

Calligraphy

INSCRIBING ORALITY:

Calligraphy, Layout and the Vernacular Anxieties of the Chandayan Manuscripts

by Vivek Gupta

In the opening encomia (*hamd* or *stuti*) of Da'ud's *Chandayan*, we encounter a verse which provides a window to the meaning of writing in 1379 when this romance was composed. Da'ud praises his spiritual guide (*pir*), Shaikh Zainuddin:

Shaikh Zainuddin put me on the right path—

on [his] path of religion I destroyed sin.

I cast my sins in the Ganga—he lifted me into the boat of salvation.

He opened my eyes and my heart filled with light—

he taught me to write new letters.

I became aware of the written word's (akhira) power—wrote

a Hinduki song (hinduki gai) in Turki script (turki likhi)

If the Shaikh's rule is spread—sin is outlawed.¹

—Canto 9

Of the lessons that Da'ud learns from his teacher, the skill of writing in Turki script is fundamental.² We do not know exactly how orators pronounced these words in premodern times, but the word *akhira* here for the written word is a vernacular form of the Sanskrit *akshara*.³ Da'ud playfully rhymes the word Hinduki for a Hindavi or Avadhi vernacular with Turki by means of the *ki* suffix. The vernacular, Hinduki, is sung—and written in the Arabic alphabet.

Da'ud's role in crafting the narrative of the *Chandayan* appears in the author-portraits of him in a manuscript made at the beginning of the 16th century in the Delhi-Agra region and now split between collections in India and Pakistan [fig. 1].⁴ These author-portraits emphasize both the writing and recitation of the *Chandayan*. Tucked in his own architectural space, separate from the action in the *Chandayan*'s visual narrative, Da'ud often sits on the floor in a white tunic (*jamah*), holding a rosary (*tasbeih*), and reads from or writes in the pages of a manuscript on a bookstand (*rahl* or *kirakh*). Sometimes he gestures at the volume, as if reciting; at other times, he turns the page, and in some cases, he even writes in the book itself.⁵ In a portrait of him writing, he inscribes the word Allah in Arabic script [fig. 1].⁶ His practice of calligraphy involves his entire body. He leans upon his writing support at an angle on one of his knees and balances it with his hand. He conjures his narrative of Lorik's love for Chanda in inscribing, orating and imagining.

Da'ud signals his awareness of the conundrum of inscribing

orality in his praise of Shaikh Zainuddin. Devanagari, Kaithi or any script made for the Sanskritized Hindavi idiom of the *Chandayan* would much better suit Hindavi's sound system. The process of translating phonemes from Hindavi into an Arabic script required some deliberation. On the other hand, Arabic scripts have technologies of vocalization (*i'jam*, *tashkil*, *harakat*) that enable precise elocution. Mechanisms for inscribing the Qur'an facilitate perfect recitation (*tajwid*). Yet, scribes did not utilize similar orthographic strategies for the completely unvocalized *Chandayans*. The poetry and five extant early manuscripts imply that readers and listeners of the Indo-Sufi romance valued the codification of the *Chandayan* in *aksharas* or written words, although the poem's stanzaic *chaupai-doha* suggests that it was meant to be transmitted orally.

This chapter introduces the calligraphy (*khatt*) and layout (*takhtit*) of the five early illustrated *Chandayan* manuscripts with attributions from the mid-15th to the mid-16th century.⁷ It compares the *Chandayan* manuscripts to a Persian anthology of poetry made in Jaunpur, not only because the *Chandayan*'s birthplace is a mere 200 km west of it, but also because of thematic and orthographic connections. Building on Qamar Adamjee's study of the *Chandayan*'s visual narrative and Éloïse Brac de la Perrière's research on sultanate calligraphy, this essay raises some of the key issues when dealing with the script of these manuscripts, including multilingualism, scribal standards and vernacular culture. The scribes of the *Chandayan* channelled their vernacular anxiety—that is, negotiating how to codify their vernacular expression—into standardizing the inscription of the Indo-Sufi tale of love.

SULTANATE VISUAL VERNACULARS: BIHARI TO NASKHI-DIVANI SCRIPTS AND THE CHANDAYANS

All five of the early *Chandayan* manuscripts contain evidence of scribal knowledge of two little-recognized styles of Indian sultanate scripts, Bihari and an affiliated script known as naskhi-divani, as scholars designate them. Unlike styles of writing that fall within rubrics of Islamic calligraphy on which treatises focus, such as Kufic, Naskh, Thuluth, Muhaqqaq, Nasta'liq, etc., there are no descriptions from the premodern world that define the principles of these two styles of script. Thus, we rely on visual evidence. We strive to speak of the characteristics or elements of these scripts rather than decisive categories. Because epigraphy



Figure 1: "Chanda criticizes Biraspati" (c.174: 2), Delhi-Agra region (?), 1525-40. Collection of the National Museum, Karachi. Courtesy Murad Mumtaz.

and the manuscript record indicate that both Bihari and naskhi-divani styles originated in sultanate India from the 13th century, we may think of them as sultanate visual vernaculars in which the literary vernaculars, such as Hindavi, played a critical role.

