

# Mosques, Temples, and Orientalists: Hegemonic Imaginations in Banaras

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In a climate of rising religious fundamentalism, it is relevant and pertinent to examine the processes by which a “religious” site is created. My general premise is that historical narratives are negotiations, rather than simple renditions of fact, and thus are always reflective of their authors’ contemporary politics. Within this framework, this essay explores the processes through which the city of Banaras has been created and represented as an indisputably Hindu city. In addition to the revivalist religious agenda of the Marathas, this process has involved the hegemonic imaginations of both nineteenth-century colonial Orientalists and modern-day postcolonial nationalists.

Usually described as a Hindu pilgrimage city of riverfront temples, Banaras, India, has long been thought of as a central regenerative source for Hindu tradition and cultural continuity. This image has persisted despite glaring evidence of an Islamic presence in the city in the form of prominent mosques, urban institutions, and a substantial Muslim population.

Even the most vociferous defenders of Banaras’s antiquity as a Hindu site admit that in terms of built fabric, the contemporary city is largely an eighteenth-century creation. Thus, the present Vishwanath temple, its preeminent shrine, was only built in 1777, and no building can be dated earlier than the sixteenth century. How then, does an image of a Banaras of hoary antiquity persist?

As this essay will demonstrate, Banaras was re-created as a site of Hindu pilgrimage, and this remaking occurred within the framework of a revivalist religious agenda. In a climate of rising religious fundamentalism, it is relevant and pertinent to examine the processes by which a “religious” site is created. My larger premise, however, is that historical narratives are negotiations rather than simple renditions of fact, and thus reflect their authors’ contemporary politics. As Elizabeth Ermarth has pointed out, we can never actually re-create the past; all we can know are representations of it.<sup>1</sup>

In keeping with this understanding, this article presents a historical narrative of the processes of Banaras’s creation and representation that is unquestionably colored by my own

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political concerns. Key among these is my belief that hegemonic consciousness inevitably colors interpretations of historical events and their spatial and territorial manifestations. The term hegemony is often used to imply the dominance of one social class or group over another through the use of ideology.<sup>2</sup> This implies one group's ability to project a worldview that subordinated people's accept as "common sense" within a framework of consent. It is within such a framework that Banaras has been created and represented as a Hindu city.

## HIDDEN HISTORIES

On my third visit to the Alamo in San Antonio, I was stunned to hear that the United States (or rather the Nation of Texas) had lost the battle there in 1836. On reflection, I realized that accounts of the event never explicitly claimed a Texan victory. Films, books, and oral accounts referred to "the struggle for freedom," but never made clear mention of who won and who lost. Of course, for most people familiar with the story the outcome may be largely irrelevant — it was the fight that mattered. Yet perhaps more significantly, as someone accustomed to American global hegemony, I simply assumed (quite naturally, I thought) that the Texans must have been the victors.

The point of this anecdote is that history entails a selective retelling of the past. And since our expectations in this process often reflect contemporary realities, no historical narrative can provide an unbiased lens. Growing up in a Hindu household in urban India, I experienced this lesson firsthand with reference to Banaras. During those years, I often heard stories of a mosque immediately adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple, the holiest of holy Shaivite shrines in the city. Its presence, I was told, was related to Islam's historic triumph over Hinduism on the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, the mosque provided a conclusion of sorts to a narration of invasion, desecration, destruction, and plunder that began with raids by Mohammed of Ghazni in the eleventh century CE.

But these were stories told and retold to a child. They would never have made their way into an official textbook. In the climate of state-sponsored secularism in the 1970s, my history texts were concerned with a rhetoric of "unity in diversity." They glorified the achievements of Hindu dynasties, followed in chronological order by the achievements of Muslim dynasties: according to the official recounting, there was no overlap or conflict. Of course, my classmates and I were very conscious of what was being left unsaid. But the idealist in me preferred the textbook version — even though, like others, I felt the seductive pull of alternate narrations.

Representations of the city of Banaras are deeply implicated in this symbolic agenda. My earliest image of Banaras is of a poster issued by the Indian government's tourism department. It depicted the riverfront, with its ghats, palaces and temples, and beneath was a caption that read simply

"India." This is the enduring image of the city — a metonym for the "eternal" India of deep spiritual traditions.

In hindsight, I now see this poster as just one of a series of pictorial and textual representations of the city that reiterated a view of the city's exclusively Hindu character. And along with my history text, it was another aspect of a government-approved image for the nation that stressed a benign Hindu hegemony. Although "diversity" could be Muslim, "unity" in the end was almost always a grid defined by Hinduism. In this equation, Banaras was undisputedly Hindu.

Despite these reassuring representations, the anecdotes of siege and salvage heard in childhood persisted, and they became real whenever religious riots broke out. Finally, in December of 1992, when a mob of Hindu fundamentalists destroyed the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, the stories became for me the stuff of realpolitik. The religious conflict in Ayodhya forever disturbed the Banaras of picturesque imagery.

The most clearly identifiable structures in any aerial view of Banaras are the Gyan Vapi and Alamgiri mosques. From the air, it is also clear that each is situated adjacent to a significant Hindu temple. The Alamgiri mosque is adjacent to the Bindu Madhav temple, while the Gyan Vapi mosque is adjacent to the Vishwanath temple (FIG. 1). Police contingents guard three of these religious sites, and photography is banned at the Gyan Vapi/Vishwanath temple precincts.<sup>3</sup>

On a visit to the city in December 2002, I became acquainted with Musa, a Muslim man, thirty years old and a weaver by profession.<sup>4</sup> His family was in the silk brocade trade and manufactured the Banarasi sarees that were so prized by my family. On one occasion I asked Musa to take me to the Gyan Vapi mosque. Entry into the mosque precinct is restricted, and I hoped Musa could help me get inside. When the police stopped us, the inspector on duty was very polite, but he refused to allow me to enter the mosque, or to take photographs of its exterior. However, Musa left abruptly. Later he confessed that, dressed as he had been in "traditional" garb, he felt marked as a Muslim male and vulnerable to police brutality. He was well aware how quickly rival claims to space could erupt through and disturb the city's spiritual theater.

