BOOK REVIEWS


This book forms part of a serial on “Documents of Non-Christian Religions”. The subtitle is “Life and Legend” — selected, translated and introduced by Annemarie Schimmel. It is an attempt to acquaint the German reader with the famous mystic of Baghdad, Ḥusayn Ibn Mansūr, called al-Ḥallāj. As a leading authority on Iqbal, Annemarie Schimmel has frequently alluded to the importance of the role played by al-Ḥallāj in the thought of Iqbal, an aspect that did not attract the attention it deserves. The book under review gives evidence that the author has taken up this challenge and immersed herself into the all-too-perplexing complexities of reflexes that made up the religious attitude of the mysterious mystic. She has duly acknowledged the extent to which we are indebted to the late Louis Massignon who “re-discovered” al-Ḥallāj during the twenties of the present century. Professor Schimmel’s biographical sketch of the saint from Baghdad is based on Massignon’s monumental work La Passion d’al Hossayn ibn Mansour al Hallaj, Martyr Mystique de l’Islam (1922). Notwithstanding this indebtedness to Massignon, the book under review is a piece of literature that Annemarie Schimmel alone could probably produce. A major factor that made this remarkable achievement possible is her comprehensive knowledge of different languages. This book contains translations from Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Sindhi, Siraiki, and Urdu. Western Researches on Islam traditionally suffer from the setback of limited linguistic combinations, i.e., Western scholars knowing Arabic mostly combine it with a knowledge of Turkish and Persian; those who start with Indian languages usually combine it with a study of Persian, or vice versa, but not with Arabic. Even the researches of outstanding scholars like Goldziher were hamshackled by the ignorance of Urdu and Sindhi (cf. Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung, Leiden 1952, p. 320).

Professor Schimmel’s versatility has enabled her not only to translate from al-Ḥallāj (Part I) but also to draw a portrait of the mystic as he appears in the Islamic traditions (Part II) from the 11th to the 20th century. The Bibliography comprises works from practically the entire Muslims world — excepting the part East of the Bay of Bengal. This latter fact is, though understandable, nevertheless regrettable, because it is precisely in those neglected areas that Muslim mysticism found a most fertile soil and Siti Jenar, one of the renowned saints of Java, is in more than one way a true replica of al-Ḥallāj in the Far East.

Texts of al-Ḥallāj are selected from his (a) poems, (b) his prayers and utterances, (c) from the Riwayāt, (d) from the Kitāb al-Ḥawāsin, (e) from his commentary of the Holy Qur’ān, and (f) from biographical notes. Needless to say that the verses rendered into German by the author are poetic compositions, and not merely prose translations. This applies not only to the verses of al-Ḥallāj himself but also to poetic references to him by numerous disciples and friends throughout the ages. Annemarie Schimmel’s chronologically ordered selection is admirable for its comprehensiveness. If, nevertheless, this array of inspired believers appears to be chosen rather somewhat at random we have to...
excuse the author with the size of the precious pocket-book which naturally imposes certain limitations (although among the Pashtu poets we would have given preference to the missing Raḥmān Bābā over Khūshqāl Khān Khattak, similarly among the Urdu poets we cannot but consider the unmentioned Mīr Dard much closer connected with al-Ḥallāj than Akbar Allāhābādī). The book contains excerpts from Fāfid al-dīn ‘Aṭṭār, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī, Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī, Lāl Shahbāz Qalandār, Maḥmūd Shabistarī, Lahjīl, from the Turkish mystics Yūnus Emre, Nes‘mī, Eshrefoghlu Rūmī, Ashīk, from Jahāngīr Ḥāshimī, ‘Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī, from the Turkish poets Fuẓūlī, Pīr Sultān Abdāl, Ri’yāzī, Elma‘īlī Ummī Sinān, Niyāzī Mīrādī, from Nazīrī, Dārā Shikoh, Kūl Muṣṭafā, Khūshqāl Khān Khattak, Bādīl, Za‘ī, Mīr Jān-Allāh, Bühle Shāh, from the Sindhi poets Shāh ‘Abd al-La‘l of Bhit, Makhdūm Muḥammad Zamān, and Sachal Sarmast, from the German poet and orientalist Friedrich Rückert, from Mirzā Ghālib, Bādīl of Ro’hī, Faqīr Imām Bakhsh Khādīm of Shikarpūr, Akbar Allāhābādī, from the Turkish dervish Rūḥ-Allāh, from Muḥammad Iṣqāl, the contemporary Turks Sāliḥ Zeḵī Akṭay, Asaf Ḥaṭe Chelēbī, Eμın Ulgener, Bēdri Noyān, the Syrian Adonis and the Egyptian Sālāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣābūr.

