

Madra, Amandeep Singh and Singh Parmjit, *The Golden Temple of Amritsar Reflections of the Past (1808-1959)* (London: Kashi House, 2012), 294 pp ISBN 970-9560168-1-2 (hb), £45.00.

This beautifully produced book is intended to, 'pay homage to the time when the Golden Temple, the city of Amritsar and the Sikhs were at the height of their glory.' After a brief introduction there is a section of travellers' accounts of the Golden Temple and the city of Amritsar which spans the period from Ranjit Singh to the 1950s. This is followed by 489 illustrations in the form of pencil sketches, water colours, oil paintings, black and white and coloured photographs, maps and architectural drawings. Each is provided with a description both of its subject matter and of its creator. The works of famous artists and photographers such as William Carpenter and Margaret Bourke-White are included alongside those of amateurs. The subject matter varies from aerial shots of the city and temple complex to the visits of Royalty and Viceroys, day to day activities and the gatherings of *Shahidi Jathas* to take oaths of non-violence before the Akal Takht at the time of the Gurdwara Reform movement. The distinctive Akali-Nihangs form the focus of many portraits. The illustrations have been painstakingly acquired from public and private collections around the world. Many of the early photographs are rare and have not previously been widely available.

The challenges facing the Sikh community and the Golden Temple in the colonial era emerge clearly both from the text and the illustrative material. British power was inscribed on the temple complex by the erection of a large Gothic Clock Tower immediately outside. This not only attested to the ruling colonial presence, but directly confronted the timeless spirituality of the Holy Tank with modern Foucaultian disciplinary notions of time. The text alludes to western visitors' cultural insensitivities as they were confronted with the need to remove their shoes as they entered the complex. The pushing aside of pilgrims by Sikh policemen and guides to allow easier access for them is also repeated in the text. While many of the accounts acknowledge the tranquillity of the Temple they also have recourse to Orientalist stereotypes, comparing this with the 'chaos' of Hindu Mandirs. Two of the authors in seeking to convey the surroundings to a western audience fall back on a comparison with St Mark's Square in Venice.

The growing tensions in end of empire Amritsar are missing from the text and illustrations. Yet by the time of independence, nearly ten thousand buildings had been burned down, leaving around half of the walled city in ruins. Hall Bazaar which was at the centre of the initial outbreak of violence on 5-6 March 1947 features in a photograph, but in the tranquil early twentieth century. There are no photographs of the refugees who criss-crossed their way at the nearby Wagah border, although their plight has been so poignantly captured through the lens of Margaret Bourke-White.

The authors probably sought to draw a veil over this period in the city's

history, as it would have jarred with their celebratory aims. It is for the reader to judge whether the book would have been enhanced by a 'grittier' dimension. In its own terms, this is a splendid and evocative representation of a hundred and fifty years history of the Golden Temple and its environs. It is sumptuously illustrated in what was clearly a labour of love. The book undoubtedly deserves a place in the homes of all those who are continuously drawn to the centre of the Sikh faith.

**Ian Talbot**

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Ilyas Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-1961*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011) xiv + 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-906172-3 (hb) £16.99.

Dr Chattha's book is an important contribution to the growing corpus of material which has taken the focus away from the 'high politics' of South Asia, and given a regional and local perspective to events. Such studies allow us to better grasp the complicated process of partition, violence and resettlement in the sub-continent, which has a critical local dimension. Dr Chattha is singular in the utilisation of police First Information Report [FIR] records in the Punjab, which gives depth and local contextualisation to his subject. With strong archival research, Chattha views '...violence [during the partition] as variegated and complex, [which] illustrates the existence of an organisational and "genocidal" element in it, alongside spontaneity' (12).

The book is divided into three parts. The first part contextualises Gujranwala and Sialkot by providing information on the ethnic, religious, social and economic make-up of both cities, with a focus on the British period. Here Chattha argues that 'colonial rule not only brought increased material progress, but heightened awareness of communal identity' (74) in both the cities.

In chapter two Chattha gives the Punjab-wide context of partition-related violence. He traces the beginning of partition-related violence from the disturbances in Rawalpindi division in March 1947 to the scenes of carnage on both sides of the Punjab following the formal Transfer of Power on August 15, 1947. Together with narrating the main events and themes surrounding partition violence - like the genocidal, class and gender issues, Chattha also points out that the issue of forced conversions still remains an understudied dimension. The chapter also traces the complicated process of refugee resettlement which brought to the fore tensions between the centre and the province, the reluctance of Punjab officials to resettle refugees from 'non-agreed' areas, and the corruption relating to allotment of land, properties and businesses. The chapter also touches upon the urban settlement and economic development challenges which large scale migration posed for the Punjab.

Part II analyses in two chapters the incidents of violence and migration in Gujranwala and Sialkot. Here Chattha weaves an interesting story of how violence was perpetrated on the non-Muslim residents of the two cities, and how these cities were 'cleansed' of non-Muslims. Writing on Gujranwala, for example, Chattha argues that the replacement of a Hindu Deputy Commissioner by a Muslim one 'served to emphasise the helplessness of the minorities' and that from then onwards, 'police raids on non-Muslims were considered attacks by them' (122). This event highlights how perceptions, coupled with rising political tensions, and a few law and order issues, created a sense of panic among the non-Muslims of the city. Chattha also points out how 'violence in Gujranwala district was frequently marked by its cold-blooded organisation' (124). He further argues that the FIR records simply put the perpetrators of these attacks as '*hamlahwar*' [attackers], which covers a broad spectrum of people. This was obviously done to prevent the identification of the attackers with a certain group, caste, or locality, and to prevent future prosecution. Chattha then localises the narrative by assessing the killings of Hindus and Sikhs by the Lohar community of Nizamabad in Gujranwala (130-8), where pre-planning, the lure of loot, abduction of women, and the complicity of the local police become clearly evident.

