Before the founding of the state of Afghanistan in the eighteenth century, the main centers of political and cultural gravity for the Pashtuns lay in India, where numerous Pashtuns migrated in pursuit of commerce and soldiery. Amid the cosmopolitan pressures of India and its alternative models of self-knowledge and affiliation, Pashtun elites elaborated a distinct idiom of “Afghan” identity. With the Afghans’ absorption into the Mughal Empire, earlier patterns of accommodation to the Indian environment were overturned through the writing of history, whereby the Afghan past and present were carefully mapped through the organizing principle of genealogy. While the Afghan religious world was being reshaped by the impact of empire, in response, tales of expressly Afghan saints served to tribalize the ties of Islam. With the decline of Mughal power, the collective “Afghan” identity of the diaspora was transmitted to the new Afghan state, where the relationship of this tribal template of Afghan authenticity to the non-Pashtun peoples of Afghanistan remains the defining controversy of national identity.

"Da watan omūd me nahūd show khodāya dzha kram  
Rahmat band kram tūrū zulfā pa kashmīr kšē  
All hope has gone of returning home  
Now these black curls have bound me to Kashmir  
—Rahmat Allāh Dāwī, fl. ca. 1770"

Locating Afghan History

The Afghan diaspora in India has generally been treated as separate from the greater narrative of Afghan history (Halim 1974; Qanungo 1965; Siddiqi 1971, 1982). Rather than seeing migration as a central characteristic of the Afghan past, work on the Indo-Afghans has been regarded as more properly a part of Indian than Afghan studies.¹ Yet until at least the eighteenth century,

¹However, for studies of modern Afghan diasporas, see Alessandro Monsutti (2004) and Christine Stevens (1989). For India-centered studies of the mobile social world with which the Afghans interacted, see Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2003) and André Wink (1990).
it was among the Afghan courts and prosperous tribal settlements of India that the fulcrum of Afghan history was to be found as Afghans migrated from the northwest toward the greater opportunities of Hindustan. The diasporic communities they founded in India are central to any study of Afghan history, for it was among them that there emerged the earliest historical works expressly devoted to the “Afghans,” in this period effectively denoting (and consolidating) membership of the disparate Pashtun tribes. Marginalizing to the periphery of Afghan history the writings produced in India between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries is, therefore, to risk turning the historiography of the Afghans on its head. For it was in this diaspora that many features of the Afghans’ sense of their historical identity crystallized, in terms of a sense of the defining limits between self and the world that was stamped on the present through the heavy imprint of the past.

Taking shape in writings that were to influence successive generations of Afghans, these definitions wrought weighty and durable casts of identity. In written terms at least, the historical consciousness of the Afghans took shape in connection with the experience of migration to India and the encounter there with forms of social, religious, and political organization that differed from their own, including larger-scale formations—cosmopolitan and imperial—that shook the social foundations of these diffuse bands of tribesmen. Though such pressures could be contained during the period of Afghan political supremacy in northern India under the Afghan Lodi and Suri rulers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Afghans’ defeat and gradual incorporation into the Mughal state after 962/1555 brought a new urgency to questions of Afghan self-definition (cf. Arlinghaus 1988; Nichols 2001). Stretching from independent Afghan rule to defeat, incorporation, and the postimperial realignment of an Afghan “people” and its others, the period surrounding the Afghans’ encounter

\[\text{2A few words on terminology may be necessary here. In this essay, the term “Afghan” is used in its original sense of referring to the Pashtuns and not the Hazaras, Uzbeks, Farsiwan, Aymaq, Arabs, Kuchis, and sundry other ethnic groups living in the territories of modern Afghanistan. In using the term “Afghan” in this way, I expressly do not suggest that this limited ethnic remit be applied to the modern Afghan nation-state, even if for their part contemporary Pashtun nationalists do consider the Pashtuns to be the only “true Afghans.” Though coeval with the processes explored later, the troubled grafting of the term “Afghan” onto the modern framework of “nationality” has its own, later history and, as such, falls beyond the scope of this essay. Although I am aware of the discomfort of many anthropologists with the notion of the “tribe,” I have adopted the term here in its broadest sense to designate a social unit held together by an ideology of genealogy and common descent, especially one composed of corporate descent groups. I have used the term “blessed man” here alongside the more common term of Sufi “saint.” As used here, the term “saint” (walid) refers to a figure whose status has been sanctified through processes of shrine building, hagiographical writing, and ritual veneration (Green 2006a). The term “blessed man” (Green 2006b), however, refers to a man set apart from other men by his possession of supernatural “blessing-power” (barakat), which is typically used in partisan fashion to aid those who seek to become his protégés. Though all Muslim saints are, by definition, blessed men, not all blessed men have (yet) achieved the architectural, literary, or ritual recognition to be regarded as saints.}\]
with the Mughal Empire may for these reasons be seen as the formative period of Afghan history, both as process and conscience.

In all its wealth and complexity, it was India that was the setting for this process of ethnogenesis, of the gradual differentiation and discovery of a collective Afghan self from amid a plethora of other forms of identity. In examining these processes, this essay hopes to demonstrate the historical contingency of the Pashtun Afghans’ self-identification with the tribal system as it emerged in the particular circumstances of their diaspora in India.3

Given the commentary that has accompanied the semantic expansion of the term “diaspora” to include much that might sensibly be described as processes of migration (Brubaker 2005; Cohen 2001), it is with some deliberation that I have chosen this term. Certainly, the Indo-Afghans do not mirror such “classic” diasporas as the Jews of the Roman Empire or the African slaves of the Atlantic world. Yet in different forms, such criteria as coercion, boundary maintenance, and “diasporic consciousness” were important features of the movement of Afghan hill-dwellers to the plains of India. Fearsome inter-Afghan competition for grazing land among rival clans formed an important backdrop to resettlement, only after which is there evidence for the emergence of a consciousness of commonality and community with other tribesmen as fellow “Afghans.” Ecological factors also contributed to the affiliation of Afghans with the overland horse trade and itinerant soldiering. Although we cannot point toward an agency of one-sided “oppression” behind the Afghans’ migration, their movements were nonetheless inextricably bound to the violence of competition for pasture, trade, and military employment.

If I have generally refrained from employing the expression “diaspora consciousness,” this essay makes clear the importance of such a mentality to the formation of an Afghan historical identity. As we will see in the following pages, the early histories of the Afghans represented an attempt to articulate an identity among categories drawn from the encounter between the Afghans’ own forms of social organization and the cosmopolitan environment of India. The emergence of an emphasis on tribal affiliation over and against other forms of social alignment and organization formed the most enduring

---

3 The main primary sources used in this essay are Nīmat Allāh ibn Ḥabīb Allāh Harawī, Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahnā wa Makhzan-e-Afghānī; Hālīz Rahmat Khān, Khulāsāt al-ansāb; Rizq Allāh Mushtāqī, Wāqi‘āt-e-Mushtāqī; ‘Abbās Khān Sarvānī, Tārīkh-e-Shēr Shāh; and Ahmad Yādgār, Tārīkh-e-Shāhī (Tārīkh-e-Salaṭīn-e-Afghāna). Partial or complete translations of several of these texts are also available. Bernhard Dorn’s History of the Afghans (1829–36) is a translation of a single manuscript (Ms. Persian LX in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society, London) of the early abridgement of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahnā known as the Makhzan-e-Afghānī; Nirodbhusan Roy’s Ni Imamullah’s History of the Afghans (1958) is a more complete translation. I. H. Siddiquī’s Waqī‘at-e-Mushtaqī of Shaikh Rizq Ullah Mushtaqī: A Source of Information on the Life and Conditions in Pre-Mughal India (1993) and B. P. Ambasthyā’s Ṭārīkh-i-Šēr Šahī by ‘Abbās Khān Sarvānī (1974) are also complete translations. However, wherever possible, I have relied on and given references to the original Persian versions.
and effective of boundary markers, structured as it appeared to be in the irrefutable fact of birth. In reality, of course, the tribal system was more fluid and absorbent, a fact that Afghan genealogists would often wrestle with over the centuries. The specific temporalities underlying the formation of this tribal attitude are explored in the later sections of this essay, founded as they were in the changing political conditions that underwrote the repeated shifting of boundary marking between the Afghans and their Indian environment. Though I have not attempted to overinterpret the data to reflect that other taxonomic hallmark of a diaspora—that is, “homeland orientation”—it is fair to say that the Afghans in India did maintain a sense of their original “homeland” (watan). Its value, though, was regularly recalculated against an index of the Afghans’ changing fortunes in their diaspora.

Although movement from the early Pashtun habitats in the Sulayman mountains to the west of Punjab into the fertile plains below is probably as old as Indian history itself, the establishment of Afghan political power in north India during the fifteenth century reflected a protracted period of migration in which Pashtun tribal groups were able to establish sustainable settlements throughout northern India, and later in the Deccan (Digby n.d.). Partly as a result of the patronage of migrant warriors and partly as a result of migration strategies that are as yet unclear, under the aegis of the Afghan Lödt (855/1451–932/1526) and Sūr (947/1540–962/1555) rulers, there emerged a large number of Afghan settlements across northern India (in Punjab in particular) with economic ties to the land (Husain 1969; 1994, 1–18; Shafi’i 1929).4 Though in many cases migration was a result of the prospect of military service, as we have noted, the search for agricultural or pastoral land was of similar importance. These factors notwithstanding, it was the hugely profitable “arms trade” in horses that played the pivotal role in Afghan migration and subsequent state formation (Digby n.d.; Gommans 1999, 68–135). For like other migrant groups in India, large sections of the early Afghan communities in India constituted a trading diaspora whose activities brought them into close contact with other trading groups who had little familiarity with either the religious idiom of Islam or the social model of the tribe.5

As a consequence of the success of these ventures, there emerged across northern India a class of Afghan notables characterized by its headmanship of a fractured series of different clans for whom economic distractions were often more powerful than the ideological drive toward collective identity (Rahim 1961, 34–58; Siddiqui 1977). At the same time, by dint of its very success,

4 For a convincing new analysis of the Muslim settling process in medieval north India more generally, see Simon Digby (2004).
5 The terms used in the sources that I have translated here as “tribe” vary and include tāyiʃa, qaɓila, and aʃbaɓ. Despite the popularity of the term tāyiʃa in the early Persian texts referring to the Pashtuns, particularly the Tarikh-e-Khān Jāhānī, in modern Pashto usage, the term qaum is generally preferred.
this elite class interacted with a cosmopolitan Persian-based (or “Persianate”) culture in India centered on the older model of the court, or darbār, and its plurality of participants. With the Indian conquests of the ethically Mughal (moghol, “Mongolian”) followers of Bābur and Humāyūn, these cosmopolitan diversions of Afghan culture were brought to an abrupt end by the business of politics. Despite a short-lived revival of Afghan power under the Sūr dynasty, in 962/1555 the Afghans were finally displaced by the Mughals as the dominant ethnic group in north India, and the Mughals subsequently developed an ethnically and religiously plural state structure in relation to which the Afghan tribal elite was forced to redefine itself through accommodation or rebellion. Begrudgingly at first, increasing numbers of Afghan headsmen became servants of the new dispensation. However, their success was to vary considerably under different Mughal rulers as the Afghans vied for influence with the Persian (Īrānī), Central Asian (Tūrānī), and Rājpūt factions of the imperial body politic (Joshi 1985, 1–20).

The Cosmopolitanism Contradictions of Islam in India

An inescapable feature of premodern Muslim societies was the presence of the Sufi “blessed men” whose embodiment of affection and knowledge had the potential to bring them the following of any number of individuals from their surrounding societies, which ranged from sophisticated urban settings to closed worlds of the mountain or lowland village (Green, forthcoming). Their functions and significance were manifold, but central to their near universality was the way in which they served to embody local readings of an Islamic moral order in the daily facts of life within their constituencies. Through their miracles, wrathful or benevolent, divine justice was seen to enter the social world, while as mediators and preceptors they frequently served to mortar the fissures in individual and group relations (Dupree 1979; Green 2006b). The capacity of these blessed men to create networks of affiliation transcending and in some cases contesting the bonds and barriers of kin-based formulations of community served as one of the principal means by which the Afghans were able to connect and embed themselves in the Indian world. Their structures of affiliation deliberately transcending ties of kinship and ethnicity, Sufi networks formed an effective means of social mediation and, indeed, reconfiguration; Sufi affiliations thus represented an important register of the formation of social relations with the world beyond kin. Many of these functions were shared by both living and dead saints who, through various institutional, theological, and commemorative mechanisms, provided one another with mutual support.

