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## IMPERIAL POWER OF THE MUGHAL COURT IN CHRONICLES OF SEYDI ALI REIS AND MUTRIBI SAMARQANDI\*

*Seydi Ali Reis ve Mutribî Semerkandî'nin Kroniklerinde Babürlü Sarayının İmparatorluk Gücü*

METİN ATMACA

**Abstract:** Most of the historical observations of the Mughal court during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were written by court historians, scribes, and literati. A few texts were composed by Muslim travelers who left important accounts of Mughal political, economic and social life. This article will examine two of those chronicles. The first, composed by Ottoman Admiral Seydi Ali Reis, *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* (The Mirror of Countries) describes the life of the Mughal court in mid-sixteenth century. The second, written by Mutribi al-Asamm al-Samarqandi (also known as Mutribi Samarqandi), a subject of the Ashtarhanid Dynasty of Bukhara, describes the court of Jahangir in the early seventeenth century. Although both Seydi Ali Reis and Mutribi Samarqandi shared a similar background being elite Turkish-speakers with high levels of education who identified as Sunni Muslim they had strikingly different experiences. This article shows that a comparison of these two chronicles hints at how court rituals, manners, and administrative policy in Mughal India changed during over seventy years. However, in order to understand the transformation of the Mughal court, we must also look into the lives of the narrators: what brought them to the Mughal Empire, what effect they had at the court, and what ideas they carried back with them to their home countries.

**Keywords:** Seydi Ali Reis, Mutribi Samarqandi, Mughal Empire, Ottoman Empire, Ottoman-Mughal Relations Muslim Travelers, Chronicles

**Öz:** 16. ve 17. yüzyılda Babürlü hükümdarlar ve maiyetlerine dair kaynakların çoğunluğu saray vakanüvisleri, kâtipler ve edipler tarafından yazılmıştır. Babürlü siyaseti, iktisadı ve sosyal hayatı üzerine önemli bir kaynak teşkil eden bu metinlerin çok azı Müslüman seyyahlar tarafından yazılmıştır. Bu makalede bu eserlerin ikisi üzerinde durulacaktır. Birincisi, Osmanlı kaptanı Seydi Ali Reis'in *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* (Ülkelerin Aynası) adlı eseri olup 16. yüzyıl ortalarındaki Babürlülüler'in sarayındaki hayatı anlatmaktadır. İkincisi ise erken 17. yüzyılda Cihangir döneminin saray hayatını anlatan, Buhara merkezli Astarhan Hanlığı'ndan gelen Mutribî el-Asam el-Semerkandî'nin (Mutribî Semerkandi) kaleme aldığı *Musahibah'ha ba Cehangir Padişah* (Padişah Cihangir'le Sohbetler) adlı eserdir. Her ne kadar her iki isim de benzer bir geçmişe sahip (Türkçe konuşan ve iyi eğitilmiş, Sünni itikadına tabi Müslüman elitler) olsalar da şaşırtıcı derecede farklı tecrübeler yaşamışlardır. Bu makale bahis konusu kronikleri karşılaştırarak saraydaki ritüeller, örf ve âdetler ve idari politikaların 70 yıl içinde nasıl değiştiğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, Babürlü sarayındaki değişimi anlayabilmek için, bu iki yazarın hayatlarına da bakılması gerekmektedir. Bunun için her iki seyyahın Babürlü İmparatorluğu'na geliş sebepleri, saray üzerinde bıraktıkları etki ve ana yurtlarına dönerken beraberlerinde götürdükleri üzerinde de durulacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Seydi Ali Reis, Mutribi Semerkandi, Babür İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı-Babürlü İlişkileri, Müslüman Seyyahlar, Kronikler

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Most chronicles of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were written by court scribes and literati at the request of emperors. Few of those texts were written by Muslim travelers as first-person accounts. Among these memoirs and travelogues of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are two very unusual chronicles. The first, *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* (The Mirror of Countries), was composed by Seydi Ali Reis, an Ottoman admiral, and the second, *Musahibah'ha ba Jahangir Padishah* (Conversations with Emperor Jahangir), by Mutribi Samarqandi, an Uzbek wanderer. The work written by Mutribi is divided among several sections, each describing a conversation that he held with the emperor. His style is anecdotal and he narrates each of his encounters with Jahangir in first voice. Whereas Seydi Ali Reis wrote his account rather in a travelogue style with impressions he had through his observations. Both chronicles offer the modern reader some precious first-hand insight about the world of their authors as well as the mentality of elite Muslims in South Asia.

