Tales Bent Backward:
Early Modern Local History in Persianate Transregional Contexts
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> Thus a Shāh will rise to lordly height
> and adorn his gate with day and night.
> He will conquer till the ends of lands
> and he'll make empire of world's expanse.
> But it's not to be within Iran;
> for this fortune falls on Hindustan.

- *Tārīkh-i Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb Shāhī* (1026/1617), anonymous author

In 1084 AH/1673 CE, Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī, a former comptroller of religious endowments (*mustawfī*) arrived in the Quṭb Shāhī capital of Hyderabad, in Telangana, after an arduous journey from his home city, Yazd, in the Safavid realm. He had been a member of the urban notable class in Yazd, and he was a master of the Persian literary arts, with a penchant for history. Despite his elevated position in Yazd, Mufīd had made a play at advancing his career at the court in Iṣfahān. After this had failed, he had chosen to abandon his homeland for the opportunities that the realms of Hind promised a man of his birth and talents, and so he made his way to the Deccan. He would remain in Hyderabad for only a little over three years, and, deriding it with the appellation "Kadūratābād," the "Abode of Gloom," he would head north in search of patronage. He traveled to Ujjain in 1088/1677, where he found favour at the court of the Mughal prince, Sulṭān Muḥammad Akbar, and then finally settled in the city of Multān. Two years later, in 1090/1679, he completed a three-volume, encyclopedic history of Yazd, from primeval times to his own era, during the Safavids' rule. Its title, *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī* (hereafter *JM*), was meant to pun on the author's own cognomen, Mufīd, which means "useful." Thus, it translates

alternatively as "The Compendium of Mufīd" or "The Useful Compendium." He arranged the first two volumes in chronicle form. The lengthy third volume complemented the narrative of the first two books with biographies of the city's notable personages and disquisitions on its monumental places.[1] In the last volume's conclusion, he inserted a first-person narrative of his life and journey from Yazd to Hind, which he composed in the highly ornamented style of Persian belles-lettres.[2] This self-narrative serves as a kind of coda, insinuating that the history of Yazd culminated in the story of his own transplantation to India.[3] In both works, the author regularly complains that during his sojourn in Hyderabad he was overwhelmed by anxiety, homesickness, and insomnia. There, he turned for relief to the one remedy that had always comforted him before—books.

Devouring one such volume, he encountered the triumphant couplets, quoted at the top of this article. This was an anonymous work of history, *Tārīkh-i Sulṭān*

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[1] There are a few seventeenth-eighteenth-century manuscripts preserved in European libraries that contain *JM,* all produced in India. None of these contain all three volumes together. Volume 1: BnF Suppl Pers 349 (late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century copies). Volume 2: a complete copy is in Hyderabad, Salar Jung Ms 84; selections from the work are preserved in a *majmūʿah* in the British Library Or 1963, fols. 57a-77a. Volume 3: There is a seventeenth-century holograph copy (bound in two codices) at the British Library: Or. 210 and Or. 211; there is also an autograph copy: BnF Suppl Pers 1824. Later manuscripts in Iranian collections will be discussed below. There is a printed edition, containing the complete first and third volumes and the selections from the second volume contained in the British Library *majmūʿah*: Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī, *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī*, ed. Iraj Afshar, 3 vols. (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 2007).

[2] There is a slightly longer version of this autobiographical account of the author's life and travels in the Bodleian Library, bearing the title *Risālah* (Epistle). (Bodleian Library Ms. Ouseley 90). The provenance of the manuscript is not known, but it dates from late seventeenth- or possibly eighteenth-century India. A paleographical comparison of the hands in the *Risālah* and the holograph copy of *JM* (British Library, Or 210 and Or 211) demonstrates that Ouseley 90 is not a holograph copy of the *Risālah*. (The copyist of the *Risālah* wrote in *naskh*, but Mufīd inscribed the bulk of *JM* in *nastaʿlīq*; however, comparison is possible because Mufīd inscribed the Arabic passages in *JM* in *naskh*.) Thus, it is not certain that the additions contained in it are the authors' own or a later augmentation.

[3] The inclusion of this autobiographical material is not a peculiarity of the holograph manuscript. All other, subsequent, extant copies of the third volume reproduce this pairing of history of Yazd with the author's self-narrative. The slightly longer, stand-alone version of the *Risālah* exists in only one copy, the Bodleian manuscript.

Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh (hereafter *TQS*),[4] which detailed the history of the Quṭb Shāhī

dynasty (ruled 901/1496 to 1098/1687).[5] *TQS* was completed in 1026/1617, just under

sixty years before Mufīd would happen upon it, and the verses referred to an event

that had occurred two centuries previously. The poem comprised a prognosticatory

proclamation that had supposedly predicted the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty's transplantation

from Iran to India and imminent rise to power in that auspicious land. The Quṭb Shāhs

were descended from the Turkoman Qarā Qūyunlū princes of western Iran, who, in

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[4] The work is usually known as *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*. Occasionally, the title is written as: *Tārīkh-i Guzīdah-i Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb Shāhī*, as in BnF Suppl Pers 174. No complete critical edition of *Tārīkh-i Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb* has yet been published. Citations in the earliest four manuscripts of *TQS* are as follows: 1.) Kitābkhānah va Mūzah-i Millī-Malik (hereafter Millī-Malik) Ms. 3885 (Note: this codex has been paginated rather than foliated; for this reason, I have cited the existing page numbers rather than folio numbers. The pagination begins on the incipit page, which should properly be folio 1b. I am very grateful to Golriz Farshi (University of Michigan) for providing me with a PDF of this manuscript, which was otherwise inaccessible to me.); 2.) BnF Suppl. Pers 1809; 3.) India Office (hereafter IO) Isl. 179; 4.) Leiden Or. 1343. See below for a critical discussion of *TQS* and its full manuscript history. Minorsky published an abridged English translation of the opening section of the work in: V. Minorsky,"The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 17.1 (1955): pp. 50-73. He translated some sections in full, but simply summarised others. The original text reads more like a rough patchwork of accounts from conflicting sources; it often switches between first and third person accounts and jumps backwards and forwards in time. Minorsky's translation makes the account into a seamless narrative, which obscures the unfinished, polyvocal character of the work. Moreover, Minorsky used two manuscripts for his translation: The Cambridge, Christ's College, MS. Dd. 4.10, which he collated with BnF Suppl. Pers 174. The latter is a relatively late manuscript (probably 18th century) and contains later additions. It is unclear why he did not reference much older BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, which is in the same collection. Lieutenant-Colonel John Briggs published an English translation of *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī* in 1829, which he inserted into his multivolume translation of Firishtah's *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, whose treatment of the Quṭb Shāhs he found wanting. Briggs' translation is a selective and fanciful one, which he made from a single (unidentified) manuscript. See: Mahomed Kasim Ferishta, "History of the Kings of Golconda Entitled Kootb Shahy," in *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India Till the Year 1612*, ed. and trans. John Briggs, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1981), pp. 194-292.

[5] The Quṭb Shāhī dynasty was one of the five states that ruled the Deccan after the fall of the Bahmanids. These dynasties were the ʿImād Shāhīs of Berār, the Barīd Shāhīs of Bīdar, the ʿAdīl Shāhīs of Bījāpūr, the Niẓām Shāhīs of Aḥmadnagar. The Barīd Shāhs absorbed the ʿImād Shāhs into their kingdom at the end of the tenth/sixteenth century, leaving four sultanates until the Mughal conquest of the Deccan. The latest and most rigorous work on the Deccan sultanates is the Ph.D. dissertation Roy S. Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates, 1565-1636" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2012). Also: Roy Fischel, "Origin Narratives, Legitimacy, and the Practice of Cosmopolitan Language in the Early Modern Deccan," in *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud: Sources, itinéraires, langues (XVIᵉ-XVIIIᵉ siècle),* a special issue of *Purṣārtha* 33 (2015): pp. 71-94. Aside from Fischel's work, the classic historical surveys of the Deccani sultanates are as follows: Haroon Khan Sherwani, *History of Medieval Deccan*, *1295-1724*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad, 1974); *History of the Quṭb Shāhī Dynasty* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlat Publishers, 1974); *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharial, 1985).

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872/1467, had been defeated and hunted down by the rival Āq Qūyunlū dynasty; the versified prediction implied that by relocating to Hind, the fallen family would be redeemed of their ignominious defeat. Indeed, the fulfillment of that destiny is precisely what *TQS* goes on to recount: In the hundreds of folios that follow those verses, the youthful Qarā Qūyunlū prince and destined founder of the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty, called Sulṭān Qulī (Quṭb al-Mulk), resettles in the Deccan, where he finds the favour of the reigning Bahmanī emperor, and, after that ruler's demise, establishes his own powerful kingdom in the eastern Deccan region of Telangana.

Yet, for Mufīd, more poignant than the redemptive and prognosticatory resonances of these verses, was the sense of hope they evoked— hope for material gain and the supposed destiny of conquest that the realms of Hind were though to avail elite men of Iran, be they Turk or Tājīk. These jubilant sentiments must have vexed Mufīd, who had been compelled to cross the ocean by exactly this kind of promise, only to find himself lost in a gloomy abode of disappointment. In the following quatrain, penned outside of Hyderabad, he epitomised his feelings regret:

Rest flees the foreigner's[6] breast at night's dark hour.	*har shab bi-ravad zi-sīnah ārām-i gharīb*
He drinks from sorrow's cup; his mouth turns sour.	*va'z sharbat-i ghum talkh buvad kām-i gharīb*
Though no grief's worse than death, or so they say,	*gūyand kih az marg batar nīst ghumī*
worse still, no doubt, the foreigner's evening hour.	*shakk nīst k-z-ān batar bavad shām-i gharīb*[7]

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[6] The Persian word translated as "foreigner" is g*harīb*. It signifies a range of meanings in Persian as well as in Arabic, from which the Persian derives. The word is related to the word for west and westerner (*gharb* and *gharbī*), and the term gharīb contains a bit of this sense within it. The implication in the poem is that the foreigner's suffering manifests as a specific kind of misery felt by Westerners. The pun is further twisted around a conceit revolving around the root-meaning of the word gharīb, which has to do with the setting of the sun (Arabic: *gharaba / yaghrubu*): In the evening, the poet is forced to witness the sun setting in the west, which painfully reminds him of his homeland.
[7] The verses in the holograph manuscript of *JM* in British Library are found in: Or. 211, fol. 197b. The comparable pace in the published edition is Mufīd, *JM*, 3:795. In Mufīd's *Risālah*: Bodleian Library, Ms. Ouseley 90, p. 169 (This manuscript has been paginated rather than foliated.)

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That sour taste must have seemed twice as acrid each time Mufīd was reminded of the auspicious fate that awaited luckier newcomers to Hind. Nonetheless, when he read a few folios further into that book on the Quṭb Shāhs, he must have been consoled to discover that even the author of those irritatingly optimistic verses must not really have been so certain about Hind's beneficence. Comparing Hind to the land of Iran (*Īrān-zamīn*), the anonymous author described the latter as "the best land in the world."[8] Like so many court historians in the Deccan, the anonymous author was almost certainly of an immigrant background as well, and Mufīd would likely have read the author's juxtaposition of these seemingly contradictory sentiments about the these two places as exemplifying the perplexing experiences of émigrés who found themselves in a place that was at once so cosmopolitan and yet so alien. This tension, evident in the book Mufīd found, highlights important questions that shaped migrants' experiences in general: How did they conceptualise the relationship between the spaces of Iran and Hind? How did these migrants conceive of home? What did it mean to them? On this issue, Mufīd is less ambiguous than the author of *TQS*. He peppers *JM* with a popular *ḥadīth*, proclaiming homesickness a religious act (in Arabic): "Love of homeland (*waṭan*) is a part of faith (*ḥubb^u al-waṭan^i min al-īmān*)." According to Mufīd, *waṭan* (*vaṭan*, in Persian pronunciation) clearly meant the city of Yazd and its surroundings, not the entire land of Iran or the political realm ruled by the Safavids. Even still, these meditations on the relationship between Hind and Iran that Mufīd chanced upon in this anonymous book on the Quṭb Shāhs undoubtedly resonated with him, even if his primary affinity was with the relatively limited region

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[8] "…*Īrān-zamīn kih bihtarīn bilād-i āmal ast.*" Instead of the words "bilād-i ʿālam" (lands of the world), the earliest manuscript, Milli-Malik Ms. 3885, reads "*iqlīm-i ʿālam*" (clime of the world), perhaps meaning to emphasize its superior climate. *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 51; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 42b-43a; IO Isl. 179, fol. 33a; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 53b-54a.

of Yazd. But the situation is more complicated still; even though the author had

eventually settled permanently in Mughal territory, where he was serving in the house

of a Mughal prince, he dedicated his magnum opus (his "Useful Compendium") on

Yazd and his own exile in Hind to the reigning Safavid monarch, Shāh Sulaymān (r.

1077- 1105/1666-1694), whose realm he had abandoned. Clearly, Mufīd understood

his history of Yazd to have some import for the imperial realm, not just for Yazd. In

other words, Yazd's history had some use beyond its boundaries.