Matsuo Ara (1982) has argued that the great proliferation of funerary architecture under the patronage of the Indo-Afghans reflected the horizontal distribution of power among an acephalous tribal elite.
We see these processes at work during the period of Afghan preeminence in north India of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For the impression that emerges from the histories of the Lodi and Suri period is one of the extensive integration of the Afghans into the Indian social and religious world. Although all written after the events they describe, such histories as the Waqiat of Rizq Allah Mushtaqi (d. 981/1581) and the Tarikh-e-shahi of Ahmad Yadgar (fl. 1572–76) present the Afghans as having ties to numerous Sufi saints, living and dead, who were similarly revered by the non-Afghan groups around them in India. Surviving documentation of wajh-e-ma’ash and wajh-e-amalak land grants similarly presents the Afghan notables as keen patrons of non-Afghan Sufis and their shrines during the heyday of Lodi and Suri rule (Siddiqi 1972). In many cases, this amounted to the patronage of a preexisting sacred geography, particularly shrines of members of the Chishti Sufi order, which was earlier associated with the Afghans’ political predecessors in Hindustan.7 Inevitably, most of the evidence concerns the Afghan elite, but we can probably assume that with the vast plethora of saints and preceptors who were conceptually, if not necessarily practically, affiliated with the Sufi orders (turuq) in north India, there was even greater accommodation to the Indian environment further down the social scale. Such supraethnic affiliations with non-Afghan saints show how the idiom and networks of the Sufis were able to transcend differences between Muslim groups and create new kinds of social and intellectual ties. Because such extended ties were also politically expedient, north India’s invaders were repeatedly keen to show their devotion to the tombs of the saints. When the Lodis were routed by Babur in 932/1526, his first act on entering Delhi was to circumambulate (tawaf) the tomb of the Chishti saint Nizam al-din Awliya (d. 725/1325) before going on to visit the shrine of Qutb al-din Bakhtiyar (d. 633/1235) that had earlier been favored by the Afghans (Zain Khan 1982, 92). For the same reason, during the quarter-century Afghan interregnum after the ousting of Humayun in 963/1554, Shahr Shahr made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Mu’inn al-din Chishti at Ajmer; his Mughal successors later followed his example assiduously.

It would be an exaggeration of political expediency to see the numerous land grants bestowed on non-Afghan Sufis by the Afghan rulers and their notables solely in this way. The universalizing idiom of the Sufis was clearly attractive in its own right, not least to the learned and cultivated likes of Masnad-e-Al Khawwas Khan (d. 958/1551), the chief courtier of the Afghan ruler Sikandar Lodi (r. 894/1489–923/1517).8 Sikandar himself was also a patron of numerous

---

7The founder of the Lodi dynasty, Buhlul Lodhi, was possibly buried at the tomb of the early Chishti saint Nasir al-din Chiragh-e-Dihl (d. 757/1356). On the debate over the identification of this tomb, see Ara (1982) and Digby (1975b).

8 Appropriately, in the centuries after his assassination, Khawwas Khan’s tomb in Delhi came to be regarded as a saintly shrine in its own right.
Sufis, including the immigrant Syrian Qādirī Sufi, Muhammad Ghaws, who settled in Uchch before dying there in 1517 (Trimingham 1971, 97). Among the numerous non-Afghan Sufis associated with the courts of the Lōdīs and Sūrs, perhaps the most important was ‘Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī (d. 944/1537). ‘Abd al-Quddūs drew numerous disciples from the Afghans of the Sūr court, and it seems likely that although some of these associations were primarily of a devotional nature, others were of a more political kind (Digby 1975a). An important power broker in the Jawnpur region, ‘Abd al-Quddūs addressed several letters to well-placed Afghan notables of the Sarwānī clan, as well as a letter to Sikandar Lōdī. Though of a moralizing nature, and written by a Sufi who was frequently critical of those in state service, the correspondence nonetheless reflects the two-way traffic of patronage and piety, for in 1491, ‘Abd al-Quddūs received a land-grant from the Afghan notable ‘Umar Khān Sarwānī, and similar grants were later accepted by members of his family (Khan 1977, 80). We also know of other Afghan notables becoming disciples of non-Afghan saints; such was the Afghan soldier and follower of ‘Abd al-Quddūs, Dattū Sarwānī (fl. 953–54/1546–47), who left an autobiographical record of his associations with a range of Sufis (Digby 1964). Shaykh ‘Alī Batnī Mizyānī, the paternal grandfather of the Afghan historian Shaykh Kabīr Hayzā, was another Afghan warrior in Sūr service who exchanged the field of battle for the life of the dervish wayfarer by handing his sword over to Shēr Shāh (Shaykh Kabīr, f. 108–11). Shaykh ‘Alī Batnī was a devotee of Shaykh Maḥfūz, a Sufi in the lineage of Raḥīm Shāh Mānikpūrī, while the historian’s maternal grandfather Khālīl Allāh Batnī was a follower of Mīr Sayyid Manjhan Rājgīrī, the author of the hybrid Sufi poem in the Hindwī language, Madhumālatī, that brought a Sanskritic cycle of tales of romance into an interpretive framework of Sufi theology (Shaykh Kabīr, f. 197v).

The blessed men pictured as affiliated with the Afghans in the Waqī’āt of Mushtāqī and the other historians of the Lōdīs and Sūrs belonged to a much wider Indian world than that delimited by formations of kinship, presenting the Afghans as multiply connected to the cultural and ethnic mosaic of north India. Mushtāqī recorded an aetiological legend of the kind associated with many other Indo-Muslim rulers in which the emergence of Afghan rule under

---

9This figure is not to be confused with the more celebrated Muhammad Ghaws of Gwalior, who in any case pitched his fortunes in with the Mughals by praying for the downfall of the last Afghan Lōdī ruler, Ibrāhīm Lōdī. With Bābur’s conquest of Delhi shortly afterward, Muhammad Ghaws of Gwalior was given a handsome reward for his supernatural wager. See Scott Kugle (2007, 163).

10With the end of Afghan rule, ‘Abd al-Quddūs cultivated links with the Mughals, writing letters to both Bābur and Humāyūn. On ‘Abd al-Quddūs’s relationship with contemporary politics, see Digby (2003) and I. A. Khan (1977). Despite the saint’s connections with the Afghans, it seems to have been Humāyūn who constructed his tomb shortly after his death in 944/1537.

11Although Mushtāqī was not an Afghan himself, he bore close family connections with the Lōdī rulers, and in his earlier career as an imām, he seems to have been patronized by notables of the Afghan Lōdī rulers (see Mushtāqī, f. 37r–f. 37v).
the Lōdīs was linked with the power of the Chishtī saints. He described Buhluł Lōdī (r. 855/1451–894/1489) visiting the grave of Qutb al-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 633/1235) in Delhi and spending an entire night on the eve of battle standing bare-headed in prayer beside the saint’s grave. When morning came, a mysterious figure appeared from the world of the unseen (mardī az ḡayb, presumably the saint himself), handed Buhluł a wooden stick (chūbī), and commanded him to set off. After the ensuing battle, Buhluł returned for more help in his campaign to gain control over northern India, and the saint reassured him that he would look after his prayers (duʿāʾ-ye-tā bar māst) (Mushtaqī, f. 6v–f. 7r).

The story is striking in placing the earliest Afghan ruler in India in a relationship with a saintly figure whose cult and charisma was by no means limited to the Afghans but extended to each of north India’s successive rulers. An interesting parallel can be found in the Humāyūn-nāma of the first Mughal emperor Bābur’s daughter, Gulbadan Bēgam (d. 1011/1603), which recounted a dream that the second emperor Humāyūn experienced after an unsettling encounter with an envoy sent by his Afghan rival, Shēr Shāh. In the dream, a green-clad (sabz pūshīda) holy man appeared to encourage Humāyūn in his travails and to intimate victory by handing Humāyūn his staff (ʿasā) (Gulbadan Bēgam 1902, Persian text 48–49, trans. 144–46). The man then predicted the birth of a son and heir, who should be named Akbar, who would, of course, become the most celebrated of all Mughal emperors, quite literally al-akbar, “the greatest.” Despite the similarity to Buhluł’s nocturnal encounter, what is striking about this dream is its intimation of the ties between sahihdom and kinship that Mushtaqī’s account lacks. For when Humāyūn politely asked the saint who he was, the mysterious figure revealed himself as none other than Humāyūn’s own Sufi ancestor, Shaykh Ahmad (d. 536/1141) of Jām, the caravan town to the west of the old Timurid capital of Herat.12

Whether in life or in death, the operations of such blessed men were of a partisan nature, and Mushtaqī also recalled the non-Afghan Sufi Shaykh Samaʾ al-dīn (d. 901/1495) blessing Buhluł’s son and heir, the Afghan ruler Sikandar Lōdī. Here again, a saint was seen to obliquely predict a youthful ruler’s rise to power, doing so in accordance with a commonplace topos that would have been instantly recognizable to all those familiar with the ways of the saints, whether Afghan or not. Mushtaqī’s account is worth citing in full:

When Buhluł died, all of the notables of Delhi wanted Miyañ Nizām [i.e., Sikandar] to become king, so he set off from Delhi and went to say farewell to Shaykh Samaʾ al-dīn. Miyañ Nizām carried with him

---

12The renowned Khurasani “Terrible Elephant” (ẓhindā pīl), Ahmad-e-Jām, was an ancestor of Humāyūn on the side of his mother, Māham. In the dream, the saint also informed the emperor that his heir, Akbar, would pointedly be of the saint’s lineage (az nasl-e-man khvāhād shod) instead, presumably, of his paternal Tūmūrī line. For more on Ahmad-e-Jām, see W. Ivanow (1917).
a commentary on the Quran and took it with him to the shaykh. But he did not reveal his political claims (dawa‘) to the shaykh, and simply made his salaams, sat politely and asked the shaykh to teach him. The shaykh then read the blessed faṭiha and began teaching…. When he finished, he said, “Know that God will bring good fortune (nikbakt) in both worlds (sara‘).” Miyān Nizām asked the shaykh to repeat these words, and he said them again three times. Then Miyān Nizām hugged the book to his side and asked to be dismissed. (Mushtāqī, f. 13v)13

Clearly, saintly affiliations were capable of reifying or transcending preexisting social networks. For seen in this story is the sultan’s close connection with a saint from beyond the bounds of kinship.14 A similar story was told in the Tārīkh-e-shaḥt of Ahmad Yādgār, in which we read of Sikandar Lōdt enthusiastically meeting the famous Indian Sufi Jamālī Dihlawī (d. 942/1536) upon the latter’s return from his travels and of the Afghan ruler sending him an obsequiously devotional poem (Yādgār 1939, 47–48; see also Ni‘mat Allāh 1960–62, 224–27). Such relationships of emotional and soteriological fealty could also be tied in with kinship and, as such, could be passed on through the generations, tying in perpetuity the big men of the Afghan tribes to the service of the softly spoken sons of the saints. We have already seen how Jamālī’s own master and father-in-law, Shaykh Samā‘ al-dīn, was closely connected with Sikandar’s father and predecessor as ruler of Hindustan, Buhlūl Lōdī (Yādgār 1939, 34). According to Jamālī himself, Buhlūl had visited Samā‘ al-dīn at his lodge, placing his head at the Sufi’s feet and sitting formally before him (sar dar qadam-e-hazrat-e-isha‘n nahād wa mutaqābil nashast) (Jamālī 1311/1893, 178).

These narratives envisioned the Afghan rulers through the same historical imagination that shaped the annals of other Indo-Muslim rulers belonging to other “ethnic” groups. For historians such as Yādgār and Mushtāqī by no means presented the Afghans as a unique tribal community separated from wider Indo-Muslim society by allegiances to their own exclusive saints, but as active and enthusiastic participants in the cosmopolitan milieux of the shrine and court, which both appropriately shared the same nomenclature. Like Sikandar, we are also told by Mushtāqī that the sultan’s brother Miyān Zabar al-dīn counted many Sufis among his retinue, as well as the praise-singers and musicians (qauvvalān wa sāzandāgān) necessary for any goodly gathering of Sufi enthusiasts. Wrapped in the urbane customs of Delhi, on Thursday nights

13On the life of Samā‘ al-dīn, see the account of his son-in-law Jamālī (1311/1893, 171–84).

