

one paragraph and those of Meisami, Waldman, and Khalidi in another. Hardy and Nizami fare a bit better throughout the text, but the reader wishes to see Auer distinguish his position from others more specifically or specify the particular way he plans to apply the methods of those whose works have inspired him.

There is a third and fairly minor point to be raised, and this involves the numerous Persian words transliterated by the author. While it is doubtless necessary to give the original Persian of a key term such as *khatam-i tajdaran* (“seal of the crown bearers”) applied by a historian to his royal patron in imitation of the phrase *khatam al-anbiya* (“seal of the prophets”) universally applied to the prophet Muhammad, other terms do not contribute to the argument in any apparent way. I for one find English words such as “earth”, “sleep”, “two”, and “courage” perfectly adequate for translating the meaning of Indian authors without needing to see the Persian equivalents of *khak*, *khvab*, *du*, or *shuja‘at*.

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LISA BALABANLILAR:

Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia.

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Lisa Balabanlilar is known for her fascinating interventions into the cultural history of the Mughals, notably “The Begims of the mystic feast: Turco-Mongol tradition in the Mughal harem”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, 2010, 123–47 and “The Emperor Jahangir and the pursuit of pleasure”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, 2009, 173–86. Earlier she wrote “The Lords of the auspicious conjunction: Turco-Mongol imperial identity on the subcontinent”, *Journal of World History* 18, 2007, 1–39. In all this work Balabanlilar endeavours to widen our understanding of the Mughals and show that modern studies have been dominated by nationalist, sectarian and other ideological agendas that define the Mughals as a singularly Indian phenomenon, quite distinct from – and so marginalized from – the Islamic Middle East and Central Asia. Balabanlilar’s ambition, carried forward and elaborated in her new book *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire*, is to bring the Mughals back into a wider framework. For Balabanlilar, this is achieved by emphasizing the Turkic, Timurid and Islamic elements of Mughal identity as opposed to their well-known (and rather obvious) Indian ones.

In theoretical terms, Balabanlilar combines world or global history writing with centre–periphery discourse in an attempt to place Mughal India in a more up-to-date framework. Concerns about global context and centre vs. periphery are not exactly new in the study of Indian history, but the author uses them to compelling effect in *Imperial Identity*, effectively breaking the established mould for general histories of Mughal times. We cannot, of course, write a new kind of history if we focus on the achievements of individual Mughal rulers, their military exploits or the administrative and revenue systems of the Mughal state. All of these things are necessarily in India and keep our geographical horizon neatly fixed on the subcontinent. Even art history and literary history are held in this framework: the Mughals developed new genres, such as translations from Sanskrit texts, and a new style of painting that drew on a range of Indian sources. Discounting “outside influence”, these cultural products

have, for many decades, been conveniently classed as “Indian”. While it may have suited earlier generations of historians involved in the state building project following independence to see the past in this way, history and identity are a complex business, especially for anybody who is somehow Mongol and Turkish, as indeed the Mughals were. In order, therefore, to move away from the established trope of “Mughal as Indian”, we need to move to new datasets, or at least look at well-known datasets with fresh eyes. This takes Balabanlilar away from the standard narratives to questions of legitimacy, kingship and the ritual events that articulated, developed and projected the identity of the Mughals in South Asia. In this sense Balabanlilar’s work can be usefully juxtaposed to the more traditional *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719*, by Munis D. Faruqi (Cambridge, 2012). Balabanlilar’s willingness to think outside the box is shown at the outset where she gives a list of the “Timurid-Mughal Dynasty of India” that includes all the wives and children of the Mughals. Identity invariably involves women, and the identity of one’s mother was no minor matter for Mughal rulers, not that we are told this in most histories. The list is fascinating and an immediate indication that a different approach is going to be taken. From the family list the book then moves through five chapters: 1. “Babar and the Timurid exile”; 2. “Dynastic memory and the genealogical cult”; 3. “The peripatetic court and the Timurid-Mughal landscape”; 4. “Legitimacy, restless princes and the imperial succession”; and 5. “Imagining kingship”. This is followed by an impressively comprehensive bibliography and detailed index. The important contribution of Audrey Truschke, “The Mughal *Book of War*: A Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, 2011, 506–20 can be usefully added. Truschke’s work takes us to the intricate interaction between learned elites – Hindu and Muslim – that lay behind one of the most important projects of the early Mughal court. This project, in essence the development of a new kind of Persian literature, was also part of the Mughal identity, or at least new facets of that identity as it developed a permanent place on Indian soil. Inheritance is important in identity politics, but there are difficult decisions to make about what one will take forward and what one will leave behind in a new land. And for the Mughals, their new land involved many powerful things that could not be avoided, perhaps one of the most important being the Chishtī order. The links between the Chishtīs and the Mughals was profound, with the Chishtī saints, both living and dead, much venerated. Akbar walked all the way to the tomb of Mu’in al-Dīn Chishtī at Ajmer on pilgrimage, a kind of ritual act we would expect Balabanlilar to find fascinating. The Chishtīs (and Sufis more generally) are not, however, taken up in this book. One cannot include everything in a book that aims to plough a new row and give us difficult material in an accessible and fluent style. This Balabanlilar does successfully, no doubt guaranteeing the place of this book in courses on Indian civilization. It will certainly be essential to any library that seeks to represent Mughal India in a meaningful fashion.

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J.P. LOSTY and MALINI ROY:

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