Introduction

Safavid and Mughal Empires in Contact

Intellectual and Religious Exchanges between Iran and India in the Early Modern Era

REZA POURJAVADY
University of Bamberg, Germany

KIANOOSH REZANIA (iD)
Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

ABSTRACT   In the introduction to this special issue, the editors attempt to portray the emergence/formation of a pluralistic atmosphere in Mughal India in the early modern era as a reciprocate reaction beginning with the migration of a group of not entirely religiously open-minded Iranian scholars to a not yet pluralistic Mughal India. They point out that the migration of Iranian scholars to Mughal India both enhanced the plurality of the Mughal intellectual atmosphere and their own openness. They then highlight some significant characteristics of the new/newly emerged discourse in the Mughal empire, such as pluralism, rationalism, antiquarianism, and Persianization. The editors moreover endeavor to point out these characteristics in the processes investigated by the authors of the special issue.

KEYWORDS   Safavid Iran, Mughal India, pluralism, rationalism, antiquarianism, Persianization

This special issue includes the contributions to a workshop that took place on June 7–8, 2018, at the Center for Religious Studies, Ruhr University Bochum, as part of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg "Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe" (2008–2022). Its central theme is the migration of Safavid scholars to the Mughal empire and its religious and intellectual outcomes.[1]   [1]

As the result of a political decision, Mughal Emperor Akbar I (r. 963–1014/1556–1605) legitimized the rights of all non-Muslim subjects in his territory. This new policy presented   [2]

---

1   We would like to thank our colleague Dr. Eduard Iricinschi for his comments on the draft of this introduction.

many political advantages for his rule. However, judging from firsthand accounts of his supporters and opponents, it is apparent that Akbar did not change his policy merely to gain political advantage.[2] His decision was rather the outcome of a new religious and intellectual perspective.

A collection of several factors brought together this transition. One of them, which we [3] consider important, is the migration of Iranian scholars to Mughal India. In the early sixteenth century, the Safavids proclaimed Shi'i Islam as state religion in Iran. Gradually, with the help of the religious scholars invited from Ǧabal ʿĀmil (the south of Lebanon), they promoted a Shari'a-oriented understanding of Shi'ism. As a result, the pressure on non-Shi'i thinkers, such as Naqšbandī Sufis and Noqṭavīs, to conform to this new perspective increased (Amanat 2014, 368–69). There were also specific incidents that started the immigration of scholars from the Safavid empire. For instance, following the arrest and imprisonment of the Zaidī ruler of Gīlān, Kār Kīā Khān Aḥmad Khān in 976/1568, many scholars associated with his court left for India, thus turning to the Mughal empire as their place of religious and political asylum. These scholars included Ḥakīm Abo l-Fatḥ Gīlānī (d. 997/1589), whose intellectual abilities brought him to Akbar's attention. As a result, he became one of the emperor's leading counselors on religious and intellectual affairs (Bany 2019, 216).

That these scholars migrated from the Safavid to the Mughal empire does not imply that the [4] Mughals ruled over an already established pluralistic society in which the Iranian immigrants participated after their arrival to India. The migrant scholars played a significant role in creating a pluralistic atmosphere in the empire, and their heterogeneous opinions contributed a great deal to general intellectual developments in the Mughal empire. It would also be a mistake to assume that certain Iranian freethinkers went to India and spread their ideas over there. While still residing in Iran, the same scholars did not hold quite the same religious openness as the one they maintained in India. The discourse in which they subsequently participated was the internal product of Mughal India, and the various cultural elements of the Mughal environment were indispensable to its formation.

The new discourse that emerged in the Mughal empire in the 980/1570s was without precedent in Islamic civilization. Its marks can be best observed in the writings of Abo l-Fażl ʿAllāmī [5] (d. 1011/1602), Akbar's official chronicler and his other counselor on religious matters, particularly in his official history of Akbar's reign, the *Akbar-nāma*, and in his work on Akbar's empire, *Āyīn-e Akbarī* (Habib 1998, 330; Abo l-Fażl ʿAllāmī 1877, 20152022). Moreover, they can be found in other writings and documents of this period or those produced shortly after. The following are some of the characteristics of the new discourse.

