

Hugh J. M. Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014 2nd (Expanded and Fully Revised Edition) xiv + 254 pp. ISBN 978-0-7748-2548-1 (pb) \$29.95 (CDN), 978-0-7748-2550-4 (epub).

Those familiar with the history of Sikh migration or with Canadian immigration history in the first decades of the twentieth century will know well the story of the *Komagata Maru*. For more than a quarter century, Hugh Johnston's *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Oxford 1979; UBC Press 1989) has been the go-to book on the subject. In 2014, Johnston published an expanded and fully revised edition of this classic to commemorate the centenary anniversary of the *Komagata Maru*. The chapters in the new edition have been thoroughly and completely rewritten and much new material has been added, including a preface, postscript, and one entirely new chapter. At 254 pages, the expanded edition is more than 50% larger than its predecessors. The number of illustrations too has been increased from four photographs taken exclusively from the Vancouver public archives to twenty photographs, including three personal photographs from the Kapoor Singh Sidhoo family. In short, this is not the same book.

One of the strongest features of the book is Johnston's attention to biographical detail. Not only does Johnston elaborate and expand upon the lives of the usual suspects (such as Malcolm Reid, W. C. Hopkinson, H.H. Stevens, Edward Bird, Har Dayal, Husain Rahim, Bhag Singh, and Balwant Singh) but integrates into the narrative personalities more peripheral to the immediate events (such as Taraknath Das, Guran Dita Kumar, Teja Singh, Dr. Sundar Singh, Bhagwan Singh Jakh, Behari Lal Verma, Arjan Singh, as well as others). Such attention to biographical detail brings to the fore a richness of experience that goes beyond what less detailed accounts of the event might suggest. Johnston's sagacious concern for including hitherto overlooked biographical details of many of the personalities involved provides the reader with a nuanced account of the competing frames of reference and experience at work in this iconic episode of Indo-Canadian history.

A second key feature of this revised edition is the judicious care Johnston has taken to contextualize the conditions leading up to and surrounding the *Komagata Maru*. The opening chapters of the book succinctly, yet masterfully, foreground the confluence of empire, Canadian immigration policy, and individual personalities. The *Introduction* sketches the prevailing conditions of empire and migration at the turn of the twentieth century, and the circumstances in which South Asian migrants to Canada found themselves. Chapter 1: *A Hidden Policy* documents the Canadian government's attempts to manage Asian immigration against the backdrop of increasing number of migrants of south Asian decent arriving in Vancouver in the first decade of the twentieth century. The newly added Chapter 2: *A Political Awakening* offers the perhaps the most robust account available of the personalities and the local historical antecedents that go on to shape the trajectory of events in Vancouver (and beyond) in the summer of 1914.

Johnston's combination of biographical detail and broad historical contextualization brings together macro and micro histories. In doing so, he effectively unsettles 'caricatured' accounts and simplistic understandings of not just the events surrounding the *Komagata Maru*, but raises important questions relating to such ideas as empire, justice, citizenship, pluralism, and belonging. Johnston's macro-micro approach further helps to disclose the complexities of the relationships between the parties and personalities involved. As Johnston shows, these dialogic relationships were made all the more complex by various fault lines not only as between the 'key players' (i.e. the City of Vancouver and the passengers aboard the *Komagata Maru*) but as within the many groups involved (e.g. Punjabis living ashore in predominately white Vancouver, the politicized divisions within the shore committee, Caucasian Edward Bird defending Punjabi passengers, and so on).

The scope and thoroughness of *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru* offers more than a history of migration. It also represents a sophisticated case study of Punjabi transnationalism in all its complexity. It delineates the flow of persons, ideas, and money across not only numerous national borders (Canada, Britain, the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, and India), but across local boundaries - physical, social, and imagined. Johnston's account of the *Komagata Maru* eloquently illustrates the flows and disjunctures (in the words of Arjun Appadurai) of local, national, and international interests and imaginaries.