14As a historical motif, the blessing of a king by a saint was nevertheless incredibly persistent. Two centuries later, it was revived in Afghan circles when it was associated with the famous account of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī being crowned by a Sufi as ruler of all the Afghans (Ali 1963). Given the genealogical links described earlier, it is perhaps also worth mentioning that Ahmad Shāh Abdālī traced his clan descent from one Abdāl, who derived his name from that of the famous Sufi, Abū Ahmad Abdāl (d. 355/966).
Zabar al-dīn regularly hosted musical gatherings (mahfīls) at the shrine of the primordial saint of Muslim Delhi, Nizām al-dīn Awliyā (Mushtāqī, f. 31v–f. 32r).

These ties of the Afghan sultans to saints outside the networks of kinship were mediated by access to a Persian literary sphere that the Afghan elite shared with other inhabitants of Hindustan. The court of Sikandar Lōdī was a major center of literary production in Persian, encompassing works of poetry, musical theory, and medicine, as well as writings of a religious character (Husaini 1988). Many among the latter were of an expressly Sufi kind, with the most notable among the literary-inclined Sufis attached to the court of Sikandar Lōdī being the aforesaid Jamālī Dihlawī (Jamali-yi Dihlawi 2002; Latif 1977). Like Amīr Khusraw two centuries before him, Jamālī straddled the roles of dervish and court poet, and among such writings as his hagiographical Siyār al-ārifīn, he also composed a series of qasīdas in praise of the successive rulers of north India.15 Like ‘Abd al-Quddūs, Jamālī was circumspect (if also rather more deferential) in this literary cultivation of friends in high places, and he addressed no fewer than seven qasīdas to Sikandar before subsequent occasion demanded that he compose a further dozen in deference to Bābur and Humāyūn.16 As we have seen, Sikandar, in turn, expressed his devotion to Jamālī through the poetic medium of Persian.

Persian literary culture formed a common discursive ground that Sufi acolytes and enthusiasts could share, a cosmopolitan sphere promoting an ethic of fraternity and worldly transcendence that should be carefully distinguished from the embodied politics of the living Sufi and his partisan miracles and blessings. It is notable in this respect that the Lōdī period was one of the great ages of Persian dictionary compilation, testament to the expansion of the Persian written world among new groups of nonnative speakers. Several years after Sikandar’s meetings with Jamālī, a notable of the Sūr clan, ‘Abd al-Rahīm ibn Ahmad Sūrī (fl. 929/1519), abandoned the world to become a Sufi master in his own right and gathered a considerable circle of followers. Showing the symbiotic relationship of the Sufi idiom to its Persian medium, the result of ‘Abd al-Rahīm’s spiritual endeavors was the compilation for his followers of a lexicon of Persian mystical terminology titled Kashf al-lūgḥat (The Unveiling of Language). The Kashf al-lūgḥat also reflects the literary efforts of the later Afghan saintly memorialist and follower of the Chishtī Sufis, ‘Abd Allāh Khwēshgī (d. 1106/1694), who, after a sojourn in the Deccan in Mughal service, returned to his home town of Qasur and spent his last years writing his Asrār-e-mASNāwī (Secrets of the Masnawi) to explain the meanings of the Persian poetry of Rūmī to the Afghan chiefs of the Khwēshgī clan. Whether through dictionaries or other works, with the flourishing of literary Persian under the Lōdīs of the sixteenth

15 Several of these poems have been published in the Oriental College Magazine (January 1935, pp. 36–37).
16 This flattery paid off, and Jamālī’s son Shaykh Gadāʿī was later granted the office of sadr by Akbar.
century, the devotional ties of Afghan tribesmen to nontribal Sufis were in many ways dependent on the mediation of the Persian written word. Shared written languages, and the shared moral and intellectual worlds to which they gave access, were an important way of forging ties beyond those of kinship.

Boundary markers of either a religious or an ethnic kind do not seem to have been prominent in this courtly setting, in which linguistic and literary exchange both mapped and forged the cosmopolitan social networks of the court. As one of India’s richest ages of literary cosmopolitanism, the period of Afghan rule was not uniquely associated with Persian, and the Lodi court also patronized works in Sanskrit. Around the turn of the sixteenth century, members of the ruling Lodi clan commissioned such Sanskrit texts as the *Sulaimancarita* on the lives of the Judeo-Muslim prophets Soloman/Sulaymān and David/Dāʾūd, which with its courtly audience highlighted the story of David’s seduction (Minkowski 2006). Of similarly broad appeal to men of taste and leisure was another of the Sanskrit works to appear under Lodi patronage, Kalyāna Mallā’s well-known *Anangaranga* (Theater of Love), which would later attract the attention of the great Victorian cosmopolitan and erstwhile Sufi, Sir Richard Burton.

During the revival of Afghan rule under the Sūrs, the court contained not only Sanskrit writers but also a number of important Hindwi poets, witnessing important literary test cases in the rise of the new vernacular. One such poet was Shāh Muhammad Farmālī, who upon being asked why he would not write in Persian replied that because his beloved was Indian (*hindī*) and could not understand Persian (*pārsī*), it was only proper that he should express his love for her in Hindī (Shaykh Kabīr, f. 146v; also cited in Siddiqi 1966, 74). It was at the court of Islām Shāh Sūr (r. 952/1545–961/1554) a few years later that Mīr Sayyid Manjhan composed in Hindwi his hybrid Sufi romance *Madhumālatī*, with its heady concoction of Sufi symbols and Indic narrative (Manjhan 2000). Manjhan’s Awadhi dialect became closely connected with the Sūr court, with *Madhumālatī* only one of several Hindwi works patronized by its notables; it has recently been suggested that the Mughals’ subsequent patronage of Brajbhasha literature reflected a deliberate rejection of the Awadhi style that they regarded as too closely associated with the Afghans (Behl, forthcoming). The Sufi and historian of the Indo-Afghans, Rizq Allāh Mushtāqī, was himself a gifted poet in Hindwi and used numerous Hindwi terms in his Persian *Wāqiʿāt*. An account in the early seventeenth-century *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahanī* (The Khan Jahan’s History) about the Afghan saint Shaykh Ḥūsain Maswānī located this Sufi linguistic cosmopolitanism still closer to the Afghans. According to the text, Shaykh Ḥūsain composed poems on the subject of divine unity (*tawḥīḏ-e-haqq-e-tāʾalā*) in Persian, Pashto, and Hindwi; short extracts from his writings in each of these languages were included in the text (Ni’mat Allāh 1960–62).

---

17I am grateful to Allison Busch for drawing my attention to this.
Another Afghan Sufi, Shaykh Bustān Baraich, was noted in the text as a poet in Pashto, besides his skills in Arabic (Nīmat Allāh 1960–62, 744). But despite the early blossoming of Hindwi, apart from a few isolated examples, a formal literature in Pashto had yet to emerge. When it did, it would appear amid the conflict with the Mughals for control of the Pashtun “homelands” rather than in the courtly settings of the diaspora. What is clear is the Lōdī and Sūr rulers’ affiliation with the cosmopolitan languages of the Indian court—Persian, Sanskrit, and incrementally also Hindwī—rather than the Pashto dialects of their forefathers, which had in all probability already been abandoned by many of the Afghans in India.

In the same way that after Bābur’s arrival in India, the Mughals gradually neglected Chaghatai (Turkī) in favor of Persian, the rootless and cosmopolitan character of Persian lent the language great importance among its Afghan patrons. Persian defied all rights of tenure; it subsisted in a circulating realm of books and conversations that enabled exchange and the new connections it brought; it had no owners. Like the Sufi conceptual world it helped sustain, Persian transcended narrower formations of kin and linguistic community (Green, forthcoming). Like the ties of Afghan disciples to non-Afghan Sufis in India, the Persian world of writing formed an important means of connecting Afghans to other social groups. In this way, the diasporic character of the Afghan communities in Hindustan and the Deccan was intimately connected to the decision of their elites to patronize Persian rather than Pashto as a signal of engagement with the wider world of India and its microcosm at court. The cosmopolitanism of Persian would sustain it among the Pashtuns for centuries after the fall of Afghan rule in India. Even with the consolidation of Pashto literature during the great age of Pashto letters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Pashto writers remained bilingual figures closely affiliated with the Persian tradition. Just as in the twentieth century, many ethnically Pashtun writers based in and around Kabul wrote in Persian rather than Pashto, in the diaspora in India, the use of Persian was similarly recognized as granting access to a wider written world.

There were nonetheless limits to the linguistic and religious mediation between the Afghans and their Indian environment. The formal boundaries of Islam still needed to be affirmed, and the histories tell us that certain popular practices connected to the tombs of the saints—practices that joined Muslims and “Hindus” into common religious practice—were regarded with official suspicion. If we can believe the moralizing tendencies of the religious scholar Mustaṭīq, Sikandar Lōdī prohibited fertility rituals at the shrine of the “martyred bridegroom” Sālār Maṣʿūd Ghāzī involving the parading of a spear (nīza) amid a great procession (Mushtāqī, f. 9r). While it is unclear whether Afghans
themselves were involved in the cult of Sālār Mašʿūd, we have seen that Afghans in the diaspora did affiliate themselves with Sufis belonging to India’s different communities. At the level of the court at least, these ties were cemented by the affiliation of Afghan tribal notables with the written world of Persian, as the connection of the Afghans to other groups in India was at its strongest when the transcendental ties of the Sufis were mediated through what was in some senses a Persian public sphere. A fitting example of this is seen in the Afsāna-ye-shahān (Stories of Shahs) of Shaykh Kabīr, who, like other writers of Persian with pretensions to style and learning, decorated his text with numerous verses culled from such “classical” poets as Hāfiz, Nizāmī, and Rūmī.

In the complex social spheres that emerged in India between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the clan was no longer the sole frame of reference for the Afghans. Though alternative bonds of loyalty and self-definition were offered by the plural traditions of the court and the city more generally, devotion to non-Afghan saints engendered patterns of affiliation beyond the tribe or clan. Of course, saintly ties were not the only means of transgressing kinship, only the means that most preoccupied our learned informants. Other allegiances, including those between friends and lovers, were similarly capable of crossing social boundaries. It is perhaps in this sense that we should understand the series of stories found in the Afghan histories of Mushtāqī and Yādgār devoted to transgressive love or marriage between members of different ethnic groups (Mushtāqī, f. 20r–f. 21r; Yādgār 1939, 99–108). Although these love stories all ended badly, their sheer narrative power attests no less than their evident popularity to their resonance for their audience. This was a period in which the emergence of cosmopolitanism—however vicarious its access through shared worlds of writing and speech—could test the limits of social cohesion among Afghans no less than other north Indian groups.

**Tribalizing Sainthood, Tribalizing History**

A prominent characteristic of the historiography patronized by the Afghans of the Mughal and post-Mughal periods was an obsession with the question of Afghan ethnogenesis (cf. Vogelsang 2002). The earliest major example of this was the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, which subsequently proved to be the most influential of all the accounts of the Afghans’ historical identity.¹⁹ In the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, we possess an important and subsequently extremely influential ethnohistory of the Afghans whose composition was patronized by the preeminent Indo-Afghan notable, Khān Jahān Lōdī (d. 1040/1631). Its principal author, Niʿmat Allāh, was a professional news writer (waqīʿa-nawīs) in Mughal service who seems to have been from an urban Irānī (rather than a Pashtun) family of Herat with

---

¹⁹On the history and codicology of the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānt, see S. M. Imamuddin (1948, 1960).
long-standing connections to the Mughals, although the work may have been cowritten by Haybat Khan Kākar, a Pashtun attendant of the Khañ Jahañ from the Afghan settlement of Samana in Punjab (Imamuddin 1948). Like other historical works of its period, the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī was also a collaborative work in other ways, having been based on information collected by a series of assistants and informants. Though its sections of dynastic history drew largely on earlier written works, the chief source for its accounts of the tribal past seems to have been oral traditions current among the Afghan diaspora at the turn of the seventeenth century. While reflecting more widespread oral ethnohistories, the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī nonetheless connected, codified, and perfected these traditions in writing. As the common ancestor of a lineage of later historical texts written on and by the Afghans, the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī provides important insight into the social and mental world in which the historical identity of the Afghans was first articulated into a systematic whole, projecting the specific temporality of the text’s formation at the Mughal court onto both the past and future of Afghan history.

