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A way with words: Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan (1832–1890) and the unexpected power of print

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Abstract

The writings of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan well exemplify the argument of Francis Robinson's influential article on vernacular print publications that furthered a Protestant Reformation-like democratising of sacred knowledge. Both the number of his publications, and the personal empowerment enjoined by his Ahl-i Hadith jurisprudence, make him, in fact, an ideal exemplar of this kind of publication. He also, however, stands apart. First, his 'vernacular' included not only Urdu, but also Arabic and Persian. Second, beyond democratisation, print simultaneously enhanced scholarly authority, and it did so to an unusual extent for Siddiq Hasan because of his pioneering reach beyond India to the Ottoman lands, with Arabic works published and distributed from cities like Istanbul and Cairo. Third, Siddiq Hasan's publications served a diversity of purposes, like Persian publications that enhanced his princely status, and Arabic publications that not only forged transnational networks of like-minded scholars but also, in other hands, served modernist theologians and innovative literary scholars. Finally, in the end, the potential of print turned on him as officials used his publications to allege seditious intent. That denouement aside, the life of Siddiq Hasan's print publication points to a moment of rich intellectual life in the context of colonial rule, taking Robinson's insights on the potential of publication in unexpected directions.

Keywords: Siddiq Hasan Khan; Islamic reform; Ahl-i-Hadith; colonial India

In the late nineteenth century, Sayyid Muhammad Siddiq Hasan, the second husband of the ruler of the princely state of Bhopal, Nawab Shah Jahan Begum, published up a storm. It would be hard to imagine anyone who better exemplifies Francis Robinson's influential argument on the importance of vernacular print publication in shaping Islamic reform.¹ Robinson argued that these publications, pre-eminently translations of sacred texts and guidance manuals, made for a Protestant Reformation-like democratising of elite sacred knowledge, fostering a new self-consciousness and a new sense of self, rejecting the intercession of intermediaries and emphasising individual responsibility and achievement.² Siddiq Hasan stands out among those producing such texts for the

¹ F. Robinson, 'Islam and the impact of print in South Asia', in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History and Politics*, (ed.) Nigel Crook (Delhi, 1996), pp. 62–97.

² The comparison risks the implication that the reformist impulse was simple mimicry. Still, missionary influence did indeed matter, both in strategies (including print) and, as Nile Green argues, 'the phenomenological and

sheer quantity of what he published as well as for jurisprudence that disproportionately empowered his individual readers.

But the authority garnered by print publication was more complex than simple loss for traditionally educated Islamic scholars (*alim*, pl. *ulema*).³ As work subsequent to Robinson's has shown, the leading reformist scholars published not only in the Urdu vernacular but also in Arabic, issuing publications essential to their status among other scholars and to their reputation among 'lay' readers.⁴ What is unexpected in Siddiq Hasan's case is that he further enhanced his authority by pioneering the distribution of his printed Arabic publications beyond India throughout the Ottoman lands. And if that was not unexpected enough, these publications reached a surprisingly diverse audience, some of whom came to his writings on such subjects as lexicography, philology, and etymology for their own very different project of creating a modern literature in Arabic. Beyond his Arabic studies, moreover, Siddiq Hasan also published in the field of Persian literature, boosting both the reputation of the Bhopal court and his standing within it. He needed that boost.

Nawab Shah Jahan Begum had defied family custom in marrying him in the first place. Not only was she a widow, but she chose as spouse someone neither Afghan nor of shared family descent. Siddiq Hasan, from the country town of Qanauj in the successor state of Awadh, had arrived at the court as a humble *munshi* or clerk, albeit a *sayyid* in descent and deeply learned. A powerful faction at the court dismissed him as an impoverished upstart, distrusted him as an interloper who had the potential to put succession at risk, and, as he gained a central role in court governance, accused him of tyrannical rule.⁵ Colonial officials, ever suspicious of Islamic conspiracy, made the publications that had long served him so well nothing less than evidence of sedition. The unexpected power of print worked in multiple ways.

Still, for a time in the 1870s and early 1880s, Siddiq Hasan was in his element. He hardly looked the part of a holy scholar, immersed in some humble scholarly setting and surrounded by students and disciples. He lived the allegedly decadent 'nawabi' lifestyle that reformers typically denounced. But he had the scholarly training; he had an incentive to carve out his own arena of achievement; and, above all, he had resources beyond compare. His own *jāgīr* grant reached the sum of Rs 75,000 (a year) at a time when a scholar who was teaching in a seminary (like the *madrasa* at Deoband) might earn at most a salary of Rs 12 or 15 a month.⁶ By the mid-1870s, he had acquired a personal library of over 600 manuscripts and printed books, thanks in large part to agents in major Ottoman cities gathering texts that would then, in many cases, be the basis for his translations, commentaries, or abridgement.⁷ He assembled fellow scholars and assistants at the court who compiled materials, revised texts, and prepared manuscripts for publication.⁸

theological', including an emphasis on the work ethic, personal salvation, and the abandonment of superstition. Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (Delhi, 2014), chapter 4. See also Sher Ali Tareen, *Defending Muhammad in Modernity* (Notre Dame, 2020), pp. 29, 156–160. For the Islamic roots of reform in colonial India, however, see B. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India, Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982).

³ As suggested in Robinson, 'Islam and the impact of print in South Asia', pp. 74–75.

⁴ M. Q. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 40–44.

⁵ For the classic history of Bhopal as a princely state, see S. M. Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal: A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India* (London, 2000).

⁶ That is in one of the formally organised academies pioneered by a rival sectarian orientation, which founded its original *madrasa* in the town of Deoband in 1866.

⁷ The 603 titles included 51 publications of his own. The library is now housed at the Nadwatul 'Ulama library in Lucknow. C. Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's library: the use of Hanbali literature in 19th century Bhopal', in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, (eds) B. Krawietz, G. Tamer and A. Kokoschka (Berlin, 2013), pp. 162–197.

⁸ Saeedullah has compiled the names of his team from the closing chapter of a range of Siddiq Hasan's publications: Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan of Bhopal* (Lahore, 1973), pp. 85–86. For a detailed

He subsidised their publication, and he set up a network of agents and booksellers for distribution. The count varies, but Siddiq Hasan is typically credited not with dozens but with hundreds of books issued under his name.⁹

Siddiq Hasan was a 'media alim', someone whose influence rested in print, the new medium of the times, rather than in any personal charisma or presence as a teacher or holy *shaikh*.¹⁰ Certainly, there were fellow scholars and occasional students around him, but for the most part, his multiple books were to speak for themselves, and speak they did, given the extent of his distribution, his eloquent writing, and his articulation of a message that fit the times. This in itself is remarkable given the importance typically accorded to the moral exemplification expected of the scholarly leadership.¹¹ Yet, as Robinson memorably put it, with translation and printing, sacred texts 'could now be consulted by any Ahmad, Mahmud or Muhammad, who could make what they willed of them'.¹²

Indeed, the teachings of Siddiq Hasan's reformist orientation, the Ahl-i Hadith, might particularly seem to put ulema authority at risk. Among the emerging Sunni sectarian orientations (*maslak*, pl. *masālik*) of the day, they offered the limiting case for insisting on each believer's personal responsibility. Not only did the Ahl-i Hadith reject the role of any intercessor like imams, holy men, and the Prophet himself, they even minimised the personal role of an alim or scholarly guide. They opposed *taqlīd* (adherence to a single law school [*mazhab*] like the Hanafi) in favour of direct engagement (*ijtihād*) with the Quran and Prophetic hadith. To do otherwise, they argued, risked continuation of error and denied God's graciousness in opening these texts to on-going engagement. They eschewed the jurisprudential principles of *qiyās* (analogy) and *ijmā'* (consensus), let alone *ra'y* (opinion) that might extend or determine the relevance of any given teaching beyond the one explicit in the text. This literalism limited the need for scholarly guidance. It also meant that a relatively delimited sphere of practices was subject to religious guidance.

But print worked in contradictory ways, democratising interpretation but also disseminating scholarly work that assured the credibility of the translations and guides put into readers' hands. A central reason for this continuing scholarly role would seem to be the essential role of print publications in shaping the sectarian lines that would be a hallmark of modern Islam in the Indian subcontinent. Siddiq Hasan played an active role in such contestation. The reasons such differences emerged are complex, but they were surely energised and shaped by the colonial context. Colonial rule stimulated the very focus on sacred practice as a bulwark against Christian missionaries and irreligion in a period when there was no state patronage of Indian religious institutions. Colonial rule also prevented any move to empowering one orientation of the competing denominations as part

study of Siddiq Hasan's networks, see C. Preckel, 'Islamische Bildungsnetzwerke und Gelehrtenkultur im Indien des 19. Jahrhunderts: Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Ḥān (st. 1890) und die Entstehung der Ahl-e Ḥadīth-Bewegung in Bhopal', (unpublished PhD dissertation, Ruhr University Bochum, 2005).

⁹ Most scholars have followed Siddiq Hasan Khan's son, who counts 222 titles, presented in a chart that includes language, subject, and place of publication. Muhammad 'Ali Hasan Khan, *Ma'āsir-i Siddīqī: Sīrat-i Walājahī* (Lucknow, 1927), vol. 4, appendix, pp. 1–20. Differences over the book count result from including titles produced collectively, false attributions, multiple books in a single volume and so forth. Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, p. 84.

¹⁰ Siddiq Hasan noted his status as a *sayyid* and descent from the Suhrawardi saint, Makhdum-i Jahaniyya Jahangasht (d. 1384), and his Naqshbandi affiliation, in the entry in his *tazkira*, but he emphasised only his teachers and *ijāzas*. Nawab Siddiq Hasan and Sayyid Nurul Hasan Khan, *Tazkirah shan'-i anjuman ma' nigāristān-i sukhn*, (trans. and ed.) 'Ataa ul-Rahman Kakori (Patna, 1968), p. 38.

¹¹ To be sure, he did have some students, among them the son of Namad b. 'Atiq of an important Najdi scholarly family, who later became *qazi* of Riyadh. Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's library', pp. 196–199.

