Sir Sayyid's public sphere: Urdu print and oratory in nineteenth century India[1]

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Many years ago Jürgen Habermas warned that the concept of a public sphere "cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history" of Britain, France and Germany, especially since the eighteenth century; "nor can it be transferred, idealtypically generalized, to any number of historical situations that represent

formally similar constellations". He was careful to restrict his definition to a narrow "literary character of a public sphere constituted by private people putting reason to use"[2]. In the market economy of early industrial capitalism, this realm of the public interposes itself between the bureaucratic state and the new domestic privacy of the nuclear family and claims autonomy in the formulation of cultural values and political goals for the society at large. Like Gramsci's analysis of the role of intellectuals, ideology, and civil society in modern Italy, Habermas's work was concerned with the content and social location of formal, discursive speech and writing in relation to dominating concepts of power and authority in particular times and places[3]. Intended to undermine the authority of such utterances, both Habermas and Gramsci claimed that there is a real authority to undermine. And for Habermas, as opposed to Gramsci, there was more than a hint of nostalgia for the era when intellectuals counted for something, before the evil day when the culture industry and the capitalist welfare state absorbed the democratic potentiality inherent, however ambivalently, in the public sphere.

It's easy, as usual, to say that India is another story. The state was foreign; the capitalists by in large foreign too, and also far away; the realm of family privacy, pretty much an undiscovered country. The question I would like to consider is what to make of some of the bits and pieces, many of them consciously adapted from British examples, that seem to resemble the model of the public sphere, the attempts to formulate and promote a new form of collective consciousness among Indians in organized and ideologically articulate political and social movements. What should we make of the small forays of the literate few into print capitalism, voluntary associations, political debates and

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[2]   Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, tr. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1989, pp. xvii-xviii [original German publication, 1962]. The term for "public sphere" in the German original is *Öffentlichkeit*.

[3]   Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and tr. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, New York: International Publishers, 1971, pp. 44-90, 206-246.

demands for a "public" role for Indians in the formulation of government policy? Are they, as Benedict Anderson suggested, deracinated "pilgrims" imitating the "modular" examples of their foreign rulers, adapting ideas and institutions that arose out of different conditions, leap frogging history in order to participate in an imposed present?[4] And whatever it took to get the British to pay attention to them, what relation could they have to the larger populations they claimed to represent and to lead for the sake of some idea of the general welfare?

How might the concept of a "public sphere" apply to the Urdu language in the course of the nineteenth century? As a very partial response, I propose to look at the long career of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), in particular, his public utterances, first in print and then in speech. The effort will be to identify for further research issues of social context as well as specific formats and technologies as they may have transformed the authority of the written or spoken word and the definition of actual or potential interlocutors and audiences.

Muslims and print

As a young man, before he came to prominence as an educational leader, religious reformer and political spokesman for a significant section of South Asian Muslims, Sayyid Ahmad Khan devoted himself to historical research and the preparation and publication of critical editions of Indo-Muslim historical texts. My present, very preliminary effort will be to ask questions about the physical appearance of these printed texts in relationship to their manuscript sources. How was "the art of the book" transformed by the processes of turning them into printed texts, and what do these transformations say about the authority of the text and its accessibility, perhaps, to new ways of reading and new reading publics? In what respects do Sayyid Ahmad's publications participate in an on-going tradition of Persianate literacy and to what extent were they altered by European textual conventions?

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[4]   *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983, pp. 106-123.

Large claims are sometimes made for the significance of printing in the modern history of India and the Islamicate world, first as absence, a symptom of "what went wrong"[5]; then as "revolutionary" transformation with respect to religious consciousness, social identity, and the nature of authority. The category of printing refers not only to a range of technologies, developed first in China and Korea, then in Europe, but also to a set of institutions and practices now commonly bracketed as "print capitalism". Why Muslims and others over a period of nearly four centuries did not take up these technologies and practices, even when they were aware of them, has, in the eyes of some scholars, called for an explanation. Fairly elaborate arguments have been advanced about the nature of Islam and the Arabic alphabet, the alleged primacy of oral over written communication, the authority of face to face instruction, and the vested interest and aesthetic standards of calligraphers that are said to have made print technologies illegitimate or at least unappealing[6].

The task of designing Arabic fonts for moveable type was taken up in Europe and by Europeans long before it took hold in the Islamicate world[7]. In India, the establishment of British rule in Bengal and surrounding areas in the late eighteenth century stimulated the first significant efforts to publish printed books. Christian missionaries, at first in the Danish colony at Serampore, then, after 1813, within territories under British rule, made vigorous efforts to reach new Indian audiences with books and pamphlets in Urdu and other Indian languages. William Jones, Francis Gladwin, William Kirkpatrick, and John Borthwick Gilchrist presided over the preparation and publication of text books and reference works in European formats, largely for British

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[5]   Bernard Lewis, *What went wrong? Western impact and Middle Eastern response*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 142-145.

[6]   For example, see Francis Robinson, "Islam and the impact of print in South Asia", [in:] *The transmission of knowledge of South Asia*, ed. by Nigel Crook, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 64-70; also Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 133-134.

[7]   "Maṭbaʿa", [in:] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 6, ed. by C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and Ch. Pellat, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.

military and civilian officials. They also commissioned manuscript copies and later publication of works of historical and cultural significance. "As for the manuscript tradition itself", according to Jeremiah Losty, "it was (…) a victim of the interest of a few men like William Jones" and others, who "naturally collected manuscripts, being concerned to gather together the basic literature of India, and used the printing-press in Calcutta as the means of printing and, hence, widely disseminating India's ancient learning". By the mid-nineteen century, "a flood of Indian and Persian classics from presses throughout India" eliminated "the need to have works laboriously copied by hand (…), and the manuscript tradition itself (…) all but came to an end"[8].

The fact that printing developed in Europe and arrived in India under the auspices of Christian missionaries and imperial conquerors presumably made it strange, even suspect. The literary theorist Homi Bhabha quotes a missionary account of an incident in Delhi in 1817 when a group of Indians were supposedly struck with awe at the sight of a New Testament translation in "the Hindoostanee Tongue": "(…) never having heard of a printed book before, (…) its very appearance was to them miraculous". But if they felt that way, they nevertheless were unpersuaded by the missionary's arguments for Christianity and refused to be baptized. Since the book was printed, according to Bhabha's reading of the incident, it was bound up with the alienation of British rule. The creative response to the challenge, according to Bhabha's influential essay, was to "mimic" this foreign, imperial artifact "as the affect of hybridity – at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance, from the disciplined to the desiring"[9].

Not only a sign of foreign conquest, printing stands forth, according to some scholars, as part of the narrative of modernity, the domination of Europe over the entire course of human history: of science and technology, individual conscience, the nation

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[8]   Jeremiah P. Losty, *The art of the book in India*, London: The British Library, 1982, p. 150.

[9]   Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs taken for wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817", [in:] idem, *The location of culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 103, 120. Bhabha assumes, probably incorrectly, that the text was in Hindi, rather than Urdu.

state, the rise of standardized vernacular languages and much more[10]. When Aloys Sprenger, the Swiss physician and orientalist, was commissioned to prepare a catalogue of the libraries of the Nawab of Avadh in 1848, he prefaced his work by claiming that India was recapitulating the history of modern Europe. "After the Musalmans had, several centuries ago, entirely lost sight of the original idea of their religion, they are now beginning to make their sacred books intelligible to all. This must lead to results, analogous to those which the translation and study of the Bible produced in Europe". Furthermore, he claimed, the newly created audience, included women, had created a demand for "light literature" and "a spirit of liberality" and "general civilization"[11]. Recently, Francis Robinson has asserted a more complex version of a similar view: the onset of print did create an "Islamic Protestantism" and "modernization", but it was as an act of resistance to European Christian rule, lead by ulama, that print came into its own among South Asian Muslims. By the 1820s, there emerged throughout India a powerful counter-missionary movement among Muslims, using similar techniques of printing as well as popular oratory[12].

