

RADOSŁAW TEKIELA
(University of Warsaw, Poland)
ORCID: 0000-0002-2710-8076 

***Kāyam Khā̃ Rāso* and Image of Muslim Rajput Rulers**

Abstract

The article aims to analyse *Kāyam Khā̃ Rāso* and to contextualize it against the interplay of cultural influences in early modern India. While earlier research showcased that Jān chose to accentuate just the local qualities of their Rajput lineage, this paper argues that Sufism sacred kingship presents an equally important role in its interpretation. ‘The local’ of *Kāyam Khā̃ Rāso* should be understood as both Islamic and Rajput rather than Rajput at the expense of Islamic features. This article examines different facets of the image of the Kāyam Khānī rulers in the text and showcases how they are presented in *Rāso*. It then uses the analysed image in to argue that their ‘locality’ belongs simultaneously to both worlds. Their milieu should be regarded as local, Rajput and Islamic, but equally distant from both the so-called Great Tradition of Hinduism, and orthodox Islam. It forms conversation space where contact between traditions can be achieved.

Keywords: Northern India, Kāyam Khānī, Rajput, Sufism, image of a ruler



Introduction

*Kāyam Khā Rāso*¹ is a genealogical poem belonging to the genre of *rāso*.² It was authored by Nyāmat Ālī Khān, a member of the Kāyam Khānī dynasty that ruled Fatehpur in the Śekhāvāī region of Rajasthan.³ This author is primarily known by his assumed name as poet Jān, and throughout this paper he will be referred to such.⁴

Jān wrote an idealized account of his family from the beginning of the world. The fact that he presented an idealized perception of his dynasty to his audience raises doubts about its historicity. However, the panegyric nature of the work allows us to understand the assumptions about how the ideal monarch would behave. This becomes academically interesting because, at the time, Fatehpur was a point of intense cultural contact and formed a unique culture. Its ruling elite identified themselves as Muslims yet claimed that their progenitor – the eponymous Kāyam Khān – was a Cauhān⁵ of royal descent who converted to Islam. Furthermore, they were careful in expressing their identity using both the idiom of the cosmopolitan Persianate culture and the local Rajputs. It may raise some eyebrows in contemporary India since as Moran writes: ‘early Rajput rulers sought to obscure the unorthodox elements of their backgrounds (...) the construction of Rajput kingship as a fundamentally Hindu institution thus masks a complex historical process

¹ The transcription follows the rules set forth in Danuta Stasik, *Język hindi*, vol. 1, Warszawa 2010, pp. 13–18. However, since *Kāyam Khā Rāso* is composed in *Piṅgal* and dialects forgo use of Perso-Arabic phonemes (*q, g, x, z, f*), these will be represented by *k, g, kh, j, ph* instead. The names will follow this convention as well to avoid the confusion, i.e., *Kāyam Khā*, not *Qāim Xān*. Exceptions will be made with regards to sultans of Delhi, and other historical characters that have well-entrenched names in English. The precise date of this work is not known. Its author informs us that he finished his work in 1634 but later added a smaller part. We can only assume date between 1653 (death of Daulat Khān II, the last event mentioned in *Rāso*), and 1664 (*Padanāma*, held to be the last of Jān’s poems, is created); Ratanlāl Miśra (ed.), *Kāyam Khā rāsā*, Jodhpur 2007, pp. 157–158, stanza in *dohā* metre no. 939, p. 172, stanzas in *dohā* metre no. 1034. (Further on, ‘*dohā* no.’ will be used.) Of note is that *Rāso* belongs to the historical period in which the Rajput identity started to be “genealogized”, and many of the Rajput groups had their identity questioned. For more on this subject, see e.g., Dirk Kolff, *Naukar; Rajput and Sepoy. The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, New York 2002; Radosław Tekiel, ‘Ideal indyjskiego władcy – analiza na podstawie Raso o Kajamie Khanie autorstwa poety Dżana’ (M.A. diss., University of Warsaw, 2020).

² For more on the matter of genre of *rāso* as a genre, see e.g., entry *rāso kāvya*, Dhīrendra Varmā et al. (ed.), *Hindī sāhitya koś*, vol. 1, Vārāṅasī 1973, pp. 793–796.

³ The details of the history of this region are described in Ratanlāl Miśra, *Śekhāvāī kā itihās*, Jhūñjhunū 1984, the details of dynastical history in Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyamkhānī vaṃś kā itihās evaṃ saṃskṛti*, Jodhpur 2018, or Sunita Budhwar, ‘The Qayamkhani Shaikhzada Family of Fatehpur’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 39 volume I (1978), pp. 412–425, Viewed 9 November 2022, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44139379>>.

⁴ Jān uses his assumed name through the poem, but his given name is not mentioned in *Rāso* and his identification is based on other poems. However, in stanza 4 he identifies Aliph Khān as his father, and in stanza 671 he lists name Nyāmat Khān among Aliph Khān’s progeny.

⁵ Cauhāns, Cāhamāns are one of the principal Rajput families of Northern India, and the family of – among others – such famous figures as Hammīr, and Pṛthvīrāj III. On the matter of Cauhān history see e.g., Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, Jodhpur 2016.

lasting several centuries (...).⁶ Identity of Rajput royal houses thus became entwined with Hinduism and their purported role as defenders of Hinduism. While it is a position of scholarship, this position still holds some sway societally.⁷

Nonetheless, one can easily describe Kāyam Khānīs as a Muslim Rajput dynasty. This paper will examine the social fabric of early modern North India to explore its rich tapestry and see what composite ideas about statehood arose in a such culturally charged environment.⁸

Previous research on Kāyam Khānīs

Previously, *Kāyam Khā Rāso* was only analysed by Talbot. She posits that Kāyam Khānīs' claim to descent from a royal house has been a point contested by the local Rajput rulers, but they nonetheless considered themselves a part of the local milieu. This point is exemplified by the choice of medium for the propagation of their idea: Jān was almost certainly proficient in Persian and Arabic yet chose Braj Bhāṣā as the sole language of his poetry. It is a significant declaration since although many of the Muslim poets were writing in vernacular languages, almost all of them created the poetry in one of the languages of cosmopolitan Islam (Persian and Arabic) as well. Talbot posits that it shows a conscious attempt to elevate local qualities,⁹ yet it is disputable. She frames Braj Bhāṣā and Persian in terms of (respectively) localness and cosmopolitanism.

