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Citation

The Persian Translation of *Śivapurāṇa* and Eighteenth-Century North Indian Śaivism

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Abstract: This article examines the Persian translation of the Śivapurāṇa composed in 1730 by Kishan Singh 'Nashat'. By historically contextualising Nashat's life and work and closely reading the preface attached to the translation, this study sheds light on hitherto unexplored aspects of eighteenth-century Persianised Hindu scribal communities and their textual production on Hinduism. Against the backdrop of the emerging Persian Vaiṣṇava literature in the eighteenth century, Nashat's Shiv Puran stands out in its Śaiva devotional sentiment. Through a careful examination of the translation against a range of Sanskrit sources and catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts, this article further illuminates the muddled history of the textual transmission of the Śivapurāṇa in Sanskrit. Ultimately, this study shows that Persian translations produced by Hindus, outside of the Mughal courtly context, are a rich source for the study of popular Hinduism in the early modern period.

Introduction

Our knowledge of the historical circumstances under which people have composed, read, copied, and translated Sanskrit puranic texts has many gaps.[1] This is, as they say, not a bug, but a feature of puranic discourse: Two fundamental characteristics of *purāṇa*s are their claim of primordiality and sacredness on the one hand (Fitzgerald 2014), and the process of 'composition-in-transmission' that produced them, on the other hand (Bakker 2019). Hans Bakker argues that the former explains the latter: Because divine inspiration, in puranic discourse, is the only authentic source, the role of the individual composer is so insignificant that puranic transmitters feel they are allowed to change, delete, or expand given texts without any repercussions. 'The aspiration', Bakker writes, 'to create something supra-individual is responsible for the fact that Indian puranic composers vie with each other in minimalizing the effect of empirical, historical and personal circumstances of the texts, making it a hard task for Indologists to date and to determine the products'. (Bakker 2019, p. 177).

Despite the puranic composers' best efforts to disguise their historicity, cultural-historical research that is firmly rooted in rigorous philological work on *purāṇa*s is

possible, as has been shown by the scholars who, for the last two decades, have been working on reconstructing different stages of the transmission of the *Skandapurāṇa* (Adriaensen et al. 1998). The critical edition of *Skandapurāṇa*, Peter Bisschop (2016) explains, has not only set out to reconstruct the earliest form of the text, but, moreover, to present the changes through which the text has gone throughout the centuries and thus to shed light on the diversity of *purāṇa* traditions. Most puranic texts, however, have not been scrutinised to such a degree like the *Skandapurāṇa.* Critical editions hardly exist,[2] and studies that discuss the reception of *purāṇa*s in Sanskrit, not to mention in other languages, that further consider cultural-historical questions are even rarer.[3]

One productive and perhaps surprising place to look at when studying the transmission, transformation, and reception of *purāṇa*s is the several Persian translations of *purāṇa*s from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is productive because studying translations always forces us to grapple with questions of sources, strategies of transposition, and the translator's agency and personal circumstances. The study of translations is a crucial component of any attempt to map and understand the transmission and reception of a textual tradition.

It might be somewhat surprising, although, to examine Persian translations to shed light on the transmission history of *purāṇa*s: As if the 'composition-in-transmission' of *purāṇa*s does not make life hard enough for scholars when it comes to determining with any accuracy the historical circumstances of any given text, Persian translations of Sanskrit literature, too, are notorious for being silent on their sources. Without the painstaking job of a close comparative reading of a range of Sanskrit manuscripts and recensions against the Persian translation, it is impossible to pinpoint the sources with which Persian translators in early modern South Asia worked, and even with comparative research, it is not always possible.[4]

Not only that, but Persian translators of narrative literature in early modern South Asia are also known for not considering faithfulness in translation a guiding literary ideal. South Asian Persian translations of the Sanskrit epics and story collections from the early modern period were mostly target culture oriented and emphasised the Persianness of the resulting text. Persian literary translations from South Asia were not governed by concerns of equivalence or faithfulness but by Persian cultural values, genre expectations, and contemporary taste. The many stylistically elevated and versified adaptations of Indian stories and especially the epics point to the fact that Persian authors in early modern South Asia had different priorities and literary commitments than might be expected with modern, Western ideas about translation.[5] Given the reputation of early modern Sanskrit-Persian translations as too free and even inaccurate, scholarship does not often focus on comparative analysis and close engagement with both the Sanskrit and the Persian.[6]

Yet, studying Persian *purāṇa*s can illuminate not only matters of textual transmission and criticism but also severely understudied cultural-historical aspects of Persian translations of Sanskrit literature. The strong association between Persian and Islam in scholarship on early modern South Asia has often led researchers to

examine Sanskrit-Persian translations primarily as sites of religious encounters between Hinduism and Islam. The increase in translation activities at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) and in the milieu of prince Dara Shukoh (1615–1659), moreover, keeps drawing scholarly attention to the significance of Sanskrit culture to the Mughal political project.[7] Persian translations that were produced outside the Mughal court, like those of Sanskrit *purāṇa*s, by Persianised Hindu translators rather than Muslims, have thus been badly neglected.

As an entry point into the study of the cultural history of Persian *purāṇa*s, this article focuses on the Persian translation of the *Śivapurāṇa,* composed by Kishan Singh 'Nashat' of Sialkot, probably in 1730, and entitled *Shiv Puran*.[8] This is the earliest *purāṇa* to have been translated into Persian that came down to us in full.[9] Later Persian *purāṇa*s include, for example, *ʿAyn al-Zuhur* (*Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*) by the same Nashat from 1737, *Bahr al-Najat* (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa*) by Anandghan 'Khwush' from the early 1790s, and *Gaya Mahatam* (*Gayāmāhātmya*), also from the early 1790s by the same Khwush. Most of the translations by Khwush and others from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were commissioned by British officials; the historical context in which they were produced is thus quite different and requires a separate study.[10]

Exploring the Persian *Shiv Puran* and the work of Kishan Singh Nashat more broadly is extremely productive not only because it is a valuable source in reconstructing the life and education of Persianised Hindu scribes in the early eighteenth century, thus complementing existing scholarship on 'the world of the munshi'.[11] It can also uniquely shed light on aspects of the social history of lay Śaiva communities in northern South Asia, the ways in which early modern readers understood and used *purāṇa*s, and the muddled history of the textual transmission of the *Śivapurāṇa* in Sanskrit and beyond.

Introducing the *Śivapurāṇa*

The *Śivapurāṇa*, although bearing the name of Śiva, the supreme god himself, has hardly attracted the attention of western scholars of Śaivism. In comparison with other Śaiva *purāṇa*s, such as the *Skandapurāṇa,* scholarship in English or other western languages on the *Śivapurāṇa* is almost non-existent.[12] It is considered a relatively late *purāṇa:* R. C. Hazra (1953) argued that most sections of the recension printed by Vaṅgavāsī Press in Bengali script in 1908 could not have been composed before the tenth century, and that the recension preserved in the 1906 Veṅkaṭeśvara Press printed edition probably dates back to the fourteenth century, if not later. These printed editions, as is the case with many other *purāṇa*s, create the false impression that the recensions they preserve have been transmitted in manuscripts through the centuries as one coherent work. In reality, one is more likely to find manuscripts of single *saṃhitā*s (lit. united, combined; the term refers to a compilation of verses) rather than the 'complete' *Śivapurāṇa.*

The two editions have only three *saṃhitā*s shared between them (*Vidyeśvara*, *Kailāsa*, and *Vāyavīya*), but certain *saṃhitā*s in the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press recension

(namely *Rudra*, *Śatarudra*, and *Koṭirudra*), which Hazra dates to the fourteenth century, draw heavily from the *Jñānasaṃhitā* of the Vaṅgavāsī Press recension. While the Vaṅgavāsī Press edition consists of six *saṃhitā*s and the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press edition has seven *saṃhitā*s, the *Śivapurāṇa* in various places in the text proclaims it consists of twelve *saṃhitā*s, but those additional *saṃhitā*s are not attested in any existing manuscripts.

