Faction, Family, and Status Culture: The High Nobility of Mughal India

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For my grandmother,

Nisar Fatima Mallick

1934-2017

Abstract

This thesis aims to provide a social history and an ethnographic survey of the Mughal high nobility from the late 16th to the early 18th centuries. Its wider historiographical objective is to re-examine the conceptual framework hitherto used in studying the Mughal ruling stratum – generally designated a nobility – especially key concepts like "ethnicity" and "faction." It does so through a tripartite approach. The study of family is the study of relationships and connections of kinship, affinity and patronage, as well as of lineage and descent as elements of identity. The study of faction seeks to unpack the meaning of this term in modern scholarship, to see what basis it possessed in the emic language of the sources, and which groups and networks did and did not fit the concept. The survey of status culture aims to discern the relationship between status and identity, and how status was articulated, performed, and defended in the courtly context. A core argument of the thesis is that aristocratic identity was extensively refashioned by late Mughal literati belonging to the *mansabdārī* stratum in the 18th century in a context of political challenges and increasing marginalisation, and it is this late consensus that was communicated to the first generation of colonial scholarship, forming the basis of modern understandings of the Mughal ruling class. The thesis demonstrates that the Īrānī faction comprised a small circle of élite Shīʿī emigrants from Safavid Iran, often obscured in modern scholarship by overemphasis on Jahāngīr's consort, Nūr Jahān. It further finds an absence of evidence for what modern scholarship has called the Tūrānī faction until the late 17th century when a coteries of Central Asia noblemen begin to derive a new Tūrānī identity from a specific set of cultural and ethnographic discourses. It further describes the networks of circulation whence this aristocracy was derived. These findings contribute to our understanding of the late 17th and early 18th century Mughal crisis of authority, the nature of the Mughal ruling stratum, and the evolution of identity in this period. Most importantly, the thesis demonstrates that the identity eventually called "Mughal" emerged from the shared experience of the Indo-Muslim élite in the 18th century, having little connection to either Central or West Asia.

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نویسنده را نیست فردا امید

Table of Contents

Abstract *2*

Acknowledgments *3*

Introduction *6*

0.1: Historiographical Outline **6**

0.2: Revisiting the Mughal Nobility **11**

0.3: Concepts and Approaches **15**

0.4: Sources **31**

Chapter 1: The Īrānīs *43*

1.1: Emergence of a Faction – Ghiyās Beg and His Heirs **46**

1.2: The New Iranian Nobility of Mughal India **57**

1.3: Reproductive Politics and the Irani Ascendancy **73**

1.4: Crisis and Climax c. 1686-1713 ..... **82**

1.5: Conclusion **93**

Chapter 2: Mobilities and Circulation, Centres and Peripheries *99*

2.1: Four *Mansabdārī* Careers **102**

2.1.1: Islām Khān Rūmī, Husayn Pāshā of Basra (fl. 1649-1676) 102

2.1.2: Mīr Jumla Mīr Muhammad Amīn Shahristānī, "Rūh al-Amīn" (1573-1637) 109

2.1.3: Mīr Jumla Mīr Muhammad Saʿīd Ardistānī (c. 1591-1663) 114

2.1.4: ʿAlī Mardān Khān Amīr al-Umarā Yār Vafādār (d. 1657) 120

2.2: Élite Emigrants, Transregional Connections and *Mansabdārī* Service **125**

Chapter 3: The Myth of the Tūrānī Faction *138*

3.1: Networks of the Tūrānī Nobility and the Absence of a Faction **141**

3.2: Tūrān – Origins and Meanings **152**

3.3: Re-Imagining Tūrān in the 17th Century **163**

Chapter 4: Status Culture of the Mughal High Nobility *176*

4.1: Status and the Imperial Court **176**

4.2: The Mughal High Nobility 1605-1686 – Origins and Composition **186**

4.3: Aspects of Aristocratic Status **195**

4.4: Conclusion **211**

Chapter 5: Commemorating the Umarā *214*

5.1: The Mansabdār-Historians of the 18th Century **214**

5.2: History, Identity, & Ethnography in Late Mughal Historiography **232**

5.3: Late Mughal Legacies and the Birth of Colonial Historiography **257**

Conclusion *264*

Glossary ***269***
Appendix 1: Umarā of Tūrān ***271***
Appendix 2: Governors and Ministers 1605-1686 ..... ***273***
Abbreviations ***280***
Bibliography ***281***

Introduction

0.1: Historiographical Outline

The 17th century was a period of unprecedented connectedness and circulation between the states and societies of Central, South and West Asia. Military, professional, scholarly, and indeed aristocratic networks linked centres of patronage and employment in a period that saw the expansion, consolidation, and centralisation of three major dynastic polities, the Safavid, Uzbek and Mughal.[1] In this setting, the court of the Great Mughals was the heart of a polity that, as it evolved beyond its comparatively modest origins, recruited extensively from these networks to staff its military-bureaucratic ruling apparatus. In doing so, it reshaped and refashioned these individuals and families into a new stratum, a social collective with a sensibility all its own in a courtly society united by its milieu, a shared political culture, and an ideology of service. This thesis is an attempt to understand that milieu and its inhabitants on their own terms. Its core argument is that the Mughal court developed a form of court culture as a regulatory mechanism with the dynasty and monarch at its apex, the by-product whereof was a common sensibility that eventually evolved into a much broader kind of shared elite identity. Imperial ideology and status culture set the confines of court society and intra-élite competition, and themselves came inevitably to be modified by the evolution of the ruling stratum across this period. As the members of this court society passed with the court of the Great Mughals from living memory into the pages of history, they were commemorated by Shāh Navāz Khān (1700-1758), the *mansabdār*-historian par excellence of the 18th century, as a united whole in his *Maāsir al-Umarā*, "the Illustrious Deeds of the Nobility."

Not unexpectedly, a courtly society of the scale of the Mughal, with its attendant culture of conspicuous consumption and excess, drew the attention of foreign observers from a very early date. The most important of these were likely the European representatives of the various trading companies.[2] Some of the earliest 18th century European orientalists such as Alexander Dow, William Orme and William Francklin were also connected with the East India Company. Theirs has been a twofold, enduring contribution to the historiography of the nobility in ways this thesis shall investigate in its first and fifth chapter. This has had important longer-term

[1] Liesbeth Geevers, "Safavid Cousins on the Verge of Extinction: Dynastic Centralization in Central Asia and the Bahrāmī Collateral Line," (1518-1596),' *JESHO* 58 no. 3 (2015): 297, 320; Corinne Lefèvre & Ines G. Županov, "Introduction," in *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud* (Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales: 2015) 22, 24

[2] Mehreen Chida-Razvi, "The Perception of Reception: The Importance of Sir Thomas Roe at the Mughal Court of Jahangir," *Journal of World History* 25 no. 2/3 (2015): 263

implications for the study both of Jahāngīr's reign, as well as the broader conceptualisation of the Mughal ruling élite. As J.S. Grewal has argued, these laid the foundation for the shibboleths of colonial historiography: India as an essentially Hindu land fallen prey to foreign invasion, with its Muslims essentialised as foreigners, invaders, and tyrannical rulers.[3] Systematic scholarly attention, however, dates to the first wave of translation of courtly sources in the 19th century by H.M. Elliott and John Dowson, which included a translation of the introduction to *Maāsir al-Umarā*.[4] The very use of the term "nobility" in understanding this social group has been debated, of course, and is something we shall return to. Early beginnings of the study of Mughal state and society with historians in the colonial period generally emphasised a progressist view of pre-modern India as approaching but ultimately failing to attain civilised modernity, coupled with a character or personality-centric view of the monarchs and nobles. This tended to limit study of the Mughal nobility to fragmented and biographic treatment within the broader fold of military-political history. For the period that most concerns this thesis, the research of Jadunath Sarkar was pathbreaking but ultimately limited. Dipesh Chakrabarty discusses Sarkar's conceptualisation of Mughal history as a tragic drama, dominated by themes of heroism and personal character, and contrasted with the process of nation-building in early modern England and France.[5] This emphasis on personal character and decline manifests in the only analysis of the nobility in his *History of Aurangzib*, sub-titled "Moral Degeneration of the Mughal aristocracy."[6] Other important studies from this period include Ibn Hasan's monograph, the first of its kind, on the central institutions of the Mughal polity.[7] A consensus which has persisted from this period is that the noble stratum was non-hereditary, and heterogenous in composition.[8]

After independence, concern shifted to structural aspects of the polity, especially its administration and bureaucracy: the nobility was typically examined as an arm of the state system of surplus extraction, the *mansabdārī* system being conceptualised as the bureaucratic "steel frame" of the empire, as in Irfan Habib's *Agrarian System in Mughal India* (1963).[9] The

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[3] J.S. Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India: The Assessments of British Historians* (OUP: 1970), i-ii
[4] H.M. Elliott and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (Trubner & Co., 1877), 187-191
[5] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and his Empire of Truth* (Oxford University Press: 2016), Chapter 5, especially 183, 204-5
[6] Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, (MC Sarkar & Sons, 1952), 3:248-279 & 5:375-6
[7] Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (Oxford University Press: 1936)
[8] Cf. Nurul Hasan, "New Light on the Relations of the Early Mughal Rulers with their Nobility," *PIHC* 7 (1944): 395
[9] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System in Mughal India* (Asia Publishing House: 1963)

first direct survey of the topic was M. Athar Ali's *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (1966), followed later by his magisterial *Apparatus of Empire* (1985). Athar Ali's work established vital parameters in the study of this stratum, including his elucidation of the differentiation between the categories of *amīr* and *mansabdār*, the significance of *mansab* (i.e. numerical) rank as an index of status, and the exacerbation of *mansabdārī* factionalism by the fiscal crisis of Aurangzeb's later reign.[10] However, his oeuvre saw a crystallisation of the "ethnic" classification of the nobility as it had persisted since the early 20th century, viz., the its categorisation into the supposedly "well-recognised racial groups" comprising "foreign" Muslims, subdivided into Īrānīs and Tūrānīs, Afghans, Indian Muslims, Rajputs, and non-Rajput Hindus.[11] Another important work of this period is Satish Chandra's *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court*, which examined the role of nobiliary factions in its internal conflicts from 1707, and the pivotal role of Zūlfiqār Khān (d. 1713) and his Īrānī faction therein.[12]

From about the late 1970s, new approaches began to be explored more generally in Mughal history, especially in search of new sources, perspectives, and approaches, some of which are closely related to our topic. Rosalind O'Hanlon's work examined expectations, roles, norms of comportment and behaviour among *mansabdārs* as these evolved from Akbar's reign through the 17th century, especially as articulated by the Īrānī *amīr* Bāqir Khān Najm-i-Sānī (d. 1637).[13] Stephen Blake's contributions to our understanding of imperial service and Mughal patrimonialism further provided important context to the position of the nobility and the nature of imperial service.[14] Particularly important is these works' investigation into households and domesticity as conceptualised by the imperial centre that were received by and moulded the *mansabdārī* stratum, which the fourth chapter of this study examines. This dimension of the social and cultural history of the Mughal ruling stratum was further explored by Ruby Lal in her study of the institution of the imperial harem in Akbar's reign.[15] Lal's investigation of

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[10] M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Asia Publishing House, 1966); M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Titles and Offices to the Mughal Nobility 1578-1658* (Oxford University Press: 1985)

[11] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility*, 15

[12] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court* (Oxford University Press: 2003), especially Chapter 3

[13] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India," *JESHO* 42 no. 1 (1999): 47-93; O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body: History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar," *MAS* 41 no. 5 (2007): 889-923

[14] Stephen Blake, "The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals," *TJAS* 39 no. 1 (1979): 77-94

[15] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World: Historicising the Harem* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

kinship patterns within the dynasty and the harem laid the ground for this work's examination of these patterns in the sub-dynastic noble kin-networks of the nobility.

John F. Richards' *The Mughal Empire* (1993) presented the first modern synthesis of our view of the Mughal polity and its administration, further situating these within a wider Eurasian context.[16] From the end of the century, research on élite and sub-élite strata of Mughal society has expanded in two inter-connected directions. Firstly, beginning with Sanjay Subrahmanyam, authors have considered the phenomenon of Near Eastern diasporas and the circulation of élite, sub-élite, and professional groups across the Persianate world.[17] In the context of the early modern Deccan Sultanates, Roy Fischel more recently has examined the political significance of "foreign" vs local identity, and mobility vs locality, themes which we shall revisit in the Mughal context.[18] The other strand of work is studies of specific individuals, kin-networks and occasionally broadly "ethnic" sub-groups; this method was adopted by historians of the Mughal nobility after Athar Ali, including Firdos Anwar, Afzal Husain, Rita Joshi, and Mohammad Afzal Khan.[19] Studies of this kind dealing with Nūr Jahān (c. 1576-1645) have too often emphasised the figure of the Empress to the detriment of study of other important figures, both from her family and in the wider nobility, as the first chapter will seek to show.[20] Although this method has yielded invaluable and detailed information about the careers of individual nobles and their role within the political history of the empire, attempts to view these comparatively and qualitatively remain at an early stage, partly, as this work seeks to show, because the prevailing model of understanding *mansabdārī* identity remains the mid-century ethnic classificatory system.

Works published in recent years have developed new approaches to the study of the Mughal élite, such as Ali Anooshahr and Lisa Balabanlilar's examination of memory,

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[16] John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)

[17] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Élite Migration and Modern State Formation," *TJAS* 51 no. 2 (1992): 340-363; Keelan Overton, ed., *Iran and the Deccan: Persian Art, Culture and Talent in Circulation* (Indiana University Press: 2020).

[18] Roy Fischel, *Society, Space and the State in the Deccan Sultanates 1565-1636*, PhD Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2012

[19] Firdos Anwar. *Nobility under the Mughals 1628-1658* (Manohar: 2001); Afzal Husain, *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahāngīr: A Study of Family Groups*, (Manohar: 1999); Rita Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility under the Mughals* (Vikas Publishing House: 1985); Mohammad Afzal Khan, *The Ruling Élite: Iranian Nobility under Shahjahan and Aurangzeb* (Viva Books: 2016)

[20] Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (Oxford University Press: 1993); Ruby Lal, *Empress: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan* (W. W. Norton & Company: 2018)

ethnography, and imperial identity to the 16th century.[21] Corinne Lefèvre's monograph on Jahāngīr has also provided a fresh perspective on the recruitment and replenishment of élites within the contours of the Mughal political system.[22] Munis Faruqui has also examined the recruitment of regional élites and sub-élites, albeit from the perspective of individual dynasts and the institution of the princely household. More recently, Mana Kia and Richard Eaton have both published studies on the wider Persianate world, with Kia especially discussing the nature of élite and sub-élite identity therein.[23] One of the most important recent interventions is Gagan Sood's in examining a corpus of texts produced by *mansabdārs* towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, showing the gradual emergence of a common historiographical conception and shared sense of identity prefiguring what the fifth chapter will seek to demonstrate is the reworking of aristocratic identity by *mansabdār*-historians in the 18th century.[24]

[21] Ali Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires: A Study in Politics and Invented Traditions* (Oxford University Press: 2018); Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* (IB Tauris: 2012)

[22] Corinne Lefèvre, *Consolidating Empire: Power and Élites in Jahangir's India*, tr. Renuka George (Permanent Black: 2022)

[23] Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*; Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism* (Stanford University Press: 2020)

[24] Gagan Sood, "A Political Sociology of Empire: Mughal Historians on the Making of Mughal Paramountcy," *MAS* 56 no. 4 (2022): 1253-1294

0.2: Revisiting the Mughal Nobility

This thesis will aim to build upon existing scholarship by demonstrating, firstly, the character of the Mughal ruling class, and then the extent to which Mughal history was received by modern historiography from 18th century *mansabdār*-historians *of* that class. In a sense, that century is thus the starting point of this study in marking both the end of the Mughal high nobility, and the beginnings of a mature historiography thereof in a period of transition for late and post-Mughal Persianate élites in the subcontinent. The social-historical purpose of this study is to produce an ethnographic survey of the Mughal high nobility, and what I will call its status culture. Its historiographical ambition is to re-examine modes of analysis applied to the nobility that I will argue have become obsolete. These twin aims are closely connected. The first four chapters are thus devoted to understanding *what* this stratum comprised, as much of the nobility has yet to be systematically enumerated and then subjected to analysis. The potentialities of a non-quantitative collective approach struck me as particularly fruitful. Through close examination of family trees, of pertinent texts and communities of knowledge and belonging this thesis pursues a classificatory rather than quantitative approach and seeks to develop categories of identity and status that hold true for this entire status group (especially as most classificatory work on this subject does not examine the histories of service of multiple families). The final chapter is the lynchpin of the thesis in demonstrating where the modes of analysis I argue against originate, viz., in the writings of élite authors writing for ideological ends in the period of the *umarā*'s decline and dissolution, and in so doing to show a remarkable and unexpected interaction between indigenous and European scholarship in the 18th century.

The two key concepts which have dominated the study of differentiation *within* the nobility are those of "ethnicity" and "faction." To an extent, this work departs from both, insofar as they are unhelpful to us in understanding vertical and lateral distinctions in this stratum. In the Mughal context, ethnicity has too often been determined in a collective and quantitative method which arguably involves first taking such categories as they are found in the chronicles at face value, and then distributing or assigning them in what must necessarily be an arbitrary fashion. Benedek Péri has offered a useful critique of this method in his discussion of the ethnic origins of Iranians at Akbar's court.[25] Péri affirms that an investigation

[25] Benedek Péri, "The Ethnic Composition of the "Iranian" Nobility at Akbar's Court (1556-1605)," in *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th-17th Centuries*, ed. Eva Jeremias (Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies: 2003), 180; see also Benedek Péri, "A Turkic Clan in Mughal India: The Qaqshals in Akbar's Service," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 60 no. 4 (2007): 367, on the "Tūrānī" designation

of this kind is possibly in Akbar's reign given the relatively small number of nobles in his chosen period (1574-1605).

Since its widespread adoption by anthropology, a range of questions have been raised about the term ethnicity, its meanings, and the dangers of essentialisation it raises.[26] This thesis will use the term in particular ways, seeking to apply an in-depth approach to identity and origin throughout this period. Ethnicity – or rather identity – is at the very heart of this project, appearing recurrently as a *leitmotif*. We are fortunate, then, that identity in premodern subcontinent has been the subject of several scholarly interventions that will be helpful to this project. At the same time, it is important to specify that Mughal conceptions of ethnicity and race are *not* a central concern of this thesis except insofar as these tie into – or appear to tie into – aristocratic identity. Our concern is with a very small group of individuals, a circle of about 150 households and families, whose experiences were in no way typical of other social groups within the Mughal polity. This is one of the reasons that this thesis does not pretend to offer a theory of race or ethnicity universally applicable in Mughal India.

Sumit Guha, across a range of works, has made pertinent observations on the formation of social identities in the premodern subcontinent. Importantly, he has demonstrated that neither ethnic identity nor status identity can be seen to be static or unchanged.[27] Where social identity was tied to status and prestige, especially of the kind associated with military roles, it had to be both policed and enforced – in Guha's words, we are mistaken in focusing on the markers of social boundaries while ignoring the *powers* that enforced them.[28] His critique of caste as a potential universal categorisation of social groups is furthermore a useful reminder to us in considering the traditional classification of Muslim, especially élite Muslim, social groups in the subcontinental Persianate context.[29] As we shall see, the most important transformations in the *umarā* as a social and status identity occurred in the context of rapid sociopolitical change. Guha's observations on the role of the state in mediating élite identities are further expanded by Subah Dayal's deconstruction of ethnic markers in the Mughal state's classification of its military personnel: in the absence of the expected "Īrānī" and "Tūrānī" ascriptions, she finds a range of relevant categories represented including lineage, patriline,

[26] Bob Carter and Steve Fenton, "Not Thinking Ethnicity: A Critique of the Ethnicity Paradigm in an Over-Ethnicised Sociology," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 40 no. 1 (2010): 1-110
[27] Sumit Guha, *Environment and Identity in India 1200-1991* (CUP: 2009), 83
[28] Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia Past & Present* (Brill: 2013), 3, 154
[29] Ibid., 15

language, sect, and putative geographical origin.[30] Whereas Dayal finds that absolute and overarching schemes of premodern identity used by 20th century historians derived from the higher ranks of the Mughal nobility, I hope to demonstrate that even at this level, aristocratic identity was something particular and shaped in the unique context of élite mobility between Northern India, Central Asia, Safavid Iran and the Deccan.[31] As Kumkum Chatterjee observed, a shared Persianised, Islamicate courtly culture played an important role in mediating relationships between South Asian rulers, and élites belonging to the wider Persianate world.[32] We are further helped by Supriya Gandhi's comprehensive survey showing that Mughal writings lacked overarching sociological categories like caste in their classification of social collectives.[33] We shall see that origin and community in the context of aristocratic identity cannot be usefully examined through the modern concept of ethnicity or related concepts like caste. On the other hand, as Chris Bayly observed, nobility is very much visible in premodern Muslim sensibilities in the subcontinent.[34] This thesis will aim to demonstrate the existence of a discretely Mughal set of norms around identity and examine the particularity of those constituent elements of aristocratic identity that belonged distinctively to this stratum and its heirs, related to and yet ultimately independent from the wider Persianate world.

Unfortunately, in speaking of the relationship between Mughal élites and their relationship to the wider world, we encounter the question of their indigeneity or lack thereof. One such perspective on the cultural identities of this stratum is André Wink's description of the Mughal *mansabdārī* class as comprising commanders of bands of "deracinated horse warriors…in effect constituting the nobility," a view which seems inspired by Patricia Crone's idiosyncratic model of viewing military slavery and élite groups in the Islamic world.[35] This leads him to doubts whether the *mansabdārs* could become "a landholding aristocracy with Indian roots," although we shall observe qualifications to this conclusion in the fifth chapter. I shall aim to demonstrate that Mughal élite status identities, including ultimately the very word Mughal itself and what it came to connote, were ultimately indigenous despite putative

[30] Subah Dayal, "Making the 'Mughal' Soldier: Ethnicity, Identity and Documentary Culture in Southern India c. 1600-1700," *JESHO* 62 (2019): 858
[31] Ibid., 860
[32] Kumkum Chatterjee, "The English East India Company & Cultural Cosmopolitanism in Late Mughal Bengal: Mughal Political Culture and Persianisation," in *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud*, eds. J. Flores, Corinne Lefèvre & Ines Županov (Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales: 2015), 295
[33] Supriya Gandhi, "Locating Race in Mughal India:," *Renaissance Quarterly* 75 (2022): 1206-1207
[34] Chris Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (OUP: 1998): 16
[35] André Wink, *Akbar* (Oneworld: 2009),

affective connections to imagined homelands elsewhere. Mughal-ness as conceptualised by the late Mughal élite – the first people who would have thought of *themselves* as Mughal – could only have emerged in the context of 18th century India and would indeed have made little sense to first generation emigrants in the heyday of Mughal imperial power. We shall see this as we visit Mughal identity in its many forms throughout this thesis, whether as the political expression of an underlying social reality (Chapter 1), a social and cultural phenomenon co-opted with political aspirations (Chapter 3), in its interaction with status and behaviour (Chapter 4), and finally as commemorated and transmitted to succeeding generations (Chapter 5).

Similarly, this thesis attempts to complicate our understanding of "faction." Rather than accepting nominal claims made by social and political groups as presented in the sources, this thesis seeks to unpack the meanings of these terms and designations, and then try to identify which groups – if any – within the nobility were associated with them. Proceeding to examine how these terms operated in Mughal status culture and politics, we arrive at a much more realistic understanding of what factionalism meant in the context of the Mughal court, and which groups can in fact be designated "factions." To this end, Chapter 1 is devoted to the Īrānī faction, and Chapter 3 to the Tūrānī faction, as these are both held to be the primary, quasi-ethnic factions of the Mughal high nobility in most studies of its political operation, including those of Athar Ali, Chandra and Alam. These chapters seek to deconstruct the widespread view that an Īrānī and a Tūrānī faction existed from about the mid-16th century onwards, and to demonstrate the origins of the factions designated Īrānī and Tūrānī by the end of Aurangzeb's reign. This will further demonstrate the ultimately indigenous and Indic context in which the Mughal understandings of "Īrānī" and "Tūrānī" were formed.

0.3: Concepts and Approaches

In examining the high nobility, modern scholars are greatly indebted to the scholarship of preceding generations, especially the work of Athar Ali who first examined the nobility as a collective and elaborated key concepts such as *khānazādagī* and the distinction between the *mansabdārs* and *umarā*. We benefit also from more recent work on the Mughal ruling class like Faruqui's *Princes of the Mughal Empire* which brought to the fore the networks of patronage that underlay dynastic competition, and the ascendance of aristocratic political power independent of dynastic support from the end of Aurangzeb's reign. We are also fortunate in possessing specialised studies of sub-groups of the nobility like Joshi's monograph on the Afghan *amīrs*, which brings out patterns of circulation and kin-based patronage unique to the Afghans thanks to their clan-based system of political organisation. However, there remain limits to our knowledge of the nobility as a collective. A persistent problem is that of determining the extent and limits of its composition, especially of the high nobility with which this thesis is concerned. *Mansab* (numerical) rank indicated the theoretical size of the cavalry contingent commanded by a nobleman, the level of his income as derived from a fief (*jāgīr*), and broadly his rank within the nobiliary stratum.[36] Despite the convenient delineation provided thereby, hitherto one of the dominant methods of identifying factions and powerholders in the court system, there are nuances which elude *mansab*-based classification. Shāh Navāz Khān, writing in the 18th century, faced the same problem, writing:

> "[In Akbar's reign] royal service was esteemed, and *mansabs* had high worth…even [*mansabdārs*] of 500 of that age have been mentioned. And until [Shāh Jahān] and the start of [Aurangzeb's] reign, with their abundance of ranks and dignities (*manāsib-u-marātib*), I have written of those who ranked at 3,000 and were honoured with drums and standards (*tabl-u-ʿalam*), after which time, owing to the much-inconvenienced government (*yasāq-i pur-mashāq*) of the Deccan, the increase in royal servants and the decrease of incomes, these conditions did not remain. Little by little the circle expanded such that in these evil times (*īn zamāna-i bī-khayr-u-barkat*), when many ranking at 7,000 are unemployed and at sixes and sevens (*ba-haft-u-hasht-i rozgār*), damaged in both honour and reputation, while *amīrs* of five and six thousand are wandering with

[36] The functioning of the *mansab* and *jāgīr* system is described in detail in Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 63-68

> their five senses dazed in the six corners of this ill-fated world (*charkh-i bad-sar-anjām*), I have been content to stop at five thousand."[37]

Like the noble historian, we too shall have occasion to see that time, external political circumstances, the exchange of honours and ranks, and other factors also served to determine the relative importance and the status of *amīrs*. As such, I have adopted a modified approach based on Athar Ali's in delimiting the high nobility. This phrase is my etic designation for a group typically designated in the sources as the *umarā-yi ʿazzām* and related terms. *Umarā*, singular *amīr*, was generally used in contemporary sources to refer to *mansabdārs* with a rank of 1,000 and above.[38] At times, the entire *mansabdārī* stratum is referred to as the Mughal nobility in modern scholarship, but this is not quite accurate. Athar Ali defined the object of his study of the "nobility" as the latter, i.e. all *amīrs* with *mansabs* of 1,000 *zāt* and above.[39] This study adds the qualification that these held what we can term "executive" office either as the governors of provinces or the occupants of one of the central ministries, for reasons explained more closely in the third and fourth chapters. It will here suffice to say that the degree of responsibility involved in these offices necessarily indicated a certain amount of trust placed in the individual, as well status commensurate to the office according to the political system's prevailing status culture.[40] It is then seen that this group largely corresponds to the higher sub-category of *umarā* referred to by a variety of terms suggesting higher status than that simply designated by *umarā*, including *umarā-i ʿazzām* (great nobles), *umarā-yi khāndān-hā-yi ʿālī* (nobles of high family), *buzurg-zādagān* (those of high birth), *sāhib-i khāndān-i ʿumda* (those of lofty family), *ʿumdahā-yi bārgāh-i khilāfat* (loftiest of the court of the caliphate), *nūyīnān-i daulat* (high commanders of the state) and similar terms. The nobility as distinct from the high nobility are usually referred to (as for example in *Bādshāhnāma* and *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*) as *umarā-yi nāmdār* (the renowned nobles), while the entire *mansabdārī* stratum appears as *umarā va mansabdārān va dīgar banda-hā* (idiomatically, "the nobles, the officers, and other servants").[41]

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[37] Navāb Samsām al-Daula Shāh Navāz Khān, *Maāsir al-Umarā*, ed. Maulavī ʿAbd al-Rahīm (Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888), 8-9, hence *Maāsir*

[38] Anwar, *Nobility under the Mughals*, 14

[39] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 7; *Bādshāhnāma* 2:717

[40] Anwar, *Nobility under the Mughals*, 118 points out that 5,000 zāt seems to have been the qualifying *mansab* for the highest ministerial offices, all *dīvāns* either possessing that rank or immediately being given it upon appointment.

[41] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:115 & 2:717, *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*

The approach taken in this thesis seeks to offset the problem of imprecision modern scholarship faces in the category of the high nobility, whose composition and rank fluctuated with time. This is demonstrated, for instance, in the physical placement of the *umarā-i ʿazzām*, who occupied the space in the hall of audience between the gold railing surrounding the throne, and the silver railing beyond which stood the remainder of the *mansabdārs*.[42] This distinction was observed by Manucci, who referred to them as the "great officials," and Bernier, who referred to the same space as the platform of the "omrahs."[43] Blake, based on sources from Shāh Jahān's reign, designates this high nobility to be *mansabdārs* ranking above 2,000 *zāt*, but Irādat Khān "Vāzih" (d. 1716), describing the court of Bahādur Shāh, says "*amīrs* from 7,000 *zāt* to 3,000 *zāt* were permitted within the railing (*mahjar*)."[44] Thus, in combining a quantitative *mansab*-based approach with a qualitative approach grounded in elements of status and political responsibility, the thesis seeks to delimit the high nobility and make it the focus of our study.

The core concepts used in this thesis in attempting to understand the high nobility are, as the title indicates, faction, family, and status culture. The term faction as used here refers to a type of social and political collective encompassing multiple families, with at least one or two core kin-groups represented in the high nobility. A Mughal noble faction was characterised by a common identity as articulated in shared status-claims (genealogical, geographic, cultural, religious or political), interpersonal ties of affinity, consanguinity, or patronage across multiple generations, and political capital accumulated through participation in imperial service and participation in court politics. Working with this definition, this thesis seeks to assess the basis for alleging the existence of Īrānī, Tūrānī and other factions through the period that is its concern. The first chapter hence seeks to demonstrate the uniqueness of the 17th century Īrānī faction, which inaugurated a new political model that was emulated – although with not nearly as much success – by networks which I describe as the neo-Tūrānī and the Khvāfī. Furthermore, as Chapter 1 will attempt to show, factional affiliations seems only to have existed in a meaningful way at the highest levels of the *umarā*. Factionalism in the 18th century took on a very different form in the absence of such networks, as the fifth chapter will show.

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[42] Blake, *Shahjahanabad: the Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739* (Cambridge University Press: 1990), 91-92

[43] Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor* (John Murray: 1907), 88-9; François Bernier, *Travels in the Moghul Empire*, trans. Archibald Constable (Oxford University Press: 1916), 269

[44] Mīr Mubārakullāh Irādat Khān Vāzih, "Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān," c. 1714. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library no. 579, digitised by Indian Ministry of Culture, f. 83

There are certain problems inherent to the study of courtly factions, or indeed any decentralised or informal network with political significance in the early modern period. In Rubén González Cuerva and Alexander Koller's discussion of the concept of faction in early modern historiography, factions "are not to be found in court records or registers…they are characterised by elements that are obscure and almost anarchic, occasionally conspiratorial, and as such, they are informal in nature and equally informal in their communication."[45] These political formations involve informal kinds of patronage and personal ambition, the very acknowledgment of whose existence would bely the formal ideological narrative of impersonal service and loyalty demanded by the imperial system. Jeroen Duindam points out that factions, which he defines as competing interest groups in court societies, are difficult to discern in early modern Eurasian court chronicles, and instead require reference to materials like letters and diaries of courtiers.[46]

In the Mughal context, non-official histories and epistolary sources present a further complication in that historical actors are extremely unlikely to identify *themselves* as members of factions and indeed it is difficult to point to a single indigenous term that can be directly translated as faction. However, as shall be seen in subsequent chapters, the one word that does seem to have indicated what modern scholarship describes as Mughal noble factions was *guroh*, glossed by Steingass as "troop, squadron, company, band, levy of people, crew." What is even more interesting is that *guroh* seems to have had a faintly pejorative connotation. Thus, when the Īrānī nobleman Vāzih refers to the rival Tūrānī faction as *guroh-i tūrāniya*, this might perhaps be translated as a derisive reference to "that band of Tūrānīs" or "that Tūrānī gang." Shāh Navāz Khān elsewhere refers to two rebel nobles of Akbar as being "from that deviant *guroh*" (*ān guroh-i zalālat-pizhūh*).[47] On occasions where *amīrs* refer to their belonging to a sub-group of the *umarā*, they usually do so in ethnographic or lineage-based terms. Thus, the Khvāfī Shāh Navāz Khān refers to Khvāfis as "men of Khvāf," (*mardum-i khvāf*) or "people of khvāf" (*ahl-i khvāf*).[48] Nizām al-Mulk, head of the Tūrānī faction, similarly speaks of "the people of Tūrān" (*ahl-i Tūrān*).[49] On another occasion, Tūrānīs as an imagined population are

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[45] González Cuerva & Koller, "Factions in Early Modern Courts" in *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions,* ed. Ruben Gonzalez Cuerva & Alexander Koller (Brill: 2017), 1

[46] Jeroen Duindam, "The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control," in *Prince, Pen and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives*, eds. Maaike von Berkel & Jeroen Duindam (Brill: 2018): 101

[47] *Maāsir*, 1:483

[48] Ibid., 1:667-8

[49] " 'Arzdāsht-i Navāb Āsaf Jāh ba-Hazrat Zill-i-Subhānī Muhammad Shāh Ghāzī," *The Asiatick Miscellany* 1 (1785): 482

referred to as a *firqa* ("body, sect, clan, troop, band"). This suggests that open factional alignment, as opposed to interest groups that veiled themselves in the language of the prevailing idiom of service and loyalty, was not something desirable at the Mughal court.

The next core element in this thesis's conceptual framework is that of family. One dimension thereof was the living, material family, comprising not only the immediate relations of an *amīr*, but encompassing his extended family and clan, his relations by marriage, his domestics and servants, scholars or poets he patronised, the personnel employed in his fiscal administration, and the soldiers and troopers who formed his military retinue.[50] It is quite clear from the sources that a very large assemblage of people was attendant upon any *amīr* of rank, as modern scholars have noted.[51] The most common designation for this large, amorphous group on the margins of a nobleman's career is typically *khveshān*, "kinsmen" or "relations," as we see in contemporary texts, as well as clients and military personnel usually called *naukarān*. Of interest to us is the language used in denoting these relationships of patronage, and the implicit moral imperative therein, in that an *amīr* was expected to maintain and support such retinues. Thus, in referring to the annihilation of the vast households of Asad Khān (d. 1715) and Zūlfiqār Khān after their downfall, Kāmvar Khān speaks of "the servants and dependants" (*mulāzimān va tābiʿān*) and those "brought up on [the family's] salt," (*namak-parvarda*), referring to the concept of loyalty to one's patron's salt.[52] Elsewhere, Shāh Navāz Khān praises a nobleman's virtue of "cherishing his kindred or clan" (*qabīla-parvarī*).[53] There could be gradations even among these retainers: when ʿAlī Mardān Khān (d. 1657) arrived at court, his "high servants" (*naukarān-i ʿumda*) also received *mansabs*.[54] Similarly, obligations to these hangers-on were inherited by a nobleman's successors and descendants, such that Mustaʿadd Khān refers to the pecuniary demands of a nobleman's "inherited acquaintances" (*āshnāyān-i maurūsī*).[55]

The other aspect of family was the non-living dimension of inherited lineage, genealogy and descent, a vital part of any nobleman's identity and status. An array of terms is used in the

[50] On the administrative professionals employed by *amīrs* in the management of their finances, see Afzal Husain, "The Establishments, Households and Private Life of Mughal Nobles," *PIHC* 68 (2007): 377-388.
[51] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 86-90, 99-100; O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body," 900-1
[52] Kāmvar Khān, *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā,* ed. Muzaffar Alam (Asia Publishing House: 1980), 175; David Gilmartin, "Imperial Sovereignty in Mughal and British Forms," *History and Theory* 56 no. 1 (2017): 82
[53] *Maāsir*, 2:737
[54] Ibid., 2:795
[55] Muhammad Sāqī Mustaʿadd Khān, *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, ed. Āghā Ahmad ʿAlī (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1870): 403

sources to refer to lineage and descent: *nasl*, *hasab-u-nasab*, *nizhād, khāndān, dūdmān, āl* and *tabār*. These are emic terms which I assign the broad etic designation of lineage and designate the ancestry *amīrs* as rendered in the status culture of the court. These terms indicated, as we shall see in chapter 4, connection and origin to a matrix of status-claims related to identity encompassing genealogy, lineage-based status, and inherited charisma. One of the most common of these in the high nobility is *siyādat* or the status of being a Sayyid, a putative descendant of the Prophet. The antiquity of respect accorded this status-claim meant that there was a well-developed science of genealogy in the Islamic world based on categorisation according to lineage, sub-lineage, locality and chronology, and deeply concerned with verification and authenticity.[56]

In addition to the decidedly Islamic quality of *siyādat,* the Persianate world also inherited from the post-Sasanian Iranian tradition a set of concepts and terms like *nizhād*, *tukhma* and *gauhar*, closely associated with status identities, which denoted the profound relationship between a man's lineage, his essential nature, and his family history.[57] Beyond wider culturally embedded understandings, the Mughals also drew on what Lefèvre calls the "dynastic heirlooms" of their Timurid and Chinggisid genealogical traditions.[58] In the context of a court society that so heavily emphasised lineage-based identity, it is worthwhile to remember Pamela Kyle Crossley's perspective on the emergence of "Manchu" and "Han" conceptions of identity in 17th and 18th century Qing China. Crossley argues that "the process by which historicised identities were produced is obscured when the antiquity of those identities is accepted."[59] Close examination of the sources will reveal a similar obscuration to have taken place, especially in late Mughal historiography, and account further for the popularity of terms with wide cultural connotations and meanings like Īrānī and Tūrānī. This thesis will aim to show that these terms, as lineage- and descent-claims, had a far more limited meaning at the Mughal court than has generally been assumed in modern scholarship, and –

[56] Kazuo Morimoto, "Keeping the Prophet's Family Alive: Profile of a Genealogical Discipline," in *Genealogy and Knowledge in Muslim Societies*, eds. Sarah Bowen Savant & Helena de Felipe (Edinburgh University Press: 2014), 15-17

[57] Edmund Hayes, "The Death of Kings: Group Identity and the Tragedy of 'Nezhād' in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh," *Iranian Studies* 48 no. 3 (2015): 376

[58] Corinne Lefèvre, "In the Name of the Father: Mughal Genealogical Strategies from Bābur to Shāh Jahān," *Religions of South Asia* 5 nos. 1 & 2 (2011): 413

[59] Pamela Crossley, *In A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 6

again – that it is from 18th century reworkings of this concept that modern historiography has received its quasi-ethnic understanding of these terms in the courtly context.

We see then a well-defined tradition whence élite authors of the Mughal period derived a vocabulary and a conceptual framework whereby to discuss the inherited aspect of family and its relationship to the past. They situated Mughal noble families' origins with high-status individuals, collectives, and spaces in the wider cultural geography of the Persianate world in what Kumkum Chatterjee has called an "overarching idiom of cosmopolitanism" among courtly circles and regional élites.[60] However, there is a further sub-category of lineage derived from a set of terms here designated "emic-ethnographic." For about a third of the *amīrs* examined collectively in Chapter 4, lineage is identified with social collectives that in historical scholarship have been called "tribes." This is a complicated and difficult term, one that has become entirely outmoded in anthropology because of its association with colonial sociologies. However, the term continues to be used in modern scholarship because in the context of the early modern Central Asian and Iranian plateau, "tribe" is the application of an etic term to a local system or institution, namely a specific type of social collective. It is found in complex, stratified societies, both pastoral-nomadic and sedentary, across western Asia including Turco-Mongol steppe peoples and the Kurds and Afghans of the Iranian plateau, occurring also as a type of socio-economic formation in Iranian society of which the Qizilbāsh are the premier example. The composition and structure of these groups in Safavid society is equally debatable – Beatrice Forbes Manz calls these "political and religious communities," Akihiko Yamaguchi "tribal confederations," and James Reid "complex social and economic institutions," but there is a consensus that these were at least nominally kin-based.[61] The term is retained in this work since it remains the standard translation for the set of polysemous words here designated emic-ethnographic including *īl* ("a tribe, especially nomadic"), *tāyifa* ("people, nation, tribe, family"), *oymāq* (most commonly used in reference to the Qizilbāsh), *tabaqa* ("race, generation"), and *jamāʿat* ("crowd, troop, body").[62] These terms reappear in Mughal sources, most commonly rendered *oymāq*, *īl*, *tāyifa, qaum* and *ulūs*, with definite connotations of

[60] Chatterjeee, "Mughal Political Culture and Persianisation," 293-4

[61] Beatrice Forbes Manz, "The Rise of Nomad Tribes 1500-1800," in *Nomads in the Middle East*, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Cambridge University Press: 2001): 171; Akihiko Yamaguchi. "Mediating Between the Royal Court and the Periphery: The Zangana Family's Brokerage in Safavid Iran (1501-1722)." *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, ahead of print (2023): 2; James J. Reid, "The Qajar Uymaq in the Safavid Period 1500-1722," *Iranian Studies* 11 no. 1 (1978): 120

[62] Richard Tapper, "Shāhsevan in Safavid Persia," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37, no. 2 (1974): 329; see also Forbes Manz, *loc. cit.*

kinship and increasingly from the 18th century in the context of ethnographic discussions by the authors, which we will explore in detail.

These emic-ethnographic terms matter because they are the conceptual language whereby members of a courtly élite articulate a type of descent claim. In examining them, it is worth referring to David Sneath's argument regarding the use of genealogy among élite social strata as tools of power, an observation we will have occasion to return to in Chapter 3. These terms represent the conscious efforts of noble chroniclers in an urban, sedentary, and early modern setting to incorporate these social collectives into their own understandings of kinship and heredity, and to conceptualise the lifestyles and behaviours of non-urban, linguistically, culturally and at times chronologically remote populations for definite ideological purposes in such a setting. Mana Kia showcases a prominent example of the self-representation of such an élite author in her discussion of Āzar Begdilī's autobiography, pointing out that "rather than 'ethnic' Turkish tribes, Turco-Mongol lineages, like those for a time known as Qizilbash, were distinct social collectives, connected to the histories of Persianate kingship across multiple lands."[63] Āzar's family line's origin story, Kia argues, concerns three larger collectives: his own patriline (*tāyifa, dūda, nasab*) and the wider Begdilī lineage (*tāyifa, tabaqa*), as well as the Shāmlūs (identified as one of several Turco-Mongol *tāyifas* or *oymāqs*) as a whole.[64] It seems clear furthermore that the interchangeable use of such terms in the sources suggests they were applied to a category of peoples with only a few common characteristics. Firstly, that they employed some kind of patrilineal, putatively kinship-based system of internal organisation, and, secondly, constituted sources of military labour of a kind I examine in Chapters 3 and 4. Thus, for example, in Shāh Navāz Khān the Āghuz are a *qaum* descended from Oghūz Khān, the ancestor of the Turks, as is the Barlās *qaum* of Munʿim Khān (d. 1711). However, elsewhere he refers to the noble tribe, *tabaqa-yi jalīla*, of Barlās among the Chaghatāys.[65] The Chaghatāys are commonly referred to as an *ulūs*, but this clearly does not amount to a larger or broader category than *qaum* since it is used for as particular a sub-group as Yūsufzaī Afghans.[66] Elsewhere, the same type of sub-group is referred to as *qaum*: *Afghān-i Pannī va qaum-i dīgar,* "the Pannī Afghans and other tribes."[67] Finally, the entire sedentary and pastoralist population of Central Asia as conceptualised by the term *Tūrānī* in the 18th century are represented as a

[63] Kia, *Persianate* Selves, 126-7
[64] Ibid., 129
[65] *Maāsir*, 1:274, 3:204, 3:667
[66] Ibid., 1:559
[67] Ibid., 1:125

jamāʿat or a *firqa* ("body, sect, clan, troop, band") in *Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī*.[68] These terms thus possess a broadly similar range of meanings.

This thesis generally renders these terms in translation because, in the language of our authors, they are not precisely analytical concepts. These meanings seem to have been used interchangeably and consistently for such populations from the mid-16th to the mid-18th century. A Safavid text early in this period, the *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, divides the Qizilbāsh not into *oymāqs* but irregularly into tribes (*tavāyif*), peoples (*aqvām*, sing. *qaum*), and classes (*aqsām*, sing. *qism*). There is no reason to suppose this differed from subcontinental usage given that several Iranian Qizilbāsh *amīrs* rose to the highest office of the empire, such as Bairām Khān (d. 1560) from the Bahārlū *oymāq* or Asad Khān and Zūlfiqār Khān from the Qarāmānlū *oymāq*.[69] Jahāngīr used *oymāq* to refer both to pastoralists around Badakhshān and Kābul as well as a type of cavalry-based military retinue.[70] By the late-17th century the term *qaum* is used in an indiscriminate manner for Hindu and Muslim military professional communities.[71] Even so broad a term as *nizhād*, used in Firdausī's *Shāhnāma* to refer to groups as distant as Turks, Persians and Arabs, can refer to the lineage of a single individual: thus, Muhammad Qulī Khān of the Barlās *tabaqa*, was of the lineage of (Amīr) Barantaq (*az nizhād-i Barantaq*).[72] These terms are central to the presentation of lineage connections in our texts: the wide span of types of collective, group and individual identity they encompass demonstrates to us the danger of interpreting these sources without contextualisation. However, their imprecision reveals to us an equally important aspect of this study: the gradual attenuation of older kinds of collective identity into what by the 18th century were genealogical artefacts of individuals' family and lineage. Their identification of their own ancestry with Chaghatāy or Qizilbāsh was the articulation of a status-claim, an assertion of élite origin and membership of the *umarā* in the status culture then prevailing. I shall explore in the fifth chapter the ways in which ethnography, history, and themes of distant origin were manipulated to genealogical ends by our authors.

After family and faction, status culture is the third central concept that underlies this thesis. It serves an important role in bringing together several pertinent ideas, and in linking

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[68] ʿInāyatullāh Khān. "Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī." n.d. British Library, London, IO Islamic 3987. f. 9b, 14b

[69] *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muhaddis (Bihnām: 1982)

[70] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 50, 108, 180 and *passim*

[71] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 506

[72] *Maāsir*, 3:204; Beveridge mistranslates this as the clan of the Barantaqs but in fact Amīr Barantaq was a single individual of the Barlās clan

the social, cultural, and historical meanings of familial and factional memory and identity with their practical operation and political ramifications in the *mansabdārī* system. Historians and anthropologists have used this term in reference to a range of things. This thesis is to some extent indebted to the approach taken by Takie Sugiyama Lebra in her study of the modern Japanese nobility. Lebra followed Clifford Geertz in emphasising the communicative dimension of culture, seeing it as something "not in a mind, but between minds; not private, but public."[73] Her ethnography of that specific status culture sought to understand its relationship with subjective personal experience, and only secondarily its relationship with political and economic factors.

For the purposes of this thesis, status culture signifies the shared set of meanings and types of claim that conferred status in the status group designated the high nobility of the Mughal court. It is a way of trying to understand the constant and ongoing interchange in the Mughal polity and its political system between status and power, between sociocultural and political capital, and between the past and the present, as conceptualised in the shared framework and worldview of the high nobility. This concept is seen as a means of bridging the gap between the cultural framework of the system and its practical operation. Such an approach not only complicates our understanding of key identities like *Īrānī* and *Tūrānī* and their evolution, but also forces us to trace their remote origins and understand the process of historicisation whereby they were produced in the first place. Doing so firstly dismantles what might be termed a functionalist model of the Mughal system which posits these identities and their meanings as static. It further draws our attention to periods of disjunction wherein contestations of status and identity mirror political and other disruptions otherwise elided in the sources. The three important such periods of contestation that this thesis will consider are the gradual ascendance of the Īrānī faction in the early 17th century, the reconceptualization of Tūrān in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and finally the transformation-via-commemoration of the *umarā* by the *mansabdār*-historians of the successor courts. As such, the evolution of this status culture is a major preoccupation of my study.

The overall approach of this thesis is to firstly demarcate the high nobility as a distinct status-group, and next, via close examination of family trees, sources of origin, and networks of kinship and patronage as these appear in the sources, to identify its constituent elements

[73] Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility* (University of California Press: 1993), 15

(factions, non-factional networks, and individuals). The first chapter deals with a faction, or rather *the* faction par excellence in the history of the high nobility, the Īrānīs, constituting a unique and hegemonic social network within the nobiliary stratum for the great majority of the period of its operation. Its identity and status-claims were rooted in the unique political and cultural dynamic between Safavid Iran and Mughal India, and its emergence and ascent to power between 1560-1611 was the result of a fortuitous convergence of factors. It maintained itself at the centre of court politics through what I have argued was a conscious politics of marriage and reproduction and a high degree of internal cohesion buttressed by kinship ties, socio-cultural exclusivity and Shīʿī religious solidarity. I have attempted further to demonstrate how our understanding of the nobility in this period remains clouded by an over-emphasis on the personality and role of Jahāngīr's celebrated consort, Nūr Jahān. Importantly, the Īrānī faction is the only group or network of the nobility that can concretely be identified with a non-subcontinental polity or stratum, viz., the Safavid ruling class as constituted prior to the reforms of ʿAbbās I.

Chapter 2 is an investigation of the practical mechanisms underlying both family and faction. The cosmopolitanism of court societies coupled with increasingly inter-connected economies and cities created preconditions for a high degree of élite mobility and transcultural encounter in the Early Modern Persianate world, a phenomenon whose importance to the maintenance of the high nobility cannot be underestimated. The Mughal court benefited greatly from this through the recruitment of individual members of this élite and of the professional, scholarly, and martial groups that circulated around these same transregional networks of exchange between Central Asia, Iran, the Near East and the Indian subcontinent. However, the role of major emigrant families and households as focal points of networks of personnel and expertise, and as dispensers of patronage for a wide variety of individuals and groups, played an important part in establishing dynamics of patronage and redistribution even among the court nobility. The liminal nature of many of these spaces of mobility and emigration, like the Indo-Persian frontier and Indian Ocean trade routes, permits the observation of events and phenomena that would be obscured in courtly settings with their tight regulation of élite activity and its representation in text and historiography. Finally, these transregional connections and commercial activities in a period of vigorous economic expansion were in large measure the material foundation of élite patronage and status in a culture that strongly valorised conspicuous consumption and ritualised displays of generosity.

Emigration and circulation were of course not restricted to what we might call "civilian" personnel. There was a constant inflow of military professionals, semi-nomadic pastoralists, and slaves from Central Asian populations, especially those who could fulfil the court's most prized and prestigious military role, that of the heavy mounted warrior, which was closely entwined with a multitude of identities that operated variously on individual, collective and genealogical levels. Chapter 3 sought to identify these and the variety of other individuals and groups of Central Asian derivation (including the cultural figures of "Turk" and "Mongol") that, as I will argue, have wrongly been lumped together under the designation of Tūrānī, and the actual place of the many territories of Central Asia in the imagined geography of the Indo-Timurid court. Tūrān and its many meanings show us the evolution of memory, identity and belonging in this period and their framing in different contexts. Chapter 3 further attempts to provide some insights into the nature of lineage-based connections and understandings of kinship around the larger social collectives identified as "tribes," clans and peoples. "Tūrānī" status identity is seen to be formulated as a social and political response to the Īrānī hegemony by a discrete faction based on ties of personal patronage rather than any conception of "ethnic" solidarity between the lineages and social collectives actually found in Transoxiana and the Steppe. At the same time, working backwards from the late-17th century conflation of Tūrānī, Chaghatāy and Mughal allows us to trace the evolution of the term Mughal (originally *Mughūl*) itself. I will aim to show that the meanings of this word evolved in meanings from Mongol, to referring for most of the 17th century to non-Hindūstānī Muslim cavalrymen, to Central Asian emigrants (since a network of these consciously co-opted the term at the end of Aurangzeb's reign). Finally, in the 18th century, the *mansabdār*-historians attached this term to the entire non-Sayyid emigrant element of the nobility.

Having thus unpacked and critically examined the supposed bases of the Īrānī and Tūrānī emigrant factions, Chapter 4 resumes a collective classificatory approach to the high nobility and its status culture. The chapter attempts to unpack terms like *amīr* and *khānazād*, and understand this status culture's conceptual framework around reputation, identity, and personal and collective status, of which the kinship and lineage-based aspects were the most important. This framework had to be imposed, often on a purely narrative and commemorative level, upon a political system with practical limitations and which periodically suffered unmanageable internal and external pressures. There would always be collectives and individuals that simply could not, in the end, be absorbed by the political system and its status culture. Some were too culturally distant like the Marathas and Nāyaks of the far south, others

maintained political cultures and identities too resilient to be broken down and assimilated, like the Afghans, Sikhs, and to an extent even the Rajputs.

The fifth chapter, as I have stated, is of great importance to the core arguments of this thesis. For most of its existence, the *umarā* does *not* seem to have possessed a very strong sense of collective social identity. This emerged only in a context of conflict, decline, and social change. It is here perhaps useful to remind ourselves of Guha's observation that the social capital termed status required not just narratives and communication, but "the persistent strategic deployment of power and wealth."[74] As the remnants of firstly the *umarā* and eventually the entire *mansabdārī* stratum faced consistent challenges from newly ascendant social groups, they regrouped and sought to assert themselves through the reworking of the court's status culture into what became the culture of a new status group or social order, the *shurafā*, constituted the (post-)Persianate Muslim élite of the modern period. The *mansabdārs* failed to survive as a distinct stratum precisely because they no longer possessed the ability to deploy power and wealth in the Mughal successor courts. However, their project of commemoration and communication was tremendously successful. It saw the coalescence of diverse status identities, previously both laterally and vertically distinct, into a new set of identities deployed by the *zamīndārī* gentry into which the *mansabdārs* were ultimately absorbed. Status continued to be derived from historical connection to the Mughal court and more broadly memories of the North Indian dynastic past, but it was thus finally decoupled from its fundamental basis in imperial service. Contrary then to what André Wink observed, the military-bureaucratic apparatus assembled by the Mughal Emperors finally underwent a provincialisation and territorialisation into a landed gentry. The chapter concludes with perhaps the most unexpected finding of this thesis: the encounter of the first generation of colonial orientalists with the commemorative project of the last *mansabdār*-historians, and the persistence of that project in a distorted form in the historiography of the Raj.

The evolution of languages of identity and status, and of similar conceptualisations of genealogical and cultural origin like *siyādat* (Sayyid-ness), *sharāfat* (gentility), *īrānī*, and *tūrānī*, occurred in tandem with the evolution and transformation of the courtly élite stratum throughout this period. Culture and ideology were not static; they were both contingent and reactive. If the Mughals were fortunate in inheriting a set of social and status conventions that were very broadly understood and appreciated, such as Persianate language and culture, norms

[74] Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India*, 151

of religion, behaviour, and gender, then their own political and social circumstances continued to shape the evolution of these conventions and their inheritance by the 18th century. From Akbar's time an evolving idiom of rule was paralleled by an élite status culture maintained by the high nobility. What this work argues study thereof will reveal is aptly phrased by David Sneath in the context of Central Asian aristocratic orders. Sneath contested the putative biological basis of kinship, suggesting that genealogy and lineage were tools of aristocratic power "more likely to reflect contingent historical conditions and forms of government" than kinship structures.[75] This holds true for the matrix of status-claims comprising Mughal nobiliary identity, of which lineage, genealogy, and origin were integral elements. Their deployment by élite individuals and, later on, élite authors reflects precisely the ongoing struggle for power and the assertion of status in the ever-changing fortunes of the high nobility both in its internal dissensions in the 17th century and its increasing struggle with newly emergent social groups and sub-élites from the beginning of the 18th.

The period that primarily concerns this project regarding the high nobility is the 17th century and the first two decades of the 18th. There are a variety of reasons for this. Firstly, only from the final decade of Akbar's reign do we see the central ministries and offices interact with the *mansab* ranking-system as they would continue to in the 17th century. Furthermore, only with the succession crisis of 1600-1605 do we see the recruitment of new interest groups into an extant political system by Jahāngīr. The latter's reign also provides us the first instance of newly recruited élites bound by ties of loyalty to a newly enthroned prince encounter an older generation of *amīrs*.[76] All of these were central dynamics to the functioning of *mansabdārī* political activity within the context of the court in subsequent reigns. As for of the end of our period, the 1712-1713 Īrānī régime under Zūlfiqār Khān and Jahāndār Shāh has long been recognised as a pivotal moment in the post-Aurangzeb Mughal period, and as such is the basis for analyses of important reconfigurations in the political history of the monarchy by Chandra, Alam, Richards, and Faruqui.[77] Chapter 5 will demonstrate that it marked not only the end of the political system inaugurated by Akbar, but also the end of the high nobility that functioned therein, and will trace the ultimate fate of its successors. It will hopefully be

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[75] David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (Columbia University Press: 2007), 202-3

[76] See, for example, Munis Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press: 2012), 150 & Lefèvre, *Consolidating Power*, Chapters 9 & 10

[77] Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court,* Chapter 1; Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, 21-32; John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press: 1993), 261; Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 319-320

apparent by the end of this thesis that the social and political system of the imperial court was largely stable and in operation c. 1570-1712, and quite distinct from the periods that preceded and succeeded it.

Inevitably, given the scale of Mughal historiography and the centrality of the nobility within the polity, this thesis is forced to consider certain subjects only insofar as they directly relate to élite behaviour and identity. The nobility intersects with many issues in Mughal historiography without being able to be confined to any one niche. I see the *umarā* of Jahāngīr, Shāh Jahān, Aurangzeb and Bahādur Shāh I as the central subject of this thesis, which I examine through the threefold model of family, faction and status culture. The axis on which this study turns is a specific historiographical moment in the 18th century in which late Mughal literati and élites completely redefined the memory of that stratum and its relationship to wider élite identity in the context of rapid socio-political change. That understanding was transmitted to early colonial historiography in a distorted form, and came to underpin both the modern historiography of the Mughal nobility, as well as the status culture of the Persianate Indo-Muslim élite in the late Mughal and colonial period.

For this reason, I have engaged only to a limited degree with certain topics such as religious cultures, the production of historical texts, and the military-political history of the empire except insofar as these are relevant to the history of the high nobility. It will also be seen that there is an unexplored relationship visible from the sources between aristocratic status culture, and military roles in the empire. Because my aims are a sociocultural and historiographical, the relationship between military roles and status identities across the breadth of the Mughal military-bureaucratic apparatus is beyond the scope of this thesis. [78] Equally, it is beyond the scope of this project to address wider debates about the nature of the fiscal crisis of the late 17th century, reasons for the decline of the empire (as opposed to the conceptualisation and commemoration of this decline by élite authors), or the true character of the 18th century and whether this is best seen through the paradigm of imperial decline or decentralisation. For its own purposes this thesis only affirms that the fiscal crisis of the Deccan and the *mansabdārs* was very real, with the revisionist approach of Richards having been strongly critiqued by Zakir Husain, and some works dating the crisis' origins even earlier, as

[78] See for example Dirk Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge University Press: 1990) 25

for example Anwar's.[79] The fiscal crisis led to widespread financial and political instability in the first decades of the 18th century, which manifested at the level of the imperial court in new patterns of factionalism as attested by (among others) Chandra and Alam's works on the politics of the 1707-1748 period. Such an assumption is not incompatible with our knowledge of more widespread economic growth and the flourishing of regional centres in the 18th century, nor with the political aspirations and indeed success of newly emergent groups. David Washbrook makes a persuasive case that it is precisely the growth and stability of the 17th century that nurtured the political aspirations of the regional and "community" forces which emerged as political alternatives in the 18th century. [80]

Furthermore, examination of the high nobility's interaction with other sub-élite and intermediate groups within the *mansabdārī* system is limited to considerations of patronage and service, without probing more deeply into links with these and other intermediate or subaltern groups. Before we approach this social collective as it relates to other strata, we must first establish its contours and understand it on its own terms. There is undoubtedly rich potential in studying links between the high nobility and other social groups. However, these are beyond the scope of a study of the high nobility at court.

[79] Zakir Husain, *Medieval India: Studies in Polity, Economy and Society* (Primus Books: 2019), 311-312 and 331; Anwar, *Nobility under the Mughals*, especially Chapters 5 and 6

[80] David Washbrook, "India in the Early Modern World Economy: Modes of Production, Reproduction and Exchange," *Journal of Global History* 2 no. 1 (2007): 105-6

0.4: Sources

I have tried insofar as possible to work with sources connected directly to court society. Of the private or quasi-private accounts produced from the turn of the 18th century, I have everywhere privileged accounts by courtiers and members of families with histories of *mansabdārī* service, especially those with well-established genealogies, who would consequently be more intimately familiar with the status culture and ideological concerns of the high nobility. The high nobility itself has left few historical or biographical texts, except the work of Irādat Khān Vāzih from the prominent Sāvajī family, itself produced in exceptional circumstances at the start of Farrukh-Siyar's reign. Of the *mansabdār*-historians, the most important by far is Shāh Navāz Khān, of a long line of *mansabdārs* and minor *amīrs*, who was active in the politics of the Nizam's court from 1730 to his assassination in 1758. He wrote the monumental *tazkira*, *Maāsir al-Umarā*, between 1743-1748 while in temporary exile from the Nizam's court. I have complemented this with study of Shaykh Farīd Bhakkarī's *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn*, the other major *tazkira* of the Mughal nobility, written between 1649-1651. The circumstances of the composition of these texts and the motivations of their authors are addressed in detail in Chapter 5. The other major corpus of texts this thesis relies on are the courtly chronicles of the relevant period, those produced under the auspices and often the direct supervision of the reigning Emperor: the *Jahāngīrnāma*, the *Bādshāhnāma*, the *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*, and the *Bahādurshāhnāma*.[81] To these can be added Sāqī Mustaʿadd Khān's *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* and Kāmvar Khān's *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, both of which were written explicitly in imitation of the official chronicles and like them were based almost entirely on the *vāqiʿāt* or official daily records of the imperial court that were then widely available. From texts of the same period, the thesis also touches upon the epistolary collections produced after Aurangzeb's death and widely attributed to him by contemporaries, although the genuine provenance of these documents and their value as sources is interrogated in Chapters 3 and 5. The court *vāqi'āt* themselves have not survived: the *akhbārāt* available to us are according to Athar Ali news reports by the agents of nobles and high officers on assignment in the provinces.[82] Several of the courtly chronicles were partially or wholly published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the late 19th century; however, they were used primarily to the end of elaborating the political and military history of the period by Irvine, Sarkar and their immediate

[81] *The Jahāngīrnāma: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India,* tr. Wheeler Thackston (Oxford University Press: 1999); ʿAbd al-Hamīd Lāhaurī, *Bādshāhnāma* ed. Kabīr al-Dīn Ahmad & ʿAbd al-Rahīm (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1867); Mīrzā Muhammad Kāzim, *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*, ed. Khādim Husayn & ʿAbd al-Hayy (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1868); Niʿmat Khān ʿĀlī, "Bahādurshāhnāma," Bodleian Library, MS Elliott 20;
[82] M. Athar Ali, "The Use of Sources in Mughal Historiography," *JRAS* 5 no. 3 (1995): 366-7

successors. From the mid-20th century, M. Athar Ali and other historians of the nobility have used them mainly as sources of details of *mansab* ranks and promotions.

The way I have approached these texts is twofold. The production of historian-cum-courtiers like Shāh Navāz Khān, Khvāfī Khān and Shaykh Farīd is a major concern of this thesis from the standpoint of ideology, memory, and the evolution of élite status culture in this period. Because of this, the ideological motivations as well as any demonstration of affective relationships, personal ties and the like are investigated and examined in as much depth as possible. The other, more straightforward method I have applied to the texts is as sources of information in terms of *mansab*, rank, offices and dignities occupied at court and in the provinces, and material emoluments. Courtly sources of the kind exemplified by the *Bādshāhnāma* appear thus in the thesis firstly as repositories of factual information about histories of *mansabdārī* service, and next as depictions of aristocratic status culture in the context of a functioning Mughal political system. They are not, however, vehicles for the ideology of élite identity whose emergence in the 18th century is so integral to the thesis. As such, I do not examine them from the standpoint of authorial subjectivities in the same was as I do the *tazkiras*. The only exception to this is the *Fathnāma-i Nūr Jahān Begum* of Kāmī Shīrāzī, in that although a courtly text this work was composed at the instance of a dynastic consort affiliated with the Īrānī faction, and because circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that Kāmī himself arrived at the Mughal court under the patronage of an Īrānī *amīr*, Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī.

The question of factual reliability must also be addressed. Courtly sources have long been regarded as staples of the military-political history of the Mughal Empire; Athar Ali has provided commentary on the circumstances of composition of these official histories. The question of 18th century sources, particularly the *Maāsir al-Umarā*, is different. Where I have felt able to use this as a basis for events preceding the 18th century, I have done so for two reasons. Firstly, many of the events and individuals described were within living memory, at a remove of two or three generations. It would, for example, be extremely unlikely for Shāh Navāz Khān to falsify details of Husayn Pāshā's career in a decade when the said *amīr's* youngest son was still active at court without badly damaging his credibility. Secondly, the *mansabdār*-historians wrote their texts addressed to an audience deeply concerned with the authenticity and reliability of the information conveyed therein precisely because these texts, as the fifth chapter will aim to demonstrate, were integral to the project of commemoration and

communication the authors were engaged in. Furthermore, they drew upon what head by then become a standardised corpus of texts that were widely circulated in élite Persophone circles of which the official histories and imperial chronicles were the most important. Indeed, as Chapter 5 will attempt to show, direct imitation and replication of both the style and content of imperial historiography was a central concern of these authors. An addendum to the *Maāsir* comprises four biographies of prominent nobles that Shāh Navāz Khān had either omitted or that had somehow failed to be reproduced in extant copies of the work, written by Āzād Bilgrāmī; Shāh Navāz Khān's son, in an introduction to the work, is at pains to assure his audience of the verity and reliability of this addendum, which he does by providing a list of the 31 books on whose basis Āzād wrote these biographies, including of course the *Akbarnāma*, *Jahāngīrnāma, Bādshāhnāma, ʿĀlamgīrnāma, Bahādurshāhnāma*, as well as other widely circulated texts like the *Tārīkh-i Firishta* and *Iqbālnāma-i Jahāngīrī*.[83] Finally, between the two *tazkiras*, I have generally preferred Shāh Navāz Khān in that Shaykh Farīd's work concentrates specifically on the lives and careers of those *amīrs* to whom either he or his intended patron (Shāyista Khān) had ties of kinship or patronage, and its notices of other *amīrs* tend to be extremely brief. However, in studying the Īrānī faction at which Shaykh Farīd was writing, I tried to use both sources.

A third and indeed quite radically different corpus of texts I engage with in this thesis is that of European observers of the Mughal court. Some clarifications about my method are necessary here. Chapter 1 engages, among other things, with the thorny issues of disentangling aristocratic factionalism in Jahāngīr's reign from a historiographical preoccupation with Nūr Jahān that has existed since the very period of which we speak. To this end, I examine the types of observation and communication transmitted by contemporary European writers like Sir Thomas Roe and Francisco Pelsaert in that these contributed to the formation of what can be called a Nūrjahānī prism of viewing Jahāngīr's reign from early generations of colonial scholarship onward. Chapter 5, in the same way, examines how European writers engage with Mughal history and the degree to which we can observe the early formation of a historiographical consensus around key issues therein. The latter task further leads me to an investigation of these orientalists' encounter with *mansabdārī* historiography and the relationship between the two bodies of thought, which is an independent stream of the thesis in its own right whose confluence with the main current occurs at the very end of the work. On

[83] *Maāsir*, 1:4-5

the other hand, I have used the accounts of some travellers to Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb's courts, Tavernier but especially Bernier, as sources for snippets of information and direct observations of a court society that they witnessed, however alien it was to them.

The purpose these sources fulfil is, firstly, providing direct first-person observations that would seem to corroborate details of the courtly status culture and aristocratic life distilled from the indigenous corpus. Second, Bernier served for many years in the household of Dānishmand Khān, sometime *Bakhshī* and tutor to Aurangzeb, and as such was directly exposed to one of the most powerful nobles at court who had lived through the defection of Mīr Jumla, the war of succession in 1658, and the frantic manoeuvrings around the vizierate in the 1660s.[84] Even chance comments and subjective observations made by members of the *umarā* could thus find reflection in his text, and it is for this reason that I have drawn upon his reports in the second chapter around a diplomatic incident that happened in the early 1660s. It is important however to specify that I am not engaging with Bernier as a precursor of European racialism. Recent contributions by Supriya Gandhi have examined Bernier's exposure to and engagement with Mughal ideas around race – most importantly, these show the beginnings of an association between Mughal-ness and a European conception of "whiteness" that would, as we see in the fifth chapter, enjoy a long afterlife culminating in the racial conception of subcontinental history.[85] However, engagement with the genealogies of European racialism is as far beyond the scope of this thesis as any general analysis of premodern conceptions of ethnicity and race in Mughal India.

It is now perhaps appropriate to offer some broader reflections on the sources in context. What I have attempted to do is less to write a history of the Mughal nobility so much as to recreate their world and worldview. In so doing, I interact at various points – including at times closely – with the history of intra-aristocratic political conflict, dynastic politics, and social change, but these are not in themselves key concerns of the thesis. For this reason, authors like Khvāfī Khān and Shāh Navāz Khān are especially valuable. They wrote as members of the *mansabdārī* class with friends, patrons and even relations among the *umarā*, and they wrote for men like themselves. In what was already a small and restricted world, they had the advantage of personal connections with major *amīrs* through whom they had knowledge of courtly intrigues and private discussions absent from the official record. Shāh Navāz Khān

[84] Aniruddha Ray, "Last Memoir of François Bernier from Surat," *PIHC* 42 (1981): 251
[85] Gandhi, "Locating Race," 1213

transcribes, for example, a discussion between his great-grandfather and Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh (d. 1694) on Aurangzeb's suspicions of his sons.[86] Another particularly evocative such scene is described by Vāzih in the immediate aftermath of Bahādur Shāh's death, which sees him sitting in a pavilion with Zūlfiqār Khān and another Īrānī *amīr*, Mīrzā Sadr al-Dīn Safavī, the three of them worriedly discussing how best to conciliate Prince ʿAzīm al-Shān.[87] Many such anxious conversations in similarly discreet settings would have taken place between senior noblemen in times of crisis, this account giving us a window into the world of interpersonal intrigue and negotiation amongst the high nobility necessarily absent from most sources. There is further evidence that, in private and domestic settings, *mansabdārs* of this background remained keenly interested in questions of genealogy, family history and court society. Shāh Navāz Khān recounts a long and involved history of Bahādur Shāh's consort, ʿAmat al-Habīb, which he evidently learned while living in the house of her nephew Mutahauvur Khān (fl. 1748), whose son she fostered in the harem.[88] It would be completely impossible to gain such an account, crossing barriers of purdah, reputation and private family history including such deeply personal matters as the illegitimate birth of an imperial consort, except from a nobleman with intimate personal connections to the family in question, as is borne out by Mutahauvur Khān's giving the author refuge in a period of political disgrace.[89]

Moreover, the audience that texts like those of the *mansabdār*-historians were aimed at comprised other members of the élite stratum conversant with literary Persian, extant historiography, and to some degree details of court politics. As such, there is a vast amount of detail implicit in much of this work that would have been immediately apparent to authors with such a background and are obscured to us. Khvāfī Khān wrote about the complaint of the two *Bakhshīs* in 1690 that newly enlisted *mansabdārs* were monopolising *jāgīrs* to the detriment of the old nobility, an event that had occurred hardly thirty years previously. His audience likely knew that these *bakhshīs*, Rūhullāh Khān (d. 1699) and Bahramand Khān (d. 1702) belonged to the same Īrānī faction, and that Bahramand Khān's daughter was married to Rūhullāh Khān's nephew – indeed, one of Bahramand Khān's grandsons was alive and present at the Nizām's court as late as the 1740s.[90] If Shāh Navāz Khān tells us that Shafīʿullāh Barlās

[86] Shāh Navāz Khān, *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* tr. H. Beveridge (Asiatic Society: 1941-1952), 1:790
[87] Irādat Khān, f. 113
[88] *Maāsir al-Umarā*, 2:335-6, 343
[89] Ibid., 2:343
[90] Ibid., 1:365; Khvāfī Khān, *Muntakhab al-Lubāb,* ed. Maulavī Kabīr al-Dīn Ahmad (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1869-1874), 2:394

arrived at court from Transoxiana and was immediately made master of ceremonies (*Mīr Tozak*) because he was "well-known" (*rū-shināS*), he is telling us that something about this man was immediately intelligible to himself and his readers.[91] It is for us to take a critical look at this sentence and this term, contextualise it by clarifying what we can of the origin and background of the *amīr* in question, and only then determine what Shāh Navāz Khān is telling his audience. Cultural references must be similarly unpacked: what does it mean to say that a *mansabdār* was "a real Turk, a simple soldier," or that another's origins lie with "unknown people" (*mardum-i ghayr-mashāhīr*)? Because so much is implicit in the text, we cannot – as all too many early translators did – dismiss events and details or modify language simply because we find them irrelevant, fanciful, or overly ornate.[92] If something has been included, it is because it had meaning for the author and his intended audience.

In the same way, the official sources and court histories offer a stylised depiction of the world of the *umarā* in its ideal form. They show us court society and its denizens, the *umarā* and their families, as they were conceived of by the state, and as they were intended to be remembered by future generations. They show us court society and imperial service at their most ideal, as conceptualised by the state itself. As such, they provide invaluable insight into the status culture and ideology which defined boundaries, status, rank, and power within this system, i.e. the ideological framework of the system. In addition to this framework, they enable us to examine social and political realities that constituted the system's operation by comparing the data found herein with information we glean from other sources about the origins of *amīrs*, personal connections of kinship, demographic and other commonalities. We are thus able to make some sense of the factions, networks and groupings within the nobility based on far more solid ground than that provided by the ethnic classification system. This method enables us, for example, to demonstrate in Chapter 2 that Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī was unquestionably a member of the Īrānī faction whose existence and composition is determined in Chapter 1.

There are certain inborn limitations due to the natures of the sources and of our subject, both. As stated, there are ambiguities inherent to the study of factions, families, networks and individuals in this courtly society. Thus, even while trying to marshal evidence drawn from systematic works, often the best data available to the historian of Mughal India is the

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[91] *Maāsir*, 1:493

[92] See, for example, Blochmann's translation of Āīn-i Akbarī or Dowson's translations of various Afghan historians in his fourth volume.

observations of contemporaries, which are ephemeral, or reports of court gossip. Sometimes, all that remains is fragments or snippets of information, for which reason this thesis is compelled to use the method outlined above, comparing political histories of service with what can elsewhere be gleaned about the familial connections, patronage links and origin of the given *amīr*. Especially frustrating in this context is the cultural reluctance of élite authors explicitly to name women, except politically active dynasts and consorts, and occasionally especially prominent élite women connected to the former. It is worth noting that despite being willing to discuss kin-ties between aristocratic families including their own, Vāzih and Shāh Navāz Khān studiously avoid telling us anything about their own mothers, wives, or daughters. Āzād Bilgrāmī in his biography of the latter avoids even obliquely acknowledging the existence of his mother by referring to a maternal grandfather: thus, Shāh Navāz Khān moved from Lahore to Aurangābād not to live with his maternal grandfather (*jadd-i mādarī* in another contemporary source) but with his *aqribā*, his kindred or relations.[93]

Beyond sociocultural factors inherent to the study of family and faction are problems that arise from the nature of extant sources and how these deal with different kinds of information. The official chronicles for the very reason of their prescriptive ideological imperative offer interesting possibilities in that they are forced to reconcile an unruly and unmanageable reality with such an ideal narrative by papering over any cracks that appear in the system. The ways in which they contain and mediate information about disruptions such as the succession crisis of 1622-1628 are in themselves informative. We shall see this especially in the first chapter thanks to the plethora of authors offering contrasting and at times even conflicting perspectives, as for instance in the *Bādshāhnāma's* report of the dismissal of several Īrānī*amīrs* from high office. This episode was an indication of the Emperor's displeasure with those of his wife's relations who had chosen to support her aunt Nūr Jahān in the succession struggle.

The commemorative texts produced by 18th century *mansabdār*-historians bring a different set of issues to the fore. Chapter 5 investigates these in greater detail. As sources, however, I would like to emphasise the fundamentally communicative and commemorative nature of these texts. The authors, as I have said, comprised part of a self-conscious community of knowledge and memory that sought to represent, commemorate, and transmit its identity

[93] *Maāsir*, 1:18; the term is used by Kāmvar to refer to Sādāt Khān I as maternal grandfather of Farrukh-Siyar's only son.

and inherited prestige to subsequent generations. Kumkum Chatterjee has drawn attention to the character of 18th century Indo-Persian historical writing as an act of communication or of self-representation, which recalls to us Lebra's discussion of the communicative and collective nature of culture.[94] In the writing of these histories, the *mansabdār*-historians were communicating and commemorating this status culture in their own community of knowledge and belonging in the aftermath of seismic political reconfigurations that had effectively brought an end to the political system wherein the status culture operated.

The increasingly commemorative function of 18th century Mughal historiography is exemplified by the proliferation in this period of the *tazkira*, a genre which has increasingly come to scholarly attention in recent years, especially in the context of literary and poetic circles. Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence designate the *tazkira*, which they translate as "biographical compendium," as a genre of literature produced by élite authors for élite consumption through the collection of biographies of a certain type of commemorated individual, usually poets or saints.[95] The purpose of this type of cultural production is the structuring of élite identities. Kia offers a helpful perspective in contextualising *tazkiras* as a genre of what she calls commemorative texts. The memorialising function of the *tazkira*, in uniting history and biography of a chosen category of élite individual, is for Kia cumulative and horizontal, in that the text simultaneously draws on the past to link it to individuals in the present, and situating the author and his contemporaries in communication with one another.[96]

The *tazkira* is perhaps not a straightforwardly historical type of text. Arthur Dudney follows Kia in pointing to the difficulty of gleaning precise historical information such as names and dates from texts which he describes as "literary representations of social networks and the memory thereof," concerned less with fact and critique than the intellectual and aesthetic concerns of communities of poets.[97] Thus, the *tazkira* as a genre is a type of composite text that eludes easy classification; its defining feature is its function in uniting social collectives of the past and present in a community of meaning and identity. As I have stated, I believe these limitations are offset to a considerable extent by the nature of the information the

[94] Kumkum Chatterjee, "History as Self-Representation: The Recasting of a Political Tradition in Late Eighteenth Century Eastern India," *MAS* 32 no. 4 (1998): 915, 918
[95] Marcia Hermansen & Bruce Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Commemorations" in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia,* eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (University Press of Florida, 2000), 150-1
[96] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 172
[97] Arthur Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters: Khān-i Ārzū among the Eighteenth-Century Philologists* (Oxford University Press: 2022), 24

authors sought to mediate, i.e. information about the military and political history of the empire inspired by the form and format of the imperial chronicles, histories of both inherited status claims and imperial service. It is here again worthwhile to consider Lebra's discussion of culture as "the symbolic realm of human action, which is tapped for signification and representation of 'reality.'"[98] She further posits two sides to reality, subjective and objective. As such, the *tazkira* of the *mansabdār*-historian conveys relevant information to us as mediated through the behavioural norms and status culture of the *mansabdārī* stratum; the factual data such a text transmits is historicised in the same way as that of the courtly chronicles relied on by modern scholarship.

