1.1 In his Akbarnāma, Abūl Faḍl states that Akbar’s horoscope was cast by ‘the foremost of Indian astrologers, the Jotik Rāi, who was one of the servants of the royal household.’ Akbar’s son and successor Jahāngīr also frequently mentions Jotik Rāi in his Memoirs. According to H.Blochmann, Jotik Rāi was not the name of an individual but the title of ‘the (Hindu) Court Astrologer.’ Was this just an honorary title or did the Jotik Rāi have any specific functions at the Mughal court? While admitting that ‘Jotik Rāi is a title given to an astrologer,’ Shireen Moosvi asserts that ‘Blochmann’s suggestion that Jotik Rāi means a Hindu’ Court Astrologer’ is not warranted.  

1.2 An examination, however, of all passages relating to the Jotik Rāi in the Akbarnāma and in Jahāngīr’s Memoirs does show that the Jotik Rāi had definite functions at the court and was in regular attendance there. The former sources narrate that when Akbar was born Humāyūn ordered Maulānā Când to determine the precise time of birth and prepare the horoscope. After ascending the throne, Akbar got some more horoscopes of his birth prepared, among others, by Fathullāh Shirāzī and by Jotik Rāi. Later on, Akbar also got the horoscopes of his sons Salīm (the future Jahāngīr), Murād and Dānyal according to both Muslim

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4 Akbarnāma, I, p. 69.
and Hindu systems of horoscopy. Jotik Rāi also advised Akbar about the auspicious moments (muhūrtas) for performing various tasks. The Akbarnāma relates that once Akbar consulted the Jotik Rāi about the auspicious moment for entering the capital and, when told that after three days hence such a moment would appear, waited for these three days.  

1.3 Thus it is evident that Akbar appointed, in addition to Muslims, also Hindus as Court Astrologers and gave the latter the title Jotik Rāi (from Sanskrit Jyotisārāja through Brajabhāṣā Jotik Rāi). That this is not a ceremonial title given to the best astrologer of the realm but that the Jotik Rāi had court functions becomes clear from Abūl Faḍl’s statement that the Jotik Rāi “was one of the servants of the royal household,” cited at the beginning of this article, and also from the fact that the two chronicles refer to him always as Jotik Rāi and not with his personal name.

The functions of the Jotik Rāi were to prepare the horoscopes of the emperor and his offspring and to determine the auspicious moments for various undertakings. As we shall see below, Jahāngīr’s Jotik Rāi made prognostications on the basis of the monarch’s horoscope and was consulted about the recovery of lost objects as well.

1.4 The importance of the institution of Jotik Rāi can be gauged from the prominence shown to him in two miniature paintings depicting the birth of Salīm, the future Jahāngīr. These paintings illustrate two different manuscript copies of the Akbarnāma and were painted in Jahāngīr’s atelier. The first painting, said to be by Bishandas, is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It has various scenes connected with the birth of the royal heir. In the lower register, four astrologers are seated on a precious carpet just outside the harem. A lady has just brought the glad tidings of the birth of the emperor’s heir and the four astrologers set out to determine the time of birth by means of a water clock, measure the sun’s altitude with a ring dial and cast the horoscope. Of the four, those at the extreme left and right are Muslims. The one of the right is holding a sheet of paper on which there is some writing in Persian script. The one on the left is measuring the altitude of the sun with a ring dial. The two in the middle are Hindus. The younger person on the right is holding a sheet of paper with Devanāgari writing in his left hand and is drawing the horoscope with his right hand. The elderly

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6 Ibid, III, p. 54.
Hindu astrologer at the left is overseeing all the activity. He is seated on a somewhat higher seat and has gold lace in his turban. It is to him that the lady from the harem is conveying the news of the prince’s birth. Therefore, he should be the Jotik Rāi.

1.5 The second painting, composed by Kesu the Elder and painted by Chitra, is from the manuscript of Akbarnāma at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. It shows a team of astrologers carrying the news of the birth of a son to Akbar. While the other members are standing at a respectful distance, the chief of the delegation is ascending the step to approach the seated king. He is dressed like a Hindu in a transparent white jama. In his left hand he is holding a rolled sheet of papers on which Devanāgari letters can be seen. Obviously this is the Jotik Rāi submitting the infant prince’s horoscope to Akbar.