Both Seydi Ali Reis and Mutribi Samarqandi were Muslims. Ali Reis was from the Ottoman Empire and Mutribi Samarqandi was from Samarqand, which was under the rule of the Ashtarkhanid Dynasty of Bukhara. Though Ali Reis and Mutribi had different backgrounds, they also had much in common. They were both over 50 years old and had achieved political prominence in the time they traveled to India, although neither was sent officially by their respective states as ambassadors. They were both treated well during their time at the Mughal court. Furthermore, both advised the emperor. Finally, both returned to his [respective] home and wrote about his experiences in India.

Ali Reis' and Mutribi's chronicles differ in style and content, reflecting the different profiles of their authors. Mutribi penned his memoirs in clear and simple Persian, while Ali Reis' text is in Ottoman Turkish verse. Mutribi traveled to India during the last period of his life, only spent two months at the court of Jahangir. He wrote his account on conversations he held with Emperor Jahangir and gifts bestowed upon him during his residence at Lahore. Ali Reis, on the other hand, remained in India for two years and three months. He spent his first two years in India looking for a way to return to Istanbul but with no avail. He remained at the Mughal court in the last course of his expedition. Ali Reis' and Mutribi's travels to India occurred at different times. Ali Reis' journey in India spanned the years from the end of November 1554 to February 1556 during the rule of Humayun, whereas Mutribi's stay lasted only two months during the last year of Jahangir's reign in 1627.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I intend to compare Seydi Ali Reis' and Mutribi Samarqandi's chronicles in the context of their experiences at the India and Mughal courts. In so doing, I will reveal how court rituals, manners, and administration policy changed during these approximate seventy years, using the Seydi Ali Reis' and Mutribi Samarqandi's chronicles as case studies. In addition, I will discuss what brought Ali Reis and Mutribi to the Mughal Empire, what effect they claimed to have at court, and what they carried back to their countries. My purpose for making this comparison is to understand if the world, as perceived by Indian Muslims during this period, was defined by cultural boundaries or by the political differences of imperial states. Before going into details of their chronicles and comparing them a short biography of Seydi Ali Reis and Mutribi Samarqandi will help us to understand their work better.

### I. Seydi Ali Reis

Seydi Ali Reis live in the period of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66). It is believed that he was born in 1498-99, though there is no clear indication of it from his

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<sup>1</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 93-129. None of sources provide the exact time, except stating the year of 1627, of Mutribi's stay in India. Surinder Singh, "The Indian Memoirs of Mutribi Samarqandi," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 55, (1994), pp. 345-354; Mutribi Samarqandi, *Khatirat-i Mutribi*, ed. Abdul Ghani Mirzoyef (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1977), p. 5, 7.

memoirs.<sup>2</sup> Ali Reis states that his father and ancestors had been in charge of the royal arsenal (*dar-ül-sanai-yi amire kethüdalari*) at Galata since the capture of Istanbul. He adds that from them he had inherited his knowledge of naval matters.<sup>3</sup> He participated in the capture of Rhodes (an apparent reference to the attack of 1522, when the Ottomans suffered heavy losses). He had taken part, he says, in the fighting of the “Western seas” (*derya-yı mağrib*, i.e. the Mediterranean sea) and had been present at all the victories of Hayreddin Pasha.<sup>4</sup> He wrote books on astronomy, philosophy and navigation sciences, and was popularly known as “The Ottoman Writer” (*Kâtib-i Rûmî*).<sup>5</sup> He is widely known in the field of geography as the author of the *Kitâbü'l-Muhît* (Book of the Ocean), a compilation from different sources of instructions for navigating the seas between Persia and China.<sup>6</sup>

