

‘I will do as my father did’: On Portuguese and Other European Views of Mughal Succession Crises*

Jorge Flores

University of Aveiro and Brown University
Jorge_Flores@brown.edu

Abstract

The Mughal succession crises occurring between the political downfall of Akbar (c. 1600) and Aurangzeb's death (1707) were portrayed in detail by a considerable number of European observers. This essay intends to study the way those critical moments, that would eventually lead to the disintegration of the Mughal empire, were openly desired both in Goa and Lisbon: they somewhat represented the life insurance of a defenseless *Estado da Índia* forced to face a giant – the *Grão Mogor* – that could not be controlled. On the other hand, and for different reasons, the agents of the English East India Company, operating on the ground, as well as the theatergoers that saw John Dryden's plays in London, favored the dynastic stability of Timurid India. This represents an interesting diversity of European images of the *Mogor*, and asks for a careful analysis of their motives and impact.

Keywords

Mughal empire, Portuguese India, political succession, dynastic crises, European perceptions of Asia, early modern world.

Introduction

The problem of political succession, in a large spectrum of cases ranging from the simplest chieftaincies to the most sophisticated of sovereign states in diverse epochs and different societies, has recurrently occupied historians and anthropologists. Those moments of transition, when evolving towards acute political crises, are naturally capable of leaving profound marks on the collective mindset of a people. Not haphazardly, one of those crucial episodes in the history of Portugal is the death of King Sebastian (r. 1557-78), for the uncertainties of his succession were transformed into uncertainties as to the viability of the nation itself.

Such periods, turbulent and quite unstable, are arrived at via coups and conspiracies, constituting fertile terrain for the careers of pretenders, rebels, and impostors who up until then

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were forgotten or unknown (Bercé 1990; Bercé and Guarini 1996; Eliav-Feldon 1999; Cheesman and Williams 2000). We refer to difficult moments in the life of a king or a kingdom, occasions in which personal conflict and national drama often overlap, with interesting parallels drawn between the destruction of a family and the disintegration of a country. Fathers were pitted against sons, brothers versus brothers, struggling in an eddy of feelings and behaviors – jealousy, desire, loyalty, betrayal, love, and hate – that today would most likely be classified as belonging to the private domain. But in the past, and in very distinct socio-political realities – from the crucial role played by love in the political vocabulary of the Portuguese *ancien régime* (Cardim 2000), to the importance of filial piety to the exercise of power in China (Wu 1979) – these emotions acquired a tangible public projection. The foundations of this theme in western thought are associated with the legend of the founding of Rome and the conflict between Romulus and Remus. Once in the early modern period, the topic materializes in the tale of King Lear, a legend of pre-Roman England which Shakespeare sublimely transformed into theater in the early seventeenth century and which the director Akira Kurosawa, also quite keenly, adapted to medieval Japan and to Hidetora's tragedy in *Ran* (1985).

Between the diverse filaments that make up the European image(s) of the Mughal empire between the final decades of the sixteenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century, the question of succession and the dynastic crises indubitably commanded rapt attention. Specifically, the political disappearance of Shahjahan (r. 1628-58) and the War of Succession (1657-8), leading to the conquest of power by Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707), constituted a central theme for Western travelers in India in the second half of the seventeenth century. António Botelho expounds at length about the phenomenon in his *Relação das cousas mais notáveis, que observei no Reino do Gram Mogor* (c. 1670). The Jesuit describes the fratricidal struggles taking their toll on the imperial family since the time of Akbar (r. 1556-1605) and later reveals the conversation between Shahjahan, already ailing, and his sons. Questioned as to the course of action vis-à-vis his brothers in the event of the death of the emperor, Aurangzeb responded sharply: "I will do as my father did" (BL, *Add. Ms.*, cod. 9855, f. 34v).

A contemporary of Botelho, Niccolò Manuzzi (1638-1717) arrived in Surat in 1654 and immediately entered the service of the prince Dara Shikoh, the elder brother of Aurangzeb, the latter having ordered the death of the former during the war of succession. The Venetian dedicated a good part of the first volume of his *Storia del Mogol* to that conflict (Manucci 1989: I, 231 ff.) and the interesting copies of Mughal miniatures he ordered in south India include the scene where the head of Dara Shikoh is presented to Aurangzeb by the slave Nazir (Falchetta 1986: I, 97). But Manuzzi's text suffered various alterations and revisions, and its impact in Europe, molded by the Jesuit François Catrou, dates from a later period (Subrahmanyam 2005a: 174-178). Therefore, the account by François Bernier (1620-1688) is perhaps more representative. This French doctor arrived in Mughal India in 1659 and wrote extensively concerning Aurangzeb's ascension to the throne. These writings were widely diffused throughout Europe in the last third of the seventeenth century (Bernier 1968).

This article analyzes the manner in which the critical moments of political succession in the Mughal empire were seen by the Europeans, being occasionally evaluated in diametrically opposite directions given the different perspectives in play. However, it does not simply concern a distinction between those who were in the subcontinent at the time and those who were not first-hand witnesses to the turmoil. As we seek to demonstrate, the Portuguese vision from Goa was not identical to the perspective of the agents of the East India Company (EIC) living in Surat. Similarly, and once spread throughout Europe, the news regarding the eventual

disintegration of the Mughal empire is read quite differently in London than in Lisbon. Before reflecting upon these differences, it is necessary to understand the reasons for the chronic dynastic instability in Timurid India. It is important to know, to borrow the words of António Botelho, why Aurangzeb promised to imitate his father when the time came to battle for the throne.

The Turco-Mongol Inheritance and Political Succession in Timurid India

Despite the fact that the Mughals were more inclined to a succession based on primogeniture, no rules existed and the options were always great in number. Such uncertainty, leading to dangerous breaks in political authority and situations of potential territorial fragmentation, was at the heart of the Turco-Mongol social organization in a geographical arc as ample as the distance separating the Middle East from northern China (Fletcher 1995; Vatin and Veinstein 2003). The death of Timur in 1405 and the subsequent – long and violent–struggle for succession (Manz 1999: 128 ss) would repeat itself innumerable times, with other faces in different locales, between Ottomans, Safavids, Mughals, and Uzbeks. The Manchus are also to be placed in this framework and constitute an interesting case study (Perdue 2005: 122-127). Their clan structure followed a model of flexible succession, but the process of “Sinification” to which they were progressively submitted after conquering Beijing in 1644, implicated the adoption of the least fallible system of Ming succession. Despite this, the conflict between Kangxi (r. 1662-1722) and his son Yinreng in 1708, chosen as heir apparent by the emperor himself nearly thirty years before, demonstrates how the situation still remained volatile (Wu 1979).

In Timurid India the cyclical absence of stability in the moments of political transition rested on the legitimacy inherent in any member of the clan prominent enough to claim territorial sovereignty and force the division of power. Each time a sovereign died the previous political bonds were destroyed so that completely new alliances could be forged by the emerging leaders. The political fragility of the first Mughal emperors is, in this context, understood, since they were “genetically” disposed to respect the principle of collective sovereignty and the division of the administration of the provinces between their brothers or sons (Khan 1972; Haider 1976; Sarkar 1984: 31 ss; Tripathi 1998; Dale 2004: 68-71). That was one of the challenges facing Babur (r. 1526-30) after his conquest of Kabul in 1504 (Dale 2004: 200-206). Once in power, Humayun (r. 1530-40, 1555-6) did not delay in addressing the revolt by his brothers, in particular, that of Mirza Kamran (Khan 1964). Akbar was the first to reject such a concept of sovereignty and opted for the centralization of imperial authority, but he could not avoid serious dissension with his half-brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim, who governed Kabul in the Turco-Mongol tradition (Subrahmanyam 1994).