The modern editions and a few English translations of the *Śivapurāṇa* introduce the text as a *mahāpurāṇa*, i.e., one of the eighteen 'great' *purāṇa*s, the lists of which can be found in various *purāṇa*s. But this categorisation of the *Śivapurāṇa* as a *mahāpurāṇa* is not as clear cut in tradition. The *Śivapurāṇa* is not listed consistently in those puranic lists as a *mahāpurāṇa*, and in its place the *Vāyūpurāṇa* (or *Vāyavīyapurāṇa*) sometimes appears; as mentioned above, it is a later text, thus not considered fundamental to the development of early Śaivism; moreover, it does not discuss in a systematic way the five puranic topics (*pañcalakṣaṇa)* of creation, cosmology, genealogies, cosmic cycles, and dynasties. Given this evidence, Hazra argues, the *Śivapurāṇa* cannot claim the status of a *mahāpurāṇa* but rather of an *upapurāṇa* (i.e., secondary).[13] Recent scholarship often dismisses the distinction between *mahā-* and *upapurāṇa* as artificial, as well as the *pañcalakṣaṇa* as a model that does not really characterise *mahāpurāṇa*s, or *purāṇa*s in general (Rocher 1986, pp. 24–30; Smith 2016). Yet, the unclear status of the *Śivapurāṇa* as either a great or secondary *purāṇa*—which modern scholarship has tended to disregard as too derivative, too local, too sectarian, and all in all not that important—might have contributed to the lack of scholarly interest in the *Śivapurāṇa*.[14]

In terms of content, the *Śivapurāṇa* is dedicated to the greatness of Śiva and the benefits of worshipping him to attain liberation. It contains explanations about the creation of the cosmos and establishes the superiority of Śiva over Viṣṇu and Brahmā. It tells the stories of Satī's marriage to Śiva, Dakṣa's sacrifice, and Satī's self-immolation in the sacrificial fire. It narrates Śiva's wars with the demon Tāraka and other encounters with demons like Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu. It includes the story of Śiva's reducing Kāmadeva to ashes, the austerities of Pārvatī, and her marriage to Śiva. It tells of the births, lives, and marriages of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya, the sons of Śiva and Pārvatī. It expands in great length on the origin, location, and worship of the twelve *jyotirliṅga*s, and dedicates praises to Kāśī, the celebrations of Śivarātri, and Śiva's thousand names.

Sanskrit-Persian translations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

The reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir (r. 1659–1707) is often noted in scholarship as the period in which the so-called Sanskrit–Persian 'translation movement' died out (Mujtabai 1978, pp. 66–67; Shukla 1988). While it is true that royal sponsorship of the study of Indian traditions and the production of Persian translations of Sanskrit narrative literature, sciences, and history has waned in the decades following Akbar's death (d. 1605), it would be wrong to assume that such textual

production took place only at the Mughal court. In fact, the second half of the seventeenth century was a period of efflorescence of Persian translations of Sanskrit literature, and authors of various backgrounds were involved in such translation projects. The *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* for example, was translated into Persian, probably in 1658, and dedicated to Aurangzeb (Gandhi 2023). Four different *Ramayan*s were composed during Aurangzeb's reign—one by Gopal ibn Shri Gobind in the 1680s, two renditions by Chandarman 'Bedil' in 1686 and 1693, and one more by Amar Singh in 1705 (Abidi 1974). Persian renditions of Vedantic texts such as *Gulzar-i Hal*, a translation of *Prabodhacandrodaya*, or the translation of *Rāma Gītā* by Banwalidas Wali (d. 1674) were completed during the second half of the seventeenth century as well (Gandhi 2020).

Carl Ernst (2003), in his typology of Sanskrit-Persian translations from South Asia in the second millennium, offers a rough division into four categories of translations, distinguished by time period and topics: early, mostly pre-Mughal, Arabic, and Persian translations on practical arts and sciences; Persian translations from the time of Akbar (1570s–1590s), having primarily political significance; Persian translations from the milieu of Dara Shukoh (1640s–1650s), of mostly metaphysical and mystical texts; and Persian translations of texts dealing with Hindu ritual and law, commissioned by colonial officials (1770s onwards). Whether it is because Ernst is focussed on encounters between Islam and Hinduism, or because of the received wisdom about Aurangzeb and the blow his bigotry dealt to Persian studies of Sanskrit texts, translations produced in the second half of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries do not feature in his survey. Stefano Pellò (2014, 2018, 2020) has addressed this gap in scholarship and dedicated several publications to the study of erudition in Persian among Vaiṣṇava scribes and poets from the early eighteenth century onwards. These Persianised Vaiṣṇava composers, like Lala Amanat Ray (*fl.* 1740), have produced several Persian renderings of Vaiṣṇava devotional literature.[15] Quite a few of the Persian *Ramayan*s from the 1680s onward also seem to participate in this Persianised Vaiṣṇavism.[16]

Śaiva literature in Persian, however, is not very easy to find. Muslim authors since the fourteenth century have composed texts on yogic practices, which are believed to be based on the tradition of Nāth Yoga (Ernst 2016).[17] But it seems that distinctively Śaiva texts, apart from the *Śivapurāṇa* as will be discussed below, have not been translated into Persian in large numbers during the Mughal period, either by Muslims or by Hindus.[18] In fact, we do not know a lot about the relationship between Śaiva communities and the Mughal court or the social history of Śaivism in early modern North India more broadly. This might have to do with the fact that from the sixteenth century onwards, Śaivism in North India did not have great political support: as Patton Burchett notes, Hindu rulers across North India in this period 'increasingly allied themselves with Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* communities and their institutional forms and symbols while moving away from those of tantric Śaivism and Śāktism' (Burchett 2019, p. 108).

A handful of sources survives that tell us something about the relationship between the Mughal empire and Śaiva religious institutions. Several documents collected from the Nāth monastery Jakhbar in Punjab shed light on land grants given over two centuries, since the reign of Akbar, by the Mughal court to the monastery (Goswamy and Grewal 1967). This collection even includes one personal letter, written by Aurangzeb and addressed to Mahānt Ānand Nāth from 1661/2. The letter, written in a reverential tone, requests some quicksilver to be sent to the Mughal emperor, and suggests that the Mahānt and the emperor had met in person before (Goswamy and Grewal 1967, pp. 119–124). Véronique Boullier (2018) notes, however, that Aurangzeb was not remembered in Nāth tradition in the most flattering light. In a recent article, she discusses several Nāth yogis' legends that mention the Mughal emperor, and argues that they reflect the complex relationship the Nāths had with Islam, for which Aurangzeb acts as a signifier.

