

Introduction

Abstract

The following introduction provides an in-depth exploration of Sir William Jones's pioneering contributions to the study of Oriental languages, literature, and mysticism within the context of late eighteenth-century British colonial expansion and intellectual movements. It discusses Jones's efforts in bridging Eastern and Western intellectual traditions, particularly through his work on Persian studies, and examines how his Enlightenment and Romantic ideals influenced his approach to Orientalism. The introduction also evaluates the scholarship on Jones, highlighting the under-researched aspects of his Persian studies and their significant impact on European Romanticism and Orientalism. This multidisciplinary approach used in this work situates Jones as a central figure in the complex interplay between colonialism, intellectual curiosity, and cultural exchange.

Keywords: Sir William Jones, Orientalism, Persian studies, Post Colonial studies, Colonialism, Comparative studies.

The late eighteenth century was a period marked by substantial colonial expansion and intense intellectual activity. The British Empire, through the East India Company, extended its influence in India, leading to intricate interactions between British and Indian cultures. Intellectual currents of the Enlightenment emphasised reason, scientific inquiry, and secularism, while the emerging Romantic movement began to value emotion, individualism, and a fascination with the exotic. It was within this dynamic socio-political and cultural context that Sir William Jones (1746–1794) conducted his pioneering work, bridging Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. Jones is arguably the first Western scholar to engage in comparative studies between Oriental mysticism and Western philosophical schools. This book argues that Jones's seminal inquiries into Persian language, literature, and mysticism were pivotal in shaping European intellectual history and significantly influenced Middle Eastern and South Asian studies. By examining Jones's published works and his personal collection of Persian texts, this book demonstrates how his profound understanding of Oriental culture, combined with his legal expertise, contributed to the development of a syncretic intellectual tradition that bridged Eastern and Western thought. This analysis also considers how Jones's Enlightenment and deistic perspectives influenced his interpretation of Persian mysticism within the specific context of early modern Indian syncretism.

Jones's Early Engagement with Persian Studies

In 1770, before gaining his reputation as an Orientalist, Jones attended the Middle Temple and studied law; he also began to learn Arabic and Persian. His acquisition of the Persian language resulted in the composition of *Histoire de Nader Chah* (1770), a French translation of a Persian biography of Nader Shah (1688–1747), and *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771), the first English grammar of the language. Due to Jones's deep understanding of Oriental culture and his legal experience, in 1781, Edmund Burke (1729–1797) sought his assistance in preparing a bill to protect the Muslims living in the subcontinent against the East India Company.¹ In line with the bill, Jones translated Arabic treatises on Islamic laws of succession, published as *The Mahomedan Law of Succession to the Property of Intestates* (1782). Although *The Mahomedan Law of Succession* was relatively short, it immensely impacted the British legal system operating in India by making the Supreme Court of Judicature independent from untrustworthy local judges.² Due to Jones's knowledge of Oriental culture, Burke also consulted him on other Indo-Persian affairs, such as 'on the government, manners, and sciences of the Persians.'³

Jones's fascination with Persian poets, such as Firdowsī (940–1020), Niẓāmī (1141–1209), Rūmī (1207–1273), Sa'dī (1210–1291), and Ḥāfiẓ (1315–1390), drove him towards Persian mysticism and Sufi metaphysics. His interest in mystical Persian poetry can be observed in his early works such as *A Grammar* (1771) and *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages. To Which are Added Two Essays, I. On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations. II. On the Arts, Commonly Called Imitative* (1772). Due to the success of his Persian Grammar, his vast knowledge of the language – which was the language of the Mughal court of India at the time – and his legal expertise, Jones was appointed as a puisne judge in the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William. On 25th September 1783, Jones arrived in Calcutta, where he centred his professional career on law and focused on defending the rights of the Indians.

In India, Jones met Warren Hastings (1732–1818), the first Governor-General of Bengal (1772–1785). Hastings was familiar with the cultures and languages of the subcontinent;⁴ like Jones, he had great respect for ancient Oriental scripture and believed in the concept of Hindus and Muslims being governed by their own laws. In 1784, Jones and a few other British residents of Calcutta founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal to systematically investigate a wide range of Oriental knowledge. Journals such as *The New Asiatic Miscellany: consisting of original essays,*

¹ Cannon, 'Sir William Jones and Dr. Johnson's Literary Club,' p. 33.

