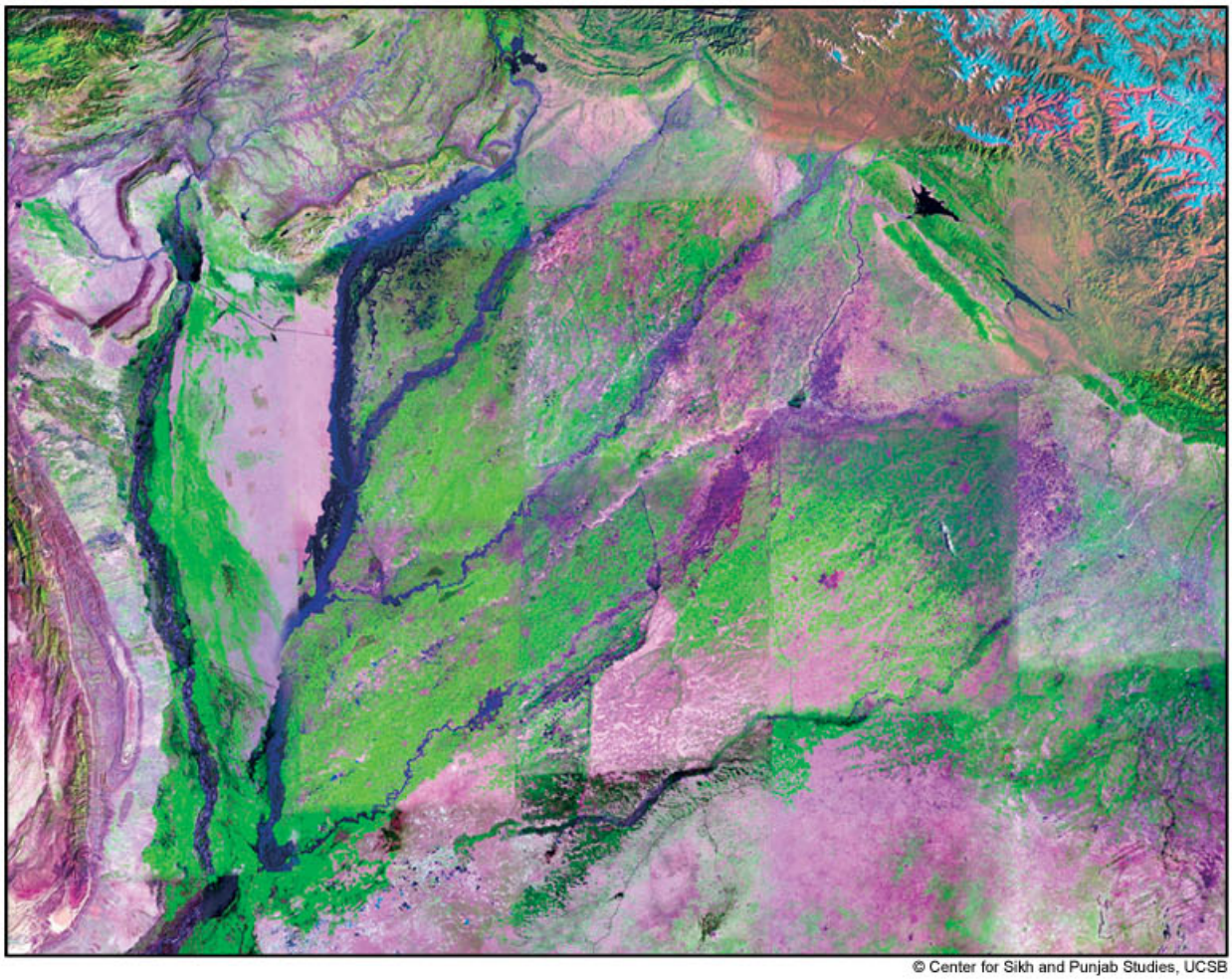
Journal of Punjab Studies



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JOURNAL OF PUNJAB STUDIES

Special Issue: W.H. McLeod: Assessing his Legacy

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Editorial

W. H. McLeod (1932-2009) played a singularly important role in introducing the Sikh tradition to the Western world. He emerged on the scholarly scene in the mid-1960s and remained a dominant presence during the subsequent four decades. Responses to his research ranged from unequivocal admiration to downright denunciation, but there cannot be any disagreement that his work remained at the center of scholarly output of his generation.

Soon after Professor McLeod's death, I discussed the possibility of reviewing his contribution to Sikh studies with Professor J.S. Grewal whom McLeod had called "my elder brother, who knows more." The idea was to bring to focus McLeod's considerable scholarly production and, in the process, assess the strides made by his generation. Professor Grewal graciously agreed and I am grateful to him for his essay that appears here.

Later, it occurred to me that given Professor McLeod's close association with the *Journal of Punjab Studies* since its inception in 1994, we should dedicate a special issue to commemorate his first death anniversary. I have always been very grateful to the honor that McLeod bestowed upon Harjot Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, Louis E. Fenech, and myself by calling upon the four of us "to keep the flag [of Sikh studies] flying" in the dedication to his *Sikhism* (1997).

This special issue seemed like an opportunity for each of us to write about how we have executed the responsibility he assigned in our research, teaching, and outreach activity while simultaneously providing an assessment of the state of the field. My three colleagues readily agreed to share in this project, though we left it open to handle this brief in the particular way each one of us deemed fit. I am grateful that they took time from their busy schedules to write the essays that appear here.

This issue is divided into two sections. The first comprises five essays. Gurinder Singh Mann's essay begins by examining McLeod's interpretation of Guru Nanak's life and teachings and proceeds to include his suggestions for expanding our understanding of the demographic origins of the early Sikh community. Pashaura Singh's essay highlights the strengths and weaknesses of McLeod's understanding of the early Sikh community, and how the recent developments in scholarship can contribute toward our understanding of the Guru period.

Louis E. Fenech addresses the theme of martyrdom in the Sikh tradition and brings to focus the differences between both McLeod and his students and amongst the students themselves. Harjot Oberoi takes us to the late nineteenth century, and presents a case study of Attar Singh Bhadaur, a Sikh savant who provided information to European scholars

interested in the Sikh community. In the closing essay, J.S.Grewal presents a comprehensive assessment of McLeod's scholarly output.

In the second section, there are reviews of five books, the abstracts of five doctoral dissertations, all written within the past several years, as well as information regarding a new Punjabi language manual to be published in early 2011. This provides a window into the activity of new scholars working in the field. All of these studies have either a direct or indirect association with the program at UC Santa Barbara, and we view this work as the effort of a new generation of scholars to keep "the flag flying."

This year we also mourn the loss of Norman Gerald Barrier (1940-2010), a senior voice in Sikh studies, Garib Dass Vartia (1939-2010), a dholi and a cultural icon of the past generation, and Ajeet Singh Matharu (1983-2010), a doctoral student at Columbia University and a budding scholar in the field. Their obituaries share with our readers their accomplishments and dreams.

I hope that an assessment of the work of the W.H. McLeod, a leader in the field, presented in this issue will provide a timely and necessary impetus for a new phase in Sikh studies. Learning from the agony of the past decades, we look forward to an era in which debates are constructive and creative rather than a distracting side show of attacks and allegations. The *Journal of Punjab Studies* would welcome meticulous critiques of the essays included in this issue. This may be the best way to honor the memory of Professor McLeod!

Gurinder Singh Mann
UC Santa Barbara
Fall 2010

Guru Nanak's Life and Legacy: An Appraisal

Gurinder Singh Mann
University of California, Santa Barbara

Taking W.H. McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* as a point of departure, this essay examines the previous generation's understanding of Guru Nanak's life and mission and expands upon it in light of empirical evidence culled from early contemporary sources. By questioning McLeod's arguments regarding the paucity of general historical information about Guru Nanak's life and his close participation in the Sant community of poets such as Kabir and Ravidas, this essay argues that the Guru founded a new community replete with a distinct set of beliefs and institutional structures. While scholars have tended to focus on the upper caste Hindu background of Guru Nanak, very little attention has been directed towards articulating the social demographics of this new community, which were overwhelmingly drawn from nomadic and low-caste Hindu society.

Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder of the Sikh community, is a subject of perennial interest for the Sikhs and their scholars, and a quick look at any bibliography on the subject would reflect the range and the depth of writings available on various aspects of his life and teachings. Given his relatively recent dates, there is a wide variety of sources available about his life and mission (*Jagat nistaran*).[1] These comprise texts, including his poetic compositions and the writings of his immediate successors and early followers; sites such as Talwandi, the place of his birth, and Kartarpur (The Town of the Creator), the center he established; and two known artifacts associated with his life.[2] These sources provide primary information for a scholarly reconstruction of the Guru's life.

Among the studies that have shaped the discussion on this issue in recent scholarship, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) by W. H. McLeod (1932–2009) would be the first to come to mind. Since its publication, this book has served as a key source of information on the Guru and the founding of the Sikh tradition in the English language.[3] Its conclusions pertaining to the details of the Guru's life, the import of his teachings, and the nature of his legacy in the rise of the Sikh community have remained dominant in scholarship on Guru Nanak and early Sikh history created during the last quarter of the twentieth century.[4]

With the post-partition generation's work in Sikh studies reaching a close, it seems reasonable to begin reflecting on the field's future expansion.[5] Beginning this process with a discussion on Guru Nanak and the origins of the Sikh community is logical, and making *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* the point of departure seems pragmatic. This creates the opportunity to review a scholarly icon of the past generation, assess the state of scholarship around one of the most significant themes in Sikh history, and simultaneously explore the possibilities for future research in the field. Working on this assumption, this essay deals with the issues pertaining to Guru Nanak's life, teachings, and activity at Kartarpur, which are addressed in three stages: how McLeod treats them in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, my assessment of his positions, and the possible ways to expand this discussion.

My work in recent years with the early Sikh sources has convinced me that the interpretation of Guru Nanak's life and legacy, which resulted in the beginnings of the Sikh community, needs close scrutiny. This project involves a fresh look at the issues related to the life of the founder, interpretation of his beliefs, and a clearer sense of the sociocultural background of the early Sikh community. A greater understanding of this phase of the Sikh community's history would serve both as a foundation to interpret developments in subsequent Sikh history and a window into the medieval north Indian religious landscape.

Constructing Guru Nanak's Life

The opening part of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* presents a discussion of the Guru's life (pp. 7–147). It begins with an introduction to the sources: the Guru Granth (a largely pre-1604 text), the opening section of the *Vars* (ballads) of Bhai Gurdas (d. 1637?), and a set of the Janam Sakhis ("life stories" [of Guru Nanak]) written over a period of two centuries (1600–1800), and goes on to present summaries of the Guru's life in these texts.[6] From this extensive literary corpus, McLeod selects 124 stories from the Janam Sakhi literature, subjects each one of them to a close scrutiny, and places them under the categories of "possible" (30), "probable" (37), improbable" (18), and "impossible" (39) (pp. 92–94). This discussion is followed by an examination of the details regarding the Guru's dates of birth and death (pp. 94–99), and closes with a page and a half summary of his life that is believed to be historically verifiable (pp. 146–147).

Reactions to McLeod's work on the Janam Sakhis as a source of early Sikh history range from denunciation to a sense of awe, but there cannot be any disagreement that he is correct in starting his discussion with early sources on the life and mission of the Guru.[7] In addition to his historical approach, McLeod's attempt to introduce Sikh sources in translation was also a major contribution to the field.[8] Despite these methodological

strengths, however, the assumptions that McLeod brought to bear on these sources are problematic. For instance, right at the outset McLeod argues that the Janam Sakhis as a source for the Guru's life are "highly unsatisfactory," and the challenge is "to determine how much of their material can be accepted as historical" (p. 8). Instead of replacing these low-value texts with some more useful sources for the purpose of writing a biography of the Guru, McLeod subjects them to an elaborate analysis that ultimately confirms his basic point regarding their limited historical value (pp. 71–147).

Without making a distinction between an analysis of the literary form of the Janam Sakhis and making use of them as a source for reconstructing Guru Nanak's life, McLeod introduces selected episodes from these texts, offers critical assessment of their historical value, and adjudicates the nature of their contents. While following this method, McLeod does not pay the requisite attention to the chronology of the texts under discussion, with the result that his analysis turns out to be synthetic in nature. Selecting, swapping, and blending episodes created by individuals belonging to diverse groups with sectarian agendas, writing over two and half centuries after the death of Guru Nanak, has its own problems.[9] The resulting discussion remains centered on a formalist literary study of the Janam Sakhis and makes little advance toward delineating the Nanak of history.

McLeod's tendency to label the episodes of the Guru's life as possible, probable, improbable, or impossible, or to interpret them as hagiography has not been very productive. Let me illustrate the limitation of his approach with reference to a story involving Guru Nanak's journey to Mount Sumeru that McLeod refers to several times in his *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*.[10] He writes, "This [Sakhi] indicates a very strong tradition and one which cannot be lightly set aside. When Bhai Gurdas and all of the janam-sakhis unite in testifying to a particular claim we shall need compelling arguments in order to dismiss it" (p. 119). As far as I understand, historians are expected to make sense of the information available to them, not find "compelling arguments" to dismiss it, and McLeod's rejection of the story on the grounds that Mount Sumeru "exists only in legend, not in fact" deserves further scrutiny.

In the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscripts, the description of the Guru's journey to Sumeru is part of his return from Kashmir and is restricted to a short opening sentence of Sakhi 50. This reads: "Having crossed the Savalakhu hills, [the Guru] climbed Sumeru and arrived at a place (*asthan*) associated with Mahadev." The remaining story is built around the debate between the Guru and Mahadev and other Shaivite ascetics living at this location regarding the relevance of their spiritual practices and the need for social responsibility and productivity. The episode concludes on a seeming note of congeniality and an agreement between them that they all should meet again to continue this conversation at the

annual fair of Shivratari to be held at Achal, which we are told was "a three-day walk from there." The location of Achal, a Shaivite site, is well known and is around twenty miles from Kartarpur.

How did the Sumeru apparently located in the Punjab hills become the "legendary" Mount Sumeru? There are several interesting details that converge here. First, Vir Singh (1872–1957), the editor of the printed edition of the Puratan Janam Sakhi that McLeod uses, interprets *Savalakhu parbat* as 125,000 hills (*sava* is ¼ of 100,000 = 25,000 and *lakhu* is 100,000) instead of Shivalik hills, and on the basis of this reading claims that Guru Nanak crossed this many hills to reach Sumeru.[11] Second, instead of looking toward the south from the Kashmir valley with Srinagar at its center, Vir Singh takes the reverse direction and envisions Guru Nanak traveling north. Finally, building against the backdrop of Hindu-Puranic mythology and the accounts that appear in the later Janam Sakhis, he concludes Sumeru is in the vicinity of Lake Mansarovar.[12]

Not interested in making the distinction between the details of the Puratan account of Guru Nanak's visit to Sumeru and its elaboration in the later Janam Sakhis, including the speculative commentary of Vir Singh, and as a result unable to imagine that Sumeru could be a modest seat of the Shaivite ascetics that was "a three-day walk from Achal," McLeod is quick to reject the possibility of "Sumeru" being an actual mountain and the Guru having made this journey.[13] Rather than focus on this original episode for the information embedded within it—the prominence of Shaivite ascetics in both the Punjab and the bordering hills; Guru Nanak's debates with these figures; his unequivocal rejection of their way of life and the need for its replacement with a life based on personal, family, and social commitment; and a degree of amiability of the dialogue—McLeod's primary concern is on the physical location of Sumeru. His inability to grasp the details of this episode results in seeking its dismissal. Interestingly, McLeod's effort does not remain restricted to scholarly analysis of the Janam Sakhis but goes beyond to advise the Sikhs to discard them from their literary reservoir for the benefit of the coming generations, as "seemingly harmless stories can be lethal to one's faith."[14]

In my view, McLeod's analysis of the Janam Sakhis is less informed by the nature and use of these sources within Sikh literature than by an interpretive lens that views the Janam Sakhi literature as Sikh counterparts of the gospels.[15] As a result, he invested a great deal of time and energy to the study of this literary corpus, but was deeply saddened by the Sikh response to his "best scholarly work."[16] Unlike the gospels, however, the Janam Sakhis are not considered authoritative sources of belief, nor are their authors committed to the divine status of their subject. In their own unique ways, these texts attempt to narrate what the Guru did and said, generate feelings of devotion among their

listeners/readers as the followers of the path paved by him, and in the process preserve his remembrance.[17]

Rather than trying to overturn these accounts along the lines McLeod established, I believe that scholars need to study early Sikh sources such as the Janam Sakhis by developing a clearer understanding of their dates of origin and the context of their production.[18] The field is fortunate to have sufficient manuscript data and related historical evidence to address these issues, and the critical editions of these texts are slowly becoming available.[19] This seems to be the only way to flesh out significant information available there.

Let me explain what I mean with some details. On the basis of my work with the Janam Sakhi manuscripts, the evidence seems to point to the rise of the Janam Sakhis in the following sequence: Puratan (pre-1600), Miharban (pre-1620), and Bala (1648–1658).[20] The dates of the Puratan are suggestive of an early period in the history of the community, when the people who had met the Guru and had the opportunity to hear his message from himself may still have been around (*Guru Nanaku jin sunhia pekhia se phiri garbhasi na parai re*, M5, GG, 612). The evidence indicates that this text was created by someone who was part of the group that later emerged as the mainstream Sikh community. The possibility that the author of this text and some of his listeners knew Guru Nanak as a real person—who bathed, ate food, worked in the fields, rested at night, and had to deal with sons who were not always obedient—makes this text an invaluable source of information on the Guru's life.

Unlike the Puratan, the importance of the Miharban and Bala Janam Sakhis falls in a different arena. Elaborating on the Puratan narrative, these two Janam Sakhis expand the scope of the Guru's travels and introduce a circle of people who would have made up the third and fourth generation of his followers.[21] Whereas the farthest limit of travels to the east in Puratan is Banaras, Miharban extends the travels to Assam and Puri. Also as sectarian documents, they both reflect the points of view of the groups that created them and mirror the divisions within the community and the polemics involved in presenting the founder in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.[22] Given the variations in time of their origin and context of production, it is essential to study each of these texts separately to see what they have to offer on the Guru's life and the early Sikh community.

Let me present some details available in the Puratan Janam Sakhi to support its relevance for understanding the Guru's life, his primary concerns, and the contours of the early Sikh community. With regard to the founding of Kartarpur, the Puratan narrates that it was established after the first long journey (*udasi*) of the Guru, and not after the completion of his travels, as it is commonly presented in current scholarship.[23] As for the daily routine at Kartarpur, we are told that the Sikhs gathered at the Guru's house (*dargah*), recited his compositions as

part of their daily prayers (*kirtan*), listened to his exposition of the ideas therein (*katha*), and shared a community meal (*parsad/rasoi/langar*).

Given this description, his home would have been a sizable establishment large enough to accommodate congregational prayers, provide facilities for the making and serving of the food, and put up visitors.[24] The Puratan refers to the recitation of Guru Nanak's *Alahanhia* (songs of death) and *Sohila* (praise) at the time of his death (Sakhi 57).[25] There is also the firm belief that the Sikhs in their religious life did not follow what others around them practiced (Sakhi 41). In no uncertain terms, the Puratan reports that Kartarpur with the Guru's *dargah* at its center represented the sacred site for the Sikhs.[26] The presence of the Guru sanctified it, his abode served as the meeting place, and there is an expectation that the Sikhs living in distant places should make a pilgrimage, have an audience with the Guru, and meet their fellow Sikhs living there.

These details align well with the ideas of Guru Nanak. His compositions represent wisdom (*Sabhi nad bed gurbanhi,* M1, GG, 879); he is available to provide exegesis to help the Sikhs understand them (*Sunhi sikhvante Nanaku binavai*, M1, GG, 503; and the text refers to the role of holy places, festivals, and the chanting of sacred verses as an integral part of religious life (*Athsathi tirath devi thape purabi lagai banhi*, M1, GG, 150). The Guru is the central figure in this vision, and there is nothing that could compare with his presence (*Guru saru sagaru bohithho guru tirathu dariau*, M1, GG, 17; *Nanak gur Samani tirathi nahi koi sache gur gopala*, M1, GG, 437; *Guru sagaru amritsaru jo ichhe so phalu pave*, M1, GG, 1011, and *Guru dariau sada jalu nirmalu*, 1328).

After the establishment of Kartarpur, the Puratan reports four long missionary journeys—to the region of Sindh in the south, the Himalayan foothills in the north, Mecca in the west, and the present-day Peshawar area in the northwest.[27] During these travels, the Guru is reported to have initiated people into the Sikh fold through the use of the ceremony called the "nectar of the feet" (*charanamrit*), organized Sikh congregations in distant places, and assigned *manjis* ("cots," positions of authority) to local Sikhs, who were given authority to oversee the daily routine of their congregations. Whereas the narrator of the Puratan leaves no doubt that a full-fledged effort at the founding and maintenance of a community occurred at Kartarpur, and that the Guru continued his travels after its establishment, most older scholars are convinced that Kartarpur came at the end of the Guru's travels, and that he had no interest in building institutions.

Rather than attribute the institutional founding of a community to Guru Nanak, scholars of the past generation have highlighted the activities of later Gurus, especially Guru Amardas (b. 1509?, Guru 1552–1574) and Guru Arjan (1563, Guru 1581–1606).[28] Working on the basis

of his belief that Guru Nanak rejected the institution of scripture and that it started with Guru Arjan, McLeod and his generation missed the importance of the facts that Guru Nanak evolved a new script, Gurmukhi (the script of the Gurmukhs/Sikhs); committed to writing his compositions in the form of a *pothi* (book) bound in leather; and passed it on ceremonially to his successor, Guru Angad.[29]

The Puratan also informs us that the succession ceremony of Guru Nanak was performed in two stages. In the first stage, the Guru offered some coins to Angad, which in all likelihood indicated transference of the control of the daily affairs (*dunia*) of the Sikh community to him (Sakhi 56). In the second part, the Guru presented the *pothi* containing his compositions to Angad, which implies that from that point on Angad was in charge of the spiritual affairs (*din*), with the result that he was his formal successor and the leader of the Sikhs (Sakhi 57). The Guru is presented as having conducted an open search for a successor, declaring the succession in a public ceremony, and making sure that all concerned accept the transmission of authority before his death.

Examining Guru Nanak's Beliefs

In the second half of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, McLeod presents his interpretation of Guru Nanak's teachings (pp. 148–226). He begins by underlining the need to base this discussion on the Guru's compositions and interpret them by situating them in their historical context. He argues that Guru Nanak's writings can be understood within the paradigm of the "Sant tradition," which he defines as a synthesis of elements from "Vaishnava Bhakti," "hatha-yoga," and "a marginal contribution from Sufism." He assumes Guru Nanak to be "a mystic" seeking an "ineffable union with God" (pp. 149–150). Working on this understanding, he then lays out the Guru's teachings under the headings of "The Nature of God," "The Nature of Unregenerate Man," "The Divine Self-Expression," and "The Discipline."[30]

While supporting McLeod's use of Guru Nanak's compositions as the source materials and the need to situate the Guru within the context of his times, one cannot help but raise issues with how he accomplished this task.[31] Explaining his formulation of the "Sant synthesis" as a reservoir from which the religious poets of the time, including Guru Nanak, drew their ideas, McLeod writes: "Many of these concepts Guru Nanak shared with the earlier and contemporary religious figures, including Kabir. It is at once evident that his thought is closely related to that of the Sant tradition of Northern India and there can be no doubt that much of it was derived directly from this source" (p. 151).[32] There is no denying that Guru Nanak shared ideas, categories, and terminology with fellow poet saints, but McLeod pushes this position to a point that leaves little

provision for any significant originality for any of these individuals' respective ideas.

It is interesting to examine how McLeod arrived at this conclusion to assess the legitimacy of this conceptualization.[33] Writing in 2004, McLeod reports that he started the research that resulted in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* with the compositions of non-Sikh saints recorded in the Guru Granth, but found that "their thought was rather difficult to work into a coherent system." He then "turned to the works of Guru Nanak," and seemingly reached his formulation that all of them drew their ideas from of the "Sant synthesis."

Within the context of the Guru Granth, it is fair to claim that there is a relative homogeneity of overall beliefs between the writings of the non-Sikh saints and those of Guru Nanak, and this is the reason why these people's compositions appear there in the first place. It is thus true that the compositions of these saints in the Guru Granth carry themes that align with those of Guru Nanak, and since these people came prior to the time of the Guru, it is reasonable to infer that he must have borrowed these ideas from them. But the initial difficulty that McLeod faced in reducing the writing of the non-Sikh saints into "a coherent system" points to the complexity of their thinking and needs to be taken into consideration when arguing for their mutual influence upon one another.

We know that the compositions of the non-Sikh saints that appear in the Guru Granth represent an edited version of their literary production and thus reflect what largely suited the Sikh religious and social thinking. McLeod's discussion here, however, does not provide evidence that he had made any effort to study the writings of these figures that appear outside the Sikh canon.[34] Barring Kabir (292 *chaupadas* and 249 *shaloks*), Namdev (60 *chaupadas*), and Ravidas (41 *chaupadas*), the remaining ten "Sants" have a total of 19 *chaupadas*. As far as I can see, McLeod's building the argument of the "Sant synthesis" involved reading Kabir and then extending his ideas to Namdev and Ravidas, on the one hand, and Guru Nanak, on the other. I believe that each of these figures has to be studied in depth before one could make a firm claim of the type McLeod made, and there was no way to do that, given the state of knowledge in the mid-1960s.[35]

In addition, McLeod assumed that since the Guru's ideas were available in the writings of Kabir, he must have borrowed them from his predecessor. This position served as a launching pad for his twofold analysis. It made the Guru a firm part of "Sant synthesis," on the one hand, and little basis was left for a belief in the originality found in his writings, on the other. There is, however, no evidence to support the assumption that Guru Nanak knew or had access to the writings of Kabir or those of the other non-Sikh saints, and the manuscript evidence points toward the compositions of these poets entering the Sikh scriptural text during the period of Guru Amardas.[36]

Built on inadequate data, this problematic concept of the "Sant synthesis" went on to provide the framework for McLeod's "historical analysis" of the Guru's writings. It resulted in his overemphasizing the similarities between the ideas of the Guru and Kabir, on the one hand, and dismissal of the links between the Guru's ideas and those of the Sufis such as Farid and Bhikhanh, on the other.[37] McLeod does not take any note of the presence of Farid's compositions in the Guru Granth, which constitutes the largest single unit (4 *chaupadas* and 130 *shaloks*) after Kabir, and thus takes no interest in explaining their significance. Rather than address the role of Islam in Guru Nanak's thinking, McLeod dismisses that role as "marginal" at best.[38]

In addition to the difficulties inherent in McLeod's formulation of the "Sant synthesis," one cannot help but question McLeod's selection of what he thinks constitute the primary themes in Guru Nanak's compositions. For instance, while it is true that the nature of God is an important theme in Guru Nanak's poetry, it is important not to miss the specific aspects of the divine nature that fired the Guru's imagination. While singing about God, the Guru is focused on the creative aspect that brought the universe into being (*Ja tisu bhanha ta jagatu upia*, M1, GG, 1036), and is immanent in it (*Sabh teri qudrati tun qadiru karta paki nai paqu*, M1, GG, 464). Simultaneously, the Creator turned Sovereign (*Sahibu*/*Patshahi*) is understood to be deeply involved in the day-to-day making and dismantling of the world (*Bhani bhani gharhiiai gharhi gharhi bhajai dhaji usarai usare dhahai*, M1, GG, 935; *Vaikhe vigsai kari vicharu*, M1, GG 8), and initiating radical changes in the natural state of things when necessary (*Nadia vichi tibe dikhale thali kare asgah*, M1, GG, 144). Guru Nanak's interest in divine nature is thus geared toward describing how the Sovereign runs the universe and the implications of this belief for orienting human life.

Let me illustrate this with reference to the Guru's composition entitled *So Daru* ("That Abode"), which enjoys the distinction of appearing three times in the Guru Granth (M1, GG, 6, 8–9, and 347–348) and is part of Sikh prayers recited at both sunrise and sunset. It begins with a question: What is the nature of the abode where the Divine sits and takes care of the universe (*sarab samale*)? The answer to this appears in twenty-one verses, of which seventeen evoke various levels of creation and four underscore divine sovereignty.[39] This interest in the creation as divine manifestation is representative of the Guru's thinking in general and appears in many of his other compositions.[40]

It may be helpful for scholars to consider that Guru Nanak's reflection on the Divine is actually focused on the theocentric nature of the universe. As for more philosophical aspects of divine nature, the Guru seems perfectly at peace with the position that they cannot be expressed in human language and conceptual categories (*Tini samavai chauthai vasa*, M1, GG 839). For him, the divine mystery has not been

fathomed in human history (*Ast dasi chahu bhedu na paia*, M1, GG, 355; *Bed katabi bhedu na jata*, M1, GG, 1021), and what human beings are left with is to accept this limitation and make the best of the situation (*Tu dariao dana bina mai machhuli kaise antu laha, Jah jah dekha taha taha tu hai tujh te nikasi phuti mara*, M1, GG, 25).

Given this context of understanding, the primary responsibility of human beings is to grasp the values that underline the divine creation of (*rachna*) and caring for (*samal*) the world, apply them to use in their daily routine, and in the process become an active part of the universal harmony as well as contribute toward it (*Gagan mahi thal ravi chand dipak bane,* M1, GG, 13).[41] For Guru Nanak, there are two stages of spiritual development: acquiring the knowledge of truth, which seems to be easily accessible from Guru Nanak himself (*Bade bhag guru savahi apuna bhed nahi gurdev murar*, M1, GG, 504) and translating this acquisition into one's life (*Guri kahia so kar kamavahu*, M1, GG, 933; *Sachahu urai sabhu ko upar sachu achar*, M1, GG, 62) through labor and perseverance (*Jah karnhi tah puri mat, karni bajhahu ghate ghat,* M1, GG, 25). The goal of life is not to be reached in the possession of truth but in its application in one's day-to-day activities (*Jehe karam kamie teha hoisi*, M1, GG, 730; *Jete jia likhi siri kar, karanhi upari hovagi sar*, M1, GG, 1169; *Sa jati sa pati hai jehe karam kamai*, M1, GG, 1330).

McLeod's elaborate exposition of Guru Nanak's teachings remained centered on his "theology" and allows no room for ethics. There is no reference to the Guru's crucial stress on a life centered on core values such as personal purity (*ishnan*), social involvement with charity (*dan*), forgiveness (*khima*), honor (*pati*), humility (*halimi*), rightful share (*haq halal*), and service (*Vichi dunia sev kamiai ta dargahi basanhi paiai*, M1, GG, 26; *Ghari rahu re man mughadh iane*, M1, GG, 1030; *Ghali khai kichhu hathahu de*, M1, GG, 1245). Nor is McLeod able to take note of the Guru's overarching belief that liberation is to be attained collectively (*Api tarai sangati kul tarahi*, M1, GG, 353, 662, 877, 944, and 1039), emphasizing the need for communal living and social productivity. Unlike other medieval poet saints, the Guru also spoke emphatically of collective liberation (*Api tarahi sangati kul tarahi tin safal janamu jagi aia*, M1, GG, 1039), and went beyond singing about human equality to actually challenging the Hindu caste hierarchy (*Sabhana jia ika chhau*, M1, GG, 83) by starting the *langar* (communal meal), which represented rejection of any social, age, or gender-related distinctions.

McLeod's categorization of Guru Nanak's teachings brings to the forefront issues pertaining to the most effective way to interpret Guru Nanak's beliefs. As for traditional Sikh scholarship, there have been two distinct ways to expound on his compositions.[42] The primary method has been to focus on Guru Nanak's compositions. The author would introduce the context in which the Guru is believed to have written the

composition under discussion, would then quote its text, and explain its message in the medium of prose. These commentaries, as well as anthologies of the compositions used for the purpose of exegesis in devotional sessions, are extant beginning with the late sixteenth century.[43] This method of analysis of the Guru's compositions continues till the present day and can be seen working in the writings of scholars trained in the *taksals* ("mints," Sikh seminaries).[44]

The second type of analysis of Guru Nanak's and his successors' teachings begins with Bhai Gurdas, who selected a set of themes that he wanted to share with his audience, and then elaborated upon them by paraphrasing the Guru's writings in his own poetry. Beginning with the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the writers working along these lines began to use prose as their medium of expression, and from this point on these writings emerged as an important genre.[45] This approach achieved a high degree of expansion in the works of Jodh Singh (1930s), Sher Singh (1940s), and McLeod (1960s).[46]

Whereas the commentators of the former version aimed to contextualize the composition under discussion within Guru Nanak's life and deal with its total contents, the latter option involved an exercise in formal analysis, with the presentation of a particular theme without having to clarify its precise position in the larger context of Guru Nanak's beliefs, let alone situating it in the activity of his life. While the first had some sense of episodic completeness in its devotion to Guru Nanak's thinking, the second in all likelihood began as answers to questions from the audience by those who had an overall understanding of the message of the Gurus. As it developed, however, it involved the author's mechanical selection of themes, and the resulting imposition of a system on the Guru's ideas may have its strengths but also has the potential to become a problem, as in the case of McLeod.

In my view, the aforementioned approaches that analyze Guru Nanak's teaching by focusing on his compositions need to be refined as well as expanded to include the details of his life, the nature of his activity particularly at Kartarpur, and the information about the context in which these unfolded. The effort in the past years to take up a theme, catalogue its appearances in the writings of the Gurus, and essentially summarize these quotations remains limited. In other words, a computer search of, say, the term *seva* (service) in the verses of Guru Nanak can only provide the basic data, which needs to be situated within the larger context of his writings and those of his successors to arrive at its significance in the Sikh thinking.

The Founding of Kartarpur

When constructing Guru Nanak's life, McLeod focused on the early sources such as the Janam Sakhis, and for the exposition of his teaching

he was content with a formal analysis of the Guru's compositions. The sections devoted to the Guru's life and his teachings in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* remain mechanically juxtaposed, and the two decades of the Guru's life at Kartarpur are covered in the concluding page and half.[47] There is no move toward linking the Guru's beliefs with what he did during the course of his life, especially the founding of Kartarpur, and the legacy that he left for posterity.

McLeod has little to say on the Kartarpur phase of the Guru's life, which resulted in the gathering of a community, the self-imposed responsibility of overseeing its welfare, and the creation of a blueprint to ensure its future stability. For him, "the pattern evolved by Guru Nanak is a reworking of the Sant synthesis, one which does not depart far from Sant sources as far as its fundamental components are concerned. The categories employed by Guru Nanak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrine he affirms is their doctrine" (p. 161). McLeod believes that the term "founder" implies that someone "originated not merely a group of followers but also a school of thought, or set of teachings," and it applies to Guru Nanak in "a highly qualified sense."[48] Having argued this with considerable vigor, McLeod shows no interest in addressing the issue of why he was the only one among his peers to think of founding a community.

Fully convinced of Guru Nanak's rejection of "external authority," "ceremonies," "religious texts," "pilgrimage," "ritual bathing," and so on, McLeod is reluctant to explain why the Guru got into the enterprise of gathering a community with numerous institutional structures (p. 153). By emphasizing the "religious" nature of Guru Nanak's life and legacy, he undercuts the importance of such institutional structures, on the one hand, and seems to point toward its being some sort of "Hindu" group centered on meditation, on the other.[49] For him, the lives of the people at Kartarpur were oriented around three primary rhythms: meditation, search for liberation, and work in the fields. He misses the interwoven vision of liberation and landscape as reflected in Guru Nanak's poetry saturated with the images of the soil, plants, animals, migratory birds, rain, the Persian wheel, sacred centers, shops, bazaars, and so on. He misses Guru Nanak's recognition of the beauty of creation and his keenness to see the world before replicating it in Kartarpur (*Sabh dunia subhannu sachi samaiai*, M1, GG, 142; *Tat tirath ham nav khand dekhe hat patnh bazara*, M1, GG, 156).[50]

Guru Nanak's emphasis on radical monotheism, a life that follows a balance of religious and sociopolitical commitment (*din* and *duniya*; *Dunia karanhi dinu gavaia*, M1, GG, 1410), and a proactive belief in human equality and so on, which distinguish him from his fellow Shaivite or Vaishnava saints of the period, are not taken into consideration at all. The Guru's vision of social commitment was also deeply informed by his interest in and commentary on contemporary

political developments. For example, the Guru's father, Kalu Bedi, and his father-in-law, Mula Chonha, were both revenue collectors and were thus part of the political hierarchy of the time.[51] As a teenager, the Guru had to present himself in front of the village elders (*panch, chaudhari, mukadam, mahajan*) and offer defense against the accusations that his buffaloes had damaged the neighbor's wheat crop (Puratan, Sakhi 4).[52] He also worked for a decade or so in Sultanpur, a district headquarters for Daulat Khan, who later emerged as the most powerful political leader in Lahore and was instrumental in inviting the ruler of Kabul, Babur (d. 1529), to invade the region in the 1520s. The Guru's travels further exposed him to political realities, and it is significant to register that those who took up the Guru's path at Kartarpur comprised a revenue-paying farming community with close contact to the political powers of the time who determined the terms of revenue and then ensured its collection (*Fasali aharhi eku namu savananhi sachu nau, mai mahadudu likhaia khasmai kai dari jai*, M1, GG, 1286).

Guru Nanak's compositions reflect his extensive interest in and knowledge of politics and his discomfort with the prevailing corruption around the key political institutions (*Raje sih muqadam kute, jai jagain bethe sute*, M1, GG, 1288).[53] He took notice of the Mughal invasions, and was the only spiritual figure of his time to have written on the subject (which he did in the form of a set of four compositions: M1, GG, 360, 417–418, and 722). He himself was no pacifist and accepted confrontation between opposing political powers and the ensuing bloodshed as a way of life, but he could not accept violence in which the innocent and the hapless bore the brunt of political conflict (*Je sakata sakate ko mare ta man rosu na hoi, Sakata sihu mare pai vagai khasmai sa pursai*, M1, GG, 360). In light of his belief in divine justice as the organizing principle in the world, Guru Nanak rejected any justification for a system based on bribes and false witnesses (*Vaddhi lai ke haqu gavai*, M1, GG, 951; *Lai ki vaddhi denh ugahai*, M1, GG, 1032).

In other words, the Guru's early upbringing provided him the opportunity to know how the political authority functioned in the village (Sakhi 3, Puratan), the nature of its relationship with that of the local headquarters (*shiq*), and then through it to the center at Lahore (*suba*). His compositions underscore the need to be involved in life at all levels (*Jab lagu dunia reahie Nanaku kicchhu sunhie kichhu kahie*, M1, GG, 661; *Ghali khai kichhu hathahu dehi Nanaku rahu pachhanhahi sei*, M1, GG, 1245), and condemn any tendency that may lead toward an ascetic path (*Makhatu hoi ke kan parhe phakar kare hour jat gavai*, M1, GG, 1245). It is reasonable to argue that these ideas played an important role in his decision first to gather a community at Kartarpur and then to prepare a blueprint for its future. Remaining fixated on the "religious" nature of the community, scholars have totally missed the possibility that Guru Nanak's effort at Kartarpur may have been patterned on the model

of Lahore, but at the same time, was creating a better version of it.

This position comes into focus in the light of the early Sikh community's understanding of Guru Nanak's life and activity. The first account of the founding of Kartarpur, which appears a decade or so after the Guru's death, explains it in terms of the establishment of a kingdom with a castle at its base (*Nanaki raju chalia sachu kotu satanhi niv dai*, Rai Balwand and Satta Dum, GG, 966), and his nomination of a successor is described in metaphors of the transference of his royal throne to Guru Angad (b. 1504, Guru 1539–1552, *Lahanhe dhareou chhatu siri kari sifati amritu pivade*, Rai Balwand and Satta Dum, GG, 966). The Goindval Pothis compiled in the early 1570s refer to Guru Nanak as the "Bedi King," who supports both the religious and the temporal dimensions of the world (*Baba Nanak Vedi Patisahu din dunia ki tek*, Pinjore, folio 215), and call him and his successors as the "True Kings" (*Baba Nanaku, Angad, Amardas, Sache Patisah*, Jalandhar, folio 8).[54] The bards at the Sikh court of the subsequent decades categorized the activity of Guru Nanak in the areas of politics (*raj*) and spirituality (*jog*), and presented his line of successors as a divinely sanctioned royal dynasty (*Sri guru raj abichalu atalu ad purakhi furmaio*, the Bhatts, GG, 1390).[55] In his *vars*, Bhai Gurdas presented the establishment of the Kartarpur community in terms of the minting a new coin (*Maria sika jagati vich, Nanak Nirmal Panthu chalia*, 1: 45).

As mentioned earlier, the Guru enjoyed the supreme authority at Kartarpur; the *manjis* represented this in distant congregations, and the *pothi* containing his compositions marked a symbolic version of it. In addition, the Guru's *dargah* (home) served as the Sikh *tirath* (sacred spot) and the destination of pilgrimage, and the *charanamrit* (initiation ceremony) brought new people into the community. The daily prayers based on the recitation of the compositions of the Guru, followed by the *langar*, which involved communal cooking and sharing food, served as agencies of internal solidarity as well as distinction from others such as Shaivites, Vaishanavites, Shaktas, Sufis, and Sunnis.

In addition to the institutional markers present at Kartarpur, scholars have not paid adequate attention to the geographical and demographic considerations that governed Guru Nanak's decision to settle there. Though the archeological remains of Kartarpur are not available, references to its establishment in the early texts and its geographical location offer interesting data. The Puratan reports that Guru Nanak started some sort of communal activity at Talwandi (Sakhi 38), his native village, but that ultimately he decided to move on and establish Kartarpur (Sakhi 40). We know that Talwandi was founded by Rai Bhoa, a high-caste Hindu convert to Islam, and given this situation, the layout of the village would have a mosque at its center. The Puratan also mentions the presence of a temple there, which would be in proximity to the Hindu quarters, as we can guess from the layout of villages of the time.

It seems reasonable to assume that once Guru Nanak saw his communal experiment to be taking off in Talwandi, he thought of a more congenial location for its development, rather than having to function in an environment of competition with Hindu and Muslim neighbors on a daily basis (Sakhi 41). A host of reasons seem to be in place for his choice of the Kartarpur area. His father-in-law, Mulah Chonha, worked for Ajita Randhawa, a Jat village chief in the area, and would have been of help in making this move possible. This situation would also imply that the Guru knew the area well, and was aware of the fertility of the soil with plenty of rain and subsoil water ensuring the economic viability of the new community. His compositions manifest a high degree of sensitivity to the beauty of the natural world, and the area around Kartarpur, with the river Ravi entering the Punjab plains and the Shivalik foothills in view, would have been attractive for the Guru. Its location on the pilgrimage routes marked a potential for access to a stream of spiritual seekers open to taking up a new way of life. Kartarpur was thus an ideal location for the founding of a community.[56]

With regards to the demographic composition of the community at Kartarpur, McLeod and scholars of his generation took for granted that the early Sikhs came from the Hindu fold, but new information sheds a different light on their socioreligious background.[57] The received wisdom states that the Khatris, an upper-caste (Vaishiya) group within the Hindu social hierarchy to which Guru Nanak's family belonged, constituted the original Sikh community. This understanding is, it is argued, based on the evidence that appears in the early sources. We are then told that the Khatris were "the teachers of the Jats," and that this relationship resulted in the large-scale entry of Jats into the Sikh community in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, during a period of growing hostility with the Mughals.[58]

However, a closer examination of evidence from the Puratan and Bhai Gurdas regarding figures considered to be the prominent Sikhs of Guru Nanak's day reveals a different demographic portrait.

The *Puratan Janam Sakhi*	
2 Jats	Saido and Gheho
1 calico printer (*chimmba*)	Siho
1 blacksmith (*lohar*)	Hassu
1 Muslim singer (*mirasi*)	Mardana
The *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas	
9 Khatris	Taru Popat, Mula Kirh, Pirtha Soiri, Kheda Soiri, Pirthi Mal Saihgal, Rama Didi, Bhagta Ohri, Shihan, & Gajanh Upal

3 Jats	Ajita, and Burha Randhawa, Firanha Khehra
1 blacksmith	Gujar
1 barber (*nai*)	Dhinga
1 Muslim singer	Mardana[59]

Although these statistics are not substantial enough to provide a firm basis to definitively judge the social composition of the early Sikh community, it is apparent that these names do not support the type of the Khatri hegemony argued for in current scholarship. The fact that half of the supposed Sikh leadership (ten out of nineteen mentioned above) came from a lower caste/outcaste/nomadic background makes it difficult to accept that the social composition of the community was dominated by the upper-caste Khatris. It may also be useful to reiterate that all five people who accompanied the Guru during his travels came from an outcaste background, which fits well with the Guru's affection for the downtrodden (*Nicha andari nich jati nichi hu ati nichu*, *Nanaku tin kai sangi sathi vadia siau ka ris*, M1, GG, 15). Since there is no reference to any large Khatri movement to Kartarpur from Talwandi, the Guru's village, or any other place, we have to consider the possibility that the people residing at Kartarpur had come from its immediate vicinity (Sakhi 40).[60]

Let us, then, consider an alternative scenario of the composition of the original Sikh community. As for the history of the central Punjab during this period, the local traditions mention the region's devastation by the Mangols (1390s), its development under the Sultans (fifteenth century), and further consolidation under the Mughals (1526-).[61] The arrival of the Persian wheel (*harhat*) was the key instrument in the region's development. A survey of the names of the villages in the vicinity of Kartarpur also shows that the Jats and those who worked for them (*Kalals, Lohar, Nais, Tarkhanhs*, etc.) were its primary inhabitants, and that by the 1520s these people were sufficiently powerful to enter the memoirs of the ruler of Kabul, who was on his way to become Emperor Babur, the founder of the great Mughal dynasty.[62] He remembers them as troublesome and problematic, and their resistance to external interference also surfaces in the sources such as the *Chachnama* (eighth century with a Farsi version prepared in the thirteenth century), and Gardizi's *Zainul Akhbar* (eleventh century).[63]

As for the social history of the Jats, there seems to be an interesting evolution in the first half of the second millennium. The *Al Hind* (early eleventh century) labels these nomads as the "low Shudras"; Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari* (late sixteenth century) records them as large landholders (*zamindars*) on both sides of the river Ravi; and the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (mid-seventeenth century) elevates them a notch up to the lowest rung of the Vaishiyas.[64] During this period, the Jats took up

settled agriculture and became primary producers of the food that the urban society consumed. Given the situation, it is not hard to explain the Jat elevation in the hierarchy from a low caste to the bottom of an upper-caste level. No city-dwelling Hindu would have relished the idea of eating the stuff produced by supposedly low or outcaste people.

It is also important to register that we cannot take it for granted that the Jats necessarily perceived themselves as Shudras, Vaishiyas, or even part of this caste-based society. Once settled, however, they would be in search of ways to construct ties with the society around them. As part of this agenda, we can understand their large-scale entry into Islam in west Punjab, the Sikh path in the central areas, and the beginning of a tedious process of working out a relationship with the caste hierarchy within Hindu society in the areas now known as Harayana and western Uttar Pradesh.[65]

Guru Nanak's move to Kartarpur raises the possibility that he was aware of this sociodemographic situation, and that this might even be a factor in his decision to go there. The place offered fertile soil as well as a large constituency of rural people who were in search of a socioreligious identity. Given his own landowning, farming family setting—the only Sikh Guru to have come from this background—Guru Nanak would have had no problems in building ties with the Jat neighbors and invite them to join his path. His calling the Creator the Great Farmer, seeing the beginning of the universe in terms of sowing seed (*Api sujanhu na bhulai sacha vad kirsanhu, pahila dharti sadhi kai sachu namu de danhu,* M1, GG, 19), and interpreting the key values in terms related to farming would have been of considerable fascination for these people (*Amalu kari dharati biju sabdo kari sachu ki ab nit dehi panhi, Hoi kirsanhu imanu jamai lai bhistu dozaku murhai ev janhi*, M1, GG, 24; *Man hali kisranhi karanhi saramu panhi tanu khetu, namu biju santokhu sauhaga rakhu gharibi vesu*, M1, GG, 595; M1, GG 1171). It may also be interesting to point out that the author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* considers Guru Nanak compositions to be in Jataki, "the language of the Jats," who have "no regard for Sanskrit language."[66] Guru Nanak's concerns with corruption associated with political institutions and discomfort with injustice referred to earlier would have worked well with these people, given their own traditions of tribal justice and resistance to any outside infringement in their activity.

Kartarpur's location thus points toward the possibility of an interesting meeting between a substantive figure, who believed that he had been assigned a mission of creating a new dispensation (*Dhadhi sachai mahali khasami bulia sachi sifiti salah kaparha paia*, M1, GG, 150; *Hari kirati rahiras hamari Gurmukhi Panth atitang*, M1, GG, 360; *Api tarahi sangati kul tarahi tin safal janamu jagi aia*, M1, GG, 1039), and people who lived in its vicinity and were searching for a community that could help their transition from a nomadic to sedentary lifestyle.

Joining a leader who affirmed human equality (*Sabhana jia ika chhau*, M1, GG, 83) and dreamed of building a society without corruption and oppression would have offered a more attractive alternative than becoming part of the Hindu social hierarchy or locate themselves within the class differentiations prevalent within Muslim society.[67]

The evidence at our disposal points to an impressive presence of the Jats at the time of Guru Nanak's death in 1539. For instance, the village of Guru Angad, Khadur, which served as the primary Sikh seat after the death of Guru Nanak, belonged to the tribe of the Khaira Jats; and the land for Dehra Baba Nanak, the village that Guru Nanak's son, Sri Chand, established after the flooding of Kartarpur came as a gift from Ajita, a Randhawa Jat. In other words, the two Sikh sites that rose to prominence after the disappearance of Kartarpur were directly associated with the Jats. Furthermore, following the authority of Guru Nanak' successor, Guru Angad, the two most prominent figures of the time, Buddha Randhawa, who was also a potential candidate for the guruship, and Ajita Randhawa, who helped rehabilitate the Guru's family at Dehra Baba Nanak, came from a Jat background.[68]

The location of Kartarpur seems to support the view that the Jats and their rural ancillaries constituted the core of the original Sikh community, and scholars in the field need to examine this issue in the days ahead. If found viable, this shift of stance in the social composition of the early Sikh community would call for a new set of parameters to understand the origin as well as later developments in Sikh history. What was there in Guru Nanak's message that attracted these people? How did these erstwhile nomads adopt the contents of his message to their needs and aspirations? Was the early Jat experience of joining the Sikh community so successful that this prepared the ground for the other Jat tribes living around to follow suit in the subsequent decades? These questions would need to be addressed as scholarship develops.

