Cracow Indological Studies
Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (2024), pp. 267–281
https://doi.org/10.12797/CIS.26.2024.02.12

Razak Khan. 2022. *Minority Pasts: Locality, Emotions, and Belonging in Princely Rampur*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Mir Yar Ali ‘Jan Sahib’. 2021. *The Incomparable Festival*. Ed. Razak Khan. Transl. Shad Naved. Gurugram: Penguin Random House India. —Reviewed by Maria Puri (independent scholar)

For a reader, susceptible to the allure of a well-turned book which is furnished with a beautiful cover and a title holding a promise of a voyage into lesser-known domains, the two books in focus, Razak Khan’s *Minority Pasts: Locality, Emotions, and Belonging in Princely Rampur*, and its companion volume, *The Incomparable Festival*, are indeed a rare treat. While the first offers an overview of the “histories and politics of Muslims in Rampur—the last Muslim ruled state in the colonial United Provinces” (Razak 2022: 2), the latter introduces the anglophone reader to a 19th-century Urdu poem, *Musaddas tahniyat-e-jashn-e-benazir* [Felicitations for the Incomparable Festival], by Mir Yar Ali ‘Jan Sahib’ of Rampur, exquisitely translated by Shad Naved and introduced by Razak Khan.

An insidious thread links both books at the visual level. The book cover of the Penguin Classics edition of *The Incomparable Festival* showcases a portrait of the poet, his name written underneath in Urdu: Mir Yar Ali alias (*urf*) Jan Sahib Rekhtigo, the likeness sourced from a miniature painting, courtesy Rampur Raza Library (Khan 2021: 82).

The cover of *Minority Pasts: Locality, Emotions, and Belonging in Princely Rampur*, picks up on the earlier book's pictorial clues and by way of another, closely related painting, "a visual depiction of the *Jashn-e-Benazir* celebration in princely Rampur" (Khan 2022: back cover), surreptitiously epitomizes objectives underwriting Razak Khan's research project and his views on the history of the local. The "royal festival *jashn-e-benazir*, first held in 1866 by the Nawab Kalb-e-Ali Khan (1832–87) with the aim of promoting art, culture and trade in the state" (*ibid.*: 4) thus becomes an allegory for the larger story of a quest "to understand localized Muslim political and historical experiences" (*ibid.*: 1–2) against the regional as well as the larger, pan-regional backdrop.

With present-day technologies providing handy tools which allow us to peep into books in a virtual space, on the publishers' or the sellers' websites, it seems almost superfluous to reiterate the books' contents in a review. However, not yet ready to abandon a useful template, I present here briefly a formal structural arrangement of both books. In the case of *The Incomparable Festival*, its two main parts, evenly matched in length, are Introduction (pp. 1–40) and Translation (pp. 41–80). These are followed by Editor's Note and Acknowledgments (pp. 81–82), Translator's Note and Acknowledgements (pp. 83–86), Bibliography and Notes.

Introduction, as we learn later (Khan 2022: xiii), is also reiterated in parts as Chapter 1 of *Minority Pasts* where historical milieu is given more attention and where Jan Sahib's princely patron, Nawab Kalb-e-Ali Khan (r. 1865–1887), to whom the *musaddas*[1] is dedicated, and whose life spans the pre-Mutiny and the post-Mutiny periods, is discussed at greater length. In *The Incomparable Festival*, however, we are given a fine, in-depth textual analysis of the poem itself, spoken of as a "literary artefact", "a quintessential text that evokes the locale of princely Rampur [and] its literary centrality (*markaz*)" (Khan 2021: 4). One needs to remember that at that point in time, with the

[1] A poem in six-line stanzas used for commemorative or hortatory verse, a late-classical form which reached its fruition during the late 19th century.

end of the Mughal (Delhi) and the Awadh (Lucknow) states, Rampur, which had remained loyal to the British during the Mutiny (1857), had indeed emerged as an important cosmopolitan centre, a political, social and cultural *markaz* of the region, an “Oasis in the desert”, a “Refuge”, an “Arampur”, a seat of power which aspired to be seen as the next, after Deccan, Delhi and Lucknow, school of poetry, *Dabistan-e-Rampur* (Khan 2022: 30–36).

