

Stephan Popp

Institut für Iranistik, Vienna

Horoscopes as Propaganda under Akbar and Shah Jahan

In an age in which astrology was still seen as a science, the chronicles of the Mughal Empire (1526 –1707) were describing the horoscopes of their emperors and princes as a scientific proof for their superior ability to reign and wage war. Obviously, a diagram combining a set of twelve conditions with eight interconnected major and several minor modifiers hardly results in a single interpretation even if it is true. Horoscopes therefore suit a ruler's need to prove his claim to power very well by choosing the desired interpretation. Akbar had this done extensively in his chronicle, the *Akbarnāma*, for himself and his sons. His grandson Shah Jahan followed his example, but with a much less genuine interest in astrology. Yet, his claim to be a "Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction" (after Timur, the founder of the dynasty) calls for a horoscope as well, in which several obvious deficits are gracefully omitted in his still unedited chronicle *Bādshāhnāma* by Muhammad Amīn Qazvīnī. This lecture will demonstrate the use (or in Shah Jahan's case, rather misuse) of horoscopes as an instrument of propaganda in Mughal chronicles, aiming not at experts but to impress the general public.