² Baghaei-Abchooyeh, 'William Jones,' pp. 562–565.

³ Burke, *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 2: p. 487

⁴ *The New Asiatic Miscellany*, 2: p. 314.



Figure 0.1 Akbar's coins, crafted from gold (left) and silver (right), featuring both Hindu and Persian references.

translations, and fugitive pieces (1789) and *Asiatic Researches; Or, Transactions of the Society, Instituted in Bengal* (1789) were powerful media for publicising the results of the Society's expedition into Oriental knowledge. Hastings and his circle attempted to govern under the mantle of Akbar Shah (1542–1605),⁵ replicating his court, which had been bolstered by philosophical investigations and artistic collaborations between Muslims and Hindus. Eager to have research submitted to the Society by both Muslims and Hindus, Jones suggested an annual award of a medal inscribed in Persian and Sanskrit to the author of the best paper.⁶ Jones's award to the author of the best paper, which introduced Oriental sciences to the Society, resembles Akbar's reward to the scholars of his syncretic court (fig. 0.1). On one side, the coins depict the Hindu deities Ram and Sita; on the other side in Persian, it is inscribed *فروردین الهی* and *امرداد الهی* respectively meaning 'the Divine Farvardin' and 'the Divine Mordad.' The similarities between Jones's medal and Akbar's coins, both promoting multiculturalism, depict the influence of Oriental pluralism on Jones's mind.

Evaluating the Scholarship on Jones and the Complex Interplay of Orientalism, Romanticism, and Persian Influence

Jones's outstanding scholarship has made him famous to various scholars in their respective fields of study: linguists consider him the father of modern linguistics since he was the first European to develop the theory of Indo-European languages. In his thesis on the affinity of languages in 'Third Discourse' presented before the Society,⁷ Jones proposed the affinity of Sanskrit to other languages by them

⁵ Franklin, *Romantic Representations of British India*, p. 14.

⁶ Jones, *The Works*, 3: 22.

⁷ Jones, *Discourses Delivered Before the Asiatic Society*, p. 28.

sharing a common source. His significance to literary scholars is due to his works on Indo-Persian literature. He became one of the most remarkable translators and interpreters of Indo-Persian poetry, culture, philosophy, and mysticism; his publications significantly impacted Romantic poets such as Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Byron to develop sympathetic representations of the Orient in the period's literature. It was Jones's literary publications such as the 'Essay on the Arts called Imitative'⁸ which propounded an expressive theory of poetry that valorised expression over description and imitation:

If the arguments used in this essay have any weight, it will appear that the finest parts of poetry, music, and painting, are expressive of the passions [...] the inferior parts of them are descriptive of natural objects.⁹

Therefore, Jones anticipated Wordsworth's founding poetry based on Romantic subjectivity.¹⁰

Jones's career as a puisne judge and the fact that Jones studied twenty-eight languages showcase his knowledge in the areas of translation, law, Indology, and Islamic studies. Hence, different scholars from different fields, depending on their perspective, have analysed his research and presented his remarkable role in their respective fields of study. This echoes two lines in Rūmī's 'The Song of the Reed' which Jones translated and published in his essay 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and the Hindus' (1792):

Each in my fond affections claimed a part
But none discerned the secret of my heart.¹¹

From one perspective, the scholarship on Jones's diverse fields of study could be divided into two major groups: those who centred their work on Jones and those whose primary aim was to research one of the many fields Jones explored and consequently had to focus on him. Amongst the first group, two names stand out: Garland Cannon, who recorded most of Jones's communications in *The Letters of Sir William Jones* (1970) and *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (1991); the second one is Michael J. Franklin with his publications *Sir William Jones* (1995), *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works* (1995) and *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794* (2011). Other than the books mentioned,

⁸ Jones, 'Essay on the Arts called Imitative,' *Poems*, pp. 201-17.

⁹ Jones, 'Essay on the Arts called Imitative,' *Poems*, pp. 216-7.

¹⁰ Franklin, *Orientalist Jones*, p. 86; Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, p. 88.