In the diverse periods of succession traversed by the empire between the death of Babur in 1530 and that of Aurangzeb in 1707, political crises were always feared, and they materialized often enough so as not to be considered rare (Misra 1993). The lack of a tutelary figure, beheld as the Shadow of God on Earth, resulted in a vacuum of power and could cause battles amongst factions, social tumult, and pillaging. As we will see later on, the European observers in India invariably registered a climate of real anarchy anytime the disappearance of an emperor was announced. In fact, the Mughal officers that were to deal with these difficult moments of political transition would rely on subterfuges to gain time and avoid the desegregation of the empire. This came to pass after the death of Babur, according to his own daughter’s interesting account:

The death was kept concealed. After a time Araish Khan – he was an amir of Hind – said: ‘It is not well to keep the death secret, because when such misfortunes befall kings in Hindustan, it is the custom of the *bazar* people to rob and steal; God forbid that the Mughals not knowing, they should come and loot the houses and dwelling-places. It would be best to dress someone in red, and to set him on an elephant, and to let him proclaim that the Emperor Babar has become a dervish and has given his throne to the Emperor Humayun’. This his Majesty Humayun ordered to be done. People were at once reassured by the proclamation, and all offered prayers for his welfare (Gulbadan Begam 1990: 109-110).

An identical situation occurred in January 1556, after the accidental death of Humayun. Seyyidi ‘Ali Re’is, who was in Delhi at the time, states that it was necessary to adopt a strategy to cover up the death of the emperor (without hiding the emperor!) until Akbar arrived from the Punjab, thereby avoiding a general revolt. With the new emperor entering Delhi, the pretense could be dropped and the death of Humayun finally announced:

A man called Molla Bi, who bore a striking resemblance to the late Emperor only somewhat slighter of stature, was arrayed in the imperial robes and placed on a throne specially erected for the purpose in the large entrance hall. His face and eyes were veiled. The Chamberlain Khoshhal Bey stood behind, and the first Secretary in front of him, while many officers and dignitaries as well as the people from the riverside, on seeing their Sovereign made joyful obeisance to the sound of festive music. The physicians were handsomely rewarded and the recovery of the Monarch was universally credited (Seyyidi ‘Ali Re’is 1899: 57).

As with this Ottoman admiral, many other foreigners would in the following decades come to witness or hear similar episodes taking place at the Mughal court. We will also come to see how the Portuguese reacted to such occasions.

In Goa and Lisbon: Death to the Emperor!

Founded in 1505, and with its capital in Goa since 1510, the *Estado da Índia* maintained relations of both conflict and alliance with different Asian states. This long and complex relationship was characterized by the practice of a diplomacy molded by the Portuguese and European matrices, but also by actions and gestures of a genuine *Realpolitik* largely dictated by local circumstances (Saldanha 1997; Biedermann 2005). In both areas the Portuguese revealed themselves to be cautious observers of the local mechanisms of exercise and transmission of power, carefully following (and even intervening) in their own interest in the many disputes of royal authority and political crises of succession they witnessed.

This was quite a difficult exercise if we take into account the variety of the situations at stake. The political diversity encountered was the primary factor, since it was necessary to design strategies for an ample mosaic of cases oscillating between small maritime kingdoms, like the sultanate of Melaka, and the grand continental empire that the “Middle Kingdom” exemplifies. The Mughal empire, as with the contemporary Ottoman and Safavid empires, belongs to the latter category. We deal mainly with political formations of impressive territorial dimension, distinguished by complex mechanisms of political authority, aggressive strategies to increase borders, and formalized foreign relations, where the protocol and the ritual gestures used were as important as the substance of the negotiations themselves. The Portuguese speak with a mix of

reverence and fear of the *Grão Mogor*, the *Grão Turco*, and the *Grão Sofi*, empires united by a common Turco-Mongol heritage but separated by deep political rivalries. In these cases, the probability of the Portuguese playing a prominent role in the affairs of the court was naturally remote. But they nevertheless served to signal the weaknesses of the outwardly solid and monolithic empires.

Identifying the weaknesses of the “giants” to profit from them constituted one of the main strategies of the *Estado da Índia*. The observation by Duarte Galvão in 1512-3 concerning the differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites, Ottomans and Safavids, is a case in point: the ideologue of king Manuel (r. 1495-1521) rejoices in those divisions and believes the “discord amongst the infidels” was, in and of itself, a pronouncement of the end of Islam (Pato and Mendonça 1884-1935: III, 249). With respect to the Mughal empire, its debilities were inventoried shrewdly through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In *Peso politico de todo el Mundo*, written in 1622 and addressed to the count-duke of Olivares, Anthony Sherley (1565-1635) concedes that “the Grand Mogor is a potentate of very large limits, and very rich”, but goes on to state that “the sustaining of the power of this potentate has little that is naturally its own given it lacks many necessities for its states, the supply of which depends a great deal of external disposition” (Sherley 1961: 66). Some years later, in 1639, terrified by the Mughal offensive on the Northern Province (*Província do Norte*), the viceroy Pero da Silva (1635-9) suggested to António Teles de Meneses that he undermine the enemy army from within, seeking breaches in its heterogeneous ethnic composition and identifying “the colonized” who wished to throw off the Mughal yoke: “see if by some method a division of the enemy forces can be accomplished because as it is composed of moors and gentiles, Mogores and Decanins, and other nations hurt by the loss of their kings and kingdoms, there may be particular captains who could sow discord” (HAG, *RI*, bk. 3, f. 152r). As Friar Gabriel da Purificação would later state in his work *Políticas moraes para privados* (dedicated to the count of Castelo Melhor and thus certainly written in the 1660s), “it is easier to conquer any kingdom profiting from civil wars than with real war (*guerra viva*) promoted by foreigners” (Purificação, n.d.: f. 19r). However, the foreigners from Goa often ventured to go slightly further. In 1599, it seems the viceroy D. Francisco da Gama (1597-1600) gave an order to kill the prince Murad, a son of Akbar who commanded the Mughal conquest of the Deccan (Subrahmanyam 2005: 95 ss). Three decades later, as we will later find, the Count of Linhares (1629-35) entertained the constitution of a regional league to overthrow the emperor Shahjahan (Flores 2004: 446, 454-6).

The monitoring of uprisings and moments of decline in an emperor's reign, phenomena that presumably would lead to the end of the empire, became one of the essential pillars of Portuguese strategy. Interestingly, these critical situations, marked by fratricidal struggles and great agitation in imperial provinces and capitals, were welcome to Goa. In fact the scenario of a colossal empire not only encountering powerful enemies in the exterior but also facing internal dissension was wildly interesting to the *Estado da Índia*. Naturally such breaches needed to be explored and deepened.

The final years of Akbar's reign constitute a privileged moment in this regard. Given the physical debility of the emperor in that period in conjunction with the revolt by Prince Salim, the foreseeable matter of the succession was amply discussed between Goa and Lisbon at the turn of the sixteenth century. In truth, the governors of the *Estado da Índia* began to yearn for the death of the Mughal emperor from at least 1596. One night in July of that year, whilst observing a fight between two stags, Akbar was struck by one of the animals and was “silent for a while”. The emperor took nearly two months to recover from the accident, which on his worst

days of recovery kept him from any audience, alarming the court (Abu'l Fazl 2001: III, 1061-1062). A letter by the contemporary Jesuit missionary Jerónimo Xavier described what followed in detail, and provides a fascinating glimpse not only of the aura Akbar projected amongst his people, but also to the socio-political *status quo* before the death of a Mughal emperor:

And seeing as for a few days he [Akbar] did not appear, the rumor of his sickness diffused, until it became common voice that he was dying. Then the people got disturbed and started securing what was theirs, showing the works that will be when he truly does die. Outside the city the thieves began like owls and with the setting of the sun rose, killing and robbing all manner of people. The King, knowing or guessing the situation, labored to appear at one of the windows during those hours at least once a day for a quarter of an hour, even if it harmed him. His secret enemies laid low; his friends showed much sentiment, some refusing to eat for days, others would not dine until the King made them, saying their troubles were nothing. Others let their beards grow, and went about in dirty clothes needing a wash, and there were those who would injure themselves in the same area where the stag hurt the King, not as if they believed it were to heal the King, but to imitate with their wound the King's ailment (Wicki and Gomes 1948-1998: XVIII, 580).

