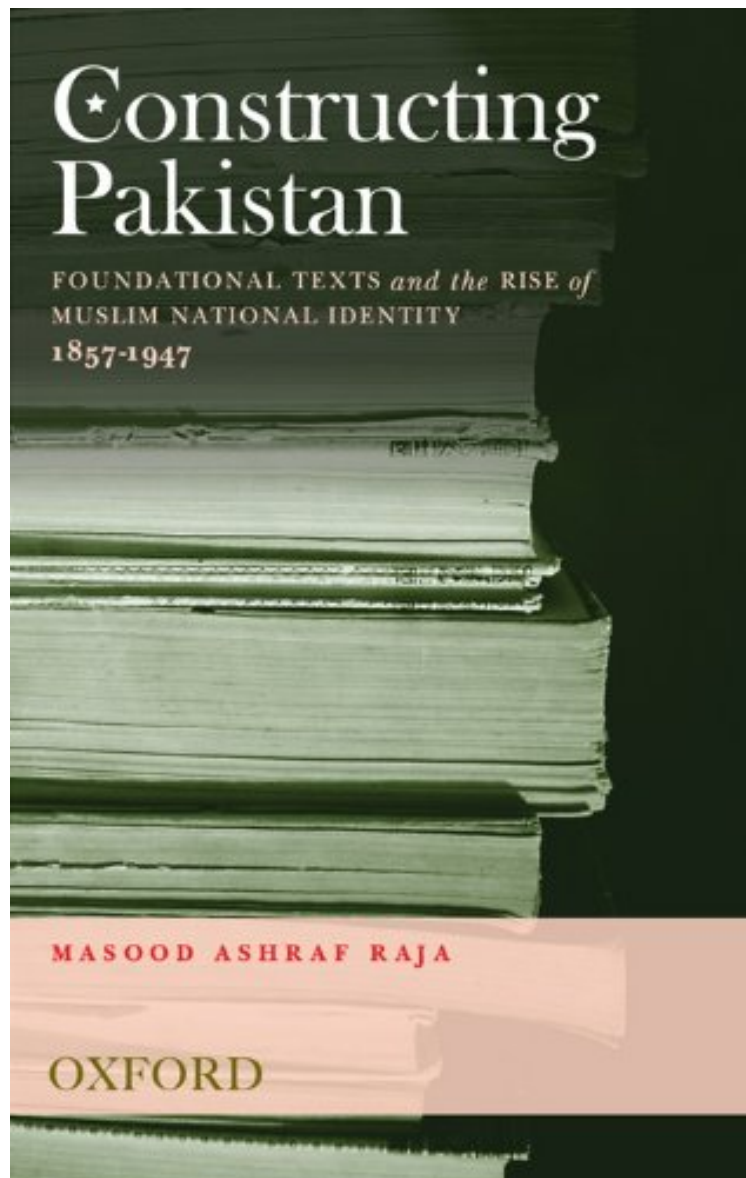


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Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity, 1857- 1947

Masood Ashraf Raja

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Masood Ashraf Raja : Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity, 1857- 1947 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity, 1857- 1947:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Topical!By Robin Truth GoodmanConstructing Pakistan analyzes the last 150 years of Muslim nationalism, from its beginning in India's Sepoy rebellion in 1857, when British colonialization was consolidated to the detriment of Muslim populations, to the founding of Pakistan. Dr. Raja contends that a survivalist ethic in religion, politics, and culture means that the current politics of Pakistan has its genealogical core in anti-colonial resistance. This is a very important intervention in the current political juncture, not only because it traces a history of secular features of Islamic societies but also because of the very breadth of cultural forms, where literary practices and theories end up feeding political and material realities and visa versa. Much of this study was done using original Urdu materials that Dr. Raja translated himself into English, granting him a nuanced version of how nineteenth century Muslim thinkers were defining their political identities. The study is enormously helpful in pushing out the limits of postcolonial thinking: it is insightful in bringing analysis of religion back into a literary field that has been historically tied to the secular philosophies of the Enlightenment. Also, at a time when the dominant voices in the field are talking about the demise of the nation in economic and political terms, Dr. Raja identifies reasons why it is more important than ever to be able to think about the nation, its histories, and its futures. Overall, Dr. Raja is formatively helpful in providing a historical rationale for why studying literary genre is central to considering the politics of aggression and counter-aggression in our contemporary world.

Constructing Pakistan addresses the previously neglected aspect of postcolonial and historical engagement with the creation and construction of Indian Muslim national identity before the partition of India in 1947. Masood Ashraf Raja's main assertion, challenging the conventional and postcolonial appraisals of the Indian national history, is that the Indian Muslim particular identity and Muslim exceptionalism preceded the rise of Congress or Gandhian nationalism. Using major theories of nationalism-including works of Benedict Anderson, Anthony D. Smith, John Breuilly, Partha Chatterjee and others-and analysis of literary, political, and religious texts produced by Indian Muslims, Constructing Pakistan traces the varied Muslim responses to the post 1857 British ascendancy. This study provides a multilayered discussion of Indian Muslim nationalism from the rise of post 1857 Muslim exceptionalism to the beginnings of a more focused struggle for a nation-state in the 1940s. In this dual act of retrieval and intervention, a varied mixture of literary, political, and religious texts are employed to suggest that if the Muslim textual production of this time period is read within the realm of politics and not just within the arena of culture, then the rise of Indian Muslim nationalism can be clearly traced within these texts and through their affective value for the Indian Muslims. Raja combines close readings of the texts, their reception, and the politics of identity formation specifically related to the rise of Indian Muslim nationalism. The author's main argument hinges on two important assumptions: 1) After the rebellion it becomes extremely important for the Muslim elite to force the dominant British regime into a hegemonic view of the Muslims, and 2) this forces the Muslim elite to develop a language of politics that must always invoke the people in order to enter the British system of privileges and dispensations. Consequently, the rise of early Muslim exceptionalism and its eventual specific nationalistic unfolding, of which Pakistan was one outcome, can then be read as political acts that long preceded the Indian national party politics. The reason most Indian and European historians cannot trace a pronounced Muslim sense of separate identity before the 1940s is because they trace this identity either in the form of resistance or in the shape of party politics. The early loyalism of the Muslim elite, in such strategy, remains unexplained, as it does not fit the resistance model. Constructing Pakistan attempts to re-read this loyalism as a sophisticated form of resistance that, in the end, makes the Muslim question central to the British politics of post-rebellion era.

Muslim literati ... selected for analysis well represented the ... aspirations of the Muslim community in their times. -- Basharat Hussain Qizilbash, *The Nation*, Pakistan, September 10, 2010 Raja's research merits introspection and contemplation of the many issues it either raises or answers about contemporary Pakistan. --Aliya Anjum, *Dawn*, Pakistan, September 26, 2010. A . . . lucid and thought-provoking book. --Muneeza Shamsie, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. About the Author Masood Ashraf Raja is an Associate Professor of Postcolonial Literature and Theory at the University of North Texas and the editor of *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies*. His critical essays have been published in journals such as *South Asian*, *Digest of Middle East Studies*, *Caribbean Studies*, *Prose Studies*, *Mosaic* and others. He is currently working on his second book entitled *Secular Fundamentalism: Poetics of Incitement and the Muslim Sacred*.