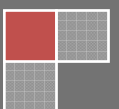


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Paper Abstracts



Abbas, Amber

The Ex-centricity of the Aligarh Muslim University

The Aligarh Muslim University has been a center of education, organization and uplift for South Asia's Muslims. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan envisioned the institution to serve this purpose, and this legacy forms the backbone of the narrative about AMU. Still, a close examination of AMU's role in the twentieth century reveals that AMU can be seen as both a safe-haven and as an island.

The 1920 founding of the Jamia Millia Islamia on the campus of the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College presented an Indian nationalist challenge to the British loyalist tradition of Aligarh- an institution founded to prepare the scions of the North Indian Muslim elite for government service. It can be argued that the Aligarh Muslim University- founded shortly after this nationalist secession- has been at the center of twentieth century Indian Muslim politics since its very inception.

The dominant narrative about AMU upholds its centrality. I argue that an examination of the difference between Aligarh's vaunted legacy, and its present place in Indian society shows that it functions as both a center and a margin simultaneously. AMU represents both a place where Muslims can safely express themselves educationally and culturally, and a place where they are isolated from Indian society and politics. Its political history has vexed its position as the center of Muslim opinion and left it at the center of debates about Muslim loyalty to the state. This complexity forms an important aspect of AMU's legacy in South Asia, and provides a lens for examining the position of Indian Muslims.

Accardi, Dean

Narrating Networks of Power: 'Ali Hamadani in early histories of the Kashmiri Sultanate

Apart from the famous Rajatarangini chronicles, the Tarikh-I-Sayyed Ali and the Baharistan-I-Shahi are two of the earliest historical accounts of the pre-Mughal Kashmiri Sultanate. Unlike many other chronicles, though, these two texts do not focus on the heroic or tragic qualities and pursuits of the ruling monarch, but rather narrate the rise and fall of kings primarily through the ongoing activities and rivalries of various religious leaders of the day. More specifically, the authors of these two histories position themselves on opposite sides of two competing Sufi Orders: the decidedly Sunni Kubrawi-Hamadani Order and the Shi'a leaning Nurbakhshi Order. Despite this rivalry, the authors of these two texts both praise, honor, and attempt to claim for themselves the renowned Sufi saint 'Ali Hamadani on behalf of their respective Sufi Orders. Through examining these two texts, I will explore the different tactics these authors deploy in their narration of the life of 'Ali Hamadani as well as the narratives of the leaders, followers, champions and patrons of the Sufi Orders in order to own the legacy of 'Ali Hamadani. In doing so, I hope to illustrate how these histories differently articulate royal, bureaucratic, religious and military power to establish social standing for two separate cross-sections of elites whose direct political power had largely waned, demonstrating how wider social networks and purposes are served in what may appear to be an otherwise simple sectarian rivalry.

Adluri, Vishwa

The Double Beginning of the Adiparvan or How to Read the Epic

Building on recent scholarship by Hildebeitel, Minkowski, Oberlies, and Austin, this paper focuses on the double beginning of the Adiparvan (Mbh 1.1.1 and 1.4.1). I will show that the Mahabharata's narrative architecture organizes the text on a philosophical and interpretive plane: the text is intentionally split at its very outset, with a hermeneutic and pedagogical apparatus in the form of the Pausyaparvan inserted between the first and second beginning that provides the reader a set of hermeneutic guidelines to reading the text.

This interpretation provides a solution to the problem of the Mahabharata's double beginning noted by Mehta (1973) and Sukthankar (1933). In his Prolegomena to the Critical Edition, Sukthankar writes: "It would have been possible to athetize the first three adhyāyas in order to remove this anomaly [i.e., the double beginning]" (1933, lxxxvii), but ultimately rejects this solution on textual and philological grounds, as "all the four adhyāyas are handed down in exactly the same form ... in all manuscripts of both recensions" (ibid.). Sukthankar's hermeneutic perspective in *On the Meaning of the Mahabharata* (1957) which I further develop here provides additional evidence in support of his decision to retain both beginnings. Besides the evidence of the manuscript tradition, we can identify a philosophical architecture to the text that lets us see this doubling as deliberate and meaningful.

I will argue that the complex philosophical architecture of the Adiparvan transforms the meaning of the historical narrative (which some German scholars have identified with an *Ur-Arisches* or *Ur-Indogermanisches Epos*) of the Kuru dynasty into a universal hermeneutic ontology. Hence, to reject the Adiparvan as a "late book" is as trivial a statement as it is thoughtless. Indeed, Sukthankar himself noted the Adiparvan's significance to the epic as a whole—perhaps one reason why the Adiparvan was collated from the largest number of manuscripts (of the 235 known manuscripts, the CE examined 70 either partially or fully, and of these actually utilized about 60 in preparing the text). I therefore propose reading the CE of the Adiparvan in light of Sukthankar's posthumously published lectures on the epic (1957), which I argue present a post-CE view of the text in which the task of lower criticism defers to hermeneutic interpretation. I simultaneously defend the CE as an archetypal text as opposed to a mere "Arbeitsinstrument."