Ali Reis is also well known for his travel narrative *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik*. The author wrote this travelogue during his adventures in India, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Persia. Ali Reis found himself in India when he escaped from the Portuguese fleet during an expedition to capture the Hormuz in the Persian Gulf in August 1554 and washed away by a strong storm (*tûfân-ı fîl*) to the northeast shores of the sub-continent. He arrived at the Indian coast of Gujarat with only three of his fifteen vessels. The period in which he arrived at Gujarat was one of great turmoil and confusion. Ali Reis gives us a brief account of the local political conditions, referring to the recent murder of Mahmud Shah III (r. 1538-54) of Gujarat and those who were involved in his murder. After passing through several places he arrived at the court of the Mughals in Delhi, while Humayun was the Mughal emperor. Humayun kept Ali Reis in Delhi for three months until the emperor died due to a fatal accident in which he fell from the steps of his library. Ali Reis advised the courtiers and statesmen of Mughal court to keep the death of the emperor secret until his son, Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Akbar, could return from his journey to Delhi. After the death of Humayun, the admiral Ali Reis set out on a return course to Istanbul with a letter to the Ottoman sultan, Süleyman the Magnificent, from the Mughal court, finally arriving at his destination in 1556.<sup>7</sup>

## II. Mutribi Samarqandi

Mutribi states that he was seventy years of age when he came to Jahangir's court in 1627.<sup>8</sup> This would place his birth approximately in the year of 1559.<sup>9</sup> He appears to have had a traditional Islamic education as a child in Samarqand, with some musical training as well, before setting off for Bukhara to further his education. In Bukhara, he became a student of the well-known Naqshbandi sufi master Hasan Nisari, from whom he learned the canon of Persian poetry. Mutribi served under several rulers and princes of Ashtarkhanids during his time in Samarqand. When his last patron, the Ashtarkhanid ruler Wali Muhammad Khan, died in

<sup>2</sup> Seydi Ali Reis, *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik: İnceleme, Metin, İndeks*, ed. Mehmet Kiremit (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1999), pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Seydi Reis, *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* (Dersaadet: İkdâm Matbaası, 1313), p. 14. Sidi Ali Reis, *Travels and Adventures of the Turkish Admiral (Mirat Al-Mamalik)*, Trans. Ármin Vámbéry (Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1975), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches: Grossentheils aus bisher unbenützten Handschriften und Archiven*, Volume 3 (Vienna: C. A. Hartleben, 1828), p. 416. The Mughals and the Safavids referred to the Ottomans as “Rum” during the early modern period. For discussions on this point see Cemal Kafadar, “Introduction: A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum,” *Muqarnas* 24 (2007), 7-25 and the same author's *Kendine Ait Bir Roma* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 86; Seydi Ali Reis, *Book of the Indian Ocean: Ocean: Kitâb al-Muhît*, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt: IGAIW, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-101, 110-120.

<sup>8</sup> Mutribi al-Asamm of Samarqandi, *Conversations with Emperor Jahangir*, trans. Richard Foltz (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publisher, 1998), p. 2. In the introduction of Mutribi's text written in Persian by Abdul Ghani Mirzoyef he states that Mutribi arrived Lahore in 1036 and calculates his age two years older than what Foltz's text states. Mutribi states he had the first conversation with the Emperor Jahangir on the hijri of 19 Rabi' al-Awwal 1036 (8 December 1626). Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

September 1611 Mutribi decided to start planning his trip to India, apparently more out of hope for enjoying financial rewards from the Mughal emperor than out of any interest in travel or seeing foreign lands. His personal finances seemed to have been precarious following Wali Muhammad's death. Because of his responsibility of providing for twenty family members it took him nearly ten years before he was able to make arrangements to leave for India.<sup>10</sup>

Before presenting himself at Jahangir's court, Mutribi revised an anthology of poets, which he had written for Wali Muhammad, and offered it to the Mughal emperor in hope of thereby winning royal favor and material gain. Thus he spent most of his time in the year of 1624 working new information into his anthology, and in early 1625, he set out for India, accompanied by his son Muhammad Ali. He arrived at Lahore in 1626, and he spent another month revising his anthology further before presenting himself at court. After all his work, Mutribi was clearly disappointed by the scant interest Emperor Jahangir initially showed in the anthology. The emperor was more interested in talking about Central Asia, grilling Mutribi with questions about famous Central Asian figures, and other related subjects.<sup>11</sup> Foltz states "all Mughal emperors were keenly aware of their Central Asian roots and Timurid lineage, and Jahangir felt a particularly intense attachment to his ancestral lands, which his own son, Shah Jahan, would later work so hard to recapture."<sup>12</sup> Eventually, however, the Emperor Jahangir read Mutribi's anthology of poetry, and he was sufficiently impressed to ask Mutribi to incorporate an anthology of his own into the work.

