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Mughal Law and the Making of British India, 1765–1793
Robert Travers
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Empires of Complaints

In this deeply researched and revealing account, Robert Travers offers a new view of the transition from Mughal to British rule in India. By focusing on processes of petitioning and judicial inquiry, Travers argues that the East India Company consolidated its territorial power in the conquered province of Bengal by co-opting and transforming late Mughal, Persianate practices of administering justice to petitioning subjects. Recasting the origins of the pivotal ‘Permanent Settlement’ of the Bengal revenues in 1793, Travers explores the gradual production of a new system of colonial taxation and civil law through the selective adaptation and reworking of Mughal norms and precedents. Drawing on English and Persian sources, *Empires of Complaints* reimagines the origins of British India by foregrounding the late Mughal context for colonial state-formation, and the ways that British rulers reinterpreted and reconstituted Persianate forms of statecraft to suit their new empire.

Robert Travers is Associate Professor of History at Cornell University.

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Dedicated to the memory of Professor Sir Christopher
Alan Bayly (1945–2015)

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After finishing my previous book, a study of British political thought in India based on English language sources, I felt that I needed to learn to read Persian in order better to understand the day-to-day workings of the Company government in eighteenth-century Bengal. Most of the Persian sources used in this book were translated into English in the eighteenth century, but I have tried to go back to the original texts to see how Persian political categories were being rendered into English. As my Persian improved, I found I was better able to understand the Persianate elements in the Company's English records, which included numerous Persian terms as well as translations from Persian and Bengali documents. But as a latecomer to Persian, lacking the skills and knowledge of a properly trained Persianist, I have relied heavily on the advice and expertise of other scholars. I was fortunate to receive my initial instruction in Persian language from Wheeler Thackston at Harvard and later from Iago Gocheleishvili at Cornell, brilliant teachers both. I am also grateful to Professor Thackston for sharing with me a draft of his new translation of the great Persian history, Ghulam Husain Khan Tabataba'i's *Siyar-ul-muta'akhhirin*, which is being published by Primus Books. This translation will be a tremendous resource for future historians of eighteenth-century India. My faltering efforts at Persian were hugely assisted by reading Persian texts with graduate students at Cornell. Rishad Choudhury, Andrew Amstutz, Osama Siddiqui, Kelsey Utne, and Du Fei generously shared their knowledge of Persian and other South Asian languages in our regular informal reading groups; their own research and ideas have also been a constant source of intellectual rejuvenation and provocation. Nicholas Abbott gave invaluable assistance in my reading of specific Persian texts and offered insightful comments on draft chapters. Muzaffar Alam, Mana Kia, and Rajeev Kinra were also extremely generous in reading drafts of chapters and giving their expert advice and encouragement. The late Kumkum Chatterjee's pioneering work on Persianate political culture in Bengal has been an important inspiration for my own work. For readers of Persian, I have included transliterations of keywords and phrases from Persian texts in my accounts of them. All mistakes in interpreting Persian texts and in any other matters are my own.

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Note on Transliteration and Names

