

# Signs of Violence: Colonial Ethnographies and Indo-Islamic Monuments

Finbarr Barry Flood

She said: What is history?

And he said: History is an angel being blown backwards into the future

He said: History is a pile of debris

And the angel wants to go back and fix things

To repair the things that have been broken

But there is a storm blowing from Paradise

And the storm keeps blowing the angel backwards into the future.

Laurie Anderson<sup>1</sup>

This is the duplicity of history: An idea recorded will become an idea  
resurrected.

Anne Michaels<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

In the Count of Boulainvilliers' Introduction to his *Life of Mahomet* (1731), the early Muslims are introduced as "a people who, defacing every monument, and burning every library, declar'd their Intent to abolish the very memorial of all former generations."<sup>3</sup> The history of such representations of 'Islamic' iconoclasm is rich in ironies and, had he but known, the Count might have reserved these words for the Revolutionaries who, just a few decades later, were to transform the cultural and political landscape of France in ways that he could never have imagined. Despite such

ironies (or perhaps because of them), the notion of a monolithic Islamic culture distinguished by an essential capacity for iconoclastic violence is a tenacious one that has resurfaced at intervals, especially during periods of inter-cultural or intra-cultural conflict. Events of the past decade have shown that, even in the era of the secular nation state, both Muslims and non-Muslims can deploy the trope to devastating effect.<sup>4</sup>

The destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in north India by Hindu Nationalists in 1992, an event that sparked bloody inter-communal riots, was predicated on the belief that the sixteenth-century mosque had been constructed on the appropriated site of a Vaishnavite temple. Commenting on these events, Tapati Guha-Thakurta notes "the way histories have been produced and mobilised around old monuments and sites."<sup>5</sup> In this essay I want to explore one particular aspect of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon, namely the way in which the trope of "Muslim" architectural iconoclasm was mobilised in colonial scholarship in the wake of the Mutiny or Revolt of 1857, when the Indian troops of the British rebelled, leading to massacres, sieges and grisly reprisals at Cawnpore, Delhi, and Lucknow. Analysis of the scholarship on India produced in the wake of these traumatic events illustrates the way in which a generic motif assumes a specific political utility when deployed in a particular historical situation.

The essay will begin by exploring imbrications of colonial ethnography and architectural history during the 1860s and 1870s. A comprehensive analysis of the epistemological and methodological entanglements of these disciplines still needs to be undertaken. Here I want to draw attention to the way in which a belief in the ability of architecture to elucidate diagnostic "racial" characteristics coincided with the idea that India constituted a living museum. This coincidence enabled the genealogy of the violence read in native physiognomies after 1857 to be traced in medieval texts and monuments, studies of which consistently emphasised an association between architectural iconoclasm, religious violence, and Muslim identity. Essentialist constructions of Islam that underwrote this inscription of the medieval past into the colonial present were invoked to contrast the benevolence of colonial rule with the arbitrary violence of the pre-colonial period, when a succession of Muslim dynasties held sway over much of South Asia. The spectre of this constructed past and its purported resurgence in 1857 was conjured as the potential future of the subcontinent should it ever slip the bonds of colonial government.

## Architectural Ethnography in Colonial India

In the various projects of cultural mapping that emerged in India after 1857, the consistent association between architectural history and ethnology in colonial scholarship is striking. The decade following the Mutiny was a key period in the development of both nascent disciplines, the rise of which can be directly correlated to the advent of new technologies. By the second half of the nineteenth century an emphasis on comparative philology in the study of peoples had given way to a focus on comparative physiology. The goal of reconstructing lost histories through formal analysis within a comparative framework remained constant, but the related rise of anthropometry and photography saw a shift from the abstraction of language to the materiality of the body as the object of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The period between 1850 and 1870 was also a formative one for scholarship on Indian architecture, in which the art historian James Fergusson devised a taxonomic chronology of Indian monuments, leading contemporaries to dub him "a Linnaeus to Indian architecture".<sup>7</sup> Fergusson was writing in London long after he had set foot in India; his imaginative and innovative championing of the photographic image in devising a system of classification for Indian architecture not only facilitated his researches at a physical remove from their objects, but invested them with a scientific status related to the perceived transparency of the medium.

The production of both colonial ethnologies and architectural histories during the period represents a facet of the epistemological phenomenon that Johannes Fabian has termed "visualism", in which "the ability to 'visualize' a culture or society almost becomes synonymous for understanding it."<sup>8</sup> Representing the mechanisation of vision, promising the reproducibility of its objects, and premised on "the truth of an indexical rather than a textual inventory", the photographic image gave substantive form to the visual "fact", transforming it into a scientific artefact to be collected, contemplated, captioned and catalogued.<sup>9</sup> As the endeavour to capture the subcontinent from behind the lens grew in pace and scale during the third quarter of the century, photography came to be employed as a paradigm for the accurate transcription and transparent representation of native custom.<sup>10</sup>

The ultimate success of photography should not, however, obscure the fact that in the mapping of "objects of interest", the practice was one of a number of methodologies, some of which shared the crucial quality of indexicality.<sup>11</sup> Chief among these was the use of full-scale plaster or metal casts for recording both architectural and ethnographic specimens. By 1866 the Prussian Schlagintweit brothers had developed a method for casting the hands and heads of live human bodies. The method

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entailed the application of five to seven pounds of plaster of Paris for a face, or fifteen for an entire head, which was then cast in metal and sold to museums and collectors:

The individual in question lies down on the ground, a writhed handkerchief is bound behind the ears to prevent the plaster from running down to the ground. Two paper-cornets, moist at the ends, for preventing irritation and sneezing, are put into the nose for allowing free breathing. Before the plaster is laid over the face, which is done by means of a spoon, the face is to be carefully smeared over with oil or clarified butter, in order not to draw up with the plaster the hairs from the head; the beard, particularly, is to be preserved by stiff pomade of some kind.<sup>12</sup>

Analogous methods were used for recording architectural monuments. During the 1860s a concerted effort was made to make casts of selected Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic monuments, some of which were subsequently displayed in British museums.<sup>13</sup> The monuments included the Qutbi (or Quwwat al-Islam) Mosque, the first Friday Mosque of Delhi, which was built in 1192 after the conquest of north India by the Muslim sultans of Ghur, in what today is central Afghanistan. The mosque was constructed largely from elaborately-carved stone pillars reused from Hindu and Jain temples (Fig. 1), a fact commemorated in a medieval inscription over its eastern entrance.<sup>14</sup> The casting of its columns was undertaken by Henry Cole in conjunction with a photographic survey by the renowned photographer Charles Shepherd. The method of casting was similar to that in contemporaneous use for the casting of human subjects; the

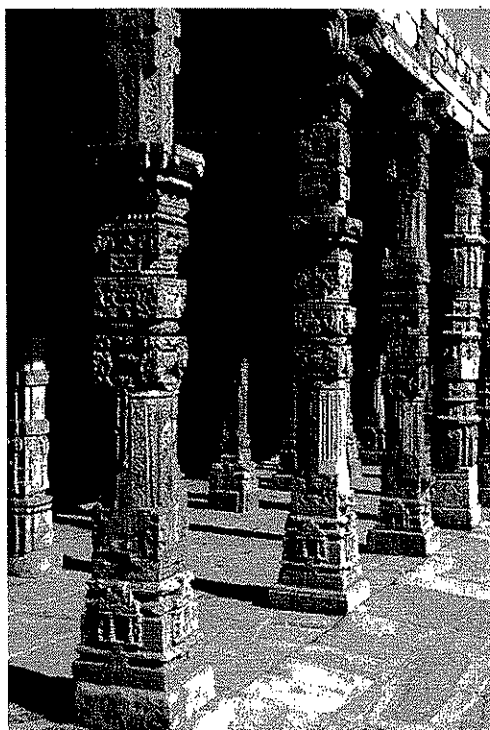


Fig. 1 Reused columns at the Qutbi Mosque, the first Friday Mosque of Delhi (1192 onwards). Photograph courtesy the author.

accompanying photograph shows the preparation of plaster and gelatine moulds, in which the final plaster casts were poured (Fig. 2). As with the casting of human bodies, a barrier coat of oil was needed to prevent the plaster adhering to the monument or mould.<sup>15</sup>

Not only does the casting of living bodies parallel the casting of medieval ruins, but a debate over the relative expense and scientific merit of casts and photographs for ethnological research in India is echoed in contemporary recommendations concerning the recording of medieval monuments.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century it was primarily through a combination of photographs and casts that visitors to the International Exhibitions of the period acquired knowledge of the colonies. Once again, the intersection of the ethnographic and the architectural in the representation of India is striking: in the International Exhibition held in Paris in 1862, for example, India was represented by 700 ethnographic and 500 architectural photographs (selected by James Fergusson) accompanied by casts.<sup>17</sup>

The close relationship between subject and object under the colonial gaze gave a new twist to the contemporary perception of India and all it contained as a "living ethnological museum".<sup>18</sup> Not only were the natives constituted as living artefacts sometimes described in terms of geographic or archaeological discovery, but the antiquarian remains of the country were also constituted as de facto ethnographic specimens capable of contributing to contemporary debates on questions of caste, tribe, and race.<sup>19</sup> The conceptual framework within which Fergusson undertook his classification of Indian architecture is conveniently summarised in a lecture entitled *The Study of Indian Architecture*, addressed to a meeting of the Society of Arts, London, in December 1866. The lecture offers a rationale for the pursuit of its topic that, in Bernard Cohn's words, is "compounded out of seventy years of British Orientalist discourse", but it also points to some highly significant innovations.<sup>20</sup> Like other of his contemporaries, Fergusson's view of Indian history and its material traces in architecture was one of progressive cultural degeneration, with the Aryan Buddhist period occupying the pinnacle of a chronologically inverted series. Using the photographs supplied to him from India, Fergusson established a taxonomic structure whose broad sectarian categorisations—Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim—still resonate in writing on medieval Indian architecture today.