The chapter on Sialkot also provides fresh insight into the local effects of partition, where over a third of the city was burnt down, and over eighty percent of its industrial units were closed down or abandoned (146). In this chapter, Chattha again keeps close to the archival record and constructs a strong narrative of how local gangs organised and perpetrated violence on the non-Muslims, frequently through police complicity. Chattha also points out that whereas a lot of the partition migration was hurried and chaotic, there were instances, such as that of Dr Kishan Chand, where the wealthy were making 'anticipatory migration' (150), highlighting the class differences in the partition experience. The chapter also discusses the effect of the partition on the 'untouchable' community in Sialkot. Considered outside the Hindu fold, initially this community had been spared the partition violence, but the aftermath of the Dogra-led violence in Jammu and the influx of vengeful refugees took its toll on this community (169-75).

The third section of the book describes the pattern of refugee resettlement and development in Gujranwala and Sialkot. Here the emphasis of Chattha's argument is on the economic change and development brought about by the refugees in both cities. Chattha argues that 'refugee labour, capital and entrepreneurial enterprise,' played a key role in the development of the iron and steel, hosiery and jewellery industries in Gujranwala (189). Similarly, the coming of refugees, mainly Kashmiri, into Sialkot gave new life to industry in the city, especially in the sporting goods and surgical industries. The chapters also highlight the role of the government, both central and provincial, in the economic development of the refugees and the two cities.

Ilyas Chattha's book is an important contribution to our study of partition and

its effect at the local level in the Punjab. Together with the studies of Ian Talbot, Gurharpal Singh, Joya Chatterji and others, this monograph shows the complex nature of partition violence and, in terms of two districts of the Punjab, gives a face to the hitherto unnamed victims and perpetrators. It also shows how refugee rehabilitation was a long and fraught process, but one which provided opportunities for both the locals and refugees.

The book is well written except for a little repetition in the concluding remarks of sections and chapters. The section giving the historical perspective, important as it is, however, could also have been more succinct, with a larger focus on the processes through which refugees in both cities negotiated governmental and local hurdles to re-establish themselves.

**Yaqoob Khan Bangash**

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Pritam Singh, *Economy, Culture and Human Rights: Turbulence in Punjab, India and Beyond*, (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2010 1<sup>st</sup> (ed) x+250 pp. ISBN 978-81-88789-62-7 (hb) Rs. 600, ISBN 978-81-88789-69-6 (pb) Rs. 300. There are very few subjects in contemporary times on which so much is written by so many persons from different walks of life as "human rights". Yet, so much still remains to be discerned and discussed to make human rights a central concern of justice and governance, nationally as well as internationally. In this context, this book is a welcome contribution coming as it does from a person who had been a victim of police torture in 1971 as a young radical activist and who has been engaged in the study of the political economy of development of India and Punjab since that time. The brilliance of this work shines through the imaginative integration of the personal life story of the author – the evolution from a religion influenced Sikh childhood to the theoretical perspective of Marxism - with the politico-economic account of Punjab and India's recent history, and the theoretical architecture of the book exploring the competing approaches towards human rights.

The central argument of the book is that there is a dialectical relationship between politico-economic interests and human rights. This dialectical relationship is explored by arguing that governments and business organisations sacrifice human rights to promote their economic interests of trade promotion and profit maximization, but that if human rights' campaigning becomes powerful, the same governments and business organisations are forced to accommodate human rights in their foreign policy designs and business strategies. In the first chapter, the author has explained the theoretical framing of the discourse on human rights by expounding two possible approaches towards human rights: an instrumentalist approach versus an intrinsic worth approach. The instrumentalist approach, according to the author, looks upon human rights, either for supporting or opposing these rights, merely as a means or an

instrument to achieve some other goals. The goals for those supporting human rights could be: development, democracy or national independence. The goals for those curbing human rights could be: suppression of a dissident movement or gaining control over economic resources. The intrinsic worth approach towards human rights views these rights as good or desirable without linking them to some other goals. The author proposes a synthesis of the two approaches by suggesting a middle path of grounded intrinsic worth approach in which the ethical richness of the intrinsic approach is married with the concreteness of the instrumentalist approach.

The second chapter lays down the macro environment of human rights in India by capturing the trend towards centralisation of economic and political power in India and the implications of this trend for generating conflicts over resources, competing nationalist aspirations and class interests. These conflicts are then shown to be linked with violations of human rights. This chapter fulfils a dual function: it provides a politico-economic perspective to those students of human rights who view human rights merely as a legal or ethical concern, and a human rights perspective to those who merely study the quantitative dimensions of India's economic and political development.

Chapter 3 brings out the international dimensions of human rights by examining the context of economic relations between two countries - India and the United Kingdom (UK) - and the placing of human rights in those relations. A critical evaluation of UK's foreign policy towards India is made to demonstrate that various UK governments have tried to ignore human rights violations in Punjab to protect and promote UK's economic interests of trade and investment promotion in India. On the other hand, the pressure of human rights organisations on the UK parliamentarians has forced them to press the UK governments to take up seriously the violations of human rights in India. This central chapter ties the theoretical concerns of the book into the applied dimensions concerning India and Punjab. Chapters 4 and 5 delve deeper into the past and present of Punjab to understand the history and political economy of conflicts that have implications for human rights conditions in Punjab. Both chapters aim to capture the historical evolution of the political culture in Punjab. Chapter 6 deals in detail with the phenomenon of religious revivalism in Punjab which has been a source of intensified conflicts in Punjab in the recent decades. This chapter also explores a rather uncharted territory of examining the creative possibilities of alliance between religious humanism and the Left political tendencies in Punjab on one issue i.e. building sound foundations of a human rights oriented political culture in Punjab.

