Macht und Herrschaft

Schriftenreihe des SFB 1167
»Macht und Herrschaft – Vormoderne Konfigurationen
in transkultureller Perspektive«

Band 2

Herausgegeben von

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Eva Orthmann / Anna Kollatz (eds.)

The Ceremonial of Audience

Transcultural Approaches

With 13 figures

V&R unipress

Bonn University Press

Umschlagabbildung: Mughal Emperor Akbar Receives the Iranian Ambassador Sayyid Beg
in 1562, by Nand and La'l. © The Victoria and Albert Musuem, London.

Contents

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Where is 'the audience'? Who is 'the audience'? Approaching Mughal spaces of social interaction

Abstract

While aspects of administration, the history of military events and a well known canon of Mughal court historiography have already been studied quite well, the reigns of certain Mughal rulers continue to be more or less ignored. This article addresses the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1627 1658) and examines the narrative representation of social interactions at court. Hence, it turns to two topics that have received little attention so far. The subject of this paper is therefore restricted in two directions. Firstly, it concentrates on two sources from the Shah Jahanı court and only draws on sources from other reigns in a comparative manner. Second, it concentrates on a form of social interaction at court, namely the royal audience. This concept, which originates from European historiography and court research, is set with regard to the transcultural orientation of this volume. However, the contribution is initially based on a more open term, which is referred to as meeting formats or forms of social interaction between the ruler and various groups or persons meeting him, regulated by a certain ceremonial. The paper follows a narratological approach, including an examination of historical semantics and the context of the sources. How and why do sources talk about audiences? How and why are certain narrative strategies and a certain vocabulary used? Answering these questions will lead to a better understanding of contemporary concepts and ideas related to audiences or courtly interaction.

Any approach to Mughal sources or historical as well as social phenomena linked to the so-called Mughal Empire[1] will face several problems, even before one starts

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1 Researchers in Mughal Studies largely agree in calling the Mughal dominion an empire at least with the beginning of Akbar's reign (r. 1556 1605). See e.g., John F. RICHARDS, The Mughal empire (The New Cambridge history of India. The Mughals and their contemporaries 5), Cambridge 2004, 6. See also Douglas E. STREUSAND, Islamic Gunpowder Empires. Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals, Boulder 2011. Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary discussion in the SFB 'Macht und Herrschaft' has shown significant differences in the concepts of 'empire' and 'emperor' as found in sources from Ancient Rome, Medieval Europe, Asian dominions and especially Ancient China. The reader should thus be aware of the concept of *empire* in late medieval and early modern India being possibly different from the perception applied in his field. However, this contribution does not leave the space for a discussion of the mentioned differences, which forms a desideratum to be tackled by the SFB.

reading a single word in the sources. Mughal Studies still largely rest on the shoulders of British colonial research and bear, as Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam stated several years ago, the burden of research highly influenced by political ideologies.[2] British colonial research identified a canon of sources still forming the body on which the majority of research draws, and research guided by ideological interest has shaped the larger picture of the Mughal times. The administrative body, economic as well as military achievements of the Mughals have been studied to a great extent, while other parts of social and cultural history, such as social interaction at court, have so far attracted less interest. Although we have plenty of material from different source categories, the audience as a modus of social interaction at the Mughal court remains poorly studied. This contribution aims at elaborating a first insight into modes and formats of social interaction, focusing on Shāh Jahān's (r. 1627–58) early reign. It is a highly problematic, but widely practiced custom to draw on textual as well as pictorial or architectural material from the different reigns of the Mughal emperors, using it to create an overall picture of 'the' Mughal court.[3] In particular, findings from the Akbarī period are often generalized as 'fundaments' of 'the' Mughal Empire and transferred to the later periods unquestioned. To be able to track changes or cuts in social practices, legitimacy concepts and so on, one would need to do research on the different emperors and their reigns. This contribution does not aim at the big picture, but sets the focus on a preliminary examination of meeting formats at the Mughal court. It therefore concentrates on the Shāh Jahānī period, but contrasts it with examples from earlier Mughal periods. I propose to follow a narratological approach,[4] comprising the study of historical semantics and the historical contexts of the in-

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2 Muzaffar ALAM/Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, Introduction. The Old and the New in Mughal Historiography, in: Muzaffar ALAM/Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM (eds.), Writing the Mughal world. Studies on Culture and Politics, New York 2011, 1 32.

3 Even during the relatively short period of around 200 years (1526 1707), the Mughal court underwent changes in spatial and social organization. For most of the 200 years ruled by the 'Great Mughals' (from Bābur to Aurangzeb), courtly life, social and spatial organization and especially everyday business are not well researched. As long as we are not able to trace continuities and discontinuities during that time, 'the' Mughal court is in no way to be understood as a monolithic block.

4 "Narratology is a humanities discipline dedicated to the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation." Jan C. MEISTER, Narratology, in: Peter HÜHN et al. (eds.), the living handbook of narratology, Hamburg, http://www.lhn.uni hamburg.de/ar ticle/narratology (20. 09. 2017). Taking into account the narrative structure of texts, concer ning both the way of narration (récit) and the story (histoire), the narratological approach together with a historical contextualization offers ways to exploit textual sources in cultural history. See e.g., Astrid ERLL/Simone ROGGENDORF, Kulturgeschichtliche Narratologie. Die Historisierung und Kontextualisierung kultureller Narrative, in: Ansgar NÜNNING/Vera NÜNNING, Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie, Trier 2002, 73 114.

dividual sources. The first question thus is: How and why do sources speak of audiences in a certain way, using specific narrative strategies and a specific vocabulary? Additionally, it is vital to ask about the author's intentions and the audience he writes for. Answering these questions will make it possible to decipher ideas and concepts contemporaries linked to audiences and courtly meetings. After this first step, we may go ahead to further questions, asking for instance about the impact different formats of audiences, feasts and their ceremonial had on social order, or on decision-making. These considerations will be left for further research. This contribution concentrates on the description of Shāh Jahān's daily routine given by Amīnā Qazvīnī in his 'Shāh Jahānnāma,' also known as 'Pādshāhnāma' ('Shāh Jahān's book' or 'Book on the Emperor').[5] Meeting formats integrated into Shāh Jahān's daily routine will be discussed with special regard to the narrative and semantic representation of the different formats. Do certain aspects prevail in the description of some or even all the formats? In which way is social order reflected in the meeting formats? To widen the frame and to offer at least glimpses of audience formats from other periods of the Mughal Empire, the analysis will be complemented by side glances at the representation of meeting formats in sources from earlier times.

A commonly applicable definition of 'audience' and 'court' seems far off.[6] Instead, most publications, even those bearing the word in the title, start from a mostly blurred, very basic understanding of 'the' audience as linked to a certain form of social interaction in a certain spatial context. The central characteristics of 'the' audience seem to be that people meet a ruler or another kind of important person in the spatial frame of a court, either in a permanent architectural or in a mobile setting. Notwithstanding its blurredness, this definition has its charm – it

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5   Unfortunately, the text has not been edited yet. This contribution refers to the London ma nuscript: Amīnā Qazvīnī, Pādshāhnāma/Shāhjahānnāma, London, British Library, MS Or. 173 (hereafter: QAZ).

6   There is a large literature on European courts in German and further European languages. Studies are divided into research oriented towards the reconstruction of court ceremonials on the one hand, and theoretical considerations on the other hand. For the theory, see e.g., Reinhardt Butz/Jan Hirschbiegel/Dietmar Willoweit (eds.), Hof und Theorie. An näherungen an ein historisches Phänomen (Norm und Struktur Bd. 22), Köln 2004; Werner Paravicini, Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen Kommission der Aka demie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem Deutschen Hi storischen Institut Paris und dem Historischen Institut der Universität Potsdam, Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994 (Symposium der Residenzen Kommission der Akademie der Wis senschaften in Göttingen 4), Sigmaringen 1997; Jeroen Duindam, Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. Introduction, in: Jeroen F. Duindam/Tülay Artan/Metin Kunt, Royal courts in dynastic states and empires. Introduction (Rulers & elites: Comparative studies in governance 1), Leiden/Boston 2011, 1 26. For a transcultural examination of case studies, see e.g., Peter Burschel/Christiane Vogel (eds.), Die Audienz. Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit, Köln 2014; Duindam/Artan/Kunt (eds.) 2011; Albrecht Fuess/Jan Peter Hartung, Court Cultures in the Muslim World, London 2011.

is free of concepts elaborated on European cases only. Audiences, together with ceremonial, ritualized banquets, *entrements* or *caroussels* have been termed as "allseits bekannte Interaktionsformen von hohem symbolischen Gehalt" (well-known forms of highly symbolic interaction)[7] or similarly. Considering audiences as well-known, basically uniform modes of social interaction might however turn out to be a fallacy, especially in the context of transcultural comparison. The picture that comes to mind is that of magnificent official audiences, in a Versaillian setting, displaying the ruler in splendor. But besides festive representation ceremonies, there are many different courtly meeting formats, not only in the Mughal Empire. Which of them should be called an audience, and what are the criteria to discern audiences from other meetings? We hope to have, with this volume, a hand in the transcultural theoretical discussion of audiences. Beyond the stage of case studies, it will need a common, interdisciplinary effort to elaborate transculturally applicable typologies as tools for further research. For the moment, the term 'meeting formats' shall point to several distinct forms of meeting an emperor, which might be subsumed under the umbrella term of audiences.