By referring to this plethora of brilliant writers Annemarie Schimmel has aptly demonstrated the effusion of the head-strong saint’s spirit over the whole expanse of Islam.

“Other authorities on mysticism just reproduced sayings of al-Ḥallāj in their treatises without, however, mentioning his name. They would merely write: ‘one of the great men said’, or ‘a great Sufi said’. “ (p. 110)

Striking and almost confounding is the large number of mystic ‘couples’ who followed in the footsteps of Ḥusayn Ibn Mansūr, i.e., the preachers or poets who either associated or even identified themselves with him or were associated with him by posterity. The first of them was ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Sa‘īdī, Pīr Sultān Abdāl, Ri’yāzī, Elma‘īlī Ummī Sinān, Niyāzī Mīrādī, from Nazīrī, Dārā Shikoh, Kūl Muṣṭafā, Khūshqāl Khān Khattak, Bādīl, Za‘ī, Mīr Jān-Allāh, Bühle Shāh, from the Sindhi poets Shāh ‘Abd al-La‘l of Bhit, Makhdūm Muḥammad Zamān, and Sachal Sarmast, from the German poet and orientalist Friedrich Rückert, from Mirzā Ghālib, Bādīl of Ro’hī, Faqīr Imām Bakhsh Khādīm of Shikarpūr, Akbar Allāhābādī, from the Turkish dervish Rūḥ-Allāh, from Muḥammad Iṣqāl, the contemporary Turks Sāliḥ Zeḵī Akṭay, Asaf Ḥaṭe Chelēbī, Eμın Ulgener, Bēdri Noyān, the Syrian Adonis and the Egyptian Sālāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣābūr.

The most famous or notorious saying of the mystic is “I am the Truth”. With Ibn ‘Arab this became the symbol of essential monism. The strong element of personality was then sublimated into the concept of all-encompassing unity. Dārā Shikoh (executed in 1659) wrote a chapter on al-Ḥallāj in his biography of great saints. The Moghul prince indubitably admired him for putting the traditionalists’ hold in jeopardy. This is based on the fact that the dour mystic was galling to orthodoxy who held that by foisting spurious miracles upon the public he was bent on fomenting troubles in the country. But the indomitable Baghdādi was impervious to the bodes of impending doom, which he himself sought, because his intense desire to bear out his love for God convinced him that he had to sacrifice himself. For him the cross or the gallows (which way he died has never definitely been established) were more of a pinnacle from where he found it opportune to convey his message. Therefore no one could deflect him from his path which the traditionalists necessarily considered as devious. They soon apprehended the shadow of sedition lurking behind every utterance of his. Probably this very obtuseness of the traditionalists prevented them from muzzling those who espoused his cause.
By pointing out the various elements of manifold origin (Zoroastrian, Christian, Indian, etc.) that coalesce in the mind of al-Ḥallāj, Annemarie Schimmel dispels the idea that he was merely a “secret Christian” as Bartholomé d’Herbelot and August Muller wanted us to believe (to the reviewer it is astounding how scholars holding such an opinion overlooked the absence of meekness in al-Ḥallāj which disqualifies him for this role, at least according to their own notions about the character of Jesus). The author views the mystic as a fervid Muslim in search of the intrinsic values of Islam. Orthodoxy will, of course, emphatically deny this inference and inveigh passionately against both, the hero as well as the author.