Mir Yar Ali ‘Jan Sahib’ (1818–1886), already a recognized poet linked to the Awadhi literary public sphere, writes Khan (2021: 4), fled “the post-1857 destruction of Lucknow and moved to the Rampur state, attracted by its royal patronage”. The caption below his portrait on the book cover gives us not only his name, Mir Yar Ali, but also his *nom de plume*, Jan Sahib, while simultaneously specifying his area of expertise: a *rekhti-go,* exponent and performer of *rekhti*; histories of Urdu literature further tell us that Jan Sahib was probably “the last exemplary *rekhti-go*” (*ibid.*: 37).

A working, standard definition of what *rekhti* is, can be found in Platts’s dictionary: “*reḵẖtī* (fr. *reḵẖta*), s.f. Hindūstānī verse written in the language of women, and expressing the sentiments, &c. peculiar to them,” (Platts 1884: 611, quoted after Khan 2021: 2), with Ruth Vanita’s seminal study (2012) providing a more precise exposition, alongside a large format theorisation, specifically for the pre-mutiny Awadh culture. Among poets, the practitioners of *rekhti*, she discusses, we find Mir Yar Ali, whose *Musaddas tahniyat-e-jashn-e-benazir* falls just within the cut-off boundary of the period, 1870, mentioned in her book’s subtitle. Taking further Vanita’s interpretation, Khan advances in his Introduction, expressively subtitled “Space, Speech and Subjectivity in Jan Sahib’s *Jashn-e-Benazir*”, a ground-breaking reading of the text. Four discrete sections provide, in turn, an overview of the production of the text in the form of *rekhti* bound tightly to an actual historical event, namely the first celebration of the Festival (“The Economy and Politics of Literary Affect”); the role of royal patronage vs. performers, and the ethnographic character of the poetic account (“Patron and Performer: Ethnography of Poetic Speech”); the urban, bazaar, public nature of the Festival’s enacting and the unreservedness of its

participants ("Women, Men and Transvestites"); the competitiveness of the bazaar culture where different acts of speech jostle with each other ("Marketplace of Speech"). As a result, we get an image of *rekhti* poetic piece as a literary artefact presenting a "word-picture of an entire social world" (Khan 2021: 7), but a piece which needs an audience to enjoy and appreciate it, with the poet, the reciter, and the listener, all bit players in the festivities of the marketplace. The way Khan puts it, "In the poem's narrative, Jan Sahib sits surrounded by all these participants as he recounts his observations which are matched by a commentary in visuals […] included in the manuscript, giving us a lyrical and visual archive of affect in a distinctively vernacular space," (*ibid.*: 5). And indeed, **the captain** and **the camel riders**[2] from the miniature painting on the book cover (of *Minority Pasts*), re-emerge now, like old friends, in the verses of *The Incomparable Festival*.

> The spring is on display with many wondrous colourants.
> The fair has stepped out in flowery accoutrements.
> **Even the mounties of the camel-riding artillery don colourful pigments.**
> **And stationed on his chair is the captain of the regiments.**
> The sepoys swoon when the women players start singing,
> Such gestures they make once their drums are drumming.
>
> (*ibid.*: 51; transl. Naved)

The public space of the bazaar attracts both the high and the low: the rulers and their courtiers, but also the money changers, opium sellers, sweeperesses (*bhanginen*) dressed to the nines and boldly strolling around, butchers, washermen, gardeners, male and female entertainers, and many other sellers and buyers of merchandise on offer. In this fairground open to all, "apart from the women's sphere, there is the disruptive world of vernacular gendered performance styles consisting of the male *ta'ifa* (dancer), *randi* (whore), *zanane* (effeminate), *hijda* (eunuch), *bhaand* (jester) and *rekhtigo* (Rekhti performer), including Jan Sahib himself, who are part of the transactions in the

[2] All highlights here and in the quoted stanzas are mine.

festive marketplace." (*ibid.*: 24). Of himself, a performer *par excellence*, "a purveyor of wordsmith skills", Jan Sahib writes:

*pesh-e-nazar yeh rahta hai har aan **ta'ifa***
mardaney ta'ifon** men 'Ali Jan **ta'ifa
rakhta ziyada sab se hai yeh shaan ta'ifa
*is **ta'ife** pe aur ho qurban **ta'ifa***
sarkar ko hamaare yihi bas hansata hai
jo nakhrey uske sunta hai khud lot jata hai

He remains forever in the mind among the **boy-dancers**.
'Ali Jan, the **boy-dancer**, among all **boy-dancers**.
In lustre he exceeds all the other **boy-dancers**.
In his place may be sacrificed all **boy-dancers**!
Only he manages to tickle our royal master,
Audiences of his tantrums double up with laughter.