It is in the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī, for example, that we read the first full account of the Afghans’ ethnogenesis as descendants of the Jewish patriarch Ya’qūb (Jacob), who migrated eastward to Afghanistan, and of the subsequent conversion to Islam of Qays ‘Abd al-Rashid Pathān, the primogenitor of the Afghan tribes and clans. Qays was said to have been converted to Islam by the Prophet himself and to have fought alongside him during the conquest of Mecca before traveling to the territories of modern Afghanistan and dying at the age of eighty-seven in the year 40/659 (Nimāt Allāh 1960–62, 107–13).20 It is important to note that this was by no means a novel or invented history at the time of the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī’s writing. Around the same time as the composition of the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī, a concise version of the Afghan ethnogenesis appeared in the Afsāna-ye-shāhān of Shaykh Kabīr (fl. 1035/1626), and the story of Qays had also been briefly sketched a few decades earlier in the Āin-e-Akbarī of the distinguished Mughal courtier, Abū’l Fazl (d. 1011/1602) (Abū’l Fazl 1875, 1:591).21 The story was also recounted under Mughal patronage by the Iranian historian Muhammad Sharīf Wuqutū (d. 1002/1595). The narratives in the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī therefore had precedents not only in the oral historical tradition of the Pashtuns themselves but also, in some cases, in the Persian historiographical tradition patronized by the Mughals. It was thus in the shadows of the grandiose historiographical projects of the Mughals that the Tārīkh-e-Khañ Jahañī made the first attempt to provide a systematic

20 The author noted that although these events were not recorded in the Hadīth, they were recounted by such reliable authors as Naṣīr al-dīn Tūsī in his Asnāf al-nakhlīqāt. The account was also later recounted in the Khulāsat al-ansāb (Rahmat Khān, f. 20v–21v, 27r).
21 In common with other versions of the legend, the Afghans’ progenitor was here said to have been given the name of Afghān rather than Pathān.
account of the Afghan past. As throughout the early modern history of the Afghans, the presence of the Mughals was in this way printed on the very existence of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī and its tutelary exposition of the Afghan way of life. For all its rhetoric of presenting the ancient and authentic history of the Pashtun tribes, the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī was in this way a quintessentially diasporic text, formulating the historical memory of the Afghans in a genre, style, and language that belonged more truly to the cosmopolitan courtly world of Mughal India. Nonetheless, the text achieved its aims in what it presented as a distinctly Afghan way by recounting the genealogical history of each of the multitude of Afghan tribes and clans, for in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, the tribe (tāyifa) was presented as the acme of Afghan identity. Here was an attempt to stamp order onto the Afghan world by weaving a weft of uneven patterns of social organization into a faultless kilim of historical narrative—a series of heroic yarns whose underlying warp was a perfected model of tribal genealogy.

No longer the fragmented, discrete, and often antagonistic social units of the homeland, here in the diaspora these distinct groups were reimagined as parts of a coherent whole through the organizing principle of genealogy.

While the general context that surrounded the composition of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī is clearly to be located in Jahāngīr’s court, with all its rival incentives toward the demonstration of status, whether nām or nang, in his Mir’āt-e-aftāb numā (The Sun-Showing Mirror), the later Mughal prosopographer Shāh Nawāz Khān (d. 1171/1758) spoke of a more private cause behind the Khān Jahān’s project. According to this account, the Khān Jahān was incensed by an Iranian envoy claiming in Jahāngīr’s presence that the Afghans were descended from the jinn; so the Khān Jahān patronized his eponymous history to prove otherwise (cited in ud-Din 1962, 46). Such forms of Iranian hauteur were far from uncommon with regard to the mountain dwellers of the Indo-Iranian hinterlands; the Kurds, for their part, were also long regarded by urban Iranians as the descendants of genies.

On the Pashtun tribes, see Bernt Glatzer (2002). Though anthropologists have often regarded tribes as organized social units, the reading presented in this essay of the tribe as ideal social model is also briefly reflected in Dale F. Eickelman (1981, 104).

Of course, the formulation of history in other regions of the Muslim world was also charted through such maps of the genealogical past in which living social formations were traced back into connection with the prophets, heroes and sometimes villains of the Quran (cf. Varisco 1995). Though this pattern was widespread in Islamic historiography in general, it took on a particular importance in tribal milieux. An interesting point of comparison with the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī and the later genealogical histories that it inspired is the Kītāb al-ansâb of the Saharan scholar Wālid wuld Khālmāl al-Daymanī (d. 1212/1797), dedicated to the ancestry (nasab) of the Znaib-speaking families of the Trarza region, whose demonstrative ancestry similarly underwrote claims to political status. Like the authors of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, Wālid wuld Khālmāl also composed an account of the miracles of the saints of the Tashumsha tribal confederation (Norris 1968, 153; see also Hall 2005).

This tradition was also recorded by Sharaf Khān Bitlisī in the Persian history of the Kurds that he wrote under Ottoman rule in the late sixteenth century, a work that in many respects may be
In order to extrapolate the wider processes at work here, it is perhaps worth comparing the Khān Jahan’s genealogical response to the Afghans’ ethnic denigration with another diasporic history, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano. In his narrative, Equiano (d. 1797), a former slave and promoter of the “repatriation” of slaves to Freetown, responded to the scripturalist genealogy that Europeans used to justify the exploitation of Africans by identifying them with the cursed descendents of the biblical Ham (Gilroy 1997; Sanders 1969). Equiano’s counterclaim was to argue that it was instead the patriarch Abraham who was the primogenitor of the Africans (Equiano 1797, 38–44). Like the Afghans in India, the Africans of the Atlantic world were here reconfigured by writing into a vast community of kinsmen.

In both polemical encounters, we see the hegemonic requirement to define the self through what were (originally) the categories of the other. The very term Afghān—with its possible etymology in the Persian term for a raucous or lamenting cry (fūghān)—hints at this appropriation of the language of insult. And like Equiano’s Christian Africans, for all their asserted independence, the Khān Jahan’s Afghans cannot be fully separate from the scriptural models of genealogy that defined the parameters of their interlocutors’ “Islamic world”—nor by this point in their history would they have wished to be.25

In the competitive encounter between different ethnic groups at the Mughal court, such histories and counter-histories were inextricably bound to the identity politics of appraisal of the self and denigration of the other (Green and Searle-Chatterjee, forthcoming). What we see at court are forms of ethnic factionalism and their literary iteration. Yet as well as a self-aggrandizing response to such rivalries, genealogy also formed a means of understanding the contexts of ethnic plurality from which they arose. In the early modernity of Asia as of Europe, the wider world was sifted and assimilated through the filter of genealogies woven from the firm facts of scripture. In its hard form as revelation, it was writing that rendered the world knowable.

In the previous sections, we have examined the capacity of Sufi affiliations to transcend the boundaries of kinship, along with the role of Persian as the linguistic and discursive amplifier of these supraethnic loyalties. This was by no means the only social capacity toward which the Sufi idiom and its social mechanisms could be directed. For as well as transcending kinship in the creation of alternative and sometimes self-consciously “Islamic” models of community, with their powerful social and semantic resonance, the Sufi saints could also be attached to the very ethnic and kin-based formations that in other

---

25 As Neil McHugh has written with regard to ethnic formation in the Nilotic Sudan, “Identification with an Arab lineage was not a choice—it was the only choice” (1994, 10).
circumstances their networks served to transcend or contest. For with all their consequence and fame, saints and the legends associated with them also acted as badges of urban, regional, or ethnic pride in a manner not altogether dissimilar to the patron saints of medieval Europe (Webb 1996). Sufi saints were tied to early modern formations of collective identity, forming means of articulating difference between the distinct peoples and social groups identifying themselves as Muslims. Their central place in these cultural matrices is seen in the ubiquity of narratives of sainthood in a whole range of literary genres in Persian, from historiographical and geographic works to belle-letters, poetic anthologies, and, of course, hagiographies and works of Sufi doctrine proper. In both his physical and narrative presence, the saint and blessed man served to embody formulations of belonging and memory (Green 2006b).

Working at a time when Afghan fortunes had already been eclipsed by the rising star of the Mughals, the authors of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī sought to present a reading of history in which the past was to be seen at every point through the prism of tribal genealogy. Pouring glory upon the founders of the primary tribes formed a key part of the text’s strategy of upholding the solidarity fostered by a tribal ethos in a period in which Afghan group identity had come under the combined threat of affiliation to the multiethnic Mughal state and the experience of diaspora life at large. Yet the saints of the Afghans also formed an important part of its overall purpose, with their deeds taking up the entirety of the text’s extended final section (khātima). In this section, the saints were all classified according to their affiliation with the Sarbanī, Batnī, or Ghurghusht tribes (tāyifā), with tribal genealogy given exclusive precedence over the religiously based meta-genealogy of the Sufi “order” (tāyifas). Scholars of premodern Muslim societies are accustomed to thinking of Sufi “orders” (tāyifas) in terms of the spiritualized transcendental genealogies described earlier, which tied initiates and devotees in a religious community with bonds of loyalty beyond those defined by kinship.26 Such Sufi genealogies linked the initiate or devotee (murīd, mukhlīs) into a relationship with both dead saints and their living representatives and did so in such a way as to demand unflinching loyalty to the living Sufi master. Not surprisingly, Sufi orders for this reason sometimes laid the foundation for successful political movements and social factions (Evans-Pritchard 1949; Muzaffari 1972; Paul 1991). But in contrast to such religious visions of the collective social identity of a Sufi “tribe” or “people” (tāyifā), the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī presented the Afghan saints solely in terms of their affiliation to a Pashtun tribe.

26 The potentially competitive relationship between ties of Sufi (or more broadly Islamic) allegiance and identity and the bonds of the tribe have been the subject of considerable discussion by anthropologists and historians in the study of Islam among the Pashtuns and other tribal societies. See Akbar S. Ahmed (1976), Ernest Gellner (1969), I. M. Lewis (1998), and Nile Green (2006b, forthcoming). More generally, see the essays in Akbar S. Ahmed and David M. Hart (1984).
(tāyifa). 27 Here we see a vision of the Afghan past that, from its vantage point under Mughal rule, fiercely contradicts the picture we have seen of Afghan affiliation to a whole series of non-Afghan Sufis.

What we see in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī is a coalescing of Sufi and tribal terminology, exploiting the semantic range of the term tāyifa to blur the boundaries between Islam and kinship as defined by a saint’s “tribe” and “Sufi order.” According to this model, allegiance to a saint could offer no meta-genealogical ties capable of challenging those of a saintly devotee to his tribe or clan. For the many Afghan saints of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī were not identified with such famous Sufi tāyifas as the Chishtiyya, Naqshbandiyya, or the Qādiriyya; their tāyifa was instead identical to their tribe or clan. The saints were thus classified primarily as belonging to the tribal tāyifas of the Sarbānīs, Batnīs and, Ghurghusht and, within them, to given clans. Even such well-known saints as Qutb al-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī of Delhi (d. 633/1235)—usually regarded as one of the founding saints of the Chishtī order—were presented as members of tribal tāyifas, in this case the Sarbānī tribe (Bakhtiyār Kākī az junla-ye-in tāyifa būdand) (Nimʿat Allāh 1960–62, 711). 28 This is not to suggest that the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī contains no stories of Afghans associating themselves with non-Afghan saints, for Sikandar Lōdī is at one point described as visiting the well-known Sufi, Yahyā Mānīr (d. 782/1380) (Nimʿat Allāh 1960–62, 184–85). But such dispersed episodes do not affect the presentation of the saints of the Afghans in the long khattima devoted to them and seem in any case to have been taken wholesale from the earlier histories.

The Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī’s tribal presentation of the Afghan saints may have been connected to the conflict between the different models of identity and loyalty offered by tribal and Sufi models of genealogy, as illustrated by the history of the Sufi Rawshaniyya movement among the Pashtuns of the sixteenth century (Andreyev 1997; Arlinghaus 1988). Like more recent charismatic and millennial movements among the Pashtuns, the Rawshaniyya tried to subsume tribal identities and the allegiances that came with them into alternative social bonds based on transcendental ties to a religious leader. Seen as presenting a threat to tribal solidarity, the Rawshānīs were swiftly and effectively persecuted by the Yūsufzay tribesmen. It is difficult to say to what extent the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī’s nativized Sufi genealogies were a reaction to the rise and fall

27 Perhaps this should no longer surprise us, given the perspective emerging from the study of Islam in other tribal societies. It has recently been argued by Irène Mélikoff (2003) that the title of the semilegendary founder of the great Anatolian Bektāsh order, Häjj Bektāsh, reflected less an organized Sufi order of the kind that was named after him than his membership in the Bektāsh clan, whereas Central Asian Studies has recently paid a great deal of attention to the relationship between tribe and saint (Demidov 1988; DeWeese 1994).

28 Nonetheless, much of the biographical data provided on Qutb al-dīn in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jāhānī does conform to that provided in the famous Siyar al-awliyā of Mīr Khwurd (d. 770/1369) and the Siyar al-arifīn of Jamāl Dīhlawi (d. 942/1536).
of the Rawshaniyya. At least as important was the wider political context that the patron and readership of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī shared with the Pashtun followers of the Rawshaniyya, in which tribal loyalties were being tested by the emergence of the supraethnic Mughal imperium. Despite the close connection of the Khān Jahān to the emperor Jahāngīr, the history that he patronized contained accounts of the tribal genealogies of numerous Sufis that served to consolidate loyalty to the tribe rather than contest it. For this was not a rebellious text but a faction-forming one, concerned with fostering tribal solidarity within the particular context of Afghan competition for influence within the wider Mughal imperium. Its effect, however, was to project this tribal vision of social connectivity into every corner of the Afghan past. The narratives achieved this by bringing an Islamic (that is, Sufi) affiliation within the folds of the Pashtun tribe or clan by ensuring that each tribe (tāyifa) dealt with in the text possessed its own band of saints. Tribal and religious identity could here be presented as one, such that honoring the saint was identical with honoring the tribe. With the saint placed in the service of the tribe, what we see in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī is not so much the role of sainthood in the localizing of Muslim practice as its co-option for the tribalization of Islam.

Amid the Afghan diaspora, tales of the saints played important roles in preserving traditions of cultural memory as groups of Afghans migrated from old habitats to new ones. The saint often acted as a narrative reference point around which the memory of other episodes or persons could cluster. Given the scale of Afghan migration into India, tales of the saints came to play a heightened role in preserving the collective tribal past as the Afghans traveled further and further from their ancestral habitats. In this way, a collective Afghan past could be created in the heart of the diaspora affirming a sense of Afghan commonality among members of different clans as “Afghans” sharing an interwoven past and a common genealogy. It is in this sense of tying the memory of the saints to collective tribal history that we should understand the accounts in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī and later Afghan histories of specifically Afghan saints acting as discoverers of wells, initiators of tribal customs, or instigators of migrations. In numerous cases, saintly legends were used in this way to link tribes to their places of residence. Given the large number of Afghan settlements established in India, making sense of their origins and their connections to earlier Pashtun habitats was clearly important, and as time passed, the saint’s and the institutionalized commemorative forms of their shrines and texts forged a firm anchor for the tribal past.

These saints were also associated with aetiological legends concerning the founding of villages or water sources. Origin stories connected with specifically tribal Afghan saints stood at the forefront of historical memory, helping to lend

---

29 Such traditions echoed a wider narrative tradition that associated Sufis with a plethora of aetiological legends throughout the Muslim world (DeWeese 2000; Green 2004a; Khan 2004; Lewis
an autochthonous character to a human landscape whose Afghan associations could in this way be presented as in some sense *sui generis*. For if an Afghan saint was responsible for creating the local Indian landscape—its wells, springs, and settlements—then that landscape inexorably belonged to the Afghans, and the Afghans, in turn, to it. In the *Tārikh-e-Khān Jahānī*, saints were thus at times presented as the original settlers of new tribal habitats. Shaykh ‘Alī Sarwar Lōdī Shāhī Khayl was thus described as having settled at the *qasba* of Khalwar in Punjab, where his descendants made up the tribes (*isbātt*) who were subsequently influential in the area (*Nīmʿat Allāh 1960–62, 795–96*). Such stories clearly belonged to an older repertoire that had developed from interclan competition for lands now lying within the borders of present-day Afghanistan, for we should bear in mind that the Pashtuns were probably migrating westward as well as eastward throughout this period. It is in this sense that we should understand the story of Shaykh Sābit Baraich as instrumental in allotting the Baraich tribe (*qaum*) their lands at Shorawak to the west of the Sulayman range. Having established a new home for his clansmen, the *shaykh* then miraculously ensured their protection from the poison of Shorawak’s snakes and the hands of the neighboring Balūch. His final miraculous act was to bring forth a spring for the Baraich and their herds (*Nīmʿat Allāh 1960–62, 754–55*). In similar vein, the *Tārikh-e-Khān Jahānī* described how Shaykh Muṭī Khalīl was appointed the head (*sar-e-halqa*) of twelve families of the Sarbaṇī clan (*Nīmʿat Allāh 1960–62, 759*), while Shaykh Bahdīn Bakhtīyār lived on a mountain with two thousand Bakhtīyār families settled under his protection (*Nīmʿat Allāh 1960–62, 764*). Like Shaykh Sābit, Shaykh Bahdīn also made a water source appear for his tribal protégés by striking (in a rare example of a Qur’anic metaphor among these stories) his “Mosaic rod” (*‘asāye-mūsawwī*) down onto a rock, which split to reveal a spring. The social function of these narrative associations of water sources with saints was manifold, ranging from establishing rights of access in the example we have just seen to maintaining the neutral ownership of springs through identifying them as the property of neighboring saintly shrines. In the description of Kabul found in the great

---


30On this narrative theme more generally, see M. A. Khan (2004). It is perhaps worth noting that Shāhī Khayl was also the clan of the Lōdī sultans.

31In some manuscripts of the text, as well as the *Akhbār al-awliya*ār, this figure is given the tribal name of Shaykh Muṭī Khayl. Its (accidental?) replacement with Khalīl in some manuscripts may reflect the non-Afghan identity of later copyists.

32We might compare such miracles to the formal prayers for rain offered to the shrines of such saints as Sīdī Muhammad al-Kuntī (fl. ca. 855/1450) by the Hassāniyya-speaking tribesmen of Shinqīt in Mauretania (Norris 1968, 99–100). More generally, the legends recorded of the tribal saints of such confederations as the Tashumsha of Western Sahara (Norris 1968, 123–52) bear many similarities to those recorded in the *Tārikh-e-Khān Jahānī*. 
Mughal catalogue of empire A’in-e-Akbari, we thus read that the mountain springs that ran down into the city were located beside the shrines of Khwāja Hamū, Khwāja ‘Abd al-Samad, and the footprint shrine (qadamgāh) of Khwāja Khizr (Abū’l Fazl 1875, 1:572.). These customs were also present in the diaspora, and in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahanī, there is a description of the tomb in Lucknow of Malik Adam Kākar, an Afghan notable who came to be regarded as a great saint, as lying beside an important sacred well (Nim’at Allāh 1960–62, 818).33

These patterns are also seen in the Akhbar al-awliyā (Reports of the Saints), which was written in the Deccan by ‘Abd Allāh Khwēshgī in 1077/1666 (Shafi’i 1929; Storey 1927–71, 1:ii: 1009–12). Composed by an Afghan author far from home and dispatched to the Deccan in Mughal service, the Akhbar al-awliyā commemorated the saints of Qasur in Punjab, where its author was born and which had been an important Afghan settlement for several centuries by the time the Akhbar al-awliyā was written. Of course, during this period of imperial relocations, this literature of displacement was by no means uniquely Afghan. A comparable example is the Ma’āṣir al-kirām that Āzād Bilgāmī (d. 1200/1786) wrote on the divines of his north Indian home of Bilgram from the same Mughal outpost of Aurangabad in which ‘Abd Allāh Khwēshgī had written his Akhbar al-awliyā (Bilgāmī 1328/1910); other Sufi works from the Deccan manifested similar ties to remembered northern homelands (Green 2004b). Nonetheless, ‘Abd Allāh Khwēshgī’s literary activities do exemplify the connections between an Afghan Sufi commemorative literature and the sense of displacement experienced by Afghans moving round India in imperial service.

Later, other Afghan texts also emerged in the diaspora devoted to the histories of specific tribal or clan groups that had settled in India, and accounts of patron or ancestral saints often occupied an important part of them. To the east of ‘Abd Allāh Khwēshgī’s hometown in Punjab, in 1118/1710 ‘Alī Muham-mad Ansārī composed his Tazkirat al-ansār (Commemorations of the Forerunners). In this account of the history of the Afghan settlement of Jullundur, the remembered past of the Afghan clans once again shared its pages with stories of the saints (Hussan Zia n.d.).34 The Tazkirat al-ansār recounted the history of the Sufi Ibrāhīm Dānishmand, his marriage to one of the daughters of the Pashtun clan of the Barakzay, and his subsequent fathering of his own clan. The Dānishmand clan that descended from this saint had migrated to Jullundur

33Malik Ādam’s mausoleum was later maintained by his descendants, who acted as the institutional heirs (sajjāda nashīns) of his charisma.
34Sections of the unpublished Tazkirat al-ansār are translated in K. Hussan Zia (n.d., 133–46). During the late 1870s, the oral tradition of Jullunder’s Afghan saints, as transmitted by the city’s faqīrs, was collected by Richard Carnac Temple. Recounting the saintly foundation of the settlement and the competition for jurisdiction over the region of the Afghan saint Nāsir al-dīn Shīrānī with a Yogi named Jālandhar, the narratives demonstrate the absorption of the remembered saints into the wider narrative imagination of the Indian world. See Captain R. C. Temple (1884–1900, 3:159–95, 3:323–26).
during the reign of Sikandar Lodi in the fifteenth century. A later migration of Afghans to Jullunder was said to have been led by another Sufi figure, Shaykh Muhammad Darwēsh (d. 1082/1671), whose descendants became the spiritual and political leaders of the Jullundur Pashtuns. Recounting tales of numerous other Dānishmand holy men, the text validated the history of the entire Dānishmand clan through the deeds of the saints who belonged to their lineage, tying together saintly and tribal memory for their mutual preservation.

Yet in its comprehensive scope, the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī remains the most important of these histories. Presented in the text as the miracle-working champions of Afghan pride, the saints of the tribesmen reflected a stubborn sense of Afghan honor—the famous pashtūnwālī perhaps—maintained in the face of the Afghans’ defeat by the Mughals. One story in the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī thus concerned the modest dutifulness of the Afghan Sufi Shaykh Watō Shūriyān Khwēshgā in serving for thirty years in the kitchen of the famous saint Khwāja Mawdūd Chishtī (d. 533/1139) at Chisht in the mountains east of Herat. Though none of the sons or deputies (khulāfā) of Khwāja Mawdūd recognized the qualities of the humble Afghan, before the master died, it was upon Shaykh Watō that he chose to bestow his cloak (jabā) and appoint him as his successor (Nim’at Allāh 1960–62, 741–42). Another story demonstrated the importance of wondrous signs of the miraculous in establishing the caliber of Afghan sainthood through an account of a group of villagers of the Kākar clan demanding a miracle from nine Sufis of their own clan. In response, the saints ordered the villagers to fill nine cauldrons with beef and water and set them over nine fires to cook overnight. When the cauldrons were ready, the Kākar saints climbed inside them and passed the whole night with the boiling stew. But in the morning, while the beef had disintegrated, the holy men climbed cheerfully out of their cauldrons unharmed. Convinced by this fearsome display of God’s favor, their clansman promptly became their most assiduous disciples (halqa begūsh) (Nim’at Allāh 1960–62, 818–21). Such extraordinary feats—the khāriq-e-ʿādat so frequently summoned in the text—were perhaps a deliberate stratagem aimed at reinforcing the pride of the struggling Afghans of the early seventeenth century through enhancing the reputation of their patron saints.