Furthermore, little is known about the life and ethos of the Jats and their outcaste rural ancillaries but, as mentioned earlier, it seems reasonable to argue that being nomads they had no organic relationship with the Hindu caste hierarchy. Making this distinction would have huge implications for our understanding of the concerns and motivations of the early Sikh community. Emerging from McLeod's *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, the overarching perceptions that Sikh beliefs as well as social constituency emerged from the larger Hindu context, as well as that their history is essentially one of carving out of a distinct identity from that of the parent community, need to be reassessed.[69]

This discussion would also have a direct bearing on issues related to caste and gender within Sikh society. If the overwhelming majority of the original community was not part of the caste hierarchy, how appropriate is it to use caste-related categories to explain early Sikh society? If the Sikhs themselves now use these terms, then it would be helpful to locate

the reasons and precise point of their entry into the Sikh discourse. In the same vein, the treatment of women in the nomadic society and customs such as widow marriage and the absence of *sati* (burning alive on the pyre of the dead husband), and so on, need to be brought into focus to help understand the happenings within the early Sikh community.[70]

In my view, a narrative of the origin of the Sikh community needs to incorporate an understanding of the life of the master (*khasam*) of Kartarpur (Nanak), the nature of the seed he sowed there (his beliefs), and the sociocultural background of the early caretakers (Sikhs). Having accomplished this task, scholars can attempt to assess how the original seedlings thrived in their subsequent transplantations in different locations, changed circumstances, and the variations among different caretakers. Building on the evidence whose bulk, range, and depth expand with the passage of time, scholars can think through these issues and create a narrative that can provide a higher degree of historical accuracy than the one in current circulation. After all, the Sikhs may be the only major tradition where the origin of the community can be constructed strictly from contemporaneous sources.

Conclusion

Where do scholars in Sikh studies go from here? Three options seem to be available. First, there is a large constituency of scholars in the field who believe that *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* marked a "paradigm-shift" in "a historiographical revolution" in Sikh studies, and they would expect future research to build and expand on its conclusions.[71] The second option has appeared in J. S. Grewal's recent writings, where he points out the limitations of McLeod's research findings pertaining to different periods and themes of Sikh history.[72] For his detailed critique of McLeod's work, see his paper in this issue.

On the basis of my reading of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* presented here and my past years' immersion in the early documents, I believe that effort to build on the received wisdom or even maintain the status quo would be counterproductive for the field.[73] While fully agreeing with Grewal about the limitations of McLeod's work, my primary interest lies in how to move forward and develop a fresh narrative of Guru Nanak's life, beliefs, and legacy. Given the critical mass of scholars presently working in the field and the availability of the large corpus of published materials, this goal does not seem beyond reach.[74]

I suggest a three-stage process to execute this agenda. First, scholars need to return to the early textual sources, date them with some degree of precision, situate them in their socioliterary contexts, and flesh out historical details from them. Second, they need to expand the pool of information by including art, artifacts, iconography, numismatics, sites,

and so on, and then seek out information that these sources can provide. Finally, the information gathered around the landmarks in Sikh history should be presented in emic Sikh terminology.[75] As I have attempted to show that the terms such as the "Sant synthesis," "unregenerate man," and "the discipline" popularized by *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* would not do, but more work needs to be done before we can cull out a set of terms that may present the frame of reference adequately.

Let me close this essay by underlining the need for precision in scholarly understanding of Guru Nanak and early Sikh history. Two events associated with Guru Nanak's fifth birth centennial that unfolded on the campuses of the universities in the Punjab serve as interesting pointers in this direction. The first relates to the name of Guru Nanak. The Akali Dal, a Sikh political party, which ruled the Punjab in the late 1960s, sponsored a set of public celebrations in 1969 to commemorate the Guru's birth, and the establishment of a new university in Amritsar was the jewel in this crown. The institution was named "Guru Nanak University" and was inaugurated with great fanfare. After the graduation of the first batch of students, a public controversy erupted that resulted in the rise of a political campaign to expand its name. The people spearheading this move were emphatic that the institution named in honor of the Guru must carry his "full name," which they argued was "Guru Nanak Dev." The state government, after protracted resistance, buckled under and granted their wish by expanding the name of the university by a legislative act in 1975. As far as I know, there is no reference to "Dev" in the writings of Guru Nanak or those of his successors or early followers. Is it part of the name or does it mark an honorific that was added later? No one seemed to be clear about these issues while changing the name in the 1970s, and the present generation does not even seem to remember that this controversy erupted in the early history of their university.[76]

The next instance concerns the date of birth of Guru Nanak and the debate that unfolded around it on the campus of Punjabi University, Patiala. In the fall of 1969, this university organized an array of activities to celebrate the event, of which an international conference held in September was the prize item. On this occasion, a special issue of *The Panjab Past and Present*, a university-based journal of history, was released, entitled *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak*; it was edited by Ganda Singh (1900–1987), a highly respected historian of the time, and was distributed to the participants. While the conference at the university campus was synchronized with the celebrations of the Guru's birth, believed to have been in late November (*Katak di Puranmashi*), the editorial appearing in the journal issue argued for April 15, 1469 (*Visakh*) as his date of birth. A generation of scholars has come and gone since the event, but no clarity seems to have emerged on this basic issue.

A final detail revolves around the reference to the early Sikh community as the "Nanak Panth."[77] Although scholars such as McLeod and many others of his generation use this label freely and without question, it must be underscored that this term does not appear in the writings of Guru Nanak, or those of his successors and their followers.[78] It first shows up in the Janam Sakhi attributed to Miharban (d. 1640), a first cousin of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind (b. 1595?, Guru 1606–1644), and even more important for us, the leader of a major Sikh sectarian group of the time (Minhas/Chhota Mel).[79] The *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, a mid-seventeenth-century Farsi text, is the first non-Sikh document to use the name the Nanak Panthi along with the Gursikh to refer to the community.[80] Furthermore, it is important to point out that a name such as the Nanak Panth, which evokes the idea of "personal" following of a leader, is criticized in the writings of Bhai Gurdas and is categorically denounced in the poetry created during the period of Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708).[81] In other words, the name assigned to the early Sikh community in current scholarship is not a self-designation, but a sectarian/external label the nature of which is criticized in the mainstream Sikh literature.

Focusing on details such as these would help scholars work toward developing a more accurate and nuanced narrative of the happenings during this early phase of Sikh history. Once the details of the founding of the Sikh community and the terms required to name and explain them are in place, people in the field can then move on to interpret the developments in subsequent history. I believe a clean start is necessary to delineate the origin of the Sikh Panth (the path of the Sikhs), and then one can map how it turned into the *gaddi rah* (big path) of Bhai Gurdas and the *param marag* (great path) of the late seventeenth-century anonymous author at the court of Guru Gobind Singh.[82]

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Notes

[1] A recent bibliography of writings in English records over six hundred entries on Guru Nanak; see Rajwant Singh Chilana, *International*

Bibliography of Sikh Studies (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 30–60. The writings in Punjabi on the Guru are far more extensive and spread over a much longer period of time. The opening statement of the Puratan Janam Sakhi reads: "The life story of Baba Nanak from the beginning to the end [who] came to liberate the world." For its published edition, see *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi (Patiala: Pepsu Book Depot, 1977).

[2] Scholars count Guru Nanak's compositions recorded in the Guru Granth (GG) in different ways. Charan Singh provides the figure of 974 poetic stanzas; see his *Banhi Biaura* [1902] (Amritsar: Khalsa Tract Society, 1945), 124–125 ; Kahn Singh Nabha presents the number as 947 in his *Mahan Kosh* [1930] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1981), 437; Sahib Singh counts them as 357 compositions and 3 *Vars* in his *Sri Guru Granth Darpanh* (Jalandhr: Raj Publishers, 1961), 1: 17; and Piara Singh Padam supports the figure of 974 ; see his *Sri Guru Granth Prakash* [1977] (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990), 58.

As for the artifacts, a *pothi* and a *chola* associated with the Guru are extant. For details, see "The Guru Harsahai Pothi," in my *Making of Sikh Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 33–40; and entries on the *chola* in Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih* (Kankhal: Sri Nirmal Panchayati Akharha, 1884), 288–289; Giani Gyan Singh, *Tvarikh Gurdarian* (Amritsar: Buta Singh Pratap Singh, undated [1919?]), 36; Kahn Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, 477.

For references to the Guru in the writings of his successors and early followers, see Ganda Singh, ed., *Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), 26–44. For the details of his life, see *Puratan Janam Sakhi*; *Janam Sakhi Miharban*, 2 volumes, ed. Kirpal Singh et al. (Amritsar: Khalsa College, 1962, 1969); *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, ed. Gurbachan Kaur (Patiala: Bhasha Vibahg, 1987); and *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi (New Delhi, Arsi Publishers, 2010). For the latest research on Bhai Gurdas, see Rahuldeep Singh Gill, "Growing the Banyan Tree: Early Sikh Tradition in the Works of Bhai Gurdas Bhalla," Ph. D. dissertation (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009).

[3] When discussing the impact of McLeod's book, one must be clear that the traditional Sikh scholars worked in Punjabi, and as a result had no access to the book. They receive eight to ten years of training in the *taksals*, which involves learning the recitation and interpretation of the Guru Granth, the study of Sikh historical writings, practice in *kirtan*, and extensive travels to Sikh pilgrimage centers. Their work prepares them to become *granthis*. Unfortunately, there is very little scholarly literature available on the *taksals*, and many scholars writing in English are not

even aware of the presence of these institutions. From among the products of these *taksals*, Randhir Singh (1898–1972), Shamsher Singh Ashok (1903–1986), Piara Singh Padam (1923–2001), and Joginder Singh Vedanti (1940–) could be counted as the major figures of the past century. For information on the early history of the *taksals*, see G. W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab* [1883] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1971), 28–37.

Among scholars who work in English, there were efforts to register differences with *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Fauja Singh Bajwa (1918–1983), a historian based in Punjabi University, engaged with McLeod's argument with a high degree of seriousness; see his "Guru Nanak and the Social Problem," in Harbans Singh, ed., *Perspectives on Guru Nanak* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1975), 141–150. In this essay originally presented at a conference in 1969, he made a two-pronged argument: Guru Nanak was deeply concerned about the social issues of his times, and given this area of his interest, his message differed in fundamental ways from those of his contemporaries. Unfortunately, Fauja Singh got embroiled in a controversy of his own in 1975, when he was attacked by university-based scholars as well as those outside academia, pushing him out of any public role. For details, see his "Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur—A New Look" [1966], *Journal of Sikh Studies* (February 1974), 79–89, and responses to it by Trilochan Singh's "Letter to the Editor" (August 1974), 122–126; and J. S. Grewal's "Freedom and Responsibility in Historical Scholarship," *Journal of Sikh Studies* (February 1975), 124–133.

Simon Digby (1932–2010), an expert on Islamic literature of South Asia, was the only Western scholar to present a substantive review of McLeod's work, which he described as "the latest and one of the most valuable additions to the corpus of Christian missionary writings on the religious sociology of India, whose type and pattern were established early in the century." Having situated McLeod's work in this tradition, Digby registers his discomfort with his "ruthless approach" to unearth the "Nanak of history," his use of "Protestant theological terms" to explain Guru Nanak's ideas, and his "weak grasp of Sufi literature." For this review, see the *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 7:2 (1970), 301–313. Published in a Bombay-based journal, Digby's ideas seemingly did not reach the Punjab and as a result could not become part of the discussion of McLeod's work in any important way.

Some scholars attempted to engage with McLeod's approach and argued that there are different ways to understand the Guru's life, but none of these succeeded in challenging McLeod's argument in any significant way or emerge as a viable alternative to his presentation. For early efforts in this direction, see Harbans Singh (1923–1995), *Guru*

Nanak and the Origin of the Sikh Faith (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), and J. S. Grewal (1927–), *Guru Nanak in History* (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1969).

It might also be useful to mention that McLeod's writings evoked a hostile response within some circles. He reports that he was not invited to the international conference arranged by Punjabi University in September 1969, and Kapur Singh denounced the book there; see his *Discovering the Sikh: Autobiography of a Historian* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 63–64. Early responses to the book included Kirpal Singh's critique published in *The Sikh Review* (February-March 1970). The second round of this attack was spearheaded by Daljeet Singh (1911–1994), whose interest in Sikh studies began after his retirement from Indian Administrative Services in 1969. As McLeod's status rose on the North American academic scene in the 1980s, Daljeet Singh's opposition to his works became increasingly strident. With some degree of effort, he was able to bring together some supporters who were ready to help him save "Sikh scholarship from the missionary onslaught." This denunciation of McLeod's writings and, by extension, those of others who were thought to have been working with him largely unfolded in North America. This criticism barred the Sikh studies programs at Toronto University (1986–1992) and Columbia University (1988–1999) from attaining permanence, and stunted the growth of the programs at the University of British Columbia (1987–1997) and the University of Michigan (1992–2004) during the nascent stages of their development. For details of these debates, see Gurdev Singh, ed., *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition* (Patiala: Siddharth, 1986); J. S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 215–237; and Hew McLeod, *Discovering the Sikh*, 154–191.

In my view, Daljeet Singh and his associates could not distinguish between McLeod's training in biblical studies and what they perceived as his "missionary designs" to erode the foundation of the Sikh tradition; see Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, 128. As a result, they could not identify the precise nature of what irked them in McLeod's writings. McLeod's response to their criticism was no less enigmatic. He argued that he was an atheist and attack on his research was part of an effort to protect the Sikh traditions from historical scrutiny; see his "Cries of Outrage: History versus Tradition in the Study of Sikh Community," *South Asia Research* (14: 1994)**, 121-135**. Given the fact that the people McLeod refer to in his discussion were products of Western modes of education and wrote in English, I am not convinced that McLeod's characterization of them as "traditional scholars" and their motivation as being centered on protecting "traditions" have much justification.

[4] The authority of *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* was established soon after its publication. McLeod himself and some other scholars built their interpretation of the events in later Sikh history on the research results of this book, thereby further strengthening its influence and authority in the field. See his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); *Who Is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); and *Sikhism* (New York: Penguin, 1997). For those who built on McLeod's interpretation of early Sikh history, see Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47–91; for its critique, see J. S. Grewal, *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997), 33–47.

As for general acceptance of the conclusions of the book in the 1980s, see John S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and A. T. Embree, ed., *The Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988 [1958]), and many others that deal with the Sikh tradition in a limited way. The impression that McLeod had acquired a mastery of Punjabi provided a high degree of authenticity and authority to his writings in the eyes of many Western scholars who were happy to use them for basic information they needed about the Sikhs.

[5] It may be useful to reiterate the landmarks of this period, which included the establishment of Punjabi University, Patiala (1962), and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (1969), as well as the celebrations of the centennials of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh (1966) and Guru Nanak (1969), the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1975) and Guru Arjan (2004), the inauguration of the Khalsa (1999), and the elevation of the Granth to the position of the Guru Granth (2008). This period has seen the production of more scholarly literature on the Sikhs than in their entire earlier history.

[6] In addition to the texts mentioned in note 2, see *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, ed. Vir Singh [1926] (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1986); *The Gian Ratanavli*, ed. Jasbir Singh Sabar (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993); and Sarupdas Bhalla, *Mahima Parkash*, ed. Utam Singh Bhatia [1776] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1971).

[7] For criticism of McLeod's use of the Janam Sakhis, see Ganda Singh, "Editorial," *Panjab Past and Present* (October 1970), i–x. It may be useful to record that the translated version of the book did not include this part; see *Guru Nanak de Udesh* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev

University, 1974). In my view, Ganda Singh's evaluation raises important questions regarding the issue of academic responsibility of a senior scholar toward new research. It seems clear that Ganda Singh had fundamental differences with McLeod's research results, but he did not want to bring them to the forefront lest they provide fuel to the fire already gathering around the book; see note 3. His argument that McLeod's work needs "sympathy," not "carping criticism," hurt the rise of a healthy debate so essential for a field at an early stage of growth. For positive assessment of his work on the Janam Sakhis, see Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature* (Jalandhar: ABS publications, 1988), 198–199; and Nripinder Singh, *The Sikh Moral Tradition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1990), 79.

[8] For McLeod's translations, see *The B–40 Janam Sakhi* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980); *The Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* (Totowa: Barnes and Nobel, 1984); *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama* (University of Otago, 1987); *Sikhs of the Khalsa Rahit* (Oxford University Press, 2003); and *The Prem Sumarag* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

The legitimacy of McLeod's use of an historical approach has also come under attack from diverse quarters; see Noel Q. King**'s** essay in Gurdev Singh, ed., *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition*; and Jasbir Singh Mann et al., eds., *Advanced Studies in Sikhism* (Irvine: Sikh Community of North America, 1989). For a recent critique, see the relevant sections in Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

It seems to me that the historical approach synchronizes well with Sikh understanding of the past. For instance, the Sikh view of time is linear, and Sikhs believe their history to be an integral part of the divine design for human history. For Guru Nanak, the universe rose as a result of the divine command (*hukam*/*bhanha*) and follows a course set in historical time (see his cosmology hymn GG, 1035–1036). The Sikhs began to record their own history soon after the community's founding, and the Puratan Janam Sakhi registers a reasonably good consciousness of issues such as that of historical chronology. The daily *ardas* (Sikh supplication) is essentially a thanksgiving prayer for the divine support through various phases of the community's sociopolitical and ideological development from the beginnings to the present day. References to historical events begin to appear in the writings that are included in the Guru Granth; see Balwand and Satta, GG, 966, for the developments during the sixteenth century; for a discussion of this issue in Guru Arjan's time, see Surjit Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History*, 137–177. The earliest manuscript of *Sakhi Babe Nanak ki Adi to Ant tak*, dated

1640, was extant until the 1970s; see *The Puratan Janam Sakhi* ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi, 136–137. For the text of the *ardas*, see the English version of *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1997), 9–11; for discussion of its history and contents, see Lal Singh Gyani, *Puratan Ardasa te Bhaugati Parbodh* (Amritsar: Panch Khalsa Press, 1920); Gyani, *Puratan Sikh Ardasa* (Amritsar: Gurmat Press, 1952), 1–17; and Piara Singh Padam, "*Ardas*," in his *Guru Ghar* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997), 279–286.

[9] For instance, unless the history of the sources employed in an account created in 1776, the year of completion of the *Mahima Parkash*, can be traced back to the times of Guru Nanak (d. 1539), I am not convinced that it could serve as a significant source of information for an "historian."

[10] *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, 11, 49, 59–60, 75, 119–122.

[11] Given his emphasis on the need for skepticism, it is strange that McLeod seems satisfied to use an edition of the Puratan Janam prepared in 1926 by Vir Singh, the limitations of whose editorial capabilities later became a subject of a doctoral research; see Harinder Singh, "Bhai Vir Singh's Editing of *Panth Parkash* by Rattan Singh Bhangu," Ph.D. thesis (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1990).

[12] *The Puratan Janam Sakhi*, ed. Vir Singh 175–176.

[13] Instead of associating this with the Puranic mythology, it may be useful to think of other possibilities such as the Jogis based there named it Sumeru; given their influence their followers began to call it Sumeru; as part of the vernacularization process, the Punjabi *meru* simply means a "hill" and *sumeru* thus becomes a big hill. I became aware of the last meaning while reading Giani Naurang Singh's commentary on the *Sarab Loh Granth*, see MS 766, Guru Nanak Dev University, folio 1930.

[14] McLeod writes, "Sikh children who receive a Western-style education will assuredly imbibe attitudes which encourage skepticism, and having done so they are most unlikely to view traditional janam-sakhi perceptions with approval. Given the emphasis which is typically laid on stories concerning Guru Nanak there is a risk about Sikhism as a whole may come to be associated with the kind of marvels and miracles which are the janam-sakhi stock-in-trade. For some the price may be worth paying, but at least they should be aware of the risks involved in adopting

the traditional approach." See his *Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 21–22.

[15] For commentaries on the Janam Sakhis, see *The Gian Ratanavli*, Sakhi 1; Ratan Singh Bhangu (d. 1847), *Sri Guru Panth Parkash*, ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004), 16, and 178–183; Ernest Trumpp (1828–1885), *The Adi Granth* [1877] (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978), i–vii; Gurmukh Singh (1849–1898), *The Janam Sakhi Babe Nanak Ji ki*, ed. M. Macauliffe (Rawalpindi: Gulshan Punjab Press, 1885), 1–10; and Karam Singh (1884–1930), *Katak ke Visakh* [1912] (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1932). Two doctoral theses, Jagjit Singh's "A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak upto the Middle of the Eighteenth Century" (1967); and Piar Singh's "A Critical Survey of Punjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century" (1968), were submitted at Panjab University, Chandigarh.

[16] For McLeod's writings on the Janam Sakhis, see his *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam Sakhis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); *The B–40 Janam-sakhi* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980); and "The Janam-sakhis," in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, 20–36; "The Hagiography of the Sikhs," in *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society* [1994](New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35–53; and "The Life of Guru Nanak," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Religions of India in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University of Press, 1995), 449-461. For the reception of these writings, see his *Discovering the Sikhs*, 150–151.

[17] Within his own writings, Guru Nanak describes himself as an ordinary human being who has been assigned the path of singing the praises of the Creator (*Manhas murati Nanaku namu*, M1, GG, 350; *Nanaku bugoyad janu tura tere chakran pakhaq*, M1, GG, 721; *Koi akhe adami Nanaku vechara*, M1, GG, 991; *Kare karae sabh kichhu janhe Nanaki sair ev kahie*, M1, GG, 434, and 660; *Hau dhadhi hari prabhu khasam ka hari kai dari aia*, M1, GG, 91, and 150, 468, and 1057).

[18] For a creative way to address this issue, see J. S. Hawley, "Mirabai in Manuscript," in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89–98.

[19] The two editions, *The Puratan Janam Sakhi*, ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi; and *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, ed. Gurbachan Kaur, represent excellent critical scholarship.

[20] The earliest known manuscripts include the Puratan Janam Sakhi (1640); the Bala Janam Sakhi (1658); and the Miharban Janam Sakhi (1754). As for the dates of these texts' composition, I base them on the following evidence. The text of the writing of the Gurus that appear in the early Puratan manuscripts is pre-Kartarpur Pothi (1604).

We have on record the claim of Hariji (d. 1696) that his father, Miharban, had completed his Janam Sakhi by 1619; see *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*, ed. Krishna Kumari Bansal (Sangrur: the editor, 1977), 234; for reference to a copy of Miharban Janam Sakhi prepared in 1651, see MS 427B, Khalsa College (*Samat 1708 Vaisakh Vadi ekam nu* [Miharban, Hariji, and] *Chatrbhuj pothi puran hoi*, folio 676). There is firm evidence that Bala Janam Sakhi was compiled after the death of Baba Handal (1648), and an elaborately illustrated manuscript dated 1658 was extant until recently, see *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, 149–150.

[21] The echoing of the Purtatan images in the literature of the Miharaban family leaves little doubt that this text was available to them, see the opening and sections of *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*.

[22] The Miharaban and the Bala Janam Sakhis were productions of the sectarian groups led by Miharban and Baba Handal, respectively. For *Janam Sakhi of Miharban*, see MS 2306, Khalsa College, dated 1650 (*Sakhi Guru Hariji ke mukh ki likhi Samat 1707*, folio 164b); and *Sodhi Hariji Krit Goshatan Miharban kian*. For additional writings of this family, see Pritam Singh and Joginder Singh Ahluwalia, *Sikhan da Chhota Mel: Itihas te Sarvekhanh* (San Leandro, California: Punjab Educational and Cultural Foundation, 2009), 84–97. An undated manuscript entitled, *Janam Sakhi Baba Handal* (folios 1-602), is available with his descendents at Jandiala Guru, near Amritsar. For more on this text and family, see Varinder Kaur, "Parchi Baba Handal: Sampadan te Itihasik Visleshanh," M. Phil. thesis (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1989); and Rajinder Pal, *Sankhep Jivan Charitar Sri Guru Baba Handal Ji* (Jandiala: Gurudwara Sri Guru Baba Handal Ji, undated [1990s]).

[23] It may be useful to point out that this itinerary is not accepted in current scholarship; see Harbans Singh, *Guru Nanak and the Origin of the Sikh Faith*, 154.

[24] A discussion of the relationship of the position of the Guru and the layout of his house with the model of a Sufi master and his hospices

(*khanqah*), on the one hand, and the hillock (*tillas*) of the Shaivite ascetics, on the other, would shed light on the nature of relationship of the early Sikhs to these groups. For general information about the period, see J. S. Grewal, ed., *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[25] For the singing of the *Alahanhia*, see the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscript dated 1690, folio 273b.

[26] For an essay on this important theme, see J.S. Grewal, "Sacred Space in Sikhism," in Joseph T. O'Connell, ed., *Organizational and Institutional Aspects of Indian Religious Movements* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1999).

[27] It is important to reiterate that the Puratan's account of Guru Nanak's travels is much less elaborate than the ones available in the Miharban and the Bala Janam Sakhis.

[28] For this interpretation of the rise of institutions such as the *langar*, the *manjis*, and the *Granth*, see Hew McLeod, *Sikhism*, 23–24, and 30–31. Working within this larger context, Pashaura Singh argues that the compositions of the early Gurus were preserved in both oral and written form (aides-memoire), and the institution of scripture formally started with Guru Arjan, see his *Life and Works of Guru Arjan* (New Delhi: Oxford University, Press, 2006), 134–171; Christopher Shackle's recent statement also attributes the first "canonical" version of Sikh scripture to Guru Arajn, see his "Repackaging the ineffable" changing styles of Sikh scriptural commentary," *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies* 71, 2(2008), 257.

Another example of McLeod's anachronistic discussion of Guru Nanak's theology based on evidence from the writings of other Gurus can be found in his discussion of the *mangal/mulmantar* ("invocation"/"the root formula")—a string of epithets that refer to different aspects of the Divine. He begins his exposition of Guru Nanak's ideas with an analysis of the *mangal* but fails to mention that it appears for the first time in the Kartarpur Pothi (1604), completed during the period of Guru Arjan. While explicating the "Sikh conception" of the Divine, it is fine for Jodh Singh to start his discussion with the *mangal*—see his *Gurmat Nirnhay* [1932] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1979), 1—but not for McLeod, who is claiming to deal only with the ideas of Guru Nanak. For a discussion of the *mangal*, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 53–54. The terms *Satinamu*, *Akal Murati*, and *Ajuni* that appear in the *mangal* are not used in Guru Nanak's verses, and his favorite epithets for

the Divine such as *Kartaru*, *Nirankaru*, and *Sahibu* are not available in this text.

For a discussion Guru Amardas' year of birth, see *Guru Amardas: Srot Pustak* ed. Raijasbir Singh (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986), 227-229.

[29] For a discussion of this *pothi*, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 33–40.

[30] There was a general welcome accorded to this section of the book after its publication. Ganda Singh complemented McLeod for "understanding, appreciating and presenting [the Guru's] teachings in a very lucid and convincing manner"; see *Panjab Past and Present* (October 1970), i–x. Needless to say, McLeod's use of Protestant terms such as "theology," "divine self-expression," "unregenerate man," and "discipline" to label the Guru's ideas may not have sounded unreasonable to people in the late 1960s, but writing in 2010 we are better equipped to understand this problem.

Although I was vaguely aware of this issue of terminology earlier, it was crystallized for me with John S. Hawley's presentation entitled "What Is Sikh Theology?" at Columbia University on March 31, 1990. In this unpublished paper, he laid out the issues involving the use of terms from one tradition to explain the ideas of the other and the problems inherent in this effort.

[31] McLeod's discussion is built around the dichotomy between the supposed Sikh belief in "divine revelation" and his need to analyze the Guru's beliefs by situating them in their historical context. For me, a historian is obligated to take into account Guru Nanak's belief that his compositions represent the divine voice (*Tabalbaz bichar sabadi sunhia*, M1, GG, 142; *Jaisi mai avai khasam ki banhi, tesrha kari gian ve Lalo*, M1, GG, 722). This comes further into focus when we note that none of the Guru's illustrious contemporaries on the Indian side made claims for divine sanction, and these are an integral part of the prophetic tradition on the Judeo-Christian-Islamic side.

[32] There is no evidence to support McLeod's category of a Sant; see Nirvikar Singh, "Guru Nanak and the 'Sants': A Reappraisal," *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 8:1 (2001), 1–34; for McLeod's response to this article and Singh's rebuttal to that, see *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 9:1 (2002), 137–142.

[33] For more on this theme, see Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod, eds., *The Sants: Studies in Devotional Traditions of India* (Delhi: Motilal

Banarsidass, 1987), 1–6; John S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 3–7; Nirvikar Singh, "Guru Nanak and the 'Sants': A Reappraisal," 1–34; and J. S. Grewal, *The Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–21.

[34] The bibliography in the book does not indicate that McLeod paid much attention to the writings of these saints that appear outside the Sikh canon. Nor does he take any note of the effort that went into the selection of these compositions for the Sikh scriptural text. From our knowledge of the early Sikh manuscripts, the writings of the non-Sikh saints were vetted in two stages. In the first, those who believed in iconic worship were labeled as unbaked stuff (*kachi banhi*) and discarded. In the second, the available compositions of those who believed in the formless God were subjected to close scrutiny and the ones that conformed to the Sikh beliefs in family and social life were selected. For these details, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 111–117; Pashaura Singh, *The Bhagats of the Guru Granth Sahib* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Vinay Dharwardkar, *Kabir: The Weaver's Song* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2003), 25–58; and J. S. Hawley, "The Received Kabir: Beginnings to Bly," in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours*, 267–278.

[35] The secondary literature referred to in this discussion include Ahmad Shah, *The Bijak of Kabir* (Hamirpur, 1917), 1–28; Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabir Granthavali* (Pondichery, 1957), iv–v; Vaudeville, *Au Cabaret de l'Amour: Paroles de Kabir* (Paris,1959), 7–11, Vaudeville, "Kabīr and Interior Religion," *History of Religions* 3 (1964): 221–222; Bhagirath Misra and Rajnarayn Mauraya, *Sant Namdev ki Padavali* (Poona, 1964), 9–31; and Parasuram Chaturvedi, *Uttari Bharat ki Sant-paramapara* (Prayag, 1951), 709–733. The names of the publishers are not mentioned in the bibliography provided in the book.

[36] In my view, the supposed similarities between the two compositions of Kabir and Guru Nanak quoted to make the point that Guru Nanak had access to the writings of his predecessor are too vague to support this argument; see Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Granth Prakash*, 47–48. For the entry of the *bhagat banhi* into the Sikh scriptural corpus during the times of Guru Amardas, see my *Goindval Pothis: The Earliest Extant Source of the Sikh Canon* (Cambridge: Harvard Oriental Series, 1996).

[37] There is not a single reference to Baba Farid in the second section of the book; see entries under his name in the index, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, 254.

[38] See his "Influence of Islam upon the Thought of Guru Nanak," in his *Sikhism and Indian Society* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1967), 292–308. Let me present one instance to challenge this situation. McLeod and many others of his generation use *Akal Purakh* (Being beyond time) as the core epithet for God in Guru Nanak's writings. It comes from Indic roots and brings in a set of philosophical connotation to explain the Guru's conception of the divine. The problem with this usage becomes apparent when one presents the simple fact that this epithet appears only once in the Guru's compositions (*Tu akal purakhu nahi siri kala*, M1, GG 1038). Simultaneously, it might also be intriguing to note that the Guru uses *Sahib*, which comes from Arabic and means "Sovereign," more than one hundred times in his compositions.

[39] The categories that represent the creation include the musical modes (*rags*), elements (air, water, fire), the deities (Brahma, Shiv, and so on), holy people (Siddh, Jati, Sati, and so on), learned people (such as writers), beautiful women, warriors, rich people, sacred spots, and others. The same type of structure unfolds in his cosmology hymn (M1, GG, 1036), the opening thirteen verses catalogue the absence of what Guru Nanak associates with the world—natural objects (sun, moon, light, sky, rivers, and so on), gods (such as Brahama, Bishanu, Mahesu), humans (men and women), religious personas (jogis, gopis, khans, shaikhs, hajis, mullahs, qazis), sacred texts (Veds, Shashatars, Katebs), sacred spots (*tirath*, Mecca/haj), social hierarchy (Varan)—and the final three declare that the Creator brought all these into being and one can only make sense of this with the help of the Guru.

[40] See his 54-verses composition entitled *Onkar* (M1, GG, 929–938), which though entitled "One God," is about the universe and how the human beings should function in it.

[41] This idea runs though the writings of all the Sikh Gurus, *Sabh srisati seve dini rati jiu, de kanu sunhahu ardas jiu*, M5, GG, 74.

[42] For traditional Sikh scholarship, see Taran Singh, *Gurbanhi dian Viakhia Parnalian* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1980); a summary of his argument appears in Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth: Canon, Meaning and Authority* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 241–257. For

another statement on this theme, see my "500 years of Sikh Educational Heritage," in Reeta Grewal et al., eds., *Five Centuries of Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 335–368.

[43] For the commentaries on Guru Nanak's compositions, see the relevant sections in the early Janam Sakhis. The earliest manuscript of this type that has come to my notice contains a collection of the *vars* in the Guru Granth. Although undated, its orthography belongs to the late sixteenth century, and the texts such as these came to be known as the *Panj Granthis* and *Das Granthis*, which contained the core compositions used for daily recitations.

[44] Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Nanak Sagar* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1993), 73–178.

[45] See Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Gurmat Nirnhay Sagar* [1876] (Kankhal: Sri Nirmala Panchaiti Akharha, 1898); Kahn Singh Nabha, *Gurmat Prabhakar* [1898] (Amritsar: Chatar Singh Jiivan Singh, 2005), and *Gurmat Sudhakar* [1899] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1979); Jodh Singh, *Gurmat Nirnhay*; and Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism* [1944] (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1986 . Bhagwan Singh's *Rahit Darpanh* (pre-1877), which still is in manuscript form with very few scholars aware of its existence, also falls in this category.

[46] See previous note. McLeod's discussion does not create the impression that he had the opportunity to immerse himself in the writings of the Guru, think through the nature of the issues related to his life and teachings, and propose a narrative of this crucial period of Sikh history that can be supported with firm evidence. Instead, I see here a young scholar coming to the Guru's compositions with preconceived notions about the medieval religious landscape of north India, and a set of Protestant categories and terms that he thought was adequate to unlock the ideas of any thinker irrespective of his or her linguistic or cultural context.

[47] The portrait of the Guru that emerged in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* coordinates closely with in his image of half-closed eyes looking toward the heavens available in the calendar art of the 1960s; see McLeod's *Popular Sikh Art* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), Preface. A serious discussion of the iconography of the Guru has yet to appear, but the data at our disposal indicate a shift between the portraits that predated the mid-nineteenth century and the iconography that

became popular afterward. For discussion of these issues, see Susan Stronge, ed., *The Art of the Sikh Kingdom* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1999); and B. N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour* (New Delhi: National Museum, 2000).

[48] W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, 5.

[49] See his "On the Word Panth: A Problem of Terminology and Definition," *Contributions in Sociology* 12:2 (1979).

[50] For an interesting discussion, see Manmohan Singh, "Bird Images in Guru Nanak's Hymns," *Panjab Past and Present* (April 1979), 227–231.

[51] Kabir refers to the authority and attitudes of the revenue collectors in his verse *Hari ke loga mo kou niti dasai patwari*, GG, 793.
[52] Reference to the village elders appears in the Puratan Janam Sakhi manuscript dated 1758, folio 15.

[53] The Puratan presents Guru Nanak's critique of the politics of the time in some detail. The Guru is presented as being deeply upset with the prevailing corruption around the political institutions, and its author expresses this forthrightly. It is, however, interesting to reflect on why the Guru's discomfort with the politics of the time is absent in the Miharban Janam Sakhi and the *Gian Ratnavali* (post-1760s). Could it be that by elaborating on this, Miharban did not want to risk annoying the Mughal authorities with whom his family worked closely, and the author of the *Gian Ratnavali* did not need to bring it into the discussion, as the Sikhs themselves were the rulers by the time of his writing?

[54] The sounds "b" and "v" are interchangeable in Punjabi, and the *Vedi Patisahu* here refers to Guru Nanak's family caste, Bedi. For an interesting comment on the concept of the king being responsible for the concerns of both *din* and *dunia*, see Abul Fazal, *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. H. Blochmann [1927] (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2001), 170–172.

[55] For more on the Bhatts, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh* (Patiala: Gur Ratan Publishers, 2005), 2: 1334–1337.

[56] As for the location of Kartarpur, Sialkot was in its north (20 miles), Kalanaur, the town where the Mughal emperor Akbar was coroneted in the 1550s, in the southeast, (5 miles), Batala in the south (15 miles), and Lahore in the west (20 miles).

[57] For a discussion of the Kartarpur period, see my *Sikhism* (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2004), 22–28.

[58] McLeod, *Sikhism*, 14–15, and 36–37.

[59] In addition, we have six names that do not carry any reference to the social station of these people (Malo, Manga, Kalu, Japuvansi, Bhagirath, Jodh, Jivai); see Bhai Gurdas' *Varan*, 11: 13–14.

[60] The Bala Janam Sakhi opens with the claim that Bala, who was supposedly a childhood friend of Guru Nanak, lived in Talwandi, and so did the descendents of Lalu, Guru Nanak's father's elder brother.

[61] Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tavarikh* [1696], tr. Ranjit Singh Gill (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972), 78-79.

[62] *The Baburnama*, tr. Annete Susannah Beveridge [1921] (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2003), 454; *The Baburnama*, ed. Wheeler M. Thackston (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 315. The villages around Kartarpur were inhabited by the tribes of Bajwas, Chahals, Gills, Kahlons, Khairas, Manns, and Randhawas. It might also be useful to mention that the Jats and their rural ancillaries constituted over 90 percent of the Sikh community when the numbers begin to become available; see Surinderjit Kaur, "Changes in the Distributional Pattern of the Sikhs in India, 1881–1971: A Geographical Appraisal," Ph.D. thesis (Panjab University, Chandigarh, 1979), 34.

[63] Cited in Irfan Habib, "The Jats of Punjab and Sind," in Harbans Singh and N. G. Barrier, eds., *Essays in Honor of Ganda Singh* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976), 94–95. Vladimir Monorsky, "Gardizi in India," *Iranica* 137 (1948), 200–215, does not seem to include this reference.

[64] *Alberuni's India*, ed. Ainslie Embree (New York: Norton Library, 1971), 401. It is interesting that this position is tangentially evoked in Bhai Gurdas's *Var* 8, devoted to the society around him. Its ninth stanza deals with the Brahmins, tenth with the Kshatriyas, whom he equates with the Khatris, eleventh with the Vaishayas, and twelfth with the Jains, Jats, Lohars, Chhimbas, Oil makers, Barbers, and so on. The placement of the Jats and the Jainis with all other outcastes is interesting. For the reference to the Jats in *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, see Ganda Singh, "Nanak Panthis," *Panjab Past and Present* 1 (1967), 54 and 57; and for their

appearance in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, see Table 1 in Irfan Habib, "The Jats of Punjab and Sind."

[65] For references to the Jats in later writings, see Joseph Davey Cunnigham, *A History of the Sikhs* [1848] (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1985), 299–300; K. R. Qanungo, *History of the Jats* [1925] (Delhi: Delhi Originals, 2003); M. C. Pradhan, *The Political System of the the Jats of Northern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966); and Nonika Datta, *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). From the press on this issue in 2010:

"Amritsar: The All-India Jat Reservation Sangharsh Committee launched its rath yatra from the Golden Temple here today. They are protesting against the government's failure to grant OBC (Other Backward Class) status to the Jat community of Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. The yatra will pass through various districts of three states before culminating on September 13, [2010] at Sonepat (Haryana), which will be observed as "Jat Chetavani Divas." On the day, the district units of various states would hold rallies across the country, said Yashpal Malik, national president of the committee, which had already declared to disrupt the Commonwealth Games. He said the community had been fighting for getting the OBC status for the past 19 years. He alleged that the community was feeling dejected over the continuous indifferent attitude of the governments at the Centre and three states which had adopted double standards by granting the status to other similar caste and communities like Yadav, Ahir, Saini, Kamboj, Gurjar etc." *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, August 29, 2010).

[66] See Ganda Singh, "Nanak Panthis," *Panjab Past and Present* 1 (1967), 54.

[67] I have seen this type of process unfolding in my lifetime. Beginning with the early 1960s, I remember the Gujjar pastoralists coming down from the hills and attempting to spend winters or settle down temporarily in the Punjab. While the farmers were happy to offer their fallow fields for free cattle manure in return, and urban society was happy to buy cheaper milk, the Gujjars were invariably seen as petty criminals who carried arms and were always ready to steal. With the agriculture having become more intensive in the Punjab in the past decades, their plight has worsened, and one often sees them squeezed with their cattle onto the open areas along the roads.

[68] This was the only point of transition of leadership in Sikh history when a Jat candidate was in the running for the office of Guruship, see *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*, 460; and *Mahima Prakash Vartak*, ed. Kulwinder Singh Bajwa (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004 [1770?]), 51–52. For general references to his life and activity in the eighteenth century writings, see relevant sections in *Gurbilas Patshahi Chhevin* (Amritsar; Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1998[1718?]); and *Kavi Saundha* ed. Dharm Singh (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1981[1790?]). For recent writings on him, see Jasbir Singh Bhalla, *Baba Buddha Jivani* (Amritsar: Navin Prakashan, 1981); Amarjit Kaur, "Punjabi Sahit Vich Babe Buddhe da Sarup," Ph.D. thesis (Guru Nanak Dev University, 2002); Sabinderjit Singh Sagar, *Baba Buddha Ji* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2005); and Harnek Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Viakhia te Sandesh* (Patiala: Gurmat Prakashan, 2008), 42–62.

Little is written about Ajita Randhawa, but his name appears prominently in the writings of Bhai Gurdas, and an important late seventeenth-century text entitled *Goshati Ajite Randhawe nal hoi* is also available.

[69] For the details of McLeod's argument, see his *Evolution of the Sikh Community* (1975), 1–19 and 83–104; *Sikhism* (1997), 3–61 and 228–250; *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society* (2007), 171–196. For those who built on McLeod's work, see Harjot Oberoi, "Ritual and Counter Ritual," in J. T. O'Connell et al., eds., *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

[70] This would also provide the appropriate context to interpret the code of conduct and belief (*rahit*) statements pertaining to the ritual details of the remarriage ceremony of widows, produced around 1700. See *Prem Sumarag*, ed. Randhir Singh [1953] (Jalandhar: New Book Company, 2000), 30–35.

[71] Tony Ballentyne, ed., *Textures of the Sikh Past* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3. This understanding implies that *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* is secure as the master narrative of the founding of the Sikh tradition, and as a corollary of this, McLeod's later writings and those of others that were crafted around its arguments deserve the currency they have enjoyed in the past decades.

[72] Grewal's early position was that "with mild disagreement here" and "a minor difference there," one could work with McLeod's overall interpretation of Sikh history, see his "Legacies of the Sikh Past for the Twentieth Century," in J. T. O'Connell et al., eds., *Sikh History and*

Religion in the Twentieth Century, 18. More recently, he has registered McLeod's limitations as to how he was not able to achieve the goals he had set up for himself in his study of the Janam Sakhis; he also contends that McLeod's argument that Guru Nanak's life story has to remain brief carries little significance in the light of the fact that we have far more detailed information about him than any other figure of his period. See J. S. Grewal, *Lectures on History, Society and Culture of the Punjab* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2007), 160–164. Writing in 2009, he expanded on Karine Schomer's argument regarding the nature of medieval Indian poetry to question McLeod's joining of Guru Nanak and Kabir as parts of the "Sant synthesis," as well as his resulting interpretation of the circumstances of the rise of the early Sikh community; see his *Sikhs: Ideology, Institutions, and Identity*, 3–4.

[73] I divide McLeod's scholarship into two broad areas: interpretations of various phases of Sikh history and translations of the early Sikh texts (see note 8). I have already registered my differences with his research results regarding the founding of the Sikh community. As for the latter category, my differences with his work are centered on the dating of the translated documents. In my view, McLeod did not have the opportunity or the time to study the early manuscripts of these texts, and in the absence of any empirical evidence he dated these texts where he thought they fitted best in the trajectory of Sikh history he himself had created. In the light of the data available to us, there is no basis to support McLeod's dating of, say, the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas before 1604; the Puratan Janam Sakhi after 1604; *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama* in the mid-eighteenth century; *The Prem Sumarag* in the early nineteenth/late eighteenth century; and *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* in 1841, for references to these dates, see his *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, 17-18.

It has been a deeply agonizing experience to critique McLeod's scholarship, with which I started my own journey into the wonderland of Sikh studies in the early 1980s, but I feel obliged to present these thoughts for the consideration of younger scholars. For the beginning of my differences with McLeod's interpretations, see my "Teaching the Sikh Tradition," in John Stratton Hawley et al., eds., *Studying the Sikhs: Issues for North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 142–143.

[74] This is as important facet of the previous generation's legacy, which began with the pioneering efforts of Ganda Singh in the 1930s and manifested in the selfless service of many others like Randhir Singh, Shamsher Singh Ashok, and Piara Singh Padam. These scholars were involved in preserving manuscripts, developing their repositories,

preparing their catalogues, and making them available in print. For Ganda Singh's biography, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Sikh Panth Vishavkosh*, 1: 714–716. For Randhir Singh, see notes 3, 68, and 81. For Shamsher Singh Ashok's monumental works, see his *Punjabi Hath Likhatan di Suchi*, 2 vols. (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1961 and 1963); and *Sikh Reference Library Amritsar dian Hath Likhat Pustakan di Suchi* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1968). For Padam's contribution, see his *Rahitname* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995), and notes 2, 3, 8, 36, 44, and 79.

[75] It may be useful to mention another position on this issue. In *Sikh Formations* 1. 1 (June 2005), Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair writes: "The study of Sikhs and Sikhism today is at a major turning point. The conventional frameworks that have dominated the efforts to carve out a distinct subject area of Sikh Studies over the last four decades appears increasingly unhelpful, if not irrelevant, against the backdrop of globalization and the emergence of new theoretical interventions in the human and social sciences. At the same time as we all, in some measure, come to terms with a 'New Age' in the twenty-first century, when the old certainties are being reassessed or giving way to new modes of thought, there is a serious intellectual challenge for those of us engaged with the study of Sikhs and Sikhism. This challenge is all the more pressing for it has also come at a juncture when there is generational change talking place in the academic leadership of the subject, with the towering 'greats' of the 1960s and 1970s gradually giving way to a new generation who now neither share their mindset nor are any longer comfortable with methodologies that have so long dominated the field."

Mandair's claim that "Sikh Studies" need to outgrow the supposedly "conventional framework" seems reasonable, but how this goal is to be achieved is the key question. Replacing the model of biblical studies that McLeod brought to Sikh studies with a new one based on the thinking of the "towering 'greats'" like Hegel and Derrida, as Mandair seems to do in his recently released *Religion and the Specter of the West* (2010), may not be much of an answer to this problem.

[76] No reference regarding the change of the name appears in *Guru Nanak Dev University: A Profile* (1994), a publication produced at the time of the university's silver jubilee celebration. It would be interesting to examine this episode and find out the basis on which the present name was argued for by its supporters, the nature of their religious affiliation, and the contribution of the large history and other related departments on the campus in this discussion. The fact stands, however, that there were

differences on what name should be used to build an institution honoring the founder of the tradition.

[77] See McLeod's "The Nanak Panth," in *Who Is a Sikh?*, 7–22; "The Early Nanak Panth," *Sikhism* 9–15; and Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 477 (entries under Nanak-panth and panthis).

[78] Guru Nanak calls the people at Kartarpur as the Sikhs (*Sunhi sikhvante Nanaku binavai*, M1, GG, 503), and considers them to constitute the Gurmukh Panth (the community of the Gurmukhs, *Hari kirati rahirasi hamari Gurmukhi Panth atitang*, M1, GG, 360); Guru Arjan assigns them the name of Sach da Panth (the path of truth, *Kal jal jam johi na sakai Sach ka Pantha thatio*, M5, GG, 714); the Bhatts describe them as the Utam Panth (the best path/the community of the best, *Ik Utam Panth sunio gur sangat*, GG, 1406) and Dharm Panth (the path of morality, *Lahnai Panth Dharam ka kia*, GG, 1401; *Dharam Panth dhariou*, GG 1406); and Bhai Gurdas uses the epithets of the Nirmal Panth (the pure path/ the community of the pure, *Maria sika jagat vichi Nanak Nirmal Panth chalia*, *Var*, 1: 45), and the Nirala Panth (the unique path, *Sabadi jiti sidhi mandali kitosu apanha Panth Nirala*, *Var*, 1:37). It is interesting to note that the term Nanak Panthi does not appear even in Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tavarikh* [1696], 80–81.

[79] The Miharban Janam Sakhi 1:8; and *Guru Amardas: Srot Pustak*, 52 and 56. For a discussion on Guru Hargobind's year of birth, see Piara Singh Padam, *Khashtam Guru de Khat Darshan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1994).

[80] For this section in the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, see Ganda Singh, "Nanak Panthis," *Panjab Past and Present* 1 (1967), 47-71.

[81] *Bishnai das avatar nav ganhia* (*Var* 14:4); and *Das avatar akar kari purkharath kari nav ganhae* (*Var* 16:10). For a denunciation of personal following, see "Apanhi Katha," in *Shabadarth Dasam Granth,* ed. Bhai Randhir Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972), 1: 71–72; Sainapati, *Sri Gursobha*, ed. Ganda Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967), 65.

[82] *Satigur sacha patisahu gurmukhi gaddi rah chalia* (*Var* 5:13); *Satigur sacha patisahu gurmukhi gaddi rah chalande* (*Var* 5:20); *Barah panth sadhie ke gurmukhi gaddi rah chalia* (*Var* 7:12); *Liha andar chaliai jiau gaddi rah, Hukami razai chalanha sadh sanghi nibahu* (*Var* 9:14); *Hukami razai chalanha gurmukhi gaddi rahu chalia* (*Var* 12:17); *Barah panth ikatar kar gurmukhi gaddi rahu chalia* (*Var* 18:14); *Gurmukhi*

gaddi rahu sachu nibihiai (19:19); *Sachu samanh sach vich gaddi rah sadh dang vahinha* (*Var* 24:6); *Babanhai ghari chal hai gurmukhi gaddi rahu nibhai* (*Var* 26:31); and *Sachui vanhaji khep laic hale gurmukhi gaddi rahu nisanhi* (29:12). The name *Param Marag* is an alternative title in the early manuscripts of the text that is known as the *Prem Sumarag* in current scholarship, see notes 70 and 73.

Revisiting the "Evolution of the Sikh Community"

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The Sikh tradition is barely five hundred years old. As the youngest world religion it has had to address the various doctrinal, philosophical, and cultural dilemmas and divergent approaches in a more 'compact' time frame and within a context of persistent political turmoil. Its evolution in response to changing historical context has been the focus of sustained scholarly attention for over a century. In his 'preliminary venture' to address this perennial issue in *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (1975) W.H. McLeod raised some questions coupled with tentative answers. The negative reception of this work in Sikh scholarly circles gave rise to intense polemical debate. The present essay carefully looks at the major hypotheses offered in the work and provides alternate readings of those issues. It further makes the case for putting McLeod's scholarship in its own historical context and adopting new approaches of understanding the Sikh past.

I

W.H. McLeod single-handedly introduced, nourished and advanced the field of Sikh studies in the western academy for more than four decades of his life. On a number of occasions he represented the Sikhs and Sikhism to both academic and popular audiences in the English-speaking world. This special issue of the *Journal of Punjab Studies* on his first death anniversary provides us with an opportunity to revisit his scholarly contributions. My special thanks go to its editor, Professor Gurinder Singh Mann, for the invitation to offer some of my thoughts in this regard. This essay is, therefore, a reexamination of McLeod's major hypotheses presented in the first and third chapters of his book, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (ESC) published in 1975. This short monograph of five essays drew a great many polemic responses from Sikh scholars, generating more heat than light on the academic issues raised in the book. There is an urgent need to contextualize McLeod's scholarship through critical scrutiny and to find new ways of imagining the Sikh past.

