

**The Muslims of northern India and the trauma of the loss  
of power, c. 1857-1930s**

EVE TIGNOL

Submitted to the Department of History  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

AUGUST 2016



## Declaration of Authorship

I, Eve Tignol, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

**Signed:**



**Date:** August 2016

A section of Chapter Three of this thesis has been published as Eve Tignol, "A Note on the Origins of Hali's *Musaddas-e Madd-o Jazr-e Islām*" in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, May 2016, pp. 1-5.  
doi: 10.1017/S1356186316000080

*À mes parents*

## Abstract

This thesis explores the views, writings and emotions of Urdu-speaking intellectual elites as they undergo a process of collective mourning and articulate memory as a creative tool for cultural regeneration in northern India from 1857 to the 1930s. North Indian Urdu and English language writings from the colonial period, I argue, reveal successive stages in the process of collective grieving that was triggered by the trauma of the loss of power and affected several generations of north Indian intellectual elites. Both considering well-known sources and investigating neglected ones, this thesis proposes to reassess the cultural and social history of colonial north India through the yet little explored perspective of memory and emotions and restore a more complex picture of Indian Muslim identity formation. This thesis also aims to draw attention to the literary history of the Urdu nostalgic genre of *shahr āshob* and to its role in fostering a collective sense of belonging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chapter One introduces the thesis in its historiographical context. Chapter Two delineates the genre of *shahr āshob*, its poetic developments after 1857 and its role in establishing 1857 as the symbol of cultural trauma. Chapter Three re-evaluates the evolution of the genre in the late 1870s and reveals its function in the re-channelling of collective grief into regeneration particularly in the works of the Aligarh poet Altaf Husain Hali. Chapter Four considers the significance of memorials for public recognition and for the shaping of a new pan-Indian Muslim identity in Mohamed Ali's papers from 1911 to 1915. Chapter Five shows how the new generation of Urdu-speaking intellectual elites strove to emancipate themselves from cultural trauma by turning nostalgia into positive action and self-assertion, especially during the Khilafat movement (1919-1924). Chapter Six extends the analysis to 1910-1930 fiction novels about Delhi by evaluating how they facilitated collective closure. This thesis more broadly heightens our understanding of cultural trauma and its impact on the processes of Muslim identity formation and separatism.

## Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT   | 1   |
| CONTENTS   | 2   |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS   | 3   |
| A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION  | 5   |
| ABBREVIATIONS  | 6   |
| LIST OF FIGURES  | 7   |
| <br>   |     |
| CHAPTER 1: Introduction  | 8   |
| CHAPTER 2: Narrating the traumatic shock: Urdu shahr āshob poetry on 1857  | 30  |
| CHAPTER 3: Grieving through nostalgia: āshob poetry and the Aligarh movement   | 68  |
| CHAPTER 4: Burials, memorials and public recognition in <i>The Comrade</i> and <i>Hamdard</i> , c. 1911-1915                   | 117 |
| CHAPTER 5: Overcoming grief by building resilience: nostalgia and empowerment in the early twentieth century                   | 162 |
| CHAPTER 6: Mourning and Creativity: Historical fiction on Delhi among second and third generation “survivors”, c. 1910s- 1930s | 194 |
| CHAPTER 7: Conclusion  | 232 |
| <br>   |     |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY   | 239 |

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank wholeheartedly my supervisor Professor Francis Robinson for his continuous support, for his patience, immense knowledge and guidance. He has always encouraged me to get to the bottom of my ideas, to travel and experiment and he has been a constant source of inspiration. I have learnt so much from his advice and will be forever grateful.

This work would not have been possible without the generous support of the Reid Research Scholarship and I am also thankful to the Department of History at Royal Holloway University of London for the Friendly Hand Trust fellowship, the Postgraduate Discretionary Fund and the PGR Research Fund bursaries, which enabled me to conduct research in India from 2013 to 2015.

Countless people have helped me in the course of this thesis. They are too numerous to be listed here but I hope they will recognise themselves and accept my warmest thanks. At Royal Holloway, I would like to thank particularly my thesis committee, Professors Humayun Ansari, Dan Stone and Dr Markus Daechsel, for their insightful feedback and encouragements. Thanks also to Professor Sarah Ansari who has been a reassuring and benevolent presence since the very first day of my doctorate. In Oxford, Professor Rosalind O'Hanlon, Dr Imre Bangha and Dr Mohammad Talib have eased my first steps in South Asian cultural and literary history. My undergraduate language professors Alain Désoulières and Amina Niazi first exposed me to the beauty and sweetness of the Urdu language. For this and for many other things, I am indebted to all of them.

Professors Frances Pritchett, Margrit Pernau, Katherine Butler-Schofield and Drs Megan Robb, Liz Chatterjee and Sneha Krishnan kindly read and commented on draft chapters and papers, detecting shortcomings and helping me to correct many mistakes, I thank them very much for their thought-provoking comments. Over the course of my graduate studies, I have greatly benefited from the encouragement, assistance and criticism of fellow researchers and friends. My warmest thanks go in particular to Megan Robb, Javed Wani, Layli Uddin, Richard Williams, Ryan Perkins, Raisur Rahman, Nishtha Singh, Laurence Gautier, Hur Hassnain, Sophie Jung Kim, Moin Nizami and Fouzia Farooq. Drs Nicolas Dejenne, Anne Castaing and Claudine Le Blanc have provided me with a friendly and stimulating environment to complete this work, I thank them for believing in me.

I consider myself very fortunate to have met many kind and generous people during my studies and travels. In India, I would like to thank Professors Chander Shekhar, Ashraf Rafi, Karen Leonard, Tariq Ahmad,

Asghar Abbas, Ishtiaq Ahmad Zilli, Seema Alavi and Drs Abdur Rasheed, Hilal Ahmed, Oudesh Bawa and Waseem Raja for their continuous and invaluable help and advice. In Delhi, I am extremely grateful to Kamal Abdul Nasir and Nuzhat Farzana and to their families for accompanying me in my exploration of Delhi's culture and poetry with lots of love and care. Many thanks also to Sanjeev and Pritam who opened their home and hearts and showed me the city in a different, entertaining, light. In Hyderabad and Lucknow, I am thankful to Raghu Cidambi, Adhiraj Parthasarathy, Madhumeeta Sinha, Rashid Changez, Amir Naqi Khan and, especially, to Amir Durrani and his family for making of my stay a truly wonderful experience.

I am grateful to the librarians and staff of the National Archives of India, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, the Delhi State Archives, the Urdu Academy, the Ghalib Institute, the Dr Zakir Husain Library at Jamia Millia University, the Hamdard University Library, the Maulana Azad Library at Aligarh, the Salar Jung Museum Library, the Nizam's Urdu Trust Library, the Andhra Pradesh State Archives, the Osmania University Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies Library, the British Library and the Bodleian Library for their kind assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their unconditional love. To my parents, I dedicate this work. No words could ever describe how much I am grateful for everything you have taught me. To my sister Céline and my brother Jean I am thankful for so many stimulating (interdisciplinary!) discussions and for always making me laugh. To Matthieu, my beloved husband, I owe everything: thank you for always reminding me what matters. I cannot wait to start a new journey together.

## A Note on Transliteration and Translation

This thesis mainly draws on written sources in Urdu. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

All proper names appear un-transliterated, according to their common usage in English, e.g. Mohamed Ali rather than Muḥammad 'Ali. In case this usage is not known, a simplified transliteration without diacritics is applied. Place names are either spelled according to their common modern English usage or according to the predominant form used in my sources.

All other words from Urdu or Persian are transliterated with diacritical markings as described below and italicised, except for the nouns and adjectives that are widely used in English scholarship (e.g. ulama, Nawab). The Urdu terms that frequently appear in the course of the thesis, however, (e.g. ashraf, shahr ashob) are not italicised.

|   |       |   |    |        |        |
|---|-------|---|----|--------|--------|
| ا | a/i/u | ڑ | r̄ | م      | m      |
| آ | ā     | ز | z  | ن      | n      |
| ب | b     | ژ | zh | و      | au/ū/w |
| پ | p     | س | s  | ہ      | h      |
| ت | t     | ش | sh | ی      | ī/y    |
| ٹ | ṭ     | ص | ṣ  | ے      | ai/e   |
| ٹ | ṣ     | ض | ẓ  | ء      | '      |
| ج | j     | ط | ṭ  | ں      | ṅ      |
| چ | ch    | ظ | ẓ  | ھ      | h      |
| ح | ḥ     | ع | '  | izafat | -e     |
| خ | kh    | غ | gh | zer    | i      |
| د | d     | ف | f  | zabar  | a      |
| ڈ | ḍ     | ق | q  | pesh   | u      |
| ذ | z     | ک | k  |        |        |
| ر | r     | ل | l  |        |        |

## Abbreviations

AIG: *Aligarh Institute Gazette*

AMU: Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

AUS: *Annual of Urdu Studies*

BL: British Library, India Office Records

DSA: Delhi State Archives, New Delhi

IESHR: *Indian Economic and Social History Review*

JESHO: *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*

JMI: Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

JRAS: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

MAS: *Modern Asian Studies*

NNRNWP&O: *Native Newspapers Reports for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*

NMML: Nehru Museum and Memorial Library, New Delhi

NAI: National Archives of India, New Delhi

SAGAR: *South Asia Graduate Research Journal*

SAMAJ: *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*

SJM: Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad

UP: United Provinces

## List of Figures

- 2.a. *Ġhadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne*: the prince's previous state
- 2.b. *Ġhadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne*: the prince's ultimate condition
- 2.c. The Diwan-e Khas in the Palace in the Delhi Fort painted by Ghulam Ali Abbas
- 3.a. Decorated title for Khushgap's "dunyā āshob" that illustrates a man harassed by intriguing creatures
- 3.b. Caricature of Syed Ahmed Khan, described as a "Necharī yogī"
- 4.a. Contemporary picture of the spared Teli temple and of the Macchli Bazar mosque in the background
- 4.b. Picture of the Macchli Bazar mosque with the demolished wall and *dālān* on the left
- 6.a. Hoseneer Dancing Girl

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

“The past oppresses me or fills me sometimes with its warmth when it touches on the present, and becomes, as it were, an aspect of that living present. [...] I can only write about it, as I have previously done, by bringing it in some relation to my present-day thoughts and activities, and then this writing of history, as Goethe once said, brings some relief from the weight and burden of the past. It is, I suppose, a process similar to that of psychoanalysis, but applied to a race or to humanity itself instead of an individual.”

J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 1946<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of the British rule in India until independence, the past acquired a particular importance for the descendants of the old Mughal aristocracy. After the Uprising that swept across north India in 1857, dramatic cultural and social transformations followed and writing about the past emerged as a prime concern. Urdu poets were regularly haunted by the ghosts of ancient masters,<sup>2</sup> local communities more eagerly engaged in the writing of their history and newspaper editors frequently reported endeavours to preserve heritage. Nostalgia pervaded much of the late nineteenth century. This peculiar concern with the past is commonly understood as pertaining to the broader processes of negotiating modernity, bargaining with the colonial authorities and shaping new “imagined” national identities that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, alongside the emergence of mass print culture.<sup>3</sup> In the historical narrative of Muslim separatism particularly, Urdu writings on the past and their gradual “shift” towards the Arab legacy have been seen as the manifestation of a growing malaise among the Indian Muslim minority

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, 1981, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1890s, Azad, a great Urdu poet and reformer of Urdu literature, suffering from fits of madness, rushed to Syed Ahmad Khan's house and confessed to him that he was hearing the voices of ancient masters dictating him a book (*Darbar-e Akbari*), which he eventually published in 1898. Muhammad Husain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, trans. and ed. by F. W. Pritchett and S. R. Faruqi, New Delhi, 2003, p. 6. He was however not the only one, later Iqbal too would be inspired by the Islamic scholar Rumi to write his famous *Asrar-i Khudi* (see Chapter Five).

<sup>3</sup> F. Robinson, "Islam and the impact of print in South Asia", in F. Robinson (ed.), *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 66-104.

leaders, anxious to secure a place in a colonial world marked by heightened competition, Hindu revivalism and communally-antagonising reforms.

Historians of colonial India and Muslim cultural history have well researched the growth of communalism and Muslim separatism in the last four decades of scholarship to “make sense” of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Theories on the so-called “myth” of Muslim backwardness, on the British *Divide and Rule* policy, or on the failure of Indian nationalism to develop a non-communal ideology all strove to explain the growth of separatist tendencies. Among the most notable studies on early twentieth-century Muslim political mobilisations, Paul Brass and Francis Robinson engaged in a debate about the emergence of Muslim political identity in the United Provinces.<sup>5</sup> Agreeing that pre-existing differences between Hindus and Muslims in north India were not significant enough to fuel separatist tendencies, Brass interpreted the formation of Muslim political identity as the result of a clever game of “symbol selection” played by the elite group.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to Brass’s “instrumentalist” approach, Robinson argued that, for political elites, “to look back to an Islamic past was instinctive rather than a matter of deliberate choice”.<sup>7</sup> The resort to history and religious symbols, which particularly overwhelmed politics during the Khilafat movement (1919-1924), is, according to Robinson, “a product of

---

<sup>4</sup> See for instance P. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge, 1974; F. Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces’ Muslims, 1860-1923*, London, 1974; L. Brennan, “The Illusion of Security: The Background to Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 18, 2, 1984, pp. 237-272; S. Freitag, “The roots of Muslim separatism” in E. Burke & I. Lapidus, *Islam, politics and social movements*, Berkeley, 1988; F. Shaikh, *Community and Consensus: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947*, Cambridge, 1989; M. Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics 1885-1930*, New Delhi, 1991; A. Jalal and S. Bose (eds.), *Nationalism, democracy and development: state and politics in India*, Delhi, 1997; A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: individual and community in south Asian Islam since 1850*, London, 2000; F. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London, 2009; M. Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism. Qasbas in Colonial Awadh*, New Delhi, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See F. Robinson, “Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism”, in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 15, 1977, pp. 215-30; P. Brass, “A Reply to Francis Robinson”, in *ibid.*, pp. 231-4; P. R. Brass, “Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia”, in D. Taylor and M. Yapp (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia*, London, 1979; F. Robinson, “Islam and Muslim Separatism”, in *ibid.*, pp. 79-107.

<sup>6</sup> P. Brass, “Elite Groups, symbol manipulation and ethnic identity”, p. 885 ff.

<sup>7</sup> F. Robinson, “Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism”, p. 222.

forces beyond their control”<sup>8</sup> since Islamic values and a special sense of history was already pervasive among the elite as well as among common men. Memory and cultural assumptions were thus not things to “choose from”, but things that shaped the actions of Muslim political leaders and helped confront the colonial state rather than their Hindu countrymen.

Benedict Anderson also underlined the importance of the past for the emergence of collective identities in his 1983 fundamental analysis of the global phenomenon of nationalism, in which he noted the significant play between memory and forgetting and its role in the elaboration of a narrative of imagined national identities.<sup>9</sup> Literature and particularly history writing have been pointed out as crucial elements in Indian responses to colonialism and the creation of modern identities by historians of South Asia too. Partha Chatterjee was one of the first to respond to Anderson’s study with a South Asian perspective. Against Anderson’s suggestion that non-Western countries developed nationalism as a derivation from Western forms of nationality, he tried to show how South Asia’s (and especially Bengal’s) relation to colonialism was rather one of difference and that the creation of an Indian historical past played a part in the articulation of alternative visions of modernity and the nation.<sup>10</sup> In his steps, Sudhir Chandra explored nineteenth-century texts to recover “the vernacular mind”,<sup>11</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj explored the rise of nationalist discourse in Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay’s Bengali writings<sup>12</sup> and Vasudha Dalmia undertook a similar task for the Hindi literary figure of Bharatendu Harischandra.<sup>13</sup> All emphasised the role of the past in the emergence of a new social consciousness and homogenising identities. More recently, Francesca Orsini carried on Dalmia’s work by

---

<sup>8</sup> F. Robinson, “Nation Formation”, p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 2006 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1983), p. 205.

<sup>10</sup> P. Chatterjee, *The nation and its fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories*, Princeton, 1993. See also *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A derivative discourse*, Minneapolis, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> S. Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: literature and social consciousness in colonial India*, Delhi, 1994, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> S. Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Nationalist Discourse in India*, Delhi, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> V. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-century Benares*, New Delhi, 1997.

studying the role of history in inspiring a collective sense of belonging in the early-twentieth Hindi public sphere.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the writings of important nineteenth- and twentieth-century Muslim figures such as Syed Ahmed Khan, Hali or Iqbal have often been seen as the “foundational” texts of a separate Muslim national identity.<sup>15</sup>

This thesis seeks to heighten our understanding of the history of collective memory and trauma in colonial north India by considering diverse and understudied material to shed light on an obscure dimension of the period and bring new insights into the processes of identity formation and collective mobilisation. In this thesis, I argue that the political dimensions that are often unearthed in Indian Muslims' writings on the past represent only one rather limiting aspect of memory in colonial north India. Rather than considering the resort to the past as a mere political tool used by Muslim elites for their own vested (separatist) interests, I argue, as Jawaharlal Nehru hinted sixty years ago, that writing about the past also enabled a sort of psychoanalytical “recovery” that participated in a broader process of collective grieving and healing. Urdu and English language writings from 1857 to the 1930s, I argue, reveal successive stages in the process of cultural mourning that was triggered by 1857 and affected several generations of north Indian intellectuals.

This exploration into South Asian Muslim memory takes the twofold form of a social history of the impact of one trauma (the loss of power of which the Uprising of 1857 was a symbol) on three generations of Urdu-speaking intellectuals and of a literary history of the nostalgic genre of *shahr āshob* and its role in fostering a collective sense of belonging in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century north Indian cities. Reading nineteenth- and twentieth-century memory works composed by north Indian Muslim intellectuals enables a new sense of a sociocultural landscape moulded by new norms, older vernacular traditions as well as inner

---

<sup>14</sup> F. Orsini, *The Hindi public sphere, 1920-1940: language and literature in the age of nationalism*, New Delhi, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance M. A. Raja, *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational texts and the rise of Muslim national identity, 1857-1947*, Karachi, 2010.

emotional and psychological processes. Both reconsidering well-known sources of the period and investigating neglected ones, this thesis proposes to reassess the cultural and social history of colonial north India and restore a more complex picture of Indian Muslim identity formation through the yet little explored perspective of collective memory.

### **Exploring collective memory**

Since the 1970s, memory has emerged as an increasingly popular subject of study. Many have understood this so-called “memory boom”<sup>16</sup> as an outcome of modernity that has transformed our relation to time and to the past; Connerton for instance argued that deep changes in our way of consuming, living and being informed have given rise to a gradual but profound feeling of rupture and disconnectedness.<sup>17</sup> In reaction to these feelings and the modern speed of life, preoccupations with memory have gradually arisen. This growing preoccupation is true in South Asia too with the developing appeal of heritage walks, memory talks and patrimony preservation measures among sections of the South Asian society.<sup>18</sup> As in the West in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the death of first-hand witnesses of the Partition of 1947 from the mid-1990s also further stimulated an urge to record and preserve life stories in India and Pakistan.<sup>19</sup>

The concept of collective memory emerged in the pioneering work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a disciple of both Bergson and Durkheim. In his two main works, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (*The Social*

---

<sup>16</sup> J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader*, Oxford, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> P. Connerton, *How modernity forgets*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance the events organised by Sohail Hashmi in Delhi (“Heritage Walks” and “My City My Memory”, which is part of the larger Delhi I Love You movement) and the Charminar Connection group which promotes Hyderabad's rich cultural heritage.

<sup>19</sup> See the growth of Partition archives and oral history endeavours by citizen non-profit organisations such as [www.1947partitionarchive.org/](http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/). The literature on Partition memories is huge, see notably: U. Butalia, *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India*, London, 1998; G. Pandey, *Memory, History, and the question of violence: reflections on the reconstruction of partition*, Calcutta, 1999; G. Pandey, *Remembering Partition: violence, nationalism, and history in India*, Cambridge, 2001; S. Kaur, *The partitions of memory: the afterlife of the division of India*, Delhi, 2001; T.K. Saint, *Witnessing partition: memory, history, fiction*, Delhi, 2010; J. Menon, *The performance of nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the memory of Partition*, Cambridge, 2013; etc.

*Frameworks of Memory*, 1925) and *La mémoire collective* (*On Collective Memory*, published posthumously in 1950), he explained that recollections are never individual constructs because “in reality we are never alone”.<sup>20</sup> In *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, Halbwachs took the example of his visit to London. He only walked alone in appearance: while passing by Westminster, he thought about what he had read in a travel guide, looking at St Paul’s Cathedral, he remembered some novels read in his childhood, admiring the view on the Thames, he thought of what a friend once told him; etc. His memories of London were actually shared memories of the groups to which he belonged.<sup>21</sup> In his *Collective memory*, Halbwachs tried to better articulate individual and collective memory and argued that although it is the work of individuals to remember, the process of remembering itself relies on the sole condition of the possibility of the existence of social groups.<sup>22</sup> Forgetting, according to Halbwachs, similarly occurs when the groups to which we belong and with which memories are associated stop existing or when we stop belonging to these groups.<sup>23</sup>

Despite strong criticism, the concept of collective memory developed by Halbwachs (and the stark opposition he drew between memory and history)<sup>24</sup> was to have a tremendous impact on memory scholars. While

---

<sup>20</sup> M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> M.-C. Lavabre, “Sociologie de la mémoire et de ses cadres”, paper presented at the seminar “Mémoires historiques d’ici et d’ailleurs : regards croisés”, 26 October 2007, available online <<http://vimeo.com/28427144>> (last accessed 30 June 2016). Halbwachs’ theory on collective memory was criticised by Charles Blondel, Roger Bastide, and Marc Bloch among others. While the psychologist Charles Blondel tried to highlight the specificity of individual sensations, Bloch, in 1925, and Bastide, later, tended to point to the abuse of Durkheimian (and anthropomorphist) vocabulary – societies “remember”, “forget”, etc. – and reminded the all importance of communication between individuals and the necessity of taking transmission into account, a gap that Halbwachs partly rectified in his *Collective memory*. See R. Bastide, “Mémoire collective et sociologie du bricolage”, in *Revue de L’Année Sociologie*, vol. 21, 1970, pp. 65-108.

<sup>23</sup> M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Despite a certain level of permeation, Halbwachs strongly opposed history and memory, history being seen as universal, exterior and temporally unitary whereas memory is interior and multiple. Recently, however, scholars have contested this opposition since “in the totality of history appears a multiplicity of individual philosophies, the thinkers of which dress as historians” (M. de Certeau, *L’écriture de l’histoire*, France, 2002, p. 79). Ricoeur also argued that memory is “the soil in which historiography is rooted” (Ricoeur quoted by D. Stone, “Beyond the Mnemosyne Institute: The Future of memory after the Age of Commemoration”, in R. Crownshaw, J. Kilby and A. Rowland (eds.), *The Future of Memory*,

memory had usually been the subject of studies that focussed on the process of memorisation - like Frances Yates' *The Art of Memory* (1966) -, memory increasingly emerged as a source for history with the development from the 1970s of the New History by the French Annales School and with Cultural Studies historians who opened the way for the history of "mentalities" and representations to which the history of memory belongs.<sup>25</sup> Pierre Nora was one of the first historians to develop a methodology for the historical study of memory from the late 1970s, and especially from 1984 to 1992 with the publication of his *Les lieux de mémoire (Realms of Memory)*. In this influential work on French national identity, Nora argued that modern times are accompanied by the "tearing" of memory under the accelerating attacks of history.<sup>26</sup> Against history, memory would have taken refuge in "sites".<sup>27</sup> Studying memory thus implied for Nora to analyse those sites (national anthems, calendars, and monuments but also libraries, dictionaries and seafronts) that represent the peculiar emotional affects and memories of a community.<sup>28</sup> Some scholars have however objected against Nora that memory has to be located beyond sites for it is not situated in objects and symbols but in individuals. Susan Crane thus argued that "all narratives, all

---

New York, 2010, p. 27) and Crane highlighted that history "always appearing in the form of historical narrative, is one form for the content of collective memory, but collective memory is also the framework in which historical remembering occurs" (S. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory", in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, n° 5, 1997, p. 1373). History would thus be as much the "product" of memory as a part of it.

<sup>25</sup> P. Ariès, "L'histoire des mentalités", in J. Le Goff (ed.), *La Nouvelle Histoire*, Brussels, 2006, pp. 169-172.

<sup>26</sup> P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1: La République, Paris, 1984, p. xix. The idea that memory is linked to place was not new: already in Antiquity, memorisation relied on "a method of *loci*", which linked images to places, for the theorists of the *ars memoriae* (P. Ricoeur, *L'Histoire*, p. 49). Places or objects can act as reminders: a house can bring back family recollections, a bite in a madeleine childhood memories. Proust stated that "the past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect" (M. Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, extract on <http://www.fisheaters.com/proust.html>).

<sup>27</sup> P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, p. xix.

<sup>28</sup> As Lavabre justly wondered the methodology raised other methodological issues, for "which are those sites of memory that are inhabited and which those that are not?" (M.-C. Lavabre, "Usages du passé, usages de la mémoire", in *Revue française de science politique*, 44e année, n° 3, 1994, p. 484).

sites, all texts remain objects until they are 'read' or referred to by individuals thinking historically".<sup>29</sup>

Cultural studies and media studies historians have complicated and critiqued Nora's approach by putting more emphasis on the dynamics of collective memory through a focus on the circumstances of the production and circulation of memory works for the former and on the processes of homogenisation and the role of media in shaping identities for the latter.<sup>30</sup> In Aleida and Jan Assmann's steps,<sup>31</sup> media studies historians have explored the "medial conditions and social structures of organization" -<sup>32</sup> what many have otherwise seen as a "typically German" approach.<sup>33</sup> Recently, Astrid Erll has focussed on how the colonial memory of the Uprising of 1857 was conveyed and transformed in "'media' of all sorts – spoken language, letters, books, photos, films", arguing that media provide the framework that shape both experience and memory.<sup>34</sup> This approach introduces the dynamics of transmission, re-creation and "re-mediation" of representations across time

---

<sup>29</sup> S. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back", p. 1381.

<sup>30</sup> The Frankfurt and Heidelberg schools, which spread in America after World War Two, were influenced by Walter Benjamin and Aby Warburg. Aby Warburg (1866-1929) particularly emphasised the importance of the "social mediation of images" (M. Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*", in I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in colonial and postcolonial contexts*, London, 2009, p. 19). In the last years of his life, he focussed particularly on the role of memory in civilisation and created an atlas of images, the Mnemosyne Atlas, that emphasised the afterlife of classical symbolism in post-classical art <<http://www.dictionarofarthistorians.org/warburga.htm>> (last accessed 7 June 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Assmann argued that "communicative" memory (*Kommunikatives Gedächtnis*) (similar to Halbwachs' notion of collective memory) could become *cultural* (*Kulturelles Gedächtnis*) if successful means of transmission are implemented. This second type of memory would be characterised not by the liveliness of human conversations but by the "formality" of recollections: for cultural memory is canonised, supported by recurrent practices and "established via acts of formal recall and ritual re-enactment" (A. Assmann, "Memory", in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion Online*).

<sup>32</sup> D. Hart, "The invention of cultural memory", in A. Erll and A. Rigney (eds.), *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, Berlin, 2009, p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> G. Winthrop-Young, "Cultural Studies and German Media Theory", in G. Hall and C. Birchall (eds.), *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 88. Winthrop-Young tried to show that the emphasis on media and on "homogenisation" was to be linked to the way the German nation came into being. He thus argues that while France and Britain are more prone to underline socio-cultural differentiations within the field of cultural studies, Germany, seen as "a kind of media product", especially focused on the role of media and technology in nation-building processes. He also noted that "typical" German interests in philology naturally turned towards the study of media with the decline of literary studies (Winthrop-Young, "Cultural Studies", p.91).

<sup>34</sup> A. Erll and A. Rigney (eds.), *Mediation, remediation, and the dynamics of cultural memory*, Berlin, 2009, p. 1.

and place that, for media scholars, substantially lacked in Nora's approach.<sup>35</sup> Cultural studies and subaltern studies historians have usually expressed the same criticism towards the study of "sites of memory" by pointing out that "'true' meaning is constructed through cultural practices".<sup>36</sup> A new focus on the reception of cultural products, partly influenced by Roland Barthes' ideas,<sup>37</sup> notably appeared in Stuart Hall's theory of "encoding/decoding": where the act of putting meaning in a product (*encoding*) is as important as the way it is read and understood (*decoding*).<sup>38</sup> Rather than emphasising the homogenising role of the memory dynamics of the media studies approach, however, cultural and subaltern studies scholars focussed on the socio-cultural oppositions that occur in society and the ways in which meaning is contested and more broadly reflects power struggles for cultural hegemony.<sup>39</sup>

Collective memory has been studied in the last decades in the South Asian context, especially for the study of modernity and the creation of national identities. As Congino argued, one of the main contributions of memory studies has indeed consisted in research into the "politics of memory" and the relations between memory and power in society.<sup>40</sup> Numerous studies have studied how monuments, memorials and school textbooks shape (and manipulate) particular visions of national memory.<sup>41</sup> In

---

<sup>35</sup> See A. Erll, "Travelling Memory", in *Parallax*, vol. 17, n°4, 2011, pp. 4-18. Recently, some media studies researchers on memory have highlighted the need to move from the notion of cultural memory to that of "transcultural" memory, emphasising the role of transnational travels, diaspora, media, wars and colonial enterprises in the shaping of a "travelling" memory (See A. Erll and A. Rigney (eds.), *Mediation*, p. 3).

<sup>36</sup> P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Janes, H. Mackay, and K. Negus (eds.), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, London, 2003, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Roland Barthes had indeed shown in *The Death of the Author* (1968) that the interpretation of a text should not be analysed through its author's intentions and biography since, according to him, it is not the author who controls its true meaning but the audience.

<sup>38</sup> H. Glevarec, E. Macé and E. Maigret, *Cultural Studies: Anthologie*, Paris, 2008, p. 157.

<sup>39</sup> T. Thwaites, L. Davis and W. Mules, *Introducing cultural and media studies: a semiotic approach*, Basingstoke, 2002, p. 158.

<sup>40</sup> A. Congino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method", in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, n° 5, 1997, p. 1393.

<sup>41</sup> In South Asia, textbook studies have thus particularly emerged after the rise of the Janata Party coalition in India and Zia ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan in the late 1980s. For example, V. C. P. Chaudhary, *Secularism Versus Communalism: An Anatomy of the National Debate on Five Controversial History Books*, Patna, 1977; K. K. Aziz, *The murder of History: a critique of history*

scholarship on colonial South Asia, while the majority of studies have tended to concentrate on British imagination,<sup>42</sup> subaltern studies scholars have also analysed some of the many ways through which colonial memories were imposed upon Indian minds. Goswami's study of the Mutiny tours and touristic guides produced for the British public, for instance, showed well how the colonial state appropriated Mughal monuments after 1857 and tried to 'erase' native memory by re-visiting the Indian landscape through the exclusive prism of the Uprising.<sup>43</sup> More recently, Kavuri-Bauer studied literature and monuments and their role in the formation and evolution of an anti-colonial Muslim identity.<sup>44</sup>

Often nuancing colonialist narratives and the impact of the "shock of modernity" on vernacular cultures, historians of colonialism have increasingly begun to rethink identity formation among colonised populations in terms of (counter)-memories and emotions. Historians have particularly resorted to the concepts of nostalgia and emotion to understand better the impact of colonialism and modernity on Indian Muslims. Scholarship on the melancholic genre of *shahr āshob* and the role of nostalgia (as well as its relations to space)<sup>45</sup> in the creation of Muslim identity or

---

*textbooks used in Pakistan*, Lahore, 1993; S. Guichard, *The Construction of History and Nationalism in India: Textbooks, controversies and politics*, London, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance G. Chakravarty, *The Indian mutiny and the British imagination*, Cambridge, 2005; N. Lahiri, "Commemorating and Remembering 1857: The Revolt in Delhi and Its Afterlife", in *World Archaeology*, vol. 35, n°1, 2003, pp. 35-60; P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and imperialism, 1830-1914*, Ithaca, 1988; S. Heathorn, "The Absent Site of Memory: The Kanpur Memorial Well and the 1957 Centenary Commemoration of the Indian Mutiny", in I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in colonial and postcolonial contexts*, London, 2009, pp. 73-116, etc.

<sup>43</sup> M. Goswami, "'Englishness' on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia", in *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 9, n°1, 1996, pp. 54-84.

<sup>44</sup> S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters: The Power, Subjectivity, and space of India's Mughal Architecture*, London, 2011. See also the excellent studies of H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse in postcolonial India: monuments, memory, contestation*, New Delhi, 2014 and H. Ahmed, "Mosque as Monument: The Afterlives of Jama Masjid and the Political Memories of a Royal Muslim Past", in *South Asian Studies*, vol. 29, n°1, 2013, pp. 51-59, which focussed on the Jama and Babri masjids as crystallisers of a Muslim identity, although he has rather concentrated on the postcolonial world. In his study of Delhi monuments and especially the Qutb Minar complex, Sunil Kumar has highlighted how medieval heritage was reinterpreted in nineteenth-century writings: S. Kumar, *The present in Delhi's pasts*, New Delhi, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> M. Pernau, "Mapping Emotions, Constructing Feelings: Delhi in the 1840s", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 634-667; R. Khan, "The Social Production of Space and Emotions in South Asia", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 611-633; R. Khan, "Local Pasts: Space, Emotions and Identities in Vernacular Histories of Princely Rampur", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 693-731. For a study

Muslim "publics" has particularly striven to discuss socio-cultural change during the colonial era and its impact on vernacular culture.<sup>46</sup> Nostalgia being at the crossroad of the history of memory and emotions, Margrit Pernau has recently reconsidered political mobilisations and collective representations and behaviours as manifestations of shared emotional processes. After Anderson's concept of "imagined communities", the emotional recently began receiving more attention in attempts to understand how emotions create cohesion in the modern world.<sup>47</sup>

This thesis contributes to this new and expanding field by analysing Urdu memory works and discussing them in relation with the concept of cultural trauma - a notion that intertwines collective memory, emotions and socio-cultural change and which has strikingly remained neglected by scholars of colonial north India.<sup>48</sup> While the Uprising of 1857 and its aftermath has often been considered by scholars as a watershed event in the history of South Asia, its psychological impact on the consciousness of several generations of Indian Muslims has usually been overlooked. I here discuss nostalgic writings as symptomatic of broader psychological processes and place them in a wider and evolving context of meaning-making and

---

of Muslim imagination and cartography in the nineteenth century see F. Devji, "India in the Muslim Imagination: Cartography and Landscape in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Urdu Literature", in *SAMAJ*, 2014, vol. 10.

<sup>46</sup> See for instance D. Bredi, "Nostalgia in the re-construction of Muslim identity in the aftermath of 1857 and the myth of Delhi", in *Cracow Indological Studies*, vol. XI, 2009, pp. 137-156, recently republished in A. Kuczkiewicz-Fras (ed), *Islamicate Traditions in South Asia: themes from culture and history*, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 25-43; C. R. Perkins, *Partitioning History: The creation of an Islami pablik in late colonial India, c. 1880-1920*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011; S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt of 1857: contrapuntal formations in Indian literature and history*, unpublished PhD dissertation, SOAS, 2012; M. Pernau, "Nostalgia: Tears of blood for a lost world", in *SAGAR*, vol. 23, 2015, pp. 74-109.

<sup>47</sup> See M. Pernau's work in the history of emotions in South Asia: among others, M. Pernau, H. Jordheim, E. Saada, et al. (eds.), *Civilizing emotions: Concepts in nineteenth-century Asia and Europe*, Oxford, 2015; M. Pernau, "Concepts of emotions in Indian languages", in *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, in press; M. Pernau, "Feeling communities", *IESHR*, in press.

<sup>48</sup> Studies on trauma in South Asia rather focussed on the postcolonial world. Scholars have usually considered Partition experiences, the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, the Emergency, the Babri Masjid incident or diaspora experiences. See for instance N. Datta, *Violence, martyrdom and partition: a daughter's testimony*, New Delhi, 2012; R. Chopra, "Commemorating Hurt: Memorializing Operation Bluestar", in *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, vol. 6, n<sup>o</sup>2, 2010, pp. 119-152; E. Tarlo, *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*, London, 2003; C. Alexander, "Contested memories: the Shahid Minar and the struggle for diasporic space", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 36, n<sup>o</sup>4, 2013, pp. 590-610; etc.

contestation at key moments in the history of colonial north India. Nostalgia is not only considered here as a subaltern form of *dissensus* and resistance as Gérard Chaliand observed in other contexts<sup>49</sup> but as an alternative agent of social change,<sup>50</sup> which is at the very heart of identity formation processes.

### **The Historiography of cultural trauma**

Considering collective memory, this thesis initially aimed at tackling the question of why from the late nineteenth century the old north Indian Mughal aristocracy had gradually given way to two separate nations. Why did Hindus – like Khatri, Kayasths or Kashmiri Brahmins – who were imbued with Mughal culture<sup>51</sup> increasingly turn towards Hindu origins while Muslim *ashrāf* gradually restricted their solidarity to fellow coreligionists? To bring insights into this oft-considered social phenomenon, I explore north Indian Muslim intellectuals' representations of the past that dominated the period from 1857 to the 1930s, a subject that has largely remained unexplored in scholarship. While analysing the sources that I shall present in this thesis, however, I realised that Urdu writers sought less to recover the past than recover *from* it. They appeared to strive to make meaning and heal from one particular collective trauma; that of the loss of power that the Uprising of 1857 and its immediate aftermath symbolised, across several generations. My study of collective memory thus eventually enriched by acknowledging the significance of cultural trauma for collective remembering at the time.

---

<sup>49</sup> P. Ricoeur, *L'histoire*, p. 583 and A. Bonnett, *Left in the Past. Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*, New York, London, 2010, p. 91. Chaliand notes that "following defeat or occupation, th[e] rigid clinging to old values became the basis of a kind of ideology of resistance" (G. Chaliand, *Revolution in the Third World: Myths and Prospects*, Hassocks, 1977, p. 8).

<sup>50</sup> P. Ricoeur, *L'histoire*, p. 583; S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, 2001; D. Walder, *Postcolonial nostalgias. Writing, representation, and memory*, Abingdon, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have showed that the Mughal aristocracy included both Hindu scribal groups like Kayasths, Khatri and Kashmiri Brahmins and Muslim *ashrāf* (Sayyid, Shaikhs, Pathans and Mughals) who shared a common Indo-Persian culture, see for instance M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi", in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2004, vol. 24 (2), pp. 61-72.

The historiography of cultural trauma follows that of collective memory since trauma is generally seen as one specific kind of memory. Memory and trauma studies have consequently often evolved hand in hand.<sup>52</sup> The concept of trauma, like memory, did not emanate from the field of historical studies but from that of medicine and psychology. The etymology of the word goes back to the Greek word for 'wound' and while it appeared as a medical term to refer to bodily injuries in the mid-seventeenth century,<sup>53</sup> it is only in the nineteenth century that trauma was associated with psychic wounds. Psychological research on trauma began with an interest in hysteria symptoms among both female and male patients - particularly for the latter in relation to work or railway accidents -, notably in Jean-Martin Charcot and Sigmund Freud's works.<sup>54</sup> It further developed with the First World War, when many casualties suffered from mental breakdowns.<sup>55</sup> In Britain, Charles Myers, who examined some of these cases, described the symptoms as resulting from a physical cause (shell-explosion) and consequently termed the condition "shell shock". At the time, symptoms such as memory loss, mutism, or paralysis were treated by traditionalist psychiatrists with electric shocks and those "who exhibited the 'hideous enemy of negativism' were threatened with court martial".<sup>56</sup> Other psychiatrists like W. H. R. Rivers, however, started using psychoanalytic principles to help recover from war neurosis.<sup>57</sup> After the Second World War,

---

<sup>52</sup> M. Broderick and A. Traverso, *Interrogating Trauma: Collective Suffering in Global Arts and Media*, London, 2011, p. 5: "[The] interpenetration of trauma studies and memory studies makes the boundaries of these two fields difficult to draw, and it is, in fact, virtually impossible to separate them out; their underlying difference being more of emphasis than any intrinsic specificity to be delineated from a historical, thematic or methodological perspective."

<sup>53</sup> L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson and M. Barad, *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> A. Young, "Bodily Memory and Traumatic Memory", in P. Antze and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, New York, 1996, p. 90. Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) for instance acknowledged the impact of traumatising events on psychological hysteria, but traditionally saw it as just the provoking agent on an otherwise already hereditarily weak subject (O. Van der Hart, "Charcot (1825-1893)", in G. Reyes, J. D. Elhai and J. D. Ford (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma*, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, London, 1997, p. 20.

<sup>56</sup> J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> He notably advocated the cessation of memory repression among sufferers. See W. H. R. Rivers, 'An Address On The Repression Of War Experience' delivered before the Section of Psychiatry, Royal Society of Medicine on Dec. 4th, 1917, originally published in *The Lancet*,

the clinical description of the traumatic syndrome, now better known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), was established.<sup>58</sup> Today in psychology, trauma is commonly understood as "an event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization".<sup>59</sup>

In his seminal study of the aftermath of the Buffalo Creek flood of 1972,<sup>60</sup> Kai Erikson showed that trauma affected communities too. He not only highlighted that "the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the mind and body" but also that "traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos - a group culture, almost - that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up".<sup>61</sup> Erikson was one of the first sociologists to extend the notion of trauma to a community, an idea that he further developed in his "Notes on Trauma and Community" in which he discussed how trauma affects social bonds.<sup>62</sup> As he indeed noticed in the Buffalo Creek incident, collective trauma tended to extend beyond the sole witnesses of the event to members of the community that were not present when the flood occurred. Complicating the understanding of the dissociative reaction often diagnosed in traumatised subjects,<sup>63</sup> Erikson argued that, while damaging the "basic tissues of social life",<sup>64</sup> trauma can in fact create community.<sup>65</sup> That

---

1918 and available online < <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/comment/rivers.htm> > (last accessed 14 June 2016).

<sup>58</sup> Notably in Kardiner's *The Traumatic Neuroses of War* (1941) according to J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, London, 1997, p. 24.

<sup>59</sup> J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. by D. Nicholson-Smith, London, 1973, p. 465 quoted in K. Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution*, London, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> K. Erikson, *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, New York, 1976.

<sup>61</sup> K. Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995, p. 185.

<sup>62</sup> K. Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', pp. 183-199.

<sup>63</sup> See for instance C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995, p. 8, who follows the idea developed by Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Erikson's idea that the phenomenon of "latency" is not applicable to collective trauma is also supported by A. Young "Bruno and the Holy Fool: Myth, Mimesis, and the Transmission of Traumatic Memories", in L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson and M. Barad, *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 344.

<sup>64</sup> K. Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community", p. 187.

is what he calls the "centripetal" and "centrifugal" tendencies of trauma, which sometimes make of estrangement the very basis for communality.<sup>66</sup>

In such circumstances, traumatic experiences work their way so thoroughly into the grain of the affected community that they come to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its imagery and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another. The point to be made here is not that calamity serves to strengthen the bonds linking people together – it does not, most of the time – but that the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship.<sup>67</sup>

Since Erikson's important observations, scholars have increasingly focussed on trauma's social and cultural qualities. Kirmayer, Lemelson and Barad have highlighted that while the clinical symptoms of individual psychological trauma are virtually the same in every culture, they "represent only one strand in a complex reality with biological, personal, social and political dimensions" that needs to be addressed.<sup>68</sup> J. C. Alexander's and Neil Smelser's works have particularly contributed to the understanding of cultural trauma as a meaning-making process and to the study of how "cultural carriers" create culturally-relevant "narratives of social sufferings".<sup>69</sup> In their works, collective and cultural trauma have often been differentiated by identifying the former as an "emotional state" and the latter as an "emotional and cognitive process having to do with construction and contestation of meaning".<sup>70</sup> In recent trauma studies, cultural trauma is commonly defined as:

a discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, when the foundations of an established collective identity are shaken by a traumatic occurrence and are in need of re-narration and repair.<sup>71</sup>

According to Smelser, the cultural shock must also be represented as damaging to the integrity of the culture affected and associated with strong

---

<sup>65</sup> K. Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community", p. 185.

<sup>66</sup> K. Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community", p. 186.

<sup>67</sup> K. Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community", p. 190.

<sup>68</sup> L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson and M. Barad, *Understanding Trauma*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> J. C. Alexander and E. B. Breese, "On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction", in R. Eyerman, J. C. Alexander and E. B. Breese (eds.), *Narrating Trauma: On the impact of Collective Suffering*, London, 2011, p. xii.

<sup>70</sup> E. B. Breese, 'Claiming Trauma through Social Performance: The case of Waiting for Godot', in R. Eyerman, J. C. Alexander and E. B. Breese (eds.), *Narrating Trauma*, p. 220. I however use the terms interchangeably in this thesis to refer to traumas or memories that are shared by a group and transmitted from one generation to the other.

<sup>71</sup> R. Eyerman, "Intellectuals and cultural trauma", in *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 14 n°4, 2011, p. 455.

negative affects such as shame or disgust.<sup>72</sup> Their constructionist definition of cultural trauma emphasises the fact that traumas do not just occur but are constructed; that it is through trauma narratives - rather than through the lived experience of traumatic events - that collective pain is inflicted and transmitted. Cultural trauma is thus seen as an on-going process of meaning-making that passes onto future generations as something that informs their core identity until it loses its relevance.<sup>73</sup> As Alexander notes, the construction of cultural trauma and the subsequent process of "working through" it, which passes in cases of individual trauma through psychoanalysis or "testimony", as Dori Laub and others argued,<sup>74</sup> takes place in society through the creation of literature,<sup>75</sup> whose aim is "to restore collective psychological health by lifting societal repression and restoring memory",<sup>76</sup> thus opening stimulating research avenues for the study of literature and the "refraction of trauma in fiction".<sup>77</sup>

This thesis is indebted both to Erikson's observations on trauma and their implications on social life and to recent scholarship on cultural trauma. Emphasising the social and cultural implications of trauma, this thesis argues that the impact of trauma on social ties reproduces what Erikson had noticed after the Buffalo Creek flood: it created estrangement and new community bonds out of the shared experience and emotions of suffering. Muslim elites of northern India also drew apart to constitute a new "community of the wounded" - *ahl-e dard* as shahr āshob writers would put it after 1857. With the growing loss of territory and consequent vulnerability of Muslim powers around the world from the 1870s, this solidarity of suffering would soon extend to fellow Indian Muslims during the "meaning-making process" and

---

<sup>72</sup> Neil J. Smelser "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma", in J. C. Alexander, *Cultural trauma and collective identity*, Berkeley, 2004, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> T. G. Schaap, *9/11 Fiction and the Construction of Cultural Trauma*, PhD dissertation, University of Calgary, 2015, p. 34.

<sup>74</sup> See D. Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995, pp. 61-75; and D. Laub and Sh. Felman, *Testimony : Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, New York, 1992. Laub argues that it is essential for the survivor to tell and "bear witness" retroactively to recover from trauma.

<sup>75</sup> J. C. Alexander, *Cultural trauma*, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>77</sup> See for instance K. Astbury, *Narrative Responses*, p. 8.

attempts at cultural reconstruction that notably unfolded in Hali's writings and later in Mohamed Ali's, Iqbal's and other Urdu writers' literary works. As Wen-chin Ouyang has recently observed for Arabic poetic modernity, "this 'traumatic' experience of a cultural other is paradoxically the catalyst for another modernity, a renewed opening up of culture and, more importantly, an opportunity for cultural revival, rejuvenation, and perhaps even revolution."<sup>78</sup> This thesis emphasises how trauma and its narratives can be fertile concepts to better understand fluctuating solidarities and cultural developments in colonial north India.

## Methodology

This thesis explores the views, writings and emotions of Urdu-speaking intellectuals as they undergo a process of collective mourning and articulate memory as a creative tool for cultural regeneration in colonial north Indian cities, and especially Delhi. This exploration of Urdu memory works starts with the traumatic shock generated by the Uprising of 1857 and ends with the publication of Iqbal's *Mosque of Cordoba* (1933) and the rise of fiction novels on pre-colonial Delhi up to the 1930s. Although I foresee the important political developments of the late 1930s and 1940s, which partly prefigure the Partition of 1947, I do not reach further into the mid-twentieth-century and do not seek to provide explanations for the success of the Pakistan movement.

I first started my exploration of Indian Muslim collective memory by following the evolution of one classic genre of Urdu poetry in the colonial world: shahr āshob poetry. While the genre first served to lament the devastation of north Indian cities (sometimes with an ironical sarcastic tone), it became increasingly associated with the genre of the elegy after 1857 and continues to be practised until today. The close relationship that Indo-Muslim culture cultivates between the city and collective memory, making of

---

<sup>78</sup> W. Ouyang, "Lost in Nostalgia: Modernity's Repressed Other", in J. Parker and T. Matthews (eds.), *Tradition, Translation, Trauma: The Classic and the Modern*, Oxford, 2011, p. 191.

the urban a particularly powerful locus of memory, led me to consider other material related to urban memory that stretched outside the realm of poetry, like mobilisations around the preservation of Delhi's heritage in the Muslim press as New Delhi was built or 1930s fiction novels on pre-colonial Delhi, therefore selecting a number of sources in Urdu and in English produced by Muslim intellectuals from 1857 to the 1930s. I understand by "intellectuals" those who Eyerman defined as "embracing the performance of a social role, one which involves the articulation of ideas communicated to a broad audience through a range of media and forums with the aim of influencing public opinion".<sup>79</sup> These included popular poets (such as shahr āshob poets, Altaf Husain Hali, or Muhammad Iqbal), novelists (Rashid ul-Khairi, Farhatullah Beg, etc.) and journalists (Mohamed Ali, contributors to literary magazines such as *Zamānah* or the *Awadh Punch*); although some of them belonged to the elite group of north Indian ashraf, others, like Muhammad Iqbal, did not. All, however, were part of the emerging Muslim middle class.<sup>80</sup>

Favouring an inductive approach and a close textual and contextual analysis of those writings, I discerned in the sources different "stages" in the process of dealing with the past: shahr āshob writers overwhelmingly expressed collective shock, Hali strove to articulate collective mourning, Mohamed Ali pressed for the official recognition of Muslims as victims, Iqbal and Khilafatist poets opened perspectives for community resilience and city novelists revealed the desire for creative closure and reparation through fiction. An evolution is palpable but I do not argue that it consists in a unique and uni-dimensional process. On the contrary, there are infinite ways of grieving collectively and infinite ways of exploring collective trauma. I only offer a glimpse into some of the attitudes to collective mourning of the loss of power among Muslims that composed the colonial north Indian social and literary landscape.

---

<sup>79</sup> R. Eyerman, "Intellectuals and cultural trauma", p. 454.

<sup>80</sup> See M. Pernau, *Ashraf into middle classes: Muslims in nineteenth century Delhi*, New Delhi, 2013.

The concepts of collective memory and trauma and especially the various methodologies used by memory scholars have often raised questions and criticism and these critiques have constantly nourished my reflexive approach to the source material. While some scholars have argued that collective memory does not exist because we cannot find its subject,<sup>81</sup> others have considered it as a meaningful but under-conceptualised term.<sup>82</sup> One of the most voiced critiques towards memory historians is their lack of differentiation between individual and collective memory, which often obscures "the audiences of the representations in question".<sup>83</sup> For Wulf Kansteiner, the dynamics of collective memory are too often viewed as an outcome and extension of individual memory without contextualising the "strategies of representations, which link facts of representation with facts of reception".<sup>84</sup> Collective memory scholars should systematically take into account the historical factors of collective memory: the intellectual and cultural traditions that fashion representations of the past, the "memory makers" and, finally, the audience which responds to those productions according to its own interests.<sup>85</sup> Memory must not be considered an outcome or an object but a complex social process of cultural production and consumption. Congino further argues that one of the effects of the widespread insistence on the political dimension of collective memory is to ignore the issue of reception and the formation of a shared identity "that unites a social group [...] whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations."<sup>86</sup>

Instead of only highlighting the political significance of memory narratives in colonial north India, this thesis seeks to place collective memory in a broader framework of social interactions, cultural change and shared emotions, without however denying the importance of the relationship

---

<sup>81</sup> M.-C. Lavabre, "Sociologie de la mémoire et de ses cadres" talking about Kosellek's point of view.

<sup>82</sup> Kansteiner quoted by D. Stone, "Beyond the Mnemosyne Institute", p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> W. Kansteiner. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies", in *History and Theory*, vol. 41, 2002, p. 179.

<sup>84</sup> W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning", p. 179.

<sup>85</sup> W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning", p. 180.

<sup>86</sup> A. Congino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History", p. 1390.

between memory and power, which permeates it throughout. Considering memory as an ever on-going and lively phenomenon that evolves through time not only according to its "makers" but also to its new media and consumers, I do not want to view memory as a mere political object and risk to "sacrifice" it to a study of its political use and "ignore the category of the social", as Congino warned.<sup>87</sup> On the contrary, my aim here is to consider memory as a locus for the articulation of connections "between the cultural, the social, and the political, between representation and social experience".<sup>88</sup> Each individual considered here was unique and yet, they all participated in a common effort of cultural regeneration that testified to significant social and cultural change. But, as scholars of collective memory cautioned, I do not emphasise the unitary or homogenous character of their writings.<sup>89</sup> Mainly because there is none: their works of memory are multiple, lively and debated and their meanings transform according to the context and to who reads them too.<sup>90</sup>

This is the "entangled-ness" and inter-relational nature of collective memory that I notably try to highlight in my study of Aligarh nostalgic works in the late nineteenth century and beyond, emphasising the many contexts in which they emerged and were later read and criticised by pro-Congress partisans, Hindu poets or Muslim journalists. One of the most fruitful strategies I adopted to highlight reception, consumption and public debate is to include the rich newspaper archive. In the course of my research, besides going through the *Native Newspapers Reports for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* from 1864 to 1937, I have perused several Urdu and English language newspapers and magazines edited by both Muslim and

---

<sup>87</sup> A. Congino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History", p. 1393.

<sup>88</sup> A. Congino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History", p. 1388.

<sup>89</sup> See for instance G. Feindt, F. Krawatzek, D. Mehler et al., "Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies", in *History and Theory*, vol. 53, February 2014, pp. 24-44.

<sup>90</sup> Both Avril Powell and Seema Alavi have emphasised the controversies that historical representations of the past triggered in relation to textbooks or stories of 1857. A. Powell, "History Textbooks and the Transmission of the Pre-Colonial Past in NW India in the 1860s and 1870s", in D. Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Delhi, 1999, pp. 91-133; S. Alavi, "Rethinking Religion and Politics: Ulema Histories and the Appropriation of 1857", in K. Narain and M. C. Das (eds.), *1857 Revisited: Myth and Reality*, Mumbai, 2008, pp. 147-163.

Hindu Urdu writers: the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* (1866-1877), *Tahzib ul Akhlāq* (a dozen volumes from 1870 to 1897), *Awadh Punch* (a dozen volumes from 1877 to 1938), *Kayastha Samachar and Hindustan Review* (1901-1911), *Zamānah* (1907-1913), *Hamdard* (year 1913) and *The Comrade* (1911-1925). This attentive reading enabled me to get a better sense of the atmosphere of the time and of the debates that took place within the wider public sphere and to interrogate the constant remodelling of the past.

Lastly, I emphasise the need to study these developments in the *longue durée* to appreciate better the reception and impact of representations on Indian Muslim consciousness across generations and class as social and cultural change transform north India. By looking at the writings of Urdu poets, novelists and journalists from colonial north Indian cities of the Punjab and the United Provinces and their reception in the wider public sphere, this thesis indeed sheds light on the complex dynamics behind collective mourning that followed the loss of power and cultural influence from 1857 in colonial north India and initiates a new theoretical and methodological approach for the reading of those texts.

### **Structure of the thesis**

I begin with delineating the nostalgic Urdu poetic genre of shahr āshob that resumes in north Indian cities after 1857 as displayed in the Urdu anthologies of contemporary shahr āshob poetry *Fughān-e Dehlī* ("The Lament for Delhi") and *Faryād-e Dehlī* ("The Cry of Delhi"). Stressing original poetic developments after 1857 and discussing the survival of Urdu poetic milieus, I argue that Urdu poets initiated a new type of secular marsiyah, which borrowed much from Shia aesthetics and helped establishing the Uprising of 1857 as cultural trauma. In Chapter Three, I follow the evolution of the genre into āshob poetry in the late 1870s and discuss how its development was integral to the formulation of the modernist discourses of the Aligarh movement. Focussing on the Urdu poet Altaf Husain Hali and his famous *Musaddas-e madd-o jazr-e Islām* (1878-9) and *Shikwah-e Hind* (1888), I highlight the role of nostalgic writings both in re-channelling collective

grieving into cultural regeneration and in serving political propagandas, such as the one that opposed Aligarh loyalists and the rising Indian National Congress in 1888. My discovery of the genesis of Hali's *Musaddas* offers important insights into the impact of melancholic Arabic Andalusí poetry in the articulation of nostalgia as a call for action. In Chapter Four, I consider the relationship between memory and mobilisation in Mohamed Ali's papers *Hamdard* and *The Comrade* from 1911 to 1915 and discuss the significance of memorials and public recognition in the shaping of a pan-Indian Muslim identity. Chapter Five seeks to show how the new generation of Urdu poets strove to open a way for collective resilience and emancipation from cultural trauma by turning nostalgia into positive action and self-assertion, especially during the Khilafat movement (1919-1924). I extend this analysis in Chapter Six to fiction novels on the city of Delhi in the 1910s-1930s and consider how the Mughal past entered the realm of collective fantasy thus enabling creative collective closure. Finally, I review in the conclusion the new insights into collective mourning uncovered in my sources and I discuss how they can enhance our understanding of the social and cultural history of colonial north India.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Narrating the traumatic shock: Urdu shahr āshob poetry on 1857**

The Indian Uprising of 1857 rapidly obtained the exalted status of one of the major events in the history of colonialism in India for both the British and Indians. With the defeat of the rebels and the victory of British forces, the landscape of North India was irrevocably changed. As the Mughal king and princes, the citizens of Mughal cities like Delhi and especially the elite groups associated with the Indo-Muslim culture suffered much during and after the Uprising. Many were imprisoned or executed and the Muslims, thought to be more responsible for the Uprising than Hindu subjects were usually expelled from the city,<sup>1</sup> forced to leave their belongings and properties. In Delhi, a vast quantity of goods, known as the “Delhi Prize” was seized by the officers; when the government finally agreed to restore the “unjustly” confiscated properties, most Muslims, who were forbidden within the city walls until 1862, were unable to claim theirs back.<sup>2</sup> Ghalib who remained in Delhi during the events gave heartrending accounts of his degrading situation and daily struggle to survive in his diary of 1857, *Dastanbuy*. On the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1859 he wrote to his friend Husain Mirza that “the orders issued here in Delhi are the decrees of fate and destiny, against which there is no appeal. Say to yourself: “We were never nobles; rank and wealth were never ours; we had no property, and never drew a pension.”<sup>3</sup>

Indo-Muslim elites saw their world crumble as quickly as the buildings around them. The finest monuments of Lahore, Agra, Lucknow and Delhi were destroyed or rehabilitated as chapels, hospitals, railway

---

<sup>1</sup> N. Gupta, *Delhi between two empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth*, Delhi, 1981, p. 22; this was partly attributed to British fear of an epidemic.

<sup>2</sup> *Home Department, Public*, 14th May 1858, n°97, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> R. Russell and K. Islam, *Ghalib. 1797-1869. vol. I: Life and Letters*, London, 1969, p. 226.

stations, post offices or military quarters,<sup>4</sup> “symbolic of the invincibility of British power”.<sup>5</sup> In Lucknow, while Begum’s Kothi (Nawab Amjad Ali Shah’s first queen’s palace) was used as a post office, many of the Nawabs’ buildings were simply pulled down and the city’s finest gardens destroyed: Charbagh became a railway station and Alambagh developed as a new colony.<sup>6</sup> Lukhnawis lamented that “Panch Mahala, Sangi Mahal, Hasan Manzil, etc. and other grand buildings which came under 1500 feet radius of the fort have been razed to the ground. Imambara Hasan Raza Khan, Masjids, etc. were bulldozed to the ground level.”<sup>7</sup> The city was unrecognisable. In Delhi, the transformation was as dramatic: after 1857, most of the crowded areas around the Red Fort were entirely demolished. Explosions were conducted in March 1859 within the Fort and most of the remaining buildings were requested for military use. Henry Cole, Curator of Ancient Monuments, reported in 1882 that “the great pillared *Diwan-i Am*, with its fine marble mosaic canopy and throne, is used as a canteen, and on the right of the throne is a bar for serving out liquor! To the left of the throne is an enclosure of bamboo screen-work in which Nubbi Bux keeps a soldiers’ coffee shop!”<sup>8</sup> In the city, the palaces of the Nawabs of Jhajjar, Ballabgarh, Bahadurgarh and Farrucknagar, the haveli of Nawab Wazir, Kucha Bulaqi Begum, the Akbarabadi Masjid and many madrasas were destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

As King has shown, demolitions after 1857 were often justified by new colonial ideas in urban planning which mainly aimed at maintaining hygiene and control and at separating the urban space between public and private spheres and native and colonial populations. After the Uprising, colonials began to remodel the city by introducing Western technology (railways and

---

<sup>4</sup> See *First Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the year 1881-82*, Simla, 1882, pp. xxiii and xxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Lahore Chronicle 1858, 15 May 1858, p. 309 quoted by N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> K. Hjortshoj, *Urban Structures and Transformations in Lucknow, India*, Ithaca, 1979, pp. 102-103.

<sup>7</sup> N. Masood, “Discovery of Lost Glory”, in S. Chandra and R. Taqui (eds.), *Conservation of Lucknow heritage: Preservation, Methodology and International Dimensions*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *First Report of the Curator*, p. xxiv.

<sup>9</sup> K. Hjortshoj, *Urban Structures*, p. 27.

later electricity, etc.), sanitising the town (through waste disposal or water supply systems) and modifying the structure of the walled city in creating two different and separated spaces: “one colonial, and primarily military and administrative, the second indigenous, and primarily residential, commercial and industrial”.<sup>10</sup> Apart from racial segregation, one of the most important transformations under British rule was a new emphasis on public spaces: narrow alleys gave way to wide streets and private gardens to public parks, a novelty which, as J. Hosagrahar demonstrated, did not remain devoid of tensions and conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

In this chapter, I investigate how the events were remembered in the decade immediately following 1857 by looking at the Urdu poetic genre of *shahr āshob* that described and lamented the devastation of cities,<sup>12</sup> notably in the compilation entitled *The Lament for Delhi (Fughān-e Dehlī, 1863)*.<sup>13</sup> Although scholars have noticed the existence and significance of *shahr āshob* poetry on 1857 it has generally been neglected in comparison to other and perhaps more “factual” sources of the period. This chapter re-assesses this body of texts through a careful analysis of their main literary motifs and highlights their originality and divergence from previous *shahr āshob*s. Although mid-nineteenth-century poets usually claimed continuity with the Urdu *shahr āshob* tradition and scholars have also generally emphasised pre-

<sup>10</sup> A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, social power and environment*, London, 1976, p. 209.

<sup>11</sup> J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous modernities: negotiating architecture and urbanism*, London, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> H. M. Bruijn, “Shahrangiz”, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 9, Leiden, 1997, p. 212 quoted by S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt*, p. 48 noted about Persian *shahr āshob*s that they could also be expressed in prose. Sunil Sharma thus prefers to see them as a topos, rather than a “genre” (S. Sharma, “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persia Poetic Landscape”, in *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, n°2, 2004, p. 73). See also F. Lehmann, “Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline”, in *Mahfil*, vol. VI, 2/3, 1970, p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> In 1931, Nizami Badayuni published another anthology of such poems entitled *Faryād-e Dehlī (The Cry of Delhi)* that I also analyse in this chapter, adding nine other contemporary poems found scattered in various poets’ *diwāns* and *kulliyāts* to Kaukab’s material. Nizāmī’s anthology strangely omitted two of Aish’s poems (*Ho gayā werān-e Dehlī-o dyār-e Lukhnau* and *Kyā kahūn is fālk-e sho’bdahgār ke nerang*) but added poems by Husami, Hali, Shamshir, Safir, ‘Abbas, Ghalib, Farhat and Majruh, some of which had been composed well after Kaukab’s edition of 1863. Hali’s poem for instance is said to have been composed and recited in an ‘English-style’ *mushā’irah* in 1874. The second edition of *Fughān-e Dehlī* also added Husami’s poem to Kaukab’s initial material but there is some debate around the authorship of the poem: while Nizami claims that it is the rare work of an otherwise unknown poet, Naeem Ahmad argued that it is actually from the pen of Bahadur Shah Zafar (N. Ahmad, *Shahr āshob*, New Delhi, 1947, p. 181).

and post-1857 connections,<sup>14</sup> I argue that the poems of *The Lament for Delhi* show important transformations in the way devastation is narrated. First, they represented 1857 as a cultural trauma through the development of the "secular" marsiyah and of a distinctive narrative of collective suffering that testified to traumatic shock and was widely shared through the performance of collective grief. Second, I will show how post-1857 shahr āshob poetry successfully re-channelled the deep emotions of nostalgia and the memories of Mughal glory into a strong attachment to the urban by increasingly exalting the city's materiality and reinvesting it with new meanings and stakes. This chapter more broadly aims to underline the significance of the traumatic shock of the loss of power that 1857 represented for Urdu-speaking elites.

### ***The Lament for Delhi: compiling shahr āshob poetry after 1857***

In 1863, only six years after the Uprising and a year after Muslims were readmitted into the city of Delhi, the poet Tafazzul Husain 'Kaukab' (1833-1873/4)<sup>15</sup> published an anthology of poems on 1857 entitled *Fughān-e Dehlī* (*The Lament for Delhi*)<sup>16</sup> by the Akmal ul-Maṭāb'a publishing house.<sup>17</sup> *The Lament for Delhi* gathers fifty-nine shahr āshob poems written in Urdu by thirty-eight poets,<sup>18</sup> all lamenting the devastation of Delhi (and, in a much lesser extent, of Lucknow) in 1857. The anthology is divided into three

---

<sup>14</sup> Kaukab clearly traced the genealogy of post-1857 shahr āshobs back to Muhammad Rafi' Sauda's verses by separating his collection into three successive "sparks", thus overtly claiming continuity with pre-1857 shahr āshob poetry.

<sup>15</sup> We do not know much on Kaukab, besides the fact that he was a disciple of Ghalib and an excellent friend of the poet Salik. Kaukab had two sons and two daughters but three of them died in their early years. See M. Ansarullah, *Jāma'-e tazkirah*, 3rd vol., Delhi, 2007, pp. 467-9.

<sup>16</sup> Tafazzul Husain Kaukab, *Fughān-e Dehlī*, [Delhi, 1863] and Lahore, 1954; 2007; Nizami Badayuni, *Faryād-e Dehlī*, Badaun, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> The publishing house was managed by Sayyid Fakharuddin and was situated in Hakim Mahmud Khan's (the famous court doctor) haveli, in Ballimaran since 1858. It also issued a weekly Urdu newspaper entitled *Akmal ul-Akḥbar*. See N. A. Khan, *Hindustānī Pres (1556 tā 1900)*, Lucknow, 1990, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> All but three poems are in Urdu: two are in Persian and one is bilingual Persian-Urdu. So Yamame counts sixty-three poems by more than forty poets but he might have taken into account the poems added by Nizami Badayuni in 1931. S. Yamame, "Lamentation Dedicated to the Declining Capital: Urdu Poetry on Delhi during the Late Mughal Period", in *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies*, vol. 12, 2000, p. 53.

“sparks” (*sharār*): the first contains four pre-1857 poems (one by Zafar and three by Sauda); the second fourteen poems on 1857 in the musaddas form with one *tarīkh* by Sozan; and the last thirty-eight ghazals and two *qat’ahs*. In each section, the poems are arranged according to the alphabetical order of their authors – though the most eminent poets are listed first – and every poet is introduced by a couple of lines in Persian indicating his name, and sometimes the names of his father and *ustād* in the manner of tazkirahs.

In the foreword, Kaukab described the compilation as a “new” type of *guldastah* (anthology) that interwove “the tears, sighs and heart-burnings of the natives of Delhi”.<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, *The Lament for Delhi* was presented as an attempt to record the collective grief of the post-1857 period by publishing poems that circulated orally and would otherwise, and most probably, have been lost. In the chronograms<sup>20</sup> presented at the end of the book, Kaukab’s work was indeed described by Salik as “the strange book [...] with which both the educated and uneducated will agree”<sup>21</sup> hence stressing that it adequately mirrored the shared feelings of the time. Kamil further described in his own chronogram that:

When Kaukab compiled this book,  
From which the condition of the people of Hind was revealed,  
Kamil thus named its date as “the endeavour  
to record the grief and sorrows of the people of Hind”<sup>22</sup>

If *The Lament for Delhi* thus constitutes a conscious “memory work”, the exact way in which the poems were collected, however, remains quite obscure. In his preface to the book, while emphasising the thriving of oral shahr āshob poetry after 1857 despite the decline of state patronage,<sup>23</sup> Salik described Kaukab’s efforts in the gathering and publishing of these poems:

<sup>19</sup> See the preface of *Fughān-e Dehlī*, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the way chronograms (*tarīkh*) work, see M. A. Farooqi, “The Secret of Letters: Chronograms in Urdu Literary Culture”, in *Edebiyât*, vol. 13, n° 2, 2003, pp. 147-158.

<sup>21</sup> See Salik’s chronogram: *Huī tālīf yek ‘ajīb kitāb*.

<sup>22</sup> Kāmil, *jab yeh tālīf Kaukab ne kitāb*.

<sup>23</sup> Poetry, which was a fundamental aspect of Indo-Muslim court culture, no longer appeared “useful” to the British. After 1857, *mushā’irahs* would have declined to the point that, in the mid-1870s the British finally took on the responsibility of organising them themselves. Ghalib for instance constantly struggled to find patrons despite his sophisticated panegyrics to Queen Victoria. See C. M. Naim, “Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A

It is obvious that when poets are in abundance and such a revolt arises, no seal can be put on the mouth that could restrain speech. And there is no force on the heart that could prevent it from filling with pain, no manifestation of grief that could not be expressed poetically. [...] In this city, lots of musaddases and ghazals have been composed on this topic, but no one had thought about gathering them and making of them a substantial anthology for the public.<sup>24</sup> [...] Munshi Muhammad Tafazzul Husain Khan, *takhalluṣ* Kaukab assembled them with extreme effort and, looking from place to place, had them sent to him. He organised them in a compendium, gave it to print to the publishing house Akmal ul-Matāba'a and entitled it *The Lament for Delhi*.<sup>25</sup>

While the compiling of anthologies by post was apparently becoming more common after 1857,<sup>26</sup> Pasha Mohamad Khan has argued that elements from the poems rather give evidence of the “existence of a community of poets interacting amongst themselves” than “of a scattered set of materials which Kaukab ha[d] brought together for the first time”.<sup>27</sup> He noted that almost all of the ghazals of the collection were composed in the same *zamīn* (metre) and the same *radīf* (rhyme) – “ān-e Dehlī” which incidentally rhymes with the title of *Fughān-e Dehlī* – and also detected examples of intertextuality.<sup>28</sup> He thus pointed to the possibility of the poems being the result of a *tarahī* *mushā'irah*, a poetic assembly that is “patterned”, i.e. when the rhyme is previously set, a common practice at the time.<sup>29</sup> Other scholars have indeed argued that the content of *The Lament for Delhi* stemmed from an organised context of composition. Malik Ram for instance, noted that “after the bloody disturbance of 1857, when peace and calm was re-established in the city the citizens probably held a *mushā'irah* during which the major master-poets of the time cried over the devastation of the city.”<sup>30</sup>

---

Comparison”, in Miller B. S. (ed.), *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 269 and R. Russell and K. Islam, *Ghalib*, p. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Literally for “spectators”.

<sup>25</sup> T. H. Kaukab, *Fughān-e Dehlī*, 2007, pp. 40-41.

<sup>26</sup> *NNRNWP&O* for 1864, p. 51 for instance, mentions the undertaking of a certain “Jewalanath” from Delhi who had gathered ninety pages of Persian poetry “written from various stations and sent by *dāk*” in the prospect of publishing an anthology.

<sup>27</sup> P. M. Khan, Draft paper, “What is a Shahr-Ashob” workshop, Columbia University, April 2009

[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt\\_pas\\_ha\\_fughanintro.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_pas_ha_fughanintro.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*. Ahsan’s *maqta’* (final verse) directly quotes an extract from Rizwan’s ghazal.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*. See also S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt*, p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> M. Ram, *Talāmeẓah-e Ghālib*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 469. The same idea also came up during an informal discussion with Feroz Dehlavi, retired professor of Urdu on 24 November 2013.

