The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719

For roughly two hundred years, the Mughal emperors ruled supreme in northern India. How was it possible that a Muslim, ethnically Turkish, Persian-speaking dynasty established itself in the Indian subcontinent to become one of the largest and most dynamic empires on earth? In this rigorous new interpretation of the period, Munis D. Faruqui explores Mughal state formation through the pivotal role of the Mughal princes. In a challenge to previous scholarship, the book suggests that far from undermining the foundations of empire, the court intrigues and political backbiting that were features of Mughal political life – and that frequently resulted in rebellions and wars of succession – actually helped spread, deepen, and mobilize Mughal power through an empire-wide network of friends and allies. This engaging book, which trawls a diverse archive of European and Persian sources, takes the reader from the founding of the empire under Babur to its decline in the 1700s. When the princely institution atrophied, so too did the Mughal Empire.

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Friends and Allies

Up to the 1980s, Mughal studies were dominated by arguments for the modernity of Mughal administrative structures.[1] In 1959 and 1966, respectively, Satish Chandra and M. Athar Ali published groundbreaking books that, although not directly challenging the view of the Mughal Empire as highly centralized and bureaucratic, shifted the focus to the social relations between, on the one hand, different groups and regional entities and, on the other, the imperial dynasty.

What followed in the 1970s with the work of John Richards, Peter Hardy, Michael Pearson, Karen Leonard, and Philip Calkins, and in the 1980s and 1990s with the scholarship of Muzaffar Alam, Richard Barnett, C. A. Bayly, André Wink, Douglas Streusand, Stephen Dale, Dirk Kolff, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, to name a few, was a new appreciation of the Mughal Empire as an alliance-state, the sum total of many constituent parts. In 1986, Muzaffar Alam described the empire as deriving its success from "balancing" and "coordinating ... between conflicting communities" for which service to the empire promised the best path for political, social, or economic advancement.[2] Also in 1986, André Wink argued that alliance making and breaking (processes he controversially described as *fitna*) rather than the outright destruction of one's opponents through sustained military action was the central dynamic undergirding the

[1] See W. Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls* (Delhi, repr. 1994); Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, repr. 1980); Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556–1707* (Delhi, repr. 1999). The work of F. W. Buckler provides a notable exception: *Legitimacy and Symbols: The South Asian Writings of F.W. Buckler* (Ann Arbor, 1985).

[2] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India* (Delhi, repr. 1997), p. 5.

sovereignty of the Mughals as well as all other Indian dynasties.[3] Unlike previous generations of Mughal historians who argued that compromised and/or overreaching administrative institutions eventually caused the empire's collapse, these revisionist scholars instead located imperial failure in the decision by different groups to either abandon or co-opt Mughal imperial authority while striking out on their own.

More recently, in a series of books published between 2004 and 2005 – *The Mughals of India* by Harbans Mukhia, *State and Locality in Mughal India* by Farhat Hasan, and *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* by Ruby Lal – we see affirmed the view that Mughal success depended on Mughal skill in forging and managing diverse sets of alliances and interests. Cementing these processes was a willingness to share what Hasan describes as the "privileges and perquisites of sovereignty."[4] The result, again, was quite similar to what historian of early modern Europe Nicholas Henshall identifies as the "side-by-side operation of absolute and shared power."[5] Hence, behind the Mughal façade of autocracy, there existed practices of kingship that privileged co-optation and consent over coercion, resulting in an imperial system in which broad swathes of society were persuaded to participate, and where the nature and composition of the Mughal state was continuously being reshaped by shifting relationships and alliances. What this book overall and this chapter in particular describe is the key role of the Mughal princes in forging these relationships and alliances. Even though the emperor and the imperial court stood at the heart of wide-ranging networks of influence and activity, the princes too played a role (distinct in each case, and in each generation, yet always crucial) in embedding the imperial system throughout expanding territories. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the vitality of the princely institution and its alliance building endeavors shaped, in no small measure, the destiny of the Mughal Empire itself.

Whereas Chapter 2 described such kingship practices for the pre-1556 period, this chapter relates how much more important alliance building became during and after Akbar's reign. Deprived of the patrimonial right to an appanage, Mughal princes were forced to embrace the shaping of their own fates, an enterprise founded on their initial willingness to patronize standout individuals and/or groups. Given the general preference for

[3] André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 26, 34.

[4] Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 119.

[5] Nicholas Henshall, "The Myth of Absolutism," *History Today* 42, no. 6 (1992): 46.

men not already committed to competing princes or the emperor, princely efforts routinely functioned as a vehicle through which political, ethnic, and class outsiders were first embraced, and by which these outsiders learned to interact and carve out a place for themselves in the Mughal system. The process of drawing new groups into the ambit of Mughal politics effectively embedded the empire's authority along the ever-shifting political and geographical frontiers.

This chapter also emphasizes how each prince's sets of alliances spoke to his particular political image. In building alliances and loyal supporters, princes shaped and projected political personas. Since the post-1585 Mughal system never presumed that a favored prince would stand unchallenged, all princes expended great energy in making the case for their own accession to the throne. For the empire's subjects, political neutrality was never an option, especially in times of princely conflict or during the inevitable war of succession; it was thus to and through them that a prince made his case. This chapter considers, then, how the prince, going beyond the rules and obligations of loyalty in his household, grappled with the wider and less reliable but equally crucial realm of friends, well wishers, and allies without whom neither the princely institution nor the Mughal Empire could survive. In the end, as they fortified their own power, Mughal princes in effect did the same for the dynasty as a whole.

AKBAR'S HINDUSTANI EMPIRE, 1556–1605

If his grandfather Babur had dismissed "Hindustanis" as a strange and unfamiliar race of people and remained steadfastly Timurid and Central Asian in his orientation, Akbar's father was determined to lay the foundations for a Mughal empire in which those very Hindustanis had some stake. When Humayun appointed a tutor for his young son Akbar, his duty was to coach the prince in the "manners and customs of Hindustan" and introduce him to Indians (*ahl-i Hind*). As a consequence, the *Akbarnama* (ca. 1598) tells us, Akbar learned to enjoy Indian ways.[6] We can only speculate about the relationship between such enjoyment and the will to build and expand an empire in Hindustan. For we do know that Akbar went on to grab the turbulent but richer parts of the empire centered on the Punjab and Delhi upon his father's death in 1556. Over the next five

[6] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, ed. Abdul Rahim, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1878), p. 347.

decades, Akbar would succeed in melding the Central Asian Mughal presence with the social landscape of Hindustan, a project his father had imagined but not achieved.

There was a telling moment in 1582, when Akbar's only brother Mirza Hakim,[7] the appanage holder of Kabul, made a passionate appeal to the Central Asian officers within Akbar's attacking army. He begged them not to help Akbar occupy Kabul but instead to turn on "the natives of Hindustan" (*Hindi nazhadan*), their fellow soldiers and officers recruited in India.[8] (Akbar's imperial army included high-ranking Central Asian, Iranian, Indian Muslim, and Rajput generals.) Mirza Hakim's plea proved futile; his attempt to manipulate anti-Hindustani sentiment among the Central Asians simply did not work. The army ultimately occupied Kabul, and Mirza Hakim's efforts to keep his threatened appanage from being folded into the Delhi-based Mughal Empire failed.

Akbar crafted a Hindustani image for himself most pointedly to portray his difference from Mirza Hakim. We will consider here briefly how Mirza Hakim, in turn, took pains to contrast his image with Akbar's. From his base in Kabul and over eighteen years after achieving political maturity in 1564–5, Mirza Hakim positioned himself and his kingdom as a counterpoint to the emerging hybrid Hindustani Mughal court centered on Akbar's new capital of Fatehpur Sikri. Hakim promoted himself as the only true legatee and guardian of Central Asian and Chaghatai-Timurid political and religious ideals, implying that Akbar had betrayed those ideals by becoming more "Indian." Mirza Hakim offered his kingdom as a safe haven to mostly ethnic Central Asian rebels who opposed Akbar's efforts to diversify the Mughal nobility. Long after it had been abandoned elsewhere in the region, Mirza Hakim continued to occasionally apply a version of the *tura-i Chaghatai* (customs of the Chaghatai), a Turco-Mongol tribal-nomadic code, to judge particular kinds of crimes. Furthermore, the Mirza retained the *shahrukhi*, a Timurid/early Mughal coin, as Kabul's main currency, while banning Akbar's Hindustan-based imperial coinage from circulation.

Finally, as Muzaffar Alam has discussed, the language of political Islam in Kabul starkly contrasted with that emanating from Fatehpur Sikri.[9] In a

[7] For an extended discussion of the contest between Mirza Hakim and Akbar and its implications for the Mughal Empire, see Munis D. Faruqui, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 4 (2005): pp. 487–523.

[8] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, ed. Abdul Rahim, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1886), pp. 364, 366.

[9] Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India* (Delhi, 2004), pp. 69–80.

late 1570s book, *Akhlaq-i Hakimi*, written at the Mirza's court by his chief secretary and dedicated to the prince, the Kingdom of Kabul affirmed its commitment to the supremacy of Islam and Muslims.[10] By contrast, the Mughal court was inching toward an imperial Islamic commitment to tolerate difference and protect people of all religious faiths.

Alongside his Central Asian credentials, Mirza Hakim proclaimed fealty to his grandfather Babur, thus positioning himself as the true heir to Mughal familial traditions. By contrast, Akbar embraced their father Humayun's legacy. Mirza Hakim's decision to attach himself to Babur's legacy made sense given that the latter continued to enjoy great prestige as the founder of the Mughal dynasty, and his tomb was located in Kabul. The Mirza spent large sums of money to maintain the tomb, and each year he presided over celebrations to mark his grandfather's death anniversary. Following Babur, he portrayed himself as a *ghazi* (Islamic frontier warrior) with a rough-and-ready Turkish steppe identity, a staunch Sunni, and a bold risk taker. Like Babur, he swore allegiance to the Naqshbandi *tariqa* (order) and helped transform Kabul into an important center of Naqshbandi authority, scholarship, and training in the 1570s. In 1570–1, the Mirza moved against the Roshaniyya – a popular Islamic revivalist and millenarian movement with strong roots among some Afghan tribes in the eastern parts of his kingdom. Drawing a page from Babur's book, Mirza Hakim succeeded by playing the Afghans against one another.[11] These and other successes drew widespread attention to Mirza Hakim's rising political star. In 1576–7, he was approached by Shah 'Ismail II of Iran to seal an alliance aimed at strengthening the Shah's efforts to reconvert Iran back to Sunni Islam.

By posing as a stark contrast to Akbar, Mirza Hakim became a powerful focus for anti-Akbar rebels in India. In 1566 and again in 1581, they invited the Mirza to invade India, dethrone Akbar, and restore Central Asian dominance there. But Mirza Hakim had only limited appeal for the vast majority of Akbar's Indian subjects, few of whom supported his invasions of northern India.

[10] The author Hasan 'Ali ibn Ashraf al-Munshi explicitly states that the first custom/obligation (*shi'ari*) of good governance in this world and the next is to enable Islam's spread and protection for the Prophet's descendants (*millat-i Hazrat*). This can be achieved by extirpating Islam's enemies (*mukhalafan-i din*). *Akhlaq-i Hakimi*, British Library, Ethe 2203, f. 96a.

[11] See Ni'matullah Khan Harvi, *Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-i-Afghani*, ed. S. M. Imam-ud-Din, vol. 2 (Dhaka, 1962), p. 580.

When Akbar finally defeated Mirza Hakim in 1582, he knew that he had to simultaneously undermine the Mirza's networks of support and, where possible, reconstitute them under his own authority. Toward this end, Akbar ordered the Mirza's key supporter, and long-standing prime minister, Khwaja Hasan Naqshbandi (a direct descendant of Khwaja Baha'-ud-Din, the fourteenth-century founder of the Naqshbandi order) banished forever from Kabul. In the process, Akbar struck at the heart of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*'s close alliance with Mirza Hakim. Rather than simply weakening the Mirza's allies, however, Akbar moved more importantly to build on his brother's attempts to cultivate his own power. Akbar's efforts intensified after Mirza Hakim's death from alcohol poisoning in 1585, the permanent removal of his sons to India, and the end of his princely appanage. Thus, even as Akbar accommodated himself to the Naqshbandis through the late 1580s and early 1590s, he continued Mirza Hakim's policy of co-opting Hazara political and military support and recruiting extensively among resident Uzbeks and Badakhshanis. He also appointed senior Mughal nobles or locally influential figures to the governorship of the region. These included his foster brother Zain Khan Koka; Shah Quli Khan (who had earlier undergone castration in order to serve both in Akbar's harem as well as in the court); and Hasan Beg Badakhshi, a leading Badakhshani noble. Despite initial misgivings, Kabul's population eventually embraced the Hindustan-based Mughals and remained remarkably loyal until the first decades of the eighteenth century. However troublesome Mirza Hakim may have been to Akbar during his lifetime, his extensive efforts to win friends and allies with an eye toward entrenching his own power proved crucial to long-term Mughal control over the entire arc of territory extending from the Punjab to Kabul.

Mirza Hakim's defeat signaled two key shifts in the story of the Mughal Empire. The first entailed a clear move toward a vision of empire that acknowledged and transcended India's diversity, a multiethnic empire in which narrowly sectarian or ethnic appeals could gain little purchase. The second was a shift away from territorial appanages (such as those held by Mirza Hakim and, before him, by Humayun and his brothers) toward a different, more nebulous role for princes and family members in the imperial enterprise. Akbar had been building toward this for some decades already.