If many of the stories in the Ṭārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī summoned the memory of the tribal settlements of a largely pastoral society, as we have seen, it would be a mistake to regard the Afghan diaspora as being composed solely of wandering herdsmen and warriors. As we have noted, trade was an important factor...
in bringing the Afghans wealth, and we even know of several Afghan saints who were said to have been involved in trading activities themselves. Shaykh Bustān Baraich (d. 1002/1593), who migrated from Roh to settle at Samana in Punjab, was one such saintly merchant; he was once accompanied on a seaborne trading mission to Goa by Ni‘mat Allāh, the author of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī (Nim‘at Allāh 1960–62, 743–44). Because the Baraich tribe was among the most important trading communities among the Afghans, it is tempting to speculate that the Shaykh Bustān served in some way to sacralize their collective activities. His ability to save his ship from being wrecked at sea reflects legends associated with the saints of many other Muslim trading communities. Given the wealth in trade and land of the leaders of the Afghan tribes and clans, it is important to recognize that the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī was the product of a highly prosperous tribal elite. Reflecting the importance of their blessed men, this affluence also found expression through the lavish patronage of shrines to the Afghan Sufis. Located in Punjab, the shrine of Shaykh Muthī Kansī reflected the prosperity of the dominant clans while also echoing the imperial style of the Mughals. The description of Shaykh Muthī’s shrine in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī is worth quoting in full as an example of this opulence:

[Shaykh Muthī’s] guest-house [mehmānkhana] was so elegant that even the gatherings of the worldly are never prepared with such grace and delicacy. The ceiling, walls and columns each matched one another in décor, and were fitted out with velvet, gold brocade and clothes hangers; and then there were also the costly Afghan [wilayati] carpets and kilims. There were the finest water-vessels and royal awnings; elegant cushions, silver bedsteads and superior bed-sheets were also spread out; marquetry chairs with coverlets were placed opposite. It was such a place that neither the eyes of the sky had seen such a thing, nor the ears of the heavens heard of it. It was always kept clean and tidy. And as for incense [khūshbū’i], every day such a great amount was spent on it that even the mathematicians of conjecture and imagination are unable to comprehend its quantity and quality. (Nim‘at Allāh 1960–62, 747)

The description serves as a fitting reminder of the strange contradictions of a text produced amid a circle of Afghan notables enjoying the richest spoils of empire and yet dedicated in large part to the memory of a marginal group of tribal shepherds and soldiers devoid of connections to any state system.

Given the broader undercurrent in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī on Afghan (religious, political, tribal) integrity, it is significant that several saints were also presented as the progenitors of whole tribes or clans. Here it is important to recognize the role of prominent Sufis (often by the same token sayyids) as genealogical brokers between the autonomous genealogy of the tribe on the one hand and, on the other hand, the scripturalist genealogies of prophetic
ancestry we have seen tying all of the “tribes” or “peoples” (aqwām) of the world into a common human ancestry traceable to the first man, Ādām. Whether through an explicit bloodline in the case of sayyids, or else through the divine blessing (baraka) that all Sufi saints possessed, the figure of the saint marked a point of interface between local and pan-Islamic models of ancestry, forming the conceptual threads that tied different modes of social organization into a unified model of the world and its multiplicity.\(^38\) In literate contexts at least, by the seventeenth century, we find that almost all models of ancestry in the lands touched by Islam had already undergone this process of conceptual fusion, in which genealogy and sainthood played so central a part. Among the Afghans, the most important case of a saintly progenitor was Shaykh Bayt, the son of the “first Afghan” and companion of the Prophet, Qays ʿAbd al-Rashid. Shaykh Bayt was regarded as the founder of the prominent Batnī tribe, from which numerous other tribes and clans subsequently emerged, as detailed in a long section of the text devoted to cataloguing the tribal descendants (aulād) of the most important Afghan saints (Niʿmat Allāh 1960–62, 843–70). In a further reflection of the interweaving of ethnogenesis and sainthood, Shaykh Bayt gave their name to the Lōdī clan by handing bread to their ancestor Ibrāhīm and announcing the Pashto words “Ibrāhīm is the eldest” (Ibraḥīm lō dī) (Niʿmat Allāh 1960–62, 770–72, 601–3). Interestingly, these saintly traditions were not always used to glorify ancestors. An account of a child born of an illicit liaison between the daughter of Shaykh Bayt and Shāh Husayn, a non-Pashtun ancestor of the sultans of Ghur, was recounted to explain the aetiology of the Ghilzay ethnonym as those “born of a thief” (Pashto ghil zay) in memory of the saint’s stolen daughter (Niʿmat Allāh 1960–62, 699–701).\(^39\)

Such genealogical connections between saints and tribesmen were not unique to the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī and can also be found in other Indo-Afghan texts. In the Tārīkh-e-Shēr Shāhī (Shēr Shāhī’s History), completed in 980/1572 during the reign of Akbar, Sarwānī drew attention to the place of Sufis within the folds of tribal genealogies, as seen in his description of the ancestry of the heads of the Sarwānīs of Roh (sārdār-e-sarwāniyān-e-Roh) (Sarwānī,

\(^{38}\)With regard to premodern Sudan, McHugh has drawn attention to related processes by which Sufi holy men acted as mediators between social institutions that were inherently conflicting, here the moral and political economy of the Funj Empire and the Arabo-Islamic norms of their influential and powerful neighbors. The Sufi blessed men “personified the convergence and mutual accommodation of opposing forces and … were often able to manipulate symbols to their own advantage as well as that of the larger community…. [T]hey became brokers of power as well as of culture” (McNeil 1994, 189). On such mediatory roles in an Indo-Afghan context, see Green (2006b).

\(^{39}\)However, in some manuscripts, the Pashto phrase reads ghil zū (thief son). A similar version of the story was earlier recounted by the Mughal courtier Abūl Fazāl (1875, 1:591). C. E. Bosworth (n.d.) has also argued for a non-Pashtun origin for the Ghilzay, seeing them as descendants of the Turkish tribe of the Khalaj, who later entered a confederation with neighboring Pashtun tribes.
In the later *Khulāsat al-ansāb*, principally concerned with the origins of the Kūta Khayl, the eponymous ancestor of the clan was said to have been the saintly Shaykh Kūta Shihāb al-dīn, whose deeds (ahwāl) were recounted in some detail in the text (Rahmat Khān, f. 14r–f. 20r). As we have already seen, the eighteenth-century *Tazkirit al-ansār* ascribed similar saintly origins to the Dānishmand clan (Hussan Zia n.d., 133–46). Other saintly aetiologies were recorded in later ethnographic sources. In Pashtun areas of the Derajat of western Punjab, the saint Sakhī Sarwar (d. ca. 690/1291?) was held to have taken three wives from a royal, tribal, and sayyid family (Raverty 1855, 338–41), whereas from another early ethnographic source, we hear a similar story describing how the saint Mūsā Nikkā was seen as the ancestor of the Wazīris (Shah 1906, 124).

The most important point of comparison for the Afghan narratives is the role of saintly legends among tribal groups in Central Asia. Such historical traditions often associated a Sufi with the conversion of a tribe or its founder, as with the conversion of the Golden Horde by the semilegendary Bābā Tūkles (DeWeese 1994). Numerous Turkoman tribes also maintain ethnohistorical traditions relating their ancestry back to a Sufi saint, a shaykh, or a pīr whose shrine often forms a primary pilgrimage site for the tribe or clan in question (Basilov 1984, 225–27). In an Indian context, it is once again the Mughals who provided a set of rival narratives, having brought with them similar ethnohistorical traditions from Central Asia that were steadily punctuated by the deeds of their own saints. This self-conscious hauling of history into the diaspora is seen to best effect in the famous *Tārīkh-e-rashidī* of Mīrza Muhammad Haydar Dughlāt (d. 958/1551), reflecting the *Tārīkh-e-Khan Jahanī* in its account of the conversion to Islam of the Mughal ancestor and ruler of eastern Turkestan, Tughlūq Timūr Khān (r. 760/1359–764/1363), at the hands of the Sufi Shaykh Jamāl al-dīn (Dughlat 1996, Persian text 10–13, trans. 8–11). Such saintly conversion narratives were also related to certain Afghan clans, and in the *Tārīkh-e-Khan Jahanī*, we read that it was through Shaykh Muhammad Sulaymān that the Farmāl clan was converted to Islam (ba-sharaf-e-bay'at-e-islām musharraf shōda-and) (Nim‘at Allāh 1960–62, 649). But by promoting the legend of their ancestor being converted to Islam by the Prophet himself, the Afghans were able to produce the trump card.

In common with its presentation of the saints as the founders of Pashtun tribes, the *Tārīkh-e-Khan Jahanī* also described saints whose descendants were

---

40 These origin stories were also reflected in the traditional account of the origins of the Tūmūrī branch of the Chahār Aymāq of northwestern Afghanistan and Khorasan, as recorded in the medieval Persian hagiography *Maqāmāt-e-Amīr Kulāl*. Here the origins of the Tūmūrī section were dated back to the marriage of the Sufi saint Amīr Kulāl (d. 772/1370?) to a daughter of the great conqueror Timūr (Singer 1982, 65–76; cf. Muminov and Babadzhanov 2001).

41 Like other Indo-Muslim historians, Dughlāt was also a devotee of the Sufis, being particularly associated with one Mawlānā Ahmad.
the subject of continued devotion by their fellow tribesmen (Ni'mat Allāh 1960–62, 807–8). One example is Abū Ishaq Dāwī, whose case is particularly interesting in view of the modern anthropological literature on Pashtun Islam. For although Abū Ishaq’s ancestors were sayyids (that is, descendants of Muham-
mad) rather than Pashtuns, both he and his heirs were said to be considered Afghans, as the saint’s maternal line came via the Pashtun clan of the Dāwī (Ni’mat Allāh 1960–62, 807). The question of the status of such Sufis as sayyids has long been problematic for the Pashtun tribal system, showing the inconsistencies that social expediency brought to the abstract model of the tribal network. We read in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī the story of Sayyid Muhammad, who traveled from Turkestan to settle among the Karānī, Kākar, and Shīrānī clans (tuman). The headsmen of these clans later gave the sayyid a wife from each of their sections, and from his union with these women, four distinct new clans emerged (Ni’mat Allāh 1960–62, 644–45). The difficulties of where to fit the sayyids within the tribal structure were often glossed over in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, with sayyid groups said to be acceptable by passing themselves off as Pashtuns. It was against this background that the text recounted the story of the marriage of a young sayyid called Ishaq to a woman of the Shīrānī clan and the attempts of their offspring to be accepted by the rest of the clan (Ni’mat Allāh 1960–62, 642–43). Such was the prestige lent to tribal affiliation that the status of particular saints as sayyids could be effectively disregarded in favor of a tribal lineage. Given the fact that claims to the bloodline of Muhammad were often an indispensable part of Muslim sainthood, this omission is all the more striking as a sign of the prestige of affiliation to a Pashtun clan.

A written exercise in ordering the social world that abandoned the transregional models of spiritualized transcendental genealogy offered by Sufi theorists and their own genre of history (the tazkirat or tabaqat), the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī instead championed the narrower genealogical ties of the Afghan tribes. In contrast to the way the term tāyifa was usually used in connection with the Sufis, the text gave no sense of the loyalties acquired through the voluntary pledge of allegiance (bay‘at) to a Sufi tāyifa or “order.” In the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, the term tāyifa was used only to signify the tribe into which the saints and their followers were born, or in a few cases adopted. There was no place in this idealized tribal system for the voluntary Sufi pledge of allegiance, for a tribesman’s religious loyalties were presented as predetermined by his membership of a tribe or clan. Though making use of the same collective terminology of the tāyifa

42The affiliation through different generations of Pashtun clans to particular Sufi families remains a feature of Afghan Islam to the present day, not entirely helpfully being termed “maraboutic Sufism” by Olivier Roy (1990a, 38–44). Links between Pashtun tribesmen and local saintly families are also seen in Raverty (1862, 55) and Shah (1906, 120, 124).

43The question of the relationship of sayyids to the Afghans was also raised in the Khulāsat al-ansāb (Rahmat Khān, f. 58v).