Talbot concludes that Jān seeks to accentuate local identity and that his choice cannot be understood as stemming from the ignorance of the wider Muslim traditions.¹⁰ Yet,

⁶ Viewed 30 May 2023, <<https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-747#acrefore-9780190277727-e-747-div1-1>>.

⁷ Kailāśnāth Vyās, Devendrasīmh Gahlot, *Rājasthān kī jatiyō kā sāmājīk aur ārthīk jīvan*, Jodhpur 2019, pp. 75–88 contains an article about Rajputs. There are multiple views presented on the role of Rajputs in Middle Ages. Many of them mention Rajput role as champions of Hinduism, and in other parts they are occasionally contrasted with Muslims. (Which implies that they themselves are not Muslims.) Meanwhile, no mention of Muslim (or non-Hindu) Rajputs is made whatsoever in their main article. (Though Kāyam Khānī have a separate description in different part of book.)

⁸ A good introductory read on Rajput identity in Polish is Aleksandra Turek, 'Radźputowie – stereotypowi bohaterowie Radżasthanu', *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 3–4 (2011), pp. 142–150. An overview of cultural considerations present in this milieu and recommendations for further reading can be found in 'Rajput Kingship', Viewed 30 May 2023, <<https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-747#acrefore-9780190277727-e-747-div1-1>>. Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995), pp. 692–722 is a valuable contribution on the matter Hindu Muslim identities in general.

⁹ Talbot never explains clearly what 'local' means in the context of her paper. It is possible that it means 'Indian', as opposed to 'universal' / 'from outside of India', yet then the entire dispute is complicated by the presence of Indian Islamic movements, like e.g. some strains of Sufism; Cynthia Talbot, 'Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative', *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (2009), Viewed 11 November 2022, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20488077>>, pp. 211–243.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 237.

Talbot seems to dismiss the distinct religious undertones as she notes the absence of the overt Islamic references and concludes that “KKR manifests little interest in religious faith”.¹¹ Nonetheless, Talbot’s research remains the only serious perspective on *Kāyam Khā Rāso* in academia, and so it falls upon this paper to prove that *Rāso* should be understood a little differently.

To address concerns raised by Talbot, Jān’s uncharacteristic choice of language seems curious and potentially meaningful. However, it will benefit from the discussion of linguistic context. There is a literary form of Mārvārī dialect of Rājasthānī called Dīngal. Dīngal has a rich tradition of heroic poetry which forms the core of Rājasthānī literature. It is the oldest regional literature written in New-Indo Aryan languages and it was experiencing a golden age during (and beyond) Jān’s lifetime.¹² Meanwhile, the language Jān chose is Piṅgal, a version of Braj Bhāṣā used in Rajasthan and characterized by some Rājasthānī influences. Braj Bhāṣā itself is a literary register based on Braj dialect. It has become a language of courtly poetry, and poets writing in Braj Bhasha have long been present at various regional courts as well as Mughal imperial court.¹³

If Jān’s intent was purely to ‘participate in the literary universe inhabited by (...) the Rajput lords of Rajasthan’¹⁴, then it begs question why did he choose Braj Bhāṣā rather than more celebrated Dīngal? Instead, I believe that what could have factored in his decision is the extensive presence and appreciation that Braj Bhāṣā poetry enjoyed both in Rājasthān and on Mughal court.¹⁵ It would allow him to participate in both literary worlds and sacrifice neither. Ultimately, however, discussion of Jān’s linguistic choices is speculative since Jān has not spoken at length about his motivations.

Moreover, this paper will argue that contrary to Talbot’s remarks about lack of Islamic undertones, the *Rāso* cannot be understood properly without considering its reaffirmation of the sacred Sufī kingship.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 241.

¹² Aleksandra Turek, ‘Radżasthani – początki języka i literatury’, *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 2 (2019), Viewed 11 November 2022, <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-c5eab883-318c-46e3-88a7-22125eeebd17/c/PO_2_2019_Turek_Aleksandra.pdf>, pp. 157–170.

¹³ Authoritative but older source on Rājasthānī literature (both Piṅgal and Dīngal) is Motilāl Menāriyā, *Rājasthānī bhāṣā aur sāhitya*, Jodhpur 2016. On the matter of Braj Bhāṣā in general see Stuart McGregor, ‘Progress of Hindi, Part I: The Development of a Transregional Idiom’, in: *Literary Cultures in History*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, Berkeley 2003, pp. 912–944.

¹⁴ Cynthia Talbot, *Becoming Turk the Rajput Way*, p. 232.

¹⁵ On the matter of Braj Bhāṣā on Mughal court see Allison Busch, ‘Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court’, *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2010), pp. 267–306.