It took Akbar a long time to inculcate the solidarity that his army displayed in 1582 outside Kabul. When he ascended the throne in 1556, enemies – hostile nobility, many of them Central Asian, and Afghan and

Rajput coalitions beyond the court – surrounded him. Early on, and perhaps drawing inspiration from Humayun's own efforts to address his narrow base of support, Akbar was determined not to restrict his inner circle of friends and allies to individuals of Central Asian origin. In the early to mid-1560s, his efforts to broaden the composition of the Mughal nobility led Timurid relatives and Central Asian nobles to revolt, but Akbar successfully crushed this opposition. He also worked harder to ingratiate himself among Indian Muslim clerics, Chishti saints, military and service lineages such as the Barhas and Shaikhzadas, caste-based scribal groups such as the Kayasths and Khatris, Hindu temple networks, and Rajput chiefs, among others. The Mughal nobility was gradually transformed by these initiatives.[12]

The remarkable changes Akbar wrought among the Mughal nobility are recorded in Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's *A'in-i Akbari* (ca. 1598). A perusal of earlier comparable Mughal texts reveals little or no attention afforded to any individual or group lacking a Central Asian lineage. In the *Baburnama* (ca. 1529–30), for example, Emperor Babur boasts of all those who benefited from his largesse when he raided the massive Lodi treasury in Agra:

> All the Afghan Hazaras, Arabs, and Baluch in the army ... every merchant and student, indeed every person who was along with the army ... Large portions of the treasury even went to those who were not in the army... Many gifts went to the beggars and soldiers who were on the other side. To Samarkand, Khurasan, Kashgar, and Iraq went gifts for relatives and kinfolk. Offerings went to the shaykhs in Samarkand and Khurasan; one was even sent to Mecca and Medina. There was a shahrukhi of largesse for every living soul, male and female, bondsman and free, adult and child alike, in the province of Kabul and the district of Wersek.[13]

The list is long, but it does not include a single Indian group. By "everyone," this text and others of the period meant only Central Asians and groups to the northwest of India. Babur's almost total silence about the

[12] Between 1555 and 1580, the percentage of nobles of Central Asian origin had dropped from 52.9 percent to 24.2 percent, Iranians dropped from 31.3 percent to 17.2 percent, and Indian Muslims and Rajputs (and other Hindus) rose from none to 16.1 percent and 15.8 percent respectively. Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy, 1560–80," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1–2 (1968): 35.

[13] Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. W. M. Thackston (New York, 2002), p. 356.

people who inhabited his "vast and populous kingdom"[14] becomes all the more astounding in the face of his lengthy descriptions of the animals, birds, reptiles, and flora of Hindustan. So also, the historical accounts *Tabaqat-i Baburi* (ca. early 1530s) and the *Qanun-i Humayuni* (1534) project a Central Asian/Timurid-Muslim imperium in India in which the existence of (never mind dealings with) subject populations is barely acknowledged. The contrast between these early Mughal accounts versus Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's late sixteenth-century writings speaks to the transformation wrought by Akbar and undoubtedly justifies the reputation he continues to hold in present-day India as an inclusive and truly great Indian ruler.

Before Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's profuse praise of Akbar's accomplishments, we can consider a transitional text such as 'Arif Qandahari's *Tarikh-i Akbari* (ca. 1580). Qandahari, an ethnic Central Asian himself, represents an earlier moment, one that affords no more than a lukewarm recognition of Akbar's incorporation of Indians into the Mughal system. It was one of the earliest major histories of Akbar's reign. In it, Qandahari openly acknowledged the diversity of Akbar's empire. The emperor's success in incorporating and reconciling the many nations under his control is broadly admired, as is his capacity for justice and good administration.[15] Important Hindu nobles are occasionally mentioned by name, although Qandahari almost never recounts actual instances of imperial patronage of non-Muslims (such as the Rajput chiefs whom Akbar inducted into the nobility starting in the 1560s). Nor is any mention made of the emperor's (unprecedented) marriages with Rajput women or the inclusion of non-Muslims in imperial-sponsored religious debates in Fatehpur Sikri. Crucially, Indian Muslim nobles, clerics, and administrators also receive short shrift at the hands of Qandahari. Since there is no doubting Qandahari's admiration for Akbar, *Tarikh-i Akbari* offers an excellent example of the rhetorical lag between the reforms Akbar initiated and the language of the empire. Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's endeavors helped close this gap in the following decade.[16]

[14] Ibid., p. 330.

[15] 'Arif Qandahari, *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, ed. Imtiaz Ali Arshi (Rampur, 1962), pp. 4–7, 9–11.

[16] This discussion draws on the insights of Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam*. See also John F. Richards, "The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. John F. Richards (Madison, 1978), pp. 252–85; K. A. Nizami, *Akbar and Religion* (Delhi, 1989); M. Athar Ali, "The Perception of India in Akbar and Abu'l Fazl," in *Akbar and His India*, ed. Irfan Habib (Delhi, 1997), pp. 215–24.

The Shaikh was one of Akbar's closest political advisors from the 1570s onward. He led efforts to generate the intellectual scaffolding needed to move the Mughal Empire away from its Central Asian and exclusively Muslim roots. To this end, Shaikh Abu'l Fazl pursued a two-pronged strategy.

The first part entailed a powerful affirmation of the multiethnic and multireligious character of the Mughal Empire. Nowhere is this explained in greater detail than in the third volume of the *A'in-i Akbari*, a work that showcases the Shaikh's skillful and innovative framing of Akbar's reign. In it, Shaikh Abu'l Fazl introduces the primarily Muslim imperial elite to the literary, philosophical, religious, and scientific achievements of Hindus. He also offers Hindu nobles a sweeping view of the most famous prophets and Islamic kings, saints, and Sufi orders who have, in turn, made India their home. The introduction to this volume explains that the project was undertaken to alleviate religious ill will by providing insights into one another's civilizational and religious attainments. With this knowledge before them, the Shaikh hopes, everyone will step back from engaging in religious disputations and conflicts and instead focus on his own spiritual well-being.[17] Celebrating the empire's diversity, alongside pleas for individuals to respect one another's cultural differences, is a major theme running through the Shaikh's other works as well.[18] This was not Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's end goal, however.

The second part of the Shaikh's strategy aimed at presenting Akbar as the guardian of India's diversity. What unfolds – reading his two major works, the *A'in-i Akbari* and the *Akbarnama*, together – is a complex theory of sovereignty. It begins by addressing the importance of a strong and righteous ruler who can protect the four worldly "essences" – access to wealth, life, honor, and religion.[19] It is a rare ruler, the Shaikh argues, who is capable of fulfilling these obligations because most are not recipients of the "divine light" (*farr-i izadi*) that is directly communicated by God to kings. Without this benediction, a king does not have access to divine wisdom and cannot therefore be a Perfect King.[20] Akbar, Shaikh Abu'l Fazl insists, is an exception.

[17] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1877), pp. 3–4.

[18] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl's introduction to the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata* offers a superb example. For an English translation, see Carl Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 180–2. See also Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol. 1, pp. 49–52.

[19] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, vol. 1, Part 1 (Calcutta, 1872), p. 290.

[20] Ibid., p. 2.

The Shaikh offered two proofs to corroborate Akbar's status as a "godly ruler" (*farman-i haqiqi*).[21] The first described the chain of transmission of the divine light over fifty-two generations of ancestors down to Akbar. This was coupled with stories of miracles surrounding Akbar's birth and his infancy. The Shaikh's second proof drew attention to Akbar's religious policies. According to Abu'l Fazl, only a godly ruler could alleviate the religious discord that grew from a false consciousness that the world was divided into two competing spheres: the spiritual and temporal. Since Akbar had made the idea of universal peace (*sulh-i kul*) the centerpiece of his ruling ideology and actually succeeded in alleviating religious discord across his empire, he must be a Perfect King. What emerges from this often strained but nonetheless innovative exposition is a vision of Akbar's patronage and protection as guaranteed to everyone regardless of race or religion.[22] So we go from an early Mughal Empire under Babur whose rhetorical allegiance was largely focused on Central Asians to Akbar's empire wherein Indian Muslims and non-Muslims alike are an integral part.

As Akbar's sons came of age in this brave new world, the wide-ranging nature of their search for friends and allies set them apart from previous generations of territorially anchored princes. Even if Akbar's seventeenth-century imperial successors largely abandoned his precise rhetoric, they retained an imperial ethos that stressed an inclusive vision of empire.

SALIM, THE FIRST GREAT MUGHAL PRINCE, 1569–1605

In Akbar's vanquishing of Mirza Hakim and his cultivation of his first son, Salim, we see a focus on the immediate family of the emperor himself, and a clear shift away from the idea of an extended ruling family co-sharing in imperial power. What becomes apparent is that an empire was being grown and protected, and Akbar intended to pass it along intact to one of his sons. This remained Mughal custom right to the end of Farrukh Siyar's reign in 1719. If Humayun, working in his appanage of Badakhshan, built his princely network of support largely in that area, princes who came of age during Akbar's reign – of whom the first and

[21] Ibid.

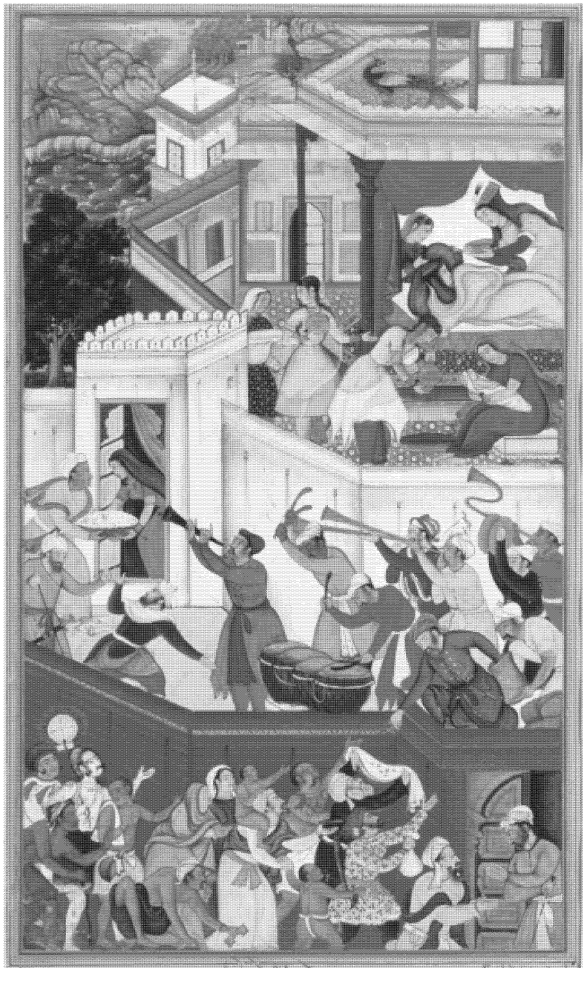
[22] This vision manifested itself in, among other things, new court rituals, festivals, and even a new imperial calendar. Stephen Blake, "*Nau Ruz* in Mughal India," in *Rethinking a Millennium: Perspectives on Indian History from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century. Essays for Harbans Mukhia*, ed. Rajat Datta (Delhi, 2008), pp. 121–35.

perhaps the most exemplary was Salim – embodied larger and wider aspirations. It was Akbar who first confronted the question of what to do with grown princes who were no longer automatically entitled to an appanage.

Judging from his actions in the 1580s, Akbar sought at first to keep his sons close at hand. Although not averse to occasionally sending them to manage administrative or military duties away from the imperial court,[23] Akbar wished to remain intimately involved in their training and in their initial alliance building. He surrounded each of his three sons with people of influence, but he focused especially on embedding Salim in several far-flung networks of symbolic and real imperial power. Akbar thus simultaneously groomed the first generation of post-appanage imperial princes, even as he clearly signaled to powerful and ambitious nonroyals in the empire that the best they could do was to hitch their fortunes to one from among this small group of princely candidates.

Salim was the quintessential post-Akbar prince and the first great Mughal Prince. In his story we see both evidence of Akbar's careful grooming and – given the threat it posed to the imperial court itself as the prince grew from child to adult – the tensions inherent in such a project. First with direction and help from his father the emperor, and then on his own, Salim forged extensive networks of support. In some cases, these were anchored squarely within his own household. Other alliances, however, such as those with powerful nobles or members of the imperial harem, were forged outside the context of the princely household. This section describes alliance building both in the prince's early years, as engineered by Akbar and as concretized in the substance of Salim's household, and also later on, as built by Salim himself. The section thus collapses themes from both the previous chapter on households and this present chapter. As evident from Salim's example, the process of extending a prince's influence never ceased. He pursued his goals with single-minded determination and did so whether he was in residence at the Mughal court or in rebellion against his father. Ultimately, in Salim's case, his alliance building brought him into conflict with his father, the emperor.

[23] Besides exercising nominal command over the army that fought Mirza Hakim in 1582, Akbar's son Murad was also initially tapped to avenge the Yusufzai massacre of an imperial army in 1586. The difficulty of that task, however, finally persuaded Akbar to listen to Raja Man Singh's advice to rescind the order. Akbar later considered sending his third son Danyal but decided against that as well. See Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol. 3, pp. 485–7, 491.



Rejoicing at the birth of Prince Salim, late 16th century (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2006AP2507–01)

Yet, starting from the very birth of the young prince, Akbar was meticulous in his grooming. In 1569, Akbar took his pregnant wife Maryam-uz-Zamani to the small village of Sikri, the home of the Chishti *pir* (religious preceptor) Shaikh Salim Chishti to give birth. The Shaikh had previously told the emperor of a dream in which Akbar, who had no male heirs despite being in his late twenties, had not one but three sons. When a boy was born, a grateful emperor named the infant Salim after the *pir* who had predicted his birth. Casting Shaikh Salim Chishti as his son's

protector, the emperor also appointed a daughter and daughter-in-law of the Shaikh to be the prince's wet-nurses.[24] A number of the Shaikh's grandsons thus became Salim's foster brothers (*koka*), and in his early years many of the Shaikh's family members lived with and attended to the prince. In 1577, Akbar appointed the Shaikh's second son and a foster father of Salim – Shaikh Ahmad – to be one of the prince's tutors.