The penultimate chapter (Chapter 7) interrogates sectarianism and instrumentalism in the human rights praxis in Punjab. This chapter examines three movements in the post-colonial history of Punjab that were movements of armed challenge to the authority and power of the Indian state, and consequently resulted in massive violations of human rights in Punjab. These movements were: the Lal Communist Party led tenant struggle in the late 1940s and the early

1950s, the Maoist Naxalite movement of the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, and the Sikh militant movement of the 1980s and the mid-1990s. While appreciating the brave work of many human rights campaigners and organisations in Punjab, the author has provided a penetrating critique of instrumentalism and sectarianism in the approaches of Punjab's political parties, most human rights organisations and even professional groups- academics, lawyers, journalist and artists- to human rights violations that took place in Punjab during the period of these three armed struggle movements. This chapter completes the full circle of the argument of the book by concluding the debate about instrumentalism versus intrinsic worth of human rights, in which the author concludes by arguing for rejecting instrumentalism and for deepening the intrinsic worth towards human rights in ideas and practices concerning human rights.

This book provides a reflection on theoretical underpinnings of economy, culture and human rights by inter-linking them with examples of turbulence in Punjab, India and beyond. What is very appealing about this book is that, on the one hand, it is a serious theoretical exercise on human rights and would interest academics involved in human rights research but, on the other hand, it would be of deep interest to those involved in the human rights movements, who are interested not only in descriptive accounts of human rights violations but also in understanding the wider context of such violations, so as to be better equipped to struggle against those violations. There have been vast changes in the economy and politics of Punjab since the period which is discussed in this book, though the emerging dimensions of human rights violations, whether relating to agriculture, industry, labour, women, children or health and environment, can be very fruitfully studied and fought against by employing the methodology of this work, which highlights the conflicts between the politico-economic interests of the people in power and those who question their powers. It is a stimulating, challenging and, at times, disturbing read which provides some guiding principles for further studies and research and can warmly be recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

**Upneet Kaur Mangat**  
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J. Chima, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2010) xix + 314 pp. ISBN 978-81-321-0302-8 (hb) Rs 750.

It is fair to say that the issue of separatism, far from being a phenomenon afflicting fragile post-colonial societies solely, is actually something which can potentially erupt in any nation. Nevertheless, it can be said that states which consist of heterogeneous populations tend to be more prone towards experiencing, and perhaps ultimately succumbing to, secessionist activities –

though admittedly, it would be foolish to suggest that heterogeneity in itself was a sufficient factor to explain the rise of secessionism.

Frequently described as the 'most diverse country in the world', with its multiple linguistic, religious, caste and even racial cleavages, it is probably not surprising that India has to date endured a number of sub-nationalist movements since its independence in 1947. Jugdep Chima, in this book, focuses on one such movement, namely the Sikh nationalist struggle for Khalistan, which reached its zenith in the period from 1984-1992 and declined rapidly from 1993 onwards. Chima's contribution towards what is quite a narrow band of literature is particularly welcome because, rather than focusing simply upon the rise of the movement, he rather ambitiously also endeavours to explain its sustenance and decline. In order to achieve this end, Chima attempts to position human agency, or *patterns of political leadership* as he defines it, as central to understanding the nature and trajectory of this secessionist movement. This is a marked departure from the work of many other scholars who have generally attempted to explain the rise of the Khalistan movement by focusing on 'underlying structural factors' such as economic deprivation. Perhaps Chima's thesis, though interesting in its own right, could be accused of being slightly naïve, for it gives the impression that personality or elite behaviour somehow functions independently from underlying structural factors. Nevertheless, by focusing on *patterns of political leadership* in such depth, Chima displays a large degree of sophistication in appreciating the highly complex intra- and inter-group relations that existed behind the crudely drawn 'Sikh versus New Delhi' image of the conflict.

Overall this book is definitively a worthwhile read for anyone interested in Sikh politics, and could even be of interest to scholars simply interested in the field of sub-nationalism in general.

**Shyamal Kataria**

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Anjali Gera Roy, *Bhangra Moves: From Ludhiana to London and Beyond*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010 + 289 pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-5823-8 (hb) £60.00.

Anjali Gera Roy's ethnomusicological masterpiece *Bhangra Moves* presents a uniquely Indian vantage point on the phenomenon of bhangra. Bhangra is commonly understood as the hybrid music produced through mixing Punjabi folk elements with western pop and black dance rhythms, and it has been studied predominantly in a diasporized domain. In the 1990s and 2000s bhangra acquired an allure for white consumers, and its popularization under the patronizing terms of Asian Kool has been critiqued as an instance of musical production at the periphery being appropriated for the consumption of the core. However, as Gera Roy argues, "not much has been said about Bhangra's return

to India where it is caught up in quite different cultural battles” (p.3). To do this, she leads us through a rich and complex reading of bhangra in a global frame, drawing on poststructuralist and postcolonial theory. Her analysis is well-written and erudite as much as it is humorous. Her vibrant and fun writing style seems to mirror the genre, as she insists on bhangra as a foot-tapping musical form, “something that persuades through providing pleasure... to understand the linkage between *nachna-tapna* (dancing and jumping) and cultural identity” (p.26).

