Introduction

In the 1890s, Muhammad Husain Azad (1830–1910), a famous Urdu writer, rushed to Muslim reformer Syed Ahmed Khan's house in Aligarh in a fit of madness and confessed that he was hearing the voices of ancient masters dictating a book (*Darbār-e Akbarī*, published in 1898).[1] The fact that the past haunted Indian elites after the establishment of British rule in northern India was not only anecdotal. After 1857, writing about the past emerged as a prime concern, as the 'enormous public "enthusiasm for history"'[2] led local communities to engage with the writing of their genealogies, newspaper editors to report on failures to preserve the built heritage, and Urdu poets to romantically recall pre-colonial times. Deep changes in ways of living, being informed, and consuming – as social scientists have argued – gave rise to gradual and profound feelings of rupture and disconnectedness in modern, and certainly even more so in colonised, societies.[3] In order to face and adapt to new circumstances, memory has often been considered a way of maintaining or reconstructing identity continuity. As Wulf Kansteiner has argued: 'memory is valorized where identity is problematized'.[4]

In 1983, Benedict Anderson underlined the importance of the past for the articulation of national identities, with the significant play between memory and forgetting, and its role in the elaboration of a narrative of 'imagined' communities.[5] The 'ideologisation' of memory driven by collective identity politics indeed usually takes the form of narratives of reconfiguration through changes in emphasis,

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[1] A. Farrukhi, *Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād*, vol. 1, pp. 362–3 quoted in F. W. Pritchett, *Ab-e Hayat*, p. 6.
[2] D. Chakrabarty, 'The Public Life of History', p. 170.
[3] P. Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, p. 143. See also S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*.
[4] W. Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory', p. 184.
[5] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 205.

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erasing, and retellings,which can lead to the development of what Eric Hobsbawm called 'invented traditions'.[6] As has been emphasised in recent decades, the past in contemporary South Asia is often claimed to create identity by a variety of actors, even when it is 'historically invalid'.[7] Before the 'history wars', the 'partisan passions', or the 'veritable festival of tradition invention' of the 1930–1940s, writings about the past had played a crucial role in the creation of collective identities since the late nineteenth century.[8] While many studies on South Asia have focused on 'official' memory politics – how colonial memory was imposed upon Indian minds,[9] or how monuments or school textbooks have shaped particular visions of nationality[10] – scholars have also interrogated memory narratives in the vernacular.

Partha Chatterjee was one of the first to respond to Anderson's study from a South Asian perspective. Against the latter's suggestion that non-Western countries developed nationalism as a derivation from Western forms of nationality, Chatterjee argued for South Asia's alternative construction of the concept of the nation in the spiritual domain, notably through analyses of historical narratives.[11] In his steps, Sudhir Chandra explored nineteenth-century literature to recover 'the vernacular mind',[12] Sudipta Kaviraj researched the emergence of nationalist discourse in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's late nineteenth-century writings,[13] and Vasudhia Dalmia undertook a similar task for the Hindi literary figure of Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850–1885).[14] Francesca Orsini carried on Dalmia's work by studying

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[6] See E. Hobsbawm 'The Invention of Tradition'; see also P. Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, pp. 579–80.

[7] R. Thapar, 'Somnatha: Narratives of History', p. 49 quoted in D. Chakrabarty, 'The Public Life of History', p. 169.

[8] D. Chakrabarty, 'The Public Life of History', p. 180.

[9] See, for instance, G. Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination*; I. Sengupta (ed.), *Memory, History, and colonialism*; S. Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters*; H. Ahmed, *Muslim political discourse*.

[10] In South Asia, textbook studies have particularly emerged after the rise of the Janata Party coalition in India and Zia ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan in the late 1980s. For example, V. C. P. Chaudhary, *Secularism versus Communalism*; K. K. Aziz, *The Murder of History*; S. Guichard, *The Construction of History*.

[11] P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*. See also P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*.

[12] S. Chandra, *The Oppressive Present*, p. 12.

[13] S. Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*.