¹⁶ ‘Sufi sacred kingship’ refers to the portrayal of a ruler that interlinks the characteristics of temporal sovereignty with the qualities of Sufi spiritual masters. In this model, the relationships between the sacred ruler and his subjects occasionally mirror the relationship between a Sufi spiritual master and his disciples. The most notable case in South Asia was undoubtedly the imperial cult of the Mughals. Azfar A. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, New York 2012 provides a comprehensive overview of such tradition, using the example of Mughal attempts to project spiritual authority. Nile Green (*Sufism: A Global History*, Singapore 2012, pp. 142–145) similarly highlights the lasting Mughal attempts of establishing imperial cult and provides another example of South Asian ruler establishing a ruler-centred cult. Lisa Balabanlilar (*The Emperor Jahangir: Power*

This paper aims to highlight that the result is a curious mix in which Sufism enables mediation between pan-Indian, Muslim centres of power, and the local Hindu milieu as it is understood in both contexts. In other words, it allows Kāyam Khānīs to claim the role of temporal and spiritual governors and middlemen between the Mughal court, and the local elites of Śekhāvāī. At the same time, their Cauhān regal descent serves both to elevate them among other Muslim nobles and make rapport with Rajasthani elites. When *Kāyam Khā Rāso* makes a notion about their descent, it sometimes serves to contrast them with other Muslim rulers, “slaves of Delhi”,¹⁷ and sometimes to leverage them against non-Cauhān Rajputs.

Qualities of Muslim Rajput rulers in *Rāso*

The Islamic identity and worldview in *Rāso* are presented in two ways: either by addressing the wider Islamic worldview (though mediated by Sufism¹⁸) with reverence, or by embracing the millenarian traditions of early modern Hindustan by portraying rulers as sacred.

Jān presents an informed account of Islamic world history, albeit it is often filtered through the Sufi philosophy and imaginary.¹⁹ He makes references to various Arabic traditions surrounding the descent of people, and he recounts how various people are genealogically connected with Noah (*Nūh*). This serves to demonstrate learning, mark Islamic identity, and underscore the right of Muslims to rule²⁰. Yet while Jān demonstrates knowledge of written traditions of Islam, he sometimes clothes them into idioms of his contemporaries – as he recounts the making of the “gods” by God – though he does so in a way that does not clash with the Islamic traditions. He makes sure to position the gods in the same place the jinn usually appear in the order of creation: and suggests a juxtaposition of smaller deities with the pan-Islamic folklore of jinn.²¹ This seems to

and Kingship in Mughal India, London 2020, pp. 83–95) delves into the robust practices of imperial in Jahangir’s court. This court is especially significant because Jān’s father (nawab Aliph Khā) spent his life as high-ranking dignitary in service of Jahangir, and he is the most significant ruler described in *Kāyam Khā Rāso*.

¹⁷ That is the case of sultan Mallu Khan. In a more general sense, Talbot notes discrepancies between Muhaṇṭ Nainī (1610–1670) and Jān and theorizes that royal descent provides Kāyam Khānīs with agency independent of main Muslim power centres. Thus, it is an element that other rulers of Rajasthan seek to disregard to portray Kāyam Khānī as Muslim lackeys; *ibidem*, pp. 215–217.

¹⁸ Jān was initiated by shaiḥ Muhammad Āīstī which explains his Sufi affiliation. Naīm Gaurāṇ and Habīb Khā Gaurāṇ, *Rājasthānī lok-saṁskṛtī evaṁ Kāyamkhānī samaj*, Jodhpur 2007, p. 65.

¹⁹ His cosmological account is one more reminiscent of Sufi and philosophical narratives than pure, Quranic creation. The stanzas from 9 to 35 are concerned with the beginning of the world up to Noah, Ratanlāl Mīśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, pp. 1–6; the Sufi influences are visible in that Jān mentions the creation of the world from “light of the Prophet” (*nūra muhammada*), and not from nothing.

²⁰ This is consistent with Talbot’s conclusions, albeit she does not argue that this Islamic concept plays significant role in their claims of legitimacy. Talbot, *Becoming Turk the Rajput Way*, pp. 235–237.

²¹ Ratanlāl Mīśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 3, dohā no. 11. On the matter of order of creation in Quran see e.g., Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*, Abingdon 2006, p. 10, 271. This description is a wider trend

be a recurrent tactic of Jān: he makes an overt reference to the local culture that men of learning can recognize as coded references to concepts falling under the umbrella of esoteric Islam.

Even more significant is the second way: where the ruler himself is a holy man. Though overt mentions of the rulers' miracles only sporadically appear in *Rāso*, the underlying philosophy of sacred kingship recurs through the work. This special divine mandate seems to be shared between Mughal and Kāyam Khānī rulers. Mughals are by necessity portrayed as dominant spiritual authorities. Their distant progenitor, Timur, is portrayed as a Messianic figure:

Then in Kabul lived emperor Timur,
He got revealed to the Seven Isles,²² Jān says he is like the Sun.²³

where the verb used (*paragatyau*) has the meaning of 'being revealed' especially with regards to Prophets in Jān's work or gods' avatars in general. The comparison between him and the Sun (or the god Surya) is also significant, because in hermetic philosophy that partly informed Mughal discourse the Sun is treated as the presence of God in the world.²⁴ Thus, Timur is portrayed a semi-divine character. His special mission is further described:

He is called Timir [darkness], yet he is the vanquisher of darkness, no
one can fight him,
If Julius Cesar or Alexander appeared in the world, they would be able
to withstand him.²⁵

This portrayal is not surprising, since Timur was the subject of Islamic millenarian traditions. Those accounts portrayed him as the Lord of Conjunction, Sāhib-e-Qirān, fated to radically change the world. It was part of the discourse of Mughal emperors, and Jān was certainly aware of that. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan – himself a poet's contemporary – decided to assume the title "Second Lord of Conjunction" (*Sāhib-e-Qirān-e-sānī*).²⁶

in Jān's writing. In his *Tamīm Ansārī*, there are passages where hostile jinn – which we know to be jinn, because we know the narrative in Arabic – is described as deity. The passages in questions are in Vīnā Lāhoṭī (ed.), *Jān – granthāvalī*, part 1, Jodhpur 2003, p. 79.

