

## Remapping the World in a Fifteenth-Century Cosmography: Genres and Networks Between Deccan India and Iran

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines codicological evidence for the presence of an illustrated Persian cosmography (*'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*) (British Library Add 23564) at the fifteenth-century Bahmani court (1347–1538) of Deccan India. It traces this manuscript's itinerary from the dating of its colophon 1441, to its place in Bahmani Bidar, to a subimperial Mughal library, to its move to 'Adil Shahi Bijapur in 1618, and finally to its arrival at the British Library in 1860. It argues that distinguishing *manuscript genre* from *textual genre* when considering book production over a *longue durée* enables one to see books more clearly through the lens of their makers and readers. By establishing this cosmography's place in South Asia, this article enables it to be situated within the activity of this manuscript genre throughout the Deccan's early modern period.



### KEYWORDS

Manuscript genre; cosmography; Deccan art; codicology

In the fifteenth century, an illustrated Persian cosmography (*'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*) dated 1441 passed through the Bahmani court (1347–1538) of Deccan India. In 1618, this same manuscript was seized by the 'Adil Shahi court of Bijapur. It arrived at the British Library in 1860 where it was eventually catalogued as Add 23564. Through its programme of seals, inscriptions, and its map of the world, this article establishes this cosmography's existence in the Deccan, whereas, it was previously attributed to Iran. In so doing, it allows us to contextualise it amidst the rapid rise in illustrated cosmographies in South Asia over the course of the long sixteenth century. A sensitivity to the difference between *manuscript genre* and *textual genre* facilitates this analysis.

Based on extant documentation, it is fair to state that Deccan India experienced a boom in the production of Islamicate cosmographies or densely illustrated encyclopaedias of the universe. In spite of a common concern with the cosmos, Mughal workshops produced fewer cosmographies as only a handful of Mughal examples survive.<sup>1</sup> While the famed author Zakariyya' al-Qazwini (1203–1283) is often pronounced to be the author of many of these works, his authorship of a Persian

cosmography is a matter of continued scholarly investigation.<sup>2</sup> In total, we have at least six Persian texts that can be thought of as an Islamicate wonders-of-creation cosmography, or *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, all of which were present in the Deccan. These six versions each survive in multiple copies. The Persian texts themselves, museum displays, social media sites, and some scholars continue to associate many of these Persian *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*s with Qazvini, but many are the product of book cultures far removed from the thirteenth-century context of Qazvini.<sup>3</sup> As recently as 2019, the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin marketed their exhibition of a late eighteenth-century Indian wonders-of-creation translation of Qazvini with the title, “Qazvini: World Pictures – Pictures of the World 750 Years Ago (Qazvini Weltbilder – Bilder der Welt vor 750 Jahren),” an over-romanticisation of a book made around three centuries after Qazvini. “Translating Qazvini: Pictures of the World 400 Years Ago,” would have been more accurate. Here, I use transliteration to distinguish between Qazvini's Arabic and Persian cosmographies and speak of him as al-Qazwini when referring to his authorship of an Arabic text and Qazvini when focusing on Persian works.

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<sup>1</sup>Raza Rampur Library (RRL) A.4601 is a Mughal copy of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation* dated 1000/1591. See 'Arshi, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 262–3, and Schmitz, *Mughal and Persian paintings*, 83–5. Telangana Oriental Manuscript Library (OML) Falsifa MS 354, a Persian cosmography dated to 1537, was completed on September 22, 1597, possibly also in a Mughal milieu. See Hussain, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, vol. 1, 281–3.

<sup>2</sup>Rührdanz, “Zakariyyā al-Qazwini on the Inhabitants of the Supralunar World.”

<sup>3</sup>Haidar, “120. Wonders of Creation by Qazvini,” 277–8.

When the colophon of the cosmography of concern was dated in 845/1441, Islamicate culture had been in circulation between South Asia and the world for a few centuries. The several cultural categories applied to South Asian material culture of Persian, Persianate, Indo-Persian, Islamic, and Islamicate, will never fully reflect these networks. The fifteenth century, also called the Timurid century, witnessed the internationalisation and widespread export of Persian art, architecture, and literature, from Central Asia and Iran to the early Ottoman and Indian domains.<sup>4</sup> One of the homes of this manuscript was the *madrassa* of Mahmud Gawan in the Deccan city of Bidar. We know that this specific *madrassa* was based on a Timurid prototype.<sup>5</sup> Yet, it would be a mistake to flatten the cultural flows between India and the world as exclusively Persian, or one strain of Persian. Persian-speaking artists, intellectuals, and diplomats from all over a larger Persian cosmopolis flocked to India during the fifteenth century in search of new opportunities.<sup>6</sup> We also have significant evidence of artistic networks between Mamluk Egypt and Yemen and sultanate India.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, fifteenth-century India was a time of fragmenting power structures, which facilitated cultural circulation between multiple nodes.<sup>8</sup> These flows were not unidirectional. The Deccan courts also sponsored architecture and book arts in Iran itself.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, we must embrace the circuitous routes of these flows and seek to identify some of their many nodes.<sup>10</sup>

The multinodal mobility of manuscript circulation comes into view upon inspection of the Deccan archives of early-modern cosmographies. A sketch of this

production reveals that intellectuals and artists at the Deccan courts had a wealth of cosmographies available to them from both varying times and places. Overall, the early-modern Deccan witnessed the production of six distinct models that fit within the cosmographical manuscript genre. We can roughly trace three of these illustration cycles back to known contexts. Those include fourteenth-century Injuid Iran (ten copies extant that were made in India),<sup>11</sup> fifteenth-century Iraq or Anatolia (seven),<sup>12</sup> and fifteenth-century Shiraz (two).<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that manuscripts from these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century contexts circulated to India separately, rather it elucidates the various kinds of cosmographies within the Deccan archives.<sup>14</sup> These cycles of illustrations could have been reproduced in later manuscripts before arriving in the Deccan.

Two other Persian cosmographies written in India obscure any single direct source – the first of which claims Qazvini's authorship,<sup>15</sup> and the other of which is the famous *Stars of the Sciences* or *Nujum al-'Ulum* of Sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah of Bijapur (r. 1558–79) composed in 1570.<sup>16</sup> The sixth Persian cosmography is the manuscript we study here, the provenance of which hangs between Iran and India.

Searching within the surviving corpus of Deccan 'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt we can thus say with confidence that book artisans and intellectuals in India had access to a considerable diversity of this manuscript genre. Previous art historical studies of Deccan manuscripts have focused on lateral developments within a particular court – most notable of which is Laura Weinstein's research on Golkonda, and Keelan Overton on

<sup>4</sup>Early arguments about this were made by Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman," and Porter, "Décors émaillés." These were extended by Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, and Gupta, "Interpreting the Eye."

<sup>5</sup>Philon, "Mahmud Gawan's Madrasa," and Blair and Bloom, "From Iran to the Deccan."

<sup>6</sup>Brac de la Perrière, *L'art du livre*, addresses this in depth for arts of the book.

<sup>7</sup>Brac de la Perrière, "Du Caire à Mandu;" Barnes, "The Painted Ceiling of the 'Amiriya."

