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Indo-Persian historian and Sindho-Persian intermediary: the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* of Mir Muhammad Maʿsum Bhakkari (d. 1606)

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Abstract
Studies of Indo-Persian historiography tend to focus on the monumental compositions created at the behest of the Mughal court. This has unfortunately led to the neglect of texts from "regional" settings. The present article intends to expand the field of inquiry by studying Mir Muhammad Maʿsum's *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* (completed *c*. 1600) which was the first Mughal-era Persian history of Sindh. I will argue that the author used the new the literary models developed by Mughal chroniclers in order to both facilitate and contest imperial domination.
Keywords: Mughal, Indo-Persian, Sindh, Historiography, *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*, Regional elites

The modern study of the rich archive of Indo-Persian chronicles from the Mughal period has usually concerned itself with monumental imperial histories of Hindustan, often commissioned by the great emperors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2] While these chronicles certainly deserve the continued

1 This article was first presented at the "Epistemological frontiers of Persian learning" conference, University of California, Los Angeles in April 2016. I thank Nile Green for inviting me, and all the other participants and attendants for their questions and comments.

2 This is the case both with recent surveys such as Harit Joshi, "Les sources historiques en langue persane en Inde, du Sultanat de Delhi jusqu'à l'empire moghol", in Nathalie Kouamé (ed.), *Historiographies d'ailleurs, Comment écrit-on l'histoire en dehors du monde occidental?* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2014), 29–42; Asim Roy, "Indo-Persian historical thought and writings: India 1350–1750", in Jose Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo and Daniel Woolf (eds), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 3: 1400–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 148–72; Stephan Conermann, *Historiographie als Sinnstiftung: Indo-Persische Geschichtschreibung während Mogulzeit* (932–1118/1516–1707) (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002); and Stephen F. Dale, "India XVI. Indo-Persian historiography", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2004, Vol. XIII, Fasc. 1, 53–63, available online at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/india-xvi-indo-persian-historiography (accessed 31/1/2017); as well as earlier surveys such as Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography during the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976); S.A.A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign, with Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl, 1556–1605* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975); and Jagadish Sarkar, *History of History Writing in Medieval India: Contemporary Historians* (Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 1977).

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study and detailed analyses that have been afforded them, their size, significance, and high production quality (both under Mughal patronage as well as subsequent publication by the colonial Asiatic Society of Bengal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) has unfortunately led to neglect of the role played by smaller texts from "regional" settings in the formation and development of the historical genre in India.[3] This is rather surprising as for a number of decades now numerous academic monographs devoted to regional history of the empire have been drawing on the wealth of information contained in such provincial composition.[4] What is needed therefore is to extend the recent interest in Persianate historiography as a whole into regional *Tarikh*s as well.

A good example of an area with an active local chronicle tradition from rather early on in the Mughal period is Sindh and Thatta, cradling the southern half of the Indus River in present-day Pakistan. At least seven authors chronicled the events of the province from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. These works include Sayyid Mir Muhammad b. Bayazid Purani's *Nusrat'namah-i Tarkhan* (completed before 1563), Mir Muhammad Maʿsum's *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* (completed shortly after 1600), Tahir Muhammad Nisyani Tattavi's *Tarikh-i Tahiri* (completed *c*. 1621), Idraki Biglari's *Biglar'namah* (completed between 1608 and 1634), Yusuf Mirak's *Tarikh-i Mazhar-i Shahjahani* (completed in 1634), Muhammad ibn Jalal Tattavi's *Tarkhan'namah* (completed *c*. 1654), and Qaniʿ Tattavi's *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (completed in 1767).[5] The

3 Regional historiography in the vernacular has fared better. See Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*: *Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700–1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) for Marathi historiography; Kumkum Chatterjee, *The Culture of History in Early Modern India: Persianisation and Mughal Culture in Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009) for the Bengal; and Subah Dayal, "Vernacular conquest? A Persian patron and his image in the seventeenth-century Deccan", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37/3, 2017, 549–69 for the Deccan.

4 The rather large library of regional studies that draws on local chronicles include the pioneering works of John Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir: An Introductory Study in Social History* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969), and Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–48* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986) as well as more recent works such as those by Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Two recent works that deal with the region studied in this article are Sunita Zaidi, "Akbar's annexation of Sind – an interpretation", Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, "The Mughal annexation of Sind – a diplomatic and military history", both in Irfan Habib (ed.), *Akbar and His India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 25–32 and 33–54 respectively. The most thorough study is Amita Paliwal's "Sind in the Mughal Empire (1591–1740): A study of its administration society, economy and culture", PhD thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 2010.

5 Sayyid Mir Muhammad b. Bayazid Purani, *Nusrat'namah-i Tarkhan*, ed. Ansar Zahid Khan (Karachi: Institute of Central and West Asian Studies of the University of Karachi, 2000); Muhammad Maʿsum Bakkari, *Tarikh-i Sind al-maʿruf bih Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*, ed. Umar Muhammad Daudpoṭa (Puna: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1938); Muhammad Nisyani Tattavi, *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, ed. Nabi Bakhshu Khanu Balocu (Haydarabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1964); Idraki Biglari *Biglar'namah,*

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relationship between this body of literature and the larger corpus of Indo-Persian historiography can only be understood after each of these Sindhi chronicles has been individually analysed in its own historical and historiographical context.

The present article concerns itself with the second text in this series, *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*, written by Mir Muhammad Maʿsum (1538–1606, low-level Sindhi *mansabdar* in Akbar's service) which inaugurated this historiographical trend. The first, Purani's *Nusrat*'*namah*, was only recently discovered and published. It survives in a single manuscript and does not appear to have been known even in the Mughal period. It seems to have escaped the notice of the chroniclers who began writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century who clearly formed a historiographical chain. In short, the intriguing *Nusrat*'*namah* is an exceptional case and not a key text in the formation of Sindhi historiography.

On the other hand, studying the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* is useful for a number of reasons. To begin, the text shows how the spread of this new genre in Sindh owed its existence to the Mughal conquest.[6] Mir Maʿsum intended for his narrative to culminate with the capture of the kingdom by the Mughal general and patron of arts ʿAbd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan (d. 1627) whom the author served prior to and during the campaign. In many ways, the content of the history was arranged to lead up to this event, in order to justify it, but also in order to salvage something of the regional identity that the conquest and subsequent occupation had threatened. Mir Maʿsum sought to emphasize the antiquity of his region (including its pagan past), its independence from Delhi, and the positive qualities of its ruling elite (which included a separate Turco-Mongol dynasty than the Timurids called the Arghuns) all in a dialogical response to Mughal domination and its claims to sovereignty. Mughal rule had therefore set the discursive and the content limits for a history of Sindh. Without it, such a history may never have been written, or if it had been, certainly not in the way Mir Muhammad Maʿsum wrote it.

But also significant was the fact that the author developed in the same military-cultural settings as some of the main participants in the nascent

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ed. Nabi Bakhshu Khanu Balocu (Haydarabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1980); Muhammad ibn Jalal Tattavi's *Tarkhan*'*namah*, ed. Husam al-Din Rashidi (Haydarabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1965); Yusuf Mirak *Tarikh-i Mazhar-i Shahjahani*, ed. Husam al-Din Rashidi (Haydarabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1962); Miru ʿAli Sheru Qaniʿ Thatavī, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, Sayyidu Husammuddinu Rashidi (Haydarabad: Sindi Adabi Board, 1971). Of these, the penultimate author has been studied to some extent by S.S. Alvi, "Mazhar- Shahjahani and the province of Sindh under the Mughals: a discourse on political ethics", in *Perspectives on Mughal India: Rulers, Historians, ʿUlama, and Sufis* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28–50.

6 A Persian history of Sindh from the thirteenth century already existed, namely, ʿAli ibn Hamid Kufi's *Fathnamah-i Sind: al-Maʿruf bih Chachnamah*, ed. ʿUmaru bin Muhammadu Daudpotah (Delhi: Matbaʿah Latifi, 1939). While our author did use this text, I contend that the Mughal era *Tarikh* was substantially different from the *Chachnamah*, which was a purported translation from an original in Arabic. See the recent analysis by Mana Ahmed Asif in *A Book of Conquest: The Chahnama and Muslim Conquest in South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) as well his earlier "The long thirteenth century of the Chachnama", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49/4, 2012, 459–91. I will refer to his book below.

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Mughal historiographical project. In addition to Khan-i Khanan, these included authors/statesmen such as Jaʿfar Beg Qazvini (d. 1612/13) and Nizam al-Din Ahmad (d. 1594) with whom Muhammad Maʿsum served in the Gujarat campaigns of the 1580s. This generation of historians had begun producing a historiographical subgenre that moved away from the royal biographies that were appearing with relative frequency in the sixteenth century, and had composed new linear and chronological narratives for all of South Asia.