But how? Mufīd's fascination with *TQS* offers some clues. It turns out that the

works' evocation of immigrants' troubled sense of belonging was only the beginning

of Mufīd's concern with this book. *TQS* and the particular narrative it contained

became profoundly important for Mufīd as he attempted to compose his own

meditation on homeland. The augural poem in *TQS* appeared at a climactic moment in

the work, in the midst of the foundation legend of the Quṭb Shāh dynasty, which, as it

happens, took the form of the founder's migration to India. There, Sulṭān Qulī, the

dynasty's first ruler, makes the journey to the Deccan from Īrān-zamīn, and fulfills the

royal destiny that was predicted for him in the versified oracle. However, what really

gripped Mufīd when he read this work was that on his way to India, this future king of

Telangana stopped at an important shrine in Yazd in order to seek the blessing of one

of the important Sufi saints of the age, Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̲ānī.[9] The fact that

Mufīd's hometown appeared at the center of this story prompted Mufīd to copy this

section on Sulṭān Qulī's migration and visit to Yazd directly into his own history of

the city. This bit of borrowed text would play a pivotal role in Mufīd's work as a

whole. Exploring why and how Mufīd put it to work promises to help explain what he

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[9] The shrine is actually in the town of Taft, in the mountains on the outskirts of Yazd.

imagined the utility of his "useful compendium" was meant to be for his faraway homeland. His work, and especially his explicit appropriation and recontextualisation of this found-narrative from *TQS*, promises to have important implications for understanding the mentalities and social practices of the migrant communities from Iran in the early modern period. Toward this end, this article will explore the work that Mufīd *imagined* his literary project could perform: On the one hand, it explores how his writing could help him maintain a sense of belonging in both Hind and Iran. On the other hand, it considers how he presumed his book could influence real affairs in both Yazd and the Safavid court.

Foreigners and Circulation Societies in Hind

How does this study of Mufīd's engagement with this work he found in the
Deccan contribute to a growing body of scholarship on the cultural and social history
of migration between Iran and Hind in the early modern period? In the quatrain
quoted above from *JM*, Mufīd chose the word *gharīb* (foreigner) to describe himself.
This was a common appellation for migrants that the native Muslim populations of
the Deccan used for people like him, but it was also one that migrants self-applied,
sometimes proudly, to distinguish themselves from the various native populations,
Muslim and non-Muslim. The complex issues of identity and social formation that
surrounded the term gharīb is central to Mufīd's work; it has also drawn the attention
of historians who have wished to comprehend the role that foreignness played in
structuring the activities of migrants and their interactions with other actors in Hind
and Iran. This current section situates the present study in relation to this body of
scholarship on migration.

Gharībān like Mufīd and many historians of the Deccan had travelled a well-
worn path. The riches and fabled opportunities of Indian kingdoms had been luring
migrants and merchants since Ghaznavid times. Immigration redoubled in the
fourteenth century and accelerated into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, too, as
the Safavids challenged and alienated many elites from their power bases, especially
in the secondary cities around the realm.[10] A large proportion of the gharībs were

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[10] There has been a wealth of literature published on migration from western and central Asia into
South Asia during the late medieval and early modern periods. A concern with cosmopolitanism,
migration, and mobility, all issues that were deemed central to the study of migrations, commenced
with the publication of an edited volume on merchant networks in the Indian ocean and China sea
trading circuits, published in 1988, by Jean Aubin and Denys Lombard. Denys Lombard and Jean
Aubin, *Marchands et Hommes d'Affaires dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chin 13 ème siécles—20
ème siècles* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1988). The work was translated into
English and republished in 2000: *Asian merchants and businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China*

Tājīks, who were highly literate people of standing and means, frequently from sayyid lineages, and with expertise in the religious and rational sciences.[11] Their marketable skills as administrators, astrologers, and, relatedly, their expertise in Persian letters— especially in the genres of epistolary composition, historical writing, and panegyric poetry— had allowed for their mobility. Consequently, they traversed an expansive and cosmopolitan universe that was delimited by the utility of Persian language and Persian cultural idioms in urban centres and courtly environments, stretching from Anatolia to Transoxiana to the Deccan.[12] But Mufīd's expression of agitation and rootlessness was representative of many gharībān who voiced similar feelings of

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Sea (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). A number of studies in that collection focused on merchants from the lands of Iran, including Armenians, and, conversely, Hindu merchant communities in Iranian cities. On this latter subject, also see: Stephen Dale's study of Indian Merchant networks outside the Indian subcontinent: Stephen Frederic Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600- 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). In the early 1990s, Sanjay Subrahmanyam produced a number of pieces on early modern Indian Ocean political economies. In his article, "Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Elite Migration and Early Modern State Formation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51 (1992): pp. 340-362, Subrahmanyam shifted the focus from merchants to Iranian elites, who had immigrated to India. There he provided some details about the great proportion of Iranian elites in Indian courts, especially in the Deccan Sultanates, beginning in the fourteenth century. Building on Subrahmanyam's work, are two important quantitative studies that focused on biographical dictionaries: Masashi Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Elites to India During the 16th-18th Centuries," in *L'heritage Timouride: Iran, Asie Centrale, Inde Xve-Xviiie Siecles*, ed. Maria Szuppe (Tachkent: L'Institut français d'Etudes sur l'Asie centrale, 1997), pp. 129-143, and Abolghassem Dadvar, *Iranians in Mughal Politics and Society 1606–1658* (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1999).
[11] The term *Tājīk*s (as opposed to Turks) was a rather mutable designation that did not so much mark an ethnic identity, but rather signified a person who inhabited an urban setting and spoke (or more accurately, was literate in) the cosmopolitan language of Persian. Consequently, the elite among the Tājīk populace frequently attained administrative posts at court, and engaged in the composition of historical works, that chronicled events there. On the other hand, the term "Turk" was equally nuanced. Similarly, it should not be considered an ethnic or national marker either, despite the fact that peoples referred to as "Turks" usually spoke a Turkic language (although not exclusively), and often traced their ancestry to one of the legendary figures of the Central Asian steppe. In its most basic sense, the term referred to people of a nomadic or seminomadic lifestyle who made up the core fighting forces of freeborn cavalry, regardless of ancestry. These peoples saw themselves (and were seen by others) to be categorically different than city-dwellers. Tājīks referred to a variety of peoples as Turks, (often pejoratively), regardless of whether or not they spoke a Turkic language. In reality the boundaries between these categories was fluid, and, in practice, the terms Turk and Tājīk ultimately referenced a class of people who shared a common lifestyle and occupation more than any other kind of social category.
[12] Tājīks often mastered other arts as well that were in-high demand for royal ateliers, such as calligraphy, painting, gilding, plastic arts, and architecture.

exclusion, homesickness, and chauvinism in spite of the opportunities for success and
wealth that the realms of Hind afforded men of their station.

A good deal of scholarship has focused on the mentality of encounter between
the gharībān and the native communities of Hind and has highlighted this chauvinism
toward the native populations. Immigrants recognized differences between the many
native populations and judged them accordingly. In their eyes, native-born Muslims
occupied a higher position than the East African slaves or the various non-Muslim
populations. But immigrants considered themselves to be superior to all these groups;
they were distinguished by an urbanity that could only have come from their home
cities in Iran.[13] Indeed, Mufīd's characterization of the peoples he encountered in
India reproduces these sentiments.

This attitude accompanied a tendency for migrants to look back toward the
cities of Iran for a sense of purpose and communal identity. Indeed migrants returned
home when they could or at least maintained contacts with people who remained
behind. Some research has emphasised the circular nature of migration flows, which
engendered transregional social networks that connected communities in Iran with
immigrants in Hind.[14] Although the net movement of people was toward Hind, the

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[13] On the competition and animosity between these distinct social groups, the foreigners and the
Deccans, see the discussion in Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates."
Fischel discusses the antagonism between gharībān and Deccaniyān on pp. 76-89, and he explores the
self-identity of the foreigners in chapter 4, especially pp. 179-198. On the gharībān of the Deccan
during Bahmanid times, also see Richard Eaton's discussion in *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-
1761: Eight Indian Lives*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 59-63. The chauvinism
of the Iranian immigrants is also a central topic in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-
Persian travels in the age of discoveries, 1400-1800*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).
Looking at stories of migration, the authors elucidated the ways in which travel writers and immigrant
authors often fit encounters with the "other" in India into the genre of "wonder" stories, following
preconceived narrative patterns circulating in Northern and Western Asia. Incidentally, this book
includes a close reading of Mufīd's travelogue, which the authors treat in isolation, without discussing
the thousand or so folios of his work on Yazd's history that precedes it.
[14] Scholars like Mana Kia, and before her, Stephen Dale, who have studied communities of immigrant
poets, have made important progress in understanding the ways in which Iranians constructed
communities and competed for social status in the Indian context, but did so while simultaneously

traffic was multi-directional, featuring a significant retro-flow of gharībān toward

western Asia as well. Such work gives a picture of the gharībān not as a diaspora

community, characterised by the common experience of dislocation, dispersion, and

exclusion, but rather as what Sebouh Aslanian has termed a "Circulation Society" in

his study of global New Julfan Armenian communities. By emphasising the

tremendous mobility and agency of Armenians within their global networks, Aslanian

demonstrates that far from being disempowered minorities, Armenians frequently

served as key political brokers, empowered by their imbricated bundles of local and

transregional connections. Of course, Armenian merchants' experiences were

different than those of the gharībs, but Aslanian's focus on mobility and connectivity

works to explain the complexity of gharīb networks as well.[15] Roy S. Fischel's work

on gharībs in the Deccan has shown that even those migrants who permanently settled

in India kept on eye on affairs back home and, to the extent that they could, tried to

keep a foot in both places.[16] Theirs was a multipolar and cosmopolitan world,

characterised by protracted circuits of connectivity and by the ever-present possibility

of movement between the metropoles scattered across Persianate Asia.

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building larger, transregional networks of affiliation, stretching between Iran and India, that were
centered on a shared body of work, shared reading practices, and shared itineraries of movement back
and forth between those lands. Mana Kia, "Limning the Land: Social Encounters and Historical
Meaning in Early Nineteenth-Century Travelogues between Iran and India," in *On the Wonders of
Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing*, ed. Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma (Boston: Ilex,
Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2013) and her "Accounting for Difference: A Comparative
Look at the Autobiographical Travel Narratives of Hazin Lāhiji and ʿabd-Al-Karim Kashmiri," *Journal
of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009): pp. 210-236. Stephen Dale, "A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness:
The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani," in *Iranian Studies* 36.2 (2003): pp. 197-212.

[15] Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks
of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (London: University of California Press, 2011). The author
introduces the concept of circulation society and critiques the concept of diaspora systematically on pp.
7-15. Aslanian was not the first to jettison the concept of diaspora for the Indo-Persian communities. It
was Subrahmanyam who first rejected, forcefully, the use of the term "diaspora" for the community of
migrants from Iran in: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad".

[16]On the gharībs' efforts to maintain networks in Iran see Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State,"
especially pp. 213-26.

At the same time, other work demonstrates that whether migrants actually
returned to their cities of origin in Iran or not, places and personages within those
cities remained cardinal points of orientation, even from across the sea. Such places in
Iran stood at the center of commemorative practices that were integral to social
activity in Hind. Poets, sovereigns, and sufis in Hind not only traced their lineages to
notable families and urban centers of North and Western Asia, but also actively
worked to perpetuate the memory of their homelands' history, prosopography, and
typography in their new homes. Illocutionary acts of commemoration served as
integral strategies by which these elite figures brokered power and authority in their
relatively new communities. In local competitions for prestige and patronage, claims
of origins in the west engendered the mobilization of a particular kind of social capital
that was highly effective in such competitions for power. In his study of South Asian
shrine complexes and hagiographies, Nile Green argued that this power was strongly
mobilised in local Indian tomb-shrines and monumental mosques. He demonstrates
that authority and power were effectively manifested through local rituals, storytelling
practices, and the dissemination of books, which invigorated those sites by means of
commemoration of prestigious peoples, places, and events in Iran. Migration
narratives, which circulated around these places were particularly effective for re-
localizing these distant, authoritative people and places and re-deploying them toward
local ends.[17] While these sites and stories were essential for immigrants' social
formation, these were not exclusive spaces, and they performed a related social

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[17] Green acknowledges that he has adapted "memory spaces" from a similar concept developed by
Wolfgang Kaschuba. Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (Delhi:
Oxford University Press, 2012). The entire Preface and Introduction, (pp. xi-xvii and 1-32) are of
interest, but see p. xi in particular.

function for the non-immigrant communities, too, who revered these places as fonts of allochthonous sacredness.

Related kinds of commemorative practices and, in particular, migration narratives, were compelling, meaningful, and functional for a variety of audiences, including for princely families of Turkic backgrounds—such as the Quṭb Shāhs—whose ancestors had been migrants themselves. In addition, such stories were useful as well for the Tājīk-émigré clients of princes, who composed them on behalf of their patrons. As a consequence, migration narratives became archetypal and were so loaded with significance and implication, that gharībs could deploy them strategically as they navigated the highly competitive environments in which they competed for prestige and patronage in many localities simultaneously. Narratives connecting rulers and noble patrons to the elevated, saintly peoples and places in Iran play an important role in their historical writing, which circulated in royal courts. For example, in a recent article, Fischel studied foundation stories about the emergence of the ʿĀdil Shāhī dynasty, and its founder Yūsuf ʿĀdil Khān (d. 915/1510).[18] A full consideration of those findings will appear below; here it suffices to say that those stories centred on the story of the founder's immigration to India, and Fischel demonstrates that the authors of these histories clearly linked the ʿĀdil Shāhs' royal mandate to a fusion of both royal and sacred pedigrees, understood to have originated in the west. I term this variety of migration narratives "retrospective narratives," i.e. those narratives in which immigrants glance backward and commemorate peoples, places, and events back home, and thereby transplant the prestige that comes from there in order to build social capital in their new contexts.

