

binaries that illustrate a dualism, as does Madhva, while ultimately wrapping them up in a non-dualistic package (pp. 146–7). These are points that Okita brings out in a learned and sensitive analysis of Sanskrit commentarial traditions that contains extensive translations with footnoted originals. He demonstrates the vitality of those traditions in the eighteenth century and the creativity of Baladeva as a theologian – one who sometimes diverges from both Madhva and Jiva to stake out positions of his own.

Okita's book offers a wedding of thoughtful old-school textual scholarship with newer, historically oriented early modern studies. The textual scholarship, however, is clearly the partner hosting the feast, providing rich fare that will be enjoyed by those interested in the development of technical Indian philosophy but which most historians will likely find hard fully to digest. These will nevertheless find it worth coming to see what's going on – sampling some heavy theological courses to understand how they are put together and appreciating the neatly presented early modern hors d'oeuvres.

Daniel Gold
Cornell University

WHEELER M. THACKSTON (ed. and trans.):
Abu'l-Fazl. *The History of Akbar*. Volume I.
(Murty Classical Library of India.) xxx, 614 pp. Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Press, 2015. ISBN 978 0 674 42775 4.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X15001251

The last decade has seen a resurgence in the academic interest in Mughal history, which has complicated the received view of early modern India. On the one hand, some scholars have focused on the vernacular (Aditya Behl, Jonardon Ganeri, Allison Busch, Sandhya Sharma) and drawn attention to the emergence of regional literature and philosophy connected in complex ways with imperial patronization. Other scholars have emphasized the Mughal court culture as an aspect of a much larger Persianate phenomenon (Muzaffar Alam, Lisa Balabanlilar, A. Azfar Moin, Rajeev Kinra), and located commonalities in state structure, resource extraction, and literary culture in high Persian from the Iranian plateau through Central Asia and into India. What has emerged is a view of the Mughals that is not that of the historians of British India who first translated the great Mughal histories and formed the view of the dynasty that was little transformed by nationalist historians. Both these perspectives, the vernacular and the imperial, no longer assume the cartoonish assumption of a good Akbar anticipating a secular Indian state and a communal Aurangzeb laying the foundations for an Islamic Pakistan.

Wheeler M. Thackston enters this robust field with a new edition and translation of a portion of the first part of Abu'l-Fazl's *Akbarnama*, a book that consciously set the pattern for a new style of writing history in Persian. The text itself is perhaps the best-known primary source for the emperor Akbar (1556–1605), and was originally translated into serviceable English by H. Beveridge for *Bibliotheca Indica* in 1897. Abu'l-Fazl (d. 1602) famously wished in this “story of Akbar” to situate his patron as a monarch in touch with both God and reason, a duality expressed in an obtuse and exalted Persian, which has confounded generations of subsequent historians who have tended to use the text as a source for information on anecdotes, persons and dates rather than as a creative envisioning of history.

The Persian text is lightly edited and vigorously translated by Thackston, as is to be expected from the doyen of translators of pre-modern Persian. It is a fresh translation founded on the Persian text of the Calcutta edition, drawing carefully on occasion from a number of manuscripts. In addition to the text and translation, the book has an introduction, maps, index, bibliography, glossary and very helpful notes. The translator manages to catch Abu'l-Fazl's frustrating willingness to combine arcane Persian, as in his fawning introduction and attempt to situate Akbar within a horoscope and Adamic framework, with really quite simple and plodding annals of battles and court events, presumably taken from the archives by Abu'l-Fazl's assistants. The translation is first class and Thackston is to be congratulated on catching the shifting registers that so often obfuscate more than illuminate Abu'l-Fazl. At the same time, Thackston barely situates the *Akbarnama* itself, satisfying himself with an introduction of only ten pages. This is unfortunate, as Thackston has an ability to find the telling orientation of Abu'l-Fazl's larger project, as, for example, in his very brief excursus (pp. xiv–xv) on the importance of mystifying language such as *shinasa'i* (“knowingness”). But the introduction and notes are embedded more within a philology than a historiography. Is it really helpful for our understanding of the sixteenth century to see Abu'l-Fazl's worldview as “secular” (p. xi) or his adversary Bada'uni as “uncompromisingly orthodox” (p. xvii)? But students and scholars alike will welcome Thackston's fluent and accessible translation of the first portion of this important work.

The translation of this most Persianate of Indic works appears in the Murty Classical Library of India, which wishes to provide a classical foundation of translations to illustrate the breadth and depth of Indian civilization. It is wonderful to see Persian recognized as a classical Indic language, and it is hoped that the remaining two-thirds of the *Akbarnama* will subsequently be published in the series. The book is produced to very high standards, with an evocative and clear Persian typeface designed by Titus Nemeth. It is highly recommended for courses on premodern South Asia or the Persianate cosmopolis of the early modern period.

Derryl N. MacLean
Simon Fraser University

LAURA E. PARODI (ed.):

The Visual World of Muslim India: The Art, Culture and Society of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era.

xxxii, 366 pp. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014. £68. ISBN 978 1 84885 746 9.

NAVINA NAJAT HAIDAR and MARIKA SARDAR (eds):

Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy.

xi, 384 pp. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015. \$65. ISBN 978 1 58839 566 5.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X15001263

These interdisciplinary and edited volumes – the first a collection of papers originally presented at a 2008 academic conference and the second an exhibition catalogue also with multiple authors – share the same basic goal: to advance scholarly knowledge and overall awareness of the history and courtly cultures of India's Deccan