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- 1 Upon reading Alam and Subrahmanyam's work, one can begin to appreciate the futility of trying to understand the relationship between the Mughal state and the Deccan in a binary framework. The Deccan was indeed an intense nexus of political, social, economic and cultural interactions between a plethora of political and ethnic groups, and there is a wealth of available sources to reflect these different perspectives (Portuguese, Mughal, Deccani, to name a few). The authors argue that it would be better to understand the Deccan as a "quadrilateral relationship" (p. 358), with the tetrad of participants being the Mughals, the Deccani sultanates, the Portuguese, and the Safavid Iranians. In providing a 16th century context for Mughal expansion southwards, we learn that the campaign of Akbar against the Deccani polities (Ahmadnagar, Bijāpūr, Golkunda, Khandesh) only intensified in the 1590s after the collapse of the Vijayanagara as a local military power. However, Mughal extension in this direction was as much about negotiation as it was about confrontation, and we only need to look at the career of Burhān Nizāmshāh to see why. Forced into exile by his brother-king, Murtaḍā Nizāmshāh, Burhān sought refuge with the Mughals, and in fact was incorporated into the nobility as a *manṣabdār* in 1584 by Akbar. Assuming the Nizāmshāhī crown in 1591 after his brother was assassinated, Burhān was suddenly reticent to acknowledge the implied suzerainty of Akbar.
- 2 This is the context to understand the main focus of Alam and Subrahmanyam's analysis: an examination of two attempts, in 1591 and 1603 respectively, by Akbar the Great to glean political and tactical information about the kingdoms of Ahmednagar

and Bijapur. The first involved the dispatching of the brother of Abū'l-Faḍl, Abū'l-Fayḍ and a litterateur in his own right, to the court of Burhān Nizāmshāh to determine once and for all whether Aḥmadnagar would accept vassalage to the Mughals. While Abū al-Fayḍ was ultimately unable to procure any such assurances from Burhān, his account (contained in the fascinating *Inšā-yi Fayḍī*) nonetheless provides a wealth of information about the Deccan in terms of climate, agriculture, roads, city-planning, etc. Particularly noteworthy is Abū al-Fayḍ's emphasis on the increasing lawlessness and chaos of Aḥmadnagarī society, a none too subtle admonition to Akbar that his 'intervention' was morally imperative. We also learn that Abū al-Fayḍ was keenly interested in the Deccan as a conduit of Iranian immigration to the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, his encounter with a number of ex-Safavid notables and their complaints regarding the despotic nature of the newly-enthroned Šāh 'Abbās in Iran reinforces his conviction that "the Mughal court could quite easily recruit the best talent from Iran" (p. 377). The second Mughal perspective comes some ten years later when another confidant of Abū al-Faḍl, Asad Beg Qazvīnī, was dispatched to the Bījāpūrī court of Ibrāhīm 'Ādilšāh to secure the return of an earlier envoy, one Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Īnjū Šīrāzī. His account, the *Waqā'i-i Asad Beg*, narrates his eventual discovery that Ibrāhīm 'Ādilšāh was using his significant largesse to placate the Mughal ambassadors and diplomatically contain Akbar. The Mughal envoy Šīrāzī was in fact receiving considerable monies from Ibrāhīm 'Ādilšāh, while Asad Beg himself was accosted on numerous occasions to accept bribes. This is a thorough and detailed examination which makes exciting use of under-utilized sources to better flush out the nuances and less-than-obvious dynamics of early modern Mughal-Deccani relations.

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Thèmes : 4.2.3. Inde musulmane

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