<sup>8</sup>Digby, "Before Timur Came"; Orsini and Sheikh, eds., *After Timur Left*; and Eaton, "Timur's Invasion and Legacy."

<sup>9</sup>Peyvand Firouzeh's work reminds us of the importance of thinking of 'between' Iran and the Deccan, rather from Iran to the Deccan. See Firouzeh, "Dynastic Self-Fashioning."

<sup>10</sup>Firouzeh, "Dynastic Self-Fashioning."

<sup>11</sup>For the first model's circulation to India see the close relationship between the illustrations in the manuscript studied in Berlekamp, "From Iraq to Fars," and the nine copies of the 'Adil Shahi translation of Qazvini. Those include British Library (BL) Or 1621, Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian manuscripts*, no. 714; NMI MS 58-48; Salar Jung Museum (SJM) Geo MS 6 (non-illustrated), Ashraf, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 2, 253–4; SJM Geo MS 8, Ashraf, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 2, 254; NLM P29 (fragmentary); OML Geo MS 72, Hussain, *A Catalogue of Urdu, Arabic & Persian Manuscripts*, 594–5; OML Geo MS 54 (Ibid.); Museum für Islamische Kunst I 9493; BL IO Islamic 3243; and, National Library of Iran (NLI) MS 2242-46, World Digital Library, "The Wonders of Creation," (Accessed 15 April 2019). This cycle of illustrations is also the primary version included in many lithographed cosmographies, including those by Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow, 1866.

<sup>12</sup>For the second model's circulation to India see the close semblance between the text and illustrations in the manuscript studied in Badiee, "An Islamic Cosmography"; "The Sarre Qazwini"; and, Carboni, "Constellations, Giants and Angels," and its relationship to seven later manuscripts. These include BL IO Islamic 845 (Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 209–10), BL IO Islamic 1337 (Ibid., 210), BL Or 4701 (Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 829), RRL A.4600 ('Arshi, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, vol. 5, 46–7, and Schmitz, *Mughal and Persian paintings*, 90–5), Chester Beatty Library (CBL) Per 128 (Wilkinson, *The Chester Beatty Library*, vol. 1, 57–8), the dispersed copy of Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MIA) 687-697.2008, and the dispersed copy of Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art (JKM) 76.402-403 (Mittal and Seyller, *Deccani Paintings, Drawings and Manuscripts*, 29–31).

<sup>13</sup>See the relationship between text and image in the manuscript studied by Robinson, "R. A. S. MS 178," and SJM Geo MS 5 and NMI 57-26.23.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Gupta, "How Persianate is it?" for a discussion of another manuscript model of Ahmad-i Tusi's cosmography that circulated to North India.

<sup>15</sup>See Gupta, "Wonder Reoriented," 75–83.

<sup>16</sup>See Leach, *Mughal and other Indian Paintings*, vol. 2, 819–9; Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur*, 62–4; Flatt, "The Authorship and Significance of the *Nujūm al-'ulūm*," and *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, 210–67. The genre of the *Nujūm* is subject of scholarly debate, however, I argue that it can be placed within the category of cosmography. See my forthcoming review of Flatt's *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates* in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

Bijapur.<sup>17</sup> Pairing these synchronic studies with a *longue durée* approach that charts the development of specific genres over time has the potential to yield several new insights. Diachronic analysis, as undertaken here, relates just how multinodal the mobility of manuscript circulation to Bijapur was. As Barbara Brend, Mika Natif and Yael Rice have shown, Persian manuscripts were retouched and remade in early-modern Indian contexts.<sup>18</sup> Here, I describe how one manuscript was reused in various locales, but in future publications I will tease out how the entire genre of the Islamicate cosmography was recreated in South Asia.

When examining the Deccan manuscript record, we must also be careful as all of these manuscripts moved over the course of their lives and where a codex was made does not necessarily map onto where it was read. With this introduction to the Deccan archive of *‘ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*, a few words are in order about the problem of genre before following the itinerary of the fifteenth-century cosmography (British Library Add 23564).

### A Subtle Distinction: Textual Genre and Manuscript Genre

We can probably never pinpoint when the first Islamicate cosmography came to India. But, if we start to approach the archives with a sensitivity to genre, those of us focused on the art historical study of manuscripts can learn from those whose primary concern are texts, and vice versa. Genre is a method of making a category.<sup>19</sup> According to Gian Biagio Conte, genres are “communicative strategies” that ordered the world.<sup>20</sup> Textual or literary genres are far more developed heuristics than how we classify manuscripts. For textual genres, we focus on narration, order, and language; i.e. the standards of Persian poetry differ from history writing in prose. Whereas to classify manuscripts as particular genres we have fewer methodological tools. I define manuscript genre as a method of situating manuscripts within a larger archive in terms of their text, material form, and codicological elements. That is, illustrated books differ from non-illustrated works, and there are multiple ways of laying out pages for illustrated and non-illustrated books. These physical features coupled

with the text, i.e. the manuscript as a whole, give it a distinctive genre that can differ from conceiving it as textual content.<sup>21</sup> The illustrated cosmography is a specific manuscript genre that can be characterised as encyclopaedic; that is, it has entries with accompanying images. These images are typically placed in demarcated spaces next to the defining entry.

Scant historical evidence exists for thinking about manuscript genres. A few library registers exist from the premodern world that give us insight into this problem.<sup>22</sup> Khayr al-Din Khidr bin Mahmud bin ‘Umar ‘Atufi’s inventory (1502/3) of the palace library of Ottoman sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) in Istanbul lists texts that fall under the category of *‘ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*. The books within this group are not as homogenous as a modern understanding of the cosmography may be. Rather, some element of wonders or *‘ajā’ib* in their titles unites them.<sup>23</sup> As anticipated, this category contains encyclopaedic works such as Qazvini’s cosmography. Less expected are narratives such as al-Ramhurmuzi’s tenth-century *Kitab ‘Aja’ib al-Hind (Book of Wonders of India)*.<sup>24</sup> The presence of narrative genres, albeit filled with wonder, are distinct from the popular knowledge about the cosmos one finds in consultative works such as the *‘ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*. Thus, the challenge of classifying the illustrated cosmography within a manuscript archive has long persisted.

I find it instructive to distinguish the cosmography as a genre of illustrated manuscript, separate from its textual form, because it allows us to be more sensitive to the conclusions we can draw from presences and absences in the extant archives. While this article demonstrates that British Library Add 23564 marks the earliest recorded Islamicate cosmography in India, the history of the textual genre avails the hypothesis of the existence of many more examples prior to 1441.

In terms of textual genres, the canonised and popular structures of the universe codified by these encyclopaedias of the cosmos were embedded into Islamicate thought in South Asia in a variety of texts from lexicography to historiography. For instance, a dictionary known as the *Farhang-i Qavvas* compiled by the poet Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah Qavvas Ghaznavi around 1300 was the first known Persian dictionary completed

<sup>17</sup>Laura Weinstein, “Variations on a Persian Theme,” and “Slave, Sultan, Scholar.” Overton, “Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting.”