¹¹ Jones, *The Works*, 4: p. 230.

Cannon and Franklin have published articles and scholarly editions which present an accurate portrayal of Jones and his works; due to the authority of these publications in understanding Jones's life and mind, this book heavily relies on them. However, since both scholars had a relative unfamiliarity with the Persian language, they mainly focused on Jones's material available in English. Also, as there is more English research available on the subcontinent's literary sources, generally, once researchers explore Jones's Oriental studies, more emphasis is placed on his inquiries into Indian cultures and traditions. Indeed, Jones's research on India's diverse cultures is remarkable, yet the shortage of research on Persian sources has kept a significant part of Jones's works relatively in the dark.

The Persian problem is more apparent amongst the second group of scholars who researched Jones's works with a focus on fields such as Indology, Orientalism, and Romanticism; some of the most notable scholars of this group and their works include Raymond Schwab's *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880* (1958), John Drew's *India and the Romantic Imagination* (1987), and James Watt's *British Orientalism, 1759–1835* (2019). Schwab's *Oriental Renaissance* is arguably one of the earliest works that explored Orientalism and Romanticism's interconnection; arguing that 'The Orient served as an alter ego to the Occident,' he suggested that the two rather complemented than competed.¹² Schwab's primary focus is the Romantic period which he viewed as 'an oriental irruption of the intellect';¹³ to him, Romanticism was an Oriental 'Renaissance.' Asserting that 'India had worked to reunite the human with a divine that is the Universe,' Schwab sourced the Romantics' interest in mysticism in their fascination with the subcontinent.¹⁴ Also, although his book establishes Jones's influence on shaping European philosophers, such as Friedrich Schlegel,¹⁵ it does not deeply engage with Jones's influence on the English Romantics such as Blake, Southey, and Shelley. Compared to Schwab's *Oriental Renaissance*, Drew's *India and the Romantic Imagination* is more thorough in analysing Jones's works and his influence on Romantics such as Coleridge and Shelley. As will be discussed in this monograph, in his works, Jones creates connections and associations between cultures distant from one another. To this end, Drew explores Jones's utilisation of Neo-Platonism, which was a common perspective during the eighteenth century, to introduce a representation of India to Europe. Drew's focus primarily is on Hinduism; in his analysis, India and Hinduism are to some extent interchangeable; this could be one of the shortcomings of his book as India has been home to a diverse range of religions – such as Islam, Buddhism,

¹² Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 4.

¹³ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 482.

¹⁴ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 483.

¹⁵ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, p. 195.

Sikhism, and Jainism – and cultures such as Persian, Arabian, and Turkish. Like Drew, Franklin is interested in Jones's syncretic methodology; yet unlike the former, Franklin examines Jones's pluralistic tendencies in the multiracial, multifaith, and multicultural environment of eighteenth-century India.¹⁶ Such examination depicts a more accurate image of Jones and manages not to completely neglect the role Persians and Arabs played in the diverse subcontinent. This accuracy can be explained in an example: Jones was after creating links between the Orient and the Occident; as Drew explains, the Neo-Platonic view – which assisted him in introducing India to Europe – had Hindu and Vedantic counterparts. However, the Hindu pluralistic mysticism was not the only source for Jones to associate the East and the West. Neoplatonism also had a Persian equivalent called the *vahdat-i vujūd*, which can be translated to 'the Unity of Being.' Drew is aware of the concept, however, it only appears on two occasions in his book.¹⁷ On the other hand, Franklin does not mention the concept directly, but he refers to one of its pragmatic aspects: the concept of *sulh-i kull*, which can be translated to 'peace with all.' suggesting 'universal toleration.'¹⁸ The Unity of Being and its deep connection to India and consequently Jones will be one of the themes of the fourth chapter of this book.