The biographical texts of the sixteenth century were rather numerous and had focused on the lives of the main royal protagonists of the era such as the emperors Babur (d. 1531), Humayun (d. 1556), Sher Shah (d. 1545), and the living emperor Akbar. These included the Turkic-language *Baburnamah* as well as its Persian translations by Zayn Khan and ʿAbd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, Abbas Khan Sarvani's *Tarikh-i Sher Shahi*, Jawhar Aftabachi, Bayazid Bayat, and Gulbadan's biographies of Humayun, and the biographies of Akbar by ʿArif Qandahari and Abu al-Fazl.[7] The proliferation of this genre paralleled courtly patronage of epics that celebrated the accomplishments of legendary heroes. These include the *Hamzahnamah* and the *Darabnamah*.[8]

However, starting in the 1580s new innovations can be observed.[9] In this period, the genre of "universal histories", which had heretofore focused on the succession chains (*silsilah*s) of prophets and kings, was repurposed to provide histories of geographical states. First, Jaʿfar Beg Qazvini, who authored the last volume of the "millennial history" or *Tarikh-i Alfi*, narrated the histories of the Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals not as separate dynastic histories but interlaced accounts of events in Iran, Hind, and Rūm. Two early collaborators

7 Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama: Chaghatay Turkish Text with Abdul-Rahim Khankhanan's Persian Translation*, ed. W.M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1993); Shaykh Zayn Khvafi Vafa'i, *Tabaqat-i Baburi*, British Library, Mss. OR. 1999; *Three Memoirs of Humayun: Gulbadan Begim's Humáyunnáma; Jawhar Áftábachí's Tadhkiratul-wáqiát; Báyazid Bayát's Táríkh-i Humáyún*, ed. and trans. W. M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009); ʿAbbas Khan Sarwani, *Tarikh-i Sher Shahi*, ed. S.M. Imamuddin (Dacca: Dacca University Press, 1964); Muhammad ʿArif Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari: Maʿruf bih Tarikh-i Qandhari*, ed. Muʿin al-Din Nadwi; Azhar ʿAli Dihlavi; Imtiyaz ʿAli Khan ʿArshī (Rampur: Hindustan Printing Works, 1962).

8 Neither text has been edited. A. Azfar Moin, in his "Peering through the cracks in the Baburnama: the textured lives of Mughal sovereigns", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49/4, 2012, 493–526, designates two phases of textual production during Akbar's reign: an early phase marked by the production of epics and romances, and a later phase marked by the composition of chronicles.

9 The following survey is informed by M.A. Ali, "The use of sources in Mughal historiography", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 5/3, 1995, 361–73; S. Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007); Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History*; Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography*; and Ali Anooshahr, "Author of one's fate: human agency and fatalism in Indo-Persian histories", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 49/2, 2012, 197–224; "Dialogue and territoriality in a Mughal history of the millennium", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55/2–3, 2012, 220–54; "Mughal historians and the memory of the Islamic conquest of India", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 43/3, 2006, 275–300.

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in this project, Nizam al-Din Ahmad and his client ʿAbd al-Qadir Badauni, then picked up the baton from Jaʿfar Beg and created histories of India after this model, in which they chronicled the strict dynastic history not just of north India, but that of the entire subcontinent, to which they now referred with the imperial term of "Hindustan" (previously reserved more strictly for the Gangetic plains). Muhammad Qasim Firishtah brought this movement to its fullest fruition by significantly expanding the content of his predecessors as well as by including the history of "pre-Islamic" India as found in Persian translations of Sanskrit texts such as the *Mahabharata*.

Mir Muhammad Maʿsum's contribution falls directly in the middle of this trend. As an officer serving under Nizam al-Din Ahmad in Gujarat (and on one occasion joining forces led by Jaʿfar Beg Qazvini), it was perhaps not surprising that the Sindhi author used a formal model of history that his commanding officers were also putting to use.[10] But beyond that he seems to have been attempting to fill a lacuna in Sindhi history of which Nizam al-Din Ahmad was actually keenly aware. Specifically, in volume 3 of the *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, while discussing the histories of various parts of South Asia (other than Hindustan) Nizam al-Din had complained:

> History books are completely devoid of information regarding the affairs of Sindh, and no chronicle discusses their condition and events, neither in detail nor in summary. The only exception is the author of the *Tabaqat-i Bahadurshahi* who has mentioned the names of a few individuals who had ruled there in different eras and has provided a few lines about how many years each of them had reigned. I, Nizam al-Din Ahmad, the author of the present chronicle will rely on the history *Tabaqat-i Bahadurshahi*.[11]

Nizam al-Din had therefore clearly stated that there was a lacuna in Sindh's history. We possess evidence that Muhammad Maʿsum was probably aware of his patron's opinion. According to Shahnavaz Khan, Muhammad Maʿsum was a "consort" (*damsaz*) of Nizam al-Din during the composition of the *Tabaqat-i Akbari*.[12] Closer in time, the seventeenth-century biographer Shaykh Farid Bhakkari goes even further and claims that the reason Nizam al-Din took Muhammad Maʿsum under his wings in Gujarat was precisely because he found the Sindhi aspirant's interest in history useful for his own historical scholarship.[13] It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Maʿsum had attempted to fill the gap bemoaned by the author of *Tabaqat-i Akbari*. However, he did more than simply provide material to be used as filler by someone like Nizam al-Din. Given the extent of his attachment to his native land, Muhammad

10 Nizam al-Din Ahmad Haravi, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, ed. Brajendranath De (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931–35), vol. II, 330–410.

11 Nizam al-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat*, vol. III, 512.

12 Samsam al-Dawlah Shahnavaz Khan, *Maʾasir al-Umara*, vol. 1, ed. Maulavi ʿAbd al-Rahim (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888), 663.

13 Shaykh Farid Bhakakri, *Zakhirat al-Khavanin*, vol. 1, ed. S. Moinul Haqq (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961–74), 202.

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Maʿsum apparently did not appreciate its past being treated as a brief diversion in a narrative that heavily emphasized the glories of Hindustan as the representative of the entire history of the subcontinent. Instead he composed an alternative chronicle that paralleled the linear history of "Hind" (as expounded by Nizam al-Din) but instead focused on Sindh.

Additionally, Muhammad Maʿsum also improved on the new model by incorporating stories about the pre-Islamic antiquities of the kingdom, thereby creating a longer and presumably superior narrative to the one produced by his patron for Hindustan. His accomplishment in this regard did not involve extensive research as he basically relied only on the medieval *Chachnamah* for the pre-Islamic history of his region. Rather, Maʿsum's unique contribution lay in his creation of one continuous narrative that tied the "Hindu" and "Muslim" periods into one seamless fabric. No other Indo-Persian historian had done this before, but subsequent authors began replicating this model.

As stated above, the most famous of these later writers was the Deccani author Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Astarabadi, better known as Firishtah.[14] We know that Firishtah had access to *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* but not the *Chachnamah* when he composed his massive chronicle of South Asia. He refers to the *Tarikh-i Sindh* in his bibliography, and while he follows Nizam al-Din in the regnal list of the kings of Sindh, he expands the content by incorporating material that corresponds to the information contained in the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*.[15] It is quite reasonable to surmise that Firishtah's inclusion of pre-Islamic history in his narrative was in part inspired by Muhammad Maʿsum's original innovation for the history of Sindh. I will further discuss this feature of the text below.

In short, despite the apparent liminality of his subject matter, the author of the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* played a noteworthy role in the formation and maturation of Indo-Persian historiography in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. All in all, the present article is intended to begin the analysis and re-centring of what is often considered a marginal or regional text of Indo-Persian historiography. Hopefully it will stimulate further studies of the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*, particularly of its exact relationship with other contemporary chronicles of Hindustan and Gujarat that treat similar events. It will also hopefully inspire further exploration of the sizable historical productions of Sindh listed above, each of which deserves individual attention. Below, I will begin with the biography of Mir Muhammad Maʿsum and then proceed to show how historiography functioned as a document both facilitating and contesting imperial domination.

14 For a recent discussion of this see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Intertwined histories: Crónica and Tārīkh in the sixteenth-century Indian Ocean world", *History and Theory,* 49/4, 2010, 118–45, especially p. 144.

15 Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Astarabadi Firishtah, *Tarikh-i Firishtah*, ed. M.R. Nasiri, 4 vols (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2008–15). The bibliographical list is in I: 9, and the section on the Arghuns is in IV: 413–20 which can be compared with Nizam al-Din, *Tabaqat*, III: 519–21.

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Muhammad Maʿsum's family history

Studying the author's biography is relevant, as the conditions of his life and service to the Mughals influenced his scholarship and the composition of his book. More specifically, what the author wrote about his family is significant as it parallels his historiographical vision more broadly. The author basically retold his family history in such a way as to assert the equality or superiority of his lineage vis-à-vis both the Safavid and the Timurid ruling dynasties. In short, the kingdom of Sindh as well as Mir Maʿsum outshone all others in Iran and India.