Fergusson offers a remarkably succinct rationale for his pursuit of the Indian past, frankly acknowledging its relationship to the colonial present:

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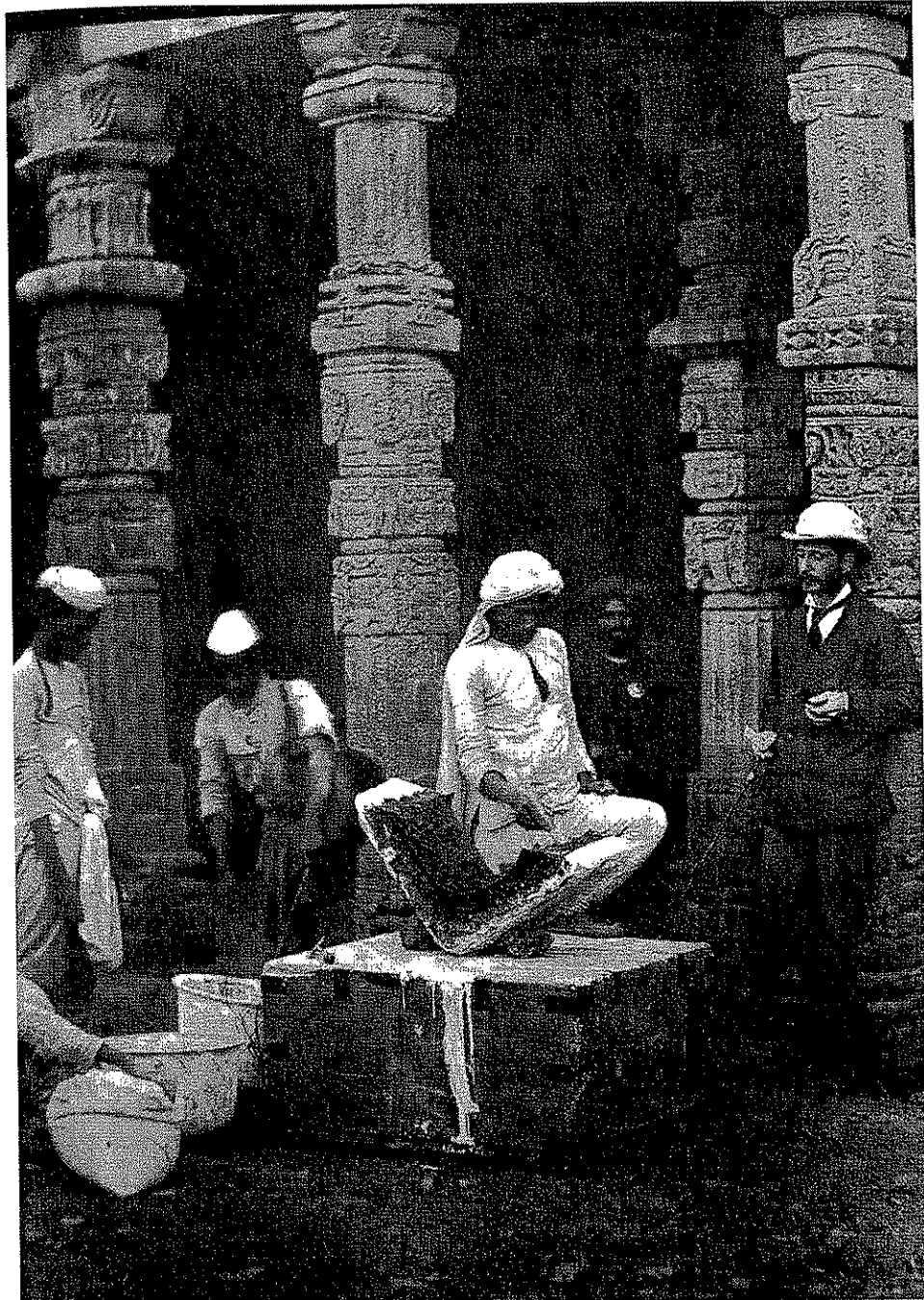


Fig. 2 Making casts of columns at the *Qutbi Mosque*, c. 1870 (after Cole, 1872)  
Photograph courtesy the author.

I consider the study of Indian architecture important, because it affords the readiest and most direct means of ascertaining the ethnological relations of the various races inhabiting India...I consider it important because it affords the best picture of the religious faiths of the country, showing how and when they arose, how they became corrupted, and when and by what steps they sank to their present level.<sup>21</sup>

Using the widespread belief that India was a land possessing "no written histories", or at least few trustworthy ones, Fergusson suggests that:

the architecture of the country may be considered as a great stone book, in which each tribe and race has written its annals and recorded its faith, and that in a manner so clear that those who run may read.<sup>22</sup>

In championing the ability of the monument to fill lacunae in the ethno-historical record, Fergusson makes the monument the indexical trace of racial and religious difference, foregrounding the architectural in the absence of either reliable texts or extant bodies with which to establish chronologically sound ethno-historical narratives. The metaphorical conceit of contemporary comparative philologists in which languages and linguistic fragments are figured as cultural monuments and ruins is thus adapted in a remarkably literal way.<sup>23</sup> Fergusson's ideas betray the influence of the pioneering post-Darwinian anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) whose influential *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* was published in 1865. In this and other works, Tylor argued that the "general laws of culture" were legible from antiquarian remains, the study of which permitted the elements of human culture (broadly conceived to include architecture, implements, myths etc.) to be located within a comparative, relational and hierarchical framework. The resulting comparative sequences permitted one to "reconstruct lost history without scruple".<sup>24</sup> Fergusson's articulation of his ideas on Indian architecture within an ethnographic framework meant that he was a regular contributor to contemporary debates about culture, race and religion, participating in meetings of the Ethnological Society of London, in whose journal he was frequently cited during the late 1860s.<sup>25</sup>

Fergusson goes on to conjoin the archaeological past with the ethnological present under the aegis of colonial rule in a manner that recalls Walter Benjamin's remarks about not even the dead being safe from hegemonic constructions of

history.<sup>26</sup> He argues that in India, where both ancient texts and trustworthy history are lacking, architecture:

is not only the best means of elucidating the manners and custom of the country, but of checking their fables, and is frequently the only means that remains to us; and, if this be so, is it possible to over-estimate its value to those who wish to know who and what the people *are* or *were*, whom we have undertaken to guide and govern?<sup>27</sup>

In his use of the monument to transcend the vagaries of native informants, Fergusson echoes a theme stressed in the writings of nineteenth-century scholars in the fields of ethnography and anthropology. Writing on the progress of the latter in India just over two decades later, Denzil Ibbetson notes:

No one who has not made the attempt can well realise how difficult is to secure a full and accurate statement of custom on any given point by verbal inquiry from Orientals, and, still more, from semi-savages...Cranial measurements, on the other hand, are probably almost free from the personal equation of the observer, and are effected only by that irreducible minimum of error which is inherent in all human observations...<sup>28</sup>

After the heyday of physiognomy and phrenology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the idea of the legible body enjoyed a resurgence from mid-century in the form of anthropometric analysis, often facilitated by photography.<sup>29</sup> The vogue for anthropometry makes itself felt in the categorisation of Indian monuments, where formal features were often taken as diagnostic of a chronology that unfolded in sectarian waves subdivided into ethnic and regional categories, even as physical form was being used to categorise the racial and religious affinities of the living natives of India.<sup>30</sup> Fergusson may have been a pioneer in this respect, but he was by no means unique. As early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century, moral and cultural difference inscribed on the Indian body had been correlated to architectural form. Thus, the "toylike" elaboration of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu temples was precisely what one might expect the child-like "small headed and nervous children of the Indus and Ganges" to produce.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the ethnologist's contemporary dependence on cranial measurements and nasal indexes is echoed in the anthropomorphising language of the classificatory scheme for Indo-Islamic architecture



devised by Alexander Cunningham, founding director of the Archaeological Survey of India, which divides the monuments into "Pathan", "Indo-Pathan", and "Mughal" based on the comparative shapes of arches or the length of the necks on which domes were borne.<sup>32</sup>

Both Fergusson and Cunningham "read" history from the monument, and the "peculiar character or physiognomy which the style possesses", even as contemporary ethnologists and physical anthropologists "read" history from the faces, features, bones, and skulls of their human specimens.<sup>33</sup> Textual monument and legible body are facets of the same epistemological phenomenon, with the individual cast as a "type" standing for larger cultural formations inscribed in form and ornament no less than in frame and physiognomy.<sup>34</sup>

### Signs of Difference

The methodological intersection between the study of medieval Indian architecture and contemporary Indian populations reflects the imbrication of both enterprises within an epistemological matrix in which questions of race, ethnicity, caste and religion occupy centre-stage, frequently as overlapping categories.<sup>35</sup> The approach to such questions taken by European scholars in the 1850s and 1860s was essentially a comparative historical one; the arrangement of Indian specimens in scientific taxonomies was intended to facilitate comparison between the observable characteristics of different kinds of native specimens, and those of specimens from elsewhere, similarly arranged in parallel taxonomies.<sup>36</sup> The project depended above all on reading signs of difference. In this respect, India was believed to hold a distinct advantage for the European scientist, for within the Indian museum the distinctions between castes, tribes, races, and religions had been rigidly preserved by the endogamous nature of "Hindu" culture, while Muslims were believed to constitute a distinct caste or, in a more nuanced view, to observe social distinctions similar to those of caste.<sup>37</sup> Religious, ethnic and even occupational differences were thus naturalised, so that in the application of the contemporary idea of "type" to India, signs of collective difference could be "read" from the body of the individual, safe in the knowledge that endogamy excluded the possibility of miscegenation.