The *Akbarnama* describes other ways in which Akbar entwined Salim's future with the Chishti lineage, paving the way for his son to be a future patron of the order. Soon after Salim's birth, Akbar undertook a pilgrimage to the shrine of the founding Chishti saint, Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti (d. 1230), fulfilling his vow to walk the two hundred and twenty odd miles from Agra to Ajmer if granted a son.[25] Some years later, Salim accompanied his father to the same shrine, on which occasion, we are told, he was ordered to bow before the saint's grave and then circumambulate the shrine.[26] Just as Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti encapsulated an expansive spiritual vision that extended its blessings to everyone in India, so too Salim embodied for the emperor the future of his imperial vision, which also encompassed all of India.[27]

By all accounts, Akbar celebrated milestones in Salim's life with unprecedented pomp and ceremony, making of them occasions to honor the Mughal nobility as well as to draw them into the ambit of the prince's early years. In 1573, Akbar ordered all "the amirs and the great officers of the state" to attend the circumcision of Salim (and his brothers).[28] After the ceremony, massive gift giving and raucous celebrations ensued, building much goodwill toward the young prince.[29] To mark the beginning of Salim's formal education, large numbers of nobles were invited to watch as the Quran was placed in the lap of the then four-year-old prince. Following a short prayer, the assembly erupted in such a roar of congratulations that the foundations of the assembly hall shook (according to *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, one of the sources for this event). Mir Kalan Harvi, the

[24] Nur-ud-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Jahangirnama*, ed. Muhammad Hashim (Tehran, 1980), p. 442.

[25] Shaikh Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, ed. Abdul Rahim, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1879), p. 350.

[26] Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, trans. Brajendranath De, vol. 2 (Calcutta, repr. 1996), p. 429.

[27] Bruce Lawrence has argued that Akbar had sought to set himself as a latter-day political counterpart to Shaikh Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti. I'd extend this argument to include Salim in the equation. Bruce B. Lawrence, "Veiled Opposition to Sufis in Muslim South Asia," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, ed. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden, 1999), p. 438.

[28] Ahmad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, vol. 2, p. 423.

[29] Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol. 3, pp. 74–5.

prince's newly appointed tutor, then raised Salim onto his shoulder amidst a shower of coins and even more acclaim.[30]

Akbar was deliberate and strategic in his selection of the prince's *ataliq*s (guardians), anointing ever more important individuals to this post as Salim approached adulthood. At first, Akbar had favored religious scholars such as Mir Kalan Harvi and Shaikh Ahmad. But in 1579, with Salim then ten years of age, Akbar appointed Qutb-ud-Din Khan, a high-ranking noble and member of the powerful Central Asian Atga clan. (Sure enough, during a revolt the following year led by nobles and officers of Central Asian origin, the Atgas remained faithful.) When Qutb-ud-Din Khan was later needed in Gujarat in 1582, Akbar replaced him with another high-ranking noble, 'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan.

'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan was the son of Bairam Khan (d. 1561), Akbar's own *ataliq* and first prime minister. He had grown up under Akbar's direct charge and had been given the honorific of "son" (*farzand*) by the emperor.[31] Akbar was married to 'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan's maternal aunt as well as his former stepmother (Salima Sultan Begum). Large numbers of his father Bairam Khan's former retainers also populated the ranks of Akbar's nobility.[32] Moreover, 'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan's father-in-law Mirza 'Aziz Koka was a scion of the Atga clan, a foster brother of Akbar, and a nephew of Qutb-ud-Din Khan. He was fluent in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hindavi; admired as a most generous patron; and famed as a consummate gatherer of rumor, gossip, news, and intelligence. As such, he was a perfect choice to teach the young prince the workings of the empire.[33] His selection as tutor suggests the value Akbar placed on passing along such wisdom to Salim.

The imperial harem, which had taken on a distinct corporate identity and grown in importance during Akbar's reign,[34] was dominated by a small group of women, including the emperor's mother, several aunts, and

[30] Ahmad, *The Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, vol. 2, pp. 423–4.

[31] 'Abd-ul-Baqi Nihawandi, *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow 140, f. 307a.

[32] Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara*, ed. Abdur Rahim, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1888), pp. 375, 382.

[33] For more on the colorful 'Abd-ul-Rahim, see C. R. Naik, *'Abdur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan and His Literary Circle* (Ahmedabad, 1966); Annemarie Schimmel, "Khankhanan Abdur Rahim and the Sufis," in *Intellectual Studies in Islam*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui and Vera Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1991), pp. 153–62; Eva Orthmann, *'Abd or-Rahim Khan-e Khanan: Staatsmann und Mäzen* (unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Tubingen).

[34] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 140–213.

a few senior wives, all of whom liked and respected one another. This made for a rare unanimity of purpose in the harem. Steadfast in their loyalty to Akbar, these senior women were also united in their support for Salim. Much of this had to do with Akbar's encouragement. Compared to his younger brothers, Salim had many more opportunities to meet, fete, and cultivate relationships with the senior women of the imperial harem. For example, in 1578, on the eve of a hajj expedition by senior ladies of the harem, Salim held a special farewell audience with them. This occurred as another order for his younger brother Murad to accompany them to Gujarat was canceled. When the women sailed off, they did so in a boat named "Salimi," likely not a coincidence. In the same year, when Akbar's mother, Maryam Makani, decided to visit the emperor in the Punjab, Salim was given the honor of welcoming her on her arrival at the imperial camp. A few years later, on the return of the royal women from Mecca, Salim was the first member of the imperial family to greet them. He did so outside Ajmer, and afterward Salim and the women gave thanks at the shrine of Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din Chishti. The deliberate symbolism of Salim and the ladies of the harem united under the protection of the saint would not have been lost on anyone. In 1583 and again in 1585, Salim was the preferred choice among the princes to welcome his grandmother and other senior ladies when they arrived at the imperial camp in Allahabad and Kabul, respectively.

Such extensive contact meant that the harem showed great concern when Salim fell ill in 1577. So also, in 1581, Maryam Makani requested that the emperor take her grandson Salim with him on the expedition to crush Mirza Hakim instead of leaving him behind in Hindustan, against the prince's wishes. Sure enough, when Salim arrived at the imperial camp and paid his respects to Akbar, Shaikh Abu'l Fazl noted that the women of the harem were especially happy.[35] Over the next few years, the harem directed birthday celebrations for Salim (1582) and a newly born daughter (1586). Neither of Akbar's other sons, Murad and Danyal, ever enjoyed the same degree of attention. The harem continued to be a powerful pillar of support for Salim over the remaining decades of Akbar's reign. Senior women such as Salima Sultan Begum and Ruqayya Begum played crucial roles in negotiating a settlement between Akbar and Salim when father-son relations turned sour in the early 1600s, eventually helping to pave the way for Salim's accession to the Mughal throne.

[35] Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol. 3, p. 369.

But Akbar did not fail to introduce his other sons into circles of influence of imperial scope. He appointed high-ranking and loyal Mughal nobles as *ataliq*s: Sa'id Khan Chaghatai and Shaikh Faizi for Danyal (1577 and 1579), and Sharif Khan for Murad (1580). He also offered Murad and Danyal opportunities to participate in a range of imperial functions and activities. Some were quite significant, as when Danyal was delegated to visit Ajmer and pray at Khwaja Mu'in-ud-Din's shrine on his father's behalf in 1580 or when Murad was given nominal command over the imperial forces that defeated Mirza Hakim outside Kabul in 1582. Generally, however, the spotlight never shone as brightly on them as it did on Salim. We may never know if this was because Akbar simply favored his firstborn son or if it was a necessity in a post-appanage system that one son be specially groomed so that attention to the empire's future remained clear and focused.

In 1585, Akbar granted Salim full adult status. Over the next two decades until Akbar's death in 1605, and even as his relations with his father deteriorated through the 1590s and during his rebellion between 1599 and 1604, Salim worked indefatigably to build a cohesive core of household retainers, the first step in consolidating his base of loyal supporters and a necessary one for all subsequent far-flung alliance building. Accordingly, the prince appears to have recruited into his household at least three (overlapping) groups of individuals: (i) political opponents of Akbar, (ii) outsiders to the Mughal system, and (iii) individuals entrenched in key social networks.

Many former supporters of Akbar's half brother Mirza Hakim, whom Akbar fought for years and whose Kabul-based kingdom he annexed in 1585, gravitated toward Salim after the annexation. The prince welcomed them and their networks into his household in stark contrast to Akbar, who largely shunned them. Thus men such as Lala Beg Kabuli, Khwaja Dost Muhammad, and Zamana Beg achieved high positions in Salim's princely household and eventually assisted him in his rebellion and then rose to high ranks in the imperial nobility following Salim's accession to the Mughal throne. Salim also lured the notorious Vir Singh Bundela, who had fought Akbar through most of the 1590s on the grounds that Akbar had favored his older brother to succeed to their father's kingdom of Orchha (in Central India). Vir Singh joined Salim in the city of Allahabad at a time when the prince was already in rebellion against Akbar. In 1602, Vir Singh Bundela assassinated Shaikh Abu'l Fazl (who was Akbar's closest advisor as well as a sworn enemy of Salim). When Salim became emperor, Vir Singh was made one of the richest and highest-ranking imperial nobles in the Mughal Empire and ruled a broad swathe of semi-autonomous territory in central India until his death in 1626. In this

fashion, the Mughals were temporarily able to assert their authority over the perennially restive region.

Like Vir Singh, Raja Basu of Ma'u and Patan (located in the foothills of the Punjab), was a perennial rebel who moved in and out of Salim's ambit through the 1590s and early 1600s. Raja Basu too was rewarded with control over his ancestral territories after Salim's accession in 1605.

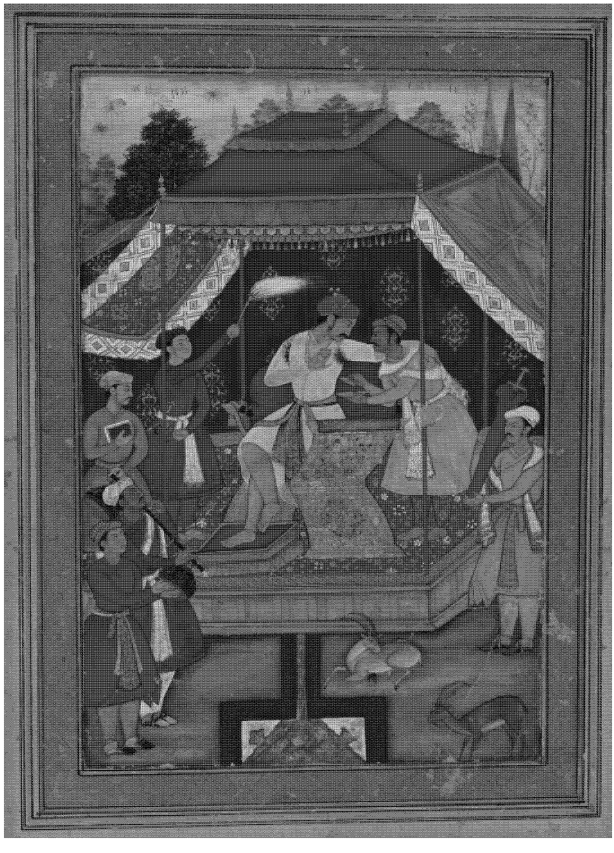
Salim reached out to groups we might consider outsiders to the Mughal imperial system, groups that had long opposed Akbar. In this regard, Salim's recruitment of Afghans was especially significant. Steadily displaced as the dominant political and military group in northern India with the spread of Mughal rule after the 1550s, most Afghans deeply resented the Mughals. Akbar in turn largely refused to incorporate them into the Mughal nobility. By contrast, Salim drew prominent Afghans to himself through the 1590s, offering them honor and rewards. One such person, Shaikh Rukn-ud-Din Rohilla, was later admiringly characterized by Salim/Jahangir as "the head of a tribe and a very brave man who, while in the service of nobles, lost an arm to a sword."[36] Salim also wooed other Afghan notables such as Pir Khan – a scion of the Lodi dynasty whose defeat by Babur in 1526 paved the way for the founding of the Mughal Empire. Although Pir Khan ultimately decided against forging an alliance with Salim, the prince's interest in the Khan persuaded other Afghans to flock to his rebellious standard in Allahabad. Following the Emperor Jahangir's accession to the throne in 1605, we see the beginnings of large-scale Afghan participation in the Mughal enterprise. No one rose higher than Pir Khan, who won the title of Khan Jahan Lodi and remained a committed imperial loyalist until Jahangir's death in 1627.

Salim also reached out to alienated Kashmiris. They had been conquered by the Mughals in 1586 and rebelled against them over the ensuing years. When Akbar sought to increase Kashmir's tax burden in 1592, Salim openly opposed the plan. Salim became a patron of Kashmiri holy men such as Wahid Sufi and Ganga Rishi. After 1599, Salim attracted an influential core of Kashmiris into his service in Allahabad. One of them was Amba Khan Kashmiri. A descendant of the recently displaced Chak royal family, he proved crucial in mobilizing a network of supporters for Salim in Kashmir and in the eastern parts of the Mughal Empire (where large numbers of Kashmiris had been exiled by Akbar in the 1590s). These connections were crucial in helping Salim consolidate his hold over Bihar during his princely rebellion. Following Salim's accession to the imperial

[36] Jahangir, *Jahangirnama*, p. 11.

throne, his Kashmiri connections also ensured that Kashmir, once a hotbed of anti-Mughal activity, emerged as one of the most quiescent parts of the empire and, over the course of the seventeenth century, the primary summer playground of the Mughal court.

