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Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India

Richard M. Eaton

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15 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**TEMPLE DESECRATION
AND MUSLIM STATES
• IN
MEDIEVAL INDIA**

RICHARD M. EATON
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PREFACE

In recent years, especially in the wake of the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992, much public discussion has arisen over the political status of South Asian temples and mosques, and in particular the issue of temples desecrated or replaced by mosques in the medieval period. While some Hindu nationalists have endeavoured to document a pattern of wholesale temple destruction by Muslims in this period, few professional historians have engaged the issue, even though it is a properly historical one.

This monograph aims to examine the available evidence with a view to asking :

- > What temples were in fact desecrated in India's medieval history?
- > When, and by whom?
- > How, and for what purpose?
- > And above all, what might any of this say about the relationship between religion and politics in medieval India?

This is a timely topic, since many in India today are looking to the past to justify or condemn public policy with respect to religious monuments.

Richard M. Eaton

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

Much of the contemporary evidence on temple desecration cited by Hindu nationalists¹ is found in Persian materials translated and published during the rise of British hegemony in India. Especially influential has been the eight-volume *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, first published in 1849 and edited by Sir Henry M. Elliot, who oversaw the bulk of the translations, with the help of John Dowson. But Elliot, keen to contrast what he understood as the justice and efficiency of British rule with the cruelty and despotism of the Muslim rulers who had preceded that rule, was anything but sympathetic to the 'Muhammadan' period of Indian history. As he wrote in the book's original preface,

The common people must have been plunged into the lowest depths of wretchedness and despondency. The few glimpses we have, even among the short extracts in this single volume, of Hindus slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the

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tyrants who enjoined them, show us that this picture is not overcharged....²

With the advent of British power, on the other hand, 'a more stirring and eventful era of India's History commences...when the full light of European truth and discernment begins to shed its beams upon the obscurity of the past.'³ Noting the far greater benefits that Englishmen had brought in a mere half century than Muslims had brought in five centuries, Elliot expressed the hope that his published translations 'will make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and the equity of our rule.'⁴

Elliot's motives for delegitimizing the Indo-Muslim rulers who had preceded English rule are thus quite clear. Writing on the pernicious influence that this understanding of medieval Indian history had on subsequent generations, the eminent historian Mohammad Habib once remarked: 'The peaceful Indian Mussalman, descended beyond doubt from Hindu ancestors, was dressed up in the garb of a foreign barbarian, as a breaker of temples, and an eater of beef, and declared to be a military colonist in the land where he had lived for about thirty or forty centuries. The result of it is seen in the communalistic atmosphere of India today.'⁵

Although penned many years ago, these words are relevant in the context of current controversies over the history of temple desecration in India. For it has

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been through selective translations of medieval Persian chronicles, together with a selective use of epigraphic data, that Hindu nationalists have sought to find the sort of irrefutable evidence—one of Goel's chapters is titled 'From the Horse's Mouth'—that would demonstrate a persistent pattern of villainy and fanaticism on the part of the medieval Indo-Muslim conquerors and rulers.

In reality, though, each scrap of evidence in the matter requires scrutiny. Consider an inscription dated 1455, found over the doorway of a tomb-shrine in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, formerly the capital of Malwa. The inscription, a 42-verse Persian *ghazal*, mentions the destruction of a Hindu temple by one 'Abdullah Shah Changanal during the reign of Raja Bhoja, a renowned Paramara king who had ruled over the region from 1010 to 1053. In his book *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them?*, Sita Ram Goel accepts the inscription's reference to temple destruction more or less at face value, as though it were a contemporary newspaper account reporting an objective fact.⁶ Unlike Goel, however, the text is concerned not with documenting an instance of temple destruction, but with narrating and celebrating the fabulous career of 'Abdullah Shah Changanal, the saint who lies buried at the site of the tomb. A reading of a larger body of the text reveals, in fact, a complex historiographical process at work:

This centre became Muhammadan first by him [i.e.,

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'Abdullah Shah Changal], (and) all the banners of religion were spread. (I have heard) that a few persons had arrived before him at this desolate and ruined place. When the muazzin raised the morning cry like the trumpet-call for the intoxicated *sufis*, the infidels (made an attack from) every wall (?) and each of them rushed with the sword and knife. At last they (the infidels) wounded those men of religion, and after killing them concealed (them) in a well. Now this (burial place and) grave of martyrs remained a trace of those holy and pious people.

When the time came that the sun of Reality should shine in this dark and gloomy night, this lion-man ['Abdullah Shah Changal] came from the centre of religion to this old temple with a large force. He broke the images of the false deities, and turned the idol-temple into a mosque. When Rai Bhoj saw this, through wisdom he embraced Islam with a family of all brave warriors. This quarter became illuminated by the light of the Muhammadan law, and the customs of the infidels became obsolete and abolished.

Now this tomb since those old days has been the famous pilgrimage-place of a world. Graves from their oldness became leveled (to the ground), (and) there remained no mount on any grave. There was also (no place) for retirement, wherein the distressed *darvish* could take rest. Thereupon the king of the world gave the order that this top of Tur [Mount Sinai] be built anew. The king of happy countenance, the Sultan of Horizons (i.e., the world), the visitors of whose courts are Khaqan (the emperor of Turkistan) and Faghfur (the emperor of China), 'Alau-d-din Wad-dunya Abu'l-Muzaffar, who is triumphant over

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his enemies by the grace of God, the Khilji king Mahmud Shah, who is such that by his justice the world has become adorned like paradise, he built afresh this old structure, and this house with its enclosure again became new.⁷

The narrative divides a remembered past into three distinct moments. The first is the period before the arrival of the Hero, 'Abdullah Shah Chungal. At this time a small community of Muslims in Malwa, with but a tenuous foothold in the region, were martyred by local non-Muslims, their bodies thrown into a well.

The narrative's second moment is the period of the Hero, who comes from the 'centre of religion' (Mecca?), smashes images, transforms the temple into a mosque, and converts to Islam the most famous king of the Paramara dynasty—deeds that collectively avenged the martyred Sufis and, most importantly, served to (re)establish Islam in the region.

The narrative's third moment is the period after the Hero's lifetime when his grave-site, although a renowned place of pilgrimage, had suffered from neglect. Now enters the narrative's other hero, Sultan Mahmud Khalaji—the 'king of the world' and 'of happy countenance,' to whose court the emperors of China and Central Asia pay respect, and by whose justice the world had become adorned like paradise. His great act was to patronize the cult of 'Abdullah Shah by (re)building his shrine which, we are told at the end of the text, included a strong vault, a

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mosque, and a caravansarai. The inscription closes by offering a prayer that the soul of the benevolent Sultan may last until Judgment Day and that his empire may last in perpetuity.

Although Indo-Muslim epigraphs are typically recorded near in time to the events they describe, the present one is hardly contemporary, as it was composed some four hundred years after the events to which it refers. Far from being a factual account of a contemporary incident, then, the text presents a richly textured legend elaborated over many generations of oral transmission until 1455, when the story of 'Abdullah Shah Chungal and his deeds in Malwa became frozen in the written word that we have before us. As such, the narrative reveals a process by which a particular community at a particular time and place—Muslims in mid-fifteenth century Malwa—constructed their origins. Central to the story are themes of conversion, martyrdom, redemption, and the patronage of sacred sites by Indo-Muslim royalty, as well as, of course, the destruction of a temple. Whether or not any temple was actually destroyed four hundred years before this narrative was committed to writing, we cannot know with certainty. However, it would seem no more likely that such a desecration had actually occurred than that the renowned Raja Bhoja had been converted to Islam, which the text also claims.

In any event, it is clear that by the mid-fifteenth century the memory of the destruction of a temple,

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projected into a distant past, had become one among several elements integral to how Muslims in Malwa—or at least those who patronized the composition of this *ghazal*—had come to understand their origins. The case thus suggests that caution is necessary in interpreting claims made in Indo-Muslim literary sources to instances of temple desecration. It also illustrates the central role that temple desecration played in the remembered past of an Indo-Muslim state or community.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples: What happened to Them?*, vol. 1: *A Preliminary Survey* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1990); vol. 2 : *The Islamic Evidence* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991).
2. H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, trans. and eds., *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, 8 vols. (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, n.d.), 1:xxi.
3. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 1:xvi.
4. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 1:xxii, xxvii.
5. K.A. Nizami, ed., *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period: Collected Works of Professor Mohammad Habib* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974), 1:12.
6. Goel, *Hindu Temples*, 2: 115-16. Goel does, however, consider it more likely that the event took place during the reign of Raja Bhoja II in the late thirteenth century than during that of Raja Bhoja I in the eleventh century.
7. G. Yazdani, ed. and trans., 'The Inscription of the Tomb of 'Abdullah Shah Changal at Dhar,' *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (1909), 1-5.

2

EARLY INSTANCES OF TEMPLE DESECRATION

It is well known that, during the two centuries before 1192, which was when an indigenous Indo-Muslim state and community first appeared in north India, Persianized Turks systematically raided and looted major urban centers of South Asia, sacking temples and hauling immense loads of movable property to power bases in eastern Afghanistan.¹ The pattern commenced in 986, when the Ghaznavid Sultan Sabuktigin (r. 977-97) attacked and defeated the Hindu Shahi raja who controlled the region between Kabul and north-west Punjab. According to Abu Nasr 'Utbi, the personal secretary to the sultan's son, Sabuktigin

marched out towards Lamghan [located to the immediate east of Kabul], which is a city celebrated for its great strength and abounding in wealth. He conquered it and set fire to the places in its vicinity which were inhabited by infidels, and demolishing the idol-temples, he established Islam in them.²

Linking religious conversion with conquest—with conquest serving to facilitate conversion, and conversion serving to legitimize conquest—'Utbi's brief notice established a rhetorical trope that many subsequent

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Indo-Muslim chroniclers would repeat, as for example in the case of the 1455 inscription at Dhar, just discussed.

Notwithstanding 'Utbi's religious rhetoric, however, subsequent invasions by Sabuktigin and his more famous son Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 998-1030) appear to have been undertaken for material reasons. Based in Afghanistan and never seeking permanent dominion in India, the earlier Ghaznavid rulers raided and looted Indian cities, including their richly endowed temples loaded with movable wealth, with a view to financing their larger political objectives far to the west, in Khurasan.³

The predatory nature of these raids was also structurally integral to the Ghaznavid political economy: their army was a permanent, professional one built around an elite corps of mounted archers, who, as slaves, were purchased, equipped, and paid with cash derived from regular infusion of war booty taken alike from Indian and Iranian cities.⁴ From the mid-eleventh century, however, Mahmud's successors, cut off from their sources of military manpower in Central Asia first by the Seljuqs and then by the Ghurids, became progressively more provincial, their kingdom focused around their capital of Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan with extensions into the Punjab. And, while the later Ghaznavids continued the predatory policies of raiding the Indian interior for booty, these appear to have been less destructive and more sporadic than those of Sabuktigin and Mahmud.⁵

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The dynamics of north Indian politics changed dramatically, however, when the Ghurids, a dynasty of Tajik (eastern Iranian) origins, arrived from central Afghanistan towards the end of the twelfth century. Sweeping aside the Ghaznavids, Ghurid conquerors and their Turkish slave generals ushered in a new sort of state quite unlike that of the foreign-based Ghaznavids. Aspiring to imperial dominion over the whole of north India from a base in the middle of the Indo-Gangetic plain, the new Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) signalled the first attempt to build an indigenous Muslim state and society in north India. With respect to religious policy, we can identify two principal components to this project: (a) state patronage of an India-based Sufi order, and (b) a policy of selective temple desecration that aimed not, as earlier, to finance distant military operations on the Iranian Plateau, but to delegitimize and extirpate defeated Indian ruling houses. Let us consider these in turn.

NOTES

1. A good summary of the political history of this period is found in André Wink, *al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. 2: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th-13th Centuries* (Leiden : Brill, 1997), 111-49.
2. 'Utbi, *Tarikh-i Yamini*, in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 2:22. For a thirteenth century Persian translation of 'Utbi's original Arabic, made in 1206, see Abu'l Sharaf Nasih b. Zafar Jurfadqani, *Tarjuma-yi tarikh-i Yamini* (Teheran: Bangah-i Tarjomeh va Nashr-i Kitab, 1345 A. H.), 31.
3. C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids, Splendour and Decay:*

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The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040–1186 (1977; repr. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992), 32, 68.