These sources, however, do not reveal much about the lay Śaiva communities surrounding these monasteries and temples. In Punjab, for example, and specifically in the province of Lahore, the region from which hailed Kishan Singh Nashat, the translator of *Śivapurāṇa*, there were several important Nāth centres, such as Tilla Jogian (near modern-day Islamabad), Puran Bhagat (on the outskirts of Sialkot), or Jalandhar, which were all surrounded by lay Nāth communities (Mallinson 2018). The lay Śaiva communities in the Punjab matter here since these were the circles in which such Persian translations were probably circulating. *Purāṇa*s in general, and specifically ones narrated in Persian, did not have much use in temples and monasteries. Furthermore, in contrast with inherited wisdom regarding Sanskrit–Persian translations as sites of religious encounters between Hinduism and Islam, the *Śivapurāṇa* was translated by a Hindu scribe, educated in Persian, who likely was not directly affiliated with any religious institution. His translation and the preface attached to it can thus shed light on popular puranic Śaivism in the early modern period as well as on the textual history of the *Śivapurāṇa*. The next four sections delve into the *Shiv Puran* in detail. First, I provide information regarding the *Shiv Puran* manuscript used in this article and discuss some problems with its dates. I then go on to analyse Nashat's translation preface, and finally, I explore the structure of the text and Nashat's strategies of translation.

The *Shiv Puran* manuscript

The *Shiv Puran* by Kishan Singh Nashat survives in an impressive number of manuscripts: in addition to the copy held at the British Library, IO Islamic 760 (Ethé 1903, p. 1:1093, accession number 1958), on which I focus here, there is another copy in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Pertsch 1888, p. 1028), and at least seven others scattered throughout South Asia in places like the Banaras Hindu University Library or the Arabic and Persian Research Institute in Tonk, Rajasthan (Qasemi 2014, p. 135).

The manuscript from the British Library is 180-folios long and written in neat *nastaʿlīq*. It contains twelve illustrations that accompany some of the stories, and there are several blank spaces left for additional pictures that were never drawn.

Hermann Ethé believed, based on the colophon, that the translation was finished on the 9th of Dhu al-qaʿda, 1096 AH, i.e., 25 August 1689 CE. But this does not make much sense: in the versified colophon just preceding it, which was composed by Nashat himself, the author states he had finished his work in the year 1786 VS/1730 CE (Nashat 1730, f. 180r). How can the two dates be reconciled?

I believe that the colophon including the Hijri date refers to the date the copy had been completed and that it mistakenly refers to the year 1096 AH instead of 1196 AH, i.e., 1782 CE. This suggestion is based on a comparison of the colophon with that of another puranic translation produced by Nashat. In 1794 VS/1737 CE, Kishan Singh Nashat finished translating the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* into Persian and named it *ʿAyn al-Zuhur*.[19] Just like in the *Shiv Puran,* the versified colophon by the author mentions the Vikrama date (Nashat 1737, *f.* 230r). This long, versified colophon is followed by a shorter colophon, by an unnamed copyist, in which the date of completion is the 9th of Dhu al-qaʿda, 1196 AH, i.e., 16 October 1782 CE (Nashat 1737, *f.* 231r). This is the exact same date mentioned in the *Shiv Puran*, with exactly a hundred-year difference. Rather than believing that Nashat translated one *purāṇa* in 1689 and the other almost fifty years later in 1737, it is much more likely, then, that the two translations were produced between 1730 and 1737, and copied by the same unnamed, slightly absentminded, copyist in 1782.

This is further substantiated by the fact that the two manuscripts belonged to Richard Johnson (1753–1807), who was an avid collector of South Asian manuscripts in the last decades of the eighteenth century, and who might have commissioned them both from the same scribe. The presence of illustrations also suggests that the patron of the copying work of both texts was a man of means.[20] There is one additional dating inconsistency that must be mentioned here before moving on: On the *Shiv Puran* flyleaf, we find Richard Johnson's bookplate with his name in English, Persian, and Devanagari, as well as his Mughal titles: *mumtāz al-daula mufakhkhar al-mulk richārd jānson bahādur ḥusām jang*, or in English: 'The hero Richard Johnson, exalted of the state, the chosen of the kingdom, sharp war-blade'.[21] The bookplate also includes a date, probably referring to the year when the book had been acquired and added to Johnson's collection. The year mentioned, although, is 1194 AH/1780 CE. It is unclear how the book could have been acquired two years before the copying had been completed. It is possible that we are dealing here with another mistake, with Johnson confusing the Persian numerals four (۴) and six (۶), but it is difficult to tell for sure. Unfortunately, there is no bookplate in *ʿAyn al-Zuhur* to which we can compare. In any case, there is enough here to question Ethé's dating of the *Shiv Puran* to 1689 CE.

Johnson's bookplates were not the only mark he had left on the manuscripts he owned. Sporadic marginalia in English, written in pencil, appear on several folios. It seems that the notes mostly contain English transliteration of Sanskrit words (e.g., *prackrittee*) and brief summaries or titles of the episodes narrated. In addition to the pencil-written English marginalia, every folio includes further ink-written notes in Devanagari. Almost every other line in Persian is accompanied by Devanagari transliteration of the Sanskrit names and terms that are mentioned in the text, to which

the Persian script does not always do justice. For example, the name of the famous forest where all the *ṛṣi*s (sages) gather to listen to puranic stories—Naimiṣāraṇya—is named Naymikharan in Persian. Those familiar with Persian transcription of Indic words would know that retroflex *ṣ* is often represented in Persian with the two consonants *kh*, but it might not be obvious at first.[22] The consistency in which the Devanagari marginalia is incorporated in the text, and the neat writing in ink, similar to that used in the Persian text, might suggest that it was added as a reading aid by the copyist himself rather than by some later reader.

Of the twelve illustrations included in the manuscript, one can find, for example, a depiction of Pārvatī offering *pūjā* to Śiva while Kāmadeva and Rati watch from the side (Nashat 1730, f. 22v); an unfinished, partially coloured painting accompanying the story of how Gaṇeśa received his elephant head (Nashat 1730, f. 82v); or a depiction of Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha killing the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu (Nashat 1730, f. 140v). Some of the blank spaces left for additional pictures include more of those pencil-written notes, explaining what should have been depicted there. For example, as part of the story about the austerities of the demon Tāraka, the English note on the blank space says: 'This picture should probably have represented Brahma in the art of conferring his favour of Taraka' (Nashat 1730, f. 19v).

Nashat's preface to the *Shiv Puran*

In the preface, Nashat provides his readers with a few personal details that allow us to locate him in broader socio-historical terms. His given name is Kishan Singh, and his chosen Persian penname is Nashat. His father was Ray Pran Natha, and the family was of Khatri background and belonged to the Mangal clan (in Persian: *qaum*). They were natives of the town of Sialkot which was part of the Mughal province of Lahore (Nashat 1730, f. 2r).