²² These words denote world according to Hindu cosmological model of *Jambudvīpa*. On this model see Anna Sieklucka, 'Džambudvīpa' (entry) in: Andrzej Ługowski (ed.), *Słownik mitologii hinduskiej*, Warszawa 2015, epub.

²³ *Kābilamē taba rahata hai, pātasāha Taimūra, Sapta dīpamē paragatyau, kahata Jāna jyō Sūra*; Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 40, stanza in *chaupai* metre no. 227. All the translations in this article were done by the author.

²⁴ Azfar A. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 234–237.

²⁵ *Nāva Timara tapa timarahara, larana sakata hai koi, Larai Sikandara Julikarana, jo ava jagamaī hoi*; Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 39, dohā no. 232. Here *larana* was divided into *lara na*.

²⁶ On Timur and his image see Azfar A. Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 37–68, on Shah Jahan styling himself the Second Lord of Conjunction see ibidem, p. 225.

The fact that Jān juxtaposes Timur against Alexander the Great lends further credence to such reading since Alexander was the original Lord of Conjunction.²⁷ Overall, this sort of Messianic mission leads to the legitimization of Mughals as emperors:

Ever since Chagatai's family came into the world, [they] were doing
 God's work,
 Then they started ruling as emperors – and are an Imperial dynasty.²⁸

It is consistent with the spiritual claims of the Mughal dynasty. While it could be read as primarily propagating Mughal discourse, it can also be interpreted as the incorporation of Kāyam Khānī in the system of spiritual authority, and benefitting them equally. For while there is only one pinnacle of the spiritual order, the idea of a hierarchy of holy men was long present in Sufism. The details vary according to the author in question but claims to the lower rank would not be out of the question, since Mughals themselves have appropriated the Sufi concepts of the hierarchy of holy men.²⁹

If Kāyam Khānī were to claim a high position in the imperial cult, they would still lack self-sufficiency, but be quite influential subjects. By working his father into the Mughal system of the political-religious imperial cult, Jān can fulfil the role of the spiritual middleman between the pervading Mughal spiritual authority and ordinary people. It may be no coincidence that the few rulers especially renowned for their spiritual proficiency – Kāyam, Daulat, and Aliph Khān³⁰ – were the ones especially intertwined with the central powers in Delhi. Sadly, such matters are only alluded to. Jān never pauses to discuss his worldview in-depth, and so in the process of interpretation, we are forced to reconstruct it from the few coded references. Clearer are a few descriptions of miracles ascribed to Kāyam Khānī. The first of them belongs to the progenitor of the dynasty, Kāyam Khān himself, and it was because of this miracle that sultan Firuz Shah resolved to make Kāyam Khān a Muslim.

Jān (through Firuz Shah's mouth) makes it obvious that only Muslims can perform such miracles, and he uses the word *karamāt* to describe the quality allowing for it.³¹ It serves both as an explanation of conversion and a more general characterization of social order. The word itself translates as both holy power, and nobleness.³² Thus, social order is Islamic in nature, because it conditions a good quality of character (that is necessary for a ruler). Muslim character of social order is furthermore reinforced by Kāyam Khān's final fate:

²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 49–50.

²⁸ *Čagatā āe jagatamaī, kīnau karma llāha,*

Tabake patisāhī kare, haī jāī patisāha; Ratanlāl Mīśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 39, dohā no. 229.

²⁹ On the hierarchy of holy men in the influential works of Ibn Arabi see Stephen Hinterstein (ed.), *The Four Pillars of Spiritual Transformation*, Oxford 2008, pp. 7–13. It is unlikely that Jān read directly works of Ibn Arabi, but they showcase presence of such concepts in Sufism.

³⁰ Aliph Khān spent most of his life in Mughal service, Daulat Khān had a memorable meeting with future emperor Babur, and Kāyam Khān himself was a servant of Delhi emperor.

³¹ Ratanlāl Mīśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 23, dohā no. 131.

³² Cynthia Talbot (*Becoming Turk the Rajput Way*, p. 215) also makes note of it.

faced with the choice to either die or rebel, he chooses death, because “if I would fight with the emperor, the faith would be harmed”.³³ Only Muslims can rule over Hindus, and so Jān indirectly condemns many local Rajasthani rulers to subservient roles.

Still, the miracles fall well within the Indian tradition. Kāyam Khān makes a tree cast shade upon him even at midday. Daulat Khān – who was given by God the power of speech (*vak siddhi*)³⁴ – uses his miraculous abilities to resolve the conflict between the precepts of generosity, and the protection of cows. He gives a cow to feed the tiger of Babur travelling in the guise of a Sufī mendicant; he subsequently manages to protect the cow from the tiger just by his presence.³⁵ Aliph Khān³⁶ is said to have left behind a miraculous tomb (*dargāh*) where he grants wishes to petitioners.³⁷ While it is typical for Sufism, it would not be out of place for any Hindu holy man. It purports to the double role of Sufism in Jān’s worldview: it at once posits him in the hierarchy of Muslim powers and connects him to the cultural milieu of surrounding local rulers.

While Jān is a man of considerable learning and fundamentally accepts the Islamic worldview, he still portrays his dynasty as Indian ‘local’ rulers. He uses the less orthodox, local forms of Islam to mediate, and outside of religious contexts, he goes out of the way to portray his dynasty as Rajputs.

Often it is a direct association: Kāyam Khānīs are Cauhāns, after all, and Cauhāns are – as Jān claims – the best of all the Rajputs:

[All the] others I have made great, he [Phadan Khān] was made great by God [himself].

There is a talk of three and a half great Rajput families,

I will tell you, and explain, you hear the talk about them .