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[18] Fischel, "Origin Narratives, Legitimacy," especially pp. 73-80.

In the aggregate, the scholarly work surveyed above has begun to reconstruct a set of social networks along the Iranian-Indian corridor, similar to the ones that Engseng Ho famously assembled for the Hadramauti communities in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia.[19] As Ho demonstrated, the formation of connected networks and collective identities depended heavily on practices of commemoration (both oral and literary), which outlined the parameters in which memories of home could be imagined and emplotted in prevalent narratives among these communities, and which simultaneously laid out the pathways along which people, objects, books, and stories could physically travel back and forth.

This scholarship focusing on connectivity has been immensely productive, but unlike Ho's work on the Yemeni communities, the bulk of the work on Persianate migration concentrates on immigrants' retrospective memories of homes in the west while in living India. But stories, just like people and their books, circulated in both directions. Along with travelers returning to Fārs or Khurāsān came stories about the Indian communities—and most importantly, stories about gharīb communities in India. Mufīd's story is one of those stories that returned home, even if its author never did.[20] I propose that in order to understand the function of memory and commemorative practices in Persianate circulation societies, we must complete the

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[19] Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). A more recent edited volume presents a number of related studies on a variety of Indian Ocean communities: Abdul Sheriff and Engseng Ho, eds., *The Indian Ocean: Oceanic Connections and the Creation of New Societies* (C Hurst & Co, 2015).

[20] Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbd Allāh Nīshāpūrī was another gharīb who was a contemporary of the anonymous author of *TQS*. Nīshāpūrī also served in the court of Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Shāh, actually returned to Iran to serve in Shāh ʿAbbās I's court after attaining high rank in the Quṭb Shāhī court. What is illustrative is that Maḥmūd Nīshāpūrī not only returned west after thirty years in the Deccan, but also wrote histories of both dynasties. These works, (each existing in a unique manuscript) are: *Tārīkh-i Turkmānīyah* (British Library, IO Isl. 3022)*,* a history of the Quṭb Shāhs, and two works on the Safavids: *Khulāṣah-i ʿAbbāsī* (Salar Jung Pers Ms. 237), and a work that has been mistaken called *Maʾāṣir-i Quṭb Shāhī-i Maḥmūdī* (British Library, IO Isl 841). The real *Maʾāṣir-i Quṭb Shāhī*, which supposedly narrated the history of the Quṭb Shāhs is not extant. In a forthcoming article, I will untangle the relationship between these texts.

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circuit and also study the backflow of stories (about or from Iranian lands) told in India as they were transported back and retold in Iranian settings. I term these stories "retroflexive narratives," that is, tales bent backward. Retroflexive narratives are distinct from retrospective narratives, or tales of *glancing* backward. Retroflexion is a complicated narrative operation, in which the author dialogues with "found" stories abroad, repackages them in new narrative environments, albeit retaining elements of their local accretions, and then sends them back (bends them back) toward home to put them to use there in new local contexts. Mufīd's engagement with the account he found in the anonymous *TQS* in Hyderabad stands an example of a commemorative act of this retroflexive type. He inserted the retrospective narrative about Sulṭān Qulī's migration that he had found there into the history of his hometown, bundled it with his own personal migration story, and sent the whole package back toward his native soil with the hope of engaging with affairs back home. Retroflexive endeavors were not always successful in effecting change, however. In the end, despite Mufīd's efforts, his writings appear to have failed to stir enough interest back in the Safavid realm in time to do the work he intended for them. Nonetheless, as stated above, the ultimate objective here is to understand how Mufīd *imagined* his work could be useful, regardless of whether it actually was or not. Comprehending the world in which a retroflexive narrative was thought to have "worked" with illocutionary force will help us better understand the mentalities and practices that shaped foreigners' strategies for orientation and negotiation in a cosmopolitan and highly competitive space.

Two Texts and Two Cities

We left Mufīd in Hyderabad, pouring over the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Sulṭān*

Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh and copying Sulṭān Qulī's story of migration into his history

of Yazd. What did he know of this book, its author, and its subject matter? Despite the

fact that the author was anonymous,[21] Mufīd no doubt recognised that it was written

in the style of a foreigner from one of the urban centres of Western Asia, who likely

worked in the royal court in Hyderabad. As Mufīd perused the roughly three-hundred

folios of the manuscript, he discovered that the anonymous author had explicitly

based much of *TQS* on quotations from an earlier, lost account, *Marghūb al-Qulūb,*

("The Desire of the Hearts"), which had been composed by yet another gharīb*,* a

sayyid by the name of Ṣadr-i Jahān Mullā Ḥusayn from Ṭabas in Khurasan.[22] That

work was likely composed in the mid-tenth/sixteen century. *TQS* had been dedicated

to Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh, the sixth ruler of the dynasty and the great-great-

grandson of the dynasty's founder, and it was completed in 1026/1617, at the peak of

the dynasty's power. [23] As he read the work, Mufīd discovered that *TQS* rehearsed the

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[21] It is unclear why the author of *TQS* would have chosen not to sign his name to his celebration of the
Quṭb Shāhs' glorious rule, which he wrote for his sovereign. But it is hard to imagine that the name
could have been lost accidently; the manuscript was copied many times shortly after its composition,
and appears to have been popular.

[22] Ṣadr-i Jahān's *nisbah* was Ṭabasī, i.e. from Ṭabas. Haroon Khan Sherwani reads the name as Ṭibsī,
interpreting it to mean Ṭiblisī (Tbilisi). Haroon Khan Sherwani, *History of the Quṭb Shāhī Dynasty*
(New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlat Publishers, 1974), p. 77, note 121. Ṭabasī seems far more likely to
me, but in either case, the *nisbah* indicates that the author came from an immigrant background. See
Minorsky's discussion of *Marghūb al-Qulūb* in: Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu," pp. 50-52, 71. Some
scholars had thought that *Marghūb al-Qulūb* was an abridgement of the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Quṭb
Shāhī*, but Minorsky showed that *Marghūb al-Qulūb* was actually an earlier work. Sherwani also offers
some discussion of this work: Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, pp. 68 (note 79), 77 (note 121.)

[23] The date of completion (1026/1617) occurred five years after Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh, took
the throne after the death of his uncle (Muḥammad Qulī) in 1020/1612. The exact date of his
enthronement was on 17 Ẕū al-Qaʿdah 1020/January 21, 1612. One manuscript of *TQS* (BL Add.
26255) is unique in that the copyist drew a full horoscope chart for the enthronement of Muḥammad
Quṭb Shāh (fol. 281a). The text explains that the event occurred in the early hours of Saturday morning
(folio 280b). Using the positions of the planets indicated on the chart, one can determine that the
enthronement in Hyderabad must have occurred between 6:30 and 7:00 AM. There is also an
abbreviated chart for Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh's birthday on 23 Rajab, 1000 AH/5 May, 1592 CE (fol.

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history of the Quṭb Shāhs from their origins among the Qarā Qūyunlū Turkomans in

ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, until the long and important reign of Muḥammad Qulī (r. 988-

1020/1580-1612), who had built the city of Hyderabad in 1000/1591 to celebrate the

start of the new *Hijrī* millennium.[24] Although the details of the Sulṭān Qulī's

migration and rise to power in India might have been news to Mufīd, he would have

been well aware that from the start the Quṭb Shāhs had claimed submission, at least

symbolically, to the newly triumphant Safavids, who had vanquished their mutual

rivals in Iran, the Āq Qūyunlūs; in fact the Quṭb Shāhs pronounced the *khuṭbah* in the

name of the Safavid Shāhs. Likewise, Mufīd would not have been surprised to read

the author's statement that upon his conquest of Telangana, Sulṭān Qulī ordered the

invocation of the twelve Shiʿite Imāms during the *khuṭbah,* as the Safavids had

done.[25]

At the time of Mufīd's sojourn, Telangana was still ruled by a Quṭb Shāhī

monarch, Abū al-Ḥasan (r. 1082- 1098/1672-1687), who would be the last of his line.

In reality, the power of the reigning Quṭb Shāh had been eroding. In 1046/1636, the

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278b). The text discusses his birth on fol. 277b and mentions that this date fell on a Wednesday (*chahār-shanbah*), but in fact, this date occurred on a Tuesday. The manuscript is undated, but is likely a late eighteenth-century copy.

[24] Hyderabad, the new capital was established eleven kilometers to the east of the original Quṭb Shāhī capital, at Golconda. For the section on the founding of Hyderabad in *TQS* see: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 342-350; IO Isl. 179, fols. 204b-209a. Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 343b-351b.

[25] *TQS* states that upon taking the throne, Sulṭān Qulī immediately had the Twelve Imāms invoked in the *khuṭbah*, and makes the *maẕhab-i iṣnā-ʿasharī* the law of the land. Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 77; Isl. 179, 48a-49b; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 81a-81b. Also see Sherwani*, Quṭb Shāhīs*, pp. 46, 432-3, 436-7. Three important pieces of scholarship address the problem of Shiʿism in all the Deccan kingdoms, particular its political role. Sadiq Naqvi, *Muslim Religious Institutions and Their Role under the Qutb Shahs* (Hyderabad: Bab-ul-Ilm Society, 1993), pp. 24-27, 41, 118-24; Daniela Bredi, "La Funzione Politica Della Sciismo Nei Sulṭānati Deccani," *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 64, no. 1-2 (1990): pp. 37-69; and D. Bredi, F. Coslovi, and B. Scarcia Amoretti, "Shīʿism in the Deccan: A Hypothetical Study," *Islamic Culture* 62, no. 2-3 (1988): pp. 97-112. It is tempting to read this pairing of Shiʿism with the expression of loyalty to Safavids as an attempt to tap into the legitimating social capital emanating from the revolutionary and messianic Alid movements that were rapidly becoming tied to the success of the Safavid house. On Alid messianism, see: Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2002) and Ahmed Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kinship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Mughal Emperor Shāh Jahān had forced Abū al-Ḥasan's predecessor, ʿAbd Allāh

Quṭb Shāhī, to accept tributary status, compelling him to sign a formal Deed of

Submission (*inqiyād-nāmah*), which made the Quṭb Shāhs vassals of the Mughals—at

least on paper—and forbade them from pronouncing the name of the Safavid monarch

or including elements Shiʿite rites in the *khuṭbah*. Twenty years after that, in

1066/1656, the Mughals had won a decisive military victory against the Quṭb Shāhs

and temporarily occupied the city of Hyderabad. Notwithstanding these setbacks, the

Quṭb Shāhs were not powerless, and while the Mughals had become embroiled in the

war of succession in the late 1650s, they attempted to reconfirm ties with the

Safavids.[26] Although Mufīd was surely aware of these recent events, he could not

have known that fourteen years after he turned up in Hyderabad, in 1098/1687, the

Mughals would completely dissolve the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty. Still, he undoubtedly

observed the contrast between the dynasty's current circumstances and the *TQS*'s

jubilant account of affairs when the Quṭb Shāhs were still on the ascendant. Indeed,

perhaps the most poignant change would have been the degradation of Safavid

influence and the status of Shiʿism in Telangana. In any case, in the author of *TQS*'s

telling, the mutually beneficial link between realms, which had allowed state-

sponsorship of the Shiʿite rite to take hold in both polities, was forged in the exultant

story of Sulṭān Qulī's migration, which climaxed in Yazd. Let us look closely now at

that miraculous story of the transplantation, redemption, and rise to glory, which

piqued Mufīd's interest.

The anonymous author of *TQS* was determined to connect the narrative about

Sulṭān Qulī's immigration and rise to power to the glorious history of the Quṭb Shāh's

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[26] See Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhīs*, pp. 432-433.

ancestors in Iran, the Qarā Qūyunlūs, as earlier historians of the dynasty had done.[27]

TQS opens with a full narrative of the Qarā Qūyunlū dynasty, and it dwells on the

celebrated careers of its progenitors, Qarā Muḥammad (d. 1389), Qara Yūsuf (d.

1420), and Jahānshāh (d. 1467), remembered especially for their resistance to the

Timurids in Iran, and their glorious feats of *ghazā* against the Christian communities

of the Caucuses.[28] Although Mufīd appears to have known nothing about Sulṭān

Qulī's migration story before his arrival in the Deccan, the dynastic history of the

Qarā Qūyunlūs, was well known to him before leaving home, and he had already

touched upon their history in various parts of *JM*.

     In in the final episode leading up to the story of Sulṭān Qulī's migration, *TQS*

recounts how Ūzūn Ḥasan, the sovereign of the Turkoman Āq Qūyunlū tribal

confederation, killed the illustrious Qarā Qūyunlū king, Jahānshāh, in 872/1467,[29] and

thereby brought the *dawlah* of the Qarā Qūyunlūs to an abrupt and violent end. This

tragedy, and the persecution of the family by one of Ūzūn Ḥasan's successors,

Yaʿqūb, precipitates Sulṭān Qulī's flight to India.

