



Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

By Audrey Truschke

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This rich history documents the fascinating, overlooked exchange between the Persian-speaking Islamic elite of the early Mughal Empire and traditional Sanskrit scholars. The book begins with the invitation of Brahman and Jain intellectuals to King Akbar's court in the 1560s, then details the numerous, Mughal-backed texts they and their Mughal interlocutors produced under emperors Akbar, Jahangir (1605–1627), and Shah Jahan (1628–1658).

These cross-cultural encounters engendered a dynamic idea of Mughal rule essential to the empire's survival. Many works, including Sanskrit epics and historical texts, were translated into Persian, elevating the political position of Brahmans and Jains and cultivating a voracious appetite for Indian writings throughout the Mughal world. The first book to read these Sanskrit and Persian works in tandem, *Culture of Encounters* recasts the Mughal Empire as a polyglot polity that collaborated with its Indian subjects to envision its sovereignty. This study also reframes the development of Brahman and Jain communities under Mughal rule, which coalesced around carefully selected, politically salient memories of imperial interaction. *Culture of Encounters* certifies the critical role of the sociology of empire in building the Mughal polity, which came to irrevocably shape the literary and ruling cultures of early modern India.

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Review

"a breakthrough in modern scholarship on the history and culture of South Asia" -- Carl W. Ernst, University of North Carolina

"an important and impressive work that should change the field of Mughal studies" -- Francesca Orsini, SOAS, University of London

" full of intellectual energy" and "a major intervention in the study of the Mughal Empire in India" -- Harbans Mukhia, The Asian Age

"Truschke reveals a vibrantly multicultural Mughal court, one more thoroughly Indian than is commonly thought" -- Richard M. Eaton, University of Arizona

From the Inside Flap

Culture of Encounters documents the fascinating exchange between the Persian-speaking Islamic elite of the Mughal Empire and traditional Sanskrit scholars, which engendered a dynamic idea of Mughal rule essential to the empire's survival. This history begins with the invitation of Brahman and Jain intellectuals to King Akbar's court in the 1560s, then details the numerous Mughal-backed texts they and their Mughal interlocutors produced under emperors Akbar, Jahangir (1605-1627), and Shah Jahan (1628-1658). Many works, including Sanskrit epics and historical texts, were translated into Persian, elevating the political position of Brahmans and Jains and cultivating a voracious appetite for Indian writings throughout the Mughal world.

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About the Author

Audrey Truschke is assistant professor of South Asian history at Rutgers University-Newark and a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. She writes about cultural and intellectual history, the relationship between empire and literature, and cross-cultural interactions in early modern South Asia.

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