¹² Robinson, 'Islam and the impact of print in South Asia', p. 75.

of modern state-building, as would happen in some countries with a Muslim population. Colonial arbitration of competition, moreover, over such issues as control of mosque spaces, also fuelled differences.¹³ And, crucially, denominational identity became part of self-respect and social belonging in an era of far-reaching social and economic change.

That Siddiq Hasan pioneered the distribution of Indian Islamic print scholarship trans-regionally was not only significant in itself, as noted above, but in so doing, he extended the numbers of vernaculars for these reformers beyond Urdu to Arabic, and most likely Persian, in Afghanistan and beyond as well.¹⁴ Although the exact count of his titles is incomplete, Saeedullah's classification of the titles he himself reviewed is suggestive, with Urdu texts in fact in the minority (Persian at 25; Arabic, 35; and Urdu, 38).¹⁵ That there was a transregional audience for Indian Islamic scholarship may be surprising given the influence of Orientalist and modernist critics alike, who long posited a thesis of decline in Islamic thought from the classical era onwards and imagined Indians, in any case, as peripheral to intellectual life.¹⁶ A leading Arab-British scholar recently reported that his Birmingham audience was 'shocked' at hearing him describe his debt to Indian Ahl-i Hadith teachers and the centuries of Indian scholarship that had drawn Middle Eastern students to India.¹⁷ Scholarship, however, has long recognised India's contribution to the study of hadith, not least in the eighteenth century, and recent revisionist work has revealed original and creative work in other fields as well, including the 'rational' sciences, well into the early nineteenth century. (These were the *ma'qūlāt*, in contrast to fields 'transmitted or revealed', *manqūlāt*, focused on the Quran and hadith.)¹⁸ The Islamic studies scholar, Asad Q. Ahmad, for example, has emphasised that North Indian scholars demonstrated new directions in philosophy and logic in the mid-nineteenth century when Siddiq Hasan was part of this intellectual world.¹⁹ That said, a reformer like Siddiq Hasan rejected much of the scholarship of recent centuries and turned to earlier texts as the foundation for critique.²⁰

And in this, and in his writings in general, he was part of an increasingly interconnected world. His books were no doubt largely read within India, but that there was this readership abroad enhanced his authority. The fact that the same teachings were relevant from Istanbul to Cairo to Bombay to Bengal mattered, especially in a period of lively interest in developments in the Ottoman empire and among Muslim populations

¹³ For a case over mosque control involving Ahl-i Hadith, see A. M. Guenther, 'A colonial court defines a Muslim', in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, (ed.) B. D. Metcalf (Princeton, 2009), pp. 293–304, and Sana Haroon, *The Mosques of Colonial South Asia: A Social and Legal History of Muslim Worship* (London, 2021), chapter 1.

¹⁴ His Arabic publications continue to be published in the Middle East as well as a recent edition of his Persian *Tazkira*. Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tazkira Sham'-i Anjuman*, (ed.) Kazim Khadwi (Yazd, 2007).

¹⁵ Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 195–198.

¹⁶ For a challenge to the decline thesis, see A. Patel, 'AHA roundtable. The trajectory of Arab Islamic humanism: the dehumanization of a tradition', *American Historical Review* 120.4 (2015), pp. 1343–1354. On the long eighteenth century as one of the most creative in Islamic thought, see A. S. Dallal, *Islam without Europe: Traditions of Reform in Eighteenth-Century Islamic Thought* (Chapel Hill, 2018).

¹⁷ H. Amin and A. Majothi, 'The Ahl-e-Hadith: from British India to Britain', *Modern Asian Studies* 56.1 (2022), pp. 176–206, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X21000093>.

¹⁸ For a foundational article identifying translocal hadith circles, see J. O. Voll, 'Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi and Muhammad Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab: an analysis of an intellectual group in 18th-century Medina', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975), pp. 32–39.

¹⁹ A. Q. Ahmed, 'Logic in the Khayrābādī School of India: a preliminary exploration', in *Law and Tradition in Classical Islamic Thought: Studies in Honor of Professor Hossein Modarressi*, (eds) M. Cook, N. Haider, I. Rabb and A. Sayeed (New York, 2013), pp. 227–243.

²⁰ For a critique of 'overcompensat[ing] for the pernicious stereotype of universal decline', see Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, 2021), pp. 237–240.

generally. They seemed proof of the universality of one's message at a time when all scholarly leaders sought to transcend a denominational label. Producing a message welcomed across a vast geography by multiple audiences made clear that these were core Islamic teachings, free of regional specificity, that could be followed by all. The medium made the message.

And Urdu among vernaculars was no less part of that universality. At a time when other vernaculars were burrowing into regional specificity, Urdu transcended regions as well, in part because of the colonial choice of Urdu as the vernacular over a wide region, but also because of the celebration of Urdu's expansive and polyglot vocabulary by writers like Siddiq Hasan. Linguistic activists elsewhere were stripping Marathi and Bengali, for example, of Perso-Arabic and even English loan words.²¹ Shah Jahan Begum, one might add, similarly revelled in linguistic pluralism, publishing a thesaurus with equivalents for words across languages including Urdu, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.²² The two imagined themselves as part of a larger world. Although Siddiq Hasan travelled little, thanks to print he was an active participant in what is sometimes called 'the first age of globalization'.²³

As he rode the wave of opportunities afforded by technology and steam transportation, Siddiq Hasan's publications brought recognition. His publications in Ottoman cities yielded him (and Shah Jahan Begum) medals from the Ottoman sultan. He won some degree of colonialist approval as well from his communications with—another surprising audience—the Asiatic Society of Bengal, sending the Society eight of his publications along with Shah Jahan Begum's *Tājūl Iqbāl* in 1876, and later lending Society members a complete manuscript copy of the biographical dictionary of the Prophet's family by Ibn Hajar (1372–1449) as they prepared its translation.²⁴ Siddiq Hasan cared about his reputation.²⁵ With his publications, he succeeded in creating an arena outside the court that brought him appreciation. This was the power of print. Until it was not.

Siddiq Hasan's allegedly seditious publications were fed into the Islamophobia narrative so readily and easily activated in these decades. And British officials, even in regard to a semi-autonomous princely state, had ultimate power. In 1885, Siddiq Hasan was dramatically consigned to a sad finale beyond appeal. Indeed, his condemnation was so dramatic and so revealing of colonial Islamophobia, racism, and despotism that scholarly and popular attention to him often focuses on nothing else.²⁶ But the story of his publications, with their unexpected content and reach, repays attention. We will start with his family background and location in Bhopal that shaped him.

²¹ A point made about Marathi by P. Deshpande, 'Locating Marathi's pasts: literature, linguistics, and language histories in modern South Asia', Institute for South Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 27 April 2021.

²² Shahjahan Begum, *Khizanatul lughat* (Bhopal, 1886–1887).

²³ James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (eds), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley, 2014). On the importance of imperial formations for the movement of Muslims and dissemination of texts, see S. Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015), especially chapter 4, 'Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan and the Muslim cosmopolis', pp. 267–330. For participation in a global world in contexts wrongly thought to be sealed and stable, see D. Rodgers and H. Reifeld, *Cultures in Motion* (Princeton, 2013).

²⁴ *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for March 1876*, p. 47, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/107394#page/59/mode/1up> and *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for February 1877*, p. 36, <https://ia600700.us.archive.org/13/items/proceedingsofasi1877asia/proceedingsofasi1877asia.pdf> (both accessed 3 May 2023).

²⁵ C. Keen, 'The rise and fall of Siddiq Hasan, male consort of Shah Jahan of Bhopal', in *The Man behind the Queen. Male Consorts in History*, (eds) C. Beem and M. Taylor (Basingstoke, 2014), pp 185–204.

²⁶ C. Preckel, 'Wahhabi or national hero? Siddiq Hasan Khan', *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World*, Newsletter 11 (2002), p. 31. To be clear, Preckel herself has hardly fallen into this trap: she is the foremost Western scholar of Siddiq Hasan's scholarship in European languages.

The backstory to Siddiq Hasan's publications

Siddiq Hasan's early life brings home the largely unappreciated liveliness of the intellectual world of Islamic thought in his day and the transnational world that shaped it. He came by education honestly. Men of his family had long staffed the bureaucracies of princes and large landlords as secretarial munshis.²⁷ They had mastered the 'Persianate' cultural skills of penmanship, accountancy, and formalised rhetoric for bureaucratic, diplomatic, and epistolary documents, and they had learned forms of behaviour and sentiment that marked them as cultivated and ethically informed.²⁸ His grandfather had risen to high rank in Hyderabad. But his father broke the pattern in ways that took his intellectual and social world in new directions. He abandoned the family's Shi'ism, so important in this region, to join the lively Sunni reformist circles of Delhi. He even participated in an abortive jihad on the frontier in the 1820s that imagined an ideal Muslim community free of what was seen as oppressive Sikh control. Sayyid Aulad Hasan survived the crushing defeat of that undertaking in 1831, but he died soon thereafter, leaving an isolated and impoverished widow behind. His colleagues stepped in to see to his sons' education.

Siddiq Hasan, in the age-old style, moved among teachers from Qanauj to Farukhabad, on to Kanpur, and then Delhi.²⁹ He learned both the skills to become a munshi as well as the disciplines essential for participating in the Islamic scholarship of his day. In Delhi, Siddiq Hasan became a student of none other than Mufti Sadru'ddin Azurda who was part of the second generation of the scholarly circles launched by Shah Waliullah Mohaddis (1703–1762), one of the leading luminaries of the cultural efflorescence in Islamic thought of the long eighteenth century. Azurda had studied with two of his sons, Shah `Abd ul-`Aziz and Shah `Abd ul-Qadir. He also had been a student of the celebrated scholar of 'rational' Islamic disciplines, Fazl-i Imam Khairabadi (d. 1827), whose son, Fazl-i Haqq (1796–1861), continued his tradition and was an intimate part of Azurda's circles. Azurda was central to the city's social and literary life, opening his beautiful haveli for regular poetry soirées where he welcomed the great poets of the day like Ghalib and Momin.³⁰ Azurda represented the pinnacle of what a person trained in bureaucratic skills could achieve in the new regime of the East India Company, which had taken control of Delhi in 1803, since he had risen to the post of principal *sadr amīn*, the highest judicial position then open to Indians. In his biographical dictionary Siddiq Hasan honoured Azurda as *ustād-i muharrir*, the teacher of scribes.³¹

Persian was key. It had been a language of governance, aesthetic standards, personal formation, science, and literature across vast domains of the old world, with India a

²⁷ On the Mughal-era munshi, see M. Alam and S. Subramanyam, 'The making of a munshi', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2014), pp. 61–73, and R. Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Berkeley, 2015).