This interesting episode did not take long to be included in the political correspondence exchanged between Goa and Lisbon. In January 1598, Philip II (I of Portugal, r. 1580-98) already knew "the Mogor was badly treated for the wound given to him by a stag at court" (Rivara 1992: III, 814) and was readily anticipating the death of the Mughal emperor. In fact, Akbar begins to be "buried" in the Portuguese texts almost a decade before his real death. In December 1597, when the emperor was only 55 years old, D. Frei Aleixo de Meneses already admitted that "it is expected with his death, albeit he is not yet old, the empire ceases to be". Then the archbishop of Goa added: "by the divisions that are to come between his sons, in the partitioning of the kingdoms: the eldest [Salim] was always publicly the enemy of the second son [Murad], the one who is in charge of the conquest [of the Deccan], which did not progress as rapidly as the King desired" (Beylerian 1974: 584-585). The relevance of Meneses' observation is twofold. On the one hand, there is the idea that would come to be repeated countless times in the following years: once the titular figure of Akbar was no more, the empire would not survive the division of the "spoils", which his sons would assuredly undertake. Secondly, the reference to the enmity between the brothers Salim and Murad is linked to the disappointing results of the military campaign in the Deccan led by the latter.

Likewise, the Portuguese followed with rapt attention Akbar's manifest fear that he would be poisoned by his eldest son, a fear corresponding to a suspicion that, according to the Mughal chronicler Badayuni, dated back to 1591 ('Abdul Qadir Badayuni 1986: II, 390). D. Francisco da Gama refers to the emperor's anxiety twice in December 1599 (BN, *Res.*, cod. 1976, f. 141v; Subrahmanyam 2005: 99) and Philip III (r. 1598-1621) does not forget to call attention to it in January 1601: "Akbar is already old and was distrustful of his eldest son, fearing he would poison him" (AHU, *Cons. Ult.*, cod. 282, f. 19r). At the time, it was not yet known in Lisbon that Salim had revolted against his father. However, in Goa attention was centered on the effects of the rebellion and on the awaited fragmentation of the empire as soon as Akbar expired. The insurrection by his eldest son began in July 1600 when Salim sought to take control of the fort at Agra, taking advantage of his father's presence in the Deccan. In the letters that arrived in Lisbon in 1602, the details of this matter were included, permitting the King to conclude that "judging by the Mogor's advanced age, his pending death would cause

great disruptions”(AHU, *Cons. Ult.*, cod. 282, ff. 120v-121r). Additionally in 1604, Philip III again congratulated himself on the internal crisis of the Mughals: “The state in which Akbar finds himself relative to his eldest son, of which you inform me, is what suits that State [the *Estado da Índia*] and my hopes are that God may continue their divisions so long as he lives, since upon his death it is understood that it will spread to all of his domain” (AHU, *Cons. Ult.*, cod. 282, f. 207r).

Notwithstanding, it is in the Jesuit materials – Fernão Guerreiro dedicated an entire chapter to the dissensions between Akbar and Salim (Guerreiro 1930-1942: I, 307-309) – that we see a much richer and embedded vision of the imperial succession. Those texts reveal an Akbar nervous and quite insecure, persecuting an imaginary opposition and reacting without thought to the movements of his son. The Jesuit missionaries also rigorously captured the political uncertainties that Akbar’s irreversible sickness – which “grew on people’s tongues” – caused in Agra. Registering the movements of the diverse protagonists, the Jesuits transmitted in their letters the idea that everything was taking place “behind the scenes”, in a tense but controlled manner, without risking power falling into the streets (Flores 2004: 184-189). Akbar’s death in 1605 and the proclamation of his successor did not give way to subterfuges. Jahangir, who witnessed the successive deaths of his brothers and potential rivals, Daniyal and Murad, experienced a relatively smooth process of transition, which seemed a good omen for future succession scenarios (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2000). The caveat however came later in the same year, with the emperor dealing with the revolt of his son Khusrau, who he rebuked in the most violent of fashions. Following a common practice in the empire, the sultan was blinded so he could not exercise power or seek to take it. For the prince’s partisans, especially the more prominent nobles, assassination or cruel torture were the punishments, performed in the public arena in an exercise filled with symbolism, destined to impress upon the public the prevention of fresh rebellions. Jerónimo Xavier observed all this and described all in detail in a letter dated October 1606 (Rego 1963: 70-74; Silva 1927).

The following periods of transition could not be more turbulent. On 28 October 1627, when Jahangir passed away in the vicinity of the city of Lahore, there were already various pretenders to the Mughal throne and the turmoil did not delay in arising. In fact, the death of the emperor began a short period of three months dominated by widespread political instability. The prince Parwez, the eldest of Jahangir’s sons and the principal candidate to the throne, died a year earlier. Prince Khusrau, who disputed his father’s authority in 1605, died in prison in 1622. Therefore the decision was thought to be between prince Shahryar, the youngest of Jahangir’s offspring and married to a daughter of empress Nur Jahan, and prince Khurram, who rebelled against his father in 1622 and upon whom suspicion of the death of his two brothers fell.

In this process the central role belonged to Asaf Khan, the brother of Nur Jahan and *wazir* (chief fiscal minister) of the empire (Kumar 1986). While Nur Jahan preferred Shahryar, Asaf Khan leaned toward Khurram. So, given that the latter as governor of the Deccan was quite removed from Lahore and that it was necessary to neutralize Shahryar, Asaf Khan opted for an alternative solution that permitted him more time. With the aid of a large part of the Mughal nobility, he proclaimed Dawar Bakhsh, the son of Khusrau also known as Bulaqi, to be emperor (Flores and Subrahmanyam 2004). In the *wazir’s* strategy, Bulaqi was as crucial a figure as he was decorative. The words of Muhammad Sharif Hanafi are telling in this regard: “it is well known to politicians that the throne of royalty cannot remain vacant for a moment, and therefore the ministers of the government and the principal officers of the Court considered it expedient

to place Sultan Dawar Bakhsh, the grandson of the Emperor Jahangir, upon the throne for some days; and thus to guard against mutinies and disturbances which might otherwise arise” (*Majalisu-s Salatin*, in Elliot and Dowson 1996: VII, 137). Bulaqi was simply another ploy to avoid a power vacuum and subsequent chaos. He was a mere expedient comparable to the staging displayed during the deaths of Babur or Humayun.

Little more than twenty days after Jahangir’s death, Prince Khurram received the news in the Deccan. He left immediately for Agra, but not without sending a *farman* (imperial edict) ordering Asaf Khan to eliminate Shahryar, Dawar Bakhsh and likewise, other possible candidates to the throne. On January 19, 1628, Bulaqi was imprisoned, and soon the *khutba* (Friday prayer) was read in Khurram’s name, proclaiming him emperor with the title of Shahjahan. Two days later followed the executions of Shahryar, Dawar Bakhsh, Khurram’s brother Gurshasp, and even two sons of prince Daniyal (Tahmurs and Hoshang), a brother of Jahangir. Shahjahan waited in the vicinity of Agra for the ideal moment to enter the city and on 3 February he was crowned emperor (Saksena 1968: 56-65; Prasad 1923; Richards 1995: 116-118).