It must be stated in all fairness that Professor Schimmel, while regarding al-Ḥallāj as a Ṣūfī within the fold of Islam, apparently sides with him. Beside a casual remark about Ibn Ḥazm, the arch-enemy of the “false Prophet”, there is little mention of the arguments against Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr. We miss especially any reference to the diatribe against him by Ibn al-Nadīm in his Fihrist. The inimical views of the latter are shared even by many liberal Muslim thinkers who find it difficult to reconcile themselves to the mystic’s ostensible pandering to the public’s liking for scandal and sensation. A truly enlightened modern critic calls al-Ḥallāj a “spiritual adolescent” because he seemed to have regarded all his experiences as unique and never to have attained to manhood so as to become aware of the fact that he is sharing general phenomena which are common to many. In this context one might deplore that Sarmad, a convert from Judaism and spiritual ‘instigator’ of the Moghul heir to the throne, Dārā Shikoh, has not been dealt with more elaborately, for we feel that Sarmad succeeded best in following Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr, nay, he even superseded him by demonstrating at the time of his execution that he left behind him the Ḥallājīan stage of adolescence and finally attained spiritual maturity. Whereas he had all the time been running about shouting the first half of the Confession of Faith Lā ilāha — which means atheism — he used his very last moment, when his head was being severed from the trunk, to utter the completing words ʾilla-ʾIlāh. Thus he declared his faith at the time when it was no more a matter between him and men, but solely between himself and the Creator with whom he longed to be united. In fact, Sarmad’s succession to al-Ḥallāj still calls for a separate study.

But again, while speaking about Iqbāl and his comparison between Nietzsche and al-Ḥallāj, Annemarie Schimmel does justice to the orthodox view by referring to the opinion of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī who said that al-Ḥallāj stumbled because he lacked a guide. Iqbāl expresses the same view about Nietzsche. (p. 126)

The modernising Muslim of the younger generation with his zealous concern for social reform may be at a loss to integrate al-Ḥallāj into a redefined system of Islamic thought. For the reader with little or no mystic proclivities, Ḥusayn Ibn Manṣūr will remain enigmatic in spite of Professor Schimmel’s laudable effort to clarify and to draw as much synoptical and as precise a picture of the saint as is possible in such concise a presentation (We should add that her introduction and comments are in no way a stilted attempt to straiten things out. Her analysis of al-Ḥallāj’s mind is not merely the result of a profound study; she has fully absorbed every strand in the fabric of his thought just as if she were a disciple of the Ṣūfī. But being at the same time an experienced teacher she affords a lucid description in the form of a flowing narration. The contemporary Egyptian author, Salāḥ ʿAbd al-Šābūr, has written a drama where the mystic turns into a Sozialrevolutionär. Professor Schimmel, however, rightly points out that the religious ideas are rather obscured in this drama. To the reviewer this means again Christianising
al-Ḥallāj, i.e., to draw him into an arena of conflict similar to that of the unresolved question whether Jesus was a preacher of non-violence solely concerned with the Hereafter or whether he was a political rebel against Roman colonialism—a matter of eternal dispute between so many eminent scholars.

To us the most promising start toward a revaluation of the Baghdadi mystic, a revaluation that can be meaningful in the modern context, is ‘Abd al-Rahmān Badawi’s *Islamic Existentialism* to which Annemarie Schimmel briefly alludes. (Since Badawi is missing in the bibliography we recommend “Les Points de Rencontre de la Mystique Musulmane et de l’Existentialisme”, in *Studia Islamica* XXVII).

But the book is, of course, not intended for the revolutionary intellectuals in Algiers or Dacca. It is meant for well-educated German readers who wish to broaden their horizon. For them it will not be easy to penetrate the often quite complex world of Muslim religious attitudes. But Professor Schimmel has facilitated such an insight to a considerable extent. In fact it is difficult to think of a method or a way of presentation that could make things plainer. If still there remain difficulties in fully grasping the portent of the myth that is al-Ḥallāj, it is due to the inherent intricacies of the subject and not to any fault of the author. As a contribution to Islamics, Professor Schimmel’s book ought to occupy a prominent place in the book-shelf of every scholar of Oriental Studies.


Like the book on Al-Ḥallāj reviewed above, this volume also appeared as part of a series called “Documents of Non-Christian Religions”. Size, binding, and the beautiful make-up of both these books are, therefore, alike.

Annemarie Schimmel hardly needs any introduction as an Iqbalist. Her comprehensive study on the poet-philosopher appeared in 1963 under the title *Gabriel’s Wing*. Beside this standard work she has written numerous introductions and articles on Iqbal. But, outside the German-speaking countries, little is known about her translations of Jāvid Nāmah (*Buch der Ewigkeit*, Munich 1957) and Payām-i Mashriq (*Botschaft der Ostens*, Wiesbaden 1963). These masterpieces along with her many other writings, translations, and editions (e.g. a book on *Pakistan — Ein Schloss mit Tausend Toren*, 1965; a translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddima*; and a re-edition of Max Hening’s translation of the Holy Qur’ān, 1960) have contributed to a deeper understanding of Muslim thought in Germany. Even many a Muslim had to admit that they came to appreciate Iqbal fully well only after having studied Professor Schimmel’s German rendering of the works of the Pakistani thinker. For analogy’s sake we might say that Schimmel is to Germany what Arberry is to the English-speaking world, although the former is not confined to her home country. For the last six years she has been teaching at Harvard.