(*ibid.*: 25, transl. Naved)

One should keep in mind that in South Asia fairs were (and still are), "sites of entertainment, pleasure-seeking and popular culture that enriched and interrupted the patterns of everyday life." (*ibid.*: 7). The fair brought on the merry-making, and descriptions of its carnivalesque goings-on, couched in a colloquial, racy vernacular gratified the senses still further.

In Conclusion, speaking of "relationship between Islam, space, speech acts and processes of integration" (*ibid.*: 38) and the emergence of what Ahmed (2016) calls "trans-territorial category […] through the idea of circulation and shared aesthetics", Razak Khan poses an interesting question: "[W]hat about forms that do not travel or remain resolutely local? What might they teach us about locality, local speech and subjectivity?" (Khan 2021: 39). To contextualise the issue, let me quote from a recent book by Francesca Orsini (2023) which airs similar concerns. Discussing Sant orature, texts simultaneously mobile and local, she writes:

> Discussions of circulation, particularly in the context of world literature, tend to create an opposition, and a hierarchy, between texts that circulate and those that do not. After all, in David Damrosch's formulation, only the former qualify as world literature. But throughout this book, and particularly here, I suggest that we need to pay attention to both location and circulation as constitutive of, informing, and informed by literary texts. (*ibid.*: 100)

Taking note of the above, and without attempting to answer Khan's question posed earlier, one may rather contend, with pleasure, that the English rendering of the very local and localized text (dismissed by scholar of Urdu as "popular", "mass" and "low" literature), and even more so, its publication in the Penguin Classics series, has definitely put the text into circulation and on the map of world literature.

Shifting to a more personal tone, let me briefly turn to the translation. Being a translator myself, and a long-time subscriber to Levy's (2000) notion of "translation as a decision making process". I found it particularly fascinating to learn how Naved dealt with specific translatorial challenges and what systemic decisions he had to take while rendering the Urdu text into English. For instance, he shares with the readers his dilemma whether to settle on prose translation (more common for rendering Eastern poetry of late)[3] or opt for rhymes, and writes:

> In this translation of Jan Sahib's *Jashn-e-Benazir* […], I have chosen to represent the original's rhyme scheme. **The reason for this is not fidelity to the original**. In its particular case, the lengthy poem hangs together

[3] Naved (2021: 84) writes: "[…] perhaps the severest banishment of rhyme in recent years has occurred in translations from the Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages in which the orthodoxy of rhymed verse has prevailed for centuries. Milton's complaint against 'the jingling sound' of rhyme is taken all too seriously by translators when they render ghazals, masnavis and qasidas in free verse, or worse, summary in prose. While this choice could have aesthetic (perhaps to render the freshness of an old sensibility in more modern form) and/or disciplinary motives (perhaps to render literature more readable for writers of history), it has the profound result of serving a global language of English translation. A new orthodoxy replaces the old one."

> on the armature of rhyme and metre. It does not tell a story or elaborate a philosophical theme […]; it is a musaddas (a poem in six-line stanzas) used for commemorative or hortatory verse. (Naved 2021: 84).

Naved does, indeed, confess that in his English rendering “the rhymes are not always perfect” (*ibid.*: 85), but cannot be abandoned either, for as he explains, the rhyme scheme of the original acts as “the spine” of the whole poem. While the poem’s each single Urdu stanza displays a “unity of theme, purpose and conceit”, it is linked to other stanzas, on different themes, basically by way of “the six-line format, […] internal rhyme and uniform meter.” Such a “spine” needs to be maintained in the translated text as well for the poem to “hold.” Though, interestingly, Naved does accentuate the fact that modern translatorial choices (including his) are often dictated by demands made by English as global language.