Altogether, Mutribi spent only two months at the Mughal court in Lahore, before begging for his leave to return home to Samarqand. The emperor released Mutribi on the condition that he return to India within a year, but as Jahangir passed away in the succeeding months and Mutribi was already over seventy, it is unlikely that he ever made a second trip.<sup>13</sup> Nothing more is heard of Mutribi, and it is probable that he also died shortly thereafter.

### III. Experiences at the Mughal Court

It is important to compare Ali Reis' and Mutribi's chronicles because their different experiences at the Mughal court reveal its political transition from an unstable Indian state to a powerful and wealthy empire. Humayun's treatment of Ali Reis reveals how he needed to establish a friendly alliance with the more powerful Ottoman Empire, whereas Jahangir's attitude toward Mutribi shows that during his time the Mughal state had developed into a powerful empire of its own.<sup>14</sup> That is, during Jahangir's reign, the powerful Mughal court was by then in a position to compete effectively against other powers such as the Safavid and Ottoman Empires.

When Ali Reis arrived in India, there was a tremendous level of political turmoil and the subcontinent was among different rulers. The Mughals held only a portion of northern India, Sind was under the reign of Mirza Isa Tarkhan Shah (r. 1554-67), and Gujarat was in a political dispute between the new Sultan Ahmad Shah II (r. 1554-61) and its nobility.<sup>15</sup> The Emperor Humayun's last years were spent during a time when the Mughal reign was fully restored, after

<sup>10</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, p.4

<sup>11</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-22.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Foltz, "The Mughal Occupation of Balkh, 1646-7," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7:1 (1996), pp. 49-61.

<sup>13</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> Born in 1569 in Sikri, a village near Agra, Jahangir ascended the throne in 1605, at which time he took the name "Jahangir" (World-Seizer) as his new title and remained in the power until he passed away from poor health in 1627. For more detail on the life and reign of Jahangir see Muni Lal, *Jahangir* (Delhi: Vikas, 1983); also Beni Prasad, *History of Jahangir* (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1940); Jahangir, *Jahangirnama*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 36-37.

a period of much chaos. Humayun did not possess a definitive capital city, but when he entered Delhi in July 1555, he restored Babur's monarchy and established his court there.<sup>16</sup>

Ali Reis arrived in Delhi in October 1555, a few months after Humayun established himself there. Ali Reis tells us that out of respect for the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Süleyman the Magnificent, Humayun accorded him a brilliant reception, with the *Khan-i Khanan* (a title given to the commander-in-chief of the army), high officers and several thousand troops dispatched to greet him.<sup>17</sup> That same evening, the *Khan-i Khanan* hosted a banquet in his honor, and Ali Reis was granted an audience with the emperor. After being presented to Humayun, he offered a gift of a chronogram and two ghazals, "all of which pleased the Padishah greatly."<sup>18</sup> But when he begged permission to proceed on his journey, Humayun refused to grant it, wishing to retain him, and offered him an assignment for taking revenue collection. This was not the first offer Ali Reis received during his travel through India—earlier, the Sultan of Gujarat, Ahmad II, offered him a governorship. Ultimately, Humayun consented to his leaving, but not before he obliged Ali Reis to teach him how to calculate solar and lunar eclipses and other astronomical matters.

