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Center for South Asian Studies
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin, October 11-14, 2018

South Asian Muslim Studies Association
2018 Symposium

Thursday, October 11, 2018

“Insider/Outsider Perspectives
in
South Asian Muslim Studies”

The Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club
1 West Dayton Street
Madison, WI 53703
www.concoursehotel.com
1-800 356-8293
South Asian Muslim Studies Association (SAMSA)
southasianmuslimstudiesassociation.org

2018 Symposium

The Co-Chairs of the SAMSA Symposium Roger D. Long, M. Raisur Rahman, and Sanaa Riaz, and the Program Committee—the SAMSA Executive Officers and Board Members—invite you to the 2018 Symposium. The SAMSA Symposium was formerly known as the SAMSA Pre-Conference. The South Asian Muslim Studies Association was officially launched in 1974 at Villanova University by political scientist Professor Hafeez Malik (b. 1930) to promote research on Muslims of the Indian sub-continent. As a result, SAMSA, since its inception, has sponsored hundreds of scholars, without reference to seniority, gender, religious affiliation, or national origin, in panels covering topics dealing with any area of research pertaining to Muslims and Muslim life in any of the countries of South Asia, as well as in the South Asian diaspora. In 2014 SAMSA, in commemoration of its fortieth year, organized its First Pre-Conference: “Forty Years of South Asian Muslim Studies.” The theme of the 2015 Pre-Conference was “Interactions: National and Transnational Themes in South Asian Muslim Studies.” The 2016 Pre-Conference, “Modernity and Tradition in South Asian Muslim Thought: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on the Modernist Legacy of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,” was dedicated to the ideas of Sir Syed Ahmed (1817-1898) in celebration of the bi-centennial commemoration of his birth and the publication of a volume dedicated to his life and work edited by M. Raisur Rahman and Yasmin Saikia. The 2017 Pre-Conference acknowledged the seventieth anniversary of independence and assessed research conducted on South Asian Muslims during that period: “Postcolonial Scholarship at 70: Seven Decades of Research on South Asian Muslims, 1947-2017.” The theme of the 2018 SAMSA Symposium is “Insider/Outsider Perspectives in South Asian Muslim Studies.” SAMSA expresses its gratitude to the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for hosting the Symposium.

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Program Summary
Thursday, October 11, 2018
University C/D

2:00    Welcome

2:00-3:30    Panel: “Constructions of Law, Authenticity, and Identity of South Asian Muslims”

3:30-3:45    Coffee Break: Foyer

3:45-5:30    Roundtable: “Insiders, Outsiders, and Teaching South Asian Muslim Studies”

6:00    SAMSA Pre-Conference Dinner: University Room C-D
Program
Thursday, October 11, 2018
University C/D

2:00   Welcome: Roger D. Long, Eastern Michigan University
2:00-3:30  “Constructions of Law, Authenticity, and Identity of South Asian Muslims”
Chair: M. Raisur Rahman, Wake Forest University

Yaqoob Bangash, Information Technology University, Lahore
“Upholding the Rule of Law?
The Lahore High Court of Pakistan

Mashal Saif, Clemson University
“Authenticity and the Question of Belonging: Debating the Limits of Deobandism in Contemporary Pakistan”

Jaclyn A. Michael, St. Lawrence University
“Representation of Many Muslim Partitions in Garm Hava”

SherAli Tareen, Franklin & Marshall College
“Debating the Cow in Colonial India”

3:30-3:45  Coffee Break: Foyer

3:45-5:30  Roundtable: “Insiders, Outsiders, and Teaching South Asian Muslim Studies”
Chair: Laura Dudley Jenkins, University of Cincinnati

Mujeeb Ahmad, International Islamic University, Islamabad
Qudsiya Ahmed, Cambridge University Press
Roger D. Long, Eastern Michigan University
M. Raisur Rahman, Wake Forest University
Yasmin Saikia, Arizona State University

6:00   SAMSA Pre-Conference Dinner
Chair: Roger D. Long, Eastern Michigan University
Dinner Speaker: Yasmin Saikia, Arizona State University
“An Inclusive Politics: Sir Syed and the Other”
SAMSA Dinner Speaker

Professor Yasmin Saikia
Professor of History and Hardt-Nickachos Endowed Chair
Arizona State University

“An Inclusive Politics: Sir Syed and the Other”
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

Editors
Yasmin Saikia | M. Raisur Rahman
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898)

