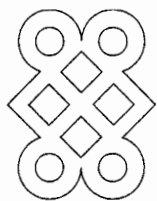


*A HISTORY OF
ISLAMIC SOCIETIES*

SECOND EDITION



IRA M. LAPIDUS

Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

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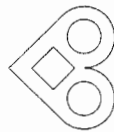
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Table 15. *Muslim India: outline chronology*

Ghaznavids (begin the Muslim conquest of India)	977-1186
Afghanistan	999-1040
Khurasan	
Ghurids	1186-1215
Afghanistan	1173-1206
India	
Delhi sultanates	1206-1290
Dynasty of Aybeg	1290-1320
Khalji	1320-1413
Tughluq	1414-1451
Sayyid	1451-1526
Lodi	
Independent Muslim regimes	
Bengal	1356-1576
Kashmir	1346-1589
Gujarat	1407-1572
Jawnpur	1394-1479
Malwa	1401-1531
Deccan (Bahmanids)	1347-1527
Deccan (Faruqis)	1370-1601
Mughal empire	1526-1858
Suri dynasty	1540-1555
Akbar I	1556-1605
Aurangzeb	1658-1707
British victory at Plassey	1757
Britain becomes paramount power	1818
British Raj	1858-1947

CHAPTER 18

THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT: THE DELHI
SULTANATES AND THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

In the Indian subcontinent Islam was introduced into an already developed civilization defined by agriculture, urbanization, higher religions, and complex political regimes. India was defined by the caste system, by Brahmanic Hinduism and Buddhist religions, and by Rajput and other Hindu political elites. In the past there had been great empires, but on the eve of the Muslim invasion India was divided into numerous small states. The Muslim conquests brought a new elite and a new level of political integration, and began the process of generating a new culture blending universal Muslim concepts and symbols of statecraft, cosmopolitan artistic pursuits such as architecture and painting, and regional motifs. Muslim religious communal orientations encompassed all of the principal varieties of 'ulama' scholasticism, Sufi-Shari'a synthesis, shrine worship, and reformism. In India, as opposed to Iran or the Ottoman empire, a pluralistic religious society escaped bureaucratization and state control. The special cultural qualities of Indian-Islamic civilization, and the autonomy and plurality of religious tendencies, made it a distinctive variant of the universal Islamic pattern.

THE MUSLIM CONQUESTS AND THE DELHI SULTANATES

The history of Islamic societies in the subcontinent goes back to the Arab invasions of 711-13 when Muslim rule was established in Sind, but the definitive Muslim conquest came from the post-Abbasid military regimes in Afghanistan. The Ghaznavids captured Lahore in 1030 and plundered North India. In the late twelfth century, the Ghaznavids were replaced by local mountain chieftains under the leadership of the Ghurid dynasty, who began the systematic conquest of India. Between 1175 and 1192 they occupied Uch, Multan, Peshawar, Lahore, and Delhi. In 1206, one of the Ghurid generals, Qutb al-Din Aybeg, the conqueror of Delhi, made himself independent and founded the first of a succession of dynasties collectively known as the Delhi Sultanates (1206-1526). Each dynasty represented a different segment of

the Afghan-Turkish Inner Asian military lords and their clients, the victors of the moment in the constant jockeying for power. The successive dynasties made continued efforts to centralize state power, but none of them achieved absolute political control; each was merely senior in a political society composed of numerous local Muslim and Hindu lords. Each dealt with the problem of establishing an Islamic state in a region of profound Hindu and Buddhist culture. Out of their collective achievement came a distinct kind of Muslim civilization.

Under 'Ala al-Din Khalji (1290-1316), the Delhi regime reestablished its imperial status, and extended its power to Gujarat, Rajasthan, the Deccan, and some parts of South India. 'Ala al-Din tried also to strengthen the agrarian administration. Before the Muslim conquest agrarian taxation was based on the principle that peasants had a duty to cultivate the land and to pay the ruler a share of the produce. The share extracted by the ruler could be assessed by measuring the land and taxing each measured unit by a fixed amount or by dividing the actual crop. Much less common was a contract under which peasants paid a fixed tax regardless of the size of the crop. Local rulers generally dealt with the villages as a unit, and collected the taxes with the assistance of local headmen who would assess the individual peasants. The ruler commonly assigned his tax rights to pay the salaries of