- **Pluralism:** In 982/1575, the emperor began to hold debates between scholars of religion [6] in a hall constructed especially for the purpose, called the House of Worship (ʿEbādat-ḫāna; Rizvi 1975, 119). The emperor's interests included, among others, Hindu religions, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Sufism and Noqṭavism. During this time, scholars pursued a comparative study of these various religions. From 986/1578-79, Akbar adopted the principal position of "peace with all" (*solḥ-e koll*), according to which one religious doctrine or practice should not become dominant to the point of excluding other religious doctrines and practices. Each religion has a sense of the truth, and none of them is the absolute truth. Moreover, scholars argued that the object of worship in various Hindu faiths and all other religions, including Islam, is

---

2   For the view of a supporter, see Abo l-Fażl ʿAllāmī's *Āyīn-e akbarī* (1877), and for the view of an opponent, see Badāʾūnī's *Montaḫab al-tavārīḫ* (1864–1869).

one and the same. This perspective seems to have been an offshoot of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) doctrine of the "unity of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Abo l-Fażl fully adhered to this doctrine, and so many Iranian immigrants did. Akbar might have had a teacher who instructed him in Ibn ʿArabī's teachings (Habib 1998, 331; Amanat 2014, 375). According to this doctrine, the unique absolute existence manifests itself in various forms, and the multiplicity of religions should be understood as a variety of its manifestations. Abo l-Fażl articulates this in the following way: "There is one heart-ensnaring Beauty which casts splendor through many thousands of veils. They have spread an expansive carpet, and it sheds forth many different colors" (Habib 1998, 331).

- **Rationalism:** The same discourse promoted by the Iranian scholars exiled in the   [7]
  Mughal Empire privileged rational thinking. By order of Akbar, teaching law (*feqh*),
  jurisprudence (*oṣūl*), and tradition (*ḥadīṯ*) were restricted, and instead, schools pro-
  moted studying medicine, philosophy, and arithmetic (Badāʾūnī 1864–1869, 2:306–
  307). Distinguished Iranian proponents of the rational sciences, such as Fatḥollāh Šīrāzī
  (d. 997/1589) and Nūrollāh Šūštarī (d. 1019/1610), who chose to migrate to the Mughal
  empire, enjoyed Mughal patronage (Ahmed and Pourjavady 2016, 608–10). They played
  a major role in establishing the teaching of the rational sciences in India. Notably, they
  taught classical philosophical works, such as those of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and Še-
  hāb al-Dīn Sohravardī (d. 587/1191). They also gave special attention to the Greek
  philosophers, particularly the Neoplatonists. In the *Āʾīn-e Akbarī*, Abo l-Fażl takes spe-
  cial care to emphasize his knowledge of the philosophical tradition. He even responds to
  Abū Ḥāmed Ġazālī's (d. 505/1111) religious condemnation of the philosophers, remark-
  ing briefly that Ġazālī "had spoken nonsense" (Habib 1998, 331). At Akbar's request,
  Maqṣūd ʿAlī Tabrīzī (d. after 1025/1616) translated Šams al-Dīn Šahrazūrī's (d. after
  687/1288) history of philosophy, *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ* (The Delight of
  Souls and the Garden of Joys), into Persian.

- **Antiquarianism:** According to the newly adopted discourse, truth was unveiled to hu-   [8]
  mankind in Antiquity. The proof of this position was to be found in the *Vedas*, the old
  Indian religious texts in Vedic Sanskrit, in the Zoroastrian *Zand-Avesta*, in the sayings
  of Ancient Greek philosophers, and in those attributed to the ancient Persian sages. The
  purpose of translating ancient texts was to make their truths available to the readers of
  the time. Although an antiquarian mindset was common among many religious tradi-
  tions, it seems that the Neopythagorean tendencies of the Mughal courtiers reinforced
  this perspective under Akbar.