Sialkot during this period was a well-known centre of paper production and Persianate learning. Lahore and its surrounding *qaṣbas* were a hub of Persian cultural production during the seventeenth century, with eminent Mughal poets and scholars such as Chandarbhan Brahman and Munir Lahori hailing from there. As a major political centre, Lahore also drew Jains, Kayasths, Khatris, and Brahmins to seek employment in various literary, scholarly, and bureaucratic capacities (Dhawan 2019).[23] By the early eighteenth century, these Hindu scribal castes were Persianized to a great extent. They acquired education in Persian at local *maktab*s and *madrasa*s (primary and secondary schools, respectively) and sometimes even at home, if the family had a longer history of Mughal bureaucratic service and distinction in Persian (Bellenoit 2017, pp. 33–66).[24] This might have been the case for Nashat, as it seems that Persian education and interest in translation was running in the family: his father, Pran Natha with the penname 'Aram', had also completed a Persian translation of a section of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, perhaps around the 1730s (Siddiqi 1997, p. 2:504).[25]

Nashat does not mention any further affiliation, apart from his sectarian commitment to Śiva, which will be discussed below. He did not have any patron who commissioned the work, and he does not go into detail regarding his professional

background or aspirations. It is quite possible, however, that much like many other Khatris and Kayasths in the Punjab and beyond, his Persian education served him in maintaining some family business, or that he trained in Persian in the hope of pursuing a more lucrative career in government.[26]

The one thing he makes clear in the preface apart from his personal information is his utter devotion to Śiva and his desire to translate the *Śivapurāṇa* to praise his name. Nashat begins his preface, as customary in Persian prefaces, with a praise of God:

> *ḥamd-i be-ḥadd va s̱anā-yi be-ʿadd mar qādir-i muṭlaq va dādār bar ḥaqq rā sazad ki ba-yad-i qudrat-i kāmila-yi khwud tamāmi-yi makhlūqāt az yak musht-i khāk biyāfarīd sipās-i farāvān va sitāyish-i be-girān khāṣ ṣāniʿe rā lāʾiq ki az jumlagi-yi maṣnūʿāt ansān rā ba tashrīf-i ʿaql u adrāk mumtāz u sarfarāz gardānid*
>
> Endless praises and boundless salutations are given to the all-powerful and just one who, with his absolute power, created all beings with one handful of dirt. Many praises and infinite gratitude befit the unique maker who further distinguished and exalted humankind from among all beings by elevating reason and intellect (Nashat 1730, f. 1v).

He thus opens with a general, Islamic-inflected praise, referring to God's creation and the elevated status of humans among all beings. Then he moves on to explain why God had elevated and distinguished humankind from all others, using a clearly Śaiva idiom. Humans were given reason and intellect, Nashat writes, so

> *tā bar kamāhi-yi chigūnagi-yi maʿrifat ba-qadr-i ṭāqat-i basharī āgāhe yāfta muẕakkar-ẕāt va ṣifāt-i īzad-i be-chūn u hīchgūn muqayyad va sargarm bāshad*
>
> that they could obtain awareness of knowledge's true essence through the power of the human faculties, and could thus become lovingly devoted to the unparalleled and inexplicable masculine essence and the divine qualities (Nashat 1730, f. 1v).

From the outset, then, Nashat frames his text in devotional terms. The supreme God had given humans their faculties so they could recognise and worship him in his masculine form, i.e., as Śiva.[27] Yet, not all humans enjoy this deep understanding of the true essence of knowledge. 'Although very knowledgeable and insightful', (*bā vujūd-i dānish-rasā u dīda-bīnā*) Nashat writes, many cannot see that they are in fact 'in the well of error and the alley of deception' (*dar chāh-i ẕalālat va kū-yi ghavāʾib*; Nashat 1730, f. 1v). They cannot distinguish existence from non-existence, and they do not know how they came into being. Nashat, however, 'the lowliest of beings', (*kamtarīn-i makhlūqāt*) is proof that 'enlightened-hearted ones, who are awakened to reality, whose mind is exalted' (*raushan-dilān ḥaqīqat-āgāh marfūʿ-ẕamīr*) do exist, since he has 'complete fortitude and unspeakable faith in his majesty, the repository of grace, Shri Mahadev Jīv' (*rusūkhe tamām va iʿtiqāde mā lā-kalām ba janāb-i fayżmāb srī mahādev jīv ast*; Nashat 1730, f. 2r).

Nashat states that his goal in translating the *Śivapurāṇa* into Persian was glori-fying the grace and benevolence of Lord Śiva. He mentions the long tradition of Persian translations of Sanskrit literature and argues that all the '*hindī* books' that were translated into Persian in the past, 'such as *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat*, *Shri Bhagavat*, *Jog Basisht* et cetera' were all produced by 'his believers', i.e., devotees of Śiva, out of complete faith, and therefore he, too, would like to follow their footsteps and praise God in the same manner (Nashat 1730, f. 2r). This statement is factually wrong and we have no evidence to corroborate it. The Hindu authors who were involved in the Akbari translation projects, for example, were not identified in the texts in sectarian terms, and later authors who rendered the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* were quite clearly Vaiṣṇavas, as explained above.

Furthermore, Nashat undertook the translation of *Śivapurāṇa*, which is 'the pure essence of the Vedas and contains the joys and pleasures of Shri Mahadev Jīv' (*ki khulaṣ-i bed-hā ast va mushtamil bar kavāʾif u līlā-hā-yi srī mahādev jīv ast*) to spread the knowledge of and devotion to Śiva.[28] By translating the stories of Śiva, he hopes that 'the majority of his believers, who have skills in Persian and who do not know Sanskrit at all can still attain eternal prosperity by reading it. By hearing the virtues of his essence and qualities they will forever gain blessings and prosper' (*tā akthare az muʿtaqidān-i īn janāb ki dar fārsī dastras dārand vaa az sanskrit aṣl-an ba ānhā bahra nīst az khwāndan-i ān saʿādat-i abadī ḥāṣil namāyand va ba istimāʿ-i manāqib-i żāt u ṣifāt-i īshān hamvāra fayż-andoz u kāmyāb gardand*; Nashat 1730, f. 3v). He then concludes the benefits in reading or listening to his *Shiv Puran*:

> *bibāyad dānist ki har ki īn nuskha-i fayż-bunyād rā ba iʿtiqād-i tamām muṭāliʿa namāyad va ba gosh-i ʿaqīdat-i niyosh iṣghā kunad dar dunyā az daulat va jamʿiyat bahra-yāb shavad va dar ʿaqabe mukt va najāt naṣīb gardad tā dam-i ḥayāt hīch ranj va andūh mubtalā nashavad va hamdosh khūbī va kāmrānī bashād*
>
> Anyone who studies this book, which is founded on grace, with complete faith, and who listens carefully and faithfully, will find prosperity in this world in the form of fortune and peace. And afterwards, he will be allotted *mukt* and liberation. As long as he lives, he will not experience sorrow and misery, and will be happy and prosperous equally (Nashat 1730, f. 3v).

Nashat seems to believe, then, that there was an audience for this kind of compo-sitions among his fellow Brahmins, Kayasths, and Khatris who did not necessarily know Sanskrit but could read Persian quite easily. From the way he advertises the merits of the book, it seems that he did not have Muslim audience in mind at all. A closer examination of the extant manuscripts, however, might reveal patterns of ownership and circulation and shed light on the popularity of the *Shiv Puran* in eighteenth-century North India.