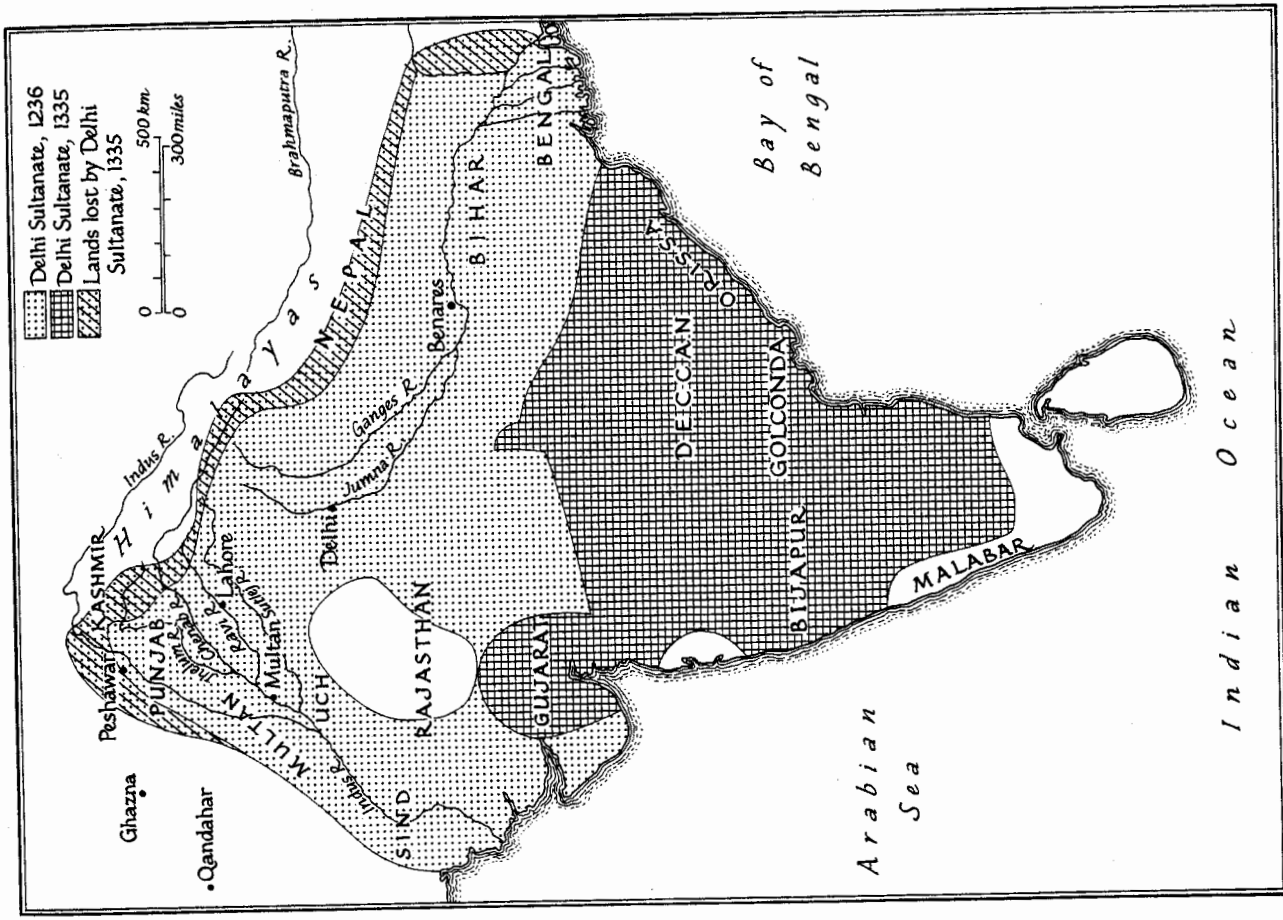
his soldiers or administrative employees. In 1300, in the core areas of northern India, 'Ala al-Din Khalji fixed a new standard of revenue demand at one-half the produce, abolished the perquisites of local chiefs, and confiscated all existing land grants in an effort to deprive local lords of their military and financial power. He also controlled the grain market in Delhi, where grain was distributed at controlled prices to the soldiers and the urban population.

The Khalji regime barely survived the death of its founder; it was succeeded in 1320 by the Tughluq dynasty (1320–1413). Muhammad b. Tughluq (1325–51) attempted to counterbalance the political influence of well-established Muslim families by cultivating the support of newly immigrant Turkish warriors. He was the first Sultan to appoint non-Muslims to military and government offices, participate in local festivals, and permit the construction of Hindu temples. To maintain the Muslim credentials of his regime, Muhammad b. Tughluq followed a strong pro-Sunni policy. He stressed his identity as a Muslim warrior by defending India against the Mongols. He gave formal adherence to the Shari'a, accepted the 'Abbasid Caliph in Cairo as head of the Muslim umma, appointed a chief judge, and imposed the head tax on non-Muslims. He was generally favorable to the 'ulama'. His was the first Muslim regime to integrate Turkish warlords, Hindu feudatories, and Muslim scholars in the political elite.

The Tughluq empire, however, disintegrated rapidly under pressure of revolts by governors, local resistance in the Deccan, and the formation of independent Hindu kingdoms. In the early sixteenth century the struggles over the Delhi Sultanate led to the intervention of Babur (a descendant of Timur), a warrior adventurer and local lord in Farghana, who was for a short time ruler of Samarkand and then of Kabul, Herat, and Qandahar. In 1526 Babur defeated the Lodis at the battle of Panipat, and established himself as the ruler of Delhi. His son Humayun lost the throne to the Afghan lord Sher Shah (1540–55), but then reestablished himself in Delhi and Agra, and handed on his rule to Akbar. Akbar was the true founder of the Mughal empire.

For the Delhi Sultanate, an offshoot of Muslim expansion sustained by a small and factious military aristocracy that ruled over the vast Indian subcontinent, cultural and ideological cohesion was essential. To soothe the factional quarrels, maintain solidarity among the Muslims, and integrate the Hindu lords into the governing elite, the Delhi Sultanate elaborated its own cultural and political identity. This was at once Muslim and cosmopolitan, built upon both Persian and Indic languages, literature and arts, brought together into a new Indian-Islamic civilization.

This cultural policy, however, took time to develop. At the outset the Delhi Sultanate was aggressively Muslim. The first gesture of the Muslim conquest was to destroy major Hindu temples and replace them with great mosques, whose size, design, and inscriptions were symbols of Muslim domination. The mosque of Quwwat al-Islam in Delhi incorporated stones and iron pillars from Hindu monuments in order to symbolize that an Islamic order had superseded a Hindu one. The



Map 18 The Delhi Sultanates

Qutb Minar, a towering brick structure, signaled the presence of a Muslim community. The Delhi regimes stressed allegiance to the Caliphate and support for the judicial establishment of the 'ulama'. Some rulers, such as 'Ala al-Din, sought Sufi rather than 'ulama' support for the Sultans, since the Sufis shared a hierarchical concept of political society. Just as the Sufi saints stood at the apex of the universal spiritual order, the Sultans stood at the head of secular society.

The Muslim concept of kingship derived substantially from the Iranian Muslim tradition. Barani's (d. c. 1360) treatise on kingship began with a section on the moral purpose of human existence. Men are created, he argued, with a mixture of vices and virtues; to cause the good to prevail, the ruler must change the dispositions of his subjects and help them act as true Muslims. He must himself follow the teachings of the Prophet, enforce the Shari'a, suppress rebellions, punish heretics, subordinate the unbelievers, and protect the weak against the strong. A Muslim king is responsible for order, for stability, and for the safety and prosperity of his subjects. Barani's moral principles were followed by practical advice on the management of the army, the treasury, and the subordinate officials. The ruler, he said, must appoint to office people who have the requisite virtues; rank should be determined by moral qualifications, for the ruler and his servants set an example of good behavior for all subjects and create the conditions that make it possible for them to fulfill their religious duties. Thus, his political theory aimed at the creation of a social order that brought men into accord with God's command by cultivating moral virtues in the governing authorities.