The category of "Bihari" is characterized by thick, wedge-shaped horizontal strokes specifically in terminating letters and thin verticals. Diacritical markers are horizontal rather than at a slant [fig. 2].⁸ Bihari evidently associates the script with the Northeastern Indian region of Bihar, but the name remains a mystery, especially as it appears far beyond Bihar in places such as Bengal and the Deccan.⁹ And, by early modern times, it even reached Ethiopia.¹⁰ The British Museum's manuscripts catalogue, published in 1879, describes an Indian Qur'an in Bihari script as "large and angular Naskhi" and dates it to the 14th century.¹¹ The name for this script is also unresolved in the catalogue of the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna. The first volume of 1918 describes the script of a Bihari Qur'an as *thuluth-i kufi*. The third volume of 1965 calls the script *bahr*, which means "sea" while the fourth volume of 1995 designates it as *khatt-i bihar* (Bihari calligraphy).¹² In Roman transliteration, some scholars place a diacritic below the letter h, which signifies a

belief that the roots of this script pertain to sea routes.¹³ The earliest dated manuscripts in Bihari and naskhi-divani come from the very decade of the writing of the *Chandayan* in 1379. One of the early Bihari Qur'ans is ascribed to Lahuri (probably Lahore) in 1374 and there are two more dated manuscripts from the end of the 14th century.¹⁴

Even less understood than Bihari is naskhi-divani. Naskhi-divani, as the name implies, is a combination of a normal naskh and a divani script often used for chancery documents. Brac de la Perrière describes it thus:

*The bar of the kāf often terminates with a small hook, as with the alif that features a lower tail curving left of its vertical line. Some letters like the kāf are almost angular, however the ḥā' and khā' in the initial position and the final ligature of the yā' with letters preceding it have a rounded appearance with a loop; the dāl is large and open.*¹⁵

As seen in a 15th-century Qur'an in red, naskhi-divani is often



Figure 2: Qur'an with interlinear Persian translation, India, 1450-1500. Collection of the British Library, London, Add. MS 5551, ff. 135v-136r. © The British Library Board.

used in interlinear Persian translations of Qur'ans in Bihari script [fig. 2]. It often appears in marginal glosses of such Qur'ans as well. Since it is frequently diminutive or paratextual to the Bihari script, it has a special affinity with Bihari. In many cases, the scribe responsible for both the Bihari text and naskhi-divani paratext would have been the same person. Beyond the art of the book, we also know of talismanic shirts adorned with Bihari and naskhi-divani, which were worn in Sufi or esoteric contexts.¹⁶

Picture a Sufi shrine (*khanqah*) where one would have a range of books, including the Qur'an and *Chandayan*, inscribed in styles of the Bihari and naskhi-divani varieties. Sufi practitioners would wear talismanic tunics and partake in esoteric practices such as reading omens (*fal*) or other forms of divination. We know that Bihari Qur'ans are notable for their frequent inclusion of books of divination (*falnamah*). Given the *Chandayan's* story of mystical love, its recitation and viewing would be included within this set of Sufi practices.

The orthography of the *Chandayan* manuscripts does not similarly conform to the categories of Bihari or naskhi-divani. In some of the manuscripts (Varanasi, Lahore-Chandigarh, Mumbai), the thickness of the writing veers towards characteristics of a Bihari

hand, whereas in others (Berlin, Manchester) the calligraphy fits more squarely within the parameters of naskhi-divani.

The writing of the Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh, late 15th century) and Lahore-Chandigarh (Delhi-Agra, 1525-40) manuscripts correspond to aspects of the Bihari script, especially in the striking difference between thick and thin strokes [figs. 3 and 4]. The similar rhombus-shaped layout (discussed below) of these two books may have afforded the scribe space to draw his stylus (*qalam*) across the page and quickly pivot to create a sharp angle.¹⁷ The tightly stacked terminating *kaf* of Bihari appears noticeably in the Lahore-Chandigarh manuscript¹⁸ while the terminating large and open *ya* letters may be seen in both manuscripts. The angles of the rhombus layout echo within its calligraphy.

The Mumbai *Chandayan* (Northern Deccan, second half of the 16th century) also contains some elements reminiscent of a Bihari script [fig. 5], but it does not adhere to the features of this category as visibly as the Varanasi and Lahore-Chandigarh codices. Its alternation between thick horizontals and thin verticals is less staccato than Bihari. Its letters look scrunched together, reminiscent of firmans (sultanate chancery mandates), probably due to the constricting layout.

The calligraphy of the Berlin (Jaunpur? mid-15th century) and



Figure 3: Text page of *Banaras Chandayan*, Uttar Pradesh (?), late 15th century. Collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi (After Krishnadasa 1981).



Figure 4: “Rao Mahar Dispatches a Messenger” (c.93), Delhi-Agra region (?), 1525-40. Collection of Lahore Museum, Lahore.