The third group identifiable within Salim's household included men who, through their own status and friendships, afforded him access to significant social networks. Among them were notable religious leaders from the Naqshbandi order, as well as dons of locally embedded ethnic groups such as the militarily powerful Saiyids of Barha and the learned *shaikhzadas* of Kairana. Salim greatly valued his association from 1594 onward with Khwaja 'Abdullah, a lineal descendant of the famous Naqshbandi saint Khwaja Ahrar (d. 1490), and a nephew of Khwaja Hasan Naqshbandi, Mirza Hakim's



Prince Salim with a courtier and attendants in a tent, ca. 1600 (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Purchase, F1960.27)

prime minister from 1565 to 1582. Khwaja 'Abdullah's recruitment to Salim's household created a link to the prominent Naqshbandi order that Akbar had largely ignored in favor of other Sufi orders, such as the Chishtis. Sure enough, nobles with ties to the Naqshbandis provided critical military support during Salim's struggle to succeed his father in October 1605 and in his 1606 conflict with his son Khusrau.[37]

The Saiyids of Barha, a group that traced its origins to a thirteenth-century Arab immigrant to India, were a force to be reckoned with across an arc of territory northwest of Delhi. Ignored by the previous Lodi rulers of north India, the Barhas became a key constituency within the Mughal military establishment after Akbar's accession in 1556. Although the Barhas were considered rustic in habit, simple, and boorish,[38] every Mughal emperor from Akbar onward treated them as especially loyal Mughal supporters within the general population and placed them at the honored head of the Mughal vanguard (*harawal*) in battle. Salim/Jahangir once described them as "the bravest men of their time,"[39] and Akbar and Salim wrestled for influence among them.[40] Saiyid 'Ali Asghar Barha, Salim's childhood friend and confidant, remained by the prince's side even through his rebellion. Saiyid 'Ali Asghar was the son of Saiyid Mahmud Barha – the first major Barha figure to accommodate himself to the Mughals in the 1550s and a high-ranking imperial noble during Akbar's reign.

Shaikh Hassu, son of Shaikh Bina (of Sirhind), was a surgeon as well as an elephant doctor at the Mughal court and had also been a childhood friend of Salim.[41] His clansmen, the *shaikhzada*s of Kairana (in present-day western Uttar Pradesh), were firmly allied with various other *shaikhzada* lineages in the region through marriage and friendship and were respected as educated landholders, albeit with small landholdings. In the early 1590s, when Shaikh Hassu introduced two *'alim*s (religious scholars), Shaikh Muqim-ud-Din and Shaikh Ahmad, to Salim, the prince immediately recommended both men for subsistence grants (*madad-i ma'ash*).[42] The Shaikhs were founders of *madrassa*s (Islamic religious

[37] K. A. Nizami, "Naqshbandi Influence on Mughal Rulers and Politics," *Islamic Culture* 39 (1965): 46–7.

[38] Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasiru-l-Umara*, ed. Abdur Rahim and Ashraf Ali, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1890), p. 377.

[39] Jahangir, *Jahangirnama*, p. 38.

[40] Saiyid Roshan Ali, *Saiyid-ul-Tawarikh* (Delhi, 1864), pp. 24–6.

[41] 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, ed. Ahmad Ali, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1869), pp. 169–70.

[42] Shaikh Ali Mushtaqi, *Gulistan-i Kairana* (Amroha, 1888), p. 49.

schools) in Kairana[43] and became useful conduits of influence in their *qasba* settlements as a result of their roles as educators of local landholders (*zamindars*), dispute resolvers, and marriage matchmakers.

Like every other important Mughal Prince, Salim reached out as well to cultivate scholars and artists. The list of well-known poets who were patronized at one point or another by Salim include Saiyid Muhammad 'Itabi, Mulla 'Ali Ahmad Nishani, Akbar Isfahani, Khusraui Qa'ini, Ra'i Manohar, Sultan Afshar, Mirza Hasan, Tifli, Maqsud 'Ali Tabrizi, Rukn-ud-Din Masih Kashani, and Muhammad Hashim Sanjar Kashani. Many were recent immigrants from Safavid Iran. Salim's early education under men such as Shaikh Faizi, Akbar's poet laureate, and Muhammad Husain Zarin Qalam (one of the greatest calligraphers of his generation) seems to have prepared him well for the role of literary and artistic patron, a man of both the pen and the sword – the perfect Muslim ruler and a worthy son to Akbar.

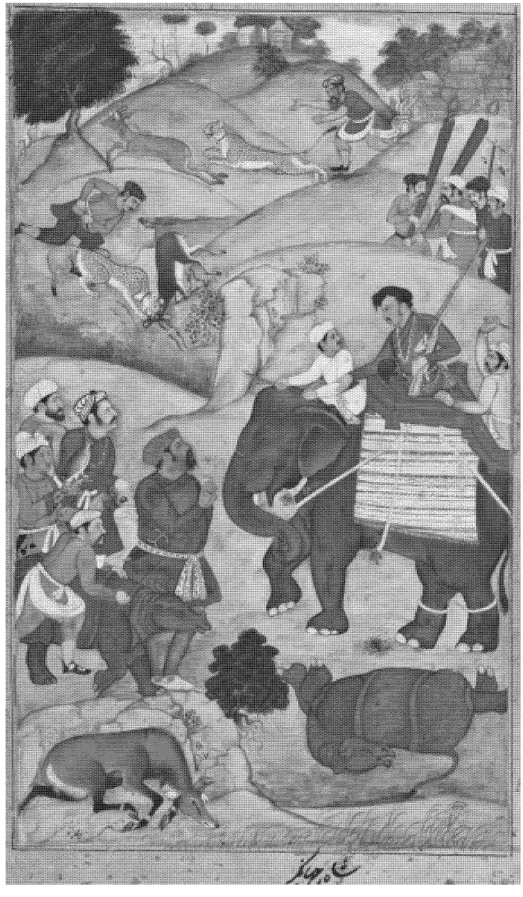
Salim's atelier, his artistic establishment, projected this precise motif both before and after he rebelled against his father in 1599. Salim laid the foundation of his atelier some time in the mid- to late 1580s with the decision to employ Aqa Reza Herati, a recent immigrant from Herat, as its artistic director. Aqa Reza remained in the prince's service after he rebelled, removing himself from the imperial court to Salim's base in the city of Allahabad. Aqa Reza's body of work was, as expected, dominated by the figure of Salim.[44] He depicted a youthful, energetic prince, drinking, hunting, carousing with companions; studying; conversing with old men; and holding court.[45] So also the works of other artistic luminaries in Salim's household including Mirza Ghulam, Nanha, Bishan Das, Quli, Mir 'Abdullah Katib Mushqin Qalam, Abu'l Hasan and Nadira Banu highlighted their master's charisma, his religiosity, his divine favor, his Chaghatai roots, his authority over the people around him and their loyalty through service to him, and his administrative and judicial experience.[46] Through their art, the members of Salim's atelier emphasized how the prince

[43] Ibid., pp. 49–50.

[44] S. P. Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Works: A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (Delhi, 1994), pp. 62–9.

[45] Ibid., pp. 64–9.

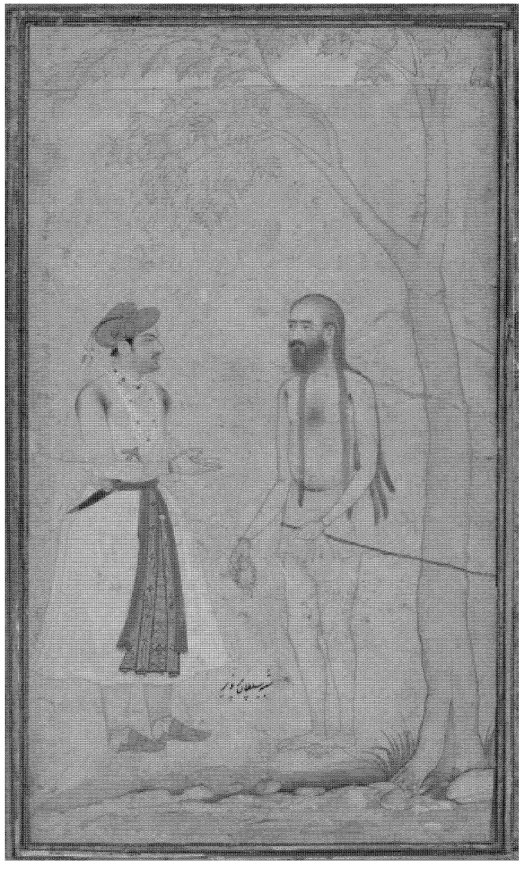
[46] Asok K. Das, *Mughal Painting during Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta, 1978), pp. 45, 47, 50, 54, 57, 62; Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work*, pp. 66, 65, 69; Ellison B. Findly, "Jahangir's Vow of Non-Violence," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 2 (1987): 246; L. Binyon et al., *Persian Miniature Painting* (Oxford, 1933), p. 149.



Prince Salim at a hunt, Folio from a Shikarnama (Hunting Album) ca. 1600–4 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, U.S.A. Digital Image © 2012 Museum Associates/LACMA/Art Resource/Art Resource, NY)

was a serious contender for imperial power.[47] The importance of such work earned Aqa Reza Herati his place in the inner circle of Salim's household.

[47] In light of Salim's known fascination with Christian iconography, we might assume that he was fully aware of the power of pictorial representations in focusing loyalty in the person of an individual. Father Jerome Xavier, writing in 1597, noted that Salim was "so anxious for things imported from Portugal ... and especially for pictures of Our Savior and the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Angels (to whose care he commends himself) that he excites our wonder." E. D. Maclagan, "Jesuit Missions to the Emperor Akbar," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 65 (1896): 67. In the following year, Father Xavier found Salim busy directing the work of two painters who were "tracing out by the application of colors" some pictures with Christian themes. Ibid., 74.



The Mughal Prince Parvez and a holy man, early 17th century (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Purchase, F1929.3)

A powerful household such as that built by Salim depended on casting a broad and inclusive net for recruitment and also on building a cohesive inner core. Work in this vein never ceased until the fateful day a prince either achieved his ambition to become the next Mughal emperor or died in the attempt. In the interim, a powerful household also served a prince who turned to rebellion against the imperial court, as did Salim against Akbar in 1599, following years of growing tension.

As early as the late 1580s, the wisdom of Akbar's decision to keep his sons at the Mughal court began to appear increasingly suspect. The relatively close living quarters, increasing conflicts over precedence, and rising tensions among the princes' supporters engendered an environment

of competition and hostility. The marriage of Mirza 'Aziz Koka's daughter to Murad in 1587, for example, seems to have placed this powerful nobleman and foster brother of the emperor on a collision course with Salim. To prevent conflict from breaking out at court, Akbar finally separated his sons geographically. In 1591, Murad was appointed provincial governor of Malwa, then Gujarat, and finally the Deccan where he died in 1599. In 1597, deteriorating relations between Salim and Danyal forced the latter's removal to Allahabad. Danyal mostly stayed away from the Mughal court as long as Salim remained there.

The father–son feud between Akbar and Salim, however, continued to simmer. Salim systematically heaped favor on precisely those individuals Akbar had sidelined or from whom he suffered a slight. Thus, when Akbar imprisoned the poet Saiyid Muhammed Etabi for his satires of certain Mughal nobles, Salim petitioned for his release. Akbar then ordered the poet's exile to the Hejaz, but Salim helped him flee to the Deccan instead. When Akbar imprisoned an imperial nobleman, Yusuf Khan Rizvi, for colluding with Kashmiris in a rebellion, Salim recommended Rizvi's reappointment as governor of Kashmir. Just as Akbar was in the midst of yet another standoff with Raja Basu of Mau (who had already rebelled against the Mughals on a number of occasions), Salim sought a royal pardon for the Raja.

Akbar retaliated by bringing pressure to bear on Salim's supporters and by undermining their loyalty. For example, in 1594, he married one of Salim's strongest supporters in the harem, Shakr-un-Nisa Begum, to a distantly related Timurid cousin Mirza Shahrukh (the former ruler of Badakhshan). Immediately following this marriage, the emperor contracted a second one between another daughter and supporter of Salim, Khanum Sultan, and Muzaffar Husain Mirza. Both men harbored strong political ambitions that rendered them unlikely to kowtow to Salim; in the process, Salim lost two powerful supporters in the harem.

The poet Khwaja Muhammad Shirazi, more commonly known as 'Urfi, may have been among the best-known victims of this intensifying father-son struggle. Although only one from a large stable of poets patronized by Salim, 'Urfi was one of the greatest exponents of the *qasida* (ode) during the Mughal period. 'Abd-ul-Qadir Badauni, his contemporary, notes that the poet's *divan* (collection of poems) was not only one of the most popular works of its day but also was considered an auspicious possession by literate Persian speakers.[48] In a context in which highly regarded poets

[48] Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, vol. 3, p. 285.

often had their poems transcribed for private circulation, read aloud in private and public assemblies, recited on the streets, and used as templates to tutor individuals in the art of poetic composition, a single *qasida* by a poet of 'Urfi's stature could draw his patron to the attention of a large number of people. 'Urfi deployed some of his considerable ode-writing talents in favor of Salim.[49] Rosalind O'Hanlon best captures the value of an endorsement by someone of 'Urfi's stature in her observation that

> [I]t was people, rather than land, which constituted the scarcer resource . . . [it was] people therefore that these states needed to work hard to attract. In this setting, literary and aesthetic modes of appealing to loyalties, attracting clients and cultivating forms of identity may well have made more sense than strategies of direct coercion.[50]

For Salim, 'Urfi's value lay also in his indirect animosity to Akbar, itself derived from 'Urfi's early snub in 1585 by Shaikh Abu'l Faiz, "Faizi," Akbar's chief poet and the brother of the powerful Shaikh Abu'l Fazl. Faizi rarely patronized poets himself but rather maintained a "long-standing habit" of being "friendly with everybody for a week."[51] This short association was usually sufficient for him to gauge whether an individual was worthy of being introduced to the imperial court. In skill and talent, 'Urfi Shirazi clearly passed this test; yet, on account of a bitter falling-out with Faizi, 'Urfi never gained a full-time position in Akbar's household. As a result, for the next few years, 'Urfi had to content himself with being an employee of the high-ranking Mughal nobleman Hakim Abu'l Fath Gilani, who was known for his dislike of Shaikh Abu'l Fazl. It was upon the death of the Hakim in 1589 that 'Urfi turned to Salim as his new patron, along with the noblemen Zain Khan Koka and 'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan.

