship is evident

⁸⁷ Wescoat, “Mughal Gardens,” 206-207.

⁸⁸ Wescoat, “Mughal Gardens,” 207-208.

⁸⁹ Wescoat, “Mughal Gardens,” 208

⁹⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 205.

⁹¹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 364.

in his description of the reign of Sultan-Mahmud Mirza, a Timurid prince who briefly governed Samarkand in the 1490s. According to Babur in the *Baburnama*, as “soon as Sultan-Mahmud Mirza heard of his brother’s death, he went to Samarkand and took the throne without opposition.”⁹² Babur pointedly notes that both “highborn and low, military and citizen alike were repelled by several of Sultan Mahmud’s actions.”⁹³ Chief of these actions was his nature that was “inclined to tyranny and viciousness.” Babur continued:

“the people of Samarkand... were scandalized and outraged by such tyranny and vice... [they] opened their mouths with curses and raised their hands in supplication... Beware of festering inner wounds, for inner wounds surface in the end. Distress no one insofar as you are able, for one cry of tyranny can upset the whole world. As a consequence of tyranny and vice, he ruled in Samarkand no more than five months.”⁹⁴

Babur explicitly expressed that the sultan’s lack of just rule beckoned his demise. More importantly, Babur acknowledged that “although his administration and military management were quite excellent... he was by nature inclined to tyranny.” In this particular example, just rule required a similarly conscientious nature along with the establishment of a well-functioning bureaucratic order. Justice was crucial in how a king governed, and without justice the entire Perso-Islamic model collapsed.

Babur, then, seems to have had established a balance between justice and generosity: he rewarded those who showed allegiance and severely punished those who had broken pacts of loyalty.⁹⁵ After Babur conquered northern India, he noted that “[t]he

⁹² Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 27.

⁹³ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 27.

⁹⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 28.

⁹⁵ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 204.

one nice aspect of Hindustan [was] that it [was] a large country with lots of gold and money.”⁹⁶ However, Babur continued that this wealth was distributed:

“Every merchant and student, indeed every person who was along with the army, took away a large share. Large portions of the treasury went even to those who were not in the army... Many gifts went to the begs and soldiers who were on the other side... There was a shahruhki of largesse for every living soul, male and female, bondsman and free, adult and child alike...”⁹⁷

Babur distributed large portions of the treasure he acquired in India to reward those who fought with him. This new bounty also served as an incentive for his army to keep fighting. While Babur was generous to those who were loyal to him, he administered harsh punishments to those who crossed him. Before his formal invasion of northern India, Babur conducted many smaller raids, including one against Bhera. There, some soldiers “were acting unruly of harassing the people of Bhera. Some men were sent to execute the unruly ones, and others had their noses slit and were paraded around camp.”⁹⁸ In another instance, Babur “sent a detachment to raid. They killed a few Afghans, cut off their heads, and brought back a few captives and cattle and flocks.”⁹⁹ As Richard Eaton notes, Babur, “like Timur, was capable of inflicting severe cruelty” where he impaled his opposition and erected towers of his opponents’ skulls.¹⁰⁰

2.4 Other Symbols of Ancient Iran: Letters of Advice and Razm-o-Bazm

The *Baburnama* also includes a short fatherly letter of advice in which Babur offered Humayun counsel on kingship. This practice dates back to the ancient Iranian books of *andarz*, a genre of advice literature which widely circulated Central Asia after

⁹⁶ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 353.

⁹⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 356.

⁹⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 274.

⁹⁹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 269.

¹⁰⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 204.

the Arab conquest in the seventh century and into the Timurid inheritance of Perso-Islamic notions of governance.¹⁰¹ Although Babur did not compose a manual for Humayun, this letter can be understood as part of a larger long-standing tradition of advice manuals which discussed statecraft, governance, and kingly etiquette.

First, Babur offered Humayun counsel on the proper etiquette of kings. He cautioned Humayun to “not fail to make the most of an opportunity that presents itself,” and reminded the young prince that “indolence and luxury do not suit kingship.” He reiterated this advice in his reminder that “one is master one may rest from everything—except being king.”¹⁰² Responding to an earlier letter, Babur admonished Humayun for seeking solitude and warns the young prince that “[s]olitude is a flaw in kingship.”¹⁰³ These two examples demonstrate Babur’s attempt to guide his son in the realm of governance, emphasizing the appearance of prestige and power as part of the more performative aspects of kingship. Babur cautioned Humayun against solitude and encouraged the future prince to actively seek out new territories, reminding his son that “this is your time to risk your life and wield your sword.”¹⁰⁴ These examples suggest that Babur attempted to beckon his son toward a more active and engaged style of rule which primarily comprised territorial conquest.

Second, this letter consolidated Humayun’s future as Babur’s successor of the Timurid legacy in India. Babur prompted Humayun to observe the rule that “six parts [go to Humayun] and five to Kamran [his brother].”¹⁰⁵ While Babur cautioned Humayun to

¹⁰¹ Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 128.

¹⁰² Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 423.

¹⁰³ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 423.

¹⁰⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 423.

¹⁰⁵ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 423.

“have restraint” while dealing with his brothers, he also reminded the young prince that his younger brothers should “display no deficiency in their homage and respect” toward Humayun.

Third, Babur advised Humayun to seek the counsel of experienced officers and military *begs* at his service. Referring to Humayun’s impending plans of conquest of Hissar and Balkh, Babur reminded Humayun of his “great mission” which required the *padshah* to “stop... avoiding people.”¹⁰⁶ Babur suggested for his son to “consult the experienced *begs* for strategy and tactics and do what they say” and to “invite [his brothers and *begs*] in twice a day” but also cautioned Humayun to assert himself in these instances.¹⁰⁷ In this way, Babur highlighted the importance of informed and independent decision-making as a critical component of kingship. As a parting word of advice, Babur also encouraged Humayun to always keep the army “disciplined and in training.”¹⁰⁸ Having endorsed Humayun as the future *padshah* of his empire, Babur offered his son, and the future *padshah*, advice on how to govern. He articulated the importance of conquest and counsel in the successful projection of both power and prestige.

Another instance which reflects the pervasive presence of ancient Iranian traditions in the *Baburnama* is the notion of *razm-o-bazm* (feasting and fighting). Profiled in Firdawsi’s *Shahnama*, the tradition of *razm-o-bazm* is a theme “associated with heroic figures” in the epic poem who are generally described as warriors.¹⁰⁹ This tradition of feasting and fighting came to symbolize the authority and legitimacy of a king through

¹⁰⁶ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 424.

¹⁰⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 424.

¹⁰⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 424.

¹⁰⁹ Olga M. Davidson, “Haft Kan,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on September 1, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-kan>.

the display of opulence and prestige. The activity of feasting also introduced the opportunity for “the telling of stories about the exploits of warriors,” and it is this element of the tradition which allowed for the performative articulation of power through tales of “heroic prowess and of poetic skillfulness.”¹¹⁰ In the same vein, the practice of *bazm* also became associated with kingly authority: after an ostentatious show of wealth, kings would also assert their dominance as lords of strong warriors. This tradition changed over time, later incorporating elephant and camel fighting, but its roots were deeply entrenched in the Iranian mythical past.

Although the *Baburnama* includes a number of incidents where Babur both attended and hosted grand feasts akin to the ones described in the *Shahnama*, the most notable event was a banquet hosted by Babur which occurred after he secured control over sections of northern India. This feast was a grand affair attended by foreign visitors, namely some Qizilbash from Iran and Uzbeks from Central Asia, various Hindu ambassadors, as well as princes, khans, grandees and amirs. Babur observed the magnificence of these feasts, where the attendees “brought in their gifts of gold, silver, and copper coins, textiles, and other goods...[such as] brocades and purses.”¹¹¹ While these gifts were spread on a mat before Babur, “enraged camels and elephants were made to fight on an island opposite. A few rams were also, after which the wrestlers began to wrestle.”¹¹²

Although there is no direct mention of either the *Shahnama* or the heroes associated with the tradition of *razm-o-bazm* in the depiction of this celebration, an

¹¹⁰ Davidson, “Haft Kan.”

¹¹¹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 426.

¹¹² Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 427.

important commonality is the display of wealth and power expressed by the host. The description of silver and gold being “poured” on a mat in front of Babur particularly highlights his position as the padshah.¹¹³ Having mentioned the presence of the Qizilbash, the Uzbeks and various Hindu ambassadors at this feast, this display of wealth can be seen as a public projection of power where the padshah rewarded his loyal followers with gold and silver. He wrote in detail of the amount of gold and silver rewarded to each person and made certain to mention specifically those who “had abandoned their homelands and followed [him] in exile.”¹¹⁴

2.5 Shah Ismail and the Timurid Prince

While Babur engaged with Iranian ideas through his Central Asian Perso-Islamic inheritance, this interaction transcended from the conceptual to the real as the young prince formed a cordial relationship with both Shah Ismail (r. 1501- 1524), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, and his son Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524- 1576). For the most part, Babur’s references to Shah Ismail in the *Baburnama* are cursory at best while he mostly reports the Safavid shah’s occasional forays into Central Asia. Apart from one particular instance where Shah Ismail reunites Babur with his older sister after Ismail’s defeat of the Uzbeks in Merv, the *Baburnama* does not discuss the Safavid shah in much detail.¹¹⁵

However, Babur’s maternal cousin Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat, penned a history on the “Moghuls” of Central Asia, the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, and this chronicle is more forthcoming about Shah Ismail’s activities across Central Asia. Having entered Babur’s service in 1506, Mirza Haidar corroborated the events dictated in Babur’s memoir. More

¹¹³ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 426.

¹¹⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 427.

¹¹⁵ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 11.

importantly, Mirza Haidar narrated how Babur sought Safavid aid, much to the chagrin of his supporters in Samarqand. While Babur avoided mentioning the shah in detail, Mirza Haidar openly recorded that Ismail “brought about general massacres” and that his “misdeeds” were far too many to account for in the text.¹¹⁶

After this portrayal of Shah Ismail, Mirza Haider described Babur’s deference to the Safavids and their joint collaboration in the 1511 conquest of Samarkand.¹¹⁷

According to Mirza Haider, the people of Samarkand first welcomed Babur with “pomp and splendour,” as they had long awaited for “the shadow of [Babur’s] protection.” Their excitement, however, was short lived as Babur entered Samarkand with the Safavid Qizilbash army in tow. Mirza Haidar noted that “the people of Samarkand ceased to feel that intense longing for the Emperor which they entertained while he was absent” when they saw Babur “clothed in the garments of the Kizilbash (which was pure heresy, nay almost unbelief)” and the “crown of royalty, whose nature was heresy and [resembled] the tail of an ass.” In this account, Mirza Haider acknowledged that Babur sought aid from the Safavids “in the hour of necessity,” but this submission to Safavid authority spurred anxiety among the people of Samarkand. They became concerned with Babur’s blind eye to “the gross error of the Kizilbash” and subsequently questioned Babur’s status as a legitimate sovereign.

The anxiety that the people of Samarkand experienced was not unfounded. As a Safavid representative, Babur was unable to temper the unruliness of the Qizilbash.

While Mirza Haider did not specify the details of Qizilbashi behaviour in Samarkand, he

¹¹⁶ Mirza Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, trans. E. Denison Ross (New Delhi: ABI Prints and Publishing Co., 2006), 2: 232

¹¹⁷ Mirza Haidar, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 245-246.

described the group's belligerence towards the residents of Herat which comprised unrestrained looting, assault of the religious clergy, and the forced public cursing of the Prophet's companions.¹¹⁸ Because of his lack of authority in the region, Babur was unable to control the violence of the Qizilbash which cost him local support. An example of this aggression was when the Safavid general Najm al-Din Thani ordered a massacre of the people in the fortress of Qarshi, near Samarkand, which resulted in the killing of fifteen thousand people.¹¹⁹ As such, Samarkand, like Herat, was entirely under Safavid, and as an extension, Qizilbash authority. In compliance with his agreement with Shah Ismail, Babur struck coins with the names of the twelve Shia imams and the Alid formula *ali wali Allah* ("Ali is God's friend").¹²⁰

This incident significantly compromised Babur's reputation as Timur's heir in Samarkand. Moreover, this event impacted how Humayun chose to employ specific symbols of power to reconfigure his father's embarrassing deference to Safavid authority.¹²¹ Babur's status as an independent padshah was fundamentally corrupted with his donning of the "crown of royalty," a Safavid *taj* (crown), also known as the Taj-i Haydari, worn by Shah Ismail's followers and devotees as a symbol of submission to the spiritual leader or guide (*murshid*) of the Safaviyya order.¹²² Although Babur acquiesced to Shah Ismail out of political necessity, his acceptance of the *taj* was understood by the Safavids as the padshah's surrender to Ismail both politically and spiritually.

¹¹⁸ Haydar, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 235.

¹¹⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 87.

¹²⁰ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 235.

¹²¹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 87

¹²² Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 235.

More importantly, this incident was the beginning of the Mughal adoption of Safavid symbols of rulership and authority which in itself was a complex and complicated development. While Babur and his descendants looked to ancient Iranian symbols of power through their inherited understanding of Perso-Islamic traditions, they simultaneously grappled with their geopolitical relationship with Iran in the sixteenth century. We see this contradiction appear when Babur, in the hopes of regaining control of Samarkand, was forced into an alliance which required him to wear the Safavid *taj* and the cloak of the Qizilbash. A critical component of this political relationship, then, was the insistence to be a loyal follower which created issues of status and reputation for Babur as a monarch. As Babur and his descendants maintained a political alliance with the Safavids, claims of sovereignty that relied on ancient Iranian notions of kingship became increasingly more problematic. In the case of Babur's adoption of the Safavid *taj* in particular, we see the Timurid prince wear it in exchange for Safavid aid. However, Humayun later employed the *taj* as a symbol of power in imitation of the Safavid shahs.¹²³ Azfar Moin notes that "Mughal rituals of sovereignty and symbols were deeply informed by their knowledge of Safavid practices," and this included the rituals both Babur and Humayun had to adopt as the Shahs' disciples.¹²⁴

2.6 The Presentation of Humayun by Khwandamir in the Qanun-i Humayuni

After Babur's death in 1530, Humayun inherited his position as the Mughal dynasty's next padshah, but his transition to power was tumultuous. In Central Asian political practice, rulers often imparted territory to their sons to govern on a semi-

¹²³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 144.

¹²⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 88.

independent and semi-permanent basis.¹²⁵ This practice of collective sovereignty meant that princes had equal claims to the title of padshah. While Humayun's brothers Askari and Kamran governed Multan and Kabul respectively, they also occupied Punjab to recruit military personnel in the effort to revolt against Humayun. In the midst of his brothers' plot to dethrone him, Humayun faced other threats to his authority, namely the ruler of Gujarat, Bahadur Sultan, and Sher Suri Khan, the chieftain of the Afghan Lodis. While Humayun sought to quell these threats, he also shifted his attention to solidifying specific symbols of kingship in the projection of Mughal authority.

The *Qanun-i Humayuni*, penned by the Persian historian Khwandamir who served the Timurids and the Safavids, is a courtly panegyric celebrating Humayun's first five years of his rule. Loosely translated as the "Canons of Humayun," this work reveals the degree to which traditional Iranian symbols of power informed the Mughal padshah's understanding of kingship. This text reflects a multi-faceted understanding of authority where Humayun drew from his inheritance of the ancient Iranian and medieval Perso-Islamic past to forge symbols of legitimacy in the early days of his reign.

The text begins with the explanation of the qualities required of the ideal monarch who was also recognized as God's chosen vicegerent. In this early section, Khwandamir explained that God "endowed some [rulers] with the attributes of justice and made them the protectors of their subjects." He continued that these just rulers were then "installed on the thrones of equity and liberality," so that "the shadow of their protection did not permit the Sun of injustice to blaze upon" their subjects. After the description of the perfect monarch as the ultimate protector, Khwandamir exalted Humayun as God's

¹²⁵ Balabanlillar, *Imperial Identity*, 105.

representative on earth whose equal “the eye of the aged heavens had never seen.”¹²⁶ He asserted Humayun as God’s chosen champion, emphasizing that the “heavenly herald of the Supreme Lord of Kingdoms” dictated Humayun the role of “the vicegerent on earth.”¹²⁷ With this type of language Khwandamir sought to establish Humayun as a monarch who was hand-picked by God because of his proclivity for justice, an idea which he continued to expound in the *Qanun-i Humayuni*.

In a similar vein, Khwandamir praised Humayun as the “Shadow of God” and “the asylum of the world.” Inspired by ancient Iranian traditions and the Perso-Islamic articulation of the king as God’s shadow, Khwandamir highlighted the inextricable link between the monarch and his application of justice in the maintenance of peace. He presented this critical aspect of kingship by comparing Humayun to Ardashir, the Sasanian monarch renowned as a paragon of justice in the Perso-Islamic imagination:

“He (Humayun) is the most dignified and just king, the mightiest pillar of religion and fortune; he has confirmed the rules of justice, and he strictly observes the duties of a chief. (He resembles) Solomon in that he gives away countries (in reward); (he is) a Rostam with the heavens for his horse. He is an ornament of the crown of sovereignty and was nourished in the lap of God's kindness. (He is the second) Ardashir and (is as) powerful as a lion. (He is) a Nushirwan (of his time) and has spread justice in the whole world.”

In this particular section, Khwandamir drew upon a number of figures from both mythical and ancient Iran. He celebrated Humayun as the second Ardashir and the Anushirvan of his time, thus reinforcing the padshah’s alleged affinity and love for just rule. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ancient Iranian notion of the circle of justice was

¹²⁶ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Bains Prashad (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1940), 5-6.

¹²⁷ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 22.

deeply rooted in the implementation of justice and social equilibrium. By referring to these particular (and popular) figures, Khwandamir formed an ideological link between ancient Iran and Humayun's reign. He presented the young padshah as a vessel containing the attributes of these legendary figures, and for this reason he was the best candidate to "spread justice in the whole world."

To add to this emphasis on justice, Khwandamir included sun worship and sun veneration in this discussion of legitimizing symbols:

"And over the third room was constructed a very lofty saloon, which was the envy of the heavens, and excited the jealousy of the residences of the Sun and the Moon. Whenever the King, who is as powerful as Alexander the Great, adorned this blissful place by holding his court, the Jamshed of the Sun without the help of the chair of the heavens could not obtain the honour of kissing the ground before him; and the sweet-singing Venus, having been deprived of joining the chorus of the singing girls of this delightful assembly, could not make its voice reach them."¹²⁸

This passage refers to Humayun's practice of holding court at sunrise. In what would have been a public spectacle during sunrise, Humayun unveiled his face and removed his *taj* so that "light would shine forth." The divine light and sun veneration were foundational concepts in ancient Iranian notions of kingship, where the monarch's "divine effulgence" linked the earthly ruler to the heavenly bodies above. Khwandamir employed these ideas to support his claim of Humayun's status as God's vicegerent. Ebba Koch observes that the connection between the king and the sun was "made through Persepolis, which was visited throughout the centuries by rulers who associated themselves with the Persian practice of kingship."¹²⁹ Sultans and shahs left inscriptions

¹²⁸ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 57.

¹²⁹ Koch, "How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran," 200.

there, believing that Persepolis had been built by the mythical king Jamshid, in order to associate themselves with the Iranian past. Regarding Persepolis, the popular theologian and philosopher Jalal al-Din al-Davani wrote in 1476:

“At sunrise he [Jamshid] ordered the throne to be turned towards the Sun, and the eyes of the onlookers were dazzled by the brilliancy. Saying that they beheld two suns, one in the sky and the other on earth, they knelt down . . . and thenceforth he was surnamed Jamshid, his name being Jam and shid meaning ‘Sun’”¹³⁰

Humayun, aware of the power of the ancient Iranian past in projecting kingship, heavily depended on these symbols of power to establish himself as a legitimate inheritor of this part of the Persianate world. Also inspired by Khusraw’s legendary palace carpets, Humayun installed “a round carpet divided into [concentric] circles corresponding to the orbits of the planets” and:

“sometimes spread this carpet on a circular wooden platform which was equal to it in area. And himself occupying the circle of the gold-embroidered cloth, he, like the Sun, reflected to it beauty, light and purity. Each section (of the people) was ordered to sit, in accordance with one of the seven planets appropriate to it, in the circle to which it corresponded.”¹³¹

This passage illustrates how Humayun, through the symbolic imitation of Khusraw’s projection of power, imitated and enacted the notion of divine effulgence as a symbol of kingship. Yet, this is not the only instance where Khwandamir suggested continuities between the historical and mythical rulers of Iran and the Mughal padshah. With a focus on Humayun’s practice of sun veneration, Khwandamir depicts the *padshah* as the Jamshid of his age:

¹³⁰ Quoted in Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran,” 81.

¹³¹ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 81.

“Another of the innovations was that every morning when the Jamshed-like Sun raised its head out of the garment of the heavens (*i.e.*, from the east), and put on the habit of blue satin of the sky, and the heavenly sky wore the golden crown of the Sun, which adorns the world, on its head, and showed its shining face to the inhabitants of the earth, the King whose standards are always victorious, adorned his person in an apparel of such a colour as was appropriate to the day, and dressed in a new suit placed on his head a crown of the 73 same colour.”¹³²

This passage illustrates Jamshid as the sun in the sky and Humayun as his earthly counterpart. As this symbolically rich language beckoned the image of Jamshid (along with other important historical and mythical figures), it was impactful in articulating and crystallizing Humayun as a worthy monarch. This rhetoric by Khwandamir in the *Qanun-i Humayuni* introduced Humayun amidst a host of legendary monarchs and exalted the young padshah as a significant member of this league of great Iranian rulers. Humayun further enriched this Iranian discourse by incorporating the local Indian custom of *jharokha*, a tradition where the king was presented to his subjects in a raised pavilion. Richard Eaton argues that the integration of this ritual suggests a “progressive Indianization of the Mughals’ political culture” at this time.¹³³ With the syncretism of these two traditions, Humayun cultivated what Ebba Koch refers to as the “Mughal myth of kingship.” This concept relied upon the established popularity of the kings from the *Shahnama* in the ideological expanse of the Persian cosmopolis and the significance of the sun and the divine light in both the Iranian and local Indian imaginations.¹³⁴

¹³² Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 73

¹³³ Eaton, *India in the Persianate*, 214.

¹³⁴ Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran,” 199.

2.7 *Taj-i Izzat and Taj-i Haydari*

While Babur donned the Safavi *taj* (“crown”) as a representative of Shah Ismail in Samarkand, Humayun created a Mughal version of the *Taj-i Haydari*. In what seems to have been a reaction to Babur’s embarrassing deference to Safavid authority, Humayun fashioned a *taj* inspired by the Safavid crown.¹³⁵ Fortunately, Khwandamir described the crown in detail in the *Qanun-i Humayuni* and described it as “one of the chief contrivances of the King” made with cloth and silk. It also had a “hollow space resembling the Persian digit seven” which was put adjacent to another one of these numbers to create the number seventy-seven. This number, according to Khwandamir, corresponded to the “numerical value of the word *izz* (honour), and hence this gorgeous crown was designated the *Taj-i Izzat* (crown of honour); and like its number it exceeded in dignity everything else in the world.”¹³⁶ To celebrate the creation of this crown, a court poet penned the following verse:

“The King of kings, the defender of the faith, Humayun,
May his wealth increase every moment!
The custom of wearing the crown has among people
Become, through his inventive power, universal.
Though its name is the Crown of Honour,
Its date is the Crown of Prosperity.”¹³⁷

This crown was worn by both Humayun and the members of his court in imitation of the Safavid model, where the *taj*, as in the Safavid case, also symbolized the wearer’s spiritual submission to the Mughal padshah and initiation into this courtly cult. By utilizing the *taj* as a tool of legitimacy, Humayun sought to reclaim Mughal authority

¹³⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 124.

¹³⁶ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 71.

¹³⁷ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 71.

while mitigating the imperial embarrassment suffered at the hands of the Safavids.¹³⁸ It is also important to note that the unveiling of the courtly taj coincided with the rebellions of his brothers in 1532. While Humayun used typical military tactics to deal with this real political threat, he also used symbols to reinforce his claim to sovereignty.

The following eight years of Humayun's reign were turbulent. His brothers continued to rebel while he faced serious opposition from Bahadur Sultan and Sher Khan Suri. Finally defeated at the hands of the Afghan Sher Khan Suri in 1540, Humayun and his retinue spent four years in exile before the Safavids responded to their plea for aid. As the dethroned padshah and his humble retinue moved westwards toward the Safavi capital of Qazvin in 1544, their journey was marked with the visitation of major cities across Iran (such as Herat) and several detours to the shrines of venerable saints.¹³⁹ Recognizing the prestige in hosting Timur's descendant at his court, Shah Tahmasp received Humayun with visions of splendour and ceremony.¹⁴⁰ However, later in this account, history repeated itself as Humayun, like Babur, submitted to Safavid authority. It is at this point that Jawhar Aftabchi's account diverges from other Mughal sources such as Gulbadan Begum's *Humayunama* and Abul Fazl Allami's *Akbarnama* where they completely omit the episode of the Taj-i Haydari:

“When the emperor entered the Shah's assembly, the shah came to the edge of the rug to greet him. Then the shah indicated a felt pillow to the right, and he sat down himself and asked the emperor's condition and whether the road had been

¹³⁸ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 124.

¹³⁹ Colin Mitchell, *Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2009), 91.

¹⁴⁰ Laura Parodi, “Humayun's Sojourn at the Safavid Court,” in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea*, eds. A. Panaino and R. Ziploli (Milan: Mimesis, 2006), 135.

difficult. Then he said, “Will you wear a *taj*? The *taj* is an emblem of honour,” the emperor replied. “I will wear one.” The shah put one on the emperor’s head with his own hand, and the shah and all the khans and sultans let out a whoop and, saying “Allah, Allah,” they prostrated themselves as their custom.”¹⁴¹

This exchange between the two monarchs is noteworthy. Humayun refers to the Taj-i Haydari as the Taj-i Izzat which he had created in imitation of the Safavid *taj*. Humayun attempted to attach a culture of spiritual devotion to the Taj-i Izzat which was similar to the Taj-i Haydari. However, this symbol of legitimacy lost its appeal once the padshah donned the Safavid *taj*. After this incident, Mughal sources scarcely mention the Taj-i Izzat or do so in a cursory manner. For example, in the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl referred to the Taj-i Izzat as a symbol invented by Humayun, but the *taj* does not reappear later in the chronicle as a symbol of legitimacy and power.¹⁴² At this point, we can detect a rearrangement of Mughal history where both Babur and Humayun’s deference to Safavid authority was either erased or sanitized in official court chronicles.¹⁴³ Having been commissioned by Akbar upon his ascension to power, these Mughal chronicles attempted to construct the Mughal-Safavid relationship as an equal one. In reality, this was not always the case.

2.8 Akbar: Reinventing Symbols of Power

Having inherited the dynastic throne at the age of thirteen, Akbar, guided by his trusted regent Bairam Khan, sought to expand the former boundaries of the Mughal empire beyond northern India towards the east and west. While Akbar expanded his

¹⁴¹ Jawhar Aftabchi, “Tadhkiratul-waqiat” in *Three Memoirs of Humayun*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009), 121-122.