Syed Ahmed Khan has been called a “multidimensional personality, a creative thinker, a philosophical theologian, a community leader, an educationalist and a liberal modernist.” He was all these things and more. He was an intellectual, a man of letters, a powerful and inspiring orator, and an inspiration to his community whose name and legacy live on two centuries after his birth. Popularly known as Sir Syed, he was born in Delhi on October 17, 1817 to a Husaini Syed family who had migrated to India from Herat during the reign of the Mughal Emperor, Akbar (1542-1605, Emperor 1556-1605). In 1754 his paternal grandfather, Syed Hadi, was awarded a mansab (honorary rank) and an honorary name, Jawwad Ali Khan, at the court of the 16th Mughal Emperor, Alamgir II (1699-1759, Emperor 1754-59). He also received a number of other offices and titles. They were conferred on his son, Syed Muttaqi, Sir Syed’s father, on his death. Bhai Muttaqi, as the Emperor called him, a man of spiritual and mystical leanings, died in 1838. Sir Syed’s maternal grandfather Khwaja Fariduddin Ahmad (1747-1828) was of Kashmiri origin and only briefly associated with the Mughal court. He was an envoy for the East India Company to Persia and Burma, a scholar, particularly of mathematics, and had an extensive library. He was employed by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar Shah II (1760-1837, Emperor 1806-37), and had deep religious leanings as well. His daughter, Aziz-un-Nisa, Sir Syed’s mother, was an educated woman who taught her son part of the Qu’ran and other subjects and was great influence on him. It was his mother and his paternal grandfather, and not his father, who were the most important figures in his early education and to whom Sir Syed owed most, for his early intellectual development. Sir Syed was, therefore, born into a family at the center of Mughal rule and Mughal culture in Delhi with a family that had some connections with Mughal administration; a family with scholarly interests, some experience in governing and government service, and spiritual leanings.

Syed Ahmed (he used the title Khan later in his life) was the younger of two brothers. His elder brother, with whom he was close was Syed Muhammad, was educated from a young age at home at his maternal grandfather’s house where he was one of a dozen boys of his extended family of a similar age. He was tutored in Persian and he learned Arabic. He also learned mathematics and developed an interest in science.

In 1836 his father died and the family was left with little financial support apart from a small allowance given to his widow and income from property from the maternal grandmother’s side of the family. Syed received work in the Mughal administration in the office of the sadar amin (civil judge) but in February 1839, and against family wishes, accepted the position of naib munshi (deputy civil judge) with the East India Company which was offered to him by a British official who had met Syed in Delhi. As a result, his work in the judicial branch of the East India Company began. He would work for the Company and then for the British administration for the next 38 years. The first of his several hundred pieces of writing appearing in 1840. It has been estimated that in the course of his life he penned over 6,000 pages of writing. On December 24, 1841 Syed was appointed munsif at Mainpuri (United Provinces) and then Fatepur Sikri where he penned a number of writings including a short essay on the life of the Prophet.
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Cont’d)

He had achieved renown as a civil servant and on a holiday in Delhi in 1842 the Mughal court conferred on him the family titles of Jawwad ad Daula (Servant of Success) and Arif Jung (Spiritual Devotee). By the early 1840’s he had begun his life as a man of letters and an intellectual eventually producing huge numbers of writings on a variety of subjects in history, archaeology, journalism, literature, and politics, and including and most importantly, around thirty pieces of writing on religion where he eventually developed his modernist interpretation of Islamic thought.

Syed’s theological views went through three stages. The first was from 1842 until 1857 and is characterized by an orthodox approach when the touchstone was the sunna (example) of the Prophet and his Companions. His first religious study was the publication in 1842 of a biographical sketch of the Prophet Muhammad, Jila al-qulub bi zikr al-mahbub (Delight of the Hearts in Remembering the Beloved), which was a Sufi text. His second was a defense of the Sunni camp, Tuhfa Hasan (1844), and was aimed against the Shias. In his third treatise, Kalimat al-haqiq (Sentence of Truth) (1849), he gave his views on pirs (heads of religious orders) and their discipleship. His fourth brochure was Rah-i sunnat dar radd-i bid’at (The Sunna and the Rejection of Innovations) and the fifth Namiqa dar bayan-i mas’ala-i tasawwur-I shaikh (Explaination of the tasawwur-I shaikh-doctrine) (Contemplating on the Master-doctrine) (1852). The last writing of this period was the translation of passages of al-Gazali’s Kimiya’ al-Sa’adat (The Alchemy of Happiness) (c. 1105) into Urdu.

The period 1857 to 1869 represented a period of transition when he produced one important work, the commentary on the Bible, Tabyin al-kalam (1862); it is from 1870 that Syed Ahmed Khan espoused his independent religious thought taking a rationalist approach to all matters religious. His commentary on the Qur’an, Tafsir-al-Qur’an, was the most significant but most controversial of his writings. It was published in sections over a fifteen-year period between 1876 and 1891 and met opposition from conservative ulama who condemned his attempt to present an interpretation of the Qur’an consistent with contemporary European science.