²⁸ Coined by Marshall Hodgson, 'Persianate' describes an 'overall cultural orientation' carried by Persian (and local languages of high culture, like Urdu). M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 3 (Chicago, 1974), pp. 293–294. See also N. Green, 'Introduction', in *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, (ed.) N. Green (Oakland, 2019), pp. 1–71, available at <https://luminosoa.org/site/books/e/10.1525/luminos.64/> (accessed 4 May 2023).

²⁹ Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 33–35 for details of his teachers.

³⁰ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asaru's Sanadid*, pp. 702–703, quoted in S. Liddle, 'Azurda: scholar, poet, and judge', in *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857*, (ed.) M. Pernau (New Delhi, 2006), p. 133.

³¹ 'Azurda Dihlawi' in Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tazkira*, pp. 42–47, which includes quotations of Azurda's verses whose languages are described as *tāzi*, *fārsi*, and *rēkhta*. Azurda's salary in the 1820s was Rs 250 per month. Liddle, 'Azurda: scholar, poet, and judge', p. 143.

premier part of what is sometimes called a ‘Persian Republic of Letters’.³² Even after the British replacement of Persian as the official administrative language in the 1830s (in favour of English and the vernaculars), many literati of Siddiq Hasan’s generation knew Persian well; even the less expert knew the great Persian poets as well as texts on ethics and deportment. Persian continued as an official language in the princely state of Hyderabad until 1884, as it did until the late 1850s in Bhopal and several other princely states. In the mid-century, when the prince Dyce Sombre travelled across India, he used Persian to communicate in elite circles and to record his intimate thoughts in a diary.³³

It was Siddiq Hasan’s formation in Arabic disciplines, however, that would most profoundly shape his intellectual career, including early exposure to the controversies roiling intellectual circles. The foundational reformist Urdu tract, the *Taqwīyyat al-Īmān*, written by a scion of the Waliullahi family, Shah Isma‘il Shahid (1779–1831), had made the preservation of God’s unity (*tauḥīd*) its central theme. The text had argued that since God was bound by no precedent or law, his incomprehensible power and unity could extend even to acts that were unthinkable, like lying (*imkān-i kazb*), or even creating a prophet equivalent to Muhammad in this or some other cosmos (*imkān-i nazīr*).³⁴ God’s power stood in contrast to the highly limited power of all created beings, and the text called for an end to intercessory saint and imam-oriented practices seen to compromise divine omnipotence. The debate over divine ‘ability’ became a *cause célèbre* in early nineteenth-century Delhi, calling for skills in the ‘rational’ disciplines of logic and philosophy. Azurda was deeply engaged with this debate, whose premier exponents on the ‘inability’ side were the Khairabadi scholars, father and son. Even the poet Ghalib was pulled in.³⁵ The innovative and complex logical syllogisms of the ‘inability’ protagonists, Asad Q. Ahmed suggests, provide evidence of the continued originality of Islamic thought in this setting. Siddiq Hasan, of course, held firmly to the ‘ability’ argument that clarified God’s transcendence and deplored the elevation of holy intercessors that hindered fidelity and personal responsibility.

Siddiq Hasan was a stellar student, gifted in languages, quick to learn, clever with words, and a fluent writer, but the issue of employment loomed. In 1854, he found his way to Bhopal, occasionally teaching and preaching, but primarily supporting himself by selling the perfume (*itr*) sanctioned by Prophetic example. The Bhopal prime minister, Munshi Jamaluddin (d. 1881), who himself had been deeply influenced by the Waliullahi reformist perspective in Delhi, saw in him a kindred thinker (and fellow *awadhī*) and soon offered the young munshi a modest appointment at court.

In an episode that made clear Siddiq Hasan’s self-confidence as well as the moral urgency he brought to his work, however, he was soon back on the street after defying a senior official over a point of Islamic behaviour. Not without struggle, he survived the reprisals that fell so hard on Muslims after the Mutiny. After an abortive stay in Tonk, he returned to an appointment in Bhopal in 1859 where Jamaluddin now arranged

³² For this shared world, see Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism* (Stanford, 2020).

³³ M. Fisher, ‘Conflicting meanings of Persianate culture: an intimate example from colonial India and Britain’, in *The Persianate World*, (ed.) Green, p. 236. But an 1888 travelogue, whose Persian lacked terms to accommodate scientific and technological changes, makes clear its decline in India. N. Green, ‘The antipodes of “progress”: a journey to the end of Indo-Persian’, in *The Persianate World: A Shared Sphere*, (eds) A. Ashraf and A. Amanat (Leiden, 2018), pp. 216–251.

³⁴ For the enduring influence of this text, see H. O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-Century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah* (New Delhi, 2008), and, for an excerpt, see B. D. Metcalf, ‘The *Taqwīyyat al-Iman* (Support of the Faith) by Shah Isma‘il Shahid’, in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, (ed.) B. D. Metcalf (Princeton, 2009), pp. 201–211.

³⁵ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 65–66.

for him to marry his widowed daughter, many years his senior. This was at once a statement of reformed practice and, at last, a secure niche for a much-buffed young scholar.

In Bhopal Siddiq Hasan found a setting that would enrich his scholarship, above all by opportunities to immerse himself in the work of the Yemeni, Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Shaukani (1759–1834), another luminary of the intellectual efflorescence of the long eighteenth century. Siddiq Hasan already knew something of Shaukani since one of his teachers in Delhi, Maulana `Abdul Haqq Banarsi, had sat at Shaukani's feet in the 1820s, copied his writings, and then returned to Hindustan as a proponent of his ideas.³⁶ In 1863, Jamaluddin, accompanying the ruling begum on hajj, met, and invited to Bhopal, two brilliant young scholars who had been students of Shaukani's son. These were Zainul `Abidin b. Mohsin and his brother, Muhammad Shaikh Husain. Siddiq Hasan and Zainul `Abidin, who was appointed state *qāzī*, became inseparable companions, bound not only by their immersion in the Islamic disciplines, but in Arabic poetry and linguistic studies—to say nothing of a love of words and word play. Siddiq Hasan secured *ijāza* (authorisation to teach) for several of Shaukani's texts from Muhammad Shaikh Husain. The brothers were, moreover, a link to other prominent Yemeni hadith scholars.³⁷ In 1868, Siddiq Hasan himself undertook his own hajj and used the occasion for extensive copying of manuscripts and interaction with Arab scholars as well as members of the Indian diaspora in the Hijaz, including scholars who had left Delhi during the state violence of the immediate post-Mutiny period.³⁸

Siddiq Hasan continued to be deeply engaged with Waliullahi scholarship, but Shaukani's thought was particularly important in shaping what was increasingly known as Ahl-i Hadith thought.³⁹ Shaukani opposed following a single law school in favour of direct engagement with the Quran and *sunna*. That Shaukani made use of hadith traditions acceptable to Sunnis and Zaydi Shi'a alike must have been especially important for scholars like Jamaluddin and Siddiq Hasan, whose origins were in the Shi'a world of Awadh.⁴⁰ Might not the abandonment of a Sunni law school allow the achievement of the elusive goal of unity with the Shi'a, whose presence was so personal for these North Indian reformers? Shaukani also dramatically narrowed the use of jurisprudential principles that extended sanction to ever-wider domains of human experience. What could be better in the quest for agreement than putting forward only a limited range of teachings that were explicitly under the purview of religious guidance? The resultant focus on an ethical life conforming to the Prophetic model fit well in the context of colonial rule. It made, effectively, for a de facto separation between governance, on the one hand, and religious or moral guidance, on the other. The majority of Shaukani's teachings were on ritual law, not on the body of law entailing human transactions, and, in this regard, his stringent limitations on the use of analogy (*qiyās*) was central. Why, he wrote in regard to usury, for example, '[enlarge] the scope of the believers' duties which is only increasing their burden?'⁴¹

³⁶ B. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shaukani* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 20–21.

³⁷ Among them, the al-Ahadal and al-Mizaji families from Zabid and scholars in the tradition of Ahmad b. Idris (d. 1837). Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's library', p. 178, fn. 51.

³⁸ He copied Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Siyāsa al-shar'iyya* and several of Shaukani's books, as he described in his account of his hajj, *Rihlat al-Siddiq ilā bayt Allāh al-'atiq*. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³⁹ For a detailed list of Siddiq Hasan's publications of Shaukani's work, including translations into Urdu and commentaries in Arabic, see *ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴⁰ Thanks to Brinkley Messick, personal communication, who noted the similarity between Shaukani's efforts to speak to both the Zaidi Shi'a and the Shafi'i Sunnis of Yemen. See also B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 43–44.

⁴¹ Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, p. 95, and the book generally for detailed discussion of jurisprudence.

Siddiq Hasan had found his intellectual and personal niche. As he took on additional responsibilities, he established himself as tutor to the widowed Shah Jahan Begum, who had ascended to rule in 1868. In 1871 she proposed marriage. No one would have predicted the flood of publications that would soon flow from this now wealthy and secure scholar. He had the resources, and he had, he believed, transcendent signs of approval. In a world where dreams of the learned and holy are understood to be authentic communications, starting in the early 1880s he had had dreams of the Prophet himself, as well as of Shaukani.