¹⁴² Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 138.

¹⁴³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 130.

empire, he also inherited the imperial embarrassment of Humayun's deference to Shah Tahmasp and his acceptance of the Taj-i Haydari. Akbar looked to incorporate a spectrum of symbols which served as a foundation for his own claim to legitimacy. While this process involved crystallizing "received and institutional and narrative forms [that] were part of Timurid and Safavid legacies," it also incorporated local Indian ideas and language inspired by Sufi customs.¹⁴⁴ Using these concepts in the illustration of his patron as the perfect padshah, Abul Fazl Allami penned the court chronicle *Akbarnama* ("Book of Akbar") over the course of seven years.

Using rhetoric similar to Khwandamir's *Qanun-i Humayuni*, Abul Fazl incorporated the ancient Iranian notions of the "shadow of God" and the divine light in the *Akbarnama*, yet these imperial symbols appeared in tandem with the Sufi ideas of illumination and the "Perfect Man." Having been a student and admirer of the School of Illumination originally founded by Suhrawardi in the twelfth century, Abul Fazl introduced the notion of *ishraq*, which translates to the "rising of the sun," into his depiction of Akbar as the perfect monarch.¹⁴⁵ This movement, also referred to as the *Ishraqi* system of thought, was influenced by Muslim intellectuals (such as Hallaj, Ghazzali, and Ibn Sina) and by Iranian and Indian philosophical trends.¹⁴⁶ Suhrawardi applied the dual metaphors of light and vision from Plato's works and used this in his formulation of the concept of *ishraq*. In the *Hekmat al-ishraq*, Suhrawardi defined light, as "the most general act of knowing," and vision, as "the act of the subject in terms of

¹⁴⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Akbar and Religion* (Delhi: Jayyed Press, 1989), 74.

¹⁴⁶ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, 75.

generalized knowledge.”¹⁴⁷ These ideas, which appear as “vision-illumination” in the text, lead to knowledge which is then “acted by a subject.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, God is considered the “light of lights” and the ability to understand this light is a “process of cognition [seen as] an illumination from above through the intermediary of the spirits and the spheres.”¹⁴⁹ Returning to Abul Fazl’s use of similar language, he applied the idea of “vision-illumination” to Akbar’s status as a divinely sanctioned ruler. This application of Suhrawardi’s ideas is apparent in Abul Fazl’s illustration of Akbar’s divinely endowed status as a “king... possessed of arts in intelligence we call a guide on the path of God/Although kings are shadows of God, he is the light of God/How can we call him a shadow?”¹⁵⁰ Through this notion of *ishraq*, Abul Fazl exalted Akbar onto a pedestal above the Shadow of God to the “light of God.” Not only did this presentation associate Akbar with special powers of guidance but also granted the emperor with Gnosticism.¹⁵¹

The concept of illumination, then, is critical to Abul Fazl’s depiction of the padshah, as he “tries to harmonize and synthesize peripatetic and *ishraqi* ways of thought within the general framework of Ibn Arabi[‘s]” school of thought, *wahdat al-wujud*.¹⁵² More specifically, Abul Fazl integrated the Sufi notion of *al-insan al-kamil* (the Perfect

¹⁴⁷ Hossein Ziai, “Illuminationism,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, consulted on August 27, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/illuminationism>.

¹⁴⁸ Ziai, “Illuminationism.”

¹⁴⁹ Nizami, *Akbar and Religion*, 76.

¹⁵⁰ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1939), 1: 139.

¹⁵¹ Peter Hardy, “Abul Fazl's Portrait of the Perfect Padshah: A Political Philosophy for Mughal India – or a Personal Puff for a Pal?” In *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, ed. Christian W. Troll, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Vikas, 1985), 121.

¹⁵² Hardy, “Portrait of the Perfect Padshah,” 124.

Man) into this depiction of the padshah.¹⁵³ Popularized by Ibn Arabi in the thirteenth century, Muslim intellectuals understood *al-insan al-kamil* as the “khalifa of God on earth...entrusted [with] the divine safeguarding of the World.”¹⁵⁴ This figure was celebrated by Sufi thinkers as the “spirit of the universe,” an earthly vessel of a “microcosm which actually manifests all divine perfection.”¹⁵⁵ Inspired by such ideas and language, Abul Fazl attached the idea of the Perfect Man to Akbar. With references to Akbar as the “lord of the world” and the “shade of tranquility,”¹⁵⁶ Akbar is presented as the “shadow of Divinity,” tasked with the “guardianship of all mankind.”¹⁵⁷ “Mankind,” for Abul Fazl and Akbar, included both Muslims and non-Muslims. With this definition in mind, Abul Fazl praised Akbar as a guide for the former group seeking the “existence...[of] a Perfect Man whose spiritual guidance will bring man to righteousness and understanding.”¹⁵⁸ For the latter, he associated Akbar with more “open-minded” ideas.¹⁵⁹

Some of these notions can be found in Abul Fazl’s use of the sun and sunlight in the *Akbarnama*. Continuing Humayun’s legacy of revering the sun, Akbar likewise incorporated the Iranian emphasis of the divine light (*farr*) with the Indian tradition of

¹⁵³ R. M. Eaton, “Abul- Fazl Allami,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, consulted on July 21, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-fazl-allami-historian>.

¹⁵⁴ R. Arnaldez, “al-Insān al-Kāmil”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 27 October 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0375.

¹⁵⁵ Hardy, “Portrait of the Perfect Padshah,” 125.

¹⁵⁶ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 678.

¹⁵⁷ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 1012.

¹⁵⁸ Hardy, “Portrait of the Perfect Padshah,” 136.

¹⁵⁹ Hardy, “Portrait of the Perfect Padshah,” 136.

king-viewing. He further tailored this performance to include the Hindu ritual of *darshan*, where Akbar would appear before his prostrating subjects at sunrise.¹⁶⁰ With references to Akbar as the “essence of sunlight” whose luminance came from his “relat[ion] to the sun,” Abul Fazl embedded both the Iranian ideas of the divine light as well as the *ishraqi* system of thought. Moreover, Akbar venerated the sun at sunrise, memorized names for the sun in Sanskrit (which are 1001 in total),¹⁶¹ and lit sacrificial fires fashioned after the Brahmanical and Zoroastrian practices of fire worship.¹⁶² To add to these ideas, Akbar also commissioned the construction of a temple devoted to the Hindu goddess Krishna for his Rajput wife within the confines of the Mughal palace, a development which further ignited the orthodox clergy’s anger.¹⁶³ As well, because of his deep fascination with religion, Akbar hosted weekly debates in his infamous *Ibadatkhana* (House of Worship) where religious spokespeople from various faiths participated. Through such inter-faith dialogue, Akbar reached the conclusion that “all religions were equally true or equally false.” With this provocative assertion, Akbar was accused of harbouring un-Islamic values. With accusations levelled by Sunni Muslims against Akbar for being a Shia (after he favoured Persians at his court) and being a Hindu (after improving court mobility for Hindus loyal to Akbar), Abul Fazl vehemently denied these claims in the

¹⁶⁰ Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran,” 200-201.

¹⁶¹ John F. Richards, “The Formulation of Imperial Authority Under Akbar and Jahangir,” in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. John F. Richards (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 306.

¹⁶² Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 152.

¹⁶³ Jeffrey D. Long, “Hindu Dharma: Unity in Diversity- A Pluralistic Tradition,” in *Dharma: The Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh Traditions of India*, ed. Veena R. Howard (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 80.

Akbarnama. Instead, he promoted the vision of Akbar as the ultimate spiritual guide whose sole concern was to justly patronize those who were loyal to his empire.¹⁶⁴

In addition to the syncretism of Sufi ideas and imperial language, Abul Fazl punctured this vision of the divine light with Timurid-Mongolian lore. He described the process of how the widowed mythical Mongolian goddess, Alongua, was impregnated by a ray of divine light after which she became a vessel “worthy of the world-illuminating light.” Acting as an initial conduit between the earthly and supernatural realms, she passed down this light for generations until Akbar became a recipient. Allegedly, the divine light:

“took shape, without human instrumentality or a father’s loins, in the pure womb of her Majesty Alongoa, after having, in order to arrive at perfection, occupied during several ages the bodily wrappings of other holy witnesses, is manifesting itself at the present day, in the pure entity of this unique God-knower and God-worshipper (Akbar).”¹⁶⁵

In the medieval period, concepts of millennialism and spiritual renewal were a constant in Islamic societies. In the *Akbarnama*, we see the use of similar language with Abul Fazl’s assertion of Akbar as a legate of the legitimizing divine light of kings. Yet, Azfar Moin observes that this passage also affirms Akbar as “the inaugurator of the millennium.” Moin argues that in order to expunge the memory of Humayun’s submission to Safavid authority, Akbar not only altered the depiction of this event in Mughal histories, but he also focused on projecting “a grand performance of sacrality.” He manipulated the “sign-laden moment of the Islamic millennium to requite the wrongs inflicted by the Safavids

¹⁶⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 141.

¹⁶⁵ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 85.

on his dynasty and redeem the sovereignty of Timur's heirs in India."¹⁶⁶ According to Islamic tradition, a *mujaddid* (or renewer of Islam) was to appear every century to revive Islam in the world. In 1582, chroniclers expressed Akbar as a *mujaddid* in time for a once-in-a-millennium astrological event of "the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter [that] had occurred in the same celestial position as it had near the birth of Islam and the end of the Sasanian- Zoroastrian dispensation."¹⁶⁷ At this time, Akbar commissioned a thousand-year history called the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* in which Akbar was declared the Renewer of the Second Millennium and minted coins with the word *alf* (thousand) on them. As such, Akbar went to great lengths to depict himself as the next *mujaddid*.

However, Akbar's performance of what Moin refers to as "sacred kingship" did not end here: he built upon his role of the *mujaddid* to bolster his status as the next Sahib Qiran.¹⁶⁸ "Sahib Qiran," popularly used by Timur in the fourteenth century with its "charismatic significance and universalist implications," denoted an auspicious conjunction between the planets Jupiter and Mars.¹⁶⁹ After Timur's death, this honorific circulated and appeared widely in Central Asian histories, with its use reaching the courts of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman and the Safavid Shah Ismail in the sixteenth century.¹⁷⁰ In a similar fashion, Khwandamir exalted Humayun as the Sahib Qiran in the *Qanun-i Humayuni*, but he did not maintain the use of this title in any meaningful way. In stark contrast, Abul Fazl meticulously discussed the moment of Akbar's birth in a detailed

¹⁶⁶ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 130.

¹⁶⁷ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 133.

¹⁶⁸ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 131.

¹⁶⁹ Naindeep Singh Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Sahib Qiran," *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009): 94-98.

¹⁷⁰ Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction," 101-103.

astrological analysis in his chronicle. According to Abul Fazl, Akbar, like Timur Sahib Qirani, was born at the conjunction of the planets Mars and Jupiter, a fortuitous astrological moment to which “[w]ise men attach[ed] importance to... in the horoscopes of rulers.”

Abul Fazl not only compared Akbar to Timur but established Akbar on a higher level. To highlight this idea, he posited Akbar as the *shahinshah* (king of all kings) and explained that in Akbar’s “potent horoscope [the power of Mars is] even greater than in the Sahib-Qirani’s... and this indicates magnificence of power, greatness, a high degree of triumph and victory, and the conquest of territory.”¹⁷¹ To add to this presentation, Abul Fazl emphasized that the padshah, because of Mercury’s “mixed disposition,” was fated to cast “rays of comfort” to “fling open the gates of justice and equity to all people.”¹⁷² More specifically, he illustrated that Akbar would “adorn the world with the light of intelligence in affairs of livelihood and [would] solve the problems of religion and state with wisdom” which would pave the path towards uncontested just rule.¹⁷³ Using language charged with “conjunction astrology, messianic and millennial myths, and claims of royal and saintly authority combined in the person of the monarch,” Abul Fazl artfully interpreted Akbar’s destiny as the monarch of the universe.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 89.

¹⁷² Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 85.

¹⁷³ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 1: 83.

¹⁷⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 166.

2.9 Akbar and Abbas: Changing Political Landscapes Between India and Iran in the Sixteenth Century

While Akbar, like his predecessors, drew inspiration from a spectrum of Iranian traditions, he also actively engaged with his Iranian neighbours outside the realm of symbols and literature. Yet, unlike his father and grandfather, Akbar asserted his sovereignty by claiming the title of the universal monarch. This dramatic shift is palpable in two noteworthy incidents recorded by Abul Fazl in the *Akbarnama*. The first instance appeared in Abul Fazl's report of Shah Abbas's movement during his campaign to dethrone his father, Muhammad Khodabanda (r. 1578- 1587), where the Shah sent an envoy to the Mughal court in the hopes of receiving aid. In a description of the events in Iran, Abul Fazl condescendingly observed that Abbas had been "incited... to assume the sovereignty" by "selfish strife-mongers" who "made his inexperienced youth the means of obtaining their own ends." He continued:

"The Sovereign of Persia came to Khurasan, but owing to his blindness, the presumption of the minsters, and the duplicity of the soldiers, he was obliged to return without effecting anything. He (Abbas) sent [an ambassador] to court and asked for assistance. The just Shahinshah did not regard him as worthy of an answer. He remarked how could he assist one who contended with his visible god (his father). At this time he represented anew his own purity..."¹⁷⁵

In this passage, Abul Fazl demerited the shah with descriptions of Abbas as an impressionable young prince. Refusing to aid Abbas in the plot against his father, Akbar adopted a highly censorious disposition towards the Iranian shah.

¹⁷⁵ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 893.

This patronizing demeanor culminated in a letter Akbar wrote to Abbas in 1596, where the Mughal monarch unveiled himself as the universal monarch. Upon his accession, Shah Abbas had written to Akbar reproaching him for not dispatching a congratulatory letter sooner.¹⁷⁶ Akbar replied after four years, explaining that his delay was because of his many campaigns in India from which he emerged victorious. He also informed Abbas that his empire had grown considerably, now stretching “[f]rom the mountains of the Hindu Koh to the shores of the ocean.”¹⁷⁷ After a lengthy description of his conquests, Akbar articulated that the days where the Mughals submitted to Safavid authority were long over. He did this by admonishing the Shah’s intolerance, reminding Abbas:

“[that] in the rules of sovereignty and the religion of humanity, concord is preferable to opposition and peace better than war, and especially as it has been our disposition from the beginning of our attaining discretion to this day not to pay attention to differences of religion and variety of manners and to regard the tribes of mankind as the servants of God, we have endeavoured to regulate mankind in general.”¹⁷⁸

Akbar, after imparting this piece of advice, provided Shah Abbas with an example as to how his magnanimity “set in motion the chain of concord and devotion and laid the foundation of affection” between the provinces of Punjab and Transoxiana. He further reminded the young Shah of his duty as the “Shadow of Divinity” to “conciliate [the] hearts” of all “the sections of mankind.” Because kings are the “shadow of Divinity,” Akbar continued that “the Creator has given this sublime order for the discipline and

¹⁷⁶ Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran,” 195.

¹⁷⁷ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 1009.

¹⁷⁸ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 1011.

guardianship of all mankind” which included “wide toleration.” Akbar concluded the letter emphasizing that “[p]atience and endurance must ever be one’s companions, for the maintenance of permanent dominion depends thereon.”¹⁷⁹

These two incidents ultimately underscore the Mughal shift away from their official deference to the Safavids towards an increasingly assertive political position. Regarding Akbar’s refusal to offer aid to Abbas, it is noteworthy that Akbar did not consider himself bound to return the favour bestowed by the Safavids earlier in the sixteenth century. Akbar’s stance solidified in the letter to Abbas, where the Mughal monarch admonished Abbas for his renowned intolerance (towards groups such as Sunnis and Nuqtavis) in spite of his duty as the shadow of God to establish justice in his realm. As outlined in this chapter, the notion of the monarch as God’s shadow originally emerged from ancient Iranian political practices, and Akbar’s condescending re-articulation of this idea to the Iranian shah is notable. While maintaining this position, the padshah defined the role of divine viceregency in the letter to allegedly instruct but also to assert himself as the ideal universal monarch. Because of his “attention to differences of religion and variety of manners and to regard the tribes of mankind as the servants of God,” Akbar deemed himself a deserving claimant of the title. Indeed, if we consider the wide range of traditions Akbar drew from in his articulation of power, Abul Fazl’s definition of the ideal universal monarch seems to be tailored to fit Akbar.

Starting with Akbar, there was a dramatic shift in how Mughal chroniclers wrote about contemporaneous Iran. Although Abul Fazl depicted Tahmasp as a Shah who

¹⁷⁹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 1012-1013.

“ruled with skill and moderation” and that “many good deeds adorned his reign,” his depiction of Shah Abbas was less generous.¹⁸⁰ Instead the chronicle depicted Abbas as an inexperienced prince in need of guidance who “shed blood without consideration.”¹⁸¹ To contrast this assertion, Abul Fazl buttressed Akbar’s influence and sovereignty by noting that Abbas “subsided somewhat at the remonstrance of the world’s lord (Akbar).”¹⁸² With these disparate descriptions of the two monarchs in mind, the *Akbarnama* conveys a fundamental turn in the relationship between the Safavids and Mughals. In particular, the monumental letter was an emphatic declaration of what Abul Fazl attempted to articulate in the *Akbarnama*: Akbar was the best candidate for the role of governing all of mankind as a “universal king.”¹⁸³

2.10 Conclusion

While the Mughals employed a spectrum of legitimizing symbols of kingship that were rooted in the pages of Iranian tradition, they also actively engaged with their Iranian neighbours on a tangible level. This Mughal-Safavid interaction appeared in the Mughal literary sphere in a major way, where the Mughals distinguished between historical, mythical and contemporaneous Iran.¹⁸⁴ While the Mughals celebrated and venerated ancient Iranian kings and statecraft, their political relationship with contemporaneous Safavid Iran was complicated. In the early days of Mughal rule, texts such as the *Tarikh-i Rashidi* demonstrate the submissive imperial position which the Mughals had adopted.

¹⁸⁰ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 897.

¹⁸¹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 901.

¹⁸² Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 901.

¹⁸³ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 901.

¹⁸⁴ Koch, “How the Mughal Padshahs Referenced Iran,” 198-199.

There were two main instances of dynastic embarrassment where both Babur and Humayun submitted to the Safavid Shahs which mitigated their role as the heirs of Timur and as Mughal sovereigns. Part of this deference included donning the Safavid *taj* which initiated these emperors as disciples of the shahs. However, this official submissive position shifted by the end of the sixteenth century.

While Akbar depended on multiple symbols of authority used by his predecessors (such as the notion of kings as God's shadow and the Indian tradition of king-viewing), he modified these ideas and also incorporated new expressions of power. One of the most important developments in this period was Akbar's elevation to the status of universal monarchy. This idea was perhaps most evident in Akbar's letter to the Safavid Shah, where the Mughal padshah emphasized the multiethnic and multicultural composition of his growing empire in response to the reports of persecution in Safavid territory. Akbar reminded the Shah that according to the ancient Iranian notions of justice to which kings were bound, the Shadow of God was tasked with protecting his subjects. As Akbar embraced subjects of various classes and creeds, he asserted his superiority over the Shah in the sphere of tolerance which, according to Akbar, made him the ideal candidate for the role of universal monarch. Akbar emphatically accepted and embraced this self-appointed title and articulated a superior Mughal position towards his Safavid neighbours.

While Akbar sought to declare his temporal and political superiority in his letter to Shah Abbas, Abul Fazl similarly promoted Akbar as the supreme ideological being of the world in the *Akbarnama*. Specifically, by employing Sufi-inspired concepts such as

al-insan al-kamil and *ishraq*, Abul Fazl presented Akbar as a spiritual monarch whose enlightened status rendered the padshah the best candidate for universal monarchy.

Moreover, Abul Fazl not only glorified Akbar as Timur's heir but elevated Akbar onto a pedestal above the renowned Central Asian conqueror. As Akbar's empire expanded to include a multitude of ethnicities and cultures, the Mughals integrated elements from their Perso-Islamic and Timurid-Mongolian inheritance and local Indian traditions to forge a unique and syncretic expression of prestige. For the Mughals, this heterogeneous mixture of political symbols further crystallized Akbar's claim to the mantle of universal monarchy. Through such ideological constructions, Abul Fazl expressed an important message in the *Akbarnama*: the Mughals were no longer in the shadow of their Safavid neighbours.

CHAPTER THREE: MUGHAL CONCEPTIONS OF IRANIAN RELIGION

Along with the projection of power, religion was also a salient consideration in the Mughal understanding of Iran in the early modern period. The sixteenth century was marked by the hard delineation of boundaries between empires, whereby communities were pressured to align as Shia or Sunni. With the rise of the gunpowder empires of the Safavids (Shia), the Ottomans and the Mughals (Sunni), confessional lines between these powers hardened. However, the ubiquity of Sufism in the Islamic world allowed for communities to connect with one another across these different empires. In recent years, scholars such as Omid Safi and Shahzad Bashir have repositioned Sufism as a critical undercurrent in the religious dimension of the early modern period.¹⁸⁵ With the inheritance of the Timurid legacy, the Mughal adherence to Sunnism was largely associated with Sufism. Sufism, with a broadly Sunni orientation, had become popular in Central Asia and Iran where Sufi networks such as the Naqshbandis and Chishtis flourished and initiated chapters across the Persianate world. Since Sufi orders were an entrenched religious phenomenon of this environment, Babur and his descendants engaged with various Sufi fraternities with Sunni leanings during their reigns in India. While the Mughals sat comfortably with their association with Sunni Islam, the new dynasty of the Safavids under Shah Ismail began promulgating Twelver Shi'ism. The Mughals and the Safavids shared the common association of Central Asian and Iranian Sufism, but the Safavids complicated this multiplicity by adding Shi'ism. As Sufism

¹⁸⁵ See Omid Safi, "Bargaining with Baraka: Persian Sufism, "Mysticism," and Pre-modern Politics" *The Muslim World* 90 (2000): 259-288; and Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

influenced the religious and imperial identities of these empires, this chapter will assess how Mughal writers wrote about and presented Iran and Persianate culture with regard to the categories of Sufism and Shi'ism. As well, this chapter will explore how Mughal writers understood the relationship between the court and local Sufi saints and networks.

3.1 Defining Sufism and its Spread in the Persianate World

Sufism began in the ninth and tenth centuries as an individualistic movement entrenched in ascetic ideals, a system which comprised “individual ascetics loosely grouped around a master.”¹⁸⁶ Yet, by the eleventh century, the Sufis became a mainstay of Islamic societies across the Middle East, especially Central Asia and Iran, with various *tariqas* (brotherhoods) and *silsilas* (genealogy).¹⁸⁷ Claiming lineal descent from both Muhammad and Ali, these orders carefully documented and verified the chain of spiritual transmission that emphasized the master and disciple relationship. The master, or *murshid* (one who is guiding), was the physical means through which a disciple, or *murid* (one who desires), could achieve enlightenment. The *murid*'s journey began with “renouncing the lower self” all the while “replacing it with a purified Self made possible by the annihilation of the master’s ego.”¹⁸⁸ Although initiation rituals differed among orders, they generally adhered to Muhammad’s method of welcoming disciples: shaking hands, offering garments, or shaving the head. The most common of these rituals was the presentation of a cloak by the *murshid* which symbolized the constant reminder of the

¹⁸⁶ Lawrence Potter, “Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 78.

¹⁸⁷ Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 79.

¹⁸⁸ Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc., 1997), 124.

master's and, by extension, God's presence in the disciple's life.¹⁸⁹ Carl Ernst has noted that this ritual also mirrored the precedent of caliphal courts where the offering of garments such as cloaks and hats was a salient part of imperial custom.¹⁹⁰ For the Sufis, the most commonly used garment was made of wool (or *suf*) from which the etymology of Sufism emerged.¹⁹¹ There were then three categories of these woolen cloaks: *tabarruk* (cloaks of blessing), *irada* (cloaks of discipleship), and *khilafa* (cloaks of masters).¹⁹²

As the inward connection to God was of crucial importance for the spirituality of the Sufis, so too was the outward emphasis on social conduct. For this reason, the donning of the cloak was yet again another reminder of the Sufi's duty in the visible world. Early collections of Sufi manuals emphasized the role of *adab* (moral and ethical conduct) in the master-disciple relationship and offered advice on how to control selfish desires.¹⁹³ Later collections became more specific in their codification of moral conduct, with detailed entries on how to distribute cloaks ripped in the state of spiritual euphoria.¹⁹⁴ Despite the various orders that flourished across Central Asia and Iran and their distinct initiation processes and mystical practices, the frequency of such *futuwwat* manuals (which transcribed the codified rules of conduct and etiquette) demonstrates the prevalence of Sufi ideas across the Islamic world.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Ernst *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 144.

¹⁹⁰ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 144.

¹⁹¹ William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2000), 22.

¹⁹² Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 144.

¹⁹³ Margaret Malamud, "Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1996): 91.

¹⁹⁴ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 145.

¹⁹⁵ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 145.

In the tenth century, Khorasan became the first province to successfully develop a system of patronage where Sufi leaders and the ruling elite developed a symbiotic relationship.¹⁹⁶ This dynamic revolved around the ideas of *baraka* (sanctifying power), *ihsan* (virtuous beauty) and *iradat* (devotional discipleship): notable local Sufi saints would vouch for a political figure or new dynasty with the promise that the community would be treated honourably.¹⁹⁷ Iranian Sufis were quick to engage in a complicated and interdependent system of patronage and devotion with the emergent Seljuk dynasty.¹⁹⁸ In exchange for their spiritual blessing, the new dynastic regime became devoted to these influential masters and further patronized Sufi lodges and complexes and offered religious figures salaries and stipends.¹⁹⁹ This relationship between the Iranian Sufis and the Seljuks demonstrates the importance of Sufism by the eleventh century. They now possessed the potential to raise and diminish dynastic power.²⁰⁰ Possessing both *wilaya* (power and authority) and *walaya* (intimacy with God), these friends of God deemed themselves responsible for the state of worldly affairs.²⁰¹ In other words, Sufi orders and their saints became intermediaries between the imperial sphere and the masses, a powerful position which ultimately dictated the success of the political order of the day. This system of devotion remained in Khorasan long after the fall of the Seljuks.²⁰² In this

¹⁹⁶ Margaret Malamud, "Sufi Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 3 (1994): 428.

¹⁹⁷ Omid Safi, "Bargaining with Baraka: Persian Sufism, "Mysticism," and Pre-modern Politics" in *The Muslim World* 90 (2000): 264.

¹⁹⁸ Malamud, "Sufi Organizations," 428.

¹⁹⁹ Malamud, "Sufi Organizations," 428.

²⁰⁰ Safi, "Bargaining with *Baraka*," 264.

²⁰¹ Safi, "Bargaining with *Baraka*," 264.