Structurally, the chapter titles from the earlier editions have been largely preserved, though the content of each chapter has been significantly reworked. Chapter 3: *Encouragement: Disputing the Law Successfully* addresses four developments: the arrival of the *SS Panama Maru* and the favourable legal decision which permitted thirty eight Sikhs aboard to land despite arriving indirectly on more than one ticket from port to port), the "extraordinary and arbitrary" deportation of Indian nationalist Bhagwan Singh Jakh, expansion of Hopkinson's surveillance role into the US, and the increased anti-Asian lobby in Vancouver's immigration office itself (38). *Departure: A Punjabi Immigrant ship from Hong Kong* documents Gurdit Singh Sirhali's chartering of the *Komagata Maru* and offers some insight into the demographics of its passengers. The manoeuvrings of Malcolm Reid and W.C. Hopkinson to detain the ship, the hiring of Edward Bird as counsel for the ship's passengers, and the politicking involved in providing for the passengers aboard the ship are the subjects of Chapter 5: *Arrival: Stopped at Canada's Gateway*. Chapter 6: *Delay: Stalling by Officials* takes a transnational turn in its detailing the transfer of the ship's charter from its Japanese holders to the shore committee. Chapter 7: *The Court of Appeal: Canada's Policy Upheld* relates the failed test case of Munshi Singh. The "famously farcical, yet hazardous, battle between an unprepared and overconfident boarding party and an organized, motivated mass of passengers" (120) is recounted and analyzed in *Force: The Police Repulsed*, while Chapter 9 navigates the politicking around the decision to call out the *SS Rainbow* against the *Komagata Maru* and its passengers. Chapter 10: *Return: A Tragic Homecoming* sifts through the growing perception by authorities of the ships' passengers as Gadharites and the subsequent violence visited upon the

passengers at the Indian port of Budge Budge. *Arrest and Detention: The Aftermath of the Budge Budge Riot* records in detail the search for fugitive passengers, their subsequent arrests, and in several cases their execution by the state. Chapter 12 follows Gurdit Singh's engagement with the nationalist political manoeuvrings of the Congress Party all the while living *in cognito*. The chapter further takes up Gurdit Singh's arrest (1922), five-year prison sentence for sedition, and release, whereupon he publically advocated for a memorial for those passengers who died during the Budge Budge riots. In Chapter 13, Johnston returns to Canada to record the exodus of many Gadharites from the west coast, the assassination of W.C. Hopkinson in August 1914, and the murders of Arjan Singh and Bhag Singh. The volume concludes with a *Postscript: After the Komagata Maru* which surveys the persistence and overall success of the Sikh community in Canada.

The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar offers the reader the experience of 25 years of further research and reflection on the subject by the author since the last edition. Johnston offers a lucid and cogent presentation that brings to life a series of deeply complex human events, both tragic and triumphant. This book is must reading for those new to Sikh and Punjab Studies. Those who have read earlier editions of this work would be remiss if they not take this opportunity to rediscover an old story told anew.

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Katy P. Sian, *Unsettling Sikh and Muslim Conflict: Mistaken Identities, False Conversions, and Postcolonial Formations*, (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013 +135 pp. ISBN 978-0-7391-7874-4 (hb) £34.95.

Katy Sian's book on conflict between British Sikhs and Muslims is an important scholarly intervention in a field largely constituted by journalistic, sensational and partisan accounts. The existence of conflict between British Sikhs and Muslims may come as a surprise to some readers (as it evidently did to the Muslim participants of an 'inter-faith dialogue' convened for Sikhs and Muslims, see Mughal 2009). The heart of this conflict lies in rumours of sexual 'grooming' and 'forced conversions' of Sikh girls at the hands of predatory Muslim men. Following the scandalous Pakistani Muslim grooming ring that was exposed in Rochdale in 2012, these stories have been given credence by the police and the BBC, as evinced by a September 2013 edition of *Inside Out London* on the grooming of Sikh girls. However, Sian insists these claims should not be taken at face value. She states that in fact, there is no police evidence of targeted grooming of Sikh girls (pp.55-6, 95-6). How can we make sense of the wide circulation of these stories, then, and of their centrality in Sikh identity discourses?