It is perhaps worthwhile to more closely consider how and why this type of information differs from that gleaned from the standard *tazkira*. Hermansen and Lawrence point out that there is no "careless recording" in the *tazkira*.[99] Each piece of information is meant as self-representation and is intended to communicate meaning to its audience. The structure of each biographical notice is as follows: Shāh Navāz Khān opens with a discussion of the personal name (as distinct from the nobiliary title), family and origin of the *amīr*, dealing with the dimensions of lineage and origin we have discussed. On occasion this can be as brief as that of Sayf Khān – "he was Sayf al-Dīn Mahmūd, popularly called Faqīrullāh, the son of Tarbiyat Khān the *bakhshī* of Shāh Jahān."[100] At other times, much voluminous detail is considered worth recording, as in the biography of Asālat Khān Mīr Mīrān. This was a nobleman of storied lineage, whose mother and grandmother belonged to the Safavid dynasty, and who traced his own descent from the famed saint Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī. Shāh Navāz Khān devotes considerable space to tracing these histories and the family's introduction to Jahāngīr before commencing with details of the nobleman's career.[101] The bulk of the biographies is taken up with minute details of military campaigns, administrative assignments at court and in the provinces, and records of performance in battle, usually enumerated according to the regnal year of the then-sovereign. These sections are written in overt imitation of the style of the imperial chronicles. The concluding sections of the biographies are the most interesting in that they communicate details of character and of connection, i.e., the personal traits and behaviours of the nobleman, and his connections by marriage and patronage to other *amīrs*. This type of data is some of the most important in that, firstly, such connections are seldom found in the

[98] Lebra, *Above the Clouds*, 14-15
[99] Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 150
[100] *Maāsir*, 2:479
[101] Ibid., 1:167-8

official sources, and secondly in that they demonstrate to us the aspects of ascriptive and achieved status valorised in Mughal status culture, such that the *mansabdār*-historians sought to mobilise these in the creation of their communities of meaning and commemoration. Thus, unlike the typical author of a poetic or mystical *tazkira*, Shāh Navāz Khān might provide such details as the sexual jealousy of a nobleman like Amīr Khān, culturally-ascriptive personal characteristics like "Turk-ness" (*Turkī*), or valorised achieved types of status like the wealth of Mīr Jumla, examples to which we shall return in Chapter 4.

These kinds of information would have been intelligible to the intended audience of these texts, viz., surviving members of the *mansabdārī* stratum in the 18th century, and communicated meaning to them in ways perhaps difficult for modern sensibilities to appreciate. However, embedded in these stylistic conventions of the genre is vital information for our purposes, information relating to affinity, consanguinity, patronage, kinship, and lineage as understood by contemporary élite audiences. Purnima Dhavan points out that the narrative structures of the *tazkira* drew not only upon anecdote and gossip but also "verifiable information from available human and textual authorities" to enhance the reputation and standing of the social and literary networks involved.[102] Reproducing the style of the imperial chronicles becomes an assertion of legitimacy and a claim to accuracy in all our *mansabdār*-historians other than Vāzih, as we shall see. On the one hand this enables us gradually to document stylistic modifications and changes in the evolution of this historiography in the 18th century. It is further an opportunity to isolate stylistic deviations, as for instance Mustaʿadd Khān's emphasis on his personal preceptor-disciple relationship with the Emperor, Khvāfī Khān's emphasis on antiquities of service and the prestige of status identities like Mughal and Sayyid, and the gradual penetration of ethnographic motifs into the genre. These and similar deviations and fault-lines present a challenge and an opportunity. They remind us that the texts are parts of various ongoing ideological projects and of cultural endeavours with explicit political ends in mind, while distinguishing authorial bias from received information as derived from sources no longer available to us.

It is worthwhile also to consider the sources of information available to *mansabdār*-historians of the 18th century. In addition to the aforementioned *vāqiʿāt* were a number of private texts, epistolary collections, and histories, that no longer exist. A useful point of

[102] Purnima Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines in Eighteenth-Century Deccani Literary Communities: Lachhmī Narāyan Shafīq and his Circle," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 57 no. 4 (2020), 464

departure in considering these is the sources used by Shāh Navāz Khān: according to his intimate friend Āzād Bilgrāmī, he had a vast library which was plundered and scattered after his assassination in 1758.[103] When the work was being edited and prepared for circulation between 1768-1780 by Shāh Navāz Khān's son, Samsām al-Mulk, and Āzād, they relied on thirty-one historical texts that had either survived the pillaging or presumably been obtained from elsewhere, as they are mostly extremely common texts like the *Tārīkh-i Firishta* or the *Akbarnāma*. However, one of these texts is the memoirs of Muhammad Shafīʿ "Vārid" Tihrānī (d. after 1739), written shortly after the invasion of Nādir Shāh.[104] References to this text in extant catalogues are misleading and it is in fact extremely rare.[105] I have not seen the manuscripts in Bankipore or in the collection of the Maharana of Udaipur, which are the only other copies of Vārid according to D.N. Marshall's bibliographic survey. However, of the remaining manuscripts, the Ouseley manuscript in the Bodleian – recently edited and published by Mīrās-i Maktūb – is in fact the second volume of the work, chronicling Iran in the aftermath of the downfall of the Safavids.[106] The manuscript copy of the first volume in the British Museum's collection, which modern writers have relied on as the only contemporary source for various events of Muhammad Shāh's reign (1720-1748), bears the inscription: "the owner of this book (*mālik-i īn kitāb*) is Husayn Karāmat…the origin of this book (*asl-i īn kitāb*) is from the house of Navāb Samsām ad-Daula Shāh Navāz Khān Bahādur Haydarābādī," followed by the date "1192 *hijrī* [1778] in the city of Haydarābād (*dar balda-i farkhunda-bunyād haydarābād*)."[107] It is entirely possible that the said Vārid was a personal friend of Shāh Navāz Khān and gave him a copy of the text. In discussing 18th century texts Dhavan has pointed out that in early years of a manuscript's transmission, only intimate colleagues and trusted friends were given copies of works, and that until a work became well-known or widely available, access could only be given by the author and his intimate circle.[108] The circulation of this text reminds us not only of the extensive sources possessed by Shāh Navāz Khān, but also of the prestige he enjoyed even within his lifetime as the premier authority on the history of the nobility (such that even the origin of a manuscript from his library was worthy of commemoration) amplified by personal and political connections we examine in Chapter 5.

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[103] *Maāsir*, 1:11
[104] Nabi Hadi, *A Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts: 1995), 617
[105] D.N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographic Survey* (Asia Publishing House: 1967), 486
[106] Muhammad Shafī' Tihrānī, *Mir'āt-i Vāridāt: Tārīkh-i Suqūt-i Safavīyān*, ed. Mansour Sefat-Gol (Mīrās-i Maktūb: 2004)
[107] Muhammad Shafī' "Vārid" Tihrānī. "Mirāt-i Vāridāt." British Library, London: MS Add. 6579. f. 1
[108] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 470

In conclusion, this thesis attempts to study the Mughal high nobility through a threefold approach of family, faction, and status culture. I have attempted to demonstrate the functioning of the *umarā* in the heyday of Mughal power from the close of Akbar's reign to the wars of succession after Bahādur Shāh I. At its core, this thesis is an investigation of the relationship between status and identity in the Mughal aristocratic context. I hope by its end to have persuaded my readers of certain conclusions. From a wider perspective, perhaps the most important of these is the term Mughal and its evolution from a Central Asian ethnic marker, through a type of military role with an associated status identity, eventually to a kind of ascriptive social identity that underwent considerable change in the late 17th and 18th centuries before an eventual crystallisation in the sense to which it survives today. Concurrently, I hope the specific meanings of Īrānī and Tūrānī are de-ethnicised and situated in context as concatenations of specific status-claims in the courtly context, mobilised to ideological ends by networks of Mughal aristocrats. Finally, I have sought to demonstrate the extent to which modern understandings of the Mughal nobility owe much to its reworking by *mansbadār*-historians in the 18th century, and the reception of their texts by the first generation of colonial historians in what I can only describe as a deeply unexpected intellectual encounter. While making these arguments, I hope the thesis has also contributed to our understanding of identity, familial, collective, and individual, at the Mughal court. Two minor secondary contributions of this project are to the political history of Mughal factionalism. I thus contend that the factional situation in Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān's reign was the relative dominance of a network of emigrant noble families through the manipulation of reproductive politics, rather than of a single family or imperial consort. I further argue for early 18th century court politics as having been characterised intensifying and increasingly violent competition between progressively widening circles of *mansabdārs*, of whom all but a few had only tenuous connections to the high nobility of the 17th century.

Chapter 1: The Īrānīs

As indicated in the introduction, it is clear from modern studies of the early 18th century that the primary factional conflict *within* the *mansabdārī* stratum was between two factions designated Īrānī and Tūrānī in contemporary sources, and that these had existed since the last decades of Aurangzeb's reign. These two factions, especially the former which appeared to have been larger and more influential, therefore seem the ideal starting point for elucidating differences *within* the high nobility. The chapter therefore seeks to trace the origins of the circle of *amīrs* connected to Zūlfiqār Khān, the head of this faction at the time of its demise. To this end, the chapter investigates the emergence of the faction, its origins, ascendancy, and eventual demise in the wider context of the 17th century Mughal nobility.

The phenomenon of migration from Iran to India in the Mughal period is well-documented. A large number of emigrants were drawn primarily from the class known variously as Tājīks (i.e. non-Turkmen Persians) or "men of the pen" (*ahl-i qalam*) entrusted chiefly with clerical and administrative matters.[109] The centralisation of power in Safavid Iran, involving the suppression of various regional courts and polities that had long flourished in the region, severely curtailed economic and professional activities for members of these classes, many of whom thus found it worthwhile to migrate to India, where they found a large market for their administrative skills.[110] It is likely that increasing intolerance of religious groups deviating from the recently established state religion of Twelver Shiism also played a role in spurring emigration from the Safavid polity.[111] Further, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has demonstrated the existence of independent Iranian commercial networks between the Gulf and the Deccan, emphasising the commercial and clerical abilities of these emigrants as a political currency they brought to the courts of the subcontinent. [112] The evidence does not then seem to point to homogeneity of origin or motive among the various Iranian emigrants to the subcontinent.

In the Mughal context, the Iranian or Īrānī cohort of the Mughal nobility was originally understood in an ethnic sense by Athar Ali, who identified as Īrānī "the Persian speaking

[109] Masashi Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites to India in the 16-18th centuries," *Cahiers d'asie centrale* 3/4 (1997): 132
[110] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 354
[111] Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites," 134; Amir Ahmad, "The Safavid Rulers and the Nuqtawi Movement," *PIHC* 64 (2003): 1244
[112] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 343

peoples from Herat to Baghdad."[113] Mohammad Afzal Khan generally abides by this ethnic understanding, qualified by the caveat that emigrants with administrative experience tended to be given higher rank.[114] He does not differentiate between social strata, placing families whose "high repute and eminence" he acknowledges in the same Īrānī category as scholars, poets, scientists, physicians and the like. This can be seen as a further development of Subrahmanyam's argument that administrative and commercial experience combined with technical skills such as accounting explain the predominance of an Iranian diaspora in this period.[115] Lefèvre on the other hand identifies a conscious recruitment of Iranian élite emigrants by Jahāngīr, attributing this not only to cultural capital and administrative skill, but their knowledge of and involvement in Shāh ʿAbbās's ongoing political experiments.[116] More importantly, there existed longstanding cultural and social ties between the two polities dating to Humāyūn's Iranian exile of 1544 – far beyond those with the Uzbek or Ottoman polities – which would have further facilitated the rapid absorption of Safavid emigrants.[117]

This chapter aims to demonstrate the uniqueness of the social network called Īrānī at the Mughal court, as the outcome of a phenomenon of emigration by members of the Safavid political élite entirely distinct from wider patterns of trans-regional circulation in this period. The Īrānī faction described in the sources and in contemporary scholarship refers to the families that constituted this network and their dependents and retainers. This faction came into being at the beginning of the 17th century. There was no discrete faction or major network prior to the reign of Jahāngīr that can justifiably be referred to by this term, nor can any generalisations about *mansabdārs* of Iranian origin reasonably be made up to this point. They fit a common demographic profile in Iranian society, and largely migrated because of the same political pressures. Most importantly, they recognised these common origins and shared socio-cultural heritage, actively working to erect a closed political interest group, a faction, of their own. In tracing the history of this faction, I will further aim to demonstrate the early historiographical distortions by both Indian and European contemporaries in creating a distorted conceptual framework whereby to view this period, and the ways in which a mistaken emphasis on Nūr

[113] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility*, 20
[114] Khan, *The Ruling Élite*, 16
[115] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 357-8
[116] Lefèvre, *Consolidating Empire*, 261
[117] Corinne Lefèvre, "Jahāngīr et son frère Šāh ʿAbbās: Compétition et circulation entre deux puissances de l'Asie musulmane de la première modernité," *Islam in the Indo-Iranian World during the Modern Epoch*, ed. D. Hermann and F. Speziale (Klaus Schwarz: 2010), 26

Jahān has obscured important aspects of the history of the Mughal nobility and the early generations of the Īrānī faction in Jahāngīr's reign.

1.1: Emergence of a Faction – Ghiyās Beg and His Heirs

The social network that would come to be known as the Īrānī faction had as its core the enterprising father-son duo of Mīrzā Ghiyās Beg Tihrānī, later entitled Iʿtimād ad-Daula, and his son Āsaf Khān. It is worth examining the emergence of this network as a political force, the identity of its supporters, and its relationship to the wider political context as a starting point for our investigation into the Īrānīs. Superficially at least Ghiyās Beg resembles the well-recognised category of bureaucratic emigrants of the 16th century, given his familial history of service as *vazīrs* and administrators in the service of provincial governors and noblemen, placing him in the Tājīk clerical-administrative class.[118] His early career matches the profile of such an emigrant and is typical of a mid-ranking *amīr* at the end of Akbar's reign. According to Shaykh Farīd he served in Akbar's reign as *dīvān-i buyūtāt*, one of the subordinates of the *Dīvān Vazīr*, and according to Shāh-navāz Khān also as provincial *dīvān* of Kābul.[119] The high office of *Dīvān Vazīr* rotated between a number of minor *amīrs* in the early years of Jahāngīr's reign: Ghiyās Beg was *Vazīr* together with Vazīr al-Mulk in 1606-1607, although he left office under a cloud given his son Muhammad Sharīf's involvement in Prince Khusrau's rebellion.[120] No close relation of his held any office or *mansab* up to this point except some relations of his wife, to whom we shall return later in the chapter.

The principal catalyst for this family's rise to prominence was the marriage of Ghiyās Beg's daughter Mihr al-Nisā (the future Nūr Jahān) to Jahāngīr in 1611, as was widely acknowledged even at the time. In Shaykh Farīd's words, Jahāngīr from the date of this marriage made Nūr Jahān, Iʿtimād ad-Daula and Āsaf Khān "the centre of the affairs of all the kingdoms of Hindūstān" (*madār-i mamlakat-i tamām hind*) to the end of his life.[121] The new consort's father was made *Vakīl* (vicegerent) and given a *mansab* of 5,000 (then the highest existing *zāt* rank). Further honours rapidly followed: the marriage of a granddaughter, Arjumand Bānū, to the favoured Prince Khurram in 1612, the appointment of Iʿtimād ad-Daula's client Khvāja Abūl Hasan Turbatī as *Mīr Bakhshī* in 1613, and of his wife's kinsman Irādat Khān I as *Khān Sāmān* the following year.[122] Other connections prospered similarly: Sādiq Khān, a nephew, was second *Bakhshī* from 1613, and his grandson by marriage, Bāqir

[118] Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites," 132
[119] *Zakhīrat*, 2:13; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:1073-4
[120] *Jahāngīrnāma* 31; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:1074
[121] *Zakhīrat*, 2:13
[122] *Jahāngīrnāma* 126, 137, & 181

Khān Najm-i-Sānī, became Governor of Multān at the same time.[123] This concentration of central ministries in the hands of such closely connected individuals concurrent with major provincial governorships was without precedent and marks the beginning of, not a monopoly, but certainly a persistent over-representation of these families and their associates at the highest administrative level of the Mughal state for about a century.

The rise to power of a group of *amīrs* around Iʿtimād ad-Daula and his family – the specific identity of these *amīrs* often frustratingly neglected by modern scholarship – has traditionally been viewed through the prism of the "junta debate," i.e. whether or not there existed a "Nūr Jahān junta" comprising the Empress, her relations, and Shāh Jahān as a prince between 1611 and 1622. Nurul Hasan has objected to the characterisation of this faction, specifically its political pre-eminence, on the grounds that although nobles would have attached themselves to princes or other influential *amīrs*, such groupings would have been shifting in character, and no one group could have become so powerful as to oust others from positions of importance.[124] Lisa Balabanlilar follows Hasan in this assessment, arguing that the negative reaction to the Empress and her family stemmed from her public presentation as transgressive of cultural norms surrounding imperial women.[125] She further contends that other families like those of Khān Khānān held similarly advantageous positions, and that modern scholarship has failed to identify a single dominant cohort at Jahāngīr's court. Ellison Findly, on the other hand, acknowledges the existence of this group, considering the importance of the debate to rest rather on the question of how exceptional such an instance was among the emergence of distinguished family groupings. [126] Nevertheless, Findly does not fail to characterise this period and the concomitant emergence of a new group of *amīrs* at the centre of power as a "prodigious acquisition of power [by Nūr Jahān] and a disposal of uncountable political and social favours."[127] The question is further problematised by Afzal Husain, who points out that the influence of one network need not mean that the Mughal court was divided into two groups for and against the junta. [128] If such a faction existed, it would inevitably have been one among many. Lefèvre is particularly critical of the theory, which she seems to find symptomatic of the paradigm of "Nūrjahānī influence" that has dominated the study of Jahāngīr's reign.[129] Lefèvre

[123] *Jahāngīrnāma* 186, Zakhīrat 2:208, *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:386; Shaykh Farīd explicitly attributes Sādiq Khān's appointment to the intercession (*vasīla*) of Āsaf Khān, his cousin and married to his sister
[124] Nurul Hasan, "The Theory of the Nur Jahan 'Junta' – A Critical Examination," PIHC 21 (1958): 334
[125] Balabanlilar, The Emperor Jahangir, 180
[126] Findly, *Nur Jahan,* 44
[127] Ibid,, 46
[128] Afzal Husain, "Mahabat Khan and Court Politics During Jahangir's Reign," *PIHC* 54 (1993): 211
[129] Lefèvre, *Consolidating Empire*, 68, 262

and Balabanlilar both point out that the Empress was in complete accord with her husband, and that Iranians recruited through what Lefèvre calls the "Nūrjahānī network" never represented a force working against the dynasty.

I will here as elsewhere argue for a need to de-centre Nūr Jahān in favour of paying closer attention to the constituent elements of the social network her family was embedded in, particularly in terms of other kin-groups. The preoccupation with Nūr Jahān as a political actor and as an enduring figure in historiography and cultural memory has obscured the reality that the political ascendancy in this period was not that of an individual or even a family but that of an aristocratic faction, of which the family of Iʿtimād ad-Daula was only the core. The argument that other factions existed and continued to function and hold governorships and other offices cannot be advanced against this theory. It seems difficult to assert that the dominance of a single faction could have entirely arrested the progress and extinguished the influence of other networks and individuals in the nobility without causing a large-scale and politically catastrophic alienation of *mansabdārs*, as eventually happened in 1712-13. Furthermore, it is simply not true that nobles inimical to the Empress and her family continued to enjoy favour unabated in this period. Mahābat Khān and Khān Jahān Lodī, old favourites of Jahāngīr, were recalled from their prominent Deccan appointments in 1617 and experienced a hiatus in promotion for the next three years.[130] Many of these *amīrs* cordially hated Nūr Jahān and her family. Shāh Navāz Khān reports that Khān-i ʿAzam ʿAzīz Koka "never went to any [of the Iʿtimād ad-Daula family's] houses, not even to Nūr Jahān Begum's door."[131] Khān Jahān Lodī, Khān 'Ālam and Mahābat Khān's joint protests against the Empress's influence and entreaty for the liberation of Prince Khusrau, recorded in the contemporary *Intikhāb-i Jahāngīr-shāhī*, reflect the same sentiment.[132] These nobleman owed their rank and position to personal connections with the Emperor, and consequently had the most to lose from the entry of a new group into his circle of intimates.

In speaking of *mansabdārī* competition, and the success or failure of different factions or social networks, it is worth specifying the object of the said competition. The control of and access to resources in the forms of *jāgīrs* and stipends at the regional level, and more importantly of offices and dignities at the central level was the long-term purpose of any individual or network of any influence at the Mughal court. The most powerful offices were

[130] Afzal Husain, "Mahabat Khan and Court Politics," 210
[131] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*332
[132] Afzal Husain, "Mahabat Khan and Court Politics," 211

those of *Vakīl* or *Dīvān Vazīr,* usually the most important official in the empire, *Mīr Bakhshī* or paymaster-general, and the *Khān Sāmān,* superintendent of the royal household. These offices correspond to a three-way typology of domestic officers (steward, marshal & chamberlain) common to courts across Europe, East Asia & the Islamic world in this period.[133] Beyond the prestige they conferred through providing continual, personal access to the monarch, these offices carried great powers of patronage that would have been used to install members of the minister's clientele in positions of influence at various levels of the central and provincial administrations. From these positions, they would advance the multitude of relations, retainers, and dependents that clustered around major *amīrs* by providing them low-level *mansabs*, provincial appointments, opportunities to attain military distinction, and other such entries into the *mansabdārī* system. The central ministries also provided lucrative financial opportunities to their occupants – the *Dīvān* was the principal financial officer of the empire, and the *Bakhshī* in charge of all payments to *mansabdārs*.[134] These same occupants would of course have maintained large staffs of their own, providing additional opportunities for peculation and enrichment. Iʿtimād ad-Daula was dismissed from his first tenure as *Dīvān* (1605-1606) on account of his rapacity and appetite for bribes in that office, unusual even by Mughal standards.[135] The *Khān Sāmān* administered the emperor's household, controlled all state-owned artisans and manufactures (*kārkhānajāt* and *buyūtāt*), and most importantly oversaw the administration of escheat and the confiscation of noble estates.[136] Even relatively minor functionaries such as the Emperor's chief secretary were able to amass vast fortunes through their influence in the administration and access to the Emperor.[137]

Seen in this light, Iʿtimād ad-Daula's clientele was exceptionally successful in Jahāngīr's reign. The emerging dominance of this faction becomes clear from the distribution of executive power at the centre, as documented in Appendix 2. The *vizārat* was divided between six *amīrs* over the first six years of Jahāngīr's reign; from the time of his marriage to Mahābat Khān's coup in 1626 it was held by only two *amīrs*, Iʿtimād ad-Daula himself and his client Khvāja Abūl Hasan. Similarly, two of the three *Mīr Bakhshīs* in this latter period (Ibrāhīm Khān and Sādiq Khān) were close relatives of Iʿtimād ad-Daula. Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī and Irādat Khān I, the two *amīrs* who served Jahāngīr as *Khān Sāmān* for the last

[133] Duindam, "Court as a Meeting Point," 38
[134] Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, chapters 5 & 6, esp. 151 & 215; Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb,* 59
[135] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 33
[136] Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, 234-236, 244
[137] *Maāsir-i ʿAlamgīri*, 161

twelve years of his reign, were also closely associated with Iʿtimād ad-Daula, as we shall have occasion to see.[138] *Mansab* ranks and provincial appointments reflect a similar pattern. In 1615, I'timād ad-Daula's son Ibrāhīm Khān became Governor of Bihār and Irādat Khān I, their kinsman, was appointed to Kashmīr, where he was later succeeded by Ibrāhīm and Āsaf Khān's brother, Iʿtiqād Khān.[139] A grandson, Ahmad Beg Khān, was appointed to Orissa in 1621.[140] By 1622, the year of Ghiyās Beg's death, he was an *amīr* of 7,000, Āsaf Khān his eldest son was an *amīr* of 6,000, with his two younger sons and nephew Sādiq Khān all holding *mansabs* of 4,000, and his sons-in-law Qāsim Khān and Saff Shikan Khān at 3,000 and 2,500 respectively.[141] This is before we even begin to examine the situation of more distant connections and clients. Such a concentration of important executive offices at the centre along with high *mansabs* and important provinces was quite without precedent and cannot be seen as typical even of élite networks in the Mughal political context up to this point.

A development of later historiographical significance also dates to this decade: the characterization of Nūr Jahān as a figure of overweening power, ambition and (implicitly illegitimate) influence in the writings of European observers. Early travellers like William Hawkins (fl. 1608-1613) noted only the prominence of Ghiyās Beg and Āsaf Khān, while mentioning in passing that the former's daughter was "the King's chief queen or paramour."[142] From the second decade of the reign, however, these observers' emphasise the latter's importance at the expense of the former. Edward Terry (fl. 1616-1619) alleged that "Noore-Mahal…had much advanced her friends, before meane, and in manner commands the commander of that empire by engrossing his affections."[143] Francisco Pelsaert's influential account (heavily reproduced by later authors such as Pieter van den Broecke and Joannes de Laet) speaks of an Emperor who has "surrendered himself to a crafty wife of humble lineage…her former and present supporters have been well rewarded so that most of the men who are near the king owe their promotion to her and are consequently under such obligation

[138] Ibn Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, 237-8 notes that the office carried little authority in Akbar's reign and only acquired its extensive responsibilities early in Jahāngīr's. There is no reference to a Khān Sāmān in the *Jahāngīrnāma* before Irādat Khān I's appointment in 1614. On Irādat Khān's relationship to Ghiyās Beg's wife's family, cf. *Zakhīrat*, 2:200
[139] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 173, 346, 381
[140] Ibid., 366
[141] Ibid., 188, 376-377, 381, 395;
[142] William Hawkins, "The Hawkins' Voyages," in *Early Travels in India 1583-1619,* ed. William Foster (OUP: 1921): 94
[143] Edward Terry, "A Voyage to East India," in *Early Travels in India 1583-1619,* ed. William Foster (OUP: 1921): 329

to her that he is king in name only."[144] As Lefèvre has observed, these characterisations only intensify in negativity with time.[145] Writing in 1624, Pietro della Valle declared her "a very cunning and ambitious woman" who governed her husband not just by "counterfeited honesty" but even "sorceries."[146] By the end of Jahāngīr's reign, van den Broecke described the Empress as "a vicious woman…filled up with cunning to the throat."[147] Iʿtimād ad-Daula and Āsaf Khān, to say nothing of collaborators beyond immediate family, thus fade almost into insignificance.

These accounts, of course, owe as much to European perceptions of the Perso-Islamicate world and legitimate or illegitimate gender roles therein as to direct observation; Barbara Metcalf observes that these accounts of Nūr Jahān's life and political role often tell us more about Europe than about India.[148] On occasion, they served also as convenient explanations for the given author's lack of political or commercial success. Thus we read Sir Thomas Roe (fl. 1616-1619) complain to his superiors "all justice or care of anything or public affairs either sleeps, or depends on her, who is more unaccessible than any goddess…so that your servants had need to be very circumspect how they engage themselves in any journey or residence."[149] It is particularly interesting to consider Roe's motivations given Hasan identifies him as the source of the 'junta' theory.[150] To what extent was the inaccessibility and alleged omnipotence of Nūr Jahān a convenient explanation for Roe's limited success in advocating for East India Company interests at the Mughal court?[151] Beyond such immediate concerns, the Nūrjahānī emphasis established by these early authors played into the sensationalist conception of Islamic dynastic harems as sequestered, sexualised spaces already well established in Europe's conception of the Ottoman imperial harem.[152] Indeed, contemporary European audiences had responded with fascination to similar representations of Ottoman Sultan Sulaymān I's relationship with his Ruthenian consort, Roxolana, portrayed by western

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[144] Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, tr. W.H. Moreland & P. Geyl (W. Heffer & Sons: 1925): 50
[145] Lefèvre, *Consolidating Empire*, 30
[146] Pietro della Valle, *The Travels of Pietro della Valle in India,* ed. Edward Grey (The Hakluyt Society: 1842), 53-54
[147] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 280
[148] Barbara Metcalf, "Narrating Lives: A Mughal Empress, A French Nabob, A Nationalist Muslim Intellectual" in *TJAS* 54 no. 2 (1995): 476
[149] Sir Thomas Roe to Sir Thomas Smythe, 16 January 1617, in *Letters Received by the East India Company Volume V*, ed. William Foster (Sampson, Low, Marston & Company: 1901), 329
[150] Hasan, "Theory of the Nur Jahan 'Junta,'" 325
[151] Rupali Mishra, "Diplomacy at the Edge: Split Interests in the Roe Embassy to the Mughal Court," *Journal of British Studies* 53 (2014): 28
[152] Reina Lewis, "The Harem: Gendering Orientalism," *Orientalism and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey P. Nash (CUP: 2019), 166

ambassadors as a scheming and unscrupulous woman exerting a sinister influence over state policy.[153]

Despite such compromised origins, these early European representations were foundational to the tradition of viewing Jahāngīr's reign through a Nūrjahānī paradigm: J.S. Grewal observed that Dow (who drew primarily from the early 17th century sources as well as Manucci and Tavernier's later histories) devotes thousands of words to apocryphal if romantic elements of what came to be the standardised folk-biography of Nūr Jahān such as her caravan birth, miraculous rescue as an infant from a snake, her youthful romance with Prince Salīm, and so forth.[154] James Mill followed him in reproducing the fanciful early life history of Nūr Jahān, attributing her father and brothers' advancement to her influence, going on to speak of her "inconsiderate mind, and gaudy taste…and haughty and uncontrollable disposition," and predictably concluding that "the caprices and passions of the Sultana exercised a calamitous influence over the fate of the empire."[155] Mill concluded by attributing Shāh Jahān's succession to Āsaf Khān's knowledge of the "baneful effects of his sister's passions."[156] Seen in the context of this well-established and frankly distorted historiographical tradition, it is unsurprising that Baini Prashad, the first modern scholar to closely investigate the politics of Jahāngīr's reign, did so through a prism (the "junta") that continued to centre Nūr Jahān and her family (the latter primarily as ancillary to the Empress). From our perspective of faction and family, this historiographical tradition presents a twofold problem. It utterly elides the extensive network of personal and political ties connecting many *amīrs* that underpinned the power of the emergent Īrānī faction. Further, in that this tradition owes its understanding of kinship and gender to non-indigenous observers, it misconstrues the (culturally and politically legitimate) role played by dynastic women as well as aristocratic kinship ties in the Mughal system, as subsequent sections will seek to demonstrate.

The final years of Jahāngīr's reign were dominated by the question of succession. A severe decline in the Emperor's health in 1621 was compounded by a succession of events that led to an intensification of competition between potential heirs: the deaths of Khusrau in 1621 and Iʿtimād ad-Daula in 1622, the marriage of Prince Shahryār to Lādlī Begum (Nūr Jahān's

[153] Galina Yermolenko, "Roxolana in Europe" in *Roxolana in European Literature, History and Culture*, ed. Galina Yermolenko (Routledge: 2010), 23-25
[154] Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, 12; on the folk-biography of Nūr Jahān, cf. Lal, *Empress*, 6-8
[155] James Mill, *The History of British India* (Baldwin, Cradock and Joy: 1817), 1:552, 555
[156] Ibid., 1:558

daughter by her first husband), and finally the rebellion of Prince Khurram in 1622-23.[157] It is worth outlining the political history of this period before investigating the socio-political networks underpinning contemporary aristocratic factionalism. Jahāngīr favoured his eldest grandson, Dāvar Bakhsh, as heir, whereas Nūr Jahān favoured Shahryār, Āsaf Khān his own son-in-law Khurram, with the high nobility divided between these candidates and Prince Parvez, creating a volatile situation.[158] Khurram, after facing defeat in the Deccan, escaped into the eastern provinces of the empire in 1623-4; when defeated yet again by an imperial army in 1625 under the command of Parvez and Mahābat Khān, he submitted and sent his sons as hostages to the imperial court.[159] In 1626, Mahābat Khān was removed as governor of Parvez and ordered to Bengal; outraged by this and other perceived slights, for which he especially blamed Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān, he launched a daring coup as Jahāngīr was en route to Kabul and took him prisoner, in spite of a failed military attempt by Āsaf Khān and others to liberate the Emperor.[160] He ruled in Jahāngīr's name for the next six months until outwitted by Nūr Jahān, who orchestrated the Emperor's escape, whereupon Mahābat Khān fled to the Deccan and formed an alliance of convenience with his erstwhile enemy, Khurram.[161] Upon Jahāngīr's death shortly thereafter in October 1627, Āsaf Khān acted against his sister's attempt to enthrone Shahryār, imprisoning her in his own house and removing Khurram's three sons from her custody.[162] Khurram was finally enthroned as Shāh Jahān in early 1628, confirming Āsaf Khān's position as *vakīl*, rehabilitating Mahābat Khān, and cementing the political extinction of Nūr Jahān, who was held under house arrest in Lahore until her death in 1644.[163]

The preceding is perhaps a dry summary of what were dramatic events enacted by colourful personalities, but the political history of the empire concerns us only in what it tells us about the *umarā*, especially the Īrānī *amīrs*, whose role has been rather neglected by contemporary studies of these events. The clearest pertinent information is found in three contemporary accounts, each with its own agenda. Shaykh Farīd's *tazkira* was written in hopes of obtaining patronage from Shāyista Khān, the son of Āsaf Khān, and as such gives us the version of events presumably best palatable to the latter's partisans by 1651. The official

[157] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 163, 168; Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 207-8
[158] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 36
[159] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 208-9; Lal, *Empress*, 189-191; Balabanlilar, *The Emperor Jahangir*, 192
[160] Balabanlilar, *The Emperor Jahangir*, 195; Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 261-266; Lal, *Empress*, 194-198
[161] Munis Faruqui, "Erasure and Exaltation: The Coup of 1626 and the Crisis of Mughal Imperial Authority," in *The Mughal Empire from Jahāngīr to Shāh Jahān*, ed. Ebba Koch (Marg Foundation: 2019), 64
[162] Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 281
[163] Faruqui, "Erasure and Exaltation," 64

Bādshāhnāma, on the other hand, was written in the context of a newly enthroned Shāh Jahān's having to deal with what Faruqui summarises as "a feeble predecessor, an unusually empowered empress, and machinations of emboldened nobles."[164] As such, while implicitly or explicitly denigrating Jahāngīr and Nūr Jahān, the *Bādshāhnāma* follows the dominant trend of early Shāhjahānī historiography in providing a relatively sympathetic reading of the rehabilitated Mahābat Khān's character and motivations while disparaging Āsaf Khān, in order to minimise the centrality of noblemen in kingmaking.[165] Finally, we possess *Fathnāma-i Nūr Jahān Begum*, a panegyric work composed in praise of Nūr Jahān detailing Mahābat Khān's coup and her attempted military liberation of the Emperor. It was writted between the defeat of Mahābat Khān and the death of Jahāngīr (1626-7), showering praise on the Empress.[166] In Faruqui's reading, the *Fathnāma* was committed to magnifying Nūr Jahān's dominant role in a future Mughal court presided over by a sovereign of her own succession, and as such was committed to undermining Āsaf Khān's standing.[167] We thus possess three perspectives: one of Nūr Jahān and her supporters hostile to Āsaf Khān, the "official" dynastic perspective hostile to both Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān, and finally a slightly later work written to flatter Āsaf Khān's heirs.

I will demonstrate that these perspectives show us the continued existence of a single, discrete faction throughout this period, comprising the associates and allies of Iʿtimād ad-Daula from his appointment in 1611, that these remained a surprisingly cohesive political grouping through the falling out of Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān, and that their heirs survived into Shāh Jahān's reign as the dominant Īrānī faction. Firstly, contemporary sources agree that Irādat Khān I and Khvāja Abūl Hasan Turbatī were loyal adherents of Iʿtimād ad-Daula, Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān. The former was according to Shaykh Farīd the son-in-law of Āsaf Khān Mīrzā Jaʿfar, Itʿimād ad-Daula's wife's kinsman, and obtained high rank thanks to the assistance (*dast-yārī*) of Āsaf Khān.[168] He earns high praise in *Fathnāma* for his intrepidity and appears in the vanguard with the Empress's supporters, "inspiring much courage" (*dil dād bisyār*).[169] Similarly, Khvāja Abūl Hasan appears in as a close supporter and loyal general of both Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān, present with Irādat Khān I at the council of war (*kangāsh*) called by the

[164] Ibid., 70
[165] Ibid., 75
[166] Kāmī Shīrāzī, *Vāqāyiʿ al-Zamān: Fathnāma-i Nūr Jahān Begum*, ed. I.H. Siddiqui (Rampur Raza Library: 2003), ix, 18
[167] Faruqui, "Erasure and Exaltation," 68
[168] *Zakhīrat*, 2:200
[169] *Fathnāma*, 150-51, 208-9

Empress immediately after Mahābat Khān's coup.[170] Finally, their cousin Sādiq Khān appears at the same event in Shaykh Farīd's account, and appears in a similarly positive light in *Fathnāma* as "the sage Khān" (*khān-i sukhandān*) carrying confidential messages from Jahāngīr to his empress, to whom he acts as counsellor and advisor in the prelude to the attack.[171] However, even in the writing of the *Bādshāhnāma*, a text strongly condemnatory of Nūr Jahān's role, these partisans of hers appear in a positive light. Irādat Khān I "had always been in concord with Āsaf Khān" and thus assists him in *opposing* the sedition and mutiny (*fitna-u-fasād*) raised by Nūr Jahān.[172] Similarly, when Āsaf Khān "for reasons of state" (*bar maslahat-i daulat*) is unable to leave Shāh Jahān's young sons in the custody of the empress, he hands them over to Sādiq Khān "the son of his uncle, married to his own honoured sister," presumably indicating a high degree of trust (rightly) reposed in that *amīr*.[173] Clearly, some realignment took place between late 1626 and the accession of early 1628.

The answer to this is yielded by a curious list in the *Bādshāhnāma* of seven *amīrs* previously engaged as governors of provinces (*ba-nazm-i sūbajāt*) who were dismissed upon Shāh Jahān's accession (*maʿzūl gashtand*), with mention of their successors.[174] Two of these – Muzaffar Khān Maʿmūrī in Mālwa and Jahāngīr Qulī Khān of Allāhabād – were presumably removed because they mounted a stiff resistance to Shāh Jahān's princely rebellion in their respective provinces.[175] The other five however were almost certainly removed as partisans of Nūr Jahān: Mīrzā Rustam Safavī, Qāsim Khān Juvaynī (married to her sister Manīzha Begum), Sayf Khān the son-in-law of Āsaf Khān, Fidāī Khān from Bengal, and Mukhtār Khān I from Delhi. Fidāī Khān was a devoted adherent of the empress who had fought valiantly and nearly drowned in the Jhelum during the attack on Mahābat Khān's forces; according to Shāh-navāz Khān, it was she who had him appointed Governor of Bengal.[176] Sayf Khān had openly opposed Shāh Jahān's attempt to proceed through Gujarat towards Lahore.[177] As for Mukhtār Khān I and Mīrzā Rustam, we shall see in the subsequent section that there is a strong case to be made for their connection to the faction of Iʿtimād ad-Daula. It seems then that about half the major Īrānī *amīrs* supported either sibling, given that the *Bādshāhnāma* explicitly confirms Iʿtiqād

[170] *Zakhīrat*, 2:52
[171] *Fathnāma*, 132-3, 140-43
[172] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:70
[173] Ibid., 1:71
[174] Ibid., 1:124-5
[175] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:730, 2:358
[176] *Zakhīrat*, 2:52; *Fathnāma*, 158-9; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:562
[177] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:126

Khān governor of Kashmīr and Bāqir Khān Najm-i Sānī in Orissa in their governorships, while depicting Āsaf Khān, Irādat Khān I and Sādiq Khān with approbation as guardians of imperial princes and opponents of Nūr Jahān's seditious attempts to seize power.[178]

However, this was clearly no permanent split in the faction, presumably given that underlying social relationships remained unchanged. We thus read that Sayf Khān "despite his many errors" (*baʿze taqsīrāt*) was restored to his *mansab* and *jāgīrs* at the intercession (*iltimās*) of Mumtāz Mahal.[179] Khvāja Abūl Hasan regained favour and in 1633 was made Governor of Kashmīr.[180] Mukhtār Khān I and Mīrzā Rustam were both permitted an honourable retirement with large pensions allotted each by the court.[181] Fidāī Khān too was rehabilitated in 1633, receiving court honours and a *jāgīr* in Jaunpūr.[182] We see thus at the outset of Shāh Jahān's reign a remarkably cohesive and resilient *mansabdārī* network entering the second generation of its existence. This resilience to external pressure cannot be understood without examining the ideological adhesive binding these individuals together, which is the task of the next section.

[178] Ibid., 1:70-71, 125
[179] Ibid., 1:177
[180] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:130
[181] Ibid., 2:261 & 2:635
[182] Ibid., 1:562

1.2: The New Iranian Nobility of Mughal India

We have so far only examined these *amīrs* as individual nobles connected to a *political* group that becomes especially visible at the end of Jahāngīr's reign. Closer examination reveals deeper and older underlying *social* ties between kin-groups in this network that explain both its longevity and its internal cohesion, demonstrating yet again the ways in which the twin concepts of family and faction explain the functioning of aristocratic socio-political networks in the Mughal courtly context. The origins and status identities of these families, intertwined with the early Safavid political élite, will demonstrate how they came to be identified in this context as "Īrānī."

Despite the eminence it attained in India, the Iʿtimād ad-Daula clan was not of particularly exalted origin, belonging as it did neither to the tribal aristocracy, nor to one of the Sufi or Sayyid notable lineages. Ghiyās Beg's father Khvāja Muhammad Sharīf was the *vazīr* of Tātār Sulṭān Sharf al-Dīn Oghlī Takkalū, the Qizilbāsh governor of Khurāsān, placing it in the category of the *Tājīk* clerical-administrative class, the "men of the pen" charged chiefly with civil and bureaucratic matters.[183] The Takkalū clan was decaying, implicated by numerous rebellions in the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp and driven from all major posts and appanages, the dissolution of Tātār Sulṭān's court at Herat being only the final nail in their coffin.[184] Khvāja Muhammad Sharīf's family would have found itself in reduced circumstances while also stained by association with a now-disgraced clan. Migration to Mughal India was doubly attractive by virtue of Ghiyās Beg's wife's family having already migrated to India and entered Mughal service.

Ghiyās Beg's wife was the granddaughter of Āqā Mullā Qazvīnī, a bureaucrat and provincial *vazīr* noted in the *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī* as a relation of Khvāja Muhammad Sharīf.[185] Her uncle, Khvāja Ghiyās al-Dīn ʾAlī Qazvīnī (d. 1581), and her cousin Qavām al-Dīn Jaʿfar Beg, had both emigrated to India and bore in succession the title of Āsaf Khān.[186] The families clearly maintained close ties: Ghiyās al-Dīn ʿAlī's son, Nūr al-Dīn, would be executed along with one of Ghiyās Beg's sons due to their involvement in Prince Khusrau's abortive rebellion. Even more interestingly, Qavām al-Dīn's daughter – Ghiyās Beg's cousin by marriage – was the wife of the future Irādat Khān I (Mīr Muhammad Bāqir). Irādat Khān I,

[183] Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites," 132
[184] Monshi, 1218; Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 27ff.
[185] Monshi, 260
[186] *Maāsir*, 1:282; *Zakhīrat*, 1:187

we learn, was first introduced to imperial service by his father-in-law, although his future prominence was due to well-documented association with Āsaf Khān.[187] By origin, Irādat Khān I was a Sayyid of Sāva in western Iran – Sāva, "a traditional Turkman holding, maintained [in the late 16th century] by Adhma Khan, a Takkalu."[188]

These history of these three lineages – the Sayyids of Sāva, Āqā Mullā of Qazvīn's descendants, and Khvāja Muhammad Sharīf's descendants – is tangled up in Qizilbāsh intrigues going back generations. We find here the social history of families, genteel, provincial and Tājīk rather than aristocratic, that became immersed in the high politics of the court thanks to the ambitions of their Qizilbāsh patrons. Mīr Jaʿfar Sāvajī had served as Grand Vizier during the Takkalū regency for Tahmāsp I, and was executed when the Takkalū lost power to the Shāmlū-Ustājlū confederation in 1531.[189] However, at the same time, Āqā Mullā was the private *vakīl* of Dev Sultān Rūmlū, an erstwhile confederate of the Takkalū whom they had fallen out with and had killed in 1527.[190] We have an invaluable source for this in the 16th century writer Būdāq Munshī Qazvīnī, who belonged to exactly the same kind of social background in the same province of Iran. He served for two years as *vakīl* of none other than Muhammad Khān Sharf al-Dīn Oghlī, father of Tātār Sultān Takkalū, whom he accompanied to both Baghdād and Herat.[191] It is eminently possible that he knew Ghiyās Beg's family personally.

It is no coincidence that these three families of similar background and with close connections to the Takkalū *oymāq*, all found themselves at Akbar's court and happened to reinforce these ties of geographical origin with intermarriage and political patronage. The Takkalū clan's political fortunes declined considerably after 1531. Chūha Sultān the *vakīl* was deposed and killed in that year, followed shortly thereafter in 1534 by the defections of ʿUlamā Sultān and Ghāzī Khān Takkalū to the Ottomans.[192] The enraged Shāh Tahmāsp ordered a wholesale massacre of Takkalū *amīrs* (referred to by his chroniclers as *āfat-i Takkalū*, the

[187] *Maāsir*, 1:315-319
[188] Maria Szuppe, "Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbash Amirs in Late Sixteenth-Century Iran: A Case Study of the Political Career of Members of the Sharaf al-Din Oghli Tekelu Family," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society,* Ed. Charles Melville (I.B. Tauris and Co., 1996**),** 92
[189] Colin Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (I.B. Tauris: 2009), 61
[190] Būdāq Munshī Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-Akhbār*, ed. Mohsen Bahramnezhad (Mīrās-i Maktūb: 2000), 150; on the identity of the two Āqā Mullās, cf. S.H. Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History: Volume 2*, ed. Sanjay Garg (Routledge: 2018): 459
[191] Roger Savory, "A Secretarial Career under Shāh Tahmāsp I," *Islamic Studies* 2 no. 3 (1963): 345-6; Szuppe, "Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbāsh Amīrs," 8
[192] Monshi, 1218

"Takkalū pestilence"), sparing only Muhammad Khān's branch of the clan because of the latter's defence of Baghdād in the face of his kinsmen's treachery.[193] Even more significantly, after the downfall even of the Sharf al-Dīn Oghlī in 1565, Jaʾfar Khān (d. 1593), the eldest scion of the clan and nephew of Tātār Sultān, had migrated to India and received a mansab of 1,000.[194] In 1576, the year of Muhammad Sharīf's death, Jaʾfar Khān's first cousin, Musayyib Khān Takkalū, had been nominated Governor of Ghiyās Beg's hometown of Ray, where he had held *tuyūl* landholdings since his father's death 1565.[195] Ghiyās Beg may well have been induced to emigrate to India by his wife's relations as well as the family members of his father's patrons of the Takkalū clan. Musayyib Khān would have been well-aware of his near kinsman's progress in India. Politically, these individuals were all connected to Qizilbāsh élites soon to face unprecedented challenges in ʿAbbās I's reign (1587-1629). Musayyib Khān and another cousin, Mukhtār Sulṭān, were both executed in 1590. Jaʾfar Khān, the last important *amīr* of this family, died in India in 1593 without descendants.[196] He was survived however by Ghiyās Beg, Āṣaf Khān Qazvīnī and the future ʿAzam Khān, who carefully supported one another into the early years of Jahāngīr's reign. It is very likely that independent networks rooted in the *oymāqs* existed with links to Mughal India that could have served as an "escape route" for the victims of political conflict. Such links may have begun to be fostered as early Humāyūn's Iranian sojourn. Būdāq Munshī confirms as much in a passage about Humāyūn's death and the regency of Bayrām Khān, himself a Bahārlū Qizilbāsh:

> Bayrām Khān became regent (*madār al-muhimm*)…and everybody in Iran (*har-kas dar īrān-zamīn*) was promised a hundredfold profit [i.e. if they joined him in India], nobody being excluded from his generosity…the power [of Akbar] has now reached such a level that he conquered Gujarat and bestowed it on Ghiyās al-Dīn ʿAlī Qazvīnī, the son of Āqā Mullā.[197]

It is difficult not to read some envy in the notoriously avaricious Būdāq Munshī's description of Āqā Mullā's son, who as *Bakhshī* of Gujarāt from 1573 would have enjoyed substantial emoluments.[198] It seems clear that Bayrām Khān had as early as 1556 begun

[193] Colin Mitchell. "Tahmāsp I." *Encyclopedia Iranica* online edition, 2009; Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge Univesity Press: 1980), 62
[194] *Maāsir,* 1:721
[195] Szuppe, "Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbash Amirs," 86
[196] Ibid., 92; Jaʾfar Khān is not known to have had any descendants in Mughal service; the Kāmgār Khān referred to by Szuppe is the son of another Jaʾfar Khān (Umdat-al-Mulk)
[197] *Javāhir al-Akhbār*, 195
[198] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:281

extending invitations to his connections in Iran, some at least of whom took these up, and despite his fall from power enjoyed sufficient success and good fortune for the rumour thereof to make its way to their homeland by the 1570s. This was a momentous decade for Qizilbāsh élites and their supporters: Shāh Tahmāsp's declining health and old age re-opened the way for the second period of Qizilbāsh civil war that prevailed from his death to ʿAbbās I's early reign. In this context, it is suggestive that Nūr Jahān's first husband Sher Afgan Khān was an Ustājlū and a former courtier of Ismāʿīl II (r. 1576-1577). The Ustājlū and Takkalū had joined forces to bring him to the throne upon his father's death, and in Iskandar Munshī's words "the members of this tribe…had been out of favour with Shāh Tahmāsp but were reinstated by Shāh Ismāʿīl II."[199] They and their clients would doubtless have suffered reversals after he was killed and his supporters purged by a coalition of rival *oymāqs*. By the end of the 16th century, there was thus evidently a discrete network of Iranian *mansabdārs* at Akbar's court with political links extending into several past generations, which they seem to have reinforced with intermarriage. This pattern of a shared heritage and kinship reinforced by continuous intermarriage and political patronage provided the formula for the cohesion and success of the Īrānī faction in succeeding generations. The historic association of these emigrants with the Qizilbāsh *oymāqs* is central to understanding the character of the Īrānī faction as it evolved in the 17th century, because the kind of emigrants who came to enter and achieve prominence in that faction.

Although a thorough review of Safavid historiography is far beyond the scope of this chapter, this Iranian élite emigration must be contextualised in the wider dynamic of socio-political change in ʿAbbās I's reign, which saw a consolidation of royal power at the expense of older élite groups and ideological movement away from the early generations of the dynasty. Modern scholarship has examined his reign and those of his successors Safī I (1629-1642) and ʿAbbās II (1642-1666) through the prism of increasing pressure by new élites of military-servile (*ghilmān*) and clerical background against previously hegemonic social elements. Kathryn Babayan discusses the massacre of February 1632, a significant victory for the *ghilmān*, in which they exterminated one of the most powerful groups at court comprising an alliance between religious lineages connected to the dynasty, Sayyid notables, certain members of the Safavid *oymāqs*, and several women of the harem.[200] By the mid-17th century, Rudi

[199] Monshi, 226
[200] Kathryn Babayan, "The Waning of the Qizilbash: The Spiritual and the Temporal in Seventeenth Century Iran," PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1993: 97-99

Matthee describes "a triangular competition for political supremacy among the 'old' tribal forces made up of Turcoman Qizilbash troops, the 'new' bureaucratic elements composed of Georgian and Armenian imported slave soldiers (gholāms), and the ranks of the increasingly prominent religious estate."[201] The casualties of this political reconfiguration belonged to marginalised Qizilbāsh *oymāqs* and increasingly disfavoured religious lineages with inherited charisma and prestige of their own such as the Shaykhāvand and Pīrzāda clans.[202] The nature and role of these competing groups within the Safavid state are topics of contention in modern scholarship, but their importance as constituent elements of the Safavid ruling class is undeniable. Whereas Kathryn Babayan and Rudi Matthee support the idea of triangular struggle between tribal, bureaucratic, and religious forces, Willem Floor questions the assumption that the existence of these groups or forces "also was used as a mobilising force for political purposes," and indeed whether the groups can be assumed to have a monolithic identity.[203] This debate has an important bearing on our subject. If we can assume that aspects of these identities carried real political significance in Safavid Iran, can we then observe a reflection thereof in patterns of migration to Mughal India? We shall see that we can.

The Qizilbāsh were undeniably a major element in the Safavid state, as noted by several scholars including Kathryn Babayan and Maria Szuppe. It is equally well established that ʿAbbās I promoted slave-soldiers and bureaucrats (*ghilmān*) of Georgian and Armenian origin as part of his centralisation of power at the expense of the Qizilbāsh. As for the religious establishment, we must keep in mind the distinction between the so-called Sayyid notables (a translation of terms like *akābir* and *aʿyān*) and religious scholars.[204] The former group constituted a local aristocracy that had emerged in the aftermath of the Mongol period, both worldly and religious in character, possessing large estates and administrating local shrines, their status reinforced by their lineage as well-known Sayyids, often descended from prominent local Sufis. Jean Aubin points out that the family of Shaykh Safī of Ardabīl itself originally belonged to this class.[205] The status-claims of Sayyid notables, many themselves descended from prominent Sufis, both competed with and complemented those of the Safavid dynasty. As time went on, this would come to expose them to considerable danger. Said Arjomand describes an emerging conflict by the 17th century between these notables and the new Shīʿī

[201] Rudi Matthee, "The Career of Mohammad Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah ʿAbbas II (r. 1642-1666)," *Iranian Studies* 24, no. 1/4 (1991): 19
[202] Ibid., 84
[203] Floor, "A Note on the Grand Vizierate," 437
[204] On the *a'yān*, cf. Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahān im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Schwarz, 1980), 209
[205] Jean Aubin, "Études Safavides I: Šāh Ismāʿīl et les notables de lʿiraq persan," *JESHO* 2 (1959): 42

jurists imported by the Shāhs primarily from Arabic speaking lands. These latter, emerging from a "more narrowly professionalised function" as experts on ritual and dogma, were more strictly religious in their cultural outlook than the clerical notables.[206] The general trend of evolution of the Safavid state from the reign of Tahmāsp onwards was one away from the ideological discourses and institutions that benefitted tribal-aristocratic and religious-notable élite groups. In the context of the early 17th century, Babayan comments that "since the Safavi goal of centralisation could not be achieved within the framework of a tribal political culture, their Turco-Mongol political heritage was being overshadowed by an Irano-Imami one."[207]

We do not need to take a position on the centrality or otherwise of the competition between old and new socio-political elements to 17th century Safavid politics. For our purposes, it suffices to point out that *specific* Sufi and tribal-aristocratic lineages fell victim to political change from the late 16th century onwards, and – as demonstrated below – these constituted the source of the Īrānī network at the Mughal court. We must therefore understand there to have been two major phases or patterns of emigration to India from Iran in the Mughal period. The first and better known comprised religious dissidents as well as literary and clerical functionaries increasingly starved of patronage by the Safavid centralisation of power. It is the second group, drawn from the survivors of factional and political conflict and comprising members of élite groups prominent in the Safavid dynasty's early history, that came to constitute the Īrānī faction at the Mughal court. In examining these, we see that they uniformly belong to the same category of members of the early Safavid political élite as the Takkalū *oymāq*.

We have already noted that Bayrām Khān's family were Qizilbāsh *amīrs* of the Bahārlū *oymāq*. Shaykh Farīd notes that Bayrām Khān was a Twelver Shīʿī (*mazhab-i aimma-i isnā ʿashr dāsht*) and that although his son, Khān Khānān ʿAbd al-Rahīm, converted to Sunnism, he was suspected of religious dissimulation (*taqiyya*).[208] The suspicion would appear to be justified given that most of the recorded marriages of his descendants took place to Shīʿī *amīrs*, including a granddaughter who married Āsaf Khān's son Shāyista Khān.[209]

[206] Said Amir Arjomand, "The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shiʿite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran: A Study in Historical Sociology," *JESHO* 28 (1985): 180
[207] Babayan, *Waning of the Qizilbash*, 96
[208] *Zakhīrat*, 1:187
[209] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:836

The next set of Iranian émigré *amīrs* were the brothers Muzaffar Husain Mīrzā and Rustam Mīrzā, belonging to the Bahrāmī collateral line of the Safavid dynasty, who ruled Qandahār as an appanage until 1593. Liesbeth Geevers examines this collateral line in detail. She identifies the increasing difficulty of their position vis-à-vis both the main line and the competing Uzbek and Mughal states in the wider context of dynastic developments in these polities, with an increasing hostility to the Turco-Mongol tradition of princely appanages.[210] To this end, Ismāʿīl II and ʿAbbās I sought to recover direct control over their fiefs of Qandahār and Zamīn-davār.[211] Combined with annually increasing attacks from the Uzbek rulers, they found themselves left with no options except to surrender their territories to Akbar and embrace a career as Mughal *amīrs*.[212] In Jahāngīr's own words, they were "inundated with favours," quickly becoming an established part of the imperial court.[213] Muẓaffar Husain Mīrzā's daughter became Shāh Jahān's first wife as Qandahārī Mahal.[214] The name of Rustam Mīrzā, who survived well into Jahāngīr's reign, is one of those most frequently encountered in the *Jahāngīrnāma*, and the family's eminence continued in succeeding reigns. His three sons married, respectively, the daughters of the Khān-i-Khānān, of Khān-i-ʿAzam ʿAzīz Koka, and of one of Iʿtimād ad`-Daula's sons, marking their rapid incorporation into the highest rank of existing *amīrs*. The lattermost couple, Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī and Nauras Bānū Begum, were parents-in-law of the Princes Aurangzeb and Murād Bakhsh, and of Asālat Khān Mīr Mīrān.[215] A nephew, Saf Shikan Khān, married a sister of Mumtāz Mahal and became father-in-law of Khalīlullāh Khān Yazdī, *Mīr Bakhshī* and Governor of the Punjāb in Aurangzeb's reign.[216] Rapid intermarriage into existing networks, as we shall see, was one of the most important incorporative mechanisms whereby the Īrānī faction maintained its cohesion.

The next major emigrants were Mīr Mīrān Yazdī and his son, who reached India in 1608. Mīr Mīrān was a Mūsavī Sayyid descended from the famed 15th century Sufi, Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī, causing Shaykh Farīd to remark of his grandson Khalīlullāh Khān that "because of his exalted ancestry (*ulū-i hasb va sumū-i nasb*) he is famous in all quarters of the world."[217] Jahāngīr thus records his presentation at court: "since he belonged to a saintly line,

[210] Geevers, "Safavid Cousins," 293
[211] *Ibid*., 309
[212] Ibid., 320; *Zakhīrat*, 1:99
[213] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 158
[214] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:354
[215] Jadunath Sarkar, *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb and Historical Essays* (MC Sarkar & Sons: Calcutta, 1917), 103
[216] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*768
[217] *Zakhīrat*, 3:33

I showed him great respect and gave him a rank and *jāgīr* sufficient to maintain his dignity."[218] He specifies the close relationship of Mīr Mīrān's ancestors with the Safavid dynasty as a kinsman of Tahmāsp I and Ismāʿīl II, those sovereigns "being honoured to be in-laws and relatives of the Shaykhs."[219] This proximity to the Safavid dynasty indubitably magnified the prestige of an already illustrious genealogy. Khān ʿĀlam's embassy (1613-1620) was deputed to intercede with Shāh ʿAbbās I for those sons and relations of Mīr Mīrān who had been left behind in Iran, and were thus restored to him in 1620.[220] According to the *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, the family had fallen into disfavour due to their support of a Qizilbāsh rebel, Baktāsh Khān Afshār.[221] The same source informs us that the Mīr Mīrān possessed many benefices and derived a vast income " from private estates, assignments, and allowances of various kinds.[222] Mīr Mīrān thus typifies the highest echelons of the Sayyid notable class discussed above, and we shall encounter many of his descendants in succeeding chapters.

Bāqir Khān Najm-i-Sānī, whom we have encountered, migrated to India between the beginning of Jahāngīr's reign and 1611. His was a prominent bureaucratic family of Isfahān, descended from the powerful *vakīl* of Shāh Ismāʿīl Safavī's reign, which had fallen into decay during the civil wars of Tahmāsp's regency.[223] Shortly after his arrival he married a niece of Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān, and his fortunes rose in tandem with those of his wife's family. By Shāh Jahān's reign, he was one of the foremost *amīrs* and had served many years as Governor of Orissa.[224] His descendants and connections in *mansabdārī* service became extremely numerous in succeeding decades, including by 1648 his son Fākhir Khān, his son-in-law Ahmad Beg Khān, and his relation (*khvesh*) Muhammad Sharīf.[225] They retained this eminence well into the succeeding reign, with Mafākhir Khān his grandson being son-in-law to Asad Khān, and a granddaughter, Nūr an-Nisā, being married to Bahādur Shāh.[226]

In 1618, the formidably named Mīr Muhammad Amīn Shahristānī, Mīr Jumla Rūh al-Amīn entered Mughal service. The next chapter examine his remarkable career between Safavid Iran, the Deccan and Mughal North India in detail. His family, the Shahristānīs of

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[218] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 183
[219] Ibid.
[220] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* 1:770
[221] Monshi, *Tārīkh*, 1:231
[222] Ibid.
[223] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 57
[224] *Bādshāhnāma*, 1:120
[225] Ibid., 2:720
[226] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:228 & 1:519

Isfahān, were illustrious Sayyids who in Jahāngīr's words "had always held power in Persia," the Emperor noting that his nephew was a son-in-law of Shāh ʿAbbās I.[227] Shaykh Farīd likewise notes that the Shahristānīs were "famous Sayyids of Isfahan" (*az aʿyān-i sādāt-i isfahān*).[228] They were much intermarried with other aristocratic families of Iran: the mother of Rūh al-Amīn's contemporary, the Safavid grand vizier Khalīfa Sultān (1593-1654) having been a Shahristānī Sayyida.[229] Like these other emigrant *amīrs*, he had fallen into disfavour with the Shāh due to his political ambitions, and consequently sought to make his career in India instead. His career was closely linked to the fortunes of Āsaf Khān and Nūr Jahān, as we shall see. There is a remarkable correspondence between his movements and those of Kāmī Shīrāzī, author of the *Fathnāma*. Rūh al-Amīn left Golconda and spent about a year in Bījāpūr before returning to Iran in 1611-12, whence he came to India five years later. Kāmī Shīrāzī migrated to Bījāpūr in 1595 and served its *vakīl*, Saʿd al-Dīn, who died in 1611, before returning to Iran and eventually making his way to Mughal India.[230] It is possible that Rūh al-Amīn became succeeded the *vakīl* as Kāmī's patron during his stay in Bījāpūr; since the former was closer to Nūr Jahān than Āsaf Khān (judging by his removal as *Bakhshī* after Shāh Jahān's accession), this theory is supported by the *Fathnāma's* comparative characterisation of the empress and her brother. Shaykh Farīd further notes he was a "very bigoted in his Imāmī religion" (*dar dīn-i imāmiya taʿassub-i tamām dāsht*).[231]

By 1623, these were joined by Mukhtār Khān I of Sabzvār, whose ancestors had been governors of the holy city of Mashhad under Shāh Tahmāsp, enjoying high rank.[232] According to Iskandar Munshī, the Banū Mukhtār "amassed large private estates and properties, encourages their bailiffs and dependents and became very wealthy," such that no western Iranian (*ʿIrāqī*) Sayyid had ever been their "equal in status or wealth and the number of servants."[233] Immediately upon arrival in India, he was made Governor of Delhi and bestowed a *mansab* of 2,000.[234] By the third generation of this family in India, they had married into the

[227] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 265
[228] *Zakhīrat* 2:217
[229] Floor, "A Note on the Grand Vizierate," 450
[230] Ahmad Gulchīn-Maʿānī*, Kārvān-i Hind* (Muʿassasah-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Āstān-i Quds-i Razavī: 1990), 1159
[231] *Zakhīrat*, 2:219
[232] Ordinal numbers are used to differentiate eponymous *amīrs* of the same family. *Amīrs* bearing the same title but otherwise unrelated are differentiated by a modifier, e.g. Khān Jahān Lodī vs Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh.
[233] Monshi, *Tārīkh*, 1:242
[234] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:126

Safavī, Iʿtimād ad-Daula and Sāvajī families, as well as provided an princely consort to Aurangzeb's grandson Bedār Bakht

Khānlār Qarāmānlū, in the *Zakhīrat* from the Turkmen grandees of western Iran (*az akābir-i tarākima-i ʿirāq*), came to India shortly before the end of Jahāngīr's reign.[235] The Qarāmānlū chieftains belonged to the Alpāvut Turkmen confederation and had risen to prominence under the Qarā-Quyūnlū ruler Jahān Shāh in the mid-15th century, before becoming attached to the Safaviyya order.[236] Khānlār is identified as the son of one Zūlfiqār Khān, a chieftain of the clan in the early 17th century, and received the same title from Jahāngīr.[237] This must have been Zūlfiqār Khān (d. 1611), the Governor of Āzarbayjān, whose brother Farhād Khān was killed on Shāh ʿAbbās's orders in 1607.[238] The family seems to have fallen badly out of favour in that monarch's reign, as is evinced also by the highly positive treatment they are given in the dissident, pro-Qizilbāsh *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān* of the same period.[239] Tantalisingly, the same work refers to an old affinity between the Qarāmānlū chieftains and the Najm-i-Sānī family: could this perhaps be the reason for his marriage to a granddaughter of Iʿtimād ad-Daula, another of whose granddaughters married Bāqir Khān Najm-i-Sānī?[240] The Qarāmānlū clan's fortunes in Iran did not improve. By 1640 their then chieftain, Kalb ʾAlī Beg, was reduced out of desperation to the violent murder of his own father to avert the Shāh's wrath (ultimately to no avail).[241] Zūlfiqār Khān Qarāmānlū was the father of Asad Khān Amīr al-Umarā and grandfather of the eponymous and ill-famed *vazīr* of Jahāndār Shāh. Each married repeatedly into the Iʿtimād ad-Daula family, espousing respectively the daughters of Sādiq Khān, Asad Khān and Shāyista Khān. After Shāyista Khān's death in 1694, Zūlfiqār Khān seems, as his nephew and son-in-law, to have become both the head of Īrānī faction and *paterfamilias* of the Iʿtimād ad-Daula family due to these matrilineal and marital ties.

In 1637, ʿAlī Mardān Khān, one of the highest ranking Īrānī *amīrs* in the history of that faction, defected to the Mughals, bringing with him the fortress of Qandahār. His father Ganj ʿAlī Khān, a Kurdish chieftain, belonged to the tribal nobility of the early Safavid period,

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[235] *Zakhīrat*, 2:411
[236] *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muhaddis (Tehran: Behnām, 1982), 37-38
[237] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:1045
[238] J. Reid, "The Qarāmānlū: The Growth and Development of a Lesser Tribal Élite in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Persia," *Studia Iranica* 9 (1980):202-203
[239] On the authorship and political leanings of this work, see Sholeh Quinn. *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shāh ʿAbbās: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (University of Utah Press: 2000), 21, 48, and 61
[240] *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, 37
[241] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 207

although he had been brought up at the court of Shāh Tahmāsp and been a special protégé of Shāh ʿAbbās.[242] He is identified by Iskandar Munshī as "one of the great *amīrs*" of the reign.[243] It is also worth noting that *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān* numbers the Kurdish tribal chieftains among the Qizilbāsh nobility.[244] In a pattern that will by now be familiar, the family's wealth and prominence excited the jealousy of Shāh Ṣafī after the death of their patron, and ʿAlī Mardān Khān, following in the footsteps of Muzaffar Husain Mīrzā Safavī, chose to defect with the fort of Qandahār of which he was governor.[245] The *Bādshāhnāma* yet again emphasises the high regard and trust that Shāh ʿAbbās I reposed in Ganj ʿAlī Khān and his son, and attributes the latter's defection to the "inclination of Shāh Ṣafī towards violence and murder" (*jidāl-u-qitāl*), clearly referring to the harem massacre of 1632, as we shall see in the next chapter.[246] He was immediately given a *mansab* of 6,000 and made Governor of Kashmīr, ultimately becoming Amīr al-Umarā.[247]

The last major kin-group of aristocratic Iranian origin to emigrate to Mughal India is also one of the most interesting. The Marʿashī clan was an influential and well-connected Sayyid lineage descended from Mīr Buzurg Qavām al-Dīn, a 14th century ruler of Māzandarān.[248] Three branches of the family existed by the end of the 16th century: the Māzandarānī branch produced Khayr al-Nisā Begum, consort of Sultān Muhammad (r. 1578-1587) and mother of Shāh ʿAbbās. From the elder Isfahānī branch came the aforementioned Khalīfa Sultān (d. 1654), son-in-law of ʿAbbās I and twice vizier of Īrān (1623-1632 and 1645-1654), and from the younger Isfahānī branch came Sulaymān II, 18th century pretender to the Safavid throne, whose son Muhammad Hāshim Mīrzā wrote the genealogy of the family in exile in India. [249] Indeed, this late Indian exile is one of the curious facts about this family. They seem to have begun migrating from Iran only after Khalīfa Sultān's death, when his brother Mīr Qavām al-Dīn and nephew Saff Shikan Khān Marʿashī came to Aurangzeb's court.[250] It seems likely that the vizier's personal influence and prestige had protected them from the jealousy of the Safavid monarchs, but in his absence they followed the example of grandees of comparable rank like ʿAlī Mardān Khān, Mīr Mīrān and others. In fact, Khalīfa Sultān's own

[242] Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 28-29
[243] Monshi, *Tārīkh*, 2:1313
[244] *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, 40
[245] *Bādshāh-nāma*, 2:25
[246] Ibid., 2:30
[247] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*186
[248] Muhammad Hāshim Mīrzā, *Zabūr-i Āl Dāūd*, ed. ʿAbd al-Husayn Navāī (Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2000), 21-22
[249] Ibid., 40-41
[250] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:669

influence had limits: when Shāh Safī purged the connections of his grandfather in what Muhammad Hāshim Mīrzā calls the "hideous affair" (*amr-i shanīʿ*) of 1632, he targeted Khalīfa Sultān and Īsá Khān Shaykhāvand's sons as maternal grandsons of the late Shah, the former being blinded and the latter killed outright.[251]

We see that all these kin-groups and individuals conform to common demographic patterns in belonging to a social stratum that can broadly be designated the early Safavid élite. More specifically, they emerge from those specific sub-groups of that stratum that were casualties of civil conflict in the context of intensifying centralisation from the reign of Tahmāsp I to that of ʿAbbās I, whether *oymāqs* such as the Takkalū or Qarāmānlū, Sufi-notable lineages like the Mīr-mīrān, Banī Mukhtār and Shahristānīs, royal favourites like ʿAlī Mardān Khān, or even lineages too genealogically proximate to the dynasty for comfort, such as the Bahrāmī Safavīs and arguably the Marʿashīs. They went on, in India, to form a closed, endogamous network of political patronage and informal assistance, united by a shared sense of dynastic heritage, religious identity, and kinship.

I will argue that it is this specific concatenation of status identities whereby the term "Īrānī" came to be understood in the 17th century Mughal court. Sajjad Nejatie points out that "Iranian" as an early modern social identity generally rested upon factors such as association with the Persian language, Shiism, and habitation in the Safavid state, and further that this came by late Safavid times to be closely associated with the term *Qizilbāsh* in reference to the Safavid soldiery.[252] However, we have considerable evidence that the term possessed an even greater specificity at the Mughal court. Firstly, "Īrān" as a term in 17th century Mughal texts refers very specifically to the dominions of the Safavid monarch, *not* to a geographical space; the Shāh is typically referred to as "the monarch of Iran" (*dārā-yi īrān*) or "the ruler of Iran" (*vālī-yi īrān*), and his envoys as the "ambassadors of Iran" (*safīr-i īrān, īlchī-yi īrān*).[253] By contrast, we find Shaykh Farīd in c. 1650 describing these geographic territories with well-established terms like ʿIrāq (i.e. *ʿirāq-i ʿajam*, southwestern Iran), Āzarbāyjān, and Khurāsān.[254] The *Bādshāhnāma* too describes Shāh Abbās II as advancing upon Khurāsān, the latter clearly depicted as a contested space between the Mughals and Safavids.[255] It is especially interesting then to note that Amīn Rāzī, in his geographical and biographical encyclopaedia, describes

[251] *Zabūr-i Āl Dāūd*, 81
[252] Nejatie, "Iranian Migrations," 496-7
[253] For example, *Bādshāhnāma* 1:72, 271-2, 397, 478; *Zakhīrat*, 1:108, 2:397
[254] *Zakhīrat*, 1:187, 2:411
[255] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:299

"Īrān" as a "very vast dominion" (*mamlakat-i ghāyat vusʿat*), its constituent regions being referred to as *bilād* ("regions, habitations, territories") such as the "country of Fārs and ʿIrāq" (i.e. southwestern Iran) in the third clime, whereas Khurāsān is held to be part of the fourth clime and a "great country" (*bilād-i muʿazzam*) in its own right.[256] There clearly seems to be a distinction between the polity and its constituent geographical spaces. Finally, as early as the *Fathnāma*, we have reference to a grouping called Īrānī that can only be political: Mahābat Khān boasts, during the Indian summer of his rule, that "I have filled the hearts of the Īrānīs with dread" (*kunam dil-hā-yi īrānī pur az dard*).[257] This makes no sense if Īrānī is an ethnocultural or geographic descriptor since Shaykh Farīd, who was intimately connected with Mahābat Khān, tells us the latter's father was "an authentic Sayyid from Shīrāz who migrated to Kābul" and served Muhammad Hakīm Mīrzā.[258] However, it makes eminent sense if the term was a political descriptor bearing the meanings I have here argued for: even if a Sayyid, Mahābat Khān did not belong to any eminent family of Safavid Īrān, and had neither affinal nor consanguineous ties to any Īrānī *amīr*. He owed his high rank to having loyally served Jahāngīr from the latter's childhood, and consequently had the most to lose from the entry of a new, tightly knit faction into the monarch's favour.[259] Īrānī thus seems to have been a primary descriptor of the said faction from its very first generation.

Seen thus in context, we are able to differentiate the Īrānīs as a faction of the high nobility from Iranian or Persian emigrants in general, as well as *mansabdārs* of lower rank. This network of kin-groups and individuals constitutes a visibly different demographic cohort therefrom in that it is an extension of the older element of the contemporary Iranian ruling class, imbued with the cultural and religious heritage of the Safavid polity, as we shall see. Indeed, it is primarily among emigrants of this rank that we are able to trace religious affiliations with any certainty. In addition to a common religious culture and prestigious social and familial origins, they were also tied by long-standing bonds of heritage and service to the Safavid dynasty. In the culture of the Mughal court, as we shall see in Chapter 4, these constituted valuable and intelligible status-claims and conferred meaningful political rank as well as social status. That the sources give us the perspective of the state and dynasty should not lead us to assume that the Īrānī *mansabdārs* were quiescent participants in this process.

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[256] Amīn Ahmad Rāzī, *Haft Iqlīm*, n.d., National Library of India, Kolkata, BL MS 100, digitised by Ministry of Culture, f. 32a, 161b
[257] *Fathnāma*, 193
[258] *Zakhīrat*, 2:116
[259] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 32

Were that the case, we should not have to speak of an Īrānī "faction" at all. Having thus examined the Īrānīs from the perspective both of faction and of status culture, we now turn to perhaps the critical element of their success: family, or rather, their manipulation of kinship and reproductive politics.

