

# **The Magic of Prithviraj, Padmini and Pratap in the Vernacular Imaginaire: Revisiting the Interface of Colonialism, Orientalism, and Nationalism**

by  
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## **Abstract**

Few persons have had the kind of impact on the Indian popular nationalist imagination that scholar-administrator-colonialist James Tod (1782-1835) has had. Tod's words and images have echoed in prose and verse, been amplified in pamphlet and history and have resounded in theatre and podium. His has been a powerful, but essentially underestimated, influence. In an extraordinary afterlife Tod's writing has animated popular Indian nationalism through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was among the first scholars who shifted Orientalist interest from the classical to the vernacular, from the written to the oral tradition, from the brahman to the bard. He made the three figures of Prithviraj, Padmini and Pratap iconic to the vernacular nationalist imaginary. Tod's work was inspirational to the literary modernity of several Indian languages including Bengali, Rajasthani, and Hindi. Ironically, although Tod's persona exemplified colonialism, it shaped powerfully the aesthetic of anti-colonial praxis and continues to inspire militant nationalist ideologies including that of the Visva Hindu Parishad. This paper examines afresh the relationship between colonialism, orientalism and nationalism.