[First is] Cauhān [family], second Tamvar, and the third Pamvar,

[all the] other [families] are [worth] half as much as the family [one of the above].³⁸

In the passage just cited emperor Akbar narrates his reasons for valuing one of the Kāyam Khānīs. Just like Islam conditions qualities necessary for just rule, so does Cauhān descent. Ideally, the socio-political elites would be composed primarily of Muslims of

³³ (...) *patisāhanisau lare, hota dhamakī hāni*; Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 51, *dohā* no. 303.

³⁴ It is both told by Jān and illustrated by examples. Aside from the story in question, he prophesizes doom to Lūnkarān and his advisors. *Ibid*, pp. 81–85, *dohās* no. 498–513.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 85–86, *dohās* no. 517–531.

³⁶ It is the same Aliph Khān as in footnotes 4 and 38.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 155, stanzas no. 934–936.

³⁸ *aura baṛe mere kiye, ye kīne karatāra.*

Sārhe tīna kulī kahai, rajapūtanakī jāta,

tohi kahyaū samujhāi kai, suni lai tinakī bāta.

Cāhuvāna Tuṃvara dutīya, tījau āhi Pambāra,

ādhemē sagare kulī, sārhe tīna bicāra (...), *ibidem*, p. 103, *dohās* no. 634–636. Here the present subjunctive

kahyaū appears in present tense in translation due to stylistic concerns in English.

good descent. There is an episode of succession struggle in Delhi and Kāyam Khān speaks against the possibility of a slave-sultan. Jān speaks both for himself and Kāyam to elaborate on the consequences that the rule of a low-born could bring:

[One has a] mind according to [one's] lineage, say wise men,
 If someone consorts with people of bad breeding, it will not end well.
 People of bad standing will not improve even if they tried million times,
 If a pawn becomes a queen, it is like the hair moved the head.³⁹
 (...) and wroth he told everyone,
 Why there cannot be a slave on the imperial throne.
 "Elevate [to the throne] a lord of good family,
 If a servant takes the office, he will not bring any glory".⁴⁰

The ancestry carries more than dynastic rights. It is framed in the terms of ability. The man's capability is dependent on ancestry (and his confession as we have seen), and so only chosen people can be trusted to rule. This of course reinforces the weight of ancestry itself. Kāyam Khān's Rajput ancestry would predispose him to lead the country. He chooses to forsake the throne only because he has no interest in Delhi. Otherwise, the fact that Jān has the hierarchy of local Rajputs, yet never bothers to create the hierarchy of Indo-Muslim rulers of Northern India, indicates that he is concerned primarily with the local hierarchy. This ancestry is sometimes described using the metaphor of a tree:

Cauhān is the wishing tree with innumerable branches (...).⁴¹
 Son of Tāhar Khān is a wishing tree: brave, righteous, and a good
 son (...).⁴²

The Kāyam Khānī themselves are portrayed as the branches of the miraculous wishing tree (*kalp vṛkṣ*)⁴³, or the trees themselves. Though they are a part of the great tree from the start, their individual growths only serve to exalt their family.

³⁹ That means the world has become upside down.

⁴⁰ *Gota gaila budhi hota hai, aisē kusala kahanta,*
kulahīnāi mukha lāiye, pūrī parai na anta.
Kulahīnāi sudharai nahī, kīje jatana karora,
pāis tau pharajī bhaye, calāī sīsake jora.
 (...) *sabasaū kahyau risāi,*
pātasāha kaitakhata para, cerau kyāi na āi.
Sāhaba uttima kījiye, jo kulavanto hoi,

ceraike cākara bhaye, sobha na pāvai koi, Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, pp. 31, 33, dohā no. 187–188, 193–194.

⁴¹ *Kalapa bicha Cahuvāna hai, jākai anagana sākha (...)*, ibidem, p. 9, dohā no. 53.

⁴² *Taravara Tāharakhāna, tana sāhasa sata sapūta (...)*, ibidem, p. 175, dohā no. 1041.

⁴³ Anna Piekarska-Maulik, 'Kalpawryksza' (entry) in: Andrzej Ługowski (ed.), *Słownik mitologii hinduskiej*, Warszawa 2015, epub.

While the metaphor of ‘ancestry as a tree’ would be relatively common – the expression ‘genealogical tree’ comes to mind – the chosen tree of Kāyam Khānī is anything but common. *Kalp vṛkṣ* is the best of trees in the Indian tradition: it is a heavenly tree that could grant fulfilment of any wish. It confirms the dynasty’s nature as the best of people: because they are the sole ones capable of fulfilling the wish of their people like the wishing tree itself.

The concern for Rajput ancestry features also heavily on the other virtues. Aliph Khān himself is motivated by the mindfulness of his Rajput ancestors like raja Hammīr: one cannot shame his ancestors! Thus, specific names feature heavily in the consciousness. Ties with Rajputs are not limited to self-definition, and blood relations. They are also cared for by cultivating local customs, albeit Jān seldom bothers with describing them, the one description of the wedding in *Rāso* has local characteristics, like, for example, being contracted by the gift of a coconut.

However, being Rajput is not only based on blood relations. It is also a bond between the ruler and his land which Jān personifies as a woman. This metaphor surfaces twice. Once, when Kāyam Khān muses about whether to inherit Delhi’s throne, he frames his rejection through a linguistic metaphor of Delhi as a black widow and a woman of bad repute. It is also present when Jān talks about Cauhān and the region of Lake Sambhar. The salty earth of Sambhar is described as *laun*: ‘salt’, but the context of defending, or bringing shame to, salt hints that Jān connects this word with etymologically connected ‘*salonā*’, ‘salty, beautiful’, to finally mean ‘beauty, beautiful woman’. Thus, Jān speaks of Kāyam Khānī’s duties through the metaphor of marriage to the Earth. Jān once again revisits this metaphor later and asserts that they are fulfilling their ‘marital’ obligations.⁴⁴ This metaphor serves to inscribe Kāyam Khānī upon the geography of Rajasthan, and – vice versa – connect them to Rajasthan. That makes them local par excellence and serves to highlight that any sort of their identity is ultimately Rajput and local. It is also a very typical motif of Rajasthani literature – and once again showcases that Jān knowingly uses the Rajput idiom.⁴⁵

By now we have established that *Rāso* portrays its heroes as both Muslims and Rajputs. While it is an intriguing combination by itself, one can benefit from an analysis of how the ideal Kāyam Khānī rulers play both parts of their identity.