...I dreamt that his daughters had blessed my house with their feet. It was interpreted that the meaning of his daughters is his thoughts....And it means that his noble researches will spread widely through my writings in Arabic and Persian.... in the east and in the west; in the south and in the north, through this poor one; and praise be to Allah.⁴²

Siddiq Hasan was meant to write and meant to publish, and he did, disseminating text after text in the diverse languages of his milieu.

Persian and the multiple goals of publication: reputation, sociality, contestation

Siddiq Hasan produced at least two dozen works in Persian, and among them were works characteristic of the full range of genres with which he engaged.⁴³ These publications identified him as part of a princely elite participating in an expansive world of translocal literati for whom fluency in Persian had a particular cachet. He made it clear in his poetry that he belonged to this class by taking as his poetic *takhallus* 'the Nawab'.⁴⁴ Siddiq Hasan's Persian publications enhanced Bhopal's claims as heirs to Mughal glory. The Bhopal rulers from the mid-nineteenth century aspired to nothing less than recognition as successors to the now-defunct Mughals. They built in Mughal architectural style and they welcomed dislocated scholars, musicians, and artists to their court.⁴⁵ This was a style that resonated with British self-presentation as heirs to the Mughals on occasions like their own post-Mutiny *durbars*. Siddiq Hasan's assignment in 1859 was to create a Persian chronicle for Bhopal in princely style.⁴⁶ But religious writings were also a component of Persianate

⁴² Siddiq Hasan Khan, *al-Rawz al-Khazīb min Tazkiyat al-Qalb al-Munīb* (Agra, 1298/1881), quoted in Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 36–37.

⁴³ Saeedullah characterises the Persian titles he saw as four, Quranic commentary; three, hadith; three, doctrine; three, law/fiqh; six, history and biography; two, literature; one, ethics (*akhlāq*); two Sufism; one, 'general'. Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 195–198.

⁴⁴ For Persian poetry, see Siddiq Hasan Khan, *al-Maghnam al-bārid lil-šādir wa-al-wārid* (Bhopal, 1882) <https://www.worldcat.org/title/maghnam-al-barid-lil-sadir-wa-al-warid/oclc/43560777/editions?editionsView=true&referer=br> (last accessed 1 April 2022). His Arabic poetry has multiple editions: see *Naswat al-Sakran min Sahba' Tadhkar al-Ghizlan* (on the theme of worldly and divine love) <https://www.worldcat.org/title/naswat-al-sakran-min-sahba-tadhkar-al-ghizlan/oclc/690830364/editions?editionsView=true&referer=br> (last accessed 1 April 2022). For translations of selected couplets, see Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 115–117.

⁴⁵ H. L. Archambault, 'Becoming Mughal in the nineteenth century: the case of the Bhopal princely state', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36.4, (2013), pp. 479–495. On the emulation of Mughal architecture by both Sikandar Begum and Shah Jahan Begum, see B. D. Metcalf, 'The buildings of the begums of Bhopal: "Islamic" architecture in a nineteenth-century Indian princely state', in *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India*, (ed.) D. Fairchild Ruggles (New Delhi, 2014), pp. 66–91.

⁴⁶ No copies of the history appear to be extant, but possibly it was among the books given to the Asiatic Society in 1877, listed as *Tārīkh-i Riyāsāt*, in Persian and Urdu. See above, fn. 22.

culture, read and created alike well into the colonial period, and there too Siddiq Hasan played a part.⁴⁷

Most enduring among Siddiq Hasan's Persian projects, however, was a biographical dictionary, a *tazkira*, of Persian poets that is still in print today. The *tazkira* was a capacious form, variously including biography, regional descriptions, poetic excerpts, and literary criticism. These dictionaries served in part as 'libraries', incorporating examples of each poet's *oeuvre* for creative reuse and deployment on the part of other poets, compilers, and cultivated readers generally. During the 1870s and 1880s a full half-dozen Persian *tazkiras* were published from Bhopal, outdoing Qajar Iran at the time and making Bhopal the last major centre to produce such texts in South Asia.⁴⁸ Siddiq Hasan's *Sham`i Anjuman* (1875) was ambitious, a tribute in part to his success in assembling a team of scholars, including his sons, to make such work possible. It covered poets throughout history and across periods, and its alphabetical arrangement made it democratic, nestling a contemporary unknown poet from a small country town in Awadh alongside a great classical poet like Sa'di or Hafiz. Supplements provided more entries as material came to light. The Bhopal *tazkira* was a remarkable contrast to contemporaneous volumes produced by the princely state of Arcot, limited to the poets and literary debates of its own court and surroundings, as well as those with a similar purview produced in these years in Qajar Iran.

Late *tazkiras* can be seen as efforts to conserve an Indo-Persian literary tradition at risk of loss.⁴⁹ The same impulse was at play in the collection and publication of the remarkably extensive and diverse Persian works of Imam Bakhsh 'Sahba'i'. This, too, was a project that served Siddiq Hasan's princely goals.⁵⁰ Sahba'i was a scholar and poet who had taught Persian at the Urdu-medium Delhi College and who was part of the same intellectual and literary circles as Azurda.⁵¹ Sahba'i and his two talented sons were murdered in the brutal reprisals unleashed by the British when they retook Delhi after the Uprising of 1857. The publication of the *Kulliyāt* (1879) built on the ties of friendship and discipleship that had been cultivated in pre-Mutiny circles of Persianate learning, but it also looked ahead to the new opportunities presented by print modernity.⁵² Although some of Sahba'i's writings had been published, most were only preserved in manuscripts guarded by his now dispersed disciples, among them Din Dayal, Bhopal's chief munshi, who led the project, along with Siddiq Hasan. A good two dozen figures participated as patrons, editors, and publishers.⁵³ The project not only offered Siddiq Hasan an opportunity

⁴⁷ See Ali Altaf Mian, 'Surviving desire: reading Hāfiz in colonial India', *Journal of Urdu Studies* 2.1 (2021), pp. 31–67.

⁴⁸ K. Schwartz, 'A transregional Persianate library: the production and circulation of *tadhkiras* of Persian poets in the 18th and 19th centuries', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 52.1 (2020), pp. 1–27. See also the abstracts at 'The World of the *Tazkirah*: Sources for Study of the Premodern Persianate Lands', A conference organised by Alexander Jabbari and Nasrin Rahimieh at the University of California, Irvine, 5 February 2016. <https://sites.uci.edu/tazkirah/abstracts/> (last accessed 30 March 2021).

⁴⁹ D. Boyk, 'Nationality and fashionability: hats, lawyers and other important things to remember', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 43.5 (2020), pp. 879–897, 880–881.

⁵⁰ The discussion of this project follows Z. Shah, "'Bringing spring to Sahba'i's rose-garden": Persian printing in North India after 1857', in *The Global Histories of Books: Methods and Practices, New Directions in Book History*, (eds) E. Boehmer et al. (London, 2017), pp. 191–212.

⁵¹ For Sahba'i's social and intellectual world, and an evocative introduction to his Persian writings, see C. M. Naim, 'Shaikh Imam Bakhsh Sahba'i: teacher, scholar, poet, and puzzle-master', in *The Delhi College*, (ed.) M. Pernau (Oxford, 2006), pp. 145–185.

⁵² This formulation and the phrase 'print modernity' is owed to Shah, "'Bringing spring to Sahba'i's rose-garden"', p. 194. On friendship, see M. Kia, 'Indian friends, Iranian selves', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 36.3 (2016), pp. 398–417.

⁵³ Shah "'Bringing spring to Sahba'i's rose-garden"', pp. 201–203. The press manager's son devised the publication chronogram.

to display his literary taste and attainments, but also to cultivate his own support base among influential officials in the nearby princely states of Gwalior and Indore. Its publication also allowed him to develop his relationship to one of the major presses of the day, Kanpur's Matba'-i Nizami, with its high-quality press and extensive marketing networks.⁵⁴ In honouring a victim of unjust post-Mutiny reprisals, the project registered a subtle protest in a period when overt criticism, let alone opposition, was foresworn.

Siddiq Hasan also published at least a baker's dozen of studies in Persian on core Islamic disciplines, including Quranic commentary, hadith studies, doctrine, and law. An example of a Persian text offering reformed guidance is his *Hujā'i al-kirāma fī asār al-qiyāma* (1874). In the characteristic style of much of Islamic scholarship in this era, this text was a commentary, in this case on a seventeenth-century Arabic work by the Shafi'i scholar, Muhammad al-Barzanji (d. 1691), made relevant now to Siddiq Hasan's readers.⁵⁵ Siddiq Hasan's readers would see their own socio-ritual world anew, judged by an authoritative scholar in dialogue with the historic sacred tradition.⁵⁶

Typical of the times, the text was argumentative, a challenge to what Siddiq Hasan deemed reprehensible innovations whose abandonment would not only benefit believers, but also, perhaps, forestall the arrival of the Last Day.⁵⁷ He targeted women for practising grave rituals that entailed the expectation of intercession by the dead. He urged women to practise seclusion and eschew what he took to be either Hindu or European clothes (saris, blouses with short sleeves). He deplored the elaborate Muharram processions that had become civic observances in settings like Bhopal. He called for an end to mixed gatherings and visits to graves as part of the observance of the *shab-i barāt*, when, it is believed, each person's fate is foretold for the coming year.

In another text, *Nafh al-Tīb*, Siddiq Hasan neatly bridged the literary and the reformist, recasting stanzas of Hafiz, with couplets of Rumi interspersed, to expose the anguish that *taqlīd* deserved.⁵⁸ To adhere to a single *mazhab* was to abandon the beauty of the beloved, or, in another couplet, to recognise that *taqlīd* merited the mourning inherent in lovers' separation. This text was written in answer to a minor participant in a controversial exchange that had been launched by one of the major intellectuals of the day, the Hanafi scholar, Maulana `Abdul Hayy (1848–1886), who was part of the Farangi Mahall family of distinguished scholars whom Francis Robinson has long studied.⁵⁹ The debate proper was carried out in Arabic, but in this Persian text Siddiq Hasan built on his poetic virtuosity to bring the debate to a larger audience for whom the poetry would be familiar.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ The two volumes of the *Kulliyāt* were published at the Matba'-i Nizami in Kanpur; a second edition, at the Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow. Naim, 'Shaikh Imam Bakhsh Sahba'i', p. 162.