     Yaʿqūb, as Mufīd would have learned while reading *TQS*, dabbled in the art of

geomancy and astrology himself and, consequently, had become anxious about the

young Sulṭān Qulī.[30] After tasking the realm's experts with drawing up the boy's

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[27] This material on the Qarā Qūyunlūs was based on Ṣadr-i Jahān's lost book; that author probably
drew from well known fifteenth-century Persian sources, including ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī's
Matlaʿ al-Saʿdayn and Mīr Khvānd's *Rawẕat al-Ṣafā*. No doubt he used some of the same resources
that Nīshāpūrī used for his earlier history of the Quṭb Shāhs, *Tārīkh-i Turkmānīyah*, which provides a
very similar account. The anonymous author of *TQS* may have even used Nīshāpūrī's work.
[28] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 3-45; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 2b-38b; IO Isl. 179, fols. 3a-29a;
Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 4a-47b. After the preface, the introductory section of the work (*muqaddimah*)
gives the Turkic origins of the Qarā Qūyunlū family and then begins the narrative in earnest with Qarā
Muḥammad's resistance to the conquest of Ṣāḥib-Qirān Tīmūr and concludes with the a chapter on Pīr
Qulī, Sulṭān Qulī's grandfather, and the great-nephew of Jahānshāh.
[29] This victory occurred at the Battle of Mush. *TQS*'s account of Jahānshāh's demise is provided in
Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 36; IO Isl. 179, fol. 23b; Leiden, Or. 1343, fols. 38a-38b.
[30] The text reads: "*ū rā az fann-i raml va ʿilm-i nujūm buhrah būd.*"

horoscope (*zāʾichah-i ṭāliʿ*), they informed him that Sulṭān Qulī's star would rise in

Hind rather than in ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, implying that the boy posed no threat. Indeed, the

verses from *TQS* quoted at the beginning of this article were meant to convey the

essence of the court astrologers' prediction:

Thus a shāh will rise to lordly height
    and adorn his gate with day and night.[31]
	kih gardad yakī shāh-i mālik-riqāb
	    nihad bar dar-ash sarmah va āftāb

He will conquer till the ends of lands
    and he'll make empire of world's expanse.
	dar āfāq-i kishvār gushāʾī kunad
	    jahān dar jahān pādishāhī kunad

But it's not to be within Iran;[32]
    for this fortune falls on Hindustan.[33]
	va līkan nabāshad bi-mulk-i ʿirāq
	    bi-hindūstān aftad īn ittifāq

TQS relates that even though Yaʿqūb should have been relieved by this

astrological reading, the paranoid monarch decided to eliminate the Qarā Qūyunlū

line anyway.[34] Sulṭān Qulī's uncle, Allāh Qulī, learned of Yaʿqūb's plan and fled to

India with his nephew. The irony here is that the author of *TQS* is implying that the

villainous Yaʿqūb was actually the agent of God's will; by chasing him to India,

Yaʿqūb unwittingly caused Sulṭān Qulī to fulfill the destiny that he himself had

divined. Divination plays an important role in the accounts of both *TQS* and *JM*, and

we will witness more such oracular events as the story unfolds.

Next, Mufīd arrived at Sulṭān Qulī's migration narrative itself. This is where

he started copying. In *TQS,* this passage constitutes a transitional moment that bridges

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[31] The Persian word translated here as "night" is *sarmah,* which is usually translated as "collyrium," a substance that was commonly used as an eye salve. In this context, however, the reference is to the eye cosmetic, known as kohl, which is a sulphide of antimony. The metaphor hinges on the contrast between the brightness of sunshine and the darkness of kohl; the shāh masters both and adorns his realm with them.

[32] The text reads "'Irāq" (abbreviating ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam) but I have chosen to translate it here as "Iran." In other parts of the text, the author clearly understands ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam to constitute a part of "Īrān-zamīn," and he uses both terms in reference to that region. In any case, the author chose ʿIrāq here to rhyme with *ittifāq*. He could not have chosen Iran and Hindustan as the rhyming words of the couplet without spoiling the meter.

[33] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 46; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fol. 40a; IO Isl. 179, fol. 30a. Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 48b-49a

[34] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 46; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fol. 40a; IO Isl. 179, fol. 30b; Leiden Or. 1343, fol. 48b-49a.

the section of history dealing with the family's past in Iran and the section dealing

with their rise to power and empire building in the Deccan. I have chosen to present

the text from Mufīd's quotation of the narrative he found in *TQS* rather than from the

TQS so that I may comment upon discrepancies between the two accounts as they

arise. Mufīd's text itself is virtually the same as that in *TQS*, aside from a few minor

variations where Mufīd finds his source text stylistically wanting, and, in a few

places, where he makes some abridgments. The only variation of significance is that

Mufīd smooths over some of the grammatical inconsistencies he encountered in the

original, where, occasionally, the narration switched from first-person to third-

person— evidence that the author of that work was likely collating Ṣadr-i Jahān's

Marghūb al-Qulūb with other sources.[35] Mufīd deliberately set the whole episode in

first-person, erasing any ambiguity about the reliability and authenticity of the

accounts' originator, Sulṭān Qulī himself. Thus, Mufīd opens by introducing the

chain of sources and recording where he found them:

> … the narrative (*naql*) that is nearest to the truth came to my attention in
> Hyderabad, which I read in *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*. The gist of this piece is
> summarized here: The purity of the sayyids, Ṣadr-i Jahān, conveyed the
> following in the book, *Marghūb al-Qulūb*.[36] "I [Ṣadr-i Jahān] heard the
> following from the tongue of Sulṭān Qulī, Emperor, Holy-Warrior, Princely-
> born, known as Barār al-Malik:[37]

Right away, it is worth noting that in the *TQS*-version, the author presented the

entire opening section of the passage in the third person. In that rendition the

author had Ṣadr-i Jahān, the author of *Marghūb al-Qulūb*, provide an objective

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[35] The *TQS* manuscripts are uniform in this regard, and so there little chance that Mufīd was working
with a variant copy.
[36] *JM*: British Library Or. 210, fol. 45b; *JM*, 3:53. For citation of comparable passages in *TQS*
manuscripts see below.
[37] "*man az zabān-i pādishāh, ghāzī, amīrzādah Sulṭān Qulī al-mushtahir bih Barār al-Malik…*" Barār
Malik is an epithet that appears on the inscription on Sulṭān Qulī's tomb and on some portraits. See
Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, pp. 16, 49. The title does not appear in *TQS*.

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account, with no pretense that he had heard the story from Sulṭān Qulī

personally. In the later part of the account, the anonymous author switches to

first-person narrative. However, in *JM*, Mufīd explicitly specifies that the

initial speaker in the narrative is Ṣadr-i Jahān, who then frames his narrative as

an eyewitness account of a tale he heard directly from Sulṭān Qulī. Sulṭān

Qulī's account follows (as transmitted by Ṣadr-i Jahān):

> We are descended from the sons of Amīr Qarā Yūsuf, and were among
> the close relations of Jahānshāh.[38] The homeland of our ancestors was
> the village of Saʿdābād in the province of Hamadān.[39] After the
> predomination of the Āq Qūyunlū sovereigns over the Qarā Qūyunlū
> house, as a child, in the company of my uncle, Allāh Qulī Bayk, I went
> to the Deccan in India and after meeting the rulers there, in the end,
> returned to Iraq[-i ʿAjam] for a while.[40]

At this point, the wording of Mufīd's version begins to correspond more

precisely with *TQS*, which here makes the abrupt switch to first-person

narration, in Sulṭān Qulī's voice:

> After a time, my noble uncle determined to set out with swift-footed
> horses, gifts, and presents for the rulers of the Deccan. It so happened
> that we took up the path of the journey to Hind again; and when we
> reached Yazd, the Land of Pious Devotion (*Dār-i ʿIbādah*),[41] we went
> in visitation and service to His Excellency, Shelter of Guidance,
> Instrument of Spiritual Knowledge, Shāh Naʿīm al-Dīn Niʿmatullāh al-
> Ṣānī (may his beloved grave be sanctified) because our connection to
> him was somewhere between discipleship for a spiritual guide and

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[38] Jahānshāh's granddaughter, Khadījah Khānum (Khadījah Bīgum) had married Pīr Qulī, the
grandfather of Sulṭān Qulī. However, Pīr Qulī, like Jahānshāh, was himself a descendant of Qarā
Yūsuf. Khadījah Khānum was the daughter of Yūsuf, Jahānshāh's son.

[39] The comparable sentences in *TQS* begins as follows: "In the book of *Marghūb al-Qulūb*, it is written
that that king is descended from Amīr Qarā Yusūf and is a close relative of Jahānshāh, Pādishāh,
whose circumstances are commemorated in books of history. His ancestral homeland was in the
blessed village of Saʿadābād, which was one of the principalities of Hamadān. . ." (See below for
citations in *TQS* manuscripts).

[40] Here Mufīd is compressing *TQS*'s slightly wordier account of this first trip to the Deccan and of the
return to ʿIrāq. *TQS* adds that Sulṭān Qulī made the first trip in the first year of his life, out of fear for
his execution (*az khawf-i iʿdām*).

[41] The comparable sentence in *TQS* reads: "On another occasion we set out on the path of journey to
Hind, in the companionship of my Noble Uncle, taking swift-footed horses who rode like lightening,
along with gifts and presents. When we reached Yazd, the Land of Pious Devotion…" The remainder
of the passage is essentially identical. Neither author attempts to account for the fact that Sulṭān Qulī
and his uncle had already been and returned from the Deccan before this fateful journey.

kinship (*pīr-murīdī va kh̲īshī*)—[that is,] given that his wife was
Jahānshāh's daughter [*sic*][42] and that the magnanimity and holiness of
that Excellency was perfect. After inquiring about our health, and
expressing favour and sympathy, he intoned these words upon the
tongue of divine revelation (*bar zabān-i vaḥī*):[43] 'O son, be confident
that you will obtain the graces of security and [the fulfillment] of
aspirations of every kind! From the Court of Divine Unity (*bārgāh-i
aḥadīyat*), He has entrusted to you and your children sovereignty over
a region of Hindūstān.'[44] His blessed hand anointed (*mālīdah*) my head
and shoulders. Picking up several gold coins from under the carpet, he
gave them to me, [saying]: 'This is the first revelatory opening
(*futūḥ*).[45] Go in good health, for that region is appointed to you.' We
grew hopeful on account of the enlightened saint's[46] forecast (*ishārah*).
So, requesting that he recite the *Fātiḥah* [on our behalf], we turned our
attention to the region of Hind."[47]

At this point, Mufīd switches to a summative paraphrase of *TQS* rather than

verbatim transcription of it, but he continues to narrate as if he were quoting from

TQS, and he persists in presenting that text as a recording Ṣadr-i Jahān's personal

audience with Sulṭān Qulī. He has Sulṭān Qulī explain how he arrived in Bīdar

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[42] Both *JM* and *TQS* explain here that she was the daughter of Jahānshāh, but, as *TQS* explains
elsewhere, she was actually his granddaughter. Her father was Jahānshāh's son, Yūsuf.

[43] In John Briggs' translation (or interpretation!) of the *TQS*, which he appended to Firishtah's work, he
has it that the author prefaces this prognostication with the statement that Niʿmatullāh al-S̲ānī was
"skilled in astrology, and by divine favor had an insight into futurity" [p. 342]. However, no
manuscript I have examined of either *JM* or *TQS* contains any such phrase.

[44] "*Īn kalāmāt bar zabān-i vaḥī tarjamān guzāranīdand kih ʿay farzand, bi-ḥusūl-i ʿināyat-i amānī va
āmāl dar har bāb vaṣiq va mustaẓahir bāsh kih az bārgāh-i aḥadīyat sulṭānat-i quṭr'ī az iqṭār-i
Hindūstān bi-tu va awlād-i tu ḥavālah kardah'and.'"* The term "Hindustān" usually refers to lands of
the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, whereas "Hind" generally signifies the whole of the
subcontinent. However, both Mufīd and the author of the *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī* appear to understand
Hindustān to encompass the land of the Deccan as well.

[45] *Futūḥ* (loanword from Arabic) means "openings," but it commonly means "conquests" or "victory"
(the opening of a land). Among the mystically inclined the term can mean "spiritual awakening" and in
some contexts, "revelation" (the opening of a new prophetic dispensation). These latter senses resonate
with the word "*vaḥī*" (divine revelation) a few lines earlier. Here, the author intends both "conquest"
and "divine revelation" simultaneously. The conceit continues in the last line, where the saint recites
the Fātiḥah, i.e., the opening *sūrah* of the *Qur'ān*, in honour of Sulṭān Qulī's divinely sanctioned *futūḥ*.
Fātiḥah and *futūḥ* share the common root, F-T-Ḥ.

[46] The Persian word translated here as "saint" is "shāh," which means "king," but in post-Mongol
Persian writing commonly indicates a holy man or the spiritual guide.

[47] *JM*: British Library, Or. 210, fols. 45b-46b; *JM*, 3:53. The locations of the analogous passage in the
TQS manuscripts are as follows: Millī Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 47-48; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 40b-
41a; IO Isl. 179, fols. 30b-31b; Leiden Or 1343, fols. 49a-50b. Neither author specifies the particular
route the Sulṭān Qulī and his uncle chose for their journey, but *TQS* mentions upon their arrival in
Bīdar that they been travelling by sea. The trek through Yazd suggests they were heading for the port
of Shahrū, or old Hormuz, the future site of Bandar ʿAbbās.