<sup>18</sup>Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnama*; Natif, “The SOAS *Anvār-i Suhayli*,” Rice, “Mughal Interventions in the Rampur *Jamī’ al-tavarikh*.”

<sup>19</sup>To be clear, I am not referring to genre as it is commonly understood in genre painting of early-modern Europe.

<sup>20</sup>Gian Biagio Conte, *Genres and Readers: Lucretius, Love Elegy, Pliny’s Encyclopedia*.

<sup>21</sup>Contadini, “The Manuscript as a Whole.”

<sup>22</sup>Necipoğlu, Kafadar, and Fleischer, eds., *Treasures of Knowledge*. Konrad Hirschler has studied two late thirteenth-century manuscript catalogues. See Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library*.

<sup>23</sup>von Hees, “The Astonishing,” has criticized the “wonders” genre as a stable group of texts.

<sup>24</sup>Emiralioglu, “Books on the Wonders of Creation,” 598.

in India.<sup>25</sup> Its ordering evinces Qavvas's awareness of the cosmographical genre as it cuts close to the *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*: (1) celestial creations; (2) earthly creations; (3) plants; (4) animals; and, (5) manmade creations.<sup>26</sup> Yet, as far as we know, we do not have surviving cosmographical manuscripts made in the period *circa* 1300 that were in India. Qavvas certainly read within the genre and was aware of its impact, otherwise he would have never ordered his dictionary as such.

In historiography, Rafi' al-Din Shirazi completed a chronicle of the Deccan court of Bijapur entitled the *Tadhkirat al-Muluk* (*Account of Kings*) in the year 1612. Appended to this history is a lengthy section devoted to wonders and rarities.<sup>27</sup> The first entries of wonders include topics from the *Shahnama* and common tropes from travel literature. The later entries transpose the logic of the Arabic and Persian wonders-of-creation genre onto the topography of India.<sup>28</sup> In this case, we know for certain that the same Bijapuri libraries that Shirazi accessed had numerous cosmographies. We will probably never be able to tell exactly which of the cosmographies Shirazi read, but for him to draw on cosmographical topoi attests to the lasting power of this scholastic tradition.

The manuscript central to this article came to Bijapur's library only six years after the Shirazi completed the *Tadhkirat al-Muluk*. This cosmography was definitely not the most popular work in circulation in India at the time. It was more so a thing of the past, a vestige from a Bahmani library. How did the Bijapuri library value Bahmani manuscripts such as this? The answer to that question likely depends entirely on which genre of manuscript. Yet, the Bijapuri library certainly valued this cosmography enough for it to be preserved over the centuries.

With the idea of manuscript genre in mind, we now turn to a description of the manuscript, its map of the world, and then track the Persian cosmography's itinerary from Bidar to Bijapur to London.

### A Persian Cosmography in the Fifteenth Century, British Library Add 23564

The manuscript that endured throughout the transformations within the cosmography genre over the long sixteenth century is a Persian cosmography dated 1441.<sup>29</sup> In spite of the label on its late nineteenth-century binding that states, "Muhammad ul-Kazwini. Ajaib ul-makhlukat," this manuscript is a Persian adaptation of Qazvini's text of which four other copies are known.<sup>30</sup> Previous scholars attributed this manuscript's production to Shiraz.<sup>31</sup> Although, in passing, Barbara Brend once speculated its Indian place of creation. The evidence provided here further substantiates her analysis.<sup>32</sup> Determining this manuscript's ties to the Deccan involves a close study of its seals and later inscriptions.

This manuscript of concern contains 342 folios and measures a modest size of 26×16.5 cm. It has 21 lines of clear black *naskh* script per page, with headings executed in gold, blue, and red, and an illuminated headpiece (*'unvān*) (Figure 1). In total, it has 431 paintings plus one full-page frontispiece illustration.<sup>33</sup> Most of its figural images are defaced because of an act of iconoclasm.<sup>34</sup> The few paintings that have escaped rubbing show the merits of a promising artist. Take, the cosmography's painting of a dark blue peacock (*ṭāvūs*) (Figure 2).<sup>35</sup> The swoop of the peacock's body from its beak, under its belly, to the back of its plume forms a calligraphic line. The wings and plume combine hues of dark blue and light pink,

<sup>25</sup>Baevskii, *Early Persian Lexicography*, 71–7; Karomat, "Turki and Hindavi," 139.

<sup>26</sup>Baevskii, *Early Persian Lexicography*, 157.

<sup>27</sup>See Ernst, "Admiring the Works of the Ancients," 200. Two other manuscripts of this work include BL Add 23883 and BL IO Islamic 3541.

<sup>28</sup>Such accounts of the 'wonders of India' were not exclusively in travelogues written by foreign Persian and Central Asian visitors. See Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian travels*, and Subrahmanyam, "Monsters, Miracles and the World of *'ajā'ib-o-gharā'ib*."

<sup>29</sup>Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, 464. A stamp on the concluding flyleaf of the manuscript states when it entered the British Museum's collection: "Purchased of Mrs. Taylor, April 1860." The date of copying is given in the colophon on BL Add 23564, f. 342b. This belongs to the collection of Robert Taylor which consists of 355 volumes (now Add MSS. 23252–23606), viz., 247 Arabic, 90 Persian, 11 Turkish, 7 Syriac and Mendaitic; and was purchased of Col. Taylor's widow in the year 1860.

<sup>30</sup>Those other copies are MIK I. 6943, Topkapı Palace Library (Topkapı) R 1660 dated 1441, John Rylands Library (JRL) Pers 37, and BL Or 12220. See Rührdanz, "Illustrated Persian *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* Manuscripts," 34, for a succinct summary of this group. Rührdanz, "Zakariyyā al-Qazwini on the Inhabitants of the Supralunar World," presents the recent discovery of a Persian redaction of Qazvini's text, suggesting that it was first composed in Persian.

<sup>31</sup>Persis Berlekamp lists this as, "1441 (844), Iran, *The Wonders of Creation of Qazwini*, Persian." See *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, 180. It appears in passing in Rührdanz, "Illustrated Persian *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* Manuscripts," 34; Wright, *The Look of the Book*, 320; Brentjes, "Courtly Patronage of the Ancient Sciences," 418n27; and Caizzo, "La representation d'al-Mirrih et d'al-Zuhal," 29.

<sup>32</sup>Barbara Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting*, 78. Éloïse Brac de la Perrière includes it in her preliminary list of sultanate manuscripts but does not indicate a place of production, nor a rationale for this attribution. See *L'art du livre dans l'Inde des sultanats*, 298.

<sup>33</sup>The manuscript likely had a second full-page illustration given that its catalogue entry states that its first page is lost. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*, vol. 2, 464.

<sup>34</sup>BL Add 23564, f. 109b. Brend refers to this painting, but does not recognize the equestrian figure as Shirin. See *Perspectives on Persian Painting*, 78. Iconoclasm and the status of figural imagery are beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>35</sup>BL Add 23564, f. 311b.



**Figure 1.** Illuminated headpiece (‘unvān), Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Folio: 26×16.5 cm, British Library Add 23564, f. 4a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).