⁵⁵ The text commented on here is *al-Ishā'a li-ashrāt as-sā'a*, listed in a biographical note on the author at http://nur.nu/damas/Bios/From-marifa_barzanji-bio.pdf (accessed 4 May 2023).

⁵⁶ See Etty Terem, *Old Texts, New Practices: Islamic Reform in Modern Morocco* (Stanford, 2014), for an extended argument that challenges the assumption in public opinion and some scholarship that only those who jettisoned tradition addressed the challenges of modern change.

⁵⁷ Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, chapter 2, emphasises this contestatory style.

⁵⁸ The discussion of this text follows Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 93–103. Wakil Ahmad Ajiz answered in turn with his *Diwān-i Hanafi*.

⁵⁹ On Farangi Mahall, see F. Robinson, *The `Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (Ranikhet, 2001), and on Maulana `Abdul Hayy's debate, see specifically pp. 121–123 and 151.

⁶⁰ For brief discussions of many of Siddiq Hasan's texts in all three languages, see Rahmatullah, 'Contribution of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan to Quranic and Hadith Studies', (unpublished PhD dissertation, Aligarh Muslim University, 2015). https://archive.org/stream/ContributionOfNawabSiddiqHasanKhanToQuranicAndHadithStudies/Contribution%20of%20Nawab%20Siddiq%20Hasan%20Khan%20to%20Qur%27anic%20and%20Hadith%20Studies_djvu.txt (accessed 4 May 2023).

Siddiq Hasan's Persian publications demonstrate both the arbitrariness of the vernacular-classic distinction as well as the multiple goals that 'print modernity' entailed. Many of those goals were, no doubt, pragmatic, but there was also sheer pleasure for someone like Siddiq Hasan who delighted in language, whether turning a phrase in any one of his languages for poetry, or sparring to best his rivals in scholarly debate, or producing volumes like the *Tazkira* and *Kulliyāt* that enhanced his courtly standing.

Arabic publications: warring texts, more commentaries, more connections

The controversial exchange between Maulana `Abdul Hayy and Siddiq Hasan began with `Abdul Hayy taking to Urdu journals and magazines to defend *taqlīd*. His opening volley in the written exchange, his *Ibrāz al-Ghayy al-wāqī' fī Shifā' al-'ayy*, would become one of his most circulated works. In it, he alleged biographical errors—crucial for the correct analysis of hadith transmission and an area of `Abd al-Hayy's particular expertise—notably in Siddiq Hasan's *Ithāf al-nubalā*, but in other books as well.⁶¹ Siddiq Hasan, in short order, answered with the *Shifā' al'Ayy 'an-mā Awradaū al-Shaikh 'Abd al-Hayy*. A second exchange followed. Their texts covered the classic issues of debate between the two perspectives: *taqlīd* versus the obligation to turn to multiple sources of Prophetic traditions; and the legitimacy of the jurisprudential principles of analogic reasoning (*qiyās*) and consensus (*ijmā*). Underlying the debate was the urgent Ahl-i Hadith contention that *taqlīd* had misled the pious into routine adherence to false innovation. For Hanafis, however, that very continuity produced the certainty essential to stability and unity, a position countered by the Ahl-i Hadith conviction that literalism and a delimited sphere of matters subject to consistent guidance offered its own continuity.⁶² `Abd al-Hayy and Siddiq Hasan also debated specific practices that would long draw sectarian lines, like Siddiq Hasan's controversial opinion, following Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), that travel to Medina for the specific purpose of visiting the Prophet's tomb was illegitimate.⁶³ With `Abd al-Hayy's untimely death and Siddiq Hasan's disgrace, this celebrated debate effectively marked the end of Siddiq Hasan's public intellectual life.

His influence, however, did not end. A major component of Siddiq Hasan's lasting impact rests in his Arabic commentaries on Shaukani, which are among his most widely held and reprinted works today. Siddiq Hasan, along with the better known and younger Egyptian, Rashid Rida (1865–1935), was one of the two most important disseminators of Shaukani's work. Rashid Rida (mis)understood Shaukani's disapproval of *qiyās* to be limited only to matters of worship, not to human interactions, and established himself as an activist foundational in the emergence of twentieth-century Islamist thought. Far more engaged with the institutions of the European nation-state, Rida mirrored a socio-political role for an Islam that covered all aspects of life. Arguably, Siddiq Hasan was the more faithful transmitter of Shaukani in his propagation of Islam as a matter of personal faith and practice.⁶⁴ In Yemen at the time, and in India then and later, an explicit limiting

⁶¹ Siddiq Hasan, *Ithāf al-nubalā* (Kanpur, 1872). Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, p. 100. See also E. Moosa, *What is a Madrasa?* (Chapel Hill, 2015), p. 90.

⁶² For the importance for ulema authority of being able to claim to adhere to 'an invariant corpus of the law' in a colonial context, see Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, pp. 23–24.

⁶³ Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, p. 99. A fatwa of the Deobandi Rashid Ahmad Gangohi suggests the contestatory style of the day: opposition to visiting the Prophet's mosque, he asserted, was simply cowardice in the face of the hard journey. B. D. Metcalf, 'Two fatwas on hajj in British India', in *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and their Fatwas*, (eds) M. K. Masud, B. Messick and D. S. Power (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 184–192.

⁶⁴ A. Dallal, 'Appropriating the past: twentieth-century reconstruction of pre-modern Islamic thought', *Islamic Law and Society* 7.1 (2000), pp. 325–358. Haykel, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, p. 234.

of 'religion' to matters of ethics, family law, and ritual was well suited to the times. However, as the reference to Rashid Rida suggests, the unmediated engagement with sacred texts proved a congenial foundation for those tending towards positions as different in their implication as 'reformist', 'modernist', and 'Islamist' alike.⁶⁵ Beyond Shaukani, Siddiq Hasan also drew on, and disseminated, the scholarship of the Delhi reformist tradition, as it was communicated above all in the texts of Maulana Muhammad Isma'il and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi (both d. 1831), driven by commitment to *tauhid* and pioneers of deploying vernacular reformist texts to expand their influence.

Siddiq Hasan was part of networks engaged in assembling and editing classic Islamic works in Arabic for print publication in Ottoman cities. In a recent study of this extraordinary, and at times controversial, publication effort, Ahmed El Shamsy identifies Siddiq Hasan as among those ulema who not only recognised the power of these texts for reformist ends, but was exceptional in being able to finance their publication as well.⁶⁶ Siddiq Hasan himself edited and printed the commentary of the Shafi'i Ibn Hajar (1372–1449) on Bukhari's great classic hadith collection, the *Fath al-bārī*. This was the first print publication of this exemplary work of hadith scholarship, notable for its breadth in documentation of authenticity and its skill in interpretation.⁶⁷ Before this, in a place like Delhi, students were reduced to sharing manuscript sections of the text, hand to hand.⁶⁸

Many of Siddiq Hasan's own writings drew substantially on his classical manuscript collection. During his pilgrimage he had copied an important critique of logicians by Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), who would be a model of assiduous scholarship and well-honed Islamic argumentation for reformists in South Asia, although he was little known there before the end of the eighteenth century. His agent in Mecca continued to find and send manuscripts to him, including a second major text of Ibn Taymiyya, his *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*. K. A. Nizami sees Siddiq Hasan as key to 'strengthen [ing] [Ibn Taymiyya's] ideological prominence' in India. He engaged with his thought judiciously, holding, for example, a far more nuanced view of the work of Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1260), who is often taken as Ibn Taymiyya's polar opposite.⁶⁹

Siddiq Hasan also produced his own commentary on Bukhari, *'Awn al-bārī*, its deference to Ibn Hajar evident in a title that rhymed with his.⁷⁰ The commentary was keyed to Ahmad al-Sharji al-Zubaydi's abridgement of Bukhari and printed in the margins of

⁶⁵ Thus, among the late nineteenth-century Aligarh 'modernists' were, among others, Mohsin ul Mulk (a former Shi'a) and Nazir Ahmad whose thought was taken to align with that of Ahl-i Hadith. J. Jones, *Shi'a Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 154; A. Hopf, *Translating Islam, Translating Religion: Conceptions of Religion and Islam in the Aligarh Movement* (Berlin, 2021), chapter 5. On Ahl-i Hadith and Jamaat Islami affinity, see Syed Vali Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution* (Berkeley, 1994).

⁶⁶ El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, pp. 173–176, often drawing on Preckel's analysis, cited above, of these networks.

⁶⁷ On Ibn Hajar's commentary, see J. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland, 2018), especially p. 16, chapter 3, and pp. 77–79; for the importance of the text in India generally, see chapter 9, p. 158.

⁶⁸ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, pp. 205–206. Shah Waliullah himself had written a short commentary on the text. The text, Blecher suggests, in India from the early sixteenth century, migrated, like scholars, to centres of wealth and learning. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, pp. 145–146. Shah Waliullah's son, Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz, told stories of his verbal dexterity in his *Būstān al-Muhaddithin*, Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, pp. 90–91.

⁶⁹ Shah Waliullah was one of those who brought his manuscripts to India. K. A. Nizami, 'The impact of Ibn Taymiyya on South Asia', *Journal of Islamic Studies* I (1990), p. 139. Also Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's library', especially pp. 170–174. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics* identifies Siddiq Hasan as a 'node' in the dissemination of classical works across a wide transnational network, pp. 174–175, and discusses his nuanced views on Ibn 'Arabi, pp. 167–169.

⁷⁰ Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, pp. 157–159.