Finally, Nashat provides a brief statement about his writing process. He writes: 'I translated from Sanskrit into Persian this excellent book which has a thousand dis-tinctions and virtues over other books, and, following the *hindī puran*, I divided it into seventy-four *adhyay*s, i.e., chapters in Persian' (*li-haẕā īn kitab-i mustaṭāb rā ki hazārān*

imtiyāz va sharaf bar kutub-i dīgar dārad az zabān-i sanskrit ba fārsī tarjuma namūd va muṭābiq-i pūrān-i hindī bar haftād va chahār adhyāy ki ba zabān-i fārsī ʿibārat az faṣl bāshad taqsīm dād; Nashat 1730, f. 3v). This specific statement might seem puzzling at first, and far from representing the reality of the *Śivapurāṇa*: as mentioned above, up to thirteen different *saṃhitā*s ascribe themselves to the *Śivapurāṇa*, and all of them combined contain thousands of verses. What '*hindī puran*' was Nashat referring to? Even if we assume that he translated only one *saṃhitā*—it has already been noted that the *Śivapurāṇa* was never circulating as a whole text with all its *saṃhitā*s—there is no single *saṃhitā* that consists of exactly seventy-four chapters. When comparing the selection of chapters in Nashat's *Shiv Puran* with the Sanskrit *saṃhitā*s it becomes clear that Nashat was drawing on a range of stories from all *saṃhitā*s in no particular order.

Some might dismiss Nashat's statement, on the grounds that anyway early modern Persian translations of Sanskrit literature were never accurate or faithful to their sources.[29] After all, it is not uncommon to find such statements about faithfulness in Persian translations from Akbar period and, to a lesser extent, from the seventeenth century: phrases like 'word-for-word' translation (*lafẓān biʾl lafẓ*) or 'without omissions and additions' (*be-kame wa ziyādate*) are used by translators to announce their close reliance on their sources, whatever they might be, even when they take great liberties and licenses in their interpretation or use of language and style.[30] Chapters are often omitted, added, or heavily abridged; versified narratives are often rendered in prose; and a range of poetic and interpretive elements are added by the translators, in accordance with the generic and stylistic expectations of Persian literary culture. Perhaps Nashat, too, simply announced his commitment to 'the source' while in reality creating a selection of chapters taken from the Sanskrit *saṃhitā*s?

The solution to this puzzle is more straightforward than that. Since our goal here is to uncover the transmission history of *purāṇa*s—where, how, and by whom they were read, copied, and translated—we must move away from printed editions as our point of reference and take the translator's statements seriously. The modern printed editions of the *Śivapurāṇa* do not represent the premodern lives of the text and modern (and western) ideas about what translation is should not interfere with historical analysis. As a comparative study of the Persian *Shiv Puran* with extant Sanskrit manuscripts reveals, the *Śivapurāṇa* did not only circulate in separate *saṃhitā*s, but also in one much shorter recension, that seems to have been quite popular in the eighteenth century.

The seventy-five-*adhyāya Śivapurāṇa*

An examination of several descriptive catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts reveals that in addition to independent *saṃhitā*s that ascribe themselves to a larger *Śivapurāṇa*, a parallel recension existed, that contained seventy-four to seventy-six chapters. For example, Julius Eggeling's *Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (1899, vol. VI, pp. 1311–12) lists eight *Śivapurāṇa*-related manuscripts in total, three of which contain single *saṃhitā*s. The other five, however, are described by Eggeling as '*Śivapurāṇa*, or rather that section of it commonly passing under that

name, in seventy-five or seventy-six *adhyāyas*'.[31] There are at least two more such manuscripts in the UK, one listed in Arthur Keith's (1903, p. 67, no. 124) catalogue of the Sanskrit manuscripts held in the Indian Institute Library at Oxford, and one in Theodor Aufrecht's (1845, p. 63, shelf mark MS. Walker 204) Latin catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts held in the Bodleian Library. This is just a preliminary list. All these manuscripts are dated to the mid-to-late eighteenth century. A comparison of the Sanskrit chapter titles with Nashat's text shows without a doubt that this was the recension with which Nashat had worked for his translation project.

Nashat, then, did not make a Persian abridgement of a longer Sanskrit text based on his own preferences but rather rendered an already existing and quite popular tradition in Sanskrit. In terms of its content, one might describe it as 'Śiva's greatest hits' as it consists of some of the most famous stories about Śiva and his family, and does not dwell as much on cosmology and other broader topics. While Western catalogers disregard this recension as a mere section of a larger text, or an abridged version of the 'full' *Śivapurāṇa*, the fact is that this recension was much more alive and in circulation than any other imagined 'full' *Śivapurāṇa*, that only came into existence in the late nineteenth century with the first printed editions. The order of chapters in the short *Śivapurāṇa* further shows that the text's compilers did not always follow the order in which the stories are narrated in the longer *saṃhitā*s, and some *saṃhitā*s were ignored in their entirety. When comparing this shorter *Śivapurāṇa* recension with the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press edition, for example, it becomes readily apparent that the short *Śivapurāṇa* ignores completely the three *saṃhitā*s *Umā*, *Kailāsa*, and *Vāyavīya* (interestingly, the last two are among the *saṃhitā*s shared by the two modern editions). It includes numerous stories told in the five *khaṇḍa*s of the *Rudrasaṃhitā* as well as multiple stories narrated in the *Koṭirudrasaṃhitā* (these *saṃhitā*s, as mentioned above, draw heavily from the *Jñānasaṃhitā* included in the Vaṅgavāsī Press recension). A handful of stories narrated in *Śatarudrasaṃhitā* and *Vidyeśvarasaṃhitā* are also included in this shorter *Śivapurāṇa.* This shorter recension of the *Śivapurāṇa* thus seems to represent a parallel recension that drew stories from the larger pool of narratives concerning Śiva and his family.

Nashat's strategies of translation

Let us now explore a couple of passages from Nashat's text to demonstrate some of the author's translation strategies. The two *maṅgalācaraṇa* verses opening the text are an auspicious place to start. In Sanskrit, the puranic author begins with one verse dedicated to Śiva and his family, and another verse addressing Narasiṃha:[32]

> *śrīgaṇeśāya namaḥ*
> *jagataḥ pitaraṃ śaṃbhuṃ jagato mātaraṃ śivāṃ |*
> *tatputraṃ ca gaṇādhīśaṃ natvaitad varṇayāmy ahaṃ ||*
> *vāgīśā yasya vadane lakṣmīr yasya ca vakṣasi |*
> *yasyāsti hṛdaye -- taṃ nṛsiṃham ahaṃ bhaje || Śivapurāṇa* 1.1–2 (IO Sans 2815)

Salutations to Gaṇeśa
I praise in submission Śambhu and Śivā, the world's father and mother
as well as their son, Gaṇādhīśa.
I worship Nṛsiṃha, in whose mouth, chest, and mind
Vāgīśā, Lakṣmī, and -- reside.[33]

Nashat stays close to the first verse but presents some changes to the second one. Translating the Sanskrit verses into lightly rhymed Persian prose, he thus begins the first chapter:

> *rāvi-yi īn rivāyat-i dil-nishīn va ḥāki-yi īn ḥikāyat-i ṣadqtarīn jabha-yi nāz va pīshāni-yi irādat*
> *ba sijda --- srī mahādev va pārbatī ki pidar u mādar-i khalq-and va farzand-i arjumand-i īshān*
> *ki srī ganesh-and*
> *vālā guhare kaz arjumandī*
> *dar nām-i pidar nihad bulandī*
> *yaktā guhare ki chūn kunad auj*
> *daryā shavad az vay āsmān mauj*
> *nūrānī sākhta va adā-yi namaskār ba janāb-i narsingh jīv ki tamāmī ẓuhūr-i qudrat-i qādir dar*
> *dahān va lachhmī va giyān dar sīna-yi īshān ẓāhir ast namūda*

The narrator of this pleasing narrative and the author of this most truthful story illuminates the brow of gracefulness and the forehead of intention with a prostration --- for Sri Mahadev and Parbati, who are the parents of the world, and their beloved son, Sri Ganesh.
A precious gem, through its nobility
confers eminence on its father's name
A unique pearl, that when it surfaces
The ocean surges to the heavens
He further offers adoration to Narsingh Jīv, in whose mouth the entire presence of the omnipotence of God appears, and in whose chest Lachmi and knowledge manifest (Nashat 1730, f. 3v).