In search of coeval and emic views on audiences, one finds quite a bunch of meeting formats and social interaction in Mughal courtly spaces. There are *of course* very pompous and official audiences held at feasts, and, *of course*, there are private meetings between the emperor and his family members or his most important nobles. None of them should be rated as 'the' one and only form of audience, rather they should be considered as modes of meeting an emperor that have been adapted to different contexts and purposes. Observing the narrative representation of those formats will open a window onto the imaginations, the 'ways of worldmaking,'[8] ideas and norms of the respective authors. To understand their concepts of meeting a king is the first step towards a transcultural approach to the topic.

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7 Gert MELVILLE, Agonale Spiele in kontingenten Welten. Vorbemerkungen zu einer Theorie des mittelalterlichen Hofes als symbolische Ordnung, in: BUTZ/HIRSCHBIEGEL/WILLOWEIT 2004, 179 202, here 184.
8 As some sociologists such as Peter L. BERGER and Thomas LUCKMANN have suggested, attention must be paid to the social construction of reality, which not only consists of the subjectively meaningful conduct of lives of the members of society but also of their thoughts and actions, which then maintain this world as 'real.' Borrowing from Nelson GOODMAN's terminology, 'ways of worldmaking' is used here to denote all kinds of action involved in the permanent process of constructing reality and making sense of it. See Peter L. BERGER/ Thomas LUCKMANN, Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie, Frankfurt a. M. 2003; Nelson GOODMAN, Ways of Worldmaking, Indianapolis 1978.

We do not find any primary information on Amīnā Qazvīnī, the author of our principal source, except from his own writing and some later historiographies.[9] With his full name Mīrzā Muḥammad Amīn ibn Abī l-Ḥusayn (or Ḥasan) Qazvīnī, also known as Mīrzā Amīnā or Amīnā-yi Munshī (Amīnā the Writer), he was a native of Iran, probably Qazvīn. His birth date, as well as the date of his decease, remains unknown. After having moved to India some time before 1040 h. sh. (1630 A. D.), he entered the service of Shāh Jahān's court in 1042 h. sh. (1632 A. D.). He belonged to the entourage of Afẓal Khān, who as a distinguished official of Shāh Jahān's court patronized many writers (for example, also Chandra Bhān Brahmān, the author of the 'Chahār Chaman').[10] Having attracted the interest of Shāh Jahān, he was the first writer commissioned to write a history of Shāh Jahān's reign, of which he only completed the first volume. His text covers the first decade of Shāh Jahān's reign. Maybe he was transferred to another post after presenting the first half of his project. Taking into account the author's possible interest in self-representation, the information provided by him should be judged cautiously. Nevertheless, Qazvīnī may be described as a member of the larger group of Persian émigrés at the Mughal court, who entered the court-related society as a client of an influential official. His career thus followed a pattern to be observed with many Munshīs of his time.[11]

Qazvīnī dedicates a whole chapter to the description of Shāh Jahān's daily routine.[12] Headed "On the daily routine in front of the world-governing throne of

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9 Besides his own Shāhjahānnāma, Qazvīnī is mentioned in Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbū, ʿAmal i Ṣāliḥ or Shāhjahānnāma, rev. ed. Waḥīd Qurayshi, based on Calcutta ed. (1912 1946) by Ghulām Yazdani, 2nd edition 4 vols., Lahore 1967 1972, vol. 1, 11 12, vol. 3, 385 86, 438 39; and ʿAbd al Ḥamīd Lāhōrī, Bādshāhnāma, ed. Kabīr al Dīn Aḥmad/ʿAbd al Raḥīm (Bibliotheca Indica 56, 1 2), Calcutta 1866 1872, 2 vols (henceforth quoted as Lāhorī, Bādshāhnāma), vol. 1, 9 10. All information provided in secondary literature and ency clopedias is based on these three sources. See Hameed ud Din, Amīnā Qazvīnī, in: Ency clopaedia Iranica, London 1985 , vol. 1/9, 955; Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian ma nuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1879 83 (reprint 1966), 3 vols., vol. 1, 258.

10 For this work and the author's social and historical context, see the erudite book by Rajeev Kinra, Writing Self, Writing Empire. Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo Persian State Secretary, Oakland CA 2015. The source is available in edition: Chandra Bhān Brahmān, Chahār Chaman, ed. Syed M. Jafari, New Delhi 2008 (hereafter Chandra Bhān), the London manuscript (London, British Library, MS Add. 16,863) has been consulted for this contribution additionally.

11 Cf. the case of Chandra Bhān Brahmān, Kinra 2015, and for another example Muzaffar Alam/Sanjay Subrahmanyam, The Making of a Munshi. Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 24/2 (19.04.2005), 61 72.

12 On the relationship between architecture and ceremonial, see the works of Ebba Koch, (see below fn 26), esp. Ebba Koch, Diwan i ʿAmm and Chihil Sutun. The Audience Halls of Shah Jahān, in: Muqarnas 11 (1994), 143 165, for a detailed review of the primary sources and the literature.

His Majesty, the Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction,"[13] it displays a long
row of meeting formats held every day. The chapter comprises six folios in the
London manuscript (f. 134–142) and is organized chronologically, following the
daily routine from the emperor's rising in the early morning until his very
restricted resting time at night. It covers descriptions of his meetings with the
common people as well as with different groups of courtiers and state officials.[14]
Qazvīnī explains certain meeting spaces and provides information on some of
the persons or functions mentioned. Both content and language are shaped by
the praise of Shāh Jahān's ideal characteristics and behavior. The emperor is
shown as just, tolerant, and at the same time observing a deep, but in no way
bigot Islamic faith. Special emphasis is put on the emperor being personally
involved in the daily business of governmental affairs and administration. His
particular attention to his noble 'servants' (*banda*) is presented as one of his
most important deeds: The emperor is aware of the service each person provides
to the empire and thereby is able to behave correctly towards everyone, always
paying attention to the mutual claims between emperor and servant.

After observing the Islamic morning prayer, Shāh Jahān's daily routine
started with a morning audience, called *jharōka darshan*. The *jharōka* is a kind of
balcony or oriel inserted into the outer walls of the forts as well as into the 'walls'
of the mobile court.[15] At sunrise, the emperor used to show himself on this

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13 The title *ṣāḥib qirān* (i. e., Lord of the auspicious conjunction/Herr der Glückskonjunktion)
was adopted by Amīr Tīmur. From Shāh Jahān onwards, the title 'Second Lord of the aus
picious conjunction' was used by the Mughals. It underlined their dynastic legitimation as
heirs of Timur and at the same time fitted into their inventory of legitimation also shaped by
cosmological elements. See Lisa Balabanlilar, Imperial identity in Mughal India. Memory
and dynastic politics in early modern Central Asia (Library of South Asian history and
culture 1), London 2012, 47 48.

14 The Mughal Empire rested on a body of officials organized in the *manṣabdārī* system. All
'servants of the Empire' were given a rank (*manṣab*) which determined both the amount of
money they were allowed to draw from assigned *jagīrs* (prescribed areas) and the military
force the *manṣabdār* had to raise for the emperor in case of war. A *manṣabdār* could be asked
to fulfill any duties in the civil or military service. Learned and religious men as well as
craftsmen and artists were also included in the system. Regular rotation from posts at court to
the peripheries and vice versa was a central characteristic of the system. Thus, the *man
ṣabdārs* formed a body of officials directly linked to the emperor and his dynasty. As there was
no fixed group of courtiers residing at court, and the system differed substantially from the
European *fiefdom*, I translate *manṣabdārs* as 'courtiers and officials' instead of *nobles* or
aristocrats.