The ethnography starts off with the ‘return’ of diasporic bhangra mutants to Punjab, where traditionalists consider it “not bhangra at all”. Rather than offering a folkloric genealogy in terms of Punjabi harvest rituals, she shows that bhangra is an archetypal reinvented tradition, a postcolonial musical form that compressed the diverse dance forms of pre-partition Punjab (*jhummar, luddi, dhamal, sammi, gidha* etc), which were distinguished by gender, movement, region, function or context, into a single vigorous and manly amalgamation. She pinpoints the inception of bhangra as we know it to the performance of a nostalgic dance medley by students of Mahindra College in the early 1950s, which attracted the approval of the Maharaja of Patiala (p.56). Bhangra was therefore formalized through a collaboration of feudal and institutional interests in a postcolonial gesture of inventing Punjabi cultural identity or the *punjabiyat*. She then takes us through a series of encounters to narrate how it was that bhangra returned to India charged with diasporic subcultural capital.

The chapter on bhangra’s circulation in global commodity markets shows it to be the most successful instance of brand marketing in recent history. The Indian music industry, cashing in on bhangra’s success overseas, successfully placed bhangra as urban and diasporic as well as rustic, appealing to metropolitan youth as well as Punjabi truck drivers and *dukandars* throughout India. Importantly, she shows that bhangra’s cooption into Bollywood as a genre signifying family togetherness and earnest courtship as well as vulgar item number has appropriated the Punjabi ‘body-in-pleasure’ for the services of the entire nation. Similarly, the post-liberalization flourishing of TV channels from MTV to ETC Punjabi allowed Punjabi to rupture the hegemony of Hindi-Urdu in the national public sphere. She also recasts debates about exploitation and argues powerfully that “rather than a centralized world economy in which the production of the periphery is appropriated for the consumption of the core, the bhangra industry functions through an unconventional division of labour where performers, industry and media mutually coopt and cannibalize one another” (p.119). The consumption of bhangra on TV is important as this medium prefigures the performance aspects of bhangra. She moves beyond Brian Axel’s account of the centrality of the body in Sikh subjectivity through the Khalsa signifiers, and points out intersections with the Rajput *sardar* and the *jat* landowner which coalesce into a corporeal ideal of *lamba uchcha gabru* (robust and masculine). Thus, the iconic figure of Punjabi masculinity has moved from the fighting and laughing colonial Sikh body to the bleeding body post 1984 and



returned as the dancing bhangra body in the 1990s, and moreover, an aesthetic of 'body-in-pleasure' which the nation borrows through re-enacting its kinesics. Another important intervention is in her analysis of the *bolian* (lyrics), where she reverses the celebratory accounts in cultural studies concerning the boundary-effacing mixing of black and Punjabi lyrics British Asian dance music by showing how these moments of lyrical fusion actually accentuate cultural difference rather than similarity. Whilst she agrees that the bhangra trans-nation is open to Punjabis and non-Punjabis alike, and points to the ambiguity of the bodies of diasporic bhangra artists whose appearance defies categorisation as Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, she insists that the use of Punjabi *bolian* protects cultural interiority and allows the encoding of nostalgia for a primordial *punjabiya*.

In a book so rich in scholarly interventions it is hard to do justice to them all. Two questions that remained underexplored were why she neglects the possibility of female or queer performances of bhangra in her haste to see bhangra as an essentially masculine genre. We learn that the widespread perception of *giddha* as the female dance form to bhangra's male dance form is wrong, but the book stops short of any further comment. It would also have been helpful to have a more sustained analysis of how it is that bhangra has been reinvented as the patrimony of Punjabi Sikhs at the expense of Hindus and Muslims, and of the different postcolonial history of bhangra in Pakistan and its diaspora. The big ethnomusicological intervention may be her delineation of three different modes of bhangra which come out of this return – *punjabibhangra*, *desibhangra* and *vilayetibhangra*, domains respectively presided over by Gurdas Mann, Malkit Singh and Daler Mehndi (p.49-101). For Punjab studies, it is probably her masterful exposition of the contemporary 'bhangrascape', using the metaphor of the five rivers and their capillaries to "subvert global hegemonies by altering the relations between diasporas and homelands, the global and local music industry, cosmopolitans and locals, and producers and consumers to provide new virtual communities in which marginalized rusticity is valorized" (p.12).

**Kaveri Qureshi,**  
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Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan: Perspectives on Community, Land, and Economy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010) xix + 475 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-547723-8 (hb) Rs.1295.

In 1949, Zekiye Eglar arrived in Pakistan to embark upon a project that would become the first of its kind; an ethnographic account of life in a Punjabi village in the newly created state. Eglar would spend the next five years in Mohla, a village in the Gujrat District, where she would learn Punjabi and work closely with Fazal Ahmed Chowdhry, the head of the village and an American-educated

artist, in order to more deeply embed herself within the everyday dynamics of rural life. First published in 1960, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*, would quickly come to assume the status of a seminal text in a field that had, until then, been crowded by colonial treatises written for the District Gazetteers and the erstwhile Board of Economic Inquiry.

In addition to the original text, this new edition of *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* also includes a second book, *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village*, a previously unpublished manuscript that was prepared by Eglar as a sequel to her original work on Mohla. The two books are accompanied by an Introduction, an Epilogue, and a short but deeply interesting biography of Zekiye Eglar, all of which have been written by Beena Sarwar with some assistance from Fazal Ahmed Chowdhry, Eglar's companion and principal informant during her stay in Pakistan. The Introduction to the two books provides a brief summary of the contents while also outlining the significance of the texts not only as pioneering works when they were first written, but also as guides for subsequent work in this area. In this context, it is possible to see how, despite the passage of five decades since it was first published, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* retains some relevance for those interested in the dynamics of rural life in the Punjabi countryside.