Not only did Salim thus gain an ally in 'Urfi, he also was privy to the goodwill of 'Urfi's other two patrons between 1589 and 'Urfi's premature death in 1591. Joint patronage of 'Urfi was not merely about highlighting a shared platform of cultural appreciation; more importantly, it signaled the

[49] In one famous composition, for example, 'Urfi speaks of Salim's omniscience, his ability to remove injustice and tyranny from the world, his ability to cure the infirm, his philanthropy, his benevolence, his gentle nature, his qualities as the perfect son, and, significantly, the attributes of sovereignty he shared with his father. Abdul Ghani, *Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court*, vol. 3 (Westmead, repr. 1972), p. 105.

[50] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Cultural Pluralism, Empire and the State in Early Modern South Asia – A Review Essay," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44, no. 3 (2007): 368. O'Hanlon's insights are substantially supported by Allison Busch, "Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court," *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 267–309.

[51] Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, vol. 3, p. 285.

growing political ties among Zain Khan Koka, 'Abd-ul-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, and Salim. Linking these men was their shared dislike of the brothers Shaikh Abu'l Fazl and Faizi, whose arrogance and abrasiveness, proximity to the emperor, and role in formulating some of Akbar's more controversial policies (especially their attempt to help Akbar fashion a new imperial cult, the *Tauhid-i Ilahi*) had made them notorious and unpopular figures at the imperial court. Ultimately, as the eighteenth-century historian Khafi Khan wrote, the poet 'Urfi Shirazi fell to the machinations of this duo; "it is well known," Khafi Khan asserts, "that Faizi and Abu'l Fazl, out of jealousy, had him murdered by administering poison."[52]

Salim's partisans and networks were attacked in other ways as well: by being removed from imperial posts and being disgraced and publicly humiliated. Yet despite all the bad blood between father and son, we might argue that their struggle in no way hurt the dynasty – on the contrary. For, regardless of whether you chose Akbar or Salim (or any of Akbar's other sons), your ultimate choice was still a core member of the Mughal dynasty. In the earlier appanage system, competition for loyalties resulted in factions that supported different territorial pieces belonging to different family members and undermined the consolidation and extension of the empire over generations. The system instituted by Akbar, which involved alliance building as an integral part of a prince's grooming, actually augmented the growth of the empire. We see in the following section how these processes continued through Salim's rebellion and how the struggle between father and son took both of them far afield in pursuit of supporters. The prince was no longer territorially limited, nor could he afford to limit his pursuit of alliances to fellow Central Asians.

Salim's Allahabad-based Rebellion Extends the Reach of Empire

Salim's rebellion provides a good example of how princes forged new social networks beyond the confines of the imperial court. This point holds despite the ultimate failure of Salim's rebellion.[53] Salim's five-year stay (1599–1604) in Allahabad resulted in his firmly establishing dynastic authority in this region because of the manner in which the prince attracted support to his cause. Whereas prior to the 1580s Allahabad was reputed to

[52] Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-Labab*, ed. Kabir-ud-din Ahmad, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1869), p. 241.

[53] As laid out in Chapter 5, Salim's long rebellion failed because, being based in Allahabad, outside the major zones of power, he was unable to get any real traction against Emperor Akbar.

be an area of fierce anti-Mughal sentiment, after 1604 this was no longer the case, nor did such resistance return until a century or so thereafter. Salim's stay played no small part in this transformation and can be taken as a great demonstration of how the spread of imperial power was helped, and not hindered, by the friendships and alliances forged in the context of a dramatic rebellion.

When Salim and his entourage relocated to Allahabad in 1599, he brought imperial courtly life to a region that had never encountered it in any sustained manner. During the next five years, he extended his authority over a swathe of territory between the cities of Patna in the east and Qannauj in the west. In early 1600, in a throwback to the appanage-centered past, he pronounced himself *sultan* (king) to assert his independence from Akbar.[54] In the summer of 1602, he appropriated the even more exalted title of *padshah* and began issuing coins in the name of "Sultan Salim *Padshah Ghazi*" (Warrior Emperor). Before long, his new power center in northern India began to lure individuals from the imperial court who had been unable to attain high positions in that establishment. Salim's "little kingdom" offered fresh opportunities for professional and economic advancement.

Abu'l Hasan Mashhadi was one of many talented individuals whose migration to Salim's court transformed Allahabad's place in the Mughal Empire. Prior to the death of Akbar's son Murad in 1599, Abu'l Hasan had served as that prince's personal secretary and *diwan* (treasurer) in the Deccan. Abu'l Hasan, however, was not an imperial officer, and his hopes of entering the larger imperial system appeared to die with Murad. Although he could have remained in the Deccan and attempted to gain employment with Danyal – Murad's brother and replacement – or even waited for an opportunity to join Akbar's imperial establishment, he instead moved northward to Allahabad where he entered Salim's service. His noted administrative skills in no small measure helped the prince consolidate his control over the region, and Abu'l Hasan remained with the prince for the duration of Salim's estrangement from Akbar.[55]

Allahabad's growing attractiveness as a counterpoint to service under Akbar or Danyal is also suggested in the example of Pir Khan (later Khan Jahan Lodi). Between 1600 and 1603, he continually threatened to leave Danyal's employment in the Deccan and decamp to Allahabad. In the end,

[54] Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol. 3, p. 773; Kamgar Husaini, *Ma'asir-i-Jahangiri*, ed. Azra Alavi (Bombay, 1978), p. 24.

[55] Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasiru-l-Umara*, ed. Ashraf Ali, vol. 3 (Calcutta, 1891), pp. 163–8.

only his powerful social connections within the Deccan-based nobility and massive gifts from Danyal kept him from joining Salim.[56]

Alongside his efforts to entice imperial employees to his own service, Salim worked very hard to forge links with regional leaders, including Indian Muslim figures. Salim's princely court at Allahabad proved extremely hospitable for men such as the distinguished religious scholar Miran Sadr-i Jahan, who hailed from the town of Pihani in the region of Qannauj, and administrators such as Muhammad Muqim/Wazir Khan and Shaikh Khubu/Qutb-ud-Din Khan, who shared links to the north Indian town of Badaun. Others such as Shaikh 'Ala-ud-Din, Shaikh Bayazid, Shaikh Kabir, Shaikh Yusuf, and Shaikh Hassu were tied into various *shaikhzada* communities in Fatehpur, Mau, Kairana, Gopamau, Khairabad, Daryabad, Bihar Sharif, and Mustafabad. The mass desertion of pro-Akbar imperial officials at the outset of Salim's rebellion strengthened the hand of the Indian Muslim *zamindar* and *qasba* elites in Salim's domain, since their main competitors in local patronage systems had left. Many of these individuals went on to become high-ranking Mughal nobles following Salim's accession in 1605, thus making available to the dynasty their extensive social networks and connections in Allahabad and beyond.

Below the level of the princely court, Salim's administration in the *suba*s (provinces) of Allahabad, Awadh, and Bihar provided disparate communities with many professional opportunities. Again, the example of Indian Muslim groups is instructive. The departure of imperial officials following Salim's arrival in Allahabad seems to have accelerated their induction into all levels of administration in the princely state. Although there is no definite information regarding the ethnicity of officials such as Nurullah, Mu'in-ud-Din, Shaikh Nurullah, and 'Abd-us-Salim,[57] nor of Shaikh Ahmad,[58] their names suggest that they were Indian Muslims. Indeed, it is noteworthy that of the eighteen names of lower-ranking officials that have survived in a variety of records from Salim's years in Allahabad, fourteen were likely so. Although it is not possible to track the subsequent careers of these men, the experience and training garnered while running a princely administration would have undoubtedly enabled them to find work within the imperial service once the region reverted to direct imperial control.

[56] Harvi, *Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani*, vol. 2, pp. 486, 491.
[57] *Mughal Farmans*, ed. K. P. Srivastava (Lucknow, 1974), pp. 14–15.
[58] *Mughal Documents 1526–1627*, Vol. I, ed. S. A. I. Tirmizi (Delhi, 1989), p. 75.

Salim's success with Indian Muslims was replicated with groups of regionally powerful Bundelas and Purbiyas as well. Based on their support for the prince during his rebellion, many individuals – most notably Vir Singh Bundela (mentioned earlier) – rose to become high-ranking imperial noblemen after 1605. Just like their Indian Muslim counterparts, certain non-Muslim groups were integrated into the Mughal Empire through their participation in Salim's rebellion, which set up their eventual accommodation as loyal subjects.

Individuals drawn from the *qasba*s of the Allahabad region did more than simply fill out the ranks of Salim's administration or army. They also served as local contacts and conduits for demonstrations of Salim's largesse and powers of adjudication. This is apparent from a 1602 case in which Saiyid 'Abd-ul-Khalil, a resident of Qannauj, petitioned Salim, "the just prince" (*shahzada-i 'adil*), for help after he had been cheated out of some land. During his audience with Salim, the Saiyid complained about his own misfortune, and he also warned the prince that unrest (*shorish*) was sweeping Qannauj on account of the corruption (*fasad*) of local officials. Salim responded by restoring Saiyid 'Abd-ul-Khalil's lands and punishing a host of local officials.[59] Such actions – facilitated by the proximity and accessibility of Salim's court in Allahabad – likely contributed to Salim's later success, in 1602, in mobilizing a sizable army of just fewer than 40,000 men for a (failed) push against Agra.

Salim also actively reached out to local *shaikhzada* notables and religious figures by issuing numerous new land grants and confirming many older ones. In some cases, the prince reached out to individuals who had received prior favors from the Mughal state. Invariably, his actions deepened ties between the recipients and the dynasty. In other cases, however, Salim's generosity helped forge new relationships, extending the breadth of imperial connections across the region. Among the recipients of the prince's largesse were local figures such as Shaikh Jahan, Shaikh Muhammad, and Shaikh Nasir – descendants of Hazrat Makhdum Abkash Daryabadi who had originally founded the important settlement of Daryabad.[60] Pir Jalil, the founder of a large Suhrawardi *khanaqah* in Awadh and a member of a very distinguished religious family, was similarly honored with a *madad-i ma'ash* grant (tax-free lands given in charity to religious or worthy individuals).[61] Likewise, in 1601 and again in 1604,

[59] Mulla Khairullah, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Rashidi*, KU Mss. 15/2, f. 22a-22b.
[60] Brij Bhukan Lal, *Tarikh-i Daryabad* (Daryabad, 1924), p. 100.
[61] Agha Mehdi, *Tarikh-i Lucknow* (Lucknow, 1976), p. 342.

the family of Pir Damaria of *suba* Bihar received large land grants from Salim.[62] Salim also issued land grants to representatives of the family of Makhdum Saiyid Hasan, the founder of the settlement of Hasanpura in District Saran. This Indian Muslim family was dominant in the large and densely populated districts of Saran, Muzaffarpur, Patna, and Bhagalpur (*suba* Bihar).[63] The archival record also reveals the prince's largesse percolating down to a number of lesser individuals and families. Among them were an aged and unnamed widow and her son, who received a small land grant in district Sandila after she petitioned the prince for pecuniary help.[64] On account of Salim's willingness to issue extensive land grants to both *madad-i ma'ash* holders and disparate *shaikhzada* groups, earlier trends favoring the creation of a powerful new class of Indian Muslim landholders in the countryside of Awadh and Allahabad gathered pace in the early 1600s. Salim's efforts and his determination to carve out an independent area for his rule – harnessing, if you will, the energies of the earlier nomadic appanage warrior-ruler system to the emerging post-Akbar dispensation – extended his own and ultimately Mughal dynastic authority into new areas.

COMPETING ALLIANCES AND PRINCELY STYLES: DARA SHUKOH AND AURANGZEB

The example of Salim demonstrates how the fate of the empire became more closely entangled with the interpersonal dynamics – both intimate and public – of the royal family itself. This had profound implications for the relationship between father/emperor and sons/princes, and also for the sibling relations among the princes. From the perspective of the emperor, the dilemma was which prince to groom and how. Should all efforts focus on one expected heir? Should all sons be given some degree of preparation? Should they be equally groomed? Should the prince remain at the court or be sent out to the provinces? From the prince's point of view, as he grew older and became aware of his possible destiny, he became necessarily hostile to his competitor brothers and, indeed, developed a certain level of paranoia regarding every symbolic and concrete extension of influence the emperor might offer to one or the other. Each prince's story was distinct,

[62] R. R. Diwakar, *Bihar through the Ages* (Patna, 1958), p. 491.

[63] S. H. Askari, "Documents Relating to an Old Family of Sufi Saints in Bihar," *Procs. Ind. Hist. Rec. Com.* 26 (1949): 1.

[64] NAI 2672/2, National Archives of India (Delhi).

and each generation of princes grappled with different circumstances, different court intrigues, and a whole new set of noble and regional players. All of them, including every Mughal emperor after Akbar, had to be adept at managing webs of interrelationships, garnering support from a wide section of the population, and even befriending and gaining the loyalty of those with whom they did not always agree. These qualities of kingship were appreciated well before Akbar (Babur, as noted in Chapter 2, warned Humayun that a king must know how to enjoy and be constantly in the company of others). Yet their importance came into sharper focus and their attainment became ever more of a challenge as the empire grew bigger and more diverse.

By the time Emperor Shah Jahan's sons, Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, competed for the throne in the late 1650s – a contest Aurangzeb eventually won – the importance of managing large networks of crosscutting alliances had become critical. Such management and the specific allies one gained together shaped a prince's public image and presaged the style of kingship he might one day assume. And in the event of a prince's failure to build allies, his image and his rulership did indeed come under question, as happened to Humayun, who lost his throne in the early 1540s. Ali Anooshahr goes so far as to blame this loss on Humayun's "indifference or failure to realize the importance of exerting direct control over his image."[65] Observing the careers of generations of Mughal princes, it is clear that each worked hard, often over decades, to fashion his image through strategic alliance building. Crucially, there was no single template on which a prince modeled himself. Rather, depending on the situation at hand, the maneuverings of one's major political rivals, and the mood of the empire, each prince had to create his own niche.