The book under review is not a mere translation of Iqbal’s Persian Psalms as the title seems to suggest. It is rather an anthology comprising excerpts from all the works of the poet-philosopher: Bāng-i Đarā, Stray Reflections, Asrār-i Khūdī and Rumūz-i Bekhūdī, Early Essays, Payām-i Mashriq, Zabūr-i ‘Ajām, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Jāvid Namah, Pakistan Speech, Bāl-i Jibrīl, Đarb-i Kal m, New Year’s Message 1938, and Armaghān-i Hijāz. The book contains a useful record of names and terms, introducing to the non-Muslim reader not only such personalities as Ṣarāḥbī and Kabīr, but also such significant places as Khotān and Fārān, without which an insight into Iqbal’s poetry is hardly possible. The bibliography is proportionate to
the little book, but comprehensive enough to be a helpful guide to readers who feel stimulated to know more about Pakistan's spiritual father, and undoubtedly their number will not be negligible.

Professor Schimmel introduces Iqbal as a “politician, philosopher, and poet all in one. He was equally well trained in European as in Islamic philosophy. He lived during a crucial period of the history of the Muslim world, at a time when century-old traditions crumbled and relations between the Orient and the Occident started to take a new shape. The West had known Islamic culture for about a thousand years, had fought against it and sometimes borrowed from it certain values and literary forms. In the writings of Goethe and Rueckert and the generations succeeding them, this dispute entailed a genuine understanding, a coming to terms. In the case of Rueckert, it even resulted in assimilating Oriental poetry. Since the beginning of the 19th century there has been an effort to obtain a more objective view of Islamic history. This interest itself was, however, first and foremost historical. The contemporary Orient was considered as politically barren, as a tottering territory. The religion and civilisation of Islam seemed no longer capable of adapting itself to the conditions of modernity which was then apparently enjoying a golden age in Europe. However, under the pressure of the colonial powers Muslims, whether in India or in the Arab countries, awakened with determination to the need of asserting their identity and to resuscitate their civilisation. Again and again they sought to prove to themselves and to Christianity that their soil was the original spring-board of European civilisation.

Iqbal represents the most critical point of Muslim self interpretation. The diverse currents of thought, that stirred the Muslims in general and those of the Subcontinent in particular, during the years between 1900 and the outbreak of World War II, are clearly discernible in his writings.” (p. 9-10)

It is but natural that, in such a book written for Germans, the author stresses the impact of German literature on Iqbal. But besides, is not this intellectual relationship of the philosopher with Goethe, Nietzsche and French thinkers like Bergson and Massignon indeed a standing challenge to the coming generations of Pakistanis? A challenge to break through the one-sided cultural orientation toward Britain that still ensnares the country in a Victorian tangle. It is certainly one of Iqbal's greatest merits to have crossed the barriers of a world-view that was virtually locked in the domain of Shakespeare and Milton. By doing so the poet has shown the way to cultural emancipation of the former colony toward an intellectually agile Muslim state. And it is to this aspect of Iqbal's greatness that Annemarie Schimmel draws the reader's attention. In this way she has succeeded in making the often-emphasized universalism of Iqbal truly meaningful to non-Muslim Westerners.

"Has Iqbal erected a new philosophical system? Certainly not. But in an ingenious synthesis he has blended eastern humanities with western ones. For example, his valuation of Nietzsche, gives evidence of an amazingly deep insight into the greatness as well as the limitations of this tragic thinker. Iqbal was not inclined to develop a system. He was too convinced of the diversity of happenings and the freedom of action to be able to forge his thoughts into a rigid system. He considered philosophy to be 'wisdom without ardour', in contradistinction to poetry which he called 'wisdom with ardour'. However, the western reader will more often than not admire his knowledge and discernment, his power of mental perception and the method of tackling those problems which were then emerging in Europe as burning topics of discussion. Often he was able to do so without even having access to the necessary literature.” (p. 18)

Detlev Khalid

The author was formerly a senior lecturer at the University of Dacca and is presently teaching history at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand and his present work has grown out of a Ph. D. thesis submitted to London University in 1966.