15 Koch 1994, 143 45, and 143, fig. 1, representing Shāh Jahān's *jharōka* inside the public
audience hall. For a *jharōka darshan* representation, see: Abū l Ḥasan (ca. 1620), Jahāngīr in
the *jharōka* window, from a Jahāngīrnāma. Prince Sadruddin Agha Khān Collection, in:
Amina Okada (ed.), Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court, New York 1992, 182. See also
Sheila R. Canby, Princes, poets & paladins. Islamic and Indian paintings from the collection
of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan [this catalogue is published in association with

balcony, which looked over a free space where elite members as well as common people would gather. The meeting format provided an opportunity of getting into contact with the emperor, for example by submitting petitions. This form of public audience held every morning was established by Humāyūn[16] and was maintained by Jahāngir and Shāh Jahān. While it has commonly been interpreted as being rooted in Indic traditions, the *jharōka darshan* as a courtly meeting format seems to be absent in earlier (and later) Indic traditions. Only the *darsana*[17] concept has links both to Indic religious practice (the contemplation of a divinity) and to social relations (the meeting of a (spiritual) master and his student). The *jharōka darshan* might therefore have been an invented tradition, resulting from Mughal integrative politics which aimed at fostering the commitment of the Indic population.[18] Qazvīnī's description of this daily event is written in a technical, far less adorned style than, for instance, his praise of Shāh Jahān's prayer routine. The author provides information on the spatial setting of the audience and its organization: While the emperor appears in a *jharōka* window looking onto the riverside, "most of the servants of the world-protecting court are arranged at the foot of the *jharōka*. Because this is a *bār-i ʿāmm* (a public audience), they are standing in order, according to their characteristics (*khulq* or *khalq*). Everybody is waiting for His Majesty to make (his) most beautiful, world-adorning light rise over them."[19] He continues by giving a short note on the *jharōka darshan* having been implemented by Akbar. Qazvīnī explains the ceremony as ensuring easy access to the emperor for everybody. He particularly emphasizes the possibility of entering into direct exchange with the ruler. The

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　　an exhibition at the British Museum, London, from 22 January to 12 April 1998 and at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, from September 1999 to January 2000], London 1999, 141.

16　Eva ORTHMANN, Ideology and State Building. Humayun's Search for Legitimacy in a Hindu Muslim Environment, in: Vasudha DALMIA (ed.), Religious interactions in Mughal India, New Delhi 2015, 3 29, esp. 8 9.

17　Sanskrit *darsana*, Hindi *darshan*, the contemplation of a picture or object representing a deity. The concept may be interpreted as a form of ritualized use of eyesight: "Distinct senses can be ritualized separately. An especially striking example is the Hindu rite of the 'Viewing' (in Sanskrit, *darshana*; in Hindi, *darshan*) of the gods. It consists of direct eye contact between the believer, who 'takes' the sight (*darshan lena*), and the deity presented in the divine image, who 'grants' the sight (*darshan dena*). A 'wind' or 'current of energy' (C. Mallebrein) of spiritual strengthening is thought to overcome and 'fill' the venerator. Great, wide eyes betoken the presence of the divinity in the image, and attract the believer's gaze." (Hubert MOHR, Perception/Sensory System, in: The Brill Dictionary of Religion, Kocku von STUCKRAD (ed.) 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1872 5287 bdr COM 00342 (11.01.2018)). See also BALABANLILAR 2012, 142; and KOCH, 1994, 144 and esp. fn. 10.

18　Nirmal KUMAR, Rituals of Power and Power of Rituals. A Study of Imperial Rituals and Invented Traditions in 16th Century North India, in: Shireen MOOSVI, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress. A Study of Imperial Rituals and Invented Traditions in 16th Century North India, Aligarh 1998, 248 49.

19　QAZ f. 137.

jharōka darshan would allow the common people to submit petitions at any time, to complain about unfair decisions of the administration, or to submit a lawsuit to the ruler. Finally, it allows everybody to "be exalted by the fortune of seeing the abundant light of the emperor of the world (*farmānravā-yi jahān*)."[20]

On the semantic level, the text adopts legitimating elements inherited from Mughal tradition, but in a subtle manner. Most prominently, the rule and the emperor himself are presented as governing not only the realm of *hindustān*, but also the whole world. The emperor as a person as well as other elements of his body politic are specified by appositions referring to the semantic field of *jahān* (world), such as *aurang-i jahān-sitān* (the world-governing throne [of Shāh Jahān]), *bandahā-yī dargāh-i jahān-panāh* (the servants of the world-protecting court), or *farmānravā-yi jahān* (emperor of the world). Additionally, the author draws on a symbolism of light, associating the presence of the ruler with a light that shines over the audience participants (and the entire domain). This divine light, borrowed from the old Persian concept of *farr-i īzadī*,[21] has been very prominent in legitimation and representation strategies, both textual and pictorial, for example during the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr.[22] Qazvīnī attributes this light directly to the emperor. It is specified as *nūr-i jamal-i jahān-ārāyī ān ḥażrat* (the beautiful, world-adorning light of this majesty).[23] On the content level, the text concentrates on the organization and 'technical' features of the audience. The *jharōka darshan* format is shown as open for both servants of the court, namely *manṣabdārs* of different rank, and the public. The audience is arrayed according to the participants' duties at court and their rank. To explain this arrangement, Qazvīnī refers to the formal or ceremonial nature of the event. He classifies the *jharōka darshan* as a *bār-i ʿāmm*, thus, a public audience or literally a public holding of court. We may conclude that at least Qazvīnī himself, if not his contemporaries as well, had a somehow differentiated conception of courts and audiences. He obviously discerns between a general concept of public audiences and the actual example, the *jharōka darshan*. One feature of a general

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20 Ibid.

21 For the Persian etymology, see the definition and iconography of the *farr(ah):* Gherardo Gnoli, Farr(ah), in: Encyclopaedia Iranica, online edition, 1996, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farrah (30.01.2018). For the adaption in Mughal kingship concepts, see Heike Franke, Akbar und Ǧahāngīr. Untersuchungen zur politischen und religiösen Legitimation in Text und Bild (Bonner Islamstudien 12), Schenefeld/Bonn 2005; Heike Franke, Emperors of surat and maʿni. Jahangir and Shah Jahan as temporal and spiritual rulers, in: Muqarnas 31 (2014), 123–149; Balabanlilar 2012.

22 See e.g., Anna Kollatz, The Creation of a Saint Emperor. Retracing Narrative Strategies of Mughal Legitimation and Representation in Majālis i Jahāngīrī by ʿAbd al Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī (ca. 1608–11), in: Stephan Conermann/Jim Rheingans (eds.), Narrative pattern and genre in hagiographic life writing. Comparative perspectives from Asia to Europe (Narratio aliena? 7), Berlin 2013, 227–266.

23 Qaz f. 137.

or public audience (*bār-i 'āmm*) commonly agreed on thus was the participants' arrangement following the social order or ranking system. While access to the audience does not seem to have been restricted, officials from the department of justice reviewed the petitions handed in and verified the claims. Only after this first check were positively reviewed ones brought before the emperor in another meeting format, which followed directly in his daily routine. The text also offers information on the duration of the meeting and additional information on other events held in the same spatial contexts (such as elephant fights, military parades). The *jharōka darshan* represents the most public audience format at the Mughal court under Shāh Jahān. Though the assembly of the audience displays differentiations in social rank, this is not as prominent as in other audience formats, like the *jharōka 'āmm va khvāṣṣ* held directly after the *jharōka darshan*. The description of the event is oriented towards the representation of the emperor (on the semantic level) and more or less general information on the organization and purpose of the event.

More exclusive meetings were held at the Mughal court in the different audience halls, for which several names are used in the sources. Some sources differentiate between *divan-i 'āmm* (a public audience hall) and *divan-i khvāṣṣ* (an audience hall for courtiers and officials), but we also find mentions of *divan-i 'āmm va khvāṣṣ*, as in Qazvīnī. Unfortunately, the terminology does not follow a strict logic, as *divan-i 'āmm va khvāṣṣ* does not appear to describe an audience hall welcoming both common people and courtiers. It is rather used synonymously for the *divan-i khvāṣṣ*. Sources furthermore use the more general term *darbār*. Both *divān* and *darbār* may refer to the spatial setting and to the meeting format held in it. The terminology continued to change, which does not add to the clarity for today's readers. While in Akbar's and Jahāngīr's time, the locations are called *divān* or *darbār*, later under Shāh Jahān we also find the term *jharōka-i khvāṣṣ va 'āmm*.[24] The name is apparently used synonymously with the older version *divan-i 'āmm va khvāṣṣ* and denotes the spatial context of audiences held for courtiers and officials.[25] The change establishes a clear reference to the spatial setting of the ruler, who now appears in an oriel even during elite audiences.[26]

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24 As Qazvīnī uses it. See also Chandra Bhān, 90.

25 To complete the confusion, both terms are also used in reverse order. Apparently there is no difference between *jharōka* or *divan i 'āmm va khvāṣṣ* and *jharōka* or *divan i khvāṣṣ va 'āmm*.

26 See Ebba Koch's contribution in this volume, and further Koch 1994. 143 165; Ebba Koch, Visual Strategies of Imperial Self Representation. The Windsor Pādshāhnāma Revisited, in: The Art Bulletin 99/3 (2017), 93 124; Ebba Koch, Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature, in: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 19/3 (2009), 293 338.