Fergusson adopted the notion in his construction of an Indian architectural history. If the India of the nineteenth-century ethnologist were a museum in which rigidly-maintained tribal, caste, and religious distinctions provided a racial population untainted by hybridity, then inevitably the same must be true of the pre-colonial populations of India:

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the great fact of Indian ethnography is that all these various people retain most of their individuality to the present day. What is, however, more to our present purpose is, that each and all of them have left most distinct traces of their peculiarities in the buildings erected, and the different styles of architecture they from time to time adopted.<sup>38</sup>

The patently heterogeneous style of much early Indo-Islamic architecture—in which forms derived from Iranian traditions were translated into a north Indian architectural idiom and constructed from reused materials—had the potential to weaken this equation of style with racial and religious difference, undermining the methodological assumptions on which Fergusson's reading of Indian history from its architectural traces rested.<sup>39</sup> Responding to this potentially fatal flaw Fergusson takes several, often contradictory, approaches. The most basic of these is the adoption of a contemporary perception of Islam as a culturally amorphous "other", devoid of any distinctive architectural styles, but capable of assuming those of the cultures it engulfed. Such an interpretation could be supported by the penchant for reusing architectural materials in early Indian mosques:

Wherever the Muslims went they introduced no style of their own, but employed the native people to build their mosques for them; and this accounted for the fact that some of the most beautiful Mahommedan buildings in India were purely Hindoo from first to last.<sup>40</sup>

Elsewhere, Fergusson and others are compelled by the logic of their theoretical strictures to fragment medieval monuments into "Hindu" and "Muslim" components; the result is not so much a synthesis as a juxtaposition of two parallel traditions. Discussing the *Qutbi Mosque* in Delhi (1192), Fergusson explains to his readers, "to understand the architecture, it is necessary to bear in mind that all the pillars are of Hindu, and all the walls of Muhammadan architecture."<sup>41</sup> Casts of the mosque (Fig. 2) thus conveniently illustrated both "Hindu" styles of architecture (the reused pillars) and "Pathan" (the new carvings made for the mosque in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries).<sup>42</sup> As Metcalf notes:

If all architectural elements were defined as "Hindu" or "Muslim", nothing remained unknown. Everything—the arch, the dome, the bracket capital, the decorative motif—had its place in the comprehensive system. What the colonial ruler had explained, he, of course, controlled.<sup>43</sup>

As these divisions suggest, if the taxonomic impulse was above all a search for convincing signs of difference, the most basic of these differences was religious. Just as contemporary archaeologists felt competent to distinguish between "Hindu" and "Muslim" monuments (or their components) on the basis of certain formal characteristics, so the ability to identify contemporary adherents of these religious faiths by their appearance, behaviour and dress was also considered a desirable skill for colonial administrators. Texts designed to prepare young officials for life in India and to facilitate reading signs of difference often stress the fierce appearance of Muslims, who were believed to possess a much greater innate capacity for martial prowess than their Hindu compatriots.<sup>44</sup> Some observers believed that such differences were inscribed in and on the body. An article in the *Phrenological Journal* of 1824-5 relates how:

Combativeness and Destructiveness are very little developed in the Hindoo; and in the Hindoo skulls which are in the Society's Collection, the distance between Destructiveness and Destructiveness (sic) is stated as not exceeding on an average 4½ inches, being an inch or an inch and a half less than in the European cranium.<sup>45</sup>

As I have mentioned above, qualities attested by the Hindu head could be correlated in and confirmed by a penchant for baroque styles of temple ornament. Conversely, the natural qualities of the Muslim apparently revealed themselves in the appropriation, destruction, and/or mutilation of the architectural members on which such ornament was borne. From the eighteenth century onwards, the theme of Muslim religious intolerance and its material correlates in acts of destruction are stressed in accounts of both contemporary civil strife and its assumed antecedent traces in medieval architecture.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, the presence of "Hindu" or "Jain" material in a "Muslim" context was often taken as an a priori signifier of inter-cultural conflict, even as decay or damage to the medieval monuments invariably signified "violence" to them.<sup>47</sup> This is especially true of the mosques erected after the conquest of north India by the sultans of Ghur in Afghanistan in the late twelfth century, which effectively brought most of north India under the control of a Muslim dynasty for the first time. Among these are the Qutbi Mosque in Delhi (1192) mentioned above (Figs. 1-2), and the 'Two-and-a-Half-Day' Mosque at Ajmir in Rajasthan (1199), both of which make extensive use of recycled architectural materials that are assumed to come from temples destroyed in the wake of the conquest. In what is probably the earliest published discussion of the latter, James Tod (1829) casts its builders as "the Goths

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and Vandals of Rajasthan", lauding the fortuitous survival of the reused columns while casting "a malediction upon all spoilers of art".<sup>48</sup>

For many observers (and here, oddly, Fergusson is an exception), the aesthetic attractions of the early Indo-Islamic mosques derived almost entirely from the "Hindu" materials that they engorged.<sup>49</sup> Failing to consider reuse as a positive mode of reception, nineteenth-century observers who lauded these reused materials necessarily denied the same appreciation to the Muslim patrons who had reused them, even portraying the act of reuse as an anti-aesthetic gesture. An account of the *Qutbi Mosque* complex in Delhi addressed to the Second Congress of Orientalists in London (1874) makes clear the contemporary reasoning:

Indeed, on *à priori* grounds, we should expect this want of appreciation of truthful ornamentation among the Mahomedans, a barbarous and warlike people, whose religion narrowed their minds, naturally none of the most liberal, and demanded the suppression of aesthetic feelings.<sup>50</sup>

Such observations were underwritten, not by close empirical analysis of the monuments, but by unexamined assumptions about the essential nature of Islam itself, which found confirmation in readings of early Indo-Islamic architecture. Puzzled as to the visibility of figural ornament on reused material at the *Qutbi Mosque* in Delhi, Alexander Cunningham remarks: "...as it is very unlikely that these figures would have been exposed to the sight of the early Musalmâns, I conclude that these stones must have also been carefully plastered over."<sup>51</sup> In fact, careful examination of the site produces ample evidence to the contrary, but such evidence sits ill with colonial and later readings that assume an essential aversion to images of any sort on the part of Muslim patrons.<sup>52</sup> The same principle also works at the macro level, with Cunningham confidently asserting that "the erection of a mosque by a Muhammadan conqueror always implies the destruction of a Hindu temple", thus obviating any need to examine or explain the diverse range and dates of materials combined within a single building.<sup>53</sup> Essentialising notions about the iconoclastic nature of Islam thus came to inform interpretations of key monuments that served in their turn as indexical traces not just of difference, but also of inter-communal violence. In this way a colonial discourse of "Islamic iconoclasm" constituted the medieval realities that it appeared to describe.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, since the native populations of India formed a living archive, a capacity for violence instantiated in the traces of the past held the potential for future resurgence. It is against this background that past, present and

future are brought into constellation in the definitive work on Indian ethnography of the period.

