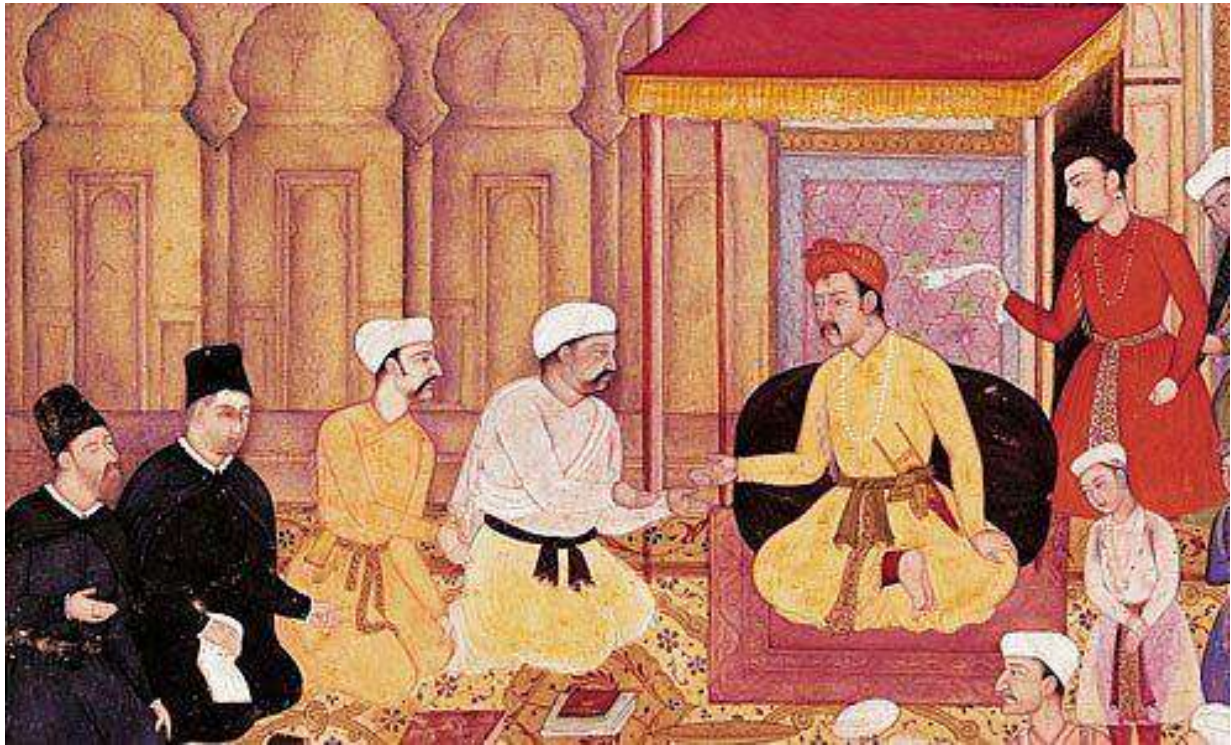


The First Islamic Millennium and the Making of the
Tarikh-i Alfi
in the Sixteenth Century Mughal India



Dissertation for MA Degree

Said Reza Huseini

Supervised by Professor Jos Gommans

Department of Colonial and Global Studies,

Leiden University

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The illustration on the cover: Akbar observing a discussion at Ibadat-khana.

Source: Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*.

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Introduction

If anything significant survived from the imperial millennial programme of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605), the *Tarikh-i Alfi* is part of it. It is a book of history containing a historical narrative of the world (*'alam*) as was known to the Mughals. It opens with the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E and continues till the reign of Akbar. The title of the book consisted of two terms: *Tarikh* or history and *Alfi* or one thousand, that means it is history of “One Thousand Years- a millennium”. Along with the *Alfi* coins, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was thus the token of commemoration of the first Islamic millennium, a significant moment for the Muslims that was completed in 1592.

At first look, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* might represent a general history, but it is not as simple as that. The book is a core element of the Akbar-i millennial programme to justify the Mughal political ideology. It was designed by a group of Indo-Iranian scholars to project the Mughal king as the ideal man, the sacred sovereign and the unifier of the Hindu-Muslim communities. The *Tarikh-i Alfi* was a joint project to provide a historical narrative to depict the world in the first Islamic millennium with the aim to prove that the

discords and problems in the world increased after the establishment of the religious institutions controlled by a certain group of people, who misused them for their own social and political advantages. These agencies limited public access to religious scriptures and kept them to their own circles on the pretext of claiming of being representatives and defenders of those religions. Thus, they asserted being legitimized interpreters of these holy texts. Each religious institution proclaimed to be the only true faith, the right path to salvation and distinguished its followers from others. While it united a group of people under a certain label, it created disunity and hostility against others. Akbar's political ideology was to oppose these misleading ideologies by harmonizing various ideas and creating a platform where all traditions could be represented equally. In particular, reducing cultural distances within the diverse Indian society by creating bridges between the Islamic and the Indic cultures was essential.

The central element in Akbar's political ideology was "Absolute Peace" or *sulh-i kul*, that meant respecting all traditions equally. It was not a policy of forced cultural integration based on superiority of one group upon others, but rather it was meant to create a political unity that could embrace different communities and protect their cultural values without destroying their identities. Thus, the Mughal political ideology was to maintain the already existing cultural mosaic within India that had been formed after centuries of co-existence of various ethnic and cultural groups, and encouraging them to harmonize with newly arriving groups of people from other regions.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* reflects the inclusive political ideology that the Mughal empire required. The expansion of the empire brought a large part of the Indian subcontinent with its different traditions and cultural ideals under Akbar's rule that needed a specific policy to ensure stability and continuation of the Mughal sovereignty. The empire could be created, but not continued by violence. After his various military campaigns, Akbar learned that the only guarantee for his state's survival was possible with the collaboration of military elites and local ruling classes of all the regions he has conquered. Thus, the empire needed an inclusive political ideology to satisfy both the ruler and the ruled.

Simultaneous to the expansion of the Mughal empire, globalization intensified in this period and opened a new phase in world history, in which, the European maritime

powers changed the traditional political map of the world.¹ Technological development in shipbuilding and discovery of new sea routes going towards the east, intensified the connection between Europe and Asia. This provided large amounts of information which dramatically changed the classical views and created need for re-ordering the world.²

Similarly, regional conflicts and religious persecutions forced many men of knowledge and skills to migrate to safer zones. More specifically, the establishment of the Safavid empire in Iran increased sectarian conflicts after the Safavids declared the *Imami Shi'a* ideology to be their state-religion. The sectarian clashes together with the Safavid wars against the Uzbek rulers of Transoxiana increased a wave of inter-regional migration.³ India was an ideal destination for many migrants. It was centre of a great empire, a commercial emporium and the very place, where her heterogeneous inhabitants had contact with other cosmopolitans. The idea of acquiring knowledge from all parts of the world was well received in the minds of the Mughal elites. Most importantly, India had an immense diversity of religious communities that could host other religious groups as well.

The globalization and the empire building process reinforced connectivity and transformation of knowledge between various regions. The convergence of intellectuals representing different traditions provided skillful groups of administrators to create systems the Mughal empire needed. Particularly, they formulated a theory of kingship to express the king's relation to the people in his domain and define his position in the contemporary world. Traditionally, the king was said to be chosen and protected by the Divine that released him from any obligation towards people. However, in Mughal political ideology, the king must have eligibility to be chosen by the Divine and was responsible towards his subjects' security and prosperity. In a way it was replacing of the divine agency by the human agency. Nevertheless, the connection with Divine as source of legitimacy was still important. Formulating this specific kind of imperial ideology

¹ Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before the European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3.

² C.A. Bayly, "The First Age of Global Imperialism, c.1760-1830," in Meena Bhargava (eds), *Exploring Medieval India II: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries Culture, Gender, Regional Patterns* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), 367-68.

³ Mirza Beg Gunabadi, *Rauzat al-Safaviyya* ed. Ghulam Reza Majd (Tehran: Majmue Intisharati Adabi wa Tarikhi, 1387/2004).

required knowledge provided through texts in different fields, observations, experiments and also translations of ancient and current works. Declaration of this new imperial ideology required a particular moment to be projected as divine-will that was provided by the completion of the first Islamic millennium that occurred in 1592.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* thus reflects the imperial ideology formulated for Akbar. This theory was to create a peaceful space for inhabitants of the Mughal empire, in which they could deliver their real sentiments with calmness of mind and freedom of expression. After the expansion of his empire, his main concern in the last two decades of his life (1580-1600) was to harmonize the Hindu-Muslim communities by finding similarities between their ideologies. This had been already an important issue that involved the Muslim rulers of India before Akbar's reign, but none of them had taken it as seriously as Akbar had. However, it also depicts the challenges Akbar and his intelligensia faced, to undertake this difficult task. It required facing religious leaders, particularly the orthodox Sunni *Ulema*, who enjoyed a traditional authority to interfere in political issues for centuries. The policy of *sulh-i kul* was not acceptable to them as their position depended on their communalizing ability that could ensure their socio-political power. Thus, Akbar had to cross the barrier of *Ulema*. To do so, he needed to terminate their interference in state affairs and decrease their religious authority and for that he needed a group of scholars, who could put them down in religious debates. The establishment of the *Ibadat-khana* (literally means, house of worship) in 1579, provided this opportunity and also facilitated with finding capable scholars, who could formulate and facilitate his political ideology.

The Mughal political ideology has been well studied and analyzed. Most of these studies and other works emphasized on the centrality of Akbar's role in formulating the imperial ideology of *sulh-i-kul*. However, this was not the case. Abbas Amanat highlights the role of migrant *Nuqtawī* thinkers from Safavid Iran in making Akbar's imperial ideology, but he completely ignores other traditions that shaped Akbar's thoughts.⁴ Iqtidar Alam Khan investigated the formation of Akbar's personality traits and his world outlook, and suggested that Akbar's worldview has largely changed after 1580, mainly

⁴ Abbas Amanat, "Persian *Nuqtawīs* and the Shaping of the Doctrine of "Universal Conciliation" (*Sulh-i Kull or kuhl*) in Mughal India," in Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (eds), *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, and Construction of Religious Authority in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

due to his becoming familiar with more scholars arriving in his court.⁵ Satish Chandra argued that Akbar opening his court to everyone was a great success as its consequence was the formation of a new composite ruling class, which included regular people such as Todar Mal and Patar Das, who later became noted administrators in Akbar's court.⁶ In his comprehensive articles on the Mughal political ideology, Irfan Habib suggests that Akbar's imperial ideology was formulated by Abul Fazl and other scholars, who believed that diversity is the essential part of creation and each human has a different understanding of truth. Likewise, each religion contained a truth in it. Thus, all religions should be respected by the state and given freedom of expression, but not to the level that it could harm people. State was the ultimate authority to maintain this balance. Abul Fazl believed that only an inclusive ideology enforced by a strong and wise ruler could protect the cultural mosaic of India.⁷ Habib's view has been supported by Richard Eaton's note on Abul Fazl as the main theorist behind the development of Akbar's political ideology and the one who, deeply understood that, "Islam in India was religion of minority community ruling over Hindu majority".⁸

However, the relation between Akbar's political ideology and the Islamic millennium has so far remained unknown. Azfar Moin's work on millennial sovereigns could be the first study on this subject.⁹ Nevertheless, Moin's work does not mention about the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. Quite surprisingly, Sayed Athar Abbas Rizvi gives fair details about the historical narrative of the book, but he fails to recognize its millennial importance.¹⁰ Similarly, Ali Anooshahr used the *Tarikh-i Alfi* to show the importance of

⁵ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook: A Critical Approach," *Social Scientist*, 20, 9-10 (1992), 16-30.

⁶ Satish Chandra, J. S. Grewal "et al", "Akbar and His Age: A Symposium," *Social Scientist*, 20, 9-10 (1992), 61-64.

⁷ Ibidem, 68-72; Irfan Habib, "A Political Theory for the Mughal Empire: A Study of the Ideas of Abu'l Fazl," *Proceeding of the Indian History Congress*, 59 (1998), 329-40.

⁸ Richard Eaton, "Abul-Fazl Allami," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed June 25, 2017).

⁹ Ahmad Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); The reaction to this book are various, see Ahmad Azfar Moin, "The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam," reviewed by Ali Anooshahr, *The Medieval History Journal*, 18, 1 (2015), 166-191; A. Azfar Moin, "The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam," reviewed by Richard Eaton, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 44, 2 (Autumn 2013), 289-291.

¹⁰ Sayed Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign with Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl 1556-1605* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers 1975), 253-62; Rizvi, "Tarikh-i Alfi," in *Historians of Medieval India* ed. Muhibbul Hasan (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan), 123-41.

the *Ishraqi* scholars from Shiraz in helping Akbar to harmonize the Indic-Islamic ideas; nevertheless, he does not mention that other traditions also collaborated with the *Ishraqi* scholars.¹¹

With all of its importance for the Mughal political ideology, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* still remains poorly studied. Except some short entries, there is, almost, no adequate study on the book and its significance to the Mughal imperial ideology.¹² The main reason behind this negligence is that neither its original Persian text nor its translation was available. However, the text partially became available in 1999 through Sayed Ali Ale-Davoud and then most of it was edited and re-printed in 2002 by Ghulam Reza Majd.¹³ However, they are not analytical editions. In fact, they isolated the book from its historical context by entitling them as history of Iran in the first case and history of Islam in the second case. The *Tarikh-i Alfi* is not at all a regional or religious history; nevertheless, they at least made the text available for research to contemporary scholars.

This dissertation is the first attempt to study the relation between Akbar's political ideology and the Islamic millennium based on the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. The reason is that the *Tarikh-i Alfi* is the earliest Mughal source explaining the necessity of an inclusive political ideology and its relation to the Islamic millennium. Moreover, it represents the ideas of the *Ishraqi*, the *Nuqtawī* and the *Jaunpuri Mahdawi* members who collaborated in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project. The dissertation is based on Majd's edition and also on some unpublished manuscripts of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* that are not included in Majd's work, and addresses several relevant questions about the book. Firstly, what is the book about, who are the authors, and why was it commissioned? What is its relation to the Mughal political ideology, and how this ideology has been embodied in its historical narrative?

¹¹ Ali Anooshahr, "Shirazi scholars and the Political Culture of the Sixteenth-Century Indo-Persian World," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 51, 3 (2014), 331-52.

¹² Sayed Ali Ale-Davoud, "Tarikh-i Alfi", *Encyclopedia of the World of Islam* ed. S. Mustafa Mirsalim (Tehran: Encyclopedia Islamica Foundation, 1996), 193-95; Ali Anooshahr, 'Dialogism and Territoriality in a Mughal History of the Islamic Millennium', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55 (2012), 222-224; Rizvi, "Tarikh-i Alfi," in *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 253-62.

¹³ Ale-Davoud, *Tarikh-i Alfi: Tarikh-i Iran wa Kishvarhaye Hamsaya dar Salhaye 850-984H (Tarikh-i Alfi: History of Iran and the Neighboring Countries from 850-984H)*, (Tehran: Intisharati Fikri Roz, 1377/1999); Qazi Ahmad Tahtavi and Asaf Khan Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi: Tarikh-i Hazar Sal-e Islam* ed. Ghulam Reza Tabatabai Majd (Tehran: Intisharati 'Ilmi wa Farhangi, 1382/2002).

This research approaches these questions through four chapters. The first chapter discusses the necessity for an inclusive political ideology and the challenges exposed by the orthodox Sunni Ulema. In the second chapter, the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, its authors and its structures are discussed. Why a historical narrative should be written or co-authored by non-historians? This is a question that has been or can be raised about the authors as they are not all historians, but rather experts in different scientific fields. Therefore, knowing the background of the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, helps to understand exactly why they were selected for the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project and, whose ideas are embedded within the book. Relevantly, each author represented a certain thought, i.e., the Ishraqi, the Nuqtawī or the Jaunpuri Mahdawi which have some common resonance points that could bring them together. What ideologies were behind the commission of the book has been addressed in chapter three. In chapter four, the significance of the millennium for Akbar and formulation of a millennial theory that could justify his position above all traditions, have been discussed. Also, it will answer the question, why the book was commissioned in 990/1582, even before the actual Islamic millennium, and what had motivated Akbar to change the common *hijri* chronology to *rihla* chronology. Chapter five will discuss the book's attempt to harmonize the Islamic and the Indic ideas such as sun worshiping and transmigration of soul. It creates bridges of understanding between the Hindu-Muslim ideas that was essential for laying the foundation of the Mughal political ideology.

Chapter 1: Akbar and his Empire

Looking for an Inclusive Political Ideology

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* was part of Akbar's millennial programme designed to follow a greater purpose. It was to introduce the Mughal imperial ideology. This ideology was necessitated by two major phenomena developing side by side at the regional and global level. At the regional level, the Mughal empire reached to a certain level of stabilization after expanding its control from the Hindu-Kush mountains in present day Afghanistan to the shores of Gujarat and Bengal and controlling the subcontinent's main trade routes.¹⁴ The restoration of the Mughal empire by Humayun (d.1556) and its territorial expansion under Akbar was followed by increase of local nobility in the diverse body of the Mughal ruling class.¹⁵ This diversity created a cosmopolitan nature of the state and necessitated a specific political system to ensure the state's stability and progress that was dependent on

¹⁴ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals-Delhi Sultanate 1206-1526*, 2 (New Delhi: Har-Anand publications, 2004); Jos Gommans, "Limits of Empire," in Meena Bhargava (eds), *Exploring Medieval India II: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries Culture, Gender, Regional Patterns* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), 506-507.