The first book is split into two substantive sections. Through successive chapters, the first of these sections provides an account of the village and its inhabitants, focusing in particular on questions of *biraderi*, kinship, and the rhythms of rural life. Here, despite the richness of the ethnographic detail presented by Eglar, the narrative remains largely descriptive, seldom delving into a more detailed analysis of what is being observed. This is perhaps most evident in Eglar's discussions of *biraderi* and *seyp* labour, both of which she sees as being key to the social and economic stratification of the village populace. *Seyp* was a long-term, contractual between landlord and artisan, or between artisans, with the former providing payment in kind for services rendered by the latter.

For Eglar, *biraderi* is an important marker of group identity and status which also serves to underpin the occupational segregation that underpins the interdependent village economy. However, the potential for *biraderi* and the *seyp* relationship to impede social mobility, and to serve as the basis for economic exploitation in the guise of interdependence, remains largely unexplored. Hamza Alavi and Saghir Ahmad (and later, Shahnaz Rouse), writing soon after *A Punjabi Village* was published, would provide a more critical examination of this question, noting the economic and political implications of the traditional rural hierarchy in Punjab. In this sense, Eglar's omission of any discussion of politics in the village is also curious; by the time Eglar left Mohla in 1955, elections to both the Provincial Assembly and District Boards had taken place in Punjab. While these events would have presumably had some impact on life in the village, no mention is made of them, or of the way in which they may have shed light on power dynamics within the village.

In contrast with the first section of the book, the second section, devoted almost entirely to *vartan bhanji*, the ritualized and reciprocal exchange of gifts

between households, provides for a much more rewarding read. Tracing out first exactly what *vartan bhanji* is, and then how it is put into practice, Eglar's focus shifts towards the primary role played by women in the ritual; despite being used to strengthen bonds of kinship and economic exchange, it is women who undertake the responsibilities of the ritual, and play a key part in facilitating it. As argued by Eglar, this is all the more important when bearing in mind that this ritual exchange of gifts contributes strongly towards sustaining and reinforcing the interdependent system of social and economic relationships in Mohla. Eglar's emphasis on women and *vartan bhanji*, which illuminates the often overlooked yet multifaceted nature of female participation in rural public life, is echoed by other observations made in the book. Far from performing purely passive roles within the confines of their homes, Eglar finds the women of Mohla to be deeply involved in the management of their households, and in the processes of agriculture, commodity production and exchange.

A *Punjabi Village* ends with a chapter on Mohla in a changing world, in which Eglar documents the way in which many of her findings, particularly with regards to economic production and interdependence, would potentially be transformed by the impact of agrarian reform and urbanization. To an extent, *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village* represented an attempt to set the context for these changes, providing a more exhaustive account of economic relations in the village prior to the reforms. In this respect, as well as revisiting some of the material presented in the first book, the second also shares some of the first's deficiencies. Eglar begins the book with a few chapters devoted to the history, social organization, and demographics of the village, before moving on to descriptions of land ownership patterns and agriculture. As was the case in the first Punjab, Eglar brings a considerable amount of detail to bear on her account, documenting the roles and position of individual families and groups in the entire production process. This is best demonstrated by the chapter on Khushi, a tenant farmer whose work and economic decisions are used to provide a description of economic life, as well as the constraints faced by individual villagers. Thus, while a discussion of exploitation and domination is still lacking, Eglar nonetheless acknowledges, and shows, that the inequitable access to land and surplus does limit the potential for social mobility. Alongside the chapters on agriculture and production, Eglar also includes three chapters on the role of cattle in Mohla. The prima facie incongruity of this inclusion is quickly cleared up when understanding Eglar's interest in livestock; in addition to providing milk and horsepower, cattle also help to regulate the rhythm of village life, and inform the barter relationship between different individuals and groups.

In her Epilogue to both books, Beena Sarwar revisits Mohla and attempts to document the changes that have taken place there since Eglar did her fieldwork in the 1950s. Mohla in 2008 is, according to Sarwar, radically different from the village that Eglar visited. In addition to being much more heavily populated than before, Mohla is now virtually a suburb of the city of Gujrat, linked as it is to that city, as well as Punjab's other major urban centres, by a road network that

had simply not existed in Eglar's time. Increased urban linkages have brought economic opportunity to Mohla which, coupled with the remittances from migrant workers in the Gulf, have allowed the village to experience a considerable degree of prosperity. Significantly, the occupational stratification, artisanal commodity production and *seyp* relationships that Eglar observed have all but disappeared, replaced by wage labour and industry. Unsurprisingly, *vartan bhanji* continues to exist in a vestigial form at best, having declined in importance as the interdependent village economy disappeared. Although the general picture that is painted of contemporary Mohla is one of progress, it is clear that this is due in no small part to the village's propitious proximity to a reasonably large hub of urban economic activity. In the more rural parts of Punjab, where mechanized agriculture and increasingly skewed landownership patterns continue to shape the agrarian economy, it is possible to see the breakdown of the social relationships that Eglar documented without the benefit of the growth witnessed in Mohla.

*A Punjabi Village* therefore remains an important text, not only because of its richly detailed account of life in rural Punjab, but also because of the insights it gives us into the extent, and effect, of the change that has since taken place in the province. The inclusion of *The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village* in this new edition provides additional information on the economy of Mohla that partially addresses some of the shortcomings of the original volume. Furthermore, Eglar's work on *vartan bhanji*, and the centrality of women to the social and economic life of Mohla, continues to serve as a vital contribution to our understanding of gender roles in a Punjabi village. The book remains a necessary read for those interested in ethnography, and the socio-economic dynamics of rural Punjab.