Whether or not one accepts the more sweeping claims for Europe or Euro-America as the model and standard for what might happen elsewhere, the historiography of European printing

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[10]   Most influentially are the classic works by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The printing press as an agent of change*, single volume ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The coming of the book*, tr. David Gerard, London: Verso, 1976. Febvre and Martin offered a more complex and less "revolutionary" view of the impact of printing.

[11]   Aloys Sprenger, *A catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindustany manuscripts, of the libraries of the King of Oudh, compiled under the orders of the Govt. of India*, Vol. 1: *Persian and Hindustany poetry*, Calcutta, Printed by J. Thomas, 1854, p. viii.

[12]   F. Robinson, "Islam and the impact of print…", esp. pp. 73 and 82. See also brief discussion and further references in my essay, "The colonial context of Muslim separatism: from Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi to Sayyid Ahmad Khan", [in:] *Living together separately: cultural India in history and politics*, ed. by Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 408-411.

can be instructive in raising questions about textualities in other cultural contexts. Most of the limited literature on the history of printing in India, at least with reference to Urdu, recounts the authors, titles, and types of texts – newspapers, novels, religious scriptures and disputations – and to some small extent the number and cost of such publications[13]. If one is to take European history seriously, as a guide to the significance of printing in India, one can do better. Print technologies and print capitalism in Europe were in fact considerably more diverse and uneven developments than many common characterizations would lead us to believe. The relationship between the elaborate conventions of the European manuscript and the early craft of printing, the so-called incunabula with their own special hybridities, reveal that the printed text was far from being the standardized and transparently authoritative artifact that are too casually associated with printing. The processes of producing, distributing and reading such texts, their various genres and formats, all had to be developed over time in a variety of cultural contexts. The economics and social networks of book production and consumption were

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[13] There is one outstanding study of early print capitalism in Urdu (and also Hindi): Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007. See also Robert Darnton, "Book Production in British India, 1850-1900", *Book History* 2002, No. 5, pp. 239-262; *Print Areas: Book History in India*, ed. by Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004; Anindita Ghosh, "An uncertain 'coming of the book': early print cultures in colonial India", *Book History* 2003, No. 3, pp. 23-55, which deals primarily with Bengali. Some earlier studies that are more specifically relevant to Urdu include Muḥammad ᶜAtīq Ṣiddīqī, *Hindustānī axbārnavīsī (kampanī ke ᶜahd mẽ)*, Aligarh: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū (Hind), 1957; Emmett Davis, *Press and Politics in British Western Punjab, 1836-1947*, New Delhi: Academic Publications, 1983; and Nazir Ahmad, *Oriental presses in the world*, Lahore, Pakistan: Qadiria Book Traders, 1985, is exceptional in its attention to the technical history of printing. See also Graham Shaw, "Lithography v. Letter-Press in India: Part II: Lithography and the Vernacular Book", *South Asia Library Notes and Queries* 1994-1995, No. 30, pp. 1-10. For a fresh look at "how printing did (rather than did not) spread among Muslims", see Nile Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel, Trans-Culture and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2009, No. 41(2).

not necessarily so sharply divided between the era of the manu-
script and the printed text, and there remained for many centuries
significant areas of overlap between the unique version of a text
and its mechanically reproduced ones. The details of the printing
craft and physical appearance of a text, it has been argued, are
constituents of its meaning, indications of how an utterance
changes in transmission, not only what goes into creating texts
but also what sort of activities can be considered "reading" them,
what makes participation in any of the relevant roles associated
with literacy accessible to some people and not to others[14].

As in Europe, there is evidence of considerable continuity
between the manuscript tradition and the introduction of print
technologies to India. The nature of reading and writing in India
at least during the Mughal era from the late 16th century had un-
dergone a significant history of transformation before the intro-
duction of print technology. For all the continuing authority of
face to face mediation in the transmission of textual knowledge,
Nile Green has shown a simultaneous world of bureaucratic,
historical, epistolary and other literary texts that were collected,
exchanged and read without the presence of personal interac-
tion[15]. If the process of cutting the type fonts and assembling
them for printing required a wholly different set of skills from
the arts of calligraphy, the invention of lithography in Germany
at the end of the eighteenth century opened up the possibility of
reproducing hand written texts in ways that were more consistent
with established practice. Abdul Halim Sharar's account of how
the art of calligraphy thrived in the early days of lithography
(*patthar kā chāpā*) in Lucknow after 1830, claims that it was at

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[14] See Cyndia Susan Clegg, "History of the book: an undisciplined
discipline?", *Renaissance Quarterly* 2001, No. 54, pp. 221-245, for a recent
review essay on the state of the field, and the *AHR Forum: How Revolu-
tionary Was the Print Revolution?*, *American Historical Review* 2002 (Feb-
ruary), No. 107(1), pp. 84-128. See among his many works Roger Chartier,
*The order of books: readers, authors, and libraries in Europe between the
fourteenth and eighteenth centuries*, tr. Lydia G. Cochran, Cambridge:
Polity Press, 1994.

[15] Nile Green, "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal *Takiyya:* Persia-
nate Knowledge Between Person and Paper", *Modern Asian Studies* 2010,
No 44, 2, pp. 241-265.

first uncontaminated by commercial motives. Only the finest calligraphers took up the new art, using the finest inks, the finest paper. No cost was spared: "(…) thousands of lamps of mustard-oil were lighted to produce the fine-quality lamp-black. Instead of aid, fine-skinned lemons were used and sponges took the place of cloth". Lucknow calligraphers became skilled in the art of making correction directly on the printing stone by writing the letters in reverse (*ulṭā likhnā*)[16].

Despite the looming spectre of British military and economic dominance, Lucknow, like Delhi, survived in the penumbra of Mughal courtly regimes until the upheavals of 1857. By that time, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, born and raised as a Mughal gentleman in a family closely attached to the Red Fort of Delhi and its surroundings, an employee of the East India Company for some twenty years, had managed to keep the colonial culture at bay by devoting his extra-curricular attentions to the study of Islamic theology and Mughal history. Well educated in Arabic and Persian, he did not know English. During those years Sayyid Ahmad participated in the introduction of printing to the cultural milieu of Delhi. Following the old Mughal pattern, his career took him to smaller towns and cities and extended his links to a more far-flung community, the so-called "service gentry," heirs to the literate officials, religious scholars and dispersed military families of the Mughal empire.

In cities, small towns and fortresses of the rural countryside, members of this "service gentry" lived off newly secured land revenue with occasional forays into "service" for the British or other holders of land and power. In the course of the nineteenth century, according to C. A. Bayly, "English education and new forms of communication greatly expanded the organization and self-consciousness of intermediate people between state and agrarian society". Bayly has argued, however, that "pre-colonial 'mentalities' and forms of organization (…) were active forces"

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[16] ᶜAbd ul-Ḥalīm Šarār, *Guzaštā Lakhnau*, reprint ed., Lucknow: Nasīm Book Depot, 1965, pp. 142-145; originally published in serialized form c. 1913-1920; English ed. and tr. by E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Husain, *Lucknow: the last phase of an oriental culture*, London: Paul Elek, 1975, pp. 107-108.

in the social history of the colonial period[17]. In later work, Bayly has noted that the printing press, long ignored as a useful technology in an already complex and highly active "information order", suddenly blossomed forth in the 1820s and 1830s. He notes, however, that the content of printed texts closely resembled and complemented the religious, political, commercial and literary texts of long established oral and manuscript formats[18].