Later, after the death of the five princes in January 1628, a rumor was spread claiming the sultan Bulaqi had been spared and, as the legitimate heir to Jahangir, was preparing an army of rebels to dispute power with the usurper Shahjahan. The legend of Bulaqi tied together evident parallels with a conjunction of episodes that marked the history of India, even in the twentieth century, and the majority of the European travelers attributed to it certain glamour. All the same in Goa, where they were receiving information about the presence of the sultan in diverse areas of the Mughal domain and even Safavid Persia, and where the matter turned into more than just a literary topic. We know that the viceroy count of Linhares, in the initial phase of his government, maintained a project of an alliance between the *Estado da Índia* and Bulaqi. Shahjahan was an orthodox Muslim, distant from the eclectic approach to religion cultivated by his father and grandfather and less prone to compromises with Europeans that intermixed with his empire. Despite registering important variations (Flores 2004: 510-3), the Portuguese image of the emperor was a globally negative one and as such it is not surprising to find out that Linhares wrote in his diary with enthusiasm about the many rumors swirling of his death. He made three such entries in the last trimester of 1630. The first register, on 11 October, shows the manner in which these rumors circulated and, with them, the earnest vivacity of the viceroy: “I received letters that I understand to be conflicting as to the Mogor’s death because the banyas say his grand era is finished, and even when the old Mogor [Jahangir] died they used similar language, and if that is the case it is a good thing for this State” (BA, *MM*, cod. 51-VII-12, f. 97r).

Invested in abbreviating the reign of Shahjahan, the Portuguese viceroy writes several letters to Bulaqi (or to his doubles...), addressing him as the “true Mughal King” and dreaming of an alliance, with a veiled participation by Goa: uniting the first-born grandchild (*neto morgado*) of Jahangir, the sultan of Ahmadnagar and Khan-i Jahan Lodi, a prominent Afghan rebel in conflict with Shahjahan until his assassination in February 1631. The objective, it goes without saying, was to remove the Mughal emperor from power and place Bulaqi on the throne. Yet the opportunity went up in smoke. When the “phantom” of Bulaqi is spoken of again in the *Estado da Índia* in 1634-5, Linhares doubted the alliance in absolute terms. He suggests in his diary “it is this Bolaquim among the Mogores, another King Sebastian as with the Portuguese” (*Diário do 3º conde de Linhares* 1937-1943: 265).

Nearly three decades later, Shahjahan's illness was a point of departure for open warfare over succession, beginning in the final months of 1657 and lasting over a year. The war of succession constituted a watershed moment in the history of Mughal India and consequently has captured the attention of many of the historians of the Mughal empire (Sarkar 1973: I-II, 165 ss; Ghauri 1964; Sharma 1966; Ali 1963; Ahmad 1964; Richards 1995: 151 ss). Shahjahan designated his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, to succeed him. Nevertheless, the remainder of his sons resolved to dispute his decision, each proclaiming himself emperor of the provinces he governed: Aurangzeb in the Deccan, Shah Shuja' in Bengal, and Murad Bakhsh in Gujarat. The politico-military advantage fell to Aurangzeb, who executed Dara Shikoh for heresy in 1659 and Murad Bakhsh two years later. Shahjahan was incarcerated in the Agra fort, where he spent his last days (d. 1666). Shah Shuja' succeeded in fleeing to Arakan and later died there. However, like a second Bulaqi, Shah Shuja' continued to "appear" in different parts of the empire (Karim 1953).

Again, the Portuguese rejoiced in the civil war ravaging the empire. The *Relação que dá o Pe. Fr. Niculao da Conceição a El-rei [...] das couzas de Bengala*, a text seemingly written in the late 1650s, states: "the Mogor [Shahjahan] is a man of over sixty years, has four grown sons, each in a different part of his empire, amassing money and adherents, being with arms in hand so that when their father dies each may place a crown on his head. And with his death the great Mughal empire will surely end" (AHU, *Índia*, box 26, doc. 67; Flores 2004: 354-5; Guedes 1999: 463-79).

Aurangzeb's revolt, in truth, was not very original. It was, in the end, the history of all Mughal princes who fought for the throne as soon as they felt the authority of their father, the emperor, to be waning. Writing in the beginning of Aurangzeb's reign, António Botelho expounds at length about this interesting phenomenon in his *Relação das cousas mais notaveis, que observei no Reino do Gram Mogor*. The Jesuit explained that the Mughal princes never truly felt like brothers for they grew and lived apart from one another. It is surely a valid interpretation, leading us to revisit the Turco-Mongol inheritance in the words of Stephen Dale: "Whether or not brotherly love was a significant emotion in other pre-modern societies it had little meaning where children had so little sustained contact after their earliest years. The children/young men also developed mini-courts and distinct political ambitions, as indeed was natural for them to do in the Turco-Mongol system of shared inheritance" (Dale 2004: 69-70). Later, Botelho commented on the conversation of Shahjahan with his sons on the eve of the conflict and restated the emblematic expression of Aurangzeb, which we adopted for the title of this article (BL, *Add. Ms.*, cod. 9855, f. 34v).

Furthermore, the figure of Aurangzeb – in large part due to his strict religious policy – caused deep tremors and critical images amongst the Portuguese. Yet again, the specter of internal warfare and the disunion of the empire opened excellent prospects for the *Estado da Índia*. In December 1658, writings from Goa indicated that the "government is varied" and that, "with this King [Aurangzeb] not being legitimate, there is a variety of principle vassals that have rebelled against him" (Pissurlencar 1953-1957: III, 622). In 1666 the turbulence continued: "the sons of the Mogor are at [...] war, and the eldest [prince Akbar] went to Persia, and nothing is known for certain about him, as his departure was unexpected; the other brothers have been meeting, concerned with King Aurangzeb and his administration of the empire as tyrannical and cruel, not much given to the Christians" (HAG, *MR*, bk. 26 B, f. 535r).

Aurangzeb's negative profile gave rise to support for an alternative solution and the instructions given to Gregório Pereira Fidalgo concerning his embassy to Persia in 1696-7

reflect that political purpose. Already mindful of the advanced age of the Mughal sovereign at the time, the ambassador was supposed to favor contact with prince Akbar, Aurangzeb's son, at that moment in hiding at the Safavid court for having declared himself emperor in 1681, and for supporting the Rajput rebellion headed by Durga Das: "to deliver unto him this conclusion about the great utility secured for him by our friendship, quite advantageous to his pretensions in Hindustan as the Mogor's son, the King being so old and with so little strength, his life will certainly not long last" (Aubin 1971: 115; Pissurlencar 1928: 163-169; Hallissey 1977: 67-74). Linhares had tested this very strategy nearly seventy years before with Bulaqi.

Some of the protagonists of the "Golden Age" of the Mughal empire – noting particularly Shahjahan and Aurangzeb – were victims of conspiracies on the part of the Portuguese. They were discreet and largely inoffensive conspiracies, probably remaining unknown to the emperors targeted. It is nonetheless relevant that in Goa and Lisbon the disorder and pulverization of the imperial Mughal authority in India was an assumed desire, without the consequences to the *Estado da Índia*, and of a subcontinent reduced to chaos, ever truly being calculated. It can be argued that the Portuguese professed a situation of strong political violence, with the different kings and viceroys adopting a dangerous "nihilistic" attitude towards Mughal India, which they surely did not wish to spread to their own domain.

In Surat and London: Long Live the Emperor!

