

Talk – 'Reading Iqbal's Ilm ul-Iqte ād: Economic Value, Translation in the Early 20th-Century and Urdu as a Language of Secular Islam'

Date::

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My presentation considers the relationship between linguistic translation, vernacular expression and the scientization of economics in late colonial India. To do so it focuses on efforts by North Indian literateurs in the years after 1840 to render Western political economy texts into Urdu as well as the role of the city of Lahore in this process. Concentrating on one particular work by Muhammad Iqbal, the paper puts by the famed poet and Islamic modernist's efforts at fashioning an Urdu economics into dialogue with larger changes that were afoot in economic theory more generally in the last decades of the nineteenth-century. Completed in the first years after the turn of the century, the paper argues that Iqbal's Ilm-ul-Iqtasad ("The Science of Economics") represented an important attempt at both translating Western economic theory into the Urdu vernacular and also at translating between two competing languages of economic science. To bring this point to light my reading of the Ilm-ul-Iqtasad zeroes in on its way of reckoning with a concept of economic value that was shifting markedly in the years after 1870, as the classical tradition of political economy in the Western world, with its labor theory of value, began giving way in the face of the 'marginalist' revolution and its version of a utility-based theory.

When: March 24 at 3 p.m.

Where: Marshall Building, Room 490 (845 N. Park Ave.)

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