¹⁵ P.S. Bedi, *The Mughal Nobility under Akbar* (Jalandhar: ABC Publications, 1985); More detail could be found in Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997 revision of author's Ph.D thesis, 1961).

collaboration of this diverse nobility within a system, which was “the first step towards cross-cultural exchange and integration”.¹⁶ This system was a combination of modified forms of the Mongol military organization brought by the Mughals and the Islamic *iqta*’ that had been practiced in India before the Mughals.¹⁷ Thus, the Mughal administrative reformations were to bring all these diverse noblemen, warriors, clan chiefs, rulers, scholars and artisans under an imperial ranking system (of *zat* and *sawar*: literally meaning essence and reality), and this was a much-needed response to this territorial expansion.¹⁸

At the global level, the millennial mentality was shared by many regions around the world. The earlier messianic and millennial mentalities, which were known in both Latin Christian¹⁹ and in the Islamic world²⁰, developed further and became an important religious and political concern. The notion of creating the paradise on earth and preparing the ground for *Parusia* (second coming of Christ)²¹ or *Zuhūr* (second coming of Mahdi)²² motivated some rulers to fashion themselves after the promised one and to think of controlling Jerusalem, where the prophesized savior would establish his universal kingdom. The idea of Parusia inspired the Portuguese to move out towards the Indian Ocean and also motivated Columbus’ maritime expedition in the Atlantic.²³

¹⁶ Michal Biran, “Mongol Transformation from the Steppe to Eurasian Empire,” *Koninklijke Brill NV*, Leiden, 2004, 394; Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (New Delhi: Oriental Books reprint exclusively distributed by Munshiram Manoharlal 1971); Muhammad Habib and K.A. Nizami eds. *A Comprehensive History of India: The Delhi Sultanate 1206-1526*, 5 (New Delhi: People’s Publication House, 2006); Irfan Habib, “Two Indian Theorists of the State: Barani and Abul Fazl,” Paper Presented at the Indian History Congress, Patiala, 1998; Maria E. Subtenly, *Timurid in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia*, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012); Iqtidar Alam Khan, “Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship,” *Medieval India-A Miscellany*, 2 (1972), 1.

¹⁸ Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 132-33.

¹⁹ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West 1221-1410*, (London and New York: Pearson, Longman, 2005); John M. Court, *A Short History of Christian Millenarianism* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

²⁰ Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²¹ John M. Court, *A Short History of Christian Millenarianism*.

²² Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* trans. Ali Davani, 13 (Tehran: Mu’asisa-yi Tahqiqat wa Nashre Ma’aref Ahl al-Bayt, 1308/1929).

²³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 104-107.

Similarly, millenarianism was “one of the most powerful, diverse and enduring expressions of Islam”.²⁴ It could dramatically transform political, social, cultural and religious order by offering new methods to encounter “political repression, social injustice and the clerical tyranny”.²⁵

The empire building process required an inclusive political ideology that could ensure the power relation between monarchs and subjects. The Mughal imperial ideology was a development from an earlier model of kingship that was known in the Persianate lands. It was based on a pyramidal model, in which divine kingship was “a check on authoritarian tendencies of the militarized politics”.²⁶ This imperial ideology was practiced by the Delhi Sultanate and was also adopted by Humayun, but it was crystalized and modified by Akbar to introduce an inclusive and specific form of sovereignty- that of a supreme king with heavenly powers over all kinds of authorities. This theory was largely modified on the eve of the first Islamic millennium by the combination of various ideas introduced by intellectuals converged in the Mughal court. Akbar’s millennial programme was thus designed to assert this new imperial ideology and the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was therefore a historical narrative conceived to justify this implementation.

Equally, the territorial expansion brought more wealth and diverse population. It provided with both professional people and financial resources that allowed Akbar to conduct his imperial “cultural programme” that had no precedent.²⁷ The inclusive political ideology required interaction with all traditions in the empire. The emperor needed to be represented as “Manifestation of All” (*mazhar-i kul*). This representation would not happen without respecting all cultures and traditions. Thus, including all of them and acknowledging and accepting their differences were essential for Akbar that came to be known as policy of “Absolute Peace”. The completion of the first Islamic millennium provided an unique opportunity to justify and sustain the new political ideology based on accepting of different traditions.

²⁴ Abbas Amanat, “Islam in Iran v. Messianic Islam in Iran,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 28 March 2017).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Anooshahr, “On the Imperial Discourse of the Delhi Sultanate and Early Mughal India,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 163.

²⁷ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 132-33.

The openness of the Mughal court provided Akbar with a large number of intellectuals from different regions of the empire and the world. It turned the Mughal court into a universal centre that shaped Akbar's thoughts and widened his worldview. The crystallization of the Mughal political ideology occurred in an intellectual centre specifically built for this purpose and came to be known as the Ibadat-khana. There, the emperor acknowledged being superior over religions and the "Perfect Human" (*insan-i kamil*) and also the "Mahdi of the Age", whose manifestation would inaugurate a new progressive period. Similarly, various millennial strands met in the Ibadat-khana that facilitated Akbar to select his candidates for the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. Most of the authors of the book met at the Ibadat-khana debates. Hence, the book is a textual reflection of oral discussions and also represents various millenarian debates conducted at the Ibadat-khana. Discussions on religions performed by scholars of different traditions with the aim to justify the correctness of the respected tradition was not without critical responses. However, it taught the emperor that diversity in religions is like diversity in languages and thoughts, a fact that could not be disputed. How could he maintain the pluralism he witnessed at his own court represented the much greater territory he ruled? Moreover, how could he control the harshness of the orthodox Sunni Ulema, who believed themselves of being the only true representatives of the true tradition?

Challenge of the Orthodox Sunni Ulema

The most important element related to the Mughal political ideology reflected in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* is Akbar's tendency towards "Unity of Being" and his policy of sulh-i kul in his empire. The reason for enforcing sulh-i kul was the religious tensions that filled the air before 1580s. The major challenge to this idea was exposed by the orthodox Sunni Ulema, whose interference in the state matters was realized to be a great danger.

From 1556-1576, the orthodox Sunni Ulema enjoyed both political and economic powers. For their unquestionable position as defenders of Islam, any attempt to harmonize the Indo-Islamic society and opening the doors to non-Muslims and migrant intellectuals with different ideas was almost impossible. It was for their interference in state matters that convinced Akbar about the necessity of ending their power. To do so,

he needed scholars with vast knowledge to bring the Ulema down to their knees through their own religious sources and also support Akbar in informing his political ideology that would allow integration of the Indo-Muslim communities. Akbar wished to provide conditions in which “all religious beliefs and practices could flourish with out any hindrance, either political or religious”.²⁸ However, any attempt in this regard was too provocative and dangerous for the existence of high religious tensions filled the air.

Akbar’s fear from the Ulema was real. He saw, how the Sunni orthodox Ulema misused their positions as interpreters and defenders of the Prophet’s Sharia and Sunna that threatened the lives of regular people. They objected his abolition of pilgrimage tax (1563) and *jizya* (1564) and giving *in’am* grant for the support of a temple at Vrindavan (1565). His respect for Hindu beliefs increased and protected the Muslim groups, particularly the Shi’as, who had suffered from the orthodox Sunni Ulema.²⁹

The victims of the orthodox Sunni Ulema were everyone who was opposed to their ideas. Akbar witnessed, how Shaikh Abul Nabi insisted and finally ordered the exhumation of Mir Murtaza Sharifi Shirazi’s remains from the vicinity of Amir Khusrau’s tomb in Delhi in 1567 and later with the help of Makhdum al-Mulk, threatened Shaikh Mubarak for his Mahdawi thoughts to the level that Shaikh Mubarak and his sons were saved only by the emperor’s compassion.³⁰ In 1577, he witnessed that how the Ulema was divided upon making decision whether to fine or execute a Brahman of Mathura, who had condemned Islam and its Prophet. Akbar commissioned a trial under Abul Fazl and Bir Bal, who confirmed the allegiance. While, Akbar tried to be reluctant in the case by leaving it to his *sadr -al sudur* Shaikh Abdul Nabi with the wish that he will free the Brahman, he was surprised after hearing that the Shaikh had ordered the execution of the Brahman without his confirmation. Akbar’s anger was for the fact that according to Hanfi jurisprudence, a non-Muslim living under a Muslim ruler could not be punished for his condemnation of Islam or the Prophet. Akbar took this action of the

²⁸ Khan, “Akbar’s Personality Traits and World Outlook,” 20-21.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 21.

Shaikh as a direct challenge to the state's matter.³¹ These issues reinforced the urgency of terminating the Ulema's monopoly over religion.³²

From 1573 to 1579, Akbar remained helpless to undertake this task, not knowing any way out. While, the Ibadat-khana was a way to learn about Islam, still he needed a strong group against the Ulema. In this critical situation, Shaikh Mubarak and his sons Abul Fazl and Faizi came to help Akbar to break down orthodox Sunni Ulema's power³³. Shaikh Mubarak already combined "high theological learning with spirit of humanism and tolerance"³⁴ and had the idea of "reorienting the Islamic beliefs by unearthing the basic truths from the current schools of Islamic thoughts and sects, and of reconciling them with each other", but it was impossible for him to expose this idea in presence of the powerful Ulema. Hence, he needed a powerful man with the same desire, which was Akbar.³⁵

Shaikh Mubarak's significant contribution was his idea of the religious decree (*mahzar*) to free Akbar from the chain of the orthodox Ulema. In 1579, Akbar's superiority over the Ulema was established through the mahzar that announced him as the *Imam* of the time (*imam-i zamān*) and the Mujtahid of the age. After becoming an Imam, no authority could question Akbar's achievements. To form the mahzar and defend it, Shaikh Mubarak used the ideas of Ishraqi scholars like Jalal al- Din Davani (d.1502), particularly his famous words that the Mujtahids's decisions are not necessarily correct. Abul Fazl vehemently supported Shaikh Mubarak's idea of mahzar. He solved the problem of Akbar's illiteracy that could invalidate the decree. He mentions that the king was not part of the society, but rather the successor of God on earth (*khalifa al-Allah*) and his heart was the recipient of God's message.³⁶ Unlike the Mujtahid, who acquired his knowledge through studying and was not free of mistakes (Sunni idea),³⁷ the knowledge of Imam was gifted by God (*ilm-i ladoni*) and he was safe from committing any mistake

³¹ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslim*, 141-143.

³² Irfan Habib, "A Political Theory," 330.

³³ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 74-75.

³⁴ Irfan Habib, "A Political Theory," 330.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 102.

³⁶ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 3, 252-53; For kingship in Islam see, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *Nasihah al-Muluk* eds. Jalal Homayee (Tehran: Kitab-khane Majlis, 1317/1938), 39-40.

³⁷ R. Krishnamurti, *Akbar: The Religious Aspect* (Baroda: Ram Lal J. Patel Maharaja Sayajiro University, 1961), 23-25.

(Shi'a idea).³⁸ Theoretically, Abul Fazl solved the problem by putting the position of Mujtahid below the dignity of “the pure soul (*nafs-i qodsi*)”, which means Akbar. He then urges the wise sovereign to become the pacifier of disturbed hearts by holding this institution.³⁹

Badayuni mentions that most of the Sunni Ulema were forced to sign it except Shaikh Mubarak. He did it willingly and even wrote under his signature that the mahzar was his wish that came true after several years.⁴⁰ The main purposes of the mahzar was to bring all matters affecting the life of and wellbeing of people of all religions living in the Mughal domain, directly under Akbar's control. As Rizvi has argued, “it sought to obviate the possibility of playing with the life of the people in the name of the orthodoxy or Islam”.⁴¹ However, the mahzar did not have any religious base, but rather it was political and was designed for administrative needs. It was a way to take the power from the orthodox Ulema that responded by their open resistance, rebellion, and accusations of Akbar to be the enemy of Islam.⁴² Although Akbar could subdue the rebels, nevertheless he required to project a specific image of the king who legitimized for his all actions by all traditions e.g., Muslims and Hindus. This task came to be undertaken by Abul Fazl with the help of the migrant scholars.

Abul Fazl believed that the very diverse nature of human being requires different traditions. However, he asserted that religions controlled by their agents reduced the possibility of critical thinking about them. The existences of many religions indicates the presence of more confusion among people as any religion, naturally is opposed to reason and criticism. He argued that no religions and prophets could ensure peace or salvation of the humankind for the reason that they all wanted to rule over the people through faith. Abul Fazl alleged that there was only one “heart-ensnaring beauty, which casts splendor through many thousands of veils”.⁴³ Thus human society was like a carpet with many colours and designs. The recipient of Divine Light is the only one, who can protect the property, life, honour and religions of the people. This single man is not the prophet, but

³⁸ Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub Kolaini, *Usul al- Kafi* ed. Sayed Jawad Mustafawi, 1 (Tehran: Kitab Furushi Ilmiyya Islamiyya, 1369/1990), 192.

³⁹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 3, 252-54.

⁴⁰ Badayuni, 2, 272.

⁴¹ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 155.

⁴² *Ibid*, 149, 360.

⁴³ Irfan Habib, “A Political Theory,” 332.

the Just King, the reflector of God's light and organizer of human affairs that can maintain justice among the human society.

Abul Fazl's solution for the critical situation Akbar faced in terminating the orthodox Ulema's power, was based on two pillars; religious tolerance and respect for reason. In his chapter on the "Ethnography of Hindustan", he discussed the various causes of misunderstanding and religious tensions. Some characteristics in the society had been identified which often caused problems on various levels. They were: the diversity of languages, the distance between the Hindu scholars and the scholars from other regions, the absorption of humankind in the delights of corporeal gratification, the indolence, hostility with critical analysis, the animosity and persecution of others in the name of faith, and finally the prosperity of wretches without responsibility, who harm the society. The key question for Abul Fazl was, were there any common grounds for all these problems? The answer was clear- disrespect of reason and religious bigotry does not allow a person to respect the reality that human creation is based on diversity that must be respected. However, this fact was ignored and rejected by the orthodox scholars of all religions.⁴⁴

Like his father, Abul Fazl had wish to harmonize various traditions and create an ideal society free from ignorance and blind imitation (*taqlid*). But, his project needed an ideal man, a powerful character with an ability to enforce this idea. In his theory, the mighty king should be a father to the humankind and all people should receive comfort from his benevolence without fear of discrimination. Further, the transcendental unity should be absolutely recognized by the king, who loves all people equally. The king should make friendship with good men of all communities and accept excuses and make peace with the bad. Enforcing this policy after 1579, allowed a large number of non-Muslims and migrants to enter the Mughal administration but also provoked the orthodox Ulema to take hostile position against the king.⁴⁵

Abul Fazl's theory was a combination of the various thoughts, particularly Ibn 'Arabi's idea of "Unity of Being" (*wahdat al-wujud*) and the Ishraqis' idea of "Necessary Being" (*wajib al-wujud*) and "Pure Good" (*khair-i mahz*). Abul Fazl mentions that pure

⁴⁴ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 2 ; Azra Nizami, *Social Outlook of Abul Fazl* (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, 1972), 26-28.

⁴⁵ Irfan Habib, "A Political Theory," 334.

good is the essence of divine majesty and evil can not exist in the presence of pure good. Thus, whatever comes from divine is good and that make only two possible attitudes towards human being. Either treating all people with respect and accepting them, because all people are part of the great “Being” or to love all people (*muhabbat-i kul*). Hence, to Abul Fazl, good life is not a prayer to God, as the Ulema believed, but rather it was an “attitude of universal concord and service to the whole mankind irrespective of religious and sectarian differences”.⁴⁶

Abul Fazl was an expert in Islamic theology too. He knew *tafsīr* and also was an expert in all Islamic sects. In Badayuni’s words, Akbar found the capability in Abul Fazl to teach a lesson to the *Mullahs*. From 1575 onwards, Abul Fazl became the main spokesman of the emperor and the actual coordinator of the imperial cultural programmes, particularly forming of the Mughal political ideology. Akbar’s confidence and trust on Abul Fazl increased after seeing his vast knowledge in Persian and Arabic philosophy and literature, and his strong and systematic method of argument that would make his opponents speechless. With his help, Akbar brought down the edifice of the orthodox Sunni Ulema and learned that he could turn the table on them by easily condemning them to be blind followers of tradition.

The universal peace was not only a political necessity, but also a religious responsibility. Only a person, who has all capabilities that make him the ideal candidate for God to authorize him as His representative could achieve the universal peace. Thus, this person is the closest to God and should create the ideal society (*madine fazila*) on earth.⁴⁷ People with any background should be able to live in peace. Such a society could be created only with the efforts of the perfect human.⁴⁸ This character can’t be anyone for Abul Fazl except Akbar. However, the challenge was, how to project Akbar as a perfect human, a character chosen by God and the most capable among all humans. The millennial momentum and the gathering of the migrant intellectuals with various millennial thoughts provided the answer. Akbar had to be shown as the ideal king through

⁴⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 360.

⁴⁷ Erwin Isak Jakob Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 124-25; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 355. Majid Fakhri, Al-Farabi, *Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld, cop. 2002).

⁴⁸ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 340-358.

various traditions. Thus, making Akbar as the Just Imam and the Mahdi of time, the avatar of Rama and Krishna through a millennial programme was essential. None other than Abul Fazl could coordinate this programme that was a collection and modification of different thoughts that were reflected in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*.

Chapter 2: Making of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*

The Book and its Structure

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* was commissioned by Akbar in the year 990/1582. The task was to compile a history of the world from the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 down to Akbar's reign and it was undertaken by a group of well-known scholars of his court. The book was to commemorate the completion of the first Islamic millennium, which occurred in 1592. It was designed to be superior in scope and contents over all other historical works that had been ever compiled (*nasīkh-i tawārīkhi digar*). It was planned to include the history of all Muslim rulers from the day the Prophet passed away, to analyzing reasons of their rise and fall. Nonetheless, it was not limited to Muslim rulers, but also encompassed all other people, who came in contact with them. Hence, this makes the book more than simply a history of Mughals, Muslim rulers, or a certain region, but rather the history of the world (*atrāf wa aknāf-i 'alam*) for the one thousand years from 632 till 1592.

