



Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

By Audrey Truschke

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Culture of Encounters documents the fascinating exchange between the Persian-speaking Islamic elite of the Mughal Empire and traditional Sanskrit scholars, which engendered a dynamic idea of Mughal rule essential to the empire's survival. This history begins with the invitation of Brahman and Jain intellectuals to King Akbar's court in the 1560s, then details the numerous Mughal-backed texts they and their Mughal interlocutors produced under emperors Akbar, Jahangir (1605–1627), and Shah Jahan (1628–1658). Many works, including Sanskrit epics and historical texts, were translated into Persian, elevating the political position of Brahmins and Jains and cultivating a voracious appetite for Indian writings throughout the Mughal world.

The first book to read these Sanskrit and Persian works in tandem, *Culture of Encounters* recasts the Mughal Empire as a polyglot polity that collaborated with its Indian subjects to envision its sovereignty. The work also reframes the development of Brahman and Jain communities under Mughal rule, which coalesced around carefully selected, politically salient memories of imperial interaction. Along with its groundbreaking findings, *Culture of Encounters* certifies the critical role of the sociology of empire in building the Mughal polity, which came to irrevocably shape the literary and ruling cultures of early modern India.

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Editorial Review

Review

In *Culture of Encounters*, Audrey Truschke makes a compelling argument for the importance of Sanskrit and Sanskrit intellectuals in the Mughal court. Although certain aspects of these 'encounters' have been researched before, Truschke's work is more comprehensive, and her precise textual analyses go further than any others so far. This is an important and impressive work that should change the field of Mughal studies.

(Francesca Orsini, SOAS, University of London)

A remarkable achievement. Exploiting a substantial archive of Sanskrit materials, Truschke reveals a vibrantly multicultural Mughal court, one more thoroughly Indian than is commonly thought, owing to its close engagement with the land's oldest literary culture.

(Richard M. Eaton, University of Arizona)

Cultures of Encounter is a breakthrough in modern scholarship on the history and culture of South Asia. This absorbing account of the interaction of Persian and Sanskrit offers a powerful corrective to conventional one-sided narratives.

(Carl W. Ernst, University of North Carolina)

About the Author

Audrey Truschke is assistant professor of South Asian history at Rutgers University–Newark and a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. She writes about cultural and intellectual history, the relationship between empire and literature, and cross-cultural interactions in early modern South Asia.

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