The English attitude during these moments of political instability in Mughal India was diametrically opposed to the Portuguese one. In the first place, it is important to analyze the reactions by the EIC agents in India. Adopting an angle of vision as espoused by James Tracy – introducing the old discussion about Asian despotism but underlining the testimony of the VOC factors in the subcontinent on the *Grão Mogor* instead of re-reading what was published in Europe by intellectuals and political thinkers who never came to know India (Tracy 1999) – it would be interesting to follow the news circulating between the imperial capitals and the presidency in Surat about these Mughal dynastic crises. Such information was later sent to the headquarters of the Company in London.

The unsettled succession of Jahangir in 1627-8, that came to be a major preoccupation for both the EIC and the VOC factors in India, is a good starting point. The Dutch, also established in Surat, found out about the death of the emperor in the early days of December 1627. They genuinely feared a plundering of the city and the commissioner Dirck van der Lee, who was at the time en route to the inspection of the trading posts in Gujarat, decided to place guards at the door of the factory. For their part the VOC agents in Agra still did not know, as of 19 November, if the emperor was simply sick or dying, or if he had in fact already died. According to van der Lee's testimony, as soon as the news regarding Jahangir's death was out, some notables abandoned the city, taking their riches with them, while others opted to reinforce the vigilance of their homes. The streets became insecure and supplies very expensive (Prakash 1998: 145). This was a similar situation to the one seen a few years earlier during Khurram's insurgency against Jahangir. From Agra, ironically "pillaged by the King's own son", Wouter Heuten, Heijndrick Adriaens, and Maerten Fredricx described, in February 1623, the desperate state of what they considered to be the "richest city in Hindustan". With the governor of the city shut up in the "castle", the rebels enter the unprotected neighborhoods, setting fires to homes and torturing rich dwellers until they gave up the whereabouts of their riches. The spoils of Agra were taken to Khurram, at the time in Fathpur Sikri, "who exhibited himself triumphantly,

sitting on an elephant on a seat of silver". The Dutch factors commented: "how will the king react to this insolence only time will tell" (AR, *OBP*, 1078, ff. 405r, 407r-8r. Translated from the Dutch by Natália Tojo).

What were the reactions of the English merchants? Jahangir was still reigning feebly and the Surat agents were already foretelling the coup by Khurram. It was November 1626 and prince Parwez had died a little over a month ago. "Caromes", who was now the eldest of Jahangir's living sons, had the advantage in the matter of succession. Even so, it was necessary to take into consideration the aspirations of Shahryar and especially Dawar Bakhsh, or Bulaqi, "a hopeful gentleman and indubitate heire" (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 153).

After the confirmation of Jahangir's passing, pessimism spread amongst the representatives of the Company. The merchandise could not be sold for it was not known who would reign, much to the lamentation of the agents of the factory in Agra in the last days of December. Even though the ascension of Khurram constituted the most probable of events, rumors and veiled information arrived daily from Lahore (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 189). In Surat, the portrait painted by the EIC corroborates the VOC's version: "a suddaine rumour overspread the land with the Kings death, which filled all men with feare and expectation, except only rebels and theeves, that make itt their harvest. This newes was first wispered here the 19th November, but within two dayes after publikly divulged". The people passionately disputed the succession and manifested their support for one or another candidate. The most prominent men of the city, almost all of Persian origin, sided with Khurram (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 202-3). The same choice was made by the governor of Surat, who anticipated the succession by minting coins in the name of Shahjahan (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 232).

The EIC agents correctly narrated the conflict between Shahryar and Bulaqi, including Asaf Khan's role in the dispute. Bulaqi was proclaimed emperor in Lahore: however, as far as they knew, this was only the case in that city. Everything seemed to favor Khurram, "whom the souldiers in generall doe love, and whose best age, warlike disposicion, travaile, and exeperience in the highest and dejected fortunes hath made him fittest for the rule and government of so many nacions and countryes" (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 206-7). In the early days of January, James Slade noted that the succession had not yet been settled and that, for an empire of that dimension, it was admirable that the cities were so calm. Asaf Khan supported the grandson of Jahangir, "being indubitate heire according to the customes of most nations". But even this Englishman suspected that it was all a well-disguised strategy: maintaining Bulaqi in Lahore with the title of King, so Khurram could peacefully enter Agra and take the imperial treasury (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 226). Knowing of Shahjahan's imminent coronation, the EIC agents in Agra reacted according to their future interests, procuring future deals. They met with Jahangir's successor in the vicinity of the city and, having secured an audience with him ("the first Christians that saluted him or mett him"), offered him a gift which was accepted (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 228-9).

On the last day in January – after Bulaqi's death (something they had yet to know), but before Shahjahan's coronation – the EIC agents in Ahmadabad sent rather inexact news to Surat. According to some letters received from Ajmer, Khurram had already entered Agra and even reconciled himself with Bulaqi. He gave him his daughter in marriage and entrusted him with the governance of the province of Bhakkar, commanding an army of 40,000 horsemen. The same English merchants claimed that many of the Rajputs were known to be on the side of Khurram. They also give account of a revealing dialogue between Asaf Khan and Amanullah Khan-i Zaman, a prominent Mughal noble who genuinely favored Bulaqi. Seeing the *wazir* with

Shahjahan, he accused him of not having kept the promise that they all agreed to during Jahangir's life: to crown Bulaqi emperor. Asaf Khan defended himself arguing that he made him King but Bulaqi readily spent too much money and was too young to govern such a large empire. Amanullah Khan-i Zaman then went to a meeting with Bulaqi. Finding him rather dispirited ("much dejected and caste down"), he asked him if he knew the danger he was in and revealed to him that it would not be long before they tried to place him in irons. To avoid the worst, he said, Bulaqi should place himself under his permanent protection and he counseled him to be more frugal in his expenses and his gift giving (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 231-3).

The English did not wait to hear of the death of Bulaqi and the other princes. The agents of Agra reveal that on 17 February 1628: Shahjahan "crullie murdered all other princes of blood". They add that Asaf Khan master-minded the coup and was responsible for the "lamentable massacre". He did it, they surmised, so that Shah Shuja' could become emperor in the future (*EFI*, vol. 1624-1629: 240). The following day the agents in Ahmadabad inform the Company in Surat. They recount the "bloodie accion" by Asaf Khan who, acting on orders sent by Khurram and taking advantage of the absence of Amanullah Khan-i Zaman, ordered the assassination of Bulaqi and the other princes (*EFI*, 1624-1629: 241-2).

Despite being touched by the cruelty of Bulaqi's and the other prince's assassinations, the EIC agents quickly accepted Shahjahan as emperor, guaranteeing security and stability for commerce. Perusing the English documentation relative to the war of succession brings us to much the same conclusion. The account of the factor of the Company in Agra regarding the supposed death of Shahjahan towards the end of 1657 is a relevant example: "what the event of these civill dissentions wilbee wee cannot foretell, but thus much wee know: if the three youngest soons will not subordinate themselves to the authority of the elder, it will not bee a year, two, or three that will end the difference; and then all trades wilbee spoiled, both inland and forraigne" (*EFI*, vol. 1655-1660: 121). At the beginning of 1659, Shahjahan already being a prisoner of Aurangzeb, Surat informed London about the political situation in the Hindustan: "Wee feare the next year wee shall not be able to send you anie Agra goods; that place being now the seat of the warr, three of the Princes lying rounds about it with very great armyes, and it is said they will give battle to each other suddainly" (*EFI*, vol. 1655-1660: 196).