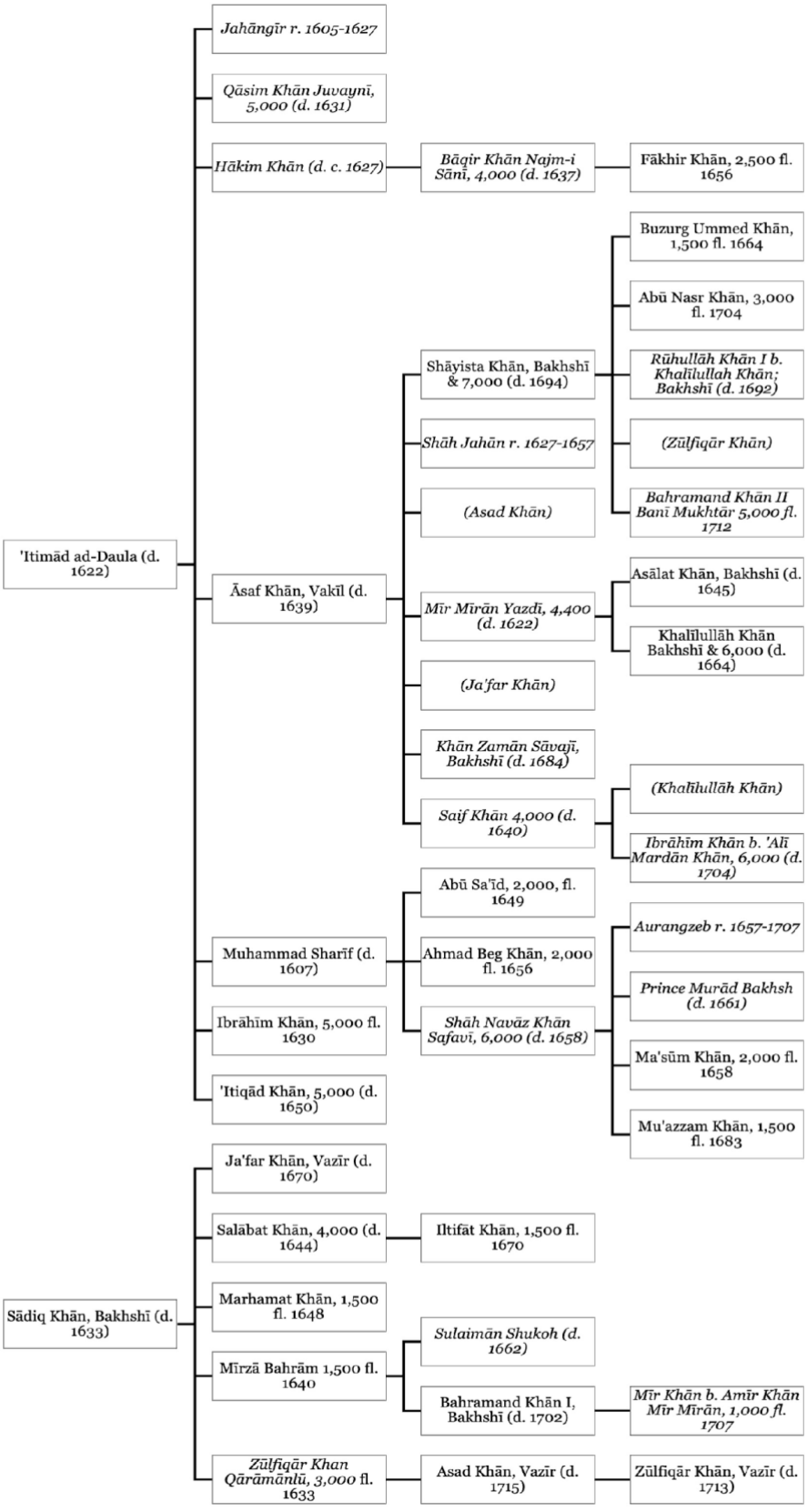


Figure 1: Ghiyās Beg's Descendants

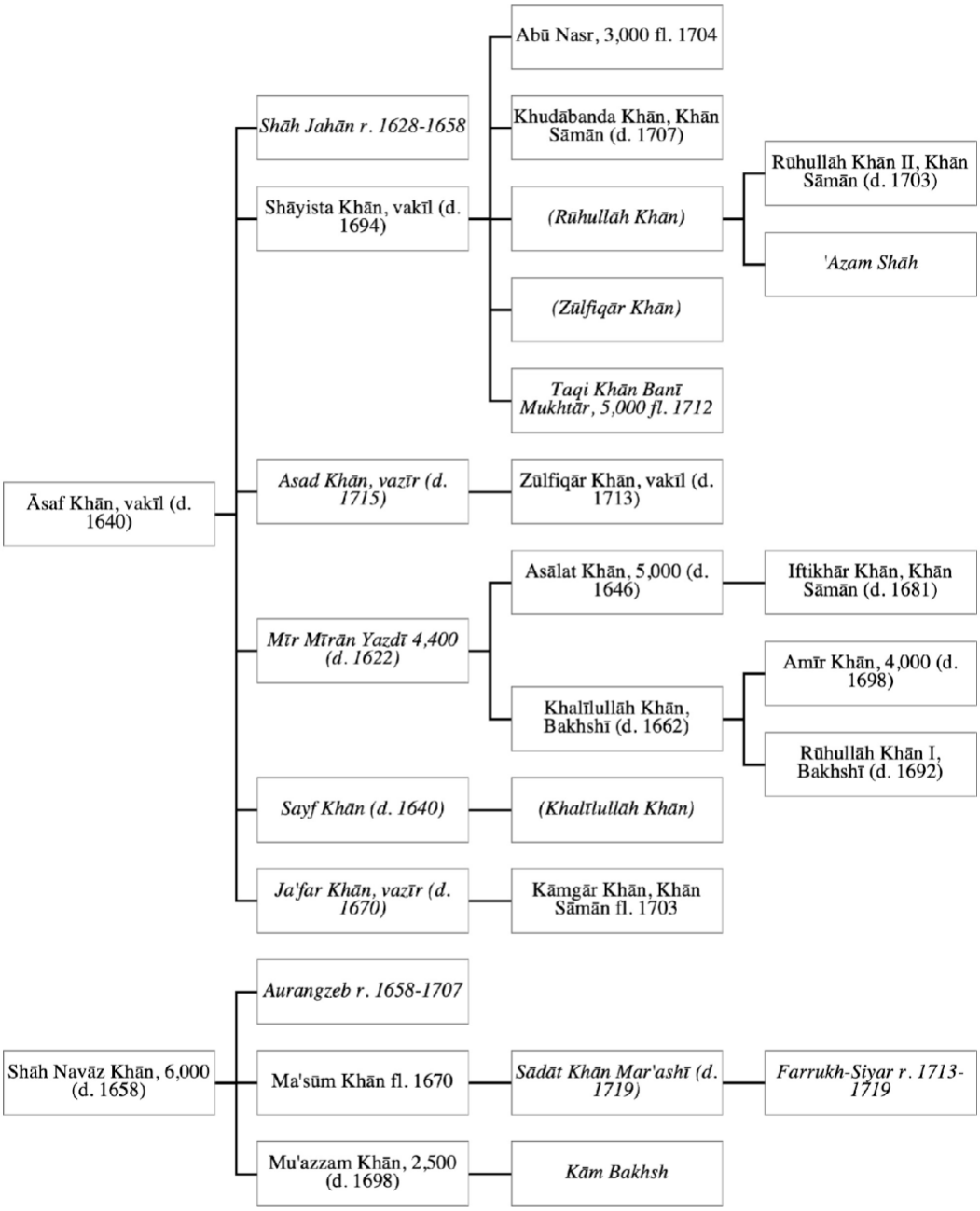


Figure 2: Īrānī Amīrs in the Late 17th Century

1.3: Reproductive Politics and the Irani Ascendancy

The Īrānīs were not a typical network of the Mughal nobility. We shall see in subsequent chapters that the degree to which they were a product of their pre-Indic Safavid context is not paralleled by any other grouping visible in the Mughal nobility. Equally unusual is the socio-cultural cohesion they continued to exhibit in the Mughal context, as is the scale and longevity of their political success. However, perhaps the most interesting and certainly the least-studied aspect of the faction's behaviour is the degree to which it seems consciously to have incorporated marriage and reproduction into its political functioning.

We cannot know precisely how the marriage of Jahāngīr and Nūr Jahān came about, as acknowledged by both Lal and Findly. There is no substantial evidence for the sentimental stories about a youthful romance.[260] However, it seems clear that their attachment was more than that of a purely pragmatic arrangement given, firstly, the honours and rank bestowed on her family far in excess of any other in-laws of the Emperor, and secondly her unusual demographic profile. In 1611, she was a thirty-four-year-old widow without a particularly distinguished genealogy. It might be argued that Akbar too had married Bairām Khān's widow –but Salīma Sultān Begum (1539-1613) was twenty-two years old at the time of her marriage and, moreover, was Bābur's maternal granddaughter and a descendant of the illustrious Naqshbandī Khvāja lineage, which we examine in Chapter 3.[261] Another useful comparison is to Tarbiyat Khān ʿAbd al-Rahīm, whose sister Jahāngīr married in 1608 and gave the title Pādshāh Mahal. The only advantages he derived thereby was a *mansab* of 1,200 and being made commandant of Alwar fort – not quite the same degree of favour as imperial ministries and rich provinces like Bengal.[262]

More to the point, Īrānī *amīrs* seem to have recognised the importance of reinforcing ties to the imperial centre by marital connections, not only thanks to the initial impetus of Nūr Jahān and Jahāngīr's marriage but perhaps also their own heritage. The Sayyids of Sāva, the Qazvīnīs and Ghiyās Beg's family were already much intermarried by the 17th century. Exposure to Safavid politics would have habituated them to the importance of dynastic marriage – Qizilbāsh *oymāqs* and Sayyid notable lineages were one of the main groups that contracted marriage with the dynasty, and such alliances usually had significant political

[260] Lal, *Empress*, Chapter 8; Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 16
[261] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 140
[262] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:926

benefits for the subject families involved.[263] The Takkalū *oymāq* had multiple marital ties with the dynasty, as did other families of the Īrānī circle such as the Mīr-mīrān and the Khalīfas.[264]

Marriage was also a key mechanism for incorporating recent emigrants. Given the nature of the sources, it is virtually impossible in most cases to find direct information about marital ties between individual noble families (as opposed to with the dynasty). It is thus an indication of both the noteworthiness of the Īrānī families, as well as the prevalence of intermarriage in their circle, that we are able to trace these connections, both obliquely from the official record, as well as foreign observers like Bernier and later sources like Shāh Navāz Khān. Figure 1 enumerates linear descendants to the fourth generation of Iʾtimād ad-Daula and of his fraternal nephew to have attained the rank of *amīr*, along with ministries held, failing which their highest recorded *zāt* rank. Sons-in-law are italicised and individuals appearing elsewhere in the genealogy are bracketed. Of the eleven *mansabdārs* of the fourth generation, all except Mīr Khān held office as governors of provinces. Every major émigré Safavid family of the high nobility is represented here: the Bahrāmī Safavīs, Mīr-mīrān, Banī Mukhtār, Qarāmānlū, ʾAlī Mardān Khān, Khalīfa-Marʿashī, and Najm-i-Sānī. This was obviously an endogamous, closed network. There is every evidence that cognatic, non-patrilineal relationships were considered important kinship ties – one particularly telling example thereof is when Jaʿfar Khān's son Kāmgār Khān refers to the recently deceased Amīr Khān Mīr Mīrān as his "cousin" (*ʿam-zād*).[265] The relationship existed almost entirely through the female line: Kāmgār Khān's mother's sister was Malika Bānū, who was Amīr Khān's maternal grandmother, making them first cousins once removed.

There seems little doubt that kinship was therefore an important element of the faction's self-perception and cohesion, reinforcing the common heritage that formed the basis thereof. We shall more closely explore in the next chapter into the ways in which the Safavid political legacy continued to animate these *amīrs* in India. Beyond political attachments to the Safavid dynasty and polity, these families came from the same social milieu and shared experiences of conflict and exile, already powerful factors in the construction and maintenance of an emigrant identity, factors compounded by the concurrent maintenance of ties of marriage and affinity. Sectarian unity, to which we shall return at the end of this chapter, was the third cohesive ingredient marking out the Īrānī faction. Together, these three elements – a shared social and

[263] Nazak Birjandifar, "Royal Women and Politics in Safavid Iran," PhD dissertation, McGill University, 26-30
[264] Szuppe, "Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbāsh Amīrs," *passim*
[265] *Maāsir*, 3:160;

political heritage, ongoing reinforcement of kinship through endogamy, and a common religious identity – were very successful in producing a stable equilibrium, accounting for the faction's longevity and cohesion.

So much at least for the faction's internal behaviour. However, these patterns were in several ways *externalised* in the arena of factional politics of the court. This thesis argues that the tendentious questions surrounding the "junta debate" as well as the role of the Īrānīs in succeeding decades of court politics is resolved when we see that they were consistent in backing princely candidates with marital ties to their own network. When given the choice of multiple princes, they consistently preferred those whose Īrānī consorts had produced male offspring, a pattern discernible from about 1620 to the final year of the faction's existence in 1712-13. We have already seen that in the succession struggle brewing from about 1622, members of the faction consistently backed either Shāh Jahān or Shahryār. This would repeat itself in subsequent generations.

In considering this pattern, we encounter once again problematic misconceptions of gender in modern Mughal historiography. From the earliest times through Akbar's reorganisation of the imperial harem, dynastic women's most important role, and their chief source of legitimacy and the legitimate exercise of power, was the production of imperial offspring (the management of which process was a major political concern of the dynasty), distantly seconded by marriage.[266] Here again we face the twofold historiographical problem of extricating Mughal dynastic women from the Orientalist tropes of early European observers, and of extricating the Īrānī faction from a Nūrjahānī paradigm. Nūr Jahān was an anomalous figure in Mughal political culture as a politically powerful consort who had nonetheless failed in her primary duty of producing a male heir. There is no conceivable doubt that she was extremely conscious of this herself. Her bitterest enemies were those – ʿAzīz Koka, Qutb al-Dīn Koka and Mahābat Khān – who like herself depended on intense affective relationships with the Emperor or dynasty, often including quasi-kin bonds like fosterage.[267] This was further buttressed by their successful performance of dynastic service in military-administrative roles that paralleled her failure in the reproductive role of an imperial consort. Her political career, as Findly, Lal and Faruqui demonstrate was marked by attempts to manipulate and control the succession in the absence of an imperial heir born of her womb, forcing her to rely on tenuous

[266] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 63; Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 89; Balabanlilar, *Begims of the Mystic Feast*, 130
[267] Lal, *Empress*, 138, 154; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:332

connections to a niece's husband and then a stepson turned son-in-law. It is extremely telling that in perhaps the most dangerous moment of her career, the coup of Mahābat Khān, at her most public recorded appearance i.e. mounted upon an elephant in battle, she chose to do so bearing in her arms the infant princess, offspring of Shahryār by her own daughter Lādlī Begum; accompanying her was the child's wet-nurse, the highborn Bahū Begum, daughter-in-law of Āsaf Khān and great-granddaughter of Bairām Khān (Āsaf Khān himself followed the elephant on horseback).[268] In doing so, she claimed legitimacy by emphasising her own role as grandmother of imperial progeny and her family's integration into the highest ranks of the Mughal nobility through culturally acceptable avenues such as fosterage, while eliding the presence of a daughter from a previous marriage.

This is a good moment to recall Leslie Peirce's observation in an analogous Ottoman context that legitimate power for women in Islamicate society necessitated "postsexuality," a situation defined by the cessation of childbearing (through menopause), and motherhood.[269] Nūr Jahān to a considerable degree lacked both qualifications, and seems clearly to have recognised this; coupled with her failure to secure political power in the succession crisis, this left her historiographically exposed both to Mughal historians' denigration on account of ambition that was culturally coded as illegitimate, and European observers' aforementioned unfavourable characterisations. It is remarkable to read of early Shāhjahānī historians disparaging even Bahū Begum for her bloodthirstiness in seeking to murder Mahābat Khān.[270] This sort of lurid scandal-mongering and the anomalous situation of Nūr Jahān has perhaps obscured what I would describe as the *normality* of marriage and reproductive politics as methods of political participation among the high nobility, and I will aim to demonstrate that the Īrānī faction enjoyed unparalleled success in this domain of Mughal politics. Āsaf Khān's removing his princely grandsons from Nūr Jahān's custody and placing them in the house of his cousin, Sādiq Khān, is a significant piece of evidence.[271] We observe him locating the source of his own family and faction's legitimacy in the dynasts and eventual potential successors borne by his own daughter; his confiding them to a cousin who had been (as we know from the *Fathnāma*) an ardent partisan of his sister was likely an attempt to rehabilitate Sādiq Khān in the new Emperor's eyes, a seemingly successful attempt given the official *Bādshāhnāma*'s glossing of his care of the princes, whose aunt he was married to, and his

[268] *Fathnāma* 196-7; *Zakhīrat*, 2:54
[269] Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 23
[270] On early Mughal historians of Nūr Jahān, cf. *Faruqui*, Erasure and Exaltation, 71-3
[271] *Bādshāhnāma*, 1:70

subsequent career in Shāh Jahān's reign. It is also interesting to note that Sayf Khān, as we have seen, was restored to office at the intercession of Mumtāz Mahal, mother of Shāh Jahān's only potential heirs. It is entirely possible that Āsaf Khān induced Sādiq Khān and other Īrānī *amīrs* to support Shāh Jahān over Shahryār by pointing out that the former's Īrānī consort, unlike the latter's, was the mother of sons and future potential heirs.

The same pattern repeats itself in the war of succession in 1656-1658. Richard Eaton for example suggests Dārā Shukoh's enmity with Shāyista Khān and Khalīlullāh Khān as instances of the former's arrogance, contributing to his unpopularity with the nobility and the support these gave Aurangzeb.[272] Sarkar likewise mentions that many of the "Persian and Central Asian" nobles at court were secretly leagued with Aurangzeb and in opposition to Dārā Shukoh, being "corrupted or caring for their own interests only."[273] There is however a much simpler explanation. The Īrānīs at this period held the vizierate (under Jaʿfar Khān Umdat al-Mulk) and the *bakhshī-garī* (Iʿtiqād Khān Bahman Yār), as well as rich provinces like Awadh (ʿAzam Khān Sāvajī), Delhi (Khalīlullāh Khān Mīr Mīrān), and Mālwa (Shāyista Khān) – their support would probably have sufficed to swing the struggle in favour of either contender. Dārā Shukoh on the one hand was the only prince married to a fellow Timurid, Nādira Bānū Begum, which Faruqui sees as evidence of his privileged status among Shāh Jahān's sons.[274] Aurangzeb and Murād Bakhsh on the other hand had both married daughters of Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī and his wife Nauras Bānū Begum, Āsaf Khān's niece – the former's consort had borne two sons, Muhammad Akbar and Muhammad Aʿzam.[275] Shāh Shujāʿ was married to Irādat Khān I's daughter, who had borne a son named Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn in 1645.[276] The relentless opposition to Dārā Shukoh coupled with support for Aurangzeb evinced by Shāyista Khān and Khalīlullāh Khān (the latter's intervention proving decisive at the Battle of Sāmūgaṛh) is therefore consistent with the faction's pattern of behaviour and can be explained as a rational decision made with their long-term interests in mind.[277]

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[272] Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 304
[273] Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, 2:237
[274] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 39
[275] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:267 & 2:305; Bernier, *Travels*, 74, claims that Shāh Navāz Khān secretly communicated Dārā Shukoh's battle plans to his son-in-law.
[276] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:476
[277] Khalīlullāh Khān's defection to Aurangzeb is attested by the eyewitness account of ʿĀqil Khān Rāzī. Cf. ʿĀqil Khān Rāzī, *The Waqiat-i-Alamgiri of Aqil Khan Razi,* tr. Zafar Hasan (Publications of the Aligarh Historical Institute, 1946), 22

These patterns remain clear in Aurangzeb's reign. Bernier observed in about 1664 that Muhammad Akbar seemed the best placed of Aurangzeb's sons to succeed, since although very young, he "has several near and powerful relations at court, and being born of Shāh Navāz Khān's daughter, is descended from [the Safavids]," whereas the elder sons Muhammad Sultān and Muʿazzam were the sons of Rajput women.[278] Although Akbar removed himself from the succession thanks to his ill-fated rebellion, by the end of Aurangzeb's reign the Īrānīs had a clear candidate in his full-brother, Aʿzam Shāh. His chief consort, Jahānzeb Bānū, was Dārā Shukoh's daughter – however, apart from his maternal connection to the Īrānīs, his eldest son Bedār Bakht was married to Shams al-Nisā, daughter of Mukhtār Khān II.[279] Almost every single Īrānī *amīr* we know of supported Aʿzam Shāh in the war of succession, including many physically endangered thereby due to a closer geographical proximity to Bahādur Shāh's forces, such as Ibrāhīm Khān, son of ʿAlī Mardān Khān, in Kashmīr and Mukhtār Khān III in Delhi.[280] Zūlfiqār Khān and Asad Khān, despite allegations of the former's lack of enthusiasm, fought for Aʿzam Shāh at the decisive Battle of Jajua.[281] Muttalib Khān and Tarbiyat Khān of the Banī Mukhtār and Khudābanda Khān son of Shāyista Khān were, Vāzih tells us, "counted among the intimate friends (*khusūsān*) of Aʿzam Shāh" and were to a man killed fighting at his side.[282] Indeed, he says "the nobles of high birth and imperial favour of Aurangzeb's time were all arrayed at the side of Aʿzam Shāh," (*hama hamrāh-i Aʿzam Shāh)*.[283] On the other hand, Bahādur Shāh was the son of Navāb Bāī, daughter of a minor Raja. His Īrānī wife, Nūr an-Nisā of the Najm-i-Sānī family, had been dead for fifteen years, and he was known to be entirely under the influence of his two primary consorts, Amat al-Habīb, an Afghan, and Mihr-Parvar, a Chaghatāy.[284]

However, the Īrānī ascendancy was no longer nearly as absolute in 1707 as it had been in 1656 or 1626, for reasons we investigate in the subsequent section of this chapter. The failure of the Īrānī *amīrs* to bring Aʿzam Shāh to the throne eroded their position still further. Nevertheless, they seem even in their final moments to have attempted to maintain the strategy which had produced such favourable dividends for their fathers and grandfathers. In February 1712, as yet another destructive war of succession threatened to engulf the empire, Zūlfiqār

[278] Bernier, Travels, 126
[279] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 173
[280] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:656-7 & 2:256
[281] Ibid., 2:1037
[282] Irādat Khān, ff. 18, 47
[283] Ibid., f. 79
[284] Khvāfī Khān, 2:334 & *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:335-6

Khan earnestly courted Prince ʿAzīm al-Shān, offering to make him his father's heir with Īrānī support. ʿAzīm al-Shān had numerous consanguineal and affinal ties to the Īrānīs: his mother had been a descendant of Bāqir Khān Najm-i-Sānī, and his wife was Rūhullāh Khān Mīr Mīrān's daughter and Shāyista Khān's granddaughter (making her the niece of Zūlfiqār Khān's wife) – best of all, this wife had borne a son, Humāyūn Bakht, in 1696.[285] However, the imperial court now existed in an atmosphere of intensified competition and distrust, and ʿAzīm al-Shān and Zūlfiqār Khān had been too long at odds for the prince to now set aside his grudges, as we shall see. He refused the *vazīr*'s services with an insulting reply: "imperial servants (*bandagān-i bādshāhī*) have no refuge (*maljā*) but this court…you should likewise present yourself at court (*ba-mulāzimat-i huzūr biyāyand*) with the rest of them."[286] Only after exhausting the possibility of uniting with ʿAzīm al-Shān did Zūlfiqār Khān turn to Muʿizz al-Dīn Jahāndār Shāh, two of whose consorts belonged to the family of Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī – however, neither had borne issue.[287]

We thus see how closely family and faction were intertwined in the conceptual framework of Mughal politics. The absence of quotidian detail from the sources ought not to cause us to forget the real intimacy and affective ties that would have united the *amīrs* of the Īrānī faction. Kinship through consanguinity, marriage and fosterage implied a degree of political proximity exceeding minor affective ties, which in turn bore greater weight than mere service, patronage, or employment. This is clearly demonstrated by one of the most important contemporary sources, Shaykh Farīd's *Zakhīrat*. Chapter 5 will investigate the composition of the work – however, the political details of Shaykh Farīd's career, coinciding with the early years of Īrānī hegemony (c. 1606-1649), provide an interesting insight into the politics of the high nobility from the perspective of a minor *mansabdār*. In Moinul Haque's summary, after holding minor provincial posts he served Khān Jahān Lodī from 1610, but was *dīvān* of Nūr Jahān's personal household in 1615, before apparently being reassigned to Khān Jahān Lodī by the central *dīvānī* at the start of Shāh Jahān's reign.[288] Following the *amīr*'s rebellion, he spent several years in the household of Mahābat Khān, upon whose death he spent 8 years in the Deccan become the *dīvānī* again assigned him to the service of Sarandāz Khān Qalmāq, with whom he had a bad relationship.[289] In 1649, he became *amīn* and news-writer of a dozen

[285] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 227
[286] Irādat Khān, f. 113
[287] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 93 & 151
[288] *Zakhīrat*, 1:xv-xix
[289] Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, "An Early Historian of the Mughal Nobility," *PIHC* 47 (1986): 321-22

fortresses in the Deccan, where he wrote his book, framed as a petition for employment to the then-governor of the province, Shāyista Khān, the leading Īrānī *amīr*, although the dedication is unfortunately marred by lacunae in all surviving manuscripts.[290] Of the nobles he served, he was deeply dedicated to Khān Jahān, in defence of whose rebellion he expends much ink, depicting him as unjustly persecuted by his enemies at court, to the extent that Mahābat Khān criticised him one day for excessive praise (*izhār-i buzurgī-hā*) of the rebel *amīr*.[291] He was at least ambivalent to Mahābat Khān, whom he criticises for his miserliness, irreligion, cruelty, and lack of fear of God (*saffākī-u-bī-bākī*), but nevertheless enjoyed a good relationship with.[292] Finally, in his appeal to Shāyista Khān, he waxes effusive about the many dignities (*buzurgī*) of the nobleman, notably that he has the honour of being the eldest son (*pisar-i mahīn*) of Āsaf Khān, grandson of Iʿtimād ad-Daula, nephew of Nūr Jahān Begum, nephew by marriage of the Emperor, foster-brother of Dārā Shukoh, and finally also "possessor of many servants, much wealth, fame, wisdom, perception and knowledge" (*sāhib-i jamīʿat va khazāna va shaukat va ʿaql va idrāk va dānish*).[293]

From this, we can deduce much about the nature of factional affiliation. Khān Jahān Lodī, Nūr Jahān, Mahābat Khān, and Sarandāz Khān not only belonged to completely different socio-political networks, but as we know on occasion violently opposed one another in conflict. Nevertheless, Shaykh Farīd served all of these and seems generally to have been well-treated, and despite overt loyalty to an enemy of Āsaf Khān felt able to dedicate so laborious a text to the latter's son in evident expectation of employment. It is clear then that the friendships and enmities of the high nobility existed first and foremost among the *amīrs* themselves. There does not appear to have been any political implication in neutral professional service by minor *mansabdārs* (Shaykh Farīd, never having attained the rank of 1,000, would not have counted even as a very minor *amīr*). Although, as we shall see in the next chapter, major *amīrs* maintained large retinues and clienteles of their own, and could and did recruit *mansabdārs* directly from these, the shade of factional affiliation did not extend to *mansabdārs* who entered service from the stratum of independent *zamīndārs* and local gentry. Shaykh Farīd's father and uncle were local notables and religious scholars in Sindh employed at various points by *amīrs* of Akbar's reign, but neither they nor he seems to have had any close personal relationship with a political network excluding a generic affiliation with the Tarkhān branch of the Arghūns,

[290] *Zakhīrat*, 1:3
[291] Rezavi, "An Early Historian," 320; *Zakhīrat*, 2:166
[292] *Zakhīrat*, 2:172
[293] *Zakhīrat*, 2:188-9

quasi-independent rulers of Sindh to the middle of Akbar's reign.[294] We can further deduce from Shaykh Farīd's various unsatisfactory Deccan assignments that *mansabdārs* of this level had some discretion in where they were transferred, but on occasion could be given unfavourable postings against their will. It seems clear however that savage hatreds like those of Mahābat Khān and Āsaf Khān (and indeed the intriguing Bahū Begum) or devoted commitments like Irādat Khān I's to the Empress did not extend into the middling and lower ranks of the *mansabdārī* stratum.

In conclusion, the Īrānī factions's political manoeuvrings, which became visible especially around crises of succession, hinged consistently on the principle of supporting imperial dynasts with blood or marital ties to Īrānī families, and among these consistently princes whose consorts had produced male issue. These patterns held true for five generations of the imperial family from Jahāngīr's marriage in 1611 to Jahāndār Shāh's accession in 1712. The faction's practical mobilisation and manipulation of kinship and reproduction to pragmatic ends in the political arena greatly exceeded that of other aristocratic networks in success, and accounts for its longevity as well as lasting proximity to the dynasty and the institution of the monarchy. In a curious twist of fate, after the faction's ignominious downfall and annihilation in 1713, there is only one family from this network that finds mention in the annals of Farrukh-Siyar's and succeeding reigns, the Marʿashīs. Farrukh-Siyar's chief consort, Fakhr an-Nisā, was the daughter of Sādāt Khān Marʿashī, and at the time of his accession was the mother of a young son, Jāhāngīr Mīrzā.[295] It seems that being the maternal grandfather of imperial progeny (*jadd-i mādarī-yi shāhzāda*) saved the said *amīr* from political and financial ruin. In this respect something at least of the Īrānī political legacy survived the end of the faction.

[294] Rezavi, "An Early Historian," 318
[295] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 183

1.4: Crisis and Climax c. 1686-1713

The late 17th century saw the Īrānī faction undergo increasingly severe challenges. They faced intensifying competition with newly emergent factions from about the 1660s, suffered in the generalised fiscal crisis of the empire from the 1690s, and struggled in the ongoing political crisis of the early 18th century until 1712. In that year they staked everything on a desperate gamble and briefly seized power in a coup led by Zūlfiqār Khān. They remained throughout this period the most powerful of various groupings and networks in the *umarā*. They had been for generations the greatest beneficiaries of the Mughal political system outside the dynasty. The brief Īrānī regime of 1712-1713 ended that dispensation and inaugurated a new and desperate period of ongoing civil war, of which they themselves became the first casualties.

The period under consideration can be divided into three broad phases. 1658-1687 saw the emergence of new factions of the high nobility, which I will argue were brought into being and promoted by Aurangzeb with the express purpose of curbing the Īrānīs. From 1687-1707 the nobility and indeed the whole of the imperial administration were occupied with the attempted consolidation of the Deccan conquests, and the major problems they occasioned, ranging from *mansabdārī* rank inflation and state's fiscal crisis to the emergence of a new class of Deccani *mansabdārs* and increasing conflict between the Īrānīs and the Tūrānīs. Bahādur Shāh's reign saw an uneasy and unsustainable armistice between the various factions that began to break down after Munʿim Khān's death in 1711. From 1712-1723 we see the collapse of dynastic authority and violent competition between noble kingmakers: the Īrānīs to their demise in 1713, the Sayyid brothers and the new nobility 1713-1720, and finally the triumph of the Tūrānīs in 1720-21. These developments here concern us to the end of the Īrānī faction.

We have already that Shāh Jahān did not view the Īrānī influence with unalloyed happiness or favour. Even in the 1630s, he remarked of his father-in-law Āsaf Khān "I am well aware of all I owe him, but henceforth let affairs of state vex him no longer," (*ahsān-i ū bar zimma-i man sābit ast, lekin āyinda umūr-i khilāfat ba-ū tasdīʿ nabāyad dād*).[296] After Āsaf Khān's death in 1640, the *vakālat* was allowed to lapse and no Īrānī was made *vazīr* again until the very end of the reign – indeed, for most of the central ministries, Shāh Jahān preferred scholarly and administrative professionals previously unconnected to the high nobility, as we shall see in the fourth chapter.

[296] *Maāsir,* 1:157

Aurangzeb also took measures to limit the faction's influence by promoting two new factions, the Khvāfīs and the Tūrānīs. The Khvāfis were a group of *mansabdārs* claiming common origin from Khvāf in Khurāsān. They emerged as a distinct network in the 17th century but have typically (and erroneously) been counted among the Īrānī nobles.[297] This is simply incorrect. For one thing, the Khvāfīs were clearly Sunnī despite accounts of Shāh ʿAbbās compelling the local notables to convert to Shiism, as reported by Abūl Fazl, who claims they are now staunch Shīʿīs. [298] Given that this incident supposedly occurred in 1588 and that Abūl Fazl completed the Āīn-i Akbarī by 1600, it seems unlikely that such a sea change was accomplished in a population noted for its defiant sectarian attachment in the space of six or seven years, at most a decade. There is furthermore nothing in the Indian careers of the Khvāfīs to suggest that they were Shīʿas. Most extraordinarily, *as late as 1893* the British agent in Khurāsān, Sir Charles Yate, visited Khvāf and reported that "the people were all Sunnīs."[299] The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the community remained Sunnī, which would likely have been a great part of the impetus for their emigration to the subcontinent.

Some among the Sayyids of Khvāf had migrated to India as early as Akbar's reign, most notably a Khvāja Shams al-Dīn, who became *vazīr* and governor of Bengal, but in Aurangzeb's reign this faction coalesced around two or three prominent kin-networks and their clients and connections, viz., the families of Shaikh Mīr and Mīr Abūl Maʿālī. Shaikh Mīr and his brother Sayyid Mīr were devoted adherents of Aurangzeb from his days as prince. The former took first place at the accession honours of 1658 and would likely have become one of the foremost dignitaries of the new reign had he not been killed in battle in 1659. The Emperor brought up his sons and attained high ranks as Governors of provinces out of Aurangzeb's regard for their late father. Mīr Abūl Maʿālī's family enjoyed even greater proximity to Aurangzeb - his wife was the Emperor's wet-nurse, and his son, Khān Jahān Bahādur Kokaltāsh, was long viceroy of the Deccan and "the central figure in the government."[300] Fidāī Khān Koka, another son, served as Governor of Bengal to his death in 1678.[301]

In addition to these major *amīrs*, a number of successful *mansabdārs* from noble lineages of the second-tier began in this period to advance into the high nobility. These include ʿĀqil Khān Rāzī, another of retainer of Aurangzeb from the latter's Deccan career, who died in

[297] M. Afzal Khan, "Iranis in the Mughal Nobility: A Case Study of the Khawafis," *PIHC* 41 (1980): 248
[298] *Āīn-i Akbarī*, 1:494
[299] Charles Yate, *Khurasan and Sistan* (William Blackwood & Sons: 1900), 131
[300] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:790
[301] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 104

1695 after 18 years as Governor of Delhi.[302] By far the most important from our perspective, however, is none other than Shāh Navāz Khān himself, whose direct ancestors had come to India in Akbar's reign to benefit from the success of their kinsman, Shams al-Dīn Khvāfī.[303] It is therefore unsurprising to read in the *Maāsir* that "inhabitants of Khvāf have been distinguished from early times for ingenuity and intellect," and well as for "their skill and sagacity" and that therefore "during the reign of Aurangzeb, which was a time of appreciation and when there was a ready market for honesty, men of this clan were distinguished by appointments to high positions of trust, office and dignity," and finally that "most men of Khvāf are distinguished for their good and straightforward nature.[304]" In what we shall see in the final chapter is not altogether a coincidence, that other great 18th century historian, Khvāfī Khān, was also a Sayyid of Khvāf by descent as his title obviously proclaims, and is described by Shāh Navāz Khān as a bosom friend. Dowson's assertion that his title is derived from the clandestine (*khāfī*) composition of his history, his name being variously spelled Khvāfī or Khāfī in the sources, is belied by the consistent use of the former by Shāh Navāz Khān.[305] Shāh Navāz Khān would have been in a position to know, given that he elsewhere describes Khvāfī Khān as his bosom friend.[306] Moreover, Shāh Navāz Khān tells us that his grandfather was on terms of great intimacy with Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh: it quite clear that the Sayyids of Khvāf constituted an independent and self-contained faction unconnected to the Īrānīs.[307]

The other major emergent faction in Aurangzeb's reign was that of the Tūrānīs, although as Chapter 3 shall argue it is better referred to as the neo-Tūrānī faction, the core of which was always the family of Nizām al-Mulk Āsaf Jāh. We examine this faction and its pretensions to "Tūrānī" origin in detail in the third chapter. Here, it suffices to say that like the Khvāfīs, these Tūrānīs were raised to prominence by the personal favour of Aurangzeb and owed to him their attainment of *khānazād* status comparable to the Īrānīs. The bitter rivalry of Asad Khān and Zūlfiqār Khān on the one hand and Fīrūz Jang and Nizām al-Mulk on the other is best documented towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, but almost certainly had its origin in this earlier period, which first saw Īrānī hegemony contested at court. Fīrūz Jang was a great

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[302] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* 1:266
[303] Ibid., 1:221
[304] Ibid., 1:221, 2:806-7, 2:696
[305] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 7:208; *Āīn-i Akbarī,* tr. H. Blochmann (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1873), 1:494 ff. where Heinrich Blochmann points out that the authors of the *Pādshāhnāma* and *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* consistently spell the name with the letter *vāv*.
[306] *Maāsir,* 3:680
[307] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:790

favourite of Aurangzeb's, who nurtured the careers of the said Khān and his kinsmen.[308] All the letters he wrote him that survive in *ruqqāt-i ʿĀlamgīrī* are addressed to "Khān Fīrūz Jang, my faithful friend" (*Khān Fīrūz Jang yak-rang-i man*), in contrast to communiqués to higher-ranking officers including his first cousin Asad Khān. Elsewhere, he praises Fīrūz Jang as a paragon among *mansabdārs* to his favourite grandson Bedār Bakht.[309] In this context it is noteworthy that the said Khān's eldest son received his first *mansab* in 1684 at the extraordinarily young age of thirteen.[310] This was a mark of favour extended only to the highest of the court nobility – Asad Khān for example had received a *mansab* from Shāh Jahān at the age of around fifteen.

Beyond the challenge of new factions in this period, a well-documented problem of the nobility in Aurangzeb's later reign was the mass absorption of new *mansabdārs* from the Deccan sultanates and ensuing fiscal crisis due to the shortage of *jāgīrs*. A comprehensive survey of these developments is beyond the scope of this chapter – however, some sense of the scale of this absorption can be gleaned from the fact that in the brief period from Aurangzeb's arrival in the Deccan in 1682 to the commencement of the siege of Golconda in 1687, he distributed *mansabs* to Deccani defectors totalling an incredible 51,000 *zāt*.[311] This was furthermore prior to the fall of Golconda, whereupon Mustaʿadd Khān remarked that "it would require another volume to describe in detail the coming of the Haidarābādīs to the imperial court, their gaining of *mansabs* [ranging from] seven thousand to five hundred, and the admission into imperial service of professional men...of every kind."[312]

That this mass expansion of the *mansabdārī* stratum entailed the expenditure of resources incommensurate to those obtained by the Deccan conquest has been thoroughly established by contemporary scholarship. [313] These developments concern us however in that their main casualties were the members of the established nobility. In 1690, the *Bakhshī* Rūhullāh Khān and his deputy Bahramand Khān (Asad Khān's nephew) reported to the Emperor that owing to the paucity of *pāybāqī* lands (i.e., those held in reserve as *jāgīrs* for

[308] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 297-298
[309] "Dastūr al-ʿAmal-i Āgāhī," n.d., National Archives, New Delhi, MS 2201, f. 27b
[310] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 148
[311] *Maāsir-i ʿalamgīrī* 149, 165, 166, 171, 173, 180-81;
[312] Ibid., 184
[313] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility,* 92-94; Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics,* xlvii-xlix; a new interpretation challenging this view was offered by John F. Richards in *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Clarendon Press: 1975), chapters 6 & 7; Zakir Husain, *Medieval India: Studies in Polity, Economy and Society* (Primus Books: 2019), 311-312 & 331, offers a strong critique of Richards' revisionist approach

newly promoted *mansabdārs*) and "the excess of new officers, especially the innumerable Marathas and Deccanis who have been raised to high rank...the *khānazād* nobles have often to wait four or five years before receiving their *jāgīrs*" (*khānazādān rā aksar chahār sāl va panj sāl jāgīr muyassar namī-āmad*).[314] Aurangzeb appointed his brother-in-law Mūsavī Khān superintendent of *jāgīrs* (*dīvān-i tan*) to resolve these chaotic conditions – the stress of the job was such that he collapsed and died within a few months of his appointment, with the administration become ever more disorderly.[315]

It is also important to note that the conquest of Bījāpūr and Golconda added practically nothing to the *jāgīrs* available for imperial officers. Revenue extraction in Berar, Khāndesh and Ahmadnagar was almost impossible due to the collapse of law and order and Maratha attempts to impose their own systems of revenue extraction. The Bījāpūr Carnatic had suffered under the turmoil and infighting of the late 'Ādil Shāhī administration for years before the Mughal invasion of 1677-79 under Diler Khān Dāūdzaī, who had massacred the populace and devastated the countryside.[316] Golconda had suffered less, but the vast majority of its territory was allocated to the crown lands (*khālisa*) whose revenues went directly to the imperial treasury.[317] Moreover, Aurangzeb expected those among his nobles who were so able to maintain armies at their own expense when pay was in arrears: as early as 1666, Jai Singh had spent 10 million rupees of his own money in his viceroyalty of the Deccan.[318] Khān Fīrūz Jang was commended by the Emperor for maintaining a larger contingent than he was required to.[319] In this context we ought to remember that most of the important military operations in the Deccan were conducted by Īrānī nobles, such as Asad Khān and Zūlfiqār Khān, who prosecuted the siege of Jinjī for eight long years, and Rūhullāh Khān II and Saff Shikan Khān Marʿashī who relentlessly campaigned against the Marathas in Ahmadnagar and Berar.

Some modern scholars speak of the nobility's experience of the Deccan in terms of "demoralisation."[320] This may be an exaggeration. It is better to speak of an exacerbation of competition between aristocratic networks owing to the scarcity of resources. Senior *amīrs*

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[314] Khvāfī Khan, 2:396
[315] S.M. Azizuddin Husain, "Scarcity of Pai Baqi Land During Aurangzeb's Reign," *PIHC* 39 no. 1 (1978): 426-430
[316] Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, 4:136
[317] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 158
[318] Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, 4:104, 5:191-92
[319] "Dastūr al-ʿamal-i Āgāhī," f. 27
[320] John F. Richards, "The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan," *TJAS* 35, no. 2 (1976), 249; Audrey Truschke, *Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King* (Stanford University Press: 2017), 93;

such as Asad Khan, Zūlfiqār Khān, Fīrūz Jang, Chīn Qulīj Khān, Tarbiyat Khān and others, far from become enervated or lethargic, became hyper-active in their pursuit of military objectives. Zūlfiqār Khān's long campaign in the Carnatic has been attributed to his supposedly nurturing seditious ambitions.[321] However, Aurangzeb had explicitly ordered him to penetrate as deeply as possible into the region because "in the Carnatic are many ancient treasure hoards" (*dafīna-hā-yi qadīm*) whereby "all the claims of those seeking pay (*talab-dārān*) may be defrayed."[322] It is rather competition *between* factions that intensified. We read therefore of conflicts in the imperial camp between the partisans of Zūlfiqār Khān and the various Tūrānī mansabdārs after the siege of Wākin-khedā.[323] Military success was now the only guarantee of imperial favour and consequently of political advancement.

By 1707, a toxic mix of ingredients had been brewing for many years: intensifying competition and increasingly vindictive infighting between aristocratic networks, a loss of internal cohesion in the face of large numbers of arriviste entrants to the *mansabdārī* stratum, and a fiscal crisis that seriously affected even the highest levels of the nobility. The war of succession that brought Bahādur Shāh to the throne did not resolve any of these issues. Rather, it produced an anomalous and increasingly unstable situation in that the Īrānīs, the most powerful faction of the *umarā*, had backed a losing candidate, whereas the next largest, the Tūrānīs, had abstained from the struggle altogether. The new Emperor was thus without significant support in the established high nobility.

The whole of Bahādur Shāh's reign (1707-1712) can be understood as an attempt to conciliate existing factions of the high nobility while promoting a new cohort of nobles in an attempt to buttress the Emperor's own position. With little political backing, Bahādur Shāh was forced to make vast concessions to the major *amīrs* and to hand out titles and rank without discrimination or care, his feeble position delicately obscured by the courtly language of royal generosity – thus, he was publicly acclaimed as an Emperor of ocean-hearted generosity (*pādshāh-i daryā dil*), privately scorned as the oblivious king (*shah-i bī-khabar*).[324] In this context, Khvāfī Khān is indicating to his audience the feeble political authority of Bahādur Shāh over his nobility when compared to previous sovereigns, as well as an implicit disapproval of his largesse in seeking simultaneously to conciliate existing factions and

[321] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 231
[322] *Ruqqa'āt-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, f. 48b
[323] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 300; the same incident in greater detail in *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:1037
[324] Khvāfī Khān, 2:629

attempting to promote his supporters. Coupled with the scarcity of resources and the consequently increasing intensity of factional competition, this produced a situation where aristocratic factions were now able to dictate terms to the reigning Emperor. In exchange for securing his favourite Munʿim Khān the vizierate (previously held by Asad Khān), Bahādur Shāh was forced to make major concessions to the Īrānīs, including a resurrection of the office of *vakīl* (lapsed since Āsaf Khān's death seventy years previously) for Asad Khān as compensation, and the union of the viceroyalty of the six Deccan provinces with the office of *Bakhshī* in the person of Zūlfiqār Khān.

It is to this period that we can date a famous dialogue between Munʿim Khān and Bahādur Shāh as reported in Vāzih's memoirs, about which modern scholars disagree. Bahādur Shāh, pondering the fate of the many *amīrs* who had supported (*rifāqat va hamrāhī numāyand*) ʿAzam Shāh, inquires of his vizier what ought to be therewith. Munʿim Khān counselled him that their offences should be entirely forgiven – he likens the empire, a burden "not to be borne by any one or two men," to a great hall of audience (*bārgāh-i sulaymānī*), which requires many tall pillars and strong ropes to be upheld, and declares it is this very nobility which constitute the strong pillars of the empire.[325] He goes on to remind the Emperor of the august services (*khidmāt-i ʿumda*) and high esteem (*iʿtibār*) that these nobles performed and enjoyed in previous reigns; it is these who, he says, possess the vital qualities of experience of matters of state (*marātib-shināsī-yi umūr-i saltanat*), knowledge of its administration (*dastūr-dānī-yi ādāb-i shān*) and recognise the glory of sovereignty and kingship (*shukoh-u-shaukat-i riyāsat-i mulk-dārī va kārhā-yi ʿumda-i bādshāhat*), and above all, possess the etiquette of royal service (*ādāb-i khidmat-i salātīn*).[326] Most importantly, the knowledge of these qualities lies in being "high born and of noble family" (*dar buzurg-zādagī va sahib-i khāndān-i ʿumda būdan ast*).

Abhishek Kaicker sees this conversation as likely apocryphal, exemplifying like the rest of Vāzih's oeuvre the resistance of an established nobility to new men from the provinces.[327] Faruqui posits it as an example of the clemency with which the supporters of vanquished princes were treated.[328] However, there is reason to believe this reflects discussions that took place between the Emperor and his retainers, or at the very least glosses over a more unpleasant political reality. Could Bahādur Shāh conceivably have tried to punish two

[325] Irādat Khān, f. 79
[326] Ibid., f. 80
[327] Abhishek Kaicker, *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi* (Oxford University Press: 2020): 191-2
[328] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 257

recalcitrant factions, members of which held provinces encompassing the whole of the Deccan and much of North India? Or altogether side-lined the most experienced and ambitious generals of his father, who still commanded tens of thousands of troops in the field? The fact that he acquiesced to the extensive demands of Zūlfiqār Khān gives this possibility the lie. Again, in this context the expansive disbursals of cash and rank in this reign, characterised as extravagant by contemporary observers, appear to be attempts to conciliate existing members of the high nobility as well as to establish supporters of the newly enthroned Emperor. This is evident, for example, in the list of thirteen *amīrs* whose rank was raised at Bahādur Shāh's coronation *darbār*: members of all major networks and groupings in the nobility are present.[329] Five of these were Īrānīs of old family, viz. Asad Khān and his son Zūlfiqār Khān, Mīrzā Sadr al-Dīn Safavī, Nāsir Khān grandson of ʿAlī Mardān Khān, and ʿAtāullāh Khān Marʿashī. Three others are adherents of Nizām al-Mulk: (Chin) Qulīj Khān his uncle, Dilāvar Khān Muhammad Naʿīm, and Mughal Khān his brother-in-law, thus representing the neo-Tūrānī faction of Aurangzeb's reign. Irshad Khān represents the Khvāfī Sayyids who rose to prominence in the late 17th century. Finally, ʿInāyatullāh Khān Kashmīrī represents the favourites of past reigns and the household retainers of Aurangzeb. Of Bahādur Shāh's own supporters and princely retainers we see only Munʿim Khān and his son Khānazād Khān, and presumably the obscure figures of Abūl Fath Khān, Fazlullāh Khān and Mīr Ahmad, of whom nothing is known but their names.

Munʿim Khān's death in 1711 ended what had effectively been a factional truce since the summer of 1707 as conflict broke out once again between the Īrānīs and the Emperor's retainers, frustrated in their hopes for advancement by the persistent grasp of the former on high office. Bahādur Shāh's supporters rallied around ʿAzīm al-Shān, the most competent of his sons, and demanded that the offices of *Bakhshī* and viceroy of the Deccan be given to Munʿim Khān's two sons, and that Zūlfiqār Khān abandon these to become *Vazīr*. Zūlfiqār Khān flatly refused to accept such a compromise, thereby seeking to maintain the Īrānī stranglehold on the two highest military-administrative offices in the empire. ʿAzīm al-Shān then lost his temper in the open *darbār* and declared that "Zūlfiqār Khān seeks to arrogate the vizierate to his father and all other offices to himself," (*Zūlfiqār Khān vizārat ba-nām-i pidar va dīgar khidmāt ba-nām-i khvud mī-khvāhad nigāh-dārad*).[330] Their rivalry came at last to a head upon the Emperor's death in 1712. Zūlfiqār Khān rallied the three other princes against

[329] *Bahādurshāhnāma*, ff. 47b-48a
[330] Khvāfī Khān, 2:677-680

ʿAzīm al-Shān, who was defeated in battle and killed, and then treacherously murdered all but one – Jahāndār Shāh, weakest among the contenders for the throne. This moment marks a turning point in that for the first time, a nobleman had seized executive power independently of backing from the institution of the monarchy. Alam, Richards, and Chandra are united in seeing this as a watershed in the Empire's history, out of which arose a new style of politics as *mansabdārī* networks sought to seize control of the government through the office of *Vazīr*.[331]

The seizure of power by Zūlfiqār Khān inaugurated a period of political violence and retaliation entirely without precedent in Mughal history. He immediately began a violent purge of all of ʿAzīm al-Shān's supporters and indeed of all *mansabdārs* of whatever rank other than his own supporters, killing or imprisoning them at will and seizing their property. Adherents without connections to the dominant faction were excluded from participation in imperial service, and "the servants of the martyred princes...wandered destitute in all directions."[332] Mughal chroniclers chose to focus on Jahāndār Shāh's personal life, his scandalous marriage to the dancer Lāl Kunwar, and the supposed elevation of her lowborn associates, the much scorned "people of the bazaar." [333] This is largely a reflection of the offence caused to élite sensibilities by the elevation of the new consort. In actual fact the Īrānīs were more or less omnipotent, and on the only occasion on which one of Lāl Kunwar's brothers was considered for the government of a province, Zūlfiqār Khān flatly refused to countenance such an appointment.[334] Although Faruqui attributes the marginalisation and penalisation of the supporters of defeated princes to the Emperor's vindictiveness, it seems more likely to have been a consequence of the nature of Zūlfiqār Khān's regime as the first where an aristocratic faction successfully seized complete control of the government. The all-powerful vizier was ruthless in trying to exclude all but his kinsmen and connections from rank and office: Zabardast Khān and Nāsir Khān Mīrzā Amān of ʿAlī Mardān Khān's family were appointed to govern Lahore and Kābul. Bahramand Khān II Banī Mukhtār was given a mansab of 5,000 despite his youth, and Zūlfiqār Khān's nephews were also given titles and ranks despite being children.[335]

The Īrānīs, being the largest and most influential of the *mansabdārī* factions of the early 18th century, were consequently the first to seize power in the new political order after Bahādur

[331] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, 58; Chandra, *Parties and Politics*, 43-48; Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 261
[332] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 160
[333] Khvāfī Khān, 2:689
[334] William Irvine, *The Later Mughals* (MC Sarkar & Sons: 1904), 1:193
[335] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* 1:279, 1:449, 2:384;

Shāh's death. As the proverb has it, the tallest tree in the forest is the first to be cut down, as the various other *mansabdārī* networks united in a coalition against their regime. The numerous dismissed *mansabdārs* of Bahādur Shāh and Aurangzeb, and vast numbers of the disaffected soldiery flocked eastward to the banner of the Sayyid brothers in Allāhābād and Bihār, where they proclaimed Farrukh-Siyar, a son of the murdered ʿAzīm al-Shān, Emperor.[336] By December 1712 the Sayyids had assembled an force of 45,000 cavalry and defeated an army sent by Jahāndār Shāh and Zūlfiqār Khān outside Agra.[337] Between December and January, the Sayyids intrigued with the Tūrānīs, who after several years of imperial disfavour under Bahādur Shāh had hurriedly been given assurances of favour and rank in late 1712 as the rebellion of Farrukh-Siyar gained power in the east.[338] Shortly before the critical battle on 10th January 1713 outside Delhi, "Chīn Qulīch Khān along with many of the illustrious nobles of Tūrān...had formed a concord with Muhammad Farrukh-Siyar" (*ʿahd-i muvāfaqat dar-miyān āvurda būdand*) and withheld aid from Jahāndār Shāh, who was soundly defeated.[339]

The massacres of ʿAzīm al-Shān's supporters, the dismissal and expropriation of noblemen unattached to the triumphant faction and the vindictiveness shown by Zūlfiqār Khān in power had set the tone for the new epoch of Mughal kingmakers. The vizier was thrown into irons and put to death by Farrukh-Siyar's partisans, and Asad Khān's vast fortune was expropriated. Following the model they themselves had set, all their associates and followers were dismissed from office and put to death, exiled or despoiled, with the one exception of Sādāt Khān the new Emperor's father-in-law. Contemporary and later sources emphasise the utter annihilation of the Iʿtimād ad-Daula family and the amazement it excited among all observers. Kāmvar informs us that

> "The servants and dependents of father and son, who had enjoyed such prosperity ('eaten their salt by double mouthfuls'), were dispersed and scattered, and a strange and unearthly fate befell their households, which with all their excellences had matched the splendour of the royal workshops. In the twinkling of an eye no trace of their wealth and property remained, nor any sign of the men and women."[340]

[336] Ibid., f. 150
[337] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 165-6
[338] Ibid., 171
[339] *Khvāfī Khān*, 2:719
[340] Ibid., 176

Vāzih wrote that "this family, which had for two hundred years enjoyed favour, was in one moment annihilated and left without trace like the Barmakids" (*hamcho daulat-i barāmika bī-nām va maʿdūm mutlaq garded*).[341] The comparison to the ill-fated ʿAbbāsid viziers is well made. The Īrānīs were annihilated overnight. Asad Khān's death shortly thereafter was commemorated as "the end of the nobility in India" (*goyā dar hind khātim al-umarā būd*).[342] There were only a few survivors, mostly consigned to obscurity. Mukhtār Khān III, last scion of the eponymous family, occupied the undistinguished position of superintendent of the imperial stables.[343] Sādāt Khān II held no office at all, but was left undisturbed in possession of his property until at least the deposition of his imperial son-in-law in 1719.[344] In practical terms, however, the Īrānī faction had ceased to exist as a political force.

[341] Irādat Khān, f. 171
[342] Ghulām Husayn Khān Tabātabāī, *Siyar al-Mutaakhkharīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd (Dār al-Imāra: 1833), 30
[343] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 173
[344] Khvāfī Khān, 2:555?

1.5: Conclusion

The Īrānī faction was the longest-lived and most successful network in the history of the Mughal nobility, bar none. From 1611 to 1713 they gave the empire two empresses, three *Vakīls*, seven *Vazīrs*, fifteen *Mīr Bakhshīs*, eight *Khān Sāmāns*, and innumerable provincial governors, princely consorts, military officers, and courtiers. Three basic elements of social behaviour underpinned its success within the Mughal system: a shared socio-cultural heritage, a conscious politics of kinship and reproduction both internally and in relation to the dynasty, and a common sectarian identity. These enabled the network of families to maintain cohesion and transmit it across generations in a remarkably stable manner, while resisting the attenuation and modification of identity experienced by other élite emigrants, as we shall discover in the second and third chapters. Their long period of dominance at the imperial centre transformed the nature of aristocratic competition by the late 17th century. Their seizure of power in 1712 then laid the foundations of the radically altered political dispensation that would come prevail in the first half of the 18th. As such, their story is in many ways at the heart of the history of the Mughal high nobility.

Prior to the ascendancy of the faction, we view not factions but individual families and their adherents, such as the Atka-khayl of Shams al-Dīn Khān Atkah (d. 1564) and his son Khān-i ʿAzam ʿAzīz Koka (d. 1624). In Jahāngīr's reign, after the first succession under Akbar's dispensation, we have the example of princely favourites becoming major grandees of the empire, such as Khān Jahān Lodī (d. 1631), Mahābat Khān (d. 1634) and Khān ʿĀlam Dūlday (d. 1632). Finally, in Shāh Jahān's reign, we see individuals of scholarly background, typically recent emigrants without pre-existing ties to the high nobility, appointed to the central ministries like the vizier Saʿdullāh Khān (d. 1656) and the *Khān Sāmān* Fāzil Khān (d. 1663). We shall investigate these types of individual and network more deeply in the third and fourth chapters. However, the striking contrast that appears between these groups and the Īrānī faction is the smallness and ephemerality of the former. They provide at most two or three occupants of high office, typically father and son or uncle and nephew. Their antecedents are generally little known, and their descendants fade rapidly enough into a similar obscurity. The Īrānīs, by contrast, provide generation after generation of ministers, consorts, governors, and generals. From the emigration of Ghiyās al-Dīn Qazvīnī in 1560 to the execution of Zūlfiqār Khān in 1713, five generations elapse, each serving only to increase the power of this faction.

We have seen that a shared socio-cultural heritage from the early Safavid milieu coupled with endogamous marital patterns to create a powerful mechanism of absorption for new emigrants. We see these clearly expressed as late as 1712: Irādat Khān III "Vāzih," of the Sāvajī family, wrote a versified letter to the powerful vizier, his distant kinsman, asking him to protect him from the Emperor's disfavour.[345] Vāzih reproduces it in his memoirs as proof of the disfavour he received from Jahāndār Shāh, which would have conferred a certain political capital in Farrukh-Siyar's reign. It is of particular interest as one of very few surviving private communications from one Īrānī nobleman to another –

My ancestors served the imperial family

Without hope of reward or personal gain

I am ʿAlī's descendant (*āl-i ʿAlī*), and you his sword (*zūlfiqār*),

Know that I have no guardian (*vālī*) but you

I am ashamed of the sin which I committed,

I stand at your door with my head bared

Today, you are in the place of my fathers and uncles (*jadd-o ʿamm*),

Humiliate me not before the strange and familiar (*bī-gāna va khvesh*)

Even if I am wrong, and viler than anything you accuse me of,

Shouldn't the name of my family (*khāndān*) be regarded well?

Today you are our chieftain (*sar-i guroh*) and guard of our honour (*nāmūs*),

Think not of me, but of our forebears (*buzurgān*)

The language absolutely precludes this being addressed to any but an intimate friend or patron. Moreover, it embodies perfectly for us the ideological self-perception and identity of the Īrānī nobles: an identity rooted in shared ancestral heritage, ties of kinship and affinity, and an emotive appeal to the ʿAlid loyalty and Twelver Shīʿī faith of the Safavid ruling class. Vāzih begins by referring to his family's antiquity and the Shīʿī faith that he shares with Zūlfiqār Khān. In asking Zūlfiqār's pardon, he does so by reminding him of their close ties. He reminds him of their shared ancestry, of the honour of his forebears (who are also the vizier's maternal ancestors); and obliquely identifies himself among the latter's *khveshān* (relations),

[345] Irādat Khān, f. 146-7

and thus entitled to more consideration than mere strangers or aliens (*bī-gānagān*). He explicitly identifies himself as part of the faction (*guroh*) of Zūlfiqār Khān, whom he entrusts with his good name (*nāmūs*) – a particularly affecting appeal given *nāmūs'* connotations of chastity and the honour of a family's women. Implicitly, "spare me for the sake of the honour of my wives and daughters, who are also your female relations." Let us remember that both men were *mahram* (i.e. among the close relatives with whom purdah is not observed) of Zūlfiqār's aunt, who as Khān Zamān Mīr Khalīl's widow likely lived among the women of Vāzih's family, and thus is encompassed by the *nāmūs* of his household. The letter ends with a final, explicit reference to mutual ancestors (*buzurgān*). Given that Zūlfiqār Khān was patrilineally not a fellow Sayyid but a Qarāmānlū Qizilbāsh, this cannot be a generic reference to ʿAlid descent – Vāzih is talking about their immediate common ancestors. Finally, given that he elsewhere identifies Khān Fīrūz Jang as the "chieftain of the Tūrānī *guroh*," (*sar-i guroh-i tūrāniya*), we are left with the tantalising possibility that *guroh* was the endonym used in reference to political factions at the court.

Finally, the essentially Shīʿī character of the Īrānī presence at the Mughal court is an under-examined facet of Mughal religious cultures, exemplified by two imperial consorts far apart in time: Nūr Jahān as Shāh Shuja's foster-mother and Sāhiba Zamānī, the Marʿashī consort of Muhammad Shāh. Shujāʿ was raised from his infancy by Nūr Jahān, and in Jahāngīr's words they were both "inordinately fond" of him.[346] Perhaps this was simply the Empress preparing yet another provisional heir against the contingencies of imperial successions – however, what interests us is that she seems to have brought him up a Shīʿī. His tutor, who likely impressed him with Shīʿī ideas, was ʿAlā al-Mulk, the son of Nūrullāh Shūshtarī.[347] What makes this even more remarkable is that he must have been appointed to that post by Nūr Jahān, given that Jahāngīr had executed his father in 1610 (i.e. before their marriage) either for "bigotry" or for religious dissimulation.[348] The *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, written prior to the rise of Nūr Jahān, has him declare that "Qāzī Nūrullāh met his deserved end, though the common people must have thought me a bigoted and coarse Sunnī (*sunnī-yi mutaʿassub va ghalīz*)."[349] Shaykh Farīd reported that the Qāzī was "very devoted to the Imāmīya sect, but for

[346] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 281
[347] S.A.A. Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isnaʿashari Shīʿas in India* (Munshiram Manoharlal: 1996), 1:4, 1:343
[348] Alvi, "Religion and State during the Reign of Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr: Non-Juristical Perspectives," *Studia Islamica* no. 69 (1989): 112
[349] ʿAbd al-Sattār ibn-i Qāsim Lāhori. *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, eds. Arif Naushahi and Moeen Nizami (Mīrās-i Maktūb: 2006), 78

some reason he was slain out of Jahāngīr's anger" (*dar ghazb-i jahāngīrī kushta gasht*).[350] Therefore, either the Emperor mellowed in his attitude to Shīʿī sectarianism after his marriage, or Nūr Jahān appointed the cleric to tutor her great-nephew specifically as a form of patronage or protection, both of which suggest sincere Shīʿī conviction on the Empress's part. This upbringing clearly had a lasting effect on Shujāʿ – Bernier reported that in 1656 he "confided in the support of the Persian *omrahs*, whose religious views he had embraced."[351] Thus, the prince either professed forms of devotion linked to Shiʿism, such as ʿAlid loyalty, or claimed to be particularly sympathetic to Shīʿī interests, specifically to attract Īrānī political support.

Sāhiba Zamānī was the daughter of Sayyid Salābat Khān Marʿashī and through her paternal grandmother was the great-great-granddaughter of Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī, father-in-law of Aurangzeb and Murād Bakhsh.[352] All her documented ancestors thus belong to well-known Shīʿī, Safavid lineages. Salābat Khān was one of the few survivors of the downfall of the Īrānī faction thanks to his privileged position as Farrukh-Siyar's brother-in-law.[353] Sāhiba Zamānī's grandfather was killed and her father and uncles wounded in the violence surrounding Farrukh-Siyar's deposition by the Sayyid brothers in 1719.[354] After the downfall of the latter, this presumably gave them some favour in the sight of the new sovereign, Muhammad Shāh, which coupled with her illustrious ancestry to ensure her selection as a consort to the Emperor. Her only offspring was a daughter, who despite her mother's protests was married to the invading Ahmad Shāh Durrānī in 1757.[355] She then departed for Afghanistan with her daughter, not returning to India until Ahmad Shāh's death in 1774. During this exile, land that Muhammad Shāh had granted her was repossessed by the crown and given in *jāgīr* to Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the noted Naqshbandī scholar. She demanded the return of this land, to which the imperial court assented. We know of the case because Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz brought it before the British Resident in 1806: his correspondence with Governor-General reveals that Sāhiba Zamānī, "being a bigoted Shea, took an aversion to Ubd ool Azeez, in consequence of his being a Soonee, and appropriated the ground to herself." Of Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's sectarian affiliation there can also be no doubt, given that he authored a notorious polemic against Twelver Shiism

[350] *Zakhīrat*, 2:373
[351] Bernier, Travels, 26
[352] Mīrzā Muhammad quoted in Irvine, "The Later Mughals (1707-1803)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* 73 (1907): 359
[353] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 183
[354] Ibid., 252
[355] Sehar Khwaja, "Fosterage and Motherhood in the Mughal Harem," *Social Scientist* 46 nos. 5-6 (2018): 42, 44-5

seeking to comprehensively refute Shīʿī beliefs and practices.[356] The fact that long after the political end of the Īrānī hegemony, a Marʿashī consort had so rigorously maintained her sectarian identity suggests that other dynastic consorts would have been able to do so as well. Taken together, these two cases – Nūr Jahān raising Shujāʿ from c. 1616-1627 and Sāhiba Zamānī, an imperial consort to 1748 – span the entirety of the faction's existence.

The degree to which the political activity of the women of this faction is documented is perhaps the best index of its prominence in a cultural context where historians and chroniclers were in generally highly reluctant to identify and record even the names of women. It is a strange irony that the distorted representation of the first and perhaps most distinguished Īrānī imperial consort in historiography has served to elide the prevalence of aristocratic women's involvement in court politics in subsequent decades. As we have seen, Shāhjahānī historians and European observers had each their own reasons for the highly negative gendered representations of Nūr Jahān Begum. In unpacking the embeddedness of this *topos* into early Mughal historiography, we come to comprehend the culturally legitimate role of imperial consorts both as actors in their own right, and as conduits between the high nobility and the dynasty. This is perhaps a potentially productive approach for further study.

The matrix of identities and behaviours that united the families and individuals of the Īrānī faction represents a unique phenomenon in the wider Mughal system. It does not seem that any other network or grouping within the high nobility ever came close to this model. External factors ensured a degree of élite emigration from Safavid Iran into Mughal India, just as structural factors within that polity had determined the nature of ties between the pro-Takkalū emigrants in the late 16th. These behaviours were replicated by the Īrānī *mansabdārs* throughout the 17th century and indeed successfully transposed into the Mughal courtly milieu – they are seen to have been unmatched in their manipulation of dynasty's reproductive politics. We shall later examine how the faction led by Khān Fīrūz Jang and Nizām al-Mulk in the late 17th century seems to have sought to reproduce the Īrānī model of socio-cultural identity through the articulation of a new kind of "Tūrānī" identity, with limited success.

In closing this chapter, we are able to definitively answer the question of what the Īrānī faction was. It was a group of élite Shīʿī emigrants from Safavid Īrān, mostly of Sayyid-notable

[356] Soraya Khodamoradi, "Siyāda and Imamate in Eighteenth-Century India: The Tarīqa Muhammadiyya Khālisa and the Sunni-Shīʿa Sectarian Conflict," in *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam*, eds. Rachida Chih, David Jordan & Stefan Reichmuth (Brill: 2021), 2:153

or tribal-aristocratic Qizilbāsh background, who continued to be identified with the Safavid polity in India. The impetus for their emigration came from internal conflict within the Safavid state, in that they are all linked to various Qizilbāsh *oymāqs* that fell from favour. In India, the prestige of their Safavid dynastic ties and their own genealogies brought them into the Mughal high nobility. The origins of the faction lay in the remarkable fortunes of the family of Iʿtimād ad-Daula in Jahāngīr's reign. Through the mechanisms of factional operation we have discussed, ranging from the rapid incorporation of newcomers, patronage and intermarriage within their own circle, and the manipulation of succession and reproduction in the dynasty, they achieved a pre-eminent position within the higher nobility from Jahāngīr's reign to the beginning of the 18th century. Under Zūlfiqār Khān's leadership, the Īrānīs became the first aristocratic network to attempt to seize control of the state in 1712, and in so doing they inaugurated a new political dispensation that long outlasted their own demise. In contrast to many of the assumptions scholars have made about this faction, it was at no time organised according to any conception of "ethnicity," nor did it encompass the totality or even the majority of Persian and Iranian emigrants to India, nor owe its preferential position to commercial or administrative skills and competence.

Chapter 2: Mobilities and Circulation, Centres and Peripheries

This chapter is devoted to examining patterns of élite circulation between Central and West Asia and Mughal India in the 17th century, and to elucidating the practical aspect of élite circulation and recruitment into the Mughal system. Having in the first chapter examined the context for and composition of the wave of élite emigration from Safavid Iran to Mughal India around the turn of that century, this chapter seeks to further investigate the nature of such emigration and the position of emigrant *amīrs* within transregional networks of patronage and professional talent. In order to do so the chapter examines the four prominent entrants into *mansabdārī* service in this period: Husayn Pāshā (fl. 1649-1676), re-titled Islām Khān Rūmī, of the hereditary governors of Basra, Mīr Muhammad Amīn Shahristānī (1573-1637), an Iranian aristocrat and sometime vizier (*Mīr Jumla*) of Golconda, Muhammad Saʿīd Ardistānī (c. 1591-1663), diamond merchant and adventurer who rose to the same office before entering Mughal service and ultimately becoming *Vazīr*, and ʿAlī Mardān Khān (fl. 1625-1657), the most prominent Safavid defector to the Mughal polity. Over their long and distinguished careers, these nobles negotiated between various centres of power before ultimately ending up in Mughal service. The record shows them to have enjoyed considerable political latitude at various points of their career that allowed them to alternate between courtly centres of power with a remarkable freedom of action. In Subrahmanyam's words, movements of humans between Iran, India and Central Asia were rarely a form of one-way traffic.[357] However, this was less the case for members of the ruling élite than for the average migrant. Following their entry into the high nobility, these figures become largely indistinguishable in political profile from other *amīrs*.

We are therefore compelled to rely either on moments of crisis or figures crossing boundaries to ascertain the patterns of behaviour typical of élite emigrants. Their activities are particularly visible in times of crisis and in peripheral areas or zones such as the Deccan, the Persian Gulf and the Khurāsān frontier, i.e. those furthest from centralised Mughal control. We then go on to examine salient features of these four cases in the context of élite circulation between Iran and North India. In so doing, the chapter seeks to patterns of behaviour of such élite individuals and households as trans-regional political entrepreneurs that, far from being caught up in the political developments and institutional changes of the period as passive objects, were acutely conscious of their own political and material interest, and how they

[357] Subrahmanyam, "Early Modern Circulation," 55

engaged with state authorities. The chapter can be seen as describing the journey of four separate individuals into becoming part of the Mughal high nobility.

A note on definitions is necessary before we begin. The term governing élite refers here to actors embedded within the dominant military-bureaucratic strata of these societies, with ascriptive and achieved status-claims intelligible to the Mughals as a Persianate imperial court. Recent scholarship on Persians and other West Asian emigrants has tended to focus on state formation and politics in the Deccan sultanates.[358] However, these encompass a wide range of professional, scholarly and mercantile emigrants and actors, comprising élite and non-élite migrants of varied backgrounds.[359] Elsewhere, in their study of the Iranian diaspora in Early Modern India, Subrahmanyam and Christopher Bayly focuses on the class designated "portfolio capitalists," which although of military and administrative origin were further distinguished by their command of military resources and participation in Indian Ocean commerce.[360] It should be made clear that the subject of this study is distinct from patterns of élite emigration and circulation as observed in the Deccan. The figures we examine occupy a somewhat different stratum. Although almost all are recorded as participating in commercial activities, these only reinforced their political and military-bureaucratic careers. Furthermore, the high ranks they attained upon entry into Mughal service were a recognition of the administrative experience, military and financial resources, and acknowledged socio-cultural status claims they brought with them. The last factor in particular distinguishes élite emigration to the Mughal court from patterns visible in the Deccan. In the distinct political free market of the latter, foreign-ness functioned as a discrete political identity in a completely different manner from Mughal North India, as a function of élite emigrants' common self-perception as foreigners.[361] Chapters 3 and 4 will demonstrate how intra-emigrant differences seem to have been considerably more important at the Mughal court by comparison.

Apart from the standard Mughal sources, this chapter relies on the official Safavid chronicles of the period (ʿ*Ālam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī, Khuld-i Barīn* and ʿ*Abbāsnāma*) to obtain as complete a record as possible of events between India and Iran comprising our subjects. In discussing their presence and role at the Mughal court, European observers such as Bernier,

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[358] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad;" Roy Fischel, "Society, Space and the State;" Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25 no. 4 (1988): 401-424; Overton, *Iran and the Deccan*;

[359] Cf. Overton, "Introduction," *Iran and the Doors to the Deccan*, 13

[360] Subrahmanyam & Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists," 418

[361] See in particular Fischel, "Society, Space and the State," Chapter 4

Tavernier and are valuable, being unconstrained by the reluctance of official sources to discuss factionalism. These are particularly useful given they record events of the last decade of Shāh Jahān and the early reign of Aurangzeb, when ʿAlī Mardān Khān, Mīr Jumla and Islām Khān were all active at the Mughal court.

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2.1: Four *Mansabdārī* Careers

2.1.1: Islām Khān Rūmī, Husayn Pāshā of Basra (fl. 1649-1676)

The life and career of Islām Khān Rūmī is one of the most interesting and informative among those of the émigré *amīrs* of the 17th century. We will begin with an outline of the narrative before examining in detail events and phenomena illustrative of his importance to this study.

Husayn Pāshā was the scion of a family that had held office as hereditary, semi-autonomous governors of the city of Basra since 1596. Rudi Matthee has authored a survey of that city's turbulent history in the 17th century, which concerns us until Husayn Pāshā's departure for India in 1668. Basra occupied an important position from which to control both the lucrative Hajj caravan trade from Iran to the holy cities of the Hijaz, as well as the bulk of Mesopotamian trade with India across the western Indian Ocean.[362] However, surrounded by marshland, menaced by predatory Bedouin tribes, inhabited by a refractory population and constantly menaced by the ambitions of the Safavids, Basra proved extremely difficult for the Sublime Porte to control through its Governor in Baghdad. In 1596 the Pāshā of Baghdād thus sold the government of Basra to a local notable named Afrāsyāb, with the understanding that nominal sovereignty would remain with the Ottoman Sultān.[363] Afrāsyāb Pāshā maintained an orderly and secure government, in which he was followed by his son ʿAlī Pāshā in 1624 and ultimately his grandson Husayn Pāshā in 1649.[364] The Safavids made two abortive attempts to capture the town in 1623-4 and 1628, but peace was established in 1631, followed by a mission to Isfahān to re-establish good relations in 1637.[365]

This relative equilibrium was disrupted upon Husayn Pāshā's assumption of power. The sources agree that the origin of the trouble was an inheritance dispute between Husayn Pāshā and his uncles, Ahmad Beg and Fathī Beg. These latter complained of mistreatment at their nephew's hands to the Ottoman authorities in both Baghdād and Constantinople. The Sublime Porte authorised Murtazá Pāshā, Governor of Baghdād, to replace Husayn Pāshā with his uncles. He proceeded to advance and occupy Basra with a large army, while Husayn Pāshā

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[362] Rudi Matthee, "Between Arabs, Turks and Iranians: The Town of Basra, 1600-1700," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69, no. 1 (2006): 56-7

[363] Ibid., 59

[364] An outline of the political history of this period is given by Stephen Longrigg in *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Oxford University Press: 1925): 99-118

[365] Matthee, "Between Arabs, Turks and Iranians," 63

fled to Īrān. Despite initial successes, the old problems of predatory tribes, logistical difficulties and a mutinous population that had originally obstructed the effectiveness of Ottoman control of the region reared their heads once again. Murtazá Pāshā further inflamed the populace by murdering Ahmad Beg and Fathī Beg in his anger at failing to secure the much-anticipated family treasures that Husayn Pāshā had absconded with. The episode ended with Murtazá Pāshā's ignominious retreat from Basra and Husayn Pāshā's triumphant re-entry at the head of an irregular force of Arab tribal auxiliaries and Iranian soldiers in 1654, re-establishing amicable relations with the Porte by sending a mission laden with gifts and assurances of obedience.[366]

On the basis of an Arabic source, *Zaʿd al-Musāfir*, Longrigg attributes the grievances of his uncles to the "forceful and ambitious character" of Husayn Pāshā motivating him to internal oppression against his relations and subjects.[367] Among the Safavid sources however, Vāla Qazvīnī is generally dismissive of all members of the family of Afrāsyāb, accusing the Pāshā of pretension and his uncles of "malevolence and envy," whereas the *ʿAbbās-nāma* depicts Husayn Pāshā as the innocent victim of intrigue.[368] This is easily explained when we consider that the latter source sought to emphasise Husayn Pāshā's use of Iranian troops and aid in regaining his ancestral seat: "with the assistance of the untiring fortune of the Shadow of God [i.e. ʿAbbās II], Husayn Pāshā uprooted the thorns of hypocrisy from the rose-garden of his ancestral country (*mulk-i maurūsī*) and paid all the claims of internal and external pretenders."[369]

By the time Vāla Qazvīnī wrote in the late 17th century, the situation had changed dramatically. Husayn Pāshā's conquest of al-Ahsā in 1664 enraged the Porte, which despatched another army from Baghdād, whose campaign followed much the same pattern as the earlier expedition. By this point, however, Husayn Pāshā's position in Basra had become untenable. He had lost the support of the citizenry, which he plundered before fleeing first to the Iranian border and finally to Shīrāz. Sulaymān (r. 1666-1694), the new Shāh, was uninterested in a potential conquest of Basra and refused to mount a campaign in support of the Pāshā's claims.

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366 Ibid., 67

367 Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq,* 110-11

368 Muhammad Tāhir Vahīd al-Zamān Qazvīnī, *ʿAbbāsnāma*, ed. Ibrāhīm Dihgān (Kitābfurosh-i Dāvūdī Arāk, 1951), 177-78; Muhammad Yūsuf Vāla Isfahānī, *Khuld-i Barīn, Volume VIII*, ed. Muhammad Rizā Nasīrī (Anjuman-i Āsār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 2003), 530

369 *ʿAbbāsnāma*, 179

He thus determined to emigrate to India, landing at Sindh before making his way via Lahore to Delhi, which he reached on 15th July 1669.[370]

The Pāshā's career in India, which we shall consider in greater depth later, was short-lived but eventful. Retitled Islām Khān and cognominated Rūmī (the Roman i.e. Anatolian or Ottoman), he immediately received the high rank of 5,000 as well a plethora of gifts and privileges, and became Governor of Mālwa. Briefly falling from favour in 1670, he was restored his office and rank at the intercession of Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh in 1672 and distinguished himself as an able commander in the Deccan campaigns.[371] In 1676, engaged in battle with the army of Bījāpūr, his elephant was surrounded by enemy troops, and he was killed along with his son ʿAlī Beg.[372]

It is worth considering the unique position of Basra, which gave its rulers such a unique scope for political flexibility. In this Mesopotamian port, nestled between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, we encounter a frontier-zone comparable to the Deccan, wherein we observe the difficulty of enforcing central authority, especially as compared to the heartlands of those polities, and consequently the far greater freedom of action enjoyed by local actors. This position of Basra was the basis of the independent power of its ruling family. The city was a major centre not only of Ottoman but also Iranian commerce, thanks to the restrictions placed by ʿAbbas I on Iranian merchants. Most importantly, it controlled pilgrimage routes and consequently all the Hajj trade from Persia and Central Asia to Mecca and Medina. So great had the drain of specie from Iran grown by the early 17th century that ʿAbbas I sought desperately to promote alternate centres of pilgrimage within Iran to reduce the number of pilgrims passing through Basra to the Hijaz.[373] Jean de Thévenot observed in the middle of the century that not only did the Pasha derive a great income from the customs of the port but also "all the Persians who go every year to Mecca."[374] The fall of Portuguese Hormuz to the Persians in 1622 further contributed to Basra's importance in the Persian Gulf trade.[375] The wealth thus amassed by the Pashas of Basra enabled them to maintain a quasi-autonomous principality,

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[370] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:699
[371] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī,* 122
[372] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*700
[373] Willem Floor, "Commerce vi. In the Safavid and Qajar Periods," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 6 (1993):67-75
[374] Jean de Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (H. Clark, 1687) 2:162-3
[375] Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies* (Studentlitteratur: 1973) 357

unusually secure even by comparison to other frontier zones and regions without strongly centralised authority such as the Deccan or the Khurāsān frontier.

Particularly striking in the Mesopotamian context is the ease with which different centres of political power could be resorted to by the relevant actors: not only do we have two instances (1654 and 1668) of Husayn Pāshā openly offering to transfer his allegiance to the Shāh, but as early as the 1623 campaign ʿAbbās I demanded that Afrāsyāb Pāshā renounce his allegiance to the Ottomans and mint coins in the name of the Safavids.[376] In 1651, again, the agents of the English East India Company at Bandar ʿAbbās reported that the Pāshā was said to be ready to surrender Basra to the Shāh without violence.[377] In the campaign of Murtazá Pāshā, theoretically the enforcement of a decree by the central government against a refractory provincial governor, we again see multiple actors behaving in a strictly self-interested manner largely independent of the "legal" authorities, from the Governor of Baghdād seeking to despoil the inhabitants of Basra for his own profit, to Husayn Pāshā decamping to Safavid territory to negotiate an invasion of Ottoman territory. Only the two uncles, Fathī Beg and Ahmad Beg, might be said to be acting in accord with "legitimate" authorities, although the *ʿAbbāsnāma* hints that they owed this to having bribed the right "brokers" (*kār-guzārān*) in Constantinople rather than having any legitimate claims.[378] The dramatic conclusion of this rapid series of re-alignments and reconfigurations is Husayn Pāshā's quite literal burning of bridges in 1668 as he sacked Basra and fled east, likely certain that future rapprochement with the Porte had become impossible.