In the present essay I will first provide the broader intellectual context in which McLeod originally constructed his hypotheses, including some scholarly critiques of his arguments. Second, I will critique his location of Guru Nanak's teachings within the Sant tradition of North India. Third, I will carefully examine the arguments of the impact of Jat cultural patterns on the evolution of the Sikh Panth. Fourth, I will closely look at McLeod's take on the creation of the institution of the Khalsa. Fifth, I will scrutinize the cohesive role of certain Sikh institutions. Finally, I will offer some reflections on the new ways of looking at the Sikh past based on some recent approaches developing in the field of historiography. In dealing with early Sikh history, an analytical approach must be based on contextual depth, focusing on both ideology and environment.

Throughout his analysis McLeod maintained a double focus along the line of history and across the arc of traditional Sikh understanding. As a modern historian, he frequently addressed the issues of history verses tradition, the nature of authority in the Sikh Panth (community), and the ever-evolving nature of Sikh identity. For him, Sikh history offered "an unusually coherent example of how a cultural group develops in direct response to the pressure of historical circumstances" (ESC, p. 2). He referred to the works of three historians, Harbans Singh, Khushwant Singh and Gokul Chand Narang, who understood the development of Sikh community as marked by 'three major stages'. Accordingly, the first stage began with the work of Guru Nanak who founded Sikhism and the Sikh Panth. The second stage was marked by a radical reshaping of the Sikh Panth in the early seventeenth century after Guru Arjan's martyrdom in 1606. His son and successor Guru Hargobind signaled the formal process when he donned two swords ceremonially, symbolizing the spiritual (*piri*) as well as temporal (*miri*) investiture. Under his direct leadership, the Sikh Panth took up arms to protect itself from Mughal hostilities. The religious teachings of Guru Nanak were retained intact but "those who practiced them would now be prepared to defend by military means their right to do so" (ESC, p. 4). The third and final stage began when Guru Gobind Singh fused the military aspect with the religious by creating the Order of the Khalsa on the Baisakhi of 1699 in response to the growing hostility of the hill rajas and the Mughal authorities as well as the weakness of his followers.

According to McLeod, the significance of these three stages cannot be disputed, but this interpretation of evolution can be 'considerably modified'. He described the purpose of his analysis as follows:

> The purpose of this essay is to seek a more radical concept of development, one which will express a much more intricate synthesis of a much wider range of historical and sociological phenomenon. Our basic

> disagreement with the traditional interpretation concerns its simplicity. It starts too late and ends too soon. It omits vital elements within the limited area which it claims to cover. It over-simplifies the events to which it does attribute importance and lays upon them a weight of emphasis which in all three cases is considerably in excess of their true significance. (ESC, pp. 4-5)

McLeod thus intended to closely look at a much wide range of historical and sociological phenomenon to offer his 'radical concept of development' of the Sikh Panth. He proposed the hypothesis that explained the progressive development of the Panth not in terms of purposeful intention of the Gurus but in terms of the influence of the social, economic and historical environment. This specifically included such major features as the militant cultural traditions of the dominant group of the Jats ('rural peasantry') within the Panth, the economic context within which it evolved, and the influence of contemporary events such as those produced by local political rivalry and foreign invasion.[1] This interpretation, however, came under vigorous attack within the Sikh scholarly circles. In his later works McLeod reassessed his earlier stance in the light of criticisms and acknowledged the "intention of the Gurus as an important factor" in the gradual growth of the Sikh Panth, along with environmental factors that were overemphasized in his earlier analysis.[2]

II

W.H. McLeod took great pride in being 'a western historian' who was trained at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London during the mid-sixties. In his personal narrative he claimed: "The work of a western historian must involve a considerable amount of time spent on the slow, patient, and (for many) monotonous search for evidence. This does not mean searching in places which reveal only evidence which will suit a pre-formed view of the subject. It does not involve the suppression of inconvenient evidence either. Most assuredly, it does not. From the evidence which emerges, the historian must seek to frame a pattern for the course of events of any particular period, one which takes into full account the testimony of all the evidence which has been uncovered."[3] It is not surprising that McLeod came to be known as a 'rational empiricist' or 'positivist historian' who rigorously followed a skeptic approach in his analysis.

One of the great contributions of Enlightenment criticism was the analysis of society and its individuals through sociological study. In

particular, the analysis of social forces at work, the understanding of society and the relationship between wealth and power attained a new level of sophistication as a result of the pioneering work of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim on the ways in which texts and ideas relate to their social contexts.[4] Most frequently the word 'ideology' is used as a way of describing a system of ideas. It may also be used as a system of abuse in political discourse, when a position is dubbed 'ideological' because it is attached to narrow, doctrinaire positions. In the Marxist tradition, however, ideology functions in the interests of the wielders of power (often termed 'hegemonic groups'), who have an interest in maintaining things as they are and the interpretation of the world as it is, thereby enabling the economic interests of those with most wealth and influence to continue to wield that influence. Thus the study of ideology is to see how ideas and systems of thinking and belief function in a society in such a manner that the way people think and the ruling groups appear to be 'natural' and 'just'. Although these interests are not always compatible with the interests of the rest of the community, as the powerful groups are merely sectional in their interests, the way in which the language and system of ideas function is to make it appear that they are in fact in the interests of all. Not surprisingly, the critique of ideology involves the exposure not only of overt ways in which sectional interests are supported, but especially of the covert ways in which dominant interests are served. In addition, it exposes the contradictions in society and the habit which the dominant groups have of neutralizing their potential for resistance and change by co-opting some of the ideas into the dominant ideology.[5]

Most instructively, social, political and ideological criticism slowly infiltrated the world of biblical studies, dominated as it has been by the history of ideas and in particular the history of the development of the religious themes of particular communities.[6] McLeod was certainly aware of these contemporary intellectual trends and he applied sociological analysis to understand the progressive development of the Sikh Panth in terms of the influence of the social, economic and historical environment. For instance, he turned to examine the impact of the cultural traditions of the dominant group of the Jats in the process of militarization of the Sikh Panth during Guru Hargobind's period in response to Mughal hostility. We will return to this point later on in the section assigned to this discussion.

In his critique of McLeod's work J.S. Grewal skillfully provides the broader context in which religious ideas and social environment play crucial roles in the process of causation in Sikh history. He addresses the question: How do changes in history take place? The early European writers responded to the issue of 'change' in the Sikh Panth in terms of external environment in the form of repression and persecution by the Mughal state. In his *History of the Sikhs* (1849), however, Joseph D.

Cunningham introduced the factor of ideology with great emphasis on the relevance of the teachings of Guru Nanak in the development of the Sikh Panth. He also extended the scope of social environment by adding 'ethnicity' to the political factor generally invoked by his predecessors. A Punjabi Arya Samajist, Gokul Chand Narang, wrote the work *The Transformation of Sikhism* (1912), carrying the implication that Sikh ideology did not remain the same. A Bengali historian, Indu Bhushan Banerjee, wrote a two-volume work on *Evolution of the Khalsa* (1936), taking into account the ideas of Guru Nanak and his successors but emphasizing the crucial role of social environment, including ethnicity. In their *A Short History of the Sikhs* (1950) Teja Singh and Ganda Singh employed the term 'transfiguration' deliberately to hammer the point that developments in Sikh history were inspired by one and the same ideology expounded by Guru Nanak and his successors. Providing this contextual background to the controversy over *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Grewal makes the following observation: "W.H. McLeod, in theory, does not deny the role of ideas but, in practice, he concentrates on the social environment in his exposition of institutionalization, militarization, the Khalsa *rahit* and the doctrines of Gurushiip."[7]

McLeod did not write in a scholarly vacuum. Undoubtedly, he was the product of his own times. He was instrumental in carrying forward an 'objective' scholarship in his works, questioning and challenging traditional beliefs. His method remained a firm search for historical sources and causality. His undying faith in historicism and search for causality made him a 'skeptic historian'. Note the following statement: "Traditions abound but so too do compulsive reasons for skepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that the traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be wiped clean and must not be re-inscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century" (ESC, p. 16). This was the approach that historians of biblical scholarship followed in their quest for historical Jesus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They would respond to the basic question of 'what really happened'. Some Sikh historians in the academic community (like Ganda Singh) were appreciative of McLeod's work, while others (like Fauja Singh) were critical of its limitations. Among other Sikh critics Daljeet Singh was the most severe. His criticism of *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (1975) and of McLeod himself was 'brusque and pungent'.[8]

But the first frankly polemical work directed against McLeod appeared in the form of an edited volume, *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition* (1986), in which the editor, Justice Gurdev Singh, attributed 'extra-academic motives' to McLeod on the assumption that 'Christian missionaries were out to undermine non-Christian traditions'.[9] Grewal painstakingly points out that Justice Gurdev Singh's charge that McLeod presented Sikhism as 'only a rehash of an effete Hindu creed' is not

justified, since "it ignores McLeod's positive exposition of Guru Nanak's teachings which in 1968 was perhaps the most thorough exposition of the theme in English."[10] And, Gurdev Singh's work also ignored McLeod's appreciation of Sikhism as 'a religion of refined and noble quality'. It is instructive to note that the appearance of this work after post-1984 events is quite significant. Not surprisingly, the picture on the dust jacket of Grewal's *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, showing the destruction of the Akal Takhat in 1984 by the Indian army, rightly links the 'extension of the controversy' with the agony through which the Sikh community passed in the last two decades of twentieth century. This was the time when the number of Sikh critics of McLeod's scholarship increased with the inclusion of 'retired judges, civil servants, army officers, former ministers, and Vice Chancellors', who had access to the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC).[11] McLeod was seen as serving the interests of those forces which were inimical to the Sikh tradition and hostile to Sikh aspirations. Ironically, these Sikh critics successfully diverted the Sikh outrage against the Indian state towards a western scholar and his associates.

Grewal aptly points out that polemics may not be the best modes of protest but polemics do represent a form of protest. He has provided a balanced perspective on the debate between 'critical scholars' of the Sikh tradition and their 'Sikh critics' regarding controversial issues in the study of Sikhism. His book may be criticized on only one point. Academic techniques are certainly different from those of theologians and traditional scholars. The two different pedagogical ways of studying religion are aptly described in the images of pulpit and podium. The *pulpit* represents the *confessional* approach followed by religious preachers who instruct and nurture the understanding and religious participation of their communities. The *podium*, on the other hand, represents the *academic* approach to understanding various religious traditions as cross-cultural phenomena of human life by following historical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, textual, philosophical, ethical, and comparative methods.[12] Grewal seems to overlook the distinction between the 'pulpit' and the 'podium' approaches when he gives legitimacy to those Sikh critics who do not follow established scholarly norms. For instance, resorting to a level of insult and insinuation intended not to refute an opponent's arguments so much as to destroy his personal reputation is not usually a part of contemporary academic discourse. Nevertheless, the intended purpose of Grewal's book has a noble objective: "This controversy could turn out to be fruitful if the critical scholars realize the implications of their work for the Sikh community and if their critics 'from within the faith' realize the significance of 'methodological atheism' which characterize all rational-empirical research in the modern world."[13] Most instructively, the scope

of what we write is not only limited to a group of other scholars in the field but to the world audience at large.

III

W.H. McLeod located Guru Nanak's teachings of 'interior devotion' squarely within the Sant tradition of North India, a tradition that stressed such features as the formless quality of God (*nirguna*) and a doctrine of deliverance that attached no significance to caste or to external modes of worship. However, he maintained that Guru Nanak reinterpreted the Sant inheritance in the light of his own experience and passed it on "in a form which was in some measure amplified, and in considerable measure clarified and integrated."[14] He asserted that Guru Nanak's concepts of the divine Word (*shabad*), Name (*nam*), Preceptor (*Guru*), and the divine Order (*hukam*) carry us beyond anything that the works of earlier Sants offer in any explicit form.[15] Further, McLeod observed: "Plainly there is much that is profoundly original in the hymns which we find recorded under his [Guru Nanak's] distinctive symbol in the Adi Granth. There is in them an integrated and coherent system which no other Sant has produced; there is clarity which no other Sant has matched."[16] In his overall analysis, however, McLeod placed more emphasis on similarities than on differences between Guru Nanak's thought and the Sant tradition. We will return to this point in the following analysis since differences are of crucial importance for shaping emerging Sikh identity and the evolution of the Sikh Panth.

It is true that like the protagonists of the Sant tradition Guru Nanak viewed the apprehension of the divine Name (*nam*) in terms of interior devotion. However, his emphasis on the extension of the knowledge gained in the process must be acknowledged. This extension of an interiorly gained understanding of the divine Name is predicated upon social responsibility and as such should be seen as movement away from the subjective speculation of the Sants. For Guru Nanak, the definition of the ideal person (*gurmukh*, "one oriented towards the Guru") is as follows: "*Gurmukh* practices the threefold discipline of the divine Name, charity and purity" (*nam dan ishnan*).[17] Indeed, these three features, *nam* (relation with the Divine), *dan* (relation with the society) and *ishnan* (relation with the self) provide a balanced approach for the development of the individual and the society. They correspond to the cognitive, the communal and the personal aspects of the evolving Sikh identity.

Let us closely look at the following example from *Var Majh* that McLeod cited in his analysis:

> Make mercy your mosque and devotion your prayer mat, righteousness your Qur'an; Meekness your circumcising, goodness your fasting, for thus the true

> Muslim expresses his faith. Make good works your Ka'bah, take truth as your *pir* [Sufi master], compassion your creed and your prayer. Let service to God be the beads which you tell and God will exalt you to glory.[18] (M1, *Var Majh*, 1 [7], AG, pp. 140-41).

In addition to insistence upon the 'interior' in the text, there is a decided emphasis upon the 'social' context in which 'righteousness', 'good works' and 'compassion' can make sense. In Guru Nanak's hymns one finds a recurrent theme on social responsibility that is quite central to his ideology as are his prescriptions of interior devotion. In his analysis, McLeod aptly delineates early Sikhism from the formalism and ritualism of the orthodoxies of the day and completely rejects "the mistaken notion that Guru Nanak offers a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim ideals."[19] Elsewhere, he is quite explicit in saying that "the emphasis for Nanak must be laid firmly and exclusively upon inner devotion as opposed to external observance."[20] Nevertheless, this emphasis on the devotional aspects as defining the general spiritual tendencies of Guru Nanak's *bani* runs the risk of descending into 'essentialist' thought patterns, in which Indian religion is summarily conglomerated into the single concept of 'mystical experience' based upon spiritual pursuit. What distinguishes Guru Nank's ideology is his repeated invocation of moral responsibility as the representation of a spiritual understanding extended into actual world. From this perspective, the citation given above is an instructive example, demonstrating not only Guru Nanak's rejection of the empty formalism of contemporary Islam, but also the way in which he sought to substitute positive ethical concepts in the place of petrified dogma.

Guru Nanak adopted a typically classic approach towards Hindu tradition and Islam of his day, an approach through which he condemned the conventional forms of religion such as ritual and pilgrimage, temple and mosque, Brahmin and Mullah, Vedas and Qur'an. By defining the 'true Hindu' and the 'true Muslim' as opposed to the false believer who continue to follow the conventional forms, he was in fact offering his own path of inner religiosity based upon ethical values to the followers of both religions. The universality of his teachings involved drawing upon a wide range of available linguistic resources. Guru Nanak rightly understood that his audiences would comprehend his message more clearly if put into the language of their own religious heritage. Thus, he was able to reach out to his Muslim audience by using the concepts of Islam; he encountered the Yogis through the use of Nath terminology. For instance, he addressed the 'twice-born' castes of the Hindu tradition as follows:

> Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot and truth the twist. This is the

> sacred thread of the soul. If you possess this, O Brahmin, then place it on me. It does not break or become soiled with filth. This can neither be burnt nor lost. Blessed are the mortals, O Nanak, who wear such a thread round their neck.
>
> (M1, *Var Asa*, 1 [15], AG, p. 471)

In a similar vein, Guru Nanak addressed the Yogis in their own terms and symbols as follows:

> Make contentment your earrings, modesty your begging bowl and wallet, and meditation on the Lord your ashes. Let the fear of death be your patched garment, be chaste like a virgin. Make faith in God your staff. Your great yogic sect (*ai panthi*) should be universal brotherhood, and self-control the conquest of the world.
>
> (M1, *Japu 28*, AG, p. 6)

The message of the divine truth revealed in these passages reflected Guru Nanak's self-understanding. As W. Owen Cole remarks, "Guru Nanak accepted the religious language of Islam and Hinduism when it suited him, but the truth which he wished to express was his own."[21] A close look on Guru Nanak's works reveals that his main emphasis was always on the cultivation of ethical virtues and the universality of human condition. He traveled widely to both Hindu and Muslim places of pilgrimage in India and abroad, with his life-long companion, Mardana, a Muslim bard. During these journeys he came into contact with the leaders of different religious persuasions and tested the veracity of his own ideas in religious dialogues. His inspired utterances (*bani*) reflect a unique quality of universality that has been instrumental in the ongoing process of crystallization of the Sikh tradition.

Indeed, the very survival of Guru Nanak's spiritual message largely depended on the superior nature of his compositions, both aesthetically and philosophically. It is difficult to imagine that a less profound doctrine could have withstood the test of time. Guru Nanak himself was not content to leave the ethical principles that he expounded in his life as merely theoretical constructs, but instead sought to institutionalize them at Kartarpur. His decision to found a new village in 1520s on the right bank of the river Ravi where he could establish a new religious community of his followers had far-reaching significance. It will be naïve to view the congregation (*sangat*) at Kartarpur as an incidental gathering of like-minded disciples around a typical Master (Guru) in Indian setting. Rather, one need to view his efforts to establish a community upon

ethical ideals he had been propagating as the natural extension of a mission to reorganize society according to a unique set of ideological and cosmological postulations that were in accord with the divine command (*hukam*). It is no wonder that Guru Nanak named his village as Kartarpur or "Creator's abode" to highlight the point that its residents were committed to restructure their lives according to a new rational model of normative behavior based upon divine authority.

At Kartarpur Guru Nanak gave practical expression to the ideals that matured during the period of his travels, and "combined a life of disciplined devotion with worldly activities, set in the context of normal family life and regular *satsang* ["company of the holy"]."[22] It was neither a monastic order involved in ascetic life, nor any Sufi *khanqah* ("hospice") established on revenue-free land (*madad-i-ma'ash*) granted by the rulers. In fact, Guru Nanak's accomplishment in founding a new town with the help of his own followers speaks much of his organizational skills. It clearly sets him apart from other contemporary poet-saints who may have dreamed of their "city of joy" (*begampura*, "abode without anxiety") but could not create it on earth.[23] Unlike Guru Nanak who belonged to the Khatri caste, Kabir, Namdev and Ravidas were all from the lower castes. Thus they did not have the requisite confidence or the means to build a city of their own.

In sum, Guru Nanak's egalitarian ideas about women set him far apart from the medieval poet-saints of North India, particularly Kabir, who described woman as 'a black cobra', 'the pit of hell', and 'the refuse of the world' (*Kabir Granthavali*: 30.2, 30.16, and 30.20). Thus he had major disagreements with the Sants on the issues of asceticism, misogyny, and sense of mission and the idea of an organized religious community. According to Grewal, McLeod's insistence that Guru Nanak can be squarely placed in the Sant tradition or that he can be called a Sant confuses the issue. It emphasizes the importance of similarities in ideas at the cost of differences in the system of Guru Nanak and Kabir, becoming "a case of a part being confused with the whole."[24] The authenticity and power of Guru Nanak's spiritual message ultimately derived not from his relationship with the received forms of tradition but rather from his direct access – through realization – to Divine Reality itself. Such direct access was the ultimate source of his message and provided him with a purchase from which he could fully understand, interpret, and adjudicate the various elements of tradition. Throughout his writings he conceived of his work as divinely commissioned, and he demanded the obedience of his audience as an ethical duty.

IV

W.H. McLeod cautiously offered the hypothesis that the founding of the villages of Tarn Taran, Sri Hargobindpur and Kartarpur in the rural areas

saw large number of converts from local Jat peasantry. He thus proposed a sudden shift in the social constituency of the Panth when rural component came to the fore during the period of Guru Arjan. He reinforced his argument with reference to Jat influence in the Sikh Panth during the time of Guru Hargobind on the basis of the mid-seventeenth century Persian work, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*. He suggested that the entry of the Jats was presumably facilitated by the fact that Khatris commonly served as teachers of the Jats. Two other motivating factors were that the Sikh Gurus rejected the theory of caste in principle and that they raised Jats to positions of authority within the Panth. Mughal hostility towards the Panth, McLeod argued, should not be attributed solely to Jahangir's orthodoxy or to the promptings of his Naqshbandi courtiers but rather to Jat influx in the Panth: "The increasing influence of the Jats within the Sikh Panth suggests that Jahangir and his subordinates may well have had good reason for their fears, and that these fears would not have related exclusively, nor even primarily, to the *religious* influence of the Guru" (ESC, p. 12).

In his analysis McLeod focused on the martial traditions as an integral part of Jat cultural patterns: "With their strong rural base, their martial traditions, their normally impressive physique, and their considerable energy the Jats have for many centuries constituted the elite of the Punjab villages. They are also noted for their straightforward manner, for a tremendous generosity, for an insistence upon the right to take vengeance, and for their sturdy attachment to the land." (ESC, p. 11). He stressed the influence of Jat cultural patterns as a definitive factor in understanding the militant developments of the Panth following Guru Arjan's execution in 1606: "The growth of militancy within the Panth must be traced primarily to the impact of Jat cultural patterns and to economic problems which prompted a militant response" (ESC, pp. 12-13). In his analysis, however, McLeod did not elaborate on the factor of 'economic problems' in the process of the militarization of the Panth.

Jagjit Singh took strong exception to McLeod's propositions that "the arming of the Panth would not have been the result of any decision of Guru Hargobind" and that "the death of Guru Arjan may have persuaded Guru Hargobind of the need for tighter organization" (ESC, p. 12). Addressing the question of leadership and initiative, Jagjit Singh provided a rebuttal to McLeod's arguments by asserting that "the initiative and determination for carrying on the armed struggle against the established state was invariably that of the Guru and not that of his followers."[25] Grewal makes the following observation on the debate between these two authors:

> It is interesting to note that whereas McLeod attaches importance to their [Jats'] presence in the Sikh Panth before the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, Jagjit Singh looks

> upon the measures of Guru Hargobind as a factor responsible for their increased number in the Panth. This apparently small difference regarding what came first acquires great significance because of the decided preference of McLeod for ethnicity and of Jagjit Singh for ideology as the primary operative factor.[26]

Grewal thus offers a restrained judgment on the arguments of these two scholars. Accordingly, employing the method of social analysis McLeod gave primacy to the environmental factors in the progressive development of the Panth while Jagjit Singh maintained that Sikh ideology served as the cohesive force in the evolution of the Sikh community. Nevertheless, Grewal later on identifies the major flaws in their works by stressing that "the evidence advanced by McLeod in support of his hypothesis is too weak to sustain it" and that "Jagjit Singh does not account for Jat preponderance in the Sikh Panth: he simply ignores it."[27] There is a need to explain why two-thirds of Sikh population has always been Jats.

My own take on McLeod's arguments is somewhat different. I do not accept his hypothesis of sudden shift in the social constituency of Sikh Panth with the influx of Jats during the period of Guru Arjan. There is a need to avoid the dangers of retrospective interpretation by subscribing to an essentialist approach that might circumscribe the 'character' of a rather large group of diverse people within the Panth. The process of the entry of rural people within the Panth had already begun during the period of Guru Nanak at Kartarpur and continued under his successors. The settlement at the 'village' of Kartarpur certainly represented the rural 'headquarters' for the nascent Sikh community. It was founded in the midst of a wide expanse of cultivated land that Guru Nanak had managed to purchase for himself. It is highly instructive to understand his affiliation with the rural population as the result of a familial connection to matters of land ownership. His father, Kalian Chand (Kalu) Bedi, and his father-in-law, Mula Chona, were both revenue officials (*patvaris*) of comparable socio-economic background. In Punjabi culture, a *patvari* holds a position of authority in the social hierarchy of the village because of his education in Persian and the basics of accountancy. The fact that Kalu owned land would have further enhanced family's status. Similarly, Mula worked in Pakho ke Randhawe, a village in the fertile area of upper Bari Doab. The proximity of Kartarpur to the village of Guru Nanak's father-in-law suggests that Mula was helpful if not entirely instrumental in locating and then acquiring the land for the new village.[28] The noteworthy point here is that the establishment at Kartarpur might be seen as a bridge between the urban culture of Khatris and the rural culture of peasantry. Leadership role was in Khatri hands, while the increasing number of followers came from rural background.

In fact, the fifth Guru inherited diverse cross-sections of the Punjabi society when he assumed the office of the Guru. The projects of the excavation of large pools and a large well with six Persian wheels (*chheharta*) in the Majha area during his reign were basically intended for the welfare of the Jats. His philanthropic work during famine was for the amelioration of their poor economic conditions. The Mughal authorities, including Emperor Akbar, were highly impressed by it. At the time of his meeting with Guru Arjan at Goindval on 4 November 1598 Akbar remitted the annual revenue of the peasants of the district, who had been hit by the failure of the monsoon. This was indeed a major relief to the farmers. As a result of these activities Guru Arjan's popularity skyrocketed among the rural peasantry of the Punjab.

Elsewhere I have suggested that in order to appreciate McLeod's arguments there is a need to look at the cross-cultural anthropology of the peasantry in world history in general.[29] A brief survey of the history of the Punjab from the time of Timur's invasion in the late fourteenth century through the establishment of Mughal rule in 1526 reads like a textbook example of an environment of brutality, exploitation and disenfranchisement that was responsible for breeding a sharp sense of alienation in the rural population. In particular, the Jat community of the Punjab suffered the brunt of tumultuous historical circumstances. For many reasons, including their pastoral background and socio-cultural patterns, the Jats were reduced to the bottom of the caste hierarchy.[30] Therefore, they had no scope of improving their lot in the Hindu tradition. The peasant dream of radical egalitarianism was fulfilled among the Jats when they joined the Sikh movement. Guru Arjan provided them much hope to improve their economic situation. Nevertheless, as a result of the inequitable policies of Mughal regime, "the conditions of the peasant generally approximated the lowest possible level of subsistence."[31] It is no wonder that an average peasant family in the Punjab would make a bare subsistence living from year to year.

In his *Ain-i-Akbari* (II, p. 316) Abu'l Fazal testifies the importance of well-irrigation in Punjab during the reign of Emperor Akbar: "This province is populous, its climate healthy and its agricultural fertility rarely equaled. The irrigation is chiefly from wells."[32] In fact, the Persian-wheels were widely used in the regions of Lahore, Dipalpur and Sirhind, because these were the areas with sufficient and easily procurable ground-water supplies. Here, the town of Ramdaspur (Amritsar) was located in the Majha part of the Bari Doab. The familiarity of the Jats with the Persian-wheel was taken for granted in several passages of the Adi Granth.[33] Undoubtedly, the use of the Persian-wheel encouraged the extension and development of cultivation in the central Punjab. However, the self-sufficient class of the peasants was deprived of the fruits of their labor by a self-serving regime that extracted from them a large amount of revenue for providing the

technology of the Persian-wheel. Not surprisingly, the Jats were quite resentful towards the inequity of Mughal policy. It is in this context that Guru Arjan's excavation of a well with six Persian-wheels (*chheharta*) makes sense, providing a much needed relief to the farmers of Majha area who did not have to look towards the Mughal authorities for their irrigation needs. Similarly, the four hundred years old pool at Thatte Khera at Guru Ki Vadali, near Tarn Taran, provides us with the hard evidence of how Guru Arjan was deeply concerned with the needs of the rural peasantry.[34]

During the famine conditions of the late 1590s the Jats were further reduced into destitution. In the conditions of economic distress, therefore, the poor Jats turned towards the charismatic message of Guru Arjan who resolved the 'tensions of meaning' in their lives. But they were predisposed against the oppressive state structures that took two-thirds of their production in revenues. As part of their cultural traditions the Punjabi Jats have always been known for their defiance of authority. The Mughal officials were fully aware of a massive influx of Jats into the Sikh movement. During Akbar's reign they were successfully dealing with covert Jat resistance by providing revenue free grants to Guru Arjan in the Majha (Ramdaspur and Tarn Taran) and Doaba (Kartarpur) areas so that they could indirectly maintain their control over them. They were using Guru Arjan's philanthropic work of excavation of large pools and wells to their advantage. As a result of Guru Arjan's alleged blessings to Prince Khusrau, however, the situation of Mughal-Sikh relations changed dramatically. Because of their 'fears' about the increasing Jat influence within the Sikh Panth, the Mughal authorities purposefully kept Guru Arjan's execution a private affair. Even Jahangir had left Lahore after passing the orders of capital punishment. In actual practice it was Shaykh Farid Bukhari (Murtaza Khan) who carried out Jahangir's orders. It should, however, be kept in mind that no one dies a natural death in state custody. The Guru was tortured according to the Mongol law (*yasa siyasat*) while he was in Mughal custody for about a week (May 24-30, 1606).[35] Not surprisingly, after reading my arguments McLeod changed his earlier stance on Guru Arjan's martyrdom and accepted that the Guru "was cruelly executed while being held by the Mughal authorities in Lahore."[36]

V

The meta-narrative on the issue of why a tradition built on Guru Nanak's *interior* discipline of 'meditation on the divine Name' (*nam-simaran*) should have become a militant community and proclaimed its identity by means of prominently displayed *exterior* symbols comes from the Singh Sabha scholars. It stresses the point that militarizing of the Panth by the sixth Guru, Hargobind, and the subsequent creation of the Khalsa by the

tenth Guru were strictly in accord with Guru Nanak's own intention. In fact, the classic statement of this claim may be seen in the stirring words of Joseph D. Cunningham's *A History of the Sikhs*, first published in 1849: "It was reserved for *Nanak* to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enable his successor *Gobind* to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."[37] That is, Guru Nanak's egalitarian teachings provided the basis for the institution of the Khalsa to fight for equality, justice and human rights. In the recent past, Jagjit Singh developed this interpretation into a detailed theory of revolution: "The founding of the Sikh *Panth* outside the caste society in order to use it as the basis for combating the hierarchical set-up of the caste order, and the creation of the Khalsa for capturing the state in the interests of the poor and the suppressed, were only a projection, on the military and political plane, of the egalitarian approach of the Sikh religious thesis."[38] McLeod acknowledged that the most notable response to his tentative enquiry was offered by Jagjit Singh in his *Perspectives on Sikh Studies* (1985).

For McLeod, Guru Hargobind's decision to leave the plains and move to the Shivalik Hills – the low range which separates the plains of the Punjab from the Himalayas -- in response to Mughal hostility was the most significant moment in the evolution of the Sikh Panth. This move took place in the year 1634 when the Guru shifted the Sikh centre from Amritsar to the village of Kiratpur. From this time onwards Guru Hargobind and all four of his successors spent most of their time in the Shivalik Hills, first at Kiratpur and then at Anandpur. In particular, the tenth Guru was brought at Anandpur, and for the most of his period as Guru he was exclusively occupied in Shivalik affairs. McLeod argued that the Shivalik Hills have long been a stronghold of Devi or Shakti cult. The hills of the Punjab are culturally distinct from the plains, and the most significant difference being the Shakti aspects of the hills culture.

On the basis of the compositions of the Dasam Granth McLeod offered the following hypothesis: "This Shakti blended easily with the Jat cultural patterns which had been brought from the plains. The result was a new and powerful synthesis, one which prepared the Panth for a determinative role in the chaotic circumstances of the eighteenth century." (ESC, p. 14). In Guru Gobind Singh's view, Akal Purakh ('Timeless Being') was personified by steel and worshipped in the form of the Sword (*kharag*). For him, the characteristic name for the divinity was *sarab-loh*, the 'All-Steel', and it is not surprising that in the preparation for Khalsa rite the sweetened water is always stirred by a double-edged sword accompanied by the recitation of five liturgical prayers. McLeod further referred to the writings of the Dasam Granth

where constant references to the mighty exploits of the Mother Goddess are found.

In his critique of McLeod's arguments, Grewal asserts that "the Mother Goddess figures much less prominently in the *Dasam Granth* than the other *avtars*, notably Krishna and Rama," symbolizing "legitimacy of the use of physical force in the cause of righteousness."[39] In this respect, Grewal argues, "the *Dasam Granth* elaborates and reinforces the idea present in the compositions of Guru Nanak that God protects his saints and destroys the wicked."[40] In line with the teachings of Guru Nanak the tenth Guru proclaims: Akal Purakh is supremely just, exalting the devout followers and punishing the wicked. In the everlasting cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil, Akal Purakh intervenes in human history to restore the balance in favor of those who wage war on behalf of the good. From time to time particular individuals are chosen to act as agents of God in the struggle against the evil forces. Defining his mission in his autobiographical *Bachitar Natak* ("Wondrous Drama") the Guru firmly believed that he was such an agent of God: "For this purpose I was born in this world. The divine Guru (*gurdev*) has sent me to uphold righteousness (*dharam*), to extend the true faith everywhere and to destroy the evil and sinful."[41]

Guru Gobind Singh identifies Akal Purakh with the Divine Sword in the celebrated canto of *Bachitar Natak*:

> Thee I invoke, All-conquering Sword,
> Destroyer of evil, Ornament of the brave.
> Powerful your arm and radiant your glory,
> Your splendor as dazzling as the brightness of the sun.
> Joy of the devout and Scourge of the wicked,
> Vanquisher of sin, I seek your protection.
> Hail to the world's Creator and Sustainer,
> My invincible Protector the Sword.
>
> (*Dasam Granth*, p. 39, McLeod's translation)

Similarly, the 'divinity' is addressed as 'all-steel' (*sarb loh*) or as the 'revered sword' (*sri bhagauti*), a mode of expression that reveals "a dark and turbulent presence which is only ever encountered through the convulsive events of battle and love, birth and death."[42] In his celebrated *Jap Sahib* ("Master Recitation") Guru Gobind Singh proclaims: "I bow to you, the one who wields weapons that soar and fly. I bow before you, Knower of all, Mother of all the earth" (verse 52).[43] Thus the divine Being is a great warrior who wields weapons of all kinds. But before he uses those weapons he has the perfect knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. And, during the battle he does not fight savagely with

anger but with the nurturing presence of the mother whose aim is to reform her children who have gone astray.

There are some important issues that need to be addressed from the perspective of ritual studies with respect to the original Khalsa *amrit* ceremony. Was it really an initiation ceremony? Or, was it the ceremony of enthronement to the exalted status of the Khalsa with its power and authority? A careful examination of an ancient Indic practice of 'enthronement ceremony' (*rajasuya*) reveals that some elements of the original *amrit* ceremony had parallel with it.[44] But most of the features had principal Sikh components such as the recitations of five liturgical prayers. Indeed, the 'Double-edged Sword' (*khanda*) became the central article in the Khalsa *amrit* ceremony. Three significant issues were linked with it. First, all who chose to join the Order of the Khalsa through the ceremony were understood to have been "reborn" in the house of the Guru and thus to have assumed a new identity. The male members were given the surname *Singh* ("lion") and female members were given the surname *Kaur* ("princess"[45]), with the intention of creating a parallel system of aristocratic titles in relation to the Rajput hill chiefs of the surrounding areas of Anandpur. From that day onwards, Guru Gobind Singh was their spiritual father and his wife, Sahib Kaur, their spiritual mother. Their birthplace was Kesgarh Sahib (the gurdwara that commemorates the founding of the Khalsa) and their home was Anandpur, Punjab. This new sense of belonging conferred on the Khalsa a new collective identity.

Second, the Guru symbolically transferred his spiritual authority to the Cherished Five when he himself received the nectar of the double-edged sword from their hands and thus became a part of the Khalsa Panth and subject to its collective will. In this way he not only paved the way for the termination of the 'office of a personal Guru' but also abolished the institution of *masands*, which was becoming increasingly disruptive. Several of the *masands* had refused to forward collections to the Guru, creating factionalism in the Sikh Panth. In addition, Guru Gobind Singh removed the threat posed by the competing seats of authority when he declared that the Khalsa should have no dealings with the followers of Prithi Chand (Minas), Dhir Mal (Guru Har Rai's elder brother, who established his seat at Kartarpur, Jalandhar) and Ram Rai (Guru Harkrishan's elder brother, who established his seat at Dehra Dun). Indeed, abandoning these five reprobate groups (*panj mel*) led to the "greater awareness of boundaries and a heightened consciousness of identity."[46]

Finally, Guru Gobind Singh delivered the nucleus of the Rahit ("Code of Conduct") at the inauguration of the Khalsa. By sanctifying the hair with amrit, he made it "the official seal of the Guru," and the cutting of "bodily hair" was thus strictly prohibited. The Guru further imposed a rigorous ban on smoking. In addition, he made the wearing of "five

weapons" (*panj hathiar*) such as sword, disc, arrow, noose and gun obligatory for the Khalsa Sikhs: "Appear before the Guru with five weapons on your person" (*hathiar panje bann ke darsan avana*).[47] This injunction must be understood in the militaristic context of the contemporary situation.

McLeod proposed the hypothesis that all the 'Five Ks' [Beginning with the Punjabi letter 'K', these five Khalsa symbols are known by the collective term *panj kakke*, or 'Five Ks', that is, *kes* or 'uncut hair', *kangha* or 'wooden comb', *kara* or 'wrist-ring', *kirpan* or 'miniature sword' and *kachhaira* or 'a pair of breeches which must not reach below the knees'] came from the Jat cultural patterns in combination with the developments of eighteenth century (ESC, p. 51). Grewal however maintains that "on the point of 5Ks McLeod's hypothesis, essentially, does not hold good."[48] He agrees with McLeod that explicit references to 5Ks are rather late. But to assume that the 5Ks were introduced in the eighteenth century is wrong. Grewal further argues that it is necessary to make a distinction between the formulation and its substantive prototypes. Undoubtedly, "the formulation came later but the substantive symbols were there from the time of instituting the Khalsa."[49] Instructively, all these five items were there in the eighteenth-century literature in the scattered form. Elsewhere, I have argued that the formulation of the convention of the "Five Ks" became evident from the literature produced as a result of Singh Sabha's new definition of orthodoxy. Although these substantive symbols were already there in the early tradition, their formalization in the late nineteenth century enhanced their value.[50]

The social constituency of the Sikh Panth during the period of Guru Gobind Singh was quite diversified. In addition to the Jats among the rural people there were many artisan groups in the congregation such as Ramgariahs who built the fortified structures of ancient buildings at Anandpur, reflecting Guru Gobind Singh's warfare strategies. In a similar vein, the Vanjaras manufactured the weapons used by the Khalsa army. An ethnographic study of Vanjaras in Southern India highlights the fact that they were part and parcel of the Sikh Panth since the period of Guru Hargobind or even before. It is no coincidence that Makhan Shah Lubana and Lakhi Shah Vanjara were associated with the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the former for identifying and supporting the 'real Guru' in the face of the severe threat posed by pretenders and the latter for cremating his headless body at Delhi in 1675. Indeed, both have become an integral part of the cultural memory of the Sikh Panth for their roles at crucial moments of Sikh history. Similarly, Bhai Mani Singh's five sons – Ude Singh, Bachitter Singh and others – received the Khalsa initiation in 1699 and laid down their lives fighting for the Guru. All these eminent Vanjara Sikhs had a long association with the Sikh Panth. Thus the fusion of Khatri, Jat, Ramgariah, Rajput and Vanjara cultures created a

new and most powerful synthesis, one that prepared the Panth for a determined role in the chaotic circumstances of the eighteenth century. In response to McLeod's hypothesis, this modified understanding reflects the cultural diversity of the Sikh Panth.

VI

In the process of institutionalization a radical ideology becomes the orthodoxy and a revolutionary movement becomes an establishment. Through the process of the 'routinization of charisma' and the systematic codification of the way to liberation, a new religious tradition is born.[51] Guru Nanak's creative ideas and strategies at Kartarpur triggered the process of institutionalization under his successors. Considering his specific ethical formulations as a viable model of a new social organization I have argued elsewhere that Guru Nanak's ideology contained a singular appeal that might be understood in terms of 'prophecy' in Max Weber's sense of the term. Thus, there is a need to understand Guru Nanak's message as a special form of human expression specifically relevant to the re-structuring of the society according to a distinctive 'creative strategy' that was able to resolve certain 'tensions' of meaning and collective identification that the existing systems of thought could not address. In this context, Guru Nanak's rejection of the prevailing orthodoxies of both Islam and Hindu tradition provided an alternative spiritual paradigm that became the basis of social reconfiguration according to divinely sanctioned normative principles. The very survival of his message over many generations and historical periods is a testimony to its unique qualities of continued relevance.[52]

Just as ideology represents a discourse of meaning in a society, so Guru Nanak's message became the principal motivating factor in the process of institutionalization. The sober integration of his thought facilitated and lent authority to the efforts of the subsequent Gurus to institutionalize it. The quest for normative self-definition was linked with the emergence of a new kind of doctrinal self-identification among Sikhs in the early phase of history. Based initially on religious ideology, however, the distinctive Sikh identity was reinforced with the introduction of distinctly Sikh liturgical practices, ceremonies, holy sites, and the compilation of an authoritative scripture. In particular, the Adi Granth advocated the doctrine of the unity of Akal Purakh, an uncompromising monotheism in which there was no place for incarnation or idol-worship. It provided a framework for the shaping of a text-centered community and hence it was a decisive factor for Sikh self-definition. As 'an organizer, systematizer, formalizer', to use Wilfred Cantwell Smith's terminology, Guru Arjan played an extremely important role in the process of crystallization.[53]

McLeod himself acknowledged that in certain respects the information contained in *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* has been overtaken by later research, mentioning specifically that the material relating to the Adi Granth contained in chapter 4, 'The Sikh Scriptures', "has been greatly expanded by the recent work of Pashaura Singh and Gurinder Singh Mann."[54] Employing the method of textual analysis from his own training in biblical studies, McLeod entered into the so-called Kartarpur-Banno debate on the original text of the Adi Granth. He raised the issue of the incomplete nature of Guru Arjan's *Ramakali* hymn, which in its Banno version alluded to the puberty rites conducted at the initiation of his son Hargobind, involving the shaving of his head. This obviously went against the later Khalsa prohibition of hair-cutting. Following the assumption that there was a good reason for its deletion from the Kartarpur text, McLeod cautiously lent his support to the hypothesis that the Banno version was the original text and that the Kartarpur manuscript was its shortened version: "This hymn describes the puberty rites conducted by Guru Arjan at the initiation of his son Hargobind. The rites follow a standard Hindu pattern and in the third stanza there is a reference to the manner in which the boy's head was shaved …The conclusion which seemed to be emerging with increasing assurance was that the widely disseminated Banno version must represent the original text; and that the Kartarpur manuscript must be a shortened version of the same text" (ESC, p. 77).

McLeod was not able to examine the Kartarpur manuscript himself. He speculated that the Khalsa ideals could have provided the motive for the deletion of the additional portion of the *Ramakali* hymn in the Kartarpur manuscript. I personally examined the Kartarpur manuscript on 14 May 1990 in detail. Therefore, I can confirm that while there is a blank space of more than two folios after the opening verse of the *Ramakali* hymn on folio 703/1, there is no evidence of any erasure or any other kind of deletion. If there were such a deletion, it would support the claim that the Banno text may actually represent an earlier recension than the Kartarpur text. This is simply not the case because upon close examination we now know that there is no actual deletion. Thus McLeod's hypothesis was a clear case of retrospective interpretation which could not be convincingly applied to explain the early seventeenth-century Sikh situation. In fact, the question of later deletion in this instance cannot be taken seriously since there are a number of seventeenth-century manuscripts of the Adi Granth that do not contain the extra material of the Banno version. Also, the assumption that the hymn is somehow related to the puberty rites of Guru Hargobind cannot be sustained.[55] After reading my arguments, McLeod wrote to me in a personal communication: "It provides what I have so long sought, namely a thorough competent textual analysis of certain portion of Sikh scriptures. In the course of so doing you have at last answered the

question which I was raising (all of sixteen years ago) of Guru Arjan's two lines in *Ramakali* raga. Prior to this no one had provided me with a satisfactory answer to my concerns. Now, however, that answer has been provided" (Personal letter, 1 May 1991).

The next issue relates to the social constituency of the Panth which was far from being homogenous. Diverse groups from both urban and rural backgrounds comprised the Panth. While the urban Sikhs had taken Sikhism beyond Punjab in the major cities of India and Afghanistan, the rural headquarters of the Gurus attracted the local population within the fold of Sikhism. A radical egalitarianism of the Gurus' teachings was the main attraction behind the extensive Jat allegiance to the Panth. Sikh community self-consciousness was further heightened by the in-group conflict created by dissenters and slanderers. The external conflict with the local Mughal authorities provided another challenge to the Sikh Panth. McLeod maintained that after the period of ten Sikh Gurus the need to meet the internal and external challenges was provided by cohesive ideals and institutions in the Sikh Panth.

Before he passed away in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh terminated the line of personal Gurus and installed the Adi Granth as the eternal Guru for the Sikhs. Thereafter, the authority of the Guru was invested together in the scripture (Guru Granth) and the corporate community (Guru Panth). The twin doctrine of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth successfully played a cohesive role within the Sikh tradition during the eighteenth century. The *gurmata* ('intention of the Guru') system provided an effective means of passing resolutions in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. In his analysis McLeod argued that the doctrine of Guru-Panth became current first and then the doctrine of Guru-Granth emerged in response to the needs of the Sikh community. This is questionable. Even a lay Sikh knows that the doctrine of Guru-Panth cannot function without the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Grewal aptly remarks that "these two doctrines appear to be the two sides of the same coin of authority" and that "both had their immediate basis in the injunction of Guru Gobind Singh, and both crystallized in the eighteenth century."[56]

To consolidate his power Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) abolished political *gurmatas* in 1809 and downplayed the doctrine of Guru-Panth in order to reconcile the growing inequalities in the Panth. Grewal has observed that "every Sikh was equal in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, in the *sangat* [congregation], and the *langar* [community kitchen], but in the life outside social differences were legitimized."[57] Thus the process was set in motion by which the doctrine of Guru-Granth came to the fore in place of the doctrine of Guru-Panth. It gained further momentum during the Singh Sabha period. In this context, McLeod remarked that "the doctrine of the corporate Guru effectively lapsed and an undisputed primacy was assumed by the

scriptural Guru theory, a primacy which continues to this day" (ESC, p. 45).

As the chief of the Sikh pilgrimage centers Amritsar has played an important cohesive role in Sikh history (ESC, p. 53). The installation of the first authoritative text of the Adi Granth in the Darbar Sahib ('Court of the Divine Sovereign', present-day Golden Temple) in 1604 enhanced its centrality in Sikh life. It marked the beginning of a distinctive Sikh ceremony of conferring royal honor upon the scripture when it was installed ceremonially early in the morning at the central place of Sikh worship. As a result, the city of Ramdaspur emerged as a new "power center" in its own right. Here, Guru Arjan had established the divine rule of justice and humility (*halemi raj*) where people enjoyed comfortable living, fired with the spirit of fearlessness, dignity and self-respect. They strongly believed that they were under the protection of God, the Sovereign of sovereigns. In particular, the eight *chaunkis* ("sittings") of devotional singing at the "Divine Court" filled the hearts of the devotees with the mystery of the divine presence. These liturgical sessions played a dominant role in reinforcing the centrality of the Darbar Sahib in Sikh life. The contemporary Sikh bards sang eulogistic songs of the majesty of the Sikh court in regal metaphors. No one can deny the pointedly political overtones of the very phrase "the divine rule," referring to radically subversive, socially revolutionary and politically dangerous interpretations of Guru Arjan's lived experience.[58]

Although Amritsar lost its primacy when Guru Hargobind moved to the Shivalik Hills in 1634 and it fell into the hands of the followers of Prithi Chand (*Minas*, "scoundrels") for about seven decades, it regained its original status by becoming the 'rallying point' for the Sikhs in the eighteenth century. The appearance of the Golden Temple today owes a great deal to the generous patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Most importantly, the sacred sounds of devotional singing of the Guru's hymns (*Gurbani Kirtan*) resonate inside the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar every day. The beginning of twenty-first century ushered in a new era of televised broadcasting of those sacred sounds throughout the world with the help of Zee TV's Global platform, the *ETC Channel Punjabi* network.[59] Notably, the live broadcast of *Gurbani Kirtan* from the Golden Temple is viewed by millions of Sikh devotees on every continent of the planet from 4.30 am to 8.30am in the morning and from 4.30pm to 6.30pm in the evening. This service is unprecedented in the world of broadcasting as the Golden Temple is the only place of worship where a permanent Earth station is in place with a satellite dish, up-linking equipment and editing controls.[60] It is no wonder that the daily routine of *kirtan* at Golden Temple has become a significant factor in the evolution of Sikhism in a global context.

During the British rule the dominant Sikh response to modernity was conditioned by the need to enforce clear definitions of authority and

community in the face of the double challenge of colonialism and of neo-Hinduism.[61] The main impetus behind this response was to secure permanent control of Sikh institutions in the Punjab. The effect of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 was to make available to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC, "Chief Management Committee of Sikh Shrines") and thus to Akali Dal the enormous political and economic benefits that came from control of the gurdwaras. A government within a government was created as the price of a restored acceptance of the British among Sikhs.[62] In the course of time the SGPC became the "authoritative voice" of the Sikhs. As a democratic institution it has always represented the majority opinion. As such, it has laid the claim to represent the authority of the "Guru-Panth," although it has been frequently challenged by Sikhs living outside the Punjab. In order to maintain its control over the large Sikh community, it invokes the authority of the Akal Takhat in Amritsar, which is the seat of religious and temporal authority among the Sikhs. The Akal Takhat may issue edicts (*hukam-namas*) that provide guidance or clarification on any aspect of Sikh doctrine or practice. It may punish any person charged with a violation of religious discipline or with activity "prejudicial" to Sikh interests and unity, and it may place on record individuals who have performed outstanding service or made sacrifices for the sake of the Sikh cause.

Finally, McLeod asserted that in terms of formal religious observances and personal piety the gurdwaras around the world have always provided a strong bond of panthic unity. Although these institutions provide a focus for genuine personal devotion and for a continuing loyalty to traditional forms, they also serve as an arena for disruptive political strife at the same time (ESC, pp. 57-8). The gurdwaras have their own managing committees. Each congregation (*sangat*) is a democratic community. Because there are no priests or ordained ministers, lay people actively participate in the various functions of a gurdwara on a voluntary basis. Each gurdwara, however has an official *granthi*, or "reader" of the Sikh scriptures, who is responsible for conducting its routine rituals. As with other Sikh institutions, gurdwaras play a central role in community life by making it more religiously and culturally homogenous. They offer a wide variety of educational and cultural programs, such as the teaching and perpetuation of the Punjabi language and of Sikh music and songs among new generations. Some gurdwaras operate a Sikh version of a Sunday school, where children are given formal instruction in the tenets of Sikhism, while others support Sikh charitable and political causes. Although the institution of the gurdwara serves as a rallying point and an integrative force for the Sikh community, the management of its affairs sometimes becomes a bone of contention between different groups. That happens because the members of the gurdwara committee often use their position

to enhance their own image in the wider society. Thus factional politics in gurdwara affairs can have a divisive effect in the community, and are usually based on personalities, not issues. Paradoxically, this factionalism may result in greater long-term community solidarity, because it forcefully draws people's attention to get involved in community affairs. It also leads to the building of more than one gurdwara in one location, serving the needs of different factions. In the absence of an external threat, however, this factionalism seriously weakens the community's ability to work toward a unified goal.