The more recent scholarly research conducted on Jones is founded on the works of Franklin, Drew, and Schwab. One which examines his influence on the Romantics is Kurt Andrew Johnson's PhD thesis 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism in British Poetry, 1784–1812' (2010). Johnson's work explores the influence of the connections Jones created with Hinduism on Romantic poets. As his analysis rather leans toward Franklin's syncretic portrayal of Jones,¹⁹ Johnson mentions the significance of Jones's Persian studies; after emphasising 'the importance of the Persian language in Britain's colonial relationship.' due to the language being the lingua franca of the Mughal court and consequently the language of law and commerce, Johnson reiterates Robert Irwin's point on Jones's Persian *Grammar* being a poet's grammar.²⁰ Following this trend, Johnson states:

For Jones, the primary reason for Britons to learn Persian was not to make it easier for them to administer the colony, but rather to gain a better appreciation of 'Eastern' poetry. Jones seeks to foster that appreciation by demonstrating how European poetry resounded with aesthetic echoes from Persian poetry.²¹

¹⁶ See Franklin, 'General Introduction and [Meta]Historical Background [Re]Presenting,' pp. 1-44.

¹⁷ Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, p. 97 & p. 122.

¹⁸ Franklin, *Orientalist Jones*, p. 211.

¹⁹ Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism,' p. 3.

²⁰ Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, p. 122.

²¹ Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism,' p. 45.

Strengthening his argument in Franklin's *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works* (1995), Johnson elaborates that Jones's works such as 'Essays on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations' (1772) were intended to demonstrate the 'very great resemblances between the works of writers such as the Persian poet Ḥāfīz and the epic Persian poet Firdowsī, and, respectively, Shakespeare and Homer.'²² Johnson's thesis presents a detailed analysis of Jones's works on Hindu literature, including his *Hymns to the Hindu Deities*; meanwhile, he also points out that these very Hymns were 'misconceived' as translations. This was because Jones was already a well-established and reputable translator of Arabic and Persian poetry, as evinced by *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) and *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772). The thesis also examines Jones's influence on Romantics, including Blake and Shelley; when Johnson begins his analysis of Blake's *Milton* and the symbology of the 'Mundane Egg' in the poem,²³ he points out that Blake's 'adaptation of a Jonesian syncretism and cultural tolerance' was due to his 'engagement with Jones' work' and his use of Hinduism to emphasise 'the unity of all human cultures.'²⁴ Johnson's statement is true but not thorough: as will be explained in this book, the unity of all human beings, their cultures, and religions is the cornerstone of almost every single mystical Persian text which Jones studied to learn the language or used as a source for his writings.

James Watt's *British Orientalism, 1759–1835* is a diverse survey of literature and theory; it uncovers various genres, and political and historical contexts for the period. Debating in a rich context, the work introduces a wealth of Romantic-period literature revolving around the Orient. The fourth chapter of the book, entitled "In Love with the Gopia" Sir William Jones and His Contemporaries,²⁵ focuses on Jones and some of his Orientalist research and works, including his Hindu Hymns, 'The Palace of Fortune' (1769), and the English translation of Kālidāsā's *Sacontalā* (1789). Watt also draws attention to the variable ways in which Jones's work was absorbed by Romantic writers and concludes his chapter with a thoughtful reading of Sydney Owenson's (1781–1859) novel *The Missionary* (1811), which can be seen as an example of Jones's perspective of tolerance and intercultural sympathy. An intriguing point obtained from Watt's book, and the chapter on Jones within it, is the complexity of the relationship and the contrast between an individual Orientalist and the overall image of the British Empire; for example, Watt points out that Jones's works, such

²² Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism,' pp. 45-6. Franklin, *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, pp. 332-334.

²³ Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism,' pp. 124-143.

²⁴ Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism,' pp. 124-125.

²⁵ Watt, *British Orientalism*, pp. 123-156.

as his 'A Hymn to Lacshmi,' can 'be seen as embedded in British abolitionist discourse as well as EIC Orientalism.'²⁶