In February 1846 at his request he had been transferred to Delhi after the death of his brother so he could support his mother. Apart from two short assignments in 1850 and 1853 as sadar amin in Rohtak, he remained in Delhi until 1854, where he continued to produce a steady body of writing. To supplement his income he also turned to journalism as well as scholarly work, producing a renowned volume (although he had already published six other books) on the archaeology of Delhi, Asar-al sanadid (The Remnant Signs of Ancient Heroes), in 1847, although his attempt to make a paying proposition of a journal founded by his brother failed. At the same time he continued his religious studies with a number of clerics including a descendant of Shah Waliullah (1702-62) at the Madrasah i-Rahimiya.
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Cont’d)

He was promoted first class *munsif* in Delhi before accepting a transfer to Bijnor on January 13, 1855. As a result, he was in the United Province, the heart of the revolt during the Mutiny, also known as the Great Rebellion, or First War of Independence, which broke out on May 10, 1857, where he was serving as the civil judge at the court of Bijnor in the northwest part of the province close to the origin of the uprising at Meerut. He refused to join those fighting the British and left for Delhi to rescue his mother. He did so but she died at Meerut. He also lost several relatives to the violence. At Bijnor, at the risk of his life, he protected a number of Europeans who were in danger and in a confused situation resisted the invitation of the Nawab of Najibabad to join in the revolt. As a result, his house was occupied and his property plundered. The Nawab fled in the face of counter-attack and the British asked Syed to take charge and govern Bijnor. However, he had to flee Bijnor and with difficulty and in great danger reached Meerut. He penned an account of these events in *Tarikh-i sarkashi-i zila-i bijnor* (*History of the Bijnor Rebellion*) in 1858.

In 1858 he was appointed to serve in Moradabad just over one-hundred miles north of Delhi. As soon as he arrived in his new posting he began to write the pamphlet, *Asbaab-i baghawat-i hind* (“The Causes of the Indian Revolt,” with the original and a translation found on Francis Pritchett’s website at www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett and an English translation published in the “Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints” in 2000, with an introduction by historian Francis Robinson.). Syed printed up 500 copies of his pamphlet and sent one copy to the government, kept a number for himself, and sent the rest to England. It was to become one of his most famous pieces of writing. It was to epitomize what Syed stood for: the defense of the Muslim community. This was to mean the defense of Islam, the promotion of Urdu, and the social reform and the educational advance of Muslims. He argued that the Rebellion occurred for a number of reasons; it had no foreign involvement, the annexation of Oudh was not the cause of the general uprising, and nor was the Bengal Army. Above all, he went on at length to argue that Muslims were not the cause of the revolt. He gave five reasons for the outbreak: 1) ignorance and misinterpretation on the part the people of India on what the British government was doing; 2) governing and passing laws that contravened Indian customs; 3) ignorance on the part of the government of Indian conditions and what Indians were thinking; 4) poor governing; and 5) bad management of and disaffection in the army. The pamphlet was only made available to the general public after it was translated into English in 1873 and, in spite of the fears of Syed’s friends that it would cause him personal difficulties with government officials, even threaten his career, it was well received by most of them, if not all, as constructive criticism and his motives were not called into question.

It was in 1867 with the outbreak of the Urdu controversy that he emerged as a leader of the Muslim community of India. His influence not only came about through his enormous output of writings but because of his great oratorical ability when his voice could echo throughout the hall where he was speaking and where he could whip up audiences “to the wildest enthusiasm.”
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Cont’d)

His involvement in the Urdu controversy came about because of his opposition to the plan to introduce Hindi as the second language of the United Provinces. An advocate of the use of Urdu, he had formed a Translation Society which translated scientific works in English into Urdu and Hindi and this evolved in 1864 into the Scientific Society of Aligarh. It sought to promote a liberal modern education for Muslims that incorporated Western scientific knowledge. Two years later the Society erected its own building. It had a reading room and a library. Its weekly journal, *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, was started by Syed and he contributed a large number of articles running to the hundreds on a wide variety of topics including human evolution, plant and animal life, and the solar system. It was also in the *Gazette* that Syed reviewed and refuted the ideas of William Wilson Hunter’s, *The Indian Mussalmans* (1871) which raised questions about the loyalty of Muslims and argued that the *jihad* of Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi (1786-1831) in 1826 was anti-British, again demonstrating his concern to defend the Muslim community. The journal had sections in both English and Urdu. Syed perceived Urdu to be the *lingua franca* of Muslims in India and with the decline of Persian, the official language of the Mughal court, promoted Urdu in his writings and fought hard against the provincial government’s plan to make Hindi the second language of the state. Urdu was the medium of instruction in the schools he had created and he believed that Urdu was the language of the gentry and Hindi, the language of the “vulgar.” His followers created such organizations as the Urdu Defence Association (1900) and the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i-Urdu (Council for the Advancement of Urdu) (1903) and Urdu became the official language of the state of Hyderabad and after its creation in 1918 the official language of Osmania University.