(Muḥammadābād), found favor with the Bahmanid sovereign, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Shāh,

and eventually rose to power himself. Mufīd's narrative ends with the following

sentence, which does not appear in *TQS:*

> With the aid of divine favor, I [Sulṭān Qulī] was placed upon the pedestal of command and the cushion of authoritative sovereignty in the kingdom of the Deccan... [48]

While this marks the conclusion of Sulṭān Qulī's cameo appearance in

Mufīd's text, in *TQS*, it is only the beginning of the kings' story. The anonymous

author continues, recounting in detail how Sulṭān Qulī and his uncle came to have an

audience with the Bahmanī sulṭān:

> We crossed the sea, making for Bīdar, Dār-i Sulṭānat-i Muḥammadābād, which was the capital of the Sulṭān of the seven lands at that time [i.e., the Bahmanid sultanate]. Once we arrived in Muḥammadābād—the realm of righteousness—after two or three days of resting from the torment and harshness of travel, it happened that, by the intercession of the amirs and the notables, in the hour when the sun—overseer of good fortune—and the planet Jupiter had surmounted the ill-omen of Saturn (*naḥūsat-i zuḥal*), the opportunity was given for an audience with the pādishāh of Bahman's lineage, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Shāh Bahmanī [r. 887-913 AH /1482-1507], who had taken up the throne in that era.[49] My noble uncle presented gifts and horses, which he had brought from Iran, and the presents were favorably received. My uncle and I were dignified with kingly favors and royal honours, and all sorts of kingly graces and attentions materialized.[50]

The narrative then explains that after some time in service to the Bahmanid sovereign,

Sulṭān Qulī's uncle, Allāh Qulī Bayk, asked for leave to return to his familiar

homeland (*vaṭan-i maʾlūf*).[51] The pādishāh tried to convince him to stay, but

> [w]hen the Jamshīd-like Pādishāh realized that my uncle was not the least bit eager to stay in the Deccan, he declared, with the tongue of divine inspiration (*zabān-i ilhām*), "Amīr Allāh Qulī Bayk, if you must go, I'll permit it, but there's no way I will ever grant Sulṭān Qulī leave to return. He will remain in

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[48] *JM*: British Library, Or. 210, fol. 47a; *JM*, 3:54.
[49] The reference is to Bahman, the Kāyānī ruler of primeval Iranian history.
[50] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 48. BnF Suppl. Pers 1809; fols. 41a-41b, IO Isl. 179, fol., 31b. Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 50b-51a.
[51] It is not clear whether the homeland intended here is Hamadan, ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam, or Īrān-zamīn.

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> my service and I will see to his edification. Destiny (*maṣīr*) has placed him at the foot of sovereignty's throne."[52]

Sulṭān Qulī then professed his desire to stay, confident that he would revive the glory of his noble lineage there. The narrative then switches back to third person, relating that when the Pādishāh learned of Sulṭān Qulī's decision to remain, "on that very day, he granted him permission to be among the intimates of his eminent grace (*muqarribān-i ḥuẓūr-i ʿināyat*)."[53] Sulṭān Qulī's commitment to remaining in the Deccan would soon pay dividends. But the author credits not only the young prince's skill and confidence, but also his origins among Iran's princes for his subsequent rise to prominence in the Bahmanid ruler's esteem:

> Although no prince from Iran had come to the Deccan,[54] many men of low rank (*arāẕil*) had settled there in service of his highness, the Sulṭān. It had reached the ear of the Sulṭān that Sulṭān Qulī's great ancestors had been kings and governors and for a long time had held command over Īrān-zamīn, which is the best land[55] in the world… He had more esteem for Sulṭān Qulī's service than any of the rest of the princes, amirs, and great khans. Day by day he would find all manner of affection and immeasurable kindness from the Pādishāh, and he was allotted the trust of the rose-garden of the aspiration of rule…[56]

The work then details how Sulṭān Qulī was appointed *ṭarafdār* (viceroy) of Telangana. Following this final crescendo in Sulṭān Qulī's migration narrative, the anonymous author relates how after Sulṭān Maḥmūd Bahmanī's death[57] and the dissolution of the Bahmanid sultanate, Sulṭān Qulī secured his independent

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[52] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 49; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fol. 41b; IO Isl. 179, fol, 32a; Leiden Or. 1343, fol. 51b.

[53] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 48-49; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 41b-42a; IO Isl. 179, fol. 33a; Leiden Or. 1343, fol. 53b.

[54] The words "and Hindustan" are added in Millī-Malik Ms. 3885 and in Leiden Or. 1343, two of the earliest copies of *TQS*. All the other manuscripts consulted exclude these words.

[55] "*muddatī-yi madīd dārā-yi īrān-zamīn kih bihtarīn aqlīm-i ʿāmal ast.*" Milli-Malik Ms. 3885 has these words "*iqlīm-i ʿālam*"= clime of the world. BnF, IO Isl. 179, Leiden Or. 1343, and other manuscripts instead read "*bilād-i ʿālam*"= lands of the world].

[56] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 51; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 42b-43a; IO Isl. 179, fol. 33a; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 53b-54a.

[57] Sulṭān Maḥmūd died on the fourth of Ẕū al-Ḥijja, 912 / April 17, 1507. *TQS*: Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 70-71; IO Isl. 179, fols. 45a-45b; Leiden, Or. 1343, fols. 74a-74b.

sovereignty in Telangana by conquest and wise statesmanship against challengers

from both Muslim and non-Muslim competitors. He established his new kingdom at

Golconda fort and became a champion of Shīʿī Islam.[58] Consequently, the reader is

told that in the proper tradition of *ghazā*, he had the opponents of the true religion put

to death.[59] The author of *TQS* concludes his account of the founder's victories in

950/1543, with his assassination, under the orders of his own son, Jamshīd.[60] He then

continues for another hundred and fifty folia, narrating the history of the Quṭb Shāhs

in the Deccan, from Jamshīd's short reign up to his own contemporary times.

Let us pause for a moment and return to the earlier point about the role of

divination and oracular speech in these texts. Reading up to this moment in the text,

Mufīd would have observed that the anonymous author of *TQS* had given three

different characters the ability to divine Sulṭān Qulī's auspicious destiny in Hind. As

we have already observed, before the central episode of the narrative, where the

Niʿmatullāhī saint predicts Sulṭān Qulī's destiny, Mufīd had already read in *TQS*

about how Yaʿqūb had confirmed his clairvoyant instincts about Sulṭān Qulī's rising

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[58] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 51-75; IO Isl. 179, fols. 33b-48a; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 54a-79a.
[59] On Sulṭān Qulī's enthronement and declaration of Twelver Shiʿism in *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp.75-77; IO Isl. 179, fols. 48a-49b; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 79a-81b. The portrayal of Sulṭān Qulī as a *ghāzī* king, a holy warrior, was, of course, a common trope in Islamicate chronographic sources in South Asia dating back to Ghaznavid times. Many scholars have shown that claims of *ghazā* or other forms of state-sanctioned religious violence in chronicles and in epigraphic literature bore little connection to real programmes of religious violence, but was rather, a customary means of articulating legitimate rule in accordance with a *jihādī* ideal, that was rarely ever put into practice among premodern Islamic societies on the ground. The classic work on this issue is: Richard M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration in Indo-Muslim States," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 246-271. The Persian Quṭb Shāhī historiographical tradition masks the degree to which in reality the dynasty actively encouraged both Hindu-Telugu culture to operate in parallel with Islamo-Persianate culture and not to assault it. Sherwani argues that far from encouraging violence against non-Muslims and non-Shīʿah Muslims, the Quṭb Shāhs patronised the production of Telugu literature, and, starting with Muḥammad Qulī, also Deccani Urdu (Dakhanī) poetry. (Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, pp. 178-182, 321-330.)
[60] Jamshīd had Sulṭān Qulī assassinated in the midst of the *ʿaṣr* prayer on Sunday, the second of *Jumādá al-Thānīyah* 950 AH/September 2, 1543 CE. This episode is recounted in *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 150; IO Isl. 179, fols. 91a-91b; Leiden Or. 1342, fols. 160a-160b.

fortune using the divinatory sciences of star- and earth-gazing. In *TQS*'s concluding

passages of the account, quoted above, the reader will note that the anonymous author

inserted one further augury into his account. Just after Sulṭān Qulī had arrived in the

Bīdar, the author gave the Bahmanid sovereign the power of prescience, comparing

him with King Jamshīd, the *Pīshdādī* king of the primordial age. But where Jamshīd

famously attained omniscience through the use of a scrying mirror, the *Jām-i Jam,*

here no such implement was needed. The author simply moves the Bahmanid ruler's

tongue to speak with divine inspiration (*zabān-i ilhām*), insisting that the boy remain

in Hind, where his kingly destiny awaits him. Obviously, this last phrase was meant to

echo the one the author chose earlier to describe the Niʿmatullāhī saint's divinatory

utterance in Yazd, where he spoke "upon the tongue of divine revelation" (*bar zabān-i vaḥī*). What's more, the author of *TQS* framed this entire account of Sulṭān Qulī's

fortune at the Bahmanid court in the language of astrological augury: It was "in the

hour when the sun—overseer of good fortune—and the planet Jupiter had surmounted

the ill-omen of Saturn (*naḥūsat-i zuḥal*)," that the young prince found himself in the

Sulṭān's presence.[61] There the humilation of exile comes to an end and the story of his

ascendancy begins. As we will see, in his appropriation of the story, Mufīd tinkered

with these episodes of divine inspiration and prognostication that he found in *TQS;* he

cast them in a decidedly different light and refracted the lessons they were meant to

illuminate. Still, he managed to accomplish this feat of transfiguration while

reproducing the text from *TQS* essentially as he found it, with only a few minor

discrepancies. In other words, the difference between the two authors' treatments of

divination and saintly prognostication has to do with the ways in which they frame

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[61] *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, p. 48; BnF Suppl. Pers 1809, fols. 41a-41b, IO Isl. 179, fol, 31b; Leiden Or. 1343, fols. 50b-51a.

this passage, not with the text of the passage itself. The next section will be concerned

with precisely this issue of context.

Retrospective and Retroflexive Narratives

The book that Mufīd found in Hyderabad told him that while the advent of

Quṭb Shāhī rule was still fresh, the historians of the dynasty had mobilized memories

of their ancestor's glorious rule in Western Iran, "the best land in the world," as the

author of *TQS* had put it, in order to demonstrate that their success and nobility had

originated there, with the blessing and guidance of a one of God's friends. The project

that Mufīd encountered here is not unique, and is characteristic of other contemporary

Persian histories of the Deccan. The schematic structure of *TQS*'s foundation

narrative bears astonishing similarity to two slightly earlier accounts of the foundation

of the ʿĀdil Shāhī dynasty, one of the Quṭb Shāhs' rivals in the Deccan, which Fischel

studied in his article mentioned above.[62] These accounts, which, like the Quṭb Shāh

tale, both center on a migration narrative, appear in Firishtah's *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*

and Rafīʿ al-Dīn Shīrāzī's *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk*, which were composed in the early-

seventeenth century by two émigré servants of the ʿĀdil Shāhīs. These authors were

writing roughly contemporaneously with the author of *TQS*. The two accounts about

the founder of the ʿĀdil Shāhī dynasty, Yūsuf ʿĀdil Khān, and his passage to India

are entirely different, but they follow an almost identical plot scheme. In Firishtah's

version, Yūsuf ʿĀdil Khān was the brother of the Ottoman Sulṭān Mehmet II. The

prince was forced to flee Ottoman territory and became a disciple of Shaykh Ṣafī al-

Dīn, the founding saint of the Safavid Sufi order. He made his way to Shīrāz, where

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[62] Fischel, "Origin Narratives."

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the Prophet Khiẕr appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to seek his royal

destiny in India. Once there, high ranking people recognised his noble qualities and

enable his rise within the Bahmanid court at Bīdar.[63] Shīrāzī, on the other hand claims

that Yūsuf ʿĀdil Khān was an Āq Qūyunlū prince, from a rival cousin clan of Yaʿqūb

Āq Qūyunlū. Fleeing the paranoid Yaʿqūb, Yūsuf stopped at mosque associated with

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in the city of Lār. There he was visited in a dream by a saintly being

(probably the Imām), who predicted his successful career in the Deccan. Yūsuf

embarked for Bīdar, where he became a favourite at the Bahmanid court. In both

versions Yūsuf then finds himself well positioned to establish his own realm once the

Bahmanid empire collapses.[64] These two ʿĀdil Shāhī migration-foundation narratives

share a narrative scheme with the Quṭb Shāhī one:

1. A humiliated prince from some royal house flees oppression.
2. The prince makes a visitation to a shrine associated with some saintly
   figure on his way across Iran.
3. The saint (living or dead) miraculously predicts that the prince's
   redemption will manifest in Hind, thus precipitating his migration.
4. Once in the Deccan the prince's noble traits become manifest and
   allow him to rise through the ranks at the Bahmanid court and then
   establish his own realm.

That these schemas form the structure of the foundation narratives of all these three

Deccani dynasties suggests that these narratives were generated in accordance with a

certain template and drew on a shared stock of tropes common to the Deccani-Persian

historiographical tradition. Taken together, these were designed to establish the

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[63] ibid., pp. 74-76.
[64] ibid., pp. 76-80. In a curious parallel with Sulṭān Qulī's migration story, Shīrāzī notes that before
Yūsuf departed, he acquired horses and slaves as gifts for the Bahmanid sovereign, just as Sulṭān Qulī
and his uncle did. Of course there is nothing extraordinary about this; horses and slaves were two of the
few luxury items from the West that were in high demand in India. Still, the fact that this seemingly
trivial detail should be mentioned in both migration narratives raises suspicions that there was some
cross-pollination among the foundation stories of the Deccani Sultanates.

