

History of Universities Seminar

Summer 2021

Convenors

Miles Taylor (University of York, UK)
Ku-ming (Kevin) Chang (Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan)
Heike Jöns (Loughborough University, UK)
Tamson Pietsch (University of Technology Sydney, Australia)

Contact email

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Timing

Wednesdays, 2.00-3.30 pm (BST/UTC+1), online via Microsoft Teams

Webpage for registration

<https://www.histgeog-uni.net/history-of-universities-seminar/>

30 June 2021

Muslim universities as agents of national integration in post-partition India

Laurence Gautier (O.P. Jindal Global University, Delhi)

This presentation will look at the role of Muslim universities in post-partition India as instruments of national integration and symbols of the Muslim community. Following partition, memories of communal violence seriously undermined the legitimacy of Muslim political parties, deemed responsible for the division of the subcontinent. Congress, the governing party, urged India's Muslim population to give up 'communal' politics to embrace instead the party's 'secular nationalism'. Yet, Congress itself tended to address Indian Muslims as a separate community. In the quasi absence of Muslim political parties, they saw Muslim universities as potent intermediaries between state and community, through which they could 'rally' Indian Muslims to the government's national integration project. Meanwhile, inside these universities, many students, teachers and administrators shared the idea that their institutions could play an important role in the development of an inclusive nation-state. Some even regarded these institutions as 'laboratories' for a composite India. Unlike government authorities, however, they did not regard themselves as a population to be 'rallied' but as full-fledged actors taking an active part in the nation-building process. This presentation will examine the competing conceptions of nation and community that surfaced during the debates on national integration in these universities. It will highlight universities' efforts to play an active part in the construction of an inclusive nation-state as well as the ambiguities of Congress's secular nationalism, perceptible in the government's attitude towards Muslim educational institutions.

Laurence Gautier is Assistant Professor at Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities and Associate Researcher at Centre de Sciences Humaines (Delhi). She is currently working on her monograph, *Between nation and community: Muslim universities and Indian politics after partition*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.