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.

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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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