All the reports by the EIC agents placed in India and Persia those years follow a similar current. They reacted identically in late 1663 when the rumor raged in the empire concerning the death of Aurangzeb: if this really happened, all the business of the Company would go up in smoke (*EFI*, vol. 1661-1664: 105-6). The trying moments of dynastic transition in the Mughal empire are analyzed by the representatives of the EIC using a predominantly mercantile logic: political agitation is synonymous with economic fallibility; stability in government represents stability of commerce. Here lies, independent of its nationality, the language used by the European merchant in Timurid India: awaiting the arrival of Nadir Shah (r. 1736-47) in Delhi and foreseeing the impending collapse of the Mughal empire, the French weighed the situation much like the EIC and VOC had seen the war of succession nearly a century beforehand. From Chandernagore, in Bengal, Dupleix wrote in January 1739 that "this revolution, if it takes place, can only cause great disturbance (*un grande dérangement*) to trade" (Subrahmanyam 2005: 178). The political realism that ruled in the capital of the *Estado da Índia* is in sharp contrast to the economic realism dominating the European factories throughout the empire. However, one should perhaps be cautious regarding an oversimplified and somewhat static and uniform view of this question. There was an important shift in the EIC's character and behavior in the latter part of the seventeenth century: due to relevant

transformations occurring in that period, the Company became a political body, rather than a mere trading enterprise. As a consequence, its attitude vis-à-vis Aurangzeb's death in 1707 is much more ambivalent than the one adopted on the moment of Shahjahan's demise (Philip Stern, personal communication).

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In London, at the general headquarters of the EIC, the news coming from India in the years 1650-60 was certainly received with apprehension. Yet other Londoners, without knowing the fluctuations of the dealings of the Company, also looked wearily on the prospect of civil war within the imperial Mughal domains, for other reasons. To understand the far-reaching consequences of such a phenomenon, it is necessary to study other types of texts, not the commercial correspondence from the EIC. It is worth imagining, beginning in the 1670s, what readers of a translated François Bernier (*The History of the Late Revolution of the Empire of the Great Mogul*) and patrons of John Dryden's (1631-1700) play based on Bernier's work, would have thought about the issue.

Bernier's *Voyages*, whose structure is somewhat confusing and heterogeneous, enjoyed an interesting European "career" in the later decades of the seventeenth century – four French editions between 1670 and 1699, the second carrying the well-known title *Histoire de la dernière Révolution des Etats du Grand Mogol* (1670); translations into English, German, Dutch, and Italian prior to 1675 (Murr 1991: 246 ss; Burke 1999: 136). Much in the manner of the epoch, the work by the French doctor speaks of «revolution» (Snow 1962; Burke 1999: 127; Harris 2005: 32-8; Hespanha 1993) to characterize the Mughal war of succession, a term maintained in some of the above referred translations, including the English one.

François Bernier unleashed a stinging criticism of the Mughal political system beginning with the appropriation of the nobles' affects by the emperor and the absence of private property in the empire. This position found a strong reverberation amongst other western authors, molding the European discourse relative to the Mughal empire and its political regime for a long period of time, and has been interpreted as a warning against the excesses of the absolutist monarchies in Europe, particularly against the tyrannical temptations of Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) and his powerful minister Colbert (Murr 1991; Burke 1999). As Sylvia Murr has stressed, Aurangzeb, being indubitably a tyrant – though one cannot escape such a label when one governs an empire which is structurally so – does not exclude Bernier from considering him a great politician and king: "for his hero Aurangzeb to remain a pedagogically effective example, he takes care to underline that he is [...] a king in every way, on which any king can model himself and Aurangzeb serves consequently as an example for all princes" (Murr 1991: 257). Reason of State prevails and Machiavellian political realism is present and noted, for the real tyrant is he who maintains himself in power without having the qualities to wield it, not one who is a gifted ruler and has the abilities to assure political stability in his reign. Bernier's exercise, defending the "legitimate tyrant", is not much removed from the Spaniard Mártir Rizo's position, in *Vida de Rómulo* (1626) (Fernández-Santamaría 1983: 296 ss). And it is certain that Bernier's Aurangzeb provoked a lively debate in Europe concerning the nature and limits of royal sovereignty. From Milan, in March 1675, the printer Federico Agnelli urged D. Gaspar Talenti – in his preface to the Italian translation of the *Voyages* – to assess whether "the fakir Aurengzeb has the right to become sovereign" and to "ponder with your superior judgment the decisions of this foreign prince" (Bernier 1675).

As noticed earlier, the prolific John Dryden surely read Bernier's work in the first English translation in 1671-2 and later transformed it into a play. In truth, Bernier himself offers

Dryden the adaptation of his book: in the dedication to Louis XIV, the French doctor refers to the war of succession as “a Tragedy which I have just seen acted in one of the largest Theatres in the World” (Bernier 1968: xxi; Murr 1991: 254). Dryden naturally grasped the self-evident connotation of «tragedy», which evolved into the title for his play and obtained as a venue some of the London’s largest theaters. *Aureng-Zebe, or the Great Mogul* was presented for the first time in November 1675 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, a theater inaugurated in 1663, which quickly became a reference for the Restoration drama. The text was published in 1676 under a slightly different title – *Aureng-Zebe, A tragedy* – and five more editions followed before the end of the century (1685, 1690, 1692, 1694 e 1699). On stage, the play would not be performed again in the seventeenth century, but, in exchange, became somewhat popular in the first three decades of the following century: 34 performances in London from 1700 to 1730 (Dryden 1971: xiii-xiv).

The multiple editions and performances of Dryden’s play could well constitute in London a renewed interest in the war between the EIC and Aurangzeb in 1687-8 and the subsequent embassy of Sir William Norris to the Mughal court in 1699-1702 (Subrahmanyam 2005: 159 ss): in the closing years of the seventeenth century, and especially in the 1800s, India occupied a relevant place in the British “public sphere” (Osborn 2004). But the relative success of *Aureng-Zebe* may also be a consequence of the English political panorama at the time. The Londoners acquainted with Shakespeare’s history plays were used to seeing situations of turmoil, plots and assassinations on the city’s stages and only needed to draw a parallel between the turmoil in Agra and the unpredictable political situation of Restoration England.

Dryden appears particularly interested in applying lessons learned from the turbulent dynastic transitions in Turco-Mongol Asia to the political circumstances of his own country. In a short article, L. H. Martin demonstrates that the enigmatic reference to the “Persian king” in *Aureng-Zebe* (IV.i.7) is based on Dryden’s knowledge of *The Royall Slave* (1639), a piece by William Cartwright which utilized an episode that took place in the court of Shah Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) to explore the theme of the “captive entertained in regal splendor with foreknowledge of his fate”. Advised by his astrologers of the danger to his life, the Safavid emperor temporarily abandoned power for expediency: he placed an “infidel” on his throne, who, in foreseeable fashion, was assassinated after three or four days reigning over the empire. The true emperor later returned to his throne confident of his safety (Martin 1973). In fact, Cartwright’s “infidel” did exist: he was a certain Ustad Yusufi Tarkishduz, a disciple of the heterodox Sufi order of the Nuqtavis that Shah Abbas intended to eliminate (Babayam 2002: 3-5; Subrahmanyam 2005a: 117-8).

Considering Timurid India, Bulaqi – whom the Mughal chroniclers described as being a “sacrificial lamb” (Flores and Subrahmanyam 2004: 88) – could well have been Cartwright’s “Persian king”. But Dryden prefers to identify him as Aurangzeb, imagining the future Mughal emperor unjustly imprisoned by his father and brother (Morat, i.e. Murad Bakhsh) and calmly awaiting the inevitable execution. Aurangzeb laments, at the beginning of the final act: “This is the ceremony of my fate: / A parting treat, and I’m to die in state. / They lodge me as I were the Persian king, / And with luxurious pomp my death they bring.” (Dryden 1971: 74).

