

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Asar-ul-Sanadid*:
The Construction of History in Nineteenth-Century India

by

Fatima Quraishi
A.B., Brown University, 2006

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History in Art

© Fatima Quraishi, 2009
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Asar-ul-Sanadid*:
The Construction of History in Nineteenth-Century India

by

Fatima Quraishi
A.B., Brown University, 2006

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Anthony Welch, Department of History in Art
Supervisor

Dr. Marcus Milwright, Department of History in Art
Departmental Member

Dr. Harold Coward, Department of History
Outside Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Anthony Welch, Department of History in Art
Supervisor

Dr. Marcus Milwright, Department of History in Art
Departmental Member

Dr. Harold Coward, Department of History
Outside Member

In 1847, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) published an Urdu text, listing and describing all notable monuments of Delhi entitled *Asar-ul-Sanadid*. His work so impressed British scholars in Delhi that he was invited to join the Asiatic Society and write a second, improved edition for translation into English. Unfortunately the translation was never written. Sir Sayyid was one of many local Indian scholars producing architectural and archaeological histories of the Subcontinent in the nineteenth-century. Yet their names are generally unknown, and their research lost in obscurity. Early twentieth-century western scholarship paid them little attention and an image formed which saw nineteenth-century historiography only serving an Orientalist vision of Indian art and archaeology. It is only in recent decades that this belief has been contested, and new studies have included a greater variety of sources. This thesis attempts to do the same by presenting translated portions of the *Asar* and analysing it within the context of its production; pre-colonial Indian histories and contemporary Indian and British scholarship in order to form a more complete picture of nineteenth century historical discourse in India.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	v
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Methodology	9
Chapter 2: Pre-colonial Historiography in India.....	21
Chapter 3: <i>Asar-ul-Sanadid</i> : Translation	32
Chapter 4: Analysis of <i>Asar-ul-Sanadid</i>	53
Chapter 5: Contemporary Indian Historians	60
Chapter 6: Colonial British Views of India	72
Conclusion	103
Bibliography	107

List of Figures

Figure 1: William Daniell, "Kutnallee Gate, Gour", engraving from <i>The Oriental Annual</i> , 1835.....	88
Figure 2: Thomas & William Daniell, "The Water-fall at Puppanassum in the Tinnevelly District"	91
Figure 3: Thomas & William Daniell, "Hindu Temples at Agouree, on the River Soane, Bahar"	92
Figure 4: Thomas & William Daniell, "Jai Singh's Observatory, Delhi", 1790	93
Figure 5: Thomas & William Daniell, "The Jama Masjid, Delhi", 1797	94

Acknowledgments

The most important person in the process of writing this thesis has been Dr. Anthony Welch who suggested studying *Asar-ul-Sanadid* in the first place. He has been the best advisor a graduate student could wish for. My parents have been invaluable in getting this thesis done; my mother for pulling a veritable rabbit out of her hat by finding the copy of *Asar* that I now own and for lugging an extremely heavy dictionary halfway across the world, and my father for allowing me to ramble on about my research on many long-distance phone calls with every expression of interest on his part! Hannah who took the time to read sections and provided excellent critique of my writing.

I'd like to thank Dr. Milwright for diligently reading my work and providing very useful comments to strengthen my writing and my argument, Dr. Coward for his extremely speedy reading of my thesis and the comments he had and Dean Rippin for being on my committee. There is no part of graduate school without paperwork and red tape and I would have been lost without Debbie and Kezia to walk me through the various forms and deadlines.

Introduction

*The history of thought is not the whole of history, but there is no intelligible history without it.*¹

By the eighteenth-century, India had seen the rule of countless kings and queens of many ethnicities and religions.² Each successive ruler had changed her, building upon the land and enacting different laws, making their mark upon the vast Subcontinent. Thus, the India that the East India Company and the British Empire acquired was a diverse nation of great complexity. In reading accounts about Indian history from the nineteenth century, penned by local Indians and by the British, this complexity is well illustrated. Their accounts, for all their similarities, show a striking array of opinions and interpretations. This diversity stems both from the immense, perhaps impossible, task of ‘explaining’ India and also from the varying backgrounds of the authors who wrote these texts.

Despite the existence of such variance, Indian history has been dogged, till recently, by a myopic interpretation in Western scholarship. Arguably, the primary causative agent for this narrow approach has been the persistence of an Orientalist perspective of the East, which denied the inclusion of histories going against Western norms. Nineteenth-century British scholarship about the Subcontinent, combined with the powerful position of colonial masters, allowed the British to establish firmly a narrative of Indian history over other, competing narratives. There is no denying the importance of

¹ Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing, London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1966, p. 131.

² It is important to note the nebulous nature of the words ‘India’ and ‘Subcontinent’, which refer to a broad geographical region of continuously shifting borders and territories. Every period of history has a subtly different ‘India’, although this difference is rarely explicated in histories. For this discussion, it is useful to refer to Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot who discuss India as a region and an idea: Catherine Asher & Cynthia Talbot, India before Europe, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 5-9.

power in the construction of this discourse: “Genealogy insists that knowledge and power are implicated in each other; it shows how knowledge not only is a product of power but also is itself a non neutral form of power.”³ The accounts that the British produced, with their emphasis on codifying the Indian past into neatly definable boxes of information, exemplify the deliberative role taken by scholars and their imperialist background.

This narrative, however, denies the richness of scholarship that actually existed in the colonial period, where India was dissected thoroughly by all manner of people. A particularly important group of writers that have been mostly left out of discussions of nineteenth-century historiography have been native Indian scholars. Their contributions, especially in the field of art history and archaeology, were invaluable. This thesis focuses on analysing the work of one such person, the esteemed Muslim academic, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), and his text on Delhi architectural history, *Asar-ul-Sanadid*, in the context of various texts produced in the same time period. The inclusion of a variety of primary sources allows for a broader picture of the study of Indian art history during the nineteenth century, and advocates the important role of local historians in developing the field. Additionally, differences in various sources identify sites of contestation, where accounts are tempered by differing opinions and agendas. These sites are crucial in constructing a nuanced history of studying India in the nineteenth century.

Since the *Asar* is primarily an art historical text, the comparative sources are also analysed for their examinations of visual culture. I have used art historical and archaeological texts where possible and, in broader texts, focused my analysis on

³ Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan, “Introduction” in Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993, p. 4.

presentations of the visual within these accounts.⁴ Moreover, art history and archaeology play an important role in nineteenth-century constructions of the Indian past. Catherine Asher and Thomas Metcalf describe this role: "...essential to assess the visual in conjunction with the textual, for together they helped shape understandings of the Subcontinent's past from pre-historic times through the twentieth century."⁵

Donald Preziosi has also examined the use of art objects as historical documents, seeing in them two roles; firstly, as providing evidence for the character of the age/nation/mentality being investigated, and secondly, as a result of its historical milieu which has to be understood within "a concomitant understanding of its circumstances of production...the entire set of historical, social, political, economic, philosophical, or religious forces in play at a given time in a particular place."⁶ This dual function is an important consideration for this thesis, which uses primary sources in the same manner as art objects, that is, both generating discourse and also being generated *because of* discourse. This analysis is divided into the following sections:

Methodology: Before any discussion can be started about the sources, however, it is necessary to formulate a theoretical framework upon which to base any analysis. There are three particular theorists whose work bears greatly upon an examination of this subject: Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. Foucault's work is crucial to define power, discourse, and truth and their interconnectedness. Foucault's other

⁴ Although there are differences between the fields of art history and archaeology today, in this thesis I will be using the terms interchangeably, given their close resemblance to one another in nineteenth-century examinations of the Indian past.

⁵ Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf, "Preface" in Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past, Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf (ed.), New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1994, p. vii.

⁶ Donald Preziosi, "Seeing through Art History" in Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993, p. 215.

contribution to this analysis is his discussion of the archaeology and history of ideas and intellectual activity. No examination of colonialism and its effects can be complete without Said's work on Orientalism, which defines both the term, and its place in imperial ideologies. Lastly, Homi Bhabha combines the work of these two scholars and other theorists to analyse further articulations of difference and cultural knowledge.⁷

Pre-colonial Historiography of India: Sir Sayyid's text relies on various histories of India written prior to the colonial period for information. These texts are primarily political histories, written during the reigns of Muslim rulers and often as official court histories. They represent a rich tradition of history writing in the Muslim world, where history was seen as an integral support to the Muslim conception of world order:

...the purpose of Indo-Muslim histories was utilitarian in the sense that they aimed to teach true religion by historical example, some to preserve a record of great deeds for the edification of succeeding generations of Muslims, some to glorify the history of Islam in Hindustan, some to praise a particular ruler or a line of rulers, and some to do all these.⁸

This element of propaganda is a continuous theme in Indo-Muslim histories with older histories serving as templates for later ones. Thus, I have chosen to present two examples of medieval history as illustrative of Indian historiography: the works of Ziauddin Barani and Shamsuddin Afif. These accounts provide some contextual background for Sir Sayyid whose education would have given him a thorough grounding in these texts.

⁷ Undoubtedly, there are other theorists who have also contributed to these ideas, but such an extended theoretical discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis, and will negate the primacy accorded to a direct examination of texts. I am of the opinion that this triumvirate represents very well the major points of the theoretical frame being constructed and also, notably, represent the continued development of these theories over the last few decades.

⁸ A.L. Basham, R.N. Dandekar, Peter Hardy. V. Raghavan & Royal Weiler, Sources of Indian Tradition: Volume I, Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1958, p. 512.

Asar-ul-Sanadid—Translation & Analysis: *Asar* is the first book written by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, published in 1847 shortly after he moved to Delhi.⁹ Written in Urdu, the book has never been translated fully into English.¹⁰ I have translated a few sections of the text: (i) [Introduction to] the building of forts and cities of Delhi, (ii) Ashoka's Pillar, (iii) Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, (iv) Qutb Minar, (v) Jahan Numaya Mosque (Friday Mosque of Delhi), and (vi) Jantar Mantar (Observatory). These sections were chosen because they are some of the longest descriptions within the text, providing adequate depth for analysis. This translation attempts to faithfully reproduce Sir Sayyid's text in terms of the information *and* the tone of his writing to provide as clear a reading of the original document as possible and to demonstrate the formidable difficulties in producing a full and accurate translation. Following this is a brief analysis of the document, using the translated portions and also making references, where necessary, to the remaining text.

Contemporary Indian Historians: To place the *Asar* fully within its context, it is worthwhile to study a few other local Indian historians also writing in the nineteenth century. I have chosen two historians; Ram Raz (? 1790-1833/4) and Rajendralal Mitra

⁹ Altaf Husain Hali, Hayat-i-Javed, David J. Matthews (trans.), Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1994, p. 48. This was the first edition; a second edition was published in 1854. Christian Troll additionally lists a 3rd and 4th edition published in 1876 (Lucknow: Newal Kishore Press) and 1904 (Cawnpore: The Nami Press) respectively, which are not significantly different from the earlier editions, as well as two reprints; Khalid Nasir Hashmi (ed.), New Delhi: Central Book Depot, 1965 and Dr. S. Moinul Haq (ed.), Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1966. C.W. Troll, "A Note on the early topographical work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: *Asar al-Sanadid*" in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1972: No. 2, footnote no. 6, pp. 136-7. To my knowledge, there has been only one other reprint of the text, a three-volume text with extended commentary: Khaliq Anjum (ed.), New Delhi: National Council for the Advancement of the Urdu Language, Govt. of India, 2003. This latest edition is the one I have used for translation.

¹⁰ There is an abridged translation of the text in English by R. Nath but he does not provide a literal translation of Sir Sayyid's text, correcting any inaccurate information in the original text. Furthermore the translations primarily focus on the Islamic architecture described by Sir Sayyid, only referring to other monuments (e.g. the Ashokan pillar, the Observatory) in appendices. R. Nath, Monuments of Delhi: Historical Study, New Delhi: Ambika, 1979. A French translation of chapters 2 and 3 of the second edition was written as a series of articles in the nineteenth century: J.H. Garcin de Tassy, "Description des monuments de Delhi en 1852, d'après le texte Hindoustani de Saiyid Ahmad Khan", Journal Asiatique, Vol. XV, 1860, pp. 508-36; Vol. XVI, 1860, pp. 190-254, 392-451, 521-43; XVIII, 1861, pp. 77-97.

(1822-1891) who were both involved in examining the Indian past, particularly in terms of art history, in the mid-nineteenth century. They are similar to Sir Sayyid in their links to the British/East India Company administration and their academic societies. The major difference between these scholars and Sir Sayyid is one of religion; he is Muslim, whereas Raz and Mitra are Hindu. This difference adds a further layer to the analysis conducted in this thesis.¹¹ Rather than applying a simplistic dichotomy of the local versus the foreigner or, as it is often characterised, the West vs. the Other, it is important to see greater variations of analysis in these histories where differing backgrounds produced differing agendas.

Colonial British Views of India: The British provide the final piece to complete the picture of nineteenth-century Indian historiography. They are the most prolific group of scholars writing about India in this period, studying every angle of Indian society, and producing a vast corpus of source material. This collection of ‘factual’ information was an integral part of the Victorian era’s emphasis on the scientific: “Crucial to the development of art history as a systematic, even scientific historical discipline in the nineteenth century was the fabrication of a central data mass... within which every possible object of study *might find its place* and locus relative to all others.”¹² This basic data collection aside, their analysis of material evidence betrays a deep-seated world-view which never called into question the vision of India as a nation “lost in the past, whose people were shaped by the heat of their climate, the distinctive character of their

¹¹ Another difference between these three gentlemen worth noting is the different locations in which they resided; Sir Sayyid lived in Delhi (Northern India), Raz in Bangalore (Southern India), and Mitra in Bengal (Eastern India). This variance is significant, especially in terms of colonial politics, but a detailed analysis on this level beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹² Donald Preziosi, “Seeing through Art History”, 1993, p. 220.

religion, and the immemorial antiquity of their social institutions.”¹³ This basic premise was to be repeated in the varying genres of text the British produced about India. The texts can be roughly divided into the two categories of ‘academic’ and ‘popular’ texts. The former took the form of journal articles and specialised texts, whereas the latter tended to be travellers’ accounts of the region. The two scholars presented in this examination are James Fergusson (1808/9-1886) and Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), perhaps the most important art historians studying India in the mid-nineteenth century. Cunningham is also a crucial figure in the eventual institutionalisation of Indian history through the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India. The prevailing British notions of Indian history were certainly informed by these academics but popular texts and print books also played a key role in disseminating information. For this purpose, I have chosen to analyse the images of India produced by Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) and William Daniell (1769-1837) and the journals of Fanny Parkes (1794-1875) and Emily Metcalf (1850-19??).

The scope of this project does not allow for a larger body of primary sources to be discussed; I have attempted to select a group of texts that sufficiently illustrate the scope of scholarship during the nineteenth century. The current examination attempts to add further complexity towards the reading of Indian art. G.H.R. Tillotson points out that early attempts to codify and explain Indian art are now heavily contested and subject to critical deconstruction. There is a concerted effort to rewrite Indian history, seeking new models, which acknowledge the existence of multiple interpretations and include indigenous approaches and aesthetics:

¹³ Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 27.

Complex in themselves, both parts of this project are being undertaken at a time when the wider field of the humanities has been, to say the least, destabilised by recent developments in cultural theory—notably the advancement of ideas about the relationship between objects and ‘discourses’ about them—which challenges the status of any text which purports to offer an explicatory guide to events or artefacts of the past.¹⁴

It has been over a decade since Tillotson wrote this but the process is still continuing.

The nineteenth century saw the British subjugate the Indian past with their conviction of Western superiority but it is unfair to see them as the only biased participants within the story of Indian history. Indeed, all historians work within an accepted set of ‘knowledges’ and ‘truths’ that affect their analysis. I am aware of my own position writing this thesis, as I work with the current theoretical discourse. Historical writing is always subject to revision through critical analysis, which accepts the absence of an unwavering ‘truth’.

¹⁴ G.H.R. Tillotson, “Introduction” in Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 1.

Chapter 1: Methodology

The methodology employed to study the sources in this thesis is framed in the work of three theorists, who each discuss the constructed nature of discipline and culture. Their work transcends disciplinary boundaries and problematizes simplistic views of society and knowledge generation. Michel Foucault does this through his notions of discourse and power, seeing them as inherently linked. Edward Said ties discourse in with imperialism, examining the colonial agenda of the nineteenth century that he calls 'Orientalism'. Lastly, Homi Bhabha combines the two theoretical projects of Said and Foucault, adding further complexity to the study of nineteenth-century discourse.

Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault's theories have left an indelible mark upon intellectual culture, touching upon a variety of disciplines where questions of power, knowledge and discourse are integral elements of study. He critiques the established norms that govern these elements and sees their interconnectedness. His work on the history of thought and the interdisciplinary nature of these examinations are emulated in the current analysis. I will present Foucault's concepts of power, truth, discourse, and archaeology in this section.

Power is not a simplistic construct of a person/group holding authority over another, nor is it something that can continue existence as a one-sided force. Foucault argues that there are positivistic notions implied in power, which come from an acceptance, conscious or otherwise, of this hold: "It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a

negative instance whose function is repression.”¹⁵ This productive component of power can be seen in the creation of vast administrations in the nineteenth century, like the British Raj, which allowed power to circulate and be harnessed by a larger social body. Furthermore, by including ideology as a component of power, Foucault opens it up to being generated outside of the state apparatus. Seeing power as dependent upon the state is reductive because of its limitations where power is homogenously considered at any level, and can only be thought of in negative terms of repression and transgression, a discourse of prohibition.¹⁶ Rather, power exists in a series of networks that inhabit the body; the family, kinships, knowledge, and technology.¹⁷ Of course, he does acknowledge a ‘meta-power’, which is essentially structured around prohibition and negative forms of power, but this superstructure does not detract from underlying productive power relations.

This discussion of power leads into one of ‘truth’, which is created within power relations and is, hence, imbued with power. Thus, truth is a non-neutral element of society and can exist in multiple contradictory forms because different groups articulate different versions of the truth:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.¹⁸

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & other writings, 1972-77, Colin Gordon (ed.), Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham & Kate Soper (trans.), New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, p. 119.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 1980, pp. 139-40.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 1980, p. 122.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 1980, p. 131.

There is, thus, a deliberative aspect to the construction of ‘truth’ and ‘fact’. Foucault sees truth as a process where certain statements are produced and circulated, authorised by systems of power.¹⁹ The production of grouped truths can best be understood as the formation of discourse. Foucault sees discourse as forming in a space of semi-silence: “Discourse and system produce each other—and conjointly—only at the crest of this immense reserve.”²⁰ What is created from these points is related as much to what it *doesn’t* say as it is to the produced statement because it denies the non-statements. Moreover, discourse is necessarily finite and limited to its subject and accepted statements about it.²¹ It is a complex practice governed by analysable rules and transformations.²²

Foucault applies his definitions of these broad concepts to studying history, which he divides into two separate components: the archaeology of intellectualism, and the history of ideas. He makes a strict delineation between the two and sees them as separate entities. The latter is “the analysis of opinions rather than of knowledge, of errors rather than of truth, of types of mentality rather than of forms of thought.”²³ On the other hand, he describes archaeology as having four basic principles: (i) it does not focus on the opinions that are revealed within discourse, rather it defines what the discourse *is*, what its formulation is, and what rules it observes; (ii) archaeology does not seek linkages between discourse, it looks to find the discontinuities, the points of fracture that lead to specific discourses; (iii) it is not concerned with any creative aspect of discourse, not

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 1980, p. 133.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, A.M. Sheridan Smith (trans.), London: Tavistock Publications, 1972, p. 76.

²¹ Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1972, p. 27 & 49.

²² Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1972, p. 211.

²³ Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1972, p. 137.

seeking the psychology and sociology of the statements; (iv) it is not involved in a project of restoration, trying to recreate through a deepened understanding of the discourse, instead it rewrites the discourse in a controlled systematic description.²⁴

These various concepts all play a role in nineteenth-century historiography. The various categories of authors discussed all embody a particular discourse, each a social body that inhabits a particular truth and they are all connected in a power relation, where information is produced and contested as it circulates. Not only do they exist within a discourse, but they also produce the discourse in their writings, which for the most part resembles archaeology as defined by Foucault. It is important to note that most of these writers are considered intellectuals, and thus implicated as impartial observers, as Foucault himself describes: “To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all.”²⁵ There is, however, a politicisation of intellectuals, where they are subsumed into a greater body politic of particular opinions and discourses, and they cannot function as the universal figures they are imagined to be, as shall be demonstrated within this thesis.

Edward Said

Perhaps the most pertinent theoretical text to examining nineteenth-century colonial perspectives on the Subcontinent is Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*.²⁶ This section will attempt to define the term, including its development into a discipline, the relevance of such a concept in its historical context, and particularly to nineteenth-

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1972, pp. 138-40.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 1980, p. 126.

²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Said’s text focuses on what he calls the Islamic Orient (see pp. 25-28) for elucidating the subject, but the concept is applicable to a much larger geography and ethnography than simply the Middle and Near East. Later portions of this section explain the relevance of Orientalism to India.

century studies of Indian art history. I will also briefly outline my own use of the term within this thesis.²⁷

Orientalism is an enduring socio-political trope that emerged in the late eighteenth century which manifested itself in Western scholarship and thought as a means not only of defining the Orient (which is diametrically opposed to the Occident) but also, through these definitions, of controlling it: "...dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it..."²⁸ It is safe to say that this view of the Orient represented an unreal, abstract notion developed through prevailing beliefs in Europe that were not changed significantly by contact with the 'real' Orient, being tied in more closely with Western notions of self and the corresponding Other, its putative object.²⁹ Moreover, these notions were not just political manifestations that were developed as part of the colonial agenda; rather they existed prior to and, in fact, aided the development of Western imperialism. Thus, the variety of aesthetic, academic, economic, historical, and sociological texts that were produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both created and maintained Orientalist views.³⁰ Such a discourse, Said contends, is part of an exchange with various kinds of powers that include political power, and cultural and intellectual power, that must see the West as superior on all fronts.³¹

²⁷ This section presents Said's work without critique; however, I am aware of the flaws that are inherent in his writing. Said has a tendency to generalize, lumping together many different Orientalists into a seemingly cohesive unit and tars them equally with his critique. Following the publication of *Orientalism*, a number of scholars have reinterpreted and re-evaluated the term to define it with greater nuance. See: Alexander Lyon Macfie (ed.), *Orientalism: A Reader*, New York: New York University Press, 2000 & Chandreyee Niyogi (ed.) *Reorienting Orientalism*, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks (CA)/London: Sage Publications, 2006.

²⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 3.

²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 22.

³⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 12.

³¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 12.

The political power, of course, was seen in the establishment of European colonies in much of the Orient, effectively subjugating the Oriental. Intellectual and cultural power was achieved by the collection of knowledge/data on the subject, i.e. the Orient(al), and a growing body of literature produced by poets, novelists, travellers, and translators, all of which were used to evidence/reiterate Western superiority.³² These methods of seeing and judging effectively contained the Orient into specific frameworks (“the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation”³³) that gave no agency to the Oriental to change or contradict the paradigm within which they existed.

What was the point of such a discourse? As previously mentioned there is a measure of control the West achieved over the Orient by containing it within these carefully delineated tropes. The foreign-ness of the Orient represented a threat to established norms in Europe, and the neutralisation of such a threat was to limit the Otherness of these exotic lands and peoples into a set of particular images and descriptors that constricted their difference into known terms and ideas, and, hence, made them less fearsome to Western audiences: “To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West.”³⁴

The continued development of this discourse had the effect that Orientalism went beyond being simply a way of dealing with the Orient, to become a subject of study, a discipline. While it is true that all fields of study are constructed and imply a position of the ‘expert’ in a particular mode of viewing, Orientalism is unique in being based upon

³² Edward Said, Orientalism, 1978, p. 40.

³³ Edward Said, Orientalism, 1978, p. 58.

³⁴ Edward Said, Orientalism, 1978, p. 67.

an amorphous geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit called the Orient.³⁵ There is no particular coherence to such a field, and the term ‘Orientalist’ is almost meaningless in what it tells us about a scholar. There is no set definition of such a person similar to there being no set criteria for describing the Orient. What is consistent about Orientalists in the nineteenth-century is their methodology for approaching the subject, what Said calls “the insensitive schematization of the entire Orient.”³⁶

The relevance of this discussion to India and Indian history lies in this very categorisation. The Subcontinent is divided into discrete units, which have distinct histories and characteristics, the attendant explanation and understanding of which can only be realised by the West. These paradigms created by the Western scholar have a tendency to move towards a finite story, one where the subject has already achieved an ‘end’ or is nearing it. Said uses the example of Egypt and Arthur James Balfour, who sees Egyptian civilisation as having entered into a period of decline, and sees the British as the necessary saviours of Egyptian knowledge and culture: “British knowledge of Egypt *is* Egypt for Balfour... [he] nowhere denies British superiority and Egyptian inferiority; he takes them for granted...”³⁷ The same attitude can be attributed to the British in India; the government as well as private individuals are implicated in this. There is an acceptance of past glories of the Orient, but only so long as the glory remains a distant memory and that only the West can save Oriental nations from “the wretchedness of their decline.”³⁸

Western constructs of Indian history, thus, play a very significant role within Orientalism and the political realities of the nineteenth-century. Arguably, Indian art

³⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 58.

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 68.

³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 32.

³⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 35.

history functions the same way; it is not entirely disconnected from political knowledge because the viewpoints contained within affect the attitude of the British Raj and its citizenry. Additionally, it is important to accept that the scholar writing these histories is not working in a vacuum; not only is he subconsciously accepting of Orientalism, but also is actively cognisant of the status of Oriental nations as colonies: “all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact [of colonisation].”³⁹

The authority that comes with this constructed narrative is so pervasive that the knowledge contained within becomes normative, and accepted into wider circles as ‘truth’, and gains legitimacy as a discipline through institutionalisation in the form of learned societies such as the Royal Asiatic Society, the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft and the publication of periodicals, e.g. *Asiatick Researches in India*.⁴⁰ In this process, the divisions of Orientalism, the polarisation between the Occident and the Orient become further entrenched through the intellectual authority that the West wields. The Orientalist does not unseat commonly accepted ideas about the Orient to his audience; he simply confirms them in a system that is self-reinforcing rather than self-critical.

The sources examined in this thesis, particularly the British primary sources, will be examined for their employment of Orientalism within their arguments about the Indian past and present. I am aware that analysing a limited number of texts places any conclusions in the precarious position of being sweeping generalisations. I would argue, however, that the influential nature of the texts and authors being considered allows a

³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 43.

degree of latitude in conclusions reached. Furthermore, I agree with Said that individual texts and authors are significant within Orientalism, which affirms itself through the cyclical reliance of knowledge among authors within the trope, something that will be amply demonstrated by the primary sources.⁴¹

Homi Bhabha

Of the three theorists discussed in this chapter, Homi Bhabha is the most recent. His work references both Foucault and Said, critically elaborating upon their analysis in the realm of culture and identity. Of primary interest to this paper is his examination of discourse during the colonial period and the forces that influenced it as well as how discourse is approached and grappled with by Self and Other.

Bhabha identifies the polarity of Occident and Orient in the nineteenth century, which were created as a result of exclusionary imperialist ideologies.⁴² He talks about the social articulation of difference as a complicated process, producing cultural hybridities that are negotiated at moments of historical transformation. The minority perspective, which exists at the periphery of power, challenges tradition to create these changes.⁴³ By doing so, he immediately recognizes active participation of minority voices. He also transcends the presentation of discourses into the rhetoric of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, instead suggesting that they need to be examined for “the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.”⁴⁴

Bhabha specifically addresses the British colonisation of India and the stereotyping of subjects that their discourse enforced upon Indians. Their rhetoric, he

⁴¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 23.

⁴² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London/New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 19.

⁴³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 67.

notes, creates a colonised population that is simultaneously the Other and also entirely knowable and visible.⁴⁵ This manipulation of the subject nation is a fetishised creation, which plays up particular characteristics of difference while, paradoxically, also finding points of sameness. This vacillation of the colonial perception is based as much upon “mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it.”⁴⁶ This discourse is employed to create administrative apparatus to both control and change (i.e. civilise) the stereotype.

The stereotypical object is fixed but this fixity is predicated upon three points of knowledge: body, race, and ancestors. The image created is not a false image meant to fulfil an imperialist agenda; in fact, Bhabha considers it a much more ambivalent text which continuously contradicts itself through metaphoric and metonymic strategies.⁴⁷ Furthermore, this codification is, in a sense, empty because it lacks an identity relying upon a refrain of ‘known’ qualities (e.g. the Indian is lazy). This absence leaves in its wake “a silence that turns imperial triumphalism into the testimony of colonial confusion.”⁴⁸ This confusion is expected; the object discussed is so mired in fantasy and paradox that it cannot be ‘understood.’

If we are to examine carefully the paradox of the stereotype, then the discourse can be divided into two streams of thought; the articulation of otherness, and the mimicry of the subject. If we take the example of the British Raj, the latter component seeks to reform the colonised nation through intellectual and moral education, so that they are

⁴⁵ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, pp. 70-1.

⁴⁶ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 75.

⁴⁷ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 123.

imbued with Western values. There is a continued understanding, however, that this reform will not wholly transform the colonial subject into the image of the West; in fact, the Anglicised is emphatically not to be English.⁴⁹ Mimicry is then subjugated to being a “cross-classificatory, discriminatory knowledge within an interdictory discourse” distancing itself from considering reality in its vision, replacing reality with a product of desire.⁵⁰ Reality, however, does intrude because of the subject’s resistance to conform to the colonial characterisation by not ‘confessing’ the ‘truth’ resulting in colonial frustration and confusion. This does not prevent the stereotypes’ persistence, which incorporates enough of the real object that while its integrity may be questioned, its existence is not.⁵¹

The colonial agenda is mired in seeing dependencies as territories and not recognising indigenous population as ‘people’. Their emphasis is focused upon possessions and national pride of this largesse and, as a consequence, requires the colonial subject to be controlled. India is configured in this strategy in an endless cycle of past-present. Bhabha calls this aspect of the colonial configuration “a monocausal system that relates all differences and discourses to the absolute, undivided, boundless body of the despot.”⁵² The image of India and the Indian as fixed, fetishised objects is a self-fulfilling prophecy for Western superiority and progress.

*...knowledge does not grow naturally but is selectively produced to realize socially defined goals.*⁵³

⁴⁹ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, pp. 90-1.

⁵¹ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 138.

⁵² Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994, p. 98.

⁵³ Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan, “Introduction”, 1993, p. 7.

The combination of the three theorists presented in this chapter represents the methodological approach of the thesis. The sources examined in this thesis highlight the place of multiple discourses in the nineteenth century. By configuring the various texts into a network of power relations, we can see the movement of discourse, from its production to its influence upon peripheral perspectives. This activity identifies the knowledges that come to persist within the imagination and their takeover of an entire social body. Within this project, one can also examine the colonial manipulation, conscious or otherwise, of authority to produce a fantastical object that circulates freely in the nineteenth century. Ronald Inden states: “[Imperial knowledges] are the universalising discourses, the world-constituting cosmologies, ontologies, and epistemologies, produced in those complex polities at their upper reaches by those persons and institutions who claim to speak with authority.”⁵⁴ This is the project of Orientalism, which is tempered by the presence of other voices and which the following chapters will examine to begin recreating these linkages and the contestation of authority.

⁵⁴ Ronald Inden, Imagining India, Oxford, UK/Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 36.

Chapter 2: Pre-colonial Historiography in India

Prior to the European interest in Indian history and the active efforts of various individuals in deciphering the Indian past in the late eighteenth century, there seems to have been little interest in documenting the history of the Subcontinent. This is particularly true for Indian history prior to the Muslim conquests of Delhi and northern India. There are no known histories from this earlier period, except the eleventh-century Kashmiri scholar Kalhana, whom Sourindranath Roy credits as being: "...a man of genius and considerable critical ability, who seems to have understood, however imperfectly, the value to historical reconstruction of the material remains of bygone ages."⁵⁵ Kalhana's diligence resulted in his masterpiece, the *Rajatarangi*. R.C. Majumdar also lauds Kalhana's understanding of the principles of modern historiography, citing his critical use of sources, and his acceptance of bias in historical accounts.⁵⁶ This spirit did not extend to most other Indian scholars prior to the nineteenth century and what is known about the period was gleaned primarily through other literary sources; epics like the *Mahabharata*, technical treatises like the *Silpa Sastras*, and fictional literature. The British, when they arrived in India, had identified the *Puranas* as the locus of Indian national memory but were disappointed in the meagre information they provided.⁵⁷ These cobbled together sources formed the pre-colonial accounts of ancient Indian history and, hence, were often made up of myths and legends.

⁵⁵ Sourindranath Roy, The Story of Indian Archaeology, 1784-1947, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1961, p. 4.

⁵⁶ R.C. Majumdar, Historiography in Modern India, London: Asia Publishing House, 1970, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Thomas R. Trautmann & Carla M. Sinopoli, "In the Beginning was the Word: Excavating the relations between history and archaeology in South Asia" in Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2002, p. 496.

The Muslim presence in India altered Indian historiography through the writing of official histories, but only so far as to provide contemporary accounts of that period.⁵⁸ The past remained shrouded in a veil of mysteries and folklore. Medieval Indo-Muslims were not interested in learning about the civilizations that preceded them. These histories were not about the past; they were concerned with the present [for the historian writing them]. They do show greater concern for accuracy in reporting chronology and geography, as well as attempting to legitimate their sources but, ultimately, these texts are not concerned with a holistic history of India. They focus their attention upon Muslims, whom they regard as being the only worthy subjects of a history, creating a separation between Muslims and Hindus not just ideologically but also historically.⁵⁹ Moreover, medieval Indo-Muslim histories are fundamentally focused upon the emperor and his actions: “But sultans, *wazirs*, *amirs*, soldiers and saints so completely fill the foreground of these works that the spectator not only cannot see the background, but is left unaware that a background exists.”⁶⁰

By the colonial period, this manner of historiography was the prevalent mode in India, having been regurgitated throughout the Mughal period. All local scholars were educated using these texts and were primed in this methodology of approaching history. The presence of the British and their institutions (e.g. the societies) for studying India had begun making an impact, but the hold of these Islamic histories continued as they were

⁵⁸ It is no accidental omission that there is no discussion of Hindu historians after Kalhana till the nineteenth-century, for they seem to be nonexistent. Roy’s text briefly mentions this: “The advent of the Islamic Oikumene had meant for him [the contemporary Hindu intellectual] an almost complete break with his past. What fragmentary knowledge he used to have of it he had completely forgotten, and he had quietly replaced it by a fanciful reconstruction lavishly embellished with legends and myths.” Sourindranath Roy, The Story of Indian Archaeology, 1961, p. 6.

⁵⁹ A.L. Basham et. al., Sources of Indian Tradition, 1958, p. 513. For more on Muslim historiography, see: Franz Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968.

⁶⁰ Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 1966, p. 111.

the primary written sources for the period in question. Thus, any history written had to rely on them and be shaped by them. The *Asar-ul-Sanadid* is no exception, gaining most of its data from these types of texts. As a prologue to discussing Sir Sayyid's text, then, it seems useful to describe briefly two histories that are frequently cited in the *Asar*: the *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi* (completed 1357) by Ziauddin Barani, and the *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi* (completed 1370) by Shamsuddin Afif.^{61,62}

Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi of Ziauddin Barani

The title of Ziauddin Barani's text implies that it is a history of the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah (r. 1351-1388), when in fact the narrative begins with the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban (r. 1266-86) and ends with Firoz Shah. It is primarily a political history of the Deccan sultanate, recounting the reigns of eight kings from the mid-thirteenth century to the mid-fourteenth century.⁶³ It is worth noting that there were other rulers who, briefly, took rule during this period, but Barani considers them interlopers, not legitimate rulers. Hence, he accords them no official recognition beyond brief mentions of the 'disruption' of rule.

There are a few points worth mentioning regarding the general construction of this text. First of all, the work is recognised by the author himself as a history text, something that is repeated within the text, especially at moments of transition between

⁶¹ Despite sharing the title, the two texts differ widely in subject and style. Sir Sayyid tends to use these and *Firishtha's* history most frequently and only occasionally refers to Mughal histories, particularly the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. I chose pre-Mughal texts in this section for this reason, and because they are the original sources/influences for the writing of Mughal histories.

⁶² It is also important to note that the translations I have relied upon are only partial translations. H.M. Elliot's series, *The History of India: as told by its own historians*, abbreviates the text omitting "all trivial and uninteresting passages". (Barani trans., p. 5) Complete versions of the texts may have information that would add to the commentary in this chapter.

⁶³ The following kings are included: Ghiyasuddin Balban, M'uizzuddin Kaikubad, Jalaluddin Khilji, 'Alauddin Khilji, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, Muhammad Shah Tughluq, and Firoz Shah.

rulers, which often begin with the words: “Zia-Barni, the author of this history...”⁶⁴ Furthermore, by history, Barani means to discuss the life and actions of rulers.⁶⁵ This is significant because it differs from our modern day understanding of history, which incorporates wider criteria to define history, including social and cultural events and norms. Secondly, the text, while it lacks many facets of modern historiography, does emphasize authenticity. The events recounted in the text are vouchsafed by Barani as having been recounted to him by sources he considered reliable (i.e. the process known as *isnad*: chains of transmission): “...he himself heard from his father and grandfather, and from men who held important offices”, or that he himself witnessed: “Zia-Barni... declares that the events and affairs of the reign of Jalalu-d din, and the other matters about which he has written from that period unto the end of his work, all occurred under his own eyes and observation.”⁶⁶

This emphasis on validity is interesting because it does not preclude Barani from opining upon the actions of various rulers. Though events are reported, there is no attempt to maintain an unbiased front; Barani vacillates between praise for some and criticisms for others, usually lauding the king in most generous terms: “For the twenty-two years that Balban reigned he maintained the dignity, honour, and majesty of the throne in a manner that could not be surpassed.”⁶⁷ This is understandable given that the history is an officially sanctioned text, and Barani has every reason to produce a biased commentary. Particularly telling is his recounting of a conversation between Muhammad

⁶⁴ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, in The History of India: as told by its own historians, trans. H.M. Elliot, ed. John Dowson, Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., 1871, 1953 (2nd ed.). The phrase can be found on: p. 6, 36, 48, and 185 etc. Note: Barani occasionally substitutes the word ‘work’ in place of ‘history’.

⁶⁵ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 6 & p. 48.

⁶⁷ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 9.

Shah Tughluq (r. 1325-1351) and himself: “I could not help feeling a desire to tell the Sultan that the troubles and the revolts which were breaking out on every side, and this general disaffection, all arose from the excessive severity of his Majesty...But I dreaded the temper of the king, and could not say what I desired...”⁶⁸

These pressures aside, we must also focus on Barani’s understanding of how the text was to function. Peter Hardy says: “...Barani’s conception of the role of historiography was practical; because he believed that he was offering to God something which would open the eyes of mankind to God and to the Sultan, something which would benefit him in this world and the next.”⁶⁹ Thus the *Tarikh* is not just a history; it is also a moral parable, functioning as a “philosophy of religious insight by teaching.”⁷⁰

The constructed nature of the text is most evident when a new king ascends the throne. Barani is at his most critical, and, perhaps, most unbiased, when each ruler is vying for power, detailing the many reasons why they are unfit for kingship. The moment they capture the throne, however, Barani’s tones down his rhetoric, still critical but disapproving such that the emperor is cast as an imperfect hero: “...the crafty cruelty which had taken possession of ’Alau-d din [r. 1296-1316] induced him to order that the wives and children of all the mutineers, high and low, should be cast onto prison.”⁷¹ They are no longer rogues, and completely unsuited to the throne, they simply are not perfect humans, be it their cruelty, their drinking, or their overly trusting nature—all are seen in

⁶⁸ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 186.

⁶⁹ Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, 1966, p. 22.

⁷⁰ C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene: An Indigenous Public Sphere” in *The Book History Reader*, David Finkelstein & Alastair McCleery (ed.), New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 177.

⁷¹ Ziauddin Barani, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 80.

the same light. Faults in the character of the king are used didactically, for other God-fearing Muslim rulers.⁷²

There are moments when Barani's moralising serves modern-day historians well; he occasionally stumbles into providing a social or economic history of the period he covers. These moments are often used to illustrate a king's inherent goodness and genius, but they offer substantial information about administrative structure: "In the generosity of [Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's (r. 1321-25)] nature, he ordered that the land revenues of the country should be settled upon just principles with reference to the produce."⁷³ Barani provides a fair amount of detail of the revenue structures, though he rarely analyses the effects of the policies.

Unfortunately this same amount of detail is not carried over into descriptions of the landscape and architecture that he mentions. Consisting primarily of glancing references, architecture functions as a stage for the people he describes, participating in royal rituals of legitimacy and power, but not requiring detailed references: "Kai-Kubad gave up residing in the city, and quitting the Red Palace, he built a splendid palace, and laid out a beautiful garden at Kilu-garhi, on the banks of the Jumna."⁷⁴ There are other sections in the text where architecture and building is mentioned in passing, such as Muhammad Shah Tughluq's desire to have the name of the *Khalifa* inscribed upon buildings.⁷⁵

It is clear that culture and aesthetics are not important in these particular histories, unlike the Mughal court histories, which are far more effusive on the subject, mentioning

⁷² Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, 1966, p. 39.

⁷³ Ziauddin Barani, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, p. 153.

⁷⁴ Ziauddin Barani, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, p. 37.

⁷⁵ Ziauddin Barani, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, p. 175.

painters, and poets regularly, and emphasizing their importance to the Mughals. When Barani is describing the Deccan kings, however, he does often list their literary prowess as positive aspects. For instance, he waxes lyrical about Muhammad Shah Tughluq's accomplishments as a calligrapher and his knowledge of poetry: "No learned or scientific man, or scribe, or poet, or wit, or physician, could have had the presumption to argue with him about his own special pursuit, nor would he have been able to maintain his position against the throttling arguments of the Sultan."⁷⁶ Barani's history is a typical medieval history, having all the requisite elements to make up an official court history. There are more critical texts, such as Firishta's history, which provide a more balanced view of the period, but Barani had the advantage of becoming a standard history for future generations, probably because these texts were picked up by other kings who wished to emulate the text for their own histories.

Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi of Shams Siraj Afif

Shams Afif's history, while having the same title as Barani's text, is a very different book, both in terms of material and approach. The major difference is, of course, that Barani's text concerns a series of kings, while Afif is continuing Barani's unfinished history of Firoz Shah. Afif's work is also a more general history of a king; he spends time describing aspects of the king's life separate from his military campaigns. The result is a text, which provides more varied information about India during the reign of Firoz Shah. Nonetheless, these details are those inherently linked with the king; Afif focuses upon extolling the virtues of Firoz Shah and uses his narrative as a means to illustrate these

⁷⁶ Ziauddin Barani, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, p. 159.

qualities.⁷⁷ Interestingly enough, Afif acknowledges this: “The author has mentioned these matters to show the prosperity of the country.”⁷⁸

The divinely inspired nature of Firoz Shah’s eventual accession and subsequent rule is a repeated thematic element in Afif’s writing. It has been said that the descriptions of Firoz Shah prior to his becoming king are full of signs and portents of the coming greatness.⁷⁹ Even the moment of accession seems prophetic: “But the divine approval of the succession of Firoz Shah was from the first made known by means of the *sheikhs*...[all the nobility and religious heads] agreed unanimously upon choosing Firoz Shah, but he was reluctant to assent, feeling the weight of the responsibility to God.”⁸⁰ Firoz Shah’s reign is seen as the perfect age, especially in the first half of the narrative, prior to Timur’s conquests of India, where all activity has the seal of God’s approval and the empire flourishes.