Sayyid Nizam al-Din Muhammad Maʿsum was born on Monday 7 February 1538 in the town of Bhakkar (modern day Sukkur) in Sindh, about half way between Karachi and Multan on the Indus River in present-day Pakistan.[16] He traced his ancestry to a line of sayyids and saints from Sabzavar (in northeastern Iran) and Qandahar (present-day Afghanistan), the most prominent of these being Sayyid Shir Qalandar and his great uncle Baba Hasan Abdal.[17] He further traced these famous men to the seventh Shiite Imam Musa al-Kazim.[18] This genealogy was significant as it connected the author to the same line of sayyids from which the Safavid family, the ruling dynasty of Iran, also claimed descent. As we will see, the connection to the Safavids was of continued importance to the people of Sindh whose homeland lay in the frontier regions between the Iranian realms and Mughal domains.

Muhammad Maʿsum did not have specific dates about his great ancestor Hasan Abdal. He tells us that his gravesite in Qandahar, which he had visited, served as a shrine to many men and women pilgrims every year. Also there were many miracles that occurred at the site, a fact probably revealed to him through oral accounts.[19] As his titles *Baba* "father" and *Abdal* "wandering ascetic" suggest, Hasan was a holy man and a mystic. Muhammad Maʿsum tells us that Hasan hailed from Sabzavar, and that upon feeling the divine call, he had travelled to Arabia and made pilgrimage to the shrines of Mecca and Medina. Afterwards, Maʿsum claims, during the reign of Timur's son Shah Rukh (r. 1405–47) Baba Hasan "returned from the country of Rūm and Hijaz" to Sabzavar. Here the author erroneously projects backward the political situation of the sixteenth century into the early fifteenth century as the Hijaz was not yet part of the Ottoman Empire (Rūm) in the early 1400s. Maʿsum also claims that Shahrukh was a disciple of Baba Hasan, that later he took his master with him to India, and that the Baba decided to settle in Qandahar because he

16 The date was obtained by U.M. Daudpota, in his "introduction", pages Ḥ-Ṭ. The fullest biography of the author is found in Husam al-Din Rashidi, *Aminulmulk Navabu Miru Muhammadu Masumi Bakkhari* (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1979) which supersedes the biography in Daudpota's introduction, as well as Jamsheed K. Choksy and M. Usman Hasan's "An emissary from Akbar to ʿAbbās I: Inscriptions, texts, and the career of Amīr Muḥammad Maʿṣūm al-Bhakkarī", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 1/1, 1991, 19–29.

17 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 3.

18 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 135.

19 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 134.

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could “smell the scent of love from its soil”.[20] This statement is also of dubious authenticity as Shahrukh never actually campaigned in India.

Yet, while the legendary origin tale of Baba Hasan Abdal may be fictitious or confused, it still fulfils several important functions in the narrative. For one, the author entwines his family history with that of the Mughal dynasty which he was serving at the time of the writing of the book. Moreover, he invents a superior role for his ancestor vis-à-vis the patriarch of the Timurid dynasty as Shahrukh was supposedly a disciple of Baba Hasan Abdal, and that made the latter the spiritual master of the emperor. Third, by inventing a fictitious campaign (called neutrally a *safar* or “journey”) to India by Shahrukh to explain his ancestor’s arrival in the subcontinent, Muhammad Maʿsum was actually distancing the memory of Baba Hasan from the one factual Timurid campaign in South Asia, the violent and destructive raid conducted by Timur in 1398. Fourth, by having him stay back in Qandahar and not proceed further to Hindustan, the author was further exonerating his ancestor from any association with Timurid predations in Hindustan.

In short, the few lines about Baba Hasan Abdal’s origins helped establish Muhammad Maʿsum’s pedigree as at least as old and dignified as the Mughal emperor’s in Delhi. But, as we saw, the genealogy simultaneously created a common ancestry, and hence equality, with the Safavids of Iran. We should also add that at one point Maʿsum refers to Baba Hasan as the *murshid-i kamil* or “perfect guide”, a Sufi term that was used with greater frequency in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries not only by Safavid sources to refer to the Safavid kings but also in the Mughal domain to refer to Emperors Akbar and Jahangir.[21] Again this would imply that the author’s ancestor possessed the same spiritual status as his imperial counterparts. All in all then, Muhammad Maʿsum placed his family at the moment of origination on equal or higher footing with the two powerful imperial dynasties that straddled his homeland.

Now where Baba Hasan Abdal bolstered Muhammad Maʿsum’s lineage vis-à-vis the Mughals and the Safavids, his other ancestor Sayyid Shir Qalandar (d. 1526) helped him assert superiority in the face of the Arghun dynasty that ruled Sindh for much of the sixteenth century. Sayyid Shir’s real name, writes the author, was Muhammad. He was the grandson of Baba Hasan’s sister. His title Qalandar marks him as an itinerant, and even antinomian, holy man of the type that would perform miracles, attract large followings, but also perhaps frighten people with his powers. According to Maʿsum, he was called Shir “lion”, because at some point Amir Zu al-Nun Arghun, the founder of the dynasty, had imprisoned the sayyid in response to slanderous reports that had disconcerted the amir about the holy man’s growing popularity among the inhabitants of Qandahar and its surrounding countryside.[22]

20 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 133–4.

21 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 136. The term is used widely in Safavid sources such as Iskandar Beg Munshi’s *ʿAlamara-i ʿAbbasi* and Qazi Ahmad Qumi’s *Khulasat al-Tavarikh*. Jahangir refers to his father as *murshid* in his memoirs (p. 38) and is addressed as such by a *mansabdar* (p. 251). See Jahangir, *Jahangirnamah: Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Muhammad Hashim (Tehran: Bunyadi Farhangi Iran, 1980).

22 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 137–8.

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Later that day the amir had regretted his insolence towards the sayyid and ordered his release. However, when his men arrived at the jail cell, they saw that the sayyid was gone and in his place a huge and ferocious lion was rolling on the floor mat. Eventually Amir Zu al-Nun and his family went to see this incredible sight, and upon witnessing the situation, the amir confessed his error and begged the sayyid's forgiveness. At this point, Mir Sayyid Shir returned to his human form, and the amir "kissed [his] hands and feet and released him".[23] In short, the brief biography of the author's other ancestor, the leonine holy man of Qandahar, also helped place his lineage on higher ground than another ruling dynasty, not the imperial Mughals or Safavids, but the local kings of Sindh the Arghuns.

That the author used his personal genealogy for historical one-upmanship over other major families is confirmed by how little other information he provided regarding the rest of his ancestors. We know that his paternal grandfather was called Sayyid Murtaza Husayni and he was from the city of Tirmiz in present-day Uzbekistan, located right across the Oxus River from the famous medieval town of Balkh in present-day Afghanistan.[24] Sayyid Murtaza's son, who was the author's father, was born in the same city but eventually came to Bhakkar where he lived for many years and eventually died in 1583.[25] We do not even know his full name, only that he was called Sayyid Safa'i.[26] The only other information regarding him is that he was appointed the Shaykh al-Islam (or the chief jurisconsult) of the city of Bhakkar in 1570 after the death of his predecessor, a certain Shah Qutb al-Din. Presumably Sayyid Safa'i too kept this post until his death.[27] He was buried in Bhakkar, next to a mosque for which he himself had paid the construction and upkeep.[28]

While the paternal side gets rather short shrift from Muhammad Maʿsum, we know a little more about the maternal side, mostly due to the political actions of the author's maternal grandfather, which he could depict positively in the narrative. He tells us almost nothing about his mother. The sole direct piece of information is provided during a brief scene describing an interview between Maʿsum and the emperor Akbar in August 1590.[29] The author had just come from Gujarat to the emperor's court in Lahore, and some presents sent by his mother for the emperor arrived at the same time. After inspecting the presents, the emperor asked Muhammad Maʿsum how long he had been separated from his mother. When the author replied that it had been almost twenty years, the emperor gave him leave to visit her first and then return to court.[30] We do not know if this visit ever took place.

The biography of this lady's father, however, is slightly better chronicled by the author.[31] Sayyid Mir Kalan was from Karbala in modern Iraq, and his family

23 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 138.
24 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 3, 237.
25 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 3, 237.
26 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 3, 237, 244.
27 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 197–237.
28 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 238.
29 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 250–1.
30 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 251.
31 He is identified by the author as a grandfather on p. 194. A simple process of elimination makes him the maternal grandfather.