Must we then identify the pre-colonial with the pre-modern and therefore the colonial with the rise of modernity: the familiar narrative of the mobilization of publics in the rising politics of the nation, with India, once again, consigned to an imperfect emulator of European history?[19] Instead, one can try to look more closely at the actual form and content of specific practices to see how people in India used technologies for their own diverse purposes, not only in response to the colonial situation but to the multiple histories that colonial rule could not wipe away.

The unread page (*varaq-e na-xunda*)

When Shiv Narayan Aram and Hargobind Tufta, two friends of Mirza Ghalib, the great Urdu poet, approached him in 1858 with a proposal to publish his Urdu letters, he refused. "Why should we let others read what only concerns us?" He had no objection to printing his poetry or his highly crafted *Persian* prose, if only as an insurance against the loss of hand-copied manuscripts. But

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[17] C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 195. Bayly identifies this so-called gentry with the late nineteenth century clientele of institutions like Aligarh and Deoband, having developed cultural styles and networks of communication which were separate from those of the predominantly Hindu merchants of the towns. Recognizing the variety of their local situations, some of which were quite insecure, he attempts to relate these variations to the emergence of "communal" politics.

[18] C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 199-200, 238-243.

[19] This is the theme of Dipesh Chakrabarty's important book, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

casual, personal correspondence in a colloquial language was not something suitable for general distribution. Just a few months after the British reconquest of Delhi, the idea was offensive to this former court poet. Nor did he have any interest in accepting a British commission to write an Urdu text book for schools in the North-West Provinces. But five years later Ghalib was somewhat more well disposed when "a man of high rank" came to him with a similar proposition regarding the publication of his Urdu letters. It turned out, however, that this person was merely acting as an intermediary for someone who was "only a dealer in books, concerned with estimating what he'll gain or lose, what he'll have to pay out and what he can save". Nothing came of the project. Then five years after that, just before Ghalib died, the first collection of his Urdu letters was in fact published[20].

Sayyid Muhammad, who had published the first edition of Ghalib's Urdu *divān* in 1841, ran one of Delhi's first presses, which also published one of its earliest newspapers, the *Sayyid al-axbār*, founded in 1836 or 1837. When Sayyid Muhammad died in 1841, the press was taken over by his younger brother, Sayyid Ahmad, who continued the enterprise for eight more years while working as a *munṣif* for the East India Company. At the same time he prepared and published his history of the buildings of Delhi, *Āṣār us-ṣanādīd*. But in 1848-1849, when the newspaper folded it had only thirty-nine subscribers[21].

To call this "print capitalism" would be an exaggeration. In 1853 the total circulation of the forty vernacular newspapers in the North-west Provinces and Punjab was under two thousand. The three papers with circulations over 200 were taken on government subscription for use in the schools. For some time such government patronage was essential to the viability of a press, though one press, the Moostufaee Press of Lucknow and Delhi,

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[20] Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969, pp. 180-182 (translated from *Xuṭūṭ-e Ġālib*, ed. by Ġulām Rasūl Mihr, Lahore: Panjab University, 1969).

[21] Muḥammad ʿAtīq Ṣiddīqī, *Ṣuba šimāli-o-maġribī ke axbarāt-o--maṭbuʾāt (1848-1855)*, Alīgaṛh: Anjuman Taraqqī-e Urdū (Hind), 1962, pp. 103-104; Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥāli, *Ḥayāt-i Jāvīd*, reprint ed., Lahore: ʿIšrat Publishing House, 1965 [1901], pp. 71-72.

was noted for having a successful distribution network of its own
and, in the words of the British official who reviewed the so-
called "native press" that year, "gets rid of a lot of trash, as well
as succeeds in sowing the seeds of wickedness and vice". Presses
that were notable for "scurrilous print" and "abuse of Cove-
nanted servants" did not, of course, receive government patron-
age[22]. But even after the 1857 Revolt, British authorities admitted
that they did not have the administrative resources to police "in-
jurious publications". One British official noted that "the amount
of Literature, good or bad, which finds its way into the Indian
market, is to modern European ideas absurdly insignificant, and
the 'general reading' Indian public forms such an infinitesimal
fraction of the vast population, that direct influence of the few
publications on readers, cannot be estimated by their number
according to an European standard". He went on to say, however,
"The thinking Indian public are a minority, but they are a most
potent minority, (…) essentially hostile to European Science and
Literature, as well as to Europeans and their Government. On
them the political influence of treasonable or foolish publications
is to be dreaded (…)"[23]. It was not until 1870 that the law created
severe obstacles to those who would try "to excite feelings of
disaffection" for which a publisher could be fined, imprisoned or
transported for life[24].

From the Persian manuscript to the Urdu printed book

What follows will be a very preliminary presentation of some
specific examples in the career of an individual, Sayyid Ahmad
Khan, who was to become associated with "Islamic modernism"
and a deliberate effort to integrate aspects of European cultural

[22] "Notes on the Native Presses in the North-Western Provinces, for
the Year 1853", [in:] *Selections from the Records of Government: North-
Western Provinces*, vol. IV, Allahabad: Government Press, N.-W.P., 1868,
pp. 111-149.

[23] F. B. Outram, "Note on Native Periodicals and Presses – 1858",
[in:] *ibidem*, pp. 152-153.

[24] Act XXVII of 1870 (Indian Penal Code amendment), quoted in
Ram Ratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism*, Allaha-
bad: Kitab Mahal, n.d. [1947?], p. 98.

practice into the lives of a newly "imagined community" of Indian Muslims. This is not an attempt to present a comprehensive study of Sayyid Ahmad's printing enterprise, but rather to identify the range and development of printing technologies and aesthetic formats that he employed. It should be understood that a fuller examination of printing and other forms of communication in northern India and among Indian Muslims would present a much more various and complicated picture, but even this one series will suggest the multiple meanings of printed communications in different historical contexts.

Manuscript of the *Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī* (India Office mss. Ethé, No. 2833)[25]

In addition to being one of Delhi's first publishers, Sayyid Muhammad was an accomplished calligrapher. Hermann Ethé, the learned orientalist who catalogued the Persian manuscripts in the India Office Library in 1903, describes in detail the "excellent Nasta'lik" and "splendid illuminated frontispieces", "fine gilt arabesques", "each page surrounded by a small gilt frame; gorgeous Eastern binding; size 12 $^6/_8$ in. by 8 $^1/_2$ in." of this "excellent copy" of the Emperor Jahangir's memoirs. The five page colophon starts by identifying the calligrapher, Sayyid Muhammad, and his distinguished lineage from the Prophet Muhammad and a long line of Mughal officials. Sayyid Muhammad says that he completed the work in July 1841, giving the Christian date, on the basis of two older manuscripts, one in the Mughal royal library, which was still extant, and another belonging to a private collector, Rajah Roghu Nath Singh; and that he did it for General Thomas Paterson Smith, with a view to preparing a printed version and English translation. A lithographed edition (*ba čhāpah sang*), he says, would be prepared by his brother Sayyid Ahmad,

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[25] Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the India Office Library*, Oxford: India Office, 1903, No. 2833, at http://www.archive.org/details/catalogueofpersi01greauoft; H. Beveridge, "Preface", [in:] *The Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī or Memoirs of Jahangir*, tr. by Alexander Rogers, ed. by Henry Beveridge, reprint ed., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p. 1968, p. xii. My initial interest in the colophon was spurred by a separate research project on the family history of Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

the *munṣif* of Fatehpur Sikri. According to an inscription on the inner flyleaf, General Smith presented the manuscript to the India Office Library in 1854.