The Delhi regime also inherited pre-Islamic Persian concepts of kingship that allowed for the exaltation of rulers, and prompted them to demonstrate their authority in lavish public works. Sher Shah, for example, constructed forts, mosques, and caravansaries for travelers along the main highways where food and fodder were provided for troops and merchants. He also built splendid monumental tombs for his grandfather, his father, and himself to legitimize the reign of a parvenu. The tombs were placed in strategic locations as an assertion of legitimacy, and near the tombs of saints to give religious respectability.

Despite its Muslim emphasis, the Delhi regime also had substantial appeal to Hindu lords. The Muslim emphasis upon loyalty to the ruler, patron-client relations, and the virtues of service and honor were consistent with Hindu political ideals. Muslim recognition of the hierarchy of ranks validated the organization of Hindu society. Both cultures accepted the dominance of kings, though the meaning of kingship was different. For Hindus, the ruler upholds the order of the world by virtue of who he is – the *axis mundi*; for Muslims, he fulfills his role by virtue of what he does – implementing the Shari'a. Only in the fourteenth century did the Tughluq dynasty begin to absorb Hindu motifs into Muslim architecture as a symbol of the Muslim appropriation of Hindu political authority. Tughluqid architecture borrowed such design features as the Hindu *chatri*, or kiosk, heavy stone balustrades, eaves, block pillars, and capitals.

The historic task of forming a shared cosmopolitan culture was furthered in the various provincial Muslim regimes. In Bengal, Sufi writers and Muslim rulers adopted the local languages. The Hindu classic, *Mahabharata*, and Arabic and Persian classics, including stories from the *Arabian Nights*, were translated into Bengali at the order of Muslim rulers. Muslim poets also wrote in Bengali about Hindu deities and myths, using Arabic and Persian loan words. This synthesis of languages and literatures was the basis for the emergence of a new literary Bengali language. Similarly, the independent Sultans of Gujarat (1407–1572) patronized the regional languages instead of Sanskrit or Persian.

In the Deccan, Bijapur and Golconda were important centers for the synthesis of Islam and local cultures. The Bahmanid regime in Bijapur (1347–1527) ruled a land that lay between Marathi-speaking peoples to the north and Kannada speakers to the south. In each of these regions there were local devotional movements and strong attachments to local saints. In neither was the Hindu Sanskrit tradition strong. Here a Muslim regime encouraged the integration of elements of Marathi and Kannada culture and the formation of a new regional language, Dakhni, strongly influenced by Persian. The local Muslim elites developed a shared culture for the diverse linguistic and religious elements of the Bijapur state, defined in opposition to the northern regimes.

In Golconda the synthesis of Muslim and Hindu aristocracies and cultures developed under the Qutb Shah dynasty (1491–1688). This regime helped to integrate the Muslim and Telugu-speaking elites by patronizing the local warrior aristocracy, providing tax-free lands for Saivite Hindu temples, and sponsoring a regional culture based on the bilingual use of Telugu and Persian. Thus, while the Delhi Sultanate leaned to Muslim supremacy, the provincial Muslim regimes fostered the integration of Muslim and Hindu cultures and the formation of an Indian version of Islamic civilization.

CONVERSION AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Under the cover of the conquest, Muslim scholars, scribes, poets, and intellectuals flocked to India, seeking the patronage of the new regimes, organizing colleges and khanaqas, and opening the way for the conversion of Indian peoples to Islam. Conversion was relatively limited; it seems doubtful that more than 20 or 25 percent of the populace of the subcontinent ever became Muslim. Muslims were concentrated in the Indus Valley, northwest India, and Bengal. In the fourteenth century Islam spread across the Brahmaputra River into Assam, and was represented in the Deccan. While the aristocracy was composed of Muslims who came from Afghanistan, Iran, and Inner Asia, Indian converts were mostly from the lower classes. Conversions commonly occurred when Muslim lords endowed a mosque or khanaqa and invited scholars or Sufis to take up residence. Around the lord and his sponsored religious teachers gathered peasants and service people who took on the

religion of their masters. However, the Turkish and Afghan warrior elite was probably hostile to conversions of nobles lest they compete for political power. Their position was similar to that of the early Arab regimes in the Middle East, for whom Islam signified the suzerainty and solidarity of an otherwise factious ruling caste.

Furthermore, the growth of cities broke down caste and geographical barriers to social interaction. People who had given up their social and political status, and who were ambitious to make careers under a new regime, such as itinerant merchants, workers and peddlers, fugitive peasants and vagabonds, found in Islam a unifying ideology. Sufi khanaqas were often established on the outskirts of towns and villages where they might appeal to lower-caste elements. In North India they were the centers for the birth of Urdu as the *lingua franca* among Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslim populations.

In some cases conversions to Islam were correlated with important changes in regional societies. In the northwest provinces, where the Jats, a hunter-gatherer and pastoral population, were coming into contact with a state-based agricultural society and a literate form of civilization, Islam became the religion of people who were becoming peasants. In Bengal, conversion similarly represented the change of hunter-gatherer and pastoral peoples to a sedentary way of life. Before the advent of Islam, Hinduism was well established in West Bengal, where rice culture supported a Brahmin religious aristocracy and Hindu temples. In East Bengal, Brahmin and caste influences were weaker, and Buddhism was the dominant religion. Under Muslim rule, East and West Bengal were integrated under a single regime, and the new political environment was permeated by Islamic symbols. Under the leadership of Muslim landlords, warriors, and Sufis, the process of agricultural expansion continued into East Bengal, making converts out of newly sedentarized peoples.

The influence of Sufis was crucial in the spread of Islam. The story of Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shahr (d. 1245), one of the early heads of the Chisti order, is illuminating. Baba Farid settled in a place now called Pak-pattan, a village in the North Indian plain. A small dusty place of mud houses and a few shops, peopled by men reputed to be illiterate, superstitious, and quarrelsome, it had a reputation for robbing travelers. Baba Farid came to this village seeking escape from the distractions and temptations of the court in Delhi. He had for years practiced a rigorous asceticism, denying himself worldly satisfactions and concentrating his attention upon devotion to God. At Pak-pattan he stopped at the edge of the village under a clump of trees, unfolded his prayer rug, and lived for days, weeks, and perhaps months in solitude, subsisting on small gifts of food which he did not acknowledge. He spent all his time in prayer.