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was connected to the shrine of the third Shiite imam Husayn b. ʻAli. He had left his homeland and come to Qandahar at some point, and after the conquest of Sindh by the Arghuns, he had moved to Siwistan (now known as Sehwan, about 200 kilometres downstream from Bhakkar) and attached himself to the shrine of Shahbaz Qalandar.[32] The only other appearance of Mir Kalan in the historical narrative is in 1556, where he interceded on behalf of the population of Siwistan whose orchards were in danger of destruction by Sultan Mahmud Khan of Bhakkar during his wars with Mirza ʿIsa Tarkhan.[33]

The author provides equally little about his own life. We get a few glimpses of his education in Islamic sciences, as would be expected of the son of a Shaykh al-Islam. One of his first teachers was a jurist by the name of Qazi Dattu Siwistani, an expert in scriptural exegesis and hadith. However, he was also proficient in *jafr* (divination from writing) and could read Turkic fluently.[34] Muhammad Maʿsum's main mentor was another jurist by the name of Qazi ʿAbd Allah son of Qazi Ibrahim, with whom the author studied hadith rather late in life and from whom he received permission to teach the subject.[35] His teachers in Sufism and mathematics (which could include arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry) were two brothers, Mirak ʿAbd al-Baqi (1575/76) and Mirak ʿAbd al-Rahman Purani (d. 1583/84). The author fondly remembers these men as great cooks who made delicious jams and lamb shank.[36] Additionally, we know that Maʿsum had studied medicine thanks to a statement by U.M. Daudpota, the editor of the Persian text in the 1930s, who had seen two medical treatises composed by the author in manuscript form.[37] It is difficult to assess Muhammad Maʿsum's education as he does not provide a detailed description of the curriculum that he pursued. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the apparent gaps. For instance, there is nothing in the text about *fiqh* or jurisprudence, suggesting a lack of interest in a judicial career on the part of the author. The mention of divination, Sufism, and astronomy on the other hand shows a broader and more universal education than that which would be required for jurisprudence.

Based on his later compositions, Muhammad Maʿsum must have read something in history and poetry as well. Badauni mentions his poetic anthology as well as a verse narrative in imitation of *Yusuf va Zulaykha*, the metrical romance about the prophet Joseph composed by ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami in the fifteenth century.[38] He had also read the works of the twelfth-century poet Nizami Ganjavi, as he later composed five metrical romances in imitation of Nizami's *Khamsah* or "quintet", including an *Akbarnama*, presumably about Emperor Akbar, which was to parallel the *Iskandarnama*, Nizami's story about Alexander the Great.[39] Additionally, based on what has been preserved and cited of his Persian poetry, we can actually identify some of authors with

32 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 198.
33 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 194, 208, 222.
34 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 199–200.
35 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 203.
36 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 215.
37 Daudpota, "Introduction", YṬ.
38 ʿAbd al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab al*-Tavarikh, ed. Tawfiq Subhani (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2001), v. III, 249.
39 Daudpota, "Introduction", 23.

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whom he was familiar. These include, for example, the Persian translation of the *Majalis al-Nafa'is*, an anthology of poets originally composed in Turkic by the Timurid statesman ʿAli Shir Nava'i.[40] Famous lyric poets are there too. Muhamamd Maʿsum quotes or references Khaqani of Shirvan (d. 1190), Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (d. 1325), Shah Niʿmat Allah Vali (d. 1431), and Saʿdi (d. 1292). There is also an echo of a line by the poet Vahshi Bafqi (d. 1583), who lived in Safavid Yazd and was a near contemporary of Muhammad Maʿsum.[41] This reading list shows knowledge of the canon of Persian lyrical classics as well as an awareness of contemporary poets in neighbouring Iran. This is no surprise given the position of Sindh in the frontier region between Safavid and Mughal domains.

Muhammad Maʿsum's education prepared him sufficiently for a secular career in politics. He began working in the service of Sultan Mahmud of Bhakkar, although we do not know what exactly he did for him.[42] At some point, he quit this position and went to the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar, but he did not explain his move. As we saw above, when the author met Akbar in Lahore in the summer of 1590 (Hijri year 998), he told the emperor that he had not seen his mother for almost twenty years. If we take that to be the time he set out for Mughal India, then it means that Muhammad Maʿsum left Bhakkar around the time of the death of his first patron Sultan Mahmud of Bhakkar and the first capture of the city by Mughal forces. This was the time of the collapse of Sultan Mahmud's state in a rebellion that brought much hardship and even a vast outbreak of disease to the city eighteen lunar years before (i.e. Spring of 982 or 1574 CE).[43] ʿAbd al-Baqi Nahavandi (1570–1637), author of *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, supports this hypothesis by stating that Muhammad Maʿsum switched sides and joined the conquering Mughal army that took the city.[44]

If the chaos in Bhakkar provided the "push factor" for Muhammad Maʿsum, a number of causes served as "pull factors". The author writes that at this time, Akbar had been stationed in Nagaur, intent on the complete conquest of Gujarat.[45] He is moreover quoted by his friend Badauni as stating that when he left his homeland and came to the emperor's court, he was very ambitious and had high hopes for himself, imagining that "I would not settle for the rank of a thousand or two thousand".[46] Undoubtedly, part of this fantasy was caused by the author's naïve sense of self-importance, or "from the excess of the desires and illusions of youth (*hava va havas-i javani*)".[47] But at the same time, the Mughals were famous for their wealth and generosity as patrons. In fact, Muhammad Maʿsum knew of a story from the time of the invasion of

40 The line of poetry quoted by Badauni III, 248 was attributed by Navai to a poet called Vali Qalandar. See Ali Shir Nava'i, *Majalis al-Nafais*, ed. Ali Asghar Hikmat (Tehran: Manuchihri, reprint 1985), 213–4.
41 See Badauni and Daudpota, cited above.
42 See the references cited in Daudpota, 10–11.
43 The death of Sultan Mahmud is given in Maʿsum, 235.
44 ʿAbd al-Baqi Nahavandi, *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, ed. M. Hidayat Husayn (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924–27), v. II, 226.
45 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 230.
46 Badauni, *Muntakhab*, III, 248.
47 Badauni, *Muntakhab*, III, 248.

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Gujarat by the Mughal Emperor Humayun (beginning in 1535), where Shah Husayn Arghun (d. 1556), the king of Sindh, had been dissuaded by his commanders from joining the Mughals because he had been told his soldiers might defect to Humayun's service if they saw the wealth and higher paygrade of the Hindustan army. To quote the Sindhi commander Mir Farrukh's words to Shah Husayn, "Once the Arghuns and Tarkhans witness the equipment and baggage of Chaghatay commanders, and then see the emperor distribute the treasures of Gujarat to his victorious army, what soldier would want to remain with you?"[48] Muhammad Maʿsum's expectation of high reward from the Emperor Akbar is related to a similar belief.

Soon, however, reality set in. After a long wait, the author was finally given an audience with the emperor who granted him a meagre rank of twenty, the lowest possible position in the Mughal imperial hierarchy.[49] Muhamamd Maʿsum would have to pay his dues and work his way up through the ranks. The opportunity arrived where it was needed, namely in the kingdom of Gujarat on which Akbar had his eyes. The new Sindhi "subaltern" officer was attached to the army fighting in that region. Most likely, Muhamamd Maʿsum would have ended up a minor figure in Mughal history, a footnote in the Gujarat campaign.

As luck would have it however, Maʿsum's commanding officers were not just conquerors but patrons of culture and great men of letters as well. These included Asaf Khan I (Ghiyas al-Din Ali Qazvini, d. 1581), Asaf Khan II (Jaʿfar Beg Qazvini), Nizam al-Din Ahmad, and finally ʿAbd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan with whom Maʿsum eventually partook in the conquest of Sindh in December 1590. From this point on, Mir Maʿsum's career advanced rapidly. Four years later, now with a *mansab* of 250, he served further expeditions in Qandahar and later in the Deccan. After this, he was sent to Shah ʿAbbas of Iran as part of an embassy from 1601 to 1604. Following Akbar's death, the emperor Jahangir sent the author back to Sindh where he fulfilled official duties until his death shortly thereafter. Mir Maʿsum was a fairly prolific author. In addition to the works mentioned above, he carved numerous rock inscriptions in Sindh, Qandahar, and Gujarat. These have survived to the present day and are mostly published now.[50]

The parallel history of Sindh and Hind

Mir Maʿsum's history of Sindh is the most famous of his compositions. Throughout this book, Mir Maʿsum displays a great deal of local "patriotism". For him, Sindhi history is placed in a linear teleology that stretches from pagan antiquity to the author's time. The early sections are not extensive, but they still merit consideration based on their inclusion. As Manan Asif has shown, Maʿsumi relied on the thirteenth-century Persian text the *Chachnamah* for his

48 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 164.
49 Badauni, *Muntakhab*, III, 248.
50 Daudpota has cited these and Rashidi has collected and published them in his *Aminulmulk Navabu*, 495–543. See also Choksy and Hasan's "An emissary" for a discussion of one of these.