Turning back to Qazvīnī, we find the emperor leaving his first public audience and proceeding immediately to the next meeting format. This *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ* seems to be similar to meeting formats called *divan-i ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*, as during Jahāngīr's reign. The audience is held in a spatial context explicitly prepared for the purpose. Qazvīnī proudly notes that the emperor himself has designed the audience hall resting on forty pillars.[27] Again, Qazvīnī explains the actual audience format in more general words. While the public audience was described as a court (*bār*), he now chooses the word *majlis*. Derived from the Arabic *jalasa* (to sit down, to sit together), the word *majlis* originally denotes a somehow intimate reunion, council or assembly at court.[28] It also denotes less official gatherings and even drinking parties, which does not fit the actual example. The evening *majlis* of a king and his intimates, but also guests from all over the world, has its tradition in Islamic dominions and is also known in the Mughal Empire.[29] The meeting format Qazvīnī presents is far more restricted than the public audience before. It is regulated by ceremonial and traditional norms to a high degree (*majlis dar kamāl-i tūra va tūzuk*). Qazvīnī mentions that doorkeepers control access to the meeting space and restrict entry to those allowed to take part in the audience.[30] Access is granted only to the *khvāṣṣān*. The distinction between *ʿāmm* and *khvāṣṣ* is a desideratum waiting for a systematic semantic analysis. Failing this, we have to limit the definition of *khvāṣṣ* (pl. *khvāṣṣān*) as a specifying term for servants of the court. It seems to designate those belonging to the closer circles around the emperor, either because they exercise a function in the administrative body of the empire, or because they are attached to the emperor as consultants, intimates or possibly even friends. The criteria used to define the group's distinction from those outside remain to be

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27 Chandra Bhān 2008, 43 44 praises the splendor of feasts held at the court of Shāh Jahān. The most splendid of all, he notes, was the inauguration of the new audience hall in Shāhjahān abād.

28 Francis Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian English Dictionary, New Delhi 2006, 1178r: *majlis*, time or place of sitting; an assembly, convivial meeting, congress, council. See also Wilferd Madelung/Munibur Rahman et al, Madjlis, in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, online 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573 3912 islam COM 0606 (19.01.2018).

29 See e.g., the assemblies at the court of the Mamluk Sultan Qanisaw al Ghawrī (r. 1501 16). See Christian Mauder, In the Sultan's Salon. Learning, religion and rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qānisạawh al Ghawrī (r. 1501 1516) PhD unpublished, Göttingen 2017; Hava La zarus Yafeh (ed.), The Majlis. Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam, Wiesbaden 1999. For the Mughal Empire, the 'Majālis i Jahāngīrī' by ʿAbd as Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī offer interesting material (ʿAbd as Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī, Majālis i Jahāngīrī, ed. ʿArif Naushahi/ Moʾīn Niẓami, Teheran 2006 (hereafter MJ)).

30 Abū l Fażl ʿAllāmī, ʿAin i Akbarī. Persian Text, ed. H. Blochmann/H.S Jarret (Bibliotheca Indica 58), Calcutta 1857 1877, 42 (hereafter: ʿAin) explains the doorkeepers (here: *bakhshīyān*, i.e., officials in charge of admission to the audience hall) using lists of those allowed to enter the respective meeting space.

explored. Since the Mughal court was an open system that allowed for external access, simple criteria such as birth or religion would appear to be inadequate explanations. It is also unclear whether there were further gradations beyond the *manṣab* ranking within the group. The main distinctive factor seems to be the ranking system, classifying all servants as *manṣabdārs* (those holding a *manṣab*/ rank) in military ranks.[31] Qazvīnī provides some helpful information concerning the inner differentiation of the audience. Social order and spatial context are closely related to one another in his words, the meeting space mirroring the ranking system of courtiers and officials. The spatial organization of the Chihil Sutun and its representation in miniatures has been the subject of many studies by Ebba Koch so far.[32] For the purpose of this contribution, it is sufficient to point to three major characteristics. Following Qazvīnī, the attendees of the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ* are organized more strictly by their rank than in the *jharōka darshan*. Railings of different color divide the audience hall into three sections, of which the one nearest to the throne is occupied by those *manṣabdārs* with the highest ranks. The lowest ranks have to stand outside the hall.[33] Similar to Qazvīnī's description, the "Aīn-i Akbarī" as well as the 'Jahāngīrnāma' explain this spatial organization as congruent with the social order of the courtiers. Special servants presenting the imperial standards stand on the left side and behind the throne.[34] But Qazvīnī also notes exceptions to the rule. *Manṣabdārs* especially close to the emperor and those chosen especially for this honor are placed at the foot of the forty pillars. This will lift them out of the general ranking. Such institutionalized transgression of rules raises the respective persons even higher than a place in the front row of the first section would do. On the semantic level, being near to the emperor is designated as *saʿādat-i qurb*, the fortune of being near. This fortune, as well as the fortunate light emanating from the Shāh Jahān, reveals a combination of personal and transpersonal elements in the presentation of the ruler. Proximity to his body personal gives a person good fortune, because the very body personal is linked to transpersonal elements of rulership, represented, for example, by the metaphor of light. The performance of audience ceremonial, the greeting of the emperor and so on thus make the attendees participate in the emperor's *Herrscherglück* that ensures prosperity and security for the realm and for its inhabitants. In this regard, textual, pictorial and symbolic representation interacts with social reality and the performative level of court life.

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31 John F. Richards, Manṣab and Manṣabdār, in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, online 2012, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573 3912 islam SIM 4931 (19.01.2018).

32 See above, fn. 26.

33 Qaz f. 137b 138b.

34 ʿAin, 41 43; Nūr al Dīn Jahāngīr, The Tuzuk i Jahāngīrī. Memoirs of Jahāngīr, ed. and trans. by Henry Beveridge/Alexander Rogers, Delhi 1968, 242.

Since it also relates to drinking and other pleasures, the generic term *majlis* seems to refer to rather informal formats of social interaction. The following example shows, however, that even nocturnal discussion rounds are characterized by a certain ceremonial rigor. ʿAbd as-Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī, the author of the 'Majālis-i Jahāngīrī,'[35] and a devoted adherent of the imperial cult (*dīn ilahī*) tells us:

> "The *padshah i dın wa dunya* (the ruler over religion and world) was seated on the throne of *davlat va iqbal*.[36] From earth to the heavens, veils of brilliant light surrounded his blessed head. Most valued princes and emirs entrusted with important matters each of them was in command of province governors were standing round the throne circle by circle (*gird gird*), hands folded on the chest. All kinds of learned men, of each confession and school, Muslims, Christians and Indic Brahmins, as well as the most learned men of science, mathematics and engineering, were standing grouped together (*martaba ba martaba*), according to their rank. Some of the learned men of religion and cult […] had come in front of these and were debating vividly before the Most Holy."[37]

This example does not provide any information about the spatial context the conversation was held in. Nor does it name the city or the place where the mobile court was set up, or give a description of the closer spatial context. ʿAbd as-Sattār's intended readership belongs to the court, even to the inner circles of the courtiers and officials. There is thus no need to describe a well-known spatial setting for this group. The author even uses exclusive knowledge to set himself and his intended readership apart as a privileged circle at court. When ʿAbd as-Sattār explains some informal etiquette practiced only between the most

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35 On this text, see also: Corinne LEFÈVRE, The Majālis i Jahāngīrī (1608 11). Dialogue and Asiatic Otherness at the Mughal Court, in: JESHO 55/2 3 (2012), 255 286; Corinne LEFÈVRE, Beyond Diversity. Mughal legal ideology and politics, in: The Medieval History Journal 16/2 (2013), 425 447; KOLLATZ 2013; Anna KOLLATZ, Inspiration und Tradition. Strategien zur Beherrschung von Diversität am Mogulhof und ihre Darstellung in Maǧālis i Ǧahāngīrī (ca. 1608 11) von ʿAbd al Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōrī (Narratio aliena 8), Berlin 2016 (including a complete translation into German); and Muzaffar ALAM/Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, Frank disputations. Catholics and Muslims in the court of Jahangir (1608 11), in: Indian Economic & Social History Review 46/4 (2009), 457 511.For additional information on the author, see Anna KOLLATZ, ʿAbd al Sattār, in: David THOMAS/John CHESWORTH (eds.), Chri stian Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History, South and East Asia, Africa and the Americas 1600 1700, Leiden 2016, 134 140.

36 Both terms may be translated synonymously as 'fortune' (STEINGASS 2006, 546, 85) and are used in Mughal texts as a set expression. Its denotation goes beyond a simple concept of fortune and includes the concept of *Herrscherglück. Iqbāl* is to be understood as a fortune somehow attached to the emperor (again, personal and transpersonal elements are con nected) and ensures the safety and prosperity of the realm as a whole. *Davlat* also includes meanings like a dynasty as the personnel a dominion is based on, and the dominion itself. See e.g., Jürgen PAUL, Lokale und imperiale Herrschaft im Iran des 12. Jahrhunderts. Herr schaftspraxis und Konzepte (Iran Turan 13), Wiesbaden 2016, 183 4, 208, 349.