[14] V. Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*.

the role of history in inspiring a collective sense of belonging in the early twentieth-century Hindi public sphere.[15] Representations of the past by important nineteenth- and twentieth-century Muslim figures such as Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–1898), Altaf Husain Hali (1837–1914), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) have also been considered the 'foundational' textual basis for a distinct Muslim national identity, and symptoms of the so-called two-nation theory that would divide nations on the basis of religion in 1947.[16] More recently, scholars have, however, emphasised the plurality of vernacular imaginings of the past and their much-debated nature in order to complicate the history of Muslim nationalism in the Urdu-speaking public sphere.[17]

My work initially aimed at addressing the role of memory among the Indo-Persian elites who used to revolve around the Mughal court – the Urdu-speaking *ashrāf*, or the 'respectable' (the nobility, and then middle classes) – as they negotiated the loss of secular power, and colonial rule.[18] The project started with the identification of a corpus of primary source material produced by those elites that engaged with the past. Besides searching through secondary sources and archival catalogues, I systematically read the *Native Newspapers Reports for the North Western Provinces* (and then *United Provinces*) *and Oudh* to identify significant episodes, and actors, in the region from 1864 to 1937. I simultaneously skimmed through volumes of prominent vernacular periodicals (*Aligarh Institute Gazette*, *Tahẓib ul-Aḵẖlāq*, *Hamdard*, *The Comrade*, and *Al-Hilāl*) and Urdu literary sources. Paying attention to Muslim *ashrāf* as well as to the Hindu Urdu-speaking scribal castes who used to work in Mughal administration (the Kayasths, Khatris, and Kashmiri Brahmins), I also read through

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[15] F. Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*.
[16] See, for instance, M. A. Raja, *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts*. For critical studies on Muslim separatism: P. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*; F. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*; F. Shaikh, *Community and Consensus*; M. Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics*; A. Jalal and S. Bose (eds.), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development*; A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*; F. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*; M. Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*.
[17] See recently J. Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams*; M. Robb, *Print and the Urdu Public*; S. A. Zaidi, *Making a Muslim*; A. Khan Mahmudabad, *Poetry of Belonging*.
[18] For more on the category of the *ashrāf* during that period, see M. Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes*.

as many issues of *Zamānah*, *Awadh Punch*, and *Kayastha Samachar and Hindustan Review*, whose editors and/or contributors were usually non-Muslims.

Through this varied corpus, I address the ways in which the past was imagined and written in Urdu, focusing on different episodes – as vignettes – of the history of British north India from 1857 to the late 1930s. Although I foresee the important developments of the 1930s–1940s, I do not delve into the Pakistan movement or into the complex memory narratives that fed communal politics around the Partition of 1947. If, as Congino argued, one of the main contributions of memory studies has consisted in shedding light on 'politics of memory',[19] I do not use memory or emotions to 'explain' the ultimate success of communal politics in British India. As scholars have indeed warned, memory should not be considered an outcome but a complex social process of cultural production and consumption. It should take into account the intellectual and cultural traditions which fashion representations, 'memory makers' (those who produce works of memory), and audiences that respond to those productions.[20] By considering both well-known and less researched sources and actors, and by including the rich and dynamic periodical archive, I emphasise the multiplicity and heterogeneous character of Urdu writings on the past. Works of memory are manifold, lively, and debated, and their significance transforms according to the historical context and to who reads them too.[21]

In many aspects, this book is like a *dvija* (twice-born), as Mohamed Ali characterised his Urdu daily *Hamdard* in 1913: while the doctoral dissertation that gave birth to this book engaged more with the argument of memory in 2016, it gradually refocused less on how the past was represented and more on how it was invested with feelings. I soon measured the powerful affective dimension of my material. One typical vernacular (and emotional) way of remembering the past, which cut through much of the corpus, is the Urdu poetic genre of *shahr āshob* (literally 'the devastation of the city'). While the genre first served to lament

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[19] A. Congino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', p. 1393.

[20] W. Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory', p. 179.

[21] For instance, Avril Powell and Seema Alavi have emphasised the controversies that historical representations of the past triggered in relation to textbooks or stories of 1857: A. Powell, 'History Textbooks and the Transmission of the Pre-colonial Past'; S. Alavi, 'Rethinking Religion and Politics'.

the ruin of north Indian cities (sometimes with a typical satiric tone), it became increasingly associated with the elegy (*marsiyah*) after 1857. It continues to be practised today. The special status of poetry in South Asia and in Urdu especially is well known: poems regularly appeared in letters, essays, periodicals, and political gatherings.[22] This justified taking it into account thoughtfully. My exploration into memory works was thus complemented by an analysis of the evolution of the *shahr āshob* genre. Nevertheless, I am not interested in writing a literary history as such, rather a cultural history of emotion for which poetry is a major source. This allows me to reassess the history of British north India in seriously taking into account sources that are sometimes dismissed or neglected by historians, but which nonetheless provide important insights into Urdu culture, representations, and emotions.