**Figure 2.** A bird of the sea (tāy al-baḥr) and Peacock (tāvūs), Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Folio: 26×16.5 cm, British Library Add 23564, f. 311b. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).



**Figure 3.** Depiction of Mt. Bisitun, showing Shirin on horseback, Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Folio 26×16.5 cm, British Library Add 23564, f. 109b. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).



**Figure 4.** Farhad is visited by Shirin on horseback while carving on the rocks of Mount Bisitun, *Khamsa* of Nizami from within an Anthology of Persian Poetry, Bidar?, 1435, Folio: 27.5×15.2 cm, Chester Beatty Library Per 124 vol. 1, f. 58b. (© The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin).

which balance the painting's periwinkle ground. In spite of these small glimmers of artistic promise, the manuscript is by no means on the highest end of luxury for the period.<sup>36</sup> The illustrations may have been more of a necessity here rather than a matter of investment – wonders-of-creation books seldom lack images, or space allocated for paintings.

Scholars have assumed that this Persian cosmography was made in Iran because of its stylistic affiliations with mid-fifteenth-century Shirazi manuscripts, but the use of style to locate provenance is insufficient in light of the multifarious exchanges between Iran and the Deccan during the fifteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Let us compare an illustration from this cosmography to one in another manuscript whose provenance is caught between Bidar and Shirazi attributions, one of its multiple similarities to this cosmography.<sup>38</sup> Dated 1435/36, only five years earlier, it is an anthology of several canonical texts of Persian poetry that would make a perfect textbook for new students and connoisseurs of Persian poetry. Both the anthology's *Khamsa* and the cosmography contain parallel narrative images of the sculptor Farhad encountering Shirin, which demonstrates how poetic and cosmographical traditions overlap.<sup>39</sup> The cosmography's painting is dominated by grey tones against which Farhad stands out with his striped polychrome robe of orange, dark brown, and red and he kneels before Shirin upon horseback (Figure 3). The painting possesses all the narrative elements – Farhad cutting into the mountain, Shirin on horseback, and the plot of Farhad and Shirin shown sculpted into the mountain. Yet, they appear to have been painted quickly. The anthology's corresponding painting has similar stylistic features, but the artist focuses on finer details, such as trees emerging from near the rocky outcrop and a modulated palette of pinks, green, and pastels (Figure 4).<sup>40</sup> While the anthology's painting contains far more granular detail, the two illustrations are close enough

from a stylistic point of view to have been the product of the same milieu. Nevertheless, the dispersal of Persian manuscript culture in the fifteenth century makes the localities it spread far more heterogeneous. Yet, Bidar occupied a place within an overlapping Persian cultural ecumene with Shiraz during this time.

### Remapping the World

One powerful group of inscriptions on the Persian cosmography's world map affirms its use in a South Asian context (Figure 5).<sup>41</sup> These inscriptions attest to how this particular cosmography literally remapped the world to an Indian perspective and they merit a close reading. The circular map is placed within a lightly ruled square box and occupies the greater part of the page. Gold *naskh* inscriptions in the map's four corners mark the cardinal directions. Unlike typical Islamic maps of this period that place South at the top, here South is reoriented to the bottom.<sup>42</sup> The outline of the circular world is executed in black, water bodies are in blue, and landmasses are the bare surface of the paper. Barbara Brend noted that this map treats India in more detail than Iran and speculated that the manuscript might have a sultanate provenance.<sup>43</sup> Upon close examination, one notices that several significant locales in South Asia are labelled on this map. These include Hindustan (North India), two sites in Gujarat, Nahrvalah (Patan)<sup>44</sup> and Somnath, Tilang (Telangana), and Ma'bar (Malabar). Before deciding to include these regional designations, the artist and/or scribe would have allotted space on the map to place these inscriptions. These South Asian regions border a water body to their South and West, China (*bilād-i chīn*) to their East, and Samarqand and Turkistan to their North. Compared to a world map in a contemporaneous Persian cosmography attributed to Iran (Figure 6), circa 1440, in which the

<sup>36</sup>The Miscellany of Iskandar Sultan (ca. 1410–11), BL Add MS 27261, would be an example of a much more luxurious manuscript than this one from a few decades before.

<sup>37</sup>Overton, ed., *Iran and the Deccan*.

<sup>38</sup>Brend, "The British Library's *Shahnama*," 90–1, 72; Benson and Overton, "Deccani Seals and Scribal Notations," 569–70; Firouzeh, "Convention and Reinvention."

<sup>39</sup>BL Add 23564, f. 109b; CBL Per 124, vol. 1, f. 58b.

<sup>40</sup>CBL Per 124 vol. 1 f. 58b. Barbara Brend and B. W. Robinson have attributed the Persian anthology to Bidar based upon style. See Brend, "The British Library's *Shahnama*," 90–1; Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, 72. Another formal feature linking the anthology to Bidar are the bichromatic palettes in its depictions of wall painting (f. 242b). The patina of bichromatic wall painting in the Takht Mahal (Throne Palace) in Bidar that was built in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, contemporary with the Persian anthology, offers a possible correspondence that would locate this manuscript in Bidar. On the northern wall of the second Southern-most room of the Takht Mahal, we see traces of wall painting that would have included courses of large roundels with floral motifs scrolling through them. The roundels now appear white against what would have likely been a darker ground. The anthology has a comparative painting that portrays a competition between a Byzantine and Chinese painter who decorate the interior of a domed structure (CBL Per 124, vol. 2, f. 242b). The mural within the painting shows a bichromatic dark blue and white wall decoration. I thank Helen Philon for discussing this with me.

<sup>41</sup>BL Add 23564, f. 106a. For an exhaustive study of Islamic maps, see Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps*.

<sup>42</sup>Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps*, 62.

<sup>43</sup>Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting*, 78.

<sup>44</sup>Burgess, *On the Muhammadan Architecture of Bharoch, Cambay, Dholka, Champanir, and Mahmudabad in Gujarat*, 3–4.



**Figure 5.** Map of the World, Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, 26×16.5 cm, British Library Add 23564 f. 106a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).



**Figure 6.** Map of the World, Persian cosmography, Shiraz, 1440, Folio: 24.6×16.4 cm, John Rylands Library Pers 37, ff. 105b-106a. (© John Rylands Library, Manchester).

only identified Indian space is ‘Hind,’ the 1441 cosmography furnishes far more detail.<sup>45</sup> The 1440 world map occupies a bifolio and its outlines are much thicker than the 1441 version. In its four corners we see swirling *chi* clouds in gold against a lapis ground, a decorative element that is absent from the map made a year later. The greater space and ornament to 1440 map would have allowed artists to add more details, such as sites in India, but their absence suggests that these were not established sites of importance in this Persian mapmaking tradition.