4. Mahmud did not hesitate to sack Muslim cities. His plunder of the Iranian city of Ray, in 1029, brought him 500,000 dinars' worth of jewels, 260,000 dinars in coined money, and over 30,000 dinars' worth of gold and silver vessels. India, however, possessed far more wealth than the more sparsely populated Iranian plateau. Somnath alone brought in twenty million dinars' worth of spoil. C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994-1040* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 78.
5. The contemporary historian Baihaqi recorded the first attack on Benares conducted by a Turkish army, carried out in 1033 by the Ghaznavid governor of Lahore. 'He marched out with his warriors and the army of Lahore,' wrote Baihaqi, 'and exacted ample tribute from the Thakurs. He crossed the river Ganges and went down the left bank. Unexpectedly (*na-gah*) he arrived at a city which is called Banaras, and which belonged to the territory of Gang. Never had a Muslim army reached this place.....The markets of the drapers, perfumers, and jewellers, were plundered, but it was impossible to do more. The people of the army became rich, for they all carried off gold, silver, perfumes, and jewels, and got back in safety.' Baihaqi, *Tarikh-i Baihaqi*. In Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, 2: 123–4. Text: 'Ali Akbar Fayyaz, ed., *Tarikh-i Baihaqi* (Mashhad: University of Mashhad, 1971), 517.

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The world is bound up closely with that of the men of faith,' wrote the Bahmani court-poet 'Abd al-Malik 'Isami in 1350.

In every country, there is a man of piety who keeps it going and well. Although there might be a monarch in every country, yet it is actually under the protection of a fakir [Sufi shaikh].¹

Here we find a concise statement of one of the leading medieval Perso-Islamic conceptions of how religion and politics interrelate. In 'Isami's view, what had saved the Delhi Sultanate from Mongol conquest was the respect showed by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (r. 1325–51) for the memory of the founder of the Chishti order of Sufis in India, Shaikh Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236), to whose tomb in Ajmer the sultan had made a pilgrimage just after engaging with a Mongol army.²

'Isami also felt, however, that the decline of Delhi, and of the Tughluq empire generally, had resulted in large part from the demise in 1325 of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya, Delhi's most renowned Sufi shaikh (see Fig. 1). Conversely, he considered that the arrival in the Deccan of one of Nizam al-Din Auliya's leading

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spiritual successors, Burhan al-Din Gharib (d. 1337), was the cause of that region's flourishing state at mid-century.³

Among all South Asian Sufi orders, the Chishtis were the most closely identified with the political fortunes of Indo-Muslim states, and especially with the planting of such states in parts of South Asia never previously touched by Islamic rule. The pattern began in the first several decades of the fourteenth century, when the order's rise to prominence among Delhi's urban populace coincided with that of the imperial Tughluqs. The two principal Persian poets in India of that time, Amir Hasan and Amir Khusrau, and the leading historian, Zia al-Din Barani, were all disciples of Delhi's principal Chishti shaikh, Nizam al-Din Auliya. As writers whose works were widely-read, these men were in effect publicists for Nizam al-Din and his order. And since the three were also patronized by the Tughluq court, the public and the ruling classes alike gradually came to associate dynastic fortune with that of the Chishti order.⁴ Moreover, as the spiritual power of a charismatic Sufi was believed to adhere after his lifetime to his tomb-site, shrines at such tombs were patronized by Indo-Muslim rulers just as they were frequented by Muslim devotees.

And since the tomb-shrines of the greatest shaikhs of this order were located within South Asia, and not in distant Central Asia or West Asia as was the case with those of other orders, a ruling dynasty's patronage of Chishti shrines could bolster its claims to being

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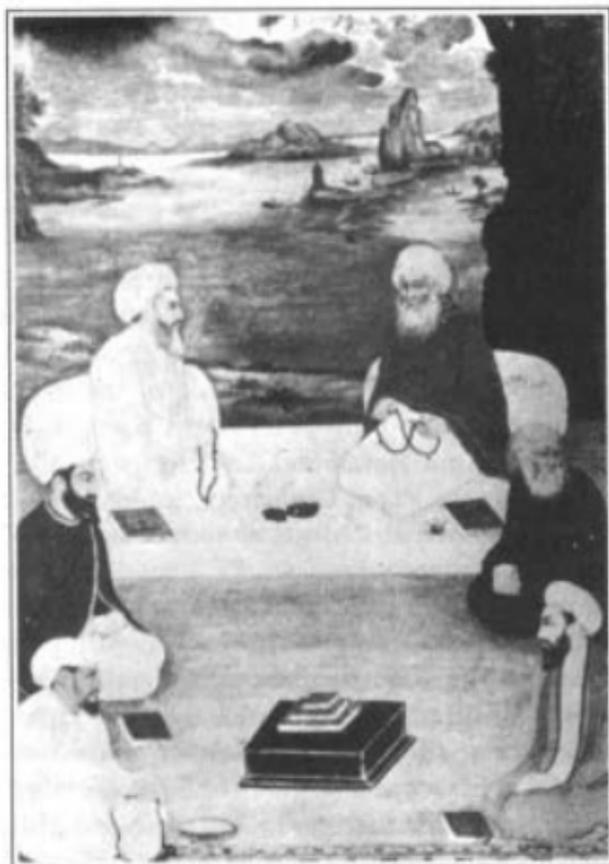


Fig. 1 : An imaginary gathering of famous Sufi saints
17th Century miniature in the Hermitage Museum,
Leningrad

Left : Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti, Khwaja Qutb al-Din
Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid

Right : Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qadir Jilani, Shaikh Abu 'Ali Qalandar,
Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya

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both legitimately Islamic and authentically Indian.

Thus Chishti shaikhs repeatedly participated in the launching of new Indo-Muslim states. At the core of 'Isami's narrative of the Bahmani Revolution, which in 1347 threw off Tughluq overlordship and launched an independent Indo-Muslim state in the Deccan, is a narrative of the passing of the Prophet Muhammad's own mantle (*khirqā*) from Abu Bakr, the first caliph, down to Burhan al-Din Gharib's leading disciple, Zain al-Din Shirazi (d. 1369). It was from that very mantle—'by whose scent one could master both worlds'—that the founder of the Bahmani Sultanate, Sultan Hasan Bahman Shah (r. 1347–58), was said to have received his own power and inspiration.⁵ We see the same pattern in Bengal, another former Tughluq province that asserted its independence from Delhi in the mid-fourteenth century. The earliest-known monument built by the founder of Bengal's Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1342–1486) was a mosque dedicated in 1342 to Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq (d. 1398), a Sufi shaikh whose own spiritual master was—like Zain al-Din's spiritual master—a disciple of the great shaikh of imperial Delhi, Nizam al-Din Auliya (d. 1325). What is more, the political ascendancy of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty coincided exactly with the spiritual ascendancy of Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq and his own family. Down to the year 1532, fully fourteen successive sultans of Bengal enlisted themselves as disciples of the descendants of this shaikh, while the tomb-shrine of 'Ala al-Haq's own son and successor, Nur Qutb-i 'Alam, became

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in effect a state shrine to which subsequent sultans made annual pilgrimages.⁶

In short, within the space of just five years, between 1342 and 1347, founders of independent Indo-Muslim dynasties in both Bengal and the Deccan patronized local Chishti shaikhs whose own spiritual masters had migrated from Delhi where they had studied with the imperial capital's preeminent Sufi shaikh, Nizam al-Din Auliya. The pattern was repeated elsewhere, as the Tughluq empire continued to crumble, giving rise to more provincial successor-states. In 1369, the Tughluq governor of Gujarat, Muzaffar Khan, proclaimed his independence from Delhi immediately after marching to Ajmer, where he paid his respects to the tomb of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, the 'mother-shrine' of the Chishti order in India.⁷ In 1404, soon after proclaiming his own independence from Delhi, the former Tughluq governor of Malwa, Dilawar Khan, described himself as 'the disciple of the head of the holy order of Nasir Din Mahmud'⁸. The reference here was to Nizam al-Din Auliya's most eminent disciple to have remained in Delhi—Shaikh Nasir al-Din Mahmud (d. 1356), over whose grave Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq (r. 1351-88) had raised a magnificent tomb several decades earlier.⁹

Nor did the pattern cease with the launching of Tughluq successor states. On entering Delhi in 1526, Babur prayed at the shrine of India's second great Chishti shaikh, Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235), while the new emperor's brother-in-law rebuilt the tomb of

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Nizam al-Din Auliya. In 1571, Akbar built a tomb for his father Humayun near Nizam al-Din's shrine, and in the same year he began building his new capital of Fatehpur Sikri at the hospice-site of Salim Chishti, the shaikh who had predicted the birth of the emperor's son. Towards the end of his life this same shaikh tied his turban on the head of that son, the future Jahangir, built gates and other buildings at or near the foundational Chishti shrine at Ajmer, as did Shah Jahan as part of his victory celebrations after defeating the raja of Mewar. That emperor's daughter, Jahan Ara, even wrote a biography of Mu'in al-Din Chishti. Shah Jahan's son and successor Aurangzeb, who sought to build another pan-Indian empire on the Tughluq model, visited and made sizeable contributions to Chishti tomb-sites in former Tughluq provinces such as at Gulbarga or Khuldabad in the Deccan, in addition to sites in Ajmer and Delhi.

Even the later Mughals patronized those Chishti shrines to which they still had access in their dwindling dominions, as when 'Alamgir II repaired and made additions to the tomb of Nizam al-Din Auliya. Bringing the pattern full circle, the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II (deposed 1858), built his own mansion adjacent to the shrine of Bakhtiyar Kaki, the very site where Babur had prayed more than three centuries earlier.¹⁰

In sum, the entire Mughal dynasty, believing that the blessings of Chishti shaikhs underpinned their worldly success, vigorously patronized the order. Two

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of Akbar's fourteen pilgrimages to the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti at Ajmer, those of 1568 and 1574, were made immediately after conquering Chittor and Bengal respectively.¹¹ Discussing his military successes with the historian 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni, Akbar remarked, 'All this (success) has been brought through the Pir [Mu'in al-Din].'¹² Vividly dramatized by Akbar's pilgrimages from Agra to Ajmer, several of them made by foot, the Mughal-Chishti partnership even survived the collapse of the Mughal state. In a sense, it persists to this day. The ceremonies, the terminology, and the protocol still found at Chishti shrines generally, and at the Ajmer shrine particularly, all reflect the extraordinary intrusion of the Mughals' courtly culture into that of the Chishti order.¹³

NOTES

1. '*Jahan-ra ki asas-i matin basta-and, bi iqdam-i mardan-i din basta-and. Bi har kishwari hast sahib-dili, bi har 'arsat hast ba hasili. Bi har mulk garchi amiri bud, wali dar panah-i faqiri bud.*' 'Abd al-Malik 'Isami, *Futuhus-salatin* by Isami, ed A. S. Usha (Madras: University of Madras, 1948), 455; Agha Mahdi Huasin, ed. and trans., *Futuhu's-salatin, or Shah Namah-i Hind of 'Isami* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1967), 3: 687.
2. *Ibid.*, text, 466; trans. 3: 702.
3. *Ibid.*, text, 456, 458; trans., 3: 689, 690-2. 'As soon as that holy man of virtue [Nizam al-Din Auliya] departed from Delhi to the other world,' he wrote, 'the country, in general, and the city, in particular, fell into a turmoil and were subjected to ruin and destruction.'
4. See Simon Digby, 'The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India,' in Marc Gaborieau, ed., *Islam and*

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- Society in South Asia*, in *Purusartha* 9 (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 69-70.
5. 'Isami, *Futuhus-salatin*, text, 7-8; trans., 1:11-13.
 6. Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 86, 91.
 7. Muhammad Qasim Firishta, *Tarikh-i Firishta*, trans. John Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mohomedan Power in India* (1829; repr. 4 vols, Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1966)] 4: 4.
 8. Zafar Hasan, 'The Inscriptions of Dhar and Mandu,' *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (1909), 12 (*murid-i shaikh-i tariqat-Nasir-i Din Mahmud, ki bud malja'-i autad wa marja'-i abdal*).
 9. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, 'The Early Chishti Dargahs, In Christian W. Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 21.
 10. Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, vol. 1:4 of *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 293, 34-35, 51, 100, 134, 174, 215, 260, 307, 310.
 11. P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1992), 100.
 12. 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, trans. W. H. Lowe (1899; repr. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1973), 2: 243.
 13. It has been noted recently that the *qauwali* protocols observed during the annual 'urs ceremonies at Ajmer, which commemorate the deathdate of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, 'betray the impact of Mughal court etiquette. The diwan, dressed in Mughal fashion, represent in fact the Mughal king rather than a religious dignitary, and comes escorted by the torch-bearers and mace-bearers wearing Mughal costumes. He takes his seat on the cushion (*gadela*) under a special tent (*dalbadal*) erected for the occasion....On his arrival in the shrine the diwan kisses the tomb and offers flowers, and then one of the *khadims*, who happens to be his *wakil*, like the other pilgrims, ties a *dastar* (turban) over his head, spreads the cloth sheet over his bowed head,

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prays for him, and then gives him *taburruk*, consisting of flowers, sandal and sweets....Then he [the diwan] sits down and the *fathiha khwans*, who are permanently and hereditarily employed, recite the *fatiha*, as well as prayers for the sovereign (*badshah-i Islam*), the diwan, the mutawalli and other officials, and for the general public.' Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moni, 'Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer,' in Christian Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1989), 72, 74.