My emphasis on the flexibility of these political alignments is not to be understood as a re-hashing of old tropes of Oriental treachery and intrigue. It is intended rather to underscore the considerable freedom of action that could be accommodated within theoretically absolutist and centralised political systems. Only with the absorption of formerly local and regional actors into courtly settings as stages of imperial politics could such powerholders be reshaped according to and remoulded into recognisable forms: this was a major function of courtly status culture. Political flexibility away from these centres of power was understood as such by important actors across this cultural zone. Husayn Pāshā in 1654 had retaken his ancestral fief by force, with the support of a foreign dynasty, from claimants judged legitimate by the central

[376] Matthee, "Between Arabs, Turks and Iranians," 61
[377] William Foster. *The English Factories in India 1651-54* (Clarendon Press: 1915), 64
[378] *ʿAbbāsnāma*, 177

government and against the forces of that government's provincial representative. He was allowed to remain established in that position for another fourteen years simply by sending gifts and assurances of loyalty to Constantinople. Nor was this a departure from tradition: Vāla Qazvīnī colourfully describes the family's assumption of power in the city as Afrāsyāb Pāshā's having "slammed shut the gates of submission and subordination in the face of the sovereign of Rūm" in order to become the city's absolute ruler (*hākim-i mutlaq*).[379] He goes on to approvingly take note of the sincerity and steadfast loyalty (*ikhlās va yak-jihatī*) of the family towards the Safavid dynasty until disturbed by the "malevolence of the seditious people of that country" (*fasād-i mufsidān-i ān diyār*), presumably referring to the Pāshā's uncles.[380] This evidently does not mean that the Afrāsyāb family were seditious rebels who for decades secretly harboured Safavid sympathies, but rather that they probably went to lengths to placate multiple centres of power likely both as a precaution against aggression from overwhelmingly militarily superior adversaries, and as a means of keeping their options open in precisely such an eventuality as that faced by Husayn Pāshā.

The most obvious and astonishing instance of this, needless to say, is the future Islām Khān's maintenance of ties with the Mughal court to which he ultimately emigrated, not to mention with various Safavid grandees like the Shāmlū governors of Khurāsān. We will consider the significance of this in terms of the political culture described above later. Let us examine the individuals we can be reasonably certain he corresponded with. The earliest definite contact between the Shāmlūs and the Pāshās of Basra took place sometime after the 1637 mission to Isfahān.[381] The earliest extant letter between them is one of goodwill, thanking the reigning Pāshā for his previous communications and expressing the desire for continued good relations. ʿAbbās Qulī Khān apologises for the delayed reply, mentioning that his father had received the previous letter but died shortly thereafter.[382] Given that Hasan Khān died in 1641 and the collection was compiled sometime after 1649, it is virtually certain that the addressee is ʿAlī Pāshā, the father of Husayn. Relations were probably initially established by ʿAlī Pāshā's emissaries to the Safavid court in 1637, if they had not existed earlier. Furthermore, Hasan Khān had been governor-general of Khurāsān in succession to his father since 1617, and belonged to the Shāmlū, among the most prominent and influential of the

[379] *Khuld-i Barīn*, 530
[380] Ibid.
[381] *The Shāmlū Letters: Munsha'āt-i Hasan Khān Shāmlū*, ed. Riazul Islam (Institute of Central and West Asian Studies: 1971) ff. 86b-87b
[382] Ibid., f. 87a

Qizilbāsh *oymāqs*.[383] It seems likely, therefore, that the Pāshās had been intent on cultivating close relationships with prominent figures in the Safavid ruling class for many decades, relationships which indubitably would have been useful in 1654 when Husayn Pāshā appealed to the court of Isfahān for assistance.

Closer to home, Shāh Navāz Khān reports that Islām Khān "always maintained friendly relations with the great princes (*salātīn-i ʿazīm al-shān*) of Hindūstān, sending them letters and presents," and notes that he had despatched a congratulatory embassy to Aurangzeb in 1661.[384] This embassy was also observed by Bernier, who refers to the "Prince of Bassora's" gift of Arabian horses.[385] The various grandees whom Islām Khān and his father would have corresponded with almost certainly include Āsaf Khān, who is known to have frequently corresponded with Iranian nobles.[386] As early as 1653, when faced with his uncles' intrigues, Husayn Pāshā hit upon the expedient of abduction, loading them "with all their property and dependents onto ships and despatching them towards the country of Hindūstān," although they escaped *en route* and fled to Baghdād.[387] These relations clearly long predated the congratulatory embassy despatched by Husayn Pāshā in 1661, which was one of the earliest diplomatic missions received after Aurangzeb's coronation.[388] Almost a decade prior thereunto he thus reposed sufficient confidence in his Mughal correspondents to assume they would act in accordance with his interests in so convoluted a scheme. Finally, he sent representatives bearing an petition (*ʿarzdāsht*) in 1665 – although it has not survived, we can likely surmise this was a direct request for assurances of refuge or protection of some kind from the Emperor, which was likely answered in the affirmative, leading to his eventual arrival in India from Iran on July 19, 1669.[389]

This brings us to the final important aspect of Islām Khān's career: the way it highlights the expectations of these figures in Mughal political culture. Islām Khān in 1669 received extraordinary perquisites and emoluments from the Emperor, ranging from the high *mansab* of 5,000 and gifts of cash and jewels to a mansion on the Jamnā and rank and *mansabs* for his

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383 *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1163
384 *Maāsir*, 1:243
385 Bernier, Travels, 133
386 *Shāmlū Letters*, ff. 75b
387 *ʿAbbās-nāma*, 178
388 Naimur Rahman Farooqui, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire," PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986: 103
389 Ibid., 104, 107

two sons as well. A year later he was deprived of all these privileges for a highly significant reason: "Aurangzeb wished that he would send for his family and settle in the country. As he, for certain reasons, delayed in sending for his wife and his third son Mukhtār Beg, and made evasions, he was removed from office and excluded from the presence."[390] We now remind ourselves that the Pāshā's wife, younger children and other dependents had been resident at Bihbahān near Shīrāz since 1654 when he first removed there to petition Shāh ʿAbbās II for military aid.[391] Clearly he realised the vulnerability of his position as soon as his relationship with Ottoman authorities was first disrupted and had these past sixteen years carefully kept his political options open. That this was not acceptable to Aurangzeb exemplifies the intensification of imperial authority with movement towards the centres of power. The Governor of Basra, a remote and semi-autonomous Ottoman dependency with certain connections to Iran, was able to maintain some flexibility in his allegiance with multiple centres of power. Mughal political culture, at least in North India, did not countenance any such flexibility for the *sūbadār* of Mālwa, a senior *amīr* of the court of Shāhjahānābād. Once joined by his relations however all obstacles to his continued advancement along the path of imperial favour disappeared. *Mansabdārī* service was thus a one-way street. Why and to what degree it was accepted as such, we shall discuss later in the chapter. At the same time this episode illuminates the degree to which imperial-nobiliary relationships were ideologically conditioned, as well as their reciprocal and mutually beneficial material aspect. Islām Khān Rūmī exemplifies the latitude enjoyed by major political actors within the governing élites of these societies, as well as the limitations of thereof in relation to central power.

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[390] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:700
[391] Ibid.; *ʿAbbās-nāma*, 179

2.1.2: Mīr Jumla Mīr Muhammad Amīn Shahristānī, "Rūh al-Amīn" (1573-1637)

Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī, as he will be to referred to avoid confusion with several other *mansabdārs* named Muhammad Amīn, is one of the most fascinating and elusive figures of this period. Existing scholarship has generally emphasised the unorthodox and extraordinary details of his career; this study seeks to emphasise the ways in which these fit into pre-existing patterns confirming much of what we can discern of *mansabdārī* factionalism and Mughal political culture.

Rūh al-Amīn came of an illustrious family, the Shahristānīs, who Shāh Navāz Khān describes to his audience as being descended "from famous Sayyids of Isfahān," (*aʿyān-i sādāt-i isfahān*). Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche identifies them as part of a group of eight families identifies in contemporary sources as the grandees (*akābir*), grandees and nobles (*akābir va ashrāf*) or grandees and notables (*akābir va aʿyān*) of Isfahān in the 16th century, obviously the same circle referred to by Shāh Navāz Khān.[392] Having held office as *mustaufīs*, provincial *sadrs* and viziers in the 16th century, they ascended ever further after the accession of Shāh ʿAbbās I, who gave two of his daughters in marriage to scions of the Shahristānīs, including Rūh al-Amīn's cousin, Mīr Taqī, and his nephew, Mīr Rafīʿ.[393] The office of Sadr, highest state religious official, was throughout the reign of ʿAbbās I held by members of the family, culminating in the same Mīrzā Rafīʿ's appointment to the office 1625.[394] In a remarkable demonstration of the widespread currency of the prestige of such clerical notable families, the latter's great-great-grandson, Muhammad Mahdī al-Shahristānī, migrated to Karbala in 1717 and founded the al-Shahristānī family of Iraqi Shīʿī clerics, prominent to this very day.

A recent study by Mohammad Shadrooymanesh and Kaveh Akhtaripour has closely examined the evidence in Rūh al-Amīn's poetry and other sources to ascertain the correct dates and order of events of his life, which become garbled in later sources such as the mid-17th century *Tazkira-i Nasrābādī*. In his own words, he was born in 981 *hijrī* (1573/4), meaning he travelled to India at the age of 29 around 1602, and spent six years in Golconda before receiving the title of Mīr Jumla in 1609/10.[395] We know that shortly after the death of Muhammad Qulī

[392] Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahān im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Schwarz, 1980), 209
[393] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1147
[394] Arjomand, "The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shiʿite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran," 176
[395] Mohammad Shadrooymanesh and Kaveh Akhtaripour, "A critical study of the sources on the life and poetry of Ruh al-Amin Shahrestani," *Ayeeneh-ye Miras* 17 (2020): 204-5

Qutb Shāh (r. 1580-1611) he departed Golconda and returned to Iran via Bījāpūr.[396] On the basis of his fourth *masnavī*, wherein he laments the recent death of his patron and mentions the accession of Sultān Muhammad Qutb Shāh, it is suggested he remained in Golconda until early 1612.[397] He returned to Isfahān via Bījāpūr and proceeded to visit Shāh ʿAbbās I in Māzandarān in 1613, where he met Iskandar Munshī, the author of the *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*. Iskandar Munshi writes that he claimed to have returned to Iran out of love of his native country and its sovereign. Overweening ambition, however, led him to demand the office of *Vakīl*, which he was denied, after which he returned to Isfahān.[398] The next we hear of him is in 1618, when he departed for India, for reasons we shall examine below. He held the office of *Khān Sāmān* in 1620-27 and from 1628-1635 before being appointed *Mīr Bakhshī*, in which office he died in 1637. A recent study on Iranian élites in the Deccan highlight his career as a unique instance of trilateral mobility between Iran, the Deccan, and Mughal India, describing his movements as "dizzying peregrinations...motivated by personal circumstance and opportunism."[399] This study aims to demonstrate, however, that although unusually eventful, Rūh al-Amīn's career confirms much of what we have seen of the Mughal political system.

In the context of the Deccan Rūh al-Amīn belongs to the class of enterprising Foreigners extensively studied by Roy Fischel, typifying the same patterns of élite mobility, the maintenance of ancestral and regional identities, and continuous distance from the Deccan environment.[400] It is evident that he was not particularly invested in the Qutb-Shāhī polity: Shāh Navāz Khān accuses him of benefiting from the indolence and incapacity of Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh to monopolise power and enrich himself at the expense of his patron.[401] However, although he only achieved the rank of Mīr Jumla in 1608, he must have been assiduously cultivating royal favour and political influence since his arrival, given that he was instrumental the same year in preventing a general rising against the Foreigners of Hyderabad thanks to his influence with the monarch.[402] The vast wealth he is said to have amassed in the

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[396] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* 2:118

[397] Shadrooymanesh & Akhtaripour, "A critical study," 208-9

[398] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1098

[399] Keelan Overton, "Introduction," in *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture and Talent in Circulation 1400-1700* (Indiana University Press: 2020), 13

[400] Roy Fischel, "Gharībān in the Deccan: Migration, Élite Mobility and the Making and Unmaking of an Early Modern State," in *Iran and the Deccan*, ed. Keelan Overton (Indiana University Press: 2020): 130-31

[401] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:118

[402] Fischel, "Society, Space and the State," 86

Deccan is mentioned in all the extant sources.[403] The mansion he built was accounted "the best of all the mansions and dwellings (*maqāmāt-u-manāzil*)" of the city, and long after his departure was still the site of celebrations by ʿAbdullāh Qutb Shāh and his court and harem.[404] He was clearly well-remembered in the Deccan, as the same source reports that he was the only official in the reigns of Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh and Sultān Muhammad Qutb Shāh to receive the unique honour of a jewelled ink-stand (*qalam-dān-i murassaʿ*).[405] His career in the Deccan, although illustrious, is therefore quite typical for successful Iranian élites of the period.

It is only after his return to Iran that he becomes an object of interest from the perspective of our study. Unlike most members of the Foreigner élite in the Deccan, Rūh al-Amīn also belonged to the highest levels of Safavid society and had many relatives who at this time were part of its governing élite. When he returned to Iran in 1613, he would have been among the senior-most living members of the family – his brother Jalāl al-Dīn, provincial Sadr of ʿIrāq and Māzandarān, had died in 1608, although Mīr Razī was living and held the office of Chief Sadr.[406] Jahāngīr tells us that "because of his relationship to Mīr Razī and the respect accorded men of wealth, the Shāh treated him with favour and attention."[407] Therefore, as an experienced administrator, as the well-connected scion of an influential and prestigious family, and as a man of great considerable wealth, he possessed what might be described as considerable political capital, on the basis of which he made extraordinary demands of Shāh ʿAbbās I, viz., to revive the office of *Vakīl* for him. The Shāh however received these representations with great disfavour, much to the dissatisfaction of Rūh al-Amīn. Iskandar Munshī disapprovingly comments that "although in his native city he possessed excellent houses, attractive private estates, and everything he needed to live like a gentleman, he hankered after high office."[408] Interestingly, the very extent of his wealth seems to have excited suspicion, Lefèvre noting the hostility of Safavid authorities.[409] Shaykh Farīd similarly reports that his proverbial generosity (*sakhāvat*) was rumoured to be fraudulent, and he was said by some to expend these sums not on good works but rather his own kinsmen in Iran.[410]

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[403] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:119; *Jahāngīrnāma* 258; *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī,* 1098
[404] Saʿīdī Shīrāzī, *Hadīqat as-Salātīn-i Qutbshāhī,* ed. Syed Ali Asgar Bilgrami (Islamic Publications Society: 1961), 73, 157 & 182-4
[405] Ibid., 77
[406] Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahān im 16 und 17 jahrhundert,* 245
[407] *Jahāngīrnāma* 258
[408] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī* 1098
[409] Corinne Lefèvre, "Jahāngīr et Son Frère," 40
[410] *Zakhīrat*, 2:219

It is at this time that Mughal India enters the equation. We can safely dismiss Jahāngīr's claim that Rūh al-Amīn had long sought to serve the Mughals, and only after hearing these reports did the Emperor summon him to India. Shadrooymanesh and Akhtaripour's assertion that he had maintained secret relations with the Mughal Emperor throughout the period of his second Iranian sojourn (1613-1618) seems difficult to accept.[411] It is clear from the evidence we have already examined that Rūh al-Amīn's political ambitions after the end of his Deccan career mainly lay in the direction of Safavid Iran, as was natural given his links to that polity and its élite. The answer seems to lie in the timeline of events. 1617-1618 corresponds to the embassy of Khān ʿĀlam Dūldī from the Mughal Empire, during which period he was in constant attendance at the court of ʿAbbās I.[412] Three possibilities appear equally likely: that, having failed to secure the *vakālat* of Iran, Rūh al-Amīn presented himself to Khān ʿĀlam as a candidate for employment at the Mughal court. Secondly, that Jahāngīr despatched Khān ʿĀlam with specific orders to recruit Rūh al-Amīn (not inconceivable given his reputation as Prime Minister of Golconda would certainly have reached Mughal Agra). Lastly, that Khān ʿĀlam had general orders to keep an eye open for suitable potential candidates drawn from the Safavid élite, meaning that his embassy combined its diplomatic function with a role comparable to contemporary corporate headhunting. There would have been nothing unusual about this. In the 1590s, Akbar had despatched Fayzī to the Deccan with the purpose of finding talented Persian scholars and administrators, Fayzī on that occasion expressly recommending sending letters and blandishments directly into the Safavid domains.[413] The second explanation is also supported by the evidence of Shāh Navāz Khān, who claims that Jahāngīr, hearing the merits of the *amīr* extolled by his courtiers, wrote and sent him a *farmān* in his own hand.[414]

As will be evident by now, Rūh al-Amīn strongly resembles the élite emigrants constituting the Īrānī faction, and indeed it is clear that he was from the outset a member of that faction. It would have been natural for him to gravitate thence, given that the group already included Mīr Mīrān Yazdī, whose ancestors belonged to the same circle of distinguished Sayyid families of 16th century Isfahān.[415] Furthermore, he arrived at the Mughal court and

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411 Shadrooymanesh and Akhtaripour, "A critical study," 211

412 *Jahāngīrnāma* 148 and 318; *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī* 1158; he departed the court on 14 August 1613 and returned on 13 January 1620, and Iskandar Munshī describes his entry into Qazvīn in 1617

413 Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Iran and the Doors to the Deccan ca. 1400-1650: Some Aspects," in *Iran and the Deccan*, ed. Keelan Overton (Indiana University Press: 2020): 91-2

414 *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 2:*118

415 Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan im 16 und 17 jahrhundert,* 226

went on to receive rank and emoluments at the peak of the Iʿtimād ad-Daula family's influence. He was appointed *Khān Sāmān* on 22 September 1620, at which point the *vakālat* lay with Iʿtimād-ad-Daula himself, the *vizārat* with his son-in-law Khvāja Abūl Hasan, and the office of *Bakhshī* with his nephew Sādiq Khān.[416] As we have had occasion to observe, the composition of the central ministries did not change significantly between the last decade of Jahāngīr's reign and the first decade of Shāh Jahān. Āsaf Khān (1622-1626, 1627-1640) was almost continually *vakīl* while his kinsmen Irādat Khān (1626-1628) and Sādiq Khān (1619-1623 & 1628-1635) served as Mīr Bakhshī.

The career of Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī makes for a valuable study in exemplifying the different political cultures and contingent circumstances of the Deccan sultanates, Iran and Mughal India in this period. The patterns of the first part of his life corresponded to that of any capable and enterprising Persian émigré in the Deccan sultanates. His career at the Mughal court, on the other hand, was predicated on the unique circumstances of his Iranian background and his political and social capital in the context of Mughal status culture. It was in his own homeland that he failed to situate himself within contemporary conditions. Belonging to the old clerical-notable élite gradually being curbed along with the Qizilbāsh by ʿAbbās I, as an influential and wealthy grandee of prestigious descent, he was the last person in favour of whom that monarch was likely to revive the powerful office of *vakīl-i nafīs*. It is not surprising, then, to learn that ʿAbbās I was relieved to be rid of his unwelcome presence.[417] Once again, we observe the negotiated relationship between élite emigrants and courtly centres of power, as well as the assimilative and coercive capacity of Mughal imperial service.

[416] Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*, xxix
[417] ʻ*Ālam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1098

2.1.3: Mīr Jumla Mīr Muhammad Saʿīd Ardistānī (c. 1591-1663)

The future Mīr Jumla Muʿazzam Khān Khān-Khānān Sipah-Sālār Yār Vafādār, vizier of Aurangzeb, in contrast to the other figures we have studied, was of humble extraction. Although of putative Sayyid descent, his father was supposedly "an extremely poor oil merchant."[418] The son, later in life, reminisced that he left Isfahān at a young age "to make his living easy, and to send help to near relations and aged and infirm relatives," consequently taking up employment as the clerk of a diamond merchant and travelling to the Deccan.[419] Successfully gaining employment in the Qutb-Shāhī kingdom and serving 18 years as its Mīr Jumla, he entered Mughal service in 1656, ultimately becoming *Vazīr* and dying on campaign in Assam in 1663. Due to both the paucity of Deccani sources and the obscurity of his early career, much of our most important information on Mīr Jumla comes from the European sources. Mughal sources primarily detail his military successes in Aurangzeb's reign.

Mīr Jumla, having arrived in India sometime around the 1620s, was in 1637 appointed the chief minister of Golconda. In the service of that polity he conquered extensive territories in the Carnatic in the 1640s, and established himself as the *de facto* ruler of a large and semi-autonomous territory, with large revenues, rich diamond mines and an extensive personal army.[420] In addition to the acquisition of wealth and territory, he disseminated his own and his wife's relations throughout the administration of the kingdom, such that by the beginning of the 1650s his power had begun to menace and alarm his patron, Sultān ʿAbdullāh Qutb Shāh.[421] Mutual jealousies and suspicions increased until matters came to a head in 1654, when Mīr Jumla's son was imprisoned by the Sultān.[422] Mīr Jumla, then absent governing his territories in the Carnatic, became alarmed and wrote urgently to Prince Aurangzeb, then in the Deccan, seeking an alliance.[423] The Prince obtained an edict from the imperial court demanding that Qutb Shāh immediately release Mīr Jumla's relations and dependents and allow him to proceed unmolested to North India. Aurangzeb despatched an army to Hyderabad on the pretext of rescuing Mīr Jumla's property, following himself shortly thereafter and laying siege to the fort of Golconda, wherein the Qutb Shāh had taken refuge. After a series of intricate negotiations,

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[418] Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla, The General of Aurangzeb* (Thacker, Spink & Co.: 1951), 1-4
[419] Ibid.
[420] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 2:*188
[421] Bernier, *Travels*, 17
[422] Manucci, *Storia do Mogor,* 1:134
[423] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:188-190

Mīr Jumla's property was released in January 1656, and a large indemnity was paid to the Mughals. At this time we have the evidence of a letter full of lamentations from Abdullāh Qutb Shāh to Shāh ʿAbbās of Iran, decrying the treachery of Mīr Jumla, the arrogance of his son, and expressing disbelief at the honours awarded him by Shāh Jahān.[424] He goes on to worry that Mīr Jumla was now engaged in preparing armies for the Mughal Emperor that would be directed at the conquest of Hyderabad, Bījāpūr and the Carnatic.[425] Needless to say, this marked the termination of Mīr Jumla's Deccan career.

The Mīr's entry into Mughal service was thus markedly more dramatic than that of Rūh al-Amīn or Islām Khān. His career as a nobleman, however, was conventional and ultimately highly successful. He reached Delhi in July 1656 and was immediately raised to the *vizārat* with the *mansab* of 6,000 and sundry honours.[426] He was again despatched to the Deccan with Aurangzeb in 1657, and had just been recalled to court when the war of succession broke out. We shall examine his role therein below. After the accession of Aurangzeb he was one of the most important grandees of the new reign, serving as Governor of Mālwa and then Bengal, in which capacity he pacified the province's borders and commenced an invasion of Assam. He died of dropsy on his way back to Bengal from that campaign.[427]

There are a number of issues pertinent to our study here. Firstly, as is obvious, he was of far less prominent origin than Islām Khān and Rūh al-Amīn. Mīr Jumla belongs to the category of émigré whom Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Muzaffar Alam designate "the upwardly mobile migrant, for whom crossing the Western Indian Ocean meant a considerable transformation in career and fortune."[428] Unlike the social and political capital possessed by those counterparts, he owed his success to a combination of financial-administrative ability and a commercial background, making him simply a particularly successful representative of Iranian emigrants to the Deccan. Sanjay Subrahmanyam has extensively discussed the role of the Iranian diaspora in the Deccan in this period, underlining the intersection between commerce and state formation throughout the early modern period.[429] As such, they differ qualitatively from the émigré Īrānīs of the 17th century Mughal court, who as we have seen

[424] Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, "A Letter of Abdullah Qutb Shah to Shah Abbas II," *PIHC* 5 (1941): 607
[425] Ibid., 609
[426] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 2:*191
[427] Ibid., 204
[428] Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Iran and the Doors to the Deccan," 88
[429] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad."

belonged to the governing élites of Iran, whose migration was overwhelmingly of a political character, and did not involve meaningful change in social status. Rather, they tended to possess types of status intelligible in the Mughal context. By contrast, movement from Iran to the Deccan for these originally non-élite Iranians meant entry into a prominent and consciously non-indigenous élite group defined by ethnic, cultural, geographical, and regional origins.[430]

Fischel describes Mīr Jumla as arguably the most famous instance of questionable loyalty in the Deccan.[431] Indeed, many episodes in his career suggest that he was a realistic statesman prepared to negotiate terms of employment with multiple potential patrons. ʿAbdullāh Qutb Shāh accused him of having conspired with the Sultān of Bījāpūr long before the imprisonment of his son.[432] This is in fact supported by his intrigues in the Carnatic with Ikhlās Khān Habshī, the Bījāpūrī representative in the region, and the fact that after conquering part of his independent fief Muhammad ʻĀdil Shāh restored those territories to Mīr Jumla.[433] In 1654, following the arrest of his son, he appealed to Aurangzeb for assistance and sought to enter Mughal service.[434] However, his first overtures to the imperial court merely sought decrees guaranteeing the safety of his family and property, suggesting he intended to continue either as the premier noble of the Golconda kingdom or the autonomous ruler of a vassal principality in the Carnatic. Ultimately, he sought to enter Mughal service while retaining the Carnatic as a private fief.[435] Finally and most astonishingly, as early as 1653 he had sent letters to Khalīfa Sultān, the *vazīr* of Īrān, expressing a desire to enter the service of Shāh ʿAbbās II.[436] Therefore, in the 1653-1655 period Mīr Jumla was negotiating terms of potential employment or patronage with four different polities: the Mughal Empire, Safavid Iran, his original patrons in Golconda, and the Sultanate of Bījāpūr. He opted for Mughal service at the very end of this period after persistent entreaties from Aurangzeb (who had his own interest in finding a pretext to attack Golconda) when his family's position seemed dangerously menaced and the increasingly restive Mughal military presence was poised to drive Bījāpūr and Golconda into a defensive alliance, which hardly suggests any vested ideological interest in the Mughal

[430] Fischel, "Society, Space and the State," 189-190
[431] Ibid., 199
[432] Sarkar, "A Letter of Abdullah Qutb Shah," 608
[433] Sarkar, *The Life of Mīr Jumla*, 71-72
[434] Bernier, *Travels*, 19;
[435] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:189
[436] Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, 65

project. Just two years later, however, he was honoured with the title Loyal Friend (*yār vafādār*) by the newly enthroned Aurangzeb. This brings us to the next stage of his career.

Mīr Jumla's role in the succession conflict between Shāh Jahān's sons further illustrates the complex and often shifting relationship between élite actors and dynastic centres of power. Aurangzeb the prince might to some degree be considered the "patron" of Mīr Jumla, being responsible for originally introducing him to imperial service, but this alone does not make a very compelling case for the alliance between the two men. In any event it was Shāh Jahān who appointed him to the *vizārat* of the empire, in which capacity he was again despatched to the Deccan against the Kingdom of Bījāpūr. It is here that perhaps the most important episode of his political career occurred in 1657.

As is well documented in the sources and in modern scholarship, Dārā Shukoh regarded Aurangzeb's successes in the Deccan with great unease, and so sought to deprive him of the support of the experienced and able Mīr Jumla. The latter was consequently recalled to the capital along with other senior officers in Aurangzeb's retinue.[437] He was at Daulatābād preparing to depart for court when news of Shāh Jahān's illness and the rebellions of Murād Bakhsh and Shāh Shujāʿ reached the Deccan, prompting Aurangzeb to prepare his own march to the north. Evidently, he was eager to secure the support of Mīr Jumla – however, the latter's family and household remained in Delhi. All actors involved must have been keenly conscious that the family were in effect hostages for the nobleman's loyalty to the court, and indeed his son Muhammad Amīn Khān Hāfiz was quickly made *Vazīr* by Shāh Jahān in a sort of dual carrot-stick stratagem. On the other hand, Mīr Jumla was effectively at Aurangzeb's mercy in the Deccan. The prince might have imprisoned the nobleman and sequestered his property, yet that would likely have alienated a valuable potential supporter of noted military, political and administrative ability. In Shāh Navāz Khān's words, "[permitting] the departure of one so capable (*sāhib-i tadbīr-u-rāy*), with so many treasures and troops (*khudāvand-i khazāin-u-sipāh-i mukhtalif*), would have been foolish."[438] The situation was one of great delicacy.

Mīr Jumla outwardly affected neutrality to begin with, and announced his intention of returning to court. Aurangzeb then sent his sons Muhammad and Muʿazzam to induce him to visit Aurangābād for a farewell interview. Upon arrival at Aurangābād, he ostensibly refused

[437] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:192-193
[438] *Maāsir*, 3:537

to join the prince in his bid for the throne and was placed under arrest. The sources unanimously assert this to be a deception aimed at Shāh Jahān to secure the safety of his family, and that Aurangzeb, in exchange for financial support and the use of his troops, guaranteed Mīr Jumla freedom and favour as soon as his family were out of Dārā Shukoh's grasp. Bernier alone suggests there was some element of coercion, and that unclear motives including a possible fear of violence induced the Mīr to accept.[439] Manucci derides Mīr Jumla's public protestations of loyalty to Shāh Jahān as "a comedy, to the end that the spies might write to King Shāhjahān and Prince Dārā of his apparent loyalty."[440] The stratagem succeeded marvellously as Shāh Jahān apparently sent *farmāns* ordering the nobleman's immediate release.[441] We may be sure that the whole episode was no more than a ruse. As soon as Agra was secure Mīr Jumla was released from captivity and showed himself zealous in the extirpation of his master's enemies, participating in the decisive battles at Deorai against Dārā Shukoh and Khajwā against Shāh Shujāʿ. After the accession he was made *Vazīr* once again and honoured with the titles Khān-Khānān Sipāh-Sālār (Khān of Khāns and Commander-in-Chief) and Yār Vafādār (Loyal Friend), previously borne respectively by Mahābat Khān and Amīr-ul-Umarā ʿAlī Mardān Khān, two of the highest ranking nobles of Shāh Jahān's reign.[442] He was absent from the accession festivities of July 1659, but his son, who was present, was made *Mīr Bakhshī* and presented with a brace of elephants.[443] These marks of exceptional favour at the beginning of a reign, necessarily the defining moment of many *mansabdārī* careers, clearly reveal the great favour he enjoyed.

The episodes of the war of succession reveal the considerable scope of action available to a judicious *mansabdār* in moments of crisis. Mīr Jumla once again found himself in a position to negotiate his relationship with central authorities and competing monarchs to his own advantage. A seasoned statesman well aware of the situation both in the Deccan and at the imperial court, he likely judged Aurangzeb his best bet in the conflict and yet was able to mask this defection from the eyes of the imperial court. We see once again how it is only in moments of crisis that the personal motivations of *amīrs* become visible. We further see their relationship with the state and dynasty to be a continually evolving process and one subject to periodic re-negotiation and change contingent upon their behaviour in such pivotal moments. Unchanging

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[439] Bernier, *Travels*, 29-30
[440] Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, 1:250
[441] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:193
[442] Ibid., 2:188
[443] *ʿĀlamgīr-nāma*, 156

loyalty as expressed in the chronicles is best understood as both a literary-historiographical trope and a culturally conditioned performance according to the hegemonic state ideology. As such, it masks what was an ideologically conditioned and reciprocal relationship of service and patronage subject to changing political circumstances within the context of intra-*mansabdārī* competition, particularly through the complexities of dynastic succession as seen in the previous chapter. This would tend to support Faruqui's conceptualisation of Mughal wars of succession as mechanisms of élite recruitment and replenishment.[444]

Like Islām Khān Rūmī and Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī, Mīr Jumla, once entering Mughal service, went on to serve as a loyal and effective imperial officer. Having been *Vazīr* and Governor of the important provinces of Mālwa and Bengal, he counted among the very first rank of Aurangzeb's officers and grandees until his death in 1663.

[444] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 149-155 and 259-262

2.1.4: ʿAlī Mardān Khān Amīr al-Umarā Yār Vafādār (d. 1657)

ʿAlī Mardān Khān, whom we have briefly encountered in the previous chapter, was one of most prominent and successful Safavid emigrants to the Mughal Empire, and his defection in 1637 with the fort of Qandahār a watershed in Mughal-Safavid relations. His is a particularly important case to our investigation: despite similarities with other Īrānī mansabdārs his case constitutes an exception to typical patterns of élite circulation between the two polities, and serves to highlight both by comparison and contrast the models of *mansabdārī* behaviour evinced by the preceding studies.

By origin the Khān belonged to the tribal-aristocratic stratum of Safavid society: his father, Ganj ʿAlī Khān, was chieftain of the Kurdish Zīk tribe. The family rose to power originally as part of Shāh ʿAbbās I's policy of promoting lesser tribal élites to curb the factional strife of the unruly Qizilbāsh *oymāqs* that had dominated Safavid politics in the 16th century. Ganj ʿAlī Khān was brought up at court as a personal protégé of the Shāh along with other children of tributary chieftains and sovereigns of tribal background, representing an effort to replace the tribal affiliation of these individuals with a relationship of personal loyalty to the monarch, thus becoming known as *Shāhsivan*, servants of the Shāh.[445] He was entrusted with the governorships of Kirmān and, after its reconquest, Qandahār, occupying the latter post until his death in 1624.[446] He was succeeded therein by his son, who inherited along with the province the affectionate sobriquet of "Bābā."[447]

Ganj ʿAlī Khān distinguished himself as a loyal and effective officer of Shāh ʿAbbās, and it seems clear that his son's appointment was to some extent a recognition of this history of service.[448] We know comparatively little about ʿAlī Mardān's tenure as governor of Qandahār between 1624-1637 but he must undoubtedly have been aware of the evolving political situation at the Safavid court. The death of his master was followed by a period of uncertainty in 1629-1632 as Shāh Safī's (r. 1629-1642) accession was contested by his aunts, Zaynab Begum and Zubayda Begum, and their supporters, various prominent members of Sayyid notable families and the Qizilbāsh *oymāqs*.[449] Exacerbated by the newly enthroned Shāh's illness, the situation was resolved by a general massacre of the cabalists in 1632,

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445 Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 28-29
446 Mohammad-Ebrahim Bastani Parizi, "Ganj-Alī Khan," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 10 (2000): 285
447 *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*186
448 *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1262
449 Babayan, *Waning of the Qizilbash*, 99

specifically aimed at members of the ruling élite with ties to the late ʿAbbās I. All the sons of ʿAbbās's daughters were blinded, the new Shāh's aunt Zubayda and several harem women were killed along with their supporters, and Zaynab Begum, one of the senior-most dynastic elders, was expelled from the harem.[450] These were certainly profoundly unwelcome developments from the perspective of ʿAlī Mardān Khān. The primary beneficiaries of the outcome of the crisis were the Ghulāms, élite slaves of Caucasian origin, led by Rustam Khān, the Georgian commander-in-chief.[451] Lacking an independent power base of the extent of the major Qizilbāsh *amīrs* and owing his position largely to his father's personal relationship with the late Shāh, ʿAlī Mardān Khān had much to lose from the ascent of élites patronised by the new sovereign. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that ʿAlī Mardān Khān might have begun considering his prospects outside of Iran as early as the beginning of the 1630s.

Babaie et al. suggest that ʿAlī Mardān Khān's defection was an act of disloyalty that might be explained by the non-heritability of bonds of personal loyalty across generations, i.e., that the son felt no familial obligation to uphold his father's loyalty to the Shāh.[452] They further quote H.R. Roehmer as pointing to the exactions of the new vizier, Sārū Taqī, and his revocation of certain fiscal privileges, as the impetus for ʿAlī Mardān Khān's defection.[453] In light of what we know about the political situation of the preceding decades, these explanations are not altogether convincing. Mehrnoush Soroush further points out that the same Sārū Taqī had recently executed his predecessor and ʿAlī Mardān's brother-in-law, Mīrzā Tālib Khān Urdūbādī.[454] What stands out amidst the record is the pattern we have already observed of the increasing marginalisation of previously dominant groups and individuals by new élites in Safavid Iran. The Urdūbādīs were an old family of notables who traced their descent to the famed medieval philosopher Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī.[455] Similarly, the factional struggle early in Safī's reign had seen the Shāh target prominent figures belonging to Qizilbāsh and Sayyid families such as the Khalīfas, the Shaykhāvand, the Ustājlū, and the Marʿashīs (several of whom we will re-encounter in India). The members of the newly dominant faction overwhelmingly were of Caucasian *ghulām* background, such as Rustam Khān, Sārū Taqī and the Shāh's unnamed Georgian mother, who replaced the Safavid princesses Zaynab Begum

[450] Ibid., 104
[451] Maeda, "Ethno-Social Background of Four Gholām Families," 262
[452] Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 176n.
[453] Roehmer, "The Safavid Period," 283
[454] Mehrnoush Soroush, "ʿAlī Mardān Khān," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (online edition, 2011)
[455] Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 43

and Zubayda Begum as the dominant figure in the harem. Therefore, the political shifts of the decade following ʿAbbās I's death were to the detriment of ʿAlī Mardān Khān, and his decision to defect appears quite rational when seen in context.

Mughal sources bear out this narrative. The *Bādshāhnāma* attributes ʿAlī Mardān Khān's departure from Safavid service to the "propensity of Shāh Safī towards murder and violence" (*jidāl-u-qitāl*).[456] Similarly, Shāh Navāz Khān speaks of Safī's violence and oppression against the servants of ʿAbbās, and claims that ʿAlī Mardān Khān resolved to enter Mughal service only after Safī put to death a number of these personages and demanded his son as a hostage.[457] None of these sources are particularly clear about the timeline of events but we can be reasonably certain that the Khān first made overtures to the Mughal court between 1632-1636. These were undoubtedly favourably received – the *Bādshāhnāma* relates the importance of Qandahār and the legitimate claims of the dynasty thereon.[458] Saʿīd Khān, the Governor of Kabul, was instructed to persuade ʿAlī Mardān Khān to defect along with the fortress in exchange for the promise of high rank and great reward at the Mughal court. ʿAlī Mardān Khān then seems to have developed cold feet, writting to Shāh Safī warning of an impending Mughal attack on the fort and asking for assistance.[459] Evidently, far from being reassured, that Shāh's suspicions were inflamed anew, and he despatched the *ghulām* Siyāvush Beg to secure Qandahār and imprison or kill the Khān. By this point there was clearly no longer any hope of reconciliation, and ʿAlī Mardān Khān accepted Saʿīd Khān's proposals. The latter reached Qandahār with an army, defeated Siyāvush Beg's force and received the fortress from ʿAlī Mardān Khān in March 1638. The Khān then departed for India with his family and retainers and, reaching court, was given a *mansab* of 6,000 along with the governorship of Kashmīr.[460]

ʿAlī Mardān Khān's case is anomalous in comparison both with the major élite emigrants examined here and other *amīrs* of the Īrānī faction. It was largely Shāh Safī's inept paranoia that both alienated him and gave him the opportunity to defect to Mughal India, an opportunity moreover that he was not particularly keen to take up, as we see by his equivocations as late as 1637. We have seen Islām Khān and Mīr Jumla coolly juggling

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[456] *Bādshāhnāma 2:*25
[457] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*186-7
[458] *Bādshāhnāma 2:*27
[459] *Bādshāhnāma 2:*28-30
[460] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*187

multiple allegiances at the same time, while Rūh al-Amīn's political peregrinations carried him through the Deccan sultanates, back to Iran, and ultimately to Agra. ʿAlī Mardān Khān, by contrast, seems only with the greatest reluctance to have been induced to leave Safavid service, and only once his own life and those of his family were threatened. After entering the ranks of the *umarā*, he "attained great respect by his loyalty, courage and ability" despite the charges of "disloyalty and faithlessness" he had incurred in Iran.[461] Like many other Īrānī *amīrs*, the changing political configurations of Safavid Iran, increasing factionalism and the marginalisation of older élites created the conditions for his alienation from service. However, the other Īrānīs' migrations were generally inspired by the loss of patronage and opportunity as opposed to actual treason, and they maintained ties both of sentiment and material interest to their homeland. Mīr Mīrān fled Isfahān in 1608, but a decade later was joined by his grandchildren, who had been permitted to leave by the Shāh at Jahāngīr's intercession.[462] Although Rūh al-Amīn made himself unwelcome at the court of Isfahān, the Shāh nevertheless looked after his children and relations when he departed for India. Not so ʿAlī Mardān Khān. His defection was a tremendous shock to the Safavids, and he remained an object of excoriation and contempt in Iranian chronicles of the 17th century.

These facts become apparent once we consider his post-1637 career in India in detail. It is evident that the Mughals considered the acquisition of ʿAlī Mardān Khān something of a propagandistic *coup*. The *Bādshāhnāma* gloatingly describes the high rank of his father and the family's closeness to Shāh ʿAbbās, along with the Khān's inherited sobriquet of *Bābā-sānī* (second father, i.e. after Ganj ʿAlī Khān, to the Shāh).[463] His is then recounted as arriving in court and justifying his actions on account of the Shah's "casting from the eye of confidence the past services and favoured exertions (*khidmāt-i guzīda va taraddudāt-i pasandīda*) of myself and my father, and setting into motion plans for my perdition," whereupon he was constrained (*zīnhārī shuda*) to seek refuge with the Mughal court.[464] By virtue of his oft-affirmed loyalty to the Safavid dynasty, contrasted with Safī's injustice and tyranny and juxtaposed with the benevolence and generosity awarded those in Mughal service, ʿAlī Mardān Khān's career buttressed various Mughal ideological claims. Tropes ranging from religious pluralism (in contrast to the sectarianism of the Ottomans, Safavids and Uzbeks) to clemency

[461] Ibid., 1:192
[462] Ibid., 1:770
[463] *Bādshāhnāma 2:*25
[464] Ibid., 2:33

and harmony (contrasted with the cruelty and bloodlust of Safavid and Uzbek rulers) were staples of their official historiography.[465] It is in this context that we understand the significance the title of *Yār Vafādār* (faithful friend) awarded ʿAlī Mardān Khān by Shāh Jahān. By contrast, he became a kind of archetypal example of disloyalty in Safavid memory. Safī's chronicler, Tāhir Vahīd, wrote that relations between the Safavids and the sovereigns of India had remained strong since the days of Bābur and Humāyūn "despite the malevolent actions of the nefarious ʿAlī Mardān, and the capture of Qandahār."[466] More than thirty years after the event, Vāla Qazvīnī was still complaining about ʿAlī Mardān Khān "who opened the gates of rebellion and disobedience, and let forth resistance and mutiny (*mukhālifat-o-ʿasiyān*)."[467] Naturally they do not comment that in so doing he probably saved his life and fortune.

In India, however, ʿAlī Mardān Khān was indubitably a well-connected member of the Īrānī faction. His children married the offspring of established Īrānī families, those of Sayf Khān (Āsaf Khān's son-in-law) and Khalīlullāh Khān Mīr Mīrān.[468] Their descendants remained prominent into the 18th century, his grandsons governing provinces under the vizierate of Zūlfiqār Khān.[469] In Lahore, where he was Governor 1638-1643, he left a famous canal and several other architectural works. As Governor of the important frontier province of Kābul from 1643-1651, he distinguished himself in the unsuccessful Balkh campaign, before being reassigned to Kashmīr where he served until his death. As is the case with Islām Khān and Mīr Jumla, and to a lesser extent Rūh al-Amīn, we observe a striking contrast between the vivid and detailed pictures that emerge of their earlier careers, particularly in times of crisis such as the sieges of Basra, the 1657 succession crisis, and the fall of Qandahār on the one hand, and the stiffly impersonal details of their *mansabdārī* careers on the other. As we have seen, proximity to the centres of imperial power necessarily obscured and circumscribed a relative latitude on the part of élite actors which we know to have existed from study of these earlier careers.

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[465] Corinne Lefèvre, "The Majālis-i Jahāngīrī (1608-1611): Dialogue and Asiatic Otherness at the Mughal Court," *JESHO* 55 nos. 2-3 (2012): 269; cf. *Jahāngīrnāma*, 40 and *Akbarnāma* 3:527

[466] *ʿAbbāsnāma*, 290

[467] *Khuld-i Barīn*, 261

[468] Muhammad Afzal Khan, "Ali Mardan Khan: A Great Iranian Noble of Shahjahan," *PIHC* 44 (1983): 203

[469] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* `:653

2.2: Élite Emigrants, Transregional Connections and *Mansabdārī* Service

The four cases presented above, examined together, exemplify patterns of élite circulation between Safavid Iran and Mughal India in the 17th century. These display characteristics differentiating them from more general trends of in the contemporary Iranian diasporas and serve to demonstrate common political expectations and behaviours of autonomous élite actors in the two polities. Particularly significant to our study is the importance of these élite actors as the focal points of concentrations of professional personnel and military labour, their embeddedness in pre-existing, particularly mercantile networks across these regions, and the nature of imperial service between the two polities. They are further distinguished by profiles with several features in common: military-administrative experience, access to large amounts of military labour and financial resources dispersed across a trans-regional area, and relatively high status-claims within the Mughal socio-cultural context. Finally, the reader should keep in mind the striking contrast between the political flexibility of these actors in liminal zones compared to the relative uniformity of their behaviour in imperial service.

The figures we have examined were not atomised individuals in a state of freedom hermetically isolated from the societies they inhabit, but rather the focal points of household- and kin-based networks extending across these spaces. The household, comprising a kin-group and its dependents, was a corporate unit functioning as a repository of capital and skill. Its function and operation was culturally understood in the same fashion as bonds of kinship and obligation to extended kin-based communities conceptualised as part of the family and duties of élite individuals, as we saw in the introduction. It is these inter-personal bonds of kinship, loyalty, and patronage through which individuals such as Rūh al-Amīn and Husayn Pāshā protected their interests across trans-regional networks and negotiated with centres of political power. In the 1654-1670 period, as we have seen, while Husayn Pāshā maintained a tenuous peace in Basra, his brother-in-law Yāhyā Āqā acted as his agent in Constantinople and Edirne, while another kinsman, ʿAbd al-Rahīm Beg, protected his domestic household and private fortune in Shīrāz.[470] Similarly, while Mir Jumla governed his private fiefdom, where he was primarily concerned with revenue farming and the diamond trade, his son and other relations by marriage carried out his political functions in the administration at the Golconda capital of

[470] Matthee, "Between Arabs, Turks and Iranians," 65; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*700

Hyderabad.[471] Rūh al-Amīn's family seem to have remained in Iran, and Iskandar Munshi informs us that his children were taken care of by Shāh ʿAbbās I.[472] The author of the *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn* reports he sent his relations 200,000 rupees a year from India.[473] These presumably went a long way towards financing their careers at the Safavid court. Mīr Jumla too, as we have seen, left so many clients and dependents in his fiefdoms in the Carnatic as well as in the kingdom of Golconda that more than thirteen years after his departure Bernier reported his agents at Masūlipatnam governed the port almost independently of the Sultan's representatives.[474] Furthermore, our focus on the individuals at the centre of these networks ought not to blind us to the considerable manpower involved. ʿAlī Mardān Khān, upon his defection, arrived with a large number of relations, clansmen, retainers and other functionaries – in addition to his sons and nephews, no less than ten of these received *mansab* ranks from the court.[475] John Fryer, who observed the household of Islām Khān in 1672, reported this to be so vast that the latter had been forced to camp outside the city of Surat with his baggage, retainers and two thousand mounted troopers.[476]

It seems generally to have been enshrined in the Mughal political system that the relations, dependents, clients, and retinues of major emigrant *amīrs* were necessarily to be included and incorporated into the *mansabdārī* system. As has been pointed out, this group, distinct from faction, is typically referred to in the sources as a nobleman's *khveshān*. Tending to or taking care of this retinue was very much seen as a virtue. ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīrūz Jang's *naukarī* conferred security (*aimanī*) due to the regularity and generosity with which he paid wages.[477] Fath Jang Khān Rohilla is likewise praised for the virtue of "taking care of his clan" (*qabīla-parvarī*), maintaining a far greater contingent than was possible merely on his official salary. Clearly, the circle of extended relatives, kinsmen, clients, employees and dependents comprising an *amīr's khveshān* was as legitimate and integral a group or institution as his very own family, and was typically included in the conferring of rank and the bestowal of material favours. It is an interesting observation that at the moment of an *amīr*'s death this group, headed by those of his male relatives with *mansab* rank, typically received promotions and favours

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[471] Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, 44; Bernier, *Travels*, 20; Bernier mentions that even the royal secretary was a relation of Mir Jumla's wife

[472] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿĀbbāsī*, 1098

[473] Quoted in Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites," 136

[474] Bernier, *Travels*, 195

[475] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*187

[476] John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia* (R. Chiswell: 1698): 1:113

[477] *Maāsir,* 2:787

like robes of honour, perhaps as a reassurance indicating their continued advancement in the system. The term seems also broadly to indicate military personnel from quasi-ethnic communities like Rajputs, Uzbeks and Afghans, that were privately maintained by major *amīrs*, as Bernier and Manucci also report. We have seen for example that Mahābat Khān maintained a large contingent of Rajputs who were sufficiently loyal to him personally as to support his coup in 1626.[478]

In addition to the large quantities of military labour and manpower at their disposal, these figures also possessed considerable financial resources as a result of their participation in the maritime commerce and trade networks of the period. All except ʿAlī Mardān Khān are documented as having possessed extensive commercial and mercantile interests within and without the subcontinent. We have already remarked the vital position of Basra, through which passed all the goods intended for sale in Ottoman territories from the Indian Ocean trade, including spices, metals, piece goods, textiles from Bengal, Coromandel, Kashmir and Gujarat, Coffee from Mocha, and pearls and silk from southern Iran.[479] It also exported one of the most valuable and highly sought after commodities in South Asia: the Arabian horse, which highly prized by Indian élites and could not be bred in India's climatic conditions, and were further indispensable to the maintenance of cavalry in the Deccan.[480] It is noteworthy that Husayn Pāshā's embassies were typically accompanied by gifts of large numbers of Arabian horses.[481] It is virtually certain that the Afrasyāb family had commercial interests in the western Indian port cities which possessed extensive connections with Basra. Even in the early 18th century, an English observer noted that Basra previously "drew many merchants from foreign parts to settle there, particularly from Surat in India."[482] This is supported by additional evidence: after his brief fall from favour in 1670, Shah Navāz Khan records Islām Khān as taking up his abode in Ujjain, before subsequently being restored to his rank in 1672.[483] In 1672, however, John Fryer observed Islam Khān (whom he described as the Bassa of Bassora) encamped outside Surat with his family and retainers, and informs us he was awaiting the arrival of a retinue sent by the Emperor to escort him to the capital.[484] It thus seems that after his dismissal from Malwa

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[478] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā,* 2:56

[479] Abdullah J. Thabit, *Merchants, Mamluks and Murder: The Political Economy of Trade in Eighteenth Century Basra* (State University of New York Press: 2001), 57-58

[480] Jos Gommans, "The Horse Trade in Eighteenth Century South Asia," *JESHO* 37 no. 3 (1994): 234

[481] *Maʿasir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 20; Bernier, *Travels*, 133

[482] Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* (A. Bettersworth and C. Hitch: 1739): 82-3

[483] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 1:*700

[484] Fryer, *A New Account, 1:*113

Islam Khan removed himself to Surat to await his relations there, further arguing in favour of pre-existing links with the port.

Rūh al-Amīn's wealth is also well-documented by contemporary observers.[485] One source of his wealth as a state official would have been revenue farming, which like most Persians in the Deccan would have provided the capital for his commercial enterprises.[486] Tellingly, it is the decade of his premiership in Golconda that saw the first attempts to establish a permanent naval trade between the Bay of Bengal (from Masūlipatnam, already a major commercial centre) and his native Iran. It is furthermore significant that he spent a year in Bījāpūr after his retirement: this would undoubtedly have been to amass and collect his properties and enterprises dispersed across western Indian ports like Dabhol and Surat, which had been the standard ports of export for the Golconda trade before the regularisation of the Masulipatnam-Bandar Abbas route in the 1630s.[487] His eventual successor, Mīr Jumla, is noteworthy as the only one of these figures whose success as an entrepreneur preceded and laid the foundations for his military-bureaucratic career. We have encountered Subrahmanyam's discussion of the role of the Iranian diaspora in the Deccan in this period, underlining the intersection between commerce and state formation throughout the early modern period.[488] He classifies Mīr Jumla's as an "unusually sizable but not unique enterprise." This however is not entirely correct. Unlike most officials, Mīr Jumla carved out a personal fiefdom, a large network of dependents and a colossal fortune that rendered him a sizable potential threat to the Deccan Sultans and a valuable potential recruit for the imperial polities of the period. As such he is far more closely comparable to Rūh al-Amīn, Husayn Pāshā and ʿAlī Mardān Khān as a major political entrepreneur possessed of political, military and financial resources of a scale and degree well beyond the average emigrant administrators or portfolio capitalists of their time. Large quantities of ready cash were indispensable to the higher ranks of the *umarā*. As we shall see in Chapter 4, being wealthy was seen as an essential part of being a successful *amīr*. Further, the generosity and patronage valorised in this status culture were highly expensive to maintain, as we can see from the examples of Abdullāh Khān, Fath Jang Khān

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485 *Hadīqat as-Salātīn*, 73, 157 & 182-4

486 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Persians, Pilgrims and Portuguese: The Travails of Masulipatnam Shipping in the Western Indian Ocean 1590-1655," *MAS* 22 no. 3 (1988): 505

487 Subrahmanyam, "Persians, Pilgrims and Portuguese," 511-512

488 Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," *passim*

and Mahābat Khān's large and well-paid retinues. No wonder that Bernier reported that most of the *umarā* were perpetually in debt "due to their large establishments."[489]

The political and commercial activities of these élite actors largely took place outside state structures and formal or official channels of communication between centres of dynastic authority. These however are simply the most obvious layer of what were widespread unofficial networks of circulation, communication and contact between the governing élites of West and South Asia. There is considerable evidence for the maintenance of these connections by our subjects. Communication between Basra and Khurāsān, for example, seems to have taken place by means of the constant flow of pilgrims from Iran to the holy cities of the Hijāz via Basra: ʿAbbās Qulī Khān wrote to ʿAlī Pāshā explicitly praising Basra as the resting place or way-station (*marhala*) for caravans bound for the sacred precinct of Mecca (*qāfila-i...ihrām-maqsad*), and indeed, most of the letters between the Shāmlūs and the Afrāsyāb family were borne by clerics *en route* to or returning from the pilgrimage.[490] This correspondence is characteristic of contact between élite figures in the Safavid and Mughal administrations, which Riazul Islām classifies as *mufāvadāt,* correspondence between privileged equals, or *ikhvāniyāt*, friendly correspondence.[491] It is certainly in the latter category, for example, that Hasan Khān Shāmlū's letters to the Mughal governors of Kābul, Kashmīr and Multān fall. The earliest of these dates to 1633, when Hasan Khān congratulated Zafar Khān Turbatī on his appointment Kashmīr, and stated that he had wished to write earlier but been delayed by the demise of the latter's father Khvāja Abūl Hasan, suggesting an even earlier beginning to the correspondence.[492] Most astonishing of these is the letter written immediately after the fall of Qandahār to its new governor, Qulīj Khān Tūrānī: Hasan Khān expresses his gladness at the latter's near proximity, and states his intention, despite ʿAlī Mardān Khān's treason, to strengthen mutual ties.[493] Hasan Khān and Qulīj Khān were both trusted and prominent representatives of their respective governments – that they were easily able to set aside so major a point of contention between these latter gives us to understand the degree to which

[489] Bernier, Travels, 213
[490] Ibid., f. 86b
[491] Riazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations* (Institute of Central & West Asian Studies: 1979), 1:260
[492] *Shāmlū Letters*, ff. 90a-b
[493] Ibid., ff. 88a-89b

pragmatism and self-interest governed ties between governing élites of the Mughal and Safavid polities.

These latter cases emphasise what can be called the social and political proximity of these élite figures. ʿAlī Mardān Khān and the Shāmlūs were governors of neighbouring provinces in the 1620s and '30s, a period when the latter at least are confirmed to have been in contact with the Pāshās of Basra. Both were likewise in close contact with prominent Mughal *mansabdārs*, particularly the governors of the western provinces as well as Āsaf Khān at the [Shahjahanabad] court. Rūh al-Amīn's was well-known personally and by reputation in the courts of both Isfahān and Āgrā, as we have seen – indeed, he died only a few months before ʿAlī Mardān Khān defected to Mughal service. ʿAlī Mardān Khān himself lived to see Mīr Jumla become a *mansabdār* in imperial service in 1654-5, and died shortly after the appointment of the latter's son as *Vazīr*. Neatly closing the circle, Mīr Jumla would have witnessed the arrival of Husayn Pāshā's embassy in 1661, and his son would have been present at the latter's entry into Mughal service and death in 1676. Almost throughout the period under consideration, three generations of the Shāmlūs served as hereditary governors-general of Khurāsān (Husayn Khān, Hasan Khān and ʿAbbās Quli Khān from 1607-1667).

Taking these figures together we come to understand what have been designated as members of the governing élite in this chapter. They are of diverse background: the Afrasyāb Pāshā family originated, broadly speaking, in the local notable (*aʿyān*) class, Rūh al-Amīn and ʿAlī mardān Khān belonged to the highest levels of Safavid society, whereas Mīr Jumla was a self-made man of mercantile origin. However, by the time they entered Mughal service, each had behind him a long history of military-administrative experience, political skill and personal prestige. Husayn Pāshā had ruled Basra for two decades, Rūh al-Amīn had risen to the vizierate of Golconda, ʿAlī Mardān Khān occupied one of the most important frontier governorates of Safavid Iran and Mīr Jumla was a quasi-autonomous potentate with vast resources of capital and military labour at his disposal in addition to holding the eponymous office. It is significant that Islām Khān, ʿAlī Mardān Khān and Mīr Jumla all received the mansab of 5,000 immediately upon entry into imperial service: this placed them in the very first rank of Amīrs. Rūh al-Amīn within a year of his arrival at court was appointed to the office of Khān Sāmān, one of the three highest dignities of the empire. As such, they occupy a qualitatively different category from the average emigrants to both North India and the Deccan at this period and attests to the complexity of the phenomenon of migration, which has been discussed in the

Deccan context by Alam and Subrahmanyam.[494] One way of understanding this is the distinction between the *mansabdārī* class in general and the *umarā* as the high nobility. Like the Īrānī mansabdārs, Husayn Pāshā and Mīr Jumla were understood to already occupy an *amīrī* rank at the moment of entry. Similarly, like the Īrānī mansabdārs, their entitlement to high rank comprises a matrix of claims based in these cases more on experience, political ability, wealth and demonstrations of loyalty than descent-claims. However, the fact that Husayn Pāshā came to be remembered as Islām Khān Rūmī (Islām Khān the Anatolian or Roman) suggests that his history of service to the Ottoman dynasty also counted for something in terms of status at the Mughal court. After all, Jahāngīr specified in his memoirs that he chose a regnal name in order to avoid being confused with the Caesars of Anatolia, i.e. the Ottoman Sultāns (Salīm I and Salīm II) of Constantinople.[495] The comparable dynastic prestige of the Safavids within the Mughal worldview, as we discussed in the previous chapter, undoubtedly also played a role in the prominence of these figures.

In the subcontinental context the most important question the most important issue to be addressed is the much-contested notion of Iranian or Safavid loyalties. What was the nature of the relationship between the Īrānī *mansabdārs* and the Safavid dynasty and polity whence they came? Did they maintain any kind of meaningful relationship with the Safavid state or was it merely the source of genealogical and social prestige in the context of the Mughal court? Contemporary sources routinely hint at a kind of continued affinity of sentiment or ideology from Iranian emigrant *mansabdārs* to Safavid Iran. In order to ascertain the precise nature thereof we are required to move away from this domain of mobilities, peripheries and circulation. We are now in an area where far less documentation and explicit evidence exists, particularly given our reliance on courtly sources. The evidence is elusive – Mughal sources are unsurprisingly reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of dual loyalty, given the importance of unchanging loyalty and fidelity within the imperial ideology. In general they tend to emphasise the superiority of service to the Mughal throne as opposed to the sovereigns of Isfahan, Bukhara and Constantinople. In Jahāngīr's own words, unlike "Iran, where there is room for only Shiites, and Rum, Turan and Hindustan, where there is room only for Sunnīs," followers of various religions found a place in Akbar's empire.[496] Doubtless cosmopolitanism and sectarian ecumenism were important aspects of the universalism of Mughal imperial

[494] Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Iran and the Doors to the Deccan," 82
[495] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 22
[496] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 40

ideology.[497] However, this tells us more about what the dynasty would have liked us to think than about the actual behaviour and loyalties of the Īrānī *mansabdārs*.

There is an important episode in 1661 that shows us just how sensitive the Mughal Emperors were to even the possibility of dual loyalties, and their keenness to obscure this from external observers: the disastrous embassy of Tarbiyat Khān in 1661, which quickly became the subject of a highly contested story in Safavid and Mughal courtly circles. Shāh ʿAbbās II became drunk and insulted the Mughal ambassador, pulling his beard, forcing him to down liquor, and insulting Aurangzeb as a usurper.[498] Tarbiyat Khan returned to India, bearing with him several Persian horses as gifts. Aurangzeb, enraged by the Shāh's insults and his ambassador's timidity, imprisoned the Khān and most tellingly ordered the horses slaughtered and their heads to be displayed outside the houses *of the Īrānī amīrs of Shāhjahānābād*. In Shāhnavāz Khān's account, they were mounted "at the doors of the nobles of Iran" (*ba-dar-i khāna-hā-yi umarā-yi īrān*) as a warning against dual loyalties.[499] Official and semi-official sources are understandably discreet about the event. The *ʿĀlamgīrnāma* omits any mention of the horses or Tarbiyat Khān's imprisonment and reports only that the Shāh announced his plans of invading the Mughal Empire via Khurāsān. As soon as this report reached the court, "the flame of imperial honour blazed forth" (*shuʿla-i ghayrat-i khusravāna zabāna bar kashīda*), which might be a polite euphemism for the Emperor's well-documented fury, and Prince Muʿazzam and Jaswant Singh were despatched with troops to Kābul.[500] The *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* simply reports that the cause of Tarbiyat Khān's imprisonment to be some unspecified fault, and that the embassy's failure was due to "the wickedness of heart, folly, violence of temper and unimaginable haughtiness of the wretched Shāh ʿAbbās," along with the story about a planned invasion of Kābul.[501] Although it is true that armies were massed both in Khurāsān and Kābul, the real source of the Emperor's anger and Tarbiyat Khān's punishment seems clearly to have been the insult to imperial honour.

The episode of the horses and their connection to the Īrānī nobles seems to have quickly become notorious. Garbled versions of the same are reported by Bernier, who tells us that in

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497 Lefèvre, "The Majālis-i Jahāngīrī," 266

498 Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between Mughal India and Iran* (Iranian Culture Foundation: 1970), 129

499 *Maāsir*, 3:690

500 *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*, 974-5

501 *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 37

response to the Shah's reproaches (of usurpation and hypocrisy) Aurangzeb ordered the horses brought by the Persian ambassador hamstrung.[502] Tavernier reports an even stranger version of the tale, that Aurangzeb proclaimed the horses could not be used by his Shīʿī nobles, and thus had them slaughtered (we shall return to the significance of this episode later).[503] The real facts of the episode were clearly well known in *mansabdārī* circles, being documented by Khvāfī Khān, and thereby reaching the *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*. There is a particularly suggestive epilogue to the equine massacre: news of the business reached the court of Golconda, where the Qutb Shāh criticised Aurangzeb's conduct and said that the horses should have been given to the learned and pious. The Mughal representative, Muhammad Murād Khān, claimed the whole story was incorrect, that the horses had rather been slaughtered after the Quranic example of Solomon, and that they had nothing to do with the either the Shah of Iran or the Īrānī mansabdārs. Rather, the horses had been slaughtered in the different neighbourhoods of the city rather than a single place for reasons of hygiene, and since at that period "every single neighbourhood of Delhi contained the mansion of one of the nobles of Iran," (*hech muhalla-e nabūd ki khālī az havelī-yi yake az umarā-yi īrān bāshad*), their being named after these nobles had let to such a false association.[504] When news of the quick thinking of Murād Khān reached the Emperor's ears, he was praised for his skill. This absurd story gives us a unique glimpse into the real situation of the Īrānī *amīrs*: not only were they obviously associated with the Safavid dynasty *and* suspected of possible dual loyalties, the Mughal state was extremely sensitive to the acknowledgment of this situation, particularly by external observers or in the official record. This much we can conclusively establish insofar as the state is involved. What of the *mansabdārs* themselves?

Such fragmentary evidence as we have suggests that there was more to the relationship between Safavid Iran and the Īrānī *amīrs* than might be expected. Of the major Īrānī nobles, only ʿAlī Mardān Khān had actually committed treason or rebellion against the Safavid state (something of which that state was keenly aware, as we have seen), and the opprobrium he had incurred did not extent to other prominent emigres or their connections. In this context the comments of European observers, unconstrained by considerations of state, assume particular value in giving us some knowledge of the real position of the Īrānī faction. Although Bernier,

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[502] Bernier, *Travels*, 151

[503] Tavernier, *Travels in India*, 1:376

[504] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 2:*173; it is also noteworthy that the prominence and wealth of a group of *mansabdārs* owning large mansions in every single neighbourhood of the capital was unremarkable to contemporary observers.

Tavernier and Manucci typically speak of "the Persians," the context in which they do so make it clear that it is the Īrānīs of the Mughal court, the *umarā-yi Īrān*, to whom they refer (in fact they often refer to a group called the "Persian omrahs," very probably a direct translation of this term). Tavernier commented that the Persians "are famed for favouring their own race," and even suggested that they outnumber the Sunnīs in Mughal service.[505] Bernier's account is especially informative: he explicitly recounted that the Persians boasted of the insolence of the ambassadors of their country as proof of the equal rank of their sovereigns to the Mughal Emperors and exaggerated the honours proffered them out of "a vain and overweening desire to exalt their nation."[506] The strong attachment of Īrānī *amīrs* to their native country was well-known: an 18th century *tazkira* of Persian poets relates a suggestive anecdote of Rūh al-Amīn. Shāh Jahān one day spoke jokingly of a planned conquest of Iran, and promised Rūh al-Amīn his native city of Isfahān as a fief (*iqtāʿ*). To this Rūh al-Amīn retorted that "unless dragged there as a prisoner [of the Shāh] by the Qizilbāsh, I want no part of Isfahān" (*mā rā qizilbāsh ba ʿunvān-i asīrī ba-Isfahān na-burand, namī-khvāhem Isfahān rā*).[507] This probably occasioned Shāh Jahān's remarks, reported by Shāh Navāz Khān, that "the Mīr is a true Isfahānī, for the men of that city are noted for their roughness and vehemence."[508] It seems then that if couched in the language of sentiment or patriotism, this attitude of the Īrānī *mansabdārs* was not seen as out of place. At the same time we can understand this rhetoric of loyalty as a status-claim embellishing both the prestige of the Īrānī families and by extension that of the Mughal dynasty as their sovereign.

Insofar as this rhetoric had practical ramifications, they manifested naturally enough on the Indo-Iranian frontier. Bernier tells us that Shāh Jahān's attempt to retake Qandahār in 1649 failed due to "the perfidy of the Persian omrahs...the most powerful noblemen of his court, and strongly attached to their native country."[509] Most tellingly, he informs us that ʿAlī Mardān Khān too affirmed this to be the cause of the campaign's failure, and informed the Emperor that he "would never succeed in taking Qandahar, unless her gates be opened by a traitor such as myself, or unless you determine to exclude all Persians from the besieging army."[510] The

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[505] Tavernier, *Travels in India*, 2:176-7

[506] Bernier, *Travels,* 146, 149-153

[507] Bindrāban Dās Khvushgū, *Safīna-i Khvushgū,* ed. Sayyid Kalīm Asghar (Kitābkhāna, Mauza va Markaz-i Asnād-i Majlis-i Shūra-i Islāmī, 1389/2010), 242, quoted in Akhtaripour and Shadrooymanesh, "A critical study," 211

[508] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā 2:*120

[509] Bernier, *Travels*, 184

[510] Ibid., 185

evidence cannot be more explicit, and the fact that it is ʿAlī Mardān Khān who allegedly made this statement attests to the veracity of the account, given that he alone had no hope of ever returning to the service of the Shāh. A final and important piece of evidence is found in the military-administrative record: of all the Governors of Kābul, and thus of the border with Safavid Iran, before Aurangzeb's departure from the Deccan, none belong to the Īrānī faction. The longest serving governors are Mahābat Khān (1617-1624), formerly a personal retainer of Jahāngīr from the latter's princely days, Saʿīd Khān (1632-1642), a very senior grandee, by extraction of aristocratic Chaghatāy descent, and ʿAlī Mardān Khān (1642-1651), once again the exception proving the rule. The backgrounds of these *mansabdārs* and their long histories of loyal service strongly precluded any likelihood that they would be tempted to intrigue with the Safavid polity. With all the evidence now examined, we can safely conclude that the discourse of the Safavid or patriotic attachments of the Īrānī faction were more than a rhetorical trope or origin-based status claim, and constituted at the very least a dangerous possibility as seen by the Mughal state. Further, as shared affective ties to the memory of a homeland and perhaps a dynasty, this patriotism likely acted to buttress the internal cohesion of the faction.

Of the four cases we have examined, Husayn Pāshā and his family had maintained ties with the court of Isfahān since at least 1623, and collaborated actively with the Safavid state between 1654-1668 before entering Mughal service in 1669. Mīr Jumla, although a Persian, only developed ties with the Safavid élite after rising to power in Golconda, and extended overtures to Shāh ʿAbbās II in 1654-55 before entering Mughal service the same year. ʿAlī Mardān Khān, after a lifetime of Safavid service, became a Mughal *amīr* in 1637 and remained steadfast in his loyalty to the Mughal dynasty until his death. Rūh al-Amīn, failing to acquire high office in Iran in 1613-17, migrated to India and remained in imperial service the rest of his life. Ironically, therefore, the most prominent of the major emigrants between the two empires seem to have been largely unsuccessful in their dealings with the Safavids, with Mughal service, by contrast, marking the terminal developments of their careers. How do we resolve this seeming paradox?

There are no compelling reasons to assert any ideological or personal loyalty to the Safavid state on the part of Islām Khān or Mīr Jumla, whose dealings with the Safavids were entirely self-interested. Mīr Jumla's case simply gives us to understand that the Safavid state was not averse to building expedient ties with Iranian emigres even of non-élite backgrounds. ʿAlī Mardān Khān, as we have seen, constituted an important exception to typical patterns of

élite circulation. Only the elusive Rūh al-Amīn, as ever, gives us some definite indications of continued and politically significant contact with Īrān. Arguably, the direction in which Safavid system developed in the 17th century was not conducive to the accommodation of ambitious élite actors such as the figures we have examined. Let us remember that the Afrasyāb Pāshā family originally belonged to the same tribal-aristocratic type of stratum as Ganj ʿAlī Khān Zeg, whereas Rūh al-Amīn as we have seen proved unsuccessful in his attempts to build a political career in the new Iran of ʿAbbās I. The fate of ʿAlī Mardān Khān (and indeed that of many other élite groups such as the Qarāmānlū *oymāq* or the Shaykhāvand notables of Isfahān) actively argue against the possibility of political success in the Safavid ruling class of ʿAbbās I and Safī's reigns. The Mughal system, by contrast, offered greater long term gain – within the parameters of *mansabdārī* factionalism – than the uncertainties of political entrepreneurship in the Deccan or the Safavid state. Moreover, status-claims such as lineage, dynastic connections or socio-cultural capital carried a unique weight at the Mughal court, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

A final word is necessary on the persistence of Iranian migrations to India even after the downfall of the Īrānī faction and the crisis of authority of the Mughal empire in the early 18th century. Shāh Navāz Khān reported in 1743 that after the downfall (*ikhtitām*) of the Safavid dynasty, many people connected with the dynasty came to India, including many Marʿāshīs; but because this empire too was fallen from glory (*saltanat īnjā ham az raunaq uftād*), all the respect and importance (*ʿizzat va iʿtibār*) previously accorded them had disappeared, but nonetheless many married into illustrious lineages including the family of the Governor of Bengal.[511] This is almost certainly a reference to Muhammad Khalīl Marʿāshī, whose father migrated to Bengal and entered the service of Alī Vīrdī Khān, who commemorated his family's lineage with a history of post-Safavid Iran called *Majmaʿ al-Tavārīkh*.[512] We have, additionally, the evidence of strong affective attachment to Iran demonstrated even by élite emigrants fleeing political chaos like Sultān Hāshim Mīrzā and Hazīn Lahījī, which would support Subrahmanyam's assessment of the unease, alienation and disquiet experienced by Iranian élite emigrants.[513] The marked persistence of this sensibility even in the absence of

[511] *Maāsir*, 3:682
[512] Sajjad Nejatie, "Iranian Migrations in the Durrani Empire 1747-1793," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37 no. 3 (2017): 498
[513] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 176, 239

political and economic power of the kind possessed by the Īrānī faction is a further argument in favour of a persistence of inherited identity in the émigré context.

The key point in this chapter should be the uniqueness of Īrānī élite emigration in the broader context of transcultural encounter and circulation whereby members of the *umarā* were recruited into imperial service. The persistence of ideological and material ties to the Safavid polity despite these factors shows us that the considerable material benefits of imperial service did not serve to offset what can be called a consciousness of common material and cultural interests by members of the governing élite. Furthermore, the implicit suspicion with which the Mughal state treated these ties demonstrates an awareness of the limitations of *mansabdārī* service. The reciprocal, ideologically conditioned relationship between the dynasty and the various factions of its nobility, howbeit expressed in terms of loyalty and devotion, rested on a solid basis only insofar as it was mutually beneficial. When this relationship was placed under extreme strain in the late 17th century, it began to dissolve.

Chapter 3: The Myth of the Tūrānī Faction

There is at present something of a consensus in the supposed existence of a discrete and distinct "Tūrānī" cohort in the Mughal nobility from about the reign of Humāyūn to that of Muhammad Shāh. Various claims are made about this cohort in most studies of the nobility: Athar Ali suggests that Tūrānīs comprised "any person coming from Central Asia where Turkish languages were spoken," and that a "group consciousness" existed among these in opposition to the Īrānīs.[514] Afzal Husain likewise affirms that migrants from Central Asia were "racially" identical to the Timurid dynasty and consequent felt a sense of superiority over the rest of the nobility.[515] Richard Foltz posits that the Mughal ruling class referred to themselves as Tūrānīs, and likewise sees an ongoing struggle between the Īrānīs and Tūrānīs.[516] Corinne Lefèvre, discussing the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr, identifies the Tūrānīs as the "old guard of Central Asian military élites...[acting] to defend the Turco-Mongol political culture which was theirs" until successfully integrated by Jahāngīr.[517] Iqtidar Alam Khan sees a similar phenomenon in Akbar's reign, which he characterises as a period of "the fading away of the Tūrānī complexion of the nobility as well as the erosion of Chaghatai traditions and customs of state organisation."[518] Satish Chandra sees a continuation of this Īrānī-Tūrānī struggle in the early 18th century.[519] Some who have disputed the implicit or explicit bifurcation of the high nobility into Īrānī and Tūrānī cohorts include Douglas Streusand, who divides the non-Īrānī element into two groups based on inherited political traditions – that of the Timurids, and that of pastoral nomads from Safavid Iran – and Munis Faruqui, who contests the idea of of a Tūrānī faction even in the 18th century on the grounds of the heterogeneity of Nizām al-Mulk's followers.[520] The picture that we form from these interpretations is that of a group with a shared sense of origin derived from Central Asia, a feeling of identity with the Timurid dynasty and its political traditions, resistance to departures from that tradition in the administrative or

[514] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 18
[515] Afzal Husain, "Marriages among Mughal Nobles as an Index of Status and Aristocratic Integration," *PIHC* 33 (1971): 309
[516] Richard Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia* (Oxford University Press: 1998), xix, xxix, 5
[517] Corinne Lefèvre, *Pourvoir Impériale et élites dans l'inde Moghole de Jahāngīr* (Les Indes Savantes: 2017), 21-22 & 397-8
[518] Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy," *JRAS* 1 / 2 (1968): 30
[519] Chandra, *Parties and Politics*, 300
[520] Munis Faruqui, "At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad and Eighteenth-Century India," *MAS* 43 no. 1 (2009): 22

religious sphere under Akbar, and a mutual antagonism with the Īrānīs, either as a faction or as a demographic element in the nobility.

This chapter contends that we need to look more closely at this group. The assumption of its existence is based on modern scholarship's taking at face value of the status claims of the Tūrānī faction of Aurangzeb's later reign. That group, which emerged in the 1680s and 1690s, did in fact claim a sense of identity and common origin with the Timurid dynasty based on a "Tūrānī" identity, came to claim to defend the political traditions of the dynasty, and had an at best complicated and often antagonistic relationship with the contemporaneous Īrānī faction. However, there is little evidence that these status claims were universally accepted even at the time, let alone in preceding reigns. The Īrānī faction itself, as has been argued, did not exist prior to 1611, so that the argument for an Īrānī-Tūrānī antagonism in the 16th century is even more questionable. This chapter will therefore examine in close detail the high-ranking *mansabdārs* of (various) Central Asian origin(s) which presumably constituted this Tūrānī cohort, what evidence exists for shared identity or political co-operation, the meanings of Tūrān and Tūrānī-ness in Mughal India and the Persianate world, their relationship to the concept of "Mughal," and the process that brought about the conception of "Tūrānī" identity as articulated by the Tūrānī faction that emerged in Aurangzeb's reign.

This study will suggest that there is much to challenge the idea of a monolithic and discrete Tūrānī identity to the late 17th century, which has been obscured by the late Mughal historiography, as we shall discuss later in this thesis. Tūrānī and Īrānī as a primordial opposition to one another long existed as a cultural, historiographic and literary trope in the Persianate world, paralleling the division of humanity into a binary of Turk versus Tājīk, i.e. sedentary versus nomadic or pastoral populations, and implicitly civilised and urbanised versus barbarous and peripheral peoples. In parallel with the cultural archetype of the Turk, we shall see that there seems to have existed a military role referred to as "Mughal." However, Tūrān and Turkish-ness had many contested meanings, some interrelated and others active conflicting, enough of which were positive and high-status in the context of the Mughal court, including associations of austerity and simplicity, martial talents and a lifestyle suited for militarism, and by the late 17th century in the Indic context an association with Sunnī orthodoxy and Sunnī, specifically Naqshbandī, sacred places in Central Asia. For this reason, in the context of the political domination of a Shīʿī Īrānī faction, Tūrān as a topos and the site of a new status identity had many fruitful possibilities for a political grouping in opposition to the

hegemonic Īrānīs. As will be argued, a single family and its network of patronage, the family of Nizām al-Mulk, mobilised the idea of Tūrānīness for these political ends, with sufficient success that by the early 18th century conflict between the highest ranks of the *umarā* was conceptualised in the language of Īrānī and Tūrānī as a binary in perpetual opposition. The chapter aims here to show how recent was this development and how contingent the factors that brought it into being. It is worth returning to Crossley's work as seen in the introduction. Discussing the emergence of "Manchu" and "Han" conceptions of identity in 17th and 18th century Qing China, she argues that "the process by which historicised identities were produced is obscured when the antiquity of those identities is accepted."[521] I believe a close examination of the sources, in identifying the precursors to the historicised Tūrānī identity as articulated by late 17th and early 18th century *mansabdārs*, reveals a similar obscuration to have taken place in Mughal historiography.