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information about antique Sindh and its Islamization. However, the author made some changes to his source. Asif believes that Maʿsum intended to showcase lineages whose members were loyal to Akbar's rule.[51] This may be true, but significantly, the changes made by the author to his source create a much more complex narrative in which Sindh and Hind are depicted as possessing parallel but independent histories. In other words, whereas the *Chachnamah* uses the terms Sindh and Hind interchangeably, Muhammad Maʿsum makes sure to distinguish them.[52]

Before we analyse this section in some detail, we should again remember that the incorporation of material from the "Hindu" antiquities of the kingdom was an act of novelty in the burgeoning Indo-Persian historiography of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It would be worthwhile to ask why Mir Maʿsum resorted to using this material in the first place. One reason was the nature of his main source, the *Chachnamah*, which had already incorporated this information into the origin narrative of Sindh. But even here, Mir Maʿsum had to exercise a choice in maintaining or expunging such material. At least he might have openly censured such episodes as depicting an age of ignorance and darkness that had been superseded by the arrival of Islam. This was indeed the attitude of scholars in Sindh, according to Tahir Muhammad Nisyani Thattavi, who wrote in 1621 that, no one would write about non-Islamic history in the Arghun period because the poetic and oral source narratives were considered to be legendary nonsense, the incorporation of which in one's books (presumably in Persian or Arabic) would guarantee severe criticism and censure by the author's colleagues.[53] Muhammad Maʿsum was therefore exceptional for the space that he gave to this material in his history.

A significant factor seems to be Muhammad Maʿsum's sense of the past which was closely connected to historical remains from antiquity. We know that he avidly carved inscriptions on buildings or rocks all over South Asia throughout his life, and constructed several structures in his hometown.[54] Furthermore, in one of his poems he specifically wrote that he believed that through such efforts one would be memorialized by subsequent generations.[55] Moreover he refers in his history, with some admiration, to a number of structures that had survived to his day from pre-Islamic times. These included forts all over Sindh and fire temples in Qandahar.[56] In this last attribute, Muhammad Maʿsum resembles his contemporary chronicler of the ʿAdilshahis in the Deccan, namely the Iranian émigré Rafiʿ al-Din Shirazi. As Carl Ernst has

51 Asif, *A Book of Conquest*, 154–5. Arshad Islam in two brief articles had already pointed out some minor discrepancies between Mir Maʿsum and the *Chachnamah* without, however, teasing out their significance. See his "Tārīkh- Maʿṣūmī: An appraisal for its relevance to the history of Sindh", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 47/3, 1999, 39–43 as well his "Indo-Persian historiography with reference to Tarikh-i-Masumi", *Journal of Objective Studies*, 11/1, 1999, 83–93.

52 See the citations to the *Chahnamah* in Asif, *A Book of Conquest*, 81, 84, 90, 108, and 118.

53 Nisyani, *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, 12.

54 Shaykh Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhirat*, 204.

55 Daudpota, "Introduction", k.

56 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 10 and 132.

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shown, Shirazi's attitude towards the Ellora temples in Vijayanagar was one of aesthetic appreciation, and not religious moralizing. This was in part because Shirazi had already become accustomed to such views of pre-Islamic antiquities through his exposure to the ruins of Persepolis back in his home region of Fars.[57] Likewise, I believe that Muhamamd Maʿsum's interest in the physical memorials of the past had reinforced his sense of the historical continuity of Sindh from pre-Islamic times down to his own age.

Finally, Emperor Akbar's interest in the non-Muslim narratives of South Asia played a role in Muhammad Maʿsum retaining the accounts of Hindu rulers of Sindh in his history. Again, according to Tahir Muhammad Nisyani, after the conquest of Sindh Akbar had asked the Tarkhan amirs at his court to bring him a bilingual Sindhi-Persian poet to tell him about a local historical tale. The tale involved an early Islamic ruler named ʿUmar who had abducted a non-Muslim woman and kept her for a while, and had therefore cast doubt on her sexual purity with her husband and her people. ʿUmar, who knew that she had not succumbed to his "seduction", convened a meeting with the woman's kinfolk (*qabilah*) and swore "the oath of Hindus" (*qasam-i hunud*) to confirm her righteousness. She further underwent an ordeal of fire which she survived unscathed, and this settled the matter completely.[58] According to Nisyani, in the version recited by the bilingual poet, the woman was said to have had a child by ʿUmar. This detail had, however, upset Akbar, who was finally assuaged when ʿAbd Rahim Khan-i Khanan dispatched other poets who revised the story to the emperor's liking. One of these poets was Mir Muhammad Maʿsum, who retold the story in a Masnavi modelled after the popular work of Nizami and called his *Husn va Naz*.[59] Maʿsum thus participated in two parallel strands of Mughal historical scholarship: one involving the chronological history of South Asia by chroniclers and the other entailing the translation of Indic narratives (in Sanskrit or vernaculars) into Persian. No wonder then that he became the first person to compose a historical narrative of a South Asian region that incorporated non-Islamic material as well.

Now, if we have a better sense of why such pagan material was maintained in his narrative, we must still understand how the author employed such episodes in his history. The ancient kingdom of Sindh is envisioned by the author as an independent realm alongside Hind or Hindustan. In this way, Maʿsum contests the version of the subcontinent's past projected by the Delhi-centric imperial historiography that portrayed various South Asian kingdoms as merely regional polities. Mir Maʿsum's Sindh had its own historical trajectory that rivalled Delhi's. He described the old capital of Aroṛ as a great city endowed with wonderful buildings, palaces, and gardens, and blessed with "all the good things of civilization (*tamaddun*) that a visitor would desire". This city was the capital of a vast kingdom that stretched east up to Kashmir and Kanauj, westwards to

57 Carl Ernst, "Admiring the works of the ancients: The Ellora temples as viewed by Indo-Muslim authors", in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 98–120, especially 108.

58 Nisyani, *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, 32–5.

59 Nisyani, *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, 35–6.

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Makran and Debal (Baluchistan and Karachi), southwards to Surat and Diu (in Gujarat), and north to Qandahar and Sistan. All the nobles and peasants were peaceful and obedient.[60]

This ancient kingdom not only enjoyed power and prosperity, it even possessed its own laws and institutions.[61] These institutions (*zavabit*) were divided into four categories. One, relating to the army, assured regular pay for soldiers. A second set, targetting peasants, imposed thrice-yearly taxes which could, however, be bartered in exchange for labour on construction projects. A third set established duties and imposts on merchants. Finally, the fourth body of legislation regulated craftsmen and their commissions from royal workshops.[62]

In short, ancient Sindh was a well-run, large, civilized, and prosperous realm. Maʿsum took pride in this pre-Islamic history and freely admitted that the ancient kingdom was run by non-Muslim kings with help from Brahmin scribes who managed the daily running of the state and knew "arithmetic, as well as Sindhi and Hindi languages and scripts".[63] As such, if not superior, Sindh was by no means inferior to Hind. In fact as the progression of the narrative shows, the violent conquest and chaotic governance of the region by the Mughals of Hindustan contrasted sharply with Sindh's independent and stable antique past.

Even the events of the coming of Islam and the subsequent centuries that witnessed the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate were used by Maʿsum in order to portray Sindh's precedence over Hind. The early Arab conquests as well as the later takeover and settlement by Khurasanis during the Ghaznavid and Ghurid periods took place before the Islamization of Hindustan. The author reminds his readers that Islam had come to Sindh with the armies of Muhammad b. Qasim while Hindustan had remained outside the purview of the caliphate. Later on, Sultan Shihab al-Din Sam had commissioned the slave general Qutb al-Din Aybak for the conquest of the subcontinent which began in Multan, Uchch, and Sindh. Delhi was indeed the last place to be conquered by the Ghurids.[64] Nor was there political and territorial uniformity in the new domains. Mir Maʿsum was keen to emphasize that the Ghurid conquests in India comprised four independent kingdoms (*mamalik*). Uchch/Multan/Sindh were ruled by Nasir al-Din Qubacha, Lahore by Taj al-Din Yildiz, Lakhnavati by Khalji kings, and Delhi by Shams al-Din Iltutmish.[65]

Moreover, Maʿsum points out that the nobles and scholars from Khurasan who came to the subcontinent after the Mongol conquest of Iran first emigrated to Sindh and only subsequently to Delhi.[66] The coming of Khurasanis was an

60 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 8–9.
61 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 10.
62 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 10.
63 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 11. The presence of Brahmin viziers in service to medieval sultans is attested in other sources as well. See Sunil Kumar, "Bandagi and naukari: Studying transitions in political culture and service under the north Indian sultanates, thirteenth–sixteenth centuries", in Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (eds), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60–107, especially 90–97.
64 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 34–5.
65 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 36.
66 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 36.