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* is a historical narrative of formation, consolidation and also decline of the Muslim community (*umma*). By omitting biography of the Prophet, it

directly engages with political aspect of the Muslim community, the challenges it faced, and its survival during the civil wars, and finally its expansion that turned it to a universal empire during the Umayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258). The book also explains that the Muslim umma developed only after it opened to other communities. This caused integration of Islamic religious elements with local cultural ideals of other communities which in turn created various faces of Islam. Thus, Islam is not a monolithic faith in the book, but rather a general heritage shared by many regions that created many local versions of Islam. It was this integration that developed Islam and turned it to a universal faith with a diverse culture.

The book also explains the tensions between the Arab tribes in the early stage of Islam. It explains the challenges the first four Caliphs faced, particularly when the civil wars weakened the Medina regime under Ali's rule which forced him to transform the political capital to Iraq in order to encounter Mu'awiya, the rebel governor of Syria. A large part of the book is about the rise of Umayyad power that turned the Caliphate to an empire. While the book blames the third Caliph 'Uthman for the rise of the Umayyads and the corruption of Islam, nonetheless, it also emphasizes on the Alids to be the legitimized heirs of the Prophet and eligible candidates for political rule. Unlike the common narrative between the Shi'as, the book stresses that there was no hostility between the first four Caliphs. This makes the book unusual, as most of the authors of the firsts parts were Shi'a scholars.⁴⁹

The horizon of the book widens after the rise of the Abbasids which includes regions from southern Europe, northwest of Africa, Transoxiana and northern India. It also contains information about all regions and people who came into contact with the Muslims like the Russians, the Chinese, Tibetans, and Europeans. The Crusade wars are given special attention, but it clearly mentions that most of these wars were fought not for religion, but rather for political issues that had economic benefits attached to them. The relation between the two sides was not always hostile as the Muslims and European traders made their shares out of it.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1-2.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

The narrative of the book is given annually. It mentions the events as they happened in Iran, India, North Africa, China, and Europe simultaneously on a yearly basis. However, Iran remains in the centre of the narrative and other parts gradually become periphery to it. It only opens again, after the rise of the Mongols that established the world empire discussed in detail in the book. The situations that caused the rise of the Mongols and also the circumstances in other parts of the world that could not resist the Mongols, are also given in details in this book. Apart from the strong will of Changiz Khan, his enormous military power, the Mongol unity and their discipline; the civil wars, disunities and sectarian conflicts among others were mentioned as reasons for their defeat. Quite surprisingly, the book shows that the Mongols repeated almost all their actions in Iran which they had achieved in China. The centre of the world temporarily moves from Iran to the Mongol lands, nevertheless, it returns to Iran after the establishment of the Il-Khanids. The history of Timur and the Timurids of Iran are given much details as it connects to the Mughals and the Safavids. The last part of the book concentrates on the events which occurred in Iran and India. The Mughal history is given side by side with that of the Safavids and the Uzbeks of Transoxiana, but the focus is on the expansion of the Mughals in the Indian subcontinent and its relation with other rulers in India and Iran. Most of the preserved manuscripts of the book end with the death of Shah Tahmasp (r.1524-76) in Iran and the return to Akbar's campaigns in India.⁵¹

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* is not limited to the political issues, but it also gives information about profound life, traditions and customs of people, while dealing with the political issues related to them. For instance, the burial cult among the Rus (Russians) and their feeling for women, the reasons behind their interests in green and dark colours was reproduced from Ibn Fazlan's account⁵² or the clothes, rituals, ceremonies and administrative system in China, are all described in details.⁵³ The harmony between the Jews and the Muslims living in Baghdad under the Abbasid Caliphs and their economic prosperity is also explained in the book. However, this harmony was not always stable, as economic competition would involve religious figures that would end only with the Caliph's direct intervention. The Muslim umma was generally in peace, but sectarian

⁵¹ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5-8.

⁵² Ibidem, 5, 3531.

⁵³ Ibidem, 6, 4166-70.

conflicts between Sunni and Shi'a, particularly in Baghdad was a cause of insecurity.⁵⁴ Occasionally, the book gives ethical and political advice after narrating events related to the rise or fall of dynasties.⁵⁵

Was commissioning of the book Akbar's own idea? Julie Scott Meisami has correctly remarked that history is the presentation of a usable past.⁵⁶ Akbar's interest in history and the fact that a large number of historical works were produced for him indicates his awareness of history as a usable past for his own time. His enthusiasm in history and his keen interest to learn from the past is thus reflected in the words of Abd al-Qadir Badayuni a co-author of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*:

“ As Caliph of the time, the shadow of God, Akbar Shah was very interested in this science [history] from his childhood till now. But he was illiterate and was not able to read or write it. He was thinking of commissioning a summary of history of kings of Delhi and also the entire world history from the beginning of Islam till present to be a *Safina*. It should include the biography of each king to be a *Tazkira* for those, who are interested in it and to be a *tabsira* for *arbabī albab dahar...*”⁵⁷

Badayuni's words show Akbar's wish for seeing the history of rulers and the entire world from the beginning of Islam to his day. Thus, the idea of world history was not new, but could have come from many universal histories the emperor was familiar with. Particularly, Akbar knew the Persian world history *Jami' al-Tawarikh (Compendium of Histories)*, commissioned by the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan to a group of scholars led by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah (d.1318).⁵⁸ The book was to make an identity for the Mongols based on the Perso-Islamic model and defines their position in their contemporary world. It includes history of all regions which came under the Mongol control or had contact with them.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5, 3295.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, 5, 3403-508.

⁵⁶ Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the end of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), 12.

⁵⁷ Badayuni, 2, 3-6; Akbar's enthusiasm in history and his interest in the number of thousand is mentioned by Qasim Hindushah in his *Tarikh-i Ferishta*. Muhammad Qasim Hindushah, *Tarikh-i Ferishta* ed. Muhammad Reza Nasiri (Tehran: Anjumani Asar wa Mafakhir Farhangi, 1387/2008), 225-26.

⁵⁸ J. Marek, *The Jenghiz Khan Miniatures from the Court of Akbar the Great* (London: Spring Books, 1963).

⁵⁹ Sheila Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Din's Illustrated History of the World* (London:

The millennial moment provided the opportunity that Akbar was looking for and the *Tarikh-i Alfi* could be that very idea of combining *Safina* and *Tazkira*. Such a book could be source of lessons and ethical advises, one of the main messages of the Persian historiography. Here, Badayuni sounds very similar to Ziya Barani, the author of *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (*History of Firuzshah*), who also thought that reading history creates a kind of self-awareness in the reader and makes him more careful about his deeds as all will be responsible for their works before God.⁶⁰ Badayuni mentions that Akbar lost his belief in the Prophet, his companions and *hadith* because of history.⁶¹

Based on Badayuni's passage, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* could be seen as Akbar's earliest wish that came true in 1582. The organization, scope and contents of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, shows that he could see both *Safina* and *Tazkira* in one, but by omitting the account of the beginning of Islam. This deliberate omission was to show the absence of a "Sacred Being" (the Prophet) being filled by another "Sacred Being" (Akbar). It was also necessary to present the period of the Prophet and its problems, and the beginning of the period of Akbar and its advantages. However, no preserved manuscript of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* has been found that could show the period of Akbar. Amanat suggests that this was a thoughtful omission as it was "heretical and unfit to Akbar's later image".⁶² His suggestion could be accepted only if all preserved manuscripts of the book are studied.

The Committee of Authors: An Indo-Iranian Collaboration

Knowing the committee of authors is the key to understanding the *Alfi* project and its relation to the Akbar-i millennial ideology. The group of authors consisted of Naqib Khan (d. after 1610), Shah Fathullah Shirazi (d.1587), Hakim Humam (d.1595), Hakim Ali Gilani (d.1619), Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi (d.1584), Nizam al-Din Ahmad Heravi (d.1594), Abdul Qadir Badayuni (d.1615), Mullah Ahmad Tahtavi (d.1586) and Ja'far Beg Asaf Khan (d.1612). The king supervised the book personally, Badayuni edited it and finally Abul Fazl added an introduction to it.

Nour Foundation, 1995).

⁶⁰ Ziya Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*.

⁶¹ Badayuni, 2, 211.

⁶² Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs" 385.

Combination of this group for a historical task was not ordinary. This means that the *Alfi* project was not simply a project of writing a historical account. The members were diverse both in their socio-cultural background as well as in their respective fields of scholarship. The committee contained migrant intellectuals from the Safavid Iran and the Indian scholars in different fields. They represented various schools of thoughts. They were theologians, philosophers, astrologers, mathematicians, historians, medical scientists and experts in other fields. Moreover, the members could be divided into three ideological groups: the migrant Shirazi scholars with illuminist (*Ishraq*) thoughts, the Nuqtawīs and the Jaunpuri Mahdawis. These scholars were divided into two main groups; of migrant scholars from Safavid Iran and the Indian scholars. Among them, the impact of the Ishraqis on the book and on Akbar's thought was dominant.

The Migrant Scholars from the Safavid Iran

The majority of the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* were intellectual migrants from Safavid Iran. Most of them came from prominent families, served in the Safavid court, but the Safavids' restricted religious policies forced them to take refuge in India.

Mir Ghiyath al-Din Qazvini, known as Naqib Khan, was Akbar's private book reader. He was the son of Mir 'Abdul Latif Qazvini, who belonged to one of the most distinguished family of historians in Safavid Persia, but migrated to Mughal India due to the Safavid religious persecution.⁶³ Qazvini's family was known as Sunni in Iran and as Shi'a in India.⁶⁴ Naqib Khan was an expert in history, as he knew the entire *Rawzat as-safā' fi sīrat al-anbiyā' w-al-mulūk w-al-khulafā'*; a Persian general history on origin of Islam composed by Mir Khand in 1497, by heart and could write the history of the world from his memory.⁶⁵ Naqib Khan was a distinguished student of the Mahdawi scholar

⁶³ N.K. Singh and A. Samiuddin, *Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, 3 (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2003), 791-92.

⁶⁴ Abul Fazl Allami, *Akbarnama* ed. Maulawi Abdul Rahim, 2 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1876), 19.

⁶⁵ Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (Jahangirnama)* eds. Muhammad Hashim (Tehran: Bonyad Farhangi Iran, 1980), 150.

Shaikh Mubarak Nagori (d.1593)⁶⁶ that makes it possible to assume that he learned about Jaunpuri Mahdism and also the Ishraq philosophy from his teacher.

Equally, Naqib Khan was a specialist in genealogy, biographies, and stories in Arabic, Persian and Hindi.⁶⁷ Badayuni mentions that no one could compete with Naqib Khan in history and understanding chronologies.⁶⁸ Abdul Sattar Lahori in his *Majalis* highlighted Naqib Khan's active participation in debates arranged by emperor Jahangir, that reflects his similar position at Ibadat-khana during Akbar's reign.⁶⁹ His vast knowledge and his non-religious approach to people were impressive. Jahangir's mention to the Jesuits that Naqib Khan would be his ambassador to Philip III (r.1598-1621) indicated his knowledge and high political position.⁷⁰

While, the historical narrative of the *Tarikh-i Alfī* was begun by a Qazvini historian, it was brought to an end by yet another historian from Qazvin. He was Ja'far Beg, a migrant from the Safavid Iran. His family was known for having close relations with the Safavid court, but he left them for the Mughal court in 985/1577. His grandfather, Agha Mullah Qazvini was a secretary at court. Ja'far Beg's father, Mirza Badi' al-Zaman was governor of Kashan during the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, and a witness to the Nuqtawī execution. He came to India at the invitation of his uncle Mirza Ghiyath al-Din Ali, known as Asaf Khan, but it is not known if he or his family was affiliated to the Nuqtawīs. He was given his uncle's title after his uncle's death in 989/1580. Ja'far Beg (hereafter Asaf Khan) was a genius scholar. He was well studied in Iran and knew *Mua'ma* or puzzle that required a sharp mind and vast knowledge. This was before his early contact with Mir Haidar Mua'amyee, who was known for such a delicate profession. Praising his own knowledge, Asaf Khan mentioned that, whatever he did not understand immediately after he saw, heard or read, then was something without any

⁶⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, 85-86.

⁶⁷ Abdul Qadir Badayuni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* eds. W. N. Lees and Munshi Ahmad Ali, 2 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1865), 97-99.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 98-99.

⁶⁹ Abdul Sattar Ibn Qasim Lahori, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, eds. Arif Naushahi and Mo'in Nizami (Tehran: Mirathi Maktub, 1385/2005), 5, 259.

⁷⁰ Jorge Flores, *The Mughal Padshah: A Jesuit Treatise on Emperor Jahangir's Court and Household* (Brill, 2015), 16.

meaning. His knowledge in history made him special to Akbar⁷¹ who appointed him to complete the *Tarikh-i Alfi*.⁷²

- **The Ishraqi Members**

Shah Fathullah Shirazi was a Sayed from Shiraz and graduated from Mansuriyya Madrasa, whose scholars were known amongst the intellectuals in the entire Persianate world.⁷³ He represented the school of thought which “synthesized the two dominant trends of earlier Islamic philosophy—that of the peripatetic philosophers (as represented by Ibn Sina) and that of the illuminist (as represented by Suhrawardi)”.⁷⁴ Fathullah was an Ishraqi philosopher and received his education from the famous scholars in both mentioned fields. Fathullah was known for his reputation in rational sciences (*‘ulumi ‘aqli*) such as logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, astrology and medicine and also had familiarity with *tafsīr*, *hadith*, rhetoric and jurisprudence.⁷⁵ He was interested in the pre-Islamic Persian past that brought him to contact with Azar Kayvan (d.1618). He tried to combine some Islamic and Zoroastrian religious elements that resented the Safavid Ulema and provoked their hostility.⁷⁶ Fathullah first served Ali Adil Shah I (d.1580) in Bijapur around 1570s and then joined Akbar. He joined Ibadat-khana in 1580 and composed a new calendar based on *Zij-i Sultani* prepared by Timurid ruler Ulugh Beg (d.1449)⁷⁷ and the *Zij-i Il-Khani* updated by his teacher Mir Ghiyath al-Din Mansur Dashtaki (d.1542). Fathullah’s new calendar was called *Tarikh-i Ilahi* by Akbar and used for official works. The new calendar indicated the new period which began with Akbar’s coronation.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Abul Fazl Allami, *Ai'n-i Akbari* eds. H. Blochmann, 1 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872), 246, 306.

⁷² Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 7, 4244.

⁷³ Stephen Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 119-20.

⁷⁴ Ali Anooshahr, “Shirazi scholars,” 335.

⁷⁵ Sayed Alireza Golshani and Narges Kavenjoun, “Amir Sayyed Fathollah Shirazi, a physician, historian and politician in Indian Mughal Empire,” *Research on History of Medicine*, 1(2012), 81-86.

⁷⁶ Stephen Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam*, 121-22.

⁷⁷ W.W. Barthold, *Ulugh Beg* trans. from Russian into English by V and T. Minorsky, Leiden 1958, trans. into Persian by Husian Ahmadi Pur (Tabriz: Intisharati Chehr, 1985).

⁷⁸ Abul Fazl, *Aini-i Akbari*, 1, 277.

Fathullah was regarded as “the main conduit of the serious study of philosophy and theology in India”.⁷⁹ His knowledge of philosophy was so vast that Abul Fazl acknowledged that: “he was so learned that if all the previous books of philosophy disappeared, he could have laid a new foundation for knowledge and would not have desired what had preceded”.⁸⁰ Apart from philosophy, Fathullah was an expert in theology, astrology, and occult sciences including preparation of talisman and the white magic. With the knowledge in a combination of various fields and the fact that he was educated from the Mansuriyya madrasa of Shiraz that was one of the best in the entire Persianate world, made him a well-known figure in Persia, Iraq and in India. Fathullah combined the “study of scripture, the traditional religious sciences, and the intellectual sciences, laying the basis for the Dars-i Nizami”, a curriculum taught in most of the Indian Madrasas till the late Mughal period.⁸¹

Fathullah’s relation to Akbar was beyond formalities. Akbar married Muzaffar Khan’s daughter to Fathullah. She was the younger sister of another daughter Akbar himself had married. In 1585 he was appointed as *sadr* of the empire and represented the emperor on a diplomatic mission to Bengal and Khandesh. In 1586 he was entitled *Azad al-Daula* and Sadr al-Sudur of Hindustan, the highest theological position one could occupy in Akbar’s administration. Practically, all affairs of the empire would be consulted with him. In terms of personal faith, Fathullah believed on Alids. In 990/1582, Badayuni met him in Fatehpur Sikri and was surprised seeing his courage to pray publicly in his Shi’a way in *Divan-i Khass*, where no religious act was permitted.⁸² Though, his life in Mughal India was short, his contribution to it was large. His collaboration with Abul Fazl and other scholars formed a unique intellectual movement. It combined the Perso-Islamic and the Indic thoughts to introduce a rational worldview.⁸³

⁷⁹ Sajad Rizvi, “Mir Damad in India: Islamic Philosophical Traditions and the Problem of Creation,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 13, 1 (2011), 10-11.

⁸⁰ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 3, 401.

⁸¹ Sajad Rizvi, “Mir Damad in India,” 11.

⁸² Badayuni, 2, 315.

⁸³ Rizvi, “Ibn Sina’s Impact on the Rational and Scientific Movements in India,” *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 21, 3, (1986), 276-284; A. A. Azmi “Shah Fathulla Shirazi: An Eminent Scholar of Mughal Period,” *Study History Medieval Science*, 2002, 18 (2), 39-57; M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman, “Fathullah Shirazi -A Sixteenth Century Indian Scientist,” *National Institution of Sciences of India* (New Delhi, 1968).