Manchester (Mandu or Burhanpur, early 16th century) *Chandayans* corresponds to the aspects of a naskhi-divani style [figs. 6 and 7]. They bear the knowledge of a Bihari hand, but they are inscribed with a differently shaped stylus, making the contrast between horizontal and vertical less pronounced. The Manchester manuscript’s writing is less curvaceous than the Berlin codex’s, which appears to veer more towards a chancery hand. The similar Persian divan-style layouts of the Berlin and Manchester manuscripts may have dictated the choice of this naskhi-divani script.

Black and red ink dominate the *Chandayan* manuscripts, but blue and gold are also frequently used. Other Bihari and naskhi-divani works in Arabic and Persian too show a preponderance of black and red while some exceptionally illuminated manuscripts, such as the Gwalior Qur’an (1399), have numerous colours of ink.¹⁹ Gold and red commonly highlight the word Allah in Bihari Qur’ans. In the Varanasi, Lahore-Chandigarh and Mumbai manuscripts the scribes chose to switch between red and black on the page. In the Berlin and Manchester *Chandayans*, they use red for the Persian headings and black for much of the text. The outlier in colour usage is the blue and red in the text of the Manchester *Chandayan* [fig. 7]. Qamar Adamjee

attempted to make sense of these puzzling colour choices and I, like her, fail to offer any substantial rationale.²⁰ We may speculate that it has something to do with the mysticism of letters (*hurufiyya*), which was popular in Sufi circles, but without firm evidence this remains a hypothesis.

One final descriptive element of the *Chandayans*’ scripts is the use of Kaithi paratextual inscriptions in a few of the codices. Kaithi is a script used predominantly in Northern and Eastern India and the name of this script associates with the *kayastha* or scribal class of society. However, brahmin communities in eastern India wrote in Kaithi widely.²¹ Accompanying one of the Persian headings of the Mumbai manuscript, although uncommon, we see a Hindavi gloss in a Kaithi hand [fig. 5].²² The most integrated of these instances of Kaithi show in the captions of the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandayan* [fig. 8]. Spare Hindavi words label names of characters, such as Chanda and Maina, or key narrative framing subtitles.²³ The careful positioning of these captions suggests that they were inscribed close to the time of painting, if not immediately after. The use of such captions within paintings finds parallels in a few early 16th-century manuscripts such as the *Aranyaka*

vary [figs. 6 and 7]. The *Miftah al-Fuzala* (Key of the Learned) of Muhammad ibn Muhammad Da'ud Shadiyabadi, a multilingual Persian dictionary (*farhang*), the manuscript of which is attributed to late 15th-century Mandu, also varies for how it renders Hindavi words in the curvaceous Nasta'liq script.²⁷ Unlike the *Chandayan*, the *Miftah* utilizes vocalization for a range of words and even adopts methods for showing retroflex syllables absent from Arabic or Persian. It is, after all, a dictionary, and yet its inscription of vernacular words in Nasta'liq is inconsistent.

Anxiety about how to commit the oral word to beautiful writing did not deter the scribes and patrons of the *Chandayans*. The power of the vernacular written word or *akhira* allows us into the performative worlds of the past, a world in which the recitation of the *Chandayan* would have had transformational powers.

LAYOUTS OF THE CHANDAYAN AND COMPARISONS WITH THE JAUNPURI ANTHOLOGY

Let us turn to a comparison of the *Chandayan* manuscripts with the *Dastur al-shu'ara*, an anthology of Persian poetry, made in Jaunpur. Established as a sultanate in the mid-14th century by Firoz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi, Jaunpur earned the epithet of Shiraz-i Hind, or Shiraz of India, attracting poets, artists and nobility from all over the world.²⁸ Given Jaunpur's centrality to sultanate India, this comparison situates the *Chandayans*, which circulated interregionally, in a wider book culture beyond the Indo-Sufi romances.

The *Chandayan* and Jaunpuri anthology emerged from a shared cultural context. The manuscript in focus, British Library Or. 4110, was compiled during the reign of the Sharqi Sultan Mubarak Shah of Jaunpur (r. 1399–1402), just a year after Timur's raids of Delhi and roughly two decades after Da'ud wrote the *Chandayan*.²⁹ It contains poems from some of the most canonical Persian poets such as Nizami and Rumi, writers whose oeuvre would have been familiar to Da'ud. As such, the anthology appears to be a didactic tool for an aspiring poet. Dalmau, the place of the *Chandayan's* composition, neighbours Jaunpur. We know that several Indo-Sufi vernacular romances were recited in Jaunpur. A Jaunpuri sultan also commissioned the poet Qutban to write the *Mrigavati* or *Magic Doe* in 1503.³⁰

Brac de la Perrière has established some parallels between the Jaunpuri anthology and Bihari Qur'ans. For example, its ornament of orange scrolling leaves is found on early 15th-century Bihari Qur'ans [fig. 2].³¹ Another unique feature is the swirling, circular reading tables [fig. 9] of which the only approximate parallel may be found in the tables in an early 15th-century Bihari Qur'an.³² In addition to these comparisons, we also witness Bihari and naskhi-divani scribal knowledge across the anthology. The body text of the book tends towards characteristics of a naskhi-divani, and in some places, such as its headings and diagrams, we see traces of the wedge-shaped Bihari script.