37 MJ, 29. All translations in this contribution are my own.

exclusive circles and the emperor, he adds: "This is explained because other people might not know."[38] Restricted (spatial) access is thus linked to the formation of distinct social groups (like those allowed to be present in the most exclusive circle, in Jahāngīr's time the *majlisiyān-i khvāṣṣ*), which are distinguished by exclusive knowledge. The 'Majālis-i Jahāngīrī' also prove that less rigid or even informal conversation rules between the emperor and his interlocutors were rated as privileges of exclusive circles.[39] ʿAbd as-Sattār, like Qazvīnī, stresses the arrangement of the audience, which he describes as strictly centered on the emperor and grouped according to the functions of the respective persons and their rank. We also find, even more prominently than in Qazvīnī's text, the description of a brilliant light shining around the emperor. The ruler is thus distinguished in both texts by similar narrative means. He is spatially elevated and secluded from the audience, he bears a light (in miniatures represented by a halo), and the assembly is centered on him. The court assembly further reflects a social order, placing important members close to the emperor or at distinguished places. The description of the audience standing with "hands folded on the chest" (ʿAbd as-Sattār) or without moving during the whole ceremony (Qazvīnī)[40] furthermore underlines both his elevated position and the respectful attitude the members of the audience show him. We find similar descriptions of audiences in court historiographies like the 'Akbarnāma,' the 'Jahāngīrnāma' and others. They seem to share a representative agenda: 'Big' audience scenes in the official spatial contexts are used to display the main values stated in legitimation of rule, like divine election, integration of diverse denominations, the emperor as the center of the world and the host of the most learned men of the whole world. In addition, the ideal-typical attitude of the audience (respectful and submissive) is often included in the depiction, also through the descriptions of the emperor's salutation ceremony.[41] The 'Majālis-i Jahāngīrī' mention the diversity of ethnic and religious groups the assembly consists of.[42] Qazvīnī does not include this topic, but there is a similar, even more detailed example from the Shāh Jahānī period. Chandra Bhān Brahman, an Indic *munshī* patronized by several important nobles and Shāh Jahān himself, describes an audience in the *jharōka-i khvāṣṣ va ʿāmm* held by Shāh Jahān. Again,

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38 E.g., MJ, 31.

39 MJ, 31: The emperor informally addresses the author, who is able to understand this as an invitation to speak.

40 QAZ, f. 138.

41 On this, see e.g., Muḥammad Jalāl Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shāhjahānnāma, ed. Syed M. JaʿFARI, New Delhi 2009 (hereafter ṬAB), 58. The *sujda*, also *taslīm* or Turkic *körünüsh* (prostration before the emperor) plays a significant role in the 'Majālis i Jahāngīrī,' being quoted as the courtier's fortunate privilege at the beginning of each chapter. See e.g., MJ, 9, 13, 29.

42 Chandra Bhān 2007, 90 95.

the metaphor of a (celestial) light is prominent. Equating the emperor to the sun, and the audience hall to the celestial globe, Chandra Bhān widens the metaphor even in the choice of verbs, when we learn that the emperor fortunately "*rises*" (*ṭulūʿfarmūdand*) over his audience.[43] The author then mentions the great joy of greeting the emperor, which is granted to the "servants of the court, which is an asylum for Sultans" (*bandahā-yi dargāh-i salāṭīn-panāh*).[44] Here again, we find the representation of a centralistic and world-encompassing claim inserted even in the smallest sentence. In Chandra Bhān's rendition, the 'decoration' of the spatial context by music and beautiful horses and elephants lined up outside the audience hall is described in more detail than the architectural context,[45] and the arrangement of the audience in concentric circles around the throne is also explicitly mentioned. Like in the previous examples, the rank of the respective persons is shown as a crucial factor for their placement. In contrast to Qazvīnī, Chandra Bhān points out the ethnic and religious affiliation of those present, adding a long list of the origins of courtiers and foreign ambassadors. The author furthermore stresses the various talents and skills of the courtiers and guests, so that he may conclude by showing Shāh Jahān's court to be the center (*qibla*) and the 'place to be' for learned men, military experts or religious scholars from all over the world.[46] This characterization of the court can also be found in texts from Akbar's and Jahāngīr's time. We find similar narrative strategies also on the level of *récit* in the 'Majālis-i Jahāngīrī' (such as double constructions indicating the centralized and hierarchical order: *gird-gird, daraja ba daraja, martaba ba martaba*). The narrative strategies used to depict audience scenes – and the way audience scenes are used in texts to illustrate these three central characteristics – do not differ very much from time to time and share a common agenda.

Turning back to Qazvīnī's narrative, we find detailed information on both practical issues (which topics are discussed where and in which order; what are the functions certain officials fulfill) and the day-to-day governmental business. The 'agenda topics' seem to be ordered following the spatial organization of the empire. Officials in charge of crown lands, for example, will report first, followed by the reports from the provinces.[47] Those officers from the provinces and smaller regional branches present at court (*muqarribān-i dargāh*)[48] will also

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43 Chandra Bhān, 91.

44 Ibid.

45 Chandra Bhān, 90.

46 Chandra Bhān, 90 95.

47 QAZ, f. 138. The following draws on Qazvīnī's description of the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ* to be found in QAZ, f. 137b 138b.

48 It is not clear whether the *muqarribān i dargāh* (those near to the court) are officials who have travelled to court from their provinces to report, or whether the *muqarribān* are officials permanently staying at court, who read out written reports sent from the provinces when the province officials did not come to court personally.

offer gifts (*pīshkash*). Governmental issues and personnel issues go hand in hand. The province reports as well as the reports from the administrative departments include lists of those deserving increase in rank or punishment by demotion. Special officers (*bakhshīyān-i ʿuẓẓām*) will present reports on the promotion of the *manṣabdārs*. They also perform the duties of a master of ceremonies, guiding the *manṣabdārs* towards the throne to greet the emperor (*taslīm*) and putting on the robes of honor granted by the emperor. They also distribute alms to the poor and needy. Other officials from the staff working for the *vazīr/ṣadr as-ṣudūr,* the *mutakallifān-i ṣadārat*, will bring petitioners in front of the throne who pulled the chain of justice to ask for a decision on legal disputes by the emperor. As we learned before, the officials will only grant access after a first check of the respective issue. Qazvīnī spends a lot of effort reporting 'technical' details, like designations of officials involved in the ceremonial and their precise function during the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*. He repeatedly states that the emperor takes care of all his subjects during the audience. This also includes animal subjects like elephants and horses mustered in the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*. The use of animals in the textual representation of Mughal rule is a hitherto little studied, but highly interesting phenomenon. While the 'Jahāngīrnāma,' for instance, has long lists of animals killed in hunting expeditions (these lists are given after the description of an expedition and at the end of the year), we also find traces of friendly or even affectionate relations between the Mughal emperors and their animal subjects. Examples range from Akbar, who forbade their slaughter on a number of days, to Jahāngīr, who erected a memorial tower with inscriptions for his favorite tame hunting antelope, the brave *Hansrāj*.[49] Qazvīnī uses the topic to illustrate the emperor's care for the poor and needy. He shows Shāh Jahān feeding those elephants and horses that look weak or thin, and personally blaming their careless grooms. The emperor's care is thereby shown as even embracing his animal subjects, who cannot speak for themselves and thus need special attention. We may therefore note two foci in Qazvīnī's narrative. He especially emphasizes the poor and weak on the one hand, and the officials and functionaries close to the emperor on the other hand. Those who are close to Shāh Jahān either by rank, function or by personal relationship are treated differently from the others. Qazvīnī notes, "the emperor personally takes care of the reports and petitions handed in by the grandees of the empire (*ʿumdahā-yi davlat*)."[50] He writes letters and documents concerning their issues with his own hand, even in the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*. Documents concerning 'everyday' issues have to wait for the next meeting format, to which

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49 Nūr ad Dīn Jahāngīr, The Jahangirnama. Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India, trans. by Wheeler M. Thackston, New York 1999, 69.
50 QAZ, f. 137b 138.

the emperor will proceed after the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*, which we may finally characterize as the most public format of interaction with his courtiers, administration specialists and military men.

Before turning to more confidential meeting spaces at Shāh Jahān's court, let us cast a quick glance at audience descriptions by Qazvīnī's successor in the function of a court historian, Jalāluddīn Ṭabāṭabāʾī. After he reached India in 1640, coming from his Iranian homeland, he entered court service and started to compile a history of Shāh Jahān's reign on behalf of the emperor in the same year. However, his 'Shāhjahānnāma'[51] only covers the period from 1632 to 1635 and ends with the eighth year of government. Ṭabāṭabāʾī was removed from his task, which was given to ʿAbdul Ḥamīd Lāhōrī,[52] the author of the famous 'Pādshāhnāma/Bādshāhnāma.'[53] Although it only covers a period of three years, the work is remarkable for its richness in detailed descriptions. The author clearly focuses on the daily business of rule that he locates in the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ* audience. An average of more than three-quarters of the text concentrates on detailed renditions of gift-giving between the emperor and his functionaries meeting him at court. Gift-giving and the investiture or confirmation of posts appear in inseparable unity. The interaction of functionaries, members of the dynasty, foreign guests or envoys in this text follows a standard structure. Short mentions only enumerate the names and posts of those meeting the emperor on a certain occasion. Gifts and posts received are added in brief words. More detailed descriptions elaborate on the service (*khidma*) the respective functionary has performed for emperor Shāh Jahān or the Mughal dynasty as a whole. Ṭabāṭabāʾī often goes into details, sketching whole *khidma* careers.[54] Interestingly, he also gives evidence of patronage (or *khidma*) relations below the level of direct relations between emperor, courtiers and officials. We find, for example, Yamīn ud-davla Amīn al-milla Khān coming to court with a whole entourage of clients in his service. While the Khān himself is introduced to the honor of kissing the emperor's feet, his entourage is allowed to kiss the carpet beneath the imperial feet – still a great honor not granted to every visitor.[55] The audience descriptions include enumerations of the gifts presented to the emperor, as well as those bestowed on the visitors. Robes of honor form an integral part of this ceremony

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51 The text has recently been edited, see Muḥammad Jalāl Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Shāhjahānnāma, ed. Syed M. Jaʿfari, New Delhi 2009. It is also known as 'Pādshāhnāma.' See Dara N. Marshall, Mughals in India. A Bibliographical Survey of Manuscripts, London, New York 1967, 223 (782i).