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By effectively injecting a legitimizing 'substance' into a new body politic at the moment of its birth, the royal patronage of Chishti shaikhs contributed positively to the process of Indo-Muslim state-building. Equally important to this process was its negative counterpart: the sweeping away of all prior political authority in newly-conquered and annexed territories. When such authority was vested in a ruler whose own legitimacy was associated with a royal temple—typically one that housed an image of a ruling dynasty's state-deity, or *rashtra-devata* (usually Vishnu or Shiva)—that temple was normally looted, redefined, or destroyed, any of which would have had the effect of detaching a defeated raja from the most prominent manifestation of his former legitimacy. Temples that were not so identified, or temples formerly so identified but abandoned by their royal patrons and thereby rendered politically irrelevant, were normally left unharmed. Such was the case, for example, with the famous temples at Khajuraho south of the Middle Gangetic Plain, which appear to have been abandoned by their Chandella royal patrons before Turkish armies reached the area in the early thirteenth century (see Fig. 2).¹

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It would be wrong to explain this phenomenon by appealing to an essentialized 'theology of iconoclasm' felt to be intrinsic to the Islamic religion. For, while it is true that contemporary Persian sources routinely condemned idolatry (*but-parasti*) on religious grounds, it is also true that attacks on images patronized by enemy kings had been, from about the sixth century AD on, thoroughly integrated into Indian political behavior. With their lushly sculpted imagery vividly displaying the mutual interdependence of kings and gods and the commingling of divine and human kingship, royal temple complexes of the early medieval period were thoroughly and pre-eminently political institutions. It was here that, after the sixth century, human kingship was established, contested, and revitalized.² Above all, the central icon housed in a royal temple's 'womb-chamber' and inhabited by the state-deity of the temple's royal patron, expressed the shared sovereignty of king and deity (see Fig. 3).

Moreover, notwithstanding that temple priests endowed a royal temple's deity with attributes of transcendent and universal power, that same deity was also understood as having a very special relationship, indeed a sovereign relationship, with the particular geographical site in which its temple complex was located.³ As revealed in temple narratives, even the physical removal of an image from its original site could not break the link between deity and geography.⁴ The bonding between king, god, temple, and



Courtesy : AIS, Gurgaon

Fig. 2 : A temple at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, abandoned by its royal patrons, was not touched by the Turkish armies when they reached the area in the early 13th century.

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Courtesy : AIS, Gurgaon

Fig. 3 : Stone sculpture of Narasimha 1 (1238-64), ruler of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, worshipping the state-deity, Lord Jagannath, flanked by a Shiva linga (right) and an image of Goddess Durga (left)

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land in early medieval India is well illustrated in a passage from the *Brhatsamhita*, a sixth century text: 'If a Shiva linga, image, or temple breaks apart, moves, sweats, cries, speaks, or otherwise acts with no apparent cause, this warns of the destruction of the king and his territory.'⁵ In short, from about the sixth century on, images and temples associated with dynastic authority were considered politically vulnerable.

Given these perceived connections between temples, images, and their royal patrons, it is hardly surprising that early medieval Indian history abounds in instances of temple desecration that occurred amidst inter-dynastic conflicts. In AD 642, according to local tradition, the Pallava king Narashimhavarman I looted the image of Ganesha from the Chalukyan capital of Vatapi. Fifty years later armies of those same Chalukyas invaded north India and brought back to the Deccan what appear to be images of Ganga and Yamuna, looted from defeated powers there. In the eighth century, Bengali troops sought revenge on king Lalitaditya by destroying what they thought was the image of Vishnu Vaikuntha, the state deity of Lalitaditya's kingdom in Kashmir. In the early ninth century the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III invaded and occupied Kanchipuram, which so intimidated the king of Sri Lanka that he sent Govinda several (probably Buddhist) images that had represented the Sinhala state, and which the Rashtrakuta king then installed in a Shaiva temple in his capital. About the same time

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the Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha also invaded Sri Lanka and took back to his capital a golden Buddha image—'a synecdoche for the integrity of the Sinhalese polity itself'—that had been installed in the kingdom's Jewel Palace.

In the early tenth century the Pratihara king Herambapala seized a solid gold image of Vishnu Vaikuntha when he defeated the Shahi king of Kangra. By the mid-tenth century the same image was seized from the Pratiharas by the Chandella king Yasovarman and installed in the Lakshmana temple of Khajuraho. In the early eleventh century the Chola king Rajendra I furnished his capital with images he had seized from several prominent neighbouring kings: Durga and Ganesha images from the Chalukyas; Bhairava, Bhairavi, and Kali images from the Kalingas of Orissa; a Nandi image from the Eastern Chalukyas; and a bronze Shiva image from the Palas of Bengal. In the mid-eleventh century the Chola king Rajadhiraja defeated the Chalukyas and plundered Kalyani, taking a large black stone door guardian to his capital in Thanjavur, where it was displayed to his subjects as a trophy of war.⁶

While the dominant pattern here was one of looting royal temples and carrying off images of state deities,⁷ we also hear of Hindu kings engaging in the destruction of the royal temples of their political adversaries. In the early tenth century, the Rashtrakuta monarch Indra III not only destroyed the temple of Kalapriya (at Kalpa near the Jamuna River), patron-

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ized by the Rashtrakutas' deadly enemies, the Pratiharas, but they took special delight in recording the fact.⁸

In short, it is clear that temples had been the natural sites for the contestation of kingly authority well before the coming of Muslim Turks to India. Not surprisingly, Turkish invaders, when attempting to plant their own rule in early medieval India, followed and continued established patterns. The table and the corresponding maps in this study by no means give the complete picture of temple desecration after the establishment of Turkish power in upper India. Undoubtedly, some temples were desecrated but the facts in the matter were never recorded, or the facts were recorded but the records themselves no longer survive. Conversely, later Indo-Muslim chroniclers, seeking to glorify the religious zeal of earlier Muslim rulers, sometimes attributed acts of temple desecration to such rulers even when no contemporary evidence supports the claims.⁹ As a result, we shall never know the precise number of temples desecrated in Indian history. Nonetheless, by relying strictly on evidence found in contemporary or near-contemporary epigraphic and literary evidence spanning a period of more than five centuries (1192–1729), one may identify eighty instances of temple desecration whose historicity appears reasonably certain. Although this figure falls well short of the 60,000 claimed by some Hindu nationalists,¹⁰ a review of these data suggests several broad patterns.

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First, acts of temple desecration were nearly invariably carried out by military officers or ruling authorities; that is, such acts that we know about were undertaken by the state. Second, the chronology and geography of the data indicate that acts of temple desecration typically occurred on the cutting edge of a moving military frontier. From Ajmer in Rajasthan, the former capital of the defeated Chahamana Rajputs—also, significantly, the wellspring of Chishti piety—the post-1192 pattern of temple desecration moved swiftly down the Gangetic Plain as Turkish military forces sought to extirpate local ruling houses in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century (see Appendix 1, Map 1: nos. 1–9).

In Bihar, this included the targeting of Buddhist monastic establishments at Odantapuri, Vikramashila, and Nalanda. Detached from a Buddhist laity, these establishments had by this time become dependent on the patronage of local royal authorities, with whom they were indentified. In the 1230s Iltutmish carried the Delhi Sultanate's authority into Malwa (Appendix 1, Map 1: nos. 10–11), and by the onset of the fourteenth century the Khalaji sultans had opened up a corridor through eastern Rajasthan into Gujarat (Appendix 1, Map 1: nos. 12–14, 16–17).

Delhi's initial raids on peninsular India, on which the Khalajis embarked between 1295 and the early decades of the fourteenth century (see Appendix 1, Map 1: nos. 15, 18–19), appear to have been driven not by a goal of annexation but by the Sultanate's

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need for wealth with which to defend north India from Mongol attacks.¹¹ For a short time, then, peninsular India stood in the same relation to the north—namely, as a source of plunder for financing distant military operations—as north India had stood in relation to Afghanistan three centuries earlier, in the days of Mahmud of Ghazni. After 1323, however, a new north Indian dynasty, the Tughluqs, sought permanent dominion in the Deccan, which the future Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq established by uprooting royally patronized temples in western Andhra, most prominently the Svayambhushiva temple complex at Warangal (see Appendix 1, Map 1: nos. 20–22) (see Fig. 4). Somewhat later, Sultan Firuz Tughluq did the same in Orissa (Appendix I, Map 1: no. 23).

From the late fourteenth century, after the tide of Tughluq imperialism had receded from Gujarat and the Deccan, newly emerging successor states sought to expand their own political frontiers in those areas. This, too, is reflected in instances of temple desecration, as the ex-Tughluq governor of Gujarat and his successor consolidated their authority there (see Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 25–26, 31–32, 34–35, 38–39, 42), or as the Delhi empire's successors in the south, the Bahmani sultans, challenged Vijayanagara's claims to dominate the Raichur doab and the Tamil coast (Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 33, 41). The pattern was repeated in Kashmir by Sultan Sikandar (Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 27–30), and in the mid-fifteenth century when the independent sultanate of Malwa con-

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Courtesy : AITS, Gurgaon

Fig. 4 : Ruins of the Swayambhu Shiva temple, Warangal (demolished, 1323 by the Tughluq prince Ulugh Khan).

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tested renewed Rajput power in eastern Rajasthan after Delhi's authority there had waned (Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 36–37). In the early sixteenth century, when the Lodi dynasty of Afghans sought to reassert Delhi's sovereignty over neighbouring Rajput houses, we again find instances of temple desecration (Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 43–45). So do we in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the Bahmani Kingdom's principal successor states, Bijapur and Golconda, challenged the territorial sovereignty of Orissan kings (Appendix III, Map 3: nos. 55, 59), of Vijayanagara (Appendix II, Map 2: no. 47), and of the latter's successor states—especially in the southern Andhra country (Appendix II, Map 2: nos. 50–51, 53–54, Appendix III, Map 3: nos. 60–61).

Unlike the Deccan, where Indo-Muslim states had been expanding at the expense of non-Muslim states, in north India the Mughals under Babur, Humayun, and Akbar—that is, between 1526 and 1605—grew mainly at the expense of defeated Afghans. As non-Hindus, the latter had never shared sovereignty with deities patronized in royal temples, which probably explains the absence of firm evidence of temple desecration by any of the early Mughals, in Ayodhya or elsewhere. The notion that Babur's officer Mir Baqi destroyed a temple dedicated to Rama's birthplace at Ayodhya and then got the emperor's sanction to build a mosque on the site—the Babri Masjid (see Fig. 5)—was elaborated in 1936 by S. K. Banerji. However, the author offered no evidence that there had ever been

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Fig. 5 : Babri Masjid (before demolition, 6 December 1992), Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh).