After a time people recognized him as a holy man. The poor came for cures and amulets, and advice on family matters. They asked him to intercede with the landlords and the tax collectors. Officials, landowners, scholars, and the rich, weary of the emptiness of the world, went to consult him. Tribal chiefs visited to ask his help in negotiating feuds. Merchants sought his protection to pass through the town

unmolested. Other holy men, Muslim and non-Muslim, sat in his presence. As his reputation grew, Baba Farid acquired enough gifts to build a hospice. Disciples came to live with him. Stories circulated about his wisdom; he came to be venerated. People converted to Islam in his name. Thus an other-worldly man acquired worldly power. Renunciation was the basis of his worldly success. Because he no longer cared for the ordinary things of life, he was able to see matters in context and measure their relative importance. Because he did not care for himself, he was a good judge of other people's motives and interests; he was, therefore, successful as a teacher, healer, and mediator.

His followers did not see this as ordinary wisdom. They saw his powers as a sign of God's blessings being channeled into this world. They believed that he possessed baraka, the capacity to know things unknown and to dispense blessings which are ultimately only in God's gift. When he died, his grave became the repository of his baraka. The people visited his tomb, touched and kissed the holy place, made gifts and sacrifices, and celebrated seasonal festivals and his birth and death days.

Behind the mystical and magical powers of individual saints such as Baba Farid lay deep cultural sympathies which made the person of the Sufi and his teachings attractive to non-Muslims. The Sufi who renounced worldly gain, devoted himself to prayer, and expressed himself through poetry corresponded in the popular imagination to the Bhakti devotional preacher who had given up his past life and had access to higher wisdom. Sufism stood for detachment within the world rather than renunciation of the world. The Sufis married and raised children, cared for the community, and sought to bring justice and ethical values into human affairs. Similarly, Indic philosophies valued a detached style of life that permitted the believer to outwardly fulfill the complex requirements of the social and moral code, and yet inwardly be free for spiritual progress. The masses saw in the Sufis the kind of spiritual achievement they had come to expect from the yogis.

Sufi teachings and practices also corresponded to the Hindu metaphysical concept of the universe. The monotheism of the Sufis was not a surprise to Hindus, because the Saivite and Vaisnavite traditions had monotheistic trends. At the same time the claims of the Sufi masters to be the concrete manifestation of the powers of God were compatible with Hindu polytheism. Moreover, the Sufis did not wholly exclude the worship of local gods within and alongside Islam. Indeed, the veneration of Sufi graves and their annual festivals corresponded in some cases with the Hindu calendar. In Bengal and the Punjab Muslims celebrated Hindu festivals, worshiped at Hindu shrines, offered gifts to Hindu gods and goddesses, and celebrated marriages in Hindu fashion. Hindus who converted to Islam retained many of their past beliefs and practices; many Hindus venerated Muslim saints without change of religious identity.

Thus, in popular religious culture, the boundaries between Islam and Hinduism were more flexible than in formal doctrine. Islam entered into the Indian environment sometimes by assimilating converts into a new communal identity and

religious beliefs and sometimes by being assimilated into the indigenous culture. Conversion to Islam was a subtle matter in which Islamic elements might be added to an existing complex of Hindu religious beliefs, without change of world-view or social identity, or in which the convert could make a revolutionary change in both beliefs and allegiances.

Yet, despite considerable success in the conversion of Hindus to Islam, the great majority of the subcontinent's peoples remained Hindus. While the Middle East and Indonesia were almost totally converted, India, like the Balkans, remained substantially non-Muslim. There are several reasons for this. First was the thin veneer of the Muslim conquest in India. The Muslims were small bands of warriors who were not, as in the case of the Arab or Turkish conquests of the Middle East, backed by large numbers of settlers. The Muslims established a political elite, but they could not colonize the country. Second, the pre-Islamic political structure of India remained intact. The previous regime was highly decentralized, composed of local lords and a Brahmin religious elite who retained local political power under Muslim suzerainty. The caste social structure under Brahmin leadership was also resistant to change. As in the Balkans, the thinness of the governing elite, the confirmation of local lords, and the protection of the non-Muslim populations all served to maintain a continuity of non-Muslim identities.

THE VARIETIES OF INDIAN ISLAM

The combination of migrations from the Middle East and Inner Asia and local conversions gave the subcontinent all varieties of Islam. The 'ulama' often became part of the state establishment. The Sultans appointed a chief *sadr*, a chief *qadi*, and a Shaykh al-Islam; the post of *sadr-i jahan* was created in 1248 to supervise most religious activities, including justice, prayer, markets, and endowed funds. The chief justice administered the court system, and *qadis* were appointed at provincial and district levels. Subordinate *sadrs* dealt with local land and registration matters and *qadis* dealt with civil and criminal cases. Preachers and prayer leaders were also state-appointed and state-paid officials. Madrasas were established and the teachers salaried by the government. The curriculums of the Mu'izzi and Nasiriya madrasas included Arabic, hadith, law, logic, theology, literature, and mysticism. However, despite the formal Muslim establishment, the influence of the 'ulama' on the general society was very limited. Rather, Sufism played the critical role in the creation of a Muslim community in India. Sufi warriors flocked to India looking for religious merit in the holy war. As on the Ottoman frontiers, they became the leaders of migrating Turkish warrior bands. The Kazaruniya order helped to establish Islam in Kashmir. Rural mystics spread the Sufi notion of the universal hierarchy of saints and the practices of veneration of tombs. Malamatis and Qalandaris, individual wandering dervishes, exemplified rejection of the worldly way of life.

The tariqat were represented by the Suhrawardiya, the Chistiya, and the Shattariya, who established extensive networks of khanaqas throughout North India.

The disciples of 'Umar al-Suhrawardi, under the leadership of Shaykh Baha' al-Din Zakariya (d. 1267), brought the order to India. Multan was their main base, but the order was also important in Uch and Gujarat. The Chisti order was introduced into India by Mu'in al-Din Hasan Chist who, born in southeastern Iran in 1141, settled in India, and died at Ajmer in 1236. His order spread throughout Rajasthan, Bengal, and the Deccan, and was especially important in the northern Gangetic plain and the Punjab. The Chisti order accepted the doctrine of Ibn al-'Arabi concerning the unity of being, and preached a non-political and non-violent philosophy.

