

SOAS South Asian Texts

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## HALI'S MUSADDAS

THE FLOW AND EBB OF ISLAM

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and  
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SOAS South Asian Texts

During the period of British colonial rule in India, members of the education services and others felt it to be a natural part of their duties to edit important works of South Asian literature, so as to make them more accessible to English-speaking readers. The initiative represented by these nineteenth century editions, which are now difficult to obtain, has sadly long since been allowed to lapse.

The present series of SOAS South Asian Texts represents an attempt to revive this tradition in such a way as to meet the rather different requirements and expectations of students of South Asian literature today. The series is designed for those who have a basic reading knowledge of the language, but require the assistance of explanatory material in English in approaching original literary texts.

All volumes in the series accordingly begin with an editorial introduction in English, followed by the text itself, which is accompanied by explanatory notes and a glossary. It has not been thought necessary to provide translations of modern prose, but older verse texts are accompanied by full English translations. Though these renderings are primarily designed to assist understanding of the original and themselves make no claim to any literary merit, it is hoped that they and the editorial introductions may serve to introduce some of the classics of South Asian literature to those unable to read them in their original language.

Christopher Shackle  
Rupert Snell

*Series Editors*

## Preface

The *Musaddas* is the poetic masterpiece of Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914), the greatest Urdu poet of the generation between Ghalib (1797-1869) and Iqbal (1879-1938). Inspired by the reformist ideals of Hali's mentor Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) and taking as its grand theme 'The Flow and Ebb of Islam', the *Musaddas* was the most ambitious and original long Urdu poem to be composed in the half-century following the traumatic suppression of the uprising of 1857. First published in 1879, the poem's powerfully articulated and influential vision immediately excited widespread enthusiasm of a previously unparalleled kind, and has subsequently ensured its recognition as one of the major achievements of the Urdu literature of the British period.

While sometimes receiving passing mention in more general accounts of the period, Hali's *Musaddas* has, however, hitherto hardly received the attention which it deserves from scholars of Indian literature and history. It is also a text which deserves a more prominent place than it is at present accorded in comparative studies of the literature of Islamic reform during the period of colonial rule. Our purpose in preparing this edition has accordingly been both to assist readers wishing to study the poem in the original through the medium of English, and to bring this highly significant work before an audience extending beyond those able to read it in Urdu.

Our edition follows the usual arrangement of the SOAS South Asian Texts series, being divided into three principal units: introduction, text and translation, glossary and index.

The first part of the introduction consists of a short discussion of Hali's life and works. Given the existence of a number of other biographical and critical treatments of the poet, the aim here is more to highlight issues and themes relevant to the analysis and content of the *Musaddas*. The second part describes the differences between the original *Musaddas* of 1879 and the revised Second Edition of 1886, which has subsequently become the standard text. An analysis of the poetic form and highly innovative style of the *Musaddas* is then followed by illustrations of some of the many imitations which it inspired. The third part of the introduction contains a wider exploration of the significance and the ambiguities of the poem. This study particularly underlines the relevance of the *Musaddas* to many of the issues currently engaging the attention of historians of nineteenth century colonial India. The introduction is followed by a full bibliography of all works cited therein.

As explained in detail on p. 12 below, the Urdu text of the *Musaddas* is reproduced with a facing English prose translation which aims only to be a reasonably reliable guide to the meaning of the original. Hali's prose Introductions to the First and Second Editions are followed by the text of the 294 stanzas of the Second Edition of the poem, accompanied by translations of all Hali's original footnotes. These notes not only serve as guides to references

in the poem, but also cast light upon the sources and inspiration of the *Musaddas*. Asterisks in the translation indicate passages modified in the Second Edition, and refer the reader to the following appendix on pp. 208-216 which lists all these revisions with a brief commentary.