52 Not to be confused with ʿAbd as Sattār Lāhōrī, the author of the 'Majālis i Jahāngīrī.'

53 Lāhōrī, Pādshāhnāma. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive translation, nor a modern edition of the work. For illustrations from the Windsor manuscript see https://www.royal collection.org.uk/collection/1005025/the padshahnama (16.05.2018).

54 See e.g., Ṭab, 69.

55 Ṭab, 58.

and often are complemented by additional gifts like swords or daggers coming from the emperor's personal (*khvāṣṣ*) property. Ṭabāṭabā'ī's text is an excellent complement to Qazvīnī's description, since it details the interactions that Qazvīnī only mentions. The genesis of both texts can be located in a tight time frame and in the same courtly context. In this respect, a further analysis promises deeper insights into the social interaction between the ruler and the courtiers.

Returning to Qazvīnī's text, the author takes us one step deeper into secluded court spheres. He gives details on two more meeting formats with highly restricted access. The first is held in the *ghuslkhāna*, literally 'bathhouse.' Obviously, the term seemed awkward to Qazvīnī, as he adds some explanations. Located between *divan-i 'āmm*[56] and the most secluded *zanāna* or *ḥarāmsarāy*, thus, the living space of the imperial family and especially the women, the *ghuslkhāna* had initially been used for the Islamic ritual washing before prayer. Now, Qazvīnī explains, it serves as a *khalvatkhāna*. We should dwell a moment on that term, for it will be used for the next (and most restricted) meeting format that Qazvīnī mentions as well. Steingass knows the term as a secluded, "private" room for prayer or "private" meetings and audiences. It may also denote the women's apartments, which is not likely in our example.[57] If "private" means 'not open to the public,' these explanations fit the example of Shāh Jahān's court. However, both the *ghuslkhāna* and the even more confidential *shāh burj*[58] audiences should not be understood as private in the sense of personal meetings. Both audiences serve administrative purposes, including the hearing of reports, political decision-making, the issue of documents and legal proceedings.[59] Shāh Jahān thus presides over both meetings in his function as emperor and by no means as a private person. In both audiences, access is restricted to those officials needed to discuss and decide the respective topics. Additional informants may be called in, but will not stay after making their statements. The meeting in the *shāh burj* is classified as *khalvatkhāna-yi khvāṣṣ*, as a most private room for confidential meetings. The emperor withdraws to the *shāh burj* to consult with

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56 I. e., the audience hall the *jharōka 'āmm va khvāṣṣ* is held in.

57 Steingass 2006, 472b, s.v. *khalvat:* "granting a private interview, retiring to consult in private; retirement, solitude, privacy, a closet, private apartment; a private audience", and *khalvatkhāna:* "the women's apartment, or any other private apartment; an oratory, place for private prayer."

58 The text refers to the *shāh burj* structure at Shāhjahānābād, Delhi, which is located next to the *chihil sutūn* audience hall. See e.g., Ebba Koch, Mughal Agra. A riverfront city, in: Salma K. Jayyusi/Renata Holod/Attilio Petruccioli/André Raymond (eds.), The city in the Islamic world, Leiden 2008, 555 88; Ram Nath, History of Mughal architecture, 4 vols., vol. 4/1, The age of architectural aestheticism, Shāh Jehān, 1628 1658 A.D., New Delhi 2005. For a map see Catherine B. Asher, Architecture of Mughal India (The new Cambridge history of India 1, The Mughals and their contemporaries 4), Cambridge 1992, 192.

59 Qaz f. 138b 141.

his most intimate counsellors. Here, he even convenes with the *vakīl* or *pīsh-dastī* (superintendent) of the harem. This female official had to report on the personal as well as financial status of the women living in the harem. Together with her, the emperor would decide on granting stipends, on marriages and so on. The personal living circumstances of women belonging to the dynasty as well as their noble servants form a part of the daily political business at the Mughal court. The female members of the dynasty thus belong, to a certain extent, to the body politic of the empire as well. Qazvīnī's main interest, however, is in the emperor's discussions with his prime vizier. The latter is presented as taking part in the political decision-making process. In Qazvīnī's words, the emperor "makes him share (*mustashār mī-gardānand*) in many of the questions of rule and reveals his most hidden thoughts concerning the empire to this pillar of the most important servants of this rule."[60] Some services, such as the review of petitions by officials, and the reports from the provinces could be interpreted as mere preliminaries for a ruler who is ultimately the only one to decide. However, the sentence just quoted clearly indicates a further transpersonal aspect of Mughal rulership: It points to shared decisions. Joint decision-making seems to have been an integral part of the system rather than an isolated case. The process of issuing *firmāns* (court documents) described by Qazvīnī confirms this assumption. After a first discussion among the emperor and officials either in the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ* or in the *ghuslkhāna*, and after a decision has been taken, the court scribes (*munshīs*) will issue a *firmān.* This paper is again proofread and signed by the emperor. But besides the imperial seal and signature, also princes owning a seal and a personal signature (*risāla khvīsh*) will sign, as well as the *divān* as the most important state functionary. The documented decision is thus represented not only as the emperor's will, but as a joint and consensual decision.[61] Issuing documents cuts through the purpose of several meeting formats and may be described as a vital part of them. Documents, embodied or materialized testimony of political, judicial and other decisions, are hence closely linked to the performative aspect of rulership as enacted in the different audience formats. After issue, the objects became part of the body politic of the empire and deserved the same respect as the emperor in person. Functionaries receiving a *firmān* sent to their province thus had to observe the same greeting ceremonial as if they would welcome the emperor in person.[62] Qazvīnī's narrative again concentrates on functions and functionaries, informing his reader on the dif-

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60 Qᴀᴢ f. 140.
61 Qᴀᴢ f. 139.
62 See e.g., Ṭᴀʙ, 68. See also the very detailed description in Mīrzā Nathan, Bahāri stān i Ghaybī. A history of the Mughal wars in Assam, Cooch Behar, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāhjahān, ed. Moayyidul Islam Bᴏʀᴀʜ/Suryya Kumar Bʜᴜʏᴀɴ, Assam 1936, 705 6.

ferent kinds of servants providing information, writing documents, and registering the sums granted for certain projects or to certain persons. To adopt Kantorowicz' picture again,[63] Qazvīnī uses his description of audiences to show an imperial body politic which consists not only of Shāh Jahān, but which includes artifacts that embody rulership (such as the throne, gifts like robes of honor, and documents) as well as functionaries and members of the dynasty, who share in the decision-making process. Shāh Jahān's body personal, however, is not present in the narrative. Even when it comes to the description of the emperor retiring to bed, Qazvīnī shows a ceremonialized *coucher du roi* during which historiographic and religious texts are read to the emperor resting behind a screen, until he finally falls asleep.[64]

Regarding Qazvīnī's classification of audiences, we may ascertain four grades. The text gives evidence of certain generic concepts of audience formats, like the *bār-i 'āmm* as denoting a format of audience open for a wide public, and the *khalvatkhāna* for a confidential audience. Both generic terms derive from spatial contexts and are used to explain the respective Mughal terminology (*jharōka darshan* for a public audience, *ghuslkhāna* for a confidential audience). The specific Mughal terminology derives from the respective spatial contexts of the meetings. Thus, we see spatial contexts, semantics and the praxeology of audiences closely related to one another.

Turning away from the official (and thus male and kind of 'public') point of view Qazvīnī writes from, let us take a final example from another context. It shows meeting formats at court from an insider's perspective. As there are no similar sources from the Shāh Jahānī period, we have to go back to the early times of the Mughal Empire. Gulbadan Bīgum, a sister of the second Mughal emperor, Humāyūn (r. 1530–40 and 1555–56), and thus a paternal aunt of the third emperor, Akbar (r. 1556–1605), is as yet the only known lady from the Mughal dynasty who wrote a historiographic account of the empire in her time. Her 'Humāyūnnāma' (Book of Humāyūn)[65] differs in content and style from the historiographies of male authors.[66] Her understanding of history seems, at a first

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63 Ernst KANTOROWICZ, Die zwei Körper des Königs. Eine Studie zur politischen Theologie des Mittelalters, München 1990.