Another Ishraqi member was Hakim Masih al-Din Ali, a student of Fathullah and an expert on Ibn Sina's medical works. He learned traditional sciences from Shaikh Abdul Nabi(d.1584), the Sadr al-Sudur of Hindustan. He first served Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan who recommended him to Akbar. Impressed with his medical knowledge, Akbar entitled him as "the Galen of the Time" (*Jalinūs-i zamān*) in 1593-4. He wrote an introduction on Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine*, entitled it *Mujarrabat* and presented to Akbar. He was an active member at the Ibadat-khana and a supporter of rational sciences. Meeting him in 1580, Father Monserrate was annoyed by his scientific approach to religion. Hakim Ali did not believe in miracles, as it was not scientifically proved to him, which was against the Father's belief that Christ performed several miracles as was mentioned in the Holy Script.⁸⁴ Hakim Ali's knowledge was not limited to medicine only. He was also an innovative thinker. He built a room under water and furnished it with shelves full of books yet water could not enter it. It was designed in such a way that one had to swim to enter the room, and after surfacing inside the room, he could breathe again, rest and read the books. After visiting it, Jahangir called it, "The Under Water Library" (*Kitab-khane Abi*).⁸⁵

The Ishaqi members deeply believed that Reason is the main tool of understanding of all phenomena. If anything could be explained logically, it should be accepted. They also believed that all human beings share the same origin as the founder of the Ishraq philosophy had explained. In its various parts, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* specifically discusses the necessity of accepting reason and unity of human kind in origin as two important elements that can help to decrease tensions in the human society. The importance of reason and logical analysis are given as the main factors of success of great historical figures.

- **The Nuqtawī Members**

After the Ishraqi scholars, the Nuqtawīs were the main influential segment in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project. Hakim Humayun (known as Humam) was Abul Fath's brother, the famous

⁸⁴ Antonio Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J., on his Journey to the Court of Akbar* trans. J.S. Hoyland, annotated. S.N. Banerjee (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 420.

⁸⁵ Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* eds. Muhammad Hashim (Tehran: Bonyad Farhangi Iran, 1980), 88; Lahori, *Majalis*, 301-2.

Nuqtawī intellectual. Their father Maulana Abdul Razzaq Gillani served the local ruler of Gilan, but was tortured to death in 1566-67 on the order of Shah Tahmasp.⁸⁶ Escaping the Safavid persecution, the Gilani brothers migrated to India under the name of traders. Abul Fath's character and his vast knowledge attracted Akbar and he was appointed as Sadr of Bengal and then as *vazir* of the empire as he was a capable man in military and administration. The relation between Abul Fath and Akbar according to Abdul Baqi Nahavandi was similar to that of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid and the Barmakid Ja'far.⁸⁷ His impact on Akbar was to the level that he dared to stop Akbar from smoking tobacco that was newly imported. His affiliation to the Nuqtawī thoughts could be seen in his *Mazhar al-asrār (Manifestation of Secrets)* and *Zīya al-Nayyirain (Light of two Suns)* that he had composed.

Being with his older brother Abul Fath, Humam had the chance to join the Mughal administration. He was given a job in the royal kitchen (*bakavol begi*). However, he was not a man of the kitchen. Shortly, he received Akbar's patronage and was promoted to a higher administrative rank. The Gilani brothers were appointed as provincial sadr and controlled the free-tax land grants given to the Ulema (*madadi ma'ash*).⁸⁸ Humam represented Akbar as his ambassador to Abdullah Khan Uzbek (d.1598) the ruler of Transoxiana in 994/1584. Upon his arrival in Kabul, he learnt about his brother Abul Fath's death.⁸⁹ He continued his service under Akbar and then became a close companion to Jahangir, who reduced his drinking, based on Humam's advice.⁹⁰

The Indian Scholars

- **The Jaunpuri Mahdawi Members**

Though Abul Fazl was not a co-author of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, but his observation of the work involved him in the project. Abul Fazl was son of Shaikh Mubark Nagori, the famous Jaunpuri Mahdawi thinker. His father admired "the greatness and mystic status

⁸⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 124.

⁸⁷ Abdul Baqi Nahavandi, *Ma'asir-i Rahimi* ed. Muhammad Hidayat Husian, 3 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924), 847.

⁸⁸ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 165.

⁸⁹ Badayuni, 2. 371.

⁹⁰ Lahori, *Majalis*, 315.

(*wilayat*) of Sayed Muhammad of Jaunpur (d.1505) the founder of Indian Mahdawi movement, anathema to the orthodoxy”.⁹¹ Shaikh Mubarak played a significant role to free Akbar from the orthodox Sunni Ulema’s interference in the state matters. With the help of his father, Abul Fazl enabled Akbar to end the supremacy of the orthodox Ulema and brought them under state’s control.

Shaikh Mubarak was a scholar in both the traditional and rational sciences. His familiarity with the various Islamic sects and their jurisprudences helped him to take a different position in theological controversies. He was well aware of the Ishraq philosophy and could be called even an Indian Ishraqi scholar. He studied under Katib Abul Fazl Kazeruni, who had migrated to Gujarat. Kazeruni was a disciple of the well-known Shirazi scholar Jalal al-Din Dawani, the author of *Akhlaq-i Jalali* and took Shaikh Mubarak under his tutelage and adopted him as his son. Probably at Agra, Shaikh Mubarak married a relative of Mir Rafi al-Din Safavi of Inju, a noted Sayed from Shiraz.⁹² Later, for his deep interest in the Ishraq philosophy, Shaikh Mubarak educated his sons with the works produced by the Shirazi scholars and sent his sons to learn from Fathullah Shirazi after he arrived in Agra.⁹³

Abul Fazl’s early education came from his father. He acquired “a deep understanding of the philosophy of the Ishraqis, the thoughts of the Sufis and the subtleties of the Greek philosophers whose works were translated into Arabic, and of commentaries on them as well as of the works of scholars like Ibn Sina”.⁹⁴ He was keen to understand all kinds of knowledge, and learning about various traditions and truths in them. He believed that all kinds of knowledge are important and should be heard from anyone, who possesses it. Thus, respecting people of all creeds and traditions was vitally important.⁹⁵

Abul Fazl’s ideas were heavily drawn from the philosophy of Ibn Sina, Ishraqi tradition and thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabi. Thus, migration of the intellectuals like Fathullah Shirazi and the Nuqtawī brothers from Gilan were most beneficial to him. Being an Indian, Abul Fazl was aware of the Indic traditions and also the social context of the

⁹¹ Irfan Habib, “A Political Theory,” 329.

⁹² Nizami, *Social-Religious Outlook of Abul Fazl*, 2, 48.

⁹³ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 80-81, 102.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 81.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 92.

society he had grown in. However, he did not see any need to add to these traditions, but rather realized the distances between them, hence he tried to make a bridge of connection between them and harmonize various traditions. This idea was supported by Ibn ‘Arabi’s idea of “Unity of Being” and Suhrawardi’s idea of “Illumination”.⁹⁶

More important for the purpose of this paper, Abul Fazl was the key member in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project and the main connecting element in the Akbar-i cultural programme. It was him, who was in contact with local and migrant scholars and cooperated with them. He established close friendship with the Ishraqis, the Nuqtawīs, the Imami Shi’as, the Sunni Ulema, the Mahdawis, the Jews, Christians, Jain, Hindus and Zoroastrian scholars who came to the Mughal court, and also expanded his contact with other scholars in Iran and Transoxiana.⁹⁷

Another Indian member was Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi. He was known for his strange and sometimes irrelevant questions at Ibadat-khana. According to Badayuni, he was rude, quarrelsome and contentious in debates. In doing so, he did not hesitate to destroy his rivals in discussions to attract the emperor’s attention. His understanding of Islam was annoying to both Shi’a and Sunni. His ambiguous position brought him to the notice of Akbar, particularly after his tendency towards the orthodox Ulema was noted. Akbar’s suspicion increased after Sarhindi objected to the king’s will to include the words *Allah-u-Akbar* in his coins and imperial seals. Sarhindi, assumed that Akbar misused these words for himself and that displeased Akbar. After that, he could not gain the emperor’s favour. Even his support of temporary marriage (*mut’a*) and wearing yellow and red cloths could not help. His debate on purple clothes annoyed Sayid Muhammad Mir ‘Adl to such an extent that he fell almost into physical clash with him.⁹⁸ Mir ‘Adl was a supporter of Shaikh Mubarak and the Mahdawi thoughts. Sarhindi’s points were close to Akbar’s own interest as he wore purple dress and also had many wives in his *harem*.⁹⁹

Whether Sarhindi was a Mahdawi is not known. He was suspected for misusing his position to acquire wealth. Badayuni says that the news of his participating in bribery reached Akbar who then put him under the custody of Hakim ‘Ain al-Mulk. Still, for his

⁹⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 340-41.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 130-40.

⁹⁸ Badayuni, 2, 211.

⁹⁹ Rubi Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

knowledge, Akbar summoned him to the Ibadat-khana. Probably, he suspected Abul Fazl of losing his position; therefore, he took a bold and hostile position towards him, Abul Fath and Fathullah Shirazi in debates. He attempted to gain Akbar's attention by fabricating some ideas and attributing them to Ibn 'Arabi. Among them was his argument that the lord of the age (*Sahib-i Zaman*) would have many wives and would shave his beard.¹⁰⁰

Like most of the scholars of his time, Sarhindi was bilingual. He was part of the group that conducted the translation of *Atharvā Vedā* for Akbar. This indicates that he closely worked with Brahmin scholars.¹⁰¹ Badayuni says that all these attempts could not save Sarhindi after the emperor suspected him guilty of bribery. He was sent to Ranthambore fort and was later found dead, while still being tied to his bed. Badayuni suspected that he was thrown down from the fort at night in 1588.¹⁰²

Another Jaunpuri Mahdawi member was Abdul Qadir Ibn Mulukshah Badayuni. Unlike other authors, there is more information available on him. He was born in 1540 in Toda Bhim in Jaipur and studied in Sanbhal and Agra, where he came to know Shaikh Mubarak and his sons and studied with them. Joining the court of Akbar in 1574, he attracted the emperor by his knowledge in *Fiqh* and was appointed as Akbar's Imam for the Wednesday prayer. The position of Shaikh Mubarak's sons at court created hate in Badayuni as he could not compete with them.¹⁰³ Though, his religious bigotry could put him away from Akbar, however his bilingualism and knowledge of Sanskrit kept him at the court and involved him in Akbar's translation project. Badayuni, remained one of the most active members of this project and translated texts from Sanskrit into Persian which he considered as a great sin that he had committed upon Akbar's force.¹⁰⁴ He refused to write an introduction on his translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and later copied a Qur'an in *Naskh* style to repent his translating of Sanskrit works.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 84, 109, 166.

¹⁰¹ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 1, 115.

¹⁰² Badayuni, 2, 277.

¹⁰³ Ibidem, 2, 198-200.

¹⁰⁴ A. S. Bazmee Ansari, "BADĀ'ŪNĪ, 'ABD-AL-QĀDER" (Why all are capital letters?), *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 18 March 2017); see H. Blochmann, "Badāoni and his Works," *JASB* 38, 1 (1869), 105-44; Badayuni, 2, 5-7; Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 1, 116.

¹⁰⁵ Badayuni, 2, 367.

Badayuni was a critique of Akbar, Abul Fazl and other members of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project. In return, Akbar and Abul Fazl asserted that Badayuni was not logical, but a blind follower of his tradition (*'alim-i zahir*).¹⁰⁶ Being involved in the *Alfi* project, his participation in the Ibdat-khana debates and the fact that he was witness to the Akbar-i millennial programme and wrote his ideas about them makes him very important in our argument. With its all encompassing importance, however, Badayuni's works are not free from his personal religious prejudices and his frustrations from seeing the migrant Iranian scholars in a better position than him. While, his criticism reflects some realities, still they should be read carefully.

Among the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, Mullah Ahmad had a particular position. He was the son of Nasrullah Faruqi, the Hanafi Qazi of the city of Tahta in Sind. Mullah Ahmad was born and studied first in Tahta before he changed his Hanafi sect to that of Imami Shi'a. His conversion was said to be the result of his dream, in which Imam Ali converted him. He visited Shah Tahmasp and studied under some Shi'a scholars in Iran and Iraq. He met Shah Fathullah in Bijapur before joining Akbar's court and probably his knowledge about Ishraq philosophy increased after meeting him. Later in Agra, he came to close contacts with the Nuqtawī circle led by Hakim Abul Fath.¹⁰⁷ His relation with the Ishraqi and the Nuqtawī scholars influenced his writings, particularly the parts where he wrote to defend the rights of the Shi'a Imams to rule.

Another member was Nizam al-Din Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Muqim Heravi a noted Indo-Persian historian. He was a descendant of the Sufi Shaikh Abdullah Ansari of Herat and a serious supporter of the Mughals that increased his chance to join the administration. His father, Khawja Muqim had served Babur and was an important figure in helping Humayun against a conspiracy organized by Nizamuddin Ali Khalifa to remove Humayun from his throne. Khawja Muqim remained loyal to Humayun even after he was defeated by Sher Shah Suri (d.1545) and ousted from India. He joined Akbar in Agra in 1568, a decision that paved the way for Nizamuddin Ahmad to begin his career as a soldier in Akbar's army. Gradually, he moved to higher ranks and became the *Bakhshi* of Gujarat, while he was writing his history *Tabaqat-i Akbari* (known also as

¹⁰⁶ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Badayuni, 2, 319.

Tarikh-i Akbarshahi) considered to be the history of Islamic India¹⁰⁸. He died in 1003/1594, aged 45.¹⁰⁹

The book was designed for a transitional period. According to Badayuni, the task was given to seven scholars at the beginning. The events of the first year were written by Naqib Khan, the second year by Shah Fathullah Shirazi, the third year by Hakim Humam, the fourth year by Hakim Ali Gilani, the fifth year by Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi, the sixth year by Nizam al-Din Ahmad Heravi and the seventh year by Abdul Qadir Badayuni. Each person had to write the history of one year within a week, which means by the end of the first week, the history of seven years was ready. If we accept this, then the events of thirty-five years were written in five weeks. The project started in 990/1582, which was assumed to be the end of the first millennium. If Akbar wanted to commemorate this moment then it was logical to begin the project earlier than this date. But, declaring the millennium and then undertaking the project shows that he expected the year 1000/1592 to be the actual millennial moment. The seven members of the committee had ten years time to compose history of one thousand years.

However, polarization in the committee was the obvious reason that eventually collapsed the teamwork. There were the Ishraqis, the Nuqtawī, the Jaunpuri Mahdawi and the Imami Shi'a members within the team. Thus, the conflict of ideas was inevitable. As a result, the king ordered Mullah Ahmad to continue the work alone, which was recommended by Abul Fath Gilani. He continued the book from the year 36 of *rihla* to the rise of the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan (d.1304) and completed it in two volumes (*daftar*) before Mirza Fulad Barlas murdered him in 1586 in Lahore. This indicates that the project initiated in 1582, was completed in two volumes in four years by Mullah Ahmad. Due to the importance of the project, Akbar ordered Asaf Khan to complete the work. In 1586 Asaf Khan continued the events from the reign of Ghazan Khan to the year 1589. This was three years lesser than the first millennium that the book was designed to cover.¹¹⁰ Badayuni mentions that during *Nauruz* (the Persian new year) celebration in 1001/1593, he met the emperor and presented the first edited volume of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*

¹⁰⁸ Singh and Samiuddin, *Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, 2,708; Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976); Nizam al-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbarshahi*, MSS no. 685, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

¹⁰⁹ Singh and S. Samiuddin, *Encyclopedic Historiography of the Muslim World*, 2, 708.

¹¹⁰ Ale-Davoud, "Tarikh-i Alfi", *Encyclopedia of the World of Islam*, 193-95; Badayuni, 2, 318-19.

in the company of Mullah Mustafa Lahori. Satisfied with it, Akbar asked Badayuni to edit the other two volumes too. After one-year's work, Badayuni presented the second volume and left the third volume to Asaf Khan, who had written it before. Hence, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* began in 1582, was completed before 1592 and its two volumes were edited, and finally submitted in 1593.¹¹¹ Like most of the other books, the final draft was reviewed by Abul Fazl, who wrote an introduction on it and then it was sent to the royal scriptorium to be copied and then sent to the royal atelier to be illustrated.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Badayuni, 2, 392-93; Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5, 3527.

¹¹² Abul Fazl, *Ai'n-i Akbari*, 1, 116.

Chapter 3: Ideologies behind the *Tarikh-i Alfi*

It has already been mentioned that the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* came from different traditions. Three main ideologies of the Jaunpuri Mahdawi, the Nuqtawī and the Ishraqi were behind the commission of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. They shared some ideas that could bring them together. The Indian Mahdawi members, particularly Abul Fazl, Mullah Ahmad and Badayuni were familiar with the Ishraq philosophy that could connect the Indo-Iranian team. However, what ideas connected them to each other and why the Ishraqi and Nuqtawī members were dominant in the project requires some further explanation.