### **Hassan Javid**

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Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo! The Hidden Culture of a Red Light Area*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011 2<sup>nd</sup> (ed) + 336 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-906279-9 (pb) Rs595.

This new edition of *Taboo!* marks ten years since the book was first published, and it has been supplemented by an epilogue from the author, reflecting on the book's reception as a cult phenomenon. The *shahi mohalla* red light district of Lahore is iconic, and has been explored in two other monograph-length works since *Taboo!* was published: Feryal Ali Gauhar's (2002) *The Scent of Wet Earth in August* and Louise Brown's (2005) *The Dancing Girls of Lahore*, both of which are characterised by a blend of ethnographic observation and fictionalized narrative. In a recent critical essay, Kamran Asdar Ali (2005) questions the fascination that the figure of the *tawaif* or courtesan holds for South Asian viewing and reading publics, as a stock character in countless morality tales that abound on screen and in pulp and highbrow fiction. He asks why there has been

such a proliferation of works on the life-world of the prostitute, by the liberal intelligentsia as well as the media. What is the nature of the debate on morality, sexuality and gender politics taking place through the figure of the courtesan, where extra-marital sex remains a crime against the state and where memories of severe punishment for sexual liaisons under the Hudood Ordinance of the Zia era in the 1980s still resonate among the public?

Fouzia Saeed's book captures explicitly this mixture of liberal, feminist impulse with the titillation that the figure of the prostitute produces in Pakistan, and the production of the book – with its photographs of dancing girls with their calves strung with bells, men showering money over dancing girls and prostitutes at their doorsteps waiting for clients – accentuates this effect. The topics discussed in the text range from the political life of the *mohalla*, police abuse, rivalries and interdependencies between musicians and *kanjars* [the pimp/prostitute caste], competition from prostitutes outside the *kanjar* caste of the *mohalla*, the aspirations of young girls to become film stars, to tangled family relationships, generational gaps and anxieties over 'getting their daughters married'. She attends to the *mohalla*'s internal discourses of lamenting the decline from the noble stock of *tawaif*, which is reflected the *nawab* clientele being replaced by common men off the street who are more interested in prostitution than courtly dance and recital. Saeed stamps over these stories the message that women of the *shahi mohalla* are not so different from their counterparts in the larger respectable society.

However, this objective is hamstrung by her persistent exotifying of the women of the *mohalla* through the narrative style she adopts. In *Taboo!* we find the author struggling with her positionality between an academic, a fiction writer and an activist. As an activist, she claims "my book is about eliminating the social stigma associated with women in this profession" (p.xxi). She declares that a "straight academic treatment of this subject would not be a good way to achieve this objective" (p.xix), yet she sounds like a positivist ethnographer when she says "I show these people as they are" (p.xix). She is also a feminist researcher who wants to be visible in her work. Towards the end, and especially in the epilogue to the new edition, the author goes into scholarly mode as she tries to develop her theory of 'good women' and 'bad women' and the politics of morality. Of the many stories that run parallel in the book one is of Saeed's transformation from a curious visitor at a *kotha* to a myth-buster, an international expert and consultant on gender issues in Pakistan, and, of course, celebrity author of *Taboo!* She vividly describes how her journey as a woman was fraught with disapproval from family and friends, how her colleagues at Lok Virsa turned against her because they did not like her work, and how she was intimidated by police for carrying out fieldwork in the *mohalla*. Once she overcame these difficulties, she not only managed to win over her family and friends but also started confiding in them her field findings—the 'juicy stories' that they seem to have anticipated from her fieldwork. At one point she tours American visitors around the *mohalla* with a group of her urban cousins who

covered their faces with *dupattas* to avoid being seen in the *mohalla* by future husband and in-laws. The visitors seem to have thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of being so close to these forbidden women and actually being able to touch them “as if they were objects” (p.86). At personal level, Saeed hardly speaks about her anxieties, internal struggles, and the transformations during the course of this journey from a lay observer to a ‘feminist researcher’ of prostitution. In other words, it appears as if she renders herself visible to the reader only to the extent that she is “a PhD girl in the red light area” (p.13). A careful reading, however, would suggest that unlike some ethnographies which strive to give voice to the people they study, in *Taboo!* it’s Saeed who speaks through her respondents rather than vice versa. So, readers should not be puzzled when they find a respondent presenting academically coherent and theoretically informed arguments favouring of women’s empowerment or lamenting patriarchy.

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#### **Ayaz A. Qureshi,**

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P. Panayi *Collapse and Forced Migration in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) xxvii + 305 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-22747-7 (hb) £55.00.

Though there exist a multitude of reasons for how and why a given populace becomes forcibly exiled, this edited volume attempts to advance an underlying linkage between imperial collapse and refugee creation. Such a connection seems perfectly plausible, for history is testimony to the fact that the much of the adverse humanitarian consequences associated with imperial rule manifests itself not so much during periods of strength (i.e. when empires have consolidated their territorial gains and developed structured relations with their subjects) but rather during periods of expansion and contraction. Moreover the humanitarian consequences of imperial collapse seldom fall upon its subjects, or former subjects, equally. Rather, as this volume makes abundantly apparent, it is often the case that certain groups or communities have tended to suffer more than others as a result.