### The People of India

Published in eight volumes between 1868 and 1875, *The People of India* represents a monumental endeavour to fix the various "types" of contemporary Indian ethnography both photographically and textually within the 469 photographs and their accompanying descriptive letterpresses. The genealogy of the enterprise may lie in the "types" favoured by eighteenth-century British artists, but the scale of the enterprise would have been inconceivable before the advent of photography.<sup>55</sup> This was not the first Indian ethnographic text to be illustrated photographically, but it was by far the most ambitious.<sup>56</sup> The project required the combined services of fifteen named photographers and nineteen named authors, and was edited by John William Kaye, secretary in the Political and Secret Department of the East India Company's Home Civil Service, and John Forbes Watson, director of the India Museum in London.<sup>57</sup> The inevitable lack of consistency resulting from such collective endeavour ensured it a cool reception from scholars, but the enterprise provides important insights into the intersecting trajectories of architecture, ethnography, and history in colonial constructions of "Muslim violence". The preface explains the impetus for the project:

During the administration of Lord Canning, from 1856 to 1863, the interest which had been created in Europe by the remarkable development of the Photographic Art, communicated itself to India, and originated the desire to turn it to account in the illustration of the topography, architecture, and ethnology of that country.<sup>58</sup>

Accompanying this is a reference to the events of 1857 and their role in promoting the use of the camera in the subcontinent:

The great convulsion of 1857–8, while it necessarily retarded for a time all scientific and artistic operations, imparted a new interest to the country which had been the scene of, and to the people who have been the actors in those remarkable events.<sup>59</sup>

The Mutiny spawned a genre of photography dedicated to its immediate aftermath (including the iconic post-Mutiny photographs taken by Felice Beato early in 1858),

and to its sites with their monuments erected to commemorate the British dead.<sup>60</sup> Lacking the apparent, if staged, immediacy of Beato's photographs, the traces of the traumatic events of 1857 are inscribed on *The People of India* in a variety of ways, not least in its geographical scope, with the south of India (which was largely unaffected by the Mutiny) represented only fleetingly, and in the final volume.<sup>61</sup>

The north Indian photographs included in *The People of India* invoke the memory of the Mutiny by means of the accompanying letterpresses, which "constructs knowledge of racial 'types' relative to their political co-operation with the administrative frameworks of colonial authority", presenting the Indian body as "a map of physical and, by association, moral character".<sup>62</sup> Through the medium of the text, we are invited to read the behavioural traits of the various types represented in their physiognomy as indicative of past behaviour, or predictive of their propensity for future loyalty. As Christopher Pinney notes, "to discover political allegiance so clearly mapped in the physiognomy of the citizen was an administrator's dream."<sup>63</sup>

The use of photographic images in this way brings to mind Fergusson's previously cited representation of Indian architectural history in terms of its "value to those who wish to know who and what the people are or were, whom we have undertaken to guide and govern." Fergusson and others had argued that the history of India was one of progressive cultural degeneration periodically reinvigorated by foreign invasions. With the passage of time, however, such invaders invariably succumbed to cultural and moral decadence. As already mentioned, in his apologia for architectural history, Fergusson advocates its usefulness for reconstructing not only the zenith, but also the decline "of the religious faiths of the country...how they became corrupted, and when and by what steps they sank to their present level."<sup>64</sup> The Mughal invasion of 1526 was the last before the arrival of the Europeans, and by the nineteenth century the Mughal emperor and his court in Delhi were represented as the embodiment of Oriental despotism and cultural and moral decadence. The text accompanying a portrait of surviving members of the Mughal family, rulers of north India from 1526 until they were deposed in 1858 in the wake of the Mutiny, is typical in this respect, claiming that "the photograph gives a representation of the style of these persons", as decadent degenerates (Fig. 3).<sup>65</sup> The invocation of style in the context of reading the face recalls Fergusson's earlier reference to the importance of stylistic physiognomy in the reading of Indian monuments.

The intersections between reading monuments and reading bodies discussed above also permeate *The People of India* in a variety of ways. Despite the familiar conjunction of the topographic, architectural, and ethnographic invoked in the preface

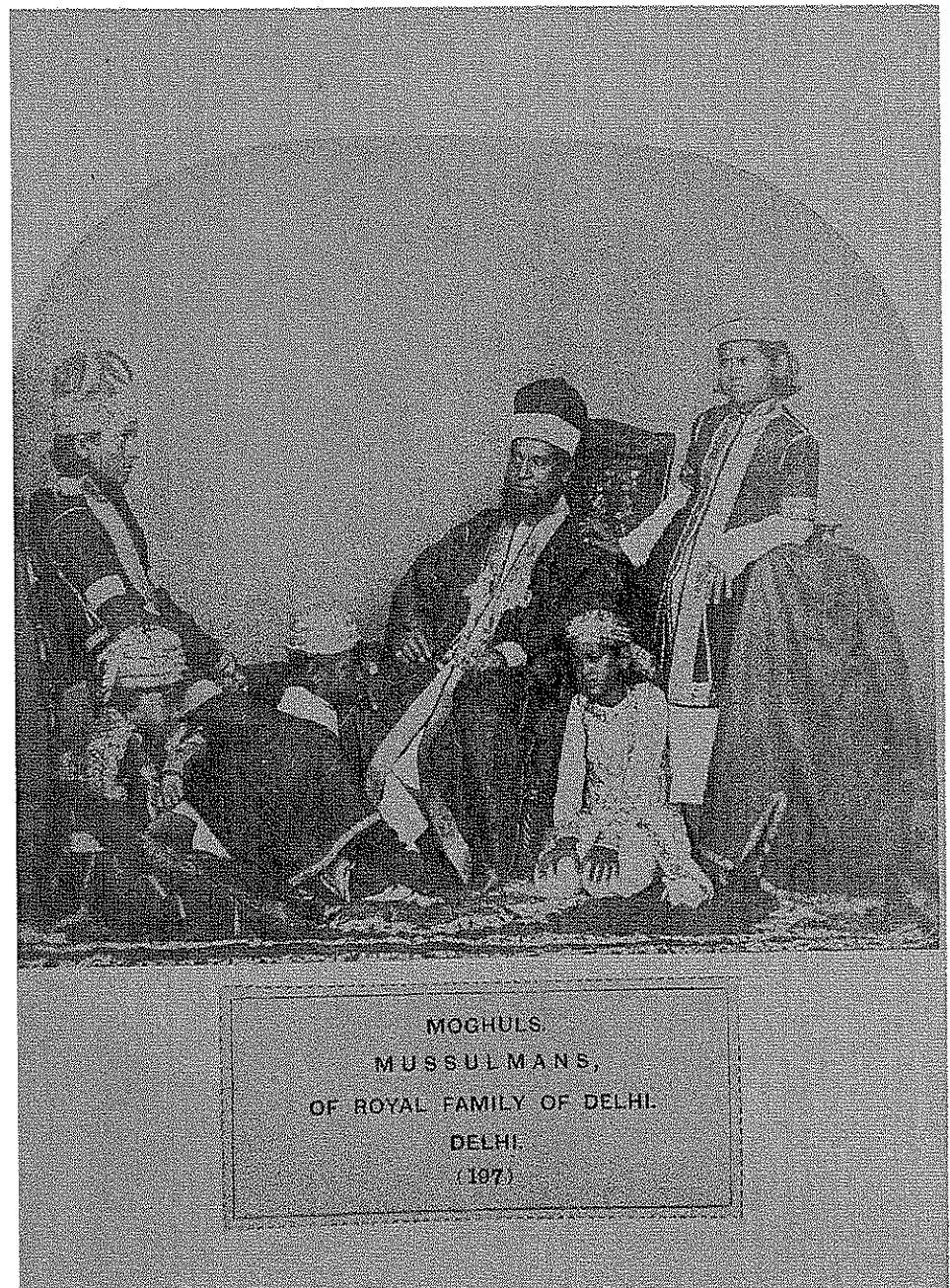


Fig. 3 *Moghuls*, from *The People of India*, Volume 4, 1869, #197. Photograph courtesy the author.

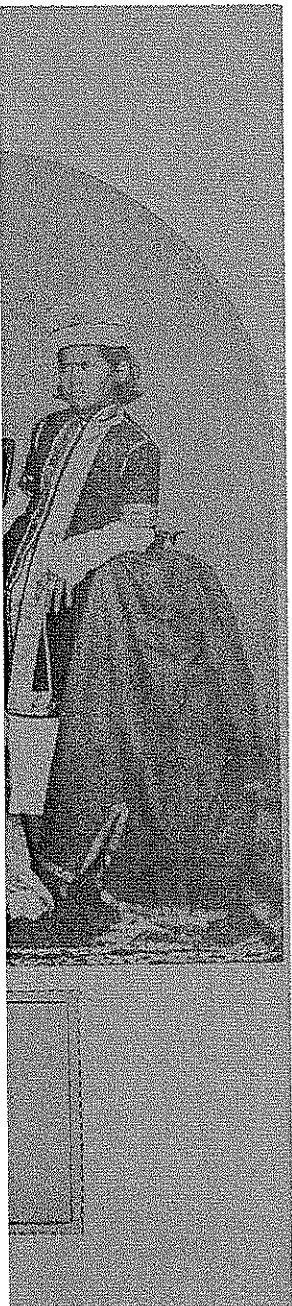


to *The People of India*, the nature of the work precluded the inclusion of architectural photographs. However, as Arjun Appadurai has pointed out, captions and letterpresses are no less integral to the photographic backdrop than visual props.<sup>66</sup> The texts that accompany the images in *The People of India* sometimes inscribe architectural backdrops as an absent presence against which the image should be viewed. In this way an attempt is made to secure the ultimately ambiguous status of the image by imbuing it with a connotative aspect rich in intertextual allusions to contemporary representations of Indian history.<sup>67</sup> In the text accompanying the image of the Mughals, their palace in Delhi is invoked as the locus of rebellion and dissent during 1857, when it “became the focus of all the deep-lying discontent of the Mahomedans of India.”<sup>68</sup> A connection between Mughal decadence and Mughal architecture had earlier been assumed by Charles Napier in his *Defects Civil and Military of the Indian Government* (1853), when he equated the physical filth that reigned amidst the decrepit buildings of Mughal Delhi with the “moral filth” of those who reigned over them.<sup>69</sup> In accounts of the Mutiny, the Mughal palace became a site of infamy, “stained with the blood of so many English women and children.”<sup>70</sup>