The mapping of such locales onto the world’s topography would have resonated with both the Bahmanis and ‘Adil Shahis. The Bahmani dynasty (1347–1538) was the earliest Islamicate court to flourish in the Deccan region. Some of the Bahmanis’ important centres were Dawlatabad, Gulbarga, Firuzabad, Sagar, and Bidar.<sup>46</sup> By the time the Bahmanis relocated their capital to Bidar under Ahmad Shah Bahmani I (r. 1422–36) they had grown into a sultanate with their own individual identity and transregional networks. The Western coast of India was a space for them to participate in transregional trade. Bahmani sultans travelled on military campaigns to Gujarat, which endowed places such as Somnath and Patan value.<sup>47</sup> In the Bahmanis’ self-understanding, Telangana may have been the closest region that their sultanate bordered, or even fell within. It is also peculiar that no ocean separates the Deccan and the holy sites of the Hijaz on the map.<sup>48</sup> This representation of Indian lands as so proximate to major Islamic holy sites perhaps reflects how a Deccan scribe wished their world to be. Given that Bijapur is further east than Bidar, coastal regions such as Malabar held more consequence for the ‘Adil Shahi court.

Whether labelled at the time of its production, when it was in Bidar, in the possession of the Mughal general ‘Abd al-Rahim’s library, or in Bijapur, or even at some point thereafter, these inscriptions reveal how the world was literally reoriented to a South Asian perspective. The Deccan was not relegated to the periphery of a cultural system, but it was at the centre, similar to how

many other Bahmani intellectuals were starting to see their sultanate.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, we will likely never know where this manuscript was made. Yet, determining its origins may not yield us with as many conclusions as we hope. The Deccan domains of the Bahmanis and ‘Adil Shahis were liminal “in-between” spaces where objects bearing nearly no trace of Indian artists circulated. The Deccan attracted talent from Iran and, in many if not most cases, these Iranian artists did not adopt local practices, although, here we see how the world’s topography from the vantage point of the Deccan was rethought.

With the several problems of this Persian cosmography’s provenance in mind, I now trace the evidence of its itinerary and its several stops in Bidar, a sub-imperial Mughal library, Bijapur, and the British Library.

## The Mobility of a Fifteenth-Century Cosmography

### A. Bidar

Seals and inscriptions indicate three key events in this cosmography’s life and its passing through three distinguished libraries of Islamicate South Asia. First, it entered the library of Mahmud Gavan, the Bahmani governor and merchant of the Deccan court of Bidar in fifteenth-century India. Second, it was acquired by the Mughal general ‘Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, who was stationed in the Deccan from 1593 to 1612.<sup>50</sup> Third, the Bijapuri sultan, Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627), owned it.<sup>51</sup>

The earliest dated evidence in the cosmography is its colophon that states its date of completion in 845/1441, *fi shuhūr sanat khams wa arba’in wa thamānmi’a al-hijriyya al-hilāliyya*.<sup>52</sup> Next, the codex bears three seals in a style related to a programme of seals found on manuscripts from the library of Mahmud Gavan.<sup>53</sup>

The first seal related to the seals on manuscripts of Mahmud Gavan’s library appears in the centre of the second flyleaf and is slightly obscured by repairs

<sup>45</sup>JRL Pers 37, ff. 105b–106a. Rührdanz, “Illustrated Persian ‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt Manuscripts,” 34, mentions this as the same recension.

<sup>46</sup>Philon, “Religious and Royal Architecture of the Early Bahmani Period.”

<sup>47</sup>Tabataba’i, *Burhan-i Ma’athir*, 65–66.

<sup>48</sup>This proximity is absent from the Persian cosmography attributed to Iran, circa 1440. See JRL Pers 37, ff. 105b–106a. Robinson describes this manuscript in *Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library*, 35–69.

<sup>49</sup>See Flatt’s discussion of ‘Isami’s *Futuh al-Salatin*, in which the author positions himself as an heir to Firdawsī is one such example. Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, 191–2.

<sup>50</sup>Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India*, is the most comprehensive study of ‘Abd al-Rahim’s workshop and patronage.

<sup>51</sup>Overton, “Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting.”

<sup>52</sup>BL Add 23564, f. 342b.

<sup>53</sup>See Overton, “Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting,” 115; Benson and Overton, “Deccani Seals and Scribal Notations,” 564–5. With regard to BL Add 23564, two identical seals, one on the flyleaf and the second on the colophon page of this manuscript, show long-stemmed letters and a scalloped rim similar to the ‘gingerbread men’-shaped merlons ubiquitous to Bahmani architecture of Gulbarga and Bidar. Six later seals – two on each opening flyleaf and folio 3a – also appear in the manuscript. For several new perspectives on the social world of Mahmud Gavan, see Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*. For his ownership of Qur’ans from various parts of the world, see p. 157.





**Figure 7.** Second flyleaf note with three early seals, Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Folio: 26×16.5 cm, British Library Add 23564, f. 3a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

(Figures 7 and 8). One can clearly read the word Allah in the top right corner and the beginning of the word *al-Malik* afterwards. In the middle right, there is the beginning of the word *majlis*. The *Taj al-Masadir* (*Crown of Infinitives*) of Abu Ja'far Bayhaqi (d. 1150), a manuscript identified as having been in the library of Mahmud Gavan, possesses an identical seal (Figure 9).<sup>54</sup> This

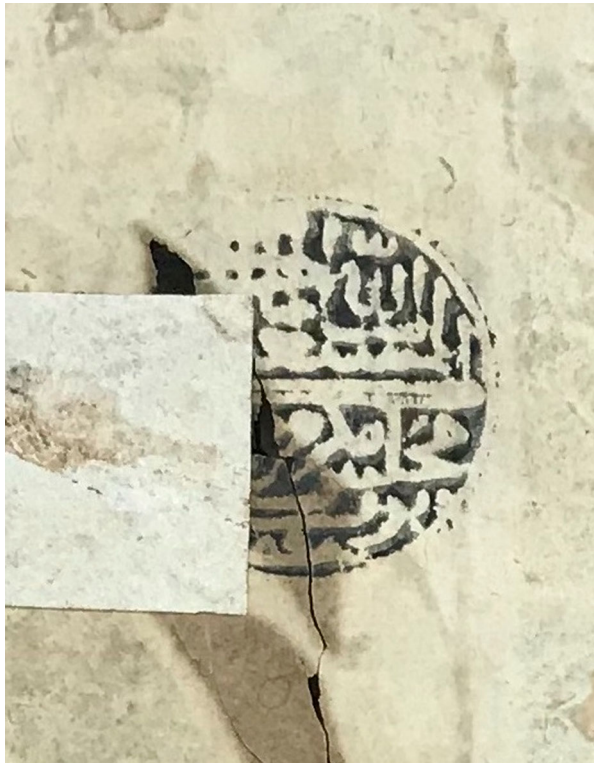
seal shows a prominent *hā'* in the name Mahmud across the length of the double-ruled circular seal.<sup>55</sup> Both examples from the cosmography and the *Taj al-Masadir* bear these traits and their diameters measure 24 mm.<sup>56</sup>

Another seal associated with manuscripts of Mahmud Gavan's library occurs on the top left corner of the cosmography's flyleaf. Like the previous example,

<sup>54</sup>BL Bijapur 38 (Loth 994).

<sup>55</sup>Overton, "Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting," 116n173.

<sup>56</sup>Benson and Overton, "Deccani Seals and Scribal Notations," 565.