The Shattari order was introduced into India by Shaykh 'Abdallah Shattar (d. 1485), who toured the Ganges Valley dressed like a king, with followers in military uniforms, carrying banners and beating drums, in order to propagate his beliefs. His followers regarded him as being in direct contact with the saints, the Prophet, and with God himself, a man possessed of both earthly and spiritual power and absolved by his detachment from the world from all ordinary legal and social norms. The Shattari order appealed to the rich and was closely identified with the state elites. It withered away when it lost the favor of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

The several orders represented variations on the system of Sufism that had developed in the Middle East. The distinctive feature of these movements was the organization of a brotherhood built around the total devotion and obedience of the disciples to the master. The central experience of the disciple was to be initiated into the discipline and spiritual technique taught by the master. Once the novice had been initiated there was a ceremonial passing on of the cloak, or *khirqa*, of the master to his disciple. The Sufis believed in the miraculous powers of their saints, and that the very order of the universe was upheld by a hierarchy of masters, the leading one of whom was called the *qutb*. Thus, Shaykh Nizam al-Din Auliya (d. 1325), one of the founding fathers of the Chisti order, was perceived by his followers to be the head of a spiritual hierarchy who ruled a kingdom parallel to that of temporal rulers. The great Sufi leaders presided over courts that rivaled those of temporal Sultans; the patched cloak, the prayer carpet, the wooden sandals, and the rosary were the mystics' insignias of chieftainship. The head of the order dispatched his *khalifas*, or lieutenants, to various provinces, and they, in turn, appointed subordinates to bring the mission to towns and cities. The chief of the whole network of Sufis was often called the Shah or Sultan to symbolize the combination of a territorial and a spiritual sphere of influence.

The khanaqa was the collective home of the Sufi community. A Chisti khanaqa consisted of a big hall called a *jama'at khana* in which the followers lived their communal life. The hall was usually a large room supported by pillars, which marked the places where the Sufis prayed, studied, and slept. Some khanaqas had rooms attached for the private use of the shaykh and the senior members. Often there was a garden, a veranda, and a kitchen. The life of a khanaqa was organized like that of a royal court. The Sufi master took a central place; his disciples hung about waiting to be invited to sit near him. The Shah received the general public,

listened to petitioners, gave amulets to heal the sick, mediated disputes, and dispensed spiritual counsel.

The people attached to the khanaqa were divided between permanent residents and visitors; the permanent residents were organized in a hierarchy depending upon their spiritual standing and the duties assigned them. The disciples did personal services for the master and his family, and organized the common house-keeping tasks of the khanaqa. The visitors were numerous; they included scholars, government officials, and businessmen looking for escape from worldly burdens. Poor people came for money, advice, recommendations, or intercessions with their superiors. They came for cures, sympathy, and blessings. The mystics taught them how to worship in the manner of Islam.

Apart from the Quran and hadith, the most important religious influence on Indian Islam was the teaching of Ibn al-'Arabi and the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, the unity of being. These teachings were spread both by the Chistis and the Shattaris, who believed that spiritual attitude was more important than specific religious laws or practices. They also saw that Islam and Hinduism shared spiritual insights, and this led to an assimilation of Sufi and Hindu beliefs about the control of emotional life as a prerequisite to the control of external behavior. The Sufis adopted Hindu ceremonies, devotional songs, and yoga techniques. Popular religious culture became a mixture of Muslim and Hindu practices. Thus, the Sufis were divided among monist, pantheist, and syncretist religious tendencies, between commitment to individual spirituality and collective Shari'a, and between universal Muslim practices and specific Indian forms of worship.

Sufism was closely connected to the vernacular languages; Sufis pioneered the absorption of Indian language, music, and poetic forms into Islamic practice. Hindi became their spoken language, and inspired the birth of Urdu, a literary version of Hindi, as a Muslim language. The earliest work in Urdu was a treatise on Sufism written in 1308. Dakhni was first used by Chistis in Golconda in the early fifteenth century and was developed further by Sufis in Bijapur and Gujarat. Mystical poetry in Sindhi and Punjabi dates back to the fifteenth century; Pashto mystical poetry to the late sixteenth century. Poetry in the vernacular languages took up the classical Persian themes of the yearning for and love of God. The love of the Prophet was also told and retold in poems, folk songs, riddles, and bridal songs. Hindu poets also wrote mystical poems using Muslim images and themes, including the honor of the Prophet and the mourning for Husayn.

Other Muslim movements veered away from the spiritualist and syncretic forms of Sufism. The Mahdawi movement was founded at the end of the fifteenth century by Sayyid Muhammad of Jawnpur. Sayyid Muhammad claimed to be the mahdi and traced his descent to Musa al-Kazim, the seventh in the "twelve" line of imams. He preached poverty, renunciation, and prayer, and sought to restore the purity of religious belief and practice, and to build a community based upon allegiance to Muslim law. His followers established *daira*, or communities, in which they lived an ascetic life, shared their earnings, and attempted to minimize their worldly involvement

so as not to be distracted from their dependence upon God. The members met weekly to confess their sins. The Mahdawi movement was important in Gujarat in the sixteenth century, and was widely accepted during the reign of the great Mughal Sultan Akbar. With acceptance came a loss of missionary zeal, and with the passing of the millennium, the thousandth year of the Muslim era, the followers of Sayyid Muhammad lost their conviction of the imminent coming of the mahdi.

Yet another alternative was a "reformist" type of Islamic belief which stressed hadith as the basis of Muslim learning and pious practice. Opposed to the excesses both of legal studies and of Sufi spirituality, the hadith scholars found their master in Shaykh 'Abd al-Haq Dihlawi (d. 1642). The Suhrawardis were committed to Muslim law, taught the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity of witness), and insisted upon the superiority of prophecy to sainthood. These movements would inspire Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) and the reformers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

MUSLIM HOLY MEN AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY

The relations between 'ulama', Sufis, and the state were varied. In principle, the 'ulama' were servants of the state. They benefited from state protection of Islamic religious life, enforcement of Islamic religious law, and state employment as bureaucratic officials, judges, prayer leaders, and teachers. The 'ulama' and the state had a symbiotic relationship because of the clear division of political and religious authority.