In appearance, Sayyid Muhammad's handsomely illuminated manuscript has much in common with the lithographed publications that were just beginning to appear on the Indian scene, though the direction of influence will require further research. There is no title page and no punctuation or division into paragraphs, but there is a table of contents (*fehrist*) written in red. Consistent with older manuscripts there are corrections in red, rubrications, that may show links between older Islamic and European manuscript conventions. Also, the lines are justified, something that was more easily achieved in *nastaᶜlīq* than in *naqš*, the calligraphic style commonly used in moveable type. The fine waxed paper and multicolored gilt designs marking the separate chapters, were characteristic of older manuscripts, but the numbering of pages was presumably borrowed from printed models. It has been claimed that Indian *nastaᶜlīq* style is closer to printing than Irani styles[26]. If this is true, it isn't clear if this is a recent development in the wake of printing or a convergence of forms.

Manuscript of the *Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī* (Bodlein Library ms., Sachau and Ethé, No. 221)[27]

Sayyid Muhammad completed the manuscript shortly before his death in 1841. Five years later, his younger brother, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, made his own copy in a similar format, "two illuminated frontispieces (…); each page framed with stripes in gold and other colors; different illustrations, coins, seals, a view of the black stone, etc. etc. (…); binding with green and gold". But there is a disparaging note here, aside from the "etc. etc."; the

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[26] Golam-Hosayn Yusufi, "Calligraphy", [in:] *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 4 (fasc. 7), p. 711; available at http://www.iranica.com/newsite.

[27] *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Pushtu Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, ed. by Eduard Sachau and Hermann Ethé, Part I: *Persian Manuscripts*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1889, No. 221, p. 118 [Elliot 406], at http://www.archive.org/details/catalogueofpersi01 bodluoft.

nastaᶜlīq, say the learned cataloguers, is "written by a very modern hand", a charitable way of commenting on the inferiority of the calligraphy, aggravated by a tendency to overlap or insert words over the lines. Aside from the modern style of the illustrations, other "modern feature included a table of contents coordinated with the numbered pagination. The colophon states that Sayyid Ahmad compared ten manuscripts from the library of Bahadur Shah, the *pādšāh* of Delhi, to establish this text. He had done the work for John Panton Gubbins[28].

The fact that these copies were made for British officials raises questions about payment and patronage and to what extent Mughal and British practices in this regard resembled or diverged from each other[29]. There is no evidence, however, of money changing hands. One may also ask how the task of establishing a text based on comparative readings of alternative manuscript sources reflected contemporary European scholarship as opposed to earlier Islamic standards.

The era of lithography

Munshi Sayyid Ahmad Khan Dehlvi, *Jām-i Jam* ([Agra]: bi chāpa-e sang līthogrāfik [1840])[30]

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's first publication, written when he was twenty-one years old and printed a year later, was a lithographed chart of the Timurid dynasty, prepared at the behest of Robert

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[28] S. A. A. Rizvi, "A Farewell Address in Urdu Presented to John Panton Gubbins by the Citizens of Delhi in 1852", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 1964, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 397-407.

[29] For a good description of Mughal patronage of libraries and book production in the age of Akbar and Jahangir, see John Seyller, *Workshop and patron in Mughal India: the Freer Ramayana and other illustrated manuscripts of ᶜAbd al-Rahim*, Washington: Artibus Asiae in association with the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1999, Supplementum XLII, pp. 50-58.

[30] Edward Edwards, *A Catalogue of the Persian Printed Books in the British Museum*, London: British Museum, 1922, col. 98 at: http://www.

Hamilton, the Commissioner of Agra, where Sayyid Ahmad had just started his career in the East India Company service. The work starts with a preface that includes the kind of information about the author's family that was contained in the colophons of the Jahangir manuscripts. The chart itself goes from Timur to Bahadur Shah, filling in information under such headings as father's name, mother's name, *qaum* (they are all Chaghtai), various relevant dates (in the Hijri calendar), place of burial, and a brief comment.

Āʾīn-i Akbarī, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Xān, ḥasb-e farmāʾiš Šaix Quṭb ud-Dīn va Muḥammad Ismāʾīl Saudāgarān-e Dehlī, dar Maṭbūʾa Ismāʾīlī… 1272 H. [1855 C.E.][31]

As indicated on the title page, Sayyid Ahmad undertook the preparation of a scholarly edition of this late 16th century work on a commission from two Delhi merchants. Altaf Husain Hali, Sayyid Ahmad's biographer, states that Sayyid Ahmad was compensated by being presented, as a *naẕr*, an offering from an inferior to a superior, with the published books, valued at Rs. 1600, although it isn't clear if this amounted to the full edition and how large that edition might have been. Of the three volumes planned for the book, only two, the first and the third, were published. Materials for the second were lost in 1857[32]. In any case, the

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archive.org/details/catalogueofpersi00brituoft. See also: *Maqalat-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Pānīpatī, Vol. 16, Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab, 1965, pp. 2-3, 13-74. Cf. H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians. The Muhammadan Period*, Vol 8, London: Trübner and Co, 1877, pp. 430-431. For the manuscript of this text, perhaps in SAK's own hand, see Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. 1, London: British Museum, 1966, Or. 145, pp. 284-285, at http://www.archive.org/details/catalogueof persi01brituoft (thanks to C. M. Naim). See also "Hamilton, Sir Robert North Collie, sixth baronet (1802-1887)", rev. Peter Penner, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (online edn, Jan 2008: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12125).

[31] E. Edwards, *A Catalogue of the Persian Printed Books…*, col. 55. For a facsimile edition see Abu ʾl-Faẓl ʿAllāmī, *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, be taṣḥīh Sar Sayyid Aḥmad, Alīgaṛh: Sar Sayyid Akaiḍmī, 2005.

[32] A. Ḥ. Ḥāli, *Ḥayāt-i Jāvīd*, pp. 78-82.

project was conceived as a luxury item and a highly limited edition. The book relied on extensive research, with much annotation and insertion of additional information based on variant manuscript and other sources, but it also exhibited the best traditional calligraphy and extensive illustrations.

In the tradition of Islamic manuscripts, annotations were inserted around the page, often sideways and upside down. On the other hand, Sayyid Ahmad took care with tables and charts to align them in ways more like those used in British official records. The illustrations were informative but relied on schematic line drawings at some distance from the Mughal miniatures of the past[33].

Ās̱ār us-s̱anādīd, 1st ed. (Delhi: Maṭbūʾa Sayyid ul-Axbar, 1847 ʿisvī, 1263 H.)[34]

Among Sayyid Ahmad's most significant publications during his early years are two editions of an historical account and guide to Delhi. The press used to print them had been purchased by his older brother, Sayyid Muhammad, who died in 1841, the year he completed the *Tūzuk* manuscript. That press was destroyed in the course of the violent conflicts of 1857.

That first edition of *Ās̱ār us-s̱anādīd* may be counted as one of the earliest works of Urdu historiography, but it was clearly founded on earlier Persian prototypes, more an album (*mu-*
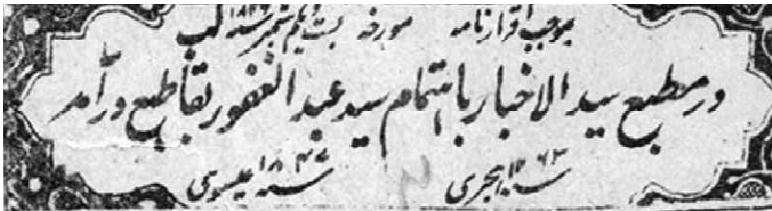
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[33] Many of these illustrations were reproduced, without acknowledgement, in the English translation by H. Blochmann (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872 and later editions).