I was interested in the Gyan Vapi mosque because it is one of the few unobliterated markers of Islamic presence in Banaras. As mentioned already, it is located immediately adjacent to the Vishwanath temple. The temple was built in 1776, long after construction of the mosque. Nevertheless, its activities and institutions occupy the area immediately around the two precincts. But I was also aware this hidden history of conflict is two-sided. At the rear of the mosque is a carved masonry wall reputed to be a remnant of an earlier version of the Vishwanath shrine. Most historical accounts credit the mosque's construction to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, who was also responsible for the destruction of the older Vishwanath temple.

The other great remaining Muslim shrine in Banaras is the Alamgiri mosque. Today it is a "protected monument,"



FIGURE 1. *Panchganga ghat and the Alamgiri mosque. The Alamgiri mosque is one of the most prominent structures in this view.*

under jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Among other things, the ASI has prescribed norms for the repair and preservation of such monuments, and these include a list of do's and don'ts that take precedence over the tastes and preferences of local community management agencies such as *waqfs* or temple trusts.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of my visit there, the caretaker of the Alamgiri mosque, an ASI functionary and a Hindu, recounted its "authentic" history. Then, he told me that the imam of the mosque had wished to renovate the gateway of the precinct, but had been prevented from doing so by the ASI. The reason was that that imam's choice of form and materials did not meet the stylistic standards and preservation norms set by the ASI. "Why then," the functionary asked, "do they [the ASI] not reveal the temple columns under the northern dome? That's the truly authentic structure under there." He was referring of course, to the Bindu Madhav temple that had once occupied the site. In most versions, this temple had also been destroyed by Aurangzeb (also known as Badshah Alamgir), who had sponsored construction of the mosque that bears his name in its place. This incident condensed for me a range of conflicting claims over buildings and space that coalesce around Hindu Banaras and its invented traditions. In order to salvage the Hindu city, it was necessary to obliterate Muslim Banaras. And in order to represent it as an eternally Hindu city, a hoary tradition had to be invented for it.

The principal patrons of the city's eighteenth-century rebuilding were the Marathas. A federation of oligarchies from central India, they established their influence over large parts of northern India following the decline of the Mughal empire. Among other things, the Marathas were interested in rebuilding centers of pilgrimage in the north. In Banaras, they built temples and ghats, sponsored religious and educational institutions, and began to resettle Brahmins from the Maratha country there (FIG. 2). However, rebuilding the city not only involved the construction of new temples, but the continuing refurbishment of older ones and the provision of financial endowments for temples and *brahmapuris* (residential enclaves for priests). And eventually this newly invigorated tradition of patronage was taken up by other north-Indian Hindu elites, and persisted even after political authority passed to the British toward the end of the eighteenth century (FIG. 3).<sup>6</sup>

This process of rebuilding corresponded to the propagation of the notion of a sacred Hindu Banaras through a series of spatial and textual productions. In this sense, it is important to recall how Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have defined invented traditions as symbolic practices, governed by certain norms, that automatically imply continuity with the past.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Banaras, these "invented traditions" encompassed aspects of both the local built environment and native textual representation. However, given the political scenario on the Indian subcontinent from the late eighteenth

**FIGURE 2.**  
*View from roof of riverfront palace  
on Dashashwamedha ghat.*



**FIGURE 3.** *Palaces built by  
Maratha elites on the riverfront.*

century onward, they also became entangled with an Orientalist project of colonial origin concerned with producing a “pure” Banaras of indisputably Hindu antecedents.

As I shall describe, these notions of the city continue to be reiterated today through processes of representation, salvage, obliteration and reinvention. These three categories are by no means exclusive of each other; indeed, they are inevitably intertwined. Yet each of these processes takes on a specific complexion in the case of Banaras that is both textual and spatial.

Today, although the politics of spatial representation reflect the changed dynamics of postcolonial India, it remains important to represent the site as Hindu. And in order to do so, alternate identities must still be obliterated. Thus, the story of Hindu Banaras is best understood as one of continuous remaking, which is only partly indebted to contemporary imaginations.

#### SPACES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Banaras is the name used in common parlance for the city (also known as Kashi and Varanasi) that is located along the north bank of the Ganges river.<sup>8</sup> The city is called Kashi in almost all Hindu scriptural references. In mythological terms, Kashi is associated with the deity Shiva, and within the Hindu religious tradition, it is the place where people come to die, since dying at this site ensures spiritual salvation. It is also a site for Hindus to venerate the dead.

The ghats of Banaras are central to its religious life. These are defined segments of river frontage between thirty and two

hundred yards in length. Most have been constructed as a series of stone terraces and stairs running down into the Ganges, and several are important places of pilgrimage. In the city’s creation myth, Shiva, the material form of an immaterial Brahma, together with his female consort Parvati, created the sacred area of Banaras. Shiva then created Vishnu, and the austerities that Vishnu performed by the side of the Manikarnika ghat were instrumental in creating the universe (FIG. 4).<sup>9</sup> This ghat is one of two preeminent cremation grounds in the city, as well as the mythical center of its creation.<sup>10</sup>

The city has an intimate relationship with the river, and many volumes have been published detailing the place of the city and the river in Hindu myth and religion.<sup>11</sup> While a larger discussion of this subject is outside the purview of this essay, it is important to mention that the city’s relationship to the river figures repeatedly in the processes of representation, obliteration, salvage and reinvention by which its contemporary meaning has been created. In particular, claims for the antiquity of the city draw great veracity from the presence of the river. Quite simply, it is easy to conclude that since the river must have always been here, so too must have been the city. Most visual representations of the city are also given from the river, allowing the river and the city to be further entwined in the symbolic imagination.

Away from the river’s edge, however, other significant spaces involve the juxtaposition of temple and mosque. As mentioned already, the Vishwanath temple is located immediately adjacent to the Gyan Vapi mosque, and the Alamgiri mosque is adjacent to the Bindu Madhav temple. Such a geography lends credence to narratives of obliteration, and



FIGURE 4. Manikarnika ghat. This is the main cremation ghat in Banaras.

legitimizes efforts at salvage. Most importantly, authorities contend that the Gyan Vapi mosque obliterated an earlier version of the Vishwanath temple on its present site. And other accounts argue that the mosque of Razia Bibi occupies the site of an even earlier version of this shrine. This would lead one to believe that the preeminent Hindu shrine in the city has been built at least three times. And religious and educational institutions, such as monasteries and schools, further influence the public sphere in Banaras, and help create and maintain a climate of Hindu hegemony in which such narratives can gain prominence.