64 QAZ f. 141b 142.

65 The unique, but incomplete manuscript is preserved at the British Library, Or. 166 (hereafter GUL). The Persian text as well as an English translation are to be found in Wheeler M. THACKSTON (ed.), Three memoirs of Humáyun (Bibliotheca Iranica Intellectual traditions series 11), Costa Mesa 2009.

66 There are two parallel sources to Gulbadan's account, all three of them written as memoirs to be used as material for the 'Akbarnāma' by Abū l Fażl 'Allāmī. Nevertheless, the three texts bear their own characteristics and are worth studying as individual testimonies by very different authors. All three texts have been edited and translated into English in one volume by THACKSTON 2009.

glance, close to the historical consciousness that can be witnessed in other Mughal histories. However, Gulbadan's rendition is different in a few (but crucial) respects.[67] The text is unique in Mughal historiography because of its female insider's perspective. As she writes for a limited readership (those occupied with collecting material for Abū l-Fażl, hence people close to the dynasty), she is able to record information a male historian, even a court historian like Qazvīnī, would never be able to procure. There are several fascinating descriptions of meetings with women of the dynasty in her 'Humāyūnnāma.' Gulbadan provides insight into interaction scenarios 'behind the scenes,' in the private spheres of the early Mughal Empire. We have to distinguish these meetings from the meeting formats discussed above, as they differ in one vital respect. The family meetings between the emperor and the royal ladies are set in the social context of the harem, that is, the inner social space of the court reserved for members of the dynasty. The audience formats discussed above, on the contrary, belong to the outside, official sphere of the court, and will therefore be called official audiences in the following.[68]

The two examples presented here show different ways of meeting the emperor. In the first case, and this is a very famous passage, Gulbadan describes a kind of pool party held on the occasion of the construction of the so-called *tilsim-khāna* (house of the talisman), a structure built by Humāyūn and described by Gulbadan, among others. The emperor thus hosts his guests in a spatial context chosen (and even designed) by him. There are no traces of the structure left, and up to now it has proved impossible to reconstruct the shape of the building, or to get a reasonable idea of what the *tilsim* festivals obviously held there were about. The setting of the following meeting scene seems to be a spacious court with a stepwell in the center.[69] While beautiful women, musicians and singers sit on the steps of the initially unfilled basin, the emperor and his female relatives occupy

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67 Anna KOLLATZ, Der Lauf der Dinge aus weiblicher Perspektive. Gulbadan Bēgums (st. 1503) Geschichte aus der Innensicht des Mogulhofes, in: Stephan CONERMANN (ed.), Wozu Geschichte? Historisches Denken in vormodernen historiographischen Texten. Ein transkultureller Vergleich (Bonner Asienstudien 18), Berlin 2017, 143 168. See also Ruby LAL, Historicizing the Harem. The Challenge of a Princess's Memoir, in: Feminist Studies 30/3 (2004), 590 616; Ruby LAL, Rethinking Mughal India. Challenge of a Princess' Memoir, in: Economic and Political Weekly 38/1 (2003), 53 65.

68 On the differentiation of inside and outside spheres of an Islamicate court and the Mughal court in particular, see e.g., Kishori S. LAL, The Mughal harem, New Delhi 1988; Ruby LAL, Mughal Palace Women, in: Anne WALTHALL (ed.), Servants of the dynasty. Palace women in world history (The California world history library 7), Berkeley 2008, 96 114; Ruby LAL, Domesticity and power in the early Mughal world (Cambridge Studies in Islamic civilization), Cambridge 2005.

69 Stepwells (*baolī*) form a part of Indian palace architecture and were included as recreation areas in architectonic ensembles up to the 18th century (e.g., the *Shāhī baolī* at Lucknow Imambara site).

the space in front of it. There is a jeweled throne placed in the forecourt of the basin, and gold-brocaded cushions are spread in front of it.[70] The emperor Humāyūn and his mother Mahim Bīgum occupy one cushion in front of the throne during a banquet. Afterwards, he will join the people in the basin, when suddenly water starts running into it. This surprise effect seems to be a great entertainment, especially for those who do not get wet. Gulbadan devotes the first part of her description to the seating arrangement. She gives the names as well as the kinship relations of the ladies placed at the emperor's right and left-hand side. Those ladies who have come from far away and belong to Mahim Bīgum's Central Asian Timurid lineage, namely her aunts, the sisters of emperor Bābur, are placed on the right. On the emperor's left-hand side, we find other wives of the late Bābur, Gulbadan herself and the families of Bābur's as well as Gulbadan's foster mothers and fathers,[71] and finally the wives of certain *amīr*s.[72] The seating order seems to be of great importance to the author. Obviously, there is a connection between lineage or kinship degree and the seating arrangement during the banquet. The audience is oriented towards the emperor, who forms the center of the party. Thus, the banquet arrangement is in analogy to the placing of the nobles in the *jharōka ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*. The meeting seems to evolve in three steps. After the initial banquet, Gulbadan gives a detailed description of a gift-exchange ceremony called *sāčiq*. The Turkic term, like its Perso-Arabic synonym *nisār*, denotes a gift of coins which will be scattered over the recipient. After having scattered their gifts over the emperor, the whole amount is equally distributed to the company. This form of gift-giving is also present in descriptions of audiences for courtiers and officials in the *darbār- i ʿāmm va khvāṣṣ*, for instance in the 'Shāhjahānnāma' by Ṭabāṭabāʾī.[73] While the *nisār* as well as the *pīshkash* are gifts given from an inferior position to a socially high-standing person, the gift given by the emperor to the audience is called *niʿma, ʿināyat* or *marḥamat* (both: grace).[74] As in Ṭabāṭabāʾī's audience descriptions, Gulbadan records gifts both to and from the emperor. Her text, however, does not differ-

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70 The chapter on the *tilsim khāna* and its opening is to be found in Gᴜʟ f. 24 28, see also Tʜᴀᴄᴋsᴛᴏɴ 2009, 20 ff. (Persian text), 20 ff. (English translation).

71 Foster mothers and fathers, as well as their natural children, stand in a close relationship with the princes and princesses of the dynasty. They often form a close peer group around a prince or princess, and remain their most confidential intimates for life. See e.g., Munis D. Fᴀʀᴜǫᴜɪ, Princes of the Mughal Empire. 1504 1719, Cambridge, New York 2012.

72 Gᴜʟ, f. 26a. Gulbadan gives a long list of names, ordered according to the kinship rank of the ladies, which stretches from f. 25a to 26a.

73 See e.g., Ṭᴀʙ, 28, 62, 95. The term is also used for money or gold scattered over the people by the emperor or his princes during a procession (see ibid., 52).

74 *Niʿma* or the verbal form *niʿma farmūdan* (to offer grace) as well as *maḥamat* and *ʿināyat (farmūdan)* are fixed expressions for gifts the Mughal emperor gives to inferior persons. Both are widely used in historiographic texts from periods of the Mughal Empire.

entiate the two of them semantically. The gift hierarchy does not appear to be as important as in descriptions of official contexts. While the meeting starts in a somewhat ceremonialized manner shaped by the prescribed, hierarchical seating arrangement, it gradually turns into a jolly party with relaxed ceremonial. This might be a criterion differentiating audiences – formal, ceremonialized meetings from informal festivities or parties. Both forms of social interaction were performed regularly at the Mughal courts and have been immortalized in textual sources as well as miniature paintings.[75] The relevance of festivals for the negotiation of social order at the Mughal courts is another important but as yet unexplored area.

At this first occasion, the family members came to meet the emperor, who was hosting them in his *tilsim-khāna.* The second example will show it the other way round, the royal ladies hosting the emperor in their private rooms. We are in Gujarat, in January 1535. A part of Humāyūn's court[76] is encamped there for nearly a month, waiting for the military to gather. During this time, Gulbadan notes, there are official audiences twice a week on Sundays and Tuesdays, which are called *rūzhā-yi dīvān* (days of audience or court). The ladies of the harem, Gulbadan and her sisters, though, are in attendance "most days" (*akẕar rūzhā*).[77] The term she uses is *dar mulāzamat būdīm* (we were in attendance/in service), which is exactly the same term used for male courtiers and officials present at the *divan-i khvāṣṣ va ʿāmm.* On the semantic level, the source thus apparently does not discern between official audiences and family meetings. Though the emperor visits the ladies in their private tents, the spatial organization reflects a hierarchy similar to official audiences. It seems to be of the highest importance to Gulbadan, as she gives a close description of the meeting space, the ladies' camp. The first tent, closest to the emperor's place, is occupied by Maʿṣūma Sulṭān Bīgum, a sister of Humāyūn (by another mother, born ca. 1509). Gulrang Bīgum, another sister, and Dildar Bīgum, Gulbadan's mother and a wife of Bābur, follow in the same rank. Only then do we find the tents of two of Humāyūn's wives, and *ghair bīgumhā*, that is, "other ladies" – in a quite remote position. Humāyūn starts his visit in the first tent, with Maʿṣūma Sulṭān Bīgum, and each day progresses to the next one. All the ladies mentioned, together with their foster mothers and foster siblings, attend the daily meetings. Gulbadan tells us that in her tent, the meeting lasted until the third watch of the night, and that there were also singers, mu-

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75 The Indic Holi festival is one example of carnivalesque occasions held at the Mughal court. See e.g., the miniature by Govardhan, Jahangir Playing Holi, ca. 1615 25, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. In: OKADA 1992, fig. 226.