There are moments where there are hints of criticism in the narrative, but even these are presented as faults coming from excessive goodness rather than vices. Firoz Shah is drawn as a pious Muslim, and Afif points to his enforcement of Holy Laws, including the denunciation of figurative drawing, which he directed to be replaced with garden scenes.⁸¹ The sections which describe the king’s religiosity are also rich with details about the administration of the empire and the economic policies, specifically

⁷⁷ Peter Hardy talks at length about the title of *tarikh* [history] being used for this text, when in fact Afif himself regarded the text as part of a larger body of work in which he addressed the *manaqib* [good qualities] of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, Muhammad ibn Tughluq, and Firoz Shah, emphasizing the need for caution when analysing Afif’s ‘historical’ perspective. Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 1966, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, in The History of India: as told by its own historians, trans. H.M. Elliot, ed. John Dowson, Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., 1871, 1953 (2nd ed.), p. 50.

⁷⁹ Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 1966, p. 43.

⁸⁰ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 8.

⁸¹ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 106.

revenue collection. In turn, these discussions let slip details about social history of the region.⁸²

A substantial portion of the text is also spent upon the building activities of Firoz Shah. A prolific patron of architecture, there are numerous references to the construction of cities such as the Punjab city of Hisar Firozah, purportedly built for the benefit of Muslim travellers but from which he derived significant revenue. Notable among these cities is Firozabad, referred to at various times in the narrative and described in some detail: “There were eight public mosques, and one private mosque...the public mosques were large enough to accommodate 10,000 supplicants.”⁸³ A later section of the text is devoted to cataloguing all the construction that Firoz Shah has ordered during his reign, which provides a comprehensive list of all the buildings, indicating the functions they served (palaces, forts, and inns), the maintenance and repairs ordered for various tombs, as well as some of the administrative infrastructure he put in place to oversee his commissions.⁸⁴

Perhaps the most noteworthy mention of architecture in Afif’s work is the extended commentary on the Ashokan columns that Firoz Shah had moved from their original location to various sites.^{85,86} This event is interesting for many reasons, not the least of which is the active use of a manifestly non-Muslim (with its undeciphered

⁸² Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 21.

⁸³ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, p. 38. Firozabad is mentioned again on p. 53, with an update on the status of construction.

⁸⁴ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, pp. 96-7.

⁸⁵ Shams Siraj Afif, “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi”, 1871, 1953, pp. 91-5.

⁸⁶ Of course, neither Afif nor Firoz Shah knew that these were Ashokan columns, discovered by the British in the nineteenth-century with the translation of the inscriptions following James Prinsep’s groundbreaking work on Paali inscriptions. Afif declares the pillars had been standing since the time of the Pandavas. (p. 91)

Sanskrit inscription) structure by the sultan. Afif's narrative follows the entire episode, from the original location of the columns, which Firoz Shah visits and admires, to the task of removing the pillars, to their installation in various places. There is little description of the pillars' appearance, focusing on the immense task of uprooting and carrying the very heavy stones.⁸⁷ Even this task is rife with divine association: "It is said that certain infidel Hindus interpreted them as stating that no one should be able to remove the obelisk from its place till there should arise in the latter days a Muhammadan king, named Sultan Firoz."⁸⁸ As Hardy says, "History, that is events, does not itself mould and develop the sultan's characteristics, it merely provides a stage for their manifestation."⁸⁹

Afif is a very different writer from Barani, writing perhaps a more engaging text on the reign of Firoz Shah. On the other hand, he is no less sycophantic than Barani and certainly follows certain conventions that are universal to Muslim medieval historiography, such as the listing of sources to validate his text.⁹⁰ Both are equally useful texts for Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who was interested in providing a background for his texts and the passing references of Barani and the greater details of Afif both serve his needs to some extent. They do not, either of them, go into any greater depth about the architectural details, and it is unreasonable to expect such a genre of text to do so. For such a task, Sir Sayyid had to rely on other sources and methodologies.

⁸⁷ For more on Tughluq architecture see: A. Welch & H. Crane, "The Tughluqs, Master Builders of the Delhi Sultanate" in Muqarnas, Vol. 1, 1983, pp. 123-166; A. Welch, "Architectural Patronage & the Past" in Muqarnas, Vol. 10, 1993, pp. 311-322; R. Nath, History of Sultanate Architecture, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978.

⁸⁸ Shams Siraj Afif, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, p. 94.

⁸⁹ Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 1966, p. 51.

⁹⁰ Shams Siraj Afif, "Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi", 1871, 1953, pp. 5, 9, 12, et passim.

It is undeniable that pre-colonial Indian writers were producing texts that functioned very basically as histories, but they were not necessarily concerned with discovering the past. Certainly, there were few critical examinations of sources, and historians did not challenge existing conceptions of the past. The same, however, can be said of many nineteenth-century British historians, and indeed of Indian historians like Sir Sayyid. Hardy notes that there was an assumption that medieval histories were ready-made sources for understanding Indian history: "...that the medieval Muslim chronicles of India need less 'processing' than other varieties of historical evidence before they can be made to yield intelligible history."⁹¹ The discipline of history was still undergoing refinement, and scholars did not have the tools to begin challenging their practices, especially in the foreign field that was Indology. History cannot be challenged and reframed when it is unknown. Moreover, it was only in the twentieth-century that a number of theoretical frameworks arose, e.g., post-Hegelian, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism. In the nineteenth century, the scholar's task was to uncover the bare bones of history; it is our task to analyse their findings within a context. These histories are important for the information contained within but their primary purpose, at least now, is related more to their existence and their structures than to their content.

⁹¹ Peter Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 1966, p. 12.

Chapter 3: *Asar-ul-Sanadid*: Translation

Translator's Note

Asar-ul-Sanadid is not an easy text to translate; it was written when vernacular Urdu was still being developed and is full of curious turns of phrase. I have done my utmost to maintain Sir Sayyid's voice throughout the translation and represent the information as accurately as possible. There are, however, points where the meaning of the text is unclear and I have hypothesized on what the correct answer is. Furthermore, Urdu has little in way of punctuation, with only one form of commas and a dash to indicate the end of a sentence. And even these, I suspect, are recent additions to the language, an Anglicising perhaps. The *Asar*, being a relatively early example of Urdu non-fiction has many grammatical gaps, which I have endeavoured to fill. There are also occasions when series of synonyms are used to praise monuments, which are occasionally shortened in the translation because of the limitations of the English language. I do make a note of this shortening. Since the purpose of this translation is to recreate Sir Sayyid's text, the veracity of the information he provides is not an issue.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE BUILDING OF FORTS AND SETTLING OF CITIES

IN DELHI⁹²

Greek philosophers divided the world into seven parts, classifying each part as a separate region. Each region begins at the horizon line and ends at the outer limits of the north.⁹³ According to the Greek system, Delhi is in the third region. The length of the land is

⁹² Notes: All footnotes in the translations are those noted in the second *Asar* edition by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, unless the note ends with (FQ), indicating my own notes on the text. Where the footnote reads: "see inscription no.", it is referring to the images of inscriptions made to accompany the text. All transliteration in the translation follows the Urdu spelling used in *Asar-ul-Sanadid*.

⁹³ *A'in i Akbari*

114 *darjay* and 38 *daqiqay* and the width from the horizon is 18 *darjay* and 15 *daqiqay*. The longest day here lasts for 13 hours and 50 minutes. English⁹⁴ astronomy divides the world into four parts.⁹⁵ According to this system Delhi is in *Asbbah* [Asia?] and is specifically located in Hindustan. Hindustan has been further divided into three parts and Delhi is in middle Hindustan. The length of Hindustan, as calculated in London by English experts [astronomers] is 20 *darjay* less than the Greek system. Apart from this discrepancy, the rest of the calculations are the same. This city is very old. The rajas of the city have sometimes governed on behalf of the kings of Persia, or Kamao, or Kanauj, or Deccan or have ruled as independent heads of state. Delhi, from its inception, has been the capital of rajas and/or kings, save for eight periods when Delhi was not the centre [of power] for an empire.⁹⁶ The first time was when Raja Jadhashr laid siege upon Raja Jarjodhan, who fled to Histnapur and for seven generations ruled from there. When Nami, known as Raja Dustwan became the raja of Delhi, the banks of the Ganges rose so much that the city of Histnapur was flooded and swept away. The ruler then established a city along the banks of the river Kushki in the Deccan region but eventually returned to Delhi and made it the capital.⁹⁷ The second period was when Raja Bikramjait [Vikramjait] of Ujjain was victorious over Raja Bhagwant and seized the city but kept Ujjain as the capital, leaving a governor in Delhi. It was in the Jogi period that central authority returned to Delhi. The third period occurred when Rai Pithaura built the Ajmer Fort and moved the capital there, leaving his brother, Khaande Rao as the

⁹⁴ *Jughraafia*

⁹⁵ I presume “English astronomy” refers to the system and rules of astronomy followed in England. (FQ)

⁹⁶ *Mahabharat*

⁹⁷ *Khulaasata al Tawarikh o Rajawaali*

governor. The fourth period was in 587 A.H. (1191 A.D.),⁹⁸ when, after his conquest, Sultan Shahabuddin returned to Ghazni⁹⁹ and appointed Qutbuddin Aibak, the commander-in-chief, as governor of Delhi. The fifth¹⁰⁰ period was in 737 A.H. (1336 A.D.), when Sultan Muhammad Tughluq Shah felt the capital should be in a more central location of the empire. Thus, he moved the capital from Delhi to Qutbabad (Diyogar). Tughluq changed the name of the city from Qutbabad to Daulatabad. This king was very bloodthirsty and cruel, and he gave orders that all inhabitants of Delhi were required to move to the new capital. His rule was so strict that no one managed to remain in Delhi following the forced move. The helpless citizens of Delhi left the city and it was completely abandoned and empty. Wild animals began inhabiting the city, day and night. Diyogar (Daulatabad), however, was too far from Mughal lands, and in 742 A.H. (1341 A.D.), the sultan returned to Delhi and gave his subjects the choice between going back to Delhi or staying in Daulatabad. And thus, Delhi was once again populated. This unfortunate incident in the history of Delhi is very famous and perhaps there is no other city that has been left abandoned in such a manner. The sixth¹⁰¹ period was when Sultan Sikandar Lodhi made plans to take Gwalior and moved his capital to Agra. At this time there was already a fortress in Akbarabad. After destroying the original fort, the king, Jalaluddin Akbar, built another one on top and, eventually, his son, Sultan Ibrahim¹⁰² also maintained it as the royal residence. When the Mughal emperor, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babar, defeated Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi, the capital was still based in Agra. After this event the king, Humayun, first kept the capital in Agra but later moved it to

⁹⁸ In listing the different dating systems used by Sir Sayyid, I have chosen to maintain the order he lists them in, putting the second [and third] in parentheses. I assume the order is dependant upon the sources used. (FQ)

⁹⁹ *Taj Almaasir*

¹⁰⁰ *Tarikh i Farishta*

¹⁰¹ *Tuzuk i Jahangiri*

¹⁰² *Akbarnama*

Delhi. The seventh time was when Jalaluddin Akbar Shah built a fort in Agra and established a city, Akbarabad, there and proclaimed it the new capital, leaving a governor in Delhi. This remained the capital when Jahangir was king, moving back to Delhi when Shah Jahan ascended to the throne. The eighth period is the current one in which General Lake took Delhi from Shah *Jum Jah Jaary* [Jim J. George?] under the Siom treaty in September 1803 A.D. The dynasty came to an end and power was transferred to London. The city has remained populated during the times of Hindus and Muslims. From the location selected by Shah Jahan for his city to fourteen miles south of the city, there are ruins of cities and buildings dotted all over the landscape. Looking at these structures, it is clear that rajas and emperors were very active in building new forts and establishing cities in order to gain fame. Some of these settlements continue to be inhabited, while others have been abandoned. Apart from the rulers, private wealthy citizens also built recreational buildings and tombs, some of which still exist today. For this reason, I shall first address the topic of the history of construction of forts and cities.

LATH ASHOKA OR MINARAH-E-ZARAI OR LATH FEROSHSAHI

This pillar is constructed of stone, many believe it is *korand* stone, and it is constructed very neatly. There used to be five more pillars like this one, located in Radhiya, Mahta, Allahabad, the Meerat district, and the Nawhra village. The king, Ashoka, also known as Biyasi, constructed all five of these pillars. Hence, there are two inscriptions upon this pillar. The first is in the name of this king. The language of this inscription is Paali and Sanskrit¹⁰³ and the letters are of a very old script, which predates the Devanagiri script. The proclamation includes teachings of the Buddha, commands to do no harm to others and to not practice laws of retaliation and corporal punishment upon criminals. This inscription had

¹⁰³ See inscription no. 2

not been read prior to now, Ferozshah¹⁰⁴ had gathered many pundits, but they too were unable to decipher the language, and now Mr. James Prinsep has read and translated the text. It is said¹⁰⁵ that Raja Ashoka was the grandson of Chandra Gupta,¹⁰⁶ that he was the governor of Ujjain, and was enthroned in about 325 B.C. This pillar was built in the 27th regnal year or 298 B.C. According to the Persian dating system, it would seem that this king was actually the king of Kashmir, and his laws governed all of Hindustan. In this period, matters of religion were debated [altered?], which angered the public, and the king was driven out from his empire. The religious views on the pillar provide some evidence for the theory that Ashoka was the king of Kashmir. Using the Persian dating system, it would place the reign of Ashoka starting around 1373 B.C., but I believe the first date is correct. The second inscription¹⁰⁷ upon the pillar contains the name of Baildeo Chauhan.¹⁰⁸ He was initially the king of Sanbhar, where the Chauhans are from originally.¹⁰⁹ By waging war against the rulers of Delhi, he conquered the land. Rai Pithaura, during his rule, which was 1220 Simt (1163 A.D.), had the proclamation of his victory inscribed upon the pillar. The letters of this inscription are in the Devanagiri script and it is the Sanskrit language. The sentences of this edict are easily read. The text praises Baildeo, listing his attributes, and claiming that his rule brought peace to Hindustan. During the time when Ferozshah went to Thatta to build a fortress and, from there, made his way to Delhi, that is, about 770 A.H.

¹⁰⁴ *Haft Aqleem*

¹⁰⁵ *Tarikh i Firoz Shahi, Shams Siraj ud din Afif*

¹⁰⁶ Archaeological Society of Bengal, book no. 6, p. 566, volume (?) 209, and p. 209, and Royal Asiatic Society, book 6, p. 469.

¹⁰⁷ *A'in i Akbari and Tarikh i Kashmiri*

¹⁰⁸ Nath puts Baildeo as Bisaldeva, which is not how Sir Sayyid spells it. (FQ)

¹⁰⁹ For more on ancient Indian history see: Romila Thapar, Early India: From the origins to AD 1300, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. (FQ)

(1368 A.D.), the pillar was in the village Nawhra, subdivision Salura, district Khizrabad,¹¹⁰ which is located towards the mountains, about 90 *kos* from Delhi. At this time, it was thought that the pillar was the stick used by Bhim to graze his cattle.¹¹¹ Ferozshah made the decision to uproot the pillar from its original location and had it moved to Delhi so that it would be remembered for a long time. With this plan, men from the surrounding villages and towns were gathered and bails of cotton were used to pad the pillar and digging began to uncover the foundations. When the entire structure was uncovered, the column tilted and came to rest on the cotton. The bails were then carefully removed one by one to bring the column down onto the ground.¹¹² At the column's root was a large square rock upon which the pillar rested. This rock was also removed, and once the entire structure was unearthed, it was wrapped in rawhide to prevent any harm in the move. A cart of 42 wheels was constructed to move the pillar, and a large group of men tied ropes around the column to lift it up and place it onto the cart and then tied the ropes firmly to the wheels. Two hundred men pulled these ropes in order to move the cart. Thousands of men toiled to move the column to the edge of the river, which flowed beside Nawhra village, where many boats were tied together and the pillar was lifted onto them and then taken on the river to Ferozabad and finally brought the pillar to the Ferozshah fort where it was brought near the mosque and a three story structure [scaffolding?] was built. As each level came up, the pillar was placed atop it and then work on the next level was begun. Completion of the next level restarted the same cycle and, thus, all three levels were built. When the pillar had to be raised, thick ropes were tied at one end to the pillar, and wound around circular posts embedded firmly in the ground on the other end. Many men collectively twisted the posts

¹¹⁰ *Khulaastha al Tawarikh*

¹¹¹ Bhim is a Hindu mythological character from the *Mahabharata*, one of the sons of Pandu. (FQ)

¹¹² *Tarikh i Firoz Shahi, Shams Siraj Afif*

with great force to lift the pillar even half a yard. Once the pillar had lifted a bit, sticks would be placed underneath with cotton bails for padding. Raising the pillar to its full height using this process took quite a few days and the same square rock was placed underneath the column, with the spaces filled with rocks and limestone to strengthen the foundation. White and black marble were used at the top to create a beautiful kiosk,¹¹³ placed a copper finial plated with gold on top, which gave the structure the name of *Minarab-e-Zarrin*. It is unfortunate that neither the towers nor the finial exist anymore, in fact, even the tip of the pillar has broken off. Many say the damage was caused by lightning or by bombs. The length of the pillar is 32 feet, with eight yards sunk in the building and 24 yards rising above it.

QUWWAT-UL-ISLAM MOSQUE SITE

Rai Pathaur Temple

Near the Rai Pathaur fort, there was a very famous temple. On all four sides of the temple were built two-aisle, three-aisle, and four-aisle deep courtyards. In the centre of the temple, there was a courtyard with doorways in the northern, southern and eastern sections and an idol placed on the western section. In this same manner, the external courtyards were built for circumambulation. This temple was built at the same time as the fort, hence can be dated to 1200 years hence from Raja Bikramjait [Vikramjait]¹¹⁴ (1143 A.D./538 A.H.). The structure of this temple is very unusual and the work of the master lapidaries is of such high quality as cannot be replicated. On each stone there is inlay work of such beautiful flowers and marvellous carved vegetal motifs so fine that no description of them can be adequate. In every place, on lintels, ceilings and columns, there are images of gods and chain-and-bell [*ghantamala*] motifs. The eastern and northern sections of this temple have remained intact.

¹¹³ *Burj* is used here, but Nath calls it a kiosk. (FQ)

¹¹⁴ *Khulaastha al Tawarikh*

The iron column, which is a symbol of the Vaishnavis [followers of Vishnu], and the numerous idols of Krishan Atar, Mahadevi, Ganesh, and Hanuman, testify to this being a Vaishnavi temple. Consequently, during the Muslim period, all the idols were destroyed. Despite the destruction, close inspection of the remains reveals the identity of each statue. In my opinion, apart from these courtyards, there was also a building made of red stone in this compound, which was destroyed. Remains of red bricks among the rubble of the destroyed idols provide evidence for such a building.¹¹⁵

Adena Delhi Mosque or Mosque Jamiye or Qummat-ul-Islam Mosque

In 587 A.H. (1191 A.D./1248 years hence from Raja Bikramjait [Vikramjait]), the Qutbuddin Aibak, who was the Commander of the army of Mu'izzuddin Muhammad bin Sam urf Sultan Shahabuddin Ghauri, conquered Delhi, and converted the aforementioned temple into a mosque. They took away all the idols from the temple, and wherever idols were depicted upon walls, doorways, and columns, they either completely destroyed them or wiped out their faces. They, however, left the building intact and the effects of 27 temples, which were worth 54,000,000 Dehliwals,¹¹⁶ were used in the construction of this mosque, and a plaque with the date of Delhi's conquest by Qutbuddin Aibak was placed above the eastern gate.¹¹⁷

Construction by Sultan Mu'izzuddin

After Qutbuddin Aibak returned to Ghazni after conquering Ajmer, Ranthambor Fort and Naharwala [modern-day Gujrat],¹¹⁸ Sultan Mu'izzuddin gave the order that the temple be converted into a mosque. When Aibak returned from Ghazni in 592 A.H. (1195

¹¹⁵ *Taj Almaasir*

¹¹⁶ Dehliwaal is the coinage of the period. (FQ)

¹¹⁷ See inscription nos. 3 & 4

¹¹⁸ *Tarikh i Farishta & Taj Almaasir*

A.D.), following the king's orders, he had a red stone mosque constructed with five arches on the western facade of the site and the date of construction was inscribed upon the northern door.¹¹⁹ In 594 A.H. (1197 A.D.), the mosque was completed. This date is inscribed on the left jamb of the central arch.¹²⁰ Among the five arches, the four outer ones are approximately 28 feet high and the central arch is about 48 feet high and 21 feet wide. The arches are decorated with inlay of great intricacy, and an immense variety of vegetal motifs. There are carved inscriptions of Quranic verses and Hadith on all arches; when the mosque was completed, gilded pinnacles were placed onto the roof.¹²¹ Stones from the temple have been used in the arches as well. Where one of the outer stones of the middle arch has fallen, the interior side of a stone can be seen with depictions of an idol. Using a telescope, the idol can be seen quite clearly. In the time of Sultan Mu'izzuddin and Qutbuddin Aibak, the covered area measured 50 yards by 72 yards. Ibn Abul-Maali was designated the custodian of the mosque and his name is inscribed upon one of the pillars of the western courtyard.