#### THE HEGEMONIC IMAGINATION

Hegemonic claims in Banaras are inevitably spatial, since all efforts to reinvent its cultural significance must be corroborated in spatial form. While I do not intend to sideline the importance of Banaras within Hindu religious practice, I do intend to deconstruct the process by which it has been made into a preeminent Hindu site. Hegemony is completely successful only when it seems to make sense. And, as Robert Bocock has suggested, in order to be successful, a hegemonic viewpoint must encompass an entire worldview, with its attendant philosophy and morality.<sup>12</sup>

In Hindu Banaras such a hegemonic climate must be examined in the context both of colonial preoccupations and the rhetoric of the independent Indian nation-state. Thus, Ronald Inden has suggested that present knowledge and representation of the people and institutions of the Indian subcontinent are largely based upon the West's fantasies about its own rationality. Toward this end, depictions of India as a civilization of caste, villages, spiritualism, and divine kingship have persisted within a larger Orientalist framework.<sup>13</sup> Colonial narratives of Banaras were typical of the origins of such attitudes, stressing a notion of timelessness. Such notions have operated broadly within the overall framework of Orientalism. But I am more narrowly interested in specific ways they have been applied to the Indian subcontinent, and especially to the domain of Hinduism.<sup>14</sup> As Bernard Cohn has demonstrated, colonial scholarship also conceptualized India through the creation of simplified categories, setting up dichotomous oppositions between religious and social groups.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, along with various other social and religious formations, aspects of the Indian built environment were catalogued as either "Hindu" or "Islamic."

Postcolonial nationalism may also be understood as a hegemonic project. In the case of the independent Indian state, this has involved espousal of what Ayesha Jalal has called "cultural normalization," where the state is required to be impartial to differences of race, language, religion and caste.<sup>16</sup> As Jalal also pointed out, this rhetoric of "inclusionary nationalism" and "equal citizenship" is often accompanied by an unwillingness to deal with the realities of religious difference.<sup>17</sup>

Historically, as Partha Chatterjee demonstrated with reference to the independence movement in Bengal, hegemonic nationalisms are usually concerned with the worldview of a dominant group. Thus, "anticolonial nationalism," created a sovereign domain of its own before engaging the colonial power in nationalist battle.<sup>18</sup>

Colonized societies often also conceived of their world as divided between material "outer," and spiritual or "inner" domain.<sup>19</sup> The outer sphere was where the West dominated; and it was here that it was to be emulated in terms of technology, economy, and administrative skills. By contrast, the inner domain was spiritual, defined by one's cultural identity. And in the context of a hegemonic emergent Indian nationalism, this was defined as Hindu. However, as the nation became more successful in the outer domain, it became urgent to reinforce and protect this inner domain. And, in a sense, the drive to represent Banaras as a site of unalloyed Hindu spirituality came to symbolize this effort.

#### REPRESENTATION

By the process of representation, I mean the modes and narratives through which a status of antiquity has been consistently maintained for Banaras. Rob Shields has suggested that all urban representations are "souvenirs" that stand for the city itself. Rather than any real social exchange, all representations of cities displace the city so that one is left to deal with a "surrogate level of signs." Shields goes on to say:

*... this is true whatever one's theoretical position on whether it makes sense to talk of an objective, pre-representational "reality." Representations tend to follow the formula of telling us "what is really happening." This process can become so complete that quite different representations of a given set of events and experiences are possible, especially when based on wider, culturally different, systems of representation.<sup>20</sup>*

The act of representation is carried out through texts, and as Roland Barthes has suggested, all texts are derived from other texts to the extent that there is no "originality," but only "intertextuality."<sup>21</sup> In other words, while interpreting a text, a person is dependent on previous knowledge and conditioning, which in turn is derived from other texts. For Banaras, such textual representations range from scholarly works to coffee-table publications and tourist guides. The myth of Hindu antiquity has also been perpetuated through oral narratives. And recently these narratives have been corroborated by a number of scholarly works that cite Sanskrit texts, especially *puranic* sources.

Following Barthes, Trevor Barnes and James Duncan argued that all representations are mediated by existing theories, perceptions, and cultural information.<sup>22</sup> And they sug-

gested an expanded notion of the text that included a wide range of cultural productions — including paintings and maps to represent the landscape.<sup>23</sup> Barthes himself privileged the image over the text, and wrote about how the photograph is the only uncoded message, able to communicate objects “as they really are” without the aid of another code, such as a language.<sup>24</sup> In this regard, Banaras has indeed been well represented in the West through visual media. But as various scholars have demonstrated, colonialism involved both the control of territory and the control of categories and meanings. And the photographic image, in particular, was a powerful tool to both document and categorize.<sup>25</sup> Thus, colonial images of Banaras cannot be seen as independent of a larger intent, the “text” of colonialism.

As already mentioned, colonial representations were embedded in colonial investigative practices on the Indian subcontinent. These included the establishment of disciplines such as historiography and museology. Colonial scholarship had a marked preference for Sanskrit, and in order to facilitate these investigations, scholars read Sanskrit texts such as the *Kashi Khanda*, the *Khashi Kedar Mahatmya*, and the *Kashi Rahasya*, in addition to glean information from Brahmins. This information was then compiled and catalogued, reflecting the colonial anxiety to preserve the subcontinent’s “timeless” traditions. The Brahmin’s ability to translate was viewed as the appropriate *modus* through which this “epistemological space” of unequivocal difference could initially be comprehended.<sup>26</sup> But by learning classical and vernacular Indian languages for themselves, the British hoped to make their own classifications and categorizations of this new territorial and epistemological space, so that it could be controlled.

