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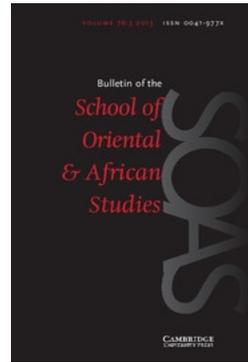
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Munis D. Faruqi: *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719*. xvii, 348 pp. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. £60. ISBN 978 1 107 02217 1.

Audrey Truschke

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One of the redeeming features of the catalogue is the long and detailed entry on the Dara Shikoh Album (pp. 124–37). The importance of this almost complete album, prepared with loving care by Dara and presented to his new wife Nadira Banu in 1641–42, as a rare document of Mughal painting and album-making in the early years of Shah Jahan’s reign, is immense. Amid the uncertainty and confusion surrounding the activities of the painting atelier during the initial period of Shah Jahan’s reign, this securely dated and documented body of paintings provides invaluable evidence on the style and technique followed by the new generation of painters working there, as well as on the mood and preferences of the patron. Dara, like his father and grandfather, started his own atelier with painters of his choice. He also collected earlier works, calligraphic specimens and European prints and pictures, and following in their footsteps started compiling albums containing his own calligraphic work, parts of his collection and new works painted for him. Unfortunately for modern scholars only one painting in the present album bears a date, 1043/1633–34, and the signature of the otherwise unknown painter, Muhammad Khan. Losty, contrary to the dating proposed by earlier scholars, is of the opinion that most parts of the album were put together between 1631, the year of his betrothal to Nadira Banu, and 1633, the year of their marriage. He declares: “It is in fact a statement of his intentions”. This is by no means impossible as Dara was a favoured prince who at that time enjoyed an unfettered position pursuing his scholarly as well as romantic interests as he wished. Losty goes so far as to identify some of the beautiful women found in the album, “who have the air of portraits about them”, as Mumtaz Mahal (Dara’s mother), Jahanara (his sister), and Nadira Banu. It is unclear whether we can be so sure of this given the present state of our knowledge.

The third chapter deals with the rich body of material selected mostly from the albums compiled for Johnson, and provides a solid basis for the identification of styles prevailing at the tottering court of Imperial Delhi and the influential provincial capitals of Lucknow, Murshidabad and Patna. The final chapter includes pictures from nineteenth-century Delhi: the selection of these entries reflects the trend towards a growing interest in the materials of this period.

Like Losty’s landmark 1982 *The Art of the Book in India*, this well-designed and well-produced catalogue will remain a standard reference work for many years to come.

Asok Kumar Das

Tagore National Fellow, Varnika, Baganpara

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Munis Faruqui takes up a topic of enduring interest in South Asian scholarship, the Mughals, and provides a fresh, keen analysis of some key dynamics that sustained this imperial formation. Faruqui’s central argument is that the Mughal Empire thrived on princely competition. He places *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, his first book, in the context of Mughal state formation, and identifies princes, individuals who typically do not garner much scholarly interest unless (and until) they

ascend the throne, as major political actors. According to Faruqi, the development of the Mughals' open-ended succession system that relied upon fierce, often deadly, princely rivalry goes a long way towards explaining the strength of the Mughal Empire for nearly two-hundred years and its ultimate fragmentation into regional successor states. In a growing and diverse kingdom, competitive succession groomed princes to become kings and also prepared people to be effectively ruled.

Faruqi advances his claims by drawing on an impressive array of Persian and European sources. Of particular note is his use of news reports dating to Aurangzeb's reign that provide fascinating details about royal clashes and imperial intrigues. Faruqi also relies upon the more standard canon of Mughal histories, but his deep and careful reading of these works sets a high standard for future scholarship. Faruqi repeatedly displays masterful sensitivity to the tone and assumptions of Indo-Persian texts and uses them to capture shifts and tensions within the Mughal dispensation. Faruqi describes many aspects of the lives of Mughal princes, but this book is a far cry from earlier personality-focused biographies. Instead Faruqi recovers the structural political importance of Mughal princely competition, which often led to rebellions or ruthless wars of succession but also began far earlier in a prince's life as each contender built up his household and forged alliances that integrated new groups into the imperial order. In so doing, Faruqi convincingly contends, princes were instrumental in fostering a vibrant, expanding empire.