The Jaunpuri anthology also offered the *Chandayan* manuscripts a variety of layout standards. The anthology shows approximate examples of the three layouts that the scribes of the *Chandayan* adopted. Across the five *Chandayans* we witness the divan layout (Berlin, Manchester), the rhombus-shaped layout

(Varanasi, Lahore-Chandigarh), and the one-two alternating layout (Mumbai). Each of these three layouts signify how scribes attempted to standardize the vernacular text. This is not to say that the Jaunpuri anthology was the actual model for the *Chandayans'* layout, but books like the Jaunpuri anthology cultivated the scribal impulses we see in the *Chandayans*.

The Berlin and Manchester manuscripts exemplify what I call a divan-style layout [figs. 6 and 7]. At the top of the page there is a Persian caption in its own text box. The number of lines in the captions varies considerably because the Persian caption's textual content is not versified nor standard. This Persian text marks a shift in linguistic register from the Hindavi poetry much like Sanskrit framing texts in Braj Bhasha books on poetic method (*ritigranth*).³³ Below the caption, we have two columns of five hemistiches of the quatrain (*chaupai*). The *chaupai* typically has a pair of two rhyming hemistiches containing 16 beats or metrical instants (*matras*) each. A dividing column separates the two hemistiches in these two *Chandayan* manuscripts. Then, the summarizing couplet (*doha*) is also allocated its own two-line text box with each of the two lines occupying their own space. The individual lines of classical *dohas* are 24 *matras*, a third longer than the *chaupai*, calling for the extra space. The scribes do not indicate the caesura (*yati*) within the individual lines of the *doha*, which falls after the 13th *matra*. This 13+11 organization of *matras* in the *doha* quickens its pace akin to the function of a pithy summary. This is the formulation of a standardized *doha* and Imre Bangha has recently demonstrated that the count of *matras* varies in the *Chandayan*.³⁴

The Jaunpuri anthology contains divan layouts similar to the Berlin and Manchester *Chandayans*, but its poems typically do not occupy an individual page as in the *Chandayan* [fig. 10].³⁵ The one-to-one correspondence for poem and painting in the *Chandayans* is a design concept the closest of whose parallels is found between individual poems and paintings in later Rajput and Pahari paintings, where one poem is inscribed on the back or above an accompanying painting. The more action-oriented episodes of the *Chandayan* best suit such a close and high canto-to-painting ratio.

When the layouts akin to this divan style are utilized for Persian manuscripts, usually the language is entirely in Persian and scribes set apart the final verse, but in the same metre. Depending on poetic form, the final lyric can also include the sobriquet (*takhallus*) of the poet. We can envision the scribes of the Berlin and Manchester *Chandayans* bringing the instincts that they developed from inscribing manuscripts like the Jaunpuri anthology to their choice to accommodate the vernacular in a divan layout. This decision facilitated line breaks and an economy of space. Later Indo-Sufi vernacular romances, especially in Dakhni, adopted a double-columned layout, but the one-to-one canto-to-painting usage is not uniformly employed in later examples.

The distinctive rhombus-shaped layout of the Varanasi and Lahore-Chandigarh codices also economized written space for the vernacular [figs. 3 and 4]. On these rhombus-shaped pages, the Bihari-esque text fills the page and accommodates all the words onto the line. Unlike oblique text in Nasta'liq from 15th-century Persian manuscripts, the stacked oblique text is not meant to be read as a single distich. Instead, the verse begins from the right ascending point of the diamond and is read across the page as it descends. Similarly, it continues from one edge of the folio to the other in the bottom obliques. Readers would thus



Figure 6:
"Rao Rupchand
Summons the
Minstrel" (c.61),
Jaunpur region (?),
mid-15th century.
Folio; 21 x 12.5
cm. Collection of
Staatsbibliothek
zu Berlin, Stiftung
Preussischer
Kulturbesitz, Berlin,
Ms.or.fol.3014,
ff. 16v-17r.

طلک کنیز و در وقت حد باختر و بیکله طوطا بگیند	دشعل راجین بل ننه بلا اول
ورد که شیب بریده که نواختند بوی و بوی ز پیکر شنبلیلی	بانته کما انوار آن از هویدی
لج راتن نہیں لیرنگار	بانتهن جنه در پچین دودایی
بویهایس اینی سویدی	زاجا بوجه کون ترغناؤ
بیرھیند توه بی لایی	لج راتن نہیں ترنگار
شکلیتہ بہ بیمن بیاد	کیننلا سیکتہ کینانین کینا کا و رھار
خند اول مز نور لاولا و	من نور افی رین کد لکھنوی کئی کئی کئی