The attribution of the poems to one poetic event, however, seems rather limiting. Internal elements suggesting different dates of composition, signs of intertextuality in poems that are set in different patterns and the mention of oral recitation may also point at the continued liveliness of shahr āshob performances in the aftermath of 1857.<sup>31</sup> While Hali's poem (an addition of *The Cry of Delhi*) would have been recited in 1874, the poems composed by Raqam and Afsurdah are said to date from 1858, and Dagh's musaddas is supposed to have been composed in 1859-60.<sup>32</sup> Allusions to Mr Cooper's (Deputy Commissioner of Delhi until 1864) town improvement projects in two other poems also suggest a later date of composition.<sup>33</sup> In his commentary on shahr āshob poetry, Arifi indeed argued that "the tradition of *āshobgoī* was still present a few years after 1857".<sup>34</sup> As Urdu poets left Delhi to return to their hometowns, like Panipat, Aligarh, or Jahangirabad, and make a living from teaching, collecting taxes or as police officers,<sup>35</sup> or to settle in regional courts where patronage was still provided, poetic milieus that sustained the composition of shahr āshob poetry undoubtedly persisted. Hyderabad, Alwar, Rampur, Jaipur, or Tonk emerged as popular destinations. Majruh, for instance, after spending a few years at Hali's ancestral property in Panipat, successively travelled to the courts of Alwar, Jaipur, and Rampur.<sup>36</sup> Until 1874, when Shivdan Singh died, the court of Alwar employed several of the poets whose poems are gathered in the

---

<sup>31</sup> For examples of intertextuality, see for instance Tajammul, 'Phirte chalte jo men ā niklā beshahr-e Dehlī', verse 20, in the collection. I thank Katherine Butler-Schofield for pointing out to me during the Urban Emotions workshop (St John's College, Oxford, 27 February 2016) that the period immediately following 1857 and especially the years 1862-1863 were significant for the development of new musical styles, especially in north Indian regional courts. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, the period after 1857, to which *Fughan-e Dehli* belongs, was an intense period of renewal and adaptation. See for instance R. D. Williams, *Hindustani music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758-1905*, unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London, 2014

<sup>32</sup> N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 6 and p. 28. Hali's poem was not part of *The Lament for Delhi* but an addition of Nizami. About Dagh's poem, see S. M. A. Zaidi, *Muṭā'lah -e Dāgh*, Lucknow, 1974, p. 247.

<sup>33</sup> See S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt*, p. 61.

<sup>34</sup> A. Arifi, *Shahr āshob*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> See the examples of Rizwan and Zahir in M. Ram, *Talāmezah-e Ghālib*, p. 239 and N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> M. Ram, *Talāmezah-e Ghālib*, pp. 474-479.

anthology like Majruh, Salik or Zahir.<sup>37</sup> Communities of poets were thus still active.

Although the compilation aimed at emphasising the unity and similarity of the poems, differences in the authors' expressions and sensitivities can be uncovered. While the poets of the anthology evolved in a same literary milieu and were in constant interaction (and competition),<sup>38</sup> they also came from different communities and cities and earned their living in very different ways. Although the majority of them belong to the Muslim ashraf of Delhi and were sometimes friends or kin,<sup>39</sup> some of the poets were Hindus (Zahir is a Khatri and Farhat a Kayasth) or originally came from other cities, like Lucknow, Hyderabad, Agra, Benares, Panipat and Bijnor. Moreover, while some were amongst the most famous poets of the time (Sheftah, Azurdah, Salik, 'Aish, Dagh or Ghalib), others would have been of humbler or unknown origin, like Sozan or Husami (said to have earned a living from storytelling without having had a proper education),<sup>40</sup> sometimes even making mistakes of grammar and "pronunciation".<sup>41</sup>

It is thus important to note here that although the poems collected are similar and repetitive, they were composed by poets of different generations who had distinct experiences of the Mughal court and of the city. Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) for instance had only come to Delhi from Panipat in 1854 at seventeen years old after having secretly left his noble but impoverished family and his new bride in quest for religious education. He stayed away from the Delhi College, which he judged as "against religion",<sup>42</sup> and left the city two years later when he found employment as a clerk in Hisar.<sup>43</sup> His experience of the city was certainly very different from Hakim Agha Jan 'Aish's or Mufti Sadr Uddin Khan Azurdah's, both famous

---

<sup>37</sup> M. Ram, *Talāmeẓah-e Ghālib*, p. 239.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance the famous argument between Ghalib and 'Aish. N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> Dagh and Sha'iq are brothers, just like Rizwan and Salik, and Saqib and Talib.

<sup>40</sup> N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> T. H. Kaukab, *Fughān-e Dehlī*, ed. 1954, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> S. Anjam, *Monogrāf Khwājah Alṭāf Husain Hālī*, Delhi, 2007, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup> A. Ahmad, "Hali", in Gibb H.A.R. (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1999 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1965), online version.

notables of the time. Hakim Agha Jan 'Aish who died shortly after 1857 was the most prolific poet of *The Lament for Delhi* and six of his shahr āshobs (two musaddases and four ghazals) are gathered in the collection. He came from a famous family of Delhi physicians and was at the service of the king. Azad remembered later in his *Āb-e Hayāt* that

he was adorned with the jewellery of knowledge and the attire of accomplishment. He was courteous and of a good disposition, with a sweet tongue and a cheerful countenance. When you saw him you felt that he was smiling. [...] His ghazals, because of their limpidity of diction, liveliness of themes, and beauty of idiom, were flower-wands.<sup>44</sup>

Mufti Sadr Uddin Khan Azurdah (1789-1868), on the other hand, was also from a noble Muslim family but evolved in different spheres. Figure of the Delhi intelligentsia and lover of poetry to the extent that his house became a regular venue for mushā'irahs, he also held important official posts in the British administration: he was a member of the Delhi College and the Principal Chief Justice (Sadr Amin) of Delhi from 1841.<sup>45</sup> During the Uprising, Bahadur Shah wished to appoint him as city magistrate, a proposition that he refused, considering the Uprising to be "ill-advised".<sup>46</sup> His links with the Mughal court and a (forged?) signature on fatwas encouraging jihad against the British led colonial officials to suspect him of sympathy with the *mujāhidīn* and put him on trial. He was eventually released, but had lost his job and half of his property in the process.<sup>47</sup> Part of this situation appears in his musaddas, in which he both recalls the sophistication of the court as well as he attributes the responsibility of the Uprising to the Emperor:<sup>48</sup>

Misfortune befell the city because of the Fort

---

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Husain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat. Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, tr. and ed. by F. W. Pritchett and S. R. Faruqi, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 378-379.

<sup>45</sup> S. Liddle, "Azurdah: Scholar, Poet, and Judge", in M. Pernau (ed.), *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 125-144.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>47</sup> See A. Powell, "Questionable Loyalties: Muslim Government Servants and Rebellion", in C. Bates (ed.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, New Delhi, 2013, p. 93.

<sup>48</sup> R. Jalil, "Reflections of 1857 in Contemporary Urdu Literature", in C. Bates, A. Major, M. Carter and G. Rand (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, vol. 1: Anticipations and Experiences in the Locality, Los Angeles, 2013, p. 122.

Because of its [bad] behaviour, Delhi too was punished.<sup>49</sup>

The sympathies unveiled in the poems thus usually reflect each of the authors' personal situation, loyalties and perhaps hopes for the future. While Saqib (~1840-1869), son of Nawab Ziauddin Ahmad Khan Loharu,<sup>50</sup> appointed Honorary Magistrate of Delhi by the British, greatly praised British town improvement projects, Ghalib (1797-1869), resentful towards the British with whom he struggled to secure pension saw them as guilty of the bloodshed.<sup>51</sup> Contrary to what some scholars have argued, post-1857 shahr āshobs were far from being unanimously anti-British although, of course, censorship was most carefully enforced at the time.<sup>52</sup>

All the poems of the anthology invariably belonged to the shahr āshob style. In Urdu, the (relatively new) genre was essentially characterised by a particular mood, melancholy, and especially a particular subject: the city.<sup>53</sup> In the Islamic world that "had an overwhelmingly urban focus"<sup>54</sup> the city was usually celebrated through the vivacity of urban life and its idealised moral order: cities were often described as gardens of paradise on earth and conveyed particular ideas of harmony and virtue. Although tazkirahs and travelogues often described urban landscapes in some way or other, the genre or topos of *shahr āshūb* or *shahr angez* in the Turkish and Persian traditions which was greatly appreciated in the late Timurid and early Safawid periods<sup>55</sup> consisted in humorously praising a city by describing the positive uproar caused by its many beautiful young citizens (or "city-disturbers"). Instead of describing monuments as in Sanskrit literature or in the Arabic *rithā' al-mudun* genre, it portrayed sometimes satirically the inhabitants of various professional, ethnical and religious backgrounds.<sup>56</sup> The

---

<sup>49</sup> First verse from Azurdah's musaddas.

<sup>50</sup> N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> See Ghalib's ghazal in *Faryād-e Dehlī*.

<sup>52</sup> S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt*, pp. 67-76.

<sup>53</sup> F. Lehmann, "Urdu Literature", p. 127.

<sup>54</sup> M. Hermansen, "Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Biographical Literature (*Tazkirahs*)", in *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, 2002, vol. 4, n°2, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> M. Rahman, 'Shahrangiz', H. A. R. Gibb (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999, online version.

<sup>56</sup> See for example the description of Tabriz by Lissani in A. Bricteux, 'Pasquinade sur la ville de Tébriç, par maître Lissani de Chiraz', in *Mélanges de philologie orientale publiés à l'occasion*

representation of the city as a space where moral values and behaviours were epitomised eventually emphasised the morality and righteousness of its ruler. Seventeenth-century Persian shahr āshobs composed in India by Kalim Hamadani, Munir Lahori and Fani Kashmiri for instance served to exalt the greatness of the Mughal Empire by describing peaceful cities characterised by the diverse composition and impeccable morality of their inhabitants.<sup>57</sup>

From the eighteenth century, however, the genre was adapted in Urdu and operated an important shift, which definitely distanced it from its Turkish and Persian counterparts.<sup>58</sup> With the decline of Mughal power, poets increasingly resorted to the genre to portray the social disarray of north Indian cities. Whereas Turkish and Persian shahr āshobs were primarily composed in honour of the “city-disturbers”, the function of the city-poem radically changed to describe and lament the “disturbed city” and the confused state of affairs of different classes of inhabitants. Such poems were written on Delhi, Awadh, Bihar, Agra, Hyderabad and Rohilkhand<sup>59</sup> and the first of this kind would have been composed by Ja’far Zatalli (1659-1713), the famous satirist who was sentenced to death for having ridiculed the king Farrukhsiyar in one of his verses.<sup>60</sup> Often keeping a humorous and satirical tone,<sup>61</sup> Urdu shahr āshobs described the disorder and chaos of a “world turned upside down” and the fall of moral values attached to the Indo-Persian culture.<sup>62</sup> Along with satirical critiques of the power in rule, which sometimes recalled “insult poems” (*hawj*),<sup>63</sup> realistic depictions of misery,

---

*du Xe anniversaire de la création de l'Institut supérieur d'Histoire et de Littératures Orientales de l'université de Liège*, Louvain, 1932, pp. 1-56.

<sup>57</sup> S. Sharma, “‘The Errant Eye’ and Mughal Pastoral Poetry”, paper given at the CSAS seminar, 14 March 2013.

<sup>58</sup> The first poem in this trend was probably the *Maṣnawī-e āshob-e Hindustān* composed in Persian by Bihishti at the end of the reign of Shah Jahan.

<sup>59</sup> N. Ahmad, *Shahr āshob*, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> On Zatalli’s “obscene” and satirical poetry see S. R. Faruqi, “Burning Rage, Icy Scorn: the Poetry of Ja’far Zatalli”, paper presented at the Hindi-Urdu Flagship Program, University of Texas, Austin, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008, accessible online at: [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/srf/srf\\_zatalli\\_2008.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/srf/srf_zatalli_2008.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> I. Hasan, “Later Mughals as represented in Urdu Poetry. A study of Qa'im's shahr ashob”, in *Annali dell' Instituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, vol. XII, 1962-3, p. 132.

<sup>62</sup> C. M. Naim, “A Note on Shahr Ashob”, in *AUS*, vol. 4, 1984, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> For more on that, see for instance I. Hasan, “Later Mughals as represented in Urdu poetry. A Study in the light of Shahr Ashobs from Hatim, Sauda and Nazir”, in *Annali dell' Instituto*

hunger and exile were intertwined with complaints on the reverse of fortunes, with the morally and occupationally “inferiors” rising in status.<sup>64</sup> This new development, with the fact that shahr āshob writers usually used plain and simple language, led the Urdu genre to be considered as “democratic”<sup>65</sup> and “historical”, the change in fortunes pointing for instance at the growing social tensions between Hindu commercial groups and the Indo-Persian gentry during the eighteenth century.<sup>66</sup> After the sack of Delhi by Ahmad Shah Abdali (1756), Urdu poets gradually abandoned their satirical tone and the caricature of all types of citizens to become more emotional and lament the city’s devastation.<sup>67</sup> After 1857, Urdu poets naturally turned towards shahr āshob poetry to express their grief at Delhi’s desolation, claiming continuity with the Urdu tradition. I argue, however, that they also developed the genre in unprecedented ways by developing it as a secular marsiyah and by making of the urban space the very centre of their narrative of cultural trauma.

### **The shock of 1857 and the expression of collective trauma**

Although shahr āshob poems written on 1857 show and claim continuity with previous poems, they also attest rupture and I argue, *intended* to do so. By durably linking the shahr āshob genre to the marsiyah, by emphasising discontinuity and by nostalgically “sacralising” the pre-1857 city, shahr āshob writers aimed (and succeeded) at describing 1857 as a cultural trauma. As Astbury noted for French Revolution novels, authors usually turned their personal strife into a narrative construct in trying to come to terms with their

---

*Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, vol. IX, 1959, pp. 131-153 or the work of Abdullah Chishti at JMI.

<sup>64</sup> M. Rahman, “Shahrangiz”, in Gibb H.A.R, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999, online version.

<sup>65</sup> C. R. Petievich, “Poetry of the declining Mughals: the shahr ashob”, in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. XXV/1, 1990, p.105.

<sup>66</sup> C. Bayly, “Delhi and Other Cities of North India During the 'Twilight'”, in R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages. Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi, 1993, p. 132.

<sup>67</sup> Mir Taqi Mir powerfully expressed these feelings in prose and poetry. See Mir Taqi Mir, *Zikr-e Mir. The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi 'Mir'*, tr., introduced, and commentaries by C.M. Naim, New Delhi, 2002 (1st ed. 1999).

traumatic experience.<sup>68</sup> As she explained, "this means that the texts are often a compromise between reporting and not reporting, repeating and curing, somewhere between a disguised repetition of the traumatic event and the direct verbal representation of it".<sup>69</sup> Shahr āshobs poets indeed displayed the psychological symptoms of trauma: they represented their recollections of 1857 as indelible "parasite"<sup>70</sup> memories in the Indo-Muslim collective consciousness. Trauma is for instance constantly described as still actively distressing; the present tense is always used when describing the events of 1857, in many instances the acuteness of the shock is asserted through its recurrence and poets often express their need but difficulty to talk about the events;<sup>71</sup> all symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Tajammul for instance repetitively used the word *phir* (again) to characterise his emotional distress:

*Again, the thought of Delhi is tied to my mind,  
Again, comes the melancholy and grief for Delhi.  
Again, my heart breaks [...]*<sup>72</sup>

Ghalib also well described the collective inability of "processing" and coping with trauma and how the traumatic wound affected collective identity:

Such inflaming is the complaint,  
Alas, we bear this burning scar!  
Jointly, alas, we cry and tell  
The tear-shedding events.  
Thus we meet with friends, O God,  
*How could we erase from our hearts the scar of separation?*<sup>73</sup>

Although Urdu shahr āshobs had always documented social dismay, and continued to do so in the Urdu-speaking world,<sup>74</sup> they had never presented

<sup>68</sup> K. Astbury, *Narrative responses*, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> K. Astbury, *Narrative responses*, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> See for instance C. Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1996.

<sup>71</sup> The idea of remaining silent because of the shock appears in several poems: see for instance Rizwan, *Merī faryād se zāhir hai bayān-e Dehlī* verse 16; Salik, *Jahān meṅ shahr haiṅ jitne jahān Jahān ābād*, verse 19.

<sup>72</sup> Tajammul, *Phir bandhā dil pe khayāl-e Dehlī*, first stanzas.

<sup>73</sup> Ghalib, *Bas keh fu'āl māyārīd hī āj*, last three couplets in *Faryād-e Dehlī*.

<sup>74</sup> Shahr āshob poetry describing factual destructions of cities also continued to be written. One striking example is the lamentations on the "Great Flood" of Old Hyderabad by the Musi River on the 28th September 1908 that led to the death of many citizens and the destruction of whole neighbourhoods. Hyderabadī poets writing in Urdu (like Ali Haider Tabatabai or Amjad Hyderabadī) described the events in heartrending shahr āshob poems. One of the most famous examples is the poem entitled *Qiyāmat-e soghrā* (The Minor

the events described as “culturally undermining”, one of the most central elements in the representation of cultural traumas.<sup>75</sup> As Erikson and other scholars have argued, events are not traumas as such: it is the way people react to them that gives them their traumatic quality.<sup>76</sup> *The Lament for Delhi* testifies in many ways to collective trauma and consists in attempts by Urdu poets to express collective grief through performance and represent 1857 as rupture by developing the "secular" marsiyah.

While post-1857 shahr āshobs are, like their antecedents, narratives of loss and ruin, the use of specific literary devices helped establish the events as culturally traumatising and shaped the way shahr āshobs came to be written. In the construction of a narrative of cultural trauma and in the reading of 1857 as an example of collective martyrdom, shahr āshob writers generally resorted to a language and framework that was particularly efficient in conveying grief and tales of common dispossession: the marsiyah. While the marsiyah – from the Arabic root *r-s-y* (literally, “oration in mourning”<sup>77</sup>) – is to be found in the secular Arabic lamentations traditionally recited at the time of the funeral for the mourning of the deceased or at the loss of cities like Baghdad or Cordoba,<sup>78</sup> the genre in Urdu and Persian was mainly used in a religious context to commemorate the martyrs of Karbala and especially Imam Husain. Only from the later part of the eighteenth century and especially in the mid-nineteenth century were shahr āshobs

---

Doomsday) composed by Amjad Hyderabadī who saw his family swept away by the current (See for instance, Khwajah Hamid ud-Din Shahid, *Haiderābād ke shā’er. Intikḥāb kalām: 1900 se 1958 tak*, Hyderabad, 1958; Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Ḥazrat Amjad kī shā’eri*, Hyderabad, 1934; Hakim Ashura Jamal Amjad: *Sayyid Ahmad Husain ‘Amjad’ Sāhib Rubayāt*, Hyderabad, 1964; Muhammad Osman Ali, *Amjad Hyderabadī: Hayāt aur kārnāme*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Osmania University, 1987. I am grateful to Professor Ashraf Rafī’ for discussing the topic with me). The Partition of 1947 also saw a recrudescence of empirical shahr āshob poetry.

<sup>75</sup> J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> K. Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble*, New York, 1994, p. 229 and J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 36.

<sup>77</sup> M. Trivedi, “A Genre of Composite Creativity: Marsiya and Its Performance in Awadh”, in M. Hasan and A. Roy (eds.), *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 194.

<sup>78</sup> Ch. Pellat, “Marthiya” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition online).

composed “in a new way, in which the “colour” of marsiyah was prominent”.<sup>79</sup>

From 1857, shahr āshob writers massively (and almost exclusively) used the musaddas and ghazal verse forms: of the fifty-nine poems of *The Lament for Delhi* fifty-two (i.e. almost ninety per cent of them) are either in the musaddas<sup>80</sup> or ghazal forms. Both genres irrevocably accentuated the feelings of loss and despair and linked the memory of the Uprising with Shia mourning. On one hand indeed the ghazal, which originated in Arabic poetry from the *naṣīb* (nostalgia) part of the panegyric *qaṣīdah*, was traditionally used by the poets of the Hejaz to describe the deserted encampment and express sorrow at separation.<sup>81</sup> As amorous poetry it also reflected on the transience of love and on the pain of loss and separation with the beloved. It was also one of the usual metres used for requiems.

Famished, they watch the sky with the eyes of regret,  
And recognise in the crescent moon a slice of bread!<sup>82</sup>

Families were seized out of their home and murdered,  
There are no graves, no coffins and no mourners.<sup>83</sup>

The resort to this particular form enabled nineteenth-century shahr āshob writers to nostalgically emphasise human finitude. They thus described the destruction of Delhi allegorised in the figure of the lost lover or of the deceased in a more abstract, condensed tone by elaborately using classical images of loss like autumnal gardens or extinguished candles.

The adoption of the musaddas form, however, was even more unequivocal. The musaddas was originally developed in the Shia kingdom of Lucknow for the elegies devoted to Imam Husain and his relatives martyred at Karbala, which were especially recited during the month of Muharram. In nineteenth-century Lucknow, the marsiyah was indeed “invariably” in the

---

<sup>79</sup> “Shahr āshob”, in *Urdū Dāīrah-e M’ārīf islāmīyah*, p. 820.

<sup>80</sup> The musaddas is a six-stanza metre on the model “aaaabb ccccd”, see M. Rahman, “Musammāt”, in H.A.R. Gibb, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999, online version, the adoption of this meter for shahr āshobs was an innovation of the time; “Shahr āshob” in *Urdū Dāīrah-e M’ārīf islāmīyah*, p. 825.

<sup>81</sup> “Ghazal”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Brill, 2nd edition online) by R. Blachère and A. Bausani.

<sup>82</sup> Mubin, *Pasand-e khātīr har khās-o ‘ām thī Dehlī*, verse 22.

<sup>83</sup> Zahir, *Farishte maskīn-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 16.

musaddas form.<sup>84</sup> Developed with Mir Damir, the musaddas under Anis and Dabir was increasingly considered “the most suitable form for a marsiyah”<sup>85</sup> and had become the fundamental characteristic of nineteenth-century Shia elegies. As C. M. Naim argued, the change was most probably linked to the fact that “the marsiyah moved indoors” and poets abandoned singing for declaiming (*taht ul-lafz*).<sup>86</sup> The genre usually consisted in the commemoration of the hardships suffered by the martyrs of Karbala, with detail and realism. Azurdah, the famous Chief Justice of Delhi before the Uprising, gave the longest and most detailed account of the fortunes of the nobility to which he belonged in his musaddas. First recalling the sophistication and elegance of the Mughal court, Azurdah’s poem laments its ruin and culminates with the memory of his two friends, the poets Sahba’i and Sheftah, respectively killed and sent to jail by the British:

Those who could not bear the weight of jewellery  
And found the *jhūmars* on their foreheads heavy  
They could not wear even muslin *dūpaṭṭās*  
And wrap themselves in intricate stoles  
Now they go everywhere carrying loads  
They walk two steps with difficulty and fall.<sup>87</sup>

[...] One day, madness led me to the forest  
To beat with a stone my head and chest  
My heart and soul are in pieces,  
When I remember the encounters with Mustafa Khan [Sheftah]!  
How wouldn’t you become mad, O Azurdah  
When the innocent Sahba’i has been murdered this way?<sup>88</sup>

The use of both the ghazal and musaddas forms for shahr āshob poetry therefore seems to have been a deliberate choice made by post-1857 poets to emphasise and describe the sufferings of the citizens with particular pathos. Along with the adoption of the forms usually adopted for Shia elegies, shahr āshob writers certainly adopted the elegists’ task of weeping and making others weep (*ronā aur rulānā*). With heartrending descriptions of massacre and misery declaimed in a particular way and tone, the Shia marsiyah aimed

<sup>84</sup> J. A. Haywood, “Marthiya”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>85</sup> C. M. Naim, “The Art of the Urdu Marsiya”, in M. Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds.), *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 102.

<sup>86</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>87</sup> Azurdah, *Āfat is shahr meṅ qila’ kī badaulat āyī*, verse 3.

<sup>88</sup> Azurdah, *Āfat is shahr meṅ qila’ kī badaulat āyī*, verse 11.

at generating a particular collective mental and emotional state of mourning, considered religiously rewarding. The main quality of marsiyahs is indeed that of evoking emotions (*ras-bhāv*) to an audience<sup>89</sup> - and of acting as what Amy Bard calls "emotives" -<sup>90</sup> and, with this collective emotional "contagion" (or "collective effervescence"), reinforcing sentiments of group belonging and solidarity.<sup>91</sup> Post-1857 shahr āshob poetry assuredly shared these aims. The poems of *The Lament for Delhi* and *The Cry of Delhi* swarm with comparisons between shahr āshob poets and Shia elegists (*marṣiyahkḥwāns*) and reveal a same context of recitation during which both the poet and the audience would burst into tears. Hali for instance indicated a clear equivalence between shahr āshob and Shia performances (while claiming the inappropriateness of the situation):

It is not a mourning assembly (*bazm-e mātam*), but a mushā'irah, Hali,  
It is not here proper to grieve others with your tears.<sup>92</sup>

With the similar use of interjections of sorrow (*wāe, hāe, haif*, etc.), shahr āshob writers aimed at transmitting deep emotions to the audience and induce collective expressions of mourning but applied to a different non-religious context. Salik's description in the preface of Kaukab's compilation of the context of composition of the poems but especially of their potency to make the audience re-live the traumatic experience supports the idea that the poets' use of the musaddas and ghazal forms was consciously made:

If you look carefully, every musaddas is an elegy (*marṣiyah*), and every ghazal is a requiem (*nauḥah*). Who has the power, listening to them, not to cry? Whose heart is not brimming with blood because of this pain? When one listens to someone's verses on that matter, his ears go dumb, he has knots in his stomach, he remembers his own hardships and that crossing of the desert comes in sight again.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> M. Trivedi, "A Genre of Composite Creativity", p. 198.

<sup>90</sup> A. Bard, "No Power of Speech Remains!: Tears and Transformation in South Asian *Majlis* Poetry", in K. C. Patton, J. S. Hawley (eds.), *Holy tears: weeping in the religious imagination*, Princeton, 2005, p. 156.

<sup>91</sup> C. von Scheve, "Collective Emotions in Rituals: Elicitation, Transmission and a "Matthew-effect"", in A. Michaels and C. Wulf, *Emotions in Rituals and Performances*, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 55-77.

<sup>92</sup> Hali, *Jitne jī maut ke tum munh meṅ nah jānā hargiz*, verse 30 in *Faryād-e Dehlī*.

<sup>93</sup> *Fughān-e Dehlī*, 2007, pp. 40-41.

The reference to the effect of verses on the audience is also an enduring theme developed in the poems. At least one verse of every poem was dedicated to the description of its capacity to make listeners burst into tears as Salik had announced in the preface.

*In listening to this condition, whose heart is not wounded?  
Who is not miserable, afflicted by this sorrow?  
Which heart is not seized by this sadness?  
Which eyes do not shed tears of blood because of this woe?*<sup>94</sup>

*In listening to every verse, how can eyes not fill with tears?  
O Salik, grieved are the marsiyahkhwāns of Delhi!*<sup>95</sup>

By interweaving emotions and memory in such a particularly potent way, and by making conspicuous links with Shia rituals of mourning, shahr āshob poems generated the same responses of collective mourning in their audience. The composition and recitation of shahr āshob poems in the aftermath of the Uprising may have released some of the tension generated by the trauma in inscribing the experience into collective memory, thus “allowing the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed” through collective acts of commemoration.<sup>96</sup> Although the relevance of the concept of catharsis is difficult to assess in the case of shahr āshob poems, the use of specific genres inducing memory and weeping certainly helped both express trauma and cure through the performance of collective grief. The fact that shahr āshob poems, like Shia elegies, could have been recited or chanted in a particular way supposed to arouse and heighten emotions in the audience could also have resulted in the trope of the “weeping Hindustani” (poet and/or musician) lamenting the end of the Mughal world, notably developed in early twentieth-century Bengali literature.<sup>97</sup>

By commemorating and collectively grieving the loss of power in 1857, Urdu poets narrated a tale of collective martyrdom and identified themselves

---

<sup>94</sup> ‘Aish, *Kyā kahūn is falk-e sho’badahgār ke nerang*, verse 2.

<sup>95</sup> Salik, *Rūe jannat men bhī ham kar ke bayān-e Dehlī*, verses 3 and 14.

<sup>96</sup> J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> For instance the figure of Murad Khan in Dilipkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Bhārater Saṅgīta Guṇī*. Pt. II. Calcutta: A. Mukherji, 1978, pp. 15-27, quoted in Richard Williams, *Hindustani music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758-1905*, PhD dissertation, King’s College London, 2014, p. 248.

as a “people of suffering” (*ahl-e dard*).<sup>98</sup> Contrary to previous shahr āshobs, post-1857 poems tended to increasingly direct their gaze toward past glory and integrate this yearning as much as trauma as part of their core identity. Some poets like 'Aish illustrated well how trauma irrevocably changed them:

The irises are wearing blue garments  
 Afflicted, they are the mourners of Delhi  
 The hyacinths are twisted recalling  
 The entangled curls of the beloved of Delhi  
 The poppies change their marks in memory  
 Of the beauty spots of the fairies of Delhi  
 The narcissi are open wide, remembering  
 The good look of the beautiful-eyed of Delhi<sup>99</sup>

The poets' portrayal and claim of collective martyrdom and traumatic cultural damage were closely linked with a representation of the events of the Uprising as a rupture as well as with a desperate yearning for pre-1857 times. The Uprising was unanimously represented as a breach in the history of north Indian Mughal elites by being compared to the apocalypse. Some poets thus cleverly inscribed Delhi's experience within Islam's sacred history to emphasise rupture.

They say that the violence of this tempest is unfathomable,  
 Here Noah's ark too would have sunk.<sup>100</sup>

Mubin's musaddas for instance conspicuously linked 1857 with the memory of Karbala:

Such injustice had never been seen before  
 This is a catastrophe that has left hearts in pieces  
 Alas, in front of their fathers, sons have been killed  
 With this sorrow how can the memory of Janab Asghar not come again?<sup>101</sup>  
 Delhi too is an example of Karbala  
 Delhi causes fathers to cry on their children's corpses.<sup>102</sup>

The representation of 1857 as cultural rupture, however, most notably took the form of a deep yearning for the pre-1857 city as poets constantly lingered on descriptions of paradise lost. The stark opposition between past

<sup>98</sup> See for instance Zahir, *Farishte maskīn-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 27.

<sup>99</sup> 'Aish, *Mil gayī khāk meṅ shān-e Dehlī*, verses 16 to 19.

<sup>100</sup> Dagh, *Falk zamīn-o malā'ik janāb thī Dillī*, verse 11.

<sup>101</sup> 'Ali Asghar was the youngest son of Imam Husain and was martyred at Karbala like him on the tenth of Muharram. He is honoured as the youngest martyr of Karbala, he is said to have been six months old at the time of the battle.

<sup>102</sup> Mubin, *Pasand-e khātir har khās-o 'ām thī Dehlī*, verse 29.

and present and the poignant use of “before/after” images illustrate well the feelings of loss, which for S. Boym are often linked to the arrival of modernity or to the aftermath of revolutions and of the fall of empires.<sup>103</sup> One of the most interesting and notable innovations of post-1857 shahr āshob poetry is indeed that it was less a literature about the city than a literature about the city *of the past*. Past and present invariably appear in pure antagonism and nostalgia emerges in each couplet through various “then and now” images: paradisiac gardens turned into deserts, beautiful princes into beggars. This way of representing the events of 1857 continued onto the early twentieth century. Khwajah Hasan Nizami for instance accompanied his *Ghadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne* (from 1914)<sup>104</sup> by touching “then and now” images of princes similar to those depicted in shahr āshob poems, thus hinting at the “inter-mediality” of these motifs.<sup>105</sup>

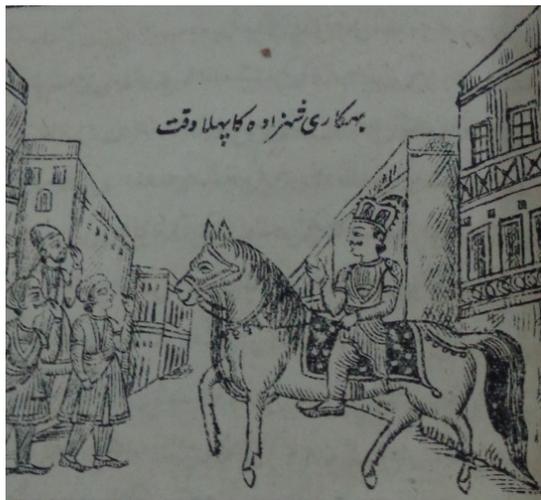


Fig. 2.a. The prince's previous state

Khwajah Hasan Nizami, *Ghadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne*, vol. 1, Delhi, 1918, p. 42



Fig. 2.b. The prince's ultimate condition

<sup>103</sup> S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, 2001, p. 7 and D. Walder, *Postcolonial nostalgias*, p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> For a study of the work, see M. Schleyer, “Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane”, in *AUS*, vol. 27, 2012, pp. 34-56.

<sup>105</sup> See for instance Hazrat Khwajah Hasan Nizami, *Ghadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne. Hissah Awwal*, Delhi, 1918, pp. 42, 50, and 98.

## Emotions and the city: the urban landscape and the expression of collective grief

In Sanskrit literature, the description of cities with their palaces and buildings was one of the characteristics of a good poem,<sup>106</sup> and Arabic poetry too had a long tradition of describing deserted camps. As Pellat noted poets used to mourn over *aṭlāl* (ruins) and lament the destruction of buildings (and mosques in particular), especially after the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols or at the loss of cities in Ifriqqiya or Al-Andalus (especially Cordoba) during the *Reconquista*.<sup>107</sup> If people and souks were also mentioned in praise of the cultural and economic bloom of cities, Hassen noted that “an emphasis is often put on the caliph’s palaces and mansions, on their grandeur and rich architecture, on the parks and gardens that surround and embellish them. We are sometimes told of chandeliers and pounds with water-jets, and sometimes, even if fragmentarily, the interiors of apartments or royal chambers are described.”<sup>108</sup>

In Turkish and Persian, however, it was people rather than buildings that formed the urban landscape. Writers usually memorialised the diversity of the population that made the city a sanctified and glorious habitat in *taẓkirahs*, travelogues or *shahr āshob* poems. This was also how cities came to be described in the Indo-Persian tradition. Margrit Pernau has for instance noted about the famous travelogue of Dargah Quli Khan (composed in Persian around 1739-1741 and entitled *The Delhi Album* or *Muraqqa’-yi Dehlī*) that “the complete absence of descriptions of the buildings of Delhi is conspicuous”,<sup>109</sup> and that it was people, living and dead, who actually framed the city landscape. In his account, Dargah Quli Khan only

---

<sup>106</sup> The city was praised in Sanskrit literature through the portrayal of the beauty of city palaces and of the organised order of its population, the social groups described being situated in specific areas of the town (Kshatriyas thus resided in the East, Brahmins in the North, etc.). See for instance B. Chattopadhyaya, *Studying Early India: Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues*, London, 2006, p. 75. See also Dandin, *Kavyadarsa* I, pp. 22-3 quoted by S. Kaul, *Imagining the Urban: Sanskrit and the City in early India*, New Delhi, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> Ch. Pellat, "Marthiya".

<sup>108</sup> See for instance M. Hassen, *Recherches sur les poèmes inspirés par la perte ou la destruction des villes dans la littérature arabe du IIIe/IXe siècle à la prise de Grenade en 897/1492*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Sorbonne 1977, vol. 1, p. 90.

<sup>109</sup> M. Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, p. 157.

incidentally described the urban space as the majority of his work consisted in listing and describing Sufi saints, poets and entertainers. Apart from a few *dargāhs*, marketplaces were the only urban spaces that were given some attention. In the following passage about Chowk Sa’adullah Khan in Delhi, the market is described in a very typical shahr āshob style, emphasising human interactions and sensual love:

The uproar [of the chowk] is in front of the gate of the fort and there is a confluence in the surroundings of the Peshgah of the Jalu-Khana. [...] There are beautiful lads dancing at intervals and the storytellers playing on the imaginations of the people. Seated on the wooden chairs are fortune-tellers reminiscent of the *maulvis* on the pulpits, who speak eloquently on the relative importance of each day and month [...]. [This place] is full of catamites and beardless lads. Whenever one raises one’s eyes there are beautiful faces and when one extends a hand it rubs across someone’s neck.<sup>110</sup>

In eighteenth-century Urdu poetry too, the description of “disturbed cities” still consisted of the depiction of social chaos rather than urban destructions.<sup>111</sup> The poems of *The Lament for Delhi* largely retained the traditional Persian way of describing the urban space and eulogised the pre-1857 city in exalting the virtue and quality of its many residents, “doctors, poets, scholars, mathematicians, and wise men”.<sup>112</sup> The ruin of the city was still described through the ruin, death and exile of its citizens:

Their grandeur and pomp was ruined,  
Of those who were the pomp and grandeur of Delhi.<sup>113</sup>

Where are the skilled? Where are the perfect people?  
Because of their erasure was erased the magnificence and splendour of Delhi.<sup>114</sup>

However, some post-1857 shahr āshobs also indicate particular changes in the conception and representation of the urban that seem to have begun to develop from the middle of the eighteenth century in Sauda’s and

<sup>110</sup> Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-ye Dehli: The Mughal capital in Muhammad Shah’s time*, ed. and transl. by C. Shekhar and S. M. Chenoy, Delhi, 1989, pp. 21-22.

<sup>111</sup> See for instance “Qalandar Bakhsh Ju’rat, In the presence of the nightingale: a shahr ashob”, transl. by S. F. Rahman, and F. W. Pritchett, in *AUS*, vol. 3, 1983, p. 3: Cobblers wear gold-embroidered shoes, and stroll about in state; potters give up earthenware and dine from silver plate. Shavers of pubic hair now make up poems to recite; what a disaster, even the pied mynah, day and night, tries to make his voice prevail in the presence of the nightingale!

<sup>112</sup> Mubin, *Pasand-e khātir har khās-o ‘ām thī Dehlī*, verse 11.

<sup>113</sup> Aish, *Mil gayī khāk meṅ shān-e Dehlī*, verse 6.

<sup>114</sup> Tajammul, *Sirf ek nām ko bāqī hī nishān-e Dehlī*, verse 8.

Mir's verses. Already at the time, the theme of the building in ruin started to appear in *shahr āshob* poetry: ruins were sometimes used as a motif to express feelings of despair and grief but usually remained metaphorical, abstract and anonymous.<sup>115</sup> After the sack of Delhi by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1756, *shahr āshob* writers started to show less interest in the listing and caricature of confused citizens and more in the melancholic description of the city. 1857 *shahr āshob* writers amplified it in an unprecedented way: in addition to the description of the ruins of nameless houses and buildings particular monuments were mentioned by name and sometimes briefly described. The city's splendour was no longer only attributed to the people inhabiting it but to monuments, which equally composed the urban landscape:

Alas, Alas, Shahjahan's buildings have been dug up,  
Alas, Alas, Delhi's splendour has been destroyed!<sup>116</sup>

Along with the three major areas of Old Delhi (the Red Fort, Jāma' Masjid, and Chandni Chowk), a number of streets (particularly Ballimaran), canals, shops and other buildings entered the poetic realm. The poet Shamshir for instance mentioned the Khas bazaar (between the eastern gate of the Jāma' Masjid and the Red Fort) and Mirza 'Aziz evoked the Lal Diggi, a tank built in front of the Red Fort, also known as the Ellenborough tank (1846):<sup>117</sup>

In the Khās bazar which was near the exalted Fort,  
There were all kinds of prosperous shops of Delhi  
Now even in name the buildings have not remained,  
Thus nameless have become all the houses of Delhi.<sup>118</sup>

The great Lāl Diggi was the cause of the city's bloom,  
It is now blind, that protective eye of Delhi!<sup>119</sup>

The new concern with monuments is often explained by scholars studying early nineteenth-century travelogues, maps or antiquarian writings by the growing influence of Western scholars interested in the historical heritage and spatial mapping of north Indian cities from the middle of the

<sup>115</sup> See for instance Sauda, *Mukhammas-e shahr āshob*, verse 28.

<sup>116</sup> Saqib, *Hāe kuhn sāl falk dushman-e jān-e Dehlī*, verses 2 and 3.

<sup>117</sup> H. C. Fanshawe, *Delhi: Past and Present*, Delhi, 2010 [1907], p. 20.

<sup>118</sup> Shamshir, *Kaise kaise hue barbād-e makān-e Dehlī*, verses 7 and 8.

<sup>119</sup> Mirza 'Aziz, *Jitne dekh ke kehete hain khazān-e Dehlī*, verse 13. There is surely a pun here between *chasham* 'eye' and *chashmah* 'source' to allude to the tank.

eighteenth century but most importantly from the beginning of the nineteenth century. C. M. Naim, F. Devji and M. Pernau,<sup>120</sup> for instance, have argued that a new approach to monuments had been initiated by Western scholars, officers and tourists interested in the historical heritage and spatial mapping of North Indian cities.

One of the first works, which reproduced such conceptions of the city as a primarily built environment, was Mirza Sangin Beg's *Sair al-Manāzil* ("A Walk through the Houses") composed in 1820 and possibly commissioned by Thomas Metcalfe.<sup>121</sup> In 1824, Lalah Sil Chand compiled his *Tafrīḥ al-'imārāt* describing the buildings in Agra (and accompanied by drawings) under the instigation of John Steven Lushington,<sup>122</sup> and in the late 1840s, Syed Ahmed Khan edited his two versions of *Āsār uṣ-Ṣanādīd* at the behest of a British judge.<sup>123</sup> In these works, monuments were increasingly described as archaeological remains. The most famous and better-studied example of this change in perceptions is the comparison between the first and second edition of *Āsār uṣ-Ṣanādīd* by Syed Ahmed Khan (in 1847 and 1852 respectively) to appeal to the Royal Society in London.<sup>124</sup> While the edition of 1847 contained many descriptions of the people of Delhi, the second edition was largely expunged of these "digressions".<sup>125</sup> The Delhi of the second edition was no longer a habitat but a site of antiquities.<sup>126</sup> Pernau has argued that from the

---

<sup>120</sup> C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called "Asar-al-Sanadid"", in *MAS*, vol. 45, n°3, 2011, p. 698; F. Devji, *Muslim nationalism: Founding identity in colonial India*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993, pp. 76-78; M. Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle classes*, p. 158. See also Y. Sharma, "From Miniatures to Monuments picturing Shah Alam's Delhi (1771-1806), in A. Patel and K. Leonard (ed.), *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, Leiden, 2012, pp. 111-138.

<sup>121</sup> To whom the edition held by the Archaeological Museum of the Delhi Fort is dedicated. (M. Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle classes*, p. 65). See also C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books", p. 689.

<sup>122</sup> S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters*, p. 96.

<sup>123</sup> Robert N. C. Hamilton, see C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books", p. 670.

<sup>124</sup> C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books", p. 705, see also *Asar Oos Sanadid*, Cawnpore, 1904, p. 2: Syed Ahmed Khan thus corrected some information, and systematically added dates, sources and the copy of the inscriptions found on the monuments. Syed Ahmed Khan received the title of Honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1864.

<sup>125</sup> See C. W. Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: "Asar al-Sanadid", in *JRAS*, n°2, 1972, pp. 135-146; and D. Lelyveld, "Sauda Sulad: Urdu in the Two Versions of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Asaru's-Sanadid", in *AUS*, vol. 26, 2011, pp. 21-38.

<sup>126</sup> C.M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books", p. 698.

1840s, due to British influence, Indian writers started favouring matter-of-fact descriptions of the urban landscape thus revealing, for her, that the "link between people and spaces is broken around the time",<sup>127</sup> "and hence the possibility for the endowment of spaces with feelings".<sup>128</sup>

I argue that other circumstances can explain the greater emphasis on architecture displayed in contemporary Indian writings and that the idea that it completely replaced older ways of conceiving urban space is to be nuanced. Contrary to what has been often argued, even the second edition of *Āsār uṣ-Ṣanādīd* still, although less obviously, showed the persistence of shahr āshob motifs, city monuments being at times described as living sites. The Jāma' Masjid for instance was still described by both Syed Ahmad Khan and shahr āshob writers, like Kamil, as living sites, dependent on human life (and ruin).

The eastern doorway is located on the side of the Khās bazar. The doorway is very large and buildings have been built upon it. In front of the door are thirty-five stairs. Every day there is movement on these stairs: this movement is like a daily fair in Shahjahanabad. A thousand different types of clothes are hung on clotheslines and with wonderful beauty make everywhere look like a garden in bloom. Young men of passionate disposition go about holding all sorts of animals in cages making their beautiful voices resound. On one side a pigeon seller sells pigeons and on another side a horseman stands with horses. Customers wander in large numbers and buy their purchases in exchange of cash.<sup>129</sup>

This description easily compares with post-1857 shahr āshobs, in which the mosque appears as a site of human interactions through the description of its markets, reliquary and stairs:

Its splendid markets were set like a *chaupar* in every direction.<sup>130</sup>

The penitents had rose-cheeked faces,  
Night and day, these colourful assemblies were adorned,  
In the evening, the movement on its stairs was (like) spring

The sky has ruined it all,  
Now it has become a hospital.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> M. Pernau, "Mapping Emotions, Constructing Feelings: Delhi in the 1840s", in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2015, vol. 58, p. 651.

<sup>128</sup> M. Pernau, "Mapping Emotions", p. 638.

<sup>129</sup> Syed Ahmed Khan, *Āsār uṣ-Ṣanādīd*, Delhi, 2011, pp. 278-283.

<sup>130</sup> A cruciform board game.

<sup>131</sup> Kamil, *Tamām gulshan 'aish-o sarūr thī Dehlī*, verse 27, referring to the fact that only the sick now come to pray to the mosque.

In fact, the attachment of the poets to the city landscape is visible in the fact that the city usually appears as a container, which provides the necessary setting for action putting buildings and people in a relation of interdependence, nuancing the idea that the link between both had been severed at the time. Some shahr āshob writers for instance emphasised this particular relation with the metaphor of the body represented by the city that citizens bring to life.

Ghalib, Sheftah, Nayyar, Salik and Saqib,  
In the body of Delhi, these people were the life of Delhi.<sup>132</sup>

The intimate relation between the people and their built environment is also echoed in the poems by the idea that the fortunes of the population and of the buildings mirrored each other. Social upheaval is thus paralleled by the despair generated by urban ruin, monuments echoing the citizens' ordeal and reflecting human finitude. In a couple of instances, poets expressed the idea that, just as the poet himself mourned the devastation of the city landscape, edifices too were wailing over its population:

It became insignificant in the world, the mark of Delhi,  
Homeless has become every house of Delhi.<sup>133</sup>

The sky now cries at the earth's condition,  
Every house cries on the separation with its occupants.<sup>134</sup>

The strong reciprocity between the built landscape and the people seems to translate the loss of habitat generated by 1857 into a cultural dislocation. Environment and culture were seen as deeply linked since environment shaped culture just as culture reciprocally modelled environment. The loss (or destruction) of one's habitat and sense of place is thus often equalled with the death of culture itself. Scholars of urban memory have frequently noted that changes in the urban landscape tremendously affect social memory, as built environments both create a "sense of community"<sup>135</sup> and act as powerful reminders of collective history, forming a "topography of remembering" which embodies the past in the physical landscape "through

<sup>132</sup> 'Abad, *Ham ne mānā keh milī khāk meṅ shān-e Dehlī*, verse 6.

<sup>133</sup> Muhasin, *Woh pari chehre hue qatal miyān-e Dehlī*, verse 3.

<sup>134</sup> Dagh, *Falk zamīn-o malā'ik janāb thī Dillī*, verse 11.

<sup>135</sup> P. Connerton, *How modernity forgets*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 99.

traces of the city's sequential building and rebuilding".<sup>136</sup> To see the poets' wailing over the destruction of buildings as a sign of rupture between people and their built environment would, however, be a step too far. On the contrary, Delhi's monuments became charged with unprecedented symbolism and appeared as supports of a fading Mughal culture and identity because they stood in place of the people when most of them had left or died. The Red Fort stood for the Mughal nobility, Ballimaran for the poets, Chandni Chowk for the hustle and bustle of daily life. The loss of buildings echoed the loss of the people who interacted around them and, vice-versa, if buildings still stood, maybe there was hope that life would resume.

Thank God, the Jāma' Masjid remained standing!  
There is now hope that it was saved, the life of Delhi.<sup>137</sup>

While Western influence may have accentuated the change in conceptions of the urban that also appears in shahr āshob poetry,<sup>138</sup> I argue that the growth of a sense of place and the emotional investment in the architectural environment were also inspired by both the changing nature of Mughal travelling practices from the eighteenth century onwards and the expression of cultural trauma.

*From movable to immovable cities: Mughal camps and cities*

The Mughals like the Timurids and Safawids (under whose rule shahr āshob literature thrived) were incredibly mobile and retained a nomadic way of life.<sup>139</sup> Although Mughal emperors built fine capital cities and encouraged urbanisation, the Mughal court consisted first and foremost of a camp. As the French traveller Bernier described in his *Travels in the Mogul Empire (A.D. 1656-1668)*, "the whole population of Delhi is in fact collected in the camp, [...] it has no alternative but to follow [the court and army] in their march or

---

<sup>136</sup> M. Crinson (ed.), *Urban Memory. History and amnesia in the modern city*, New York, 2005, p. xii.

<sup>137</sup> Ahqar, *Hāe afsos keh āfat zadgān-e Dehlī*, verse 12.

<sup>138</sup> Hali's shahr āshob for instance mentions the art of painting the city: "O master-painter, do not open before us an album of paintings, it will only remind us of the mushā'irahs of the past", verse 4.

<sup>139</sup> A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, London, 2004, p. 77

perish from want during their absence".<sup>140</sup> As far as 1739, Mughal emperors spent around forty per cent of their time in tours of one year or more.<sup>141</sup> When emperors left with their camp, the city was emptied of its population and dramatically declined since the entire court (women, cooks, water-carriers, craftsmen, etc. included)<sup>142</sup> followed the emperor.

Massive tents were erected as the entire court moved from one place to another, forming a veritable "tent city" with palaces, streets and bazaars.<sup>143</sup> The Jesuit Father Monserrate for instance reported that "[the bazaars] established for the King and the princes are very large and very well-stocked, not only with stores of grain and other provision, but also with all sorts of merchandise, so that these bazaars seem to belong to some wealthy city instead of to a camp. They are always made on one plan, so that anyone who has spent a few days in camp knows his way about the bazaars as well as he does the streets of his own city."<sup>144</sup> Abul Fazl also described in the *A'in-i Akbari* the size of each encampment, which required for its carriage "100 elephants, 500 camels, 400 carts, and 100 bearers."<sup>145</sup> In 1648, the imperial camp as symbol and assertion of Mughal power was so essential that it served as archetype for the construction of the Red Fort of Delhi whose layout reproduced the model of the camp.<sup>146</sup> Even in the capital city, tents were still erected in and around buildings, and awnings and canopies were rigged to the palaces.<sup>147</sup> Architecture and "tentage" were usually combined as far as 1857.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, A.D. 1656-1668, pp. 280-1 quoted by S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The sovereign city in Mughal India, 1639-1739*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 68.

<sup>141</sup> S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 97.

<sup>142</sup> A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the great Mughals*, p. 80.

<sup>143</sup> A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the great Mughals*, p. 80.

<sup>144</sup> F. Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia, 1206-1925*, London, 2007, p. 129.

<sup>145</sup> Abul Fazl 'Allami, *The Ain-i Akbari*, trans. by H. Blochmann, Calcutta, 1873, vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>146</sup> P. A. Andrews, *Felt Tents and Pavilions: The Nomadic Tradition and its Interaction with Princely Tentage*, London, vol. 2, 1999, p. 903.

<sup>147</sup> P. A. Andrews, "The Generous Heart or the Mass of Clouds: The Court Tents of Shah Jahan", in *Muqarnas*, 1987, vol. 4, p. 151.

<sup>148</sup> The continuance of the use of tents under Shah Alam II and Bahadur Shah Zafar is for instance attested in Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e āk̄h̄ir*, Delhi, 1885.



Fig. 2.c. The Diwan-e Khas in the Palace in the Delhi Fort  
Ghulam 'Ali Khan, Watercolour, 1817. British Library, shelfmark Add.Or.4694

As travelling practices started to wane at the beginning of the eighteenth century, probably as a result of the unmanageable size of the imperial camp but also with the decline of Mughal power and territory, the court remained increasingly immobile. I argue that around that time, when Mughal territory started to equal to the territory of Delhi itself, a new sense of place started to develop amongst Mughal elites and city buildings became even more imbued with symbolism.

*Nostalgia and the city's materiality: emphasising cultural trauma*

Delhi is often represented in the poems as a sacred space, sometimes at the centre of Creation, or equalled to the holy places of Islam (especially to Mecca). The urban space is often integrated into the world of Islam and the world of Islam is reciprocally integrated into Delhi's landscape, therefore affirming both its beauty and sacredness:

This city was the noble city after Mecca,

This city was more heavenly than all other cities combined.<sup>149</sup>

In her investigation of Indian tazkirahs, Hermansen has noted that the sacralisation of cities was a way of memorialising Islam in the urban space and affirming Muslim identity through the configuration of new centres and circuits of pilgrimage.<sup>150</sup> Indo-Persian elites had in fact often compared Delhi to a little Mecca since the beginning of the Muslim rule.<sup>151</sup> In shahr āshob poems, however, the sacralisation of the pre-1857 landscape seems to do more than defining space as a memorial of religious piety. The places of pilgrimage and worship that were exalted in tazkirahs are not the only spaces sacralised in post-1857 shahr āshob poetry, in which the entire Mughal city with its language and culture is described as the place of God's manifestation. While the language of the Exalted Fort, Urdu, is equalled to the language of the Qur'ān, the Red Fort is compared to the Mount Sinai, one of the places of God's manifestation on earth.<sup>152</sup>

In the world there was no rival to its magniloquence,  
As if it were the language of the Qur'ān, the language of Delhi.<sup>153</sup>

Friends call it *Urdū-e Mu'alla*,  
It is the language of God, this special language of Delhi.<sup>154</sup>

Delhi was like the rise of Khurshid's light,  
Delhi was the envy of a hundred Mount Sinai.<sup>155</sup>

The shahr āshobs of *The Lament for Delhi* undoubtedly displayed particular representations of the city that helped build a poetic narrative of cultural trauma. The representation of Indo-Muslim elites as "victims" merged with a reading of 1857 as damaging to the very essence of Indo-Muslim culture that the Mughal city epitomised. The poets of *The Lament for Delhi* aimed at emphasising the pre-1857 urban landscape in order to

---

<sup>149</sup> Safir, *Kyā āsmān āj badenwān ho gayā*, verse 2.

<sup>150</sup> See M. Hermansen, "Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Bibliographical Literature (Tazkirahs)", in *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, vol. 4, n°2, 2002, pp. 1-21.

<sup>151</sup> *Idem*. As Khusrau put it "if it but heard the tale of this garden [Delhi], Mecca would make the pilgrimage to Hindustan"!

<sup>152</sup> The Fort, like the Sinai, is red in colour: when God appeared to Moses on the Mount Sinai, he appeared surrounded by red light (explanation given by Nuzhat Farzana). Red is also the colour typically associated with Mughal power.

<sup>153</sup> Sipih, *Miṭ gayā safihah-e 'ālam se nishān-e Dehlī*, verse 10.

<sup>154</sup> Zahir, *Bal be Dehlī-o zahe shaukat-o shān-e Dehlī*, verse 15.

<sup>155</sup> Kamil, *Tamām gulshan-e 'aish-o sarūr thī Dehlī*, verse 1.

accentuate the cultural damage that its devastation implied. They partly followed traditional theories of Islamic architecture in which the Emperor and his imperial city (or camp) were conceived as the *axis mundi*, the imperial Fort acting as the “symbolic centre of a nested hierarchy: city, empire and universe”.<sup>156</sup> Perceived as both the macrocosm of man and the microcosm of the empire, the city was described to resemble human anatomy (perhaps hereby alluding to the emperor) with the main market acting as its backbone, the palace as its head, the Great mosque as its heart, smaller streets and buildings acting as ribs and organs, and walls defining the body.<sup>157</sup> Such theories are exactly reproduced in *The Lament for Delhi*, in one of Ahsan’s verses:

Let’s call Chandni Chowk the breast, and say the Fort’s the head,  
And let’s imagine Jāma’ Masjid is the waist of Delhi.<sup>158</sup>

As Siddique has shown, the metaphor of the body was indeed an important image in Mughal ideology and authority was asserted through the “ritual and relational hierarchy of the different parts of the body” for instance materialised in the ceremonious giving of the *khila’t* (honorific robe) which incorporated the subjects in the body politics.<sup>159</sup> As O’Hanlon argued, the just emperor and his norms and values were seen as agents of cohesion in the articulation of the different bodies composing the empire and regulating, by moral virtue, the different spheres of the kingdom, household and individual.<sup>160</sup> The Mughal emperor was the symbolic centre of the city and Empire, acting as the “divinely ordained focus [...] of society”,<sup>161</sup> and the poems largely perpetuated this vision.

---

<sup>156</sup> S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. xiv.

<sup>157</sup> N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi tradition in Persian Architecture*, Chicago, 1973, p. 93 quoted by S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 35.

<sup>158</sup> Ahsan, *Hāe woh log jo the rūh-o riwān-e Dehlī*, verse 3, translation by Pasha Khan, [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt\\_pasha\\_fughan.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_pasha_fughan.pdf), p. 4,

<sup>159</sup> S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt*, p. 50 quotes B. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”, in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 168.

<sup>160</sup> R. O’Hanlon, “Kingdom, Household and Body History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 41, 5, 2007, p. 889.

<sup>161</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *Nets of awareness*, p. 29.

I argue here that the sacralisation of Delhi both reflected traditional Islamic theories of the city as centre of culture and emphasised traumatic cultural loss. What is indeed mourned in the poems is not the city landscape as such but its “sacredness” epitomised in the image of the Mughal king and of his power, which embodied God’s presence on earth. The city is described as an allegory for Mughal culture and power and this is certainly why no 1857 shahr āshobs seem to have been written at the time on local *qaṣbahs* or regional towns but on cities on which a Mughal aura had shone.<sup>162</sup> In a couple of verses, Zahir further illustrated the divine link between the Mughal king and God by calling Bahadur Shah’s rule the “Caliphate” as well as his dynasty the “House of Timur”.<sup>163</sup> Through the description of ruin, it was in fact the link between men and God, embodied in the figure of the king that was said to have been broken:

The trees of this prosperous garden have been trampled  
The flowers of the gardens of the Caliphate have been reddened with blood.<sup>164</sup>

Where is the king of justice Bahadur Shah?  
Where is this eloquent and just sovereign Bahadur Shah?  
Where did these unfaithful rebels come from  
That have erased his name from the world?<sup>165</sup>

As scholars like Daniela Bredi have noted, the choice to remember pre-1857 Delhi as a Mughal city was however not entirely accurate. Although the Mughal emperor still reigned over the Red Fort, his influence had become mostly symbolic and his resources were limited. After Shah Alam II’s difficult return to Delhi in 1774 and the British occupation of Delhi from 1803, the proverb used to mock that the Mughal “empire” only stretched from Delhi to Palam.<sup>166</sup> As a matter of fact, Delhi, from 1803 to 1857 was very much governed by the British who controlled what happened in the city and fort. ‘Arsh Timuri remembered in his *Qil’a-e mu’alla kī jhalkiyān* (1937) that the Mughal court had to obtain permission from the British Resident every

<sup>162</sup> At least, no such poems have yet been unearthed.

<sup>163</sup> Zahir, *Farishte maskīn-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 32. Divine light was supposed to have descended from Timur to his Mughal descendants. See for instance: F. Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia*, London, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>164</sup> Zahir, *Farishte maskīn-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 23.

<sup>165</sup> Zahir, *Farishte maskīn-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, end of verse 24.

<sup>166</sup> As the saying literally goes “Sultanat-i Shāh ‘Ālam, az Dehlī tā Palam”. Palam is now a South West suburb of New Delhi.

time the king planned to leave Delhi, even to spend a few days in his hunting lodges on the outskirts of the city.<sup>167</sup>

Since their annexation of Delhi in 1803, the British had pacified the territory and made it thrive again.<sup>168</sup> They had adopted the Mughal way of life and manners, founded the Delhi College and stimulated and commissioned artists, poets, and scholars, as well as managed the city. The city bloomed again in what Andrews called the “Delhi Renaissance”.<sup>169</sup> In a recent article arguing against the idea of Muslim estrangement from the British and hostility towards Western knowledge before 1857, Mushirul Hasan emphasised the fact that during the Delhi Renaissance Muslim elites had in fact begun to adapt to Western ideas and power, and had only little interest in the Mughal king and his fort. He further argued that “not many shed tears over the collapse of the Mughal Empire or the defeat of Bahadur Shah, a decrepit old man who took refuge in Urdu lyrical poetry.”<sup>170</sup> The shahr āshob poems of the time, however, conspicuously wailed over the end of the Mughal world and not over the end of the “colonialism” of the White Mughals. As Bredi puts it, indeed, the Delhi Renaissance period has usually been read among Indo-Muslim elites as “an imagined place embodying the final splendour of the Mughal age”,<sup>171</sup> and shahr āshob poetry well supports this statement. As an article by “a Hindu Nationalist” also wrote in the *Hindustan Review* and *Kayastha Samachar* in December 1902, the period was remembered as follows:

Delhi still had its statesmen, though statesmanship in their hands degenerated into mere intrigue, its poets, who though inferior to *Khusro* and *Faizi* still retained traces of the fire of the old masters, its scholars, who though incapable of striking out new lines of thought, yet haunted the precincts of old libraries, seeking solace from the worries of a distracted world in the contents of some old moth-eaten volume, its soldiers, though there were no battles to fight and no countries to conquer, its belles and beaux, its musicians and dancers, its Nawabs and Rajas. The Emperor was

---

<sup>167</sup> Arsh Timuri, *Qil'a-e mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, Delhi, 1937, p. 48.

<sup>168</sup> Fraser Papers, vol. 33, AF to his mother, p. 338, 6 December 1811, on the Ganges quoted by W. Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, London, 2006, p. 74.

<sup>169</sup> N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> M. Hasan, “The Legacies of 1857 among the Muslim Intelligentsia of North India”, in C. Bates et al. (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins*, p. 111.

<sup>171</sup> D. Bredi, “Nostalgia in the re-construction of Muslim identity in the aftermath of 1857 and the myth of Delhi”, in *Cracow Indological Studies*, vol. XI, 2009, p. 145.

still there, with his pompous though empty pageantry, his *Diwan Am* and *Diwan Khas* and the pseudo-peacock throne, and his court, though reduced to the shadow of a shade, still cast its spell over the people of his city.<sup>172</sup>

This profound nostalgia and romantic memory of the period as a Mughal one was certainly a discursive tool for the construction of a narrative of cultural trauma by Urdu poets in the aftermath of the Uprising, and did not wait the 1930s to develop, contrary to what Bredi argued.<sup>173</sup> The emphasis in the poems on the city's holiness and its allegory for Mughal culture and power clearly participated in the articulation of the narrative of its devastation as a cultural trauma by emphasising major cultural loss.

The evolution of the representation of the city in 1857 shahr āshob poems would therefore indicate both the growing sense of place that had developed with the decline of the Mughal Empire and the conscious attempts at creating 1857 as cultural trauma, which made buildings central to the definition of the urban landscape. As Ghalib indeed lamented in a letter when remembering the world before 1857, "all these things lasted only so long as the king reigned".<sup>174</sup> The new emphasis on buildings and urban planning projects in the poems indeed reflects the growing preoccupation for the protection of heritage sites and town improvement measures in the aftermath of the Uprising. As Dagh and Saqib both illustrated, the death and life of the city's culture was thus increasingly linked to the destruction and reconstruction of buildings:

An open field in the middle of the Fort and, within it, a road  
Have changed the very heart and life of Delhi.<sup>175</sup>

Who is that ruler of Jamshed's rank? Cooper sahib!  
May he be called the Shah Jahan of Delhi!

[...] Once more the Jāma' Masjid's bustle fills the market,  
Once more, every building in Delhi is adorned.

[...] There is a beautiful museum in the Fort  
Like a Chinese idol-house it watches over Delhi.

Chandni Chowk was ruined, but then built anew  
Let us call it the youthful fortune of Delhi.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar*, December 1902, vol. VI, n°6, p. 502.

<sup>173</sup> D. Bredi, "Nostalgia", p. 146.

<sup>174</sup> R. Russell and K. Islam, *op. cit.*, p. 291 quoted by Pritchett, *Nets of awareness, op. cit.*

<sup>175</sup> Dagh, *Yūn miṭā jaise keh Dehlī se gumān-e Dehlī*, verses 8 and 9.

<sup>176</sup> Saqib, *Hāe kuhm sāl falk dushman-e jān-e Dehlī*, verses 8, 10 and 12-13, translated by P. M. Khan:

This last poem, however, is the only instance of appraisal of the positive urban changes under the British rule in the collections, and the large majority of the poems linger on lamentations over urban destructions. Other sources, such as Ghalib's letters and the *Native Newspaper Reports*, well highlight the fact that after 1857, issues around urban development were often raised by Urdu litterateurs and editors who frequently lamented and opposed the destruction of some garden, well, mosque or ancient gate. From 1857 to his death, Ghalib regularly lamented the destruction of lanes or gateways.<sup>177</sup> Most of the notices of the *Native Newspapers Reports* "positively" mentioning the British Government's impact on the city landscape generally consisted of calling the state's assistance in restoring sites such as the *nuzul* gardens in Lucknow (1868), Humayun's tomb (in 1868), the Jāma' Masjid (in 1871), the Taj Mahal (in 1871), the Lahore Fort (in 1873), etc. Oppositions to demolitions were plenty however. Much emphasis was put on the demolition of historic sites by the British Government or on its negligence towards dilapidated buildings. Alterations and destructions of buildings were eagerly followed (and even anticipated) by the elite population: rumours around the destruction of the Khooni Darwaza in Delhi appeared in 1865 and oppositions to the intentions of the Government of demolishing the Machchi Bhawan and the Raiser Pasand in Lucknow respectively emerged in 1868 and 1873. These examples and many others, which were published in Indian newspapers after the Uprising up to the twentieth century, show the Indo-Muslim elites' deep preoccupation for the protection of heritage sites and for the "proper" use of (Mughal) monuments in the colonial world. Disrespect towards tombs, improper uses of mosques and negligence towards gardens and mausoleums were often denounced by Urdu editors.<sup>178</sup> Controversies on the use, management and legitimate authority over these sites usually led to

---

[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt\\_pas\\_ha\\_fughan.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_pas_ha_fughan.pdf), p. 3. N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 92. Cooper did much to reconstruct the city in the aftermath of the Uprising and left the city in 1864.

<sup>177</sup> R. Russell and K. Islam, *Ghalib*, p. 124.

<sup>178</sup> The *NNRNWP&O* show examples of opposition to the dilapidated state of *nuzul* gardens in Lucknow (3 November 1868, p. 428); to the disrespect for tombs in Lucknow (25 November 1872, p. 76); to the improper use of mosques in Lucknow (28 September 1872, p. 619), etc.

claims of heritage and evolved into pressures on the Government to hand the management of these sites to native princes or local agencies. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1867, the *Ukbar Alum* for instance complained that,

If any of the descendants of former kings where [sic] on the throne now, these buildings would have been properly repaired and cared for; but now that the English Government are the *hakims*, these buildings are in their possession, and although repairs are made by the Government, they are not what they ought to be; and the consequence is that these beautiful places are daily going to ruin.<sup>179</sup>

Likewise, the Mughal prince Mirza Ilahi Bakhsh (d. 1878) repeatedly claimed property and compensation for several buildings in Delhi, which he considered parts of his heritage and proposed to repair at his own expense.<sup>180</sup> The *Koh-i Noor* of the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1865 thus explained that he had petitioned the Government, “stating that the several buildings, including the *Madrussa*, *Humaeyun’s Tomb*, *Lall Bungla* of the Mirza, Jehanara Begum, Mahomed Shah, Jehangire, and the graveyard at the Kootub, be made over to him, as they were the property of his ancestors.”<sup>181</sup> A couple of months later, he further asked a compensation of three lakhs of rupees for Akbarabadi Begum’s masjid in Delhi that had been demolished.<sup>182</sup> Although we shall look later at the political implications of urban destruction but also of monument preservation and restoration projects led by the British Government on the Indo-Muslim elites’ memory of their own past, especially from 1911 onwards, it is important to note here that monuments had acquired such importance because of their symbolic value as reminders of Mughal power.

### *Conclusion*

As we have seen, the shahr āshob poems of *The Lament for Delhi* show continuity but also rupture with previous shahr āshob poems and inform us on the way the Uprising was articulated as cultural trauma in the few years following 1857. By identifying Indo-Muslim elites to a “community of

---

<sup>179</sup> *NNRNWP&O* for 1865, p. 125.

<sup>180</sup> *NNRNWP&O* for 1865, p. 435 and p. 502.

<sup>181</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>182</sup> The *Koh-i Noor* of the 9th September 1865, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 503.

suffering” and by using diverse literary devices among which the resort to the style of the marsiyah and to conventions usually associated with mourning and Shia rituals in a non-religious, secular context, 1857 was collectively represented as a historical and cultural rupture that undermined Mughal identity. While shahr āshob poetry might consist of both the repetition of trauma and the cure from it, I have argued that the use of marsiyah imagery was paramount to the performance of collective grief and undoubtedly indicates the persistence of lively poetic milieus after 1857, despite the decline of state patronage. The constant references to orality and to the impact of shahr āshob verses on the audience in the poems show that shahr āshob poets cultivated a culture of “āshobgoī” which implied collective commemoration and communal weeping.

Shahr āshob poets also expressed the traumatic shock of 1857 by a greater emphasis on the city's built landscape, which encapsulated the extent of the loss that 1857 represented. The Mughal city was always described as a sacred space of order and pleasure that had been trampled upon. Buildings were used to cleverly echo collective trauma when human life had been lost. Although the urban landscape was still characterised by lively interactions (or the lack thereof), buildings increasingly appeared as sites of longing. This was a major innovation of post-1857 shahr āshob poems. While scholars have often emphasised the relationship between a growing interest in the city's archaeological landscape and the influence of Western scholarship and tourist practices, I have argued that it most certainly reflected the immobilisation of the Mughal court and the waning of Mughal travelling practices from the eighteenth century, which encouraged a growing “sense of place” as buildings were gradually imbued with greater symbolism, as signs of Mughal power.

In shahr āshob poems, the city was exalted as the core of the Mughal elites' identity with city buildings acting as concrete sites for Indo-Muslim cultural mourning. With the city's destruction and remodelling after 1857, monuments and ruins seem to have gradually acquired new meanings and Urdu-speaking elites clearly manifested anxieties for the protection of

historical sites, both in poetry and newspaper articles. The city and its ruins that had become symbols of an Indo-Muslim culture and identity in post-1857 shahr āshob poetry were increasingly used in politics, especially at the beginning of the construction of New Delhi, when “attacks” on the material ruins of the Indian past became a popular motif in anti-colonial mobilisations. As we shall see, the Mughal city of shahr āshob recollections remained an important object of nostalgia and memory for Urdu-speaking elites, well beyond 1857.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Grieving through nostalgia: ashob poetry and the Aligarh movement

After 1857, Mughal culture fell apart and the distinctive sharīf “family life, language, ideology, and religion all came into question”.<sup>1</sup> What indeed was a Mughal courtier if the Mughal court no longer existed? What counted as nobility when rulers had become subjects?<sup>2</sup> As scholars of the period have highlighted, the post-1857 era was marked by the split between the dwindling Indo-Persian elite and the burgeoning Hindu merchant culture,<sup>3</sup> which was further widened by new government measures in education and government jobs. Competitive recruitment, new mandatory qualifications, quotas and the gradual establishment of elective government – first through local committees – opened public offices to new English-proficient graduates who directly competed with the Urdu-speaking elite.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1860s, the Hindi-Urdu language controversy also put strain on the former elite, and the clash of interests took an increasingly communal form throughout the late nineteenth century and beyond, despite the fact that Urdu remained the language of administration.<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth-century, the

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation: Muslim solidarity in British India*, New Delhi, 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1978), p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> J. Lear has observed a similar situation in his study of the Indian Crow nation, see J. Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*, Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> C. R. King, *One language, two scripts: the Hindi movement in nineteenth century north India*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> See F. Robinson, *Separatism*, pp. 36-50.