Nashat thus wraps the two verses in formulaic sentences that serve to set the stage of the narration event and further composes a Persian verse in the praise of Ganesh, inserted in between the two original praise verses. The differences between the Sanskrit verse dedicated to Narasiṃha and its Persian rendition might stem from variant readings of the verse or Nashat's misunderstanding. Without a comparative reading of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts of this recension and a more comprehensive study of the contents of Nashat's translation, it is impossible to determine why these changes took place.

Nashat's attempts to slightly elevate the text stylistically by using ornate language and inserting verses are seen elsewhere in the text, too. The beginning of the seventh *adhyāya* serves as an illuminating example. This chapter, narrating the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice and Satī's self-immolation, begins in Sanskrit as follows:

> *sūta uvāca |*
> *śrūyatāṃ ṛṣayaḥ -- kathayāmi kathāṃ śubhām |*
> *yac chrutvā saphalaṃ janma bhaviṣyati na saṃśayaḥ ||*

pūrvaṃ dakṣasya rudrasya sparddhā jātā mahātmanoḥ |
tato dakṣaḥ svayaṃ yajñaṃ kṛtavān devasannidhau ||
anāhūya tathā rudraṃ pūrvaṛṣisamanvitaḥ |
tato devī satī nāmnī pitrānāṃ kāritā yadā ||
tathā gatā punas tatra nāhūtāpi pitur gṛhaṃ |
prāpyāvajñāṃ tu sā tatra dehatyāgam athākarot || Śivapurāṇa 7.1–4 (IO Sans 2815)

Sūta said:
Let it be heard, sages! I'm telling you this auspicious tale.
Upon hearing it you'll undoubtedly attain a fruitful birth.
In the past, rivalry arose between eminent Dakṣa and mighty Rudra.
Then Dakṣa performed his own sacrifice in the presence of the gods.
He was already surrounded by all the sages, but he did not invite Rudra.
When the goddess named Satī became [aware] of her father's [actions],
Uninvited, she went to her father's house again.
But having been treated with disrespect, she then relinquished her body there.

Nashat accurately renders these four verses in Persian but pads his translation with more vivid imagery, inserted verses, and additional information that contributes to the flow of the story (such as Satī's mental state or the cause for the rivalry between Dakṣa and Rudra). He uses *sajʿ*, or rhymed prose, to construct longer sentences with repetitive phrases, characteristic of Persian literature:

adhyāy-i haftum dar bayān-i jagg-i dakchha prajāpat
sūt guft ay rikhīsharān khūb pursīdīd va az istimāʿ-i īn kathā darja-yi mukt ba shumā ḥāṣil
khwāhad shud ḥālā gosh-i niyosh ba man dārīd chūn ba taqrībe dar miyān-i dakchha va rudar
jīv ātish-i nifāq ba bālā kashīd va nāʾira-yi purkhāsh tā ba charkh-i haftum rasīd az ānjā ki nifāq
balāe ast va kharābe khānmān ārad va ʿālame rā ba sar pancha-yi nīstī rasānad
daulat hama zi ittifāq khīzad
be-daulate as nifāq khīzad[34]
dakchha dāʿiya-yi dūr az fahm va baʿīd az ʿaql karda shurūʿ dar jagg namūd va jamīʿ ʿābidān
va zāhidān rā barāy-i inṣirām-i ān ṭalab farmūd va hīch kas ba ṭalab srī mahādev jīv nafiristād
va āhūt jagg ki khāṣ-i devtā-hā ast ba nām-i īshān nadād satī khabar-i jagg shanīda be-ṭalab-i
pidar raushan kun-i khāna-ash gardīd chūn az īshān shafaqat-i pidarī u mādarī nadīd shuʿla-
yi āh tā ba sipihr-i barīn bar kashīd va qālib-i khwud rā hamānjā guẕāshta jān ba jān āfarīn
sipurda guft
vadāʿ jān-i man az jasm-i nā-tavān bāshad

Chapter seven, on Dakchha Prajapat's sacrifice

Sut said: You inquired well, sages! Upon hearing this story, you will reach liberation. Now listen to me carefully. At one time, the flame of hypocrisy arose between Dakchha and Rudar Jīv, and the fire of quarrel reached all the way to the seventh sphere. Hypocrisy is a calamity that can bring about the destruction of families and lead the world to the nails of ruin.

> Everyone's fortune arises from harmony
> Misfortune arises from hypocrisy

Dakchha had an unreasonable and inexplicable wish. He began the sacrifice, and to complete his wish, he ordered all the worshippers and ascetics not to search for Sri Mahadev Jīv, and not to dedicate to his name the Āhūt sacrifice, which is special to the gods. Sati heard the news of the sacrifice, and even though she was uninvited, she illuminated her father's house with her presence. Since she did not receive any parental kindness, she let out a blazing sigh to the heavens, and released her body in that very spot. She died gloriously, saying:

> Safe journey, my soul, from this weak body (Nashat 1730, f. 13r)

These examples should not give the impression that Nashat's translation is consistently ornate or heavily loaded with inserted verses. Quite the opposite: he uses rhymed prose sparingly and formulaically and inserts no more than a few single verses in every chapter. The origin of some of these verses can be traced back to poets such as Rumi (d. 1273), as in the above translated excerpt, Hilali (d. 1529), Nizami (d. 1209), and others.[35] Other verses are of unknown origin, and some were very popular in Mughal India, such as the famous verse:

> *agar firdaus bar rū-yi zamīn ast*
> *hamīn ast hamīn ast hamīn ast* (Nashat 1730, f. 34r)

> If there is paradise on earth
> It is here, it is here, it is here

This verse, used by Nashat to describe the city of Himavat—more splendid than the kingdoms of Alakā, Bhogavatī, and Amarāvatī—was famously inscribed on the wall of Shah Jahan's private audience chamber (Sharma 2017, p. 107).[36]

Conclusions

This article explored Kishan Singh Nashat's Persian translation of the *Śivapurāṇa.* It aimed to historically contextualise Nashat's life and work to shed light on the hitherto unexplored Persographic Śaiva communities in Northern India and their literary production on topics of popular Śaivism. Nashat's translation and his devotion to Śiva as the motivation behind his work, it was shown, stand out in the ocean of Vaiṣṇava literary production in Persian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The preface Nashat attached to his translation makes it clear that he wished to produce a Persian *Śivapurāṇa* as an act of devotion, to bring the knowledge of God's deeds and benevolence to his fellow Hindu scribes, who by the eighteenth century, he thought, could read Persian much more easily than Sanskrit.