Faruqi unravels his account of Mughal princes over seven substantive chapters, which blend topical and chronological approaches. Chapter 1 takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of 200 years of Mughal history as seen through succession struggles and also introduces the complex cast of princes and kings. Faruqi distinguishes three major phases of the Mughal princely institution: an early formative stage, a century-long golden era, and a later period of decline. In chapter 2, Faruqi explores the first period of the Mughal princely system (1504–1556) in which competitors for the throne were granted appanages to administer as they saw fit. Babur largely continued earlier Timurid practices in this regard. Faruqi detects a move towards a more centralized, imperial dispensation even under Humayun, and marshals both military and textual evidence that indicates this change.

Chapters 3–6 then address the heyday of the Mughal princely system that was solidified by Akbar in the 1580s and held strong for a century, until Aurangzeb began rolling out increased restrictions in the 1680s. Akbar initiated this new phase by narrowing the possible candidates for rule to his sons, thus excluding any claims from collateral lines. Akbar also discarded the older notion that a kingdom could be divided among worthy contenders and established the principle of an indivisible empire. In this winner-takes-all arrangement, rivalry between a king's sons benefitted the empire in numerous ways, such as by encouraging the skills that princes would require to become successful rulers, giving princes an incentive to reach out to marginalized groups, and offering the imperial centre recurring opportunities to reassert its power in opposition to princely challenges. Thus the endemic disobedience, rebellion, and succession battles that accompanied open-ended succession bolstered rather than drained the Mughal state.

In these central chapters, Faruqi alternates between general accounts, such as describing a typical "day in the life of a Mughal prince" in chapter 3, and descriptions of specific events, such as contrasting Dara Shikuh and Aurangzeb in chapter 4. Those unfamiliar with Mughal history may be slightly disoriented by the repeated shifts in timeframes. But Faruqi effectively uses this blended approach to achieve his dual goals of outlining the major characteristics of Mughal princely contests while acknowledging specificity in the experiences of individual would-be-kings. Faruqi's narrative here brings royal struggles alive while not losing sight of the broader implications for the Mughal kingdom.

Chapter 7 and the conclusion recount the decline of the Mughal princely institution. Faruqi recognizes the 1680s as the start of serious trouble for Mughal princes, following on the heels of Prince Akbar's failed revolt against Aurangzeb. The next few decades witnessed a series of problems across the empire, including widespread fiscal insolvency, severe disruptions in law and order, overly powerful nobles, and increased meddling by Aurangzeb in his sons' affairs. In the relationship between these various crises and the health of the Mughal princely institution, Faruqi perceives a vicious cycle of causality. He argues that princely households fell victim to broader social and imperial disruptions and, in turn, that the inability of princes to run financially stable and relatively independent households irreparably weakened the Mughal Empire. After Aurangzeb's reign ended in 1707, the system of princely competition and indeed the entire imperial formation quickly fell apart. Faruqi formally ends his book in 1719, the year of the first ordered Mughal succession, by which point the Mughal Empire had already begun to fracture into numerous regional states.

Faruqi's work holds extensive implications for our understanding of the Mughal state, and his underlying insights extend far beyond the lives of princes. Faruqi shows through careful, well-documented analysis how Mughal power intersected and connected many layers of Indian governance and society, including local, regional, and imperial levels. Careful readers will notice small weaknesses in the book, such as the author's overly trusting use of European travelogues, the reliability of which has been convincingly questioned in recent scholarship. But Faruqi's core contention stands strong: that Mughal authority was an ever-evolving, on-the-ground project in which competition among princes was key to extending and enacting imperial ambitions.

Audrey Truschke

Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities in Religious Studies,
Stanford University

TEENA PUROHIT:

The Aga Khan Case: Religion and Identity in Colonial India.

xi, 183 pp. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press,
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Teena Purohit's book *The Aga Khan Case: Religion and Identity in Colonial India* develops a critical theme in the study of South Asian Islam, that of its heterogeneity. Despite the attention scholars have devoted to this topic, Islam persists in appearing to be a homogeneous category to many non-specialists. Purohit pushes against prevailing assumptions that Islam can be understood through studies of texts and the Arab world, showing instead how Islam is shaped by specific local contexts. Through a close examination of the conditions under which the Indian minority of Bombay Khojas came to be identified as Shii Imami Muslims in the nineteenth century, she shows that the application of sectarian nomenclature was determined by the conditions of colonial modernity, and does not reflect the full range of practices and identities embodied in the community, yet was projected as "an eternal fact" (p. 2). Her objective is to historicize Ismaili identity, and in so doing to reveal the ways in which the community is embedded in a broader non-sectarian devotional community, the *Satpanth*.