- **Persianization:** Promoting Persian culture became a central part of the new discourse.   [9]
  Akbar identified himself as the heir to the old kings of Persia. Abo l-Fażl portrayed
  him as embodying the Iranian ideal of the recipient of divine majesty (*farrah-e īzadī*;
  Habib 1998, 332; Amanat 2014, 374). In 991/1583, Akbar adopted the Zoroastrian
  solar calendar as his official calendar and celebrated the Persian festival of Naurūz.
  During that festival, Akbar also issued a decree requesting the worship of the sun four
  times a day (Badāʾūnī 1864–1869, 2:321–322).

Akbar's interest in Persianization was also manifested in his promotion of the Persian lan-   [10]
guage. He ordered not only the translation of many works from Sanskrit into Persian but also

the translation of several Arabic works into Persian. Unlike many Muslim rulers, Akbar did not grant Arabic any special status as the language of the *Qurʾān*, nor did he regard it as a second scientific language after Persian. On the contrary, in 990/1582, he ordered the madrasas in the Mughal Empire to restrict teaching in Arabic and to promote the widespread use of Persian (Badāʾūnī 1864–1869, 2:306–307; Amanat 2014, 382).

However, this kind of discourse seems to have ceased after the death of its major promoters, [11] Akbar and Abo l-Fażl. Akbar's successor, Jahāngīr (r. 1014–1037/1605–1627), transformed the discourse so much that only some of its minor elements remained intact. Nevertheless, in a few decades, the discourse found a new initiator, Dārā Šokūh (d. 1069/1659). By that time, however, its Persianizing element had abated, which meant it was generally better adapted to Indian society.

For their part, the Safavids were aware of the formation of this new discourse in the Mughal [12] empire. The Safavid court historian Iskandar Beg Munshī (d. 1043/1633–34) blamed Abo l-Fażl for making the Mughal emperor a "libertine" (*vasīʿ al-mašrab*) in matters of religion (Moin 2015). Some aspects of Akbar's cultural changes occurred later in Safavid Iran. Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 996–1038/1588–1629) was arguably influenced by many aspects of Akbar's reign. For instance, he followed Akbar's example by adopting a positive interaction with Christian missionaries. He also tried to create a multi-religious atmosphere in his capital, Isfahan. Another aspect of the impact of the Mughal cultural discourse was the Safavid's patronage of Persian scientific works and the translation of Arabic works into Persian. Indeed, following Akbar, and probably also inspired by him, the Safavids laid greater emphasis on Persian as the language of culture and science within their empire.

The contributions of this special issue exemplify the mentioned characteristics in Mughal [13] India and Safavid Iran in different ways. Takeshi Aoki and Kianoosh Rezania investigate the genesis and development of Āẕar Kaivānīs as a syncretistic religious group and their relations with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Islam, especially Noqṭavī ideas and the Ešrāqī philosophy. The Āẕar Kaivānīs, as a group of authors linked to Āẕar Kaivān, the school's founder, exhibit extraordinary interest in the pre-Islamic Iranian legacy. They attempt to combine the Ešrāqī philosophy with this legacy, whereas the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition constitutes the linguistic surface and the Islamic philosophy the content. Besides some limited biographical information on Āẕar Kaivān himself, who died in 1028/1617-8 in Patna at the age of 85, there is not much historical information on this group (Corbin 1987; Rezania 2014). This scant state of sources gave rise to different hypotheses about the historical development of the school. What was not in doubt, however, was their connection to both Safavid Iran and Mughal India: According to the surviving sources, Āẕar Kaivān was born in Fārs province in Safavid Iran and migrated to India. This fact makes Āẕar Kaivānīs one of the foci of the present special issue.

