

Der Babri Masjid-Ramajanmabhum-Konflikt. Eine ausgewählte Dokumentation.¹

HERMANN KULKE

Wie aus den vorangegangenen Beiträgen deutlich geworden sein dürfte, spielten in den Auseinandersetzungen um den Babri Masjid/Ramajanmabhum-Komplex die Historizität der Überlieferungen über Heiligkeit und Geschichte Ayodhyas eine zentrale Rolle. Selten dürfte das Schicksal einer Nation in einem derartigen Maße von einem zutiefst politisch motivierten „Historikerstreit“ um die Rechtmäßigkeit historischer Ansprüche und Überlieferungen abgehängt haben, wie im Kampf um Ayodhya, der die Indische Union in seine bisher schwerste Krise stürzte. Die Dokumentationen, die in den Jahren 1990-1992 von den verschiedenen, am Konflikt beteiligten Gruppen der indischen Regierung vorgelegt wurden, stellten (insbesondere in der politisch aufgeheizten Situation des Spätjahres 1992) jeweils ein Politikum höchsten Ranges dar. Es ist daher sinnvoll, eine Auswahl aus diesen Dokumentationen auch hier vorzulegen.² Diese Auswahl soll gleichermaßen ein eigenständiger Beitrag zu den unterschiedli-

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- 1 „Last not least“ sei an dieser Stelle Herrn Prof. D.N. Jha, dem Mitverfasser des *Historians' Report to the Nation*, für seine Hilfe während seines dreimonatigen Aufenthaltes am Historischen Seminar der Universität Kiel im Sommer 1993 gedankt. Die wichtigen Dokumente, die er uns zu Ayodhya zur Verfügung stellte, sowie sein Vortrag und zahllose Gespräche über die Vorgeschichte der Zerstörung der Moschee haben wesentlich zur Verwirklichung des Planes beigetragen, die vorliegenden Aufsätze und die Dokumentation zu verfassen.
 - 2 In den Jahren 1990-1992 wurden mehrere umfangreiche Zusammenstellungen aus diesen Dokumentationen veröffentlicht, die auch Zeitungsartikel, Gerichtsakten, Wahlkampfmaterial zu Ayodhya enthalten. Die meisten dieser Editionen, wie z.B. J.C. Aggarwal/N.K. Chowdhry (*Ramjanmabhum Through the Ages. Babri Masjid Controversy*. New Delhi 1991) und V.C. Mishra (*Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid. Historical Documents, Legal Opinions and Judgements*. New Delhi, n.d. [1991]) vertreten deutlich den VHP-Standpunkt. Dies gilt besonders für K. Elst (*Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid. A Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict*. New Delhi 1990) und die von der VHP edierte Sammlung „*History versus Casuistry*“ (New Delhi 1991). Eine Ausnahme bildet in dieser Hinsicht A.A. Engineer (*Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi Controversy*. New Delhi 1990).

chen Positionen der am Konflikt beteiligten Gruppen sein, wie auch als ein Anhang zu den vorangegangenen Beiträgen dienen. Sie beschränkt sich auf eine Auswahl aus jenen „offiziellen“ Dokumentationen, die vom All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) und der Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in den Jahren 1990/1991 der indischen Regierung vorgelegt wurden, sowie auf einen Auszug aus einem Evaluationsbericht, den kurz vor der Zerstörung der Moschee eine Regierungskommission aus diesen Dokumentationen erarbeitet hatte und auf einige Passagen aus den Weißbüchern, die die indische Regierung und die Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) im Frühjahr 1993 nach der Zerstörung der Moschee veröffentlichten.³

Der damalige Premierminister Chandra Shekhar berief am 1.12.1990 und 10.1.1991 erstmals Vertreter der VHP und des AIBMAC zu gemeinsamen Beratungen. Es wurde vereinbart, daß beide Seiten bis zum 22.12.1990 Dokumentationen ihrer jeweiligen Standpunkte und ihrer Ansprüche auf das Babri Masjid-Ramajanmabhumi-Areal in Ayodhya der Regierung vorlegen, die sie dann der jeweils anderen Gruppe weiterreichen würde. Bis zum 6.1.1991 hatten beide Gruppen dann Stellungnahmen zu den Darstellungen der Gegenseite vorzulegen. Dies geschah jedoch nur seitens der VHP, während das AIBMAC weitere 32 Dokumente nachreichte. Der VHP-Dokumentation vom 22.12.1990 war eine 22 seitige, gedruckte Zusammenfassung vorangestellt, während die AIBMAC-Dokumentationen lediglich eine unter sechs Kategorien geordnete, kommentarlose Zusammenstellung von Dokumenten darstellt – ohne Zusammenfassung der eigenen Hauptargumente. Im Innenministerium, dem bei diesen Verhandlungen die Federführung oblag, wurde von diesen Dokumentationen ein regierungsinterner, regestenähnlicher Bericht verfaßt.⁴ Am 10.1.1991 wurde bei der Sitzung der Kommissionen vereinbart, seitens der VHP und des AIBMAC je eine Expertengruppe für die weiteren Sitzungen zu benennen, die im Januar und Februar 1991 stattfanden. Nach dem Rücktritt der Regierung Chandra Shekhars am 7.3.1991 fanden zunächst keine weiteren Sitzungen dieser Kommission mehr statt. Die vier Historiker, die mit dem AIBMAC zusammenarbeiteten, übergaben jedoch am 13.5.1991 einen Bericht „A Historians' Report to the Nation“ der Regierung.

3 Die Zeitschrift „Frontline“ enthält in ihrer Ausgabe vom 21.5.1993 drei ausführliche Berichte von S.K. Pande, N. Ram und A.G. Noorani über die beiden Weißbücher der Regierung und der VHP.

4 Abgedruckt in V.C. Mishra (1991: 295-308). Im Gegensatz zum späteren internen Bericht der Regierung Narasimha Raos enthielt sich dieser jeglicher Wertung der eingereichten Dokumente.

Nach Abbruch erneuter Agitationen der VHP und Karsevaks im Juni/Juli 1992 nahm Narasimha Rao die Gespräche mit allen beteiligten Gruppen erneut auf und schuf in seinem Premierminister's Office (PMO) eine „Ayodhya Cell“-Arbeitsgruppe, die im September 1992 eine regierungsinterne Evaluation dieser laufenden Gespräche und der bereits 1990/91 vom AIBMAC und der VHP eingereichten Dokumentationen erarbeitete. Im Oktober 1992 berief dann Narasimha Rao erneut die Expertenkommissionen ein, die am 3. und 16.10. und 8.11.1992 tagten. Im Mittelpunkt dieser zweiten Runde der Verhandlungen standen die Beurteilung der sogenannten „neuen archäologischen Entdeckungen“ in Ayodhya, sowie Aussagen B.B. Lals über Ergebnisse seiner früheren Grabungen in Ayodhya, die er bisher verschwiegen hatte. Der im Sommer erschienenen Veröffentlichung einer Historikergruppe der VHP *Ramajanma Bhumi: Ayodhya – New Archaeological Discoveries*, die zunächst großes Aufsehen in der Öffentlichkeit erregte, widersprachen die Experten des AIBMAC mit zwei weiteren, unveröffentlichten Eingaben.⁵ Die heftigen Kontroversen dieser zweiten Runde der Expertengespräche, die bereits ganz im Zeichen der steigenden innenpolitischen Spannungen vor dem Sturm auf die Moschee stand und in der Sitzung am 8.11.1992 abgebrochen wurde, sind ausführlich in einem obigen Beitrag behandelt worden.

Von den sieben hier wiedergegebenen Dokumenten stellen zwei die Position des AIBMAC, drei jene der VHP/BJP-Seite und zwei die der indischen Regierung dar.

