Appendix E

Manrique’s description of the banquet organised by Asaf Khan in Lahore 1628-29 arranged to welcome Shahjahan. Following is the text of the details on the banquet under Chapter LXVI.

Chapter LXVI

In which an account is given of a sumptuous and wonderful Memane or Banquet which Prince Assofo Kan gave to the Great Mogol.

[372/I] Just as I was leaving Laor, garrulous rumour announced that the Emperor was about to visit his father-in-law, Assofo Kan, to congratulate him on his recovery[372/I], a reason why I was delayed two days beyond the time appointed for my departure, awaiting a necessary despatch.

[373/I] I also made use of this opportunity to witness the wonderful magnificent Banquet given by this prince to his Lord and Emperor, I took full advantage of the great privilege granted me of entering the palace, as far as etiquette allowed, and on this occasion even obtained permission to exceed those limits, and, with a companion[3] who was with me, to penetrate up to a gallery which ran above the principal bath-hall, which I have already described sufficiently. A eunuch conducted us there, and warned us not to make a sound, and should we be forced to make any, in being obliged to rid ourselves of unrestrainable and importunate phlegm, we were to go into an adjoining room, which he pointed out to us.4 He also told us to leave that place until he returned to fetch us, and so left.

The banquet took place in the chief bath-hall.5 Besides its ornamentation, the hall was also adorned on this occasion with rich carpets of silken, sliver, and

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2 This is one of the most interesting of the actual experiences which Manrique details.

3 No doubt this was Father Crasto, with whom he was staying.

4 As pardanashin (secluded) ladies were to be present their looking on would have given serious offence.

5 The private apartments of the emperor and his nobles were styled the ghusal-khana, literally the room for ablutions. The name was no doubt due to the presence of an arrangement for the ablution similar to that described lower down. Manucci says, “the ghusal-khana, the place were audience is given and justice dispenced”; and again: “the ghusal-khana, which is the secret place where the audience is given and council sits” (Storia do Mogor, ii. 361, 400). See also Bernier, p. 265; Mundy, ii. 201. Blochmann quotes the Bahar-i-Ajam, a Persian dictionary, that the practice arose with the Emperor Sher Shah, whose hair took so long to dry after his bath that to save time he received his bath-room (J. A. S. B. xliv. 297).
golden embroidery, which covered the floor so as to form tables on the ground, as is the national custom, and also served in place of chairs and couches to those who graced them as invited guests. But, tough they thus reject raised tables as unnecessary they still approve the use of magnificent rich vessels.  

To bear these there were in the four corners in the room many stands, each of five tears, all handsome covered with Persian mileques of gold and silver. These thus acting as side boards or buffets, were covered with numerous vessels of gold, which were well worth looking at; some were to be seen inlaid with precious stones, the others in place of this had the finest and most brilliant enamel work, which, while it varied as to material, harmonised in colours.

This superb display was accompanied by diverse large perfume-holders and braziers of silver, of wonderful workmanship, ranged all round the hall, in which the sweetest perfumes were burnt, composed of various confections of ambergris, eagle-wood, and civet mingled with other odoriferous substances. These, thus blended, were gratifying without offending and even soothed the olfactory organs. At the entrance to this lovely hall stood a Hydra with seven spouts. It was of silver, of exquisite workmanship and moderate height, ornamented with greenish scales. It projected out of its renascent heads thin streams of scented water which fell into a large trough of the same material, keeping it always half filled. For, though it discharged part of what it received at one side, the level from the other side was always maintained for washing the feet, which is an essential point of ceremonial courtesy according to Mogol custom.

In the centre of this, for the time being, gilded and decorated treasure-house a desterchana was laid, that is, a table-cloth, as we should say,

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6 The text has apruevan para el uso de las magestosas y ricas baxillas. The modern meaning of bajillo or bajilla is a stand for wine vessels, but in Manrique’s time it was used for a service of plate. Minsheu, in his Sp. Dict. (1623), has “Baxilla, a garnish of plate”, that is, a set of vessels for use on the table. The Oxf. Dict. has s. v. Garnish, “1587…… is sold usuallie by the garnish, which doeth containe twelve platters, twelve dishes, twelve soucers”. See Yule, Marea, i. 384, n. 3 on the use of drinking vessels by Mughals (Mongols).