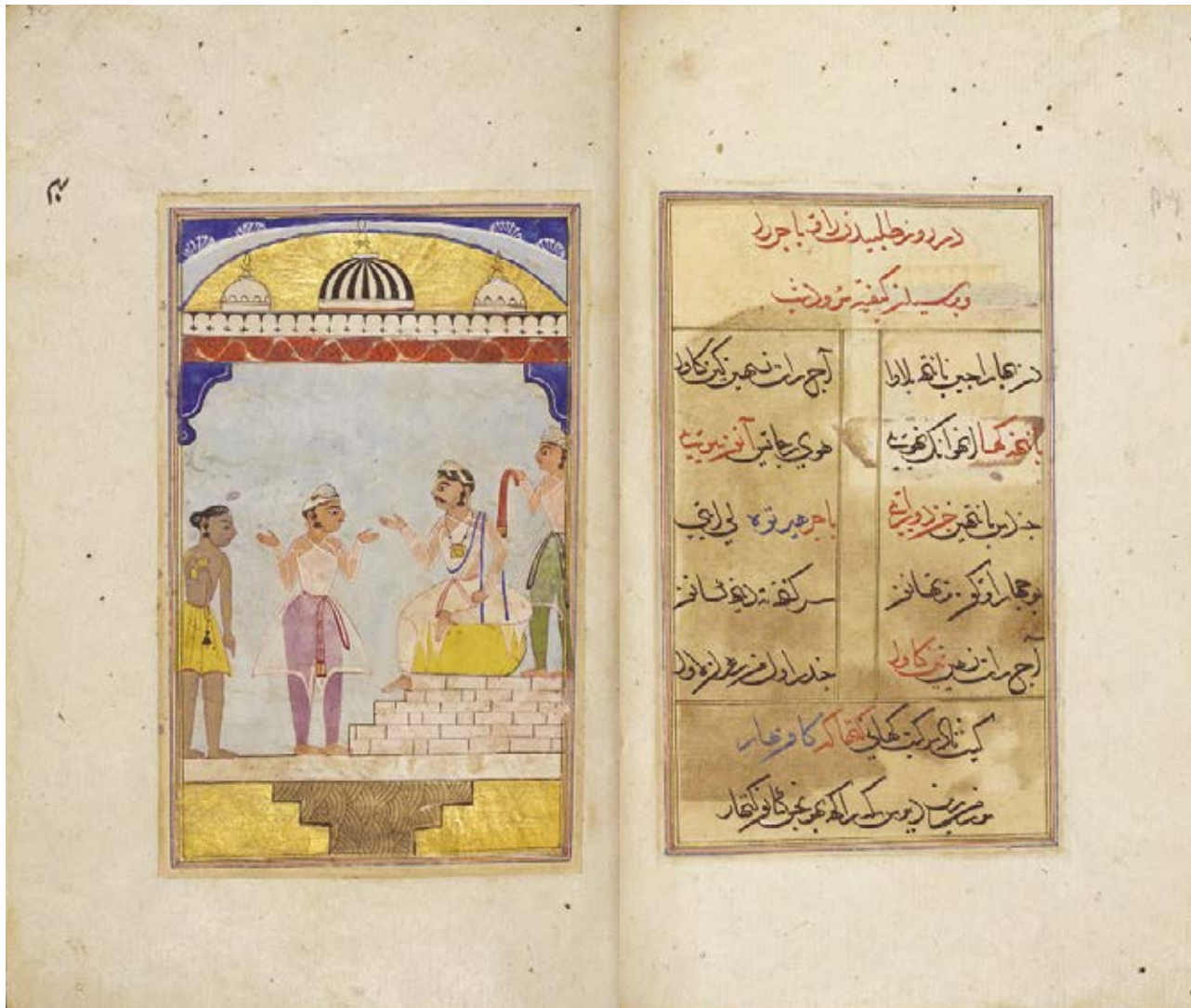


Figure 7: “Rao Rupchand Summons the Minstrel” (c.61), Mandu or Burhanpur, early 16th century. Painted or written surface; 15.4 × 9.5 cm. © University of Manchester, Hindustani MS. 1, ff. 39v-40r.

shift their gazes or turn the book as they sang these verses. While the rhombus-shaped layout is, to my knowledge, distinct in the art of the Islamicate, Persian or South Asian book, diagonals were a hallmark of Persian arts of the book of the 15th century. The scribe in Jaunpur certainly experimented with oblique calligraphy. In some cases, they created cross-shaped obliques where readers would also tilt the page to read [fig. 11].³⁶ The innovation of the rhombus for the five lines of the Hindavi *chaupai* would be in the repertoire of sultanate scribes as they were also responsible for the tree-, square-, and spiral-shaped reading diagrams in the Jaunpuri anthology [fig. 9].³⁷

Other innovative layouts decorated talismanic shirts, which curved to the contours of the human body. Beyond written texts, diagonal sight lines repeat throughout the paintings of *Chandayan* manuscripts, especially for the relationship between Chanda and her lovers.³⁸ The design concept of working with angles on the page would have thus resonated in both word and image.

Both the divan and rhombus-shaped layouts occur twice in the corpus of five *Chandayan* manuscripts. Given these recurrences, one wonders if the scribes copied from one codex

to the next. Regarding the divan layouts, this meant that a central Indian scribe in Mandu or Burhanpur would have copied from a manuscript, or a manuscript based on the same model of one that existed in the mid-15th-century Jaunpur region or Uttar Pradesh. The nearly identical spellings of Hindavi words in these two manuscripts (Berlin and Manchester) supports this idea. In terms of layout, a similar relationship may exist for the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandayan's* scribes in the early 16th-century Delhi-Agra region vis-à-vis the Varanasi *Chandayan*, made in 15th-century Uttar Pradesh.