The chroniclers who accompanied the East India Company were also in search of “authentic” traditions. In the colonial mind, such authenticity was defined as “Hindu,” and its elements had to be disentangled from layers of Muslim (i.e., foreign and “inauthentic”) domination.<sup>27</sup> In their eagerness to produce authentic visual representations of the Indian subcontinent, the British used first painting and then photography.<sup>28</sup>

By established Banaras as authentically Hindu, the city could also be inscribed within a frame of the traditional. As Nezar AlSayyad has suggested, all such efforts are ultimately flawed and inauthentic, since there is never any conjunction between tradition and authenticity.<sup>29</sup> The rubric of the traditional implies a condition of stasis, and it is this very assumption that is inauthentic. Thus, a search for authenticity will always be nostalgic, and in turn propel the production of tradition. When tradition is produced in this way, however, the effect is to aestheticize a site by glossing over any real conflict that may be present.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in their efforts to create authentic representations of Hindu traditions, colonial representations of the city simultaneously rendered it both static and Hindu.

## REPRESENTING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Paintings of the riverfront such as those by William and Thomas Daniells and those that are included in James Prinsep’s *Benares Illustrated* are instances of such representations (FIG. 5). Prinsep, who arrived in Banaras in 1820, had been trained as an architect, and within a year he had conducted a detailed survey of the city and made drawings of a number of buildings.<sup>31</sup> Based on his surveys, he then created a map of the city. Prinsep was very conscious that he was engaged in a unique task, “a work never yet undertaken.” His emphasis was on the “accuracy” of his task, a preoccupation of the Enlightenment European scholar. He also conducted a census of the city — its people and buildings — as well as a catalogue of castes and trades.<sup>32</sup> For Prinsep, Banaras was a repository of both Hindu learning and superstition.<sup>33</sup> His work drew upon selective indigenous interpretations, but was colored by a colonial insistence on authenticity and timelessness.

European paintings of eighteenth-century Banaras by English artists like Daniells depicted picturesque scenes inspired by a pastoral aesthetic. Prinsep was not happy with such representations. For him, Daniells’s illustrations were “detached” and failed to “satisfy curiosity regarding a place which exhibits a larger remnant of the external characteristics of Hindoo taste and habits, than is to be met with in any other Eastern city within the pale of British dominion.”<sup>34</sup>

In *Benares Illustrated* Prinsep continually reiterated Banaras’s “Hindu” character. The buildings illustrated are usually temples, ghats, and the mansions of prominent merchants. By contrast, its two principal mosques found their way into the illustrations only as ruined temples or scenic backdrops. Thus, Prinsep illustrated only the rear of the Gyan Vapi mosque, and captioned it the old “Vishveshvar.”



FIGURE 5. Prinsep’s depiction of Dashashwamedha ghat. Reproduced as “Dusashwamedh Ghat Benaras,” in *Benares Illustrated* by James Prinsep (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1996), p.84.

*Antiquarians will be well pleased that the Moosulmans, in their zeal for the triumph of their own religion, discovering a method of converting the original structure into a capacious Musjid, without destroying above one half of its walls; so that not only the ground plan, but the entire architectural elevation, may still be traced out.*<sup>35</sup>

As part of his *Illustrations*, Prinsep published a drawing of this mosque/temple. It was accompanied by a reconstructed plan captioned “Plan of the Ancient Temple of Vishveshwur.” On this drawing, the outline of the Alamgiri mosque on the site is demarcated as a dotted line, a representation that had the effect of rendering its very presence illicit (FIG. 6).

The other prominent mosque in the city, the Alamgiri, received a slightly different treatment: it only appeared in illustration of a ghat that adjoined it, with a caption that read “Madhoray ghat and the minarets at Banaras.” Speaking of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Prinsep added:

*The imperial zealot, not satisfied with triumphing over the religion of the Hindoos, chose a method of perpetuating the insult most offensive to their habits and feelings, by carrying his minarets to such a height as to overlook the privacy of their houses, the upper apartments and terraced roofs of which are always tenanted by the females of the family.*<sup>36</sup>

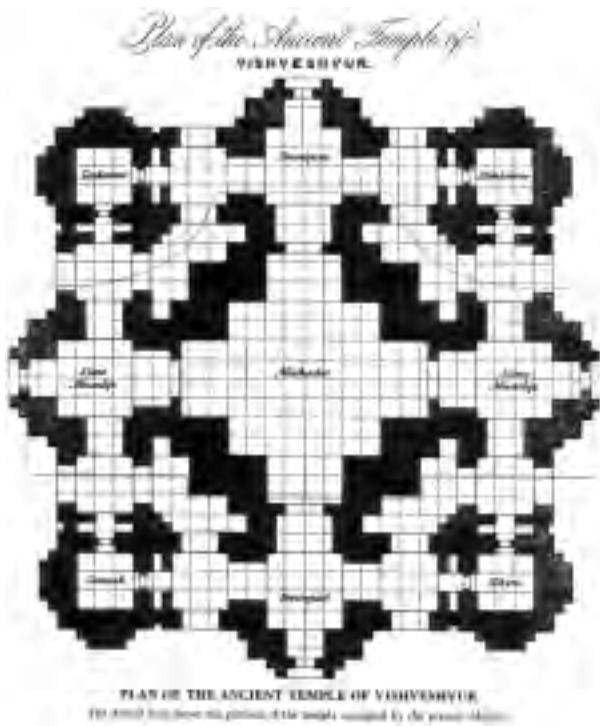


FIGURE 6. Prinsep's drawing of the “Ancient temple of Vishveshwur,” based on the remnants on the site of the Gyan Vapi mosque. Reproduced as “Plan of the Old Vishveshwur Temple,” in *Banaras Illustrated* by James Prinsep (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1996), p.68.

In the manner of other colonial surveyors, Prinsep consistently sought to negate the Muslim presence in Banaras and to view it as illicit. What was at issue for him was not discovering whether or not Aurangzeb was a zealot who may have destroyed temples in the city. Rather, his representations embodied a colonial historiographical tradition that used architecture to render this story without critical investigation.