This section focuses on the infamous contest between the brothers Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, noting their distinct approaches to alliance building and the contrasting public image produced, wittingly and unwittingly, by each. The contest is fascinating because even though Dara Shukoh was the oldest and favored son of Shah Jahan and even though, like Salim, he was mostly kept at the court and carefully groomed for the throne, Dara Shukoh's bid for the empire failed. In part, his failure can be put down to the fact that he served only one stint leading an army (an abortive campaign in 1653 to retake the Safavid-held city of Qandahar) and had never built up credible military experience. This is in sharp contrast to his brothers Shuja',

[65] Ali Anooshahr, "The King Who Would Be Man: The Gender Roles of the Warrior King in Early Mughal History," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18, no. 3 (2008): 328.

Aurangzeb, and Murad, each of whom undertook a variety of military and gubernatorial assignments in the provinces. But Dara Shukoh's candidacy failed for another reason: he never worked as hard as his brothers – especially Aurangzeb – to cultivate wide-ranging and diverse sets of allies across the empire. As a result, it was Aurangzeb's superior alliance building and corresponding strong public image that won out over the controversial and comparatively isolated public figure struck by Dara Shukoh.

Prince Dara Shukoh's Alliances

Over the course of his princely career, Dara Shukoh did successfully build some relationships with powerful people. After Emperor Shah Jahan, no one was more openly supportive of Dara Shukoh's imperial aspirations than his older and unmarried sister Jahan Ara (b. 1614). After her father and Dara Shukoh, she was likely the third most influential person in the Mughal Empire between the 1630s and the end of Shah Jahan's reign in 1658. She was certainly one of the richest people in the empire, with an annual income that may have reached up to 10 million rupees. With so much wealth at her disposal, the princess is said to have maintained a massive household that included large contingents of administrators and soldiers.[66] Whenever possible, Jahan Ara tried to help Dara Shukoh. Most notably, in 1658, during the war of succession, she not only gave him money and jewels to help him flee Aurangzeb's advancing forces, but she also offered an unsuccessful proposal to partition the empire between the rival brothers following Dara Shukoh's defeat at the Battle of Samugarh. It is very possible that Jahan Ara's strong contacts in the Punjab, Gujarat, and Ajmer/Rajasthan played a role in directing Dara Shukoh's flight in 1658–9.

Dara Shukoh also nurtured close ties with prosperous and expanding merchant networks including those of the Jain community. He seems to have largely done so through the head of Surat's merchant guild, the merchant and tax farmer Shanti Das. Under Dara's protection, Shanti Das gained complete freedom of movement for his property across the entire empire in 1642 and was granted permission to restore a temple site

[66] Niccolao Manucci, *Mogul India or Storio do Mongor*, trans. W. Irvine, vol. I (Delhi, repr. 1996), p. 212. In case anyone doubted Jahan Ara's power, one look at some of the buildings endowed by her during the construction of Shah Jahan's new capital in Delhi would have sufficed. These included the largest bazaar in the city and one of the city's largest gardens. Jahan Ara also sponsored the construction of the main congregational mosque in Agra, the second largest Mughal city, in the late 1640s.

in Ahmadabad that had been confiscated and destroyed by Aurangzeb.[67] Nor was Dara unhappy to have the right of first refusal, via this powerful merchant, on the valuable jewels imported into India. These were often passed on as gifts to Shah Jahan, whose gratitude confirmed Dara Shukoh's importance. Although Shanti Das was coerced into financially supporting Dara Shukoh's younger brother Murad at the beginning of the war of succession in 1657 (Murad was serving as governor of Gujarat at the time), there are indications that he remained loyal to Dara Shukoh. When the prince arrived in Gujarat in 1659 after being on the run for more than a year, Shanti Das helped him raise funds to recruit a fresh army. He may have also been one of the unnamed "merchants of Gujarat" who provided Dara Shukoh crucial intelligence about Aurangzeb's difficulties in overcoming Shuja' in eastern India.[68] This information may have steeled Dara Shukoh's resolve to strike toward Ajmer and the heart of the empire in one final push to defeat Aurangzeb.

Dara Shukoh's ties to sections of the Jain community were matched by links to certain Hindu religious communities. In 1643, for example, Dara Shukoh affixed his seal to an imperial order (*farman*) confirming a grant in Gokul and Gopalpur to Goswami Vithal Ra'i. The stated purpose was to encourage the Goswami to "continue to offer prayers for the perpetuity of this eternity-allied kingdom." This was confirmed in three successive princely orders between 1646 and 1647.[69]

For all his well-known disillusion with and scorn for the mainstream Islamic establishment, Dara Shukoh occasionally did confer or confirm land grants for Muslim religious figures across the empire.[70] His princely patronage also extended to building a mosque – aptly named "Masjid-i Dara Shukoh" – for the *'ulama'* of Jaunpur,[71] making a gift of a religious school in Thanesar,[72] and providing employment opportunities in the imperial service for religious scholars from such diverse parts of the empire

[67] *Mughal Documents A.D. 1628–59, Vol. 2*, ed. S. A. I. Tirmizi (Delhi, 1995), p. 71.

[68] Bindraban Das Ra'i, *Lubb-ut-Tawarikh*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow 161, f. 136a.

[69] *Imperial Farmans (AD 1577 to AD 1805). Granted to the Ancestors of His Holiness the Tikayal Maharaj*, ed. K. M. Jhaveri, (Bombay, 1928), n.p.; *Mughal Documents A.D. 1628–59*, ed. Tirmizi, pp. 81, 87.

[70] Lachman Singh, *Tarikh-i Zila'-i Bulandshahr* (Bulandshahr, 1874), p. 237; M. M. U. Bilgrami, *Tarikh-i Khat-i Pak-i Bilgram* (Aligarh, 1958), p. 175; Shams-ud-Din Belgaumi, *Tarikh-i Mukhtasar-i Dakhan* (Belgaum, 1944), pp. 122, 126; *Mughal Documents A.D. 1628–59*, ed. Tirmizi, p. 102.

[71] S. I. A Jaunpuri, *Tarikh-i Salatin-i Sharqi aur Sufiya-yi Jaunpur* (Jaunpur, 1988), p. 609.

[72] Abul Hasnat Nadvi, *Hindustan Ki Qadim Islami Darsgahain* (Azamgarh, 1936), p. 30.

as Bilgram and Thatta.[73] In 1656, Dara Shukoh made several extraordinary gifts. He not only paid for a massive and expensive prayer rug for the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina, but he also ordered that Rs. 100,000 worth of goods and cash be distributed in Mecca.[74] Efforts to patronize other significant Muslim religious groups also led the prince to endow cash and land grants for important Chishti shrines and lineages in Ajmer, Delhi, and Khuldabad (in the Deccan), among others. Given the central importance of Sufi shrines as hubs for all manner of political, economic, religious, and sociocultural networks, the prince's patronage was almost certainly aimed at generating positive publicity well beyond the immediate confines of the shrine.[75]

Reaching out also to Sufis who were not clearly identified with any established *tariqa*, Dara Shukoh welcomed the famous antinomian and naked *qalandar* (mystic) Sarmad in his court and kept him by his side through most of the 1650s. He likewise made overtures to men such as Shah Fath Muhammad Qalandar of Jaunpur as well as Punjab-based saints such as Shaikh Sulaiman Misri Qalandar, Shah Muhammad Dilruba, and Shaikh Bari. The prince ordered his officers to provide Sulaiman Misri a warm welcome whenever he visited the city of Multan. Following the death of Shaikh Bari in 1652, Dara Shukoh commissioned a dam to protect his tomb from periodic flooding by the River Ravi.

Dara Shukoh's backing of such lone figures likely emerged from his antipathy toward the mainstream Islamic religious establishment and his interest in spiritual experiments, and certainly it earned him the loyalty of those who revered these local saints. Ultimately, however, his most sincere devotion was reserved for the Qadiri *tariqa*, in whose company he reports

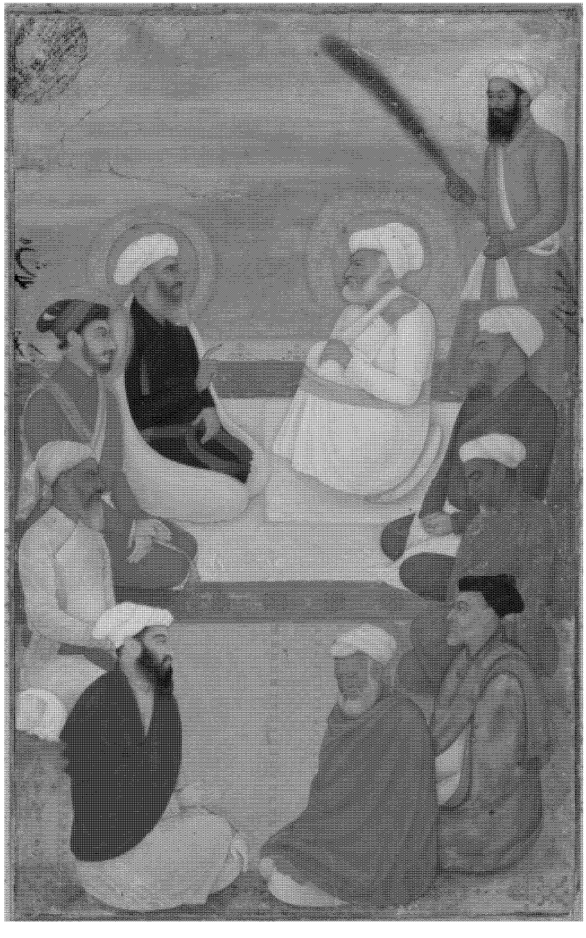
[73] Ghulam Hasan Siddiqui, *Sharaif-i 'Usmani*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow 277, ff. 60a, 66a; Bilgrami, *Tarikh-i Khat-i Pak-i Bilgram*, p. 174; Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 249.

[74] K. Khan, *Muntakhab al-Labab*, vol. 1, p. 731.

[75] Muhammad Ismail, *Sufi Literature in India during the 17th Century*, unpub. M.Phil. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 1986, pp. 93–4. Elsewhere the historical record shows Dara Shukoh playing the role of patron for Chishti intellectuals such as 'Ala-ud-Din Muhammad Chishti Barnawi. Barnawi dedicated an anthology named *Chishtiya-i Bihistiya* (ca. 1655–6) to the prince. It includes notices of famous saints from the Prophet Muhammad to Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i Dilli (d. 1356). More significantly, it contains notices of local saints of Barnawa and Rapri in the Punjab. At the time, both towns were part of Dara Shukoh's *jagir*. The prince's patronage for such a work was likely a source of some pride for the local residents. It may have even won him some political support in the region.

finding "God's grace in this world and the next."[76] He assumed the pen name "Qadiri" and wrote verses praising the founder of the order, Saiyid 'Abd-ul-Qadir Gilani (d. 1166), and his own teachers Miyan Mir (d. 1635) and Mulla Shah Badakhshi (d. 1661).

Despite all the ties he cultivated, Dara nonetheless can be described as ultimately failing in the task of alliance manager because of serious



Dara-Shikoh with Mian Mir and Mulla Shah, ca. 1635 (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; Purchase – Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisitions Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, S1986.432)

[76] Dara Shukoh, *Sakinat-ul-Auliya'*, ed. Tara Chand and Reza Jalali Naini (Tehran, 1965), pp. 5, 6.

missteps. He became altogether too personally involved with the Miyan Mir lineage of Qadiri Sufis. Not only was this exclusivity alienating to other Qadiri lineages, not to mention other Sufi orders, it also drew Dara into highly corrosive debates about religious precedence. It was missteps such as these that seem to have paved the ground for Aurangzeb to eventually charge his brother with heresy.

Dara Shukoh also seems to have had an absolutely unrivaled propensity for making enemies among the highest echelons of the Mughal nobility, alienating in turn Mir Jumla, Sa'dullah Khan, Mahabat Khan, Khalilullah Khan, 'Ali Mardan Khan, Qasim Khan, Sha'ista Khan, Afzal Khan, Raja Jai Singh, and Saiyid Miran Barha. Alarmed, Shah Jahan reminded his son to try and improve his behavior, to "not be ill-disposed or suspicious of royal grandees ... [to] treat them with favor and kindness."[77] Yet the emperor's entreaties were in vain. Later on in life, Aurangzeb claimed that Dara Shukoh's capacity to be an "enemy of good men" and his unwillingness to listen to the advice of Shah Jahan were important factors in his political downfall.[78]

Prince Aurangzeb's Alliances

It is telling that four generations of Mughal emperors, from Jahangir to Bahadur Shah, had been princes who spent substantial stints away from the court in the years leading up to their accession. Favored sons such as Dara Shukoh, who stayed at the imperial court, did not, it seems, pose an insurmountable obstacle. Indeed, the example of Aurangzeb demonstrates precisely the advantage held by the prince who was made to venture farther afield.

Yet life away from the imperial court was not easy for princes, especially in their early years. Jahangir's son Prince Parvez asked to return to court shortly after his first major appointment as commander of the Mughal forces against Mewar in 1606. The rigors of the campaign as well as the presence of a host of domineering Mughal nobles came as a shock to the young prince. Less than forty years later (in 1644), Aurangzeb simply abandoned his governorship of the Deccan and returned to court without permission. It seems he was exhausted and longed to be back in the imperial court. In 1646, Aurangzeb's brother Murad also deserted his

[77] Aurangzeb, *Ruqa't-i 'Alamgiri*, ed. Saiyid Muhammad Abdul Majeed (Kanpur, 1916), p. 18.