²⁰² Malamud, "Sufi Organizations," 428.

period, Sufism emerged from the margins of religious life and became a focal point in local politics.²⁰³

In eleventh century Khorasan, we can also observe the merging of Sufism and *fiqh* (Islamic law). As the functions of the Islamic shaykh and *murshid* coalesced and strengthened the bond between the master and disciple, Sufism increasingly gained mainstream acceptance.²⁰⁴ This development inaugurated a new era of Sufi *tariqas* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which emphasized spiritual practices and teachings of particular Sufi figures. The Kubravi order, for example, was an influential Central Asian Sufi network from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries.²⁰⁵ Founded by Najm al-Din Kubra (1145-1221) in Khwarazm in the thirteenth century, the order attracted devotees who later formed individual chains of spiritual transmission.²⁰⁶ By the fifteenth century, daughter *silsilas* such as the Nurbakhshi and Naqshbandi stemmed from the roots of the Kubravi Sufi tradition and proliferated across the expanse of the Islamic world.²⁰⁷

While Sufi orders grew in popularity, Central Asia was ravaged by the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century.²⁰⁸ In this religious and political climate, the bond between Sufi brotherhoods and the reigning dynasty hardened as the dual role of the Sufis became more pronounced.²⁰⁹ As the murder of the Abbasid caliph in 1258 officially

²⁰³ Malamud, "Sufi Organizations," 427.

²⁰⁴ Malamud, "Sufi Organizations," 437-438.

²⁰⁵ Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubraviyah in Central Asia," *Soviet and North American Studies on Central Asia* 21, no. ½ (1998): 46.

²⁰⁶ Devin DeWeese, "Baba Kamal Jandi and the Kubravi Tradition among the Turks of Central Asia," *Der Islam* 71, no.1 (1994): 58.

²⁰⁷ DeWeese, "Eclipse of the Kubraviyah,"

²⁰⁸ Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 77.

²⁰⁹ Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 12.

destroyed the institution of the Caliphate,²¹⁰ the political vacuum left by the Mongol conquest in Central Asia and Iran created opportunity for various established orders to rise as central mediators between the masses and the new political hegemon. In this way, Sufism became a critical aspect of the medieval Islamic world.²¹¹

In addition to facilitating mediation, regional Sufi networks also provided local communities with continuity.²¹² In the city of Jam in medieval Khorasan, for example, the Sufi shaykhs of a local shrine community formed close relationships with the ruling political dynasties of the day, be they Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Karts, or Timurids.²¹³ This frequent turnover of political dynasties, and the ability of Sufi groups to continue unabated, illuminates the degree of Sufi agency in the medieval period.²¹⁴ Despite the marital, political and devotional ties with the Karts, the Shaykhs of Jam would also support Timurid advancement in Khorasan.²¹⁵ In other words, these spiritual figures were not merely isolated ascetics concerned with the invisible world but were actively involved with rulers and accepted patronage which determined the success of their *tariqas*.²¹⁶

3.2 Defining Shi'ism and its Spread Across Central Asia and Iran

Before we further discuss the rise of Safavid Shi'ism in Iran, we must first understand the political and religious trajectory of Shi'ism, a movement which began as a

²¹⁰ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 126.

²¹¹ Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 12.

²¹² Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 101.

²¹³ Beatrice Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 224.

²¹⁴ Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 101.

²¹⁵ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 224.

²¹⁶ Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 79.

“political rather than a theological controversy” informed by a succession dispute among Muslims upon Muhammad’s death.²¹⁷ After the Prophet’s death in 632, two main factions supported different contenders for the Prophet’s spiritual and political legacy: Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s father-in-law, and Ali, Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law. The Quraysh, a powerful and influential Meccan tribe which comprised some of Muhammad’s earliest supporters (*Muhajirun*), bolstered Abu Bakr as the rightful claimant of the Prophet’s authority.²¹⁸ On the other hand, the Ansar, a conglomerate of tribes from Medina which consisted of recently converted Muslims, largely promoted Ali for the same position.²¹⁹ Using their status as early converts to Islam, the Quraysh-*Muhajirun* dominated the politics of religion in this early period.²²⁰ Although Muhammad had spent the better part of his life preaching egalitarian values, his death shifted the narrative back to the tribal culture of Arabia. In other words, tribal power and influence once again guided the politics of succession.

After the reigns of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman, the supporters of Ali, collectively referred to as *shiat al-Ali* (later referred to as Shi’ites), once again lobbied for Ali to be caliph. Finally granted with what his supporters considered his birthright, Ali ruled the Caliphate until he was assassinated in 661. This event ushered in the rise of the Umayyad dynasty in Syria, whose early caliphs Muawiya and Yazid were reviled in the

²¹⁷ Nadeem Hasnain and Sheikh Abrar Husain, *Shias and Shia Islam in India: A Study in Society and Culture* (New Delhi: Harnam Publications, 1988), 7.

²¹⁸ L. Veccia Vaglieri, “‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 11 November 2020, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0046.

²¹⁹ Vaglieri, “‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.”

²²⁰ Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi’ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 8-9.

Muslim imagination as both corrupt and oppressive.²²¹ Ali's son, Husayn, led a revolt against the Umayyad dynasty, but he and his family were massacred on the plains of Karbala in Iraq in 680.²²²

This event loomed large in the imagination of later Shia Muslims and incensed the supporters of the *ahl al-bayt* (Muhammad's household). In the seventh century, Shia Islam was neither organized nor recognized as an independent confessional category, but the Battle of Karbala was crucial in the development of Shia Islam as the sect's devotional rituals became more crystallized. Along with the emphasis on Ali and his family's political and spiritual supremacy over the other caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman), Shia Islam also came to commemorate this event as "an important way to worship God."²²³ Although non-Shia Muslims and Sufis also attach importance to the Battle of Karbala, this event eventually became a focal point of Shi'ite beliefs and customs.²²⁴

Said Arjomand notes that the formation of doctrinal Imami Shi'ism (also referred to as *Ithna Ashari* and Twelver Shi'ism) formed under the leadership of Muhammad al-Baqir and Jafar al-Sadiq (the fifth and sixth Imams) in the eighth century.²²⁵ In this period, Shi'ism slowly began to assume a distinct identity with the promotion of Ali as

²²¹ Kamran S. Aghaei, "Āshūrā' (Shī'ism)," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 29 October 2020, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23855.

²²² Momen, *Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 63.

²²³ Aghaei, "Āshūrā' (Shī'ism)."

²²⁴ Aghaei, "Āshūrā' (Shī'ism)."

²²⁵ Said Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1987), 27.

the first of twelve Imams.²²⁶ The mantle of the Imamate required descent from Muhammad through Ali, a connection which allegedly blessed the Imams with the unequivocal ability to understand and disseminate both the divine word and traditions of the Prophet with *isma* (infallibility).²²⁷ As well this station endowed the divinely appointed Imams with *ruh al-kuds* (the holy spirit) and the ability to perform miracles.²²⁸ Adulated as the vicegerents (or “the realized faces”) of God, Imams were dual temporal and spiritual guides responsible for the salvation of Muslim communities. Special importance was given to the coming of the “Hidden Imam,” or *al-Mahdi*. Al-Mahdi, or “the rightly guided one,” was a figure predicted to be a “restorer of religion and justice...who will rule before the end of the world.”²²⁹ Although this term does not appear in the Quran, both Sunni and Shia traditions anticipated the arrival of a harbinger of peace. Initially, this title was utilized as “an honorific epithet without messianic significance” since Muhammad’s time but was later appropriated by religious Shia scholars to refer to the Twelfth Imam who disappeared in 874. During the eighth and ninth centuries, the Abbasid caliphs appropriated such messianic and apocalyptic vocabulary and symbols.²³⁰

²²⁶ Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 27.

²²⁷ Momen, *Introduction to Shi‘i Islam*, 143.

²²⁸ Wilfred Madelung, “Imāma,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 29 October 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0369.

²²⁹ Wilfred Madelung, “al-Mahdī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 29 October 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0618.

²³⁰ Madelung, “al-Mahdī.”

Returning to the seventh century, communities across the growing Islamic world had various complaints with the Umayyad dynasty. The most notable of these complaints was the mistreatment of non-Arab Muslims in the Iranian province of Khorasan.²³¹ Although the doctrinal legacy of Islam promoted egalitarianism, these Persian land-owning classes were treated secondary to Arab Muslims as past tribal connections and the timeline of conversion still dictated one's social and political status. The Umayyads further ostracized Iranian Muslims by exclusively incorporating members of Arab tribes in its fighting force. Capitalizing on the brewing restlessness in the province of Khorasan, the revolutionary family of the Abbasids recruited Alids (supporters of Ali) from Central Asia and Iran who asserted that a direct descendant of the Prophet should inherit caliphal power.²³² In response, the Abbasids cryptically promised their supporters that a member of the Prophet's family would rule (*al-rida min al-i Muhammad*- "The chosen one from the family of Muhammad"). The Alids understood this slogan as the Abbasids' declaration of support for Muhammad's descendants. With Alid support the seeds of revolution were sown, and the anti-Umayyad movement emerged swiftly from the eastern Islamic world to topple the Umayyad dynasty in 750.

When the Abbasids inherited the mantle of the Caliphate, they immediately presented themselves as legitimate heirs to the empire. Claiming descent from Muhammad's uncle al-Abbas, the dynasty maintained its status as members of the Prophet's family and asserted their divinely endowed insight into matters of religion and

²³¹ Michael Cooperson, *Al-Mamun* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 10.

²³² C.E. Bosworth, "Abbasid Caliphate," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on November 23, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abbasid-caliphate>.

state.²³³ They used regnal titles with apocalyptic and messianic language to convince their subjects of their right to rule, employing titles such as al-Mansur (“the one granted victory by God), al-Mahdi (“the rightly guided”), and, al-Hadi (“the right guide”).²³⁴ Moreover, because the locus of the Abbasids’ support came from the eastern Islamic world, they built a capital in the heart of Iraq in Baghdad, a notable centre of Alid activity.²³⁵ The Abbasids’ persistent refusal to relinquish the caliphal office sparked a series of rebellions across the empire. In response to this reprisal, the seventh Abbasid caliph (al-Mamun) declared the direct descendant of Muhammad, the eighth Imam al-Reza to be his heir apparent. However, the Imam died in 818, some believe at the order of Mamun, and was unable to assume power.²³⁶

Over the next century, the relationship between the Abbasids and their Shia supporters steadily declined. In this climate, the Abbasids monitored the descendants of the Prophet’s family for sparks of resistance and dissent with the aid of *naqibs*.²³⁷ The primary function of the *naqib* was to confirm the genealogical link of *sayeds* as descendants of the Prophet.²³⁸ This figure was also responsible for the dispensation of special stipends and monitoring unruly and disruptive *sayeds* within the localities of regional *naqibs*.²³⁹ This position became pervasive in the medieval period as descendants

²³³ Cooperson, *Al-Mamun*, 11.

²³⁴ Cooperson, *Al-Mamun*, 12.

²³⁵ Bosworth, “Abbasid Caliphate.”

²³⁶ Momen, *Introduction to Shi‘i Islam*, 72-73.

²³⁷ Bosworth, “Abbasid Caliphate.”

²³⁸ Teresa Bernheimer, *The Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750-1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 61-65.

²³⁹ Bernheimer, *The Alids*, 52, 61.

of the Prophets settled in communities across the Islamic world.²⁴⁰ From the beginning of the Abbasid revolution to the ninth century, the Alids generally remained quiet with the exception of occasional resistance in response to Abbasid oppression of their communities.²⁴¹ By the tenth century they were granted primary positions in local politics across the eastern Islamic world, specifically in Baghdad under the Buyids.²⁴² By the eleventh century, *sayeds* occupied a status of respect, reverence and privilege across the Islamic world because of their descent from the Prophet.²⁴³ Communities of *sayeds* formed in cities such as Mashhad and Qazvin which later became associated with Shi'ism. These cities transformed into prosperous urban centers with the discovery and construction of shrines around graves of venerated descendants of the Prophet, such as the eighth Shia Imam, al-Reza, in Mashhad and his sister, Fatima, in Qom.²⁴⁴

3.3 Shi'ism, Sufism, and Tomb Shrines in the Medieval Islamic World

As we have discussed thus far, both Sufism and Shi'ism had a notable presence in the historical and doctrinal development of medieval Islamic thought. Although these ideas were represented separately in this chapter, they share the commonality of esotericism and Gnosticism.²⁴⁵ We see these concepts emerge in the Shi'ite devotion to the Imamate and the Sufi emphasis of the *murshid* where both stations are treated as intermediaries between God and the visible universe. In the Shi'ite understanding of

²⁴⁰ Bernheimer, "Shared Sanctity: Some Notes on Ahl al-Bayt Shrines in the Early Talibid Genealogies," *Studia Islamica* 108, no.1 (2013): 7.

²⁴¹ Bernheimer, *The Alids*, 6.

²⁴² Bernheimer, *The Alids*, 7.

²⁴³ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 208.

²⁴⁴ Bernheimer, "Shared Sanctity," 7.

²⁴⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Shi'ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History," *Religious Studies* 6, no. 3 (1970): 234.

Imams, these descendants of Muhammad were imbued with Prophetic light which endowed them with a special understanding of religious texts, protection from sin, and infallibility.²⁴⁶ For Sufis, the *murshid* was a genealogical vessel through which the *baraka* of the Prophet flowed and touched those who sought closeness with God.²⁴⁷

This ideological closeness reappears in the Shi'ite and Sufi emphasis on the cloak and its transmission. According to Shia *hadith* (Prophetic tradition), the Prophet fastened a cloak around Fatima (his daughter), Ali (his cousin and son-in-law), Hasan and Husayn (his grandchildren) which symbolizes the transfer of the Prophet's spiritual power to his descendants.²⁴⁸ In Sufi circles, the transfer of the cloak from *murshid* to *murid* conveys the transmission of the *murshid's* spiritual power and teaching which equips the *murid* with insight to transcend beyond the material world.²⁴⁹ Woven together by the thread of esotericism and hidden knowledge, the cloak in both Sufi and Shi'ite ideology came to symbolize the wearer's privileged status as either a friend of God or the Prophet's descendant.

This connection between the Sufi and Shi'ite understanding of temporal and spiritual intermediaries manifested physically in the popularity of tomb shrines across the Islamic world. Pilgrimage to shrines of saints and other religiously significant sites became an important component of Muslim devotion in the medieval period particularly across Central Asia and Iran.²⁵⁰ In fact, an entire genre of pilgrimage guides, called the *kitab al-ziyara*, emerged as early as the ninth century which conveyed *ziyarat* etiquette,

²⁴⁶ Momen, *Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 23.

²⁴⁷ Nasr, "Shi'ism and Sufism," 235.

²⁴⁸ Nasr, "Shi'ism and Sufism," 233.

²⁴⁹ Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 144.

²⁵⁰ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 192.

hagiographical information, and reminders of the piety of particular saints.²⁵¹ *Ziyarat*, or shrine visitation and pilgrimage, was a means by which devotees sought *baraka* from deceased Sufi saints and Shi'ite Imams through proximity with their buried remains.²⁵²

With the understanding that the esteemed Sufi saints and Imams of past ages were vessels through which the light of the Prophet flowed, these shrines became sites of devotion where pilgrims sought cures for illnesses, asked for saintly intercession with God for their problems, and prayed for guidance.²⁵³

Particularly in fourteenth-century Iran, shrines superseded mosques as important loci of religious devotion and visitation in Iranian cities such as Jam and Ardebil.²⁵⁴ Shrines dedicated to the veneration of the Prophet's direct and manifold descendants also gained popularity in the medieval period. Referred to as *Imamzadehs*, these sites of visitation were established all across Central Asia and Iran. Because devotion to the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) was a significant component of Islamic piety in this period, these shrines were frequented by pilgrims across the confessional spectrum.²⁵⁵ An example of such a popular site of pilgrimage is the Mashhad shrine of the eighth Shia Imam, al-Reza. Maintained by the Ilkhanids in the thirteenth century,²⁵⁶ al-Reza's tomb transformed into an important urban centre by the fifteenth century under Timurid patronage.²⁵⁷ With the rigorous development of irrigation works and the frequent

²⁵¹ Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints Among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141.

²⁵² Ernst, *The Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 74.

²⁵³ Meri, *Cult of Saints*, 164-168.

²⁵⁴ Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 78.

²⁵⁵ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 206.

²⁵⁶ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 205.

²⁵⁷ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 208, 220.

visitation of pilgrims boosting the economy, the local communities of Mashhad thrived economically.²⁵⁸ This lucrative centre of religious and economic activity was capitalized by the Safavids in the sixteenth century. May Farhat notes that the Safavids subsequently developed Mashhad “into an arena where orchestrated displays of piety, the dispensation of charitable acts through the establishment of endowments, and architectural embellishments” all culminated to “[reinforce] their political claims as heirs of the imamate.”²⁵⁹

In this period, Twelver Shi‘ism had a fairly large following in Iranian cities such as Mashhad, Qashan, Isfahan, and Rayy. As the Safavids turned their attention to the consolidation of Iranian territories at the turn of the sixteenth century, Shi‘ism became a pragmatic confessional choice for the emergent dynasty in terms of legitimacy. Although the Safavid observance of Shi‘ism was remarkably eclectic and heterodox (as we will discuss in the subsequent section), they promoted orthodox Twelver Shi‘ism on the official level.

3.4 The Safavids and the Restless Qizilbash

Founded by Shaykh Safi al-Din in thirteenth-century Ardabil, the Safaviyya Sufi Order followed the basic master and disciple mould with a broadly Sunni orientation.²⁶⁰ However, this peaceful order became militarized and ‘radicalized’ over time with the spiritual guidance of Shaykhs Junayd (1429-1460) and Haydar (1459-1488) in the

²⁵⁸ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 206.

²⁵⁹ May Farhat, “Shi‘i Piety and Dynastic Legitimacy: Mashhad under the Early Safavid Shahs,” *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014): 201-202.

²⁶⁰ Rudi Mathee, “Safavid Dynasty,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 28, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/safavids>.

fifteenth century.²⁶¹ In this process, they acquired a type of ‘folk’ Shi‘ism which was not based in Shi‘i doctrine and orthodoxy. Rather, the Safavids adopted millenarian and revolutionary ideas that were popular in fourteenth and fifteenth century Central Asia and the Caucasus.²⁶² Specifically, the *tariqa* absorbed references to Ali as the perfect warrior, the injustice of Karbala and the martyrdom of Husayn, and popular ideas of vengeance in the name of the Prophet’s murdered family which emphatically refashioned the order’s spirit. In this emerging politico-religious environment, the order’s Sunni categorization shifted towards a *ghuluww* (extreme), militant, and highly heterodox practice of Shi‘ism.²⁶³ The Safavids capitalized on the messianic and millenarian ideas and language so as to shape their rhetoric and attract a large following of Turkic tribes fleeing persecution from Ottoman territories.²⁶⁴ By folding the Qizilbash into the Safavid standard, Shah Ismail tempered this group into the dynasty’s military muscle which propelled the success of the Safavid empire.²⁶⁵

Based in the Caucasus, the Qizilbash were a composite group of Turkish migratory tribal warriors who served as the loyal fighting force which guaranteed the Safavid conquest of Iran in the sixteenth century. They flocked to the Safavid cause and fused the Shi‘i notion of the expected messiah with the Sufi veneration of the *murshid* by

²⁶¹ Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Shi‘ism, Sufism and the Gulat* (Wiesbaden: Coronet Books, 1972), 72-73.

²⁶² Kathryn Babayan, “The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi‘ism,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 136.

²⁶³ Potter, “Sufis and Sultans,” 81.

²⁶⁴ Potter, “Sufis and Sultans,” 81.

²⁶⁵ Kioumars Ghereghlou, “Haydar Safavi,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on September 21, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haydar-safavi>.

the late fourteenth century.²⁶⁶ This group contended that divinity could migrate into different figures and bodies through time, an idea which ultimately supplanted the established understanding of resurrection pivotal to orthodox Shi'ism.²⁶⁷ The Safavids then fashioned these ideas to their cause. With claims that the Sufi masters of the Safaviyya were vessels containing the divine essence, the relationship between the Safavid Sufi master and his Qizilbash disciples surpassed mere reverence to absolute submission.²⁶⁸ In fact, Fazlullah Khunji Isfahani, a fifteenth century chronicler and critic of the Safavids, noted that followers of the Safaviyya "openly called Shaykh Junayd *illah* (God) and his son *ibn Allah* (Son of God)."²⁶⁹ Such claims of divinity inspired the Qizilbash's charge into battle, whereby they plunged into enemy lines without armour with the firm belief that their spiritual guide would protect them.²⁷⁰

To add to this arsenal of symbols, Shah Ismail also popularized his role as al-Mahdi. In the medieval period, claims to being the Mahdi were not uncommon; Fazlullah Astarabadi, founder of the Hurufiyya, and Mohammad Nurbakhsh, founder of the Nurbakhshiyya, made comparable claims. Perhaps inspired, in part, by Astarabadi's claims of divinity, Shah Ismail presented himself as the physical manifestation of God's essence and al-Mahdi to his Qizilbash followers.²⁷¹ As such, Shah Ismail was one of the

²⁶⁶ Babak Rahimi, "Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood: A Comparative Study of Ottoman and Safavid Origins," *Thesis Eleven* 76, no. 1 (2004): 94.

²⁶⁷ Rahimi, "Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood," 94-95.

²⁶⁸ Rahimi, "Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood," 94-95.

²⁶⁹ Quoted in Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safavids*, 73.

²⁷⁰ Shahzad Bashir, "Shah Ismail and the Qizilbash: Cannibalism in the Religious History of Early Safavid Iran," *History of Religions* 45, no. 3 (2006): 254.

²⁷¹ Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005): 112.

many charismatic guides who claimed this messianic role in the hopes of garnering support. He manipulated the fervour of the Qizilbash and promoted revolutionary rhetoric in the name of avenging the *ahl al-bayt*.²⁷² As outlined earlier in this chapter, the Battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Husayn was central to the Shia imagination. Because groups like the Qizilbash highly lionized Ali and the *ahl al-bayt*, they partook in the commemoration of this event. Shah Ismail then drew upon the memory of Karbala to inspire his army and likened his enemies to the architect of Alid misery, Yazid, to recruit a large following of warriors. With poetic references to himself as the “guiding Imam” whose “period has begun,” Shah Ismail manipulated the messianic, millenarian, and revolutionary expectations of his followers to establish the Safavid empire in the sixteenth century.²⁷³

As the Safavids began their dynastic trajectory, the religious landscape of ‘Greater Iran’ was characterized by unparalleled diversity and multiplicity. Given that the Mughal dynasty was founded roughly in the same period, it is important for us to have an appreciation for this heterogeneous and complex environment. The Mughals, in part, drew from similar religious traditions and ideologies from Central Asia and Greater Iran. The following section will examine Babur and the role that religion played in very early Mughal history where this heterogeneous and eclectic mixture of Sufism and Shi‘ism

²⁷² Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 279.

²⁷³ Amelia Gallagher, “The Apocalypse of Ecstasy: The Poetry of Shah Ismail Revisited,” *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2018): 371.

ultimately defined Iran. As this thesis is dedicated to exploring the Mughal conception of Iran, let us now turn to Babur and the focus on religion.

3.5 Babur: Early Mughal Texts on Sufism and Shi'ism

Having introduced Shi'ism and Sufism in the early modern period, let us turn to the Mughals and their understanding of religion, and how this understanding was influenced by Mughal conceptions of Iran in the Persianate world. In the subsequent section, we will discuss the categorization of Safavi Shi'ism in Mughal texts while also exploring the relationship between Babur and the Sufi *tariqas* during his lifetime. As Sufi networks of this politico-cultural climate possessed the ability to both endow and revoke political power, it was critical for reigning dynasties to vow allegiance to specific Sufi leaders and their brotherhoods with local influence. As a product of this environment, Babur understood the importance of invoking the aid of saints. In the *Baburnama*, we see many recorded instances where Babur's understanding of political power is inextricably linked with the blessing of revered Sufi masters.

Like many of his Timurid cousins, Babur's spiritual deference to the Naqshbandis began in his childhood when he was initiated into the fraternity as a disciple.²⁷⁴ Indeed, the Naqshbandis had played a critical role in religious Timurid life since the time of Timur himself. The first mention of the brotherhood in the *Baburnama* is when Babur describes how his father, Umar Mirza, was a devoted disciple of Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar,²⁷⁵ a dominant spiritual and political figure in the religious environment of

²⁷⁴ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 169.

²⁷⁵ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 9.

Samarqand in the fifteenth century.²⁷⁶ One of the central tenets of Naqshbandi doctrine was the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* (“seclusion among people”) which encouraged Naqshbandi Sufis to embrace worldly affairs while maintaining an internal connection with God.²⁷⁷ The Naqshbandis, such as Ubaydullah Ahrar, applied this idea to place themselves in the midst of regional politics and enjoyed both spiritual and material success. By associating themselves with the Timurids, the Naqshbandis too became powerful and wealthy, and Babur later depended on the order in his quest to seize the ancestral throne of Samarqand in 1496. In his memoir, Babur discloses that Khwaja Qazi, a devoted disciple of the legendary Ubaydullah Ahrar, was instrumental in his first conquest of Samarqand.²⁷⁸ Khwaja Qazi belonged to an influential and prestigious family of men of religions learning, and his position in Samarqand was critical for the fourteen-year-old Timurid prince.²⁷⁹

But Babur’s devotion and discipleship to the Naqshbandi order transcended beyond the material plane into the world of dreams. Babur recorded several instances where Khwaja Ahrar (d. 1490) appeared to him in moments of distress, but the most remarkable of these incidents occurred upon Babur’s decision to capture Samarkand for the second time from the Uzbek Shaybani Khan in 1500:

“About that time I had a strange dream. I dreamed that Khwaja Ubaydullah Ahrar had arrived and I had gone to greet him. He came and sat down. The tablecloth must have been laid somewhat unceremoniously before him, for it seemed that he was offended. Mulla Baba looked at me and motioned. I motioned back as if to say, “It’s not my fault. The steward is to blame.” The khwaja understood and accepted this apology. Then he rose, and I rose to escort him. In the entryway he

²⁷⁶ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 123n90.

²⁷⁷ Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition* (Fenton: Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004), 169.

²⁷⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 98-99.

²⁷⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 70.

took me by the arm... and lifted me off my feet so that one of my feet was off the ground. In Turkish he said, “*Shaykh Maslahat berdi*. (Shaykh Maslahat has bestowed).” A few days later I took Samarkand.”²⁸⁰

Emblematic of a spiritual link with the unseen world, dreams, along with mystical traditions such as astrology and divination, were perceived as factual in the medieval Islamic world.²⁸¹ Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1191), an influential philosopher of this period, combined the oneirocritic traditions of pre-Islamic Iran, ancient Greece and Egypt into a codified system of mystical knowledge which circulated the medieval Islamic world and became embedded in spiritual Sufi practices of the day.²⁸² He was also inspired by Plato’s theory of the intellect which theorized that the truths of the invisible world could only be accessed when the mind and body were in deep slumber.²⁸³ As such, dreams were no longer exclusive to prophets alone. For the friends of God (i.e. Sufis), dreams created a connection to the divine which elevated their role as worldly intermediaries.²⁸⁴ In this environment, dreams briefly moored the visible and invisible worlds, and this understanding formed the collective perception of dreams as social fact.²⁸⁵ Dreams also functioned “as emotive metaphors and powerful propaganda tools” with which Babur sought the support of living Naqshbandis.²⁸⁶

In his discussion of the status of dreams in the medieval Islamic world, Azfar Moin observes that dreams had two functions. They could either “change the self of the seer” or they could “articulate the self with networks of community.” This second point is

²⁸⁰ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 98-99.