Finally, the one-two alternating layout of the Mumbai *Chandayan* also elicits correspondences in the Jaunpuri anthology [fig. 5]. In the Mumbai codex, there is one stacked segment of text in the centre of the page followed by two bifurcated lyrics. Red and black ink alternate, accentuating the pattern of this one-two line cycle. We find this exact layout in a uniform black ink in a table of various Persian metres in the Jaunpuri anthology [fig. 12].³⁹

Overall, the *Chandayans* and Jaunpuri anthology emanated from the same book culture and contain clear evidence of the same scribal instincts, whether in styles of calligraphy or layouts.



Figure 8: “Drama at the Temple” (c.263: 3), attributed to Delhi-Agra region, 1525-40. Collection of Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

The Persian anthology captures a range of standards for scribes to use in writing the vernacular text. When looking at the ingenuity of both the Jaunpuri anthology and *Chandayans* we may imagine scribes as flexible innovators of how to exploit their resources (paper, pigments, stylus, scripts) to codify a wholly new oral romance. Further technical analysis would allow us to better understand these forms of calligraphy.

We can also begin to think about how each of these bifolio designs were encountered in the bodily practice of oration. Many of the Lahore-Chandigarh codex’s author-portraits depict Da’ud sitting in front of a bookstand. The *Miftah* devotes an entire illustrated definition to the meaning of the bookstand (*rahl* or *kirakh*) and displays these props in several other definitions.⁴⁰ The *rahl* as an object heightened the elegance of the performance. When viewing the divan and one-two layouts the *Chandayan* would remind the performer of other Islamicate books. The calligraphy functioned like a musical score that stimulated the aesthetic experience of sound and sight as well as separation and longing (*viraha*). An orator would inflect their voice with emotion as they sang the Hindavi lyrics. The angular rhombus layout, the wedged Bihari-like script and the cross-shaped *rahl* would create

a rhythmic geometry mirrored in the pulse of the *chaupai-doha* oration. A whole grammar of ornament in geometric textiles and tiles comes into view. An orator would have to tilt their gaze or entire body, animating how he told the story of love. We begin to see the performer’s gestures as he narrated the tale. Without the help of a *rahl*, the book would be held in one’s hands or laid upon one’s knees making this physical encounter even more intimate.

CONCLUSION

The identification of a few calligraphic and codicological elements in the *Chandayan* manuscripts provokes many speculations about the function of writing in these manuscripts.

The lack of vocalization and the enigmatic colour codes of the Manchester manuscript put the text’s recitation into question. If the *Chandayan* was primarily an oral text, could these written words function as mnemonic devices to jog an orator’s memory of the entire verse? Other sultanate manuscripts such as the *Ni‘matnamah* (Book of Delights) and *Miftah*, both made at the end of the 15th century in Mandu, gave specific attention to assuring Hindavi words would be pronounced correctly.



Figure 9: Reading Diagrams, *Anthology of Persian Poetry*, Jaunpur, early 15th century. 37 x 26 cm. Collection of the British Library, London, Or. 4110, ff. 153v-154r. © The British Library Board.



Figure 10: Verses of Nizami, *Anthology of Persian Poetry*, Jaunpur, early 15th century. 37 x 26 cm. Collection of the British Library, London, Or. 4110, ff. 53v-54r. © The British Library Board.



Figure 11: Poetry shown in obliques, *Anthology of Persian Poetry*, Jaunpur, early 15th century. 37 × 26 cm. Collection of the British Library, London, Or. 4110, ff. 190v-191r. © The British Library Board.



Figure 12: Table showing different metres for Persian poetry according to Malik 'Aziz Allah (Metrical patterns indicated in the margins), *Anthology of Persian Poetry*, Jaunpur, early 15th century. 37 × 26 cm. Collection of the British Library, London, Or. 4110, ff. 223v-224r. © The British Library Board.

If we take Da'ud literally in the phrase “[Shaykh Zainuddin] opened my eyes (*naina*) and my heart (*hiye*) filled with light—he taught me to write new letters (*akhira*),” then were the Arabic script letters of the *Chandayan* manuscripts newly learned for the scribes? Eyes, light and heart mark three emotionally charged Sufi concepts that lead us to seeing, reflecting and feeling, which parallel the act of writing in this verse.⁴¹ If the written text of the *Chandayan* was not intended for reading, then why give each poem its own page? Did the written word here carry talismanic or divinatory properties? When the wandering minstrel, the bajir, drives Rao Rupchand mad in love with the head-to-toe descriptions of Chanda's beauty, he does not appear to sing his lyrics from a book in the illustrations to the Berlin and Manchester manuscripts [figs. 6 and 7]. Recitation surely involved some extemporaneity and poetic play.

A careful examination of the calligraphy and layout of the *Chandayan* manuscripts reveals how scribes directed their vernacular anxieties and resolved the challenges of inscribing orality. They adopted existing calligraphic scripts used for Bihari Qur'ans and naskhi-divani Persian texts. They laid out pages with pre-existing methods for a language not suited for the *turki likhi*. The scripts of the *Chandayans* served multilingual purposes.