[78] Aurangzeb, *Raqa'im-i Kara'im*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow 383, f. 204b. See also Aurangzeb, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta, repr. 1988), pp. 26, 27; Aurangzeb, *Ruqa't-i 'Alamgiri*, pp. 18, 22, 36.

command in Balkh on the northwestern frontier. But despite the drawbacks of being and feeling out of touch with events at court, princes sometimes learned that in the bitter competition for the throne, certain advantages accrued to having relative independence. Thus, for a time, Akbar's son Murad evaded his father's efforts to bring him back to court from his command in the Deccan. As tensions with his father and stepmother, Emperor Jahangir and Nur Jahan, increased in the early 1620s, Prince Khurram willingly left for the Deccan. In 1645, after realizing how unwelcome he was at the imperial court, Aurangzeb begged his father's chief minister Sa'dullah Khan to assign him anywhere so long as it was far removed from the court.[79]

A decade before, when Aurangzeb was seventeen, Shah Jahan did send him far away. Following a successful military campaign in Bundelkhand, the young prince was assigned to manage the Deccan provinces. By this distant assignment, Shah Jahan tried early on to nullify his younger son's potential challenge. Aside from an eight-month stretch in 1644–5 and three short visits in 1647, 1649, and 1651, Aurangzeb spent all the rest of his post-1635 princely career away from the imperial court. He undertook two stints as governor of the Deccan (1636–44 and 1652–8) and also held the governorships of Gujarat (1645–7) and Multan (1648–52). He led campaigns in Bundelkhand (1635), Balkh (1647), and Qandahar (1649 and 1652). In the long years of these assignments, Aurangzeb learned to work with and to accommodate unfamiliar and sometimes hostile groups, most of whom, unlike himself, had deep roots in these regions.

Mughal sources abound with accounts of how Aurangzeb specifically sought out local Muslim clerics. Likely consulting with religious leaders in Burhanpur and Khuldabad, traditional centers of Islamic learning in the Deccan, he is known to have maintained lists of individuals to whom he then reached out. When he built the city of Aurangabad in the 1630s, he filled its mosques and *madrassa*s with these individuals.[80] In September 1641, Aurangzeb granted Shaikh Ibrahim of Bir just over six acres of land plus a stipend to buy oil to light the lamps of a mosque.[81] He also ordered a small stipend provided to one Bibi 'A'isha, the granddaughter of a minor religious scholar.[82] In the 1640s, when the imperial court moved

[79] Aurangzeb, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib*, p. 25.

[80] *Mughal Archives: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Documents Pertaining to the Reign of Shah Jahan, Vol. 1*, ed. M. Z. A. Shakeb (Hyderabad, 1977), pp. 90–1; *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, ed. Yusuf H. Khan (Hyderabad, 1950), p. 184.

[81] *Mughal Archives*, ed. Shakeb, p. 20.

[82] Ibid., pp. 24–5; *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, ed. Y. Khan, p. 186.

to investigate imperial *madad* grants (of land) for suspected large-scale malfeasance, Aurangzeb stonewalled, perhaps to curry local favor for himself and against Shah Jahan. During his governorship of Multan, he gave large cash gifts to repair the shrines of at least three Suhrawardi saints, and he issued or confirmed *madad* grants for a number of Shaikh Baha'-ud-Din Zakariya's Suhrawardi descendants in Multan. Many Shattari disciples of Shaikh 'Abd-ul-Latif Burhanpuri as well as Dihbidi Naqshbandis were also granted employment in Aurangzeb's own household or else recommended by the prince for imperial service.

Unlike Dara Shukoh, Prince Aurangzeb never narrowed his religious commitments beyond a general association with Hanafi-Sunni Islam. In fact, he is described as spending long hours in conversation with all manner of Muslim religious figures. Thus we know that he spent a great deal of time with Deccan-based Shah Waliullah Husaini, a direct descendant of the Chishti saint Khwaja Saiyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz (d. 1422), a custodian of the saint's tomb, and a locally influential figure. While in the Deccan, Aurangzeb also regularly met with the famous Shattari *pir* Shaikh 'Abd-ul-Latif Burhanpuri and the Qadiri *pir* Saiyid Sher Muhammad Qadiri Burhanpuri. In Gujarat, he repeatedly called on the Chishti notable Shaikh Muhiy-ud-Din and cultivated a number of prominent Qadiri lineages, including those of Saiyid Hasanji Qadiri of Patan and the descendants of Saiyid Muhammad al-'Aydarus of Ahmadabad – bitter rivals of the Hazrat Shah 'Alam lineage favored by Shah Jahan and Dara Shukoh. The steady correspondence between Aurangzeb and the Naqshbandi master Khwaja 'Abd-ul-Ghaffar in the late 1640s includes communication about presents received and bestowed, military campaigns, and the comings and goings of specific traveling notables.[83] Just as such outreach efforts proved crucial in enabling Aurangzeb to govern effectively, they also undoubtedly laid the groundwork for his successful bid for the throne.

Thus, when Dara Shukoh lost the Battle of Samugarh, no amount of supplication (he offered Rs. 25,000 to Shaikh Baha'-ud-Din Zakariya's shrine) could bring Multan's religious communities to his aid. Meanwhile, the Naqshbandis provided Aurangzeb with soldiers and also imported horses and camels as expressions of their support. In Gujarat, too, Dara Shukoh encountered a lack of support among some of the big Qadiri shrines in Patan and Ahmadabad. As in Multan, Aurangzeb's earlier

[83] Aurangzeb, *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*, ed. Abdul Ghafur Chaudhuri, vol. 1 (Lahore, 1971), pp. 616, 619, 619–21, 630–1, 632–3; 'Inayat Khan, *'Inayatnama*, British Library, Ethe 411, ff. 44a-47a, 47a-50a.

patronage and personal associations in this region plus powerful intra-Qadiri rivalries effectively thwarted the hapless older prince.

Aurangzeb had more in his arsenal than the backing of locally powerful religious groups. He had cultivated strong support among Afghans, Dakhnis, and Marathas during his time in the Deccan. Consider the Afghans. Every important Afghan tribal group was present among the troops that marched out of the Deccan with Aurangzeb in 1657–8, including Ansari, Khweshgi, Niyazi, Lodi, Tarin, Kakar, Bakhtiyar, Ghauri, Sarwani, Daudzai, Orakzai, Masud, Mohmand, and Wilakzai. An addendum to the chronicle, *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-i Afghani*, in fact tells the story of thirteen poverty-stricken brothers from a single unnamed Afghan family who joined Aurangzeb's forces as they left the Deccan in 1657.[84] The prince's army provided attractive employment to Afghans, and they helped ensure his ultimate success. Yet, sources suggest that it took a good deal of work on Aurangzeb's part to cultivate his relations with Afghans and other ethnic groups, especially when they had not fought for the Mughals before.

Moreover, the imperial court seemed wary of granting advancement to Afghans. Nonetheless, during his first stint in the Deccan, Aurangzeb cultivated close ties with men such as Hadidad Khan (d. 1656), his sons, and their Ansari clan. The Rohillas were also among the Afghans whom Aurangzeb counted as friends. In 1653, Aurangzeb increased Usman Khan Rohilla's *mansab* rank to 1000/1000 and appointed him the *faujdar* (military commandant) of Sultanpur and Nandurbar.[85] Meanwhile, between 1653 and 1655, Usman Khan's nephew, Fath Khan Rohilla, received three rapid promotions to reach a *mansab* of 1000/1000.[86] In a 1657 letter, responding to imperial disquiet about granting such rapid advancement to Afghans, Aurangzeb demanded to know why a further increase in the *mansabs* of Fath Khan Rohilla and his brother Hayat Rohilla had been rejected. They must be rewarded, he declared, for their sterling actions during a recent military campaign against Golkonda, adding that promoting Afghans did not violate imperial norms.[87]

[84] Harvi, *Tarikh-i-Khan Jahani*, vol. 2, p. 873.

[85] Aurangzeb, *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*, vol. 1 pp. 120–2; Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Dhakhirat al-Khawanin*, ed. S. Moinul Haq, vol. 3 (Karachi, 1974), p. 116.

[86] M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility, 1574–1658* (Delhi, 1985), p. 277; *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, ed. Y. Khan, p. 197.

[87] Aurangzeb, *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*, vol. 1, pp. 604–5.

Thus, in his role as Mughal Prince and governor of the Deccan, Aurangzeb fought for groups otherwise overlooked by the court. We see the same pattern with Sidi Miftah Habash Khan, a *Habshi* (African, former slave) leader whose first imperial appointment was to Aurangzeb's nascent household in 1636.[88] Aurangzeb heaped favors and patronage on Habash Khan in recognition of his influence in the Deccan. Habash Khan's daughter was married to the son of Malik Ambar, the greatest *Habshi* warrior-statesman in the region and de facto ruler of Ahmadnagar for almost two decades until his death in 1626. A second daughter was married to Hasan Khan Habshi, the son of yet another well-known *Habshi* clan leader, Yaqut Khan Habshi. Habash Khan augmented these impeccable familial and political connections by encouraging the immigration of Arab Saiyids to the Deccan, accommodating them as servitors, and helping them in various ways. Habash Khan and his family repaid the many kindnesses of Aurangzeb by fighting with great loyalty during his campaign against Dara Shukoh, alongside many other *Habshi*s.[89] Large numbers of these men – again, many who had never previously served under the Mughals – fought on Aurangzeb's side. They joined the ranks of other non-Habshi Dakhnis who had been similarly cultivated and recruited by Aurangzeb during his military campaign to win the Mughal throne. Some, such as Ghazi Bijapuri and 'Abd-ul-Rahman Khan, were richly rewarded with imperial titles and subsequently inducted into the Mughal nobility.[90] In the process, an important source of opposition to imperial rule in the Deccan was gradually neutralized.

The Marathas were another group to play an important part in Aurangzeb's winning coalition. Although the Deccan's political elite was primarily Muslim and included *Habshi*s, and recent Iranian and Turkish immigrants, locally raised armies were mostly non-Muslim and often heavily Maratha. The Marathas were especially renowned for their skills as guerilla fighters. Fairly detailed records of Aurangzeb's activities in the month of November 1637 highlight the prince's early recognition of their

[88] The Habshis (individuals with African familial roots) were one of the many groups that comprised the larger Dakhni population. Others included descendants of Circassians, Turks, Iranians, and local converts to Islam. Often, different Dakhni groups fought one another for political domination of the Deccan. Yet, they also shared some tenuous bonds, among them their ties to the geographical space of the Deccan, their adherence to Islam, and their more than occasional opposition to Mughal power.

[89] S. Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara*, vol. 1, p. 582; Muhammad Kazim, *Alamgirnamah*, ed. Khadim Husain and Abdul Hai, vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1868), p. 45.

[90] Kazim, *Alamgirnamah*, vol. 1, pp. 62, 76.

important role within the Deccan's politics. For example, as part of the celebrations around his nineteenth birthday, Aurangzeb held an audience with a Maratha commander called Linguji Bhonsle.[91] Linguji was a member of the Bhonsle clan that included Shahuji, perhaps the most powerful Maratha commander of the 1630s. Shortly after, Aurangzeb had another audience, this time with a much larger group of Maratha chiefs.[92] Several days later, Marathas constituted more than half of the important individuals invited to attend Aurangzeb's nineteenth birthday celebration in Aurangabad. Included on this list were almost all the high-ranking Marathas within the imperial service in addition to an assortment of powerful Maratha allies.[93] Many of them would participate in the successful Mughal expedition against Baglana in 1638. They also played a critical role in Aurangzeb's efforts to crush a *zamindari* revolt prior to his transfer in 1644.

Aurangzeb's efforts to cultivate Maratha support intensified following his return to the Deccan in 1653. Although none seems to have held a visibly important position in his princely household, Aurangzeb held regular audiences with Maratha luminaries.[94] Aurangzeb also recommended Maratha imperial officers, such as Maluji, to participate in key Mughal military campaigns, including the one against the kingdom of Deogarh in 1655–6. In 1657, Kartalab Khan (originally Jaswant Rao prior to his conversion to Islam) was placed in command of a force ordered to collect back payments of tribute from Deogarh. The decision to appoint a Maratha to handle such a delicate task was a sign of great favor.

Aurangzeb seems to have won broad support among the most important Maratha military networks by 1657, and many Marathas accompanied him to confront Dara Shukoh. Among them were imperial officers such as Kartalab Khan, Jadu Ra'i, and Rustam Ra'i. His forces also included a significant number of Maratha chiefs such as Damaji, Natuji, Netuji Bhonsle, Babaji Bhonsle, Dadaji, Dakuji, Beas Rao, Betuji, and Manuji, who were not imperial employees. In an apparent attempt to cement his support across this group, Aurangzeb offered most of them high-level *mansabs*.[95] The Marathas with their large contingents proved a bastion of support for the prince both prior to and during the battles of Dharmat and Samugarh; they assisted in the subsequent occupation of

[91] *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, ed. Y. Khan, p. 32.
[92] *Mughal Archives*, ed. Shakeb, pp. 148–50, 151, 152, 153.
[93] *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, ed. Y. Khan, pp. 42–3.
[94] *Mughal Archives*, ed. Shakeb, pp. 108, 123.
[95] Ibid., pp. 47, 48, 54.

Agra and Delhi as well. Such service, however, laid the grounds for a vicious internecine war in the 1660s that pitted pro-Mughal Marathas against a rising Maratha commander by the name of Shivaji . . . but this is another story.

As in the Deccan, so also in Gujarat, Balkh, Multan, and Qandahar – local imperial administrators and scribal groups; merchants and grain carriers (*banjaras*); Afghan, Uzbek, Hazara, Rajput, Bundela, and Baluch tribal chiefs; Sindhi and Koli *zamindars* all drifted in and out of the prince's world. In some cases, Aurangzeb succeeded in drawing people to himself; in others, he was thwarted by local rivalries, competition from his brothers, or just a lack of interest among certain individuals or groups in becoming part of the Mughal system. Nonetheless, Aurangzeb's networking experiences in the provinces prepared him superbly for his struggle for the throne, both in terms of his learning political leadership and the skills to manage alliances and also very practically in cultivating sources for troops and material support. With no exceptions, until the eighteenth century, the candidate with the broadest backing across the empire became the next emperor.