Dokument I, *The Political Abuse of History*, wurde von 25 Historikerinnen und Historikern des Centre for Historical Studies der Jawaharlal Nehru Universität (JNU) in New Delhi verfaßt und im Oktober 1989 als Broschüre veröffentlicht. Sie wurde in den folgenden Wochen in mehreren indischen Zeitungen vollständig oder auszugsweise abgedruckt und stellt die von der VHP-Seite am stärksten bekämpfte Gegendarstellung ihrer eigenen Position im Ayodhya-Konflikt dar. Er wurde daher als Dokument A16 in die Dokumentation aufgenommen, die das AIBMAC am 23.12.1990 der indischen Regierung vorlegte und erhielt damit auch einen „offiziellen“ Charakter.

Dokument II, *Ramjanmabhumi-Baburi Masjid. A Historians' Report to the Nation* wurde von den Historikern R.S. Sharma und D.N. Jha (beide Delhi-Universität), M. Athar Ali (Aligarh-Universität) und dem Archäologen Suraj Bhan (Kurukshetra-Universität) verfaßt. Zu diesem Bericht heißt es im White Paper der indischen Regierung vom Februar 1993 „At a later

5 Dieser Dokumentation waren auch die Frontline-Aufsätze vom 6.11.1992 von Champakalakshmi, Ratnagar (beide JNU) und Shrimali (Delhi-Universität) beigelegt, in dem diese neuen Funde heftig kritisiert werden.

date, i.e. 13 May 1991, a group of four historians submitted a report to the Government. The four historians were the ones who had participated in the negotiations as nominees of the AIBMAC“ (S. 15). Dieser hier nur sehr gekürzt wiedergegebene „Historikerbericht an die Nation“ stellt letztlich jene zusammenfassende Darstellung der Position des AIBMAC dar, die in deren Dokumentationen bisher gefehlt hatte. Gegenüber dem 1989 veröffentlichten Artikel der JNU-Historiker „The Political Abuse of History“ nimmt dieser Report auch Bezug auf die Dokumentation des VHP vom Dezember 1990.

Dokument III, *Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir*, wurde am 22.12.1990 von der VHP der indischen Regierung vorgelegt. Die 21 Seiten umfassende Schrift (mit weiteren 91 Seiten Anhang) ist ohne Zweifel die wichtigste Zusammenstellung der von der VHP zusammengetragenen „Pro-Mandir“-Dokumente, Aufsätze etc. Dem gekürzt wiedergegebenen einleitenden Abschnitt (1) folgt das VHP-„Beweismaterial“ unter folgenden weiteren Punkten: 2. Documentary evidence: the Hindu testimony; 3. Documentary evidence: the Muslim testimony; 4. Documentary evidence: the European accounts; 5. Evidence from the revenue records; 6. Archaeological and art-historical evidence; 7. Untenability of the alternative hypothesis; 7.1 No second Janmasthan; 7.2 Hindus never ceased claiming the site; 7.3 Attempts to suppress Muslim testimony. Die VHP-Dokumentation schließt mit den hier ebenfalls abgedruckten Abschnitten 7.4 und 7.5 und einem Anhang von 29 Appendices.

Dokument IV entstammt der Schrift *Rejoinder to the AIBMAC Documents*, die die VHP am 6.1.1991 der indischen Regierung als Entgegnung auf die Dokumentation des AIBMAC vom 23.12.1990 vorlegte. In dieser Entgegnung werden alle 80 vom AIBMAC-Dokumente (meist einzeln, bisweilen summarisch) mit der sich stets wiederholenden Bemerkung „widerlegt“: „xx doesn't give any evidence whatsoever“. Aus dieser sehr polemischen Schrift des VHP wurde hier die überdurchschnittlich lange Entgegnung auf den (hier als Dokument I wiedergegebenen) Beitrag der JNU-Historiker ausgewählt, der der AIBMAC-Dokumentation vom 23.12.1990 beigefügt war.

Dokument V entstammt dem *BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & the Rama Temple Movement*, das die BJP im April 1993 veröffentlichte. Der vermutlich interessanteste Teil des 172 Seiten umfassenden Weißbuches der BJP ist die hier auszugsweise aufgenommene BJP-Selbstdarstellung, politischer Bannerträger der Rama-Bewegung und der nationalen Hindutva-Erneuerung zu sein. Im Gegensatz zur indischen Regierung, die in ihrem Weißbuch einer geistig-ideologischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Hindutva-Nationalismus ausweicht, setzt sich die BJP in geradezu

aggressiver Weise mit den säkularistischen Kräften des unabhängigen Indiens, insbesondere der Kongreßpartei, auseinander, in denen sie in eigenartig anmutender Umkehr der Tatsachen die eigentlichen Verursacher der „Kommunalisierung“ der indischen Gesellschaft und damit letztlich auch des nationalen Desasters am 6.12.1992 sieht. Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt des Weißbuches der BJP liegt in der politischen Auseinandersetzung mit der Zentralregierung. So weist es zum einen die Schuldzuweisung durch das Weißbuch der indischen Regierung an die inzwischen abgesetzte BJP-Regierung von Uttar Pradesh zurück. Stattdessen erklärt es die Unentschlossenheit der Regierung Narasimha Raos und dessen Politisierung der Ayodhya-Bewegung („He merely treated the Ayodhya issue as a BJP-related problem, and turned it into a political game“, S. 160), sowie „provozierende Reden“ der Tempelgegner zur eigentlichen Ursache der „spontanen“ Stürmung und Zerstörung der Babri-Moschee durch ungeduldige und durch Regierungsaktivitäten verunsicherte Karsevaks. Das Weißbuch der BJP enthält weiterhin ein umfangreiches Kapitel über „The Evidence and Dialogue on Ramajanmabhumi“ (S. 49-73), das im wesentlichen eine Wiederholung der bekannten und daher hier nicht wiedergegebenen Argumente der VHP darstellt.

Dokument VI ist dem bisher unveröffentlichten Bericht der Regierungskommission („Ayodhya Cell“), die nach dem 27.7.1992 unter Leitung Naresh Chandra im PMO eingerichtet worden war, um für die Regierung ein Resümee der Verhandlungen mit dem AIBMAC und der VHP, sowie deren Dokumentationen zu verfassen (zur „Ayodhya Cell“ siehe auch Dokument VII). Auszüge aus dem regierungsinternen Resümee wurden erstmals in dem Weißbuch der BJP veröffentlicht und sind daher insbesondere in Hinblick auf mögliche Auswahlkriterien der BJP mit Vorsicht zu betrachten. Sollte sich jedoch der Wortlaut der im BJP-Weißbuch zitierten Passagen der Regierungskommission bestätigen, so würde dies zeigen, in welchem Maße sich – im Gegensatz zum regierungsinternen Bericht der Regierung Chandra Shekhars im Januar 1991 – die „Ayodhya Cell“ im PMO Narasimha Raos in Einzelfällen⁶ Argumente des VHP zu eigen gemacht hatte.⁷ Dies könnte eine der Ursachen für die lähmende

6 Siehe hierzu in Dokument VI z.B. die Deutung der „pillar bases“ und die allgemeine Einschätzung der VHP-Dokumentationen durch die „Ayodhya Cell“.

7 In dem Bericht über das BJP-Weißbuch heißt es in „Frontline“ (21.5.1993): „It is fairly evident from the copious quotations from the records of the Special Cell on Ayodhya, including whole minutes, that someone there has been helping the BJP all along. As head of the Cell, Naresh Chandra bears responsibility for the records finding their way to this political party [BJP]. The summaries prepared by the Cell are clearly tendentious and one-sided“.

Inaktivität der indischen Regierung in diesen entscheidenden Monaten des Ayodhya-Konfliktes gewesen sein.

