

THE ATLAS PROJECT: THE SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF MUSLIMS IN SOUTH ASIA

The Atlas Project is a research programme focused on the history and geographical spread of social and intellectual movements in the Muslim world. It provides information about how individuals and ideas moved within and between differently configured Muslim societies, how they interacted with local attitudes and customs, how they responded to changes in economic and political conditions, the scholarly and religious movements they inspired, and their enduring legacy in contemporary times. The Project envisages the Muslim world in five volumes, with each volume focused on a different region. These include: i) The Arabian Peninsula, Southwest Asia, the Nile Valley and the Red Sea; ii) West-Central Asia, Inner Eurasia, Western China; iii) North Africa, the Western Mediterranean, Saharan and West Africa; iv) South Asia; and v) Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The volume on South Asia is nearing completion. This volume would set the template for other regions and would define the method, procedures, and analysis which can be applied to the historical geography of Islam in other major regions. The South Asia volume describes the arrival of Islam in the region through trade and military incursions and the eventual establishment of Muslim polities such as the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. The main focus is on the diffusion of Muslim thought and practice through the villages and towns of the subcontinent. Covering a time span of about eight centuries, the Atlas shows the teaching centres, educational and philosophical trends, the spread of Sufi orders, social and political movements, and the diverse routes for disseminating ideas, beliefs, and knowledge. This entails a detailed presentation, for the whole region, of intellectual genealogies comprehensively mapped for different Sufi orders and for madrasa scholars. The volume draws on a variety of historical sources (such as local histories, biographical dictionaries, chronicles, and other materials) that have been verified, collated, and interpreted. This historical data has been used to create 162 maps, 142 charts, and 109 tables to provide a graphic depiction of Muslim intellectual history in the subcontinent. The maps and charts visualise the interconnected networks of transmission of texts, ideas and practices over the centuries. The accompanying text ties the themes together and explains the key findings that such a representation offers. Together they present the history of the spread of social and intellectual movements across South Asia, and account for disruptions and divisions, as well as connections and continuities, across different regions. The Atlas is under the direction of Dr Farhan Nizami and has been supported in the past by the Leverhulme Trust (UK), the Faisal Islamic Bank, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York. Funding from these bodies has brought the South Asia volume close to completion.

Currently, work on preparing a textual commentary of 200,000 words is underway. Dr Moin Ahmad Nizami is working on identifying the key themes raised by maps and charts and explaining these in the accompanying text. About 40,000 words of this text have been written thus far. Preparation of the endnotes is also underway to ensure that they reflect correctly the changes done on the maps and charts during multiple rounds of revisions. All work on the

graphic elements of the Atlas, such as the maps, charts and tables has been completed and they have been incorporated into the book's layout. The end-matter including Bibliography, and the Atlas Gazetteer which will assist the reader in locating places on maps, has been updated and finalised. The Atlas Project received a grant from the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences to prepare the first volume on South Asia ready for Oxford University Press.