Focussing on one *Shiv Puran* manuscript, which formerly belonged to Richard Johnson, this research further examined the scribal practices that were involved

in the production of this object and raised concerns regarding its date and production. It was suggested that in contrast with what is stated in Ethé's catalogue (itself based on scribal mistakes), the translation had been completed in 1730 and the manuscript—completed in 1782—had been produced specially for a western patron, probably Johnson himself.

Nashat's translation, it was further shown, is key in illuminating the history of the textual transmission of the Sanskrit *Śivapurāṇa*. Nashat did not produce a Persian abridgement of a longer 'full' *Śivapurāṇa*, but rather rendered in full an existing, and quite popular, Sanskrit recension that existed alongside independently circulating *saṃhitās*, that ended up being gathered into two long *Śivapurāṇa* editions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally, this article briefly examined some of Nashat's translation strategies and discussed the author's attempts to stylistically elevate the text by using rhymed prose, adding vivid literary imagery, composing new verses, and quoting poetic lines from the Persian canon. A more comprehensive study of the contents of Nashat's translation could further illuminate eighteenth-century Śaiva lore.

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Richard Johnson (1753-1807): *nabob, collector and scholar: an exhibition of oriental miniatures and manuscripts from the collection of Richard Johnson, as well as rare books, documents, prints and drawings illustrating his career and interests, mounted for the sesquicentenary of the Royal Asiatic Society... from 1 August 1973*. London: India Office Library, India Office Records.

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Notes

1 All transliterations from Persian and Arabic follow the transliteration schema of The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES). Attention is given to *majhūl* letters, common in Indo-Persian pronunciation.

2 The vast majority of printed editions of *purāṇa*s, printed by Veṅkaṭeśvara Press or Vaṅgavāsī Press, are not considered critical, as they rely on a limited, unknown number of manuscripts, they do not provide any information about the manuscripts used and do not include variant readings in the form of an apparatus. In other words, they lack transparency regarding the editing process. By comparison, the All India Kashiraj Trust published in the second half of the 20th century editions of *Vāmanapurāṇa*, *Kurmapurāṇa*, and *Vārahapurāṇa* that include many variant readings, drawing from a range of manuscripts and several earlier printed sources. For the first edition, see Gupta 1967. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* has also been critically edited in two volumes by Pathak (1999). On the problems with printed editions of *purāṇa*s, see: Rocher 1986, pp. 59–67.

3 Studies of reception of *purāṇa*s have tended to focus on puranic quotes in Sanskrit *nibandha* literature, as well as on commentarial writings on *purāṇa*s, and specifically on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. See: Hazra 1975; Noel, S. J. Sheth 1984; Florinda De Simini 2014; Greg Bailey 2018.

4 Audrey Truschke (2016, pp. 107–110), for example, notes that the *Razmnama* (the Persian Akbari translation of the *Mahābhārata* from the 1580s) follows the *Mahābhārata's* Devanagari northern recension, but deviates from it in one case. In the *Razmnama*, the 14th book, *Aśvamedha Parvan*, is based on the *Jaiminīyāśvamedha*, i.e., a different retelling of this section in the epic.

5   Among the literary, elevated Persian translations from the epic and puranic corpus, one can find, for example, Fayzi's *Mahabharat* (1586) and *Nal Daman* (1594), Masih's *Ram u Sita* (c. 1620), Chandarman Bedil's *Nargisistan* (1693), and Amanat Ray's *Jilwa-yi Zat* (1733).

6   Recent exceptions are Shankar Nair's book (2020) in which he analyzes Nizam Panipati's *Jog Basisht* (1598) against the Sanskrit *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*, and Stefano Pellò's article (2018) on Amanat Ray's Persian translation of the tenth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, entitled *Jilwa-yi Zat* (1733).

7   On the significance of translations to the Mughal political project and visions of kingship, see: Faruqui 2014; Truschke 2016; Alam 2016. Older surveys of Sanskrit-Persian translations have often framed them as resulting from Muslim curiosity about Hindu beliefs and rituals. See, for example: Gorekar 1965; Mujtabai 1978; Shukla 1988.

8   This title reflects the Persian pronunciation of the Sanskrit title: the short *a* vowel at the end of words is eliminated (thus, *śiva* turns into *shiv* and *purāṇa* turns into *puran*), and retroflex sounds are replaced by their dental counterparts. The term *puran* is thus consistently used throughout the essay to refer to the Persian title.

9   The *Harivaṃśa*, however, which is sometimes referred to as *purāṇa*, was translated in the late 16th century at Akbar's court as part of the broader *Razmnama* project. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was definitely known among Persian writers in the 16th century and even before, but probably was not translated in full. Summaries of it were made for Akbar, and parts of it, especially the 10th *skandha*, were rendered in Persian in the 14th century. See: Aumer 1866, p. 140; Truschke 2016, p. 107.

10 Anandghan Khwush was an extremely prolific author and translator. Between 1790–1795 he not only translated the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* in five volumes and the *Gayāmāhātmya*, but he also translated the *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, composed a *maṣnavī* (long narrative poem in rhyming couplets) in two volumes which he modelled on Rumi's *Maṣnavi-yi Maʿnavī*, and penned a *dīwān* (a collection of poetry). See: Ethé 1903, pp. 935, 1094–1096, 1575, 1578, 1589.

11 See, for example: Alam and Subrahmanyam 2004, 2007, 2010; Kinra 2010, 2015.

12 For recent scholarship on the *Skandapurāṇa*, see, for example: Bisschop 2006; Cecil 2020; Dokter-Mersch 2022.

13 This verdict is supported by other 20th century Indian scholars, such as Sashibhusan Chaudhuri, A. D. Pusalker, and others. See: Rocher 1986; p. 33n17.

14 On the denigrated status of *upapurāṇa*s in early scholarship, in comparison with *mahāpurāṇa*, see: Rocher 1986, p. 67–69.

15 Amanat Ray, for example, translated into Persian the tenth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* between the 1730–1750s.

16 Chandarman 'Bedil' (*fl.* 1690) and Amar Singh (*fl.* 1705), for example, clearly frame their *Ramayan* retellings in devotional terms. This is made clear by statements in their prefaces as well as the emphases they make in their translations. See: Bedil 2014; Amar Singh 1973.

17 Carl Ernst's collected essays from 2016, *Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga*, include several articles that deal with the relationship between Sufism and Yoga. Part two, *Sufism, Yoga, and Indian Religions*, discusses the presence of practices and ideas derived from Haṭha yoga and Nāth yoga in Arabic and Persian texts from South Asia and beyond.

18 It is possible, however, that such Śaiva texts were indeed translated but simply did not survive in the archives.

19   A preliminary examination of ʿAyn al-Zuhur suggests that this is a translation of the *Kāśīmāhātmya* from the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* rather than of the whole *purāṇa.* See: Ethé 1903, p. 1095, shelf mark IO Islamic 759.