[34] J. F. Blumhardt, *Catalogue of Hindustani Printed Books in the Library of the British Museum*, London: 1889, col. 23. See facsimile edition, Sir Syed Academy publication, 1. Alīgaṛh: Sar Sayyid Akaiḍmī, Alīgaṛh Muslim Yūnīvarsiṭī, 2007. I am also indebted to C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called «Asar-al-Sanadid»", *Modern Asian Studies* 2011, No. 45, pp 669-708. See also my essays, "The Qutb Minar in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Ās̱ār us-s̱anādīd*", [in:] *Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India*, ed. by Indra Sengupta and Daud Ali (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2011; "Sauda Sulaf: Urdu in the Two Versions of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Asaru's-Sanadid", *Annual of Urdu Studies* 2011, vol. 26, pp. 21-38 (<http://www.urdustudies.com/pdf/26/06LelyveldSauda.pdf>).

raqqaᶜ), guidebook, gazetteer and biographical dictionary (*taẓ-
kira*) than historical narrative[35]. Interspersed throughout with
long extracts of poetry, mostly in Persian, the Urdu style of the
first edition is suffused with Persian language and rhetoric, not
easily translatable into English and not, presumably, addressed
primarily to a foreign audience.

    Although this printed book partakes of some conventions of
European publications, there is still some continuity with older
Persian manuscript works in a similar genre. The illustrations in
one copy at the British Library are hand colored[36]. The script is
nastaᶜlīq, reproduced by lithography.

    The title page recalls the ornamental rosettes (*šamsa*) of the
Persian manuscript tradition, but as C. M. Naim has pointed out,
there is commercial and publication information that one would
not see on a manuscript:

That is, "according to the contract (*iqrār nāma*) dated 1st Sep-
tember, 1846. At the press of Sayyid ul-akhbār, under the super-
vision of ᶜAbd ul-Ghafūr, 1263 hijri, 1847 isvi". The text then
starts off on the next page with an ornamental presentation of a
taqrīẓ written for this book, as the heading states, by an eminent
senior poet and intellectual of Delhi, Navab Muhammad Ziya-
-uddin Khan, presented in four columns over the next four pages
and ending with the inverted triangle common to the manuscript
tradition. This is followed by the preface, with a new ornamental
heading occupying one-third of the page and enclosing the

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    [35]   Christian W. Troll, "Note on an early topographical work of Sayyid
Ahmad Khan: *Āsār us-sanādīd*", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1972.
    [36]   J. F. Blumhardt, *Catalogue of the Library of the India Office*, Vol. II.-
Part II: *Hindustani books*, London 1900, No. 14109.c6.

biʾsmiʾl-lāh benediction. Below that comes the source of the book's title, a verse by ꜥUrfi Shirazi of Akbar's court:

> *az naqš o nigāre dar o divār šikasta*
> *ās̱ār padīd ast s̤anādīd ꜥajam rā*

> The marks and decorations of ruined gates and walls
> reveal traces of foreign [Persian] heroes.

Then comes a four page prose preface that ends with a dedication to the British commissioner of Delhi, a Persian *mas̱navī-s*, and a listing of the four chapters (*bāb*) that make up the book. Much of the body of the book is comments on landmarks of the city, presented in no particular geographical, historical or thematic order, and each illustrated with a lithographed black and white picture.

Ās̱ār us-s̤anādīd, 2ⁿᵈ ed. (dar mat̤baʾa sult̤ānī vaqāʾeꜥ qilꜥa-e muꜥallā, 1269 hijrī, mut̤ābiq 1852 ꜥisvī)[37]

During the years that intervened between the two editions of *Ās̱ār us-s̤anādīd*, Sayyid Ahmad was increasingly drawn into European ideas, methods and social relations. When Arthur Austin Roberts, the Collector and Magistrate of Delhi, traveled to England, he took a copy of the first edition with him to present to the Royal Asiatic Society. He returned with the idea of enlisting Sayyid Ahmad to help him prepare an English translation. In the process of discussing the work, however, Sayyid Ahmad was persuaded that it needed substantial revision with respect organization, chronology, and the accuracy of many of the details in the text.

The second edition has none of the illustrations of the first, but it contains extensive reproductions of inscriptions in a variety of Indic and Islamicate scripts, as well as tables, references and other scholarly apparatus. There is far less poetry, and the lan-

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[37]   J. F. Blumhardt, col. 23; facsimile edition, Sir Syed Academy publication, 2. Alīgaṛh: Sar Sayyid Akaiḍmī, Alīgaṛh Muslim Yūnīvarsiṭī, 2007; also available on google books under its English designation: Syud Ahmed Khan, *Asar-Oos-Sunnadeed: A History of Old and New Rules, or Governments, and of Old and New Buildings in the District of Delhi*, Delhi: Indian Standard Press, 1854.

guage is closer to the undecorated prose style that Sayyid Ahmad later used in much of his journalism. Responding to what purported to be the scholarly demands of some British officials, little was done to make the work attractive by Indian aesthetic standards.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's shift to typography

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's publications before 1857 used lithography to reproduce handwritten texts[38]. After 1857 and the destruction of his brother's lithographic printing facilities, Sayyid Ahmad turned to moveable type to conduct a concerted campaign to reconcile British rulers and Indians, particularly Muslims, to each other. His publications in the years immediately after the rebellion, *Asbāb-e baġāvat-e Hind* (Causes of the Indian Revolt) and *An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India*, both of them printed by J. A. Gibbons at the Mofussilite Press, the first in Agra in 1859, the second in Meerut the following year. Printed in moveable type, they could accommodate both English and Urdu in the same format. Although the *Asbāb* was primarily an Urdu text, it contained marginal and interlinear English glosses and quotations. The *Loyal Muhammadans* text, intended as a serial publication, was presented in double columns, Urdu on the right, English on the left. Both were primarily intended for a British official audience.

> ***Syud Ahmud, The Mohomedan commentary on the Holy Bible: Taba'īn al-kalām fī tafsīr al-Taurāt va al-Injīl ᶜalá millat-i al-Islām**, Part First (Ghazeepore: Printed and Published by the Author at his private press, 1862 A.D., 1278 H.)*

According to his biographer Altaf Husain Hali, Sayyid Ahmad drew on compensation and reward money that he received for

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[38]   An exception is *Taḥṣīl fī jarr al-ṣaqīl* (Āgrā ke yatīmoṅ ke chāpa-xāna meṅ [Agra Orphans Press], 1844) a short treatise on mechanics, translated from Persian to Urdu in accordance with the order of (*ba mubib hukam*) Padri John James Moore [?]; in Muḥammad Ismāᶜīl Pānīpati, ed., *Maqālāt-i Sar Saiyid*, Vol. 16 (Lāhaur 1965), pp. 75-96.

siding with the British in 1857 to purchase a printing press from Rurki for the considerable sum of Rs. 8000[39]. Posted in Moradabad at the time, he undertook the project of writing a commentary on the Bible as a way of defending Islam but also reconciling Christians and Muslims in the wake of the violence of the rebellion. When he was transferred to Ghazipur in 1862, he took along this expensive equipment and hired a staff to assist him in his various projects, including an Englishman to prepare the English text and a Jew from Calcutta to help him with the Hebrew. *The Mahomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, came out in two parts over the next two years, but was never completed. Using separate typefounts that Sayyid Ahmad had acquired for this purpose, it was printed multilingually in English and Urdu, with a good deal of Arabic and even some Hebrew. That was not something that would have been easy to achieve with handwritten lithography.