I argue that the emotional dimension of memory is precisely what gave power to it. I hence concentrate on the emotion that most powerfully emerged in relation to the past in Urdu-speaking colonial north India: *ġham* (grief). Whether it was pre-1857 Mughal rule, the time of the Prophet, or the glorious Muslim kingdoms of Andalusia, the past was usually described within a semantic web of pain, nostalgia, and regret in Urdu sources. Characterising that grief and showing how diverse actors engaged with it, transformed it, and used it in a variety of contexts, this book explores how grief acted in turn as a driving force in the history of British India. Without minimising the impact of British epistemologies, and, in fact, sometimes hinting at intersecting considerations of collective feelings, I explore how grief and memory provided 'new frames of action'.[23] As Rana Iqbal argued about the force of contemporary Pakistani *marsiyah*-poetess Taswir Fatima: 'When something is written under the influence of sorrow, it's definitely effective'.[24] How emotions can be 'effective', however, is a relatively recent question of historians.

1 Emotions and Memory in History

Memory and emotions emerged as objects of history around the same time, with the development of *new history* by the Annales School and of Cultural Studies, which opened the fields of 'mentalities',

[22] About Urdu poetry and political mobilisation, see C. Petievich, 'From Court to Public Sphere'.
[23] A. Assmann (ed.), *Memory and Political Change*, p. 4.
[24] A. Bard, 'Value and Vitality in a Literary Tradition', p. 332.

representations, and 'sensibility'.[25] Until the beginning of the twenti-
eth century, as Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy have explained, the
urge to 'rationalise' history as a scientific discipline led historians to
focus mainly on economic and political history – the history of 'facts'.[26]
In the 1950s, the discipline benefited from the development of social
constructionism and of disciplines that questioned the traditional
opposition between heart and reason (cognitive psychology, neurosci-
ences, philosophy of mind). This provided new ground for historical
research.[27] Until then, and Norbert Elias' work on the 'civilising pro-
cess' provides good evidence, emotions were usually seen as primitive,
human instincts that needed to be both controlled and rationalised in
order to bring about an advanced modern civilisation.[28] Feelings were
'considered to be part of a universal, natural, heritage, beyond the cul-
tural, and thus unhistoricisable'.[29]

With theories of social constructionism, individual cognitive pro-
cesses like memory and emotions were to be understood as being
developed and maintained by social interactions. Maurice Halbwachs
first described memory as a social construct in his two main works,
The Social Frameworks of Memory (1925) and *On Collective Memory*
(published posthumously in 1950), since 'in reality we are never
alone'.[30] In *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, Halbwachs took the
example of his visit to London. He walked by himself only in appear-
ance: while passing by Westminster, he thought about what he had
read in a travel guide; looking at St Paul's Cathedral, he remembered
some novel read in his childhood; admiring the view on the Thames,
he thought of what a friend once told him; and so on. Eventually, his
own recollections of London were the shared memories of the groups
to which he belonged.[31] While he maintained that it is the work of
individuals to remember, the process of remembering itself relies on

[25] L. Febvre, 'La sensibilité et l'histoire'. Johan Huizinga's *Herfsttij der
Middeleeuwen* was published in 1921.
[26] D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *Politiques des émotions au Moyen Âge*, p. 10.
[27] D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *Le Sujet des émotions au Moyen Âge*, pp. 16 and
19–20. See also the introduction to D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *La Chair des
émotions*.
[28] For an excellent critique of Elias' work, see H. P. Duerr, *Nudité et Pudeur* and
the introduction by André Burguière.
[29] D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *Le Sujet des émotions au Moyen Âge*, p. 18.
[30] M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, p. 2.   [31] Ibid., pp. 2–3.

the sole condition of possibility of the existence of social groups, and also works at binding society together. Emotions too, while felt in the body, are modelled by society as 'communicative practices'[32] and 'instruments of sociability'.[33]