The Jaunpuri Mahdawi Ideology

The Jaunpuri Mahdism was represented by Shaikh Mubarak, his sons Abul Fazl and Faizi, and Shaikh Mustafa Gujarati. More importantly, they could establish their tradition in the heart of the Mughal empire after they convinced Akbar to expand an old chamber (*hujra*) of the Mahdawi Shaikh Abdullah Niazi Sarhindi to a place for religious debates. Construction of the Ibadat-khana in Fatehpur Sikri in 1575 was a great triumph for the Jaunpuri Mahdawi as they could now connect to the heart of the Mughal intellectual

centre that could save them from the persecution they faced till 1573.¹¹³ It became the major device for Akbar to search for the truth in each religion, understanding the level of the scholars' knowledge and to find a better philosophy for personal life and more importantly an imperial ideology to rule his vast empire.¹¹⁴ The discussions convinced Akbar that no religion should be preferred or condemned, as "the badness of any sect could not wave a veil over its merit".¹¹⁵

The Jaunpuri movement, first founded by Sayed Muhammad of Jaunpur (d.1505) experienced its socio-political and military development and became a secretive and intellectual movement by the time of Akbar. Sayed Muhammad was known for his vast knowledge, strong character and extreme piety and resistance to any kind of worldly pleasures. He declared his Mahdihood in Mecca, based on the Islamic tradition that Mahdi will appear first in Mecca and move to Kufa and then to Jerusalem, where Christ joins him- but returned to India for his mission.¹¹⁶

Jaunpuri's movement was not violent. It was for promoting personal ethics, better morality, and social behaviour with lesser emphasis on religion. His ideal society was in settling camps (*daira*) based on equality of all members irrespective to their socio-political or cultural backgrounds.¹¹⁷ Unlike the tradition that predicted the rise of Mahdi with sword (*sayf*), Jaunpuri had emphasized on personal devotion through word (*zikr*). He approached people without looking at their social, political or religious affiliation as he declared himself the Mahdi for all. His followers were given sermons designed by him and was not based on any specific Islamic jurisprudence, hadith, tafsir or so forth. He had the tendency towards introducing a universal idea to include all the people. In other words, he was a Mahdi with one universal religion (*din-i kul*) based not on the Sharia, but on his own teachings.¹¹⁸ Thus, toleration of others for making a better society was in the heart of Jaunpuri's teaching. He declared his mission at a time when north India was

¹¹³ Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs," 372; Badayuni, 2, 200; Khan, "Akbar's Personality Traits and World Outlook," 20.

¹¹⁴ R. Krishnamurti, *Akbar: the Religious Aspect* (Baroda: Ramlal J. Patel Maharaja Sayajirao University, 1961), 15-19.

¹¹⁵ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 142.

¹¹⁶ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, 78.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 84-100.

¹¹⁸ Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India*, 84-100.

politically stable, thus it did not leave any space for dramatic socio-political changes that would have motivated him to consider on moralities rather than politics.¹¹⁹

An important sympathizer of Jaunpuri Mahdism at Akbar's court was Badayuni. He was an admirer of the Jaunpuri Mahdism and has viewed millennialism as being necessary to protect the Sharia. To him the Mahdawi movement was to protect Islam and its leaders like Jaunpuri were the manifestations of God's will to revive His religion. To justify the Mahdihood of Sayed Muhammad Jaunpuri, he used the Nurbakhshi idea of projection of the soul (*burūz*). Sayed Muhammad Nurbakhsh (means the one, who bestows light), the founder of Nurbakhshiya messianic movement (d.1464) introduced the idea of *burūz*, that "in projection of the soul, the perfecting soul irradiates (*tajalli*) itself along with the perfect soul and, thus makes its experience complete".¹²⁰ Unlike transmigration of soul, in *burūz*, "the soul does not leave a body, but overpower another soul".¹²¹ Hence, to Badayuni, Mahdi was the result of this projection of the Divine's light that would legitimize the messianic message and put Mahdi on a stage that he could see the realities (*haqīqat*) that regular people could not see.

The Nuqtawīs Ideology

The Nuqtawīs ideology was prominently introduced to Akbar by a group of Nuqtawī migrants from the Safavid Iran. Among them, Mir Tashbihi Kashani, Abul Fath Gilani and his brother Humam, Abdul Ghani Yazdi, Hakim Ibadullah Kashani and Sharif Amuli were the main figures. The Nuqtawī movement was an extension of the *Hurufī* ideology, that was first introduced by Fazlullah Astarabadi (d.1394). Probably, the Islamic messianic appeals increased after the Mongol invasions had inspired the Hurufīs. The Hurufī incorporated some pre-Islamic Iranian apocalyptic traditions such as the millennial cycle (*hazarag*), the advent of savior (*soshiant*) and the renewal of the world,

¹¹⁹ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals: Delhi Sultanate 1206-1526*, 2; Ziya Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* eds. Sayed Ahmad Khan (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1860-62).

¹²⁰ Moin, "Challenging the Mughal Emperor," 390-402.

¹²¹ Ibid.

the Day of Judgement (*qiyamat*) and the eternal residence in paradise (*firdaus*) that found their way into Shi'a religious literature.¹²²

The Hurufi s were interested in mysticism and asceticism. The Hurufi doctrine explains the relation between God, human and his position in the universe. Based on their teachings, “the theoretical discussion starts by comparing God, an unchanging and unmoving reality, to the earth and other heavenly bodies, whose rotation causes them to go through cycle such as the seasons. The cyclical nature is present in history as well, so that the cycle of humanity began with Adam and will end with the Day of Judgement. This large span of time contains three smaller cycles, whose boundaries are crucial markers on the procession of earthly time. History is thus divided into: the cycle of prophet-hood (*nubuwat*), from Adam to Muhammad; that of sainthood (*walayāt*), from Ali, through the eleventh Shi'a Imam al-‘Askari, to Fazlullah; and, beginning with Fazlullah, that of divinity (*uluhiyat*)”.¹²³

The Hurufis engaged with *zikr* and insisted on it as a way to think and to be free of materialism. It could enable them to “transport all aspiration to the spiritual world, made visible to him in a series of intense and luminous dreams, and gradually to cast off all worldly attachments”.¹²⁴ They believed that God has manifested Himself in human form. The perfect human-represented-God could become Mahdi, who does not engage in violence to bring justice, but he “eliminates the tyranny of wrongful interpretation of God’s message by announcing the correct interpretive method”.¹²⁵

The Nuqtawīs largely followed the above mentioned ideas. Its founder, Mahmūd Pasīkhānī (d.1427) was probably born in Pasīkhān, a small area in Gilan. He became a disciple of Astarabadi, but the two separated after some time. He believed that the universe was created from a *nuqta* or point, thus the origin of all human and the world is a single point. The Nuqtawīs had “anthropocentric mystical belief” which was at the core of their cosmology which they supported, and preached that all intellectual orientations

¹²² Amanat, “Islam in Iran v. Messianic Islam in Iran,” *Encyclopedia of Iranica* (Accessed 28 March 2017).

¹²³ Shahbaz Bashir, *Between Mysticism and Messianism: The Life and Thought of Muhammad Nurbakhsh(d.1464)*, (Yale University, 1998, Ph.D Dissertation), 54.

¹²⁴ H. Algar, “ASTARĀBĀDĪ, FAẒLALLĀH,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 28 March 2017).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

are to be reconciled with and treated equally.¹²⁶ They preached that the creation is eternal and the worldly honour or disgrace, which is the result of human action, is the real paradise or hell.

They preached that the age of Islam is ended and the period of Persians has begun. This ideal period is led by the Mahdi, who is Mahmūd. They believed that the body of the Prophet attained perfection and led to the creation of Mahmūd, who has been escalated to the divine position. The transmigration of soul facilitated the connection from the Prophet to Mahmūd. The Nuqtawī thoughts of its founder's idea of "cyclical renewal and his anthropocentric call for divorcing the heavens and returning to the Adamic essence to earth"¹²⁷ was not easy to ordinary people. Therefore, scholars in Safavid Iran and Mughal India were interested in Pasikhani's ideas.

The Safavid policy of persecution and execution of the Nuqtawīs, forced many of Mahmūd's followers to migrate to Mughal India. The main pressure opposed by the state and the persecution of the Nuqtawīs was conducted under Shah Tahmasp in 1575-76 and then later again under Shah Abbas I, in 1590-92 to bring them down and end their millennial thought and it was indeed a response to their millennial fever. The persecution of the Nuqtawīs in Iran on the order of Shah Abbas I, was due to "the reaction to fear on a Nuqtawī provoking uprising at the turn of the Islamic millennium (1591-2)".¹²⁸ In his *Risala*, on the Nuqtawī ideas presented to Akbar, Mir Tashbihi used Mahmud's name to praise God: "bi Allah al- Mahmūd" and equalizes Nature with God. In his work, Tashbihi emphasizes on unity between God and human and puts humans at the centre of creation. In his theory, God and human represent each other.¹²⁹

The Ishraqi Ideology

The illuminist philosophy (*Falsafa-i Ishraq*) is one of the most important forces in the Islamic philosophy that deeply influenced the intellectuals in Iran, Transoxiana and in

¹²⁶ Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs and the Shaping the Doctrine of "Universal Conciliation" (*Sulh-i Kull*) in Mughal India," in Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (eds), *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, and Construction of Religious Authority in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 374.

¹²⁷ Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs," 387.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, 369-371.

¹²⁹ Nizami, *Socio-Religious Outlook of Abul Fazl*, 10-11.

India. Its originator is Shaikh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (d.1191) who is known for his *Hikmat al-Ishraq (The Philosophy of Illumination)*. In his study of Ishraq philosophy, Hossein Ziai remarks that Suhrawardi's thoughts are divided by "dream of Aristotle revealing the key doctrine of knowledge by presence and by his acceptance of the reality of the Platonic Forms. Works written before that time were Peripatetic indoctrines; later works reflected his Illuminationist thought".¹³⁰ According to Henry Corbin, Suhrawardi incorporated the wisdom of ancient Persians which provided the creative locus for an encounter between Persianism and Hellenism in the tradition of Ishraq.¹³¹ Corbin also mentions that unlike the Western thought that accepted a schism between faith and knowledge, between theology and philosophy, such a division was avoided in the Persian context, thanks to Suhrawardi's works.

The Ishraq philosophy supports the notion of knowledge-by-presence (*ilm-i huzuri*), that identifies an epistemological position prior to required or representational knowledge (*ilm-i husuli*). It tries to learn the mysteries of Nature not only through principles of physics, but also "through metaphysical world and the realms of myths".¹³² This way of thinking recalls the idea of unveiling and presence (*kashf wa shuhud*) in Ibn 'Arabi and Ghazzali's works. Ibn 'Arabi's position is so well known that it needs no further explanation. Ghazzali (d.1111) is known for his rejection of the philosophy, particularly that of Aristotalianism represented by Ibn Sina (d.1037), which is based on the principle of Reason (*a'ql*). Nevertheless, he used that philosophy to establish the superiority of "Revelation" (*wahy*) and the Sharia over Reason.¹³³ Similar to them, the Ishraq philosophy criticized Ibn Sina for having some problematic issues in his explanations. It argues for distinction between scientific knowledge and knowledge-by-presence and mentions that the essence of human beings lies in their self-awareness, through the luminosity of their own inner existence.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Hossein Ziai, "Illuminationist Philosophy," in The Edward Graig (eds), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 4 (London: Routledge, 1998), 700–703.

¹³¹ Daryush Shayegan, EN ISLAM IRANIEN, ASPECTS SPIRITUELS ET PHILOSOPHIQUES, *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 25 June, 2017).

¹³² Ziai, "Illuminationist Philosophy," 701.

¹³³ Ahmad Beheshti and Muhammad Mohsen Ya'qubiyani, "Wahy-i Nabawi az Didgahi Ghazzali," *Faslname Ilmi-Pazhuheshi Andishe Nowini Dini* 4, 13 (1378), 9-48.

¹³⁴ Ziai, "Illuminationist Philosophy," 700–703.

The illuminist philosophy takes its name from the word *Ishraq*, meaning “rising”; in particular the “rising of the sun”. It uses the notion of light to explain the connections between God, Light of Lights, and the universe. It describes that the whole creations are forms of lights radiated from the Divine, the main Light. Thus, there is reality of continuum between the Divine and the universe.

An important centre of *Ishraq* philosophy was Shiraz. The Mansuriyya Madrasa was an important education centre from where a number of its scholars were expanding the illuminist thoughts to other regions, particularly to India. They were also in close relation with the Nuqtawīs and worked closely with the states in Iran and in India. Some of its most noted scholars like Jalal al-Din Dawani, Ghiyas al-Din Dashtaki (d.1540 or 42) and Shah Fathullah were known for their attempts to prepare an educational programme enabling one to reach the stage of perfection.¹³⁵

All of these ideologies shared some common interests that could facilitate their collaboration in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project. They believed in the unity of God and the human. They accepted the reality of diversity in the human society that should be respected. They had common belief in the rise of Mahdi after death of the Prophet, but had different candidates for that position. The Nuqtawīs saw the nuqta as the origin of creation and the *Ishraqis* assumed light to be that origin. In all three ideologies, man stands at the centre of the universe and is an intermediary between God and the world. None of them suggests man as the shadow of the Divine, but only as His representative.

They all supported non-violent methods and highlighted the importance of reason in human understanding. They all accepted that the religious laws could be changed in different temporal and spatial contexts. The *Ishraqi* scholars refined their learning after migrating to India, a development that could be traced to the role of the Indian society. Badayuni believed that the Muslims of India have better regulations than other Muslims because they lived in a different social and cultural context. Nizam al-Din Ahmad showed the diverse Indian society in his *Tabaqat* and emphasized on its maintenance under a strong ruler.¹³⁶ More importantly, they all believed on the centrality of the king as pacifier of the troubled society and the unifier of various communities.

¹³⁵ Ali Anooshahr, “Shirazi scholars,” 335-37.

¹³⁶ Athar Ali, “The Evolution of the Perception of India,” 82.

All three ideologies were influenced by millennialism. They stressed on the importance of perfection of the pure soul. They assumed the rise of a “Perfect human” is essential for rebuilding a new society through his knowledge and justice. In Ishraq philosophy, a wise ruler is “characterized by both cosmic vision and epic deeds”.¹³⁷ This person is not anyone else except the Mahdi in the Jaunpuri and the Nuqtawī thoughts. It influenced Badayuni’s mind to an extent that he wrote his *Najāt al-Rashīd (Salvation of the Rightly Guided)* to respond to the appealing millennium,¹³⁸ as the title of the book was a chronogram corresponding to the year 999/1591. He introduced his understanding of the millennium in this book and his resentment and rejection of Akbar’s Mahdihood in his *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, the book that lost its normal historiographical flow under the millennial pressure that filled the ambience of the Akbar-i court.¹³⁹

The Jaunpuri Mahdawi scholars like Badayuni adopted some Ishraqi ideas too. The terms of tajalli and burūz of nūr used in Badayuni’s work, were parts of Suhrawardi’s thesis that brings Badayuni close to other Ishraqi intellectuals like Shah Fathullah. Whether Badayuni was aware of it or not remains unknown. Badayuni’s millennial theory was derived from similar sources that other Mahdawis had used. While rejecting to label Badayuni as “orthodox”, Moin suggested that his understanding of religion was knitted to his millennial notion.¹⁴⁰ His millennialism was based on Ibn ‘Arabi’s idea of “Unity of Being” and Abu Ma’shar Balkhi, “who promoted Indic notion of cycle of time in Islamic astrology”.¹⁴¹ Badayuni’s millennialism was a combination of the ideas of Conjunction (*qiran*), cycle of time, and irradiation of divine light in an accomplished person. He accepted the decline of Abrahamic religions after a millennium from their commencement because of the conflict among their Ulema and those in power (similar to the Nuqtawī idea of the period of the Prophet). Equally, he referred to the prophetic saying that his body will not remain in the ground for more than a millennium after his death.¹⁴² His *Najāt al-Rashīd* was a direct response to Akbar’s millenarianism that Badayuni thought to be the sign of fall of Islam that necessitates the rise of Mahdi,

¹³⁷ Shayegan, *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 25 June, 2017).

¹³⁸ Badayuni, 2, 208.

¹³⁹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 157-159.

¹⁴⁰ Moin, “Challenging the Mughal Emperor,” 390-91.

¹⁴¹ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 160.

¹⁴² Moin, “Challenging the Mughal Emperor,” 392-94.

which was not Akbar in his mind. On the other hand as a co-author, but not an influential one, Badayuni could not add his own ideas about Mahdi to the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, so his *Najāṭ al-Rashīd* largely was his response to Akbar's millennialism embodied in the historical narrative of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, that he had unhappily edited.

Chapter 4: The *Tarikh-i Alfi* and the Millennium

Making Millennial Formula for Akbar

It has been pointed out that the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was part of the Mughal millennial programme to project Akbar as the sacred sovereign, the supreme leader, and the actual millennial man based on all traditions. Moreover, the Mughal political ideology of sulh-i kul needed to be justified. The millennial momentum was the exact time for inaugurating this inclusive political ideology. Such a sacred sovereign required divine support. That was provided by an auspicious moment that occurred in 990/1582. Badayuni shed some lights on it in his *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh (Selection of Histories)*:

“In this year [990], [his Majesty] ordered that since one thousand years of *hijra* is completed and everywhere the word *hijri* is written, now a history should be compiled that includes about all kings of Islam till today that could be superior to all other histories written. It should be entitled *Alfi*. In mentioning the years, the word *rihla* should be written instead of *hijri* and the events

occurred in the world from the death of the prophet (peace be upon him) until today has ordered to be written by seven people...”¹⁴³

The first part of the passage shows that Akbar assumed that the first Islamic millennium was completed in 990. But, it was not. The actual *hirji* chronology is based on the Prophet’s famous migration from Mecca to Medina in 622. Thus, considering the *hijri* date, 1582 was not the millennial moment. If that is correct, then why had Akbar declared the millennium before its actual arrival? Abbas Amanat suggested the Nuqtawī influence to be the reason for this change. The Nuqtawī thinkers predicted the Conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter (*qiran*) in 990 as sign of a great change, the end of the Arab period and the coming of Mahdi. They approached Shah Tahmasp to convince him of being the promised Messiah based on their knowledge, but they failed as the Shah suspected them to be in contact with powerful Qizilbash leaders those he wanted to subdue. The Nuqtawīs prediction was paid at the expenses of their persecution. The Safavid Shah and later Shah Abbas I, correctly understood the potential of the Nuqtawī to turn their Messianic notion into a military rebellion on the predicted year.¹⁴⁴ Being disappointed by the Safavids, the survived Nuqtawīs turned towards India and saw Akbar a capable candidate for them to become their Mahdi.