VII

In concluding the discussion of this essay, it may be stated that McLeod presented historical facts as telling of a single narrative, while recent scholarship maintains that historical facts do not lead to one story but interpretation of such facts to create various versions of the history and therefore 'critical histories'. He maintained that history and documentation could prove the single line of causality. His constant struggle with Sikh sources was to define a singular methodology as relevant to scholarly enquiry, which can be identified as historical teleology. Such an approach privileges the scholar's 'historically accurate' account over the memories of the followers of a religion and plays down the 'tradition' handed down from the past. In fact, tradition is the active enlivening of the present through links with the past. But central to the concept of tradition is memory, especially group memory passed down through the generations. In particular, the concept of group memory has found increasing currency among historians, and anthropologists, and in the mass media. This concept conveys the dynamic aspect of narration, which is never just a recollection but also the act of recollecting. The group memories frequently offer different narratives of the past.

Calendars count years but narratives serve to describe the link between the past and the present. Motivated by shared interest in the past, groups derive roughly consensual group memories from individual memories. Groups shape and reshape these memories inter-subjectively through discourse and may communicate versions to successive generations.[63] As group interests change, so can the narratives that reflect them. In other words, group memories vary according to specific strategies of authorization, verification, and transmission that are deliberately adopted to express particular interests.[64] Obviously, written documents emerge from the 'struggle of memory against forgetting'. In addition, there are other issues related to the complexity of the idea of 'forgetting' and the power in silence. At times knowledge of the past becomes a dangerous thing and its proponent maintains a determined 'silence' for the sake of survival. This is how people conceal the past to

protect themselves from reprisals. One must acknowledge that history and memory are as much about repression and suppression as they are about creation and recollection.[65] In fact, the control of voices on historical knowledge has always been critical and remains critical in all sorts of settings. As David William Cohen remarks: "The processing of the past in societies and historical settings all over the world, and the struggles for control of voices and texts in innumerable settings which often animate the processing of the past, this we term the *production of history*."[66] It is no wonder that the powerful erase those out of power from public consciousness and forge the collective memory that they select.

In sum, Sikhism has had and continues to have a seemingly unending number of dominant, institutional, regional, national, and local expressions of faith in constant dynamic relationship with one another, continually influencing each other and defining and redefining what it has meant and continues to mean to be a Sikh in different places around the globe. There is a need to adopt an inclusive approach in historical analysis which allows the multiplicity of Sikh voices throughout the Sikh World today and throughout Sikhism's history to be heard without privileging any singular one. The best tribute to McLeod's 'objective scholarship' can be paid when we explore new ways of knowing the past and complement historical data with ethnographic study that can illuminate the lived experience of the Sikh community. In more recent studies 'religion' is not considered a purely interior impulse secreted away in the human soul and limited to private sphere, nor an institutional force separable from other non-religious or secular forces in the public domain. Rather, all the public-private, religion-politics, and church-state dichotomies have come under the powerful critique of postmodern and postcolonial studies. It has been suggested that such dichotomies, rather than describing reality as it is, justify a certain configuration of power. The idea that "religion has a tendency to cause violence – and is therefore to be removed from public power – is one type of this essentialist construction of religion."[67] Not surprisingly, Sikh doctrine of *miri-piri* -- symbolizing the 'temporal' as well the 'spiritual' investiture – explicitly affirms that religion and politics are bound together. In McLeod's words, religious issues must be defended in the political arena and political activity must be conducted in accordance with traditional religious norms.[68]

Notes

[1] W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), chs. 1 and 3.

[2]W.H. McLeod, *Sikhism* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 116.
[3] See W.H. McLeod's autobiographical narrative in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier, eds., *Sikhism and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 9.

[4] Christopher Rowland, "Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism," in J.W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 656.

[5] Ibid., p. 657.

[6] Ibid., p. 656.

[7] J.S. Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1998), p. 168.

[8] Ibid., p. 126.

[9] Ibid., p. 300.

[10] Ibid, p. 300.

[11] Ibid., p. 227.

[12]For instance, see June O'Connor, "Pulpit and Podium," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 63-4.

[13] Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations*, p. 16.

[14] W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 161.

[15] Ibid.

[16] W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 31.

[17] M1, *Ramakali Siddh Gost 36*, AG, p. 942.

[18] McLeod, *The Sikhs*, p. 28.

[19] Ibid., p. 29.

[20] W.H. McLeod, *Exploring Sikhism: Aspects of Sikh Identity, Culture, and Thought* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 29.

[21] W. Owen Cole, *Sikhism and its Indian Context 1469-1708* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 96.

[22] McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 230.

[23] Ravidas, *Gauri 2*, AG, p. 345.

[24] Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations*, pp. 300-301.

[25] Cited in ibid., p. 173.

[26] Ibid., p. 177.

[27] Ibid., p. 178.

[28] Gurinder Singh Mann, *Sikhism* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), p. 22.

[29] See my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan: History, Memory, and Biography in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 224-28.

[30] Nonica Datta, *Forming an Identity: A Social History of the Jats* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 23.

[31] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2nd revised edition, 1999; originally published, 1963), p. 230.

[32] Cited in ibid., p. 123, n. 57.

[33] For instance, see M 1, *Basant Hindol 1*, AG, p. 1171: "Make (service with) the hands your wheel, and focused attention the chain and the buckets, and yoke the mind like the bullock, to work the well. Irrigate your body with the divine nectar, and this way the Gardener, your God, will own you." Also see ibid., p. 123, n. 59.

[34] The photographs of the original structure of the pool at Thatte Khera may be seen in Gurmeet Rai and Kavita Singh, "Brick by Sacred Brick: Asrchitectural Projects of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind," in Kavita

Singh, ed., *New Insights into Sikh Art*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2003): 36-7.

[35] Ganda Singh, *Guru Arjan's Martyrdom*, p. 27.

[36] See his Foreword to my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. x. In her review of my book, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh observes: "I find it significant that Professor Hew McLeod (who doubted the martyrdom in his *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Oxford, 1975, p. 3) now agrees with Pashaura Singh. In his forward to his book, McLeod acknowledges and honors the Guru "who was cruelly executed while being held by the Mughal authorities in Lahore." See *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture and Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (December 2007).

[37] J. D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1955 [1849]), p. 34.

[38] Jagjit Singh, *Perspectives on Sikh Studies* (New Delhi: Guru Nanak Foundation, 1985), p. vii.

[39] Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations*, p. 178.

[40] Ibid.

[41] *Shabadarath Dasam Granth Sahib*, Volume I (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1973), p. 74.

[42] Navdeep Mandair, "An Approximate Difference," *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 2009): p. 91.

[43] Translation is taken from W.H. McLeod, *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 69.

[44] See, for instance, the enthronement ceremony of Sri Ram Chandra at Ayodhya after 14 years of exile in the *Ramayana* film series. The principal priest asks for the holy water from different sacred rivers which Hanuman brings in time in a brass container. Then the priests pour handfuls of water over Sri Ram Chandra's head to sanctify his hair number of times with the recitation of Vedic mantras.

[45] Doris Jakobsh's article ("What's in a Name?" in *Sikhism and History*, ed. Pashaura Singh & N. Gerald Barrier, OUP 2004, pp. 176-93) presents the argument that "Kaur" as nomenclature for Sikh women was part of the Singh Sabha project in the twentieth century. However, we have evidence that "Kaur" was used by Sikh women in the pre-modern times (Guru Har Rai's daughter's name was Bibi Rup Kaur and then there were Sada Kaur, Raj Kaur, Mehtab Kaur, Rup Kaur and so on). The actual practice was already there, though the formulation of the convention may have come as the result of Singh Sabha reforms.

[46] J.S. Grewal, *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997), p. 30.

[47]Ganda Singh, ed., *Hukam-name* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967), pp. 179, 194.

[48] Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations*, p. 184.

[49] Ibid., p. 303.

[50] See my "Formulation of the Convention of the Five Ks: A Focus on the Evolution of the Khalsa Rahit," *International Journal of Punjab Studies,* Vol. 6, No. 2, (1 July 1999): 155-169.

[51] Roger O'Toole, *Religion: Classic Sociological Approaches* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1984), p. 168.

[52] See my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 198.

[53] Ibid.

[54] See his introduction to an omnibus volume of his four classic works in W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs and Sikhism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. viii. For detailed analysis of the issues related to the Sikh scriptures, see Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority* (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2000) and Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[55] See my *The Guru Granth Sahib*, pp. 114-122.

[56] Grewal, *Contesting Interpretations*, p. 304.

[57] J.S. Grewal, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 118.

[58] See my *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 128.

[59] Vijay N. Shankar and Ranvir Bhatnagar, "ETC Channel Punjabi: Gurbani for the World," in *The Golden Temple: A Gift to Humanity – 400 Years of The Guru Granth Sahib* (Gurgaon, Haryana: Ranvir Bhatnagar Publications, 2004), pp. 172-73. Gurbani Kirtan started being shown live from the Golden Temple in 2001.

[60] Ibid., p. 172.

[61] Christopher Shackle, "Sikhism," in Linda Woodhead et al. eds., *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 83.

[62]Ian J. Kerr, "Sikhs and State," in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier, eds., *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1999), p. 166.

[63] For details, see Peter Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity Narratives from Village India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 5-6.

[64] Ibid., p. 7.

[65] David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7.

[66] Ibid., p. 4.

[67] R. Scott Appleby, "Fire and Sword: Does Religion Promote Violence?" in *Commonweal*, Volume CXXXVII, No. 7 (April 9, 2010): 13.

[68] McLeod, "The Role of Sikh Doctrine and Tradition in the Punjab Crisis," in *Essays in Sikh History, Tradition, and Society*, p. 99.

Martyrdom: W.H. McLeod and his Students

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Hew McLeod's work on martyrdom in the Sikh tradition is minimal, although an understanding of the phenomenom may be pieced together from his collected works. It may thus be seen as inevitable that his doctoral students have ventured so prolificly into this terrain, particularly evinced by their keen interest and examinations of the execution of the first martyr of the Sikh tradition, Guru Arjan (d. 1606 CE), the compiler of the Adi Granth and its principal contributor. This paper examines and contrasts general claims regarding Sikh martyrdom made by all three scholars and specific ones about Guru Arjan's death.

I

Let us begin with Hew McLeod's now-classic essay 'The Evolution of the Sikh Community' published in 1976.[1] It is in this article that McLeod, like any critical historian, wondered about the many historical and environmental factors which played a role in the gradual shaping of the Sikh Panth of the past and of today. His musings were in many ways interventions into the dominant Sikh narrative of the day which put forward an interpretation of Sikh history and religion which placed by far the greatest emphasis in the ongoing evolution of the Sikh community on the agency of the ten living Sikh Gurus. In this reading the Sikh Gurus were very much the architects of the history, ideology, and religion of the Sikh people and the post-Guru period of the Sikh tradition (after the death of Guru Gobind Singh in October 1708) was simply projected as a time when their followers did their utmost to embody that message and live up to its ideals.[2]

McLeod began problematising this beloved narrative in much the same critical way he applied to the narratives of the first Sikh Master in his initial book, Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion,[3] focussing in the process upon the effect on the nascent Sikh community of growing numbers after the guruship of Guru Nanak, of the large influx of members of the Jat caste into the Panth during the time of the fifth Guru, and of the sixth Guru's strategic shift of location from the Punjab plains to the Shivalik hills, home of various shakti expressions of the Hindu tradition, expressions which over time, McLeod conjectured, helped

augment the tenth Guru's understanding of himself and the larger universe, ultimately resulting in the composition of such works as the *Chandi Charitr*, *Chandi ki Var*, and the *Chaubis Avtar* all of which find their place within the Dasam Granth and, as well, in the inauguration in 1699 of the Khalsa, the famed martial order of the Sikhs. Although some of these important factors were previously mentioned or hinted at by other scholars (Indubhusan Banerjee referred to the importance of the Jat composition of the later Panth in the 1930s for example)[4] no other historian had pondered these developments as systematically and presented them as effectively in the construction of the Sikh Panth as had McLeod. This may have been an effective presentation but it was one, let us remember, which was still largely speculative a claim from which McLeod never wavered.

McLeod's meditations on the development of this Sikh history were certainly met with skepticism, resistance, and at times vitriol as the appearance of Jagjit Singh's *The Sikh Revolution* and the various publications by the Sikh Studies group led by Jasbir Singh Mann attest.[5] Unfortunately, little common ground was sought by more traditionally inclined scholars of Sikhism for while skeptics suggested a linear trajectory in which the Sikh Gurus alone had shaped Sikh history McLeod's not-so-tacit claim was that this process was rather a dialectical one: yes, the Sikh Gurus had shaped Sikh history but that very history had shaped and continues to shape the Sikh Gurus (or at least the image of the Gurus to later Sikhs), a point which McLeod's sustained scholarship continued to advance.

It is in this light that I would like to again turn to McLeod's essay and explore the topic at hand, namely martyrdom in the Sikh tradition with a particular emphasis on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, a topic on which both I and Pashaura Singh as McLeod's doctoral students had earlier written. There is both here in McLeod's 'Evolution' and throughout his prolific scholarship no sustained definition of martyrdom put forward[6] nor a contextual analysis of the type he masterfully presents in his *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama*[7] of those eighteenth and nineteenth-century Sikh works in which ideas of martyrdom prominently figure. This is just as well as McLeod's principal areas of focus are upon the life and teachings of Guru Nanak, the janam-sakhis, and later in his career the Khalsa Rahit. It is in discussing the latter, in particular that McLeod had chance to speak of the Panth's many martyrs although he did not really distinguish between various types of martyrdom. But it is the way he speaks of them that elicits our interest.

Although not a discourse on martyrdom itself therefore 'The Evolution of the Sikh Community' is the first place in which McLeod writes of what would become many similar references to what is considered to be the first martyrdom of the Sikh tradition, that of Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh Guru, in 1606. For Sikhs, let us be clear, this was a

supremely important and self-conscious act on the part of the fifth Sikh Master, taking to heart the teachings of the first Sikh Guru and undertaken to edify,[8] the consequences of which are still readily felt throughout the history of the Sikh people, inspiring Sikhs throughout the world to acts of rare courage and perseverance.[9] Such a tale of selfless sacrifice is a harrowing one, poignantly repeated in Sikh texts and devotedly narrated by Sikh kathākars and sung by Sikh musicians the world over,[10] pitting evil enemies against righteous soldiers, tyrants against saints. According to it Guru Arjan was falsely implicated in the rebellion of the emperor's ambitious son Khusrau through the machinations of various personnel at the Mughal court in Lahore (the notorious Chandu Shah Khatri to be specific), imprisoned under the orders of the emperor Jahangir, and ultimately executed in horrific fashion even though he had the opportunity to escape his punishment and death through the intercession of the Muslim saint, Mian Mir. Gruesome paintings of the Guru's execution are commonplace and may be readily observed throughout Sikh museums within northern India adding a rough, evocative texture to the narrative's prominence which further underscores the Guru's physical torment.[11] McLeod's take on this event is brief, in the passive voice, paring away all but the most essential elements:

> Gurū Arjan, the fifth Gurū…had in some manner incurred the displeasure of the Mughal authorities and in 1606 had died while in custody.[12]

Such brevity is of course reminiscent of McLeod's work on Guru Nanak, which condenses the life of the first Sikh Master into a small number of paragraphs.[13] Here Guru Arjan's death is reduced to a single sentence. Many later scholars have understood this phrasing as a blunt critique and/or outright rejection of the more commonly held understanding noted earlier: Guru Arjan was not killed, executed, or martyred but he had simply died. As the construction of Sikh personhood is in part a product of the glorious narratives of the Sikh past, a past in which martyrology prominently figures, one can understand how McLeod's view may be construed as disrespectful.[14] Why does McLeod not accept Guru Arjan's murder by the state as martyrdom? Sikh sources often tacitly ask. It is true that he references this event as a martyrdom in later books and essays, but invariably this occurs, as he himself often repeats, only when he discloses traditional interpretations.[15] During the 1980s and 90s, a period of severe ethnonationalist violence within the Punjab, McLeod's critical approach was often felt to have been consciously fostered by divisive, anti-Sikh forces within the Indian government in an attempt to humiliate the members of the Panth and make them more amenable to the

demands of the Congress government. Small groups of Sikhs within the Sikh diaspora continue this stance to this day.[16]

Certainly McLeod's is a mild critique of the dominant wisdom. Although it incorporates the central idea of the principal, near hegemonic Sikh narrative, that is that Guru Arjan was executed by the emperor Jahangir, it does not go into any of the enthusiastic and at times shocking detail which punctuates traditional accounts, an understanding which also informs McLeod's references to Guru Tegh Bahadar's execution and that of other Sikhs traditionally understood to be martyrs. Although one may question McLeod's statement in good faith (after all, there is little doubt that the state's displeasure was incurred because Jahangir did indeed understand Guru Arjan to have blessed Khusrau's rebellion—this itself takes care of the matter of 'some manner') McLeod's reasoning for this failure is nevertheless sound, as I have shown elsewhere, insofar as there exists no contemporary source which supports the claims of the current Sikh narrative. Indeed, contemporary and near-contemporary sources most certainly exist but we do not hear of Guru Arjan's death as martyrdom, resistance, and defiance until the mid eighteenth century, nearly a century and a half after the fifth Master's demise. Furthermore, the label *śahīd* is not applied to him until well into the nineteenth.[17] The reason for these absences I conjectured some years back was that there was no martyrologist to transform Guru Arjan's death into glorious martyrdom in the way that Guru Tegh Bahadar's biographer (if you will) had done in the *Bachitar Natak*.[18] For some reason, to put it bluntly and in other words, Sikh authors of the seventeenth to mid eighteenth centuries did not find anything edifying or heroic in Guru Arjan's execution, viewing the fifth Sikh Master perhaps as just one other victim (albeit an exceptionally significant one) of the Mughal state against which Khalsa Sikhs were apparently pitted.[19] Nor is it explicit that Guru Arjan's death was incorporated by later Sikh writers and ideologues into the type of 'violent' bhakti we discover in the tenth Guru's writings on the goddess Chandi or in his wonderfully inclusive *Jāp Sāhib* and *Akāl Ustāti*, all compositions of which prominently figure within the Dasam Granth.[20]

II

Since the publication of McLeod's essay, and later, my articles and book on the Sikh concept and history of martyrdom the academic conferences, essays, and books dealing with Guru Arjan's death and the idea of martyrdom within Sikhism have been numerous, all more or less censuring McLeod's claims and repeating the critique of his work noted above regarding the fifth Guru.[21] Perhaps the most important, sustained, and serious assessment of my and McLeod's analysis of contemporary sources is that of Pashaura Singh (another of McLeod's students) which

appears in his very important book on Guru Arjan.[22] This, I believe, requires a prolonged comment as Pashaura Singh's discussion is a long and nuanced one incorporating at points some very original perspectives. In his chapter on Guru Arjan's martyrdom (so titled) Pashaura Singh raises some very interesting and significant points in his analysis of Guru Arjan's imprisonment and execution, particularly his study of the Mughal observance of the Mongol *törä* and *yāsā*, norms and laws respectively, as opposed to *sharī'a*, Islamic law. Although *yāsā* and *sharī'a* may not be mutually exclusive (and both are somewhat flexible) Pashaura has here underscored the importance of the Mughal attention to their Chingissid legacy and how such legacy was implemented in everyday Mughal courtly life and observances.[23] This focus on Mongol norms and precedents is nevertheless in my opinion somewhat exaggerated within the context of Guru Arjan's death.

With some injustice to the many points Pashaura brings to bear upon his understanding of the Guru's death let me précis his overall argument regarding *yāsā* briefly.[24] It runs something as follows: Jahangir's memoirs mention that he had longed looked upon the 'shop' of the Sikh Gurus with distrust. An opportunity to deal with it arrived when the fifth Guru placed a sign of fortune on the rebel Khusrau's forehead. Hearing of this the emperor ordered the Guru's imprisonment and then commanded him to be subjected to *siyāsat o yāsā* which, strictly speaking, we may translate as 'punishment in accordance with Chingissid custom and code' but which could simply mean emphatically punished or executed as Wheeler Thackston's translation of the *Jahāngīr-nāmah* indicates.[25] So far we follow the emperor's memoirs. Here is Pashaura's novel contribution: He claims that the *yāsā* is here the equivalent of *törä* which maintains in regard to the execution of those of royal or honoured background that blood not be spilled. Ipso facto as Guru Arjan was a spiritual figure he was tortured and killed without the shedding of his blood and thus, Professor Singh reasons, the relatively tame mention of 'torture' (*āzār*) to which the Guru was subjected that is mentioned in the Persian *Dabistān-i Mazāhib* written about 40 years after the event is likely accurate.[26] He also adds, to support the contention that torture was indeed applied, a contemporary apocryphal shalok in the Banno recension of the Adi Granth which mentions dousing the soul within burning hot sand, claiming that there may also be some truth to the more colourful narrative which states that Guru Arjan was placed upon a large griddle whilst it was heated and had hot sand poured upon him. [27] Finally, he states that the description elaborated in the later eighteenth century in Kesar Singh Chhibbar's *Bansāvalī-nāmā* (1776 CE) in which the Guru died after being bound and thrown into the Ravi may also be accurate.[28] Why did no Sikh bother to describe the Guru's suffering? Pashaura Singh speculates that the famous vār of Bhai Gurdas Bhalla in which Guru Arjan's death is memorialised fails to include any reference

to inflicted injuries because 'the memory of what Bhai Gurdas actually witnessed was too painful for him to describe in words.'[29]

Pashaura's claim, I must state, is an important one and gives a fresh interpretation to Guru Arjan's execution by being the first to emphasise the application of the Chingissid *törä* in regard to it. But it is questionable despite its novelty as it hinges in large part upon the speculation that Jahangir would have understood Guru Arjan to be either royal, honoured, or spiritual.[30] We do hear of Jahangir applying the principles of the törä for example to his rebellious son, Khusrau, who was brought to him with hands bound and chains on his legs in the törä-esque fashion so prescribed.[31] The question to ask therefore is Did Jahangir understand Guru Arjan and by extension the young Sikh Panth in the way that Pashaura suggests? This seems unlikely as Guru Arjan, according to Jahangir, was not a genuine spiritual guide, but rather a pretender to the status who merely dressed the part, *dar libās-i pīrī o shaikhī* 'in the garments of spirituality and holiness'. Guru Arjan's teachings were, Jahangir continues, the 'false trade' (*dokān-i bāṭil*) of an 'inconsequential little fellow' (*mardak-i majhūl*) whose falseness Jahangir himself had realised when the Guru applied the *qashqah* to the seditious Khusrau's forehead.[32] It is worth noting that some of Khusrau's other sympathisers were treated in a very harsh manner, paraded around in the skin of an ass before the captured prince's very eyes, torture which Jahangir cheerfully describes (something he does not do regarding Guru Arjan's execution).[33] Would the emperor therefore advise his subordinates in Lahore to take such care in carrying out Guru Arjan's death sentence, the guru of a group which was to say the least an exceedingly marginal presence in Mughal sources,[34] to ensure that he was killed in what we can only assume to be a relatively respectful manner (torturous, yes, but respectful nevertheless)? In the light of the emperor's memoirs I think this unlikely despite the use of the specific terms siyāsat o yāsā. In this regard therefore I suggest that Thackston's translation is more accurate than the one provided, for example, by Ganda Singh ('put to death with tortures') and embraced by later Sikhs.[35]

There are other nuances to Pashaura's overall argument which require similar attention. In regard to the allocation of blame for example we are also given cause to pause. In examining eighteenth-century sources dealing with Guru Arjan Pashaura notes the two narratives of Kirpal Das and Sarup Das Bhalla which are in general agreement.[36] In the latter we find that the emperor was actually misled by Chandu Shah into fining the Guru after which Chandu Shah paid the fine and tortured the Guru to death to exact his revenge for having his offer to marry his daughter to Guru Arjan's son Hargobind rebuffed. As Harbans Kaur Sagu claims 'Bhalla allocates total blame to Chandu and none to the emperor Jahangir.'[37] Is it possible that the Mughal state purposefully fostered this narrative to allocate blame to Chandu Shah for the Guru's execution and

thus ensure that Jahangir was not implicated in the act? asks Pashaura Singh. A tempting reading which Pashaura supports by noting the gossip conveyed by the Portuguese Jesuit Jerome Xavier in his letter to his superiors in Lisbon.[38] Yet, the simple fact that the emperor himself mentioned his order to execute the Guru in his memoirs is enough to problematise this interpretation. Such memoirs after all were not meant to be privately held but distributed to princes, royalty, and other family members as gifts since these, like the famed Mirrors literature, were prepared to instruct and edify.[39] The importance of 'book culture' within the Mughal court, books as commodities, reflections of power, and potential gifts in which this power is conveyed is one of the Indo-Timurid court's well known facets,[40] a point to which Pashaura refers when speaking of manuscripts of the Adi Granth.[41] Such a sympathetic reading of contemporary sources suggests that although Pashaura Singh is very cautious in his approach to Guru Arjan's death he ultimately remains more true to the accepted interpretation than either myself or McLeod. Important as Pashaura's claims may be therefore these do not really go beyond McLeod's brief sentence and thus his analysis fails to critically advance our understanding of the event of the Guru's death. It rounds out the narrative innovatively to be sure, but forwards it little.

Before leaving Pashaura Singh's research let us note another source to which he turns his gaze and which requires some comment, the infamous letter of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624). Pashaura's focus on this is equally problematic. As Indu Banga has recently shown the passage in question dealing with Guru Arjan is written as a digression (a somewhat more lengthy aside than she gives it credit, mind you)[42] in an advocation of the glory of Sirhindi's particular variety of Islam.[43] Indeed, the simple fact that Sirhindi phrases the event in the passive voice in Persian (*kushtan-i kāfir-i la'īn-i goindwāl bisyār khūb wāqi' shud*, 'the execution of the accursed kafir of Goindwal very fortunately happened') and thus not in the jubilant tone which either Ganda Singh or Pashaura Singh note, supports this claim.[44]

Yet even Indu Banga fails to note that the emphasis on Sirhindi falls into the same precarious trap into which scholars have been falling since the late nineteenth century, namely the failure to recognise that both the Naqshbandi order's and Sirhindi's significance is a product of later Indian historiography, in particular that of the Naqshbandiyya silsilah itself, something to which Pashaura Singh himself points.[45] It seems to me that Jahangir, who let us recall had previously rebelled against his father; proclaimed himself emperor; gone so far as to have his father's truly beloved court favourite, Shaikh Abu'l Fazl 'Allami killed; and had already ruled securely as emperor for a number of months before deciding to deal with Khusrau would not have thought twice about the support of a group and a man whom at one point in time he considered

deluded (as he so notes in his memoirs), deluded indeed for having questioned Jahangir's sovereignty.[46] Scholars of Sikh history and all those who uncritically accept the standard narrative in which Sirhindi prominently figures here seem to me to be blatantly caricaturing the Islam of the Mughal court thus confusing the flashing of Islamic credentials with the wholehearted support of the Naqshbandiyya. The two could be quite different; indeed, there were many ways of expressing 'Muslim-ness' in Mughal circles during the period of Jahangir as Jahangir himself often implies in his memoirs. There were moreover other Sufis and Sufi groups within the Mughal court whose attitudes towards non-Muslims were nowhere near as harsh as Sirhindi's, particularly the Qadriyyah order to which the already mentioned Mian Mir belonged and the Chishtiyya silsilah the reverence to which Jahangir continued after his father's death (despite what appears to be Nur Jahan's dislike of this order which, Ellison Findly speculates, may have resulted in the decline of Shaikh Salim Chishti's family within the Mughal darbar).[47] Would their support have been any less or more significant to buttress Jahangir's wish to retain the power in which he was already in full possession? Mian Mir was certainly held in high esteem by Jahangir and it seems likely that the great Sufi's opinion would have carried far more weight than Sirhindi's. Based on a survey of materials produced by other Naqshbandi centres throughout northern and southern India, moreover, it seems quite clear that the small clique of Naqshbandis with whom the emperor Jahangir was familiar was never really a significant or influential one, despite both the emperor's financial donations to it and Sirhindi's own prolific output to the contrary.[48]

III

Let us now return to Hew McLeod. McLeod never really mentions the supposed influence of Ahmad Sirhindi on those who caused Guru Arjan's death in his work as once again his focus lay elsewhere, and there is only so much one scholar can do. Within it furthermore there are no systematic statements about the phenomenon that is martyrdom apart from the brief definition we find in his dictionary. From this we assume that when McLeod did choose to write about or reference the Panth's many martyrs he did so with a definition that was rather instrumental, a characterisation we can piece together cumulatively through his various books and articles. Simply put McLeod interprets ideas of martyrdom through an ostensibly Semitic lens, achieving a definition which is quite similar to those we find in Judaic, Christian, and Muslim sources:[49] 'a conceptual system of posthumous recognition and anticipated reward' a phrase I used in an earlier article underscoring in part the Sikh martyrological debt to Arabic and Islam.[50] Although he does not accord to it the type of strictly Indic definition we find in Balbinder Bhogal's

significant work on religious violence in the Sikh tradition[51] we nevertheless discover that in the light of recent researches into Sikh martyrdom there is a good deal which, like a definition, McLeod implies without actually saying.

As the lives of the Sikh Gurus have been shaped by received Sikh history and memory so too has this affected the lives and the image of the Panth's glorious dead. McLeod's research does not give the type of contextual analysis we see for example in Ratan Singh Bhangu's self-conscious adoption of a martyrological strategy to achieve his own mid to late nineteenth-century goals (the unity of the Panth in the light of increasing British incursions into the Punjab put simply),[52] but it nevertheless implies that the martyr is very much the creation of the martryologist a point upon which many works of and on Sikh martyrdom apparently fail to elaborate thus taking at face value traditional narratives. In the mid 1990s McLeod was asked to prepare his Historical Dictionary of Sikhism, the arena in which he finally clearly defined what he meant by martyrdom. The term he defines however is actually *s̲h̲ahīd*, the Arabic equivalent from which we receive the Punjabi *śahīd* but it is a term he does not examine historically or contextually. For the word śahīd in the period of the Sikh Gurus and beyond meant in the eighteenth century many things to many people, people amongst whom the Sikhs were included. Certainly the word śahīd as I noted elsewhere was within the lexicon of Punjabi Sikhs since the times of Guru Nanak who uses the word in the Adi Granth as too does the Hindu Bhagat, Raidas.[53] We also discover it in the vars of Bhai Gurdas and very sparingly in eighteenth-century Sikh literature.[54] I assumed based on these early readings that it was both the term's intimate association with Islam, against which Khalsa Sikhs were apparently pitted according to contemporary literature, and to its associations with the 'enchanted' environment of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Punjab which allocated the status to people killed in any number of ways, which precluded its use in eighteenth-century Sikh literature.[55] This was more or less repeated in Professor McLeod's major study of the Khalsa rahit-namas, Sikhs of the Khalsa, in his attempt to demonstrate that the idea has little salience within this particular genre of Sikh literature.[56] For the most part I continue to stand by that assessment. Since the publication of my book in the year 2000, however, it has been pointed out to me that the word does appear in at least one source which I had overlooked in earlier studies, the *Pakhyān Charitr* attributed to Guru Gobind Singh and which appears in the Dasam Granth. For Pashaura Singh this failure throws doubt upon my assumption about the word śahīd.[57]

Pashaura is certainly correct. There can be little doubt that the passage in question (*Charitr Pakhyān* 102:30, Dasam Granth, p. 948) refers to the martyr, the heroic warrior martyr who becomes so by being killed in righteous battle, as he or she came to be understood in the very

early nineteenth century under the masterful hand of Seva Singh Kaushish.[58] The passage in question deserves some scrutiny, from the tale of Raja Dasarath and Rani Kekai, the father and stepmother of the Ramayana's Ram Chandar respectively:

> A bloody battle ensued in which many unparalleled heroes had resolved to die fighting. They attacked with fury directed from every direction towards the enemy. During the battle many fell as pure martyrs. Shyam alone knows the number of warriors who fell fighting.[59]

The definition here seems clear, but an ambiguity persists nevertheless. What makes this claim important is that the term śahīd is prefaced by the word pāk or pure indicating of course that the author of this particular charitr felt that there were also impure examples of śahīds in existence. I suggest that this statement both does and does not throw my assumption into question. On the one hand, the soldiers who fell were 'pure martyrs' most likely in the sense that they died in battle and were thereby united to Akal Purakh, but on the other hand the author makes clear that there were other definitions of the śahīd with which he was familiar but which he does not specifically mention, impure understandings if you will which I examined in Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition.[60]

All these 'impure' understandings are absent from McLeod's Historical Dictionary definition. He does mention that the idea of the śahīd and of *śahādat/ śahīdī* (martyrdom) continues to play a central part in the history of the Panth and in this he is quite correct as we see the Sikh tradition of martyrdom articulated in many different genres, in prayer, calendar art, and song to name just a few.[61] We also find the appearance of specific Sikh śahīds in such places as Singapore (Bhai Maharaj Singh), Canada (Mewa Singh), and the United Kingdom (Udham Singh), Sikhs whose deaths have been appropriated as cultural artefacts in order to articulate a particular Sikh identity within these respective countries with the hope of fostering its recognition and the position of the Sikh community there vis a vis the state,[62] underscoring the importance of martyrdom in constructions of Sikh identity and history for Sikhs the world over.

Sikh martyrs furthermore like other Indians and even soldiers killed during the period of the British and after Partition in 1947 have played an important role in the construction of and control over sacred space with martyries established at virtually all sites onto which Sikh blood as fallen. The same holds true for those Sikhs killed during the recent period of ethnonationalist violence, including such Sikhs as, among many others, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. And, as well, martyrs figure intimately within recent studies of Indian cartography in which the

outlines of the nation, be it the Indian nation itself or the imagined entity of Khalistan, the so-called homeland of the Sikhs, have been plotted through such sacrifice.[63] The blood of martyrdom in these related contexts is indicative of ownership and power. Indeed, the maps of India or of the proposed Khalistan become in this context martyries unto themselves virtual representations onto which Sikhs have projected their past, present, and their future, a future we are often told which can only be achieved by further sacrifice.

Ultimately therefore we may suggest that this is perhaps the reason why both McLeod's and my statements about Guru Arjan and by extension those others of ours which refer to subsequent Sikh martyrs incur such displeasure. These are caricatured and made to appear as if these encourage Sikhs not only to deny their past but to also deny them an important place in the future of all of us.

Notes

[1] W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 1-19. See also pp. 37-58.

[2] A large number of texts project this standard narrative. For one see Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs* (Delhi: Manohar, 1985).

[3] W.H. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

[4] Indubhusan Bannerjee, *The Evolution of the Khalsa* I (3rd ed., Calcutta: AMC, 1972), pp. 20-1.

[5] Jagjit Singh, *The Sikh Revolution: A Perspective View* (New Delhi: Kendri Singh Sabha, 1984).

[6] The key word here is sustained as in McLeod's 1995 *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* a brief definition is supplied to which we shall turn in a moment. W.H. McLeod, *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* (Landhom, MD and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), pp. 192-93.

[7] W.H. McLeod (ed. and trans.), *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987).

[8] To this end, J.S. Grewal has recently noted that

> [Through his death Guru Arjan] was effectively urging "the claims of pluralism" as a matter of conscience

> against one single central rule in culture, power, religion, civil society and political economy.

J.S. Grewal, 'Guru Arjan Dev's Life, Martyrdom and Legacy,' in Pritipal Singh Kapur and Mohinder Singh (ed.), *Guru Arjan's Contribution, Martyrdom and Legacy* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009), p. 22. The works attributed to Guru Nanak which later Sikhs have incorporated into a rhetoric of martyrdom are many. The most significant of these is easily the first Guru's *slok vārān te vadhīk* 20, Adi Granth, p. 1412.

[9] The edifying nature of Sikh martyrdom is quite obvious in the numerous Sikh martyrologies produced since the early nineteenth century. Perhaps the most significant of these deal with the martyrdom of the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the *chhote sāhibzāde*. Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: Playing the 'Game of Love'* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 93-4. For examples of contemporary Sikhs recalling the stories of Sikh martyrs to help them bear their own personal tribulations see the many interviews with Sikh victims of contemporary ethnonationalist violence in Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) and Balbinder Singh Bhogal, 'Text as Sword: Sikh Religious Violence Taken as Wonder,' in John. R. Hinnells and Richard King (ed.), *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 128.

[10] *Kathākar* generically refers to a narrator but within the Sikh tradition the term is somewhat more specialised in the sense that it is one who delivers a religious discourse or a homily or a lesson from Sikh history (all of which may be referred to as *kathā*). Perhaps the most significant text from which *kathākars* draw their narratives is Santokh Singh's mid nineteenth century multi-volume masterpiece the *Gur-pratāp Sūraj Granth* commonly known as *Sūraj Prakāś*.

[11] See the painting titled '*Tere Bhāne vich Ammrit Varasai*' in *Ailbum Kendrī Sikkh Ajāibhgar* (Amritsar: Central Sikh Museum, 1991), p. 17.

[12] W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, p. 3.

[13] W.H. McLeod, *Gurū Nānak and the Sikh Religion*, pp. 146-7.

[14] For example Brian Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001).

[15] In her critique of my work on Guru Arjan's martyrdom Professor Indu Banga states that I ignore 'McLeod's reference to Guru Arjan's death as that of a martyr.' The implication here is of course that McLeod in his later work had finally accepted that which all Sikhs claim is fact. In the original reference which she notes McLeod does state just this although he does so in the context of repeating traditional understandings. In other words, he makes no personal value judgment which is what allocating the term martyr to anyone entails. Indu Banga, 'Recent Studies on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan: A Critique,' in Pritipal Singh Kapur and Mohinder Singh (ed.), *Guru Arjan's Contribution, Martyrdom and Legacy* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009), pp. 162-79, esp. p. 166. McLeod mentions the fifth Guru's execution as martyrdom in W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 42 and within his *Sikhism* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 129 amongst others.

[16] McLeod often confronted these accusations head on particularly in his autobiography and in a series of articles. See for example W.H. McLeod, 'Cries of Outrage: History Versus Tradition in the Study of the Sikh Community,' in *South Asia Research* 14 (Oct., 1994), pp. 121-35; 'Gatha Sri Adi Granth and the Controversy,' in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117:4 (Oct-Dec, 1997), pp. 702-04; 'Sikh Fundamentalism,' in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118.1 (Jan.-Mar., 1998), pp. 15-27; and finally W.H. McLeod, *Discovering the Sikhs: Autobiography of a Historian* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).

[17] While Guru Arjan's death is noted in both *vār* 24 of Bhai Gurdas and the *Bachitar Nātak* 5:11 the first source to hint at the Guru's death as an execution is Kirpal Das Bhalla's *Mahimā Prakāś Vārtak* circa early 1740s, an interpretation followed by virtually every Sikh narrative afterwards. Kulvinder Singh Bajwa (ed.), *Mahimā Prakāś (Vārtak)* sakhi 81 (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004), pp. 124-5 although let us be clear even here the death is not stated to be a martyrdom. It is perhaps for this reason that Harbans Kaur Saggu does not include Kirpal Das' text into his discussion of early sources. See Harbans Kaur Saggu, *'Srī Gurū Arjan Dev jī dī Śahādat de Pañjābī Śrotān dā Viśleshan,'* in Pritipal Singh Kapur and Mohinder Singh (ed.), *Guru Arjan's Contribution, Martyrdom and Legacy* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2009), pp. 195-218. For early narratives of this episode see Louis E. Fenech, 'Martyrdom and the Execution of Guru Arjan in Early Sikh Sources', in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121.1 (2001), pp. 20-31. It is not until the

period of the Singh Sabha that Guru Arjan's death is titled *śahīdī*. The allocation of this term to the fifth Master's death is even absent in perhaps the most important martyrological work of the gur-bilas tradition, Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Gur-panth Prakāś*. There is however the passage in Kesar Singh Chhibbar's *Bansāvalī-nāmā* (1776 CE) in which the fifth Guru claims the status of martyrdom without specifically naming it as such, appropriating terms which were more commonly used to designate the status in the eighteenth century. See Piara Singh Padam (ed.), *Bhāī Kesar Singh Chhibbar Krit Bansāvalī-nāmā Dasān Pātśāhīān kā* 5:132 (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997), p. 84:

> *bhāī gurdās nūn baithi samajhāiā* / *asādā lagegā sīsu ihu nischā hai āiā*
> [Guru Arjan] sat and explained to Bhai Gurdas that his head will be offered [as a sacrifice] and that this moment has arrived as a certainty.

[18] Guru Tegh Bahadar's death narrative appears first, famously, in the so-called autobiography of his son, Guru Gobind Singh, the *Bachitar Nātak*. See *Bachitar Nātak* 5:13-16, Dasam Granth, p. 54.

[19] Fenech, 'Martyrdom and the Execution of Guru Arjan,' p. 31. Perhaps a partial reason for this may be the fact that Sikhs were not aware of the evidence of Jahangir's memoirs until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

[20] Balbinder Singh Bhogal, 'Text as Sword: Sikh Religious Violence Taken as Wonder,' pp. 107-35 and Navdeep Mandair, 'An Approximate Difference: Proximity and Oppression in the West's Encounter with Sikhism, ' in *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* 5:2 (December 2009), pp. 85-101.

[21] In the most rambling manner is Sangat Singh's essay 'McLeod and Fenech as Scholars on Sikhism and Martyrdom,' presented at an international conference of Sikh Studies held in the year 2000 which may be read at www.globalsikhstudies.net. It is quite commonplace to find my name mentioned along with McLeod's whenever a critique of my Guru Arjan martyrdom narrative is produced. Indu Banga's is the last example of this teaming. Indu Banga, 'Recent Studies on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan: A Critique,' p. 166.

[22] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan: History, Memory , and Biography in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 204-43.

[23] The Central Asian dimension of Mughal military and courtly culture is explored in Richard C. Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Douglas E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 1-49.

[24] The chapter in question tries to probe deeply into the mid sixteenth-century Punjabi environment and examine whether or not the social makeup of the Punjab and the nascent Sikh community played a role in the emperor's decision to execute Guru Arjan. Here, for example, Pashaura draws upon James Scott's well known works on the weapons used by the disenfranchised to effect change. His contextual analysis of the Punjab from the time of Amir Timur until that of Babur (the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries) is however problematic, relying upon conventional and indeed popular understandings of the history of Punjab during the Lodi and Indo-Timurid period, as Indu Banga has noted. Indu Banga, 'Recent Studies on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan: A Critique,' pp. 175-8.

[25] Wheeler M. Thackston (trans.), *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1999), p. 59. In regard to Prince Khusrau, one may ask if Jahangir did indeed take his challenge to the emperor's sovereignty seriously. We note throughout the memoir that Jahangir was well aware of Khusrau's arrogance (p. 48-9) and clearly blamed him for the suicide of Shah Begam, Jahangir's beloved first wife (p. 51). The emperor may have thus taken action against his son not because of the threat he posed but rather simply to finally deal with him for having caused the death of a beloved family member.

[26] Kaikhusrau Isfandiyar (ed.), *Dabistān-i Mazāhib* I (Tehran: Kitab-khanah-i Tahuri, 1983), p. 207. In have placed the word 'torture' within inverted commas because the exact Persian word, *āzār* can refer to any type of torment. One may thus translate the passage as follows: '[Guru Arjan died] as a result of the heat of the sun, the severity of summer, and the injuries [inflicted] by the baliffs.' What these injuries were is left unsaid.

[27] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 207-08, 218.

[28] See Piara Singh Padam (ed.), *Bhāī Kesar Singh Chhibbar Krit Bansāvalī-nāmā Dasān Pātśāhīān kā* 5:137 (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997), p. 55.

[29] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 234. Pashaura here also elaborates upon the idea I noted in my 'Martyrdom and the Execution of Guru Arjan in Early Sikh Sources,' p. 31, n. 73 that it was likely that Bhai Gurdas said nothing about Guru Arjan's specific style of execution because one of his central concerns was likely to be the survival of the Sikh Panth. An anti-Mughal diatribe would not serve these interests well.

[30] Pashaura Singh spends quite some time attempting to demonstrate Jahangir's attitude towards the Guru based in part upon the speculation that Jahangir was with Akbar when he visited Guru Arjan in Goindwal in 1598. Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 230. Jahangir himself does not mention ever visiting Guru Arjan at Taran Taran in his memoirs.

[31] Thackston (trans.), *The Jahangirnama*, pp. 57-8.

[32] I have taken the Persian text from Ganda Singh's *Guru Arjun's Martyrdom (Re-interpreted)* (Patiala: Guru Nanak Mission, 1969), p. 10.
[33] Thackston (trans.), *The Jahangirnama*, pp. 53-4, 59.

[34] The only time in which Sikhs figure in a Mughal narrative during the time of Jahangir (apart from the sole reference to Guru Arjan in the *Jahangīr-nāmah*) is the brief description of the emperor Akbar's visit to Guru Arjan in 1598 as the former was making his way back to Agra after a lengthy stay in Lahore. This appears in the *Akbar-nāmah* the specific portion of which has been recently translated in J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, *Sikh History from Persian Sources* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), p. 55.

[35] Ganda Singh, *Guru Arjun's Martyrdom*, p. 12.

[36] Kulvinder Singh Bajwa (ed.), *Mahimā Prakāś Vārtak* 81, pp. 124-5 and Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahimā Prakāś* 2 volumes [ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh] (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, 1971), vol. 2, 22:2-8, pp. 410-11.

[37] Saggu, '*Srī Gurū Arjan Dev jī dī Śahādat*' p. 203:

bhalla jī sārā dosh chandū 'te lāunde han, bādśāh jahāngīr 'te nahīn

[38] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 213-14, 233.

[39] For example, Sajida Sultana Alvi (ed. and trans.), *Advice on the Art of Governance: Mau ḥizah-i Jahāngīrī of Muhammad Bāqir Najm-i Sānī: An Indo-Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

[40] See the aptly titled chapter 'Mughal Exercise of Power in the Creation of Texts,' in Bonnie Wade, *Imaging Sound: An Ethnomusicological Study of Music, Art, and Culture in Mughal India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 1-35.

[41] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, pp. 137-41. Also see the discussion in Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: The Court of God in the World of Men* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 67-8.

[42] Banga perceptively notes the phrase *dar īn waqt*, 'in these times' with which the point begins to underscore the passage's nature as an aside. The original letter in Persian appears in Hussain Halami bin Sa ḥid Istanbuli (ed.), *Maktūbat-i Imām-i Rabbanī Hazrat Mujjadad-i Alf-i Thānī* (Karachi: Adab Manzil, 1397 H./1977 CE), pp. 307-10. Guru Arjan's reference is on p. 309.

[43] Indu Banga, 'Recent Studies on the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan: A Critique,' pp. 173-4.

[44] The implication I receive from this particular wording, particularly the terms *bisyār khūb* suggests that Sirhindi, well aware of his dubious standing in Mughal circles, is here attempting to curry a favour with Murtaza Khan which the former simply did not possess in Mughal circles.

[45] Yohanan Friedman, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal and London: McGuill-Queen's University Press, 1971), pp. 1-12. The interaction between Sirhindi and Jahangir and the apparent reasons for it are elaborated in Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan Empress of Mughal India* (New York, 1993), pp. 207-10.

[46] True, the following reference occurs more than a decade after the execution of Guru Arjan but is worth noting nevertheless, from Wheeler Thackston's translation of the Jahangir-amah:

> During these days it was reported that a charlatan from Sir hind named Shaykh Ahmad had spread a net of deceit and deception in which he had trapped many unspiritual worshipers of externality.

Later Jahangir would free Sirhindi and on the emperor's 55th birthday grant to the Shaikh 2000 rupees. Wheeler M. Thackston (trans.), *The Jahangirnama*, pp. 304, 341, 406.

[47] Sajida S. Alvi, 'Religion and the State During the Reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605-27): Nonjuristical Perspectives,' in *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989), pp. 95-119, esp. p. 109. Although a caveat should be inserted regarding Nur Jahan's attitude towards the Chishtis: this became something of a de facto Mughal policy only after she had become the power behind the throne in the late 1610s. See Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan Empress of Mughal India*, p. 211.

[48] See the introduction to Simon Digby (ed. and trans.), *Sufis and Soldiers in Awrangzeb's Deccan: Malfúzát-i Naqshbandiyya* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 3, 8.

[49] See '*śahīd*' in McLeod's *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*, pp. 192-93.

[50] Best seen in W. H. McLeod, 'The Sikh Struggle in the Eighteenth Century and its Relevance for Today,' in *History of Religions* 31:4 (May 1992), pp. 344-62. The quote originally belongs to the classicist G.W. Bowersock and is used in my 'Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition,' in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117.4 (Oct.-Dec. 1997), p. 630. Of course, when appropriated by the Sikhs the idea of martyrdom was attuned to a Sikh pitch. In particular, while martyrdom is the sure way to heaven or salvation within Islamic understandings only those who are saved can become martyrs in the Sikh tradition as martyrdom entails the abolition of *hau-mai* or self-centeredness. See my discussion in *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, pp. 63-102.

[51] Bhogal's work is an intriguing take on martyrdom and violence in the Sikh tradition underscoring the love-violence relationship we discover within more traditional forms of Hindu devotion or bhakti, a point which Navdeep Mandair also explores in his 'An Approximate Difference' (p. 92-6). Here Bhogal sees a clear continuity between humanity's relationship with Akal Purakh as articulated by Guru Nanak and the

preceding Sikh Gurus, elaborating a metaphor of text (Adi Granth and Dasam Granth) as sword. In weaving this complex tapestry, however, Bhogal attributes claims to McLeod's work (and mine) which reflect misreadings of it. Neither I nor McLeod posit 'a break in Sikh tradition' with the accession of Guru Hargobind to the office of Guru. Indeed, McLeod goes to some lengths to demonstrate the tradition's continuity both theologically/ideologically and politically for lack of a better word.

[52] For exceptions see my *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition* and Purnima Dhavan's 'Reading the Texture of History and Memory in Early-Nineteenth-Century Punjab,' in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 29:3 (2009), pp. 515-27.

[53] Guru Nanak, *Sirī rāg ashtapadī* 2 and Bhagat Raidas, *Rāg malār* 3:2, Adi Granth, pp. 53, 1293.

[54] Vir Singh (ed.), *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib jī dī Kuñjī: Vārān Bhāī Gurdās Satīk Bhāv Prakāśanī Tīkā Samet Mukammal* 3:18:2, 8:8:3, 21:13:2, 40:8:2 (New Delhi: Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, 1997), pp. 68, 131, 335, 625. The word *śahīd* appears once in the Chaupa Singh rahit-nama (in the compound term *śahīd-gañj*, 'martyr-treasury') as well as within the ghazals of Bhai Nand Lal Goya as the verb *shahīd kard*, 'to martyr.'