Looking through Mutribi's account and comparing it with Ali Reis' details on his reception by Humayun, the former was not welcomed in the same royal fashion as the latter had been. There are several reasons for this. For one, Mutribi was not an official or ambassador of the Ashtarkhanid Dynasty. The Mughal Empire in Jahangir's time was greater and more stable than during the reign of Humayun, causing Jahangir to be less concerned with impressing a guest from Samarqand. Also, throughout the reign of Akbar and in the early years of Jahangir's reign, the Mughal court had granted patronage to more poets, artists, and guests than during Humayun's time. Thus Mutribi's arrival in India was not an uncommon affair. In his first conversations with Jahangir, Mutribi eagerly inquired about the anthology that he presented the emperor. Instead of bothering to check what his guest offered him, the emperor kept bringing the subject to back to Samarqand and the different aspects of Central Asia that could be connected to his family. Instead, the first thing he wanted to know was in what state of repair the *Gur-i Amir* (Tamerlane's tomb) was.<sup>19</sup> Mutribi replied that he had offered the detail about this topic in his book. In a session several weeks later, Jahangir wanted to know about the annual cost of maintenance for the *Gur-i Amir*, which Mutribi estimated as roughly 10,000 rupees. Upon the information was his guest the emperor added that he would allot that exact amount to Samarqand for the maintenance of the monument.<sup>20</sup> The members of the Mughal Dynasty considered Tamerlane as their ancestor and, therefore, the land they called "Turan" (Central Asia) as their legitimate birthright. Thus the nostalgia for the conquest of Central Asia, particularly Samarqand and Bukhara, had always been an undying obsession for almost all the Mughal emperors since Babur.<sup>21</sup>

The emperor's displays of generosity had been a long-held tradition at the Mughal court. This was certainly the case at Jahangir's court. These displays of generosity were used as means to impress visitors with their wealth and power, ensuring that these things would then be

<sup>16</sup> John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> During Humayun's reign, there was not much interaction between the Mughals and the Ottoman Empire, and Humayun was the only Mughal sultan who wrote a friendly letter to Süleyman the Magnificent, acknowledging him as Caliph. The succeeding Mughal Emperor Akbar, however, abandoned Humayun's conciliatory policy altogether. Sultan Süleyman's failure to send a congratulatory embassy upon Akbar's ascension to the throne combined with his military achievements and rapid expansion of the Mughal Empire were probably responsible for his lukewarm treatment towards the Ottomans. Jahangir likewise continued his father's unfriendly policy towards the Ottoman sultans. N. Rahman Farooqi, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1989), p. 227-28.

<sup>18</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>19</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 86; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Jahangir, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

reported back to the visitors' home countries.<sup>22</sup> Jahangir reputedly took these displays to a new level by showing Indian treasures and novelties to his visitors in order to humble them. Mutribi describes Jahangir as showing "a huge chunk of black gold and casually asking if it is the same material Timur's sepulcher is made of, demonstrating a novel mechanical contraption of great complexity, inviting him to witness the lunar weighing ceremony, bringing out the world's biggest sugar block,"<sup>23</sup> and on each occasion repeating the same question: "Have you ever witnessed anything like this in Turan?" Awestruck with what he has been shown, Mutribi each time replies that he truly has not. Mutribi's account informs the reader that he is in a wealthy and powerful country, where everything is superior, better, and more astounding. It seems that the emperor wanted to impress his guest, as well as his audience that he would write for, with the wealth and majesty of his domains.

Emperor Humayun, on the other hand, was not as inclined to make such ostentatious displays of generosity on his guests. Instead, it was Ali Reis, who, during his stay in Delhi, attempted to impress upon Humayun and his courtiers the superiority and primacy of the Ottoman sultan among the Muslim monarchs. Humayun tried to learn from Ali Reis, who the emperor considered to be a man of great learning and dignity, and together they discussed several subjects. Besides discussing poetry and astronomy, he questioned Ali Reis on the extent of "the land of Rum" (*Vilâyet-i Rûm*),<sup>24</sup> the administrative system of the Ottoman Turks,<sup>25</sup> and the signs of sovereignty of the sultan in conquered lands (for example, proclaiming the sultan's name in the religious holidays and Friday prayers).<sup>26</sup> At other times, Humayun asked for Ali Reis' advice on administrative or political issues:

One day, during an audience, the conversation turned upon Sultan Mahmud of Bukkur, and I suggested that some official contract (*Ahdnameh*, i.e., "agreement") should be made with him, to which Humayun agreed. The document was drawn up, and the Emperor dipping his fist in saffron pressed it upon the paper, this being the *Tughra*, or imperial signature. Thereupon the document was sent to Sultan Mahmud. The sultan was much pleased and both he and his Vizier Molla Yari expressed their thanks for my intervention in a private letter, which I showed to His Majesty, who had entrusted me with the transaction.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Ali Reis not only gave useful advice to Humayun, but he also helped to stop a political crisis upon his unexpected death:

His son Jalal al-din Akbar was at the time of Humayun's death away on a journey to visit Shah Ebul Maali, accompanied by Khanik-khanan.<sup>28</sup> He was immediately informed of the sad event. Meanwhile the Khans and Sultans were in the greatest consternation; they did not know how to act. I tried to encourage them and told them how at the death of Sultan Selim the situation was saved by wisdom of Piri Pasha, who managed to prevent the news of his death from being noised abroad. I suggested that, by taking similar measures, they might keep the Sovereign's death a secret until the Prince should return. This advice was followed... On the next day a public audience was announced, but as the astrologers did not prophesy favorably for it, this also had to be given up. All this, however, somewhat alarmed the army, and on the Tuesday it was thought advisable to give them a sight of their Monarch. A man called Molla Bi, who bore a striking resemblance to the late Emperor only somewhat slighter of stature, was arrayed in the imperial robes and placed on a throne specially erected for the purpose in the large entrance hall. His face and eyes were veiled.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Foltz, "Two Seventeenth-Century Central Asian Travelers to Mughal India." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3: 6 (1996), p. 373.

<sup>23</sup> Foltz, "Two Seventeenth-Century," p. 372; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 23, 32-33.

<sup>24</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 51; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 52; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> Unless otherwise stated, English translations of *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* are taken from the version translated by the Turcologist Ármín Vámbéry. Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> In a footnote Ármín Vámbéry notes "This is meant for Bairam Khan, the faithful follower of Humayun and later on the Atabek of Akbar," Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

The Chamberlain Khoshhal Bey stood behind, and the first secretary in front of him, while many officers and dignitaries as well as the people from the riverside, on seeing their Sovereign made joyful obeisance to the sound of festive music. The physicians were handsomely rewarded and the recovery of the Monarch was universally credited.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to Humayun, Jahangir did not seek any political information from Mutribi about his country. The emperor was interested in Central Asia mostly because of family relations. From the emperor's attitude towards Mutribi it is understood that Jahangir had little interest in his guest's poetry and instead he sought some general information about his ancestral homeland.<sup>30</sup>

Comparing Ali Reis' and Mutribi's chronicles, we can see a significant difference in Mughal attitudes toward the world beyond India. Humayun's relation to this world, as evidenced through Ali Reis' welcoming reception and the nature of their discussions, is very different from Jahangir's attitude seventy years later. Before Akbar's reign, the Mughals approached their guests in a more down to earth manner. For example, Emperor Humayun accepted the Ottomans as the Mughals' equals, and, in some sense, as even superior, evidenced by Humayun's acknowledgement of the Ottoman Empire as Caliphate<sup>31</sup> and his use of the title Padishah in reference to the Ottoman sultan.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Akbar considered the Mughal Empire as superior to all other states, and Jahangir followed his father's lead by proclaiming himself the "holder/ ruler of the world" (*Jahan-gir*). Jahangir, unlike Humayun, made elaborate displays of wealth to show his guests that the Mughal Empire was the world's supreme power. There might be several reasons for this change of attitude. First, Ali Reis and Mutribi were of different status when they embarked on their travels to India. Ali Reis was the admiral of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, which was the possessor of the two most sacred places in Islam and its domains extended from North Africa to Persian Gulf. In contrast, Mutribi was a retired noble who came from the Khanate of Ashtarkhanids, one of the smallest Muslim states in Central Asia despite it still being valuable to the Mughals as their "ancestral homeland." Second, the Mughal Empire under Humayun's rule was in great political turmoil, and therefore, in greater need of outside support. During Jahangir's reign, on the other hand, the empire was politically stable and wealthy. Overall, Ali Reis had more political influence within the Mughal court than Mutribi due to the advantages of his status and the precarious state of Humayun's empire.