Politically, the Nuqtawī prediction of the rise of Mahdi in a certain millennial moment was highly significant for Akbar to change a disturbing memory. Akbar was well aware that the Safavid Shah Tahmasp received his father Humayun after his defeat from Sher Shah Suri in 1540. Though, Humayun retook his domain in India by help of the Qizilbash army (of Sufi-warriors), nonetheless, the humiliation of Humayun in the Safavid court was heavy on the Mughal mind. Migration of intellectuals from the Safavid Iran and also the millennial moment in 1582 was the exact time for Akbar to turn the table around. These migrants saw Akbar as their protector, ideal patron and the millennial sovereign. To do so, they used their knowledge that could have served the Safavids, but they offered it to promote Akbar’s imperial ideology and to establish his superiority over the Safavids in this millennial competition. In a way, by using the millennial moment, Akbar could beat the Safavids with their own stick.

¹⁴³ Badayuni, 2, 328-19.

¹⁴⁴ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 163-64.

For the Nuqtawīs the year 990 was the millennial moment. However, they had already started to convince Akbar about the importance of this moment and also his position in this millennial event. Abul Fath, his brothers Humam and Nur al-Din, and Maulana Muhammad Yazdī tried to attract Akbar towards the Nuqtawī ideas in 1569. Later, the famous Nuqtawī thinker Sharif Amuli approached Akbar with the notion that in the year 990, a Messiah would appear and abolish lies, restore social order based on justice and his knowledge, and the period of Arab domination will be over. Amuli was a Nuqtawī thinker and declared himself being the millennial revivalist. He left Amul for Balkh in 1576 and visited Deccan before joining Akbar. He offered his thirteen treatises that were imitation of Pasīkhānī's works.¹⁴⁵ After being received warmly by Akbar, probably Amuli abandoned his claim realizing the impossibility of contesting with the king over the millennial competition.

Amuli suggested that Akbar is the promised millennial ruler. He declared that this certain person was Akbar, whose name in *Abjad* system was equivalent to 990. Another Nuqtawī Maulana from Shiraz (*jafr-dan*) corroborated these predictions through divination (*ʿilm-ī jafīr*) written in a book he claimed that it belonged to Sharif of Mecca and another book that he himself had composed. This Maulana was Mu'in al-Din Hashimi Shirazi, who was accused of having anti-Sharia ideas by some religious figures. In his letter to Sharif of Mecca in early 1582, Akbar strongly condemned Maulana's accusers and asked for his protection.¹⁴⁶ Maulana Shirazi explained that the age of the world is seven thousands years and it is over, and it is the time for Mahdi to appear in 990. The Nuqtawīs argued that Mahdi, who will solve all problems and remove disunity from the Muslims and Hindus, would be Akbar.¹⁴⁷ The Nuqtawīs' millennial moment supported by astrological calculations and use of the science of letters was that favourable environment would make a millennial formula for Akbar.

The Nuqtawīs' millennial moment in 990 was a great offer to Akbar that he could not be reluctant to. They recited a poem predicting the appearance of Ali, the lion of God (*asadūllah*), who would remove his veil and announce his universal rule. This poem was

¹⁴⁵ Badayuni, 2, 284.

¹⁴⁶ Mansura Haidar, *Maktubati Allami: Insha'i Abu'l Fazl* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998), 2-3.

¹⁴⁷ Badayuni, 2, 245-48, 287.

attributed to Shah Ismail I (r. 1501-1524), but now was recited by the Nuqtawīs for the Mughal emperor, which was a clear shift in their position that would project Akbar greater than the Safavid Shah.¹⁴⁸ Another poem with similar theme attributed to the Isma'ilia intellectuals of Khurasan, Nasir Khusrau (d.1060) was used to legitimize their point.¹⁴⁹ They considered Akbar as the lord of the age and the lion of God, the world ruler, who would protect all human beings. Fathullah Shirazi calculated Akbar's horoscope and projected him with all the qualities that the "Perfect Human" could have. He puts *asad* (Leo) as Akbar's month of birth that went well with the poem the Nuqtawīs recited, in which the lion of God appeared in the month of *asad*.¹⁵⁰ According to this horoscope, Akbar had the perfect reason (*a'ql-i kamil*) and his India was superior to the fourth climate (*īqlīm*), implying Akbar to be greater than his Uzbek and Safavid counterparts. Thus, both the Nuqtawīs and the Ishraqi philosopher Fathullah Shirazi collaborated to show Akbar as the millennial man.

Furthermore, the Nuqtawīs insisted that the *qiran* was an absolute reason (*Burhan-i qati'*) for the millennium and Akbar as their Mahdi.¹⁵¹ However, the Akbar-i court was not free of other millennial representatives that would intensify the millennial competition. Badayuni records of a certain descendant of Shah Ismael I, Shaikh 'Arif, known as Taj al-'Arefin, who was known for doing mysterious works like presenting summer fruits in winter and moving through wall indicating ability to transport himself across time and space. Shaikh Arif veiled (*niqab*) his face that emphasized not only on his Sayed genealogy, but also on his tendency to look like an Imam. His presence would take comfort from the Nuqtawīs as he cursed them after they tried to unveil him before the king. This feeling increased after the emperor appealed to the Shaikh to become like him or to let Akbar to become like the Shaikh.¹⁵² The presence of the Safavid royal characters could push the Nuqtawīs more towards Akbar. This encouraged Akbar to use the millennial momentum for his own advantage.¹⁵³ By accepting the Nuqtawīs idea, Akbar simply could hold the position of Mahdi for himself that was important for his

¹⁴⁸ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 165.

¹⁴⁹ Badayuni, 2, 312-13.

¹⁵⁰ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1, 31-39; Badayuni, 2, 287.

¹⁵¹ Badayuni, 2, 312-13.

¹⁵² Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 137.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 136-37.

imperial ideology. In a response to the Nuqtawīs' appeal, Akbar promised them that he would conduct it without violence, but in a rational way.¹⁵⁴ Akbar's rational way was his millennial programme that included commissioning of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, minting *Alfi* coins, and issuing new social regulations.

The Question of Chronology

Another important issue that Badayuni's passage carries is the change in *hijri* chronology that makes the *Tarikh-i Alfi* a unique case in the Islamic historiographical tradition. The change is from *aano hegirae* (in the year of migration) to *anno mottis* (in the year of death) or *rihla*.¹⁵⁵ It starts with the death of the Prophet in 632 and not his *hijra* in 622. Thus, it added 10 years to the *hijri* date. What could explain it? Why it did not include the Prophet's biography? Stephen Blake suggested that Akbar took 612 as the year of the First Revelation (*bi'that*) as the base for the book's chronology. His suggestion makes only 970 years from 612 to 1582.¹⁵⁶ Other problem with Blake's view is that Akbar would not make mistake in the lunar calendar and knew the difference between *bi'that* and *rihla*. Taking Badayuni's words, Ale-Davoud suggests that Akbar changed the chronology to show the book to be different from all earlier histories (*nasikh-i Tawarikh digar*). The *Tarikh-i Alfi* derives its information from a large number of sources, but being superior to earlier works cannot explain the change of chronology.¹⁵⁷

Whether Akbar has chosen this new chronology or not is unknown. However, it could have been the Nuqtawīs' proposal. If they were proposers of the year 990 as the millennial moment, then they should have had a logical explanation for the new chronology too. Amanat argued that the Nuqtawīs believed that the period of Arab domination (*daur-i Arab*) would end one thousand years after the death of the Prophet.

¹⁵⁴ Badayuni, 2, 312-13.

¹⁵⁵ Ali Anooshahr, 'Dialogism and Territoriality in a Mughal History of the Islamic Millennium', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55 (2012), 222-224; the change in the chronology has created confusion. For instance, Major C. Stewart misunderstood the chronology of it when he was preparing his catalogue of the Tipu Sultan's Library. He registered that the work was divided into five books that extends from ca. 622 to 1592.

¹⁵⁶ Stephen Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 126-28.

¹⁵⁷ Ale-Davoud, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 14-15.

In their calculation, the year 990 was that moment.¹⁵⁸ Badayuni accuses Akbar for declaring the end of Islam, the Prophetic period and becoming reluctant to people, who avoided using the Arabic letters in their writing shows that the king accepted the Nuqtawī point.¹⁵⁹

Not only the Nuqtawīs, but the Jaunpuri Mahdawīs also viewed the death of the Prophet as the starting time for the first Islamic millennium.¹⁶⁰ Having the Mahdawi intellectuals like Shaikh Mubarak and his sons Abul Fazl and Faizi could support the Nuqtawī calculation of the first Islamic millennium inaugurated by the Conjunctions in 990. Similarly, Badayuni believed that the great religions decline after a millennium and mentions that a great religion like Islam will suffer one thousand years after the death of its founders and that urges the rise of a revivalist (*Mujaddid*) to protect it.¹⁶¹ The *Tarikh-i Alfi* exactly follows this logic by being commissioned in 990 and opens with the death of the Prophet. The book begins with the Prophet's death to suggest the end of the Arab period and to declare Akbar to be the predicted Mujaddid and the Mahdi of the Age. Hence, the *rihla* chronology was essential for the *Tarikh-i Alfi*.

The *rihla* chronology had some other values. It avoided engaging with the Prophet's biography and some of his achievements that were questioned by Akbar. Badayuni records that under influence of Abul Fazl, Abul Fath and Bir Bal, the king completely lost his belief in the issues of revelation, visiting the heaven, resurrection, and miracles, as they were not logical for him.¹⁶² Sharing many points with Akbar's thoughts, Abul Fazl refers to miracles as a fraud action that could confuse and mislead the ignorant people. This indicates that anyone claimed for achieving miracles could misguide people, including the prophets.¹⁶³ The very same point was resented the Jesuit Father Monserrate, when he heard that Akbar believed that Christ did not achieve miracles, but used his knowledge and any physician could do the same.¹⁶⁴ Akbar's decision of not including the

¹⁵⁸ Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs," 378.

¹⁵⁹ Badayuni, 2, 255-57.

¹⁶⁰ Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 108-110.

¹⁶¹ Azfar Moin, "Challenging the Mughal Emperor: The Islamic Millennium according to 'Abd al-Qadir Badayuni," in *Islam in South Asia in Practice* eds. Barbara D. Metcalf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 390-402.

¹⁶² Badayuni, 2, 211.

¹⁶³ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 3, 182-188; Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 385.

¹⁶⁴ Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, 120.

Prophet's biography would go well with the *Akbarnama*, in which Abul Fazl avoided the Islamic history and directly connected Akbar to Adam, the first human, who was the successor of God on earth according to Qur'an that would extant that Caliphate-hood to Akbar and would make him God's Caliph (*Khalifat al-Allah*).¹⁶⁵

Akbar better than the Prophet

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* project could provide a suitable platform to discuss the Akbar-i millennial mentality and a way to explain his imperial ideology based on historical narratives. Thus, the committee of authors was deliberately selected not for simply writing a history book, but rather to establish historical justification to prove Akbar to be the Perfect Human. His period of rule should be different in comparison to his predecessors. Furthermore, his character needed some ideal prototypes that only history could show. For this reason, most of the relevant elements to his political ideology are carefully inserted to the parts related to Ali (d.661), the first Shi'a Imam and the fourth Caliph of the Sunnis. Ali is a charismatic character for the Muslims in general, but he is sacred for the Shia's in particular. The book makes Ali a suitable historical prototype for Akbar's thoughts and deeds. Likewise, the book uses the case of Sultan Zayn al-'Abidin of Kashmir (d.1470), when it comes to justify Akbar's political achievements, particularly his policy of sulh-i kul and respecting non-Muslim subjects in India. Thus, the book creates two models for Akbar- that of Ali as an Islamic prototype and that of Sultan Zayn al-'Abidin, as an Indian example.¹⁶⁶

The first important imperial element reflected in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* is the superiority of the king. In a conversation between Ali and Caliph 'Uthman (d.656), Ali explains the importance of respecting subjects and hearing of their voices by rulers. According to Ali, king has the highest position before God. In contrast, the most evil person before Him is the cruel ruler, whose actions open doors of misery to the people.¹⁶⁷ The king intermediates between the divine and people. Likewise, the society can't gain peace and prosperity without an Imam, who has political powers. He could guide people with their

¹⁶⁵ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 2, 1304.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, 1, 198.

religious and worldly affairs. The Imam should treat all (*'am wa khas*) equal with respect. Hence, Ali has several eligibilities; he is an Imam, a guide chosen by God and a political leader that indicates criteria for an ideal sovereign.

Likewise, Akbar needed a higher position than the Mujtahid. He needed to combine both Shi'a and Sunni ideas. This was provided by the millennial moment that could escalate him to a higher stage. The *Tarikh-i Alfi* confidently declares Akbar being the revivalist of the second Islamic millennium (*Mujaddid-i hazara-yi dowom*) based on a hadith that God will choose a person to revive His religion at the end of each century. The Sunnis usually accepted this hadith and the Mujaddids were mostly affiliated to one of the four Sunni doctrines. The book adds that: "the necessity of such revivalist known also as Mahdi, Qutb and Caliph of the Age is inevitable".¹⁶⁸ However, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* does not suggest that Akbar is the revivalist of the Prophet's Sharia or Sunna that put him exactly in opposition to the Sunni idea of Mujaddid.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* confirms the mahzar signed at the Ibadat-khana. It suggests that based on the principle of divination, the letters and the dots in Akbar's name are equal to "Justice" (*'adl*) and "Guide" (*mahdi*) that are good news and an undoubted claim. It justifies the mahzar that established Akbar's superiority as the "Just Imam" over Mujtahids. It also indicates the interconnectivity between the ideas discussed at the Ibadat-khana and the millennial elements used for making Akbar's political ideology.¹⁶⁹

Once, it established the supremacy of Akbar, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* proposes its most important idea that was the core element to Akbar-i political ideology. Akbar's policy of sulh-i kul was already formed and practiced before the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project started. It was essential to show that the Mughal domain was the ideal society and that all could live in peace and harmony. In other words, Akbar's territory should have been visualized as the eventual destination idealized in the philosophical thoughts. No Prophet could create such an ideal time and space. But it could happen under the leadership of Akbar.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* suggests that Akbar's period is better than the period of the Prophet. Akbar believed on the oneness of the creator, but respected diversity of the creatures (*tawhid wa jama'*). The book calls it *mashrab-i wilayat* and its owner (Akbar)

¹⁶⁸ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 241.

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem, 1, 241-43.

believes that all people have true faiths and each individual has his own way to understand the Divine and that should be respected. In contrast, the prophets are sent to distinguish between right and false. Their tendency is to separate people based on the religion they preached. Further, the “Period of Prophet” (*daur-i nabuwat*) is one thousand years and was dominated by enormous religious orders that created problems and disunity among people. However, Akbar’s period is “Period of Unity” (*daur-i wilayat*) that begins after the Prophet’s time and brings people of all creeds and traditions together. In *mashrab-i wilayat*, diversity and pluralism is the actual unity (*‘ayn al-wahdat wa al-jama’*). Thus, all truths are truth. To emphasize on truth in each tradition, the *Tarikh-i Alfī* brings an anecdote from Abul Qasim ‘Abdul Karim Ibn Hawazan’s *Risale Qushairi* and Abul Qasim Ismail Ibn ‘Abbād’s *Iqna’*, in which Ali heard the church bell and asked his companions if they understand it. Being ignorant of it they asked Ali to explain. Ali then says that the bell cries out that: “what I am saying is true (*haq wa sidq*)”.¹⁷⁰ Hence, through distinguishing these two periods and Ali’s story, the *Tarikh-i Alfī* justifies the policy of *sulh-i kul* that was the main foundation of the Mughal imperial ideology.

If this was the case, then, where does this idea of unity and Akbar’s privilege over the Prophet come from? The notion of *mashrab-i wilayat* mentioned above has some similarities with the idea of Muhammad Ibn Mahmud Dehdar Shirazi with the pen name “Fani”, but converted in the *Tarikh-i Alfī*. Muhammad Dehdar was a noted Ishraqi scholar, who authored a large number of books. In his *Raqaeq al-Haqaiq*, Fani discusses Ibn ‘Arabi’s theory of “Unity of Being” from perspectives of the Shirazi and the Indian Sufi scholars. It suggests that the theory of unity (*mashrab-i wahdat*) is valid, but it is not comparable to that of the Prophet’s. The period of the Prophet and his manner is original (*mashrab-i asl*) and others are all below that.¹⁷¹

Further, the idea of the period of Prophet and its problems and the greatness of Akbar was modification of the Hurufī-Nuqtawī thoughts. As it has already been pointed out, both the Hurufīs and the Nuqtawīs assumed that history is divided into three cycles

¹⁷⁰ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 242-43; for Sahib Ibn ‘Abbād, see, Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *Al-Šāhib Ibn ‘Abbād Promoter of Rational Theology Two Mu‘tazilī kalām texts from the Cairo Geniza* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

¹⁷¹ Muhammad Ibn Mahmud Dehdar Shirazi, *Rasail-i Dehdar* ed. Muhammad Husain Akbari Savi (Tehran: Nashri Mirathi Maktub, 1375), 32-33.

of prophet-hood, the sainthood and divinity. The Nuqtawīs highlighted the problems occurred during the period of the Prophet that needed to be ended by the beginning of the Persian period (*daur-i 'ajam*).¹⁷²

Likewise, how Akbar reached this realization to bring all people together which was the essence of the idea of sulh-i kul? Abbas Amanat highlighted contribution of the agnostics such as Nuqtawīs to the formation of sulh-i kul. He thinks that it was not Akbar's innovation, but a suggestion that came from Sharif Amuli that people of all creeds and all intellectual orientations should be reconciled and treated equally. Amanat's argument might be fair as the Nuqtawīs contributed to divinize the king, but the first trace of the term sulh-i kul is to be found in a letter written by Abul Fath Gilani to Sharif in 1581.¹⁷³ So, was Abul Fath the one who suggested it? Amanat's suggestion has no supporter among the Indian historians of the Mughal period, who saw Abul Fazl as the main figure behind the idea of sulh-i kul.¹⁷⁴ Khan argued that the cosmopolitan nature of the Timurid state had decreased sectarianism. Habib acknowledged Amuli's contribution to Akbar's millennial programme, but does not mention his role in the formation of sulh-i kul, as to him that was Abul Fazl's work.¹⁷⁵ However, it is safe to assume that the collaboration of different scholars formed and justified sulh-i kul. Badayuni remarks that by the year 1578, no one dared to discuss issues relevant to religions, other than Abul Fath and Mullah Muhammad Yazdi and that highlights the Nuqtawīs' impact on Akbar.¹⁷⁶ Still, the Nuqtawī element could not be the only factor as the Mughals inherited the policy of religious tolerance from their Turko-Mongol ancestors who were admired as an ideal model of tolerance in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² See the *Hurufi* ideas in this paper, 19-20.