Instead of considering the school as a monolithic fabric, equally influenced during its his- [14] tory by the three components of Zoroastrianism, the Noqṭavī order, and Ešrāqī philosophy, Takeshi Aoki's contribution, "The Dasātīr and the 'Āẕar Kaivān school' in Historical Context: Origin and Later Development" (2022), inquires which tradition was more influential in which period. He thus divides the development of the school into four different historical stages according to its literature. In the first stage, an anonymous thinker must have authored the *Dasātīr,* one of the most important texts of the school, sometime after 1519. It should be pointed out that the scholarship formerly assumed hypothetically that Āẕar Kaivān penned this text (Mojtabaʾī 1994). Whereas some scholars highlight the Ešrāqī philosophy as the primary intellectual source for the emergence of the school, Aoki investigates the impact of the

Nuqṭavī on this group. The author holds that the Āẕar Kaivānīs migrated to India in 990/1582–3 after being attracted to Noqṭavī thoughts in Safavid Iran. Aoki identifies "Iranocentrism" as the most present element in this stage, as reflected in the *Dasātīr*. The second stage gives birth to the second authoritative book of the group, the *Ǧām-e Kai Ḫosro*, authored by Āẕar Kaivān. Leaving out the concept of transmigration, which is present in the *Dasātīr*, Āẕar Kaivān builds much more upon Persian Sufism in this book and, to some degree, on Ešrāqī philosophy. Both the *Dasātīr* and the *Ǧām-e Kai Ḫosro* influenced a trilogy of books written in the seventeenth century (1028–34/1618–24): the *Ḫᵛīš-tāb*, the *Zardošt Afšār*, and the *Zāyanda Rūd*. Although influenced by both former books, these writings do not exhibit marks of "Iranocentrism" but rather the influence of Ešrāqī philosophy. Aoki identifies in these books and thereby a higher level of systematization of religious thoughts of the school at this stage. The last stage of Aoki's periodization includes a more isolated book, the *Zūra-ye Bāstānī*. Instead of Persian Sufism or Ešrāqī philosophy, this book contains elements of Zoroastrian thoughts. Moreover, it resorts to *Dasātīr*'s vocabulary, previously absent in the writings of Āẕar Kaivānīs. Aoki's research shows how a religious tradition changes the balance of its constituents throughout time and how dynamically the tradition is able to reshape itself.

Kianoosh Rezania's contribution, "Did the Āẕar Kaivānīs Know Zoroastrian Middle Persian Sources?" (2022), explores the religious contacts between the Āẕar Kaivānīs and Zoroastrians based on the linguistic evidence in the bilingual book *Dasātīr*. Rezania argues that *Dasātīr*'s author employed the Zoroastrian *Zand* texts as a model for his book. He identifies the part of the text written in an artificial encrypted language, representing a celestial language, as corresponding to the Avestan text in the Zoroastrian commentary tradition. The other part, written in a specific form of New Persian, i.e., with few Arabic words, corresponds to the Middle Persian translation and commentary in the *Zand* texts. Furthermore, Rezania shows that the Āẕar Kaivānīs were in contact with Zoroastrians from the very beginning of the formation of their tradition and, to some extent, were conversant with the Zoroastrian Middle Persian literature. The article attests to some lexemes in the *Dasātīr* that can be known to its author only through the Middle Persian texts. Rezania, however, points out that only the form of Zoroastrian literature, not its contents, shaped the *Dasātīr*. Rezania also demonstrates that the religious contact between the Āẕar Kaivānīs and Zoroastrians was based on literary contacts between Muslim literates and Zoroastrian priests as early as the beginning decades of the tenth/sixteenth century, rooted in the lexicographic interests in India. Therefore, the geographical field of contact between Āẕar Kaivānīs and Zoroastrianism was Mughal India rather than Safavid Iran. According to Rezania, the Āẕar Kaivānīs owe a great deal to the religious discourse emerging at the court of Akbar, namely *dīn-e elāhī*. The epithet *āẕar* 'fire' in the name of many figures of the group might be due to the prestigious place Akbar gave to fire at his court. Both Aoki's and Rezania's contributions deal with the topics of antiquarianism and Persianization in this period.