#### IV. [The] Journey Back Home

Ali Reis spent three months at the Mughal court while Mutribi stayed for two months only.<sup>33</sup> Even though the latter stayed for more than two years in India he spent most of his time traveling through the domains of various sultanates and clans and attempting to find a way home. Despite their audience in the palace neither Ali Reis nor Mutribi were officially sent as ambassadors to the court; rather, they each had personal reasons for their stay. Certainly, Ali Reis was forced to stay by Emperor Humayun, but Mutribi traveled to the Mughal court for pragmatic and material reasons. This is evident from their respective attitudes towards Humayun and Jahangir and by the amount of time that passed before they requested permission to leave. Besides these observations, the two chronicles reveal that the formal etiquette required for requesting permission to depart was nearly identical to each time period. Also, the chronicles reveal that receiving permission was not very easy for either Ali Reis or Mutribi. Ali Reis and Mutribi literally had to beg to leave.<sup>34</sup> Requesting permission to leave from the emperor was

<sup>29</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 56-57; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 55-56.

<sup>30</sup> Foltz, "Two Seventeenth-Century," p. 373.

<sup>31</sup> Farooqi, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>32</sup> According to Ali Reis' account Humayun said, "Surely the only man worth to bear the title of Padishah is the ruler of Turkey, he alone and no one else in all the world." Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 53; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> Alam and Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>34</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 91; In one place Ali Reis formulates his request to depart as "ruhsat taleb olunduk da", Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 45. In another place he states "...merhamet ve şefkat edüp ruhsat-ı

simply not a polite gesture; Ali Reis' and Mutribi's safety depended on receiving letters of safe conduct from the emperor.<sup>35</sup> These letters served as a kind of passport for traveling through different Mughal lands.

Ali Reis pleaded for permission to proceed on his journey almost immediately after arriving at Humayun's court. Humayun at first refused to give his consent and instead offered Ali Reis a *jagir* (a kind of revenue assignment) and governorship of a district, though the latter politely declined. The emperor even suggested that he might send an envoy to Istanbul, carrying an explanation from the admiral for his inability to return; but Ali Reis wisely judged the manner in which the Ottoman sultan would interpret such a message. Ultimately, Humayun agreed for him to leave, provided that Ali Reis instructed him on the science of astronomy and the latter waited until the monsoon season ended when the roads would become passable.<sup>36</sup>

Seydi Ali Reis came back to Istanbul with a letter from the Mughal court.<sup>37</sup> It begins with eulogies and compliments. The letter addresses the sultan as the "Khalif of the high qualities" and prays for the eternal perpetuation of Süleyman's caliphate. The emperor adds that although he did not have any communication with the sultan "yet the most excellent qualities and the exalted virtues of you, the model of Sultans, have always excited the wish of mutual correspondence."<sup>38</sup> The arrival of Seydi Ali Reis, states the emperor, provided the opportunity of fulfilling this long-cherished desire. Thus, this letter was sent as a proof of Mughal rulers' sincerity and devotion. The letter concludes with the following words: "It is hoped and expected, that also on your part the gates of mutual communication will be opened by the keys of attachment, and the channels of correspondence will not be closed; and that in this manner the foundation of the towering fabric of union will be strengthened and kept free from decay."<sup>39</sup> Humayun's sudden death in 1556, before the letter reached its destination, considerably reduced the chances for a Mughal-Ottoman alliance, and Emperor Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Akbar, Humayun's successor, did not bother to improve diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast, Mutribi did not take anything back with him except money and a few memories of conversations with Emperor Jahangir. After spending two months at the court of Lahore, he begged to leave for his home in Samarqand. Jahangir asked why he wished to return. Mutribi replied that he had twenty family members to look after. The emperor answered that he would send two thousand rupees to his family in Samarqand and requested his presence on a trip to Kashmir. Mutribi continued to beg permission to leave, and finally Jahangir said, "You really want us to give you permission. We have never seen such an insistent person!"<sup>40</sup> Finally, the

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inayet eyleyüp ve bu bendeye tekrar at ve ser ü-pa yani hıl'at ve yol fermanı virtüb gitmek üzere..." Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 55. Similar to Reis, Mutribi also states "Man dar rukhsat ilhah namudam..." ("I appeared to be very insistent for the permission...") Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Seydi Ali Reis names this letter as "yol fermanı." Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47; Reis 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 45-46.