²⁸¹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 73.

²⁸² Green, “Dreams and Visions in Islam,” 294-297.

²⁸³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 73.

²⁸⁴ Green, “Dreams and Visions in Islam,” 297.

²⁸⁵ Green, “Dreams and Visions in Islam,” 297-278.

²⁸⁶ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 73.

pertinent to Babur's dream which takes place at a moment in time when he was bereft of political support.²⁸⁷ Particularly after the death of Khwaja Qazi, Babur had difficulty in recruiting support from other Naqshbandi leaders such as Khwaja Ahrar's son, Khwaja Yahya.²⁸⁸ With particular emphasis given to the presence of the Sufi saints in Babur's dream, this passage demonstrates the Timurid prince's understanding of the power and place of Sufi networks in the claim for authority. Not only did Babur receive spiritual blessing from the renowned Ubaydullah Ahrar, but he was also acknowledged by Shaykh Maslahat in his dream, an influential saint of the twelfth century.²⁸⁹

Babur's dream can be understood as an acknowledgement of the Naqshbandis' reach and influence in the region. With his dream, Babur attempted to recruit aid from living Sufis while relying on the prestige of past saints such as Ubaydullah Ahrar and Maslahat. In Babur's lifetime, Sufi networks such as the Naqshbandiyya occupied significant space in the mosaic of political power in the medieval and early modern Islamic world. These esteemed men were teachers, tutors and mentors to members of the aristocracy, whose positions prompted the formation of powerful ties with the urban elite. With this influence, Naqshbandi shaykhs wielded the power to grant control of cities such as Samarkand.²⁹⁰ Babur lost the city for a second time in 1499, but in his final bid for Samarkand in 1511 he turned his attention to the Naqshbandiyya's regional adversaries: the Safavids under Shah Ismail's banner.

²⁸⁷ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 74.

²⁸⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 46.

²⁸⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 74.

²⁹⁰ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 71.

The bond between the Timurids and the Naqshbandis did not completely dissolve but flourished in both Central Asia and later in South Asia.²⁹¹ When Babur conquered Kabul in 1504, he patronized the Naqshbandi community in the city much as his family had done for decades. As the Timurids conquered parts of northern India, it became critical for them to maintain the political and spiritual ties with the Naqshbandis. For Babur's Timurid and Indian subjects, affiliation with the Naqshbandi order legitimized the dynasty's claim for power which Babur sustained with active patronage.²⁹² Although Sufi brotherhoods such as the Chishtis pre-existed Babur's arrival in India, the Naqshbandis became associated with their new Indian environment as the Timurid ruler conquered much of South Asia. In this period, the bond between the Indian Timurids and Khwaja Ahrar's descendants living in South Asia remarkably intensified.²⁹³ In addition to dynastic loyalty to the Timurids, *vaqf* holdings (namely mosques and madrasas) attracted a significant number of Naqshbandi Sufis (such as the esteemed Muhammad Baqi Billah) to emigrate to India with the incentive of expanding the order's influence with patronage and education.²⁹⁴

As Babur claimed more territory in India, he slowly turned his attention to local Sufi groups such the Chishtis.²⁹⁵ Upon his conquest of Delhi, Babur visited the shrines of the notable Chishti saints, Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizam al-Din Auliya.²⁹⁶ As

²⁹¹ Dale, "Legacy of the Timurids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8, no. 1 (1998): 50.

²⁹² Arthur F. Buehler, "The Naqshbandiyya in Timurid India: The Central Asian Legacy," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (1996): 214.

²⁹³ Dale, "Legacy of the Timurids," 49.

²⁹⁴ Dale, "Legacy of the Timurids," 48.

²⁹⁵ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 241.

²⁹⁶ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 203.

we assess Babur's relationship with the Naqshbandis and the Safavids, we see an unsurprising pattern appear. For Babur and the Timurids, the link between political power and local Sufi networks dictated allegiance and patronage. This complex relationship between Sufi saints, their networks, and reigning dynasts continued well into the reigns of Humayun and Akbar. In this period, we see the Naqshbandis appear yet again to vie for Mughal patronage against established and popular Sufi networks in the region, such as the Shattaris and Chishtis.

The landscape of the Eastern Islamic world was mixed and heterogenous. With this understanding in mind, we are concerned with how Mughal writers and historians conceived and articulated Shi'ite Safavid Iran during the reign of Shah Ismail. Babur understood that the importance of Sufi networks was instrumental in the climate of the sixteenth century, and thus his submission to the Safavids in 1511 is noteworthy. In particular, Babur's memoir includes some interesting references to Shi'ism and Shah Ismail. In a description of Sultan-Husayn Mirza, one of the last Timurid princes of Khorasan, Babur records that his son Muhammad Husayn Mirza was a "dyed-in-the-wool Shi'ite" after he "became a devotee of Shah Ismail."²⁹⁷ In a provocative denunciation of Shi'ism, Babur openly referred to his conversion to Shi'ism as a heretical practice: "he died astray in that heresy."²⁹⁸ While discussing the earlier Timurid prince Baysunghur Mirza, the grandson of Timur, Babur noted that he converted back from Shi'ism after "he renounced this vile doctrine and became orthodox."²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 198.

²⁹⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 198.

²⁹⁹ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 82.

Such deprecatory remarks appear several times, yet Babur does not extend his personal revulsion for Shi'ism to the Safavid shah. Rather, he mentions Shah Ismail with respect and objectively reports his successes across Central Asia and Iran. This dissonance between his description of Shah Ismail and his aversion to Shia Islam demonstrates how confessional identities reveal minimal information about this period's political environment.³⁰⁰ As the Safavids defeated the Uzbeks and turned their attention towards Samarkand, they understood the value of Babur's Timurid lineage and recruited him as a vassal. A defining moment of Babur's arrival in Samarkand - now under Safavid rule- was the Timurid prince's acceptance of *the Taj-i Haydari*, a distinct red conical hat worn by the Qizilbash.³⁰¹ While diminishing Babur's status as Timur's heir, Babur's acceptance of the *taj* signified his incorporation into the Safavid political hierarchy.

Concerning the *taj*, we can observe similar headgear throughout the courts of the Persianate Islamic world. With its origins in pre-Islamic societies, turbans came to symbolize the individual's status as a Muslim during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad.³⁰² There are numerous Islamic traditions which highlight the importance of donning the turban as they were markers of religious affiliation, but certain styles and colours of turbans came to identify specific dynasties over the next several centuries. For example, the Abbasid caliphs distinguished themselves by wearing turbans with trails that flowed past their shoulders, a style which was also emulated by Mamluk sultans in the thirteenth century.³⁰³ As such, the turban, and similar headgear, came to symbolize one's

³⁰⁰ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 84.

³⁰¹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 81.

³⁰² H. Algar, "Amama," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 2, 2019, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/amama-or-ammama-arabic-emama-the-turban>.

³⁰³ Algar, "Amama."

religious and political allegiance in the Islamic world. In the Safavid case, the red *taj* was a symbol of devotion to Ali and the Safavid *murshid*. Yet, the *taj* was also an indicator of one's political loyalty which incorporated the individual into the Safavid order's religious and political cause.

Babur understood the implications of accepting the Safavid *taj*. In his memoir, for example, Babur described how soldiers from the opposition defected to his army with "their turbans in their hands," a gesture which demonstrated their separation from previous loyalties.³⁰⁴ As such, when Babur accepted the Safavid *taj*, he agreed to comply with a new set of expected behaviours which included devotion and submission to Shah Ismail, his new *murshid*.³⁰⁵ As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sufi culture emphasized the transmission of a garment (usually a cloak) in the process of initiating new devotees. Babur understood his new role as he accepted the Safavid crown, but this acceptance does not signify his conversion to Shi'ism. Rather, his deference to Shah Ismail is symptomatic of the overall power Sufi *tariqas* possessed in worldly conquest. In particular, the rise of the Safavids highlights the success of militant Sufi groups in Central Asia. Babur spent years shaping his claim to the ancestral throne of Samarkand to no avail. With little support from the Naqshbandis and with the Safavids playing a dominant role in parts of Central Asia, the Timurid prince submitted himself to the Sufi-king who could help him accomplish his dream. As Babur's Timurid sovereignty was compromised, this episode later impacted how Humayun and Akbar treated devotion and kingship. Humayun cultivated his own devoted following and fashioned a *taj* in imitation

³⁰⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 254.

³⁰⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 81.

of the Safavid Taj-i Haydari, and Akbar, inspired by the status of the Safavid Sufi king, declared himself the universal monarch.

As this thesis is dedicated to understanding the Mughal conception of religious identity, let us now consider the categorization of Qizilbashi Islam. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the Qizilbash were extreme in both devotion and violence. Sources from this period indicate that the Qizilbash charged into battle without armour with the belief that their faith in Ismail would protect them.³⁰⁶ As well, Qizilbashi violence was cataclysmic in nature. In 1511, Najm al-Din Thani, a Qizilbashi general, arranged the massacre of fifteen thousand people in Qarshi, a city near Samarkand.³⁰⁷ While Babur was largely silent about his opinion of the Qizilbash and Qizilbashi Shi'ism, the historian Mirza Haidar Dughlat offers us a less nuanced perspective. In his description of the Safavid conquest of Herat, Mirza Haidar described the martyrdoms of the Sunni officials Hafiz al-Din Abu Bakr and Sayf al-Din Ahmed (who held the juridical position of *shaykh al-Islam*). The former refused to incorporate the customary public cursing of the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar in his sermon, asserting that to do so would be “an act of blasphemy.”³⁰⁸ As a consequence:

“the accursed Qizilbash (may God curse them) rose up to a man, and pulled the hoary-headed Hafiz down from the pulpit, by his collar, trampled him under their feet, and then cut him in pieces; while the great men of the city all fled.”³⁰⁹

Similarly, Sayf al-Din Ahmed was invited by Shah Ismail to “curse the Companions and adopt the Shia faith,” but he refused all the while referring to Qizilbashi

³⁰⁶ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 296.

³⁰⁷ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 87.

³⁰⁸ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 235.

³⁰⁹ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 235.

Sufism as a “corrupt belief” and its followers “infidels...worthy of death.”³¹⁰ Mirza Haidar, referring to Ismail as “that hundred times a wretch,” continues by describing that the Shaykh refused to succumb to Ismail’s demand and launched a series of insults at the shah.³¹¹ Ismail then consulted his Shi‘ite *ulema* regarding how he should respond to these insults, to which they replied “with people such as these[,] words are of no avail.”³¹² In response, Ismail launched an arrow at the Shaykh who:

“pulled the arrow out, rubbed some of the blood that issued from the wound, over his blessed face and white beard, saying: ‘Thanks be to God, that after a life of eighty years spent in the confirmation of the True Faith, and the refutation of false doctrine, I have seen my white beard stained with the blood of martyrdom.’ That black-faced heretic [*bad-kish*] then drew another arrow from his quiver, and shot it at the Shaykh... In short, the persecution was continued as long as Shah Ismail remained in Khorsasan.”³¹³

As well, it is important to note the idea of confessional ambiguity in this environment, where it was difficult to categorize piety strictly on the basis of labels such as Sunni and Shi‘i. In the medieval period, Shi‘i and Alid elements were popular even among Sunni communities which blurred the distinction between Shi‘ism and Sunnism on a popular level. Because these movements defied easy categorization, groups with *Husn-i Tashayyu‘*, or the love of Shi‘ite features, became associated with Shi‘ism.³¹⁴ This idea appears in Mirza Haidar’s description of the Nurbakhshis in Kashmir, where he acknowledges that the order “did not conform to the teachings of any sects, whether Sunni or Shia” but harboured Shia leanings. This observation further suggests that Mirza

³¹⁰ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 235.

³¹¹ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 236.

³¹² Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 236.

³¹³ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 435.

³¹⁴ John. E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 4.

Haidar made a distinction between doctrinal Shi‘ism and heterodox folk Shi‘ism. His record of the events in Herat ultimately categorizes Safavi and Qizilbashi Shi‘ism as violent and excessive. When Shah Ismail began consolidating power in the early sixteenth century, the communities in his newly conquered territories were predominantly Sunni. Although he was unable to enforce an immediate mass conversion to Shi‘ism, Ismail focused on official promulgations of Shi‘ism for purposes of legitimacy. For this reason, he and his son, Shah Tahmasp, invited esteemed religious Twelver Shia scholars to help implement this new policy at the Safavid court.³¹⁵ Hailing from Arabic-speaking regions such as Iraq and Bahrain, these scholars occupied important administrative positions in the Safavid court and were deemed essential allies in the legitimation of the Safavid empire as a mainstream Muslim power.³¹⁶

Despite the presence of these learned religious scholars, the early Safavids were initially unable to temper the revolutionary zeal and heterodoxy of the Qizilbash. The events described by Mirza Haidar indicate the *ghuluww* nature of the Safavid Sufi order in the early years of the empire’s establishment. While the Safavids declared their official association with orthodox Twelver Shi‘ism, the enforcement of doctrinal and visual examples of the Twelver denomination was scarce during Ismail’s reign. Because Ismail endorsed the heterodox beliefs of the Qizilbash, the contemporary Mughal understanding and reporting of Safavi Shi‘ism at this time was inextricably tied to the behaviour of the Qizilbash and their extraordinary *murshid*.

³¹⁵ Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (I.B. Tauris: New York, 2004), 8.

³¹⁶ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 8-9.

3.6 Humayun: Mughal Sources on Changing Loyalties and the Meeting of the Two Sovereigns

Although Babur brought the Naqshbandis to South Asia and supported them, Humayun distanced himself from such Central Asian elements and shifted his focus to the more ‘native’ Sufi order of the Shattaris which was founded by Abdallah Shattar in Samarkand in the fifteenth century. Upon his emigration to South Asia, Shattar emphasized his spiritual link to Bayazid Bistami, a revered Persian Sufi of the ninth century, as well as his genealogical link to Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, an influential Sufi intellectual of the thirteenth century.³¹⁷ Shattar’s teaching emphasized the transformation of the individual through meditation which unlocked the disciple’s acknowledgement of God’s presence in the disciple.³¹⁸ Also central to the order’s ideology was *dawat-i sama*, the notion that enlightened individuals could harness the power of astral bodies to impact earthly destiny.³¹⁹

Over the next hundred years, the Shattariyya integrated local Hindu forms of devotion into their mystical practices, such as combining the Arabic names of God with Hindawi elements of worship. Like many Sufi orders of the fifteenth century, the Shattaris also fostered a close relationship with local rulers and influenced regional politics. The spread and popularity of the Shattariyya in South Asia was likely a result of

³¹⁷ Scott Kugle, “‘Abdallāh Shattār,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 29 October 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23912.

³¹⁸ Kugle, “‘Abdallāh Shattār.”

³¹⁹ K. A. Nizam, “‘Shattāriyya,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 29 October 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6869.

the pantheistic nature of its doctrine.³²⁰ In 1549, the Shattari Shaykh Muhammad Ghaws penned the *Bahr al-hayat*, a Persian adaptation of the yogic book *Amrit kund*, where he integrated yogic practices and Sufism into a distinct form of worship.³²¹

While the Shattariyya gained traction in the South Asian milieu, it was not long before the Timurid Mughals began cultivating a spiritual relationship with this particular Sufi order. In the *Baburnama*, Babur notes his impression of Muhammad Ghaws as a “powerful spiritual man” who counselled him to release Khwaja Rahimdad, a captured *amir* of the Lodhi dynasty.³²² In another instance, Muhammad Ghaws had secretly alerted the advancing Timurid forces in Gwalior of the fortress commander’s seditious plans.³²³ Although Babur was officially devoted to the Naqshbandiyya at this time, his budding relationship with the Shattariyya helped the Mughals consolidate power in South Asia. With Humayun’s ascension to the Mughal throne, it was not long before Humayun unveiled his esoteric and slightly occult tendencies which slowly pushed the Naqshbandiyya into the periphery of his court. In this way, the Shattaris became the focal point of Humayun’s spiritual and political attention, where the Shattari Shaykh Phul, Muhammad Ghaws’s older brother, became a political advisor to Humayun.³²⁴

Azfar Moin notes that later Mughal chronicles either dismissed the Shattaris as pseudo Sufis or downplayed their influence on Humayun’s performance of kingship in the Mughal court.³²⁵ Similarly, neither the Shattaris nor their esoteric teaching are

³²⁰ Nizam, “*Shattāriyya*.”

³²¹ Carl Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no.1 (2005): 30.

³²² Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 382.

³²³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 97.

³²⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 101.

³²⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 112.

mentioned in Khwandamir's *Qanun-i Humayuni*, yet particular aspects of Humayun's presentation of kingship was inspired by the Shattari principle of *dawat-i sama*.

Humayun allegedly harnessed the power of the planets by wearing colours associated with specific planets on certain days of the week:

“As Saturday is the day of Saturn, and the colour of Saturn, according to the astronomers, is said to be black, the ever-successful King, dressed his royal body on this day in a black habit; and his face, which resembled the Sun, appeared to the people like the planet Jupiter, which shines in the darkness of the night.”³²⁶

Not only did Humayun associate these colours with cosmology but to certain aspects of Islam and Islamic history as well. Regarding the colour black, Khwandamir continued:

“It is related of Abu Muslim Marwazi that about the time of his expedition, he on several days ordered all his servants to put on dresses of the same colour; terror struck the mind (of the enemy) [the Umayyad dynasty] from their appearance on the day when this party was dressed in black; and he adopted this colour (for his dress). The descendants of 'Abbas, may God be pleased with them! from the dawn of prosperity and power to the end of their days of fortune and government, dressed themselves in similar garments, and their flags and other insignia of royalty were of the same colour [black].”³²⁷

Along with the presentation of this idea as a performative custom of kingship, there was a spiritual aspect which was imbued with the Shattari emphasis on the ability and role of heavenly bodies in impacting earthly destiny.³²⁸ Humayun was not merely a king but he was a “sacred king” who could draw upon the power and influence of the heavenly bodies.³²⁹

The centrality of the Shattaris during Humayun's early reign can be observed in the treatment of the Naqshbandi shaykh Makhdumi Nura, the successor and grandson of

³²⁶ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 77.

³²⁷ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 79.

³²⁸ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 122.

³²⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 122.

the revered Ubaydullah Ahrar in Central Asia. After Babur's death, the shaykh sought to rekindle his ties with the Timurid Mughals and set out to Agra for an audience with Humayun. At this time, Mirza Haidar Dughlat disapprovingly noted that Humayun:

“... was anxious to become [Shaykh Phul's] disciple, for he had a great passion for the occult sciences- for magic and conjuration... Since doctrines such as these suited his disposition, he became at once the shaikh's disciple.”³³⁰

For this reason, when the Naqshbandi Shaykh requested a meeting, “the Emperor and all his following neglected and slighted Khwaja Nura, who had a hereditary claim to their veneration.” This unwelcome reception “naturally caused the Khwaja great inward vexation.”³³¹ Shortly after, the disgruntled Sufi shaykh had a vision where he predicted the fall of the dynasty, which Mirza Haidar Dughlat notes came to fruition three years later with the rise of Sher Shah Suri.³³² With detailed descriptions of the Khwaja's impressive spiritual powers and miracles and the contrasting depiction of the Shattaris as teachers of “sorcery,” Mirza Haidar suggests that Humayun's mistreatment of the venerable shaykh catalyzed the fall of the empire.³³³ Without the saintly *baraka* and blessing of Ubaydullah Ahrar's direct descendant, Humayun allegedly devised his own failure.³³⁴

A profound development in terms of appreciating how the Mughals conceived of Safavid Iran was the exile of Humayun (1540-1555) and his sojourn at the Safavid court. Not only did this unprecedented event influence how Mughal authors conceived Iran, but it inaugurated a new era and an influx of Iranians to the Mughal court. As these Iranians

³³⁰ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 398.

³³¹ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 399.

³³² Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 399.

³³³ Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, trans. Ross, 398-400

³³⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 100.

accompanied Humayun to his return to India, there was a shift in demographics and economy. Moreover, this event ushered in a new period of Indo-Persian relations which impacted the Mughal perception of Iran, Iranian culture, and Iranian religious identity. However, many of these chronicles, such as the *Humayunama* and *Tazkirat al-Vaqiat*, were written after Humayun's death and were commissioned by his son, Akbar. Although the attitude towards Shi'ism presented in these chronicles may reflect the place of Shi'ism during Akbar's reign, these accounts also offer valuable insight into how Mughal writers treated the meeting between Humayun and the spiritual guide of the Safavids, Shah Tahmasp.

After Humayun was defeated by the Afghan Sher Shah Suri, Humayun and his retinue were in exile for several years. Their fortunes changed when in 1544 Shah Tahmasp responded to the Mughal plea for aid. As Humayun and his entourage travelled west towards the Safavid capital of Qazvin, they stopped in many cities and were entertained with grand receptions in cities like Herat.³³⁵ Finally, the two great monarchs met in Tahmasp's court which marked a new era of Safavid-Mughal relations. Mughal chronicles such as Gulbadan Begum's *Humayunama* describe the interaction between the Shah Tahmasp and Humayun as a meeting among equals. Her account emphasized that the padshah was welcomed with an "honourable reception" replete "with full honour and respect."³³⁶ She also highlighted that "[t]he friendship and concord of those two high placed pashas was as close as two nut-kernels in one shell."³³⁷ In contrast to the vision of

³³⁵ Colin Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, 91; Parodi, "Humayun's Sojourn at the Safavid Court," 135.

³³⁶ Gulbadan Begum, *The History of Humayun (Humayun-nama)*, trans. Annette Susannah Beveridge (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902), 168.

³³⁷ Gulbadan, *The History of Humayun*, trans. Beveridge, 169.

respect illustrated by Gulbadan Begum, Jawhar Aftabchi described an incident where Shah Tahmasp challenged Humayun's sovereign status in the *Tazkirat al-Vaqiat*:

“When the emperor entered the Shah's assembly, the shah came to the edge of the rug to greet him. Then the shah indicated a felt pillow to the right, and he sat down himself and asked the emperor's condition and whether the road had been difficult. Then he said, “Will you wear a *taj*? The *taj* is an emblem of honour,” the emperor replied. “I will wear one.” The shah put one on the emperor's head with his own hand, and the shah and all the khans and sultans let out a whoop and, saying “Allah, Allah,” they prostrated themselves as is their custom.”³³⁸

Scholars have generally accepted Humayun's acceptance of the Safavid *taj* as his temporary conversion to Shi'ism. However, Afzar Moin has argued that this interpretation has two major shortcomings: it misjudges the place of juristic Shi'ism in early Safavid Iran and overlooks the practice of Sufi rituals in Shah Tahmasp's court.³³⁹ Although Shah Tahmasp certainly attempted to distance himself from his father's messianic pretensions in order to enforce Twelver Shia orthodoxy, this endeavour materialized over the course of his fifty-two-year reign.³⁴⁰ During Humayun's stay in Iran in 1544, the Safavids were still struggling with the process of conversion on an official level which had only begun in a decade earlier. In the first half-century of Safavid rule, efforts of conversion were largely aimed at the lower classes.³⁴¹ Utilizing tactics such as public cursing (*tabarraian*) of revered Sunni figures,³⁴² the Safavids sought to establish a definitive rift between the labels of 'Sunnism' and 'Shi'ism' which were previously

³³⁸ Jawhar Aftabchi, “Tadhkiratul-waqiat” in *Three Memoirs of Homayun*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009), 121-122.

³³⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 127.

³⁴⁰ Rudi Matthee, “Safavid Dynasty,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on Nov 23, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/safavids>.

³⁴¹ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 26.

³⁴² Rosemary Stanfield Johnson, “Sunni Survival in Safavid Iran: Anti-Sunnite Activities During the Reign of Tahmasp I,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 130.

fluid. By the late sixteenth century, Twelver Shi‘ism grew to yield a strong influence among the ruling elite and the lower classes,³⁴³ as reflected in the increased translation of important Shi‘i texts from Arabic to Persian in Safavid society.³⁴⁴

It is also important to consider Tahmasp’s periods of repentance which occurred in the years of 1534 and 1555. Although Tahmasp indulged in all manners of vices in the early years of his rule, he experienced a spiritual revival which culminated in the proclamation of public repentance. In the first period of repentance, the Shah publicly renounced wine and banned public spaces linked with indecency: taverns, brothels, public theaters, and drug dens.³⁴⁵ He outlawed all *manahi* (forbidden acts) in the hopes of enforcing orthodoxy among his courtiers and subjects, yet there was scarce enforcement and observance of these proclamations in his court.³⁴⁶ In one incident, Tahmasp relayed that he received oneiric guidance from the Prophet to ban all *manahi* in the empire if he wanted to succeed temporally. His disciples adhered to some of Tahmasp’s bans, but they also maintained that “some of these forbidden acts... we cannot give up.”³⁴⁷ On the official level, Tahmasp’s early period of repentance prompted the spread of orthodox decrees and ideas, but the nature of the Shah’s court still steered towards unorthodoxy.

Second, Moin also notes that this reductive interpretation overlooks the place of Sufi rituals in the Safavid court.³⁴⁸ While Shah Tahmasp integrated the Twelver Shi‘i clergy in important administrative roles, his court also indulged in unorthodox Shi‘i

³⁴³ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 10.

³⁴⁴ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 5.

³⁴⁵ Colin Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, 72.

³⁴⁶ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 117.

³⁴⁷ Quoted in Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 117.

³⁴⁸ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 127.

customs such as the *chub-i tariq*, where the shah's devotees would receive blows with a stick to symbolize their loyalty to the Safavid monarch.³⁴⁹ As well, Tahmasp's subjects frequented the court to touch or acquire pieces of the Shah's clothing which they contended manifested *baraka* to cure a wide range of afflictions (*tabarruk*).³⁵⁰ He maintained a familiarity with a variety of Sufi rituals and practices which were not necessarily endorsed by the Shi'ite orthodoxy. An example of this is the aforementioned incident of the *taj*. While scholarship on this event has interpreted the *taj* as an emblem of orthodox Shi'ism, where Humayun's adoption of the Safavid headgear has been understood as his conversion to Shi'ism, scholars such as Azfar Moin argue that the use of the *taj* is much more consistent with Sufi customs.³⁵¹

Compared to the description of the Safavid conquest of Herat offered by Mirza Haidar in the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, the chronicles penned by Gulbadan Begum and Jawhar Aftabchi shed little light on the Mughal understanding of Shi'ism. However, Aftabchi describes the Mughal visit to al-Reza's shrine in Mashhad after Humayun's meeting with the Shah:

“... [the Emperor made] his prostrations at the tomb of Imam Al[i], son of Musa, [the eighth Shia Imam, al-Reza] on whom be the peace of God! ... the door keeper [of the shrine] then represented that it was impossible to open the chain: the King in consequence retreated a few steps, but afterwards returned, and said, ‘O Imam, every person who has ever offered up his vows at your shrine has obtained the object of his wishes; your slave has also come with similar hopes to your tomb, in expectation of succeeding in his request.’ ... instantly the chain was unlocked; it might be even said it was cut int two: on which his Majesty

³⁴⁹ Colin P. Mitchell, “Tahmasp I,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 15, 2019, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tahmasp-i>.

