Abstracts

Genealogies of Deobandi Political Theologies in Late Colonial India (1912–1947)

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Between 1912 and 1947, amid political and military upheavals on the domestic and foreign fronts, Deobandi Ulamā contributed to developing multiple constructions of a colonial Muslim self and community, and offered differing pathways to a post-colonial future by employing diverse strategies that relied on separatism and/or seeking solidarity with India's non-Muslim majority. This study traces the descent and conditions of possibility of Deobandi discourses during that eventful period.

Shaping of Railway Architecture of India: A Case of Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus)

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Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus), an impressive late-19th century railway station and headquarters constructed in Bombay (now Mumbai) in the Victorian neo-Gothic style, has been held by historians like Jan Morris as 'the central building of the British Empire', linking its construction directly to the British Imperialism. The development of railways in India was, however, a multi-layered process influenced by several actors and events not only at the national level, but also at the international and even the local level. This complexity also impacted the way grand railway stations in India came to be shaped and signified. This presentation reflects on the actors, motivations and processes that influenced the construction, scale and exuberance of Victoria Terminus. It also highlights how authoritative meanings were shaped in the course of its creation, which continue to dominate its perception as 'an architectural marvel and sensation' even today, leading to its inscription on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2004.

The Two Provinces of Punjab

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The cultural and political unit of British-Indian Punjab has been partitioned for the past 72 years by the hermetically sealed border between India and Pakistan. The overwhelming majority of Punjabis - speaking the same language, belonging to the same castes and following a broadly similar moral code of daily conduct - has been prevented from meeting anyone of the opposite 'side' or even from access to any kind of public news on the 'others' in the respective neighbouring Punjab. The comparative project, consisting of two teams, is to study socio-cultural change on each side of the international border which, for the first time in the history of the subcontinent, had interrupted all social intercourse between the two kinds of Punjabis according to formal criteria of the colonial power. After the massive bloodshedding at partition time, divergences and commonalities, as developed in the two Punjabs during the past seven decades, are to be studied (by representatives of the respective subjects) in the fields of social structure, religion and the specific methods of conducting provincial politics in the light of rather different constitutional preconditions.

Beyond scientists, soldiers, and peasants: Exploring a parallel register of masculinity in 1960s India through Air India's 'Maharaja' mascot

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In 1960s India, the state-promoted models of masculinity were the scientist of the Nehruvian project and the soldier and the peasant of Lal Bahadur Shastri's "Jai jawan, jai kisan". These ideal men personified the qualities of hard work and personal sacrifice for the nation at a time of various political crises, foregoing overt heterosexual interactions. This project examines a parallel register of masculinity through the "Maharaja", Air India's mascot - a princely character who was commonly depicted in the national airline's posters engaging in various romantic and sexual escapades, often with white women. By examining this unexplored register of Indian masculinity in the 1960s, the paper calls into question the unity of the project of the postcolonial state as the authoritative face of the nation.