2.1 But who was the person who held the title or office of Jotik Rāi? Neither the Persian chronicles nor the paintings reveal the identity. However, we know of various Hindu Jyotishis who were associated with Akbar’s court. The most prominent among these was Nilakanṭha, son of Ananta and a resident of Kāšī. It is quite likely that it was he who held the title and office of Jotik Rāi under Akbar.

2.2 Nilakanṭha was a protege of Akbar’s minister Ṭoḍarāmal who sponsored the compilation an encyclopaedic compendium called Toḍarānanda under the supervision of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa at Kāśī. For this encyclopaedia, Nilakanṭha composed the Jyautiṣa-saukhya and some other sections between 1572 and 1582. But the most famous of his writings is the Tājikanlakanāthī on Islamic astrology which he completed in 1587. In 1662, his son Govinda wrote a commentary on

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4 Cf. Geeti Sen, Paintings from the Akbar Nama: A Visual Chronicle of Mughal India, Calcutta 1984, Pls. 3, 58; describing this painting, Sen observes ‘The Hindu, suitably attired in transparent jama, may be the astrologer Chand’ (p. 133). Maulānā or Mullā Cānd was a famous Muslim astronomer and astrologer, whom Abū’l Fadl describes in glowing terms; cf. Akbarnāma, I, p. 69; S.R. Sarma, op. cit., p. 236.

8 In this instance, Ṭoḍarāmal appears to be emulating the example of some famous masters of yore; Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara, minister of Govindacandra of Kannauj who produced the Kṛtyākālapatnā in the first half of the twelfth century; Hemādri, prime minister of the Yādava kings of Devagiri who authored the voluminous Caturvargacintāmāni in the second half of the thirteenth century and so on. Regarding such ministerial compendia, see A. Berriedale Keith, A History of Sanskrit Literature, London 1956, pp. 448-49.


it, calling it *Rasāla* (from the Arabic *risālah*, tract). Govinda also wrote a commentary called *Pāyāsadhāra* (1603) on the *Muhārtacintāmaṇi* (1600) of his paternal uncle Rāma. Introducing his lineage at the beginning of this commentary, Govinda states that his father Nilakanṭha was an incomparable ornament at Akbar’s Court:

\[
\text{sīmā mūmāṇsakānāṁ kṛtasukṛtacayaḥ karkaśas tarkaśāstre
} \\
\text{jyotihāstre ca gargaḥ phanipatibhanūtyākṛtau śeṣaṇāgah }
\text{prthivīśakabbharaṇyaḥ spuratadulasaḥbhamāṇdananam }
\text{paṇḍitendrah}
\text{sāksāc chrintilakānṭhah samajani jagatīmaṇḍale nilakanṭhah}
\]

Govinda’s son Mādhava also wrote a commentary called *Śīśubodhini* on his grandfather’s celebrated *Tājikanilakānti*, where he proudly proclaims that his grandfather Nilakanṭha was honoured by Akbar (*Akābbarakṣmesamāṇyaḥ*) and that his father Govinda was highly honoured by Jahāṅgīr (*nṛpativara-Jahāṅgīra-
\text{sāhātimāṇyaḥ}.\)

Govinda had another son called Cintāmāni, who also makes references to his family’s association with the Mughal Court. In his commentary *Sanmatcintāmaṇi* (completed in 1661 during Aurangzeb’s reign) on Raghuṇātha’s *Muhārtamālā*, he mentions his grandfather’s two great works, *Ṭoṭṭarāranaṇa* and *Tājikanilakānti* and proclaims that his father Govinda was the foremost among the mahuṅtikas at the court of Jahāṅgīr (*yaḥ śrī-Jahāṅgīrasabhāsūp dhurya-sauryaś ca mahuṅtikā-
\text{tārakāśu}.\)