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important part of the story of the rise of the Delhi Sultanate for later historians, and our author was contesting the erasure of Sindh in these teleological Hindustan-centric narratives.

Maʿsum did not deny that his native land was eventually incorporated into the Delhi-based empires of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, his account still highlighted the unique perspective of Sindh in this political reality. For one, the author emphasized the significance of the region as a frontier against Mongol invasion. We know that defeating the Mongols served as an important test of sovereignty and legitimacy for Delhi Sultans. However, Maʿsum reminded his readers that many of the actual battles against the enemy took place in Sindh and Multan, which bore the brunt of the invasions.[67] Obviously, Delhi could not have survived without the victories in those western territories.

Also, while taking pride in Sindh's importance for the defence of the sultanate, Maʿsum showed some ambivalence about the imperial centre and its expansive reach into subject kingdoms. For example, in describing the reign of ʿAla al-Din Khalji, Maʿsum admitted that the control and management of the state reached their apex under that sultan. However, with the advantage of hindsight, he warned his readers to recall the cyclical theory of history according to which states gradually attained a climax of maturity from which they eventually declined. He quoted an Arabic phrase, "When something reaches completion, then you may expect it to decline".[68] In short Maʿsum intimated that the expansion of the sultanate under the Khaljis led to its eventual downfall. Readers would be able to draw the parallel between the Khaljis and the new Delhi-based Mughal Empire under Akbar that had also experienced territorial and administrative growth in the years leading up to the composition of the history of Sindh.

Maʿsum's narrative of the Delhi Sultanate ended with Timur's sack of Delhi in 1398. The difference between Mir Maʿsum's version and other Indo-Persian historians is quite instructive. Whereas Hindustani chronicles generally highlighted the severity of slaughter while simultaneously attempting to connect the Sayyid dynasty that subsequently ruled from Delhi to Timurid sovereignty, Maʿsum treated the incident as the severing of Sindh's subjugation to the sultanate. In other words, if Sindh's legal status was determined through its earlier takeover by Delhi Sultans, the region no longer owed loyalty to Hindustan once the Timurids had conquered the old capital. Instead it was the new relationship with the Timurids that determined Sindh's political standing in the fifteenth century. The author asserted explicitly that, "the obedience of the people of Sindh to the sultans of Hind lasted until the arrival of his majesty Lord of the Auspicious Conjunctions [Timur]… After that, the rulers of Sindh freed themselves from obedience to the emperors of Delhi and became independent".[69] In short, the autonomy of Sindh was guaranteed by the same source of sovereignty that legitimized the Sayyid rulers of Delhi – namely, their investiture by the Timurids.

67 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 38–49.
68 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 44.
69 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 59–60.

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Interestingly, Maʿsum also claims this autonomy to be rooted in the last years of the Delhi Sultanate when Sindh was ruled by the independent dynasty of kings referred to as the "Jams".[70] According to our author, when Firuzshah was declared sultan in Sindh, following Muhammad Tugluq's death, the Sindhi ruler Jam Khayr al-Din immediately challenged the new monarch and chased him out as far as Sihwan. Having thus asserted his independence, Khayr al-Din then ruled with goodness and justice, and improved the life of the peasants and other subjects.[71] Firuzshah, however, would not be content with this challenge and subsequently invaded Sindh, defeated the Jams, and reinstated them back on their throne.[72]

These latter events would have compromised the autonomy of the Jams as they had been appointed on their thrones by the sultan of Delhi. However, this apparent setback is skilfully used by Maʿsum to establish the complete independence of Sindh during the events of Timur's invasion. According to our author, when Timur's grandson Pir Muhammad moved his armies to Multan and beyond, the representatives of Delhi in Bhakkar fled and left the province defenceless. The safety of the town was secured by a local sayyid Abu al-Ghays who took refuge with the prophet Muhammad. The prophet appeared to the Timurid prince in a dream and showed him the Bhakkari sayyid and demanded his good treatment. Pir Muhammad obeyed the prophet and even gave the sayyid the pargana of Alwar as his reward.[73]

It is during this phase of independence that Maʿsum presents us with his ideal king. This was Jam Nizam al-Din, known as Nindo, who ruled as an independent ruler (*hakim-i ba istiqlal*) with the support of the ʿulama, the Sufis, the army, and the subjects. He spent his early years in colleges and Sufi hospices. He was humble and lived as an ascetic. He first moved from Thatta to Bhakkar, put down bandits, filled the storehouses, and appointed his own household slave (*khanah*'*zad*) in charge. Having secured Bhakkar, he returned to Thatta and ruled for 48 years in such a way that all his subjects lived in peace and comfort. He would often frequent his stables and tell his horses that he did not wish to ride them to battle other than in holy war, as he was surrounded by Islamic polities which he did not wish to attack and cause the blood of Muslims to be spilled. He even managed to keep off a Mongol (Arghun) army that attacked Sindh from Qandahar. In short, Jam Nizam al-Din stands for the old glory of Sindh, where Islam and Muslims were protected, peace prevailed, bandits were suppressed, and Mongol Arghuns were kept at bay.[74] His reign in fact can be contrasted with the chaos created by Mughal armies and early governors during the initial conquest.

The other Moghuls

The end of the Jams and the start of Mongol era of Sindh began with the Arghuns. This is the longest section of the text, and provides a narrative for

70 On the Jams see Simon Digby, "The coinage and genealogy of the later Jāms of Sind", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2, 1972, 125–34.

71 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 64.

72 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 65–6.

73 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 68–70.

74 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 73–5.

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an alternative "Moghul" dynasty of South Asia. The Arghuns, we are told, were some of the best members of the Chaghatay dispensation (*ulus-i Chaghatay*) that comprised the Timurid military elite. The ancestor of the family, one Amir Zu al-Nun, was noticed by Sultan Abu Sa'id Mirza, Akbar's ancestor, and was shown such favour that his rank surpassed that of blood relatives.[75] According to Maʿsum, the Amir was stationed in Qandahar where he eventually gained independence from the Timurids (*istiqlal girift*) and commanded real Mongols such as Hazara and Negüdari retinues (*ahsham*).[76] The author's representation of the history of the Arghuns is quite similar to his understanding of the history of the Jams. Both had independence from Timurids, be that Timur himself or his descendant Abu Sa'id Mirza – in other words the two glorious ancestors from whom Akbar could claim his sovereignty.

Maʿsum did not pretend that the Timurids were inferior in rank to the Arghuns; quite the contrary. For example, he narrated the story of Badiʿ al-Zaman Mirza, the rebellious son of Sultan Husayn Bayqara whom the Arghuns were eager to please while he was a refugee with them in Qandahar. The fact that Badiʿ al-Zaman Mirza asked for the hand of and was given Amir Zu al-Nun's sister in marriage, also shows the amir's inferiority of rank and subservience to the Timurid master.[77] Maʿsum even quoted a statement of Sultan Husayn Bayqara expressing his disbelief that his son would abandon his royal family (*khandan-i saltanat*) and would instead join "servants" (*mulazi-man*) in Qandahar.[78] This subservient relationship continues into the early sixteenth century when the expansion of the Arghuns into Sindh is justified as yielding to and getting out of the way of Babur in Kabul, and even after Babur's invasion of the Punjab, Maʿsum has Shah Beg Arghun arguing that they should move further south and invade Gujarat to avoid conflict with the Baburids.[79]

However, what Arghuns lacked in formal status vis-à-vis the Timurids, they more than made up for through their loftier character. For Maʿsum pulls no punches when it comes to describing the descendants of Timur as a drunk, scheming, and disunited lot. For example, he recounts the story of how the wife of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, and mother of prince Muzaffar Husayn Mirza, conspired with the vizier Nizam al-Mulk to murder prince Muhammad Mu'min Mirza, the sultan's grandson while the latter was imprisoned in a fort. Maʿsum reminds his readers that the sultan was drunk out of his mind when he signed off on the young man's murder.[80] Or later in Kabul, when Mirza Ulugh Beg, the fourth son of Abu Saʿid Mirza, dies and is succeeded by his underage son Mirza ʿAbd al-Razzaq, civil war breaks out between a domineering Shiram Zikah and other amirs who eventually murder him and throw the town into chaos.[81] The author continues this theme into the reign of

75 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 80.
76 Maʿsum, *Tarikh,* 80–1.
77 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 84.
78 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 86.
79 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 104, 126.
80 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 87.
81 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 98.