³⁵⁰ Mitchell, “Tahmasp I.”

³⁵¹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 127.

entered the holy tomb, walked around it, and then offered up his prayers, after which he sat down at an appointed place, and began to read the [Q]uran.”³⁵²

This visit to al-Reza’s shrine demonstrates how shrine visitation remained an important bridge between Sufism and Shi‘ism. As we have discussed throughout this chapter, the Mughals were active patrons of Sufi shaykhs and their *tariqas*. On account of this association, the Mughals also acknowledged the power of shrine visitation. Although al-Reza is revered in the Shia imagination as the eighth Imam, with his shrine being a popular pilgrimage site for Shias, he is also respected in the Sunni tradition for his genealogical link to the Prophet. Not only was shrine visitation a bridge between Sufism and Shi‘ism in the medieval period, but it continued to connect Sunni devotionalism, Sufism, and Shi‘ism in the early modern period as well.

Concerning the subtlety of Mughal sources regarding Shi‘ism in this period, it is important to consider the influx of Iranians during the last phase of Humayun’s reign who may have also contributed to the connection of the two empires across territorial and religious boundaries. Although these newcomers were largely artists, a number of courtiers, officers, soldiers, and notables accompanied Humayun back to his court in South Asia; motivations are difficult to determine, but the shah’s recent public orthodoxy may have been an issue. While Tahmasp had largely banned alcohol and all *manahi*, he also shied away from openly supporting artists and calligraphers in his court. Impressed by the calibre of artistic production in the Safavid court, Humayun asked a number of artists to return to India to serve in his court. For this reason, members of Tahmasp’s

³⁵² Jawhar Aftabchi, *Tezkereh al-Vaqiat*, trans. Major Charles Stewart (London: W. Nicol, 1832), 60.

atelier accompanied Humayun with the promise of patronage in India and others followed suit to find their fortunes in the land of opportunity and new beginnings.

Ali Rezavi argues that the Mughal court increasingly accepted Shi'ism on account of the arrival of Iranian and Shia migrants. In this period, an esteemed Shia scholar even went as far as to discourage the observance of *taqiya* (dissimulation in times of persecution) among Indian Shia Muslims.³⁵³ In terms of religious identity and court politics, we must also acknowledge Bairam Khan, a Persian Shia notable at the Mughal court.³⁵⁴ When Humayun was entrusted with the governorship of Badakhshan in 1520 by Babur, Bairam Khan served as one of his chief notables until Humayun's death in 1556.³⁵⁵ He also played an instrumental role in Humayun's consolidation of power in the first ten years of the padshah's rule and is also credited as the mastermind behind Humayun's reconquest of India.³⁵⁶ When the Afghan Sher Shah Suri assumed power in 1540, Bairam Khan followed Humayun into exile and insisted him to request Safavid aid. He also quelled disputes that erupted between Humayun and Tahmasp during their stay in Qazvin and was held in high regard by Tahmasp and his court.³⁵⁷ Bairam Khan rose in status and prominence as Humayun appointed him to the role of protector and regent of the infant Akbar, the future Mughal monarch.³⁵⁸ Humayun and Bairam Khan's close relationship demonstrates that although there was an undeniable dislike of Shi'ism in

³⁵³ Rezavi, "The State, Shias and Shi'ism," 34.

³⁵⁴ N. H. Ansari, "Bayram Khan," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on January 23, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bayram-or-bayram-khan-mohammad-kan-e-kanan-an-illustrious-and-powerful-iranian-noble-at-the-court-of-the-mugh>.

³⁵⁵ Ansari, "Bayram Khan."

³⁵⁶ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 215.

³⁵⁷ Ansari, "Bayram Khan."

³⁵⁸ John F. Richards, "Conquest and Stability," in *The New Cambridge History of India: The Mughal Empire*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13.

some Mughal texts, the 'issue' of religious denomination was not a significant factor in imperial politics.

3.7 Akbar: Religious Policies in a New Era of Mughal Rule

Assuming power in 1556, Akbar's first decade of rule was dedicated to the consolidation of territories which his father had wrested back after his return to India during the period of 1553 to 1556. As Akbar expanded his empire and incorporated communities of various religious and ethnic backgrounds, the young monarch was tasked with the challenge of effectively reigning over a majority non-Muslim (mostly Hindu) population. Before we discuss Mughal perceptions of Iranian religion and the place of Shi'ism, it is important to outline a few policies which reflect the empire's changing ethnic composition. First, it is important to consider the official status of Hindus as *dhimmi*, a legal agreement which offered non-Muslim subjects protection under their Muslim rulers. Initially comprising Jews and Christians during the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, this status offered monotheists official protection and freedom to practice their religion in exchange for a tax payment called the *jizya*.³⁵⁹ Not only was this policy of inclusion beneficial for a state like the Mughals, with its wide diversity of believers, it was also a lucrative source of revenue for the treasury. In an astonishing gesture which ultimately reflects his strategic ambitions, Akbar went as far as abolishing the tax in 1564.³⁶⁰

Second, Akbar interpreted the new *dhimmi* status of Hindus to allow him to marry Rajput princesses, which was a political move that strengthened the bonds between

³⁵⁹ M.L. Roy. Choudhury, "Hindu-Muslim Relations During the Mughal Period 1526 to 1707 A.D.," in *Proceedings of the India History Congress* (1946): 287-288.

³⁶⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 233.

indigenous Rajput nobility and the Mughal court.³⁶¹ Soon after, Akbar outlawed the slaughter of cows³⁶² and did not forcibly convert his courtiers to Islam.³⁶³ Moreover, the Rajastani Rajputs had a significant presence in Akbar's court as they were incorporated into and promoted through the *mansabdar* system. The *mansabdar* system was initially introduced by Sher Shah Suri during his brief rule of India in the 1540s. In this model, appointed regional governors were expected to provide a number of troops (*sawar*) specified by the court along with the collected taxes from their particular land assignment. The ranks were distinguished with two numbers: *sawar* and *zat*, which denoted the *mansabdar*'s personal salary.³⁶⁴ Prior to this, the Mughal court had relied on the traditional *iqta* system and the military prowess of nomadic Central Asian tribesmen, whose presence and influence threatened the long-term infrastructure of the empire. However, with the *mansabdar* system, the court gradually created a new multiethnic military force, which limited the power of traditional Turkic, Uzbek, and Afghan nobles in Akbar's court.³⁶⁵ The two principle ethnic groups which Akbar turned to were the Rajput nobles and the immigrant Iranian notables.³⁶⁶ As a result, Akbar's policies situated

³⁶¹ Stephen Dale, "India Under Mughal Rule," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, eds. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 277-278.

³⁶² Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 233.

³⁶³ Dale, "India Under Mughal Rule," 278.

³⁶⁴ Stephen P. Blake, "Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires," in *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

³⁶⁵ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 224-225.

³⁶⁶ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility Under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy," in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* ½ (1968): 30.

Shi'ite notables within the Mughal court and further influenced Mughal perceptions of Iranian religious life.

One of Akbar's greatest obstacles in forming an inclusive court were the orthodox Sunni *ulema* and the Naqshbandis. Prior to Akbar, the Naqshbandis and the Shattaris played a significant role in the expression of power, but these Sufi networks became less influential in court politics in the later part of the sixteenth century. By the time of Akbar, the Naqshbandis had lost ground to the resurging Chishtiyya.³⁶⁷ The order had earlier gained prominence in the fourteenth century under the guidance of the revered Nizam al-Din Auliya, a Sufi Shaykh lionized in South Asia even today, who helped popularize the order in the urban centre of Delhi.³⁶⁸ This network continued to gain acclaim over the next two centuries where reigning dynasts, such as the Tughluqs, visited the shrines of Chishti saints.³⁶⁹ In fact, the shaykhs of this order enjoyed so much popularity that, upon his conquest of Delhi, Babur visited the shrines of such notable Chishti saints, Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizam al-Din Auliya.³⁷⁰

During Akbar's reign, the Chishtis were important players who received largesse and favours from the Mughal court.³⁷¹ Orthodox elements, such as the Naqshbandis, were threatened by Akbar's liberal religious policies. While the Naqshbandis promoted

³⁶⁷ Blain Auer, "Chishtī Muʿīn al-Dīn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 29 July 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25501.

³⁶⁸ Blain Auer, "Chishtiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson. Consulted online on 29 July 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25502.

³⁶⁹ Auer, "Chishtiyya."

³⁷⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 203.

³⁷¹ Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 234.

principles such as *rusum-i biganagan* (“abolishing the customs of strangers”) and unyielding adherence to the traditions of the Prophet, the Chishtis preached a more liberal and inclusive version of religion.³⁷² More importantly, the Chishtis became prosperous because of Hinduphilia, whereby they integrated Hindu practices into their rituals of worship. While they incorporated the notion of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence) like many Sufi *silsilas* of the medieval and early modern periods, they emphasized the fusion of religious and cultural customs. More importantly, the Chishtis formed close ties with local Hindu populations as devotion for them was not confined by the categories of ‘Muslim’ and ‘non-Muslim.’ It is no surprise that Akbar, with the hopes of creating a diverse and integrated religious experience in his court, found Chishti teachings appealing. They contended that:

“The whole world is a manifestation of love (*‘ishq’*), to quote from one such treatise, and we see everything as perfect (...). As you begin *iradat* (become a *murid* and join the order) you stop quarrelling over *kufir* and *iman*. There is no precedence of one religion over the other (. . .). After you experience the limitlessness of unbounded Beauty you can see His Grace present both in a *kafir* and a Muslim.”³⁷³

In the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl describes Akbar’s first interaction with the Chishtis during a hunting expedition in 1562 where:

“a number of minstrels were singing and enchanting ditties about the glories and virtues of the great Khwaja, Khwaja Muin al-Din, may his grave be hallowed! Who sleeps in Hazrat Ajmir. Often had his perfection and miracles been the theme of discourse in the holy assemblies. His Majesty who was a seeker after Truth and who in his zealous quests sought for union with travellers on the road of loneliness, and showed a desire for enlightenment, conceived a strong inclination to visit the Khwaja’s shrine. The attraction of a pilgrimage thither seized his collar.”³⁷⁴

³⁷² Alam, “Akbari Dispensation,” 158.

³⁷³ Quoted in Alam, “Akbari Dispensation,” 162.

³⁷⁴ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 154.

Akbar subsequently made several pilgrimages to the shrine in Ajmer and funded its management on a regular basis.³⁷⁵ The status of the Chishtis rose further when Akbar met with the great Chishti saint Shaykh Salim near Agra in 1568. Salim prophesized the birth of Akbar's first son (Jahangir) and on recognition Akbar ordered the construction of Fatehpur Sikri ("The City of Victory") at the location of this auspicious meeting.³⁷⁶

After Akbar quelled the rebellions that sprouted in the beginning of his reign, he turned his attention to more intellectual pursuits which resulted in the establishment of weekly theological debates in the *Ibadatkhana* (House of Worship) in 1575. Built at Fatehpur Sikri, the *Ibadatkhana* hosted religious and philosophical discussion by delegates representing a wide array of religious traditions, and it is believed that Akbar was privy to many of these discussions and debates.³⁷⁷ It is important to note that in this period, Akbar became increasingly inspired by the ideas of Ibn Arabi, a philosopher of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, which were conveyed to him by Sufis at his court. In particular, the popular Sufi idea of *wahdat al-wujud* (first popularized by Ibn Arabi) and its pantheistic flavour increasingly inspired Akbar to push back against the orthodox Sunni *ulema* in his court.³⁷⁸ These new ideas, combined with the Chishti emphasis on *ishq* ("love of the Divine"), informed Akbar's rejection of Muslim orthodoxy in his court. While Akbar's interest in the Chishtis and their doctrine was largely informed by the order's close link with the Hindu population in South Asia, Mughal sources indicate that Akbar's fascination with religious traditions also stemmed

³⁷⁵ Alam, "Akbari Dispensation," 162.

³⁷⁶ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 168-169.

³⁷⁷ Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, "Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar's *Ibadatkhana*," *Studies in History* 24, no. 2 (2008): 195.

³⁷⁸ Hardy, "Abul Fazl's Portrait," 124.

from his concern for the truth which allegedly resulted in the *Ibadatkhana* discussions.³⁷⁹

Abd al-Qadir Badauni, a conservative member and historian of Akbar's court, secretly penned the *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* ("Selected Histories") in which he recorded the first forty years of Akbar's reign. Regarding the *Ibadatkhana*, he observed:

"...Shaikhs, Ulama, and pious men, and a few of his own companions and attendants were the only people who were invited. Discussions were carried on upon all kinds of instructive and useful topics... But ill-feeling arose in the company about the seats and order of precedence, so His majesty ordered that the Amirs should sit on the east side, the Sayyids on the west, and the Ulama on the south, and the Shaikhs on the north. His Majesty would go from time to time to these various parties and converse with them, and discuss philosophical subjects..."³⁸⁰

By 1578, the simple presentation noted by Badauni clearly changed as we see Abul

Fazl's record of these discussions in the *Akbarnama* which included Shias:

"The wide capacity and the toleration of the Shadow of God were unveiled. Sufi, philosopher, orator, jurist, Sunni, Shia, Brahman, Jati, Sevra [Jain monks], Charbak, Nazarene, Jew, Sabi, Zoroastrian, and others enjoyed exquisite pleasure by beholding the calmness of the assembly, the sitting of the world-lord in the lofty pulpit, and the adornment of the pleasant abode of impartiality. The treasures of secrets were opened out without fear of hostile seekers after battle. The just and truth-perceiving ones of each sect emerged from haughtiness and conceit and began their search anew. They displayed profundity and meditation and gathered eternal bliss on the divan of greatness."³⁸¹

Despite Abul Fazl's rosy depiction of these discussions, accusations between the different groups of heresy became rampant.³⁸² Badauni noted that these "learned men used to draw the sword of the tongue on the battlefield of mutual contradiction and opposition, and the

³⁷⁹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 260.

³⁸⁰ Abdul-Qadir ibn Muluk Shah Badauni, *A History of India: Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. George S.A. Ranking, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1990) 2: 202-203.

³⁸¹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 252-253.

³⁸² Andre Wink, *Akbar* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 98.

antagonism of the sects reached such a pitch that they would call one another fools and heretics.”³⁸³ In another instance, Badauni observed Akbar’s impatience and disappointment with the *ulema* in these discussions:

“One night, all at once the vein (of pride) in the neck of ulama of the time swelled up... His Majesty got very angry at their rude behaviour, and said to me, In future, report anyone of the ulama who talks nonsense and cannot behave himself, and I shall make him leave the assembly... [to which I replied] If I carried out this order, most of the ulama would have to leave.”³⁸⁴

The *Ibadatkhana* debates were instrumental in unveiling the inadequacy of the *ulema*. In particular, it was their inability to simply interpret and impart the Quranic and Prophetic traditions, and their poor performance in these debates which convinced Akbar that the principle and practice of *taqlid* (unquestioning adherence to legal traditions) was archaic and futile.³⁸⁵

Akbar’s impatience with the Sunni *ulema* was only exacerbated by the arrival of Iranian Shi’ite participants. Equally unimpressed with the fanaticism of the Shia *ulema*, Akbar concluded that the theologians of both sects were similarly rigid and bigoted.³⁸⁶ However, these *Ibadatkhana* discussions gave Shia scholars a platform and voice which encouraged discourse between Sunni and Shia theologians in the Mughal court.³⁸⁷ In his chronicle, Badauni disapprovingly noted that these discussions “emboldened the Shi’i Ulama and lowered the morale of the Sunni theologians.”³⁸⁸ He further observed that the

³⁸³ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 255.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Sayid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of Muslims in Akbar’s Reign* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1975), 115.

³⁸⁵ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 139.

³⁸⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 124.

³⁸⁷ Rezavi, “Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology,” 201.

³⁸⁸ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 308.

leading Shia theologian in the *Ibadatkhana* discussions was the Iranian Mulla

Muhammad Yazdi who:

“commenced openly to revile the sahaba (Companions of the Prophet), told [strange] stories about them, and tried hard to make him [Akbar] a Shi‘i. But he was soon left behind by Bir Bar... and Hakim Abul Fath, who successfully turned the Emperor from Islam, and led him to reject inspiration, prophethood, the miracles of the Prophet and of the saints, and even the whole law, so that he could no longer bear their company.”³⁸⁹

Although Akbar did not observe any Shi‘ite rituals and beliefs throughout his life, this incident demonstrates a shift in the nature of the court. In the presence of orthodox Sunni clerics, Shia theologians felt comfortable enough to publicly curse the companions of the Prophet without fear of punishment. More importantly, these discussions ultimately encouraged the inclusion of marginal religious voices and steered the court towards an unprecedented atmosphere of debate.

In the late 1570s, the city of Fatehpur Sikri was abandoned, and so too were the discussions in the *Ibadatkhana*. These debates resumed on a smaller scale in Akbar’s palace in Agra where “crowds of learned men from all nations and sages of various religions and sects came to the court and were honoured with private conversations.”³⁹⁰ An important principle in these discussions was Akbar’s observance of reason, or *aql*, as the basis for every religious practice.³⁹¹ It was on this basis that Akbar ultimately concluded that all religions were either equally true or equally false.³⁹² Although Akbar’s lauded temperament of tolerance and the remarkable syncretism of religious and cultural

³⁸⁹ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 214

³⁹⁰ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 263.

³⁹¹ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 140.

³⁹² Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 234.

traditions were largely informed by the changing political realities of this period, the *Ibadatkhana* discussions contributed to Akbar's general disillusionment with the orthodox *ulema* of his court and their inflexible religious views.

In 1579 Akbar declared himself the Mujtahid (interpreter) of the empire, a title which was generally reserved for learned Muslim theologians. This declaration was enshrined in the Mazhar ("that which has been revealed"), also known as the Infallibility Decree of 1579. This document was (perhaps forcibly) approved by the *ulema* of the court and recognized Akbar as the highest religious authority of the empire.³⁹³ Some scholars have argued that this decree ultimately sought to sever the erstwhile deference the Mughals paid to the Safavids.³⁹⁴ By declaring Akbar the Mujtahid of the age and with Mughal chronicles referring to him as the "Caliph of God," the Mughals cultivated a distinct line between their adherence to Sunni Islam and Safavid Iran's promulgation of Shi'ism without officially denouncing Shi'ism within the expanse of the Mughal court. This decree ultimately placed Akbar above the Shi'ite *ulema* of Iran while simultaneously reinforcing his image as God's chosen caliph, a title which had a unique Sunni flavour.³⁹⁵ In other words, Akbar's caliphal status as *amir al-muminin* (Commander of the Faithful) was a way to recover Mughal sovereignty in response to the historical dynastic submission to Safavid authority.³⁹⁶ In fact, Akbar encouraged the recitation of a phrase which was dangerously close to the Muslim testimony (*shahada*): "there is no God but

³⁹³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 139-140.

³⁹⁴ Wink, Akbar, 104.

³⁹⁵ Wink, Akbar, 104.

³⁹⁶ F. W. Buckler, "A New Interpretation of Akbar's 'Infallibility' Decree of 1579," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* no.4 (1924): 593.

God and Akbar is his caliph” within his palace.³⁹⁷ The frequent appearance of such ‘Sunni-centric’ language in both the Mazhar as well as Mughal chronicles suggests a purposeful manipulation of the categories of Sunni and Shia. Because of the significant number of Persian (and Shia) notables in the Mughal court, blatant hostility towards Shi’ism would have been detrimental to the assimilation of these figures in the court.³⁹⁸ To avoid such a confrontation, Akbar employed the titles of caliph and mujtahid to implicitly re-assert Mughal sovereignty in the midst of a growing Iranian presence in his court. Moreover, this decree demonstrates that part of the Mughal conception of Iran came to place an emphasis on Safavid Iran’s official Shi’ite identity.

The tinge of millennial language imbued within the declaration of this decree is worth noting. Mazhar shares the same root as *zahir* which also describes the act of unveiling that which is hidden. Not only did Akbar declare himself to be the Mujtahid of the age, he also *unveiled* his status using the same language that Shah Ismail had used as a teenager to announce his ‘emergence’ from the jungles of Gilan. This type of millennial language with its emphasis on revelation and unveiling is noteworthy as we consider this edict within the context of the Islamic millennium. In the years leading up to the first Islamic millennium, (1000 Hijri, 1591 CE), societies across the Islamic world awaited the arrival of the *mujaddid*, or renewer of the faith. While religious figures such as shaykhs and members of the *ulema* claimed this title, Akbar also actively promoted his status as the expected reviver of Islam from Prophetic tradition. With the mazhar, Akbar pre-

³⁹⁷ Wink, Akbar, 104.

³⁹⁸ Buckler, “A New Interpretation,” 607.

emptively constructed this image in the years leading up to the millennium.³⁹⁹ To celebrate this millennial event, Akbar commissioned the *Tarikh-i Alfi* (Millennial History) in 1581, a Persian chronicle which was completed over a decade with many contributing authors. This chronicle began with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and ended with Akbar, who is exalted as *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani*, the Renewer of the Second Millennium.⁴⁰⁰

The *Ibadatkhana* discussions and Akbar's appropriation of the status of the Mujtahid and *mujaddid* provides an ideological context for his eclectic courtly faith, *Din-i Ilahi* ("Religion of God"), and his promulgation of *Sulh-i kull* ("peace for all").⁴⁰¹ Inspired by the practices and rituals of various faiths, Akbar fashioned an amalgamation of customs into his new cult in 1581. In particular, sun veneration was a central feature of *Din-i Ilahi*.⁴⁰² Although this idea had its origins in Hindu customs and traditions, some rituals of *Din-i Ilahi* hint at an Iranian provenance. These include: worshipping the sun at four different times in the day (morning, noon, evening, and midnight), sleeping in a posture so as to awake to a rising sun, reciting the one thousand and one Sanskrit names for the sun,⁴⁰³ and lighting sacrificial fires which were fashioned directly according to Zoroastrian religious tradition. Regarding the latter, even Badauni observed how this was done in "the manner of the kings of [ancient] Persia."⁴⁰⁴ Moreover, Akbar styled himself as a spiritual guide by initiating disciples of a diverse class and creed into his new courtly

³⁹⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 133-134.

⁴⁰⁰ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 134.

⁴⁰¹ Wink, *Akbar*, 98.

⁴⁰² Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 268-269.

⁴⁰³ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 332.

⁴⁰⁴ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 268-269.

cult.⁴⁰⁵ His devotees honoured him as the manifestation of the godhead and prostrated before him in private assemblies.⁴⁰⁶ The phrases used by the devotees of this cult- *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) and *Jalla Jalaluhu* (may his glory never end)- support this idea.⁴⁰⁷ According to Mughal sources, Akbar's vision highlighted tolerance in India where he could "bin[d] the multitudes of the inhabited world on the thread of unity"⁴⁰⁸ and "no man [could] be interfered with on account of his religion."⁴⁰⁹

The topic of Iranian migration to Mughal India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been debated. Ali Rezavi argues that Akbar's move towards universal tolerance may also have been inspired by the ongoing religious persecution of Sunnis and Nuqtavis in Safavid Iran during the reign of Shah Abbas.⁴¹⁰ Although some of these Iranian figures emigrated to India in the hopes of receiving royal patronage, a significant number of these religious scholars sought refuge in the diversity of the Mughal court in the face of Safavid intolerance.⁴¹¹ This group, which came to occupy a significant place in the Mughal court, also included administrators, military personnel, scientists and artists.⁴¹² Masahi Haneda notes an increase in the number of Iranian émigrés at the Mughal court between 1575 to 1595, where this group comprised a total of 25.54 percent of the notables active in the Mughal court.⁴¹³ From these statistics, two notable examples

⁴⁰⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 143.

⁴⁰⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*, 403.

⁴⁰⁷ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 144.

⁴⁰⁸ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 246.

⁴⁰⁹ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 406.

⁴¹⁰ Rezavi, "The State, Shias and Shi'ism," 37.

⁴¹¹ Masahi Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Elites to India During the 16-18th Centuries," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 3/4 (1997): 134-135.

⁴¹² Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Elites," 134.

⁴¹³ Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Elites," 131.

are Nurullah Shushtari and Fathullah Shirazi. Nurullah Shushtari was an esteemed Shi'ite theologian in Iran who emigrated to India in 1580 and was appointed as a *qazi* in Lahore despite being a Shi'ite.⁴¹⁴ He participated actively in theological polemics and published responses to various Sunni ulema who had written anti-Shi'ite tracts. With regard to the doctrine of *taqiya*- which allows Shi'ites to dissimulate about their faith- Shushtari actually encouraged the abolition of this practice in Mughal India on account of Akbar's policies of toleration.⁴¹⁵

The other example was the Iranian Shia emigrant Fathullah Shirazi, a scientist who was first employed by the Deccan king Ismail Adil Shah, is also a noteworthy example.⁴¹⁶ Impressed by the reputation of Fathullah's administrative skills and scientific knowledge, Akbar invited him to serve at the Mughal court in 1583. By 1586, Fathullah was promoted to the positions of *sadr* and *amin ul-mulk* (assessor of the empire) where he was entrusted with matters of revenue.⁴¹⁷ Moreover, Fathullah also introduced the ideas of Iranian rationalist scholars such as Jalal al-Din Dawwani, Mir Sadruddin, Mir Ghiyasuddin Mansur and Mirza Jan in Akbar's court; such ideas encouraged research in mathematics and medicine while emphasizing the role of religious ideas such as *aql* (reason) over *taqlid* (unquestioning adherence to legal traditions).⁴¹⁸ Moreover, the

⁴¹⁴ Abdul-Qadir ibn Muluk Shah Badauni, *A History of India: Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. George S.A. Ranking, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1990), 3: 137-138.

⁴¹⁵ Rezavi, "The State, Shias and Shi'ism," 39.

⁴¹⁶ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 3: 216.

⁴¹⁷ Shireen Moosvi, "Three Iranian Voices in the Renaissance Under Akbar," *Studies in People's History* 5, no. 2 (2018): 186.

⁴¹⁸ Rezavi, "The State, Shias and Shi'ism," 38.

Mughals' eagerness to incorporate these learned Iranian men into the court also illustrates the Mughal predilection for Persian ideas and culture.