[521] Crossley, *In A Translucent Mirror*, 6

3.1: Networks of the Tūrānī Nobility and the Absence of a Faction

This section collectively examines those *mansabdārs* of Akbar, Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān's reigns who are identified by Athar Ali as Tūrānīs and who were indisputably members of the high nobility on account of having served as ministers or governors of provinces. According to the reign in which they first held rank, these comprise 14 governors and three ministers of Akbar, 13 governors and one minister of Jahāngīr, and 18 governors of Shāh Jahān.[522] To these have been added three individuals who, despite not occupying high office, had exceptionally high mansabs (Khvāja ʿAbd al-Rahīm Jūybārī, his nephew Tayyib Khvāja, and Sardār Khān Qalmāq). In addition to the above are 8 individuals whom Athar Ali calls Tūrānī but are either not Tūrānī or lack clear information about their origins. The results can be grouped together into four broad clusters according to their origin: Khvājazādas associated with the Sufi orders of Central Asia, Chaghatāy and Mongol (*Mughūl*) noblemen, Uzbeks, and a fourth, slightly broader category comprising *ahadī* troopers, household retainers, and domestic slaves drawn from Inner Asian pastoralist and nomadic groups. As we shall see, there is no evidence for the co-operation of these four groupings.

The Khvājas, seven in number, belong to one of three lineages, the Jūybārīs, the Ahrārīs and the Naqshbandī Khvājazādas, all of them associated with the Naqshbandī order. These lineages were held in high esteem by the Timurids, who had long been associated with that order: Tīmūr himself had close relations with Amīr Kulāl and Shaykh Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband, the founders of the order.[523] The Ahrār Khvājazādas possessed an even more immediate link to the dynasty in that they were the descendants of Khvāja ʿUbaydullāh Ahrār, the *pīr* and preceptor of Bābur's father ʿUmar Shaykh Mīrzā.[524] An index of the high status evidently accorded these lineages is the fact that they are the only recorded families of non-agnatic Timurid descent to receive the hand of Mughal princesses in marriage. An illustrative example is Khvāja Sharf al-Dīn Husayn Ahrār, whose mother Māh Kūchak Begum was a granddaughter of the Timurid ruler Abū Saʿīd Mīrzā (r. 1459-1469), making her a first cousin of Bābur.[525] He married Bakhshī Bānū Begum, Akbar's sister, in 1561.[526] Indeed, several 16th century Mughal princesses married Khvājazādas: another of Humāyūn's daughters, Bakht an-Nisā Begum married Khvāja Hasan Naqshbandī, and their son Mīrzā Vālī married his cousin Najīb an-Nisā,

[522] Appendix 1
[523] Muzaffar Alam, "The Mughals, The Sufi Shaykhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," *MAS* 43 no. 1 (2009): 143
[524] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 57, 96
[525] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:808
[526] *Akbarnāma*, 2:197

daugthter of Muhammad Hakīm. This couple's son Mīrzā Valī in turn married Bulāqī Begum, Prince Dāniyāl's daughter.[527]

The Jūybārī Khvājas were likewise of very high rank. They were putative descendants of an 11th century mystic who came to be accorded Sayyid status sometime after the Mongol conquest, around the same time as the proliferation of Sufi orders in the region.[528] This Sayyid status was evidently universally accepted by the 17th century. The *Jahāngīrnāma* tells us that the lineage of the Jūybārīs goes to Imām Jaʿfar Sādiq.[529] The claim is repeated half a century later in the *Bādshāhnāma*, which refers to Jahāngīr's veneration for "that lofty family, on account of the excellence of their lineage and the nobility of their pedigree (*karāmat-i nasab va sharāfat-i hasab*)...they are thirty nine generations removed from Sayyid ʿAlī ʿUrayz, the son of Imām Jaʿfar Sādiq, and are counted glorious among the Sayyids and exalted among the nobles (*ajilla-i sādāt va aʿizza-i akābir*) of Tūrān, and the Khāns of the Uzbek honour them and repose perfect trust and confidence in them."[530] ʿAbd al-Rahīm Khvāja (fl. 1606-1651) came to India in 1606 as the ambassador of Nazr Muhammad Khān (he was in fact married to the said Khān's aunt) – the Samarqandī traveller Mutribī records in several places the eagerly anticipated arrival of the Khvāja, and the eulogy composed in his honour and recited in Jahāngīr's presence.[531] Even if we take these accounts as apocryphal, they speak to a recognition afforded these status claims that would have been familiar to Persophone audiences in Central Asia and Mughal India. ʿAbd al-Rahīm Jūybārī remained at the Mughal court, although he did not occupy high office. His nephew Tayyib Khvāja came to India in 1651, married his uncle's daughter and eventually rose to the rank of 4,000 *zāt*.[532]

ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīrūz Jang (d. 1644), a direct descendant of ʿUbaydullāh Ahrār, was politically the most successful of the Khvājas, enjoying a fifty-year long career as mansabdār, amīr and governor of key provinces like Mālwa and Bihār. He also illustrates ongoing marital and personal connections between the various Khvāja families at the Mughal court. Through his mother he descendad from Khvāja Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband, and his maternal uncle was

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[527] *Jahāngīrnāma,* 7; *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:976 & 979
[528] Ashirbek Muminov, "Dihqāns and Sacred Families in Central Asia," in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, ed. Kazuo Morimoto (Routledge: 2012), 205
[529] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 451
[530] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:194
[531] Mutribī Samarqandī, *Conversations with Emperor Jahāngīr*, trans. Richard Foltz (Mazda Publisher: 1998), 56 & 60
[532] *Bādshāhnāma* 2:611; on the family's marital ties to the Ashtarkhānid rulers of Bukhārā, see Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 99-100

Khvāja Hasan, Akbar's brother-in-law.[533] Involved in intrigues and conspiracies throughout his career, he fell foul of Shāh Jahān after the latter's accession and was imprisoned, but was released after the accession of none other than ʿAbd al-Rahīm Jūybārī on account of their common connection to the Naqshbandī order.[534]

The next major group, the Chaghatāys and Mongols, were putative descendants of the Turkic-speaking retainers of the Timurids, and Mongol military-aristocratic lineages of the eponymous *ulūs* in Central Asia. Although these two groups – as we shall see in the subsequent section – were nothing short of hostile to one another in Central Asia proper, they seem in India to have come to constitute a slightly more cohesive bloc, at least when compared to other supposedly "Tūrānī" collectives. The Turkic Chaghatāy retinue of Tīmūr formed the nucleus of the ruling class of his dominions, and the direct descendants of that retinue formed the core of the early Mughal nobility that accompanied Bābur and Humāyūn.[535] In addition to these, we find a small number of Mongol military-aristocratic lineages whose legitimacy harkened back to the Chaghatāyid Khāns preceding Tīmūr's accession to power, specifically the Arghūns, Tarkhāns, Dughlāts and Jānī Qurbānī Oirats. Ali Anooshahr points out that these groups are not to be understood as "tribes," but rather as élite military lineages claiming descent from office-holders of Chinggis Khān's army.[536] These two groups were undoubtedly the best placed to claim any kind of common identity or heritage with the ruling dynasty on account of histories of familial service and it is worth remarking that these are widely acknowledged in the sources. Jahāngīr variously refers to members of this group as, for example, a Barlās clansman as "a genuine scion of the *ulūs* Chaghatāy."[537] The Barlās were of course Tīmūr's own clan, and members thereof appear in the highest offices of the state from the establishment of the dynasty to as late a date as 1711 when Munʿim Khān, whose father was from "the Barlās people" (*qaum-i Barlās*), died as *Vazīr*.[538] In origin the Barlās were merely one of several clans attached to the service of the Chaghatāyid Khāns, along with others such as Arulāt, Sildoz, and Jalāyir, representatives of which appear in the 15th century (at least one putative Arlāt appears as late as the 1640s in the *Bādshāhnāma*).[539] By the 16th century, after two centuries of Timurid rule

[533] *Jahāngīrnāma,* 7
[534] *Bādshāhnāma*, 1:193-4
[535] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, xxiv
[536] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 118-9, 124
[537] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 34
[538] *Maāsir*, 3:667
[539] Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge University Press: 1989), 28; *Bādshāhnāma* 2:486

and in the light of Akbar's pretensions to the Chinggisid inheritance, the Barlās underwent something of a retrospective genealogical upgrade, and the *Akbarnāma* came to identify Alanquwā, ancestress of Chinggis, as a daughter "of the Qiyāt tribe and the Barlās family," conflating the clan affiliations of Chinggis and Tīmūr and thus attributing to them a (fictitious) common ancestry.[540] The clan name Barlās supposedly derives from Īradamchī, a kinsman of Chinggis' father Yesugai, who was "the first to bear the title of Barlās, the meaning of which fine word is brave and of noble lineage."[541] The consistent affirmation of Chinggisid and Timurid genealogical themes in the imperial ideology persisted well into the 17th century, Corinne Lefèvre for example pointing to Shāh Jahān's renewed emphasis on the figure of Tīmūr.[542] This does seem to have burnished the status of fellow Barlās agnates at the imperial court. We have the example of Shafīʿullāh Barlās, entitled Tarbiyat Khān (d. 1685) who emigrated from Central Asia in Shāh Jahān's reign and was immediately appointed to the relatively high office of Master of Ceremonies (*Mīr Tūzuk*) because he was *rū-shināS*, a word signifying "conspicuous, celebrated, honourable, respectable, or an acquaintance," which seems fairly clearly to indicate his status was well-known or widely acknowledged in the context of the Mughal court.[543] In Aurangzeb's reign he led the ill-fated embassy to ʿAbbās II, which has been discussed earlier. Of the twenty-two Chaghatāy nobles, Tarbiyat Khān is the only one not clearly identified as a descendant either of Tīmūr's own *amīrs* or of the companions of Bābur and Humāyūn.

Other nobles of non-Barlās lineage tend nevertheless to be of illustrious descent: many were the *amīrs* of powerful clans that had long served the Timurid dynasty. A prominent example is Qulīj Khān Ulfatī Andijānī, governor of important provinces like Gujarāt, Kābul and Lahore, and father-in-law of Prince Dānyāl.[544] Subrahmanyam points out that he appears in the sources as a defender of *shiʿār va tūra-yi chaghatāy*, the customs and laws of the Chaghatāy.[545] His clan, the Jānī Qurbānī, were Persianised Oirat Mongols descended from the thirteenth century Īlkhānid vizier Nawrūz Āqā and had long ruled Tūs and Nīshāpūr as their fiefs.[546] In the 14th century, they submitted to Tīmūr and thereafter served his descendants, and

[540] *Akbarnāma*, 1:178
[541] Ibid., 1:190
[542] Lefèvre, *Mughal Genealogical Strategies*, 431
[543] *Maāsir*, 1:493; *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:609; on the definition of *rū-shināS*, cf. Steingass, 595
[544] Blochmann, *Āīn-i Akbarī*, 309
[545] Subrahmanyam, "Early Modern Circulation," 50
[546] Vladimir Minorsky and C.E. Bosworth, "Tūs," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel & W.P. Heinrichs. (Brill: 2012), online edition

Qulīj Khān's direct ancestors were prominent in the reign of Husayn Bāyqarā (r. 1469-1506).[547] Shāh Navāz Khān comments on the vastness of the inheritance he left his sons.[548] Of similar stature were the Arghūns, a high-ranking Mongol family descended from companions of Tīmūr, whose Indian representatives descended from Amīr Zūnnūn (d. 1506), the Timurid governor of Qandahār. The eponymous elder branch of the clan established an independent principality in Sindh from 1520 until subjugated by Akbar in 1592, whereas its younger branch, the Tarkhāns, remained in Mughal service.[549] Despite geographical distance, both branches seem to have been active in the social networks of the early 16th century Chaghatāy élite of Kābul and Delhi. Zūnnūn's granddaughter, Hājī Begum, was first married to Qāsim Koka (fl. 1509-1520), a foster-brother of Bābur, then to Shāh Hasan Arghūn of Sindh (d. 1524) and finally to Mīrzā Īsá Tarkhān (d. 1568) of the same clan.[550] Another major clan were the Dūldays, who were among the *amīrs* to have accompanied Bābur out of Farghānā.[551] The most important representative of this clan in India was Khān ʿĀlam Dūlday, Jahāngīr's ambassador to Shāh ʿAbbās I. He survived the factional turmoil of the 1620s and was appointed Governor of Bihār by Shāh Jahān.[552]

The third major cluster are the Uzbeks. These constitute emigrants from the Uzbek Khanate of Bukhārā established by the Shībānids and usurped in 1598 by another Chinggisid lineage variously called the Jānids, Tuqāy-Tīmūrids or Ashtarkhānīds (I use the last of these terms to avoid confusion).[553] At least one of these, Bahādur Khān ʿAbd an-Nabī, came to India in the aftermath of this takeover, in the course of which his patron was killed.[554] It is worth noting that four of these seven were already relatively high-ranking members of the Uzbek polity. If any significant group could be invested with the supposed attachment to Islamic orthodoxy possessed by the Tūrānī nobles, it would probably be these given the emphasis of the Uzbek Khāns on abiding by the *sharīʿat*, as we shall see in the subsequent section. There was little love lost between the Uzbeks and the Chaghatāys or Mughūls: the latter saw them as

[547] James Reid, "The Je'ün-i Qurbān Oirat Clan in the 14th Century" in *The Journal of Asian History* 18 (1984): 198
[548] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:434
[549] Amita Paliwal, "A Buffer State of the Sixteenth Century: Sultan Mahmud Khan and his Principality of Bhakkar 1555-1574," *PIHC* 62 (2001): 200
[550] Zahīr al-Dīn Muhammad Bābur, *The Bābur-nāma: Memoirs of Bābur*, trans. Annette Susannah Beveridge (Luzac & Co.: 1922), 342 & 443
[551] Ibid., 37
[552] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:120
[553] Thomas Welsford, *Four Types of Loyalty in Early Modern Central Asia: The Tūqāy-Tīmūrid Takeover of Greater Mā Warā Al-Nahr, 1598-1605* (Brill: 2013) examines this in detail
[554] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:351

usurpers and interlopers into their own Central Asian homeland, and no Uzbek ever occupied one of the high court offices in the Mughal Empire.[555] Insofar as they may have had connections with other clusters, we could expect to see these with regard to the Khvājazādas, who were honoured by the Uzbek Khāns: however, there is no evidence for such connections except in the individual case of ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīrūz Jang, who "always had thousands of Uzbeks in his service."[556]

The final cluster represented here comprises individuals who might variously be described as domestics or retainers and whose names or biographies show them to have belonged to various Inner Asian pastoral or nomadic communities, at least by origin. Up to the 16th century these appear to have comprised migrants or as Péri has it "guest workers" who immigrated *en masse* to India from Central and Inner Asia. ʿAbd al-Muttalib seems to fit this model: his tribe, the "Miyānkāl *oymāqs* of Samarqand," were Persophone nomads of varied ethnic origin who emerged in the 16th century, Miyānkāl being the territory between Samarqand and Bukhārā.[557] Later examples, such as Lāla Beg and Bāqī Khān, appear to have been domestic slaves who rose to positions of responsibility and authority. Although élite slavery as a military institution on the ʿAbbasid and Seljuq model had existed in the Delhi Sultanate (and similarly drew on Inner Asian steppe populations for manpower), it was absent from the Mongol tradition as opposed to the Turco-Persian and had ceased to exist on a large scale by the Mughal period. There are however conflicting interpretations of exactly how military slavery persisted and in what form by the late 16th century. Shadab Bano identifies surviving "military slaves" in the Mughal period as domestics whose privileged access to the person of the ruler enabled some of them to rise to positions of responsibility. She further argues that their designation as *chela* (rather than *banda*) denotes a "strong emotional bond of service."[558] Jos Gommans on the other hand argues that the institution of *chela*, although framed in a language of discipleship in the Indo-Mughal paradigm, was "basically identical to the élite military slaves of the Turco-Persian world."[559] Péri likewise posits that the internal organisation of one of these Turkic clans, the Qāqshāls, demonstrates the maintenance of nomadic institutions and traditions of succession in India.[560] Kolff discusses another such clan, the

[555] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 40
[556] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:543
[557] A. Janata, "Aymāq" in *Encyclopedia Iranica* III no. 2 (1987): 136-7
[558] Shadab Bano, "Military Slaves in Mughal India," *PIHC* 67 (2007): 352-3
[559] Gommans, "Slavery and Naukarī among the Bangash Nawābs of Farrukhābād," in *Circumambulations in South Asian History*, eds. Jos Gommans & Om Prakash (Brill: 2003), 187
[560] Péri, "A Turkic Clan in Mughal India," 375

Sārangkhānīs, descendants of Turkmen or Mamlūk slaves of the Tughluq dynasty, whose services were much in demand given slave soldiers' supposed reputation for loyalty.[561]

Let us further note that multiple high-ranking officials (Bāqī Khān, Sarandāz Khān, Sardār Khān and Lāla Bāz Beg) are designated *Qalmāq*. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, Central Asian writers designated most steppe nomads of western Mongolia *qalmāq*. The term in its narrow sense designated the Oirat peoples, who did not see themselves as Mongols, but more broadly all western Steppe peoples who had not converted to Islām, including other Turkic and Mongolic nomads.[562] This is certainly the sense in which it is used by Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt: he says "the *Mughūls* [i.e. Chaghatāyids] made endless war upon the infidels of the *qālīmāq*," and later that by the time of Yūnus Khān the Chaghatāyid ruler, Bābur's maternal grandfather, "Mughūlistan had been emptied of the *qālīmāq*" (*az qālīmāq khālī shuda būd*).[563] Bābur himself also differentiates between the *Mughūl* and the *Qalmāq*, using the former in reference only to the Islamised Mongols of the Chaghatāy ulus.[564] It thus clearly designates non-Muslim Mongolic peoples of the western Mongolian steppe, on the eastern boundaries of the Chaghatāyid Khāns. We can affirm with reasonable certitude, then, that these peoples would have been non-Muslim and have spoken languages other than the literary Turkic Chaghatāy common to the Uzbeks and Chaghatāys, and have been culturally quite dissimilar to the aforementioned groups. They may or may not have been specifically Oirat: quite possibly they encompassed some of the Mongolic clans mentioned in the *Bāburnāma*, such as the Qārlūq, Qazzāq, Qūylūq, Qībchāq, and others "of whom [Bābur] speaks only with contempt and hatred."[565]

This debate is important for us to understand the character and role of individuals derived from this class. Who are they and why would they have been employed in the households and retinues of the Timurid sovereigns and princes? Whether they emigrated *en masse* in clan-based collectives or were purchased as slaves, whether or not they maintained specific nomadic and other traditions in India, is uncertain. It seems beyond doubt however that these were élite slaves and military professionals whose rise to positions of responsibility and power was based firstly on personal bonds of loyalty and service to the person of the

[561] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 55
[562] Joo-Yup Lee, "Were the Historical Oirats 'Western Mongols?'" *Études Mongoles et Sibériennes* 47 (2016): 8
[563] Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt. *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī,* ed. Dr. ʿAbbās Qulī Ghaffārīfard (Mīrās-i Maktūb: 2004), 92 & 123
[564] *Bāburnāma*, 23
[565] A. le Coq, "Türkische Namen und Titel in Indien," *Aus Indiens Kultur: Festgabe Richard von Garbe* (Verlacht von Palm & Enke: 1927), 1

sovereign. They further owed the socio-cultural capital whereby they attained such positions to longstanding cultural tropes about the supposed loyalty or incorruptibility of slave-soldiers, especially from Inner Asia and the steppe, removed from court intrigues and bereft of local loyalties.[566] Lāla Bāz Beg, for example, was given the title of Jahāngīr Qulī Khān, signifying his personal closeness to the emperor as his *qulī* (slave) or *chela*.[567] As such, the source of their status as servants of the dynasty is ideologically quite far removed from the status-claims of the Khvājas, Chaghatāys and Uzbeks and they must be understood as a fundamentally distinct constituency among those mansabdārs whose origin points to Central and Inner Asia.

A final word is appropriate about those individuals Athar Ali perhaps wrongly designates Tūrānī. Ikhlās Khān Shaikh Ilāhdiyā was a Shaikhzāda of Badāyun.[568] Fidāī Khān has been discussed in previous chapters – no genealogical information is given about him but he was certainly an adherent of Nūr Jahān's family. There does not seem to be any genealogical information about Ma'sūm Khān Farkhundī or his father Muʿīn al-Dīn Khān. Finally, the family of Shams al-Dīn Khān Atka and his son ʿAzīz Koka cannot be called Tūrānī because all that is known of them is that Atka Khān's father was a "householder" (*kadkhudā*) of Ghaznī.[569] On these grounds Faruqui too refers to the group as "Central Asian" but Ghaznī as a place of origin is hardly grounds for so doing – Bābur in his description of the place makes no mention of any Turkic peoples, only of Afghans and Hazāras.[570] Furthermore, we shall see the limits of both Tūrān and Turkistān in the subsequent section – Ghaznī does not fall within either. The high rank Atka Khān came to enjoy was due to the distinguished military services he rendered Humāyūn – the family's continued prominence into Jahāngīr's reign was due to his son, Khān-i ʿĀzam ʿAzīz Koka's personal relationship with Akbar.[571] No detail of the nomenclature or titulature of the clan's members suggests Turkic or Mongol origins with any certainty. The title of Koka, signifying the ruler's foster-siblings, was not restricted to Turkic-speakers, being borne by Indian Muslims like Qutb al-Dīn Chishtī and Sayyids of Khvāf like Khān Jahān, ubiquitously called Khān Jahān Koka or Kokaltāsh.

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[566] On the qualities of Turkic military slaves as encapsulated in literature of the period, see Sunil Kumar, "Service, Status and Military Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate," in *Slavery and South Asian History*, eds. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 89
[567] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:728
[568] Ibid., 1:662
[569] *Maāsir*, 2:531
[570] *Bāburnāma*, 217-219
[571] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 63

Having examined the so-called Tūrānī mansabdārs, this chapter demonstrates the existence of at least four distinct clusters of networks within this group that supposedly constituted a faction. In speaking of the Īrānī mansabdārs, this study has used the term "faction" to designate socio-political networks encompassing multiple kin-groups among the higher umarā, with ties of kinship and affinity periodically reinforced by intermarriage, multiple shared status claims (be they genealogical, ethnic, religious, etc) and patterns of political co-operation across generations. There is very little evidence to suggest that any such network existed among the social collectives called Tūrānī. There is no common dynastic affiliation to these groups, whose historic bonds are to several distinct lineages – the Shībānīd and Ashtarkhānid Jochids, the Chaghatāyids of Mughūlistān, and the Timurids themselves. As for the various Inner Asian steppe collectives, they had no ancestral ties to either of these lineages. Many of these peoples viewed themselves as separate and distinct from the Mongols.[572]

The Khvājas presumably benefitted from their historical connections with Tīmūr and especially with Bābur's father, but these connections are qualitatively different from those of the Chaghatāy, Mughūl and Uzbek *amīrs*, being based not on family histories of service and loyalty but rather the charisma of their Sufi ancestors.[573] We observe the difference in status manifesting in patterns of marriage: whereas a number of Khvājas in the 16th century married Timurid princesses – indeed, they are the only recorded group in the history of the post-Humayun Mughal nobility to do so – this privilege was certainly not accorded to Chaghatāy or Mughūl lineages. In the North Indian context, Robert Parkin affirms that affirms that élite marriage relationships were hypergamous in nature, and wife-takers socially superior.[574] In the courtly setting, Lal further points out the role of royal women as inheritors and transmitters of tradition and lineage, with their reproductive ability consequently posing a potential complication of dynastic succession.[575] It therefore seems clear that these two groups occupied different ranks in the status culture of the Mughal court.

Patterns of endogamy can be observed to a limited extent among the Mughūl and Chaghatāy nobles of rank. This is interesting because it shows the ways in which these formerly antagonistic groups began to coalesce into a discrete bloc in the Indian context. These patterns

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[572] Lee, "Were the Historical Oirats 'Western Mongols?'," 11-12
[573] Alam, "The Mughals, The Sufi Sheikhs, and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," 173
[574] Robert Parkin, "Ladders and Circles: Affinal Alliance and the Problem of Hierarchy," *Man* 25 no. 3 (1990): 473; see also S.J. Tambiah, "From Varna to Caste through Mixed Unions," in *The Character of Kinship*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge University Press: 2010) 223
[575] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 63

began as early as the end of the 15th century, when the Mughūl rulers Yūnus Khān and Esen Būqā Khān gave their daughters in marriage to various Timurid dynasts (which is how Bābur came to be related to Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt).[576] In the Kābul period of Bābur's reign, Qāsim Koka and Hājī Begum's daughter, Nāhīd Begum, married Muhibb ʿAlī Khān (d. 1581), son of one of Bābur's companions. The latter's sister, Gulbarg, was married to Hājī Begum's kinsman Hasan Beg Arghūn.[577] We can therefore surmise that, having been displaced by the Uzbeks from Transoxiana, the common experience of exile and the memory of Central Asia produced some kind of common identity in two previously distinct groups, the Chaghatāys and the Mughūls. However, it must be specified that this is a limited and particular phenomenon only to be observed in the 16th century between two specific groups of kin-networks quite distinct from the other clusters of "Tūrānī" *mansabdārs*. Another discernible group in this cluster are the minor Timurid dynasts of Badakhshān, descended from Sulaymān Mīrzā (d. 1589) who had been ousted from his fief and taken refuge in Akbar's court.[578] His son Mīrzā Shāh Rukh (d. 1607), although relatively undistinguished among the senior *mansabdārs*, nevertheless married two Mughal princesses: Shakr an-Nisā the daughter of Akbar and Kābulī Begum the daughter of Prince Muhammad Hakīm. This family, however, belonged to the same patriline as the ruling lineage. Among the genealogical data that exists, we do not see marital connections between the Khvājas and the Chaghatāys, the Chaghatāys and the Uzbeks, or the Khvājas and the Uzbeks (with the exception of Khvāja ʿAbd al-Rahīm Jūybārī's dynastic marriage to Nazr Muhammad Khān's aunt). Therefore, insofar as there is a common Tūrānī bloc in terms of heritage or identity, it seems to comprise specifically the Chaghatāys and Mughūls, who despite historical antagonism had a history of some limited measure of political cooperation and interaction in the Timurid dominions since the beginning of the 15th century. There is no reason to assume this extended to the Uzbeks, the Khvājas, or the Qalmāq.

Therefore, returning to the historiographical assumptions discussed at the start of the chapter, we have seen that we cannot assume either a shared ethno-cultural identity, dynastic affiliation, political tradition, status identity or group consciousness among these *mansabdārs*. The next sections of the chapter will demonstrate what the Central Asian heritage of these groups actually comprised, what meanings it had to observers in India and in the Persianate world, and how the evolution and transformation of these meanings produced a "neo-Tūrānī"

[576] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 263
[577] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:746
[578] *Akbarnāma* 3:211-212

identity in late 17th and early 18th century South Asia that had very little to do with the actual Central Asian heritage of the Timurids and the élite emigrants who first followed them into India.

3.2: Tūrān – Origins and Meanings

I have in the previous section described the individual members and groups of Central Asian origin in the nobility up to the mid-17th century, demonstrated the existence of at least four distinct constituencies therein and challenged the possibility of these having constituted any kind of "faction." This section examines the utility of the concept of Tūrānī as a discrete unit of analysis in the Mughal nobility prior to the Deccan years of Aurangzeb's reign, and the various identities and status-claims connected to Central and Inner Asia that existed in the 16th and early 17th century. What we will observe is that Central and Inner Asian origin as conceived of in contemporary histories, ethnographies, and literary tropes, constituted a multitude of origin narratives, identities, status-claims and dynastic affiliations that often contradicted and competed with one another. What we gradually see is the attenuation and amalgamation of these topoi, the emergence for the first time of a common "Tūrānī" identity among sections of the *mansabdārī* class, as further discussed in section 3 along with the reasons for this transformation. This section shall first investigate Turkic and Mongolic identities, then Tūrān and Turkistān as geographical descriptors and as spaces in the mental geography of the Persianate world, and finally the role of explicitly religious themes and Islamic elements of status culture.

As previously stated, the contrast of Iran and Tūrān as primordial adversaries is one of great antiquity in the Iranian world: as early as the 5th and 6th centuries, the Sassanian court identified itself with the mythical Kayānian dynasty that waged war against pastoralists from the east, in response to the migration of various Turkic and Hunnic peoples into Central Asia.[579] Their depiction as such in the Sassanian *Book of Kings* or *Xwadāy-nāmag* was carried over into the *Shāhnāma* of Firdausī, which emphasised Tūrān (rather than Rome) as the primordial and eternal enemy of the Iranian peoples.[580] Thus, from a very early date, the contrast between Iran and Tūrān was an archetypal contrast and conflict between sedentary civilisation and belligerence and primitivity of the steppe.[581] Ironically, these understandings were absorbed by what Richard Payne calls "the nomadic imperialists" of Central Asia, who came to identify themselves around the 11th century with the mythical Tūrānian ruler Afrāsyāb and to view

[579] Richard Payne, "The Making of Turan: The Fall and Transformation of the Iranian East in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9 (2016): 27
[580] Mahmoud Omidsalar and Touraj Daryaee, "Šāh-nāma: The Šāh-nāma as a historical source," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2017
[581] Tadeusz Kowalski, "Turks in the Shah-Nama," in *The Turks in the Early Islamic World*, ed. Edmund Clifford Bosworth (Ashgate: 2007), 122

themselves as having supplanted and surpassed the Iranians.[582] By the mid-12th century, the Samarkand poet Sūzanī eulogised its Qarākhānid rulers as descended "from Qarā Khān Hasan and *Pādishāh* Afrāsyāb," and identified their domain as the country or provinces of Tūrān (*kishvar-i tūrān, vilāyat-i tūrān*).[583] The 14th century Īlkhānid universal history, *Jāmī' al-Tavārīkh*, divided creation into "Turk va Tājīk," representing the sum total of humanity as bifurcated into nomadic and sedentary peoples.[584] Iran and Tūrān thus likewise represented an archetypal binary between two civilisational or cultural zones, viz., the civilised and urbanised regions of the south and the comparatively uncivilised, wilder and unsettled regions of the north. Poetic works replicated these themes. The famous romantic *ghazal* of Hāfiz (d. 1390) known as the "Shīrāzī Turk" was, in the words of a 16th century commentator, dedicated to a "Turk" lover since "they are cruel, merciless and bloody people...and that is why these poets call their beloved Turks."[585] Similarly, in the poetry of Hāfiz's contemporary 'Ubāyd-i Zākānī, Turks in romantic *ghazals* are not only objects of desire but also of fear due to their association with "boundless aggression and violent sexuality."[586] By the 16th century there was therefore a well-established literary and historiographical tradition in the Persianate world that associated the "Turks" as an imagined collective with warlike behaviour and the pastoral lifestyle of the steppe. This can be called the primary cultural meaning of Tūrān.

The figure of the Mongol and the trope of Mongol-ness further complicates this narrative. Mongol-ness was both bound up with Turk-ness and yet distinct from it, especially in Central Asia proper. As a way of life and a signifier of dynastic legitimacy, it was a source both of pride and of embarrassment in the Islamised and Persianised milieu of 16th century Transoxiana. One the one hand, Mongol cultural traditions were seen as encompassing such implicitly desirable traits as simplicity, military skills and plain living.[587] It encompassed also a code of behaviour and way of life still upheld by military-aristocratic lineages of putative Mongol origin in Central and Inner Asia in the 16th century.[588] Thus, Mīrzā Haydar describes his Dughlāt ancestors as preservers of the customary law (*tūra*) of Chinggis Khān, such that

[582] Payne, "The Making of Turan," 30
[583] Hakīm Sūzanī Samarqandī, *Dīvān*, ed. Dr Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh Husaynī (Chāpkhāna-i Mūsavī: 1959), 148, 347
[584] Joo-Yup Lee, "The Historical Meaning of the Term Turk and the Nature of the Turkic Identity of the Chinggisid and Timurid Élites in Post-Mongol Central Asia," *Central Asiatic Journal* 59 nos. 1-2 (2016): 101-102
[585] Murat Umut Inan, "Crossing Interpretive Boundaries in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul: Ahmed Sudi on the Divan of Hafiz of Shiraz," *Philological Encounters* 3 (2018): 284-5
[586] Dominic Brookshaw, "To Be Feared and Desired: Turks in the Collected Works of ʿUbayd-i Zākānī," *Iranian Studies* 42 no. 5 (2009): 739
[587] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 39
[588] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 118-9, 125

they preserved it long after it was forgotten or abandoned by the Chaghatāys.[589] We shall return to the articulation of Turkish-ness and Mongol-ness as behaviours later. The more urgent ideological problem posed by the Mongol heritage was that of dynastic legitimacy.

The dilemma faced, as Ali Anooshahr has demonstrated, by the Shībānids in Transoxiana, the Timurids in India and even the Mongols proper of Mughūlistān, was reconciling their genealogical and cultural heritage from Chinggis Khān and his successors – still a source of prestige and political legitimacy – with the embarrassing legacies of paganism and violence inextricably associated with the Mongol conquests.[590] The Mongols were included in the spectrum of steppe peoples classified as "Turk" by medieval Islamic chroniclers.[591] However, this did not translate to any community of identity or origin felt by the Turkic-speaking Chaghatāy nobles and the Mughūl *amīrs*. On the contrary, their attitudes to one another were explicitly antagonistic, as is made clear by Mīrzā Haydar, himself a Mughūl of impeccable lineage, in a revealing passage from the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*:

> From among the four peoples (*ulūs*), one is that of the *Mughūl*, but these are divided into two kinds, the first Mughūl, the next Chaghtāy. Yet these two have long been one another's enemies...and call one another by insulting names, such that the Chaghtāys call the Mughūls *jata*, and the Mughūls call the Chaghtāy *qarāvānās*.[592]

These terms are revealing. *Qarāvānās* is evidently the same as *qarāūnās,* a term which has generally been translated as "half-breeds," having referred originally to descendants of the low-ranking Īlkhānid soldiery with local pastoralists of Afghanistan and the Punjab.[593] The 19th century Ottoman scholar Sulaymān Āfandī's Chaghatāy-Ottoman dictionary glosses the word *jata*, translated by Anooshahr as "bandit," as "a man of low extraction, a gypsy, base."[594] We thus begin to get a sense of competing status-claims between the Mughūls emphasising their closeness to the Mongol cultural and political heritage, and the more heavily Persianised and Islamised Chaghatāys' disdain for that heritage and its aforementioned negative associations. *Jata* appears as a pejorative appellation of the Mughūls as early as the Timurid *Zafarnāma* (c.

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[589] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 97
[590] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 84-85, 114 & *passim*
[591] Lee, "The Historical Meaning of the Term Turk," 109
[592] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 191
[593] Peter Jackson, "The Mongols of Central Asia and the Qara'unas," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 56 no. 1 (2018): 92 & 98; Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 128
[594] Shaykh Sulaymān Āfandī, *Šejx Sulejman Efendi's Čagatāj-Osmanisches Wörterbuch*, trans. Ignaz Kúnos (Publications de la Section Orientale de la Société Ethnographique Hongroise: 1902), 52

1424).[595] This latter attitude permeates the *Bāburnāma*. Bābur variously refers to the Mughūls as "captors and plunderers of faithful Muslims," implicitly referring to their pagan heritage. He declares that "mischief and devastation must always be expected from Mughūls," that shameful deeds of all kinds "are the clear product of a Mughūl nature," and that they are devoid of loyalty.[596] There is thus every reason to believe that far from sharing in a common "Tūrānī" identity, the various members of the Mughal nobility derived from Central and Inner Asian lineages would have regarded one another, if at all, with something approaching antipathy.

The conflicting dynastic status-claims of the Chaghatāys and Mughūls provide further evidence of the incompatibility of these groups' political and ideological traditions. Chaghatāy, it is worth noting, remained the designation accorded the Timurid rulers of India by both the Uzbeks and the Safavids. Safavid and Mughal sources attest a letter supposedly issued by the Shaybānid ʿAbdullāh Khān to Muzaffar Husayn Mīrzā of Qandahār, in which he warns him against delivering his ancestral kingdom to the Chaghatāys i.e. Timurids (*zinhār vilāyat-i maurūsī rā ba-dast-i chaghtā na-dahand*).[597] Even late 17th century Safavid sources refer to Mughal armies as "the armies of the Chaghatāy" (*sipāh-i razm-khvāh-i chaghtāy, giroh-i anboh-i jaghtāy*).[598] To their neighbours in the north and west, the term Chaghatāy seems therefore to have designated the heirs of Tīmūr, and this is the sense in which Mīrzā Haydar differentiates between Chaghatāys and Mughūls. This illustrates the competing worldviews of the two groups despite the confusion of overlapping nomenclature. The Chaghatāys and their retainers derived their legitimacy entirely from Tīmūr as *Sāhib-Qirān* and world-conqueror; the Mughūls situated themselves within the Chinggisid cultural and political heritage as the dynastic heirs of Chaghatāy Khān, second son of Chinggis. They were thus rightful overlords of his domain of Transoxiana and Mughūlistān, historically referred to as the Chaghatāy *ulūs*, in contrast to Timurid usurpers. Mīrzā Haydar thus complains bitterly of the Timurids' treatment of the Mughūl Khāns (his own maternal ancestors), who were "called kings but treated as prisoners" (*mahbūs mī-būda*) to the point that the Timurid ruler Abū Saʿīd condescendingly told Mīrzā Haydar's grandfather Yūnus Khān that "the time has come for you to lay aside all these pretensions [to kingship]."[599] As Anooshahr comments, Mughūl

[595] Sharf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī, *Zafarnāma*, ed. Maulvī Muhammad Ilahdād (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1887), 493 & *passim*
[596] *Bāburnāma*, 104-5, 115, 140
[597] *Akbarnāma* 999, 1010; *Ālam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 331-333
[598] Valī Qulī Shāmlū, *Qisas al-Khāqānī*, ed. Hasan Sādāt Nāsirī (Sāzmān-i Chāp-o Intishārāt, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance: 1992-1995) 1:437, 1:475, *passim*
[599] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 263-4

descendants in India such as the Arghūns and Dughlāts saw the Timurids as "half-breeds at best and the servants of their ancestors."[600] This perhaps accounts for the decline of rank and favour possessed by the Tarkhāns and Arghūns as witnessed in the previous section. It is also worth noting the shift in meaning of the term Chaghatāy *ulūs*, which by the 16th century referred to the Turco-Mongol inhabitants of Chaghatāy Khān's domain rather than to his own descendants. This is clearly also the meaning it has in Jahāngīr's reference to Farīdūn Barlās as a "genuine scion of the Chaghatāy *ulūs*."[601]

The divisive heritage of the Mongols and ensuing dynastic disputes also posed a considerable problem to the Uzbeks, whose Shībānid and Ashtarkhānid rulers derived their legitimacy through descent from Jochi or Yūjī, Chinggis Khān's eldest son. They were thus seen as illegitimate interlopers into Transoxiana, the domain of Chaghatāy Khān's descendants. This would have been compounded by the fact that the they perceived themselves as (and seem to have been perceived by the Mughals and Safavids) as the inheritors of Mongol and steppe traditions such as austerity, martial skills, and so forth.[602] Their attempted ideological solution to this was, with the proverbial zeal of recent converts, to emphasise the Islamic orthodoxy of the Uzbek rulers. Thus, for example, we have Shaybānī Khān portrayed in dialogue with learned scholars and clerics about the rights of inheritance and patrimony according to the *shariʿa* (*hukm-i mīrās dar sharīʿat-i hazrat-i payghambar*), which he finds conveniently coincide with the same in the *yāsā* or law code of Chinggis Khān (*yāsā-i changez khān*).[603] In this context it is worth remembering that some 13th century Mamlūk jurists used the Mongols' adherence to the *yāsā* over the *sharīʿa* as grounds for declaring them non-Muslims and legitimate objects of *jihād*.[604] Shaybānī Khān neatly inverted this and proceeded in later in the *Mihmānnāma* to portray his Uzbeks as *mujāhidīn* against the Muslim Kazakhs, whom they likewise stigmatised as irreligious pagans.[605] Later the same century, we read in Mīrzā Haydar (otherwise quite hostile to the Uzbeks) of the renowned piety and orthodoxy of ʿUbaydullāh Khān of Bukhārā (r. 1534-1539). He described how "nobody like him has ever been seen or heard of: so lofty a sovereign, a Muslim firm in his faith, god-fearing and abstinent. He

[600] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 140
[601] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 35
[602] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 39
[603] Fazlullāh ibn Rūzbihān Khunji, *Mihmānnāma-i Bukhārā: Tārīkh-i Pādshāhī-yi Shaybānī Khān*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūda (Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb: 1962), 22
[604] Denise Aigle, "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymiyyah's Three ʿAnti-Mongol' Fatwas," *Mamluk Studies Review* 11 no. 2 (2007): 95-96, 116
[605] *Mihmānnāma*, 43

governed all the affairs of religion, of the country, of kingship, of the treasury, and of the soldiery and the common people according to the *sharīʿa* and never tolerated a hair's breadth of deviation from it," (*ba yak sar-mūe tajāvīz az sharʿ rāzī nabūdī*).[606] Evidently this form of cultural power projection enjoyed some degree of success.

Rather unexpectedly, it was coupled with a renewed emphasis on Chinggisid heritage. The Shībānids denounced the Timurids as usurpers of the authority of the house of Chinggis Khān and contested the legitimacy of the Mughūl Khāns on account of their submission to Tīmūr's non-Chinggisid lineage. Thus, the *Mihmānnāma*, composed under the direct supervision of Shaybānī Khān, claims that "the *ulūs* of Chaghatāy in concord with the descendants of Tīmūr Beg, son of Tarāghāy, had departed entirely from obedience to the descendants of Chinggis Khān," (*ulūs-i jaghtāy ba-muvāfiqat-i aulād-i tīmūr beg bin tarāghāy mutlaq-an az tāʿat-i aulād-i changez khan bīrūn rafta-and*).[607] It is worth noting that well after a century of Timurid rule in Transoxiana, the Shībānids did not accord Tīmūr even the humble titles of *amīr* or *gurgān*. We shall return to this theme to observe its subsequent evolution in the next section.

Therefore, far from there having been a common Tūrānī cultural identity or even a broader Tūrānī status identity, groups of Central and Inner Asian origin present in the Mughal ruling class had distinct origins and drew upon diverse and often conflicting traditions, identities and languages of legitimation. The Timurids and their Chaghatāy retainers emphasised the legacy of Tīmūr; the Mughūls by contrast drew with pride upon the heritage of Chinggis Khān. The arriviste Uzbek rulers sought to merge Chinggisid themes with an emphasis on Islamic orthodoxy. We cannot assume these to have manifested in recognisable patterns of factional behaviour in India, and indeed there is no evidence that they did so.

So much then for the denizens of Tūrān. But what was Tūrān itself? What did it mean to an educated audience in 16th century Mughal India? Where was it? What associations did it possess? To answer these questions, which pertain to the place of Tūrān in the mental geography of the Persianate world and its contemporary meaning as a geographical and cultural descriptor, we are fortunate in possessing an invaluable source. This is the *Haft Iqlīm* of Amīn Ahmad Rāzī, an encyclopedic work divided according to the seven climes of medieval Islamic geography. The author was a first cousin of none other than Iʿtimād ad-Daula Ghiyās Beg, and

[606] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 413
[607] *Mihmānnāma*, 136



Figure 3: Turan in the Haft Iqlīm

spent much time at the court of Akbar, whom he praises highly.[608] The work is both a geographic encyclopaedia and a *tazkira*, giving biographical notices of prominent saints, clerics and poets of the cities mentioned in each clime. Given the patronage he received from the courts of Isfahān and Agra, we can assume that the intended audience of the work comprised the wide range of individuals in terms of background and identity represented at those courts. It is furthermore the kind of work which, disseminated in the courtly settings of Agra and Isfahān, aimed at educated and cultured members of the élite, and thus most accurately imparts to us ethnographic understandings of these places and peoples as held by that élite.

For Amīn Rāzī, Tūrān and Mā-varā al-Nahr or Transoxiana are clearly synonymous. He described Samarqand and Bukhārā as "one of the first cities of the great country of Tūrān" (*bilād-i muʿazzam-i tūrān*) and "one of the most esteemed cities of Tūrān" (*az shahr-hā-yi muʿtabir-i tūrān*) respectively.[609] He carefully delineates the boundaries of Transoxiana as follows: "to its east, Farghāna and Kāshghar, to the west, Khvārizm, in the north, Tāshkand, and in the south, Balkh. It is bounded by the river *Jayhūn*, which lies between it and the mountains of Badakhshān...the great river *Sayhūn* likewise [is its boundary], which flows from

[608] M.U. Memon, "Amīn Ahmad Rāzī," *Encyclopædia Iranica* 1/9 (1989): 939
[609] *Haft Iqlīm*, f. 357a and 374a

mountains in Turkistān into the sea of Khvārizm."[610] This introduces us to two important elements of the conceptual structure of this geography: the identity of Tūrān with Mā-varā al-Nahr in the eyes of observers from Iran and India, and the clear distinction between Tūrān and Turkistān.

Tūrān proper was undeniably Transoxiana, the lands between the Oxus (*jayhūn* or *amū*) and the Jaxartes (*sayhūn*), comprising great cities like Bukhārā and Samarqand and the settled lands around them. As early as 1391, an inscription of Tīmūr identifies him as "the Sultān of Tūrān" (*turan-nïŋ sultan-ï temür beg*) and his opponent Tokhtamysh or Tūqtamish, the ruler of the Golden Horde, as "the Khan of Bulghār," (*qan-i bulγār*).[611] The *Zafarnāma*, compiled about thirty years after these inscriptions, distinguishes Tīmūr's realm from the territories of the Golden Horde, variously called the Jochid *ulūs* (*ulūs-i jūjī)*, *Rūs*, *Bulghār* and *Qabchāq*, and the lands of Mughalistān to the east, which are the domain of the *jata* (i.e. Mughūls).[612] Amīn Rāzī's encyclopedia shows the continuation of this particular and limited understanding of Tūrān as a specific kingdom or country in the broader space of Central and Inner Asia by Tīmūr's descendants in India. The identification of Tūrān with Mā-varā al-Nahr, the domain of the Uzbek Khāns, persists well into the 17th century. In the *Jahāngīrnāma*, the seat of Tīmūr's capital is identified as being in "Tūrān," as is the territory of the contemporary Ashtarkhānid rulers of Bukhārā.[613] The *Bādshāhnāma* likewise identifies Imām Qulī Khān as the ruler (*hākim* and *vālī*) of Tūrān, and in Shāh Jahān's correspondence with that ruler identifies the Ashtarkhānids as "the illustrious family of the Khāns of celestial majesty of the lands of Tūrān," (*silsila-i jalīla-i khavānīn-i sipihr tamkīn-i vilāyat-i tūrān*).[614]

Delineating the exact boundaries of these spaces in the mental geography of contemporary and later observers is more than an exercise in geographic antiquarianism. It demonstrates to us exactly what the connotations of these spaces were, what significance they held to distant observers in Iran and India for whom these descriptors held cultural and ideological rather than immediate political or geographic meaning. The specificity of Tūrān matters because, as will be shown, the associations of Tūrān-as-Transoxiana, i.e. Tūrān as a

[610] Ibid., 357a-b
[611] A.I. Ponomarev, "Amendments to the Reading of Timur's Inscriptions," *Soviet Oriental Studies* 3 (1945): 223-4; transliteration as found therein
[612] *Zafarnāma*, 460-61, 734, *passim*
[613] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 324; on the Uzbeks, 82, 363, 423, and 451, where Imām Qulī Khān is identified as ruler of Tūrān
[614] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:231-236, 251, 261

geographical descriptor, are quite different from the cultural and ethnographic understandings of Tūrān-as-steppe, i.e. a generic stand-in for the qualities associated with Turkish-ness, nomadism, pastoralism and the lifestyle of the steppe. These latter understandings prevailed over the former in a specific moment in the late 17th century.

Transoxiana in the *Haft Iqlīm* is not a barbarous or remote country, quite the contrary. It is *Turkistān* which is invested with the qualities of distance, wildness, and the negative aspects of Turkish-ness and the Mongol heritage. Amīn Rāzī identifies Tūrān as a country unparalleled for "the abundance of the people, the increase of its harvests, the quantity of its fruits...one of the key marks of that land (*diyār*) is that it never experiences famine."[615] Its cities, with their poets and *ʿulama*, are bastions of Islam and civilisation: as Subrahmanyam has elsewhere pointed out, Bābur had bequeathed to his heirs a description of the city as an architectural marvel, a flourishing centre of cultivation, and home of theological, scholarly, and commercial activity.[616] He relates a supposed *hadith* of the Prophet as follows: "in Mā-varā al-Nahr a city will be found whose people are ensconced in the mercy of the divine, and indeed Bukhārā has the glory [of being that city], for till the day of judgment she will be distinguished by the number of her martyrs above all other cities, and she has produced countless saints, virtuous men, and scholars," (*auliyā va fuzalā va fusahā*).[617] Furthermore, Mā-varā al-Nahr falls into the fifth of the seven climes of human habitation, along with other settled and prosperous lands like Khurāsān, Sīstan, Kirmān, Fārs, ʿIrāq, Āzarbāyjān, Armenia, Anatolia and the archipelago of Greece, under the astrological governance of Venus (*zuhra*, a planet signifying qualities of beauty and pleasure).[618] Turkistān is a very different place.[619] The Jaxartes is the boundary separating Transoxiana and Turkistān, and it is the various inhabitants of the steppe beyond that river who were identified by medieval Islamic geographers as "Turks."[620] It is here that Turkish-ness is found in all its least appealing aspects. Amīn Rāzī's geographical and ethnographical description of Turkistān is worth reproducing:

> "Turkistān is a collective name (*ism-i jāmiʿ*), referring to the entirety of the homeland (*bilād*) of the Turks from the first to the seventh clime, but most of it falls in this sixth

[615] *Haft Iqlīm*, f. 357a
[616] Subrahmanyam, "Early Modern Circulation," 48
[617] *Haft Iqlīm*, f. 374a
[618] Ibid., f. 339b
[619] Ibid., 392a
[620] Lee, "The Historical Meaning of the Term Turk," 108-109

clime. The Turks are mostly a nomadic (*sahrā-nishīn*) people, and are distinguished from other tribes (*qabāyil*) by their bravery and hardiness (*shujāʿat va jalādat*)."[621]

Many of the negative tropes we have encountered are reproduced Amīn Rāzī: Turkistān "is a place full of strange and wondrous things" (*gharāyib-u-ʿajāyib bisyār-ast*) inhabited by barbarous people such as the *Qālīmāq,* the *Mughūl*, the *Tātār*, the *Bulghār* and others. Unlike preceding chapters including those concerning Transoxiana, the text provides no *zikrs* or biographical details of any clerics, saints or poets of these barbarous territories and peoples. Furthermore, in the schematic of the seven climes whereby medieval Islamic geographers divided the world, the more remote climes, with their excesses of heat and cold, were believed to manifest in the uncivilised and excessive character of their inhabitants.[622] This is seen for example in the *Mihmānnāma's* attribution of filth, violence and sexual profligacy to the Kazakhs as inhabitants of the remote northern climes.[623] Let us then observe that Mā-varā al-Nahr's neighbours in the temperate fifth clime are mostly cities and the sedentary, cultivated territories we have already listed, and it has produced renowned scholars and poets like Nizāmī ʿArūzī and Rūdakī as documented in Amīn Rāzī's *tazkira*.[624] Turkistān, on the other hand, is said to "fall almost entirely in the sixth clime," along with various sparsely inhabited territories on the boundaries of the Islamic world like Kāshghar, Yārkand and Khutan, or regions named after the nomadic or otherwise alien peoples who inhabit them, such as *Tātār, Kīmāk, Rūs* and *Chigil*.[625] The seventh clime, comprising the domain of the Golden Horde (*Bulghār*) and of the Slavs (*Saqlāb*), is a completely remote and alien place, its inhabitants "of a colour between deep red and white," its limit "the country of Gog and Magog" (*bilād-i yājūj-u-mājūj*) and its cities "few in number, in the entirety of the clime there being only twenty three cities." Even the location of these cities is uncertain, as "some say they are in the northwest, others that they are close to the north pole."[626] The entire clime occupies just two folios of the manuscript (for comparison, the fifth clime covers fifty-four folios), is devoid of a single poetic or scholarly *zikr*, and concludes with the legendary city of Jābulqā "in the uttermost west, [whose] inhabitants descend from the [mythical] tribe of ʿĀd and worship God after the manner of the

[621] *Haft Iqlīm,* 392a
[622] J.T. Olsson, "The World in Arab Eyes: A Re-Assessment of the Climes in Medieval Islamic Scholarship," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77 no. 3 (2014): 489
[623] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 86
[624] *Haft Iqlīm*, f. 357a-b, 362a, 389a
[625] Ibid., 393a onwards
[626] Ibid., 407a

Jews."[627] We see then that Tūrān as the geographical space of Transoxiana was very much part of the civilised Islamic ecumene, and it was the more remote regions of Turkistān and Inner Asia which were repositories of the dangerous and liminal qualities of Tūrān as a broader cultural space and its Turco-Mongol inhabitants.

Once we understand this distinction, much of the Mughals' attitude towards Transoxiana and its inhabitants becomes clearer: Transoxiana was the imagined homeland and the repository of the Timurid heritage, but its present Uzbek rulers were seen as barbarous interlopers belonging to the uncivilised domains of the Jochid *ulūs* and Turkistān. That the Uzbeks themselves were aware of this is revealed by their strenuous efforts to distance themselves from the heritage of Turkistān and their emphasis on Islamic orthodoxy. Crucially, the *Mihmānnāma* like Amīn Rāzī presents the dividing line between civilisation and barbarism as the Jaxartes (*Sayhūn*), on whose hither side is the settled, civilised and Islamic domain of Shaybānī Khān, whereas "Turkistān lies on the further bank of the *Sayhūn...*which is the ancient homeland of Jochī Khān and Shībān Khān," and is at the time of writing the home of the barbarous, allegedly pagan Kazakhs upon whom Shaybānī Khān goes to wage war.[628] As Anooshahr points out, the problematic heritage is dealt with by being displaced through time and space.[629]

We therefore see the multiple meanings held by Inner and Central Asian spaces for members of the Mughal nobility in the 16th and 17th centuries. Cultural and ethnographic tropes of Turkish-ness and Mongol-ness and the meaning vested in spaces like Transoxiana and Turkistān show far greater complexity and variety than might be expected given the relatively narrow meanings of Tūrān and Tūrānī-ness as status-identities and cultural descriptors of the 17th century. The succeeding section investigates why this was the case.

[627] Ibid., 408b
[628] *Mihmānnāma*, 144
[629] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 108

3.3: Re-Imagining Tūrān in the 17th Century

In the course of the 17th century, as Central Asia increasingly ceased to be a living memory for most of the Mughal nobility, Tūrān came to assume several new meanings. Some of these, such as ethnographic and genealogical reworkings of Inner Asian élite identities, and the Sunnī Islamic prism whereby these were commemorated in historical works, were developments of pre-existing themes and topoi inherited directly from Central and Inner Asia. Others, such as new cultural understandings of Turk-ness, and the idea of Tūrān as the essential homeland of the Timurid dynasty, were comparatively original developments in the subcontinental context. These produced a new matrix of status-claims and cultural tropes that comprised Tūrān in the late 17th century which were then mobilised by a group of *mansabdārs* who have consequently been remembered as the "Tūrānī faction."

The role of Sunnī Islam as a vehicle through which to express and even "sanitise" the Turco-Mongol heritage with its many problematic aspects deserves more attention. The clearly Islamic self-perception of Mughūls, Chaghtāys and Uzbeks one and all by the 16th century is beyond doubt. Mīrzā Haydar goes so far as to say of the Qirghīz that "the Mughūls have all become Muslims and entered the people of Islam (*ahl-i Islām*) but the Qirghīz have remained in infidelity (*kufr*), and thus have been expelled from the Mughūl people," (*az mughūl khārij shuda ast*).[630] Clearly, then, if there is anything pagan about these peoples it belongs firmly in the past according to Mīrzā Haydar. The major and enduring symbol of this Islamised heritage is the Noachide genealogy given the various steppe peoples as common descendants of Japheth (*Yāfas*), Noah's eldest son. This was a suitably Islamic identity that provided a common unity to peoples typically classified as part of the same broad ethnic or cultural grouping by Muslim and Persian-speaking observers, despite their well-documented pagan past and the absence of identity of culture or origin amongst them. This genealogy, although of some antiquity, is not particularly prominent in the earlier texts. Mīrzā Haydar acknowledges it only once, when describing the patrilineal descent of his cousin Sultān Saʿīd Khān of Yārkand, in which he says only that the descent of the Mughūl Khān from Japheth is documented in the 14th century *Jāmīʿ al-Tavārīkh* of Rashīd al-Dīn and the *Zafarnāma* of Sharf al-Dīn Yazdī.[631] From the later 16th century we see an intensification of this theme. Akbar's court historiography, in describing his Chinggisid descent, emphasised the mythical princess Alanquwā as the key link in the chain of

[630] *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, 190
[631] Ibid., 645

descendants between Chinggis and Noah.[632] The *Haft Iqlīm* provides an expansive ethnography:

> "The eldest son of Japheth was called Yāfas-Ughlān, who was the first of the kings of the Turks just as Qayūmars was the first Sultān of Fārs, and he had five sons from whom the Turks descend, and from their increase in numbers of their offspring the Slavs (*saqlāb*) were driven into the country of Rus (*diyār-i Rūs*)...Alancha Khān his son had two sons of his own, the first called Tātār and the second called Mughūl, whose descendants have always been at odds."[633]

Amīn Rāzī thus neatly encapsulates the rivalry between the Chaghtāys and the Mughūls within his ethno-genealogical scheme, and conveniently fits them within the broader category of "Turk" as descendants of Japheth. What is particularly interesting from our point of view is that with the disappearance of the Chaghtāys as a political force from Central Asia, their Uzbek and Mughūl rivals also seem to have conceded this common origin. Despite a relative paucity of Uzbek sources, we possess two pertinent works, the first of which *Silsilat al-Salātīn*, a genealogy and history of the Ashtarkhānid rulers of Bukhārā compiled in the early 18th century by a minor dynast named Mīr Muhammad Salīm, who wrote from exile in India. The second is *Shajra-i Turk*, the genealogy of the Turks, written in Chaghatāy by the Shībānīd ruler of Khīva, Abūl Ghāzī Khān (1603-1664).[634] Abūl Ghāzī Khān wrote partly inspired by his access to the Safavid royal libraries at Isfahān and Qazvīn – his stated purpose in writing was to recapitulate ethnographic and historical knowledge of the steppe peoples broadly designated Turks and Mongols, and extend this to the history and the oral traditions of his own Turkic subjects in Khvārizm.[635]

Abūl Ghāzī Khān recapitulates Amīn Rāzī's genealogy, which he is very likely to have seen during his residence in Isfahān from 1629-1639. To the eldest of Japheth's sons he gives the name Turk as progenitor of the eponymous people, and traces his descent to Tatar and Mughūl, and the enmity of their descendants.[636] All of these, he tells us, were Muslims to the

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[632] Akbarnāma, 1:178; Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire*, Chapter 2
[633] *Haft Iqlīm*, f. 392b; I have omitted the detailed genealogy of Japheth's other sons as given by Amīn Rāzī
[634] B. Spuler, "Abu'l Ḡāzī Bahādor Khan," Encyclopædia Iranica, I/3 (1983), 292-293
[635] V.V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia: Volume 3, Mīr ʿAlī Shīr, A History of the Turkmen People,* tr. V. & T. Minorsky (E.J. Brill: 1962), 122, 149-151
[636] Abūl Ghāzī Bahādur Khān, *Histoire des Mogols et des Tatars,* tr. Baron Desmaisons (Imprimerie de lʿacadémie Impériale des Sciences: 1874), 9-11

ninth generation from Tātār Khān, after which they became infidels.[637] He repeats the *Akbarnāma's* myth of Alanquwā's impregnation by a ray of light while she dreamt, and elsewhere refers to the *Zafarnāma* as an authoritative source.[638] The influence of Timurid historiography is seen in his description of Tīmūr: he refers to him as Amīr Tīmūr the Barlās, and is generally neutral in tone in describing Tīmūr's career. Of his relationship with the Chinggisid Khāns of the Mughūls, he says only that they were kings merely in appearance, and that most of them were devoted to Tīmūr's interests.[639] In describing Tīmūr's wars with his own Jochid kinsman Tūqtamish, he goes so far as to prefer Tīmūr's cause, attributing to his enemy "the massacre of Muslims of Mā-varā al-Nahr, who died the deaths of martyrs."[640]

Muhammad Salīm like Abūl Ghāzī Khān repeats Amīn Rāzī's genealogy. After elaborating that the descendants of Shem (*Sām*) are "the people of Iran and Arabia and Mesopotamia," he turns to the Turks and reports that they are descendants of "Sultān Turk the eldest son of Japheth."[641] He then repeats verbatim the account of Alanquwā's descent from "the Qiyāt tribe and the Barlās family" as given in the Akbarnāma, before going on to establish the descent of "Amīr Tārāghay...honoured father of His Highness the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction" (*hazrat sāhib qirānī*, i.e. Tīmūr) from the same origin.[642] Finally and most remarkably, he elaborates the descent of his own ancestors from "Jochi Khān the son of the Great Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction, Chinggis Khān the Great," (*Sāhib-i qirān-i ʿazam changez khān-i muʿazzam*).[643] In considering the magnitude of this shift in attitudes, it is worth considering a verse composed by Shībānī Khān two centuries previously:

> "When I rekindle the flame of empire (*daulat*) let none be amazed
>
> For as you lords full well know, in me the dying candle of the House of Chinggis flares up again
>
> I am the dawn of felicity rising from the sky of Chinggis
>
> When I breeze by like the morning wind, the candle of Tīmūr goes out as I pass."[644]

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[637] Ibid., 12
[638] Ibid., 64-66
[639] Ibid., 163-4
[640] Ibid., 171
[641] Hājī Mīr Muhammad Salīm, *Silsilat al-Salātīn,* Bodleian Library, MS Ouseley 269, f. 15a
[642] Ibid., f. 24a & 30b
[643] Ibid., f. 125a/b & 156b
[644] András J.E. Bodrogligeti, *A Grammar of Chagatay* (Lincom Europa: 2001), 404

In these two works we see the attenuation of historic hostilities and resentments, and the elaboration of a common ethnic genealogy within an Islamic framework (and using Timurid titulature) for the otherwise antagonistic Mughūls, Chaghatāys and Uzbeks. It may well be that part of the reason that Muhammad Salīm, who was surely aware of these distinctions and antagonisms, minimised these because they had become elided in the conceptualisation of Tūrān in India and specifically in the status culture of the imperial court. Moreover, *Silsilat al-Salātīn* was composed toward the middle of the 18th century, when the self-declared Tūrānī *amīrs* were the most prominent remaining aristocratic lineage at court – Muhammad Salīm, as an impecunious exile, would hardly have wanted to contest their wider claim to ascriptive Tūrānī identity and thus likely presented a distorted view of the relationship between these populations in Transoxiana and Turkistān. It is worth returning here to Sneath's observation that among nomadic peoples of Central Asia genealogy and lineage were tools of aristocratic power "more likely to reflect contingent historical conditions and forms of government" than kinship structures.[645] This was certainly so with aristocrats who claimed kinship with these people from the Persianate courts of India.

Linguistic developments appear to parallel this cultural and ideological attenuation of the Central Asian heritage. The rise of Persian, first as a sociocultural signifier of prestige, and increasingly as a major element of Mughal identity, is well documented by Muzaffar Alam among others.[646] The language it displaced was of course the Chaghatāy language of Tūrān, and the increasing prominence of Persian in Akbar's reign is seen in the translation of early Mughal sources like the *Bāburnāma* and the *Tazkira-i Humāyūn va Akbar* from Chaghatāy into Persian.[647] Indeed, it was the translated version of the former that was used in the 1590s as a source on Farghānā by Amīn Rāzī, a source he refers to as the *vāqiʿāt-i Bāburī*.[648] Naturally, this displacement of the old language did not produce its immediate extinction. Into the lifetime of Jahāngīr, Chaghatāy seems to have been widely spoken at the Mughal court. In the *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, about half the conversations on Central Asia are reported as having been conducted in that language, and Jahāngīr in other accounts was keen to stress his familiarity with it.[649] However, by the late 17th century there would have been a definite shift towards Persian, as for

[645] Sneath, *The Headless State,* 202-3
[646] Muzaffar Alam, "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics," *MAS* 32, no. 2 (1998): 348
[647] Ibid., 323
[648] *Haft Iqlīm*, 383b
[649] Lefèvre, "Dialogue and Asiatic Otherness at the Mughal Court," 273-274

example in the gradual evolution of Mughūlistān to Mughalistān in texts by the late 17th century.[650]

In tandem with these developments is the increasingly emphatic depiction by the Mughals of Tūrān as the imagined primordial homeland of the Timurid dynasty and specifically as the resting place of Tīmūr. In the *Jahāngīrnāma* we have multiple references to Tūrān as the capital and homeland of Tīmūr, and one instance of Jahāngīr sending money with the Uzbek emissaries for the upkeep of Tīmūr's tomb.[651] The *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* likewise attributes an exaggerated veneration for Tīmūr's grave to the Emperor, having him declare that had he lived in Samarqand he would have kissed the feet of Tīmūr's grave every day.[652] By the mid-17th century, *gaurkhāna-i maurūsī* and *gaurkhāna-i ajdād*, i.e. land of the graves of [Timurid] forefathers, had become a stock phrase in diplomatic correspondence in referring to Transoxiana.[653] Shāh Jahān's emphasis on the figure of Tīmūr is also apparent in source of the period. The *Bādshāhnāma* thus characterises the Mughals' claim to Qandahār and various other Central Asian territories and fortresses on the basis that "all these were conquered and subdued (*musakhkhar-u-maftūh gashta būda*) in the time of the great Khāqān and Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction, conqueror of all countries, axis of the world and of the faith."[654] Later in the work, the Balkh and Badakhshān campaigns are justified on the same grounds, that their conquest is necessary to open the way to Samarqand which is "the ancestral domain (*mulk-i maurūsī*)" of the dynasty and was "the celestial throne of the axis of the world and the faith, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction."[655] It is worth observing that the near-ubiquitous word *maurūsī* (hereditary or patrimonial) comes from the same triconsonantal root as *mūris* (progenitor) and *mīrās* (patrimony), emphasising both the genealogical element and the inherited *rights* of the Mughals as Tīmūr's successors. Unfortunately, the *ʿĀlamgīrnāma* ends decades before the emergence of the so-called Tūrānī faction and does not provide much pertinent information. However, Shāh Navāz Khān and Khvāfī Khān repeat a telling anecdote in reference to a *mansabdār's* scornfully decrying Tūrānī (religious) evidence, i.e. a religious opinion from a scholar or cleric of Tūrān, as follows: "this is Tūrānī evidence, what is it worth," (*īn shahādat tūrānī-st, chi iʿtibār dārad*). Shāh Navāz Khān comments "he did not remember

[650] Cf. *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, passim
[651] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 324 & 357
[652] *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, 194b, 197a
[653] *Shāmlū Letters*, f. 77b, where Hasan Khān Shāmlū makes inquiries regarding Mughal intentions towards Transoxiana
[654] *Bādshāhnāma* 2:62
[655] Ibid., 2:486

that his sovereign was also Tūrānī" (*hifz na-kard ki pādshāh ham tūrānī-st*).[656] Khvāfī Khān's account is less circumspect, and has the Emperor curtly reply "I myself am Tūrānī" (*mā ham tūrānī-em*).[657] The fact that such an anecdote was circulated in writing by the last generation of *mansabdārs* to have lived in Aurangzeb's reign suggests that the origin of the dynasty in Tūrān was widely acknowledged by the turn of the 18th century.

Another meaning that seems to have come into being by the 17th century is the idea of the Mughal as military professional, related to the idea of the Turk as soldier. This appears to mirror the well-documented nature of terms like Afghan and Rajput as military status-identities in this period: in Dirk Kolff's terms, they constituted "soldiers' identities rather than ethnic or genealogical denotations."[658] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, in particular, refers to such groups as "Mughals in the *birādarī* of Yakka-tāz Khān," or to "Muhammad Amīn Khān and some Mughals."[659] These seem to be references to the soldiers or retinues of *mansabdārs* of Central Asian origin. More interestingly, in the description of a siege the text classes a group of soldiers as "four Mughals and one Baheliyā."[660] Baheliyās are one of those groups of pastoralists typically identified as a clan and listed by Kolff among the fluid military identities used by footsoldiers in the imperial army. The context of the preceding remark strongly suggests that "Mughal" could also serve as such an identity.[661] Finally, we have a reference to "the Mughals and other peoples of the Hindus and Muslims" (*Mughaliya va dīgar aqvām az muslimīn va hunūd*) being rewarded for military service.[662] It seems clear that this was a kind of fluid collective identity associated with a style or type of military professional, as well as one associated with service in the retinues of Central Asian *mansabdārs*. This process quite possibly mirrored that among Afghans and Rajputs (certainly included among "other peoples of the Hindus and Muslims" here referred to): viz., the adoption of an ostensibly ethnic identity that is in fact a mark of belonging in a social collective associated with a military type and cultural behaviours.[663] As to what that military type is, it is highly probably these were mounted troopers armed with sword, bow and arrows, an innovation brought to the subcontinent by the Timurids and one strongly associated with the nomadic peoples of Central and Inner Asia.[664]

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[656] *Maāsir* 3:661
[657] Khvāfī Khān, 2:379
[658] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 18, 26-27, 57
[659] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 88, 504
[660] Ibid., 427
[661] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 117-118
[662] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 506
[663] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 57
[664] Ibid., 23; Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation*, 188

Afghans and Rajputs were also associated with this style of warfare, as opposed to less prestigious military status-identities like the Purbiyās, Ujjainiyās and Bundelas, who fought on foot.[665]

There is thus considerable reason to believe that in between being interpreted as Mughūl (i.e. a Mongol of east-central Asia) and a Mughal in the sense of a man of *vilāyat* in the 18th century, the term Mughal had a period of existence as a military status-identity, i.e. a social identity linked to a prestigious military role. Further investigation reveals that it referred specifically to military-professionals of the mounted-warrior type with putative origins in Iran and Transoxiana, prefiguring its eventual use in the subsequent century as a designation for emigrants from those regions collectively. Dayal provides an extensive survey of military-ethnographic classification in Mughal muster rolls in the Deccan, arguing that identity in the context of military role signified "a broad set of categories "including lineage, agnatic derivation from a common male ancestor, kinship, language, religion, denomination, occupation, city, region, or family organisation."[666] It is interesting to note she finds (in the absence of any such term as Īrānī or Tūrānī) a number of identifications of Mughal with modifiers of lineage, sect, city or region. such "Mughal Tūnī, Mughal Māzandarānī, Mughal Sādāt, Mughal Badakhshī," alongside what appear to be tribal, ethnic, or sectarian identifiers such as "Sādāt Bukhārī" or Jalāyir or Barlās.[667] Given, as Dayal observes, that we lack any information about the social identity of muster-masters, there is no reason to assume these were any kind of fixed, absolute definitions so much as attributions of a military-social identity (*Mughal*) to cavalrymen fulfilling a type of military role while also claiming a putative genealogical or other social identity of the kind examined earlier in the chapter. If we then assume Mughal signified in the 17th century a type of military role analogous to Rajput (which also appears with various modifications in the muster rolls), Dayal's argument locating the inscription of military identities as part of a north Indian, Mughal process of expansion into the Deccan would appear to strongly reinforce Stewart Gordon's thesis of north India and the Deccan as independent "zones" with distinct military cultures.[668] Mughal, Rajput and Afghan (and possibly Qalmāq and Uzbek) would thus appear to be social identities linked to a type of

[665] Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation* 190; Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 117 & 120 on the footsoldiers.
[666] Dayal, "Making the Mughal Soldier," 858
[667] Ibid., 895
[668] Stewart Gordon, "Zones of Military Entrepreneurship in India, 1500-1700," *Marathas, Marauders and State Formation in Eighteenth Century India* (Oxford University Press: 1994): 182-184, 204

North Indian military role as well as putative tribal affiliation, or in Gordon's words "a descriptive term for men on horseback" linked to honour and social status.

This hypothesis is borne out by the evidence of the *Fathnāma*, which posits Mahābat Khān leading an army of "Rajputs" against Āsaf Khān and Nūr Jahān's army of "Mughals." Kāmī says, "his army was all Afghans and Rajputs (*sipāh-i ū hama rajpūt-u-afghān*), he brought almost ten thousand men to the battlefield" having him boast shortly thereafter that "Not a single man will remain from the Mughals (*na-mānam az mughal bar-jā yakī mard*), for I have filled the hearts of the Īrānīs with dread…like the sea will I bring this *qaum* in waves!"[669] As Gandhi points out, Mughal authors, lacking overarching categories such as caste to denote social groups, usually referred to them as *qaum*. If then, with the evidence of *Fathnāma*, *Maāsir-i Ālamgīrī*, and the muster-rolls examined by Dayal, we see that caste-markers like Rājpūt, Rājpūt *dakkanī*, or Pandit *zunnārdār dakkanī* or appeared primarily as military identifiers, there is a strong case to be made for Mughal functioning in the same way in this period. It is well-established that Mahābat Khān's personal retinue, Muslim and Hindu, consisted predominantly of Kachwāhā, Chauhān and Sisodiyā Rājpūts and Mewātīs.[670] Mughal in the *Fathnāma* would then seem to indicate the predominantly Muslim contingents of the Īrānī *amīrs*, as demonstrated by a few further references: for example, an order to Āsaf Khān to "quickly raise an army of Uzbeks and Mughals" (*zi uzbak va zi mughal fauje guzīn kun*), Irādat Khān I "came to the Mughals and gave them courage (*dil dād bisyār*)," and the Empress admonishing Mahābat Khān "you have shown much enmity to the Mughals" (*ʿadāvat bā Mughal az bas ki kardī*).[671] Finally, this status identity's attribution on a military basis to military professionals of the kind examined would also explain Bernier's commentary on Mughals as a "race" from Tartary that nonetheless admitted other "foreigners" (*étrangers*) into their ranks.[672] In conclusion, there seems clearly to have existed by the 17th century a set of racialised social identities associated with military roles on a scale of prestige and military that declines from north to South, from Hindūstān to the Deccan as Gordon observed, but possibly also from Turkistān or "Tūrān" to Hindūstān.[673]

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[669] *Fathnāma*, 191, 193
[670] S. Inayat Ali Zaidi, "Ordinary Kachwaha Troopers Serving the Mughal Empire: Composition and Structure of the Contingents of the Kachwaha Nobles," Studies in History 2 no. 1 (1980): 66
[671] *Fathnāma*, 205, 209 & 222
[672] Gandhi, "Locating Race," 1186
[673] Cf. the pejorative characterisation of "black" *nayakas*, Gandhi, "Locating Race," 1202 & Gordon, "Zones of Military Entrepreneurship," 205

There is no doubt that the martial associations of Turk-ness were strongly associated with the cultural conception of Tūrān. This is widespread in sources dating to Aurangzeb's later reign and its aftermath. A word is here appropriate about these, particularly the *Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī* or *Nīmcha-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, which Jadunath Sarkar has translated as the "Anecdotes of Aurangzeb." The authenticity of this work, contested both by Sarkar and Audrey Truschke, is discussed elsewhere in this thesis and it is argued to date to the 1720s.[674] The importance of the episodes recounted in this and related texts is that they encapsulate the cultural attitudes and historical worldview of the Mughal ruling class in the immediate aftermath of Aurangzeb's death, as they sought to re-work the memory of that Emperor's life and reign. The work was compiled by his confidante, Hamīd al-Dīn Khān, and it will be argued that its political attitudes render it virtually certain that the text was composed at Muhammad Shāh's court to curry favour with the Tūrānī faction then in power. The injunctions provided by the Emperor to his successor in dealing with Tūrānīs are very revealing:

> "The Tūrānī group (*firqa-i tūrānī*) are born soldiers (*sipāhī-yi muqarrar*). They are skilled in assaults, raids, night-attacks, and sieges (*tākht-u-tārāj va shab-khūn va bandī-kardan*). They feel no apprehension or shame (*hirās va khijālat*) in manoeuvring or retreating, being a hundred stages removed (*sad marhala dūr*) from the utter senseless of those born in Hindūstān (*jahl-i murakkab-i hindūstān-zāyān*)…this people must be cultivated (*īn jamāʿa rā riʿāyat bāyad dāsht*) for they are useful when all others are useless (*ba-kār mī-āyand ki dīgare ba-kār namī-āyand*)."[675]

This mirrors tropes found as early as 13th and 14th century historiography wherein Turkic martial prowess is associated with cunning and stratagem. Mamluk sources for example characterise Mongol soldiers, "the horsemen of Tūrān," as soldiers who fought "with trickery and artifice, not with manliness like Rustam."[676] Later in the 18th century Āzād Bilgrāmī too speaks of the *jang-i qazāqī*, warfare in the Kazakh style, as the most skilled and difficult style of warfare. [677] We can reasonably assume that these characterisations owe more to a romantic or literary conception of Tūrānīs as generic "Turks" than to any meaningful reproduction of Central or Inner Asian military cultures or practices by these groups and individuals in India. This is clearly brought out by a telling anecdote of none other than Asad Khān, Aurangzeb's

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[674] Truschke, *Aurangzeb*, 113
[675] ʿInāyatullāh Khān. "Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī." British Library, London, IO Islamic 3987. f. 9b
[676] George Lane, "Mongol News: The Akhbār-i Moghulān Dar Anbāneh Qutb by Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn Mas'ūd Shīrāzī." *JRAS* 22, no. 3/4 (2012): 532
[677] Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī, *Khizāna-i Āmira* (Nawal Kishor: 1871), 49

Īrānī vizier. Asad Khān before departing for the Carnatic campaign had boasted that he would "show men what Turkish-ness is" (*mardum khvāhad dīd turkiyyat chi mī-bāshad*).[678] Observing the nobleman's reluctance to submit himself to the rigours of campaigning, the Emperor sent him a cold reply which can be idiomatically translated as "enough of your boasting, your Turkishness amounts to nothing," (*dīgar ba-khvud ma-nāz ki turkī tamām shud*).[679] *Turkī* and *Turkiyyat* here clearly refer to valour and martial ability, and moreover as something to be enacted and performed to the enhancement of a man's reputation. Although Asad Khān was an Īrānī *mansabdār*, his patrilineal ancestors were Qizilbāsh of the *Qarāmānlū oymāq*, a group which would have been referred to as Turks in a 16th century Safavid context.[680] Thus, if as Joo-Yup Lee says Turk denoted Turkic peoples in the ethnological sense and all Inner Asian steppe nomads in a sociological sense, in Mughal India it had also acquired a sociocultural meaning with connotations of good soldiery.[681] We see this for example in Shāh Navāz Khān's biography of Shāh Beg Khān Arghūn (who was a Mughūl and not a Turk, strictly speaking) as "a simple and frank Turk" in Beveridge's translation, or perhaps "a real Turk, a simple soldier" (*mard-i turk sāda-sipāhī*).[682]

Let us bring this section to a close by looking at the actual *mansabdārs* who comprised the Tūrānī faction of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These were overwhelmingly concentrated in the kin-network of Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān Fīrūz Jang and his son, Nizām al-Mulk, a family of Khvājazādas from Samarqand. Their lineage is undistinguished compared to the *mansabdārs* we have examined earlier in the chapter. They did not belong to any of the great Naqshbandī Khvāja families, being rather putative descendants of the 12th century Persian mystic Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyá Suhrāvardī (d. 1191), who was unconnected to the prestigious Naqshbandiyya order.[683] The earliest member of the family to attain prominence was a Samarqandī scholar named ʿAbd al-Rahmān Shaikh ʿAzīzān, whose great-grandson Khvāja ʿĀbid was the progenitor of the family in India.[684] They are therefore not patrilineal Turks, Mongols, or of any other kind of Inner Asian pastoralist or military professional by origin, nor do they belong to the Sufi lineages associated with the major cities of Transoxiana. Few enough

[678] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 353
[679] Ibid.
[680] Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis," 151, 161
[681] Lee, "The Historical Meaning of the Term Turk," 102
[682] *Maāsir*, 2:644
[683] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:539; on Suhrāvardī, see Hossein Ziai, "Illuminationism," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 12 no. 6 (2004): 670-672
[684] Ibid.

traces of these are to be found even among his close supporters, with the one exception of the major Tūrānī *amīr* Siyādat Khān Sayyid Ughlān, who was a Sayyid of Bukhārā and a close ally of Fīrūz Jang, as is also attested by Irādat Khān.[685] Munis Faruqui has observed that despite the Tūrānī character ascribed to the Nizām's political supporters by Chandra, Zaheeruddin Malik and others, his entourage in fact comprised a heterodox collection of Afghans, Indian Muslims (including his own maternal relations), Khatrīs, Kāyasths, Bunḍelas, Rājputs and Deccanis.[686]

This likely accounts for the increasingly generic and archetypal character of the "Tūrānī" associations of this faction. Essentially, they had invented a new version of Tūrānī-ness and articulated this as a status-claim of the dominant kin-network. Most of these derive from cultural topoi such as the military reputation of the inhabitants of Tūrān, their supposed Sunnī orthodoxy, and the image of Tūrān as the dynasty's homeland. Consequently, they reflect very little of the status culture and ideological production of contemporary Central and Inner Asia and its peoples other than a vague attribution of Islamic orthodoxy. Notably, this is a Sunnī orthodoxy which in India is pitted against the Shīʿī Iranians rather than the (quasi-)pagan Kazakhs, Mongols and Oirats as in Transoxiana. Chinggisid and Noachide descent-claims, the positive, militaristic aspects of the Mongol heritage, the steppe lifestyle, and steadfast orthodoxy in the face of pagan and heterodox behaviour, are present (if at all) only in a very distorted and residual form. Thus, the constituent aspects of Tūrānī-ness that have retrospectively been attributed to 16th century *mansabdārs* – Islamic orthodoxy, dynastic connections, a specific political tradition, a shared "ethnocultural" origin with the dynasty, a common status identity – are seen to be very late developments derived from the residue of a Central Asian status culture that was no longer a living reality in the subcontinent.