Anthony King has drawn attention to the inherent tension between discursive representations of cities and their actual spatial and material forms.<sup>37</sup> He implied that aspects of built form, such as architectural style, are themselves a layer of symbolic representation in the city. Thus, built form may be both a vehicle for symbolic representations and a spatial representation of social discourse. And together, they are a prerequisite for the mental constructs that eventually represent the city.<sup>38</sup>

I must emphasize though that by themselves the temples or mosques of Banaras do not indicate one or the other kind of identity. Nevertheless, colonial narratives were preoccupied with separating Hindu Banaras from any Muslim accretions, and so they reiterated the presence of a Hindu city that was continually under siege. Thus, for Banaras to be a “Hindu” city, all its “Muslim” elements had to be carefully filtered out. Such representations continue to influence contemporary accounts of the city. In publications ranging from coffee-table books to those of a more scholarly variety, Banaras is consistently depicted as the epitome of a timeless Indian (read Hindu) culture.<sup>39</sup>

One reason for separating and categorizing was that the image of order that was colonialism needed the specter of chaotic communalism. Thus, when Prinsep does mention the festival of “Mohurrum,” he also points to a single incident of violence between groups of Hindus and Muslims that occurred on that occasion in 1805 (FIG. 7). And he credits “the judicious intervention of Mr. W.W. Bird, then Magistrate, and the really docile and submissive temper of the Hindoos,” with the aversion of further violence.<sup>40</sup> As Gyanendra Pandey has pointed out, to the colonial authorities communalism was conceived as a state of chaos that was only averted by the civilizing intervention of colonial authority. Communalism was therefore the opposite of colonialism.<sup>41</sup>

## TEXTUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Representations by Hindu revivalists were influenced by a desire to read antiquity into texts on Banaras. In particular, the *Kashi Mahatmya* and the *Kashi Khand* were used as prime sources to establish an ancient story for Banaras. In these texts the city is envisioned beyond the normal processes of decay and destruction.<sup>42</sup> The *Kashi Khand* is the most elaborate eulogizing text for the city, and provides its creation myth. However, it was only put together in its current form around the mid-fourteenth century — after the first Muslim





**FIGURE 7.** Prinsep's depiction of Mohurrum in Banaras. Reproduced as "Procession of the Tazeeas," in Benares Illustrated by James Prinsep (*Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1996*), p.48.

invasion.<sup>43</sup> As Diana Eck has suggested, these texts may have become popular precisely because of the nostalgia they evoked for an earlier age.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, many of the texts that detail the city's antiquity were composed after Muhammad Ghuri's invasion of the city and the first reported destruction of the Vishwanath temple in 1194.<sup>45</sup> Vasudha Dalmia has also suggested a nostalgic interpretation for such texts. Specifically, he has pointed out that the textual presence of Banaras became stronger in the presence of successive Islamic invasions — and, consequently, of dwindling support for Hindu religious institutions there.<sup>46</sup>

A similar process took place with regard to narratives of Malaysian history. Ziauddin Sardar has suggested that a compartmentalized history of Malaysia was only invented to serve the purposes of European imperialism. Thus, the history of "Malaysia" was periodized and placed within the larger hegemonic grid of European history, and the very existence of Malaysia was predicated on Europe's knowledge about it. According to Sardar, the *Sejarah Melayu*, "the ancient chronicles of the Malays . . . a riproaring narration, full of adventure, history, myth, migration, poetry and word-play, where people experience migration, uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis" is therefore "both fiction and history," and does not mention dates or time periods. Although the *Sejarah Melayu* does refer to the past, it remains "preoccupied with its own concerns."<sup>47</sup>

Rather than speaking in terms of linear colonial histories versus mythical indigenous accounts, I would suggest that all narrations about the past are preoccupied with their own concerns. A text such as the *Kashi Khand* is as concerned with projecting its worldview as any colonial narrative.

OBLITERATION/SALVAGE

The act of salvage cannot occur without a litany of obliteration, and all accounts of obliteration are themselves representations. Such tales of obliteration in Banaras's case appear at many scales and in many guises. Most important, however, is the litany of destruction and rebuilding centered on the Vishwanath temple. It reveals that the notion of a Hindu city has now become so entrenched that contemporary mosque sites are accepted as previous sites of the Vishwanath temple (FIG. 8).

By most accounts, the temple was first destroyed in 1194, and the mosque of Razia Bibi is now accepted to occupy that original site.<sup>48</sup> The temple was consequently rebuilt, but again destroyed in the sixteenth century. The culprit for this event is now identified as the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, credited both



**FIGURE 8.** Hindu sacred sites in Banaras. Courtesy of S. Freitag, "Introduction to Part I: Performance and Patronage," in *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800–1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.24.

with destroying the Vishwanath and Bindu Madhav temples and with raising the Gyan Vapi and Alamgir mosques on their sites. Meanwhile, periods of peace and rebuilding in the city have interestingly been attributed to Akbar, the Mughal emperor cited for his eclectic religious beliefs and sense of tolerance.<sup>49</sup>

Even though patronage of Hindu shrines actually continued during Aurangzeb's reign, and a Rajput, Jaisingh-sponsored reconstruction of the Bindu Madhav temple took place at the time, the dominant narrative is one of obliteration.<sup>50</sup>

Accounts of destruction and rebuilding coexist in Banaras with mythical accounts of the continuous presence of its sacred geography. Thus, accounts of obliteration are always accompanied by a rhetoric of salvage. For example, in *Benares: City of Light*, Eck recently recounted the events that established a Muslim presence in the city. But her principal preoccupation remained uncovering a sacred, mythical Hindu geography.

Colonial travelers who visited Banaras had interpreted the city as exclusively Hindu. For them, any Muslim characteristics were merely tangential to the city's essential identity as the pre-eminent site of the Hindu religion. In James Prinsep's words:

*The Musselmans apparently form but one-fifth of the population, and are not more numerous than the Brahmans alone; very few of them reside within the City, properly so-called, which is almost exclusively Hindu.*<sup>51</sup>

In their self-styled role as preservers of Indian heritage, the British took over the task of patronizing Brahmin learning, and established the Banaras Sanskrit College in 1791.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Prinsep could lament the decline of patronage in the form of "stipends from Rajas and men of rank." Along with "the great success of the new colleges in Calcutta, in which the study of European literature is united with that of India," he claimed this would spell the decline of this "alma mater of rigid Hindooism."<sup>53</sup>