As is still the case today, the definition of emotions is an object of debate. Psychologists such as Paul Ekman have argued for the universality of 'basic' emotions – anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise – and, on the other side of the spectrum, social constructionists have claimed that 'emotional experience is not pre-cultural but *pre-eminently* cultural'.[34] With varying degrees of adherence to social constructionism,[35] scholars of many disciplines now aim at bridging the nature–nurture divide and at understanding the relationship between 'feeling', that is, the capacity of experiencing emotion, and 'emotion', that is, the conscious act of 'translating' the emotion – what Abdul Majid Daryabadi respectively termed *ehsās* and *jazbah* in Urdu in his *Falsafah-e jazbāt* ('Philosophy of Emotions', 1914).[36]

Scholars have generally remarked that the 'material reality' of feelings cannot be easily disentangled from their interpretation, and that they 'co-produce each other in an endless loop'.[37] In *The Navigation of Feeling*, historian William Reddy suggested a dynamic relationship between emotional experience and emotional expression.[38] He criticised the social constructionists' denial of inner emotional residuum. 'No meaningful history of emotions is possible from a strong constructionist position',[39] he claimed, since it hardly allows for agency and change, but he emphasised the importance of language in the 'naming' process of emotional expression.[40] He consequently elaborated

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[32] M. Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice?'
[33] B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods', p. 19.
[34] C. A. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, p. 5. See also Jean Briggs' study of the Utku Inuits, *Never in Anger*, p. 6.
[35] B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods', pp. 8–10; R. Harré (ed.), *The Social Construction of Emotions*; D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *La Chair des émotions*, pp. 8–15.
[36] See C. Traïni, 'Des sentiments aux émotions (et vice-versa)'; A. Blom, 'Emotions and the Micro-foundations of Religious Activism'. About Abdul Majid Daryabadi, see M. Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity*, Chapter 8.
[37] M. Pernau, 'Introduction', p. 25
[38] W. Reddy, 'Against Constructionism', p. 329.
[39] Ibid., p. 331.   [40] Ibid., p. 329.

the theory of 'emotives' to characterise the way feelings are translated into expressions that are, in turn, performative.[41] Emotives, he argued, 'do things to the world' and 'are themselves instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, intensifying emotions'.[42] It is in this capacity that emotions (or rather, for Reddy, emotives) can drive historical change.

Historians have taken on-board the theory that – at least in part – 'emotions depend on language, cultural practices, expectations, and moral beliefs. This means that *every* culture has its rules for feelings and behavior; *every* culture thus exerts certain restraints while favoring certain forms of expressivity'.[43] Even though historical sources give access only to already interpreted and mediated emotions, studying them across time provides valuable information on past and present societies. In recent decades, historians have explored how emotional norms are implemented, maintained, or refashioned through the concepts of 'emotionology',[44] 'emotional styles and regimes',[45] or 'emotional communities'.[46]

Since Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) at least, emotions have indeed been said to play an important role as social glue that, like rituals, 'cement community consciousness'.[47] The fact that adherence 'to the same valuations of emotions and their expression'[48] helps create community is essential – although the exact type of community that is thus created is debated: while Barbara Rosenwein argued that emotional communities are based on pre-existing social groups, Margrit Pernau suggested that emotions themselves have the power to create community.[49] Scholars have further argued, and this is addressed briefly in Chapter 3, that the (emotional) productions of elites and middle classes sometimes possess or have the purpose to

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[41] Ibdi., p. 331.   [42] Ibid., p. 332.

[43] B. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', p. 837.

[44] P. Stearns, *American Cool*.

[45] W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*.

[46] B. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.

[47] L. Febvre, 'La sensibilité et l'histoire' and P. Gay, *Education of the Senses: The Bourgeois Experience* quoted in E. Chatterjee, S. Krishnan, and M. Robb, 'Feeling Modern', p. 540.

[48] B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods', p. 1.