It seems therefore very likely indeed that this identity was articulated in opposition to the Īrānī identity of the then-hegemonic faction in the context of intensifying intra-nobiliary competition in the late 17th century. A new topos emerged of Tūrān as a historic space, a source of legitimacy and imperial dynastic prestige, as a cultural space associated with war, courage and good soldiery, and as a sacred space associated with Sunnī orthodoxy and the charisma of Naqshbandī saints. Such an idea, this chapter argues, presented a powerful uniting theme and trope for what was in fact the disparate collection of adherents and clients clustered around a single family's patronage. That family came thereby to claim and to present itself as the head

[685] Ibid., 2:876; Irādat Khān, f. 87
[686] Faruqui, "At Empire's End," 22

and the champion of all Tūrānīs in India, a remarkable status-claim and status identity that *could only have emerged* in the late 17th century subcontinental context. Thus, the final twenty years of Aurangzeb's reign were dominated by a conflict between two factions with distinct status-identities and a distinct set of status claims. The Īrānīs were a collective primarily of Shīʿī *amīrs* with Safavid dynastic ties, a common Shīʿī identity, and mostly of Sayyid and Qizilbāsh origins. The Tūrānīs constituted a network of patronage centred around Khān Fīrūz Jang's family, which presented itself in ways that directly mirrored and opposed Īrānī status identity, viz., Timurid dynastic ties, a strongly orthodox Sunnī religious identity, and purported identification with martial nomadic or pastoralist populations and Sufi orders of Central Asia. This binary, mobilising as it did so many widely understood cultural tropes and oppositions like Sunnism-Shiism, Iran and Tūrān, the sedentary versus the pastoral, and so forth, was irresistible to contemporary historiographers and very quickly became part of the socio-political vocabulary of the Mughal court.

As the Tūrānī faction increased in power and imperial favour, its status-claims came increasingly to be accepted – as will be shown in the next chapter, there is nothing unsurprising in this. Status and status-based identities had perpetually to be asserted, defended, and performed, and in consequence the rise of the Tūrānī faction to a position of power and influence as one of two dominant political factions likewise saw the dissemination of these tropes and discourses, these new meanings of the old idea of Tūrān. Aurangzeb himself seems to have encouraged the opposition of the Īrānīs and Tūrānīs, and we may speculate that the Emperor also indulged the pretensions of the latter to kinship with him. After the victory of Wākin-kheḍā in 1705, Zūlfiqār Khān's adherents celebrated by loudly proclaiming the Shīʿī axiom – "no warrior like ʿAlī, and no sword like his scimitar (*zūlfiqār*)." When this was reported to Aurangzeb, he responded by increasing the *mansabs* of the Tūrānī *amīrs* while rewarding Zūlfiqār Khān with only a sword.[687] By 1713 Vāzih identified Khān Fīrūz Jang as "the head of the Tūrānī faction" (*sar-i guroh-i Tūrāniya*), and his political ally Sayyid Ughlān as "revered by all the Tūrānīs" (*tamām-i Tūrāniya*).[688] The articulation of the new Tūrānī identity reached its apex in 1724, when Nizām al-Mulk had seized control of the Deccan, and his kinsman Qamar al-Dīn Khān occupied the *vizārat* in Delhi. That year, in a letter to Muhammad Shāh, he lays out the historical vision of Tūrān as his faction conceptualised it.

[687] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 2:1037
[688] Irādat Khān, f. 87

> Amīr Tīmūr conquered the countries of Hindūstan through the strength of his arm and confided the superintendence of these lands to the people of Tūrān (*ahl-i Tūrān*), and praise God! To the present day the Mughals (*Mughaliya*) have shown neither negligence nor weariness in this task, having exerted themselves and obtained victories. Emperor ʿĀlamgīr, may God purify his soul, likewise confided the key of conquest and victory into the hands of the late Khān Fīrūz Jang, such that the defeat of the Rajputs, the victory against Prince Muhammad Akbar, and the subjugation of the Deccan and all its forts was accomplished by the power of Navāb Fīrūz Jang's sword."[689]

Thus, a collective called people of Tūrān, described as Mughal, is said to have been the constant support of the Chaghatāys and the Timurid dynasty from Amīr Tīmūr's time down to Aurangzeb's reign, under the leadership of the Samarqand Shaikhzādas. It is self-evident how greatly the idea of Tūrān came to be modified from the mid-17th century to the 18th, and further how far removed it was from its historic meanings.

In conclusion, Tūrān and Tūrānī-ness underwent several evolutions in the post-Central Asian, Indic context of the Timurid dynasty, with much of the ideological and cultural heritage of Central and Inner Asia becoming attenuated and diminished by the 17th century and resurfacing with the Tūrānī faction in a very different manner. The word Mughal was even *more* distant from Tūrānī in this period, in that it signified a military role, whereas the two terms would become almost synonymous by the 1720s. It is perhaps also noteworthy that most of the senior "Tūrānī" *mansabdārs* examined in the first section reach high rank in the period *preceding* the political hegemony of the Īrānī faction. These newer status-claims were articulated in response and opposition to the Īrānīs towards the end of their period of dominance by groups and individuals with very limited connections to those associated with Central and Inner Asia in the 16th century. Tūrān as a place of saints and scholars, as the homeland of the dynasty, and Tūrānī-ness as Sunnī orthodoxy and martial ability, are status-claims that make sense only in the Mughal Indian context. In the next chapter, we shall examine the status culture wherein these were articulated.

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[689] "ʿArzdāsht-i Navāb Āsaf Jāh ba-Hazrat Zill-i Subhānī Muhammad Shāh Ghāzī," 482

Chapter 4: Status Culture of the Mughal High Nobility

4.1: Status and the Imperial Court

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the often bewilderingly diverse array of status-claims and status identities that existed within what this study designates the status culture of the Mughal high nobility. The introduction mentions previous uses of this term, and whence is derived its use in thus study. Broadly speaking, it is an attempt to determine what conferred status at the Mughal court, the practical and political ramifications thereof, its (in)stability, and the ongoing, fluid, and imperceptible interchange between sociocultural and political capital, between status and rank, between the multifaceted dimension of aristocratic identity called status and its overt expression through élite activity as performed at the Mughal court.

In studying the Mughal high nobility from this perspective, we have first to consider it as a "status group." A status group is a collective characterised firstly by an element of community (i.e. common consciousness) and next through its determination by status, which Max Weber defined as "a social estimation of honour."[690] In a more recent critique of Weber, Jack Barbalet suggests that Weber's theory of stratification is coherent primarily as "an account of cultural structure," i.e. of the perception of social differentiation in social consciousness, defending its application to periods preceding the advent of market society.[691] Let us consider the application of these principles to the nobility. Lebra, in her study of Japanese aristocratic status culture, considered status a "cultural construct par excellence, having nothing to do with the naturally given," yet nonetheless "deeply embedded in what is deemed nature," viz. aspects of identity such blood and descent.[692] Status culture in this context becomes a means of bridging cultural behaviour with what is understood as naturally given ("ascribed") elements of status. We can see three reasonably distinct determiners of élite status: 1) behaviour, activity, and appearance, 2) ancestry, descent, heredity, and 3) beliefs and values. This returns us to a key problem of studying status, which is its subjectivity: status is a thing of perception, and status identities are always contextual. Therefore, we must ask questions such as, who determines the value of lineages and genealogical status-claims? In what context and why are

[690] Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, tr. H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills (Routledge: 2009), 186-7
[691] Jack M. Barbalet, "Principles of Stratification in Max Weber: An Interpretation and a Critique," *The British Journal of Sociology* 31 no. 3 (1980): 412
[692] Lebra, *Above The Clouds*, 22-23

certain behaviours valorised and others denigrated? How do these common values or beliefs arise?

None of these things are fixed, stable, or unchanging. This applies both to ascribed and achieved forms of status, which do not necessarily correspond to changeability of status claims: for example, education, although achieved, is an irreversible status identity.[693] We shall see the significance of this when discussing personal and behavioural aspects of Mughal élite identity such as masculinity and courage, but extending at times even to notionally irreversible forms of ascribed status like lineage. This matters all the more given the theoretically non-hereditary character of *mansab* rank and the extent to which its grant was the privilege of reigning Emperors.

Forms of ascriptive and achieved status played a vital role in the functioning of the entire imperial system. Almost all forms of status ultimately related back to the dynasty and sovereign, who mediated the performance and acknowledgment thereof, and can be measured in proximity thereunto. There in a sense lies the problem of studying status. Status is always in the eye of the beholder – it is something that is claimed, and not all such claims are always acknowledged. In the context of an elaborate court society, the quest to achieve and maintain status in the eyes of one's peers in the *mansabdārī* stratum and one's superiors in the dynasty was an ongoing process and the source of endless anxiety and concern to the Mughal *amīr*. Status was a core part of Mughal imperial power in that it underpinned the court society and idiom of role whereby a diverse array of groups and individuals were incorporated and accultured to the imperial military-bureaucratic élite. Status, which is to say reputation, worth and prestige, represented social and cultural power and was a prerequisite to political power – an *amīr* who could not command status could command nothing. Status and prestige were the currency of the political market of court politics, and indeed in the relation of the imperial court with other courts in South and West Asia. Thus, in this chapter we examine an aspect of court society that applied to the entirety of the nobility and those who would become part of it. It is consequently worth keeping in mind the kinds of careers traced in Chapter 2, since this status culture is what demonstrates the imperial courts ability to absorb and remould élite emigrants and entrants into imperial service.

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[693] Leo F. Schnore, "Social Mobility in Demographic Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 26 no. 3 (1961): 411-414; Schnore's discussion of ascribed and achieved status is based on Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.: 1936)

Given the problem of understanding status-culture in a group as highly diverse in its origins, its religious cultures, its activities and indeed its identities such as the high nobility, coupled with its constant political fluctuations, changes in composition, and indeed its very size, we are faced with a very significant task. However, this task may not be as daunting as it first appears. Firstly, the Mughals were fortunate in that they inherited a set of social and status conventions that were very broadly understood and appreciated. The value of Persianate culture, the prestige of Persianate language, élite norms of comportment and behaviour, sacralised geographies encompassing the holy places of Islam, and the heritage of the Iranian imperial tradition and its idioms of kingship were widely understood and accepted. Mughal ideas of élite male comportment, behaviour and etiquette including the ideal virtues and characteristics of the nobleman and warrior were drawn from a well-established Persian literary tradition going back at least to the 11th and 12th centuries.[694] Mughal military culture valorised the role of the heavy cavalry trooper, a type of military professional originating with Turkic peoples of Central Asia but valued across South Asia and Iran.[695] Patrilineal, clan-based kinship, patriarchal norms of social organisation and the value of genealogical writing were equally widely understood and shared by the Mughals with various subject peoples like Afghans and Rajputs as well as with competing courts elsewhere in the Persianate world.[696] As we saw in the preceding chapter, the same goes for literary and historiographical tropes such as the perennial opposition of Iran and Tūrān. Much of this status culture was therefore a shared inheritance from the past.

Furthermore, the common arena in which these claims were asserted, performed, and regulated was the imperial court as an institution and a space. We possess a single metric applicable to the entirety of this status group: *mansab* rank numerically expressed. *Mansab* should not be taken, however, as a direct and outward expression of a person's status. Rather, it is of use to us as a means of pinpointing specific moments, usually the culmination and climax, in the ongoing interchange between status claims and identities as performed by *amīrs* on the one hand, and political power and material position as dispensed and distributed by the

694 O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 58

695 Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 23-24

696 Richard Davis Saran and Norman P. Ziegler, *The Meṛtīyo Rāṭhoṛs of Meṛto, Rājasthān: Select Translations Bearing on the History of a Rājpūt Family, 1462-1660* (University of Michigan Press: 2001; 66-7; O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body," 893, 901; Lefèvre, "Mughal Genealogical Strategies," 415

imperial centre on the other. Throughout the period this study examines, the sovereign and dynasty remained the ultimate arbiters of status and power.

With these caveats in mind, let us discuss the sources of information we have. The data we possess from the sources is of two kinds: the first is the anecdotal, fragmentary, and necessarily incomplete kind gathered from disparate sources but primarily non-official histories and *tazkiras* such as those of Khvāfī Khān and Shāh Navāz Khān. We are here constrained by the fact that in-depth biographical and personal histories exist only of the very highest members of the *umarā*, men such as Āsaf Khān, Shāyista Khān, and Khān-i ʿAzam – useful data nevertheless, but hardly representative. On the other hand, the choices made by these authors, albeit at a slightly later date, and the transmission of such information from earlier sources suggests that it was endowed even at the time with a certain sociocultural significance in that such anecdotes and reports were seen as necessary or informative aspects of élite biographies. Some interesting examples of these include the incident of Amīr Khān and Sāhibjī, or Niʿmat Khān ʿĀlī's mockery of Kāmgār Khān, to which we will return. Beyond such details, however, the *tazkiras* found in *Āīn-i Akbarī* and *Maāsir al-Umarā* give reasonably extensive information on the background of most senior *amīrs*, as in some cases do the court chronicles. The second kind of data is that provided by the official record of courtly chronicles, documenting primarily the increase or decrease of rank, the conferment of offices of high and middle rank at court and in the provinces, and the award of material honours and emoluments. This type of information provided by the main chronicles, the *Bādshāhnāma* and *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*, is not just extensive but exhaustive. Outside of their period of 1628-1668, however, the *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* and the *Jahāngīrnāma* are less exhaustive but certainly document the majority of major awards and promotions of this kind among the high nobility.

This evidence demonstrates something fundamental about the nature of the nobility and especially the high nobility. It is comprised by communities of people, *amīrs* and *mansabdārs* and their successors, that lived and were judged continuously in one another's eyes such that the court constituted a kind of gorgeous panopticon. *Amīrs* and *mansabdārs* were constantly reading about their peers and predecessors, participating in the same ceremonies and courtly rituals, reciting the same poetry, and indeed talking to and encountering one another. Every such occasion and encounter was an opportunity to assert status, but also a possible threat to it. *Tazkiras* full of rumour and anecdote, and non-official histories, are themselves proof that these communities constantly communicated about one another and represented themselves in

writing. Court chronicles are not simply a calendar of dry facts but chronicle the living theatre of the imperial *darbār*, a theatre in which the conferment and withdrawal of imperial favour and thereby status was constantly enacted, reputations were made and broken, and individuals saved or lost face. Physically, this occurred daily in the Hall of Special Audience (*dīvān-i khāss*), "an arduous task that required great concentration" from the nobles, forced to stand still for many hours.[697] Vāzih describes the magnificence of the audience of Bahādur Shāh: around his throne, within a golden railing, the princes of the dynasty and of vanquished kingdoms like Bījāpūr and Golconda. Beyond the golden railing and up to a silver railing stood the great *amīrs* of *mansabs* from 3,000 to 7,000 and foreign ambassadors. Past the silver railing was gathered the vast crowd of the *mansabdārs*.[698]

The physical congregation of the nobility could be a fraught occasion for many: on one occasion, Shāh Jahān demanded of Khalīlullāh Khān how it were possible that his wife wore jewel-encrusted shoes worth three million rupees except through his own peculation. Another nobleman answered that the Emperor had nothing to complain of, for his wife delivered these treasures to Khalīlullāh Khān by daily beating him on the face therewith. The Emperor was vastly amused and forgave the embezzlement, but Khalīlullāh Khān was furious, having felt mortified by the relation of such a story – evidently, he valued three million rupees far less than he did his own face before his peers.[699] Other physical spaces were also contested: domestic visitations had connotations of seeking service or paying fealty to the owner of the house, so that visitations from the Emperor or Princes were marks of high honour, usually on the occasion of imperial marriages. An instance where the assertion of such status was disputed and rejected was when Mīr ʿAbd al-Karīm, recently entitled Amīr Khān Sindhī, demanded that the great nobleman and *Khān Sāmān* Kāmgār Khān visit his home to receive an imperial order. Kāmgār Khān, son, grandson, and great-grandson of imperial viziers, refused in the most insulting terms. Told of the summons, he replied "which Amīr Khān is this? Amīr Khān [Mīr Mīrān] was my cousin, and is dead."[700] Told that it was Amīr Khān ʿAbd al-Karīm, he replied "He is ʿAbd al-Karīm the footman (*farrāsh*). I don't go to the houses of footmen." When the outraged and humiliated nobleman went to the Emperor, Aurangzeb refused to rebuke Kāmgār Khān: "He is Jaʿfar Khan's son – you shouldn't have summoned him to your house." Kāmgār Khān

[697] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 93
[698] Irādat Khān, f. 82
[699] *Storia do Mogor*, 1:293
[700] *Maāsir*, 3:160

himself was forced to resort to the Emperor in what was if anything an even greater loss of face when the poet Niʿmat Khān published obscene poetry satirising his marriage to a much younger woman.[701] The Emperor rejected his petition, writing that he had no intention of sharing in Kāmgār Khān's humiliation, which the poet had given fame (*shuhrat*) throughout the world. The representation of such events in the sources and their similarity to European accounts demonstrate that whether or not literally true or they represent the kind of episode that could occur in courtly context. They show us, firstly, the centrality of face and reputation as constantly fought over, asserted, defended, and damaged in a culture that prized status, honour and prestige, and secondly, the omnipresent role of the sovereign as the final mediator of status and worth.

This is a good opportunity to discuss the terminology used in the sources for these terms.[702] Many are indeed derived from the same Arabic triconsonantal root indicating information or knowledge and its spread: *shuhrat* is fame, renown, reputation, often attached to lineage, descent-claims and names, whose absence denotes low birth or obscurity as in the case of Muʿtamad Khān, whose antecedents were *not* among celebrated or renowned people (*mashāhīr*).[703] Individual ancestors could be famous, *mashhūr*, like "the famous Khalīfa Sultān" (*khalīfa sultān-i mashhūr*).[704] Personal honour and reputation, we shall see, was usually indicated by *ghayrat*, a term particularly interesting in that it denotes "jealousy" or "zeal," in other words, honour and repute were evidently things to be jealously guarded and zealously defended. An even more important, even more unstable dimension of face, honour and status was the sexual integrity of an *amīr* as embodied by his harem's absolute inviolability: *nāmūs*, "reputation, fame, renown, esteem, honour," but also the "reproach, shame, bashfulness, modesty," inherent to its loss. *Bī-nāmūsī* represented utter humiliation or disgrace.[705] *Nāmūs* was often conjoined with *nang* as *nang-u-nāmūs*, or *nang-u-nām*, *nang* being "honour" and "estimation" but also "infamy, base, shameful" because of its related meaning of "battle:" i.e., courage in battle was held to mirror sexual integrity. Therefore *nang kardan* was to do battle, *hifz-i nang-u-nāmūs kardan* was to preserve or defend one's honour, and the place of *nāmūs*, *nāmūs-gāh*, was a "battlefield." *Nām* likewise was "name" but also "reputation" or "fame," as was *nek-nāmī* reputation or "a good name," so that the honoured or reputed nobles were *umarā-*

[701] Kaicker, *The King and the People*, 99-100
[702] Definitions provided from Steingass' dictionary of Classical Persian.
[703] *Maāsir*, 3:431
[704] Ibid., 3:677
[705] As in the *ʿarzdāsht* of Nizām al-Mulk to Muhammad Shāh, discussed in Chapter 5.

yi nāmdār, and those nobles who had died in battle had thereby "gathered an eternal good name," (*nek-nāmī-yi abad andokhta-and*).[706] However, to be left without *nām*, *bī-nām gashtan*, was to be ruined or annihilated.[707] Again, we see that status and face were living things to be constantly fought over, contested and defended.

How then to approach the evidence we have for these things as documented by the court chronicles and non-official histories? Some idea of the scale of the *umarā* can be gained from the *Bādshāhnāma's* enumeration of all *mansabdārs* of 500 *zāt* and above from 1628-1648: these comprise 305 *amīrs* of 1,000 *zāt* and above and an additional 267 officers of ranks between 500 and 900 *zāt*.[708] The overwhelming majority of these individuals have left very little trace. The method employed in the first and second chapters, i.e. that of closely investigating the antecedents, lineages and careers of the entire high nobility, is impractical. Apart from the difficulty of reconstructing the careers of three hundred-odd officers, it is now impossible given the lack of survival of relevant materials (if these ever existed) to recover the origins and familial connections of all but a small subset of these individuals. This chapter consequently relies on the method of a prosopography of the *amīrs* of the high nobility. The approach used, as discussed in the introduction, was to isolate members of the higher *umarā* who occupied "executive" positions, i.e. central ministries or governorships of provinces, from 1605-1686. These offices were not given to noblemen except those of established rank and seniority with long histories of service and usually existing familial connections to the high nobility.

This choice naturally needs to be justified. In making this selection this thesis has drawn upon modern scholarship on status groups and their relation to power. Ursula Hoffman-Lange identifies three classical methods of élite identification: the so-called "positional," "decisional" and "reputational" methods.[709] The first of these is examines formal leadership positions in a range of institutions and rests upon the assumption of an integrated ruling class. The decisional method is based on the active involvement of élites in policy decisions, and thereby eliminates non-decision-making positional élites. Finally, the reputational method relies on experts in order to identify élites. Despite the obvious objection that these methods are largely applied to

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[706] *ʿĀlamgīrnāma* 391, *Bādshāhnāma* 2:717 & 1:119
[707] Irādat Khān, f. 171
[708] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:717-742
[709] Ursula Hoffmann-Lange, "Methods of Élite Identification," *Palgrave Handbook of Political Élites,* eds. Heinrich Best & John Higley (Palgrave Macmillan: 2018) 79-92

modern industrial societies and thus have limitations in the study of an early modern pre-industrial polity, there are elements in the Mughal political structure well-suited to the application of these approaches and offsetting their weaknesses. The Mughal polity was indeed governed by an integrated "power élite," and one whose "horizontal and vertical bodies" were reasonably clearly defined, with the *umarā* existing between the imperial family and the lower *mansabdārī* stratum.[710] In terms of the reputational method the very inclusion of information on these senior *amīrs* in official and non-official sources is an index of wider perception of their status and importance by chroniclers like Lāhaurī and later courtiers like Khvāfī Khān. Finally, in a military-bureaucratic system with no clear distinction between civil and military roles wherein the resources of the ruling class were directly connected to participation in the administration, executive decision-making is one of the best metrics of the political power of a status-group. The main issue with this method is that it elides non-official and non-decision-making members of the élite and members of patronage networks and households outside the "official" system of ranks. We know from our study of the Īrānīs in Chapter 1 the vastness of the social apparatus and of the patronage- and kin-based networks that existed behind court networks. To try and reconstruct such networks and connections for various *mansabdārī* networks, whose very existence and composition is not entirely clear from the sources, or from individual grandees who left hardly a trace of written or other materials, is now impossible. This chapter has attempted to address this problem in its discussion of princely retinues and of imperial consort kin in the next section.

The period of 1605-1686 is likewise deliberate: in assigning three decades to each reign we examine about three generations of the high nobility, thereby tracing its evolution and stability with a roughly equal number of officers per reign. In beginning with Jahāngīr we begin with a period where the major constituent elements of the nobility in the 17th century were all finally present. It is worth remembering that the most important wave of Īrānī emigration did not occur until his reign, as we have seen in Chapter 1, a generation after the institution of the *mansabdārī* system by Akbar. Jahāngīr too was the first monarch under whom the Mughal nobility as an institution existed entirely within the parameters of the political culture and system that Akbar had begun to establish, as Lefèvre has pointed out.[711] In ending with the fall of Bījāpūr in 1686, we end also the North Indian period of Aurangzeb's reign, wherein political and social conditions remained largely unchanged from preceding reigns and before the

[710] Ibid., 81
[711] Lefèvre, *Pouvoir Impériale et Élites*, 398

demographic and fiscal pressure placed on the Mughal system by the attempted absorption of the Deccan provinces, and before the notoriously excessive distribution of *mansabs* and offices on Deccani officials, which were seen as anomalous and arbitrary even at the time. This is a point we shall return to later in the chapter.

Before discussing the status-group that emerges from this method, it is appropriate to comment on two "outlier" subgroups, in order to see how there is a surprising homogeneity to the profile of the average Mughal *amīr*. Of five *amīrs* out of 161 who do not clearly belong to or originate in the kinds of social collectives as other members of the status group, two are Shaykhzādas of local *zamīndārī* background (Dāūd Khān and Saʿdullāh Khān), another is a Khatrī revenue-officer (Patr Dās Rāja Bikramājīt), a fourth is the Bohra Qāzī ʿAbd al-Vahhāb, and the last is Fidāī Khān, of unknown origin but whose name (Mīr Hidāyatullāh) suggests that he was a Sayyid.[712] Absences from this status-group are also instructive. Let us take the number of *mansabdārs* of 4,000 and 5,000 *zāt* of Shāh Jahān's reign who do not occupy executive offices, using the complete lists of officers from the *Bādshāhnāmas* of Lāhaurī and Vāris. These are largely exceptions which prove the rule. One such is Tayyib Khvāja Jūybārī: as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Khvāja held a high rank on account of his ancestry but did not pursue a military-administrative career. Indeed, he left India to return to Transoxiana upon his brother's death to take up leadership of the Naqshbandī-Jūybārī order.[713] Others are Rajputs such as Amar Singh, brother of Jaswant Singh, and Rāy Singh, son of the Sīsoḍiyā Rāja Bhīm Singh, non-successor dynasts of these respective clans, but also, interestingly, Mīrzā Rāja Jay Singh Kachwāhā.[714] This strongly suggests that it was not lineage alone but lineage combined with affinal kinship to the reigning sovereign that brought Mān Singh, Kalyān Mal and Jaswant Singh to the high rank they enjoyed. Others are Bahādur Khān Ruhela and his kinsman Mubāriz Khān: this is a family that had been involved in Khān Jahān Lodī's rebellion of 1631, in which Bahādur Khān's father Daryā Khān was killed.[715] It does not seem, as Rita Joshi suggests, that it was on account of their Afghan heritage that these *amīrs* were never made *sūbadārs*, given that Afghans like Dilāvar Khān Kākar, Rashīd Khān and indeed

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[712] ʿAbd al-Vahhāb can be considered part of Aurangzeb's princely retinue: they met when the prince governed Gujarāt. On Aurangzeb's recruitment of Gujarātī Sunni clerics, including ʿAbd al-Vahhāb, see Samira Sheikh, "Aurangzeb as seen from Gujarat: Shiʿi and Millenarian Challenges to Mughal Sovereignty," *JRAS* 28 no. 3 (2018): 565 and 573-578

[713] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 101

[714] *Bādshāhnāma* 2:717

[715] Ibid., 1:339-340

eventually Bahādur Khān's brother Diler Khān appear in this status group.[716] Rather, it seems that Rajputs and Afghans and other military communities were only trusted after generations of service or where affinal or other kin-based connections existed – possibly a legacy of the Uzbek rebellions of the 1560s and 1580-81.

[716] Rita Joshi, *The Afghan Nobility and the Mughals*, Chapter 4

4.2: The Mughal High Nobility 1605-1686 – Origins and Composition

Table 1: The Amīrs and their Origins[717]

	High nobility	5,000 *zāt* and above
Near kin	77 (48%)	38 (58%)
1st Generation	34 (21%)	11 (17%)
Household	20 (12.5%)	11 (17%)
Total	131 (81%)	60 (91%)
(Other)	30 (18.5%)	6 (9%)

Table 1 represents the high nobility in this period as gleaned by the method described, the details of these individuals being provided in Appendix 2. The data was collated following M. Athar Ali's method in *The Apparatus of Empire*. Athar Ali's entries for 1605-1658 are corroborated with the official sources in print, viz., Blochmann's first volume of the *Āīn-i Akbarī*, *Jahāngīrnāma*, and Lahaurī's *Bādshāhnāma*. For the 1648-1658 period we rely on a modern translation of Muhammad Vāris' *Bādshāhnāma*.[718] For Aurangzeb's reign the data is from Muhammad Kāzim's *ʿĀlamgīrnāma* to 1668 and the slightly less authoritative *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*. Where Sāqī Mustaʿadd Khān does not mention occupants of a position, entries of previous occupants thereof in *Maāsir al-Umarā* usually provide the name of their successors. Whatever biographical details existed about these individuals both in the chronicles and in Shāh Navāz Khān's *tazkira* supplemented the above data. The information thus collected enabled a classification members of this status group based on their route of entry therein. These are, first, *amīrs* who were near kin of other *amīrs* of the same rank, secondly, first-generation emigrants from Central and West Asia, and a third category broadly designated the household or retinue of dynasts. A further subset of the data comprises *mansabdārs* of 5,000

[717] These are enumerated in Appendix 2.

[718] Muhammad Vāris, *Badshahnama of Muhammad Waris*, tr. Ishrat Husain Ansari and H.A. Qureshi (Idāra-i Adabiyāt-i Dillī: 2017)

zāt and above, representing the very first rank of the nobility in military-bureaucratic terms: for context, this group numbered only 26 *amīrs* at the close of Shāh Jahān's reign.[719]

Before we explore the implications of this data there are some salient points that must be kept in mind as we address it. The first and most important of these is that the imperial family is always the critical and central point of reference whereby status is acknowledged, confirmed, and enacted. Proximity to the imperial family is generally a good index of political power and prominence, and the various expressions of such proximity constitute several of the status-claims asserted by *amīrs* and accommodated by the imperial centre. The next points both relate to the high percentage of *amīrs* who were relations or descendants of other members of the same stratum. This shows a startingly high degree of continuity in a theoretically non-hereditary social collective. The percentages here are considerably higher than those found by Athar Ali for *khānazād mansabdārs* both collectively and among *amīrs* of 1,000 zāt and above.[720] Moreover, the category only includes those *amīrs* whose near relatives within two degrees of kinship held equally high office – the number of those who had other relatives or forebears in imperial service would undoubtedly be even higher. We see that descent, kinship and family were thus significant status-claims, bearing out Eaton and Foltz's arguments on the important of lineage in Mughal élite culture.[721] Let us see what else can be gleaned about Mughal status culture from the status identities and claims demonstrated by this social collective.

There are predominantly three primary sources of entry into this group, exceptions to which we shall see largely confirm the rule: emigration, *khānazādagī*, and what can be designated princely "retinues" or households. The term *khānazād* is imprecise even in 17th century sources: it seems to be used generically to indicate a common origin or frame of reference, as for example when the Afghan Bahādur Khān refers to himself as a *khānazād* of Khān Jahān Lodī as the son of the latter's comrade-in-arms Daryā Khān ("*man yād-u-pisar-i Daryā Khān-am khānazād-i shumā"*).[722] Similarly, Ahmad Beg Kābulī is called a "*khānazād* of ten generations" given his descent from Chaghatāy amīrs.[723] Generically, it referred to any *mansabdār* whose father or grandfather had been in imperial service. The *amīrs* gathered here

[719] Vāris, *Bādshāhnāma*, 316-7
[720] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 11-13
[721] Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, Chapter 5; Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 22, 55
[722] *Maāsir*, 1:417
[723] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:674

on the other hand belonged to established lineages whose members had held similarly high rank in preceding generations. There are two categories which included in this group although not all the members thereof had relatives within such close degrees of kinship in this group. The first comprises Chaghatāy noble lineages, since it seems self-evidently absurd to exclude from a category signifying a status identity based on heritage someone like Qulīj Khān Ulfatī Andijānī, whose ancestry was traced in the preceding chapter, or Saʿīd Khān Chaghtāy, whose descent from Tīmūr's own *amīrs* numerous sources including the *Jahāngīrnāma* mention with approval.[724] These are the type of lineages designated aristocratic kin groups by Anooshahr.[725] The next is the Rajput Rajas on the grounds that, firstly, those appearing here belong (with one exception) to the dominant lineages of the kingdoms of Rājpūtāna, i.e. the Kachwāhā of Amber, the Rāṭhor of Mārwāṛ and the Bhāṭī of Jaisalmer, but more importantly, the three Rajas numbered among these 77 *amīrs* are Jaswant Singh Rāṭhor, Mān Singh Kachwāhā and Kalyān Mal Bhāṭī, whose fathers and grandfathers had held their kingdoms as *vatan jāgīr*, i.e. autonomous principalities, since Akbar's reign.[726] Moreover all three had near female relatives in the imperial harem prior to attaining high rank in these "executive" positions: Mān Singh's sister Shāh Begum, Jaswant Singh's aunt Jagat Gosāīñ and Kalyān Mal's niece Malika Jahān were all consorts of Jahāngīr.[727]

Table 2: Emigrant Amīrs

Origin	*Number*
Governing élites	21 (60%)
Literary or scholarly professionals	4 (12%)
Household or princely retinues	3 (9%)
Obscure or unknown	6 (18%)

[724] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 31
[725] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 134
[726] Syed Inayet Ali Zaidi, *The Mughals and the Rajputs 1605*-1659, PhD Dissertation, Aligarh Muslim University, 187
[727] Lal, *Domesticity and* Power, 168-171; on the omission of these from the official sources see Lefèvre, "Mughal Genealogical Strategies," 428-429;

Of course, we established in Chapter 2 the importance of emigration and movement across transcultural networks as a source for the recruitment of administrators and civil and military professionals to imperial service. As Foltz puts it, this was a period of unprecedented mobility, circulation and communication between élite and sub-élite strata in Uzbek, Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal society, such that "within the upper social strata, Muslim Asia at this time was in many ways one world, and not three."[728] Table 2 examines the origins of emigrant *amīrs* and the means whereby they entered *mansabdārī* service. The majority of first-generation emigrants to attain high rank themselves belonged in their societies of origin to the stratum of local and urban notables, designated governing élites in Chapter 2. Senior members of the Īrānī faction like Mukhtār Khān of Sabzvār and Zūlfiqār Khān Qarāmānlū as well as the four nobles examined in the second chapter typify this class of émigré, as do prominent *amīrs* from Transoxiana like ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīrūz Jang and Tarbiyat Khān Barlās, both of whom we then examined in Chapter 3. A third subset of this group constitutes emigrants or defectors from the Uzbek polity such as Qubād Khān, the *Mīr Ākhor* (Master of Horse) of Nazr Muhammad Khān of Balkh, Shāh Qulī Khān Vaqqās Hājī, previously ambassador of the same ruler to the Mughal court, and Shamsher Khān Ūzbak, identified as one of the "middle-ranking" (*mutavassit*) nobles of "the land of Tūrān" (*Tūrān-diyār*).[729] These seem to parallel high-ranking Safavid émigrés of the same period, albeit on a much smaller scale. Another interesting group of first-generation emigrants are what can be designated literary or scholarly professionals: these were individuals without any discernible connections to governing or political élites but distinguished by various kinds of intellectual achievements. Remarkably, these four *amīrs* went on to occupy the highest offices: Afzal Khān Shīrāzī as *Khān Sāmān* (1627-1629) and *Vazīr* (1629-1638), Fāzil Khān as *Khān Sāmān* (1646-1652 & 1658-1663) and *Vazīr* (1663), Dānishmand Khān as *Bakhshī* (1657 & 1667-1670) and Mīrak Haravī as *Sadr* (1658-1661). We shall return to these in the next section. A third group is *amīrs* who combine the domestic and emigrant routes by having entered the service of subsequent monarchs in their princely days, such as Lashkar Khān and Vazīr Khān Muhammad Tāhir.[730] Finally, there are six *amīrs* whose origin is unclear, except only Muʿtamad Khān, who came

[728] *Foltz*, Mughal India and Central Asia, xxiv
[729] *Maāsir*, 3:99, 2:658 & 2:633
[730] Munis Faruqui discusses Muhammad Tāhir, the future Vazīr Khān's service in the princely household of Aurangzeb in Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 105

from "unknown (i.e., lowborn) people of Iran," (*mardum-i ghayr-mashāhīr-i īrān*).[731] The other five are Allāh Qulī Khān, an Uzbek of the Almān tribe, Mīrzā ʿAlī Beg of Badakhshān, Tāhir Khān of Balkh, Tarbiyat Khān Fakhr al-Dīn ("from Tūrān") and Yūsuf Muhammad Khān of Tāshkand. Given that all these are from Transoxiana or territories that border it, it seems highly likely that they were Central Asian military professionals of the type discussed in the final section of Chapter 3.

The final major category, households and princely retinues, refers to individuals who entered the service of a future Emperor during his career as a prince (typically emigrants, professionals, or local *zamīndārs*), or those who attained high rank through personal attendance on the reigning Emperor (generally slaves, domestic servants, and foster-kin). A key example of the latter is Iʿtibār Khān, a eunuch who waited on Jahāngīr throughout the Emperor's life and towards the close of his reign was made Governor of Agra, before being pensioned off by Shāh Jahān with the high rank of 6,000 *zāt*.[732] The same office was later held by Vazīr Khān Hakīm ʿAlīm al-Dīn, a Shaykhzāda of the Punjāb who had served as Shāh Jahān's personal physician and remained with him throughout the years of his rebellion. He was rewarded with the high *mansab* of 5,000 *zāt* in 1628, before dying as the governor of his native province.[733] Many *amīrs* of this category were elevated in the reign of Shāh Jahān. As we have seen in the first chapter, he was distrustful of the established nobility, including his wife's relatives of the Īrānī faction, and preferred employing individuals without connections to factions of his father's reign. Thus, we see for example Islām Khān Mashhadī, "one of the oldest servants of the princely days of [Shāh Jahān] who started out in the profession of secretary" (*dar simt-i munshīgarī*) rising to the offices of *Bakhshī* (1637-1639) and *Vazīr* (1639-1646).[734] This data has interesting implications for the meaning of service in Mughal status culture to which we will return. At the very least it seems clear that personal and domestic service was not seen as in any way degrading or a barrier to advancement to high rank – the former, and likely very often the latter, involved service in the culturally prestigious role of the heavy mounted warrior of the kind extensively described by contemporary European observers.[735] This bears out existing scholarship on the nature of domesticity and the household in the patrimonial conception of Mughal kingship, whereby the entirety of the imperial apparatus came to be seen

[731] *Maāsir*, 3:431
[732] Ibid., 1:134-5
[733] Ibid., 3:933, *Bādshāhnāma* 2:29
[734] *Maāsir*, 1:162
[735] See, for example, Bernier, Travels, 212-214 & 216, and

as an extended version of the imperial household.[736] Proximity to the imperial person, albeit through personal attendance, was evidently as legitimate a route to the highest rank of nobility as military-administrative success or even (as we shall see) ties of kinship.

Table 3: "Miscellaneous" Amīrs

Origin	*Number*
Sayyids	15 (54%)
Foster- or consort-kin	3 (10%)
Military communities	5 (18%)
Other	5 (18%)

Table 3 looks at the final category from Table 1, i.e. the fifth of *amīrs* who do not clearly belong to the three previously mentioned routes. It is deceptive in that several of these figures are not really anomalous in comparison to other members of this status group. One of the immediately striking facts about this subset of the data is the number of *amīrs* who are Sayyids, of Hindūstānī or other origin. Some, such as Sher Khvāja and Khān Daurān Nasrat Jang, are associated with the Naqshbandī order (albeit in India) whose connections to the Timurid dynasty are well established – as Muzaffar Alam has demonstrated, the order enjoyed a revival of sorts in India from the beginning of the 17th century.[737] Others presumably traced their descent from other major orders established in India like the Chishtiyya (several of whom were foster-kin to Jahāngīr), the Qādiriyya represented here by Sayyid Ahmad Qādirī, who was *Sadr* from 1611-1625. It is particularly interesting to observe that a number of these *amīrs* active in the decade of the 1600s and 1610s –Murtazá Khān Shaykh Farīd, Sayyid Bāyazīd Bukhārī, Dīndār Khān and Sayyid Jalāl – all trace their descent from the 14th century Sufi saint Makhdūm Jahāniyān.[738] Dīndār Khān is explicitly stated to have been a kinsman of Murtazá

[736] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 54; Blake, "The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals," 79; Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 97
[737] Alam, "The Mughals, the Sufi Shaikhs and the Formation of Akbari Dispensation," 143, 166-173
[738] *Maāsir*, 2:23 & 2:633

Khān. Jahāngīr himself further mentions the widespread veneration for Makhdūm Jahāniyān in India during his lifetime and the prominence of his descendants in Gujarāt.[739] It seems quite likely then that these *amīrs* of Sayyid descent represent established *tarīqas* or local *zamīndārī* interests analogous to Sufi orders in contemporary Iran and Transoxiana. Other members of this group belong to military specialist communities such as Afghans, Rajputs (Hindu and Muslim), and Turkmens. This leaves us with the rather odd subgroup of *amīrs* who are either foster-brothers or consort kin of imperial dynasts but whose background is left otherwise identified. The case of one of these individuals, Vazīr Khān Muqīm, is particularly illustrative of issues around examining this status group with the necessarily limited information available to us.

Muqīm was an officer given the title of Vazīr Khān and made *vazīr* by Akbar at the end of his reign, according to Jahāngīr.[740] He held that high office initially alone, then in conjunction with Vazīr al-Mulk Jān Beg, before being suddenly demoted to the office of *dīvān* of Bengal in 1607, from which he was recalled the following year.[741] Shāh Navāz Khān reports that he accompanied Prince Parvez to the Deccan in 1616 (perhaps once again to serve as provincial *dīvān*) and that nothing further is known of him.[742] This is an extraordinarily scarce amount of information for someone who must have had some influence and position given that he occupied one of the highest offices of the empire in two reigns. A critical piece of information is included quite casually by Jahāngīr in his memoirs. One of Prince Khusrau's consorts, who bore a son in 1616, was "the daughter of Fāzil Rikābdār's son Muqīm."[743] The case becomes extremely interesting. A *rikābdār* was an officer in princely households according to a 16th century source.[744] Neither Muqīm nor any Fāzil is present in Muʿtamad Khān's list of Jahāngīr's princely retainers.[745] However, there was a Fāzil Beg in the household of another Mughal prince, Mīrzā Hakīm (Akbar's brother), who was the brother of Khān Khānān Munʿim Beg, one of the highest grandees of Humāyūn and Akbar.[746] If this were the

[739] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 243
[740] Ibid., 28
[741] Ibid., 92 & 96
[742] *Maāsir*, 3:932-3
[743] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 192
[744] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 277
[745] Muʿtamad Khān, *Iqbālnāma-yi Jahāngīrī*, eds. ʿAbd al-Hayy & Ahmad ʿAli (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1865), 356-8
[746] Munis Faruqui, "The Forgotten Prince: Mīrzā Hakīm and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *JESHO* 48 no. 4 (2005): 495

same as Muqīm's father, it would connect him to a major kin-group in the nobility of the 16th century and explain the choice of his daughter as a consort for Jahāngīr's eldest son. Chronologically this is borne out by Fāzil Beg's death in 1564 and the birth of a grandson to Muqīm in 1616, as this would place him around his forties or fifties upon appointment to the office of *vazīr*. The case for this connection becomes even stronger when we consider his career in light of contemporary factional politics: Muqīm, who is absent from the *Āīn-i Akbarī*, would have been made *vazīr* between 1602-1605 when Khān-i ʿAzam and Mān Singh were urging Akbar to supersede the rebellious Salīm with his grandson Khusrau, very possibly at the instigation of these two grandees.[747] Khān-i ʿAzam like Muqīm was the prince's father-in-law, whereas Mān Singh was his uncle. Khusrau had been granted imperial rank and a household under the supervision of Mān Singh in 1594.[748] This would further explain Muqīm's sudden demotion to a provincial *dīvānī* in 1607, the year of Khusrau's rebellion. Moreover, as *dīvān* of Bengal he would have been subordinate to the province's governor Islām Khān Chishtī, who as Jahāngīr's trusted foster-brother likely had little sympathy for the rebel prince.

This reveals to us a glimpse of the vast network of connections and relations elided by the narrative of the official and other sources which are available to us. It further illustrates the difficulty of reconstructing earlier generations of *amīrs.* Barring Muqīm's brief tenure at the forefront of court politics in c. 1602-1607, no member of Munʿim Beg's family rose to prominence after 1575, and thus they presumably were all but forgotten by the time Shāh Navāz Khān began amassing materials for his *tazkira* in the mid-18th century, unlike prominent Īrānī and neo-Tūrānī families whose descendants remained active into the reigns of Farrukh-Siyar and Muhammad Shāh. Foster-kin and consort-kin, i.e. *amīrs* connected to the dynasty by marriage or fosterage, would not have been from obscure backgrounds. Faruqui points out that the choice of foster-mother for princes at least in Akbar's reign were selected in order to forge ties with prominent families.[749] It is therefore reasonable to assume that the other individuals of this miscellaneous group, Jahāngīr's foster-brothers Bāyazīd Koka and Muʿtaqad Khān Koka, also came from established backgrounds either of the old Mughal nobility like Munʿim Khān's family or from major *zamīndārī* or Sufi *tarīqa*-based lineages of India like those of

[747] On the adherents of Prince Khusrau see Reyaz Ahmed Khan, "Mirza Aziz Koka in the Court of Jahangir," *PIHC* 73 (2012): 223-230 & Nurul Hasan, "Theory of the Nur Jahan 'Junta,'" 324-5 and 329
[748] Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 30-31
[749] Ibid., 73

Qutb al-Dīn Koka and Islām Khān Chishtī. We see in Table 4 a persistent presence of consort and foster kin in the high nobility throughout this period.

Table 4: Fictive and Consort Kin

	High nobility	5,000 *zāt* and above
Fictive Kin	19 (12%)	8 (12%)
Consort Kin	27 (17%)	17 (26%)

By and large, then, a large majority of the Mughal high nobility rose to its rank through some variation of one of three routes: inherited rank, emigration, or personal service or attendance on members of the dynasty. Bernier, observing a court society whose manners and mores were doubtless alien to him, claimed that the *umarā* "mostly consist of adventurers from different nations...and are generally persons of low descent, some having been originally slaves, and the majority being destitute of education."[750] We are now able to see that Bernier was quite wrong. In terms of origin and profile, the *umarā* belonged overwhelmingly either to established aristocratic lineages of the Timurid, Safavid or Uzbek polities, to local notable social groups of South, Central and West Asia, to military-professional social groups of North India and Transoxiana, or to transregional professional and scholarly communities and networks of the kind examined in Chapter 2. Those who did have servile and domestic origins advanced by the same means, the same activities and in the same social, political and cultural context as other members of this status group. Having established its composition and origins, it is now time to look at what this data tells us about the myriad aspects of the Mughal court's status culture.

[750] Bernier, Travels, 212

4.3: Aspects of Aristocratic Status

One of the most important and central categories of status-claim advanced in this group is that of lineage. This encompasses multiple types of status identity: genealogical, lineage-based, and based on inherited charisma. The centrality of lineage and descent as aspects of imperial ideology and status both in the Central Asian Timurid heritage, and their reconceptualisation in 17th century India, are well established as for example in Corinne Lefèvre's work.[751] The harem institution too emphasised the lineage and pedigree of élite women over their reproductive role, in contrast to (for example) the contemporary Ottoman harem.[752] By comparison, examination of the role or importance (or even existence) of similar ideologies or status identities in the ruling élite is extraordinarily neglected. Richard Eaton alone has discussed the presence of any sense of hereditary aristocracy or nobiliary descent in the Mughal ruling class, and only in terms of comparison to the Deccan, where he finds this sensibility absent.[753] At most, older studies on the nobility tend to assume a sense of "racial" or ethnic superiority felt by the emigrant *umarā*, usually ascribed to the Tūrānīs.[754] Echoes of this assumption continue to be found in more recent scholarship, such as Munis Faruqui's assertion that notions of Central Asian "racial and political superiority" were prevalent in the 16th century Mughal polity, or Gijs Kruijtzer's ascription of "national sentiment" to various Muslim subgroups.[755] It is perhaps worth looking at Pamela Crossley's criterion of "racial" phenomena: "the explicit attribution of a fixed moral or cultural character, based on ancestral affiliations, and making individuals or groups unassimilable, or un-transformable."[756] As we have had occasion to see and shall see yet again, this is not a criterion fulfilled by 17th century Mughal élite conceptions of heredity or lineage. In this context it is worth pointing out that the existence of xenophobic or ethnically based group and status identities in the Deccan arose precisely in the absence of a (quasi-)hereditary status group like the Mughal *umarā*.[757] Non-indigenous, i.e. foreigner, political identity arose in the context of a radically different situation

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[751] Lefèvre, "Mughal Genealogical Strategies," 413, 418, *passim*; Annabel Teh Gallop, "The Genealogical Seal of the Mughal Emperors of India," *JRAS* 9 no. 1 (1999): 77-140;

[752] Lisa Balabanlilar, "The Begims of the Mystic Feast: Turco-Mongol Tradition in the Mughal Harem," *TJAS* 69 no. 1 (2010): 138; Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 217-224

[753] Richard Eaton, "The Rise and Fall of Military Slavery in the Deccan," in *Slavery and South Asian History*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton (Indiana University Press: 2006): 122

[754] Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, 17-18; Ibn Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, 38; Afzal Husain, "Liberty and Restraint: A Study of Shiaism in the Mughal Nobility," *PIHC* 42 (1981): 283

[755] Faruqui, "A Forgotten Prince," 503; Gijs Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in 17th Century India* (Leiden University Press: 2009), 182

[756] Crossley, *In A Translucent Mirror*, 14

[757] Fischel, "Gharībān in the Deccan," 130

in the Deccan, reflecting the competing possibilities of patronage and remuneration represented by multiple courts, as Fischel and Eaton have demonstrated. That is not what is examined here.

Moreover we have ascertained in preceding chapters the lack of any "ethnic" basis for the terms Īrānī and Tūrānī, on which assumptions of ethnic status identities are based. Men from Tūrān and Iran too, as we have seen, could be men of obscure origin (*mardum-i ghayr-mashāhīr)*, people "without fame." This term gives us a vital clue to the nature of lineage-based status. Most members of this status group have lineage-identities that situate them within a prestigious broader collective. The most common of these is to be a Sayyid, i.e. a lineal descendant of the Prophet and ʿAlī via Hasan or Husayn, which have constituted a distinct social group in many Islamicate and Persianate societies.[758] However, mere *siyādat*, the quality of being a Sayyid, was on its own a rather limited status identity: many of the least prominent members of this status-group are men who evidently have no other claim than that of generic *siyādat*. The highest ranking *amīrs* are those distinguished by connection to prominent, established and reputable Sayyid lineages, such as the by-now familiar figure of Rūh al-Amīn, "of the noble Sayyids of Isfahān," or Mukhtār Khān of Sabzvār, whose family were hereditary Safavid *Naqībs* of Mashhad and intendants of the pilgrimage (*Amīr al-Haj*).[759] The same went for the highest ranking Sayyids from Transoxiana such as the Naqshbandīs, Ahrārīs and Jūybārīs, the last of whom Shāh Jahān designates "highest among the nobility of mankind" (*ʿumda-yi nujabā-yi anām*) in a letter to Imām Qulī Khān of Balkh.[760]

There are qualities thus of fame, eminence, or being well-known clearly attached to certain lineages which act in a sense as proof of their authenticity and value, qualities belonging to the same semantic field as the terminology of face and reputation discussed earlier in the chapter. More than lineage alone, their association with *place* situates them firmly not just within time and history but space and the prevailing mental geography of Persianate and Islamicate élites of the time. Association with sites like Bukhārā, Mashhad, Najaf, Karbalā, and the Hijāz serve to affirm individuals' belonging in prestigious and high-status communities closely connected to these sites. The same phenomenon can be observed in the various senior *amīrs* associated with Sufi *tarīqas* like the Naqshbandīs, the Chishtīs, and the Qādirīs. All these orders traced what Amina Steinfels calls an "initiatic lineage" to the Prophet and his

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[758] Morimoto, "Introduction," in *Sayyids and Sharīfs*, 1-13 and *passim*
[759] *Maāsir*, 3:413 & 3:409
[760] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:235

companions.[761] Many *tarīqas* also had geographical associations with territories like Transoxiana and prestigious cities like Samarqand and Bukhārā.[762] We shall return to another kind of collective, that of military specialist communities.

A further important aspect of ancestry and lineage as an element of status culture is its ability to connect living individuals with charismatic hero-ancestors of the past. It is useful in this context to keep in mind that genres of text popular in this period, such as *silsila-nāmas* (genealogies) and *tazkiras* (biographical dictionaries) were valued precisely because they combined the function of commemorating past heroic or saintly figures with connecting them to living descendants.[763] Such texts were commissioned by the imperial court in order to emphasise the divine and miraculous ancestry of the imperial family and consequently its celestially-sanctioned rule, and to project this to domestic and international audiences.[764] *Siyādat* of course connected *amīrs* to the Prophet and the Imāms. Similar conceptions of heredity and inherited ancestral charisma were found not just in the wider Persianate world but also in the Indic societies inhabited by the *umarā*. Not only would such topoi be familiar to nobles who passed most of their lives in India – pre-existing local traditions were themselves often influenced by their encounter with the Mughal court. The *vaṃśāvalī* (genealogy) of the Meṛtiyo Rāṭhoṛs of Mārwāṛ enumerates not only the Rajas of Jodhpur (i.e. Jaswant Singh's ancestors) but also the Khānzāda Muslim Rājpūts who shared his patriline, as well as female descendants who became consorts to Mughal dynasts.[765] In an élite society deeply conscious of lineage, descent from powerful, saintly, or otherwise charismatic and heroic ancestors was a universally intelligible topos.

The ancestors of these *amīrs* (as culturally represented at the time) number a variety of such figures. The Mīr Mīrān family, for example, traced its descent from the 15th century saint Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī, which Iskandar Munshī explicitly cites as the reason for its marital ties with the Safavid dynasty.[766] ʿAbd al-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān descended from the Bahārlū clan

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[761] Amina Steinfels, "His Master's Voice: The Genre of Malfūzāt in South Asian Sufism," *History of Religions* 44 no. 1 (2004): 56

[762] Alam, "The Mughals, the Sufi Shaykhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," 142, 149

[763] Stephen F. Dale, "Indo-Persian Historiography" in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville (I.B. Tauris: 2012), 578; Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 170

[764] Muzaffar Alam, "On the End of the Akbari Dispensation" in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*, eds. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Columbia University Press: 2012), 126; Ruby Lal, "Settled, Sacred and All-Powerful: Making of New Genealogies and Traditions of Empire under Akbar," *Economic and Political Weekly* 36 (2001): 943; Lefèvre, "Mughal Genealogical Strategies," 415-16

[765] Saran and Ziegler, *The Meṛtīyo Rāṭhoṛs*, 439

[766] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 214 & 231

of the Qarā Qoyūnlū confederacy. His biography asserts his descent from ʿAlī Shukr Beg (fl. 1460), ruler of Hamadān, and his descendants, who were "exalted by kingship in Iran" (*lavā-yi saltanat dar īrān bar-afrāshta-and*).[767] Chaghatāy *amīrs* could likewise point to exalted forebears: the Tarkhāns descended from Atkū-Tīmūr, a renowned warrior of Tīmūr's reign.[768] Even those who could not claim descent from saints, prophets or kings, could nevertheless acquire status as descendants of prominent historical figures. Two families closely connected Iʿtimād ad-Daula, those of Āqā Mullā and Bāqir Khān Najm-i-Sānī, were descended from powerful *vazīrs* of the early Safavid period, a connection which brought both advantageous marriages and imperial patronage.[769] Bāqir Khān is an useful example – sometime after his marriage to Iʿtimād ad-Daula's he wrote a manual of ethics for the instruction of *mansabdārs*, a text to which we shall return.[770] In some cases such descent claims were appreciated even from comparatively recent ancestors. Bahādur Shāh considered bestowing the *vizārat* upon a newly arrived *amīr* from Iran because the man was a grandson of Khalīfa Sultān (d. 1654), ʿAbbās II's celebrated *vazīr*.[771] These four cases give us religious (saints), royal (princes), martial (warriors) and administrative or political (*vazīrs*) types of status-conferring ancestor.

As should be apparent, one of the most valued kinds of inherited status identity for an *amīr* was some kind of dynastic connection, consanguineous or otherwise, to the Timurid polity in Central Asia or to its successors and rivals. Jahāngīr assiduously describes the marriages of the Mīr Mīrān family with daughters of Tahmāsp I and Ismāʿīl II, who were "honoured to be in-laws of the [Niʿmatullāhī] Shaykhs."[772] The aforementioned ʿAlī Shukr Beg connected Khān Khānān to the Timurids via a Bahārlū marriage to Sultān Mahmūd Mīrzā of Badakhshān.[773] Similarly, the Naqshbandī, Ahrār, and Jūybārī Khvājas enjoyed prestigious status as *pīrs* and relations by marriage not only of the Timurids but also of the Shībānīd and Ashtarkhānid rulers of Bukhārā.[774] Interestingly, despite Akbar's reduced patronage of the Naqshbandī order Jahāngīr saw fit as late as 1620 to marry one of his nieces to Mīrzā Valī Naqshbandī.[775] Such

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[767] ʿAbd al-Bāqī Nihāvandī, *Maāsir-i Rahīmī*, ed. M. Hidayet Husain (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1924), 46
[768] *Akbarnāma* 3:973
[769] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:282; Fazlī Khūzanī al-Isfahānī, A *Historiographical Study and Annotated Translation of Volume 2 of the Afzal al-Tavārīkh*, trans. Simin Abrams (University of Edinburgh: 1999) 2:23
[770] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service, 57
[771] *Maāsir*, 3:677
[772] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 183
[773] *Maāsir-i Rahīmī*, 1:61
[774] Alam, "The Mughals, The Sufi Shaykhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," 153-4; Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 55 & 57
[775] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 303

connections did not necessarily have to involve marriage or kinship. Service and patronage were perceived as forming analogous close ties between individuals as seen in the concept of *tarbiyat,* which Anooshahr translates as "raising" or "training up." This signified a form of mentorship which thereupon created obligations and implied a duty of loyalty (*vafā*).[776] This is also the kind of bond that ʿAlī Mardān Khān possessed with ʿAbbās I, belonging as his father did to the class of *shāhsivan*, members of tribes distinguished by the Shāh's personal patronage and upbringing rather than positions in the formal tribal structure of the *oymāqs*.[777] He is depicted in the *Bādshāhnāma* as attributing his defection to Shāh Safī's ingratitude in "casting aside the past services and exertions of myself and my father," (*khidmāt-i guzīda va taraddudāt-i pasandīda-yi marā va pidar-i marā az nazr-i iʿtibār andākhta*).[778] His own loyalty in return for this inherited *tarbiyat* is rewarded with the title of "loyal friend" (*yār vafādār*).

Tarbiyat and *khidmat* naturally lead us to the next and equally important type of status-claim: that signified by *service*. Service, usually designated by the near-ubiquitous term *khidmat* in official sources, was an integral element of the imperial ideology and consequently of the prevailing status culture at the imperial court. Blake and O'Hanlon discuss the role and nature of *mansabdārī* service, which was conceptualised in the imperial ideology as that of servants or domestics in constant *personal* attendance upon the emperor, rather than as officers or bureaucrats within a standardised system.[779] Of the 69 *umarā* with *mansabs* above 2,000 *zāt*, those not appointed to provincial positions were called *umarā-i hāzir*, *amīrs* of the presence, emphasising again the idea of personal attendance.[780] In the conception of the empire as an extended household, the nobility could thus be represented as the servants of that household in attendance upon the great householder, i.e. the sovereign. The three highest offices of the empire, *Dīvān Vazīr*, *Bakhshī* and *Khān Sāmān,* correspond broadly to a pan-Eurasian pattern of quasi-domestic officers in patrimonial kingdoms: stewards or seneschals, marshals or masters of the horse, and chamberlains.[781] This approach further had the advantage of imposing a kind of theoretical equality on *mansabdārs* of varying backgrounds.[782] Thus, attendance on the sovereign's person was a dimension of imperial service as legitimate as military or

[776] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 134
[777] Babai et. al, *Slaves of the Shah*, 22
[778] *Bādshāhnāma* 2:33
[779] Blake, "the Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire," 86, 90; O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 54-55, 57
[780] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 87
[781] Duindam, "Court as a Meeting Point," 38
[782] O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body," 690

administrative activity. In practical terms, this also allowed for the promotion to senior positions of slaves, eunuchs, and domestic servants theoretically without competing loyalties or interests beyond their attachment to the ruler. This was of course long established practice in Islamicate and other societies, notably by Akbar and Jahāngīr's contemporary ʿAbbās I.[783] We see from our data that such individuals as the eunuch Iʿtibār Khān, Shāh Jahān's servant Sardār Khān, or personal physician Vazīr Khān ʿAlīm al-Dīn could govern important provinces like Agra and Mālwa.

We should pause here to consider some implications of this ideology of service for Mughal sources. *Tarbiyat* as a source of service marked the culmination under Akbar of a process that had begun with Bābur of moving away from the Central Asian model of governance, dominated by élite military-aristocratic lineages, towards one dominated by an autocratic monarch and his supporters, the latter often of a lower standing.[784] With Akbar's reign (and the imposition of the *mansabdārī* system) there was a decisive ideological and practical break with the political heritage associated with the Timurid principalities of Central Asia.[785] Interestingly, a near contemporary source explicitly identifies his recruitment of the Kachwāhās as a form of *tarbiyat*.[786] Mughal (i.e. Indo-Timurid) status culture had therefore moved decisively away from the predominantly lineage-based status-culture of the Chaghatāys. This likely accounts for the elision and omission of lineage-based status-claims in so much of the official literature. Although some acknowledgments of *amīrs'* ancestry are made by Jahāngīr in his memoirs, these are largely absent from the more impersonal *Bādshāhnāmas* and the *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*. Even the aristocratic descent of Chaghatāy and Mughūl *amīrs* is framed in the language of "service" to the dynasty, as for example Saʿīd Khān Chaghatāy whose forebears had "served" the Timurids "generation after generation."[787] This is reflected even in titulature, with such titles as Khidmat Parast Khān ("Khān pleased by serving") and no less than four Tarbiyat Khāns, one of whom was a Barlās clansman of the dynasty and another of whom was the nephew of Pādshāh Mahāl, Jahāngīr's consort.[788] This reminds us that all forms of status, at least in their outward expression or textual representation,

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[783] Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, Chapter 1, provides an overview
[784] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 115, 126
[785] Faruqui, "A Forgotten Prince," 500
[786] *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, 66-7, quoted in Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 134
[787] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 31
[788] *Maāsir*, 1:484 and 1:493

were ultimately mediated by the political centre of the court and the system, i.e. the Emperor and the dynasty.

Another relevant aspect of *tarbiyat* is that it signified the recruitment of military labour often from tribally-organised pastoral communities rather than established military-aristocratic lineages.[789] There is some evidence Mughal armies followed a similar pattern in recruiting from military specialist groups occupying what I would tentatively suggest is a *comparable* social position in North India such as Afghans and Rājpūts – Dirk Kolff for example has suggested the model of salt-loyalty and *naukarī* (as military service) was brought to North India from the northwest and indeed Mīrzā Haydar uses the term *naukar* (from the originally Mongol *nökör*) to refer to soldiers of tribal-pastoralist origin in Humāyūn's armies.[790] Finally, this model of recruitment from communities of this type has obvious parallels in the Safavid polity's recruitment to the *qurchīs* and even the *qizilbāsh*, modern scholarship continuing to use the term "tribe" in translation of *īl* and *oymāq*.[791] An investigation of whether the Qizilbāsh *oymāqs*, the Kurds and the *Shāhsivan*, Uzbek and other Central Asian pastoralist groups, and the communities broadly designated Afghans and Rajputs in North India, constitute comparable groups in social or military terms is far beyond the scope of this study. However, in the context of Mughal aristocratic status culture, treating *amīrs* from these diverse origins as part of a broadly comparable subset of the *umarā* yields some interesting similarities. It seems that performing a specific type of military labour – the culturally prestigious role of mounted heavy cavalry, as discussed in the preceding chapter – enabled the assertion of a comparable type of status-claim. This would unite, for example, such figures in the data as Khān Jahān Lodī, ʿAlī Mardān Khān Zīk, and Jān Sipār Khān. Taking these figures, an Afghan, a Kurd and a Turkmen, we can further observe that analogous forms of status identity united these communities.

In 1613, Khān Jahān Lodī himself commissioned *Makhzan-i Afghānī*, a text combining the features of *tārīkh* and *tazkira* in the articulation of a common genealogy and identity for all "Afghans" in 1613. It professes to be based on oral reports of "the Afghan nation and their conversion to Islam...the links of their genealogy [having] remained quite unknown and

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[789] Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 127 and 133

[790] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 20; Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Empires*, 130 and 133

[791] Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 27, 34, 31; Masashi Haneda, *Le Chah et les Qizilbas: le Système militaire safavide* (Klaus Schwarz Verlag: 1987), Part III; Reid, "The Qajar Uymaq," 117

unnoticed."[792] The same type of text was produced in the mid-17th century by Abūl Ghāzī Khān, the Shībānid exile at the Safavid court who became Khān of Khīva: two texts entitled *Shajra-i Turk* (the genealogy of the Turks, including that of the Mongols) and *Shajra-i Tarākima* (the genealogy of the Turkmens, including that of the Qizilbāsh).[793] Finally, ʿAlī Mardān Khān would very likely have been familiar with the *Sharaf-nāma* (1597), a similar history of the Kurds by Sharf al-Dīn Khān Bidlīsī, a commander who like ʿAlī Mardān Khān's father was of Kurdish origin and served at the Safavid court.[794] All three of these texts were written or commissioned by members of such military groups familiar with courtly circles and Persianate historiography. One wonders if the purpose of the texts was to advance status-claims intelligible within such a context for these groups which were relative newcomers to the *umarā*, certainly in comparison with older Sayyid and Sufi lineages, or established Chinggisid and Chaghatāy genealogies. A common model in the Persophone world for the creation of a communal identity among such groups was descent from mythical progenitors, group identity being culturally represented as based on common genealogical descent.[795] The case for this is strengthened when we consider the claims made by these texts. Turkmen and Afghan genealogies trace descent from religious figures like Noah and King Saul respectively; Kurds and some Qizilbāsh groups from historical dynasties like the Ayyubids and the Qarā Quyūnlū.[796] Rajputs, who comprise the vast majority of the non-Muslim *amīrs*, had of course comparable genealogical traditions. Cynthia Talbot has pointed out that importance of genealogy in Rajput culture actually increased in the Mughal period due to the value placed thereupon by the imperial court in assigning political leadership roles among the Rājpūts.[797] It seems clear then that these military professional communities firstly performed a function of sufficiently high status to enable several of them to rise to the *umarā*, and that they advanced lineage-based claims analogous to those of other *amīrs*.

In discussing military labour and cultural roles we have begun to move from ascriptive to achieved forms of status. Service, both as a familial legacy or as personally demonstrated and performed, had actively to be acquired. Another widespread form of achieved status was

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[792] Niʿmatullāh, *History of the Afghans,* trans. Bernhard Dorn, (Susil Gupta: 1965) 1:2
[793] Abūl Ghāzī Bahādur Khān, *Shajra-i Tarākima* (Intishārāt-i Pīnār: 2012)
[794] Erika Glassen, "Šaraf ad-Dīn Khān Bedlīsī," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 4, no. 1:76-77
[795] Hayes. "The Death of Kings," 386
[796] *History of the Afghans*, 1:37, 1:43-79; Sharaf Khān Bidlīsī, *Sharafnāma*, ed. Mehrdad Izady (Mazda: 2005): 83-117; *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*, 21, 40-42
[797] Cynthia Talbot, "Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative," *MAS* 43 (2009): 217

wealth. In the culture of conspicuous consumption and gift giving that prevailed in the Mughal court (and indeed in all Persianate courts), it is obvious why the possession of wealth would be seen as conferring status.[798] The transfer of valuables in cash and kind was universally understood as a method of mediation between actors through which relations of service and patronage were articulated and acknowledged.[799] Nor were those at all inconsequential in value: gift giving was not an informal practice but "highly institutionalised as a regular form of taxation," generally designated *pesh-kash* in both Mughal and Safavid practice.[800] Bāqir Khān in his mirror for princes actively stigmatises poverty as a source only of disgrace, while discussing the various legitimate uses of wealth and its potential as a source of virtue (he would have been in a position to know, as his wife belonged to the wealthiest family of the nobility).[801] On a practical level we see this very clearly in Rūh al-Amīn's career, his vast wealth being mentioned in all contemporary sources, with Jahāngīr referring to the universal respect accorded rich men.[802] Most notably, Mīr Jumla as we have seen owed his advancement not to any advantages of lineage but rather to proven administrative and fiscal experience coupled with a sizable private fortune. This consideration applies also to Sayyid and Sufi notable families which occupied high socio-economic positions in contemporary Iranian and South and Central Asian society.[803] Soviet scholars treated lineages like the Ahrār Khvājazādas as "feudal landlords."[804] Iskandar Munshī for instance refers to the accumulated "private estates and properties" amassed by the Banī Mukhtār since Timurid times.[805] Similarly, in contemporary Mughalistān Sufi lineages with institutionalised hereditary succession had essentially been transformed into aristocratic households with resources of wealth and patronage at their disposal.[806] The poverty of itinerant dervishes and ascetics would certainly have been alien to members of these lineages.

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[798] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 54

[799] Guido van Meesburgen, "Intirely the Kings Vassalls: East India Company Gifting Practices and Anglo-Mughal Political Exchange (c. 1670–1720)," *Diplomatica* 2 no. 2 (2020): 273;

[800] Rudi Matthee, "Gift Giving iv. in the Safavid Period," *Encyclopedia Iranica* X/6 (2001): 609-614

[801] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 62

[802] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 1098; *Jahāngīrnāma*, 258

[803] Quiring Zoche, *Isfahan im 16 und 17 jahrhundert*, 209

[804] Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia*, 97; see also Alam, "The Mughals, The Sufi Shaykhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation" on the wealth and political power of Naqshbandī lineages in Transoxiana.

[805] *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, 242

[806] Alexander Papas, "Lingua Franca or Lingua Magica? Talismanic Scrolls from Eastern Turkistan," *The Persianate World*, ed. Nile Green (California University Press: 2019), 214

Another form of achieved status was learning. The potential rewards of this were very great – for most of Shāh Jahān's reign the *vizārat* was occupied by two men famed primarily for their learning and scholarship. Afzal Khān Shīrāzī, the first of these *Vazīrs*, was a scholar of Shīrāz distinguished by knowledge of the science (*ʿulūm-i rasmī*) who served Shāh Jahān initially as a *munshī*.[807] The *Bādshāhnāma* lauds him as a second Plato (*Aflatūn*).[808] Sa'dullāh Khān, given the title *ʿAllāmī Fahāmī* ("most learned and discerning") and according to Bernier Shāh Jahān's favourite minister, was known for his mastery of "the rational and historical sciences (*ʿulūm-i ʿaqliya va naqliya*), the memorisation of the Qur'ān, and for the beauty of his calligraphy and the elegance of his prose composition."[809] Similarly, Fāzil Khān the *Khān Sāmān* and *Vazīr* is described as "unique in his knowledge of the physical and mathematical sciences (*funūn-i tabīʿī va riyāzī*), especially in astronomy and astrology," (*ʿilm-i hīʿat va nujūm*).[810] A further interesting piece of information relates to Dānishmand Khān, Aurangzeb's *Bakhshī* and likewise of scholarly background. Bernier recounts that he alone of the high *umarā* was exempt from daily attendance at the *darbār* "in consequence of his being a man of letters, and of the time he devotes to his studies."[811] In considering the success of these four men, all of whom were ministers of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb, it is also worth keeping in mind that part of the attractiveness of Iranian migrants to various contemporary courts was their often high level of education and familiarity with a range of sciences and disciplines.[812] Finally, we know from contemporary Mughal works the wide range of scholarly and literary attainments expected of *amīrs* at court, ranging from theology and philosophy to the Persian literary canon.[813] Malik Ambar's lack of acquaintance with the practice of composing chronograms is set forth as proof of his ignorance by Shāh Navāz Khān.[814] It seems clear then that familiarity with literature and the sciences constituted an achieved status-claim among the *umarā* in its own right.

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807 *Maāsir*, 1:145
808 *Bādshāhnāma*, 1:495
809 Bernier, Travels, 23; *Maāsir*, 2:441
810 *Maāsir*, 3:524
811 Bernier, Travels, 265
812 Jean Calmard, "Les marchands iraniens: formations et montée d'un groupe de pression," *Marchands et Hommes dʿaffaires Asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine 13e-20e siècles*, eds. Denys Lombard & Jean Aubin (Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études: 1988), 96; Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 357
813 O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal India," 75
814 *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 2:12

One of the standard rhetorical tropes used in court Persian to refer to members of a royal household or administration since medieval times is "the lords of the pen and sword" (*arbāb-i sayf-o qalam*) occasionally bifurcated into "the people of the pen" and "the people of the sword" (*ahl-i sayf va ahl-i qalam*).[815] The counterpart to learning was martial valour and military prowess. Representations thereof abound in the sources and appear in close conjunction with such virtues as courage, valour, manliness, striving and ideas of personal honour or self-respect.[816] Some representative examples will illustrate the varied forms of this trope. In the *ʿĀlamgīrnāma,* for example, the Emperor's "imperial honour" (*ghayrat-i khusravāna*) is defended by his "great courage," (*himmat-i buland*), the latter phrase being met with also in Bāqir Khān's work.[817] Often these appear in conjunction with status identities based on lineage or military labour. We have already seen the idea of *Turkī* as good soldiery or a soldierly character in the previous chapter. Courage could also be religiously-inspired: in the words of Khān Jahān Lodī, "there is no bravery without submission to Murtazá ʿAlī," (*hech shujāʿat bī-ghulāmī-yi murtazá ʿAlī namī-bāshad*).[818] At times all these qualities could converge – Jahāngīr offers the bravery of the Bārha Sayyids as proof of the genuineness of their Sayyid lineage.[819] The quality which concerns us here is the fundamentally performative nature of courage and martial success as claimed forms of status. These were assertions that had to be lived up to and achieved in imperial service in the provinces and on campaign. Asad Khān, we have seen, actually incurred a loss of face in failing to live up to his claimed *Turkī*, which had ended or "run out," (*tamām shud*).[820] Similarly, courage if not performed in imperial service was worthless – the military ardour (*tahauvur*) of the rebel Khān Jahān Lodī and his Afghans are characterised not as honourable or worthy but as a form of intoxication or profligacy (*bad-mastī*).[821] Courage therefore illustrates the ways in which status could be overtly contested and become a source of anxiety or even loss of status to *amīrs*. Failure to live up to these assertions could have very serious consequences. In the case of Muhammad Amīn Khān Hāfiz, he was disgraced, lost his gubernatorial appointment, suffered a reduction in

[815] Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Élites," 92
[816] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 51, 57, 65
[817] *ʿĀlamgīrnāma*, 974
[818] *Maāsir*, 1:131
[819] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 401
[820] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 353
[821] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:339

mansab and was forbidden from appearing at court after retreating from battle with rebel Afghan tribes.[822]

Forms of achieved status relating to honour and face were particularly unstable as sources of anxiety. They had to be continually asserted and enacted within the dimensions of the court and its cultural milieu. Valour and martial prowess were certainly part of what demonstrated the quality of manliness (*mardānagī* or *javānmardī*) as a man and more importantly an élite male, distinct from people of low rank without status.[823] His patriarchal honour as a householder as embodied and inscribed on the person of his women, children and other dependents was an equally important component thereof. Mahābat Khān is excoriated in the *Bādshāhnāma* for risking his honour by jeopardising the physical safety and consequently honour of his women.[824] The word used is *nāmūs*, referring specifically to sexualised or patriarchal honour given its multiple meanings (reputation, fame, honour, but also modesty, chastity, disgrace, shame, or reproach). He regained this honour, of course, by returning to imperial service. The same idea of *nāmūs* occurs in the text of Vāzih's letter requesting pardon from Zūlfiqār Khān, entrusted with the *nāmūs* of Vāzih's family (*khāndān*).[825] This was a reference to Zūlfiqār Khān's paternal aunt, who as the widow of Vāzih's uncle would have inhabited the latter's home with his various dependents: Vāzih is reminding the *Vazīr* that he would lose his own honour by damaging the purdah of Vāzih's household, specifically its women.

There is of course a determinedly physical dimension to this honour: the immuration of female members of the imperial household within a physical harem had been increasingly institutionalised from Akbar's reign.[826] Aristocratic households were as we know designed as miniature replicas of the imperial household, with *amīrs* performing the role of householder like in imitation of the emperor.[827] The importance thereof and likewise the tension potentially engendered to an *amīr's* status from any disturbance to the physical safety of his female dependents is demonstrated by an episode from Shāh Jahān's reign. Amīr Khān Mīr Mīrān's wife, Sāhibjī, was the daughter of the Amīr al-Umarā, ʿAlī Mardān Khān.[828] On one occasion,

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[822] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 117 & 121
[823] O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service," 64
[824] *Bādshāhnāma* 1:116-7
[825] Irādat Khān, ff. 146
[826] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 174
[827] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 96-7; O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household, Body," 901
[828] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:251

her palanquin was in danger of being crushed by a maddened elephant, whereupon she leapt out of it, crossed the street, and locked herself into a shop. According to Shāh Navāz Khān, Amīr Khān felt his honour (*ghayrat*) damaged by her temporary exposure and wanted to divorce her. He was dissuaded therefrom by the Emperor, who rebuked him by saying "she performed a manly deed and saved your *nāmūs*," (*kār-i mardāna kard va nāmūs-i to nigāh-dāsht*).[829] In this remarkable case, the status-anxiety of the Amīr is counterbalanced by the valorisation of his wife's actions, which are perceived as fulfilling the requirements of a masculine role that he failed to perform. The text constructs her as a "lion-like woman" (*sher-zan*) who embodies manliness (*mardānagī*) and thereby restores her husband's honour. In this case, it is the very excessiveness of the *amīr's ghayrat* which causes him to lose face. Of course, the Emperor's mediation of the matter places it in context. We can speculate that Sāhibjī's own status as the daughter of a very high-ranking nobleman and her affinal links with other prominent Īrānī families was sufficient to offset the loss of status, if there was any, incurred by her momentary loss of purdah.