**Figure 8.** Detail of seal second flyleaf, Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Diam: 24 mm, British Library Add 23564, f. 3a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).



**Figure 9.** Detail of seal on flyleaf, *Taj al-Masadir (Crown of Infinities)* of Abu Ja'far Bayhaqi (d. 1150), Diam: 24 mm, British Library Bijapur 38 (Loth 994). (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

it is double-ruled and the *ḥā'* stretches the entire length of its diameter, however it is very weakly impressed (Figure 10). On stylistic grounds, it relates to a seal of Mahmud Gavan dated 1471–72 found on the *Sharh Mughni al-Labib* (Figure 11).<sup>57</sup> The diameters of both seals on these manuscripts are 26 mm. Because of the weakness of the impression of the cosmography's seal we cannot deduce with certainty that it is the same seal as on the *Sharh Mughni al-Labib*, but it does have a similar row of slender ascending ligatures.

If the two seals on the cosmography are indeed identical to those found on the *Taj al-Masadir* and *Sharh Mughni al-Labib* that once belonged to the library of Mahmud Gavan, we can conclude that the cosmography was also in this fifteenth-century Bahmani library.

Fifteenth-century Bidar was a place of lively scholarship and book production. At least two treatises on

calligraphy have been linked to the city.<sup>58</sup> Pertinent to the cosmography genre, Shaykh Adhari, Ahmad Shah's poet laureate, composed a *mathnavi* known as the *Mir'at al-Asrar (Mirror of Secrets)* with sections entitled the '*Aja'ib al-Dunya (Wonders of the World)*' and '*Aja'ib al-'Alam (Wonders of the World)*'.<sup>59</sup> Again, this poem demonstrates how intellectuals in Bidar read within the cosmographical *textual* genre before the manuscript of concern here was made. A Safavid illustrated manuscript of Shaykh Adhari's work was copied in Herat in 1022 / 1613 in the library of a Khurasani governor and reminds us of Persian cultural flows from India to other cultural nodes.<sup>60</sup>

The library of the high-ranking Bahmani vizier Mahmud Gavan was one of global networks, which makes the presence of a cosmography there all the more significant.<sup>61</sup> Gavan's epistolary connections ranged from the

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 564.

<sup>58</sup>Yves Porter, "Une traduction persane," and Ernst, "Sufism and the Aesthetics of Penmanship."

<sup>59</sup>According to Raja'i, the latter has been identified as a manuscript of the '*Aja'ib al-Ghara'ib (Wonders of Oddities)*' now in the Majlis Library, Tehran (MS IR 2791). Raja'i, A. 'A. "Āzari Tūsi." Other manuscripts include BL IO Islamic 78, 191, and 611. For references to this text see Mittal and Seyller, *Deccani paintings*, 17; Sharma, Giri, and Chakraverty, *Indian art treasures*, 198; Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 188–95; Azad, *Khizana-i 'Amira*, 31–2. For more on this poet see the article of A.C.S. Peacock in this volume.

<sup>60</sup>Walters Art Museum W.652, *Ghara'ib al-Dunya*. I thank Travis Zadeh for bringing this manuscript to my attention.

<sup>61</sup>Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, 59–77; Petrovich, "Merchants, Young Heroes and Caliphs: Revisiting Maḥmūd Gāwān."



**Figure 10.** Detail of seal, Persian cosmography, Bidar or Shiraz, 1441, Diam: 26 mm, British Library Add 23564, f. 3a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

Sufi poet Jami living in Timurid Khurasan to leaders in Mecca and Cairo.<sup>62</sup> We can thus imagine the Persian cosmography offering intellectuals visions onto a rapidly expanding world from the vantage point of the Deccan.

Decades after Gavan's death in 1481, British Library Add 23564 likely stayed in Bidar. As A.C.S Peacock's contribution to this volume reveals, it was during this time when the poet 'Iyani enjoyed patronage in Bidar and literary culture in Bidar flourished. Alongside this rise in Persian culture, Bahmani power started fragmenting as the first three decades of the sixteenth century witnessed quick successions of Bahmani sultans. Alongside these sultans Qasim Barid I, a Bahmani minister, inaugurated his own dynasty that ultimately usurped Bahmani control. By the reign of 'Ali Barid Shah (r. 1543–80), the Persian cosmography remained in the library in a Barid Shahi domain.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, in spite of these seals, the manuscript's origin remains caught between Shiraz and Bidar. As fifteenth-century Iran and Bidar were part of a shared Persian ecumene, determining with certainty that this



**Figure 11.** Detail of seal dated 1471-72, *Sharh Mughni al-Labib*, Deccan, March 8, 1421, Diam: 26 mm, British Library Bijapur 7 (Loth 967), f. 1a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

manuscript was made in India rather than Iran may not yield as weighty conclusions as we may anticipate. We know that intellectuals in fifteenth-century India read cosmographical texts. Even if the manuscript under discussion was not made in India, it is more probable than not that manuscripts like it were.

### **B. An Interlude in the Sub-imperial Mughal Library**

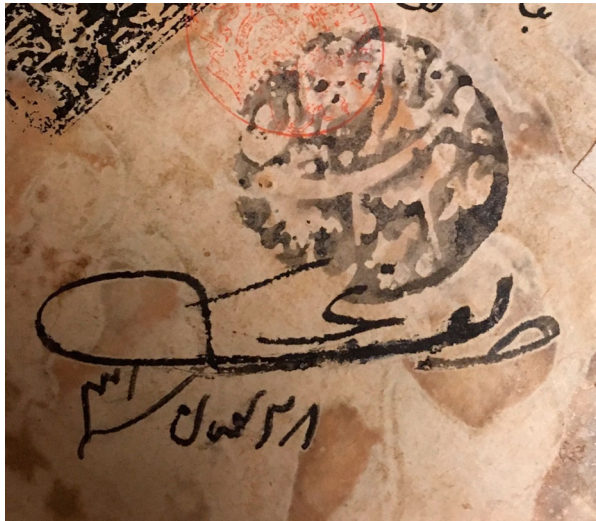
After the seals of Mahmud Gavan, the next dated evidence in the manuscript is a seal associated with the sub-imperial library of the Mughal statesman and Hindi poet 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan (1556–1626). Identified by Ursula Sims-Williams, this seal also occurs on the second flyleaf note (Figure 12).<sup>64</sup> It is dated August 3, 1587, or the 28th of Sha'ban in the 31st regnal year of Akbar.

How this manuscript came into 'Abd al-Rahim's possession while it was probably still in the Deccan remains unknown. However, it is not surprising because his multiple political roles meant that he

<sup>62</sup>Flatt, "Practicing Friendship."

<sup>63</sup>Sardar, "Bidar," 173–7.

<sup>64</sup>I gratefully acknowledge Ursula Sim-Williams of making me aware of this. According to Sims-Williams, this same seal occurs on the *Shahnama* BL IO Islamic 741.