These efforts at salvage have inevitably been colored with the rhetoric of scientific investigation and reasoning. The result is often a project of reading history into traditional texts. For instance, Nicholas Dirks believes that "fanciful texts" do identify key elements of political action and signify moments in indigenous thought about the past, and that the religious and the political cannot be separated. Dirks's statements challenge those who would completely dismiss texts such as the *Kashi Khand*. However, establishing the veracity of these texts (or even dismissing them for that matter) should be understood as a political act. If myth is to be seen as part of "historiographic possibility and a distinctive way of establishing sequence and relevance in the understanding and representation of the past," then at the very least, the memory of Banaras' mythical past has informed much of its remaking.<sup>54</sup>

Romila Thapar has also suggested that a closer examination of traditional texts (and the *Kashi Khand* may be included in this category) may reveal what she has termed "embedded histories."<sup>55</sup> In her words,

*... each version of the past which has been deliberately transmitted has significance for the present, and this accounts for its legitimacy and continuity. The record may be one in which historical consciousness is embedded: as in myth, epic and genealogy; or alternatively it may refer to the more externalized forms: chronicles of families, institutions and regions, and biographies of persons in authority.*<sup>56</sup>

Thapar has examined embedded histories in what have previously been seen as mythical texts: the *itihasa-puranas* (chronicles of dynasties and caste groups), the *vamsacharitas* (lineage stories), and *gathas* (epic poems). She also sees the *puranas* as depicting a worldview that linked the past and the present.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Thapar has suggested that several religious sects used historically phrased arguments in support of origin stories in the context of competition for patronage. Thapar sees both an embedded history as well as a historical consciousness that is expressed as "externalized history" in many of these texts.

I see this project as being part of the larger theme of salvage. A nation-state must have a history, and in the absence of clearly recognizable historical literary forms, such as "embedded" forms may be discovered in quasi-historical texts. The issue again is not whether Banaras does or does not have a history. Indeed, arguments could be made to prove or disprove either viewpoint. What is interesting is that establishment of Banaras as a Hindu city occurred at the intersection of nationalist motivations that sought "history" in traditional texts, and revivalist and Orientalist agendas that use these same texts to establish the city's mythical origins.<sup>58</sup>

However, all such attempts to use traditional texts to establish Banaras as an ancient Hindu site collide with the reality on the ground. Whatever the reasons for their being, the Gyan Vapi mosque, the Alamgiri mosque, and the new temples erected in their vicinity form zones of tension. These spatial contestations coalesce in particular around the Vishwanath temple/Gyan Vapi mosque. And both mosque and temple precincts are under police guard so that entry to the mosque is only permitted during prayer time. Meanwhile, the preservation discourse has taken a particularly poignant turn with regard to the Alamgiri mosque, where revivalist Hindu representations now underline much of the discourse around its religious significance.

## REINVENTION

Reinvention has consistently been the means through which the Hindu essence of Banaras has been salvaged. While reinvention is implied in acts of representation and salvage, I am concerned here with the active creation and sponsorship of new buildings, spaces and activities that are deployed to claim Banaras as an indisputably Hindu site.

Ironically, the elites who financed the eighteenth-century rebuilding of the city were themselves implicated in the syn-

cretic culture of contemporary India. Maratha architecture relied on Mughal techniques and decorative devices derived from mosques and tombs. Architects studied the remains of past traditions, including the Yadava temples of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and married them to Mughal and Sultanate building traditions from the western Deccan (FIG. 9).<sup>59</sup> And although their agenda was a revivalist one, the fulfillment of Hindu ritual requirements did not prevent Maratha architects from freely borrowing Mughal-style cusped arches, and reinventing them for application in temple colonnades, niches and spires (FIG. 10).

If hegemony helps maintain Banaras in its status as a Hindu site, the hegemonic climate is reinforced through invented traditions. These are norms and practices that maintain an illusion of continuity with the past. Nezar AlSayyad has suggested that many “traditional” environments are such because they are intentionally presented for consumption by an increasingly global audience. Furthermore, such environments are often sites of ongoing conflict as well as sites where past conflicts are remembered.<sup>60</sup> Thus, far from being a benign act of commemoration, nostalgia is often used as a vehicle for establishing territorial claims.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, all acts of reinvention in Banaras are implicitly also acts of salvage. Indeed, reinvention in the arena of pub-

lic performance has had a powerful political history in Banaras (FIG. 11). The Rajas of Banaras have been key players in this drama. Although this is a Shaivite city, they patronized Ramlila, a different deity in the Hindu pantheon. Philip Lutgendorf has suggested that the Banaras rulers actively patronized the Ram tradition because it was anchored in a tradition of divine kingship.<sup>62</sup> Since this was a newly created kingship (and since, as Cohn has suggested, the Rajas were placed in a political position of dependence on the Nawabs of Awadh), the need to project symbols of royal legitimacy was pressing.<sup>63</sup>

While the above example presupposes an overtly political motive, other instances of reinvention straddle the realm of the religious (read Hindu) and the secular. For the past three years, an organization called the Ganga Sewa Nidhi has orchestrated just such an invented tradition, the Ganga Aarti. The ritual, a *pūja* or lustration ritual for the Ganga, occurs every evening on the riverbank, at the Dashashwamedha ghat. This is how a guidebook describes the ritual:

*Every evening at five, a magical aarti is performed at Dashashwamedha Ghat. Halt your boat right at the steps for the best view. . . . To the chant of Sanskrit mantras, and the clash of cymbals and drums, the river is wor-*

**FIGURE 9.** One of the many temples in the city built and patronized by Hindu elites. This temple shikhara (tower) is built in the “Maratha” architectural style of the Deccan. Photo by author.



**FIGURE 10.** One of the many temples in the city that were built and patronized by Hindu elites. This one is sponsored by the Raja of Banaras. Note the architecture of its gateway in the “Rajput” style. Photo by author.



shipped with flowers, incense, sandalwood, milk and vermilion. First the blazing camphor lamp and then the many flamed aarti lamps are raised high and then arched back to the water, the dark river reflecting the golden flames as Ganga accepts the worship.<sup>64</sup>

The ritual is itself a visual spectacle that is meant to be viewed from a boat on the river. Six priests dressed in matching crimson dress stand in a row on raised platforms on the Dashashwamedha ghat. They conduct the ritual in synchronous motions, while music is played from a public address system. Although only three years old, the ritual is already being subtly touted as part of the eternal traditions of the city.