The Devout Warrior-Prince Versus the Court-based Scholar-Prince

During Aurangzeb's various governorships and more than two decades from his first military mission in 1635, he largely won the goodwill and respect of the people who served under him as well as those he was responsible for governing. During that period, Aurangzeb commanded at least six major campaigns. Even in failure, he usually managed to salvage his military reputation. Thus, despite his inability to conquer Balkh in 1647, he was credited with saving the imperial army from complete annihilation at the hands of the enemy Uzbeks and Almans. When Aurangzeb returned from this fight, the court-based imperial poet 'Alvi wrote a panegyric he named *Iftitah-i Sultani* or "The Beginning of Kingship." In it 'Alvi lauded the prince for his manliness, his bravery, his quick judgment, his steadiness under attack, and his military skills. Aurangzeb's marvelous performance, 'Alvi suggests, was a sign that God and the Prophet Muhammad were on his side.[96]

Even after two further military failures in wresting Qandahar from Safavid control, Aurangzeb's military reputation again emerged more or less unscathed. The failures were effectively pinned, in fact, on Shah

[96] 'Alvi, *Iftitah-i Sultani*, National Library of India, Buhar Collection 394, ff. 9b, 13a-b.

Jahan's efforts to micromanage both campaigns and then on his decision to prematurely call off the second expedition even as Aurangzeb pleaded for more time to force a positive result.[97] On the eve of the 1657–9 war of succession, there is no question that Aurangzeb was perceived as the most militarily and administratively experienced Mughal Prince ever. It was a powerful reputation, one that he deployed to devastating effect, first against his brother and later his father.

Descriptions of Aurangzeb the prince depicted a heroic individual in the spirit of earlier Persian and Islamic rulers. In one episode at the age of fifteen, Aurangzeb fought a rogue elephant at the imperial court, earning the title "Bahadur" (brave) from his father. Later during the Balkh campaign, at the height of a battle with the Uzbeks, Aurangzeb is said to have dismounted from his elephant to say his prayers. The opposing commander is recounted as saying in amazement: "To quarrel with such a man brings ruin upon yourself."[98] Aurangzeb was indeed a man to be reckoned with.

In addition to his courage, Aurangzeb cultivated a reputation for great generosity and selflessness. Although the contemporary French traveler François Bernier offers an unfavorable impression of Aurangzeb based on his political ruthlessness during the succession struggles with his brothers and father, Bernier also grudgingly concedes that Aurangzeb gave to others "with a liberal hand."[99] The prince is elsewhere described as loyal and thoughtful toward his supporters and household members. During campaigns, he was known to dress the wounds of men under his command and to make little distinction between their personal safety and his own. Far from living the life of ease typical of other Mughal princes, Aurangzeb was reportedly as hard a taskmaster on himself as on others.[100] In contrast to most other Mughal princes, he seems to have found no detail too small for his attention. In the surviving correspondence from his days as a prince, we read of him tackling everything from high administrative and political matters to the provision of thread to the imperial *karkhana* (workshop). According to the correspondence, Aurangzeb even personally oversaw

[97] Aurangzeb, *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*, vol. 1, pp. 33–4, 35–7, 42–4, 44–7, 47–8, 64–6, 67–70.

[98] 'Abd al-Hamid Lahawri, *Padshahnamah*, ed. Abdul Rahim, vol. 2 (Calcutta, 1872), p. 704.

[99] François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, trans. A. Constable (Delhi, repr. 1983), p. 10.

[100] This is evident, for example, in his extraordinary instructions to his oldest son Muhammad Sultan in 1654 detailing how the young prince should spend his day. Jadunath Sarkar in *Studies in Aurangzib's Reign* (Calcutta, repr. 1989), pp. 27–8.

efforts to ensure that Burhanpuri grapes and mangoes arrived in good shape at his father's court by having them packed in paper.[101]

Aurangzeb's manner of dress and his habits of eating and entertainment were the very antithesis of other Mughal princes. He strenuously avoided all excesses of food and drink and strove to speak in a quiet and calm voice. It was widely believed that his behavior was shaped by his personal religiosity; the prince seems to have been consciously modeling his life and manners on the first four Rightly-Guided Caliphs of Islam. Although Shah Jahan and Dara Shukoh occasionally lampooned Aurangzeb and even suggested that he was a hypocritical dissimulator, his behavior won him admirers within the Muslim religious establishment. There were certainly members of the Mughal nobility, whether Hindu or Muslim, who also appreciated his restraint. Aurangzeb talks about how as a prince "he used to treat the nobles in such a way that they were pleased and always praised him whether he was present or absent."[102] We read of Shah Jahan advising Aurangzeb to drop his "meekness of spirit" or face the possibility of the nobles' contempt; yet Aurangzeb cited a Prophetic saying in response: "Whoever humbles himself, God bestows honor on him."[103]

By contrast, Dara Shukoh, the favored older brother, had a reputation as arrogant and brash. In contrast to Aurangzeb's military achievements in the Deccan, Dara Shukoh displayed his urbanity, sophisticated tastes in literature and philosophy, and a generally scholarly and sedentary leadership style. Indeed, Dara Shukoh appeared to disavow Mughal expansionism in favor of his well-known, if controversial, scholarly adventures and his long and impassioned study of the relationship between Islam and Hinduism. When it came to relations with Hindus, Aurangzeb, on the other hand, preferred forming political alliances while maintaining his own mainstream Muslim religiosity.[104] And whereas Dara Shukoh patronized the arts and literature, Aurangzeb showed no public interest in either.

The story of Dara Shukoh's self-fashioning is an extraordinary one. No other major Mughal Prince evinced less interest in the empire's administrative or military affairs than he did. Not surprisingly, his one and only military enterprise ended in absolute disaster. In a contemporary and anonymously written account of the 1653 Qandahar campaign,

[101] Aurangzeb, *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*, vol. 1, pp. 119, 146–7; vol. 2, pp. 806, 819, 821–2.
[102] Aurangzeb, *Ruq'at-i 'Alamgiri*, p. 4.
[103] Aurangzeb, *Anecdotes of Aurangzib*, pp. 26–7.
[104] M. Athar Ali, "The Religious Issue in the War of Succession, 1658–59," in *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society, and Culture* (New Delhi, repr. 2006), pp. 245–52.

Lata'if-ul-Akhbar, Dara Shukoh variously comes across as stubborn yet also easily swayed by flattery and abusive when thwarted, eager to resort to astrology or magic for guidance, insensitive to reports of suffering by Mughal troops, and thoroughly incompetent as a military commander. For example, in more than one episode, he places his trust in groups claiming they could force Qandahar's submission through magic incantations or secret flying objects from which the prince's soldiers might lob exploding devices.[105] One man even went so far as to demand two dancing girls, two thieves, two gamblers, a dog, a sheep, a buffalo, and five chickens as part of a sacrifice to create a special potion that when applied to the blade of a sword, the man assured, could cut through steel. In the end, perhaps because the human subjects escaped, the potion proved useless.[106] Elsewhere in the text, Dara Shukoh's unwillingness to honor anyone but his own household retainers and the disregard and contempt he showed toward the imperial noblemen serving under him undermined Mughal field operations.[107] All in all, the account of the prince's actions in *Lata'if-ul-Akhbar* stands in stark contrast with *Iftitah-i Sultani*, the poem commemorating Aurangzeb's equally difficult 1647 Balkh campaign.

Dara Shukoh's behavior seems mystifying: how did he expect to win the throne without any interest or experience in fighting and winning military campaigns? Was he uninterested in the throne, or did he have some alternative and unusual plan of his own? Perhaps Dara Shukoh presumed that loyalty to Shah Jahan would automatically translate into loyalty to him. Besides, he was vastly wealthier than his three brothers; his income equaled all of theirs combined, and he probably had a similar advantage in terms of military contingents. The sources also suggest, however, that Dara Shukoh enjoyed a sense of his own omnipotence, a certain spiritual exaltedness, and an entitlement to the Mughal throne ordained by God himself. Whether or not he did so consciously, he differentiated his leadership from that of his brothers through the religious adventures that dominated his life.

Dara Shukoh appears to have seen links between his religious proclivities and his political fate as emperor, and to have envisioned himself as a

[105] Anon., *Lata'if-ul-Akhbar*, Center of Advanced Study Library (Aligarh Muslim University), Persian Ms. 15, ff. 121–2.
[106] Ibid., f. 128.
[107] Ibid., ff. 27, 33, 104, 112, 120, 134–5, 156, 175–7, 183, 190–1, 194.

saint-king.[108] In his second book, *Sakinat-ul-Auliya'*, for example, he describes a dream from his youth in which an angel appeared before him and repeated four times: "Those things that have not been made apparent to any earthly kings, God has bestowed upon you."[109] The same episode was recounted a few years later in his next book, *Risala-i Haqnuma*.[110] Later still, according to the record of a conversation with the Hindu ascetic Baba Lal Vairagi, Dara Shukoh digresses to ask a series of political and ethical questions. Why, for instance, must the king of a large country (i.e., the Mughal Empire) arrest, imprison, and execute people? How does a king who was once a *yogi* (ascetic) remain true to his earlier vocation? Is it acceptable for a king who is also a *faqir* (ascetic) to not require his courtiers to dress like dervishes?[111] Through the early to mid-1650s, Dara Shukoh and his followers cultivated an aura of inevitable political success around this "prince of the world," an aura that enfolded at once his religious and political aspirations.[112]

There is no doubt that Dara Shukoh's intellectual endeavors were driven by abiding spiritual interests and a quest that likely began when he was a teenager. As the sense of his spiritual importance increased, however, so too did the belief, as his older sister Jahan Ara put it, that he was the heir apparent (*wali 'ahd*) to both the "esoteric" (*batin*) and "exoteric" (*zahir*) kingdoms.[113] With Shah Jahan's acquiescence, any expectation of normative Mughal princely conduct seems to have been set aside for Dara Shukoh. His religious perfection became the platform from which he differentiated himself from his brothers and staked his claim to the imperial throne. Ultimately, he lost to Aurangzeb in the war of succession. If Mirza Hakim's political failure (versus his half brother Akbar) arose from his appeal to only a narrow Central Asian constituency, Dara Shukoh's lay with how little his claims to special spiritual insight resonated with anyone beyond his household or Shah Jahan's staunchest loyalists.

[108] This question is explored in greater detail in Munis D. Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta, and the Politics of Mughal India," in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi, forthcoming 2012).

[109] Shukoh, *Sakinat-ul-Auliya'*, pp. 5–6.

[110] Shukoh, *Risala-i Haqnuma*, National Library of India, Zakariya Collection 177, f. 7b.

[111] Cl. Huart and Louis Massignon, "Dara Shikoh's Interview with Baba La'l Das at Lahore," in *On Becoming an Indian Muslim*, ed. and trans. M. Waseem (Delhi, repr. 2003), p. 115.

[112] Zulfiqar Ardistani, *The Religion of the Sufis: From the Dabistan of Mohsin Fani*, trans. David Shea and Anthony Troyer (London, repr. 1979), p. 78.

[113] Jahan Ara Begum, "Risala-i Sahibiya," ed. Muhammad Aslam, *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 16, no. 4 (1979): 96.

CONCLUSION

In 1705, a Mughal nobleman named Mubarakullah Wazih/Iradat Khan was appointed commandant (*qila'dar*) of the fort of Mandu in Malwa. As such, he was a subordinate of Aurangzeb's grandson Bidar Bakht, who was serving as governor of Malwa at the time. In keeping with proper etiquette, sometime after his arrival in Malwa, Iradat Khan visited Bidar Bakht's court in the city of Ujjain. According to Iradat Khan's memoir (written in the mid-1710s), the two men hit it off instantly. "By the grace of God, in very little time," writes Iradat Khan, "a friendship resulted between me and him that was inconceivable between ruler and subject/servant (*naukar*)."[114] According to Iradat Khan, Bidar Bakht demanded that they spend as much time together as possible. The prince extended his favor by also generously sharing his own food and undertaking no important decision without consultation. When Iradat Khan finally left to take charge of his position in Mandu, Bidar Bakht made him promise to write once a week. In return, the prince promised to do the same. Over the next few years, the two men stayed in constant contact.

When Aurangzeb died in 1707 and a war of succession was upon the empire, Bidar Bakht immediately commanded Iradat Khan to leave his post and join him in Ujjain. Tapping into Iradat Khan's network of support, the prince sent a separate invitation to the Khan's son, then the military commander of a district near Ujjain with a few thousand troops at his disposal, to join him.[115] Over the years, Bidar Bakht had built an intricate web of friendships and obligations on which he could prevail when needed. And so it was with generations of other Mughal princes. They spent most of their lives striving to build friendships or positioning themselves to cajole support, often in preparation for the time that they might need them in combat against one another.

No doubt, Mughal administrative acumen played a key role in the empire's success between Akbar's reign and the end of Aurangzeb's. A second, less studied, but even more fundamental source of Mughal success, however, was the dynasty's extraordinary capacity to build and sustain alliances in bewilderingly diverse geographic and social settings. This is an imperial practice that the Mughals shared with other contemporary entities including the Ottomans and the Safavids. What sets the Mughals

[114] Mubarakullah Wazih, *Tarikh-i Iradat Khan*, ed. Ghulam Rasul Mehr (Lahore, 1971), p. 9.

[115] Ibid., pp. 10, 20, 22.

apart, however, is the central and long-standing role that princes played in alliance building across the empire.

As princes pursued friendships and alliances, they drew groups already subject to Mughal power into deeper relations with the dynasty. Competition between members of the royal family also fostered ties to powerful individuals and groups who were on the political margins or even opposed to the dynasty. As we will see in the next chapter, such efforts received a powerful fillip in the course of princely rebellions.