Construction by Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash

In later years, Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash wished to expand this mosque, and in 627 A.H. (1229 A.D.), three arches were added to the southern and northern sides of the mosque, extending it all the way to the outer courtyard of the Rai Pathaur temple. These arches are of a very finely constructed red stone with Quranic verses inscribed upon them in *kufic* and *naskh* calligraphic styles, and decorated with exquisite vegetal motifs. The date of construction has been inscribed upon the left side of the central arch of the southern extension.¹²² Some of the arches have been damaged and, in the case of one northern arch,

¹¹⁹ See inscription no. 5

¹²⁰ See inscription no. 6

¹²¹ *Taj Almaasir*

¹²² See inscription no. 8.

the entire structure has collapsed onto the street. In 631 A.H. (1233 A.D.), when Sultan Shamsuddin had conquered Malwa and Ujjain, the Mahakal Temple was destroyed and the idols as well as the image of Raja Bikramjait [Vikramjait] were brought to Delhi and placed at the entrance of this mosque.¹²³ The arches added by Shamsuddin Altamash on the southern and northern extensions, are 37 yards, 1 foot high, and the central arch is 8 yards wide. The southern section is contiguous with the original temple courtyard, which when added to the mosque make the total covered area 132 yards and 9 feet in length.

QUTB MINAR

The eminence, the exaltation and the beauty of this monument cannot be described. The fact is that this monument is such that there is no comparison for it here on earth. It is said that if one stands beneath the pillar and looks to the skies, hats and turbans have to be removed in order to see [otherwise they fall off I presume]. When looking down from the top of the column, people on the ground seem very small, and seeing tiny men, small elephants and horses, is very odd. In the same way, those on the ground see the people on top as miniscule, and it seems as if they are angels descending from the heavens. Thus, this pillar is from a miraculous time.¹²⁴ As well as its elevation and magnitude, the structure is also very beautiful and finely wrought. One cannot help but be forced to gaze at the pillar. The lowest section of the *minar* is decorated with alternating circular and square engaged columns, the second section is entirely comprised of spherical engaged columns, the third is entirely square engaged columns, with the highest two sections being completely round. The structure is made entirely of red stone, except the fourth level where white marble is also employed. There is inlay work and painting everywhere of such splendour that each carved

¹²³ *Tarikh i Farishta*

¹²⁴ The phrase used is *ajajib rozgar*, which can mean “a wondrous/fantastical/miraculous age”. (FQ)

vine is interwoven endlessly with many others, and even the smallest flowers and branches have been created by dozens of scattered hints of colour, all these elements creating a monument that is of great interest. It is often thought by Muslims that Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash constructed the column and this information is often seen in history books and on the epitaph of Sikandar Bahlul on the entrance.¹²⁵ In some history books, the monument is identified as a mosque's minaret¹²⁶ and in some as Sultan Mu'izzuddin's pillar.¹²⁷ It cannot be a minaret because the column's door is north-facing similar to Hindu temples, while the doors of minarets are always east facing. It is known that the pillar begun by Sultan Alauddin had an east-facing door and, as is common in Muslim construction, was located on a plinth. This is unlike the Hindus who do not use plinths, a feature also missing from this monument. The structure's first level also shows evidence of stones being placed at a later stage and there is evidence of bell-and-chain motif of Hindu temples on the first floor. Additionally, the inscription on this pillar is similar to that of Qutbuddin Aibak and Mu'izzuddin's conquest on the converted temple-mosque. From these various facts, it can be argued that the first floor is Hindu in origin. There is nothing odd in the fact that epitaphs have been inscribed where idols were once idols. It has become legendary that stones with the praises of the king, Rai Pathaura, were replaced with inscriptions of the names of kings and Quranic verses. This belief has helped in continuing the belief that Rai Pathaura, apart from the fort and temple, also built this pillar 1200 years hence from Raja Bikramjait [Vikramjait] (538 A.H./1143 A.D.). This may be true because Rai Pathaura's daughter was a sun worshipper, and Hindus believe that the Jamna river is the daughter of

¹²⁵ *Tarikh i Firoz Shahi, Shams Siraj Afif*

¹²⁶ *Taqvim ul Baladan*

¹²⁷ *Fatuhah i Firoz Shahi*

the sun, which is why visiting the Jamna is considered an important obligation.¹²⁸ From this point of view, the pillar was first constructed as a location from which the worship of the Jamna could occur. In 587 A.H. (1191 A.D.), when the Muslims conquered the temple, they added their own epigraphs upon the building,¹²⁹ and named Fazl ibn Abul-Ma'ali the caretaker, inscribing his name near the entrance.¹³⁰ The monument was raised higher at the same time that Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash expanded the mosque by adding three additional arches to two sides, that is, in 627 A.H. (1229 A.D.). The expansion is documented in inscriptions on the wall.¹³¹ Since then, the column has been called a minaret, with inscriptions on every level referring to this identification,¹³² including those of the call to prayer, and naming the architect of the expansion. Today there are five sets of ruins of this structure, but there is also no doubt that, as is legendary, there were once seven storeys, and the column was also well-known as *minarah-e-baft-manzari* [minaret of seven views]. Now where there is a railing, there once were crenellations, like those on ramparts. On the fifth level, there were doors on all four sides, and on top of that, a *chattri* was placed to form the seventh level. Firoz Shah built the seventh level in 770 A.H. (1368 A.D.). He writes that at the time of construction,¹³³ he had the column's height raised from the existing level, and had the construction information inscribed upon a door on the fifth level.¹³⁴ After this, the column was damaged again. In 909 A.H. (1503 A.D.), during the reign of Sikandar Bahlul, Fateh Khan also had some work done on the structure, and had the construction status

¹²⁸ *Darshan* is the word used

¹²⁹ See inscription no. 9

¹³⁰ See inscription no. 10

¹³¹ See inscription no. 11

¹³² See inscription no. 12

¹³³ *Fatuhāt i Firoz Shahi*

¹³⁴ See inscription no. 13

inscribed above the entrance to the column.¹³⁵ It is famous that in 1197 A.H. (1782 A.D.), due to a severe dust storm and earthquake, the uppermost levels fell to the ground. Stones from the original construction also fell and, in some places, cracked. In 1829 A.D. (1245 A.H.), Captain Smith, under the orders of the British Government, restored the entire column. He replaced the crenellations with stone railings, and a beautiful brass railing on the fifth level. The sixth level was replaced with a beautiful stone *burj* with eight windows, and the seventh level was cut away to place a wooden *burj* topped by a *phurera* [unknown meaning]. Unfortunately, neither of these towers remained intact. The stone *burj* was taken down from the column and placed on the ground below, and the wooden *burj* no longer exists.¹³⁶ It is a pity that at the time of this construction, the epitaphs on the fallen stones were incorrectly repaired. Often, the shape of letters has been made, but close inspection reveals that they are incorrect, in some cases, just imitations of alphabets, and in some cases, words, which have little to do with the subject of the inscription. Until today, the inscriptions of this monument had not been read. I have read all of them with the aid of a telescope. The height of the first column is 32 yards, some inches, the second, 17 yards, some inches, the third, 13 yards, and the fourth, 8.25 yards. The total length of the existing five levels is almost 80 yards, and that of the stone *burj* constructed by the English, which then was lowered to the ground, is 6 yards. With all the missing elements, the complete structure would have been 100 yards. This is the height the column was believed to have attained when it had seven complete levels. The circumference of the column on the ground is 50 yards, which then tapers at the top to a circumference of 10 yards. The monument is completely empty on the inside, with only stairways circling anti-clockwise along the walls.

¹³⁵ See inscription no. 14

¹³⁶ The stone *burj* is still there today. (FQ)

The first level has 156 stairs, the second, 78 stairs, the third, 62 stairs, the fourth, 41 stairs, and the fifth also has 41 stairs, so that the total number of stairs comes to 378 stairs. It seems as if there have always been these many stairs, since there was no way to reach the two uppermost levels.

JAHAN NUMAYA MOSQUE, FRIDAY MOSQUE

This supreme place of worship, this mosque is about a thousand yards away from Shahjahanabad towards the west, on a small hill, built in such a manner that the hill has been completely hidden by the building. The king, Shahabuddin Muhammad Shah Jahan, constructed the mosque with a delicacy and beauty that is beyond description. There is no man with the ability to describe this monument. As well built and beautiful a mosque does not exist upon this earth. The entire structure is built of red stone with inlay work in white and black marble, and white marble in the interior. All the domes are made from white marble, with lines of black marble. A highly skilled architect built this mosque, where every door, wall, arch, niche, and decoration is filled with careful detail.¹³⁷ The foundations of the mosque were laid on 10 Shawwal 1060 A.H. (1650 A.D.), the twenty-fourth regnal year, under the supervision of *Wazir* [Minister] Saadullah Khan and *Khan-i-Samaan* [in charge of stores] Faazil Khan, and every day five thousand masons, labourers, diggers, and stonecutters worked on the site. Despite this, it took six years to complete the mosque and a total of one million [ten *lakh*] rupees were spent. The building has three domes of great beauty. The mosque measures 90 yards in length and 20 yards in width. The *Qibla* wall has seven niches, and on the outside, facing the courtyard are eleven arches. One arch is very high, flanked by five arches on each side. All the arches are inscribed using black marble for inlay; the central arch has a tughra, “*ya haadi*” on it, and the remaining arches bear an epitaph

¹³⁷ The Urdu ends with a double negative: “...not absent of detail” which I have rearranged. (FQ)

with praises of Shah Jahan, the date of construction and the details of expenditure.¹³⁸ On both sides of the arcade, are extremely tall and stately minarets, which have attached stairs to reach the top. The minarets are crowned by *chattris* with twelve windows, which are superb. From the top of the minarets, the entire city can be seen. The view of the city resembles a bowl, and trees and homes animate the scene. The northern minaret has fallen due to lightning and, along with the flooring of the courtyard, both of red stone, has suffered damage in various sections. In 1233 A.H. (1817 A.D.), the English, during the reign of Akbar Shah, restored the minaret and the flooring. Thanks to God's blessings, the mosque is able to accommodate such a large number of worshippers that they resemble ants and many cannot hear the voice of the *imam*. Hence, Prince Mirza Salim, son of King Moinuddin Muhammad Akbar Shah, had a magnificent raised platform of stone constructed in the middle of the central arch in 1245 A.H. (1829 A.D.), so that a *mukabbir* could stand upon it and deliver the call to prayer and other sections recited aloud so that they would resound in the ears of all present. All the floors in the mosque are white marble with black marble inlay demarcating individual prayer spaces. The minbar is made of white marble and is of such beauty that it cannot be described adequately. In the northern section's veranda, there are housed some holy relics of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). This area is known as the *Maqaam Dargah Asar-ul-Sharif* [shrine of sacred relics]. The veranda is very beautiful and pleasant. The courtyard is 136 square yards in area, and in the centre is an exquisite¹³⁹ marble ablution tank, fifteen yards long by twelve yards wide, and in its centre is a fountain, which operates every Friday, on Eid, and other holidays. At the southern section of the pond, in 1180 A.H. (1766 A.D.), Muhammad Tahseen Khan *Mubli Badshah* [royal eunuch] had a small

¹³⁸ See inscription no. 42.

¹³⁹ There are actually four synonyms of beautiful here, but I have cut them out. (FQ)

stone railing constructed, proclaiming that he had dreamt of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) sitting in that location. On all four sides of the mosque's courtyards are built beautiful *iwans* leading into verandas, pleasant rooms, and buildings, and on all four corners are towers of great interest, which have provided liveliness and light in the mosque. In the southern and eastern courtyards, are clocks to indicate prayer times. The mosque has three fine brass-plated doors.

Southern Door, Jaamiye Masjid

The elegant southern doorway of the Friday Mosque is located near the Chitli-Qabr Market. There are habitable rooms above the doors and a stairway of 33 steps. At the third turning of the stairs, there is a public space, and small business vendors set up their stalls, selling all manners of things, including *faluda* [traditional South Asian dessert] vendors, who sell sugar cane juice and multi-coloured *faluda* at their stalls. Many varieties of *kebabs* are made; their scent can cause a passer-by to fall into a deep longing for the *kebabs*. A variety of odd animals and poultry of good stock is sold here and angel-faced youths congregate here on the [Persian—*nauroz*] New Year, and even the sky is envious of their magnificence and their wiles. Old friends, and youths, step out in a feeling of camaraderie to enjoy and celebrate.

Northern Door, Jaamiye Masjid

The northern doorway of the mosque is by the Paiye-Wale Market. This door is also very beautiful, and also has habitable rooms constructed above the doors, a stairway of 39 steps. Here too are located *kebab* stands and grocery stands, but the big spectacle comes from the showmen¹⁴⁰ and the storytellers. At the third turning, a storyteller sits with his carpet spread on the floor, and recounts the tale of Amir Hamza. In other places, the stories

¹⁴⁰ Referring to jugglers, trained monkeys, snake charmers, etc. (FQ)

of Hathim Tai, and the Bustan-e-Khiyal are recited, and everywhere there are men clustered, listening to the tales. At one side, the showmen perform and magicians perform tricks, making the old look young and the young look old.

Eastern Door, Jaamiye Masjid

The eastern doorway is located by the Khas Market. The doorway is very large. There are buildings built upon the doors. In front of the doors are 35 stairs. Everyday there is traffic on these stairs. This traffic is like a festival everyday in Shahjahanabad. A thousand different types of fabric are displayed upon lines and, in unusual and wonderful ways, the walls seem like gardens in bloom. Young men of passionate temperaments wander with all kinds of animals in cages, and their beautiful sounds can be heard everywhere. At one side, a birdman sells pigeons, and on another side, a horseman stands with horses. Customers wander through the markets in groups and, after examining the wares, purchase them.

JANTAR MANTAR¹⁴¹

“Jantar” meaning “tools” and referring specifically to “tools for stargazing” here, and “mantar” is a meaningless word that is attached to the real word in conversation, like *khana wana*.¹⁴² Thus, this is an observatory that was built by Raja Swami Jai Singh of Jaipur during the reign of Muhammad Shah in the 7th regnal year (1137 A.H./1724 A.D.).¹⁴³ For accuracy in measurements, observatories were also constructed in Jaipur, Mitra, Banaras, and Ujjain. Most of the instruments in this observatory were made of limestone and other stones to prevent discrepancies in measurement. The observatory is now in a ruinous state. Most of

¹⁴¹ The awkward construction of the Observatory section is very unusual. The passages do not read as smoothly as other descriptions. The contrast with other portions of the text leads me to believe that the fault lies in Sir Sayyid’s difficulty in grasping the technical aspects of the observatory instruments. The fact that the Observatory was in ruins and no longer functioning probably meant that he had to rely on accounts of nearby inhabitants in the absence of written sources, further supporting this explanation. (FQ)

¹⁴² *Khana* means food, *wana* has no meaning, similar in construction to phrases like super duper. (FQ)

¹⁴³ *Zaich Muhammad Shahi*

the instruments have been destroyed and the measurement units on them have faded and none are capable for taking measurements with today. Three stargazing instruments, made of limestone and rock, are still in the building in pieces.

1. Jai Prakash¹⁴⁴

This instrument is for the measurement of shadows, a pillar for the purpose of measurement has been placed on an upper level, around the horizontal circumference, a diameter of 53 feet, 8 inches has been established and four levels have been constructed in the manner of a well, one level is below the ground, and three raised above the ground. The wall has been divided into sixty sections. Windows have been carved out in the shape of a niche and have been alternatively left open and filled in. Along the inner walls, *muqantarāt*¹⁴⁵ have been drawn with units for the measurement of degrees, and above, the *muqantarāt* of the circumference and horizon, have all been divided.

2. Ram Jantar

This instrument is a raised platform; its breadth is oriented towards a northern direction with four arcs. Each arc has stairs running on both sides so that one may climb them and survey the effect of the shadows. Underneath the platform, two more arcs emerge. The measurement units for the equatorial horizon and the zodiac signs were recorded on each arc but they have been completely wiped out and the arcs are often broken.

3. Samrat Jantar

This building is actually a measuring device. A ramp has been laid out in the middle of an equatorial sundial of a radius of 18 *gaz*; it is a fine structure made from limestone and rock.

¹⁴⁴ I believe Sir Sayyid has some of the names of the instruments confused: Jai Prakash consists of two hemispheres sunk into the ground, Ram Jantar is a sundial, and Samrat Jantar is an equatorial sundial. (FQ)

¹⁴⁵ *Muqantarāt* may refer to the walls radiating outward from the central pillar to the walls at equal intervals at the ground level. Garcin de Tassy's translation defines *muqantarāt* as traced or imagined circles parallel to the horizon. (FQ)

Measurement units have been marked out upon it. The ramp has stairs to allow people to reach the top and observe the shadows. Similarly stairs have been constructed in each side of the sundial arcs. The units on this instrument have also been erased over time. Thus, in 1852 A.D., the Raja of Jaipur handed over the renovation of the ramp to the Archaeological Society of Delhi, but repairs were not completed. Sawai Jai Singh himself invented these three instruments, which is why they have Hindi names.

Karah-i-Maqar

Below this observatory, two concave hemispheres have been placed such that the axis of the zodiac is incomplete in one and in the other. Thus, if one half is raised and placed upon the other, the sphere will be complete. There are twelve *kos* [arcs] made in the spheres. Six sections have been filled in and the other six are empty. There are signs of inscribed units, which are now erased, and perhaps there was once an axis, but that no longer exists. Every empty *kos* has stairs leading up to it so that they can be reached and the shadows can be observed. The diameter of these spheres is 26 feet, and they are constructed from limestone bricks.

This observatory is one where the English principles and rules of astronomy have been applied from its inception. In the past, Greek astronomy principles and their stargazing tools were used everywhere. Thus, the observatory is unique and well known among its peers. In the fourteenth regnal year of Muhammad Shah (1144 A.H./1731 A.D.), Raja Sawai Jai Singh sent many mathematicians with Father Manuel to England and had telescopes ordered from there. These men visited the English observatories. They brought the English stargazing instrument, known as Lear, and compared to the Jantar Mantar instruments. The lunar calendar measurements of Lear differed by half a *darja* [minute] and during solar and lunar eclipses by a quarter *daqiqay* [equivalent to fifteen seconds]. From these accounts, it can

be confirmed that the English were involved in this observatory. It explains why an observatory built according to Greek principles followed those of the English system. Those following the Greek system agitated at the acceptance of the different system and demanded that the new principles should be validated by rational proofs. The fact of the matter was that the calculations made according to this new system and what was observed corroborated with each other and the case to prove the new rules was set aside, perhaps forgotten. Now, at the Observatory, there are catalogues, which list the new principles that have been adopted which are contrary to those accepted in the Greek system:

1. Outer circumference of the centre of the Sun was accepted
2. The movements of the moon around its circumference were to be recorded
3. It was accepted the Venus and Mercury were lit, like the moon, by the Sun, and also wax and wane.
4. It was accepted that Saturn was not of a spherical shape, but of a pear-shape.
5. Around Jupiter there are four celestial bodies, which have been designated as Jupiter's moons.
6. Various objects around the sun were identified and their behaviour observed, and it was determined that it took a *bars* for them to complete an orbit.

7. Many constellations have not been proven to be stars, and are often planets. The appearance of the new moon, and the visible and invisible constellations, their rising and setting do not need to be measured any longer, because the telescopes allow them to be observed during the day. Instruments for observation have been prepared according to the accepted Greek and English rules of astronomy. There is no doubt that the measurements recorded by the instruments are generally accurate. At the observatory, a new calendar was recorded which is known as Muhammad Shahi. It began on Monday, 1st Rabi-us-Saani 1131

A.H. [1718 A.D.] and this date has been recorded as the start of the Muhammad Shahi reign. The first regnal year actually started on 8th Rabi-us-Saani 1131 A.H. [1718 A.D.]; after Jalaluddin Farrukh died, high-ranking officials placed the treasurer on the throne after whom Muhammad Shah was crowned. Since they both ruled only for a few months, their rule was erased and the eight days of Rabi-us-Saani that had passed were invalidated and 1st Rabi-us-Saani was pronounced as the beginning of Muhammad Shah's reign. These dates are according to the lunar calendar with days and months following the lunar cycle, which the Hijri calendar is also based upon. The only difference is that the Hijri calendar begins with Muharram and the Muhammad Shahi begins with Rabi-us-Saani. Dates are calculated using instruments and recorded. At this point it is worth noting that on 1st July 1852 A.D., the date is 14th Ramadan 138 Muhammad Shahi [calculated] or 12th Ramadan 138 Muhammad Shahi [lunar sighting].

Chapter 4: Analysis of *Asar-ul-Sanadid*

Before conducting a detailed analysis of the textual information in *Asar-ul-Sanadid*, it seems appropriate to discuss briefly the language it was written in, Urdu. Although some form of Urdu has existed since the eleventh-century, the modern-day version of Urdu developed primarily in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁶ Urdu was developed by the Muslims of India as an urban language and for a long time it was only an oral tradition, with Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit being the primary written and administrative languages of the Subcontinent. Even when it did evolve into a more sophisticated, refined state, Urdu prose was a relatively rare breed of writing, and non-fiction was unknown to the language. The eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the meteoric rise of Urdu in the courts of Northern India, a move that has been described as being a “deliberate, populist strategy on the part of the elite.”¹⁴⁷ It was this change as well as the presence of the British, which, ironically, gave Urdu the final push into its status as a scholarly language.

The introduction of Western systems of education in India has been hailed as one of the most successful means by which the British embedded their notions of society and civilization onto their colonies: “English education has been an extraordinary agency of moral and intellectual regeneration. It has brought a large number of people into pregnant contact with Western ideas...”¹⁴⁸ The British response to all things Indian was to categorise and classify, and Urdu was no different. Rather than focusing on Urdu as a literary language with a rich cultural background, they saw it as a convenient language

¹⁴⁶ Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1969, pp. 91-5.

¹⁴⁷ C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene”, 2002, p. 175.