[55] These conjectures are summed up in my *Martyrdom in The Sikh Tradition*, pp. 8-9, 164.

[56] W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 239-40.

[57] Pashaura Singh, *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*, p. 242, n. 112. The other uses of the word *śahīd* in eighteenth-century Sikh literature are noted in my *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*. Briefly, the word appears once in the Chaupa Singh rahit-nama (line 474) as the compound term *śahīd-gañj* or 'martyr-treasury' and once within the ghazals attributed to Bhai Nand Lal Goya (7:3) who was Guru Gobind Singh's Persian poet.

[58] Garja Singh (ed.), *Śahīd-bilās (Bhāī Manī Singh) krit Sevā Singh* (Ludhiana: Punjab Sahit Academy, 1961).

[59] *Charitr Pakhyān* 102:30, Dasam Granth, p. 948. See also *Charitr Pakhyān* 404:167, Dasam Granth, p. 1371 in which we also find the terms pāk *śahīd*.

[60] See the chapter entitled 'The *Śahīd*'s Role in a Mystical Universe,' in my *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, pp. 145-70.

[61] A recent study of Sikh singing and performance in which martyrological themes resonate is Michael Nijhawan's *Dhadhi Darbar: Religion, Violence, and The Performance of Sikh History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[62] For Bhai Maharaj Singh's memory and its articulation by Sikhs in the cultural politics of Singapore see Van Dusenbury, 'Socializing Sikhs in Singapore: Soliciting the State's Support,' in Pashaura Singh and N.G. Barrier (eds.), *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), pp. 116 ff. Mewa Singh's history and martyrdom celebration is noted in Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 129-33. The use of Udham Singh's memory is noted in my 'Contested Nationalisms; Negotiated Terrains: The Way Sikhs Remember Udham Singh "Shahid" (1899-1940),' in *Modern Asian Studies* 36:4 (2002), pp. 827-70.

[63] For example Brian Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body* and Sumathi Ramaswamy, 'Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India,' in the *Journal of Asian Studies* 67(3) (August 2008), pp. 819-53.

Empire, Orientalism, and Native Informants: The Scholarly Endeavours of Sir Attar Singh Bhadour

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It is no more tenable to view the relationship between the West and the East through simple binaries like powerful metropolitan knowledge and powerless vernacular cultures. The production of colonial knowledge was not simply a matter of what was advanced by knowledge practitioners in the West. Indigenous intellectuals and antique traditions of knowledge actively, if not equally, shaped the imperial agenda. Thus, we can no longer confidently speak of a hegemonic western discourse. While the imperial powers may have had powerful illusions of a fully autonomous archive, the reality on the ground was that a massive repertoire of Munshis, Pandits, and Bhais, the traditional bearers of indigenous knowledge systems, enabled and greatly expanded colonial knowledge. The workings of indigenous knowledge systems and the makings of colonial archives are explored in this essay through the masterly translations and writings of Sir Attar Singh Bhadour (1833-1896).

> "Thought is a labyrinth." Hugh Kenner
> "Beneath every history, another history." Hilary Mantel[1]

Edward Said in his influential work, *Orientalism* passionately argued that the West since ancient times but particularly during the period of modern imperialism sought to subjugate the East through a powerful discourse made up of essentialized caricatures, negative images and insidious categories. Collectively this discourse under the cover of complex knowledge systems, like philology, travelogues, taxonomy, anthropology and the study of world religions, showed the West to be all prevailing and powerful and the East always ready for submission and subordination. Colonialism thus was not simply a matter of guns, frigates and superior technology but also involved a complex network of texts, symbolic systems and scholarly traditions.[2] While a great deal of what Said proposed was initially enthusiastically accepted within the academy, most recent scholarship is uncomfortable with the Saidian paradigm and suggests radical amendments and revisions, if not a complete

abandonment of the Saidian project. It is no more tenable to view the relationship between the West and the East through simple binaries like powerful metropolitan knowledge and powerless vernacular cultures. The production of colonial knowledge was not simply a matter of what was advanced by knowledge practitioners in the West. Indigenous intellectuals and antique traditions of knowledge actively, if not equally, shaped the imperial agenda. Thus, we can no longer confidently speak of a hegemonic western discourse.

In a recent essay, Nicholas Dirks has extensively documented how Colin Mackenzie's (the first Surveyor-General of India) cartographic, ethnographic and historical work was greatly facilitated by his Indian collaborators.[3] Since Mackenzie (1754-1821) did not know any Indian languages, he could not have conducted his monumental work across a very challenging terrain, both in a physical and social sense, without the assistance of his native informants. Key among his indigenous collaborators was a man by the name of Kavelli Venkata Boria. A Brahman by caste, Boria knew four languages (Sanskrit, Tamil, Telgu and Kanarese) and had an extensive social network across the Deccan. Dirks as a historian wants to tell us more about his talent and achievements. But he is helpless. The colonial archive has only left faint traces concerning the life-story of Boria. We would like to know much more about where was he educated. What turned him into a polyglot? What sort of cultural registers did he work within? What sort of indigenous systems of knowledge did he master? How did he conceive of his collaboration with Colin Mackenzie? Was it purely an employment contract or something more? Historians of South Asia can barely answer these urgent questions and as a result Boria is condemned to perpetually live in the shadows. But when it comes to Colin Mackenzie the colonial archive is overflowing with data and information. We have his lavish publications and survey reports, the gigantic ethnographic collection he assembled is well preserved in the British library and his life-story is the subject of a hallowed biography.[4] With such asymmetrical grids of information so firmly embedded in our archives it is not surprising that the Scottish enlightener Mackenzie looms large as a master narrator. The best that Dirks can do is to point us towards Boria and complicate the story of the colonial archive.

Nicholas Dirks is not alone in this revisionist pursuit. An increasing number of Indologists and historians are putting forward a similar plea. Rosane Rocher, Christopher Bayly and Vasudha Dalmia would all like us to enlarge our biographies of the Pandits, Maulvis and Munshis, the collective ensemble that so deeply and consistently contributed in the production of colonial knowledge.[5] And only by doing so can the canon of orientalist historiography move beyond standard names like James Mill, Mounstuart Elphinstone, John Malcolm and Alexander Dow. In other words, we need an amended list that would also include names like

Ali Ibrahim Khan, Bapu Deva Shastri, Radhakanta Tarkavagisa and Sir Attar Singh Bhadour, the subject of this paper. But how does one go about matching one's historiographical aspirations with empirical realities? Is it possible for us to transcend the near silence of the colonial archive? I do not want to sound too optimistic about this project particularly when it comes to the Punjab, for it was not the site of major colonial institutions like Fort Williams at Calcutta or the Sanskrit College at Benares. Yet, the tools of historical research promise a considerable yield. I hope to illustrate this possibility of historical recovery by now turning to Attar Singh, the key protagonist in this paper.

Attar Singh first comes to our attention within the imperial archives, when he receives a brief mention from the German Indologist, Ernest Trumpp in the introductory essay to Trumpp's infamous translation of the *Adi Granth*. In narrating the biography of the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Trumpp approvingly notes: "The Sakhis, which Sirdar Attar Singh, chief of Bhadour, who with an enlightened mind follows up the history and religion of his nation, has lately published, throw a very significant light on the wanderings of Tegh Bahadur …"[6] However, soon after this warm proclamation of Attar Singh's achievements Ernest Trumpp resumes his imperious tone and henceforth Attar Singh appears in his text only in a series of footnotes. Some of these footnotes are worth reproducing here as these are of considerable help as we reconstruct the Attar Singh archive and his role as a native informant. The first of Trumpp's footnotes states: "Their title is: The Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Translated from the original Gurmukhi by Sirdar Attar Singh, Chief of Bhadour. January, 1876. Lahore, Indian Public Opinion Press. It would have been very useful if the translator had also added some critical apparatus about the probable time of the composition of these Sakhis. They cannot be very old, as the British territory thereabout is already mentioned."[7]

Trumpp despite his critical reservations is deeply intrigued by Attar Singh's scholarship. He again observes, as if talking to himself: "We must remark here, that in these Sakhis no distinct line is drawn between the wanderings of Guru Teg-bahadur and those of Guru Govind Singh, so that it remains uncertain, where the first end and where the second commence. As I have not the original text at my disposal, I cannot say, if this is owing to some fault of the text or to some oversight of the translator. This great defect seems at any rate not to have struck him, as he makes no remark about it. It is certain that the Sakhis from 51 refer to Guru Govind Singh, the fight at Mukt-sar having taken place under him. In Sakhi 56 it is also stated that the Guru was only thirty-five years old, which could only be said of Govind Singh."[8]

Having made some constructive suggestions concerning Attar Singh's translation, Trumpp again acknowledges his debt to the Sikh intellectual as he begins to record the importance of the Rahit and manuals of code of

conduct (*rahitnamas*) for the Sikhs. In a footnote he once again seeks corroboration from Attar Singh's writings by observing: "Two of these Rahit-namas have lately been published in an English translation by Sirdar Attar Singh of Bhadour; but it is a pity that he has not given the Gurmukhi texts also. The translation is very free and gives only the sense generally, not verbally. Fortunately I brought the original text of the Rahit-nama of Prahlad-rai with me, so that I am enabled, for the sake of accuracy, to quote it, where it may seem necessary. The title of Sirdar Attar Singh's publication is: The Rayhit Nama of Pralad Rai, or the excellent conversation of Daswan Padsha, and Nand Lal's Rayhit Nama, or rules for the guidance of the Sikhs in religious matters. Lahore, printed at the Albert Press, 1876."[9]

While the Orientalist archive covering Attar Singh's scholarship can be said to begin with Ernest Trumpp, it continues to expand as other European and British authors take note of the Sikhs. In the early 1880s Max Macauliffe wrote a famous essay concerning Banda Bahadur. And almost at the very beginning of his text, he noted in a footnote: "In the Pant (sic) Parkash, a Sikh work compiled by Ratan Singh to glorify the Sikh religion and clear it of the aspersions cast upon it by one Bute Shah. The work was presented to General Ochterlony. Sirdar Attar Singh, C.I.E., chief of Bhadaur, has favoured me with a MS. Copy. I am principally indebted to it for the following narrative as far as the death of Banda."[10] Here Macauliffe is acknowledging another aspect of Attar Singh's scholarship and erudition. Among the learned, Attar Singh was famous for his private library. He possessed one of the largest collections of Gurmukhi, Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts in the Punjab. It is hardly surprising that Macauliffe received a copy of Rattan Singh Bhangu's justly famous history of the Sikhs from Attar Singh. But what sort of other conversations took place between Attar Singh and Macauliffe? Although Macauliffe was to emerge as a major historian of the Sikhs, in the early 1880s he was just beginning his interest in Sikh history and texts. In what way was his voice shaped by his long association with Attar Singh? Unfortunately, the existing historical record is of no help in this crucial matter. Despite these shortcomings within the colonial archive we know that Attar Singh's intellectual influence continued to expand. Increasingly he becomes indispensable for all those scholars who want to write anything important concerning the Sikhs.

We next get to notice Attar Singh's presence in the writings of the Hungarian Orientalist, Doctor G.W. Leitner. While Leitner is not a name we often encounter in Sikh Studies, he was in many ways critical to the formation of modern Punjabi. As Principal of the Government College in Lahore, and the first registrar of the Punjab University, he pushed hard for the recognition of north Indian vernaculars within the educational curriculum. When many in Lahore refused to have Punjabi language courses taught at the Oriental College, he turned to his close friend Attar

Singh for help. Attar Singh was able to show the detractors of Punjabi that the language had an ancient history in the province and possessed a vast literary canon. He demonstrated all this by producing books from his private library and Leitner duly published this extensive list in his report on the state of indigenous education in the Punjab. [11]

Approximately a decade after Leitner's influential work on indigenous education we once again find a reference to Attar Singh's scholarship in Lepel Griffin's first-ever English biography of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Griffin was closely associated with the British colonial administration in the Punjab and in the early 1890's he was asked by W.W. Hunter on behalf of the prestigious imprint, Clarendon Press, to write a biography of Ranjit Singh. Griffin was eminently suited for the commission as he had earlier compiled such books as *The Punjab Chiefs* (1865*)*, *The Law of Inheritance to Sikh Chiefships (1869)* and *The Rajas of the Punjab* (1870). It is highly likely that Attar Singh greatly assisted Griffin in the production of his detailed histories of royal lineages in the Punjab. For Attar Singh himself had authored in Urdu a genealogical account of royal lineages in the Malwa region of the Punjab entitled: *Tawarikh-i-Sidhu Bairaran, Khandan-i-Phul*. However, we have no definitive evidence regarding such a collaboration. Generally, we are beginning to understand the European Orientalists preferred to stay silent about their native sources of information. Griffin is in very many ways a part of this colonial convention. But in his biography of Ranjit Singh, he records a very enlightening footnote: " A valued friend of mine, Sirdar Attar Singh of Bhadour, the head of one of the first Cis-Sutlej families, has translated and published an interesting collection of Sakhis, describing the wanderings and adventures of Guru Tegh Bahadur and his son Guru Govind Singh."[12] Once again, much like in the writings of Trumpp, Macauliffe and Leitner, the key subject of this essay, Attar Singh makes a brief appearance in a footnote. Griffin, clearly deploys Attar Singh's findings in reconstructing the lives of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. It was generous of him to publicly record his intellectual debts.

But after Griffin our archive suddenly goes cold. Although we have the master narrative of the European Orientalists very much alive and present in our midst, and still asserting a considerable influence, Attar Singh recedes into the shadows. This is unfortunate as in many ways he and many others like him are critical, if we are ever going to understand how the modern Sikh archive was put together. So, we urgently need a thick description of his life and scholarly pursuits. And this is what I turn to in the following section of this essay.

Sir Attar Singh Bhadour

Attar Singh was born to blue-blood in 1833. His father, Sardar Kharak Singh, a well known member of the Sikh landed gentry and a close relative of the Maharaja of Patiala, was the head of the house of Bhadour.[13] Kharak Singh was very keen for his son to receive a first-class education. While some of his early education was imparted by distinguished private tutors at home, Attar Singh was also sent away to the city of Benares to receive extensive training in classical languages, philosophy, logic and music. By his early twenties, the young aristocrat had mastered five languages: Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi and English. In many ways, Attar Singh is a great exemplar of what the social historian Christopher Bayly has recently conceptualised as the "north Indian ecumene."[14] Besides being a forum for public opinion and debate, this ecumene also served as a huge circuit for the circulation of languages (particularly Persian, Sanskrit, and Urdu), pre-colonial knowledge systems (in fields as diverse as rational learning, philosophy, rhetoric, astronomy, legal discourse, and mysticism), and personnel (landed gentry, city merchants, lawyers, judges, doctors and healers). "The guardians of the ecumene," writes Bayly, "represented the views of bazaar people and artisans when urban communities came under pressure. Their connections spread across religious, sectarian, and caste boundaries, though they never dissolved them. A common background in the Indo-Persian and, to a lesser extent Hindu classics enlightened them. The theme of high-minded friendship animated the poets, scholars, and officials who conversed along these networks and set the tone for them. Though suffused with pride of country, the ecumene remained cosmopolitan, receiving information and ideas from central and west Asia as well as from a dimly defined Hindustan. In this sense, it was closer in spirit to the groupings of philosophers, urban notables and officials in the world of late antiquity – the Christian-Greek ecumene – than it was to Habermas's modern public."[15]

Drawing on the cosmopolitan tenor of the ecumene, Attar Singh with unusual grace, charm and wit established a large network of affiliates made up of both native elites and the European scholars and administrators. Well-versed in music, philosophy, history and the arts, he took an active interest in the province's public affairs. We get a glimpse into his passions and interests from a recent biographical sketch: " A great man, Attar Singh, lived here [the city of Ludhiana] in the 19th century. His life forms an important chapter in Ludhiana's history. He built a big residence for himself. The palace-like complex of buildings had a princely lodge, an audience hall for music and poetry, a prakash-kirtan room, guest-houses, servant quarters, guard rooms, stores, stables, cattle sheds, etc. It had a garden with fountains, lawns and foot-paths. It was called Bhadaur House. The most noteworthy part of this princely

residence was its library. It had a rich collection of books. Historians have recorded it and researchers have benefited from it. This library could match Khuda Baksh Library of Patna. The fact that Bhadaur House existed in Ludhiana sounds unreal. The history of this late 19th century building would read like a chapter of a historical novel."[16]

Sardar Attar Singh excelled in historical research and was one of the first Punjabis to become an elected member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1869, and later the Royal Asiatic Society, London.[17] Attar Singh's profound knowledge of Sikh tradition, together with his overall appreciation of Indian culture, his close contacts with many leading Punjabi figures and his possession of the best equipped private library in the province, made him a much-sought after person among the upper echelons of the provincial bureaucracy. His advice was often sought on religious, social and political matters. For his part Attar Singh readily sounded out the administration on potential flashpoints and prepared exhaustive reports on current affairs for submission to high officials. Such earnest loyalty won him several titles and sinecures from the colonial administration. In 1877, on the occasion of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi under the auspices of Lord Lytton he was conferred with the title: *Mulaz-ul-ulama-o-ul-Fazal*. This title celebrated Attar Singh's learning in Persian and Urdu. Another imperial Darbar in 1887, this time to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations led to him receiving the title: *Mahamahopadhyaya*. This award honoured his learning in Sanskrit and Indian classics. The very next year he was knighted and now came to be known as Sir Attar Singh Bhadour.

Soon after the Lahore Singh Sabha was founded in 1879, Attar Singh became a member. He acted as a patron to both Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh, the two leading lights of the Lahore Sabha, and in fact helped Ditt Singh secure a job at the Oriental College. Jagjit Singh, in his history of the Singh Sabha movement argues that without the financial assistance of Attar Singh the Khalsa Press and the newspapers started by the Sabha like the *Khalsa Akhbar* might not have survived. In order to promote the activities of the Sabha and its ideology, Attar Singh helped start a Singh Sabha at Ludhiana in 1884 and in turn became its first President. His three other prominent positions within contemporary Sikh organizations included the presidentship of the Khalsa Diwan Lahore in 1889, the vice-Presidentship of the Khalsa College Establishment Committee and the trusteeship of the College Fund. From the late 1880s Attar Singh played a key role in the foundation and promotion of the college. Outside Sikh institutions Attar Singh contributed to the Bengal Philharmonical Society, the Senate of the Punjab University College and the influential cultural body Anjuman-i- Punjab headquartered at Lahore. His aristocratic lineage led to him being inducted to serve on the board of the Aitchison's Chiefs' College.

Given Attar Singh's literary and scholarly tastes and his interests in public affairs it is not surprising that when in 1873 the Kuka civil rebellion broke out, he became interested in exploring the reasons for this millenarian insurgency. After consulting the writings of Bhai Ram Singh and an apocryphal text called the *Sau Sakhi* (literally, A Hundred Stories), Attar Singh concluded that the Sikhs were basically loyal to the Raj but the circulation of prophesies wrongly attributed to Guru Gobind Singh had prompted them to rebel. As he succinctly put it: " A prophecy worked up, Government disregarding, may be more potent for disturbance than fifty years of authority over them [the Sikhs]."[18] His findings were so well received by the colonial administrators that they encouraged him to publish the results of his research, as well as a translation of the *Sau Sakhi* text into English. Never to shirk from pioneering work, Attar Singh took on the arduous task of translation and in late 1873 released a well-researched book entitled: *Sakhi Namah; Sakhee Book, or the Descriptions of Gooroo Gobind Singh's Religion and Doctrines* (Benares, Medical Hall Press).

While we may not think much of translation as an activity today, when tens of thousands of people are fluently bilingual in Punjabi and English, at the time when Attar Singh carried out his translation he was a rarity. Very few people in late nineteenth-century Punjab could write well in English, the newly introduced colonial language. And we should also underscore the fact that the translation project carried out by Attar Singh would call for far greater linguistic skills than ordinary English literacy. The cultural critic Walter Benjamin, in a famous essay on the role of the translator reminds us that translation is no ordinary task.[19] Translation, Benjamin philosophically proposes is a creative mode of knowledge closely affiliated to scriptures, revelation and redemption. The freight that a good translator carries is a heavy one for in giving an afterlife to literary texts, a translator Benjamin informs us is obliged to transmit a vector of values: conceptual purity, transcendence, and visions of the extraordinary.[20] Besides the virtues that Benjamin lists in his remarkable essay, a translator also needs a variety of technical skills in linguistics, grammar, language conventions and archaic usages. What distinguishes a mere translator from a good translator is that the latter possesses a certain magnitude of self-reflexivity, a deep familiarity with communal traditions, and in a frontier province like Punjab, a command of several language registers. Attar Singh possessed all of these technical and reflexive skills in ample measure.

We get a taste of these skills in his "Translator's Preface." I have selected three passages from this preface as each one demonstrates Attar Singh's intellectual vision and technical prowess. He opens his text with the following statement: "Oh how wonderful is the creation of God that above all worldly things, religion is the supreme thing. With its corruption, the corruption and degeneration of all things generally

happen, for, it is religion that binds thousands in one cord of union. It is the saying of the sage, that religion and secular things are the twins. It is owing to disunion in religion, that rebellion and other disturbances in the country generally happen. The learned foreigners have justly separated religion from legislation. But the real and true management of a country depends upon the strength of religion. Such points of niceties are generally observed by those who are learned and experienced and who are in short, able statesmen to govern a country. Such benign government as this, is an act of kindness of the Almighty, and the management of such a country entirely depends upon human beings." [21]

Attar Singh was fifty-years of age when he wrote this passage and while he in many ways is rather cryptic in what he wants to say and yet we find in these words a profound understanding of things South Asian. He writes about the importance of religion in the subcontinent and the beginnings of secular modernities under the Raj. It is worth asking here how does he come to associate himself with the modern category religion? Is this a translation of the Sanskrit *Dharma* or is his usage part of a much older Indo-Persian genealogy that through Islam had introduced the people of the subcontinent to words like *mazhab*, *din*, and *iman*.[22] It is equally possible that he acquired the category religion in its modern usage through his learning of English and exposure to Christian missionaries. The city of Ludhiana where he lived for much of his life was a major centre of Presbyterian missionary activities and it was in this city that the first English-Punjabi dictionary was published and the project to translate the Gospels initiated. So it is quite possible that his usage of the category religion has modern lineages, for after all he lived in Punjab's premier city of translation. But this is all conjecture. We will never really know how Attar Singh appropriated the category religion. However, independently of this history of appropriation or should we say of translation, Attar Singh gives contemporary scholarship a major reason to pause. He configures in the above cited passage many things historical and sociological to do with religion and secularism that in our general consensus within the academy supposedly happened much later.

The second passage that I want to cite here speaks eloquently of Attar Singh's linguistic abilities and his extraordinary proficiency in deconstructing texts. He states: "This work [*Sau Sakhi*] was originally written in Hindi prose and poetry. The meanings generally differed from the rules of Grammar and as a matter of course, men of shallow intellect and understanding generally misunderstood those ambiguous meanings and phrases. But such misunderstood words and phrases were considered as words of prophecy, and hence they (the ignorant) always failed to comprehend what the original meanings are. I have tried my best to translate into English those words and phrases with clearness and accuracy. There are words in this book so arranged and placed under the rules of Rhetoric and Syntax that when they are closely read and

consulted, they imply that some rebellion will happen soon. It is for this reason that the book is considered strange and uncommon even by the learned sometime. All these will be evident to the reader when they will peruse it."[23] Clearly, Attar Singh has mastered the skills that we today describe as close textual reading and translation hermeneutics. By using the rules of grammar, rhetoric and syntax he is able to warn his readers that they ought not to affirm the foundational claims of the text. He demonstrates to us with great élan how the life of the mind can lead to autonomy and critical historical judgment.

And finally I want to cite Attar Singh on historical reasoning. He writes: "After a deep research and careful investigation I observe that the book in question was written in the year 1894 Vicramaditya, corresponding to the Christian era 1834, for there are many events and circumstances happened in and about the above year and some years after it. It contains also the prophecies about some distinguished persons who flourished in the above year. Therein such names are mentioned that if any event happens, the corroboration of event or events comes to pass. This will be proved by several tales that are written in the book."[24] The *Sau Sakhi* text still confounds scholars as to when it may have been written.[25] Attar Singh is the first scholar wanting to establish its chronology and he proposes that the apocryphal text under discussion was written in the year 1834. He come to this conclusion because he feels that certain events and persons described in the text can only be dated to the year 1834 and thus the text could not have been written at an earlier date. Besides chronology, Attar Singh provides us with an extensive editorial commentary through footnotes. Some of these glosses are worth reporting here for they tell us much about Attar Singh's way of thinking. I have selected the following six annotations for this purpose (1) '*Toork*: Mahammedans,' (2) '*Sungut*: A body of the true followers of Gooroo Gobind Sing,' (3) '*Pauhul*: Baptism of the Seikh religion,' (4) '*Ardasia*: A Servant of Gooroo's shrine,' (5) '*Maleches*: Nations against Hindooism,' (6) '*Punth*: The whole body of Seikhs as the word Church denotes whole body of Christians.'[26] In this list, composed at a time when many of our key terms were still not standardized, we can recover a bit of Attar Singh's voice, presentation and philological rigour.

Three years after publishing his first book, the energetic Attar Singh released another major work of translation in 1876. His scholarly preoccupation with the question as to which prophetic texts contributed to the Kuka uprising continued and he translated, *Malwa Des Ratan di Sakhi Pothi*, a Punjabi manuscript into English. This seminal text, possibly written by an Udasi mendicant sometime in the early nineteenth century documents Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh's travels through Eastern Punjab, particularly in the Malwa region. Once again much like his first book, Attar Singh provides the reader with an introduction, extensive annotations and editor's comments. In his

introductory note, Attar Singh shares with us his understanding of the text. He states: "These Sakhis were originally written in a very crude language, intermingled with poetry. Through them we become acquainted with the origin of the Seikh religion, the manner and custom of the Seikhs, and many of their prophecies bearing upon political and ecclesiastical matters. Such prophecies are always found scattered through their historical books, as in the Hadis of the Mahomedans, and are the main sources of errors into which they have often been led."[27]

Clearly, Attar Singh had no confidence in prophecies and he sought to warn both the colonial authorities and his co-religionists as to how the prophecies could be so easily misread and mistranslated. However, as a good scholar Attar Singh is profoundly aware of the fact that civil-disturbances in the Punjab or historical change in general always flows from multiple sources and causes. This self-understanding of the complex rhythms of history is apparent when he proposes: "The ignorance of the people, the tolerance of the government, and the jealousies and suspicions arising out of antagonistic creeds, have often endangered the country. Designing men prompted by the extravagant assurances of prophecy have often lured their countrymen to destruction, and impregnated their minds with an underlying hostility to rulers. Religion itself appears to have lost its hold upon men's minds, for we find many endeavouring to establish new religions, but the old prophecies still retain maintain their ground, and will yet lead to important changes."[28] So while prophecies were important, many other passions and hatreds contributed to social upheaval or what Attar Singh calls "destruction." While he once again uses the category religion here, we still do not get a sense of whether he is translating a term from the Indo-Persian cosmopolis or has he appropriated this term through his encounters with muscular Christianity and his learning of English.

The final two texts that Attar Singh translates are the early Rahitnamas of Nand Lal and Prahlad Rai.[29] These are perhaps the very first translations into English by a Sikh scholar of the important Rahit corpus. One wonders what exactly are the connections between Attar Singh's earlier books and his interest in the Rahit codifications? This question once again takes us back to European Orientalism and the production of colonial knowledge, a central theme of this essay. In translating the Rahitnamas, Attar Singh is publicly signaling to the colonial knowledge-brokers the critical importance of the Rahitnamas in the self-understanding and religious practises of the Sikhs. We know from the historical record that Attar Singh's intervention proved to be highly influential. Ernest Trumpp, the German Orientalist, who got so much about Sikhism wrong and mistranslated the scriptures, however did manage to get one thing right. His understanding and presentation of the Sikh Rahit was in many ways solid and well-documented. This was in large measure because of Attar Singh's influence and mediations.[30] The

Sikh aristocrat wrote extensively to the British government and made sure that the man they had hired to act as the official interpreter of Sikhism would include translations of the Rahitnamas in his account.[31] As mentioned earlier, we do find Trumpp somewhat grudgingly acknowledging Attar Singh's influence and translation work. And while Orientalist scholars may not have always generously acknowledged their intellectual debts, our thick description of Attar Singh's scholarly writings helps solidify the argument that Orientalist knowledge was not merely an outcome of the European gaze. In many ways it was highly dependent on indigenous scholarly traditions and conversations.

Independently of Trumpp, Attar Singh's translations of the Rahit were deeply imbibed by the army officials who wrote recruitment manuals for Sikh districts in the Punjab.[32] Given the wide and enduring impact of Attar Singh's writings it is imperative that we consider him as a significant scholar in his own right. He was very much the virtuous translator that Walter Benjamin wrote about. We see Attar Singh's intellectual autonomy in the way he presented his findings, his subtle variance from colonial discourse on matters of religion and secularism, and his leadership positions across a wide spectrum of public institutions. It is not without reason that T.H. Thornton, one of the most senior colonial officials in the Punjab described Attar Singh as, "the most learned of the Sikh aristocracy."[33]

Conclusions

Our case study of Sir Attar Singh Bhadour's scholarly endeavours lends itself to some larger conclusions. First, it allows us to query what Tony Ballantyne so aptly describes as "the systematization of Sikhism."[34]This "systematization" as we have come to understand, at least within the Orientalist discourse, begins with James Browne's well-known tract: *An History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks* (1788).[35] But while we widely acknowledge Browne's contributions to our knowledge concerning Sikhism, we rarely pause to reflect on how much of what he learned about the Sikhs was based on what he had appropriated from his two key native informants: Budh Singh Arora and Ajaib Singh Suraj.[36] In fact, the largest portion of Browne's tract entitled, "History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks," was based on Budh Singh and Ajaib Singh's Persian manuscript: *Risala Dar Ahwal-i-Nanak Shah Darwesh*. It is remarkable that Browne only wrote 15 pages of his tract, the other 27 pages were simply an abridged translation of the Budh Singh and Ajaib Singh manuscript. Interestingly, Browne never fully acknowledges his informants. All he tells us is that while he was in Delhi in 1783 he met "met with two Hindoos of considerable knowledge, who were natives of Lahore, where they had resided the greater part of their lives, and who had in their possession, accounts of the rise and progress of the Sicks,

written in Nuggary (or common Hindoo) character, I persuaded them to let me have a translation of one of them in the Persian language, abridgeing it as much as they could, without injuring the essential purpose of information."[37] It is only because of the pioneering work of the late Ganda Singh that we now know that the so-called "two Hindoos," the key informants of Browne or rather his co-writers, were actually two Sikhs, Budh Singh and Ajaib Singh.[38] Contrary to what Edward Said has narrated, the non-metropolitan scholars had plenty of agency and intellectual agility. The knowledge base of Budh Singh and Ajaib Singh continues to be available to us and serves as a solid reminder of how native intellectuals were so very central in the chain of European knowledge-gathering.

Much like Brown, John Malcolm another employee of the East India Company, also acknowledges his debts to a native informant. In the introduction to his well-known work on the Sikhs Malcolm enlightens us about the nature of his knowledge-gathering enterprise. With exceptional candor he writes: "When with the British army in the Penjab, in 1805, I endeavoured to collect materials that would throw light upon the history, manners, and religion of the Sikhs. Though this subject had been treated by several English writers, none of them had possessed opportunities to obtain more than very general information regarding this extraordinary race; and their narratives therefore, though meriting regard, have served more to excite than to gratify curiosity. In addition to the information I collected while the army continued within the territories of the Sikhs, and the personal observations I was to make during that period, upon the customs and manners of that nation, I succeeded with difficulty in obtaining a copy of the Adi Granth, and some of the historical tracts, the most essential parts of which, *when I retuned to Calcutta, were explained to me by a Sikh priest of the Nirmala order, whom I found equally intelligent and communicative, and who spoke of the religion and ceremonies of his sect with less restraint than any of his brethren whom I had met with in Penjab* (emphasis added)."[39]This native collaboration should compel us to read Malcolm in a very different light. And we need to know much more about his Nirmala instructor. In what language did the two converse? Did Malcolm's Nirmala instructor provide him with translations? Unfortunately, for the moment we know much more about John Malcolm than the Nirmala scholar. This ought to change and it is only when we have ample thick descriptions of native intellectual traditions that we will be able to write a cogent account of modern Sikh Studies.

The asymmetry of the imperial intellectual grid continues to haunt us as we probe the colonial archives. Although the acerbic Trumpp pauses to pay homage to his native informant, true to character he does so with far less gratitude and enthusiasm than Malcolm. The huge debts he must have incurred are only worthy of a single sentence: "One Nirmala Sadhu

of the Amritsar establishment, Atma Singh, was for a considerable time my instructor."[40] And as with much else, it is only with Max Macauliffe that we get a massive outpouring of affection and acknowledgement of native paradigms of learning. With great humility, he notes: "For literary assistance I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Sardar Kahan Singh of Nabha, one of the greatest scholars and most distinguished authors among the Sikhs, who by the order of the Raja of Nabha accompanied me to Europe to assist in the publication of this work and in reading the proofs thereof; to Diwan Lila Ram Watan Mal, a subordinate judge in Sind; to the late Bhai Shankar Dayal of Faizabad; to Bhai Hazara Singh and Bhai Sardul Singh of Amritsar, to the late Bhai Dit Singh of Lahore, to the late Bhai Bhagwan Singh of Patiala, and to many other Sikh scholars for the intelligent assistance they have rendered me."[41] It was these men who in many ways made it possible for Macauliffe to write his six-volume magnum opus. But despite the considerable respect and warmth that Macauliffe demonstrates, the imperial order makes it impossible to render fully transparent the production of colonial knowledge. We may never know which parts of Macauliffe's volumes rely upon Bhai Kahan Singh's encyclopedic knowledge or which parts are the exclusive product of Macauliffe's intellect. It is worth noting here that Macauliffe in the preface to his six-volume work on the Sikhs noted: "It is believed that a work of this nature cannot be accomplished again."[42] We may find it hard to interpret as to what Macauliffe is alluding to. But one possible interpretation is that having spent considerable years among the Sikhs in the Punjab, Macauliffe knew that the coming of colonial modernity would eventually completely destroy traditional articulations of knowledge and understanding.[43] And in that sense, any potential project of knowledge, particularly the monumental scale that Macauliffe liked to work on would be impossible to mount because the sort of traditional intellectuals who sustained him would be no more. An entire way of being and a complete knowledge-system was headed towards total dissolution and was to be replaced by the furies of colonial modernity.

This consideration of Macauliffe brings me to the second of my conclusions. Edward Said, while often brilliant and incisive, was wrong in conceiving that imperial knowledge was exclusively the product of metropolitan scholarship. All knowledge about the East did not simply flow from the West. This mistaken belief led Said to focus on European figures like Ernest Renan, Edward Lane, and Hamilton Gibb. But we get no documentation concerning men like Kavelli Venkata Boria, Bapu Deva Shastri, Ali Ibrahim Khan or for that matter Sir Attar Singh. While Said has recently been attacked for numerous factual errors in his scholarship and the partisan nature of his work (for instance, his support for Palestinian nationalism), it would be much better if we within the academy were to test his truth-claims purely on theoretical grounds.[44]

And based on theoretical testing his hypothesis concerning the making of the imperial archives has considerable drawbacks. While the imperial powers may have had powerful illusions of a fully autonomous archive, and one could argue that Said was duped by these illusions, the reality on the ground was that a massive repertoire of Bhais, Gyanis, Munshis, Pandits and Maulvis, the traditional bearers of indigenous knowledge systems, enabled and expanded colonial knowledge.

I want to close this essay with a question that takes us back to the central figure in this study. Attar Singh belonged to what Bayly has described as the "north Indian ecumene." Based on Attar Singh's biography we could view him as a core member of this cosmopolitan ecumene. The son of an aristocrat, who from an early age excels in languages and receives extensive training in the city of Benares in the domains of philosophy, logic, poetics, aesthetics and music, and turns into a leading litterateur and raconteur, Attar Singh could have been easily crowned as a prince of the ecumene. And yet by early 1870 we can see him parting ways with the ecumene. Why this transformation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century? Why did he abandon his natural habitat, the cosmopolitan ecumene? Our preliminary answers to these questions would include a list made up of such thing as the policies of the colonial State, the census operations, the workings of the Arya-Samaj and other socioreligious organizations, evangelical Christianity, print-capitalism, vernacular nationalism, and cultural homogeneity that is so central to the project of modernity. But there is something deeply dissatisfying with this list. How could an ecumene that was the product of several centuries dissolve so easily? Perhaps a more confident answer to this and similar questions will only emerge once we have fully mapped not only colonial but also pre-colonial modes of knowledge. This paper is a minor contribution in that direction.

Notes

[1] The two epigrams for this essay are from Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 561 and Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall* (London, Fourth Estate, 2009), p. 66.

[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

[3] Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of An Archive," in Carol A. Breckenbridge and Peter van der Veer eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 279-313.

[4] W.C. Mackenzie, *Colonel Colin Mackenzie, First Surveyor-General of India*, (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers, 1952). Also see, Jennifer Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie* (London: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[5] Rosane Rocher, " British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government," in Carol A. Brenckenbridge and Peter van der Veer, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 215-249, V. Dalmia, " Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of the Old School: The Benares Sanskrit College and the Constitution of Authority in the Late Nineteenth Century, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 24, 1996, pp. 321-37 and Christopher Bayly, "Orientalists, Informants And Critics in Benares, 1790-1860," in Jamal Malik ed., *Perspectives Of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History 1760-1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 97-127.

[6] Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth Or The Holy Scripture of the Sikhs* (London: WM.H. Allen & Co, 1877), p. lxxxviii.

[7] Ibid., p. lxxxviii.

[8] Ibid., p. lxxxix.

[9] Ibid, p.cxiii.

[10] M.A. Macauliffe, "The Sikh Religion Under Banda," *The Calcutta Review*, vol. lxxiii, p. 155.

[11] "Appendix IV – List of 389 books in the Gurmukhi characters in the possession of Sirdar Attar Singh of Bhadaur," in G.W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab* (Patiala: Languages Department Punjab, 1971, first published, 1883).

[12] Sir Lepel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press: 1892), p. 48.

[13] The life-history of Attar Singh is indebted to Sir Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, (London: Trubner & Company, 1873), Loke Nath Ghose, *The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars*, part II (Calcutta: J.N. Ghose and Company, 1879), pp. 471-75, Harbans Singh ed., *The Encylopaedia of Sikhism* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1992), pp. 216-218 and my own, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp. 290-292.

[14] C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 368. For the following description of the Indian ecumene I have particularly drawn from chapter 5 of the book, pp. 180-211.
[15] Ibid, p. 182.

[16] M.S. Cheema, "Sir Attar Singh and His Bhadaur," *The Tribune*, December 17, 2000.

[17] The following few paragraphs concerning Attar Singh's biography, unless otherwise indicated, are from my book, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, pp, 290-92. Additional information is based on sources listed in footnote 13.

[18] Sir Attar Singh, "Political Suggestions, Information And Other Services of Sir Attar Singh K.C.I.E., Chief of Bhadaur," Attar Singh Papers, p. 2.

[19] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of The Translator," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 69-82.

[20] Ibid, particularly see pages 72-82 of Benjamin's essay.

[21] Attar Singh Bhadour, *Sakhi Namah; Sakhee Book, or the Descriptions of Gooroo Gobind Singh's Religion and Doctrines* (Benares, Medical Hall Press, 1873), p. v.

[22] On the evolution of Indo-Persian vocabulary pertaining to matters religious and secular see the excellent book by Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India 1200-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[23] Attar Singh Bhadour, *Sakhee Namah*, pp. v-vi.

[24] Ibid, p.vii.

[25] For an extensive discussion on when the *Sau Sakhi* text may have been written see W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa, A History of the Khalsa Rahit* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 139-48.

[26] Ibid, all six terms are citations From Attar Singh Bhadour's, *Sakhee Namah*, pp. 2, 19, 20, 117, 177.

[27] Attar Singh Bhadour, *Travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh* (Lahore: Indian Public Opinion Press, 1876), quote from the section entitled, "Preface".

[28] Ibid, p. ii.

[29] Attar Singh Bhadour, *The Rayhit Nama of Prahlad Rai, or the Excellent Conversation of the Duswan Padsha and Nand Lal's Rayhit Nama, or Rules for the Guidance of the Sikhs in Religious Matters*(Lahore, n.p., 1876).

[30] Ernest Trumpp, in Chapter III, "Sketch of the Religion of the Sikhs," in *The Adi Granth*, pp. cxii-cxvi.

[31] See T.H. Thornton to C.U. Aitchison, Foreign Department, No. 2696, dated 14 July, 1873.

[32] For instance see R.W. Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs for Use of Regimental Officers*, (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1896), pp. 6-10.

[33] See T.H. Thornton as per footnote 27

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[34] Tony Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 34.

[35] James Browne's essay on the Sikhs appeared as part of his larger work, *India Tracts*, Blackfriars, Topographic Press, 1788, pp. i-xii and pp. 1-30. Browne's essay on the Sikhs can also be accessed in Ganda Singh ed., *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, (Calcutta: Indian Studies Past & Present, 1962).

[36] A historian who is an exception to this is the late Fauja Singh. See his excellent essay, "Early European Writers: Browne, Polier, Forster and Malcolm," in Fauja Singh ed., *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*(New Delhi: Oriental Publishers & Distributors, 1978), pp.1-20.

[37] James Browne, *India Tracts, pp. iii-iv.*

[38] *Ganda Singh ed., Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, pp. 1-8.

[39] Lieutenant-Colonel Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (London: John Murray, 1812), pp. 1-2.

[40] Ernest Trumpp*, The Adi Granth Or The Holy Scripture of the Sikhs* (London: WM.H. Allen & Co, 1877), p. cxiii.

[41] Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. xxix-xxx.

[42] Ibid, p. xxxii.

[43] For pre-colonial knowledge systems see Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989) and a special issue on " Knowledge in Circulation in Early India," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, 2, 2010, particularly see articles by Rosalind O' Hanlon and Nile Green.

[44] For an extensive list of factual errors in Said's *Orientalism* and a critique of his political affiliations see Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 277-309. The most incisive theoretical critique of Said is provided by Aijaz Ahmad*, In Theory, Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 159-220. Also see, James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255-76.

W.H. McLeod and Sikh Studies

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Professor W.H. McLeod, the most distinguished Western scholar of the past half a century, has expanded the scope of Sikh studies and brought a considerable volume of literature to the notice of scholars through his writings. His work has also provoked a protracted controversy in Sikh studies. The first section in this essay outlines his academic career with reference to his major works. The last section makes a general assessment of his work. The remaining seven sections present a critique of his treatment of the life and teachings of Guru Nanak, McLeod's interpretation of Sikh history, his approach to and understanding of Sikh literature (including publication of texts and translations), his treatment of caste and gender in the Sikh social order, his view of Sikh identity, his conception of history and its methodology, the character of his Historical Dictionary of Sikhism, and his introduction to popular Sikh art. This critique, it is hoped, may be helpful in the pursuit of Sikh studies.

I

Among the Western scholars of the past half a century Professor W.H. McLeod stands distinguished for his lifelong interest in Sikh studies, the volume of his publications, and his familiarity with a wide range of Sikh literature. His work has been uncritically accepted by the Western academia and categorically rejected by the Sikh intelligentsia as a motivated misrepresentation of the Sikh tradition. It is necessary, therefore, to form an academic assessment of his work.

A glance at Professor McLeod's academic career may be helpful in the first place. Born in New Zealand in 1932, Hew McLeod went to the University of Otago in Dunedin in 1951, received M.A. degree in History in 1955, and completed his theological course to be ordained in 1957. He came to the Punjab in 1958 to teach English at the Christian Boys Higher Secondary School in Kharar. Unsatisfied with his vocation, he thought of specializing in Sikh history and Sikhism for a professional career. The change in profession was facilitated by Western institutions and sustained by growing interest in Sikh studies in Great Britain and North America. He went to the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1963 and completed his doctoral thesis in 1965 on 'The Life and Doctrine of

Guru Nanak'. Its revised version was published by the Clarendon Press in 1968 as Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion.

Meanwhile, Dr. McLeod had started teaching History at Baring Union Christian College, Batala. He started research into Janamsakhis on Smuts Fellowship at Cambridge in 1969-70, which resulted eventually in the publication of two books in 1980: the Early Sikh Tradition by the Clarendon Press and the B40 Janamsakhi by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The lectures he gave to the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge were included in The Evolution of the Sikh Community, published by the Oxford University Press, New Delhi, in 1975 (and by the Clarendon Press in 1976).

Professor McLeod had started teaching History at the University of Otago in 1971. A work of the 1970s, his Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama was published in 1987. His Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism had appeared already in 1984. On a Commonwealth Fellowship at the University of Toronto in 1986, he prepared lectures for the American Council of Learned Societies and the University of Oxford. The two series were published in 1989 as The Sikhs: History, Religion and Society, and Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity.

Unfortunately, Professor McLeod suffered a stroke early in 1987. He was never the same again. He went to Toronto to give courses in Sikh history and Sikh religion in the fall of 1988 and for four more semesters. In 1990, the University of London awarded the degree of D.Lit. for his published work. He continued to publish for two decades more but largely on the basis of work done or published earlier. Much of his work catered to the growing need of Sikh studies in the Western societies where Sikhs were becoming conspicuously present. Significantly, he produced only one monographic study, the Early Sikh Tradition, as a companion volume to his doctoral thesis. The bulk of his work consists of lectures, essays, articles and translations.

The prestige of the Clarendon and the Oxford University Press assured a certain measure of circulation for Professor McLeod's works and established his reputation as a scholar. But the factor that boosted his image as the leading scholar of Sikhism was, ironically, a persistent criticism of his work by 'Sikh scholars', both amateur and professional. It began with his early publications and became more and more strident in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. He responded to this criticism in some of his articles. His autobiographical Discovering the Sikhs (2004) was meant to answer his critics and to explain the nature of his interest in the Sikhs, and his conception of history and its methodology.

Professor McLeod refers to himself as a historian of Sikhism and the Sikhs. Other themes get related to these primary concerns. He himself talks of various aspects of the Sikh past. His translations and textual sources are an integral part of his interest in Sikh history. By and large, his publications relate to religion, history, literature, society, identity and

art. Then there is his view of history and historical methodology. We may consider each of these areas one by one before making some general remarks.

II

McLeod's single most important work, Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion (1968), is his major statement on Sikhism. He clarified or amplified his views later but never really modified his basic position on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak.

With the declared intention of applying rigorous historical methodology to the sources of Guru Nanak's life, McLeod turns to the Adi Granth, the first Var of Bhai Gurdas, the Janamsakhis and two versions of the eighteenth-century Mahima Prakash. Of all these sources, the Janamsakhis appeared to provide the most promising source. Analyzing all the sakhis one by one McLeod comes to the conclusion that we get only a broad outline of Guru Nanak's life, but hardly any reliable or factual detail.

McLeod sets out to reconstruct the life of Guru Nanak in terms of 'the concrete incidents' of his life. Even his compositions are analyzed by McLeod only for concrete events. In the process, he compartmentalizes the life of Guru Nanak, and this approach becomes counter productive. We know that Guru Nanak wrote a large volume of poetry in which he comments comprehensively on contemporary social order, polity and religion, revealing a deep interest in matters religious and ethical, and a rare kind of social awareness. The personal and secular aspects of his life can surely be interesting, but not as significant as the primary occupation of his life: the formation, exposition and propagation of his system of beliefs.

McLeod discusses the teachings of Guru Nanak in terms of the nature of God, the nature of unregenerate man, the divine self-expression, and the path to reach the goal. McLeod's training in theology has a direct bearing on his approach to Sikh religion: 'theology' remains almost an exclusive concern. Liberation through nam-simran is seen as the goal of life. This emphasis on nam simran ignores Guru Nanak's own preoccupation with ethical and social commitment. McLeod appears to assume that Guru Nanak's conception of liberation was the same as that of the Vaishnava bhaktas and the Sants. For Guru Nanak, however, ethical conduct is essential for liberation, and the liberated-in-life (jivan-mukta) remains active in social life not merely to pursue his own interests but also to promote the welfare of others. Concerned solely with theology, McLeod ignores the social and political dimensions of Guru Nanak's ideology.

McLeod argues that Guru Nanak regarded Hindu and Islamic beliefs as 'fundamentally wrong', and that the religion of Guru Nanak is not a

synthesis of Hindu and Islamic beliefs. We know indeed that Guru Nanak looks upon contemporary religion in terms of the Brahmanical, the ascetical and the Islamic tradition; all the three stand bracketed, and none of them is authoritative for Guru Nanak. However, McLeod goes on to argue that the pattern evolved by Guru Nanak was a reworking of the Sant synthesis. He does not tell us why he ignores Guru Nanak's explicit statements on divine sanction for his message. We do not have to believe in revelation in order to see that Guru Nanak claims complete originality for his faith.

Indeed, the idea of divine sanction for Guru Nanak's dispensation is expressed in his compositions even more forcefully than in the Janamsakhis. He is called by God to his court and given the robe of true adoration with the nectar of the true name. They who taste it attain peace. The minstrel spreads the message and utters the bani received from the Lord. 'I have spoken what you have made me speak'. 'Regard the bani of the true Guru as nothing but true; he is one with God'. The Vedas talk of virtue (pun) and vice (pap) and of heaven and hell; Guru Nanak's gian involves adoration of the greatness of the True One and the True Name. The Vedas talk in terms of trade; Guru Nanak's gian is received through God's grace. People talk of the four cosmic ages, each with its own way laid down in the Veda, and the Veda meant for Kaliyuga was the Atharvana. For Guru Nanak, however, liberation in Kaliyuga comes through appropriation of the Name, recognition of hukam, and living in accordance with the divine will. The cosmic context of this statement underscores the universal validity of the claim as well as the distinction of the way propagated by him.

In his dialogue with the Siddhs, Guru Nanak tells them that he belongs to the 'Gurmukh panth', he refers the praises of God as 'our capital', and the all pervading light of God as 'our support'. The Guru and the Sikhs, together, represent a new kind of association, called sangat, Gur-sangat, Gursant-sabha, sant sabha, Sikh sabha, or sadh sabha. The Name is recited in the sat-sangat and the True Guru gives the understanding that the Name alone is ordained by God. It is explicitly stated that there is only one door and only one path; the Guru alone is the ladder to the divine court. The praises of God in the sant-sabha become the best of acts in accordance with Gurmat. The sevaks of the Guru reflect on his shabad in sat-sangat, realize the divine presence within, and become the means of liberation for others. The Sikh of the Guru rises above all considerations of varna and jati. In the Guru's presence, as in the court of God, there is no consideration for caste or birth.

Guru Nanak's comments on certain customs suggest that the traditional songs for marriage were to be discarded in favor of the hymns of joy (sohila) on union with God; the traditional modes of lamentation were to be discarded in favor of singing of Guru Nanak's Alahanian. There was no room for traditional rites and rituals in the ideology of

Guru Nanak. His comments carry the implication that singing of his hymns relating to these rites and rituals are the alternative for his Sikhs. The old practices and institutions were not merely to be discarded but replaced by new ones which harmonize with his worldview.