* * *

In an age when history writing on South Asia often turns adversarially political, especially in the context of reading and re-evaluating Muslim presence in India, one can only marvel at the plethora of allusions inherent in the title of Razak Khan’s book, *Minority Pasts: Locality, Emotions, and Belonging in Princely Rampur*. While plural in the *pasts* points to a whole range of *pasts*, defined in a variety of ways and existing despite homogenizing tendencies of the pan-regionally produced accounts, *minority* implies that those *pasts* relate to minority communities: religious, geographical, class or gender-based, etc. *Minority Pasts* as a phrase entail the existence of many *minorities* and many *pasts*, peripheral, local, not important in the larger scheme of things. *Rampur* locates them in a specific place, and *princely*—in specific time space. *Locality* combined with *emotions* and *belonging* hint at a discourse grounded in identity politics hingeing on *affect*, thus making for *affective community* tied by bonds reaching over time and space. Though Khan does not use the term *affective community* himself, he studies, what he calls, *affective archives*, which are for

him the "memory storehouses" that are routinely used both for the local/ised history projects as well as individual or group identity self-fashioning. The *affective history* of princely Rampur thus assembled is a chronological account spanning the period from 1857 (Mutiny) to 1949 (accession to the Indian Union) with a pioneering analysis of the post-1947 period when the *affective community* of the Rampuris came to be partitioned between India and Pakistan.

The book, which opens with an Introduction, is divided into five chapters, and closes with an Epilogue. It is further furnished with paratextual supplements, some prefacing the main text (List of Maps and Illustrations, List of Abbreviations, Acknowledgements, Note on Transcription), others appending it (Notes, Bibliography, and Index). The scope of his work is set up by the author thus,

> The present study examines the princely state of Rampur in the post-1857 British colonial period by focusing on the rule of Nawab Kalb-e-Ali Khan (r. 1865–1887), Nawab Hamid Ali Khan (r. 1889–1930), and his successor Nawab Raza Ali Khan (r. 1930–1949). Moving beyond the temporalities of princely rule, this book also looks at the history and trajectory of postintegration history of Rampur and Rampuris in postcolonial India. (Khan 2022: 2)

Chapter I, "Oasis in the Desert," notionally begins with the catastrophe of 1857 and its aftermath but Khan sees in "this historical moment […] an opportunity for the emergence in Rampur of a new kind of locality, i.e., the chief 'Muslim princely locality' in colonial United Provinces" (*ibid.*: 28). The reign of Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan (r. 1855–1865), and even more so, of his son, Nawab Kalb-e-Ali Khan, witness a new type of patronage and provide, under the guise of Rampur, a new 'Oasis in the desert' of the post-1857 dislocation" (*ibid.*: 30). Of the five sections of this chapter, the first outlays the notion of this "Oasis" in terms of cultural production and engagement; the second discusses the case of *Jashn-e-Benazir* and the role of the ruler, the townsmen and the bazaar in creating princely public culture (*ibid.*: 36); the third, Nawab Kalb-e-Ali's literary contribution in the form of "pil-

grimage text (*Hajjnama*) entitled *Qindil-e-Haram* (The Candle of the Sacred Sanctuary)" and written during Nawab's pious journey to Mecca in 1872 (*ibid.*: 40). The last two sections deal with the notion of Rampur's public culture and Urdu print culture, including Urdu newspaper production and circulation.

Chapter II, "Courtly Modernity", examines "the crucial transitional period" which saw "the first direct encounter between Rampur and colonial administration" (*ibid.*: 22), namely the colonial regency (1889–1896) which entailed British-controlled tutoring of the young ruler, Nawab Hamid Ali Khan, and his subsequent accession, in 1896. Though, according to Khan (*ibid.*: 55), Nawab Hamid Ali Khan's long reign is often viewed with nostalgia, it apparently witnessed adversarial and "contrasting articulations about Nawabi Rampur" formulated under the onslaught of "colonial, reformist, and nationalist politics of North India". While colonial writings labelled Rampur as "violent Rohilla locality," the middle-class Urdu-speaking Muslims saw it as "a decadent Nawabi locality", and the nationalist discourse as "a loyalist princely locality." There might have also been some Shia–Sunni undertones, with the aristocracy predominantly Shia and the population Sunni. The already discussed Nawabi festivals, *Jashn-e-Benazir*, praised in 1860s for generous patronage, were, by the end of the 19th-century (*ibid.*: 75), severely criticised, mostly on moral grounds, and discontinued. Moreover, the drawing of Rampur state and Nawab Hamid Ali Khan into the sphere of Muslim politics in United Provinces, mainly by reason of the Ali brothers' pan-Islamic agenda,[4] brought home the fact that Rampur no longer existed merely as a bounded geographical locality but was produced, re-produced and transformed through actors, practices and discourses which were often translocal.