7 See chap III, n. 2.

8 See chaps, VI, n. 30; IX, n. 15; XXI, n. 10. The odoriferous substance obtained from the glands of the civet cat (Viverra civettin). It is brownish fluid contained in this animal’s anal gland; it was worth £2 per oz.

9 The nine headed serpent monster, killed by Hercules, whose head grew again after her cut them off. It would seem that fountain had the form of a snake, as “greenish scales” are mentioned, an unusual pattern in a Muhammadan house, but they may have been fishes heads.

10 Dastar-khwan (Pers.), it was either of cloth, as here, or of leather, sometimes with a cloth over it. In Arabia it was usually of leather, and called the sufrah. It is either square or circular. Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali
made of the finest and whitest muslin, on which, instead of natural sweet-smelling flowers, artificial flowers of gold and silver, interwoven in the cloth, served as ornament.

In the principal place at this table were two large and beautiful cushions and plain gold cloth, and upon these other smaller cushions of silver cloth, also quite plain.

This formed the entire furniture of the imperial table, since napkins, which they do not use, were wanting.

When the time came the Emperor entered, accompanied by a large bevy of gallant, handsome women. These preceded him, dressed in the richest garments, in mileques or cloth of gold and silver ground-work being ornamented with varied designs of coloured silk: on their necks they wore golden chains and rich strings of pearls, while their heads were adorned with silver garlands. Following this lovely bevy of women came the Emperor between his mother-in-law and his daughter, leading the former on his right and the latter on his left.

Just behind him came the heir-apparent, Prince Sultan Dara Sucur, with his grandfather, Assofo Khan, on his right.

As soon as whole company had reached the principal entrance of this garnished dining-hall they began to play music in neighbouring rooms, and those opposite them, on every kind of instrument. When the emperor had taken

gives a description of dinner-party arrangements not dissimilar to these (Observations, p. 174). Terry notes that when he dined with Asaf Khan they had table-cloths of “Stitch leather... and these were covered again with pure white and fine calico clothes” (Voyages, p. 195). See Chardin, Voyages p. 89.

11 It appears that parda was not maintained among such near relatives. In many Indian Musulman families, however, it is curiously strict nowadays, and no such meeting as is here described would be possible.

12 His mother-in-law was the wife of Asaf Khan and the mother of the Emperor’s late wife, Mumtaz Mahal Arjumand Bano Begam, “The lady of the Taj”. She was a daughter of Mirza Ghiyas-ud-din Asaf Khan. The daughter present was Jahanara Begam, usually called the “Begam Sahiba”, who was Shah Jahan’s favourite. She was a daughter of Mumtaz Mahal and hence Asaf Khan’s grand-daughter (Ain, i. 369, 511).

13 Prince Dara Shikoh was the eldest and favourite son of Shah Jahan. His mother was Mumtaz Mahal, so he was Asaf Khan’s grandson. He was born in 1615. In 1658, while Shah Jahan was ill, he fought Aurangzeb for the throne, at Dharmatpur, a place near Ujjain, now marked by the “Fathabad” (“Victory”) Station on R. M. Railway. He was defeated and captured while flying to Sind, and was imprisoned and murdered, his head being sent by Aurangzeb to the old emperor on a platter. Dara Shikoh was a man of literary tastes and the author of several works (Beale, Dict. Oriental Biog., p. 117). Only one prince is named.
his seat at the table between those two cushions I mentioned, with two venerable matrons at his back, who stood and kept the importunate flies away with rich fans, the father-in-law, mother-in-law, and their family knelt down suddenly before the Emperor, who extended is hand to his mother-in-law, made her rise, and addressing her as “Mother”, placed her on his right. This, however, was so appreciated by her husband and grandchildren that they at once made deep and profound obeisance to the Emperor, to prove how fully the valued that favour. In order to enhance it the Emperor ordered them to sit at his table, which they only did after the third demand. They then took their seats at the end of it, the Princess placing their grandfather in the centre.

