

*The Department of Colonial and Global History of Leiden University and the
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Utrecht University present*

India's Ancient Past in Persian Historiography

A Lecture by Professor Muzaffar Alam
(George V. Bobrinsky Professor at the University of Chicago)



Image: "Shah Jahan on a Terrace, Holding a Pendant Set With His Portrait", Folio from the Shah Jahan Albumrecto: dated 1627–28; verso: ca. 1530–50, painting by [Chitarman](#) ([metmuseum.org](#))

Date

2 nov 2022

15 – 17 pm

Location

Utrecht University

Drift 21, room 0.06

Please register

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In recent years in some modern historical writings a wide variety of Ancient India's rich literary traditions have been identified as diverse genres of historiography. Within these genres have then been located/ listed genealogies, biographies, chronicles, and also the great Sanskrit epics which were translated into Persian in the Mughal era. Some historians have thus reread several texts in order to recover them as histories. My presentation sets out in the same spirit upon a similar line of inquiry, but from a different angle, presenting a survey of premodern Persian chronicles in order to ascertain how Persian historiographers have read, interpreted, and reinterpreted the ancient Indian past. We will notice that while some discard, dismiss, forget, or ignore India's ancient past, some others are explicitly invested in recovering it in order to present an integrated long-durée history of Hindūstān.

Professor Muzaffar Alam is George V. Bobrinsky Professor at the University of Chicago. He has studied Persian since his days at school and has trained at the most prestigious Indian universities for the study of South Asian history including Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh, and Jawahar Lal Nehru University. He has also held visiting positions at institutions in Paris, Leiden, and Madison. After thirty years of service at JNU, he transferred to the University of Chicago in 2001. Besides articles in leading journals, he is the author of several well-known monographs: *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), *The Mughal State 1526-1750* (edited with Sanjay Subrahmanyam) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient* (with Seema Alavi)

(Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), *The Languages of Political Islam in India: c. 1200-1800* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), and *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discovery: 1400-1800* (With Sanjay Subrahmanyam) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).