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*An Analytical Survey of Persian Works  
on Indian Learned Traditions*

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## AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF PERSIAN WORKS ON INDIAN LEARNED TRADITIONS

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## *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī*

Abū Sulaymān Dāwūd ibn Tāj al-Dīn Abī al-Faẓl Muḥammad Banākatī was a poet and historian who flourished at the Ilkhanid court during the period when the capital was in Tabriz and Soltaniyeh. He was probably born in Banākat (Tajikistan), a town on the upper side of Syr Darya of Transoxiana, and died in 730/1329-30. We almost know nothing about his life except that in the month of *ḍū al-qa‘da* 701/July-August 1302, Banākatī was awarded the title of poet laureate (*malik al-ṣu‘arā*) by the Ilkhanid ruler Ġāzān Ḥān (r. 1294-1305). In his *Tadkīra al-ṣu‘arā* (Biography of poets), Dawlatšāh Samarqandī records one of Banākatī’s poems (Samarqandī 1385š/2007, pp. 395-397). Banākatī completed the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* on 25 *šawwāl* 717/31st December 1317 during the reign of Abū Sa‘īd (r. 1316-1335) (Barthold 1987, p. 645, Jackson 1988, p. 669).

Banākatī’s general history was officially entitled *Rawzat ulī al-albāb fī ma‘rifat al-tawārīḥ* (or *fī tawārīḥ al-akābir wa-al-ansāb*, “The garden of those who are interested in the knowledge of histories (or histories of influential persons) and genealogies.” It contains nine chapters (*qism*) dealing with: (i) histories of Prophets from Adam to Abraham, (ii) histories of ancient kings of Persia, (iii) histories of Prophet Muḥammad, the four rightful caliphs, and the imams, (iv) histories of regional dynasties in the eastern caliphate which were established during the ‘Abbasid, (v) history of Jews, (vi) history of Christians and Franks, (vii) history of India, (viii) history of China, and (ix) history of the Mongols. The main sources of the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* are the *Niẓām al-tawārīḥ*, a Persian historical work by Nāṣir al-Dīn Bayzāwī (d. 685/1286, see Itani 1997) and, as Banākatī himself says, Rašīd al-Dīn’s *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* which had been written only a decade before the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* (Banākatī 1348š/1969, p. 1). The chapter on India, titled “on the history of Indians, the images of the climates, and descriptions of the kingdoms in Hindustan and their monarchies from

the time of Vāsudeva to sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn” (*dar tārīḥ-i Hunūd wa šuwar-i aqālīm wa dīkr-i mamālik-i Hindūstān wa pādšāhī-yi īšān az ‘ahd-i Bāsudīw tā sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn*), is divided into three parts (*bāb*). The first, divided into four sections (*faṣl*), deals with the calculation of time and eras, the chart of the seven climates, and geographical information about Hindustan; the second part presents the life of Śākyamuni (a name for Buddha) and the belief of metempsychosis (*dīn-i tanāsuḥ*); the third part deals with the history of the kings in India.

Although most of the accounts of this chapter are borrowed from the second volume of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ*, the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* probably includes materials from the third volume of Rašīd al-Dīn’s chronicle, which was supposed to deal with geographical knowledge of the world but was presumably never completed and has never been traced so far (Browne 2003, p. 72). The second and third sections of the first part of the chapter on India of the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* actually contain descriptions which do not appear in the second volume of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ*. Although section two, dealing with measuring of habitable zone on the Earth, is chiefly based on the second section of part one in the chapter of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* about India, the *Tārīḥ-i Banākatī* contains a chart which divides habitable zone into seven areas, which is not found in the second volume of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1374š/2005, pp.12-14; Banākatī 1348š/1969, p. 316). Moreover, in section three of *bāb* one, which contains an outline of the seven climates, Banākatī includes references to Ptolemy’s work, which are not found in the second volume of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* (Banākatī 1348š/1969, p. 316-318; Shiraiwa 1995, pp. 192-183).