¹⁴⁸ Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 294.

for the purposes of lower level administration. Urdu was forcibly evolved under the East India Company into a simple, straightforward vernacular prose, with the flowery nature of Persianate prose removed in its usage. This transformation took place primarily at Fort William College in Calcutta under the direction of John Gilchrist, a notable scholar of Urdu linguistics.¹⁴⁹

This simpler version of Urdu was picked up quite quickly because it suited the needs of the general public, being a more accessible language than Persianate literary Urdu due to both common usage and its simple turn of phrase. This is the version of Urdu that is utilised so effectively by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in writing the *Asar-ul-Sanadid*. Sir Sayyid's usage of Urdu in a major non-fiction work revolutionised Urdu prose and firmly established its continued role of the language in nineteenth century scholarship: "Urdu suddenly found itself preoccupied, and capable of dealing successfully, with a very extensive range of religious, polemical, controversial, historical, social and personal writing."¹⁵⁰

Sir Sayyid and his archaeological text, then, take on a greater importance than the information contained within the text. The information is important, because it plays a significant role in informing the British about the history of Delhi, but its long-term impact and significance are altered in the face of the pivotal role being ascribed to the *Asar*, namely as evidence of the metamorphosis of a language and with it, the rise of an intellectual class within Urdu-speaking society. Gail Minault examines the role of Sir Sayyid in the so-called 'Delhi Renaissance' in the mid-nineteenth century, occurring

¹⁴⁹ Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, 1969, p. 107.

¹⁵⁰ Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, 1969, p. 108.

during a period when the city was unquestionably in decline.¹⁵¹ The period before the 1857 War of Independence marks an age where British and Indians were involved in an exchange of intellectual ideas, which allowed for the flourishing of local intellectuals. The continued use of Urdu as an administrative language aided an intellectual class in Delhi which was interested in Western discourse for what it had to offer Indians and Indian culture. They were already committed to the process of cultural examination and re-formation, having been involved in a “wistful remembrance of what was and what might have been.”¹⁵² This made the Delhi Renaissance a movement of preservation as much as it was a movement of revitalisation.¹⁵³ The presence of a text like *Asar* is then immediately understood; it represents the proud past of India, and also the continued involvement of Indians in remembering the past.

It is important to note here that the version of *Asar-ul-Sanadid* that has been translated and analysed here is the second edition, published in 1854, only seven years after the 1847 edition. The first edition is a very different text, written and published within eighteen months of Sir Sayyid’s move to Delhi following the death of his brother.¹⁵⁴ The research for this initial publication was a painstaking survey of Delhi and its environs conducted by Sir Sayyid often with the aid of Maulvi Imam Bakhsh Sahba’i, head of the Persian department of Delhi College. Sir Sayyid’s meticulous attention to detail is well described in this passage from his biography written by Altaf Husain Hali:

Conducting research into the buildings, which lay outside the city, was no easy task. Scores of these buildings had fallen down and were lying in ruins. Most of the

¹⁵¹ Gail Minault, “Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi & the ‘Delhi Renaissance’” in *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 287.

¹⁵² C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene”, 2002, p. 177.

¹⁵³ Gail Minault, “Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi & the ‘Delhi Renaissance’”, 1986, p. 290.

¹⁵⁴ Altaf Husain Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, 1994, pp. 48-9.

inscriptions were either illegible or incomplete and some were written in scripts, which no one knew how to read. The most important parts of some of the ancient buildings had been demolished and from the existing remains, which were scattered over a wide area the purpose for which the buildings had been erected, could not easily be determined. If the name of the founder happened to be contained in the inscription, references had to be checked with the available histories before a complete description could be written. Some of the older buildings had been so vastly altered that it was impossible to discover how they had originally been planned. In this way, writing a detailed account of some 125 buildings, tracing and reproducing the inscriptions in their exact form and drawing up the plans of each broken-down edifice posed many problems. Sir Sayyid found that some of the inscriptions on the Qutb Minar were too high to read. Therefore, in order to obtain an exact copy, he would sit in a basket, which had been suspended between two scaffolds parallel to the inscription. While he was carrying out this operation, his friend, Maulana Sahbai, would grow quite pale from fear.¹⁵⁵

The first edition was a success in that it attracted the attention of British scholars and paved the way for membership in the Royal Asiatic Society for Sir Sayyid. It has been called a ‘potboiler’ beginning to his career, which is true to some extent because he was an ambitious man and wanted to capture the attention of the British.¹⁵⁶ The text was picked up for translation into English, but before that could happen, a second, improved edition was asked for. Sir Sayyid edited this second edition with the aid of Arthur Roberts, Collector and Magistrate of Shahjahanabad and Mr. Edward Thomas, a Delhi Sessions Judge and well-known numismatist.¹⁵⁷ It was an improved edition because the number of buildings examined was increased; chronology provided in the text was made more precise and included tables for reference; sources of information were expanded and cited; an appendix of copies of inscriptions was added; and the language was altered from ornate, Persianate Urdu prose, replete with Persian verses to a more concise, factual, and sober tone.

These changes emphasize the close interaction between Sir Sayyid and his English counterparts as well as his willingness to alter his writing style to reflect their

¹⁵⁵ Altaf Husain Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁶ Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 1995, p. 332.

¹⁵⁷ C.W. Troll, “A Note on the early topographical work”, 1972, p. 139.

requirements for such a book. It is perhaps hasty to say that the change in the text is simply a result of British demands upon Sir Sayyid; his later work written for local Indian audiences also shows a concern for accuracy and critical engagement. Moreover, he continues with this form of writing, indicating the relevance of it to the general Indian public, his primary target audience.

There are many indicators pointing to a deliberate change of stance on Sir Sayyid's part. The fact that he chooses to list a large corpus of Delhi structures, from the major monuments like the Qutb Minar to minor buildings such as the Aurangabad Mosque is a significant fact. There are a total of 19 cities and forts & 134 buildings and monuments described in the second and third book. All these buildings collectively represent Delhi's history, and there is an unspoken emphasis that the lesser-known buildings are part of the social fabric and, hence, have a place in any text that talks of Delhi. This interest in social history is an intrinsic part of the text, as every description of buildings includes the current status of the building, and how it was used when the information was compiled. In my translated portions, this is most noticeable in the *Masjid-e-Ja'ami*, where the descriptions of the doorways of the mosque, focus entirely on the markets they house and the activities that take place in these locations. The same is true for many other buildings; in the much shorter description of the shrine of Amir Khusrau, the last sentence reads: "Every year on 17 Shawwal, at this shrine [*dargah*], there is a lively festival [*mela*], and during spring, the start of the season [*basant*] is also celebrated here."

Apart from such details, there is an emphasis upon the history of the building; when it was built, who built it, subsequent construction and repairs, etc. These histories

do not attempt to leave out any portion of the known history; instead they painstakingly recreate the chronology of the building as far as possible. There are even references to contemporary repair work on some of the monuments, such as the work by Captain Smith on Qutb Minar. Many books in this period fit in the genre of nostalgic remembrances of the former glory of India, but Sir Sayyid's descriptions seem to suggest the continued life of these buildings, and there is no hint of melancholy in his writing.¹⁵⁸ He is not wishing for a long gone era; the book is much more straightforward recording of information about Delhi's architecture, past and present. The information presented also follows a basic criterion, falling in with the preface's stated goal of providing texts for quick reference. There is purposely no extended analysis of buildings, save a few notable exceptions, because the *Asar* is a basic reference text meant for the edification of a wide audience. The use of a vernacular language to write the text is a clear indicator of this outreach by Sir Sayyid. Urdu was not a language to reach any elite audience; it was a thoroughly middle class language in the nineteenth-century, and writing a book in Urdu meant the book was intended for that class. Furthermore, Urdu also restricted the book's use to Northern India, the only place where the language was used.

The sources used within the text also point to the targeting of native Indian audiences. The references are overwhelmingly weighted towards medieval and early modern histories of India. The inclusion of Hindu and Buddhist monuments works in the same way, broadening his reach to non-Muslim Indians. The claim that the Qutb Minar is Hindu in origin is perhaps the most blatant and surprising item within the text because it diverges from the Muslim and Hindu dichotomies that are created in architectural style

¹⁵⁸ Nostalgia in literature, especially historical texts, is quite common and can be found in many other periods and regions. Michael Cooperson has written about descriptions of Baghdad that fall within this genre. Michael Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative" in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 13, 1996, pp. 99-113.

by the British and, by some Indian historians. It is a bold step, described by C.A. Bayly: “...Sayyid Ahmad’s description of Delhi displays similar affection for the Hindu and Jain temples which had arisen in the city.”¹⁵⁹ The continuing work of Sir Sayyid to unite Indians and promote certain aspects of Western lifestyle to them indicates Sir Sayyid’s focus upon Indians to transform themselves, something that is in marked contrast to the British.

Muhammad Sadiq describes Sir Sayyid as epitomising “the Indian Renaissance and all that it stands for—its ardour for life and action, its faith in the future, its distrust of authority, its optimism, and self-confidence.”¹⁶⁰ Perhaps he does because this text is revolutionary, it takes leaps that eminent historians like James Fergusson could not have even imagined, and takes back Indian history firmly into the hands of the Indian. The book takes ownership of the past by describing it in Sir Sayyid’s terms, where he is integrating Eastern and Western learning into a harmonious whole. It remains to be seen whether he is alone in this endeavour or whether it was an effort on the part of all Indian historians.

¹⁵⁹ C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene”, 2002, p. 177.

¹⁶⁰ Muhammad Sadiq, A History of Urdu Literature, 1995, p. 336.

Chapter 5: Contemporary Indian Historians

A result of the overwhelming presence of British academics in India has meant that few Indian historians are known, especially in Western scholarship. The few names that do occasionally pop up are only briefly covered, and little trace of them exists in later histories of colonial India and the writing of the Indian past. They are present, however, and they did make considerable contributions to the elucidation of Indian history. Some, like Sir Sayyid, operate within the British academic world and outside, and some only inhabit one of the two worlds. The two historians whose scholarship I will be examining, Ram Raz and Rajendralal Mitra, are both well established in the western traditions. They provide good comparisons to Sir Sayyid with their links to British academia, and their work is accessible in English. This chapter briefly analyses the work of these historians in order to place Sir Sayyid within a broader category of ‘Indian’ historians examining texts for any parallel trends within different narratives. Such an endeavour, however, may be worthless because it presupposes a particular mode of Indian history in the same manner as the Orientalist vision of the British, which assumes “that there exists a coherent, authoritative mode of understanding South Asia’s visual past.”¹⁶¹

Ram Raz

Little is known about Ram Raz. His only surviving English publication, the essay “Architecture of the Hindus” was published in 1834 where he is acknowledged as a “native judge and magistrate at Bangalore; corresponding member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.”¹⁶² The preface that accompanies the text provides

¹⁶¹ Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf, “Introduction”, 1994, p. 1.

¹⁶² Ram Raz, Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus, London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1834, title page.

some further biographical details, stating that he was born around 1790, at Tanjore in the Carnatic region, purportedly from a poor background and he was lucky to have received an education, especially one which included learning to read and write in English.¹⁶³ It seems that Raz was continually employed in government service, which, combined with his knowledge of English and many vernacular languages, eventually brought him to the attention of the British.

His English patrons actively encouraged him in scholarly enterprises, which included writing about Hindu architecture, resulting in the compilation of his essay, and being awarded membership in the Asiatic Society. Unfortunately, Raz died suddenly in 1833/34, and thereafter his contributions and memory faded into the background as an influx of British historians and archaeologists descended upon India and took over the production of knowledge of the Indian past.¹⁶⁴ Scholarship on Indian historiography during the nineteenth-century rarely mentions Raz; indeed there is limited information on local historians prior to the latter half of the century. Pramod Chandra's text *On the Study of Indian Art* is perhaps the only text where Raz is mentioned, albeit briefly, as an important figure in tracing Indian art history.¹⁶⁵

An examination of the essay reveals Raz's careful approach to architectural history. The text focuses on analysing a multi-volume Hindu treatise on architecture, sculpture and associated arts, collectively known as the *Silpa Sastra*. These treatises are complex, detailed documents, which provide instructions for the building of sacred Hindu spaces and the rituals that accompany construction. The examination of such documents

¹⁶³ Ram Raz, *Architecture of the Hindus*, 1834, p. vi.

¹⁶⁴ I presume Raz died in 1834 or shortly before; no date is given of his demise in the preface, which simply notes that news of his death reached Britain at the time this book was published.

¹⁶⁵ Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 10-11.

was quite common in this period among Orientalists who were reconstructing Indian history by primarily relying on literary sources. Raz introduces the material and some of the issues the source presents, including their limited survival and the dates ascribed to them: “The exact age of each of these treatises is very difficult to ascertain. Tradition gives most of them an antiquity altogether extravagant...”¹⁶⁶

His critical approach to both the source and its subsequent usage is unusual in a time when historians were still inclined to trust the veracity of primary sources. Chandra is full of praise for Raz’s methodology: “A reading of the book reveals a clear and sensible method whereby the author attempted to understand the form of South Indian architecture by referring to a Sanskrit work on architecture, and the living practitioners of the art, traditional architectural practice being very much alive at that time.”¹⁶⁷ Moreover, he laments that this approach was not taken up by other historians of the time, which would, in his opinion, have considerably advanced knowledge of Indian architecture. In contrast to Ram Raz, Sir Sayyid has little critical analysis of primary sources in the *Asar-ul-Sanadid*. He does, however, comment upon his descriptions, which are always backed by physical evidence, in common with Raz and Mitra. For example, in the description of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque site, Sir Sayyid contends that there is evidence of a pre-Islamic building besides the temple that still exists, as evidenced by remains of red bricks in the courtyard.

Raz’s primary gripe with the texts he studies is their paucity of technical information; he often comments on the emphasis upon ritual rather than architecture:

¹⁶⁶ Ram Raz, *Architecture of the Hindus*, 1834, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 1983, p. 10.

It may be proper to notice, however, that a considerable portion of the whole is occupied with a minute description of the mysteries, rites, and sacrifices to be performed on various occasions, in the building of temples, houses, villages, towns, and cities; the ceremonies attending the consecration of images; the mode of determining the propitious moment for commencing to lay the foundation of an edifice, as well as rules for predicting the future prosperity of him who causes the edifice to be raised, by the aspect of the stars, the situation for the building with respect to the cardinal points, and other astrological devices.¹⁶⁸

Despite these stated difficulties, Raz combs through the extant material to present all available information contained in the text. His examination is divided into architectural features; pedestals, bases, pillars, etc. The essay does move beyond a simple presentation of facts, using current examples of Hindu architecture to illustrate or qualify the information provided by the *Silpa Sastras*: “The pillars...are to be seen in a portico at *Tiruvana-malei*...they are probably modern improvements...”¹⁶⁹ Although the subject matter and the division of analysis (i.e. architectural forms in Raz’s essay and individual buildings in Sir Sayyid’s text) is different in Raz’s and Sir Sayyid’s work, they are similar in being very basic introductory texts with limited, concise information provided. Such an observation can be extended to most academic literature produced in the early colonial period, which sought to compile information before moving onto deeper examinations.

Raz does extend his analysis by comparing Indian architectural standards with Graeco-Roman and Egyptian ones: “The difference in Indian orders, consists chiefly in the proportion between the thickness and height of pillars; while that of the Grecian and Roman orders depends, not only on the dimensions of columns, but also on the form of the other parts belonging to them.”¹⁷⁰ The main significance of this analysis is that it

¹⁶⁸ Ram Raz, *Architecture of the Hindus*, 1834, p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ram Raz, *Architecture of the Hindus*, 1834, pp. 36-7.

¹⁷⁰ Ram Raz, *Architecture of the Hindus*, 1834, pp. 37-8.

seems to refute the prevailing perception that stone architecture in India was entirely derived from classical sources. Brief instances of non-compliance with accepted beliefs among Western Orientalists are a familiar refrain among local Indian scholars, something that only escalated in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century with the changing political climate in India. Another example of this is when Sir Sayyid challenges accepted Western constructs of archaeology by claiming the continuation of Hindu influence in Islamic architecture in the Qutb Minar. These contestations are essential in demonstrating the non-cohesive nature of Indian historiography in the nineteenth-century.

Overall, Ram Raz's work is important for making information available that had been inaccessible due to language barriers. It is an interesting coincidence that Raz's publication appeared around the same time as James Prinsep's translation of the Paali inscriptions. The importance accorded to primary sources as part of developing a base of knowledge regarding Indian history was a key component of initial British scholarship on India, with Sir William Jones and the Asiatic Society leading the way. This genre of writing continued well into the twentieth century but the volume diminished as most sources became available in translations and scholars moved on to the task of analysing and compiling the sources into coherent chronologies of Indian history and archaeology.

The bibliographic genre of Raz's writing also makes it difficult to judge where his work stands in the context of British Orientalising narratives of India. His research does not interact with the discourse; the use of the word 'Hindu' to describe the architecture is not following the nineteenth-century European tendency to see the world through a race-coloured lens, it simply references the examination of the quasi-religious texts, the *Silpa*

Sastra. Had Raz lived to publish more of his work, perhaps a better examination and analysis of his stance could be achieved.

There is a tendency to see Raz as being an anomaly, as one of the few known Indian scholars in a crowd of foreign academics. The truth, however, is that Ram Raz is not an anomaly because of his being Indian, but because he actually got noticed and included into Western scholarly efforts. The Indian public had been involved in producing histories and other literary material and were not passively allowing the British to subsume their efforts; they were operating in a separate field altogether, in local languages, which rendered them invisible to the Western eye. There were other texts that followed the early examples of poetic and panegyric histories, such as “The Conquerors of Hindustan” written by Maharaja Apurva Krishna in 1849, which focused on the later Mughals. Christopher Bayly talks about these histories and other literature which demonstrate the existence of a critical Indian ‘ecumene’ that was involved in a process of self-examination and reconstruction, what he describes as “a sense of cultural and political community and of criticism of the ruling powers.”¹⁷¹ Thus, when we examine Indian historians in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is more accurate to see them as integrating an existent local tradition of history writing with new tools and methodologies introduced by the British.

Rajendralal Mitra

Born in 1822 into a West Bengal family, the Mitras of Soora, Rajendralal Mitra was perhaps the most important Indian scholar of his time. His work in the field and his active participation in academic society doubtless had great influence in opening doors

¹⁷¹ C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene”, 2002, p. 178.

for other Indian scholars following his footsteps. He is, perhaps, the first mainstream Indian historian, seamlessly integrating himself into Western academia and the local intelligentsia, where his predecessors had existed in one group or the other. Mitra's exposure to Indian historical scholarship came when the Asiatic Society (of Bengal) hired him as its Assistant Secretary and Librarian in 1846. In his ten year tenure with the Society, Mitra was tasked with preserving the Society's acquisitions, aiding scholars with their research, and keeping track of the work of various branches of the Society, recording them in session minutes and journals.¹⁷² Mitra also served in the Asiatic Society in various capacities, including as its President in 1885.

His work for the Society had provided Mitra with a thorough education in the subject, which, combined with proficiency in various languages, aided his own research on Indian history. Sisir Mitra divides the body of his work into four categories: (i) bibliographic works, (ii) edition of texts, (iii) historical works, and (iv) Bengali literature.¹⁷³ In the first and second categories, Mitra was carrying on the work of Ram Raz and other scholars contributing to the corpus of primary Indian sources. The third category, which this section focuses upon, is Mitra's own examination of Indian history and the fourth category comprises articles written in Bengali, making information available to a wide demographic, speaking to Mitra's interest in promoting the study of India by Indians and for Indians.

In 1875 and 1888, Mitra published his two-volume major text, *Antiquities of Orissa*. He conducted the exploratory operation of Orissa's temples and sculptures

¹⁷² Sisir Kumar Mitra, "Raja Rajendralal Mitra" in *Historians and Historiography in Modern India*, S.P. Sen (ed.), Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1973, p. 3.

¹⁷³ Sisir Kumar Mitra, "Raja Rajendralal Mitra", 1973, pp. 4-9.

himself in 1868-1869, which was reported in great detail in the text, including many line drawings and lithographic illustrations of the temple complex creating an important source text for Orissa art and architectural history. The primary research formed the backbone of the book, with Mitra using them to provide his own interpretation of the architecture, religion and social history of Orissa. Much of the first volume was edited and reproduced in the 1881 publication, *Indo-Aryans: Contributions towards the elucidation of their Ancient and Medieval History*, which was a broad social and cultural history of Ancient India covering topics ranging from “Beef in Ancient India” to “Vestiges of the Kings of Gwalior”.¹⁷⁴ The interest of historians had certainly shifted from an interest in politics to a more anthropological examination of past societies, and Mitra’s inclusion of these subjects indicates that local scholars were taking cues from western scholarship and expanding their field of study.

The question then turns to whether Mitra fully accepts British conceptions of India along with his immersion into their institutions. The preface of *Indo-Aryans*, clearly demarcates the positions he holds counter to British historians, James Fergusson in particular: “Mr. Fergusson’s remarks [on the origin of Indian architecture] have not been of a comprehensive character, dealing with the subject in all its bearings, such as the public had a right to expect from a ripe scholar and antiquarian of his standing.”¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Mitra underscores the fact that his contention with Scotsman is based on Fergusson leaving out evidence from analysis because it ran counter to his claims. On the other hand, Mitra sees himself as a scientific, and therefore unbiased, researcher relying

¹⁷⁴ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans: Contributions towards the elucidation of their Ancient and Medieval History*, London: Edward Stanford & Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1881, Vol. I, pp. 354-88 & Vol. II, pp. 345-84.

¹⁷⁵ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. ii.

on logic to interpret his findings. This blatant disagreement with British academics is in stark contrast with the subtle disputes seen in Raz and Sir Sayyid's texts.