Toozook-i Jehangeeree, ed. Syud Ahmed (Allygurh: Printed at his Private Press, 1864 A.D., 1281 H.)[40]

The colophon to Sayyid Muhammad's 1841 manuscript copy of Jahangir's memoirs had declared that a goal of the project was to enable the younger brother, Sayyid Ahmad, to publish a lithographed edition. Now, many years later, Sayyid Ahmad, recently transferred to Aligarh, returned to that text, but this time he used his own press with its moveable type in much the same format as the Bible commentary, even though this text was wholly in Persian. In a similar format was the *Tarīx-i Firūz-šāhī* of Ziya uddin Barani, edited by Sayyid Ahmad but completed "under the superintendence of W. N. Lees and Mawalavi Karbir al-Din" and printed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta[41].

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[39]   A. Ḥ. Ḥāli, *Ḥayāt-i Javīd*, pp. 118, 130. Rurki was a center for iron manufactures. See also Iftikhar ʿAlam Khan, *Sir Sayyid aur Scientific Society* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamiʿa, 2000), p. 15.

[40]   E. Edwards, *A Catalogue of the Persian Printed Books…*, col. 307.

[41]   Ziaa-i Barni, *The Táríkh-I Feroz-Sháhí of Ziaa Al-Din Barni, Commonly Called Ziaa-I Barni. Edited by Saiyid Ahmad Khán, Under the Superintendence of Captain W. Nassau Lees,... and Mawlavi Kabir Al-Din.* Calcutta: W. N. Lees' Press, 1862. [Available on google books].

One of the features of this and the other publications that is-
sued from this press is that they were all done in a utilitarian
moveable type font that eschews any hint of calligraphic
(*xušnavīsī*) aesthetics. The work has clear divisions: a title page,
a table of contents, a lengthy forward (*dībāča*) in Persian, and
footnotes. There is only one illustration at the end of the book, a
picture of Jahangir's tomb in Lahore. It is in black and white, and
drawn according to European ideas of perspective.

With these two works Sayyid Ahmad's efforts as an histo-
rian of the Delhi and the Mughals came to an end. By this time,
he had turned his attention elsewhere.

The Aligarh Institute Gazette and *Tahẕīb ul-axlāq*

When Sayyid Ahmad was transferred from Ghazipur to Aligarh
in 1864, he brought the press with him. It was there the following
year that he brought out his newspaper, *The Aligarh Institute
Gazette*, the organ of the Aligarh Scientific Society, primarily in
a bilingual format, this time closely resembling the layout of the
official government gazette of the Northwest Provinces. This
publication remained for the rest of his life and beyond an impor-
tant vehicle for the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and
what became known as the Aligarh movement.

In 1872 the total circulation of all vernacular journals in the
North-West Provinces and Oudh was under six thousand. The
journal with the largest circulation was the weekly *Aligarh Insti-
tute Gazette*. It had 381 subscriptions, but 100 of them were to
the government, thirty-eight to British readers, and fifty-two in
exchange to other journals. That left 191 private Indian subscrib-
ers, all of them members of the Aligarh Scientific Society, spon-
sor of the journal since it first came out in 1866. The membership
of the society had once been up in the four hundreds, but had
declined. Members of the society were to pay Rs. 24 a year, plus
Rs. 3 for postage, which entitled them to all the society's other
publications as well, most particularly its Urdu translations and
editions of historical and scientific texts. Non-member subscrib-

ers to the gazette had to pay Rs. 12, plus the same postage[42]. Small as the circulation was, it was distributed over a large territory, mostly from Lahore to Patna, but also Hyderabad and Bombay.

Although *The Aligarh Institute Gazette* was bi-lingual in double columns, many pieces were untranslated from the Urdu, in which case both columns would be in Urdu. The bi-lingual format was for the benefit of the gazette's British readers. One critic blamed the journal for wasting space by printing in English, for using "small and smudgy" typeface instead of lithography, and for "twisted and terse" language, a style that was partly imposed by the process of translating items from the English press[43]. But in its early years, perhaps because Sayyid Ahmad was posted in Banaras much of the time, the journal was not always in the good graces of the British authorities. "It affects considerable independence of speech, and apes the bluster of the English press," according to the annual report on publications for 1875. "The style is diffuse and unattractive". The report also noted that *The Aligarh Institute Gazette* and its sister publication *Tahẕīb ul-axlāq* were the targets of intense criticism from other Urdu journals, largely over Sayyid Ahmad's religious and social views[44]. If the press could command only a small circulation, it was nevertheless characterized by strong controversy and rivalry.

Tahẕīb ul-axlāq was explicitly in imitation of *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, journals of the early eighteenth century London coffee house milieu, with a number of essays adapted from specific prototypes[45]. But, Sayyid Ahmad noted, there was a difference:

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[42]   *The Aligarh Institute Gazette*, vol. II (1867), on the first page of every issue.

[43]   Wajid ᶜAli Khan, "Kardar namah", reprinted in AIG, XIII, 91 (November 12, 1878); see reply in XIII, 98 (December 7, 1878). (Thanks to Dr. Shafey Qidwai.)

[44]   North-Western Provinces, General Proceedings, April 1875, No. 5 (U.P. Archives, Lucknow); see also *Selections from the Vernacular Press*.

[45]   Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, second ed., Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 343; A. Ḥ. Ḥāli, *Ḥayāt-i Jāvīd*, p. 163. Cf. J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation…*, p. 59.

> Steele and Addison were fortunate that their contemporaries used
> to read and appreciate their writings. But our misfortune is that our
> writings are regarded as anti-religious. To read them is to court
> perdition (…) It was not difficult for Steele and Addison to win
> over a thousand hearts. But to us it is extremely hard to captivate a
> single one (…) We do not say that by the help of this feeble organ
> we shall be able to do for India what Steele and Addison did in
> their days to England (…) 'We but try to begin; it is for Him to
> complete.'[46]

Journalistic "public" controversy in Urdu and commercial suc-
cess or failure was a small scale matter. Probably more interest-
ing are the ways that Sayyid Ahmad and his rivals came to repre-
sent time and community within the framework of their literary
experiments. As Anderson argues, the form and concept of a
newspaper rests on the shared, objectified experience of simulta-
neous stories of what could be a fairly far-flung population[47].
Anderson makes the same point about the novel, which Sayyid
Ahmad is again said to have been instrumental in promoting. The
first Urdu novel, "Deputy" Nazir Ahmad's *Mirāt ul-ᶜurūs* (The
Bride's Mirror), published in 1869, the same year as Ghalib's
letters, depicts private experiences, ordinary life and language,
for a general, "public" audience to be read privately – or, at least,
in school[48]. This echoes what Habermas says about Richardson

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[46] Quoted in translation in Sayyid ᶜAbduʾl-Latif, *The Influence of Eng-
lish Literature on Urdu Literature* (London: Forster, Groom & Co., 1924),
p. 117.

[47] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities…*, pp. 30, 37-38.

[48] *Mirāt ul-ᶜurūs*, reprint ed. Delhi: Kutb Xānah Naẓīriya, n.d.; A. Ḥ.
Ḥāli, *Hayāt-i Jāvīd*, p. 323; Frances W. Pritchett, "Afterword: the first Urdu
bestseller", [in:] Nazir Ahmad, *The Bride's Mirror*, reprint ed. of tr. G. E.
Ward, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 204-223; C. M. Naim,
"Prize-Winning *Adab*: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to
the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification", [in:] *Moral Conduct and
Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. by Barbara Daly
Metcalf, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 290-314; D.
Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*,
Princeton University Press, 1978, pp. 56-58; in 1885, 14 000 copies were
reprinted (*NWP and Oudh Gazette* II [1886], p. 911). Ralph Russell, in an
excellent discussion of *Mirāt ul-ᶜurūs* denies that the work is a "novel", but

and Rousseau[49]. By 1888 it had sold more than 100 000 copies and been translated into five other Indian languages[50].

