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Malik Khushnud Khan, Habshi Poet in 17TH Century

Deccan Difference in a Plural Society

Taking the specific case of the Dakhni poet Malik Khushnud Khan, a member of the Habshi community of African origin, perceiving his “own” people from within a Persianate literary tradition, I study the literary representation of the other in the plural society of the late medieval Deccan . Khushnud Khan a Habshi slave, was born in Golconda and became the court poet of Adil Shah of Bijapur . Khushnud can be credited with participating in the formation of the Dakhni literary system in the plural society of the Deccan in the 16th and 17th centuries : i attempt to unravel the “historical” from the “literary” perception by contextualising an inherited repertoire of signification as a case of literary reception .

The locality of Habshiguda in Hyderabad is testimony to the presence of Ethiopians or Abyssinians, known in Arabic as al – Abash in the Deccan

The medieval Deccan was a milit

Over the course of many centuries Ethiopians would appear repeatedly in the historical record. Some were quite notable: in the seventh century, Bilal ibn Rabah, the son of an enslaved Abyssinian woman and Islam's first muezzin (the person who calls Muslims to prayer); in the 14th century, Bava Gor, a merchant in the agate trade and a highly venerated Sufi pir (Muslim spiritual master); and in the early 17th century, Malik Ambar, a Muslim general in India's Deccan, under whose command were nearly 8,000 soldiers, including several thousand fellow Habshi. In 1530, during the Portuguese occupation, Sayf al – Mulk Miftah, the governor of Daman on the coast of Ahmednagar in western India, was described as an Ethiopian who commanded a force of 4,000 Habshi soldiers.