<sup>5</sup> As C. R. King has shown, the British both encouraged school learning in sanskritised Hindi in the Nagari script and discouraged its use for official purpose, thus denying access to government positions to those who had studied the language. (C. R. King, *One language*, p. 186). Many petitions in the late 1860s and early 1870s asked for a change of policy regarding the use of the Persian alphabet in courts. (V. Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, p. 181). Much of the controversy was in fact based on the problem of the script rather than the language. See C. R. King, “Forging a new linguistic identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914”, in S. B. Freitag (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment, 1800-1980*, Berkeley, 1989, p. 188. Kashmiri Brahmins, Kayasths and Muslim ashraf however still constituted the majority of public servants in the late nineteenth century but, gradually, “the Government felt compelled to take steps that affected their intake into, and distribution in Government service”. (K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p. 101). In 1903, the *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar* thus complained of the

anxiety of seeing other social groups accessing the public service increased the Urdu-speaking elite's sentiment of urgency and fear of lagging behind the groups that had been prompter to adapt to the new policies. Number of associations aiming to negotiate these pressures sprung in north India as a joint response of the Urdu-speaking elite.<sup>6</sup> Out of these organisations, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (later Aligarh Muslim University) founded in 1875 by Syed Ahmed Khan had the most enduring impact on Urdu-speaking groups and especially the Muslim ashraf.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I shall look at how cultural mourning for the loss of power provided an impulse for cultural regeneration for writers of the Aligarh movement through a re-adaptation of the shahr āshob genre. In the late 1870s, when the Russo-Turkish war broke out, shahr āshob poetry was transformed into āshob poetry which more broadly lamented the ruin of the Muslim world and encouraged visions of a worldwide Muslim community unified in grief, as we shall see from examples from the *Awadh Punch*. Aligarh poets appropriated this narrative of worldwide Muslim decline and re-engaged with the Arab heritage for Muslim cultural regeneration. Examining two connected yet unnoticed articles from the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* in 1878, I will show that Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) often dubbed "the poet of the Aligarh movement" composed his famous *Musaddas* on the example of the Andalusī *Lament for the fall of Seville*. Regeneration not always came from the adoption of Western models but also from the reworking of Arabic ones. While the adaptation of Arabic classics participated in the articulation of new "strategies of authority" by the Muslim ashraf, it also

---

quotas in government service, saying that "those who know the United Provinces will readily admit that they [the Kayasths] are the only literate community in the Province. The other castes of the Hindus are not so numerously educated nor do all of them take to service, the Kayasthas and Mahommedans therefore practically remain the sole aspirants for public service and both fill the public offices." *Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar*, 1903, p. 615. See also D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh*, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> By 1870s, the number of such organisations amounted in the U. P. at more than twenty (F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 85). Societies such as the *Benares Institute* (1861), the *Jalsah-e Tahzīb* (1868) or the *Anjuman-e Hind* (1868) were not communal in nature and did not aim for "sanskritisation" but rather at Westernisation through modernist reform. See K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p. 160; L.C. Stout, *The Hindustani Kayasthas: The Kayastha Pathshala, and the Kayastha Conference, 1873-1914*, PhD California, 1975, p. 78; L. Carroll, "Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement", in *Indian Economics Social History Review*, 1974, p. 432.

revealed how the longing for the origins of Islam inflated the trauma of the loss of power and was used to reconstruct community identity in Muslim apologetic works. As we shall see, however, while the Aligarh narrative of Muslim backwardness attained popular success in the late 1880s and beyond, it was also a highly contested and polarising rhetoric. In 1888, Hali's *Complaint to India* and the resort to āshob poetry in the satirist magazine *Awadh Punch* for anti- and pro-Congress propaganda showed that nostalgic poetry played a significant role in contemporary disputes over class and leadership, an aspect that has usually been overlooked in scholarship. At the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, this discourse continued to be increasingly used in the organisation of community politics in dialogue with the colonial state, which validated Muslim claims regarding their so-called political importance. Āshob poetry composed by Aligarh partisans was then clearly part of an elite discourse.

Aligarh's grieving of the trauma of the loss of power and the articulation of a discourse in which India appeared as the place of Muslim downfall, however, was gradually read outside of its prime context of composition. In the early twentieth century, Aligarh's response to cultural trauma eventually estranged Hindu Urdu-speaking communities. Examples from the *Awadh Punch* show that Hindu contributors criticised Hali's tone in the *Musaddas* and *Shikwah-e Hind* and highlighted the growing communal tensions that such representations of Indo-Muslim history encouraged. In many ways, the nostalgia displayed in Hali's poems and in other Aligarh scholars' writings led to social fragmentation. I argue that they were symptomatic of the recurrent phenomenon of dissociation among traumatised subjects. As Erikson has noted among trauma victims, they often tend to "gather in groups with others of like mind",<sup>8</sup> to "drift away" and make of trauma a source for kinship and estrangement too. As I show in this chapter, by seeking to process the trauma of the loss of power, Muslim ashraf increasingly drew apart from their Hindu Urdu-speaking friends.

---

<sup>8</sup> K. Erikson, "Notes on Trauma", p. 194.

## From shahr āshob to āshob poetry: the growth of pan-Islamic sentiments in the late 1870s

The adoption of print brought a revolution in north India in the nineteenth century. From the 1840s, the introduction of new techniques and the diminution of production costs led to the mass production of printed material in India.<sup>9</sup> It galvanised Urdu-speaking elites. So much so that, as Robinson noted, “in the last thirty years of the [nineteenth] century, over seven hundred newspapers and magazines in Urdu were started.”<sup>10</sup> If print did not entirely displace public discourse, it nonetheless had a major impact on the development of ideas and the elaboration of new canons and styles. It quickly became one of the “main forums for public debate”.<sup>11</sup> As Stark illustrated, in the new world of print, “the successful publisher’s choices not only *responded* to readership tastes and reflected processes of canonization as well as current trends in literary activity, they also *shaped* these processes.”<sup>12</sup> The print media also enabled for the first time the emergence of reading publics “that transcended the boundaries between the written and spoken word”.<sup>13</sup> The press fostered a sense of being connected to the wider world and of belonging to what Anderson called “imagined communities”.

When war was declared between the Russian and Ottoman empires in 1877, the Urdu press bloomed. News from the world and especially from Turkey inundated the Indian public sphere and left Urdu-speaking elites and especially Muslim ashraf who saw in the Ottoman Empire the last “spark” of Islamic glory aghast. Meetings were organised all over India to raise money for the Turkey Relief Fund, local newspapers issued daily editions to cover the latest developments in the war and Indian volunteers even joined the

---

<sup>9</sup> See U. Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India, 1858-1895*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> F. Robinson, “Islam and the impact of print”, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> R. Perkins, “From the Mehfil to the printed word: Public debate and discourse in late colonial India”, in *Indian Economic Social History Review*, vol. 50, n°1, 2013, pp. 47-76.

<sup>12</sup> U. Stark, *An Empire of Books*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> R. Perkins, “From the Mehfil to the printed word”, p. 49.

Turkish army.<sup>14</sup> *Shahr āshob* poems that had until then mourned the devastation of Mughal cities now lamented the condition of the whole world. Affected by world news, Urdu poets extended the original genre to what was now called *āshob* poetry (poetry on disturbance) or *dunyā āshob* poetry (poetry on the disturbance of the world). Although *āshob*s were still written on local issues and class problems, more and more poems alluded to global developments. The satirist magazine *Awadh Punch* published in Lucknow by Munshi Sajjad Husain, Rais of Kakori, for instance started publishing *āshob* poems alongside news of the Russo-Turkish war and of the Southern India famine (1876-1878) almost since the beginning of its publication in January 1877.<sup>15</sup>

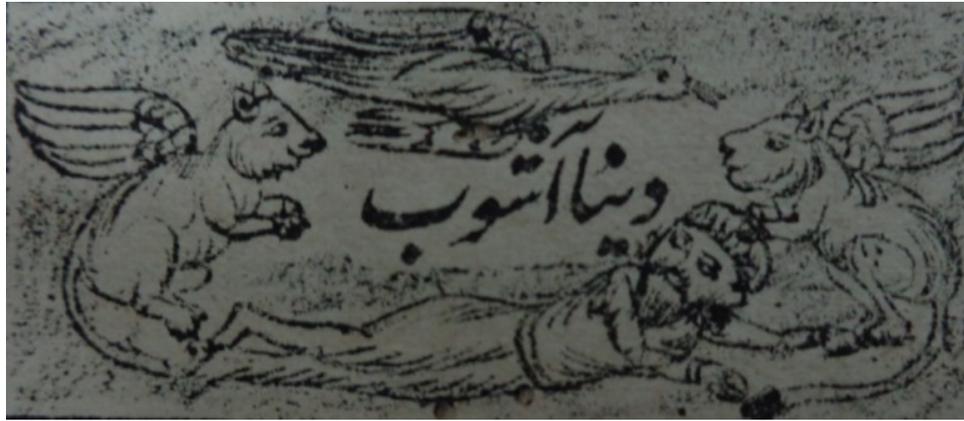


Fig. 3.a. Decorated title for Khushgap's "*dunyā āshob*" that illustrates a man harassed by intriguing creatures. *Awadh Punch*, 18 December 1877, p. 5

In the introduction to his *dunyā āshob* in the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1877 issue of the *Awadh Punch*, the poet Khushgap<sup>16</sup> explained that "until now poets of the whole world have recited *shahr āshob*s, now your devoted servant will put together and recite a *dunyā āshob*".<sup>17</sup> Similarly in a *dahr āshob* (*dahr* also meaning the world, the age) written in 1928, Safi Lukhnawi explained that

<sup>14</sup> Even Syed Ahmed Khan, despite disagreeing with the widespread view considering the Ottoman emperor as Khalifa, organised a meeting in his house to collect funds. See G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: religious symbolism and political mobilization in India, 1919-24*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972, pp. 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> The *Awadh Punch* was published from the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1877 to 1936. See M. Hasan, *Wit and Humour in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 11 and *A selection from the illustrations which have appeared in the Oudh Punch from 1877 to 1881*, Lucknow, 1881.

<sup>16</sup> The full name of the poet Khushgap is Rashak Khaqani Fakhar Salman. He was probably a regular contributor or worked as assistant manager for the magazine as his name is followed by the epithet "*munshī-e Awadh Punch*".

<sup>17</sup> Khushgap, "*Dunyā āshob*", in *Awadh Punch*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1877, p. 313.

“while others used to write *shahr* āshobs, I am writing *dahr* āshobs”.<sup>18</sup> Urdu poets thus clearly saw āshob poetry as a natural development of the *shahr* āshob genre.

The development of *shahr* āshob into *dunyā* āshob poetry in the late 1870s well illustrated the “symbiotic relationship between the growth of pan-Islamic consciousness and of the press”.<sup>19</sup> Khushgap’s *dunyā* āshob of 1877, for instance, well showed the impact of the press in spreading feelings of worldwide persecution:

Stop giving the Turks a trial of strength!  
 Stop harassing the delicate Russia!  
 [...] From the shadows come our disgrace, O God,  
 Stop blackening all colours!  
 [...] Don’t let the government borrow from us without reason,  
 Stop overflowing us with fees and taxes!  
 In what distress is now the Deccan  
 Stop reminding us our due!  
 [...] Enough elegies have been written already,  
 O Deccan Punch, now stop making us cry!<sup>20</sup>

The poem not only put Indian news and more general world affairs on the same level but also mentioned the role of the press (here the *Deccan Punch*) in the process. Such elegies strengthened feelings of belonging to an all-Indian community and to a broader world that shared the same grief and was linked via the print media. The lack of differentiation in the poems between the Great Famine of 1876-1878 and the imposition of new relief measures on one hand,<sup>21</sup> and the Russo-Turkish war on the other undoubtedly indicated the strong identification between Indian Muslim subjects and their Turkish coreligionists. A poem published in the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1877 issue, simply entitled *Nauḥah* (Lamentation) and signed “F.”, typically lamented the Russo-Turkish war by equalling it to the contemporary Indian famine. The lack of

<sup>18</sup> A. Arifi, *Shahr āshob: Ek tajziyah*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 259.

<sup>19</sup> F. Robinson, “Islam and the impact of print”, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> Khushgap, “*Dunyā* āshob”, p. 313.

<sup>21</sup> About the Great Indian Famine of 1876-1878 see *Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. 3: Economic*, Oxford, 1908, p. 488. The famine first broke out in the South, affecting Madras, Hyderabad, Mysore and Bombay and in 1877 spread to the North in the Central and United Provinces and in the Punjab, affecting a population of 58,500,000 overall. The Government proposed the imposition of new taxes to face the situation, which eventually led large numbers of Bombay relief-workers to strike.

food that spread both in Turkish trenches and Indian northern regions tied Muslims in a same trial of strength:

This scarcity of grain is a sign of Doomsday,  
Water too doesn't fall  
And the government has imposed taxes again,  
Complaint to God!  
There in Turkey, a war has started,  
Lives are in danger  
Here famine gathers in the trenches,  
Complaint to God!  
[...] There is no expectation for food, no hope for water,  
O, eternal regret!  
Why, has the month of Ramzan come this year?<sup>22</sup>

The impact of global news on the development of *dunyā āshob* poetry clearly shows the Urdu poets' growing awareness of pan-Indian and world politics. More than pure nostalgia, however, this type of poetry in the *Awadh Punch* rather expressed a sentiment of urgency in the present and comprised an important element of lament, which had indeed been, as we have seen in the previous chapter, an important development of post-1857 *shahr āshob* poetry. In the *Awadh Punch*, *āshob* poetry emphasised the theme of martyrdom instead of comparisons with past glory. It became in the hands of the satirist writers of the magazine an expression of discontent and, eventually, contestation: the emphasis on worldwide oppression was used to articulate a discourse of protest that was overtly directed towards God or the vicissitudes of time but actually denounced government policies and the colonial state. In the following poem, "Lament on the taxes" (*Tax par hāe hāe*), composed at Peshawar by a certain Kh. B. Farogh and published on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1878, the typical language of the *marṣiyah* was clearly used to voice opposition to government measures:

Tumult, and strife, tyranny and countless oppression  
Cannot describe in full our misery, alas!  
Our emaciated and starved hands are empty, how empty!  
Did it deserve taxes, this condition of ours? Alas!  
[...] Alas! At the very time of our death we cry for help,  
But all hope has been ruined, alas! Alas!  
What a calamity, no one hears the complaint of the taxes!  
Why is this lamentation useless? Alas!<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> F., "Nauḥah", in *Awadh Punch*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1877, p. 211.

In the late 1870s, shahr āshob poetry had thus given way to an elegiac genre on the condition of India and of the whole world. This development was very symptomatic of the new awareness that Indians developed with the influence of print capitalism of belonging to a broader world that was accessible through daily news. While the nostalgic aspect of post-1857 shahr āshob poetry was usually absent from the āshob poems published in the *Awadh Punch* that rather adopted the devices of the secular marsiyah to voice discontent, the Aligarh movement was to creatively reemphasise it and develop the genre to a new level.

### **The past as the way forward: āshob poetry and the Aligarh movement**

When the Uprising broke out in north India, Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), who was born and brought up in a traditional noble family of Delhi associated with the Mughal court, was serving as Sadr Amin for the British in Bijnor. Like his contemporaries, he was deeply affected by the events of 1857. Many of his family members and friends were killed and his house in Delhi was ransacked. Hali later noted in his biography that “the desolation of Delhi dealt such a blow to his heart that gradually it became a wound and then ultimately it turned into an ulcer. In fact, the plan for education of the Muslims also came to his mind after seeing the condition of Delhi.”<sup>24</sup> In the post-1857 period, Muslim ashraf were particularly traumatised, “their power was most obviously reduced, their culture was most openly held of small account, and their religion was most strongly attacked.”<sup>25</sup> The climate of acute nostalgia was reinforced in the early 1870s, by the widespread colonial image of the “backward Muslim”, incapable of adapting to the modern world that was backed by colonial statistics and reports from the Hunter

---

<sup>23</sup> B. Kh. B. Farogh, "Tax pe hāe hāe", in *Awadh Punch*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1878, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> A. H. Hali, *Hayat-e Jawed: a biographical account of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, part I-II*, Aligarh, 2008, p. 499.

<sup>25</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 84. Kayasths and Kashmiri Brahmins had usually been considered loyal during the Rebellion of 1857 and rewarded in consequence (K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p. 101).

Commission.<sup>26</sup> These sentiments were reinforced by the war in Turkey a few years later. In this new colonial world in which Urdu poets were still haunted by the memories of 1857, Syed Ahmed Khan decided to help his community recover from cultural loss and reconstitute an Urdu-speaking collective identity.<sup>27</sup> Fascinated by Western knowledge, he travelled to England and came back with the desire to accommodate tradition and modern sciences. He adopted a position of loyalism towards the colonial state and promoted English education, insisting on the fact that modern sciences were not in opposition to Islam. Since, in the modern world, “the way to social standing was no longer birth, but achievement”,<sup>28</sup> Syed Ahmed Khan sought to redefine honour and nobility through education and the cultivation of modern manners, taste and etiquette, notably in his monthly Urdu paper *Tahzīb ul-akhlāq*.<sup>29</sup> From the late 1860s, with the rise of the Hindi-Urdu language controversy, Syed Ahmed Khan’s efforts shifted from uplifting the whole Urdu-speaking society to the sole Muslim ashraf community.<sup>30</sup>

In response to the challenges of British rule, Syed Ahmed Khan offered to reinterpret the principles of Islam in the light of modern life and sciences by turning towards the Islamic past. Going back to the origins of Islam and to the life of the Prophet, thus by-passing a rich and long tradition of scholarly debates, he tried to articulate a new model of Islamic modernism. Syed Ahmed Khan had in fact been interested in history and archaeology since

---

<sup>26</sup> S. Seth, “Constituting the “Backward but Proud Muslim”: Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India”, in M. Hasan and N. Nakazato (eds.), *The Unfinished Agenda: Nation-building in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 129. Statistics putting all Muslims – nobles or poor – in a same religious category highlighted the disinterest of Muslims at large in the government-sponsored schools system.

<sup>27</sup> Muslim government servants and landlords supported the Kayastha conference just as Kayasths participated to Muslim institutions and constituted a fair portion of Aligarh graduates. See L. Stout, *The Hindustani Kayasthas*, p. 173; D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s first generation*, p. 171 and F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> M. Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*, p. 266.

<sup>29</sup> The *Tahzīb ul-akhlāq* was first started in 1870 after Syed Ahmed Khan’s return from England on the English example of the eighteenth-century *Tatler* and *Spectator*. In 1896 the journal was merged into the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*. See M. S. Kidwai, *Sir Sayyid’s contribution to journalism with special reference to the Aligarh Institute Gazette and the Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq*, PhD dissertation, AMU, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Hali, *Hayat-e Jawed*, p. 77.

before the Uprising.<sup>31</sup> At the inauguration of his Scientific Society in 1863, he reasserted the need of placing history as a priority for Urdu-speaking scholars and complained that his fellow countrymen

are ignorant of the historical events that occurred in the past and are unable to draw any lesson from them for the future. They have no idea as to how the small nations of the world made progress and became great like the big shady trees. [...] As regards the histories written in Asia [...] they do not attach any importance to the description of causes responsible for the rise and fall of civilization.<sup>32</sup>

The past was seen as the way forward: much of Syed Ahmad Khan's work thereafter implied the elaboration of accurate Muslim historical narratives that would encourage self-empowerment. As he for instance wrote to Nawab Mohsin ul-Mulk in July 1869 "the English have written the histories of the Muslim emperors and their empires with great dishonesty and prejudice and there are no evils which they have not attributed to the Muslims. Our young people study and read only this kind of books in English which leave a very bad effect on them."<sup>33</sup> Aligarh soon became a centre for the study of the history of Islam and Aligarh scholars often debated the poor representations of Muslim history that notably appeared in English or Urdu language government works and textbooks.<sup>34</sup> From 1886 to 1895, the aim of one of the programmes of the Muhammadan Educational Conference was to "investigate, collect, edit, and print Persian manuscripts, records, archives, and other source material for a correct assessment of the History of Muslim

---

<sup>31</sup> See for instance his *Jam-e Jam* (1840), *Āshār uṣ-Ṣanādīd* (1847-1852), *Silsilah ul-Mulk* (1852), *History of Bijnor* (1855, destroyed in 1857), his edition of the '*Ain-e Akbarī* (1855).

<sup>32</sup> *Selected documents from Aligarh Archives*, ed. Yusuf Husain, Aligarh, 1977, pp. 43-45 quoted in I. H. Siddiqui, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing" in *Sir Syed Centenary Papers: in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Karachi, 1998, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Syed Ahmad Khan to Nawab Mohsin ul-Mulk Mahdi Ali Khan, London, 23 July 1869 in M. A. Mannan (ed.), *Selected Letters of Sir Syed Ahmad*, Aligarh, 2007, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> For instance, Syed Ahmed Khan worked on a refutation of Muir's book on the life of the Prophet. In the late 1860s, the Aligarh Institute Gazette criticised a number of history books for their poor representation of Muslim history, notably by the then Inspector of Schools for the Benares Circle Shiva Prasad's '*Aīnah-e Tārīkhnumah* but also the Urdu translation of Elphinstone's *History of India*. See AIG, 18 January 1868, p. 32 about Shiva Prasad's textbook: "No opportunity seems to be lost of throwing ridicule on former Musulman glory or of exciting hatred against former Musulman cruelties". In the 1870s, textbooks controversies continued to be regularly covered by the College Gazette.

India, and to promote research and dissemination of general information on Islamic history, and institutions in general".<sup>35</sup>

Besides the elaboration of scholarly works on the subject, the Aligarh movement became particularly famous for the poetical mourning of past glory. Almost every project undertaken by Syed Ahmed Khan was accompanied by the recitation of nostalgic verses because Muslim ashraf were more likely to take part if memory was thus invoked.<sup>36</sup> The memory of glorious forebears whose educational qualities were emphasised in nostalgic poetry was used to encourage Urdu-speaking elites to take lessons from the past and join the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh.<sup>37</sup> Such poems inundated political meetings and assemblies; particularly community gatherings such as the Muhammadan Educational Conference, established by Syed Ahmed Khan in 1886. Syed Ahmed Khan frequently used this rhetoric to promote and disseminate his project and ideas. In one instance, Hali related how Syed Ahmed Khan proceeded to convince Nawab Mukhtar ul-Mulk to financially support the Muslim Anglo-Oriental College. Syed Ahmed had asked an artist to draw a picture on the basis of an Urdu couplet ("Succour gives a glimpse from afar, a boat approaches to save the sinking fleet!") on which a vessel (symbolising the wretched condition of Muslims) was drawn sinking. A small boat (representing the MAO College) was heading towards it to save the shipwrecked from the storm. The painting was sent to Nawab Mukhtar ul-Mulk and persuaded him to contribute to the fund.<sup>38</sup> As the *Rafi-ul Akhbar* indeed noted in November 1897,

No civilised nation which has seen better days can forget its past glory, the memory of which sometimes prompts its members to exert themselves to regain their lost greatness, and sometimes to console themselves with boasting of their greatness in times gone by. The poets and authors of Sir

---

<sup>35</sup> A. Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*, London, 1967, p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Hali to Maulvi Mahbub 'Alam, editor of the *Paisah Akhbār*, Lahore, n.d. in Shaikh Muhammad Isma'il Panipati (ed.), *Makātīb-e Hālī*, Lahore, 1950, pp. 49-51.

<sup>37</sup> *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1882, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 9: "we begin to recollect the fame of our forefathers; our hearts are shaken with the recollection of the Universities of Cordova and Granada, Baghdad and Samarkand, which were founded by our ancestors; [...] we ought to do the same as our forefathers had done."

<sup>38</sup> Hali, *Hayat-e Jawed*, pp. 119 and 484-485. After that he sent at least Rs. 100 every month.

Saiyid Ahmad Khan's school were once in the habit of reciting *marsias* or dirges on the loss of the Muhammadan supremacy in India.<sup>39</sup>

As scholars have shown and as I will underline, the emphasis on past glory served many political purposes. It was notably used by Muslim leaders to raise funds, mobilise groups and bargain to gain advantages from colonial authorities according to their so-called political importance.<sup>40</sup> The evocation of glorious origins and of an imperial past resonated particularly between 1900 and 1909 when Muslim leaders "were compelled, in order to remain in control, to demand more vigorously than ever before that government should protect their interests".<sup>41</sup> It became a central feature for the organisation of Muslim political associations, like the Muslim League in 1906.<sup>42</sup> However, I argue that the success of this narrative intertwining collective nostalgia with modernist reform was also linked to the need to make sense of past trauma. Hali's *Musaddas*, particularly, responded to the contemporary melancholic climate by bolstering community bonds through the collective grieving of trauma. In Aligarh's nostalgic poetry, the evocation of a glorious Arab past was coupled with an emphasis on extra-Indian origins, which revealed a desire to reinforce the status, authority and group identity of the Muslim ashraf. As Vladimir Volkan has argued about the psychology of large groups, going back to the origins is a frequent phenomenon among threatened groups, which "become obsessed with repairing, protecting, and maintaining their large-group identity".<sup>43</sup> I argue that a similar process took place in Aligarh's nostalgic poetry, which tried to reinforce the Muslim ashraf's identity and propose modernist reform through a return to Arabic classics.

---

<sup>39</sup> The *Rafi-ul Akhbar* of the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1897, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 695.

<sup>40</sup> See F. Robinson, *The Memory of Power, Muslim "Political Importance" and the Muslim League*, in R. Ahmad (ed.), *International Conference on the All India Muslim League (1906-1947)*, 2006, pp. 157-175.

<sup>41</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> See F. Robinson, "The Memory of Power".

<sup>43</sup> V. Volkan, "Large group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis", in *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 18, n°4, 2009, p. 207.

In Aligarh, Syed Ahmed Khan surrounded himself with talented poets and writers who could popularise his modernist message.<sup>44</sup> Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914) was the most famous poet of the Aligarh movement to compose on the decline of Islam and he played a tremendous role in the circulation of modernist thought, so much so that “it became the recognised function of Hali to write and often recite poems dwelling on the glorious past of Islam”.<sup>45</sup> One of the first and most important poems that Hali composed at the behest of Syed Ahmed Khan was the famous *Musaddas on the ebb and flow of Islam* (*Musaddas-e Madd-o jazr-e Islām*), which revolutionised Urdu poetry by its simplicity and straightforwardness. Published in its entirety in the pages of *Tahzīb ul-aḳhlāq* in 1879 as well as in book form, the poem received immediate and widespread appraisal: it generated a veritable “*Musaddas*-mania” in the Urdu-speaking world and beyond, with countless authors copying its style and subject matter. Syed Ahmed Khan immediately applauded Hali for his work in a letter written on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1879,

The moment I got hold of the book, I did not leave it until I had finished its reading. And when the reading was completed, I felt sorry why it came to an end. [...] The poem includes a number of such stanzas which one cannot read without getting one’s eyes filled with tears. Truly something that comes from the heart, it touches the heart. [...] Well, I may have acted as a stimulant to this poem, and I consider it as a matter of good luck, and grace. When, on the Day of Judgment, Allah will ask

---

<sup>44</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas: the flow and ebb of Islam*, Oxford, 1997, p. 2. Altaf Husain Hali was born in Panipat in 1837 in a noble but impoverished family of the Ansari clan. Lacking of formal education after his father’s death in 1846, he however dreamt of further study and secretly left for Delhi in 1854 where he pursued his traditional education. This is where Hali (whose *takḥalluṣ* was then *Ḳḥasta* “broken”) first started to compose poetry and to participate in *mushā’irahs*. When the Uprising of 1857 broke out, he had been serving as clerk in Hisar for a year but then returned to Panipat – a journey that had a lasting impact on his health. After 1857, Hali returned to the city and worked as tutor for the children of Nawab Mustafa Khan Shefta, one of Ghalib’s close friends. Benefitting from both Ghalib’s and Shefta’s guidance, he changed his pen name to “Hali” (“Contemporary”) (S. Anjam, *Monogrāf Ḳḥwājah Alṭāf Husain Ḥālī*, Delhi, 2007, p. 23). At the death of both his masters in 1869, Hali left for Lahore where he worked as assistant translator at the Punjab Government Book Depot, revising the Urdu translation of English books. There, he entered in contact with European literature and with the poet Azad with whom he developed what was later called the New School of Urdu literature. In the middle of the 1870s, he went back to Delhi and met Syed Ahmed Khan. Hali described him as a “servant of the Lord, a hero”: “one look of his was cast in my direction also, and this had its immediate effect” (see C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 92-93). Hali’s career was metamorphosed by that encounter and despite his being “deeply rooted in the past” (M. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu literature*, Delhi, 1995, p. 349) he remained a loyal servant of the Aligarh movement and an important figure of the New School of Urdu literature until his death in 1914.

<sup>45</sup> A. Qadir, *Famous Urdu Poets and Writers*, Lahore, 1947, p. 138.

me, "What have you brought (for your deeds)?" I will say, "I made Hali write the *Musaddas* and nothing else".<sup>46</sup>

*Musaddas-e Madd-o Jazr-e Islām*, as Syed Ahmed Khan had hoped, described the glorious Islamic past and mourned Muslim backwardness in a very touching way. It aimed to lead the Muslim ashraf to cultural regeneration and was indeed a reformist masterpiece. Despite the stir that the poem created and the consequent attention that it was given in scholarship, however, not much is known about the poem's genesis and some of its particularities remain difficult to explain. The poem was very innovative: on one hand it borrowed to the shahr āshob and dunyā āshob traditions that had developed in the late 1870s but on the other hand the poem also developed a very Arabic "flavour" and style – instead of Persian – that was uncommon at the time. Although clearly influenced by Arabic genres, Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed noted in their edition of the *Musaddas* that "the overt influence of Arabic poetry is less easy to establish".<sup>47</sup> Evidence from the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* more than a year before the official publication of the *Musaddas*, however, brings new insights into the reasons why the poem borrowed so much from the Arabic tradition: as the two articles suggest, the poem was indeed conceived as an Urdu imitation of al-Rundi's famous lament for the fall of Seville.

*"Elegy on the misfortunes of Al-Andalus" and "a Musaddas on its example"*

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1878, in the middle of the Russo-Turkish war and several weeks after news reached India of the fall of Plevna, two connected articles written by Syed Ahmed Khan were published, occupying an unusual number of pages of the *College Gazette*. The first article, entitled "Elegy on the misfortunes of Al-Andalus" – a surprisingly anachronistic title – started thus:

Having learnt about them, we wrote in our previous paper about the misfortunes in Plevna which maddens even a heart made of stone; [...]

---

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Syed Ahmad Khan to Hali, Shimla, Park Hotel, 10 June 1879, p. 10 edited by M. A. Mannan (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 31.

but these events are not new. In the history of Spain, i.e. Al-Andalus, atrocities worse than those [of Plevna] also happened. [...] This is neither about the past events of Al-Andalus nor about the contemporary events in Turkey: everywhere where there are Muslim communities and powers, they are now in one and only condition [decline].<sup>48</sup>

The link made in the first few lines of the article between the contemporary events in the Ottoman Empire and those that took place in Al-Andalus in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries was further illustrated by Syed Ahmed Khan through the reference to, and publication of, a thirteenth-century Arabic marsiyah (with both the original Arabic and its Urdu translation) in the following pages of the *Gazette*. The marsiyah, wrongly attributed to a certain Sayyid Yahya Qurtubi Andalusí said to have composed in prison,<sup>49</sup> was actually the famous *Lament for the Fall of Seville* (*Rithā' al-Andalus*) written in the middle of the thirteenth century (sometime between 1236 and 1266) by Abu al-Baqa al-Rundi, an Andalusian poet from Ronda (b. in Seville, around 1204 - d. in Ceuta in 1285).<sup>50</sup> Wrong ascriptions of the poem to other authors were in fact quite common due to the fame of the poem, to which several verses were often added, thus obscuring the date of composition. The attribution to al-Qurtubi was also not completely unusual among Arabic scholars and both Sharif al-Din Mahmud al-Khafaji (d. 1657) and the *Fihris al-Makhtutat* of the *Dar al-Kutub* in Cairo ascribed the text to a certain al-Qurtubi.<sup>51</sup> This false attribution hence hinted at the fact that the text in Syed Ahmed Khan's possession (a variant of the original *Lament*) circulated in Arabic scholarly milieus rather than Western ones, which had published translations of the poem into French and German in 1828 and in 1865.<sup>52</sup> The fact that the poem was published soon after the Muslim defeat in Plevna,

---

<sup>48</sup> *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 26 Jan. 1878, p. 105.

<sup>49</sup> The attribution of the poem to Yahya al-Qurtubi, would be anachronistic, if it is the same figure as Yahya bin Umar al-Qurtubi (d. 1172) since the events described in the verses have taken place in 1236, long after al-Qurtubi's death. See S. Meisami and P. Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1, 1998, p. 194.

<sup>50</sup> Some scholars date the composition from 1248 while others date it from 1267. See Jalel El Gharbi, « Thrène de Séville », *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 79, 2009, 26-30. Not much is known about al-Rundi's life: he probably lived in Granada, is thought to have been a judge and would have composed a number of treatises on poetics, metrics and law (See J. S. Meisami and P. Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, p. 372).

<sup>51</sup> See R. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, "Abū'l-Baqā' al-Rundi and his elegy on Muslim Spain", in *The Muslim World*, vol. 66, 1976, pp. 30-31.

<sup>52</sup> *Idem*.

Syed Ahmed's excitement upon having "seen" (*dekhā*) the pain of al-Rundi's lament and the immediacy that the articles imply between the discovery of the Arabic poem and its publication in the *AIG* also seem to indicate that Syed Ahmed Khan did not know it beforehand and had stumbled upon it somewhere else; maybe in a contemporary (Indian or more probably foreign) newspaper.<sup>53</sup> At the time of the war, indeed, foreign (especially Turkish) newspapers were eagerly read in India. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) for instance remembered that he excitedly read the Arabic paper *Dar ul-Khilafat*, published in Constantinople at the time.<sup>54</sup>

The publication of Arabic verses translated into Urdu was moreover extremely rare in the *AIG* and the fact that the poem occupied several pages shows how much the Andalusian elegy had struck and inspired Sir Syed. The article further read:

In this turbulence [the fall of Seville], Sayyid Yahya Qurtubi Andalusī, who was a great *'alim* and incomparable poet, was imprisoned when he was young. He then cried a lot on the ruin of Muslims and in his lamentations he wrote one *marṣiyah* of which we give you a translation in our newspaper. [...] Our community should look attentively to what Yahya Qurtubi did and to what we are doing. In his time, he was crying over his contemporaries, and in our time, we are crying over our community. The only difference between him and us is that he was crying over what had happened, while we are crying over what is happening to our community. He was crying on the dead, we are crying on the living. He recited *marṣiyahs* for lifeless corpses; we are reciting *marṣiyahs* for the corpses of those who, though alive, are lifeless.<sup>55</sup>

Syed Ahmed Khan established a direct relation between the decline of Muslim Spain and the decline of Indian Muslims and compared (and encouraged his readers to compare) al-Rundi's lament to the widespread practice of writing *shahr āshob* and *dunyā āshob* poems of the type that we have analysed. The feelings of despair that dominated the Urdu-speaking elite's literary compositions were here criticised by Syed Ahmed Khan: while al-Rundi composed elegies for the dead, Urdu poets wrote for the living and nothing could come out of such passive lamentations. Syed Ahmed Khan

---

<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately Syed Ahmed Khan did not mention where he had found the poem.

<sup>54</sup> G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, pp. 6-7 quoting S. R. Wasti (ed.), *Memoirs and Other Writings of Syed Ameer Ali*, Lahore, 1968, p. 107.

<sup>55</sup> *AIG*, 26 Jan. 1878, p. 105.

was creatively looking for a remedy to this attitude into which he, himself, had often fallen. The discovery of al-Rundi's poem acted as a catalyst that enabled him to find an alternative to Urdu āshobs: Hali's *Musaddas*. The *Musaddas* in fact concretised in poetry what Syed Ahmed Khan wanted to change in the Indian Muslim society and was imagined, as we shall see later, as a powerful tool to awaken the community.

The second article which immediately followed the first was entitled "a *Musaddas* on the example of the elegy [*The Lament for the Fall of Seville*]: on the ruined condition of the Muslim community".<sup>56</sup> In this article, Syed Ahmad Khan explained the genesis of what would become the most famous poem on the decline of Islam in India. He wrote:

When I saw the pain of Sayyid Yahya Qurtubi's *qaṣīdah marsīyah-e Andalus*, I said to my kind honourable friend Maulvi Altaf Husain Hali that it is sad that there used to be mourners for Al-Andalus but that these days no one until now has mourned the condition of our community. I told Hali: "God, my master, gave you a tongue but you do not speak; God gave you the marvellous ability to narrate but you don't make use of this miracle; God fills your eyes with tears through rain-bearing clouds but you do not let them flow once! The rain falls from the clouds in the hearts of oysters but your tears will fall into the hearts of men: cry over the condition of Allah's community, write a marsiyah like Qurtubi's on the ruined condition of the community!"<sup>57</sup>

The article continued:

And so I heartily thank Hali that my plaint had an impact on his heart and that he agreed to my wish and started writing a musaddas on the condition of the community to tell its story from the beginning to the end so that after [describing] its flow and progress, its decline would have much impact on the heart and our sleepy community would wake up and worry about their own offspring's welfare, progress and education. We copy here on this occasion a few stanzas from this musaddas related to the Arabs' condition in the beginning.

As the article explicitly shows, the *Musaddas* was therefore not only written at Syed Ahmed's overt demand but on the specific instruction to take al-Rundi's *Lament* as precise example. Despite the fact that the poem was published in 1879, the article shows that Hali had been working on its

---

<sup>56</sup> AIG, 26 Jan. 1878, p. 111.

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*.

composition since the end of 1877 or the beginning of 1878.<sup>58</sup> In another instance, Shackle has also noted that Hali was in possession of al-Rundi's lament: when Hali went to Hyderabad in 1905, he met Maulvi Hakim Wahid al-Din 'Ali, an expert of Arabic poetry. During their conversation, "Hali mentioned that he happened to have by him a copy of al-Rundi's famous Arabic lament on the fall of Al-Andalus, and said that he wished his visitor would attempt to rewrite it so as to depict the sorry state of contemporary Islam."<sup>59</sup> A week later, Wahid al-Din 'Ali came back with an Arabic *qaṣīdah* based on al-Rundi's which was subsequently published with an Urdu translation by Hali. From this anecdote, it seems obvious that Hali was forever marked by the exercise that Syed Ahmed Khan had asked him to do almost thirty years earlier. The instruction for the *Musaddas* to follow the example of an Arabic lament also explains that Hali's poem was imbued with a rare Arabic flavour (the choice of the *musaddas* metre, the rhyme in Arabic nouns in -at, the references to the Sunna and Hadiths).<sup>60</sup>

The fact that al-Rundi's lament was rediscovered by Syed Ahmed Khan at the time not only demonstrate in itself the growing importance that contacts with other Muslim countries represented for Indian Muslims but also the drive of Aligarh scholars to connect with the Arabic tradition. As Robinson has argued, the "rejection of the Persianate Mughal past and [the] embracing of Arab models"<sup>61</sup> was not only a means through which Islamic modernism could be achieved but was also part of broader "strategies of authority" that were developed by religious and literary leaders like Syed Ahmed Khan, who strove to establish and maintain their influence in the colonial world. Francis Robinson identified these new strategies with the rejection of the Persian heritage and of "the ornate and flowery products of a failed courtly culture",<sup>62</sup> with the new emphasis on Arabic authoritative texts like the Qur'an and the Hadiths and with the focus on the figure of the

---

<sup>58</sup> The twelve stanzas published in 1878 differed a bit from the one published a year later, although the bulk of it remained the same.

<sup>59</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, pp. 245-6.

<sup>60</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 29-32.

<sup>61</sup> F. Robinson, "Strategies of Authority in Muslim South Asia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 47, n°1, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> F. Robinson, "Strategies of Authority", p. 16.

Prophet – tendencies of which the *Musaddas* was a perfect example. Although not deliberately discarding Urdu’s Persian heritage,<sup>63</sup> the poem concretely embodied the fact that Arabic literary traditions were increasingly compelling to Indian Muslim elites who were looking for a new impulse.

However, I argue, the choice of “copying” an Arabic text was not only stimulated by a flourishing desire for things Arabic but was also guided by the fact that the Andalusī poetic tradition contained something that the Urdu and Persian ones did not have. The Arabic Andalusī genre of *rithā’ al-mudun* (city elegy)<sup>64</sup> contained specificities which differed in many ways from Urdu shahr āshob poetry and which were particularly interesting for a modernist leader trying to popularise his message. Hali used several literary devices of *The Lament for the Fall of Seville* which helped build nostalgia to then turn it into an effective agent of “propaganda”: the evocation of exotic and once-glorious Islamic places (with a cyclical view of history), the call for jihad, and the warning of the sleeper who needs to wake up, which all had a lasting impact on the way Urdu-speaking elites subsequently related to their Arab past.

*The ebb and flow of Islam: linking India to worldwide Islamic glory*

One of the most interesting aspects of Arabic *rithā’ al-mudun* that irrevocably marked the reformist āshob poem was the idea of the ebb and flow of Islam, which directly influenced the title of Hali’s *Musaddas*. *The Lament for the Fall of Seville* was a typical Arabic marsiyah that lamented the fall of Andalusian cities by intimately linking them to other once-glorious Muslim kingdoms in a broader historical narrative of Islamic accomplishment and decline. Hali’s *Musaddas* also started with a reflection on the ebb and flow of the world of Islam and on the transitory nature of life.

---

<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, however, Hali did not choose to use the same metre used by al-Rundi (the *basiṭ* metre) for his lament. He used instead the *mutaqārib* metre which was for instance used in Firdausi’s *Shahnamah* and was “one of the few Perso-Urdu metres at all commonly used in classical Arabic poetry, at least that of the Abbasid period”, see C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>64</sup> See A. E. Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature*, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures, vol. 34, 2009.

Nostalgia was more overtly directed towards the fate of other Islamic civilisations in the world, relocating the history of the rise and fall of Indian Islam in the long past of Muslim sovereignty that was said to have spread worldwide:

There is no continent upon this globe  
 In which their buildings do not stand firm.  
 Arabia, India, Egypt, Spain, Syria, and Dailam,  
 The whole world is filled with their foundations.  
 [...] Their majesty is manifest from Granada,  
 Their greatness is made apparent by Valencia,  
 Their glory is recalled by Badajoz,  
 Cadiz throbs with longing for them.  
 Their fortune sleeps in Seville,  
 And Cordoba weeps for them night and day.<sup>65</sup>

Whereas Urdu shahr āshobs on Delhi or Lucknow did not usually compare Indian cities with other Muslim ones (with the exception of Mecca), nor the Mughal Empire with other famous powers in or outside India, the invocation of historical dynasties was a common characteristic of Andalusī *ubi sunt*. As Elinson noted in his study of elegies on Al-Andalus, “in the layering and recalling of past elegies, the *rithā’ al-mudun* for a particular location is literally built on the ruins of other historical losses that locate it within a larger context of the genre, resulting in a complex and richly textured effect.”<sup>66</sup> Andalusī poets thus had the custom of interweaving the immediate Andalusian past with a more distant Arab past invoking the historical landscapes of the Najd highlands, the Nile, Mecca, and Damascus, “the mere mention of [which] conjures up a host of images and emotional responses that carry the audience far beyond the boundaries of the actual words”.<sup>67</sup> The lament that Syed Ahmed Khan published in the pages of the *AIG* indeed lamented:

Where are the crowned kings of Yemen  
 And where are their jewel-studded diadems and crowns?  
 Where are [the buildings] Shaddad raised in Iram  
 And where [the empire] the Sassanians ruled in Persia?  
 Where is the gold Qarun once possessed?  
 Where are `Ad and Shaddad and Qahtan?

<sup>65</sup> Hali, *Musaddas*, verses 80 and 83, translated by C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*.

<sup>66</sup> A. E. Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus*, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup> A. E. Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus*, p.30

An irrevocable decree overcame them all so that they passed away  
And came to be as though they had never existed.<sup>68</sup>

In his *Musaddas*, Hali adopted this particular Arabic literary device “of establishing a framework for nostalgia through the citation of exotic proper names”<sup>69</sup> and linked for the first time the fate of Muslim India to other historical instances of cultural loss. In the *Musaddas*, Delhi was remembered in its glory alongside Baghdad and Cordoba and was mentioned together with Syria and Dailam as the great places of Islam; India was thus not opposed to glorious extra-Indian lands but included as one of them.

The inclusion of India into a broader world of glory and decadence concurred with the greater awareness of Muslim ashraf of participating in a broader Muslim world that was partly stimulated by the printed word, as we have seen above. The *Musaddas* thus represented an important development in the way Indian Muslims gradually related to their past as not only Indian, but also extra-Indian, global, and Islamic. If these tendencies were growing among Indian ashraf, they were far from completely new. Noble families had always sought to emphasise their extra-Indian origins through genealogies which perhaps encouraged them to view “their past as more Islamic than Indian”.<sup>70</sup> Faisal Devji, however, noted that whereas earlier genealogies and pre-modern histories tended to highlight family and small group inheritance, the past in Hali’s verses was not “filiative” but “conceived of temporal succession and historical transmission in genealogical terms”.<sup>71</sup> Offering a grand meta-narrative of Muslim history, the sense of cultural dispossession was relocated in a broader tale of Islamic ebb and flow, which encouraged Muslim self-awareness and promoted the shaping of a unified, pan-Indian Muslim sharif identity.

---

<sup>68</sup> "Abu al-Baqa al-Rundi, "Lament for the Fall of Seville", trans. from Arabic by J. T. Monroe, in O. R. Constable (ed.), *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish sources*, Philadelphia, 1997, pp. 220-221.

<sup>69</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 31.

<sup>70</sup> P. Hardy, "Modern Muslim Historical Writing on Medieval Muslim India", in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, p. 295.

<sup>71</sup> F. Devji, *Muslim nationalism: Founding identity in colonial India*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993, p. 157.

### *Collective shame and reform*

The most notable difference between al-Rundi's lament and the *Musaddas*, however, was the latter's reformist perspective. Hali was not writing for the dead, as al-Rundi did, but for the living: a large part of the poem was hence centred on the origins and teachings of Islam and on a social critique of contemporary times. The description of the ebb and flow of Islam was thus narrated through an overt reformist prism: Muslims thrived as long as they followed the fundamental teachings of Islam and declined as soon as they forgot them. To regain past glory, cultural memory and a return to the roots was thus justified. The *Musaddas* enabled melancholy for the more immediate Mughal past to be transformed into a powerful longing for Islamic origins thanks to the adoption of Arabic tropes and re-channelled contemporary collective emotions into a call for modernist reform. Using the guilt and shame that is often associated with collective trauma,<sup>72</sup> Hali pointed to the memory of lost power to trace a way to regain past glory. As Hali explained in the preface, he did not write the *Musaddas* "to be enjoyed or with the aim of eliciting applause, but [...] to make my friends and fellows feel a sense of outrage and shame"<sup>73</sup> and incite them to action. As al-Rundi questioned the faith and bravery of his contemporaries, Hali did not hesitate to be harsh.<sup>74</sup> The evocation of glorious Islamic powers further accentuated the Indian Muslims' responsibilities in the decline of a whole civilisation:

There is meanness in everything we do  
Our ways are worse than those of the most base  
Our forefathers' reputation has been eaten away by us  
Our step makes our countrymen ashamed  
We have thrown away our ancestors' credit  
And sunk the nobility of the Arabs.<sup>75</sup>

Al-Rundi's example, like many such Arabic poems, also usually turned nostalgic lament into a very powerful and overt call for jihad, through the

---

<sup>72</sup> J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, London, 1997, p. 52 and Neil J. Smelser "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma", p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> First preface to the *Musaddas*, in C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 97.

<sup>74</sup> See for instance Hali, *Musaddas*, v. 133: "But we, who are still exactly where we were, are a burden on the earth like minerals. We exist in the world as if we did not" translated by C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*.

<sup>75</sup> Hali, *Musaddas*, v. 121 translated by C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*.

same resort to shame.<sup>76</sup> Although Syed Ahmed and Hali of course did not call for jihad and in fact kept a very loyal attitude to the British during the Russo-Turkish war, the urge to action that pervaded the Andalusī poem gave to the Urdu elegy a different dimension that lacked in Urdu and Persian āshobs and that was used instead to endorse Western education. The ability of Arabic poetry to encourage individual and collective agency that deeply fascinated Hali concurred with new utilitarian preoccupations. As Hali noted elsewhere, “in Arabia, when they wanted to prepare the tribes to do battle, poets would recite their verses, setting hearts on fire, and the tribesmen would be ready to sacrifice their lives.”<sup>77</sup> Urdu āshobs could stop being “useless” laments by creatively adopting the peculiar tone of Arabic poets thus offering a new boost to a “moribund” Urdu poetry. The *Musaddas* as reformist text adopted much of al-Rundi’s methods and had indeed as main objective the awakening of the community.<sup>78</sup> It gave to al-Rundi’s admonitions a modernist twist: the image of the sleeper warned by time was for instance reused by Hali to convey a different meaning. While al-Rundi reminded people of the transitory nature of life (“O sleeper, time gives you a warning: if you are asleep, it is always awake!”), Hali used the image as a warning of the need to live with one’s time and acquire Western education.<sup>79</sup>

As many have shown, Hali’s vision of the origins of Islam was also strongly invested with a modernist perspective. The moral virtues appraised in the modern world were relocated in the past: Hali focussed “on the social aspects of the Prophet’s message”<sup>80</sup> and insisted on the fact that Islamic glory stemmed from the *ummah*’s unquenchable quest for knowledge, and

---

<sup>76</sup> A. E. Elinson, *Looking Back at Al-Andalus*, p. 36: “The brackish, muddy, and thus, useless water of this world can be exchanged for the pure life-spring of the next, but this exchange can only occur through jihad. Through action, tears can be turned into freshwater, and death into life.”

<sup>77</sup> L. Steele, “Hali and his Muqaddamah: the creation of a literary attitude in nineteenth century India”, in *AUS*, v. 1, 1981, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas*, p. 93.

<sup>79</sup> Hali, *Musaddas*, v. 139: “Day and night the age gives this signal, “the way to get on here is by being reconciled with me. Those who do not find it agreeable to follow me will have to be bypassed by me” translated by C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas*.

<sup>80</sup> M. A. Raja, *Constructing Pakistan*, p. 61.

that regeneration could only come from the same principle.<sup>81</sup> Hali's *Musaddas* was thus a very imaginative re-adaptation of the thirteenth-century Andalusī poem. It adopted many of its literary devices while reinterpreting them to serve the reformist and modernist agendas that were particular to the Aligarh School. The subject matter, the invocation of exotic and glorious place names and the displacement of nostalgic emotions all served to encourage a call for action and recreate a sense of belonging to a pan-Indian Muslim *ashrāf* community. Although, as we shall see next, the *Musaddas*, like later poems, was conceived as a text of propaganda whose main aim was to "fall into the hearts of men", it also had a tremendous and lasting impact on the way Indian Muslims remembered and invoked their past. Symptomatic of wider changes in the Urdu-speaking world, the poem advocated a new way of life for the elite by grieving collective trauma and re-channelling post-traumatic shame into modernist reform.

### **Community belonging and the political uses of nostalgia**

Syed Ahmed Khan, on whose prompting Hali had written the *Musaddas*, was enchanted by the poem as soon as he finished reading it:

The more it is printed and published and becomes known with the boys singing it to the stick-beats, the dancing girls reciting it on tablas and violins at the dance parties, and the Qawwals in the shrines enchanting and enrapturing others with their songs, the more I will feel pleased. It is my heart's desire to arrange a meeting in Delhi in which the gentlemen and aristocrats may be invited. And in that meeting dancing girls may be made to perform their art. But they too will have to sing the songs from the *Musaddas*.<sup>82</sup>

The publication of the *Musaddas* in the pages of the *Tahzīb ul-akhlāq* "took the public by storm"<sup>83</sup> and Hali himself, who was quite critical of its "plain" style, was surprised by its success.<sup>84</sup> When Hali reworked the text in 1886, the *Musaddas* had been republished six times, recited in many assemblies and

---

<sup>81</sup> M. A. Raja, *Constructing Pakistan*, p. 68.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Syed Ahmed Khan to Hali, M. A. Mannan (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 11.

<sup>83</sup> M. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu literature*, p. 347.

<sup>84</sup> He wrote in his second introduction to the *Musaddas* that "the popularity and renown which the poem has won in all parts of India in six years is truly astonishing". C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 99.

gatherings for the Prophet's birthday, introduced in school curricula,<sup>85</sup> used as warm-up for religious assemblies and even acted out in dramatic performances.<sup>86</sup> The poem rapidly became an integral part of the Urdu-speaking elite's lives. As Sir Abdul Qadir illustrated,

We read it in our school-days, we read it when we grow up, we recite it in our clubs, we listen to it in our Anjumans, we see the best of the land recurring to it in our conferences, we hear it sung with music and without it, again and again and again.<sup>87</sup>

As Bailey noted in his study of Urdu literature, "no poem has had so great an effect on the Urdu-speaking world."<sup>88</sup> In addition to various imitations by Urdu poets, a number of translations of the *Musaddas* also appeared in Pashto, Gujarati and Punjabi.<sup>89</sup> Many authors started to write *Musaddas*-like poems lamenting present "backwardness" and using the same literary devices that had been developed by Hali (and adopted from al-Rundi's lament). Shibli Numani (1857-1914), for instance, deeply impressed by the power of Hali's *Musaddas*, composed a poem entitled *Qaumī Musaddas*, which he recited at a public performance in Aligarh in 1890. His poetry was visibly influenced by Hali's adoption of al-Rundi's literary themes:

Those fine vistas of Marv, Shiraz and Isfahan,  
Those palaces, walls and gates of the Alhambra,  
Every stone of Egypt, Granada and Baghdad,  
And the decayed ruins of our lamented Delhi,  
All still have jewels glittering in their dust,  
All still remember their stories by heart.<sup>90</sup>

While some of the poets imitating Hali's style mainly used āshob poems to linger on feelings of nostalgia, most of them saw the *Musaddas* as an example of how poetry could be efficiently used. Reformers were not only moved by the mournful verses of the poem but saw in it an alternative to the usual passive response that Urdu poets had given to the pressures of the modern world in shahr āshob poetry. As Shackle noted, "the mania would not have happened at all had the *Musaddas* not had for a new public the rare

---

<sup>85</sup> Particularly in the North-Western Provinces, see Robinson, "Memory of Power", p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> S. A. Sandelvi, *Hali bahaisiyat sha'er*, Lucknow, 1960, p. 263 quoted in S. Anjam, *Monogrāf*, p. 75.

<sup>87</sup> A. Qadir, *The New School of Urdu Literature*, Lahore, 1898, p. 20.

<sup>88</sup> T. G. Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Karachi, 2008, p. 93.

<sup>89</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 45.

<sup>90</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, pp. 39-40.

quality of articulating a whole new vision.”<sup>91</sup> It not only represented a milestone because “it supplied the new school [of Urdu literature] with a model and directed poetry into a new and fruitful channel”<sup>92</sup> but also because it gave poetry a new purpose and use: propaganda.

The manifesto style of the *Musaddas* inspired authors such as Munshi Tahavvur Ali, a police officer from Budaon, who composed *Musaddas-e Ulvī* in order to support the building of a madrasa<sup>93</sup> or Maulvi Ni‘matullah Amrohi who wrote the *Musaddas-e Ni‘mat* in support of an anti-Shia polemic.<sup>94</sup> *Musaddases* seem to have also been written in this perspective by Hindus, such as Lala Kidari Lal Nirbhai Ram in his *Musaddas-e Nirbhai Prakash*, Pandit Brij Kaifi in his *Musaddas-e Kaifi* and Munshi Prashad Shafaq in his Arya Samaji poem significantly entitled *Musaddas-e Shafaq, Madd-o Jazr-e Aryā*.<sup>95</sup> Brij Narain Chakbast would also have adapted the theme and used it to propose Hindu reforms.<sup>96</sup> The late nineteenth-century press was submerged with this new type of political literature and reports from *Native Newspapers Reports* well demonstrated the success of that type of poetry that occupied pages and pages of local newspapers. In 1895, for instance, a poem by a certain Maulvi Muhammad Zamir ul-Haq published in the *Agra Akhbar* described “the political grandeur and the high social position the Musalmans had attained in the past, [and] lament[ed] the general degeneration in which they have fallen in the present day.” It continued with: “the Musalmans forgot their “God” and hence their present decadence. But they cannot now possibly rise unless education, both literary and technical, is extensively cultivated among them.”<sup>97</sup> In 1900, *Musaddas-e Nāzim* was published from Lahore by Muhammad Abdullah Tonki 'Nazim', the then Arabic professor of the Oriental College Lahore, who overtly copied Hali’s style. Like Hali’s

<sup>91</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 37.

<sup>92</sup> T. G. Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 349. This new style received various criticisms, among which Chiryakoti, Shibli’s mentor, who published an anti-Musaddas, *Musaddas-e Awali* in 1901 in opposition to Hali’s natural style (J. A. Khan, *Muhammad Shibli Nomani*, Aligarh, 2004, p. 84).

<sup>93</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 42.

<sup>95</sup> C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*, p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> A. Schimmel, *Classical Urdu Literature from the beginning to Iqbal*, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 240.

<sup>97</sup> *Agra Akhbar* of the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1895, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 616.

*Musaddas*, the poem begun with a *rubā'ī* reflecting on the ebb and flow of Islam,<sup>98</sup> related the history of Islamic civilisation and knowledge, interspersed with shaming verses on the present backwardness of Indian Muslims and exhorted Muslims to acquire Western education.<sup>99</sup>

In a letter to Maulvi Mahbub 'Alam, editor of the *Paisah Akhbār*, Lahore, in 1904, Hali tried to justify the overpowering role that āshob poetry had come to play in community politics.<sup>100</sup> The letter responded to an article published in the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1904 issue of the paper entitled "The excess of poetry in community gatherings". Although Hali agreed with the author that poetry had taken too much place in those organisations, he retraced the beginning of the practice with Syed Ahmed Khan and justified its use in some instances. Besides postulating that poets saw in community gatherings opportunities to recite poetry after the abolition of traditional platforms (*mushā'irahs*), he also explained:

I acknowledge that the late Sir Syed Ahmed Khan permitted poems to be recited at his conferences to a certain extent, but it was *not* because he considered these poems useful to the main conference, but because when these conferences were founded, the common Muslims were not aware of their purpose, and because of this, *they could not be persuaded* in their heart to join in. *Hence it was necessary to provide an atmosphere to these conferences with which Muslims are naturally familiar so that they come to join these meetings with great pleasure and eagerness.* But nowadays, it is no longer the same situation for Muslims. They have become aware of the real purpose of these conferences and it is no longer necessary to recite a couple of verses for them to come to these meetings. For this reason, reciting poems that remind Muslims of the period of ignorance and backwardness in the Muhammadan Educational Conference no longer serves any useful purpose.<sup>101</sup>

Despite deploring the fact that poets exclusively composed on the decline of Islam,<sup>102</sup> however, Hali argued that āshob poetry was still necessary in some

---

<sup>98</sup> M. A. Tonki 'Nazim', *Musaddas-e Nazim*, Lahore, 1900, p. 9: "O community, here is the result of your negligence, today, because of you, Islam has a bad name; In the beginning from nothing you have risen, and in the end from everything you have waned."

<sup>99</sup> Example M. A. Tonki 'Nazim', *Musaddas-e Nazim*, p. 42: "Coming to this world, what role did you take? You living or not, what difference would it make?"

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Hali to Maulvi Mahbub 'Alam, editor of the *Paisah Akhbār*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51. Emphasis mine.

<sup>102</sup> The letter criticised that "everywhere people have been crying and weeping on the decline of the Muslims, and have hardly directed their attention towards other subjects. [...] If poems were written for these meetings on such topics which are suitable to the demands

cases; for instance for the meetings of the Anjuman-e Himāyat-e Islām that crucially needed financial support. Āshob poetry clearly served to convey particular messages but also to attract audiences and funds. While the letter was critical towards the use of such practices – Hali proposed that they should be abolished in favour of religious sermons and moral lectures –, it attested of their widespread success in the twentieth century.

Kayasthas and Kashmiri Pandits equally used āshob-type literature for propaganda. In 1900 for instance, Babu Pyare Lal, zamindar of Barautha published a history book entitled *Hindustān-e Qadīm (Ancient India)* and written in Urdu, in which the author drew “such a vivid picture of the pristine greatness of Hindus as is calculated to give them a lesson and strike them with shame as to what they were before, and what they have become now.”<sup>103</sup> The *Kayastha Hitkari* of the same year published a speech made at a Kayasth conference in which the hardships of the community were displayed to show how “very necessary [it was] that some means should be devised to materially improve the condition of the Kayasths.”<sup>104</sup> The majority of such poems aimed at encouraging Urdu-speaking elites to “devote themselves heart and soul to the study of modern arts and sciences”.<sup>105</sup> The success of Aligarh's āshob poetry seems to have gradually extended to other groups looking for a better social status in the colonial world.<sup>106</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century and up to the middle of the twentieth century, the discourse of past glory and present backwardness reached groups that were not necessarily of noble descent but nonetheless looked for a good social position in British India. The *Kshatriya* of the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1918, for instance noted that “though the Jat community are in a very depressed condition it is gratifying to note that they still have some of the prototypes of their illustrious forebears. We should therefore bear in mind the following poem

---

of the time, these tunes on the community's progress and decline that have been sung repeatedly would no longer be written.” *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>103</sup> The *Rahbar* of 1<sup>st</sup> May 1900, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 227.

<sup>104</sup> *Kayasth Hitkari* of the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1900, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 364.

<sup>105</sup> See the *Kshatriya Mitra* of the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1910, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 199.

<sup>106</sup> S. Anjam, *Monogrāf*, pp. 82-83.

[published in the paper] and learn to hope for the educational future of our community.”<sup>107</sup>

*1888: Complaint to India or the rise of the Indian National Congress*

Despite being popular among other classes, Aligarh's nostalgic poetry was clearly directed towards the Muslim ashraf and consisted in a powerful elite discourse which aimed at strengthening social bonds through collective grieving and maintaining ashraf cultural influence in the colonial world. The political uses and implications of this discourse best materialised in 1888 as the Indian National Congress was preparing its annual session in Allahabad and the anti-Congress propaganda intensified in north India. The Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885, had until then held its annual sessions in East and South India but in the winter of 1887 it developed new centres in Lucknow and Allahabad and Madan Mohan Malaviya started to tour in the region to recruit new members.<sup>108</sup> The Indian National Congress, which was rather a “coalition of ‘out’ factions [...] reacting against specific administrative changes or official oppression”<sup>109</sup> and aimed at representing the interests of Indian subjects, without being restricted to any class, caste or religious community,<sup>110</sup> appealed to more and more Muslim ashraf. The main demands of the INC however worked against Aligarh's aim to maintain the political influence of Muslim ashraf in north India. This worried members of the Aligarh movement who claimed to represent their interests<sup>111</sup> and felt helpless before the demands for elective government and competitive examinations. During the Muslim Educational Conference in winter 1887, after a year of fierce campaigning, Syed Ahmed Khan opened fire against the Congress in a speech at Qaiserbagh in Lucknow:

---

<sup>107</sup> NNRNWP&O for 1918, p. 407.

<sup>108</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920*, Oxford, 1975, p. 139.

<sup>109</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots*, p. 136.

<sup>110</sup> The Congress propaganda was often criticised by Muslim opponents as pro-Hindu. C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots*, pp. 123, 142.

<sup>111</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 116.

[...] if any of you – men of good position, Raïses, men of the middle classes, men of noble family to whom God has given sentiments of honour – if you accept that the country should groan under the yoke of Bengali rule and its people lick the Bengali shoes, then, in the name of God! Jump into the train, sit down, and be off to Madras, be off to Madras!<sup>112</sup> (Loud cheers and laughter)<sup>113</sup>

The Conference highlighted divisions among the Muslim ashraf; and Syed Ahmed Khan's reluctance of promoting English education among lower classes by proposing a resolution against the establishment of small schools for Muslim children<sup>114</sup> was vigorously opposed, and eventually dismissed, by the opposition among whom was Munshi Sajjad Husain, Rais of Kakori, Congress member<sup>115</sup> and editor of the then ten-year-old *Awadh Punch*.<sup>116</sup>

In 1888, just after the Lucknow speech, Syed Ahmed Khan launched an anti-Congress campaign under the direction of Theodore Beck and founded the United Indian Patriotic Association, which regularly published pamphlets and "claimed a monopoly on loyalty to British rule and purported to represent the politically significant sections of the population".<sup>117</sup> In March, April and May 1888, the anti-Congress and Congress campaigns got more intense: while Ajudhia Nath's touring in the region recruited new Congress members among the province's elite, Aligarh partisans persuaded associations of landlords and government servants into public declarations against the Congress. In March, the Muslims of Allahabad declared themselves opposed to the Congress;<sup>118</sup> on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1888, the British Indian Association of Oudh, constituted of maharajas, rajas and *ta'luqdars* of Oudh, both Hindus and Muslims, declared the Congress movement "distinctly seditious", "disclaiming all connection therewith";<sup>119</sup> and in May

---

<sup>112</sup> Madras was where the annual Congress session was held in 1887.

<sup>113</sup> Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, *The Present State of Indian Politics. Consisting of speeches and Letters, reprinted from the "Pioneer"*, Allahabad, 1888: Speech at Lucknow on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1887, pp. 10-11.

<sup>114</sup> See M. S. Jain, *The Aligarh Movement*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 93 and the *Proceedings of the Muslim Educational Conference*, Aligarh, 1887, Resolution 3, p. 42.

<sup>115</sup> S. K. Das, *History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956: struggle for freedom: triumph and tragedy*, New Delhi, 1995, p. 506.

<sup>116</sup> S. Naeem, *Shināsan-e Sir Syed*, vol. 2, Aligarh, 2011, pp. 26-27.

<sup>117</sup> D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation*, p. 309.

<sup>118</sup> Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 120.

<sup>119</sup> *Pamphlets issued by the United Indian Patriotic Association, n°2: Showing the seditious character of the Indian National Congress and the opinions held by eminent natives of India who are OPPOSED to the Movement*, Allahabad, 1888, p. 96

from 1,200 to 2,000 Muslims assembled in Allahabad and condemned the Congress.<sup>120</sup>

The same year, Hali published a poem entitled *Complaint to India* (*Shikwah-e Hind*), which was filled with anguish and bitterness. Thirty-four pages long and written in *tarkīb band*,<sup>121</sup> the poem was written on the model of a love poem addressed by Muslim “lovers” to their unfaithful beloved India; a theme extensively used in classical poetry. Relating the love story between India and the Muslims since its beginning to its “end”, Hali typically represented the beloved as “overpoweringly, cruelly, even fatally beautiful”<sup>122</sup> for a naïve lover, unprepared though aware of his tragic destiny. Oscillating between recollections of past glory and fears of annihilation, Hali emphasised the need to remember before “leaving”: he mourned the Muslim ashraf's cultural death in India, accusing the country of Muslims' present ruin. In *Complaint to India*, this cultural death was also interpreted as resulting from the loss of Muslim cultural specificities:

O Hindustan, as long as we were not called Indians,  
We had refinements that distinguished us from all  
You have made of our condition an utter ruin  
We were fire; you made us ashes, O Hind!<sup>123</sup>

Against this traumatic narration of Muslim cultural death equated with the loss of power, Hali emphasised glorious origins and genealogical ties with ancestors who belonged to different lands but were united “all under the banner of Islam”.<sup>124</sup> The lengthy descriptions of the respective qualities of ancestors of various origins, which the Muslim ashraf would have inherited indiscriminately, helped to re-create a sense of belonging - something that Hali further highlighted by the constant use of the personal pronoun “we”:

---

<sup>120</sup> *Civil and Military Gazette* of May 19, 1888 quoted in *Pamphlets issued by the United Indian Patriotic Association*, appendix, p. vi.

<sup>121</sup> The *tarkīb band* is a style of ghazal in which every stanza has its own rhyme. It also displays a break in the middle of each couplet in which a common rhyme often appears. This type of poetry is thus particularly rhythmic. See B. D. Metcalf, “Reflections on Iqbal's mosque”, in M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions. A Collection of Unpublished and Rare Iqbalian Studies*, Lahore, 2003, p. 166.

<sup>122</sup> F. Pritchett, *Nets of awareness*, p. 93.

<sup>123</sup> Hali, *Shikwah-e Hind*, band 7.

<sup>124</sup> Hali, *Shikwah-e Hind*, band 10.

We had the Turks' authority and the Mughals' endurance  
 The Kurds' determination and the Bedouins' sense of honour  
 We had the Hashmis' manners and the Abbasids' erudition  
 The Arabs' rhetoric and the Adenites' eloquence  
 In war, we were impetuous like Ali and courageous like Khalid  
 We had the Khamris' majesty and the Faruqis' grandeur<sup>125</sup>

Hali's *Complaint to India* undoubtedly built on the same literary devices used in the *Musaddas* and derived from al-Rundi's lament. However, it also clearly participated in the 1888 anti-Congress propaganda, in which Aligarh partisans claimed that the Muslim ashraf's interests were being trampled upon by a Hindu majority and "Bengali supremacy" incarnated by the Indian National Congress. The powerful images of India devouring or reducing Muslims to ashes mirrored fears that Muslim political influence would disappear in the shadow of elective government and make of the Muslim ashraf a subordinate minority. Contrary to the second edition of the *Musaddas*, which Hali wanted more optimistic, *Shikwah-e Hind* was incredibly pessimistic: it reflected the anxieties of Indian Muslims who felt constrained between their memory of a glorious past and their incapacity of sustaining it in the colonial world.

Smoke is still rising from the snuffing of the gathering's candle  
 The traces of the travellers' footprints still say, O dust of Hind,  
 That a magnificent caravan has just passed this way  
 It is certain that, weathered by time,  
 Our ancestors' memory will gradually leave our heart,  
 We will forget of which branches we were the fruit,  
 Whence we fell and where we came to be sold.<sup>126</sup>

Like the *Musaddas*, *Complaint to India* generated enthusiasm among Muslim ashraf and was copied by Urdu poets, who sometimes even borrowed its title.<sup>127</sup> While the *Musaddas* as a modernist text encouraging reform tended to attribute Muslim downfall to their own negligence, *Shikwah-e Hind* usually viewed India as the agent of Muslim decline, thus reflecting the political context that surrounded the composition of the poem and revealing the inner

---

<sup>125</sup> Hali, *Shikwah-e Hind*, band 3.

<sup>126</sup> Hali, *Shikwah-e Hind*, band 11.

<sup>127</sup> See for instance the *Agra Akhbar* of the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1899 which published a *Complaint against India* by one Sayyid Aijaz ud-Din Faiq in which it is said that Muslims "are fast forgetting their origin and changing their manners and customs, and a time is approaching when they will cease to remember their past altogether." in *NNRNWP&O*, p. 372.

turmoil of the Muslim ashraf after 1857. Although *Shikwah-e Hind* was clearly a political tool in the anti-Congress campaign that made of nostalgia and memory an effective argument for propaganda, it also well illustrated how collective trauma could lead to social fragmentation.<sup>128</sup> In his search for community identity and solidarity, Hali rejected his Indian heritage and, in the process, drew apart from his non-Muslim fellow countrymen, as we shall see later.

### *Āshob disputes in the Awadh Punch*

In 1888, many āshob poems like Hali's *Complaint to India* appeared on the front pages of north Indian newspapers. The āshob poetry that was used in the anti-Congress Aligarh campaign met opposition in anti-Aligarh milieus: in spring 1888, the *Awadh Punch* engaged in an "āshob battle" in three rounds between pro- and anti-Congress partisans. Although Syed Ahmed Khan's modernist reform and Hali's powerful poems on a glorious Islamic past were widely appraised by Urdu-speaking elites, they indeed also became objects of controversy. Many newspapers and magazines openly accused Syed Ahmed Khan and his disciples of being "lunatics", "Natory"<sup>129</sup> and "Christians",<sup>130</sup> and fatwas denouncing him of infidelity were composed in Mecca.<sup>131</sup> As Hali noted in *Hayāt-e Jāved*,

The *Punch* newspapers mostly discussed Sir Syed. Their editors and proprietors were usually Muslims, and the sale of those papers depended on the degree to which they disgraced him, how much they presented him in cartoons, how many satirical verses they carried against him, and how they portrayed his merits as demerits. Thus, they exposed not only Sir Syed but the entire community to disgrace and ridicule.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> M. T. Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It*, New York, 2004 quoted in J. Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster*, New York, 2014, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Or *Nechari*, "nature-worshipper": name often given by conservative Muslims for people who study nature rather than religion, and so-called materialists.