The fact that the work under review has been brought out as the 7th of a series of publications of the Cambridge University Centre for South Asian Studies — shows its link with the broader interest of the area in which East India Company’s role during the period (1756-1775), was actually or potentially significant. But, before going to England for working on this thesis, our author was closely associated for more than a decade with the activities of that group of scholars who were working out the details of the social history of the Muslims of Bengal centering round the Asiatic Society of Pakistan at Dacca. Even preceding that period our author had visited England once before for higher studies and had come back with lasting interest in the file documents of the permanent Settlement of Bengal, to which the present work, in fact, constitutes a detailed background. Thus, besides being a link in the broader history of the modern South Asia, the present work is also to be classified as a ring in the Chain of the impressive and voluminous works produced in the field of the social history of Bengal by young and old scholars during the last two decades of independence. In this respect, one has to take into account the fact that the period covered by this work is of paramount importance not only as marking the transition from the the Mughal to the British rule in Bengal but also as forming the foundation stage of the British empire in India.

In the present work, our author has expressly aimed at making a critical analysis of the ‘conflict’ between the imperial Mughal ideal of a chaste and welfare-of-the-ryot (or subject) oriented administration and the most tyrannical mercantile colonialism of the servants of the East India Company in the Subah of Bengal which included Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The ‘conflict’ intensified in the career of Reza Khan during the three and half decades that he lived through and served the English rulers following the Battle of Plassey, especially from 1765 to 1790, in the capacity of Nā‘ib Šubahdar, Nā‘īb Nāzīm or Principal Minister, as he was variously called. During this period, he served the English with unquestionable loyalty while, at the same time, he also zealously upheld the old Mughal system of administration, which, from time to time, led to the clash of interest between him and the English; so that, at points of crises, he was shown on the wrong side. The inevitable result of this was the personal tragedy of Reza Khan on the one hand, and gradual assumption of administrative powers by the Englishmen on the other. This process, well-known as ‘Anglo-Mughal phase of Bengal’s history’ came to an end with the abolition of the post of Nā‘īb Nāzīm and the take over of power entirely in the English hands by Lord Cornwallis on 1st January, 1791 (p. 1).

In spite of this under-current of a tug of war, Reza Khan’s services proved invaluable to East India Company in so far as he maintained a fake show of Mughal sovereignty in Bengal and kept ‘politics’ where his predecessors — beginning with Murshid Quli Khan down to Mir Jafar — had lodged it, that is, beyond the reaches of the people of Bengal. He successfully tackled it as an ‘affair’ exclusively between the sinking Mughal administration and the rising British power. His role in the administration thus proved an opiate that made the people of Bengal further apathetic towards politics and rendered the transition of power from the Mughal to the British hands imperceptible, colourless,

The period from 1756 to 1775, marked as the 'transition', is obviously incomplete and the account might have been brought down to 1791 in order to make the 'period' wholesome. We must not, however, overlook the fact that during this period power was held by an Anglo-Mughal dual government or dyarchy, in which, to begin with, the English held the 'shadow' power but at the end the English completely over-shadowed the Mughals. This change was effected not by a 'give-and-take' process but by 'take-over' which was not symmetrical but apportunistic and tactful. First, the ebb of the Mughal power was gradually let to touch the bottom — driving the people thereby into a state of complete helplessness and starvation and the 'take-over' of power was effected in a gradual process into the English hands. In this 'transition', therefore, one can discern first a process of the ebbing of the Mughal power and then another process of the rising tide of the British power, and considering the vastness of materials available for the whole period, our author seems to have concentrated on the first part of it, leaving the equally vast and interesting field of the second part to the disposal of other scholars.

As indicated by the second title, it was our author's endeavour in this book to illustrate the 'transition' through a detailed but critical study of Saiyid Muhammad Reza Khan. In this regard, he has brought to light not only a vast source of new materials but also opened up a new vista of vision by studying Reza Khan neither as a patriot nor as a villain but as a 'civil servant' trained in the Mughal tradition of governance and completely loyal to the tradition of service, which yielded a better understanding of the man and his career. In the same process, he has also brought into clear perspective the nature of the deep-laid political intrigues and sabotage of the people's interests which were imbedded in the Mughal administration under the Nawabs of Bengal and which became manifest in their worst at the time of Mir Ja'far and onwards.