There are frequent instances in his text where Mitra actively contradicts the findings/conclusions of Western researchers although his contentions lie more with the lack of evidence than with matters of interpretation. For instance, he regards the claim that foreign artists, including the Greeks, remained in the Subcontinent after Alexander the Great's invasion, with scepticism: "...I know not on what authority this statement has been made."¹⁷⁶ This statement also reveals that not only was the refutation of western perceptions of India common among local scholars, but also that these contestations are possibly aimed at specific beliefs such as the influence of the Greeks upon Indian architecture, which Raz also contests. Mitra's critical analysis reveals a careful examination of materials and sources. He is particularly vehement about the care needed to decipher the Indian past: "Ancient Indian history, from its hazy character, has suffered particularly from hasty generalizations and *ex cathedra* assertions, and we cannot be too careful in guarding it against them."¹⁷⁷

Mitra does not always seek to repudiate the British, to whom he owed his career, and the preface ends with his acknowledgement of Alexander Cunningham's advice and corrections to his work.¹⁷⁸ His resistance to complying with British perceptions does not, however, mean his work is a dramatic departure from existing theories of history. Racial categorisation is the most conspicuous of these. In his argument that the inception of

¹⁷⁶ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. 9.

¹⁷⁷ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. 48.

¹⁷⁸ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. vi.

stone architecture in India was non-derivative [from the classical tradition], Mitra falls into the familiar descriptions of racial typecasting and differentiation:

It would be foreign to the subject of this essay to discuss at length the history of architecture among the Aryans from the time they issued forth from the plateau of Central Asia to people India, Persia, and diverse parts of Europe, but it is certain that one branch of them, the colonists in Greece, attained a higher pitch of excellence, if not in magnitude and therefore in majesty, but certainly in exquisite perfection of artistic beauty, elegance and taste, than the Semites, or the Turanians, ever did in any part of the world, and the argument, therefore, of the Aryans never having been a building race, may be rejected as gratuitous.¹⁷⁹

Race was a repeated refrain in all matters of the Occident and the Orient in the nineteenth-century; it was used to justify the continuation of colonisation, citing the inability of Oriental races to justly rule themselves and shun their old despotic ways, emphasizing the superiority of European races over others. It is clear from Rajendralal Mitra's text, however, that it was not only Western scholars and a wider public who framed the world in racial terms; it had permeated into a more general academic discourse. Further on in the text, Mitra introduces tables systematically dividing Indian architecture into various regional and racial categories.¹⁸⁰ He does accept that the classifications are adopted for expediency's sake, until a better system can be formulated, although he does not clarify what the flaws are. Furthermore, the use of tables is a thoroughly western influence with British scholars, such as Cunningham publishing texts entirely composed of tables for reference.¹⁸¹ This predilection for tables was also seen in the *Asar's* second edition, which included chronological tables as part of the changes suggested by Sir Sayyid's British patrons. The domination of Western scholarship and thought is also evident when looking at Mitra's sources; he refers almost exclusively to

¹⁷⁹ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. 35-6.

¹⁸¹ See: Alexander Cunningham, *Book of Indian Eras: with Tables for Calculating Indian Dates*, Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1970.

the works of British scholars, either for criticism or praise. The only non-Westerner he refers to is Ram Raz, who in Mitra's eyes is another Indian scholar working within the British establishment.¹⁸²

Although British dominance of studying India was achieved, there is also a tension in Mitra's work, revealing a nascent Indian nationalism. This sentiment is largely missing from Ram Raz's work, probably due to the difference in publication dates. Raz and Sir Sayyid published pre-War of Independence, whereas Mitra was publishing after. Indian history had inexorably shifted in 1857, and Indian views about the British presence in the Subcontinent were largely negative after this date.¹⁸³ Even though Mitra worked for the administration, he no doubt had sympathies for Indian nationalists. Tapati Guha-Thakurta talks about how Mitra actively engages with his Western education and British connections to elevate Indian greatness: "[Mitra's work] shows how Western knowledge, used on its own rigorous terms of proof and argument, could become an instrument for asserting the antiquity and autonomy of the Indian art tradition."¹⁸⁴

The opposing forces that act upon Mitra explain the contradictory nature of the text, which shifts from one discourse to the other in a bizarre dance. The scholars who followed Mitra, especially the likes of Ananda Coomaraswamy, the Sinhalese historian, were far more overt in their nationalist agendas and in contradicting British opinions.

¹⁸² Rajendralal Mitra, *Indo-Aryans*, 1881, p. 37-41.

¹⁸³ The same can be said of British views pre- and post-1857. India and Indians had always been subjects of great interest in their 'exotic-ness', in parts alluring but always tinged by a distasteful Otherness. 1857 served to strengthen negative perceptions of India, a fact that was seen in British literature dealing with India, both fiction and non-fiction. For more, see: Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 1994, pp. 163-165. These shifts of tone add another layer of complexity to nineteenth-century Indian historiography, one which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹⁸⁴ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations" in *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41.

Indian nationalism was a backlash to European theories. The different publication dates of Raz, Sir Sayyid and Mitra, ably illustrate a trajectory charting the changing nature of British-Indian relations. None of these histories are extremely controversial or pointedly anti-British, but they all contain hints, Mitra most prominently, which indicate a non-compliance with the ‘accepted’ theories of the British. Thomas Metcalf comments upon the differences between the Indians and the British: “One way of capturing the difference might be to say that Indian[s]...endeavoured to make the past, seen as flexible and fluid, into the present, while for the British their chief objective was to make the present appear to be the past.”¹⁸⁵ The next chapter looks at British imaginings of the Indian past, which will illustrate the differences between Indian and British ideas.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Metcalf, “Past & Present” Towards and Aesthetic of Colonialism” in Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 15.

Chapter 6: Colonial British Views of India

*What the colonial ruler had explained, he of course controlled...*¹⁸⁶

Large numbers of British citizens began making their way to India in the eighteenth-century as the East India Company gained a firm foothold in India as a quasi-government. The slow trickle of merchants had transformed into a flood of travellers from a large variety of backgrounds. By the early nineteenth-century, the British had established themselves in India and a vast administration had been set up, allowing greater numbers to settle into life in the lands of the Raj.¹⁸⁷ These visitors came to India often seeking their fortunes, but also attracted to the exotic allure of the Subcontinent. Their interest in this foreign land manifested itself through the production of a vast body of literature that sought to represent and understand India. These representations are of a mixed variety, in the form of travel journals, memoirs, picture-books, prints, and scholarly journals/texts. The subject matter varied immensely, as the British curiosity about the Subcontinent was multi-faceted; the dark-skinned natives and their customs, the remnants of various civilizations that had inhabited the land, and the geography. Documents of this nature can be divided into two primary categories: popular reading material and scholarly/‘scientific’ texts.

Academic texts sought to codify all facts about India and Indians. D. Lorenzen has said of nineteenth-century British Orientalists: “Their works are characterized by a meticulous concern for accuracy, an exhaustive collection of all available facts, and an

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture & Britain’s Raj*, Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989, p. 52.

¹⁸⁷ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants and Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 23.

almost obsessive avoidance of systematic generalization and evaluation.”¹⁸⁸ This manner of data collection led to a particular interest in Indian history. The key to understanding the present India, lay in unravelling the mysteries of the past. Historians, amateur and professional, turned their gaze to studying Indian texts and monuments. They formed societies, such as the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (est. 1784), where various gentlemen would congregate to hear papers on a variety of topics, including history. The absence of local written histories, especially prior to the medieval Muslim invasions, focused much attention upon archaeology and the existing monuments of past Indian civilizations. As such, a number of private citizens began excavating and documenting their findings. These individual efforts were replaced in the latter half of the nineteenth-century by government institutions, particularly the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which took over the task of discovering India’s past.¹⁸⁹

Another notable category of material was far more informal in nature, consisting of journals/memoirs and images of India. The former were accounts written by people, including many women, who came to India and settled there. These accounts are an invaluable source for the general trend of public views about India. British travellers and settlers were fascinated by the exotic nature of the Subcontinent, a vast land full of foreign people, customs, and scenery. Romanticism, in the first half of the nineteenth-century, lent itself well to shaping an image of India which, “...with its great rivers and

¹⁸⁸ D. Lorenzen, “Imperialism and Ancient Indian Historiography” in India: History and Thought, S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1982, p. 86.

¹⁸⁹ The ASI is the only institution that I discuss within this thesis in some detail. The other noteworthy institutions involved in shaping ideas about Indian art were art schools and museums. For more on this topic, see: Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Monuments, objects, histories: institutions of art in colonial and postcolonial India, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; Ray Desmond, The India Museum, 1801-1879, London: H.M.S.O., 1982; E.B. Havell, “Art Administration in India” in Journal of the [Royal] Society of Arts, Vol. 58, 1910, pp. 274-298; Cecil L. Burns, “The Function of Schools of Art in India” in Journal of the [Royal] Society of Arts, Vol. 57, 1908-09, pp. 629-650.

mountain ranges, its ancient ruins and colourful peasantry, appealed powerfully to those who sought out the picturesque.”¹⁹⁰ These romantic images were typecast firmly into the public’s mind by the mass production of paintings and prints of India for sale in England. The demand for these objects was such that artists made trips to India to create more images to sell. The British, both in India and England, were intensely fascinated by India and were constantly seeking means through which to understand it.

This chapter focuses upon British knowledge-production from the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth-century about India. I will focus on the subject of Indian architecture within the primary sources examined (which are not always art historical texts) and some of the reports produced by the Archaeological Institute of India. The first section examines academic scholarship and research, analysing work by James Fergusson and Alexander Cunningham and the institutions set up to systematise data collected into a ‘discipline’; the second section reviews two memoirs, those of Fanny Parkes and Emily Metcalf, as well as the paintings of Indian buildings produced by Thomas and William Daniell.¹⁹¹

British Academics: A ‘Scientific’ Examination

In the initial years of British presence in India, it was private citizenry that took on the study of Indian art history. Their goal was to gather information about the Indian past in order to piece together a history of the region. These individuals were very important in their documentation of monuments, objects, and manuscripts, which allowed for a much more comprehensive body of knowledge on the hitherto little-known subject

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, 1989, p. 16.

¹⁹¹ This chapter focuses upon British writings by the British about India. It is worth noting that in the eighteenth-century, the British commissioned Indians to write Indian histories. The scope of this thesis prevents a further examination of these texts. For more, see: R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India*, 1970, p. 6.

of Indian history/archaeology. Archaeological excavation, however, was not the first step taken in the pursuit of ‘deciphering’ India; it was language that took centre stage. There was a general unspoken consensus among British gentlemen that without a solid grasp of Indian languages, little understanding could be achieved of Indian history.¹⁹² The first English translation of a Sanskrit document was by Charles Wilkins, who translated the *Bhagavad Gita* in November 1784.¹⁹³ Wilkins’ translation was the opening of the floodgates and by the beginning of the nineteenth-century many documents had become available in European languages. Additionally various institutions for the study of Indian history, or more broadly Oriental history, were set up. For instance, in 1795, the French government established the *École des Langues Orientales Vivantes* and there, Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824) was the first teacher of Sanskrit in Europe.¹⁹⁴

The two key figures in deciphering native languages were Sir William Jones (1746-1794) and James Prinsep (1799-1841). Jones came to India in the late eighteenth century already an enthusiastic student of the Orient.¹⁹⁵ His presence and passion of India, led to the creation of the Asiatick Society in Bengal in 1784 and its journal, *Asiatick Researches*: “Under Jones and Hastings, the Asiatick Society became the catalyst for a sudden explosion of interest in Hinduism, as it formed enduring relations

¹⁹² The importance placed upon text before object also lies in the form of Oriental study being practiced which subordinated material culture to text: Thomas R. Trautmann & Carla M. Sinopoli, “In the Beginning was the Word”, 2002, p. 495.

¹⁹³ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India: a survey of the culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims*, New York: Grove, 1959, p. 5. The Society’s agenda is worth noting here: “...an institution for enquiring, among other things, ‘into the History...the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literatures of Asia’.” Quoted in Sourindranath Roy, *The Story of Indian Archaeology*, 1961, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, 1959, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ For more information on Jones and the Asiatic Society: S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 & O.P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India’s Past, 1784-1838*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988.

with the local Bengali intelligentsia and led the way to uncovering the deepest roots of Indian history and civilization.”¹⁹⁶ It is largely due to the untiring efforts of Sir William Jones that a solid base of primary sources was translated and made available. James Prinsep is also a key figure in British Oriental history, because of his translation of the Paali inscriptions on Asokan pillars, which transformed the study of Indian history and he is generally credited with the discovery of Mauryan India.¹⁹⁷ Newly understood inscriptions overturned many existing theories, and later excavations were greatly aided by the translation of the script. David Kopf describes these early Orientalists as being open to forming linkages with local scholars in Bengal on an equal footing and not as colonial masters and the period as: “...a history of two civilizations in contact, of the institutional innovations that served as networks of interaction between them, and of the unique patterns and universal processes of culture change that resulted from them.”¹⁹⁸ This openness is in stark contrast to British-Indian relations in the last decades of the nineteenth-century where the image of the educated Bengali had been transformed into one that threatened the Raj, and was an object of hatred informed by mockery and derision.¹⁹⁹ These divergences are very significant because they contest the unity of the Orientalist views and suggest the complexity of British responses to India.

The interest generated by the Society and its publications led to the mushrooming of similar societies throughout the Subcontinent, including the Archaeological Society of Delhi, which was established in 1847, under the patronage of the Hon. J. Thomason and

¹⁹⁶ William Dalrymple, “Introduction” in Begums, Thugs & Englishmen: The Journal of Fanny Parkes, New Delhi, London: Penguin, 2003, p. xiv.

¹⁹⁷ David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 169, 265-66.

¹⁹⁸ David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance, 1969, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Metcalf, Ideologies of the Raj, 1994, pp. 165-66.

with Sir Thomas Metcalf as its President.²⁰⁰ It is interesting to note that the Delhi Society opened membership to Indian scholars in the 1850s. In their statement outlining the role of Indian scholars in the Society, we can see shades of the British civilizing mission as well as a, perhaps, surprising acknowledgement of local cultural understanding: "...in the hope of introducing a taste among the native community for the study of Historical subjects...their local linguistic, or other knowledge may enable them to supply with greater readiness and accuracy than our Western Orientalists usually arrive at."²⁰¹ This lordly tone that benevolently declares a paradoxical message of favour and acknowledgement is a refrain, repeated by both scholars below and many others throughout the colonial period.

James Fergusson

The progress made by Sir William Jones and James Prinsep, and other Indologists, meant that the corpus of material regarding India's past had developed considerably by the mid-nineteenth century. Translations of local languages aided in elucidating the significance of monuments and, as a result, documentation of architectural history during the middle of the nineteenth-century achieved greater accuracy and a vast subject matter became available for discussion. The process of examining and

²⁰⁰ C.W. Troll, "A Note on the early topographical work", 1972, p. 141 & Sourindranath Roy, The Story of Indian Archaeology, 1961, p. 33. It is clear that both texts use the same source for their information on the Society, because they have very similar quotes for the Society's mission of investigating "by means of plans, drawings, and elevations by inscriptional, traditional and historical researches, and, if possible, by publications of the ancient remains, both Hindoo and Mahomedan, in and around Delhi..." Roy does not cite his source, but Troll does: Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi, 1850, Appendix, p. i. The society does not seem to have been very long lived, fading out of prominence very soon and there are only two extant volumes of this journal, published in 1850 and 1853. Unfortunately both volumes are extremely rare and I have been unable to locate a copy.

²⁰¹ Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi, 1853, p. 68, quoted in C.W. Troll, "A Note on the early topographical work", 1972, p. 141. Note: Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan is listed as one of the members.

cataloguing monuments still remained an individual pursuit, and a Scotsman, James Fergusson, took up this task very successfully.

Fergusson came to India as a businessman, a partner in a prosperous commercial establishment in India. During his years residing in India from 1829 to 1847, however, he became increasingly interested in researching the local architecture. He was convinced that documenting the monuments themselves would be of great use to interested scholars and became what Pramod Chandra describes as: “a veritable one-man architectural survey, sketching, drawing, making plans, taking careful notes, and, above all, doing some very hard thinking.”²⁰²

Rather than getting distracted by the foreign opulent nature of the buildings he was surveying, Fergusson focused upon classifying Indian architectural styles into different categories and did not attempt to link his findings to the western canon. The Victorian preoccupation with race as a causative factor of history, however, led him to order Indian architecture into ethnic and religious partitions, forcibly creating stylistic divisions between the various groups inhabiting India. This was never questioned despite the many buildings he encountered and documented which contradicted the unhesitating belief that architecture could demonstrate ethnographic and religious divisions.²⁰³ Novel though his approach to studying Indian architecture was, it remained mired within notions of western superiority, which unconsciously legitimised the British colonisation of India.

Fergusson’s work was presented in a series of publications, among which was the seminal work, *History of Indian and Far Eastern Architecture*, first published in 1866,

²⁰² Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 1983, p. 13.

²⁰³ Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 1983, p. 16.

with the final revised edition by Fergusson being published in 1876. An important article by Fergusson is one he presented before the Society of Arts in London in 1866 entitled, “On the Study of Indian Architecture”.²⁰⁴ The article presents us with a clear view of Fergusson’s racially derived views of Indian history; at the very outset, the clear distinction between “Hindu” and “Mohammedan” styles is established, a motif that reappears through the entire essay. Moreover, Fergusson’s categorisation of Indian art into “consecutive series, with well-defined boundaries” fits in with the prevailing Western preoccupation of classifying and ordering information.²⁰⁵ It is telling that he was acknowledged as a sort of Linnaeus for the study of Indian architecture.²⁰⁶

Fergusson’s essay is notable in its constructed narrative regarding the historiography of Indian art history. At the very outset, he recognizes the efforts of the Daniell brothers and James Prinsep in their contributions to the study of Indian architecture, effectively placing them at the positions of pioneers in the field and discounting any previous texts that may have existed upon the topic. In fact, Fergusson contends that there are no written histories of India prior to the British presence.²⁰⁷ It cannot be said that Fergusson did not know of the existence of Indian historical sources: medieval Indo-Muslim court histories and treatises such as the Hindu *silpa sastras* were commonly known (some had even been translated into English) by the time this paper was read. Ultimately, Fergusson refuses to see these sources as valid histories and, hence, he effectively sidelines the work of Indians in examining their own history.

²⁰⁴ James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture, London: John Murray, 1867.

²⁰⁵ James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture, 1867 p. 6.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Metcalf, An Imperial Vision, 1989, p. 35.

²⁰⁷ James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture, 1867, p. 22.

Fergusson's actions are classically Orientalist; his discourse is constructed to see the West and Western actors as making the Orient understandable in all ways: "I now see that the whole subject [Indian Architecture] may be made intelligible."²⁰⁸ The local populace has no place in this construction, being passive actors in this narrative. They have no place in his essay except as relics of the past, despite his claim that Indian architecture is a living tradition. Said speaks of this exterior authority in *Orientalism*: "...the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, *renders its mysteries plain for and to the West* [italics added]."²⁰⁹ It takes away agency of the local population and limits contesting views.

It is interesting that there is no question whether India can be fully 'understood'; it is implied that a full examination of the material, i.e. India, and its documentation can lead to a finite answer about the nature of Indian-ness. This is tied into Fergusson's own character, as Chandra describes him: "...his penchant for ill-tempered and offensive polemic, his inclination to eccentric and extreme statement, and his gratuitous espousal of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority over the Asiatic, a mentality that permitted him continually to deny conclusions regarding Indian art that flowed inexorably from the force of his own logic."²¹⁰ This attitude is reiterated by a review of Indian history, again constructed on racial lines and the continued insistence of the separated-ness of Indian society: "...the great fact of Indian ethnography is that all these various people retain most of their individuality to the present day...and all of them have left most distinct

²⁰⁸ James Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 1867, p. 6.

²⁰⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, pp. 20-1.

²¹⁰ Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 1983, p. 12.

traces of their peculiarities in the buildings they erected.”²¹¹ Fergusson is, admittedly, not the only scholar to have perceived India this way, he is simply a prime example of this belief, which persisted for the entire colonial period, and even beyond. It is only in recent years, in the post-colonial, post-structural era, that there has been an acceptance of greater complexity within South Asian art. This is due to the pervasiveness of established tropes and their acquisition of the status of ‘truth’, in itself a construction of power.

This fixed perception is iterated in two distinct arguments within the article: the racial categorisation of India/Indian architecture, which I have already presented, and a contention that architecture is the most accurate method of learning about Indian history. Therein lies another assumption; that architecture is static in its form despite being a living tradition: “...it is more distinct, that it never shifts its locality and that it does not change with time... We can stand actually... beside the people who were hewing the mountain into form and we can read the thoughts they then were wishing to express.”²¹² This second belief is intrinsically linked with the first in seeing India as something that could be deconstructed into smaller separate comprehensive units of knowledge.

Fergusson’s very careful recording of numerous Indian monuments and the subsequent publications that followed his findings placed him as the pre-eminent architectural historian of India during his time and after. He revolutionised the field of Indian archaeology. His additions to existing bodies of knowledge notwithstanding, Fergusson’s major achievement was to legitimise the study of Indian art history as a worthwhile endeavour *despite* its difficult fit with the prevailing canon of art. It is worth

²¹¹ James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture, 1867, pp. 9-10.

²¹² James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture, 1867, p. 11.

noting that he saw architectural history in India not through a ‘European’ lens *per se* but as a subject in its own standing, and even something that Europeans could learn from:

...there is no form into which stone can be carved which is not beautiful, if it is appropriate to the purpose for which it is employed; and that no one form is preferable in architecture to any other form, except in so far as it is better adapted constructively for the situation in which it is employed, or artistically more aptly expresses the purpose of the building of which it forms a part.²¹³

Such a statement is unusual, to say the least, coming from a British historian in the nineteenth-century. This fact is emphasized by the discussion that followed the reading of the paper. The comments by various members of the Society betray their hesitation to accord Indian architecture equal status with European art. For instance, Henry Cole lauds Fergusson’s contributions to increasing knowledge about Indian architecture, but did not want to see it imitated.²¹⁴ Similarly, another member, Peter Graham, decries the imitation of European styles by Indians.²¹⁵ Indian architecture remained firmly fixed as an interesting object of study, to be documented and understood, and nothing else. This was to be the dominant mode of thought for the entire colonial period and beyond.