The influence of Persian mysticism, i.e., Sufism, or what Johnson calls the 'Jonesian syncretism and cultural tolerance,' on the Romantic poets has been examined in the works of the Iranian scholar Elham Nilchian.²⁷ She explored this influence on Byron and Shelley from a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective in her PhD thesis 'Sufi-Romantic Self Loss: The Study of the Influence of Persian Sufism on English Romantic Poetry' (2011). Nilchian traces the source of the Romantics' inspiration in Persian poets such as Ḥāfiz, Rūmī, and Nizāmī 'whose works were translated and adapted by the eighteenth-century scholars such as William Jones and Isaac D'Israeli.'²⁸ The second chapter of her thesis, 'A Persian Song of Jones,'²⁹ examines Jones's translation of Ḥāfiz's poem which he published in his *Grammar* and titled 'A Persian Song;' besides, the chapter accurately explores the Sufi notions of the Persian poem, its English translation, and the impact it made on later Romantics. Nilchian is one of the very few literary scholars who knows Persian and has examined some of Jones's works; however, generally in her works, Jones could just be perceived as a cultural mediator between Persian muses and the British poets. Carl Ernst is another scholar familiar with Persian, some of whose works refer to Jones but centre on other topics. Like Jones, Ernst has researched Arabic, Persian, and Urdu philosophical and theological texts; his main interest is religious studies, and his writings focus on critical issues of Islamic studies, pre-modern and contemporary Sufism, and Indo-Muslim culture. With these research interests, Ernst is bound to refer to Jones. For example, in his article 'Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages' (2013), Ernst explores the long history of interaction between Islam and Hinduism. Jones is mentioned briefly in the article, yet Ernst points out that he has examined some of Jones's manuscripts and mentions some of Jones's verse compositions in Persian.³⁰ This makes Ernst arguably the first scholar who has closely examined Jones's Persian compositions; however, as Ernst's main interest lies in religious studies, he does not thoroughly focus on Jones and his Persian compositions.

²⁶ Watt, *British Orientalism*, pp. 137-140; p. 138.

²⁷ For example, Nilchian, 'Gul and Bulbul: Persian Love in Byron,' pp. 155-164; Nilchian, 'Shelley's Quest for Persian Love,' pp. 222-244.

²⁸ Nilchian, 'Sufi-Romantic Self Loss,' p. iii.

²⁹ Nilchian, 'Sufi-Romantic Self Loss,' pp. 73-116.

³⁰ Ernst, 'Muslim Studies of Hinduism?,' pp. 173-195; pp. 187-188.

Reevaluating Sir William Jones: A Multidisciplinary Exploration of Persian Studies, Orientalism, and Romanticism

As may be observed from the past few pages, Jones's groundbreaking Persian studies remain relatively under-researched, and the majority virtually unexplored compared to the rest of his works. Therefore, this book will explore Jones's inquiries into Persian language, literature, and mysticism. Arguing upon the significance of the language, its philosophy, and its vast socio-political impact on the Orient, this monograph investigates Jones's published works and his annotations on his personal collection of the Persian texts he examined. Overall, this study seeks to portray Jones through his research on Persian literature and mysticism. Examining Jones's understanding and analysis of Persian texts will significantly improve upon the works of prior researchers who did not profoundly investigate Jones's Persian studies, such as Schwab, Cannon, Drew, Franklin, and Johnson. In addition, as the examination focuses on Jones, it will further elaborate on the Romantics as well as the eighteenth and nineteenth-century perception of the Orient, its culture, religion, mysticism, and literature; consequently, the findings of this book also complement the works of researchers such as Nilchian, Ernst, and Watt. Furthermore, the overall approach of this research involves not just published primary sources, Jones's published works, but also a detailed examination of the texts he read and annotated; such an approach has not been taken on Jones's annotations by any other researcher to this date. Therefore, other than the novelty this monograph introduces to the prior studies on Jones's works, it sheds a brighter light on Jones's mind. The book is divided into five chapters; although each chapter has its introduction, I briefly mention them in the following few pages so that the readers can have a comprehensive view of the framework. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the translations and transliterations presented in this book are mine unless stated otherwise. Also, since there are many – mostly images from Jones's manuscript folios – each chapter's figure numbering starts from one.