For Sayyid Ahmad, however, English had become indispensable – even though he himself was never able to master it. In testimony to the Indian Education Commission in 1882, Sayyid Ahmad explained that he had abandoned his earlier belief in vernacular education, at least with respect to Urdu. It was, he claimed, virtually impossible to express oneself in Urdu without reliance on figures of speech and exaggerated expressions[51]. Sayyid Ahmad's shift from lithography to type, from decorated formats to plain ones, went along with changes in prose style, ideological focus and public activities, such as the creation of voluntary associations and, most of all, the Aligarh College.

Taṣānīf i Aḥmadīyah, vol.7, Part 1/ *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 6 (Aligarh: Aligarh Institute Press, 1335 Nabvi, 1312, Hijri, 1895 ʿīsvī)

Even wholly Urdu publications, notably *Tahẕīb ul-axlāq*, the intellectual and literary journal of the Aligarh movement, maintained a format and typography that was similar to the *Aligarh Institute Gazette.* Most striking is Sayyid Ahmad's use of moveable type for an explicity religious text, namely his commentary on the Qurʾan. During his lifetime, he published six volumes over the space of fifteen years, from 1880 to 1895. The format of the Tafsir separated the scriptural text in a large, bold *nasx* typeface at the top of the page from the Urdu translation and commentary below, but assimilated them both to an image of rational order,

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in terms of the arguments of Habermas and Anderson the work fits the model; "The Modern Novel in Urdu", [in:] *The Novel in India*, ed. by T. W. Clark, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970, pp. 118-122. Russell also points out that the novel was originally written before the announcement of the prize, for the private edification of the author's family; for a recent historical analysis see Ruby Lal, "Gender and *Sharafat*: Rereading Nazir Ahmad", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2008 (January), Vol. 18, Part I, pp. 15-30.

[49] J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation…*, pp. 49-50.
[50] R. Russell, "The Modern Novel in Urdu", p. 119.
[51] D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation…*, pp. 206-207.

which was the point of Sayyid Ahmad's exegesis. A seventh volume, published posthumously in 1904 by the Mufīd al-ᶜĀmm Press in Agra, reverted to calligraphic lithography[52]. Even during his lifetime, Sayyid Ahmad published some of his religious as well as personal works with this press, which was notable for the beauty of its calligraphy and the clarity of its printing. It may not be possible to retrieve the spiritual experience of the typesetter and compare it to the calligrapher, but it is reasonable to conclude that Sayyid Ahmad, an indifferent calligrapher himself, wanted the act of producing the publication to reverberate with the technological processes of the modern world. Typography may have suggested impersonal, unambiguous standardization, something that could be read without benefit of an a personal intermediary. In the end, however, Sayyid Ahmad's use and style of typography turned out to be an idiosyncratic, personal statement of the man's quest to make religious inspiration relevant to the changing times.

Sayyid Ahmad's preference for moveable type over lithography was exceptional. Urdu publishing had overwhelmingly moved in the opposite direction since the introduction of lithography. The great commercial publishing houses, notably Nawal Kishor of Lucknow, relied almost entirely on lithography for its Urdu publications[53]. There is reason to believe that choosing typography over lithography was not a particularly wise economic calculation. Perhaps Sayyid Ahmad was stuck with his Rs. 8000 investment, which lasted for nearly four decades, but one would still need to compare how much typesetters were paid as opposed to calligraphers[54]. Lithography, gradually replaced by photo-offset in the later twentieth century, maintained the role

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[52]   I have examined these volumes in the Rare Books collection of the British Library. The collection at Aligarh Muslim University has been scanned and now available on line at http://www.sirsyedtoday.org.

[53]   See U. Stark, *An Empire of Books*; see also Brinkley Messick, "On the Question of Lithography", *Culture & History* [Copenhagen] 1997, Vol. 15, pp. 158-176. Many thanks to Prof. Messick for providing me with a copy of his paper, which deals with Arabic legal texts from Yemen.

[54]   For the expenses involved in operating Sir Sayyid's press, see Iftikhar ᶜAlam Khan, *Sir Sayyid aur Scientific Society*, pp. 38-41.

and aesthetics of Urdu calligraphy to dominate the field. Only very recently, over the last fifteen years or so, have computer fonts made calligraphy and calligraphers obsolete in India and Pakistan.

Type, however, made Urdu look somewhat more like English on the printed page in the late nineteenth century. By that time, for example, most government records, notably court cases and revenue regulations came in printed formats, not the cursive English calligraphy of the East India Company that perhaps had more in common to the chancery styles of Persian or Urdu. If one wanted to create an equivalence between Urdu and English, and to print them side by side, moveable type was more suitable than lithography. It should be noted that lithography was not the preferred method for other Indian scripts like Hindi, though it was used for a Hindi edition of *Āṣār us-ṣanādīd* that came out in 1876[55].

Lekčarz-o-ispičaz

Hali, Sir Sayyid's biographer, devotes a section of his biography of Sayyid Ahmad Khan to "public speaking" – the word is transliterated – and public meetings (*majmūᶜa-i ᶜām*). A "speech" or "lecture" – again he uses the English words – has far more influence, he says, than the written word because people read individually in different settings and therefore have different responses, whereas "the effect of a speech [here, however, he uses the word *taqrīr*] falls upon the whole gathering collectively and simultaneously". Without mentioning the traditions of religious oratory, Hali claims that Sayyid Ahmad was the first person in Hindustan to introduce public speaking in a language other than English. (By Hindustan he probably means the region between Punjab and Bengal). Although there were some great Bengali orators, so far as he has heard, they all spoke in English. For Hali, who describes his own first experience of hearing Sayyid Ahmad speak in Lahore to an audience said to number over 10 000 in 1874, to raise funds for the Aligarh College, such ora-

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[55] *Saṃsāradarpaṇa*, Delhi: Gopal Malik, 1876. This is only a very approximate version, at best, of Sayyid Ahmad's work, though it is attributed to him. [OCLC: 32991055].

tory was a vivid, new experience. "Although public speeches now seem to be everyday things, Sir Sayyid's introduction of speechmaking was completely new to ordinary Hindustanis"[56].

The reason India had no tradition of oratory, Hali claims, is that under a *salṭanat* subjects have no right to express their opinions. Only by the grace of British rule was public utterance possible. But Hali ignores the *vaᶜz* delivered from the *minbar* of a mosque or the *malfūẓāt* of a Sufi *xānqāh*[57]. It is not that he excludes religious topics from his category of public speaking, because one of his chief examples is a wholly theological speech that Sayyid Ahmad gave in Lahore in 1884. The difference would seem to be the form and setting of these speeches, which make them into an entirely different genre of public utterance. In particular he emphasizes the informal and extempore nature of Sayyid Ahmad's oratory, never prepared in advance, relatively colloquial in language, and communicated as much in voice and facial expression as in words. Sayyid Ahmad, he says, had no training and no prototypes; he was just a natural orator.

Sayyid Ahmad's first recorded public utterance is a prayer (*duᶜā*) he offered in a Moradabad mosque in 1859 before an estimated twelve to fifteen thousand people. Marking the end of the Revolt, it was a formal statement of allegiance to British rule. The second was a Persian discourse on the value of studying European science, delivered at the home of ᶜAbd ul-Latif Khan in Calcutta. In 1864 in Ghazipur, first at the founding of a school, then of the Scientific Society, Sayyid Ahmad began to develop into the kind of public speaker that Hali describes[58]. In 1869, he travelled to London where he attended several public meetings,

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[56]   A. Ḥ. Ḫāli, *Ḥayāt-i Jāvīd*, pp. 193, 640-651.