<sup>130</sup> S. F. Ahmad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Beck and the Indian National Congress*, MPhil AMU, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> F. Robinson, "Strategies of Authority", p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> Hali, *Hayat-e Jawed*, p. 382.



Fig. 3.b. Caricature of Syed Ahmed Khan, described as a “Necharī yogī”.  
 A selection from the illustrations which have appeared in the *Oudh Punch* from 1877 to 1881,  
 Lucknow, 1881, plate n° XVII, p. 34

The dispute in the *Awadh Punch* apparently started with the publication of an āshob poem in the Kanpur newspaper *Ak̄hbār-e 'alam-e Taswīr* by an opponent of the Indian National Congress entitled “Community Warning” (*Qaumī 'ibrat*). The *Awadh Punch* quickly reacted to the poem by publishing another poem, *The Drum of Islam (Naqqārah-e Islām)* in the edition of the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1888, written by Munshi Abdul Basir ‘Huzur’, a Congress partisan. Another poem, *The Horn of Israfel (Sūr-e Isrāfīl)*, was sent in response by an anti-Congress reader from Mirzapur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Munshi Sajjad Husain, the editor of *Awadh Punch* published the poem composed of thirty-seven verses in the musaddas form, intertwining the verses with his own critiques. In the introduction to the poem, the editor summarised the dispute and justified his participation in it:

A few days ago, one poem entitled “Community Warning” by an opponent to the National Congress was published in the newspaper *Ak̄hbār-e 'alam-e Taswīr* in the form of a pamphlet, in which he spread many accusations with personal attacks on manly tempered and justice-lover Muslims, who having

crushed their egoistic and blind glasses [...] under their boots, had joined the National Congress. To the weak arguments, silly statements and selfish postulates of this "Warning", Mr Munshi Abdul Basir, *takhalluṣ* "Huzur" had given to prestigious Muslims a progressive and cultured response in *The Drum of Islam*. And since [the *Awadh Punch*] is a community issue and since it is, for the right of settlement and revocation, the duty of a honest and just newspaper to give the occasion to consider both [views], we have published *The Drum of Islam* in the issue of the 5<sup>th</sup> April. In response to it, one of our esteemed and affectionate [readers] from Mirzapur has sent to our office his musaddas *The Horn of Israfel* for publication. Although besides bad arguments, bad language and harsh words, it also presents, from the beginning to the end, provocative content and an abundance of personal attacks that vent rage, and despite the fact that no one can draw any sort of usefulness from it, the righteous justice by which we included *The Drum of Islam* now compels us to publish this response, (why wouldn't it be thus?) to give the occasion to spectators to establish their own opinion.

Despite Munshi Sajjad Husain's so-called willingness to give his readers the chance to "establish their own opinion", a last pro-Congress poem by Mirza Muhammad Murtaza "Ashiq", *The Sun of Doomsday (Aftāb-e Qiyāmat)*, concluded the dispute on the 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The poems, published over a two-month period, clearly replied to each other in what became increasingly aggressive campaigning. They not only directly mentioned and responded to the preceding poems but also used a similar metre and identical images that were constantly echoed and ridiculed and which certainly found their origin in the *Community Warning* of Kanpur.<sup>133</sup> The last poem mainly resorted to smear tactics to purposely undermine the credibility of the Aligarh anti-Congress campaign rather than engage with the arguments put forward by the previous poets.<sup>134</sup> With the use of the musaddas metre and their evocative titles, the poems incontestably placed themselves in the āshob tradition. Although this style of nostalgic poetry was clearly identified as being "Aligarhian" in pro-Congress poems, Congress partisans did not hesitate to adopt the same style to mock the

---

<sup>133</sup> The second poem, *The Horn of Israfel* mentioned *Qaumī 'ibrat* in its last verse (verse 37) which would have been published by a Muslim and which I have unfortunately been unable to find in the pages of the *Awadh Punch*.

<sup>134</sup> Verse 11 for instance says: "Can I summarise who has brought this calamity? Nechar, Nechar, Nechar! [...]"; verse 12: "Now the Muslims are aware of who are responsible for the spread of this rebellion: those Necharis are in fact the enemies of Islam"; verse 22: "They have erased the honour of the Shari'ah, they have wiped out Islam's shame and bashfulness".

language of their opponents. The *Drum of Islam*, while resorting to the same rhymes and metre, ridiculed Aligarh's discourse:

These people of Nechar are sad, day and night,  
They always remain surrounded by this worry  
    "We'll become the slaves of the Bengalis,  
    They'll come and spread everywhere,  
    None will remain in this world,  
Neither the drunkard, nor the cupbearer!"<sup>135</sup>

In response, the author of *The Horn of Israfel* replied by accusing the Indian National Congress of wanting to eliminate both the Muslim ashraf and Islam,<sup>136</sup> emphasising the fact that the ashob dispute was first and foremost about class and respectability.

It is true that all the nobles bear this grief,  
Always they are surrounded by this worry:  
We'll become the slaves of the people of Bengal  
These low born people are indeed cheerful  
This will be the effect of the Congress  
May God never bring such a time!<sup>137</sup>

As the poems showed, nostalgic poetry easily yielded to calls for action, which best materialised in political propaganda. Both sides for instance used the image of the sleeping community to call up new members, showing that their political party would bring back honour and political influence. The ashob dispute in fact well betrayed both the Muslim ashraf's fears of losing influence and the growing tensions between Aligarh's definitions of respectability and the Congress' attempts at securing leadership. While remembering lost glory, the poems all addressed the question of equality in Islam before the rise of mass politics. While Aligarh poets clearly demonstrated their reluctance of being associated with lower classes, pro-Congress writers emphasised the need to go back to the equality preached by the Prophet:

---

<sup>135</sup> "Naqqārah-e Islām", *Awadh Punch*, verse 30.

<sup>136</sup> The fourth verse of *The Horn of Israfel* lamented "We've been harassed by destruction such that what was ours became the property of others, these thoughts have accumulated in our hearts that we should relieve the ruin of the nation: everyone wants Islam and the name of Muhammad to be erased from this country."

<sup>137</sup> "Sūr-e Isrāfīl", in *Awadh Punch*, verse 26.

*The Drum of Islam* (pro-Congress):

Where are our Muslim brothers  
Who governed the whole world?  
Look, what misfortune befell them,  
Turning them into green grocers and  
butchers

[...] The Prophet made them all  
equals:  
He received this order from God.  
Remember their humility:  
They were equal like milk and sugar  
They took and gave their daughters to  
each other,  
In nobility no one was less than the  
other.<sup>138</sup>

*The Horn of Israfel* (anti-Congress):

Where are our Muslim brothers  
Who possessed the whole world?  
Look, what calamity befell them:  
Green grocers and butchers have become  
their leaders!

[...] We agree that in Islam we are equal,  
Green grocers and butchers, poor and  
rich,  
But this command is [only] valid inside  
the mosque,  
Take it outside and this will be the result:  
Carders and weavers will take our lead,  
Cobblers and gardeners will reign over  
us.<sup>139</sup>

The issue of equality and mass politics led pro-Congress poets to suggest the establishment of a “circular” that would definitely abolish nobility and make everybody equal.<sup>140</sup> They pitied poor Muslims who could never access the elite culture promoted by Aligarh<sup>141</sup> and expressed their discontent at Aligarh’s dominant narrative of redefining respectability in the colonial world through the acquisition of Western knowledge and the rejection of tradition.

The āshob dispute in the *Awadh Punch* demonstrates the difficulty with which social change was lived and debated by north Indian Muslim ashraf. Aligarh’s discourses of decline and past glory were clearly an elite discourse that dwelled on issues of class, nobility and political influence in the late nineteenth-century. Some Muslim ashraf, such as Munshi Sajjad Husain, who mocked Aligarh's āshob poetry, despised this discourse, which did not represent the interests of the whole Muslim population, promoted loyalism to the British authorities and rejected traditional forms of authority. They rather argued that Aligarh was the prime reason for Muslim decline by breaking with tradition. The āshob dispute in the *Awadh Punch* and more

<sup>138</sup> "Naqqārah-e Islām", verses 1-3.

<sup>139</sup> "Sūr-e Isrāfīl", verses 1 and 3.

<sup>140</sup> "Naqqārah-e Islām", verse 42: “May there now be a circular that would make everyone equal to those nobles”.

<sup>141</sup> "Naqqārah-e Islām", verse 35: Poor Muslims who are inferiors [...] They are neither CSI, nor Necharis. Neither judges, nor *munsifs*, and nor even Deputy collectors! They don’t wear coats, nor put on trousers. They don’t urinate standing, and can’t speak English.

generally the uses of nostalgia by Aligarh partisans show well that the dynamics at work in this type of poetry aimed at strengthening social bonds and sustaining a north Indian Muslim sharīf identity that had suffered from the trauma of the loss of power that 1857 symbolised. As we have already noted, however, community bonding amongst traumatised groups usually also implied social dissociation.

### **India as the land of Muslim downfall: trauma, shame and dissociation**

Scholars have often noted that the powerful “pull” towards an extra-Indian past that was notably displayed in Hali’s *Musaddas* and more radically in his *Complaint to India* was linked to the Muslim ashraf’s growing “reluctance to receive and participate in the cultural experience of India’s history”.<sup>142</sup> As we have seen, although the particular historical context surrounding these works should not be downplayed, the emphasis on extra-Indian origins most certainly revealed the desire of Aligarh poets to reinforce the status and authority of the Muslim ashraf by insisting on their noble ancestors – genealogies after all had always played a prominent part in Indo-Muslim aristocratic culture. The representation of India as corrupt or as the land of Muslim downfall, however, was quite new. As Maulvi Muhammad Zakaullah remarked the conscious “alienation” from India was a recent development among the Muslim ashraf: “I cannot bear to hear Indian Muslims speaking without reverence and affection for India. It is a new fashion, unfortunately springing up, which did not exist in my younger days.”<sup>143</sup> The idea that Muslim ashraf were not “truly” Indians had for instance been developed in the early 1870s by Sayyid Mahdi Ali Khan, later known as Mohsin ul-Mulk, at a lecture given at the Mirzapur Institute on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1873:

[w]hat especially has caused the decline of the unfortunate Indian Muslims has been their adoption of India as a homeland, and their

---

<sup>142</sup> A. B. M. Habibullah, “Historical Writing in Urdu. A Survey of Tendencies”, in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, p. 485.

<sup>143</sup> C. F. Andrews, *Zaka Ullah of Delhi*, Cambridge, 1929, p. 111 quoted by F. Devji, “India in Muslim imagination”, p. 3.

forsaking of their original homes. When the Muslims arrived in India they were very robust, rosy complexioned, strong and healthy. Their natures were free as well. There was some spirit in their hearts as well. They were ignorant of the ties of custom. But when they made India their homeland and joined with those nations that were inferior to them in strength, courage, freedom, knowledge and livelihood, (nations) in whose veins flowed restrictions, slavery to custom, and narrow-mindedness, then they, too, became so. [...] All that energy which arose in the sandy wastes of Arabia to revive and delight Iran and the whole of Central Asia, arrived in India only to be washed away in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>144</sup>

The ideas that Mahdi Ali Khan's vision of Muslim history conveyed were followed by Hali too when he wrote his *Musaddas*.<sup>145</sup> They were very typical of the reformist rhetoric that accused Muslims of having forgotten their past and highlighted their anxieties in the modern world. The image of the ship sinking in the Bay of Bengal for instance was very striking in Hali's verses and probably indicated concerns about the growing cultural and political influence of Bengalis in the colonial world:

That fearless fleet of the religion of the Hijaz,  
Whose mark reached the extreme limits of the world,  
[...] Which traversed the seven seas -  
Sank when it came to the mouth of the Ganges.<sup>146</sup>

Faisal Devji has read this peculiar discourse of a corrupting India as betraying "both a humiliation that seeks to dissociate itself from the scene of colonial contest, and a sense of community that finds itself lost in India as a profoundly alien political space".<sup>147</sup> The feelings of shame of being Indian that were expressed in Hali's verses were indeed undoubtedly accompanied by the strong awareness of a colonial gaze which looked down upon its subjects in the justification of its civilising mission. Syed Ahmed Khan for instance related a striking anecdote that took place in 1869 when he was in London and well demonstrated the impact of colonialism on the self-representation of Indian subjects:

---

<sup>144</sup> Mahdi Ali Khan, *Majmuah-e Lectures-o Speeches*, vol. 1, Lahore, 1904, p. 33 quoted by F. Devji, "India in the Muslim imagination", p. 3.

<sup>145</sup> For more on Mahdi Ali's treatment of Muslim history, see for instance Abdul Latif, *Autobiography and other writings*, Chittagong, 1968.

<sup>146</sup> Hali, *Musaddas*, v. 113 translated by C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas*.

<sup>147</sup> F. Devji, "India in the Muslim imagination", p. 3.

There is in the India Office in London a number of books representing the likeness and physical features of the several races and classes of the natives of India, and giving a description of their manners and customs, and in many cases even delineating the conspicuous parts of these usages themselves, by representing the peculiar attitudes, postures, and actions assumed by them in the various occupations of daily life; and as many of these representations are photographs, they show many bearings and marks of Indian character indicative of barbarity and rudeness amounting almost to brutality. [...] One day I visited the India Office, accompanied by my sons Hamid and Mahmood, and the latter began to look through the book in question. Meanwhile in stepped a young Englishman, who in all probability was a successful "Competition-wallah". After a short time he asked Mahmood if he was an Indian. This question was put with an evident feeling of contempt, but as my son was ingenuous, he promptly replied in the affirmative. No sooner, however, had he affirmed himself to be an Indian, than he felt deeply ashamed, and showed it in his face. The Englishman looked hard at him, not to say contemptuously. Mahmood, reading his thoughts, immediately observed that, strictly speaking, he was a foreigner, not an Indian.<sup>148</sup>

The relationship between Syed Ahmed's son and the "successful Competition-wallah" was marked by respective shame and contempt, in which the only reason was Mahmood's belonging to India and his being a colonial subject. The impact of colonial rule of course played a tremendous role in the emergence of a self-awareness and shame of belonging to a subject nation. As Devji argued, "the *qawm* was seen to be alienated from India newly conceived as a cartographic space but also as being trapped within it in a way that made for literary descriptions dominated by notions of shame and humiliation".<sup>149</sup>

I argue, however, that the "pull away" from India and the shame that notably appeared in Hali's poems is also to be linked to the process of collective mourning that had been initiated in post-1857 shahr āshob poetry. Mourning Mughal culture and resolving the cultural trauma of the loss of power was a particularly difficult process for Urdu-speaking elites in the colonial context where public expressions of grief for the Mughal era, and later for other Muslim powers, could be interpreted as evidence of Muslim disloyalty – something that Muslim apologetic endeavours, like Sir Syed's, strove to avoid at all costs. Gradually realising, as Alexander noted in other

---

<sup>148</sup> *The Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 22 December 1869, pp. 829-830.

<sup>149</sup> F. Devji, "India in Muslim imagination", p. 12.

collective traumas, that “an important part of the self ha[d] disappeared”,<sup>150</sup> Aligarh scholars strove, as trauma victims usually do, to reconstruct collective identity “in public life through the creation of literature”.<sup>151</sup> Cultural loss, as we have seen, was irrevocably accompanied by strong feelings of shame that Hali well exploited: while the glorious extra-Indian past was imbued with the positive emotions of pride, the Indo-Muslim past was associated with guilt and shame – a process that is quite common in reactions to cultural traumas.<sup>152</sup> Muslim ashraf, who were in the impossibility of directing their post-traumatic anger towards the colonial state, tended to express instead both guilt towards themselves and anger towards India – pointed to as responsible for the traumatic loss. This process revealed great cultural and emotional disorientation.

In Hali’s poems, the memory of Arab origins replaced “the imperfect present with a perfect past”,<sup>153</sup> offered to “re-enact reunion with the lost object”.<sup>154</sup> Encouraging both social and religious reform, the Aligarh movement successfully re-channelled nostalgia into religious fervour in a context that was favourable to the development of pan-Islamic sentiments. In the early twentieth century, however, Hali's *Musaddas* and *Shikwa-e Hind* were increasingly read and criticised as instances of Indian Muslims' cultural dissociation from their Indian heritage. This was partly the result of the community identity discourses that Aligarh scholars promoted and that were prompted by the traumatic experience of the loss of power. As other scholars have noted in collective traumas, a common way of coping is to re-centre on

---

<sup>150</sup> J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 6.

<sup>151</sup> J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 6.

<sup>152</sup> See for instance S. Schneider, H. Weinberg, *The Large Group Re-Visited: The Herd, Primal Horde, Crowds and Masses*, London, 2003; I. Kogan, *The Struggle against Mourning*, Lanham, 2007; V. D. Volkan, “Not letting go: from individual perennial mourners to societies with entitlement ideologies”, in L. Fiorini, T. Bokanowski, S. Lewkowicz and E. Person (eds.), *On Freud's “mourning and melancholia”*, London, 2009, pp. 90-109; V. D. Volkan, “The Next Chapter: Consequences of Societal Trauma” in P. Gobodo-Madikizela and C. van der Merve (eds.), *Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Perspectives of the Unfinished Journeys of the Past*, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 1-26.

<sup>153</sup> J. Damousi, *Living with the aftermath: Trauma, nostalgia and grief in post-war Australia*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 68 quotes J. Rutherford, *Men's Silences: Predicaments in Masculinity*, London, 1992, p. 127.

<sup>154</sup> J. Damousi, *Living with the aftermath*, p. 68 quotes D. Bassin, ‘Maternal Subjectivity in the culture of nostalgia: mourning and memory’, in D. Bassin, M. Honey and M. M. Kaplan, *Representations of Motherhood*, New Haven, 1994, p. 168.

essential cultural values for cultural regeneration, which often implies emotional dissociation. The reconstruction of a Muslim sharīf collective identity, I argue, implied fracture with the Hindu Urdu-speaking elite – a fracture that was facilitated by the rise of communal polarisation around the fate of the Urdu language and script – despite the fact that Hindu Urdu-speaking elites usually clearly expressed their solidarity with Muslim pro-Urdu leaders.<sup>155</sup>

Kayasths seem to have engaged in a similar mourning and collective reconfiguration process by recalling their glorious Hindu origins and putting their collective past into writing, giving birth to numerous “caste histories”.<sup>156</sup> Kayasth community newspapers regularly announced projects of writing the history of their communities, which usually claimed to belong to the Hindu Kshatriya varna.<sup>157</sup> As Sender noted, Kashmiri Pandits also “adopted an historical perspective”<sup>158</sup> and, like the Muslim ashraf, tended to express emotional “dissociation” from Hindustan around the same period. They increasingly highlighted their Kashmiri origins and longed for a Kashmir homeland that was described as paradise on earth, perhaps in a similar attempt to escape the colonial world and return to their roots for the construction of a new collective identity. As Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' for instance wrote in the autumn 1891 issue of the *Safir-e Kashmir*, “Leaving Kashmir was like leaving Eden, it was our downfall”.<sup>159</sup> If such sentiments were widespread among the Urdu-speaking elite in the late nineteenth-century, they resounded quite differently in the twentieth century.

---

<sup>155</sup> Pant has noted that while the north Indian Kashmiri Pandits who had emigrated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to adhere to the Indo-Muslim culture and fought for the cause of Urdu in the late nineteenth-century, newly immigrated Kashmiri Pandits in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries were more aggressive in their religious assertions: K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, p. 154-156.

<sup>156</sup> On this, see the excellent work of L. C. Stout, *The Hindustani Kayasthas*.

<sup>157</sup> The *Kayastha Samachar* for instance advertised at least three such publications in the course of three years (1903-1906): the *Kayastha Sarvasva* (February 1903, vol. VII, n°2, p. 199), the *Miftah Makhzan ul-Ansab* (May-June 1904, vol. IX, n°5-6, p. 554) and the work of Pandey Ram Saran Lall of Ghazipur (July 1906, vol. 14, n°83, p. 103). Such works were usually written in Urdu. A look at the list of the publications by the Nawal Kishore Press shows the success of such enterprises. See U. Stark, *An Empire of Books*, pp. 461 ff.

<sup>158</sup> H. Sender, *The Kashmiri Brahmins (Pandits) up to 1930: cultural change in the cities of North India*, PhD dissertation, Wisconsin-Madison, 1981, p. 137.

<sup>159</sup> *Safir-e Kashmir*, October-November 1891 quoted in H. Sender, *The Kashmiri Brahmins*, p. 137.

*Shifting solidarities: the Musaddas and Shikwah-e Hind in the early twentieth century*

The early 1900s saw the growth of communal tension in north India. Political agitation and consequent colonial concessions to Hindu revivalist claims in the United Provinces led to more assertive demands from Muslim leaders who anxiously looked at new administrative policies.<sup>160</sup> In 1900, for instance, Sir Anthony MacDonnell, then Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces agreed to the use of Devanagari in courts after having received a Hindu deputation, which fuelled Muslim agitation at Aligarh and led to the foundation of the Urdu Defence Association by Mohsin ul-Mulk.<sup>161</sup> In the South, communal tension also increased. At the end of the nineteenth century, the nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak decided to organise an annual national festival in honour of the birth anniversary of the Marathi ruler Shivaji, which eventually (and unintentionally) sparked Muslim indignation.<sup>162</sup> The festival that was hoped to “create national feeling”<sup>163</sup> and was held in different parts of India in fact polarised the Hindu and Muslim communities as “two great monolithic political communities divided by memories of masterhood and subjecthood, and by the pride of the one at the humiliation of the other”.<sup>164</sup> In 1906, Muslim leaders from Aligarh who had just founded the All India Muslim League definitely refused to join in the yearly celebrations, arguing that

while every community is free to celebrate its great men, in order to create a national feeling among its members, it has no right to ask men of another community to take part in such celebrations, especially when the hero celebrated happens to be regarded as an enemy by the members of that community.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 133.

<sup>161</sup> P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 143.

<sup>162</sup> As Hardy noted, the festival was intentionally conceived as nationalist but was not intended to “exacerbate Hindu-Muslim relations”. He would have indeed himself claimed that “had he been a north Indian he would himself have adopted Akbar as a hero for both Hindus and Muslims” (P. Hardy, *The Muslims*, p. 142).

<sup>163</sup> *The Hindustani* (Lucknow), 2 July 1901, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 431.

<sup>164</sup> P. Hardy, *The Muslims*, p. 142.

<sup>165</sup> *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 11 July 1906, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 426.

Instead, they proposed to celebrate Ahmad Shah Abdali, who defeated the Mahrattas. Proposals to commemorate Akbar instead to “promote a feeling of common fellowship”<sup>166</sup> amongst members of all communities were also put forward, but with the announcement of the partition of Bengal communal tension was already at its paroxysm. In this new context, Hali’s *Musaddas* and *Complaint to India* were read with very different lenses: the pull away from India was no longer only interpreted as part of the discourse on community identity and political leadership but as a vigorous assertion of communal antagonism and as a lack of dedication to India’s past and future. Although Ayesha Jalal noted that “Hali’s *Shikwa-e-Hind* did not stir a public controversy over his, or for that matter his community’s, putative lack of allegiance to India”,<sup>167</sup> I show here that on the contrary strong criticism was voiced against Hali’s expression of emotional dissociation.

In 1904, Hali was awarded the title of *Shams ul-‘ulama* by the British Government. The official recognition and praise of his literary achievements sparked a series of critiques from contributors of the *Awadh Punch* who accused Hali of having “drowned” Urdu poetry<sup>168</sup> and of having achieved nothing but Muslims’ further degradation. The paper humorously conceded that while Hali was not a savant and did not deserve the title granted by the Government, “he nonetheless possess[ed] a collection of Arabic books”.<sup>169</sup> For the *Awadh Punch*, Hali was definitely not worthy of public acknowledgment.<sup>170</sup> At the time, two letters addressed to Hali (and Aligarh) – one signed “Hindustan” (28<sup>th</sup> July 1904) and the second “The Islamic faith” (4<sup>th</sup> August 1904) – both targeted Hali’s two famous poems the *Musaddas* and

<sup>166</sup> *Oudh Akhbar*, 10 November 1906, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 788.

<sup>167</sup> A. Jalal, “Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia”, in S. Bose and A. Jalal (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*, Delhi, 1998, online version <<https://www.tcd.ie/iis/documents/archive/pdf/communalismayesha.pdf>> (last accessed 10 July 2016), p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> “*Kḥwājah Hali kī shā‘erī par*”, in *Awadh Punch*, 16 June 1904, p. 1.

<sup>169</sup> “*Islām kā kḥḥḥ Aligarh ke nām men*”, in *Awadh Punch*, 4 August 1904, p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> “*Islām kā kḥḥḥ*”, p. 7: “These days, the issue [...] is that you should receive some title from the government for good service to your community. Your service to the community, what is it? Why should you receive this title? [...] In your time, the remaining Muslims have been trimmed and cut to pieces; the remaining women had their hands cleaned by force and their purdah were pulled and they were snatched from their chairs; and they fear they will be summoned to madrasas by force!”

*Shikwah-e Hind* and complained about their representation of Indo-Muslim history. At the centre of the letters' preoccupation was the representation of the Muslims' arrival and degeneration in India and the emotional rejection of India that characterised Hali's poems. Both letters accused Hali's representations of being offensive and his attitude irreligious; they noted that the Muslims who Hali mourned in fact still existed and that the virtues and sciences that Aligarh eagerly pursued had never disappeared but were being constantly trampled by Aligarh's anxious search, thus emphasising the tension between nostalgia and modernity.<sup>171</sup> In Hindustan's letter, the author beautifully refuted Hali's accusation that India was responsible for Muslim decline by showing that Syed Ahmed Khan's modernist ideas and the Aligarh movement was guilty for the Muslims' cultural downfall due to their lack of religiousness:

In which ways have I been perfidious, that you wrote indeed that I have taught Muslims selfishness? That I am selfish? That I have ruined Muslims? There still remains today Muslims of the old times and the children who have obtained education from them should not plant new saplings from their own hands that would confront the old branches. Look now, if you have obtained, in [doing] this, the qualities that you lament in your *Musaddas* and *Shikwah-e Hind* or not.

In reality, if you look attentively then [you will see that] the hands of your Pir Nechar [Syed Ahmed Khan] were spoiled and you put the blame on me. Be attentive, these Muslim qualities that you search for in *Shikwah-e Hind*, where are they? Look at this hospitality, these virtues, this togetherness. Remember that religion is something in the world that removes difficulties. As much as someone loves religion and will be obedient, as much he will be close to God and love His servants. When someone is obedient then he automatically obtains all of the best virtues as God's reward.<sup>172</sup>

But besides the obvious critique of Aligarh's irreligiousness that was commonly expressed, India's letter also more broadly opposed Hali's representation of Muslim interactions with India in both *Shikwah-e Hind* and the *Musaddas*. Although the anonymous author expressed his desire to have spoken earlier, it seems that the granting of the *Shams ul-'ulama* title and the

---

<sup>171</sup> "Islām kā ḳḥaṭ", p. 7: "If Hali had said that the sciences had left with the Arabic Empire or that the new sciences had ruined the old and that therefore one now needs to learn these new sciences [it is one thing], but it is another to say that Muslims have forgotten their ancient sciences."

<sup>172</sup> "Hindustān kā ḳḥaṭ", p. 5.

publication of a book by an Aligarh scholar called “Radical” in the letter rekindled his willingness to retort.<sup>173</sup>

The author’s response to Hali’s poems was not necessarily less communal-minded than Hali’s initial words, on the contrary. Muslims’ arrival in India was described as a most violent phenomenon; but the author’s real focus was not so much on the brutality of the event as on the violence of Hali’s dissociation from India. While Muslims had been friends with Indians for centuries to the extent that they were considered equal, Hali was now ungratefully turning against his adopted kin. What the author criticised was not specifically Hali’s “communal” representations but the Muslim ashraf’s rejection of India and their lack of dedication to what had long become their homeland:

I submitted to the command of the Sultanate and I respectfully made room. Because of their continued stay it has become thus that they have revered me like my own sons and have become so friendly with my sons that I began to think of them as real brothers. But, these friends kept an account of mutually exchanged gifts; in reality, records were kept of what was yours and what was mine. The wealth and goods that were theirs remained theirs. I neither took anything from them, nor did they give me anything.<sup>174</sup>

Although the article remained anonymous, a Hindu Urdu-speaker very likely composed it. At the beginning of the twentieth century indeed, and even more after the foundation of the Muslim League, Hindu Urdu-speaking elites more regularly expressed their disapproval of Muslims’ lack of dedication to the Indian nationalist cause and of their separatist trends. The *Awadh Punch* article was probably the work of someone like Brij Narain Chakbast (1882-1926) who was a regular contributor and routinely expressed critiques of Hali in particular. While he was influenced by Hali and other Urdu literary personalities,<sup>175</sup> he was drawn into the *Awadh Punch* anti-Hali campaign in 1903, ridiculing his style of poetry in articles of the magazine.<sup>176</sup> Chakbast was typical of a number of Hindu Urdu-speaking elites who felt

---

<sup>173</sup> “It is sad that Sir Syed has passed away otherwise today I would cling to his clothes and reply to him face to face. But fortunately, you and Mehdi Ali [Mohsin ul Mulk] are alive. So you (*tum*) will listen to my answer.” “Hindustān kā k̲h̲aṭ”, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>175</sup> S. S. Kaif, *Chakbast, Makers of Indian Literature*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> S. S. Kaif, *Chakbast*, p. 42. Notably, according to Kaif, in an article on 27 August 1903.

increasingly uneasy with the Muslims' growing communal withdrawal. Born into a Kashmiri Brahmin family of Faizabad, he was traditionally educated in Urdu and Persian. Influenced by the nationalist ideology of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he yet never became a member of the Indian National Congress.<sup>177</sup> Chakbast composed in Urdu from a young age and, as a Kashmiri Brahmin, he was against the developing representation of Urdu as an Islamic language. In 1905, he engaged in the famous literary argument against Abdul Halim Sharar which divided Urdu-speaking opinion but which he eventually won.<sup>178</sup> Muslims' lack of allegiance to the nationalist cause or at least their rejection of the Indian heritage and Urdu's composite literary culture increasingly frustrated members of the Urdu-speaking elite who argued that "the Indian Mussulman is the product of mixed influences in which the indigenous Hindu element preponderates".<sup>179</sup> As Shackle has shown, Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi', another Kashmiri Brahmin, copied the *Musaddas* style to encourage modern education while emphasising India's rich heritage against Muslim claims of precedence. His *Bhārat Darpan yā Musaddas-e Kaifi* published in 1905 in Lahore indeed questioned Hali's "evocation of the unique civilizing mission of medieval Islam".<sup>180</sup>

What the Prophetic mission gave to Arabia,  
And what it gained from Islam  
Are matters which it is fitting for anyone to praise.  
But it is bad to make the charge  
That India and China were pupils of Arabia,  
And that the Arabs were everyone's teachers and guides.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Muzaffar-e Islam, "The Conscious poet of nationalism: Chakbast", in *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 49<sup>th</sup> session, Dharwad, 1988, p. 192.

<sup>178</sup> After Chakbast's new edition of *Gulzār-e Nasīm*, a *masnavi* written by Pandit Daya Shankar Kaul Nasim a Kashmiri Brahmin Urdu poet. Soon after the publication, Sharar published a review in which he expressed his doubts as to the authenticity of the authorship of the *masnavi* which he preferred to attribute to Nasim's Muslim *ustād* Atish. A dispute followed highlighting the ongoing process of making Urdu a Muslim language. See C. R. Perkins, *Partitioning History*, chapter 4: Chakbast, Sharar and *Gulzār-e Nasīm*, pp. 209-254. See also the full publication of the dispute: Mirza Muhammad Shafi' Shirazi, *M'arikah-e Chakbast-o Sharar y' anī mubāhisah-e Gulzār-e Nasīm*, Delhi, 1966.

<sup>179</sup> *The Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar*, March 1901 (vol. III, n°3), p. 124

<sup>180</sup> C. Shackle, "Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' (1866-1955): A Mirror for India, translated from the Urdu and introduced by Christopher Shackle", in S. Nijhawan (ed.), *Nationalism in the vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the literature of Indian freedom*, Ranikhet, 2010, p. 103.

<sup>181</sup> C. Shackle, "Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi'", p. 106 quotes *Musaddas-e Kaifi*, verse 103.

In the early twentieth century, the emotional dissociation from colonial India that was part of the process of mourning had gradually fractured the Urdu-speaking elite along religious lines and Aligarh's reconstruction of collective identity had failed to include indiscriminately the members of the old aristocracy that it had first strove to protect. As the Kayasth Samachar lamented in 1902:

They [The Muslims] do not yet believe that India is their home for all ages to come, though they have been living here for nearly nine centuries. The antiquity of India does not appeal to their imaginations. Even some of the most glorious periods of the Mohammedan rule do not appeal to them. They are not proud of Akbar and Shah Jahan. They do not know that they will sink or swim with their Hindu countrymen. Some of them have vague hopes of regaining their lost supremacy - not by physical power, but by some miracle. Others there are who look to Mecca and Constantinople and even to Kabul for making their homes. There is yet another section which is haunted by the chimera of Pan-Islamism and is "hatching vain Empires". Foolish men and foolish dreams!<sup>182</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The expression of nostalgia underwent a change in north India in the late nineteenth-century. The shahr āshob genre that until then lamented the destruction of cities developed into dunyā āshob poetry in the late 1870s thanks to the print media. In 1877 or 1878, just after the fall of Plevna to the Russians, Syed Ahmed Khan "unearthed" a thirteenth-century Andalusi poem belonging to the Arabic genre of *rithā' al-mudun* that changed the way nostalgia was expressed and used. With a reformist agenda, Hali wrote a poem on the decline of Indian Islam taking the Andalusi poem as example. Hali's *Musaddas* forever changed the way Urdu-speaking elites related to their past by offering a meta-narrative of past glory that conflated post-1857 nostalgia with a longing for extra-Indian origins. By placing India's past in a broader narrative of Islamic glory, Hali aimed at reconfiguring a lost collective identity while opening ways for cultural regeneration through modernist reform. The inclusion of India into a broader framework of Islamic history that was derived from Andalusi *rithā' al mudun* tremendously

---

<sup>182</sup> *The Hindustan Review and Kayastha Samachar*, November 1902, vol. 6, n°5, p. 399.

influenced the Urdu-speaking world and inspired many Urdu literary productions, such as Sharar's, which romanticised episodes of Muslim glory in his historical novels. The success of āshob poetry and its rhetoric of nostalgia became increasingly present in the political sphere so much so that Hali eventually disapproved their extensive use in community meetings forty years later. The modernist rhetoric of decline and backwardness also significantly impacted on political debates about leadership and class distinctions, notably during the 1888 anti-Congress propaganda.

While Aligarh's nostalgic representations of the past mainly aimed at strengthening social bonds and promoting cultural regeneration among a Muslim sharīf class in depression, nostalgia appealed more and more to lower social groups who also strove to secure a good position in the colonial world. These representations, I argue, directly derived from the collective experience of trauma crystallised in the events of 1857. Collective grieving however also led the Muslim ashraf to draw apart from other groups and to reject their Indian heritage by representing India as the land of their downfall. In the early twentieth century, this dissociation was increasingly accused as a lack of allegiance with contemporary politics, a blind loyalty to the colonial state and a passive rejection of the Indian composite heritage. In the early 1910s, as we shall see, some young Aligarh educated Muslim leaders increasingly disapproved the "passivity" of the Muslim ashraf whose nostalgic recollections prevented them from engaging with Indian nationalist claims. As *The Comrade* complained on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1911,

[...] the jeremiads of Islamic poets, reformers, and historians of the last three or four decades created in the minds of the Moslem lad a vague but persistent notion that far the least splendid portion of the story of Islam was the drama enacted by his ancestors on the Indian stage. Hindustan became in his imagination the land of the downfall of Islam and the scene of its tragic end. He dreamt dreams, but they were not those of a restored Delhi, or a revived Agra, but of a new Cordova, a re-incarnated Baghdad.<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>183</sup> *The Comrade*, 14 January 1911, vol. 1 n°1, p. 1.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Burials, memorials and public recognition in *The Comrade* and *Hamdard*, c. 1911-1915**

While late nineteenth-century nostalgic writings turned towards an extra-Indian heritage for cultural regeneration, after the annulment of the Partition of Bengal and the transfer of the capital of the British Raj from Calcutta to Delhi, fantasies of a glorious past reinvested the Indian soil. In this chapter, we shall see how the peculiar climate of the 1910s and the construction of New Delhi awakened a growing urge among Indian Muslims to preserve their Mughal past and its local manifestations in the urban landscape. I argue that the early-twentieth century reflected a new stage in the process of the collective mourning of the loss of power: the need for proper public memorialisation.<sup>1</sup> Analysing articles published in *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* from 1911 to 1915, I show first that the construction of New Delhi re-opened the wound of 1857 and stimulated the Muslim ashraf's willingness to participate in the reconfiguration of the city landscape, notably by founding the Ghalib's Grave Fund from Calcutta and advising for the destruction of Delhi's Kashmiri Gate. Mohamed Ali's papers strove to obtain official recognition and rehabilitate the memory of the Muslim victims of the Uprising by memorialising it durably in the city landscape.

During the construction of New Delhi, Mughal buildings indeed were exploited as sites of paramount importance by 'Young Party' Muslims<sup>2</sup> deflated by the political climate of 1911. Through a series of long articles entitled "The City of Tombs" in *The Comrade* and *Dehlī ke qadīmī maqābar-o*

---

<sup>1</sup> By memorialisation, I mean the process of providing supports for people to commemorate a person or an event, here the history of Muslim power in India. In this chapter, I particularly refer to the term as the process through which buildings are turned into political objects of memory (memorials).

<sup>2</sup> Francis Robinson has noted that the 'Young Party' group was not a party in a narrow sense since it had no formal organisation and also displayed differences but the term was often used at the time to represent one major interest group of north Indian Muslims. F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 6.

*masājīd* ("Delhi's ancient tombs and mosques") in *Hamdard* and through the Kanpur mosque incident in summer 1913, I will show how a political strategy, which underlined the significance of the memorialisation of a royal Muslim past, was developed in the 1910s. The process of memorialisation and the successful mobilisation for the preservation of "Muslim" buildings clearly emerged as a means to boost a pan-Indian Muslim identity, force the government to publically recognise its importance and impose 'Young Party' Muslims as the main Muslim political leaders. This chapter will show that, contrary to what H. Ahmed has recently argued,<sup>3</sup> a 'Muslim politics of monuments' had already started to develop in colonial times.

Rather than focusing, as Kavuri-Bauer, on "how the Mughal mosques of Delhi became critical spaces *to resist* British power",<sup>4</sup> I highlight here the changing significance of those places for politicised Muslims, both in terms of space (and often *waqf* status) and material structure. Particularly through an anonymous article entitled "Qaumī Yādgāreṅ" in *Hamdard*, I address the meaning of "community memorials" as the protected physical reminders of a history of power and as publicly recognised spaces where Indian Muslims could articulate their own memory narratives. I will also demonstrate that the development of Muslim politics of monuments was shaped by the changing relationships between 'Young Party' Muslims and colonial authorities. First negotiating, then opposing and subverting British memorialising practices, Mohamed Ali's press constantly engaged with the meaning and role of historic monuments for the development of a pan-Indian Muslim identity, in which buildings were erected as symbols of an indelible culture and power.

### **Mohamed Ali's journals and the construction of New Delhi (1911-1931)**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1911, during his lavish Coronation Durbar in Delhi, George V revealed that the capital of the British Raj would soon be

---

<sup>3</sup> H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse*, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*, p. 15. Emphasis mine.

transferred from Calcutta to Delhi.<sup>5</sup> With the news still resounding in the stupefied audience, the king-emperor also announced the construction of a new Delhi, meant to “convey the idea of peaceful domination and dignified rule over the traditions and life of India by the British Raj”,<sup>6</sup> of which he laid the foundation stones two days later. This “royal boon” to the people of India was accompanied by the annulment of the partition of Bengal that had taken place six years earlier and the creation of a new governorship for the Presidency of Bengal, Orissa and Assam that was prompted by a tense political climate, with the rise of anti-colonial activism, the Swadeshi movement, that the partition had generated in Calcutta.<sup>7</sup> Transferring the seat of government offered the opportunity for the new Viceroy Charles Hardinge (1910-1916) to move away from the influence of nationalist agitators, as well as to enhance and stabilise colonial authority.<sup>8</sup>

Not everyone received the news with enthusiasm; several British residents and government officers, among whom Lord Curzon (1899-1905) who had presided over the Partition of Bengal in 1905, strongly criticised the state’s decision.<sup>9</sup> He and others did not agree with the expenditure that the construction of the new city would imply; a city that was full of ruins and tombs and was dubbed by pro-Calcutta partisans “the grave of empires”.<sup>10</sup> They argued that “the activities of a modern State would be unconsciously affected in the atmosphere of a vast, silent graveyard, with its haunting memories”.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, although some Urdu-speaking elites were enthused by the impulse to revive the old imperial capital and wrote poems of praise

---

<sup>5</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, “Announcement by and on Behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor”, n°3, p. 6, quoted in R. G. Irving, *Indian summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, London, 1981, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Parliamentary Papers*, “Second Report of the Delhi Town Planning Committee”, Cd. 6888, p.5 and *Parliamentary Papers*, “Final report of the Delhi Town Planning Committee”, Cd. 6889, p. 2 quoted by R. G. Irving, *Indian summer*, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> S. Chattopadhyay, “Cities of power and protest: spatial legibility and the colonial state in early twentieth-century India”, in *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, vol. 19, n°1, 2015, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> E. A. Christensen, *Government architecture and British imperialism: Patronage and imperial policy in London, Pretoria, and New Delhi (1900-1931)*, PhD dissertation, Northwestern University Illinois, 1995, pp. 67-68.

<sup>9</sup> R. G. Irving, *Indian summer*, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> S. Chattopadhyay, “Cities of power”, p. 42 and *The Comrade*, 28 March 1914, vol. 7, n°13, p. 253.

<sup>11</sup> “Vested Interests and New Delhi”, *The Comrade*, 28 March 1914, vol. 7, n°13, p. 253.

accordingly, the annulment of the Partition of Bengal was a big blow for the Muslim Leaguers who had played loyalty to preserve Muslim interests. Loyalism no longer paid off for 'Young Party' Muslims. A week after the Durbar, Nawab Viqar ul-Mulk stated that "it is now manifest like the midday sun, that after seeing what has happened lately, it is futile to ask the Muslims to place their reliance on Government. [...] What we should rely on, after the grace of God, is the strength of our right arm."<sup>12</sup> With the repartition of Bengal, the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war a few months earlier had already sparkled indignation amongst Muslims – the rejection of the Muslim University scheme in 1912 would bring the final blow. The construction of New Delhi and the appointment of the Delhi Town Planning Committee in March 1912 thus started in a tense political climate, in which the 'Young Party' was prepared to "compel" the government "to recognise and to protect Muslim interests by whatever means were available".<sup>13</sup>

As soon as the New Delhi Scheme was announced, the Punjab Government decided to acquire "with the least possible delay all land and houses [...] as far as the Kutub Minar and Tughlukabad";<sup>14</sup> a process that resulted in the dramatic decrease of the value of property in the area.<sup>15</sup> Although the government already owned 31,381 acres of land – mostly the result of confiscations after the Uprising – by the end of the Coronation Durbar, 113,821 acres had been notified for acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act.<sup>16</sup> Entire families were expelled from their properties while new people, attracted by new opportunities, settled in the city. Although the foundation stones for the new city had been laid in the northern durbar site, it was decided in May 1912 that the imperial capital would be constructed at the South of Shahjahanabad, in a place judged better in all respects and which had "views across old Delhi to that wilderness of ruined tombs that

---

<sup>12</sup> Viqar ul-Mulk, "The Fate of Muslims in India" published in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* of 20 December 1911 quoted in F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> Home, Delhi, A Proceedings, April 1912, 103-139: Acquisition of land at Delhi and the planning and building of the new city of Delhi, pp. 1 and 12.

<sup>15</sup> "The City of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 24 May 1913, vol. 5, n°20, p. 418.

<sup>16</sup> A. Earle 15-1-12, quoting letter n°253-c dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 1911, in Home, Delhi, A Proceedings, April 1912, 103-139, p. 12.

form the remains of the 7 older Delhis".<sup>17</sup> The British architect Edwin Lutyens, freshly arrived in Delhi, found major monuments of the ancient capitals useful to draw and delimit the layout of the city, enthroning them "in open spaces [...] as centrepieces in the elaborately landscaped park system envisioned by the Archaeological Survey".<sup>18</sup> The restoration of historic sites hence was central to their incorporation into the design of the city, which, after all, was conceived to absorb and safeguard India's cultural heritage. Work on the Qutb Minar started in December 1912, and the restoration of Purana Qila, for instance, was part of a larger project for the preparation of what would be one of the "finest" drives of the capital.<sup>19</sup>

Santhi Kavuri-Bauer has argued that British restoration projects always went hand in hand with the Indians' alienation from their own cultural heritage by disrupting traditional activities taking place in and around monuments, distributing repair funds arbitrarily, establishing opposing categories such as "functional" vs. "non-functional" buildings and yielding Indian aesthetics to Victorian tastes.<sup>20</sup> By turning historic monuments into "museological artefacts", the British would have reduced the Mughal monument's "very monumentality".<sup>21</sup> Without entering into detail in the "true" intentions behind colonial restoration projects, the problem for Urdu-speaking elites was, however, less about the colonial reconfiguration of protected monuments than about their very preservation. For, if the "views all along the hills [we]re splendid" and some of the old monuments, like the Safdarjung and Lodhi tombs, could form fine and central features,<sup>22</sup> the newly acquired lands still had the great disadvantage for colonial town planners of being honeycombed with mosques, temples and tombs that would not be easily demolished. Minor monuments which did not fit into

---

<sup>17</sup> R. G. Irving, *Indian summer*, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> R. G. Irving, *Indian summer*, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Sanderson, *Annual Progress Report*, 1913 quoted by E. A. Christensen, *Government architecture*, p. 206.

<sup>20</sup> See S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*.

<sup>21</sup> S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*, pp. 52 and 54.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from L. Dane, dated 18<sup>th</sup> January 1912, Home, Delhi, A Proceedings, April 1912, p. 43.

Lutyens' hexagonal plan were said to be "awkwardly situated",<sup>23</sup> and were only dubbed a nuisance, "nameless uncared-for erections" which "interfere everywhere", spoiling Lutyens' designs.<sup>24</sup> It soon appeared that building the city in this landscape would naturally entail choices as to what would be preserved (and as to what would *not*) of the city's buildings. Whereas provinces such as Bombay, Madras or Bengal had clear instructions regarding the destruction of religious buildings on land already acquired by the government, there was no definite ruling on the question in the Punjab.<sup>25</sup> From the very beginning of the New Delhi project, it thus appeared quite clearly that the urban landscape of the city would be metamorphosed.

The developments of the new town planning project were closely watched upon by the north Indian Muslim *ashrāf* for whom Delhi was still associated with Mughal power and the trauma of its loss. The English weekly and Urdu daily newspapers *The Comrade* and *Hamdard*, both published by Mohamed Ali's press established in Delhi from 1912, were particularly vocal in their criticism. Mohamed Ali (10 December 1878 - 4 January 1931) was an Urdu poet and journalist in the direct line of nobles connected to the Mughal court until 1857.<sup>26</sup> After his father's death in 1880, his mother, Abadi Bano Begum (most famously known as Bi Amma), reared him and his brothers and they acquired a traditional education. In his brothers' footsteps, Mohamed Ali studied English at Bareilly and then at Aligarh, against his uncle's wishes.<sup>27</sup> In 1898, he received a government scholarship to read Modern History at Oxford but despite his efforts, he failed to enter the Indian Civil Service, the Allahabad Bar examination and the faculty at Aligarh, and turned instead to a career in the Native States civil

---

<sup>23</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.* Lutyens apparently mentioned the matter to his wife Emily in the late 1913. See E. A. Christensen, *Government architecture*, p. 211.

<sup>25</sup> Home, Public, B, December 1913, n°170: Questions and answers in the Imperial legislative council regarding the acquisition of Muslim mosques etc. and regarding the preservation of religious edifices, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment: an autobiographical sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, New Delhi, 1999, introduction by Mushirul Hasan, p. 15. His grandfather, Sheikh Ali Baksh served as official in the court of Nawab Muhammad Yusuf Khan until his death in 1867.

<sup>27</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, pp. 50-51.

service, though still participating in Aligarh affairs.<sup>28</sup> After some time in the education department in Rampur, he entered the service of the Gaekwar of Baroda, a job that he thought unrewarding and eventually left in 1911 to devote his efforts and passion to journalism. He continued to be absorbed in Aligarh affairs, notably supporting (maybe instigating) a student strike in 1907 against the College's British professors.<sup>29</sup>

Aided financially by Ali Imam and the Aga Khan, *The Comrade* was launched in Calcutta on 14th January 1911. Mohamed Ali later explained in his autobiography that "the reason which impelled me to take up journalism was that the affairs of my community [...] made it the only avenue through which I could hope to reach a place in which I could prove of any appreciable use to it, while still earning a livelihood".<sup>30</sup> He was actively involved in the Muslim League and eagerly participated in the Muslim Educational Conference, two activities that his papers frequently documented. From its beginnings, *The Comrade* was a huge success, with more and more Muslims rallying around Mohamed Ali. It soon became "the paper of the young educated Muslims",<sup>31</sup> providing "a framework for the uneasiness and dissatisfaction of the Muslim educated elite scattered throughout the district bars and low-paid government jobs of the province".<sup>32</sup> Although, in May 1911, the *Kayastha Samachar* appraised *The Comrade* as "one of the best-written weeklies in the country",<sup>33</sup> it also highlighted its already dissident nature. "To speak out frankly, the policy adopted by *The Comrade* has been in many respects the reverse of what was foreshadowed in its prospectus", the magazine complained.<sup>34</sup> The paper was described as an organ of the Muslim League and not as the "bit of neutral ground where war shall cease and passions shall subside and whereon the

---

<sup>28</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 180 and D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation*, p. 331.

<sup>29</sup> D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation*, p. 331.

<sup>30</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 202. The U.P. government reported in 1914 "no paper has so much influence with the students as the *Comrade* [...]". Home, Pol. D, Dec. 1914, 31, quoted by M. Hasan in the introduction of M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 15

<sup>32</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 202.

<sup>33</sup> "The English Press in India in 1910-1911 - I", *Kayastha Samachar*, May 1911, vol. 23, n°141, p. 399.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*.

belligerents shall meet together”<sup>35</sup> that it had promised in its first issue. On the first page of *The Comrade*, indeed, Mohamed Ali had written:

We declare that in our relations with Government we will not permit malice to cross our path, warp our judgment and create disaffection. [...] Be that as it may, there is no gulf between races which individuals cannot bridge.<sup>36</sup>

But what was announced to be a “comrade of all and partisan of none” quickly started to voice the views of educated Muslims and prepare them “to make their proper contribution to territorial patriotism”.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the Urdu daily *Hamdard*, which Mohamed Ali founded after moving to Delhi in 1912 “to educate the people”, *The Comrade* was seen as “the medium between them and their rulers”,<sup>38</sup> the organ through which he could address many “exciting topics [that] could not be avoided [...] in the heat of advocacy”.<sup>39</sup>

From the middle of 1912 at least, Mohamed Ali was indeed often described by the government as “utterly unscrupulous”,<sup>40</sup> “a quite typical specimen, full of incurable vanity”<sup>41</sup> leaving trouble wherever he went. After the Italo-Turkish war, the annulment of the Partition of Bengal and the rejection of the Muslim University scheme, the Balkan war left him deeply affected.<sup>42</sup> From 1912, Abdul Bari of Farangi Mahal in Lucknow became his *pir* and he increasingly considered the ulama as political allies.<sup>43</sup> He grew a beard and wore flowing robes with astrakhan hats with the half moon and *Khuddam-e Ka’aba* badges.<sup>44</sup> Having become a “professional politician”,<sup>45</sup> he did not hesitate to resort to Islamic symbols to mobilise people and develop, with his brother Shaukat, a “blend of religion and politics, not always

---

<sup>35</sup> “The English Press in India in 1910-1911 – I”, *Kayastha Samachar*, p. 400.

<sup>36</sup> “We are partisans of none, comrades of all”, *The Comrade*, 1<sup>st</sup> issue, 1<sup>st</sup> number, 14 January 1911, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 75.

<sup>38</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 97.

<sup>39</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Butler to Hardinge, 3 November 1912 (Hardinge Papers, 1912) quoted by M. Shan, *The Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, vol. 2: The Tripoli and Balkan Wars, New Delhi, 1980, p. 132.

<sup>41</sup> Edwin Montago to Chelmsford, 23 June 1920, file n°6, Chelmsford Papers quoted in M. Hasan's introduction of M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> M. Ali, *My Life a Fragment*, p. 76.

<sup>43</sup> D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation*, p. 340.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>45</sup> G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 189.

subtle," which "was to become their specialty".<sup>46</sup> In July 1913, just before the Kanpur incident, Mohamed Ali printed a pamphlet entitled "Come over into Macedonia and help us" in several issues of *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* that was declared forfeited by the government. Although Mohamed Ali adopted a low profile at the time,<sup>47</sup> the violent conflict at Kanpur in August and tendentious reports of it in *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* led the government to demand a security deposit under section 3 of the Indian Press Act of 1910.<sup>48</sup> Mr W. M. Hailey declared that

It is now clear that Muhammad Ali is a man who is liable to lose his self-control and write violently on any subject on which, for the time, he feels strongly. He has raised up a 'Young Muslim' party in Lucknow, Agra, Delhi and Lahore which is prepared to go to any lengths in opposition to Government.<sup>49</sup>

On 7<sup>th</sup> November 1914, shortly after the declaration of war between Turkey and Great Britain, Mohamed Ali published in *The Comrade* an article entitled "The Choice of the Turks" in which he declared his loyalty to the Ottoman Caliph. Mohamed Ali's security deposit was immediately forfeited and the paper shut down.<sup>50</sup>

### **"Burying" the past: coming to terms with the memories of 1857**

From the launch of *The Comrade* in 1911, the attention of readers (and authorities) was frequently directed towards the question of the preservation of the Indian heritage. The restoration of the tombs of great men (especially Muslim royalty) was a common subject of discussion in Indian newspapers since the establishment of the British Raj. What preoccupied *The Comrade* in the early 1910s, however, even before the announcement of the transfer of capital, was a still unresolved and disputed past: that of the Uprising. In

---

<sup>46</sup> G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 202.

<sup>47</sup> Mohamed Ali Papers, NMML, reel n°2, Letter from Mohamed Ali to W.M. Hailey, dated 15 July 1913.

<sup>48</sup> See Home, Political A, October 1913, Proceedings 142-149: Demand of security under section 3 of the Indian Press Act, 1910 from the keepers of the *Comrade* and *Hamdard* press and the *Baitul Sharaf* Press Delhi for the publication of objectionable writings in the *Comrade* and *Rafiq* newspapers respectively. The security was paid on 11 August 1913.

<sup>49</sup> Home, Political A, October 1913, Proceedings 142-149, pp. 1 and 2.

<sup>50</sup> The papers were revived in 1924 but definitely closed down two years later.

March 1911, an article published under the title "The Care of Tombs" lauded the fact that the mausoleums of Nur Jahan and Shivaji were receiving "due attention" and praised Lord Curzon for his "great service to the country in the preservation of ancient monuments".<sup>51</sup> But the article also raised the burning question of the last Mughal's grave in Rangoon.<sup>52</sup> *The Comrade*, in fact, conjured up a demand that regularly appeared in Indian newspapers since the beginning of the twentieth century and that was linked to the state's treatment of "Mutiny"-related issues. In late 1903 - early 1904, several newspapers from the North-Western Provinces and U.P. published a letter by Maulvi Abdus-Salam of the Anjuman-e Islām at Lahore to Lord Curzon complaining about the condition of Bahadur Shah's tomb. A correspondent reported that the grave was indeed a "mud" one situated in a ruined garden with grass growing over it.<sup>53</sup> Despite the fact that the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma had expressed his willingness to let the king's offspring repair the tomb, their indigence did not enable them to do so. The *Sahifa* of Bijnor protested: "it is a pity that while Government itself undertakes to keep the ancient royal buildings in repair, it should relegate the duty of repairing the tomb of Bahadur Shah to his penniless descendants".<sup>54</sup> The controversy around the king's tomb, which seemed to affect colonial opinion too,<sup>55</sup> in fact more broadly questioned his role (and that of the Mughal nobility) in the Uprising and demonstrated the desire of north Indian sharīf editors to rehabilitate his memory around the time of the Uprising's fifty-year anniversary. Although the Government seems to have permitted the Muslim community to erect a memorial on the spot in 1907,<sup>56</sup> the *Urdu-i Mualla* of Aligarh resurfaced the issue in January 1910:

[...] even if it were proved that [Bahadur Shah] took part in the Mutiny, he ought to have been treated with the respect due to a captive king. Unfortunately this was not done, and Bahadur Shah passed the remaining years of his life in a state of helplessness and disappointment. After his

---

<sup>51</sup> "The Care of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 11 March 1911, vol. 1, n°9, p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>53</sup> The *Naiyar-i Azam* (Moradabad) of the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1903, see *NNRNWP&O*, p. 469.

<sup>54</sup> The *Sahifa* (Bijnor) of the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1904 in *NNRNWP&O*, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> The *Oudh Akhbar* of the 10<sup>th</sup> November for instance refers to a debate between Mr. Hyndman and Mac-Minn about the matter. See *NNRNWP&O* for 1903, p. 774.

<sup>56</sup> The *Advocate* (Lucknow) of the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1907 in *NNRNWP&O*, p. 1042.

death Government did not even wish that there should remain any trace of his grave.<sup>57</sup>

*The Comrade's* article in March 1911 thus resumed a recurring discussion in Indian newspapers by questioning Bahadur Shah's role in the Uprising. But demand for a befitting tomb for the king also highlighted the need to properly mourn and come to terms with the trauma of 1857. The article indeed asked "have we not left those terrible times far behind, and need they interfere with the rights of the dead and the duties of the living?"<sup>58</sup> Rather than asserting that those "terrible times" had truly been left behind, the paper demonstrated the willingness to bury that painful past in order to go forward. The article also highlighted the common attitude of educated Muslims towards heritage preservation measures undertaken by the government that they continued to adopt during the construction of the new imperial city. Although some scholars, amongst whom most recently Santhi Kavuri-Bauer, have sometimes seen monument restoration projects as a colonial "strategy" to "systematically cleanse the Mughal buildings of all lingering presence of the power and authority of their royal creators",<sup>59</sup> this view was certainly not shared by Muslim ashraf. Even if the appropriation and re-modelling of classical monuments and gardens could have reflected in some measure an intention from British officials to erase the memory associated with these sites, it was always highly praised in Indian newspapers as positive enterprises (certainly not conflicting ones) which helped preserve the Indian past.

Not long after this first piece, a series of articles began to appear on a weekly basis about the preservation and repair of Ghalib's tomb located in Delhi, close to Nizamuddin Auliya's *dargāh*. The first article was published in June 1911 under the title "Ghalib's grave" and mentioned Dr Morton's suggestion to erect a suitable monument over the grave of the famous nineteenth-century poet.<sup>60</sup> *The Comrade* was quick to react to the suggestion.

---

<sup>57</sup> *Urdu-i Mualla* (Aligarh), January 1910 in *NNRNWP&O*, p. 162.

<sup>58</sup> "The Care of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 11 March 1911, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> S. Guha (ed.), *The Marshall Albums: Photography and Archaeology*, New Delhi, 2010, p. 52.

<sup>60</sup> "Ghalib's grave", *The Comrade*, 17 June 1911, vol. 1, n°23, p. 444.

From the office in Calcutta, it asked its readers to visit the tomb in Delhi, report on its state and put forward an estimate of the cost of urgent repairs to be carried out before the construction of an adequate memorial. Two weeks later, *The Comrade* reported again on the matter. One reader, probably Tasadduq Husain,<sup>61</sup> had gone to the tomb and had suggested an estimate for the repairs “on a very modest scale”,<sup>62</sup> although Mohamed Ali himself proposed instead the construction of a stone fencing and the hiring of a gardener “to plant a small flower-garden and tend the grave”.<sup>63</sup> The article also mentioned the opening of a “Ghalib’s Grave Fund” to raise “a worthy monument over the last remains of Mirza Naushah”.<sup>64</sup> With the first sums coming from the staff and amounting at Rs. 50, *The Comrade* also announced that Hali would be asked “to nominate a small committee representing every province of India” to collect local subscriptions.<sup>65</sup> A week later, however, the paper complained of the lack of response to its appeal. The fund was now only richer of Rs. 30.<sup>66</sup> The next number hoped for the raising of local subscriptions,<sup>67</sup> but the next one lamented again that the response was so feeble.<sup>68</sup> In the middle of August, the fund was starting to receive some attention, notably thanks to the generous contributions of Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Old Boy and Bombay Barrister M. K. Azad, and Newab Gholam Ahmad Khan of Madras.<sup>69</sup> The sums received continued to increase over the next weeks to reach Rs. 677 in December 1911.<sup>70</sup> But the matter ended unexpectedly: while acknowledging the (relative) success of *The Comrade’s* fundraising campaign, the last article on Ghalib’s Grave Fund mentioned that some of Ghalib’s relatives had finally decided to repair the tomb at their

---

<sup>61</sup> A letter from Tasadduq Husain mentions his going to the grave and making an estimate. It also mentioned (as the article of the 8<sup>th</sup> July) Hali for the fundraising campaign (see Maulana Mohamed Ali Papers, JMI, 464-465). The letter, however, is dated 25 July 1911, i.e. two weeks after the publication of the article.

<sup>62</sup> "Ghalib's grave", *The Comrade*, 8 July 1911, vol. 2, n°2, p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>64</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>65</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>66</sup> "Ghalib's grave", *The Comrade*, 15 July 1911, vol. 2, n°3, p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> "Ghalib's grave", *The Comrade*, 22 July 1911, vol. 2, n°4, p. 67.

<sup>68</sup> "Ghalib's grave", *The Comrade*, 29 July 1911, vol. 2, n°5, p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> I am using here the names as transliterated in *The Comrade*, 12 August 1911, vol. 2, n°7, p. 126.

<sup>70</sup> "Ghalib's Grave Fund", *The Comrade*, 2 December 1911, vol. 2, n°23, p. 474.

own expense and that they “would not like the idea of their great ancestor’s grave being repaired by public subscription”.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to know what happened with the money raised, although we can conjecture that it nonetheless helped build the marble structure that still stands today. In any case, Ghalib’s Grave Fund served to demonstrate both that *The Comrade* had influence on educated Muslims all over India (contributions came from Bengal, U.P., Punjab, Madras, Bombay, etc.) and that Muslims could effectively mobilise on memory issues. The memory of the Uprising and of the people associated with it emerged as a public preoccupation.

After the Coronation Durbar of 1911, Mohamed Ali decided to leave Calcutta. In October 1912, he opened a new printing press in Kucha-e Chelan, a famous *muhallah* of Shahjahanabad, from which he continued to publish *The Comrade* as well as launched the sister daily paper in Urdu, *Hamdard*. Mohamed Ali was happy to be back near Aligarh.<sup>72</sup> A fortnight before he moved to Delhi, however, one of his friends writing under the pen-name Birbal, warned him of the danger of Delhi’s atmosphere for his future growth:

There is such a thing as a spirit of the ruins, which peacefully reigns over fallen greatness, and if disturbed, takes its revenge on meddlesome humanity by possessing their souls. [...] I only hope that you will be able to resist the subtle and all-pervading charm of the dead and buried past, and preserve your impishness in the midst of the Tombs of Delhi.<sup>73</sup>

For Mohamed Ali, however, the past was neither dead nor buried; in fact, one of the first articles written in Delhi was entitled just that: “Bury the Past”.<sup>74</sup> As in its previous articles on Bahadur Shah’s and Ghalib’s tombs, the past that *The Comrade* wanted to bury was that of the Uprising. Coming to Delhi certainly brought back memories of the trauma that Mohamed Ali’s grandfather and so many of his contemporaries had experienced more than fifty years earlier; a trauma which was even more difficult to overcome by having been dominated by British officers and historians. Ever since the

---

<sup>71</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>72</sup> “The Sadness of Farewell”, *The Comrade*, 14 September 1912, vol. 4, n°11, p. 245.

<sup>73</sup> “The Comrade: A Review” by Birbal, Calcutta, 17 September 1912, *The Comrade*, 19 October 1912, vol. 4, n°13, p. 301.

<sup>74</sup> “Bury the Past”, *The Comrade*, 19 October 1912, vol. 4, n°13, pp. 295-296.

British had taken over the city, memorials and commemorative plaques had sprung up in Delhi, marking the spots where battles were fought and men killed.<sup>75</sup> In the decades after the events, Mutiny tours guided foreign tourists through Delhi, Lucknow and Kanpur thanks to travelogues and history books that narrated gruesome massacres and Indian disloyalty.<sup>76</sup> There was no place for Indian narratives of the events.

*The Comrade's* first suggestion for New Delhi town planners was directed towards the memory of the Uprising and the need to rehabilitate the honour and courage of the Indians: "while the English have a distinguished roll of heroes who owe their fame to the courage displayed during the Mutiny, the names of their Indian comrades are forgotten".<sup>77</sup> With the need to remember Indian bravery also came the desire to erase recollections of Indian disloyalty during the Uprising and to heal a particularly painful wound by forgetting and destroying its memorials, especially the Kashmiri Gate:

If an officer of Government residing in the temporary quarters now being erected in the Civil Lines approaches the town where the Indian population resides, the first sight that greets him is the shot-riddled Kashmir Gate, which brings back memories that should fade and disappear rather than be revived. [...] The first official act that [His Excellency the Viceroy] should perform after taking over the charge of India's historic Capital should be the demolition of the Kashmir Gate and its reconstruction as monument of the desire of Great Britain to bury the carrion of the dead and dread past and of the resolve of the Government to trust that it may itself be trusted.<sup>78</sup>

Memorials of 1857 had been a frequent matter of concern; in May 1876, for instance, an incident at Shahjahanpur in the United Provinces revealed the uneasiness with which north Indian editors viewed British memorials of the

---

<sup>75</sup> See R. Nanda and N. Gupta, *Delhi, the built heritage: a listing*, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 5, 37, 54, 78; *First Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the year 1881-82*, Simla, 1882, pp. cix-cx; A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, social power and environment*, London, 1976, p. 215.

<sup>76</sup> See S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters* and M. Goswami, "'Englishness' on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia", pp. 54-84. Both scholars have argued that tourist trails around north India, mediated through the journals of Royal Mutiny tours (in 1875-6 and 1905), guidebooks (like John Murray's and Thomas Cook's) and travelogues, encouraged a strong re-reading of Mughal monuments at the exclusive light of the events of 1857 in the aim of imperial consolidation. Lord Charles Canning (1856-1862) was the first to organise official tours of India, and the first Royal tour was organised for the Prince of Wales in 1875-1876.

<sup>77</sup> "Bury the Past", *The Comrade*, 19 October 1912, vol. 4, n°13, p. 295.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem.*

Uprising and particularly those erected in memory of British citizens: during a parade, a soldier of the 22<sup>nd</sup> regiment at Shahjahanpur had suddenly left the ranks, opened fire and killed three Indians. After his arrest, when he was asked the reasons behind his act, he replied that since he had seen the Kanpur Memorial Well a great enmity towards Indians had aroused in him.<sup>79</sup> The incident triggered a discussion on the significance of these memorials and on their impact on both European and Indian minds. As the *Punjabi Akhbar* noted, "Hindustanis imbibe extreme fear from them [memorials], and tremble in the same degree as the European savage raves and fumes at [the] sight of them".<sup>80</sup> The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* also argued that "such memorials will always rekindle rancour and create trouble; we now put forward the idea that it is necessary for our Government that, for the maintain of peace and order, all such memorials be destroyed, and if it is necessary to keep such memorials for the reason that they recall historical events then we think that it would be necessary to thoroughly complete the written history of 1857."<sup>81</sup>

By the 1910s, the British memory of 1857 was increasingly questioned by Indian writings on the subject, which strove to rehabilitate the memory of the Indians who had fought and fallen or had been found guilty of the Uprising. Like the north Indian newspapers discussing the impact of the Kanpur Memorial Well in 1876, *The Comrade* demonstrated anxiety for the way in which the Indian past would be remembered: the paper not only wanted the Kashmiri Gate to be demolished but also wished for the construction of an Arch of Triumph "the triumph of cool and calm statesmanship and of charity, hope and faith"<sup>82</sup> in its place. In "Bury the Past", *The Comrade* revealed a deeply ambiguous attitude towards memory and oblivion and showed the desire to participate in the careful selection process of what was to be remembered of India's past and to rehabilitate the memory of the Indian victims of 1857. The "obsession" with the Uprising in

---

<sup>79</sup> See "Shāhjahānpūr kā wāqī'āt", *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 12 May 1876, p. 285.

<sup>80</sup> "Shāhjahānpūr kā wāqī'āt", *AIG*, pp. 285-86.

<sup>81</sup> "Shāhjahānpūr kā wāqī'āt", *AIG*, p. 286.

<sup>82</sup> "Bury the Past", *The Comrade*, 19 October 1912, vol. 4, n°13, p. 295.

*The Comrade's* articles in 1911-1912 further highlighted two of its main agendas: the first one, directed towards Indians, was to properly commemorate their past and perform their collective duty towards the dead, notably by subscribing to the Ghalib's Grave Fund and pressurise the government for the construction of a monument over Bahadur Shah's tomb; the second one, addressed to the government, was to properly recognise and protect Indian subjects. To achieve that, the British first needed to forget the past of Indian disloyalty that the Kashmiri Gate embodied.

### **Mosques and tombs as reminders of Muslim power: mobilisations**

At the beginning of 1913, Major Beadon, then Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, argued that "Delhi is really one vast graveyard: tombs are still to be seen in almost every locality".<sup>83</sup> Constructing a new capital in such an area was not an easy task and implied choices as to what of the city's past deserved to be preserved. Already in August 1912, before Mohamed Ali arrived in Delhi, Beadon had tried to tackle the problem by composing three lists of the buildings that were located within the building area, specifying what should be done with them. List Z included the buildings and tombs that did not need to be preserved, list Y those which did not need to be destroyed forthwith and, finally, list X contained those which ought to be preserved, knowing that all the structures that had not been listed "would fall naturally into list Z".<sup>84</sup> The lists were used by town planners and engineers to identify the monuments that needed to be preserved, although, as we shall see in the case of the mosque at Kokī kā Pul, mistakes were sometimes made. The document also revealed that, for British officers, the deportation of local populations and the gradual discontinuance of local practices were seen as a process through which lands and buildings could be acquired and, eventually, destroyed.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Demi-official from Major H.C. Beadon to the Hon'ble Mr. H. Wheeler, Delhi, 31 August 1912, in Home, Delhi, September 1912, Deposit n°9: Question of the treatment of mosques, temples and tombs in connection with land acquisition proceedings at Delhi, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Idem.* S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*, p. 115 wrongly explains the content of the lists.

<sup>85</sup> Demi-official from Major H.C. Beadon, Home, Delhi, September 1912, Deposit n°9, p. 1: "In the column of remarks I have shown what fairs, large or small, are held. I do not think

From April 1913, the beginning of construction works was accompanied by a series of actions taken, or covered, by *The Comrade* and *Hamdard*, which strongly condemned the legal processes used by the state to acquire land in Delhi. *The Comrade* complained that

Rules and regulations are being passed in Delhi with such rapidity that it takes away one's breath to follow them as they succeed each other, and the discontent they create would lead anyone to believe that there was no such thing in Delhi as a Municipal Corporation with representation of her people to criticise, and improve or reject objectionable rules and regulations. [...] We therefore intend to send, with the permission of the Municipal Corporation, a representative of the *Comrade* to its weekly meetings, so that we may remain well informed on the subject of the City Improvements.<sup>86</sup>

*The Comrade* was prepared to represent the local people's interests. The first article on the topic, which appeared on the 24th May 1913, indeed noted the great agitation that the New Delhi project had created among the local population because of the "remarkable diminution of the value of house property" and "the fear that their houses would be acquired without adequate compensation for the improvement of the town".<sup>87</sup> However, it was most preoccupied with the implications of the design of the new capital on Indian collective memory. "It is not only the houses of the living that are in danger, but also the resting places of the dead" *The Comrade* lamented after criticising the Government for "destroying every trace" of Delhi's past.<sup>88</sup> The article, the first of a series, was entitled "The City of Tombs" and was reproduced a month later in *Hamdard* as "Delhi's ancient graves and mosques".<sup>89</sup> It focused on one memorandum written by Beadon, which had been reproduced three days earlier by the secretary of the Anjuman-e Mu'yyid ul-Islām, examining and proposing to rethink the arrangement of Delhi's Muslim burial grounds. In the note, the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi reproached the Muslims of Delhi to bury their dead without any record of their names and reason of death "in any scrap of waste land which

---

that we need bother about trying to stop any of them. The petty ones will cease automatically with the removal of the populace and the demolition of the institutions, and the larger fairs are such that we could not well expect their discontinuance, so long as the people show a desire to attend them."