[49] See Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities* and M. Pernau, 'Feeling Communities: Introduction'. I use 'emotional communities' for convenience, but I do not agree with the fact that they necessarily correspond to social groups.

cut across classes,[50] and sometimes borrow from subaltern aesthetics. Simultaneously, the pursuit of upward social mobility – or 'ashrafisation' in Muslim South Asia – also leads lower caste groups to embrace practices and values of higher castes to improve their own social status. Regardless of the type of interactions (face-to-face, textual, imagined) in which they find expression,[51] shared emotions 'frequently spill over into feelings for those who feel (or do not feel) the same way, leading to more or less intense emotions within the community and the demarcation of its boundaries'.[52] Emotions indeed perform 'boundary work', marking identity and belonging (sometimes enabling social mobility), as well as marking distinction.[53]

Historians of South Asia are, of course, already contributing to this expanding field, exploring the way emotions can create and sustain a sense of collective belonging, feed political mobilisations, or exclude. Friendship and love in pre-modern and colonial India have received special attention,[54] along with the relation between emotion and place.[55] For colonial north India, Akbar Zaidi has recently argued for the agentive role of *żillat* (humiliation) in 'encouraging [Indian] Muslims to redefine who they were'.[56] The power of emotions, such as anger, nostalgia, or hope, in initiating political mobilisation and collective action in South Asia has also been queried.[57] Emotions have further been investigated in their capacity to differentiate groups: Joel Lee, for instance, has recently studied *ghṛṇā* (disgust) as a way to mark hierarchies of caste.[58]

[50] D. Boquet and P. Nagy, *Le Sujet des émotions au Moyen-Âge*, pp. 38–9.
[51] Despite the fact that Benedict Anderson, as Margrit Pernau noted, did not consider emotions in his study of national identities; M. Pernau, 'Feeling Communities: Introduction', p. 5.
[52] Ibid., p. 11.   [53] L. Mitchell, 'Whose Emotions?'
[54] See, among others, F. Orsini, *Love in South Asia*; D. Ali and E. Flatt, *Friendship in Pre-Modern South Asia*.
[55] For emotions and place in particular, see the special issue of *The Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* devoted to the topic (vol. 58): M. Pernau, 'Mapping Emotions, Constructing Feelings'; R. Khan, 'The Social Production of Space and Emotions'; R. Khan, 'Local Pasts: Space, Emotions and Identities'; E. Chatterjee, S. Krishnan, and M. Robb, *Feeling Modern*; and D. Bredi, 'Nostalgia in the Re-construction of Muslim Identity'.
[56] A. Zaidi, *Making a Muslim*, p. 7.
[57] A. Blom and N. Jaoul, *The Moral and Affectual Dimension of Collective Action*; A. Blom and S. Tawa Lama-Rewal, *Emotions, Mobilisations and South Asian Politics*.
[58] J. Lee, 'Disgust and Untouchability'.

Due to Margrit Pernau's impulse and to the fact that language and conceptual studies have been considered valuable methodological entry points into emotions, Urdu emotional concepts have received special consideration.[59] Pernau's recent work on the transformation of emotion in colonial South Asia is outstanding: analysing the development of emotion concepts and practices in Urdu sources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she argued that while modernity has often been associated with the disciplining of emotions, the history of colonial north India was marked by a transformation of the ideal of emotional balance into the exaltation of emotional fervour.[60]

In many ways, my understanding of grief across a similar period corroborates these findings. It also aims to complement them by exploring how 'one' emotion reflected a multiplicity of voices and practices that do not point to a linear development but to the co-existence of different emotional communities. Historians of emotions have often emphasised the importance of language, of not transposing modern Western concepts to non-European phenomena, and of exploring the evolution of concepts as an evolution of modes of thinking.[61] My close reading of a variety of sources with a special attention to their emotional vocabulary and its transformation sheds light on the evolution of emotional styles and communities. At the intersection between the intimate and the cultural and political, I argue that emotions were not just the expressions of particular communities, but proactive tools used to form a basis for solidarity and for discrimination, to shape communities, and to motivate collective action.

2 Poetry, Emotions, and Sincerity

This book relies on a variety of textual sources: colonial reports and records, conference proceedings, (banned) pamphlets, English- and Urdu-language periodicals, edited letters, essays, ethical treatises, and poetry – all of which are compared and contextualised. The reason this book draws much from the Urdu poetic genre of *shahr āshob* is

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[59] C. Oesterheld, 'Changing Landscapes of Love and Passion'; C. Oesterheld, 'Campaigning for a Community'; M. Pernau, H. Jordheim, E. Saada, et al. (eds.), *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts*; M. Pernau, 'Introduction'; M. Pernau, 'Feeling Communities'; M. Pernau, 'From Morality to Psychology: Emotion Concepts'.

[60] M. Pernau, *Emotions and Modernity*.

[61] Y. Robreau, *L'honneur et la honte*, p. 7.