Alexander Cunningham and the ASI

The institutional body of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) soon succeeded amateur antiquarians. The director of the Survey, Alexander Cunningham, is the other notable personality in the nineteenth century who added to the growing knowledge of Indian antiquity. Cunningham came to India as a cadet in 1833, and remained in the army until his retirement in 1861.²¹⁶ During his time in the service of the

²¹³ James Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 1867, p. 15.

²¹⁴ James Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 1867, p. 26.

²¹⁵ James Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 1867, p. 27.

²¹⁶ R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India*, 1970, p. 23.

Bengal Engineers, Cunningham pursued the study of Indian antiquities, firmly establishing that his chronology was based upon inscriptions rather than style (which had been Fergusson's method). British historians fell firmly into these two categories of methodology, with most following Cunningham and his predecessors' emphasis on language as the primary source material for Indian history. In 1861, Cunningham's already brilliant career in Indian antiquities achieved another milestone, as the first Director of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). He had been advocating for government involvement in the study of Indian history since 1848, when he wrote an article in *Asiatick Researches* entitled, 'Proposed Archaeological Investigations'.²¹⁷

This new title effectively made him *the* authority on India. It must be noted that Cunningham was already considered the foremost expert on Indian archaeology even prior to his appointment as Director, but the official sanction of his expertise propelled him beyond any other scholar in India. It was with this influence that Cunningham pronounced aesthetic judgment upon Indian architectural styles: "Just as the excellence of Hellenistic art was associated with the greatness of the civilisation of Periclean Athens, the 'superior' qualities which the British perceived in Buddhist art came to hinge on a broader construct of the 'purity' of Buddhist religion and culture in India."²¹⁸ The promotion of Buddhist art as the pinnacle of Indian achievement, of course, was closely related to the Gandhara antiquities, which were Graeco-Roman influenced, fitting into the Western canon.

Cunningham's early publications were related to numismatics and chronology, including technical texts like a book about conversion of the different calendars used in

²¹⁷ Sourindranath Roy, *The Story of Indian Archaeology*, 1961, p. 35.

²¹⁸ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa Archaeology", 1998, p. 33.

India. As the Director-General of the ASI, Cunningham was responsible for yearly reports on all ongoing excavations. Under Cunningham's directorship, the ASI had embarked upon a systematic process of locating and documenting all historic sites that occurred within primary texts, solidifying the relationship between material and literary evidence in Indian archaeology.²¹⁹ This process was recorded in the yearly reports for which Cunningham always wrote a preface and sometimes an introduction. These reports demonstrate the systematic institutionalisation of Indian art history into various bodies of knowledge from a field, which had for the better part of a century been an individual pursuit. This changeover resulted in some differences in the basic premises that governed the study of Indian art but in reality, little changed except for better organisation of the discipline.

The preface of the very first set of reports by the ASI recognizes this change of approach:

Hitherto the Government has been chiefly occupied with the extension and consolidation of empire, but the establishment of the Trigonometrical Survey shews that it has not been unmindful of the claims of science. It would rebound equally to the honour of the British government to institute a careful and systematic investigation of all the existing monuments of Ancient India.²²⁰

The introduction to this first set of reports is an interesting read, sketching out the development of Indian archaeology from Sir William Jones onwards, recognizing primarily the efforts of British historians. James Prinsep is highly 'decorated' within this chronology. This is partly for his discovery, but probably also a reaction to his sudden, early death at the age of 39 years: "James Prinsep had done his work; for all his brilliant

²¹⁹ Thomas R. Trautmann & Carla M. Sinopoli, "In the Beginning was the Word", 2002, p. 499.

²²⁰ Alexander Cunningham, Four Reports made during the years 1862-63-64-65, Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972, p. iv.

discoveries, which would have been the labour of ten or a dozen years to most other men, were made during the last three years of his career...”²²¹

Cunningham’s narrative is based around those he considers important to the field, even if he disagrees with them. James Fergusson, of course, makes an appearance in this tale, first praised and then criticised for his methodology: “I differ from Mr. Fergusson on this point, as I consider that inscriptions are, beyond all doubt, the most certain and the most trustworthy authority for determining the dates of Indian monuments, whether buildings or caves.”²²² This is, of course, the focal point of the entire essay which lauds the work of translators repeatedly: “...I beg it to be distinctly understood that we field archaeologists make no claim to more than ordinary scholarship, and...we can truly ascribe our success in great measure to the hitherto difficult path having been smoothed by our great Sanskrit scholars...”²²³

The introduction establishes a particular chronology of discourse, where the characters making an appearance represent the worthy scholars of the field, whose work has authority in interpreting the Indian past. Moreover, Cunningham gives himself the authority to decide who is worthy of notice. There is one Indian scholar who makes an appearance in the introduction, Dr. Bhau Daji, whose work in Western Indian archaeology is recognised for its important contributions to the field. Noticeable is the condescension with which Cunningham speaks of Daji, whose later work he considers faulty and full of error: “But in spite of these errors due to hasty opinions and rash speculations, which will no doubt be modified hereafter by more mature judgement, I feel

²²¹ Alexander Cunningham, *Four Reports*, 1972, p. XVII.

²²² Alexander Cunningham, *Four Reports*, 1972, p. XX.

²²³ Alexander Cunningham, *Four Reports*, 1972, p. XLIII.

that Dr. Bhau Daji is a worthy successor to Dr. Stevenson...²²⁴ The wording of this disagreement is very different from that dealing with Fergusson, who is clearly an equal to Cunningham, whereas Daji is not.

The first four reports of the ASI are written by Cunningham; later editions have him writing a preface with reports by various officers working in the department. The initial report includes an exploration of Delhi, which is described as a series of ruins. Cunningham's report relies upon a variety of historical sources, both European (e.g. early travellers to India, like William Finch) and Indian (e.g. court histories). The report of Delhi's history as a city is similar to that of Sir Sayyid's but considerably longer and more detailed, as well as focused entirely on the political history of the city's various capitals. Sir Sayyid does make an appearance in the text, when the Qutb Minar's origin is discussed, primarily for his argument of Hindu origin to be discussed and eventually disproved.²²⁵ Cunningham's consistent reference to Sir Sayyid is notable for giving him credence as a scholar, even if only to disprove his work. The text continues in this vein of reporting various facts of the cities surveyed and the interpretation of scholars, which Cunningham then passes judgement on. It is reasonable to suggest that Alexander Cunningham felt emboldened in his position of authority to examine arguments and evaluate them. His background certainly gave him some authority but he, like Fergusson and many others, took on the mantle of expert all too easily and with a great deal of finality in his verdicts. This was a predilection of British academics that assumed authority in all matters India, and although their views differed and they argued amongst themselves of the validity of various theories, they contained these disagreements within

²²⁴ Alexander Cunningham, Four Reports, 1972, p. XXXV.

²²⁵ Alexander Cunningham, Four Reports, 1972, pp. 189-94.

their own societies, leaving the native Indian public as onlookers and not as active participants.

The other fundamental issue with Cunningham's work and the ASI is its narrow approach to history caused by a strict reliance on documents as the main outline for Indian history.²²⁶ By limiting the investigation of archaeology to a single source of information, which had been acknowledged throughout the nineteenth century as an unsatisfactory source of history, the ASI was liable to error in its investigation and also to missing entire swathes of history that had been lost from written sources, such as the Indus Valley Civilization. The long-term consequence of Cunningham's approach was that archaeological investigations in the Subcontinent continued to use this methodology well into the twentieth-century.

These two historians represent entirely different methodologies in their approach to India, but their combined work informed the definitive opinions on Indian art for decades, eventually replaced by nationalists and post-colonialists. Yet, to this day, Fergusson's text is considered seminal, and Cunningham is immortalised in his role as the founder of the Archaeological Survey.

Travel Memoirs and Artists

The prospect between those lofty eminences which every now and then rose in solemn grandeur before us, was sublime beyond conception: glens so dark and deep that the powers of vision were baffled by their profundity, and the tall spires which towered majestically above them, hooded by light feathery clouds, presenting a contrast at once the grandest and most picturesque, exhibited altogether a scene of singular and wild magnificence.²²⁷

As the British presence in the Subcontinent grew, so did the curiosity of the public in England about this new, foreign frontier. A market for writings and illustrations

²²⁶ Thomas R. Trautmann & Carla M. Sinopoli, "In the Beginning was the Word", 2002, p. 500.

²²⁷ Rev. Hobart Caunter, The Oriental Annual or Scenes of India, London: Bull & Churton, 1835, p. 14.

was created and writers and artists alike sought to fulfil that niche.²²⁸ They travelled around India recording their perceptions of the Orient, describing the exotic locations and people they encountered. The India imagined within these portrayals was manipulated to fit in with existing visions. This construction was not necessarily a conscious decision: “Like imperial policymakers, artists, too, despite their personal perceptions and predilections, shared in that dream and illusion and helped perpetuate the myth.”²²⁹ Their publications reflect the Romanticism of the age; the Indian past was imagined as a series of picturesque ruins, remnants of a once-great civilization (see fig. below).²³⁰ At the same time, opinions of the Subcontinent were coloured by a mixture of revulsion and fascination. India was too vibrant, too opulent for the rather puritanical British.



Figure 1: William Daniell, "Kutnallee Gate, Gour", engraving from *The Oriental Annual*, 1835

²²⁸ For more on this subject, see: Margery Sabin, *Dissenters and Mavericks: Writings about India in English, 1765-2000*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

²²⁹ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants and Emperors*, 1986, pp. 16-7.

²³⁰ M. Archer, *Indian Architecture & the British, 1780-1830*, Feltham: Country Life Books, 1968, p. 33.

These encounters are recorded from a non-scholarly perspective, but they also follow an almost academic style of codification and examination. For instance, *The Oriental Annual or Scenes in India*, a three volume series putting together a descriptive account of India with engravings of ‘Indian’ scenes contains many passages which have the feel of nineteenth-century scientific accounts.²³¹ Similarly, the paintings are precisely copied, if posed, images of animals, people, and architecture. They are often considered the first channel through which the British became familiar with the buildings of India.²³² These documents constitute a key component in an examination of the British understanding of India, through their importance in framing the discourse that defined India. The British were quite prolific in producing these texts and images: “No other race or nation has left such accurate documentation of their imperial venture as the British,” say Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia.²³³ A happy by-product of these extensive records is that since many of the buildings and locations catalogued no longer exist, it is only because of entries in journals and paintings that we even know of their existence.

Thomas and William Daniell

In 1786, the little-known artist Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) took a trip to India, accompanied by his nephew, William (1769-1837). The Daniells were part of a whole host of professional artists who went to India to amass a fortune, as opportunities in Britain were few. Thomas Daniell had seen the success of artists like Tilly Kettle, George Willison, and most notably, William Hodges (1744-97). Hodges’ success as a landscape

²³¹ For instance, see: Rev. Hobart Caunter, *The Oriental Annual*, 1835, pp. 51, 109 & 181.

²³² Mildred Archer, *Indian Architecture & the British*, 1968, p. 64.

²³³ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants and Emperors*, 1986, p. 15.

artist made Daniell aware of the growing romantic awareness of the past in Britain.²³⁴

Both the Daniells were talented topographic artists and willing to trek across India, which they did for seven years, painstakingly amassing a vast stock of sketches.²³⁵ They would continue to use these sketches for the rest of their lives.

The advantage the Daniells had over other earlier artists was that the ever-increasing reach of the East India Company widened their scope of Indian scenery to illustrate. Delhi, in particular, was no longer under the control of the Marathas and, in 1789, they reached the city that Hodges had been unable to, finding it “so crowded with buildings and ruins that they were to stay there for two and half weeks.”²³⁶ After many years moving across the country, the Daniells returned to England and published to great acclaim, six volumes entitled *Oriental Scenery*, a series of 144 aquatints of Indian scenes. The series was influenced by William Hodges’ book, *Select Views*, which had been published sometime between 1786 and 1788, and provided a ready model for successful travel books. *Oriental Scenery* expanded upon *Select Views*, and diverged from the more picturesque mode Hodges applied to his work, emphasizing greater accuracy. This attention to detail and authenticity increased their influence and their market. Scholars and architects used the illustrations as a compendium of Indian design.²³⁷

Oriental Scenery’s corpus included a wide variety of images, all of which incorporated the various requisite elements required of Indian scenes; vast landscapes, native inhabitants, and architectural elements, often in the form of ruins. “The Water-fall

²³⁴ Mildred Archer, Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794, London: Thames & Hudson, 1980, p. 9.

²³⁵ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, From Merchants and Emperors, 1986, p. 104.

²³⁶ Mildred Archer, Early Views of India, 1980, p. 46.

²³⁷ Mildred Archer, Early Views of India, 1980, p. 230.

at Puppenassum in the Tinnevelly District” (see fig. below) is a good example of this conflation of these components.²³⁸ The enormous rocky cliffs and thundering waterfalls set up a picturesque backdrop to the tiny figures, in their foreign clothing and complexion, worshipping the rock carvings, provide the perfect idealised India. Pal and Dehejia describe this: “...they have become almost stereotypes of British art with Indian subjects.”²³⁹



Figure 2: Thomas & William Daniell, “The Water-fall at Puppenassum in the Tinnevelly District”

Even more specific among these archetypes was the banyan tree, which grew all over India, was revered by Hindus, and fascinated Europeans with its drooping aerial roots. The tree provided a perfect stage for casting India, accompanied by a temple and with Indians often sitting in the shade provided by the intertwined trees (see fig. below). It is undeniable that the Daniells and other artists specifically sought out these typecast images, perhaps even combining elements of various images to create the ‘perfect’ Indian

²³⁸ Note: This site no longer exists as a dam was built in place, providing a good example of the important service these images now have in our reconstruction of Indian cities and landscape.

²³⁹ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, From Merchants and Emperors, 1986, p. 40.

image. It is noticeable that the landscape regularly overwhelms the built architecture in these aquatints, suggesting the monumental nature of Indian geography, which no Indian style of architecture could conquer.



Figure 3: Thomas & William Daniell, “Hindu Temples at Agouree, on the River Soane, Bahar”

Delhi was central to the Daniells’ success and they capitalised on their opportunity by sketching as many of the ruins as they could. Among the most celebrated of these images is the enormous sketch (28 x 51 in.) of the Delhi observatory, known as Jantar Mantar.²⁴⁰ Thomas and William were very taken by the gigantic observatory instruments that made up the structure, as were other Westerners (see section on Emily Metcalf below). This sketch (see fig. below), more than any other in the Daniell collection, embodies the same heightened level of the picturesque that Hodges’ images

²⁴⁰ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, From Merchants and Emperors, 1986, p. 108.

have. The ruinous state of the monument is noted in the cracks of the structures and the discolouration on the sides. Indian soldiers scattered through the ruins emphasize the enormity of the instruments, as do the empty stretches in the background, where another immense instrument is visible.



Figure 4: Thomas & William Daniell, “Jai Singh’s Observatory, Delhi”, 1790

These idealised landscapes notwithstanding, there are sketches which fall better into the category of architectural drawings, such as were picked up by academic groups like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, with whom Thomas Daniell maintained contact.²⁴¹ The sketch of the Jamia Masjid in Delhi, has a draftsmanlike quality to its rendering (see fig. below). Each detail is rendered with care, and the proportions seemingly accurate; the image could easily have been produced for an academic paper rather than a travel series where the image must attract even if it does so through false or constructed portrayals.

The Daniells’ work was instrumental in perpetuating an Orientalist notion of India. They chose to construct their images as such because they were following the

²⁴¹ Mildred Archer, Early Views of India, 1980, p. 38.

market demand; their agenda was not imperialist, rather it was capitalist. The notion of India as an exotic nation with its untamed landscape and desolate ruins was so embedded in the Western imagination that a more ‘real’ image would not have sufficed, and the Daniells would have not achieved the financial success that they did. Oriental India became hostage to a cyclical process, which saw the same images reused continually for the entire colonial period because they were profitable, and fit in with accepted notions, and also because they served the agenda of the British government. This is not to say that Thomas and William Daniells’ sketches served no other purpose beyond being marketable items. Their travels and its documentation were extremely valuable to cartographers of the East India Company, as they went to new, uncharted territory.²⁴²



Figure 5: Thomas & William Daniell, “The Jama Masjid, Delhi”, 1797

²⁴² Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, From Merchants and Emperors, 1986, p. 39.

Thomas and William Daniell were not the only artists to travel to India and make their fortune but they were among the most influential. Their aquatints and engravings were reused and copied by dozens of publications dedicated to the Orient. Their success was perhaps a result of the careful combination of ‘realism’ with the ‘picturesque’ satisfying a variety of demands by audiences eager to learn about India. The real decline in prints and paintings came with the advent of photography, which dramatically altered British perceptions of India: “...it was the realistic images of photographers that awakened their audience to the reality of an India that was not always so palatable.”²⁴³ These photographs were equally constructed but they could not [and perhaps would not] succumb to the idealised mythic India that for so long had dominated British imagination.

Fanny Parkes

Fanny Parkes moved to India with her husband, who served with the East India Company, in 1822 and lived there for twenty-four years. Her adventurous nature and intellectual propelled her into travelling extensively around the Subcontinent, learning about the land and its natives. These travels and her life in India are described in her memoirs, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*. William Dalrymple describes Parkes as “one of the last English writers to believe—or even to want to believe—that mutually respectful relationships [between the Indians and the British] were possible or even desirable.”²⁴⁴ The victory of the British over France in the Seven Years War (1756-63) established their military superiority and they were unquestionably the dominant power in the Indian Subcontinent. By 1793, the British had ceased to think of their time in India as a temporary stay and the administration had adopted a more

²⁴³ Pratapaditya Pal & Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants and Emperors*, 1986, p. 16.

²⁴⁴ William Dalrymple, “Introduction”, 2003, p. xxi.

aggressive imperialist attitude.²⁴⁵ When Parkes came to India, the superior attitude of the British had become normalised and there was little Romantic wonder left in the British residents of India. Fanny Parkes, however, did not fall in with these conventions and saw India as a great land, full of wonders and beauty.

Parkes, herself the daughter of a colonial officer, was well versed in living in a colony and accepted her changed lifestyle with ease, throwing herself into exploring India. It is clear that for all her travels, Parkes' vision of India remains a mythic vision, embedded in a Romantic fantasy of the Orient. The 'other-ness' of India is evident in her descriptions: "...we ascended the bank to Daraganj, to see the inner court, and found it filled with elephants, *tattoos*, cows, and natives."²⁴⁶ Her trek to see the Taj Mahal via the river, is full of scenes of 'Indian' beauty, portrayals that conjure otherworldly, untouched realms of the past: "This river is very picturesque; high cliffs, well-covered with wood, rising abruptly from the water: here and there a Hindu temple, with a great papal tree spreading its fine green branches around it: a ruined native fort: clusters of native huts: beautiful stone *ghāts* jutting into the river..."²⁴⁷

The architecture of India, particularly the Taj Mahal and the ruins of Delhi, only accentuate Parkes' romanticism. The tragic tale of Mumtaz Mahal that accompanies the Taj Mahal is only the icing on the cake. There are moments in this tale when Parkes takes on the role of a historian, with her careful examination of buildings and related historical and geographical context: "The new city of Shahjahanabad lies on the west bank of the Jumna, in latitude 28° 36' North...about seven miles in circumference and is surrounded

²⁴⁵ D. Lorenzen, "Imperialism and Ancient Indian Historiography", 1982, p. 90.

²⁴⁶ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen: The Journal of Fanny Parkes*, William Dalrymple (ed.) New Delhi, London: Penguin, 2003, p. 68.

²⁴⁷ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 169.

on three sides by a wall of brick and stone...’’²⁴⁸ Furthermore, Parkes often decries the general neglect of monuments and argues the need for better conservation.

It is clear that she is well read on the subject of Indian architecture; her classification of the Taj Mahal dome’s egg-shape as typical of Islamic architecture versus the semicircular domes that Hindus prefer suggests her education on the subject.²⁴⁹

Additionally, Parkes mentions reading an account of Delhi, *Capt. Skinner’s Travels*, and quotes passages from the *Asiatic Journal*, that betrays her familiarity with the multiple genres of literary material on India that were available at the time.²⁵⁰ Her admiration of the building’s form is tied in with European aestheticism. For instance, when speaking of the Taj Mahal complex, she is careful to point out the ‘non-garish’ colour of the red stone used: “The red granite is of a sober and dingy reddish colour, and looks very handsome in buildings; the stones are very large, and generally beautifully carved...’’²⁵¹

It is necessary to point out that Parkes was not wholly positive about India and Indians, there are moments in her writing where she criticises Indian practices: “Nothing is so shocking, so disgusting, as the practice of burning bodies; generally only half-burning them and throwing them into the river.’’²⁵² Despite her great admiration of the Subcontinent and her people, there is a distinction between European society and a ‘never the twain shall meet’ attitude persists even in Fanny Parkes’ view. When she meets an

²⁴⁸ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 304.

²⁴⁹ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 179.

²⁵⁰ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, pp. 174 & 207.

²⁵¹ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 184.

²⁵² Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 167.