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Babur's son Humayun, claiming that lack of support by the Arghuns for Humayun, while he was on the run from the Afghans, was actually due to the disunity of haughty Timurid notables themselves, who first prevented the possibility of peaceful negotiations with the Arghuns, and then devolved into infighting and betrayal of each other.[82] The Arghun ruler, we are told, had been prepared to leave Sindh to Humayun and conquer Gujarat instead. However, the division among the imperial forces and their depredations of the harvests and grain stores of Sindh forced the Arghuns to resist them.[83]

Unlike the Timurids, the Arghuns display courage, foresight, and unity. For example, while the sons of Sultan Husayn Bayqara and their servants dissolve and flee before the invading Uzbek Shibani Khan, Amir Zu al-Nun Arghun holds his ground, fights the Uzbek army, and dies in battle.[84] After his death, in a great show of unity, his two sons Shah Beg and Muhammad Muqim meet with all the Arghun amirs, their Tarkhan allies, and other military figures, and elect Shah Beg to be their leader. In return, the new king makes no changes in anyone's position (*mansab*) as determined from the time of his deceased father. This behaviour stands in contrast to the dynastic struggles and civil conflicts of the Timurids.[85] The Arghuns are even shown the same respect by Saha Ismaiʿl as that befitting royal Timurids. Mir Maʿsum claims that when Shah Beg personally met with the Shah through the intercession of Durmish Khan Shamlu, he was exempted by the Shah from full prostration, and was only asked to kneel "according to the Chaghatay custom (*bi ay'in-i töra-i Chaghata'iyah*)".[86] Finally, when Shah Beg dies, Maʿsumi tells us that he was mourned in proper Chingissid tradition (*rusum-i Chingiziyah*).[87] In short, the Arghuns, while technically a lower rank family in the *ulus*, possessed all the respect accorded to the royal family, whom they surpassed in character and quality.

All in all, the treatment of the pre-Islamic, pre-Mughal, and early Mughal history of Sindh by Maʿsum revolved around implicit or explicit comparisons that distinguished "Sindh" from "Hind" and proclaimed its independence and even superiority. The author's coverage of the reign of Akbar and his conquests in the lower Indus continues and intensifies the contrast. The text provides a narrative containing oppressive and violent mismanagement of the region by Mughal governors until its final and definitive incorporation by ʿAbd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan. The reason for this, besides the obvious need to praise the Mughal commander, appears to have been to justify his very presence in Sindh. Based on a few contemporary letters by the Mughal chief minister Abu Al-Fazl, it seems that Khan-i Khanan was not initially supposed to capture Sindh at all, but was to proceed to Qandahar. However, the khan preferred to capture the much more profitable lands along the Indus River.[88] Maʿsum's book would therefore validate his patron's actions retroactively.

82 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 169, 175.
83 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 168–70.
84 Maʿsum, *Tarikh,* 101–2.
85 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 102.
86 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 107.
87 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 127.
88 Bilgrami, "The Mughal annexation", 38–9.

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The pretext for the invasion of Sindh was provided by the disruption caused in the kingdom during the political struggles that broke out on the scene between the death of Mirza Shah Hasan Arghun on 16 December 1554 and the death of the last independent king of Bhakkar Sultan Mahmud Khan on 29 May 1574.[89] This period, lasting two decades, includes many themes already at work in the rest of the *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi*. The battles pit the network of Arghun and Tarkhan lineages (*uymaq*s/*moghul*) against low-born retainers and slaves.[90] The succession struggles witness the crucial role of powerful women, such as the mother of Sultan Mahmud Khan who urged him to take the throne but saved the lives of Arghun and Tarkhan notables.[91] We also see the key role played by the ʿulama of Sindh (such as the author's grandfather) serving as mediators during peace negotiations.[92] Finally we can observe the disruptive role played by the Portuguese, who through their raids prevented the formation of a strong unified kingdom in Sindh.[93] In short, Sultan Mahmud Khan of Bhakkar was in no position to stem the rising tide of Mughal power to his east.

Prior to his death, Mahmud Khan had tried to play both his imperial neighbours (the Safavids and Mughals), as had the earlier Arghuns. He had tried to make alliances with the Mughal in 1557/58 by marrying Taj Khanum, the daughter of a close associate of Bayram Khan, the powerful minister of the emperor Akbar.[94] In the same year, Sultan Mahmud received the title of khan from the Safavid Shah Tahmasp, along with the paraphernalia of lordship. Five years later, the Safavid Shah had sent the Bhakkari ruler a ring, a crown, a belt, a robe, a parasol, and other items and given him the title of *khan-i khanan*. Making simultaneous alliances with the Safavids and the Mughals had been a strategy used by the rulers of Sindh since the time of the Arghuns. Yet this was not a sustainable policy. With the fall of Bayram Khan in 1561, the death of Sultan Mahmud in 1574, and the death of Shah Tahmasp in 1576 and the ensuing civil war in Iran, the emperor Akbar had no major hurdles in his desire for annexing the kingdom.[95]

Maʿsum claims that as Mahmud Khan had already expressed submission to the Mughal Emperor, the latter dispatched a governor called Gisu Khan to take control of both Bhakkar and Thatta on 29 August 1574. Gisu Khan plundered the city, and began ruling in Bhakkar as a tyrant.[96] When the news of Gisu Khan's heavy-handed and destructive methods reached Akbar, he sent another army led by Muhammad Tursun Khan in order to replace him in April 1575. After negotiations fell through, Gisu Khan went back to court. An audit of the treasury was conducted and all the women of Mahmud Khan's harem were sent to Akbar in Lahore.[97]

89 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 189–235.
90 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 187–8, 190.
91 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 188.
92 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 193–4.
93 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 207.
94 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 223.
95 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 223–5.
96 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 242–3.
97 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 244–5.

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However, internal opposition at the Mughal court led to Akbar changing his mind, appointing Tursun Khan as governor of Agra, assigning Banwalidas as the *karori* of Bhakkar, and instating Sayyid Muhammad Amroha (with a mansab of 1000) as governor as well as *sadr* (chief religious officer) in December 1575.[98] Once again, the excessive taxation imposed by the sayyid led to armed rebellion in some villages.[99] Sayyid Muhammad died soon afterwards on 30 October 1576, and Akbar appointed his son Sayyid Abu al-Fazl in his place. The latter brutally put down the peasant rebellion.[100] Soon thereafter, on 10 January 1578, Akbar's eunuch Iʿtimad Khan was appointed governor, but his insolence and bad behaviour offended both the imams of Bhakkar as well as the army, who eventually assassinated him on 16 May 1578.[101]

Akbar then sent Fath Khan Maharat along with Raja Parmanand (Todarmal's relative) to replace the dead eunuch. Two years later, a rebellion broke out in Parmanand's absence, and so Akbar made Fath Khan sole governor. The latter, however, was a simpleton and when his ineffective deputy Shahab Khan sparked another armed resistance and was killed, Akbar fired Fath Khan and replaced him, on 2 March 1586, with Muhammad Sadiq Khan who was also commissioned with taking Thatta.[102] Muhammad Sadiq, however, was faced with stiff resistance from the Tarkhan ruler of Thatta Mirza Jani Beg, and the latter was rewarded for his mettle by being accepted by Akbar as the ruler of Thatta under Mughal overlordship.[103] Meanwhile, locusts laid waste to the grain of Bhakkar and famine broke out.

Akbar tried to deal with his problem in March of 1588 by appointing yet another new governor, Ismaʿil Quli Khan, who was actually in Multan and sent his son Rahim Quli Beg in his stead. Rahim Quli managed to turn the economy around and bring back prosperity. However, as his father was appointed to a post elsewhere, he too left Bhakkar, which then became the *jagir* of Shiruyah Sultan in the middle of December 1588.[104] The new governor, however, was an alcoholic and left the work of government to his purchased slaves. After another armed rebellion, he too was fired and was replaced by Muhammad Sadiq Khan again who sent his son Zahid Khan on 17 February 1590.[105] While Zahid Khan ruled quite competently, misfortune befell the province again and the harvest failed leading to another famine.[106]

This seemingly endless and chaotic series of disasters under Mughal rule, brought about by incompetence or natural calamity, obviously sets up the narrative for a positive denouement. In a rather brief closing section, Maʿsum completes his story by describing the eventual conquest of the whole of Sindh by ʿAbd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan. The author states that he himself partook in this campaign under Khan-i Khanan's command. We find out that the Khan-i

98 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 245.
99 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 245–6.
100 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 246.
101 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 246.
102 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 247.
103 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 247–9.
104 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 249.
105 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 250.
106 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 250.

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Khanan as well as Muhammad Sadiq Khan (the calamities of whose governorship the author had attributed to natural disasters) had interceded on the author's behalf with the emperor, who gave Maʿsum a *jagir* in Thatta.[107] Khan-i Khanan arrived in Bhakkar on 11 December 1590. The invasion of Thatta began not long after that. After a series of battles involving field artillery and Portuguese support for the Tarkhans, the Mughal forces finally defeated Jani Beg. The latter was delivered to the emperor and given a *mansab* of 5000.[108] Jani Beg, we are told, eventually died in the Deccan in February 1600 while accompanying Mughal forces against Ahmednagar. However, Khan-i Khanan asked for his son, Ghazi Beg, to be given Thatta in his father's place.[109] In short, without describing the condition of Khan-i Khanan's reign in Sindh, the narrative comes to an abrupt end, with the new governor having brought stability to the region and even having allowed some continuity by maintaining part of the old ruling dynasty.