It should be noted that we have deliberately chosen to omit the extended verse Supplement of 162 stanzas which Hali added to his Second Edition. It would have added quite unprofitably to the size and expense of this edition to have reproduced, translated and commented upon this Supplement, which has always been rightly regarded as far inferior in quality to the original. An idea of its contents and character may be gained from the summary and illustrative examples provided in section 2:3 of our introduction on pp. 19-25.

The glossary lists all but the commonest words used in the poem, both to assist readers working through the Urdu text and to convey a sense of the text's poetic lexicon. We have, however, excluded from the glossary the very different vocabulary of the prose Introductions. Finally, an index of proper names refers to the maps at the beginning of the book, to our introduction, and to all occurrences of such names—also of quotations from scripture and of Hadith—in Hali's Introductions, in the *Musaddas* itself, and in Hali's notes.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Taj Company Limited, Lahore, for permission to reproduce the Urdu text of their edition of the *Musaddas*. We also wish to record our thanks to Dr S. Aiyar for comments on parts of the introduction, to Dr Stefan Sperl for kindly vetting the transliterations of Arabic quotations, and to Dr Rupert Snell for picking up many imperfections as our first reader. For those which remain, the responsibility is our own.

London  
March 1996

Christopher Shackleton  
Javed Majeed

### Conventions and Transliteration

Bracketed numbers preceded by M (e.g. M105) indicate references to stanzas of the *Musaddas*. Other bracketed references are to works listed in the bibliography following the introduction, normally by author, year of publication and page number. The system of references used in the final index of proper names is explained in the prefatory note thereto on p. 254.

All dates are to be understood as AD, unless marked as BC, or as AH for Hijri years. Personal and geographical names are written in their most familiar standard form, with diacritics marked only in the index of proper names, also in the bibliographies for authors of Urdu and other non-English titles. Commonly understood words like 'Quran' and 'Hadith' are similarly spelt without diacritics. English translations of Quranic verses follow the version of Yusuf Ali 1938, while the Authorized version is used for Biblical quotations.

In keeping with the character of the *Musaddas*, the system of diacritics used in this book to transliterate Urdu and Arabic follows the conventions favoured by Islamicists, rather than the South Asianist systems employed in other volumes in the SOAS South Asian Texts series. The vowels are written:

a ā i ī u ū e (izafat -e) ai o (copula -o) au

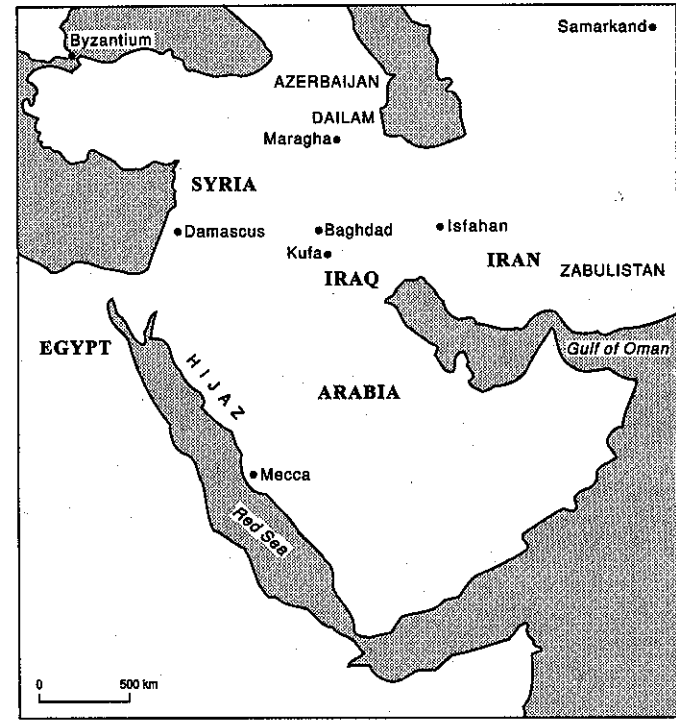
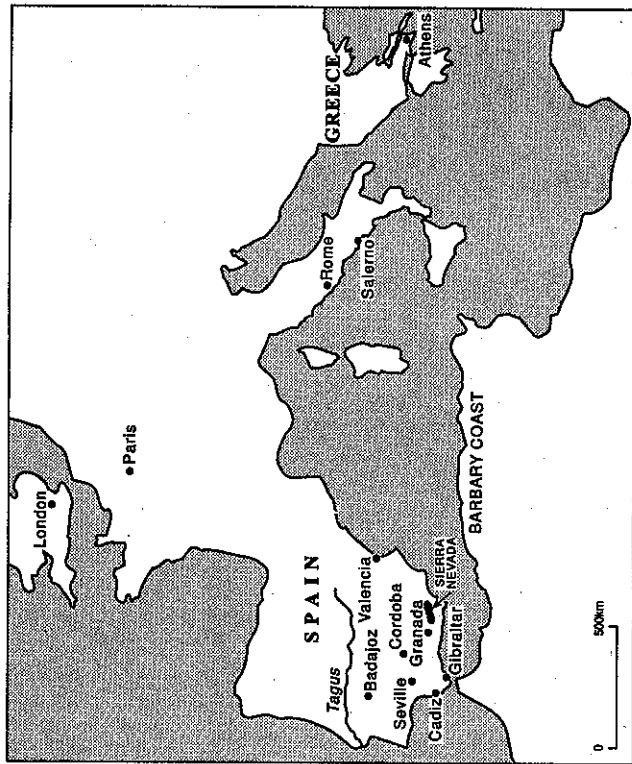
The following diacritics are used to distinguish the consonants of the Urdu alphabet:

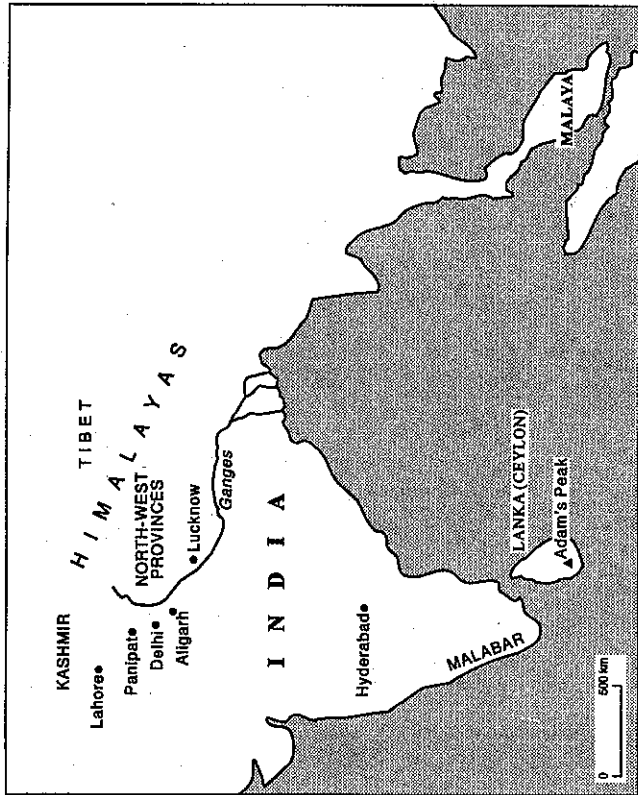
b t ṭ s (Arabic th) j ch h kh (Arabic kh) d ḍ z (Arabic dh)

r ṛ z zh s sh ṣ ẓ (Arabic d) t z ' gh (Arabic gh) f q

k g l m n (nasalization ñ) v (w for Arabic and after kh) h ' y

Final 'silent h' is omitted in all instances, including the common monosyllables here written as *pai*, *ki*, *na*, *vo*, *ye*. The Arabic definite article is written phonetically in names.





Map C. India

## INTRODUCTION