Chapter III, "Princely Progress," deals with the reign of Nawab Raza Ali Khan (r. 1930–1949) which saw modernisation and democratisation of princely polity coupled with growth in the participation of

[4] Shaukat Ali (1873–1938) and Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878–1931) were Muslim leaders, originally from Rampur, who played an important role in the politics of the time.

state subjects in governance and its articulations. It also saw, in 1947, India gain independence, though at the price of being partitioned into two nation-states, India and Pakistan, the last envisaged as a homeland for Muslims. Khan sensitively maps the last nineteen years of Rampur Nawabi state, its entry into the violent orbit of nationalist politics, Muslim separatism and Congress aspirations to pan-national representation, right up to the moment of Rampur's merger with the Indian Union on 1 December 1949. This last event saw Rampur being transformed overnight from a "modern, industrialised locality" into a peripheral "Muslim locality" of no importance.[5]

Chapter IV, "Locality, Genre, and Self-Definitions of Rampuris," reverses the gaze. While the earlier chapters "explored the political and cultural spaces of the princely court as well as popular public-arena-based politics," the current chapter "examines the ways in which Rampuri subjects understood and wrote about their locality, self-identification, and emotions" (*ibid.*: 156). The narrative is no longer focused on the ruler but his subjects and specifically, their literary production in Urdu. The aim is to examine the connection between the sense of place (Rampur) and identity (*Rampuri*), and the sense of belonging to a place, here Rampur (*Rampuriat*) (*ibid.*: 24). To this end Khan delves into the archive and examines various textual sources relevant to the period. He looks at three genres in particular: history (*tarikh*), biographical compendia (*tazkira*), and life writings (*hayat*). Here, of special interest to the scholar of life writings is the rare autobiographical memoir authored by a woman. The author in question, Begum Jahanara Habibullah (1915–2003), was a member of the princely family, born and brought up in Rampur; she migrated, with her husband, to Pakistan soon after Partition and settled in Karachi. Written almost at the end of Begum's life, originally in Urdu, the memoir,

[5] At the time of British withdrawal (15.8.1947), there were over 500 princely states (native states) comprising 40% of the territory and 20% of the population of the Indian subcontinent. Many of the largest states were Muslim (Hyderabad, Bhopal) and their integration with Indian Union came at a great cost. A Bhopal-based Muslim writer, Manzoor Ahtesham, writes about the influx of Punjabi refugees after Partition, which totally changed the nature of earlier Muslim localities.

"one of the affective nostalgic memoirs by an upper-class exile (*muhajir*)" (*ibid.*: 188), provides, among others, a peep into life in the *zenana* quarters of the princely family. Though written in Urdu, it was first published in English as *Remembrance of Days Past: Glimpses of a Princely State during the Raj*.[6] There is also an additional bonus: bibliographical details of another autobiographical account written by a woman of a similar background, namely Mehrunissa Khan (2006). Though this book is not discussed by Razak Khan, it does add to the treasure trove of life writings of the period.