The Sufi relationship to state authority was more ambiguous. Sufi orders such as the Suhrawardi and the Chisti were themselves quasi-political societies within the Delhi Sultanate. The Suhrawardis maintained a close and collaborative relationship with the Delhi regimes, facilitated by their geographical distribution. Concentrated in the border regions of Multan, Uch, and Gujarat, remote from the center of power, the Suhrawardis were able to enjoy state patronage, gifts of land, and other favors and still maintain their autonomy as provincial notables. Their role was to mediate between the Delhi Sultanate and provincial princes and tribes. Sufism thus played an important role in integrating tribal and frontier peoples into the Delhi regime. The ability of the Suhrawardis to fulfill these political functions was the basis of their spiritual authority. Wealthy state-supported khanaqas were the worldly symbol of the Suhrawardi claim to mediate in the world to come.

The Chistis lived by a different political philosophy. Their shaykhs rejected government service, refused endowments, and expected to earn their living by cultivating wastelands or receiving unsolicited gifts from the common people. The shaykhs even refused interviews with Sultans. For ordinary disciples, however, earning a living in some simple productive way was considered meritorious. As part of their responsibility for improving the worldly condition of Muslims, they were permitted to take employment. For the order as a whole, charity and responsibility for the poor were primary values. The Chistis maintained their spiritual authority by detachment from rather than by mediation among worldly powers.

Though rejecting worldly concerns, the Chistis were after all in the midst of the world. They implicitly accepted the political structures of the Sultanate and indirectly validated the authority of the Sultans by advocating a concept of universal hierarchy which Sultans could use to validate their claims to be the heads of a temporal world order. Only wandering Qalandaris and Malamatis denounced and wholly withdrew from the world.

The relations of 'ulama' and Sufis to the state and to each other changed over time. In the course of the thirteenth century, 'ulama' influence was ascendant, but under the Khalji dynasty (1290–1320) Sufis were promoted as a counterweight to the 'ulama'. 'Ala al-Din used the latitude given him by Chisti ties to reduce the power of Turkish nobles and 'ulama' and to bring Indian Muslims into the governing elite. Muhammad b. Tughluq, however, called upon the 'ulama' and the Suhrawardis to condemn Chisti religious practices, such as *sama'*, or musically accompanied religious ceremonies. Nizam al-Din Auliya, the head of the Chisti order, had to appear in person to defend himself. The Tughluqs succeeded in forcing the Chistis to abandon their headquarters in Delhi and to disperse all over India. They were also forced to serve in military campaigns in South India and to take up missionary activities under government sponsorship. Under political pressure, the Chistis split. Some collaborated with the government and others refused. The division within the order broke the power of its all-India organization.

The political power of the Suhrawardis was also eventually broken by the authorities. Muhammad b. Tughluq gave them lands and villages, and then forbade anyone to visit their khanaqas without permission from the governors. Disputes over succession to the leadership of the order had to be brought to the Sultans for resolution. As the Suhrawardis became more dependent upon the state, their mediating powers declined. Only in Gujarat, which had an independent dynasty, did the Suhrawardis continue to be regarded as patron saints. They received gifts of landed estates and maintained their influence over public opinion. With the absorption of Gujarat into the Mughal empire in 1572, the Suhrawardis completely lost their political importance. Their decline allowed for the spread of the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders and the eventual resurgence of 'ulama' and reformist types of Islam which demanded that state policy be based on allegiance to Shari'a rather than upon Sufi principles.

The Delhi period thus set the basis for an Islamic society with its characteristic ambiguities of Islamic and non-Islamic aspects of state ideology and popular culture. Islam in India was marked by a pluralism of religious communities which passed on to the Mughal empire.

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

The Mughal regime and Indian culture

The Mughals completed the long struggle to create a centralized Indian empire. Founded by the victories of Babur, the empire was consolidated in the reign of his

grandson Akbar (1556–1605). Akbar expanded the empire from its original territories in Hindustan and the Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Bengal. In the north he took Kabul, Kashmir, Sind, and Baluchistan. The Deccan was absorbed in 1600. Not until the end of the seventeenth century did the empire expand further south and absorb Bijapur, Golconda, and other hitherto independent South Indian provinces. Nonetheless, large parts of India remained outside. Rajasthan remained in the hands of local Hindu lords, and East Central India was governed by tributary tribes. The imperial government was controlled by a military and political elite which was primarily made up of Afghan, Iranian, and Turkish lords and native Indian Muslims. While the ruling elite was officially Muslim, Hindus – mostly Rajputs and Marathas – formed about 20 percent of the Mughal aristocracy. The Hindus were important as subordinate military lords, administrative officials, financiers, merchants, and landowners. Hindu officials commonly shared the Persian cultural style of their Muslim counterparts.

From the Mughal point of view, the ruling elite was held together by the loyalty and service of subordinate lineages to the dominant Mughal lineage. Indian society was a condominium of noble lineages bound to the emperor by territorial or political concessions, family ties, and ceremonial and cultural style. The aristocratic lineages were called *biradari*, *jati*, or *qawm*. They in turn made their clients the supporters of the Mughal state. The aristocracy was thus defined in patrimonial as well as in Muslim terms.

This ruling elite was further organized according to the *mansabdar* system. This was a military hierarchy in which each office-holder had two ranks – a *zat* rank that defined his standing in the hierarchy and a *sawar* rank that defined the number of troops he was expected to bring to battle. The mansab officers were paid either in cash or by the grant of an estate called a *jagir*, which was the equivalent of a Middle Eastern *iqta'*. The jagirs were awarded to the military officers of the emperor, local princes, Rajputs, and tribal leaders. Each noble maintained an administration that included a military contingent, a financial and administrative staff, a household staff, a harem, and servants. The household of a noble imitated the household of the ruler. Mughal nobles also assumed responsibility for building mosques, bridges, and caravansaries and for patronizing scientific and literary activity.

About seven-eighths of the taxable land of the Mughal empire was distributed to military assignees and about one-eighth was reserved as the personal estate of the ruler. A major administrative problem was to set the assignment of territories and revenues in proportion to the military obligation of the assignees. Changes in local conditions required constant redistribution of land in order to maintain a realistic correspondence between rated values, actual income, and military obligation. Lords were transferred from one jagir to another to prevent them from acquiring a vested interest in a particular region.