**Figure 12.** Detail of seal of 'Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, dated August 3, 1587 (28 Sha'ban, 31st regnal year of Akbar), British Library Add 23564, f. 3a. (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

stood at the crossroads of several vectors of mobility.<sup>65</sup> Between 1576 and 1612 the Mughal Emperors Akbar and Jahangir deployed him to serve as an extension of their imperium as their *khān-i khānān* or lord of lords. While the Mughal empire's capital shifted between the northern cities of Lahore and Agra, 'Abd al-Rahim embarked on diplomatic missions in the western, northwestern, and central regional polities whose regional histories long preceded the Mughals in India.

This seal is probably linked to a period when 'Abd al-Rahim and the Mughals were more aggressively targeting the Deccan for their diplomatic and military efforts. 'Abd al-Rahim's sub-imperial court and army was stationed in the Northern Deccan city of Burhanpur at the pinnacle of his career from 1593 to 1612.<sup>66</sup> The beginning of this posting is only six years from the date of this seal and inscription. We know he was invested in establishing his presence there as his chroni-

cler, 'Abd al-Baqi Nihavandi, includes an entire chapter devoted to his patronage of buildings in Burhanpur.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the presence of this seal gives us new insight into Mughal involvements in Bidar, before was taken by the 'Adil Shahis of Bijapur.

'Abd al-Rahim's library and workshop were also extremely porous and bookmakers and intellectuals were constantly moving in and out from his patronage.<sup>68</sup> We can therefore imagine one of these mobile individuals travelling from the Deccan to 'Abd al-Rahim's library in possession of such a book.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, after it was in the library of 'Abd al-Rahim's peripatetic court, we can locate it back in Bidar in 1618.

### C. Bijapur

In 1618, one year before Bidar's official annexation by the 'Adil Shahis, the Persian cosmography was taken from Bidar to Bijapur. The second flyleaf note states, "this wonders of creation arrived safely with the conquest of Bidar by Muḥammad Mu'min, on August 8, 1618 / *kitāb-i 'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt bā fath-i bīdar birizāi āvarda Muḥammad Mu'min huḥūr-i majlisī, bi-tārikh-i 12 sha'bān 1027*" (Figure 7). Above this note we find the phrase, "the shelter of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah / *'ālam-panāh-i Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh,*"<sup>70</sup> and below it someone has scribbled the word *nawras*. *Nawras*, Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II's (r. 1580–1627) programme of nine *rasas* (aesthetic sentiments), enjoyed such popularity in the arts, literature, and architecture that it also featured prominently in the sultan's seals.<sup>71</sup>

Given that Ibrahim 'Adil Shah's conquest of Bidar in 1619 resulted in the flow of cultural goods such as books to Bidar, it is remarkable that the cosmography left Bidar before its conquest. This implies that the process of Bijapuri annexation may have been a more gradual socio-political shift than the 1619 date of conquest suggests.

Similar notes of transferal appear on other manuscripts that circulated from the library of Mahmud Gavan to the Bijapuri Royal library. The *Taj al-Masadir*

<sup>65</sup>Aitken, "The Laud *Rāgamālā* Album, Bikaner, and the Sociability of Subimperial Painting;" Lefèvre, "The Court of 'Abd-ur-Rahīm Khān-i Khānān as a Bridge between Iranian and Indian Cultural Traditions."

<sup>66</sup>Gupta, "Splendour of the City" discusses his presence in the Deccan.

<sup>67</sup>This is entitled, "On the good works, building of mosques, schools, baths, and buildings of charity" (*dar khayrāt u mabarrāt u ta'mir-i masājid u madāris u ḥammāmāt u biqā' al-khayrī*). See Nihavandi, *Ma'athir-i Rahimi*, 8.

<sup>68</sup>Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations;" "Aitken, "The Laud *Rāgamālā* Album, Bikaner, and the Sociability of Subimperial Painting."

<sup>69</sup>There is also the possibility that the attributed seals of Mahmud Gavan's are not his at all and this was simply acquired by 'Abd al-Rahim through connections with Iran. However, as the Bijapuri acquisition notes described in the following section are explicitly tied to manuscripts in Gavan's library, the falsity of Gavan's seals on BL Add 23564 is less than likely.

<sup>70</sup>This trails off further to the phrase "the year 1504 / *sanat 910 hijrī*." The opening flyleaf has a more lucid version of the same expression of the second flyleaf. It states: "This *Wonders of Creation and Oddities of Existence* in Persian with many paintings, in *naskh*, and a red binding, was brought by Muhammad Mu'min as a bequest of the victory of Bidar, and it entered the library on August 6, 1618. / *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt va gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt-i fārsī, tammām muṣavvar, bi-khatt ravish-i naskh, jild-i surkh, bābat-i fath shahr-i muḥammadābād al-ma'rūf ba bidar āvarda Muḥammad Mu'min majlisī jam' kitābkhāna bi-tārikh-i 12 māh-i sha'bān 1027.*"

<sup>71</sup>JKM MS 3, f. 1a. Mittal and Seyller, *Deccani paintings*, 85.



**Figure 13.** Flyleaf note, *Taj al-Masadir* (Crown of Infinitives) of Abu Ja'far Bayhaqi (d. 1150), Folio: 30×23 cm, British Library Bijapur 38 (Loth 994). (Photo: Courtesy of the British Library).

has a partial inscription towards the bottom of its flyleaf stating, “on account of the victory of Bidar / *bābat-i fath-i shahr-i muḥammadābād*.”<sup>72</sup> (Figure 13) Given the cosmography’s two key properties akin to the *Taj al-Masadir* – its seal and this inscription – this also further substantiates the argument that it was in the library of Mahmud Gavan.

The aforementioned fifteenth-century Persian poetic anthology also bears a telling inscription that records its movement from Bidar to Bijapur.<sup>73</sup> However, unlike the cosmography and the *Taj al-Masadir* this anthology was not brought to Bijapur as a result of Bidar’s conquest and Bijapur’s victory (*fath*); rather, the Bijapuri imperial library purchased it. Within the anthology, each text bears its own colophon, and an ‘Adil Shahi note appears on the colophon page of the *Bustan* (Orchard of Sa’di),

inscribed in a large bold *naskh* script in contrast to the manuscript’s delicate *nasta’liq*. It reads, “bequeathed because of the war, [this book] was bought from Khvaja Ayyub [for] the library of the great servant Sultan ‘Adil Shah ... on November 12, 1514.”<sup>74</sup> Above the note there is an ‘Adil Shahi seal applied at the time of the note when it arrived in the Bijapuri library. 1514 is roughly a century before the cosmography and *Taj al-Masadir* were transferred from Bidar to Bijapur. This suggests that the eventual decline of Bidar and Bijapur’s seizure of many of its cultural goods occurred over a much longer period than the moment of rupture that the 1619 date of conquest suggests.

By the time the Persian cosmography left Bidar, Bijapur was already a site of much cosmographical production. Three different cosmographies were already

<sup>72</sup>BL Bijapur 38 (Loth 994).

<sup>73</sup>Brend, “The British Library’s *Shahnama*,” 90–1; Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, 72.