Dokument VII entstammt dem *White Paper on Ayodhya*, das die indische Regierung im Februar 1993 veröffentlichte. Das 124 Seiten umfassende Weißbuch enthält eine umfangreiche Liste aller ihr seitens der VHP und des AIBMAC eingereichten Dokumente (S. 43-55), sowie die hier auszugsweise abgedruckte Darstellung des Verlaufes und der Ergebnisse der Gespräche, zu denen am 3. und 16.10.1992 die VHP und das AIBMAC erneut von der Regierung einberufen worden waren. Das Weißbuch der Regierung verfolgt das Ziel, die Politik der indischen Regierung unter Narasimha Rao im Ayodhya-Konflikt zu rechtfertigen und die politische Verantwortung für die Zerstörung der Babri-Moschee am 6.12.1992, die sie nicht zu verhindern vermocht hatte, der BJP-Landesregierung von Uttar Pradesh unter Kalyan Singh und dessen Taktik anzulasten, Anordnungen der Zentralregierung zum Schutz der Moschee systematisch ignoriert bzw. boykottiert zu haben und damit den Aktionen der VHP und der Karsevaks und der Zerstörung der Moschee freien Lauf gelassen zu haben.

Dokument I

The Political Abuse of History Babri Masjid-Rama Janmabhumi Dispute⁸

Behind the present Babrimasjid-Rama janma-bhumi controversy lie issues of faith, power and politics. Each individual has a right to his or her belief and faith. But when he claims the legitimacy of history, then the historian has to attempt a demarcation between the limits of belief and historical evidence. When communal forces make claims to „historical evi-

8 Als Verfasser werden die Mitglieder des Centre for Historical Studies der JNU genannt: Sarvapalli Gopal, Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Suvira Jaiswal, Harbans Mukhia, K.N. Panikkar, R. Champakalakshmi, Satish Saberwal, B.D. Chattopadhyaya, R.N. Verma, K. Meenakshi, Muzaffar Alam, Dilbagh Singh, Mridula Mukherjee, Madhavan Palat, Aditya Mukherjee, S.F. Ratnagar, Neeladri Bhattacharya, K.K. Trivedi, Yogesh Sharma, Kunal Chakravarti, Bhagwan Josh, Rajan Gurukul and Himanshu Ray. Der vorliegende Text ist der vom Centre for Historical Studies herausgegebenen Broschüre entnommen.

dence“ for the purposes of communal politics, then the historian has to intervene.

Historical evidence is presented here not as a polemic or as a solution to the Rama janmabhumi-Babri masjid conflict, for this conflict is not a matter of historical records alone. The conflict emerges from the widespread communalization of Indian politics. Nevertheless it is necessary to review the historical evidence to the extent it is brought into play in the communalization of society.

I

Is Ayodhya the birthplace of Rama? This question raises a related one: Is present day Ayodhya the Ayodhya of Ramayana?

The events of the story of Rama, originally told in the Rama-Katha which is no longer available to us, were rewritten in the form of a long epic poem, the Ramayana, by Valmiki. Since this is a poem and much of it could have been fictional, including characters and places, historians cannot accept the personalities, the events or the location as historically authentic unless there is other supporting evidence from sources regarded as more reliable by historians. Very often historical evidence contradicts popular belief.

According to Valmiki Ramayana, Rama, the King of Ayodhya, was born in the Treta Yuga, that is thousands of years before the Kali Yuga which is supposed to begin in 3102 BC.

i) There is no archaeological evidence to show that at this early time the region around present day Ayodhya was inhabited. The earliest possible date for settlements at the site are of about the eighth century BC. The archaeological remains indicate a fairly simple material life, more primitive than what is described in the Valmiki Ramayana.

ii) In the Ramayana, there are frequent references to palaces and buildings on a large scale in an urban setting. Such descriptions of an urban complex are not sustained by the archaeological evidence of the eighth century B.C.

iii) There is also a controversy over the location of Ayodhya. Early Buddhist texts refer to Shravasti and Saketa, not Ayodhya, as the major cities of Koshala. Jaina texts also refer to Saketa as the capital of Koshala. There are very few references to an Ayodhya, but this is said to be located on the Ganges, not on river Saryu which is the site of present day Ayodhya.

iv) The town of Saketa was renamed Ayodhya by a Gupta king. Skanda Gupta in the late fifth century A.D. moved his residence to Saketa and called it Ayodhya. He assumed the title Vikramaditya, which he used on his gold coins. Thus what may have been the fictional Ayodhya of the epic poem was identified with Saketa quite late. This does not necessarily suggest that the Gupta king was a bhakta of Rama. In bestowing the name of Ayodhya on Saket he was trying to gain prestige for himself by drawing on the tradition of the Suryavamsi kings, a line to which Rama is said to have belonged.

v) After the seventh century, textual references to Ayodhya are categorical. The Puranas, dating to the first millennium A.D. and the early second millennium A.D. follow the Ramayana and refer to Ayodhya as the capital of Koshala. (Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana, 1.240.2)

vi) In a way, the local tradition of Ayodhya recognizes the ambiguous history of its origin. The story is that Ayodhya was lost after the Treta yuga and was rediscovered by Vikramaditya. While searching for the lost Ayodhya, Vikramaditya met Prayaga, the king of tirthas, who knew about Ayodhya and showed him where it was. Vikramaditya marked the place but could not find it later. Then he met a yogi who told him that he should let a cow and a calf roam. When the calf came across the janmabhumi milk would flow from its udder. The king followed the yogi's advice. When at a certain point the calf's udders began to flow the king decided that this was the site of the ancient Ayodhya.

This myth of „re-discovery“ of Ayodhya, this claim to an ancient sacred lineage, is an effort to impart to a city a specific religious sanctity which it lacked. But even in the myths the process of identification of the sites appears uncertain and arbitrary.

If present day Ayodhya was known as Saket before the fifth century, then the Ayodhya of Valmiki's Ramayana was fictional. If so, the identification of Rama janmabhumi in Ayodhya today becomes a matter of faith, not of historical evidence.

The historical uncertainty regarding the possible location of the Rama-janmabhumi contrasts with the historical certainty of the birthplace of the Buddha. Two centuries after the death of the Buddha, Asoka Maurya put up an inscription at the village of Lumbini to commemorate it as the Buddha's birth-place. However, even in this case, the inscription merely refers to the village near which he was born and does not even attempt to indicate the precise birth place.

II

Ayodhya has been a sacred centre of many religions, not of the Rama cult alone. Its rise as a major centre of Rama worship is, in fact, relatively recent.

i) inscriptions from the fifth to the eighth centuries A.D. and even later refer to people from Ayodhya but none of them refer to its being a place associated with the worship of Rama. (*Epigraphica Indica*, 10. p.72; 15. p.143; 1. p.14)

ii) Hsuan Tsang writes of Ayodhya as a major centre of Buddhism with many monasteries and stupas and few non-Buddhists. For Buddhists Ayodhya is a sacred place where Buddha is believed to have stayed for some time.

iii) Ayodhya has been an important centre of Jain pilgrimage. To the Jains it is the birth place of the first and fourth Jaina Tirthankaras. An interesting archaeological find of the 4th-3rd century B.C. is a Jaina figure in grey terracotta, being amongst the earliest Jaina figures found so far.

iv) The texts of the eleventh century A.D. refer to the Gopataru tirtha at Ayodhya, but not to any links with the janmabhumi of Rama.

v) The cult of Rama seems to have become popular from the thirteenth century. It gains ground with the gradual rise of the Ramanandi sect and the composition of the Rama story in Hindi.

Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Ramanandis had not settled in Ayodhya on a significant scale. Shaivism was more important than the cult of Rama. Only from the eighteenth century do we find the Ramanandi sadhus settling on a large scale. It was in the subsequent centuries that they built most of their temples in Ayodhya.

III

So far no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had been earlier occupied by a temple.

i) Except for the verses in Persian inscribed on the two sides of the mosque door, there is no other primary evidence to suggest that a mosque had been erected there on Babur's behalf. Mrs. Beveridge, who was the first to translate *Babur Nama*, gives the texts and the translation of these above verses in an appendix to the memoirs. The crucial passage reads as follows: „By the command of the Emperor Babur, whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heavens, the good hearted Mir

Baqi built the alighting place of angels. *Bawad [Buwad] khair baqi* (may this goodness last for ever): (*Babur Nama*, translated by A.F. Beveridge, 1922, II, pp. LXXVII ff)

The inscription only claims that one Mir Baqi, a noble of Babur, had erected the mosque. Nowhere does either of the inscriptions mention that the mosque had been erected on the site of a temple. Nor is there any reference in Babur's memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya.

ii) The *Ain-i-Akbari* refers to Ayodhya as „the residence of Ramachandra who in the Treta age combined in his own person both spiritual supremacy and kingly office“. But nowhere is there any mention of the erection of the mosque by the grandfather of the author's patron on the site of the temple of Rama.

iii) It is interesting that Tulsidas, the great devotee of Rama, a contemporary of Akbar and an inhabitant of the region, is upset at the rise of the mleccha but makes no mention of the demolition of a temple at the site of Rama janmabhumi.

iv) It is in the nineteenth century that the story circulates and enters official records. These records were then cited by others as valid historical evidence on the issue.

This story of the destruction of the temple is narrated, without any investigation into its historical veracity, in British records of the region. (See P. Carnegie, *Historical sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, Zillah Fyzabad, Lucknow, 1870*; H.R. Nevill, *Faizabad District Gazetteer, Allahabad, 1905*).

Mrs. Beveridge in a footnote to the translated passage quoted above affirms her faith in the story. She suggests that Babar being a Muslim, and „impressed by the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine“ would have displaced „at least in part“ the temple to erect the mosque. Her logic is simple: „... like the obedient follower of Muhammad he was in intolerance of another Faith, (thus he) would regard the substitution of a temple by a mosque as dutiful and worthy“. This is a very questionable inference deduced from a generalized presumption about the nature and inevitable behaviour of a person professing a particular faith. Mrs. Beveridge produces no historical evidence to support her assertion that the mosque was built at the site of a temple. Indeed the general tenor of Babur's state policy towards places of worship of other religions hardly justifies Mrs. Beveridge's inference.

To British officials who saw India as a land of mutually hostile religious communities, such stories may appear self-validating. Historians, however, have to carefully consider the authenticity of each historical statement and the records on which they are based.

While there is no evidence about the Babri mosque having been built on the site of a temple, the mosque according to the medieval sources, was not of much religious and cultural significance for the Muslims.

The assumption that Muslim rulers were invariably and naturally opposed to the sacred places of Hindus is not always borne out by historical evidence.

i) The patronage of the Muslim Nawabs was crucial for the expansion of Ayodhya as a Hindu pilgrimage centre. Recent researches have shown that Nawabi rule depended on the collaboration of Kayasthas and their military force was dominated by Shivaite Nagas. Gifts to temples and patronage of Hindu sacred centres was an integral part of the Nawabi mode of exercise of power. The dewan of Nawab Safdarjung built and repaired several temples in Ayodhya. Safdarjung gave land to the Nirwana akhara to build a temple on Hanuman hill in Ayodhya. Asaf-ud-Daulah's dewan contribute to the building of the temple fortress in Hanuman hill in the city. Panda records show that Muslim officials of the nawabi court gave several gifts for rituals performed by Hindu priests.

ii) In moments of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim rulers did not invariably support Muslims. When a dispute between the Sunni Muslims and the Naga Sadhus over a Hanumangarhi temple in Ayodhya broke out in 1855, Wajid Ali Shah took firm and decisive action. He appointed a tripartite investigative committee consisting of the district official Agha Ali Khan, the leading Hindu landholder, Raja Mansingh, and the British officers in charge of the Company's forces. When the negotiated settlement failed to control the build up of communal forces, Wajid Ali Shah mobilized the support of Muslims leaders to bring the situation under control, confiscated the property of Maulavi Amir Ali, the leader of the Muslim communal forces, and finally called upon the army to crush the Sunni Muslim group led by Amir Ali. An estimated three to four hundred Muslims were killed.

This is not to suggest that there were no conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, but in neither case were they homogeneous communities. There was hostility between factions and groups within a community, as there was amity across communities.

The above review of historical evidence suggests that the claims made by Hindu and Muslim communal groups can find no sanction from history. As a sacred centre the character of Ayodhya has been changing over the centuries. It has been linked to the history of many religions. Different communities have vested it with their own sacred meaning. The city cannot be claimed by any one community as its exclusive sacred preserve.

The appropriation of history is a continual process in any society. But in a multi-religious society like ours, appropriations which draw exclusively on communal identities engender endless communal conflicts. And attempts to undo the past can only have dangerous consequences.

It is appropriate, therefore, that a political solution is urgently found: „Rama janmabhumi-Babri Masjid“ area be demarcated and declared a national monument.

Dokument II

Ramjanmabhumi-Baburi Masjid. A Historians' Report to the Nation⁹

BY R.S. SHARMA, M. ATHAR ALI, D.N. JHA, SURAJ BHAN

[...] As for the second argument [der Säulenfundamente], this is based on the recent announcement by Professor B.B. Lal that certain brick bases found by him in the close vicinity of the Baburi Masjid many years ago were meant for sustaining pillars and so suggest the existence of a temple-like structure in the south of the Baburi Masjid. Though he excavated the ground over eleven years ago and thereafter published several papers on Ayodhya diggings, he first mentioned this discovery only towards the end of 1990 (*Manthan*, October 1990).

This delay, left unexplained, is certainly strange. We wanted to clarify our ideas about the inferences drawn from these pillar bases by examining the site notebook and register of antiquities connected with the Ayodhya excavations. We also wanted to have a look at the drawings, plans, photographs, excavated material, etc., connected with the Ayodhya excavation of Professor Lal. For this purpose we wrote five letters to the Government of India and we also requested the Home Minister to make the necessary material available to us for examination. But our repeated requests did not yield even an acknowledgement of our letters. The failure to make available the relevant material raises not only questions of ethics in using

9 Der hier vorliegende Text entstammt der ursprünglichen, hektographierten Ausgabe der Schrift vom 13.5.1991. Noch im selben Monat wurde der gesamte Text – zunächst ohne Wissen der Autoren – vom People's Publishing House in New Delhi nachgedruckt (22 Seiten).

archaeological material, but also makes it doubtful whether Professor Lal's new interpretation is really borne out by the actual record and material of his excavations.¹⁰ [...]

The conclusions that we have reached after a careful consideration of the entire available evidence may be summed up as follows: -

(1) No evidence exists in the texts that before the 16th century (and indeed before the 18th century), any veneration attached to any spot in Ayodhya for being the birth-site of Rama.

(2) There are no grounds for supposing that a Rama temple, or any temple, existed at the site where Baburi Masjid was built in 1528-29. This conclusion rests on an examination of the archaeological evidence as well as the contemporary inscriptions on the mosque.

(3) The legend that the Baburi Masjid occupied the site of Rama's birth did not arise until late 18th century; that a temple was destroyed to build the mosque was not asserted until the beginning of the 19th century.

(4) The full-blown legend of the destruction of a temple at the site of Rama's birth and Sita-ki-Raso [Sita's kitchen], is as late as the 1850's. Since then what we get is merely the progressive reconstruction of 'imagined history' based on faith.