Despite choosing to focus its attention exclusively on the twentieth century, this book can hardly be accused of lacking breadth. The earlier chapters shed light on the collapse of two grand empires as a result of World War I, namely the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman, with Thorpe focusing on the former, and Chatty and Rowe paying attention to the latter. There are also some extremely

well researched contributions from Panayi, Talbot, Levene and Frank, which offer a refreshing comparative dimension to the literature on refugee studies. This book also includes a collection of chapters, by Virdee, Chattha, Sen and Robertson concentrating on the end of British colonial rule in India and Uganda, in terms of its direct and indirect consequences. In this latter section, Virdee's chapter 'No Home but in Memory' is a particularly fascinating read, not least because it offers an oral history take on both sides of divided Punjab, Indian and Pakistani.

The main objective of this volume was to explain how and why forced migration was so inextricably linked to imperial collapse and undoubtedly, through the range of contributions made by the various authors, it has more than achieved this. It is evident to the reader that aggressive forms of nationalism tend to emerge in support, or indeed in opposition, to collapsing or collapsed empires. As such, when these groups manage to articulate territorial claims, owing to the gaping power vacuum left behind by imperial collapse, there exists an underlying compulsion to 'naturalise' the link between this demarcated space and its national populace. This inevitably leads to minority groups within such territories becoming increasingly vulnerable to persecution and forced exile.

Overall, owing to the comparative nature, and also area specific focus, of this volume, it constitutes a 'must have' for any student of refugee studies, or indeed anyone studying the last days, and legacies, of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, and of course the impact of British departure from the Indian-subcontinent.

### **Shyamal Kataria**

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Ali Nobil Ahmad, *Masculinity, Sexuality and Illegal Migration: Human Smuggling from Pakistan to Europe*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011 + 215 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-0975-5 (hb) £55.00.

Ali Nobil Ahmad's monograph offers far-reaching critiques of orthodox migration studies. This is a literature that was for a long time fixated with economic push-and-pull explanations. Of late, it has been dominated by social networks and transnationalism, frameworks which disqualify questions about the causes or consequences of migration in favour of understanding its intermediary processes. In contrast, Ahmad takes seriously what has been called 'migration culture', setting out a new and original theoretical model that sheds light on why so many thousands of young men from Pakistani Punjab have set out in the last decades for an increasingly perilous journey across central Asia to the West.

The book is based on detailed life histories. There are three main pools of interviews: with post-war old-timers in East London; with recent illegal migrants in London, namely 'freshies'; and with illegal migrants in Florence, Italy. These are supplemented with updated interviews from Lahore and Peshawar, including

encounters with smugglers and deportees. These sites allow him to make comparisons across historical regimes of migration, labour and welfare, as well as across spaces located differently in transit routes and final destinations. All of his informants are men, a point which is significant for the analysis that follows. His data are intimate and sustained, which is itself a considerable achievement given the level of familiarity needed for an illegal migrant to speak trustingly about his situation.

Of the many interventions laid out in the book, three stand out as particularly important. First, the notion that men are sent overseas to improve their families' lot is set upside-down. Probing the recesses of their memories, and offering explanations seldom heard in migration studies, the old-timers explain that their decision to migrate was often undertaken in the face of parental opposition and, even more often, pleas from their spouses that they should not go. If the impetus was not the family, what was it then? Ahmad spells out the importance of influences outside family and household, prising open the working of homosociality, male friendship and networks of class-fellows, colleagues and neighbourhood in which speculative gossip circulated about the prosperity of those who went abroad. These old-timers, now grey-bearded patriarchs and respectable members of mosque committees, were moved by a sense of adventure and exploration, a desire to see the colonial metropole for themselves rather than experiencing it second-hand. More interesting, from the perspective of recent postcolonial theory exploring race and desire, is their curiosity about white people and freedom, which Ahmad relates to the men's experiences of chilling out with bourgeois white youths enjoying hash-hazed years on the hippy trail. The England-returnees returned to their villages to display themselves in starched white *salwar kamiz* and gold watches, and were described as having turned white in their skin colour too. Ahmad sees their white clothes, gold watches and disposable cash as sperm-like, circulating fetishes of male potency.

These themes endure in his interviews with freshies too. Not only did they often leave without their families' knowledge, or coerce their families into paying to have them smuggled, by using outbursts of *zid* and *nakhra*, but some even talk about desiring to be free from their families, no matter what happened to them when they went abroad. Ahmad locates this desire in growing up in a repressive culture offering few opportunities for sexual exploration. They wanted to go abroad and do *aiashi*. Mess around, and mess around with girls. These dynamics are no doubt significant in Indian Punjabi migration too.

Ahmad understands these drives through George Bataille, whose lurid work centred on "the disavowed extremes of human experience, and the way these are grounded in economies of expenditure and erotic desire" (p.33). Bataille offers a 'strangely ethical vision' helping to theorize that "human needs defy the logic of utilitarianism – to engage in costly and often ruinous risks" (p.36). As well as making sense of the erotic undertones in the men's migration stories, it also helps to comprehend their journeys through Europe and its economies. This brings us to the second important intervention: understanding illegal migration. Bataille



distinguishes between restrictive and general economies. Europe's restrictive economy generates booms and busts that have produced a flow of migrants so excessive that labour demand bears no relation to labour supply. This excess is "siphoned off, wasted and diverted elsewhere as deemed fit by core, rich countries" (p.5) and periodically expelled out of its bowels through raids on illegal migrants, arrests, deportation, and repatriation into the clutches of the FIA. Illegal migration, which Ahmad shows to have been present but unanalysed in earlier post-war Commonwealth migration, is a giddy, vertiginous endeavour of death-like risk-taking. He offers gut-wrenching reflections on the Mediterranean, which swallows brown bodies on banana boats into its belly and spits them out as bobbing corpses, and on oversight by border authorities, which tacitly permit migrant bodies-that-don't-matter to cross in suffocating lorries and car boots, or treacherous routes by foot and in the hands of unscrupulous agents, to feed Europe's low-pay economies.