Nilakanṭha’s brother, Rāma, also a distinguished astronomer and astrologer, mentions Akbar’s glorious reign in his works. Thus the colophon of his *Rāma-
\text{vinodakarṣaṇa* reads in part: *iḥ ... śrīnad-Akābbarasāhā-paramāmātyadhourya-
\text{śrīmahārājāhāhirājā-sīrīmādāsā-kārte ...* In his *Rāmavinodakośṭhaka* he praises Akbar who ascended the throne in VS 1612 (= AD 1556) and who started his own regnal era.\)

Thus it is obvious that several generations of Nilakanṭha’s family enjoyed patronage at the Mughal court. Of all the contemporary astrologers, Nilakanṭha

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\[12\] *Muhārtacintāmaṇi with the commentary Pāyāsadhāra* of Govinda, Bombay 1946, pp.1-2 (verse 8 at the beginning of the commentary).

\[13\] CESS, A-4, pp. 415-17.


seems to be the most influential personage. Therefore it is fairly certain that it is he upon whom Akbar conferred the title Jotik Rāi. Besides Nilakaṇṭha, several other Hindu astrologers also received Akbar’s patronage. Two of these deserve to be mentioned in this context. 17

2.3 At the seize of Asirgarh, Akbar conferred the title jyotirmat-sarasā ‘elegant / charming person among the astronomers’ on one Nṛṣimha. It is not known what his accomplishments in Jyotiṣa were. But his son Raghuṇātha Kavikaṇṭhīrava was an astrologer and composed the Muhūrtamālā at Kāśi in 1600 during the reign of Aurangzeb. In this work, he mentions that his father Nṛṣimha received the title of jyotirmat-sarasā from Akbar. 18

2.4 There is one more astronomer/astrologer who is associated both with Akbar and Jahāngir, though he does not seem to have received any special title. It is Kṛṣṇa Daivasā, son of Ballāla. Kṛṣṇa wrote an excellent commentary on Bhāskara’s Bijagratā. 19 In Akbar’s Bureau of Translation, where several representative Sanskrit works were translated into Persian and Persian works into Sanskrit, Ulūgh Beg’s Astronomical Tables were rendered into Sanskrit by the joint efforts of Muslim and Hindu scholars. The Muslims in the team were Fathullah Shirāzī and Abū’l Faḍl. The Hindus included Kṛṣṇa. 20 Kṛṣṇa also wrote a commentary on Śṛiṅati’s Jātakapaddhati, a manual on preparing horoscopes. 21 In this commentary, he included the horoscope of Khān-i-Khānān Abdul Rahīm Khān who was an influential courtier of Akbar, at one time tutor of Sallīm, and himself a famous man of letters. 22

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17 Akbar received advice on astronomical matters also from Jaina monks like Bhānuscandra; cf. Akbarnāma, III, p. 94; Pushpa Prasad, Akbar and Jains, In: Ifran Habib (ed), Akbar and his India, Delhi 1997, pp. 96-108, esp. p.102.

18 At the conclusion of his work, he states of his father:

   "xākakakābhārasavabhāusatātakādi dīllinimatātīvārdj-
   jyotijīratāsam dīpa padavim ēseriṣūgrahe II"


19 Bijagratā of Bhāskara with the commentary Navāṅkura of Kṛṣṇa Daivasā, ed. V.G. Apte, Poona 1930.

20 Cf. M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman, Fathullah Shirazi, New Delhi 1968, p. 24: ‘A part of the Zij-i Jadid-i Mirza (Astronomical tables of Ulugh Beg) had been translated under his guidance [i.e., Fathullah Shirazi],’ by Kishan Jotishi, Ganga Dhar, Mahesh Mahanand and Abul Fazl.’ This information stems from the Ā’īn-i-Akbarī, but Blochmann’s translation (I, p. 110) is hopelessly garbled.


22 Abdul Rahim himself wrote a small tract on Tājika astrology in Sanskrit under the title Khetagkautuka, in which he sprinkles Arabic/Persian technical terms. There are several editions of this work. Cf. CESS, A-2, pp. 79-80.
Krśṇa’s younger brother Raṅganātha wrote a commentary called Gāḍhārtha-prakāśaka on the Sātyasiddhānta. At the conclusion of this commentary, he introduces his lineage and, in this connection, describes his elder brother Krśṇa as Jāhāṅgīrāsravabhāumasya sarvādhiṣṭapatṛīṣṭhītah.  