His educational activities, for which he is most famous and through which his legacy mostly endures, began when he established a *madrasa* in Moradabad in 1859. An important characteristic of the school was the teaching of Western science along with traditional religious subjects. In 1863, in Ghazipur in the far eastern part of the United Provinces, he established another *madrasa*, and purchased his own personal press. It was also in Ghazipur that on January 9, 1864 he founded the Scientific Society. In 1869 Syed spent eighteen months in Europe, mostly in London, on leave. In order to finance his trip, which left him in dire financial difficulties and which put him heavily in debt, he sold his library, mortgaged his house, and asked for and received a grant from the government. He left a vivid account of his impressions of his trip in his correspondence which was published in the newsletter of the Scientific Society, as *Safarnamah-i Musafiran-i Landan* (Travelogue of the Voyage to London) (and translated into English in *A Voyage to Modernism: Syed Ahmed Khan*.) He travelled with his eldest son, Syed Hamid (1849-94), who was in the provincial service in the North-West Provinces, a cousin Khudadad Beg, a servant, Chajju, and his younger son, Syed Mahmood (1850-1903), who was one of nine people to receive a government scholarship to study in England. The cousin, Khudadad Beg, was from the maternal side of the family and he also received a government scholarship. Syed Mahmood was to enroll at Lincoln’s Inn to study law and at the University of Cambridge (Syed’s wife had died in 1861 when he was 44 years old leaving him to raise his two sons and a daughter.)
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Cont’d)

Syed Mahmood was to end a distinguished career in the law as a judge of the Allahabad High Court (1892-93). In England Syed visited schools and universities and was received as an honorary member of the Athenaeum Club and a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society. On August 6 he received the Order of the Star of India from the Secretary of State for India, Lord Argyle (1823-1900, Secretary of State 1868-74) and would henceforth be entitled to call himself, “Bahadur” (lit. “Brave,” the title derives from the Mongol term, “Baghatur”) and to add the initials C.S.I. after his name. During his stay in London he was warmly received by a number of former officials from India including the former Viceroy, Lord Lawrence (1811-79, Viceroy 1864-69), who visited him often and invited him and his sons to the opening session of parliament in February 1870. Colonel G.F.I. Graham (b. 1840) who, along with his friend Sir Auckland Colvin (1838-1908) of the Indian Civil Service, had translated his Asbab-i baghawat-i hind into English, and was the first person to publish his biography (1885), also attended regularly on him. Syed was even invited to meet with Queen Victoria at a court appearance but he could not attend on the scheduled date. Apart from the severe financial straits he constantly faced during the trip and the money he had to borrow to meet his expenses he also received the “painful” news that his daughter, Amina, had died.

He returned to India the following year determined to establish a college for Muslims in India, “similar to that of Oxford or Cambridge”: the campaign to create the college became known as the Aligarh Movement. In 1870 he established the “Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning among Muhammadans.” Three years later the Committee proposed the construction of a college at Aligarh and on May 24, 1875 teaching commenced at the school level. The foundation stone of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was laid by the Viceroy, Lord Lytton (1831-91, Viceroy 1876-80) on January 8, 1877 and college classes began in 1878. Sir Syed had retired as a jurist in July 1876.

In 1878 he was nominated to serve on the Viceroy’ Legislative Council. For four years he served on the Education Commission. Fearful for the positions of Muslims in a Hindu-dominated political party he urged Muslims to refrain from participating in the activities of the Indian National Congress when it was founded in Bombay in December 1885. In 1866 he had created the Aligarh British Indian Association to establish contacts with the British parliament to further Muslim interests. In 1878 he founded the Muhammadan Association to promote political cooperation among Muslims on a national basis. In 1883 he organized the Muhammadan Civil Service Fund Association to support the entry of Muslims into the Indian Civil Service. In 1886 he inaugurated the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference. It was at a meeting of the Conference on December 30, 1906 in Dhaka that a number of its delegates established the All-India Muslim League. In 1887 he was nominated to be a member of the Civil Service Commission and the following year he established the United Patriotic Association.
Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Cont’d)

For all his activities he was knighted in 1888 and henceforth would become known as “Sir Syed.” He also received an honorary doctorate in law from the University of Edinburgh. Sir Syed died on March 27, 1898 and his tomb graces the center of the campus, but through his college, since 1920 Aligarh Muslim University, his modernist philosophy and legacy endures. The Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology was founded in Karachi in 1995 and every year, on October 17, his birthday is celebrated around the world by Aligarh Muslim University alumni and their friends. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was one of the sub-continent’s great intellectuals, man of letters, and reformers; for Francis Robinson, “the greatest Indian Muslim of the nineteenth century.”
Notes