It is for the people of this country to judge whether on the basis of such dubious evidence as the VHP has presented in support of its case, it is justifiable to mortgage the destiny and good repute of the country.

10 Erst am 23.10.1992 wurde den AIBMAC- und VHP-Expertengruppen Einblick in die Grabungsunterlagen im Archaeological Survey of India gewährt (siehe unten Dokument VII). Sie beschränkte sich jedoch auf insgesamt nur drei Stunden für die getrennt vorgehaltenen Gruppen und schloß das wichtige Dokument, das Grabungsbuch B.B. Lals, aus, eine Tatsache, die von den VHP-Historikern ausdrücklich gutgeheißen wurde. (Siehe hierzu die Berichte in *Times of India* vom 15. und 24.10.1992 und im *Statesman* vom 24.10.1992).

Dokument III

**Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir presented
to the Government of India on December 22, 1990,**BY THE VISHVA HINDU PARISHAD¹¹**1. Introduction**

The Babri mosque stands on a high mound in central Ayodhya on the western ramparts of the ruins of an ancient fortress called Ramkot or Ram Durga or Kot Ram Chander. The Hindu contention that this structure was

1.1. Sacredness of the site

Some persons¹³ seek to question the very foundations of this evidence by arguing that Rama is a mythical and not a historical character, and that it cannot be proven that he was born on the Janmabhoomi site. That objection can be answered by pointing out that such proof is not required according to the international standards prevalent in this kind of issue. No one in the world has demanded evidence for the sacred character of the mosques on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Is it proven that the Dome on the Rock or the Al-Aqsa mosque was built over Mohammed's footprint in the rock? Similarly, the grotto in which Jesus is believed to have been born, is protected as a place of pilgrimage for the Christians. The belief that Jesus was born there, is neither theologically important nor historically verified. Yet, the Christians' right to their sacred place is upheld without questioning. Like followers of other religions, we do not need to offer a justification for considering that very site sacred.

So, the relevant question to be considered, is not: can you prove the grounds on which you hold this site to be sacred? The relevant question is: is there proof that an old and persistent tradition among Ram devotees has considered the site as the sacred Ram Janmabhoomi, and that Ram worship took place there in a temple, before and until the Babri Masjid was built? The evidence which is presented here, will prove that the question has to be answered in the affirmative.

1.2 Documentary evidence

The literary evidence beginning with Valmiki's Ramayana, written, even on the most modest estimates, before the 2nd century BC, shows how Ayodhya became a sacred city in Hindu perception, a place of abundant sanctity and pilgrimage on account of its being considered as the city of Ram's birth, activities (*lila*) and death.

The existence of a Ram Janmabhoomi shrine at Ramkot, marking what was believed to be the birthplace of Ram, and held by the Hindus as one of their holiest spots on earth in the 12th-13th centuries, is well-attested by its description in the *Ayodhya Mahatmya*, a sacred Hindu text forming part of the *Vaishnava Khanda of the Skanda Purana*. The *Ayodhya Mahatmya* narrates the supreme glory of the Ram Janmabhoomi shrine situated to the

13 Hier und im folgenden wird mehrfach, jedoch ohne direkte Nennung, auf die Schrift der JNU-Historiker angespielt.

west of Lomash Ashram and north of Vasishtha Kund, specially of offering worship on this spot on Ram Navami day, Ram's birthday.

All the historical literature after 1528 AD, when a mosque was constructed by Mir Baqi at a spot west of Lomash and north of Vasishtha Kund under the orders of the Moghul conqueror Babar, and using 14 black Kasauti-stone pillars of an erstwhile Hindu building, attest that the Hindus continued to consider this as their holy Janmasthan shrine, kept returning to it to offer their devotions, occupied its courtyard in due course, and built thereon a *Ram Chabootra* (cradle of baby Ram) and a Sita kitchen. There are numerous accounts that prove the continued celebration of Ram Navami festival at this place with great gatherings of people, and bitterness between Hindus and Muslims over the former's attempts to take over the place, leading to several disputes and clashes in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Against this mass of testimony, it has been pointed out that Babar's own, otherwise meticulous, diary is silent about a temple demolition and mosque construction at the Janmabhoomi site. This seeming „argument from silence“ has been conclusively explained by Mrs. Beveridge in her English translation (*Babur Nama in English*). Babar reached the Ayodhya area on March 28, 1528, and camped there for a short period to settle the affairs of Awadh. Unfortunately, in all known copies of Babar's diary, there is a break in the narrative between April 2 and September 18 of 1528. The loss of these pages could have occurred during the storm on May 17, 1529, or during Humayun's stay in the desert after 1540.

To the literary testimony for the continuous tradition of Ram worship at the disputes site, and for the uncontroverted belief that the Babri Masjid had replaced a Ram Janmabhoomi temple, we may add another category of written evidence: the revenue records. These show that the Masjid/Janmabhoomi area has been considered as Waqf property only after 1931 (and even then this was contested), and that it has always been known as „Janmasthan“. In fact, most pre-British documents call the Babri mosque the „Masjid-i Janmasthan“, or even just Janmasthan.

1.3 Evidence on the spot

Our archaeological evidence comes from the excavations conducted in the area immediately south of and adjacent to the Babri mosque. Here the fieldwork was conducted from 1975 through 1980 by the Archaeological Survey of India under the direction of Prof. B.B. Lal. The excavations have revealed the existence of a series of burnt-brick pillar-bases at regular

intervals. These are found arranged in parallel rows in the directional alignment in which a number of black-stone pillars are existing in the mosque. Archaeological evidence of „robber's trench“ clearly proves that some of the bricks from the pillar-bases were intentionally removed by those who destroyed the temple. However, stratigraphical evidence proves that these pillar-bases were built in the 11th century and they continued to be in use till the end of the 15th century. From immediately below the topmost floor, which apparently belongs to the general floor of the mosque, archaeologists have recovered a variety of Islamic Glazed Wares which are dated to different periods between the 13th and the 15th centuries. Evidently, the temple belonged to the period immediately before the construction of the mosque.

In the early 16th century when the mosque was built at this very place, the builders of the mosque used a number of black-stone pillars from the old temple existing here. Some of these pillars have been found used as load-bearing pillars for the arches of the domes of the mosque. Art-historical studies of these pillars show that they bear a large number of images of gods and goddesses, such as the *Yakshas*, *Devakanyas*, *Dvarapalas* and *Ganas*, and sacred motifs, such as the *purnaghata*, lotus, *hansa* and *mala*, all of which belong to the Hindu iconography.

It is, therefore, clear that the evidence of the pillar-bases, the pillars and the glazed wares is conclusively in favour of the thesis that a temple has existed on the „Janmabhoomi“ from the 11th through the 15th century, and that it was destroyed in the 16th century, to which period the „Babri Masjid“ belongs. (S. 1f)

7.4 Total lack of counter-evidence

The thesis recently advanced by some persons that the Babri Masjid did not replace any extant Ram temple goes against common sense in many ways. The well-attested fact that the Hindus offered Ram Puja in the mosque courtyard even under Muslim rule, the rows of 11th century pillar-bases aligned with the wall of the present structure, the touch-stone pillars incorporated in it, the Hindu sculptures they carry, all these indications converge on the thesis of a pre-existent Ram temple replaced by the Babri mosque. This thesis is also perfect conformity with historically attested behaviour patterns of Hindu devotees and Muslim conquerors. Indeed, the Ram Mandir hypothesis postulates little more than that the general patterns applied in Ayodhya too.