The equation of Indian architecture with moral decadence is a theme taken up by John Ruskin in a series of lectures delivered in the aftermath of 1857. Talking of the Mutiny, Ruskin invokes the theme of barbarism as a foil for colonial civilisation, marvelling that the former could thrive even for so brief a period in the presence of the latter:

But cruelty stretched to its fiercest against the gentle and unoffending, and corruption festered to its loathsomest in the midst of the witnessing presence of a disciplined civilization—these we could not have known to be within the practicable compass of human guilt, but for the acts of the Indian mutineer.<sup>71</sup>

If Ruskin makes no differentiation between Hindu and Muslim here, such a distinction is central to the taxonomic project of *The People of India*, in which religious affiliation is a constant, despite constant slippages between classification according to ethnicity, caste and occupation. Moreover, while there is no suggestion that Muslims alone were responsible for the violence of 1857, a belief in their natural bellicosity meant that the fierce cruelty alluded to by Ruskin was sometimes given a historical pedigree that invoked the well-established trope of Muslim iconoclastic violence. An entry entitled *Moulvees* or “doctors of Mahomedan Law” in volume four of the work



aph courtesy the author.



shows three seated figures with books spread before them and religious texts inscribed on plaques behind them (Fig. 4). The accompanying letterpress demonstrates the way in which the motif of Muslim violence could be articulated around an architectural backdrop:

Wherever Mahomedans prevailed for a time, during the rebellion of 1857, their national peculiarities stood forth in distinct terms. They commenced persecution at once. Priests and Moulvees arose among them, *as they had done among the original invaders of old*, preaching the fierce "jehad", or religious war; and while English were massacred as at Delhi, the persecution of Hindoos began in Rohilcund. A little more delay in the final contest for

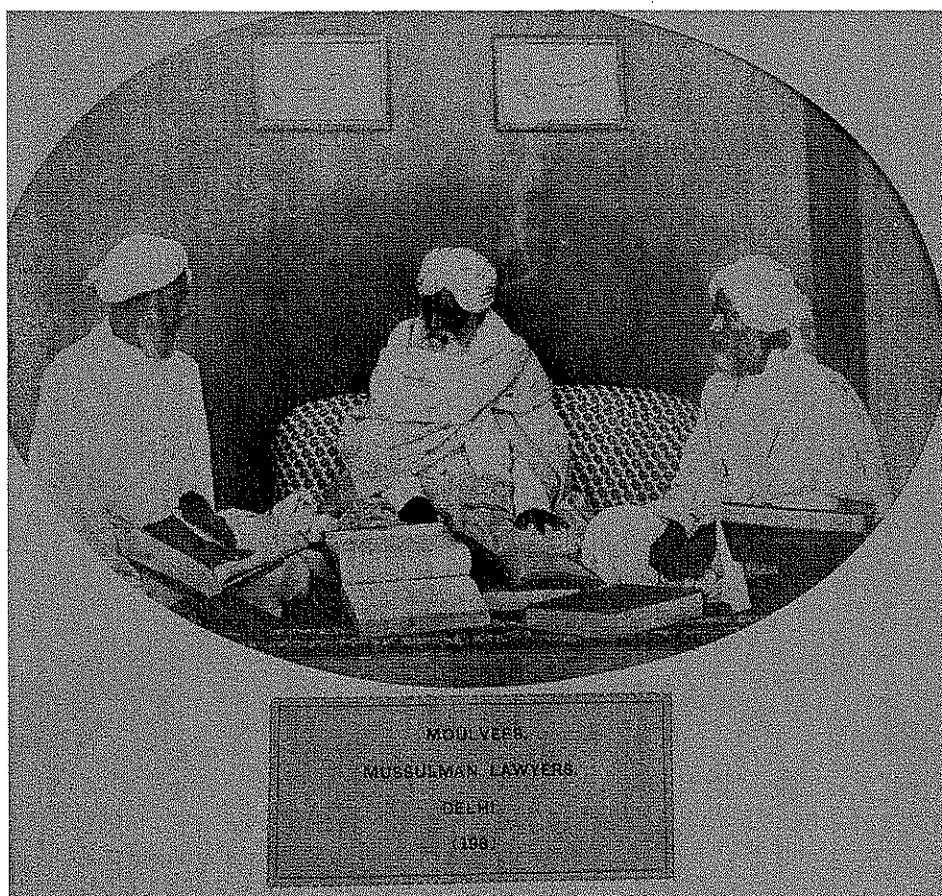


Fig. 4 *Moulvees*, from *The People of India*, Volume 4, 1869, #198. Photograph courtesy the author.

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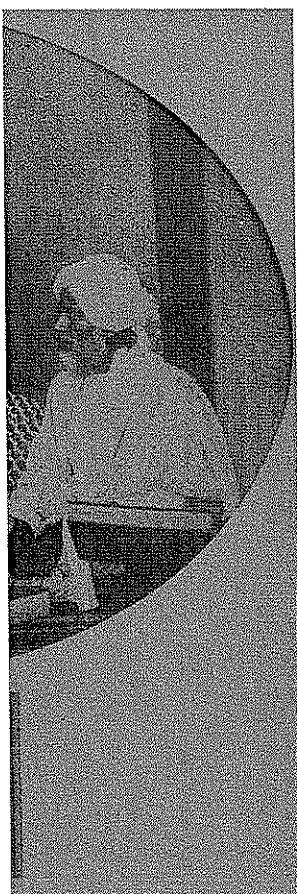
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supremacy, fought, *as of old*, at Delhi, and the land would have been deluged with Hindoo blood as well as English. Hindoo temples would have been desecrated, and the faith of Islam proclaimed—not, as before, mildly and peaceably (*sic*), but with the fierce enthusiasm and fanaticism of a people long debarred from the exercise of what were once cherished privileges. Happily, for all, this could not be. It was restrained by a firm and merciful Christian power, which holds all in its hand, and governs without distinction of creed.<sup>72</sup>

The original invaders of old, the final battle for Delhi, the desecration of Hindu temples, all suggest a relationship between the violence which contemporary historians associated with the Afghan conquest of northern India in the twelfth century—to which the *Qutbi Mosque* (Figs. 1–2) and other Indo-Islamic monuments apparently bore witness—and that which accompanied the events of 1857 in Delhi. Both the events of the Muslim conquest and the monuments erected in its wake were attracting much scholarly attention at this time, and the twelfth-century invasion itself is discussed in an earlier entry in the same volume of *The People of India*.<sup>73</sup>

In this case, however, it was not the sectarian violence of the Muslim other, but the benign egalitarianism of the colonial self that prevailed. Contrasts between the arbitrary violence of Muslim rule and the rational benevolence of British administration are found from the late eighteenth century onwards, but become a constant refrain in scholarship of the late 1850s and 1860s across a range of fields.<sup>74</sup> In one of his many writings on India, the legal historian Henry Maine asserts that only the Empire prevented the "pent-up flood of barbarism" from breaking forth in India. In doing so, he implicitly contrasts the destructive iconoclasm that would invariably accompany such an event with the creative iconoclasm of British rule, which necessarily assumed "the duty of rebuilding upon its own principles that which it willingly destroys."<sup>75</sup>

Although British observers might identify with the military and political successes of the Muslims, and the possession of a historical consciousness that seemed to them frustratingly lacking in their non-Muslim subjects, the theme of religious tolerance is a standard trope of difference.<sup>76</sup> The theme surfaces in the preface to the first volume of Elliot and Dowson's *History of India*, a seminal translation of medieval Arabic and Persian sources, published in 1867, contemporaneously with both Fergusson's lecture on the study of Indian architecture and the first volume of *The People of India*. The *raison d'être* of the translation is given as follows:



graph courtesy the author.