The ritual also marks an act of hegemonic representation. The Ganges is a symbol of the independent nation-state, and is mentioned in its national anthem. The *puja* itself is a Hindu form of worship, and when performed in Banaras marks veneration for the city and its religious traditions as well as the river itself. Thus, this reinvention is an act of Hindu hegemony that may be construed as homage to a secular symbol.

#### HEGEMONY REALIZED

Such constructions are particularly relevant in the context of the growing influence of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva). It is important to distinguish between inclusion-



**FIGURE 11.** Festival of Ganesh under Maratha patronage in Banaras. From L. Rousselet, *India and Its Native Princes*, as depicted in S. Freitag, “Introduction: The History and Political Economy of Banaras,” in *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800–1980* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), p.4.

ary nationalism as expressed within a rhetoric of secularism and the concept of Hindutva. Hindu nationalists desire to create a disciplined national culture from what they claim to be a superior Hindu past. According to Thomas Hansen, Hindutva embodies a space of purity against the dual threats of Islamization and Westernization.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, although the nationalism espoused by the independent Indian state does not claim adherence to any particular religious belief system, such an inclusionary ethos is uncomfortable with pronounced cultural or religious differences.<sup>66</sup> This discomfort with difference is often expressed in India in terms of a binary opposition between “secular nationalism” and “religious communalism.”<sup>67</sup>

The common explanation for the destruction of temples by zealous Muslims rulers has been that mosques were used as instruments of spatial reinscription in the cause of religion. But Richard Eaton has suggested that such contestations were never religious alone, and he has proposed that Hindu temples were destroyed by Muslim rulers because they served as repositories of authority used to further their patrons’ political ambitions. In destroying a Hindu temple, often a Muslim ruler was striking against potential political opposition, rather than striking a blow for a religious belief. Eaton has supported this argument by adding that since mosques were not invested with similar associations, Hindu rulers never destroyed them when they conquered Muslim territory.<sup>68</sup> Since temples were symbols of religious and political power, the “Muslim” Mughal state also often supported

temple institutions monetarily and politically, as well as through participation in, and active patronage of, religious events. In this vein, Eaton has suggested that the destruction of the Vishwanath temple by Aurangzeb in 1669 actually occurred in response to a rebellion against imperial authority led by Hindu Rajputs, the temple's patrons.

Eaton's article was published in a "liberal" Indian news magazine, *Frontline*. Yet, regardless of its well-intentioned motives, its arguments were still structured within an overarching atmosphere of Hindu hegemony. Nationalist Indian history treats the Mughals as an Indian dynasty, and claims their achievements as national achievements. Within such a narrative, the Mughals cannot be viewed as religious zealots out to destroy an "infidel" place of worship. Their motives in destroying a temple must be presented as political.

Local Muslim histories in Banaras reflect similar concerns. Take, for example, a history of the Gyan Vapi mosque perpetuated among Muslim students by authors such as Abdus Salam Nomani.<sup>69</sup> Nomani's 1963 writings deny that the iconoclastic Aurangzeb even built the mosque: "This is wrong. The foundations of this mosque were laid by the great grandfather of Badshah Alamgir, Akbar, and Alamgir's father, Shahjahan, had started a madras (*sic*) in the mosque in 1048 hijri."<sup>70</sup> Thus, as Sandria Freitag has pointed out, Muslims of Banaras have turned to rulers with a reputation for secularism, and for patronizing the formation of a syncretic Indo-Muslim culture, in order to substantiate their claims to a role in the city.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Muslim residents of Banaras who seek a way to express identity are forced to look for symbols that speak simultaneously to secularism as well as Islam. The city is thus a symbol around which both visions — that of inclusionary nationalism, as well as exclusionary Hindutva — are being built. In the past, the physical destruction of temples was accompanied by a strengthening of the importance of the city in Hindu texts. Simultaneously and dialectically, religious sites were located within this textual framework. And all subsequent projects of religious rebuilding in the city

were then conceived within this invented framework. Yet while the Maratha project to rebuild Hindu Banaras has been largely successful, it has not been successful in obliterating the city's Islamic history or the Islamic form of its urban structure and buildings. Nevertheless, current attempts by Islamic groups to rewrite the supposed genealogy of some of the city's mosques does suggest that Banaras continues to be a site of Hindu hegemony.

#### FUTURE PROSPECTS

Banaras has been created through the simultaneous and intertwined processes of representation, obliteration/salvage, and reinvention. These acts occurred in response to the separate but coincident imperatives of Hindu re-annexation and British colonialism. Thus, the revivalist anxiety of Hindus promoted a nostalgic return — to be achieved through a process of reinvention. But these attempts by elite Hindu groups to re-annex Banaras as a place of pilgrimage intersected with the interests of the colonial British, who saw Banaras as a repository of unchanging Hindu tradition. For its part, the colonial anxiety was to create categories, and separate all evidence into them pursuant to the construction of Oriental subjectivity. Eventually, the two agendas colluded, with the result being that the city was increasingly represented and reinvented as Hindu.

Contemporary religious revivalism is also about the invention of tradition, but it is also much more militant about obliteration. As the ASI functionary at the Alamgir mosque reiterated, the preservation discourse embedded in the ideals of the hegemonic postcolonial Indian state is no longer sufficient to satisfy the proponents of Hindutva. Under their new ideology, the salvaging of the Hindu past also implies the need to obliterate the Muslim one. And since the story of Banaras is itself one of continuous obliteration, such actions are increasingly viewed by their proponents as morally justifiable.

#### REFERENCE NOTES

1. E. Ermath, "Sequel to History," in K. Jenkins, ed., *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.56.

2. This is a very simplified version of the concept of hegemony. Various theorists including Antonio Gramsci and Karl Marx have written about and around the concept. For a more detailed discussion, see R. Boccock, *Hegemony* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., date), p.17.

3. I did not see any police at the Bindu

Madhav temple.