Da'ud tells us that the *turki likhi* of *hinduki gai* was emotionally transformative for him. But what did it mean to the *Chandayan's* scribes, orators and listeners? The scripts of the *Chandayans* reveal a remarkable, multi-layered history of adapting performative genres for new audiences, which transformed societies across sultanate India.

Notes

- 1 Translated by Richard J. Cohen. Hindavi based on Mataprasad Gupta. For a most recent edition based primarily on the 17th-century Bikaner manuscript and readings from the Berlin codex, see Shyam Manohar Pandey, ed., *Dāūda kṛta Candāyana* Volume 1 and 2 (Allahabad: Sahitya Bhavan [Private] Limited, 2018). An important analysis of this verse and Da'ud's performance background is Heidi Pauwels, “Rethinking the Early Sufi Romance: The Case of the Candayan”, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 27 (2), 2023: 253–279.
- 2 What Da'ud means by Turki is somewhat ambiguous in this verse. On the one hand, it may refer to the script of the Turks as a people, the many tribes that spread over Western, Central and South Asia, who contributed to the development of the Persian language and literature. These people predominantly spoke Turki vernaculars and wrote in Persian using the Arabic alphabet. On the other hand, Turki may denote the script of the Turki language and associations with the writing of literary texts in Turki, which became popular from the late 14th century until the 16th. See Dilorom Karomat, “Turki and Hindavi in the World of Persian”, in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*, eds., Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 143–144. Whatever the case may be, we can safely assume that the *turki likhi* refers to an Arabic alphabet.
- 3 Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, *Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 131–155, offers insights into more recent recitations of the *Chandayan*.
- 4 Qamar Adamjee, *Strategies for Visual Narration in the Illustrated Chandayan Manuscripts*, PhD Diss. (New York University, 2011), 114–115. Adamjee identifies other author-portraits in the *Iskandarnamah* (c. 1475) and *Aranyaka Parvan* (1516). It can be added that we see “author-portraits” in a few later, 17th-century manuscripts such as of Surdas in the illustrated *Sursagar* of Mewar. See John Stratton Hawley, *Surdas: Poet, Singer, Saint (Revised and Enlarged Edition)* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2018), 205–304. On the afterlife of the Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandayan* during Partition see Aparna Kumar, *Partition and the Historiography of Art in South Asia*, PhD Diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2018), 142–143, and Vivek Gupta and Aparna Kumar, “How Partition Divided a Centuries-old Manuscript between India and Pakistan and Continues to Plague the Region's Heritage”, *The Art Newspaper*, 12 August 2022, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/08/12/how-partition-divided-a-sufi-manuscript-between-india-and-pakistan-and-continues-to-plague-the-regions-heritage>.
- 5 For Da'ud's recitation with a listener, see Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, K-7-30-H; for holding or turning a page, see National Museum of Pakistan Karachi folio showing the month of Savan and Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, K-7-30-C; for Da'ud writing see Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, K-7-30-A (c. 148: 3).
- 6 See “Various Rice Dishes”, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, K-7-30-A (c. 148: 3).
- 7 There is one significant manuscript in a Kaithi hand that falls out of the bounds of this article, which is ascribed to the beginning of the 17th century and is currently housed in a Bikaneri collection. It is unillustrated. The most succinct summary of the status of editions and manuscripts in English is Imre Bangha, “Book Review: Shyam Manohar Pandey (Ed.), *Daūda kṛta Chandayan*”, *South Asia Research* 40 (1), 2020: 142–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02627280198993118>.
- 8 Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq, “An Epigraphical Journey to an Eastern Land”, *Muqarnas* 7, 1990: 83–108; Eloise Brac de la Perrière, “Manuscripts in Bihari

Calligraphy: Preliminary Remarks on a Little-Known Corpus”, *Muqarnas* 33, 2016: 63–90; Eloise Brac de la Perrière and Monique Burési, eds., *Le Coran de Gwalior: Polysémie d'un manuscrit à peintures* (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 2016).