By contrast, the anti-Mandir thesis rests on a number of untenable assumptions:

1. The Babri Masjid was built on empty land. But the site is the highest point in central Ayodhya, the place of honour: in no city in the world would it ever have been left empty, much less in a temple city of long standing.
2. Mir Baqi went elsewhere to collect the touch-stone pillars, but at that other place, where the material was readily available, he did not build a mosque (for no second mosque with such pillars is known).
3. The tradition associating the site with Rama was created out of nothing while the site was occupied by an imperial mosque. Hindus left whatever place they had earlier considered the birthplace, without a trace, and started an exclusively Hindu worship in a mosque courtyard taking the unparalleled risk of confronting the Muslim power, for no historical reason at all.

In an academic context, the burden of proof would rest squarely with those coming up with such a string of far-fetched hypotheses to contradict a well-established hypothesis attested by a long list of uncontroverted independent testimonies by local Muslim as well as European writers spanning four centuries. More so because the Mandir hypothesis is not only supported by the evidence which we have presented, but is coherent with well-attested behaviour patterns:

1. Muslim conquerors destroyed many temples and replaced them with mosques.
2. In a few cases, they left the whole building standing (Kaaba, Aya Sophia); but far more often they left the earlier building only partly standing, or razed it completely, but visibly used parts of the destroyed temple, to flaunt the victory of Islam over paganism: e.g., the Jama Masjid of Damascus (Syria), the Gyanvapi mosque (Varanasi), Jami Masjid of Rajamundri (Andhra), Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid (Delhi), Adhayi-Din-ka-Jhonpra mosque (Ajmer), Jami Masjid of Kanauj (U.P.), Jami Masjid of Sambhal (U.P.). (S. 20)

7.5 Conclusion

The choice is between two hypotheses. Actually, the hypothesis that a Mandir stood on the Ram Janmabhoomi site until Babar's troops destroyed it and replaced it with the Babri Masjid, has only recently been made into a „hypothesis“ and forced to compete with the alternative anti-Mandir hypothesis. Until recently, the pre-existence of a Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir at the Babri Masjid site was a matter of established consensus. It was confirmed by a large number of Hindu, Muslim and European sources from the 17th century onwards, and never once put in doubt. And it explains all the relevant facts and observations mentioned in all the sources, and all the iconographical and archaeological findings at the site.

By contrast, the alternative hypothesis is a recent invention of armchair theorizers under political compulsions. Formally, it does no more than put into question a number of the source which confirm the Mandir hypothesis. It does not offer a coherent scenario that would explain all the available facts. It goes against general historical knowledge in a number of respects, and fails to justify its extra-ordinary assumptions. Materially, it does not come up with any proof: no proof that any of the pro-Mandir documents is telling lies, much less any proof of the events that would make up an alternative non-Mandir scenario.

The choice is between a hypothesis firmly rooted in reality, and a hypothesis constructed in the air and totally out of tune with general knowledge and particular evidence. Faced with this choice, any sincere scholar, and indeed any right-minded citizen, will not find it difficult to make up his mind. (S. 21)

Dokument IV

Vishva Hindu Parishad
Rejoinder to the AIBMAC Documents.
Submitted to the Government of India
on January 6, 1991.¹⁴

A. 16) The 25 JNU historians don't give any proof whatsoever. All they can do, is try to cast aspersions on the arguments which Hindus have been giving. A coherent alternative hypothesis which takes into account all the known facts, is not available in the JNU historians often-quoted statement. Their statement has been taken care of by Prof. A.R. Khan (articles in *Indian Express*, 25/2 and 1/4/90, appended to this text) and by the Belgian scholar Koenraad Elst (*Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid*). Nevertheless, even after Prof. Khan exposed this document as „elusive in character“; criticised its methodology, and drew attention to „not only concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence“; the entire pseudo-secularist intelligentsia has continued to quote „the eminent JNU historians“ as the final word on this issue.

The AIBMAC should have shown in what way this document substantiates their case, then we could give a precise reply to that deduction. So far, we can only say that this statement beats around the bush flamboyantly.

It talks a lot about there being no proof for Rama's existence, his time and place of birth, his elevation to divine status, etc.: all these things do not concern us here, we have been asked by the Government for evidence of the medieaval Ram Mandir and its destruction by Muslim invaders who built the Babri Masjid on top of it, and we have given that evidence. We repeat that we do not have to justify why we consider a place sacred, we expect our sacred places to be respected as much as members of other religions would do.

The JNU document also philosophises about how there existed inter-communal amity as well as intra-communal strife. Very well, people are people and cannot be reduced to their religious denominations. Therefore,

14 Der vollständige Text des *Rejoinder to the AIBMAC Documents* ist abgedruckt in V.C. Mishra (1991: 249-285). Die hier abgedruckte Entgegnung zur Schrift der JNU-Historiker ist der Vorlage der VHP für die Regierung entnommen.

many common Muslims don't observe the Quranic injunctions against friendship with Kafirs. Some Muslim rulers also preferred a stable kingdom with communal amity to their Islamic duty of persecuting the Kafirs (though they were severely criticised for this Islamic laxity by the guardians of orthodoxy, e.g. Akbar by Ahmad Sirhindi, who had a wealth of verses at their disposal for proving the Muslim's duty to fight the Kafirs.

In particular, the Nawabs, who belonged to the Shia sect, which shortly before had been persecuted by Aurangzeb, were not too zealous in their observance of Quranic rules regarding the Kafirs. That is why they allowed the Hindus to worship in the Masjid courtyard, understanding that the Hindus were very attached to this sacred place. But all that peaceful co-existence between Shias and Hindus does not add up to proof that the Babri Masjid was built on empty land.

About the three instances of Nawabi officials giving grants to Hindu institutions, cited in the JNU pamphlet as evidence of the Nawabs' secularism, Prof. A.R. Khan (History Dpt., Himachal University, Shimla) has remarked: „It may be noted that in the first two evidences the authors have deliberately concealed the fact that both the *diwans* were Hindus. [By contrast], while mentioning about the gifts by the officials of the Nawabi court to Hindu priests (in their third evidence), they have not forgotten to state that the officials were Muslims. This not only amounts to concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence“. (Indian Express 25/2/90)

The JNU text does not go into the archaeological evidence, in fact it denies that there is any for the relevant period: „So far no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had earlier been occupied by a temple“. As Mr. I. Mahadevan has pointed out (Indian Express 6/12/90), the JNU historians have selected from the Archaeological Survey of India report what suited them, the absence of any remains of habitation from before the 7th century BC, and left out the finding that there was again a building on the disputed spot from the 11th century AD onwards.

It is true that the first brief ASI report on the excavation led by Prof. B.B. Lal does not mention the pillar-bases; but it does mention the floors made of lime and *kankars*. While not mentioning the pillar-bases, the report does mention remains of at least a building. In the present discussion, that is a very pertinent fact: the Masjid replaced a building. It is up for discussion what kind of building it was, but at least, the choice of possible scenarios has been narrowed down and no longer includes the possibility that the Masjid was built on empty land.

Concealing this all-important fact in a statement that pretends to put distorters of history to shame, is quite a feat. If there was an open intellec-

tual arena in India, rather than a Left-controlled one, the JNU historians would have lost their big name for their attempts at distortion, and maybe also their big mouth.