Dryden proceeds with a liberal adaptation of Bernier’s work and a reinvention of the events (all concentrated on one single day), which creates distortions and leads him to ignore characters and, likewise, to insert in the conflict a love story between Aurangzeb and Indamora. Taken as a whole, *Aureng-Zebe* has merited the attention given it by scholars of seventeenth century English drama (*inter alia*, Alssid 1965; Newman 1970), but there are also

contributions by specialists of south Asia to consider as well (Bhattacharya 1993). What prevails is the analysis of the dramatic method and other formal aspects of the play; the characterization of the protagonists (especially the women – Nourmahal, Indamora, Melesinda and Zayda); and the interpretation of *Aureng-Zebe* as a metaphor for the political reality of Restoration England. This last aspect seems most pertinent to our study, in connection to the portrait of Aurangzeb conveyed by the play.

John Dryden was not the first to associate dynastic crises in a Muslim empire with the political *status quo* of an early modern European state. For such we only have to look to Istanbul in the mid-sixteenth century. Confronted with the revolt by the heir to the throne, Prince Mustafa, Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66) orders the execution of his own son in 1553. The instigators of this plot appear to have been the Sultana Roxelana – interested in eliminating Mustafa so that one of her sons could ascend to the throne– and the Grand Vizier. The tragic episode serves as a foundation for the play *La Soltane*, by Gabriel Bounin (1561) and could represent a didactic lesson to contemporary France, which lived much the same moment of great political turbulence after the death of Henry II (r. 1547-59). Six decades later, in Florence, Prospero Bonarelli drew from the same Turkish tragedy the play *Il Solimano* (1619). The context was also appropriate since Cosimo II (r. 1609-21) sustained for years the hope of conquering Jerusalem, and a drama exploring the possible political disintegration of the Ottoman empire – Giovanni Botero had already prophesied the end of the empire judging from the recurrent fratricidal battles with which the Ottomans had to deal (Botero 1956: 83-86) – provided a good stimulus for the project. On the other hand, Bonarelli surely intended to emphasize the utility, to Florence, of the lessons of Mustafa's injustice, in a period where Cosimo II was ailing, leaving prospects for serious political problems concerning succession in the Great Duchy (Le Thiec 1996).

In London in the 1670s the game of mirrors is played with Agra and not so much with Constantinople. Aurangzeb is the hero of Dryden's drama and the future emperor, having no tyrannical qualities, represents the stability of the government. The despot is instead the "Old Emperor" (Shahjahan), accompanied by the sanguine Morat (the rest of Aurangzeb's brothers rapidly disappear from the scene). As for the love story it ends happily, with the image of Aurangzeb and Indamora contributing to the profile of the prince as perfect, the ideal monarch "whose private happiness is fused to the public good and who can provide the promise of a productive future for himself as well as for his people" (Alssid 1965: 469).

The portrait of Aurangzeb as composed by Dryden is better understood when compared to contemporary England. The initial years of the reign of Charles II (r. 1660-85) – marked by deep politico-religious divides and a fragile political authority – were highly unstable, culminating in the Exclusion Crisis of 1678-81 (Harris 2005). In this manner the lauding of Aurangzeb is the lauding of Charles II and it comes as no surprise that Dryden places the action of his play in Agra, in the year 1660, the same year as the Stuart Restoration.

In any event, the reality was quite different. Aurangzeb was far from being idealized by Dryden, much as Charles II was indeed more akin to Shahjahan. On the eve of the Mughal war of succession, finding himself exiled in Holland (1651-60), Prince Charles sent an emissary – Henry Bard, or Lord Bellomont, who had fought beside Charles I (r. 1625-49) in the civil war – to Asia. Manuzzi knew Bellomont well (Manucci 1981: I, *passim*), but the passage of the ambassador of the future Charles II through Persia and India (where he was to perish in June 1656) also left its mark on the correspondence of the EIC (*EFI*, 1655-1660: 20-24, 127-128) and the VOC. Johan Tack's perspective from Delhi in June 1656 is rather interesting, for a

letter from Charles II arrived for Shahjahan and is read before the emperor and nobles after having been translated by a Jesuit. Offended by those who killed his father, Charles of England came to ask for Shahjahan's financial assistance to retake the lands of the slain Charles's assassins. Sarcastically, the Mughal emperor commented that, considering the gift the English presented to him, it would be difficult to obtain money from anyone (AR, *OBP*, 1210, ff. 1050r-1050v. Translated from the Dutch by Natália Tojo).

As far as we know, in the final decades of the seventeenth century there are no echoes of Bernier or Dryden in Portugal. The fall of Shahjahan, the assassination of his three sons, and the victory by the astute Aurangzeb is something which, in all probability, only the monarch, the Overseas Council (*Conselho Ultramarino*), the political circuits at court, and the Jesuits knew and debated, always based on news coming from Goa. Still in December 1667, exalting from the recent celebration of a treaty with the Mughal emperor (Biker 1881-1887: IV, 123 ss; BN, *Res.*, cod. 257, ff. 43v-44v), the viceroy in India saw in Aurangzeb much difference from the one discussed, a few years earlier, in London and Paris. In fact, the Count of São Vicente (1666-8) relies mainly on the reputation of the *Estado da Índia* and the Portuguese Crown, emphasizing to D. Afonso VI (r. 1656-83) the fact that they were able to assure negotiations of peace, under the condition of equals, "with such a grand and insolent Prince". The treaty, in conjunction with the awaited successes of the embassy led by Manuel de Saldanha to Beijing (1667-70), would permit the Portuguese king, "to be at once respected by the two greatest monarchs in the universe" (BNF, *FP*, vol. 33, f. 144r).

Nevertheless, the political situation of the country at the time – as was happening in France and assuredly in England – favored interesting parallels between Mughal India and the *Portugal Restaurado* in its early decades. It suffices to recall the personal debility and weak authority of D. Afonso VI, a puppet-king controlled by the count of Castelo Melhor since 1662 and who would be deposed by his own brother, Prince D. Pedro, five years later. Exiled to Angra do Heroísmo since 1669, D. Afonso VI returned from the Azores in 1674 only to be incarcerated in Sintra until his death in 1683. Tempting analogies come to mind, more so because soon after the English translation of Bernier came to light, Samuel Pepys' *The Portugal History: Or a Relation of the troubles that happened in the court of Portugal in the years 1667 and 1668*, was published in London (Pepys 1677). Bernier could well be considered the European chronicler of the Mughal "revolution", much as Pepys is to be recognized as the European chronicler of the Portuguese "revolution". The count of Castelo Melhor could evidently play the role of Colbert and, despite the many differences, D. Afonso VI has some Shahjahan in him, the latter of course also being removed from power by a "revolution" and exiled to the palace at Agra until his death 1666. Concerning the regent D. Pedro (1667-83), later King Pedro II (r. 1683-1706), who prepared the coup in 1667 with the help of the queen, his sister-in-law and later his wife, he is most like Aurangzeb in comparison. Furthermore, much like his contemporaries Charles II and Aurangzeb, he also confronted conspiracies in his first years of power (*Epítome da Vida do Serenissimo Rey de Portugal D. Afonso VI* (1684), BN, *Res.*, cod. 1505, ff. 64r-68r).