The Nuqtavis, an esoteric movement inspired by Hurufism and millennial cosmology, also played a role in Indo-Iranian relations. Founded in the late fourteenth century by Mahmud Pasikhani of Gilan, the Nuqtavi doctrine was inspired by the Hurufi emphasis on lettrism, which was an esoteric tradition which assigned numerical values to each letter of the Perso-Arabic alphabet to derive 'hidden' meaning from religious texts.⁴¹⁹ The Nuqtavis were especially dedicated to promoting the importance of pre-Islamic Iranian notions of time and space. With their emphasis on reviving the religious and cultural traditions of pre-Islamic and ancient Iran which had been suppressed at the onset of the Arab invasions of the seventh and eighth centuries, the order became popular among Iranians.⁴²⁰ Their doctrine included elements from both the Mazdean and Manichean religious movements of ancient Iran and emphasized the notion of the transmigration of the soul. Moreover, central to Nuqtavi ideology was the ritual veneration of the sun as the centre of the universe, where the sun also symbolized the king's sacred and divine status on earth in ancient Iranian thought.⁴²¹ This eclectic and millennial group comprised disciples mainly from trades and artisan groups (such as poets, calligraphers, craftsmen, musicians and storytellers).⁴²² Threatened by their popularity, Shah Abbas orchestrated a mass persecution of the order in 1593. In the wake

⁴¹⁹ Bashir, *Hurufis*, 112.

⁴²⁰ Karim Najafi Barzegar, "The Nuqtavi Movement and the Question of its Exodus During the Safavid Period (Sixteenth Century AD): A Historical Survey," *Indian Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (2013): 48.

⁴²¹ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 70.

⁴²² Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 102.

of this slaughter, a number of Nuqtavi disciples fled to India in the hopes of refuge and patronage in Akbar's diverse court.

It is important to note that the arrival of the Nuqtavis in India in 1593 was not Akbar's first interaction with this group. In fact, Abul Fazl was an ardent admirer of the Nuqtavis, and Akbar at one time had been in contact with the Nuqtavi leader of the day, Mir Ahmad Kashi.⁴²³ However, Akbar's initial interest in the group's ideas allegedly began after his audience with Sharif Amuli, an Iranian Nuqtavi who had settled in India in 1576.⁴²⁴ Intrigued by Amuli's belief in the idea of renewal (*tajdid*), Akbar invited this Nuqtavi- described as a "heretic" by Badauni- to explain the Nuqtavi philosophy.

Although the Nuqtavis were an Islamic millennial movement with Alid and *ghuluww* undertones, they projected a strong sense of Persian identity.⁴²⁵ In particular, they espoused symbols which were primarily associated with the Persian past,⁴²⁶ such as the use of the sun to symbolize the monarch's divine status on earth.⁴²⁷ The Nuqtavis continued to form a close bond with Akbar which intensified over their shared belief in the transmigration of the soul and the importance of the sun as a focal point of worship and devotion. Moreover, Babayan notes that Nuqtavi doctrine was imbued with universalist ideas which were of particular interest to Akbar. Because of Akbar's position as an ethnically Central Asian monarch in a diverse religious and ethnic empire, *Din-i*

⁴²³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 164-165.

⁴²⁴ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 253-254.

⁴²⁵ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 80.

⁴²⁶ David Blow, *Shah Abbas: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 13.

⁴²⁷ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 70.

Ilahi can be considered as an attempt at reconciling this diversity albeit on a smaller and official level.⁴²⁸ The Nuqtavi movement's popularity with Akbar was instrumental in the formation of Akbar's courtly cult, where the Nuqtavi ideas of sun veneration, reincarnation and the transmigration of the soul became central to the tenets of *Din-i Ilahi*.⁴²⁹ Noteworthy, as well, is the mobility of these Nuqtavis to India, where they became conduits between the Mughals and the historical Iranian past. While Akbar and his court were not strangers to ancient and contemporaneous Iranian ideas, the arrival of Nuqtavi figures in India re-introduced, rekindled, and elevated Iranian memory at the Mughal court in new ways.

Although the notion of the Persian cosmopolis is a topic of discussion in the fourth chapter of this thesis, it is important to note that these emigrant religious figures were critical conduits for Iranian knowledge and ideas at the Mughal court. As the notion of cosmopolis is contingent upon the mobility of people and texts, these emigrant figures transported ideas of Iranian religion with them to the courts of South Asia. As these figures were patronized by the Mughals, they contributed to ongoing scholastic production at the Mughal court. Moreover, the presence of these émigré Iranians, along with Akbar's declaration of Persian as the official bureaucratic and administrative language of the empire in 1582,⁴³⁰ only continued to intensify the popular use of the Persian language at the Mughal court. In this way, the Mughals' sense of belonging to the

⁴²⁸ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 60.

⁴²⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 165.

⁴³⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate*, 381.

concept of the cosmopolis strengthened over time with the arrival of Iranian emigrant figures and their contributions to the production of both knowledge and art.

With such trends in mind, let us turn our attention to the Mughal depiction of Safavid and Qizilbashi Shi‘ism in sources such as the *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* and the *Akbarnama*. Similar to the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, Badauni’s account characterizes the Qizilbash as “heretics” whose violence was extreme. In a description of the Qizilbash presence in the city of Qandahar during Humayun’s campaign to reconquer India, Badauni asserted that Humayun was able to take the city because of “the tyranny and oppression inflicted by the Qizilbash canaille on the inhabitants of the city” which had caused unrest in Qandahar. He continued that the Qizilbash’s observance of *taburra*, the ritual cursing of the Prophet’s companions, incensed Mirza Yadgar Nasir who:

“struck [the Qizilbashi amir with] such a blow with an arrow which he had in his hand that the arrow penetrated his chest up to the wing, and passing through him stuck to the ground... The Qizilbash were astounded, and utterly confounded, and the proverb was exemplified, ‘Qazi, I am an old woman, and if you don’t believe me, I can scream just like one, listen!’ Their haughtiness was humbled, and Humayun entering the fort allowed Bidagh Khan [a Qizilbash leader], who had come to him in trepidation and anxiety, to proceed towards Iraq. Notwithstanding this, all the inhabitants of the city, who were heartily sick of them, killed the Qizilbash in every street.”⁴³¹

In addition, Badauni also commented on how the Qizilbash were renowned for attacking pilgrims *en route* to Mecca on account of their “bigoted interference with the established religion and the orthodox followers of Muhammad.”⁴³² He again mentions this impediment when he notes that “the two roads to Makkah, through Persia and over

⁴³¹ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 1: 578.

⁴³² Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 1: 480.

Gujrat, were impracticable, because people going in by land had to suffer injuries at the hands of the Qizilbashis.”⁴³³ On account of the perceived threat of the Qizilbash, the theologian Makhdum ul-Mulk issued a *fatwa* (religious decree) “that the ordinance of pilgrimage was no longer binding, even hurtful.” In other instances, Badauni referred to the Qizilbash as those who “chose the roadless road” and used the phrase “the vile Shia sect” to describe Twelver Shi‘ism.⁴³⁴

3.8 Conclusion:

Mughal conceptions of Iran and Iranian religious life were undoubtedly complex. While on the one hand, there were elements of fondness and an idealization of Iran as the locus of primordial sun-based religions, such as the Nuqtavis. On the other hand, there are many Mughal sources which are typically hostile to Shi‘ism, such as the *Tarikh-i Rashidi and Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*. Although there was a presence of intense theological polemics in the court, the category of Qizilbashi Islam was especially targeted and vilified by Sunnis outside of Iran. While some figures harboured this type of antipathy, Akbar’s official declaration of religious tolerance attracted a number of Persian individuals (both Sunni and Shia) fleeing persecution.

In the previous chapter, this thesis discussed how Mughal chronicles celebrated Akbar as the universal monarch and part of this construction included Akbar’s claim of exemplary religious tolerance. For the Mughals, the dynamic religious landscape of the Mughal court (and the Mughal empire) was a cornerstone of Akbar’s position as the

⁴³³ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 206.

⁴³⁴ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 2: 280.

universal monarch. With the mass emigration of a number of Iranian religious figures to the Mughal court in the latter half of the sixteenth century, especially those fleeing religious persecution, this superior self-idealization continued to crystallize. More importantly, this ideological shift impacted the Mughals' understanding of their status within the conceptual space of the cosmopolis, a development which will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURE AND THE COSMOPOLIS

As we have observed in previous chapters, the idea of Iran occupied a central place in the Mughal imagination. This presence, although important in the roles of kingship and religion, was perhaps the most prevalent in the cultural sphere. Even before the arrival of the Mughals in the sixteenth century, dynasties in South Asia patronized poetry, prose, and historical works in Persian. Foreign dynasties such as the Ghaznavids and Ghurids of the tenth and eleventh centuries conquered parts of northern India and cultivated a court culture which was rich in the Persian language and culture. Indo-Muslim dynasties such as the Khaljis and Tughluqs of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries similarly patronized and folded a wide range of Persian artists and thinkers into the imperial sphere. When the Mughals arrived in India in the sixteenth century with their Central Asian penchant for Persian culture, they encountered a well-established tradition of Persian language and thought in South Asia. The Mughals were avid and generous patrons of a wide spectrum of artistic endeavours, ranging from poetry and prose to gardens and architectural monuments. While the sponsorship of artistic mediums varied, so too did the cultural influences which formed the unique articulation of Mughal cultural production. Similar to the syncretic and amalgamative nature of Mughal kingship, cultural production under the Mughals was tinted with the distinctness of the Mughals' Central Asian roots, the Indian elements of South Asia, the inherited presence of Persian culture in both of these identities, and the direct contribution of contemporary Safavid-Iranian artists and poets in the sixteenth century. While the Mughals also produced literature in local languages such as Braj Bhasha and Sanskrit along with Persian, this chapter is concerned with exploring the place of the Persian language at the Mughal

court. With a focus on the artistic and literary production under the Mughals, this chapter will explore how Mughal authors understood ‘Persian-ness’ as a part of the mosaic of Mughal cultural activity. As well, this chapter will assess how Mughal chroniclers and poets described Iranian artists and their contributions to the Mughal imperial sphere.

4.1 Persian Culture in the Courts of the Medieval Islamic World

Before we embark on the discussion of Mughal cultural production, it is important to discuss the idea of the Persian cosmopolis which influenced Mughal cultural pursuits, such as poetry, in the sixteenth century. This conceptual cosmopolis was bound by the use of a shared language, and this network strengthened as both people and texts moved across geography. Leading up to the sixteenth century, communities across Central Asia and Iran contributed to the process and development of the Persian cosmopolis through the production of Persian language texts. As a Persian-speaking dynasty, the Mughals inherited and were significantly influenced by this complex and layered legacy. The subsequent pages will broadly examine some aspects of cultural production, such as poetry, paintings, and architecture, from the rise of Islam to the sixteenth century.

Persian poetry, with its origins in pre-Islamic and ancient Iranian courts, was an important component of statecraft and governance.⁴³⁵ Even the founder of the Sasanian dynasty (224-651 CE), Ardashir Babakan, allegedly declared that poets were “a part of government and the means of strengthening rulership.”⁴³⁶ This conception of poetry continued even after the Arab invasions of the seventh century. Although the Arabs boasted an independent Arabic cultural tradition, they absorbed the Sasanian adoption

⁴³⁵ Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 3.

⁴³⁶ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 6.

and admiration of Persian statecraft, poetry, and culture upon their arrival. In the effort to create a far-reaching urban empire, the Arabs came to eventually downplay their tribal culture while increasingly associating with Persian court culture.

The Umayyads and early Abbasid rulers engaged closely with Persian culture, specifically in the sphere of poetry.⁴³⁷ With Persian poets, such as Bashar Ibn Burd (714-783), Abul Atahiyah (748-825) and Abu Nuwas (757-815), and Persian singers, like Ibrahim and Ishaq al-Mawsili, employed at the Abbasid court, the Abbasids gained much cultural prestige and acclaim in this period.⁴³⁸ This courtly dynamic became complicated as notions of Arab supremacy became rampant, and this tension culminated with the popularity of the Shu‘ubiya movement of the ninth and tenth centuries where Persian poets wrote in Arabic and flaunted their poetic prowess in response to notions of Arab primacy.⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, culture was a means through which dynastic courts acquired glory and repute, and for this reason artists and poets became increasingly important commodities in the spread of Persian courtly culture.⁴⁴⁰

Along with poetry and texts, Persian aesthetics also manifested in other mediums, such as Persian styles of architecture. The new Arab dynasties came to patronize visual artistic production, such as in the case of the Umayyad palace at Amra Qusayr, where paintings absorbed specific aspects of Byzantine and Sasanian wall painting style and

⁴³⁷ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 5.

⁴³⁸ G. Schoeler, “Bashshār b. Burd, Abū ‘l-‘Atāhiyah and Abū Nuwās,” in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles Lettres*, eds. by Julia Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 275.

⁴³⁹ Ghazzal Dabiri, “Historiography and the *Sho‘ubiya* Movement,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 6 (2013): 216-217.

⁴⁴⁰ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 23.

tradition. In particular, there was an integration of Islamic and pre-Islamic ideas in the realm of iconography, where symbols such as the lance, which came to signify “Prophetic and caliphal power,” and the Sasanian royal crown, etched in the mosaic of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (691), were featured in Islamic art of the Umayyad period.⁴⁴¹ The Abbasids and Umayyads also borrowed from pre-Islamic architectural developments and adopted structural elements such as the *iwan*, an external domed façade commonly found in Persian palaces dating back to the Parthian period (247 BCE-224 CE) and used extensively by the Sassanians.⁴⁴² This feature of pre-Islamic Iran became a component of Perso-Islamic architecture, where the *iwan* appeared not only in palaces but also in religious buildings such as mosques and madrasas.⁴⁴³

From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, Persian poets and artists still occupied a central position in the courtly culture of Central Asia and Iran. In the tenth century, one of the new nomadic Turkic powers to emerge in the medieval period, the Ghaznavids, inherited this rich Persian cultural legacy and were generous patrons of Persian literature. Because a ruler’s prestige was partly informed by the output of courtly literary and artistic production in the dynasty’s courts, a competitive environment emerged where

⁴⁴¹ Maria Vittoria Fontana, “Art in Iran xii. Iranian Pre-Islamic Elements in Islamic Art,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on January 15, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/art-in-iran-xii-iranian-pre-islamic-elements-in-islamic-art>.

⁴⁴² Oleg Grabar, “Ayvan,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on March 18, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ayvan-palace>.

⁴⁴³ Oleg Grabar, “Īwān,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 26 August 2020, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3713.

poets and artists became important cultural commodities and were held in high esteem.⁴⁴⁴ In this process, the Persian cosmopolis continued to develop in interesting ways. During the reign of the Ghaznavids, courtly culture reached remarkable heights with the active patronage of poets, and perhaps most actively so during the reign of Mahmud of Ghazni (971-1030). He patronized poets such as Farrukhi Sistani, a popular Iranian poet of the eleventh century,⁴⁴⁵ and Unsuri, an eleventh century dynastic court poet, who was given the honour and status of *malik al- shu'ara* ("King of the Poets" or poet laureate), an accolade introduced for the first time earlier by the Iranian Samanids in the tenth century.⁴⁴⁶

Although these two poets acquired acclaim and glory in the court of the Ghaznavids, Firdawsi eclipsed them both in reputation with his *Shahnama*. This epic poem, which is both a history of pre-Islamic Persia and a catalogue of revered mythical and historical ancient Iranian figures, became a mainstay of courts across the Persianate world. Not only was this composition lauded for its literary content, but it also was a source of didactic court literature which emphasized *adab* (etiquette) and imparted advice to young rulers in the manner of the ancient Iranian books of advice (*andarz*).⁴⁴⁷ This epic became embedded in the fabric of Persian court culture, where this poem weaved across time and geography to impact virtually every court of Central Asia, Iran, and India. With the rise of the new Turko-Islamic powerhouse dynasty of the Seljuks in 1037,

⁴⁴⁴ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 31.

⁴⁴⁵ Tetley, *Poetry as a Source for Iranian History*, 3.

⁴⁴⁶ J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Malik al-shu'ara," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 26 August 2020 http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4875.

⁴⁴⁷ Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shahnama*, 1-2.

the patronage of Persian literature continued. They maintained the Ghaznavid practice of appointing poet laureates which attracted numerous poets to Seljuk courts.⁴⁴⁸ The most notable of these poets was Abd al-Malik Muizzi, renowned for his *qasidas* (panegyric odes) and *ghazals* (love poetry) in the twelfth century, who was awarded the coveted position of poet laureate.⁴⁴⁹ By the end of the twelfth century, the main role of the court poet was to pen verses praising his generous patron.⁴⁵⁰

In the wake of the Mongol invasions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was a great disruption of courtly life in Central Asia and Iran. Despite the initial massive fragmentation of territory in this period, there was eventually a surge of cultural activity particularly in the realms of artistic and literary production. For historically nomadic and steppe-based dynasties such as the Mongols, this type of patronage was essential in the assertion of legitimacy as they appropriated the Perso-Islamic past and combined it with Mongol cultural traditions.⁴⁵¹ With the unification of the Mongol empire under the Ilkhans, they turned to Iranian traditions in the quest to establish themselves as legitimate rulers.⁴⁵²

Moreover, through conquest and patronage, the Mongols inherited the legacy of the Persian cosmopolis. Like the dynasties which ruled before them in this region, the Ilkhans and their vassals were significantly influenced by Persian culture. In terms of

⁴⁴⁸ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 31.

⁴⁴⁹ Tetley, *Poetry as a Source for Iranian History*, 3.

⁴⁵⁰ Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 10.

⁴⁵¹ Maria Eva Subtelny, "Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage Under the Later Timurids," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 4 (1988): 489.

⁴⁵² Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Rule of the Infidels: the Mongols and the Islamic World," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 155.

poetry, one of the most notable poets of thirteenth-century Mongol Iran was the Persian Sa‘di Shirazi who was patronized by the Salghurids in the province of Fars. In this period, Sa‘di penned the famed *Bustan* (the Orchard) and *Gulistan* (the Rose Garden), collections of poems which gained significant acclaim across Central Asia, Iran and parts of India.⁴⁵³ The Mongols also commissioned the *Zafarnama*, a history of the Mongols penned by the Persian poet and historian Hamdallah Mustawfi, which was structurally inspired by Firdawsi’s *Shahnama*.⁴⁵⁴ They also incorporated motifs from the *Shahnama* into the architecture of imperial palaces, such as the Takht-i Sulayman (in western Iran near the city of Hamadan), which was the residence of the second ruler of the Mongol Ilkhanate.⁴⁵⁵ As illustrated copies of the *Shahnama* were increasingly commissioned and distributed among the Ilkhan elite, artists in this court inaugurated a new era of Persian painting.⁴⁵⁶ Mention must be made of “the Great Mongol *Shahnama*,” an illustrated manuscript of the epic completed in 1336 for an unnamed Ilkhanid ruler, which is renowned for its impressive illustrations.⁴⁵⁷ While the Mongols capitalized on Persian artistic traditions in this period, they also incorporated Chinese elements⁴⁵⁸ and various Central Asian motifs.⁴⁵⁹ Their interest in painting led to the creation of Persian miniatures, a visual artistic medium which was designed to augment particular episodes

⁴⁵³ Bertold Spuler, *The Muslim World: The Mongol Period*, trans. F.R.C. Bagely (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), 32.

⁴⁵⁴ George Lane Pool, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth- Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 8.

⁴⁵⁵ Manz, “Rule of the Infidels,” 155.

⁴⁵⁶ Manz, “Rule of the Infidels,” 156.

⁴⁵⁷ Priscilla P. Soucek, “Demotte Šahnama,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 21, 2020, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/demotte-sah-nama>.

⁴⁵⁸ Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (Houston: Random House Incorporated, 1992), 7.

⁴⁵⁹ Manz, “Rule of the Infidels,” 156.

being narrated in poetic and prose texts; this style of illuminated manuscripts was avidly patronized by later dynasties such as the Timurids, the Mughals, and the Safavids.⁴⁶⁰

In the late fourteenth century, the Timurids conquered parts of Central Asia and Iran and continued the legacy of high Persian culture. Like the numerous dynasties before them, the Timurids also drew from and appropriated Persian traditions for purposes of legitimacy and became active patrons of Persian literature, painting, and architecture.⁴⁶¹ In this process, they too contributed to the development of the conceptual space of the cosmopolis. Maria Subtelny observes that the Timurids came to be recognized by “contemporaries as well as by posterity as the most cultural dynasty in the medieval Islamic world.”⁴⁶² This image of the Timurids as gatekeepers of cultural production is, perhaps, best exemplified by Timurid cultural activity in the late fifteenth century. In this period, the city of Herat in particular had become a literary haven where artists and poets were employed in droves in Sultan-Husayn Bayqara’s court.⁴⁶³ While rulers of the Timurid house were active patrons of the arts, various Timurid nobles also contributed to the cultivation of a blossoming cultural environment.⁴⁶⁴

Among the Persian poets supported by the Timurid Sultan-Husayn Bayqara was the Sufi shaykh and poet Nur al-Din Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492), whose *masnavis* (poems with rhyming couplets) were heavily influenced by earlier renowned Persian

⁴⁶⁰ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 9.

⁴⁶¹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 39-40.

⁴⁶² Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 40.

⁴⁶³ Marta Simidchieva, “Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics: Kashifi’s *Baday-i al-afkar* and its Predecessors, *al-Mu‘jam* and *Hada‘iq al-Sihr*,” *The Society for Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003): 509.

⁴⁶⁴ Subtelny, “Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage,” 489-490.

poets such as Sa‘di and Hafiz.⁴⁶⁵ Mention must also be made of Ali Shir Nava‘i, a founding figure of Chaghata‘i poetry who wielded significant influence in Bayqara’s court. More importantly, he was among the many high-ranking Timurid nobles who patronized poets and artists of his own.⁴⁶⁶ Husayn Vaiz-i Kashifi was also another important literary figure who acquired patronage in Bayqara’s court, through the recommendation of Nava‘i, and developed a widespread reputation as an excellent Islamic scholar and preacher.⁴⁶⁷ While the Timurids were active patrons of Persian poetry and art, they also preserved the cultural traditions of their Turkic origins.⁴⁶⁸ Specifically, they developed Chaghata‘i, an Eastern Turkic dialect, as a literary language which significantly borrowed from Persian paradigms of prose.⁴⁶⁹ Yet, even with the promotion of Chaghata‘i, Persian remained the primary language of courtly culture throughout the course of Timurid rule.

Moreover, the Timurids were enthusiastic patrons of paintings, illustrated manuscripts, and miniatures. While Timurid cultural production culminated in the late fifteenth century, this process began with Timur’s son Shahrukh earlier in the century. In this period, Shiraz was an important literary and cultural capital, and it came to be associated with book production and miniature painting as well.⁴⁷⁰ Just as the Mongols had commissioned illustrated manuscripts and miniatures based on popular works of

⁴⁶⁵ Z. Safa, “Persian Literature in the Timurid and Turkmen Periods (782-907/ 1380-1501),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, eds. Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 920.

⁴⁶⁶ Subtelny, “Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage,” 490-491.

⁴⁶⁷ Simidchieva, “Imitation and Innovation in Timurid Poetics,” 509-510.

⁴⁶⁸ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 40.

⁴⁶⁹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 42.

⁴⁷⁰ Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 166.

Persian literature such as the *Shahnama*, so too did the Timurids actively engage in the patronage of such visual art. Particularly, the three sons of Shahrukh (Baysunghur Mirza, Muhammad Juki, and Ibrahim Sultan) separately commissioned impressive copies of the *Shahnama* which were primarily used to underscore the elements of Iranian kingship that suited their style of governance.⁴⁷¹ As well, miniatures depicting verses and scenes from popular works of Persian literature were also frequently produced, such as Firdawsi's *Shahnama*, Sa'di's *Bustan* and *Gulistan*, Jami's *Baharistan* (The Garden of Spring)⁴⁷² and Nizami Ganjavi's *Khamsa*.⁴⁷³ As such, cultural production evolved and reached new heights during Husayn Bayqara's reign, where artists from across Central Asia and Iran flocked to Herat in the hopes of acquiring patronage. One of these artists was Kamal al-Din Bihzad, a Persian painter of great acclaim who later served in the court of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp. Bihzad trained a generation of artists who, after fleeing to South Asia, are credited with founding the Mughal style of painting in the sixteenth century.⁴⁷⁴

In addition to literary and artistic production, the Timurids were also avid patrons of gardens. In the ancient Iranian traditions dating back to the Assyrian (900-600 BCE) and Achaemenid (550- 330 BCE) periods, imperial palaces were constructed within the parameters of vast and majestic gardens.⁴⁷⁵ Gardens came to symbolize the ancient Iranian political notion of the "circle of justice," an idea which emphasized irrigation as

⁴⁷¹ Eleanor Sims, "The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausi's *Shahnama* Commissioned by Princes of the House of Timur," *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 56-57.

⁴⁷² Basil Gray, "The Pictorial Arts in the Timurid Period," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, eds. Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 871.

⁴⁷³ Gray, "Pictorial Arts," 866-867.

⁴⁷⁴ Gray, "Pictorial Arts," 865.

⁴⁷⁵ Subtelny, *Le monde est jardin*, 122.

the foundation of just rule. These ideas were absorbed by the Sasanians and were later integrated into the Perso-Islamic model of statecraft.⁴⁷⁶ Inspired by the Perso-Islamic books of advice and their emphases on irrigational systems and agricultural output, the later Timurids understood the importance of gardens in their environment. Upon Timur's conquest of Central Asia and Iran in the fourteenth century, he constructed and managed an impressive number of royal gardens in Samarkand.⁴⁷⁷ After Timur's death, his son Shahrukh followed his example and established gardens in cities such as Herat and Mashhad. The most important of these Timurid gardens, however, was the *Bagh-i Zaghan* (Ravens' Garden) in Herat, which became emblematic of Timurid power and prestige over the course of the fifteenth century.⁴⁷⁸ Like his predecessors, Sultan-Husayn Bayqara also commissioned gardens such as the *Bagh-i Jahanara* (World-adorning Garden) in Herat, a majestic architectural project which was completed over the course of twenty-five years. Gardens, although appreciated for their aesthetic presence, also functioned as venues for a wide range of political and social activities.⁴⁷⁹ For this reason, gardens were an important component in Perso-Islamic medieval culture, and Babur continued this legacy upon his founding of the Mughal empire in the sixteenth century.

While the Persian cosmopolis developed in places like Central Asia and Iran over the course of many centuries, it also evolved in South Asia with contributions made by many Indo-Persian and Turkic dynasties. Let us now turn to Babur and his descendants in

⁴⁷⁶ Subtelny, *Le monde est jardin*, 123.

⁴⁷⁷ Lisa Golombeck, "The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 137-139.

⁴⁷⁸ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 131.

⁴⁷⁹ Mohammad Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia," *Garden History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 259.

South Asia, and how the inherited legacy of the Persian cosmopolis ultimately channelled into Mughal imperial florescence in the sixteenth century.