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a temple at this site, much less that it had been destroyed by Mir Baqi. The mosque's inscription records only that Babur had ordered the construction of the mosque, which was built by Mir Baqi and was described as 'the place of descent of celestial beings' (*mahbit-i qudsiyan*). This commonplace rhetorical flourish in Persian can hardly be construed as referring to Rama, especially since it is the mosque itself that is so described, and not the site or any earlier structure on the site.¹²

However, whenever Mughal armies pushed beyond the frontiers of territories formerly ruled by the Delhi sultans and sought to annex the domains of Hindu rulers, we again find instances of temple desecration. In 1661, the governor of Bengal, Mir Jumla, sacked the temples of the neighbouring raja of Kuch Bihar, who had been harassing the northern frontier of Mughal territory (Appendix III, Map 3: no. 64). The next year, with a view to annexing Assam to the imperial domain, the governor pushed far up the Brahmaputra valley and desecrated temples of the Ahom rajas, replacing the principal one at Garhgaon with a mosque (Appendix III, Map 3: nos. 65–66).

All of these instances of temple desecration occurred in the context of military conflicts when Indo-Muslim states expanded into the domains of non-Muslim rulers. Contemporary chronicles and inscriptions left by the victors leave no doubt that field commanders, governors, or sultans viewed the desecration of royal temples as a normal means of decoupling

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a former Hindu king's legitimate authority from his former kingdom, and more specifically, of decoupling that former king from the image of the state-deity that was publicly understood as protecting the king and his kingdom. This was accomplished in one of several ways. Most typically, temples considered essential to the constitution of enemy authority were destroyed. Occasionally, temples were converted into mosques, which more visibly conflated the disestablishment of former sovereignty with the establishment of a new one.¹³

The form of desecration that showed the greatest continuity with pre-Turkish practice was the seizure of the image of a defeated king's state-deity and its abduction to the victor's capital as a trophy of war. In February 1299, for example, Ulugh Khan sacked Gujarat's famous temple of Somnath and sent its largest image to Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalaji's court in Delhi (Appendix-I, Map 1: no. 16). When Firuz Tughluq invaded Orissa in 1359 and learned that the region's most important temple was that of Jagannath located inside the raja's fortress in Puri, he carried off the stone image of the god and installed it in Delhi 'in an ignominious position' (Appendix 1, Map 1: no. 23). In 1518, when the court in Delhi came to suspect the loyalty of a tributary Rajput chieftain in Gwalior, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi marched to the famous fortress, stormed it, and seized a brass image of Nandi evidently situated adjacent to the chieftain's Baghdad Gate (Appendix II, Map 2: no. 46). Similarly, in 1579, when Golconda's army led by

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Murahari Rao was campaigning south of the Krishna river, Rao annexed the entire region to Qutb Shahi domains and sacked the popular Ahobilam temple, whose ruby-studded image he brought back to Golconda and presented to his sultan as a war trophy (Appendix II, Map 2: no. 51). Although the Ahobilam temple had only local appeal, it had close associations with prior sovereign authority since it had been patronized and even visited by the powerful and most famous king of Vijayanagara, Krishna Deva Raya.¹⁴

In each of these instances, the deity's image, taken as war trophy to the capital city of the victorious sultan, became radically detached from its former context and in the process was transformed from a living to a dead image. However, sacked images were not invariably abducted to the victor's capital. In 1556, the Gajapati raja of Orissa had entered into a pact with the Mughal emperor Akbar, the distant adversary of the sultan of Bengal, Sulaiman Karrani. The raja had also given refuge to Sulaiman's more proximate adversary, Ibrahim Sur, and offered to assist the latter in his ambitions to conquer Bengal and overthrow the Karrani dynasty. As Sulaiman could hardly have tolerated such threats to his stability, he sent an army into Orissa which went straight to the Gajapati kingdom's state temple of Jagannath and looted its images. But here the goal was not annexation but only punishment, which might explain why the Gajapati state images were not carried back to the Bengali capital as trophies of war.¹⁵

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Whatever form they took, acts of temple desecration were never directed at the people, but at the enemy king and the image that incarnated and displayed his state-diety. A contemporary description of a 1661 Mughal campaign in Kuch Bihar, which resulted in the annexation of the region, makes it clear that Mughal authorities were guided by two principal concerns. The first was to destroy the image of the state-diety of the defeated raja, Bhim Narayana. And the second was to prevent Mughal troops from looting or in any way harming the general population of Kuch Bihar. To this end, we are informed, the chief judge of Mughal Bengal, Saiyid Muhammad Sadiq,

was directed to issue prohibitory orders that nobody was to touch the cash and property of the people, and he should go personally and establish order everywhere. He was asked to confiscate the treasure of Bhim Narayana, break the idols and introduce the laws of Islam. Sayyid Sadiq issued strict prohibitory orders so that nobody had the courage to break the laws or to plunder the property of the inhabitants. The punishment for disobeying the order was that the hands, ears or noses of the plunderers were cut. Sayyid Sadiq busied himself in giving protection to the life and property of the subjects and the destitutes.¹⁶

In newly annexed areas formerly ruled by non-Muslims, as in the case of Kuch Bihar, Mughal officers took appropriate measures to secure the support of the common people, who after all created the material wealth upon which the entire imperial edifice rested.

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NOTES

1. Wink, *al-Hind*, 2:324.
2. 'The need to link one's royal origins to religious and divine forces,' writes B. D. Chattopadhyaya referring to the period 700–1200, 'led to the extraordinary temple building of this period.' B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Historiography, History, and Religious Centres: Early Medieval North India, circa AD 700–1200,' in Vishakha N. Desai and Darielle Mason, eds., *Gods, Guardians and Lovers: Temple Sculptures from North India, AD 700–1200* (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 40.
3. Michael Willis suggests that one of the reasons the imperial Pratiharas did *not* build great monumental temple complexes was precisely their determination to avoid the localization of sovereign power that temples necessarily projected. According to this reasoning, the most active patrons of temple construction in this period were subordinate kings who did not have such vast imperial pretensions as did the Pratiharas. Willis, 'Religion and Royal Patronage in north India,' in Desai and Mason, eds., *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers*, 58-9.
4. Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 122, 137–8. Davis here cites David Shulman: 'A divine power is felt to be present *naturally* on the spot. The texts are therefore concerned with the manner in which this presence is revealed and with the definition of its specific attributes.' David D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 48. Emphasis mine.
5. Cited in Davis, *Lives*, 53.
6. Davis, *Lives*, 51–83, *passim*. The same pattern continued after the Turkish conquest of India. In the 1460s, Kapilendra, the founder of the Suryavamshi Gajapati dynasty in Orissa, sacked both Shaiva and Vaishnava temples in the Kaveri delta in the course of wars of conquest in the Tamil country. See Phillip B. Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation*

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and *Ethnohistorical Analysis of the Rayavacakamu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 146. Somewhat later, in 1514, Krishna Deva Raya looted an image of Bala Krishna from Udayagiri, which he had defeated and annexed to his growing Vijayanagara state. Six years later, he acquired control over Pandharpur, where he seems to have looted the Vittala image and carried it back to Vijayanagara, with the apparent purpose of ritually incorporating this area into his kingdom. Davis, *Lives*, 65, 67.

7. In the late eleventh century, the Kashmiri King Harsha even raised the plundering of temples to an institutionalized activity; and in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, while Turkish rulers were establishing themselves in north India, kings of the Paramara dynasty attacked and plundered Jain temples in Gujarat. See Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia, and Bipan Chandra, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1969), 14, 31.
8. Willis, 'Religion and Royal Patronage.', 59.
9. In 1788, for example, the author of the *Riyaz al-salatin* claimed that Muhammad Bakhtiyar demolished local temples after he conquered Bengal in 1204, though no contemporary evidence suggests that he did so. Ghulam Hussain Salim, *Riyazu-s-Salatin: A History of Bengal*, trans. Abdus Salam (1903; repr. Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1975), 64. Even contemporary sources could make false claims. An inscription on a mosque in Bidar, dated 1670, claims that the Mughal governor Mukhtar Khan had destroyed a temple and built the mosque on its site. 'But as a matter of fact,' noted the epigraphist who published the inscription, 'the mosque is a new construction, and the rock does not seem to have been disturbed, for it still survives.' *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, 1927-28 (Calcutta: Government of India, 1931), 32.
10. Entry for the date 1688 in 'Hindu Timeline,' *Hinduism Today* (December, 1994), cited in Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,' *Comparative Studies in Society and*

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- History*, 37, no. 4 (Oct., 1995), 692.
11. In 1247 Balban, the future sultan of Delhi, had recommended raiding Indian states for precisely this purpose. See Minhaj Siraj Juzjani, *Tabakati-i-Nasiri*, trans. H.G. Raverty (1881; repr. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1970), 2: 816.
 12. See S.K. Banerji, 'Babur and the Hindus,' *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society*, 9 (1936), 76–83.
 13. For example, a 1406 inscription records that after Sultan Firuz Shah Bahmani had defeated the forces of Vijayanagara in the much-contested Raichur doab region, 'a mosque has been converted out of a temple as a sign of religion'. It then records that the Sultan himself had 'conquered this fort by the firm determination of his mind in a single attack (lit. on horseback). After the victory of the emperor, the chief of chiefs, Safdar (lit. the valiant commander) of the age, received (the charge of) the fort.' *Epigraphia Indica, Arabic and Persian Supplement*, 1962 (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1964), 57–8.
 14. Briggs, *Rise of Mahomedan Power*, 3:267. The temple's political significance, and hence the necessity of desecrating it, would have been well understood by Murahari Rao, himself a Marathi Brahman.
 15. Khawaja Ni'mat Allah, *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-i-Afghani*, ed. S.M. Imam al-Din (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960), 1:413–15; Abu'l-fazl, *Akbar-nama*, trans. Henry Beveridge (repr. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1979), 2:281–2, 480.
 16. S. Moinul Haq, trans., *Khafi Khan's History of 'Alamgir* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1975), 142–3.

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If the idea of conquest became manifest in the desecration of temples associated with former enemies, what happened once the land and the subjects of those enemies were integrated into an Indo-Muslim state? On this point, the data are quite clear: pragmatism as well as time-honoured traditions of both Islamic and Indian statecraft dictated that temples lying within such states be left unmolested. We learn from a Sanskrit inscription, for example, that in 1326, thirteen years after he annexed the northern Deccan to the Tughluq empire, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq appointed Muslim officials to repair a Shiva temple in Kalyana (in Bidar District), thereby facilitating the resumption of normal worship that had been disrupted by local disturbances.¹² According to that sultan's interpretation of Islamic Law, anybody who paid the poll-tax (*jizya*) could build temples in territories ruled by Muslims.²

Such views continued to hold sway until modern times. Within several decades of Muhammad bin Tughluq's death, Sultan Shihab al-Din (1355-73) of Kashmir rebuked his Brahman minister for having suggested melting down Hindu and Buddhist images

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in his kingdom as a means of obtaining quick cash. In elaborating his ideas on royal patronage of religion, the sultan referred to the deeds of figures drawn from classical Hindu mythology. 'Some [kings],' he said, have obtained renown by setting up images of gods, others by worshiping them, some by duly maintaining them. And some by demolishing them! How great is the enormity of such a deed! Sagara became famous by creating the sea and the rivers....Bhagiratha obtained fame by bringing down the Ganges. Jealous of Indra's fame, Dushyanata acquired renown by conquering the world; and Rama by killing Ravana when the latter had purloined Sita. King Shahvadina [Shihab al-Din], it will be said, plundered the image of a god; and this fact, dreadful as Yama [death], will make the men in future tremble.³

About a century later, Muslim jurists advised the future Sikandar Lodi of Delhi (r. 1489–1517) that 'it is not lawful to lay waste ancient idol temples and it does not rest with you to prohibit ablution in a reservoir (sacred tank, Kurukshetra) which has been customary from ancient times.'⁴

The pattern of post-conquest temple protection, and even patronage, is especially clear when we come to the imperial Mughals, whose views on the subject are captured in official pronouncements on Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, one of the most controversial figures in Indian history. It is well known that in the early eleventh century, before the establishment of Indo-Muslim rule in north India, the Ghaznavid