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dynasties' royal and spiritual legitimacy through reference to the temporal and saintly lineages that originated in Īrān-Zamīn.

Even if the author of *TQS* was employing stock tropes, he was utilising these rhetorical figures to convey particular connections with Iran that were uniquely legitimating for the Quṭb Shāhs in their contingent circumstances. The anonymous author of *TQS* had placed Sulṭān Qulī's arrival in the Deccan in the context of the brilliant careers of the Qarā Qūyunlū's progenitors in Western Asia. Thus, the Quṭb Shāhs' benevolent *dawlah* and legitimate rule in Telangana had deep roots in Iran, long before the family's noble deeds under the Bahmanids in the Deccan. By relating this pre-history, *TQS* explicitly made the tales of the Qarā Qūyunlūs' gallant stands against the mighty Tīmūr and the tales of their *ghazā* against the infidels integral to the story of the Quṭb Shāhs' own political and religious legitimacy in India; as discussed above, the author of *TQS* left no doubt that these descendants of Qarā Yūsuf continued their ancestor's legacy of *ghazā* and glory once they arrived in their new domains. No doubt, by positioning the dynasty's progenitors as formidable opponents of Tīmūr, the anonymous author meant to palliate the Quṭb Shāhs' constant anxiety about the expansionist designs of that world-conqueror's own powerful descendants, the Mughals, who were menacing the Deccan kingdoms. The narrative of Sulṭān Qulī's migration to the Deccan realised the transfer of the Qarā Qūyunlūs' legitimacy, patrimony, and divinely sanctioned mission into the new land. Thus, in the anonymous author's rendering, Qarā Yūsuf's progeny had risen in Hind to defend it from the house of Tīmūr once again. And, it was the Niʿmatullāhī saint in Yazd that facilitated this transitive operation.

Here in *TQS* we have a classic example of a legitimating narrative of the "Retrospective" variety, paralleling Nile Green's findings on shrines, where the ability to demonstrate prestigious roots in Iran carried social and political capital in emergent communities of circulation in India. Just as in those ʿĀdil Shāhī narratives, in *TQS* and *JM*, it is the saint who plays a pivotal role in transferring the dynasty's temporal and sacred patrimony to the Deccan. Shāh Niʿmatullāhī al-S̱ānī does more than simply facilitate the prince's move. Charging this mundane act of migration with a charismatic glow, the saint succeeds in transmuting the royal house's history into destiny and transplanting it into new lands.

Unlike the saintly figures in the ʿĀdil Shāhī narratives, though, the Niʿmatullāhīs were not mere oneiric phantoms with miraculous powers. At the time of Sulṭān Qulī's immigration, they were living, human agents. Indeed, they were major power players, heading a longstanding, transregional Sufi institution, with three main centers of activity, in Yazd, in Kirman, and in Bīdar. In reality, Shāh Niʿmatullāhī al-S̱ānī may have made a more concrete (though admittedly less sensational) contribution to the young prince's career than the narrative lets on. It may likely have been through the intercession of the Niʿmatullāhī sufis of Bīdar, Shāh Niʿmtullāhī al-S̱ānī's cousins, that Sulṭān Qulī found access at the Bahmanid court in the first place. For at least three generations, the Bahmanids had been partnering with the progeny of the order's founder, Shāh Niʿmatullāhī Valī, marrying their princesses to the saint's descendants.[65] It seems likely that as exiles, Sulṭān Qulī and his uncle's

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[65] Peyvand Firouzeh has written on the ways in which the relationship between the Bahmanids and the Niʿmatullāhīs can be traced through Bahmanid patronage and funerary architecture. Aḥmad Shāh Bahmanī I paid for Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's tomb complex in Māhān, near Kirmān. Aḥmad Shāh II, then constructed the tomb for the shaykh's son and successor, Khalīl Allāh, in Ashtur, outside Bīdar in Karnataka. The Bahmanid royal tomb complex was built beside Khalīl Allāh's tomb. See her "Sacred Kinship in the Garden of Poetry: Aḥmad Shāh Bahmanī's tomb in Bīdar (India)," *South Asian Studies*

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stopover in Yazd to visit their relatives may have been a practical one, designed to

procure a letter of introduction from the Yazdī sufi or something of that sort, which

they could take to his Niʿmatullāhī cousins in Bīdar, who might intercede with the

Bahmanid monarch on their behalf. In reality, then, Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-Ṣānī's role in

facilitating Sulṭān Qulī's relocation to Hind was probably as a well-connected social

intermediary along a transregional network of kinsmen and devotees. Of course,

neither Mufīd nor the author of *TQS* would have found much benefit in narrating such

a mundane story, no matter how interesting it might be for historians today. Both

authors narrate this encounter in an entirely hagiographical register and portray the

Niʿmatullāhī saint as the agent of divine will, one who plays a key role in the

unfolding of sacred history. Channeling the heavens, the saint transforms the Qarā

Qūyunlūs of ʿIrāq-i ʿAjam into the Quṭb Shāhs of Telangana, enabling these ghāzī-

kings and champions of Twelver Shiʿism to continue their erstwhile battle against the

Tīmūrid house and other enemies along new frontiers in Hind. By stressing that this

Qarā Qūyunlū legacy and religious mission was destined to replay itself in Hind, *TQS*

transfers the lesson from the distant past and space of Iran to imminent future

horizons within the space of Hind, where it will continue to play out. The Quṭb Shāhs

are legitimate rulers, implies the text, not just because of what they have done, but,

more urgently, because of what they are destined to do as inheritors of an earlier

legacy. The success of the Quṭb Shāhs in the Deccan was evidence that the

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31:2 (2015): pp. 187-214. See also, her PhD dissertation: "Architecture, Sanctity, and Power:
Neʿmatullāhī shrines and *khānaqāhs* in fifteenth-century Iran and India" (PhD dissertation, University
of Cambridge, 2015). Also see: Terry Graham, "The Niʿmatu'llāhī Order Under Safavid Suppression
and in Indian Exile" in *Heritage of Sufism, Volume III: Late classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750):
The Safavid & Mughal Period*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: One World, 1999), pp. 165-200. Prior
to the Bahmanids' partnership with the Niʿmatullāhīs, the royal house pursued a similar relationship
with the Chishtīs. It was only after the death of the most illustrious of the Chishtīs, Gaysū Darāz, in
825/1422, that the Bahmanids began actively pursing the Niʿmatullāhīs. See Richard Eaton's chapter
on Gaysū Dārāz in *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* (New York:
Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 33-58.

Niʿmatullāhī saint's prediction had come true, but readers would have understood the Quṭb Shāhs' growing need to resist Mughal expansion in Hind as a new manifestation of the family's old opposition to tyrants like Tīmūr in Iran. Indeed, this particular spin on the narrative would have appealed to agents of the Quṭb Shāhī court, who were witnessing increasingly grave Mughal incursions into the Deccan.

But Mufīd's purpose for appropriating the tale had less to do with an interest in the Quṭb Shāhs' sacred or political mission in Hind than with its rhetorical utility for his own project. In his eyes, the Quṭb Shāhs' mission, and the Niʿmatullāhī saint's role in realising that mission was important only in so far as it addressed concerns that were immediately relevant to Yazdīs and to the Safavid Shāh, to whom *JM* was dedicated. Clearly Mufīd wished to portray Yazd and the centre of the sacred universe and the Niʿmatullāhī family as uniquely capable of sustaining sacred kings in their mission. But was this what the author of *TQS* was attempting to demonstrate? Would he have expected his audiences have read the story in this way? I contend that he did not; Mufīd was actually distorting the original author's intended objective for the story. However, proving this requires that we consider the degree to which the Niʿmatullāhīs were actually involved in Quṭb Shāhī affairs at the time the *TQS* was written. It also demands that we examine how the author treated the Niʿmatullāhīs elsewhere in the text. Doing so will allow us to better discern how Mufīd managed to twist the story about the saints' encounter with Sulṭān Qulī and make it speak in the service of his own project.

What role did the anonymous author of *TQS* envision for Niʿmatullāhīs and Yazd? Divine ordination in the mouths of sufi saints was a standard motif in Islamic narratives of kingship in South Asia as well as in the rest of the Islamicate world. As

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already mentioned, the Quṭb Shāhs' predecessors, the Bahmanids, had built their

empire upon a public partnership with sufis, first with the Chishtīs, and after the death

of Gesū Darāz, with the Niʿmatullāhīs. Even so, there are clues that by the time the

TQS was penned, the Yazdī pīr's blessing of Sulṭān Qulī would not have stricken

readers as uniquely significant. This is partly because once the Quṭb Shāhs had

consolidated their power in Telangana, they refrained from cultivating the special

relationship of patronage and spiritual discipleship with the Niʿmatullāhī family that

both their Qarā Qūyunlū ancestors and their Bahmanid patrons, had actively

cultivated. An enduring popularity of the Chishtī lineages among non-Shīʿī Deccani

Muslims no doubt precipitated this shift.[66] By the reign of Sulṭān Ibrahim Quṭb Shah

(d. 988/1580), royal patronage had already begun to favor a descendant of the Chishtī

saint, Gaysū Darāz, called Ḥusayn Shāh Walī. The king married his daughter, Pīr Mān

Ṣaḥībah, to him.[67] Moreover, after an episode during Muḥammad Qulī's reign, when

some descendants of the Niʿmatullāhīs in Bīdar abetted the rebellion of a pretender to

the Quṭb Shāhs' throne, the Quṭb Shāhs were probably beginning to feel ambivalent

about their earlier ties to the Niʿmatullāhīs.[68] Indeed, ties with the Chishtīs solidified

even further after the *TQS* was written, so much so that by the time of Mufīd's visit,

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[66] Although Chishtīs traced their lineage to saints from the town of Chist, near Herat in Khurasan, they
had been revered in many Indian locales since the time of Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 633/1236), far
longer than the Niʿmatullāhīs. There were already many ancient Chishtī shrines in South Asia by the
time Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's descendants came to the Deccan.

[67] On the marriage with Pīr Mān Ṣaḥībah, see Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, p. 254, note 204. Ḥusayn Shāh
Walī, also known as Sayyid Shah ʿAbd Allāh, (died no later than 1079/1668) was a great-great-
grandson of Gesū Darāz, and is credited with engineering the Hussain Sagar, an artificial lake which
still exists in Hyderabad.

[68] These events are discussed in Fischel's dissertation: There was an imposter who claimed to be Shāh
Ṣāḥib, the son of Ibrāhīm Quṭb Shāh, who had married a daughter of one of the descendants (*pīr-
zādah*s) of one of the Niʿmatullāhī pīrs of Bīdar, Khalīl Allāh. Shāh Ṣāḥib had died shortly after the
marriage in 1580 C.E. The imposter was exposed and arrested in Bīdar, but was then rescued by the
Niʿmatullāhī *pīr-zādahs* and taken to Vijayanagar, which he used as a base from which he raised a
short-lived rebellion against Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh. Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State," pp. 44-
45. The episode can be found in *TQS*: Millī-Malik Ms. 3885, pp. 368-371; IO ISL 179, fols. 219b-
221b. Fischel cites Salar Jung Ms. 85, pp. 522-526.

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the last Quṭb Shāh, Abū al-Ḥasan Quṭb Shāh, had been living as an ascetic in the

khānqāh of the sufi, Shāh Rājū, a descendent of the Chishtī saint, Gesū Darāz, until

immediately before he was made king.[69] In any case, by the height of Quṭb Shāhī

power, while the author of *TQS* was penning his history, a retrospective narrative that

concerned Sulṭān Qulī's encounter with Niʿmatullāh al-Ṣānī in Yazd would have

afforded the kind of allochthonous claim that might have been indispensible for

demonstrating genealogical and spiritual legitimacy in the gharībān constituents'

eyes. Nevertheless, while such a claim of legitimacy was still necessary at this time, it

would not have been a sufficient one. Ultimately, asserting a historical link with the

Niʿmatullāhīs in Iran, or with Yazd in particular, constituted just one brick in the

ramparts of the dynasty's highly accretive claims of legitimacy, and definitely not a

unique one. Besides this, the Quṭb Shāhs also needed to demonstrate their legitimacy

in the eyes of gharībs from other cities in Iran, who might have been devotees of other

lineages. These efforts complemented appeals to Hindu Telegu and native Muslim

Deccani elites that were disseminated through imperial policies of patronage and

architectural programmes that utilised a variety of local and vernacular symbols of

religious and cultural authority.[70] Ultimately, the figure of Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-Ṣānī

and the locus of Yazd formed probably a small part of the eclectic tapestry of signs

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[69] Abū al-Ḥasan was not a direct descendent of Sulṭān Qulī, and had never expected to take the throne.
See discussion in Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, pp. 601-602, 659, note 7. Abū al-Ḥasan Quṭb Shāhī was
married to the previous Quṭb Shāh's third daughter, Bādshāh Bībī, and, although there is some
confusion about his lineage, Sherwani inclines toward the accounts that claim that he was descended
from Sulṭān Qulī's cousin, Fatḥī Khān, son of Allāh Qulī Bayk, the uncle who had accompanied Sulṭān
Qulī to the Deccan, but who had later returned to Iran. (See ibid., pp. 658-59, note 6. Also refer to the
genealogical table at the end of the book (unpaginated).
[70] As an example, Eaton has convincingly demonstrated that Muḥammad Quṭb Shāhī's court in
Hyderabad was designed to stand as a cultural hybrid; it was equally beholden to local, Deccani, and
Telegu-Hindu demands for legitimacy and drew on local symbols and practices together with those
rooted in Iran. See: Eaton, "Quṭb Shāhī Warangal and the Foundation of Hyderabad."