[15]

In their contribution "Avicenna's *Šifāʾ* from Safavid Iran to the Mughal Empire: On Ms. Rampur Raza Library 3476" (2022), Amos Bertolacci and Gholamreza Dadkhah concentrate on the intellectual contact between Safavid Iran and Mughal India by investigating a manuscript of Avicenna's philosophical magnum opus, the *Kitāb al-Šifāʾ* (the *Book of the Healing*). The manuscript comprises three of four book parts: logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. Bertolacci and Dadkhah identify ten steps in the transmission of the manuscript, beginning with its production in 718/1318, and continuing with its ownership by prominent philosophers of Šīrāz in the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries, namely Ṣadr al-Dīn Moḥam-

[16]

mad Daštakī Šīrāzī (d. 903/1498), his son Ġeyās al-Dīn Manṣūr Daštakī Šīrāzī (d. 948/1542), his grandson Ṣadr al-Dīn Moḥammad II (d. 962/1555), and later by Fatḥollāh Šīrāzī, famous for his promotions of rationalism in Mughal India. Having been taken from Shiraz, the origin place of the Daštakī family, to Rampur, the manuscript exemplifies the strict intellectual exchanges between the two empires. Its transmission took place during the flourishing period of philosophical teachings in Safavid Iran, in which more than a hundred manuscripts of the *Šifāʾ* were produced, whereas only a couple of dozen manuscripts were produced in each of the previous centuries. The same period witnesses the emergence of the Persian translation of the *Metaphysics* as well as its commentaries as independent works. According to the authors, the manuscript testifies to the "Safavid renaissance" (Pourjavady and Schmidtke 2015) through its circulation. Moreover, being the subject of long-term philosophical investigations in Shiraz, the manuscript attests to the significance of the intellectual transmission from Safavid Iran to Mughal India. This article highlights the rationalism and Persianization in the Mughal-Safavid discourse.

In his article "Exploring Patronage, Genre, and Scholar-Bureaucracy: The Trans-Imperial [17] Career of Ḫvāndamīr (d. 1534)" (2022), Colin Mitchell explores the intersection of patronage, genre, and scholar-bureaucracy by investigating the career of Ġeyāṯ al-Dīn Ḫvāndamīr, the great statesman and historian of the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries. His career is entangled with the emergence of the Safavid and Mughal empires as well as the Uzbeks in Central Asia. Enjoying the patronage of these empires, Ḫvāndamīr penned numerous texts in different genres such as ethics, prosopography, epistolography, and chronicle. Mitchell investigates Ḫvāndamīr's understanding of patronage and discusses how the trans-imperial patronage shaped his approach to text and genre. In the introduction to one of his books, the *Makārem al-aḫlāq*, he highlights the role of intellect in bureaucracy and administration. Again, here, as was the case for Āẕar Kaivānīs, the text attests to a resort to pre-Islamic legacy because Ḫvāndamīr considers this rationality rooted in pre-Islamic traditions. Mitchell points out that Ḫvāndamīr does not see any contradiction between pre-Islamic wisdom, the Qurʾānic revelation, and ongoing divine inspiration in Sufi traditions. Like manuscripts of Avicenna's *Šifāʾ*, which transcended Safavid Iran and reached Mughal India, Ḫvāndamīr was influential in substantiating the Perso-Islamic culture in South Asia, producing a 'Persian cosmopolis,' which, according to Mitchell, shaped the north and south Indian courts. Mitchel identifies the probably pervasive participation of the Hindu scribes as the most prominent characteristic of the Persian cosmopolis. One can argue that Ḫvāndamīr fashioned new intellectual trends by shedding light on forerunners of the literary genre of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. The case study of Mitchell attests to rationalist, antiquarianist, and Persianizing tendencies at the Safavid and Mughal courts.