Shaukani's most famous work, the *Nayl-al-awtār*, which was his commentary on the hadith compilation of Majd al-Din ibn Taymiyya (Ibn Taymiyya's grandfather), *Muntaqā al-akhbār*, a work that set the standard for increased stringency in identifying valid hadith.⁷¹ As Joel Blecher notes, 'a base-text with a supercommentary on a completely separate, albeit related, text could only have been imagined in an era of print'.⁷² Siddiq Hasan's *Nayl al-awtār min asrār Muntaqā al-akbār wa-bi-hāmishihi Kitāb 'Awn al bārī li-hall adillat al-Bukhārī* was printed in Cairo in 1880 at the famous Bulaq Press.⁷³

Siddiq Hasan also published extensively in the fields that honed expertise in evaluating the language of texts purporting to originate in Prophetic words and practice. One of his best-known works, a study of lexicography shading into philology, *Al Bulgha fī 'Usūl al lughā*, took the classic fifteenth-century work in this field, the *Muzhir* of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, and made it both shorter and more comprehensible.⁷⁴ He persuasively demonstrated the relevance of Suyuti's principles to contemporary intellectual projects, including translation of Arabic classics. Siddiq Hasan took from Suyuti, for example, guidelines on issues about appropriate vocabulary, which led him to reflect on Urdu's excellent resources in Sanskrit and Persian, its eloquence, and its beauty. More than a simple distillation, the *Bulgha* was, thus, creative work on Siddiq Hasan's part, rethinking and re-presenting a great classical work of scholarship on a subject essential to the study and popularisation of hadith in his own day. This text again illustrates his ability to tack between grounding in the great texts of the past, on the one hand, and the contexts of the present, on the other.

Siddiq Hasan's Arabic texts were part of a new 'public Arabic print sphere' that reached across continents.⁷⁵ Siddiq Hasan's readers included members of the celebrated al-Alusi family of scholars in Baghdad, like the Salafi, Nu`man Khair al-Din (1836–99), author of an influential defence of Ibn Taymiyya. They corresponded, cooperated in publication, and issued joint fatwas.⁷⁶ His books were also valued, as noted above, by Ottoman intellectuals developing Arabic for a range of new prose genres. Their 'Awakening', the *nahda*, was long understood to be a movement dependent on exposure to modern European literatures coupled with a return to the allegedly dead Arabic classics. Writers of the *nahda*, in fact, built not only on Arabic classics but on later Islamic scholarship as well.⁷⁷

The most significant publisher of Siddiq Hasan's work in the Ottoman lands was Ahmad Faris Shidyaq, whose life story could not be more different from Siddiq Hasan's. The cosmopolitan Shidyaq's magnum opus mocked all establishments, whether clerical, political, or literary, and was a landmark in modern Arabic prose. For all their differences, like Siddiq Hasan, he was infatuated with language and cultivated precisely the great traditional disciplines of word-focused Arabic humanities.⁷⁸ From the late 1870s, he published

⁷¹ D. W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 26.

⁷² Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, p. 158. See the appearance of this print virtuosity at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011814668> (accessed 4 May 2023).

⁷³ Bulaq's first press was brought back to Cairo by an agent of Muhammad Ali (de facto ruler, 1805–1848), who was sent to Europe to be trained in printing; its first book was issued in 1822. Green, *Terrains of Exchange*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ This discussion follows J. A. Haywood, 'An Indian contribution to the study of Arabic lexicography: the "bulgha" of Muḥammad Ṣiḍḍīq Ḥasan Khaṅ Bahādūr (1832–1890)', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 3.4 (October 1956), pp. 165–180.

⁷⁵ The phrase is from F. C. Johnson, 'Foreword', in Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, *Leg over Leg*, (ed. and trans.) Humphrey Davies (New York, 2013–2014), vol. 1, p. xxv.

⁷⁶ Preckel, 'Screening Siddiq Hasan Khan's library', pp. 171–172, fn. 29, for details and multiple bibliographic references.

⁷⁷ With thanks to Dr Nadia Bou Ali for comments on Siddiq Hasan's connections to Shidyaq and the importance of 'south-south connections', at the South Asia History Seminar, St Antony's College, Oxford, 10 May 2011.

⁷⁸ Lebanese by birth, Shidyaq moved across the Levant and Europe, and became involved in Biblical translation in Cairo and Britain before moving on to the world of French intellectuals in Paris, thence to Tunis, and finally

a full dozen of Siddiq Hasan's Arabic works at his Al Jawā'ib press in Istanbul for distribution through his own agents in Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and India. These included Siddiq Hasan's Arabic lexicography; his bibliography of Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Hindi dictionaries; his study of the formation and derivation of Arabic works; and his studies of hadith and jurisprudence, including his anti-*taqlid* commentaries, which represented the foundational jurisprudential perspective for modernists and scholars of the Ahl-i Hadith alike.

Readers valued Siddiq Hasan's clarity in conveying technical issues as well as the lucidity of his language, with Allama Salim al-Bustami (1819–83), for example, describing the 'expressiveness of Siddiq Ahmad's Arabic as if he had been brought up in Yemen'.⁷⁹ Siddiq Hasan's pioneering reach to Arabic-speaking audiences in the west was important, even if it was not as dramatic as Blecher puts it, 'a reversal from the premodern flows of knowledge and patronage in the Indian Ocean'.⁸⁰

Urdu publications: translation, guidance—and an attempt at self-justification

Siddiq Hasan published the largest number of his titles in Urdu, with translations front and centre, including texts of Shaukani, and, most importantly, of the Quran. Urdu, the lingua franca and official provincial language over a broad swathe of the country, offered Siddiq Hasan his largest potential audience.⁸¹ The translation of the Quran into Indian languages began with Shah Waliullah in Persian, followed by its translation into Urdu by his son, Shah 'Abdul Qadir (d. 1815). Siddiq Hasan's *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān bi Latā'if al Bayān* built on Shah 'Abdul Qadir's. Some 17 volumes in total, Siddiq Hasan worked on the first seven volumes and the last two, seeing only the first two into print before his death.⁸² He also put into his readers' hands accessible Urdu translations and commentary on hadith, like the relatively brief *Ḡhunyat al-qārī tarjumah sulāsiyat al-Buḫḫārī* (1875) at just 44 pages long.⁸³

A compendium of Siddiq Hasan's Urdu fatwas is telling for the topics it covered, its mode of argumentation, and the bolstering of each opinion by attestations from other scholars. The *Majmū'a-yi Fatāwā* includes fatwas delivered over several years up to around 1300/1884–1885, as indicated by the dates of those adding their signatures to respective opinions.⁸⁴

Istanbul. Along the way he was a Maronite, a Protestant, and a Sunni Muslim. See Green, *Terrains of Exchange*, pp. 53, 94–95; and G. Roper, 'Faris al-Shidyāq and the transition from scribal to print culture in the Middle East', in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, (ed.) G. N. Atiyed (Albany, 1995), pp. 209–232.

⁷⁹ A. Ahmad, *Tatawwur al-Adab al-Arabiya wa Marakizuha fi al-Hind* (New Delhi, 2013), p. 5, quoted in F. U. Ahmad, 'Contribution of Nawab Siddique Hasan Khan to Arabic language and linguistics: a study', *Pratidhwani the Echo* 3.2 (2014), available at https://www.thecho.in/files/Faris-Uddin-Ahmed_4wl3c777.pdf (last accessed 18 May 2021). The 'Allama' is likely Salim al-Bustānī (1848–84), the son of Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883), and himself also a leading figure in modern Arabic.

⁸⁰ Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, p. 151.

⁸¹ On the emerging 'Urdu sphere' or 'Urdu cosmopolis' of the era, see Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Delhi, 2007), and C. Ryan Perkins, 'From the mehfal to the printed word: public debate and discourse in late colonial India', *Indian Economic and Social Review* 50.1 (2013).

⁸² Volume 2, for example, covers *Sūras* from *Āl-i 'Imrān* to *al-Nisā'*: Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tarjumān 'al-Qur'ān bi-latā'if 'al-bayān*, Part 2 (Lahore, 1889), available at https://www.worldcat.org/title/tarjuman-al-quran-bi-lataif-al-bayan-part-2/oclc/1015686842&referer=brief_results (accessed 5 May 2023).

⁸³ Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Ḡhunyat al-qārī tarjumah sulāsiyat al-Buḫḫārī ma'e tamimāt al-ṣabī fi tarjumah al-arba'in min aḥādīs al-nabī* (Lahore, 1291 [1874 or 1875]).

⁸⁴ Sayyid Nawab Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Majmū'a-yi Fatāwā* (Lahore, n.d.) This volume may well have been culled from a range of other publications. This edition was published after 1890 since Siddiq Hasan is identified as *marhūm*.

The topics confirm the overriding concern around correct worship, including prayer and saint-oriented devotional practices; they address appropriate personal behaviour, like women wearing gold jewellery, as well as matters related to marriage and divorce, like the implications of a husband's disappearance for a wife's marital status. The fatwas address issues that increasingly defined emerging intra-Sunni sectarian/*maslakī* differences: the legitimacy of kissing thumbs and placing them on the eyes at the name of the Prophet; raising hands and saying 'amen' out loud in the canonical prayer; and observation of the Prophet's birthday. Siddiq Hasan took on the illegitimacy of the inclusion of Hanafis in the mosque and of prayers knowingly offered behind a Hanafi imam, differences that resulted in law cases in colonial courts that contributed to hardening sectarian lines.⁸⁵ Siddiq Hasan answered every query by marshalling relevant hadith (in Arabic with translation) and adding attestations from other scholars. The first fatwa, on ritual sacrifice, garnered support from a full dozen authorities, identified by position, authorship of a text, or locative (in this case all linked to sites across northern India).

Finally, Siddiq Hasan's *Tarjuman-i Wahabbiyya* (1884) served a different end from the texts reviewed above. Written in Urdu and immediately translated into English, it was a virtuoso effort, born of desperation, to deflect official suspicions concerning his political loyalties.⁸⁶ To this end, it amassed every argument possible. The book included personal tributes, letters, political documents and analysis, history, memoir, fatwas, and hadith criticism alike. Four long translations from earlier publications (three in Persian and one in Arabic) were meant to provide evidence that he had long eschewed jihad and Wahabbi ideology.