Discussing affinal connections brings us to the last major subset of status identities that can be discerned in this data: kinship with the imperial family itself, constructed through marriage or various forms of fictive kinship like fosterage. More than a quarter of *amīrs* of the first rank are some form of consort kin to the imperial family, to borrow a term from Chinese historiography. This is one of the few ways in which we are able to gain some sense of non-executive decision-makers of considerable influence in this stratum given the extreme cultural reluctance to explicitly name or identify élite women in the sources. It reinforces the point made throughout this chapter that proximity to the imperial family is a reliable index of status, and that all status claims were ultimately mediated by the Emperor with reference to the prevailing imperial ideology. There is now some literature on the political role of imperial consorts, including noblewomen who entered the harem.[830] This section's purpose is not to examine either but rather how such connections to the dynasty functioned in the context of aristocratic status culture. Clearly, most imperial consort kin were of very high status: 8 of 15 *vazīrs* and 11 of 25 *Bakhshīs* in our period were related within three degrees to an imperial consort. More still would have been kin to the dynasty via marriages of their female kin to princes, but these connections are unfortunately more difficult to trace given that little

[829] *Maāsir*, 1:286

[830] Balabanlilar, "Begims of the Mystic Feast," 126-132; Findly, *Nur Jahan*, 94; Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 130-32, 167-170;

information is available about princely households. We see however that at least two of Prince Khusrau's fathers-in-law were in this group (Vazīr Khān Muqīm and Khān-i ʿAzam Koka) and can surmise that other *amīrs* still would have been connected with the princes of succeeding reigns.

One of the more suggestive aspects of this mode of kinship is indicated by those of the Rajput Rajas present in this group. Lefèvre has posed the question of how Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān coped with the sheer biological reality of their maternal descent from Rajput Rajas, given this nowhere finds mention in official sources.[831] Let us observe, however, which of them are found in this group. Mān Singh Kachwāha first rose to prominence in the reign of Akbar – Jahāngīr calls him "an old wolf" but says he pardoned his faults and kept him in royal favour, despite his conspiracies with Khusrau.[832] Jaswant Singh Rāṭhoṛ rose to prominence in Shāh Jahān's reign, and there is a very curious incident that occurred in connection with his family. His half-brother Amar Singh, due to a personal feud whose origins are unclear, struck dead the *Bakhshī* Salābat Khān in the Emperor's presence. The appalled *mansabdārs* present, led by Arjan Singh Gauṛ, quickly killed him with daggers and maces.[833] Shāh Jahān attempted to have matters explained to Amar Singh's retainers, but these rioted and were all killed. Strangely, the *Bādshāhnāma* in discussing this event does not use any of the usual standard pejoratives either for Amar Singh or his retainers – on the contrary, it identifies him as "a young man distinguished among all the Rajputs for his nobility and courage," (*javāne ki dar tāyifa-i rājpūtiya ba-asālat-o basālat imtiyāz dāsht*).[834] This is all the stranger given that Salābat Khān was Āsaf Khān's nephew and thus hardly lacking in powerful connections at court. Nor were there any penalties imposed on any of his relations or dependents: indeed, Jaswant Singh was ultimately permitted to build a *chhattri* (cenotaph) for his brother in his own mansion in Agra.[835] Both instances of this remarkable degree of permissiveness make sense if we consider that Jahāngīr's mother was a Kachwāhā and Shāh Jahān's mother a Rāṭhoṛ, the great-aunt of Amar Singh and Jaswant Singh. Certainly the Emperors themselves seem to have been alive to some sense of shared heritage or connection. Shaykh Farīd, interestingly, explicitly

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[831] Lefèvre, "Mughal Genealogical Strategies," 28

[832] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 94

[833] Saran and Ziegler, *The Meṛtiyo Rāṭhoṛs*, 64-66

[834] *Bādshāhnāma*, 2:381

[835] Ebba Koch & JP Losty, "The Riverside Mansions and Tombs of Agra: New Evidence from a Panoramic Scroll Recently Acquired by The British Library," *British Library Journal* (2017): 5; the *chhattri* was built for Amar Singh, not Jaswant Singh, whose own *chhattri* is the Jaswant Thaḍā in Jodhpur

acknowledges the blood link after describing the killing of Amar Singh (*rāja rā ham pāra pāra kardand*):[836]

Khatr-hā-st dar kār-i shāhān base / ki bā shāh na-dārad khveshī kase

There are many dangers in the service of kings / for nobody has any kinship with a king

The two forms of fictive kinship are fosterage and "adoption." This term here indicates the practice, common under Akbar and Jahāngīr and early in Shāh Jahān's reign, of conferring honorary familial relationships on senior retainers. Jahāngīr for example conferred the title of "son" (*farzand*) on Khān Jahān Lodī, "whom [he] did not consider as any less than my own sons."[837] Shāh Navāz Khān reports from Iskandar Munshī that he likewise conferred the title of brother on Khān ʿĀlam Dūlday – both men were of course intimates and supporters of his from his princely days.[838] A similar practice seems to have existed in Akbar's reign, as Rājpūt sources report him "adopting" Kishnāvati Bāī, daughter of Durjansāl Kachwāhā and giving her in marriage to Sūraj Singh of Jodhpur. This same Rānī was the mother of Gaj Singh and grandmother of Amar Singh and Jaswant Singh, further emphasising their proximity to the dynasty in comparison to other Rājpūts.[839] Shāh Jahān likewise honoured Āsaf Khān's during his lifetime with the title of uncle (*ʿamū*).[840] The Mughal practice of fosterage is on the other hand far better known than these other modes of kinship in aristocratic status culture.[841] It would appear though that it functioned in much the same way. Terms like *anege* and *aneke* refer to paternal and maternal substitutes, whereas *koka* is a derivation of the Chaghatāy *qöngül-dash,* i.e. heart's companion.[842] That it placed serious obligations on the dynasty itself vis-a-vis these *amīrs* is clear again from the example of Khusrau's rebellion, whereupon Mān Singh and Khān-i ʿAzam Koka both escaped any retribution unlike the unfortunate Muqīm, who was demoted by several degrees.

These forms of kinship represent very high status in the imperial court because they brought *amīrs* into unique proximity to the imperial family, notably including female dynasts. Manucci attests that Zūlfiqār Khān took his leave from Princess Jahānārā in person because he

[836] *Zakhīrat*, 3:34
[837] *Jahāngīrnāma*, 87
[838] *Maāsir* 1:736
[839] Saran and Ziegler, *The Meṛtiyo Rāṭhoṛs*, 51
[840] *Bādshāhnāma*, 1:114
[841] See for example Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 74-76; Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 188-194
[842] Le Coq, Türkische Namen und Titel," 2

was married to a (foster?) relative of the princess, and that further she gave the nobleman a costlier *pesh-kash* than she had given his father. Upon the latter's indignation, she replied that Zūlfiqār Khān was her relation by marriage, whereas he, Asad Khān was merely in the service of her family.[843] This remarkable assertion, given that Asad Khān married Mumtāz Mahal's sister, and his son the latter's niece by Shāyista Khān, suggests that Shāyista Khān's daughter was foster-sister to the princess and thus counted as a closer relation than a maternal aunt. There seems little reason to doubt this anecdote as it accords with what we know of the culture of the imperial court, down to the detail that the Princess received both men from behind a latticed window of her own residence with several eunuchs in attendance. The episode is further of interest in describing the physical means of communication between dynastic women and major noblemen.

[843] *Storia do Mogor*, 2:354

4.4: Conclusion

There are some final remarks and observations to be made about the status culture of the high nobility, particularly in reference to the scholarship cited in the introduction. From the data gathered it is clear that status, hitherto a relatively less considered aspect thereof, has an important bearing on the study of the Mughal ruling stratum. There was a constant and subtle interchange between power and status, between social mobility and the assertion or performance of status claims in the courtly context. This was always ultimately mediated by the imperial centre, i.e. the dynasty and its own ideological claims as the final point of reference, although within the courtly structure we see the persistence of older status identities, particularly lineage-based, that are not immediately evident from official and later sources. An elaborate matrix of claims and identities, ranging as we have seen from the ascriptive and irreversible to the achieved and changeable, worked together to confer and confirm the status of *amīrs* and thereby created a stable status group, howbeit one that initially seems to present an almost unworkable diversity. Despite varied origins and status (or other) identities, these *amīrs* achieved high rank and political power through three obvious routes, and once part of this group asserted their status by means of the same types of claims: hereditary and other connections to charismatic figures of history and legend, the acquisition of desirable qualities like wealth and learning, and the maintenance of various forms of personal honour. This further suggests that the status culture of this status group, which functioned as the "power élite" of the Mughal polity, was an important element in the creation of a common idiom of government and rule, and accounts for the relative conformity of *amīrs* after entry into *mansabdārī* service as seen in Chapter 2.

As we have seen, however, the interchange of power and status went both ways. Most kinds of status did not actually enjoy meaningful stability: they could and did change to reflect political and other realities. This goes even for theoretically ascriptive and irreversible status identities such as that based on lineage: the authenticity of *siyādat* could be questioned, but in the case of an Emperor like Bahādur Shāh I, *siyādat* could even be claimed and posthumously conferred on ancestors.[844] This went also for identities based on space and religious geography, such that from being Sayyids of Hirāt, the descendants of Qāsim Khān Namakīn came to be known as "Sindhī" because of the entombment of successive generations in that province.[845] Lineage and ancestry had to be commemorated by *amīrs* and acknowledged by the court to

[844] Khvāfī Khān, 1:592
[845] *Maāsir*, 1:303

retain both meaning and the ability to confer or enhance personal status. Irreversible and achieved forms of status based on performance, as we have seen, were also unstable and dependent on a continual re-enactment in the courtly context. The role of the monarch and imperial family seems to have been the confirmation or accommodation of these status identities in the language of the imperial ideology, and enabling or acknowledging their performance. It seems however, especially considering the persistence of kin-based status in a theoretically non-hereditary stratum, that social mobility outside the bounds of the established status culture was at best limited. The wider implications of this for the end of the political dispensation pursuant to the Deccan Wars are interesting. We can speculate whether the large-scale incorporation of culturally unfamiliar individuals of low social status (in the context of the North India-based Mughal high nobility) at high ranks destabilised the pre-existing status culture and engendered resentment and alienation in the *umarā* as well as fracture its cohesion as a united status group. This would have prefigured the early 18th century conflict of the *umarā-i qadīm* and the *umarā-i jadīd*, the old and new nobilities, examined in the next chapter.

Another consideration that leads us into the next chapter is the role of Islam, of religious cultures and religious identity in aristocratic status culture. Increasingly with the generations of the *umarā* it seems Islam was a high-status ascriptive identity, *especially* – and this is the key point – orthodox, orthopractic forms of Islam associated with territories and places like Mashhad, Bukhārā or Najaf, sanctified by saintly or prophetic associations. A great part of the status identities affirmed by groups in the *umarā* depended on linkages to Prophets, Imāms, saints and Sūfī orders, and those that did not were nonetheless often associated with dynasties and countries that were established parts of the historical Islamic ecumene. Nowhere is this as evident as the Īrānīs' resolute Shiism, which as we saw in the first chapter persisted across generations, rooted in the religious and status culture of the Safavid state, and the affirmation of various Transoxiana-based *amīrs* and *khvājas* of their connections to the dynasty and to the equally resolute Sunnī orthodoxy of the Naqshbandī *silsila*.[846]

This would at least partially account for the continued articulation of the *Īrānī-Tūrānī* binary in the late 17th century, leading us to consider the possibility that the intensification of discourses of religious orthodoxy and religious identity in that period represent the first stages of the shift and evolution of aristocratic status culture as it would develop in the first half of the 18th century largely independently of *mansabdārī* service. Finally, we increasingly see the

[846] Faruqui, "A Forgotten Prince," 507

lack of utility of older quasi-ethnic categorisations of the nobility into Īrānīs, Tūrānīs, Indian Muslims, Rajputs and other Hindus. These are limited designations that in no way capture the variety of status-claims and identities whereby an *amīr* identified himself, and certainly would not have been intelligible as such to the figures under consideration. It might well be argued that it is time these were abandoned.

Chapter 5: Commemorating the *Umarā*

5.1: The Mansabdār-Historians of the 18th Century

Preceding chapters looked at the nobility in terms of its origins, composition, functioning, and status culture within the political system that existed from Akbar's reign to shortly after the death of Aurangzeb. With this chapter, we arrive at the 18th century, which is the chronological lynchpin of this study in that this period saw both the political extinction of the high nobility, and the beginnings of its historical commemoration and representation as have been received by modern scholarship. This period saw the collapse of the Mughal military-bureaucratic apparatus and the *jāgīrdārī* system was well as the political insurgence of sub-élite groups at the centre and in regional courts, violently intensified intra-élite conflict, and political assertion by social groups previously marginalised in the dominant status culture. The *mansabdārī* stratum's experience of this period was one of displacement and, arguably, trauma as it saw an erosion of its political power and relevance. The structural break represented by the wars of succession and factional conflict (c. 1707-1724) saw the extinction of almost all the high nobility of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb, barring a very few kin-groups. Status was increasingly decoupled from imperial service. Surviving members of the Mughal nobility underwent a process in roughly three stages of demographic transformation, provincialisation into the successor courts and regional states, and territorialisation into regions like Awadh and the Deccan, preceding their complete disappearance as they amalgamated with the wider Indo-Muslim genteel class called the *ashrāf*. The historiographic response of élite authors to this experience, as received by the earliest generations of modern (i.e. colonial) historians, laid the foundations for what past chapters have argued is a distorted conceptual framework through which to view the Mughal *umarā*.

The focus of this chapter is a relatively small group of informed individuals of *mansabdārī* background from the late Mughal élite who in the face of these transformative developments sought to redefine and rewrite élite identities, and to formulate new discourses of status. These figures are united by two essential qualities in that they are both political actors as active members of the *mansabdārī* stratum, and litterateurs with ideological purposes in their historical writing. Through engaging with these figures and more broadly with the nature of textual commemoration in Mughal historiography, the chapter will examine the fortunes of the *mansabdārī* stratum in the 18th century and how these historians consciously sought to re-work élite identity, expand the ambit of the *mansabdārī* status-group, and respond to contemporary

challenges in the courtly milieus of the imperial successor-states. As such, we move increasingly away from courtly sources and political history to trace the emergence of the term "Mughal" as an internal category mobilised by members of this stratum, and the attendant reworking of élite identities by these authors in a progressively widening sphere of political and social concern mirroring the gradual dispersion of surviving *mansabdārs*.

We can refer to the texts produced as a new kind of political historiography, situating legitimacy and authority in the memory of the recent past, and seeking to articulate a new mode of élite identity. Many, notably the *Maāsir al-Umarā*, are *tazkiras* or biographical compendia. Mana Kia designates these "commemorative texts," their function the formation and preservation of social collectives through the commemoration of people and their lives.[847] Others such as Khvāfī Khān's are overt political histories in the *tārīkh* genre, and still others – such as the *Maāsir-i-ʿĀlamgīrī* or *Bahādurshāhnāma* of his recent predecessors Muhammad Sāqī and Niʿmat Khān ʿĀlī – are annalistic chronicles imitating the style of the official histories of Shāh Jahān's reign. They are however quite distinct from these earlier courtly histories: authorial purpose can be gleaned throughout these texts, which their claims to impartiality and rigour, and of approaching history as a science or craft, intentionally mask.

The primary authors we begin with are Khvāfī Khān and Shāh Navāz Khān, descendants of middle-ranking *mansabdārs* of the Khvāfī faction of the 18th century and authors of two "canonical" late Mughal histories: *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* and *Maāsir al-Umarā*. The third major author is Ghulām ʿAlī "Āzād" Bilgrāmī, close friend and associate of Shāh Navāz Khān and editor of the latter's work, as well as author of *Khizāna-i Āmira*, an important *tazkira* in its own right.[848] All these men had direct connections to *mansabdārī* service. Close relatives of each had served in mid-ranking political offices like *faujdār*, *dīvān* and *bakhshī* at the provincial level, and all of them operated in the environment of the successor courts, with concerns shared by élite literati of similar backgrounds. For this reason, the chapter omits examination of some works like Ghulām Husayn Khān Tabātabāī's well known *Siyar al-Mutaakhharīn*: the author's documented antecedents do not include imperial *mansabdārs*, and he addresses an audience demonstrably different from the *mansabdār*-historians.[849] The chapter aims to demonstrate, firstly, the longevity and success of the discourses and topoi

[847] Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), Chapter 7, esp. 163-166
[848] Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī, *Khizāna-i Āmirā* (Kanpur: Naval Kishor, 1871)
[849] A.S. Bazmee Ansary, "Sayyid Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Ṭabāṭabaʾi," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill: 2012), online edition

elaborated in this new historiography, and secondly, the material and political decline of surviving elements of the *mansabdārī* class, who by the end of the century were indistinguishable from the provincial Muslim gentry of cities like Aurangābād and Allāhābād. The chapter concludes by investigating the reception and further repurposing of these themes and topoi in the first generation of colonial historiography, which reveals an unexpected and lasting influence of the *mansabdār*-historians of the successor courts.

Before advancing further, it is worth considering relevant current scholarship of this period and these figures. Recent scholarship has moved away from the view of the late Mughal literati as hesitant heirs of a declining tradition, insecure in their command of the Persian language and the empire's Persianate heritage. Arthur Dudney's recent work on the prominent poet and philologist Sirāj al-Dīn Khān "Ārzū" showed that there was indeed an efflorescence of Persian scholarship in Delhi in the first half of the 18th century, and that Mughal litterateurs like Ārzū considered themselves possessors of Persian literature and masters of its critical tools.[850] Abhishek Kaicker has written on Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Jalīl, grandfather of none other than Āzād Bilgrāmī, in the context of the uses of literary production as a form of political participation in the early 18th century, a theme central to this chapter.[851] Most importantly, Kia's *Persianate Selves* investigates the production of 18th century narratives of affiliation, identity and origin across the Persianate world, and what she designates the "multiple constitution" of lineage and belonging in social collectives.[852] We will return to and examine her extensive discussion of the meaning and function of identities like "Persian" and "Mughal" among the authors of these texts. Of equal importance to this chapter are scholarly treatments of the Mughal successor states. Munis Faruqui and Karen Leonard have both discussed the establishment of Hyderabad state in the 18th century, Leonard in particular discussing the redistribution of power that brought about a new political consensus from the first Nizam's death to the 1760s – i.e., the very period in which Shāh Navāz Khān's political career was at its apex.[853] Kumkum Chatterjee elaborates the recasting of the *mansabdārī* political tradition and historiographical production of the literati of the Murshidābād court in Bengal.[854] Finally,

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[850] Arthur Dudney, "Metaphorical Language as a Battleground for Tradition and Newness in late Mughal Persian," *International Journal of Persian Literature* 2 no. 1 (2017): 141, 153; Arthur Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022)

[851] Abhishek Kaicker, "The Promises and Perils of Courtly Poetry," *JESHO* 61 no. 3 (2018): 327-360

[852] Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves*, Chapters 5 & 6

[853] Karen Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System and its Participants," *TJAS* 30 no. 3 (1971): 569-582; Faruqui, "At Empire's End," *passim*

[854] Chatterjee, "History as Self-Representation," *passim*

Juan Cole's book on the emergence of a Shīʿī clerisy in Awadh comprehensively covers the establishment and early history of the Mughal successor state based in Lucknow and Faizābād.[855]

A chronological approach will show itself to be the most effective as the chapter elaborates the political context and circumstances of these authors and of the production of these texts. This will take us from the ongoing period of civil strife 1712-1724, which saw internecine conflict between aristocratic factions, through the period of Muhammad Shāh's (r. 1720-1748) reign after 1724, defined by large-scale conflict between legacy *amīrs* and *mansabdārs* from newly ascendant, territorially rooted groups to the period after the invasion of Nādir Shāh (1739) and the death of Muhammad Shāh (1748), wherein the successor courts increasingly came into their own as political and cultural alternatives to a Delhi court declining in prestige, especially in Hyderabad, Lucknow and Murshidābād. This period saw the final displacement of the *mansabdārī* stratum by a variety of new social groups, and their gradual absorption into a broader Indo-Islamic social élite that had come to be delinked from imperial service. To this end, we begin by examining the inter-connected phenomena of the demise of aristocratic factionalism and the emergence of a "new nobility" (*umarā-i jadīd*) in the context of material contraction, especially as it manifested in the position of the vizierate in Muhammad Shāh's reign and the so-called shoe-sellers' riot of 1729.

The first and most important change in this period, which has been insufficiently examined by historians and which cannot be sufficiently emphasised, is the sheer violence of the civil wars after Aurangzeb's death from the aristocratic perspective, such that the decade from 1710 marks perhaps the single greatest demographic disruption in the nobility's history. Most scions of the Banī Mukhtār and Iʿtimād ad-Daula families were killed in 1707. Surviving members of the Īrānī faction, including the Qarāmānlūs and the descendants of ʿAlī Mardān Khān were purged after Zūlfiqār Khān's death in 1713, as we saw in the first chapter. Vāzih, writing in political disgrace and obscurity the following year, wrote that in the span of a single year (*muddat-i yak sāl*) he had seen "such wars between kingdoms, so many deaths of princes, and the annihilation of old families (*khāndān-hā-yi qadīm*) and illustrious and ancient houses (*dūdmān-hā-yi kuhan*)…that of this kind have not been seen in a thousand years."[856]

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[855] Juan R. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh 1722-1859* (University of California Press: 1988), Chapter 2

[856] Irādat Khān, f. 2

Succeeding years saw the intensification of increasingly habitual violence and retaliation with concomitant destructive effects on surviving members of the nobility. Upon Farrukh-Siyar's deposition in 1719, most of his senior *amīrs* and retainers including Sādāt Khān Marʿashī his father-in-law, Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān Ghālib Jang the deputy *bakhshī*, Iʿtiqād Khān and Saifullāh Khān were pursued into Chandni Chowk and indiscriminately massacred by the Sayyid Brothers' supporters.[857] The latter met a similar fate within a year: Husain ʿAlī Khān Bārha was suddenly assassinated along with several of his kinsmen in 1720, and his brother ʿAbdullāh Khān was defeated in battle at the start of 1721, taken prisoner and given poison, most of their relatives being imprisoned or despoiled and driven into exile.[858] The treacherous murder of ʿAbdullāh Khān, after Muhammad Shāh's solemn vow of clemency as recorded by Khvāfī Khān within a few years of the event, shows the degree to which retaliatory violence had become normalised, in stark contrast to the preceding century. These are only a few illustrative examples – it is enough to point out that by the middle of Muhammad Shāh's reign, there seem to be only *three* major noblemen at court directly descended from Aurangzeb's high nobility: Amīr Khān Mīr Mīrān II, Sādāt Khān Marʿashī II, and Qamar al-Dīn Khān of the Nizām's family. This violence was in part a boiling over of tensions that had been brewing since the intense factional competition in the final decades of Aurangzeb's reign. We shall return to the significance of this.

From 1712 onwards, centrifugal forces were in the ascendant in all corners of the empire. The largest and wealthiest provinces of the empire, including Bengal, the Deccan, Awadh and the Punjab, saw the increasing entrenchment of *zamīndārī* and other local interests and the solidification of permanent provincial administrations.[859] The widespread institutionalisation of *ijāra* or tax-farms, maintained by local and corporate sub-élites, saw the effective disappearance of the institution of the *jāgīr*, thus eliminating one of the most fundamental material foundations of the social and political system of the 17th century.[860] All this signified, from our perspective, a contraction in the resources available to the imperial court and a consequent disappearance of the material basis for *mansabdārī* factionalism. Unlike in its 17th century heyday, the system could no longer accommodate and retain vanquished

[857] *Tazkirat as-Salātīn-i Chaghtā*, 252
[858] Khvāfī Khān, 2:941,
[859] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, 201 & *passim*
[860] The prevalence of *ijāra* in the 18th century is well-documented, although its economic significance is hotly debated; cf. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* 458-463, Shireen Moosvi, "The Pre-Colonial State," *Social Scientist* nos. 3 & 4 (2005): 44, André Wink, "Maratha Revenue Farming," *MAS* 17 no. 4 (1983): 595-607

amīrs, such that these either disappeared into obscurity or dwindled into becoming local *zamīndārs* in various provinces, as we shall see. Thus, the Īrānī hegemony of 1712-1713 was overthrown by a coalition of Tūrānī and Hindūstānī *mansabdārs*, as the dispensation of the Sayyid brothers and their Rajput allies was ousted by the Tūrānīs in 1719-1721, and the Tūrānīs themselves retreated from the front stage of power with Nizām al-Mulk's withdrawal to the Deccan in 1724, in waves of violence accompanied by the economic and material disintegration previously outlined.[861] The system of long-term aristocratic factional competition based on networks of patronage and kinship mediated by the monarch through the allocation of revenues and offices had evolved into a new kind of politics characterised by short-lived coalitions of expedience, rapidly changing loyalties and enfeebled central authority, patterns which were reinforced in succeeding reigns.

This chapter has emphasised that along with the old imperial system, the old nobility largely ceased to exist in demographic terms at this period. What then of the new nobility, the *umarā-yi jadīd*? Although this was indisputably a period in which new social groups came to the fore, there is a lack of clarity concerning their composition. In the writing of Vāzih's memoirs – to which we shall return – Abhishek Kaicker sees the "emergence" of a hereditary nobility in opposition to waves of "new men" from the provinces entering the *mansabdārī* system through princely retinues and elsewhere characterises this as a period of challenge to "the legitimacy of the political order upheld by the king and his nobility."[862] Muzaffar Alam goes so far as to allege a "radical social mobility" as typified by the incident of the vegetable-seller Zuhra, favourite of Jahāndār Shāh's consort Lāl Kunwar, publicly insulting Nizām al-Mulk Āsaf Jāh's father. He suggests that her confidence reflected a new order of power brokered "not only in the royal court but also in the marketplace as new social groups rose and competed with the old established nobility."[863] Yet we need also to remember subsequent events: according to Siyar al-Mutaakhkharīn, the Nizām's retainers "fell upon Zuhra's retinue, and after having handled them severely, they dragged Zuhra herself from her elephant to the ground, and gave her several cuffs and kicks."[864] When Jahāndār Shāh considered punishing the Nizām at his consort's entreaties, Zūlfiqār Khān replied that "to punish the Nizām for having corrected an insolent upstart would enrage all the nobility, who would consider the

[861] The most comprehensive outline of the court's political history to 1739 remains William Irvine's *Later Mughals.*
[862] Kaicker, *The King and the People,* 192 & 282
[863] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, xx
[864] Ghulām Husayn Tabatabāī, *The Siyer al-Mutakherin*, tr. John Briggs (Oriental Translation Fund: 1832), 48-9

honour of the order as hurt by any affront to the nizam." Zuhra, Lāl Kūnvar and their associates were not participants in the *mansabdārī* stratum. As will be seen, the two cohorts whose conflict increasingly defined the politics of this period were an old nobility (*umarā-i qadīm*) comprising nobles directly linked to families and networks of the high nobility of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb, against a new nobility drawn from major territorially rooted *zamīndārī* networks of the provinces.

This was a case of intra-élite rather than élite versus subaltern or élite versus sub-élite political conflict. The group of *amīrs* around the Sayyid brothers, the most successful of the new nobility in that they alone managed to secure the vizierate, was itself of recent provenance, being the product of efforts by Bahādur Shāh to recruit and promote *mansabdārs* of Hindūstānī Muslim *zamīndārī* background, most of whose antecedents lay at a fairly low level of the *mansabdārī* cohorts of previous reigns, as a counterweight to existing factions. Sayyid Miyān, the father of the Sayyid brothers, rose no further than the rank of 1,000 zāt and the minor *faujdārī* of Nandeḍ before dying in 1690.[865] While Aurangzeb lived none of the former's sons occupied any office higher than a *faujdārī* or gained particularly high *mansabs*. It was only in 1708 that Hasan ʿAlī Khān Bārha received his title of ʿAbdullāh Khān and the rank of 4,000 from Bahādur Shāh, under whom he later served as Governor of Allāhābād.[866] Niʿmat Khān ʿĀlī mentions that at the same time a number of people were given their first mansabs, whose names reveal them to be of Hindūstānī, ie provincial Indian Muslim, origin, such as Ghulām Muʿīn al-Dīn and Ghulām Qutb al-Dīn Qannaujī.[867] Others of Bahādur Shāh's favourites include another Hindūstānī duo of comparatively undistinguished background, Ghulām Mustafá and his son ʿAlī Asghar, who received the titles Kārtalab Khān and Khān Zamān Mewātī and successive promotions to high rank from the first coronation at Lahore in 1707 to the very final year of the reign. [868] Knowing this, the accusations of profligacy and excessive generosity levelled by Vāzih, Shāh Navāz Khān and Khvāfī Khān take on a markedly different light as the resentment of *mansabdārs* of established background against the promotion of parvenus to ranks where both groups were in competition for the same offices and resources.

The overthrow of the Sayyid brothers and the purge of their adherents saw the Tūrānīs finally coming briefly to power under the vizierates of Muhammad Amīn Khān (1720-1722)

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[865] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:80
[866] *Bahādurshāhnāma*, f. 135a
[867] Ibid.
[868] Kāmvar Khān, 9, 40, 117

and Nizām al-Mulk (1722-24). The latter's retreat to the Deccan and establishment of an autonomous principality there is seen by both Chandra and Faruqui as the end of the 1713-1724 factional struggle, wherein the Īrānīs, Sayyids and Tūrānīs had successively sought to make the position of *Vazīr* the principal object of a new political struggle, an effort which Nizām al-Mulk's withdrawal demonstrates to have been a failure.[869] However, this thesis has sought to here demonstrate on a wider level that factional operation had effectively failed entirely. We no longer observe stable political formations comparable to the aristocratic faction of the 17th century. This was the result of a variety of factors, including the vacuum caused by the disappearance of the Īrānīs – no other group was large and internally cohesive enough to fill this. The neo-Tūrānī faction, as we have seen, had always been small and centred around the Nizām's family, and proved as unequal as the family of the Sayyids to establishing a comparable political hegemony. Even more importantly, the balance of power having tilted decisively from the Emperor to the *amīrs*, the imperial centre was no longer able to mediate relations between aristocratic networks or raise new factions almost out of nothing, as Aurangzeb had the Khvāfīs and Tūrānīs. Thus, losers in these factional struggles tended either to fade into obscurity or to retreat to a pre-existing territorial basis of power, as for example the Afghans and Rajputs seem to have done from the mid-1710s. A representative example is the Afghan ʿAzīz Khān Chaghtā, who seems to have negotiated his own exit from court politics by amassing rights to as many *jāgīrs* as possible in the environs of his own clan's territories in Rohilkhand.[870] This phenomenon led to the increasing territorialisation of surviving *mansabdārī* lineages in imperial provinces comparatively freer of external pressures, like Awadh and the Deccan.

A major event of Muhammad Shāh's reign, the shoe-sellers' riot of 1729, demonstrates this new political style, viz., short-term alliances and informal networks without a sustained basis in patronage or kinship replacing the faction, and an overall pattern of conflict between the *khānazād* nobles and the new nobility. In the shoe-sellers' riot, several Muslim shoe-sellers rose up and assaulted a number of senior *amīrs* in the Jāma' Masjid, supported by Arab and Abyssinian artillerymen, in response to the murder of one of their number by a Hindu jeweller with courtly connections. Abhishek Kaicker sees in these events varied criticism of the nobility both from the public and from dissatisfied members of the élite constituting "a direct challenge

[869] Chandra, *Parties and Politics*, 168-177; Faruqui, "At Empire's End," 17-18
[870] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, 67, 99, 128 & 234; cf. Kāmvar Khān, 222 & 234 on his brief *sūbadārī* of Awadh.

to the legitimacy of the political order upheld by the king and his nobility.[871] Alam likewise sees an assertion of the marketplace over the court wherein "a slew of lower-class characters…made their demands and aspirations loudly and violently known."[872] However, there is also a strong case for Najaf Haidar's reading of the event in seeing it driven by the personal rivalry of the vizier, Qamar al-Dīn Khān, and the *bakhshī*, Raushan ad-Daula, as is suggested by contemporary sources.[873]

It is worth going a little further into the sequence of events. The nobleman Sher Afgan Khān had given refuge to the jeweller, with the support of Raushan ad-Daula, whereupon the shoe-sellers went clamouring to the court for justice. Muhammad Shāh deputed Qamar al-Dīn Khān to resolve the matter. The vizier demanded the jeweller's handover, which Sher Afgan Khān refused.[874] The next day, as the shoe-sellers' mob began verbally abusing Sher Afgan Khān and Raushan ad-Daula during the Friday prayers, the vizier arrived with his retainers and urged them on with inflammatory rhetoric, demanding justice for "the oppressed martyr" (*shahīd-i mazlūm*) killed by "a wicked infidel" (*kāfir-i zālim*).[875] At this, his own retainers along with Rūmī Khān and Sayyid ʿArab ʿAlī Khān's artillerymen joined the shoe-sellers' mob and assaulted Sher Afgan Khān and his Afghan retinue. Sher Afgan Khān and Raushan ad-Daula were both injured and had to be rushed to safety, while the mob demolished the Hindu jeweller's house and acclaimed Qamar al-Dīn Khān as the victor and protector of Islam.

Kaicker dismisses allegations of court intrigue lying behind the event as a "conspiracy theory." Haidar however points out that the riot would not have gone the shoe-sellers' way without the intervention of the vizier's retainers and the artillerymen as well as the vizier's own tacit support. This can be taken further: who were the major *amīrs* involved in this? Sher Afgan Khān, the *amīr* who sheltered the Hindu jeweller, was from a family of *zamīndārs* from Panipat who had first entered imperial service in Bahādur Shāh's reign, and his brother, Lutfullāh Khān Sādiq, was then *Khān Sāmān*.[876] Raushan ad-Daula, who along with Sher Afgan Khān, was the primary victim of the riot's violence, was from a Khvājazāda family associated with the

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[871] Abhishek Kaicker, *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 282
[872] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, xxiii
[873] Najaf Haidar. "Violence and Defiance of Authority in Mughal India: A Study of the Shoe Sellers' Riot of Delhi," *Studies in History* 36 no. 2 (2020): 171, 174
[874] Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, lvii
[875] Haidar, "Violence and Defiance of Authority," 169
[876] *Maāsir*, 3:177-8

Naqshbandī order, and his ancestors had held minor *mansabs* since the mid-17th century.[877] Khān Daurān, the *bakhshī* and favourite of Muhammad Shāh, was from a *Khvājazāda* family of Agra and had received a *mansab* in Farrukh-Siyar's reign – the contemporary Vāla Dāghistānī reports his grandfather had lived in poverty, and he owed all his wealth and rank to Muhammad Shāh's favour.[878] On the other hand, Qamar al-Dīn Khān was the only minister of Muhammad Shāh's *not* of recent pedigree given that his family had belonged to the high *umarā* of Aurangzeb for three generations. Finally, who was the elusive Rūmī Khān whose troops swung the tide of battle in the shoe-sellers' favour? A Rūmī Khān appears alongside Yahyá Khān Rūmī in the *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* in 1672. The same Yahyá Khān was Yahyá Āqā, brother-in-law of Islām Khān Rūmī of Basra, our old acquaintance of Chapter 2, who had arrived in India the previous year and received a *mansab*.[879] Rūmī Khān was thus very likely the title of a younger son or nephew of Islām Khān. We see then two *amīrs* descended by blood from high-ranking *amīrs* of Aurangzeb's reign – Qamar al-Dīn Khān and Rūmī Khān – conspiring to humiliate and possibly have murdered Sher Afgan Khān and Raushan ad-Daula, two *amīrs* (like the then *Bakhshī* and *Khān Sāmān*) whose high *mansabs* were of very recent provenance and belonged to major territorial *zamīndārī* rather than courtly *khānazād* lineages.

My final point in support of this model of understanding *mansabdārī* behaviour in this period is the situation of the vizierate: its lustre was only further enhanced by its having become the primary seat of the major kingmakers and *de facto* regents of the empire since Bahādur Shāh's death, viz., Zūlfiqār Khān, ʿAbdullāh Khān Bārha, Muhammad Amīn Khān Tūrānī and Nizām al-Mulk. It seems to have become virtually hereditary in the Nizām's family, going first to Muhammad Amīn Khān's son Qamar al-Dīn Khān till his death in 1748, and then to his and the Nizām's grandson, ʿImād al-Mulk, until 1760.[880] Jadunath Sarkar sees a continuation of Īrānī and Tūrānī factional conflict herein, pointing to the only other candidates for office being the Īrānīs noblemen Amīr Khān II in 1739 and Safdar Jang of Awadh in 1748. He further alleges these factions were now headed by Saʿādat Khān and Qamar al-Dīn Khān respectively.[881] However, it is not clear that this is the case – the Īrānī faction was politically extinct, as demonstrated, and the Lucknow Navābs, although Shīʿī Sayyid emigrants from

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877 Ibid., 2:333

878 Ibid., 1:820-22; ʿAlī Qulī b. Muhammad ʿAlī Khān Vāla Dāghistānī, *Tazkira-i Riyāz al-Shuʿarā*, ed. Muhsin Nājī Nasrābādī (Asātīr: 2005), 2:785

879 *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 110 & 116; Farooqi, "Mughal-Ottoman Relations," 109

880 *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 50

881 Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, (M.C. Sarkar & Sons: 1932-1950), 1:8-9

Nīshāpūr, have no documented connection to Īrānī circles or the Safavid dynasty. Furthermore, Sarkar erroneously reports a conversation wherein Muhammad Shāh decides not to replace Qamar al-Dīn Khān with Amīr Khān "in order not to antagonise the Tūrānī nobles."[882] The exact context is this: an advisor, asked about the expedience of the measure, replies:

> "Although Amīr Khān is an *amīr*, the son of an *amīr*, and a valorous and skilful man, the high and low of Hindustan know the pettiness of his manners and dealings (*auzāʿ va atvār*). I and others who have entered royal service through his introduction (*tavassul*)…are, in the eyes of the Rajas of India and other notables and supports [of the state] arrived at this rank only yesterday, whereas Āsaf Jāh and [Qamar al-Dīn Khān] are regarded by all the powerful (*aqviyā*) with a hopeful gaze, and consider their obedience [to the state] the foundation of all their own desires and wishes."[883]

There is no mention of Īrānīs or Tūrānīs anywhere. The key quality *uniting* Āsaf Jāh, Qamar al-Dīn Khān and Amīr Khān is that they are "*amīrs* and sons of *amīrs*" (*al-amīr ibn al-amīr*), i.e., *khānazād* nobles descended directly from the high nobility of Aurangzeb and his predecessors, and thus widely recognised as entitled to the kind of political pre-eminence conferred by the vizierate even in these later days of the new nobility. From this emerged the emphasis on the antiquity of nobility, the heredity of service (*khānazādagī*), and contempt for the new nobility (*umarā-i jadīd*) as central elements of the new historiography, in order to situate its authors alongside such survivors of the old nobility in claiming social prestige and a legitimate right to political authority denied to the new nobility they competed with.

These were the circumstances of the composition of Vāzih's memoirs and Khvāfī Khān's *Muntakhab al-Lubāb*. Both were linked to erstwhile factions of the high nobility, the Īrānīs and the Khvāfīs respectively. There is unfortunately little information about Vāzih's activities after the downfall of the Īrānīs – he died in 1716 – but from what we can see descendants of families associated with these factions maintained some measure of personal and affective ties, as well as a group solidarity against the *umarā-i jadīd*. We have seen that the Īrānīs and Tūrānīs felt united against the new nobility of Bahādur Shāh's time. Comparable links can be seen in the personal relationships of various *khānazād* descendants: the Afghan Mutahauvur Khān Khveshgī, nephew of Bahādur Shāh's consort, was a close friend of Shāh

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[882] Ibid., 1:20
[883] *Siyar al-Mutaakhkharīn*, 100

Navāz Khān, a Khvāfī, and married into the Īrānī family of the Marʿashī Sayyids.[884] Similarly, we know Khvāfī Khān and Shāh Navāz Khān, in the latter's words, were united in "perfect friendship (*mahabbat-i tamām*), all the more interesting in that it exemplifies the maintenance trans-regional links in *mansabdārī* circles, given the former lived in Delhi to his death about 1730, while Shāh Navāz Khān moved between Lahore and Aurangābād.[885] Their common factional affiliation is further seen in Khvāfī Khān's laudatory account of Shāh Navāz Khān's great-grandfather Amānat Khān Khvāfī, Aurangzeb's *dīvān* of the Deccan.[886] Both authors attribute his dismissal from office to the slander of envious eunuchs. Rather amusingly, Sāqī Mustaʿadd Khān – who says he knew him personally – provides a vastly different account, describing him as the incompetent and corrupt dupe of the flattery of "riff-raff and servants" (*ajlāf-u-atbāʿ*), during whose administration "his degenerate sons, bloodsucking family friends and cunning fakirs (*pisarān-i nā-khalaf, āshnāyān-i maurūsī-yi sarāpā-talaf, va faqīrān-i chālāk-dast*)…devoured the revenues and landed him in prison."[887] Evidently, filial piety and class solidarity ensured the discretion of the two Khvāfī historians with regard to Amānat Khān's poor judgment.

The next stage of socio-political development saw the elision of the distinction between *khānazād* and non-*khānazād mansabdārs* as the entire stratum began to experience considerable pressure from yet more ascendant social groups, especially in the context of the successor courts. From being intra-élite, conflict and competition began to occur between the old élite and various sub-élite groups. In this context, it is worth examining the new centres of *mansabdārī* power and activity as exemplified by the *mansabdārī* successor-courts. Chris Bayly, who has developed the most comprehensive typology of 18th century polities in India, refers to these as Mughal "satrapies," representing a shift of power from the centre to the local agents of the empire.[888] They were the courts of Murshidābād under Murshid Qulī Khān and his successors, of Hyderabad and Aurangābād under the Āsaf Jāhī dynasty and of Lucknow-Faizābād under the Nīshāpūrī lineage of Nawābs. As Athar Ali points out, the various emergent 18th century polities were sharply divided between those which were "fragments of the empire" that had to stand upon their own feet as the central government atrophied, and others. These other polities (i.e. those of the Marathas, Jats, Afghans and so forth), although products of the

[884] *Maāsir*, 3:795
[885] Ibid., 3:680
[886] Khvāfī Khān, 1:376-378
[887] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 403
[888] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 25-6

crisis of empire, pursued a mode of government antithetical to that of the empire.[889] Bayly further affirms that the imperial court of Delhi itself took on the features of a *mansabdārī* successor court by the 1760s.[890] It arguably begins to display these features as early as the final decade of Muhammad Shāh's reign.

The remoteness of this milieu from the imperial court even of Farrukh-Siyar or Bahādur Shāh is seen in the influence and presence of local interest groups and sub-élites like large merchants and *zamīndārs*, and the brief histories of service of most military-bureaucratic (i.e. *mansabdārī*) figures. In Bayly's terms, most major actors in the successor courts "may have echoed the high officials of Mughal times but their social origins would not have graced the court of Aurangzeb."[891] At the Delhi court, the increasing paucity of resources saw a rapid demographic attrition as legacy *mansabdārs* drifted away to the various successor courts from about the 1730s onward – Āzād Bilgrāmī, for example, permanently left Delhi in 1738. In Murshidābād, *jāgīrdārī* had been abolished altogether as early as 1707 so that only the Nawābs themselves belonged to the old *mansabdārī* class: all others in the state were local zamīndārs by origin.[892] Mārwāṛī financiers like the well-known Jagat Seṭh family were also politically prominent in Murshidābād.[893] In Awadh, the Nīshāpūr Navābs initially established themselves by relying on imperial troops. Shortly thereafter, seeking to establish themselves in eastern Awadh, they dispossessed older landholders (especially Sunnīs and Afghans), preferring to co-opt Awadh Rajput and Shaikhzāda *zamīndārs* into what Juan Cole calls a "distinctly Shīʿī-tinged" power-sharing coalition, but again one that primarily reflected social groups with local rather than imperial interests.[894] Hyderabad is a particularly interesting case, which is worth expanding on: Leonard characterises its development in the 18th century as one from a system wherein princely and noble power depended on military and diplomatic success, to one where power was diffused between large networks of patronage and political relationships with a

[889] M. Athar Ali, "The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case," *MAS* 9 no. 3 (1975): 391
[890] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 26
[891] Ibid., 165
[892] Chatterjee, "History as Self-Representation," 918
[893] Karen Leonard, "The 'Great-Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21 no. 2 (1979): 156, 158 & 161; Atis Dasgupta & Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarti, "The Growth of Calcutta: A Profile of Social Dislocations in the Early Colonial Period," *Social Scientist* 20 nos. 3 & 4 (1990), 41
[894] Cole, "Roots of North Indian Shiʿism," 47

variety of actors such as financial élites, local *zamīndārs*, mercenaries and revenue-farmers of varied origins.[895]

The survivors of the *mansabdārī* class in these courts, men like Shāh Navāz Khān, Āzād Bilgrāmī, and others of these circles such as Mutahauvur Khān Khveshgī and Ghulām Husayn Tabātabāī, were embattled remnants of a now increasingly obsolete ruling stratum displaced by insurgent social groups. Non-*khānazād mansabdārs* of the kind prominent in the first half of the century had belonged to *zamīndārī* families steeped in Persianate high culture who had maintained links to major imperial cities in the provinces and held minor *mansabs* for generation. They sought to uphold the imperial system and were eager participants in its courtly society and culture. The archetypal such *mansabdār* of provincial background is Mīr Ghulām ʿAlī "Āzād" (1704-1786), who grew up at his family's home in Bilgrām in Awadh before travelling to Delhi to live with his maternal grandfather, a minor *mansabdār* since Aurangzeb's reign, in 1721. He served as deputy to his maternal uncle, the governor of Sehwan in Sindh and later Multān, from 1729-1734. Around this time he made the acquaintance of the Iranian literary figures, Vāla Dāghistānī and Hazīn Lāhījī – marking the beginning of his association with poetic and literary circles – before moving to Allāhābād where his father then lived in 1735.[896] Given Hazīn's long stay in Sindh, it is probably in his own uncle's service there that Āzād encountered the poet.[897] Upon returning from his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1739, he settled down in the Deccan, where he would remain the rest of his life, gathering around him a large circle of students, including well-known figures such as Shafīq Aurangābādī, ʿAbd al-Vahhāb "Iftikhār," and ʿAbd al-Valī "ʿUzlat." A prolific author, he composed four *tazkiras*, of which the most important for our purposes is *Khizāna-i Āmira*, composed in 1761 and encompassing many contemporary political events and personalities, culminating in Battle of Panipat. His career trajectory to the mid-1730s is that of an aspirational *mansabdār* who, given some family connections at court, could still expect a reasonably successful and rewarding career in the early years of Muhammad Shāh. Clearly this did not remain the case by the time he reached middle age – he moved to the Deccan the same year that Nādir Shāh's invasion devastated Delhi, and at a time when his relations were among the "old and new families" whose property

[895] Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System," 575-6
[896] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 124
[897] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels,* 234

and land grants were being expropriated by the Navābs, as he bitterly complains in another *tazkira*.[898]

The Deccan courts in the 1740s and 1750s were really the last place where the *mansabdārī* stratum still packed a punch. It is unsurprising that a close friendship grew up between Shāh Navāz Khān and Āzād, who preserved the former's *Maāsir al-Umarā* from destruction after his untimely death. Shāh Navāz Khān's family, *dīvāns* of the Deccan provinces since the mid-17th century, were quintessentially *mansabdārī* and had documented connections to the Khvāfī faction of Aurangzeb's *umarā*. He became *dīvān* of the household of the Nizām's son Nāsir Jang, and in the latter's regency over Hyderabad he was effectively first minister of the Deccan and Berar (1737-1740).[899] Āsaf Jāh returned to the Deccan from Delhi in 1740 and, finding his son refractory, defeated him in 1741 and dismissed Shāh Navāz Khān from all his offices as an accessory to the son's rebellion. It must have been around the same time that Shāh Navāz Khān met Āzād, who had settled in Aurangābād, Shāh Navāz Khān's ancestral home and the then capital of the Nizām's dominion, around 1739-40.[900] As we know, he compiled the *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* in the 1740s until the sudden resumption of his political career in 1748, when Nāsir Jang succeeded his father. Shāh Navāz Khān's political career demonstrates the continued ability of surviving *mansabdārs* to decisively alter the course of politics. Initially restored as first minister of the Deccan from 1748 to his patron's death in 1750, he resumed the office in 1753 under Salābat Jang. His administration clashed violently with the Nizam's French advisor, Charles Patissier de Bussy, who finally colluded with the governor of Masulipatnam to bring about the Shāh Navāz Khān's downfall and assassination in 1758.[901]

The period of Shāh Navāz Khān's political career and literary output (c. 1737-1758) is coterminous with the period of transition of the successor courts discussed by both Bayly and Leonard. The first Nizām's highest officers and administrators had all been military commanders of *mansabdārī* background, predominantly Muslims and Rajputs who had come to the Deccan from North India and received their titles directly form the Mughal Emperors,

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[898] Ghulām ʿAlī Āzād Bilgrāmī, *Maāsir al-Kiram*, ed. Shaykh Shams al-Haqq (Maktab Ihyā ʿUlūm al-Sharqiya, 1971), 213-214
[899] Ibid., 1:15
[900] Jamal Melik, "Azad Bilgrami," *Brill Encyclopedia of Islam* 3 (2013)
[901] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:26

much like Shāh Navāz Khān's own ancestors.[902] The violent succession dispute between the Nizām's various sons 1748-1762 marked the gradual collapse of this old order, and with Nizām ʿAlī Khān's reign from the 1760s onwards marking the emergence of a new and distinctively nobility tied to the Nizām's court in the new capital of Hyderabad. Although some of these had been recruited from Mughal service, others were Maratha chieftains, local *zamīndārs* and revenue-farmers (*taʿalluqdār*), rich bankers from castes like the Mārwāṛīs and Jains, or representatives of genteel Shīʿī families like the Sālār Jang who had been prominent in the Deccan since the Golconda Sultanate: in other words, what Leonard describes as "a new nobility, built up within a framework of the new political system in the Deccan."[903] It goes without saying that most of these groups did not feel any attachment or investment in the Mughal court's legacy, unlike *mansabdārī* lineages, howbeit of minor rank, such as the Bilgrām and Bārha Sayyids or the Shaikhzādas of Pānipat.

This social process parallels state formation in the successor courts of Lucknow-Faizābād and Murshidābād. In the face of these new nobles, men like Shāh Navāz Khān and his kinsmen represented the last gasp of the old *mansabdārī* order, affirming the regulations and rules laid down by Aurangzeb and staunchly resisting the intrusion of the Deccani and other interlopers into the affairs of the successor courts by attacking the basis of their power, "evil innovations" like revenue-farming, permanent *jāgīrs* allotted to local *zamīndārs,* or even the influence of newcomers like the French East India company. It is in this context that we must understand that what Bilgrāmī describes as Shāh Navāz Khān's "restoration of order and punishment of refractory *mansabdārs*" were in fact attempts to maintain the top-heavy structure of Mughal provincial government in the Deccan, despite the weakness of the successor states and the increasing influence of local groups.[904] Interestingly, Shāh Navāz Khān writes with great approbation of the stringent measures of Aurangzeb's *dīvān-i tan* Mūsavī Khān (who perhaps not coincidentally was succeeded in office by Shāh Navāz Khān's own uncle), which had been so hated by the Deccani *zamīndārs*, and lamented that "in these days (i.e. the 1740s) all regulations are ignored and have become obsolete."[905]

As a political undertaking, the efforts of the *mansabdārs* in the Deccan were a complete failure, embodied by the loss of power by these *mansabdārī* survivors in the late 18th century.

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[902] Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System," 580
[903] Ibid., 582
[904] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:18
[905] Ibid., 2:325

None of the *vazīrs* or *dīvāns* of the successor courts after Shāh Navāz Khān's murder in 1758 would belong to the old *mansabdārī* stratum. The high nobility of the 17th century typically possessed no homeland in Mughal domains but the imperial court itself: their genealogical associations were with cities, territories and peoples of Central and West Asia. In an odd reversal, *mansabdārī* and *khānazād* lineages experienced a progressive territorialisation and provincialisation as their links to other imperial centres frayed and the Delhi court itself became one, relatively impoverished, urban centre among many. As Bayly has observed, although distributed between many of these centres, Mughal nobles and literati continued to marry into one another's families, maintained connections, and venerated the symbols of their shared heritage.[906] It is in this window between the decline of the imperial centre and their final absorption into the *zamīndārī* stratum that our authors wrote. Shāh Navāz Khān's family had been established in the Deccan since the end of Aurangzeb's reign – by the mid-18th century we are told they were identified specifically with the *qasbah* of Qutbpurā in Aurangābād.[907] Similarly, Āzād's family were by the early 18th century permanently settled in Allāhābād, having been uprooted from their ancestral home by the expropriations of the Lucknow Navābs.[908] He himself, thanks to his residence in Aurangābād, came to be identified culturally with the Deccan by contemporary literary figures.[909] These provincial capitals had served as urban centres in miniature to the minor Muslim service gentry, *zamīndār* families who staffed the lower levels of the military-bureaucratic administration in its heyday. They now became *zamīndārs* in possession of revenue rights in specific *parganas* and provinces associated with these cities.[910] This represents the final disappearance of the *mansabdārī* stratum as a distinct group: the high nobility was either extinct or transformed into territorial potentates like the Nizams, whereas survivors of the middling *mansabdārī* ranks had descended to the level of provincial gentlemen devoid of any unique social or political capital in the successor courts (much less other polities of late 18th century India).

The curious fact about the literary-historiographical activities of these men, valiant defenders of a dying class, was the astonishing success of their project in cultural terms. As will now be suggested, they were remarkably successful in completely re-shaping the historiography and image of the imperial nobility at its height to suit their own ends. It is this

[906] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, 40
[907] *Maāsir*, 3:107
[908] Bilgrāmī, *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 124
[909] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 464-67
[910] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 46

reformulation of élite identities in these texts that we shall examine in the second section of this chapter.

5.2: History, Identity, & Ethnography in Late Mughal Historiography

This section investigates the essentially commemorative historical texts produced by the *mansabdār*-historians in the political context elaborated by the preceding section, specifically the development of new themes and motifs, as well as the reworking of familiar topoi of aristocratic status culture. These re-conceptualisations span three generations of historian. The first comprised authors (Vāzih, Muhammad Sāqī, etc.) with living and personal connections to the empire as it existed under Aurangzeb, ties which they emphasised as status claims and political protection in a decade of ongoing crisis. The next was the generation of Khvāfī Khān and Shāh Navāz Khān, men of the second tier of *mansabdārs*, with personal and familial links to major aristocratic factions, writing primarily in the context of *khānazād* versus *zamīndārī* intra-élite conflict. Finally, in the generation presided over by Āzād Bilgrāmī, we see the rise of *mansabdārs* often of relatively minor background whose forebears had only ever occupied the periphery of court circles. They were nonetheless the last defenders of this stratum and its political heritage in an epoch defined by the ascent of previously sub-élite social groups. The generational divide is by no means absolute – in demographic terms, Shāh Navāz Khān and Āzād Bilgrāmī were of much the same age, and the former's innovative use of the *tazkira* was eagerly embraced and promoted by the latter. Before embarking on our survey of these, it is worth examining the antecedents of aristocratic historiography.

The prehistory of the *mansabdārī tazkira* and of late Mughal historiography can be traced to the 16th century. The *tazkira* as a genre emerged from same literary milieu, i.e., Timurid Herat, whence Abūl Fazl derived inspiration for the historiography of Akbar's reign, in the wider context of what Maria Szuppe calls "historico-biographical writing."[911] It is here worth mentioning that the political *tazkira* is neglected as a type of text, having been subject to comparatively less critical analysis as poetic and Sufi *tazkiras* of the same period. The juxtaposition of collective individual biographies with chronicle writing intensified in the 16th century with Khvāndamīr (d. 1535), who was followed in this by later Safavid writers like Hasan Beg Rūmlū (d. 1578) and the well-known Iskandar Munshī (d. 1633), both of whose writings contain sections devoted to biographical information about military leaders, bureaucrats, clerics, and other individuals of rank.[912] We cannot be certain that Shaykh Farīd

[911] Maria Szuppe, "Historiography v. Timurid," *Encylopedia Iranica* online edition, 2003; Irfan Habib, "Timur in the Political Tradition and Historiography of Mughal India," *PIHC* 57 (1996): 292; on early *tazkiras*, cf. W.P. Heinrichs, J.D. Bruijn & J. Stewart Robinson, "Tadhkira," in *Encyclopedia of Islam New Edition Online*, ed. P. Bearman (Brill: 2012)

[912] Sholeh Quinn, *Persian Historiography across Empires: The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (CUP: 2020), 197

had access to Iskandar Munshī's *ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī,* although we know Shāh Navāz Khān cited the work as a source; however, he almost certainly would have had access to the extensive *tazkira* section in the final volume of Abūl Fazl's *Akbarnāma*.[913]

In Sholeh Quinn's view, the inclusion of *tazkiras* in royal histories was likely a means both of emphasising the prestige of rulers with extensive and distinguished courtly retinues, but also of drawing attention to the ideological and political concerns of the authors of these histories.[914] How then do we understand Shaykh Farīd's *oeuvre*? In his own words (despite unfortunate *lacunae* in the introductory pages of both surviving manuscripts), although past historians (*arbāb-i tavārīkh*) had written accounts of kings of old (*ahvāl-i salātīn-i mā-taqaddam*), "yet none had written of the dignified lords (*khavānīn-i sipihr-ihtishām*), each of whom had administered and continued to administer the regulations of felicitous rule (*dastūr al-ʿamal-i rozgār-i kām-rānī karda-and va mī-kunand*)," or of their events and particulars, which stood as "an example and an instruction to the world" (*ʿibrat-bakhsh-i ʿālamiyān va hosh-afzā-yi jahānīyān*).[915] This opening is followed with much extensive praise of Navāb Shāyista Khān, to whom the book is evidently dedicated, and from whom he hoped for a better assignment than his dissatisfactory Deccan post.[916] The material presented, then, reflected the author's hope of attracting the patronage of one of the senior-most *amīrs* of Shāh Jahān.

I argue Shaykh Farīd's *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn* is best understood as an attempt by the author to situate himself at the core of an emergent imagined community, the *mansabdārī* stratum. It corresponds exactly to what Hermansen and Lawrence describe as the core function of the *tazkira*, to memorialise individuals as part of a common social group, while communicating their legacy to a new generation as part of a wider collective identity.[917] The method pursued by Shaykh Farīd is firstly to create this collective, specifically by gathering the *amīrs* of the three preceding reigns into three respective volumes; next, to identify the most important individuals within the collective, i.e. the dozen or so *amīrs* to whom the greatest space is given in each volume; and finally, to locate himself in relation to those of the second group to whom he bore ties of loyalty, affinity and inherited obligation.

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[913] Ibid., 188
[914] Ibid., 156, 200-201
[915] *Zakhīrat*, 1:2
[916] Ibid., 1:3; Rezavi, "An Early Historian," 322
[917] Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 152

Thus, in the second volume dealing with Jahāngīr's recently elapsed reign, the first 186 pages are devoted to seven *amīrs*, while its last two hundred or so pages comprise brief biographies of the remaining important *mansabdārs* of Jahāngīr's reign, many notices comprising barely a paragraph, at times a single sentence. These seven biographies are those of Iʿtimād ad-Daula, Āsaf Khān, and Nūr Jahān Begum from the intended patron's family, and then Ghāzī Beg Tarkhān of Sindh, Khān Jahān Lodī, Mahābat Khān, and Abdullāh Khān Bahādur Fīroz Jang. The choice of nobles is extremely deliberate: not only were these four *amīrs* among the highest-ranking servitors of Jahāngīr, each had direct personal ties to Shaykh Farīd himself or to his family. Mahābat Khān's brother and Abdullāh Khān's sister were married, and it was their son Khvāja Baqā who had introduced Shaykh Farīd to *mansabdārī* service in 1606 as *faujdār* of Lucknow, the latter calling himself "companion" (*musāhib*) of the said Khvāja.[918] Similarly, Ghāzī Beg Tarkhān belonged to the Arghūn dynasty, quasi-independent potentates of Sindh, whom Shaykh Farīd's father and uncle had served: thus he says, "the homeland (*vatan*) of the author of these pages, Shaykh Farīd, is Sindh, and he possesses the relationship of a well-wisher (*nisbat-i duʿā-goī*) to this exalted family [i.e. the Arghūns]."[919] Finally, he repeatedly emphasises his close personal relationship with Khān Jahān Lodī, to the extent of obliquely defending the latter's rebellion by heavily implying he was pushed to that extreme by the unjust persecution of *dīvānī* officials.[920]

Clearly then the primary focus of this text is subjective: its purpose is to document and commemorate the illustrious careers of *amīrs* either related to the hoped-for patron of the work, or who shared a personal relationship with the author. Thus, quite senior *amīrs* of Jahāngīr without either qualifying characteristic like Saʿīd Khān Chaghtā or Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī receive very brief sketches in place of the extensive biographies and personal details given men like Mahābat Khān and Khān Jahān.[921] It is difficult to believe these choices are not deliberate: in the first volume, dealing with Akbar's reign, by far the two most extensive biographies are those of ʿAbd al-Rahīm Khān-i Khānān, Shāyista Khān's grandfather-in-law (32 pages), and Murtazá Khān Farīd Bukhārī (22 pages), who had been Governor of Gujarāt when Shaykh Farīd was *dīvān* of the province.[922] Perhaps the single most interesting aspect of Shaykh Farīd's

[918] *Zakhīrat*, 2:352
[919] Ibid., 2:212
[920] *Zakhīrat*, 2:93-99
[921] Ibid., 1:190-193, 2:216-7
[922] Ibid., 1:31-63, 1:126-148

work is the comparatively extremely positive characterisation of Nūr Jahān, on whom he lavishes praise:

> That virtuous queen (*malika-i neku-sifāt*) and her exalted family greatly benefitted the common people (*khalq-allāh*)…whoever went to her court with a petition (*iltijā*), whatever kind of aid he sought, came away with his reward (*kāmyāb mī-gasht*). In the time of good fortune of that glorious family (*ān khāndān-i kiram*), there appeared in Hindūstān a light and freshness that will carry their good name (*nām-i nek*) to the day of judgment.[923]

This is an obvious appeal both to the familial pride of Shāyista Khān and a testimonial to the good opinion the late consort presumably continued to enjoy among her kith and kin. He continues in this vein for some pages before coyly admitting that "indeed, the author of these pages Shaykh Farīd Bhakkarī has also petitioned (*talab ba-qalam āvurda*) that family for a pension (*tankhvāh*)." More interestingly, the bulk of the notice labelled "Navāb Mihr al-Nisā Nūr Jahān Begum" is in fact dedicated to a detailed, blow-by-blow account of Mahābat Khān's rebellion, with a positive treatment of both Nūr Jahān and Āsaf Khān as attempting a heroic rescue of the Emperor, while highly critical of Mahābat Khān's "rashness and insolence" (*jurat va gustākhī*).[924] There is even a direct reference to Shāyista Khān's wife, the granddaughter of Khān-i Khānān, who announces "the instant he is in my grasp (*qābū mī-yābam*), I shall shoot Mahābat Khān dead!"[925] He thus subverts the bloodthirstiness negatively attributed to the noblewoman by earlier Shāhjahānī historians, as we saw in Chapter 1, as a means of flattering his intended patron.

Finally, it is useful to observe here that the idea of *mansabdārī* rank providing the foundation of a social identity and an independent status group thus originated in an official of extremely minor rank, which we shall see presages the development of a collective *umarā* identity by the descendants of second- and third-tier *amīrs* in the early 18th century. It is perhaps precisely because they lacked the extensive array of genealogical, personal, and other status claims of the high nobility that *mansabdārs* like Shaykh Farīd sought to emphasise the common social identity of what was still then a primarily military-administrative group, and thereby to situate themselves in relation to grandees like Khān Jahān Lodī and Mahābat Khān. The

[923] Ibid., 2:48
[924] Ibid., 2:56
[925] Ibid., 2:58

tazkira, as we have discussed, was the perfect genre for this purpose, and would be revived to a similar end by Shāh Navāz Khān and Āzād Bilgrāmī.

In *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn*, we find the seeds of later historiographical developments while also observing the limits of the ideology of service an increasingly centralised Mughal state sought to impose onto its military-administrative apparatus. Affective relationships based on personal loyalty and patronage outside the strict bonds of the *mansabdārī* system clearly carried a greater currency and legitimacy in the political culture of the empire in the 17th century. Even dynastic service seems to have acquired greater prestige if an inherited familial tradition, whence Shaykh Farīd's references to the *amīrs* his father and uncle had served.[926] There is further an unusually explicit and positive representation of aristocratic women in the text, something that disappears completely from later historiography, possibly an index both of the prestige and active political participation of Īrānī noblewomen, as well as the well-documented prominence of Shāh Jahān's daughters.[927] In some ways, the text allows us faintly to perceive tension between the claims of imperial ideology vis-à-vis the actual worldview of the *umarā*. Nonetheless, the *tazkira* is most important in demonstrating the existence of topoi emphasising personal connections and affective relationships among a high-status social collective as sources of a prestigious status identity. *Mansabdārī* status identity was still in its infancy; nonetheless, Shaykh Farīd drew upon the emergent consciousness of this stratum as a defined, discrete social group to position himself in proximity to a hoped-for patron. His *tazkira*, like those of his distant 18th century successors, sought to record and enhance the prestige of the social network involved, foreshadowing developments a century later.[928]

Elements of *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn*'s concerns would persist in Mughal historical writing. Importantly, affective ties and personal connections remained a central preoccupation of aristocratic historians. The production of annalistic history by official historians at the imperial court in the 17th century tended to concentrate on what Sholeh Quinn has called the legitimizing projects of the dynasty through certain consistent pillars such as Timurid descent and the depiction of royal virtues such as justice, military power, and traditional kingly activities.[929] It was in this context that the specific annalistic form of historical representation, through regnal years, *mansabdārī* appointments, and records of royal activities, best

[926] Ibid., 1:v, vii
[927] Shadab Bano, "Piety and Princess: Jahanara's Role in the Public Domain," *PIHC* 74 (2013): 246
[928] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 464
[929] Sholeh Quinn, "Through the Looking Glass: Kingly Virtues in Safavid and Mughal Historiography," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010): 148

exemplified by the *Bādshāhnāma* evolved and became the mainstay of what Shāh Navāz Khān later called the "craft" or "art" (*fann*) of history.[930] At the same time, in the context of the political upheavals in the immediate aftermath of Aurangzeb's reign, *mansabdār*-historians began experimenting with a range of genres of text and types of historical writing in a manipulation of identity and memory to contemporary ends. Mughal historiography thus came increasingly to take on a memorative rather than ideological or function in the 18th century, culminating in the confluence of the courtly style and aristocratic historiographical production in the form of *Maāsir al-Umarā*.

Gagan Sood has recently examined the conception of the Mughal imperial polity in non-official histories written by mid-ranking *mansabdārs* towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign in the context of Mughal paramountcy in the subcontinent.[931] These understandings provide a useful point of departure for our survey of the 18th century historiography. Sood shows that their historical narrative was one of ongoing territorial expansion underlain by two conceptual concerns – the loyalty of the élite and the unity of the imperial polity.[932] Adversaries are conceptualised as either recalcitrant, potentially manageable members of the élite, or members of unassimilable groups such as Afghans, Marathas, and so forth.[933] It will be seen that this view from the apex of imperial power in the final decade of the 17th century was already a thing of the past by the time Irādat Khān Vāzih began writing his memoirs. As we have seen, the aristocratic élite of the empire had completely inverted the relationship – ideologically conceptualised as founded upon loyalty and service – between major *amīrs* and the sovereign, while relations between the various arms of the administration were characterised by disunity and infighting. Similarly, the centripetal process of territorial expansion and the absorption or management of local groups had collapsed with the retrenchment of the provincial administrations and the ongoing and seemingly untameable insurgencies of the Marathas in the Deccan, the Sikhs in the Punjab, the Jats and Rohillas in North India and the Yūsufzaī Afghans in the northwest.

The first decades of the 18th century saw Mughal *amīrs* begin to take ideological refuge from the chaotic political conditions of the court in the memory of preceding reigns, especially

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[930] *Maāsir*, 8
[931] Gagan D.S. Sood. "A Political Sociology of Empire: Mughal Historians on the Making of Mughal Paramountcy," *MAS* 56 (2022): 1253-1294
[932] Ibid., 1289
[933] Ibid., 1285

that of Aurangzeb as embodying a no longer extant apex of material power. We have seen that past had always been a source of legitimacy and prestige in Mughal status culture, especially imagined pasts of service, loyalty, and dynastic connection. These were now rooted in a very recent past, one within living memory and all the more important since none of the Emperors from 1713 to 1748 were the sons of their predecessor. Farrukh-Siyar and Muhammad Shāh both sought to emphasise their connections to their common great-grandfather Aurangzeb and his reign by bringing his elderly servants and retainers – Hamīd al-Dīn Khān Bahādur, ʿInāyatullāh Khān and Amīr Khān Sindhī – out of retirement and reintroducing them to active service.[934] In fact, these came to enjoy far higher rank in this period than previously. This period also saw a proliferation of memoirs, histories and epistolary collections related to Aurangzeb like *Kalimāt-i Tayyibāt* and *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, where the Emperor is typically presented as a figure of both unlimited political power and immense sanctity and spiritual charisma, being thus both patron and preceptor to the authors thereof. Incidentally, this characterisation of Aurangzeb is the obvious explanation of the persistent, exaggeratedly high opinion he has been afforded by the Indo-Muslim élite which so puzzled colonial observers. Simply put, demonstrating affective attachment to Aurangzeb was high-status behaviour from the early 18th century onwards.

Thus Aurangzeb appears in Vāzih' memoirs as a saintly and benevolent figure. Vāzih is variously presented being honoured for his bravery, being commended for his service, and offered his choice of placements and positions by the Emperor.[935] Shortly thereafter, the Emperor learns about his financial troubles, always being "fully informed about [Vāzih's] conditions" (*muttaliʿ-yi ahvāl būdand*) offers him the rich post of Mandu (contradicted by a later statement that it was ʿAzam Shāh whose patronage obtained him the position).[936] The depiction of his final leave-taking from the Emperor would draw tears from a stone: he is summoned late at night to the Emperor's private chamber (*khvāb-gāh*), and the aged Emperor declares, "it is time for us to part, and who can say whether we shall meet again," (*miyān-i mā va shumā judāī, va mulāqāt-hā-yi dīgar kujā?*). In preparation of his imminent demise, the Emperor pardons Vāzih any known or unknown wrongs he had committed, and asks for the Khān to pardon him in turn "with a sincere heart," (*az sidq-i dil*).[937] The Emperor then blesses

[934] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā*, 1:258
[935] Ibid., f. 6-7
[936] Ibid., f. 8
[937] Ibid., f. 10

him by reading the *fātiha* over him and gives him leave to depart. Vāzih was so moved by the encounter that he says he became violently ill and could not stop weeping from the moment he left Aurangābād to his arrival in Mālwa. Sāqī Mustaʿadd Khān likewise says ʿInāyatullāh Khān asked him to compile a history of Aurangzeb, the "spiritual guide of all creation" (*pīr-u-murshid-i kāyināt*).[938] This language of Sufi discipleship appears in works of this generation to characterise the Emperor's relationship with his personal attendants and servitors. He devotes ten pages to such interesting topics as "the numberless blessings of this angelic soul," the "noble character of this perfect sovereign," down to the Emperor's "exceedingly firm and well-formed" handwriting.[939] ʿInāyatullāh Khān himself describes his motive in compiling *Kalimāt-i Tayyibāt* was "combatting the increase of infidelity (*afzā-yi kufr*) since the Emperor's demise."[940]

Similarly, what I have called the neo-Tūrānī faction, being the last surviving faction of Aurangzeb's time, sought to emphasise their personal connection to Aurangzeb in addition to their already well-established strategy of affirming a common "Tūrānī" origin with the dynasty. It seems almost certain that the collection called *Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī* and translated by Sarkar as *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb* dates to the 1720s, likely the height of Tūrānī power in 1720-1724. Versions of it contain letters as well as a purported testament of Aurangzeb among whose injunctions to an imagined successor are an exhortation to "in every way confer favours" on Tūrānī noblemen and a caution against the Sayyids of Bārha, because "if you let them take the reins ever so little, the result will be your own disgrace."[941] This is obviously a post-facto justification of Muhammad Shāh's abjuration of his oath of clemency. There is further a very interesting letter from Nizām al-Mulk to Muhammad Shāh, written shortly after his seizure of the Deccan provinces, acquired and published by the Company officer William Kirkpatrick in 1785, whose contents leave little doubt of its authenticity.[942] Nizām al-Mulk complains bitterly of the ill-treatment to which he has been subjected by the Emperor's evil and ignorant advisors, reminding the Emperor time and again of the services of his own father to Aurangzeb, and affirms that his only motivation is the restoration of "the government and regulations of ʿĀlamgīr (*saltanat-u-zavābit-i ʿĀlamgīrī*) that have for some time been falling into disarray."[943]

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[938] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 69
[939] Ibid., 523-534
[940] ʿInāyatullāh Khān, "Kalimāt-i Tayyibāt," Bodleian Library MS Fraser 158, f. 2
[941] Sarkar, *Anecdotes of Aurangzeb*, 54
[942] "ʿArzdāsht," 482-494
[943] Ibid., 484

He then neatly affirms his own claim to governing the Deccan provinces by pointing out that when Aurangzeb conquered these from their corrupt and incompetent sovereigns, he conferred them on Khān Fīrūz Jang, i.e. his own father.[944]

The next major theme that preoccupies the *mansabdār*-historians is their obsessive insistence on the rights of the old nobility (*umarā-i qadīm*), acquired through their long histories of service and loyalty as a result of which they are uniquely qualified to participate in government. Among the earliest of these is Vāzih's famous anecdote in which Munʿim Khān compares Hindūstān to audience-hall of Solomon (*bārgāh-i Sulaymānī*), i.e., a burden not to be borne by one or two men but many strong pillars and supports. He then says no better support is to be found than the nobles of good family (*sāhib-i khāndān-i ʿumda*, elsewhere *umarā-yi khāndān-hā-yi ʿālī*), acquainted with the manners or mode of royal service (*ādāb-i khidmāt-i salātīn*) on account of their high birth (*buzurg-zādagī*).[945] There is no mention of Īrānī or Tūrānī factions: there is a single nobility, united by their heritage of imperial service and established personal intimacy with the dynasty. Of course, such a nobility entirely excludes the new *mansabdārī* adherents of Bahādur Shāh and Farrukh-Siyar. It is from this perspective that we read of Khvāfī Khān's strong disapprobation of Bahādur Shāh's and even Aurangzeb's profligate handing out of *mansab* rank to Deccanis and Hindūstānīs leading to the unemployment (*bī-chakarī*) of the *khānazād*s, his complaints about the difficulties they nobles faced in obtaining *jāgīrs*, such that the management (*tadbīr va band-u-bast*) went awry.[946] Precisely the same complaint is found in the Nizām's letter: "since the departure of ʿĀlamgīr, due to the dismissal and removal of the high nobility (*umarā-i ʿazzām*) the record of the administration of the empire (*sirishta-i band-u-bast-i saltanat*) has gone crooked."[947] He then says that the downfall of Bījāpūr and Golconda occurred when their rulers "from ignorance and youth discarded the ancient, well-wishing servitors of their forefathers (*naukarān-i daulat-khvāh-i qadīm-i kār-āmadanī-yi ābā-u-ajdād*)," who knew "the rites of governance and command," (*tarīqa-i riyāsat-u-farmān-ravāyī*).[948] He says the same cause brought the downfall of the Safavids and delivered Iran to the Afghans (in what one suspects is a comparison to the Mughals and Marathas), and exhorts Muhammad Shāh to remember that the duty of Emperors is "to firmly maintain the *sharī'yat*, the honour of the masses, to do justice, and to understand

[944] Ibid., 488
[945] Ibid., ff. 79-80
[946] Khvāfī Khān, 2:391, 394, 628
[947] "ʿArzdāsht," 482
[948] Ibid., 486

the value of the pillars of the state and the ancient nobility (*qadr-dānī-yi arkān-i daulat va umarā-yi qadīm*), the rights of whose ancient loyalty (lit. rights of their salt, *huqūq-i namak*) are firmly established."[949]

Of course, this insistence of personal claims upon the sovereign's ancestors only really worked for the innermost circle of royal retainers in the immediate aftermath of Aurangzeb's death. The wider circle of *khānazād* and eventually non-*khānazād* historians would have to search for newer and more innovative ways whereby to affirm their status and buttress their claims to political pre-eminence. They did so through the manipulation of lineage, genealogy and eventually identity, subtly modifying these ascriptive elements of aristocratic status culture to their own ends. This begins to become apparent from the 1720s, which as shown in Chapter 3 saw the climax of the new Tūrānī identity. Nizām al-Mulk in his admonitory letter wrote that "the result [of Abdullāh Khān Bārha's actions] has been the disgrace of the Chaghatāys" (*bī-nāmūsī-yi Chaghtāy*) while pointing out that this was due to advancing non-Tūrānī, non-*khānazād* nobles, into positions of power.[950] The incident he is obliquely referring to is Abdullāh Khān's permitting the return of Farrukh-Siyar's widow, Indirā Kānwar, to her father Ajīt Singh Rāṭhor in 1719, which as per Khvāfī Khān damaged the honour of the kingdom (*nāmūs-i saltanat*) in the eyes of all self-respecting and civilised people (*qāida-sanjān va ādāb-dānān-i bā ghayrat*).[951] Thus, the honour of the royal house of the Chaghatāys was entrusted by Amīr Tīmūr to the "Mongol" people of Transoxiana. We know from Chapter 3 that such an assertion would have seemed contradictory and ridiculous to Tīmūr's immediate successors, but had become normalised by the 18th century. The Tūrānī faction now claims intimacy with the dynasty to the point of sharing in the honour of its women. A similar claim appears in *Ahkām-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, wherein a supposed letter from Aurangzeb to Muhammad Amīn Khān claims: "The Tūrānī community (*jamāʿat-i tūrānī*) are the brothers by virtue of common habitation of my ancestors," (*birādarān-i ham-shahrī-yi mā-and*).[952]

Khvāfī Khān, however, embarked on an even more daring identitarian experiment than this with the concept of Mughal-ness. He was the first firmly to establish the important and enduring theme whereby geographic and genealogical "Īrānī" and "Tūrānī" -ness were conflated with a common and quasi-ethnic "Mughal" identity shared with the dynasty. Khvāfī

[949] Ibid., 488
[950] Ibid.
[951] Khvāfī Khān, 2:833
[952] *Ahkām*, f. 14b

Khān informs us in the introduction to his work that "trustworthy histories" hold the Timurid dynasty to be "Turks of noble descent" (*turkān-i vālā-nasb*) and that according to many historians the origin of the Turks is from "Turk, son of Japheth, son of the Prophet Noah."[953] More interestingly, he goes on to describe the expanse of persons who can be referred to as Mughals:

> Mughūl Khān [the ostensible descendant of Turk] was a great and glorious emperor. In the care of the people and in the governance of the realm he was the equal of any of his ancestors, and the habitations of Mughalistan owe to him their foundation. Although since the time of Emperor Akbar the name of Mughal has been given to Turks and Tājīks, and even to the Sayyids of Iran and Turan, by all the people (*khāss-u-ʿāmm*), in truth the title of Mughal applies especially to the Turks of that very lineage whose descent is from Mughal Khān...and it is from the lineage of that very Mughal Khān that spring Changez, and Halākū, and Chaghtā, and Amīr Taymūr.[954]

This is an extraordinary passage in more ways than one and its significance should not be overlooked. It is on the basis thereof that Kia has asserted "migrants from Irani and Turani domains, their descendants, and the Timurids were all Mughals...[and that] continued scholarly use of this term as an imperial surname obfuscates both its broader meaning and Persianate perceptions of the imperial family, which did not use Mughal."[955] However, there is little evidence apart from Khvāfī Khān that this was indeed the case prior to the reign of Muhammad Shāh. It is not coincidence that this generous description unites the *khānazād* nobles of Muhammad Shāh, whether of Sunnī eastern-Iranian origin like its author, western Iranian and Twelver Shīʿī like Sādāt Khān Marʿashī, or Central Asian like the Nizām and Qamar al-Dīn. Common political interest seems thereby to have produced a feeling of socio-cultural community and identity of origin in groups which as recently as two decades prior had been in bitter political conflict. As regards the assertion of "*khāss-u-ʿāmm,*" we cannot know for certain whether the population at large designated these heterogenous elements of the ruling stratum as "Mughals," although there is tangential evidence from Bernier that suggests this may have been the case – "to be considered a Mogol, it is enough that a foreigner have a white face and profess Mahometanism."[956] We have looked closely over past chapters at the construction of

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[953] Khvāfī Khān, 1:1-3
[954] Ibid., 1:4
[955] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 155 & 157
[956] Bernier, Travels, 3

élite identity and memories of origin among the higher *mansabdārs* and demonstrated the fundamentally exclusive and particular nature of the forms of identity now so easily collapsed into the designation "Mughal."