4. Not his real name.

5. [Http://asi.nic.in/](http://asi.nic.in/). Accessed August 15, 2003. European-led antiquarian activities in India began under the Asiatic Society in 1784. Under William Jones, this aim was to study "the antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Greater India." The Archaeological Survey of India was formally inaugurated in 1861 with the intent of surveying and cataloguing monuments in

India. Preservation of monuments became an aim of the ASI later. The ASI has always been part of the colonial project of cataloguing the past in the Indian subcontinent. The Archaeological Survey of India was established by the British colonial government in order to preserve the subcontinent's built heritage. Its classificatory norms were established in accordance with colonial categories of knowledge about the Indian subcontinent. Thus, the built her-

- itage was clearly bifurcated into “Hindu” and “Muslim” in keeping with what the colonial government saw as the subcontinent’s two distinct and irreconcilable pasts.
6. C. Motichandra, *Kashi ka Itihas* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1962).
  7. E. Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.1.
  8. In most accounts of its sacred geography, the city is located between the Varana and the Assi, both tributaries of the Ganges. The name “Varanasi” derives from these two tributary names.
  9. J.P. Parry, *Death in Banaras* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp.13–14.
  10. Many of these legends are part of scriptural knowledge that is preserved by the Brahmins. Pandit Kubernath Sukul has published some of this knowledge in *Kashi Vaibhav* (Patna: Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, 2000).
  11. For a summary account of the myths associated with the city in English, see D. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (Princeton, NJ: Knopf, 1982).
  12. Bocoock, *Hegemony*, p.17.
  13. R. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
  14. E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp.1–5. Edward Said defined Orientalism as “a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’” An Orientalist is therefore any academic who “teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient.” Said maintained that Orientalism is the European West’s way of coming to terms with the Orient based on a specific experience. Orientalism, therefore, may or may not have any correspondence with the “real” Orient. It does however, possess an internal consistency.
  15. B. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
  16. P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.11.
  17. A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.573.
  18. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p.5. Chatterjee’s larger framework is derived from the work of Benedict Anderson. See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p.6. In this book, Anderson demonstrated that nations were “imagined into existence,” and were not simply the natural results of sociological conditions, such as shared religion or language.
  19. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p.6.
  20. R. Shields, “A Guide to Urban Representation and What to Do About It: Alternative Traditions of Urban Theory,” in A. King, ed., *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp.229–230.
  21. R. Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Image Music Text*, trans. by S. Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).
  22. Barnes and Duncan, *Writing Worlds*, pp.7–9.
  23. T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan, “Introduction,” in T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan, eds., *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.5.
  24. R. Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” in *Image Music Text*, p.17.
  25. E. Shohat and R. Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.104–5.
  26. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, p.4.
  27. V. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.55.
  28. C. Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
  29. N. AlSayyad, “The End of Tradition, or the Tradition of Endings,” in N. AlSayyad, ed., *The End of Tradition* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).
  30. A. Roy, “Nostalgias of the Modern,” in AlSayyad, ed., *The End of Tradition*, p.151.
  31. B. Cohn, “The British in Benares,” in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.445.
  32. O.P. Kejariwal, “James Prinsep: His Life and Work,” in *Benares Illustrated by James Prinsep* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 1996, first published in 1832), pp.10–12. Prinsep also established the Benares Literary Society, and with the help of Sanskrit scholars, began to collect coins and inscriptions as part of a project to reconstruct ancient Indian history.
  33. Kejariwal, “James Prinsep: His Life and Work,” in *Benares Illustrated by James Prinsep*, p.5.
  34. O.P. Kejariwal, “Preface,” in *Ibid.*, p.5.
  35. “Old Temple of Vishveshvar,” in *Ibid.*, p.29.
  36. “Procession of the Tazeeas,” in *Ibid.*, p.49.
  37. A. King, “Introduction: Cities, Texts and Paradigms,” in King, ed., *Re-presenting the City*, p.4.
  38. *Ibid.*, p.4.
  39. Publications range from Eck’s *Benares: City of Light* to Parry’s *Death in Banaras*.
  40. “Madhoray Gaht and the Minarets,” in *Benares Illustrated by James Prinsep*, p.25.
  41. G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).
  42. Parry, *Death in Banaras*, p.170.
  43. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p.50–54.
  44. Eck, *Benares: City of Light*, p.85.
  45. *Ibid.*, p.85.
  46. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p.53.
  47. Z. Sardar, *The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), p.16.
  48. Eck, *Benares: City of Light*, p.133.
  49. A reconstruction was initiated in 1585 by Todarmal, one of Akbar’s ministers. At this time there was a brief hiatus of sustained patronage for ritual and scholarly traditions financed by Todarmal and Mansingh, another of Akbar’s Hindu ministers. These two ministers brought in other Rajputs such as the Rajas of Bundi, and parts of the ghats were built.
  50. Dalmia, *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p.53–54.
  51. *Benares Illustrated by James Prinsep*, p.477.
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  54. N.B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory*

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55. R. Thapar, *Interpreting Early India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), pp.137–38.
56. *Ibid.*, p.138.
57. *Ibid.*, p.152.
58. See Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*.
59. G. Michell and M. Zebrowski, *The Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.246.
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61. Roy, "Nostalgias of the Modern," p.153.
62. P. Lutgendorf, "Ram's Story in Shiva's City," in S.B. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800–1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp.34–61.
63. B. Cohn, "Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India: The Banaras Region," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82 (1962), pp.312–20.
64. *Varanasi City Guide* (New Delhi: Eicher Goodearth Limited, 2002), p.45.
65. T.B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.4.
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68. R.M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," article in two parts in *Frontline*, Vol.17 Nos.25,26 (December 2000 and January 2001). For online version, see <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/archives.htm>.
69. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras*, p.14.
70. As quoted in N. Kumar, "History and Geography as Protest: The Maintenance of 'Muslim' identity in 'Hindu' Banaras, c. 1880–1987," p.33. Paper presented to the panel on Protest and Resistance, American Historical Association, December 1987. Cited in Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras*, p.14.
71. S. Freitag, "Introduction," in Freitag, ed. *Culture and Power in Banaras*, p.14. On the other hand, such a recognition of syncretic roots can cut both ways. Attempts at inscribing an overarching Hindu presence in Banaras are visible in tourist pamphlets that refer to the Alamgiri mosque as an "amalgamation of Hindu-Muslim religious sentiments" (and in common parlance as "Beni-Madhav ka Dera"), thus implying a Hindu geneology. See *Varanasi City Guide*.