<sup>86</sup> "The City of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 24 May 1913, vol. 5, n°20, p. 418.

<sup>87</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>88</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>89</sup> "Qadīmī maqābar-o masājīd", *Hamdard*, 29 June 1913, pp. 2-3.

happens to be near a mosque, without any regard to order or anything else.”<sup>90</sup> Invoking the necessity to “respect the dead”, sanitation and health issues as well as future city improvement measures, the true stake was of course the acquisition of land. Major Beadon proposed to reorganise the Muslims’ “unmethodical”<sup>91</sup> burial practices by simply discontinuing the use of burial grounds in areas within the Delhi area (such as Qadim Sharif in Paharganj) and to provide three big enclosed cemeteries to be used by the whole city’s Muslim population on the outskirts of the town instead.<sup>92</sup> The cost of the adjustments, which was estimated at around Rs. 20,000, was to be raised by the Muslims themselves, a task that Beadon expected easy.<sup>93</sup> Of course, *The Comrade* qualified the question of Muslims raising money for their own graveyards unheard-of and sordid and despised the “considerable ignorance of Moslem views about burial grounds and graves and Moslem funeral arrangements” that the memorandum displayed.<sup>94</sup> However, the aspect that was most reviled by the papers was the argument put forward by the Deputy Commissioner of the need for the respect of the dead:

It is ridiculously inconsistent to state that the first consideration that moved the authorities to make the new proposals was a desire “to honour the dead” because “the dead should not be buried everywhere and in such unsuitable places that after a time the relations of the dead may not themselves be able to distinguish the grave of their departed kinsmen” and then to state in the same breath that the third consideration is that “it is not proper that obstacles may be thrown in the way of improvements to be made in the City in future, or prejudice them with a view to save extensive graveyards.” If extensive graveyards are not to be saved, then in the name of all that is plain and straightforward, why all this consideration for burying the dead in a place where their graves may easily be distinguished?

---

<sup>90</sup> File n°77/1915 B, Education, CC: Mohammanadan graveyards in Delhi, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Beadon noted that “the bodies are buried in no methodical order, and finally that there is no record kept of any kind whether of the deceased or the cause of death” (File n°77/1915 B, Education, CC, pp. 1-2).

<sup>92</sup> One cemetery of 30 acres was situated near Nizamuddin, for the population of Paharganj and old Delhi; another cemetery of the same dimension was near Dhoralia Nullah, for the people of Sadar Bazar and the new city; finally, the third cemetery of 20 acres was planned near the Azam road and the Najafgarh Branch canal for the people of Sabzimandi and the Civil Lines. (See File n°77/1915 B, Education, CC and “The City of Tombs”, *The Comrade*, 24 May 1913, vol. 5, n°20, p. 419.)

<sup>93</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>94</sup> *Idem*: according to *The Comrade*, the burial practices of Muslims emphasised the need to be able to bury their dead day or night, without transporting the corpses by carts or horses. These practices thus necessitated relative vicinity between Muslim dwellings and burial grounds.

How are the people of Delhi to be convinced that the authorities are sincere in their desire to make the graves of their departed friends and relations easily distinguishable, if the graves of their saints and divines, patrons and ancestors that are already sufficiently distinguished are to be levelled with the ground?<sup>95</sup>

The article in *Hamdard* further invoked the “deep relevance” of tombs and mosques “for the history of Muslims” as well as their significance “in the Muslim religious mind”.<sup>96</sup> Both papers argued that for the Muslim citizens of Delhi, the past was now more important than the future.<sup>97</sup> It was their wealth and the demolition of burial places was consequently interpreted as dispossession. While other writers, such as Mirza Farhatullah Beg, used the famous Persian expression *murdeh badast-e zindeh* (lit. the dead are in the hands of the living) to lament the lack of care that Muslims showed towards their own dead,<sup>98</sup> the idiom was rather used in *Hamdard* and *The Comrade* to criticise government town improvement measures. Of course, the papers played on the trauma of the loss of power and the popular yearning for the Mughal era on one hand and on the widespread exasperation of the 1910s on the other and successfully merged both. The emphasis, however, was less put on the historical value of monuments than on their role as reminder of lost Muslim power. The Red Fort was less considered a memory of Shah Jahan than a proof that a Muslim royal past had indeed existed. Monuments were infused with the memory of Muslim power.

At the end of June 1913, new articles with the same titles were published in *The Comrade* and, later, in the *Hamdard*. They reported on-going conversations with Mr. Hailey, Chief Commissioner of Delhi, about the

---

<sup>95</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>96</sup> "Qadīmī maqābar-o masājīd", *Hamdard*, 29 June 1913, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>98</sup> Farhatullah Beg, “The dead are in the hands of the living”, in *Mazāmīn-e Farhat*, vol. 2, Hyderabad, n. d., p. 56 (describing the state of graveyards): “if a few days later [after the stone has been put up on the grave] no one has come to take care of the grave, the stone is taken away. Goats keep on capering on the graves, chickens scratch the mud ones. Ponies graze on the tombs and from their constant hopping here and there, some bricks have fallen off a grave, the mortar of some other has crumbled, and the stone of another has fallen. [...] (p. 57) two or three men go towards a tomb and sit on it, they take the platform for a throne and the upper part of the grave for a pillow. They take a puff on a cigarette or a *bīrī*. One gives the order to a water-carrier to fill the hookah bowl. He prepares the hookah, comes back and fills it with tobacco. Enjoying the hookah, they remain there smoking [...] constantly refilling it with tobacco.

selection of the buildings and tombs to be demolished. Mr. Hailey aimed at clarifying the process of land acquisition and of demolition of religious places. He brought to the readers' attention that the Committee would respect "all religious buildings to which importance attaches" and that "where the sites of religious buildings and graveyards have been acquired it must not be understood that they have necessarily been acquired for demolition".<sup>99</sup> It further announced that officers had been appointed to look into the problem and that any person interested in the fate of any building should directly address the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>100</sup> As Hailey later wrote to Mr. Wheeler, he had been forced to take further measures in the matter:

Since April last [1913] interested persons have continued to throw a fierce light of publicity on any demolition proceedings connected with the new sites. Remains are being invested with a sometimes real and sometimes spurious association of religion or importance which their owners did not put forward a few months ago.<sup>101</sup>

The local resistance against demolitions that *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* supported was finally being taken into account. But, although both newspapers quickly pointed at the ambiguous terms "importance" or "necessity" used in Hailey's note,<sup>102</sup> they more generally argued that

It is impossible to draw any distinction between religious buildings. An old neglected mosque, whose walls have fallen and whose history we do not know is, according to our religious conceptions, equal to Delhi's grand Jama' Masjid. [...] Each and every particle which has been consecrated *waqf* in the name of God, whether prayer is thereon read or whether ablutions are performed, is worth of reverence."<sup>103</sup>

Beyond the problem of the demolition of monuments and built structures, one of the important stakes for Muslim ashraf was space and its

---

<sup>99</sup> "The City of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, vol. 5, n°24, pp. 494-495.

<sup>100</sup> "The City of Tombs", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, p. 495.

<sup>101</sup> Home, Public, Deposit n°36, August 1913: Letter from Hailey to Wheeler dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 1913, p. 2. Hailey explained that Beadon's list was being examined cautiously and that the engineering staff had been ordered to obtain a written authorisation before demolishing any religious or historic monument. The Land Acquisition officer had also been requested to make a list of all such buildings and enquire their history and the reverence in which they were held. After the lists would be composed, Mr Hailey would himself check personally with the local notables and a surveyor which buildings would be preserved.

<sup>102</sup> *Hamdard* noted: "as Mr Hailey said, it is true that all the buildings have not "necessarily" been acquired for demolition, but if the ancient monuments would not necessarily be demolished, then perhaps they would not be necessarily preserved either!" "Qadimi maqabar-o masajid - hissah dawam", *Hamdard*, 1 July 1913, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Idem*. Also see "More Apprehension", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, vol. 5, n°24, p. 495.

use. Since the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the government had been able to acquire any land (including places of worship) in the name of public good and decide which ancient monuments deserved to be protected.<sup>104</sup> As Hilal Ahmed and Santhi Kavuri-Bauer have shown, the state's distinction between functional and non-functional (described as dead, "without owner") monuments further enabled the government to overlook their complex religious status.<sup>105</sup> For Muslims, however, functional or not, a space that had been consecrated as *waqf* was unalterable; it could neither be sold nor acquired.<sup>106</sup> A *waqf* endowed for the construction of a mosque could not be revoked in any case since the land was God's. As G. C. Kozlowski has shown, *awqāf* were most specifically used by Indian Muslim elites to secure the stability of their estates after the establishment of the British rule in the nineteenth century:<sup>107</sup> the adoption of a rigid and "orthodox" view of Islamic law by Anglo-Indian courts in fact encouraged Muslim elites to create *awqāf*. But gradually, family conflicts over these endowments led the government to distinguish between *awqāf* that were "religious" and "charitable" and those which served the interests of particular families.<sup>108</sup> The famous Bombay lawyer Badruddin Tyabji, who regularly examined *waqf* cases, for instance, once declared a *waqf* dedicated to the maintenance of a tomb in Bombay invalid since he considered it as a "disguised attempt to preserve the family's wealth".<sup>109</sup> Considering the care of a tomb as an act of idolatry, the *waqf* was further declared "bad" and null.

---

<sup>104</sup> See for example H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse*, and his discussion of the ways in which the Government legally acquired number of ancient monuments, as well as the process through which they could come under the category of "protected" monuments.

<sup>105</sup> H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse*, p. 83.

<sup>106</sup> Z. Abbasi, "The Classical Islamic Law of Waqf: A Concise Introduction", in *Arab Law Quarterly*, vol. 26, 2012, p. 124: Literally, *waqf* comes from the Arabic root *waqafa* "to hold". Under the shariah, it is "an institutional arrangement whereby the founder endows his property in favour of some particular persons or objects. Such property is perpetually reserved for the stated objectives and cannot be alienated by inheritance, sale, gift or otherwise." Hanbali Muslims were the most permissive of all the schools of Islamic jurisprudence in the matter since they allowed the sale of a *waqf* property that is either damaged or destroyed. Most South Asian Muslims, however, belonged to the Hanafi school, which does not permit such actions.

<sup>107</sup> G. C. Kozlowski, *Muslim endowments and society in British India*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 40.

<sup>108</sup> G. C. Kozlowski, *Muslim endowments*, pp. 95 and 142.

<sup>109</sup> G. C. Kozlowski, *Muslim endowments*, p. 143: *Zooleka Bibi (and another) v. Syed Zyruil Abedin*, BLR, vi, 1058 ff.

Without going in detail in the elaboration by Jinnah of a bill in 1911 for the validation of family *waqf*, which resulted in the 1913 Mussalman Wakf Validating Act but which only concerned private family endowments, it is interesting to note that the early 1910s consisted in a sensitive time as far as *awqāf* were concerned. In 1913, both *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* showed anxiety for the respect of "God's Acre".<sup>110</sup> Although Mohamed Ali's papers began with mentioning tombs and graveyards, they gradually focused on the fate of mosques. Mosques, indeed, were a far more interesting religious symbol. Passionate outcries for the integrity of mosques against the onslaught of city town planners were indeed able to create wider mobilisation.

*The Kokī Bridge mosque: a first attempt at mobilisation*

On 21st June 1913, *The Comrade* (later, the *Hamdard*) reported a "distressing sacrilege":<sup>111</sup> the demolition of a historic mosque near Kokī Bridge, where Maulana Shah Abdul Haq Muhaddis (1551-1642) had taught for fifty years in the time of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The newspapers further lamented that the descendants of the saint had yet been in government service for decades and kept the mosque and its adjoining cemetery in good repair. The mosque that was situated near the canal from Delhi to Okhla and still used for prayers by passers-by was, however, accidentally demolished by the Imperial Public Works Department while demarcating road boundaries.<sup>112</sup> Villagers had removed the stones so quickly that local people had to "assist [the Chief Commissioner] in locating the spot where the famous mosque had stood for centuries amidst the ruins of earlier Delhi".<sup>113</sup> Although the remains of the famous Shaikh had been long

---

<sup>110</sup> To quote the expression used in "More Apprehension", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, p. 495.

<sup>111</sup> "Distressing Sacrilege", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, vol. 5, n° 24, p. 495 see also "Qadīmī maqābar-o masājīd", *Hamdard*, 29 June 1913, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> See CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B: Demolition and restoration of Maulana Abdul Haq's mosque near Okhla, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> "Distressing Sacrilege", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, vol. 5, n° 24, p. 495.

transferred to Hauz Shamsi, the place still retained an aura of sacredness.<sup>114</sup> On 24th June, Mubin ul-Haq, a descendant of Abdul Haq, alerted by the press, wrote to the Chief Commissioner to enquire about the rumours around the destruction of his ancestor's mosque that had reached him in Shimla:

In connection with the schemes for the improvement and extension of Delhi, there have for some time been persistent rumours that a number of cemeteries, shrines and mosques and other buildings which are not of sufficient historic or architectural value such as come within the list of protected monuments, will be pulled down and cleared. [...] Now recently, however, I heard that our ancestral mosque had actually been pulled down. My enquiries seem to establish the correctness of the news, and it has pained me to hear of the fate of the place. [...] We have always held the place in reverence owing to the family associations and to the fact that our ancestor, whose name is known and respected throughout India, lived, studied and worked there, and it is there that my grandfather and other relations and my own child lie buried.<sup>115</sup>

Mr. Hailey enquired the Chief Engineer on the reasons behind the demolition of the mosque, which had occurred against the normal procedure and without the necessary written permission that such an operation now required.<sup>116</sup> The demolition was a sorry mistake: the mosque was listed "Y" ("structures not to be demolished forthwith"). Mr. W. R. Robson, in charge of the works, explained to the Executive Engineer, 4<sup>th</sup> Division that in order "to clear all roads and to dismantle all buildings that came in the way"<sup>117</sup>, he gave the order on 4th June for demolishing the compound wall of the mosque, but certainly not the mosque itself.

The authorities decided to sweep the matter under the rug. As *The Comrade* gladly reported, Mr. Hailey "expressed every readiness to make full amends for the sacrilege which, we need hardly say, was in no way

---

<sup>114</sup> In 1848, three *darwishes* had settled there "simply on the belief that the place swept of the traditions (Hadis) of our Prophet", see CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 11, extract from page 99 of "Miratul Haqayaq" printed at Rampur State in 1902.

<sup>115</sup> CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, pp. 27-29: 24/06/1913: to C.C. from Simla descendant of Abdul Haq (Mubin ul-Haq)

<sup>116</sup> CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 25: letter of C.C. to Chief Engineer, 21 June 1913.

<sup>117</sup> CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 42: From W. R. Robson to the Executive Engineer, 4<sup>th</sup> Division.

authorised by him."<sup>118</sup> He also promised to punish the people guilty of the mistake and to treat the new building as an "Ancient Monument".<sup>119</sup> Abdul Haq's descendants were offered the rebuilding of the mosque (whose cost was estimated at Rs. 800-1,000) and the fencing of the graveyard.<sup>120</sup> On 14th July, the family of the saint wrote a letter of thanks to the government, announcing their readiness to cooperate with the Public Works Department staff to supervise the rebuilding and asking for the permission to erect a tablet in the mosque thanking the government's kindness.<sup>121</sup> Mohamed Ali's papers rejoiced: the *waqf* was left intact and the mosque would now be new. The emphasis on the building being now listed an "Ancient Monument" in *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* revealed one of the motives of the agitation. The importance was not so much on the archaeological preservation of what was a historic mosque than on the recognition by the Government of the importance of preserving Muslim interests. The religious outcry and the excuse of collective memory proved efficient both for influencing Muslim opinion and for negotiating with the authorities. Mosques and, to a lesser extent, graves appeared as a means through which a pan-Indian Muslim identity could be constructed and mobilised. In fact, before the outburst of the Kanpur mosque case a week later, Mohamed Ali's reports ended with the sad news of another sacrilege in Delhi.<sup>122</sup> As official records noted, mass meetings were starting to spring up mid-July, notably in Madras, against the desecration of mosques in Kanpur and Delhi.<sup>123</sup> By then, *The Comrade* and 'Young Party' Muslims more aggressively demanded the protection of their monuments and interests. They aimed at imposing their views as those of a

---

<sup>118</sup> "Distressing Sacrilege", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, p. 495

<sup>119</sup> According to "Distressing Sacrilege", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, vol. 5, n° 24, p. 495. I have not been able to find the information in colonial records.

<sup>120</sup> CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 42: Letter from G.F. Demontmorency to M. I. Hak, 2 July 1913.

<sup>121</sup> CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 47.

<sup>122</sup> "Distressing Sacrilege", *The Comrade*, 21 June 1913, p. 495 and "Qadīmī maqābar-o masājid", *Hamdard*, 29 June 1913, p. 2 mention the demolition of another stone mosque in the area of Paharganj.

<sup>123</sup> From Madras to CC Delhi 17 July 1913 in CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B, p. 66: "A mass meeting of Madras Muslims was held under the presidency of Syed Shah Meran Muhammad Sahib Khaderi, after the Jumma prayer at the Royapettah mosque to protest against the destruction of the Cawnpore and Delhi mosques by the local Governments."

unified Muslim community and their combativeness was thus not only directed towards the colonial state but also towards those Muslims (even within the Muslim League) who did not share the same views. The Kokī bridge mosque was one of *The Comrade's* first successful attempts at mobilising pan-Indian Muslim emotions and collective memory.

*The Kanpur mosque incident (1913)*

While *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* continued to report on the desecration of mosques in north India,<sup>124</sup> the situation in Kanpur started getting the full attention of Mohamed Ali's press over the month of July 1913. The case started in 1909 when land was notified for acquisition to build a new road between Mouleganj and the Dufferin Hospital, in the congested area of Macchli Bazar in Kanpur.<sup>125</sup> Land plans were inspected and implied the destruction of the Teli temple, a "handsome" Hindu structure and the outer eastern courtyard of the Macchli Bazar mosque. Opposition was voiced against the destruction of the temple and, in November 1912, the authorities decided that the new road would be splayed and the temple fenced and "left as an island in the middle of the roadway".<sup>126</sup> As government records note, some Muslim gentlemen started to ask whether the mosque would be affected and were assured that the only portion of the mosque that would be removed was the vestibule (*dālān*) at the North East of the courtyard. In February 1913, the Improvement Trust Committee decided to compensate the demolition by giving a plot for the construction of a new washing place along the north wall of the building.<sup>127</sup>

Towards the end of March 1913, however, articles began to appear in Mohamed Ali's newspapers protesting against any interference with the mosque's structure although government officers claimed that the

---

<sup>124</sup> See for instance "A mosque demolished in Agra", *Hamdard*, 22 July 1913, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118: Riot at Cawnpore in connection with the demolition of a mosque in Machli Bazar. State of Muhammadan feeling in India, Appendix A, Press communiqué by R. Burn, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1913, p. 57.

<sup>126</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>127</sup> *Idem.*

destruction of the *dālān* had been known and approved by the mosque's *mutawallis* as early as 1911.<sup>128</sup>



Fig. 4.a. Contemporary picture of the spared Teli temple and of the Macchli Bazar mosque in the background. Home, Political A, October 1913, 100-118, p. 189

*The Comrade* and *Hamdard* eagerly followed local news and the process of negotiation that took place between the local authorities and a coalition of ulama, zamindars and Muslim Leaguers who mobilised against the destruction of the “sacred” *dālān*. *The Comrade* argued that the acquisition procedure was vague and that the members of the board, “not conversant with English”,<sup>129</sup> had been unable to study the map properly. For colonial officers, the protest was neither genuine nor sincere but was qualified “an after-thought suggested by the concession to the Hindus and by the desire to secure some corresponding privilege by the Muhammadan community”.<sup>130</sup>

Maybe it was to some extent but the issue was more complex: it was also about defining which parts of a mosque were sacred and reaching a common opinion on the matter. In April 1913, a petition was indeed sent to

---

<sup>128</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n°105, p. 65: Telegram dated Agra the 7<sup>th</sup> Aug 1913 From the Chief Secretary to the Government of the UP to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department.

<sup>129</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>130</sup> Letter by J. B. Meston, Naini Tal, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1913 published in “The Cawnpore Sacrilege”, *The Comrade*, 5 July 1913, vol. 6, n°1, p. 10.

the government of U.P. by a certain Muhammad of Kanpur, containing fatwas from local ulama against the alienation of any part of the mosque and asking that the proceedings be stopped. Although the Raja of Mahmudabad and Mohamed Ali entered in correspondence with Sir James Meston, Lieutenant-Governor of U.P., he remained unyielding, declaring that the washing place was “not part of the sacred building”<sup>131</sup> and that, when the Chairman of the Municipal Committee visited the place a few months earlier, “there was a pile of shoes lying on the platform and the Muhammadans who were with him wore boots inside”.<sup>132</sup> At the end of June, the Raja of Mahmudabad wrote again that he was sending a memorial from the Muslims of Kanpur suggesting the appointment of an investigation committee to look into the matter.<sup>133</sup> The letter was slow to reach Shimla and on the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> July, the *dālān* was demolished.<sup>134</sup> Of course, the demolition created agitation among local Muslims but it was decided that no action would be taken and a telegram asking for the permission to rebuild the vestibule was sent to the Viceroy.<sup>135</sup> While everything had started to settle quietly in the locality, *The Comrade* urged the Muslim League to take action on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>136</sup> The paper fuelled the flame by reproducing a letter from Meston, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1913 – the day after the tragedy – in which the Lieutenant-Governor conceded that a deflection of the road to spare the mosque would have been a “small matter” but that minor sacrifices needed to be made for public good.<sup>137</sup> Once the agitation would be over, an enquiry would be conducted to settle for the future “what are the sacred limits of a mosque generally and what is the religious law about compensation”.<sup>138</sup> The

---

<sup>131</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>132</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118: Telegram from Lieutenant Governor of the UP to Viceroy, dated Naini Tal, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1913, p. 1.

<sup>133</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 82.

<sup>134</sup> *Idem.* The letter was sent on the 21<sup>st</sup> June and reached Meston on the 28<sup>th</sup>, but the demolition of the washing place had already been ordered for the 1<sup>st</sup> July and the reply could not be sent in time.

<sup>135</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 92.

<sup>136</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>137</sup> Letter by J. B. Meston, Naini Tal, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1913 in “The Cawnpore Sacrilege”, *The Comrade*, 5 July 1913, vol. 6, n°1, p. 10.

<sup>138</sup> *Idem.*

protest against the demolition of the *dālān* revealed the fact that Muslim opinion was in fact largely divided on the question.<sup>139</sup>

The papers continued to lament the demolition of the mosque and negotiate with the authorities when, on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, the famous incident occurred. The issue of *The Comrade* that week was unusually delayed in order to cover the news: after a mass meeting (of around 10,000-15,000 people)<sup>140</sup> at the *Idgāh* of Kanpur, a group of Muslims, filled with anguish on the sight of the desecrated portion of the mosque<sup>141</sup> or excited by the recitation of pathetic verses,<sup>142</sup> began to pile up the bricks of the demolished wall that were still lying there. The police was called and blank cartridges were fired to spread the crowd but stones were thrown in retaliation. At half past ten, Mr Tyler, District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, ordered the police to fire. The operation that lasted ten minutes ended with seventeen men killed, thirty-three injured and many more arrested.<sup>143</sup> The fact that an official deputation was supposed to meet local Muslim representatives to discuss the problem on the 9<sup>th</sup> August seemed to

---

<sup>139</sup> While some ulama considered the whole structure of a mosque (as a *waqf*) to be unalterable, others agreed at the conversion of parts of a mosque into a road if for public good. See for instance Confidential Records, Home, 1914, B, 8: Pamphlet entitled *Ahkam ul-masjid* regarding the demolition of mosques (by Janab Abu Al-Makarram Muhammad Rifa'at Ali Khan of Shahjahanpur): "the whole *masjid* cannot be converted into a road but if a road is narrow and the *masjid* is a grand one, a portion of the latter can be utilized in widening the road for the convenience of the public." One common argument used by colonial officers was to demonstrate that a number of mosques and graves had already been demolished without any efforts from local populations to save them, and that "[the British government] have done more for their religious buildings in the last fifteen years than has perhaps ever been done since they were erected." See Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, statement by Mr. Sanderson, Superintendent of Muhammadan monuments in the Northern circle, p. 89.

<sup>140</sup> See Minute by the Lieutenant Governor on the Cawnpore mosque and riot, pp. 74-112 by J. S. Meston, the 21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1913 in Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 95.

<sup>141</sup> "The Cawnpore Tragedy", *The Comrade*, 2 August 1913, vol. 6, n°4, p. 73.

<sup>142</sup> "Today we have our Karbala; this is the time to interpret it; Hasan and Husain have had their throats cut, and I am here to recite prayers for them"; "Cawnpore will become a second Tripoli", etc. See Minute by the Lieutenant Governor, Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, pp. 96-7.

<sup>143</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings 100-118, p. 2: Telegram from the Lieutenant Governor of the UP to the Private Secretary to Viceroy, dated Bareilly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1913. According to government records, 118 rioters were trialled in connection with the Kanpur mosque incident, see Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 71.

support the idea that the riot was provoked by malevolent people: the Delhi press according to Meston,<sup>144</sup> the police according to *The Comrade*:

The Cawnpore Mussalmans were, as a matter of fact, being continuously urged by *respectable "outside" Moslems* to take no action till the result of the deputation, which was to wait on Sir James Meston, had been made known. They had accepted the advice, and the local leaders appeared calm and cool and were waiting the forthcoming interview with His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in a spirit of hopefulness. It is difficult, in view of all this, to believe that the Cawnpore Moslems would have broken the peace *without grave police provocation*.<sup>145</sup>

A week later, *The Comrade* further supported the idea, put forward by one Kanpur correspondent, that "the riot was carefully engineered by the police themselves and the "Kabulia" [that had started the riot] were the police hire links".<sup>146</sup> The article infuriated the authorities and a demand of security (amounting at Rs. 2,000, the maximum permissible) under section 3 of the Indian Press Act was immediately requested from Mohamed Ali.<sup>147</sup>

The Macchli Bazar mosque case was seen as a test case by both parties, the local government as much as Mohamed Ali's press. For the colonial officers in charge, the agitation in Kanpur was clearly "fomented from outside and from Delhi in particular",<sup>148</sup> "in order to embarrass us with contemplated Delhi improvement".<sup>149</sup> As Meston confessed, the fact that the agitation had roots in Delhi "where so much work of the highest importance is now being undertaken" made him "particularly unwilling to make any concession".<sup>150</sup> By Delhi, the authorities truly meant 'Young Party' Muslims led by Mohamed Ali. The Commissioner of the Rohilkhand division further remarked that

---

<sup>144</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>145</sup> "The Cawnpore Tragedy", *The Comrade*, 2 August 1913, p. 73. Emphasis mine, Mohamed Ali seems to acknowledge his involvement in the matter.

<sup>146</sup> "The Cawnpore Tragedy", *The Comrade*, 9 August 1913, vol. 6, n°5, p. 93. The suggestion also appeared in the *Tauhid*. See Home, Political A, October 1913, Proceedings 142-149, p. 2.

<sup>147</sup> Home, Political A, October 1913, Proceedings 142-149, p. 1 and 8. The security was paid on the 11<sup>th</sup> August. On the 8<sup>th</sup> August, Mr. H. Wheeler advised Mr. W. M. Hailey to bring to his notice any infringement on the provisions of the Press Act by either *The Comrade* or *Hamdard*. See Demi-official letter from Mr. H. Wheeler to Mr. W. M. Hailey, Simla, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1913, in Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 4.

<sup>148</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118: Telegram from Lieutenant Governor of the UP to Viceroy, dated Naini Tal, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1913.

<sup>149</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118: R. H. C (Raddock), 7-9-13, p. 11.

<sup>150</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118: Telegram from Lieutenant Governor of the UP to Viceroy, dated Naini Tal, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1913, p. 90.

It is the younger school that is fussing round, and men like the Hon'ble Mr Saiyid Raza Ali and young executive officials of the Muslim League, who see a chance to enhance their own power and bring themselves into prominence.<sup>151</sup>

For Mohamed Ali, on the other hand, "the Cawnpore mosque furnishe[d] a test case through which the principle of freedom of Muslim places of worship from outrage and desecration has to be vindicated once for all."<sup>152</sup> It was another occasion after the Kokī Bridge mosque case to mobilise Muslims around the public recognition of Muslim buildings. With the indignation that *The Comrade* notably spread (among many other Indian newspapers like *Zamindar*, *Tauhid* or *Madina*)<sup>153</sup> across all sections of Muslims, the Kanpur mosque case rapidly emerged as an example of what could be politically achieved through the solicitation of Muslims' collective emotions and memory.<sup>154</sup>

Quickly after the incident, *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* started a "Cawnpore Moslem Relief Fund"; reported on Dr Ansari and Shaukat Ali's visits to the wounded and to the prisoners; and described the site where the tragedy had taken place, with descriptions of blood stains and bullet impacts on the walls of the mosque.<sup>155</sup> Poems lamenting the martyrdom of men and buildings were published and recited at meetings devoted to the collection of funds all over British India.<sup>156</sup> Black banners were waved by groups of protesters; mosques threatened to close in religious strikes.<sup>157</sup> Photographs were taken, bought and held up in assemblies to incite financial support to the victims.<sup>158</sup> Mohamed Ali, like many of his contemporaries, ordered a set

---

<sup>151</sup> See Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings n° 100-118, p. 20: Extract from a fortnightly demi official letter, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1913, from the Commissioner, Rohilkhand division, p. 21.

<sup>152</sup> "The Cawnpore Tragedy", *The Comrade*, 9 August 1913, vol. 6, n°5, p. 8.

<sup>153</sup> For a study of the covering of the Kanpur incident by *Madina* see Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>154</sup> Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>155</sup> "The Cawnpore Tragedy", *The Comrade*, p. 96.

<sup>156</sup> See for instance Home, Political A, October 1913, p. 54.

<sup>157</sup> See Mohamed Ali Papers, JMI, 1007-1008, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1913, from Shah Baz Khan Meerut Cantonment. The latter solicited Mohamed Ali's views on the possibility of leading religious strikes.

<sup>158</sup> Home, Political A, October 1913, *op. cit.*, p. 41: Demi-official letter from the Hon'ble Mr. H. Le Mesurier CSI CIE, to the Hon'ble Mr. H. Wheeler CIE, n°82-c dated Ranchi, 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1913: "[about a meeting at Bankipore on the 31<sup>st</sup> July] Mr Mazhar ul Haq was said to have

of photographs taken by one Mazurul Haque of Mittra and Sous Photographers.<sup>159</sup>



Fig. 4.b. Picture of the mosque with the demolished wall and *dālān* on the left.  
Home, Political A, October 1913, 100-118, p. 193

Mosques were turned into political platforms<sup>160</sup> and Muslims were prompted to wake up and protect religious sites by fiery speeches and pamphlets.<sup>161</sup> Cases of desecration of mosques and graveyards in Delhi resurfaced and stirred public opinion.<sup>162</sup> The political discourse developed by Mohamed Ali's party quickly gained popular support. As Gooptu has shown, the agitation also coincided with feelings that had begun to spread among the Muslim urban poor whose economic and social situation had worsened since

---

stimulated excitement by showing photographs of the demolished portion of the mosque and by spreading statements regarding the conduct of the Cawnpore officials."

<sup>159</sup> Mohamed Ali Papers, NMML Reel 2, From Mittra and Sous Photographers to Mohamed Ali, Cawnpore, 23 September 1913 in response to letter n°11619, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September. The company proposed two different sets, one of seventeen photographs at Rs. 15, and one of nineteen photographs at Rs. 18.

<sup>160</sup> Home, Political A, October 1913: Demi-official letter from the Hon'ble Mr. C. A. Barron CIE to the Hon'ble Mr. H. Wheeler CIE n°1660-S.B. dated Simla, the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1913, p. 44.

<sup>161</sup> Such as "Muhammadans, you are asleep [...] Awake! Awake! Arise! Arise! [...] The mosques in Delhi were destroyed by force but you were silent." Home, Political A, October 1913: Weekly report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, dated Simla, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1913, pp. 3-4.

<sup>162</sup> Home, Political A, October 1913: Demi-official from Mr C. Q. Barron: "the old charges against the Delhi authorities of demolishing graveyards and other sacred enclosures were revived".

the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of competitive Hindu commercial classes who “were also aggressive in their religious and cultural expression”.<sup>163</sup> The Muslim poor, Gooptu argues, started to “ma[k]e sense of their plight in dialogue with a projected history of decline of the Indian Muslims and of Islam worldwide”<sup>164</sup> that elites promoted, in a process of “Islamisation” or “*ashrafisation*” that gave a new centrality to religion as a way to articulate political action and construct identity.<sup>165</sup> The success of the mobilisation could be easily measured by the amount of funds raised (around Rs. 80,000 of which Rs. 12,000 came directly from Mohamed Ali’s press)<sup>166</sup> and by the growing anxiety of colonial officers. In September 1913, the government noted that

This unfortunate case has greater potentiality for trouble than any since 1857. It is uniting all sections of the Muhammadan community of India into a common belief that their “deen” is in danger. [...] An appreciable loss of life, including the old, the young and the child, has stirred Muhammadan sentiment to its deepest depths. The literate and illiterate, the orthodox and the heterodox, the men of the new school and those of the old – have been equally affected. My latest information is that the idea of “the sacrilege” and “the martyrdom” has entered into the zenanas, and the influence of the women is on the side of the ill-considered but popular grievance.<sup>167</sup>

*The Comrade* and other such north Indian newspapers had not only managed to rally and unify Muslim opinion but had also proved the power of their political determination to the colonial state. Finally, in October 1913, Lord Hardinge decided to put an end to it. Charges against the rioters were dropped, the *dālān* was reconstructed and the government reassured its subjects and hoped that the incident would be soon forgotten.<sup>168</sup> *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* had won: Muslim interests were safe.

---

<sup>163</sup> N. Gooptu, *The politics of the urban poor in early twentieth-century India*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 261.

<sup>164</sup> N. Gooptu, *The politics of the urban poor*, p. 268.

<sup>165</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>166</sup> Home, Political, A Proceedings n°100-118, October 1913: weekly report of 23<sup>rd</sup> September, p. 1.

<sup>167</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913 Proceedings n°113, Letter to the India Office, n°14 (Police), dated 4<sup>th</sup> September 1913, p. 11.

<sup>168</sup> Home, Political, A Proceedings n°100-118, October 1913: Appendix D: Extract from the Statesman dated Calcutta, 16<sup>th</sup> October, the Viceroy at Cawnpore: Moslem Deputation and Lord Hardinge’s reply, p. 61.

It is noteworthy that the addition of Muslim monuments to the list of “Ancient” or “Protected” monuments, which was encouraged by *Hamdard* and *The Comrade*, was not always met with approval by local populations and elites.<sup>169</sup> In June 1918, for instance, the addition of the tomb of Bahlol Lodhi as an ancient monument implied the evacuation of the place and was sternly objected by the locals who denied the fact that the property was the tomb of the dynasty founder, complaining of the lack of reliability of the identification provided by Syed Ahmed Khan's *Āsār uṣ-Ṣanādīd*.<sup>170</sup> In 1929, a certain Mohammad Abdul Ghafar also wrote a petition to the Chief Commissioner of Delhi to ask the permission to lay out afresh the Shalamar Garden, which had been his ancestor's property, and bring it to its original condition by repairing the tomb that was situated within, thus asking the Archaeological Department to remove a board that had been fixed upon the tomb's dome. The authorities replied that the tomb was declared protected monument in 1914 and hence could not be altered by the petitioner.<sup>171</sup> As Hilal Ahmed has indeed pointed out, the categorisation of certain buildings as ancient or protected monuments prevented the owners from fully enjoying their rights and notably from altering their properties.<sup>172</sup> As the Kanpur mosque case also highlighted, *The Comrade* and *Hamdard*'s propaganda for the official protection of those spaces was thus not always in line with local opinion.

### **The meaning of memorials and the need for public recognition**

Besides the capacity of Mohamed Ali's press of rallying and mobilising Muslim opinion by resorting to the clever use of religious symbolism, the

---

<sup>169</sup> The *Comrade* and *Hamdard* always cheered when a monument made it into the list of ancient or protected monuments and supported government scientific researches on the Muslim monuments of Delhi. See notably “Delhi's Ancient Islamic Monuments”, *Hamdard*, 5 July 1913, p. 5.

<sup>170</sup> Notably by Pir Rasul Baksh and Ghafur Baksh, sons of Nabi Baksh, Habibullah and Inayetullah of Chiragh Delhi and Wahid Baksh son of Rasul Baksh. See C.C., Education, 24/1918 B “Protection of monuments in Delhi Province”, pp. 53-54 Objecting to the notification n°4414 dated 24 June 1918.

<sup>171</sup> See C.C./Education/1(6)/1930 (B): Petition from Muhammad Abdul Ghafar regarding exemption of his property at Qutab from the Ancient Monuments Act of 1904.

<sup>172</sup> H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse*, p. 84.

Kanpur mosque case also crystallised new conceptions about the process of memorialisation that were being voiced in *Hamdard*. In 1913, at the time of the Kokī Bridge and Kanpur mosques cases, one of *Hamdard*'s contributors addressed the significance of monumental memory and turned buildings into political objects that needed state recognition. Beyond the visible fervour with which *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* infused buildings with collective emotions in the cases that we have just examined, an unsigned article published in *Hamdard* on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1913 - three days before the Kanpur incident - entitled "Qaumī Yādḡāreṅ" (Community Memorials)<sup>173</sup> revealed interesting discussions on the significance of historic buildings for collective memory in a journal which was primarily conceived for public education.

In "Community Memorials", the author underlined the influence of memorials by starting his article with the news of the erection of a new British memorial in Selkirk to commemorate the 400-year anniversary of the battle of Flodden Field, which opposed Scottish and English armies. The article first described the unveiling of the two memorial statues by Lord Rosebery. The author, who displayed sympathy for the Scots, explained that thanks to the erection of that memorial, "the people of Scotland have revived the memories of that struggle forever, although it reveals their defeat, it also emphasises their noteworthy efforts".<sup>174</sup> The author argued that even though the monument memorialised a defeat, it nonetheless acknowledged the bravery of Scottish mind and warned Englishmen of the danger of confronting them. The Battle of Flodden Field memorial was seen as an example of what memorialisation meant for both parties and it was cunningly paralleled with the situation between the British authorities and the Muslim community in India, suggesting that memorials to "defeated"

---

<sup>173</sup> "Qaumī Yādḡāreṅ", *Hamdard*, 29 July 1913, p. 4. The Urdu term *qaum* is a debated one and it is difficult to translate it into English without imbuing it with a particular ideological bias. It has often been used and translated as "nation", but I choose here to translate it as "community". The article indeed takes example on Europe and especially, as we shall see, on the erection of a National Memorial at Flodden Field in 1913, but it also refers to communities, such as the Scots or the Indian Muslims, which cannot be seen as nations in the modern political sense of the term. The article also used the terms *qaum* and *millat* interchangeably. It is nonetheless important to keep in mind the different meanings that the word can convey in Urdu.

<sup>174</sup> *Idem*.

populations, i.e. Muslims, were essential for community identity. They displayed the official acknowledgement of their existence and worth.

In fact, the 400-year anniversary of the battle of Flodden Field and the erection of the memorial came at a particular time in both Britain and India. In May 1913, the House of Commons had finally passed the second reading of the Government of Scotland Bill (or Scottish Home Rule Bill) by 204 votes to 159. It was the result of years of political campaigning: in 1894 a resolution was proposed by Sir H. Dalziel to give the Legislatures of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England the control and management of their own affairs and the beginning of the twentieth century was further marked by the appearance of the “Young Scots”, an offshoot of the Liberal party which had as its main objective the Scottish Home Rule.<sup>175</sup> In 1912, the Irish Home Rule Bill was passed and now the Scottish Home Rule was agreed too. It was a big achievement for Scotland and an inspiration for India. After all, Aligarh’s ‘Young Party’ Muslims demanded the same thing that Scotland had just obtained – Home Rule. It is with this particular context in mind that the author of the article underlined the significance of built memorials: first, as monuments commemorating the past (even one of defeat) that had definite patriotic values; and second, as signs of the state’s recognition of the communities that they memorialised. Contrary to 1876 reactions to British memorials that emphasised the Muslim ashraf’s lack of understanding of the purpose of such practices after the incident at Shahjahanpur, Mohamed Ali’s press now highlighted the relevance of public memorialisation. Monuments were now considered both important mementos and influential political objects.

On one hand, indeed, the author described monuments as reminders of collective history and “the best established means to boost the community’s wakefulness” by making the history of their glorious ancestors visible to present generations “as a warning whip and a mark of pride”.<sup>176</sup> The theme of historic buildings acting as a “warning” to future generations was a

---

<sup>175</sup> Hansard (1803-2005) online, Commons Sitting, Orders of the Day, “Government of Scotland Bill”, House of Commons, 30 May 1913, vol. 53, pp. 471-551.

<sup>176</sup> “Qaumī Yādgarēn”, *Hamdard*, 29 July 1913, p. 4.

common Persian literary image often used when alluding to ruined monuments which remind observers of their own finitude before the achievements of the great people of the past.<sup>177</sup> This theme was notably adopted in Mughal epigraphy by commemorating victory and conquered people at the same time. One such inscription composed by Nami and commemorating Akbar's victory over the Khandesh state in 1600-1601 lamented: "At dawn I saw an owl sitting on the pinnacle of Shirwan Shah's tomb. Plaintively it uttered the warning "Where is all that glory and where is all that splendour?"<sup>178</sup> As we have seen, the theme also appeared in shahr āshob poetry, in which the sight of the devastated city translated into profound despair and acute nostalgia but also into a reminder of faith. The author of "Qaumī Yādgarēn" clearly followed this traditional conception of historic buildings:

In Delhi, the Red Fort, the Jama Masjid, Nizamuddin's *dargāh*, Qutubuddin's *rozah*, Baqibillah's grave, Humayon's tomb, etc., are, with hundreds such similar monuments, edifices from which men instantly learn the lesson of the impermanence of their existence and refresh their faith. Go to Old Delhi, and see how many tombs and how many religious edifices there are, some in good repairs, some broken and dilapidated, and from a silent voice what a lesson of warning they tell! Look at the height of the Qutub Minar, look at the forlorn beauty and terrible grandeur of the mosque Quwwat-ul Islam! These are the tombs and religious edifices whose every particle should be the collyrium on the eye of the mystic, which wake up men from their deep slumber; they teach wisdom and increase piety.

Historic buildings were not only seen as mementos but as the places where traditional memorial practices could be performed. Apart from describing the beauty of dilapidated graves, the author indeed referred to recitations of the *fātihah* at the mausoleums of Data Ganj Bakhsh Hujwiri in Lahore, of Khwajah Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer and of Khwajah Baqibillah, Sultan Nizamuddin or Khwajah Qutubuddin in Delhi as moments that stir

---

<sup>177</sup> E. Koch, "Shah Jahan's visits to Delhi prior to 1648: New evidence of ritual movement in urban Mughal India", in *Environmental Design: Mughal architecture. Pomp and Ceremonies*, XIth year, n°11, p.20.

<sup>178</sup> See J. Horowitz, "Inscriptions of Dhar and Mandu", in *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, 1909-10, pp. 26-27 quoted in E. Koch, "Shah Jahan's visits", p. 29. The inscription undoubtedly recalled Umar Khayyam's famous poem on the fall of Baghdad: "On the turret of the palace which rose to high, where kings and emperors prostrate did lie, I saw there perched a ring-dove which "Where to, where to, where to" did cry." See J. Horowitz, "Inscriptions of Dhar and Mandu", p. 28.

collective emotions and memories most powerfully.<sup>179</sup> Monuments were thus not only conceived as buildings but as sites where particular cultural and religious performances constantly re-actualised the memory of a collective past. Indian Muslims' community memorials also formed a network linked to the holy places of the Islamic world. Indian Muslim collective memory was thus described as pan-Indian and pan-Islamic.<sup>180</sup> As in Hali's *Musaddas*, Delhi was placed among Karbala, Meshhed, Baghdad, Constantinople, Cordoba, Bukhara, Ajmer, Sirhind and Lahore as one of the "magnificent sites that keep alive the most important religious and worldly guides of the enlightened community (*millat*)";<sup>181</sup> the Haramain Sharifain being, of course, "the best memorials, which can make their blood boil, heat their bodies and render their souls restless".<sup>182</sup> In *Hamdard*, memorials and religious community were inter-related.

Religious and secular buildings were said to inspire great pride among the population and to act as "an incitement and a means of progress for the nations to come" which could "come and go on the avenues for progress of the past generations of which the traces and signs are still visible to build on them new roads for progress".<sup>183</sup> This particular patriotic value given to architecture (probably inspired by English thinkers)<sup>184</sup> was relatively new but very popular in north Indian newspapers and magazines. In one article entitled "Upper Indian Architecture" published in *Kayastha Samachar* by Mr. Niaz Mohammad, Reader at the Oriental College of Lahore,<sup>185</sup> in 1906, the patriotic value of architecture was said to teach "noble thoughts" and to "perforce remind man of the immensity of the Creator of the Universe and

---

<sup>179</sup> "Qaumī Yādgarēn", *Hamdard*, 29 July 1913, p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> This is also visible through the two terms *qaum* and *millat* used throughout the article. In government records over the events, a report from Peshawar indicated that this discourse was indeed widespread. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, Syed Ali Abbas, argued that the Ka'aba was vital to Muslims and that all the mosques around the world were branches of it. See Weekly report 16<sup>th</sup> September, Peshawar, p. 3 in Home, Political, A Proceedings n°100-118, October 1913.

<sup>181</sup> "Qaumī Yādgarēn", *Hamdard*, 29 July 1913, p. 4.

<sup>182</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>183</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>184</sup> For instance, Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).

<sup>185</sup> "Upper Indian Architecture". *Kayastha Samachar*, July 1906, vol. 14, n°83, pp. 37-48.

incline his heart to humility."<sup>186</sup> The patriotic value of architecture naturally implied to strive to preserve tradition through the protection of patrimony at a time that was characterised by intense modernisation. Poems from an Urdu literary magazine like *Zamānah* show that monuments were indeed getting more and more attention and were imbued with particularly strong patriotic feelings by Hindu and Muslim Urdu poets alike. In 1909 and 1910, for instance, two poems entitled "The mausoleum of Nur Jahan" (*Nūr Jahān kā mazār*) and "The tombstone" (*sang-e mazār*) respectively composed by Sayyid Mahmud Faruq and Ram Parshad romantically depicted monuments as the resilient reminders of past glory.<sup>187</sup>

On the other hand, memorials also embodied for the author of "Qaumī Yādgarēṅ" the state's acknowledgement of the people for which they stood. This was clear from the start with the reflection on the significance of the Battle of Flooden Field memorial in Scotland. Muslim memorials were seen as political objects that encapsulated the struggle of the new Muslim political elites for the state's recognition and protection of community interests. It is noteworthy that buildings such as the Red Fort, the Jama' Masjid or Nizamuddin's shrine were never called "monuments" (*āśār*)<sup>188</sup> but "memorials" (*yādgar*) in the article.<sup>189</sup> It was their value as reminders of collective history and as spaces where religious memory had been performed for centuries that was highlighted as the primary reason why they needed to be preserved and protected by the state – not because of their architectural value. Although Santhi Kavuri-Bauer indeed noted that mosques (and more generally anything that was considered *waqf*) were increasingly seen as "symbolic spaces of Muslim social identity" in the Muslim press,<sup>190</sup> this expanded beyond religious monuments for the author of "Qaumī Yādgarēṅ" who also considered secular buildings from the Mughal and Delhi Sultanate periods. Having underlined the value of the historic buildings and tombs of

<sup>186</sup> "Upper Indian Architecture". *Kayastha Samachar*, p. 38.

<sup>187</sup> See respectively *Zamānah*, July 1909, pp. 49-50 and *Zamānah*, July 1910, p. 72.

<sup>188</sup> The word *āśār* was for instance used to translate into Urdu the colonial categories of "Ancient Monuments" or "Protected Monuments".

<sup>189</sup> The word *yādgar* can be used for monuments but its primary meaning is "conveyer of memory". It can also refer to anthologies, memoirs or keepsakes which act as reminders.

<sup>190</sup> S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental matters*, p. 117.

Delhi as community memorials, the author pursued that they should be granted the same protection that enjoyed newly constructed British memorials:

For Muslims, as for poor communities (*qaum*), it is useless to hope to build new memorials for their ancestors like the other religions, civilisations and wealthy nations of the world; but there is no doubt that the protection of our ancestors' memorials that our ancestors and their successors have built must be arranged. It is our strict obligation. Every day economic necessities increase: the post, the railway, the telegraph and cars are in fashion everywhere. New avenues and new roads are springing up and our tombs and religious buildings are everywhere in one city after the other and day after day [demolished]. We are not against economic progress, but for these reasons and perforce we are against the fact that because of it [progress] or under its pretence, the graves of our ancestors should be demolished without reason. Why would we disgrace ourselves in obliterating the traces of our ancestors in order to build new community memorials?<sup>191</sup>

Memorials, and especially British ones, were indeed an important matter in the eyes of colonial officers and the description of Muslim buildings as memorials in *Hamdard* certainly denoted the desire to bring the destruction of Muslim structures to the attention of the government and expect the same respect towards Muslim monuments that the government demanded towards memorials. In the late 1900s and early 1910s, memorials emerged as an increasingly debated matter in north Indian newspapers as colonial monuments in memory of kings or viceroys started to mushroom in north Indian cities.<sup>192</sup> Increasingly, newspaper editors and contributors eagerly discussed the desire to have a say in the way things were memorialised in the Indian landscape. On the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1910, the *Leader* indeed argued that "it would be a pity if a matter like the memorial for the Sovereign should, instead of being popular and spontaneous, be dominated by officials, and be so managed as to produce resentment in any section of the people" and complained that "the committee for the memorial does not include any representative for Madras and the United Provinces".<sup>193</sup> As

---

<sup>191</sup> "Qaumī Yādgarēṅ", *Hamdard*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1913, p. 4.

<sup>192</sup> The erection of a memorial pillar in Allahabad in memory of Lord Minto and discussions around erecting a befitting memorial for King Edward for instance received much criticism. See *NNRNWP&O* for 1910, pp. 791, 806, 825, 894.

<sup>193</sup> See the *Leader* for the 2 August 1910, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 705.

Indian subjects were supposed to respect British memorials,<sup>194</sup> “Qaumī Yādgāreṅ” demanded that the opposite be enforced as well: if the defacement of a memorial to King Edward was translated by colonial authorities as an attack on British rule, how could destroying a Muslim monument not be interpreted as an attack to the Muslim community? The article finished on a heated note,

This [the destruction of Muslim monuments] will make us weep, yes! We will cry tears of blood, but they will not be useless, they will water the field of the community (*qaum*) and will make the flowerbeds of fraternity bloom. Although whole neighbourhoods are being demolished, there are still thousands of reminders of the grandeur of the community (*millat*); some are manifest in some ruined monuments and some are visible in some fallen wall or in the silence of some dilapidated cemetery embracing the grandeur of former [generations].<sup>195</sup>

The article clearly turned Muslim buildings and ruins into political monuments by resorting to the argument of memory - an argument that was particularly sensitive both among Muslim ashraf and British officials. The process of memorialisation involved any "Muslim" building in “Qaumī Yādgāreṅ” but particularly the sites that displayed former Muslim power, from the Delhi Sultanate rule to the more recent Mughal period. The discussion was indeed about power and the desire to memorialise it in the Indian landscape against the onslaught of New Delhi town planners. The recognition of those sites as memorials of a Muslim culture of power by the authorities appeared as a necessity for the Muslim ashraf who were still mourning the trauma of 1857 and the end of the Mughal rule. It was an argument that could mobilise and unite Muslim opinion and that 'Young Party' Muslims hoped to compel the colonial state to acknowledge.

---

<sup>194</sup> Authorities were particularly anxious of defacement, particularly of Mutiny memorials and during the construction of New Delhi. See for instance Commissioner Office, 68/1894: Defacement of tombs of British officers on the Ridge and Confidential/Home/25/1921 (B): safeguarding of monuments and statues from defacement.

<sup>195</sup> “Qaumī Yādgāreṅ”, *Hamdard*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1913, pp. 4-5.

*“A Memorial Tablet Scheme”: the subversion of British memorial practices*

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1913 an article by an anonymous “Ex-Citizen” suggesting a memorial tablet scheme in Old Delhi was published in *The Comrade*.<sup>196</sup> This was presented as another attempt at preventing British town planners from destroying buildings and tombs in Delhi. It was suggested to adopt British memorialisation practices, notably the fixing of memorial tablets. First arguing that British public opinion was generally hostile to the construction of the new imperial capital on the bones of the dead and highlighting that further destruction would necessarily take place, destroying "whole *mohallas*" of which "no traces will be left beyond plans and sketches for the benefit of history and research",<sup>197</sup> the author suggested to erect commemorative plaques to preserve the memory of important men despite the destruction of their monuments. The "Ex-Citizen" further argued that it was a responsibility of the people to ensure that their heritage be preserved:

Does it not, in the circumstances, behove us all, Hindus and Moslems and others, to make one supreme effort to preserve some marks showing the spot where so many great men of India had lived, whom Delhi had produced or otherwise attracted to its courts and concerns throughout its centuries of chequered career. [...] With a view to preserving the memory of these great men and of their homes and habitations, I suggest that we should institute a scheme of memorial tablets – bearing names and dates. These marble tablets may be fixed up in the walls, or when homes have or will disappear, on stone posts on a side of the road nearest to the actual post.<sup>198</sup>

At Rs. 15 per marble tablet, the suggested scheme was not thought too expensive and the author assumed that the population would be able to participate on their own without the need to inform the government or town planner engineers.

It was quite an odd suggestion that was not in line with the approach that *The Comrade* usually adopted: the author did not openly criticise the government for the destruction of buildings but rather directly call on the population for their support. Although it is difficult to identify the

---

<sup>196</sup> “Old Delhi – A memorial Tablet Scheme” by Ex-Citizen, *The Comrade*, 5 July 1913, vol. 6, n°1, p. 13.

<sup>197</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>198</sup> *Idem*.

anonymous author, he was probably a Muslim noble who had acquired good British education or had lived in Great Britain for quite some time: the practice of putting up commemorative tablets was clearly inspired by British examples. The solution to demolition measures put forward by the article was so atypical that it was not commented in the next issues of the paper. The article was forgotten over the next months until the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1914 when two connected articles appeared in *The Comrade*: one by the same "Ex-Citizen" entitled "The New Capital" and the second by J. Ramsay MacDonald, the future British Prime Minister, entitled "City of ruins and tombs" that was reproduced from the *Daily Citizen*. MacDonald's article on Delhi complained of the recent practice that had developed among the population of Delhi of erecting memorial tablets on graves that was said to significantly delay the work of city town planners:

Every step the builders take has to be considered lest their foot falls upon a tomb. A platform under a tree shade becomes sacred in these days when holy places have to be purchased so that roads may be made and foundations dug; a new industry has sprung up in the *bazar* for the making of tablets informing the surveyors that this and that that is the resting place of this Khan and that Shah. Nobody but a skilful and patient diplomatist could have emerged from the maze of holiness, false and real, which lay on the ground.<sup>199</sup>

The new "industry" mentioned by MacDonald's article interestingly recalled the Ex-Citizen's suggestion in *The Comrade* six months earlier. It led the author to justify himself in the same issue of the paper. The Ex-Citizen denied that "a sudden and desperate movement for a wholesale and indiscriminate bestowal of sanctity to the many thousands of crumbling and decaying tombs" had "sprung up", arguing that it only consisted of a modest action by a small local organisation led by a certain Shah Abdus Samad Sahib who "has at some few places supplied tablets and carried out repairs, but that is nothing very unusual for him to do".<sup>200</sup> He also denied Ramsay MacDonald's insinuation that the process had been undertaken with the

---

<sup>199</sup> "City of ruins and tombs" by Mr R. MacDonald, *The Comrade*, 14 February 1914, vol. 7, n°7, p. 141.

<sup>200</sup> "The New Capital" by Ex-Citizen, *The Comrade*, 14 February 1914, vol. 7, n°7, p. 133.

intention of disturbing the progress of the town planning projects. He rather explained:

All that has happened is that the wild and unauthorised rumours of the last year relating to the scheme for the making of the new town alarmed the people and caused uneasiness as to the fate of public burial places, shrines and important tombs. A mosque had already been demolished and there were persistent rumours that other *khanqas* and shrines were similarly threatened, and naturally there was much anxiety prevailing at the time. Out of this, a society was then formed for taking steps for the preservation of important shrines and tombs, but it has not been able to do any substantial work so far. [...] In the circumstances and in view of the impending complete transformation of the place [i.e. Delhi], it seems quite possible that an effort will be made to secure important places and tombs, such as can be located, from disappearing altogether.<sup>201</sup>

The article further argued that the “Indian mind” had now awakened to the history of Delhi and had developed a sense of collective duty for its preservation. It would thus be unfair for the British government, which put so much emphasis on the protection of its own glorious past, to deny a similar feeling and desire among Indian people.<sup>202</sup> The article emphasised that memory had become an important stake among the local Muslim population which had spontaneously mobilised to preserve what they could of their past. Although it did not consist of active and aggressive resistance, the desire for memorialisation could no longer be ignored by colonial officers. This time, the article received a response by *The Comrade* which praised the Ex-Citizen and emphatically dubbed him “one of the most intelligent and patriotic citizens of Delhi”.<sup>203</sup> Of course, Mohamed Ali exulted: an innocent practice had eventually turned into an act of local contestation.

The contributors of *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* had gained astounding confidence. On the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1914, *Hamdard* published an article on the Akbarabadi mosque in Delhi that was built by Akbari Begum (one of Shah Jahan’s wives) and destroyed by the British during the Uprising.<sup>204</sup> Although

---

<sup>201</sup> “The New Capital” by Ex-Citizen, *The Comrade*, p. 133.

<sup>202</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>203</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>204</sup> “Masjid-e Akbarābādī - Dehlī”, *Hamdard*, 7 May 1914, p. 4.

the exact situation of the centuries-old mosque was unknown,<sup>205</sup> *Hamdard* suggested that it was most probably beneath the Edward Memorial Park during whose construction “the foundations of the mosque had emerged”.<sup>206</sup> *Hamdard* called on the government to turn its attention to the matter. A petition was sent to the Chief Commissioner to add the mosque to the list of Protected Monuments and excavate the park, signalling that the *waqf* ground should “not be used in an inappropriate way”.<sup>207</sup> The suggestion to excavate a British memorial park to unearth a supposed Mughal mosque was a bold move. It showed well how far Mohamed Ali was prepared to go in his show of strength to defend the Muslim royal past against the British.<sup>208</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have argued that collective mourning reached a new stage. People of all kinds mobilised for the protection of Muslim monuments and a new awareness of the importance of the city’s patrimony emerged at the time of the construction of New Delhi, as the trauma of the loss of power painfully resurfaced. With the need for memorialisation also came the advent of Muslim politics of monuments, of which *The Comrade* and *Hamdard* were particularly representative. Although Muslims were not the only ones to complain of the destruction of religious buildings during the construction of the new imperial capital,<sup>209</sup> they were certainly the most vocal, probably because of the city’s long Muslim history and of the tense political climate of the 1910s. We have seen that *The Comrade* and *Hamdard*’s attitude towards religious monuments evolved from one of dialogue and cooperation with the

---

<sup>205</sup> 2012 excavations for the Subhash Park Metro Station in Delhi, which may have unearthed the remains of the famous mosque, sparked a dispute between the ASI and the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, pushing for demolition over summer 2012.

<sup>206</sup> “Masjid-e Akbarābādī - Dehlī”, *Hamdard*, 7 May 1914, p. 4.

<sup>207</sup> See *Hamdard*, 21 May 1914, p. 6.

<sup>208</sup> I have not yet been able to trace the outcome of this case neither in *Hamdard* nor in government records.

<sup>209</sup> See for instance the question of the demolition of a wall of the Gurdwara Rakib Ganj in 1920. Fortnightly Report, Delhi: 2<sup>nd</sup> Fortnight September 1920: CDD Annual Home File n°3 for 1920 quoted by S. Singh, *Freedom movement in Delhi (1859-1919)*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 201-215.

colonial state to one of bold opposition. Engaging with the meaning and role of historic monuments, Mohamed Ali's papers constructed them as symbols of a resisting Muslim culture. As we have seen, this popular discourse revealed the need for the memorialisation and public recognition of the trauma of the loss of power as well as consisted in a means through which political influence could again be achieved.

*The Comrade* and *Hamdard* not only emphasised and successfully politicised the patriotic feelings that emerged in relation with the built landscape and which could be efficiently used for the construction of a pan-Indian, pan-Islamic identity but also resorted to memory as a means to attract the attention of authorities and enter into dialogue with them by using and sometimes "subverting" their own arguments. The emphasis on the respect due to Muslim memorials concretely embodied the desire for the public recognition of Muslims' former power, which was still mourned in the early twentieth century. Agitations around religious buildings such as the Kanpur mosque also brought 'Young Party' Muslims to the forefront of Muslim politics. It confirmed Mohamed Ali's power in efficiently yielding the authorities to accept his political claims and remained, even after the Viceroy settled the question, a way to pressurise the government and threaten New Delhi city planners. As Edwin Lutyens told his wife in late 1913, while Keeling the city engineer was once standing talking near a building "an Indian man appeared over a wall and cautioned him to "Remember Cawnpore"."<sup>210</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> E. A. Christensen, *Government architecture*, p. 211 quoting a letter to Emily, November and December 1913.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Overcoming grief by building resilience: nostalgia and empowerment in the early twentieth century

*The morn that shifts so soon tomorrow new,  
Whence it comes is only known to few:  
The dark abode of being is shook by morn,  
Which by Muslim's call to prayer is born.<sup>1</sup>*

Nostalgia dominated much of the mentalities of north Indian Urdu-speaking elites after the cultural trauma of 1857. This continued in the 1910s with the outbreak of the Balkan wars and, later, with the defeat and dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire after World War One. The aesthetics of the qaumī marsiyah notably developed by Hali in the late nineteenth century continued to be popular when expressing collective despair and protestation. From the Kanpur mosque incident in 1913 and still more with the Rowlatt Act agitation of 1919, āshob poems gradually transformed into patriotic anti-colonial poetry in the works of both Hindu and Muslim Urdu writers alike. It developed as a powerful incitement for mass mobilisation as well as a lucrative tool for fundraising campaigns as pan-Islamist sentiments grew in the hearts of Muslim middle classes. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, I argue that a change was beginning to be perceptible: though melancholic discourses undoubtedly retained a popular appeal, during the Khilafat movement (1919-1924) Urdu writers increasingly expressed their desire to reconstruct Muslim glory by their own hands. Nostalgia started to yield more and more to discourses of creative action and positivism.

Looking at the changing role of nostalgia and āshob poetry in the emergence of a political poetry of optimism in the late 1910s, I will show how

---

<sup>1</sup> M. Iqbal, "Islam and Musulman (Dawn)", in M. Iqbal, *The Rod of Moses: A Declaration of War against the Present Age*, trans. by S. A. Ali Shah, V. G. Kiernan and B. A. Dar, Lahore, 2014, p. 301.

Urdu poets developed a praxis that both built on nostalgic poetry and encouraged a forward-looking attitude. Increasingly in the 1920s Islam was felt able to rise from its ashes: cries of "Islam in danger" turned into supportive yells for Islam's irrepressible force against Western onslaught. Examining some of the poetic works of Shibli Numani, Mohamed Ali Jauhar or Muhammad Iqbal, I discuss how they revealed a renewed confidence that helped build community resilience and recover from collective trauma by emphasising hope and self-reconstruction.

In their works, the reconstruction of individual and collective selves implied resorting to nostalgia and emancipating from it. The symbol of Karbala, particularly, acquired a different meaning: it was no longer seen as a historical example of oppression but as a model of love, hope and self-sacrifice. Considering the notion of "community resilience", I shall particularly look at the way Iqbal grappled with death and cultural mourning to propose new visions of time, God and the Self. From the mid-1910s, he traced a way to immortality through self-assertion and he erected ruins as examples of collective resilience, a process that culminated in his famous *Masjid-e Qurtubah* (1932) after the failure of the Khilafat movement and the collapse of pan-Islamic dreams. Exploring the ways in which Urdu poets transformed the pervading longing for the past into a longing for the future during the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter thus emphasises their eagerness to open perspectives for collective healing as well as the role of religion in the process.

### **Collective mourning in the early twentieth century: the qaumī marsiyah**

Despite the letter of Hali to Maulvi Mahbub 'Alam who complained about the "excess of poetry in community gatherings"<sup>2</sup> in 1904, as we have seen in Chapter Three, the qaumī marsiyah continued to be very popular at the beginning of the twentieth century and community societies, like the

---

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Hali to Maulvi Mahbub 'Alam, editor of the *Paisah Akhbār*, Lahore, n.d. in Shaikh Muhammad Isma'il Panipati (ed.), *Makātīb-e Hālī*, Lahore, 1950, pp. 49-51.

Anjuman-e Ĥimayāt-e Islām founded in Lahore in 1884,<sup>3</sup> regularly used poetry to attract both people and funds on which the functioning of the Anjuman depended. In 1899 or 1900, for instance, Muhammad Iqbal was called to recite his *Nālah-e Yatīm* (The Orphan's Cry) at the annual session of the society.<sup>4</sup> The poem had such an impact on the audience that "the printed copies of the poem designed to sell for pennies fetched four rupees each"<sup>5</sup> and that the public almost "mobbed the poet" after the meeting was over.<sup>6</sup> Iqbal, like many of his contemporaries, continued to emphasise worldwide Muslim grandeur and decline in the fashion typically developed by Hali in his *Musaddas* and inherited from Andalusī laments, which constantly linked the Indian landscape to a broader Islamic world of past glory and present ruin. The emphasis on Delhi's glorious past was at the centre of a few of Iqbal's early poems such as *Bilād-e Islāmiyya* or *Goristān-e Shāhī* in which Delhi's "desolate" landscape of Mughal tombs triggered what he described as collective Muslim pathos and memory. Iqbal romanticised Muslim landscapes, such as Baghdad, Andalusia or Sicily, which he had seen from a distance on his return journey from England in 1908, and inscribed them in one single movement of Islamic ebb and flow. In his *Sicily*, Iqbal also

---

<sup>3</sup> The Anjuman-e Ĥimayāt-e Islām (Society for the Support of Islam) was an educational organisation inspired by the Aligarh movement and founded in the Punjab in 1886 in the wake of the Muslim Educational Conferences.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Iqbal was born in Sialkot in 1877 in a family of Kashmiri Brahmins who had converted to Islam about two centuries before his birth (Z. Taunswi, *Hayāt-e Iqbāl*, Lahore, 1977, p. 15). Iqbal's grandfather, Shaikh Rafiq, was a merchant of Kashmiri shawls who had left the village of Looehar in Kashmir to settle in the Punjab as part of a Muslim mass migration due to increased violence from the Hindu Dogra rulers after 1857 (H. Malik, *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, New York, 1971, pp. 3-4, H. Malik, "Iqbal, Muhammad", in J. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York, 2001, online version). Iqbal started composing poetry at the Mission College but it was when he entered the Government College Lahore in 1895 that his talent was revealed. In Lahore, he regularly took part in *mushā'irah* organised by the Anjuman-e Kashmīrī Musalmānan, a society that aimed at Kashmiri Muslims' social and educational reform and organised poetic symposia at the Bhati Gate in Lahore's Bazar-e Hakimān. Opposite to the gate was the house of Hakim Shahbaz ud-Din who, impressed by Iqbal's poetry, invited him into his circle and made him member of his society, the *Shorish-e Maḥshar*, which published a number of his poems (See A. A. Beg, *The Poet of the East. Life and work of Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher, with a critical survey of his philosophy, poetical works and teachings*, Lahore, 2004, pp. 9-10 and H. Malik, *Iqbal*, pp. 10-11). The beauty and poignancy of Iqbal's poetry soon met with widespread appraisal. Even Dagh Dehlvi, then his *ustād*, soon stopped correcting his verses that had reached "near perfection".

<sup>5</sup> H. Malik, *Iqbal*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*.

significantly placed himself in the tradition of Muslim city elegists like Sa'di, Dagh Dehlvi and Ibn 'Abdun:<sup>7</sup>

The nightingale of Shiraz was the lamentor on Baghdad  
Dagh shed the tears of blood on Jahanabad  
When the sky destroyed the State of Garnatah  
The unhappy heart of Ibn Badrun lamented  
The ill-fated Iqbal has been conferred mourning for you  
Destiny has selected the heart that was your confidante  
[...] Tell me your pathos, I am also embodiment of pathos  
I am the dust of the caravan of which you were a stage  
Show me the old picture painted again  
Make me restless by relating the tale of bygone days  
I will take your gift towards India  
I myself weep there, and will make others weep there.<sup>8</sup>

In re-appropriating the task of *marṣiyahkḥwāns* like many āshob writers before him, Iqbal consciously highlighted Muslim unity through collective suffering and nostalgia, a literary device that had commonly been at play in late nineteenth-century āshob poetry. This type of poetry supplied political platforms such as the Anjuman-e Ḥimayāt-e Islām with heartrending verses that galvanised the middle class audience and helped raise funds for the educational needs of Muslims.

In the early twentieth century, poems entitled *dunyā āshob*, *'alam āshob* or *dahr āshob* that the *Awadh Punch* regularly published in the late 1870s to express discontent at government measures such as the imposition of taxes or the mishandling of the Deccan famine of 1876-78 also continued to regularly appear in the press. Poets increasingly resorted to nostalgic poetry set in the *marṣiyah* style to express their political views and nationalist feelings at the "decline" of colonial India. In the mid-1900s, poems encouraging the Swadeshi movement for instance clearly relied on the literary style of āshob poetry as was sometimes reflected by the title of compositions. In 1907, for instance, when Lala Lajpat Rai was exiled to Burma and the editors of the Punjabi *Hindustan* and *Yugantar* newspapers

---

<sup>7</sup> As Mustansir noted, Ibn Badrun was not actually the writer of the lament on Granada (rather composed by Ibn 'Abdun), but his commentator. See M. Mustansir, *Tulip in the desert: a selection of the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal*, London, 2000, p. 141. See also Ch. Pellat, "Marthiya" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New edition*, Brill, 1989, vol. 6, fascicules 107-108, p. 606.

<sup>8</sup> "Siqliyyah" in *Call of the Marching Bell*, pp. 212-213.

were imprisoned after being accused of fuelling Swadeshi agitation in Rawalpindi,<sup>9</sup> a certain 'Surur' Jahanabadi composed a melancholic musaddas entitled *Shahr Āshob* which interestingly combined descriptions of autumnal gardens with precise complaints accusing the police and Lord Morley for Punjab's grief.<sup>10</sup> In 1908, a poem published in the *Sunder Shringar* by Radha Krishna Bhargava also lamented India's decline that he attributed to his fellow countrymen's "love for foreign-made articles".<sup>11</sup> In 1907 and 1909, the *Native Newspapers Reports* show that the genre was also used to condemn the attitude of the Nawab of Dacca or to criticise the Reform Scheme regarding separate electorates for Muslims.<sup>12</sup> Āshob poetry which was popular among Hindu and Muslim Urdu-speaking elites alike, possessed the particularity of being able to express opposition to the colonial state and denounce political oppressions: in 1922, Pandit Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' composed an 'alam āshob about which he explained to Professor Mas'ud Hasan Rizwi that "on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1922, the Budget of the Government of India was presented in the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly in Delhi. It was decreased by more than 30 crores and the imposition of new taxes was proposed. [...] This new situation induced me to write this poem."<sup>13</sup> By the turn of the twentieth-century, therefore, āshob poetry and qaumī marṣiyahs still resonated and the nostalgic aesthetic that had developed after 1857 was still meaningful in northern India.

The writing of political marṣiyahs and the mobilisation of pan-Islamic emotions further intensified in the 1910s with the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war in 1911, the Balkan wars in 1912-1913 and the Kanpur mosque incident in summer 1913, which heightened the sense of worldwide Muslim decline. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century had indeed seen the

---

<sup>9</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai was released in November 1907, a month before the publication of the poem in *Zamānah*.

