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Title:	The Improbability of a Temple: Hindu Mobilization and Urban Space in the Delhi Shiv Mandir Agitation of 1938
Authors:	Baul, D. (/jspui/browse?type=author&value=Baul%2C+D.)
Keywords:	Delhi Urban Space Religion Property
Issue Date:	2020
Publisher:	Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd
Citation:	Studies in History, 36(2), pp.230-250.
Abstract:	<p>The 1920s and 1930s were decades of intense religious polarization and violence in many parts of British India. These decades were also especially empowering ones for Hindu nationalist organizations in Delhi. So, it rankled Hindu leaders that Delhi's built environment had a dearth of Hindu sacred structures to attest to their power, on account of the city's past status as a Mughal capital. Instead, transitory spatial markers of local veneration made up its somewhat ephemeral Hindu sacred geography. The Shiv Mandir agitation of 1938 was a collective attempt by Hindu volunteers to forcibly occupy government land in a prominent arena of the city as a symbolic restitution of this historical inequality. The agitation itself had two parts—first, the occupation of a plot of land as a temple and, second, the aggregation of legal arguments supporting ownership of the plot for the Hindu public. By combining these two strategies, the Shiv Mandir agitation laid out the political and legal preconditions necessary for the production of a more conspicuous and enduring material landscape of organized Hindu religiosity in the city. Through this process, Hindu nationalist organizations consolidated themselves as the ultimate public custodians of temples and temple land. This was a powerful role that drew its prestige in good measure from control over prime urban property.</p>
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