<sup>74</sup>CBL Per 124, f. 294b. See also, Wilkinson, ed., *Chester Beatty Library catalogue*, 53. “*jang-i bābat kharid az khvāja ayyūb ... kitābhāna-i bandagī-yi ḥazrat-i ‘azam al-sūltān ‘ādilshāh khuld malak ... bi-tārīkh 24 ramāzān sanat 920*.”

being copied at Bijapur – al-Qazwini’s *Wonders of Creation*, a Persian translation of Qazwini ordered by Sultan Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah I (r. 1534–58) in 1547, and the *Stars of the Sciences* of Sultan ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah (1570). We can envision the Persian cosmography wrapped safely in a cloth in Bijapur with these other ‘*ajā’ib al-makhlūqāts* and scholars and courtiers selecting which version to read.

If we took a court-centric approach to book production, we would not necessarily be focused on tracing how a genre transforms over centuries and likely not be able to ask the several questions this cosmography’s transferral to Bijapur poses. Such as, would have Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah I commissioned a new Persian translation if British Library Add 23564 were already available to him? For, it was in a library at the neighbouring court. It would only take a few more decades before his successor would completely outdo him with the composition of the magisterial and wildly transcultural *Stars of the Sciences*.

By the time the Persian cosmography arrived in Bijapur, we do not know if readers sensed its datedness. Although, we do know of an archaizing copy of al-Qazwini that was produced at least seven times, probably in the Deccan.<sup>75</sup> The Deccan libraries invested in preserving cosmographical traditions, and this Bahmani hold-over may exemplify that commitment.

#### D. The British Library

After the Persian cosmography’s time in Bijapur, the British Museum eventually acquired it via sale in 1860. However, its path to the British Museum differs from most of the Bijapuri manuscripts in the British Museum. A manuscript like the *Taj al-Masadir* (BL Bijapur 38, Loth 994), for example, comes from the India Office Library’s Asar Mahal collection of 430 books. This was the former Bijapur Royal Library, which was transferred to the India Office Library after 1853 and largely catalogued by Otto Loth, hence its Loth catalogue number.<sup>76</sup> The B number accompanying the Loth manuscripts stands for Bijapur.<sup>77</sup>

While it is possible that the cosmography was also in the Asar Mahal, the later, presently unidentified seals on the manuscript would support the idea that it was in transit over the course of the eighteenth century. The

existence of a non-Asar Mahal collection manuscript in transit from (Iran to) Bidar to Bijapur to the British Library indicates that many other examples of such books could be hidden in plain view.

#### Conclusion: Thinking Diachronically with Manuscript Genre

Thus far, the material evidence of manuscripts has hardly factored within the debates with regard to the categories of Persian, the Persianate, and Indo-Persian in South Asia.<sup>78</sup> If manuscripts are considered within these debates over, “how Persian is Persian in its use in India?” or “is Persian any different in India?” it is most often for textual content. It bears repeating that when dealing with Persian in India, the manuscript record should not be taken for granted. Printed editions are far from perfect and there is much to be gained from the materiality of manuscripts. When we look at manuscript genres, the audiences of these books come further into light. Close codicological study enables us to move to the realm of interpretation, use, and reception, rather than an endless quest to detect something affected by an Indian context in a particular linguistic turn of phrase.

There is not an ideal category (Persian vs. Indo-Persian vs. Persianate) for the manuscript of this study, but it sheds light on a class of earlier texts (fifteenth-century works read in following centuries) that may have static interpretations if the manuscript record is not considered. The Persian cosmography of this article instructs us that a fifteenth-century book was read and reread, and its physical form was altered to a distinctively Indian perspective. Thus, no matter how canonised a Persian text may be, from the *Gulistan* of Sa’di to the *Shahnama*, an Indian context lent itself to new interpretations of these texts. United by the Persian language and cultural practices, Bidar and Bijapur participated in a shared ecumene as Iran in the early-modern period, but we must make room for varying perspectives under this larger umbrella. Paying attention to transformations within manuscript genres allows us to see these differing views of the same world.

In sum, after it was made in 1441, the Persian cosmography (British Library Add 23564) passed through

<sup>75</sup>Gupta, “Wonder Reoriented,” 116–28.

<sup>76</sup>Loth, *A Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*; Overton, “Book Culture, Royal Libraries, and Persianate Painting,” 98.

<sup>77</sup>At the time of writing, if one requests such a manuscript as a British Library reader, they would type “IO Islamic Bijapur XX.”

<sup>78</sup>Alam, “The Culture and Politics,” Arjomand, “A Decade of Persianate Studies,” and Green, “Introduction” are three representative texts. There are, of course, some noteworthy exceptions to this including, Sharma, “The Production of Mughal *Shāhnāmas*,” and Charles Melville’s contribution to this volume. Furthermore, a new generation of scholars appears to be more conscious of manuscripts. See, especially, Thelen, “Intersected Communities: Urban Histories of Rajasthan, c. 1500–1800.”

three important libraries of Islamicate South Asia: the library of Mahmud Gavan in Bidar, the Mughal library of ‘Abd al-Rahim, and the library of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah in Bijapur. This manuscript’s sustained presence in the late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Deccan anchors our understanding of the subsequent developments in the manuscript genre of the cosmography. When subsequent manuscripts were made and commissioned, this 1441 Persian cosmography is one of the many layers upon which they built. It provided artists and intellectuals in South Asia a choice for how to imagine their world, amidst the several other options that would later become available.

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### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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 IO Islamic 1377, Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.  
 IO Islamic 3541, Rafi‘ al-Din Shirazi, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk*.  
 IO Islamic 3243, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.  
 Or 1621, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.  
 Or 4701, Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.  
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##### Chester Beatty Library (CBL)

Per 124, Anthology of Persian Poetry.  
 Per 128, Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.

##### Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad (JKM)

76.402-403, Folios of Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.

##### John Rylands Library, Manchester (JRL)

Pers MS 37, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat* (Persian: concordant with BL Add 23564).

##### Rampur Raza Library, Rampur (RRL)

A.4600, Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.  
 A.4601, Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.

##### Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MIA)

687-697.2008, Folios of Zakariyya‘ ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat wa Ghara’ib al-Mawjudat*.

##### Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin (MIK)

I. 6943, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat* (Persian: concordant with BL Add 23564).  
 I. 9493, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.

##### National Library of Medicine, Bethesda (NLM)

P29, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.

##### National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran, (NLI)

MS 2242-46, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.

##### National Museum of India, New Delhi (NMI)

MS 57-26.23, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat* (Persian version with peoples and customs and crafts chapters concordant with SJM Geo MS 5).

##### Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad (SJM)

Geo MS 5, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat* (Persian version with peoples and customs and crafts chapters).  
 Geo MS 6, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.  
 Geo MS 8, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.

##### Telangana State Oriental Manuscripts Library, Hyderabad (OML)

Falsifa MS 354, *‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat* (Persian translation earliest dated 1537).  
 Geo MS 54, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.  
 Geo MS 72, *Tarjuma-i ‘Aja’ib al-Makhluqat*.

## Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul

R 1660, 'Aja'ib al-Makhlūqat (Persian: concordant with BL Add 23564).

## Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

W.652, *Ghara'ib al-Dunya* of Shaykh Adhari.

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