<sup>10</sup> *Zamānah*, December 1907 issue, pp. 383-390, "Shahr āshob" by 'Surur' Jahanabadi. For more on that affair, see G. Singh, *Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh, History of the Freedom Movement in Punjab*, vol. IV, Patiala, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> *NNRNWP&O* for 1908, p. 258.

<sup>12</sup> The *Hind* for the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1907, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 485 and the *Hindi Pradip* for December 1909, *NNRNWP&O*, p. 82.

<sup>13</sup> A. Arifi, *Shahr-Āshob*, p. 256.

steady increase of pan-Islamic solidarity since the Russo-Turkish war of 1877. When news of the victory of Turkey over Greece reached India after the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, for instance, Muslim mosques had been illuminated in celebration and the Turkish fez had become popular.<sup>14</sup> As Nanda indeed noted, “at the turn of the century, Turkey had come to occupy a place in the minds and hearts of large sections of the Muslim community”.<sup>15</sup> At the time, cries of “Islam in danger” emerged as a powerful rhetoric, which united all sections of Indian Muslims and marked the entering of the ulama in the politics of the Muslim League. The ulama had a tremendous appeal and, contrary to the Western-educated Muslim politicians of the League, they “could transcend many of the divisions of Islamic society”,<sup>16</sup> well beyond the offensive articles of Mohamed Ali’s press. Several pan-Islamic organisations were founded, amongst which the Red Crescent Mission (1912) notably led by Dr Ansari and the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka’aba (1913) that worked for the defence of Islamic Holy sites.<sup>17</sup> Āshob poetry that emphasised pan-Islamic solidarity emerged as an important tool for mobilisation. What Minault has argued about poetry during the Khilafat movement was already true in the mid-1910s: “no longer was the nationalist movement confined to the council houses and bar associations; it had moved into the streets, the bazaars, temple fairs, and mosques”.<sup>18</sup> The Urdu political *marṣiyah* became an important means of communication and mobilisation that voiced Indian Muslim indignation and directly “spoke to the emotions”.<sup>19</sup>

After the Kanpur incident, political *marṣiyahs* encouraging pan-Islamic solidarity submerged the north Indian press and Muslim decline was commonly interpreted as the consequence of Western oppressive

---

<sup>14</sup> See B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi: pan-Islamism, imperialism and nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 107.

<sup>15</sup> B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi*, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 272.

<sup>17</sup> As Robinson noted, other organisations, like the Indo-Ottoman Colonisation Society (1914), also emerged. See F. Robinson, “The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia”, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol.8, 1998, p. 282.

<sup>18</sup> G. Minault, “Urdu Political Poetry during the Khilafat Movement”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 4, 1974, p. 459.

<sup>19</sup> G. Minault, “Urdu Political Poetry”, p. 461.

imperialism: pan-Islamic mobilisation took a more overt anti-colonial turn. The themes of mourning and martyrdom which had been developed in āshob poetry since 1857 significantly re-emerged as the victims of Western interventions, both in the Ottoman empire and in Kanpur, were raised as martyrs of the nation.

Are you asking about the nation of the Arabian Prophet  
Why is it decreasing today in number and manifestation?  
[...] Listen! Those precious treasures are buried  
Some in the dust of the Balkan, some in Cawnpore.<sup>20</sup>

By constructing a discourse on loss and ruins and by identifying the colonial state as the agent of devastation, āshob poetry became a discourse of anti-colonial mobilisation. As N. Gooptu argued, political poetry of the time "was reminiscent of and resonated with the matam (mourning) and marsiyah (a lament) traditions of Islamic verse, and related to the elegiac hymn and ritual mourning of Mohurram".<sup>21</sup> This rhetoric developed the theme of loss and martyrdom as the central theme in the religious and political claims of the time and concurred with the daily experiences of the urban poor.<sup>22</sup> Papers like Abul Kalam Azad's *Al Hilāl* frequently described the Kanpur massacre as a new Karbala:

"O wounded persons of Cawnpore! [...] You may remember that once on the banks of the *Euphrates* a group of Muhammadans was robbed in the same way, after which the page of the history of *Bani Omayya* was turned. O innocent children, young buds of the flower garden of Islam, who has caused you to wither?"<sup>23</sup>

Like many other poets, Shibli Numani expressed all his exasperation with Muslim suffering in his famous *Shahr āshob-e Islām*,<sup>24</sup> denouncing colonial oppression and worldwide Muslim martyrdom.

---

<sup>20</sup> Shibli Numani, *Kulliyat*, 81 quoted by M. A. Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'mani. An exposition of his religious and political ideas*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> N. Gooptu, *The politics of the Urban poor*, p. 270.

<sup>22</sup> N. Gooptu, *The politics of the Urban poor*, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> The article, entitled "Mashhad-i Akbar and the pitiful sight of Aderna (Tripoli) was reproduced in the *Union Gazette* of the 21 and 22 August 1913. See *NNRNWP&O* for 1913, p. 896.

<sup>24</sup> The poem was published many times in the *Zamindar* and the *Muslim Gazette* and was notably recited in Delhi in 1913 by Mohamed Ali and Dr Ansari after the return of the Medical mission from the Balkans. About Shibli Numani's thought and work, see J. A. Khan, *Muhammad Shibli Nomani*, Azamgarh, 2004 and M. A. Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'mani*.

How long these cruelties, this oppression, how long?  
How long this perpetuation of injustice?  
Our cries and wails please your ears and sight how long?<sup>25</sup>

Mournful verses were often read during assemblies that called on the population for funds, a "strategy" that was often reported by colonial reports which told of the heap of "money, turbans, and superfluous articles of clothing"<sup>26</sup> that the enthusiastic public assembled in front of the speaker who had moved it to tears. Saiyid Raza Ali for instance was said to always use the same *modus operandi*: "He prefaced his remarks in each instance by shedding tears, and then burst into lamentations, upon the innocent men slaughtered at Cawnpore for the sake of their religion, but then declared that "no they are not dead, but they live as martyrs, as example to all others." [...] the conclusion was an appeal for funds".<sup>27</sup> The *Native Newspapers Reports* of the time listed many poems written on the occasion, especially in September 1913, almost everywhere in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.<sup>28</sup> As Z. Umer noted, "a vast number of literary tracts from minor writers" with evocative titles were published from Lahore to Benares, notably S. Aminuddin's *Barq-e Islām*, Shaykh Rahmatullah's *Thunderbolt of Islam* (Benares, 1913) or Shaykh Mahmud Ali's *Muraqqa'-e Tarābulus* (Lucknow, 1914).<sup>29</sup> As we have seen, however, contrary to what N. Gooptu noted, the development of the political marsiyah not directly built on the Shia elegiac genre but developed instead from the shahr āshob genre that owed much to Shia marsiyahs since 1857. The fact that these poems rather associated with the shahr āshob genre - something that is often revealed by the imagery of autumnal gardens or the title of the poems - highlights the fact that it was not only linked to the mere denunciation of oppression but to the traumatic experience of the loss of power in the colonial world and its collective mourning.

---

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Khan, *Muhammad Shibli Nomani*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Home, Political B, November 1912, Proceedings 82-86: weekly reports of the Director of Criminal Intelligence on the political situation for the month of October 1912, report for 30th October.

<sup>27</sup> Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings 100-118: Extract from a fortnightly demi-official letter, dated the 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1913, from the Commissioner, Allahabad division, p. 20

<sup>28</sup> *NNRNWP&O* for 1913, p. 1016.

<sup>29</sup> Z. Umer, *Maulana Shibli Numani*, p. 343.

## From nostalgia to hope: political poetry and pan-Muslim mobilisations

Despite not actively participating in politics until 1923,<sup>30</sup> Iqbal perhaps first displayed a new vision of Islam that Khilafat leaders later also expressed. In 1908, from his return from England whose “climate made [him] a Muslim”,<sup>31</sup> Iqbal wholeheartedly participated to the widespread movement of pan-Islamic solidarity and regularly took part in *mushā’irahs* that aimed at collecting funds for Turkish casualties. In 1913, Iqbal recited his *Jawāb-e Shikwah* (Answer to the Complaint), which replied to his *Shikwah* composed four years earlier, at Mochi Gate in Lahore. The poem sold at thousands of copies and the money was sent to Constantinople.<sup>32</sup> Iqbal’s *Jawāb-e Shikwah* continued the tradition of the political *marṣiyah* while demonstrating a clear change of focus: Iqbal emphasised, in the manner of Hali, the responsibility of Muslims in their ordeal. It addressed the widespread growing melancholy among Indian Muslims by providing a harsh reply to their grievances: it argued that God still loved and cared for the faithful so long as they deserved it. *Jawāb-e Shikwah* sought to turn idle nostalgia into religious

---

<sup>30</sup> R. Wasti, “Dr Muhammad Iqbal from Nationalism to Universalism”, in *Iqbal Review*, Jan 1978, vol. 19, n°1, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Wahid Ahmad “Naqib” quoted in G. H. Zulfiqar, *Iqbāl*, p. 67. Zulfiqar argued that Iqbal’s complete turn towards Islam actually began on his journey to Europe, as he was successively struck by the beauty of Delhi, Aden, the canal of Suez and the greatness of Egyptian soldiers in Turkish caps (G. H. Zulfiqar, *Iqbāl*, p. 66). In Europe, Iqbal grew profoundly disenchanted by the Western concept of national territorialism that he had previously encouraged, (As Jalal has noted, at about the same time, after the Swadeshi agitation of 1905, Rabindranath Tagore also voiced the same delusion with territorial nationalism. A. Jalal, “Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity”, paper presented at the session of the Council of Social Sciences Pakistan, Lahore, on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2001, p. 3) now considering it as a great threat to Islamic unity and describing his previous nationalist period as his “phase of ignorance and folly” (S. R. Wasti, “Dr Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 38). Decided to “illuminate the dark horizon of the East”, (*Kulliyat-e Iqbal*, p. 132 quoted by B. A. Dar (ed.), *Letters of Iqbal*, Lahore, 1978, p. 7) Iqbal rather focussed on extolling an Islamic “nationalism” that was not based on territory, language or outlook but on common beliefs and practices that united Muslims around the world. As Iqbal argued in 1910, “the membership of this nation, consequently, would not be determined by birth, marriage, domicile or naturalisation. It would be determined by a public declaration of “likemindedness”, and would terminate when the individual has ceased to be likeminded with others. The ideal territory for such a nation would be the whole earth.” (M. Iqbal, “Political thought in Islam”, *Kayastha Samachar*, December 1910, vol. 23, n°136, p. 529; on this, see also S. R. Wazi, “Dr Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 41).

<sup>32</sup> See M. Iqbal, *Shikwa and Jawab-i Shikwa. Complaint and Answer. Iqbal’s Dialogue with Allah*, translated from the Urdu with an introduction by K. Singh, Oxford, 1990, p. 59.

fervour by encouraging Muslims to renew their faith, fight for Islamic unity and no longer rely on the sole achievements of their forefathers:

Who blotted out the smear of falsehood from the pages of history?  
Who freed mankind from the chains of slavery?  
The floors of my Kaaba with whose foreheads swept?  
Who were they who clasped my Koran to their breasts?  
Your forefathers indeed they were: tell us who are you, we pray?  
With idle hands you sit awaiting the dawn of a better day.<sup>33</sup>

Iqbal's *Jawāb-e Shikwah* addressed the fundamental question of the Muslim's cultural death that resurfaced more intensely in the mid-1910s. Rather than giving in to anger and depression like his contemporaries, Iqbal tried to overcome and work through grief.

In *Khīzar-e Rāh*, a poem that he also recited at a session of the Anjuman-e Himayāt-e Islām in 1921,<sup>34</sup> Iqbal again addressed collective grief by highlighting the possibility of regeneration.<sup>35</sup> He argued for the pan-organisation of the "Muslim nations" and the restoration of the Khilafat as a way forward and sought to mobilise and energise Muslims towards taking action. In *Tulū'-e Islām*, recited a year later – most probably after Mustafa Kamal Atatürk's victory over Greek armies –, Iqbal sought to turn melancholy into hope once more by showing that adversity only made Muslims more precious. Decline was cleverly turned into an advantage, a challenge through which a new sense of self-awareness could emerge - a trial of life that highlighted the things that truly mattered. In the poem, the Islamic faith was clearly identified as the way to counter the forces of history.

The storm of the West has made the Muslim into a real Muslim  
Only the upheavals of the sea bring the pearl's beauty to its perfection  
The avalanche of calamity over Uthmanis is not to be bereaved  
As the dawn is produced after destruction of myriads of stars!  
[...] Stability of life in this world is bestowed by firm faith  
The Turanian has proved even longer lasting than the German!<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> *Jawāb-e Shikwah*, verse 11 trans. by K. Singh, *Shikwa and Jawab-i Shikwa*, p. 71

<sup>34</sup> A. Hashmi, "Three poems of Iqbal: A Psychological Interpretation", in *AUS*, 2010, n°25, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> "*Khīzar-e Rāh*", in *The Call of the marching Bell*, p. 353.

<sup>36</sup> "*Tulū'-e Islām*", in *The Call of the marching Bell*, pp. 360-361.

Already perceptible from 1913 in Iqbal's poetry, this new vision of Islam and use of āshob poetry further developed in other poets' work during the satyagraha and Khilafat agitations in 1919.

Although Indian subjects remained on the whole loyal to the British crown during World War One,<sup>37</sup> the defeat of Turkey and the subsequent dismantling of the Ottoman Empire indeed brought further distress to Indian Muslims. With the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, all Ottoman territory passed under Western occupation.<sup>38</sup> After the war and the release of the pro-Turkish 'Young Party' leaders from prison, the political climate remained tense: in February 1919, the Rowlatt committee proposed to extend the emergency measures of the Defence of India Act of 1915 that had enabled the authorities to arrest and detain persons suspected of conspiracy without trial during the First World War. The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, commonly known as the Rowlatt Act from the name of the judge who supervised the advisory committee, roused widespread indignation. Discontent grew against the British government and Gandhi, with other leaders like Mohamed Ali, decided to organise a satyagraha hartal against the bill that was passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in Delhi on 18th March 1919. Although the strike was planned for the 6th April, the success of the propaganda in Delhi was such that the satyagraha protest started on the 30th March. The city was empty and shops were closed. Police was deployed everywhere from the Jama Masjid to Sadar Bazar and from Ajmeri Gate to Lal Kuan.<sup>39</sup> Soon, however, news that food and drinks could still be bought from stalls in the railway station reached the city and people marched towards the station to close them. A dispute between satyagrahis and the stationmaster ensued. Police was called and shots fired: 14 people were killed.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Even leaders like Mohamed Ali and Dr Ansari advocated loyalty for a time and the Muslim League cancelled its annual session to avoid bringing trouble to the government. See F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 239.

<sup>38</sup> See for instance P. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres. The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920*, Columbus, 1974 or D. Fromkin, *A Peace to end all peace. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Middle East*, New York, 2001 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1989).

<sup>39</sup> D. Nath, *Dehlī aur Āzādī: Dehlī kī jang-e āzādī kī kahānī 1857 tā 1947*, Delhi, 2011, p. 107.

<sup>40</sup> D. Nath, *Dehlī aur Āzādī*, p. 110.

The satyagraha protest of 1919 in Delhi and the subsequent incident inspired Mohamed Ali to write an āshob poem that he provocatively entitled *Fughān-e Dehlī*, a title that clearly echoed the name of Kaukab's anthology of 1857 poems on Delhi that we have analysed in Chapter Two. Although it used the same language, the message of the poem was completely different and reflected the beginning of a change in the way āshob poetry was used during the subsequent non-cooperation and Khilafat movements, which Mohamed Ali, his brother Shaukat and their *pir* Maulana Abdul Bari with his Firangi Mahal clique, as well as famous Calcutta journalist Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) and Mahmud ul-Hasan, head of Deobandi ulama founded in September of 1919.<sup>41</sup> While the poem expressed oppression, it also displayed determination at the same time. Mohamed Ali confidently argued after the incident of the March strike:

If the word of God (*kalimah-e haq*) is fastened to the heart of Delhi  
 Never can the name and traces of Delhi be erased  
 The complaint of the tyranny of strangers shall never be on our lips:  
 This is the unique style of lament for Delhi (*Fughān-e Dehlī*)<sup>42</sup>

In fact, Mohamed Ali was not the only one to express the newly found confidence that Iqbal had first displayed. Many poems composed against the Rowlatt Bill, and still more after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre of the 13th April 1919, demonstrated the desire to take action and finally shake off collective grief once and for all. One poem that appeared in the *Ukhuwat* of Lucknow on 26th April 1919 by a certain "Mahwi" thus typically complained:

The expression of grief is forbidden in this regime  
 We are suspected; our grief is suspected  
 How can we demonstrate our grief to our brothers?  
 How can one stop the bewailing of the heart and the eye?  
 How long can we suffer insults?  
 Is this life at all? O seekers after comfort  
 Awake and free yourself from this grief.<sup>43</sup>

The foundation of the Khilafat movement not long after the Rowlatt Act agitation benefitted from Hindu-Muslim cooperation<sup>44</sup> and aimed at further

---

<sup>41</sup> See G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, and G. Minault, "Khilafat movement", in U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz et al. (eds.), *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, Berlin, 2015 (online version)

<sup>42</sup> Z. A. Siddiqi, *Maulana Muhammad 'Ali aur jang-e āzādī*, Rampur, 1998, p. 211.

<sup>43</sup> *NNRNWP&O for 1919*, p. 158.

pressurising the government and influencing the treaty-making process against the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, Khilafatist leaders went to London to plead their case and demand the restoration of the status quo *ante-bellum*, the preservation of the Islamic Khilafat and the protection of the holy places of Islam.<sup>45</sup> One of the main objectives of the ulama and Khilafat agitators from 1919 to 1924 (and beyond) was indeed to secure a safe haven for Islam and protect religious sites that were now at the hands of Western powers. The Khilafat issue was seen as “an attempt to destroy the very fabric of Islam”<sup>46</sup> and Khilafatist leaders stressed the impossibility of distinguishing between temporal and spiritual leadership in Islam,<sup>47</sup> making of the Khilafat a primary religious issue.<sup>48</sup> The delegation came back to India unsuccessful but more passionate than ever. It was not only the Ottoman Empire that was described in danger of annihilation but the whole Islamic faith. Muslims were seen as oppressed by the “insatiable ambitions of unscrupulous politicians, ever greedy for an extension of their empires”,<sup>49</sup> and marsiyahs for the Khilafat depicted mournful pictures of yoke and

---

<sup>44</sup> Jalal notes that the Hindu-Muslim entente was more difficult in the Punjab due to the “hopelessly narrow-minded” leaders in Lahore. See A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: individual and community in South Asian Islam since 1850*, New Delhi, 2010, p. 254 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Speech by Mohamed Ali in *Report of an Interview with the Right Honourable H. A. L. Fisher, on behalf of the Right Honourable Edwin S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, at the Board of Education on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1920*, p. 17, see also *The Turkish Settlement and the Muslim and Indian Attitude. The Address presented by the Indian Khilafat Deputation to the Viceroy of Delhi, on January 19<sup>th</sup> 1920; and the Manifesto of the All-India Khilafat Conference passed at its Bombay Session, held on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> 1920*, ed. by the Indian Khilafat Deputation, London.

<sup>46</sup> Speech by Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, in *A People’s Right to Live. Speeches delivered at a Meeting held at the Essex Hall on Tuesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1920, to Vindicate Turkey’s right to a National Existence*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> As Mohamed Ali wrote to the Viceroy in 1919, Muslims apprehended “that the temporal power of Islam might be so weakened that it might become liable to suffer, without adequate power to prevent, the curtailment of its spiritual influence through the pressure of the temporal power of rival creeds.” Letter from M. Ali to the Viceroy, Chhindwara (CP), 24 April 1919, in Home Department, July 1919 edited in M. Shan (ed.), *Unpublished Letters of the Ali Brothers*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 156-7.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, as scholars have shown, not all ‘Young Party’ Muslims agreed to this rhetoric and the main stake of Khilafatist leaders was rather their own position in India than the situation in Turkey (See for instance G. Minault, *The Khilafat movement* and F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 291 ff.). The agitators, amongst whom the ulama, later proved an embarrassment for secular politicians who saw their influence decline, unlike that of the Khilafat Committee and the Jamiat ul-ulama.

<sup>49</sup> Speech from Nadvi in *Justice for Islam and Turkey. Speeches delivered at a Meeting held at Kingsway Hall, on Thursday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1920 to demand Justice for Islam and Turkey*, p. 23.

oppression.<sup>50</sup> Khilafatist leaders started touring north India, holding multiple local conferences and raising funds.<sup>51</sup>

With the rise of the Khilafat and nationalist agitations, Urdu poets built on the collective emotions of grief<sup>52</sup> to express confidence in Islam's cultural force. Martyrdom was, in the verses of Mohamed Ali Jauhar and Hasrat Mohani, turned into an instrument of hope and love and Karbala reinterpreted as the paradigm of Muslim resilience in adversity. Instead of using the ghazal to lament Muslim decline, Hasrat Mohani freed himself from melancholy and turned it into "a medium of hope and strength".<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Jauhar reinterpreted the meaning of the martyr at Karbala by dislodging it from the logics of mourning and replacing it as a positive symbol of collective self-reassertion:

Life will arrive after your death, O murderer!  
Our journey will start when yours ends [...]  
In reality, the murder of Husain is the death of Yazid  
Islam is resurrected after every Karbala.<sup>54</sup>

Iqbal's poetry continued to address the political "Islam in danger" rhetoric used by repealing grief and proposing instead a vision of Islam as "brimful with joy of life and light",<sup>55</sup> perceiving the Muslim community as "a stable point" in the flow of history.<sup>56</sup> He presented religious regeneration and assertion as a real possibility because Islam could never be defeated. In his theory on communal history as a way to cultivate love (and action), Iqbal also erected Imam Husain as the paradigm of the true believer who emerges from and is entranced in love. By doing so, S. A. Hyder noted that Iqbal was in fact "building upon the Sufi hermeneutics of Karbala and identifying

---

<sup>50</sup> The government grew wary of those "nationalist" poems, which they sometimes penalised as seditious under the Press Act. See *NNRNWP&O* for 1918, p. 710 and for 1919, p. 167 ff.

<sup>51</sup> See contemporary āshob poems compiled by R. Kamarparti, *Āshob: Neshnal Arkaivz men mahfūz zabt shuddah ādābiyyat se intikhāb*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> G. Minault, "Urdu Political Poetry", p. 464.

<sup>53</sup> M. Umar, *National Movement in India. The role of Hasrat Mohani*, Jaipur, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted by Syed Akbar Hyder, "Recasting Karbala in the Genre of Urdu Marsiya," from *SAGAR*, Spring 1995, p. 149.

<sup>55</sup> Cited by A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love. The work of Muhammad Iqbal*, Al Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 5<sup>th</sup> Public lecture, Royal V&A Museum, London, 1998, p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> A. Bausani, "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 3, issue ¾, 1954, p. 167.

Husain as the foundation of Islam's most essential creed of Divine Unity",<sup>57</sup> an aspect that had already been developed by Rumi for instance.<sup>58</sup> For Iqbal, Husain's struggle at Karbala encapsulated the action of love *par excellence* within his concepts of *khudī* and communal ego, and constituted a model for contemporary Muslims.

From Husain we learned  
The riddle of the Book, and at his flame  
Kindled our torches. Vanished now from ken  
Damascus' might, the splendour of Baghdad,  
Granada's majesty, all lost to mind;  
Yet still the strings he smote within our soul  
Vibrate, still ever new our faith abides  
In his *Allahu Akbar*.<sup>59</sup>

Karbala thus re-emerged as a symbol of Muslim struggle and even Hindu Urdu writers, such as Munshi Premchand, expanded the theme to encourage Hindu-Muslim cooperation and anti-colonial mobilisation.<sup>60</sup> In his 1924 drama, Premchand narrated that a Hindu caravan was passing near Karbala: "when they learnt that Imam Husain's party was fighting for truth and justice against an oppressive army, they decided to help Imam Husain's side."<sup>61</sup> As Justin Jones has also showed in his study of *Shahīd-e Insāniyat (The Martyr of Humanity, 1942)*, Sayyid 'Ali Naqi Naqvi (1905-1988) sought to emphasise the contemporary relevance of Imam Husain as "the model of the perfected human Self [...] set down for mankind in Karbala".<sup>62</sup> Although 'Ali Naqi was apolitical, his work resonated in the context of the Quit India Movement of the 1940s, notably with the founding of the Husain Day Committee which promoted the commemoration of Imam Husain among all creeds. At the time, Husain and Karbala re-emerged as inspirations for political protest and satyagraha action through the idea of self-sacrifice: as Jones justly remarks, "recitations of Josh Malihabadi's politicised verse on Karbala, and the

<sup>57</sup> S. A. Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*, Oxford, 2006, p.141.

<sup>58</sup> S. A. Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*, p. 143.

<sup>59</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness: a philosophical poem*, trans. by A. J. Arberry, London, 2001 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1953], p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> See for instance the Hindi and Urdu drama by Munshi Premchand, *Karbālā*, Delhi, 1974 [1924].

<sup>61</sup> Q. Ra'is, *Premchand*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> J. Jones, "Shi'ism, Humanity and Revolution in Twentieth-Century India: Selfhood and Politics in the Husainology of 'Ali Naqi Naqvi", in *JRAS*, vol. 24, n°3, p. 420.

presentation by lesser poets of new verse arguing defiantly for the replacement of the regime of "Yazidiyat" with that of "Husainiyat", carried an obvious contemporary message that nevertheless remained uncensored by government restrictions."<sup>63</sup> During the freedom struggle, non-Muslim Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru thus celebrated the figure of Imam Husain and hoped that Karbala may "become not a memory of great sorrow but rather a great triumph, the triumph of the human spirit against overwhelming odds."<sup>64</sup> Most often than before, convinced sounds of "our glory can never be erased" started resonating in Urdu.<sup>65</sup>

### **On building self-help and community resilience**

As Sadiq observed about Iqbal, he emphasised "man's unbounded capacity for self-improvement and power",<sup>66</sup> while still holding onto tradition and old values. Like many of the Khilafatist poets, he looked onto the past when envisioning the future. Daniela Bredi has viewed this attitude (especially in Iqbal's *Sicily* and *The Mosque of Cordoba*) as an example of "restorative nostalgia",<sup>67</sup> a strategy "in which the resort to the past is a means to carve out a space of legitimacy for oneself in the present".<sup>68</sup> This distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgias was notably drawn by Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*: without seeing these two kinds of nostalgia as "absolute types", she explains that restorative nostalgia – mostly present in national or religious revival movements – is focussed on the *nostos* (literally, "return") and "attempts a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home", its prime interest being the restoration of this idealised past. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia emphasises the *algia* ("pain") in a more contemplative attitude that "lingers on ruins and loss".<sup>69</sup> Both would

---

<sup>63</sup> J. Jones, "Shi'ism, Humanity and Revolution", p. 428.

<sup>64</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (NMML), Messages, 9 March 1942, S. n°144 (Allahabad).

<sup>65</sup> Poem by Ahmad (Aligarh) n. d., in R. Kamarparti, *Āshob*, p. 163.

<sup>66</sup> M. Sadiq, *History of Urdu Literature*, p. 362.

<sup>67</sup> D. Bredi, "Nostalgia 'restauratrice' all'opera: 'Sicilia' e 'La Moschea di Cordova' di Muhammad Iqbal", in *Rivista degli studi orientali*, vol. 83, n°1-4, pp. 317-332.

<sup>68</sup> D. Bredi, "Nostalgia 'restauratrice'", p. 320.

<sup>69</sup> D. Walder, *Postcolonial nostalgias*, p. 16.

differ in their attitude towards the past, while the former hopes to bring the past to the present (often in opposition with other groups), the latter reflects on the passage of time and on the irrevocable human finitude. In the case of Iqbal and Khilafatist poets, however, I would rather argue that poetry did not merely build on the language of nostalgia in itself but aimed at intrinsically transforming it. They sought to appropriate a language that was popular to pass on a different message, a message of hope that promoted a positive vision of Islam, stressed Muslim solidarity and resilience and emphasised self-assertion. In fact, as we shall see more clearly from *The Mosque of Cordoba*, this attitude rather revealed how vulnerability was eventually turned into a force, a means of self-empowerment and a desire to positively work through collective grief.

Scholars have attributed the newly found emphasis on self-realisation (among Muslims as well as other communities) to different historical developments. In his *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity*, Javed Majeed for instance emphasised the importance that the concept of Self assumed in the first half of the twentieth century in the work of Gandhi, J. Nehru and Iqbal as a way to articulate alternative visions of the nation and resist the objectifying colonial gaze.<sup>70</sup> Francis Robinson has on the other hand suggested that this development likely stemmed from the major shift from “other-worldly” to “this-worldly” Islam from the nineteenth century, which encouraged Muslims to “take action for Islam on earth” and “set in motion processes that might underpin the development of more individualistic Muslim self.”<sup>71</sup> The greater emphasis on self-assertion also reflected transformations taking place in the political sphere when a new sense of confidence grew among north Indian political leaders after the end of the war as they aspired to further devolution of power and, increasingly, self-government.<sup>72</sup> Already in 1911, *The Comrade* expressed doubts about the idea

---

<sup>70</sup> J. Majeed, *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity. Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal*, Delhi, 2015.

<sup>71</sup> F. Robinson, “The British Empire and Muslim Identity”, p. 287.

<sup>72</sup> During the war, U.P. ‘Young Party’ leaders of the Muslim League had worked together with the Congress to reach agreements in the hope of progressive self-rule and negotiated

of representing Muslims in regard of their so-called "political importance" and rather displayed the desire for self-fulfilment. Discouraging the sole reliance on the achievements of their ancestors, a rhetoric that had been extensively used by Muslim Leaguers,<sup>73</sup> the paper instead extolled attitudes of self-help:

We think [the writer's] views should encourage the Mussulmans not in vain glorious talk of political importance, but in cultivating the virtues which built up the empire of their ancestors. His glorious ancestry is the last refuge of the bankrupt, and nobody has been more bitingly sarcastic on the subject of such snobbery than Moslem litterateurs themselves. *Padaram sultan bud* (my father was a king) is the form of introduction that indicates decadence. We wish both Moslems and Hindus took a lesson from Ali, the Hero of Islam, who said: "He is the true hero who says, lo! I am such a one; not he who says such was my father." We shall be judged by our posterity as we judge our forbears [sic].<sup>74</sup>

In 1919, after the defeat of Turkey and during the satyagraha agitation, Sahibzadah Abdul Wahid Khan expressed the same idea:

Believe me, the time has come when the deeds of our fathers and forefathers have lost their value. Now the only question is - what qualifications do *you* possess? Yesterday we could very well say "oh! we are nothing but look at the great Muhammadan Empire in Asia!!!" That is nothing but vanity, and in my humble opinion that idea worked mischief more than good, for until a man relies upon the strength of his own shoulder-blade he cannot acquire experience of any value, nor can he attain much success.<sup>75</sup>

If of course many reasons may explain the growing emphasis on self-assertion and empowerment, I argue that it might also have stemmed from the success of mobilising "emotional communities" which moved in unity through the same process of trauma and grief. The solidarity of Indian Muslims at the beginning of the Khilafat movement and since the Kanpur mosque incident in 1913 undoubtedly fuelled sentiments that Muslim India could still be powerful when ably guided and could therefore rise again from its ashes. Khilafatist leaders and poets, and especially Muhammad Iqbal, strove to articulate alternative perspectives to bolster the individual and

---

the Nehru Pact in 1916, conceding separate representation in the UP. F. Robinson, *Separatism*, p. 250 ff. The Pact nonetheless attracted local opposition.

<sup>73</sup> See F. Robinson, "Memory of Power".

<sup>74</sup> *The Comrade*, 18 February 1911, vol. 1, n°6, p. 103.

<sup>75</sup> Home, Political A, June 1919, Proceedings n°362-376: Question of the effect upon Muhammadan opinion in this country of the forthcoming announcement of the terms of peace in relation to Turkey; speech of Sahibzadah Abdul Wahid Khan, p. 17.

collective selves by turning the grim setting of post-1857 colonial north India into an empowering environment and by transforming subjects into dynamic actors. This is what public health or anthropology scholars often call "community resilience": the ability to adapt and be strengthened by adversity and to "rebound" after traumatic experiences.<sup>76</sup> While the promotion of community resilience is increasingly used "as a basis for policy-making"<sup>77</sup> and for public health as a prevention measure or to improve recovery from trauma after natural disasters for instance, Christopher Burton further noted that "resilience also encompasses post-event processes that allow communities to reorganize, change, and learn in response to an event".<sup>78</sup> While the multiple factors that enable (or prevent) the resilience-building process are still under review,<sup>79</sup> one of the characteristics of resilient communities is their high "community (or social) capital": social participation and interaction; community bonds; and innovation.<sup>80</sup> Begna Dugassa thus noted the importance of community relations, community trust and non-coercive leadership for resiliency,<sup>81</sup> and Christopher Burton further highlighted the role of religious organisations as "key drivers in terms of post-event personal support and involvement", which "provide linkages [...] and sustain disaster resilience."<sup>82</sup> I argue that the political and cultural climate of the 1910s-1920s provided a unique occasion for rebounding around religion and emphasising collective inner strength among Urdu-speaking intellectuals and political leaders. The success and popularity of the Kanpur mosque mobilisation and later of the Khilafat movement in unifying Muslim opinion in an unprecedented way opened new perspectives for the

---

<sup>76</sup> See for instance, G. A. Wilson, "Community Resilience and Social Memory", in *Environmental Values*, vol. 24, n°2, 2015, p. 227.

<sup>77</sup> G. A. Wilson, "Community Resilience", p. 277

<sup>78</sup> C. G. Burton, "A Validation of Metrics for Community Resilience to Natural Hazards and Disasters Using the Recovery from Hurricane Katrina as a Case Study", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 105, n°1, 2015, p. 69.

<sup>79</sup> A. Chandra, *Building community resilience to disasters: a way forward to enhance national health security*, Santa Monica, 2011, p. 22.

<sup>80</sup> C. G. Burton, "A Validation of Metrics", p. 71.

<sup>81</sup> See B. Dugassa, "Colonial Trauma, Community Resiliency and Community Health Development: The Case Of The Oromo People In Ethiopia", in *Journal of Health Development*, vol. 4, n° 1-4, 2008, pp. 52 and 57.

<sup>82</sup> C. G. Burton, "A Validation of Metrics", pp. 79-81.

reconstruction of a collective identity and recovery from the trauma of the loss of power through a renewed emphasis on religion.

### **Iqbal's reconstruction of the collective self**

Iqbal was certainly the Urdu writer who most admirably promoted community resilience through the bolstering of collective and individual selves. More than any other writer of the time, he strove to give a new direction to despair by turning it into religious fervour and tried to counter his contemporaries' pessimism by reconstructing a Muslim collective identity through a re-interpretation of Islamic history and ethics. Already in 1915, he articulated his new vision in Persian in his *Asrār-i K̄hudī* (Secrets of the Self), in which he developed a philosophical reinterpretation of Islam in light of his discoveries in Western philosophy and particularly of Bergson's theory of time and duration. Three years later, he complemented his first volume with another poem in Persian entitled *Rumūz-i Bek̄hudī* (Mysteries of Selflessness) (1918). While the former poem defended a theory of the self, the latter focussed on the individual in relation with society, exploring the concept of the ideal community and Islamic ethics. Despite a three-year gap, the poems were so closely intertwined that they have sometimes been published in one volume under the title *Asrār-o Rumūz* (Secrets and Mysteries).<sup>83</sup> In the first part of *Asrār*, Iqbal paid homage to Rumi as the one who prompted him to write the two books, guiding him out of his fruitless despondency. In the first verses, Iqbal described his apparition to him in a dream – a common *topos* in Sufi milieus –, thus inscribing his philosophical project in line with Rumi's mystical works and explaining his own intellectual and poetic project as one that would transform contemporary melancholy:

'Twas night: my heart would fain lament  
The silence was filled with my cries to God  
I was complaining of the sorrows of the world  
And bewailing the emptiness of my cup  
At last mine eye could endure no more  
Broken with fatigue it went to sleep

---

<sup>83</sup> See for instance M. Iqbal, *Maṣnawī-e Asrār-o Rumūz*, Lahore, 1928 or M. Iqbal, *Asrār-o Rumūz*, Lahore, 1972.

There appeared the Master, formed in the mould of Truth,  
 Who wrote the Koran in Persian [i.e. Rumi's *Maṣnawī*]  
 He said, "O frenzied lover,  
 Take a draught of love's pure wine.  
 [...] Up, and reinspire every living soul!  
 Say 'Arise!' and by that word quicken the living!  
 Up, and set thy feet on another path;  
 Put aside the passionate melancholy of old!<sup>84</sup>

Secrets of the Self (1915) and Mysteries of Selflessness (1918)

One of the aspects that influenced Iqbal the most in his articulation of a new Islamic philosophy was his encounter with Henri Bergson, first with his eager reading of Bergson's masterpiece *Creative Evolution* (*L'évolution créatrice*, 1907), and, later, with his meeting with Bergson in 1931. Bergson's theory of duration and creative evolution that supported a philosophy of life and movement in contrast with a contemplative philosophy inherited from the Greek tradition deeply impressed the young Iqbal as well as generations of Western scholars.<sup>85</sup> The years following the publication of *Creative Evolution* saw the emergence of a "Bergsonian cult" in Europe and Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France "were filled to capacity, not only with society ladies and their suitors, but also with a whole generation of philosophy students [...] and poets such as T. S. Eliot".<sup>86</sup> Bergson's vitalism developed against the theory of spatialised time to contest the ascendancy of nature and science on the living that was largely adopted in physics, biology and social sciences. He distinguished pure "duration" from spatialised (or serial) time, not as a succession of independent moments but as a heterogeneous and interpenetrative qualitative multiplicity that forms the very texture of life.<sup>87</sup> This is this particular essence of life that makes it capable of ever creation and led Bergson to develop his theory of the *élan*

---

<sup>84</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self. Asrar-i Khudi*, translated by R. A. Nicholson, Lahore, (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1920) 1960, p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> N. Hautemanière, "Mohamed Iqbal, penseur d'un autre Islam", in *Les clé du Moyen-Orient*, 2014, accessible online : <http://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/Mohamed-Iqbal-penseur-d-un-autre.html> (consulted 5 May 2016).

<sup>86</sup> L. Lawlor and V. Moulard Leonard, "Henri Bergson", in E. N. Zalta (ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 online edition).

<sup>87</sup> See L. Lawlor and V. Moulard Leonard, "Henri Bergson".

*vital* as life constantly fights fixation by evolving in irreducibly new, creative and unexpected ways.<sup>88</sup>

Iqbal developed his reconstruction of Islamic philosophy by reinterpreting Bergson's theories of time in light of the Qur'an and other European and Islamic thinkers and by articulating them as a theology. In *Asrār* and *Rumūz*, Iqbal both aimed at reconciling Western science and philosophy with the Qur'an, thus conforming to Syed Ahmed Khan's previous endeavours, and sought to counter contemporary interpretations of Muslim decline by offering a new Islamic praxis. Against fears of seeing the Muslim community disappear in the modern world, Iqbal proposed a reassessment of the significance of time and of the "forces of history",<sup>89</sup> on the basis of Bergson's fundamental theory of duration and *élan vital*.<sup>90</sup> Like Bergson, Iqbal argued that the serial time of natural sciences is "utterly inadequate to explain the innermost experiences of our consciousness",<sup>91</sup> and that it is, instead, twofold: one is the (false) time of the material world (what Bergson described as "spatialised time") and the other, the time of God (Bergson's "duration"), infinite and ever growing.<sup>92</sup> For Iqbal, man (or rather, what Iqbal calls *khudī*, the "ego", the innermost being)<sup>93</sup> is called upon to participate in this movement of endless creation, because it is, in fact, his true essence. To discover his true personal Self, man thus needs to "tear his girdle"<sup>94</sup> and realise that he is in fact imprisoned in serial time:

Thou hast extended Time, like Space  
And distinguished Yesterday from Tomorrow  
Thou hast fled, like a scent, from thine own garden  
Thou hast made thy prison with thine own hand  
Our Time which has neither beginning nor end  
Blossoms from the flowerbed of our mind.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> I am particularly grateful to Céline Tignol for explaining and discussing the topic by sharing her own research on Bergson with me.

<sup>89</sup> J. Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism*, New Delhi, 2009, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> For more on the use of Bergson by Iqbal see for instance D. Howard, *Being human in Islam: the impact of the evolutionary worldview*, London, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> A. Bausani, "The Concept of Time", p. 160.

<sup>92</sup> See A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love*, p. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Rumi also used the term in the same way, see M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, p. 15; and A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love*, p. 23.

<sup>94</sup> A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love*, p. 31.

<sup>95</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, pp.137-138.

For Iqbal, *khudī* is timeless and is urged to take part, with God, in the movement of life; it is, as Diagne framed it, a “co-worker” of God.<sup>96</sup> But, while writing in a mystical way and interpreting Bergson’s theories in a religious manner (for Iqbal, for instance, the creative evolution necessarily takes place in God, otherwise it would end in pure chaos),<sup>97</sup> Iqbal argued against the Sufi concept of *fanā’* (annihilation of the Self in God).<sup>98</sup> On the contrary, Iqbal saw the ideal of *khudī* not in self-negation, but in self-affirmation. It is through becoming more and more individual that *khudī* fortifies itself and takes part in the forward assimilative movement (*‘ishq*)<sup>99</sup> that is life.<sup>100</sup> According to Iqbal, in participating in God’s evolving creation, man becomes Perfect (*Mard-e Mū’min, Mard-e khudā* “Man of God”).<sup>101</sup> He evolves in divine presence and transcends serial time: he overcomes death and becomes immortal.<sup>102</sup> For such a man, death is not an end but a new beginning.

The Perfect Man falls down upon Death like the falcon upon the dove. The slave is ever dying killed by the fear of death, and fear of death precludes him from living, whereas the free man has a far higher dignity, death gives him a new life.<sup>103</sup>

Iqbal thus offered a creative solution to the problem of death: it could be overcome and immortality could be achieved within the self. By re-interpreting Islamic philosophy with Western metaphysics and the Qur’an, Iqbal opposed the Western view of Islam as “a fatalistic doctrine of predestination”<sup>104</sup> and interpreted time as a “*genuinely creative* movement

---

<sup>96</sup> See S. B. Diagne, “Bergson in the Colony: Intuition and Duration in the Thought of Senghor and Iqbal”, in *Qui parle*, vol. 17, n°1: special issue: Thinking alterity, 2008, pp. 125-145.

<sup>97</sup> A. Bausani, “The Concept of Time” p. 161.

<sup>98</sup> See for instance J. Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Iqbal sees love as assimilation, movement, action.

<sup>100</sup> See for instance M. Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> Here, Iqbal borrowed from Nietzsche’s concept of the Super Man, although he reinterpreted it in a religious context. See A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love*, p. 26. There were, however, influences from Nietzsche even in Bergson.

<sup>102</sup> For more on Iqbal’s theories on immortality, see M. Iqbal, “The Human Ego – His Freedom and Immortality” in M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, Oxford, 1934, pp. 90-117.

<sup>103</sup> Jāvīdnāmah, quoted by A. Bausani, “The Concept of Time”, p. 176.

<sup>104</sup> S. B. Diagne, “Bergson in the Colony”, p. 141.

and *not* a movement whose path is already determined".<sup>105</sup> As Iqbal argued in *Asrār*, the key for attaining the status of Perfect Man and reach immortality was to fortify the *khudī* through assimilative love (i.e. action) and adherence to the concept of the unity of God (*tauḥīd*), thus strongly criticising "pessimistic mysticism"<sup>106</sup> and inaction that would weaken the self.<sup>107</sup>

In *Rumūz-i Bekhūdī* (1918), Iqbal focussed on the relationship between individuals and the Muslim community. He argued that while the self is individual by nature, "only in society he finds security and preservation",<sup>108</sup> as individuals are linked to each other "like jewels threaded on a single cord".<sup>109</sup> Contrary to his previous focus on the individual self, in *Rumūz*, Iqbal advocated that individuals could only strengthen themselves by creating an ideal community, thereby learning the true meaning of love, within a communal tradition. Only in this context could the Muslim "develop and hone his or her selfhood".<sup>110</sup> Iqbal reasserted the importance of following and preserving tradition and Islamic values as a way to bolster community resilience:

Preserve this history, and so abide  
Unshaken, vital with departed breaths,  
Fix in firm bond today with yesterday  
[...] Thy present thrusts its head up from the past,  
And from thy present shall thy future stem.  
If thou desirest everlasting life,  
Break not the thread between the past and now  
And the far future. What is Life? A wave  
Of consciousness of continuity.<sup>111</sup>

The values and ideals that Iqbal advocated in *Rumūz* crystallised in well-defined institutions: the *shari'ah*, the Mecca as the centre of the Muslim community, the five daily prayers, etc. – in other words, historical, concrete

<sup>105</sup> M. Iqbal, *Lectures*, 196 quoted by A. Bausani, "The Concept of Time", p. 165.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted by A. Schimmel, *The Secrets of Creative Love*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, p. 39.

<sup>108</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>110</sup> J. Majeed, "Muhammad Iqbal: Rumuz-e Bekhudi [Mysteries of Selflessness], in C. Baldick and P. Childs (eds.), *The Literary Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 2010 <http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=30671>, accessed 06 May 2016. See also J. Majeed, "Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, aesthetics and postcolonialism", in G. Nash, K. Kerr-Koch, S. Hackett (eds.), *Postcolonialism and Islam: Theory, Literature, Culture, Society and Film*, pp. 35-47.

<sup>111</sup> M. Iqbal, *The Mysteries*, p. 62.

and fixed institutions: for Bausani, this was “a central contradiction in Iqbal’s thought.”<sup>112</sup> In fact, if the emphasis on the community's religious history and traditions may have represented a pitfall of Iqbal's philosophic-religious system, it was not in contradiction with his project of self-reconstruction. Underlining the unity, continuity and community of Islamic practices helped rebound the community around religion and offered a way for collective recovery from the trauma of the loss of power by fostering empowerment and resilience. As Nicholson said in the preface to his English translation of *Asrār-i Khudī* in 1920, Iqbal’s work indeed immediately caught the attention of young Muslims and many saw him as “a Messiah [who] stirred the dead with life”.<sup>113</sup>

#### The Mosque of Cordoba (1933): building on ruins after the Khilafat movement

The ideas developed in Persian in *Asrār-o Rumūz* were later translated into Urdu poetry in Iqbal's famous *Mosque of Cordoba*, written after his return

---

<sup>112</sup> A. Bausani, “The Concept of Time”, p. 168. From the 1920s, according to Zulfiqar, Iqbal argued against the conservative views of the ulama for the cultivation of *ijtihād* (interpretation) as the “principle of movement in Islam”. On the question of *ijtihād*, see also A. and A. Abdul Rahim, “A Study on Muhammad Iqbal’s Framework of *Ijtihad*”, in *Islamiyyat*, vol. 36, n°2, 2014, pp. 5-13.

<sup>113</sup> See R. A. Nicholson, *Asrar*, p. xxx and xxxi. The *Asrār* was also criticised by many readers, who did not always understand Iqbal's message. While Iqbal’s unusual use of the word *khudī* – which meant “pride” and “conceit” in Urdu – also led to misunderstandings, (M. Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, p. xxxi) others decried Iqbal’s poetry for his incorrect use of idioms and expressions. In fact, though Iqbal inscribed himself in the poetic tradition, he also displayed an eagerness to free his poetry and “denied he was a poet as understood in that tradition”, rather emphasising the political and philosophical dimensions of his verse (J. Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal*, pp. 1-2). Most of the criticism, however, came from Sufis. In the first edition of *Asrār*, Iqbal had represented Hafiz as an advocator of mystic inaction; this was soon translated as an attack on Sufism in general and many writers protested. Writers like Khwajah Hasan Nizami, Pirzadah Muzaffar Ahmad (who wrote *Rāz-e Bekhūdī* in 1918) or Maulvi Hakim Fizaruddin Tughrai (who wrote *Lisān ul-ghaib*) strongly reacted to Iqbal’s *Asrār*, sometimes representing Iqbal as an enemy of Islam (A. Schimmel, *Gabriel’s Wing. A study into the religious ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Lahore, 1989, p. 389, see also Vahid, “Iqbal and his critics”, p. 8). Iqbal argued that he was not opposed to Sufism in general but to the decadence of mystic leaders who supported ascetic inaction. In a letter to Hafiz Muhammad Islam Jairajpuri he told about Pirzadah Muzaffar Ahmad that he “did not understand my real intent at all. If *taṣawwuf* means sincerity of action (and this is what it meant in the earlier centuries of Islam), then no Muslim should object to it” (*Iqbāl nāmāh*, vol. 1, Shaikh Ataullah, pp. 53-54 quoted by A. Ali Engineer, “A Critical Appraisal of Iqbal’s “Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam”, in A. Sardar Jafri and K. S. Duggal, *Iqbal. Commemorative volume*, Lahore, 2004, pp. 122-123).

from Europe, a decade after the failure of the Khilafat movement.<sup>114</sup> On 3 March 1924, the institution of the Khilafat had been definitely abolished by Turkey's Grand National Assembly. The news was met in the Muslim world and particularly in India, where the mobilisation had been considerable, with shock and disappointment. In a speech at Aligarh on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1924, Mohamed Ali condemned the action of the Turks who had acted "irreligiously" and alluded to a proposition from Hindu friends to provide an asylum for the Khilafat in India.<sup>115</sup> The post-Khilafat period indeed showed frail attempts to restore the caliphate but all proved unsuccessful.<sup>116</sup> Despite the failure of the Khilafat agitation and financial difficulties, the Khilafat Committee still held conferences as late as 1928. With the collapse of the Khilafat, Hindu-Muslim cooperation also fell apart, especially in the Punjab where "the Arya Samaj activists and their Muslim counterparts who had orchestrated the *khilafat* and non-cooperation agitation [...] had by 1923 turned to *shuddhi-sangathan* and *tabligh-tanzim* respectively".<sup>117</sup> Mohamed Ali increasingly expressed the desire to "bring all into the field of Islam".<sup>118</sup> He now hoped to redirect the Khilafat agitation for the nationalist cause, presenting the independence of India as "a doctrine of the Quran".<sup>119</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, who had entered the Punjab Legislative Council since November 1926 and grasped the deadlock of communal harmony, argued that the caliphate did not need to be embodied in one person only but that "according to the spirit of Islam the caliphate or imamate can be vested in a body of persons, or an elected assembly".<sup>120</sup> The abolition of the Khilafat undoubtedly put the future of Muslims into question, an issue that Iqbal increasingly addressed in the 1930s: since the consolidation of Muslim Selves

---

<sup>114</sup> He also explained his theories in the *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* published in Lahore in 1930.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 11 March 1924 in K.K. Aziz (ed.), *The Indian Khilafat Movement, 1915-1933. A documentary record*, Karachi, 1972, p. 289.

<sup>116</sup> A. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 240.

<sup>117</sup> A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, p. 257.

<sup>118</sup> Khilafat Conference Presidential Address by Muhammad Ali, Calcutta, December 1928 (from the *Indian Quarterly Register 1928, vol. II: July-December 1928*, pp. 402-403), p. 321.

<sup>119</sup> Khilafat Conference Presidential Address, p. 322.

<sup>120</sup> M. Iqbal, *Six Lectures*, ed. 1958, p. 157 quoted in A. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 240.

relied on the free exercise of their faith, a safe haven for Islam had to be found, in or outside India.<sup>121</sup>

On his way back from the Round Table Conferences in London, Iqbal stopped in Madrid where he had been invited by the orientalist Miguel Palacios.<sup>122</sup> He took the opportunity to visit the mosque of Cordoba and was even exceptionally permitted to give *namāz*, a unique moment that was captured on camera.<sup>123</sup> Out of this experience, Iqbal composed one of his most famous poems in Urdu – *Masjid-e Qurtubah* (The Mosque of Cordoba) (1933) – that was published two years later in the collection *Bāl-e Jabrīl* (Gabriel’s Wing). The poem, which described the mosque of Cordoba as the finest embodiment of love, encapsulated both his philosophy and his vision of Muslim cultural renaissance in the most beautiful way.<sup>124</sup> The mosque personified Iqbal’s concept of the *mard-e khudā*, who transformed death to immortality. Since the mosque was turned into a church after the Reconquista, the building also concretely embodied the permanence and timelessness of Muslim spirit that stands against the assaults of Western colonialism, a particularly strong image in the aftermath of the Khilafat failure.

The poem first opened with a reflection on the impermanence of time and the certainty of death. This undoubtedly recalled Hali’s *Musaddas* that began with a similar observation. In the first part of the poem, Iqbal thus positioned himself within a tradition of mourning that he then broke with the description of his concept of love, which holds, indelible and eternal,

---

<sup>121</sup> I will not tackle here the problem of the movement for Pakistan to which Iqbal contributed. For more on that complex topic, see for instance F. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, New York, 2009; or A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*. See also Iqbal’s presidential address: *Presidential Address by Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Barrister-at-Law, Lahore*, All India Muslim League, Allahabad Session, December 1930. Iqbal stated that “I have no hesitation in declaring that, if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian homelands is recognized as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India.” (*Presidential Address*, p. 6).

<sup>122</sup> R. Latif, “Divergent Trajectories of “Masjid-e Qurtuba”: Iqbal’s Imaginings and the Historical Life of the Monument”, in *AUS*, n°26, p. 124.

<sup>123</sup> Spanish Muslims continue to lobby the Roman Catholic Church up to this day to allow them to pray inside the building, a request that has always been refused. See for instance <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/apr/19/spain>> accessed 18 May 2016.

<sup>124</sup> See B. D. Metcalf, “Reflections on Iqbal’s mosque”, in M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions*, pp. 165-170.

outside of history. It is from this timeless love that the mosque of Cordoba emerges.

Fast and free flows the tide of time,  
But Love itself is a tide that stems all tides.  
In the chronicle of Love there are times  
Other than the past, the present and the future;  
Times for which no names have yet been coined.  
[...] To Love, you owe your being, O, Harem of Cordoba,  
To Love, that is eternal; Never waning, never fading.<sup>125</sup>

The poem exalts the monument in the manner of a *qaṣīdah* and belongs, according to Noorani, to the poetic genre of *wafs* (*ekphrasis*): the literary description of a work of art, here architecture.<sup>126</sup> The mosque is indeed at the centre of the poem, although it is only incidentally described. References to the edifice, its columns and foundations indeed only act as the “material conduit for avowing the creative surge of the generic figure of Iqbal’s *mard-e khudā*, the exemplary Man of God whose dynamic love, drawn from the kernel of majestic Islamic conduct, has made this expression possible”.<sup>127</sup>

Your edifice unravels  
The mystery of the faithful;  
The fire of his fervent days,  
The bliss of his tender nights.  
[...] The might of the man of faith  
Is the might of the Almighty:  
Dominant, creative, resourceful, consummate.<sup>128</sup>

In *The Mosque of Cordoba*, Iqbal reaffirmed his understanding of Islamic law as the key towards self-affirmation and collective Muslim regeneration. He showed that the true Muslim – terrestrial with a celestial aspect – can reach immortality through faith; that he “is destined to last as his *azan* holds the key to the mysteries of the perennial message of Abraham and Moses”.<sup>129</sup> Although Noorani argued that the emphasis on the individual self in the poem aimed at envisioning “a utopian political

---

<sup>125</sup> “Masjid-e Qurtubah”, in M. Iqbal, *Gabriel’s Wing*, trans. by D. J. Matthews, N. Siddiqui, S. A. A. Shah, Lahore, 2014, pp. 277-278.

<sup>126</sup> See Y. Noorani, “The Lost Garden of Al-Andalus: Islamic Spain and the poetic inversion of colonialism”, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 31, 1999, pp. 237-254.

<sup>127</sup> R. Latif, “Divergent Trajectories of “Masjid-e Qurtuba”: Iqbal’s Imaginings and the Historical Life of the Monument”, in *AUS*, n°26, pp. 124-5.

<sup>128</sup> “Masjid-e Qurtubah”, p. 278.

<sup>129</sup> *Idem*.

order”<sup>130</sup> it undoubtedly also reflected the growing contemporary need of collective empowerment and recovery. *The Mosque of Cordoba* was also emblematic in that it expressed Iqbal’s religious thought comprehensively but also exemplified attempts at the complete rewriting of the poetry of ruins in Urdu that we have seen in the writings of Khilafatist poets. In his verses, the defeated monument, Cordoba’s church-converted mosque, was no longer a warning sign (*‘ibrat*) of God’s (or of Time’s) egotistic whims but an enduring symbol of God’s love on earth. Time was no longer unbeatable; Islam no longer in danger of annihilation.

### *Conclusion*

Iqbal, like Khilafatist poets sought to provide Muslims with a vision of a progressive future that was achievable through a forward-looking attitude by transforming *āshob* poetry into a revolutionary poetry of hope and resilience. Their positive reconstruction of a Muslim collective religious identity indeed took its roots in the widespread despair of Indian Muslims that had grown out of the cultural trauma of the loss of power and further intensified in the early twentieth century with the defeat of other Muslim powers. As Salim Ahmad justly argued for Iqbal is also true for the poets here analysed - cultural death and mourning were truly the overarching themes and motives of the rhetoric of decline that was promoted by political leaders and developed in poems from the Kanpur incident in 1913:

The central problem in Iqbal is not Self-hood, nor Love, nor Action, nor yet Power and Dynamism, but rather, as opposed to all these, Death is Iqbal’s central problem. This is the problem which informs his being with a tremor and upheaval that shakes his whole being.<sup>131</sup>

Death and loss were what poets tried to tackle by opening ways for community resilience and collective healing. Of course, grieving is not a linear process and not everyone welcomed Iqbal’s message nor interpreted it in the same ways. Many of his contemporaries and successors understood his

---

<sup>130</sup> Noorani, “The Lost Garden of Al-Andalus”, p. 238.

<sup>131</sup> S. Ahmad, *Iqbāl, ek shā’ir*, Lahore, 1978, p. 28 quoted by S. R. Faruqi, “How to read Iqbal”, p. 4.

thoughts in diametrically opposed directions,<sup>132</sup> partly because he sometimes contradicted himself and partly because he did not always clearly articulate his intentions. As W. C. Smith also illustrated, maybe Iqbal “was less devoted to enunciating what one ought to do, than to lashing one into doing it with all one’s might”.<sup>133</sup> What Iqbal proposed was a vision of Muslim regeneration through faith, action and love, in which community bonds would naturally act as a cure. He did not establish rules of behaviour through which one could concretely become the ideal Perfect Man that he dreamt. This was all left to *ijtihād*.

Iqbal's positive message influenced poets like Mohamed Ali as early 1911. That year, when Mohamed Ali published an appraisal of Iqbal’s poetry, and especially of his *Tarānah-e Millī*, which galvanised many Muslim circles, he said that as Hali had been acclaimed as “the poet of our *mazi* [past]”, Iqbal had become “the singer of our *Istiqbal* [future]”.<sup>134</sup> “The poet has felt the pathos of the fallen race,” he continued, “but his message, how joyous, how full of faith and celestial fire!”<sup>135</sup> Following Iqbal's steps poets like Mohamed Ali Jauhar and Hasrat Mohani also worked at turning melancholia into hope, through an adaptation of *āshob* poetry and a new interpretation of martyrdom and Karbala as positive symbols of collective resilience. These poets sought to show their contemporaries that death was not the end but only a new beginning and that by strengthening their individual and collective selves they could open a new world of possibilities. Decline was seen as a necessary stage to construct something new. As Iqbal strikingly said in *Khizar-e Rāh*,

Rumi said that every old building that is to be rebuilt  
Do you know that the building is first demolished?<sup>136</sup>

As had already been the case in Hali's verses, the reconstruction of individual and collective identity further put religion at the centre of attention. It supplied a clear framework on which community bonds could

---

<sup>132</sup> A. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 378.

<sup>133</sup> W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, 1977 [1957], p. 122.

<sup>134</sup> *The Comrade*, 4 November 1911, vol. 2, n°19, p. 380.

<sup>135</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>136</sup> “*Khizar-e Rāh*”, in *The Call of the marching Bell*, p. 353.

build and flourish again. As we have seen, it not only reflected developments that had taken place in Indian Islam from the late eighteenth century with a shift of emphasis on “this-worldly” Islam and a greater attention to inner faith but also consisted in an essential support for community resilience. The fact that Indian Muslims largely mobilised for the Kanpur mosque or Khilafat issues and increasingly put religion at the centre of their communal reconstruction - something that the Aligarh movement which primarily aimed at protecting the Muslim ashraf's interest did not achieve - more definitely estranged Muslims from other religious communities.

In 1909, Iqbal recited *Shikwah* (The Complaint), one of Iqbal's most successful (and also most controversial) poems, at a meeting of the Anjuman-e Himayat-e Islām in Lahore.<sup>137</sup> The poem, which was clearly inspired by Hali's *Shikwah-e Hind* continued the tradition of the qaumī marsiyah.<sup>138</sup> It was beautifully simple and passionate and immediately created sensation. It powerfully phrased the nostalgia and despair that Urdu writers had expressed over the last half century in what was a poignant profession of faith. The poem was criticised both by orthodox ulama shocked by the language used to address God<sup>139</sup> and by Hindus who disliked the communal tone of the poem, which was also reflected in the very melody of his verses.<sup>140</sup> It came as a “big disappointment to his Hindu admirers”,<sup>141</sup> who had previously praised his nationalist poems *Tarānah-e Hindī* and *Nayā Shivālā*. Hindu Urdu authors such as Kashmiri Pandit Chamupati Rai or Pandit Anand Narain Mulla (1901-1997) even wrote counter-poems in which

---

<sup>137</sup> See K. Singh's introduction in M. Iqbal, *Shikwa and Jawab-i Shikwa*.

<sup>138</sup> Iqbal's *Shikwah* not only had the same subject matter (and title) than Hali's *Shikwah-e Hind*, but was also set in the same musaddas metre. See also D. J. Matthews, “Iqbal and his Urdu poetry”, p. 105 and A. Ahmad, “Muhammad Iqbal”, in Chaghatai, *Iqbal: New Dimensions*, p. 25.

<sup>139</sup> Such as for the use of *harjāe* “unfaithful”. See K. Singh, *Shikwa and Jawab-i Shikwa*, p. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Iqbal, like Ghalib, mainly used Perso-Arabic vocabulary and sounds in his poems, thus reducing Indian sounds like retroflexes and aspirates to the minimum. See for instance G. C. Narang, “The sound structure of Iqbal's Urdu poetry”, in A. Sardar Jafri and K. S. Duggal, *Iqbal. Commemorative volume*, Lahore, 2004, pp. 202-206. About the overall formal aspect of Iqbal's poetry see the excellent study by M. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Litterature*, pp. 372-388.

<sup>141</sup> K. N. Sud, *Iqbal and his Poems (A Reappraisal)*, Delhi, 1969, p. 19.

Iqbal's communal sentiments were openly reproved.<sup>142</sup> In 1929, twenty years after the poem was first recited and a few years after the fall of pan-Islamic dreams, Anand Narain Mulla strikingly complained:

What you call your faith is the veil of your innocence  
What is your Allah? It is merely a name for Man's ignorance!  
The cause of your disgrace is the teaching of "you" and "me"  
The enemy of Man's progress is the colour and scent of hatred  
If it was in my power, I would purify the earth of mosques,  
I would demolish every temple, destroy every church!<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> See for instance Pandit Chamupati Rai's *Gang Tarang*: "His [Iqbal's] parched lips burn at the sight of a stream, and to quench his thirst he repairs to the sands of Arabia!" quoted by K. N. Sud, *Iqbal and his Poems*, p. 19.

<sup>143</sup> Pandit Anand Narain Mulla, "Shikwa az Iqbal", in *Zamānah*, February 1929, pp. 118-119.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Mourning and Creativity: Historical fiction on Delhi among second and third generation “survivors”, c. 1910s- 1930s**

... Besides, a new Delhi would mean new people, new ways, and a new world altogether. That may be nothing strange for the newcomers: for the old residents it would mean an intrusion. As it is, strange people had started coming into the city, people from other provinces of India, especially the Punjab. They brought with them new customs and new ways. The old culture, which had been preserved within the walls of the ancient town, was in danger of annihilation. Her language, on which Delhi had prided herself, would become adulterated and impure, and would lose its beauty and uniqueness of idiom. She would become the city of the dead [...].<sup>1</sup>

As Mohamed Ali and Ahmed Ali both emphasised, in the period from 1910 to the 1930s people feared that Delhi would become the city of the dead. Death, however, not only prompted the rise of political discourses and mobilisations around the fate of Delhi monuments among Muslim elites but also the blooming of fiction narratives on the Mughal city. As a matter of fact, writing on the city in the early twentieth century appeared to be a predominantly Muslim preoccupation.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I shall analyse city memoirs on Delhi such as Rashid ul Khairi's *Delhi's last spring* (1911 to 1937), Mirza Farhatullah Beg's *The last musha'irah of Delhi* (1928) and *Bahadur Shah and the festival of flower-sellers* (1932), Sayyid Wazir Hasan Dehlavi's *The last sight of Delhi* (c. 1932) and 'Arsh Timuri's *Glimpses of the Exalted Fort* (1937) - and open comparisons with Abdul Halim Sharar's similar work on Lucknow (*The last example of Eastern culture in Hindustan* (1913 to 1920)) - to highlight the importance that city memories acquired for Muslim elites at the time. Evolving in the fast-changing landscape of imperial Delhi where memory was being reconfigured and 1857 recollections resurfaced, these writers felt the urge of putting into writing stories that colonial modernity, religious

---

<sup>1</sup> A. Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, New York 1994 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1940], p. 144. I have not been able to analyse Ahmed Ali's most famous novel in this study as it is a later composition, which reconstructs memories of the 1910s and thus goes beyond the scope of this study. It nonetheless illustrates many of the arguments I here draw.

<sup>2</sup> It is however difficult to gauge the composition of the audience of such texts, which certainly went beyond the sole Muslim Urdu-reading public.

reform movements and social change threatened to erase. I shall here show that, drawing on previous late nineteenth-century works such as Munshi Faizuddin's *Bazm-e āk̄hir* (1885), these new compositions adopted some of the stylistic devices of storytelling traditions to move the Mughal past into collective fantasy and to reinvest it creatively. I discuss how Urdu writers aimed at offering their readers to reengage with this vanished world through creative activity. Through creative writing, I argue that Urdu writers introduced, as Kogan illustrated, a "playful element into the reality of the trauma, thus enabling some distancing from the traumatic event".<sup>3</sup> Writing a colourful and lively image of pre-colonial Delhi revealed the desire of writers to recover a lost world, internalise it and give it an eternal life thus working through the process of collective mourning and psychological reparation<sup>4</sup> by transforming the lost past into literary works of fiction.

In the realm of collective imagination, I will show that the memory of Mughal culture particularly crystallised around elements linked to the performance of culture such as the Urdu language (especially the local dialects and *begamāti zubān*), traditional poets, courtesans or the patron-emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar that had usually been condemned of degeneration by both British officers and late nineteenth-century Muslim social and religious reformers. As descendants of families that had been affiliated with Mughal courts for generations and as second to third-generation 1857 "survivors", early twentieth-century city writers also aimed at addressing the collective mourning of the trauma of the loss of power that had passed onto them and at re-habilitating the memory of Delhi's Mughal past. Rather than looking at Mughal princes and courtesans with the eyes of their modernist and reformist fathers, they started developing a critical gaze towards colonialism and reform. For instance, although supporting women's rights and education<sup>5</sup> and being proficient in English, Rashid ul Khairi –

---

<sup>3</sup> I. Kogan, *The Struggle against Mourning*, Lanham, 2007, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> On creativity and the psychological reparation of mourning, see H. Segal, "A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics", in L. Stonebridge and J. Phillips (eds.), *Reading Melanie Klein*, London, 1998, pp. 203-222.

<sup>5</sup> Rashid ul Khairi launched the paper *'Ishmat* in 1908 for "noble Hindustani women" who knew Urdu (G. Minault, *Secluded scholars: women's education and Muslim social reform in colonial India*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 132-136) and a few years later, *Tamaddun*, this time directed

Nazir Ahmed's famous nephew – still criticised “the imported and badly digested culture of the West”<sup>6</sup> and disapproved of the use of English words by fellow Urdu writers.<sup>7</sup> Instead of dreaming of ancient glorious Baghdad or Al-Andalus and repudiating the “debauchery” of Mughal times, these writers sought to restore the past of their forefathers. While dreaming of imaginary spaces where the figure of Bahadur Shah impersonated the lost *bazm* (feasting) of Mughal life and acted as the organising force behind culture production and Hindu-Muslim harmony, they also articulated critiques about the present. Their fantasies of communal harmony, however, rather disclosed memories of power and ideals of perfect governance and shaped a collective identity that was decisively religious.

### **Late-nineteenth century writings on the city: the example of *Bazm-e āk̄hir* (1885)**

In 1885, Munshi Faizuddin, one of Mirza Ilahi Bakhsh's attendants, published a book entitled *Bazm-e āk̄hir* or *The last feast* from the publishing house Maṭbaʿa Armaghān near the Turkman Gate in Delhi.<sup>8</sup> This book was the first of its kind. It describes the everyday life of the Delhi court with detailed precision, scrupulously recording whole lists of items (food, clothes, musical instruments, and the like) and the yearly events celebrated by the last two Mughal kings. Organised into different short subtitled sections, the book begins with general information on the Delhi court (the Fort's daily routine, names of popular dishes, etc.) and follows with an account of the

---

toward a male readership though still aiming at promoting women's rights. As G. Minault explained, however, while the circulation of *Tamaddun* reached 1,200 in its first year, by 1915 it had decreased to a mere 250 and the paper was therefore shut down (G. Minault, *Secluded scholars*, p. 139).

<sup>6</sup> S. S. Ikramullah, *A critical survey of the development of the Urdu novel and short story*, London, 1945, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> See N. Akhtar, *Monogrāf: Allama Rashidul Khairi*, Delhi, 2012, p. 41: Rashid ul Khairi, for instance, criticised Abdul Halim Sharar's style of writing for “mixing the pure and chaste language of the Exalted Fort with English”, after which Sharar would have changed the style of his compositions.

<sup>8</sup> Kamil Qureishi in his preface to the work mentions that the original manuscript is in the Hardinge Municipal Library in Delhi and was reedited in 1945. See introduction to Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e āk̄hir*, Delhi, 2009 [1885], pp. 9-11. See also M. Pernau, "Nostalgia: Tears of blood for a lost world", in *SAGAR*, 2015, vol. 23, p. 90.

regular activities of the nobility, punctuated by seasonal festivals and pilgrimages to local shrines for the saints' *'urs*. *Bazm-e āk̄h̄ir* was the first of a series of city writings, often written by former Mughal courtiers or their descendants, which apparently aimed at memorialising old Delhi and preserving the atmosphere of Mughal times. It was followed in 1889 by Shahzadah Mirza Ahmad Akhtar Gurgani's *Sawāneh-e Dehlī (News of Delhi)* which contained precise reports of the history of Islamic dynasties and a quantity of tables indicating the dates of Muslim rulers and British residents, interspersed by a thorough list of Delhi monuments occasionally illustrated by paintings in the fashion of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Āsār us-Sanādīd*. Writings by Mir Baqir Ali Dastango and Hakim Khwajah Nasir Naziruddin Firaq Dehlavi such as *Dillī kā ujṛā huā lāl qila'* (*Delhi's ruined Red Fort*)<sup>9</sup> and *Lāl qila' kī ek jhalak* (*A glimpse of the Red Fort*) were also published in the next decade<sup>10</sup> and, as we shall see, the beginning of the twentieth century saw the development of still more such works.

The plain and matter-of-fact language and the meticulous inventory of entire categories of items that often characterised writings like *Bazm-e āk̄h̄ir* led scholars, for instance Margrit Pernau, to emphasise the similarity of that type of city literature with the anthropological accounts on local customs that started to be published by Urdu-speaking informants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Faizuddin indeed already listed in the first few pages of the book under the heading "names of food" some twenty-four *pulāos* and twenty-six types of bread: "*chapātiyān, phulke, parāṭhe, roḡhnī roṭī, birī roṭī, besnī roṭī, k̄hamerī roṭī, nān, shermāl, gāodīdah, gāozubān, kulchah, bāqark̄hānī* [...]"<sup>12</sup> As Pernau argued, Faizuddin's account, which, according to her, displayed a "writing style that was as precise as it was unemotional"<sup>13</sup> - in striking contrast to previous pathetic shahr āshob poetry

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace that book and know its exact date of publication. While the Urdu secondary literature attributes *Dillī kā ujṛā huā qila'* to Firaq Dehlavi, Ashraf Subuhi attributes it to Baqir Ali Dastango. See A. Subuhi Dehlavi, *Dillī kī chand 'ajīb hastiyān*, Delhi, 2011 [1943], p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Hakim Khwajah Nasir Naziruddin Firaq Dehlavi, *Lāl qila' kī ek jhalak*, Delhi, 2006 [c. 1900].