<sup>37</sup> Reis 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 55. There has been a debate among the scholars if it was Humayun or Akbar, who wrote the letter intended for Süleyman the Magnificent. According to Rahman Farooqi the actual author of the letter remains unclear. However relying on Charles Henri Auguste Schefer's *Chrestomathie Persane*, Vol. II (Paris: E. Leroux, 1883), Farooqi adds that the letter belongs to Humayun. Farooqi, *op. cit.*, p. 16. The Ottoman scholar Katib Çelebi also attributes the letter to Humayun in his *Tuhfetü'l-Kibâr fî Esfâri'l-Bihâr* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Bahriye, 1329). Whereas von Hammer states that the letter was sent by Akbar to Sultan Süleyman in 1556. Joseph Von Hammer, "Memoirs on the Diplomatic Relations between the Courts of Delhi and Constantinople in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 2 (1830), p. 476-77. Azmi Özcan goes further and states that Ali Reis never mentions the letter in his book. *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 6, fn. 22. Alam and Subrahmanyam add another dimension to this discussion by acknowledging the author of the letter as a certain Khwaja Mahmud Lari and adding that the letter "began when Humayun was still alive, and completed after the accession of Akbar, and obviously carried back personally by Seydi 'Ali Reis himself." Alam and Subrahmanyam, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> von Hammer 1830, *op. cit.*, pp. 476-7.

<sup>39</sup> von Hammer 1830, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>40</sup> Mutribi 1998, *op. cit.*, p. 91; Mutribi 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

emperor released Mutribi on the condition that he return to India within a year, though as previously mentioned, it is unlikely that this trip took place.

### Conclusion

What did Seydi Ali Reis and Mutribi make of India when they visited there? Did they feel that they still remained inside the boundaries of the *dar al-Islam*? The Mughal emperors were Sunnis, [just] like the rulers of the lands that their two guests came from and they ruled the lands in their domain according to Islamic Shari'a law. Besides, Persian, and to a certain degree Turkish, was used as a common language of communication by the rulers and literati strata from the Balkans and Anatolia to Central and Southeast Asia.<sup>41</sup> For centuries, the people of these regions interacted with each other through trade routes, literary works, Sufi wanderers, wars, migrants, and pilgrims.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, both visitors must have felt at home and less foreign when they were at the Mughal Court. On the other hand, they seem to be astounded with the nature and ethnic diversity of India when they traversed the land and at times perplexed by the interpretation of Islam by their co-religionists.<sup>43</sup>

Ali Reis and Mutribi both finally returned from India to their respective homes. Meanwhile hundreds of scholars, artists, wanderers, and statesmen from the Ottoman Empire, Iran, Central Asia and other parts of the Islamic world followed the same path of these two adventurers to India. A comparison of Ali Reis' and Mutribi's chronicles suggests that the world, as perceived by other Muslims of their time, was shaped more by culture of people than by the politics produced by imperial powers.<sup>44</sup> Political boundaries did not really matter to Ali Reis or Mutribi as long as they were safe under Muslim rule. Political boundaries were not as clearly drawn as in today's modern states, though they were obliged to pay tribute to the rulers of the lands through which they traveled. Ali Reis and Mutribi both viewed India as part of the land of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and, therefore, their travel remained within these borders. In India, they became aware of the differences between Indian Muslims and their own Muslim societies back home, and they described and judged Indian Muslims according to their own regional perspective. Despite such cultural differences they felt at home because of the warm welcome they were offered the by the Mughal rulers.

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<sup>41</sup> On the usage of Persian in the Mughal Empire see Muzaffar Alam, "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2 (1998), pp. 317-349.

<sup>42</sup> Recently, there has been a surge of connected history and comparative studies on the political and cultural heritage of Muslim empires in the early modern period. For more on such studies see Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Empires between Islam and Christianity, 1500-1800* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2019); Suraiya Farooqi, *The Ottoman and Mughal Empires: Social History in the Early Modern World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Foltz, "Two Seventeenth-Century," p. 377.

<sup>44</sup> Foltz, "Two Seventeenth-Century," p. 377.

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