4.2 Babur, the Melancholic Timurid Prince: Gardens and Poetry in the Early Mughal Era

Although Babur was an exiled prince for the better part of his life, his memoir offers us invaluable insight to the place and presence of Persian culture in the Timurid-Mughal imagination. As discussed in the previous section, the Timurids were avid patrons of cultural production that ranged from majestic gardens to prose and poetry. Part of Babur's Timurid inheritance included the patronage and construction of gardens which frequently appeared in Babur's memoir. Previously, this thesis discussed gardens and agriculture as part of kingship and statecraft, where gardens were symbolically linked with the administration of just rule. In this section, we will instead examine gardens as a cultural activity.

While gardens, or *baghs*, were popular across the medieval Islamic world in places like Muslim Spain, renowned for its stately and majestic garden designs, they are featured in Timurid sources with what Stephen Dale refers to as “almost mythic significance.”⁴⁸⁰ The influence of Persian culture on the typical Timurid garden was significant, and perhaps most vividly so, in the adaptation of the *chaharbagh* (“four gardens”). With its origins in Achaemenid garden culture, the *chaharbagh* gained popularity under the Sassanids and was integrated into Islamic cultural expressions during the Arab invasions of the seventh century.⁴⁸¹ This type of garden had four distinct

⁴⁸⁰ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 185.

⁴⁸¹ David Stronach, “Čahārbāg,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 15, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/caharbag-lit>.

sections and included three main elements: “plantings (especially ornamental and fruit-bearing trees), water (irrigation channels, pools, fountains), and recreational structure, such as a pavilion or kiosk.”⁴⁸² As legatees of this Perso-Islamic model, the Timurids inherited and further modified the *chaharbagh*.⁴⁸³

Babur’s passionate interest in gardens featured frequently in his memoir, where he also emphasized the construction of gardens both in Kabul and later in his Indian territories. Babur described Kabul as a picturesque city surrounded by mountains, orchards, and running water, and perhaps inspired by the beauty around him, he built a *chaharbagh* garden of his own called the Bagh-i vafa after his conquest of the city.⁴⁸⁴ Babur sought to recreate similar gardens in India, but in his memoir the Timurid prince lamented that “one of the chief faults of Hindustan was there was no running water” with which to construct gardens. However, this did not dampen Babur’s spirits:

“Although there was no really suitable place near Agra there was nothing to do but work with the space we had. The foundation was the large well from which the water for the bathhouse came. Next the patch of ground with tamarind trees and octagonal pond became the great pool and courtyard... Thus in unpleasant and inharmonious India, marvellously regular and geometric gardens were introduced. In every corner were beautiful plots, and in every plot were regularly laid out arrangements of roses and narcissus.”⁴⁸⁵

Babur undertook the construction of gardens seriously. Perhaps it was the melancholic longing for the lush landscapes of his ancestral home of Samarkand and Ferghana which drove Babur to rigorously and passionately create gardens of various types in India,

⁴⁸² Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 135.

⁴⁸³ Stronach, “Čahārbāg.”

⁴⁸⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 156-157.

⁴⁸⁵ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 364.

including the *chaharbagh*.⁴⁸⁶ By the late 1520s, Babur had constructed so many gardens in Agra that the city was dubbed Kabul,⁴⁸⁷ and he similarly applied his passion for gardens in other parts of India, such as Gwalior and Dholpur.⁴⁸⁸ Babur even invited Mirak-i Sayyid Ghiyas, a renowned garden architect from the dissolved court of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara, to India in 1529 to plan Timurid-style gardens in cities like Agra and Dholpur.⁴⁸⁹ With the establishment of gardens, the Mughals not only created luxurious gardens for pleasure within these cities, but they recreated a part of the Persian world and its far-reaching legacy in their new-found home of India.⁴⁹⁰ As gardens were an essential part of Perso-Islamic culture, this transfer of Persian-style gardens and garden architecture not only emphasized the Mughals as new conquerors but also underscored their place as receptors of the Persian cultural past. Lisa Balabanlilar notes that gardens had a dual function where they were admired for their beauty and were also places of “artistic and social expression.” This demonstrates that “[i]t was the life within the garden, as much as the garden itself, which resonated in the Timurid psyche.”⁴⁹¹ Not only were these Timurid gardens inspired by Persian aesthetics and models, but they were also venues for the expression of the Persian language, Persian literature and Perso-Islamic notions of governance. In this process, the Mughal patronage of gardens intensified and

⁴⁸⁶ Ebba Koch, “Mughal Palace Gardens from Babur to Shah Jahan (1526-1648),” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 143.

⁴⁸⁷ Maria E. Subtelny, “Babor, Abul-Qasem Mirza,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on August 19, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/babor-abul-qasem-mirza>.

⁴⁸⁸ Howard Crane, “Garden iii. Influence of Persian Gardens in India,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on September 2, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/garden-iii>.

⁴⁸⁹ Subtelny, *Le monde est jardin*, 124-125.

⁴⁹⁰ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 113.

⁴⁹¹ Lisa Balabanlilar, “Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction: Turco-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent,” *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (2007): 29.

entrenched the memory of Iran in South Asia, whereby gardens ideologically and spatially connected the Mughals to the esteemed Persian cultural past in complicated ways.

We must also acknowledge the presence of gardens which pre-existed Babur's arrival in India. Almost three centuries prior to the advent of the Mughals, the kings of the Delhi Sultanate (with a Persian cultural inheritance of their own) generously patronized gardens and garden architecture.⁴⁹² Although gardens became popular with the Mughals, they were not a new phenomenon within India at this time. In fact, many Mughal emperors even repaired and refined the irrigational systems established by the Sultanate.⁴⁹³ This complicated interaction between the past and contemporaneous understanding of Persian culture is noteworthy. While the early Mughals built gardens with their received understanding of Persian culture, they were also inspired by the gardens of their predecessors and their distinct use of yellow sandstone and mosque architecture in gardens. These cultural practices further intertwined as craftsmen from the Sultanate regions flocked to Agra for patronage as the Mughal dynasty gained more territory and power.⁴⁹⁴

While Babur expressed interest in gardens and garden planning, he was also drawn to a wide variety of other artistic endeavours. With regards to his fascination with calligraphy, the Timurid prince even created the *khatt-i Baburi*, a form of calligraphy translated to "Babur's hand," which he used to compose a copy of the Quran.⁴⁹⁵ Perhaps

⁴⁹² Wescoat, "Mughal Gardens," 206-207.

⁴⁹³ Wescoat, "Mughal Gardens," 207-208.

⁴⁹⁴ Wescoat, "Mughal Gardens," 208.

⁴⁹⁵ Kalpana Dasgupta, "How Learned Were the Mughals: Reflection on Muslim Libraries in India," *The Journal of Library History* 10, no. 3 (1975): 242.

Babur's most obvious cultural interest was towards Persian literature. As an avid admirer and composer of Persian literature, he penned many verses in Persian and even fashioned a unique form of Persian verse called the *Mubaiya*.⁴⁹⁶ Evidence of this reverence for Persian culture appears multiple times in the *Baburnama* particularly in Babur's interest in Persian poetry and literature. This interest first emerges in Babur's description of his father, Shaykh Umar Mirza, who was "well read and literate and had read both *Khamsas* [penned by Nizami Ganjavi and Indo-Persian poet Amir Khusraw], the volumes of the *Mathnawi* [composed by the thirteenth-century literary giant Jalal al-Din Rumi]...[and] often read the *Shahnama*."⁴⁹⁷ Babur himself also frequently quoted verses from Sa'di's *Gulistan* and incorporated Persian proverbs into his narrative.⁴⁹⁸

Although Babur penned his memoir in Chaghata'i Turki, his use of Turki comprises a remarkable presence of the Persian language. As discussed earlier, Chaghata'i potential as a literary language crystallized in the latter half of the fifteenth century under the patronage of Husayn Bayqara and Shir Ali Nava'i in the effort to preserve Timurid Turkic traditions. This language ultimately borrowed many elements of the Persian language, such as the Arabo-Persian script and Persian lingual structure.⁴⁹⁹ As well, writers of Turki literature were similarly inspired by Persian models of literature.⁵⁰⁰ Although the Timurids sought to underscore their Turkic background with the promotion of Chaghata'i Turki, this language was inherently supported by the Persian language.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁶ Dasgupta, "How Learned Were the Mughals," 242.

⁴⁹⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 7.

⁴⁹⁸ Stephen F. Dale, "The Poetry and Autobiography of the Bâbur-Nâma," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (1996): 647.

⁴⁹⁹ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 150.

⁵⁰⁰ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 42.

⁵⁰¹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 40.

Babur's use of Turki in the *Baburnama* also incorporated this motley of Persian elements, which included Persian grammar, syntax and vocabulary.⁵⁰²

Although Babur's memoir is mostly a narrative of his life, it also included a number of poetical verses. Stephen Dale notes that it was commonplace for such rulers to pen poetry of their own while they actively patronized a wide range of artists, and Babur similarly wanted to promote his reputation as a poet among his subjects and the readers of his memoir. In order to write poetry in Persian, aspiring poets were expected to memorize thousands of verses composed by Persian literary masters such as Nizami Ganjavi, Sa'di Shirazi, Hafiz, Rumi, Amir Khusraw,⁵⁰³ and Abd al-Rahman Jami so they could imitate both the meter and the tone of classical Persian literature.⁵⁰⁴ Babur followed this poetical protocol and penned couplets in Persian which closely followed the model of *ghazals*, a genre which largely emphasized unrequited love. By composing verses in the style of the great Persian poets of the past, he implicitly informed the audience of the *Baburnama* of his credentials as an expert of Persian poetry.⁵⁰⁵ Not only did Babur write Persian poetry, but he also compiled his compositions chronologically in the manner of the poets he imitated.⁵⁰⁶

While Babur's memoir is laced with Persian language and quotes from past Persian poets, he also wrote about the Persian artists who had been patronized by his Timurid cousins. Babur was particularly impressed with his cousin Sultan-Husayn Bayqara whose court in Herat was a centre of cultural production in the late fifteenth

⁵⁰² Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 155.

⁵⁰³ Dale, "Poetry and Autobiography of the Bâbur-Nâma," 641.

⁵⁰⁴ Dale, "Poetry and Autobiography of the Bâbur-Nâma," 644.

⁵⁰⁵ Dale, "Poetry and Autobiography of the Bâbur-Nâma," 640.

⁵⁰⁶ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, 248.

century. According to Babur, this city “was filled with people of talent and extraordinary persons.”⁵⁰⁷ Babur devoted several pages to describing the production of contemporaneous Persian literature, primarily poetry, in Herat under Timurid patronage. According to Babur, Sultan-Husayn Bayqara court comprised “the most outstanding” poets such as Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414- 1492):

“In esoteric and exoteric knowledge there was no one like him at that time. His fame is such that it is beyond need of description. It occurs to me, however, that by way of good omen, at least a mention of him should be made in these miserable pages.”⁵⁰⁸

Jami also appears in Mirza Haidar Dughlat’s *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, where he is described as:

“by far the greatest and most excellent and learned men of all the saints and spiritual guides of the time of Mirza Sultan Husain. He is much too great to stand in need of any mention from my humble pen...”⁵⁰⁹

Although Babur described Jami as a part of Bayqara’s court, Jami had served under two Timurid princes before Sultan-Husayn Bayqara, namely Abu al-Qasim and Abu Said. As Jami also joined the bustling court of Herat’s new prince in 1470, the poet’s reputation continued to exceed the boundaries of Herat.⁵¹⁰ With a career spanning over fifty years, he penned an extensive corpus of compositions in Persian and Arabic. In addition to his successful artistic career, Jami was also renowned for his scholarly work and was a reputable Naqshbandi Sufi shaykh.⁵¹¹ His far-reaching presence and influence in multiple spheres of cultural and religious life arguably made him one of the most prolific Persian

⁵⁰⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 212.

⁵⁰⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 212.

⁵⁰⁹ Ross, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, 194.

⁵¹⁰ Paul Losensky, “Jami i. Life and Works,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on September 15, 2020, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jami-i>.

⁵¹¹ Hamid Algar, “Jami ii. And Sufism,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 10, 2020, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jami-ii>.

writers of the late fifteenth century whose words reached beyond the geography of Iran and Central Asia to places like India and the Ottoman territories.⁵¹² It is unsurprising that this esteemed figure of Persian literature is mentioned with such reverence by Babur and his cousin. More importantly, there is a sense of dynastic pride that pervades the pages of Babur's memoir. As a passionate admirer of Persian poetry, Babur did not mask his awe for the impressive literary atelier in Herat.

In the many pages of the *Baburnama*, Babur profiled numerous Persian artists and poets. The most noteworthy of these descriptions is Babur's literary critique of the literature composed by the renowned poets of Herat. Babur described the compositions of poets such as Banna'i of Herat, Sayfi of Bukhara, Abdullah Mathnawi, Muhammad Salih, and even critiqued the work of Husayn Bayqara himself.⁵¹³ Regarding the work of Sayfi and in particular his "Persian treatise on metrics," Babur observed that Sayfi "says too much and too little: the necessary words are not written and the obvious ones are dotted and pointed."⁵¹⁴ He also described the work of Abdullah Mathnawi, the nephew of the great poet Jami, who had penned several compositions which were largely imitative works based on Nizami's *Khamsa*, *Haft Peykar*, and *Sikandarnama*. Concerning the *masnavi* called *Layli-i Majnun*, Babur finished the poet's profile while commenting that the *masnavi*, although "the most famous," was "not so nice as it is reputed to be."⁵¹⁵ In his description of the poet Muhammad Salih, Babur noted: "He composed really good ghazals, although they are not so uniform as they are delightful."⁵¹⁶ Elsewhere in this

⁵¹² Losensky, "Jami i. Life and Works."

⁵¹³ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 214-216.

⁵¹⁴ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 215.

⁵¹⁵ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 215-216.

⁵¹⁶ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 216.

profile, Babur commented on the structure of his writing: “He wrote an mathnawi in Turkish in the meter *ramal* hexameter, which is to say the meter of *Subhat* ...”⁵¹⁷ In his critique of Husayn Bayqara’s divan, Babur wrote that “[s]ome of his lines are not bad, but his divan is all in one meter.”⁵¹⁸ These observations not only demonstrate Babur’s familiarity with the Persian poets and their compositions in the courts of his Timurid cousins, but they also illustrate Babur’s expertise in Persian literary meter and verse. While Babur demonstrated his knowledge of Persian literature by composing poetry of his own, he also flaunted his knowledge of classical Persian literature by critiquing the work of his contemporaries.

It is also essential to note that Babur’s inclusion of both classical and contemporaneous poets, along with his passion for garden construction, indicates an inherited cultural legacy which connected the Timurid-Mughals to the larger notion of the Persian cosmopolis. While the Persian cosmopolis was not fixed geographically, it was largely defined by the type of ideas that were passed down generationally and across space. Specifically, as Mana Kia notes, *adab* (or etiquette) was an important aspect of this Persianate inheritance which was bequeathed to dynasties such as the Timurids and the Mughals through literature.⁵¹⁹ Mobility, as well, was critical to the formation of the Persian cosmopolis as these distinctly Iranian ideas had to travel through learned bodies (poets, teachers, painters) to other parts of the world such as India.⁵²⁰ Although there was a rich history of Persian cultural production in the courts of medieval South Asia, the last

⁵¹⁷ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 216.

⁵¹⁸ Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 195.

⁵¹⁹ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 139.

⁵²⁰ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 101.

Indian dynasty of the Lodis did not avidly patronize Persian literature comparable to their predecessors. While India was a part of the Persian cosmopolis centuries before the Mughal conquest, their arrival strengthened and added to this 'Persianate' experience in new ways.

Upon his conquest, Babur imported a Persian-speaking retinue from Kabul which marked the dawn of Mughal Persian literature.⁵²¹ With this new Central Asian literature, Mughal literature in the early years of Babur's reign was largely written in Chaghata'i Turki and Persian. As the Mughals conquered territories with a rich multiplicity of lingual traditions, this dynamic became increasingly complicated. While Babur and his followers engaged with these numerous languages, Persian remained a predominant lingual force among the Mughals and was further promoted by Babur's son and grandson, Humayun and Akbar.⁵²²

4.3 Persian Artists and Later Cultural Developments at the Mughal Court

Although Humayun's ascent to kingship was tumultuous in the first four years of his reign (largely due to his brothers' rebellions and the burgeoning threat of the Afghan Sher Shah Suri), Persian culture and ideas were still actively imitated and patronized in this period. One of the most important pieces of literature to emerge in this short period was the *Qanun-i Humayuni* (Canons of Humayun), penned by the renowned Persian panegyrist Khwandamir who had served at the courts of the Timurids, the Safavids and the Mughals under Humayun. Unsurprisingly, Khwandamir penned this composition in

⁵²¹ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 19.

⁵²² Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 44-45.

Persian and while doing so consistently referenced the works of great Persian writers of the past.

Just as Babur had often quoted Sa‘di’s poems, Khwandamir also incorporated verses from the prolific poet’s works. Such an instance appears in Khwandamir’s praise of Sa‘di as “[t]he pole of the heaven of instruction and versification, the lord of saints and poets,” after which he quoted from Sa‘di’s poem at length.⁵²³ Khwandamir also incorporated the work of Abd-al Rahman Jami, the famous Naqshbandi shaykh and poet, and even concluded the *Qanun-i Humayuni* with Jami’s verses instead of his own. Elsewhere in his concluding poem, Khwandamir expressed his desire to contribute to the legacy of the great Persian poets before him: “Like Firdausi and Anwari, I may also renew the dress of poetry.”⁵²⁴ Firdausi was renowned for penning the epic *Shahnama*, a staple of Persianate courts across the Islamic world. In several places in the work, Khwandamir compared Humayun to the historical (Ardashir,⁵²⁵ Anushirvan⁵²⁶) and fictitious (Jamshid,⁵²⁷ Faridun,⁵²⁸ Rostam⁵²⁹) kings of pre-Islamic Persia who are lionized and exalted in the epic. Although Khwandamir did not include a descriptive profile of Firdausi as a poet, the frequent references to figures from the *Shahnama* demonstrate the extent to which Humayun’s court must have been familiar with this renowned work of Persian literature. Moreover, these references were primarily included to compare the Mughal padshah to the historical and mythical figures revered in the *Shahnama* as part of

⁵²³ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 77, 137.

⁵²⁴ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 135.

⁵²⁵ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 9.

⁵²⁶ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 10, 21.

⁵²⁷ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 31, 77, 85, 89.

⁵²⁸ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 10, 75.

⁵²⁹ Khwandamir, *Qanun-i-Humayuni*, trans. Prashad, 9.

Khwandamir's programme to elevate Humayun's sovereign status to the level of these famed administrators of just and legitimate rule. As well, Anvari (1126-1189), an acclaimed panegyrist widely reputed for his wit and use of metaphor, inspired the work of great Persian poets like Sa'adi. Even the prolific Jami referred to Anvari as a "prophet" of Persian poetry in his own compositions.⁵³⁰ More notably, this verse by Khwandamir reflects his desire to be included in the hierarchy of great Persian poets. Not only does the frequent mention of Persian poets and their verses demonstrate Khwandamir's familiarity with classical Persian poetry, it also suggests that the intended Mughal courtly audience was well-acquainted with the literary Persian past. Although the Mughals became patrons of many Safavid poets and writers, Khwandamir was among the few who had served the Timurids and the Safavids before acquiring patronage at the Mughal court. As the *Qanun-i Humayuni* linked Humayun to Iran's historical and mythical kings, Khwandamir similarly connected the Mughals to the Iranian legacy they revered so passionately.

Weakened by his brothers' rebellions and the rise of the Afghan Sher Suri, Humayun was ousted from India where he spent several years in exile. As this thesis has already outlined in chapters two and three, Humayun spent some time in the Iranian court of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp. While this interaction between the two great monarchs of the age was monumental in terms of political diplomacy, it was also instrumental in the development of Mughal culture. Humayun's stay in Iran fortuitously coincided with Shah Tahmasp's period of religious repentance, where the Shah became disillusioned with court poetry and the visual arts. As a consequence, patronage of such artists began to

⁵³⁰ J.T.P. Brujin, "Anwari," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on October 5, 2020, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anwari>.

slowly dwindle in the Safavid court. Humayun was impressed with the calibre of artistic talent in the Safavid court and invited a number of poets and painters back to his temporary court in Kabul. Poets such as Shawqi, Ulfati Yazdi, Baqi Isfahani, Bayani, and Farighi Shirazi left the Safavid court for the greener pastures of the Mughal empire. Some of these poets continued on to the Deccan, where there was a high demand for Persian literature, while others were patronized by prominent Mughal nobility such as Bayram Khan and Muhammad Quli Khan.⁵³¹ This mass movement of learned bodies to South Asia further anchored the Mughal empire within the experience of the Persian cosmopolis. While these figures brought with them contemporaneous Iranian ideas, they also imported the classical Persian past to the Mughal court through their artistic training.

Special attention must be given to two specific painters in Humayun's returning entourage, Mir Sayid Ali and Abd al-Samad Shirazi, who were Safavid artists trained by one of the most famous Persian painters of the sixteenth century, Bihzad.⁵³² As they received patronage from Akbar after arriving in India, they came to establish the Mughal school of painting which integrated both Iranian and Indian artistic elements.⁵³³ Although chronicles detailing the events of Humayun's reign do not offer any meaningful profiles of these artists, Mughal chronicles describing Akbar's reign such as Abul Fazl Alami's *Akbarnama* and Abdul Qadir Badauni's *Muntakhab al-tawakrih* endorsed the arrival of these émigré artists during Akbar's reign in the Mughal court.

⁵³¹ Ahmad, "Safavid Poets and India," *Iran* 14 (1976): 121.

⁵³² J.F. Standish, "Persian Influences in Mughal India," *Islamic Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1968): 168.

⁵³³ Abolala Soudavar, "The Early Safavids and Their Cultural Interactions with Surrounding States," in *Iran and the Surrounding World*, eds. Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 108.

In the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl paid special attention to the figure of Abd al-Samad. His first mention of the painter was in his retelling of Humayun's stay at the Safavid court where "[t]he exquisite and magical Khwaja Abdul Samad *Shirinqalm*... entered into [Humayun's] service...and was much esteemed by the connoisseur of excellence."⁵³⁴ Referring to both Abd al-Samad and Mir Sayid Ali, Abul Fazl wrote that they "were celebrated for their skill in painting" and were "matchless ones of this art."⁵³⁵ As well, these painters were employed by Humayun to teach the young Akbar how to paint and draw.⁵³⁶ Unlike Mir Sayid Ali, Abd al-Samad seems to have enjoyed a position which transcended mere artist. According to Abul Fazl, Abd al-Samad was active in the bureaucratic sphere where he, along with other courtiers, was entrusted with "management of the household," which according to Abul Fazl, was "equal to the administration of a great kingdom."⁵³⁷ As well, Abd al-Samad was an overseer of the imperial mint, commerce, and became the revenue minister of Multan in 1586.⁵³⁸

In addition to his dual role of artist and bureaucrat, Abd al-Samad was also a teacher for many aspiring painters at the Mughal court, where he encouraged his students to mimic the Iranian styles of painting.⁵³⁹ This teaching method, notes Priscilla Soucek, resulted in many Mughal paintings which very clearly exhibit influences from the "Tabriz compositional canon" towards the end of the sixteenth century.⁵⁴⁰ As a student of the

⁵³⁴ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 444.

⁵³⁵ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 67.

⁵³⁶ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 67.

⁵³⁷ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 598.

⁵³⁸ Milo Cleveland Beach and Jonathan M. Bloom, "Abd al-Samad," in *Grove Art Online*, ed. Sheila S. Blair, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T000096>.

⁵³⁹ Priscilla P. Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations," *Maqarnas* 4 (1987): 170.

⁵⁴⁰ Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India," 170.

famed Bihzad, Abd al-Samad imitated the renowned Persian painter's style of painting and imparted this artistic legacy to painters at the Mughal court. Mughal painting came to adopt the "Persian conventions of landscape, and their delight in the beauties of nature, of animals and birds," which later evolved to include "spontaneity and freshness" as opposed to the "stiff formality" entrenched in the earlier Persian style.⁵⁴¹ Soucek notes that this mimicry of Bihzad's work "demonstrates how the carefully balanced compositions of artists working in Herat and Tabriz provided an essential compositional framework which Mughal artists could enliven their own skill" in sixteenth-century India.⁵⁴² While Abd al-Samad was an Iranian artist from the Safavid court, his presence and talent connected the Mughals and subsequent generations of Indian painters with older elements of Iranian painting.

In contrast, Badauni mentioned Abd al-Samad sparingly in his chronicle but preserved most of his praise for Mir Sayyid Ali:

"... the painter, a versatile man, each page of whose paintings is a masterpiece, and who may be described as a second Mani in India. The story of Amir Hamzah in sixteen volumes was illuminated and completed under his supervision. Each volume of it fills a box, and each page of it measures a yard wide by a yard long, and on each page is a picture. He has completed a divan..."

While Badauni does not offer Abd al-Samad credit for working on the *Hamzanama* with Mir Sayyid Ali, both of these painters were heavily involved in the production of this epic. Comprising a total of fourteen-hundred pages, this illustrated depiction of the tales of Amir Hamza, Prophet Muhammad's uncle, was completed over the span of a decade and was heavily inspired by Persian motifs.⁵⁴³ This impressive work was illustrated for

⁵⁴¹ Standish, "Persian Influences," 169.

⁵⁴² Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India," 175.

⁵⁴³ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 189.

Akbar's personal consumption, where each 'page' was a painting of two and half feet by two feet and was presented while the Persian text was read aloud for Akbar.⁵⁴⁴ While Akbar's enthusiastic patronage stemmed from an appreciation for artistic production, Stuart Welch notes that Akbar's patronage of painting also reflects his political aspirations.⁵⁴⁵ Although the supervisors of this grand project were Iranian, talented Indian painters from across the Mughal territories were recruited to work on this majestic piece. In particular, artistic influence from the courts of Gujarat, Varanasi, and Bengal became intertwined with Persian models of painting under the supervision of Abd al-Samad and Mir Sayid Ali to create an amalgamative artistic palette.⁵⁴⁶ With this collaboration of both Iranian and Indian artists, the Mughal style of painting became both distinct and refined to include a variety of Iranian and Indian artistic influences by the end of the sixteenth century.⁵⁴⁷

Poetry, in particular Persian poetry, was another artistic medium where 'Iranian-ness' came to dominate the literary elements of the Mughal court. This presence of Persian poetry is even more significant when we consider the central function of poetry as a tool for both education and governance.⁵⁴⁸ As Akbar continued to use Persian as the official language of the Mughal court, the Mughal literary sphere also came to prioritize the production of Persian prose and poetry while occasionally patronizing works in local

⁵⁴⁴ Annemarie Schimmel and Stuart Carey Welch, *Akbar's Divan: A Pocket Book for Akbar* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 41-42.

⁵⁴⁵ Schimmel and Welch, *Akbar's Divan*, 36.

⁵⁴⁶ Schimmel and Welch, *Akbar's Divan*, 39.

⁵⁴⁷ Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India," 172.

⁵⁴⁸ Allison Busch, "Poetry in Motion: Literary Circulation in Mughal India," in *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*, eds. Thomas de Bruijn and Allison Busch (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 186.