<sup>11</sup> Pernau, "Nostalgia", pp. 90-2.

<sup>12</sup> See Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e āk̄h̄ir*, Delhi, 2009 [1885], p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> M. Pernau, "Nostalgia", p. 90.

- was similar in style and content to Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi's anthropological account *Rusūm-e Dehlī* (c. 1900-1905).<sup>14</sup> If Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi's books, as Shahzadah Gurgani's *Sawāneh-e Dehlī* and, later, Mirza Herat Dehlavi's *Chirāgh-e Dehlī* (1930) were undoubtedly conscious scholarly works that aimed at contributing to scientific knowledge and cultural preservation,<sup>15</sup> I argue here that *Bazm-e āk̄hīr* (and most of the literary writings that followed) was not. Although contributing to the city's memorialisation, *Bazm-e āk̄hīr* had another specific purpose and, contrary to what may seem at first glance and to what has been argued in scholarship, bore a rich and significant literary dimension as well as stylistic similarities with Urdu *dāstāns* and *qīṣṣahs*.

The terms *dāstān* and *qīṣṣah* (often conceived as shorter *dāstāns*)<sup>16</sup> translate as "stories" and belong to a genre that W. Hanaway described as a "form of orally recited prose romance".<sup>17</sup> Cultivated in Persian courts, this storytelling tradition further developed in Isfahan's popular coffeehouses during the Safawid period where storytellers began attracting bigger regular audiences and started prolonging their narratives day after day.<sup>18</sup> In India, one of the most famous Persian *dāstāns*, the tale of Amir Hamzah, would have already been popular since Mahmud of Ghazni's times.<sup>19</sup> Indo-Muslim courts continued this long storytelling tradition and eagerly listened to Hamzah's adventures which became the theme of beautifully illustrated

---

<sup>14</sup> While Minault mentions the date 1905 (see for instance G. Minault, "Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi and the 'Delhi Renaissance'", in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages*, Delhi, 1992, p. 183), Pernau, following Khaliq Anjum's introduction to the re-edition by the Urdu Academy in 1984, dates it 1900 (see M. Pernau, "Nostalgia", p. 92). Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi (1846-1918), who worked as tutor for noble families and served as Superintendent of the Ethnographic Survey in Delhi (See G. Minault, "Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi", p. 182 and Sayyid Yusuf Bukhari, "Maulvi Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi", introduction to Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rusūm-e Dehlī*, Delhi, reprint 1975, pp. 12-13) collected and recorded in *Rusūm-e Dehlī* the traditions of the old aristocracy who had taken refuge in the Arab Sarai after the Rebellion – an area where he lived for forty-three years. See M. Pernau, "Nostalgia", p. 91, and Sayyid Yusuf Bukhari, "Maulvi Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi", introduction to Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rusūm-e Dehlī*, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> G. Minault, "Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi", p. 183.

<sup>16</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition in Urdu. Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamzah*, New York, 1991, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters. Folk romance in Urdu and Hindi*, New Delhi, 1985, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> W. Hanaway, "Dastan-sarai", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, New York, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> See F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, pp.4-5.

manuscripts during Akbar's reign.<sup>20</sup> During the first half of the nineteenth century, Urdu *dāstāns* were equally popular among common people and the elite: storytellers regularly performed in public spaces, such as on the steps of the Jama Masjid in Delhi or in private houses like Ghalib's.<sup>21</sup> As Frances Pritchett noted, "oral dastan narration became so widespread, in fact, that local styles are said to have developed in different cities".<sup>22</sup>

Increasingly, with the advent of mass publishing, *dāstāns* and *qiṣṣahs* too started to be written down. After the early nineteenth-century publications of Fort William College and a few years before the writing of Faizuddin's *Bazm-e ākḥir*, Nawal Kishore's press in Lucknow notably undertook the painstaking task of putting on paper the Hamzah cycle with the help of a few of Lucknow's best storytellers, which resulted in the publication of some forty-six thick volumes up to 1917.<sup>23</sup> Besides these costly publications, however, short *qiṣṣahs* also circulated in cheap chapbook editions for the broader public, especially in urban areas.<sup>24</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, oral *dāstān* narratives declined with the rise of the novel (which in fact owed much to the storytelling tradition) and the death of the last professional *dāstāngo*, Mir Baqir Ali, in 1928. As Pritchett argued, although written *qiṣṣahs* still carried on oral storytelling traditions, adopted some of their narrative methods and were probably designed to be read aloud (at least to oneself),<sup>25</sup> they were unlikely to reveal any actual

<sup>20</sup> See the recent article by S. Sharma, "Reading the Acts and Lives of Performers in Mughal Persian Texts", in K. Schofield and F. Orsini (eds.), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, London, 2015, pp. 283-302.

<sup>21</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance tradition*, p. 14 and F. W. Pritchett, "The Dastan Revival: An Overview", in *AUS*, vol. 7, 1990, pp. 76-82.

<sup>22</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance tradition*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> The first volumes published from 1883 to 1890 related the famous story of *Ṭilism-e Hoshrubā* by Muhammad Husain Jah (see on the late nineteenth-century writing of *dāstāns* F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, pp. 21-28). Nawal Kishore hired three famous Lucknow *dāstāngos* for the publication of his forty-six volumes on Amir Hamzah: Muhammad Husain Jah, Ahmad Husain Qamar and Tasadduq Husain. As Pasha M. Khan noted, the cycle ended with the third volume of *Gulistān-e Bākh̄tar* by Tasadduq Husain and Muhammad Ismail Asar. See P. M. Khan, *The Broken Spell: The Romance Genre in Late Mughal India*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2013, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Pasha M. Khan, *The Broken Spell*, p. 8. See also C. Servan-Schreiber, "Littératures orales de l'Inde du Nord. La transmission du répertoire bhojpuri en Inde du Nord: formes orales et livrets de colportage", in *Ecole pratique des hautes études. Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, livret annuaire*, vol. 130, Paris, 1999, pp. 214-215.

<sup>25</sup> See F. W. Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters*, pp.145-154

performance nor “the author’s desire for oral presentation, but [rather] the author’s (conscious or unconscious) attempt to *imitate* an oral presentation”.<sup>26</sup> Written *qiṣṣahs* and *dāstāns* were thus most probably consumed in a very different non-oral and more solitary way. Ghalib, for instance, after having received the two much awaited volumes of the *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamzah* and *Bostān-e Kḥayāl*, confided in a friend: “And there are seventeen bottles of good wine in the pantry. So I read all day and drink all night. ‘The man who wins such a bliss can only wonder – What more had Jamshed? What more Alexander?’”<sup>27</sup>

In many aspects, *Bazm-e ākḥir* and other similar works may be said to participate in this broad process of putting oral narratives into writing at the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, city memoirs were sometimes introduced as *qiṣṣahs* or *dāstāns* and their authors referred to as *dāstāngos*.<sup>28</sup> However, although *dāstāns* traditionally situated their plots in some distant and wondrous past that was sometimes said to be supported by records and ancient chronicles,<sup>29</sup> the memoirs and oral stories related in nineteenth-century writings were not entirely fictional. While Faizuddin wrote his own recollections, Firaq Dehlavi narrated the eighty-six anecdotes that a certain Ahmadi Begum, the daughter of an intendant at the royal palace’s kitchen had told him when he was only seven years old.<sup>30</sup> Later, Rashid ul Khairi recorded the memories of a world he had partially witnessed, Farhatullah Beg and ‘Arsh Timuri declared having respectively heard the stories that they narrated from elder women in Delhi and his father.<sup>31</sup> Some of those city memoirs were first published in newspapers and literary magazines as part of a series. This was for instance the case for Firaq Dehlavi’s *Lāl qila’ kī ek jhalak*, which was first published in the form of articles for Shahid Ahmad

<sup>26</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters*, p. 155. Emphasis mine.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> References to *dāstāngoi* when referring to these texts is mentioned for Firaq Dehlavi’s narrative (see Intizar Mirza’s introduction to Firaq Dehlavi, *Lāl qila’ kī ek jhalak*, p. 12 and Kamil Qureishi’s introduction to *Bazm-e ākḥir*, p. 9. The fact that one of those books is also attributed to Mir Baqir Ali the last storyteller of Delhi is striking.

<sup>29</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Intizar Mirza, in *Lāl qila’ kī ek jhalak*, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> See for instance Mirza Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah and the Festival of Flower-sellers*, trans. by Mohammed Zakir, Hyderabad, 2012 [1932], p. 43 and ‘Arsh Timuri, *Qila’-e Mu’alla kī jhalkiyān*, Delhi, 2009 [1937], p. 16.

Dehlavi's journal *Sāqī*. As we shall see later, Rashid ul Khairi's *Dillī kī ākhīrī bahār* (like Sharar's *Guzishtaḥ Lukhnau*) was also published as journal articles before being eventually re-edited in an anthology. Appearing issue after issue for readers who, like *dāstān* audiences, eagerly waited for the continuation of the narrative, those articles could recreate to some extent the dynamic between audiences and authors, which the printed media partly hindered.<sup>32</sup>

The similarities between those texts and the storytelling tradition further transpired through different literary devices used by authors like Munshi Faizuddin. Stylistically, indeed, *Bazm-e ākhīr* was much closer to a *dāstān* than to a scientific essay. Although P. Khan justly points out the fact that "surely *qiṣṣahs* are not simply any narratives, but specifically *fictional* ones"<sup>33</sup> relating stories of princess fairies, dangerous '*ayyars* and magical adventures in a way that city memoirs certainly did not, city novelists still resorted to some of the *dāstān*'s literary devices. As Pritchett argued, the *dāstāns*' "ultimate subject matter was always simple: "*razm-o bazm*", the battlefield and the elegant courtly life, war and love".<sup>34</sup> *Bazm-e ākhīr*, however, only focussed on the latter as its title indicates. It centred on the description of enlightened gatherings, the atmosphere of scented gardens and the joy of luxurious Mughal feasts. It emphasised a past of amazement, refinement and fantasy that was only recoverable in the reader's imagination through the skill of the narrator: city memoirs thus induced fantasia and pleasure. As in storytelling sessions, these typical *dāstān* emotions were for instance conveyed through the use of interjections ("Look!" "Oho!"), frequent and colourful dialogues in *begamātī zubān* and the language of the court as well as through a skilful balance with long descriptive pieces, which gave a particular rhythm to the narrative. As Pritchett noted for storytelling practices, "more dense and static passages occur like islands within a narrative stream that otherwise tends to be plain, colloquial, direct, and fast-

---

<sup>32</sup> The publication in newspapers could also sometimes reveal the readers' opinion. This was particularly the case for Abdul Halim Sharar's *Guzishtaḥ Lukhnau* as R. Perkins as shown. C. R. Perkins, "From the mehfil to printed word", p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> M. P. Khan, *The Broken Spell*, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 1.

flowing”.<sup>35</sup> In *Bazm-e ākhir*, those passages often described picturesque and romantic scenes taking place in and around the Red Fort, in which the recitation of catalogues “to evoke all items of a certain class as exhaustively as possible”<sup>36</sup> appeared as a crucial literary device, which slowed down the narratives to widen into “the realms of personal fantasy”<sup>37</sup> – a process which was usually facilitated by the consumption of opium during *dāstāngoi* sessions. Muhammad Husain Jah, who worked on the writing down of *Tilism-e Hoshrubā*, for instance explained about his storytelling methods that

everyone knows that even when children tell stories, as far as they are able, they say [not merely “a garden” but] things like “a garden of flowers, with lovers’ bowers, with nightingales singing, with all kinds of fruit on the trees.” Truly, ‘the only pleasure of a short story is in prolonging it.’<sup>38</sup>

In fact, as Ashraf Subuhi later related in his story about the Delhi storyteller Mir Baqir Ali, professional *dāstāngos* had to be very knowledgeable in order to add the intended flavour to their tales. “In his old age” Subuhi tells us “he [Mir Baqir Ali] wanted to learn medicine and he went to attend lectures at the Tibia College of Delhi. He did not want to become a doctor but in his mind he developed in his tales a medical flavour.”<sup>39</sup> Munshi Faizuddin’s narrative methods were quite similar: far from aiming at the elaboration of encyclopaedic knowledge about Mughal Delhi, Faizuddin’s catalogues built a particular tone and atmosphere that were specific to oral storytelling traditions. The litany of items thus eventually aimed at stimulating among the audience the specific emotions of pleasure. Describing the garden of the Red Fort’s *zanānah*, Faizuddin typically illustrated:

In front of the king’s Moti Mahal there is a big garden. Its name is Hayyat Bakhsh. In the middle, there is a pond of 60 *guz* on 60 *guz* and in the pond there is a water palace. At the south and north there are two identical buildings entirely in marble in the middle of which there are little tanks. Water falls in the pond like a curtain. On every side, water flows in four big canals made of red sandstone and around the canals are intricate flowerbeds. In those flowerbeds, marigolds, balsams, *gul-e naurangs*, *shabbus*, lilies, sunflowers, etc. are in full bloom. The scent of jasmine, *chanbelī*, wild jasmine, mustard flowers, roses, dog roses, and *maulsarī* flowers perfumes the garden. Nightingales chirrup. Verdure shines. Look!

<sup>35</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>38</sup> Jah, *Tilism-e hoshrubā*, vol. 3, p. 920 quoted in F. W. Pritchett, *The Romance Tradition*, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> A. Subuhi, *Dillī kī chand ‘ajīb hastiyān*, p. 52.

There are mangoes, *shehedkozahs*, *batāshahs*,<sup>40</sup> *bādshāh pasands*, *Muḥammad Shāhī laḍḍūs*, etc. and the pomegranate, guava, *jāmun* [...] trees are swinging, laden of fruits and flowers. Myna birds are warbling, peacocks are singing and crested cuckoos are chanting “*pehū pehū*”.<sup>41</sup>

*Bazm-e ākhīr* and the Delhi memoirs that were written after that hence did not aim at cultural preservation in the same way as anthropological or historical accounts did. Instead, they made the Mughal past enter into the realm of imagination where it could be endlessly consumed and fantasised. While Faizuddin’s narrative cannot be described as particularly nostalgic in that it does not compare past and present, it definitely conjured collective emotions and recreated a past that was impossible to recover outside of the reader’s own mind.

### **Early twentieth-century city memoirs: re-imagining the Mughal city as fiction**

Early twentieth-century authors were certainly aware of late nineteenth-century city memoirs but they differed in that their narratives were more resolutely fictional. The announcement of the transfer of the colonial capital to Delhi, which had for a time galvanised Urdu-speaking elites longing to see Delhi regain some of its imperial glory, had soon turned sour. As we have seen in Chapter Four, while the construction of New Delhi threatened to wash away memories of a Mughal past, the establishment of the colonial capital on Delhi’s soil also re-opened the traumatic wounds of 1857. The reconfiguration and modernisation of the city landscape and the arrival of new populations further accentuated the uneasiness of Urdu Muslim writers who longed for the pre-1857 city and wrote their memories of better times. The influx of population in Delhi that had started in the 1890s continued.<sup>42</sup> It notably implied an immediate rise in the cost of living:<sup>43</sup> in summer 1913, butchers’ strikes spread in the city and the Punjab Chamber of Commerce often complained that, besides the increase in expenses,

---

<sup>40</sup> A type of small pomegranate.

<sup>41</sup> Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e ākhīr*, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> N. Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires*, p. 157.

<sup>43</sup> N. Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires*, p. 195.

merchants had now also difficulties in obtaining bungalow accommodation.<sup>44</sup> The founding of the new capital quickly resulted in increased congestion in the old city that gradually deteriorated into a slum.<sup>45</sup> Delhi was undoubtedly being transformed and its culture changed.

Rashid ul Khairi (1868-1937), Farhatullah Beg (1883-1947), Wazir Hasan Dehlavi and 'Arsh Timuri (b. 1921), all with their distinctive voice, deeply mourned a world that they had yet never physically experienced.<sup>46</sup> Although coming from different horizons the authors' approaches were quite similar. They all descended from families that had been associated with Indo-Islamic courts for generations. Apart from Sayyid Wazir Hasan Dehlavi about whom we do not know much besides his belonging to a sharīf family of Delhi, Rashid ul Khairi's ancestors were famous Islamic scholars<sup>47</sup> and Farhatullah Beg and 'Arsh Timuri, as his name suggests, came from Mughal families.<sup>48</sup> They all strove to put into writing the memories of the older generation that

---

<sup>44</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>45</sup> R. Priya, "Town Planning, Public Health and Delhi's Urban Poor: A Historical View", in S. Patel and K. Deb (ed.), *Urban Studies*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 226.

<sup>46</sup> This should be nuanced: while Abdul Halim Sharar spent several years with his father in Matiya Burj where the ex-king of Oudh still lived and partly recreated the Lukhnawi court life, Rashid ul Khairi sometimes rather longed for the time of his childhood, which was still, according to him, imbued with traditional culture. Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī ak̄hrī bahār*, p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Rashid ul Khairi came from a family of Islamic scholars that claimed ancestry from the clan of the Quresh and settled in Delhi in the seventeenth century. (N. Akhtar, *Monogrāf*, p. 10). His great grandfather was Abdul Khaliq, an Islamic scholar who taught in the madrasah of the Aurangabad masjid. Amongst his pupils was the novelist Nazir Ahmed who later married his granddaughter thus becoming Rashid ul Khairi's uncle. Rashid's grandfather Abdul Qadir was also an Islamic scholar and taught the princes at the Red Fort. Rashid was associated with the Mughal court on both sides (N. Akhtar, *Monogrāf*, p. 13). Rashid received a traditional education and was sent to the Delhi Arabic School where he learnt English (G. Minault, *Secular Scholars*, p. 130). After his father's (1877) and his grandfather's death, Rashid ul Khairi decided to leave school. His grandmother pleaded Nazir Ahmed to teach him but Rashid ul Khairi, however, never carried on the family tradition (N. Akhtar, *Monogrāf*, p. 18). After working several years in the postal department in Delhi, he resigned in 1910 when his writing activities enabled him to earn a living (G. Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, p. 131). Rashid ul Khairi was one of the most popular Urdu writers of the early twentieth-century. Influenced by Nazir Ahmed's style, he published around eighty books, including novels, short stories and essays (S. Ikramullah, *A critical survey*, p. 105). One of his most enduring legacies was his mobilisation for women's rights and education.

<sup>48</sup> Farhatullah Beg (1883-1947) was born in Delhi from a Mughal family. He first received education at home and then at the Kashmiri Gate madrasa, at the Hindu College and at St Stephen's College. As he explained in his book, *Nazir Ahmad: in his own words and mine*, trans. by M. Zakir, New Delhi, 2009 [1927], Nazir Ahmed was his Arabic tutor. After obtaining a B.A. in 1905, he left for Hyderabad in 1907-8 to work in a government school. He then served as Director of Education, and as Inspector General of the High Court in the Nizam's government. 'Arsh Timuri's grandfather was Mirza Shah Rukh Beg, one of Bahadur Shah Zafar's sons who died in 1847. 'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e Mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, p. 10.

had been passed onto them: Rashid ul Khairi narrated scenes of older princesses,<sup>49</sup> Farhatullah Beg created his novels from stories that he had heard and portraits he had seen<sup>50</sup> and 'Arsh Timuri dedicated his book to his father Majid Hazrat Labib "for having told me such rare and interesting stories thanks to which I have composed this little book."<sup>51</sup> As K. Qureshi and Aslam Parvez noted, although none of the writers clearly referred to Munshi Faizuddin's *Bazm-e āk̄hīr* in their books on Delhi, they certainly knew and maybe were influenced by it.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to note that each of these writers displayed an original and unique style. Both Rashid ul Khairi's *Delhi's last spring*, like Abdul Halim Sharar's work on Lucknow *The last example of Eastern culture in Hindustan*,<sup>53</sup> first appeared as magazine articles, respectively in *Tamaddun*, *'Iṣmat*, *Nizām ul-Mashāikh*, *Yārān-e Qadīm* or *Banāt*, and in Sharar's own paper *Dil Gudāz*. In 1937, after Rashid ul Khairi's death, his articles were collected in a book, which would have entered the school curriculum.<sup>54</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar's monthly articles were also later published in a book, to which the subtitle *Guzashtah Lukhnau (The Lucknow of the Past)* was added.<sup>55</sup> While Rashid ul Khairi, who justly earned the nickname of "painter of sorrow" (*muṣawwir-e*

<sup>49</sup> See for instance the story entitled "The princess with the squirrels", in Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī āk̄hīrī bahār*, pp. 43-4.

<sup>50</sup> See Mirza Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah and the Festival of Flower-sellers*, p. 43: "I have heard about them from the old women who were themselves present in those social gatherings. Those who had seen and participated in the festivities in those days are still living in Delhi. [...] I have seen the picture of the procession in the house of my teacher from whom I learnt painting. The only thing I have done is that I have blended them together and given them a particular colour."

<sup>51</sup> 'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e Mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> See Aslam Parvez, in 'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e Mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, p. 11; Kamil Qureshi in Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e āk̄hīr*, p. 11. Relations of respective influence and inspiration are often emphasised about early twentieth-century city memoirs. See for instance Sayyid Zamir Hasan in Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kī āk̄hīrī dīdār*, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926) was also from the same background as the other writers here analysed: born in Lucknow, he was educated at Matiya Burj, where his father worked for the ex-king Wajid Ali Shah. At nineteen years old, he went back to Lucknow and was educated at Firangi Mahal. He also became a supporter of the Aligarh movement and regularly contributed to the *Awadh Akhbar* and *Awadh Punch* before editing his first own newspaper, *Mashhar* from 1882 to 1884 and later *Dil Gudaz*. F. Hussain, "A Note on Abdul Halim Sharar", in Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, trans. by E. S. Harcourt and F. Hussain, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> See preface by Sayyid Zamir Hasan Dehlavi to Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī āk̄hīrī bahār*.

<sup>55</sup> C. M. Naim, "Interrogating "the East", "Culture", and "Loss" in Abdul Halim Sharar's *Guzashta Lakhnau*", in Alka Patel and Karen Leonard (eds.), *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, Leiden, 2012, p. 189.

*gham*), usually depicted the plight of Mughal princes and princesses after 1857 in his stories<sup>56</sup> in the same manner as Khwajah Hasan Nizami's *Ghadr-e Dehli ke afsāne* (who serialised stories on 1857 from 1914 to 1930 and on which authorities kept a close watch),<sup>57</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar preferred to describe the delights of pre-1857 customs. On the other hand, Mirza Farhatullah Beg's *The last musha'irah of Delhi* (1928) and *Bahadur Shah and the festival of flower-sellers* (1932), which was first published in the magazine *Nigār's* "Zafar Number" along with Wazir Dehlavi's *The last sight of Delhi* aimed at recreating the atmosphere of the 1840s with a naïve and humorous tone.<sup>58</sup> Wazir Hasan Dehlavi's *The last sight of Delhi* was the composition that resembled the most to Munshi Faizuddin's *Bazm-e āk̄hīr* and 'Arsh Timuri's *Glimpses of the Exalted Fort* (1937) who also described the Mughal court in a rather plain style, sought to demonstrate how Hyderabad had legitimately inherited and still sustained Delhi's rich heritage.

#### *Realising loss and mourning Delhi's Mughal past*

Early twentieth-century city memoirs were always prompted by the realisation that the Mughal past had definitely been lost. With the loss of urban spaces, Urdu writers also reacted against social change such as the death of Mughal princes, the reversal of fortunes, the transformation of cultural values (amongst which their Anglicisation) and the arrival of foreigners to the city. Besides what Schleyer argued for Khwajah Hasan Nizami's literary works, it seems that it was not only "the New Delhi of [their] day, with electric bulbs and spacious roads"<sup>59</sup> or the demolition of buildings that triggered creative writing but also the disappearance of the city's culture. In 1932 Rashid ul Khairi thus lamented in *'Ishmat* the contemporary fall of values in a typical shahr āshob stance that "the things

<sup>56</sup> He also wrote other stories on the subject such as *Widā'-e Zafar* and *Naubat-e panj rozah*, which I have not analysed in this study.

<sup>57</sup> See Confidential, Education, 3/1915 (B) Enquiry regarding a book entitled "Ghadr Delhi ke Afsane" by Hassan Nizami. It was finally decided that no action would be necessary as the book was eventually judged in no way antagonistic to British rule.

<sup>58</sup> See preface by Shahid Hasan, in Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kā āk̄hīrī dīdār*, p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> M. Schleyer, "Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane", p. 51.

that Muslims thought were defects fifty years ago are today's virtues. And what we think of as defects today used to be virtues. Before, brides used to sink in bashfulness and modesty, today they make fun of such humility."<sup>60</sup> Sharar also similarly explained the decline of the former elite culture of Delhi and Lucknow after 1857:

In Delhi cultured life gradually disappeared owing to the ascendancy of the uneducated and commercially-minded people and the departure of noble families to other parts of the country. Those who stayed on lived quietly at home in a state of isolation. The situation was just as it has been in recent times in Lucknow, when because of the influx of people from outside the area and the ruin of established élite families, the culture that developed here has been rapidly disappearing.<sup>61</sup>

All these modern changes embodied the fact that the glorious Indian Muslim past and the people who inhabited it had irrevocably passed away. This triggered the collective desire of memorialisation and the need to mourn. Wazir Hasan Dehlavi for instance illustrated at the beginning of *The last sight of Delhi* that the Delhi of the past had been lost since its people were now dead: "Delhi was not a name for bricks, if it was then we could say that the Red Fort, the Jama Masjid, and this and that, still remains."<sup>62</sup> Rashid ul Khairi also explained in 1932 how the city had died and was buried under modern buildings:

Before me the canals of Sādat Khan and Mursara were inhumed. I have seen the same for the watermill. I can still see the (bygone) image of the rooms of Zinat Mahal, the green shrubbery's trees dried out and the grand buildings of Paharganj crumbled before my eyes. Today, Delhi is composed of the Vice regal Lodge, of the High Court House, of Raisina's modern roads and beautiful gardens and when I hear that buildings have been constructed as far as the Qutb, I spontaneously ask: houses have been built but where are the inhabitants?<sup>63</sup>

If as we have seen in Chapter Four, colonial urban planning and the consequent demolitions could have prompted the urge for memorialisation, the dramatic social changes and the death of the people who once composed the city were clearly emphasised: "their many delightful stories should not

---

<sup>60</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, "The things of the new people", in *Iṣmat* (1932), in *Dillī kī āk̄hrī bahār*, p. 76.

<sup>61</sup> A. H. Sharar, *The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, p. 185.

<sup>62</sup> Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kī āk̄hrī dīdār*, p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, "The elegance of bygone people", in unknown paper, in *Dillī kī āk̄hrī bahār*, p. 58.

also disappear with them in their graves”, explained Wazir Dehlavi, “for this reason, listen to what eyes have once seen and let us collect them [those stories], otherwise, [...] in the same way as our days did not remain happy ones, one day these old memories will be erased.”<sup>64</sup>

Remembering the city thus both meant realising that it had been lost and that recovering roots was now necessary to come to terms with its disappearance. In fact, in many of early twentieth-century city writings, post-1857 life was marked by heightened precariousness and rootlessness. Authors were still haunted by the 1857 stories that they had inherited from elders. Although Schleyer argued that Nizami’s *Ghadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne* re-enacted the suffering of 1857 in the form of *‘ibrat* (warning) and aimed at bringing the readers to moral reform as a way to negotiate colonial rule,<sup>65</sup> it seems that city memoirs mainly intended to address the matter of collective mourning and aimed at restoring the memory of the Mughal courtiers of whom, as Rashid ul Khairi put it, “Christian culture ridicules the innocent appearance [...], considers them crazy and portrays them as lunatics”.<sup>66</sup>

All the authors of city memoirs tried to fix on paper the evanescent recollections of elders by rescuing within their imagination the Mughal spaces that were being reconfigured in the new colonial Delhi. Urdu writers particularly testified to the fear that houses would no longer be found, tombs forgotten and pilgrimage routes forever altered. As Farhatullah Beg illustrated:

Once dispersed, most of the aristocratic families of Delhi never again had the good fortune to see the face of their beloved city. The remaining families were expected to leave. Many were uprooted and many were about to be uprooted and a time was to come when there would be not a soul to tell where the house of the late Momin stood, as now there is perhaps no one, except myself, to point out Momin’s tomb.<sup>67</sup>

In those writings, the cold stones of once-glorious monuments were not elevated as symbols of cultural resilience or resistance but rather as sites of

---

<sup>64</sup> Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kā ākhrī dīdār*, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> M. Schleyer, “Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane”, p. 35.

<sup>66</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, “The ever-blooming flowers of Shahjahanabad”, in *Tamaddun*, 1913, in *Dillī kā ākhrī bahār*, p. 35.

<sup>67</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *The last musha’irah of Delhi*, trans. by A. Qamber, New Delhi, 1979 [1928], p. 53.

former cultural transmission and social interaction, which encapsulated the immensity of the loss. Particular sites also appeared as places where collective mourning could take place. It was not unusual, especially in Rashid ul Khairi's short stories, to refer to specific sites where the past and its people could be made alive once again but only within one's imagination. As such, space was paramount to collective mourning and memory:

Every leaf of this jungle, every brick of those tombs, every particle of this dust is one book, one story, one lesson. [...] Go to the flat ground on the old 'Idgāh's eastern side, and close your eyes; open your heart's eyes and you will see them [the great people of the past].<sup>68</sup>

Pre-1857 Mughal culture was also remembered as particularly evanescent by early twentieth-century Urdu writers, since it was often depicted as extremely mobile. Palaces were usually described as adorned with luxurious awnings and tents (*khaimah*) were emphasised as central structures in Mughal urban spaces. Authors highlighted the movability of the Mughal court, which often set off for pilgrimages to famous shrines along with the city's population, its loaded carts, moving palaces and ephemeral shops. Contrary to what Mohamed Ali's press tried to emphasise with mobilisations around the fate of Delhi's buildings, Urdu writers preferred to recall the flexibility, mobility and opulence of Mughal court life, which could easily transport itself into collective imagination. Sayyid Wazir Hasan Dehlavi, for instance, described in the typical style of late nineteenth-century *Bazm-e ākhīr*:

The light carriage first stopped at Sultānjī and then at the Tomb of the emperor Humayun. Everyone reads the *fātihah* and disperses flowers. From there, the spring breeze [i.e. the court] travels straight to the madrasah. There one, two, five poles pavilions (*rāoṭī*) have been brought and tents (*khaimah*) erected. On one side a big *shāmyānah* has been put up, in the middle of which a platform and, on the platform, the King's throne are placed. Behind, two *zanānah* tents have been erected. On all sides big green tent walls have been attached. Outside the tomb too tent walls are attached. There, about twenty ovens are heated. There are sounds of pans clanging together. Big cauldrons make noise. In them, *Gīlānī*, *Īrānī*, *Nūr Mahal*, *Zumurdī* (emerald), *Motī pulāos* are being steamed and there *Mughlai dopyāzah*, *chāshnī dār* (sweet and sour) fish, *khāṣe ke karele* (a dish of spiced bananas), *shāh pasand* lentils, *qaliyah* (stewed meat), *kundan* (golden lamb curry), *kofta*, *parsandah* (mutton stew), every type of *dalmah* (lentil stews), *doḡh* (yogurt), *burānī*, *rāitā*, *lauzātī* (almond dish), *husainī kebabs* (grilled

<sup>68</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, *Nizām ul-mashāikh* (1936), in *Dillī kī ākhīrī bahār*, pp. 62-3.

pieces of meat with salt and lime juice), *shāmī kebabs*, *shikampur kebabs* (Hyderabadi style), *murgh sālim* (chicken dish) and *samosas* are being prepared. Look on one side thin *chapātis* and *parāṭhas* are piled up and on the other side rich *bāqarkhānīs* and *pazdī nāns*, *tang nāns* and *gulzār nāns* are taken out of the oven!<sup>69</sup>

Injunctions to “close one’s eyes and look (with one’s heart)”<sup>70</sup> were plentiful in city memoirs, which sought to imaginarily reconstruct cultural sites and the abundance and luxury of Mughal life that were otherwise lost.

### *Fiction and the internalisation of the Mughal past as "psychological reparation"*

The use of some storytelling devices was paramount to the process of recovering and internalising the lost sites of Mughal Delhi, which made it enter the realm of personal and shared imagination. The work of Urdu writers was primarily to induce pleasure and pride in their readers as well as to recreate a thread of continuity with a past that audiences could now relive. In this process, Farhatullah Beg was perhaps the most gifted. Taking example on Muhammad Husain Azad’s *Nairang-e khayāl* and inspired by Maulvi Karimuddin’s *tazkirah Tabaqāt-e shu’arā-e Hind*, he for instance skilfully staged an imaginary *mushā’irah* in 1846 Delhi. Resorting to portraits and photographs of Bahadur Shah, Ghalib, or Momin Khan Momin to render his narrative more realistic,<sup>71</sup> Farhatullah Beg draw a vivid picture of Mughal Delhi as a city of light and velvety elegance. Consciously describing the preparation of the venue before the *mushā’irah* as the scene of an enchanting fairy tale, Beg wrote:

The entire house had been whitewashed with a mixture of lime and mica which caused the walls to glimmer. [...] There was such a profusion of chandeliers, candelabra, wall lamps, hanging lamps, Chinese lanterns and other lights that the house was converted into a veritable dome of light. Everything was elegant, in good taste and in its appointed place. In the dead centre of the middle row stood a small embroidered canopy of green velvet, supported on gold- and silver-coloured posts fastened with green silk tent-cords. In this pavilion was placed the green velvet embroidered

---

<sup>69</sup> Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kā ākhrī dīdār*, p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> Rashid ul Khairi’s expression in *Dillī kī ākhrī bahār*, p. 36 of “My dear! Close your eyes for a few moments. Forget the present-day Delhi. [...] Look! With a full heart, look!”

<sup>71</sup> D. Bredi, “Nostalgia in the re-construction of Muslim identity in the aftermath of 1857 and the myth of Delhi”, in *Cracow Indological Studies*, vol. 11, 2009, p. 150, and Farhatullah Beg, *The last musha’irah*, pp. 8 and 51.

seat with embroidered green cushions. On each of the four tent-posts were hung eight small silver lanterns. [...] From the centre of the roof were hung rows upon rows of jasmine garlands and streamers and these were fastened all round the walls of the canopy and created an umbrella of flowers. [...] In short, the whole scene was like a strange, rare spectacle. I moved like the enchanted Abul-Hassan, a character of *Alif Laila* and wherever my eyes roved there they stayed! While I stood still, entranced and fascinated by the scene, the guests began to arrive.<sup>72</sup>

Twentieth-century novelists recreated Mughal spaces while giving them an air of timelessness, insouciance and playfulness with images of kites of every colour flying in a cloudless sky, of the golden sunlight spreading at dusk over a city resounding with the calls of *āzān* during Ramzan, of cheeky egg fights at Nauroz and of other paradisiac scenes spreading over whole pages. Describing the famous *Phūlwāloṅ kī sair*, Farhatullah Beg narrated the court's stay in Mehrauli:

There at the cascade it was a delightful, yet different scene. As His Majesty left the cascade for the mango-grove, the princesses closed the doors and changing their loose trousers for the tight ones, dived in the cistern. *Dham!* One was diving, the other was just swimming flat, still another was standing in waist-deep water warring, by splashing water on others. Children presented a noisy scene as they stood in the shallow canals. Some girls were taking their bath in the three-door hall of the cistern. Some of them were playing on the 'slippery stone' and tumbling they would come down on the ground. As they smothered themselves in mud, they took a plunge into the cistern. Those bathing there cried and asked them to get out of the cistern and not make the water dirty.<sup>73</sup>

Farhatullah Beg, like his fellow city novelists, responded to the urge for finding their own cultural spaces within colonial modernity, even if those spaces were only imagined ones. I argue that this process also reveals one important stage of collective mourning: overcoming depression. As Hannah Segal for instance noted in her work on mourning and artistic creativity, creative action is often an attempt to restore damage and is an indication of psychological reparation. She argued that contrary to "a purely intellectual memory of the past",<sup>74</sup> emotional recollections as fixed through artistic work were central to integrating them and making them permanent. Looking specifically at Proust's literary masterpiece, she illustrated how he captured

---

<sup>72</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *The last musha'irah*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>73</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah and the Festival of Flower-sellers*, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> H. Segal, "A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics", p. 207.

the past and recovered the destroyed and lost objects by bringing them back to life. This, she argued, is only possible when the object is dead and loss has been recognised:

on realizing the destruction of a whole world that had been his, he [Proust] decided to write, to sacrifice himself to the recreation of the dying and the dead. By virtue of his art he can give his objects an eternal life in his work.<sup>75</sup>

I argue that a similar process took place in early twentieth-century city memoirs. Through descriptions of picturesque scenes, direct language and interjections, litanies of items that we also find in the *dāstān* tradition, the Mughal past was taken out of history into fiction by Urdu writers and turned into works of art, commodities, spectacles that could be consumed daily and for ever. The fact that Farhatullah Beg wrote some of his novels in the first person singular and gave them a particular atmosphere of intimacy further showed how he aimed to recover the lost past in his own self and for the public to share. In an article, Abdul Halim Sharar also revealed that his aim was "to stir people through the imagination by an effective description of their historic past and present-day conditions",<sup>76</sup> a past about which he said elsewhere that "everything was fantasy and illusion".<sup>77</sup> By stimulating emotions and imagination, city memoirs offered a kind of reparation from the collective trauma of the loss of power. Writing books aims to complete the work of mourning "in that gradually the external objects are given up, they are reinstated in the ego, and re-created".<sup>78</sup> By withdrawing into fantasy, Urdu writers thus enabled psychological reparation both for themselves and for their readers, who could also internalise the lost Mughal past and recreate it whenever needed. Those writings indeed gained wide popular success, books were re-edited several times, articles were published in series, and some works even made it into the school curriculum.

---

<sup>75</sup> H. Segal, "A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics", p. 208.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted by F. Hussain, "Note", in Sharar, *Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow, The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, p. 75.

<sup>78</sup> H. Segal, "A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics", p. 208.

## The work of mourning, fantasies and the resistance to colonial critique

As we have seen, Urdu writers aimed at recovering the dead. As such, writings like 'Arsh Timuri's *Glimpses of the Red Fort*,<sup>79</sup> for instance, tended to resemble vast genealogical trees more than true chronological narratives. Close attention was also put on the exact place that people occupied in *durbārs* or *mushā'irahs*<sup>80</sup> and ancestors or princes were described in a *tazkirah*-like fashion. Trauma was still acute and Rashid ul Khairi said he still saw the Delhi of the past (and particularly its ruin) in the faces of once prominent *bībīs*, now seen begging in the street.<sup>81</sup> In fact, city memoirs increasingly developed the style of *k̄hākah* or *shak̄h̄ṣiyat nigārī* in which the description of colourful characters was central and that Ashraf Subuhi Dehlavi's famous *Dillī kī chand 'ajīb hastiyān* (1943) would later admirably display.<sup>82</sup> Besides the external appearance and anecdotes associated with the characters described, however, one of the most salient elements in the description of Mughal princes and princesses was the way they spoke and acted. As Rashid ul Khairi noted in 1911, "those simple people who used to call salt "*nūn*" and knife "*chakwā*" were guests of a few days. How our ears long for their voices, our eyes for their appearance and our hearts for their words".<sup>83</sup>

The local speech, as well as the *begamātī zubān*, the Urdu dialect used by *purdah*-observing women of north Indian courts,<sup>84</sup> were particularly emphasised in those descriptions. In *Bazm-e āk̄h̄rī*, as we have seen, colloquial dialogues in *begamātī zubān* interspersed the long descriptive pieces as was

---

<sup>79</sup> The book was published in Delhi in 1937 by the al-Maṭaba'a Barqi Press in the Jama Masjid market at one thousand copies when 'Arsh Timuri, then citizen of Hyderabad, was only sixteen years old. See 'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e Mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> See for instance Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kī āk̄h̄rī dīdār*, p. 54. Farhatullah Beg even gave the seating plan of his imaginary *mushā'irah*, see *The last musha'irah*, p. 50.

<sup>81</sup> See for instance Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī āk̄h̄rī bahār*, pp. 41, 57.

<sup>82</sup> See A. Subuhi, *Dillī kī chand 'ajīb hastiyān*.

<sup>83</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, "Culture of revolution", *Tamaddun*, 1911, in *Dillī kī āk̄h̄rī bahār*, p. 79.

<sup>84</sup> See G. Minault, "Begamati Zuban: Women's Language and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Delhi", in *India International Centre Quarterly*, 11(2), (1984), pp. 155-170, online version, p. 20. For more bibliography on the topic, see for instance Mir Inshaullah Khan 'Insha', *Daryā-e Laṭāfat*, Dakkan, 1935; Muhiyuddin Hasan, *Dillī kī Begamātī Zubān*, New Delhi, 1976; Wahida Nasim, *Urdū Zubān aur 'Aurat*, Karachi, 1963 or Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Lughat un-Nissā*, Delhi, 1917.

often the case in oral narratives when storytellers modulated their voice and adopted particular gestures to make the story come alive. As C. M. Naim has also noted for *rekhti* poems recitations, it is most probable that gestures, facial expressions or eye movements as those used in dance and classical singing were also employed by the poets to impersonate women speaking in this peculiar dialect.<sup>85</sup> Inspired by storytelling practices, most of the city novelists were eager to stage everyday dialogues in the women's or local language with its colourful idioms and familiar interjections, adding a special touch of realism and humour to the texts. This resulted in whole passages in the colloquial Delhi patois that was fast disappearing in the rise of twentieth-century standardised Urdu. Such scenes were sometimes introduced by a "Listen to their conversation and enjoy!"<sup>86</sup> and footnotes or indexes of the words used with their meaning frequently punctuated the lively conversations, indicating the mixed impressions of strangeness, curiosity and amusement that such passages provoked amongst readers. Describing a scene in the women's *zanānah* at the occasion of Holi, Munshi Faizuddin humorously narrated the daily quarrels and gossips among the court's *begums* in their typical dialect, full of words of Indic origin (particularly visible through the frequency of retroflex sounds):

lāl joṛā maṭkāe kyā ṭhasse se beṭhī hain. ailō! yeh aur qahar toṛā keh pople munh meṅ missī kī dhaṛī aur sūkhe sūkhe hāthoṅ meṅ mehndī bhī lagī huī hai!

With what elegance does she sit flirtatiously in her red ensemble... Look! She even grossly painted her toothless mouth with *missī* powder<sup>87</sup> and applied henna on her dry parched hands!<sup>88</sup>

Rashid ul Khairi similarly, though with less humour and more pathos, illustrated daily dialogues between distressed Delhi *begums* exiled to

<sup>85</sup> C.M. Naim, "Transvestic Words: The *Rekhti* in Urdu", in *AUS*, vol. 16, 2001, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup> See for instance Rashid ul Khairi, "The ever-blooming flowers of Shahjahanabad", *Tamaddun* (1913), in *Dillī kī akhīrī bahār*, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> *Missi* powder used to be applied on teeth and gum to blacken them, a common practice in Mughal India that disappeared with new canons of beauty in which white teeth were paramount. See the excellent study of T. J. Zumbroich, "'The *missi*-stained finger-tip of the fair': A cultural history of teeth and gum blackening in South Asia", in *eJournal of Indian medicine*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 1-32.

<sup>88</sup> Faizuddin, *Bazm-e ākhir*, p. 89.

Lucknow, presenting the plethora of interjections and typical idioms of the local language:<sup>89</sup>

Oho! *khālīfah bandoheṅ*, are *bhā'ī bādshāh kī bādshāhī nah rahī to main kis gantī meṅ thī!* Yeh dekho is ankh meṅ *pānī utar āyā; fajar se shām tak takkareṅ khātī hūṅ jab kahīṅ chūlhā sīdhā hotā hai!*<sup>90</sup>

Oh, *Khālīfah Bando*, oh, my friend, the royalty of the king did not remain; I was taken such good care of! Look, tears come to my eyes, only when struggling from morning to dusk am I able to keep the fire working!

With the singular relish that such language provoked (and still provokes)<sup>91</sup> among the audience, peculiar aesthetics were also conveyed: the privacy of women-only palaces and gardens at which men were curious to peek and the luxury that such a mode of life necessarily implied.

However, although many Urdu writers such as Nazir Ahmed and Altaf Husain Hali mastered the women's speech, which they particularly used in their didactic works directed towards female audiences<sup>92</sup> – sometimes so skilfully that, as in Ashraf Subuhi's case, many thought that he was a woman –,<sup>93</sup> *begamātī zubān* had developed a peculiarly bad reputation. The *zanānah* idiom had indeed been generally used for entertainment by Urdu writers because of its “earthy, graphic, and colourful”<sup>94</sup> character, which was far from “ladylike”,<sup>95</sup> and the fact that it borrowed much from local dialects and used many words of Indic origin also meant that it only displayed “a tenuous adherence to the Islamic great tradition”,<sup>96</sup> something that late-nineteenth century Urdu reformers usually disliked. The use of *begamātī zubān* was consequently discouraged by Urdu modernist writers who only put the dialect in the mouths of “bad” women – good women speaking

---

<sup>89</sup> *Takkareṅ khānā* is an idiom. The use of expressions linked to the *chūlhā* (stove, fire) for instance were quite common. See G. Minault, “Begamati Zuban”, online version, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī akhīrī bahār*, p. 84.

<sup>91</sup> See the reading of *begamātī zubān* passages from *Bazm-e akhīr* by Zia Mohyeddin at the Jashn-e Rekhta festival held in 2015 <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYhay7\\_TLj0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYhay7_TLj0)> (last accessed 12 December 2015).

<sup>92</sup> See for instance Nazir Ahmed's *Mirāt ul-'urūs* or Altaf Husain Hali's *Majālis un-nissā*.

<sup>93</sup> “Sketch-writing and Ashraf Suboohi, *Dawn*, 15 April 2008 <<http://www.dawn.com/news/938530/sketch-writing-and-ashraf-suboohi>> (last accessed 12 December 2015).

<sup>94</sup> G. Minault, “Begamati Zuban”, online version, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>96</sup> G. Minault, “Begamati Zuban”, online version, p. 10.

almost like men in a more standard form of Urdu, with Persian loanwords.<sup>97</sup> The world of women, indeed, had been the frequent target of social and religious reformers. The deprecation of local dialects by Muslim reformers, the development of standardised Urdu with the rise of mass publishing and education and the questioning of the social milieu of the *zanānah* and of the practices of *purdah* with which the *begamātī zubān* was associated further put strain on the women's speech which started dwindling. As Minault indeed concluded, "with the gradual spread of women's education in the twentieth century, the culture of the *zenanah* began to change, and so too did *begamati zuban*."<sup>98</sup> Paradoxically, however, as Gail Minault and Faisal Devji have for instance noted, reformist authors who usually disapproved of such usages generally helped their very preservation.<sup>99</sup>

Although most city novelists had close ties with Aligarh writers (for instance, with Deputy Nazir Ahmed), they had never been educated at Aligarh. They had thus usually acquired traditional Urdu and Persian education, sometimes with a few classes of English. Contrary to what scholarship thus recently emphasised,<sup>100</sup> they had not developed the same concerns and sensibilities than Aligarh-educated *ashraf*. They did not display the same anxiety for accommodating tradition and modernity. While the description of the world in women in *begamātī zubān* may be partly linked to the fact that the city memories that writers strove to put into writing were usually passed onto them by elder women in the local language, the record of dialogues in the language of the court is hence better explained by the desire of those writers to recreate a "pristine" world still untouched by either colonial rule or reform as well as to emphasise a past of communal tolerance and inclusion; a world that was perhaps best represented by the muted atmosphere of female spaces. In *Rusūm-e Dehlī*, Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi

---

<sup>97</sup> C. M. Naim, "Transvestic Words?", p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> G. Minault, "Begamati Zuban", online version, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> See G. Minault, "Begamati Zuban", online version, p. 11 and F. Devji, 'The Equivocal History of a Muslim Reformation', in F. Osella and C. Osella (eds.), *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> See for instance M. Schleyer, "Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane" and M. Pernau, "Nostalgia".

indeed strikingly "warned" his readers in his introduction to the book that the traditional practices of Muslim women were more Indian than Islamic.<sup>101</sup>

The attention given to women in city memoirs, however, went beyond the sole example of *begamātī zubān*. For besides Mughal courtiers and princesses, the characters that were commonly represented in city novels were cultural performers such as famous musicians, poets, festivalgoers and courtesans (*tawā'if*). While Rashid ul Khairi and Farhatullah Beg usually focussed on poetic gatherings and figures like Ghalib, Momin or Zauq, 'Arsh Timuri recalled famous musicians – especially Tanras Khan –<sup>102</sup> and Wazir Dehlavi and Abdul Halim Sharar more generally wrote on various performers, poets, *qawwāls*, musicians and dancing girls. Since at least Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa's novel *Umrāo Jān Ādā* (1899), courtesans had become a preferred subject of longing and romance and their character often encompassed a whole world of culture and tradition. They, in fact, represented the lost *bazm* of Mughal courts and their decline in the modern world echoed the fate of the elite culture that they used to perform. Until 1857, they had been a very powerful group: "they dictated the law of fashion, etiquette, music, dance; they enjoyed the regard of the court".<sup>103</sup> As V. Oldenburg noted, "they were not only recognised as preservers and performers of the high culture of the court, but they actively shaped the developments in Hindustani music and Kathak dance styles. [...] They commanded great respect in the court and in society, and association with them bestowed prestige on those who were invited to their salons for cultural soirées".<sup>104</sup> In one emblematic passage, Wazir Dehlavi indeed described one of the delightful *mujrās* of Bahadur Shah's times with the famous Tanras Khan on one side, striking tunes from a *sarānchah*

---

<sup>101</sup> See Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rusūm-e Dehlī*, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> 'Arsh Timuri consecrated a whole chapter to Tanras Khan who worked at Bahadur Shah's court and settled in Hyderabad a few years after 1857. Desirous to emphasise Hyderabad's role as successor of Delhi's elite culture, Timuri concluded at Tanras Khan's demise that "Delhi's and Hindustan's sun has set in Hyderabad." 'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e Mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, p. 58.

<sup>103</sup> D. Bredi, "Fallen Women: A Comparison of Rusva and Manto", *AUS*, 16(1), 2001, p. 112, quoted in A. Safadi, "The 'Fallen' Woman in Two Colonial Novels: *Umra'o Jan Ada* and *Bazaar-e Husn / Sevasadan*", in *AUS*, vol. 24, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>104</sup> V. Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as resistance: The case of the courtesans of Lucknow", in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 16(2), 1990, p. 260.

accompanied by *sārangī* students and with dancing girls on the other side.

Focussing on the dancing girls, he continued,

They were such dolls of etiquette and culture, what can I say of their respectable garments? On seeing them the soul delights. [...] In those times they were not like [today's] prostitutes. Their conversation, singing, fondling and expertise were such that they were recognisable among lakhs of women. [...] People would bring them their children to learn manners.<sup>105</sup>

Courtesans were more than cultural performers they were educators and transmitters of knowledge. They taught etiquette and proper *savoir-vivre*. Farhatullah Beg for instance remembered in his biography of Nazir Ahmed that one of his fellow students unacquainted with poetry was sent “to Kali Jan’s place when she gives music lessons in the evenings” to train his ears.<sup>106</sup> Sharar also remembered how, only forty years before he wrote his *Guzashtah Lukhnau*, courtesans still displayed great skill and left the educated and refined crowds of Matiya Burj completely spellbound.<sup>107</sup>

The fate of *tawā'ifs* usually followed their patrons'. After the Uprising, the instability of former elite households meant that it was more difficult for them to earn a living and British policies in sanitisation and health as well as attitudes guided by “puritanical Victorian morality”<sup>108</sup> targeted them “as repositories of disease”.<sup>109</sup> As prominent but declining cultural performers, courtesans and dancing girls also inspired photographers, like Daroghah Haji Abbas Ali,<sup>110</sup> a photographer from Lucknow, who wished to immortalise “the most celebrated and popular living historic singers, dancing girls and actresses of the Oudh Court and of Lucknow” in 1874.<sup>111</sup> While the *Indar Sabhā* theatre production was often looked upon with

---

<sup>105</sup> Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kā ākhrī dīdār*, pp. 65-6.

<sup>106</sup> Mirza Farhatullah Beg, *Nazir Ahmad in his own words and mine*, trans. by Mohammed Zakir, Hyderabad, [1927] 2009, p. 32.

<sup>107</sup> A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow The Last Phase*, p. 145.

<sup>108</sup> A. Safadi, “The 'Fallen' Woman”, p. 21.

<sup>109</sup> V. Oldenburg, *The making of Colonial Lucknow*, Princeton, 1984, pp. 132-42, quoted in A. Safadi, “The 'Fallen' Woman”, p. 23.

<sup>110</sup> Daroghah Haji Abbas Ali was an engineer in Lucknow’s Municipal Office. For more on his photographs and comparisons with other photographers, see S. Gordon, *Monumental visions: architectural photography in India, 1840-1901*, PhD dissertation, SOAS, 2011.

<sup>111</sup> This is the subtitle given to his album *The Beauties of Lucknow: Consisting of Twenty-four Selected Photographed Portraits, Cabinet Size, of the Most Celebrated and Popular Living Historic Singers, Dancing Girls and Actresses of the Oudh Court and of Lucknow*, Calcutta, 1874. Apart from that album, he also realised a “guide” for British visitors depicting the monuments of Lucknow and another album of photographs of the *t'aluqdārs* of Awadh.

contempt by British officials who often saw it as a proof of the king's weakness and inefficiency,<sup>112</sup> the photographs of the "beauties" of Lucknow in their *Indar Sabhā* outfits that were most probably destined to the Lucknow gentry were intended to constitute glimpses into "the Oriental magnificence of the entertainment"<sup>113</sup> of Indo-Islamic courts.



Fig. 5.a. Hoseneer Dancing Girl  
Abbas Ali, *The Beauties of Lucknow*, plate n°7

In 1898, restrictions were introduced for courtesans in Benares and Lucknow and in 1917 propositions to remove them from city centres were put forward by the Hindu middle classes influenced by the Arya Samaj.<sup>114</sup> In the 1920s, their situation had become critical. A number of Urdu novels started denouncing their precarious condition in northern India, amongst which Premchand's *Bāzār-e Husn* (1924),<sup>115</sup> which discussed the proposed

---

<sup>112</sup> S. Gordon, *Monumental visions*, p. 195.

<sup>113</sup> Abbas Ali, *The Beauties of Lucknow*, preface quoted by *idem*.

<sup>114</sup> See A. Safavi, "The 'Fallen' Woman", p. 25.

<sup>115</sup> See also the short story by Ghulam Abbas in the 1940s, "Anandi" (*The City of Bliss*) trans. by G. A. Chaussée, *AUS*, 2003, 18 (2), pp. 324-349.

banishment of prostitutes outside the city. In his work, they were elevated as preservers of tradition, sometimes with a nationalist twist.

Sethji then continued his eloquent speech in these words: ‘You are rightly proud of our music. Even those who have been charmed by the music of Italy and France are impressed by the sophistication and spirituality of our music. But it is the very community on whose displacement some of our friends here are expanding their energies, who are the guardians of this heavenly blessing. Do you want to lose this precious heritage by destroying that community? Don’t you know that whatever feeling we have left for religion and nationhood, whatever love for our ancestors, we owe it all to our music. If it were not for this great art, nobody would remember Ram and Krishan, Shiva and Shankar. Even our worst enemy could not have thought of a better way of erasing all feelings of nationhood from our hearts!’<sup>116</sup>

In his story *Naī Dehlī* about modern change in the city, Farhatullah Beg similarly staged a dialogue with an Old Delhi citizen who lamented the fall of values among the population and particularly among courtesans, strikingly claiming against his interlocutor's indifference: "Sir, prostitutes (*randiyān*) were a model of Dilli's culture (*tahzīb*)".<sup>117</sup>

In fact, courtesans had been vehemently criticised by British authorities since before 1857 and the degeneration they represented had for instance served to “justify the British role as usurpers of the throne of Awadh in 1856”.<sup>118</sup> Sharar himself while explaining the fall of the kingdom of Oudh blamed the bad influence of courtesans. Talking nostalgically about Wajid Ali Shah, he illustrated that “he started to consort more frequently with beautiful and dissolute women and soon dancers and singers became the pillars of state and favourites of the realm. If the king had retained any scholarly or noble taste at all, it was for poetry.”<sup>119</sup> Understandably, different figures of the Mughal court (and courtesans in particular) were usually repudiated by late nineteenth-century modernist Muslim reformers, who were anxious to respond to colonial critiques.<sup>120</sup> In the process of uplifting the community from perceived degeneration, women were thus specifically

---

<sup>116</sup> Munshi Premchand, *Courtesans' quarter: a translation of Bazaar-e Husn*, trans. by A. Azfar, Oxford, 2003, p. 135.

<sup>117</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *Mirza Farhatullah Beg ke Mazāmīn: Intikhab*, ed. by A. Parvez, Delhi, 2009, p. 267

<sup>118</sup> V. Oldenburg, “Lifestyle as resistance”, p. 262.

<sup>119</sup> A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow. The Last Phase*, p. 63.

<sup>120</sup> See K. A. Ali, “Courtesans in the Living Room”, *AUS*, 20, 2005, p. 277.

targeted “as the primary upholders of indigenous traditions, religion and culture”.<sup>121</sup> They were often linked to the community’s own regeneration by reformers concerned to modernise the Muslims’ “backward” homes through the construction of model and virtuous sharīf women.<sup>122</sup> From the turn of the twentieth century, the position of women in society more urgently came to the forefront of such discourses but they were still idealised as the defenders of the honour of their culture, religion and traditions. In that respect, courtesans were thus a particularly sensible matter: they had been linked to Mughal culture and to the very essence of the Urdu language. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they notably personified in the anti-Urdu propaganda the deceitfulness and depravity of the Urdu language and script.<sup>123</sup> As the Hindi supporter Bharatendu Harishchandra claimed before the Hunter Commission (1882),

There is a secret motive which induces the worshippers of Urdu to devote themselves to its cause. *It is the language of dancing-girls and prostitutes.* The depraved sons of wealthy Hindus and youths of substance and loose character, when in the society of harlots, concubines, and pimps, speak Urdu, as it is the language of their mistresses and beloved ones.”<sup>124</sup>

The re-appropriation of the figure of the courtesan as an object of longing by Urdu city novelists thus denoted a particular stand *vis-à-vis* established colonial discourses on Indo-Muslim culture that diverged from late nineteenth-century Indian apologetic works. In fact, Sharar’s blaming of the effeminate culture of the last king of Awadh (inherited from colonial rhetoric) was further nuanced by what he denounced as the unjust accusation that “because the monarchy came to an end during his reign he

---

<sup>121</sup> See K. A. Deutsch, “Muslim women in colonial North India circa 1920-1947: Politics, law and community identity”, PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1998, p. 35.

<sup>122</sup> See K. A. Deutsch, “Muslim women”, p. 6. See for instance the didactic works of Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Nazir Ahmed, Altaf Husain Hali. About the development of women’s literature and journals see G. Minault, *Secluded scholars*; G. Minault, “Sayyid Mumtaz ‘Ali and *Tahzib un-Niswan*: Women’s Rights in Islam and Women’s journalism in Urdu”, in K. W. Jones (ed.), *Religious controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian languages*, New York, 1992, pp. 179-199.

<sup>123</sup> See C. R. King, “The images of Virtue and Vice: the Hindi-Urdu controversy in two nineteenth century Hindi plays”, in K. Jones (ed.), *Religious controversy in British India*, Albany, 1992, pp. 123-148.

<sup>124</sup> Quoted in C. R. King, “The images of Virtue and Vice”, p. 139. Emphasis mine.

became the target for the abuse of all thinking people and it was almost universally agreed that he was the cause of the downfall of the kingdom".<sup>125</sup>

While the description of *nautch* girls and the lament that authors sometimes expressed towards their contemporary decline into prostitution certainly crystallised their apprehensions and critiques towards their own community at large and left them with an enduring yearning for the jolly gatherings of Mughal times, they also encapsulated an attitude of resistance to colonial rule. As the Urdu and the culture of performance of the Exalted Fort was progressively washed away by the influx of Punjabi migrants and the rise of so-called lower classes which had their own language and idioms, Urdu writers most concretely felt that colonial authorities would no longer sustain Delhi's peculiar Mughal urbanity. Sharar for instance lamented: "these actors of ours, *because they were esteemed* in refined society, used good language and continued to improve their Urdu. But now because their audience consists only of the masses their refined speech no longer exists: they give scores of different sorts of performance, but their language is that of the bazaar."<sup>126</sup> As Pernau rightly argued and as I have emphasised, the elements often accused of cultural degeneration (the culture of courtesans and traditional ornate poetry) by the British colonial state were eventually appropriated by Indians at the turn of the twentieth century and "turned into a critique of colonialism and a resource for resistance".<sup>127</sup> This is indeed in this light that the memoirs of Delhi here analysed should be read. Through invocations of former cultural performers and speakers of the Delhi dialect, early twentieth-century city writers aimed at reconstructing lost cultural performance in the new imaginary spaces that they had opened within their own minds. They sought to re-appropriate a world untouched by colonial rule by re-asserting the cultural refinement of Mughal courts that British colonial discourse had discredited and aimed at writing an alternative narrative of accommodating Mughal cultural practices in a way that was completely different from previous late nineteenth-century reformist

---

<sup>125</sup> C. R. King, "The images of Virtue and Vice, p. 61.

<sup>126</sup> A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow. Last phase*, p. 146. Emphasis mine.

<sup>127</sup> M. Pernau, "Nostalgia", p. 93.

agendas and in which women, courtesans and traditional poets were erected as fundamental (sometimes nationalist) figures.

### **Bahadur Shah Zafar: the memory of a composite culture of power**

The figure of Bahadur Shah Zafar is central in city stories on Mughal Delhi, around whose revered presence the whole narratives revolve. He was the one who organised banquets, patronised the arts and decided on the right time to break the fast during the month of Ramzan. He was described as the organising force behind the refined cultural performance of a world that was both virtuous and harmonious. This idealised description, however, was of course linked to a political context of defiance that had started to emerge before, but more deeply after, the transfer of the colonial capital to Delhi. As we have seen in Chapter Four, in the early twentieth century, the Muslim *ashrāf* increasingly expressed anxiety over the fair treatment of the last Mughal king and his descendants. Proposal for the erection of a proper mausoleum at his resting place notably revealed the growing desire to rehabilitate his memory and contest colonial interpretations about his role in the Uprising.

In the alternative narratives that Urdu writers constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century, Bahadur Shah was remembered as a just Sufi king, an idealisation that certainly contained a colonial critique. As Pernau noticed, “once the British had turned him into a symbol of everything they abhorred in Indo-Muslim courtly culture, in the Urdu memoirs there was little space left for differentiation – Bahadur Shah had to be shaped into the mould of the *insān-e kāmīl*, the perfect man, the Sufi-king, who ruled with justice and generosity, through love but also through anger, if necessary, and whose rule transformed the ethical character of his subjects”.<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, early twentieth-century writings thus opposed the view that was commonly conveyed in reformist texts such as those published in Syed Ahmed Khan’s *Tahzīb ul-akhlāq*, which aimed at reforming society. In those writings, passages dealing with the country’s condition rather put emphasis on the

---

<sup>128</sup> M. Pernau, “Nostalgia”, p. 88.

morality of civil society: “the state of each country is based on the nature of its inhabitants. If their hearts are full of light and their *akhlaq* is good, then the condition of the country, too, will be good. But if the darkness of the lack of knowledge and of bad habits resides in their hearts, then the country becomes prey to decline.”<sup>129</sup> This was not the case in Farhatullah Beg’s novels, which on the contrary focussed on the centrality of the figure of the Mughal king - the divine justice of the Mughal court being sometimes blatantly opposed to British courts of justice. Each with their own sensibility, the city writers here analysed illustrated the close bonds between Mughal kings and their subjects and their benevolence towards them. For instance, Farhatullah Beg, while recreating the atmosphere of Delhi’s festival of the flower-sellers (*phūlwālon kī sair*) in 1848, uttered these striking words,

Owing to the Mutiny, Delhi was ruined and Bahadur Shah was deported to Rangoon. *It was like a tie that had broken loose.* What was once bound now lay scattered. *The tie that was, was of love; now there is a tie – but it is that of law.* Now every petty affair is taken to the law courts. The flower-sellers’ festival was the manifestation of faith of the subjects in the King and of the love of the King for his subjects.<sup>130</sup>

The most salient aspect that appears in all the city memoirs was, indeed, the representation of Bahadur Shah Zafar as an active promoter of Hindu-Muslim harmony. The description of his yearly activities always portrayed Hindu festivals, like Dusehra, Diwali or Holi, with the same excitement and lavishness as Muslim feasts (both Sunni and Shia) or as the king’s birthdays. The fireworks of Shab-e Barat were narrated with the same buoyancy and wonder as Nauroz’s egg fights and Holi’s flirtatious games. The vitality and harmony of Mughal times, which was most visibly praised through the local festival of the *phūlwālon kī sair*, was always described as having disappeared along with the Mughal king, the only one who could sustain them.

Urdu writers undoubtedly responded to the contemporary local and national contexts, which, especially after the collapse of the Khilafat

<sup>129</sup> M. Pernau, “The Virtuous Individual and Social Reform”, in M. Pernau et al. (eds.), *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*, Oxford, 2015, p. 175.

<sup>130</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah and the festival of flower-sellers*, p. 41. Emphasis mine. Pernau argued that the reciprocity between the king and his subjects in Farhatullah Beg’s work denotes the author’s “democratic awareness” in comparison with previous authors like Rashid ul Khairi (especially his *Naubat-e panj rozah*), see M. Pernau, “Nostalgia”, p. 98.

movement in 1924, saw the increase of communal violence in north India and in Delhi in particular. Since at least the 1910s, the firm establishment of the Arya Samaj in Delhi and the conversion of Muslims to Hinduism by the Shuddhi movement as well as the arrival of Muslim organisations (such as the corresponding Tabligh movement and in 1909 the implementation of a Delhi branch by the All India Muslim League) led to great communal tensions in the city, notably on regular orthodox Hindu-Muslim issues like language and cow slaughter.<sup>131</sup> Although World War One and the nationalist agitation, with Gandhi's non-violent campaigns and the early Khilafat movement, had buried communal conflicts for a time, the years 1923-1928 saw a resurgence of communal violence in north India.<sup>132</sup> In September 1924, a violent riot about the establishment of new slaughterhouses broke out in Delhi between orthodox Hindus and Muslims, particularly between the Jats of Sadar Bazaar, influenced by the Arya Samaj and the Muslim butchers of Pahari Dhiraj.<sup>133</sup> In 1925, the establishment of the Hindu Mahasabha office in the city further intensified "political rivalry between Hindu, Muslim, and secular nationalist groups".<sup>134</sup> In December 1926, the murder of Swami Shraddhanand by a Muslim and the subsequent retaliation actions further demonstrated the high level of communal tension that had spread in the city and as far as in the municipal board.<sup>135</sup> As Gupta argued, in the 1930s, the political polarisation was complete:<sup>136</sup> while Lala Sri Ram condemned "the exhibition of strong communal feelings" in the administration of the city",<sup>137</sup> M. A. Ansari lamented that "all the well-to-do people [...] are connected with the cloth-trade, [...] the lawyers, doctors and *hakims* are all

---

<sup>131</sup> See K. W. Jones, "Organized Hinduism in Delhi and New Delhi", in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 212-214.

<sup>132</sup> K. W. Jones, "Organized Hinduism", p.214.

<sup>133</sup> See N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 219.

<sup>134</sup> K. W. Jones, "Organized Hinduism", p. 215.

<sup>135</sup> See *idem*.

<sup>136</sup> N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 220.

<sup>137</sup> Lala Sri Ram, *Municipal problems in Delhi*, Delhi, 1932, p. 18 quoted by N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 220.

ultra-loyalists, [and] the Muslim shopkeepers are under the influence of Maulana Mohammad Ali.”<sup>138</sup>

At about the same time, Mirza Farhatullah Beg’s *The last musha’irah of Delhi* and *Bahadur Shah and the festival of flower-sellers* as well as Sayyid Wazir Hasan Dehlavi’s *The last sight of Delhi* were published. Both Wazir Hasan Dehlavi and Farhatullah Beg gave lengthy descriptions of Delhi’s festival of the flower-sellers,<sup>139</sup> a festival that had been founded in Delhi by Akbar Shah II when his son Jahangir came back from his forced exile to Allahabad thus realising his mother Mumtaz Begum’s wish to the Mehrauli Sufi saint Khwajah Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Khaki.<sup>140</sup> The festival was described by both authors as an example of Delhi’s composite culture that brought together Hindus and Muslims in joyful harmony. Wazir Dehlavi, after having described the *pankhā* procession in Mehrauli during the festival, lamented: “lo, this was the city of our times, these were its festivals, in which Hindus took part and Muslims too. [...] This period has now changed so much that its bricks have been crushed and its stones broken: that city today is a dark one.”<sup>141</sup> In *Bahadur Shah and the festival of flower-sellers* published in 1932, Farhatullah Beg well pointed at the degradation of communal harmony in the colonial world by intimately linking it to the figure of the Mughal king:

Oh! That procession and the floral *pankha*. It was quite large, no doubt, but it was, after all, a thing made of mere splinters of bamboo with a thin metal leaf wrapped over it. Only tiny pieces of mirror were studded on it. It was decorated with paper flowers and hung over just a bamboo stick. But just think: it was not just a floral *pankha*; it was verily a symbol of intense love and emotional integration which had brought the Muslims, high and low, poor and rich, and the members of every community and of every class at one place. It had brought even the King out of the Fort to a village, Mehrauli. It was not merely a fan but a repository of faith and mutual love. [...] The festival was celebrated even after the King but it gradually lost its former vitality because there was no centre now, and there was [a] lack of emotional integration. For the last five or six years it has altogether stopped. If

---

<sup>138</sup> M. A. Ansari to Jawaharlal Nehru, 19 Oct. 1929, M. Hasan (ed.), *Muslims and the Congress*, Delhi, 1979, p. 88 quoted by *idem*.

<sup>139</sup> The festival was a favourite topic in this type of literature. Being a Delhi tradition the festival was celebrated annually until 1942 when it was banned for security purposes before being revived in 1962 by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. See introduction to Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah*, p. xii.

<sup>140</sup> See for instance the explanation given in Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e ākhīr*, p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> Wazir Dehlavi, *Dillī kā ākhīrī dīdār*, p.72.

conditions, as they are now, continue and the discord persists as it is now, know then that it has stopped for good:

But why should I cry, my friend,  
For those harmonious relations of the past,  
Thousands of such wonderful ties were there  
But then they came to an end.<sup>142</sup>

Once again, with the glorification of Bahadur Shah's pacifying role, Farhatullah Beg questioned the colonial reading of communal violence as a "primordial religious conflict" that necessitated the benevolent presence of the British colonial state.<sup>143</sup> On the contrary, the lack of "emotional integration" from British authorities was pointed to as the reason behind the rise of Hindu-Muslim tensions that were said to be absent from earlier times. In city memoirs, Urdu writers usually emphasised the intimate link between the ruler and its kingdom. As a just and virtuous king produced thriving and peaceful citizens, bad governance would result, as it was felt to be the case in the colonial world, in recession and strife. Without being clearly anti-colonial, Farhatullah Beg alluded to the British's ambiguous and unbalanced position towards Hindu and Muslim communities. Bahadur Shah, on the other hand, was shown as ably negotiating and appeasing the religious feelings of both communities. While replying to the princes asking him to join the Muslim procession to the *dargāh*, the king thus refused to show any bias:

"Well my dears, please try to understand. When I did not go along with the *pankha* procession to the Jog Maya Ji temple, how can I join this procession to the *dargah*? How shall your Hindu brethren feel? They will think that as I am a Muslim, I joined the *pankha* procession of the Muslims; they will feel that I take them to be "others" and not my own for I did not even go down and kept sitting in the balcony. No, no: I shall behave alike to both of them."<sup>144</sup>

Despite dreaming of lost social harmony, however, Urdu writers had nonetheless difficulties representing a past that was truly and uniformly multi-religious. If, as Perkins has recently noted, Sharar like most of city novelists "went about creating this past world to foster the creation of an

---

<sup>142</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah*, p. 37-42. Emphasis mine.

<sup>143</sup> See about this particular reading of communal conflict, W. Fushfeld, "Communal Conflict in Delhi: 1803-1930", in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 19 (2), pp. 181-200.