Englishmen, Colonel Gardner, who is married to a local lady, it is clear that she views the Colonel as an odd, eccentric man, who is a captivating curiosity for her.²⁵³

These hints of an underlying Orientalist perspective make Parkes' criticism of Europeans even more interesting, though not surprising. She sees them as disruptive to the 'natural' functioning of Indian society, their presence in public places is like a blemish to the scene: "I stopped there [Betaizor] for an hour to sketch the *ghāt*...no Europeans are there—a place is spoiled by European residence."²⁵⁴ It is understandable that Parkes does not like British encroachment and alteration of Indian monuments, such as having a band playing on the Taj Mahal pavilion. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see how much she distances herself from Western society. It can be argued that Parkes' interest mirrors the academic interest in India, which finds the Subcontinent fascinating, and worth studying, but not worth emulating. Moreover, the vision of India she creates, and that is created by academics, necessitate a preservation of India and Indians '*in situ*' and European interaction disrupts this freeze frame. It is appropriate that Fanny Parkes calls herself a pilgrim, reiterating India's special place. The concluding sentences of the journal affix the dreamlike Indian fantasy: "...surrounded in the quiet home of her native land by the curiosities, the monsters, and the idols that accompanied her from India, she looks around and dreams of the days that are gone."²⁵⁵

Emily Metcalf

Emily Metcalf, known as Lady Clive Bayley after her marriage, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Metcalf, who worked in the Indian Service and was Delhi Resident

²⁵³ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, pp. 207-215.

²⁵⁴ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 175.

²⁵⁵ Fanny Parkes, *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen*, 2003, p. 354.

[essentially a diplomat for the British government].²⁵⁶ Although she was born in Delhi, Emily and her siblings were sent back to England as was common among British residents of India. At the age of seventeen, Emily made her way back to India, and two years later married the then Under-Secretary to the Foreign Department. Emily's memoirs were written in combination with a text put together by Sir Thomas for his daughters, *Reminiscences of Imperial Delhi*, while they were in England. *Reminiscences* is an illustrated journal putting together descriptions of Delhi buildings and culture. Several Indian artists produced the paintings in the book, while working for the Company under Sir Thomas' commission, only one of whom, Mazhar Ali Khan, is identified by his signature.²⁵⁷

Emily Metcalf's memoirs are different from Fanny Parkes, probably because of the differing social status and character of the authors. Emily does not have the same wild and adventurous spirit as Fanny, nor does she travel as much. Her trip back to Delhi does recall some of the same wonder and excitement of Fanny's trip to Agra: "I witnessed every hour and the lavish hospitality which was then such a marked feature of Indian life, were all new and delightful experiences to me, a simple girl fresh from a very retired home in England."²⁵⁸

The initial journal entries are recollections of Emily's early childhood in Delhi, and shed more light upon the colonial lifestyle in India than upon the country itself: "I remember the green sward round Government House and the large round stone balls at

²⁵⁶ Lt. Col. John Mildmay Ricketts MC, "Introduction" in *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, M.M. Kaye (ed.), Exeter, UK: Webb & Bower, 1980, p. 6.

²⁵⁷ Lt. Col. John Mildmay Ricketts MC, "Introduction", 1980, p. 12.

²⁵⁸ Emily Metcalf, *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, M.M. Kaye (ed.), Exeter, UK: Webb & Bower, 1980, p. 115.

the side of the carriage drive up to the house—these I recognised years after, in the same place.”²⁵⁹ These wistful memories aside, the rest of the text is heavily influenced by Sir Thomas’ writings; Emily does pay much attention to Indian architecture and greatly appreciates it. Another difference between Emily and Fanny can be detected here; where Fanny Parkes is quick to note the negative actions of the British in despoiling Indian architecture, Emily has a more naïve approach. She seems to deny any malicious destruction on the part of the British.²⁶⁰

Emily’s records of Delhi architecture are not very detailed, probably because of Sir Thomas’ work, which is sufficiently detailed, and does not bear replicating. Instead, Emily intersperses description within accounts of her own activities in the city:

“Separated from the city by this great wall, [the palace] was open to the river all along one side of it, where sublimely beautiful buildings were erected, intermixed with gardens.”²⁶¹ It is interesting to go through Sir Thomas’ descriptions which have much the same information as could have been found in academic texts of the period, including many of the misconceptions Europeans harboured about Indian architecture, including the purported involvement of European architects in designing and building many of the monuments in Delhi and Agra.²⁶² The two texts combined leave the impression of a family highly aware and interested in the aesthetics in architecture, with little or no involvement with natives save servants.

The memoirs are an interesting mix of anecdotes and Delhi life in the early nineteenth-century. They are significantly different from many of the memoir cum travel

²⁵⁹ Emily Metcalf, *The Golden Calm*, 1980, p. 26.

²⁶⁰ Emily Metcalf, *The Golden Calm*, 1980, p. 207.

²⁶¹ Emily Metcalf, *The Golden Calm*, 1980, p. 168.

²⁶² Emily Metcalf, *The Golden Calm*, 1980, p. 69.

books written in the nineteenth-century because they were private diaries rather than published texts, as those of Fanny Parkes and many others were. They speak of an India where the British lived in utter luxury and ease. Emily writes little about Indians except in delight of their exotic-ness. She does not seem to have the same disdain that is noticeable in some contemporary writers. Unfortunately, the journals are incomplete, coming to an abrupt end prior to her marriage, for no known reason. Emily lived in India for a number of years after the end of the journal and had a long life, dying in the early part of the twentieth-century (exact year unknown). It is difficult to know whether her views on India changed, whether marriage had any impact upon her life in India and many other questions.

“There is no way to explain or understand what we observe without some system of thinking, and every system contains its biases of languages, nationality, class interest, and viewpoint.”²⁶³ This statement by Gary Tartakov is an important one to consider in this examination of British colonial views of India. There are underlying assumptions in British perceptions of India that predicate the existence of the Oriental vision. The entire Indological experience of the British was premised on a need to demonstrate the failed state of India to justify their presence as colonial masters. This was not always a conscious agenda, but discourse rarely is: it is fixed within particular notions of power and superiority. The narrative created within this discourse created an essentialist vision of India, which sought to find an enduring reality within India to set up in opposition to the British ‘reality’. There was, among all these very different individuals, a desire to

²⁶³ Gary Michael Tartakov, “Changing Views of India’s Art History” in Perceptions of South Asia’s Visual Past, Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf (ed.), New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1994, p. 15.

compartmentalise the ‘Other’ into a narrowly defined, myopic quality, so that they could understand it.²⁶⁴

As much as this discourse was governed by reactions to the Other, it had its roots in British understanding of itself. The need to find similarities in Indian art to Classical art, for instance, indicates their desperate need to resolve their internal battle to “believe in the pre-eminence of their own contemporary culture, and in its universal validity as one defined by reason and order.”²⁶⁵ Ronald Inden comments on the continuation of this conception of Self via the Other: “...we should consider that the West’s image of itself as the epitome has depended, for two hundred years, on these changing portrayals of India...”²⁶⁶ Inden stresses the Western need to codify the Other as a method to place it in a hierarchical order which always culminates in the Self [i.e. the Western man].²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ It is worth noting that the compartmentalization of India/Indians was not just achieved through discourse but also through physical actions such as the building of cities (e.g. New Delhi) and monuments, and the (re)naming of cities and roads (e.g. Jacobabad), which froze India into a state where all that was new and modern was British and all that was old was Indian. Deliberative narratives can also be identified in the British act of restoring particular monuments and destruction of others, both acts sanctioned under law. Sourindranath Roy, *The Story of Indian Archaeology*, 1961, p. 22. Tapati Guha-Thakurta describes this programme as creating “a purified repository of an ‘original’ past...Native apathy and vandalism have as their redemptive contrast the archaeological project of clearing, excavating and retrieving stones from all around to resemble as far as possible the ‘original’ structure and to preserves it as such.” Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Tales of the Bharhut Stupa Archaeology”, 1998, pp. 38-9.

²⁶⁵ Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf, “Introduction”, 1994, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, 1990, p. 6.

²⁶⁷ Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, 1990, p. 43.

Conclusion

Andrew Pickering states: “Thus a historiography sensitive to contingency might be a *comparative* one that displayed this openness of modelling and that explored how particular extensions of particular models became stabilised against resistance in particular circumstances.”²⁶⁸ In a nutshell, that is the project of this thesis. By examining a variety of sources, we can see that Indian historiography in the nineteenth-century is not the monolithic Orientalist vision as it is often characterised. This thesis argues that the nineteenth-century study of Indian history was a heavily nuanced field, consisting of multiple interpretations even within canonistic interpretations: “...it would be...wrong to suggest that an unchanging dream of India as an exotic land is an essential feature of a hypostatized West.”²⁶⁹

Moreover, the seeming coherence of the Orientalist vision that Fergusson and Cunningham laid out had many paradoxical issues that remained open to contestation and debate.²⁷⁰ Perhaps the most difficult monument for the West to reconcile with was the Taj Mahal. On the one hand, Shah Jahan’s blatant opulence was revolting to the British, and reiterated their conception of the excessive voluptuous habits of the Oriental. On the other hand, the sheer brilliance of the architecture, the fine decorative elements, the romantic association, superseded their horror, to the point where the Taj had to be ascribed to European mastery and not Asian genius.²⁷¹ There has been much written of

²⁶⁸ Andrew Pickering, “Anti-Discipline or Narratives of Illusion” in Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993, pp. 111-112.

²⁶⁹ Ronald Inden, Imagining India, 1990, p. 48.

²⁷⁰ Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf, “Introduction”, 1994, p. 3.

²⁷¹ Thomas Metcalf, An Imperial Vision, 1989, p. 48.

how British self-identity played a prominent role in their depiction of the Other, ascribing to this definition all that was ‘not-British’.²⁷² Arguably, the Taj Mahal’s contradictions lie in the fact that the West did not *want* to see it as being ‘not-European’.

We have seen in this thesis that these controversial interpretations did not go unnoticed, that Indian scholars were involved in a process of reinterpretation. Their lack of success in asserting their alternative views lies not in a lack of voice, but rather in a lack of agency. The acceptance of intrinsic British expertise in all things Indian, tied in with Western racial philosophies of superiority played a powerful role in keeping these views at the periphery. Homi Bhabha talks at length about the flaws in colonial portrayals: “... ‘partial’ representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence.”²⁷³ Bhabha’s entire argument revolves around the representation of the colonial subject being superficially ‘correct’ and, thus, persisting. Additionally, C.A. Bayly talks about the role of colonial politics in fracturing the Indian ecumene, by favouring certain groups and individuals.²⁷⁴ The Indian public had never been a seamless web, there were significant breaks and discontinuities within it, the British simply aided the widening of these cracks. These forces combined with institutional memory allowed the paradigm to continue well into the twentieth century in spite of contestation: “It is difficult to appreciate how thoroughly our vision has been twisted by the perverse rationalisations that the European conquest and colonisation of India required of its perpetrators.”²⁷⁵ Tartakov sees the difficulty of breaking away from nineteenth-century Western perspectives being tied into the very real achievements of the

²⁷² Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 1994, p. 6.

²⁷³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 89.

²⁷⁴ C.A. Bayly, “The Indian Ecumene”, 2002, p. 185.

²⁷⁵ Gary Michael Tartakov, “Changing Views of India’s Art History”, 1994, p. 34.

British in compiling a field of study.²⁷⁶ Orientalist discourse is so fused into the data collected that separation requires an extensive project of critical analysis.

Tillotson talks about the interpretation of archaeological excavations and monuments being intrinsically linked to “the kind of past that is to be retrieved, and for whom.”²⁷⁷ Thus, when the British studied Indian architectural history, they saw “a tale of India’s decline from an ancient era of greatness, associated with the Buddhist period, to a ‘corrupt’ and ‘degenerate’ idolatry associated with medieval Hinduism.”²⁷⁸ On the other hand, Rajendralal Mitra, and later Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rakhaldas Bannerjee saw the development of a great South Asian tradition, one that superseded religion and was part of a broader ‘national’ rhetoric. This transformation continues today with a reversal in the values attached to ‘Western’ and ‘Indian’ points of view.²⁷⁹

I would argue that Ram Raz and Sir Sayyid occupy an uneasy middle space between these two opposing views. Tillotson points to both as being greatly influenced by Western styles of scholarship.²⁸⁰ It was not just styles but also Western thought that influences these two scholars, caught as they are in an internal battle over their cultural heritage and their sympathies with certain Western perspectives. They straddle a very delicate line in maintaining allegiance to both sides.

The success of this strategy lies in the continued relevance of the *Asar* to studies of Delhi history. Although few historians of Delhi today refer to the text directly because of its inaccessibility (i.e. written in Urdu), they do use the information it contains through

²⁷⁶ Gary Michael Tartakov, “Changing Views of India’s Art History”, 1994, p. 17.

²⁷⁷ G.H.R. Tillotson, “Introduction”, 1998, p. 7.

²⁷⁸ Thomas Metcalf, “Past and Present”, 1998, p. 18.

²⁷⁹ Tapati Guha-Thakurta, “Tales of the Bharhut Stupa Archaeology”, 1998, p. 43.

²⁸⁰ G.H.R. Tillotson, “Introduction”, 1998, p. 5.

later texts, which base their examinations upon Sir Sayyid's research. Carr Stephen's *Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi* published in 1876 is indebted to the *Asar-ul-Sanadid* in its format and data.²⁸¹ Stephen's work was then picked up by others, such as Percival Spear.²⁸² It is safe to see Sir Sayyid's work as a primer text, providing brief outlines of all Delhi buildings and accompanying inscriptions.

This legacy further problematizes the notion that Indians played no part in the continued paradigm of Indian art history. How can such a claim be made if Sir Sayyid had an impact at that early a stage? We can continue the claim because of the Western sympathies just mentioned. Sir Sayyid is a dramatically different scholar than most local Indians because of his acceptance of Western viewpoints and, perhaps, promotion of those views. In order to understand fully the complexity of nineteenth-century Indian historiography and include it in current writing it is necessary to look to other histories written in local languages at the time, those disconnected from British patronage. Only through this conscious appropriation of minority perspectives can a proper picture form of Indian scholarship in the colonial era:

Unless we are conscious of what we are doing, and in some way continuously assessing, reviewing, and refining our methods, we will progress only by fits and starts. We will be not only liable to repeat and perpetuate past errors but also that much less likely to profit from the work of our predecessors and that much more likely to exaggerate the notion of original contribution on our part...²⁸³

²⁸¹ Carr Stephen, *Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1967.

²⁸² Percival Spear, *Delhi: Its Monuments and History*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1943.

²⁸³ Pramod Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 1983, pp. 3-4.

Bibliography

Translated Text

Khan, Sir Sayyid Ahmad (1847, 1854) *Asar- ul-Sanadid*, Delhi: Indian Standard Press.

3rd edition: (1876) Lucknow: Newal Kishore Press.

4th edition: (1904) Cawnpore: The Nami Pres.

Reprint: (1965) Khalid Nasir Hashmi (ed.), New Delhi: Central Book Depot.

Reprint: (1966) Dr. S. Moinul Haq (ed.), Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society.

Reprint: (2003) Khaliq Anjum (ed.), New Delhi: National Council for the Advancement of the Urdu Language, Govt. of India.

French Translation: de Tassy, J.H. Garcin (1860, 1861) “Description des monuments de Delhi en 1852, d’après le texte Hindoustani de Saiyid Ahmad Khan”, *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. XV, pp. 508-36; Vol. XVI, pp. 190-254, 392-451, 521-43; Vol. XVIII, pp. 77-97.

Abridged English Translation: Nath, R. (1979) *Monuments of Delhi: Historical Study*, New Delhi: Ambika.

Primary Sources

Afif, Shams Siraj (1871, 1953) “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi” in *The History of India: as told by its own historians*, trans. H.M. Elliot, ed. John Dowson, Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd.

Barani, Ziauddin (1871, 1953) “Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi” in *The History of India: as told by its own historians*, trans. H.M. Elliot, ed. John Dowson, Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd.

Caunter, Rev. Hobart (1835) *The Oriental Annual or Scenes of India*, London: Bull & Churton.

Cunningham, Alexander (1972) *Four Reports made during the years 1862-63-64-65*, Delhi: Indological Book House.

Fergusson, James (1867) *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, London: John Murray.

Hali, Altaf Husain (1994) *Hayat-i-Javed*, David J. Matthews (trans.), Delhi: Rupa & Co.

Metcalf, Emily (1980) *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, M.M. Kaye (ed.), Exeter, UK: Webb & Bower.

Mitra, Rajendralal (1881) *Indo-Aryans: Contributions towards the elucidation of their Ancient and Medieval History: Vol. I & Vol. II*, London: Edward Stanford & Calcutta: W. Newman & Co.

Parkes, Fanny (2003) *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen: The Journal of Fanny Parkes*, William Dalrymple (ed.), New Delhi, London: Penguin.

Raz, Ram (1834) *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, London: Oriental Translation Fund.

Secondary Sources

Ahmad, Aziz (1969) *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.

Archer, Mildred (1968) *Indian Architecture & the British, 1780-1830*, Feltham: Country Life Books.

-- (1980) *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794*, London: Thames & Hudson.

Asher, Catherine & Thomas Metcalf (1994) *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf (ed.), New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies.

Basham, A.L. (1959) *The Wonder that was India: a survey of the culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of the Muslims*, New York: Grove.

Basham, A.L., R.N. Dandekar, Peter Hardy. V. Raghavan & Royal Weiler (1958) *Sources of Indian Tradition: Volume I*, Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), New York & London: Columbia University Press.

Bayly, C.A. (2002) "The Indian Ecumene: An Indigenous Public Sphere" in *The Book History Reader*, David Finkelstein & Alastair McCleery (ed.), New York: Routledge.

Bhabha, Homi (1994) *The Location of Culture*, London/New York: Routledge.

Chandra, Pramod (1983) *On the Study of Indian Art*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dalrymple, William (2003) "Introduction" in *Begums, Thugs & Englishmen: The Journal of Fanny Parkes*, William Dalrymple (ed.), New Delhi, London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, A.M. Sheridan Smith (trans.), London: Tavistock Publications.

-- (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & other writings, 1972-77*, Colin Gordon (ed.), Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham & Kate Soper (trans.), New York: Pantheon Books.

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati (1998) "Tales of the Bharhut Stupa Archaeology in the Colonial and Nationalist Imaginations" in *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hardy, Peter (1966) *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing*, London: Luzac & Company Ltd.

Inden, Ronald (1990) *Imagining India*, Oxford, UK/Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Kopf, David (1969) *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lorenzen, D. (1982) "Imperialism and Ancient Indian Historiography" in *India: History and Thought*, S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), Calcutta: Subarnarekha.

Majumdar, R.C. (1970) *Historiography in Modern India*, London: Asia Publishing House.

Messer-Davidow, Ellen, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (1993) *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity*, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Metcalf, Thomas (1989) *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture & Britain's Raj*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

-- (1994) *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

-- (1998) "Past & Present" Towards and Aesthetic of Colonialism" in *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Minault, Gail (1986) "Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi & the 'Delhi Renaissance'" in *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, R.E. Frykenburg, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mitra, Sisir Kumar (1973) "Raja Rajendralal Mitra" in *Historians and Historiography in Modern India*, S.P. Sen (ed.), Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies.

Pal, Pratapaditya & Vidya Dehejia (1986) *From Merchants and Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.

Pickering, Andrew (1993) "Anti-Discipline or Narratives of Illusion" in *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity*, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Preziosi, Donald (1993) "Seeing through Art History" in *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity*, Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway & David J. Sylvan (ed.), Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Ricketts, Lt. Col. John Mildmay, MC (1980) "Introduction" in *The Golden Calm: An English Lady's Life in Moghul Delhi*, M.M. Kaye (ed.), Exeter, UK: Webb & Bower.

Roy, Sourindranath (1961) *The Story of Indian Archaeology, 1784-1947*, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.

Sadiq, Muhammad (1995) *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Said, Edward (1978) *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books.

Tartakov, Gary Michael (1994) "Changing Views of India's Art History" in *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, Catherine Asher & Thomas Metcalf (ed.), New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies.

Tillotson, G.H.R. (1998) *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, G.H.R. Tillotson (ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Trautmann, Thomas R. & Carla M. Sinopoli (2002) "In the Beginning was the Word: Excavating the relations between history and archaeology in South Asia" in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 45: No. 4, pp. 492-523.

Troll, C.W. (1972) "A Note on the early topographical work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: *Asar al-Sanadid*" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 2, pp. 135-146.

Reference Texts

(1850) *Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi*.

(1853) *Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi*.

Asher, Catherine & Cynthia Talbot (2006) *India before Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, Cecil L. (1908-09) "The Function of Schools of Art in India" in *Journal of the [Royal] Society of Arts*, Vol. 57, pp. 629-650.

Cooperson, Michael (1996) "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative" in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 13, pp. 99-113.

Cunningham, Alexander (1970) *Book of Indian Eras: with Tables for Calculating Indian Dates*, Varanasi: Indological Book House.

Dalrymple, William (1994) *City of Djinnns: A Year in Delhi*, London: Flamingo.

Desmond, Ray (1982) *The India Museum, 1801-1879*, London: H.M.S.O.

Havell, E.B. (1910) "Art Administration in India" in *Journal of the [Royal] Society of Arts*, Vol. 58, pp. 274-298.

Kejariwal, O.P. (1988) *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Macfie, Alexander Lyon (2000) *Orientalism: A Reader*, New York: New York University Press.

Mukherjee, S. N. (1968) *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nath, R. (1978) *History of Sultanate Architecture*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.

Niyogi, Chandreyee (ed.) (2006) *Reorienting Orientalism*, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks (CA)/London: Sage Publications.

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati (2004) *Monuments, objects, histories: institutions of art in colonial and postcolonial India*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Rosenthal, Franz (1968) *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Sabin, Margery (2002) *Dissenters and Mavericks: Writings about India in English, 1765-2000*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Spear, Percival (1943) *Delhi: Its Monuments and History*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Stephen, Carr (1876, 1967) *Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal.

Thapar, Romila (2002) *Early India: From the origins to AD 1300*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Welch, A. & H. Crane (1983) "The Tughluqs, Master Builders of the Delhi Sultanate" in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 1, pp. 123-166.

Welch, A. (1993) "Architectural Patronage & the Past" in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 10, pp. 311-322.