20   Richard Johnson arrived in Kolkata in 1770 as a writer in the service of the East India Company. In the early 1780s, he served as an Assistant to the Resident in Lucknow, and between 1784 and 1785 he was the Resident in Hyderabad. It seems that his superiors were unhappy with him as he was recalled from both positions and ended up back in Kolkata. Some letter exchange between him and Sir William Jones suggests that they were on friendly terms and discussed their shared interests. In 1790 he resigned and returned to England where he took a job as a banker in the London and Middlesex Bank. After he got into some financial troubles, in 1807 he sold his collection of manuscripts and miniature paintings to the East India Company. He died later that year. His collection, currently held by the British Library, consists of sixty-four albums of paintings and about a 1000 manuscripts in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Sanskrit, Bengali, and more. See: Arnold 1921; India Office Records 1973.

21   These honorific titles were conferred to him by the Mughal emperor Shah Alam in 1780, together with a *mansab* rank of 6000, as a copy of a Mughal *sanad* indicates. See: India Office Records 1973, p. 9.

22   The retroflex ṣ was pronounced and written as the aspirated velar *kh* in several pre-modern South Asian vernaculars. Early modern Persian translators of Sanskrit texts often adopted the regional pronunciation in their transcription of words of Indic origins, and especially of sounds such as the Indic retroflexes, that were not found in Persian or other Central Asian languages that were written using the Perso-Arabic script.

23   It should be noted here that it is likely that many of these intellectual circles suffered a real blow during the 1739 Afghan attack on Northern India led by Nadir Shah. As Muzaffar Alam (2013, p. 180) notes, during the five months in 1739–1740 when Nadir Shah was in India, disorder and confusion ruled the Punjab.

24   On the differences between a *maktab* and a *madrasa*, see: Pedersen et al. 2012 and Landau 2012. Several publications from recent years discuss Persian education as well as the spread of Persian in rural towns, further away from the cosmopolitan centres of the Mughal empire. See, for example: d'Hubert 2019 and Orsini 2023.

25   The penname Aram (*ārām*) literally means calm or peaceful. The Raza Rampur Library catalogue of Persian manuscripts does not provide a descriptive entry on this work (shelf mark 5145). It mentions the translation is dated to 1148 AH/1735 CE and curiously, that the manuscript was copied in 1792 CE by his son, Kishan Singh Nashat himself. Without a closer examination of the manuscript, it is impossible to determine the accuracy of this information.

26   The social history of scribes and the significance of Persian to their professional pursuits, both in the Mughal period and in the early, formative years of British colonial rule, have received significant scholarly attention in recent decades. The work of Christopher Bayly (1996, 2012) on the role of bilingual scribes in the transition from the Mughal empire to colonial rule remains a crucial reading for the student of eighteenth century North India. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2004, 2007, 2010) have studied multiple aspects of the figure of the Hindu scribe through a close reading in the writings of figures like Sujan Ray Bhandari, Nek Ray, or Anand Ram Mukhlis. Most recently, Rosalind O'Hanlon, Anand Venkatkrishnan, and Richard

Williams (2020) have discussed the social and geographical mobility of scribal groups in the 18th century.

27   By 'masculine essence' (*muzakkar-zat*) Nashat probably refers to the Sāṃkhya-based cosmic imagery of *puruṣa-prakṛti* as the male and female elements of creation, often identified with Śiva and Śakti, respectively. This theology, Peter Bisschop (2018) explains, involves 'a male god who is the conscious and transcendent subject over-seeing creation and a goddess who is the active agent of material creation'. This division remains a central characteristic of many later forms of Śaivism.

28   The word *kavāʾif*, the plural form of *kayfiya*, is most commonly translated as qualities, attributes, or circumstances. In my rendition of Nashat's words, however, I decided to take *kavāʾif*—a Persian word derived from Arabic—and *līlā-hā*—a Sanskrit word with the Persian plural suffix, meaning playful pastime—as translating one another and participating in the semantic field of joy, pleasure, or playfulness. This decision is based on Persian conventions of ornate prose writing, where one often encounters pairs of synonyms that either rhyme or derived from the same verbal root. This convention of repetition was also quite popular among Persian translators from Sanskrit, who used it as a strategy to compose a flowing translation which includes both the original Sanskrit term and its Persian translation. Thus, one often encounters pairs of a Sanskrit term and its Persian rendition, such as *mukt va najāt* (liberation and salvation) or *giyān va maʿrifa* (both can roughly be translated as mystical knowledge of God). This translation decision is further substantiated by the fact the early modern Indo-Persian lexicons such as *Bahār-i ʿAjam* (2001, p. 1749) note that the word *kayfiya* is used among the Persians to indicate a state of joyous or playful drunkenness.

29   Modern scholarship on Persian translations of Sanskrit literature from early modern South Asia is characterised by a certain unease with the term 'translation'. A somewhat purist outlook permeates 20th century writings on Mughal-era translations and authors often pass judgement on the quality of Persian translations based on how accurate, faithful, or transparent they are. See, for example, Shukla 1988, p. 175.

30   These two phrases appear in the preface Mustafa Khaliqdad (1984, p. 5) composed for his 1590s Persian translation of the *Pañcākhyāna*. Similar statements can be found, for example, in the same author's translation of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (1997, p. 4), Nizam Panipati's (1981, p. 3) translation of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha* from 1598, or in Mulla Shah Muhammad Shahabadi's translation of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* from 1589 (1974, p. 43).

31   The shelf marks of these manuscripts are: IO Sans 2815, IO Sans 1876, IO Sans 43, IO Sans 835, and IO Sans 2659a.

32   For the purposes of this research, I rely on one Sanskrit manuscript (IO Sans 2815) of the shorter *Śivapurāṇa*, held in the British Library. This manuscript previously belonged to Charles Wilkins (d. 1836) and is dated *c.* 1750. There is no way to identify the actual manuscript with which Nashat had worked.

33   Śambhu is one of Śiva's names. Śivā, in the feminine, is Pārvatī, his consort. Gaṇādhīśa, the supreme lord of the *gaṇa*s (Śiva's army of attendants) is Gaṇeśa. Nṛsiṃha is Viṣṇu in his fourth incarnation (more commonly known as Narasiṃha). Vāgīśā is the goddess of speech or Sarasvatī, and Lakṣmī is one of Viṣṇu's consorts.

34   This verse is a variation on a line from one of Rumi's *ghazal*s: *parkandagī az nifāq khīzad/pīrozī az ittifāq khīzad*. See: (Furuzanfar 1995, vol. 1, p. 292).

35   The line quoted from Hilali appears in ff. 34r–35v and is taken from the *maqtaʿ* of one of his *ghazal*s: *shāhān chi ʿajab gar binavāzand gadā rā.* See: Nafisi 2004, 1–2. The verse

quoted from Nizami appears in f. 9v and is taken from the *Sharafnama*, the first part of Nizami's *Iskandarnama*, one of his five long narrative poems: *khudāvand-i mā-ʾī u mā banda-ʾīm/ba nīrū-yi tu yak yak zanda-ʾīm.* See: (Nizami 1947, p. 10).

36 This verse is used in abundance in other Persian puranic translations, especially in reference to Banaras. Nashat himself plays on the repetition of *hamīn ast* in the preface to his Persian translation of the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, or more precisely, of one section of it entitled in Sanskrit *Kāśīmāhātmya* ('The Greatness of Kashi'). Anandghan Khwush (*fl.* 1790–1795), who translated several puranic texts into Persian while residing in Banaras, used this verse on multiple occasions in his translation of the Sanskrit *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* ('The Kashi Book'), which is traditionally considered to be a section of the larger *Skandapurāṇa.*