¹⁷³ Amanat, "Persian Nuqtawīs," 374.

¹⁷⁴ A.F. Uthmani, "Political Ideas of Shaikh Abul Fazl Allami (1556-1602)," *Indian Journal of Political Sciences* 24 (1963), 259-83.

¹⁷⁵ Khan, "Akbar's Personality and World Outlook," 18-20; Habib, "A Political Theory for the Mughal Empire," 332-34.

¹⁷⁶ Badayuni, 2, 263.

¹⁷⁷ 'Ata Malik Juwaini, *Tarikh-i Jahangusha* eds. Muhammad Qazvini (Tehran: Intisharati Nigah, 1391/2012); Fazlullah, Rashid al-Din, *Jami' al-Tawarikh (Compendium of Chronicles)* eds. Bahman Karimi (Tehran: Intisharati Iqbal, fourth edition 1374/1994); *Tarikh-i Alfi* particularly highlights the Mongol policy of religious tolerance, 5, 3659 and 6, 3722; Lisa Baabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2012); Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Akbar's Personality and World Outlook: A critical Reappraisal," in Meena Bhargava (eds), *Exploring Medieval India: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries Politics, Economy, Religion* I (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), 355-69; Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 6, 3722.

Also, Akbar's idea of unity had roots in the reality he lived in and his affiliation to the Sufi thoughts. Badayuni mentions that Akbar was keen in understanding Ibn 'Arabi's idea of "Unity of Being" that had recognized common origin for all. By Akbar's order, a special escalator was made for son of Shaikh Zachariah Ajhudani, who would be lifted up to Akbar's bedroom, where he could teach him Ibn 'Arabi's ideas.¹⁷⁸ The idea of "Unity of Being" recommended equality and respect of all human beings. Hence, the *Tarikh-i Alfī* creates the idea of *mashrab-i wilayat* by combination and modification of the Ishraqi, Hurufi-Nuqtawī and Ibn 'Arabi's ideas to make Akbar divine's manifestation and his privilege over the Prophet.

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* builds strange millennial formula for Akbar by using *ilm-i jafr* and *ilm-i huruf*. It highlights the significance of the number twelve, by saying that from the time of Adam only six prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) had Sharia and each one was followed by twelve successors (*awsiya*), who could abolish or change their predecessors' laws. Subsequently, the book refers to the Prophet of Islam and his appointment of twelve representatives (*naqib*) from the Arab tribes of Aus and Khazraj to teach Islam to the people of Medina. It then escalates the value of the number twelve by connecting it to the cosmic arrangement through incorporating information from Ibn 'Arabi's *Futuhāt Maki*. According to Ibn 'Arabi, God has created a transparent material in the sky (*falak-i kursi*) and divided it into twelve. Each part housed an angel (*malak*), who controls one part of the universe's affairs. It continues that the number of Shi'a Imams is twelve too, but they all follow the same laws the Prophet brought. It then criticizes the Shi'as through Ibn 'Arabi's words that: "the Shi'as do not know that the reason of this unity among their Imams are for the helps they receive from those angels".¹⁷⁹

The *jafr* has been introduced in two ways in the *Tarikh-i Alfī*. The red *jafr* (*jafr-i ahmar*) contains the Prophet's weapon that won't be used except by Mahdi. The white *jafr* (*jafr-i abyaz*) contains all books revealed to Prophets. The two *jafrs* represent power and knowledge and their interrelation. Eventually, Mahdi inherits these two *jafrs* for his mission. Mahdi also possesses the Book of Fatimah (*mushaf*) the Prophet's daughter, in

¹⁷⁸ Badayuni, 2, 285.

¹⁷⁹ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 405-406.

which Ali wrote the events of past and future as heard from Fatima. Apart from these items, Mahdi inherits *jami'a*, a book written by Ali that explains, what people need.¹⁸⁰ These elements indicate that the Imam had to have political, military power and also vast knowledge that could not be disputed. Highlighting Akbar's high capacity in understanding people, Abul Fazl mentions that Akbar has reached to the perfect reason that enabled him to understand, what is good, and what is bad for people.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* uses the ilm-i jafr to project divinity of Akbar. Twelve has been viewed as the holy number by the scholars of jafr. Most of the great names have twelve letters such as the *Shahada* words which means, "there are no Gods, but God and He is the greatest". It then refers to the number of month and hours in the day and the night, which are twelve too. After preparing the ground for the holiness of this number, the book cites Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi's *Zayl-i Mawatin*, in which Yazdi mentioned that any ruler, whose name has twelve letters would have eternal rule. According to Yazdi, Timur is the first one. The book then combines Akbar and Humayun's names, removes the repeated letters and reduces them to twelve letters, reverses them and creates a new meaning that read: "his lordship [Akbar] is great". The author of this part suggests that the divinity of Akbar is an undoubted fact that is gifted to the king. To avoid any provocation and criticism, the author justifies his suggestion by referring to some Qur'anic verses inviting the audience not to judge the author, but to think about his words.¹⁸² Similarly, significance of the number twelve mentioned in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was not only textual, but also functional in other areas. The Ishraqi scholar Fathulla had invented a canon and a matchlock that could fire twelve bullets at the same time.¹⁸³ Manufacturing these devices based on this number reveals its metaphorical significance that could be interpreted as divine-supported weapon for the divine-chosen emperor.

Likewise, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* highlights the supernatural power of some specific words. Ironically, it does not refer to any words except the *Shahada*. According to the book, reciting these words shook the Caesar's palace after a Muslim delegation visited

¹⁸⁰ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 273.

¹⁸¹ Abul Fazl, *Akbranama*, 1, 31-39.

¹⁸² Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 406-407.

¹⁸³ M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman, *Shah Fathullah Shirazi: A Sixteenth Century Indian Scientist* (New Delhi: National Institute of Sciences of India, 1968),10-11.

him on behalf of Abu Bakr (d.634), the first Caliph. The Caesar informed them about the power of the words they had recited and its effect. In other occasion, the specific words like the “Great Name” (*ism-i ‘azam*) could protect the sixth Shi’a Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (d.765) from dangers of a plot arranged by the Abbasid Caliph. These words could be read loudly or silently as *zikr*.¹⁸⁴

The *zikr* had magical power if one would believe in it. Akbar’s personal interest in using the second part of Shahada (God is the greatest) as an official way of greeting, attracted both positive and negative reactions. Condemning Akbar’s action in manipulating the Shahada, Badayuni remarks that in 1578-79, greeting the king by reciting the Shahada and asserting Akbar as the Caliph of God became normal in private meetings and later it became a common *zikr* for normal people that was interpreted by Mullah Qushairi as blasphemy for Akbar being praised as God by ignorant people (*‘awām ka al-an’ām*).¹⁸⁵ In 1587, Akbar ordered his devotees to greet each other, in a particular way. One should say *Allah-u-Akbar* and the other should answer *jaljallalah*.¹⁸⁶ Writing *Allah-u-Akbar* on the imperial orders thus became necessary. Though Badayuni reports that Ibrahim Sarhindi convinced Akbar not to mint coins with these word on them, the coins minted after the 30th year of Akbar’s reign, show a significant change. Instead of the full *Kalima* that used to be there earlier, these coins bear the inscription “*Allah-u-Akbar Jaljallalah*” on the obverse, which translates to “God is great. Glorified be his glory” and instead of the *hijri* year, *ilahi* year appeared, sometimes along with the Persian month. Probably, the second part of the term *Allah-u- Akbar* could indirectly (or even directly) be understood as Akbar’s name (Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar). It might have been seen as a divine sign for the king being the sacred sovereign by people.

The significance of divinizing Akbar through letter and numbers has stronger message; that no one is like him. Being the emperor with vast territory, strong military power and having intellectual support to formulate his millennial claim would make any competition with Akbar futile. It also implied that he is the one who could removes distances from the Hindu-Muslim communities to make a better society that will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁴ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 2, 1304.

¹⁸⁵ Badayuni, 2, 273-4, 309.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 2, 356.

Chapter 5: The *Tarikh-i Alfi* as a Bridge to India

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* stresses on the necessity of making bridges of friendship between the Hindu-Mulsim communities by looking at their sources, rituals and belief systems. The Main goal is to find similarities to reduce their cultural disrances. The book elaborates on the two issues of sun worshipping and the transmigration of soul as two possible points to connect the two communities.

The Sun Worshipping of Akbar

Akbar's sun worshipping might not appear something new or strange, but it was not without significance, particularly when the Hindu subjects, knowing the tradition of *Darshan* were his audience. The Mongols believed that the divine light regulates the affairs of kingdom. Akbar himself was proud of his genealogy that included the Mongol mythical Alanqua, the lady conceived by the light. His father Humayun believed that the sun controlled the destinies of rulers and sultans. He also witnessed his Hindu nobles Bir Bal and the Jain masters' veneration of the sun as its light benefited the world. Similarly, some Sufis imagined the sun to be "the witness of the wisdom and the loving kindness of

the Creator”.¹⁸⁷ The Muslims believed that Christ and Idris (Hermes) dwelled in the heaven of the sun and the Ka’ba was located under it.¹⁸⁸ Thus, it is not correct to attribute Akbar’s sun worshipping to the Hindu influence alone.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* undertakes the first attempt to support it from both Indic and Islamic perspectives. Akbar’s sun worshipping had provoked Badayuni’s attention earlier in 1578. According to him, Akbar began to worship the sun four times a day. He collected and recited one thousand-and-one Hindi (Sanskrit) names for the sun and read them daily at noon. He adopted the Hindu practices of marking his forehead and Darshan. Many Hindus would wait to see Akbar at *Jarukha* (the overhanging enclosed balcony used for viewing purposes or giving audience) each morning and assumed that seeing the face of the king after sunrise would bless them. By order of the king, a special hanging bed was made for lifting Devi Brahman to Akbar’s bedroom, from where he would explain the Hindu myths, rituals of worshipping the fire, the sun, the stars, the stories of Maha Deva, Krishan and Rama to Akbar.¹⁸⁹ Like his father, Akbar believed that a special grace proceeded from the sun, that exalted the kings.¹⁹⁰ Their prayer was to God, but the ignorant people did not see the reality. The detail discussion of the sun worshipping in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* represents the controversies that had been on this issue at the Ibadat-khana.

The book addresses the Indic ritual of the sun worshipping not from the Indian sources, but rather from the Islamic perspective. It relates worshipping of the sun to the Hindus and uses Shahristani’s *Milal wa al-Nihal (nations and traditions)* to explain it. The prayer offered to the sun is called “the secondary praising” (*tasbih-i thani*) and should be read every morning in front of the sun. It consciously combines two ideas at the same time. It first mentions that the prayer should be offered to the sun, if one believes that it is the first light (*nur-i awwal*). If there is higher and bigger light than the sun, then the prayer should be offered to the creator of the sun, means to the main light. In both cases, the devotee could become closer to the light through purification of body

¹⁸⁷ Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims*, 358-59.

¹⁸⁸ Alfensio Nalleno Carlo, *‘Ilm al-Falak: Tarikhuhu ‘inda al-‘Arab fi Qurun al-Wusta (The Science of Astronomy: Its History for Arabs in the Medieval Period)* trans. Ahmad Aram (Tehran: Bahman Publication House, 1349/1970).

¹⁸⁹ Badayuni, 2, 283-84.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 2, 260-61; Moin has already shown Humayun’s obsession with astrology and dressing according to the colors of the stars. Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 112-24.

and soul. This part resembles to the Ishraqi idea of hierarchy of light and is also connected to the rituals of purification of the soul.¹⁹¹

The second idea embodied in the relevant passage to the sun worshipping comes from Abu Ma'shar's *Taskhir al-Kawakib (Possession of Stars)*. It gives a long description of the ritual and also translation of the prayer in Persian. The ritual should be performed during the sunrise and the worshipper should wear royal dress in golden colour. He should hold a golden firebox with particular material related to the sun. The materials should have saffron and should be mixed with cow's milk. It cites a prayer that gives almost all specific epithets of God to the sun. In other words, it replaces God with the sun. At the end it asks the sun for prosperity and ends with prostration to the sun.¹⁹² The *Tarikh-i Alfī* consciously avoids giving more detail about the sacrifice for the sun in a particular day called *ruz-i sharaf* to prevent any further provocation. But it ignores the fact that Akbar recited the Jain names of the sun (*Jainā sahasrā nāmā*) in his morning *zīkr* that he learned from the Jain scholar Bahuchandra.¹⁹³

Akbar's veneration of the sun was not an issue to be neglected even after his death. In 1605, his son and successor Jahangir minted gold coin with bust of Akbar and the legend of *Allah-u-Akbar* next to the king's face. The sun on the reverse suggests that the importance of the sun for the king was not avoidable. Interestingly, Abul Fazl does not mention the term Allah in his *Akbarnama*, but refers to the sun as *Nayyiri 'Azam* (the great light giver or the source of light) that shows how the imperial chronicle was influenced by the idea of the sun worshipping of the king. It also confirms the Ishraq philosophy in his thoughts.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the part on the sun worshipping and citing Abu Ma'shar could not be done without agreement of Abul Fazl. Apart from personal belief, Akbar's sun worshipping was part of his wish to reduce cultural distances within the Hindu-Muslim society.

¹⁹¹ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 381.

¹⁹² Bideem, 1, 381-82.

¹⁹³ Krishnamurti, *Akbar: The Religious Aspect*, 75-85; Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 381-82; Pandit Ashadhar, *Svobajana vivritti yuta Jina Sahasra nama Bhartia jannapitha kasha* eds. Hira lal Jain (Varanasi: Kashi, 1954).

¹⁹⁴ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*.

Harmonizing the Islamic *Tanasukh* and the Indic Reincarnation

Similarly, the *Tarikh-i Alfī* discusses transmigration of soul (*tansaukh*) that was known to both Muslim and Hindu scholars. Badayuni mentions that in 1582 Akbar revealed to ‘Azam Khan that he was “absolutely convinced and satisfied on the issue of metempsychosis”.¹⁹⁵ Badayuni, however does not mention how Akbar was convinced and, who convinced him. But the *Tarikh-i Alfī* helps to understand it. The book discusses it in length, insists on its accuracy and explains it from three perspectives of the Islamic, the Greek, and the Hindu philosophies. However, the whole discussion is carefully inserted into the part related to Ali-Mu’awiya conflict over power. Thus, the book makes Ali as a supporting stage to justify metempsychosis.

The book begins to explain transmigration of soul from the Islamic perspective. It discusses it from the Shi’a and the Sunni points of views. The discussion on *tanasukh* occurs between Byzantine ambassador and the Syrian governor Mu’awiya, who fails to reply. The questions addressed the distance between right and false, the earth and the sun, the east to the west and also, how to know a person’s gender and finally about transmigration of soul. These questions may reflect Akbar’s own tendency to know about them as the book gives very detailed explanation that is unusual for a chronology. Interestingly, Ali himself does not reply, but his young son Husain answers. Husain asserts that one should speak to people according to their understanding, which means if they are not scholars, there should not be scholarly discussion for them. He explains that the soul transfers to another similar body (*mithali*) after death. Then, the book mentions that this was the Shi’a idea, but the Sunnis believe that the soul transfer to the crops of green birds. These birds eat and drink in heaven and rest on the cressets of the ‘*arsh* (God’s throne). Subsequently, the book rejects the Sunni idea by referring to Husain that human soul can’t be transferred to animals’ body.¹⁹⁶

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* mentions that the transmigration of soul was accurate according to believers of metempsychosis (*ahl-i tanasukh*). Here, the believers could be the Nuqtawī thinkers and the Illuminist scholars, who were also co-authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*. The Shia’s and Sunnis accepted *tanasukh* in one or another way as in both cases the

¹⁹⁵ Badayuni, 2, 300.

¹⁹⁶ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 377.

transformation of soul was inevitable. According to the book, no prophet rejected tanasukh as it was a proved issue. Then, it discusses tanasukh from the Illuminist perspective by reproducing Suhrawardi ideas and its critics. Fathullah Shirazi was the iconic Ishraqi scholar and one of the main propagators of the Ishraq philosophy in India. He also was one of the authors that made it possible to assume that this part was written by him or reproduced under his direct supervision. The Ishraqi idea on tanasukh given systematically in the *Tarikh-i Alfī* needs some explanations.¹⁹⁷

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* converted the position of some Ishraqi scholars of Shiraz to make metempsychosis an acceptable thesis according to both Islamic and Indic notions. It first suggests that Greek, Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian and Indian philosophers agreed on the issue of metempsychosis. This suggestion does not come from Suhrawardi's book directly, but from the Shi'a Illuminist scholar Qutb al-Din Shirazi's (d.1311) commentary (*sharh*) on Suhrawardi's *Hikmat al-Ashraq*.¹⁹⁸ According to Shirazi, all of the earlier philosophers like Hermes (the prophet Idries) and Agathasimon (the prophet Seth) and Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato accepted transmigration of soul. Even Aristotle eventually agreed after his resistance against it. This suggests that the author of this part connected the eastern-western, Islamic-Indic ideas through numerous authorities on reincarnation.

