

Sacred Geographies of the Body: Embryology and Anatomy in Bengali ‘Sufi’ Texts, 16th-17th Centuries

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Despite being a Muslim majority region, the history of Bengal has predominantly been written on the basis of ‘Hindu’ texts. Medicine and science are no exceptions. Histories of precolonial medicine, chemistry etc. that do exist for the region, scrupulously avoid Islamic material. Historically poor archiving of Islamicate texts has added to this aporia. As a result we know next to nothing about Muslim knowledges of the region in the period prior to the onset of European colonialism. This paper is a small step towards rectifying that situation. By drawing upon a number of lengthy devotional texts written by Bengali ‘Sufi’ masters, such as for example Haji Muhammad’s *Nur Jamal*, I want to reconstruct precolonial Islamicate knowledges about the body. I will focus especially on sections explicitly dealing with embryology and anatomy for my reconstruction.