Reconsidering Orientalism: Nuanced Perspectives on Sir William Jones's Cultural Contributions

Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), argues that Western representations of the East are historically distorted and oversimplified, serving to justify European imperialism and domination. While Said's critique of Orientalism has been profoundly influential, it has also sparked considerable controversy. In evaluating Said's views on Orientalism and their application to figures such as Sir William Jones, it is crucial to consider both the strengths and limitations of Said's

arguments. Said posits that Western scholars, including Jones, portrayed the East in ways that served imperialist agendas. However, this perspective can oversimplify the complex interactions between Western scholars and Eastern cultures. Jones, for instance, demonstrated a deep respect and genuine interest in Eastern languages, literature, and legal systems. His work was not merely an act of colonial domination but also an earnest effort to understand and appreciate the richness of Eastern traditions. Said's critique often emphasises power dynamics, suggesting that Orientalism was primarily concerned with controlling and manipulating the East. Nevertheless, many scholars contend that Jones's contributions were driven by intellectual curiosity and a desire to bridge cultural divides. His translation of texts and the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal reflect a more nuanced interaction than what Said's framework allows. Jones's work significantly contributed to the development of comparative linguistics and brought Eastern literary and cultural traditions to Western attention. His efforts in translating and interpreting Eastern texts went beyond colonial interests, highlighting his commitment to cultural pluralism – a facet often underplayed in Said's critique, which tends to homogenise all Orientalist endeavours as imperialistic.

Said's portrayal of Orientalist scholars as uniformly complicit in imperial projects does not fully account for the diversity of motivations among these scholars. Jones, for example, was motivated by genuine scholarly interest and respect for Eastern cultures, as evidenced by his efforts to learn multiple Eastern languages and his promotion of cross-cultural understanding. Contemporary scholars have re-evaluated Jones's contributions, recognising his role in fostering cultural exchanges rather than merely serving colonial interests. His work laid the groundwork for modern Indology and comparative philology, indicating that his legacy extends beyond the colonial framework critiqued by Said.³¹ While Said's *Orientalism* provides a critical framework for understanding the relationship between power and knowledge in Western representations of the East, it also has limitations when applied to scholars like Jones. Jones's work reflects a complex interplay of genuine intellectual curiosity, cultural appreciation, and scholarly rigour, which is often oversimplified in Said's critique. A more balanced view acknowledges Jones's contributions to cultural and intellectual history, highlighting his efforts to foster mutual understanding between East and West. While Said's critique has been influential, it is essential to recognise the contributions of scholars like Jones, whose genuine intellectual curiosity and respect for Eastern cultures challenge the monolithic portrayal of Orientalism. Jones's translations and studies

³¹ For example see Fadil Elmenfi, 'Reorienting Edward Said's Orientalism: Multiple Perspectives,' pp. 64-70.

helped to foster a more nuanced understanding of Islamic mysticism, bridging cultural divides.

Methodological Framework and Content Overview

This book adopts a multidisciplinary approach to analyse Jones's work, integrating literary theory, historical analysis, and comparative cultural studies. The methodological framework is designed to provide a systematic and coherent examination of Jones's contributions to both Oriental and Western intellectual traditions. The analysis draws on postcolonial theory to interrogate the dynamics of power and representation in Jones's translations and interpretations of Persian literature. By viewing Jones's work through the lens of Orientalism, as conceptualised by Edward Said, the book explores how Jones navigated and constructed the image of the Orient within the colonial context. The historical analysis situates Jones's work within the broader socio-political milieu of the late eighteenth century. It considers the influence of British colonial policies and the role of the East India Company in shaping Jones's scholarly activities and intellectual pursuits. Primary historical sources, including letters, legal documents, and contemporary accounts, are employed to contextualise Jones's contributions. Through a comparative cultural studies approach, the book examines the intersections and dialogues between Eastern and Western thought in Jones's work. This includes an analysis of the syncretic intellectual traditions that Jones fostered, and the influence of his work on both European Romanticism and the study of Eastern mysticism. A detailed textual analysis of Jones's translations, annotations, and original writings forms the core of the book. This involves close readings of texts to uncover underlying themes, interpretive strategies, and the ways in which Jones mediated between differing cultural paradigms.