It might be asked how Khvāfī Khān himself benefitted this explication of the authentic meaning of Mughal and Turkic origin as distinct from the common cultural identity of the ruling class. It is because the elaboration of a non-indigenous and non-Indic identity of the imperial ruling class is a central part of his historiographical and political project in the context of a Hindūstānī, *zamīndārī* ascendancy. We see this manifest most importantly in his discussion of *siyādat*, of particular interest given that he himself belonged to a well-known Sayyid community. In a passage prefaced "an investigation into whether any genuine Sayyids have ever become kings in India or not," he explains –

> "Since the reign of Muʿizz al-Dīn Ghūrī, when thousands [sic] of Kings have reigned in all these regions and their twenty-two provinces...according to all reliable histories and sources that have looked into this matter not a single genuine Sayyid has ever been a king, even though two daughters of Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī entered the households of Emperor ʻĀlamgīr and Muhammad Murād Bakhsh, and bore children including ʿAzam Shāh and Akbar Shāh, and in preceding times too daughters of Sayyids have entered the Timurid family and have borne children (*tanāsil-u-tavālid hāsil shud*) but not a single one became sovereign of Hindūstān…Bahādur Shāh, son of ʿĀlamgīr, had his Sayyid-ness recited even in the *khutba* (*siyādat-i khvud dākhil-i khutba namūd)* with the approval of learned flatterers. Since it is manifestly evident to the whole world that Emperor ʻĀlamgīr, his father, never asserted that he was a Sayyid (*ba-siyādat-i khvud qāʿil nabūd*) and it is clear to all creation that his mother, who was a daughter of the Rāja of Kishtwār, cannot possibly have been a Sayyid, his Sayyid descent likewise cannot be proved...it is thus clear that none of the sovereigns of Hindūstān have been Sayyids."[957]

It is impossible to miss the satisfaction with which Khvāfī Khān, whose tone is usually coldly objective, debunks the supposed prophetic descent of Bahādur Shāh. *Siyādat*, an important motif in this period, thus reflects another kind of nobility and non-indigeneity of origin parallel to the new, composite Īrānī-Tūrānī Mughal-ness. Furthermore, the authenticity

[957] Khvāfī Khān, 1:592

of descent of Hindūstānī Sayyids was considered extremely doubtful throughout the 17th century, an attitude implicit in the above passage so evidently seeking to define *siyādat* in opposition to India as a cultural and political space. Given the recent deposal and execution of the Sayyids of Bārha (mirrored in the author's denunciation of them), this argument was doubtless appreciated by the court of Muhammad Shāh, or at least by *Khānazād* nobles like the Marʿashī Sayyids.[958] It is further obvious that these new identities of Mughal and Sayyid can *only* exist as forms of identification in India and in opposition to the inhabitants of their places of putative origin – the latter were extremely conscious of the particularity and separate-ness of lineages like these, as for example between Chinggisid and non-Chinggisid rulers.

This elaboration of a binary between non-Indic and thus authentic aristocratic genealogies and Indic, and consequently suspect, origins and status-claims can only be understood in the context of the intra-élite conflict among the *mansabdārs* of Muhammad Shāh. Another departure from tradition incipient in Khvāfī Khān's reconceptualization of *siyādat* is the affirmation of Sayyid-ness itself as conferring status, as opposed to specific Sayyid lineages, genealogically linked to charismatic ancestor-heroes like the Imāms or famous Sufis, or geographically associated with sacred spaces like Mashhad, Karbalā, or the seat of the Naqshbandiyya in Transoxiana. More generic types of Sayyid lineage, as we saw in the previous chapter, were associated with lower-ranking and comparatively obscure *amīrs*. The higher-status *siyādat* of the high nobles of Sayyid lineage is exemplified by Mustaʿadd Khān's obituary of Mūsavī Khān: "the late Khān belonged to the grandees of Īrān (*nujabā-yi īrān*), his innate/essential nobility (*sharāfat-i zātī*) was due to his lineage from Imām Mūsá (*mūsavī-nasab*), which family judged by the excellence and talent of its living members (*ahyā*) has a Jesus-like pedigree (*ʿīsavī-hasab*)," *hasab-u-nasab* being a standard descriptor of lineage.[959] This *amīr* was indeed of exalted derivation: his maternal grandfather was chief of the *ʿulamā* of the holy city of Mashhad, his father belonged to a major Mūsavī lineage of Qum, another centre of Shīʿī religiosity, related to the prominent Banī Mukhtār clan, and he was himself the senior son-in-law of Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī and thereby "honoured by being connected to the Emperor," (*ʿazz-i intisāb dāsht*).[960] Mere *siyādat* in itself was thus a fairly unimportant aspect of his genealogical status.

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[958] Ibid., 2:815

[959] *Maāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī*, 337

[960] Ibid., 338; *Maāsir*, 3:633; on the Sādāt-i Mūsavīya, cf. Takamitsu Shimamoto, "Society and Economy of Qom in the Latter Half of the 19th Century," *Orient* 24 (1988): 127

The "collectivisation" of identity, so to speak, in Khvāfī Khān and others' reconstruction of the ambit of *siyādat* and Mughal-ness presages the further broadening of the social in-group as increasingly *mansabdārs* of diverse backgrounds found themselves united against external pressure from new players in the successor courts, ranging from Rohilla mercenaries and Maratha freebooters to local *zamīndārs*, rich financiers and European adventurers. This seems to have been a realisation that dawned on members of the stratum in the aftermath of Nādir Shāh's invasion, when the importance of the Awadh and Deccan courts was magnified by the outsized role played by their rulers in 1739 even as the prestige of Shāhjahānābad receded, and is exemplified by Shāh Navāz Khān's composition of his *tazkira* between 1743-1748.

Tazkiras are variously glossed as "biographical dictionaries," "autobiographical compendia," and "commemorative texts."[961] These collections of short biographical notices almost invariably deal with Sufi saints or poets – the latter in particular being a popular subject of 18th century Indo-Persian *tazkiras*. In Stefano Pellò's words, the "*tazkira*, although usually rich in information and anecdotes...is first of all a literary genre governed by its own specific rules and topoi."[962] As such it affords us a view of its subjects from the perspective and in the context of the literary culture and social atmosphere of its composition. Kia discusses *tazkiras* using the framework of "aporia," i.e. multiple overlapping and seemingly paradoxical identities or collectives that together engender the various "selves" of the texts subjects and author. They created horizontal connections, imagining collectives "that transcended friendship, acquaintance, political loyalties, collective lineages and formal social ties."[963] Elsewhere, Purnima Dhavan writes that the genre was "particularly suited to narrate an author's multiple scholarly and affective ties" and as such was apt for the commemoration of Sufis, scholars and poets, whose circles and networks often crossed geographical, social, religious and other boundaries.[964] Indeed, much recent work on the genre has focused on the cosmopolitanism and potential of inclusion occasioned by the genre. These authors discuss *tazkiras* of poets, of

[961] Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 149; Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 22
[962] Stefano Pellò, "Persian as a Passe-Partout: The Case of Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Qādir Bīdil and his Hindu Disciples," in *Culture and Circulation*, eds. Thomas de Bruijn & Allison Buch (Brill: 2014), 24
[963] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 171-173 & *passim*
[964] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 464

literary 18th century figures, and as a conceptual broadening of our understanding of premodern identity.[965]

Shāh Navāz Khān's opus is of a different character, to say the least. He wrote in a context wherein the almost all the greatest families of the nobility were extinct or fallen into obscurity, the empire that they served had recently been humiliated by Nādir Shāh's sack of Delhi, and the descendants of the mid-ranking *mansabdārs* like his own forebears found themselves politically besieged by newly ascendant groups. *Maāsir al-Umarā* deals self-declaredly with "the illustrious deeds of the nobility," i.e. the *amīrs* of high rank, and its purpose in categorisation and identification is to differentiate and to exclude.

It is precisely because the nobility which forms the subject of the work is largely extinct that the *tazkira* has been written. Shāh Navāz Khān is quite aware of this: "my forerunners had completed books of every kind or fashion which I had thought of, and other subjects had been dealt with by great thinkers and artists both directly and indirectly," when he received the inspiration for the work.[966] He further affirms the originality of his work by discounting Shaykh Farīd's *tazkira* on the grounds that his own was founded not on hearsay (*akhbār-i samāʿī*) but trustworthy writings (*kutub-i muʿtabira*) in accordance with the masters of the historical science (*ahl-i īn fann*).[967] Indeed, the differences between the two *tazkiras* are illustrative of their respective contexts. Shāh Navāz Khān is concerned with history as a craft or science (*fann*) above criticism: contrary to Shaykh Farīd, whose text emphasises the personal, the orally transmitted, and the lived, he emphasises his written sources, the application of reason and criticism to questionable episodes, and pretensions to objectivity. There are occasions where he explicitly questions oral reports, for instance criticising the idea that Aurangzeb had Khān Fīrūz Jang poisoned for ambition on psychological grounds: the Emperor was "very vindictive and choleric (*bisyār ghazūb va kīnavar*), if he had suspected anything he would not have tolerated such splendour (*īn āb-u-rang namī-guzāsht*).[968] In his recensions of Shaykh Farīd, as is common with Mughal sources, he regularly plagiarises from his accounts without attribution.[969] However, it is his omissions that are of interest: he excises almost all of Shaykh Farīd's long and interesting personal account of Khān Jahān Lodī's rebellion, including

[965] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 25
[966] Ibid., 1:5-7
[967] *Maāsir*, 8
[968] *Ibid.,* 2:879
[969] Athar Ali, "The Use of Sources," 362

extensive details the persecutions of the exchequer and Āsaf Khān, the psychological anguish of the Afghan nobleman, the loyalty of his retainers, and the personal indignation of Shaykh Farīd, relying instead on the *Bādshāhnāma's* account.[970] He likewise tends to exclude details of personal conversations reported by Shaykh Farīd. This is presumably part of the depersonalisation of the text, as is seen also in his faithful imitation of the style of imperial chronicles in organising works according to regnal year, and emphasising details of promotions, the award of titles and emoluments, and restricting familial details to the very end of his biographical notices. These changes in style reflect the different situations of the two authors: it is not just the recent past that is Shāh Navāz Khān's concern, nor the patronage of a living nobleman; rather, it is the entire edifice of Timurid history to be brought perpetually to life through representation and commemoration, to ensure that it lives in the contemporary *mansabdārī* class, whence presumably also the concern with authenticity of sources and a preference for the chronicles of the imperial court.

This concern with reliability of sources and the factual accuracy of the biographies seems to have been a common trope of contemporary *tazkiras*, as similar statements can be found in Shafīq and Āzād's works. We should also consider the scale of Shāh Navāz Khān's enterprise. As Dhavan reminds us, "information for writing *tazkiras* and histories could only be gained either orally or through the painstaking reproduction of handwritten manuscripts."[971] Shāh Navāz Khān's wealth and connections must have been extensive, as both the scion of a reputable and by this time quite ancient *mansabdārī* family and a current occupant of high political office in the largest and wealthiest of the successor courts. It is sobering to think that he was likely one of the last men alive who had the resources, the background and the connections to undertake a project of this kind, and once again recalls to us the extent to which the Mughal high nobility of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb were already a thing of the past.

It is this glorious past, still within living memory, that Shāh Navāz Khān seeks to bring to life and to mobilise as a common cultural and political heritage and source of community, as well as to widen the ambit of the ascriptive identity of the *umarā* to include contemporary Mughal *mansabdārs* in the successor courts. Mughal legitimacy remained a concern of Shāh Navāz Khān and authors like him as the source of the legitimacy and prestige of their own class, whose unifying characteristic by the 1740s was family histories of *mansabdārī* service,

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[970] *Zakhīrat*, 2:78-99

[971] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 470

and the foundation of their claimed social superiority and preferential access to power. The text in its own way performs the same function as other *tazkiras*: memory as recollection and connection, elaborating a common identity and creating a social collective in the person of legacy *mansabdārs*. Texts like these were a means for these men to become aware of and define their proper place in the world, and to develop a personal and affective connection with an imagined community, the imperial nobility of the past, echoing what a generation previously had been an affective connection to individual sovereigns of the past like Aurangzeb. It is evident of course that very little evidence exists for any actual and contemporary solidarity of this kind in this stratum while it existed and exercised undisputed power: its bitter factional strife, which ended in violence and bloodshed, has been the subject of preceding chapters. By the 18th century, however, *khānazād* survivors found a common "Mughal" identity against the encroachment of the *umarā-i jadīd*, and by 1743 even these became part of the collective, historicised *umarā* as elaborated by Shāh Navāz Khān.

It is worth remembering, however, that the *umarā* were themselves the élite of the wider military-bureaucratic apparatus, and the designation excludes minor bureaucrats and clerks of the kind which – it must be said – produce most of the 18th cenutry *tazkiras*. Lachhmī Narāyan Shafīq Aurangābādī, for example, wrote to discuss "more obscure bureaucrats less known for poetic mastery, but with important connections to Mughal service."[972] Therefore, the authors of commemorative texts and histories typically wrote with a sub-group in mind to which they themselves belonged – the author remains "relationally present" as servant, court historian, beneficiary, or, in this case, the genealogical descendant.[973] These texts were produced by members of an élite for others like themselves.[974] What we see throughout the 18th century is a progressive widening of these circles and indeed of the circles that laid claim to Mughal heritage and Mughal identity, something which Kumkum Chatterjee describes in the dissemination of *khānazād* culture to lower levels of society in the Murshidābād court.[975]

The decades that followed would see the dissemination of Shāh Navāz Khān's work in literary and political circles at the successor courts. The major Indo-Persian literary circles which existed in this period, especially, have been the object of much recent scholarship.[976] A

[972] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 472
[973] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 177
[974] Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 149
[975] Chatterjee, "History as Self-Representation," 919-20
[976] Among others, Kia, *Persianate Selves;* Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters*;

full discussion of contact and overlap between these literary circles and the production of late Mughal historiography is far beyond the scope of this chapter. Nor does this study suggest that there was any clear demarcation between literary circles and the networks of *mansabdār*-historians, and figures involved are unlikely to have perceived there to have been. This category of late Mughal *mansabdār*-historians is an etic observation based on commonalties of putative genealogical origin, social circumstances, familial histories of imperial service and the production of texts with common ideological features. The close contact of prominent literary figures, many themselves of minor *mansabdārī* background, with our historians is however beyond all shadow of a doubt. Sirāj al-Dīn Khān Ārzū, the prominent Delhi philologist and lexicographer, was a regular correspondent of Āzād's and was himself the son of a minor *mansabdār*.[977] Others still of service and professional backgrounds had various professional and social links to these mansabdār-historians: the *tazkira*-writer Shafīq Aurangābādī's grandfather had been a revenue officer in Shāh Navāz Khān's household.[978] The letters of Mūsavī Khān "Jurat" – the chief *munshī* of Āsaf Jāh and a close personal friend of Āzād – attest to the regular contact between élite literati of Delhi and Aurangābād.[979] This hints to us how these histories and *tazkiras* would have gradually disseminated, beginning with the remnants of the military-administrative apparatus, through literary and bureaucratic networks of patronage to ever-widening élite circles. Āzād's particularly well-known literary circle would have played an important role in disseminating these new discourses of descent, service and nobility in the Indo-Muslim ruling class as a whole.

The consistent broadening of ascriptive élite status identity, viz., belonging to the *umarā* simply by even minimal connection to the *mansabdārī* stratum, was taken to the next stage of its development by Āzād Bilgrāmī, whose work introduces two important features that saw the final de-linking of élite status from imperial service: the concept of *vilāyat*, and the use of ethnography. Āzād's wrote his major work, the *Khizāna-i āmira*, in a period of even greater material and political insecurity for the *mansabdārs*. The 1750s had been a particularly chaotic decade for the successor courts, seeing the first violence within the imperial family since 1719, the despoliation of the Red Fort by the *Vazīr* ʿImād al-Mulk and his Maratha allies, and the

977 Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters*, 32

978 Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 466

979 "Inshā-i Mūsavī Khān Juraʿt," Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute, Osmania University, Hyderabad State Library MS no. 321; the letters are followed by a brief *tazkira* of the author's correspondents. Information on his closeness to Āzād is given in a 19th century *tazkira* of Deccani poets, Muhammad ʿAbd al-Jabbār Khān, *Mahbūb al-Zamān: Tazkira-i Shuʿarā-yi Dakkan* (Matba' Rahmānī: 1911), 330-331

struggle for succession between Nizām al-Mulk's sons. Much of the latter, including the treacherous murder of Shāh Navāz Khān and his relatives, played out in Āzād's home city of Aurangābād.[980] At the same time, the court of Murshidābād had fallen to the East India Company in 1756, while in Awadh the Nīshāpūrī Navābs co-opted Awadh Rajputs and Nādir Shāh's Qizilbāsh cavalry to expropriate and crush the estates of Sunnī (predominantly Afghan and Sayyid) landholders around Awadh and Agra with the assistance of the Marathas.[981] The latter event seriously affected Āzād in that it targeted his home and extended family. Above all, there was the seemingly unstoppable growth of Maratha power in the Deccan, a serious consequence of which was the attenuation of resources available to the successor courts for the patronage of men such as himself. The *mansabdārs'* social and cultural capital and family histories of imperial service counted for little in the eyes of the new kinds of state that emerged in this period.[982]

Āzād's historiographical strategy in addressing these issues is the elaboration of a decline narrative: the moral and personal decline of the Muslim ruling class has caused the decline and fall of their political rule and sovereignty in India, leading to the dominance of the Marathas and other lowly people. The narrative tension is resolved by the fateful victory of Ahmad Shāh ("Shāh Durrānī") at Panipat, which is a divine punishment for Marathas' neglect of law and custom and their marginalisation of the Muslim élite. His opposition to the Marathas is couched in ethnographic and moralistic terms that echo the characterisation of uncivilisable marginal communities in traditional Mughal historiography as seen in the 17th century, although those texts were primarily concerned with uncivilisable Afghans, conceptualised as a disruptive and anarchic people.[983] Nizām al-Mulk as we saw had already begun using the Afghans as a parallel for the Marathas and the breakdown of order in the Deccan. This was taken to its final extreme by Āzād, as for example in his description of Sadāshiv Bhāo's occupation of Delhi:

> "These Maratha chieftains are all base, ignorant, quick to anger, ungrateful, preoccupied with their own ignorant desires and the harassment of the common people. Sūraj Mal Jāt upon beholding [their behaviour] apprehended that this people would come to an unfortunate end...such is the greed of their despicable natures that they

[980] *Maāsir-ul-Umarā* 1:23-24 on the death of Shāh Navāz Khān
[981] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, 36-48
[982] Cf. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 15-25
[983] Sood, "A Political Sociology of Empire," 1267, 1285

> looted even the silver ceiling of the *dīvān-i khāss*, along with any articles of value and all the gold and silver vessels of the shrine of the Prophet's footprint, the sepulchre of Sultān al-Mashāikh Nizām al-Dīn, and the mausoleum of Firdaus-Ārāmgāh [Muhammad Shāh], even the censers of incense, chandeliers, candelabra and so forth..."[984]

In actual fact, the Marathas on this occasion did not violate the sanctity of the imperial family's apartments in the Red Fort, making this certainly a milder occupation than that of Nādir Shāh. Maratha rule he characterises as the source of "evil innovations" (*bidʿat*) such as the suppression of the various traditional rights of cultivators and landowners. He then narrates an account of writing to a conveniently unnamed companion (*musāhib*) of the Peshvā on behalf of an equally mysterious and unspecified Muslim's application for employment, to receive the answer that "nobody esteems the Muslims here, they count for nothing," (*īnjā musalmānān bī-qadr-and kasī inhā rā namī pursad*).[985] In response to this he wrote a letter which is reproduced in the text of *Khizāna-i ʿĀmira*. The sententious, hectoring and at times downright insulting tone of the letter render it an impossibility that this was ever sent: rather, its purpose is to lay out the ideological vision of the author. The relevant passages are reproduced:

> "Glorious God has bestowed Bālājī with the command of the vulgar (*riyāsat-i ʿāmma*) and as the glorious and almighty divine takes good and bad into the shadow of his generosity, so he has sometimes favoured him...it is now seven hundred years that the Kings of Islam have dominated the countries of Hind, their courts have given a place to both Hindus and Muslims, and have behaved liberally to both sects (*har do tāyifa*). Although due to correspondence of kind Muslims have predominated in numbers, the Hindus have not been excluded (*mahrūm na-sākhtand*). The most partial (*mutaʿassib-tarīn*) of the Kings of Islam was [Aurangzeb] yet his court was replete (*mamlū*) with the Rajas and accountants (*rāja-hā va mutasaddiyān*) of the Hindūs. Bālājī prides himself on the domination of these two countries, Hindūstān and the Deccan, and boasts that he has dragged the Muslims out of both these countries and left them no eminence (*jā-yi nāzish*), and more than this he has even supplanted even the Rajas of his own kind from lands that had been given them by Muslims."

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[984] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 105
[985] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 110

What disturbs Āzād's sensibilities is the disregard shown to what were to him the self-evidently universal norms of behaviour, loyalty, and reciprocity of the *mansabdārī* stratum. This seems to be something very close to what Kia designates *adab*, the proper mode of behaviour and conduct. It will be observed that this is held to span both élite Muslims as well as the right kind of Hindūs, i.e. the Rajas and members of the professional communities by now thoroughly assimilated into the Persianate culture of North India.

The élite in-group that Āzād describes now encompasses a broad sub-section of privileged groups, including those associated with the court but evidently also the various provincial Muslim *zamīndārī* groups that had existed since pre-Mughal times (in Āzād's narrative since Mahmūd of Ghaznī). These are opposed to marginal and subaltern populations of all kinds, but especially those that increasingly intruded on his world from what were once its margins. He specifies that "the armies of the bandits consist mostly of lowborn people, like peasants, shepherds, carpenters and cobblers, while the army of the Muslims comprises mostly nobles and gentlemen (*nujabā va shurafā*)."[986] His objections are not religious in colour – we know that Hindu authors writing in Persian commonly deployed similar Islamic tropes and imagery in their writing.[987] He further specifies elsewhere that war has always existed between "the *vilāyat* of Iran and Tūrān" and the people of India, all of whom were fire worshippers (*ātash-parast*) and only after the kings of the former became Muslims did "the wars and violence with the Hindūs take on the colour of religion," (*jidāl-o qitāl bā hinduvān rang-i ʿibādat girift*).[988] This is the earliest reference in the *Khizāna* to *vilāyat*, an important concept in Āzād's writing.

If lamenting the political decline of the *mansabdārī* stratum and the ascendance of marginal groups constitutes the first and "negative" dimension of Āzād's historical narrative, the concept of *vilāyat* and the exposition of an ethnographic account of the Muslim élite constitute its "positive" aspect. He situates the common and non-indigenous origin of this social group an imagined homeland called *vilāyat*, specifically *vilāyat-i Īrān-u-Tūrān*, i.e., the inhabited countries or provinces of Īrān and Tūrān, which is the source of their culture and shared identity. He thus elaborates in the fictive letter:

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[986] Ibid., 49
[987] Dhavan, "Networks and Faultlines," 472
[988] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 49

> "The Muslims of Iran and Tūrān have conquered the land of Hindūstān by the sword many times but for nearly one thousand two hundred years no army from India, whether from the Rajas of the Hindūs or from the Sultans of Islam have prevailed against the people of *vilāyat*, such as the army of Shāh Jahān which went up to the borders of Khurāsān, Balkh and Badakhshān, even though some men [of that army] were men of *vilāyat*, be they born in *vilāyat* or the sons of those born in *vilāyat*. God Almighty has erected great mountains around Kābul, beyond which are snow and cold, which the men and animals of Hindūstān cannot endure but with difficulty and on this account the subjugation of *vilāyat* is very difficult for the men of Hindūstān, whereas the subjugation of Hindūstān is easy for the men of *vilāyat*, who come from a country with a cold climate (*mulk-i sard-ser*) to a country with a warm climate (*mulk-i garm-ser*)...in summary, the men of *vilāyat* have always been victorious and many glorious kings (*salātīn-i ūlá*) have come from *vilāyat* to wage war successfully against Hindūstān.[989]"

It is obvious that this exercise in historical ethnography has nothing to do with a petition for employment, and is placed in the *tazkira* as part of Āzād's explication of the historical context in which he writes. The critical distinction for Āzād is between the men of *vilāyat* and those not of *vilāyat*. By the men of *vilāyat*, the people of Iran and Turan, Āzād refers to people who by his lifetime had come to be called Mughals, but also to élite Muslims in the subcontinental context in general as the heirs of the culture and political system of the Mughals and their Sultanate successors. This marks the final step in the gradual diffusion of Mughal-ness from court circles: effectively, any well-born Muslim can claim some part of this Mughal identity. A putative genealogical connection to *vilāyat* becomes the mark that distinguishes them from others, which is obviously a great departure from the status culture of the early 17th century, which made many distinctions, genealogical, ethnocultural and social, between migrants from Central and West Asia and never assigned them any commonality, as we have seen. In the aftermath of Panipat, Āzād writes this *tazkira* as an affirmation and assertion of this heritage, which he projects in the past as far back as Tīmūr and Mahmūd of Ghaznī, and to assuage the anxieties and doubt that the preceding decade inevitably must have produced.[990] Indeed, Hermansen and Lawrence observe that *tazkiras* are commonly written in response to

[989] Ibid., 110-112
[990] Ibid., 112

times of uncertainty and crisis.[991] To this end Āzād also elaborates a specific narrative of decline:

> "The bandits [i.e. Marathas] apply themselves diligently to the practice of guerrilla warfare (*jang-i qazāqī*) and in times of battle subsist off grains and rice (*ghalla va kāh-i kharīf*)...whereas the Muslims, accustomed to ease, are fallen into indolence (*ārām-talabī*). If these too endured the hardships of this guerrilla warfare, they would be victorious over the bandits, for what could they not accomplish against the lowborn (*arāzil*) with the courage and honour that are in the natural disposition of nobles (*dar tīnat-i nujabā*)?"[992]

Extraordinarily, the virtues of *vilāyat* are those of the Qazāq and the Qalmāq, the very steppe peoples aggressively stigmatised as pagans and barbarians by the rulers of Transoxiana and Iran, as we saw in Chapter 3. In 16th century Samarqand as in 18th century Aurangābād, ethnography was a tool of scholars and historiographers of the élite, a mirror wherein to see themselves as they desired as well as to project qualities of which they were embarrassed onto the other. Clearly, centuries from the conversion of these peoples, their desirable traits of martial excellence and simplicity of living could now be admired, emulated, and declared the inheritance of a Muslim élite. Āzād elsewhere identifies the very trait he attributes to the Marathas, diligence in preparation and training for warfare (*mushq-i razm*), as a peculiarity of the men of *vilāyat* in contrast to the people of Hindūstān, who on account of the abundance of wealth (*kasrat-i tamūl* and *kasrat-i zar*) lapse into indolence and pleasure (*ʿaysh-u-ʿishrat*).[993] Implicitly, the men of *vilāyat* have allowed themselves to turn into men of Hindūstān, and allowed the Marathas of the Deccan to surpass them in their ancestral profession of warfare. Incidentally, this resembles the observations of Āzād's contemporary and near acquaintance, Hazīn, on the degenerative effects of the climate (*āb-u-havā*) of Hindūstān on the descendants of Bābur.[994]

We see thus the conclusion of various strategies used by late Mughal historians in their historiographical project of commemoration and self-representation, and find that we have come very far indeed from their earliest generations. Vāzih in 1714 wrote a deeply personal

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[991] Hermansen and Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras," 168-9; Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 165
[992] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 49
[993] Ibid., 110
[994] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 238

history. His claims to political preference and social superiority were based on an individual affective relationship with a recently deceased Emperor, and on his own patrilineal ancestors' history of service and exalted genealogical origin. Succeeding generations of *mansabdār*-historians progressively broadened the demographic sphere encompassed by the ascriptive dimension of élite identity while refashioning the meanings of identities like Sayyid and Mughal. Interpersonal affective ties to past sovereigns became familial histories of service and loyalty to the Timurids and ultimately a collectivised imagined belonging in the succession of kings and emperors from Mahmūd of Ghaznī and Tīmūr onwards. The claims of specific and discrete lineages to association with the dynasty from its homeland likewise expanded continually. The Khvājazādas with spiritual and matrimonial connections were followed by the self-declared Tūrānī *mansabdārs*' arrogation to themselves of the dynasty's traditions and honour and in opposition to the Īrānīs; finally there emerged an expansive "Mughal" identity comprising Iran and Tūrān, culminating in *vilāyat* as the shared ancestral home of the Muslim élite.

It is worth noting that this process of expansion was not an altogether smooth one, and that before the establishment of these assumptions about élite Muslim identity, tensions remain visible in the texts. The exaltation of *siyādat* necessarily elevated the status of the Sayyid brothers treacherously killed by Muhammad Shāh. Khvāfī Khān, writing in the context of *khānazād* versus *zamīndārī* nobles, was able to contemptuously write them off, while their own supporters, including none other than Āzād's grandfather Mīrzā ʿAbd al-Jalīl Bilgrāmī, wrote eulogistic encomia comparing their patrons to the martyred Shīʿa Imāms (reproduced by Āzād in *Maāsir al-Kiram*).[995] ʿAbd al-Jalīl stigmatised Muhammad Shāh in extreme terms as "the accursed Yazīd of India" (*yazīd-i laʿīn-i hind*) and referring to his reign as a time when

"Mourning for Husayn ʿAlī was fresh in the world,

Disaster has befallen the Sayyids in India!"

Shāh Navāz Khān was on the one hand a Khvāfī of good *khānazād* descent, with all the pride of descent this entailed, but on the other was writing as much for non-*khānazād mansabdārs* including of course his close friend Āzād Bilgrāmī. Thus, although he comments disapprovingly on the appointment of the Sayyids to the vizierate as being undeserved due to the low rank of the family, he concedes that their murder was unjust and reproduces the elegy

[995] Abhishek Kaicker, "The Promises and Perils of Courtly Poetry," *JESHO* (2018): 353

of ʿAbd al-Jalīl.[996] Āzād nowhere addresses the murder of his grandfather's patrons by the very "accursed Yazīd of India" (*yazīd-i laʿīn-i hind*) whom he mourned as a denizen of paradise (*Firdaus-Ārāmgāh*). We see herein the lived contradictions of multiple kinds of being and belonging designated "aporia" by Kia.[997]

[996] *Maāsir*, 1:337-9
[997] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 165

5.3: Late Mughal Legacies and the Birth of Colonial Historiography

Perhaps the most interesting, and certainly the least examined, aspect of late Mughal historiography is its interaction with the first generation of colonial historiography. Close examination reveals startling correspondences between what came to be core elements of the colonial conception of Muslim rule in India, and topoi earlier articulated by *mansabdār*-historians. This is especially unexpected given that late Mughal ethnography was, as we have seen, a purely indigenous endeavour building from a basis in wider Indo-Islamic and Persianate tradition in the demonstrable absence of major European influence. We shall observe that European historiography of India was hopelessly mired in essentialisations about ethnicity and race – both implicitly linked to religion – from its very outset. The conclusion to this chapter will aim to demonstrate the extent to which many of these essentialisations are in fact distortions of tropes found in the ethnographic and historiographic texts produced by late Mughal historians.

The elements that seem to have been absorbed by the Company historians include: Mahmūd of Ghaznī as the inaugurator of an "Islamic" period of Indian history; the essentialisation of Muslim dynasties as invaders from an ill-defined northwest or Central Asia; the consequent non-indigeneity of Islam and Muslim élites; and the decadence or effeminacy of the Muslim ruling class, whether climatically or racially induced. I shall aim to demonstrate that all these tropes can arguably be traced to colonial distortions of *mansabdārī* historiography. These essentialisations eventually formed the Islamic half of what Manan Ahmed calls two interdependent frames of "changeless Hindus" and "Muslim invaders and despots" in the colonial historical project.[998] This has an important bearing on the historiography of the Mughal nobility in that the romantic (or perhaps sinister) essentialisation of Muslims in Indian history as conquerors, as barbarian invaders, as adventurers and soldiers of fortune, has no place for the idea of a the idea of a developed aristocracy with a unique and specific culture of its own. Let us then investigate further.

The idea of Mahmūd of Ghaznī (r. 998-1030) as an "Indian" ruler or a Muslim Sultan in Hindūstān is a specifically Mughal trope. Ahmed points out that Mahmūd was "the subject and the object of a vast array of historical and poetical works," which the well-known Abūl-Qāsim Firishta drew upon in identifying Mahmūd as "Sultān of Lahore popularly known as the

[998] Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Harvard University Press: 2020), 30, 44

Ghaznavī Sultāns;" however, the trope originates at Akbar's court.[999] It is Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad's *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī* that declares Sabuktigīn, father of Mahmūd, founded his kingdom in 977 which was "the beginning of the dominion of Islam in the country of Hindūstān," *ibtidā-yi zuhūr-i islām dar bilād-i hindūstān*.[1000] This may well be because the *Tabaqāt* was the first work in the Indo-Persian historiography claimed by its author to take the history of India alone as its subject.[1001] This is not the case in any earlier history. The mid-15th to the mid-16th centuries saw something of an interregnum in Indo-Persian historiography; however, the later Delhi Sultanate sources like *Tārīkh-i Mubārakshāhī* (c. 1434) identify not Mahmūd, but the much later Ghorid Saʿīd Muʿizz al-Dīn ibn Sām as the first Muslim ruler in India (*chūn islām dar…aqālīm-i hindūstān az sultān saʿīd-i marhūm-i maghfūr āshkār shud*).[1002] No earlier source situates the Ghaznavids among "Indian" dynasties either.[1003]

Mahmūd as the fount of Islamic rule in India is a topos of Mughal historiography; however, the broadening of late Mughal élite identity from service-based to overtly hereditary and putatively non-indigenous forms of status identity begun by Āzād saw him appropriated as a universalising memorative figure representing this social transition in élite identity and memory. The élite's histories of service and migration thus become histories of belonging and community rooted in birth and origin. It is here important to note that by the turn of the 19th century, while the *mansabdārs* had largely disappeared as a military-bureaucratic class, they had transformed the status culture of the Indo-Muslim élite, the social order which came to be known as the *ashrāf*, based on status identities elaborated in the 18th century. Juan Cole has contended that these groups are best examined as status groups, since they defy precise classification as social class; however, they encompassed the entirety of the *zamīndārī* gentry of the successor courts into which the *mansabdārs* had dispersed.[1004] All ethnographic and descriptive texts dealing with this stratum deploy a fourfold division of the *ashrāf* into Sayyids, Mughals, Pathans or Afghans, and Shaykhs. Key examples include Mīrzā Hasan Qatīl's *Haft Tamāshā*, an ethnography of India written for an Iranian audience; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali's

[999] Ibid., 94-5
[1000] Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad, *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī*, (Nawal Kishore: 1875), 3
[1001] Ali, "Sources in Mughal Historiography," 362; on the differences between Nizām al-Dīn and Firishta, cf. Ahmad, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 25f. & 74;
[1002] Yahyá ibn Ahmad Sirhindī, *Tārīkh-i Mubārakshāhī* (Asiatic Society of Bengal: 1931), 4-5
[1003] Cf. I.H. Siddiqui, *Indo-Persian Historiography to the Fourteenth Century* (Primus Books: 2014), 67, 93, 102-3, 108, 117
[1004] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 69

Observations on the Mussulmauns of India, by the wife of a Lucknow Sayyid; and Jaʿfar Sharīf's *Qānūn-i Islām*, an ethnography of Deccan Muslims.[1005]

The question then demanding an answer is whether colonial historians would have had access to and drawn upon these late Mughal sources, because in the absence of evidence a direct relationship between *mansabdārī* and company historiography must remain speculative. Alexander Dow, writing in 1773, explicitly advertises as his sources not just the historical European observers, but also "domestic writers" including *Mirāt al-Vāridāt*, *Jahāngīrnāma*, *Shāhjahānnāma, Ālamgīrnāma*, and *Mirāt-i Ālam* whose "originals were…in his hands."[1006] Robert Orme, a decade later, claims to have used translations of "Āyīn-i Akbarī, History of Firishta, particular histories of the reigns of several Mughal Emperors, and other Persian manuscripts."[1007] James Mill, writing in the early 19th century, relied not just on these predecessors but also late 18th century translations of Vāzih and the *Siyar al-Mutaakhharīn*.[1008] Most importantly, William Francklin in his history of Shāh ʿĀlam II's reign, describes among his sources among various other manuscripts "Khazanah Omrah, or Biography of the Mughal Nobility, a work frequently mentioned by Oriental historians."[1009] This last is incontrovertible evidence of the influence of Āzād Bilgrāmī, the grand old man of his generation of *mansabdār*-historians. There is then every reason to believe that these early colonial historians had access to and presumably drew from the type of historiography this chapter has discussed, whether they admitted to it or not. We can now identify overt correspondences that likely represent distortions or misconstructions of historiographical themes developed by *mansabdār*-historians.

The most obvious of these is the essentialisation of Muslims as conquerors, outsiders, adventurers, and mercenaries. Dow thus finds the Mughal ruling class comprised of soldiers of fortune "who owed their rank to merit, not to succession…a continued influx of strangers from northern Asia, became necessary for the support of princes who professed a different faith with their subjects, in the vast empire of India. The army was recruited with soldiers from different

[1005] Morvarid Rofougaran, "Qatil-i Lahauri's Haft Tamasha and its Hand-written copies," *Āyīna-i Mīrās* 13 no. 57 (2016): 166; Mīrzā Muhammad Hasan Qatīl Lahaurī, *Haft Tamāshā* (Nawal Kishor: 1875), 113; Jaffur Shurreef, *Qanoon-i-Islam: Customs of the Moosulmans of India*, tr. G.A. Herklots (Parbury, Allen & Co: 1832), 8; Mrs Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*, ed. W. Crooke (OUP: 1917), *passim*
[1006] Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan* (John Murray: 1773), 3:a-b
[1007] Robert Orme. *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, of the Morattoes, the English Concerns in Indostan* (F. Wingrave: 1805), xliii
[1008] James Mill, *History of British India* (James Madden & Co: 1840), 457 ff.
[1009] William Francklin, *History of the Reign of Shah-Aulum* (Cooper & Graham: 1798): 100

| nations; the court was occupied by nobles from various kingdoms. The latter were followers of the Mahommedan religion."[1010] Orme similarly identifies the ruling class of the "Moors" as "Tartars continually naturalising themselves in Indostan, through the encouragement which their martial spirit is sure to receive, [and] Arabians and Persians who have quitted their own, to seek their fortunes in this country."[1011] Mill likewise informs us of the heterogenous character of the Mughal ruling class "some Moguls, some Afghans, some Turks, and some Usbeks," while also essentialising them as a people in whom "the art of war" was "in a state of higher perfection…than [in] the conquered."[1012] One need hardly recall Bilgrāmī's obsession with Kazakh warfare and the "natural" courage of the nobles.

The obverse of this is of course the idea of decline and decadence, whether climatically induced or racial. The racial distinction between conquering Muslims and effete Hindus is firmly established by Mill, who declares that "there was, in the manners of the Mohammedan conquerors of India, an activity, a manliness, an independence, which rendered it less easy for despotism to sink, among them, to that disgusting state of weak and profligate barbarism which is the natural condition among such a passive people as the Hindus."[1013] Orme likewise admits that "Tartars are known amongst themselves to be of honest and simple manners," yet "The climate and habits of Indostan have enervated the strong fibres with which the Tartars conquered it; and the rude sense of that people is now refined to their descendants, in great measure, to the sensibility of the Indians."[1014] Dow too attributes the deterioration of "the fierce nations of northern Asia" to the climate and soil of India, where these invaders, instead of "carrying the spoil into their native country, sat down where it had bene found, and added the ministration of the conquered to other enjoyments of wealth."[1015] It is noteworthy also to see the strange reformulation of *vilāyat* in these texts, whether as northern Asia in Dow, or as in Mill, who speaks of "Turanee Moguls" as "the Mogul adventurers newly arrived from Tartary, and distinguished from those who had been bred in Hindustan."[1016] This seems almost directly inspired by Bilgrāmī's distinction between "the men born in *vilāyat* and the sons of those born in *vilāyat*," (*khvāh vilāyat zā va khāh aulād-i vilāyat-zā*).[1017]

[1010] Dow, *History of Hindostan*, 3:v
[1011] Orme, *Historical Fragments,* 422
[1012] Mill, *History of British India*, 2:402-3, 520
[1013] Ibid., 2:491
[1014] Orme, *Historical Fragments,* 425
[1015] Dow, *History of Hindostan*, 3:ii
[1016] Mill, *History of British India*, 425
[1017] *Khizāna-i Āmira*, 111

It should be obvious then that these tropes, which would later form the foundation of the entire edifice of the colonial historiography's conception of Muslim India, were originally late Mughal topoi erroneously mediated from the stylised Persian of Bilgrāmī and other *mansabdār*-historians into early Company historians' work. A garbled version of Mughal ethnography, indigenous to the Indo-Muslim élite, was received by early generations of colonial scholarship and found fertile ground in the new racialism of the 19th century. It is important to specify that these late Mughal racial and ethnographic discourses were independent of earlier Indo-Persian precursors because the historiography of the 18th century, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, was literary development predicated upon the unique social and political environment of the 18th century Indo-Muslim élite. Firishta and his contemporary, Amīn Ahmad Rāzī, wrote in the context of an earlier Perso-Islamicate anthropological consensus whose core elements are identified by Supriya Gandhi as the Noachide (in India, specifically Hamitic) narrative of human descent, Greco-Arabic climatic determinism, literary representations of "white" Turks against "black" Hindus, and the racialisation of specific castes.[1018] Firishta, for instance, plots out a geographical division of India based on descent from "the sons of Ham" (*farzandān-i Hām*).[1019] The fusion of these climatic and genealogical elements is of course also omnipresent in Amīn Rāzī, whose very work is organised along its eponymous seven climes, as we saw in the third chapter. The ethnographical endeavours of Khvāfī Khān and Āzād Bilgrāmī, while retaining elements of this earlier consensus, sought to manipulate and modify it to their own ends. Khvāfī Khān sought to develop a basic framework for the status identities of the beleaguered *umarā-i qadīm* in relation to an imagined *Mughalistān* in opposition to the *umarā-i jadīd* of Hindūstān; Āzād Bilgrāmī expanded and reworked this relationship into a binary that was simultaneously geographic (*vilāyat* and Hindūstān), religious (Muslim and Hindu), and social (*nujabā-va-shurafā* and *ʿāmma*).[1020] These took on a completely new existence in the hands of early European scholarship.

The influence of the late Mughal *mansabdār*-historians would ultimately reach even to the foundational text of modern European racialism, Count Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, who describes Mahmūd of Ghaznī as "a Muslim prince of mixed race, [but] much whiter than had become the alloy from which the Brahmins and the

[1018] Gandhi, "Locating Race," 1188-9
[1019] Muhammad Qāsim Hindūshāh Astarābādī, *Tārīkh-i Firishta az Āghāz tā Bābar*, ed. Muhammad Razā Nasīrī (Anjuman-i Āsār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī: 2009), 1:30
[1020] Khvāfī Khān, 1:4

Kshatriyas emerged," and sees the subsequent history of India as a series of invasions by "the warlike converts [to Islam] of the Aryanised races of the north" (*les belliqueux convertis des races arianisées du nord*).[1021] This is a re-casting of Indo-Muslim historiography from the perspective of 19th century European racial thought, and obviously tied to British conceptions of Indic civilisation as the product of three waves of Caucasian or European invasions into a racially alien, tropical environment: the Indo-Aryan, here the Turco-Persian, and eventually the British. There is no doubt that the legacy of Bernier in articulating a social category called whiteness as a core element of what it meant to be a Mughal would have informed his fellow Frenchman Gobineau's essentialisations of the Indo-Muslim élite as partially white, or at least whiter than their subjects.[1022] However, the independent genealogy of European racial thought from Bernier to Gobineau and the further development of this racial historiography in the 19th century is beyond the scope of this study.

A final comment is perhaps worthwhile on the preoccupation of colonial historians with episodes and individuals from Mughal history with romantic narrative potential. I have already warned against overemphasis on Nūr Jahān in the political environment of the early 17th century Mughal court in which she was one of several important actors. Grewal has further noted the appeal of the most fanciful elements of the Nūr Jahān *mythos* to colonial historians, beginning with Dow.[1023] A neat example thereof is Dow's description of Mihr al-Nisā as excelling in beauty "all the ladies of the East…educated with the utmost care and attention, in music, in dancing, in poetry, in painting, she had no equal among her sex."[1024] We have of course no idea what Nūr Jahān looked like and can hazard only a very general guess at what her education would have comprised. There exist furthermore certain consistent profiles of each Emperor (an enlightened Akbar, a dissolute Jahāngīr, a zealous but unscrupulous Aurangzeb, etc.) critique whereof is beyond the scope of this thesis but that are nevertheless are worth pointing out as archetypal fictional characters rather than objects of historical analysis. This is mirrored on a wider scale by the characterisation of Muslim India as the product of a series of invasions by "racially" distinct peoples from the northwest, who are essentialised as martial, fierce, despotic, or predatory. This, as I have sought to demonstrate,

[1021] Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Didot: 1884), 1:445-449
[1022] Gandhi, "Locating Race," 1201
[1023] Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India*, 12
[1024] Dow, *History of Hindostan*, 3:24

seems to be a weird transformation of *vilāyat* as it appears in the writings of Āzād and his successors.

Late *mansabdārī* historiography thus enjoyed two, equally remarkable and strange afterlives: firstly as the basis of a genteel status culture quite distant from that of the imperial court, secondly as the source of a distorted, indeed warped conceptualisation of the history of the *umarā* in European ethnography. It is almost as though, as part of the process of provincialisation, territorialisation and eventual absorption or extinction that ultimately befell the *mansabdārī* stratum, these authors wrote themselves out of history. Indo-Muslim historians who wrote (mostly in Urdu) in the 19th century were, as Ahmed points out, writing largely in response to the colonial essentialisation of Indian and Indo-Muslim history.[1025] By this time, there was hardly any distinction between the various types of *ashrāf* lineages, genealogical status claims being mere cultural artefacts. The nature of Mughal identity, too, had undergone a transformation. Mughal-ness did not begin to suggest a commonalty of origin until the early 18th century, about the reign of Farrukh-Siyar. In the intra-aristocratic disputes of Muhammad Shāh's reign, the survivors of the old nobility developed this motif of a shared Mughal identity based on descent from Iran and Tūrān. Bilgrāmī effectively extended this theme to the entirety of the Muslim ruling class in India, all of whom, as *shurafā va nujabā*, gentlemen and nobles, are men of *vilāyat*. The decoupling of status from *mansabdārī* service therefore saw ascriptive status identities based on descent in the court's status culture re-worked and manipulated by these authors. Their re-attribution to social groups integrated into the Persianate high culture of the subcontinent brought into being a status group and identity inspired by the legacy of the Mughal court but almost entirely removed from the real divisions and identities that divided that court's servitors in its heyday. This process reflected, on an ideological and cultural level, real social change that saw the *mansabdārī* stratum increasingly absorbed either into the particular patterns of the various regional successor courts, or into a more generic *sharīf* Indo-Muslim élite identity. Perhaps the most significant sociocultural phenomenon of this period, then, is the gradual disappearance of the *mansabdārs* and *umarā*'s political power, the dispersion and transformation of their peculiar status culture, and finally the extinction of their unique social identity as a distinct status group.

[1025] Ahmed, *The Loss of Hindustan*, 218

Conclusion

We have now reached the end of our study of the Mughal high nobility. I hope that the preceding chapters have gone some way towards elucidating the origin, character, and composition of this stratum. I have approached this subject by way of three interconnected themes. The study of family encompassed the relationships, connections, and dependencies implicit in the concept as seen in the Mughal context, as well as the all-important status-claim that was lineage. The study of faction united to that of family sought to unpack and critically examine the conceptual framework, especially the core concepts of faction and ethnicity, that have hitherto dominated study of the high nobility, fulfilling the historiographic aim of this study. The examination of this social group's status culture then served to accomplish the social-historical ambition of this study in making possible an ethnographic survey of the entire high nobility in my chosen period. This built up to the fifth chapter, dealing with the 18th century, which is the axis around which my study revolved. I thus discerned the evolution of a consistent, elaborate, and stable status culture of the aristocracy by the late 17th century, and its deployment, manipulation, and transformation in the hands of the nobility's heirs and successors in the 18th century as they gave birth to a new kind of collective consciousness through their project of commemoration.

At its conclusion, I hope this thesis to have demonstrated certain fundamental aspects of the Mughal nobility's existence that have not been adequately clarified and explored. The first is that this was a stratum that possessed a distinctive status culture that was entirely its own, and that it was the deployment of ideological claims within this status culture as well as a broader performance of honourability according to its terms that determined status and advancement in the courtly context. Next, I have argued the drastic re-ordering of history, ethnography and memory by late Mughal literati connected to the *mansabdārī* stratum completely transformed this status culture into the identity of a new social order that survived in the form of the *ashrāf*, the Persianate Indo-Muslim gentry of the late Mughal and colonial periods. A distorted version of this understanding was then absorbed by early colonial historians and persisted in the essentialisation of Muslims and Islam in India as something essentially foreign, invasive, and disruptive or predatory. I hope it is evident that such an understanding, derived from a misreading of the status culture of an incredibly narrow circle of landowning gentry and aristocrats, cannot possibly reflect anything of the beliefs and values of the vast majority of Indian Muslims, who were converts from various local communities and persist today as non-*sharīf* or "*pas-mānda*" Muslims. This thesis will thus hopefully have

contributed towards demystifying the modern topos of Islam and Muslims as something extraneous to India.

Finally, I have tried to show that the modern conception of the "Mughal," as we come close to it, breaks up like a mirage, and that "Mughal" identity is an accreted phenomenon that only in hindsight appears to us as a large cultural edifice. The *Mughūl* of Bābur's lifetime, the Muslim Mongol of Central Asia, by the 17th century survived as a Muslim status identity associated with a prestigious military role, that of the mounted cavalryman. As such, it bears an obvious etic similarity to other emic status identities elaborated in a military context such as Afghan and Rajput and even, by the 18th century, Qizilbāsh, associated with honourability and military prowess.[1026] After becoming caught up in the claims elaborated by the increasingly powerful neo-Tūrānī faction from the second half of Aurangzeb's reign, it evolved into a wider descriptor in the hands of the *mansabdār*-historians who transmitted it both to the social order that succeeded them and the colonial historians who encountered them, whence its crystallisation in the modern sense. In the two languages these two groups of inheritors wrote in, it thus bears the inherited meaning: the Indo-Timurid polity and its rulers in English, and a specific type of genealogical classification in the status culture of the *ashrāf* in Urdu, i.e., putative descendants of Iranian and Central Asian emigrants.[1027]

Although Mughal status culture undeniably emerged from a Persianate high culture shared by court societies around the Indian ocean and in Central Asia, it took on a character of its own that becomes distinctly apparent when we view its internal transformation and diffusion in the 18th century. It was characterised by conceptions of identity that evolved in a fundamentally Indic context, from the encounter, recruitment, and eventual assimilation of diverse peoples and social groups into the Mughal political system, identities that were articulated in the context of the Mughal court culture as part of its idiom of rule. The only instance where élite identity seems to have carried transregional identitarian significance and affected political dynamics is the case of the Īrānī faction, whose Īrānī-ness was a status identity based on personal, affective links to the Safavid dynasty and polity in the recent past of this circle of families as opposed to a broader "ethnic" loyalty. As such, I hope this framework provides a more nuanced way of thinking about the nature of identity and its role court politics

[1026] Gordon, "Zones of Military Entrepreneurship," 183-4, 189, 192; Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 17-18; on the 18th century evolution of Qizilbāsh identity, cf. Nejatie, "Iranian Migrations," 497

[1027] Qatīl, *Haft Tamāshā*, 113; cf. John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* (W.H. Allen & Co: 1884), 1051, which glosses Mughal as "the third of the four classes into which Muḥammadans are divided."

and aristocratic factionalism in the Mughal polity. I hope further that the nobility's indigenousness or lack thereof is seen to be an inadequate and inappropriate lens through which to view it. Lastly, I hope this has demonstrated the limitations of the conceptual framework hitherto used to study the nobility, especially from the standpoint of its origin. Put simply, it is time to move past the demographic classifications of Īrānī, Tūrānī, Afghan, Indian Muslim, and Rajput.

It is of course clear that the Mughal high nobility was largely one of élite émigrés. Indeed, the very similarity of the vocabulary used in Persianate histories and ethnographies in referring to a range of communities and social collectives from the Iranian plateau and the steppe to the Indo-Gangetic plains presents some interesting possibilities. To return to a point raised in Chapter 4, does this mean we can possibly see social and organisational similarities between groups like the Qizilbāsh and Kurdish *oymāqs*, the Afghan clans that descended from Roh into the plains, and the Rajput communities that integrated comparatively easily into the Mughal system? If such similarities are found, this might even suggest that social norms and cultural practices brought by various peoples in the near and distant past from across the Indus took root in fertile ground in North India. To then return to the limitations of modern concepts of indigenousness or the lack thereof in premodern populations would be a retreat from far more interesting questions of structural and cultural commonalities between medieval North India, Central Asia and Iran, such that these produced comparable social groups and sociocultural phenomena in the early modern period. The answer to these questions would seem to mirror Foltz's assertion of sociocultural unity between élite groups in these geographical regions in another comparable population, namely, martial communities. It would perhaps also help us in reflecting on Stewart Gordon's explication of Mughal success in North India as a "military-cultural" zone as opposed to the Deccan.

The question of the relationship between military roles and status identities is the most obvious standpoint whence to continue the study of the relationship between status and identity that has been the central thematic concern of this thesis. It is already clear from the work of Subah Dayal that there existed some kind of relationship, a filtering down, of elements of aristocratic status identity that became associated with prestigious military roles.[1028] Questions about the precise relationship between *mansabdārs*' identity and that of their retinue remain unanswered, which is all the more unfortunate given we know from the work of Guha that the arrival of Mughal armies in the Deccan stimulated considerable shifts in the politics of identity

[1028] Dayal, "Making the Mughal Soldier," 873, 889-892

among local military groups.[1029] We can further ask what kinds of kinship ties, or possibly those once characterised by scholarship as "tribal," existed among communities like the Afghans of late medieval North India.[1030] However, these concerns were beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, the failure of the *umarā* to survive the civil wars of the 18th century also suggests some historiographical possibilities. To some extent, the inherently transformative nature of the 1712-1724 period and the demise of the high nobility suggests it is to this point, rather than the late 17th century, that the terminal crisis of the Mughal political system must be dated. This would support Zakir Hussain's view that despite the fiscal pressure arising from the conquest of the Deccan, the imperial administration remained functional into Bahādur Shāh's reign. More broadly, I am brought to think of Gagan Sood's observation that the continual presence of an *umarā* and its incorporation and re-incorporation into successive dynasties in the geographical setting of Hindūstān (i.e. the Indo-Gangetic plain) constituted the central thread of Mughal historiography and political thought towards the end of the 17th century.[1031] As has been suggested in the fifth chapter, the diffusion of *umarā* status culture and self-representation across a wider social stratum seems to have led to the gradual self-conceptualisation by the *sharīf* class of itself as the bearer of the imperial heritage of the Delhi court since Sultanate times, something which we first see in Āzād Bilgrāmī and which becomes increasingly visible in 19th century texts. I would tentatively suggest that this might represent a process analogous to that described by Baki Tezcan in early modern Ottoman society as the expansion of the "political nation," i.e. the population that influenced and played a legitimate role in government, previously limited to court-based actors.[1032] If we then see Muslim literati of the landowning élite as self-conceptualised bearers of a political tradition that had ceased to find expression in any political reality, I believe we will be better placed to understand their response to the experience of colonialism, and trace deeper, hitherto unsuspected sources of phenomena like the new Islamicate historiography and the reformism of the 19th century.

[1029] Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity*, 83-88
[1030] Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, Sepoy*, 32-33, 65
[1031] Sood, "A Political Sociology of Empire," 1291
[1032] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press: 2010), 11, 240

Glossary

Amīr: A *mansabdār* of high rank, a nobleman. Generally referred to *mansabdārs* with a rank above 1,000 *zāt*.

Bakhshī: A military paymaster. The most senior was the *Mīr Bakhshī*, one of the three ministers.

Dīvān: A revenue-officer. Referred to *dīvāns* of provinces, various *dīvāns* in the central government under the *vazīr*, and the seneschals or managers of noble and princely households.

Jāgīr: A temporary assignment of a landholding to a *mansabdār*, who was entitled to the government share of that landholding's revenue; incomes generally corresponded to *mansab*.

Guroh: a faintly pejorative term that seems to have meant "faction" in courtly usage.

Khān: A title whose award appended to the personal name (*khitāb-i khānī*) preceded the award of higher ranking titles, and indicated status above that of most *mansabdārs* but not quite that of *amīr*.

Khān Sāmān: The grand steward, in charge of the Emperor's household, palaces, and workshops, and of diplomatic ceremonial. One of the three senior ministers.

Khānazād: "Born into the house," a term indicating connections by patronage. Originally referred to *mansabdārs* whose forebears had belonged to the high nobility, by the early 18th century referred to any *mansabdār* whose ancestors had held *mansabs*.

Mansab: Non-hereditary rank and position denoted by numerical rank and title. In this thesis *mansab* rank means *zāt*, i.e. a numerical rank indicating seniority, not *savār*, indicating the actual number of a nobleman's cavalry contingent.

Mansabdār: An officer awarded a *mansab*.

Sadr: Also *Sadr al-Sudūr*. Officer in charge of religious patronage, of seniority just below the three senior ministers.

Umarā: plural of *amīr*, indicating the nobility as a whole. By the 18th century referred to all historical *mansabdārs*.

Vakīl: Also *Madār al-Muhamm*. Vicegerent or co-regent of the empire, an office of enormous responsibility, senior to the three ministries. Only intermittently appointed.

Vazīr: Also called the *Dīvān* or *dīvān vazīr*. Chief fiscal officer, one of the three ministers of the central government.

Appendix 1: Umarā of Tūrān

Khvajas:

1. Sultan Khvāja Naqshbandī
2. ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīroz Jang, an Ahrār
3. ʿAbd al-Rahīm Khvāja Jūybārī
4. Tayyib Khvāja Jūybārī
5. Khvāja Sābir, Nusrat Khān Khān Daurān, son of Khvāja Hisārī Naqshbandī
6. Muʿtaqad Khān Mīrzā Makkī, an Ahrār
7. Ghairat Khān Khvāja Kāmgār, nephew of ʿAbdullāh Khān
8. ʿAbdullāh Khān Naqshbandī, Safdar Khān

Chaghatāys:

1. Qulīj Khān Andijānī of the Jānī Qurbānī
2. Qayā Khān Gung
3. Muhibb ʿAlī Khān
4. Rustam Khān
5. Shujāʿat Khān Muqīm
6. Saʿīd Khān Chaghatāy or Chābūq
7. Qāsim ʿAlī Khān, a relation of the Arghūns
8. Qāsim Khān
9. Jānī Beg, a Tarkhān
10. Shāh Rukh, a Timurid dynast
11. Samānjī Khān Mughal (evidently a Mughūl)
12. Hasan Beg Badakhshī
13. Mīrzā Ghāzī Beg, a Tarkhān
14. Shāh Beg Khān Daurān, an Arghūn
15. ʿAbd al-Subhān Dūlday
16. Hāshim Khān son of Qāsim Khān Mīr Bahr
17. Mīrzā Īsá, a Tarkhān
18. Khān ʿĀlam Dūlday
19. Najābat Khān Mīrzā Shujāʿ, a Timurid dynast

20. Saʿīd Khān Zafar Jang
21. Tarbiyat Khān Barlās
22. Qāsim Khān II, son of Hāshim Khān

Uzbeks:

1. Bahādur Khān Ūzbak, ʿAbd an-Nabī
2. Shamsher Khān Arslān Beg Ūzbak
3. Yūsuf Muhammad Khān Tāshqandī
4. Shāh Qulī Khān
5. Shādī Khān Ūzbak
6. Qulīj Khān (fl. 1645)
7. Allah Qulī Khān Ūzbak, son of Ilangtosh

Retainers and slaves:

1. ʿAbd al-Muttalib, of the "Miyānkāl Aymaqs of Samarqand"
2. Lāla Bāz Beg Bahādur, Jahāngīr Qulī Khān I; a Qalmāq and slave of Prince Muhammad Hakīm
3. Sardār Khān, son of Bāqī Khān chela-i qalmāq
4. Tāsh Beg Qurchī

Non-Tūrānī/Unknown:

1. Ikhlās Khān Shaikh Ilāhdiyā
2. Maʿsūm Khān Farkhundī
3. ʿAzīz Koka of the Atka-khayl
4. Naurang Khān of the Atka-khayl
5. ʿAlī Beg Akbar-shāhī, a Badakhshī
6. Jahāngīr Qulī Khān II of the Atka-khayl
7. Fidāī Khān

Appendix 2: Governors and Ministers 1605-1686

Vakīl (Vicegerent):

- 1605-1611: Amīr al-Umarā Sharīf Khān
- 1611-1622: Iʿtimād ad-Daula Ghiyās Beg Tihrānī
- 1622-1626: Āsaf Khān (first term)
- 1626-1627: Mahābat Khān
- 1627-1640: Āsaf Khān (second term)

Dīvān Vazīr:

- 1605: Jaʿfar Beg Āsaf Khān Qazvīnī
- Late 1605/1606: Vazīr al-Mulk & Vazīr Khān Muqīm
- 1607: Vazīr al-Mulk (died in office) and Iʿtimād ad-Daula Ghiyās Beg
- 1607-1608: Jaʿfar Beg Āsaf Khān Qazvīnī (2nd term)
- 1608-1611: Khvāja Abūl Hasan
- 1611-1622: Iʿtimād ad-Daula Ghiyās Beg Tihrānī
- 1622-1627: Khvāja Abūl Hasan (2nd term)
- 1627-1628: Vazīr Khān Shāhjahānī
- 1628-1629: Irādat Khān
- 1629-1638: Afzal Khān Shīrāzī (died in office)
- 1639-1646: Islām Khān Mashhadī
- 1646-1656: Saʿdullāh Khān (died in office)
- 1656-1657: Muʿazzam Khān Mīr Jumla
- 1657-1658: Jaʿfar Khān
- 1658-1663: Muʿazzam Khān Mīr Jumla (died in office)
- 1663: Fāzil Khān ʿAlá al-Mulk (died in office)
- 1663-1670: Jaʿfar Khān (died in office)
- 1671-1673: Asad Khān Āsaf ad-Daula
- 1673-1676: (Vacant), Kifāyat Khān and Amānat Khān as deputies
- 1676-: Asad Khān Āsaf ad-Daula

Mīr Bakhshī:

- 1605-1606: Shaykh Farīd Bukhārī
- 1606-1607: Vazīr al-Mulk
- 1607-1608: ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Muzaffar Khān Maʿmūrī
- 1608-1613: Khvāja Jahān
- 1613-1614: Khvāja Abūl Hasan
- 1614-1620: Ibrāhīm Khān Fath Jang

- 1620-1622: Sādiq Khān
- 1622-1626: Muzaffar Khān Maʿmūrī (2nd term)
- February-October 1626: Muʿtamad Khān, Muhammad Sharīf
- 1626-1627: Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī
- 1627-1628: Irādat Khān
- 1628-1634: Sādiq Khān (2nd term, died in office)
- 1634-1635: Islām Khān Mashhadī
- 1635-1637: Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī (2nd term, died in office)
- 1637-1639: Islām Khān Mashhadī (2nd term)
- 1640-1644: Salābat Khān
- 1644-1647: Asālat Khān
- 1647-1649: Jaʿfar Khān
- 1649-1651: Khalīlullāh Khān
- 1651-1653: Mahābat Khān II Luhrāsp
- 1653-1657: Iʿtiqād Khān Bahman Yār
- 1657: Dānishmand Khān
- 1658-1667: Mīr Muhammad Amīn (son of Mīr Jumla)
- 1667-1670: Dānishmand Khān (2nd term, dies in office)
- 1670: Lashkar Khān (dies in office)
- 1671-1674: Asad Khān Āsaf ad-Daula
- 1674-1679: Sarbuland Khān
- 1679-1680: Rūhullāh Khān
- 1680-1681: Himmat Khān (dies in office)
- 1681-: Ashraf Khān

Khān Sāmān:

- 1614-1620: Irādat Khān
- 1620-1627: Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī
- 1627-1629: Afzal Khān
- 1629-1635: Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī (2nd term)
- 1636-1643: Makramat Khān
- 1643-1646: Saʿdullāh Khān
- 1646-1652: Fāzil Khān ʿAlá al-Mulk
- 1652-1658: Iʿtiqād Khān Mīrzā Bahman Yār
- 1658-1663: Fāzil Khān ʿAlá al-Mulk (2nd term)
- 1663-1674: Ashraf Khān
- 1676-1678: Rūhullāh Khān
- 1678-1687: Muhammad ʿAlī Khān

Sadr:

- 1605-1611: Mīrān Sadr-i Jahān (died in office)
- 1611-1625: Sayyid Ahmad Qādirī
- 1625-1642: Mīr ʿAlī ʿAskar Mūsavī Khān
- 1642-1648: Sayyid Jalāl Bukhārī (died in office)
- 1648-1658: Sayyid Hidāyatullāh Qādirī
- 1658-1661: Mīrak Shaykh Haravī
- 1661-1667: ʿĀbid Khān, the future Qulīj Khān
- 1667-1681: Razavī Khān Bukhārī (died in office)
- 1681-1682: Qulīj Khān (2nd term)
- 1682-: Sharīf Khān

The High Nobility 1605-1686

1. ʿAbd al-Rahīm Khān-i Khānān, son of Bairām Khān
2. ʿAbd al-Subhān, brother of Khān-i ʿĀlam Dūlday
3. ʿAbd al-Vahhāb (Qāzī)
4. ʿAbdullāh Khān Fīroz Jang, Ahrār Khvājazāda of Bukhārā
5. ʿAlī Mardān Khān Amīr-ul-Umarā, Safavid governor of Qandahār
6. ʿAzam Khān Fidāī Koka, elder brother of Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh
7. Abū Saʿīd, grandson of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
8. Afzal Khān Shīrāzī, Mullā Shukrullāh, *Dīvān* of Shāh Jahān's princely household
9. Ahmad Beg Khān, grandson of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
10. Ahmad Beg Khān Kābulī, Chaghatāy nobleman
11. Allāh Qulī Khān, Uzbek of the Almān tribe
12. Allāh Vīrdī Khān
13. Amīr Khān, son of Qāsim Khān Namakīn
14. Amīr Khān Mīr Mīrān (d. 1698), son of Khalīlullāh Khān
15. ʿĀqil Khān Rāzī, Sayyid of Khvāf
16. Asad Khān, son of Zūlfiqār Khān Qarāmānlū
17. Āsaf Khān, later Yamīn al-Daula, son of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
18. Asālat Khān, son of Mīr Mīrān Yazdī
19. Ashraf Khān, son of Islām Khān Mashhadī
20. Bahādur Khān Uzbak, previously Shībānīd governor of Mashhad
21. Bāqir Khān of the Najm-i Sānī family of Isfahān
22. Dānishmand Khān, Mullā Shafīʿa
23. Dārāb Khān, son of Mukhtār Khān of Sabzvār
24. Dāūd Khān (Qurayshī)
25. Dilāvar Khān Kākar
26. Diler Khān, brother of Bahādur Khān Rohilla
27. Fāzil Khān, Mullā ʿAlā al-Mulk Tūnī, *Khān Sāmān*
28. Fidāī Khān
29. Ghairat Khān, nephew of Abdullāh Khān Fīrūz Jang

30. Ghazanfar Khān, son of Allāh Vīrdī Khān
31. Hāmid Khān, later entitled Mujāhid Khān (son of Murtazá Khān Sayyid Shāh Muhammad)
32. Hasan ʿAlī Khān, son of Allāh Vīrdī Khān)
33. Hasan ʿAlī Khān Turkmān
34. Hāshim Khān, son of Qāsim Khān Mīr Bahr, a Chaghatāy
35. Himmat Khān, son of Islām Khān Badakhshī, *Mīr Bakhshī*
36. Hoshdār Khān, son of Multafat Khān ʿAzam Khān ʿĀlamgīrshāhī, of the Sayyids of Sāva
37. Husayn Beg Khān, nephew and son-in-law of ʿAlī Mardān Khān
38. Iʿtibār Khān the eunuch
39. Iʿtimād ad-Daula Ghiyās Beg Tihrānī, vakīl
40. Iʿtiqād Khān (Mīrzā Shāpūr), son of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
41. Iʿtiqād Khān Mīrzā Bahman Yār, son of Yamīn ad-Daula
42. Ibrāhīm Khān Fath Jang, son of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
43. Ibrāhīm Khānsof ʿAlī Mardān Khān
44. Iftikhār Khān Sultān Husayn, son of Asālat Khān Bakhshī Mīr Mīrān
45. Irādat Khān Mīr Muhammad Bāqir, ʿAzam Khān; kinsman of Āsaf Khān; Sayyid of Sāva and Khān Sāmān
46. Irādat Khān II Mīr Ishāq, son of Irādat Khān I;
47. Islām Khān (Chishtī), nephew of Qutb al-Dīn Khān Koka
48. Islām Khān Badakhshī
49. Islām Khān Mashhadī, Bakhshī and Vazīr
50. Islām Khān Rūmī, Husayn Pāshā of Basra
51. Izzat Khān
52. Jaʿfar Beg Āsaf Khān Qazvīnī, kinsman of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
53. Jaʿfar Khān, son of Sādiq Khān Bakhshī
54. Jahāngīr Qulī Khān, son of Khān-i ʿAzam Koka
55. Jān Sipār Khān (Turkmān)
56. Jaswant Singh Rāṭhor, Mahārāja of Jodhpur
57. Khalīlullāh Khān, son of Mīr Mīrān
58. Khān Daurān Nasrat Jang
59. Khān Daurān Sayyad Mahmūd Nasīrī Khān, son of the preceding
60. Khān Jahān Kokaltāsh, Mīr Malik Husayn Khvāfī
61. Khān Jahān Lodī, of the Lodī Afghans
62. Khān Zamān Mīrzā Amānī, son of Mahābat Khān I
63. Khān Zamān Mīr Khalīl; son of ‘Azam Khān of Sāva
64. Khān-i ʿĀlam Dūlday, a Chaghatay Amīr
65. Khān-i ʿAzam ʿAzīz Koka, son of Shams al-Dīn Khān Atga
66. Khavās Khān, Daulat Khān Māyī
67. Khvāja Abūl Hasan Turbatī, son-in-law of Iʿtimād ad-Daula, *Bakhshī*
68. Khvāja Bāqī Khān Sher Khvāja
69. Khvāja Jahān Kābulī, Bakhshī
70. Lāla Beg Bāz Bahādur Kābulī, a Qalmāq

71. Lashkar Khān, Abūl Hasan Mashhadī
72. Lashkar Khān, Jān Nisār Khān Yādgār Beg, *Bakhshī*
73. Mahābat Khān I Khān Khānān, Vakīl
74. Mahābat Khān II Mīrzā Luhrāsp, son of the preceding
75. Makramat Khān, Mullā Murād, *Khān Sāmān*
76. Mān Singh Kachwāhā, Rāja of Amber
77. Mīr Alī ʿAskar Mūsavī Khān, Sadr
78. Mīr Muhammad Amīn Khān Hāfiz, son of Mīr Jumla
79. Mīrak Shaykh Haravī, Sadr
80. Mīrān Sadr-i Jahān Pinhānī, Sadr
81. Mīrzā ʿAlī Beg Akbarshāhī
82. Mīrzā Ghāzī Beg Tarkhān, Arghūn dynast
83. Mīrzā ʿĪsá Tarkhān, Arghūn dynast
84. Mīrzā Rustam Safavī, Safavid dynast
85. Mīrzā Shāh Rukh, Timurid dynast of Badakhshān
86. Muʿazzam Khān Mīr Jumla Ardistānī, *Vazīr* and *Bakhshī*
87. Muʿazzam Khān Shaykh Bāyazīd Koka
88. Muʿtamad Khān, *Bakhshī*
89. Muʿtaqad Khān Koka, Mīrzā Makkī
90. Mubāriz Khān Mīr Kull
91. Mughal Khān, son of Zayn Khān Koka;
92. Mughal Khān, son of Tāhir Khān Balkhī
93. Muhammad ʿAlī Khān Khān Sāmān
94. Muhtasham Khān, Mīr Ibrāhīm, son of Shaykh Mīr Khvāfī
95. Mukarram Khān, son of Muʿazzam Khān Bāyazīd;
96. Mukhtār Khān Sabzvārī
97. Muqarrab Khān
98. Murtazá Khān, son of Mīrān Sadr-i Jahān
99. Murtazá Khān Sayyid Shāh Muhammad
100. Muzaffar Khān, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Razzāq Maʿmūrī
101. Najābat Khān Mīrzā Shujāʿ, Timurid dynast
102. Nāmdār Khān, son of Jaʿfar Khān
103. Qāsim Khān Mīr Abūl Qāsim Namakīn
104. Qāsim Khān Juvaynī, son-in-law of Āsaf Khān
105. Qāsim Khān Muhammad Qāsim, son of Hāshim Khān, a Chaghatāy
106. Qubād Khān, Mīr Akhor of Bukhārā
107. Qulīj Khān Khvāja ʿĀbid, Sadr
108. Qulīj Khān Tūrānī
109. Qulīj Khān Ulfatī Andijānī Jānī Qurbānī, a Chaghatāy
110. Qutb al-Dīn Khān Koka
111. Rāja Baiṭhal Dās
112. Rāja Bikramājīt, Patr Dās Khatrī
113. Rāja Kalyān (Rāwal Kalyān Mal Bhāṭī of Jaisalmer)
114. Rashīd Khān (Afghān)

115. Razavī Khān Bukhārī, Sadr
116. Rūh al-Amīn Shahristānī of Isfahān, *Khān Sāmān* and *Bakhshī*
117. Rūhullāh Khān, son of Khalīlullāh Khān
118. Saʿdullāh Khān ʿAllāmī Fahāmī Jumlat al-Mulk, *Vazīr*
119. Saʿīd Khān Bahādur Zafar Jang, son of Ahmad Beg Khān Kābulī
120. Saʿīd Khān Chaghtāy, a Chaghatāy
121. Saʿīd Khān II Abdullāh Khān, son of Saʿīd Khān Zafar Jang
122. Sādiq Khān Bakhshī, nephew of Iʿtimād ad-Daula
123. Safī Khān, son of Islām Khān Mashhadī
124. Sayf Khān, son of Tarbiyat Khān Fakhr al-Dīn
125. Sayf Khān Mīrzā Safī, son-in-law of Āsaf Khān
126. Salābat Khān Raushan Zamīr, son of Sādiq Khān, *Bakhshī*
127. Sarbuland Khān Khvāja Rahmatullāh, nephew of Najābat Khān; *Bakhshī*
128. Sardār Khān Shāhjahānī
129. Sayyid Ahmad Khān, otherwise unknown
130. Sayyid Ahmad Qādirī, Sadr, otherwise unknown
131. Sayyid Amīr Khān Khvāfī, brother of Shaykh Mīr
132. Sayyid Bahvā Bukhārī, a kinsman of Shaykh Farīd
133. Sayyid Bāyazīd Bukhārī Mustafá Khān, otherwise unknown
134. Sayyid Hidāyatullāh Qādirī, Sadr, son of Sayyid Ahmad Qādirī
135. Sayyid Jalāl Bukhārī, Sadr
136. Sayyid Shujāʿat Khān Bārha
137. Sayyid Vāris, otherwise unknown
138. Shād Khān (Uzbeg)
139. Shāh ʿAlī, presumably Sayyid Shāh ʿAlī of the Bādshāhnāma
140. Shāh Beg Khān Daurān, a Chaghatāy
141. Shāh Navāz Khān Safavī, son of Mīrzā Rustam
142. Shāh Qulī Khān Vaqqās Hājī, nobleman of Bukhārā
143. Shamsher Khān Ūzbak, nobleman of Bukhārā
144. Sharīf Khān, Sadr
145. Sharīf Khān Amīr-ul-Umarā, *vakīl*
146. Shāyista Khān, son of Āsaf Khān
147. Shaykh Farīd Bukhārī, Bakhshī
148. Sher Khān, Nāhar Khān Tonvar
149. Sipāhdār Khān Safavī
150. Tāhir Khān Balkhī
151. Tāj Khān Tāsh Beg Qurchī
152. Tarbiyat Khān Barlās
153. Tarbiyat Khān Fakhr al-Dīn Ahmad
154. Vazīr al-Mulk Jān Beg
155. Vazīr Khān Muqīm, Vazīr
156. Vazīr Khān Hakīm ʿAlīm al-Dīn (Vazīr Khān Shāhjahānī)
157. Vazīr Khān Muhammad Tāhir
158. Yūsuf Muhammad Khān Tāshkandī

159. Zafar Khān, son of Zayn Khān Kokas
160. Zafar Khān Turbatī, son of Khvāja Abūl Hasan
161. Zūlfiqār Khān Qarāmānlū, Khānlar, brother of Farhād Khān

Abbreviations

ʿĀlamgīrnāma: ʿĀlamgīrnāma, Asiatic Society edition.

Bādshāhnāma: Bādshāhnāma of Lāhaurī, Asiatic Society edition

CUP: Cambridge University Press

Irādat Khān: Tārīkh-i Irādat Khān, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library manuscript.

Jahāngīrnāma: The Jahāngīrnāma, translated by Thackston.

JESHO: Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient

Khvāfī Khān: Muntakhab al-Lubāb, Asiatic Society edition.

MAS: Modern Asian Studies

Maāsir: *Maāsir al-Umarā*, Asiatic Society edition.

Maāsir-ul-Umarā: The Maāthir-ul-Umarā, translated by Beveridge and Prasad.

OUP: Oxford University Press

PIHC: Proceedings of the Indian History Congress

TJAS: The Journal of Asian Studies

PIHC: Proceedings of the Indian History Congress

Zakhīrat: *Zakhīrat al-Khavānīn*, edited by Syed Moinul Haque

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