

Editorial Introduction

Papers included in this special issue of the Journal were presented at a conference, entitled *Punjab and the Raj*, held in Government College University Lahore in January 2006. Punjab has been viewed afresh by the participants in the Conference from multiple angles. However the cultural transformation through the displacement of Punjabi language, armed resistance and migration form the main themes. Ian Talbot's paper affords a historical context to the overall transformation brought about by the Colonial regime in the Punjab after its annexation in 1849. It investigates the contradictions between order and transformation which lay at the heart of the imperial enterprise in Punjab with respect firstly, to ownership and transfer of land, secondly, to agrarian development and social engineering, and thirdly, to customary law. The next two papers by Tahir Kamran and Tariq Rahman address vital questions regarding the indigenous Punjabi language and its displacement immediately after the annexation. How that displacement impinged upon centuries old cultural syncretism, giving rise to the communal exclusivity, has been thoroughly scrutinized.

Resistance is a theme of immense significance with particular respect to the Colonial Punjab. People like Ahmed Khan Kharral, Ajit Singh, Sohan Singh Josh and Bhagat Singh took on the colonial gauntlet with immense zeal and courage, hence such movements like *Pagri Sabhal o Jata*, *Ghadar Party*, *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha* sprang up in the twentieth century Punjab. Surinder Singh has based his study on sources available only in the vernacular. Therefore the contours of themes have been pushed beyond the stereotypes and constructions of the yore. Ishwar Gaur Dayal has focused on the literary/cultural construction of the heroics of the Bhagat Singh. The symbol of the virgin martyr deployed for Bhagat Singh in East Punjab articulates eloquently the defiance for the British Raj among Punjabi folk.

Next two papers address issues of considerable intricacy. The transfer of power during the 1940s and the subsequent mass migration still holds relevance. Iqbal Chawla examines the failure of the Wavell Plan as it could not accommodate the Unionist Party as a separate political entity. Ravinder Kaur deals with the theme of migration in a commendable way. People who migrated to the colony district first during the beginning of the 20th century, and then in 1947, had to undergo once again a similar experience. With the 60th anniversary of the partition of Punjab within sight, it is an appropriate occasion for the analysis of that theme from a fresh perspective.

As mentioned earlier most of the papers included in this issue came out of the conference held at GC, University Lahore under the auspices of the History Department. That conference became possible because of the initiative of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Khalid Aftab. Besides, several institutions contributed in making that conference a success by providing financial and logistic support. Higher Education Commission Pakistan, Asr Foundation, South Asia Partnership Pakistan and Pakistan Action Aid deserve our thanks and gratitude.