From our author's detailed treatment of Reza Khan's career, it is also discernible that he climbed to power by the same ladder which was followed by Mir Qasim. But when brought to power, while Mir Qasim took to real politics, Reza Khan stuck to administrative politics; and in this limited sphere, his unquestionable loyalty to the English rulers, his passionate attachment to the welfare-of-the-subject oriented Mughal administration, his masterly book-keeping, his effective control on public affairs and, above all, his clean files and justifiable administrative measures saved him again and again from allegations and accusations hurled against him by his powerful native and English enemies including Nandakumar and Warren Hastings (pp. 293-349).

Indeed, in spite of the fact that hundreds of thousands of people perished in the frightful famine of 1770 in Bengal and Bihar under his nose while he was not only the Principal Minister but was also seated at the pinnacle of power: and even though, in his own words, notwithstanding the droughts he exerted his utmost abilities and collected the revenues of 1176 B.S. (1769-70 A.D.) as closely as so dreadful a season would admit; and in spite of an inquisition instituted against him at the instance of the Court of Directors charging him *inter alia* of monopolising grain during the famine, which was pushed with all the power and scheming the then Company's governor in Bengal, Warren Hastings, had at his command; and notwithstanding the production of a memorandum against him by Hasting's creature, the Chief Justice Şadr-ud-Din, signed by his 287 important collaborators, the Inquiry Committee had to declare him innocent as he was able to show on the basis of files and documents that in formulating the policy he invariably
kept public welfare in view, and if he had done anything at all seemingly contrary to the public welfare, he had done it only to conform to the instructions from above (pp. 227, 333). Likewise, contrary to the popular belief, our author has also found him not guilty of any fault in this regard; rather the file documents show him exerting to the utmost extent to save the dying millions of peasantry, though his endeavours were of little avail; because his warnings and timely proposals to meet the situation found no favour with higher authorities (pp. 218 ff).

This brings us to the conclusion that for running the administration of a country mere administrative power is not enough, and that the administrative machinery, however alert and efficient, is no substitute for real politics. Because, an administrative machinery can operate effectively only under the protection and guidance of a political machinery and not vice-versa. The history of Bengal during the transition period under review, also displays the unfortunate fact that under the system of dual government, the political power of the country was completely divorced from the administrative machinery; so that the policy making machinery was operated by the Englishmen in the interest of the Company and that of their own private trade while the administrative machinery was run by the Nawab and Na’ib Nazim in accordance with the Mughal tradition and Muslim law. But as the real political (or bargaining) power was concentrated in the English hands, the English were able also to control the actual ‘decision — making process’ at the administrative level by wire-pulling the policy-making mechanism, which made the government machinery of Bengal redundant. At the time of the famine, Reza Khan’s frantic appeal to the Calcutta Council to exercise their power for preventing hoarding of food grains and profiteering; and the combined appeal of himself and Becher, the Resident of Murshidabad, seeking the Council’s intervention to stop the monopoly of rice by the gomashths of the English and to prohibit purchasing of rice by the Europeans and their gomashths till after the harvest of August 1770, were considered detrimental to the interests and prestige of the Englishmen and fell on deaf ears (p. 222). The historian Karam ‘Ali testifies that Reza Khan failed to hold grain prices down at the time of famine, because he lacked power to punish mischievous people and trouble mongers (p. 222). No wonder, therefore, in spite of every thing that Reza Khan could do, according to Becher’s estimate of June, 1770, the death toll was as high “as six is to sixteen of the whole inhabitant” and that, “certain it is that in several parts the living had fed on the dead”. Even in the city of Murshidabad itself 500 persons were perishing daily under the nose of Reza Khan (p. 220).

As we have already discussed above, the present work is the product of a long experience and research of the author, in which he has succeeded remarkably in combining the usual descriptive method of presenting documented accounts with the most modern analytical-critical method and thereby he has produced a new model of documentary history which is worthy of emulation. The printing and get-up of the book are nice and attractive. There are only one or two printing mistakes that can be overlooked. The price is, however, too high and beyond the means of the local readers, for whose benefit a cheap paper-back edition may be produced. Its Bengali translation would also be very useful to the general readers as well as to the students. It is thus a welcome addition to our stock of the knowledge of the general history of South Asia and specially the history of modern Bengal.

Mūnuddin Aḥmed Khan