44The story was later repeated in the Khulāsat al-ansāb (Rahmat Khān, f. 58v–f. 61r).
as the writers of expressly Sufi works, the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī envisaged a quite
distinct social model that was not a Sufi organization at all but a tribal social
model to which Sufis were attached. 

THE NAQSHBANDĪ ASCENDANCY: THE COMPETITION OF BLESSED MEN

This desire to affiliate Sufis with particular social or ethnic groups was by no
means unique to the Afghans. In the context of the loss of Afghan political power
in India in which the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī was composed, the crucial point of
comparison is again the saints of the Mughals. The sixteenth-century Mughal
court text Ā’in-e-Akbarī had enumerated the great saints of the Mughal realm
alongside the other peoples and possessions of the emperor of Hindustan, connect-
ing the Mughal rulers to their subjects through fellow association with the
saints (Abū’l Fazl 1875, 2:207–25). But in addition to these cosmopolitan affilia-
tions, the Mughals also aligned themselves with more partisan supernatural guar-
dians devoted solely to the protection of the Mughals’ group interests. These
figures effectively comprised the many Naqshbandī Sufis who followed the
Mughals into India and affiliated themselves with Central Asians (turānī,
moghol) in Mughal service (Digby 1990; Foltz 1996; Green 2004b). Seen from
this angle, legends of the saints provide great insight into the inter-Muslim rival-
ries of premodern ethnic politics. A convincing example of such ethnic affiliation
is seen in an account in the Malfūzāt-e-Naqsbandīyya (Naqshbandī Memoirs)
concerning the Bukharan Naqshbandī migrant Shāh Palangpōsh (d. 1110/
1699). In this account, which concerned events that took place only a few
decades after the writing of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, Shāh Palangpōsh was
said to have employed his powers to help one of the commanders of Awrangzēb’s
“army of Islam” (lashkar-e-islām) to defeat an Afghan tribal rebellion near Hasan
Abdal (Awrangābādī 1358/1939, 15–16). In the text, the Afghans were described
in no uncertain terms as the “enemy” (ghanīm). Despite the later prominence
among the Pashtuns of Naqshbandī Sufi families (particularly of the Mujaddidī
d line), it is notable that there is no mention in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī of any
of the saints of the Afghans being affiliated with the Naqshbandīyya. 

Given the partisanship of immigrant Naqshbandī holy men with the Mughals, the
Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī’s concern for a similar band of Afghan patron saints

45 The social utility of such Sufi imagery by no means fell into neglect when the Afghans regained
their independence from the Mughals. The later Indo-Afghan ruler Muhammad Khān Bangāsh
(r. 1125/1713–1156/1743) formulated a persona that blended the imagery of the Sufi master
(pīr) and the holy warrior (ghāzī), with his courtiers encouraged to think of themselves as his
disciples (chēlas). Reflecting the role of the saints in the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, here was an attempt to
co-opt the same Sufi categories by the leader of a fragile tribal coalition (see Gommans 1999,
131–32). For Mughal courtly versions of this coalescence of symbols, see Richards (1988).

is perhaps unsurprising. For in this imperial context, Indo-Muslim histories often spoke in terms of saintly “armies of prayer” (lashkar-e-du’ā) (Bilgrāmī 1416/1996, 78). In stark contrast to this stately trope of the saintly army, the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī preferred what was clearly regarded as the more indigenous ideal of the tribe.

It is worth taking a small detour at this point to examine the process by which the Afghans became affiliated with the Naqshbandiyya, as this development is illustrative of the wider processes through which Afghan identity evolved in negotiation with the cosmopolitan pressures of diaspora and empire. For the Naqshbandiya to which the Afghans connected themselves from the middle of the seventeenth century was not the Naqshbandiya in its Central Asian form, but the suborder founded in India by the great “Islamic renewer,” or mujaddid, Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624). In a reflection of their connection to Bābūr and his Timurid ancestors, Central Asian (tūrānī) Naqshbandīs began to migrate to India in the decades after Bābūr’s conquest of Hindustan in 932/1526. Waqf endowment documents from Kabul demonstrate the fiscal and institutional processes by which this imperial Sufi expansion was made, with Mughal notables endowing a Naqshbandī madrasa in Kabul soon after the city became Bābūr’s capital (Dale and Payind 1999). It was from their stage post in Kabul that, like the Mughal vanguard before them, the Naqshbandiya began to expand into India, training new members in Kabul to attend to the Mughal notables moving southward in increasing numbers. We should not make the mistake, however, of seeing the madrasa’s Kabul setting as unproblematically “Afghan”; on the contrary, this was a Mughal establishment in what was briefly the first Mughal capital. The most important Naqshbandī figure in this movement down from the highlands to Hindustan was Bāqī Billāh Bīrang (d. 1012/1603), a shaykh belonging to the family of the Central Asian saintly power broker, Khwāja Ahrār. After Bāqī Billāh’s training in Kabul, his move to the new Mughal center at Delhi marked the beginning of the Indian transformation of the Naqshbandiya, promoting affiliation to its holy men among first- and second-generation Central Asians residing in India.

As is well known, the great period of change in Naqshbandī history came through the work of Bāqī Billāh’s disciple, the self-proclaimed mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindī. Sirhindī’s letters to the Mughal emperor have been the subject of much scholarly discussion in recent decades, but here we wish to draw attention to the makeup of his fellowship of deputies (khulafā) as recorded in the Hazarāt al-quds (ca. 1053/1643) of his disciple, Bādru’d-dīn Sirhindī (b. ca. 1003/1594). In the Hazarāt al-quds, we clearly see the imperial circle from which many of the mujaddid’s closest followers were drawn. Some of these figures were originally from Kabul, such as Muhammad Sādiq Kābulī (d. 1018/1609), who, like the patron of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, was employed in the service of Jahāngīr before the latter’s elevation to the throne (Sirhindī 1971, 345–47). More interesting was another of Sirhindī’s deputies, Hājjī Khīzr Khān Afghān
Celebrated for the beauty of his voice, which he used to recite the call to prayer and sing hymns through the night on holy days, Khizr Khan belonged to the Afghans of Banur in Punjab. From the *Hazarât al-quds*, we learn that it was he who began to bring the Afghans of the Punjabi gasba towns of Bajwara and Bahawalpur into the Naqshbandi fold (Sirhindī 1971, 347–49; see also 84–85). Sirhindī also recruited three close followers from Bark in the Pashtun territories between Kabul and Qandahar (Rızvı 1983, 2:232), among whom was Mawlańa Ahmad Barkı (d. 1026/1617), a scholar (ālim) who first learned of the mujaddid through a copy of his letters passed to him by a merchant traveling from India. Through such figures, during the seventeenth century the Naqshbandiya slowly began to expand beyond its Mughal constituency to reach other social and ethnic groups in India. From his base at Sirhind in Punjab, the mujaddid was ideally placed to reach the well-established Afghan communities of the region, while the Naqshbandis’ association with figures in imperial service also brought its masters to the attention of Afghans serving the Mughals. In this way, Sirhindī’s charismatic reformulation of the order involved the gathering of followers from a range of ethnic backgrounds beyond the original Mughal remit of the Naqshbandiya in India, a reflection of the supraethnic Sufi affiliations we saw developing earlier under Afghan rule. It also seems reasonable to suggest that with their earlier association with such millenarian figures as Bāyazīd Ansārī and Sayyid Muhammad of Jawnpur, some Afghans may also have been attracted to the Naqshbandiya by Sirhindī’s millenarian persona.

Like the Afghans themselves, in the circles of the mujaddid, the Naqshbandi order was itself transformed by its Indian passage and its encounter with the cosmopolitan environment of north India as manipulated by the exigencies of empire. From the seventeenth century, the association of the Afghans with the Naqshbandiya represented one of the key ways in which the religious and social formations of the Afghans were transformed in the diaspora. In the following centuries, the Naqshbandiya would become an integral part of Afghan life, commanding tremendous influence at the Bārakzay court in Kabul during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, in a reflection of their earlier role as the defenders of warriors, playing a significant part in the jihād of the 1980s. Yet at the time of the completion of the *Ta̱ṟīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* around 1021/1613, these developments were only just beginning. As far as the Khān Jahān was concerned, the Afghans had no need for such Naqshbandi interlopers and their Mughal connections. Instead, as we have seen, the *Ta̱ṟīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* included a lengthy celebration of the Afghans’ own tribal saints, far from cosmopolitan figures whose loyalty was owed to none but their kinsmen.

For all of the *Ta̱ṟīkh-e-Khān-e-Jahānī*‘s insistence on the distinction and difference of the Afghans, the fact remained that this celebration of the parochial and tribal was patronized in the same courtly context that had earlier been responsible for the Afghans’ close engagement with the literary and religious worlds of Hindustan. The difference, of course, was a reversal of political
conditions, rendering the patron of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān-e-Jahānī* a servant at another’s court rather than the master of his own. Yet like the Lōdī and Sūr courts before it, the Mughal court was no less a location for cosmopolitan encounters and exchanges. At precisely the same time that the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* was being completed, molding the Afghans’ remembered past into the literary norms of Persianate “historiography,” or *tārīkh*, in 1612 the Hindu poet Keshavadās (fl. 1600) was reshap[ing the rules of Brajbhasha kāvya literature in his *Jahāngīrjasandrīkā* (Moonlight of the Fame of Jahāngīr) under the influence of the Islamicate traditions of the same court (Busch 2005). The *Jahāngīrjasandrīkā* was the earliest Brajbhasha poem to be written in praise of a Muslim ruler and also included panegyrics to a series of other members of the court; among these praiseworthy paragons was the Khān Jahān himself! The champion of Afghan clannishness can here be found praised in the verses of a Hindu court poet. Indeed, one of the most radical examples of Afghan cultural integration in India occurred in the Khān Jahān’s own lifetime in the writings of the bhaktī poet Raskhān (fl. 1584 or 1614), whom tradition identifies as an Afghan but whose Hindwī poetry was written entirely in praise of the god Krishna (Snell 1989).

Amid its courtly context, even the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* was not wholly consistent in its iteration of tribal ties, for despite its rhetorical focus on the integrity of the tribal system, a number of stories lifted from earlier histories hint at Afghan accommodation to the Indian religious world. These contradictions were perhaps symptomatic of a wider tension among the Indo-Afghans held taut between the maintenance of the tribe and accommodation to the other groups and norms around them. With the fall of Afghan power and the relegation of the Afghans to the status of one group among the many competing for influence in the imperial system, these tensions became more prominent. The existence of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* is eloquent testimony to these divergent models of the self and the world.

**Postimperial Positionings: The Afghans after the Mughals**

In order to understand the consequences of the processes we have seen at the Mughal court, it is necessary to briefly examine some of the Afghan works sponsored after the decline of Mughal power during the eighteenth century. The *Tārīkh-e-Khān-e-Jahānī* itself became tremendously influential during this period. After its early abridgement under the title of *Makhzan-e-Afghānī* (Afghan Coffers), both works were duplicated by numerous copyists, with the *Makhzan* also at times being appended to later works of Afghan

---

47 I am grateful to Allison Busch for this information.

48 Thanks to Imre Bangha for drawing my attention to this article.
In some later manuscripts of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*, the text was reorganized to conform to the needs which its readers approached the work over the centuries in which it came to be regarded as the acme of Afghan history. One late eighteenth-century manuscript of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* included an appended tract on genealogy (*kayfiyat-e-shajara*), including instructions on how to locate the particular clan in the text from which a reader understood himself to descend but lacked knowledge of its wider genealogical implications, so transforming the text into a tool of individual self-knowledge (Salar Jung Library, Ms. Hist. 394). Amid the postimperial turmoil of the eighteenth century, when new and self-consciously Afghan states arose from the dying embers of the Mughal state, the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* took on a new importance as questions of tribal affiliation gained greater importance than ever. In its relationship to a series of atavistic responses to social upheaval, the popularity of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* in this sense mirrors the massive growth in individual projects of family history that has accompanied the breakdown of traditional family structures in Britain and the United States.