It comes as a matter of course that the ruler should be a warrior. Jān exalts virtues such as bravery, and its weight can be seen in the usage of very numerous words denoting

⁴⁴ While it appears here because of the importance of Lake Sambhar as the primary source of salt in this part of India, the salt itself has wider symbolic connotations. It was a payment method and it is therefore symbolic of obligations, and duty. This metaphor of duty is explored since it was said of Aliph Khān: ‘king of Sambhar [descending from Sambhar] paid salt to the salt’ (*Sambharī nareṣane caṛhāyo laūna laūnakau*) and praised for fulfilling his duty, Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khāī rāso*, p. 153, stanza in *savaiyā* metre no. 930. In literary context similar: “as much as sweetness God has given beauty to the salty”, *kitau miṭhāsa dayau daī itāī salonāī rūpa*, Jagannāthdās Ratnākar, *Bihārī Ratnākar*, Naī Dillī 2011, p. 185.

⁴⁵ The personification of earth as woman, like for example in the term *mātrbhūmi*, is common in the Indian literature and culture. The high value attributed by Rajputs to protection their women’s purity makes the allegory especially compelling.

a heroic warrior.⁴⁶ Descriptions of martial exploits and praise of victory form the basis of every biography in the *Rāso*. However, Jān goes beyond an appreciation for military progress. The boldness itself is also presented positively. Very often a precise reason for the fight is not as important as the process of proving oneself in combat. In truth, one of Kāyam Khān's sons abducts the sultan's horses, and then sends a statement: "what I took from you, I [took only] because of desire to fight".⁴⁷

Thus, belligerence itself is presented as a virtue. It falls fully in line with the Rajput literary tradition where war is presented as the main goal of life. Jān explicitly adheres to this worldview: he even makes a parallel between a heroic warrior and a fish: they both require water (*pānī*), albeit while the fish would die without water, the warrior would rather die in it. The word used – *pānī* – has the metaphorical meaning of 'honour' and has also been used as a metaphor for blood in Rajasthani poems.⁴⁸ It would mean either that the reputation and good name are more important to the ruler than his own life... or even that the blood of the war is necessary sustenance to the ruler. Both interpretations would fall firmly into the warrior ethics of Rajputs where war is idealized.

Proficiency in warfare, and boldness are probably the most important qualities for Kāyam Khānī in *Rāso*. They are not the only traits that Jān seeks to elevate. The virtue of generosity – held in esteem by Islamic and Indian tradition, but especially among the Rajputs⁴⁹ – is highly valued by Jān. However, despite its role, it is praised relatively rarely. There are almost no descriptions of Kāyam Khānī giving excessive gifts to anyone, but we need to remember that a lack of focus on their subjects – to whom they could be generous – prevents opportunities for a description of gifts. We get a glimpse of a faint reflection of generosity in the help that Kāyam Khānī are willing to lend to their kinsmen, albeit it mostly takes the form of military aid or introduction to central authorities, and rarely relates to material gifts.

While belligerence is the main trait of Kāyam Khānī, generosity is held to be the main trait of these sultans and emperors in Delhi that Jān portrays positively. The virtue is most visible in the descriptions of Mughal emperors. Jahangir – a contemporary of Aliph Khān – is especially noted for that, though that may be because he was both contemporary of Jān and presided over the golden age of Kāyam Khānī. It is said of him that "[all] day and night, twenty four hours [a day] he was giving [gifts]".⁵⁰

The customs connected with gift giving are intelligible for both interlocutors of Kāyam Khānī: the Mughal power at Delhi, and local rulers of Rajasthan. It mostly concerns

⁴⁶ We may note *subhaṭ, jujhār, mūchār, ranadhūr, sahīd*, among other words.

⁴⁷ *pai mai tere laye hai so, juddhakī abhilāṣa*. Ratanlāl Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 53, dohā no. 319.

⁴⁸ This interpretation was suggested in personal communication by Dr. Aleksandra Turek in 2020. This substitution appears in the battle description (*yuddh varnan*), stanzas 117–127, in: Narottamdas Svāmī (ed.), *Krisana-Rukamañī-rī veli Rāṭhaurā Pṛthvīrāja-rī kahī*, Āgrā 1971, pp. 61–67.

⁴⁹ On the very similar descriptions of generosity of Shivaji by poet Bhūṣaṇ that showcase it was typical to Indian culture see Piotr Borek, *Zapis przeszłości w Indiach*, Kraków 2019, pp. 199–230.