His third intervention is to point to the importance of timing in differentiating migrant experience in Europe's economies. The old-timers, who arrived in time to enjoy the favourable capital-labour relations under the Fordist regimes of the 1970s, were haunted by a myth of return and an unfulfilled desire to sojourn in England and go back to Pakistan. By contrast, the freshies work in a precarious, flexible, new economy and are haunted, rather, by a myth of arrival – never managing to quite get themselves established, eking out a livelihood of perennial insecurity, never sure when they might be picked up by the authorities and sent back, never able to call over their spouses and enjoy the privileges of reproductive life. Moreover, they are exploited by the old-timers who came before them. Social networks are shown here cannibalizing themselves, rather than generating value and capital.

The book is not as informative as it might have been on the sending contexts in Punjab. In particular, we learn little about why Gujrat, Gujranwala and Mandi Bahuddin have the highest rates of human smuggling to Europe, although other work suggests that the capture of the police and other state institutions and the proliferation of firearm-holding by exploitative landlords with a brazen disregard for human life might be important contributing factors in these districts. The *biradari* dimensions of emigration are also not explored, though Christine Moliner has suggested that the domination of migrant networks by Jats means that lower castes are more likely to get stuck on mainland Europe and fail to make the final journey over the English Channel. Ahmad's representation of Pakistani culture as sexually repressive is a bit stylized and could have benefited from a more nuanced literature, for example Thomas Walle, Filippo and Caroline Osella or Mark Liechty. However, it is very strong on human smuggling, travel, transit and the new migrant economies in Europe, and offers richer analysis of any of these areas than any other work I can think of.

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Roger Connah, *The Rest is Silence: Zahoor ul Akhlaq. Art and Society in Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), xvii + 390pp, ISBN 978-0-19-547472-5 (hb), Pak Rs. 2,000.

As thousands of visitors make their way to the Asia Triennial Manchester, Pakistani artists Adeela Suleman (1970- ) and Rashid Rana (1968- ) play a leading role respectively in the local Cathedral and at the Cornerhouse. Their outstanding creativity and exceptional ability to project the anxieties and the rich tapestry of their cultural, political and social context into their art allow them to be a success with critics. Back in 2006 the same city hosted *Beyond the Page: Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, an exhibition where Zahoor ul-Akhlaq (1941-1999), versatile artist whose works resonate in both Suleman and Rana's art, got a further chance to shine as the father of Pakistani art. Roger Connah, in his recent *The Rest is Silence: Zahoor ul Akhlaq. Art and Society in Pakistan*, embarks on the first-ever attempt to make accessible to a wider audience the life of a painter, designer and sculptor that is at the root of contemporary art in independent Pakistan.

Any attempt to summarise Connah's book fails to grasp and explain its complex and multi-faceted analysis of Zahoor ul-Akhlaq's oeuvre and personality. A journey into the biographer's discovery of Pakistan and the artist and into the artist's mind and cultural context, *The Rest is Silence* drags its reader into a fierce battle of the senses rather than into a mainstream academic analysis on the Pakistani painter's painter. Indeed, its pages echo the notes and rhythms of Nusrat Fateh Ali's *qawwalis*, smell of the pungent and spicy aroma of Pakistani dishes, and smear the dust of the hundreds of documents that Connah found in Akhlaq's studio over readers' fingerprints. Despite its three-book structure (1. Fragments from a Critical Life; 2. Critical Fictions; 3. Strange history), the biography shapes as a *sui generis* interior monologue that hides a sophisticated interwoven three-level plot and narrative framework. First, Zahoor ul-Akhlaq emerges here as the epitome of Pakistani history. Born in a family that had fled from India in the wake of Independence in 1947, he underwent the estrangement of the Pakistani Diaspora in North America and the United Kingdom and soothed his nostalgia away only through his return to his homeland. An emotional description of his mood and inner feelings mirrors the words of Ardeshir Cowasjee's obituary and depicts Akhlaq as "a man of words, pacifist, the gentlest man imaginable who could probably not even swat a fly [...] [a] close and most reliably unreliable friend" (Cowasjee, 1999). Secondly, as he intermingles private events with public ones, Connah gives voice to the memories of some of the hundreds of students that squeezed in Akhlaq's classes at the National College of Arts, Lahore, his colleagues, friends and simple acquaintances. It is in those tiny spaces where public and private interact that the reader finds the ethos of Akhlaq's art and, in the last resort, the biography itself:

“a constant dialogue, a constant discourse, constant action and constant self-analysis” (p. 304). By digging into the records of these multiple conversations, the author finally examines in detail the aesthetic, philosophical and artistic foundations that underpin Akhlaq’s oeuvre. Indeed, Cubism, the Bauhaus art, Paul Klee, Islamic calligraphy, Mughal miniatures, Georg F. W. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Jacob Burckhardt or John P. Berger – just to quote a few of them – come into question and substantiate all the images that are disseminated across the whole book and in the final appendix/portfolio.

*The Rest is Silence* is an engaging and interesting biography that merges history with art, personal stories with world events and narration with paintings and sculptures. Unfortunately, the quality of the images that are reproduced all throughout the book does not do justice to Akhlaq’s chromatic choices, expressivity and sinuous or geometric shapes. The book will be a particular boon to general readers and informed researchers that want to explore the twists and turns of one of the finest minds of Pakistani art and to engage in a learned analysis of the creative background that informs all the emerging local artists.

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