Indian languages, such as Braj Bhasha, in Akbar's expanding empire.⁵⁴⁹ Despite the heterogeneity of the Mughal empire in this period, the influx of Iranian emigrants and the Mughal reverence for the Persian past secured the patronage for these Safavid artists.

Perhaps the most influential of these figures were the Safavid poets Ghazali of Mashhad and Urfi Shirazi. Ghazali first served in the Safavid court during the reign of Tahmasp and set out for India after he was accused of heresy. He first travelled to the Deccan, where the noble Khan-i Zaman took a keen interest in his talent, but Ghazali later entered Akbar's service and was the first poet to be awarded the prestigious accolade of *malik al-shu'ara* (poet laureate) in the Mughal court. Badauni noted that Ghazali:

“compiled several divans and a book of masnavis. It is said that he was written no fewer than forty or fifty thousand couplets. Although his compositions do not rank very high, yet his poems, as regards to both quality and quantity are superior to those of any of his contemporaries. He had a great facility of expression for the language of the mystics.”⁵⁵⁰

He was held in high esteem throughout his life and upon his death was buried in Sarkhej, which, according to Badauni, was “the resting-place of many of the great saints and famous kings of old.”⁵⁵¹

Similar to Ghazali of Mashhad, Urfi Shirazi also sought patronage in the Deccan, but he was less lucky in this endeavour. In 1584, Urfi travelled to the Mughal territories and became a part of Akbar's court through the recommendation of Faizi, Akbar's favourite court poet and brother of Abul Fazl, and was later patronized by Prince Salim,

⁵⁴⁹ Allison Busch, “Poetry in Motion,” 187.

⁵⁵⁰ Abdul-Qadir ibn Muluk Shah Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, vol. 3 (Calcutta: Atlantic Society of Bengal, 1925), 3: 240.

⁵⁵¹ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, 3: 240.

the future Mughal emperor Jahangir.⁵⁵² Concerning his popularity and presence in Akbar's court, Badauni noted:

“for there is no street or market in which the booksellers do not stand at the roadside selling copies of the divans of these two poets [Urfi and Husayn Sanai], and both Persians and Indians buy them as auspicious possessions...Urfi has a divan of his collected poems and a masnavi in the meter of the Makhzun-i Asrar which is known throughout the world.”⁵⁵³

In fact, Urfi's work circulated beyond India to Iran and Central Asia even in his lifetime.⁵⁵⁴ While Badauni lauded Urfi's poetic prowess, he also commented on how this young poet was so “puffed up with pride and conceit that he lost regard for all.”⁵⁵⁵

Hailing from the Iranian city of Shiraz, the birthplace of renowned literary figures like Sa'di and Hafiz, Urfi boasted his status as an émigré poet from Iran, the ‘homeland’ of the classical Persian past, which upset many of his fellow poets at the Mughal court.⁵⁵⁶ He died at the age of thirty-six from dysentery, but even in his short life he managed to leave an indelible mark on the pages of Mughal literary history.

While Iranian émigrés became embedded into the cultural system of the Mughal court, it is important to acknowledge that their erstwhile loyalties to their Safavid patrons did not necessarily complicate their presence in India. Mana Kia uses the phrase “collective affiliation” to describe the flexible understanding of belonging which was based on factors such as ideas and language as opposed to the modern nationalist focus on ethnicity and race.⁵⁵⁷ Along with the Persian language, Persian literature and ideas of

⁵⁵² Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 31.

⁵⁵³ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, 3: 393-394

⁵⁵⁴ Ahmad, “Safawid Poets and India,” 122.

⁵⁵⁵ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, 3: 394.

⁵⁵⁶ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 32-33.

⁵⁵⁷ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 36.

adab were essential in mentally binding the Persian cosmopolis which included parts of Central Asia, Iran, and India. In this period, we see the phenomenon of what Kia refers to as “kinship without ethnicity,” where notions of erstwhile loyalty and origins came to be supplanted by kinship. In this context, kinship comprised “far more important lineages, including those of service, learning, aesthetics, and practice”⁵⁵⁸ which “entailed socially recognized privileges and obligations and could transmit meaning.”⁵⁵⁹ This idea was instrumental when Iranian émigrés arrived in India, where the mobility of Safavid figures such as poets and painters and their inherited cultural legacies strengthened the Mughal dynasty’s legacy in the larger frame of the Persian cosmopolis. Specifically, this mutable concept of kinship facilitated mobility to India and successfully integrated Iranian émigrés into the fold of the Mughal and Deccan courts of South Asia.

This notion of cosmopolis in the Mughal imagination magnified towards the end of the sixteenth century. While the mass emigration of Iranian Safavid figures to South Asia began towards the end of Humayun’s reign, this process continued throughout Akbar’s forty-nine years of sovereignty. As Iranian artists flocked to India in the pursuit of patronage, as the Persian language and culture was in high demand, they significantly contributed to Mughal cultural production and the Mughal conception of Iran in this period. This idea appeared in Urfi’s work, where he addressed younger Iranian poets in one of his verses:

“Abandon the customs of the Muslim people if you want
To enter the temple of the Magis, where hidden secrets will be revealed to you.
You are from the land of Iran, change your old ways
If you want to see the beautiful splendor of India.

⁵⁵⁸ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 25.

⁵⁵⁹ Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 139.

You have sailed from the realm of light to the land of darkness...”⁵⁶⁰

While Urfi confirmed the idea of India as the land of bounty and fortune, he also commented on how a poet’s origin from the ‘homeland’ of Iran was not sufficient to acquire praise and acclaim at the Mughal court. What is most interesting in this verse, however, is his presentation of India’s “beauteous splendour” in contrast to the “old ways” of Iranian poets. With this juxtaposition, Urfi placed India on a pedestal by comparing his new home to Iran. Moreover, Sunil Sharma notes that Urfi’s reference to India as “the land of darkness” came from the “older trope of the dark-skinned Hindu whose lowly status is akin to the suffering lover in Sufi poetry, in opposition to the fair-skinned Turk who is the cruel beloved.”⁵⁶¹ With this depiction of India, Urfi punctuated India’s image as the protector and generous patron of those who sought to practice their craft. Perhaps this new trope partly developed to please the patrons of Iranian emigrants, but the notion of India as the land of fortune and glory played an instrumental role in the Mughal understanding of Iran in this period. Specifically, the notion of India’s overflowing bounty was pitted against Iran’s “old ways,” where even poets of Iranian origin celebrated India as the land of endless opportunity. As such, the Mughal conception of Iran was complex. While there was an undeniable admiration for pre-Islamic and Perso-Islamic artistic legacies, figures of the Mughal literary sphere, which included émigrés like Urfi, did not hesitate to depict contemporaneous Iran with less esteem.

⁵⁶⁰ Quoted in Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 31-32.

⁵⁶¹ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 32.

Returning to the discussion of Urfi and Ghazali in Mughal chronicles, it is a testament to their popularity that their poetry was peppered into the *Muntakhab al-tawarikh* and *Akbarnama* much in the way that verses by Persian literary poets such as Nizami⁵⁶² and Sa‘di,⁵⁶³ and figures from Firdawsi’s *Shahnama*⁵⁶⁴ were integrated into official Mughal texts. The extent to which the Mughals revered the Persian language, Persian poetry of the past and contemporaneous Persian poetry clearly demonstrates the demand, and consequently the position, of Iranian émigrés at the Mughal court. Of course, this does not necessarily suggest that Indian poets writing in Persian did not receive acknowledgement. Faizi, the son of the eminent sixteenth-century scholar Shaykh Mubarak and brother of Akbar’s favourite historian Abul Fazl, received the honour of *malik al-shu‘ara* at the age of forty-two after Ghazali’s death.⁵⁶⁵ What is interesting to note, however, is that while Faizi enjoyed this prestigious position in the Mughal court, he remained insecure about his position as an Indian-born poet writing in Persian in a court dominated by Iranian literati.⁵⁶⁶ Ultimately, Faizi’s concerns about his status at the Mughal court demonstrates the extent to which Iranian poets flocked to the Mughal court for patronage and the degree to which Iranian artists were enthusiastically accepted and folded into the cultural sphere.

⁵⁶² Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, 1: 174; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 455.

⁵⁶³ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. Wolseley Haig, 3: 144, 245, 397; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 2: 455, 3: 894.

⁵⁶⁴ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking 1: 17, 32; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. H. Beveridge, 3: 337, 269.

⁵⁶⁵ Ahmad, “Safawid Poets and India,” 122.

⁵⁶⁶ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 35.

While Iranian artists enjoyed patronage, a culture of rivalry rose among the Iranian-born and Indian-born Persian-speaking literati in the Mughal court. Both factions were well-versed in the Persian language, and as avid admirers of classical Persian poetry, Indian-born artists were also worthy adversaries for the Iranian émigrés.⁵⁶⁷ This rivalry is perhaps best exemplified in the relationship shared by the Iranian poet Urfi and the Indian-born poet Faizi. Although Faizi initially took Urfi under his wing in the early 1580s, Badauni noted that their relationship “cooled” over time. Although Badauni did not offer any concrete reasons for their budding animosity, he relayed an incident which demonstrates the poets’ quick wit and rivalry. Urfi allegedly visited Faizi at his home, where the poet was in the company of a dog, and asked Faizi what he had named his new companion. Faizi replied that “His name is well-known (or Urfi)” to which Urfi at once retaliated with a pun on Faizi’s father’s name, Shaykh Mubarak, “May it be auspicious” (or Mubarak).⁵⁶⁸ Sunil Sharma notes that this incident compactly highlights the blooming rivalry between Persian-speaking Iranian and Indian poets of the Mughal court.⁵⁶⁹

4.4 Conclusion:

While this chapter does not address the Mughal patronage of poets writing in local vernacular languages, such as Braj Bhasha, it is important to note that Persian was but one of the literary languages patronized by the Mughals. However, the Persian language and Persian culture remained at the heart of Mughal culture in the sixteenth century. The frequent appearance, in particular, of classical Persian poets such as Firdawsi, Sa‘di, Nizami, and Jami demonstrates how Persian culture occupied a central position in

⁵⁶⁷ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 35.

⁵⁶⁸ Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. G. Ranking, 3: 394-395.

⁵⁶⁹ Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 33.

Mughal culture in this period. While the importance of Persian culture in the imperial dynamic suggests the continuation of an older theme where foreign dynasties accultured to Persian traditions in the name of legitimacy, it also situates Mughal India within the mutable ideological boundary of the Persian cosmopolis. The adulation of classical Persian poets in the Mughal imagination connected the Mughal court to older Iranian literature and ideas, and this admiration of the Iranian past similarly created opportunity for Safavid artists where they were respected for their craft and direct inheritance of the Perso-Islamic cultural legacy. While the Mughal understanding of Iran continued to shift and transform over time, the mobility of émigrés to India strengthened the presence of historical and contemporaneous Iran in new and complicated ways. In this process, Mughal texts came to understand Iranian artists as conduits to the Iranian cultural past. For the Mughals, it was a point of pride that Safavid artists, the gatekeepers of generations of Perso-Islamic traditions and culture, flocked to their courts to produce Persian art and literature. At the same time, this admiration for Persian ideas and art did not dissuade Mughal poets, such as the émigré Urfi, from demoting the image of Iran in their prose. Along with the investment in Mughal prestige, the patronage of Iranian artists elevated the Mughals as worthy adversaries of the Safavids at a time when the Safavid-Mughal relationship also dramatically transformed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In 1584, Akbar commissioned the Persian translation of the *Ramayana*, a Sanskrit epic detailing the exploits of the god-king Rama renowned in the South Asian imagination for banishing the world of evil. The translation and patronage of such works demonstrates the collision of cosmopolises, Persian and Sanskrit, whereby these literary languages and their accompanying traditions and ideas merged to create a unique cultural phenomenon. Just as this ‘Sanskrit-Persian cosmopolis’ was a product of two syncretic cultural traditions, the Mughals inherited a similarly complicated cultural legacy where Persian traditions and Islamic ideals merged together and were later integrated with Timurid-Mongolian elements. As the Mughals brought with them their Timurid-Mongolian and Perso-Islamic inheritance to South Asia, they contributed to the notion of cosmopolis in complicated ways. Their presence and patronage in South Asia combined the traditions of ancient Iran, the Perso-Islamic past, Timurid-Mongolian ideals, inspiration from contemporaneous Safavid Iran, the local Indian notions of South Asia, and existing South Asian Perso-Islamic ideals all into a singular imperial identity. While the Mughals drew from such a heterogeneous cultural composite, they articulated and integrated these traditions in the Persian language and complicated their overall contribution to the notion of the Persian cosmopolis.

The concept of the Persian cosmopolis is ultimately defined by the ability of a shared language and *adab* to unite communities across time and space into one ideological grouping, where communities such as those across Iran, Central Asia, and India were connected with the shared use of the Persian language and literary culture. In his discussion of the spread of the Persian language, Richard Eaton notes that in the wake

of the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, “Persian literature had no single geographical or political centre.”⁵⁷⁰ Instead of identifying their sovereignty in solely political terms, the Mughals gradually understood themselves as the ideological ‘centre’ of the notion of the Persian cosmopolis over the course of the sixteenth century. In this way, the Mughals promoted themselves as the primary shapers of the cosmopolis’ mental space, where they were no longer passive recipients of different cosmologies but were active contributors to the development of the cosmopolis. This shift is a significant feature of Mughal texts in this period, whereby the Mughals expressed their self-determined supremacy in the spheres of kingship, religion, and culture. Pivotal to this textual process was how the Mughals presented and idealized ancient, historical, and contemporaneous Iran in this period.

In chapter two, this thesis discussed the prominent presence of Persian traditions and ideas in the articulation of Mughal kingship in South Asia. Although the subcontinent had a long-standing cultivation of Iranian ideas, the Mughals strengthened this presence with their arrival in the sixteenth century. Specifically, the Mughals imported elements of their Central Asian Timurid roots and their inheritance of Perso-Islamic statecraft. One of the most important of these ideas was the ancient Iranian notion of the circle of justice, where equilibrium and just rule were equated with successful agricultural output. For Babur, this idea manifested in the avid construction of gardens both in Kabul and in northern India after his conquest, where these gardens can be understood as microcosms of the larger practice of agricultural production. Babur also incorporated various

⁵⁷⁰ Eaton, *India in the Persianate*, 14.

structural elements inspired from the ancient Iranian and Perso-Islamic past which connected South Asia to Iran in more tangible ways.

Moreover, the articulation of the Iranian past appeared yet again with Babur's letters of advice to his son, Humayun, where he effectively appointed him his successor and offered advice on governance. This type of advice-giving was a feature of the Perso-Islamic books of advice, also referred to as 'mirrors for princes,' a genre dating back to the Sasanian period which offered guidance on the etiquette of kingship. Additionally, Babur hosted large feasts called *razm-o-bazm* (feasting and fighting), which were reminiscent of the great banquets that appear frequently in the *Shahnama*. Although Babur's description of these feasts did not directly mention Firdawsi's epic poem, an important commonality was the celebration of the warrior through the retelling of feats of bravery. In turn, the king presented his own power and prestige through displays of wealth and opulence for his guests.

During Humayun's reign, the ancient and mythical Iranian past were featured frequently. In the *Qanun-i Humayuni*, Khwandamir ultimately sought to elevate Humayun to the status of the revered mythical kings (such as Jamshid and Faridun) and historical shahs (such as Ardashir and Anushirvan) of Iran. He accomplished this by including direct comparisons between the padshah and these ancient kings and in this process introduced Humayun as the continuation of this lineage of just kings. Khwandamir also engaged with the ancient Iranian understanding of the sun as a central feature of kingship and promoted the idea of divine effulgence, where the padshah became an earthly vessel for the divine light. Khwandamir underscored these ideas by

presenting Humayun as the “Shadow of God” and celebrated the padshah as a divinely sanctioned ruler.

In Akbar’s reign, Abul Fazl built upon Khwandamir’s use of sun veneration and the divine light in the presentation of Akbar’s role as the universal monarch. Abul Fazl integrated these ideas with the concepts of *ishraq* (illuminationism), where kings were associated with special powers of guidance and Gnosticism. He also promoted Akbar as *al-insan al-kamil* (‘the Perfect Man’), a Sufi concept which exalted monarchs as the guardians of mankind. With this type of language, Abul Fazl sought to present Akbar as the foremost spiritual being whose connection to the unseen world only strengthened his position as the universal monarch. The Mughal emphases on the divine light, sun veneration, and the role of kings as shadows of God also contributed to this understanding. While many of these ideas were drawn from ancient Iranian and Perso-Islamic ideas of kingship and just rule, a defining feature of Akbar’s reign was his syncretic projection of prestige. With an ever-expanding empire comprising a motley of religious and cultural traditions, Akbar sought to diversify his articulation of power. With this endeavour in mind, Akbar incorporated various Indian traditions, such as king-viewing, and Timurid-Mongolian lore into the Mughal expression of authority. The fusion of these numerous ideas helped Akbar to buttress his status as the true protector of mankind, comprising both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Iranian ideas remarkably influenced and inspired the Mughal construction of an imperial identity, but this ideological dependency became problematic as the Mughals interacted with and became inspired by contemporaneous Safavid Iran. In particular, Babur and Humayun’s deference to Safavid authority, where they donned the Safavid *taj*

and were effectively initiated into the Safavid order as the Shahs' disciples, significantly compromised the Mughal political position. This act of subjugation was particularly embarrassing for Humayun, so much so that his Safavid-inspired Taj-i Izzat and his courtly cult became obsolete after his exile in Iran. These events influenced Akbar in the second half of the sixteenth century, and perhaps most evidently so, in Akbar's declaration of his status as the universal monarch. In a letter to the Safavid Shah Abbas, Akbar clearly asserted his monarchical dominance over Abbas, contending that the Shah's religious intolerance rendered him unfit to rule as the Shadow of God. Akbar posited that because of his personal tolerance and proclivity towards just rule, he was the best candidate for the position of universal monarchy. Furthermore, he presented his experience in protecting those of different classes and creeds which, according to Akbar, distinguished him as the ideal ruler of all humanity. This pivotal moment in Mughal-Safavid relations elevated the Mughal position where the Mughals came to understand themselves as ideologically superior to their Safavid neighbours, a concept which manifested in Akbar's declaration of universal monarchy. In this process, the Mughals also resolved an important complication where they distinguished and understood Iran in two separate categories: historical and contemporaneous Iran.

In the third chapter, two particular strands of religious understanding were explored. Shi'ism became the official religious position of the Safavid empire while the Mughals associated themselves with Sunnism. In the early days of Mughal rule, during the reigns of Babur and Humayun, there was an official aversion towards Shi'ism and those who observed its rituals. However, there was a shift in this presentation during Akbar's reign for many reasons. First of all, Akbar wanted to mitigate the power of

Central Asian nobles at his court, and in this process Rajput and Persian nobles came to occupy important courtly positions. Second of all, after Humayun's sojourn at the Safavid court, a number of poets, painters, nobles, and religious figures emigrated to India. Many of these figures identified with Shia Islam, and this shifted the composition of the Mughal court to accommodate more Persian (and some Shia courtiers). While chroniclers like Abul Fazl presented the presence of these figures at the court in a positive light, the conservative Badauni referred to their Shi'ite observance with hostility. However, Badauni tempered this depiction by begrudgingly noting the talents of these figures and their contributions to Mughal artistic and literary production.

It is also important to note that while the Mughals associated contemporaneous Iran with Shi'ism, Iran was also the lodestar for mystical groups such as the Nuqtavis. The Nuqtavis, a millennial heterodox group who popularized notions of pre-Islamic Persia, notably influenced Mughal courtly culture; their ideas likely contributed to the formation of Akbar's *Din-i Ilahi*. In particular, this group's focus on sun veneration and the transmigration of the soul became a central facet of the *Din-i Ilahi*'s doctrine.

This understanding was further complicated by the Mughal affiliation with various Sufi groups whose members originally emigrated from parts of Central Asia and Iran. While Sufis of 'high' Sufism were officially concerned with the invisible world and their closeness with God, they were also gatekeepers of significant political power in this period. For this reason, the Mughals patronized various Sufi groups over the course of their rule, as Sufi networks such as the Naqshbandis, Chishtis and Shattaris found themselves in proximity to the court. While this thesis does not thoroughly explore the role of Sufi groups outside of the imperial sphere, they were pivotal in the spread of the

Persian language and ideas in the South Asian environment even before the sixteenth century. While many of these Sufi groups, such as the Chishtis, became so integrated (or Indianized) into the South Asian milieu that they adopted yogic notions of devotion and accepted Hindu disciples into their respective orders, their spiritual doctrines still included vestiges from their Central Asian and Iranian origins. When we consider how the Mughals understood Iranian religious identity in this period, it was a complex mixture of ideas which included Shi'ism, Sufism, and heterodox millennial ideology.

The Mughal conception of Iran, and the complicated nature of this understanding, was perhaps most apparent in the cultural sphere. The fourth chapter of this thesis explored how Mughal writers wrote about Iranian artists and Iran in Mughal texts, where the admiration of contemporaneous Iranian artists and the adulation of the classical Persian past significantly informed the Mughal understanding of Iran. During the reigns of Babur and Humayun, Mughal texts frequently celebrated the poetic prowess of literary figures and writers such as Sa'di and Hafez in tandem with sixteenth-century poets such as Abd al-Rahman Jami and Abd al-Husayn Nava'i. While the Mughals conceived of Iran as the lodestone of talented artists and poets, this perception was coupled with the Mughals' understanding of themselves as worthy cultural adversaries by the late sixteenth century. Persian poets such as Urfi, although initially from the 'homeland' of Iran himself, described Mughal India in opposition to Safavid Iran. In particular, India was presented as the land of endless opportunity and glory in stark contrast to contemporaneous Iran's "old ways."

Part of this courtly cultural confidence came from the mass emigration of Safavid artists to India towards the end of Humayun's reign and throughout Akbar's rule.

Because Persian culture and language was such a significant part of the cultural and historical fabric of South Asia, these figures were avidly patronized in Mughal and Deccan courts. As the Mughals patronized an impressive atelier of poets, painters, and other artists, Mughal cultural production flourished in this period. In addition to Iranian elements, the Mughals drew from local Indian and Central Asian cultural traditions across various artistic mediums which informed the unique syncretism of Mughal cultural production.

The emigration of Safavid figures, comprising those who sought patronage and refuge from persecution, strengthened the Mughal position within the conceptual expanse of the Persian cosmopolis. As this notion was contingent on the spread of shared ideas and language rather than a fixed geographical space, movement was a critical factor in the development of this experience. As Safavid-Iranian figures travelled to South Asia and brought with them older Iranian ideas and practices with contemporaneous learning, they contributed to the Persian and Iranian elements already present in the subcontinent. In other words, these émigrés were conduits to the Iranian past, whereby they continually connected the Mughals to a myriad of Iranian ideas and traditions.

As the Persian cosmopolis was connected by the use of a shared language, it is important to consider the trajectory of the Persian language in this period as well. While the Persian language gained prominence in South Asia centuries before the arrival of the Mughals, it expanded significantly in the sixteenth century as is reflected in the production of *nisabs*; *nisabs* were books which translated and explained specific words from other languages. Richard Eaton notes that in the first half of the sixteenth century, these books clarified Hindavi phrases for new Persian émigrés. However, in the latter half

of the century these *nisabs* elucidated Persian phrases for non-Persian speakers.⁵⁷¹ The use of the Persian language at the Mughal court continued to escalate as Akbar declared Persian the official administrative and bureaucratic language of the empire in 1582.⁵⁷² By Shah Jahan's reign (1628-1658), Persian became the dominant language for literary South Asians. Further evidence of the Persian language's popularity in this period is seen in the increased production and popularity of lexicographic works and dictionaries clarifying the Persian language.⁵⁷³

As the Persian language became embedded in the imperial sphere, Hindu and Brahmin courtiers, such as Chandar Bhan, became fluent in Persian and also contributed to the production of Persian language literature well into the seventeenth century. Chandar Bhan was one of the many notable Indo-Persian poets belonging to this emergent class of Indian-born writers composing complex works in Persian in this period. He also held the office of *munshi* (state secretary), and this official position was increasingly given to Hindu officials in the seventeenth century.⁵⁷⁴ Just as the patronage of the Persian adaptation of the *Ramayana* denotes a clash of cosmopolises, the incorporation of this category of Hindu writers and courtiers similarly demonstrates a fusion of different cosmologies. The contribution and presence of such figures complicated the notion of cosmopolis as Perso-Islamic and Sanskritic ideas at the Mughal court merged in complex ways.

⁵⁷¹ Eaton, *India in the Persianate*, 382.

⁵⁷² Stefano Pello, "Hindu Persian Poets," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on November 21, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/hindu-persian-poets>.

⁵⁷³ Mario Casari, "India xiv. Persian Literature," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, consulted on November 23, 2020, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/india-xiv-persian-literature-in-india>.

⁵⁷⁴ Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 5-6.

When we consider the themes of kingship, religion, and culture, it is clear that the Mughals sought to elevate themselves above their Safavid Iranian neighbours. In terms of kingship and religion, the Mughals presented and promoted themselves as the most just and tolerant. This superior self-idealization also manifested in Mughal cultural production, where the generous courtly patronage of art and literature became a point of dynastic pride. As the Mughals textually expressed this important mental shift, they repositioned themselves at the 'heart' of the Persian cosmopolis. In this process, they no longer conceived of themselves as passive conduits but as active shapers of the mental space of the Persian cosmopolis.

While the syncretism of cultural worlds was neither new nor exclusive to this period or region, it was the complexity of this phenomenon in the South Asian environment which particularly distinguished the Mughal case. The Mughals drew from a myriad of traditions which included ancient Iranian, Perso-Islamic, Timurid-Mongolian, contemporaneous Iranian, local Indian, and Indo-Persian rituals, customs, and ideas. The presence of these diverse cultural worlds in the expression of Mughal imperial identity complicated the Mughal contribution to the development and process of the Persian cosmopolis. As the Mughals became enthusiastic patrons of Persian art and literature, they commissioned works which combined the Persian language and ideas with diverse cultural expressions. The Persian cosmopolis was defined by the networks bound by language and *adab* which were dependent on the mobility of both people and texts. In this way, this new heterogeneous fusion of ideas circulated and complicated the overall cultural and ideological composition of the Persian cosmopolis in this period.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Mughals came to understand themselves as the ideological lodestar of the cosmopolis. They accomplished in articulating this position by underscoring their dynastic superiority to Iran in terms of kingship, religion, and culture. In the Mughal imagination, part of their imperial identity became intertwined with their status as the primary developers of the cosmopolis, and this notion further intensified as the patronage of Persian-language literature, art, and scholarship contended with Safavid Iranian production by the end of the seventeenth century.⁵⁷⁵ The Mughals' self-idealization of their importance in the conceptual hierarchy of cosmopolis continued to develop and intensify over the course of their dynastic history.

⁵⁷⁵ Eaton, *India in the Persianate*, 381.

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