⁵⁰ (...) *nisa dina āṭhāū jāmamaī, debai hī sū kāma*; Ratanlāl Miśra, p. 114, dohā no. 694.

things like *mansab*⁵¹, and the gifts of robes⁵², horses, and soldiers. Generosity exalts the gift giver but it also has bearing upon the fate of the one gift was given to. Kāyam Khānī achieved their greatest significance during Mughal rule⁵³ and factors like raised *mansab* and gifted soldiers doubtlessly were a factor. Kāyam Khānī were dependent on Mughal patronage as Muslim local rulers and one of the main local beneficiaries of the Mughal presence. In a way, Jān's admiration for the Mughals bears a resemblance to an artist expressing gratitude and admiration towards their generous patrons. However, it also gives a glimpse of the importance of generosity for Kāyam Khānī themselves, just not through direct reference. We already mentioned the metaphor of rulers as wishing trees, and it implies that the rulers are fulfilling the wishes of their subjects through their generosity. There is a case of familial dispute among the Khānzādās (Kāyam Khānī branch) of Jhuñjunū where the ruler of Fatehpur intervenes. The stated reason for his aid was the greed of ruling Khānzādā who took for himself all of Jhuñjunū's produce, and through this condemnation, the importance of generosity is indirectly confirmed.⁵⁴

While generosity is valued positively, less is wealth itself. Its descriptions are situated primarily during the tale of Nāhar Khān, whom Jān portrayed as possibly the wealthiest of Kāyam Khānī rulers.⁵⁵ However, it is not just the presence of riches that Jān praises, but rather the ability to project it through spending. Jān praises Nāhar Khān by mentioning his projects like the erection of a new palace in Fatehpur and spending it on artistic pursuits. It further shows the worldly, artistic knowledge of the ruler which is (as Jān posits) another kind of wealth.⁵⁶

The role of justice is relatively minor, especially since *Rāso* does not describe dealings between rulers and their subjects, and his heroes live in a world where rulers were expected to assert themselves by power. However, there is one notable aversion to this. Daulat Khān makes a statement never to take what is not his – whether that would be land, or wealth.⁵⁷ This lies opposite of what would be expected of a Rajput ruler. It is undoubtedly intentional on poet's part as he is the only ruler described with no raids attributed to his name, and one of the three Kāyam Khānīs held to be especially close to God and gifted by supernatural powers as a result.

While justice and fairness are a secondary concern for most rulers who are renowned as successful raiders, transcending the warrior Rajput lifestyle may be a viable way to get

⁵¹ *Mansab* system (*mansabdārī*) was a system of bureaucratic ranks in Mughal empire where numbers denoted an obligation to provide a specific number of armed men in return for *mansabdar*'s salary. On the matter of mansab system <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mansabdar>, Viewed 30 May 2023.

⁵² It is a Muslim custom known as *khilaat*, see: 'Khil'a, Viewed 30 May 2023, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khila-COM_0507>.

⁵³ Talbot, *Becoming Turk the Rajput Way*, pp. 226–228, Sunita Budhwar, *Qayamkhani Shaikhzada Family of Fatehpur-Jhunjunu*, p. 419.

⁵⁴ Miśra, *Kāyam Khā rāso*, p. 77, dohā no. 465.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 95, dohā no. 578–580, 587–589.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, dohā no. 588.

⁵⁷ It is the same Daulat who has attained *vak siddhi* through God and appeared in the other place of this work; *ibidem*, p. 81, dohā no. 495–497.

closer to God and achieve an alternative form of recognition. Daulat Khān's ethical stance is undoubtedly respected by the poet, though he does not make a point of condemning other behaviours. *Rāso* still expects its rulers to behave in a righteous and honourable manner. However, it is mainly by highlighting that the ruler is virtuous (*sat*) rather than providing examples of righteous deeds. Otherwise, it values reputation and good name much higher. It is akin to the ultimate prize: boldness and bravery in combat help them become respected, and some rulers (for example Tāj Khān) are respected and feared for these qualities even if they lose in combat. Otherwise, they are compelled to respond to any sort of insults, and so Tāj Khān and his brother forsake their friend's court when he treats them unfairly, just as saintly Daulat Khān rides to fight and kills raja Lūnkarān of Bikaner as soon as said raja sends an insulting, threatening letter to him.⁵⁸

Overall, rulers are described to be highly regarded by both Hindu local rulers, and Muslim elites. Bravery and skill in warfare are valued almost universally, even if Jān uses typically Rajasthani idiom to express it. Generosity is viewed very positively both in Rajput, and a wider Muslim idiom. Rajasthani literature is full of descriptions of almost excessive gifts, whereas Arabic traditions praise the generosity of figures like Hatim at-Ta'i⁵⁹, and introduce a religious obligation to give alms. The reputation and the compulsion to respond to any insult could just as easily be found in Rajasthani, as in Arabic literature⁶⁰, and so on.

Summary

It has proven near impossible to discern between Muslim and Indian facets of identity expressed in *Kāyam Khā Rāso*. This ideal sits on the shared grounds between Muslim and Indian visions of a perfect ruler. The poem offers a portrait of an Indian ruler, yet one that could be equally palpable to the Muslim powers of his time. It is obviously done by choice, since Indian and cosmopolitan Islamic cultures diverge on a fair number of issues, and Jān seeks to bring up precisely these facets that would not clash. Obviously, some statements belong to only one of these traditions. The miracle of Daulat Khān, as has been already mentioned, was done in defence of a cow. This would not be understood in the wider Islamic culture: since the cow was offered as a gift for Babur's hungry tiger, a logic of defence of one's own possessions would not be applicable, and

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 83, dohā no. 500–505.

⁵⁹ Early Arabic poet famed for his generosity in giving away his wealth, finally sacrificing his legendary camel to host a caravan with riches, aiming to buy the said camel. See: 'Hatim al-Tai', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hatem-tai>>.

⁶⁰ The early Arabic literature has the genre of *ayyām al-'Arab*, 'days of Arabs', remembering various conflicts of Arab tribes. One of the most famous is a vengeance-fueled, forty-year long Basus war, started by the killing of a camel. On the 'days of Arabs' see: 'pre-Islamic Prose', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-arts/Imagery#ref61826>>, on the Basus war see: 'Basus, War of', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662778.001.0001/acref-9780198662778-e-5422>>.

Islam does not place too much reverence on cows. Likewise, some intricacies of Sufi symbolism – like philosophical equivalence between the divine and Sun (as in Timur’s description) – would be hard to understand for people with no ties to Sufism. Yet while full meaning of all passages may not be clear to specific audience, neither of these examples would lead to backlash.