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sultan had made numerous, and very destructive, attacks on the region. Starting with the writing of his own contemporary and court poet, Firdausi (d. 1020), Mahmud's career soon became legend, as generations of Persian poets lionized Mahamud as a paragon of Islamic kingly virtue, celebrating his infamous attacks on Indian temples as models for what other pious sultans should do.⁵ But the Ghaznavid sultan never undertook the responsibility of actually governing any part of the subcontinent whose temples he wantonly plundered. Herein lies the principal difference between the careers of Mahmud and Abu'l-fazl, Akbar's chief minister and the principal architect of Mughal imperial ideology. Reflecting the sober values that normally accompany the practice of governing large, multi-ethnic states, Abu'l-fazl attributed Mahmud's excess to fanatical bigots who, having incorrectly represented India as 'a country of unbelievers at war with Islam,' incited the sultan's unsuspecting nature, which led to 'the wreck of honour and the shedding of blood and the plunder of the virtuous'.⁶

Indeed, from Akbar's time (r. 1556–1605) onward, Mughal rulers treated temples lying within their sovereign domain as state property; accordingly, they undertook to protect both the physical structures and their Brahman functionaries. At the same time, by appropriating Hindu religious institutions to serve imperial ends—a process involving complex

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overlappings of political and religious codes of power—the Mughals became deeply implicated in institutionalized Indian religions, in dramatic contrast to their British successors, who professed a hands-off policy in this respect. Thus we find Akbar allowing high-ranking Rajput officers in his service to build their own monumental temples in the provinces to which they were posted, as in the case of the Govind Deva Temple in Vrindavan by Raja Man Singh (see Figs. 6 and 7).⁷ Akbar's successors went further. Between 1590 and 1735, Mughal officials repeatedly oversaw, and on occasions even initiated, the renewal of Orissa's state cult, that of Jagannath in Puri. By sitting on a canopied chariot while accompanying the cult's annual car festival, Shah Jahan's officials ritually demonstrated that it was the Mughal emperor, operating through his appointed officers (*mansabdars*), who was the temple's—and hence the god's—ultimate lord and protector.⁸ Such actions in effect projected a hierarchy of hybridized political and religious power that descended downward from the Mughal emperor to his mansabdar, from the mansabdar to the god Jagannath and his temple, from Jagannath to the sub-imperial king who patronized the god, and from the king to his subjects. For the Mughals, politics within their sovereign domains never meant annihilating prior authority, but appropriating it within a hierarchy of power that flowed from the Peacock Throne



Courtesy : AIBS, Gurgaon

Fig. 6 : Interior of the Govind Deva Temple at Vrindavan, built by Raja Man Singh, 1590, under Mughal patronage.

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Courtesy : AHS, Gurgaon

Fig. 7 : Exterior of the Govind Deva Temple, Vrindavan.

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to the mass of commoners below.

Such ideas continued in force into the reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707), whose orders to local officials in Benares in 1659 clearly indicate that Brahman temple functionaries there, together with the temples at which they officiated, merited state protection:

In these days information has reached our court that several people have, out of spite and rancour, harassed the Hindu residents of Benares and nearby places, including a group of Brahmans who are in charge of ancient temples there. These people want to remove those Brahmans from their charge of temple-keeping, which has caused them considerable distress. Therefore, upon receiving this order, you must see that nobody unlawfully disturbs the Brahmans or other Hindus of that region, so that they might remain in their traditional place and pray for the continuance of the Empire.⁹

By way of justifying this order, the emperor noted that, 'According to the Holy Law (*shari'at*) and the exalted creed, it has been established that ancient temples should not be torn down.' On this point, Aurangzeb aligned himself with the theory and practice of Indo-Muslim ruling precedent. But then he added, 'nor should new temples be built'—a view that broke decisively from Akbar's policy of permitting his Rajput officers to build their own temple complexes in Mughal territory.¹⁰ Although this order appears to have applied only to Benares—many new

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temples were built elsewhere in India during Aurangzeb's reign¹¹—one might wonder what prompted the emperor's anxiety in this matter.

NOTES

1. P.B. Desai, 'Kalyani Inscription of Sultan Muhammad, Saka 1248,' *Epigraphia Indica*, 32 (1957-58), 165-8.
2. Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1324-1354*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb (1929; repr, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1986), 214.
3. S.L.Sadhu, ed., *Medieval Kashmir, Being a Reprint of the Rajatarangini of Janaraja, Shrivara and Shuka*, trans. J.C. Dutt (1898; repr. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1993), 44-5.
4. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, trans. B.De, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1927-39), 1:386.
5. A useful discussion of Mahmud, his legend, and the question of iconoclasm prior to the establishment of Islamic states in India is found in Davis, *Lives*, chs. 3 and 6.
6. Abu'l-fazl 'Allami, *A'in-i Akbari*, vol. 3, trans. H.S. Jarrett, ed., Jadunath Sarkar (2nd edn. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927; repr. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corps., 1977-78), 377.
7. Catherine B. Asher, 'The Architecture of Raja Man Singh: A Study of Sub-Imperial Patronage,' in Barbara Stoler Miller, ed., *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 183-201.
8. P. Acharya, 'Bruton's Account of Cuttack and Puri,' *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, 10, no. 3 (1961), 46.
9. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1911), 689-90. Order to Abu'l Hasan in Benares, dated 28 Feb., 1659. My translation. The 'continuance of the empire,' of course, was

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always on the minds of the Mughals, regardless of what religious functionary was praying to which deity.

10. '*Az ru-yi shar'-i sharif wa millat-i munif muqarrar chunin ast, ki dair-hayi dirin bar andakht nashavad, wa but-kada-ha taza bina nayabad.*' Ibid., My translation.
11. See Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, 184-5, 263.

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It seems certain that Indo-Muslim rulers were well aware of the highly charged political and religious relationship between a royal Hindu patron and his client-temple. Hence, even when former rulers or their descendants had been comfortably assimilated into an Indo-Muslim state's ruling class, there always remained the possibility, and hence the occasional suspicion, that a temple's latent political significance might be activated and serve as a power-base to further its patron's political aspirations. Such considerations might explain why it was that, when a subordinate non-Muslim officer in an Indo-Muslim state showed signs of disloyalty—and especially if he engaged in open rebellion—the state often desecrated the temple(s) most clearly identified with that officer. After all, if temples lying within its domain were understood as state property, and if a government officer who was also a temple's patron demonstrated disloyalty to the state, from a juridical standpoint ruling authorities felt justified in treating that temple as an extension of the officer, and hence liable for punishment.

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Thus in 1478, when a Bahmani garrison on the Andhra coast mutinied, murdered its governor, and entrusted the fort to Bhimaraj Oriyya, who until that point had been a Bahmani client, the sultan personally marched to the site and, after a six-month siege, stormed the fort, destroyed its temple, and built a mosque on the site (Appendix II, Map 2: no. 40). A similar thing occurred in 1659, when Shivaji Bhonsle, the son of a loyal and distinguished officer serving the 'Adil Shahi sultans of Bijapur, seized a government port on the northern Konkan coast, thereby disrupting the flow of external trade to and from the capital. Responding to what it considered an act of treason, the government deputed a high-ranking officer, Afzal Khan, to punish the Maratha rebel. Before marching to confront Shivaji himself, however, the Bijapur general first proceeded to Tuljapur and desecrated a temple dedicated to the goddess Bhavani, to which Shivaji and his family had been personally devoted (Appendix III, Map 3: no. 63).

We find the same pattern with the Mughals. In 1613 while at Pushkar, near Ajmer, Jahangir ordered the desecration of an image of Varaha that had been housed in a temple belonging to an uncle of Rana Amar of Mewar, the emperor's arch enemy (see Appendix III, Map 3: no. 56). In 1635, his son and successor, Shah Jahan, destroyed the great temple at Orchha, which had been patronized by the father of Raja Jajhar Singh, a high-ranking Mughal officer who was at that time in open rebellion against the emperor

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(Appendix III, Map 3: no. 58).

In 1669, there arose a rebellion in Benares among landholders, some of whom were suspected of having helped Shivaji, who was Aurangzeb's arch enemy, escape from imperial detention. It was also believed that Shivaji's escape had been initially facilitated by Jai Singh, the great grandson of Raja Man Singh, who almost certainly built Benares's great Vishvanath temple. It was against this background that the emperor ordered the destruction of that temple in September, 1669 (Appendix III, Map 3: no. 69).¹

About the same time, serious Jat rebellions broke out in the areas around Mathura, in which the patron of that city's congregational mosque had been killed. So in early 1670, soon after the ring-leader of these rebellions had been captured near Mathura, Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of the city's Keshava Deva temple and built an Islamic structure (*id-gah*) on its site (Appendix III, Map 3: no. 70).² Nine years later, the emperor ordered the destruction of several prominent temples in Rajasthan that had become associated with imperial enemies. These included temples in Khadela patronized by refractory chieftains there; temples in Jodhpur patronized by a former supporter of Dara Shikoh, the emperor's brother and arch-rival; and the royal temples in Udaipur and Chittor patronized by Rana Raj Singh after it was learned that that Rajput chieftain had withdrawn his loyalty to the Mughal state (Appendix III, Map 3: nos. 71-74).

Considerable misunderstanding has arisen from

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a passage in the *Ma'athir-i 'Alamgiri* concerning an order on the status of Hindu temples that Aurangzeb issued in April 1669, just months before his destruction of the Benares and Mathura temples. The passage has been construed to mean that the emperor ordered the destruction not only of the Vishvanath temple at Benares and the Keshava Deva temple at Mathura, but of all temples in the empire.³ The Passag reads :

Orders respecting Islamic affairs were issued to the governors of all provinces that the schools and places of worship of the irreligious be subject to demolition and that with the utmost urgency the manner of teaching and the public practices of the sects of these misbelievers be suppressed.⁴

The order did not state that schools or places of worship be demolished, but rather that they be *subject* to demolition, implying that local authorities were required to make investigations before taking action.

More importantly, the sentence immediately preceding this passage provides the context in which we may find the order's overall intent. On 8 April 1669, Aurangzeb's court received reports that in Thatta, Multan, and especially in Benares, Brahmans in 'esablished schools' (*mudaris-i muqarrar*) had been engaged in teaching false books (*kutub-i batila*) and that both Hindu and Muslim 'admirers and students' had been travelling over great distances to study the 'ominous sciences' taught by this 'deviant group'.⁵ We do not know what sort of teaching or 'false books' were involved here, or why both Muslims and Hindus

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were attracted to them, though these are intriguing questions. What is clear is that the court was primarily concerned, indeed exclusively concerned, with curbing the influence of a certain 'mode' or 'manner' of teaching (*taur-i dars-o-tadris*) within the imperial domain. Far from being, then, a general order for the destruction of all temples in the empire, the order was responding to specific reports of an educational nature and was targeted at investigating those institutions where a certain kind of teaching had been taking place.

In sum, apart from his prohibition on building new temples in Benares, Aurangzeb's policies respecting temples within imperial domains generally followed those of his predecessors. Viewing temples within their domains as state property, Aurangzeb and Indo-Muslim rulers in general punished disloyal Hindu officers in their service by desecrating temples with which they were associated.

How, one might then ask, did they punish disloyal Muslim officers? Since officers in all Indo-Muslim states belonged to hierarchically ranked service cadres, infractions short of rebellion normally resulted in demotions in rank, while serious crimes like treason were generally punished by execution, regardless of the perpetrator's religious affiliation.⁶

No evidence, however, suggests that ruling authorities attacked public monuments like mosques or Sufi shrines that had been patronized by disloyal or rebellious officers. Nor were such monuments desecrated when one Indo-Muslim kingdom con-

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quered another and annexed its territories. To the contrary, new rulers were quick to honour and support the shrines of those Chishti shaikhs that had been patronized by those they had defeated.

As we have seen, Babur, upon seizing Delhi from the last of the city's ruling sultans in 1526, lost no time in patronizing the city's principal Chishti tomb-shrines. The pattern was repeated as the Mughals expanded into provinces formerly ruled by Indo-Muslim dynasties. Upon conquering Bengal in 1574, the Mughals showered their most lavish patronage on the two Chishti shrines in Pandua—those of Shaikh 'Ala al-Haq (d. 1398) and Shaikh Nur Qutb-i 'Alam (d. 1459)—that had been the principal objects of state patronage by the previous dynasty of Bengal sultans.⁷ And when he extended Mughal dominion over defeated Muslim states of the Deccan, the dour Aurangzeb, notwithstanding his reputation for eschewing the culture of saint-cults, made sizable contributions to those Chishti shrines in Khuldabad and Gulbarga that had helped legitimize earlier Muslim dynasties there.