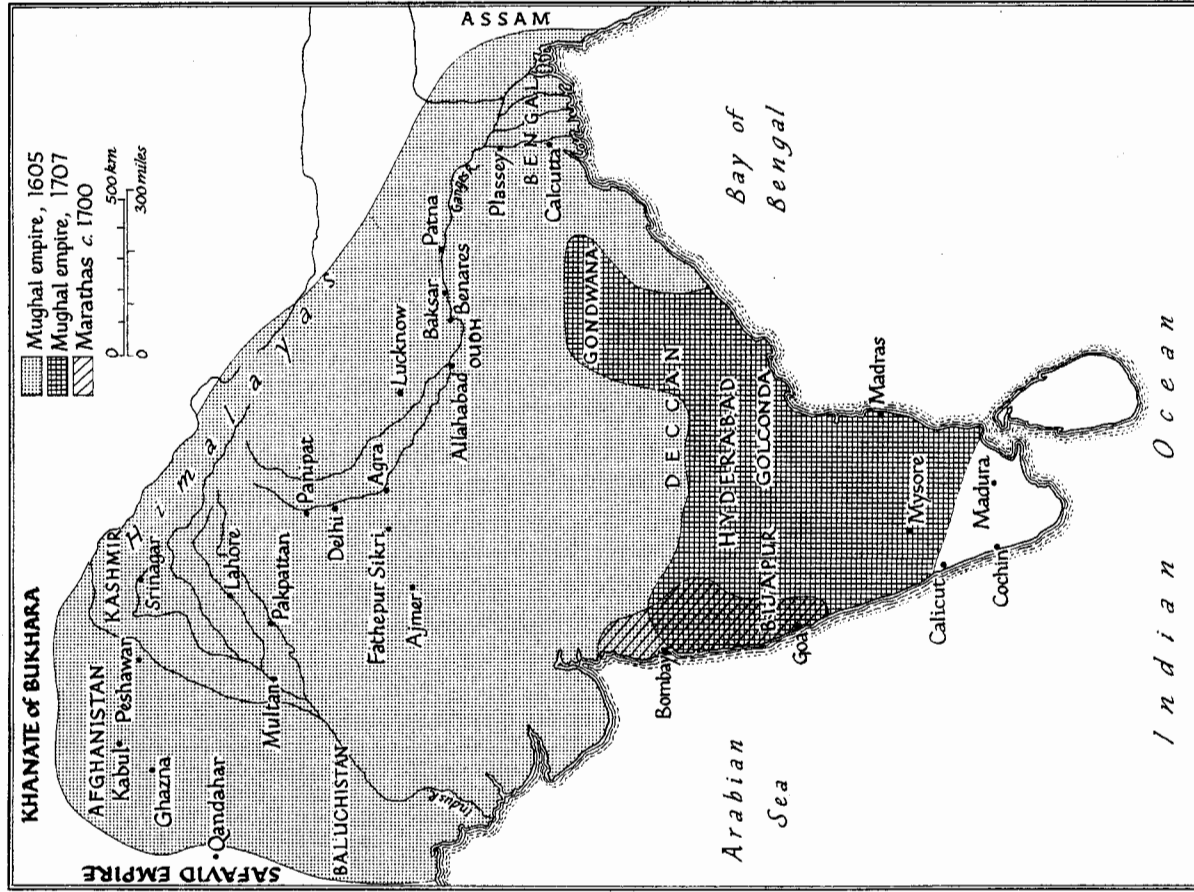
Beneath the level of the mansabdars there were numerous local chieftains. These included *zamindars*, or local notables, who had a claim to a portion of the land revenues by virtue of local conquests or caste dominance, but not, in principle,

proprietary rights over the land. Still, a local zamindar had a considerable advantage in the struggle to maintain his position. Every zamindar was backed by armed retainers, who helped him coerce the peasants and who protected his interests against central government intervention. His ability to dominate the peasantry and to mediate between them and the central government gave him a strong political and economic position. The zamindars, however, were subject to the authority of the emperor and could be expelled from office. Mughal rulers often tried to displace Rajput and other Hindu lords in favor of Muslim zamindars.

Beneath the level of the zamindars there were several classes. Money lenders and grain merchants, rich peasants, small peasant landowners, landless laborers and agricultural workers of various castes, and "untouchables" made up a structured society ranked by ritual purity. Each peasant village was headed by a local official, called the *muqaddam* or *patel*, whose position was likely to be hereditary, responsible to the authorities for payment of revenues and for the prevention of crimes. Peasants were guaranteed permanent and hereditary occupancy of the land, but they were also bound to it. In an age when land was abundant, people scarce, and peasants prone to flee to uninhabited regions, physical force had to be used to keep them in place. (This is just the reverse of modern conditions, where landlords dominate an excessive number of human beings by threatening to evict them.)

The system for the collection of taxes that applied to the central provinces of the empire, including Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Oudh, and Allahabad, went back to Sher Shah, was continued by Akbar, and lasted until the end of the seventeenth century. Taxation was administered according to the *zabt* system. A fixed fee was assessed for each unit of land and paid in cash. The rate of assessment was based on the value of the crop raised and the average yield of the previous ten years. The calculation of the value of the crop was adjusted from empire-wide norms to local prices and then to estimates of cash value. The amount actually collected was ordinarily half of the total crop. Everything that could be taxed without depriving the peasants of their subsistence and their capacity to produce another crop was taken. The actual collection of taxes was entrusted to the *jagirdar*, but local functionaries representing the central administration had an important part in the tax collection. At the sub-district level, the administration was represented by a *qanungo*, who kept accounts and who was supposed to supervise the agents of the jagirdar; and a *chaudhuri*, who collected funds from the zamindars.

Akbar also set the cultural style of the Mughal era on the basis of the combined legacy of Chaghatay Inner Asia (communicated through Babur) and the Delhi Sultanate. The Chaghatay heritage stressed the role of the ruler as a warrior lord and leader of jihad. Babur added to this the sedentary urban and Persian Islamic tradition which made the 'ulama' advisors, tutors, diplomats, and administrative servants of the Chaghatay ruler. The Delhi Sultanate contributed concepts of royal authority derived from the Persian monarchical tradition, and Islamic concepts of political responsibility. The Mughals went beyond the indirect appeals of the Delhi