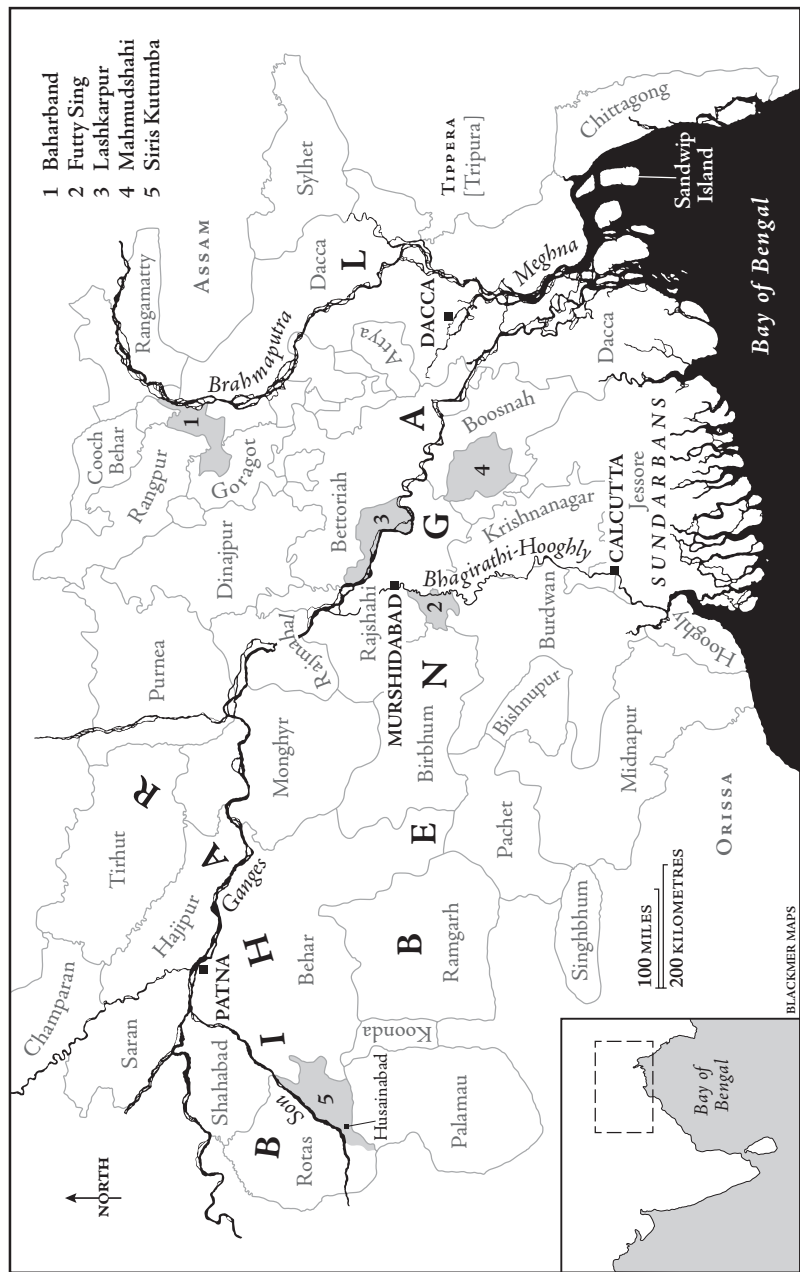
For the transliteration of Persian words, I have tried to follow the usage in Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1892). I have not used diacritic marks except for *hamza* (') and 'ayn (°), and I have used *-ul-* rather than Steingass's *u'l-* for the Arabic article. Translations, when not otherwise indicated, are my own.

It is difficult to be consistent in the English rendering of names of people and places given the range of usage in contemporary sources and among later historians. For better-known figures, for example, Muhammad Reza Khan, I have tried to follow a commonly used English transcription. For less well-known people, I have sometimes used the transcription given in contemporary English records, using quotation marks in the first usage of the name to indicate this. For place names, I have generally used colonial-era English forms, for example, Calcutta rather than Kolkata and Dacca rather than Dhaka.

Abbreviations

Add. MSS	Additional manuscripts
BBRP	Bengal Board of Revenue Proceedings
BCJP	Bengal Criminal and Judicial Proceedings
BJP	Bengal Judicial Proceedings
BL	British Library, London
BRCP	Board of Revenue Central Provinces Proceedings
BRJP	Bengal Revenue and Judicial Proceedings
BRP	Bengal Revenue Proceedings
BSP	Bengal Secret Proceedings
IOR	India Office Records
IOPP	India Office Private Papers
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004, Online edition)
PCCRM	Proceedings of the Controlling Committee of Revenue at Murshidabad
PCRC	Provincial Council of Revenue at Calcutta Proceedings
PCRP	Provincial Council of Revenue at Patna Proceedings
PRP	Preparer of Reports Proceedings
SDA	Bengal Sudder Dewannny Adawlut Proceedings
SKR	Superintendent of Khalsa Records Proceedings
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives (Historical Division)

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