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pointing to the royal house's sacred legitimacy, and one that was overshadowed by the popularity of the long established local Chishtī lineage.

This assertion is evident at the level of the text of *TQS* as well. Even though the author did set the clairvoyant saint of Yazd at the crossroads of Sulṭān Qulī's life story, his intention appears not to have been to underline the royal family's connection with the Niʿmatullāhīs or with Yazd in particular, but simply to demonstrate, in a general way, that the Quṭb Shāhs could simply display the requisite links to both a noble and a spiritual patrimony in the west. This becomes clear when we recall that, aside from the brief statement that Sulṭān Qulī and his uncle visited Yazd because of discipleship and kinship, the author himself did not mention the royal family's connections to the Niʿmatullāhīs or Yazd elsewhere in the text. Further, the Niʿmatullāhīs play virtually no part in the rest of the book, neither as political actors nor as thaumaturges.[71] More importantly, despite the fact that the Niʿmatullāhī *pīr* does perform the crucial function of divinatory kingmaking in *TQS*, in fact he serves as only one of a handful of characters that God had blessed with foreknowledge of Sulṭān Qulī's sovereignty. The author of *TQS* scattered Sulṭān Qulī's biography with a handful of other incidents of divinely inspired prognostications. As was noted earlier, the anonymous author sandwiched Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-Ṣānī's revelatory utterance in Yazd between similar oracular pronouncements from other figures: Yaʿqūb Āq Qūyunlū, his astrologers, and Maḥmūd Bahmanī. Therefore, the author of *TQS* clearly did not intend Yazd to be the epicenter of divine revelation or the metropole of sacred kingship, as Mufīd would later imagine it to be. In *TQS,* such power could bubble up in any place, in the mouths

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[71] An exception is the minor episode about the imposter claiming to be Shāh Ṣāḥib, referenced above. See note 68.

of anyone with the knowledge of the unseen world, be it in Yazd, Tabrīz, or Bīdar, in

Iran or in Hind. Yazd serves as just one important center in this commemoration, but

not the only one.

Considering the fact that Mufīd was composing a history of Yazd, his

particular emphasis on the story is predictably slanted toward the exceptional position

of Yazd and its saintly figures in the narrative. In Mufīd's rendition, the kinship

between Sulṭān Qulī's family and the Niʿmatullāhīs was essential, and he was careful

to specify those relations. But even more crucially, Mufīd gave the power to speak

with "tongue of divine revelation" to Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī, alone. He

systematically jettisoned from the narrative all the other divinatory incidents found in

TQS.[72] Only the Niʿmatullāhī saint could see the prince's destiny in *JM*. Mufīd

managed to twist the import of the narrative so that the story became about Yazd's

unique and divinely sanctioned role as the maker of kings. He accomplished this feat

not by altering the text, which he reproduced nearly verbatim, but by strategically

positioning it in his own work so that it would resonate in a different way.

Where in the text did Mufīd insert the story? He did not situate it where one

might expect it. He placed it neither in his account of his experiences in Hyderabad

(in the conclusion of the third volume) nor in his chronology of the Qarā Qūyunlūs'

affairs in Yazd (first volume). Rather, he inserted it into his long hagiographical

section on Yazd's saintly figures toward the beginning of the third volume. There, he

injected the passage inside an extraordinarily lengthy section that concerns the lives

of the saintly *pīr*s of the powerful Niʿmatullāhī family and their shrine complex in the

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[72] This is not to say that Mufīd excludes other omens and incidents of divine inspiration from *JM*; to
the contrary, the work is loaded with such events. There are a couple of key moments in the author's
self-narrative, where he divines his own destiny (*fāl*) using *istikhārah*.

village of Taft, on the outskirts of Yazd. To be precise, Sulṭān Qulī's story appears

there, as one of the key episodes in the life of Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī.

The section on the Niʿmatullāhīs opens with a protracted notice on the

founding saint of the sufi order, the famous Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī (great-great

grandfather of Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī), whose piety and miracle-working had

become renowned all over the eastern Islamic world during his own lifetime.

Paramount among the founder's many miracles recounted here was the saint's famous

prognostication, in 826/1421, wherein he employed his expertise in the sciences of

conjunction-astrology and letterism to predict that in 909 AH (1503 CE) the sufi-king,

Shāh Ismāʿīl I, would establish the Safavid Empire.[73] Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's

celebrity as a prognosticator and a kingmaker continues to be a principal theme in

Mufīd's chapters on his descendants, too. Indeed, this well-known episode of the

founding saint's life parallels and even foreshadows the story of Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-

S̱ānī's act of prescience generations later.

What is critical is that by the time Mufīd arrives at the section on the life of

Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's descendant, Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī, the narrative

emphasises the sufi family's special political partnerships with ruling houses. In fact,

Mufīd precedes Sulṭān Qulī's story with a focused discussion of the saint's alliance

with Sulṭān Qulī's triumphant ancestors, explaining that Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī

was married to Sulṭān Qulī's maternal aunt, Khānum Sulṭān, who was the

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[73] The saint's followers only "discovered" this prediction in hindsight, after Shāh Ismāʿīl's conquest. It
was found in a nest of the master's versified riddles. Moreover, these devotees only deciphered them
after a rather charlatan performance of numerological acrobatics. Mufīd's presentation of Shāh
Niʿmatullāh Valī's prognostication in verse, which his followers interpreted using the esoteric science
of letters (*ʿilm-i ḥurūf*), can be found in: *JM*: British Library, Or. 210, fols. 3b-4a; *JM*, 3:4-5. For a full
discussion of this, see Derek J. Mancini-Lander, "Memory on the Boundaries of Empire: Narrating
Place in the Early Modern Local Historiography of Yazd" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan,
2012), pp. 492-97.

granddaughter of Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyunlū.[74] The reader should recall that the author of *TQS* did not provide such details in his account of the Qarā Qūyunlū's affairs or anywhere else in the text; this is one of Mufīd's augmentations. What follows the treatment of Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī's fated encounter with Sulṭān Qulī, which has already been examined in detail, is a full account of the peak of Niʿmatullāhī family's political achievements during the tenth century AH (sixteenth century CE), when, the early Safavids married their daughters to the current Niʿmatullāhīs of Yazd and placed them in the highest offices of the realm.[75] The point here is that Mufīd carefully entangled the miraculous migration story of Sulṭān Qulī with details about the Niʿmatullāhīs ties of kinship with the Qarā Qūyunlū/Quṭb Shāhī and Safavid houses.

In addition to this, Mufīd's positioning of the story makes it clear that he intended Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī's prognostication about Sulṭān Qulī, which came to him "on the tongue of divine revelation," to echo his own account of Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's famous prognosticatory act of kingmaking, in which that saint had predicted the messianic rise of Shāh Ismāʿīl Ṣafavī sixty-two years before it occurred. Mufīd opened the chapter on the Niʿmatullāhīs with that inaugural episode of kingmaking. But in this subsequent scene, where the founder's descendant, Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī, anoints Sulṭān Qulī as king of the Deccan, Mufīd succeeds in expanding the scope of the Niʿmatullāhīs' authority beyond the Safavid realm, into Hind. The implication is that the Niʿmatullāhīs of Yazd not only shared the credit for bringing the Safavids to power in Iran, but they were also instrumental in establishing the Quṭb

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[74] Although it is not mentioned at this point in the text, Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī, was also related to the Bahmanids on his father's maternal side. He was descended from a branch of the family that had moved to Bīdar to serve the Bahmanids, but then later returned to Iran. His grandfather, Ḥabīb al-Dīn had married a daughter of the Bahmanī sulṭān, Aḥmad II.

[75] The most powerful of these figures were the well-known ʿAbd al-Bāqī and Mīrmīrān.

Shāhs as the Safavids' Shiʿite agents in the Deccan. For, as has already been related,

until the Deed of Submission to the Mughals in 1046/1636, the Quṭb Shāhs,

pronounced the names of the twelve Imāms during the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*) and

even delivered the sermon in the name of the Safavid Shāh. Yazd and its blessed

shrines, then, linked the realms of Iran and the Deccan, and thereby facilitated their

alliance for the next two centuries.[76] As a result, Mufīd implies, both royal houses, the

Safavids and Quṭb Shāhs, had the Niʿmatullāhīs of Yazd to thank for their fortune.

Mufīd's bending of the Sulṭān Qulī story had the effect of pushing the influence of

Yazd's holy men and the city's boundaries beyond its immediate domains. Yazd

became more of a metropole than even the imperial capitals of Iṣfahān or Hyderabad.

How does this fit in with the *JM*'s general purpose? The entire history of Yazd

that Mufīd presents is festooned with tales demonstrating how the city's holy men had

been king-makers, serving reigning sovereigns and benefiting the realm at large with

their expertise in esoteric sciences and their thaumaturgic power. The regular

recurrence of such episodes gives the work its structure and rhythm. However, the

deeds of the Niʿmatullāhī saints constitute probably the most important of these in the

work, for it was they who had paved the way for the Safavids' reign.[77] However, their

accomplishments also mark a turning point in the narrative. After describing the

achievements of the Yazdī Niʿmatullāhīs in the first century of Safavid rule, Mufīd

brings the story of the family up to his contemporary times. Space does not allow a

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[76] Beyond the symbolic obeisance to the Safavids that the Quṭb Shāhs expressed in the *khuṭbah*, in *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, Firishtah reports that Shāh ʿAbbās Ṣafavī sent an emissary to the court of Sulṭān Muḥammad Qulī to arrange a marriage of his son to the daughter of Sulṭān Muḥammad-Qulī. British Library, Add. 6570, fol. 287b.

[77] One important episode also stars Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī. In this narrative, the saint uses his otherworldly powers of perception to block Ūzūn Ḥasan Āq Qūyunlū's plan to raid the shrine in Taft. The saint manages to turn Ūzūn Ḥasan into a devotee and a patron of the Niʿmatullāhīs. In *JM*: Or. 210, fols. 44b-45a; Published edition: *JM*, 3:52. Also see discussion in my dissertation: "Memory on the Boundaries of Empire," pp. 455-457.

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full treatment here, but I have shown elsewhere that in the course of this narrative,

Mufīd depicts the erosion of the order's status during Shāh ʿAbbās I's reign, after he

and his successors had refrained from patronising the Niʿmatullāhīs and their shrine,

and had deliberately disempowered the heads of the order, along with other local

sayyid families.[78] The consequence, he implies, was the decay that he observed in

Yazd, and the gradual degradation of Safavid power that had ultimately compelled

him make his way to Hind in the first place. Thus, Mufīd asserts that by denying

Yazd, its shrines, and its notable figures the imperial favour they long enjoyed under

previous kings in Iran, the Safavids had destroyed the very families and institutions

that could have sustained the magnificence of the realm. But, from Mufīd's

perspective, because Yazd was in fact a centre of the Quṭb Shāhī realm too, this

neglect also had implications beyond the boundaries of the Safavid dominion, in the

Deccan, where the Safavids had lost any symbolic claims of authority over the Quṭb

Shāhs by the mid seventeenth century. The author's insertion of the Sulṭān Qulī story

into this implicit critique of the Safavid's treatment of the Niʿmatullāhīs had the effect

of redoubling the tragedy of their failures.

Mufīd was writing from within an Islamo-Persianate historiographical

tradition, paralleling "mirrors for princes" literature that typically understood history

to have a didactic objective. History was composed of edifying lessons from the past,

meant to serve as a guide for the moral behavior and statecraft of elites in positions of

power. The recounting of past periods of glory were meant not only to provide a

model for wise action, but more often, to offer a tacit critique of current

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[78] For a full treatment of the rise and fall of the Niʿmatullāhīs see: Mancini-Lander, "Memory on the
Boundaries of Empire," pp. 443-504. Also see Sholeh Quinn, "Rewriting Niʿmatuʾllāhī History in
Safavid Chronicles," in *Heritage of Sufism: Volume III: Late classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750):
The Safavid & Mughal Period*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), pp. 201-222.

circumstances by casting into relief signs of contemporary decline.[79] Mufīd's *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī*, his "Useful Compendium," was clearly written in this in this vein. While the author probably never imagined the monarch would actually read his compendium, he likely hoped that the ministers of the court who might read it could advise him in accordance with the lessons it contained.

The episode of Sulṭān Qulī's anointing in Yazd portrays one of the last of many recurring tales of glorious sovereigns in *JM*, whose rule in Īrān-zamīn had been enabled by Yazd's great men. However, the particular positioning of that narrative empowered it to evoke Yazd's former role as a womb of sovereigns beyond the frontiers of Iran. By retrofitting this story about Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-Ṣānī and Sulṭān Qulī into his work on Yazd, he demonstrated precisely the power through which Yazdīs had formerly projected their influence, power, and authority into faraway lands. That master narrative, dedicated to the reigning Shāh Sulaymān, ends with Mufīd's own miserable exodus to India, a move, which the author tells us resulted from the lack of opportunity in the Safavid realm, and, he implies, from the Safavid rulers' squandering of Yazd's sacred patrimony. The dynasty's impotence had even negatively affected the author's employment prospects in faraway Hyderabad, forcing him to seek employment in the north of India, among the progeny of Tīmūr.