NOTES

1. Surendra Nath Sinha, *Subah of Allahabad under the Great Mughals* (New Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia, 1974), 65–8; Asher, *Architecture*, 254, 278; Saqi Must'ad Khan, *Ma'athir-i 'Alamgiri* (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1871), 88.
2. Saqi Must'ad Khan, *Maasir-i 'Alamgiri*, tr., J. Sarkar (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1947), 57–61; Asher, *Architecture*, 254.

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3. See Goel, *Hindu Temples*, 2:78–9, 83; Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (2nd edn.: London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), 132–3; Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 98n.
4. Saqi Must'ad Khan, *Ma'athiri-i 'Alamgiri*, text, 81. My translation. *Ahkam-i Islam-nizam ba naziman-i kull-i subajat sadir shud ki mudaris wa mu'abid-i bidinan dast-khwashi inhidam sazand, wa ba ta'kid-i akid taur-i dars-o-tadris wa rasm-i shayu'-i madhahib-i kufr-ayinan bar andazand*. Cf. Saqi Must'ad Khan, *Maasiri-'Alamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzeb'Alamgir*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981), 51–2.
5. *Ma'athir-i 'Alamgiri*, text, 81. *Ba 'arz-i khudavand-i din-parvar rasid ki dar suba-yi Thatta wa Multan khusus Banaras brahminan-i buttalat-nishan dar mudaris-i muqaddar ba tadris-i kutub-i batila ishtighal darand, wa raghiban wa taliban az hunud wa musulman musafat-hayi ba'ida taiy numuda, jahat-i tahsil-i 'ulum-i shum nazd-i an jama'at gumrah miayand*. Cf. Jadunath Sarkar, trans., *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981), 51.
6. Consider the swift and brutal punishment of Baha al-Din Gurshasp, a high-ranking officer in Tughluq imperial service and a governor in the Deccan. In 1327, Gurshasp joined forces with the raja of Kampila in an unsuccessful rebellion against Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. When captured, the raja, who had never sworn allegiance to Tughluq authority, got the relatively light punishment of a beheading. But the rebel governor, who was not only a former Tughluq officer but the emperor's first cousin, was spat upon by his female relatives and flayed alive; then his skin was stuffed with straw and paraded throughout the imperial provinces as a cautionary tale to the public, while his body was mixed with rice and fed to elephants. See 'Isami, *Futuhu's-salatin*, trans., 3:658–89; Mahdi Husain, trans., *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta (India, Maldivé Islands and Ceylon)* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1953), 96. As a final indignity to Gurshasp, we are told by Ibn Battuta that

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the elephants refused to eat the meal that had been mixed with the rebel's body.

7. Eaton, *Rise of Islam*, 176-7.

TEMPLES AND MOSQUES CONTRASTED

Data presented in the foregoing discussion suggest that mosques or shrines carried very different political meanings than did royal temples in independent Hindu states, or temples patronized by Hindu officers serving in Indo-Muslim states. For Indo-Muslim rulers, building mosques was considered an act of royal piety, even a duty. But all actors, rulers and ruled alike, seem to have recognized that the deity worshipped in mosques or shrines had no personal connection with a Muslim monarch. Nor were such monuments thought of as underpinning, far less actually constituting, the authority of an Indo-Muslim king. This point is well illustrated in a reported dispute between the Emperor Aurangzeb and a Sufi named Shaikh Muhammadi (d. 1696). As a consequence of this dispute, in which the shaikh refused to renounce views that the emperor considered theologically deviant, Shaikh Muhammadi was ordered to leave the imperial domain. When the Sufi instead took refuge in a local mosque, Aurangzeb claimed that this would not do, since the mosque was also within imperial territory. But the shaikh only remarked on the

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emperor's arrogance, noting that a mosque was the house of God and therefore only His property. The standoff ended with the shaikh's imprisonment in Aurangabad fort—property that was unambiguously imperial.¹

This incident suggests that mosques in Mughal India, though religiously potent, were considered detached from both sovereign terrain and dynastic authority, and hence politically inactive. As such, their desecration could have had no relevance to the business of disestablishing a regime that had patronized them. Not surprisingly, then, when Hindu rulers established their authority over territories of defeated Muslim rulers, they did not as a rule desecrate mosques or shrines, as, for example, when Shivaji established a Maratha kingdom on the ashes of Bijapur's former dominions in Maharashtra, or when Vijayanagara annexed the former territories of the Bahmanis or their successors.² In fact, the rajas of Vijayanagara, as is well known, built their own mosques, evidently to accommodate the sizable number of Muslims employed in their armed forces.

By contrast, monumental royal temple complexes of the early medieval period were considered politically active, inasmuch as the state-deities they housed were understood as expressing the shared sovereignty of king and deity over a *particular* dynastic realm.³ Therefore, when Indo-Muslim commanders or rulers looted the consecrated images of defeated opponents and carried them off to their own capitals as war

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trophies, they were in a sense conforming to customary rules of Indian politics. Similarly, when they destroyed a royal temple or converted it into a mosque, ruling authorities were building on a political logic that, they knew, placed supreme political significance on such temples. That same significance, in turn, rendered temples just as deserving of peace-time protection as it rendered them vulnerable in times of conflict.

NOTES

1. Muzaffar Alam, 'Assimilation from a Distance: Confrontation and Sufi Accommodation in Awadh Society,' in R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, eds., *Tradition, Dissent, and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 177n.
2. Examples of mosque desecrations are strikingly few in number. In 1697-8 in Sambhar, in Rajasthan's Jaipur District, Shah Sabz 'Ali built a mosque on the site of a temple. In the reign of Shah 'Alam (1707-12), however, non-Muslims came to dominate the region and demolished the mosque, which was subsequently rebuilt in the reign of Farrukh Siyar. (See Z.A. Desai, *Published Muslim Inscriptions of Rajasthan* [Jaipur: Government of Rajasthan, 1971], 157). Similarly, there is evidence that in 1680, during Aurangzeb's invasion of Rajasthan, the Rajput chief Bhim Singh, seeking to avenge the emperor's recent destruction of temples in Udaipur and elsewhere, raided Gujarat and plundered Vadnagar, Vishalnagar and Ahmedabad, in the latter place destroying thirty smaller mosques and one large one. (*Raja-sumudra-prasasti*, XXII, v. 29, an inscription composed ca. 1683, which appears in Kaviraj Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod* [Udaipur: Rajayantralaya, 1886]; cited in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Mughal Empire* [Bombay, Bharatiya

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Vidya Bhavan, 1974], 351).

3. One can hardly imagine the central focus of a mosque's ritual activity, the prayer niche (*mihrab*), being taken out of the structure and paraded around a Muslim capital by way of displaying Allah's co-sovereignty over an Indo-Muslim ruler's kingdom, in the manner that the ritual focus of a royal temple, the image of the state-deity, was paraded around many medieval Hindu capitals in elaborate 'car' festivals.

TEMPLE DESECRATION AND THE RHETORIC OF STATE BUILDING

Much misunderstanding over the place of temple desecration in Indian history results from a failure to distinguish the rhetoric from the practice of Indo-Muslim state-formation. Whereas the former tends to be normative, conservative, and rigidly ideological, the latter tends to be pragmatic, eclectic, and non-ideological. Rhetorically, we know, temple desecration figured very prominently in Indo-Muslim chronicles as a necessary and even meritorious constituent of state-formation.¹ In 1350, for example, the poet-chronicler 'Isami gave the following advice to his royal patron, 'Ala al-Din Hasan Bahman Shah, the founder of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan.

If you and I, O man of intellect, have a holding in this country and are in a position to replace the idol-houses by mosques and sometimes forcibly to break the Brahmanic thread and enslave women and children—all this is due to the glory of Mahmud [of Ghazni]...The achievements that you make today will also become a story tomorrow.²

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But the new sultan appears to have been more concerned with political stability than with the glorious legacy his court-poet would wish him to pursue. There is no evidence that the new sultan converted any temples to mosques. After all, by carving out territory from lands formerly lying within the Delhi Sultanate, the founder of the Bahmani state had inherited a domain void of independent Hindu kings and hence void, too, of temples that might have posed a political threat to his fledgling kingdom.

Unlike temple desecration or the patronage of Chishti shaikhs, both of which figured prominently in the contemporary rhetoric on Indo-Muslim state-building, a third activity, the use of explicitly Indian political rituals, found no place whatsoever in that rhetoric. Here we may consider the way Indo-Muslim rulers used the rich political symbolism of the Ganges River, whose mythic associations with imperial kingship had been well established since Mauryan times (321–181 BC). Each in its own way, the mightiest imperial formations of the early medieval peninsula—the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, and the Cholas—claimed to have ‘brought’ the Ganges River down to their southern capitals, seeking thereby to legitimize their claims to imperial sovereignty. Although the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas did this symbolically, probably through their insignia, the Cholas literally transported pots of Ganges water to their southern capital.³ And, we are told, so did Muhammad bin Tughluq in the years after 1327, when that sultan established Daulatabad, in Maharashtra, as the new

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co-capital of the Delhi Sultanate's vast, all-India empire.⁴ In having Ganges water carried a distance of forty days' journey from north India 'for his own personal use,' the sultan was conforming to an authentically Indian, imperial ritual. Several centuries later, the Muslim sultans of Bengal, on the occasion of their own coronation ceremonies, would wash themselves with holy water that had been brought to their capital from the ancient holy site of Ganga Sagar, located where the Ganges River emptied into the Bay of Bengal.⁵

No Indo-Muslim chronicle or contemporary inscription associates the use of Ganges water with the establishment or maintenance of Indo-Muslim states. We hear this only from foreign visitors: an Arab traveller in the case of Muhammad bin Tughluq, a Portuguese friar in the case of the sultans of Bengal. Similarly, the image of a Mughal official seated in a canopied chariot and presiding over the Jagannath car festival comes to us not from Mughal chronicles but from an English traveller who happened to be in Puri in 1633.⁶

Such disjunctures between the rhetoric and the practice of royal sovereignty also appear, of course, with respect to the founding of non-Muslim states. We know, for example, that Brahman ideologues, writing in chaste Sanskrit, spun elaborate tales of how warriors and sages founded the Vijayanagara state by combining forces for a common defence of *dharma* from assaults by barbaric (*mleccha*) Turkic outsiders. This is the Vijayanagara of rhetoric, a familiar story.

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But the Vijayanagara of practical politics rested on very different foundations, which included the adoption of the titles, the dress, the military organization, the ruling ideology, the architecture, the urban design, and the political economy of the contemporary Islamic world.⁷ As with Indo-Muslim states, we hear of such practices mainly from outsiders—merchants, diplomats, travellers—and not from Brahman chroniclers and ideologues.

NOTES

1. Aiming to cast earlier invaders or rulers in the role of zealous and puritanical heroes, later chroniclers occasionally attributed to such figures the desecration of a staggering numbers of temples. Mahmud of Ghazni, for example, is said to have destroyed 10,000 temples in Kanauj and 1,000 in Mathura, his grandson Ibrahim 1,000 in the Delhi Dooab and another 1,000 in Malwa, Aibek, 1,000 in Delhi, and Muhammad Ghuri another 1,000 in Benares—figures that Hindu nationalists like Sita Ram Goel have accepted at face value. Goel, *Hindu Temples*, 269.
2. 'Isami, *Futuhu's-salatin*, trans, 1:66–7.
3. Davis, *Lives*, 71–6.
4. Husain, *Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, 4.
5. Sebastiao Manrique, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, trans. E. Luard and H. Hosten (Oxford: Hakluyt Society, 1927), 1:77.
6. P. Acharya, 'Bruton's Account of Cuttack and Puri,' in *Orissa Historical Research Journal* 10, no. 3 (1961), 46.
7. See Phillip B. Wagoner, ' "Sultan among Hindu Kings": Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55, no. 4 (Nov. 1996), 851–80; *idem.*, 'Harihara, Bukka, and the Sultan: the Delhi Sultanate in the Political Imagination of Vijayanagara,' unpublished paper.