These unexplored dimensions of Guru Nanak's compositions suggest a clear sense of distinction based on both ideology and praxis. Its counterpart is totally missing in the compositions of Kabir, Ravidas and Nam Dev who are seen by McLeod as the most important figures of the Sant Tradition. Even Kabir advocated renunciation and mendicancy, and he founded no institution. He did not assume the formal position of a guide and did not leave a successor. The Kabir-Panths came into existence much later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Unlike Kabir, Guru Nanak installed Angad as the Guru in his lifetime to carry forward the egalitarian Gurmukh Panth on the highway of the Name, Gurbani, congregational worship, and community meal.

McLeod reiterates his position in The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975): Guru Nanak stands firmly in the Sant tradition and he can be regarded as a Sant: the Sikh Panth originated with Guru Nanak but not his religious ideas. In reaction to criticism by other scholars McLeod hardened his stance in The Sikhs (1989): the 'fundamental doctrines' of the Sant tradition are 'faithfully reproduced' by Guru Nanak, and this goes against any claim to 'significant originality'. In a comprehensive statement in his Sikhism (1995), McLeod reinforces this view. There are two basic limitations in his approach: one, he takes into account only concepts (without much regard for their exact connotation or their contextual significance) and ignores practices altogether; and two, he concentrates on similarities and ignores all differences.

III

For McLeod's treatment of Sikh history we may turn to The Evolution of the Sikh Community and his Sikhism. His basic assumption is stated in The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975): the Sikh Panth developed in direct response to 'the pressure of historical circumstances'. Understandably, therefore, he ignores its starting point in the time of Guru Nanak. The first significant development for him is the digging of a baoli at Goindval as a place of pilgrimage in the time of Guru Amar Das. Bonds other than those of religious belief were needed for a second generation of Sikhs. In addition to a new pilgrimage-centre, Guru Amar Das provided festival-days, distinctive rituals, and a collection of sacred writings. Assuming that Guru Nanak was a Sant and the Sants were opposed to institutionalization, McLeod states that Guru Nanak was opposed to all such practices. McLeod goes on to say that these 'innovations' re-introduced traditional 'Hindu customs'. It is not clear how a pilgrimage-centre, festival-days, distinctive rituals or collection of

sacred-writings become 'Hindu'. It must be added that McLeod does not even pose the question of the connotation of 'Hindu' in medieval India.

The second important development for McLeod is the increasing number of Jats among the Sikhs. He suggests on a hunch that their preponderance was presumably facilitated by the fact that Khatris commonly served as teachers of the Jats. He goes on to refer to Irfan Habib's idea that they had become agriculturists and they joined the egalitarian Sikh Panth to remove the social stigma of their pastoral background. McLeod adduces evidence of the Dabistan-i Mazahib for the influence of Jat masands among the Sikhs. His essential argument is that the Jats used to bear arms and their very presence within the Sikh community made it militant. Therefore, the growth of militancy within the Sikh Panth in the time of Guru Hargobind 'must be traced primarily to the impact of Jat cultural patterns'. McLeod refers also to 'economic problems which prompted a militant response'. He goes on to add that the prolonged residence of the Gurus in the Shivaliks created a situation in which elements of the hill culture penetrated the Jat culture of the plains and produced yet another stage in the evolution of the Panth. He sees this influence plainly in the works of Guru Gobind Singh and in the writings produced at his court in which there are frequent references to the mighty exploits of the Mother Goddess, notably in the Chandi ki Var. In any case, 'a new and powerful synthesis' of Shakti and Jat cultural patterns prepared the Panth for a decisive role in 'the chaotic circumstances of the eighteenth century'. McLeod thus gives the impression that his concern all along is to marshal circumstances (Jat preponderance, economic problems, and the hill culture) for his explanation of Sikh militancy which rules out any role of Sikh ideology.

However, McLeod's arguments are not based on credible or adequate evidence. Whether Jat or non-Jat, the agriculturists dominated the village community and they would not need Khatris or Brahmans, who were largely dependent on them, to lead them. Nor would they regard themselves socially inferior to any other group of people in the village. Even if they bore arms the sword was not their favorite weapon, and they were not seen as refractory by the Mughal authorities in the time of Akbar and Jahangir. The issue here is not merely of bearing arms but of purposeful organization. The evidence of the Dabistan on the strength of the Jat masands is not really relevant as it comes after Guru Hargobind had adopted martial measures. According to Irfran Habib, who talks of 'agrarian crisis' and 'peasant revolts' in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the principle of cohesion for the Sikh revolt was provided by Sikh religious ideology. For his thesis of the Shakti cult, McLeod refers to Niharranjan Ray, but Ray does not talk of any synthesis and McLeod does not explain what it was. It may be pointed out that in the Chandi ki Var itself, Durga is created by God, just like Ram and Krishan, and in the Dasam Granth more space is given to the

Krishan Avtar, and even to the Ram Avtar, than to all the three versions related to Chandi or Durga put together. Why McLeod talks of Chandi alone is not clear. Probably what he had in mind was the appearance of the goddess in the eighteenth century Sikh literature. But neither McLeod nor any other scholar has studied the actual influence of the goddess, or of the Dasam Granth, on the Khalsa.

McLeod refers to his limited knowledge of the eighteenth century. Even today the social and cultural history of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century is not well known. He asserts nonetheless that traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be set aside: 'The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century'. He believes that at the end of the century there was 'a clearly defined Khalsa Panth' with well formulated religious doctrines, a coherent code of discipline, and a strong conviction that the Panth was born to rule, but this was not the position at the beginning. Therefore, he infers that the Khalsa tradition must have evolved largely in the course of the eighteenth century.

McLeod's assumption that the ideal of 'raj karega Khalsa' (the Khalsa shall rule) was not there in the early eighteenth century is belied by the occurrence of 'raj karega khalsa' couplet in a copy of the Tankhahnama made in 1718-19. The original was composed earlier, most probably in the time of Guru Gobind Singh himself. In any case McLeod's view of the late origin of 'raj karega khalsa' is untenable. Several other Rahitnamas too can be placed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. According to McLeod, the question of Khalsa rahit was not finally settled until well into the eighteenth century. But the early Rahitnamas contain all the important items of rahit, including all the 5 Ks, though not as a formulation of panj-kakar.

McLeod finds in Sikh history 'a theory of religious unity contending with diversity of social elements', raising problems of cohesion for the Panth. These problems became rather acute in the absence of a successor after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. The first answer to the question of authority appeared to be the personal leadership of Banda but it proved to be a failure. After his death, an answer was provided by the doctrines of corporate and scriptural Guru (popularly called Guru-Panth and Guru-Granth). McLeod goes on to suggest that in the circumstances of the eighteenth century emphasis shifted from the authority of the sangat to that of the militant jatha, leading to the emergence of the authority of the Sarbat Khalsa. The doctrine of Guru-Panth was well suited to the needs of the Khalsa at this time. The gurmata or the collective resolution of the Sarbat Khalsa was its practical expression. The need passed when Ranjit Singh extinguished 'the misl system' and assumed the authority of the Panth. The theory of Guru-Panth quickly lapsed into disuse and its place was taken by the Guru-Granth for all religious questions.

In 1975, McLeod looked upon the Gursobha of Sainapat as a work of 1741. In his autobiography (2004), however, he has come round to the view that it was composed in 1711. He accepts its evidence on the vesting of Guruship in the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh himself. But Sainapat refers also to the vesting of Guruship in the Shabad-Bani (in the Granth). Therefore, McLeod's hypothesis that the doctrines of Guru-Panth and Guru-Granth became current due to the needs of the Khalsa in the course of the eighteenth century, and not because Guru Gobind Singh had declared that Guruship after him stood vested in the Panth and the Granth, is not valid. In Sikh literature of the eighteenth century both the doctrines are frequently mentioned from the first to the last decade. Nor is it valid to maintain that the doctrine of Guru-Granth developed later to replace the doctrine of Guru-Panth in the historical situation of the early nineteenth century.

McLeod's Sikhism (1997) is formally divided into three parts: History, Religion, and Society. The 'History' part consists of four chapters, each of about 8,000 to 10,000 words. The three and a half chapters cover the early nineteenth century in 70 pages. Only 12 pages are given to the rest of Sikh history. We may have a close look on the whole before offering any general comment.

In the first chapter, McLeod talks discursively of the Janamsakhi image of Guru Nanak and goes on to argue that the Nanak-Panth emerged as 'religious community'. The ideal of liberation through the Name attracted rural people to Kartarpur to participate in kirtan and langar. One among many panths, it was probably 'regarded as a Hindu panth'. Guru Angad kept up the dharamsal and the langar, and used the trader's script for recording the Guru's utterances. The script came to be known as Gurmukhi. The majority of the members of the Panth observed traditional practices, making only 'a personal response' to the message of spiritual liberation. Beyond this distinction and the presence of several castes in the Panth there would be nothing to separate them from 'the other Hindu villagers of the Punjab'. It does not occur to McLeod to use the evidence of the compositions of Guru Nanak and Guru Angad to see what they thought of themselves and their followers.

The second chapter covers the period of six Gurus, from Guru Amar Das to Guru Har Krishan. McLeod reiterates that changes started in the time of Guru Amar Das when a second generation of Sikhs had come up, and consolidation was needed. 'Innovations' were introduced through 'some traditional rituals of Hindu tradition'. The Panth had the same old constituency, with Khatri leadership and Jat numerical domination. The organization became more complex in the time of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan when the sacred pool was excavated in the newly founded Ramdaspur, masands were appointed, Harmandar was constructed, the Granth was compiled, and new towns were founded. The Panth continued to expand in the rural areas. Guru Arjan attracted Jahangir's

unfavourable notice and died in Mughal custody. According to McLeod, his death by torture or execution was not definitely established, yet he was regarded as a martyr. Here again, McLeod ignores the evidence of the Gurus themselves on the wrong assumption that their compositions were not relevant for the puspose.

McLeod goes into the question whether or not Guru Hargobind assumed the dual role which came to be categorized later as miri-piri (temporal and spiritual leadership). McLeod quotes the stanza of Bhai Gurdas in which Guru Hargobind's departure from the practices of his predecessors is depicted, and looks upon it as the genuine questioning on the part of Bhai Gurdas about the direction of the change. McLeod misses the point that Bhai Gurdas is actually talking of the Mina detractors of Guru Hargobind and not of the Sikhs in general. McLeod then refers to the evidence of the Dabistan to suggest that Guru Hargobind's 'battles' were skirmishes brought about by the growing number of unruly Jats in the Sikh Panth. With the growing frequency of these troubles, Guru Hargobind abandoned Amritsar for Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills. Jat loyalty to the Guru is explained in terms of personal loyalty to the leader rather than any commitment to ideology. Without saying so, McLeod denies the assumption of miri-piri by Guru Hargobind. But in the Vars of Bhai Gurdas, Guru Hargobind is 'the king of both the spiritual and the temporal realms' (din duni da patshah) and a great warrior.

With regard to Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan, McLeod states that the Panth retired into obscurity during their time. The masands tended to reassert their independence. Aurangzeb thought of intervening in the matter of succession to Guruship. As yet there was no danger of armed conflict, though the Panth remained aware of the danger.

The third chapter relates to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Nominated by Guru Har Krishan, Tegh Bahadur sustained his claim to Guruship despite opposition form Dhirmal, Ram Rai, and the Minas. He moved to Makhowal in the Shivaliks in 1665, undertook a lengthy tour as far as Assam, lived at Patna for one or two years, and returned to the Punjab. What happened now was not clear because the Persian and Sikh sources gave conflicting accounts. McLeod quotes the well-known passage from the Bachittar Natak on Guru Tegh Bahadur's death to show that there is no reference to the Brahmans of Kashmir in this passage. The connection is said to have been made by the later Sikh writers. McLeod's restricted interpretation of the passage carries the implication that the cause of Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution was not clear. He thinks that the effect of his death was clear enough: the Mughal administration came to be seen by the Sikhs as the greatest enemy of the Panth.

McLeod then talks of the early life of Guru Gobind Singh leading to the founding of the Khalsa which constituted 'the most important event

in Sikh history'. The character of the Sikh Panth changed now, with its interests extending beyond religion and the change becoming formalized. The reluctance of Brahmans and Khatris to join the Khalsa made the caste constituency even more strongly Jat. Keeping uncut hair and bearing arms corresponded to Jat patterns of behaviour. McLeod thinks that 'external symbols' of the Khalsa could not be reconciled with Guru Nanak's 'adamant insistence' that external features of any kind stood squarely in the way of liberation. Quoting Sainpat on the pronouncement of Guru Gobind Singh with regard to the vesting of Guruship in the Khalsa Panth and the Sikh scripture, McLeod goes on to add that the Dasam Granth shared with the Adi Granth 'the status of the eternal Guru' in the eighteenth century. Thus, the Khalsa had two scriptures.

The fourth chapter shows clearly that McLeod's primary interest was in Sikh religion and not in Sikh history. He states that the religion of the Sikhs was not 'fully developed' at the death of Guru Gobind Singh. There were two more critical periods: the eighteenth century, and the Singh Sabha Movement. The periods before and after this Movement were marked by political developments. The Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Sikh history after the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 are given only a page each. McLeod looks upon these flanking periods from the limited angle of Sikh identity.

McLeod refers to the Sikh tradition with regard to the situation in which Banda came to the Punjab, and to the Mughal histories for his activities. In the nineteenth-century works of Ratan Singh Bhangu, Santokh Singh and Gian Singh, Banda is presented as setting up a panth of his own in opposition to the original Tat Khalsa. McLeod suggests that the origin of this view lay largely in the factional conflict between the Khalsa who acknowledged Mata Sundari's leadership and the followers of Banda. The apparent failure of Banda to take initiation fits into this situation. 'This conclusion amounts to little more than speculation, but it is inference of this kind which makes sense of what was happening to the Khalsa during the course of the eighteenth century.' In the light of contemporary evidence this argument is no more than idle speculation. Even if we leave out the raj karega khalsa ideal, the Amarnama refers to Banda's initiation and his commission. His hukamnama of 1710 has 'fateh darshan' and not 'Vaheguruji ka Khalsa' as the form of salutation, and it enjoins vegetarian diet. Moreover, the seal of this hukamnama refers to 'deg, tegh, fateh' as the gift of Guru Nanak.

Together with Banda's 'rebellion' the years of persecution formed a phase of critical importance. The traditions of the Khalsa were consolidated and the Rahit took a firmer shape. More than the actual events, the interpretation of what happened became the source of inspiration. Some historical figures of the first half of the eighteenth century were vividly remembered in the 'Sikh Tradition' 'as martyrs to the faith'. A defeat of the Khalsa in 1746 was remembered as Chhota

Ghallughara or 'Lesser Holocaust'. Sikh misls, which had arisen in this period as 'independent armies owing allegiance to their commanding sardar', evolved into 'more coherent forces' during the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasions from 1747 to 1769. United on occasions for a particular purpose they constituted the Dal Khalsa (Army of the Khalsa). They met twice annually at the Akal Takht to act as Sarbat Khalsa. Both the Adi and the Dasam Granth lay open at their gatherings and their decision was called Gurmata. It greatly strengthened the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth. McLeod appears to put the cart of historical circumstance before the horse of ideological underpinnings.

The period of Ranjit Singh had 'relatively little of importance concerning the development of the Sikh religion'. The only significant exception was the appearance of the Nirankaris who were dismayed at the neglect of Guru Nanak's teachings, and of the Namdharis who were alarmed by a failure to live up to the hallowed principles of the Khalsa. It is interesting to note that McLeod talks of these movements in negative terms. His purpose is to emphasize that other Sikhs in general 'saw no need for concern'. Indeed, the Khalsa were 'still members of Hindu society' and inclined to imbibe Hindu influences. There were plenty of other Sikhs: the Sahajdharis, the Udasis, the Nirmalas, and several other 'varieties'. They were all equally well recognized as Sikhs even though the Khalsa were the most prominent. McLeod has thus come round to accept Harjot Oberoi's hypothesis of 'Sanatan' Sikhism.

In his brief reference to the Singh Sabha Movement McLeod presents it in terms of opposition between the 'Sanatan' Sikhs who were 'traditional' and conservative and the Tat Khalsa who were new and radical. The former were leaders of the Amritsar Singh Sabha and the latter, of the Lahore Singh Sabha. The latter ultimately won, first over the removal of Hindu icons from the Golden Temple, then in getting the Anand Marriage Act passed, and finally in taking over the management of the Gurdwaras. They stood for an identity distinct from that of the Hindus, the objective of Khalsa identity for all Sikhs, and obedience to the Khalsa Rahit. The Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 did not introduce statutory Khalsa domination of the Panth. There was still some distance to travel. This was covered by the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee as the two most important institutions of the Khalsa. In contemporary history the Khalsa has ruled Sikhism, with its authority becoming largely and increasingly unchallenged. 'The definition of the Panth is now very much in its keeping'.

While giving this historical outline, McLeod refers to his own earlier writings, some contemporary sources, and a few secondary works. Among the contemporary sources are the Adi Granth, the Janamsakhis, the Vars of Bhai Gurdas, the Dabistan-i Mazahib, the Bachittar Natak, the Gursobha, and the Rahitnama associated with Chaupa Singh. But the

use of these sources is highly selective. The significance of the evidence used is sometimes missed or misconstrued. There is only minimal or no use of the compositions of the Gurus in the Adi Granth. Their hukamnamas figure nowhere as a source. McLeod's general approach is largely marked by dichotomy of 'tradition' and 'history'. In the absence of factual information, there are theories, hypotheses, suppositions, and guesswork, but hardly any satisfactory explanation. The 'religious' and 'Hindu' character of the Sikh Panth, whatever it means, continues till the institution of the Khalsa. McLeod appears to be keen to clarify, to elaborate, and to reinforce the hypotheses adumbrated in The Evolution of the Sikh Community. He tends to generalize on the basis of inadequate evidence. Quite often, it is not his evidence that inform his hypotheses but his assumptions which mould his interpretation of evidence. Acceptance of Oberoi's hypothesis of 'Sanatan' Sikhism is a poor substitute for empirical evidence. History is neither McLeod's primary concern nor his forte.

IV

On Sikh literature, McLeod has a number of publications. His Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism (1984) contains extracts from the Adi Granth, the Dasam Granth, the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, the Janamsakhis, the Rahitnamas, the Gurbilas literature of the eighteenth century, the later historical works, and the literature produced by the Nirankaris, the Namdharis, and the writers of the Singh Sabha movement. In his other works, he has paid more attention to the Sikh scriptures, the Janamsakhis, and the Rahitnamas than to any other form. Included in Sikh scriptures are the Adi Granth, the Dasam Granth, the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal. Generally, McLeod underlines the importance of this scriptural literature and gives descriptive accounts. About the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth, however, he has raised a few issues.

In The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975) McLeod refers to Sri Kartarpuri Bir de Darshan by Bhai Jodh Singh who had argued in favour of the authenticity of this manuscript. McLeod expresses his skepticism: if not Guru Arjan who wrote the crucial Ramkali hymn which describes the puberty rites conducted by Guru Arjan at the initiation of his son Hargobind? In his article on Sikh literature in the Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspective on a Changing Tradition (1979), McLeod reiterates that Bhai Jodh Singh's book 'leaves the principal problem unsolved'. Vehemently 'attacked' by Daljeet Singh in an essay on the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Bir, McLeod defends his position in Studying the Sikhs: Issues for North America (1993) by stating that he had merely raised questions. But these questions did carry the implication that the Kartarpur Pothi was not authentic. In his Sikhism

(1995), McLeod says that a careful analysis of the wording and content of the hymn conclusively demonstrated that it could not have been the work of Guru Arjan. In his Autobiography (2004), McLeod gives credit to his student Pashaura Singh for persuading him that his theory was wrong. Nevertheless, the general question of the nature of the Kartarpur text was still open for McLeod, for there were some considerable differences of opinion among Piar Singh, Pashaura Singh, Gurinder Singh Mann, and Balwant Singh Dhillon with regard to the origins and nature of the manuscript. It may be pointed out that Mann, Pashaura Singh and Dhillon have argued in favor of the authenticity of the Kartarpuri Pothi. Once that is settled, the other issues pale into insignificance.

McLeod's discussion of the Dasam Granth is very brief. He refers to it in The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975) as the first 'supplementary' scripture, and suggests that its autobiographical and devotional compositions could well be the work of Guru Gobind Singh, and perhaps also the Chandi ki Var. The remainder was substantially, and probably entirely, the work of others who were present at his court. The Dasam Granth was a historical source of critical importance for McLeod as an expression of the impact of the Shakti culture of the hills upon the Jat culture of the plains. He knew that this aspect of Sikh history was yet to be studied. McLeod reiterates his view of the problems of authorship in the Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition (1979), and suggests that Western scholars should concentrate on the compositions with the strongest claims to the tenth Guru's personal authorship (which too were yet to be studied in detail). Their close study was manageable and could prove to be a valuable contribution to our understanding of Sikh history.

In The Sikhs (1989), McLeod states that the Dasam Granth was regarded as 'the visibly present Guru' and given an equal status with the Adi Granth in the Gurdwaras of the Nihangs. In his article in Studying the Sikhs (1993), he asserts that in the late eighteenth century both the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth were invoked, both were present at meetings of the Khalsa, and both received the same reverence. Criticized by Gurtej Singh for his observations on the Dasam Granth, McLeod insists in his Sikhism (1995) that the Dasam Granth was held equal to the Adi Granth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He invokes the testimony of John Malcolm for the view that the Dasam Granth was regarded by the Khalsa as 'a part of the Guru Granth'. It seems that McLeod did not read Malcolm carefully, or he drew his own inference: nowhere in his work does John Malcolm state that the Dasam Granth, or even the Adi Granth, was the Guru. It may be added that McLeod is not the only scholar to have misread Malcolm to express the erroneous view that the pre-colonial Khalsa regarded the Dasam Granth as the Guru.

In his essay on the Janamsakhis in The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975) McLeod talks of the nature, purpose and function of the Janamsakhis, and their value as sources for the later history of the Sikhs as well as their usefulness as sources for the life of Guru Nanak. The first two aspects are treated more elaborately by McLeod in his Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sakhis (1980); its third 'section' of five chapters relates to the purpose, function and value of the Janamsakhis, including their importance as historical sources for Sikh history and the history of the Punjab, and their importance in Punjabi literature. The core of the book, however, is formed by the second section of six chapters, covering more than two-thirds of the text. It relates to the origins and growth of the Janamsakhis, their constituents, forms, assembling and transmission as well as evolution of the sakhis, and sources used by the compilers.

As McLeod tells us in his autobiography, he expected the Early Sikh Tradition to provoke some discussion as a detailed study of the Janamsakhis. But 'not a leaf stirred'. The book 'sank like a stone'. This was a considerable disappointment for him because he regarded this book as his best. He does not tell us why it was the best but it is surely a scholarly work. It appears to have two serious limitations. First, McLeod knows that there are several 'traditions' of the Janamsakhis, reflecting the lines of division among the Sikhs, but he says virtually nothing about the relationship between a sectarian position and its Janamsakhi tradition. Second, McLeod underlines that the Janamsakhis embody the 'myth' of Guru Nanak as by far the most important aspect. But he has only a few paragraphs of a general nature on the 'myth' of Guru Nanak. Actually, there are several 'myths' of Guru Nanak in different Janamsakhi traditions and as many interpretations of his doctrines, ethics, attitudes and status. These interpretations overlap but they also differ. By ignoring these two most important aspects of the Janamsakhis, McLeod has produced a work of scholarship which remains unrelated to the Sikh faith and Sikh history. Scholarship appears to run in neutral gear.

An important reason for McLeod to select the B40 Janamsakhi for translation was its representative character in terms of content. Admittedly, it is a composite Janamsakhi. McLeod himself classifies different traditions of sakhis in the B40, but he treats it as a single whole. If we analyze the B40 Janamsakhi for the 'myths' of Guru Nanak, we find that the essential message of the sakhis of the Puratan tradition remains close to that of the bani of Guru Nanak. The sakhis of the Adi tradition move a little away, with undue emphasis on ascetical practices and miracles of Guru Nanak. The sakhis of the Miharban tradition extol Guru Nanak in a manner that extols Guru Angad even more: a successor is not only one with the founder but also a little ahead. In the sakhis of

the oral tradition, Guru Nanak uses his supranatural powers in the interest of people who, consequently, feel induced to accept his message of nam, dan, isnan and to establish dharamsals and langars. In the sakhis of the miscellaneous category Guru Nanak is a mentor of shaikhs and he is far above Kabir; celibacy is given an edge over householding.

In his earliest article on the Rahitnamas, first published in 1982 and included in Exploring Sikhism (2000), McLeod starts with the late nineteenth century listing nine works which constituted 'the rahit-nama literature. Though attributed largely to various members of Guru Gobind Singh's entourage, the texts of the Rahitnamas actually available appeared to McLeod to be nineteenth century products. The Prem Sumarag in the Lahore Public Library was a copy of 1874. No manuscript of the eighteenth century was known to McLeod. However, in his second article originally published in 1986, the Prem Sumarag is placed in the mid-nineteenth century on the argument of its author's knowledge of, and his nostalgia for, the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Rahitnama associated with Chaupa Singh is placed in the eighteenth century, between 1740 and 1765.

The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama, actually published in 1987, contains the text and translation of two Rahitnamas: one associated with Chaupa Singh and the other with Bhai Nand Lal (known as Sakhi Rahit Patshahi 10). These are seen as the earliest Rahitnamas by McLeod. It is categorically stated that no extant Rahitnama could be safely traced to the time of Guru Gobind Singh. In the Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit (2003), McLeod talks of the 'dramatic find' which 'compels us to revise our rahit-nama dates to an earlier period than had previously been thought possible'. This dramatic find is a copy of the Tankhahnama dated 1718-19 which we mentioned earlier. McLeod was still not inclined to place the original in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. Without giving any reason, he places it close to but after the Gursobha which he thought by now was composed in 1711. The Rahitnama associated with Prahlad Singh and the Sakhi Rahit are now placed in the 1730s, the Chaupa Singh text in the 1740s, the Rahitnama associated with Daya Singh towards the end of the century, and the Rahitnama of Desa Singh either in the late eighteenth or the early nineteenth century.

No single Rahitnama as a whole is analysed by McLeod. The evidence of the Rahitnamas on various issues or themes of Sikh history is sought to be put together. All these themes are related to the religious, social and political life of the Khalsa, and the Khalsa social order. But he makes no attempt to relate them to any major aspect of the life of the Khalsa. What is much more important, recent discussion of the Rahitnamas by a few scholars indicates that McLeod's dating and, therefore, his interpretation of the Rahitnamas is not satisfactory. The Khalsa Rahit did evolve, but largely on the lines laid down in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. McLeod expected some controversy after the

publication of his work, presumably on the assumption that the Sikhs generally attached a lot of importance to the Rahitnamas as semi-scriptural, but no controversy cropped up. The 'Sikh scholars' are more skeptical about the authenticity of the Rahitnamas than McLeod and they look upon these as historical documents.

McLeod has published a translation of the Prem Sumarag with a sub-title that declares it to be the testimony of a Sanatan Sikh. Closely linked with this perception is McLeod's assumption that it was not composed before the establishment of Sikh rule. However, there is no indication that its author is aware of any Sikh state in existence. In fact, the text makes a much better sense if it is placed before the establishment of Sikh rule under the leadership of Banda Bahadur. Gurinder Singh Mann has argued that it can be placed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. The idea of raj karega khalsa becomes immediately relevant for a future Sikh state. In the Prem Sumarag, the Sikh state is yet to be established. Its politico-administrative framework is Mughal, and its ideology is Sikh. The whole work relates exclusively to the religious, social, economic, and political life of the 'Sant Khalsa' or the baptized Singhs of Guru Gobind Singh. McLeod seems to be wide off the mark in treating the Prem Sumarag as a 'Sanatan' document.

V

On the question of Sikh social order, McLeod takes up the issue of caste in The Evolution of the Sikh Community (1975). He quotes the Gurus for their denunciation of caste. He points out, however, that they arranged the marriage of their children in accordance with the traditional caste prescription. He suggests that they were opposed to vertical distinctions of caste but they were content to accept the horizontal linkages. He goes on to add that individuals from a number of castes joined the Sikh Panth to follow a new religious life but to continue with their former social practices. McLeod suggests three hierarchies among the Sikhs: (a) Khatris and Aroras in cities and Jats in the countryside, (b) Ramgarhias, and (c) Mazhabis and Ramdasias. Thus, according to McLeod, though many of the discriminatory aspects of caste were obliterated and there was a strong commitment to the ideal of equality, there was caste diversity with notions of status among the Sikhs.

In Exploring Sikhism (2000), McLeod refers to Ahluwalias and Ramgarhias as 'two Sikh castes' and equates them respectively with Kalals (vintners) and Tarkhans (carpenters) of the traditional social order. However, the name Ahluwalia was derived from a village and 'Ramgarhia' from an honorific. They included the Sikh rulers of the late eighteenth century and their descendants. The 'caste' background of others who adopted the label Ahluwalia or Ramgarhia is yet to be identified. McLeod treats them simply as 'Sikh Kalals' and 'Sikh

carpenters', but the Ahluwalias enjoyed a high status in the Punjab society; they were not placed below the Khatris. The corporate status of the Ramgarhia, on the other hand, remained essentially unchanged. McLeod concludes that the Sikh way of life offers a possibility of temporal success for individuals and in a diminished degree for castes. The whole discussion is conducted in terms of caste and social mobility, as it is done for the traditional Hindu society.

In 'The Sikh Concept of Caste' in his Essays (2007), McLeod refers to the views of Jagjit Singh on the abolition of caste, caste system and caste ideology, and comments that Jagjit Singh uses the term caste for varan (varna) and ignores jati. But Jagjit Singh does not ignore jati. McLeod gives several quotations from the Adi Granth to show that varan had no bearing on liberation. But this is equally true of jati. Both varan and jati were set aside. McLeod himself adds later that Guru Nanak did not see any relevance of jati or kul for liberation. This message was repeated by his successors. Bhai Gurdas too emphasized that the Sikhs constituted a single varan in which all the four varans had been joined. In the Tankhahnama, Guru Gobind Singh says, 'I shall merge the four barans into one'. McLeod goes on to say that the 'Sanatan' view had come to prevail among the Sikhs by the middle of the eighteenth century. But he cites no evidence for this. He simply states that in the Sanatan view 'Sikh society comprised the four traditional barans' and those who belonged to this society should never mingle with 'the Dalits'. Later on, the Tat Khalsa rejected the varan system. Having said all this, McLeod reiterates that the Sikh Gurus could see that the jati system 'held Indian society together' and they did not seek to destroy it. In support of this view, he refers again to the old pattern of matrimony accepted by them. He interprets Bhai Gurdas, the B40 Janamsakhi, and some of the Rahitnamas as accepting jati and recommending no social intercourse with Dalits. He repeats that there were urban and rural hierarchies among the Sikhs. He points out, however, that the Sikh notion of caste was generally different from the Hindu, 'partly as a result of the Sikh stand in favour of eliminating the baran differences'. In the Gurdwara there was no place for discrimination 'on the basis of purity and pollution'. Even if caste is widely practised in the Panth 'some Sikhs genuinely believe that caste observance has no place in the Sikh faith'. Yet, McLeod maintains that the Sikhs were not deviating from the path of the Gurus in accepting jati and gotra, but whether or not they deviated in terms of status ranking is 'another question'. It must be pointed out that if the notion of status comes from the varna and occupations are not prescriptive, it is not strictly legitimate to talk of hierarchy. On the whole, McLeod's conceptualization of the issue of caste is unclear, if not self-contradictory. A different kind of paradigm appears to be needed for conceptualizing the Sikh social order in which there is a strong emphasis on equality with no normative prescription for hereditary occupations.

In 'Sikhism and Gender' in his Sikhism (1995), McLeod refers to the ideal view of gender and the problem with this view. It ignored the hold of 'patriarchy in the Sikh Panth', which could be seen clearly in 'Jat attitudes to gender differences'. Indeed, McLeod underlines that the difference between 'Sikhism' on the one hand and 'Sikh society' on the other is nowhere more evident than in the question of gender. The Sikhs are not alone. 'Virtually every other human group keeps women in varying degrees of subordination, and patriarchy is far from dead in those societies which loudly proclaim the necessity of equal opportunity'. McLeod seems to be talking of modern times. In a brief statement on 'Gender and the Sikh Panth' in his Essays (1995), McLeod himself expresses the view that Sikh religion was favourably situated in comparison with the Western experience, certainly in theory and largely in practice. But, there was a clear contradiction between the ideal of equality and female-subordination on the ground. In view of the exceptional emphasis on the ideal of equality in the Sikh movement, McLeod's general statements are not very helpful in grappling with the subject.

An important feature of the Sikh Panth for McLeod is the tradition of martyrdom. In 'The Sikh struggle in the eighteenth century and its relevance for today', originally published in 1992 and included in Exploring Sikhism (2000), he outlines the 'myth' of the eighteenth century as a heroic age of Sikh history popularized by historians like Gopal Singh, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh and even the British historian J.D. Cunnnigham. In his Sikhism (1995), McLeod discusses the Panth as 'a militant community' and comes to the conclusion that in general the Sikhs maintain 'a warrior spirit'. Elsewhere in this book, he says that 'the militant aspect' can be viewed from two perspectives: as heroism of the warrior Khalsa, and the closely related angle of martyrdom. These two perspectives are actually two ways of viewing the obligation 'to be supremely brave and undaunted, never to yield to an enemy under any circumstances'. It was a central theme of Sikh history for the Tat Khalsa during the Singh Sabha period and it has remained at the heart of 'orthodox Sikhism'. The martyr ideal as a source of inspiration carries the message: 'For justice and the Panth, all Sikhs should be prepared to undergo suffering, even to the point of martyrdom'. This message had never attained the force and coherence given to it by the Tat Khalsa.

McLeod goes on to state that shahid, the word for a 'martyr', was an Arabic word originally introduced into Punjabi to express an important feature of Muslim culture. 'This clearly was the derivation of the Sikh usage, although Punjabi folklore clearly played a significant part in its development'. The village bards (dhadis) sang of the courage and sacrifice of the Sikh martyrs. The deaths of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur were seen as much more than killings or executions. 'These two Gurus were martyrs and as martyrs they should always be proclaimed'.

The Sikh Ardas, Sikh museums, and popular Sikh art demonstrate 'the related themes of heroism and martyrdom'. On this view, Sikh ideology had no relevance for the Sikh tradition of martyrdom. The Tat Khalsa reconstructed the heroic tradition as the tradition of martyrdom. It must however be point out that a study of the pre-colonial Sikh literature clearly shows that martyrdom was seen as an integral part of the Sikh tradition much before the Tat Khalsa appeared on the scene.

VI

On the issue of Sikh identity, McLeod makes a major statement in Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity (1989). He does not explain why Sikh identity presents a 'problem'. But the opening chapter, which is actually meant to argue that a discussion of Sikh identity should start with the Sikhs of Guru Nanak and proceed historically, appears to provide the answer. An approach to Sikh identity must cover the entire span of Sikh history to answer the question 'Who is a Sikh?' In any case, this is what McLeod seeks to do.

For the early Sikh identity, McLeod takes into account the doctrines, institutions, rituals, the social character of the Sikh Panth, and the consciousness of a distinctive identity among the Sikhs. However, he sees a difference between Bhai Gurdas and the Janamsakhis, between the centre and the periphery, in terms of the degree of consciousness of identity. The evidence of the Dabistan-i Mazahib is not given due importance by McLeod. He ignores the compositions of Guru Nanak and his successors who leave no doubt about the unique position of the Sikh Panth in their own eyes: it was not only distinguished from the rest of the peoples of the world but it was also meant to redeem them all. Incidentally, this dimension of Gurbani has not been studied by many scholars.

Two chapters of Who is a Sikh? relate to the Khalsa in the eighteenth century. If we concentrate on the substance of McLeod's argument, ignoring the way in which it is developed, we find that he appreciates the change brought about by the institution of the Khalsa. The identity of the 'Singh' became much more pronounced than that of the 'Sikh'. Though McLeod does not mention it, the phrase tisar panth (third panth) made its appearance in the eighteenth century Sikh literature to underline the distinction of the Khalsa Panth from both Hindus and Muslims. He points out that, though the Khalsa identity was the predominant Sikh identity in the early nineteenth century, the non-Khalsa Sikhs remained present throughout. They are seen as Sahajdharis. All non-Singhs are placed in this category, making it residual. Like many other scholars, McLeod makes the Sahajdharis an all inclusive category of Sikhs who were not Singhs. Talking of the Khalsa and the non-Khalsa as two identities among the Sikhs, he looks upon them from outside. The criterion of

external appearance becomes all-important for him. Here, it may be pertinent to mention that though the Sahajdhari Sikhs of Chaupa Singh's Rahitnama were not Keshdhari or baptized Singhs, they were a part of the Khalsa sangat. They too believed in the ten personal Gurus and Guruship of the Granth and the Panth, and they followed some of the practices of the Singhs. Much of the rahit was common for Keshdharis and Sahajdharis. The splinter groups and the Udasis were not included among the Sahajdharis. It is necessary, therefore, to identify the Sahajdharis of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century to find out whether or not they were conscious of their distinct identity.

According to McLeod, the Tat Khalsa in the late nineteenth century remained loyal to the inherited tradition when they began to shape systems in the light of ideals and modes of thinking acquired from Western education and literature. The Khalsa ideal became distinguished by a new consistency and a new clarity of definition. The earlier features which were not acceptable were either rejected or suitably modified. Quest for distinctive rituals was initiated, and attempts were made to produce acceptable statements of the rahit. 'An appropriate version of the Panth's history was formulated, a powerful stress was laid on the doctrine of Guru Granth, and Sikhs were exhorted to observe conventions which would proclaim their separate Khalsa identity'. Due to Sanatan opposition, it was only gradually that the Tat Khalsa views gained ascendancy amongst the intellectual leaders of the Panth. Eventually, they did secure dominance.

McLeod talks of three identities among the Sikhs: the Amritdhari, the Keshdhari and the Sahajdhari. Little distinction was drawn between the first two. They who retained their hair uncut and refrained from smoking were regarded as Sikhs of the Khalsa for all practical purposes. However, the idea that it was possible to be a Sikh without being a Khalsa had only negligible support among the Sikhs. The Sahajdharis were pushed to the periphery. McLeod sums up the distinctive identity of the Sikhs in terms of reverence for the ten Gurus, the practice of nam simran, veneration for the scripture, and acknowledgement of the sanctity of the Gurdwara. Other features were added from the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh: initiation into the Khalsa and observance of the rahit (including the Five Ks), belief in the end of personal Guruship at the death of Guru Gobind Singh, and vesting of the authority of the Guru in the Adi Granth and the corporate community. Those who declined to accept the basic requirements of the rahit could still be accepted as Sikhs but only on the understanding that they were failing to discharge customary duties. McLeod's search for uniformity in identity gives primacy to objectively defined features of identity.

We may add that in any given historical situation objective realities and subjective self-image are intermeshed in a consciousness of distinct identity in relation to others. As the product of these variables, identity

cannot be a static or 'fixed' entity. Nor can there be objective uniformity or 'homogeneity' among all the members of a community identified as different from others. Neither fluidity nor diversity necessarily invalidates distinctive identity. The objective realities of the Sikh Panth and the self-image of the Sikhs from the days of Guru Nanak to the present day have not remained the same, but the consciousness of distinction from the others around has remained constant. Until we come to the late nineteenth century, there was no debate about Hindu-Sikh identity. Due to the emergence of a new 'Hindu' consciousness in the late nineteenth century, an inclusive definition of 'Hindu' led to the assertion that the Sikhs were 'Hindu'. Implicit in this assertion was a political dimension. Bhai Kahn Singh could see this dimension and his own exposition of Sikh identity was meant to show the political implication of its distinctiveness. The Sikh 'Panth' was a political community, a 'qaum' like Hindus, and like Muslims. Bhai Kahn Singh did not have to invent the tisar panth. The term itself as pointed out earlier, had been in existence at least since the eighteenth century.

VII

McLeod has responded to the criticism of his work from time to time and finally in his autobiographical Discovering the Sikhs (2004). His responses reveal his own conception of history, his approach, and his methodology. In Exploring Sikhism (2000), McLeod underscores the immense contribution of the Singh Sabha movement to the dominant interpretation of Sikh history and religion. The concern of the Singh Sabha scholars for a rediscovery of the true message of the Guru 'bequeathed a range of understanding to generations within the Panth and beyond'. Max Arthur Macauliffe is one of the three most influential writers of the Singh Sabha. The other two are Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Kahn Singh. The group of Sikhs with whom Macauliffe was closely associated, and the ideals he reflected in his writing, propounded an interpretation of the Sikh religion and community which has ever since steadily gained ground. 'Today it commands the allegiance of most Sikh scholars and implicit acceptance of most members of the Panth'. Most foreign observers also assume his view to be the correct one. We still dwell in the Singh Sabha period.

In the 'History and Tradition in the Study of Sikhism' included in his Essays (2007), McLeod states that the Tat Khalsa reformers adopted a traditional view of history, giving new interpretations in ways they believed to be necessary. He explains the criticism of his treatment of the Janamsakhis by the 'traditional' Sikh scholars and historians in terms of the difference in his own worldview, approach, and method from theirs. In the essay on 'Discord in the Sikh Panth', McLeod explains that the controversies were due to contest for primacy in the academic field. On

one side in this contest were the traditionalists and on the other side were the 'committed' historians like Pashaura Singh, Harjot Oberoi, and McLeod himself.

In the 'Cries of Outrage' in Exploring Sikhism (2000), McLeod makes an explicit distinction between the traditional and 'sceptical' historians. The former normally have 'the certainty of faith' and a 'closed mind'; the latter have 'the insecurity of doubt' and free 'intelligence'. The differences between the two schools are illustrated by McLeod with reference to the 'traditionalist' reaction to his treatment of the life of Guru Nanak, the development of the rahit of the Khalsa, and the Singh Sabha movement. The article ends with the statement that McLeod was trained to be a historian in the School of Oriental and African Studies and he tried to perform his work honestly as a historian of the Sikhs. In short, he developed into a sceptical historian, and this set him in competition with the traditional variety.

In his Discovering the Sikhs (2004), McLeod states that he regarded himself as a historian who attempted to follow the established procedures of historical research. He goes on to add that he was a Western historian, trained in Western methods of historical research and adhering to Western notions of historiography. Furthermore, his primary objective had been to communicate an understanding of the Sikh people and their religion to educated Western readers. Consequently, it was important for him to speak to them in their own mode of understanding. Indeed, it was necessary to tell Westerners what Sikhism apparently means in terms they can understand. McLeod emphasizes that Western understanding underlies all that he has ever written and 'no apology is offered for it'. It is interesting to find McLeod aligning himself with the 'orientalists' who interpreted Asian societies for the European in their own terms.

McLeod goes on to state that historical method confronts tradition, sometimes accepting it, sometimes doubting it, and all too frequently rejecting it. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the Western historian adopts a different attitude and pursues a different line of enquiry from the traditionalist historian. The attitude of the Western historian is 'firmly rooted in the Enlightenment'; it is imperative that all his conclusions are rational and based on sources which are sound. For McLeod, this position is 'light years away from the attitude that takes its stand firmly on revelation'. Thus, there is 'complete opposition' between the Western historian and the traditionalist historian. McLeod closes the statement on his position with the following words: 'My works stand as I have written them, and readers will need to decide whether they are acceptable or whether the comments of my critics make better sense'.

We may make a few observations on McLeod's view of history and historical methodology. He underlines that the interpretation of Sikh history and Sikhism by the leading writers of the Singh Sabha movement was based on 'tradition' and it has deeply influenced the work of later

historians, like Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, Khushwant Singh, Harbans Singh, Gopal Singh and Jagjit Singh. They are regarded as 'traditionalist' historians. Virtually, thus, the whole range of Sikh historical writing on the Sikhs before McLeod started writing, and much that was produced contemporaneously, becomes 'traditionalist'. This is a gross oversimplification, a caricature, of modern Sikh historical writing on the Sikhs.

Just as 'tradition' stands in opposition to 'history', so the 'traditionalist' stands in opposition to the 'sceptical' historian. By definition, the historian becomes 'sceptical'. McLeod traces this mode of historical thinking to the Enlightenment which demands rational explanation on the basis of empirical evidence. But several of the historians included by McLeod in the list of 'traditionalist' historians meet this basic methodological demand. Even Bhagat Lakshman Singh, who wrote a biography of Guru Gobind Singh nearly a century ago, met this demand. Evidently, McLeod expects something more from a 'sceptical' historian than merely a rational-empirical approach. He must analyse 'tradition' for acceptance or rejection. However, the advice of a Western historian, who has written on the philosophy of history too, appears to be sounder: a historian must ask of every statement 'what does it mean?' 'Tradition' is not merely to be accepted or rejected but meaningfully interpreted.

The equation of the 'historical method' with the 'Western' mode of thinking becomes a source of confusion. Like the 'scientific method', the 'historical method' was evolved in the West in recent centuries but it is not culturally rooted. Members of other societies can adopt the historical method. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh surely share this historical method with the Western historians. McLeod tends to equate the 'Western' mode of historical writing and thinking actually with his own approach: 'Tradition versus History'. Besides becoming more or less eristic, this approach restricts the scope of historical inquiry. McLeod has extended the scope of Sikh studies not because of his approach but in spite of his conception of the primary task of the 'sceptical' historian. All his questions do not spring from 'Tradition versus History'. There were larger concerns of the society in which he lived and worked.

Finally, 'Western' thinking informs us that the primary task of the historian is to make the best sense of all the available traces which have come down to us from the past, including 'tradition'. The scope of historical studies is expanded by asking more and more questions about more and more aspects of the life of a society, or a people.

VIII

Before some general remarks on McLeod's work, we may take notice of three more works: The Sikhs of the Punjab (1968), Popular Sikh Art

(1991), and Historical Dictionary of Sikhism (1995). The first has the distinction of being McLeod's first publication. An elementary account of the Sikhs in about 30 pages, it is interesting for the early expression of his ideas and assumptions. The roots of Guru Nanak's religion were 'embedded in Hindu tradition, and specifically in the Bhakti ('Devotional') school of Hindu tradition'. However, Guru Nanak imparted 'a new clarity and coherence' to this tradition. There is a reference to the 'pressure of subsequent history' but there is no 'Jat theory' of militarization yet. There is already the assumption that some aspects of the Khalsa discipline and ideal 'must have evolved during the course of the eighteenth century'. The doctrine of Guru-Panth is placed in the eighteenth century to be replaced later by the doctrine of Guru-Panth. As we have seen, McLeod remained stuck to these ideas for nearly four decades.

The Historical Dictionary of Sikhism was meant to provide ready information on themes of Sikh religion, history, culture and social arrangements primarily to 'outsiders'. In the 'Introduction', McLeod reiterates his familiar views on Sikh history and Sikh religion, underlining the fundamental opposition between 'tradition' and 'sceptial' history. It is not surprising that he projects his controversial views in the Dictionary. This is evident from the entries like 'Adi Granth Contents', 'Adi Granth Recensions', 'Dasam Granth', 'Eighteenth Century History', 'Five Ks', 'Guru Granth', 'Guru Panth', 'Hargobind: Changes of Policy', 'Hindu Origins', 'Identity', 'Janam-Sakhi', 'Janam-Sakhi Traditions', 'Kabir', 'Macauliffe', 'Nanak: Doctrine', 'Nank-Panth', 'Nath Tradition', 'Prem Sumarag', 'Rahit-Nama', 'Rahit-Nama Prahilad Singh', 'Raj Karega Khalsa', 'Sahaj-Dhari', 'Sanatan Sikhs', 'Sant Tradition', 'Shivalik Hills', and 'Sikhism: Separate Faith'. Then there are other entries which are not entirely accurate, like 'Ahluwalia', 'Anand Karaj', 'Anandpur', 'Art', 'Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama', 'Massa Ranghar', and 'Sainapati'. We may agree with McLeod that 'History is constantly being rewritten and no interpretation is forever fixed' Much of what he says in the Historical Dictionary of Sikhism is out of date.

McLeod's Popular Sikh Art is a study of 'bazaar prints' purchased in 1965 from Amritsar. The principal sources for these prints were the illustrated Janamsakhis and the woodcut posters of the late nineteenth century. Some minor features of format and style were borrowed from Christian, European and Hindu art. The relative importance given to the Gurus came out clearly from these prints. McLeod tries to account for the ranking: Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, and Guru Ram Das, followed by others. Among the Sikh martyrs, Baba Dip Singh and the Sahibzadas are given the greatest importance. Maharaja Ranjit Singh is no longer a popular subject. McLeod describes the iconography of these popular prints in which importance is given to dress and weaponry, the halo, the Sikh and Khalsa symbols. 'Sikh history' is reflected in these prints.

However, before coming to the popular Sikh art, he talks of the emergence of Sikh art in the seventeenth century and its expressions in the time of Ranjit Singh and his successors, in the early British period and the first half of the twentieth century, largely on the basis of secondary works which no longer hold good in the light of recent research.

McLeod's statement on 'Sikh history' in the popular Sikh art is rather interesting. 'It is obviously vital that careful scholarship should be encouraged and that its tested findings should be respected. But this does not mean that tradition and folklore can be neglected, leaving the historian free to deal exclusively with the established facts and his or her interpretation of them. Both make essential contributions to our understanding of a contemporary society, both the knowledge of history as it actually occurred and the dominant perceptions of that history as it is believed to have occurred. The myths matter as much as facts'. McLeod recognizes 'the importance of understanding the tradition' because instinctive reactions are prompted by 'the traditional view' and not by 'the latest findings of academic historians'. If we are to understand the influence of historical perceptions on the history-conscious Sikh people 'it is Sikh tradition which must command our larger attention'. McLeod goes on to illustrate the 'history' in the popular prints with the help of traditional Sikh history, giving much of the space to the Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. On the whole, his contribution to the history of Sikh art is rather negligible.

IX

McLeod was rightly indignant over un-informed criticism of his work, and much more so over attribution of extra-academic motives for his academic work. It was in this connection that he felt obliged to declare that he was not a Christian missionary but an agnostic or an atheist. The declaration is rather irrelevant for our purpose: there is no significant change in his worldview as a historian of the Sikhs and Sikhism. He shared secular outlook on life and thought with the majority of Western social scientists. The bearing of his 'theological course' on his work can be seen in his basic questions and his treatment of Guru Nanak's ideology. However, this is not the same thing as 'a missionary motive'. We do no have to invoke any extra-academic motives in order to see or explain McLeod's limitations as a historian.

In his approach to Guru Nanak, McLeod separates his life from his teachings, searches only for the concrete events of his life in his quest for 'the Nanak of history', ignoring the Guru's primary concerns. This approach can make only a minimal use of the most important form of evidence on his life, his own compositions. 'Liberation through nam-simran' is a narrow and constrictive interpretation of Guru Nanak's

teachings: it keeps out all ethical concerns and social commitment both before and after liberation. No attention is given to the self-image of Guru Nanak in which he projects a distinctive position for himself and his followers. In bracketing Guru Nanak with Kabir and, therefore, with the Sants, McLeod forgets their practices and differences and remembers only ideas (taken out of their contexts) and similarities. We may underline that a comparative study of religious phenomena must take into consideration both beliefs and practices, and both similarities and differences.