76 Gulbadan uses *pīshkhāna*, which denotes a forward part of the travelling imperial court (GUL, 29b).The following section is based on Gulbadan's account on fol. 29b 31a, for the Persian text edition see THACKSTON 2009, 24f., for the English translation ibid., 26f.

77 GUL, fol. 29b.

sicians and dancing girls. After the end of the party, the emperor also rested in her tent. We do not learn more about what was going on during those meetings. They possibly served as a get-together with near relatives and a relaxing time. Ceremonial or etiquette are not mentioned, but may have been observed to a certain degree. However, Gulbadan gives a last hint as to how important the hierarchy and the emperor's personal attention to every lady were. She notes an anecdote about one of Humāyūn's wives – we remember, the two of them formed the end of the 'tent hierarchy' – complaining because Humāyūn visited the other ladies even thrice before coming to their tent. When one of the ladies annoys him by discussing the problem in the early morning, Humāyūn rejects her complaints and makes her follow the official procedure, asking her to hand in a written complaint. Gulbadan's narrative closes up to this scene in using direct speech and attributing emotions to the figure's behavior. Though Humāyūn is "*in rage*" and rejects the Bīgum's informal complaint, Gulbadan still shows him criticizing his wife in a friendly way. His duty to visit the elder ladies first is invoked as an apology, as well as personal deficiency: "I am an opium eater, so don't be furious with me when I'm late. In any case, we will be thankful to you if you hand in a written notice, whether you would like me to come or not."[78] Remarkably, personal pronouns change in these two sentences. While in the apology, Humāyūn is shown speaking of himself in the first person singular, the personal pronoun and the verb switch to *pluralis majestatis* in the second sentence. Humāyūn's functions as a 'private' person meeting his wife and as emperor, bound by official rules of conduct, meet on the very basic level of language. We may read this as a hint of even 'family' meetings being more than informal get-togethers, even though they may not be rated as formal audiences.

The sources considered in these very preliminary thoughts on textual audience representations from the Mughal court differ in several respects. First, they come from different times and reigns during the Mughal Empire. With the focus on Shāh Jahān's rule and Qazvīnī's text, I added some examples from the early (Gulbadan) and middle (Lāhōrī) periods of the Mughal Empire. This selection followed the mere interest to show different formats of meeting a Mughal emperor and the great variety of source material useful for this topic. I excluded well (or better) studied texts like the 'Akbarnāma' on purpose. Nevertheless, the selection is arbitrary to a certain extent. It will take great effort to deepen these preliminary insights and to widen the textual basis, as relevant material has to be located in manuscripts. The following conclusions are thus in no way aimed at drawing a picture of *the* Mughal or even *the* typical Shāh Jahānī audience. I merely aim at proposing some commonalities and differences in the textual

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78 GUL, f. 30b.

representation, as well as in the meeting formats represented. These thoughts may serve as a starting point for further research on the topic.

Are the meeting formats to be defined as audiences? Is it possible to think of a family meeting as an audience? This depends on our definition of audiences. The following should be read as a preliminary summary of parameters shaping meeting formats into audiences and characteristics of meeting formats at Shāh Jahān's court, on a performative, spatial, social and functional level.

On the performative level, audiences are shaped by more or less rigid ceremonial or behavioral rules, while other meeting formats may also run rather informally. This especially holds true for confidential meetings. The social component is shaped by both a hierarchical order of the attendees and access restrictions, which are interrelated with social order, but may also create new social orders, for instance when access restrictions form new peer groups. The functions of audiences range from mere representation, also in front of a general audience, to hearing reports, discussion, decision-making and so on. The administrative and political aspects seem to be predominant. Against this notion, social interaction in many functions (performative negotiation and confirmation of social relations, socializing, to name just two) seems to be a core feature of audience situations. The spatial context is closely interrelated to all of the named levels. Hierarchical order, the purpose and function of the audience, as well as its performative embodiment do influence its spatial context, which is usually arranged according to specific needs.

Defined as such, both the 'official' meeting formats as described in Qazvīnī, Lāhōrī or Ṭabāṭabā'ī and the 'family' meetings described by Gulbadan may be seen as forms of audiences. It remains questionable, though, whether a confidential meeting between the emperor and his prime *vazīr* should be called an audience. The same holds true for confidential council meetings between the emperor and small, rather fixed groups. Nevertheless, the narratives treat very different meeting formats in similar ways. Also in the festive context of the *tilsim-khāna*, and even in private meetings with female relatives, hierarchies structure the social interaction as well as its spatial setting; the hierarchy follows the *manṣab* in the official context, and kinship relations in the family context. On the semantic level, both 'official' and 'family' meetings are denoted with the same vocabulary, thus have likely been rated as similar formats in a common sense. All the texts strongly emphasize the display of hierarchy and pay special attention to the ceremonial and the placement of audience attendees. Differences on the level of *récit* result from the genre contexts the examples come from. Nevertheless, the narratives of 'official' audiences for courtiers and functionaries share common features. Enumerations of attendees and their respective ranks and places in the audience context are used to display the hierarchy, while enumerations of ethnic or religious contexts the attendees come from are used to show the polyglot

atmosphere of the Mughal court. Continuously repeated appositions engrave the central values and characteristics ascribed to the emperor in the reader's mind. Appositions are also used to characterize the court, the Mughal rule, and to show the main duties of functionaries to the emperor and vice versa. The representative functions of the texts are largely fulfilled on the semantic level. The texts share a common vocabulary linked to the concepts of *khidma* (service) and *niʿma/ʿināyat* (grace). The interaction of the emperor and his servants is thus presented as a reciprocal action. Gulbadan's narrative is more informal, but also more vivid in language. Dialogues show the interaction between the emperor and the ladies; the narration puts the reader closer to the action and adds a certain performativity to it. This strategy is also used in the *Majālis.*

To answer the questions asked in the title, meeting spaces do play a considerable role in Mughal historiographic texts. Even though they are not described extensively, the spatial organization of different audience formats is closely related to the audiences' functions both in praxeological and in narrative perspective. All the texts spend considerable effort in naming the audience (in the sense of attendees) the respective meeting format is intended for. Access restrictions and the spatial context of official meetings are presented as due to the function of the respective meeting (such as confidential consultation between the emperor and his *vazīr*). In the case of family meetings, the group of attendees itself imposes 'natural' access restrictions. The descriptions of social interaction like the receiving and giving of gifts, the everyday administrative and political business ranging from reports from the provinces to hearing legal disputes fulfill different functions, depending on the sources' intentions. While Qazvīnī aims at displaying Shāh Jahān's court as an efficient, well-organized entity, Gulbadan focuses on displaying the emperor's personal generosity and his convivial attitude. Examining the different narratives from the angle of theory in *Macht und Herrschaft*, the audiences may be interpreted as core media of representation as well as figuration and permanent negotiation of political power and social standing. Rule and domination are clearly not concentrated in the emperor's personal hand, but emerge from a finely chiseled interaction of persons as well as objects belonging to what may be identified as a body politic in Kantorowicz' sense. The daily performance of rule clearly depends on transpersonal elements, both on a level of symbolic use of objects and in personal matters. Objects belonging to the spatial organization, like the *takht* or the *jharōka* the emperor occupies, figure among the most-cited symbols of rule and dominion in our sources. The transpersonal aspect of objects and their symbolic use in audiences becomes even clearer in the example of gift-giving procedures. The *khilʾa*s (robes of honor) given to nobles, for example during their investiture in certain functions, represent their inclusion in the body politic. The same holds true for other gifts coming from the emperor's personal spheres (then noted as *khvāṣṣ*, in this

case personal gifts from the emperor). Considering Qazvīnī's rendition, he emphasizes the participation of *manṣabdārs* in every stage of political decision-making. He represents the Mughal court under Shāh Jahān as an entity based on the cooperation of a great number of well-organized functionaries who participate in the emperor's policy-making by their assistance (providing information, taking over administrative posts in the periphery). He even shows the integration of higher functionaries and counsellors into processes of the highest importance. Audiences thus work as a key platform of everyday political business at Shāh Jahān's court. They further provide the stage for socializing, symbolic performance of hierarchies and interrelations between the emperor and the members of his body politic. Thus, audiences as well as their narrative renditions do also serve to control this body and to foster the basis of transpersonal rule.

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