CONCLUSION

One often hears that between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, Indo-Muslim states, driven by a Judeo-Islamic 'theology of iconoclasm,' by fanaticism, or by sheer lust for plunder, wantonly and indiscriminately indulged in the desecration of Hindu temples. Such a picture cannot, however, be sustained by evidence from original sources for the period after 1192. Had instances of temple desecration been driven by a 'theology of iconoclasm,' as some have claimed,¹ such a theology would have committed Muslims in India to destroying all temples everywhere, including ordinary village temples, as opposed to the highly selective operation that seems actually to have taken place. Rather, the original data associate instances of temple desecration with the annexation of newly conquered territories held by enemy kings whose domains lay on the path of moving military frontiers.

Temple desecration also occurred when Hindu patrons of prominent temples committed acts of treason or disloyalty to the Indo-Muslim states they served. Otherwise, temples lying within Indo-Muslim sovereign domains, viewed normally as protected state property, were left unmolested.

Finally, it is important to identify the different

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meanings that Indians invested in religious monuments, and the different ways these monuments were understood to relate to political authority. In the reign of Aurangzeb, Shaikh Muhammadi took refuge in a mosque believing that that structure—being fundamentally apolitical, indeed above politics—lay beyond the Mughal emperor's reach. Contemporary royal temples, on the other hand, were understood to be highly charged political monuments, a circumstance that rendered them fatally vulnerable to outside attack. Therefore, by targeting for desecration those temples that were associated with defeated kings, conquering Turks, when they made their own bid for sovereign domain in India, were subscribing to, even while they were exploiting, indigenous notions of royal legitimacy.

It is significant that contemporary inscriptions never identified Indo-Muslim invaders in terms of their religion, as Muslims, but most generally in terms of their linguistic affiliation (most typically as Turk, 'turushka'). That is, they were construed as but one ethnic community in India midst many others.² In the same way, B.D. Chattopadhyaya locates within early medieval Brahmanical discourse an 'essential urge to legitimize' any ruling authority so long as it was effective and responsible. This urge was manifested, for example, in the perception of the Tughluqs as legitimate successors to the Tomaras and Chahamanas; of a Muslim ruler of Kashmir as having a lunar, Pandava lineage; or of the Mughal emperors as

CONCLUSION

supporters of *Ramrajya* (the 'kingship of Lord Rama').³ It is likely that Indo-Muslim policies of protecting temples within sovereign domains contributed positively to such perceptions.

In sum, by placing known instances of temple desecration in the larger context of Indo-Muslim state-building and state-maintenance, one can find patterns suggesting a rational basis for something commonly dismissed as irrational or worse. These patterns also suggest points of continuity with Indian practices that had become customary well before the thirteenth century. Such points of continuity in turn call into serious question the sort of civilizational divide between India's 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' periods first postulated in British colonial historiography and subsequently replicated in both Pakistani and Hindu nationalist schools.

Finally, this monograph has sought to identify the different meanings that contemporary actors invested in the public monuments they patronized or desecrated, and to reconstruct those meanings on the basis of the practice, and not just the rhetoric, of those actors. Hopefully, the approaches and hypotheses suggested here might facilitate the kind of responsible and constructive discussion that this controversial topic so badly needs.

NOTES

1. See Wink, *al-Hind*, 2:294–333.
2. See Talbot, 'Inscribing the Other,' 701.
3. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (8th–14th century)*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 49–50, 53, 60, 84.

PART TWO

APPENDIX 1

INSTANCES OF TEMPLE DESECRATION, 1192-1393

No.	Date	Site	District	State	Agent	Source
See Map 1						
1.	1193	Ajmer	Ajmer	Raj.	Md. Ghuri(s)	23 : 215
2.	1193	Samana	Patiala	Punjab	Aibek	23 : 216-17
3.	1193	Kuhram	Karnal	Haryana	Aibek(g)	23 : 216-17
4.	1193	Delhi		U.P.	Md. Ghuri(s)	1(1911) : 13 23 : 217, 222
5.	1194	Kol	Aligarh	U.P.	Ghurid army	23 : 224
6.	1194	Benares	Benares	U.P.	Ghurid army	23 : 223
7.	c. 1202	Nalanda	Patna	Bihar	Bakhtiyar Khalaji (c)	20 : 90
8.	c. 1202	Odantapuri	Patna	Bihar	Bakhtiyar Khalaji	22 : 319; 21 : 551-2
9.	c. 1202	Vikramashila	Saharsa	Bihar	Bakhtiyar Khalaji	22 : 319

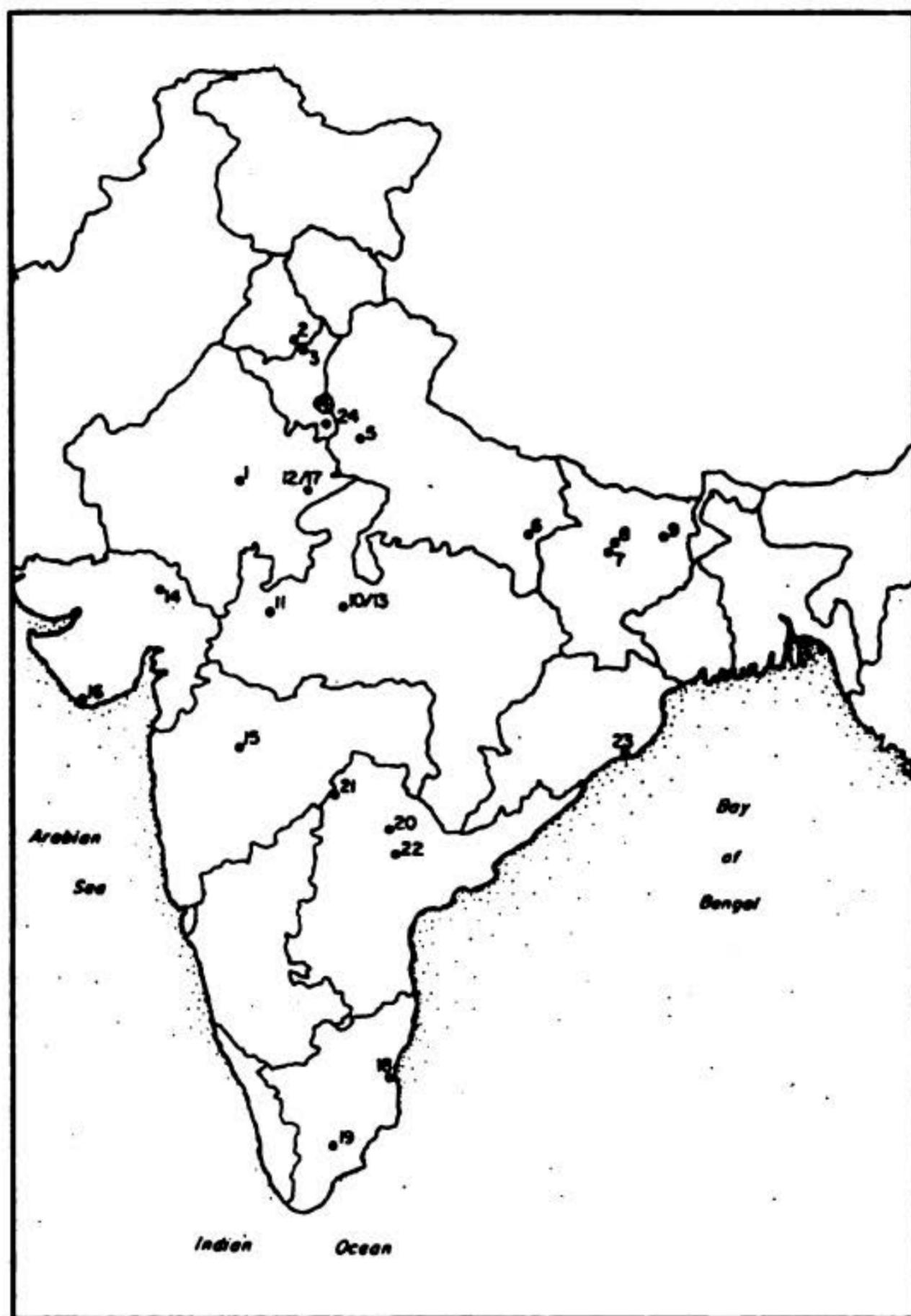
10.	1234	Bhilsa	Vidisha	M.P.	Iltutmish (s)	21 : 621-2
11.	1234	Ujjain	Ujjain	M.P.	Iltutmish	21:622-3
12.	1290	Jhain	Sawai Madh.	Raj.	Jalal al-Din Khalaji (s)	27 : 146
13.	1292	Bhilsa	Vidisha	M.P.	'Ala al-Din Khalaji (g)	27 : 148
14.	1298- 1310	Vijapur	Mehsana	Gujarat	Khalaji invaders	2(1974) : 10-12
15.	1295	Devagiri	Aurang- abad	Maha.	'Ala al-Din Khalaji (g)	24 : 543
16.	1299	Somnath	Junagadh	Gujarat	Ulugh Khan (c)	25 : 75
17.	1301	Jhain	Sawai Madh.	Raj.	'Ala al-Din Khalaji (s)	25 : 75-6
18.	1311	Chidamb- aram	South Arcot	T. N.	Malik Kafur (c)	25 : 90-1
19.	1311	Madurai	Madurai	T.N	Malik Kafur	25 : 91
20.	c. 1323	Warangal	Warangal	A.P.	Ulugh Khan (p)	33 : 1-2

21.	c. 1323	Bodhan	Nizama- bad	A.P.	Ulugh Khar.	1(1919-20) : 16
22.	c. 1323	Pillalamarri	Nalgonda	A.P.	Ulugh Khan	17 : 114
23.	1359	Puri	Puri	Orissa	Firuz Tughluq (s)	26:314
24.	1392-93	Sainthali	Gurgaon	Haryana	Bahadur K. Nahar (c)	3(1963-64) : 146

Abbreviations used above :

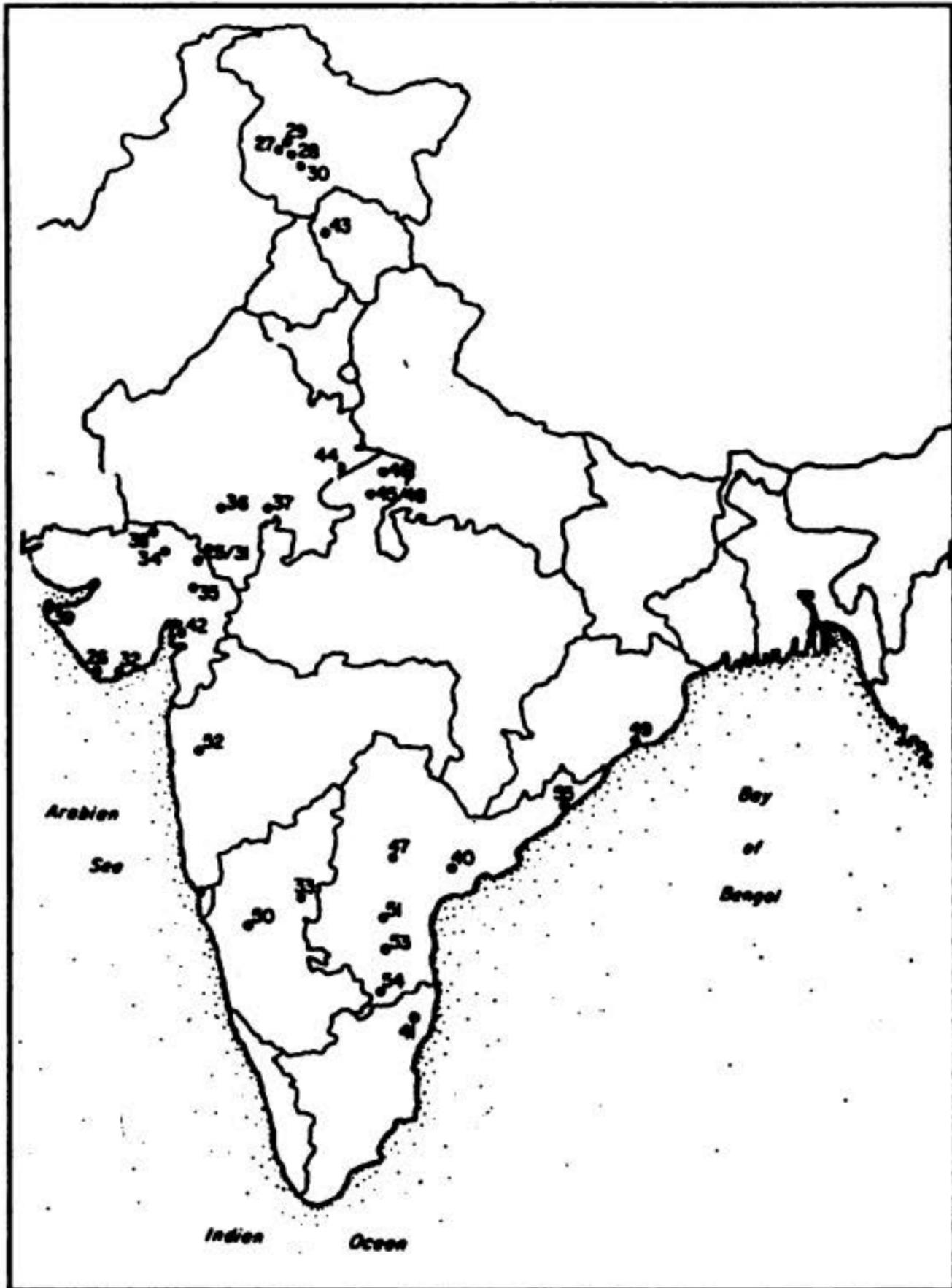
(e) = emperor (s) = sultan (g) = governor
(c) = commander (p) = crown prince