For the historical development of the Sikh Panth McLeod minimizes the crucial importance of the starting point. He ignores the compositions of Guru Nanak's successors which are actually the most important evidence on the growth of Sikh Panth in terms of its ideals, institutions, attitudes, and self-definition. This evidence runs counter to the primacy he gives to the pressure of historical environment. His hypotheses about the eighteenth century, arising out of his assumption of the pressure of historical circumstances, find no support in contemporary evidence. The political ideal of a state of the Khalsa (raj karega khalsa) became current before the establishment of sovereign Sikh rule even before the rise of Banda; the doctrines of Guru-Granth and Guru-Panth developed simultaneously after their enunciation by Guru Gobind Singh; the Khalsa rahit did evolve but essentially on the lines laid down in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. McLeod's misunderstanding about the dates of the Gursobha and the Rahitnamas could be partly responsible for his hasty hypotheses. But the fundamental cause appears to be his assumption that Sikh ideology had no bearing on Sikh history.

Sikh literature for McLeod is primarily a source for Sikh history. There is no indication that he has studied the Adi Granth as a whole. Important particularly in this connection are the compositions of Guru Nanak's successors. At the back of his emphasis on the textual study of the Sikh scripture was his doubt about the authenticity of the Kartarpur Pothi. The issue of authenticity having been settled, the other issues have little significance in terms of controversy. McLeod's view that the Dasam Granth was regarded as Guru, like the Adi Granth, has turned out to be erroneous; the nature and the extent of its influence on the life of the Khalsa is yet to be studied. McLeod's study of the Janamsakhis is based on a limited range of texts and manuscripts. He is aware of different Janamsakhi traditions but there is no appreciation of this difference in his approach. Ironically, the composite B40 Janamsakhi is selected for translation and treated as a single whole, which blurs the difference between the sakhis coming from different traditions. The bulk of his Early Sikh Tradition remains unrelated to Sikh history and Sikhism. The 'myth' of Guru Nanak, which each Janamsakhi tradition embodies, is not studied in detail or in comparative terms. The Rahitnamas are approached from the nineteenth century backwards, never to reach the time of Guru

Gobind Singh. Here, McLeod appears to have started with two basic assumptions: late origin of the Rahitnamas and a sure degree of interpolation in their texts. He modified the first, though only partially, but not the second. For the latter, it is necessary to study a large number of texts of each Rahitanama. The Rahitnamas embody norms of the religious, social and political life of the Khalsa (equated with Sikhs). However, McLeod's study of the Rahitnamas does not present a comprehensive statement on the life of the Khalsa even for the eighteenth century. Such a statement is likely to show that the 'Khalsa' way of life was not a rupture with the 'Sikh' way of life, but a kind of transformation.

McLeod has written only a few articles related to Sikh society or the Sikh social order. He emphasizes the importance of the idea of equality in the Sikh scriptures and the belief of the Sikhs. He underscores the continuation of the differences of caste and gender in Sikh history. New 'Sikh castes' like the Ahluwalia and the Ramgarhia emerge in due course. There is an hierarchy of castes too though it is not the same as in the traditional varna order. The 'Sanatan Sikhs' began to espouse varna order and untouchability. McLeod maintains that the Sikh Gurus had discarded the distinctions of varnas but kept the jati intact. He uses the paradigm of social mobility within the traditional varna order in terms of 'Sanskritization' (without using the term). However, whereas the guiding principle of social organization in the traditional varna order is inequality, the guiding principle of Sikh social organization is equality. Strictly speaking, if varna is discarded there can be no hierarchy, and if there is no prescriptive insistence on occupations there can be no jati. Sikh ethics are uniformly the same for all the Sikhs. A new paradigm, therefore, is needed for the study of the Sikh social order. We suggest that there was a tension between the conscious ideal of equality on the one hand and the tacit acceptance of the traditional institutions of the family and the monarchical state on the other. The traditional institutions impart resilience to the social background of the Sikhs. McLeod looks upon the heroic tradition as a part of the Sikh society, but he blurs the essential difference between a 'hero' and 'martyr' due to his assumption that Sikh ideology had no bearing on the Sikh tradition of martyrdom.

When McLeod talks of Sikh identity as a problem, he appears merely to advocate historical approach to Sikh identity which evolved in time. He recognizes the relevance of both subjective and objective elements for the formation of Sikh identity but tends to give crucial primacy to the latter. He treats the Sahajdharis as a residual category, which is a source of confusion. At the end of the nineteenth century a large number of non-Khalsa (non-Singh) Sikhs insisted that they were not 'Hindu'. Even more glaring was the case of the Nirankaris who did not adopt baptism of the double-edged sword and yet insisted that they were distinct from 'Hindus' and that they had nothing to do with Brahmans, their scriptures,

or their ritual practices. Like most other scholars, McLeod takes the 'Hindu' identity for granted as if it was not problematic. He does not even pose the question what the term Hindu stood for in the pre-colonial period. Consequently, the essential significance of Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's Ham Hindu Nahin is missed. What is important for identity is not merely differences but consciousness of the kind of affinity with one set of people and differences from others. In this sense one can talk of Sikh identity from the days of Guru Nanak to the present day.

McLeod defines his position as a historian in a manner that aligns him with the 'orientalists', with a certain degree of inbuilt Eurocentricism. He identifies historical method with the 'Western' first and then with his own. His conception of 'history' is restrictive and somewhat counter productive. Contrary to the dictates of the 'Western' historical outlook and tradition, he is extremely reluctant to change or even to modify his interpretation in the light of new evidence, or the old evidence seen from a new perspective. In his later academic work he tends to accept Harjot Oberoi's dubious formulation of 'Sanatan Sikhism' with a disastrous effect on his basic understanding of the Prem Sumarag. His attitude, his approach and his method have often resulted in premature hypotheses. The best dimension of McLeod's work is that it has expanded the scope of Sikh studies and brought a considerable volume of Sikh literature to the notice of scholars.

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William J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). Pp. xxviii, 258.

In *Making Lahore Modern*, William Glover contributes to the burgeoning, and exciting, recent literature on the colonial city in India. While others have primarily focused on the metropolitan centers of Calcutta and Bombay, or on New Delhi, Glover takes as his subject the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore. As he argues at the outset, a provincial city such as Lahore may be "more broadly representative of urban change in British India" than the great presidency capitals (xiv). This book is, therefore, not just a history of Lahore, but uses the history of Lahore to reflect more generally on the "colonial" and the "modern" in India.

Throughout the work Glover is at pains to upend fashionable dichotomies of "colonial difference" which see the "modern" as a European transplant in the colony, and thus contrast the European "civil station" with the traditional "old city". Both new and old together, he insists, were "modern" in their own ways and both incorporated a variety of novel practices, building forms, and representational strategies. "Differing life-worlds", in a word, existed "*within* the universalizing languages and practices of modern institutions" (xviii, italics in original). Further, contrary to much recent writing, derived from Foucault, on the coercive and disciplinary nature of modern "governmentality", Glover argues that in Lahore the modern spread through the agency of "object lessons"; and that the physical landscape of city itself provided "potentially educative" objects (xxv).

In the successive chapters of this book, Glover develops these ideas through a richly textured account of a range of buildings, urban plans, and neighborhoods across the British period from 1850 to 1940. (He does not take up the disruption of partition or the growth of Pakistani Lahore.) The first chapter explores what Glover calls the "urban palimpsest" that grew up in the city the Mughals built, and which the Sikhs and even the early British accommodated themselves to. It is fascinating to see how the British converted the famed Anarkali's tomb first to offices, then to an Anglican church, and finally to an archive, still frequented by scholars of Punjab history. But the colonial "spatial imagination" soon outgrew such constraints. Glover's second chapter outlines the ways the British sought to order and control Lahore. Appalled by Indian sanitary practices above all, they laid out cantonments, model villages, and canal colonies in the hope that a "suitably organized environment" could have an "educative" effect on the people (45-46). But the chaotic densely peopled inner city, Glover argues, always eluded them. As he wryly puts it, "there would always be a little more to Lahore than they could comprehend" (54).

The civil station, of the Mall Road and adjacent monumental civic structures, has, especially since the classic work of Anthony King in his *Colonial Urban Development* (1976), exemplified the dual nature of the colonial city, its "modern" quarter set apart from the "native". Glover challenges this notion by the very title he gives to chapter three, "Collaborations". In a carefully argued, refreshingly original, discussion of Lahore's monumental architecture, Glover insists that these structures, though they shaped a novel and distinctively colonial landscape, were never mere British implants. Indeed, the mixing of races and classes in the civil station was visibly manifested, he argues, in two classically-styled structures, the adjacent Lawrence and Montgomery Halls. Joined by a passageway with a clock tower, these two buildings "helped materialize a metaphorical joining of interests between the elite European and aristocratic Indian patrons who donated the buildings to the city" (66). The Lawrence Gardens and Aitchison College embodied a similar collaboration. But these "visual metaphors of inclusion" also always, Glover is careful to note, made provision for the social ranking and separation of peoples within a hierarchical order (74). Furthermore, these structures also, in Glover's view, provided an "architectural pedagogy" (79) for a rising class of educated Punjabi architects, most notably Ganga Ram, who framed structures of their own on similar lines, most notably in the DAV College. The college's "Hindu classical" design was not, he argues, some retreat into the past but "part of a new modernist architectural practice" (98).

Glover then takes the reader, in a strikingly original chapter, into vernacular architecture, and even into the old city itself. By a meticulous examination of construction materials, decorative design, and house layouts, derived in large part from applications for building permits, he demonstrates that Indian residents "gradually reworked both the forms and meanings of their homes" to accommodate the new technical, aesthetic, and cultural elements of the "colonial modern" (99). The chapter concludes with the fascinating story of the building of the 1930s Model Town. Scrupulously adhering to Ebenezer Howard's "garden city" layout plan, this suburb nevertheless accommodated within its bungalows cherished Indian customs and habits. The following chapter five turns the lens around, and asks what it meant for Lahore's English residents to live in colonial structures which in no way could be described as resembling an English "home". Much of this is rather more familiar, as the colonial bungalow has been, from Anthony King onward, the subject of considerable analysis. Still, Glover raises the intriguing question of who felt most "at home" in the bungalow, its anxiety-ridden English residents or the servants who camped in the garden and roamed silently along its passageways. The book concludes with some reflections on how, through the writing of local history, Lahore's

residents constructed a "useful past" that enabled them to come to terms with the modern world in which they now lived.

Sophisticated, thoughtful, deeply researched, *Making Lahore Modern* sets a high standard for writing on Indian urban history, and indeed on modern India more generally. What conclusions can we draw from it? Above all, easy conventional answers deserve closer scrutiny. The visible separation we all can see, when we visit a city like Lahore, between the colonial and the "native" quarters, gives us an apparent, but not necessarily an accurate, description of the colonial Indian city. Similarly, invocation of the name of Foucault does not excuse us from the hard work of ascertaining realities on the ground, and in the archive. But Glover also poses questions not so easily answered: what is a colonial city anyway? Is there any stable content in such a category? How do we describe even such other Punjab cities as Amritsar or Peshawar? Does it make sense to talk of "inclusivity" as Glover does in the making of the colonial modern? Is it more helpful to think in terms of urban "fragments" as Preeti Chopra does in her work on Bombay; or, as in much recent work influenced by Habermas, to focus upon the creation of a "public sphere" within the city? There are no final answers, but Glover surely helps us think afresh as we confront urban India both in the past and today.

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Kristina Myrvold, *Inside the Guru's Gate: Ritual Uses of Texts Among the Sikhs in Varanasi*. Lund: Lund Studies in African and Asian Religions, vol. 17. 2007. 536 pages.

Unlike the United States, dissertations at Swedish universities are published as books just before the date of their defense takes place to make them available to the public for the event. They are therefore not, as is often the case in the United States, revised for publication as a book later. The dissertation is the book. The universities often publish various book series in which the dissertations are published. Kristina Myrvold's dissertation *Inside the Guru's Gate: Ritual Uses of Texts Among the Sikhs in Varanasi* from Lund University, Sweden, was published as vol. 17 of the series *Lund Studies in African and Asian Studies*. It is a superb dissertation. It adds to the understanding of the rituals surrounding *gurbani* and Guru Granth Sahib in the Sikh tradition, to the understanding of religion in the multireligious city of Varanasi, India, and contributes to the study of rituals and texts. The study of Sikhism has

to a large degree been a neglected field in Religious Studies. Its study has partly been dominated by historians. As Myrvold notes, the study of texts in Sikhism has meant historical and philological study, with less attention to the role and identity of the texts in the daily ritual life. Here Religious Studies has new perspectives to offer. Religions are not collections of texts or systems of belief, but are collections of practices. Behavior and actions define religion. Religion is not texts, but something people do, and religious texts are not only texts, they are ritual objects. The aim of Myrvold's dissertation is to analyze the rituals surrounding the *gurbani* and in particular the Guru Granth Sahib among the Sikhs in Varanasi. From a comparative perspective the Sikh conception of sacred text is unique. The text is treated as their living god. The question then is how this is done in daily life. What does it imply? The dissertation investigates this in the local context of Varanasi and builds on several years (1999-2001) of field work in this city.

The book has an introduction and five parts. The Introduction informs and reflects on matters of method (field work) and theory (ritualization and ritual studies). The first part "The Sikhs in Varanasi: In Search of History" (33-110) describes the geographical place and the fairly small Sikh population (Census 1951: 1285 persons; Census 2001: 4496 persons) in Varanasi. Myrvold reminds us that Varanasi is a place of pilgrimage also for the Sikhs because it was blessed with the presence of the first, ninth and tenth gurus, it was the home of Kabir and Ravidas whose hymns are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, and has two historical gurdwaras (Nichibagh and Gurubagh). The majority of the Sikhs in Varanasi arrived after 1947 as migrant traders or refugees from Western Punjab. The chapter provides overviews of the history of Sikhs in Varanasi, the different Sikh institutions and organizations and the use of relics and visual representations used by the Sikhs in Varanasi to construct a meaningful history. Even within this small Sikh population, there is a large plurality of Sikh identities and traditions. Myrvold notes a significant presence of Udasins, Nirmala saints, and Sindhis devoted to Guru Nanak and the Sikh scripture (but also to the patron saint Jhelelal) in the history of Varanasi. In addition to the pluralism of traditions within Sikhism, in this part are also dealt with issues such as conversions, caste and diaspora, The second part "Inside the Gurus Gate: Conceptions and Practices of the Guru Granth Sahib" (111-232) analyzes how "an emic epistemology and attitudes towards the Sikh scripture are constructed and sustained by means of discursive and ritual strategies" (p. 112). It treats local conceptions of the Guru Granth Sahib, how sacred time and space are created for the Guru, analyzes the people surrounding the sacred scripture such as lay people and professional performers, and finally the handling of the manifested scriptural form of the Guru: printing, transportation, installation, ritual disposal of the text. The chapter is rich in empirical descriptions and analysis and illustrates how important the

material dimension is for the understanding of religion. This is religious studies fieldwork at its best. The third part "From Mantras to Unbroken Readings: Ways of Engaging with the Guru" (233-346) deals with performance and rituals: *path*, *kirtan*, *katha*, *simran*, *Ardas* and *seva*. Also this chapter provides a wealth of information. Myrvold quotes an informant saying: "The Guru Granth Sahib is our Guru, so if we memorize *gurbani* the Guru is within us" (p. 237), and she then documents the exact percentage of persons who have memorized the various hymns of worship. The fourth part "Practices in Times of Order and Disorder: Different Contexts of Worship Acts" (347-448) describes life cycle rituals, calendrical rites or festivals and rituals of affliction and distress with a focus on the use and function of *gurbani* in the rituals. While the previous chapters are descriptive and analytical, the fifth and final part "Constructing Meaning and Contextualizing Words and Acts" (449-494), is theoretical and especially links speech act theory (Austin, Gumperz, Rappaport, Searle) with theories of ritual performance (Humphrey and Laidlaw) in the analysis of *gurbani* and especially the ritual of *akhand path* (the greatness of which the Sikhs in Varanasi compares to the horse sacrifice in Vedic times). The chapter adds a stronger ethical perspective to the emical that dominates the four previous parts. Finally, Myrvold discusses the meaning of writing and text as ultimate reality in the Sikh tradition.

The book is a significant addition to the study of Sikhism. The analysis of religion in local community, the emphasis on what people do, on space and time, and on the material and ritual dimension provide access to Sikhism as a lived tradition in a specific locality. The book reports not only on what people do but also what they say about the things they do. It pays attention to the plurality of practices and views on different issues of religious life. The book is also an important addition to the knowledge of the sacred city of Varanasi. Even persons very knowledgeable of religious life in Varanasi will learn much new from this book.

Given the length of the book and the many topics covered in detail an index would have been very helpful and it would have made the book easier to use. However, this very valuable study is highly recommended. The book is eminently readable, and contains a wealth of information and sophisticated analysis of the Sikh traditions.

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Anna Bigelow, *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Few themes have been as crucial to the study of modern South Asia—across disciplines—as communalism, or antagonism between religions/religious communities. Given Punjab's modern history of partition along religious lines in 1947 and the carnage that both presaged and attended that event, understanding relations between religions and/or their adherents and analyzing the nature of these relationships before, during, and after the endgame of empire has been critically important to Punjab studies. The emphasis in existing scholarship on communal relations, in Punjab and beyond, has invariably been on rupture, conflict, breakdown, and violence, however, rather than on coexistence, convergence, sharing, and peace. The scholarly tide is turning toward the latter, though, and Anna Bigelow's *Sharing the Sacred* is at the vanguard of this change. Importantly, Bigelow's study does not posit coexistence and peace as an *a priori* norm or natural state and conflict and violence—communalism, that is—as an aberration. Instead, through careful historical and ethnographic analysis, coupled with an attention to religious ritual and social praxis, Bigelow eloquently excavates how peaceful coexistence between religious communities is produced. Bigelow's study is a signal achievement in Punjab studies, as in South Asian studies more generally.

Sharing the Sacred is an examination of communal relations in the town of Malerkotla, in Indian Punjab. Although in many ways Malerkotla is just another somewhat sleepy if relatively prosperous mid-sized Punjabi industrial town, it has some key distinctions that make it a compelling site for such a study, of which three stand out. The first is that Malerkotla is today the only town in postcolonial Indian Punjab that has a Muslim majority.[1] The second is that this has been so since before 1947, making it one of the only places in Indian Punjab that did not witness mass Muslim migration to Pakistan in the context of Partition. Both of these facts are grounded in Malerkotla's third distinction of note: that at Partition it was one of the few places in Punjab that did not witness widespread violence. Put another way, despite the violence that engulfed the region in 1946 and 1947, Malerkotla was essentially a bastion of peace. And it has more or less remained so since 1947, despite communal tensions at times in Punjab and other parts of India, tensions

[1] As Bigelow points out, there are increasing numbers of Muslims in Indian Punjab, but this is mostly due to the migration of Muslim laborers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The only other town with a significant population of Muslim Punjabis is Qadian, a town that has immense significance for the Ahmadiyya community. See Bigelow n11, 252.

that for many structure daily life and on a number of occasions have precipitated mass dislocation and/or death through riots and pogroms.

Bigelow develops a sophisticated argument about the production of peace in postcolonial Malerkotla that posits both the importance of history and of practices performed at ritual sites. Bigelow's strength lies in not just explicating one and then the other, however, but in showing how in Malerkotla the two—history and ritual practice—are mutually implicated, perhaps even mutually constituted, and how they together provide people with foundations to produce peace. But these foundations are only as effective as those who can wield them to their desired ends. One of the strengths of this volume is Bigelow's ability to capture this latter work and to illuminate the subtlety with which it is carried out.

Sharing the Sacred has six substantive chapters, four of which are explicitly historical. In each case, rather than presenting a historical narrative alone—this is an excellent work of local history at one level—there is a larger theoretical aim; Bigelow shows how the past is appropriated to produce a communally harmonious present. As she puts it, "residents and visitors collectively produce a romanticized version of the past … This is a deliberate process that produces a *moral past*—a particular version of historic actors and events that serves the ethical interests of actors in the present" (6). One of these historic actors, Sufi Shaikh Sadruddin Sadar Jahan, also known as Haider Shaikh, is the subject of chapter 1. Haider Shaykh is critical both because he is generally recognized as the founder of the town and because his tomb there is the site of devotion for many in Malerkotla and beyond, whether Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh. Indeed, it is Haider Shaykh, who in death evolved into a saint of local and extra-local repute, whose tomb provides a locus for this study and is the principle site where Bigelow documents (in a subsequent chapter) the sharing of the sacred between members of different religious communities. Chapter 1 is more concerned, however, with both the historical foundations of the town and its foundation myths. Bigelow reconstructs the former from existing sources, principally indigenous histories of Afghan lineages and colonial histories. While the chapter succeeds well in presenting a history based on these sources, it is more concerned with "Haider Shaikh's hagiographic personality as founder, protector, integrator, and moral exemplar for Malerkotla's community" (32). The chapter thus tacks back and forth between the town's early history and how that history is interpolated by Malerkotlans into their understanding of the town's modern and contemporary history of peace.

Chapter 2 examines another historical moment crucial to Malerkotlans' self-conceptions of the town's peaceful nature: an eighteenth-century blessing from the Sikh guru Gobind Singh. Here, Bigelow recounts an important episode in Sikh and Punjabi history and its contemporary deployments. The episode concerns two young sons of

the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, who in the context of battle between the Guru's and Mughal forces were captured, taken to Sirhind, and condemned to death by Sirhind's governor. Despite being allied with Mughal forces, the nawab of Malerkotla issued a protest against the judgment known as the *haah da naara*, or cry for justice. Although the children were executed, the Guru issued a blessing on the nawab's territory in recognition of his righteous stand that children were not combatants. The Guru's blessing plays an important role in inhabitants' explanations for the peace that prevailed in Malerkotla at Partition, as discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 4 also carries the book's historical narrative beyond independence to document the peace that has largely prevailed there in the postcolonial era.

Chapters 5 and 6 of the book are ethnographic, based on Bigelow's 17-month residence in Malerkotla. Chapter 5 focuses on the tomb of Haider Shaykh, and charts ritual activities at the shrine, shows the different rituals employed by members of different religious communities, albeit often side by side, and illustrates how the tomb is a "key signifying site in the construction of Malerkotla's shared moral past, ethical framework, and collective identity" (7). It is well known that non-Muslims attend Muslim shrines across much of South Asia. But rarely do we get such careful insights into and interpretation of how non-Muslims engage these Muslim spaces, both in spiritual and social terms. Chapter 6 moves beyond the precinct of the tomb to examine how individuals collectively produce peace, not just through civil society organizations but also through individual and everyday acts.

The power of Bigelow's argument that peace is produced, and her ability to show that the strategies of its production have not been static across the twentieth century hinges in some ways on her third chapter, which documents a series of communal incidents or tensions in Malerkotla in the early to mid-twentieth century. Although her informants were loathe to talk to her about these incidents, Bigelow reconstructs for her reader an era marked for its fraught communal relations, largely through careful archival work. This chapter enriches *Sharing the Sacred* immeasurably by showing that Malerkotla is not somehow inherently prone to peace. Bigelow effectively shows that it is just as susceptible to communal tensions as other parts of the subcontinent. The chapter provides an important backdrop, therefore, against which one can more easily see how peace is constructed. It allows one to see the importance of the changing valence given to the interpretation of stories about the past—as Bigelow both argues and shows—and "peace triggers," as she calls them in chapter 6, in constituting this peace. Indeed, chapter 3 helps underscore that there is another history, another—sadly, one might argue a more normative—path that Malerkotla could have taken. Chapter 3, then, also illustrates that Malerkotla is—as far as communalism is concerned—just like

anywhere else, but offers the hope that anywhere else—Ayodhya, Bombay, Ahmedabad—can be like Malerkotla.

Bigelow has written a work of exceptional conceptual clarity. Her exposition is crisp, her writing elegant, and her argument is sophisticated while always remaining accessible. This is a keenly interdisciplinary work, and Bigelow draws from an impressive array of scholarship effectively. To give just one example, she appropriates the concept of "attunement" from linguistic analysis to talk about "the microstrategies … through which members of a diverse population adjust to and accommodate one another" (21); she deftly demonstrates examples of such attunement in her ethnographic analysis of practices at the tomb of Haider Shaykh. At the same time, *Sharing the Sacred* makes important contributions to a number of fields. One that will be of particular interest to the readers of this journal is its contribution to our understanding of Partition and to communal conflict more broadly. Despite the depth achieved in Partition historiography over the previous two decades, the story of Malerkotla adds significant nuance to the history of that cataclysmic event by shifting attention from violence and its causes to peace and its prevalence despite the political and social climate of the time. Indeed, if we are to make sense of the violence of Partition, then we must equally make sense of the peace of Malerkotla. Bigelow has done the latter with aplomb, and it now rests with scholars of Partition to integrate this critical history into the broader understanding of the event. An equally significant contribution is to the understanding of communal violence/conflict studies. By grounding her analysis at the level of the individual—rather than in civil society organizations, as is prevalent in the field—and by placing analytic significance in the everyday, quotidian actions and interactions that undergird relationships, Bigelow shows how such interactions provide critical foundations for peace in communities. This kind of careful analysis, possible only through immersion in the community, is increasingly rare.

It is this immersion and careful ethnographic analysis, coupled with a grounding in the textual traditions of Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism that allows Bigelow to make important contributions to the field of religious studies as well. While there is no dearth of scholarship on any one of these traditions in its South Asian context, understanding the meaning of participation in a world of shared practices—whether sacred genealogies, a sacred site, and/or rituals—participation that does not diminish the commitment of individuals to their "normative" religious tradition—Hindu or Sikh, in this case—is still somewhat opaque to scholars. *Sharing the Sacred* does much to illuminate our understanding of such religious practice, or religion as lived practice, that is.

Sharing the Sacred has the rare combination of being broad ranging and subtle; it will be of value to scholars of religion, history, political science (particularly conflict studies), and anthropology—both those who

focus on the Punjab, and those who interested in pluralism beyond its borders.

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Farina Mir. *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Xiv + 277

Farina Mir's *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* is a finely grained study of Punjabi popular literature and its flourishing during the colonial period. Mir focuses her analysis on the *qissa* (epic-romance) tradition, in particular the much-loved story of the star-crossed lovers Hir and Ranjha. But do not mistake this for a book 'just' about the epic romance of Hir and Ranjha, not that such a study would not be a worthy endeavor. Mir does trace the publication history of this narrative from the pre-colonial through colonial periods, examining change and continuity as well as the remarkable persistence of Punjabi literature almost entirely outside of the circle of British patronage. But *The Social Space of Language* also illuminates with a clear light the competing and overlapping public arenas of the colonial state and vernacular literary culture, revealing the deep, enduring power of Punjabi stories that speaks to the heart of the culture from which they arose and demanding that we rethink certain sacred cows concerning the effects of British colonial policies on language, identity, and community.

Histories of South Asian language in the colonial period tend to focus on the British state's decisive role in shaping India's public culture – education, literature, media, political discourse, etc – and the consequences that process had in determining the possible forms of social organization, political mobilization, and religious identity formation. In particular when linguistic communities mapped closely with religious and/or ethnic communities, British policies sought to control and enumerate the native population in part through their selection of official and recognized languages that would receive governmental sanction, support, and patronage. Yet Mir's study demonstrates quite clearly how incomplete that project was. She identifies the Punjabi literary formation as "those individuals who shared the practices of producing, circulating, performing and consuming Punjabi literary texts." (p. 6) Further, she proves that this thriving literary formation did not depend on – nor did it receive – colonial patronage, indeed it seemed to blossom in the absence thereof. Though Mir hesitates to see this as resistance in a self-conscious sense, the persistence and

popularity of Punjabi and the refusal of this formation to be restricted to a particular writing system, religious or ethnic community, or social class is in fact evidence of a public arena refusing to conform to the system of rewards and punishments through which the colonial state sought to discipline its subjects. Rather, Punjabi literature in both Gurmukhi and Indo-Persian remained nearly as popular and prolific as literary formations dependent on government support.

Mir is not merely concerned with the production and distribution of these texts, but also with the cultural system that gave rise to, sustained, and continued to resonate with the themes of Hir-Ranjha. This approach allows us not only a look inside the print culture of colonial India, but also into the social and religious culture of the region that produced the Punjabi literary formation. In particular she examines both the places – saint's shrines – and the traditions – the devotional cults surrounding these saints – that animate the Punjabi landscape. In Chapter 4 "Place and Personhood," Mir elucidates the connections between *zat* (caste or kinship group), territoriality, and gender that come into clearer relief through the various iterations of the *qissa* Hir-Ranjha. This analysis destabilizes conventional understandings of the colonial consolidation of *zat*, the nationalist aspects of territory, and the reinscription of subordinate roles for women during the reformist religious movements of this period. In Chapter 5 "Piety and Devotion," the shared piety of Punjabi culture takes center stage as Hir and Ranjha emerge from the imaginations of Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu authors alike. Mir not only documents the range of narratives in terms of genre, authorship, and editions but also highlights how the referential quality of many manifestations of this *qissa* reveal the depth and breadth to which the story, its themes, and its power resonate throughout the Punjab. The pervasiveness and durability of Hir's tragic tale in a sense reflects the persistent durability of the Punjabi language itself. Finally, though she avoids making predictions as the future of Punjabi, Mir does indicate in the conclusion that the role of Punjabi in the present day has been profoundly changed not only by Partition but also by the very different language policies and communal sentiments attached to the language in Pakistan and India.

There are issues a reader might wish were addressed in this book, such as the degree of literacy in this period, how that affects our understanding of the narrative's significance, and how this might have changed, if at all, from the precolonial to the post. In particular, this would allow connections to be made between oral and written versions of the story. However, Mir acknowledges the difficulty of these issues and it is clear that she sought out references to oral performances from the period studied and found only passing references, inadequate for sustained analysis. Still, any scholar working on contemporary oral performance of *qissa* is extremely fortunate to have this study to build

upon. It would also be helpful to know how typical the history of Hir-Ranjha is in relation to the many other *qisse* – Mirza-Sahiban, Sohni-Mahiwal, and so on.

The Social Space of Language is a terrific addition to South Asian historiography of the colonial period, particularly in terms of the study of language, literature, society, and religion. Mir writes in a lucid and engaging style and her research is impeccable Indeed, this book is a necessary read for anyone interested in colonial or contemporary Punjabi and South Asian history.

Anna Bigelow
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Robin Rinehart, *Debating the Dasam Granth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), xiv, 212 pages.
(disclosure: this review is based on an OUP uncorrected proof)

The serious study of the Dasam Granth is quite a challenging task, to be sure, what with the text's dubious authorship, its archaic language, and last but not least its subject matter which many Sikhs find rather distasteful; the charge is not one for the faint of heart. Robin Rinehart's *Debating the Dasam Granth* is thus a very much welcome text in Sikh Studies. It is the first time that we find a scholar whose earlier work was situated within Hindu hagiography throwing her hat into the scriptural *akhā□ā* as it were. And the result has been an excellent one, providing an insight into the scripture and an analysis of it which has never been presented as systematically and persuasively. In doing so Robin brings together and summarises nearly a century's worth of scholarship in multiple languages on this vast and intriguing compendium, and makes available in English the pioneering work of perhaps the most preeminent scholar in Dasam Granth Studies today, Ratan Singh Jaggi, whose scholarship this last forty five years has been predominantly in Punjabi.

As the title ambiguously suggests the text is constructed around two interdependent themes: to make us privy to the many debates surrounding the Dasam Granth (its origins, authorship, and its 'Hindu' content) and in the process to add to these debates by an analysis of the text itself, setting it within its many interrelated contexts: historical, literary, and courtly. *Debating the Dasam Granth* may be thus easily situated within recent scholarship on the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century history of the Sikh Panth in which the historiography of compositions and texts prominently figures.

Rinehart divides her text into six chapters with two of these reserved as introduction and conclusion. The introduction makes us aware of the vitriolic which has permeated Sikh discussion about the Dasam Granth

since the late nineteenth-century and the problems inherent in such debate, issues which invariably revert to the all-encompassing question of authorship. Rather than focus on this topic solely (although it is fair to say that the question does haunt Robin's text throughout) Rinehart asks a different set of questions: when does this attention to authorship become a salient feature of discourse amongst Sikhs and what does this say about the Dasam Granth? How do the more controversial chapters connect together? and How do these measure up to contemporary Indic, Brajbhasha literature, amongst others? She begins this questioning by pointing out that those scholars and amateurs who discuss the text labour under definitions of Hinduism, dharma, tantra, shakti, avatar, and a host of others situated within a domain labelled 'Hindu,' which assume monolithic characterisations of these concepts where none such exist. These are amorphous structures, we are reminded, contested constructs which suggest a wide range of theological and ritual practices. In her final chapter she takes this a step further by noting that all controversies surrounding the text may be traced back to the period when such terminology became reified, the late nineteenth-century, a reification which was an intimate part of the Singh Sabha project (pp. 165 ff) which for the most part sought to reinterpret Sikhism through categories forged in European discourse regarding religion.

The following chapter (Chapter One) is broken up into a number of sections the first of which deals briefly with the history of Guru Gobind Singh. The portion may be concise (pp. 17-23) but it nevertheless details the various questions surrounding the Guru's life in regard to his putative compositions. The subsequent section provides description and summary of the various compositions within the tenth Guru's book. This section is very useful indeed to those unfamiliar with the Dasam Granth but also contains a few little mistakes, one such common one being the claim that the *33 Sawaiye* may be recited during the *amrit samskar* ceremony (p. 32)—in fact, the *sawaiye* recited in this initiatory ritual are the 10 *Sawaiye* (also known as the *tva-prasad sawaiye*) which are gathered together from the *Akal Ustati* (*Akal Ustati* 1:21-30, Dasam Granth, pp. 13-15). The final section discusses the historiography, murky at best, surrounding the compilation of the Dasam Granth itself, extending this debate to the present by referencing recent pronouncements from the Akal Takht regarding the study of the text.

It is Chapter Two which begins to set the literary context of the text through a focus on the *Bachitar Natak* and its placement first within the larger *Bachitar Natak Granth* and afterwards within the oeuvre of Brajbhasha and Sanskrit courtly literature, to demonstrate continuities and differences between these sets. This discussion foreshadows Robin's final chapter in which the *Bachitar Natak* is tied into the whole of the Dasam Granth. This comparison and contrast with contemporary courtly literature while paying heed to the context of the text will be a tactic of

which Rinehart makes use throughout the book, allowing her to very successfully redirect the discussion regarding the Dasam Granth without allowing us to get bogged down in the more pedestrian debates surrounding it. Here we are reminded that the narrative of the *Bachitar Natak* is set within the common Indic yuga chronology of the Puranas and epics and that its style appears thus much like that of the *vamsa* (lineage account) which is also developed throughout the Puranas (p. 67), complete with its concerns with dharma and kingship. Rinehart first advocated these comparisons in her 2004 essay, 'Strategies for Interpreting the *Dasam Granth*'[2] and I am happy to say that she has followed through very nicely. She ends this chapter by outlining the specifically Sikh understanding of the term avatar and how this construct diverges from those we find in non-Sikh texts (p. 68). Robin's emphasis on these differences, culling a specifically late eighteenth-century Sikh and Khalsa understanding of such unstructured ideas as dharma, avatar, and so on, this is Robin's novel contribution to the debate, one she expands in the final chapter.

This leads into Chapter Three which examines the various goddess compositions we discover throughout the Dasam Granth. There are lengthy summaries of the three principal goddess narratives and a collective analysis of them pitting them against the Sanskrit Devi Mahatmya of which all are apparently adaptions. Particularly insightful is her focus on the theme around which these goddess compositions revolve, the premise which most likely ties these texts and the Bachitar Natak together, namely leadership. This allows Rinehart to beautifully contextualise these compositions within the historic court of the tenth Guru. Not only was the Guru's court at both Paonta and Anandpur apparently involved in tricky negotiations with its tumultuous neighbours which Rinehart suggests may be analogous to the various intrigues within the goddess tales (p. 82), but as a court's splendour was in part based upon its literary productions, the fanciful use of metaphors, similes, and tropes—and the poet's pauses to indicate these, intermissions which are readily apparent within all three major goddess texts—may be understood as part of an instrumental strategy on the tenth Guru's part to bestow a legitimacy and grandeur upon his darbar well in keeping with traditional Indo-Islamic (especially Indo-Timurid) courtly demonstrations (p. 105). To this she adds the particularly intriguing suggestion that since the goddess had long been connected to issues of sovereignty and power in India the association between the goddess and the Sikhs would have served the sovereign claims of the Guru well (pp. 109-12), claims we find in both the Bachitar Nā□ak and the □afar-nāmah attributed to Guru

[2] Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.), *Sikhism and History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 135–150.

Gobind Singh. Nicely tucked into this section is suggestion that the Sikhs and the goddess share a structural kinship which may tell us something about why these goddess compositions have continued to remain popular amongst Sikhs. It is a pity she did not elaborate further upon these insightful claims by detailing practices in the pahari area within which we find Anandpur, practices which also recognise the importance of the Nath yogis of Gorakhnath. It seems to me that the references to the goddess would have certainly well served the tenth Guru's and the Sikhs' political and ideological fortunes in the region. But this is certainly the subject of another monograph.

The penultimate chapter focusses solely on the most controversial of the Dasam Granth's compositions, the Pakhyan Charitr, comprising the bulk of the text. Here once again issues of leadership permeating the numerous 'stories of character' are suggested as the predominant theme. The chapter contends with clusters of such stories and briefly summarises certain ones, such as those dealing with Anandpur, historical figures like Jahangir, intoxicants, warrior women, and deception. A section is solely devoted to the lengthiest of the charitrs, Charitr 404 which, Rinehart explains, is more robust than most goddess compositions within the Dasam Granth and which, as well, is the best known today as it contains the famous Sikh prayer, Benti Chaupai. What is particularly interesting in this last section is the historical context in which she sets Charitr 404, that of Sikh Mughal enmity best evinced by the descriptions of Mughals and Pathans as demons (p. 136).

As indicated by her discussion of both the *Bachitar Natak* and the goddess narratives, Rinehart also situates these stories along side compendia we find in Sanskrit literature, particularly a genre of courtly anthology known as *Brhat-katha*, and emphasises the theme of leadership (and its corollary of individual and cosmic dharma) which we discover throughout these *charitrs* thus suggesting that the overall binding thematic of the Dasam Granth, at least for the more controversial texts, is just this: leadership, the obligations of rulers to preserve, protect, and maintain dharma.

The conclusion more or less ties all of these themes together in the figure of Guru Gobind Singh. Whilst so joining she proposes (drawing upon Jeevan Deol's earlier work) that the key composition within the Dasam Granth is the *Bachitar Natak* and the *Bachitar Natak Granth* and it is the claims within these, the tenth Guru's lineage, his political and military leadership, and his battles all set within the various yugas and the worlds of humans and the domains of the gods that the other texts within the Dasam Granth accentuate. This is perhaps why the text discovered such an enthusiastic audience in the eighteenth century—especially the latter eighteenth century with the formation of a limited Sikh sovereignty in the form of Sikh confederacies or *misls*—in which one finds a number of Dasam Granth manuscripts as well as manuscripts

of its individual compositions, such as the *Pakhyan Charitr*. Indeed, such works would have provided almost shastra-like examples of proper leadership and dharmic maintenance to scattered *misldars* and their own courtiers by none other an esteemed and revered figure than Guru Gobind Singh. At the end of the chapter we finally return to the question of authorship and the problematic premise on which so many discussants base their understandings of the entire text.

As one can therefore infer this is a wonderful beginning for a very fruitful and holistic understanding of the Dasam Granth which I very enthusiastically recommend. I must underscore however that it is indeed a beginning. And so the following mild critiques should in no way diminish one's enthusiasm for Robin's book but suggest rather directions one can further explore in order to enhance an already excellent work. An examination of Dasam Granth manuscripts, of which there are many wonderful eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples readily available, would have certainly added a robust texture to Robin's argument. Rattan Singh Jaggi's work on these is certainly first rate but there are far more manuscripts than those initial ones on which he formed the basis of his conclusions. As well while Rinehart does note compositions we find in many such manuscripts but not within the printed version (such as the delightful *Ugradanti*) she does not take up the intriguing challenge which these (probably) expunged texts pose. Challenging too are the Persian compositions within the Dasam Granth. *Debating the Dasam Granth* notes the *hikayats* but dismisses these (or so I infer) as simply a Persian version of a number of *charitrs* within the *Pakhyan Charitr* (unlike the *Pakhyān Charitr* there is no framing story in the *hikayats*). Indeed, the *hikayats* are very intriguing texts on their own, drawn from numerous literary sources available in the eighteenth century, and comparing these to Indo-Persian and Sanskrit works as well as contrasting their stories with similar ones we find in the *Pakhyan Charitr* makes a fascinating study. The *hikayats* (of which there are eleven not twelve if we exclude the *Zafar-namah* which is claimed to be the first *hikayat*) may not ultimately challenge Rinehart's contention that 'the poetry composed in the courts was most frequently on topics traditional to Indian court poetry' (p. 162), but these would most certainly problematise it. Too, perhaps, would the inclusion of a section or two dealing with other works attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, particularly the *Sarab Loh Granth*.

In order to better understand the type of life this text occupies in contemporary Sikhism and to further examine Dasam Granth debates outside circles of those Sikhs we may describe as normative, a section dealing with how other Sikhs, such as the Nihangs, Namdharis, or Nirankaris, situate the text would have once again further rounded Rinehart's discussion. Particularly intriguing in this regard is the way the text is treated in Nihang circles or *deras*. In these Nihangs pay particular attention to the *Pakhyan Charitr* whose 'secret' teachings are often

passed on to young initiates. Again, I must reiterate that these are merely suggestions for future studies as there is only so much one scholar can do in an examination of a work as enormously large and challenging as the Dasam Granth. No doubt Robin is among the first to take up this challenge in English and has produced a masterful work to this end which will form the standard text for many years to come. This is a book anyone interested in Sikhism, scriptures, and the religions and the history of northern India should take to heart.

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Recent Doctoral Theses in Sikh and Punjab Studies

Dan Michon

From Sirkap to Sanghol; An Introduction to the Study of Archaeology and Religion in Early Historic Punjab: History, Theory, and Practice

(UC Santa Barbara, 2007)

In my current project, an extension of my dissertation, I examine the relationship of material culture, text, and religion in early historic period Punjab (circa 180 bce – 300 ce). I argue that in much of the work on South Asian religion the over-determination of the text has left the material culture under-interpreted, or worse, mis-interpreted. This study, then, takes material culture seriously as an independent source of evidence; and in turn, seeks to engage in a more sophisticated use of text and artifact for historical reconstruction. I agree with David Gordon White, who, in a recent article published in *History and Theory*, argues that the task of writing an adequate history of South Asian religions is as yet unfulfilled. The work to be done is daunting:

> It may be that such a history will never be written, if only because a pan-south Asian canvas is simply too large to fill. At the other extreme, local micro-histories are rarely practical due to the fact that very few locales have bequeathed historians with sufficient textual, archaeological, and art-historical data to reconstruct their multiple pasts in a meaningful way.

We are left to fill in the lacunae where we can. Where the evidence is of a quantity and quality which allows historians of religion to proceed on solid ground, they should proceed cautiously, but steadily. The varied quantity and quality of evidence, however, means that most histories will be written on one of two more practical scales:

> The one is thematic, and consists of tracing the history of a body of practice across time and space, attending to multiple human actors, voices, conflicts of interpretation, change over time and across space . . . The second consists in writing regional histories of Hindu [or South Asian] religious lifeworlds, histories that are attentive to lives and words and acts of human religious practitioners in relation to gods of the place, family, occupational group, landscape, and so on.

In all these histories—whether broad or narrow, thematic or regional—historians of religion must be attentive to the very real concerns of human actors. It is not culture that acts, but people, and too often both texts and artifacts have been stripped of their human quality and understood as ahistorical cultural signifiers. The ahistorical approach to both textual studies and archaeological interpretation flattens the historical landscape and serves the interests of the present, whether it was the British creation of a permanent underclass of irrational native subjects practicing a false religion which served to justify colonial rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or the Indian Nationalists who posited perfected Hindu ancestors which serve as forerunners to the creation of a homogenous Hindu state in twenty-first century India, or even the modern western practitioners of a Protestantized Buddhism who generate models of their wealth-abjuring, always-meditating doubles from the distant Indian past. Without human agency, the past becomes the location from where those in the present justify their particular ideology. Elite texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, and folk texts, such as the *Pāśakakevalī*, and elite material culture, such as Buddhist *stūpas* shrines and coins, and folk material culture, such as dice, beads, and votive tanks, are products of human intention. Proper histories will foreground the motivations and goals of those who created these objects, not the motivations and goals of those who write about them.

My current project, then, adds a small chapter to the project of writing a history of ancient South Asian religion. I seek to accomplish this task by writing on two of White's four registers. One part of the project is to write a series of local micro-histories. In Punjab, two sites are rich enough in archaeological material to make this possible: the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian city of Sirkap, located in Pakistani Punjab, and the early historical archaeological complex at Sanghol, located in Indian Punjab. For Sirkap, the primary archive is the archaeological evidence as found in Sir John Marshall's 1951 excavation report, *Taxila*. For Sanghol, the source material comes from the unpublished artifacts, site maps, accession books, and field books scattered in various archives throughout Indian Punjab. The other part of

the project is to use these micro-histories, combined with other evidence such as numismatics—found in the various *catalogues raisonnés*, journal articles, and numismatic treatises—to write a regional history of religious life in early historic Punjab. What ties the two parts together, other than geographic and chronological boundaries, is the concern for the motivations and interests of human actors in the creation of material culture and texts pertaining to religion.

While the project is still unfolding, I can present some preliminary findings from the city of Sirkap that encourage me to continue in this line of thought. The early historic city of Sirkap presents a rare set of data that enables the scholar to write a local micro-history. It is not the textual sources that allow for such a fine-tuned history, but the abundance of archaeological evidence. First, without the later mid-second century ce form of the Apsidal Temple superimposed onto the earlier first century bce and first century ce city, Sirkap's public ritual space is re-oriented to the northern part of the urban landscape. Thus, the northernmost *stūpa* shrine, that is the Block A shrine, seen in the context of the whole urban layout, takes on new importance as the first site to be encountered on entering the city. As the largest shrine in the city, it served as a focal point for visitors and kings alike. Further, the other *stūpa* shrines also attest to how local actors sought to use these monuments for various purposes. Some shrines were used by royalty to promote their authority and bolster their legitimacy, other shrines were used by the mercantile community to either increase or display their wealth, and all the shrines were simultaneously used by the common folk as sites to address their own concerns of health and well-being.

Sirkap also holds evidence of religion in the domestic sphere. Here, the boundaries between Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism/Brahmanism break down, and we see how local concerns and local deities dominated private belief and ritual. From oracular gambling for predicting the future, to ritual of propitiation of tutelary deities for protection, the local matrix was complex. Religion in the domestic sphere was dominated by local *apsarasas*, *yak□as*, and *yak□īs*. Local inhabitants of the city, both native born Indians and foreign-born migrants, made up the body of devotees. The names of the deities they propitiated were local ones and a few, for sure, made their way into the great classics such as the *Mahābhārata*, or into lesser known protective charms as listed in the *Mahāmāyūrī*, but the vast majority of these names are now lost to us as the cults died out. While the names may be lost, their basic functions are not: local and foreign deities and devotees were tied together by the rituals which generated good luck, wealth, health, and success in love.

Rahuldeep Singh Gill

Growing the Banyan Tree: Early Sikh Tradition in the Works of Bhai Gurdas Bhalla

(UC Santa Barbara, 2009)

My dissertation revisits the life and works of one of the Sikh tradition's first and best-known interpretive writers, Bhai Gurdas Bhalla (d. 1636). For centuries, Gurdas's writings have been a definitive source of information for Sikh life. In introducing this "Saint Paul" of Sikhism to an English audience, the dissertation argues that the most important operative methodology to understand Gurdas's works is to read his writings in light of the context in which they were written. I argue that the previous works on Gurdas's career assume much of the traditional depictions of his project, few of which are verifiable, many of which are incongruous amongst themselves and inconsistent with Gurdas's self-conception in his own writings.

In Chapter One, (Sources for the Study of Gurdas's Career) I assesses the current understanding of Gurdas's life by tracing the development of his biography through history, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. By revisiting traditional accounts in their chronological order, I am better able to assess their coloring of Gurdas's legacy, allowing for a clearer vision of his project to emerge. Beginning with pre-modern sources' treatment of Gurdas, the chapter ends with a brief review of the early-twentieth century secondary literature on his works. By tracing the data for his life through the centuries, I attempt to de-stabilize the accepted narratives and open new lines of inquiry to his biography.

Chapter Two (An Introduction to Gurdas's Works) re-dates Gurdas's works, analyzes them closely for information about early Sikh life, and shifts the academic focus to his Brajbhasha quatrains, as well as the long Punjabi poems that have received the majority of scholarly attention thus far. Although Bhai Gurdas is depicted as an interpreter of Sikh scripture, and his works are depicted as commentary, Bhai Gurdas does not see himself in that light. He considers himself a *dhadi* ("minstrel") and insofar as he writes kabitts, a *bhatt* ("panegyrist"). He very consciously builds on the body of Sikh literature before him, and yet makes his own place as one of the Sikh tradition's most pioneering poets.

In chapter Three (Three Shelters: Early Sikh Beliefs) I lay out the core beliefs that Gurdas espouses in his writings, and examine how they functioned in community construction. For Gurdas, the three main aspects of Sikh tradition are the Guru, the congregation, and the divine

word as enshrined in the Gurus' compositions. His ethics and the normative Sikh practices emerge from these three.

Chapter Four (Walking the Straight Path: Early Sikh Ethics) investigates the conduct codes and ethics that Gurdas advances in his works. By ethics, I mean those parts of his corpus dedicated to proper conduct for Sikh religious practitioners. Gurdas's ethical injunctions require exclusive allegiance from Sikh practitioners to the rightful Guru, and define membership in the community according to this clear line that he draws. This chapter culminates in a description of the Gurmukh, Gurdas's ideal, pious Sikh.

Chapter Five (Bodies in Bliss: Early Sikh Ethics) uses Gurdas's compositions to help reconstruct early Sikh practices. The chapter excavates Gurdas's theories about the role of collective religious practices and their results—particularly his articulations about the importance of the body in Sikh life. Gurdas assert the primary importance of the Gurus' compositions in Sikh practices: kirtan, daily prayer, and enactment of its teachings. I use the same method to understand collective Sikh practices: the importance of service, the celebration of Sikh holy days, and how members participated in running their community. The chapter then turns to a set of community-building rituals of greeting, welcoming, and initiation. Finally, the chapter examines Gurdas's views on other religions and how these opinions help to articulate Sikh self-conception and a sophisticated, "second order" understanding of religious practice.