Chapter V, "Princely Past, Subaltern Present. Memory, History, and Emotions," explores, to quote the author, "the postcolonial trajectories of the Muslim princely locality of Rampur and Rampuris in independent India as well as Pakistan" by looking closely at "a traffic in historical texts, memories and emotions among Rampuris across India-Pakistan national borders" (Khan 2022: 24). To this end, notions such as "nostalgia, melancholia, memory, remembrance, and forgetting" are mapped by delving into affective archives located around the writings and activities of four individuals, Rampuris by birth, two in India (Abid Raza Bedar, Shaair Ullah Khan) and two in Pakistan (Zakir Ali Khan in Karachi, and Saud ul Hassan Khan in Lahore). One of them, the *muhajir* Zakir Ali Khan, has authored an autobiography, *Mai-Baap* [Mother and Father], which, devoted as it is to the memory of his mother who brought him up singlehandedly after his father died, and later refused to move to Pakistan, is also a nostalgic memoir of the past. Even the title, which overtly refers to his mother as his *mai-baap*, parental figure beyond the mere parent, resonates with echoes of the more colloquial usage where the phrase refers to the various powers-to-be that take care of one. It thus, covertly, alludes also to the invisible presence of the princely protector acting as the ultimate guardian *in loco parentis* (*sarparast*) for the older generations of Rampuris.

[6] The autobiography, translated by Tahira Naqvi, was first published in English (2001), and later (2003) in Urdu as *Zindagī kī yāden. Rīyasat Rāmpur kā navābī daur*.

Moving a step further, in an effort to better understand links and reasons that keep an individual bound to a place by invisible ties, one is tempted to examine one term which seems to be of utmost importance to Razak Khan's interlocutors, both textual and real. The word *watan* and its numerous phraseological constructs: *watan ki muḥabbat* (p. 177), *hubbu'l watan* (p. 201), *muhibb-e-watan*, *watan azizi* (p. 214), *wataniyat* (p. 219), *watan Rampur* (p. 177) or simply *mera watan* (p. 177) reappear again and again in writings of the period, in titles of newspapers or pamphlets, in names of associations, and in conversations. In each instance such a reference evokes in the speaker (writer), but also the listener (reader), strong feelings associated with the idea of home, locality, belonging, and love linked to a patch of soil one calls one's home/land. This, in Urdu context, as David Lelyveld (2003: 24) defines it, is 'the town or village where a person actually lived or to which one continuously returns.'

Having said that, let me take a personal detour. As a researcher and translator dedicated to mapping contours of the *watan* debate in the early post-Partition literature in Hindi, I have found that there have been heated, long-lasting polemics both around the term itself as well as the very concept of homeland, right from the early days of nationalist discourse as is evident in the writing of the Hindi-Urdu stalwart Premchand. In view of this, of special interest to me are the affinities between the Rampuri discourse and similar discussions present in the writings of Bhisham Sahni, Krishna Sobti, or Krishna Baldev Vaid, all of them with roots in West Punjab, now a part of Pakistan, with their *watan* beyond reach. For Krishna Sobti the true *watan* was always the land beyond the Ravi where her extended family had lived, and where both her *nanka* and *dadka* once were.[7] In fact, Sobti's autobiographical novel, *Gujrat Pakistan se Gujrat Hindustan* (2017), published when she was over eighty, opens with a labourers' ditty, overflowing, as the narrator tells us, with *hubbu'l watani*. This ditty, uttered

[7] In Punjabi: Households of maternal grandparents (*nanka*) and paternal grandparents (*dadka*)

in distinct, familiar *lehja*,[8] envelops the protagonist, a stand-in for the author, in a specific soundscape which evokes in her feelings of searing nostalgia for the homeland left behind. The English translation renders this *hubbu'l watani bol* as "patriotic song" inadvertently subverting affect inherent in author's words (which brim with meaning located beyond the dictionary) by way of a disengaged, non-emotive rendering.[9] To show that a reading which refuses to agree with translating something so full of affect as *hubbu'l watani* by the adjective "patriotic" is a demonstrable possibility, let me tell you a story. Decades ago, I was a student at Jamia Millia Islamia. All my classmates were Urdu speakers, most of madrasa background, with only a rudimentary knowledge of English. At the first get-together, when we were introducing ourselves, the formula which all my classmates employed to refer to the locality they thought of as home involved the word *watan*. So, they would say: *mera nam…. hai, mera watan Patna, mera watan Azamgarh, mera watan Sambhal…* which for me, a person from a well-defined nation-state in Europe, *watan* or "homeland" could have only meant a nation-state. This was an Urdu lesson I never forgot. In Razak Khan's study, it is precisely *this* inherent Urdu meaning of *watan*, meaning framed by a specific highly localized sentiment, that troubles his interlocutors and forces them to purposefully remould its implied sense in their writings to show how this love for *watan*—originally Rampur—could be transferred onto the new nation-state (cf. Chapter V).