Thus it was that when a series of new histories of the Afghans were patronized amid the Indo-Afghan revival during the eighteenth century, they drew greatly on the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*’s classic formulation of the Afghan past. This new generation of Afghan histories included the *Khulāsāt al-ansāb* (Genealogical Digest), composed in 1184/1770 by the Rohila leader Hāfiz Rahmat Khān (d. 1188/1774), and the anonymous *Risāla dar ansāb-e-Afghānān* (Treatise on the Ancestors of the Afghans) and *Tawārīkh-e-Afghānī* (Afghan Histories). A number of other histories have also survived from this fertile period of Afghan history writing whose titles are now as certain as their authorship. With the emergence of a Pashto prose literature in the eighteenth century, a Pashto version of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* was also presented as the first section of the important *Tārīkh-e-Murassa*’ (Jewel-Studded History) of Afzal Khān Khattak (d. 1161/1747). By the nineteenth century, the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* also began to inform the emerging colonial literature on the Afghans and was drawn on by Muhammad Hayāt Khān in the *Hayāt-e-Afghan* (The Afghan Life) that he composed for the British administration in Punjab.

---

49 One such appropriation of the text is found in an extended version (by Ibrāhīm Batnī?) of Sarwānī’s *Tārīkh-e-Shēr Shāh* (Bodleian Library, Ms. Elliot 372), which consists of folio 158r from the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*’s long section on the Afghan saints.

50 The author of the *Khulāsāt al-ansāb* (Rahmat Khān, f. 13r) clearly stated his use of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* and the *Tārīkh-e-Shēr Shāh* of Sarwānī.

51 One such untitled manuscript (British Library, Or. 1877) consists of a first part devoted to the deeds of the Abdālī clan and a second part tracing the genealogy of the Afghans as a whole, tracing their origins from the patriarch Ya’qūb via the Indo-Afghan dynasties up to prominent figures of the eighteenth century. Another untitled manuscript (Bodleian Library, Ouseley 410) that also probably dates from the Rohila period presented the historical pedigrees of the Afghan tribes and clans in the form of a long scroll.
(Hayat Khan 1874). Numerous manuscripts of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī* were also collected by colonial scholars.

As we have seen through the spread of the “Indian” branch of the Naqshbandiyya among the Afghans in the decades after the completion of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*, connections with nontribal Sufis were an important feature of Afghan social and religious life by the time of the recovery of Afghan power under the eighteenth-century Rohila rulers. Such Sufis thus found their place in the post-Mughal histories of the Afghans. By the time of this revival of Afghan rule in India, in the *Khulāsāt al-ansāb* of the Afghan ruler of Rohilkhand to the north of Delhi, Hāfiz Rahmat Khān, in place of many of the tribal saints of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*, Ahmad Sirhindī was now explicitly mentioned among the great saints connected to the Afghans (Rahmat Khān, f. 82v). By this period, the Naqshbandis had fully infiltrated the Afghan religious world, testament indeed to the incorporation of the Afghans into the cultural and religious sphere of the Mughal imperium. In various places, the *Khulāsāt al-ansāb* also mentions the Chisht Sufi order, as well as explicitly describing Afghan connections to the Qādir order (Rahmat Khān, f. 14v, 82v). Whatever the claims of the Khān Jahān’s history, it is unlikely that this pattern of Afghan affiliations to non-Afghan blessed men, which we saw developing earlier in the diaspora, ever really disappeared. In an example of the continuing accommodation of the Afghans to the sophisticated world of urban India, in the early eighteenth-century, the tomb of the Afghan notable Mīr Musharaf, near the shrine of Nizām al-dīn Awliyā in Delhi, became the focus for celebrations of the Mīr’s death anniversary (*‘urs*). According to the *Muraqqā‘e-Dilhī* (Delhi Scrapbook), under the aegis of the Mīr’s son, the tomb’s surrounding flower gardens were illuminated with lanterns, while the love songs of the *qawwāls*, who performed at the *‘urs*, made the tomb a favorite spot among Delhi’s dandies and lovers (Dargah Quli Khan 1989, 17–18). Relationships with Sufis continued to mediate such acts of accommodation. At the height of renewed Afghan power in Rohilkhand in the mid-eighteenth century, so many non-Afghan Sufis were drawn by the promise of patronage to the Rohila capital of Farukhabad that the city received the nickname of *faqṭrābād*, the “city of fakirs” (Gommans 1999, 131). Among the more famous figures in close contact with the Rohila rulers and notables were such Delhi-based Naqshbandīs as Shāh Wālī Allāh (d. 1174/1762) and Mīrza Māzhar Jān-e-Jānān (d. 1195/1780) (Husain 1994, 207–9). In a letter that Shāh Wālī Allāh sent to the Rohila leader Najīb al-Dawla, we see a reflection of the earlier accounts of the saintly protection of the Afghans by the medieval saints of Delhi. For like the medieval saints of the city resorted to by Buhālī and

---

52 In the extravagant language of Dargah Quli Khān, “The lovers and entertainers arrange to meet here [particularly] during the monsoon... . Even if the foolish muhtasib were to pass by, he too would be intoxicated by the smells ... These aromatic gardens make the people yearn for wine and when they are enraptured they begin to sing and dance” (1989, 17).
Sikander Lodí, Shāh Wālī Allāh assured the Rohila leader he had mystically foreseen the defeat of both the Jats and Marathas at the hands of the Afghans (Wālī Allāh 1950, letter 7, 63–64).  

For all these suggestions of the inter-Islamic ties wrought by membership (whether actual or conceptual) in the transregional networks of the Sufi orders, the ideal of the tribe was now to retain its role as the bulwark of Afghan historical identity. The relationship between crises of identity caused by sudden shifts in status and the creation of an Afghan tribal historiography was made explicit in the Khulāsat al-ansāb. For its author, Ḥāfiz Rahmat Khān, stated that the incentive for composing his own genealogical history came from the dangers he had seen in the settling in India of his own clan of the Kūta Khayl (Rahmat Khān, f. 9r). Not only had their migration caused them to forget their ancestry, it had also led them to neglect the solidarity and sense of common community that such ancestral ties to other Afghan clans should foster:

I saw that the majority of the high-born people of Afghanistan [wilāyat] had become displaced [bijā] from their homeland [mulk u watan]. They had settled in India and over the generations forgotten their genealogies [ansāb], such that no-one could distinguish to whom he was closer and from whom he was distant, but only knew that he was from this tribe [qawm] or that clan [khayl]. Since as fate had it my ancestors had come and settled in India, I too followed them and came to settle there. For the rest of the Kūta Khayl it was more or less the same, such that none of them remained in the homeland itself. (Rahmat Khān, f. 10r; alternative translation in Kushev 2001)

Such was the importance of affirming the ties of genealogy that in his attempt to sanctify the status of the tribes, Ḥāfiz Rahmat looked beyond the saints of the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī. In line with the scripturalist tendencies apparent throughout the Khulāsat al-ansāb, Ḥāfiz Rahmat eschewed the fading memory of the saintly tribesmen and resorted instead to the Quran and the life of the Prophet to authorize the moral duty of knowledge of one’s ancestry (ma’rifat-e-nasab) (Rahmat Khān, f. 10v–f. 12v). Though the stories of the tribal blessed men had come and gone, the tribe remained at the center stage of history.

Amid the renewed attention to tribal (and so axiomatically Afghan) formulations of identity that accompanied the expansion and subsequent retraction of Afghan power in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, language became identified as a marker of belonging and affiliation in new—one is tempted to say modern—ways. Like the category of the past for the Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī, it was now language that presented itself as a problem to be

53Shaḥ Wālī Allāḥ also sent letters to the Afghan conqueror Ahmad Shāh Abdālī and other prominent Afghans of the age.
resolved through literary intervention. The rise of Ahmad Shāh Durranī (r. 1160/1747–1187/1773) and his establishment of a short-lived Indo-Iranian empire centered on Qandahar had witnessed attempts to replace the familiar Persian of Mughal and Safavid administration with Pashto, resulting in the composition of the first Pashto grammatical works, intended for the use of Persophone bureaucrats (Kushev 2001). Yet with their foundation so firmly set in the Durranī administration, this short spate of linguistic codification lasted little longer than the Durranī imperium itself, although the rise of British power, moving westward from Bengal into contact with the post-Durranī kingdoms in Rohilkhand, presented further incentive to compile such dictionaries and grammars. Pashto remained in these works the minor sibling of Persian, with each of these grammars presenting Pashto through the medium and categories of Persian. For our purposes, the most interesting example of these foundational works of Pashto linguistics is the Ajā‘ib al-lughāt (The Wonders of Words, 1228/1813). This four-language Pashto dictionary was compiled by Ilahyār Khān, the son of Hāfiz Rahmat Khān, whose Khulāsāt al-ansāb we have just discussed. Yet it is not the lexicographical contents of this work that we wish to highlight but rather the Persian preface in which its author described his method and motivations in compiling it. After demonstrating his genealogy in imitation of that presented in his father’s Khulāsāt al-ansāb, Ilahyār Khān recounted how during the reign of his father “most” (aksar) of the Afghans of all clans had left their homeland (wilāyat) to come to India in a new period of migration (Ilahyār Khān, f. 2v). Perceiving that even in such a short period the Afghans subsequently born in India had lost the ability to speak Pashto, Ilahyār Khān set about learning the language from the elders who had been born in the wilāyat (Ilahyār Khān, f. 3r). He then gave this rationale for this attempt to preserve the language of the forefathers:

To know and understand one’s own language [zaban-e-khōd] is proper; it is a guide to one’s rootedness and nobility [asālat wa najābat]. For how else would one know which tribe [qawm] someone was from and from what pedigree and lineage [hasb ū nasab]? (Ilahyār Khān, f. 4r)

Formulated here at the perceived moment of the absorption of a new body of Afghan migrants into the world of the diaspora was a new sense of the connection between identity and language. Paradoxically, the Afghans had their own language (zaban-e-khōd), even if they could no longer speak it! And so this language demanded to be preserved and, indeed, revived. Just as for the Khān Jahān at the court of Jahāngīr, it was no longer enough that the history of the Afghans should consist merely in memory, lore and the chronicles of others,
for Ilahyar Khan it was the ancestors’ very words that demanded preservation in the diaspora. As in the case of the *Tārīkh-e-Khān Jahānī*, the backdrop to these atavistic sentiments was a recent diminishing of Afghan power.

The efforts of Ilahyar Khan and other early promoters of Pashto letters were by no means the sole linguistic current directing the tide of Afghan history. The eighteenth-century rulers of Rohilkhand patronized both Persian and Pashto writers, as well as a series of poets in the vernacular by then gaining the name of Urdu (Husain 1994, 209–12). The earliest history of the rise and fall of the Afghan rulers of Rohilkhand was thus written not in Persian or Pashto but in the north Indian dialect of Janbhasha. This was the *Qissa-e-ahwāl-e-rōhīla* (Romance of the Rohila Deeds) of Rustam ‘Alī Bijnuī (fl. 1775), a non-Afghan former servant of the Rohila Afghans who found employment after their fall teaching Hindustani to an English soldier (Bijnori 2005). As Afghan political power in India once again dissolved in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the Afghans were re-enveloped by the clamor of languages around them. But as in the case of Ilahyar Khan, there was now a new sense of identification with the Pashto language as the old cosmopolitan realm of Persian began to dissolve in India, only to survive in the old Mughal outpost in Kabul. Emerging from the printing presses of Delhi and Punjab in the nineteenth century we find the beginnings of a new Pashto ecumene that would compete with the cosmopolitan status of Persian for the loyalty of the Afghans throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like genealogy and the remembered past, language was repeatedly reformulated and reconceived in repeated negotiation with the Indian world, against whose dynamism and wealth the historical identity of the Afghans took shape. Here in India, Afghan history was not only made in fact but also given meaning and form in writing by adopting the traditions of historiography proper to the cosmopolitan Indian world of Persian. Against this background, this essay has sought to bring the history of the Afghan diaspora out of the sometimes illusory shadows of the “homeland” and into an arena of early modern globalization underwritten by empire and its cosmopolitan charades. As older patterns of Afghan migration have revived on a new scale with the flight of refugees since the 1980s, the long-standing Afghan encounter with the Indian world has taken on new forms through the transregional affiliations of the Taliban and the introduction of Urdu to the streets of Kabul.

**List of References**


Equiano, Olaudah. 1789. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself. London: Printed for and sold by the author.


Shafî’i, M. 1929. “An Afghan Colony at Qusur.” *Islamic Culture* 3 (3).