An introduction from the translator, a Bhopal state employee, set the tone. Sayyid Akbar `Alam offered his own testimonial, along with a denunciation of the venal self-interest of opposition courtiers; copies of appreciative letters from British officials; a historical extract summarising Siddiq Hasan's marriage and subsequent honours (from Shah Jahan Begum's Persian history *Tājul Iqbāl*); and, finally, a summary of projects testifying to Siddiq Hasan's role in good governance as consort to the nawab.⁸⁷ Siddiq Hasan then opened the book proper by directly calling on the reader's good sense to recognise that accusations against him were patently untrue. 'Reader,' he wrote, 'I had no need whatever of writing this book...'. He followed with an introduction that took the long view, from 'the Creation of the World' down to the possibly imminent End Times that require Christian rule and which to oppose would be 'downright stupidity and foolishness', not least given India's 'safety and stability' along with 'religious freedom' and 'the great charter of liberty' accorded to the princes in particular.⁸⁸

Self-defence aside, other chapters serve as an introduction to the many genres of Siddiq Hasan's publications. The book's first chapter comprised an extract from Siddiq Hasan's Persian text, *Hidāyat al-sā'il ilā adillat al-masā'il* (1875), a compendium in the classic fatwa form of question and advisory answer. The whole chapter was an answer to a query

⁸⁵ See fn 12, above.

⁸⁶ I have been unable to access the Urdu edition and used the English translation, Nawab Walajah Amir-ul-Mulk, Sayyad Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan Bahadur, *An Interpreter of Wahabism*, translated from the original Urdu by Sayyad Akbar `Alam, Third Assistant to the Second Minister of Bhopal (Calcutta, 1884). Analysis based on the Urdu original include Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, pp. 273–278, and S. A. Zaidi, *Making a Muslim: Reading Publics and Contesting Identities in Nineteenth-century North India* (Cambridge, 2021), chapter 1.

⁸⁷ Shah Jahan Begum presented the Prince of Wales with the ornate Persian edition of this history, published by Kanpur's Nizami Press, on the occasion of his visit to India in 1875. See <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/publications/eastern-encounters/taj-al-iqbal-tarikh-e-bhopal-the-history-of-bhopal%20> (accessed 4 May 2023).

⁸⁸ Khan, *An Interpreter of Wahabism*, p. 9.

about `Abdul Wahabb.⁸⁹ This was a chance to make clear that Siddiq Hasan had long denied any association with the Arab Wahhabis, an accusation he attributed to the seditious Shi`a schemers siding with his long-term opponent, Qudsiyya Begum (d. 1881), Shah Jahan Begum's grandmother. There was no contact of any kind between Indians and Wahhabis, he pointed out, and, unlike him, they practised (Hanbali) *taqlid*. Siddiq Hasan invoked scholars like Shah Waliullah and his successors who regarded opposition to the ruling power an unpardonable sin. He drew on English-language newspapers like *The Pioneer* and *Hindu Patriot* that reported the erroneous use of the 'Wahhabi' label—a label, he noted, that was used to tar opponents and that was invariably rejected by those so named. Siddiq Hasan closed the fatwa with a hadith warning against heretical sects as, implicitly, the Wahhabis were.

The two chapters that followed shifted genre to hadith translation and commentary, first taking up the unlawfulness of jihad in India of the day, followed by a discussion of hadith related to the binding power of treaties.⁹⁰ Siddiq Hasan confirmed that at times jihad had merit, as described in hadith whose 'original Arabic and the translation into Urdu and Persian' were now well known in every town and village—a tribute to print publication. The appropriate conditions for jihad—a worthy imam, a base in a Muslim-ruled country, likelihood of success, and pure motivation (God's exaltation and peace)—were lacking in India now and had been in 1857. To think otherwise, he argued, was to confuse sedition and jihad. For good measure, he noted that most of the leaders in 1857 were Hindus. He added a hadith of the Prophet predicting that 'tumult and sedition [would] rise from [Najd]', the core area of Saudi and Wahhabi power. Siddiq Hasan argued that that loyalty was today binding on every 'Prince and Chief' of India as well as their subjects, and that this was far clearer to those rooted in the Quran and hadith alone and not 'entangled' by *taqlid* of a law school, citing hadith of Ibn Hajir in support.⁹¹

Shifting genres again, Siddiq Hasan included an autobiographical extract from his *Rauzul Khasib* covering the Uprising of 1857,⁹² his own peregrinations in that period until he safely settled in Bhopal, and, again, the unwarranted attacks on him.⁹³ He reiterated that abstract discussion of a concept like jihad was not advocacy. In a translation from his *Tāj al-Mukallal*, his genre returned to history, again the history of Ibn Saud and the Wahhabis, their depredations, and the Ottomans' opposition to them. Siddiq Hasan throughout was making clear that he was a scholar and in no sense a revolutionary activist in the Wahhabi style, nor was he ever a tyrant. Persuasive arguments and actual behaviour, however, did not save him.

The double-edged power of print publication: reformist success, Islamophobic ruin

Siddiq Hasan's position made his transnational interactions and extensive print dissemination possible. But it also made him a visible target. Others may have published along

⁸⁹ The Bhopal edition is *Matba` Shahjahani* (Bhopal, 1292/1875), classified by Saeedullah as a book of *fiqh*: Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 186, 196.

⁹⁰ The translation notes the hadith are from the *Mawaid-ul Awaid*. I cannot identify this book but 'Mawaid Al-'Awaid' is attributed to Siddiq Hasan, presumably a collection of translated hadith, at <https://umm-ul-qura.org/2015/08/18/biography-of-allamah-nawab-siddiq-hassan-khan/> (accessed 4 May 2023). Khan, *An Interpreter of Wahabism*, chapter 2.

⁹¹ He cited *Kitāb al-Zawājir 'an iqtirāf al-kabā'ir*, printed at the Bulaq Press in 1868, a reminder of his access to newly printed classics. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹² Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Rauzul Khasib* (Agra, 1881, in Persian).

⁹³ *Rauzul Khasib min Tazkiyat al Qalb al-Munib* is listed by Saeedullah as a work of *tasawwuf*: Saeedullah, *Life and Works of Nawab Siddiq Hasan*, pp. 189 and 198. And *Tāj al-Mukallal min Jawāhir Ma`āthir al Tirāz al Ākhīr wa'l Awwal* (Bhopal, 1882, in Arabic), as a work of history. *Ibid.*, pp. 190 and 197.

reformist, even apocalyptic lines, but as a prince, and as a Muslim with networks beyond colonial control, Siddiq Hasan stood out. The memory of the 1857 Uprising, wrongly treated as a Muslim jihad, kept alive suspicion about Muslims generally. In the 1880s, officials added to that lurking fear anxieties about dangerous influences emanating, as they saw it, from the Sudan, where the Mahdi's campaigns roiled, and from the cosmopolitan Hijaz. Officials soon began surveilling Siddiq Hasan's connections, extensive as they were, with scholars, printers, agents, and book sellers alike.

A Punjabi hired in Calcutta to travel to the northwest had every incentive to prove his worth by reporting suspicious activities on the part of book sellers and distributors. An official who intercepted a handful of Siddiq Hasan's Urdu books in Bombay could report on their language as Arabic (misled by the title page) and suspicious content (although the pages in the India Office were archived largely uncut). One particular long-distance Arab trader in cotton goods in Mecca was found facilitating the shipment of Siddiq Hasan's publications through his own mercantile networks into the Ottoman lands. Siddiq Hasan's readers, it turned out, were to be found in army barracks in Bengal and Madras as well as in trading houses in Bombay and along trade routes into the northwest. There was an Ahl-i Hadith *anjuman* in Lahore, whose members included traders, officials, teachers, contractors, and a lawyer who followed his teachings.⁹⁴

For most of the readers, the appeal of these reformist teachings—as would have been the case with the writings of rival reformist movements—would have been many. They promised divine favour. They offered mobile people the community that came from shared experiences. They taught practices associated with the greater social respectability that resulted from shedding local practices. One can readily imagine why the traders in Lahore or Bombay, and the diverse populations moving through army barracks from Madras to Bengal, might have welcomed Siddiq Hasan's writings. One can also imagine why there might be colonialist alarm at what such people might be reading if, for example, descriptions of the end times, or reporting on its possible signs in the present, or abstract discussions of conditions for jihad, were misinterpreted as calls to revolt.

It was Lepel Griffin, as agent to the governor-general for Central India (1881–1886), who chose to act on the implausible claim that Siddiq Hasan, whose interests were royally served by the colonial presence, was engaged in seditious actions. Griffin, arrogant and excitement loving, was enough of a public figure to be caricatured in a *roman à clef* and drawn in political cartoons. The appointment to Central India, moreover, had left him aggrieved since, fresh from diplomatic success in Afghanistan, he had expected to be appointed governor of Punjab. Was he just looking for action? Charmed by an unveiled princess and her manly spouse, he readily took the side of a court faction centred on Siddiq Hasan's stepdaughter, Sultan Jahan Begum (r. 1903–1926), the heir apparent, who tried to discredit Siddiq Hasan as a corrupt, manipulative, vengeful 'Svengali'.