They will make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule. If instruction were sought for from them, we should be spared the rash declarations respecting Muhammadan India, which are frequently made by persons not otherwise ignorant...If they would dive into any of the volumes mentioned herein, it would take these young Brutuses and Phocians a very short time to learn, that in the days of that dark period for whose return they sigh, even the bare utterances of their ridiculous fantasies would have been attended, not with silence and contempt, but with the severer discipline of molten lead or empalement.<sup>77</sup>

The text goes on to invoke the spectre of a past characterised by communal violence, architectural destruction and moral decadence:

The few glimpses we have, even among the short Extracts in this single volume, of Hindus slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them, show us that this picture is not overcharged, and it is much to be regretted that we are left to draw it for ourselves from out the mass of ordinary occurrences, recorded by writers who seem to sympathize with no virtues, and to abhor no vices.<sup>78</sup>

After Delhi was retaken in September 1857, some among the victors suggested that the mosques of the city should be desecrated and the Mughal Friday Mosque razed by way of punitive retribution for the Mutiny. Eventually calmer heads prevailed, leading later commentators to contrast the actions of the British with "successive conquerors of India, Turk and Tartar, Afghan and Persian."<sup>79</sup> The violence of Muslim rule, demonstrated in medieval texts and monuments, was thus integral to the construction of a colonial self whose benign modernity and effective governance was seen as staying a despotic and malign medievalism that was constantly threatening to erupt into the present.<sup>80</sup>

The linkage of the distant instantiated past with the memory of more recent turmoil in evoking a potential future for the subcontinent turned out to be a

self-fulfilling prophecy, if not quite in the way that nineteenth-century scholars might have imagined.<sup>81</sup> Over three decades ago, Mohammad Mujeeb warned against permitting "the rhetoric of the medieval historians and the political slogans of our own times" to provide the lens through which medieval monuments such as the Qutbi Mosque were viewed.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, in the past decades, nineteenth and twentieth-century scholarship on early Indo-Islamic architecture has been directly implicated in the targeting of mosques by Hindu Nationalist extremists seeking to replace them with temples, and thereby redress a perceived historical injustice.<sup>83</sup> In his analysis of the literature agitating for the construction of the Ram Janmabhumi Temple on the site of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, Pandey notes the centrality of the theme of architectural destruction to the construction of a sectarian history for India:

Interestingly, however, the recent Hindu history of Ayodhya, which also stands for the Hindu history of India, is not about the *construction* of the Ram Janmabhumi temple. It is about its *destruction*. To that extent, it is a history, not of the temple but of the mosque built upon its ruins, not of the greatness of the "Hindu" but of the evilness of the "Muslim".<sup>84</sup>

The texts that Pandey discusses are by no means unique in drawing upon the work of colonial scholars such as Alexander Cunningham. As Tapati Guha-Thakurta observes:

Archaeological writings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century would keep resorting to this theme of Muslim destruction as a prime rhetorical device. It became the main trope with which to assert the power of their new restorative exercise and their new claims to the custodianship of monuments. It is this trope which acquires an unprecedented hardness and manipulative edge in the current Hindutva discourse, sliding into a kind of programmatic agenda for the counter-appropriation of Muslim sites that the 19<sup>th</sup> century discipline could never have condoned.<sup>85</sup>

In fact there *were* occasional instances where a communalist reading of the medieval past led to physical interventions on its traces, attempts to renegotiate a history cast in the stark terms of Hindu-Muslim binaries. The most famous instance of this occurred in 1842, when the doors of the tomb of the eleventh-century sultan, Mahmud of Ghazni, were carried off from Afghanistan to India on the orders of the Viceroy, Lord Ellenborough. This was done in the erroneous belief that they had

been looted from the Hindu temple of Somnath in Gujarat when sacked by Mahmud eight centuries previously. In his proclamation announcing the return of the gates, Ellenborough declared that the "insult of eight hundred years is at last avenged."<sup>86</sup> The absurdity of the gesture was evident even to contemporaries, who pilloried Ellenborough for his crude attempt "to retaliate on the Mussulmans" a perceived slight, eight hundred years distant.<sup>87</sup> There are, however, other nineteenth-century examples of "Hindu" material from early Indo-Islamic monuments being literally manipulated for similar ends.<sup>88</sup>

These "restorative" interventions are based on a construction of medieval history heavily inflected by a notional incarnation of the modern nation-state, one shaped by an idea of racial and religious purity essential to nineteenth-century scholarship on India. In this respect at least, they anticipate the rash of architectural destruction that has spread across the subcontinent since the demolition in 1992 of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya, described by V.S. Naipaul, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001, as "an act of historical balance".<sup>89</sup> This includes the events of 2002, when a wave of ethnic cleansing, murder and rapes of Muslims in Gujarat was accompanied by the destruction of mosques, the erasure of Persian inscriptions and, in Ahmadabad, the replacement of the tomb of a celebrated eighteenth-century Urdu poet by a Hanuman temple.<sup>90</sup> Two hundred and thirty historic sites are reported to have been destroyed or damaged in the carnage. One year earlier, Naipaul had compared the effects of Islam and British colonialism in familiar terms, concluding that unlike colonialism, Islam demands the destruction of the past, the destruction of one's history: "You have to stamp on it, you have to say 'my ancestral culture does not exist, it doesn't matter.'"<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

This essay has focused on some of the ways in which the trope of architectural violence was deployed in colonial constructions of Islam in the wake of the Revolt of 1857. As I noted in my introduction, the motif is so widely dispersed in time and space that numerous other case studies are possible. Not surprisingly, the spectre of architectural iconoclasm has again been invoked in the wake of the atrocities of September 11, 2001 sometimes in a manner curiously reminiscent of the colonial ethnographies discussed above. A recent influential article by Daniel Pipes, doyen of the US Government-funded *Institute of Peace* (named in the Orwellian doublespeak beloved of the present US administration) warns that Europe is becoming "more and more a province of Islam, a colony of Islam".<sup>92</sup> The death of European Christianity,

and falling birth rates among Europeans are permitting a resurgence of Islam, transforming an unbelieving Europe into "a new dark continent". The *coup de grâce* is strangely familiar:

When that happens, grand cathedrals will appear as vestiges of a prior civilization—at least until a Saudi-style regime transforms them into mosques or a Taliban-like regime blows them up. The great national cultures—Italian, French, English and others—will likely wither, replaced by a new transnational Muslim identity that merges North African, Turkish, subcontinental, and other elements.<sup>93</sup>

In a Europe where the conversion or erasure of sacred space was a standard feature of wars fought between Muslims and Christians, and where the destruction of churches and mosques played a more recent role in Balkan ethnic cleansing, Pipes' prophecy threatens a return of the repressed.<sup>94</sup> It shares with some of its colonial predecessors not only the use of architectural iconoclasm as a metaphor for cultural obliteration, but the collapse of historical time in an apocalyptic vision that can only be averted by submission to the essentialising logic of "culture-clash" and, ultimately, that of empire.

As I mentioned at the outset, however, the history of these representations is steeped in irony, from which Pipes' pronouncements are no more immune than those of the Count de Boulainvilliers. On 3 May 2004, eight days before Pipes' piece was syndicated, the Vatican issued a decree forbidding Muslims from praying in the Great Mosque of Cordoba. The mosque, one of the most celebrated examples of medieval Islamic architecture, had been transformed into a cathedral using only a fraction of the mosque's total area after the Christian conquest of the city in 1236.<sup>95</sup> In its decree, the Vatican urged Muslims not to look "back in time" but to "accept history and go forward".<sup>96</sup> The Muslims of Cordoba might therefore, one supposes, take heart from Pipes' predictions.

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#### NOTES

- 1 Laurie Anderson, *The Dream Before (for Walter Benjamin)*.
- 2 Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1996).
- 3 Count de Boulainvilliers, *The Life of Mahomet* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2002 [1731]) 2.

- 4 Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm and the Museum", *Art Bulletin* 84.4 (2002) 641-659. I am currently working on a general history of iconoclasm in the Islamic world, to be published by Reaktion Books. The working title is *Altered Images: Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Mutability of Meaning*.
- 5 Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Archaeology as Evidence: Looking Back from the Ayodhya Debate*, Occasional Paper no. 159 (Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1997) 2. On the central role of the monument in the long-running controversy surrounding the site see Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 152-62; Gyanendra Pandey, "The Culture of History", in *Near Ruins: Cultural Theory at the End of the Century*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 29. See also notes 81-82 below.
- 6 Ronald Rainger, "Race, Politics, and Science: The Anthropological Society of London in the 1860s", *Victorian Studies* 22.1 (1978): 51-70; George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987) 75; Kelli Michele Kobor, *Orientalism, the Construction of Race, and the Politics of Identity in British India, 1800-1930*, D.Phil. dissertation (Durham: Duke University, 1998) 148 ff. As early as 1857, photography was being promoted as a way of facilitating cranial comparisons: Joseph Mullins, "On the Applications of Photography in India", *Journal of the Photographic Society of Bengal* volume 2 (1857) 35. See also John Falconer, "A Passion for Documentation: Architecture and Ethnography", *India Through the Lens*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art & Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2000) 69-118.
- 7 Review of *Indian and Eastern Architecture* in *The Builder* 34 (29 April, 1876) 407. Fergusson had lived in India between 1829 and 1842: Clements R. Markham, *A Memoir on the Indian Surveys* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1878) 246-7. See also Maurice Craig, "James Fergusson", *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architecture and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London: Allen Lane, 1968) 140-52.
- 8 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 106. See also Gyan Prakash, "Science 'gone native' in Colonial India", *Representations* 40 (Fall 1992) 15-6.
- 9 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", *October* 39 (Winter, 1986) 6. The role of photography in constituting the contents of the subcontinent as collectible artefacts is clear from John McCosh's 1856 recommendation of the camera as a means by which officers in India "may make such a faithful collection of representations of man and animals, of architecture and landscape, that would be a welcome contribution to any museum": Ray McKenzie, "'The Laboratory of Mankind': John McCosh and the Beginnings of Photography in British India", *History of Photography* 11.2 (1987) 169.