Raṅganātha’s son Munīśvara was also active as commentator. In his commentary on the Siddhāntaśiromani of Bhāskarācārya, Munīśvara says that his uncle Krśṇa was a favourite of Jāhāṅgīr (ārī-Jāhāṅgīra-bhūmitilakasyāyānana-visvāsabhāḥ).  

3.1 As mentioned before Jāhāṅgīr makes in his Memoirs frequent references to the Jotik Rāi whose forecasts came true and whose judgement (āhkām) proved to be correct. Once, on the basis of Jāhāṅgīr’s horoscope, Jotik Rāi foretold the impending demise of one of his wives called Pādshāh Bānū Begum, and this actually happened within two months. Another time he predicted that the next three or four months were not favourable to Jāhāṅgīr’s four-year old grandson Shāh Shujā and that he might fall down from a high place but he would not be harmed. “As his prognostications had repeatedly proved correct,” Jāhāṅgīr continuously kept the child in sight. Even so, in an unguarded moment the child fell down from a 10 gaz high window but was unharmed. Yet another time when a valuable pearl was lost in the harem, Jotik Rāi assured that it would be found in two or three days, and so it happened.  

More important were the following forecasts. Shāh Shujā was very ill and everybody had given up hope. All astrologers were unanimous that he would not live very long. But Jotik Rāi predicted his recovery because Jāhāṅgīr’s horoscope did not foresee any event in that particular year which would cause distress to the monarch. When this prediction proved correct, Jāhāṅgīr ordered that the Jotik Rāi be weighed against silver coin and the money be given to him as reward. The weight came to 6,500 rupees.  

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23 The Sātya Siddhānta, or an Ancient System of Hindu Astronomy with the Exposition of Raṅganātha, the Gāḍhārtha- Prakāśaka, ed. Fitzedward Hall, Calcutta 1859; reprint, Amsterdam 1974, p. 387.
26 The Tūrāk-i-Jahāṅgīr, II, p.152.
self was ill, Jotik Rāi predicted his quick recovery and restoration to health. After the recovery, Jahāṅgīr got the Jotik Rāi weighed against gold muhars and silver rupees and presented him with the resulting 500 muhars and 7000 rupees.29

3.2 Fortunately, it is possible to identify Jahāṅgīr’s Jotik Rāi. The astrologer who made true forecasts for Jahāṅgīr and was weighed against gold and silver coin by the grateful monarch was Keśava, son of Kamhara Śrīman of Kālīṅjara. Keśava’s son Iśavaradāsa was also an astrologer and composed the Muhārata-ratna in 1663 during Aurangzeb’s reign. In this work, Iśvaradāsa states that his father Keśava had the title Jyotiśarāya, that he was the foremost among the astrologers who were experts in answering questions concerning the recovery of lost objects (praṇavidāṁ varāḥ), and that Jahāṅgīr bestowed on him great wealth through tūla-dāna and other kinds of gifts, which the recipient donated to other brahmīns:

so 'yam 'jyotiśarāya'khyāḥ Jyahāṅgīrāvanipateḥ/
svagūḍhpraṇāsanaṁvādair lebe praṇāvidāṁ varāḥ/
tulāramukhadāneṣu yaṣ tv asamkhyavasūṁ vai /
viṃprastā kṛtavān kāle nārāyaṇaparāyanah ||30

3.3 There is yet another person who was given the title Jotik Rāi by Jahāṅgīr, perhaps not simultaneously with the above-mentioned Keśava but either before or after him. This is Paramānanda, son of Vāṣudeva and resident of Vāripastha (modern Panipat), who composed a Karana with the epoch 1614 which he named as Jahāṅgīr irinodaratnākara. At the beginning of this work Paramānanda states that he composed it at the instance of I’libār Khān, to please Jahāṅgīr, from whom he received the title of Jyotiśarāya.31