The first two chapters focus on his Persian studies while he was in Britain, and the remaining three chapters revolve around the development of his understandings of Oriental philosophy, culture, and mysticism when he was in India. The first two chapters centre on Jones's under-researched collection of papers available in the British Library catalogued as BL, APAC, MSS Eur. C 274. The collection consists of two different types of material; the first type, which is examined in the first chapter, entitled 'Sir William Jones's Collection of Papers, MSS EUR C. 274,' includes some loose folios of his early practice of the Persian language, some of them dated 1785. In addition to the loose folios, the MSS Eur. C 274 collection includes a notebook bearing a contemporary Indian blind-stamped leather-bound book. While the loose folios centre on Jones's practice in Persian and Arabic, the Notebook revolves

around verses in Persian and Rekhta³² by many prominent Sufi poets. It also contains many marginal notes by Jones regarding his study and analysis of Oriental literature. The second chapter, entitled ‘Sir William Jones’s Collection of Verses,’ focuses upon Jones’s annotations on the Persian verses available in his Notebook. The chapter aims to shed light on Jones’s understanding of Persian and Sufi literature by 1786, when he acquired the Notebook. Other than discussing the Sufi and literary figures available in the Notebook, the aim is achieved by examining Jones’s annotations on the poems; the annotations are primarily his translations of the poems and occasionally marginal notes regarding his analysis of them. While some of the loose folios in the MSS Eur C. 274 depict Jones during his earliest exposure to Persian language and culture, the Notebook is the earliest manuscript of Jones, which illustrates the well-established Orientalist ‘Persian Jones.’ Overall, the MSS Eur C. 274 collection demonstrates the transformation of Jones from sometime before he published *A Grammar* (1771), or even before the translation of *Histoire de Nader Chah* (1770), until 1786. Therefore, accordingly, the first two chapters of this monograph present Jones’s transformation through his Persian annotations and the evolution of his thoughts demonstrated in the collection. It should also be noted that the collection, in some cases, contains some personal writings of Jones, which reveal a far more precise understanding of his life and mind.

The remaining three chapters mainly focus on Jones’s studies and works after arriving in India until his death in 1794. To this end, the research data of these chapters have been gathered generally from the manuscripts he had while he was in India. Those manuscripts can be found in the British Library, catalogued as APAC, RSPA, 1-120, Yale University’s Beinecke Library, catalogued as Osborn c. 400, and New York University’s Fales Library, catalogued MSS 301, Box 1-2. The RSPA 1-120 contains manuscripts that either Jones bought, commissioned, or was gifted during his life in India; most of these manuscripts are in Persian, and Jones has extensively annotated twenty of them. The Osborn c. 400 collection is a notebook containing a hundred and fifty folios in Jones’s hand; it holds notations on various subjects ranging from names of different individuals and books to lines of poetry. The Fales Library’s MSS 301 are loose folios consisting of various types of documents related to his studies. Jones had a habit of annotating the manuscripts he was reading, and his annotations cover a vast range of subjects: explanatory remarks on the books, parts of the texts he was fascinated with, even annotations about his comparative studies. As Jones’s various annotations on these manuscripts have been ignored by almost every scholar who has researched him, they will serve

³² Rekhta is the language from which modern Hindi and Urdu have derived; it combines the dynamic vigour of Persian script, diction, and imagery with the sensuous Indian beauty of Urdu vocabulary.

as a centre point for the final three chapters of this monograph. Jones's essay 'On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and the Hindus' (1792) will be discussed and examined in the third chapter entitled 'On the Pluralistic Traditions of the Oriental Mystical Poetry.' In addition, Sufi syncretic narratives and allegorical traditions, which Jones mentioned in the essay, will be analysed. The chapter explores these traditions' Indian counterparts and concludes with tracing them in Jones's writings. The fourth chapter, entitled 'On the Philosophy of the Asiatics: Sir William Jones, Harmonious Metaphysics, and Unity,' focuses on the entanglement and complexity of the relationship between Sufi metaphysics, the Persian language, and their immense influence on the subcontinent, its politics, and consequently how they shaped Jones's mind and influenced his writings. The fifth and final chapter, entitled 'The Majnūn of India: Sir William Jones's Annotations on Niẓāmī's Treasury of Mysteries,' centres on Jones's annotations on his personal copy of Niẓāmī's *Treasury of the Mysteries*.³³ After discussing Jones's sources of interest in Niẓāmī and his *Treasury*, the chapter describes the annotations Jones made on the manuscript, analyses them, and concludes with presenting an autograph Persian poem Jones composed on the manuscript with reference to Niẓāmī's text.

³³ BL, RSPA 32.