As soon as all this ceremonial obeisance and prostration was over, an all had taken their places in the order I have noted, sweet sound of the soft voice were heard singing together chants glorifying the battles and victories His Majesty had won over his foes. While this well-concreted and sweet harmony of voice and instrument was going on, the arrangements for the washing the hands were bought in, as follows.

First of all four lovely girls, relation of Prince Assofo Kan and daughters of great Noblemen, entered. Their white [375/1] and pink complexions and auburn locks\textsuperscript{12a} would hold their own with the whitest skins which Boreas\textsuperscript{13} produces. While they were equal in these points their northern sisters could not but show themselves inferior in regard to gracefulness, gallant bearing, and beauty. For as it is a warm climate which governs these things and balance pose, action, movement, grace, and speech, we may, when it is lacking, well exclaim, as Catullus did of Quincia’s beauty: Nullu in tem pulchro corpore mica salis.\textsuperscript{14} These four models of beauty advanced in such a manner that the Cyprian\textsuperscript{15} goddess herself might well have been envious of their dignity, gallant bearing and

\textsuperscript{12a} Musulman women form the north of India and from Afghanistan are often extraordinarily fair, and red hair, is met with. The text has en lo blanco y purpureo de sua cara y en el rubio de sus cabellos. Rubeo means “red-gold”. Thus in Don Quixote Sancho speaks of the mole on Dulcinea’s face: “un lunar . . . con siete o ocho cabellos rubios como herbas de oro”, that is; a mole – whence sprouted seven or eight red coloured hairs like threads of gold wire” (II. X).

\textsuperscript{13} The north wind, used here simply for “northern climate”.

\textsuperscript{14} “Not one grain of wit in all so fair a body” (Cat. lxxxvi. 4). The usual reading is magno, not pulchro.

\textsuperscript{15} Venus.
sprightliness. They brought, equally divide amongst the four of them, the implements used in this ablution of the hands of that Imperial Majesty.

After the Royal ceremonies, one of them approached him and spread out before him a white satin cloth she carried in her hands; another placed upon it a very rich golden vessel, inlaid with the finest precious stones of great value. These vessels are rather better design than ours. They are hollow in centre, this hollow is being covered by a fine grating, through which the water and saliva passes, without leaving any foul, clotted phlegm on the upper cover in view. As soon as these vessel had been placed before him, another damsel advanced with an ewer of water of the same material and value, and she poured out the water, in which the Emperor washed his hands, receiving from the remaining damsel a towel on which to dry them. As soon as this ablutional ceremony was over these girls retired and twelve more came in, who, though less striking than the first bevy, yet were not unworthy of being able to appear in any company with confidence. These damsels, after presenting the hand washing vessel to the Princes with rather less ceremony than the first company had used towards the Emperor, withdrew. The dishes were then brought in by another entrance, to the deafening sound of instruments as Atables, Bergondas, and Vacas, instruments not unlike our trumpets, but of uncertain and mournful tone.

The dinner was brought in rich golden dishes by eunuchs, richly attired in Industane style, with trousers of different coloured silks and white coats of the finest transparent muslin. These coats served to cover their dark-brown skins, which disseminated the precious sweet-swelling unguents with which, on this festive occasion, they were anointed.

Four of the principal eunuchs placed themselves next His Majesty. They served him only by passing on the dishes brought by other eunuchs to two most lovely damsels who knelt on each side of the Emperor. These damsels in turn placed the dishes before him, similarly handing him drinking water and removing dishes no longer wanted.

16 The lagan or receptacle for dirty water, &c., often most graceful in shape and highly ornamental. See observations, p.175.