- 9 Eloise Brac de la Perrière, “Prisme indien: Recherches sur les corans en écriture Bihari des origines à nos jours”, *Dossier d'Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches, Aix-Marseille Université*, 2015: 15–19, on the issue of this name.
- 10 Sana Mirza, “The Visual Resonances of a Harari Qurān: An 18th Century Ethiopian Manuscript and its Indian Connections”, *Afriques* (08), 2017: 1–25.
- 11 Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* Volumes 1 and 7 (London: The British Museum, 1895).
- 12 The Khuda Bakhsh Library's catalogues were published from 1918–1995 and are collectively called *Miftāh al-Kanūz al-Khafiyah*.
- 13 Mirza, “The Visual Resonances of a Harari Qurān”, 12–13.
- 14 Eloise Brac de la Perrière, “Khatt-i bihari”, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edition, eds., Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Everett Rowson, John Nawas (Leiden: Brill, 2019). The two following manuscripts are *Al-Hawi al-Saghir* by Najm al-Din al-Qazwini al-Shafi, dated 1379, and the Gwalior Qur'an, which is dated 1399.
- 15 Eloise Brac de la Perrière, “Bihārī et naskhī-dīwānī: remarques sur deux calligraphies de l'Inde des sultanats”, in *Écriture, calligraphie et peinture, Studia Islamica*, eds., A.L. Udovitch and H. Touati (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003), 89. “La barre du *kāf* se termine souvent par un petit crochet, de même que l'*alif* est doté d'une queue inférieure placée à gauche du trait vertical de la lettre. Certaines lettres, comme le *kāf* sont presque anguleuses, a contrario, le *hā'* et le *khā'* à l'initiale et la ligature du *yā'* final avec les lettres précédentes ont l'aspect arrondi d'une boucle; les *dāl* sont grands et ouverts.” I thank Hugo Partouche for checking my French translation.
- 16 Rose E. Muravchick, “Objectifying the Occult: Studying an Islamic Talismanic Shirt as an Embodied Object”, *Arabica* 64, 2017: 673–693; Brac de la Perrière, “Les Tunique talismaniques indiennes d'époque pré-moghole et moghole à la lumière d'un groupe de corans en écriture bihārī”, *Journal Asiatique* 297 (1), 2009: 57–81. Brac de la Perrière's forthcoming book addresses this as well.
- 17 Brac de la Perrière has conducted tests on the kinds of reeds used for Bihari calligraphy. This promises to expand our understanding of Indian scribal practices.
- 18 At least one folio of the Lahore-Chandigarh codex is inscribed in a large nasta'liq, which was probably added after the making of the manuscript. See the verse on the month of Savan (c. 52) in the Lahore Museum, f. 32.
- 19 Brac de la Perrière and Burési, *Le Coran de Gwalior: Polysémie d'un manuscrit à peinture*.
- 20 Adamjee, “Strategies for Visual Narration in the Illustrated Chandayan Manuscripts”, 242–243.
- 21 I thank Imre Bangha for clarifying this for me. More research is needed on the connection between the *Kayasthas* and Kaithi.

- 22 CSMVS 57.1-12 (c. 151: 2).
- 23 For an instance of naming see "Drama at the Temple", Lahore-Chandigarh *Chandayan*, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, K-7-30-J (c. 263: 3).
- 24 Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *An Illustrated Aranyaka Parvan in the Asiatic Society of Bombay* (Bombay: Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1974).
- 25 Thomas de Bruijn, *Ruby in the Dust: Poetry and History in Padmāvāt by the South Asian Sufi Poet Muḥammad Jāyāsī* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 75–78.
- 26 Francesca Orsini, "How to do multilingual history? Lessons from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century north India", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 49 (2), 2012: 235; See also S.C.R. Weightman, "The text of Alakh Bani", in *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research, 1985-1988*, ed., R.S. McGregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 171–178.
- 27 Vivek Gupta, *Wonder Reoriented: Manuscripts and Experience in Islamicate Societies of South Asia (ca. 1450–1600)*, PhD thesis (SOAS University of London, 2020), 174.
- 28 An important study of Jaunpur is Anna Sloan, *The Atala Mosque: Between Polity and Culture in Medieval Jaunpur*, PhD Diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 2001). See Orsini and Sheikh, "Introduction", in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*, eds., Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11–12.
- 29 For a description of its contents, see Charles Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1895), 232–233. Also, Eloise Brac de la Perrière, *L'art du livre dans l'Inde des sultanats* (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 296.
- 30 See the work of Aditya Behl: *The Magic Doe: Qutban Suhrawardi's Mirigavati* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 110–141; and, "Emotion and Meaning in the *Mirigavati*", in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*, eds., Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 274–296.
- 31 Brac de la Perrière, "Manuscripts in Bihari Calligraphy", 74–75.
- 32 Brac de la Perrière, "Prisme indien", 82.
- 33 Allison Busch, "Riti and Register: Lexical Variation in Courtly Braj Bhasha Texts", in *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 93.
- 34 I thank Imre Bangha for sharing this insight with me.
- 35 British Library Or. 4110, 53v-54r.
- 36 Some examples of obliques can be found on British Library Or. 4110, 124r, 127v, 141v, 147r, 148r, 152r, 179r, 188r, 189r, 193r, 204r, 209r, 213r, 219v, 372v, 414v. We have instances of writing crossing the page on 184v, and 190v-191r.
- 37 British Library Or. 4110, 152v-156r.
- 38 See Molly Emma Aitken and Allison Busch, "The Transcultural Eros of the Manchester *Cāndāyana*", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East* 42 (2), 2022: 293. Aitken and Busch make this point for the Manchester codex, but it is observable in other copies of the *Chandayan* as well.
- 39 British Library Or. 4110, 223r-225v.
- 40 Vivek Gupta, "Images for Instruction: A Multilingual Illustrated Dictionary in Fifteenth-Century Sultanate India", *Muqarnas* 38, 2021: 77–112.
- 41 For eyes, see Vivek Gupta, "Interpreting the Eye (*'ain*): Poetry and Painting in the Shrine of Ahmad Shah al-Wali al-Bahmani (r. 1422-1436)", *Archives of Asian Art* 67 (2), 2017: 189–208.