<sup>144</sup> Farhatullah Beg, *Bahadur Shah*, p. 39.

alternative public characterized not by religious animosities and divisions but by a shared cultural world”,<sup>145</sup> this composite world did not materialise outside their imagination. On the contrary, as other scholars have shown, Sharar rather expressed concerns about Hindu-Muslim relations in his magazine *Dil Gudāz*. He regularly encouraged contributions from Hindus “to make their history, religion and culture known to Muslims”,<sup>146</sup> but was forced to recognise as early as 1887 that “[*Dil Gudāz*] is becoming more and more engrossed in the affairs of Islam to the exclusion of other points of view.”<sup>147</sup> In fact, although Urdu writers remembered the joy of Hindu festivals, the mixed dialect of Urdu court women and the “harmonious relations of the past”, they nevertheless resolutely asserted a clear Muslim identity. In the novels, Muslims were individualised but Hindus were usually exclusively treated as masses. Muslim saints, princes and princesses, courtesans, musicians, even cooks,<sup>148</sup> were precisely named and commemorated whereas Hindu lives were usually consigned to oblivion. Muslims’ deaths were repeatedly recounted and grieved, Hindus’ were not. Through a close analysis of the city memoirs written in the early twentieth century, it appears obvious that the depiction of religious harmony and peaceful cohabitation during Mughal times was not truly emphasised as such but rather as an instance of a broader memory of power that Muslim Urdu writers sought to underline. The portrayed celebration of Hindu festivals participated in a bigger narrative on the just sovereign, in the construction of an idealised vision of Mughal rule as perfection of power. Contrary to late nineteenth-century Muslim ashraf writers who, for the most part, recreated Arabian deserts and fantasised on the remains of Al-Andalus’ glory, early twentieth-century authors usually re-emphasised their Indian-ness by reengaging with Delhi’s (or Lucknow’s) Mughal heritage.<sup>149</sup> By fantasising about the Mughal city and reliving it by proxy, Urdu writers and

---

<sup>145</sup> C. R Perkins, *Partitioning History*, p. 30.

<sup>146</sup> F. Hussain “A Note”, in A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow Last Phase*, p. 23.

<sup>147</sup> Quoted by *idem*.

<sup>148</sup> See A. H. Sharar, *Lucknow Last Phase*, p. 156.

<sup>149</sup> Abdul Halim Sharar and to a lesser extent Rashid ul Khairi, however, are halfway between these two tendencies. They both wrote city memoirs and historical novels taken place in the Hejaz or Andalusia.

their readers really aimed at both mourning and recovering the lost performance of power even within the sole realm of their imagination; a power that in the early twentieth century was coming to be dreamt about in religious terms.

### *Conclusion*

As we have seen in this chapter, the nostalgic prose narratives about the city that grew at the turn of the twentieth century are interesting sources to study how the collective memory on the Mughal past was constructed over the course of a few decades. Written by Muslim *ashrāf* descended from families associated with Mughal courts since before 1857, they were particularly sensitive to the need for memorialising Delhi after the transfer of the colonial capital in 1911, when the death of former generations and the simultaneous influx of outsiders from Bengal and the Punjab metamorphosed the living landscape of the city. With the colonial modernisation and reconfiguration of Delhi also came the growing desire of Urdu authors to preserve the former spaces of Mughal cultural performance by making them pass into the realm of collective fantasy, through the typical literary methods usually associated with storytelling traditions and thus enable distancing from the trans-generational trauma that had been passed onto them. *Bazm-e āk̄hīr*, the first composition of this kind, revealed the resort to *dāstān*-like narrative techniques, alternating colloquial dialogues with longer descriptive pieces usually accompanied by lengthy lists of items. Contrary to what scholars have usually emphasised, I have shown here that the “catalogues” enumerated in city memoirs should consequently be read as part of the process of imaginatively recreating the lost *bazm* of Mughal courts rather than be considered as a conscious attempt to contribute to scientific knowledge.

Early twentieth-century city literature continued displaying some of the stylistic methods of fairy tales by treating city memories as fiction. Taking the Mughal past out of history and making it pass into fiction, they turned it into

a commodity that was popularly consumed by the Urdu-speaking middle classes. Fantasising about lost Mughal spaces offered writers and readers the possibility of both experiencing the collective "closure" of the trauma of the loss of power through creative activity and reasserting a composite identity that had been discredited by colonial discourses and repudiated by late nineteenth-century Muslim modernist reformers. The spaces that were lost in the modern world were therefore cleverly replaced within the realm of collective imagination. As C. Mucci indeed showed about intergenerational trauma transmission "storytelling and [...] the "transitional space of narrative, especially memoirs and literature may facilitate the practice of working-through of loss and death 'in the service of healing and reparation'"'.<sup>150</sup> But, contrary to Mohamed Ali's contemporary political discourses, Urdu writers rather preferred to emphasise the human dimension of the city landscape. The spaces they mourned were inhabited, flexible, moveable and characterised by communal harmony. Local idioms and *begamāṭī zubān* along with the figures of traditional poets and courtesans were particularly represented as exemplary sites of Indo-Muslim opulence and peaceful rule. The memory of the Mughal past thus successfully crystallised on specific elements (the Delhi dialect, traditional poetry, courtesans) that were until then seen as signs of degeneration and debauchery by both colonial authorities and Muslim modernist reformers were re-appropriated and idealised as instances of a pristine and refined culture still untouched by colonial rule. The fact that the courtesan for instance became a popular topic of writing for novelists revealed the desire of Urdu-speaking middle classes to offer an alternative narrative on the Mughal world and to foster attitudes of resistance and opposition to colonial (as well as Hindu revivalist) discourses on India's Muslim past.

This attitude of defiance was further revealed in the depiction of the last Mughal king as the organising force behind cultural production. Idealised as a religiously unbiased Sufi king, Bahadur Shah Zafar embodied the image of the perfect ruler that was visibly contrasted by Urdu writers

---

<sup>150</sup> C. Mucci, *Beyond Individual and Collective Trauma: Intergenerational Transmission, Psychoanalytic Treatment, and the Dynamics of Forgiveness*, London, 2013, p. 226.

with the contemporary colonial government. The festival of the flower-sellers in particular crystallised everything that lacked in the colonial capital: vitality, emotion and, above all, religious harmony. But this idealised depiction of religious symbiosis was not accompanied by a true concern for the commemoration of Hindu individuals. Hindus usually appeared as unnamed crowds when Muslim nobles were individualised. City memoirs, therefore, were, first and foremost, fantasies of a culture of power, which by the early twentieth century had become an integral part of Muslim collective identity and imagination. By reconstructing the sites of Mughal cultural performance and by summoning their actors, they offered a memory of Mughal power that was more fantasised than real. But through those imaginary spaces and cultural practices, a collective identity was nonetheless being shaped: an identity that, by looking backwards, tried to negotiate colonialism; that, though dreaming of Hindu-Muslim harmony, was decisively religious. For only faith could really help move beyond loss.

One evening I was sitting alone on the roof of my house. Thin clouds were spread over the sky. The sunlight fell over them, dyeing them a dirty red, for the atmosphere was not clear, and the dust and dirt of the city and the smoke of faraway chimneys were floating in the atmosphere. The hum of the city came from the distance like the buzzing of flies. There was everywhere a heart-rending hopelessness, that painful gloom which is a distinctive feature of our towns, which conveys to us the sense of misery and filth, of the hollowness and despondency of life. [...] Just then Nasir Ahmed [the *muazzin*] cleared his throat, and his ringing voice filled the atmosphere with its golden resonance. There was such sadness yet peace in the voice that my boredom was turned to a silent gloom. With its glory and richness the voice communicated a sense that life was ephemeral and passing [...].<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> A. Ali, "Our Lane", in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 33/34, n°1/2 (1998/1999), p. 228.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

I started my exploration of the evolution of collective memory and emotions among north Indian Muslims from 1857 to the 1930s with the question of why the Muslim ashraf gradually drew apart from their Hindu fellow countrymen and, uncovering in north Indian Muslim Urdu writings symptoms of collective trauma and grieving, I suggested that they reflected a psychological process of collective mourning. By proposing a first exploration of the evolution of shahr āshob poetry from 1857 to the 1930s, I have further discussed the different roles of memory narratives as cultural grieving and healing unfolded as a collective narration engaged in psychological reparation. Emphasising the historical depth of shahr āshob literature, I have considered how the genre, which traditionally lamented loss and social turmoil, was first used by Urdu poets to express shock and traumatic injury in the aftermath of 1857; it later moved on to express mourning and the necessity of cultural regeneration in the work of Hali, and then it was transformed by Iqbal and Khilafatist poets to encourage hope and self-empowerment. While scholars of colonial north India have often seen the Uprising as a watershed event and the subsequent nostalgia as "by far the most powerful element in the Muslim culture of this region",<sup>1</sup> I have asked questions such as "how was the loss of power integrated into Indian Muslims' daily lives?", "how did they make sense out of it?" and "how did this affect their socio-cultural landscape?" and have demonstrated that narratives of nostalgia and memory have to be considered in the context of their wider psychological and cultural implications.

I have shown that nostalgia as notably displayed in the shahr āshob genre was more than mere literary aesthetics, it impacted the lives of north Indian Muslims and shaped the way they expressed collective feelings and

---

<sup>1</sup> F. Devji, "The Equivocal History of a Muslim Reformation", p. 5.

volitions in a far more subtle and dynamic way that has generally been assumed. Muslim backwardness was not a myth as some scholars have argued by putting forward evidence from colonial statistics: it was first and foremost a collective emotion. A deep psychological wound that Muslim intellectuals sought to heal. A trauma that obsessed 1857 survivors and that they passed onto their children and grandchildren. Nawab Mohsin ul-Mulk once told to Hali an anecdote that happened in Benares when he was staying at Syed Ahmed Khan's, showing the extent to which the trauma of the loss of power had shocked the Muslim ashraf:

At about 2 a.m. I woke up and did not find Sir Syed in his bed. When I went out of the room in his search, I saw him pacing up and down the verandah. His eyes were filled with tears. I got worried and asked him whether he had received some bad news. He retorted, "What greater catastrophe can be there? The Muslims are ruined and still they are following the path of destruction."<sup>2</sup>

The trauma of the loss of power had a particularly great impact on north Indian Muslims' minds since memories of the Uprising and former Mughal power were looked upon with suspicion by colonial officers and cultural mourning was consequently hindered. The history of colonial north India was marked by complicated mourning as Indian Muslims sought to negotiate modernity and to overcome the colonial state's "organised forgetting".<sup>3</sup> As Nehru explained in his *Discovery of India*, "attempts to suppress [the past] do not destroy it but drive it deeper in the mind."<sup>4</sup> I have argued that this was particularly the case for the Muslim ashraf after 1857: if Muslim narratives about the past contained a distinctive nostalgic tone it is because nostalgic literature particularly testified to collective trauma and mourning.

Offering a re-appraisal of famous contemporary Urdu literary works, like Hali's *Musaddas* or Iqbal's *Mosque of Cordoba*, and an exploration of understudied material (like city memoirs or newspaper articles) across

---

<sup>2</sup> Hali, *Hayat-e Jawed*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>3</sup> P. Connerton, *How modernity forgets*, pp. 14-15: "when a large power wants to deprive a [...] country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting. Contemporary writers are proscribed [...] and the people who have been silenced and removed from their jobs become invisible and forgotten."

<sup>4</sup> J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, pp. 324-325.

several generations of north Indian Muslim intellectuals, I have highlighted how trauma eventually created both estrangement and community bonding. From the first post-1857 shahr āshobs of *The Lament for Delhi* examined in Chapter Two to literary works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Muslim ashraf identified themselves as a "community of sufferers" that steadily drew apart from Hindus. Narratives of nostalgia and of past Muslim glory were later extended in the early twentieth century to include a broader Indian Muslim public by journalists, novelists and poets who strove to unify Muslim opinion through successful anti-colonial mobilisations that possessed a clear religious tone. Religion, as we have seen, is indeed a powerful support for community resilience and recovery. Instead of seeing mobilisations around religion as examples of the elites' "rational manipulation", I have underlined their emotional and inner resonances. Many histories of the colonial period have highlighted the role of colonialism in the creation of clear-cut religious identities in South Asia through analyses of the impact of Orientalist knowledge, Western definitions of religion and identity or British administration on Indian minds,<sup>5</sup> often giving the impression that the colonial state had, in a sense, created communal identities and thus obscuring the agency of Indian subjects. Without denying the tremendous influence of colonial knowledge and administration on the growth of communalism in South Asia, I have suggested that the gradual turn of Indian Muslims towards their religious past also represented a repercussion of a broader process of cultural mourning that was triggered by the trauma of the loss of power, embodied in the symbol of 1857.

Through the study of Urdu and English language newspapers particularly, I have considered trauma and cultural mourning as processes, rather than events, that take place across generations and always in debate with other groups. Building memory narratives was a highly debated process that often led to clashes and disputes in newspaper columns. English

---

<sup>5</sup> See for instance R. M. Eaton (ed.), *India's Islamic traditions, 711-1750*, Delhi, 2003, p. 84.; R. King, "Orientalism and the Modern Myth of Hinduism", in *Numen*, 1999, vol. 46, n°2, pp. 146-185 ; V. Dalmia and H. von Stietencron, *Representing Hinduism: the construction of religious traditions and national identity*, New Delhi, 1995; S. Kaviraj, "Religion and identity in India", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 20, n°2, 1997, pp. 325-344.

language newspapers entered into dialogue with the English concepts of memory and memorials first questioning their relevance and later adopting British practices of memorialisation to demand justice and public recognition, as we have seen from *The Comrade*. Urdu language newspapers and magazines on the other hand discussed nostalgia through critiques of certain types of shahr āshob poems. Hindu Urdu-speaking elites responded virulently to attempts of Muslim intellectuals to frame cultural renaissance by rebuking their growing communal tone. Pro-Congress partisans mocked Aligarh's use of nostalgic poetry for propaganda by mimicking their mournful verses. People like the editor of the *Paisah Akhbār* criticised the excess of āshob poetry in community gatherings. Sufis disagreed with Iqbal's representations of the "lethargy" of Hafiz and writers like Mohamed Ali or Maulvi Zakaullah sometimes negatively pointed at the Muslim ashraf's pride in their extra-Indian origins. Across time and across generations, nostalgic narratives were in constant fluctuation according to the material and psychological needs of the time as groups contested dominant representations or attempts at identity formation and as grief was approached in many different ways. But these nostalgic narratives never disappeared: they continued to echo throughout north Indian Muslims' lives and were frequently reactivated at different points in time. As Herman indeed noted, the "resolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete".<sup>6</sup>

Besides putting special emphasis on the social and cultural implications of trauma, the exploration of memory narratives has also highlighted the close relation between memory and power. Narratives of vulnerability and the collective emotions of grief and anger have had a tremendous impact on political mobilisations and claims in colonial north India. As we have seen, nostalgia was extremely popular and narratives of vulnerability served many purposes among which calls for action, a literary trope that I have shown derived from the Andalusí style of lament. While the Aligarh movement used nostalgia to secure a dominant position in the

---

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 211.

colonial world against the demands of the Indian National Congress in 1888, Mohamed Ali used memory and memorials as the basis for claims of public acknowledgment during the construction of New Delhi, Iqbal and other pan-Islamic Urdu poets resisted the dominant narrative of vulnerability to "shore up a notion of individual sovereignty against the shaping forces of history on [their] embodied lives"<sup>7</sup> and city novelists articulated critiques of colonialism. In fact the political power of memory is intimately linked to its social production. As feelings are translated into words so is the socio-cultural transcribed into the political: this thesis has demonstrated that it is deceptive to oppose the two. Statements that "We are victims" are always performative: they create social bonding and estrangement at the same time as they ask for public acknowledgment and political action.

It is difficult to assess how successful literature was for collective recovery and closure. But it is certain that the traumatic wound of the loss of power was not closed by the 1930s. I have not extended my analysis to the 1940s, when important political developments take place in northern India, but I suggest that nostalgia and traumatic loss continued to influence north Indian Muslims' collective desires and actions, especially during mobilisations for the Pakistan movement and in the aftermath of the Partition of 1947. First insights into the 1940s suggest that nostalgia and the "psychology of victimhood"<sup>8</sup> continued to reverberate during the freedom struggle and the separatist politics of Muslim Leaguers. In November 1941, the Muslim League newspaper *Dawn* for instance argued that,

The present day condition of Indian Muslims is directly the result of loss of their political power and their comparative slowness to adopt [sic] themselves to changed circumstances. If the Muslims again win back the power to rule over their own majority areas, they will revive their old traditions of virtue and honour and develop afresh their art and literature, institutions and laws from the points where their progress was abruptly stopped.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> To borrow Judith Butler's words. J. Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance", Madrid, June 2014, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> J. V. Montville, "Complicated Mourning and Mobilization for Nationalism", in J. Braun (ed.), *Social Pathology in Comparative Perspective: the nature and psychology of civil society*, Westport, 1995, p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> M. R. I. II., "Dangers of Aggressive Nationalism", in *Dawn*, 9 November 1941, p. 3

I have here initiated a different reading of the Urdu writings of the period by considering them as illustrations of collective psychological processes and I have pointed to the productivity of large-group psychoanalysis for the history of cultural and social phenomena. However, further research is needed: one of the limitations of this study has been the necessity of prioritising popular literary figures and movements. I have however hinted at the fact that beyond Hali's, Iqbal's or Mohamed Ali's works, other writings and groups require attention. It would be worth exploring the works by Hindu groups like Kayasths or Kashmiri Brahmins and to see how they themselves integrated the trauma of the loss of Mughal power. Future research should notably aim to answer the question of whether they were touched in the same way as the Muslim ashraf and to assess to what extent nostalgic narratives informed their lives and enabled group bonding. Similarly, smaller town Muslims or Muslims from other places, like Hyderabad or regional courts, should also be considered to draw a bigger picture of interactions and "contagion" between British and non-British India during the colonial period. In the nineteenth century, indeed, India's princely states became important platforms for the continuance and renewal of vernacular cultural practices as they welcomed Urdu migrant literati from around India. Complicating the common narrative on Indo-Muslim elites' responses to the traumatic loss of power, the exploration of these under-studied milieus should bring further light on the shaping of indigenous modernities and on their significance for the preservation of vernacular cultures that have been less affected by narratives of Muslim backwardness and vulnerability. The investigation would also benefit from drawing material from the post-colonial period and consider how 1857 presaged the Partition, less than one century later. Shahr āshob poems and narratives of past glory and present backwardness strikingly resurfaced among the Muslim minority in post-independence India. As Jamal Mian Farangi Mahall, writing under the *takhallus* Sharir Banbasi, lamented in a shahr āshob published in December 1948:

No one cares what we are undergoing  
No one cares what condition the people are in

No one stops exploitation or oppression  
Tell me fairly, is anyone awake?<sup>10</sup>

The main contributions of this thesis have been to reconsider the history of colonial north India and of Muslim separatist tendencies by placing the writings of north Indian Muslims in a larger context that emphasised both external pressures and inner psychological processes; to re-appraise the genre of shahr āshob and nostalgic writings on Delhi beyond their stereotypical nature as dynamic and developing literature; and, finally, to point to the diversity and quantity of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Urdu and English language memory narratives available for the study of memory and cultural history in South Asia. This thesis aims to initiate scholarly discussions on psychical processes and their effects on social groups in South Asia.

---

<sup>10</sup> Sharir Banbasi, "Shahr Āshob", in *Hamdam*, 13 December 1948. I am grateful to Francis Robinson for providing the poem in translation.

## Bibliography

### Newspapers and Periodicals

*Aligarh Institute Gazette* (Aligarh) AMU: volumes 1866; 1867; 1868; 1869; 1871; 1872; 1873; 1874; 1875; 1876; 1877; 1888

*Awadh Punch* (Lucknow) SJM & JMI: volumes 1877-1879, 1888 to Feb. 1889, 1891-1892, 1902-1904, 1930, Oct 1935, June 1937, Dec 1937, Sept 1938

*Dawn* (New Delhi) BL IOR: several volumes for 1941

*Hamdard* (Delhi) NMML & JMI: from May 1913 to April 1915 and 3 May 1926 to 15 May 1927

*Kayastha Samachar and Hindustan Review* (Allahabad) SOAS & NMML: from January 1901 (vol. 3, n°1) to June 1911 (vol. 23, n°142)

*Tahzib ul Akhlāq* (Aligarh) AMU: volumes 1881, 1878-1880, 1893-1894, 1874, 1873, 1870-1876, 1880, 1897

*The Comrade* (Calcutta, Delhi) NMML & JMI: from January 1911 (vol. 1 n°1) to November 1925 (vol. 3, n°18)

*Zamānah* (Lahore) NAI: volumes 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1929

### Private papers

Mohamed Ali Papers, JMI

Mohamed Ali Papers, NMML

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, NMML

### Sources

*A selection from the illustrations which have appeared in the Oudh Punch from 1877 to 1881*, Lucknow, 1881

*Selected documents from Aligarh Archives*, ed. Yusuf Husain, Aligarh, 1977

“In the presence of the nightingale: a shahr ashob”, transl. by S. F. Rahman, and F. W. Pritchett, in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, vol. 3, 1983, pp. 1-9

Ghulam Abbas, “Anandi” trans. by G. A. Chaussée, *AUS*, vol. 18, n°2, 2003, pp. 324-349 [1948]

- Abbas Ali, *The Beauties of Lucknow: Consisting of Twenty-four Selected Photographed Portraits, Cabinet Size, of the Most Celebrated and Popular Living Historic Singers, Dancing Girls and Actresses of the Oudh Court and of Lucknow*, Calcutta, 1874
- Ahmed Ali, "Our Lane", in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 33/34, n°1/2 (1998/1999), pp. 218-230 [1940, translation from the Urdu *Hamarī Galī*]
- Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, New York 1994 [1940]
- Mohamed Ali, *My Life a Fragment: an autobiographical sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, New Delhi, 1999 [1942]
- , *Khilafat Conference Presidential Address by Muhammad Ali*, Calcutta, December 1928
- , M. Shan, *Unpublished Letters of the Ali Brothers*, Delhi, 1979
- Syed Amir Ali, *Memoirs and Other Writings of Syed Ameer Ali*, S. R. Wasti (ed.), Lahore, 1968
- Nazir Ahmad, *The Penitence of Nasooh: a translation of Taubatun Nasooh*, trans. by W. Naeemuddin, Oxford, 2008
- Muhammad Husain Azad, *Āb-e Hayāt: mashāhīr-e shu'rā-e Urdū ke sawāneh 'umrī*, Delhi, 2008 [1880]
- , *Ab-e Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, trans. and ed. by F. W. Pritchett and S. R. Faruqi, New Delhi, 2003
- Nizami Badayuni, *Faryād-e Dehlī*, Badaun, 1931
- Farhatullah Beg, *Nazir Ahmad: in his own words and mine*, trans. by M. Zakir, New Delhi, 2009 [1927]
- , *Delhī kā ek yādgār ākhrī mushā'irah*, 1261 hijrī muṭābiq 1846 'iswī men, Aligarh Educational Book House, n. d. [1928]
- , *The last musha'irah of Delhi*, trans. by A. Qamber, New Delhi, 1979 [1928]
- , *Bahādur Shāh aur Phulwālon kī sair*, Delhi, 1943 [1932]
- , *Bahadur Shah and the Festival of Flower-sellers*, trs. by Mohammed Zakir, Hyderabad, 2012
- , *Mazāmīn-e Farhat*, vol. 2, Hyderabad, n. d.
- , *Mirzā e Farhatullah Beg ke Mazāmīn: Intikhāb*, ed. by A. Parvez, Delhi, 2009
- Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi, *Rusūm-e Dehlī*, Delhi, 1975 [1st ed. 1900-1905]

- Hakim Khwajah Nasir Naziruddin Firaq Dehlavi, *Lāl qila' kī ek jhalak*, Delhi, 2006 [c. 1900]
- Ashraf Subuhi Dehlavi, *Dillī kī chand 'ajīb hastiyān*, Delhi, 2011 [1943]
- Wazir Hasan Dehlavi, *Dillī kā ākhrī dīdār*, Delhi, 2013 [1932]
- Mirza Herat Dehlavi, *Chirāgh-e Dehlī*, Delhi, 2009 [1931]
- Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e ākhrī*, Delhi, 2009 [1885]
- Abul Fazl, *The Ain-i Akbari*, trans. by H. Blochmann, Calcutta, 1873, vol. 1
- Mirza Ahmad Akhtar Gurgani, *Sawāneh-e Dehlī*, Delhi, 2009
- Altaf Husain Hali, *Madd-o Jazr-e Islām: al-ma'rūf bah Musaddas-i Hālī*, Delhi, 1884 [1879]
- , C. Shackle and J. Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas: the flow and ebb of Islam*, Oxford, 1997
- , *Tarkīb band mausum bah Shikwah-e Hind*, Lahore, 1888
- , *Hayat-e Jawed: a biographical account of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, part I-II, Aligarh, 2008 [1901]
- , *Hayat-e Javed. A biographical account of Sir Sayyid*, trans. by K. H. Qadiri and D. J. Matthews, Delhi, 2009
- , *Makātīb-e Hālī*, edited by M. I. Panipati, Lahore, 1950
- , *Dīwān-e Hālī: Shi'r-o shā'erī: ya'nī Shams ul-'ulama Khwājah Alṭāf Husain Hālī Panipatī marḥūm ke Urdū dīwān kā lā jawāb muqaddamah*, Lucknow, s.d.
- Sir Muhammad Iqbal, *Shikwa and Jawab-i Shikwa. Complaint and Answer. Iqbal's Dialogue with Allah*, translated from the Urdu with an introduction by K. Singh, Oxford, 1990 [1909 & 1913]
- , "Political thought in Islam", *Kayastha Samachar*, December 1910, vol. 23, n°136, pp. 527-533
- , *The Secrets of the Self. Asrar-i Khudi*, translated by R. A. Nicholson, Lahore, 1960 [1915]
- , *The Mysteries of Selflessness: a philosophical poem*, trans. by A. J. Arberry, London, 2001 [1918]
- , *The Call of the marching Bell, English translation and commentary of Bang-i Dara*, trans. by M. A. K. Khalil, Lahore, 1997 [1924]

- , *Presidential Address by Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, Barrister-at-Law, Lahore, All India Muslim League, Allahabad Session, December 1930*
- , *The Reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, Oxford, 1934
- , *Gabriel's Wing*, trans. by D. J. Matthews, N. Siddiqui, S. A. A. Shah, Lahore, 2014 [1935]
- , *The Rod of Moses: A Declaration of War against the Present Age*, trans. by S. A. Ali Shah, V. G. Kiernan and B. A. Dar, Lahore, 2014 [1936]
- , *Maqālāt-e Iqbāl*, Syed Abdul Wahid Mu'ini (ed.), Lahore, 1963
- , *Letters of Iqbal*, B. A. Dar (ed.), Lahore, 1978
- , <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/>
- Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi', *Bhārat Darpan yā Musaddas-e Kaifī*, Lahore, 1905
- Tafazzul Husain Kaukab, *Fughān-e Dehlī*, [Delhi, 1863]; Lahore, 1954; Lahore, 2007
- Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-ye Dehli: The Mughal capital in Muhammad Shah's time*, ed. and transl. by C. Shekhar and S. M. Chenoy, Delhi, 1989
- Syed Ahmed Khan, *Āšār uṣ-Ṣanādīd*, Delhi, 2011 [1852]
- , *Asar Oos Sanadid*, Cawnpore, ed. 1904
- , *Monuments of Delhi: historical study*, New Delhi, 1979
- , *The Present State of Indian Politics. Consisting of speeches and Letters, reprinted from the "Pioneer"*, Allahabad, 1888
- , *Selected Letters of Sir Syed Ahmad*, M. A. Mannan (ed.), Aligarh, 2007
- Rashid ul Khairi, *Dillī kī aḵhīrī bahār*, Delhi, 2010 [1937]
- Mir Taqī Mir, *Zikr-e Mir. The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqī 'Mir'*, translated, introduced and commented by C. M. Naim, New Delhi, 2002
- Pandit Anand Narain Mulla, "Shikwa az Iqbal", in *Zamānah*, February 1929, pp. 118-119
- Muhammad Abdullah Tonki 'Nazim', *Musaddas-e Nazim*, Lahore, 1900
- Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, 1981
- , *An autobiography*, New Delhi, 1962

---, *Glimpses of World History. Being further letters to his daughter written in prison and containing a rambling account of history for young people*, Allahabad, 1982

Khwajah Hasan Nizami, *Ghadr-e Dehlī ke afsāne. Hissah Awwal*, Delhi, 1918

*Pamphlets issued by the United Indian Patriotic Association, n°2: Showing the seditious character of the Indian National Congress and the opinions held by eminent natives of India who are OPPOSED to the Movement*, Allahabad, 1888

Munshi Premchand, *Courtesans' quarter: a translation of Bazaar-e Husn*, trans. by A. Azfar, Oxford, 2003 [1924]

---, *Karbalā*, Delhi, 1974 [1924]

F. W. Pritchett and S.R. Faruqi, "The vile world Carnival: a shahr-ashob by Nazir Akbarabadi (1740-1830)", in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, vol. 4, 1984, pp. 25-35

*Proceedings of the Muslim Educational Conference*, Aligarh, 1887

Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa, *Umrāo Jān Ādā*, Islamabad, 2000 [1899]

---, *Umrao Jan Ada: Courtesan of Lucknow*, trans. by Khushwant Singh, Delhi, 2008

Abdul Halim Sharar, *Guzishtah Lukhnau: Hindustān meṅ mashriqī tamaddun kā ākḥrī namūnah*, New Delhi, 2011

---, *Lucknow The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, trans. by E. S. Harcourt and F. Hussain, London, 1975

*The Turkish Settlement and the Muslim and Indian Attitude. The Address presented by the Indian Khilafat Deputation to the Viceroy of Delhi, on January 19<sup>th</sup> 1920; and the Manifesto of the All-India Khilafat Conference passed at its Bombay Session, held on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> 1920*, ed. by the Indian Khilafat Deputation, London

'Arsh Timuri, *Qila'-e mu'alla kī jhalkiyān*, Delhi, 2009 [1937]

### **Colonial Records**

*Native Newspapers Reports for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh: volumes 1864 to 1937* [NAI, BL]

Home Department, Public, 14th May 1858, n°97 [NAI]

Commissioner Office, 68/1894: Defacement of tombs of British officers on the Ridge [DSA]

*First Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the year 1881-82, Simla, 1882*

Foreign, External, May 1907, Proceedings n°764-796 [DSA]

*Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. 3: Economic, Oxford, 1908*

Home, Political B, November 1912, Proceedings 82-86: weekly reports of the Director of Criminal Intelligence on the political situation for the month of October 1912 [NAI]

Home, Delhi, A Proceedings, April 1912, 103-139: Acquisition of land at Delhi and the planning and building of the new city of Delhi [NAI]

Home, Delhi, September 1912, Deposit n°9: Question of the treatment of mosques, temples and tombs in connection with land acquisition proceedings at Delhi [NAI]

Hansard (1803-2005) online, Commons Sitting, Orders of the Day, "Government of Scotland Bill", House of Commons, 30 May 1913, vol. 53, pp. 471-551

Home, Public, Deposit n°36, August 1913: Question of the treatment of mosques, temples, and tombs in connection with land acquisition proceedings in Delhi [NAI]

Home, Political, A, October 1913, Proceedings 100-118: Riot at Cawnpore in connection with the demolition of a mosque in Machli Bazar. State of Muhammadan feeling in India [NAI]

Home, Political A, October 1913, Proceedings 142-149: Demand of security under section 3 of the Indian Press Act, 1910 from the keepers of the Comrade and Hamdard press and the Baitul Sharaf Press Delhi [NAI]

Home, Public, B, December 1913, 170: Questions and answers in the Imperial legislative council regarding the acquisition of Muslim mosques etc. and regarding the preservation of religious edifices [NAI]

Confidential Records, Home, 1914, B, 8: Pamphlet entitled Ahkam ul-masajid regarding the demolition of mosques [DSA]

CC, Home, 27/1914 B: Question of the payment of compensation for mosques and tombs [DSA]

Confidential, Education, 3/1915 (B) Enquiry regarding a book entitled "Ghadr Delhi ke Afsane" by Hassan Nizami [DSA]

- CC, Revenue and Agriculture, 39/1915 B: Demolition and restoration of Maulana Abdul Haq's mosque near Okhla [DSA]
- CC, Education, File n°77/1915 B: Mohammadan graveyards in Delhi [DSA]
- CC, Education, 24/1918 B: Protection of monuments in Delhi Province [DSA]
- CC, Education, 1(6), 1930 (B): Petition from Muhammad Abdul Ghafar regarding exemption of his property at Qutab from the Ancient Monuments Act of 1904 [DSA]

### Secondary Literature

- A. Abbas, *Sir Sayyid kā safarnāmah: Musāfirān-e London*, Aligarh, 2009
- Z. Abbasi, "The Classical Islamic Law of Waqf: A Concise Introduction", in *Arab Law Quarterly*, vol. 26, 2012, pp. 121-153
- A. Ahmad, "Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Muslim India", in *Studia Islamica*, n° 13, 1960, pp. 55-78
- , *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*, London, 1967
- , "Afghani's Indian Contacts", in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 89, n°3, 1969, pp. 476-504
- , *Muslim self-statement in India and Pakistan, 1857-1947*, Wiesbaden, 1970
- , "Hali", in Gibb H.A.R. (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1999 (1st ed. 1965)
- , "Muhammad Iqbal", in M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions. A Collection of Unpublished and Rare Iqbalian Studies*, Lahore, 2003, pp. 24-27
- I. Ahmad, "The Ashraf-Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Social Structure in India", in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 3, pp. 268-278
- N. Ahmad, *Shahr āshob*, New Delhi, 1947
- , *Shahr āshob kā tahqīqī muṭāla'a*, Aligarh, 1979
- S. Ahmad, *Iqbāl, ek shā'ir*, Lahore, 1978
- S. F. Ahmad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Beck and the Indian National Congress*, MPhil dissertation, AMU (Aligarh), 1989
- H. Ahmed, "Mosque as Monument: The Afterlives of Jama Masjid and the Political Memories of a Royal Muslim Past", in *South Asian Studies*, vol. 29, n°1, 2013, pp. 51-59

- , *Muslim political discourse in postcolonial India: monuments, memory, contestation*, New Delhi, 2014
- N. Akhtar, *Monogrāf: Allama Rashidul Khairi*, Delhi, 2012
- M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi", in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2004, vol. 24 (2), pp. 61-72
- , *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*, New York, 2011
- S. Alavi, "Rethinking Religion and Politics: Ulema Histories and the Appropriation of 1857", in K. Narain and M. C. Das (eds.), *1857 Revisited: Myth and Reality*, Mumbai, 2008, pp. 147-163
- J. C. Alexander, *Cultural trauma and collective identity*, Berkeley, 2004
- A. Ali Engineer, "A Critical Appraisal of Iqbal's "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam", in A. Sardar Jafri and K. S. Duggal (eds.), *Iqbal. Commemorative volume*, Lahore, 2004, pp. 122-123
- M. O. Ali, *Amjad Hyderabadī: Hayāt aur kārnāme*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Osmania University (Hyderabad), 1987
- K. A. Ali, "Courtesans in the Living Room", in *AUS*, 20, 2005, pp. 274-279
- B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 2006 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1983)
- C. F. Andrews, *Zaka Ullah of Delhi*, Cambridge, 1929
- P. A. Andrews, "The Generous Heart or the Mass of Clouds: The Court Tents of Shah Jahan", in *Muqarnas*, vol. 4, 1987, pp. 149-165
- , *Felt Tents and Pavilions: The Nomadic Tradition and its Interaction with Princely Tentage*, vol. 2, London, 1999
- S. Anjum, *Monogrāf Khwājah Alṭāf Husain Hālī*, Delhi, 2007
- anon., "Shahr āshob", in *Urdū Dāīrah-e M'ārīf islāmiyah*, vol. 11, Lahore, 1975, pp. 824-826
- M. Ansarullah, *Jāma'-e tazkirah*, vol. 3, Delhi, 2007
- P. Antze and M. Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, New York, 1996
- P. Ariès, "L'histoire des mentalités", in J. Le Goff (ed.), *La Nouvelle Histoire*, Brussels, 2006, pp. 169-172
- A. Arifi, *Shahr āshob: Ek tajziyah*, New Delhi, 1994

- H. Ashura, *Jamal Amjad: Sayyid Ahmad Husain 'Amjad' Sāhib Rubayāt*, Hyderabad, 1964
- A. Assmann, "Memory", in K. von Stuckrad (ed.), *The Brill Dictionary of Religion Online*
- J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, New York, 2011
- K. Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution*, London, 2012
- K. K. Aziz (ed.), *The Indian Khilafat Movement, 1915-1933. A documentary record*, Karachi, 1972
- T. G. Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Karachi, 2008
- A. Bard, "'No Power of Speech Remains': Tears and Transformation in South Asian *Majlis* Poetry", in K. C. Patton and J. S. Hawley (eds.), *Holy tears: weeping in the religious imagination*, Princeton, 2005, pp. 145-164
- A. Basu, "Mohamed Ali in Delhi: The Comrade Phase, 1912-1915", in M. Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic trends in colonial India*, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 109-125
- C. Bates (ed.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, New Delhi, 2013
- A. Bausani, "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 3, issue ¾, 1954, pp. 158-186
- C. A. Bayly, "Delhi and Other Cities of North India During the 'Twilight'", in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages. Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi, 1993, pp. 121-136
- , *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad, 1880-1920*, Oxford, 1975
- A. A. Beg, *The Poet of the East. Life and work of Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher, with a critical survey of his philosophy, poetical works and teachings*, Lahore, 2004
- R. Blachère and A. Bausani, "Ghazal", in H. A. R. Brill (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition online
- S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The sovereign city in Mughal India, 1639-1739*, Cambridge, 1991
- A. Bonnett, *Left in the Past. Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*, London, 2010

- S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York, 2001
- P. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge, 1974
- , "A Reply to Francis Robinson", in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 15, 1977, pp. 231-234
- , "Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia", in D. Taylor and M. Yapp (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia*, London, 1979, pp. 35-43
- D. Bredi, "Nostalgia in the re-construction of Muslim identity in the aftermath of 1857 and the myth of Delhi", in A. Kuczkiewicz-Fras (ed.), *Islamicate Traditions in South Asia: themes from culture and history*, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 25-43
- , "Nostalgia 'restauratrice' all'opera: 'Sicilia' e 'La Moschea di Cordova' di Muhammad Iqbal", in *Rivista degli studi orientali*, vol. 83, n°1-4, pp. 317-332
- L. Brennan, "The Illusion of Security: The Background to Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces", in *MAS*, 18, 2, 1984, pp. 237-272
- A. Bricteux, "Pasquinade sur la ville de Tébriç, par maître Lissani de Chiraz", in *Mélanges de philologie orientale publiés à l'occasion du Xe anniversaire de la création de l'Institut supérieur d'Histoire et de Littératures Orientales de l'université de Liège*, Louvain, 1932, pp. 1-56.
- M. Broderick and A. Traverso, *Interrogating Trauma: Collective Suffering in Global Arts and Media*, London, 2011
- C. G. Burton, "A Validation of Metrics for Community Resilience to Natural Hazards and Disasters Using the Recovery from Hurricane Katrina as a Case Study", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 105, n°1, 2015, pp. 67-86
- J. Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance", paper given at Madrid, June 2014, available online
- L. Carroll, "Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement", in *Indian Economics Social History Review*, 1974, pp. 432-447
- C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 1995
- (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995
- M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions. A Collection of Unpublished and Rare Iqbalian Studies*, Lahore, 2003

- G. Chaliand, *Revolution in the Third World: Myths and Prospects*, Hassocks, 1977
- A. Chandra, *Building community resilience to disasters: a way forward to enhance national health security*, Santa Monica, 2011
- S. Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: literature and social consciousness in colonial India*, Delhi, 1994
- S. Chandra and R. Taqui (eds.), *Conservation of Lucknow heritage: Preservation, Methodology and International Dimensions*, New Delhi, 2006
- P. Chatterjee, *The nation and its fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories*, Princeton, 1993
- B. Chattopadhyaya, *Studying Early India: Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues*, London, 2006, chapter 6
- S. Chattopadhyay, "Cities of power and protest: spatial legibility and the colonial state in early twentieth-century India", in *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, vol. 19, n°1, 2015, pp. 1-13
- Z. R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in nineteenth-century India*, Minneapolis, 2012
- E. A. Christensen, *Government architecture and British imperialism: Patronage and imperial policy in London, Pretoria, and New Delhi (1900-1931)*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1995
- A. Congino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method", in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, n° 5, 1997, pp. 1386-1403
- P. Connerton, *How modernity forgets*, Cambridge, 2009
- O. R. Constable (ed.), *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish sources*, Philadelphia, 1997
- D. Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*, New York, 2007
- M. de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire*, France, 2002
- S. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory", in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, n° 5, 1997, pp. 1372-1385
- M. Crinson (ed.), *Urban Memory. History and amnesia in the modern city*, New York, 2005
- V. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-century Benares*, New Delhi, 1997

- V. Dalmia and H. von Stietencron, *Representing Hinduism: the construction of religious traditions and national identity*, New Delhi, 1995
- W. Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The fall of a dynasty: Delhi, 1857*, London, 2006
- J. Damousi, *Living with the aftermath: Trauma, nostalgia and grief in post-war Australia*, Cambridge, 2001
- S. K. Das, *History of Indian Literature: 1911-1956: struggle for freedom: triumph and tragedy*, New Delhi, 1995
- K. A. Deutsch, *Muslim women in colonial North India circa 1920-1947: Politics, law and community identity*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1998
- F. Devji, *Muslim nationalism: Founding identity in colonial India*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993
- , "India in the Muslim Imagination: Cartography and Landscape in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Urdu Literature", in *SAMAJ*, 2014, vol. 10
- , 'The Equivocal History of a Muslim Reformation', in F. Osella and C. Osella (eds.), *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, Cambridge, 2013, pp. 3-25
- S. B. Diagne, "Bergson in the Colony: Intuition and Duration in the Thought of Senghor and Iqbal", in *Qui parle*, vol. 17, n°1 Special Issue: Thinking alterity, 2008, pp. 125-145
- B. Dugassa, "Colonial Trauma, Community Resiliency and Community Health Development: The Case Of The Oromo People In Ethiopia", in *Journal of Health Development*, vol. 4, n°1-4, 2008, pp. 43-63
- P. du Gay, S. Hall, L. Janes, H. Mackay, and K. Negus (eds.), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, London, 2003
- R. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, "Abū'l-Baqā' al-Rundi and his elegy on Muslim Spain", in *The Muslim World*, vol. 66, 1976, pp. 29-34
- J. El Gharbi, "Thrène de Séville", in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 79, 2009, pp. 26-30
- R. M. Eaton (ed.), *India's Islamic traditions, 711-1750*, Delhi, 2003
- A. E. Elinson, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature*, Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures, vol. 34, 2009
- K. Erikson, *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, New York, 1976
- , *A New Species of Trouble*, New York, 1994

- , 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995, pp. 183-199
- A. Erll and A. Rigney (eds.), *Mediation, remediation, and the dynamics of cultural memory*, Berlin, 2009
- A. Erll, "Travelling Memory", in *Parallax*, vol. 17, n°4, 2011, pp. 4-18
- R. Eyerman, J. C. Alexander and E. B. Breese (eds.), *Narrating Trauma: On the impact of Collective Suffering*, London, 2011
- R. Eyerman, "Intellectuals and cultural trauma", in *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 14, n°4, 2011, pp. 453-467
- H. C. Fanshawe, *Delhi: Past and Present*, Delhi, 2010 (first ed. 1907)
- M. A. Farooqi, "The Secret of Letters: Chronograms in Urdu Literary Culture", in *Edebiyât*, vol. 13, n° 2, 2003, pp. 147-158
- S. R. Faruqi, "Jur'at's shahr ashob: an afterword", in *AUS*, vol. III, 1983, pp. 11-16
- , "How to read Iqbal" in *AUS*, vol. 20, 2005, pp. 1-33
- S. R. Faruqi and F. W. Pritchett, "A vile world carnival", in *AUS*, vol. IV, 1984, pp. 24-35
- D. W. Ferrell, *Delhi, 1911-1922: society and politics in the New imperial capital of India*, PhD dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 1969
- J. Fentress and C. Whickham, *Social Memory*, Oxford, 1992
- G. Feindt, F. Krawatzek, D. Mehler et al., "Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies", in *History and Theory*, vol. 53, February 2014, pp. 24-44
- M. Firozuddin, *Fīroz ul-Lughāt: Urdū jadīd*, Delhi, 2013
- S. Freitag, "The roots of Muslim separatism in South Asia: Personal Practice and Public Structures in Kanpur and Bombay" in E. Burke & I. Lapidus (eds.), *Islam, politics and social movements*, Berkeley, 1988, pp. 115-145
- D. Fromkin, *A Peace to end all peace. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Middle East*, New York, 2001 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1989)
- R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages. Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi, 1993
- W. Fushfeld, "Communal Conflict in Delhi: 1803-1930", in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 19, n°2, pp. 181-200
- R. Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim mind*, New Delhi, 1988

- H. Glevarec, E. Macé and E. Maigret, *Cultural Studies: Anthologie*, Paris, 2008
- N. Gooptu, *The politics of the urban poor in early twentieth-century India*, Cambridge, 2001
- S. Gordon, *Monumental visions: architectural photography in India, 1840-1901*, PhD dissertation, SOAS, 2011
- M. Goswami, "'Englishness' on the Imperial Circuit: Mutiny Tours in Colonial South Asia", in *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 9, n°1, 1996, pp. 54-84
- S. Guha (ed.), *The Marshall Albums: Photography and Archaeology*, New Delhi, 2010
- N. Gupta, *Delhi between two empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth*, Delhi, 1981
- A. B. M. Habibullah, "Historical Writing in Urdu. A Survey of Tendencies", in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, pp. 481-496
- M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, 1968
- W. Hanaway, "Dastan-sarai", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, New York, 1996
- P. Hardy, "Modern Muslim Historical Writing on Medieval Muslim India", in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, pp. 294-309
- , *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972
- I. Hasan, "Later Mughals as represented in Urdu poetry. A Study in the light of Shahr Ashobs from Hatim, Sauda and Nazir", in *Annali dell'Instituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, vol. 9, 1959, pp. 131-153
- , "Later Mughals as represented in Urdu Poetry. A study of Qa'im's shahr ashob", in *Annali dell'Instituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, vol. 12, 1962-3, pp. 129-152
- M. Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics 1885-1930*, New Delhi, 1991
- , *Wit and Humour in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2007
- , *From Pluralism to Separatism. Qasbas in Colonial Awadh*, New Delhi, 2012
- M. Hassen, *Recherches sur les poèmes inspirés par la perte ou la destruction des villes dans la littérature arabe du IIIe/IXe siècle à la prise de Grenade en 897/1492*, vol. 1, PhD dissertation, Sorbonne 1977

- A. Hashmi, "Three poems of Iqbal: A Psychological Interpretation", in *AUS*, n°25, 2010, pp. 108-121
- N. Hashmi, *Ḥaẓrat Amjad kī shā'erī*, Hyderabad, 1934
- N. Hautemanière, "Mohamed Iqbal, penseur d'un autre Islam", in *Les clé du Moyen-Orient*, 2014 (available online: <http://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/Mohamed-Iqbal-penseur-d-un-autre.html> (last accessed 5 May 2016))
- S. Heathorn, "The Absent Site of Memory: The Kanpur Memorial Well and the 1957 Centenary Commemoration of the Indian Mutiny", in I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in colonial and postcolonial contexts*, London, 2009, pp. 73-116
- P. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres. The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920*, Columbus, 1974
- J. L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, London, 1997
- M. K. Hermansen and B. B. Lawrence, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications", in D. Gilmartin and B. Lawrence (eds.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: rethinking religious identities in Islamicate South Asia*, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 149-171
- M. Hermansen, "Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Bibliographical Literature (Tazkirahs)", in *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, vol. 4, n°2, 2002, pp. 1-21
- K. Hjortshoj, *Urban Structures and Transformations in Lucknow, India*, Ithaca, 1979
- E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 2003
- J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous modernities: negotiating architecture and urbanism*, London, 2005
- D. Howard, *Being human in Islam: the impact of the evolutionary worldview*, London, 2011
- S. A. Husain, *Yādgār-e Ḥālī*, New Delhi, 2001
- S. A. Hyder, "Recasting Karbala in the Genre of Urdu Marsiya," *SAGAR*, Spring 1995
- , *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*, Oxford, 2006
- S. S. Ikramullah, *A critical survey of the development of the Urdu novel and short story*, London, 1945

- R. G. Irving, *Indian summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, London, 1981
- M. Islam, "The Conscious poet of nationalism: Chakbast", in *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 49<sup>th</sup> session, Dharwad, 1988
- M. S. Jain, *The Aligarh Movement*, New Delhi, 2006
- A. Jalal and S. Bose (eds.), *Nationalism, democracy and development: state and politics in India*, Delhi, 1997
- A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: individual and community in south Asian Islam since 1850*, London, 2000
- , "Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity", paper presented at the session of the Council of Social Sciences Pakistan, Lahore, on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2001
- R. Jalil, "Reflections of 1857 in Contemporary Urdu Literature", in C. Bates, A. Major, M. Carter and G. Rand (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, vol. 1: Anticipations and Experiences in the Locality, Los Angeles, 2013, pp. 120-131
- J. Jones, "Shi'ism, Humanity and Revolution in Twentieth-Century India: Selfhood and Politics in the Husainology of 'Ali Naqi Naqvi", in *JRAS*, vol. 24, n°3, pp. 415-434
- K. W. Jones, "Organized Hinduism in Delhi and New Delhi", in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 212-214
- M. Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*", in I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in colonial and postcolonial contexts*, London, 2009, pp. 11-36
- S. S. Kaif, *Chakbast, Makers of Indian Literature*, New Delhi, 1986
- R. Kamarparti, *Āshob: Neshnal Arkāṭōz men mahfūz zabt shuddah ādābiyyat se intikhāb*, New Delhi, 1993
- W. Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies", *History and Theory*, vol. 41, 2002, pp. 179-197
- S. Kaul, *Imagining the Urban: Sanskrit and the City in early India*, New Delhi, 2011
- S. Kaviraj, "Religion and identity in India", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 20, n°2, 1997, pp. 325-344

- S. Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Nationalist Discourse in India*, Delhi, 1995
- S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters: The Power, Subjectivity, and space of India's Mughal Architecture*, London, 2011
- N. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani": a political biography*, Berkeley, 1972
- D. H. Khan, *Pandit Brijmohan Dattatreyyah Kaifi*, Delhi, 2011
- J. A. Khan, *Muhammad Shibli Nomani*, Aligarh, 2004
- N. A. Khan, *Hindustānī Pres (1556 tā 1900)*, Lucknow, 1990
- P. M. Khan, "From *The Lament for Delhi*", trans. and introduction to selected poems from *Fughān-i Dihlī*", in S. Nijhawan (ed.), *Nationalism in the Vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the Literature of Indian Freedom*, Delhi, 2009, pp. 88-92
- , Draft paper, "What is a Shahr-Ashob" workshop at Columbia University by the Southern Asian Institute, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2009, available online on <[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt\\_pasha\\_fughanintro.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_pasha_fughanintro.pdf)>
- , *The Broken Spell: The Romance Genre in Late Mughal India*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2013
- R. Khan, "The Social Production of Space and Emotions in South Asia", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 611-633
- , "Local Pasts: Space, Emotions and Identities in Vernacular Histories of Princely Rampur", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 693-731
- H. A. Khimjee, *The Legacy of the early twentieth-century Khilafat Movement*, PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998
- M. S. Kidwai, *Sir Sayyid's contribution to journalism with special reference to the Aligarh Institute Gazette and the Tahzibul Akhlaq*, PhD dissertation, AMU (Aligarh), 2005
- A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, social power and environment*, London, 1976
- C. R. King, "Forging a new linguistic identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868-1914", in S. B. Freitag (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment, 1800-1980*, Berkeley, 1989

- , "The images of Virtue and Vice: the Hindi-Urdu controversy in two nineteenth century Hindi plays", in K. Jones (ed.), *Religious controversy in British India*, Albany, 1992, pp. 123-148
- , *One language, two scripts: the Hindi movement in nineteenth century north India*, New Delhi, 1994
- R. King, "Orientalism and the Modern Myth of Hinduism", in *Numen*, 1999, vol. 46, n°2, pp. 146-185
- L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson and M. Barad (eds.), *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Cambridge, 2007
- E. Koch, "Shah Jahan's visits to Delhi prior to 1648: New evidence of ritual movement in urban Mughal India", in *Environmental Design: Mughal architecture. Pomp and Ceremonies*, XIth year, n°11, pp. 18-29
- I. Kogan, *The Struggle against Mourning*, Lanham, 2007
- G. C. Kozlowski, *Muslim endowments and society in British India*, Cambridge, 1985
- S. Kumar, *The present in Delhi's pasts*, New Delhi, 2002
- A. Latif, *The influence of English Literature on Urdu Literature*, London, 1924
- R. Latif, "Divergent Trajectories of "Masjid-e Qurtuba": Iqbal's Imaginings and the Historical Life of the Monument", in *AUS*, n°26, pp. 124-134
- D. Laub and Sh. Felman, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, New York, 1992
- D. Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, 1995, pp. 61-75
- M.-C. Lavabre, "Usages du passé, usages de la mémoire", in *Revue française de science politique*, 44e année, n° 3, 1994, pp. 480-493
- , "Usages et mésusages de la notion de mémoire", in *Critique internationale*, vol. 7, 2000, pp. 48-57
- , "Sociologie de la mémoire et de ses cadres", paper presented at the seminar "Mémoires historiques d'ici et d'ailleurs : regards croisés", 26 October 2007, available online <<http://vimeo.com/28427144>> (last accessed 30 June 2016)
- L. Lawlor and V. Moulard Leonard, "Henri Bergson", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2016 edition
- J. Le Goff, *Histoire et Mémoire*, Paris, 1988

- J. Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*, Harvard University Press, 2006
- F. Lehmann, "Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline", in *Mahfil*, vol. VI, 2/3, 1970, pp. 125-131
- D. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's first generation: Muslim solidarity in British India*, New Delhi, 2010 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1978)
- , "Sauda Sulad: Urdu in the Two Versions of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Asaru's-Sanadid", in *AUS*, vol. 26, 2011, pp. 21-38.
- R. Llewellyn-Jones, "Mutiny Memorials", in *The Great Uprising in India, 1857-58: Untold Stories, Indian and British*, Woodbridge, 2007, chap. 6
- S. Liddle, "Azurdah: Scholar, Poet, and Judge", in M. Pernau (ed.), *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 125-144
- J. P. Losty, *Delhi 360°: Mazhar Ali Khan's view from the Lahore Gate*, New Delhi, 2012
- J. Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism*, New Delhi, 2009
- , "Muhammad Iqbal: Rumuz-e Bekhudi [Mysteries of Selflessness], in C. Baldick and P. Childs (eds.), *The Literary Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 2010 <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=30671>> (accessed 06 May 2016)
- , "Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, aesthetics and postcolonialism", in G. Nash, K. Kerr-Koch, S. Hackett (eds.), *Postcolonialism and Islam: Theory, Literature, Culture, Society and Film*, 2013, pp. 35-47
- , *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal*, New York, 2015
- H. Malik, *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, New York, 1971
- , "Iqbal, Muhammad", in J. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York, 2001, online
- D. J. Matthews, "Iqbal and his Urdu poetry", in M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions. A Collection of Unpublished and Rare Iqbalian Studies*, Lahore, 2003, pp. 101-110
- S. Meisami and P. Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1, 1998
- B. D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, in *India's Muslims: an omnibus*, New Delhi, 2007 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1982)

- , "Reflections on Iqbal's mosque", in M. I. Chaghatai (ed.), *Iqbal: New Dimensions. A Collection of Unpublished and Rare Iqbalian Studies*, Lahore, 2003, pp. 165-170
- G. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: A study of Indian Muslim Leadership, 1919-24*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972
- , "Urdu Political Poetry during the Khilafat Movement", in *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 4, 1974, pp. 459-471
- , *The Khilafat movement: religious symbolism and political mobilization in India*, Delhi, 1982
- , "Begamati Zuban: Women's Language and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Delhi", in *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 11, n° 2, 1984, pp. 155-170
- , "Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi and the 'Delhi Renaissance'", in R. E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages*, Delhi, 1992, pp. 174-185
- , "Sayyid Mumtaz 'Ali and *Tahzib un-Niswan*: Women's Rights in Islam and Women's journalism in Urdu", in K. W. Jones (ed.), *Religious controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian languages*, New York, 1992, pp. 179-199
- , *Secluded scholars: women's education and Muslim social reform in colonial India*, Delhi, 1998
- , "Khilafat movement", in U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz et al. (eds.), *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, Berlin, 2015 (online version)
- J. V. Montville, "Complicated Mourning and Mobilization for Nationalism", in J. Braun (ed.), *Social Pathology in Comparative Perspective: the nature and psychology of civil society*, Westport, 1995, pp. 159-173
- C. Mucci, *Beyond Individual and Collective Trauma: Intergenerational Transmission, Psychoanalytic Treatment, and the Dynamics of Forgiveness*, London, 2013
- M. A. Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'mani. An exposition of his religious and political ideas*, New Delhi, 1996
- M. Mustansir, *Tulip in the desert: a selection of the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal*, London, 2000
- C. M. Naim, "The Art of the Urdu Marsiya", in M. Israel and N.K. Wagle (eds.), *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 101-116

- , "A Note on Shahr Ashob", in the *AUS*, vol. IV, 1984, p. 42
- , "Prize-Winning Adab: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification", in B. D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 290-314
- , "Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A Comparison", in Miller B. S. (ed), *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 259-276
- , "Transvestic Words: The *Rekhti* in Urdu", in *AUS*, vol. 16, 2001, pp. 3-26
- , "Ghalib's Delhi: A Shamelessly Revisionist Look at Two Popular Metaphors", in *AUS*, vol. 18, n°1, pp. 3-24
- , *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The selected essays of C. M. Naim*, Delhi, 2004
- , "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called "Asar-al-Sanadid"", in *MAS*, vol. 45, n°3, 2011, pp. 1-40
- , "Interrogating "the East", "Culture", and "Loss" in Abdul Halim Sharar's *Guzashta Lakhnau*", in Alka Patel and Karen Leonard (eds.) *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, Leiden, 2012, pp. 189-204
- B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi: pan-Islamism, imperialism and nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 2002
- S. Naeem, *Shināsan-e Sir Syed*, vol. 2, Aligarh, 2011
- R. Nanda and N. Gupta, *Delhi, the built heritage: a listing*, New Delhi, 1999
- G. C. Narang, "The sound structure of Iqbal's Urdu poetry", in A. Sardar Jafri and K. S. Duggal (eds.), *Iqbal. Commemorative volume*, Lahore, 2004, pp. 202-206
- D. Nath, *Dehlī aur Āzādī: Dehlī kī jang-e āzādī kī kahānī 1857 tā 1947*, Delhi, 2011
- A. C. Niemeijer, *The Khilafat Movement in India, 1919-1924*, The Hague, 1972
- Y. Noorani, "The Lost Garden of Al-Andalus: Islamic Spain and the poetic inversion of colonialism", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 31, 1999, pp. 237-254
- P. Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1 : La République, Paris, 1984
- R. O'Hanlon, "Kingdom, Household and Body History, Gender and Imperial Service under Akbar", in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 41, 5, 2007, pp. 889-923

- V. Oldenburg, *The making of Colonial Lucknow*, Princeton, 1984
- , "Lifestyle as resistance: The case of the courtesans of Lucknow", in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, n°2, 1990, pp. 259-287
- J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader*, Oxford, 2011
- F. Orsini, *The Hindi public sphere, 1920-1940: language and literature in the age of nationalism*, New Delhi, 2009
- W. Ouyang, "Lost in Nostalgia: Modernity's Repressed Other", in J. Parker and T. Matthews (eds.), *Tradition, Translation, Trauma: The Classic and the Modern*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 191-210
- K. Pant, *The Kashmiri Pandit. Story of a Community in Exile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New Delhi, 1987
- M. Pegors, "A Shahr Ashob of Sauda", in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 25, n° 1, 1990, pp. 89-97
- Ch. Pellat, "Marthiya" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New edition*, Brill, 1989, vol. 6, fascicules 107-108
- C. R. Perkins, *Partitioning History: The creation of an Islami pablik in late colonial India, c. 1880-1920*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011
- , "From the Mehfil to the printed word: Public debate and discourse in late colonial India", in *Indian Economic Social History Review*, vol. 50, n°1, 2013, pp. 47-76
- M. Pernau, *Ashraf into middle classes: Muslims in nineteenth century Delhi*, New Delhi, 2013
- , "Mapping Emotions, Constructing Feelings: Delhi in the 1840s", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 634-667
- , "Nostalgia: Tears of blood for a lost world", in *SAGAR*, vol. 23, 2015, pp. 74-109
- , "The Virtuous Individual and Social Reform: Debates among North Indian Urdu speakers", in M. Pernau, H. Jordheim, O. Bashkin et al. (eds.), *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*, Oxford, 2015
- M. Pernau, H. Jordheim, E. Saada, et al. (eds.), *Civilizing emotions: Concepts in nineteenth-century Asia and Europe*, Oxford, 2015

- C. Petievich, "Poetry of the declining Mughals: the shahr ashob", in *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. XXV/1, 1990, pp. 99-110
- , *Assembly of Rivals: Delhi, Lucknow and the Urdu Ghazal*, New Delhi, 1992
- J. T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*, London, 1884
- A. Powell, "History Textbooks and the Transmission of the Pre-Colonial Past in NW India in the 1860s and 1870s", in D. Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, Delhi, 1999, pp. 91-133
- , "Questionable Loyalties: Muslim Government Servants and Rebellion", in C. Bates et al. (eds.), *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 82-102
- F. W. Pritchett, "The world upside down: shahr ashob as a genre", in *AUS*, vol. IV, 1984, pp. 37-41
- , *Marvelous Encounters. Folk romance in Urdu and Hindi*, New Delhi, 1985
- , "The Dastan Revival: An Overview", in *AUS*, vol. 7, 1990, pp. 76-82
- , *The Romance Tradition in Urdu. Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamzah*, New York, 1991
- , *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics*, California, 1994
- R. Priya, "Town Planning, Public Health and Delhi's Urban Poor: A Historical View", in S. Patel and K. Deb (eds.), *Urban Studies*, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 223-245
- A. Qadir, *The New School of Urdu literature*, Lahore, 1898
- , *Famous Urdu Poets and Writers*, Lahore, 1947
- B. A. Qureshi, *New Standard Twenty First Century Dictionary Urdu to English*, Delhi, 1980.
- N. Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A study of the Khilafat movement, 1918-1924*, Leiden, 1999
- R. B. Qureshi, "The Urdu Ghazal in performance", in R. Russell and C. Shackleton (eds.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: studies in honour of Ralph Russell*, London, 1989, pp. 175-189
- A. Abdul Rahim, "A Study on Muhammad Iqbal's Framework of *Ijtihad*", in *Islamiyyat*, vol. 36, n°2, 2014, pp. 5-13
- M. Rahman, "Shahrangiz", in H. A. R. Gibb, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999, online version.

- , "Musammat", in H. A. R. Gibb, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1999, online version
- R. Rahman, "Qasbas as Place: A Sense of Belonging and Nostalgia in Colonial India", in *JESHO*, vol. 58, 2015, pp. 668-692
- Q. Ra'is, *Premchand*, New Delhi, 1985
- M. A. Raja, *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational texts and the rise of Muslim national identity, 1857-1947*, Karachi, 2010
- M. Ram, *Hali, Makers of Indian Literature*, New Delhi, 1982
- M. Ram, *Talāmezah-e Ghālib*, New Delhi, 1984
- T. Ramadan, *Aux sources du renouveau musulman. D'al-Afghani à Hassan al-Banna un siècle de réformisme islamique*, Paris, 1998
- T. K. Ravindran, *Nehru's idea of history*, New Delhi, 1980
- P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, 2000
- F. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*, London, 1974
- , "Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism", in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 15, 1977, pp. 215-30
- , "Islam and Muslim Separatism", in D. Taylor and M. Yapp (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia*, London, 1979, pp. 79-107
- , "The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol.8, 1998, pp. 271-289
- , "Islam and the impact of print in South Asia", in F. Robinson (ed.), *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 66-104
- , *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, Oxford, 2000
- , "Other-Worldly and This-Worldly Islam and the Islamic Revival", in *JRAS*, series 3, vol. 14, n°1, 2004, pp. 47-58
- , "The Memory of Power, Muslim "Political Importance" and the Muslim League", in R. Ahmad (ed.), *International Conference on the All India Muslim League (1906-1947)*, 2006, pp. 157-175
- , *The Mughal Emperors and the Islamic dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia*, London, 2007
- , "Crisis of Authority: Crisis of Islam?", in *JRAS*, series 3, vol. 19, n°3, 2009, pp. 339-354

- , "Strategies of Authority in Muslim South Asia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", in *MAS*, vol. 47, n°1, 2013, pp. 1-21
- R. Russell and K. Islam, *Ghalib. 1797-1869, vol. 1: Life and Letters*, London, 1969
- , *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan*, London, 1969
- R. Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A select history*, New Delhi, 1992
- M. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu literature*, Delhi, 1995
- A. Safadi, "The 'Fallen' Woman in Two Colonial Novels: *Umra'o Jan Ada* and *Bazaar-e Husn / Sevasadan*", in *AUS*, vol. 24, 2009, pp. 16-53
- R. B. Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Allahabad, 1927
- J. Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster*, New York, 2014
- T. G. Schaap, *9/11 Fiction and the Construction of Cultural Trauma*, PhD dissertation, University of Calgary, 2015
- A. Schimmel, *Classical Urdu Literature from the beginning to Iqbal*, Wiesbaden, 1975
- , *Gabriel's Wing. A study into the religious ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Lahore, 1989
- , *The Secrets of Creative Love. The work of Muhammad Iqbal*, Al Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 5<sup>th</sup> Public lecture, Royal V&A Museum, London, 1998
- , *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, London, 2004
- M. Schleyer, "Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane", in *AUS*, vol. 27, 2012, pp. 34-56
- S. Schneider and H. Weinberg, *The Large Group Re-Visited: The Herd, Primal Horde, Crowds and Masses*, London, 2003
- H. Segal, "A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics", in L. Stonebridge and J. Phillips (eds.), *Reading Melanie Klein*, London, 1998, pp. 203-222
- H. M. Sender, *The Kashmiri Brahmins (Pandits) up to 1930: cultural change in the cities of North India*, PhD dissertation, Wisconsin-Madison, 1981
- , "Kashmiri Pandits and their changing role in the Culture of Delhi", in R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Delhi through the Ages. Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 316-331
- C. Servan-Schreiber, "Littératures orales de l'Inde du Nord. La transmission du répertoire bhojpuri en Inde du Nord: formes orales et livrets de

- colportage", in *Ecole pratique des hautes études. Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, livret annuel*, vol. 130, Paris, 1999, pp. 214-215
- S. Seth, "Constituting the "Backward but Proud Muslim": Pedagogy, Governmentality and Identity in Colonial India", in M. Hasan and N. Nakazato (eds.), *The Unfinished Agenda: Nation-building in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 129-150
- I. S. Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and nationalism in late colonial India*, Cambridge, 2012
- C. Shackle, "Brij Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' (1866-1955): A Mirror for India, translated from the Urdu and introduced by Christopher Shackle", in S. Nijhawan (ed.), *Nationalism in the vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the literature of Indian freedom*, Ranikhet, 2010, pp. 101-111
- K. H. ud-Din Shahid, *Haiderābād ke shā'er. Intikḥāb kalām: 1900 se 1958 tak*, Hyderabad, 1958
- F. Shaikh, *Community and Consensus: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947*, Cambridge, 1989
- , *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London, 2009
- S. Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persia Poetic Landscape", in *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, n°2, 2004, pp. 73-81
- , "Reading the Acts and Lives of Performers in Mughal Persian Texts", in K. Schofield and F. Orsini (eds.), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, London, 2015, pp. 283-302
- M. Shan, *The Indian Muslims: A Documentary Record*, vol 2: The Tripoli and Balkan Wars, New Delhi, 1980
- Y. Sharma, "From Miniatures to Monuments picturing Shah Alam's Delhi (1771-1806)", in A. Patel and K. Leonard (eds.), *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, Leiden, 2012, pp. 111-138
- M. M. S. Shirazi, *M'arikah-e Chakbast-o Sharar y'anī mubāhisah-e Gulzār-e Nasīm*, Delhi, 1966
- Z. A. Siddiqi, *Maulana Muhammad 'Ali aur jang-e āzādī*, Rampur, 1998
- S. Siddique, *Remembering the revolt of 1857: contrapuntal formations in Indian literature and history*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, SOAS, 2012

- I. H. Siddiqui, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing" in *Sir Syed Centenary Papers: in commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Karachi, 1998, pp. 113-124
- G. Singh, *Deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh, History of the Freedom Movement in Punjab*, vol. 4, Patiala, 1978
- K. Singh (ed.), *City improbable: an anthology of writings on Delhi*, New York, 2001
- S. Singh, *Freedom movement in Delhi (1859-1919)*, New Delhi, 1972
- W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, 1977 [1957]
- U. Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India, 1858-1895*, New Delhi, 2007
- L. Steele, "Hali and his Muqaddamah: the creation of a literary attitude in nineteenth century India", in *AUS*, vol. 1, 1981, pp. 1-45
- D. Stone, "Beyond the Mnemosyne Institute: The Future of memory after the Age of Commemoration", in R. Crownshaw, J. Kilby and A. Rowland (eds.), *The Future of Memory*, New York, 2010, pp. 17-36
- L. C. Stout, *The Hindustani Kayasthas: The Kayastha Pathshala, and the Kayastha Conference, 1873-1914*, PhD dissertation, University of California, 1975
- K. N. Sud, *Iqbal and his Poems (A Reappraisal)*, Delhi, 1969
- Z. Taunswi, *Hayāt-e Iqbāl*, Lahore, 1977
- T. Thwaites, L. Davis and W. Mules, *Introducing cultural and media studies: a semiotic approach*, Basingstoke, 2002
- M. Trivedi, "A Genre of Composite Creativity: Marsiya and Its Performance in Awadh", in M. Hasan and A. Roy (eds.), *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 195-221
- C. W. Troll, "A Note on an Early Topographical Work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan: "Asar al-Sanadid", in *JRAS*, n<sup>o</sup>2, 1972, pp. 135-146
- M. Umar, *National Movement in India. The role of Hasrat Mohani*, Jaipur, 2005
- Z. Umer, *Maulana Shibli Numani: a study of Islamic modernism and romanticism in India: 1882-1914*, PhD dissertation, University of Oxford, 1969
- A. Young "Bruno and the Holy Fool: Myth, Mimesis, and the Transmission of Traumatic Memories", in L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson and M. Barad (eds.), *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 339-362

- S. A. Vahid, "Iqbal and his critics", in *Iqbal Review*, vol. 5, n°1, April 1964, pp. 4-24
- O. Van der Hart, "Charcot (1825-1893)", in G. Reyes, J. D. Elhai and J. D. Ford (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma*, 2008
- C. Von Scheve, "Collective Emotions in Rituals: Elicitation, Transmission and a "Matthew-effect"", in A. Michaels and C. Wulf (eds.), *Emotions in Rituals and Performances*, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 55-77
- V. D. Volkan, "The Next Chapter: Consequences of Societal Trauma" in P. Gobodo-Madikizela and C. van der Merve (eds.), *Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Perspectives of the Unfinished Journeys of the Past*, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 1-26
- V. D. Volkan, "Large group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis", in *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 18, n°4, 2009, pp. 206-213
- D. Walder, *Postcolonial nostalgias. Writing, representation, and memory*, Abingdon, 2011
- S. R. Wasti, "Dr Muhammad Iqbal from Nationalism to Universalism", in *Iqbal Review*, vol. 19, n°1, Jan 1978, pp. 35-45
- R. D. Williams, *Hindustani music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758-1905*, unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London, 2014
- G. A. Wilson, "Community Resilience and Social Memory", in *Environmental Values*, vol. 24, n°2, 2015, pp. 227-257
- G. Winthrop-Young, "Cultural Studies and German Media Theory", in G. Hall and C. Birchall (eds.), *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 88-104
- S. Yamame, "Lamentation Dedicated to the Declining Capital: Urdu Poetry on Delhi during the Late Mughal Period", in *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies*, vol. 12, 2000, pp. 50-72
- S. M. A. Zaidi, *Muṭā'lah -e Dāgh*, Lucknow, 1974
- G. H. Zulfiqar, *Iqbāl: Ek muṭā'lah*, Lahore, 1997
- T. J. Zumbroich, "'The missi-stained finger-tip of the fair': A cultural history of teeth and gum blackening in South Asia", in *eJournal of Indian medicine*, vol. 8, 2015, pp. 1-32