Had the Portuguese decision-makers at the time read the *Histoire de la dernière Revolution des Estats du Grand Mogol*? What effect, if any, would a Portuguese translation of François Bernier, perhaps complemented by a play written by D. Francisco Manuel de Melo (1608-1666) – who lived long enough to know of the Mughal civil war – have? How would the account of the French doctor in that harsh war of words between, on the one hand (favoring D. Pedro), the *Catastrophe de Portugal* and the *Monstruosidades do tempo e da fortuna*; and, on the

other (defending D. Afonso VI), the *Anti-Catastrophe* and the *Mercurio Portuguez* (Rocha 1990; Xavier 1998; Xavier, Cardim and Álvarez 1996) eventually be used? Or better yet, what impact would an eventual note by Father António Vieira (1608-97) about the conquest of power by Aurangzeb have, the Jesuit missionary being precisely the author of a 1667 document advising “the King D. Affonso VI to abdicate in favor of Prince D. Pedro” where he expands on the personal and political relations between brothers (BN, *Res.*, cod. 11371, ff. 87r-95r)? Would Lisbon, seeing itself reflected in Agra, advocate the political stability of the Mughal empire and, consequently, desire long life for Aurangzeb, instead of fomenting his destruction? Would the Reason of State as interpreted in Goa, which saw political and social anarchy in Hindustan as a guarantee of the political survival of the *Estado da Índia*, prevail? Or, alternatively, would the Reason of State from Lisbon’s perspective, which surely would advocate the stability of the Mughal government in order to induce a political discourse paralleling the legitimacies of D. Pedro II and Aurangzeb, prevail?

Conclusion

The European texts regarding Mughal India – whose relevance to the study of topics such as that of the dynastic crises of the empire is undisputed – pose various challenges. The first one consists in learning to deal with the extraordinary diversity of those texts: accounts of merchants, travelers and high officials; archival documents, ranging from state papers to commercial correspondence; narrative sources, some extremely popular, some not; and plays. European texts do not necessary convey the “truth” about Asian societies, rather they often represent a discourse, a construction, and have some sort of agenda (Subrahmanyam 2005: 9-10; Tracy 1999: 256-7). Thus, labeling some texts as more representative in order to belittle others as less interesting may lead to the impoverishment of historical analysis.

The count of Linhares and the count of São Vicente; successive generations of EIC agents placed in Surat, Ahmadabad, or Agra; François Bernier and John Dryden...European perceptions of the dynastic crises of the Mughal empire are as disparate as the profiles of its observers, the locale from which they observed, and perhaps as importantly, what each one sought to find in what he observed. The Portuguese sided with Bulaqi, the English with Shahjahan. The Portuguese condemned Aurangzeb, whom they considered to be a tyrant and illegitimate ruler. The English heaped praise upon his reign and, at least in some circles, transformed him into the perfect prince. Which images are the dominant ones? Which political constructions stronger? It is rather difficult to tell, more so because if one enlarges this exercise to include Asian texts, the results will be even more diverse. Muhammad Rabi – author of *Safina-i Sulaimani* (“The Ship of Sulaiman”), the account of a Persian embassy to the Thai court in the 1680s, of which he was the secretary –, presents the revolt of Prince Akbar against his father, the emperor Aurangzeb, in the following manner: “the very latest report had it that when the noble, high-ranking, prince Akbar, greatest of the princes of all India, [...] following the orthodox tradition of his famous forebears, turned his hopeful face to Iran, the threshold and refuge of the world, this event greatly increased the tumult and confusion which prevails throughout the land of India” (O’Kane 1972: 239-240). For Muhammad Rabi, India is a land of turmoil and, artfully evoking Prince Akbar’s Mughal precedent – Emperor Humayun, who fled to the court of Shah Tahmasp after being overthrown by the Afghan ruler Sher Shah in 1540 – presents the Persian court as a safe haven and simultaneously proclaims the superiority of the Safavids over the Mughals.

Let us consider once more the perspectives of Surat and London. In India, the EIC and VOC factors never spoke of the dissolution of the empire. They certainly feared the periods of political transition in Mughal India. They feared them, however, as one fears a looming storm which, in the end, is just passing by. It was expected that the problem of succession could be resolved as fast as possible and that the new emperor (whoever he may be) would start to exert his authority. In London, no one entertained the thought of the dismembering of the empire and no one even seriously considered the scenario. This was true both for the directors of the Company, for whom such an event could signify the loss of their investment in India, and for the political philosophers and opinion-makers, interested in consecrating the stability of power in Timurid India, for example, a convenient formula adjusted to Restoration England.

We now return to the perspectives of Goa and Lisbon. Without wasting much time explaining the historical origins of the phenomenon (if they understood at all the fundamentals of the Turco-Mongol heritage), the Portuguese assumed the turbulence that cyclically assailed Agra or Delhi to be a self-induced process of inevitable conflict between sons, fathers, and brothers for the throne. Even without recalling the early decades of Timurid India – and the reigns of Babur and Humayun were good examples to evoke regarding the extreme fragility of the empire's structures (Dale 2004: 458-61) – the Portuguese envisaged Mughal India as a reversible political reality. A powerful empire surely, but still one destined to die, perhaps because since the beginning it was insisted that the *Grão Mogor* was nothing more than a foreigner to an India where the *Firangis* had arrived first (Flores 2004: 35).

The Mughal political transition as seen from the capital of the *Estado da Índia* could not be starker. Confronted with descriptions of violent assassinations of brothers by brothers, the Portuguese never speak of tragedy – Jerónimo Xavier seems to be the only one to employ the term to describe the rebellion led by Khusrau – and emotion rarely transpires. Their pure political realism, Machiavellian in its style, is quite different from the economic realism of the EIC agents: what could the business opportunities of Hindustan mean when compared with the advantages of a political implosion of the *Grão Mogor*? Once in Lisbon, a deeper reflection on the subject is also unlikely to take place. No politician, jurist, or intellectual seemed to preoccupy himself with questioning, for example, what would happen in Portugal if the country had to face a crisis similar to that faced by the Mughals in 1657-8. Conspiring against the Mughal sovereigns and dreaming of the dissolution of their empire signifies a disrespect for the importance of order, which the Portuguese *Ancien Régime* prized so much (Hespanha 1993); a perilous contradiction at its heart. Quite alien too is a possible comparison and an exercise of cultural translation between Aurangzeb's India and D. Pedro II's Portugal.

To fully understand this phenomenon it is important to stress that, unlike other European countries, Portugal could not count on worldly voyagers in India in the last decades of the seventeenth century. These men transformed the description of a voyage into a public, autobiographical exercise and wrote with the thought in mind that they would be extensively read in Europe, certainly with the expectation that they would exercise an influence on their fatherland. Portugal bypassed the reflection then taking place in Europe regarding the tyrannical and despotic character of the Asian political systems (including the Mughal one), more so if we consider that the reflection constituted, above all, a topic in European intellectual history, a fact readily known in the celebrated travelogues of acclaimed travelers (Rubiés 2005). But if one considers other western texts or adopts a perspective closer to that of the reality in Asia, the debate acquires other shades. The multitude of European visions regarding the rise and fall of the Mughal emperors is one such example.

Abbreviations

<i>Add. Ms.</i>	<i>Additional Manuscripts</i> (BL)
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino – Lisbon
AR	Algemeen Rijksarchief – The Hague
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu – Rome
BA	Biblioteca da Ajuda – Lisbon
BL	The British Library – London
BN	Biblioteca Nacional – Lisbon
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France – Paris
<i>Cons Ult.</i>	<i>Conselho Ultramarino</i> (AHU)
<i>FP</i>	<i>Fonds Portugais</i> (BNF)
HAG	Historical Archives of Goa – Panaji, India
<i>MM</i>	<i>Miscelâneas Manuscritas</i> (BA)
<i>MR</i>	<i>Monções do Reino</i> (HAG)
<i>OBP</i>	<i>Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren</i> (AR)
<i>Res</i>	<i>Reservados</i> (BN)
<i>RI</i>	<i>Regimentos e Instruções</i> (HAG)

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