

## Recent Doctoral Theses in Sikh and Punjab Studies

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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 *apsaras*, *yakṣas*, and *yakṣīs*. 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 asserts 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 Angeles, 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, Khatri, 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

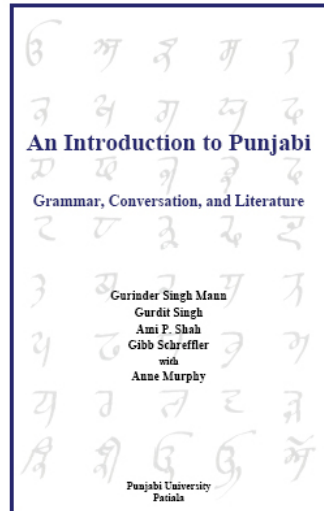
from the time of Guru Nanak onwards, this chapter argues for the importance and relevance of textual sources in understanding the trajectory of the Sikh tradition. This discussion of textual sources is informed by a revised schema of dating *janamsakhi*, *rahitnama*, and *gurbilas* literature based on 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 Gurbilas*, 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.