In Chapter Six (A Banyan Orchard: Gurdas's Vision of Sikh Ascendance) I argue that, through his writings, Gurdas was successful in helping his tradition to overcome sectarian strife, and ensured his sectarian group's dominance in the Sikh tradition. Gurdas's writings express concern for overcoming tragedy, and speak of the difficulties of walking the Sikh path. In particular, this chapter opens new lines of inquiry into Gurdas's understanding of suffering and its relationship with justice. The dissertation concludes with an analysis of Gurdas's project and presents an updated biography of this important Sikh thinker.

The results of this dissertation will be published in three stages. The first stage will be a translation of selections from Gurdas's most important compositions, the Punjabi ballads. This work will introduce his life and works to an English audience, identify the scope of his project, as well as provide five chapters of translations on core themes that have not come to light yet in scholarship. Moreover, it will contain appendices, a map of Sikh congregations about which Gurdas writes, and a glossary.

Second, I intend to publish a translation of selection from his Braj quatrains. This work will span topics of metaphysics, religious experience, and Gurdas's interface with non-Sikh religious ideas. It will also advance his notions of Sikh spirituality and how Sikhs should go about it. Nuances within each of Gurdas's genres will be pointed out so

as to produce a more comprehensive sense of his project and its accomplishments.

At the third level, I hope to publish a series of essays on what Gurdas tells us about life in the early Sikh community, particularly how early Sikh rituals functioned to create and expand community boundaries. A strong belief in the eventual ascendance of the community, related to conceptions of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, emerge from Gurdas's works. I would also like to tackle the question, raised in recent Sikh scholarship, of whether Sikhs had a conception of something like "religion" in the pre-modern period. This has implications for understanding early Sikh self-conception and communal boundary construction.

Natasha Behl

Politics of Equality: Caste and Gender Paradoxes in the Sikh Community

(UC Los Angles, 2010)

This project makes sense of how caste and gender inequality persist in the Sikh community despite genuine belief in and commitment to equality. My dissertation asks: How do ordinary Sikhs maintain a belief in equality while also participating in caste- and gender-based discriminatory practices? And how do Scheduled Caste Sikhs and Sikh women take political action in a community that engages in discrimination, yet denies its very existence? By drawing on in-depth interviews, the dissertation (1) explains paradoxes shared by many Sikhs who vehemently oppose casteism and sexism as antithetical to Sikhism, but simultaneously engage in caste- and gender-based discrimination; and (2) develops a meaning and understanding of agency from within the set of symbolic, institutional, and material practice that upholds and maintains the paradoxes of equality. What makes this particular contradiction interesting is the fact that a majority of Sikhs, including Scheduled Caste Sikhs and Sikh women, maintain that Sikhism has eliminated casteism and sexism even though discrimination is a common, everyday lived experience.

To answer the aforementioned questions, I conducted and analyzed forty in-depth interviews. I conducted interviews in two districts of Punjab, India – Mohali and Amritsar – with approximately the same number of men as women from each of the three major caste groups—Jats, Khatris, and Scheduled Castes/Backward Castes. Also, I conducted interviews with respondents of varying ages (from 21 to 71) and educational levels (from illiterate to highly educated). In addition to conducting in-depth interviews, I had the opportunity to gather crucial information in follow up interviews, informal conversation, and through observation of religious and social activities. The interviews are illustrative of and provide evidence to support the arguments that (1) despite a belief in and commitment to caste and gender equality, a structure of caste hierarchy is present among Sikhs; and (2) this particular contradiction is tied to specific material interests, narrative methods employed to maintain and challenge these interests, and social actors who are, in turn, privileged and displaced.

This project is organized around two interlocking themes: deconstructing a politics of equality and understanding quotidian political

action. The questions of lived experience, subjectivity, and visible, marked identity run centrally through both of these interlocking themes. I intervene by problematizing current notions of equality and agency present in the Sikh community by demonstrating that Sikhs construct, reinforce, and challenge social hierarchies through narrative identities in ways that are complex and often surprising. This is not only an empirical study intended to provide an accurate depiction of contemporary Sikh politics of equality and Sikh quotidian political action, it is also a theoretical contribution that forces a re-evaluation of social scientific understandings of identity, the way in which identity functions on a daily basis, and how identity interacts with agency.

To make sense of a politics of equality and quotidian political action, I turn to Linda Alcoff's (2006) account of identity and Margaret Somers' (1994) notion of narrative identity to understand this particular contradiction as an uneasy interplay between two narratives, a Sikh narrative of equality, and ontological narratives, which give rise to discrimination. An analysis of the interplay between narratives provides evidence for the following arguments: (1) despite a belief in and commitment to equality, a structure of hierarchy is present among Sikhs; and (2) this particular hierarchical structure is tied to specific material interests, narrative methods employed to maintain and challenge these interests, and social actors who are, in turn, privileged and displaced.

Broadly, my current research plan encompasses three dimensions: (1) a book manuscript that develops my doctoral dissertation research on equality, identity, and political agency in the Sikh community; (2) a series of articles (forthcoming in *Minority Studies* published by Oxford University Press and under review with *Gender & Society* and *The Journal for Punjab Studies*); and (3) a new book project based on participant-observation fieldwork in Bakersfield, CA examining the way in which Punjabi Sikh women are constituted as workers and nurturers in the first world. Currently, I have an appointment as a Riley Postdoctoral Fellow in the Political Science Department at Colorado College, where I will be working on my research plan while also teaching three courses (Minority Politics, South Asian Politics, and Power and Political Resistance). I will also attend a Workshop on Transforming Your Dissertation into a Book sponsored by the American Institute of Indian Studies & the Annual Conference on South Asia.

Gibb Schreffler

Signs of Separation: Dhol in Punjabi Culture

(UC Santa Barbara, 2010)

This dissertation is an exhaustive study of an emblematic musical instrument, *dhol*, and a like-named discursive trope of Punjabi culture. Punjab has no national flag or other such state icon to act as a unifying emblem. How could it, when it is split geographically and politically between two nations, indeed, when even as a state or province within those nations its sovereign status is sometimes viewed as tenuous? And what to do when many of the 2-3 million Punjabis in the Diaspora have identified more with the transnational Punjab *region* than with either South Asian nation or those of their adopted residence? What, in place of a flag, could reference a more or less shared Punjabi identity? It could not be faith; Punjabis are generously divided among several. It could not be ethnicity in any real sense, as the irksome divisions of caste and tribe, in varying degrees, yet crosscut Punjabi society. The Punjabi language has served as a point of unity at times, but politically driven associations between religion and perceived language use have undermined that unity. Thus we find that a popular emblem for the global Punjabi community is in fact a musical instrument, a drum: the *dhol*. While perhaps not as versatile as a flag in form, the dhol makes up for this with its semiotic multidimensionality—its ability to evoke a number of sentiments and associations through signification on many different fronts.

Part One of the thesis addresses the "who" of dhol—the people related to it and their ethnic, class, and other personal dimensions. Part Two deals with the instrument as an object, including its geographic situation ("where"), the etymology of its name ("when"), physical construction, practical uses ("what"), and specific repertoire ("why"). Part Three is concerned with broader signification, especially how the dhol engages with other aesthetic traditions: tales, dances, and songs (the question of "in what way?"). In the work's conclusion I situate the dhol as a multi-faceted cultural artifact that embodies many themes of the modern Punjabi experience.

The thesis, then, is a rich case study that addresses the expansive web of signification related to the *dhol*. It tracks the development of the sign as it has broadened its range, from the level of limited local communities to the level of "Punjabi culture" at-large. As such the thesis both demonstrates and offers explanations for how the associations with such an object may become so broad as to thoroughly embody a cultural

identity. Being a contribution from the field of Ethnomusicology, it emphasizes the role played by music in this phenomenon. In terms of sheer informational purpose, the work serves as the first ethnography of Punjabi dhol-players as well as an in-depth document of some marginal Punjabi peoples and their fading performance traditions.

The state of the field of my research determined the form and content of the dissertation and, consequently, the reasons why it is important for me to revise it for publication as a book. First, in the course of conducting research, I found that I was among the very first and few scholars to attempt a systematic study of Punjabi music-culture. Little was known outside the circles of performing communities, and so, much was yet to be discovered and documented. I was in a unique position to bridge some gaps between the various, cloistered performing individuals and to share information with both lay Punjabis and non-Punjabis. Furthermore, the types of questions I asked as an outsider and the anthropological and musicological methods that I brought to the field were complimentary to those in use by local scholars. It was imperative to record what I learned of cultural knowledge that is marginalized and fast-vanishing. Out of four fieldtrips to India and supplemental work with Punjabi communities in Pakistan, North America, and England, I amassed an enormous body of data. I decided to use the dissertation as a medium in which to include as much information as possible. This means, however, that the dissertation is unwieldy for most readers, who are unlikely to seek that level of detail for *every* aspect of the subject.

Second, in researching the specific topic, I found that everything about the *dhol* told a rich story about ethnicity, class, economics, literature, music, and the history of Punjabis. Addressing these many dimensions meant bringing several disciplines to bear upon the subject, not all with which I have the same level of familiarity. It also meant that, given as extensive a study as I was able to complete for the dissertation, I could not *fully* address each aspect of the subject. For most aspects of the subject there were few or no prior text sources. The bulk of the work relied on field research, however the disappearance of many of the traditions under question meant that I was performing considerable "salvage" ethnography. These factors mean that although there is much information in the ca.1000-page work, the coverage is uneven. A book would require the less evenly covered aspects to be set aside—as topics for future field research—while focusing on and strengthening the disciplinary rigor and narrative coherence of other aspects.

Third, since my doctoral research began, there has been a demand for information on the subject. Many Punjabis are eager to receive information on the musical heritage of their people, especially as music has grown into a major role in identity formation and expression. As Punjabi music and dance have gained a high-profile among global music, non-Punjabis have sought to understand its cultural context. Indeed, both

Punjabis and non-Punjabis alike have been challenged to understand the nature of aspects of Punjabi music-culture about which misconceptions have developed and which I address in my research. The subject desperately needs an available work that can be referenced for accurate information derived from empirical observations, rather than the current tendency towards conjecture and textual interpretation. Not only scholars and heritage-seekers require this information, but players of the *dhol* in Western countries, of which there have become many since the research was begun, have sought the information it contains and to which they do not have access outside of the marginal sphere of Punjabi traditional performers.

Revising the dissertation for publication will involve removing uneven sections while bolstering the disciplinary rigor of others, and focusing on topics of most pressing interest to scholars and practical interest to laypersons. This proposed "ethnography of the dhol" would be entitled *Beat That Drum Which Hangs from Your Neck: Marginalized Performers in Modern Punjab*. Its thesis will concern the emergence of *dhol* from the periphery as an object that forms a point of focus for ideas of Punjabi identity. At the same time, the book will expound on the changing lives of once-marginalized dhol-players in a society where more individuals now follow the profession than ever before in history. Its publication will be important for bringing my research to a form that is accessible, both to scholars in related disciplines who are not specialists in Punjab Studies and to non-academics.

Ami Praful Shah

In Praise of the Guru: A Translation and Study of Sainapati's Sri Gursobha

(UC Santa Barbara, 2010)

This dissertation is first and foremost a project of translation. Composed by the poet Sainapati during the years 1701-1708, the *Sri Gursobha*, "In Praise of the Guru," is a contemporary written narrative of the life and death of the last human Guru of the Sikh tradition, Guru Gobind Singh (1661/6-1708). In the first chapter of the text, Sainapati begins his narration of events with a recognition of the ten Gurus of the Sikh tradition, followed by a brief account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, until the main subject of his work – the life of Guru Gobind Singh – is narrativized in verse in the remaining nineteen chapters. Tasked with the mission of establishing *dharam*, Sainapati's depiction of Guru Gobind Singh blurs the line between the divine and the human; he is Vahiguru's Guru as well as Vahiguru himself. As a divine man, his mission to establish *dharam* is a multifaceted. He is at once a political leader who guides his community through a complex web of imperial machinations and treacheries; a warrior who leads his troops into battle and is himself involved in the shedding of blood; a religious figure who seeks to ensure the safety of his Sikhs in this world and their liberation in the next; and, a father and husband who experiences the unimaginable loss of his four sons.

Written in the north Indian vernacular languages of Punjabi and Braj Bhasa and recorded in the *gurmukhi* script, the *Sri Gursobha* is an invaluable source of information on the life and legacy of Guru Gobind Singh and the history of the Sikh community at the turn of the eighteenth century in northern India. However, despite its importance it has been of limited scholarly value because thus far there has been no available translation of the text in English. By providing the first unbroken English translation of the *Sri Gursobha*, based on manuscript evidence and printed editions, this study makes an important but otherwise inaccessible text available to both scholarly and non scholarly audiences alike. This translation is supplemented by an extensive glossary of epithets and terms used in the text, a timeline of events, and information on historical actors mentioned in the text.

Chapter One situates the *Gursobha* within a larger examination of the development of the Sikh literary corpus during the Guru period (c. 1500-1708). Given the importance attached to writing and the authority of texts

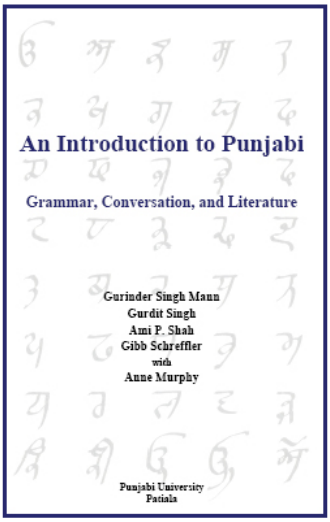
from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, this chapter argues for the importance and relevance of textual sources in understanding the trajectory of the Sikh tradition. This discussion of textual sources is informed by a revised schema of dating *janamsakhi, rahitnama,* and *gurbilas* literature based on extant manuscript evidence that challenges current scholarly positions regarding the chronological emergence of these sources and their concomitant associations with particular Gurus. By questioning the scholarly equations of genre and Guru, this chapter questions scholarly assessments that equate the *janam sakhi* literature with the mystical interiority of Guru Nanak and *gurbilas* and *rahitnama* literature with the aggressive exteriority of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh. A close reading of these sources suggests that scholarly arguments regarding "radical changes" in the nature and constitution of the *panth* over time are overstated, and that all of the Gurus were equally concerned with issues of religious identity and community formation and divine and worldly realities.

Chapter Two examines the narrative contents of the *Sri Gursobha* in light of evidence that this was a contemporary biography of Guru Gobind Singh composed in the Anandpur court and completed soon after his death in Nanderh. Over the course of the twenty chapters that comprise the *Sri Gursobha,* Sainapati presents Guru Gobind Singh's life and mission not in opposition to the lives and teachings of the previous nine Gurus, but rather, as a fulfillment and realization of their legacy. While many scholars use the language of "rupture" and "contradiction" to explain the emergence of the Khalsa during the tenure of Guru Gobind Singh, there is no evidence in the *Sri Gursobha* to suggest such an interpretation. As one of the earliest articulations of the doctrine of *gurkhalsa*, the equivalence of the Guru and his Sikhs, according to Sainapati's account, the entire community is to be understood as the Khalsa; the Khalsa is not a "warrior" identity or an exclusive identity that pits Sikh against Singh or Khatri against Jat. The *Sri Gursobha* closes with an unequivocal statement of the doctrine of *guru granth* and *guru panth* at the time of the Guru's death and a vision of re-establishing the Sikh community at Anandgarh through the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh.

Chapter Three compares the narrative of the Guru's life and mission as found in the *Sri Gursobha* with three other contemporary narratives – *Apani Katha* (1688), *Das Gurkatha* (1690s), and *Parchian Patshahi 10* (1709)– written during the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh and in the immediate aftermath of his death in 1708. Writing between 1697-1709, these authors lived within the same spatio-temporal parameters as the Guru, and may have even been first-hand observers of his life. While many scholars have focused on the *gurbilas* as the representative literary genre of Guru Gobind Singh's life, the fact is that during his own lifetime he was written about in a wide variety of genres– *parchi*, *gursobha*, and

katha – that did not include *gurbilas*. This chapter compares and contrasts these biographical accounts of the Guru in order to understand how his life was understood within Sikh sources during his lifetime; no single account fully traces the Guru's life from birth to death, but when they are read collectively they follow the entire arc of his life and address his legacy beyond death. While scholars have argued that the contours of Guru Gobind Singh's life only become clear in the later half of the eighteenth century or that we possess an inadequate or limited amount of source material from this period, a close reading of these four contemporary sources indicates, quite to the contrary, a remarkable consensus regarding the events in and meaning of the Guru's life and death.

Currently, I am working to polish the translation based on the extant manuscripts of *Sri Gursobha*. Additionally, I have completed a translation of the account of Guru Gobind Singh's life in Kankan's *Das Gurkatha*, and will make that available in the near future. This project will thus be strengthened by a renewed focus on locating and translating additional primary sources that will shed light on this critical period of Sikh history.



Punjabi is a language spoken in the Punjab, a geographical-cultural region situated in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. Currently, there are approximately 100 million Punjabi speakers, the vast majority of whom fall in West Punjab (Pakistan) and East Punjab (India). With the development of a substantial diaspora of Punjabi speakers living abroad, however, the teaching of Punjabi has acquired a new layer of complexity as both second and third generation Punjabis and non-Punjabis have shown great interest in learning the language. Since the teaching of Punjabi as a foreign language is a relatively recent phenomenon, we undertook this project in an attempt to develop the materials necessary for this task.

Part One of this manual explores this grammatical structure of Punjabi through descriptions, targeted exercises and vocabulary lists. In addition to the grammatical information provided, every chapter includes dialogues and readings on various topics, i.e. festivals, religious communities in the Punjab. Through practice and memorization of grammar, vocabulary, and conversation in Part One, students should develop a significant level of confidence and comfort with the language.

Part Two builds upon the grammatical structures outlined in Part One by providing students with an opportunity to encounter the language through poetry, short stories, and popular songs in Punjabi. These literary selections include the works of important twentieth century Punjabi writers such as Mohan Singh, Ahmed Rahi, Amrita Pritam, Surjit Patar, and Giani Gurdit Singh. Thus, in addition to teaching Punjabi as a language, we hope that this book will also provide an introduction to the history, culture, and literature of the Punjab.

In Remembrance

Professor Norman Gerald Barrier

Indu Banga
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The obituaries of Professor Norman Gerald Barrier (1940-2010), popularly called Jerry, bring out his many-faceted personality and work. He is known to be a fine human being with wit and humour; a warm hearted friend and a mentor and supporter of young scholars; a man of unparalleled energy, tenacity and activity; a great collector of archival and tract literature; a good businessman and a great source of books on South Asia in the West; a well regarded colleague and an enthusiastic teacher; and above all, a socially aware and active scholar. However, not much appeared in these obituaries by way of an assessment of Professor Barrier's academic contribution. He was active in Punjab and Sikh studies for nearly five decades. An assessment of his work, therefore, is called for.

Professor Barrier's publications fall into three major categories: source materials; editing of collections of articles; and articles on Indian, Punjab and Sikh history. The focus of all his publications is mainly on the half century from about 1870 to 1920. All his works are not available to us but most of them are. Since there is considerable overlapping in what he has published we have enough material to form a fair idea of his contribution to historical studies.

I

Publications on source materials form a major chunk of Professor Barrier's work. In his "Introduction" to *The Census in British India* (1981), he emphasizes both the importance and limitations of census reports. The censuses were not consistent over time. Concepts and ideas among officials produced categories that took on life, fostered new conceptualizations of community, and led to formal definitions of caste, religion, and primary relationships. British perceptions and shifting views of Indian society reflect colonial politics and perspectives. Barrier concludes that census reports have statistics and narrative, fact and fancy, and correlations that may or may not stand up to scrutiny.

The report of a committee appointed by the Indian National Congress on the Cawnpore riots of 1931 was edited by Barrier and published as the *Roots of Communal Politics* (1976). In his view, it was an important historical document, reinterpreting the evolution of communalism and marking an important phase in nationalist historiography. In this report a "mentality" arising from a "perverted view" of the history of Hindu-Muslim relations in India was presented as the primary cause of the riots. Communal consciousness was seen as developing after 1857 due primarily to the disruptive tactics of the British. The committee came to the conclusion that while communal attitudes set the stage for conflict, it was intensified to the point of conflagration by British machinations and inaction at critical points. Incidentally, Barrier regarded the official report on the riots as more balanced. The committee made rather radical recommendations for the restoration of harmony between Hindus and Muslims, suggesting what they should and should not do. Barrier thinks that the split in the committee over the remedies recommended was symptomatic of the difficulties in turning the tide of separation.

The "Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, tracts on Nineteenth Century Punjab" (1970) are presented by Barrier as valuable sources on the changing social consciousness and inter and intra-community differences among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab. He points out that before the end of the nineteenth century their political activity came to be based on class or religious interests. It was a phase of transition. Each community was undergoing a process of self-examination, recasting history, and strengthening communal identity. Barrier gives the "Story of the Congress" by Mohammad Shams-ud-Din Sadiq in an appendix to indicate the nature of relationship between religious communities. It is a satire on the aspiration of the Hindus for self rule.

As an extension of his interest in communal politics, Barrier's "The British and Controversial Publications in Punjab" (1974) was published as a major source on religious and political problems in the Punjab. He points out that communal literature predominates in the proscribed collections, which was symptomatic of the growing tension between, and within, religious communities: between Hindus and Muslims, Aryas and Sanatanists, Sunnis and Shias, and between the Ahmadiyas and others. Very few banned Sikh works, however, could be classified as anti-Muslim.

For Sikh history, Barrier refers to two significant turning points which had been ignored by the Sikhs and students of Sikh history: the eighteenth century "when Sikh ideas on religion, society and politics crystallized", and the period of colonial rule when the Sikhs moved from defeat towards a new awareness and militancy. These gaps in historical writing on the Sikhs were often explained in terms of lack of fresh materials for research. But this was "not true of the Sikh resurgence in the late nineteenth century". In *The Sikhs and Their Literature* (1970)

Barrier lists 1240 publications produced by the Sikhs and on the Sikhs from 1849 to 1919 in Punjabi and English. His "Introduction" provides the context in which this literature was produced.

II

In his essay on "The Punjab Government and Communal Politics, 1870-1908" (1968), he maintains that the British only "unintentionally" contributed to rivalry among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs "by adopting programs and transferring institutions which created new arenas of competition and conflict". Their policies generally were calculated to diminish conflict and eventually to improve communal relations. Barrier's assumption that the British were merely "responding to an existing gulf" among the newly educated Punjabis is questionable. It overlooks the role and impact of the officially backed Christian missionaries in the early decades of colonial rule in channeling cultural reorientation among the Punjabis along communal lines. In his "Muslim Politics in the Punjab, 1870-1890" (1971) Barrier gives translation of two Urdu political tracts, written during the anti-Congress movement in 1888, to illumine Hindu-Muslim relations and shifting ideologies within the Muslim community. Barrier suggests that opposition to the Congress and the cooperation with the British went together. He is inclined to think that Hindu-Muslim antagonism in the 1920s, the resurgence of Muslim political associations in the 1930s, and even the movement for the creation of Pakistan had their roots in the turbulent history of Bengal and the Punjab prior to 1900.

In "The Formation and Enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill" (1979), Barrier proceeds on the erroneous assumption that "private ownership of land did not exist" until the advent of their rule in the Punjab. Taking the government records at their face value he refers to the "lightness" of the revenue demand under the British. Therefore, he does not hold the government "directly responsible for the growing impoverishment". Nor does he attach adequate importance to the political considerations of the colonial rulers for this agrarian legislation. Barrier's essay has other inadequacies too, but it has the merit of being the first consistent exposition of this important legislation.

In his essay on "The Punjab Disturbances of 1907" (1974), based on his Ph.D. dissertation, Barrier assumes that the Punjab Government's attempts to help the agriculturists through "paternal" measures resulted, unexpectedly, in the alienation of the political support of the agrarian population in the central Punjab. The Government of India met this challenge by putting an end to "the local government's paternal programme". Minimizing its consistent pursuit of imperial interests, Barrier suggests that the government was not an impersonal monolith,

but an arena in which personalities, conflicting principles, and faulty channels of communication determined official policy and action.

Barrier's assumption that the communal pattern apparent after 1849 had its roots in the social and political structure of pre-British Punjab underpins his essay on "Mass Politics and the Punjab Congress in Pre-Gandhian Era" (1975). Urban politics tended to revolve around religious communalism which interfered with the growth of a broad based notion of nationhood. The Punjab Congress therefore proved to be ineffectual in developing sustained organization and contacts, and the Punjab remained much behind several other provinces in respect of constitutional politics before the Act of 1919.

III

With the passage of time, Professor Barrier turned increasingly to Sikh themes. His Introduction to *The Sikhs and Their Literature* (1970), meant to provide a 'contextual statement' for his Bibliography, became the first and the most comprehensive statement of his understanding about the Sikhs during 1870-1920. Barrier assumes that the early decades of colonial rule were marked by a serious decline in the Sikh tradition which created a crisis of identity. Ernest Trumpp's view that "Sikhism was a Hindu sect" evoked a strong reaction. The defenders of separate Sikh identity found support in the works of M.A. Macauliffe. Sikhs had begun to take fresh interest in their past and historical literature in general. "Sikh boundaries began to be demarcated and maintained". The rites of passage, equality between men and women, education and Punjabi in Gurmukhi script were some of the other emerging concerns of the Sikhs.

Barrier goes on to talk of the emergence of new Sikh institutions leading eventually to the founding of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. He dwells at some length on controversies among the Singh Sabha leaders over the issues of Sikh identity, control of Sikh shrines, Sikh ceremonies, and conversion of outcastes. The Tat Khalsa, or the radical Sikhs of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, became alienated from the managers of the Golden Temple and some other organizations. These controversies were reflected in Sikh journalism and other publications of the period. Babu Teja Singh of the Bhasaur Singh Sabha (and the Panch Khalsa Diwan) was the most virulent opponent of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Summing up this situation Barrier says that, within half a century, "the forces confronting the Sikhs had produced a wide and bewildering range of institutions. Although involved with the same problems, the institutions and their members came up with varied and often conflicting analyses of the nature of Sikhism and what must be done to insure its survival".

Barrier turns to "Sikh Politics in British Punjab" (1988) to underline that the relationship between Hindus and Sikhs became an absorbing

issue for Sikh leaders. "They were quite close in 1849, and to break them apart invited trouble." The Arya Samajists insisted that "Sikhs were Hindu". The Tat Khalsa increasingly portrayed the Arya Samaj as the number one enemy of Sikhism. Sikhs and Hindus contested the key issue of Hindi versus Punjabi, each tending to identify its language with religion and communal unity. Similarly, the tendency to focus on Sikh-Muslim relations can be traced in the editorial policy and news coverage of prominent periodicals. The government maintained the Sikh aristocracy and Gurdwaras as "channels for indirect control of Sikhs". There was basic ambiguity in British attitude towards the Sikhs. The army officers studiously reinforced a sense of allegiance to Sikhism, but the British tried to keep "Sikh nationality" and it within bounds. Barrier points out that when Punjabis talked of 'the nation', they often meant the Hindu, Muslim or the Sikh nation. A renewed sense of separate political identity based on religion eventually brought the radical Sikhs (Tat Khalsa) into conflict with the British. Barrier seems to agree with a C.I.D. note on Sikh politics underlining the close connection between the "new faith" of the Tat Khalsa and disloyalty to the British. It may be noted that Barrier's understanding of "Sikh resurgence" is not based entirely on his Bibliography. In more than 40 foot notes he refers to secondary works. The number of references to works given in the Bibliography is much smaller. Many of his views, therefore, were a part of the then received wisdom with its limitations. Barrier's later essays and "introductions" on Sikh history reiterated the issues identified and positions taken in *The Sikhs and Their Literature*.

Gradually, in the 1990s, Barrier turned more towards the concerns of the diaspora Sikhs. His comments, however, always go back to the Singh Sabha period or the phase of 'Sikh resurgence'. In his "Keynote Speech" (1999), Barrier refers to his journey into Sikh studies beginning with *The Sikhs and Their Literature*. He talks of several strands in the Sikh story, reiterating his basic position regarding the Singh Sabha movement, albeit with a shift in emphasis on recent developments. Over the decades, the crises of identity have, led to and, been shaped by the political traumas confronting the Sikhs after the mid-1980s. Referring to the recent controversies which were marked by "a variety of heated and polemical commentary" (reminding Barrier of the tract wars of the late nineteenth century), he talks of the shared assumptions about the role of key individuals, doctrines, and the *Guru Granth Sahib* as building blocks of Sikh identity. However, a discussion of Sikh identity for Barrier involves dealing with potentially conflicting interpretations of the past and contemporary events. His review of literature suggests to him that "the nature of Sikh identity has not been fully resolved".

Barrier goes on to add that the success of the Gurdwara movement and the institutionalization of the SGPC's control over Sikh shrines and Gurdwaras in the 1920s marked the culmination of the Singh Sabha

programs to mobilize the Sikhs, "but many issues prominent in the earlier period remained unresolved". The authority of the SGPC was not recognized by all Sikhs, particularly outside the Punjab. Similarly, the authority of the Akal Takht was not seen as binding by all Sikhs. The issues of the *rahit* and Amritdhari/Keshdhari/Sahajdhari relations also remained unresolved. Several developments forced a fresh and controversial re-examination of the role of the *maryada* as a measure of Sikh identity. Here again, Barrier appears to assume that "identity" does not call for any definition. It is evident from his treatment that, for him, identity and action go together, which complicates his discussion of identity and makes "Sikh identity" exceptionally problematic. His paper on the Fairfax Gurdwara in Virginia in the same volume is interesting for his view of "identity". He sees Fairfax as a rather extraordinary example of how local issues can escalate and induce debate over larger issues of identity. It is not clear, however, how differences of belief and practice within a religious community become relevant for the issue of identity which is conceived essentially in relation to others. Invariably, Barrier's discussion of identity shifts from "a Sikh" to "a good Sikh".

In a paper entitled "Sikh Emigrants and their Homeland" (1989) Barrier refers to the Sikhs in the Punjab from about 1870 to 1920 as the first phase of their emigration to other countries. He goes on to talk about the early experiences of Sikh emigrants in different countries and their networks from 1880 to 1920. This review suggests a gradual extension of patterns found in the Punjab. Like Sikhs in the Punjab, Sikhs abroad were not unified in terms of doctrine or social attitudes. The old divisions persisted, and existed in one form or another. There was no consensus about political goals or strategy. After 1920, they became involved in the radical movements like that of the Babbar Akalis. Barrier suggests that this early background is relevant for understanding the contemporary diaspora.

On the interesting subject of transmission of Sikh culture, in his "Formulation and Transmission of Sikh Tradition: Competing Organizations and Ideology 1902-1925" (1996), Barrier refers to "the definitive work" of Harjot Oberoi on this period. Barrier maintains that "Sikhism has never had an organizational church with generally accepted leaders who could resolve religious or political issues" in the intellectual debate over the Gurus, history, and the nature of tradition. He emphasizes that as in the Singh Sabha days, "the battle involves not just intellectual argument, but who controls institutions and dominates the communication network linking Sikhs throughout the world". In his "introduction" to the same volume, Barrier reiterates this argument slightly differently. Events in the Punjab deeply affect the Sikhs abroad not simply because they sympathize with their home community but also because they share their cultural values and political aspirations. Without such linkages between the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Sikhs abroad the

recent disputes and debates among the latter would not have occurred. The prolonged controversy in Sikh studies, with its negative effects from the viewpoint of the academia required a study of the cultural baggage which the emigrant Sikhs brought with them and their linkages with the home community. Barrier thinks that only through "an open exchange of ideas and alternatives" academic Sikh studies "may reduce tensions and ultimately lead to a resolution of differences acceptable to Sikhs as a whole".

In fact, Barrier refers directly to the issues and agenda in Sikh studies in three of his essays. In "The Role of Ideology and Institution-Building in modern Sikhism" (1979), he refers to the source materials available for fresh research and interpretation of the Singh Sabha period, and suggests four areas for exploration: "division and unity", "the nature and function of Sikh institutions", "British rule and the social and political mobilization of Sikhs", and "evolution of theological and historiographic trends among Sikh intellectuals". In "Sikh Studies and the Study of History" (1993), Barrier talks of tension between two approaches to Sikh historiography: the one more familiar inside the Punjab, and the other more at home in Western universities. The concerns of the "Punjab school" presented striking parallels to the writings associated with the Singh Sabha movement: respect for the Gurus, historical continuity, differentiation between Sikhism and Hinduism, hagiographic treatment of historical figures, and rejection of non-violence as a cardinal element within Sikh ideology. A second, contrasting group of historians has gradually emerged over the last several decades in Western universities. They question traditional sources and do not accept some of the suppositions of the Sikh historians. The Western historians regard Sikhism as "an evolving religious and cultural tradition, one that mirrors and in turn affects the environment in which it was evolved". Barrier goes on to suggest how Sikh history can be incorporated in the American education system, and mentions five themes which cut across particular periods of Sikh history.

In relation to these themes, Barrier supports W.H. McLeod's questionable view of Sikhism as a refined version of the Sant Tradition. He supports McLeod also about the Jat influence on Sikh culture and the Khalsa *rahit* which again is debatable. On the issue of identity, Barrier supports the controversial view presented by Harjot Oberoi. About the period of Sikh rule he suggests that there was nothing "Sikh" about it, or that there was no relationship between doctrine and state policies. This too has been questioned in recent research. He regards the Sikh resurgence of 1875-1920 as a good example of a "local" response to imperial or colonial system. Reiterating his earlier position, he maintains that the Singh Sabhas did not constitute a single movement at all but rather an assortment of organizations and individuals with differing commitments and views of history and society. He sees the strong

imprint of the Singh Sabha movement clearly in the intellectual roots and concerns of contemporary Sikhism, including the fusion of religion and politics which coalesced into the Akali movement and the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925. Two themes stand out as major focuses in Sikh history after 1947: resurgence of Sikh migration, and the attempts of the Sikhs to protect and consolidate their traditions by settling upon specific rules and rituals viewed as orthodox. In his "Introduction" to *Sikhism and History* (2004), Barrier feels gratified that the scholarly and public understanding of Sikhism had changed dramatically in the last three decades. He suggests that the leadership in addressing unexplored issues and traditions had often come from a growing group of Sikh and Western scholars trained, and teaching, in North America and Europe. However, much of this work is controversial.

IV

On the whole, Professor Barrier's work on sources is very useful for other scholars. He appears to sift through official records and vernacular sources easily to come up with generalizations. His "Introductions" provide a useful overview of the sources and the context in which these were generated. However, his assumption of the binary of 'Sikh' scholars located in Punjab and the Western academia is oversimplied. It ignores several major scholars located in the two hemispheres whose work does not quite fit into these two categories, apparently because of their critical use of the Sikh sources combined with respect for tradition, and their concern equally for continuity and change.

Furthermore, Barrier's generalizations, though attractive and appealing to the general reader, lack depth. This is evident especially with regard to his work on the Sikhs. Empirical evidence for the period 1870-1920 is mostly the basis of his generalizations, but for the later period as well as the period before annexation there is no such basis. Therefore, his views of the nature of Sikhism and Sikh identity have the weakest conceptual and empirical bases. His historiographic reviews tend to be influenced by his understanding of the Singh Sabha period. His confident style and the crispness of his generalizations conceal the elementary character of his basic position and lack of rigorous analysis.

Finally, Barrier appears to be rather preoccupied with the growing communal competitiveness in the Punjab. He tends to minimize the direct and indirect contribution of the colonial state towards engendering communal outlook and attitudes. While cautioning his readers against taking the British records at face value, he himself gets carried away by explanations of their policies and actions. His preoccupation with divisions in the Indian and Punjabi society and their historical "roots" acquires a deterministic ring. He appears to think that partition of India and the Punjab was inevitable.

*I am happy to acknowledge the help received from the library and documentation center of the Indian Council of Historical Research, and Manohar Publishers, New Delhi in locating Professor Barrier's publications.

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Dholi and Bhangra Artist

Garib Dass Vartia (1939-2010)

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Punjab has recently lost one of her cultural treasures. Ustad Garib Dass was a master dhol-player and a foundational figure in the development of modern bhangra. He was among the small group of artists who, inheriting the old traditions of Punjabi music, shaped the new paradigms that have now become taken for granted.

Garib Dass was born "Vilayati" in 1939 in village Dochak, district Gujrat (West Punjab), the son of Narain Das and Pathani Devi of the Khari branch of the Bazigar (Goaar) people. His was a tribal community, made up of itinerant performers who lived outside of mainstream society in temporary *jhuggis* (huts). As a child he roamed in a band of some forty households while the Bazigars presented their signature *bazi* shows of physical feats and acrobatics. Indeed, the family lived outside society's conventions such that it was not until "Vilayati" was age 5 that, having exhibited some health problems, his family first consulted a pandit, who subsequently renamed him "properly": Garibu.

At Partition, Garibu's Hindu community became refugees in East Punjab, where his family was eventually resettled in village Sialva Majri (Ropar). Living in a new land, and estranged from their performance circuit and patrons, they were forced to find other means of subsistence. From the time he was a young boy, Garibu laboured in the fields, pulled a rickshaw, washed clothes, and so on. However, by age 15, inspired by his cousin the late Ustad Mangat Ram, Garibu began to take an interest in dhol. He began playing for *kushti* and *kabaddi* matches. One of his first paying jobs was to make announcements with the dhol to advertise for the local traveling cinema.

In 1955, when bhangra as a staged art was just beginning to develop, Garibu received his first job in accompanying the dance at B.Ed. College in Chandigarh's Sector 20. In that same year he worked with Surjit Mann at the Khalsa School in Kurali. However, he got his big break in 1965 when he met Professor Saroop Singh of Panjab University's Evening College and was recruited to play for the bhangra team. He did so for a decade, during which time the team regularly came in first place. Having thus become a professional dholi in Chandigarh, Garibu acquired his urban name, "Garib Dass."

It was in 1967, during the shooting of the film *Heer Ranjha*, that Garib Dass met the legendary dhol master of the pre-Partition generation, "Punjab Champion" Ghuggi of Amritsar, and made him his ustad. Later, Garib Dass met Chandigarh's folk dance guru, late Sardar Bhag Singh, and soon became attached to his stable of artists. As part of this group, he appeared for the first time at the Republic Day festivities, New Delhi, in 1970, and made regular appearances at the event through 1986. During this period, the art of staged bhangra was going through development, and in his capacity as dholi, Garib Dass made contributions to what would become the more or less standard university-style bhangra that we see today. He gave performances throughout India, including annual trips to Bombay to play for events like Vaisakhi and Lohri melas. Garib Dass had cameos in several films, including *Sat Sri Akal* (1977) and *Jat Punjabi* (1979). He was the drummer for the instructional video *Learn Bhangra in 7 Days* (1989), in which one can see the classic bhangra routine at the height of its development.

Garib Dass went abroad for the first time in 1983, to Thailand and Singapore. With this, a new era in his career had begun. The visit he was clearly most fond of is when he stayed in Canada for six months during the 1986 World Exposition in Vancouver. After this experience, he had the credentials to travel all over, including: Germany (1990, 1999), Finland (1991), Turkey (1992), UAE (1994), Austria (1996, 1998, 1999), Australia (1997), Norway (1998), Sweden (1998), and France (1999), and four more trips to Canada.

Once Garib Dass had become an internationally performing dholi, his status was elevated such that his family were able to move out of the *jhuggis* in Attawa (Sector 42, where the hockey stadium now lies) into *pakka* housing in village Dhanas. They eventually shifted to the Bazigar ward in Dadu Majra where they reside today. However, Garib Dass did not intend for his family to live forever in government housing projects. He invested for the future in a plot of land in Mohali. For the once nomadic Bazigar community, the owning of land is a big step that cannot be overemphasized. From growing up riding on camels in West Punjab's jungles, Garib Dass' hard work and success was such that he has put his grandchildren in a position to be landowners. Indeed, providing for the family—a group effort—was one of his foremost values.

Garib Dass' other core values were hard work and humility. It displeased him to see people use the dhol for certain kinds of excessive profit making, in which category he even included giving dhol lessons for payment. He lamented the trend for performers to appropriate folk musical traditions only to serve their egos and increased popularity. Garib Dass criticised the arrogance of some dholis who say they will not "lower" themselves to accompany students, or who seek work only with popular stage singers. Indeed, whereas many professional dholis have experience working with college-aged youths, Garib Dass had become

especially adept at working with young children. He was regularly called by local schools to ready their youngsters in dance performances at their annual and holiday functions. In his sessions with them, he imparted an awareness of history and heritage that the children miss in their own Western-influenced upbringing. It was in returning from a lesson at one of these schools in Mohali that he suffered tragedy. However, Ustadji's core religious philosophy, which he stated directly to me as such, was that although humans may not know why, God takes and gives what he does for a reason.

We at UC Santa Barbara had a close relationship with Garib Dass and a special fondness for him. While directing the Summer Program in Punjab Studies, Gurinder Singh Mann invited the master to conduct workshops on Punjabi dance. Over the course of the program, Garib Dass taught some 180 students, who consistently rated their sessions with him as one of the highlights of the summer. His patient and friendly instruction brought energy and enthusiasm to each batch of participants. It was in this context that I first met him, seeking to learn dhol and bhangra. We became fast friends, and over the years he contributed more than any other individual to the shape of my PhD dissertation on Punjabi drummers, which I dedicated to him.

In May 2003, the UCSB Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies invited Garib Dass to the United States for the first time, to hold workshops, visit classes, and give performances. I had myself recently suffered a motorcycle accident, but I knew how important this experience would be for Garib Dass so we went through with the program. He patiently accompanied me as I led him, hobbling, about Santa Barbara; he took care of me as much as I did him—his home-cooked meals were especially memorable. At the end of this residence he directed our students in a performance of two Western Punjabi dances that were near and dear to his heart: *jhummar* and *sammi*. We invited him back in 2007, in conjunction with the Center's sponsored course, "Music of Punjab." Afterwards, several of my students told me how special it was to have had the experience of interacting with him.

The last I saw Ustadji was in December 2007. I will never forget walking out on a pier into the Pacific Ocean with him, we eating salt-water taffy, and I trying to describe deep-sea creatures for which I knew no name in Punjabi. Nor will I forget his amazement at the knee-deep snow in which he walked, shivering and slightly terrified, in Connecticut. I remember our trips in Punjab, as to buy dhols at Fatehgarh Sahib's mela, with Garib Dass carrying two drums while perched on the back of my scooter. And ordering pizza for his whole family—most of whom had never tried this exotic fare—and having to meet the Pizza Hut delivery boys in the street of a nearby sector because they would not enter Dadu Majra Colony. I remember countless gatherings at Garib Dass' home with him and his family, as they tried to make me eat impossible amounts

of food. Mostly I remember his uniquely accented voice in endless private conversations we had about faith, morality, and culture.

We lost Ustadji on 16 November to a road accident, and though he had reached approximately 71 years of age, it seems clear he would have had many more years ahead of him. Garib Dass leaves behind his wife, Devi Labh Kaur, along with three sons and one daughter, seven grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Son Des Raj and all the male grandchildren have become dholis in his footsteps. He leaves behind, too, countless students whom he taught in schools and colleges or who, in recent years, had been coming to Chandigarh from abroad to learn from him. I count myself blessed to have been one of those. Few other dholis have had such commitment, not just to their art, but also to the highest standard of ethics and humanistic values.

For examples of Garib Dass' music, please visit the UCSB Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies website at:
http://www.global.ucsb.edu/punjab/gharib_das.html

Ajeet Singh Matharu (1983-2010)

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Those eulogized in the *Journal of Punjab Studies* are usually scholars, poets, and other luminaries. We marvel over their accomplishments and bid adieu to long time friends, scholars, and even mentors. This remembrance is of a different sort. For those of us that had the fortune to meet Ajeet, we were overjoyed, inspired, and eager to see the germination of a budding young scholar. On the morning of July 26, 2010, that opportunity was cut short after a tragic car accident, as Ajeet was traveling to his Punjabi class at the AIIS Institute in Chandigarh.

Ajeet Singh Matharu was born on February 7, 1983 in Reedley, California. The precocious and gifted young boy left his Central Valley home to pursue high school at the prestigious Phillips Exeter academy. Collegiate callings would see him return to his native California and begin his undergraduate career at USC. Excelling in his studies, Ajeet majored in History and Economics.

A strong passion for social justice led him to serve as part of the Teach for America corps. A high school teacher of history, Ajeet was devoted to his students. He was recognized by his Brooklyn public school for his ability to inspire, and dramatically improve the test scores of his students. Jeers, epithets, or even the defacing of his school picture never caused Ajeet to waiver in his commitments. He saw himself as a Sikh ambassador across cultures, always eager to greet, educate, and connect with those around him. A humanitarian passion led him to new causes. He was an advocate for dialogue between Palestinians and Sikhs, moved by his sense of moral justice and the desire to bring different people together.

While his sense of social justice could not be narrowly defined, Ajeet had a special place for his own community. Nurtured in one of the oldest Sikh settlements in North America, he was vested in his community. The post-9/11 violence was a spark that pushed his *seva* in a range of activities. From the Jakara Movement to SALDEF, Sikh Research Institute, and the Sikh Coalition, Ajeet was a bond between all major Sikh-American organizations. Earlier this year, he submitted a written testimony to the Oregon State Legislature in support of the repeal of ORS 342.650, a 1920s era law passed under a wave of anti-Catholic hysteria that outlawed religious attire and prevented *keshadhari* Sikhs, along with some Jews and Muslims, from being teachers in Oregon schools. The law was repealed this year due to the efforts of Ajeet and many others.

The California Central Valley's Sikh population provided an environment for Ajeet to cultivate his interests in the history of the Sikhs. Weekly Punjabi school classes, as well as a father with a vast library on Sikh-related materials nurtured his early development His studies and travels in the Punjab, beginning in 2009, with UCSB's Punjab Summer program fostered what was going to be a life-long relationship with his parents' homeland. In fact this summer, his studies at the AIIS Chandigarh institute were further tethering him to this world.

Entering a graduate program in history at Columbia University, Ajeet excelled, accumulated recognition, and earned the respect of his teachers and peers. In his first year, the historiography of Sikh Studies became an overwhelming concern. Always self-reflective, he hoped to bring the same critical awareness to the field that he loved.

The idea for a historiography paper came in response to a call for papers for the first annual Sikholars: Sikh Graduate Student Conference; later development was seen in the form of a piece he wrote for the Sikh Foundation's web-series "Opportunities and Challenges for Sikh Academics." From these sparse cotyledons and numerous conversations where we challenged, provoked, pushed, and encouraged one another, I can provide some sense of how Ajeet saw the field, new debates that he sought to encourage, and the voice he wanted to provide.

Seeing Sikh Studies as nine different categories: orientalist, biographical, historiographical, identititarian, diasporan, feminist, revisionist, scriptural, and theoretical, Ajeet sought to explicate each through looking at the most important monographs in the field. He noted four major trends of the scholarship in the past four decades:

1. The continued uncritical usage of categories by practitioners in the field of Sikh Studies (such as Barrier's 'neo-Sikh' and Oberoi's 'Tat Khalsa') to refer to the Singh Sabha reformers. These categories themselves were a product of administrative anthropology and a colonial discourse to determine which Sikh groups were loyal to the Raj and which were not. While post-structuralists assert a critique of the relations of powers, in the Sikh context, they have been remarkably complementary in their categories with those of power.

2. An unreflective silent dialogue with some scholars of Sikh Studies and the project by many Sikh nationalists for Khalistan. With various publications arising in the 1980s and 1990s under this 'specter', a general consensus formed, although not quite unanimous, within the field that religious identity was fluid and hybrid in the pre-modern period and the modern Sikh identity and religion was created by early 20th century colonial elites. Most scholarship written during this period had a subtext in explaining the militancy, with results supporting a statist solution and the delegitimization of the

movement. The congruence of this opinion with that of the Indian state in its violent suppression of the movement has been largely overlooked.

3. The discrediting of both Sikh oral-tradition and Punjab-based, mostly Sikh, researchers in favor of Western-trained academics. The result being that there is a 'balkanization' and gulf between the Punjab-based scholarship and those trained in Western universities, who hold the former in low esteem. This process, starting in the 1970s, has born fruition with the now hegemonic locus of Sikh Studies decisively shifted outside of the Punjab.

4. The turn to the self-labeled 'critical theory,' institutionalized through the journal *Sikh Formations*, under the helm of Arvindpal Mandair. Without giving an endorsement, Ajeet acknowledged that this research project associated with the problem of translation of the concept of religion will continue to produce new scholarship in the upcoming years.

Beginning with preoccupation on understanding the field, Ajeet saw himself in different mode. He recognized that the most productive emerging scholarship in the field of Sikh studies requires multiple linguistic abilities, deep historiographical knowledge, beyond only that produced in Western universities, and access to private libraries, archives, and collections. He was seeking nothing less than a re-writing of Sikh history in the modern period. In personal conversations, he argued for a shift of periodization from 1800 onwards, rather than 1849, which is usually the date taken up by those interested in Punjab's modern period. His time in Punjab with AIIS was to gain requisite proficiency in Punjabi, in both Gurmukhi and Shahmukhi scripts. He was going to continue his study of Urdu and Hindi in the upcoming fall semester at Columbia. His preliminary works are most laudatory towards those authors such as JS Grewal and Gurinder Singh Mann with 'deep' understandings of multiple languages, including Persian, Urdu, Braj, and Punjabi in various scripts.

Engaging with theory, but ultimately seeing himself as an empirical historian, Ajeet wanted to revisit and revise the subaltern project. He was fascinated with peasants and artisans, but not in the turns that the later Subaltern Studies moved. Economic and social studies, rather than only following cultural and intellectual trajectories were to be part of his future work. He was excited and eager. In his own words, he wrote about new possibilities in the field and new research agendas: "I am both optimistic for the time ahead and proud to be taking part in creating it." On July 26, 2010 his opportunity was taken away far too soon, though we hope his thoughts, reflections, and challenge to those in the field may

live long after. I lost a friend and brother; the Sikh community lost an activist and advocate; the scholarly community lost a diligent, curious, budding young colleague. His mother (Jaswant Kaur), father (Joginder Singh), sister (Amandeep Kaur), and countless others whose life he touched in such a short period, will continue to miss him dearly.

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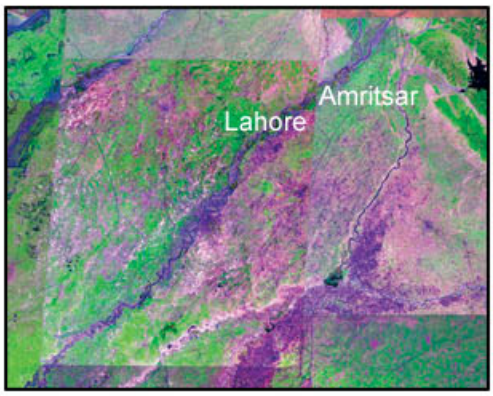

Centered around the cities of Amritsar and Lahore, the region of Punjab spreads from Delhi in the Southeast to Peshawar in the Northwest, and connects the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and the Middle East. Beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization, the region has played a pivotal role in the cultural, economic, and political development of India. The *Journal of Punjab Studies* is a forum for interdisciplinary and comparative scholarship on the region of Punjab and Punjabis living overseas.