The second explanation comes from Jalal al-Din Davani. He was familiar with both Ishraqi and Ibn Sina's thoughts. He attempted to incorporate the meaning of existence (*wujud*) mentioned in the works of Ibn 'Arabi with that of Ibn Sina's philosophical principles. Davani's works had demand among the Ottomans and Indian Muslim scholars for his Sunni background. In spite of constant invitations from Indian Muslim and Ottoman rulers, he did not leave Iran, but his fame crossed the political boundaries and gained huge interest, particularly in India. According to *Tarikh-i Alfī*, Davani in his *Shawakil*, a commentary on Suhrawardi's *Hayakel al-Nur* emphasized on the accuracy of transmigration of soul in such a way that no logical reason (*dalil-i 'aqli*) could reject it. Ali Anooshahr remarked that Davani and other Shirazi scholars like Dashtaki were not much interested in transmigration of soul.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, later

¹⁹⁷ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 1, 1, 378.

¹⁹⁸ Qutb al-Din Shirazi, *Sharh-i Hikmat al-Ashraq* eds. Mahdi Muhaqqiq and Abdullah Nurani (Tehran: Anjumani Asar wa Mafakhir Farhangi, 1383/ 2004).

¹⁹⁹ Anooshahr, "Shirazi scholars," 347-48.

generation of Shirazi scholars like Fathullah Shirazi could not avoid it after migration to India. Thus, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* is the source showing this change.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* explains that, what makes the transformation of soul essential. The reason is for the soul to reach perfection (*istikmal*) in the human body. If one human body does not have the quality and capacity for the soul to acquire perfection, it abandons that for “another body that best matches its dominant characteristics”.²⁰⁰ This soul is *nur-i isphabud*, which means *ruh* according to the Ishraqi commentators (*ahl-i sharh*) and is same as the Greek *logos*.²⁰¹ The term *nur-i isphabud* comes directly from Suhrawardi’s *Hikmat al-Ashraq*, in which he mentions that this light (means soul here) is not material, but it has self-awareness and can control the body. It is not the highest form of light, but stands below the main light (*nūr al-anwar*), which is the creator of the universe.²⁰² Suhrawardi’s position on *tanasukh* was controversial. He rejected it in his earlier works, but his later works show that he changed his idea.²⁰³

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* modifies Suhrawardi’s position towards *tanasukh*. The book rejects the idea that the soul moves to animal body because only the human body has capacity to host the human soul (*nafs-i natiqa*). Thus, this capability of human body makes it the gate for entrance of the human soul.²⁰⁴ Here, the term *istikmal* recalls Ghiyath al-Din Dashtaki’s idea of “perfection of noble essence” (*ikmal-i jauhar-i sharif*). Like Davani, Dashtaki (d.1540-42) was another main Ishraqi philosopher, who was referred to as the “Third Teacher” (*thalith-i mu’alimun*) after Aristotle and al-Farabi.²⁰⁵ Like his father Sadr al-Din Dashtaki, Ghiyath al-Din focused on an educational curriculum that could pursue the path of perfection. The programme’s main aim was to reach the stage of “Perfect Human” that could be “the shadow of the power of God”.²⁰⁶ Like Davani, Dashtaki was not a supporter of *tanasukh* as he believed that human body could not be the receiving agency for the human soul. According to him, *tanasukh* was

²⁰⁰ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 378.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ashraq*, trans. Sayed Ja’far Sobhani (Tehran: Intisharati Danishgahi Tehran, 1355/1976), 106-117; Muhammad Maleki, “Ishraqati az Hikmati Ishraq,” *Naqd wa Nazar*, 13, 3-4, 146-49.

²⁰³ Muhammad Maleki, “Ishraqati az Hikmati Ishraq,” 174-76.

²⁰⁴ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 376-79. Muhammad Maleki, “Ishraqati az Hikmati Ishraq,” 172.

²⁰⁵ Anooshahr, “Shirazi scholars,” 336.

²⁰⁶ Ibidem, 336-37.

valid only “if it refers to the transfer of human souls to and from animal bodies” which was to remove “the soul’s evil qualities like greed, anger, haughtiness and so on”.²⁰⁷ However, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* modifies Dashtaki and Davani arguments and puts them in the same line to support tanasukh.²⁰⁸

Conversion of well-known Muslim philosophers’ ideas was to harmonize the Islamic tanasukh with the Indic idea of reincarnation. Ali Anooshahr attributes the discussion on tanasukh to Fathullah Shirazi to create that connection and also to provide a logical response to the Indic notion of reincarnation that attracted Akbar. Probably, the Mughal emperor expected an answer, as he wanted to be the incarnation of the Hindu Gods. Badayuni mentions that Akbar was very interested to know the Hindu myths. He was curious to know the secret of eternity and for this reason he established a close relation with *Jogis*. In 1583, Akbar publicly performed the sun worshipping and the Darshan where many Hindus prostrated before him as if he was divine. In the same year, the Brahmins declared Akbar to be the reincarnation of Rama and Krishna. They referred to their ancient sages and recited poems that had predicted the manifestation of a world-ruler, who would respect the Brahmins, protect the cow and maintain the world-order through his justice. Badayuni says that these Brahmins wrote the poems and predictions on old papers and gave them to Akbar.²⁰⁹ Thus, the sense of being the Hindus’ holy character was essential for Akbar’s political ideology. Anooshahr remarks that the discussion on metempsychosis makes the *Tarikh-i Alfi* the first Mughal source that tries to build a bridge between the Islamic tanasukh and the Indic notion of reincarnation. He also suggested the book to be an answer to that.²¹⁰ But, he does not mention that Fathullah Shirazi finally solved Davani-Dashtaki disagreement on tanasukh in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. Fathullah Shirazi was student of Dashtaki and wrote commentaries on Davani’s works.²¹¹ His presence at Akbar’s court and his participation in the scholarly debates could be seen as an extension of the Ishraqi philosophical ideas in India.

²⁰⁷ Anooshahr, “Shirazi scholars,” 348.

²⁰⁸ Ibidem, 336.

²⁰⁹ Badayuni, 2, 324-26.

²¹⁰ Anooshahr, “Shirazi scholars,” 348-49.

²¹¹ Maryam Daneshgar, “Tasire Afkar wa Asar Jalaj al-Din Muhammad Davani dar Shebhe Qare Hind,” *Faslname Mutali’ate Shebhe Qare Daneshgahe Sistan wa Baluchistan*, year 1, 21 (1391), 42-43.

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* connects the Indic notion of reincarnation to that of the Greek ideas on *tanasukh* that were accepted by the Muslim philosophers. It suggests that Buzasf (Buddha) was one of the Indian sages (*hukama-i hind*), who accepted *tansukh*. But, it does not explain, how and, why did he agree on it. Further, *tansukh* has preached by another Indian sage named Barjamis (Brahmin?). The book suggests that he was a student of Qalanus, who brought ethics (*hikma*) to India. It then cites Sharistani's *Milal wa al-Nihal* that Barjamis was a disciple to Pythagoras through Qalanus. For Barjamis purification of the soul depended on purification of the body as only a pure body could host a pure soul. After Barjamis, the Indians were divided into two groups; those who dismissed worldly joys and even rejected producing child for the fear that it was the result of sexual pleasure that comes from delicious food and drink. The second group totally rejected all kinds of pleasures, even eating. To reach the absolute purification, this group offers their bodies to the flaming fire to free their souls.²¹²

The *Tarikh-i Alfi* attempts to show resemblance between the Indic and the Ishraqi notions about God. Rejecting extremism in the Indian practice of purification of soul, the book mentions that both Indian groups followed Pythagoras's doctrine (*mazhab*). The Indians believe that: "in reality God is the absolute light that dressed in human form".²¹³ Only the capable people can see Him. The human is slaved by his own tendencies and he can't free himself unless he fights with worldly pleasures.²¹⁴ Suhrawardi has similar explanation about God. According to him, God is the light of the lights and only people of *kashf* and *shuhud* could understand His reality. This understanding requires purification of soul from evil features.²¹⁵

Similarly, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* suggests that Buzasf was related to the ancient Babylon and attracted the mythical Persian king Tahmurath to *Sabiyya* religion which the people of Harran had. Subsequently, it refers to Suhraward's *Kitab al-Wala'* in which Buzasf calculated the age of the world to be 360,000 years and the Biblical Flood happened in the middle of this period. This part on the age of the world is similar to the Indic *Yoga* period that had been mentioned in the work of the noted astrologist Abu

²¹² Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 379-80.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibidem, 1, 380.

²¹⁵ Maleki, "Ishraqati az Hikmati Ishraq," 147-48.

Ma'shar al-Balkhi (d.886). Citing Suhrawardi and mentioning Buzasf was literally showing the similarities between the two forms of thoughts.²¹⁶

Finally, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* ends discussion on transmigration with two more evidences from the Hindu and Ishraqi perspectives. It mentions that both Buzasf and Barjamis accepted metempsychosis based on astrological information. The book cites Shahrastani's *Milal wa al-Nihal*, saying that the Indian sages believed that planets have cyclic movements. They move from one point and return to that after a certain time. That is the reason that year, month, day and night always are repeated. Other evidence for tansukh according to the Indians is the rebirth of phoenix. The bird digs the ground with its paws and beak, then a flame appears that burns the bird and leaves some oil that creates the same bird after a year. Then the book concludes the discussion on tansukh by citation of eight reasons on its accuracy from Suhrawardi's *Talwihat*. It clearly connects the Islamic, the Greek and the Indic ideas on transmigration of soul.²¹⁷

It is important to note that the whole discussion of tansukh and most parts of the divination of Akbar's name based on letters and numbers open with reference to *Maqsad-i Aqsa (Far Destination)* written by Mahmud Ibn Muhammad Dehdar Shirazi (d.1576). He was one of the most famous Shirazi scholars on the science of letters and divination. He wrote nineteen books on the significance of letters and numbers. Dehdar was a contemporary to Shah Tahmasp and dedicated his book *Zubdat al-Asrār wa Khulasat al-Azkār*, presumably written in 1576, to Shah Ismail II (r.1576-77), in which he provided a "lettrist proof for the ontological equivalency of Shah Ismail (I and II) and Imam Ali, a theme central to early Safavid imperial propaganda, and a prognostication of events up to the Islamic millennium".²¹⁸ Dehdar was familiar with the Nuqtawīs and their ideas. He was a student and associate of Shaikh Abu al-Qasim Muhammad Amri Shirazi (d.1590), the famous mystical poet and an expert on science of letters. Amri was first blinded by Shah Tahmasp for his Nuqtawī ideas and then later executed by Shah Abbas I. Dehdar incorporated some ideas of Pasīkhānī, the Nuqtawī founder in his *al-'Ilm al-Nuqta (The*

²¹⁶ Majd, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 1, 379.

²¹⁷ Ibidem, 1, 382-86.

²¹⁸ Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Dehdar Shirazi, Emad-al-Din," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (accessed 2 May 2017).

Science of Point).²¹⁹ This means that the Ishraqi and Occultists scholars like the Nuqtawīs shared many ideas. Davani was also a scholar in science of letters. Dehdar's father, Shams al-Din was a student of Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and also a mediator of Davani-Dashtaki philosophical controversy.²²⁰

Though it is an unknown book of history, *Maqsad-i Aqsa* is one of the main sources of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* for the life of Ali. While, Dehdar was not part of the authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, his book and ideas were very much present. How could this happen? Probably, his son Muhammad, known as Fani and Fathullah Shirazi represented his ideas and incorporated them to the Akbar-i millennial programme, particularly by connecting Akbar to the divine through numbers and letters that was supported by the Nuqtawīs like Sharif Amuli and Maulana Shirazi. Fani left Shiraz for the court of Ali Adil Shah in Bijapur, where he met his teacher Fathullah Shirazi. Probably, in this period, Dehdar's books arrived in Bijapur and were carried by Fathullah to Agra; where they were later used for the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. After the death of Ali Adil Shah, Fani departed for Ahmad Nagar and then later went to Burhanpur, where he was warmly welcomed by Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan.²²¹

The Adil Shah-i court was a connecting point for the Shirazi scholars to reach the Akbar-i court.²²² The Adil Shah-i court was open to scholars from any regions and their presence created an intellectual hub in the south of the Indian subcontinent. Similar to Sultan Zayn al-'Abidin of Kashmir, Ali Adil Shah respected all religious traditions and opened the court to both Muslims and non-Muslims. More importantly, it was at Bijapur that Fathullah realized the importance of reincarnation for the Muslim rulers in India. It motivated him to modify the Islamic idea of tansukh and harmonize it with the Indic notion of reincarnation.²²³ Hence, the *Tarikh-i Alfi* project provided space for the Shirazi scholars to contribute to the Mughal imperial ideology after examining their ideas at the Adil Shah-i court; something that they could not achieve in Iran for the Safavid monarchs.

²¹⁹ Muhammad Taqi Danishpazhoh, *Fihristi Noskhehayeh Khatti Ketabkhane Markazi wa Markaze Asnad Daneshgah Tehran* (Tehran: Daneshgah Tehran, 1340), 3351.

²²⁰ Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Dehdar Sirazi, Emad-al-Din," 2-3.

²²¹ Dehdar Shirazi, *Rasail-i Dehdar*, 11-12.

²²² Anooshahr, "Shirazi scholars," 340-42.

²²³ *Ibidem*, 342.

Conclusion

The *Tarikh-i Alfī* is the result of an Indo-Iranian collaboration on the eve of the first Islamic millennium to provide a historical narrative to justify the Mughal political ideology of sulh-i kul. In this policy, the king is the “Sacred Being”, superior to all traditions, who treats his subjects as friends without any discrimination based on their ethnic, language or religious backgrounds. On the one hand, the policy of sulh-i kul was to stop the interference of orthodox Sunni Ulema in state affairs supported through the mahzar that established Akbar as the “Just Imam” and the Mujtahid at the Ibadat-khana and on the other hand, it was also an inclusive political ideology to incorporate all people from different regions that came under the expanding Mughal rule.

The Mughal political ideology was based on the idea of unity in diversity; respecting and protecting all traditions and allowing them to follow their own ideals without fear. This political ideology was defined and formulated by a group of intellectuals gathered at Akbar’s court. The majority of them were migrant scholars from the Safavid Iran, who had bitter experience of the Safavid religious persecution. Among them, the Nuqtawīs with millennial mentality, the Ishraqis with their illuminist ideas found India a safer place for their activities. Likewise, the Indian Jaunpuri members were persecuted at recommendation of the orthodox Sunni Ulema for their millennial thoughts. All these millennial strands wished for a safe society under a strong just ruler who could protect people. Hence, under Akbar’s protection and patronage, they collaborated together to formulate the Mughal political ideology. Consequently, it attracted many intellectuals to migrate to Mughal India, which provided a situation for integration of various ethnicities and cultural traditions. Also, this policy distinguished the Mughals from the contemporary rulers in Asia and Europe.

The book was an important part of the Akbar-i millennial programme to show the greatness of Akbar compared to all other kings who had ruled during the first Islamic millennium. Similarly, it uses various elements such as sciences of letters and numbers, astrology, philosophy, Qur’anic verses and hadith to make a millennial formula to prove Akbar as being the promised millennial man, the sacred sovereign and the maker of the ideal society. To do so, it modifies and incorporate various ideas to serve a greater goal, and that is the necessity of harmonizing different traditions to make a better space for

human beings. It undertakes a painstaking task to find out similarities between various traditions to make connections between them, particularly between the Hindu-Muslim communities. Akbar's sun-worship and practice of Darshan would deliver a strong message to his Hindu and Jain subjects. Similarly, the whole discussion on transmigration of soul are clearly designed to show the connection between the Islamic tanasukh and the Indic reincarnation that have been discussed at Ibadat-khana.

However, the Akbar-i millennial programme and his political ideology did not remain unchallenged. The opponents of his policy of sulh-i kul were traditionalists, who claimed being the real protectors and interpreters of the Prophet's Sharia and Sunna. They mostly were the orthodox Sunni Ulema, who could not find room for their activities in the presence of the philosophers patronized by the Indian-Muslim rulers, specially during the reign of Akbar. Having no comfort in India, they gathered in Mecca, where they felt the obligation to universalize their message that Islam was in danger from the activities of the Mughal king Akbar, particularly through his respect towards non-Muslims. They assumed that their mission was to eradicate anyone and everyone who disagreed with them. They entered a harsh polemical war filled with accusations against their opponents. These Ulema used religion as a tool of suppression against people they disliked or those who resisted being convinced by them.

However, the millennial mentality was so strong in the sixteenth century that even this group of Ulema could not resist it. They fashioned themselves as the revivalists of Islam in order to go against the Akbar-i millennial programme. In other words, the first Islamic millennium was a space of competition between the rulers, the Sufi Shaikhs and the orthodox Ulema. Each group challenged the authority of others, mainly to protect or to gain political, social and economic positions they had or looked for. The winner of this millennial competition was the one, who had more resources in hand, i.e., political and military power, economic wealth and support of intellectuals, who could establish the superiority of their patron by formulating a millennial programme that could project him as the ideal man predicted in all traditions. The *Tarikh-i Alfi* is the story of this competition and propaganda tool for Akbar to justify his imperial ideology.

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