In the second part, Banākatī omits the accounts of hells and heavens in Buddhist cosmology given in the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* and only presents the six paths of metempsychosis which are placed after the account of ten evil deeds (Banākatī 1348š/1969, p. 329). One possible reason for Banākatī’s omission is that he may have felt uncomfortable with Rašīd al-Dīn’s account in which hells and heavens are compatible with metempsychosis, because in Islamic thought the other world (*āḥira*) is eternal. Instead, Banākatī additionally inserts a paragraph offering a general view of believers in metempsychosis (*ahl-i tanāsuḥ*), including non-Buddhist ones, where he introduces four paths: *nash* (transformation into another human), *mash* (transformation into animal), *fash* (transformation into vegetation), and *rash* (transformation into mineral); these accounts are not found in the corresponding part of the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* that deals only with metempsychosis in Buddhism. Moreover, he adds a

fifth path on transmigration into an angel which can be interpreted as an effort to add a category familiar to Muslim readers (Banākātī 1348š/1969, p. 328). Beside this, his description of the four paths by and large agrees with the description of metempsychosis given in earlier Arabic treatises on religions such as al-Šahrastānī's *Kitāb al-milal wa-al-niḥal* (Bāšā 1995, p. 144; Gimaret 1998, p. 182).

In part three, on the histories of the kings of India, Banākātī presents twenty-three kings who ruled Delhi and divides them into two groups (*tā'ifa*) of ten Hindu kings and thirteen Muslim rulers (Banākātī 1348š/1969, pp. 331-336). This division of kings into Hindus and Muslims does not appear in the *Jāmi' al-tawārīḥ*. The group of Hindu kings covers the time of the family of Aḍī (sun goddess Aditi) to the fall of the Hindūśāhids and Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva's enthronement. The description of the second group stretches from the time of Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim's (d. 96/715) expedition to Sind, to the reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥaljī until 717/1317. Banākātī's descriptions are based on the fifth and seventh sections of the first part (*qism*) of the chapter on India in the *Jāmi' al-tawārīḥ*: section seven concerns the rule of Aditi's family and section five includes the rules of Vāsudeva and his successors. However, Rašīd al-Dīn juxtaposed three timelines of Indian history in the first part of the chapter: the history of Delhi (section five), the history of Kashmir (section six), and the history of the rulers who flourished in the four *yugas* (sections from seven to ten, Rašīd al-Dīn 1374š/2005, pp. 50-100). On the other hand, Banākātī combines the materials and integrates them into a single timeline from Āditya sun gods to 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥaljī, by omitting the history of Kashmir and other epic-Purāṇic kings (narrated in sections eighth, ninth, and tenth of *Jāmi' al-tawārīḥ*). In this manner, the history of India becomes more coherent structurally with that of the other chapters in the *Tārīḥ-i Banākātī*, arranged on the basis of one timeline of events.

Some later Muslim historiographers in South Asia refer to the *Tārīḥ-i Banākātī* in their writings. In the section of Buddhism in his *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, Abū al-Faẓl (d. 1011/1602) narrates that during his third visit to Kashmir with the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) he met some old men who had the belief (*kāš*) in Buddhism. However, according to Abū al-Faẓl, none of them knew more about Buddhism than Ḥāfīz-i Abrū (probably referring to his replacement volume of the *Jāmi' al-tawārīḥ*, completed after 829/1426) and the author of the *Tārīḥ-i Banākātī* (Abū al-Faẓl, 1876, p. 111; Abū al-Faẓl 2004, p. 1031). Thus, as Sakaki suggests, it is probable that Abū al-Faẓl was acquainted with the description of Buddhism given in the *Tārīḥ-i*

*Banākātī* (Sakaki 1992, pp. 124-127). During the reign of Šāh Jahān (r. 1628-1658), Muḥammad Yūsuf Atakī, a Muslim historian who lived in Attock (Punjab), used the *Tārīḥ-i Banākātī* as a source for a chapter on the history of Delhi in his *Muntaḥab al-tawārīḥ* (completed in 1056/1646-47) (Rieu 1966, p. 122b-123a; see also Mashita 2011, p. 66).

**Lithograph:** *Tārīḥ-i Banākātī - Rawḍat ulī al-albāb fī ma‘rifat al-tawārīḥ (or fī tawārīḥ al-akābir) wa-al-ansāb*, Ja‘far Ši‘ār, ed., Tehran, Anjuman-i Ātār-i Millī, 1348/1969, pp. 23, 593.

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