1, Islamic Iconoclasm and the working on a general history of on Books. The working title is

*Back from the Ayodhya Debate*, Social Sciences, 1997) 2. On the versy surrounding the site see *s in India* (Berkeley: University e Culture of History", *In Near* holas B. Dirks (Minneapolis: 2 below.

ological Society of London in e W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian* lichele Kobor, *Orientalism, the 1800–1930*, D.Phil. dissertation photography was being pro- ullins, "On the Applications of ngal volume 2 (1857) 35. See ture and Ethnography", *India* r Gallery of Art & Arthur M.

9 April, 1876) 407. Fergusson kham, *A Memoir on the Indian* also Maurice Craig, "James id Writing Presented to Nikolas 10–52.

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er, 1986) 6. The role of pho- s collectible artefacts is clear a means by which officers in of man and animals, of archi- ution to any museum": Ray sh and the Beginnings of 7) 169.

- 10 *Book Circular Orders Issued by the Financial Commissioner for the Punjab in the Revenue Department*, volume 3 (Lahore: Punjabee Press, 1861) 335; Neeladri Bhattacharya, "Remaking Custom: The Discourse and Practice of Colonial Codification", *Tradition, Dissent, and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996) 40.
- 11 I take an indexical sign to be one with a "causal" or "existential" relationship to its referent: W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 56. On the indexical qualities of Indian photography see Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 20–1. See also Susan Sontag's comments on the photograph as a physical trace: *On Photography* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989) 4, 154.
- 12 Emil Schlagintweit, "Note in reference to the question of the Aboriginal tribes of India", *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (August, 1867) 129–30. The procedure was criticised for concentrating on the face rather than the cranium as a whole, since this was the basic unit of contemporary anthropometry.
- 13 Henry Hardy Cole, *The Architecture of Delhi Especially the Buildings Around the Kutb Minar* (London: Arundel Society, 1872) 3–7; Maria Antonella Pelizzari, "From Stone to Paper: Photographs of Architecture and the Traces of History", *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2003) 35–7.
- 14 J.A. Page, *An Historical Memoir on the Qutb: Delhi*, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, no. 22 (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1926).
- 15 Cole, *Architecture of Delhi*, 7. See also John Forbes Watson, *Report on the Illustration of the Archaic Architecture of India* (London: India Museum, 1869) 45.
- 16 Schlagintweit, "Note", 129; Forbes Watson, *Report*, 23; John Falconer, "Ethnographical Photography in India 1850–1900", *The Photographic Collector* 5.1 (1984) 27–28.
- 17 Fergusson in Forbes Watson, *Report*, 7–8.
- 18 Max Müller, *India—What Can it Teach Us?* (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1883) 25. In their writings on photography, both Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag have noted the ability of the photograph to museumise its subjects, and subjectify its objects.
- 19 George Campbell, *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1866) 71–2, 84, 88–9. See also the proposal for an Indian ethnological exhibition in which representative specimens of the various Indian tribes and races, taxonomically arranged in booths, "should receive and converse with the Public, and submit to be photographed, painted, taken off in casts, and otherwise reasonably dealt with in the interests of science": *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1867) 90.



- 20 Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 93.
- 21 James Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1977) 10.
- 22 Ibid., 12–13.
- 23 James Fergusson, *History of Architecture in All Countries*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1865) 42–3; Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 59. For the comparison of physiognomy and language see Marian Hobson, "Characteristic Violence: Or, the Physiognomy of Style", *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, eds. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 76. The notion of the legible monument owes something to contemporary studies of Egypt and its hieroglyphic-covered antiquities.
- 24 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 162–63; George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 73ff., esp. 80–81. See also Samuel George Morton, *Types of Mankind: Or, Ethnographic Researches Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races* (London: Trübner & Co., 1871).
- 25 See Fergusson's response to George Campbell's "On the Races of India as Traced in Existing Tribes and Castes", *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* vol. 1 (1869) 140–41. For a strident critique of Fergusson's adoption of an ethnographic framework see Anon., "The Influence of Race on Art", *The Anthropological Review* vol. 1 (1863) 216–27.
- 26 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1992) 247. See also the idea of the archival impulse as characterised by "an aggressive empiricism, bent on achieving a universal inventory of appearance": Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive", *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989) 118.
- 27 Fergusson, *Indian Architecture*, 12, emphasis mine. See also Fergusson's *Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture in Hindostan* (London: J. Hogarth, 1848) 2. Less than a decade later, a proposal for an Ethnographical Survey of India, comparable to the Archaeological Survey founded in the 1860s, cites the advantages of such a survey in giving colonial administrators a "moral hold" on the people of India: Falconer, "Ethnographical Photography", 34.
- 28 Denzil Ibbetson, "The Study of Anthropology in India", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* vol. 2 (1890) 120–1.
- 29 The use of masks in eighteenth-century physiognomic studies anticipates the role of casts in later ethnography: Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", 10 ff; Michael Shortland, "Skin Deep: Barthes, Lavater, and the Legible Body", *Economy and Society* 14.3 (August 1985) 273–312; Hobson, "Characteristic Violence". On the application of photography to

*The British in India* (Princeton:

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0 ff; Michael Shortland, "Skin  
*nd Society* 14.3 (August 1985)  
plication of photography to

anthropometric analysis see David Green, "Classified Subjects", *Ten.8 (Quarterly Photographic Journal)* 14 (1984): 30-7; Christopher Pinney and Frank Spencer in *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 148-55; Pinney, *Camera Indica* 50-53; Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photography, Anthropology, and Museums* (New York: Berg, 2001). Lavater, the father of physiognomy, is in fact invoked in at least one contemporary discussion of "reading" Indian faces from photographs: Anon., "Photography in Western India", *The Photographic News* 1.23 (11 February, 1859) 265-6.

- 30 See also the widespread tendency to read pre-modern figural sculpture as mimetic, and therefore no less susceptible to ethnographic analysis than the bodies of living Indians: James Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship* (London: W.H. Allen, 1868) 92-5, 224-6. As late as 1891 an ethnographic text could open with an analysis of the Buddhist sculptures at Sanchi third-century BCE onwards: H.H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1891).
- 31 Anonymous review of Nathaniel Halhed's *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776) in *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* vol. 2 (1824-5) 257-8. The attribution of child-like qualities to Hindus on the basis of their perceived head-size was commonplace.
- 32 Alexander Cunningham, *Report for the Year 1871-1872*, Archaeological Survey of India Reports, vol. 4 (Delhi: Rahul Publishing House, 1994 [1873]) 87. On the nasal index see Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 62. Anthropomorphism and zoomorphism also permeate certain nineteenth-century descriptions of Egyptian antiquities, with metaphorical descriptions of architectural forms in terms of skulls and bones: Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book 1843-1875* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1998) 306-7.
- 33 For a comparison between the forms of the human body and architectural form see Fergusson, *History of Architecture* vol. 1, 16.
- 34 Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographic 'Types': The Pursuit of Method", *Visual Anthropology* vol. 3 (1990) 235-58.
- 35 On the contemporary tendency to identify any linguistic religious or ethnic group as a "race", see. Stocking *Race, Culture and Evolution* 65. For Fergusson, "race" is equated with "persistent variety": *History of Architecture* volume 1, 44 n.1.
- 36 James Cowles Prichard, "The Relations of Ethnology to Other Branches of Knowledge", *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* vol. 1 (1848) 302.
- 37 For Muslims as a distinct caste see John Briggs, *Letters Addressed to a Young Person in India* (London: John Murray, 1828) 117. Note, however, that some contemporaries questioned

- the rigidity with which caste divisions were observed: John Muir, "Notes on the Lax Observance of Caste Rules, and Other Features of Social and Religious Life in Ancient India", *The Indian Antiquary* vol. 6 (1877) 251. See also Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Volume III.4 (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 113–59.
- 38 Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 10. See the insightful comments of Tanvir Hassan in *Sultanate Period Architecture: Proceedings of the Seminar on the Sultanate Period Architecture in Pakistan* (Lahore: Anjuman Mimaran, 1991) 15.
- 39 On the general problem of "hybridity" in nineteenth-century ethnography see Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800–1960* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982) 68, 95. On the importance of the issue in colonial ethnographies of India see Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 53–6.
- 40 Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 32.
- 41 James Fergusson, *A History of Architecture in all Countries, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (London: John Murray, 1867) 2.
- 42 Cole, *Architecture of Delhi*, 8.
- 43 Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989) 52.
- 44 Metcalf, *Imperial Vision* 36; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 9; Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 42.
- 45 Anonymous review of Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws*, *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* vol. 2 (1824–5) 261.
- 46 See among others, Thomas Daniell quoted in Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell 1786–1794* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980) text accompanying Fig. 88. For textual accounts of medieval Islamic iconoclasm see Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 88–112. On the role of mosque and temple in disputes of the colonial era see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992) esp. ch. 2.
- 47 As Guha-Thakurta ("Archaeology as Evidence", 24) notes, "thus, we find centuries of earlier mutations and transformations of Buddhist or Hindu structures receding before and freezing around the one cathartic blow of 'Muslim ravage'." For an example of the elision of the distinctions between damage to monuments, signifiers of violence, and the signified of violence itself, see the caption accompanying William Johnson's 1861 ethno-architectural photograph of the Karla Caves: Janet Dewan, "Delineating Antiquities and Remarkable Tribes: Photography for the Bombay and Madras Governments 1855–70",