Reza Pourjavady and Sajjad Rizvi both investigate the religious and intellectual contacts [18] between Safavid Iran and Mughal India by concentrating on Nūrollāh Šūštarī's works. While the former focused on his bio-bibliographical work *Maǧāles al-moʾmenīn* (Assemblies of the Believers), the latter studied his polemical writings. The *Maǧāles al-moʾmenīn* was written in Mughal India, but its author was educated in the Safavid territory. Following his migration to India, Šūštarī was associated with Akbar's court. As the first comprehensive Shi'i bio-bibliographical work, *Maǧāles al-moʾmenīn* comprises various kinds of Shi'i figures. The work became a model for later Shi'i biographical literature. Pourjavady's contribution, "Nūrollāh Šūštarī on Shi'i Notables" (2022), investigates the author's motivations for undertaking this project. He demonstrates that the work's comprehensiveness aims to represent the Shi'a as

a significant Islamic tradition, repudiating its perception as a minor sect throughout Islamic history. Šūštarī seems to have aimed much more at a new representation of Shi'ism than only acquainting the reader with Shi'i figures. To this end, he widened the definition of Shi'ism to include in the book as many as possible influential figures throughout history. According to Pourjavady, Šūštarī categorically divides Muslims into two groups: those who supported and those who opposed ʿAlī. Šūštarī implicitly suggested to his readers to consider themselves Shi'i only if they like ʿAlī and fully support him. Dealing with the author's perspective, Pourjavady also notes the challenges which Šūštarī confronted within the circles of the Shi'i scholars. Šūštarī's definition of Shi'a allows the practice of Sufism and philosophy, which were not acceptable for many Shi'i scholars. Some later Shi'i scholars criticized his inclusion of numerous Sufis in the book. The inclusiveness of the work accompanies another characteristic, namely the author's attempt to gain credit and respect for Shi'i communities, especially those located in India. Although he applies aggressive language in his responses to the anti-Shi'i polemics, his tone in the *Maǧāles* is less provocative for the Sunni readers.

Speaking about Šūštarī's polemical writings brings us to the topic of Rizvi's article, [19] "Shi'i Theology and Polemics between Iran and India: The Case of Saiyed Nūrollāh Šūštarī (d. 1019/1610)" (2022). Using Šūštarī's career as a case study, Rizvi investigates the transmission of theological ideas from Iran to India. Šūštarī migrated from East Iran, his birth and education place, to Indian scholarly circles in search of patronage. In his new homeland, however, he felt responsible for defending Shi'ism by writing polemical responses to anti-Shi'i treatises. Moreover, as a rational theologian, Šūštarī was presumably motivated by Akbar's embrace of reason to promote Shi'a as a rational tradition. Doing so, Rizvi shows that in intra- and inter-religious contacts, two parallel but different strategies might be applied: an offensive attack on the teachings of the others or an apologetic defense of own teaching. Which strategy one chooses to apply depends on many criteria, including the openness of the environment for such criticism. Pourjavady's and Rizvi's articles highlight the plurality of the Indian religious field in this period.

The contributors to this special issue mostly studied contact situations as cases of tradi- [20] tion building, for example, how a traditionalist deliberately chooses an inclusive approach to the tradition, opening the tradition's definition to comprise various heterogeneous ideas and branches, unacceptable in other terms and situations. Moreover, the authors exhibit the process of systematization of religious thoughts. As Aoki shows for the Āẕar Kaivānīs, traditions tend to reflect upon and systematize themselves in a contact situation. His study emphasizes the fact that traditions react retrospectively and resort to their (invented) origin in contact situations. Pourjavady's contribution represents the prospective behavior of a religious tradition, explaining how the scholars of the tradition proactively decide about its future. The case of Nūrollāh Šūštarī exemplifies how building a tradition, i.e., setting its borders, occurs in a contact situation.