Map 19 The Mughal empire: 1605-1707

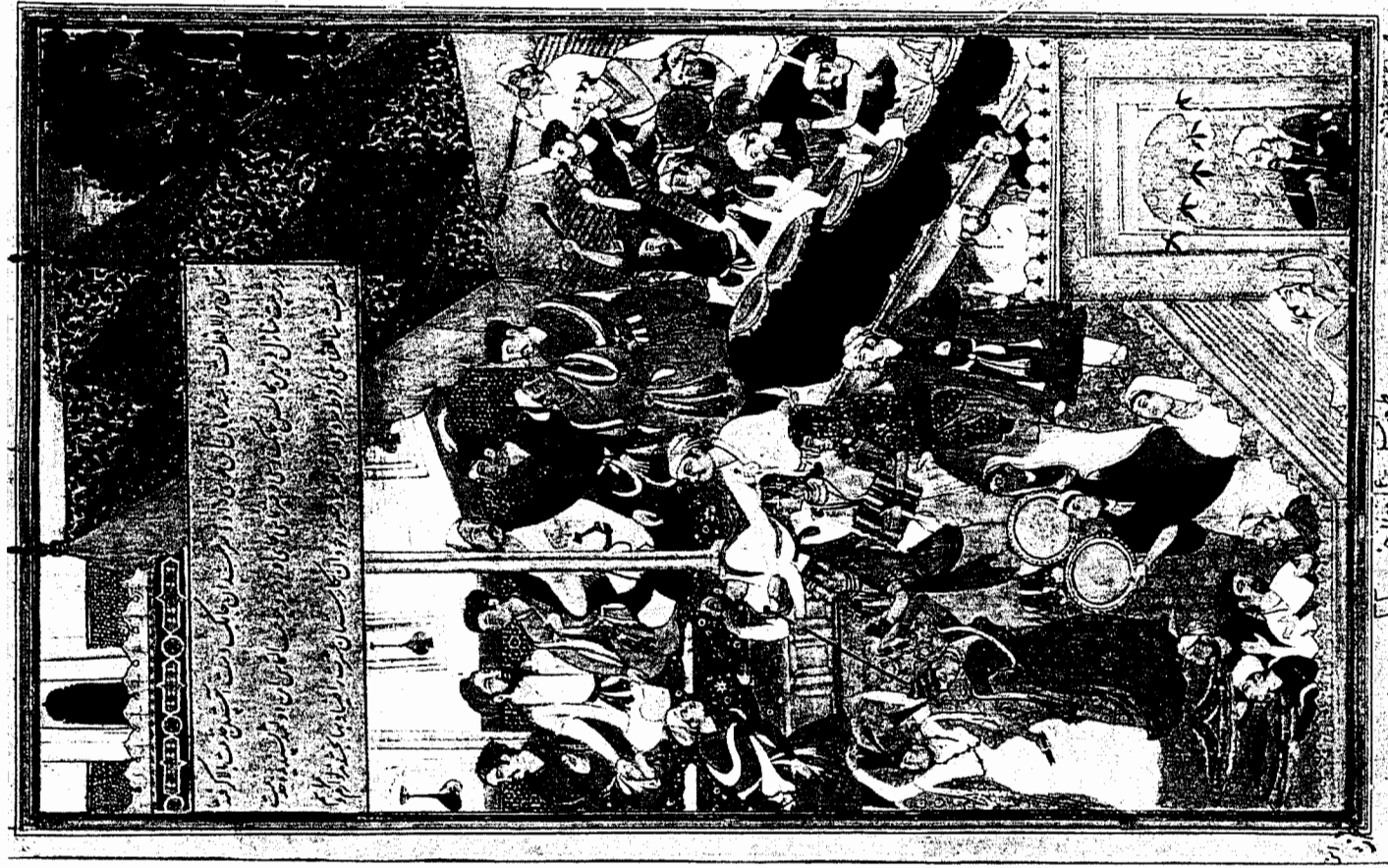
Sultanate to the non-Muslim elites and supported a cultural policy that was intended to create a cosmopolitan Indian-Islamic rather than an exclusively Muslim culture.

Akbar set the new pattern. While appealing to Muslim scholars by the endowment of madrasas and libraries, he also supported the Chisti order which was tolerant of syntheses between Hinduism and Islam, and started a state cult called Din-i Ilahi, or divine religion, with the emperor himself considered to be the Sufi master of a new religious order. The *Akbar-name* of Abu'l-Fazl 'Allami (1551–1602) is perhaps the best expression of the values of this reign. This book describes a court society in which the ruler is considered a philosopher-king, protector of all his subjects regardless of their religion, and a spiritual guide who brings reconciliation and love, and fosters well-being in the whole of his domain.

A broader cultural policy also sought to focus loyalty upon the ruler as the protector of a shared Hindu-Muslim elite culture in manners, dress, art, painting, architecture, poetry, and belles-lettres. The architectural style patronized by Akbar and exhibited in the major palace and fort complexes of Ameer, Agra, Allahabad, Lahore, and Fatehpur Sikri was based upon motifs drawn from both Muslim and Hindu architecture. The combination of these elements goes back to earlier Indian structures. Post and lintel construction was widely used in the domestic architecture of the Delhi Sultanate period. Serpentine brackets to support eaves, zoomorphic forms, bell-and-chain motifs, and other devices were all used in earlier mosques and palaces. Similarly, Hindu palaces and temples commonly used abstract geometric decorations and domed roofs which derived from the Muslim tradition. By the Delhi Sultanate period, Indian architecture had already assimilated diverse forms in ways that no longer retained a specifically sectarian implication. A style transcending religious and regional origins was already part of the vernacular of Indian architecture. Adopting this architectural style, Akbar fostered a common culture for a diverse elite.

Similarly, Indian painting was derived from Persian ways of figure drawing, illumination, and calligraphy, but it took on specifically Mughal qualities which emphasized line and form rather than color. While Mughal painting depicted court and hunting scenes, battles, animals, flowers, portraits, and other motifs of Persian art, it also drew inspiration from Hindu subjects and landscapes. Paintings were used to illustrate both Persian and Hindu literary works, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and were produced by artists of both religious backgrounds. Indian painting, like Indian architecture, was meant to transcend sectarian implications.

In the Mughal era the Muslim population remained a minority, but not all Muslims were part of the ruling elite. They did not constitute a single community, but belonged to different ethnic groups, lineages, classes of population, and even castes. Muslims, like Hindus, were often identified with kinship and specialized occupational groups, ordered in a hierarchy that gave the highest status to warriors from Afghanistan and Inner Asia and religious families descended from the Prophet or from Iranian and Arab scholars. The craftsmen and service people were of lower status.



17 The marriage of Akbar