[57]   See references in D. Lelyveld, "Eloquence and Authority in Urdu: Poetry, Oratory, and Film", [in:] *Shariᵓat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam*, ed. by Katherine P. Ewing, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 105. Cf. Patrick D. Gaffney, "Authority and the Mosque in Upper Egypt: The Islamic Preacher as Image and Actor", [in:] *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning*, ed. by William R. Roff, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 199-225.

[58]   Sayyid Aḥmad Ḫān, *Mukammal majmūᶜa Lekčarz-o-Ispīčaz*, ed. Muḥammad Imām ud-dīn Gujrātī, Lahore: Maṭbūᵓa-i Musṭafaᵓi, 1900).

even though he did not understand English[59]. After that he made numerous tours along the major railway routes of north India and down to Hyderabad, all to raise money for Aligarh College.

A detailed account of his second tour of the Punjab early in 1884 was prepared by Sayyid Iqbal ᶜAli, a sub-judge of Bara Banki, who made it his mission to record as much as he could of Sayyid Ahmad's oratory[60]. Iqbal ᶜAli is highly conscious that they have crossed a linguistic boundary. He makes several re-marks about how interesting it is to hear Punjabis speak Urdu and how difficult it is to understand what they are saying. (Bara Banki, as some of us know, has a particularly forbidding standard of linguistic perfection). Also travelling with Sayyid Ahmad was a zamindar from Aligarh district, a friend from Delhi, and Sayyid Ahmad's English-speaking nephew. At the station in Khanna, the first stop in Ludhiana district, and then at other stops along the way, they were met by members of local Islamic organizations, who accompanied them into Ludhiana itself. There a crowd that Iqbal ᶜAli guessed was over 800 overflowed the platform into the adjoining *maidān*. Among these Iqbal ᶜAli is careful to list the names of all the local notables and officials, including several Hindus and Sikhs, who were there to greet them. An Extra-Assistant Commissioner stepped forward and with both hands placed a garland around Sayyid Ahmad's neck, while others threw bouquets. The party then drove off to the house of the Nawab of Jhajjar. Among the people who came to see Sayyid Ahmad were strong opponents of his religious views who en-gaged him in serious and extended conversations.

That evening Sayyid Ahmad gave a "lecture" at the Ludhi-ana town hall to an audience that overflowed the room on to the verandas outside. Many had to leave for lack of space. After a brief introduction by the Nawab, Sayyid Ahmad stood up and in his own spontaneous words, as Iqbal ᶜAli puts it, "did the work of the *marṣiya*-s of Dabir and Anis" – that is, drove the audience to sobs and tears. In the speech Sayyid Ahmad modulates skillfully

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[59]   A. Ḥ. Ḥāli, *Ḥayāt-i Jāvīd*, pp. 153-155.
[60]   Sayyid Iqbāl ᶜAlī, *Sayyid Aīḥmad Xān kā Safar Nāmah-i Panjāb*, reprint ed. Šaix Muḥammad Ismāᶜīl Pānīpatī, Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-e Adab, 1973 [1884].

from a brief expression of Persianized politeness formulas to bits of Arabic piety finally to an intimate style in which he addresses his audience in the familiar *tum* mode. He starts by calling himself an insignificant traveller, unworthy of their gracious hospitality. Then he goes into a discussion of the concept of *qaum* or community. For Muslims it is not based on race (*nasl*) or country (*mulk*), but on individual submission to God. ("O Lord, make it so. Amen!") On the other hand, man has two aspects, human and divine. Religion, the divine part, is entirely between the individual and God; and no one else, neither family nor *qaum*, has the right to interfere.

In practical matters, however, there must be social cooperation. Here Muslims and Hindus are brothers, practically the same *qaum*, and differing Muslim sects must join together just as Hazrat ꜤAli joined the Khalifa MuꜤawiya to face the challenge of the Byzantine emperor. There is, to be sure, much that is virtuous among Muslims. They endow mosques, imambaras, khanqahs; they go on pilgrimage. But all this is finally self-regarding. It is all intended to prepare their individual souls for the day of judgment. What Sayyid Ahmad suggests is that if they work with their right hands for the end of days, let them at least use their left hands for the sake of others, for the sake of the *qaum*. A *qaum*, he says, is like a body of water: if there is no movement, no progress, it will dry up. What is required is not small, separate efforts in little localities. These are a mere drizzle and will bring forth no crop. Nor should they expect others, such as their British rulers, to do their work for them. The task requires the union of private, voluntary efforts for the mutual benefit of all Indian Muslims.

Then Sayyid Ahmad spoke of himself. For twenty-five years he has toiled for Muslim education. He has given up his home and moved to Aligarh, where he had no property or family, just because it was the most suitable place. He then describes the college, emphasizing the enforcement of prayers and theological education as well as the sense of unity among the students. Yet other Muslims have subjected him and his work to bitter attack. "Call me what you like, infidel, heretic, *naičari*. I am not asking you to intercede for me before God (…) Whatever I say is for the benefit of your own children".

The audience, Iqbal ᶜAli reports, cheered loudly and donated some fifteen hundred rupees to the Aligarh cause. The next day the party moved on to Jalandhar.

Conclusion: fragment of a public sphere

It would be appropriate to place the publications and speeches of Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the context of his other publications and his other enterprises; even more, it would be useful to see where these manifestations stand in the wider "information order" of Urdu and, alongside Urdu, Hindi, not to mention the other languages of India as well as the language of the colonial regime. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's publications and speeches cannot be described as commercial ventures. They relied initially on face to face relationships in which official British patronage loomed large, and even when they were touched by commercial motives, as in the case of the *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, Sayyid Ahmad's compensation was masked in the terms of ritual exchange. In later years, Sayyid Ahmad's publications were supported by subscriptions that were broadly advertised as acts of public spirit, what would be called today non-profit activities. The names of the subscribers were usually printed in the publication.

In contrast, Sayyid Ahmad's friend and sometime critic, Nazir Ahmad, published *Mirāt ul-ᶜurūs* (The Bride's Mirror) in 1869, the "first Urdu bestseller"[61]. First written for his daughters and circulated in manuscript among friends, this popular work of fiction became an enduring commercial success.

It would be more difficult to figure out how Sir Sayyid's various publications were actually read. The fact that most of them were produced typographically does not necessarily tell us what his readers made of them, either as occasions for liberation or domination or perhaps something else. "Your *Social Reformer* was constantly read to me by my fond father, who looked upon you as no less than a prophet of the nineteenth century", wrote Lala Lajpat Rai in an open letter to Sir Sayyid to express disap-

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[61] See Frances W. Pritchett, "Afterword: the first Urdu bestseller", [in:] Nazir Ahmad, *The Bride's Mirror*. Reprint ed. of tr. G. E. Ward (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 204-223.

pointment over the latter's opposition to the newly formed Indian National Congress[62] In this case, it seems, even a typographical text could be read aloud as part of a personal interaction.

The task now would be to identify Sayyid Ahmad Khan's audience or, more ambitiously, to analyze the conditions for the production and reception of his writings and those of his colleagues in the Aligarh movement. One might approach this sociologically, by counting of subscription lists, for example, and trying to locate these people according to indigenous or theoretical categories of groups and relationships. One might also consider this as a problem in rhetoric, a search for the "implied reader" in the text and relation of that text to other texts[63]. In either case it is important to consider the question over time, as part of a history that reaches ahead to later circumstances, interpretations, and uses.

[62] *Lala Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches*, Volume One, 1888-1919, ed. by Vijaya Chandra Joshi (Delhi: University Publishers, 1966), pp. 1-25. "The 'Open Letters' originally appeared in the Urdu weekly Koh-Noor of Lahore" (<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_lajpatrai_1888/txt_lajpatrai_1888.html#index>).

[63] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974; cf. M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis", [in:] *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, tr. Vern McGee, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, pp. 103-131.