That is not to say that Jān’s identity is ‘syncretic’. He is fully embracing Islam, just as he is embracing being a Rajput. He never compromises either: he never backtracks on his claim that only Islam may justify just rule, and on the soteriological view of the Mughals, just as he never goes back on his claims that proper lineage – and best of all: the Rajput lineage – is what enables ruler to prosper. These expressions may not belong to the most ‘orthodox’ Islam, nor parrot completely the Hindu discourse of local rulers, but they undoubtedly belong to someone who fully identified as both Rajput and Muslim.

References

- Balabanlılar Lisa, *The Emperor Jahangir: Power and Kingship in Mughal India*, I.B. Tauris, London 2020.
- Borek Piotr, *Zapis przeszłości w Indiach: Dworska kultura literacka języka bradź*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2019.
- Busch Allison, ‘Hidden in Plain View: Brajhasha Poets at the Mughal Court’, *Modern Asian Studies* 44,2 (2010), pp. 367–309.
- Budhwar Sunita, ‘The Qayamkhani Shaikhzada Family of Fatehpur’, in: *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39, vol. I, 1978, pp. 412–425, Viewed 9 November 2022, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44139379>>.
- Gauraṅ Nasīm and Gauraṅ Habīb Khā, *Rājasthānī lok-saṃskṛti evaṃ Kāyamkhānī samaj*, Gauraṅ Prakāśan, Jodhpur 2007.
- Hinterstein Stephen (ed.), *The Four Pillars of Spiritual Transformation*, Anqa Publishing, Oxford 2008, pp. 7–13.
- Green Nile, *Sufism: A Global History*, Wiley-Blackwell, Singapore 2012.
- Kolff Dirk, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy. The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2002.
- Lāhoṭī Vīnā (ed.), *Jān – granthāvalī*, vol. 1, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur 2003.
- Leaman Oliver (ed.), *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*, Routledge, Abingdon 2006.
- Menāriyā Motilāl, *Rājasthānī bhāṣā aur sāhitya*, Rājasthān Granthāgār, Jodhpur 2016.
- Miśra Ratanlāl (ed.), *Kāyam Khā rāsā*, Rājasthānī Kāyamkhānī Śodh Saṃsthān, Jodhpur 2007.
- Miśra Ratanlāl, *Kāyamkhānī vams kā itihās evaṃ saṃskṛti*, Rājasthānī Granthāgār, Jodhpur 2018.
- Miśra Ratanlāl, *Śekhāvāṭī kā itihās*, Rājendra Miśra, Jhuṅjuhnū 1984.
- Moin A. Azfar, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, Columbia University Press, New York 2012.
- Piekarska-Maulik Anna, ‘Kalpawryksza’ (entry), in: Andrzej Ługowski (ed.), *Słownik mitologii hinduskiej*, Dialog, Warszawa 2015, epub.
- Ratnākar Jagannāthdās (ed.), *Bihārī Ratnākar*, Prakāśan Sansthān, Nāī Dillī 2011.
- Sieklucka Anna, ‘Dźambudwipa’ (entry), in: Andrzej Ługowski (ed.), *Słownik mitologii hinduskiej*, Dialog, Warszawa 2015, epub.
- Sharma Dasharatha, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, Book Treasure, Jodhpur 2016.
- Stasik Danuta, *Język hindi*, vol. 1, Dialog, Warszawa 2010.

- Stuart McGregor, 'Progress of Hindi, Part I: The Development of a Transregional Idiom', in: *Literary Cultures in History*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, Berkeley 2003, pp. 912–944,
- Svāmī Narottamdās (ed.), *Krisana-Rukamañī-rī veli Rāṭhaurā Pṛthivṛāja-rī kahī*, Śrī Rām Mehrā eṇḍ Kampanī, Āgrā 1971.
- Talbot Cynthia, 'Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative', *Modern Asian Studies* 43,1 (2009), pp. 211–243, Viewed 11 November 2022, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20488077>>.
- Talbot Cynthia, 'Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37,4 (1995), pp. 692–722, Viewed 31 May 2023, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/179206>>.
- Tekiela Radosław, 'Ideal indyjskiego władcy – analiza na podstawie Raso o Kajamie Khanie autorstwa poety Džana' (M.A. diss., University of Warsaw, 2020).
- Turek Aleksandra, 'Radżputowie – stereotypowi bohaterowie Radżasthanu', *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 3–4 (2011), pp. 142–150.
- Turek Aleksandra, 'Radżasthani – początki języka i literatury', *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 2 (2019), pp. 157–170, Viewed 11 November 2022, <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-c5eab883-318c-46e3-88a7-22125eeebd17/c/PO_2_2019_Turek_Aleksandra.pdf>.
- Varmā Dhīrendra et al. (ed.), *Hindī sāhitya koś*, vol. I, Jñānmaṇḍal liṃiteḍ, Vārāṇasī 1973.
- Vyās Kailāśnāth, Devendrasimh Gahlot, *Rājasthān kī jatiyō kā sāmājik aur ārthik jīvan*, Rājasthānī Granthāgār, Jodhpur 2019.

Internet Sources

- Britannica* – 'pre-Islamic Prose', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-arts/Imagery#ref61826>>.
- Britannica* – 'maṣabdār', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mansabdar>, Viewed 30 May 2023.
- Encyclopedia of Islam*, Brill, Second Edition – 'Kḥil'a, Viewed 30 May 2023, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khila-COM_0507>.
- Iranica* – 'Hatim al-Tai', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hatem-tai>>.
- Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* – 'Rajput Kingship', Viewed 30 May 2023, <<https://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-747#acrefore-9780190277727-e-747-div1-1>>.
- Oxford Reference* – 'Basus, War of', Viewed 17 June 2022, <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662778.001.0001/acref-9780198662778-e-5422>>.