TEMPLE DESECRATION AND MUSLIM STATES



Map 1 : Temple desecrations, 1192-1394 (Appendix 1)

APPENDIX



Map 2 : Temple desecrations, 1394-1600 (Appendix 2)

APPENDIX 2

INSTANCES OF TEMPLE DESECRATION, 1394-1600

No.	Date	Site	District	State	Agent	Source
See Map 2						
25.	1394	Idar	Sabar-K.	Gujarat	Muzaffar Khan(g)	14-3 : 177
26.	1395	Somnath	Junagadh	Gujarat	Muzaffar Khan	6-4 : 3
27.	c. 1400	Paraspur	Srinagar	Kashmir	Sikandar (s)	14-3 : 648
28.	c. 1400	Bijbehara	Srinagar	Kashmir	Sikandar	34 : 54
29.	c. 1400	Tripureshvara	Srinagar	Kashmir	Sikandar	34 : 54
30.	c. 1400	Martand	Anantnag	Kashmir	Sikandar	34 : 54
31.	1400-1	Idar	Sabar-K.	Gujarat	Muzaffar Shah (s)	14-3 : 181
32.	1440-1	Diu	Amreli	Gujarat	Muzaffar Shah	6-4 : 5
33.	1406	Manvi	Raichur	Karn.	Firuz Bahmani (s)	2(1962) : 57-8

34.	1415	Sidhpur	Mehsana	Gujarat	Ahmad Shah (s)	29 : 98-9
35.	1433	Delwara	Sabar-K.	Gujarat	Ahmad Shah	14-3 : 220-1
36.	1442	Kumbhalmir	Udaipur	Raj.	Mahmud Khalaji (s)	14-3 : 513
37.	1457	Mandalgarh	Bhilwara	Raj.	Mahmud Khalaji	6-4 : 135
38.	1462	Malan	Banaskantha	Gujarat	'Ala al-Din Suhrab (c)	2(1963) : 28-9
39.	1473	Dwarka	Jamnagar	Gujarat	Mahmud Begdha (s)	14-3 : 259-61
40.	1478	Kondapalle	Krishna	A.P.	Md. II Bahmani (s)	6-2 : 306
41.	c. 1478	Kanchi	Chingleput	T.N.	Md. II Bhamani	6-2 : 308
42.	1505	Amod	Broach	Gujarat	Khalil Shah (g)	1(1933) : 36
43.	1489-1517	Nagarkot	Kangra	H. P.	Khawwas Khan (g)	35 : 81

44.	1507	Utgir	Sawai Madh.	Raj.	Sikandar Lodi (s)	14-1 : 375
45.	1507	Narwar	Shivpuri	M.P.	Sikandar Lodi	14-1 : 378
46.	1518	Gwalior	Gwalior	M.P.	Ibrahim Lodi (s)	14-1 : 402
47.	1530-31	Devarkonda	Nalgonda	A.P.	Quli Qutb Shah (s)	6-3 : 212
48.	1552	Narwar	Shivpuri	M.P.	Dilawar Kh. (g)	4(Jun 1927): 101-4
49.	1556	Puri	Puri	Orissa	Sulaiman Karrani (s)	28 : 413-15
50.	1575-76	Bankapur	Dharwar	Karn.	'Ali 'Adil Shah (s)	6-3 : 82-4
51.	1579	Ahobilam	Kurnool	A.P.	Murahari Rao (c)	6-3 : 267
52.	1586	Ghoda	Poona	Maha.	Mir Md. Zaman (?)	1 : (1933-34): 24

53.	1593	Cuddapah	Cuddapah	A.P.	Murtaza Khan (c)	6-3 : 274
54.	1593	Kalihasti	Chittoor	A.P.	I'tibar Khan (c)	6-3 : 277
55.	1599	Srikurman	Visakh.	A.P.	Qutb Shahi general	32-5 : 1312

Abbreviations used above :

(e) = emperor (s) = sultan (g) = governor (c) = commander
 (p) = crown prince

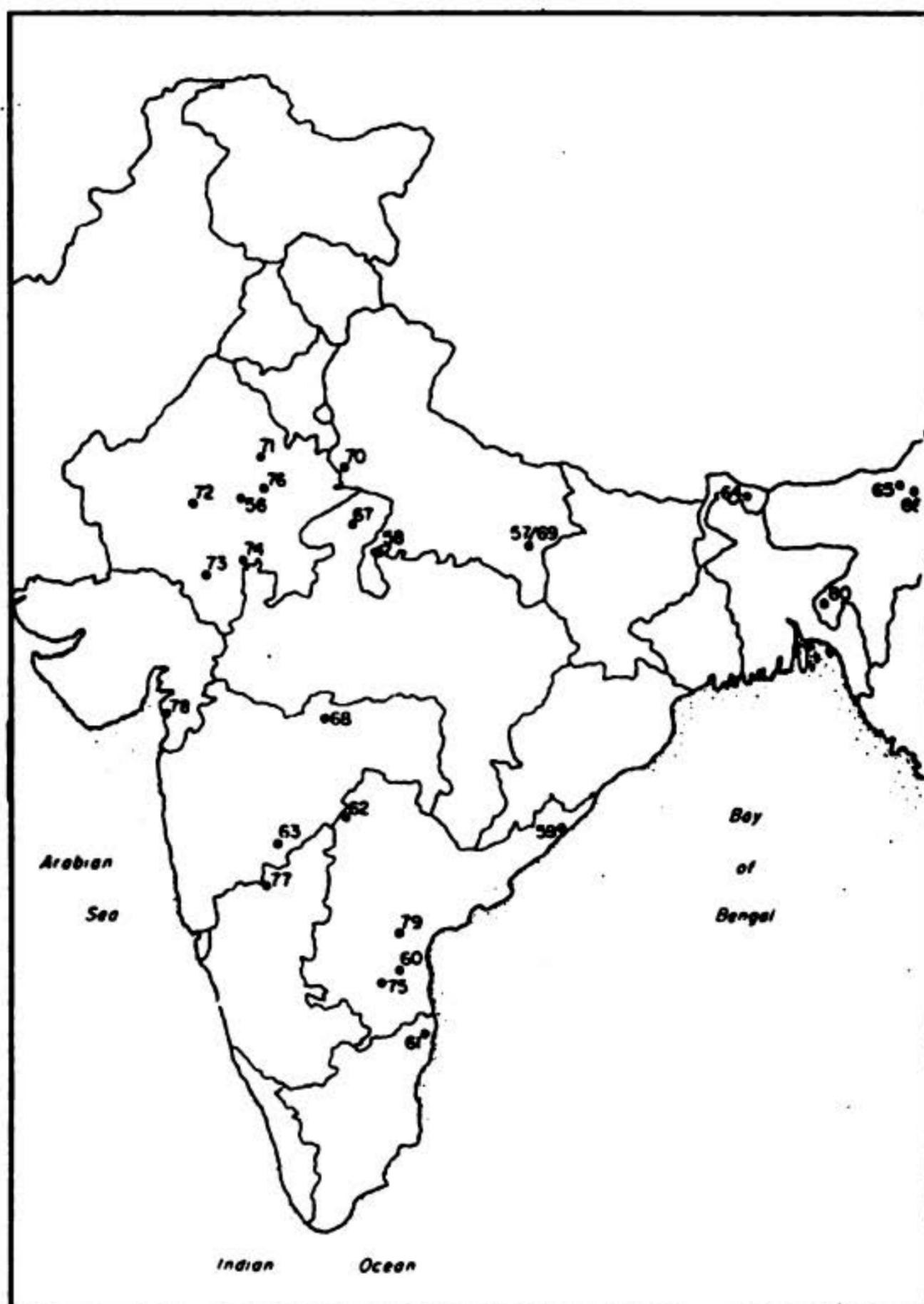
APPENDIX 3

INSTANCES OF TEMPLE DESECRATION, 1600-1760

No.	Date	Site	District	State	Agent	Source
See Map 3						
56.	1613	Pushkar	Ajmer	Raj.	Jahangir (e)	5 : 254
57.	1632	Benares	Benares	U.P.	Shah Jahan (e)	31 : 36
58.	1635	Orchha	Tikamgarh	M.P.	Shah Jahan	7 : 102-3
59.	1641	Srikakulam	Srikakulam	A.P.	Sher Md. Kh. (c)	3(1953-54): 68-9
60.	1642	Udayagiri	Nellore	A.P.	Ghazi 'Ali (c)	8 : 1385-86
61.	1653	Poonamalle	Chingleput	T.N.	Rustam b. Zulfiqar (c)	1(1937- 38) : 53 n2
62.	1655	Bodhan	Nizamabad	A.P.	Aurangzeb (p,g)	1(1919-20) : 16
63.	1659	Tuljapur	Osmanabad	Maha.	Afzal Khan (g)	16 : 9-10

64.	1661	Kuch Bihar	Kuch Bihar	W. Beng.	Mir Jumla (g)	9 : 142-3
65.	1662	Devalgaon	Sibsagar	Assam	Mir Jumla	9 : 154, 156-57
66.	1662	Garhgaon	Sibsagar	Assam	Mir Jumla	36 : 249
67.	1665	Gwalior	Gwalior	M.P.	Mu'tumad Khan (g)	10 : 335
68.	1667	Akot	Akola	Maha.	Md. Ashraf (c)	2(1963): 53-54
69.	1669	Benares	Benares	U.P.	Aurangzeb (e)	11 : 65-8; 13 : 88
70.	1670	Mathura	Mathura	U.P.	Aurangzeb	12 : 57-61
71.	1679	Khandela	Sikar	Raj.	Darab Khan (g)	12 : 107; 18 : 449
72.	1679	Jodhpur	Jodhpur	Raj.	Khan Jahan (c)	18 : 786; 12 : 108
73.	1680	Udaipur	Udaipur	Raj.	Ruhullah Khan (c)	15 : 129-30; 12 : 114-15
74.	1680	Chittor	Chittor-	Raj.	Aurangzeb	12 : 117
75.	1692	Cuddapah	Cuddapah	A.P.	Aurangzeb	1(1937-38) : 55

TEMPLE DESECRATION AND MUSLIM STATES



Map 3 : Temple desecrations, 1600-1760 (Appendix 3)

76.	1697-98	Sambhar	Jaipur	Raj.	Shah Sabz 'Ali (?)	19 : 157
77.	1698	Bijapur	Bijapur	Karn.	Hamid al-Din Khan (c)	12 : 241
78.	1718	Surat	Surat	Gujarat	Haidar Quli Khan (g)	1(1933) : 42
79.	1729	Cumbum	Kurnool	A.P.	Muhammad Salih (g)	2(1959-60): 65
80.	1729	Udaipur	West	Tripura	Murshid Quli Khan	30 : 7

Abbreviations used above :

(e) = emperor (s) = sultan (g) = governor
(c) = commander (p) = crown prince

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