Having said this, it is critical to recall that Mufīd explicitly acknowledged that this was a narrative that he unearthed in the Deccan. For him the story alone was not enough to do this work. Indeed, on its own, the history of the Quṭb Shāhs was not of

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[79] See, for example, the discussion in Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10-14. Christine van Ruymbeke has recently presented work on the mirrors for princes tradition in Persian literature. See her *Kashefi's Anvar-e Sohayli: Rewriting Kalila wa-Dimna in Timurid Herat* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

much interest to readers in Iran.[80] Mufīd's discovery and transcription of it was more

efficacious than the actual story itself; in order to render the polemical effect of the

narrative fully operational within his history, Mufīd needed to conspicuously mark it

as a *found* Deccani story about Yazd. Thus, he loaded his retelling of that tale with the

narrative of his own discovery of it while he was living in exile. Indeed, it was by

leaving the story's lineage of transmission exposed and by performing the actual

transcription of the story into his work, right before his readers' eyes, that Mufīd

empowered the text to speak of the long-term and long-distance effects of the Safavid

rulers' misguided actions. These were actions that had hastened the migration of the

best members of their realm to Indian sultanates. Ultimately, by repatriating this story

of exile and transplantation, which he juxtaposed with his own parallel one, and by

making the triumphant exile of the Quṭb Shāhs indigenous to both places, Mufīd

positioned it to articulate the Safavids' lack of vision that had so weakened the empire

and his home city along with it. By bending Sulṭān Qulī's narrative backward toward

Iran, Mufīd aimed to challenge the Safavids to reflect on their policies in Yazd, which

had once been the centre of the world.

Did Mufīd's literary project actually improve the lot of Yazdīs? Did it succeed

in effecting change inside the Safavid realm? The short answer is obviously not, or at

least, not in the way Mufīd had hoped. It was only a few decades after Mufīd's death

that the confederation of Afghan tribes invaded the realm and, sacking Iṣfahān in

1135/1722, brought the Safavids' two centuries of rule to an end and ushered in

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[80] The evidence that there was little interest in the Quṭb Shāh's history is that there is only a single
manuscript of *TQS* in Iranian library collections (Millī-Malik Ms. 3885), and while this is the oldest
copy of the work in existence, it did not inspire any further reproductions that have surfaced. Mufīd
clearly never saw this copy while living in Iran or he would not have so emphatically related that he
encountered it in Hyderabad.

period of violence and instability that devastated Yazd and the rest of the region in the

subsequent decades.[81] In reality, it is unlikely that Mufīd could have imagined his

work could have saved the realm from such a fate; so, what might Mufīd have

realistically expected his book to accomplish? And how did *JM* actually benefit the

realm? Did manuscripts containing it even make it back to the land of Iran, and if they

did, who read them? Where and when were they copied, and how were they read?

Because the work was dedicated to Shāh Sulaymān, one might assume that a

very early copy should have reached the Safavid court. No such copy or any mention

of it has come to light. *JM* clearly did make it back to Iran eventually, and has become

an important part of the patrimony of Yazd—Mufīd would say a "useful" part of that

patrimony. *JM* is one of the key sources a number of modern local histories of the

city.[82] However, interest in Mufīd's work in Iran appears not to have emerged until

the nineteenth century CE, and even then, only in quite limited circles. While early

copies of the work produced in the seventeenth century (including the holograph

copy) do exist, these were all produced in Hind, and remained in circulation there.

There are ten pre-twentieth-century manuscripts in Iranian collections that contain

portions of *JM*, and all are of nineteenth-century provenance.[83] Aside from two copies

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[81] Yazd managed to hold out longer than Iṣfahān, repelling Mahmud Ghilzai's forces in 1722 CE.

[82] The late Yazdī scholar, Īraj Afshār, is responsible for invigorating the local history of Yazd in a
collection of exhaustive works. The first is his critical edition of *JM*, (cited throughout this article),
which comprises volumes 1 and 3 in their entirety and a portion of volume 2 (based on the British
Library majmūʿah: Or 1963, fols. 57a-77a). Afshar also published an encyclopedic catalogue of the
historic monuments in Yazd and its provinces, based on scrutiny of the histories of Mufīd and his
predecessors as well as an exhaustive scouring of thousands of archeological sites: Īraj Afshār,
Yādgārʾhā-yi Yazd, 2 volumes (Tehran: Chāp-khānah-i Dānishgāh, 1970 and 1975).

[83] The earliest Iranian copy of *JM*, preserved in the Vazīrī Library in Yazd (Ms 563), is dated
1224/1809. It contains the third volume in its entirety. The others in (chronological order) are as
follows: 1.) Majles library Ms. 14393, fols. 90b-116b (in a *majmūʿah*), dated first quarter of the
nineteenth century; 2.) Kitābkhānah-i Millī Ms. 815498; 3.) Kitābkhānah-i Millī Ms. 1079536, fols.
217b-251a (bound with Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī's *dīvān*), completed at the shrine (*āstānah*) of Shāh
Niʿmatullāh in 1274/1858 by Darvīsh Naṣr Allāḥ; 4.) Kitābkhānah-i Millī Ms. 2302480 Fols. 1a-46b
(in a *majmūʿah*), dated 1288/1872; 5.) Vazīrī Library, Yazd Ms. 564 complete volume 3, copied 22
Jumada II 1249 AH/Feb 5, 1835 CE. 6.) Danishgāh-i Tihrān Ms. 4342, complete volume 3, copied

that contain the full third volume, the bulk of them preserve only portions of the chapter on the Niʿmatullāhīs, many including the story of Sulṭān Qulī and Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī.[84] Moreover, the colophons indicate that a number of these were copied by scribes with connections to either Yazd or Kirmān, and, specifically, with a connection to the Niʿmatullāhī shrines of either region. Thus, Mufīd's work appears to have first found favour, not with the royal household or with imperial provincial governors, but with the devotees of the Niʿmatullāhī sufi order, which was newly reemerging during the nineteenth century, two hundred years after the Safavids had all but eliminated them from the realm.[85] Moreover, there are no extant copies of the first or second volumes of *JM* in Iran at all. Clearly, interest in the work (or in its third volume) developed fairly late, and then, mostly among people with a Niʿmatullāhī affiliation in Yazd or Kirman.

Having said this, it appears that at least one copy containing some portions of the first volumes must have circulated back to Yazd during the first quarter of the

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1268/1851-2 by ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Māhānī; 7.) Kitābkhānah-yi Markizī-yi Āstānah-i Quds-i Riẓavī MS 6623 (Mashhad), complete third volume, copied Ramaẕān 1271 AH/May 1855 CE by ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Niʿmatullāhī Kirmānī; 8.) Danishgāh-yi Tihrān Ms. 1318, partially complete vol. 3, copied probably 1280 AH/1863-64. 9.) Aṣghar Mahdavī Collection Ms. 243 (Tehran), copied Jumada I 1295 AH/May 1878, contains the section on Niʿmatullāhīs from third volume. The manuscript was made in accordance with the wishes of Muḥammad Raḥīm Bayk for the sake of the library of the shrine (*āstānah*) of Ḥaẕrat-i Shāh. A few others are estimated to date from the nineteenth century, which cannot be dated precisely.

[84] The following are the manuscripts containing only the parts of the third volume of *JM* concerning the Niʿmatullāhīs that do include the section on Sulṭān Qulī's encounter with Shāh Niʿmatullāh al-S̱ānī. Majles: Ms. 14393, fols. 109a-110a; Kitābkhānah-i Millī Ms. 815498, fols. 52a-53b; Kitābkhānah-i Millī Ms. 2302480, Fols. 1a-46b.

[85] The revival began in earnest with the arrival in Iran of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh, the Niʿmatullāhī spiritual guide from the Deccan at the end of Karīm Khān Zand's reign. He was later executed in 1211/1797. The Niʿmatullāhīs continued to grow, however, and in 1235/1819, sufi-hating ʿulamāʾ convinced Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh to take steps to undermine the growing popularity of the Niʿmatullāhīs, especially in Gīlān. As Juan Cole has shown, the so-called heterodox movements of the Qajar period, from the Shaykhīs to the Bābīs and Bahāʾīs grew in tandem with the reemergence of sufi groups, such as the Niʿmatullāhīs. Juan Cole, "Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i on the Sources of Religious Authority," in *The Most Learned of the Shiʿa: The Institution of Marjaʿ Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 83-4. Also see Arjomand's discussion in *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 244.

nineteenth century, i.e., some decades earlier than the extant manuscripts reveal. In

1245/1829-30, a few years after the production of the earliest Iranian copies,

Muḥammad Jaʿfar Munshī Naʾīnī composed a new local history of Yazd called *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī*,[86] which he claims to have written in explicit imitation and continuation of

Mufīd's *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīd*.[87] Still, until evidence of seventeenth- or early eighteenth-

century CE copies materialize in Iran, we can provisionally conclude that copies of

Mufīd's history did not ride the ebb-flow of people and objects to Iran in any

significant quantity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries CE, and further,

that any copy that did make it there did not stimulate much interest until the early

nineteenth century CE or later. In the end, the author's great compendium of useful

lessons had come to be used in ways he hadn't intended. It had been broken up into

fragments, and its comprehensive message had been mostly scattered to the wind.

Conclusion

There were countless foreigners who circled between cities of the Deccan,

Hindustan and Iran during early modern period. Many of them ferried books, stories,

verses, and lore back with them. Some of them, such as Maḥmūd Nīshāpūrī, a

contemporary of *TQS*'s author, even produced histories for royal patrons in multiple

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[86] *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī* has been published: Muḥammad Jaʿfar Munshī Naʾīnī, *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī* (Tehran, 1974.)
The author served as a munshī to the governor (*vālī*) of Yazd, Muḥammad Valī Mīrzā, who governed
Yazd 1232-1243/1820-1827, and then served under ʿAbd Allāh Riżā Khān, who commanded him to
write the book. (See p. 229)
[87] The author unequivocally states that his work is to be a continuation (*ẕayl*) of Mufīd's historical
project, and by bringing it up to date, transforming *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī* into *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī*. See, for
example, pp. 229-230, where the author makes this statement, and names Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī and
his *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī*. Moreover, just as Mufīd had dedicated his history of Yazd to the Safavid monarch,
the author of this later book dedicated it to the Qajar king, Fatḥ ʿAlī Shāh (1211-1250/1797-1834). The
style of *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī* is similar to Mufīd's work, if not the structure, which is far less encyclopedic
than Mufīd's. To a large extent *Jāmiʿ-i Jaʿfarī* concerns the life and works of the Yazdī notable and
Qajar governor, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Khān Bāfqī (1129-1213 AH), and his sons. The author,
Muḥammad Jaʿfar should not be confused with ibn Muḥammad Jaʿfarī, the author of the oldest history
of Yazd, *Tārīkh-i Yazd*.

courts.[88] This article has attempted to show how one (not so successful) gharīb in Hind imagined he could remain engaged with his *vaṭan* and the imperial court of Iran even while trying to make a home for himself in the Mughal realm. The found narrative of migration and redemption that Mufīd directed backward toward home enabled him to compose a subtle but poignant critique of the Safavids' neglect of Yazd's sufi shrines and notable families. After all, the entire history of Yazd that framed this borrowed episode illustrated that it was Yazdis who had advised the sovereigns of Īrān-zamīn for centuries and made them great. Not only had the Safavids' neglect of Yazd been devastating to its local elites— driving experts like Mufīd himself into the arms of the Safavids' rivals—but it had severely weakened the empire and even ruined its influence in Hind as well. In Mufīd's telling, the Quṭb Shāhs' humiliating submission to the Mughals and forced abandonment of Shiʿism epitomized the Safavids' failure to maintain a stand against common enemies. This had always required state patronage of Yazd's elites.

Of course, one must read this narrative of decline that pervaded Mufīd's work with a grain of salt. Although the Safavids (and Quṭb Shāhs) disappeared shortly after Mufīd penned his work, there is little evidence that this was actually due to an overall decline in the realm, much less to the royal house's neglect of Yazd.[89] In fact, Yazd and other cities of the realm had continued to flourish during the last years of Safavid rule. In reality, we should probably read what Mufīd describes as decline as transformation. Some local elites, such as the Niʿmatullāhīs and leading sayyid families were indeed disenfranchised by the Safavids, but others filled their place.

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[88] As cited above (note 20), Nīshāpūrī, worked in the Quṭb Shāhī and Safavid courts, producing histories for both of them.
[89] See arguments to this effect in Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 104-116.

Mufīd's own failure to find personal redemption in Hind, accept among the

Mughals, manifested yet another instance of what he though to be history gone

wrong. Thus, he penned this compendium of useful lessons about Yazd in order to

reverse the course of history, or at least, to protest against the way it was unfolding.

Even though Yazdis eventually did read and benefit from the *Jāmiʿ-i Mufīdī*, they did

so too late for anyone to compel the Safavids to redeem themselves. The tongue of

divine revelation, which, in previous years, had so eloquently proclaimed the

auspicious destinies of sovereigns, had grown too stiff for retroflexion.

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