Complementary to the cases of tradition building, Rezania focuses on the *Dasātīr* as a case [21] study of how the concept of secrecy can be employed in a contact situation. He holds that the Āẕar Kaivānīs did not apply it to distinguish the insiders from outsiders. Instead, they adopt the Zoroastrian idea of secrecy as a means of communication with the divine sphere. Both traditions, namely Āẕar Kaivānī and Zoroastrianism, consider that a secret text needs the support of a mediatory text to translate it and elaborate the original secret text so that the divine message can communicate with the adherents. The leading figures of the Āẕar Kaivānīs did not claim the ability to read the *Dasātīr*'s original text. They did not seek to exert

authority over their adherents either. The competence of understanding the heavenly text was restricted to older prophets. The Āẕar Kaivānīs' strategy of secrecy is not a distinction but a sort of double coding; religious knowledge encoded in celestial language and, at the same time, encoded in translation and commentary. Their aim was not to conceal knowledge; on the contrary, it was rather to share the concealed message.

Almost all contributions of this special issue analyze examples of exogenous religious con-   [22]
tacts. An exogenous religious contact is a religious contact in which a social subsystem other than religion, e.g., politics or science, is involved in the contact situation. The case studies included in this special issue epitomize the involvement of politics or the state in religious contact. First of all, the migration of Safavid scholars to Mughal India was mainly caused by a religious-political change in Iran. Moreover, most of the migrant scholars were linked to the Mughal court, especially at the time of Akbar, meaning the Mughal state encouraged religious contact. Pourjavady and Rizvi highlight the role of Akbar's court for theologians like Nūrollāh Šūštarī, who not only defended Shi'ism in response to the polemics but also presented a new definition of Shi'ism. Rezania points to the role of Akbar's religiopolitical project for the crystallization of the Āẕar Kaivānīs, and Mitchell explores the role of patronage, the involvement of politics in religious affairs. As a social system, science can also be involved in religious contacts. Rezania highlights the emergence of religious contact between Zoroastrianism and the Āẕar Kaivānīs based on literary, specifically lexicographical, interests.

In principle, religious contact might happen arbitrarily. However, in many cases, it occurs   [23]
intentionally. For example, writing polemics against other religious traditions, as did Nūrollāh Šūštarī, is a deliberate religious contact. Syncretism seems to be a religious contact with intention too. Āẕar Kaivānī represents an example of a conscious syncretistic religious tradition based on different traditions. Aoki demonstrates how a specific tradition was more impulsive in a specific stratum of Āẕar Kaivānī's literature. Syncretism provides an example of religious contact with more than two religious components. In the case of the Āẕar Kaivānīs, we encounter an emergence of a religious tradition due to the contact between Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, the Noqṭavī order, and Ešrāqī philosophy.

It is also possible that reasoning and rational thoughts play a role in religious contacts, as   [24]
Rizvi and Mitchell demonstrate in their articles. Moreover, Bertolacci, Dadkhah, and Aoki highlight the contributions of philosophical teachings in the religious contacts between the Safavid and Mughal empires. Their pieces indicate that religious specialists resort to reasoning and rational thought in a specific contact situation, for instance, when they engage in polemical and apologetic discussions. In these situations, the specialists need to employ some universal principles applicable to all religions. Reasoning and rational thoughts provide such a framework for this enterprise. As an emperor who wanted to create a "meta-religion," Akbar organized the discussions between the scholars of different religions in a "rational" framework (Stietencron 1989).

At the end of this introduction, we would like to highlight the transliteration guidelines ap-   [25]
plied in this special issue. We adopted English writing for Persian words, which have entered English dictionaries. For others, we followed the transliteration guidelines of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* (DMG) for Persian and Arabic. Since most sources were in Persian and the context of studies was a Persian-speaking environment, Persian transliteration was primarily applied. Exceptions are Arabic words, book titles, and names of Arab figures, for which the Arabic transliteration scheme was used. We transcribed Persian words written with silent *h* (ه) at the end of the words with an ending *a*, e.g., *ḫāna*, words like شيخ as *šaiḫ* and

uniformly used *va* for Persian conjunction, although Persian speakers have been pronouncing it in most cases as *o*. Words like سياست were transliterated as *seyāsat*, the suffix *ye of nesbat*, indicating the place of origin, ancestry, or affiliation, were written in the form of *-īya*, like *Nūrbaḫšīya*. Despite our efforts to present a unified system, some inconsistencies might have escaped our attention.