Epilogue, evocatively subtitled "A City Named Rampur in the 'Muslim Belt' of Uttar Pradesh", gathers all disparate strands of this book-length study. It also provides brief remarks on the current status of Rampur and its inhabitants vs. the wider territory of the state (Uttar Pradesh) which it has become part of on accension (1949). By looking into "the historical production of locality, identification, and public culture through the local history of Rampur", the study has already

---

[8] See Khan 2022: 216, when speaking of the migrants in Pakistan today, the author says: 'Rampuris still manage to retain their distinct Urdu style (*lehja*) among other Muhajir communities.'

[9] For the Hindi original, see Sobti 2017: 9; for the English translation, Sobti 2021: 5.

amply demonstrated close “relationship between space, emotions, and subjectivity beyond the confines of nation and religious community” (Khan 2022: 223–224).

The research, from what reader is given to understand, was conducted largely through what may be best described as “an archival immersion” where archives comprised textual sources and oral communications, but also included spaces defined by their physicality: public and private libraries, public and private meeting places. So, before signing off, I would like to stop for a moment at Rampur libraries. As noted in the book and other writings of the author (Khan 2014), after the migration of its founders to Pakistan, Saulat Public Library, which, besides Raza Library, is the other Rampur library Khan uses for his research, was left in dire straits, with no financial support to be had from the authorities (*ibid.*). Having visited the library probably in the same decade as Khan, Daniel Majchrowicz, a scholar who works on 19th- and 20th-century Urdu travelogues (*safarnama*s), offers, right on the first page of his recent book, an account of his introductory call at the library. The library was still functioning, but a back wall had just come down in the rains and lots of books were destroyed. “The travelogue section was one of the causalities.” Whatever could be salvaged, was moved to an adjoining dingy room, “with hundreds of books piled about at random” (Majchrowicz 2023: 1). After sifting through the piles for a week, Majchrowicz reports that he managed to find dozens of colonial-era travelogues. But what he found most striking, and which is the reason for bringing in his account here is the fact, that most of the travelogues in Saulat’s collection were local productions, authored by Rampuris and printed in Rampur.

References

Ahmed, S. 2016. *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Habibullah, Begum J. 2001. *Remembrance of Days Past: Glimpses of a Princely State during the Raj*. Tahira Naqvi (transl.). Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Khan, M. 2006. *An Extraordinary Life: Princess Mehrunissa of Rampur*. New Delhi: Blue Leaf.

Khan, R. 2022. *Minority Pasts: Locality, Emotions, and Belonging in Princely Rampur*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2021. "Introduction. Space, Speech and Subjectivity in Jan Sahib's *Jashn-e-Benazir*." In: Mir Yar Ali 'Jan Sahib'. *The Incomparable Festival*. R. Khan (ed.), Sh. Naved (transl.). Gurugram: Penguin Random House: 1–40.

———. 2014. "The Case of Falling Walls: Politics of Demolition and Preservation in Rampur." In: *Economic and Political Weekly* 49(20): 25–28.

Lelyveld, D. 2003. *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Levy, J. 2000 (1st ed. 1967). "Translation as a Decision Process". In: L. Venuti (ed.). *The Translation Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.

Majchrowicz, D. J. 2023. *The World in Words: Travel Writing and Global Imagination in Muslim South Asia*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009340762.

Naved, S. 2021. "Translator's Notes and Acknowledgements." In: Mir Yar Ali 'Jan Sahib'. *The Incomparable Festival*. R. Khan (ed.), Sh. Naved (transl.). Gurugram: Penguin Random House: 41–83.

Orsini, F. 2023 (Reprinted 2024). *East of Delhi. Multilingual Literary Culture and World Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Platts, J. T. 1884. *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*. London: W.H. Allen & Co.

Sobti, K. 2017. *Gujrat Pakistan se Gujrat Hindustan*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan.

———. 2021. *A Gujarat Here, a Gujarat There*. D. Rockwell (transl.). New Delhi: Penguin India.

Vanita, R. 2012. *Gender, Sex and the City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India 1700–1870*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137016560.