As the first nation created as a religious asylum, Pak-
istan has a short but tortured history of fifty-four
years, half of which was controlled by a military
regime. Founded in the name of 'Islam in danger' by
Muhammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), Pakistan official-
ly elected Islam as the religion of the state in 1973,
during the tenure of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979),
the first popularly elected Prime minister of the coun-
try. Bhutto was arrested and hanged by general Zia
ul-Haq (1928-1988). While the Islamization rhetoric of
Bhutto was characterized by its mixture of socialism,
nationalism and populism, the discourse of Zia ul-
Haq appeared to be of a much more straightforward
military-Islamist type. In opposition to his rule, a
counter-discourse developed in which Mughal her-
itage was revived.

Pakistanis' response to the state Islamization process at different levels: the Sème – extremely vocal – women's groups, intellectuals and journalists spoke out against the policies, but among them were also the teachers, the schoolchildren, the dancers, musicians, painters, media designers, etc. The latter is a universe which, as a mat-
ter of fact, cannot do much without women or the image of women. It was in the 1980s, at the zenith of Zia's dictatorship, that the trope of the Mughal Empire, or rather a spe-
cific reflection of the lost Mughal splendour, became a kind of passage obligé for a certain section of the media. It should be noted here that the Timurid
dynasty, widely known as the 'Mughal' dy-
nasty, founded by Babur in the mid-16th-
century, dominated India politically during the Mughal period. The empire was no more than a memory.
mystical light of the Sufi saints. Such


Notes

As it recently has been developed

notes is compulsory as a part of the curricu-
lum, the NCA was considered to be at the
front of 'westernization'. Hence the im-
portance of this concept of 'endangered Is-
lamic tradition of miniature art' vocally pro-
cated by the teachers from the 1980s on-
wards. However, the students, especially the
current generation of graduates, are more
likely to be found next door (in India), Pak-

Islam. The empire strikes back

while the animators of the media scene paid off (and to a certain extent still does).

Beyond the fear of the censor's scissors, in a
young nation like Pakistan (the raison d'être of which is still a matter of polemic)
this inventive derivation of a prestigious
Muslim grandeur et décadence allows, in
Hobsbawm's words again, 'to establish con-

plausible and historically associated with Islam and Mus-
lims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims. As he has recently put it: ... the Islamists successfully invested in the 1980s by using a historically defined, pro-
fane, mundane, but nonetheless resiliently Is-
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Art & Literature

'Vertal-discourses

CHRISTELE DEDEBANT

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Counter-discourses

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