Conclusion

We can see how closely intertwined was the rise of historiography in Sindh with the Mughal rule. Its first author had served the Mughals, and even as he advocated for the superiority of his native kingdom, he was still engaged with intellectual developments and the political power of Hindustan. It is hard to imagine the fate of Persian historical literature in the region without Akbar's conquests in the late 1590s.

Still, Mir Maʿsum should not be seen as a mere "translator" of Hindustani ideas in the provinces. Instead, his work provides a good example of how local agents mediated Mughal power in their various conquests.[110] The role played by our author is quite complex. We are especially fortunate to have his words on the matter.[111] On the one hand, he helped create the empire as both soldier and author. As we saw above, Mir Maʿsum fought in Gujarat, gave intellectual support to his commanding officer Nizam al-Din Ahmad as he composed a chronicle of Hindustan, and even rendered Sindhi historical romances into Persian in accordance with the taste of the emperor Akbar. In other words, he was personally accustomed to the way the empire expanded and entrenched itself in western India.

107 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 251,
108 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 252–6.
109 Maʿsum, *Tarikh*, 256.
110 See C.A. Bayly's *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
111 A rare advantage for the Mughal as well as the colonial period; a good example of the challenge for the British period is Nicholas Dirks' study of the Brahman Boria who was among many Indian participants who conducted Colin Mackenzie's first general survey of India in "Colonial histories and native informants: biography of an archive", in Breckenridge and van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press 1994), 279–313; see also Harjot Oberoi, "Empire, Orientalism, and Native Informants: The Scholarly Endeavours of Sir Attar Singh Bhadour", *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 17/1 and 2, 2010, 95–113.

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Mir Maʿsum could therefore present himself as a loyal subject to the Mughals, familiar both with imperial practices and with the local history, geography, elite families, revenue system, and shrines in his native land. Additionally, as we saw above, the author could serve as a go-between on another level, namely between the current Mughal commander Khan-i Khanan and the emperor, justifying the former's apparent and initial disregard for imperial commands. Thus, in a political and social setting less complex than, say, eighteenth-century India, Persian-speaking local intermediaries such as Mir Maʿsum could assume several functions at once precisely because such intermediaries were relatively few in number. Naturally, they in turn benefitted from the opportunities provided by Mughal conquest and overthrow of former elite lineages. In the space provided by the fall of the Arghuns or Tarkhans, a descendant of a shaykh with no significant Turco-Mongol ancestry could now become a *mansabdar* in the wealthy Mughal state, offering military service and historical scholarship in exchange.

The fact that historiography served as the discursive tool by which the author attempted to accomplish his multiple roles is quite significant.[112] By participating in the historiographical movement of the late sixteenth century, Maʿsum was adjoining his newly conquered region to intellectual patterns that were trans-regional and India-wide (or empire-wide). He was defining Sindh as having been intimately connected to the fortunes of Hindustan (as opposed to, say, Gujarat, Afghanistan, Iran, or Central Asia) for all its history. And this history moved along a linear narrative already designed to function as the teleology of the Mughal Empire.

Yet, all the while the author was able to sabotage at least the intellectual hegemony of the Mughals as well. He could also maximize possibilities that were more difficult to fulfil in the imperial heartlands. For example, one of the most important teleological myths that was being worked out in Hindustan in the late sixteenth century was that the state under Akbar had perfected a distinctly South Asian form of kingship that harkened back to pre-Islamic periods as understood through Persian translations of Sanskrit classics.[113] This approach was resisted in Hindustan itself by some member of the Indo-Muslim elite such as ʿAbd al-Qadir Badauni and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. But in the periphery, where the conquest and mismanagement of the province had already caused a great deal of disruption and displacement of local elites, a local go-between such as Mir Maʿsum could much more easily and explicitly deploy the complete mythos that was perhaps merely implicit in the imperial heartland. It was quite significant that the author used the possibility of a single narrative spanning both "pagan" and "Islamic" periods not in order to aggrandize the conqueror but to celebrate his vanquished homeland, subverting the very imperial mythos and turning it back on itself. Even other

112 See Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

113 Carl W. Ernst, "Muslim studies of Hinduism? A reconsideration of Arabic and Persian translations from Indian languages", *Iranian Studies*, 36/2, 2003, 173–95; Audrey Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

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myths, such as the direct link to the Turco-Mongol ancestry of the emperors, were being deployed by Maʿsum in favour of the local Arghuns and Tarkhans overthrown by the Timurids.[114] Finally, contrasting Khan-i Khanan with his less competent predecessors certainly legitimized the Mughal commander's rule while simultaneously creating a space in which the author could severely censure imperial mismanagement by several of its agents. In short, if Mughal India used history to give itself a place of significance in the unfolding of South Asian imperial destiny,[115] Mir Maʿsum both helped place his native kingdom into the teleology of Mughal rule and repurposed the narrative structure and language through which such rule could be criticized.

But why was this allowed by the Mughal court? If the emperor could change the content of a Sindhi folktale by expressing his discontent, why did he or others not express their dislike about a historical text that criticized his rule? It is hard to know for sure, but a particular feature of the text may be relevant, namely, that the author reserves his censure not for the emperor personally but for incompetent or rapacious *jagirdar*s. In this context, the emperor could stand above the fray, while low-level *mansabdar*s kept a watchful and judgemental eye on their superior *jagirdar*s and *mansabdar*s, believing the emperor to be ultimately on their side.[116] We know that the imperial court was quite wary of provincial governors developing deep regional ties which they might use in a bid for independence. Much administrative effort was undertaken in the late sixteenth century to prevent this possibility. I think the existence of a text like *Tarikh-i Maʿsumi* reflects a similar purpose in the realm of ideas. What is taken for granted in such configurations is the role of the emperor as supreme arbiter, as if he himself were not the source of the power struggle, but were rather a disinterested, almost divine power, that could remedy its injuries, and settle its imbalances.[117]

We can find parallels to this configuration in the textual production of other provinces too. For instance Mirza Nathan, the relatively low-level *mansabdar* in

114 On the problematic role of the local agents see Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

115 An issue raised for the British period by Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

116 We can see this image of the emperor as an impartial judge in courtly sessions during Jahangir's reign as shown recently by Corinne Lefèvre "Beyond diversity: Mughal legal ideology and politics", in T. Ertl and G. Kruijtzer (eds), *Law Addressing Diversity. Pre-Modern Europe and India in Comparison (13th–18th Centuries)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 116–41; "Messianism, rationalism and inter-Asian connections: The Majalis-i Jahangiri (1608–11) and the socio-intellectual history of the Mughal ʿulama", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 54/3, 2017, 317–38; A. Kollatz, *Inspiration und Tradition: Strategien zur Beherrschung von Diversität am Mogulhof und ihre Darstellung in Maǧālis-i Ǧahāngīrī* (ca. 1608–11) von ʿAbd al-Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2016); and Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Frank disputations: Catholics and Muslims in the court of Jahangir (1608–11)", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 46/4, 2009, 457–511.

117 I am inspired here by Steven Loyal and Stephen Quilley, "The particularity of the universal: critical reflections on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power and the state", *Theory and Society*, 46/5, 2017, 429–62.

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early seventeenth-century Bengal, often highlighted the arrogance and improprieties of the governor Islam Khan Chishti in his *Baharistan-i Ghaybi*, a narrative of the events in the province which he was writing to the imperial court.[118] Likewise, the Sindhi author Yusuf Mirak in his *Tarikh-i Mazhar-i Shahjahani* detailed the predatory behaviour of Mughal *jagirdar*s in his region, but also stated that the peasants at times took their complaints directly to the imperial court and were able to receive a decree from the emperor Shah Jahan that ordered the offending governor to desist.[119] Such textual products could therefore function as the discursive site where Mughal officers lower down the hierarchy of ranks could have a voice, a sense of being able directly to address the court or other socially significant (and literate) elites whose consensus and good will would be necessary for a *jagirdar* or *subahdar* in order to have a successful tenure at office. Yet all the while they bolstered the empire as they naturalized the emperor as the peacemaker among all the conflicting constituents that served him.

118 Ali Anooshahr, "No man can serve two masters: Conflicting loyalties in Bengal during Shahjahan's rebellion of 1624", in Ebba Koch (ed.), in collaboration with A. Anooshahr, *The Mughal Empire from Jahangir to Shah Jahan: Politics, Art, Architecture, Law, Literature and Aftermath* (Mumbai, India: Marg Foundation, 2019), 54–63.

119 Yusuf Mirak *Tarikh-i Mazhar*, 171.

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