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**Domesticating the Gods and Goddesses? Early Modern Muslim Strategies for
Rendering the Hindu “*Devas*” in Persian Literature**

During the height of the Mughal Empire in early modern South Asia (16th-17th century C.E.), Muslim nobles facilitated the translation of a large body of Sanskrit literature into the Persian language, including such texts as the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, numerous *Purāṇas*, and the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, among several others. Among the myriad challenges faced by these Muslim translators in seeking to translate Sanskrit narratives into a Persian idiom was the rendering of the Indic term *deva* (“deity”). Given the seeming polytheism posed by the idea of the *devas* – and the Islamic tradition’s contrasting emphasis upon the idea of God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*) – Muslim authors were left without any obvious correlate term to draw on from within the realm of Islamicate Persian literature.

In this paper, I consider a number of strategies employed by Muslim translators to render “*deva*” into literary Islamicate Persian. With particular reference to Niẓām al-Dīn Pānīpatī’s 1597 translation of the *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* – the *Jūg Bāsisht* – I analyze a number of textual contexts in which *deva* is rendered as a “Divine name” (*ism*), an “angel” (*malak*), or even a “perfect human” (*insān-i kāmil*). Building off of Carl Ernst, Tony Stewart, and Roderic Vassie’s analyses of the “inaccuracy” that characterizes these translations, I aim to reconstruct the thought-processes that underlay the translators’ varied, and often surprising, terminological choices.