References

Abo l-Fażl ʿAllāmī. 1877. *Aʾin-i Akbari*. Vol. 2. Bibliotheca Indica. Calcutta.

———. 2015–2022. *The History of Akbar*. Thackston Wheeler M. Vol. 8. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ahmed, Asad, and Reza Pourjavady. 2016. "Islamic Theology in the Indian Subcontinent." In *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 606–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Amanat, Abbas. 2014. "Persian Nuqṭawīs and the Shaping of the Doctrine of 'Universal Conciliation' (*Ṣulḥ-i kull*) in Mughal India." In *Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam,* edited by Orkhan-Mir Kasimov, 367–91. Brill: Leiden / Boston.

Aoki, Takeshi. 2022. "The Dasātīr and the 'Āẕar Kaivān School' in Historical Context: Origin and Later Development." *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9625.

Badāʾūnī, ʿAbd al-Qāder. 1864–1869. *Montaḫab al-tavārīḫ*. Edited by Maulavī Aḥmad ʿAlī. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.

Bany, Hunter Casparian. 2019. "Building a Mountain of Light: Niẓām al-Dīn Gīlānī and Shīʿī Naturalism between Safavid Iran and the Deccan." PhD diss, Durham: Duke University.

Bertolacci, Amos, and Gholamreza Dadkhah. 2022. "Avicenna's Šifāʾ from Safavid Iran to the Mughal Empire: On Ms. Rampur Raza Library 3476." *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9638.

Corbin, Henry. 1987. "Āẕar Kayvān." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 3:183–87. https://iranicaonline.org/articles/azar-kayvan-priest.

Habib, Erfan. 1998. "A Political Theory for the Mughal Empire: A Study of the Idea of Abu'l-Fazl." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 59: 329–40.

Mitchell, Colin. 2022. "Exploring Patronage, Genre, and Scholar-Bureaucracy: The Trans-Imperial Career of Ḫvāndamīr (D. 1534)." *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9629.

Moin, A. A. 2015. "Abū'l-Fazl." In *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by M. Sgarbi. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_5-1.

Mojtabaʾī, Fatḥ-allāh. 1994. "Dasātīr." *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 7 (84). https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dasatir.

Pourjavady, Reza. 2022. "Nūrollāh Šūštarī on Shi'i Notables." *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9636.

Pourjavady, Reza, and Sabine Schmidtke. 2015. "An Eastern Renaissance? Greek Philosophy Under the Safavids (16th–18th Centuries AD)." *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3 (1–2): 248–90. https://doi.org/10.1163/2212943X-00301010.

Rezania, Kianoosh. 2014. "Āẕar Keyvān." In *Dānešnāma-ye Ǧahān-e Eslām*. Tehran: Bonyād-e Dāʾerat ol-Maʾāref-e Eslāmī.

———. 2022. "Did the Āẕar Kaivānīs Know Zoroastrian Middle Persian Sources?" *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.11.2020.8895.

Rizvi, S. A. A. 1975. *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

Rizvi, Sajjad. 2022. "Shiʿi Theology and Polemics Between Iran and India: The Case of Saiyed Nūrollāh Šūštarī (D. 1019/1610)." *Entangled Religions* 13 (5). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.13.2022.9808.

Stietencron, Heinrich von. 1989. "Geplanter Synkretismus: Kaiser Akbars Religionspolitik." In *Die Religion von Oberschichten: Religion, Profession, Intellektualismus*, edited by Peter Antes and Donate Pahnke, 53–72. Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag.