

Kamran Shahid, *Gandhi and the Partition of India: A New Perspective*, (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2005) iii and 124 pp. (pb). ISBN 9690020110.

The August 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent brought in its wake the human tragedy of massacres and mass migration. The Punjab region was at the centre of this massive social dislocation. The recent trend in historiography has been to explore the human dimension of the partition and its aftermath. The young Pakistani author of this brief study returns however to the subject of its 'high politics.' The work which originated as a postgraduate thesis at the University of Westminster disavows the official two nation theory explanation for Pakistan's emergence. Instead it concentrates on the historical contingencies arising from Gandhi's leadership of the Indian National Congress and the impact on Muslim opinion of the period of Congress provincial rule during the period 1937-9.

Kamran Shahid argues that Gandhi's style of leadership, his constant deployment of the concept of Ram Raj and his close ties with the Hindu capitalist class alienated the politically alert Muslim elites. They were further troubled by his response to the Untouchables' demand for separate electorates. Instead of displaying a willingness to co-opt Muslim political and material interests, Gandhi dealt rather in terms of Hindu-Muslim religious solidarity. His introduction of religion into politics served only, however, to exacerbate underlying communal tensions. The period of Congress rule further demonstrated to many Muslims that in independent India, its future rulers might be insensitive to their cultural as well as economic and political interests. The Pakistan demand was their response. Kamran Shahid is thus of the belief that the tragedy of partition could have been averted if Gandhi had exhibited a more *realpolitik* attitude to the Muslim issue.

There is much of value in this analysis, although it is doubtful whether it represents a new perspective. It has long been argued, for example, that the Congress made a number of strategic errors in its response to the Muslim League, most notably over the issue of forming a coalition in the politically sensitive UP province in the wake of the 1937 polls. Moreover the author may be criticized for taking his argument too far with respect to Gandhi. He is portrayed throughout as an inflexible upholder of Hindu orthodoxy and the interests of the Brahmin elite. In many respects, however, he was a controversial figure in Hindu society precisely because of his unorthodox attitudes. Significantly, he was assassinated on 30 January 1948 by Nauram Godse who came from the socially conservative Marathi Chitpavan Brahmin community and was associated with the Hindu Mahasabha. Many scholars would also not grant Gandhi the degree of political influence at the end of the Raj which Kamran Shahid implies here. It could be argued that the Mahatma was a marginal figure by 1947. If a Congress leader is to be 'blamed' for partition, the mantle falls more readily to Nehru as is evidenced in much Hindutva literature.

Nevertheless, the author is to be congratulated for critiquing official historical views of the background to Pakistan's emergence and partition. It is to be hoped that this work announces the arrival of a bright new scholar in the Pakistani academic firmament. Ferozsons have done on the whole a good job in the production of the book. One or two typographical errors have, however slipped through the net, most unfortunately on page 57 where the great Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) is rendered as Bunkum (sic).

Ian Talbot

University of Southampton

Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar General Reginald Dyer*, (London: Hambledon and London, 2005) 875 pp. £25.00 (hb). ISBN 185285457X.

When World War I ended British India was undergoing immense change. The war time measures of censorship and detention without trial under anti-terrorism legislation were continued after the war due to the political unrest. The Rowlatt Acts were hugely unpopular and provoked mass demonstrations under Gandhi's leadership. The issue was especially sensitive in the army recruiting region of Punjab, where large contingents were sent to fight in World War I. It was during this period of political unrest that General Dyer was posted in Amritsar to take over command from the waning civil authorities. Around 25,000 people gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, many of whom were unaware of the Proclamation against any public meetings, which had only been made hours before and less clear was that the city of Amritsar was in effect now under martial law. It was on 13 April 1919, that General Dyer led a force of Indian soldiers into this walled space and opened fire without any warning. The firing continued for 10 to 15 minutes, unaware that people were unable to escape from the enclosure. This resulted in the official death toll of 379 and thousands injured. There was no opportunity to remove the dead or wounded from the Bagh either as the city of Amritsar was under curfew. The massacre was one of the worst atrocities committed by a British officer and tarnished the colonial power's presence in India. Dyer, in his words, wanted to teach them a lesson; he justified his actions on the grounds that the meeting was tantamount to insurrection. Fears of another mutiny still resonated. Protesting at his forced retirement he says, 'I shot to save the British Raj – to preserve India for the Empire, and to protect Englishmen and Englishwomen who looked to me for protection. And now I am told to go for doing my duty – my horrible, dirty duty...I had to shoot.' (p. 357)

The political ramifications of this massacre were far reaching; not only in India but also in British domestic politics. It was a turning point for the nationalist movement in India, a cause which elevated Gandhi into national politics. The indifference shown to the victims and the lack of redress by the colonial power served to undermine the moral legitimacy of the British in India. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, was unable to reconcile the

actions of Dyer with the liberal reforms he had started in India. Montagu, along with Lord Chelmsford, was responsible for bringing limited self-rule into India. Following the debate in the House of Commons, 93 Members of Parliament signed a petition asking for Montagu to resign. He did not: instead he staggered on until he was sacked by Lloyd George in March 1922. Collett makes the assertion that 'the rift which started with the Amritsar debates ended in Lloyd George's downfall, a Conservative landslide and the eclipse of British Liberalism' (p. 396).

The issue proved to be very divisive both in India and Britain. The support shown by the European community in India to Dyer only demonstrated the shallowness of the reform taking place and the issue was split along racial lines. In Britain, too, the newspapers and the Conservatives rallied popular support around Dyer and collected funds to show their support. The role of the media during this episode is a fascinating revelation by Collett. It is easy to assume that the role of newspapers in shaping contemporary politics is a new development, yet during the period leading up to the debate in Parliament over the Amritsar massacre the newspapers were in the forefront of directing debate and mobilizing popular support for Dyer.

The tone of the country was one of arrogance and unashamed racism. This was true not just for the Indians that they ruled but also of the society that Dyer grew up in. Dyer was born in India, he was raised in Simla and spent time in the United Provinces where the wounds of the mutiny were still fresh. He went to boarding school in Ireland and was later posted there after attending Sandhurst. When Dyer arrived in Ireland to study, his experience of British society was non-existent and something which marked him out from other students. His experience of Ireland was of political unrest being put down with firm force. Growing up in this atmosphere must have left lasting impressions on the young Dyer. He was a shy, introverted man who had no contact with his parents during the 12 years he spent in Britain. He ultimately fell out with his parents over his decision to marry Annie, but as a couple they were completely devoted to each other. He was an ambitious man but frustrated that success eluded him, partly because he did not have the right credentials and connections to progress rapidly. This made him desperate to prove himself but sometimes he went out of his way to brag and exaggerate the truth, embellishing the facts to form an image of himself that others would like and respect.

Dyer was essentially an Indian man; he had a superb grasp of local languages. He was very affable and popular within his regiments, always leading by example. Dyer showed immense courage and led well in action though he had limited experience. He left the Afghan operations, following the incident in Amritsar, with distinction and was due to be rewarded for his command in Thal but this was cancelled. He also showed early signs of disregard for authority during his time in the Persian border area of Sistan. 'Often muddle-headed in considering the bigger picture, he was prone to misinterpret his mission and to exaggerate his part in it, he saw himself very

much a hero with a romantic role in the world' (p. 421).

Collett has avoided a black and white approach to Dyer's character; instead there are many shades of grey. This at times allows the reader to feel empathy for Dyer, generally a kind hearted man and a defender of empire. He was convinced he did the right thing, demonstrating loyalty and duty in defense of empire, but these were difficult and challenging times. Collett has written on this subject with authority, not only because he was once a soldier himself but also because of the academic rigor shown in this book. It is a pleasure to read something which is intelligent and well researched, given the meager resources available on Dyer. *The Butcher of Amritsar* by Collett reads like a wonderful woven narrative, a story which at times lets you sympathize with Dyer and at other times leaves one feeling ashamed. The massacre in Jallianwala Bagh undoubtedly preyed on Dyer's mind. Though convinced that his actions were right, Dyer spent the rest of his life trying to convince himself of this.

Pippa Virdee

De Montfort University, Leicester

D. A. Low and Howard Brasted (eds), *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence*, (New Delhi, California and London: Sage Publications, 1998) ix + 238 pp. (US hb). ISBN 0-7619-9225-1; (US pb). ISBN 0-7619-9226-X; (India hb). ISBN 81-7036-679-8; Rs. 35. (India pb). ISBN 81-7036-680-1.

Ian Talbot and Shinder Thandi (eds), *People on the Move: Punjabi Colonial, and Post-Colonial Migration* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004) xx + 238 pp. (hb) Rs. 350. ISBN 0-19-579956-9.

Scholars researching the history of migration in the Punjab will find these two books to be of great interest. Together, both of these essay collections provide a broad overview of some of the new work that has emerged on this subject in the last two decades. *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities* was published in 1998 and is based on the revised versions of papers that were presented at a workshop held in 1993 at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi. The upcoming 50th anniversary of independence and partition in 1997 encouraged historians to look afresh at the events leading up to 1947 and their impact. This workshop sought to discuss some of the new questions, themes and research methodologies that were being developed at that time. In particular, the various papers highlighted a new approach that historians were using to study partition, which involved shifting the focus away from the high politics to study the neglected topic of the 'human experience' of partition. The essays in this collection focus on a 40-year period, ranging from the 1940s to the end of the 1970s. A large proportion of the papers deal with the experiences of Punjabi

refugees, but there are also papers on the refugee experience in Bengal and Sind, as well as case studies on communal violence in Bihar and the integration of the Princely States.

People on the Move was published much more recently, in 2004. This book deals exclusively with the migration experience of Punjabi refugees. The papers in the collection deal with a much broader time range. It examines Punjabi migration in the colonial and post-colonial periods, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *People on the Move* is part of a new series by Oxford University Press called 'The Subcontinent Divided: A New Beginning'. Like *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities*, this series as a whole, and this book in particular, aim to showcase research that takes a new approach to studying 1947. It highlights research that adopts the 'history from below' approach to partition and research which explores the post-colonial period by looking at the long term impacts of 1947. However, *People on the Move* does not only focus on partition migration. Essays in the collection also look at migration patterns that were triggered by the construction of the canal colonies, Punjabi migration abroad both before and after Independence, migration patterns within the Indian and Pakistani Punjabs during the post-colonial period, as well as the experience of the Punjabi Diasporas and their influence on the Punjab. Readers of this journal may be particularly interested in reading this book, because it aims to continue 'the Punjab Studies approach pioneered by the Punjab Research Group in the 1980s and expanded since 1994 by the *International Journal of Punjab Studies*.' (p xi-xii).

In *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities* four out of the twelve papers focus on the Punjab and seven of the papers focus on partition migration. Swarna Aiyar's paper examines the partition massacres in the Punjab. The communal violence that accompanied the partition in 1947 was most intense and widespread in the Punjab. It was for this reason that, in this province, there was almost total migration of Muslims to the Pakistan side and non-Muslims to the Indian side. The rate and scale of migration in the Punjab was much greater compared to other provinces, such as Bengal. Aiyar stresses that the partition violence in Punjab should not be viewed as a simple extension of the communal riots that occurred in the Punjab during the 1920s and 1930s. These earlier riots, she argued, centred on 'religious issues', whereas the severity and spread of communal violence during 1947 were triggered by issues directly related to the 'transfer of power' (p 16). Exploring the incidents of train massacres, Aiyar highlights that an important contributory factor in the Punjab massacres was the large number of demobilized soldiers. Aiyar demonstrates that the pattern of communal violence in Punjab was much more severe than in other provinces because of the military training that these men had received. Andrew J. Major's article explores another aspect of the violence that accompanied the partition migration in the Punjab. He looks at the abduction of women that occurred in the Punjab and the recovery process launched by the Indian and Pakistani Governments after the partition.

Gyanesh Kudaisya contributes two articles to *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities*. He focuses on the issue of refugee rehabilitation. His first paper examines the process of resettlement in the East Punjab countryside during 1947-1967. Kudaisya shows that the Indian Punjab government implemented land reforms, which facilitated the successful integration and rehabilitation of refugees in the province. The land redistribution scheme awarded land to refugees on a sliding scale, which guaranteed that the poorest refugees lost the least. Kudaisya's second paper looks at the case of refugees in East Bengal and highlights how crucial this government support was in refugee rehabilitation. In East Bengal, he points out, the state focused predominantly on providing relief to the refugees; but in contrast to the Punjab, here the state government did not give refugees enough support with rehabilitation. He argues that in East Bengal rehabilitation efforts were not as well organized and did not give the refugees sufficient help with retraining for new occupations or through providing new forms of employment. Kudaisya thus challenges the contemporary stereotypes that emerged about Punjabi and Bengali refugees, with the former viewed as enterprising and the latter as lazy. He argues that the different fortunes of Punjabi and Bengali refugees had more to do with the level and quality of state rehabilitation schemes, rather than with innate cultural characteristics.

Sarah Ansari's paper demonstrates that there was similar divergence of refugee experience in Pakistan. She examines the experiences of Muslim refugees in Sind, during 1947-1948. In contrast to the West Punjab, where incoming refugees from East Punjab shared cultural and linguistic ties with the local population and thus were assimilated more easily, Ansari highlights that refugees in Sind found it much harder to assimilate. She explains that this was in part caused by the fact that the rehabilitation process was not as well coordinated in Sind. Furthermore, the refugees and local population clashed over jobs in Sind, which was exacerbated by tensions over their ethnic differences. Medha Malik Kudaisya's paper also examines the after-effects of partition, by looking at its impact on big business

The papers by Ian Talbot and Dipesh Chakrabarty take a different approach. They both discuss how historians can examine popular memory about partition. Talbot's paper shows how fictional literature can be a useful source for historians trying to capture the human impact of partition. He uses literary sources to examine and illustrate themes of violence, abduction, migration and rehabilitation. Chakrabarty's paper examines Hindu Bengali memories, based on a collection of essays that were written by refugees and published in newspapers. He examines how their narratives about the villages they left behind provide insights into how their memories are structured by trauma and nostalgia. Chakrabarty demonstrates that these memories were often selective and did not necessarily represent an accurate factual recall. Nevertheless, he shows that these accounts were still useful sources which enable historians to explore how these refugees attempted to cope with the pain of partition through remembrance.

In the preface to *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities*, D. A. Low highlights that historians had so far neglected to explore the impact of partition on major cities that were affected by the influx of refugees, such as Karachi, Lahore, and Delhi. Calcutta and Dacca. By the time *People on the Move* was published, partition scholars had begun to address this gap and two examples of the latest research on this subject are included in this collection. Ian Talbot's paper examines the case of Amritsar and Ishtiaq Ahmed's paper examines Lahore. Ian Talbot uses oral evidence to investigate the patterns of violence, migration and resettlement in Amritsar. Ishtiaq Ahmed also relies on first person accounts to construct his account of the communal violence and migration from Lahore. Together, both papers provide an insightful and in depth comparison of impact of partition on two major cities in the Punjab. They also highlight the value of oral evidence in examining the experience of forced migration.

Mohammed Waseem's paper looks at how the Pakistani state dealt with the assimilation and resettlement of refugees in East Punjab. He argues that Punjabi refugees in Pakistan were able to integrate much more easily than other refugees, because their migration was similar to an 'internal migration' and because, unlike the other refugees, there was no possibility that they could return to their homes. These factors contributed to the ensuring that the rehabilitation process was better co-ordinated in the Punjab. Gurpreet Maini's paper examines the adverse economic impact that partition had on industrial trends in border areas in the Indian Punjab, as a result of the loss of skilled Muslim laborers.

The other papers in *People on the Move* examine migration in the Punjab during the colonial and post colonial periods. The papers in part 1, discuss how colonial policies and stereotypes influenced rural and urban migration in the Punjab. They also explore migration related to the construction of the canal colonies and the growth of overseas migration amongst Punjabi peasant communities.

The papers in part 3 of *People on the Move* examine post-colonial migration within the Indian and Pakistani Punjabs. Ahmad Salim's paper presents a case study of how migration has contributed to class conflict in the Pakistani village of Miana Gondal. Sucha Singh Gill's paper highlights how cheap migrant labor has helped sustain agricultural development and prosperity in Punjab. There are also two interesting papers on the Punjabi Diaspora. Pnina Werbner looks at the role of Sufi cults and saints in Pakistani Punjabi migrant communities in the Pakistan, the Gulf and Britain; and Shinder Thandi examines the efforts of the Indian Punjab state government to attract investment from the Punjabi Diasporas in the UK and North America.

Freedom, Trauma, Continuities and *People on the Move* together present a cross-section of recent research on the history of migration in the Punjab. These books provide a particularly good starting point for students who are new to this subject. Many of the papers presented in these collections have been developed into in depth monograph studies. Those who are interested in further reading on

the subject should look at these texts. They include Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (New York & London, Routledge, 2000), Sarah Ansari, *Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947-1962* (Karachi, OUP, 2005) and Ian Talbot, *Divided Cities – Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar* (Karachi, OUP, 2007).

Vanita Sharma
Oxford

Ian Talbot, *Divided Cities: Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar 1947-1957*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006) xxxiv + 224 pp. Rs. 495. (hb). ISBN 13: 978-0-19-547226-4.

Of places and localities affected by the partition of the Punjab in 1947, the impact on the former twin cities of Lahore and Amritsar, which fell on opposite sides of the boundary between India and Pakistan, was perhaps most significant and far-reaching. The Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities of the two cities, directly or indirectly, encountered violence, uprooting, displacement and resettlement during the traumatic upheavals that accompanied the vivisection of the province in August 1947. Their experiences, both during the turmoil and in the aftermath, and the locations in which these stories unfolded, constitute the mainstay of this engaging book. *Divided Cities* examines the impact of partition on people and places in Lahore and Amritsar and traces their respective developments in the wake of partition. Organized chronologically, the fates of Lahore and Amritsar as ‘Colonial Cities’, ‘Riot-torn Cities’, ‘Border Cities’, ‘Re-developed Cities’ and ‘Remembered Cities’ over a period of ten years, from 1947 to 1957, are vividly recounted through the lenses of violence, displacement, forced migrations, resettlement, reconstruction and social memories.

The book begins with a useful chapter explaining how the two cities acquired their commercial and political importance during the colonial period, becoming dominant urban centers in the essentially agrarian Punjab. Both cities also shared a distinctive identity that was predicated on ‘communal economic interdependence’ and general religious tolerance. Both cities had significant minority populations which made important contributions to their respective economic and social growth and development. Talbot paints a picture of complex relations in the cities that challenge simplistic portrayals of Lahore and Amritsar as ‘idyllic islands of communal harmony’ or ‘cauldrons of tension waiting to explode’ (p. 27).

The partition riots that tore through the two cities in 1947 were not sudden and unexpected, as Talbot convincingly argues in the second chapter of this book. He shows that a civil war had begun brewing as early as March, when the

communities had 'begun preparing for a struggle which seemed inevitable' (p.58). The violence that erupted was not unbridled and uncoordinated, but was in many instances organized and orchestrated, driven by the contest for local control of social space. The violence in both cities was also a function of the transitional political vacuum that was created by a decolonizing scenario, in which the withdrawing power had sparked off fierce contests at all levels of the political hierarchy for social and political space. It was a complex story, for amidst the communal violence, many instances of cross-community assistance were documented.

In the following chapter, Talbot looks at the two cities as places of displacement, both in physical terms as well as in identity and cultural longing. From being commercial and political centers, the two cities were transformed to border cities by partition. This brought with it significant immediate and long term consequences for the fate on the cities and their inhabitants. Although controls were imposed very quickly, the border was never totally sealed, and remained porous for the first decade after independence. The new borders dealt a fundamental blow to Amritsar, which became a peripheral city when its former markets and raw materials supplies were cut off. Lahore, on the other hand, benefited from the Pakistani government's support for industrial development. This is one of the strongest and most important chapters in the book, and enriches and extends our understanding of the concept of 'borderlands'.

The theme of reconstruction forms the focus of the following chapter, where Talbot studies the physical reconstruction of the two cities, following the destruction they experienced during the riots of 1947 and 1948. This reconstruction was not only necessitated by resettlement requirements, but also transformed the public spaces in both cities, in particular their sacred places, where large numbers of mosques, temples and gurdwaras disappeared forever, eradicating in the process the remnants of once thriving minority communities in each of these cities.

Talbot's account of 'cultural bereavement' adds another important dimension to our understanding of memories and nostalgia as after-effects of dislocation caused by partition. Personal and family recollections of pre-Partition Lahore and Amritsar formed part of the identity crisis that accompanied violent displacement, and Talbot does well in setting these 'individual and oral memories' into 'the wider Pakistan and Indian nationalist discourses of partition' (p. 149).

In the final chapter, Talbot looks at the contributions of the refugees to Punjab's urban economic development, showing the entrepreneurial instincts of Punjabis who had to rebuild their lives in new environments, an important reminder that many victims of partition actually picked themselves up and moved on. Here, the stories of Lahore and Amritsar revealed continuities as they did disruptions.

This locality-based study which focuses on the urban is a useful addition to

a growing and increasingly sophisticated literature on partition. In his well-researched analyses Talbot demonstrates admirable dexterity in weaving together the threads of disparate and yet related themes of urban history, human violence, boundaries and borders, migration, refugees and identities. The human story, not just of loss and despair but of recovery and re-building, is effectively recounted. Although mindful of their limitations as historical sources, Talbot has made effective use of oral testimonies of affected individuals to provide a human face to the study of partition violence and upheavals. The insights gleaned from these testimonies are at once revealing and poignant, and point to the deep feelings that partition continue to evoke in the people who lived through it. This is one of the many strengths of this well-written and solidly researched book. Scholars of the Punjab, urban historians, sociologists, as well as geographers will find this a valuable study.

Tan Tai Yong

National University of Singapore

Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pal (eds) *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition: Ideology, Society, Politics, and Culture*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005) 394pp. Rs.975. (hb). ISBN 81-7304-653-0.

The essays in this volume are published in honor of the eminent historian Indu Banga who has made her mark in the study of the agrarian system of the Sikhs. The volume opens with Sheena Pal's brief introduction to her distinguished career, including an updated list of her publications for the benefit of students and researchers. It is followed by an interpretive essay on various contributions by the co-editor, Reeta Grewal. The editors have done a good job in carefully organizing a disparate set of thirteen essays on ideology, society, politics and culture within the large framework of 'five centuries of Sikh tradition'.

The only scholar who has contributed two essays in this volume is Indu Banga's mentor, J.S. Grewal, who has attained international recognition for his work of sustained excellence in the field of Sikh and Punjab studies. His first essay, 'Foundation of the Sikh Faith', offers a compelling argument that 'Guru Nanak founded a new religion as the basis of a new social order' (p. 52). He takes issue with W.H. McLeod's arguments that place Guru Nanak squarely within the Sant tradition of North India, dwelling on shared terminology and categories of thought in terms of influences and borrowings. For Grewal, it is of utmost significance to examine Guru Nanak's creative response to his historical situation, involving political, social, cultural and religious issues of his days. His approach reveals that Guru Nanak's message was meant to transcend all contemporary dispensations, making him the 'founder' of a new faith from its very beginning in the early sixteenth century.

In his second essay, 'Sikh Identity and the Issue of Khalistan', Grewal

examines the interplay of religious identity and its political articulation in the light of contemporary events. Surveying the recent literature on the Punjab crisis, he rightly observes that no distinction is made between the constitutional movement for greater autonomy by the Akalis and the militant movement for a sovereign Sikh state (Khalistan) by a fringe group, since both get related to Sikh identity. He further argues that Sikh identity has evolved historically since the days of Guru Nanak. With the increasing socio-cultural articulation of the Sikhs their consciousness of self-identity was strengthened. It was based upon their peculiar doctrines, their institutions, and their social attitudes – including their sense of commitment to both temporal and spiritual concerns. Both before and after the institution of the Khalsa, the Sikhs were seen and they saw themselves as a distinct community. In this context, Kanh Singh Nabha's *Ham Hindu Nahin* ('We are not Hindus') may be seen as a classic statement of independent Sikh identity as well as a declaration of Sikh ethnicity at the end of nineteenth century. Although it may be tempting to see the objective of autonomy leading logically to the objective of sovereign rule, Grewal concludes that historically 'there is no inevitable link between religious identity and political sovereignty' (p. 332). However, it remains to be seen whether this measured statement provides a way out of the present crisis or whether it will go unheeded.

In her essay, 'The Earliest Manual of the Sikh Way of Life', Karamjit K. Malhotra has provided the translation and analysis of *Nasihatinama* in the Guru Nanak Dev University manuscript numbered MS 770 (1718-19 CE). Since this newly discovered document is a copy of an earlier manuscript, she places its text during Guru Gobind Singh's lifetime between 1699 and 1708 in the context of the evolving corpus of Rahit literature. Malhotra argues 'in support of the idea that sovereignty for the Khalsa was conceived by Guru Gobind Singh' (p. 70). Reeta Grewal maintains that Malhotra's 'discovery is not only dramatic but revolutionary in its own small but significant way' (p. 29), a view that challenges McLeod's claim that it was Jeevan Deol who 'discovered' this early dated manuscript. In field research it is not unusual for two or more scholars to come across the same documents simultaneously.

Iqtidar Alam Khan's essay, 'Martial and Political Culture of the Khalsa', challenges a particular view that the Khalsa was created in defense of the Hindu tradition against the onslaught of Islam. He aptly argues that Guru Gobind Singh did not intend 'to work for the destruction of Islam nor did he come to regard the entire Muslim population of India as the irreconcilable enemies of the Khalsa' (p. 91). But to counter the increasing hostility of the Mughal state, the Sikh resistance 'continued to grow with the manifest aim of overthrowing the Mughal rule in those parts of the Punjab where it was vulnerable from the proximity of the recalcitrant hill chiefs' (p. 85). Some of Khan's ideas of how the Sikh soldiers learnt from their adversaries the art of using muskets on horseback will stimulate further probing into this area.

In his 'Sikh Patronage of Painting', B.N. Goswamy skillfully argues that painting in the Punjab plains goes back to the sixteenth century during the

Mughal period. There is credible evidence that early Sikh chiefs provided patronage to some Pahari painters in the late eighteenth century, who eventually came to Lahore in the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Goswamy thus provides a revision to W.G. Archer's earlier view that it was 'the years 1810-1830 (which) saw the first approach by hill artists to Sikh courts and the first expression of interest in painting by Sikhs themselves' (p. 100). In fact, a fascinating portrait of Guru Gobind Singh in Mughal style, holding an arrow in hand, may be seen in an early manuscript of the Dasam Granth, the greater portion of which was prepared at Anandpur in the 1690s. The portrait fits well with the contemporary genre of royal painting depicted in the portraits of Raja Sidh Sen (r. 1684-1727) and Raja Ajmer Dev of Mankot. In the light of this new information, Sikh patronage of painting may be traced to an even earlier period.

Two complementary essays provide an analysis of census reports with respect to Sikh population. In her 'Sikhs in the Early Census Reports', Anuripta Kaur focuses on the first significant feature of the data, showing the increase in the number of Sikhs from less than 1.14 million in 1968 to nearly 2.13 million in 1901, with the percentage in the total population of British Punjab going up from 6.5 to nearly 14. In contrast to early British assumptions about the definition of a Sikh, all categories of Sikhs returned themselves as Sikhs for the first time in 1911, showing a more than 37 per cent increase in the total number of Sikhs. Although there was a wide variety of self-identification among the Sikhs in the late nineteenth century, they could be divided into two broad categories: the Khalsa and the Sahajdhari. The early twentieth-century data, however, show the remarkable increase in the number of the Khalsa, reflecting the success of the Singh Sabha movement. In his essay, 'Sikh Spatial Dispersal (1881-2001)', Gopal Krishan brings the analysis of census data up to date, showing that the Sikh population in 1881 was 1.8 million whereas in 2001 it was 21 million in India. He offers an adroit analysis of the changing patterns of Sikh dispersal in India and abroad. Although the Sikh population in India today constitutes less than 2 per cent of its total population, the percentage of Sikhs among the Indians abroad is no less than 7.

Three essays deal with Sikh politics in the early decades of twentieth century. On the basis of his examination of Sikh periodicals Joginder Singh highlights the dynamics of Sikh politics in the colonial period under the heading, 'Transition from Socio-Religious to Political Concerns'. He skillfully argues that after the Lucknow Pact between the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League in 1916, the Sikh periodicals advocated separate representation and weightage for the Sikhs, preparing the way for the emergence of the Central Sikh League on 30 March 1919 as an alternative to the Chief Khalsa Diwan. The Akalis were already on the horizon by the end of 1920. Mohinder Singh expertly examines 'The Nabha Affair' with a focus on Akali interest in a Sikh Princely State. He departs from the popular view that the Maharaja Ripudaman Singh was deprived of his throne because he

championed the cause of the Akalis. This may be partially true, but the historical facts reveal that the Maharaja had already acquired an independent and nationalistic outlook as a prince, thus incurring the serious displeasure of the British authorities. Ultimately he was forced to abdicate in favor of his minor son and removed to Dehradun on 9 July 1923. In Mohinder Singh's view, the Maharaja's association with the Akalis hastened his fall, but his dissociation from them could not have saved him. In sum, neither the Maharaja nor the Akalis gained anything from the prolonged Jaito agitation. As a sequel to this episode, Kuldeep Kaur Grewal places 'The Patiala Enquiry' in the context of the control of the paramount power over princely states. The indictment of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala provided the British authorities with an opportunity to rescue a loyal prince from a grave situation through an enquiry that was merely a farce. Kuldeep Grewal aptly maintains that the 'crucial consideration for the Paramount Power in its relations with Indian princes was political' (p. 234), not constitutional, legal or moral.

The final three essays are written by diaspora Sikh scholars. Darshan Singh Tatla's 'Mission Abroad' offers an excellent account of the activities of Sant Teja Singh in the western world for over five years (1907-1913), establishing three gurdwaras in Shepherd's Bush (UK), Stockton (USA), and Victoria (Canada) respectively, countering the media stereotypes of Sikhs as ignorant rural peasants, rallying them for a common cause, and forcing the Canadian politicians and officials to take South Asian concerns seriously. In fact, Teja Singh's 'sojourn abroad unveils a unique picture of the mental and spiritual world of the overseas Sikhs in the first decade of the twentieth century' (p. 190). To examine the role of remittances by the overseas Sikhs in the development of 'Punjab Agrarian Economy' Shinder Singh Thandi provides interesting data based upon his field work. He meticulously shows the impact of remittances in the Punjab, ushering in a process of capital intensification, the application of more constant capital (fertilizers, irrigation, high-yielding seeds, and so on) and variable capital (labor) to a given area. In other words, migration and remittances 'fuelled this process both in terms of increasing economic concentration, especially in terms of productive capital and in the institution of newly emerging property relations' (p. 291).

The volume ends with Gurinder Singh Mann's comprehensive essay on 'Five Hundred Years of the Sikh Educational Heritage'. Covering a wide span of history Mann masterfully argues that the Sikhs 'created sites and modes to impart the Sikh educational heritage to its future generations' and that these educational institutions 'evolved to meet the needs of changing historical circumstances ranging from religious persecution, political supremacy, confrontation with modernity, to active participation in the process of globalization' (p. 355). The most interesting point in his analysis relates to the recent controversy over academic scholarship, making the case for a critical examination of 'the complex interplay of people and points of view' involved in the process. In view of the complexity of the situation, however, there is a need

to understand the fine distinction between what is appropriate from the pulpit and from the podium. In Mann's analysis this generic difference is blurred. His essay will nonetheless provoke further discussion on this topic.

In fine, most of the essays in this volume reflect the approach of positivist history following natural science-like laws of history and behavior based on the comparison of epistemologically unproblematic, objective facts. They have advantages and disadvantages of their own. Nevertheless, the volume is a welcome addition to the growing literature in the study of Sikhism and Sikh history. It will be useful to research scholars and undergraduate students alike.

Pashaura Singh

University of California, Riverside, CA

Kavita Sivaramakrishnan *Old Potions, New Bottles: Recasting Indigenous Medicine in Colonial Punjab 1850-1945*, (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2006), 280 pp, Rs 795 (hb). ISBN 81-250-2946-X.

Historical writing on ancient Indian medicine has gained momentum over the past few decades. Scholarly studies have largely focused on issues related to indigenous medicine, the introduction of western medicine and modern health care. The works of Brahmananda Gupta and Poonam Bala in the late 1980s and 1990s, and later of Seema Alavi and Charu Gupta, significantly contribute to region-specific studies on Yunani and Ayurveda systems of medicine. In interrogating regional experiences, however, these scholars made implicit reference to a broader canvas, generalizing their study in the context of the nation as a whole. In the gamut of such erudite literature, Kavita Sivaramakrishnan's work stands out. It traces the forces of development in indigenous medicine strictly within the framework of Punjab's late colonial socio-political arena. Drawing upon a vast range of source materials (from personal interviews to a wide range of hitherto unexplored vernacular journals) the author meticulously explores the medical tradition of Punjab, from 1850 until the eve of Indian independence. She largely focuses on the organizational politics of mobilization that connected the local and the provincial with the national.

The book's most significant and penetrating insights concern two central themes. She examines, first, the regional aspirations of the Punjabi Sikh community who were trying to construct a connection between Ayurvedic practices and their project of creating a distinct ethnic identity. In the second place, Sivaramakrishnan explores the linkages between Ayurveda and Ayurvedic practices with the wider debates over *Hindi-Hindu Identity* which encompassed a large part of northern India.

With the intention of relocating the history of indigenous medicine from the narrow confines of the subject, Sivaramakrishnan has undertaken the task of

placing it in the wider context of the innumerable changes that affect the private and the public domains of individuals and communities as a whole. Therefore, she weaves into a single fabric a wide range of province-specific issues such as the various nationalisms (Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh), language controversies (Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi) and movements for religious reform (Arya Samaj, Khalsa, Sanatanists etc.).

In the opening chapter, Sivaramakrishnan gives an insight into the indigenous medical practice and learning of the nineteenth century Punjab, 'with reference to the social networks and political systems that shaped its identity' (p. 14). Traditional practitioners received a distinct patronage from the Lahore Durbar. She locates the shift in their medical careers with the transfer of power to the British. As the *patron-client* dynamics began to weaken, these practitioners were forced to realign their respective positions.

The next chapter traces 'the changes in state public doctrine and its relations with urban social leadership and public opinion' (p. 33). These changes shaped the identities of the vernacular-educated practitioners at a local level. Within this ambit Sivaramakrishnan also observes, how language essentially interplayed with the curriculum of Ayurveda and Yunani systems of medicine and a 'tradition' was being reconstructed where the Gurmukhi script was slowly accommodated in the medical practices of the province.

The third chapter relates 'the role and functions of indigenous practitioners' (p. 53) with the outbreak of plague in the region. Sivaramakrishnan gives a comprehensive account of how these physicians mediated between the government's unpopular plague regime and the public. As 'western' medicine continued to work alongside indigenous physicians, eventually it encouraged a new indigenous medical authority. *Vaid* publicists like Bhai Mohan Singh and Pandit Thakur Dutt Sharma distinguished themselves from the traditional *rais* (elite) as well as the folk healers and embarked on propagating a new 'progressive, scientific' Ayurveda with a 'rational-critical, scriptural tradition' (p. 77).

The next chapter looks at the state's pressing need to respond to Ayurveda's 'scientific' propaganda. Sivaramakrishnan examines the legislative projects undertaken by the state to 'define and monopolize its sphere of professional, scientific medical education and practice' (p. 87) between 1900 and 1930. These dynamics also led to legislations like the Medical Registration Act and the Bogus Degrees Bill.

The crux of Sivaramakrishnan's work lies in her sixth chapter, which discusses the formation of Vaid corporate bodies and the adoption of *Dhanvantari* as the professional deity of Ayurvedic practitioners; all taking shape within the parameters of a vernacular sphere. While the *Ayurved Sammelan* sought to construct a common Hindu past for Ayurveda by closely associating itself with Sanskrit, the *All India Vaid-Yunani Tibb Conference* manifested itself in co-relating the Muslim identity with Urdu. Subsequently, she argues, the rift between Ayurveda and Yunani, which was a fall-out of the

Hindi-Urdu divide, the linguistic alignments had a crucial role to play. The next chapter is an extension of the argument discussing the proliferations of religion based mobilization of physicians in the following decade 1930-1940. The process eventually witnessed the setting up of the *Punjab Board of Indigenous Medicine* and the *Punjabi Ayurvedic-Tibbi Sabha* for regulating indigenous medicine.

In the closing chapter Sivaramakrishnan returns to her discussion on the two sets of debates and summarizes her arguments with reference to the discussions of the previous chapters: first, the discourse on ‘critically’ editing ‘the *Charak Samhita* and the demand for Hindi-based Ayurvedic education...expressed in the idiom of Hindi-as-rashtra-bhasha’ (p. 184); and second, ‘an alternate discourse that sought to legitimize a distinct sphere of Punjabi *Dharmik Baidik* practice, now tied up with the claims of sustaining the interests of an ethnic Sikh identity and its political aspirations in Punjab’ (p. 185). The project’s critics argued that

any changes...ought to be restricted to comments and footnotes and not interfere in the exact reproduction of the text. Any act of editing...presumed that a complete, uniform, and final text could be produced while ancient texts were not constructed on this basis (p. 194).

On the other hand:

the constituency of Punjabi *vaidis*, in its political claims and intellectual construction, now tended to legitimise Punjabi or vernacular-educated practitioners of a small town or rural provenance. This made Punjabi *desi Baidik* share a wider surface area of interaction with folk popular medicine both in terms of the identity of Punjabi language and in terms of a Sikh constituency beyond the urban areas’ (p. 235).

Kavita Sivaramakrishnan’s is one of the richest writings in social history of medicine. She has shown commendable effort in garnering a vast range of materials and appropriating them in her study. She does not offer sweeping *theorization* or general explanations, she illustrates, instead how history of medicine can be contextualized within the mainstream of social-history writing. She shows how theory and practice of medicine is in dynamic interplay with other social, economic and cultural processes. She thus extends the conventional boundaries of the study of medicine to examine the connections with political movements based on linguistic and communitarian identities. She deftly brings in the crucial role of indigenous medicine in the conflicting demands for a Hindu nation and a Sikh nation. The author re-vitalizes medicine not only as a determining factor in this discourse but also as a subject getting affected by it.

Arguably, the book under review is an empirically rich work, but it is quite

weighed down by the quantity of facts and records without much of an analytical framework. The author has counted on the literary aspects of language, public space etc. and has brought into prominence the *patron-client* model in her work. But there is a major lacuna in articulating the various approaches into a coherent argument in her chapters. Perhaps, the study could have benefited from a more meticulous treatment of the actual ideas and concepts of indigenous medicine along with the contemporaneous developments that were taking place at the realm of both private and public spaces. A better understanding of the epistemological changes that may have taken place at a provincial level in the case of Ayurveda and Yunani could have provoked new thoughts and ideas. Without undermining the scholarly approach, at some places, the comprehensibility of the work suffers because of the complexity of the prose.

Nevertheless, Kavita Sivaramakrishnan's book is a laudable piece of work, for it proves to be an excellent *hors d'oeuvre* for an apprentice in the social history of medicine and also for a wide variety of readers interested in the history of colonial Punjab.

Paromita Dasgupta

University of Calcutta

Victor G. Kiernan (trans.), *Poems from Iqbal: Renderings in English Verse with Comparative Urdu Text*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004). xxx + 292 pp. (hb). ISBN 0 19 579974 7.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz: *O City of Lights: Selected Poetry and Biographical Notes*. Translations by Daud Kamal and Khalid Hasan. Selected and Edited by Khalid Hasan. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), xxi + 291 pp. (hb). ISBN 0 19 547330 2.

The variety of literary languages continuing to be cultivated in the Punjab can have few parallels in other areas of the modern world. For over a hundred years now, language has thus been a key marker of cultural choice with an immediate relation to often sharply contested issues of religious and cultural identity, as has been explored in numerous academic studies of the region. On the other hand, as has been rather less well acknowledged in the scholarly literature, this variety of choice has from the late nineteenth century down to the present day allowed writers from the Punjab uniquely varied opportunities for literary expression.

A truly comprehensive literary history of the twentieth-century Punjab as a whole would consequently prove quite a formidable undertaking. Few open-minded critics would, however, wish to dispute the unique place among the Punjab-born poets of the period which must be accorded to those two great sons

of Sialkot, Muhammad Iqbal and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Both are primarily remembered for their Urdu poetry, although each also wrote in other languages, and the sheer poetic distinction of their very different styles of utterance means that both deserve as wide as possible an international audience. A special welcome is therefore to be given to the appearance of these two volumes of English translations with facing originals from OUP Karachi.

Given the lasting quality of the poetry, it is of no great matter that both volumes are substantially re-issues of earlier editions. Victor Kiernan's *Poems of Iqbal* will be best known in the small-format 1955 edition which was itself revised from an earlier collection. Kiernan's fine translations of 118 short and medium length poems have never really been surpassed in their ability to capture the stately quality of Iqbal's verse. Now set in a more generous page layout, their quality, which certainly vindicates Kiernan's decision (explained in an introductory note) to stick as closely as possible to the formal layout of the originals is if anything more clearly to be seen now that they can be more easily compared with the original Urdu texts which have been added on the facing pages. Otherwise the only new feature is a short preface from Kiernan which adds little to his more substantial and still insightful preface to the 1955 edition.

If a criticism is to be made of the other title under review, it is of its odd omission of any reference to Kiernan's book of translations from Faiz, produced in close consultation with the poet, which if not quite as successful overall as his *Poems from Iqbal* would be regarded by many readers as the best hitherto available, in spite of the rather off-putting format which also gives literal English versions and transliterated Urdu texts for each poem. As Khalid Hasan's introductory editorial note explains, *O City of Lights* is also in part a reissue of an earlier volume, in this case the selection of translations by Daud Kamal which he edited for publication in India in 1988 as *The Unicorn and the Dancing Girl*. To the 47 poems of that selection are now added a further 43 freshly translated by Khalid Hasan himself. To this generous collection is prefaced a miscellaneous set of prose pieces, by and about Faiz. While these offer much in the way of interesting details, readers previously unfamiliar with the poet might have been helped by a more connected introductory overview. The volume certainly provides a more comprehensive picture of Faiz's oeuvre than has hitherto been available to English readers, and as such is greatly to be welcomed.

Both the translators, it should be observed, allow themselves considerably greater freedom than did Kiernan in his translations of either Iqbal or Faiz. Something is therefore lost of the variety embraced in Faiz's own equal mastery of the strict formal structure of the *ghazal* and of looser modern poetic schemes (his views on 'prose poems' are amusingly set out in a couple of places in the introductory pages!). On other hand, quite a lot tends to get added here and there by the translators, making the presence of the facing originals an often revealing guide to their translation strategies. They both have a go at *Kya Karen*, whose deceptively simple ending (*jo hai to us ka kya karen / nahin hai*

to *bhi kya karen / bata, bata, / bata, bata*) is rendered by Khalid Hasan as ‘And if what we see does exist / What shall we do? / And if it is only in my mind / What shall we do then? / Speak, / O Speak.’, while Daud Kamal fatally blurs the effect of the simple final fourfold reiteration in ‘If it is real / What should we do? / And if it isn’t / What should we do? / Sharpen the edge of my mind. / Make me understand. / Tell me!’

Together, though, these two books should help introduce two great poets to new audiences while also giving pleasure to those who already have some familiarity with their works in the original Urdu. The latter group should be particularly intrigued by the inclusion of a few poems in other languages in both volumes, in testimony to that variety of choice which was noted at the beginning of this review. Thus Kiernan, who interestingly suggests that Iqbal may actually have found it easier to write poetry in Persian than in Urdu, ends his selection with a few short Persian poems from *Payam-e Mashriq*, while *O City of Lights* contains a few Punjabi poems by Faiz, whose rather stiffly executed reminiscences of earlier exemplars, whether of Varis Shah in *Rabba Sachia* (p. 181) or of Bullhe Shah’s folk style in *Git* (p. 257) stand in strong contrast to the effortlessly practised re-workings of Ghalib in his great Urdu poems.

Christopher Shackle

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

W. Owen Cole, *Understanding Sikhism*, (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2004), x+182 pp. \$23.95 (pb). ISBN 1-903765-15-3.

Eleanor Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xii+162 pp. \$9.95 (pb). ISBN 0-19-280601-7.

These introductory books by two eminent British scholars, W. Owen Cole and Eleanor Nesbitt, provide a gateway to Sikhism. For over three decades both authors have keenly observed the evolution of the Sikh community (Panth) in England, and their writings reflect a constant concern to understand contemporary Sikhism with empathy. They realize that Sikhism is either completely ignored or misrepresented. For instance, Cole observes: ‘The fact of the matter is that it is a religion given little consideration by non-Sikhs’ (p. 1). Although the media image of Sikhism is ‘a religion preoccupied with swords and turbans,’ Nesbitt argues that ‘personal contact with Sikhs usually impresses the outsider with energetic hospitality’ and that the Sikh scriptures ‘bring the reader to a poetic vision of ordered harmony and unity and a spiritual discipline’ (p. 1). Keeping in mind the need to approach a wider audience of both Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike, therefore, these two books are published as part of Understanding Faith series and OUP Very Short Introductions series

respectively.

Although Cole and Nesbitt differ in their approaches - the former following theological and religious studies perspective while the latter following ethnographic study approach -- they share three important themes in the history of Sikh teachings, practices, rituals and festivals. First, they highlight the distinctive identity of the Sikh tradition. Cole compellingly makes the point that 'Sikhism must be considered independently and recognized to be a distinctive revealed religion if there is to be any hope of understanding it and its relationship with other faiths' (p. 127). For Nesbitt, 'Sikhism has evolved into a separate religion in terms of Sikhs' self-definition, and because Sikhism has all the markers of a religion' (p. 4). Elaborating this point further, she remarks:

[T]he case for Sikhism as a religion is secure thanks to its inspirational 'founders', sacred certainties, and its much-revered scripture, its distinctive life-cycle rites and festivals. Sikhs have places of congregational worship and sites hallowed by pilgrimage. The Panth has organizational structures and religious authorities. The fact that the authority of certain bodies is strongly contested, and there is no tidy, centralized hierarchy, demonstrates the Panth's vitality rather than either its imminent demise or that it fails to meet arbitrary criteria for being a fully fledged 'religion'. (pp. 138-9)

In the third millennium, she continues, Sikhs belong to their interlinked transnational communities, and as such, they must be understood in this global religious context (p. 125).

Second, in contrast with most studies which tend to represent Sikhism as a single coherent orthodoxy, both books (Cole's chapter 14 and Nesbitt's chapters 5 and 6) show the existence of colorful diversity within the Sikh Panth. This is not true of the Sikh tradition only but also of any other religious tradition one might name. In fact, contrary to the impression created in standard Sikh publications, the Sikh Panth has never been a monolithic or homogenous group. These two books offer refreshing insights into the current debates within the Sikh Panth, exposing the multiplicity based on actual religious practice. For instance, Nesbitt remarks: 'In the Sikh case, this diversity is evident not only in the twist and hue of turbans but also in liturgy, including the procedures for administering *amrit* in the initiation rite of *khande di pahul*' (p. 139). In fact, the availability of virtual networking in cyberspace has further exposed this diversity, giving an opportunity to each group to make a bold claim that it alone is the 'true' representative of the Sikh Panth.

Finally, in the interests of accuracy, both authors strongly advocate the use of the terminology of Sikhi to stress the Panth's distinctiveness. For instance, by calling the Guru Granth Sahib 'our Bible', Sikhs obscure their scripture's status as living Guru. And, those who refer to *granthis* as 'priests' and to *jathedars* at

the Akal Takhat as ‘high priests’ do a disservice to a proudly lay tradition (Nesbitt, p. 139). Sometimes *amrit* is described as a sacrament or even baptism, but care must be taken in using these terms when communicating with people who are of a different faith. They are best avoided (Cole, 119). Similarly, the use of ‘excommunication’ for *tanakhah*, the penance for violating the *rahit* (‘Khalsa discipline’), is equally misleading. It is absolutely essential that Sikh terminology is used with confidence and with due explanation.

On the whole, Cole is at his best while examining Sikh theology, ethical teachings, family life, Sikh identity, Sikh attitude to other religions, and Sikhism in the twenty-first century. For him, ‘studying Sikhism has been an eye-opening and heart-warming experience that I can strongly recommend’ (p. ix). He enthusiastically remarks that ‘no religion can claim to be more monotheistic than that founded by Guru Nanak’ (p. 138). He even addresses modern issues such as ecology, amniocentesis, IVF, transplant surgery and genetic engineering from the Sikh perspective. In sum, *Understanding Sikhism* is an example of fine scholarship, reflecting both the author’s maturity and his lifetime’s work in the field.

The purpose of Nesbitt’s book is to ‘explore the ways in which Sikhism (in the sense of the Gurus’ teachings) converges with Punjabi cultural norms, which are caught up in processes of unprecedentedly rapid change, and the occasions when the Gurus’ priorities pull in a different direction’ (p. 12). Through the lens of ethnography, Nesbitt offers an adroit analysis of an interaction between ideology and cultural environment in the making of modern Sikhism, including an examination of gender, caste, diaspora, Sikh identity and contemporary issues confronting the Sikh Panth throughout the world. In fine, *Sikhism* is truly a magisterial work, breathtaking in scope, meticulousness and analytical power.

The readers of these two books will find useful aids in their exploration of Sikhism. These include maps of Punjab and other places associated with the Gurus, timeline of major historical events, the Mughal context of the Sikh Gurus, the genealogy of the Gurus, the plan of the Darbar Sahib, glossary, transliteration guide, list of Sikh festivals, bibliography, index, and an excellent selection of illustrations, including images of paintings and photographs. In particular, Nesbitt’s book provides a very impressive selection of some 23 illustrations, including some rare photographs of contemporary events.

I have noticed certain inaccuracies in the books that can be easily rectified at the earliest opportunity. In Cole’s book, for instance, the description of the ceremonial installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Darbar Sahib early in the morning (p. 8) needs to be recast. This unique ceremony takes place inside the sanctum sanctorum to the accompaniment of the recitation of panegyrics of the Sikh bards by a group of Sikhs, followed by the reading of God’s *hukam* or command for the day. The recitation of *Ardas* (the congregational prayer) takes place much later. Second, the transliteration of the original Punjabi phrase (p. 17) should read: ‘*bhana manan di himmat baksha*’, ‘Bless us and help us to

obey your will'. Third, the Punjabi 'kameez' (not 'shalwar' as mentioned on p. 3), a waist-length tunic, has sleeves down to the elbow. Fourth, the two sons of the second Guru are said to have been unsuited to leading the Panth, consequently he turned to his elderly disciple (Amar Das, who was not his 'devout son-in-law' as described on p. 30). Fifth, the Punjabi University, Patiala, produced a four-volume English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib by Gurbachan Singh Talib (not by Trilochan Singh as mentioned on p. 85). Sixth, Cole's assertion on page 111 that the mother of Guru Arjan composed the Gujari hymn (AG 496) at the time of his birth is questionable. This hymn was composed by the fifth Guru himself, describing his mother's blessings to him. Seventh, the scriptural passage (AG 1285) cited on p. 131 is by Guru Nanak, not by Guru Amar Das. Finally, the census total of 2001 for Canadian Sikhs is 278,415, not 147,000 as reported in the book (p. 158). By contrast, Nesbitt's book has two minor errors. First, the total number of verses of the liturgical composition, entitled Jap, is 199, not 196 as stated in the book (p. 46). Second, Gurcharan Singh Tohra (not Gurbachan Singh Tohra as stated on p. 132) was 26 times president of the SGPC, the Panth's highest elected body, as well as an important member of Shiromani Akali Dal, the powerful Punjab-based political party.

These minor criticisms aside, the two books reflect the authors' lifelong commitment to the field of Sikh and Punjab studies. They are written in lucid and accessible style. They will be useful for undergraduate students of comparative religion and of immense value for general readers seeking a sympathetic yet dispassionate introduction to Sikhism. It is thus highly recommended that these books find a place in various academic institutions worldwide, including the personal library of every Sikh household.

Pashaura Singh

University of California, Riverside

W. H. McLeod, *Prem Sumārag: The Testimony of a Sanatan Sikh*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, viii + 129 pp. Rs. 720 (hb). ISBN 13: 978-0-19-567152-0, 10: 0-19-567152-X.

McLeod's latest work is a translation of a Sanatan Sikh manual of conduct. Such a document is of interest and significance in that it issues from a context other than that of the Tat Khalsa. It is, of course, this particular perspective on Sikh identity that was to establish itself as normative in the early twentieth century.

The text of the *Prem Sumārag* proceeds through ten sections. These, in turn, take up the following topics; the cosmological context (and eschatological expectations) of the Panth as well as its basic precepts; initiation into the Khalsa and the signs of the Guru to come; birth rituals; marriage rituals; food

preparation; cleanliness, the physical appetites and the prosecution of one's daily work; funerary rites; political conduct; justice and the forms of administrative regulation; and, finally, the nature of the realized state.

The text is a wonderful repository of insights into the nature and maintenance of social relations in the Panth. It also offers rich insights into the norms of the wider Punjabi society of the period. The discourse on Islam is particularly noteworthy; the texts on the preparation of a Muslim for entry into the Khalsa are fascinating (p. 54-55). The text also provides a wide range of protestations against contemporary religious practices (see especially p.92) which suggest, strongly, that the text presents very much an ideal-typical presentation of Sanatan society rather than a faithful representation of it. It also offers much for the ongoing consideration of the Sikh discourse on caste identities (and here, despite McLeod's helpful footnotes a parallel text would have been particularly useful). For the Sanskritically minded, the text also offers rich structural parallels with the *Dharma Shastric* and *Sutric* literatures (from the *Manu Smriti* to the *sutras* of Apastamba, Gautama and others). The theology of Shri Akal Purakh that emerges from the text is also interesting in its vacillation between an austere *nir-guna* perspective and a somewhat more personalized view (which often shades into discussions of the Guru, and particularly the Guru to come). The text is thus of interest and significance to both Punjab studies and Indology in general.

It has always been McLeod's habit (from the publication of the *Mahima Prakas Varatak* in the late sixties to this his most recent translation) to publish both detailed monographs and accompanying translations of key works. This work is, in this regard, no different as it intended to accompany McLeod's recent study of the evolution of the Khalsa Rahit, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2003). The translation is, despite self-admitted difficulties, both lucid and elegant. I have intimated above, that it is to be regretted, however, that it was not supplied with a parallel Punjabi text. Indeed, to my knowledge, only McLeod's translation of the *Chaupa Singh Rahit Nama* has incorporated an accompanying text in the original language (the *B40 Janam Sakhi* was published without an accompanying original language text). It is also to be regretted that the critical introduction is so brief. While the relevant discussions are, of course, available in the aforementioned accompanying study, for the purposes of students engaging with the text a more extended introductory contextualization and analysis of the material would have been useful. The final paragraph of the introduction is critically telling with its emphasis of the significance of this *Prem Sumārag* as being 'much closer to the society which it describes' (p.9) than the image of the Tat Khalsa, but we are left to follow up these arguments in the larger monograph to which this translation project relates. In particular, the reference, in foot-note one, to Harjot Oberoi's *Construction of Religious Boundaries* does not bring out the critical differences between Oberoi's work and that of McLeod.

The *Prem Sumārag* occupies a crucial position as both anti-popular practice (its protestations at *puja* and *tirath*-visitation etc., attest very clearly to this) while still being very clearly Sanatanist in emphasis. While much depends on the dating of the text in terms of the contextualization of this qualified-Sanatanism, the existence of such a position is not readily acknowledged in Oberoi's brilliant, but somewhat polarized, account (see especially the fourth chapter of the *Construction of Religious Boundaries*). I am not at all suggesting that McLeod is not aware of this, but rather that, in presenting the *Prem Sumārag* to a wider public, he could have usefully integrated a little more of the material from his wider researches.

These are, however, only minor criticisms. This work reflects the exemplary Indology which we have come to associate with McLeod and marks a major contribution to the range of source material available for student study of the development of Sikh traditions. Not only this, the text itself is of great significance for Punjab Studies and for wider debates of the transmission and adaptation of forms of religious identity in early modern South Asia.

James Hegarty
Cardiff University

Ravinder Kaur (ed.), *Religion, Violence and Political Mobilisation in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), 228 pp. Rs. 480 (hb). ISBN 0-7619-3430-8.

The post-colonial state with South Asia as its locus is beset with communal/sectarian violence. The Gujarat massacre of Muslims in 2002 is one example of that trend, investing the scholars of the region with the renewed stimulus to revisit the phenomenon. The workshop organised by the department of International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark in April 2003 was triggered into existence by similar scholarly concern. The deliberations of world-renowned academics at the workshop came out in book form with the budding scholar Ravinder Kaur as its editor, in 2005. *Religion, Violence and Political Mobilisation in South Asia* is a compendium of insightful essays, and Francis Robinson's foreword, together with the editor's exhaustive introduction, add considerably to the worth and vitality of the volume. The contemporary era, imbued as it is with religious violence, makes the book under review all the more relevant.

In the foreword Francis Robinson reiterates his understanding of Hindu-Muslim separatism in UP as against Paul Brass's instrumentalist formulation. In an ambience of religious revivalism, Hindu-Muslim relations were redefined and 'the framework for political development created by the state' forced the Muslim elite to deploy separatist symbols. Therefore, contrary to Brass's understanding whereby Muslim elite of UP opted for the 'divisive instead of composite symbols' (p. 9), Robinson locates Muslim separatism in a particular

context in which the Muslim society at large and the contemporary state were calling the shots. Consequently the Muslim elite had to respond to a situation in which they were devoid of autonomy to set the priorities for themselves. Robinson also advocates the efficacy of the 'Frame Theory' developed by David Snow and Robert Benford in understanding the strained relations between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority. The reform movements within the colonial context of South Asia and their bearing on to the post colonial political setting are yet another point that Robinson makes in his piece that provides the best possible beginning to the volume.

In her exhaustive introduction, *The Mythology of Communal Violence*, Raviner Kaur has contextualized the issue of 'the anti-minority violence' with the particular emphasis on the event in Gujarat. While drawing on the conceptual articulations of Hannah Arendt, Johann Galtung and Gustave LeBon she delves deep into the theoretical underpinnings of violence and the multiple modes of its existence. In a 25 page long piece she has compressed such wide ranging themes as communalism, religious mobilisation and the role of sacred symbols in whipping up the religious sentiments, and the socio-spatial re-arrangement emanating from the communal violence receives a scholarly mention.

The first four essays are devoted to the communal violence in India. Paul Brass and Jan Breman have focussed on UP (Aligarh) and Gujarat respectively as case-studies whereas Dipankar Gupta and Thomas Blom Hansen undertake the issue of communal violence in its entirety. Brass as usual deploys an instrumentalist approach in explicating the communal conflict, by underlining the significance of Mosques and institutions like Aligarh Muslim University as 'the signifiers of the violence to the Hindu body' in the post *Babri Masjid* era (p.48). Describing at length how violence is perpetrated and the role the wrestlers and police play in conflagrating smouldering sentiments of communal hatred, Brass does not attach much importance to the changing context in which violence erupts. For instance why did it not happen during the Nehruvian era? Jan Breman locates the communal tension culminating in the Gujarat massacre in 2002 in a declining industrial environment. The rising tide of Hindu fundamentalism however played a significant role in exacerbating the Hindu-Muslim fissure. The Marxist trajectory of Breman's analysis does not, therefore, prevent him from taking other than economic determinant into account while unravelling the complex dynamics leading up to the Gujarat killings. Even Majoor Sangh Mahajan, a famous trade union known for its composite character and for its ideal of class harmony that it had cherished since the 1920s, could not withstand the fissure, splitting apart as a consequence along communal lines. All this happened 'in ex-mill localities populated by social segments from which a major part of this industrial workforce used to be recruited: subaltern Hindus (mainly Dalits, OBCs and intermediate castes, especially Patels) and Muslims.' (p.71). That the worsening economic plight of the working classes led to the 'orgy of violence' is the inference which Breman

draws from the Gujarat incident - a conclusion that is not far off the mark.

An all-encompassing study of communal riots by Dipankar Gupta makes very insightful and interesting reading. The evolution of the BJP, Shiv Sena and the Akalis in post colonial India, a methodology for doing a politics of differentiation, corroborated by some case studies, and the response these movements have generated make this essay important for comprehending the communal problem in India. Its scope is such that it could well have been placed at the beginning of the book. Equally perceptive is the narrative of Thomas Blom Hansen that unravels the threads of legality - mostly with reference to Colonial India while devoting relatively little space to contemporary issues. Having said that, the way in which sovereignty, state and legality have complemented each other in the colonial context speaks for the profundity of Hansen's thought.

The next two essays telescope the themes of religious and ethnic violence in Pakistan. Ian Talbot seeks to unravel the complex dynamics culminating in bloodshed in the name of religious and sectarian difference. He locates the issue of religious fundamentalism and Shia-Sunni conflict in a historical perspective and moves on to the contemporary scenario in a very accessible style of writing. From the two-nation theory to the Deobandi influence and the mushrooming of *madrassas*, and its fallout in terms of sectarian clashes, Talbot weaves his narrative like a tapestry. Similarly Oskar Verkaaik's piece reflects a deep engagement with the subject matter. Using categories such as *Qurbani* (sacrifice) and *siasat* (politics), he shows how, as the MQM (Mutahida Qaumi Movement) grew in its power and prestige, its leadership tended to rely more on politics than on sacrifice, thereby transforming itself from an agent of social improvement to a social nuisance. Suffice it to say that Verkaaik's analytical study of the MQM makes necessary reading for anybody interested in the politics of Pakistan. The concluding piece by Bjorn Hettne has a title 'South Asia and the War against Terrorism' that hardly matches the text. The phrase 'War against Terrorism' generally connotes the events following 9/11 attack on the twin towers in New York. Therefore the war against terror(ism) was unleashed against Afghanistan and then Iraq, impacting as a consequence quite tangentially on India and the rest of the South Asian states though with the exception of Pakistan. However the essay refers fleetingly to Pakistan. One wonders how relevant the mentions of Kerala, Gujrat, the Sikh killings in 1984 or Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka are to the war against terror.

This book is a useful addition to the literature on religion and violence. Nevertheless, despite its South Asian title, it is confined to the Indian subcontinent. Interesting comparisons could be drawn with the situation elsewhere in the region including in particular Sri Lanka, but also Nepal.

Tahir Kamran

Government College University, Lahore.