Siddiq Hasan, the effete intellectual, clearly got under Griffin's skin as the tough and martial Pathans of the ruling family did not. And he wanted it to be himself, not Siddiq Hasan, as he saw it, who told the begum what to do. He was incensed that she adopted *parda*, in many ways an assertion of power against him on her part since she could see

⁹⁴ Valuable intelligence came from the consul in Jeddah and police based in Calcutta, including a 'young officer, who came to me only last June from the Punjab' who worked the case so carefully. Government surveillance identified individual Ahl-i Hadith followers linked to Siddiq Hasan, as well as communities, even some 50 washermen and tailors in Calcutta who were drawn to a former regimental munshi in the British Army who had turned to disseminating Ahl-i Hadith teachings. See, for example, a memorandum from Deputy Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, to Secretary, Foreign Department, February 10, 1881, British Library (BL), FOR SEC I, Proceedings, July 1886, 'Compilation and circulation of seditious works by Nawab Sadik Hassan, Consort of the Begam of Bhopal', R/1/1/32. For more elite followers in Lahore, see Anon., *Affairs in Bhopal*. It was also printed in their own journal, *Ishaat-us-Sunnat* and as a supplement to a Lahore journal, *Advocate of India*.

him but not vice versa. He blamed her doing so on Siddiq Hasan—even as other officials took the practice in their stride. He bandied about charged terms like ‘jihad’ to describe Siddiq Hasan’s international connections and ‘oriental despotism’ to libel his alleged ruling practices. He invoked what a contemporary scholar calls ‘phantom Wahhabis’ who lurked everywhere in the British imagination, playing on the existential condition of fear characteristic of British colonial rule.⁹⁵ Superiors, who had expressed doubt over Griffin’s claims, backed him in the interest of making officialdom look strong.⁹⁶

Griffin did not get the summary execution or banishment beyond India he wanted, but he did manage Siddiq Hasan’s complete disgrace and isolation. In 1885, Siddiq Hasan was summarily stripped of his titles and salute, and excluded from all involvement in state governance. His distribution networks and his extensive contacts with publishers abroad were abruptly ended. He was narrowly saved from execution or exile, but he was humiliated and condemned to house arrest without even a show of the trial that would have happened in directly ruled India. So much for the vaunted British rule of law. The ‘state of exception’, far more basic to colonial rule than rhetoric would suggest, came readily to hand in a princely state.⁹⁷ Given the conventional rhetoric of friendship and harmony between British and native ‘aristocrats’, the racism and disrespect stands out all the more.⁹⁸ When a listing of Griffin’s abuses in Bhopal made their way to the floor of parliament, first on the list was his summoning the begum and her consort to a public audience of the entire court with no advance intimation that he would then publicly denounce and sentence the nawab.⁹⁹

As Siddiq Hasan himself had written in one of his histories, unadulterated (*khālis*) Christian (*nasarāniyya*) rule had replaced seven centuries of Muslim rulers in his country. To be sure, he continued, there were some rajas and nawabs, ‘who were said to be—in part, in name—rulers (*vālī*). They were nothing but the government’s *farmānbardār* (obedient subjects), like servants, though in fact servants were better than them.’¹⁰⁰ His dismissal, over Nawab Shah Jahan Begum’s outraged objections, proved the point. Siddiq Hasan seems to have simply withered and, in five short years, died.¹⁰¹ The begum, nominal power or not, rose in full fury to preserve his memory and fight relentlessly for posthumous restoration of his honours.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ J. Stephens, ‘The phantom Wahhabi: liberalism and the Muslim fanatic in mid-Victorian India’, *Modern Asian Studies* 47.10 (2013), pp. 22–52.

⁹⁶ For an account of Siddiq Hasan’s fall, see B. D. Metcalf, ‘Islam and power in colonial India: the making and unmaking of a Muslim princess’, *American Historical Review* 116.1 (February 2011), pp. 1–30.

⁹⁷ See N. Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (Ann Arbor, 1998) and, of interest given Griffin’s tenure there, E. Kolsky, ‘The colonial rule of law and the legal regime of exception: frontier “fanaticism” and state violence in British India’, *The American Historical Review* 120.4 (2015), pp. 1218–1246. See also C. Mallampalli, *A Muslim Conspiracy in British India? Politics and Paranoia in the Early Nineteenth Century Deccan* (Cambridge, 2017) for accounts of alleged plots in the Deccan in the 1830s that read like a dress rehearsal for what happened in Bhopal in the 1880s.

⁹⁸ D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (New York, 2001).

⁹⁹ For the parliamentary debate, 1888, see <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1888/aug/06/india-sir-lepel-griffin> (accessed 4 May 2023).

¹⁰⁰ Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Hadis al-Ghashiyah ‘an al-Fitan al-Khāliyah va al-Fāshiyah* (New Delhi, 2009), p. 83.

¹⁰¹ In 1888, he did rally to produce a defence, almost wholly focused on his publications. In it, Siddiq Hasan answered, for example, Lepel Griffin’s thoroughly tendentious, highly detailed, line-by-line critique of his writings that, according to Griffin, used coded language to veil nothing less than sedition. He included excerpts of the Appeal, discussed below, along with British letters of support in an appendix. S. S. Hossein [Sayyid Siddiq Hasan], *Bhopal Affairs: A Defence* (Calcutta, 1888).

¹⁰² [Shahjahan Begum], *An Appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council by The Begum of Bhopal* (Calcutta, [1889]), BL, IOR L/PS/20/F113.

In 1887, a member of the Lahore *anjuman* noted above published a defence on Siddiq Hasan's behalf in both English and Urdu.¹⁰³ The author meticulously parsed every reference to jihad and to the Mahdi in the suspicious texts. He interpreted the motivations of Siddiq Hasan's enemies as opposition to his religious views and not concern with sedition or bad governance at all. He insisted that all the claims about murdering opponents, financing the Mahdi, and inciting jihad were spurious. Far from disloyal, the author claimed, the nawab was, at most, careless, given that he was 'quite ignorant of politics and unaware of the consequences of such writings...'.¹⁰⁴ And then the author got to his point: if there was any guilt, in no way possible did that implicate him and his colleagues.

Siddiq Hasan's teachings meant that he could not have influenced others to jihad, even if he had wanted to. Any adherent to the Ahl-i Hadith, quite simply, had only their own conscience and no leader: they had no need for Siddiq Hasan or anyone else. Siddiq Hasan, the author explained, had 'encouraged learning by causing a large number of ancient works on various subjects to be printed at great cost and by compiling works based on ancient works'.¹⁰⁵ That done, there was no need of him at all:

... the Nawab is a distinguished member of the community, both on account of his social position and the theological learning, [but] there is not a single Ahl-i-Hadis (with the exception of illiterate persons, whose opinion does not count for much) who assign him the same position as that of a prophet or imam... except the prophet the Ahl-i-Hadis do not recognize any other spiritual guide [at all including] *any Maulvi living or dead* [emphasis added]...Even the head Maulvi Nazir Hosein, and the late Maulvi Ismail and Maulvi Abdula of Ghazni, who died at Amritsar, are not regarded as spiritual guides, to say nothing of the poor Nawab.¹⁰⁶

If they had to, Ahl-i Hadith folks could, so to speak, throw any of them under the bus. In his own case, the author went on to explain, he 'was at odds with Maulvi Nazir Hosein (one of whose humble pupils he [was])' on the legitimacy of whether ablution on socks was lawful.¹⁰⁷ Other ulema, particularly those with strong personal ties to followers as their Sufi shaiikh, might insist on readers clearing any text with them before reading it, but an Ahl-i Hadith leader like Siddiq Hasan did not cultivate such networks.¹⁰⁸ Francis Robinson's word on popular empowerment merits repetition: now, 'any Ahmad, Mahmud or Muhammad could make [of sacred texts] what they willed'.¹⁰⁹

Irony abounds. What Siddiq Hasan cared about for his readers, far from jihad and sedition, was precisely at the level of what mattered to the Lahori author: whether a proper ablution required bare feet. Sedition? Siddiq Hasan, speculate though he may, had wholly assimilated the colonial-era demarcation of 'religion' to matters like these, not matters of

¹⁰³ Anon., *Affairs in Bhopal*. Supplement to the 'Advocate of India' (Bombay, 1887). A scanned copy, now in the University of Toronto library, bears the bookplate 'Maharaja Tagore's Private Library', available at <https://archive.org/details/affairsinbhopald00bhob> (accessed 4 May 2023). The pamphlet was originally published by the *Ishat-us-sunnah*, a [Urdu] Mahommedan journal of Lahore. BL, OIOC Political Tracts 8023 cc.23; also BL, IOR R/1/1/33. Siddiq Hasan included most of the text in his own defence, excluding the final section on Ahl-i-Hadith leadership (pp. 137–192).

¹⁰⁴ Anon., *Affairs in Bhopal*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Nazir Hasan was, with Siddiq Hasan, the major Ahl-i Hadith leader of the day. Abū Yahyà Imām Khān Naushaharawi, *Tarājim-i Ulamā'-yi Hadiṣ-i Hind*, vol. 1 (Sauhadra, n.d. 1938–1939?), pp. 133–159.

¹⁰⁷ Anon., *Affairs in Bhopal*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁸ On this, Robinson, 'Islam and the impact of print in South Asia', p. 77, quotes a Deobandi scholar/sufi shaiikh with hundreds of disciples who urged prior approval of any text, a person with networks of popular influence not shared by Siddiq Hasan.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

state policy but personal or family law along with ritual and moral guidance.¹¹⁰ With this anonymous publication, our discussion comes full circle. That Siddiq Hasan is an ideal exemplar of teachings that empowered Muslims to independent judgement and moral responsibility could not be clearer. His teachings were teachings for the times, but far from simply derivative of the colonial culture of the day. Siddiq Hasan wrote as part of a lineage of thought and teachings that had flourished in the long eighteenth century and were themselves rooted in the work of scholarly progenitors to the earliest Islamic decades. In a world of steam and print, he had the heady satisfaction of writing as part of like-minded intellectual networks located in diverse contexts across India and beyond.

If officials did not like Siddiq Hasan's publications and their extensive distribution, they had only themselves to blame, given the post-Mutiny policy of privileging collaborators among large landowners, princes, and the like. That policy made for polarisation and rigidity within Indian society, but it also made for patronage of art, classical music, and culture generally, and, in Siddiq Hasan's case, not only the Islamic scholarship emphasised here but literary projects of many kinds as well. Located in the intellectual backwater of Bhopal, Siddiq Hasan, unexpected as it may seem, had the resources to be part of a lively and varied transregional world of multiple currents of intellectual ferment. Siddiq Hasan's print publications served diverse agendas, enlivening sacred texts, crafting language, forging networks, reaping honours, and changing lives—including his own.

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Conflicts of interest. The author reports none.

¹¹⁰ J. Stephens, *Governing Islam: Law, Empire, and Secularism in South Asia* (Cambridge, 2018). This would change in the twentieth century as some scholars turned to a state-oriented Islam associated above all with Abu'l A'la Maududi.

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