17 See Chap. XXXIII, n. 8.

18 The text has cabayas. See Chap. VII, n. 9.

19 In the text aquatic bevida, after the manner of our author when in playful mood.
I was astonished and surprised to see so much polite usage and good order in practice amongst such Barbarians, while I was not less astonished at the abundance and diversity of the dishes and eatables, among which some were in European style, especially certain pastries, cakes, and other sweet confections made by some slaves who had been with the Portuguese at Ugulim. These were so admirably and delicately made that the Emperor was surprised at such novelties, and he asked his father-in-law who made such excellent sweets. When he said they had been made by certain Franguinis (that is, Portuguese) the Emperor said, raising his voice as if in astonishment:

“In truth the Franks would be a great people for their having three most evil characteristics: first, they are Caffars (that is, people without religion); secondly they eat pork; and thirdly, they do not wash that part from which replete Nature expels the superfluities of their corporeal bellies.”

On the conclusion of this idle discourse the dinner ended also, after lasting over four hours, and the tables being cleared, with a million prolix ceremonies, which for the reason I shall not describe, in order to narrate and bring to the curious Reader’s notice another million more important and interesting matters, which form the cause and also the chief object of such visits as the Majesty is accustomed to make to his principal vassals.

Then, as an agreeable and cheering form of desert to this feast, twelve dancing girls now came in, whose lascivious and suggestive dress, immodest behaviour and posturing, were suited to Maumetan sensuality and wickedness. We may pass them over in silence, left to their own depravity as matter unfit for Christian ears.

So, to return the real incentive for this obscene meeting, I say that three beautiful damsels in rich and festive garb entered amongst them, bearing their hands three large costly golden vessels filled with most precious stones, Diamonds, Balazios, Pearls, Rubies, and other magnificent gems; according to popular rumour; these three vessels full were worth over seven hundred thousand rupees.

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20 The emperor’s speech is characteristic. The accusation of eating pork was always to the fore. The Musalman’s horror of pig is extends to his bristles, and strict Muhammadans to this day refuse to use our hair brushes.

21 This is rose red spinel, an inferior kind of ruby. This term is very common in early travellers’ writings. It is corruption, Balakshi, from Badakshi, such stone coming from the famous mines on the upper Oxus of Badakshan. See Hobson – Jobson, s. v. Balass; Yule, Marro, 161, n.2.
Now this would be a most desirable, estimable, and longed-for mouthful to a poor man, but to one of the richest Monarchs in the world, the Lord of thirty seven kingdoms and provinces (of which we shall later on give a very detailed and true account) and possessor of vast treasure of gold, silver, and precious stones, it should be of little value.

But this prince was subject to an all-devouring avarice, another Marcus Crassus, in his greed for accumulating treasure; and he showed it openly, for he paid scant attention to the dancing and acting which they made for him, spending all the time in gazing at these jewels and letting them pass through his hands; I gather in order to count them. For anything may be expected of a wealthy miser (such as he), of whom the lyric Horace tells in his first Satire:

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\text{Congestics undique saccis} \\
\text{Indormis inhius, et tanquam parcere sacris,} \\
\text{Congeris, et pictis tanquam gaudere tabellis}\]

When the feast had reached this stage, our eunuch returned to fetch us, telling us it was time we left, for if we stayed to the end it would be very difficult for us.

On this warning we at once got up and followed our guide, who, in order not to take us through the body of the Imperial guards, took us by subterranean passages until he put us on the road. We rewarded him for his trouble and the care he had taken of us and started for our lodging. It was far off, and we had first to cross many streets and squares to reach it, and that with great difficulty, though we were well satisfied to undergo this in exchange for seeing so much magnificence and things so different from any seen in Europe.

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22 He was triumvir in time of Cinna, who took the side of Marius. He was surnamed “Dives”, money being his ruling passion. He finally came to grief in an expedition he led into Mesopotamia against the forces of the Parthian King Orodes. When his head was sent to Orodes he had melted gold poured into his mouth, exclaiming, “Sate thyself now with that metal of which in life thou wast so greedy”.

23 Horace, Satires, i. l. 70:

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\text{On every side of numerous bags are piled,} \\
\text{Whose hallowed stores must never be defiled} \\
\text{By human hand to use, while your transported gaze} \\
\text{As if, like pictures, they were formed to please.} \\
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Rev. Philip Francis, works of Horace, 1765.

From Sir Edward Maclagan’s notes on this chapter.