4.1 Shah Jahan conferred the title of Vedāṅgarāya on one Śrīmālajit or Śrīmālajit. In his Girīharanānda, this Śrīmālajit states that he received the title Vedāṅgarāya from the Lord of Dilli (yam dillīnāyako ’yam vyaracata vibudhoḥ-
dāna vedāṅgarāyaṁ ''). Śrīmālajit’s son Nandikeśvara also states, in his Gaṇaka-
maṇḍana, that his father was given this title.32 Since Jyotiśa is a vedāṅga, the

31 CESS, A-4, p. 186; A-5, p. 211.
32 Ibid, A-4, pp. 421-22, the last verse, no. 74.
33 Ibid, A-3, p. 131:

  utpura mālajisamjheevedavedāṅgopāraṁ/yena vedāṅgarāyaṁ prāptam dillīnāyakat padam (11)
expression *Vedāṅgārāya* means nearly the same as Jotik Rāi. But it is not known whether this Vedāṅgārāya exercised the same functions as the Jotik Rāi did in the previous regimes. Vedāṅgārāya’s accomplishment, however, lay in another direction. In 1643 he composed at Argalāpura (modern Agra) a Sanskrit manual to teach Persian under the title *Samskṛta-Pārasika-Padaprakāśa*. Unlike similar manuals which had been composed before his time for teaching Persian, Vedāṅgārāya’s highly interesting work deals with the vocabulary related to Islamic astronomy and astrology. It also teaches how to convert dates in Hijrī era into dates of Saka era and vice versa.33

4.2 Several astrologers mention that they completed their works during Aurangzeb’s reign. For example, Raghunātha Kavikaṇṭhārava states that he completed his *Muhūrtamālā* in 1660 at Kashi, when Aurangzeb was ruling the earth, after having defeated Dārā Shāh, Shujā Shāh and Murād Shāh.34 Cintāmanī, son of Govinda, grandson of Niļakaṇṭha, completed his commentary *Sammaticintāmani* on the afore-mentioned work in 1661, as noted earlier. Iśvaradāsa, we have seen above, completed his *Muhūtaratana* in 1663, also during the reign of Aurangzeb.

4.3 Though Aurangzeb himself does not seem to have conferred the title Jotik Rāi on any astrologer, a subordinate ruler did so, presumably with the emperor’s consent. Anūpa Sīnha, Mahārājā of Bikaner from 1674 to 1698, conferred the title *Jyotiṣīrāja* on Vrasimhā (b. 1613), who wrote a number of works, viz, *Khetaplaya* (1625), *Canatkārasidhi* (1627), *Āryasiddhāntatuyakarana* (1633) and *Anūpamahodadhi* (1673). In the colophon to the last mentioned work, he says iti ... śrīmanmahārājānūpāpasimhāraye satkṛte śrīmabhauḥiṣṭirāja Vrasimhā- gaṇakanḥanīte.35

36 CESS, A-5, 375-76:

jñāṇāta Dārādaśāh Murādaδāśāh ca /
avaraṇgyevasāhe šāstary avanīm mamāyaṁ udyogah iti

A team of astrologers preparing the horoscope of Prince Salīm. Jotik Rāi is the third from the right.
Jotik Rāi, accompanied by other astrologers, submitting the horoscope of Prince Salīm to Emperor Akbar.
4.4 This practice was continued under Muhammad Shah also, when the astronomer king Sawai Jai Singh bestowed the title Jyotisarāja on Kevalarāma, as stated by Śyāmasundara Laṭṭū Pāṇḍita in his Mādhavavilāsaśākāya:

\[
jayati jyotisarāyaḥ Kevalarāmābhidhah sūriḥ
śrīmājjaipuranagare pāṇḍitavaryaha sadācāravah II
\]

In our times, nobody deserves the title of Jyotisarāja better than Professor K.V. Sarma whose rich and enduring contributions to the history of Jyotiṣa are well known. This small exercise is a tribute to his profound scholarship and gentle personality. May Śrī-Ananta-Padmanābha grant him long life and good health, so that he continues his researches and providing guidance to the younger generations under the aegis of the Sree Sarada Education Society Research Centre.

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39 Gopal Narain Bahura, Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur, Jaipur, 1976, p. 402. The work was composed in A.D. 1760.