The JNU historians, all 25 of them, seem to be not aware of the existence of a great many testimonies firmly establishing that the Masjid or at least its courtyard were used by the Hindus for Ram worship since well before the British period. Or they gloss over it. They certainly don't bring up arguments to disprove or somehow undermine this testimony. Since the JNU historians disregard both the relevant archaeological findings and all the documentary evidence, their entire document in no way affects our case. (S. 9f)

Dokument V

BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement. Bharatiya Janata Party, April 1993

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had always affirmed that the Ayodhya movement was not just a plea for a temple for Sri Rama, that instead it reflected a far deeper quest for recapturing our national identity. The movement is firmly rooted in the inclusive and assimilative cultural heritage of India. It represents the soul of the nationalist thrust of our freedom movement. The post-independence political creed of the Congress and of most other political parties had come to regard every thing that inspired this nation in the past as less than secular – in fact, communal, and even anti-national. The movement for restoration of the Temple at the birth-place of Sri Rama evolved as a corrective to this distortion. It developed into a massive protest against the derailment of all that inspired the freedom movement – the elevating chant of Vande Mataram which Maharishi Bankim Chandra gave to this nation, the goal of Rama Rajya held out by Mahatma Gandhi as the destination of free India, the ideal of Spiritual Nationalism expounded by Swami Vivekananda, the spirit of Sanatana Dharma which Sri Aurobindo described as the soul and nationalism of India, and the mass devotion to the mother-land built around the Ganapati

festival by Bal Gangadhar Tilak.¹⁵ The Ayodhya movement symbolised the re-establishment of these roots of our nationhood which had dried up due to post-independence politics and a spiritually bankrupt idiom. Indeed, 'secularism' became a perverted slogan – merely a means to catch votes, and a slogan to shout down every nationalist. (S. 7)

Thus, the BJP is convinced that the quest for a Temple for Sri Rama at Ayodhya, at the very place where the Maryada Purushotam [sic!] is believed to have been born, is the expression of a brooding national conscience that had been held in check since the partition of India by pseudo-secular leaders and parties, that it is a symbol of the greatest national introspection and cultural resurgence of the present century. The people's participation in the Ayodhya movement and its reach cutting across all barriers of caste, religion, language and region showed and emphasised its national and political thrust. (S. 8)

This historical background of the Mohammedan invasion and the provocative ocular reminders of that violent and barbaric invasion were completely ignored even after the partition of India. This neglect resulted in the failure to evolve a sound basis for Indian nationalism and durable relationships between Hindus and Muslims. The effort was to suppress the historical facts from history books, and explain away irrefutable facts by falsehoods – such as claiming that Babur was secular and tolerant. If, instead, there had been an honest admission that the invaders were foreigners and that the Indian Muslims, 90% of whom were converts from Hindus, were not their descendants but of the forefathers of their Hindu brethren, that would have prepared the ground for cultural and social assimilation and unity. On the contrary, the post-independence political leadership indulged in concealing and suppressing the truth in a desperate bid to promote false unity instead of an understanding based on truth. Far from persuading the Muslims to disown such provocative symbols, the political parties encouraged them to own them and to regard them to be symbols of Islam. The reason was evident: the pseudo-secular political parties regarded the Muslims merely as captive votes, and not as co-citizens of Hindus. They, therefore, fomented in Muslims feelings of separateness, and of insecurity. Having done so they presented themselves as the ones who were special solicitors of the separate identity of Muslims, and their only available saviours. The separatist mentality articulated by

15 Es ist überaus aufschlußreich, in welchem Grade die BJP Symbole und nationale Größen des indischen Unabhängigkeitskampfes „besetzt“ und sich damit zu deren einzigem legitimen Nachfolger erklärt. Daß Gandhi von einem Angehörigen des RSS ermordet wurde, bleibt hierbei ebenso unerwähnt, wie die ethnisch-nationalistischen Wurzeln der Hindutva-Bewegung des RSS-VHP-BJP „combine“.

the Jinnahs of the Muslim League which kept the Muslim mind separate from the Hindus finally led to the partition of the mother-land. Any statesman would have learnt from this most grievous error of the past, seized the aftermath of partition to dissolve notions of the separateness amongst Muslims, and opened up the gates of cultural and societal assimilation that is the national tradition of India. But the post-independence political leadership of India particularly of the Congress and Communist variety, did precisely the reverse and, as a result, achieved even greater separation. (S. 10f)

The theory and practice of secularism (an intra-religious evolution in the West which had no application to a multi-religious situation which always existed and existed peacefully till the invaders arrived in this great nation) resulted in greater erosion of our national identity and national consciousness than even under the rule of the invaders. The Ramajanmabhoomi movement was evolved by the very process of history as a corrective to this denationalised politics. The quest for the Temple of Rama at Ayodhya became the symbol of resurgent nationalism based on our indigenous ethos, just as the salt that Mahatma Gandhi picked became the symbol of the quest for the political freedom of India. The dormant national mind which had its centre of gravity in the spiritual centres of Indian history – the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Ayodhya and Mathura – which had been brooding for manifestation, found expression in the Ayodhya movement. This movement was not the product or the work of BJP. It was an evolution of history that gathered momentum and developed into a political movement. The BJP decided to support the Ayodhya movement a full six years after the movement had begun and after it had assumed mass dimensions incapable of being politically ignored. (S. 12f)

The nation in India always remained Hindu, whether the State was controlled by Turks, Afghans, Moghuls, Portuguese, French, English or Nehruvian Secularists. The Ayodhya movement became relevant and inevitable when the post-independence digression in the national mind seriously undermined the ethos and traditions of the nation in India, and as a result, the state and the nation again got virtually divorced by the rupture of national identity and the mindless adoption of the Western as the modern. The Ayodhya movement is intended to recapture the lost identity and restore the national pride which is the basis for Swarajya (sovereignty) and Swadeshi (economic independence). The Ayodhya movement thus implies the recommencement of our national journey as a politically independent state for the attainment of Rama Rajya that is Swarajya by

Swadeshi as codified by Mahatma Gandhi. The BJP firmly believes in this message of the Ayodhya movement. (S. 15)

This is the sweep and the canvas of the Ayodhya movement. And this is how the BJP perceives it. The Ayodhya movement and the quest for Rama's Temple at his birth-place has smashed the political censorship on any attempt to debate the width and scope of what is secularism and nationalism, and what is the role of minorities in India – whether they should for ever remain separate or join and merge into the national mainstream by processes which the sages of this country had evolved as an alternative to the annihilation which Semitic religions espouse. No one can stop the nation now from debating these vital issues. The legitimacy of the labels secular, communal, national with distorted meanings, have been seriously questioned as has been the credibility of those who had usurped the authority to issue the labels.

Without this background, the origin of the Ayodhya movement and how it reached its crescendo on December 6, 1992 cannot be understood in proper perspective, nor can its full implication be appreciated. What happened on December 6, 1992 is the culmination of a battle that commenced not in 1989 when the BJP decided to join the Ayodhya movement, or in 1984 when the VHP launched the mass struggle to liberate the Janmabhoomi; it is the fruition of 400 years of Hindu struggle to regain their holy place. (S. 19)

Dokument VI

Unveröffentlichter Bericht der Regierungskommission („Ayodhya Cell“) über das von VHP und AIBMAC vorgelegte Material¹⁶

It is proved by scriptural and inscriptional evidence that worship of Shri Ram is an ancient tradition. It is also proved, particularly by Ayodhya Mahatmya, that Ayodhya was identified as a holy city and birth place of Shri Ram as far back as 12 century A.D. The *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazal established that the identification of Ayodhya, the legendary birth place of

16 Abgedruckt aus *Bharatiya Janata Party: BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & the Ram Temple Movement*, [New Delhi] 1993, S. 70f.

Shri Ram, as the present day Ayodhya, a part of Awadh province, is at least as old as late 16th century. The accounts of Tieffenthaler and contemporary Muslim authors prove that the belief of Babri Masjid having been built after demolition of Hindu structures associated with Shri Ram is at least as old as 1771 (Tieffenthaler stayed in Ayodhya from 1766 to 1771). Tieffenthaler's account also proves that Hindus continued to venerate this site despite the presence of the mosque. Subsequent writings of Muslims and Europeans alike confirm the continuity of the belief about demolition of a Hindu Temple to construct Babri Masjid and the continued attachment of Hindus to this site. It is not possible to explain why the Hindus should have continued to be drawn to this site, thereby incurring the wrath of Muslim rulers, except on account of a deep and abiding faith. The fourteen black stone pillars used in Babri Masjid are proved to be from a Hindu temple constructed in 11th century A.D. The most plausible explanation is that this temple stood on this very site. Two such pillars are also buried by the side of the grave of Musa Ashikan, who according to Muslim historians, was instrumental in motivating the destruction of the temple and the construction of the mosque. Archaeological excavations conducted in 1975-80 reveal a series of pillar bases, also dating back to 11th century A.D., that are in the same directional alignment as the pillars used in the mosque.

The VHP evidence, thus, presents a coherent and self-consistent picture. The burden of proving any alternate hypothesis is on the other side. The BMAC evidence, on the other hand, does not address the specific issues and is nothing but a disjointed collection of wild hypothesis, conjectures and personal attacks without any solid evidence.

No consolidated presentation of the Muslim case is available in the records. A comprehensive collection of documents had been submitted by the AIBMAC during the negotiations held in December 1990-February 1992.¹⁷ These documents also are not accompanied by a resume of the Muslim case, although in the case of some documents there are annotations indicating the relevance of the documents to the Muslim case. Therefore, in the case of most documents, it is possible only to draw an inference regarding support for the Muslim case. These documents had been submitted in two stages. In addition, four historians (who had at one stage participated in the above negotiations as part of the AIBMAC team) had also submitted a report. [...] From all the documents mentioned above, as well as other sources where a definite stand on the Muslim side had come

17 Die im Weißbuch der BJP genannte Jahreszahl 1992 dürfte falsch sein, stattdessen wohl Februar 1991.

to notice, an attempt has been made to cull out the Muslim case in respect of the RJB-BM dispute.

Very briefly, the Muslim case seems to be that the Ramayana is a mythological epic and not a historical account of events; the present day Ayodhya is not the Ayodhya of the Ramayana because of discrepancies in the age and geographical location of Rama's Ayodhya; the Babri Masjid was never built by destroying any temple or other construction and, in fact, there is no evidence of a Ram Temple having existed at that site; and the Muslims have been in continuous possession of the Babri Masjid right until 1949 when the idols were placed.

Dokument VII

White Paper on Ayodhya.

Government of India February 1993

In his statement to Parliament on 27, July 1992 the Prime Minister affirmed that the efforts of the Central Government had been to „defuse the situation, avoid a confrontationist approach and to bring about a reconciliation of the views of various concerned parties“.

As a follow-up measure a special Cell on Ayodhya was set up in the Prime Minister's Office which started its work of collection, authentication and examination of the record relating to the negotiations started by the previous Government and preparation of summaries of cases sought to be established by the two sides.

Simultaneously, the Prime Minister held a large number of meetings with individuals and groups directly concerned with the dispute as well as journalists, political, religious and social leaders. These consultations, backed by the examination of the record by the Special Cell on Ayodhya, helped prepare the ground for the start of the negotiations. On the eve of the resumption of these talks, the Prime Minister wrote to the leaders of all recognised parties requesting their support.

On October 3, 1992, the Home Minister presided over the meeting between the AIBMAC and the VHP, the two parties to the earlier negotiations, which was joined by historical and archaeological experts nominated by them. The two sides exchanged and agreed to respond to the statement

of case of the VHP presented on 24th February, 1991 and the report of historians by the AIBMAC presented in May, 1991.

At the second meeting, on October 16, 1992, several decisions seeking to make the negotiations more meaningful were taken. It was decided that both sides would give their written opinion on the material and the evidence so far presented to the Government in a week's time, by which date any fresh evidence would be accepted and copies made available to the other side the next day. The meeting also decided that the archaeologists and historians nominated by both sides would be given an opportunity to examine the material relating to the excavations conducted by Prof. B.B. Lal and reports from both sides would be submitted to the Government by 29th October, 1992.

By October 29, 1992, both sides had furnished to the Government their statement of case and comments on the evidence furnished by the other side. In consultation with the two sides, the date of next meeting was fixed on 8th November, 1992 at which crucial decisions were expected, now that the work of presentation of evidence and offering comments on it had concluded.

It was at this point that in a sudden and unexpected move, the Kendriya Margadarshak Mandal of the VHP met in New Delhi, followed by a Dharma Sansad, between 29 and 31 October, 1992 and announced the call for resumption of kar seva from 6 December 1992. This move was totally inexplicable in view of the smooth movement of the negotiations as detailed in the foregoing paragraph. The only explanation imaginable could be that the intention of this unilateral announcement was to disrupt the course of the negotiation and prevent the expected reference of the dispute to the Supreme Court, thus dragging the matter into confrontation again. (S. 3f)

Evidence produced during the negotiations

The VHP has cited a number of British accounts such as gazetteers, survey reports etc. of the 19th and 20th century to support the assertion that a temple existed on the disputed spot and it was destroyed under orders of Babar. Writings of some Muslim historians of the 19th century have also been cited to support this assertion. The AIBMAC nominees have rejected this evidence by arguing that the British accounts have been motivated by their policy of 'divide and rule' and that the accounts of Muslim historians of 19th century are not based on any contemporary source and are tainted by a communal outlook and false bravado. AIBMAC has therefore stressed

the need to look into contemporary accounts to establish the truth of the matter and has pointed out that available contemporary accounts, such as Ramcharitamanas of Tulsi Dass, make no mention of the destruction of a temple.

VHP has cited certain 18th century documents including an account of an Austrian Jesuit priest Joseph Tieffenthaler, who visited Ayodhya between 1766-1771 AD. The authenticity of this account has not been challenged by historians nominated by the AIBMAC, but they have argued that the account of Tieffenthaler merely records a popular myth in its early phase of creation.

At some stage during the history of the RJB-BM structure a portion of its compound was occupied by Hindu structures of worship, viz., Ram Chabutra and Kaushalya Rasoi. The presence of these structures is marked in court documents relating to a suit filed by Mahant Raghuvar Dass in 1886. These structures were in existence till December 6, 1992. There are indications that these structures were considerably older but the evidence on this point is not conclusive. Some Survey records of 1807-14 have come to notice in which the disputed site has been marked as 'Yanmasthan', i.e., Janmasthan.

The Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid structure contained some architectural elements, particularly fourteen black stone pillars that were said to be part of a non-Islamic religious structure of 11th-12th century AD. The VHP argued that this constituted evidence that the disputed structure was built after destruction of a temple. The AIBMAC, however, argued that there was nothing to suggest that all these architectural elements belonged to a single structure standing at this very site. These could have belonged to different structures in other areas.

The excavations undertaken in 1975-80 by the Archaeological Survey of India had brought out some relevant data and antiquities. The concerned photographs, section drawings, and antiquities were also shown to historians and archaeologists nominated by the AIMBAC and VHP on 23-10-1992.¹⁸ The two sides continued to draw diametrically opposite conclusions from the same set of evidence.

The historical debate has thus remained inconclusive although much progress has been made in identifying the areas of agreement and difference. Conclusive findings can be obtained only by way of reference to a

18 Diese Einsicht beschränkte sich jedoch insgesamt auf nur drei Stunden für beide getrennt vorgelassenen Gruppen und schloß das wichtigste Dokument, das Grabungsbuch B.B. Lal's, nicht mit ein, wodurch letztlich der von den Verfassern des *Historians' Report to the Nation* geäußerte Verdacht bestätigt wurde (siehe oben). Siehe die entsprechenden Berichte in *Times of India* und *Statesman* vom 24.10.1992.