- History of Photography* 16.4 (1992) 311, Fig. 9.
- 48 James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1920 [1829]) 900.
  - 49 On Fergusson's admiration for early Indo-Islamic architecture see Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 37–8. Even Tod, while castigating the reuse of temple columns in Ajmir, praises the great arched screen that was added to the façade of the prayer-hall shortly after the mosque's construction.
  - 50 Address by Grant Duff to the Archaeological Section, *Transactions of the Second Session of the International Congress of Orientalists*, ed. Robert K. Douglas (London: Trübner & Co., 1876) 300.
  - 51 Alexander Cunningham, "Four Reports Made During the Years 1862–63–64–65," *Archaeological Survey of India Reports* vol. 1 (Delhi: Rahul Publishing House, 1994 [1871]) 187.
  - 52 Such evidence includes the care taken with alterations to figural imagery, and the orchestration of colouristic effects by the alternation of red and yellow sandstone blocks: Finbarr Barry Flood, "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Early Indian Mosque", *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples? Readings on History and Temple Desecration in Medieval India*, ed. Sunil Kumar (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, forthcoming).
  - 53 Cunningham, "Four Reports" 65, 354. See also van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, 161. Although such interpretations are rooted in colonial Realpolitik, and heavily inflected by racial theories articulated within the context of empire, it is important to stress that many of the pre-colonial Arabic and Persian histories of South Asia provide support for a triumphalist reading of Indo-Muslim architecture. The privileging of texts in the interpretation of such monuments is part of a broader phenomenon in the reconstruction of South Asian histories: Thomas R. Trautmann and Carla M. Sinopoli, "In the Beginning was the Word: Excavating the Relations Between History and Archaeology in South Asia", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45.2 (2002) 492–523. For a critique of the textual hegemony in interpretations of some of the monuments mentioned here see Alka Arvind Patel, *Islamic Architecture of Western India (mid-12th–14th Centuries): Continuities and Interpretations* (Cambridge, MA.: unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Harvard University, 2000). Ironically, it is only in the wake of the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 that more analytical approaches to the question of iconoclasm and reuse have come to the fore: Richard M. Eaton, "Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim States", *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identity in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000) 246–81; Sunil Kumar, "Qutb and Modern Memory", *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*, ed. Suvir Kaul

- (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001) 140–82.
- 54 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 94.
- 55 See, for example, the engravings of Indian “types” accompanying William Hodges, *Travels in India During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, and 1783* (London: J. Edwards, 1794).
- 56 For the history of photographic ethnographies see Brij Bushan Sharma, “Typical Pictures of Indian Natives”, *History of Photography* 12.1 (1988) 77–82; Falconer, “Ethnographical Photography”.
- 57 For a comprehensive history of the project see John Falconer, “‘A Pure Labour of Love’, a Publishing History of *The People of India*”, *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, ed. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (London: Routledge, 2002) 51–83. See also Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 155–8; Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 33–42. There are parallels in the totalising ethnographic project of Thomas Henry Huxley, who attempted to collect anthropometric photographs representative of all subjects of the Empire: Edwards, *Raw Histories*.
- 58 John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye, *The People of India*, vol. 1 (London: India Museum, 1868) preface.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 David Harris, “Topography and Memory: Felice Beato’s Photographs of India, 1858–1859”, *India Through the Lens*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art & Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2000) 119–48; Falconer, *Pioneering Photography* 14–15; Narayani Gupta, “Pictorializing the ‘Mutiny’ of 1857”, *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Maria Antonella Pelizzari (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2003) 216–39.
- 61 Falconer, “A Pure Labour”, 78.
- 62 Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 156.
- 63 Christopher Pinney, “Classification and Fantasy in the Photographic Construction of Caste and Tribe”, *Visual Anthropology* vol. 3 (1998) 267.
- 64 Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 10.
- 65 John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye, *The People of India* vol. 4 (London: India Museum, 1869): 197.
- 66 Arjun Appadurai, “The Colonial Backdrop”, *Afterimage* (March–April, 1997) 4.
- 67 Regarding the contingent nature of photographic meaning see Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning”, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984) esp. 4; Sekula, “Reading an Archive”, 117. One might even go so far as to suggest that the text endeavours to acquire some of the transparency that contemporaries attributed to the

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94.  
ing William Hodges, *Travels*  
[. Edwards, 1794].  
n Sharma, "Typical Pictures  
Falconer, "Ethnographical  
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see Allan Sekula, "On the  
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rt and Design, 1984) esp. 4;  
as to suggest that the text  
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photographic medium. This phenomenon has been noted in contemporary European photographic publications on the Middle East: Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library*, 286-7.

68 Ibid.

69 Charles James Napier, *Defects Civil and Military of the Indian Government* (Ajmer: Manik Chopra, 1977 [1853]) 33.

70 H. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1883) 408; see also 391.

71 Cited in Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: The History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 248.

72 Watson & Kaye, *People of India*, vol. 4 (London: India) 198, emphasis mine.

73 Ibid., 178. The authors of the letter-presses in *The People of India* were aware of contemporary scholarship, citing Burton's *History of Sind* for example in an entry on *Two Sindees*: John Forbes Watson & John William Kaye, *The People of India*, volume 6 (London: India Museum, 1872) 318.

74 A. Berriedale Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy 1750-1921*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1985) 146-7; Briggs, *Letters Addressed*, 117; Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 45; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 6-15; Falconer, "A Passion for Documentation", 74.

75 Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 124. One group that actively advocated iconoclasm in British India was missionaries, for whom the destruction of Hindu icons was an essential part of the conversion of temples into churches: Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Conversions and Crises of Conscience under Company Raj in South India", *Asie du Sud: Traditions et changements*, Colloques Internationaux du C.N.R.S., (582, 1979) 318.

76 Metcalf, *Imperial Vision*, 36-9.

77 H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990 [1867]), xxii.

78 Ibid., xxi.

79 Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, 411-2, 415; Richard H. Davis, "Three Styles in Looting India", *History and Anthropology* 6.4 (1994) 312-3.

80 The entry on "Maulvees" in *The People of India* expresses the desire that as such subjects die out they will "give place to a more truly loyal race of descendants". This aspiration towards change is at odds with the notion of an essential, unchanging Islam that enabled the genealogy of the violence read in native physiognomies after 1857 to be found in the flotsam of the medieval past. An entry in volume 3 of *The People of India* discusses Shair Ali Syud, "a Mahomedan of the Central Asia type", explaining that on subjects of his class, "time and change, with all the adjuncts of modern civilization, make little progress":

- Watson & Kaye, *The People of India*, vol. 3, (London: India Museum, 1868) 139. The ambiguity or ambivalence revealed here is a characteristic of colonial discourses, the classic study being Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 81 See the representation of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in March 2001 as a "regression into medieval barbarism", Flood, "Bamiyan", 652.
- 82 M. Mujeeb, *Islamic Influence on Indian Society* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakash, 1972) 127.
- 83 See the many secondary sources (including some of those discussed here) that are drawn upon in Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them?* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991).
- 84 Pandey, "The Culture of History", 31. For the use made of Cunningham's archaeological reports see p. 26.
- 85 Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Archaeology as Evidence*, 24. For a broad overview of some of the issues see Catherine B. Asher, "Uneasy Bedfellows: Islamic Art and the Politics of Indian Nationalism", *Religion and the Arts* 8.1 (2004) 37-57.
- 86 Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 202. On the role of the Somnath temple in conflicting historical narratives see now Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (Delhi: Penguin India, 2001).
- 87 *The Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches of Lord Macaulay* (London: Longman, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1871) 638.
- 88 Finbarr Barry Flood, *The Materials of Translation: Subjects and Objects in the First Indo-Persian Politics* (forthcoming) ch. 1.
- 89 Aman Khanna, "Among the Believers", *Outlook India*, 27 February 2004. Available at [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com)
- 90 Luke Harding, "Islamic Heritage Under Attack", *The Guardian*, 10 June 2002, [www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,730701,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,730701,00.html) ; Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002) 385-92. See also Flood, "Bamiyan", n. 116.
- 91 Staff and agencies, "VS Naipaul wins 2001 Nobel Prize", *The Guardian*, 11 October 2001, <http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,6109,567611,00.html>
- 92 Daniel Pipes, "Muslim Europe", *New York Sun*, 11 May 2004, available at [www.danielpipes.org](http://www.danielpipes.org) as article 1796.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Julie A. Harris, "Mosque to Church Conversions in the Spanish Reconquest", *Medieval Encounters* 3.2 (1997) 158-72; Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "Bulldozing Sacred Sites", *Archaeology* (Jan/Feb, 1998) 548-53; R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Destruction of Cultural Memory", *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 36.1 (Summer 2002) 1-8.

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- 95 Giles Tremlett, "Vatican rebuff to Spanish Muslims", *The Guardian*, 3 May 2004, [www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1208221,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1208221,00.html)

On the history of the mosque see Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "The Great Mosque of Córdoba", *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilynn D. Dodds (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992) 11-26. Interestingly, some Hindu Nationalists have seized upon the conversion of mosques and the appropriation of their sites in medieval Spain as example how history might be "undone": Khanna, "Among the Believers".

- 96 Ibid.