To answer these questions, Sian deftly leads the reader through readings in poststructural and postcolonial theory to give a sophisticated antifoundationalist exposition of this discourse, as well as an analysis of Sikh Islamophobia and proposals for how to confront it. Chapter one sets the terms for an antifoundationalist reading of Sikh identity, rejecting definitions based on religion or race. She proposes that Sikhs should be re-conceptualized as a postcolonial people and crucially as a *political* formation, emphasising the continual coming-into-being of Sikh identity. In chapter two, she reviews literature on postcolonial diasporas and concludes that British Sikhs and Muslims share a similar diasporic condition, simultaneously national and antinational. If this is the case, then why should Sikhs be so heavily invested in distinguishing themselves from Muslims? Chapter three begins to answer this question, drawing on her corpus of interview data with British Sikhs and showing how the accounts invoke histories of Mughal tyranny, Partition violence and Operation Bluestar in 1984 to identify Muslims as a perennial threat. However, in chapter four, she critiques such primordialist explanations of Sikh-Muslim conflict. Her own analysis derives from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), for whom conflict is not like the collision of two objects or groups but rather “necessitates a change in the subjectivity of the two opposing groupings as a result of the conflict itself” (p.48). Moreover, “antagonism refers to a situation in which the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself” (p.49). Following their theoretical line, Sian argues that Sikh-Muslim conflict in Britain is “more about the construction of Sikh identity than about the actual conflict with Muslims itself” (p.49).

Chapter five looks in more depth at the ‘forced conversion’ narratives which she argues are hegemonic among British Sikhs, which she sees as similar to nineteenth century ‘white slavery’ narratives in casting young women’s bodies as the markers of communal transgression. Chapter six looks at the centrality of the diasporic condition to this particular articulation of Sikh identity, “the displacement of Sikhs open[ing] up a requirement to both restitch and reimagine the Sikh community once again” (p.79). Chapter seven looks at the British multicultural post-9/11 context, in which the fear and denigration of British Muslims has called into being the colonized formation of the Sikh ‘model minority’. For Sian, the ‘forced conversion’ narrative is a cautionary tale that provides British Sikhs an ‘evil villain’ with which to disidentify, and also polices the behaviour of young Sikh women, whose growing agency and independence threatens the integrity of the community. In chapter eight, she argues that this is an instance of Islamophobia, which should be understood, following Bobby Sayyid (2003), not as an ‘unfounded hostility’ towards Muslims but “as a means of articulating the aspirations of a Western identity through their exclusion and dismissal of the ‘non-Western’, that is, the Muslim subject” (p.102). In chapter nine, she proposes a wholesale decolonization of British Sikhs, implying “the construction of a Sikh subject position that is not [seen as] inherently regressive or inherently progressive... [but] a means of elaborating Sikhness in its own terms” (p.113).

Sian refrains from presenting her data with any ethnographic particularity, talking about it as a 'linguistic corpus' (p.3) and omitting details about the identity of the speaker or the situations in which they uttered the words they are quoted. This lack of specification of the discourse raises some questions. Who is it that talks about this conflict, exactly, and in doing so brings it into being? Is it the young men whose involvement in 'gang warfare' raises concerns among journalistic commentators, or is it the old-timer patriarchs as she sometimes suggests (p.47, pp.94-6)? If within the discourse it is Pakistani Muslims who are the object of disidentification rather than Muslims in general (p.55), does this ethnic particularity complicate our understanding of the conflict? How does the discourse connect to Sikh ethno-nationalism, given that hostility not only to Muslims but also to Hindus has been found to be a major element of Sikh ethno-nationalist discourses (Das 1992, Moliner 2007)? To what extent do the young women she spoke to ascribe to this discourse, or do they challenge the way they are represented-for (pp.66-7)? These questions aside, the central insight of this well-written book is extremely powerful. In Britain today, where divisions among ethnic-religious minorities are being officially endorsed by prime-time BBC documentaries, I hope that Sian's work finds a wide readership.

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Rainuka Dagar, *Gender, Identity and Violence: Female Deselection in India*, (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014) 324pp. Rs. 795 (hb). ISBN 9781138020283.

Gender, Identity and Violence: Female Deselection in India by Rainuka Dagar is a seminal exploration of gender as an influence on survival and the position of

women in society. It is a well researched treatise which examines the issue in a historical context underpinned by interpretive epistemology. In the author's own view, the use of interpretive epistemology enables her to take a holistic view of the subject and explore the underlying connections. She is able to interpret gender relations as they are perceived and experienced by people and organizations in society, rather than only as perceived by the social researcher.

In the first part of her work Dagar has provided a fairly nuanced understanding of the role of gender as an influence on child survival. She has argued that child negation through gender targeting is a practice which has been observed through eons of history. The author has explored in detail how the social composition of children is affected by gender in different socio economic contexts. Gender relations have been examined by citing two conflicting examples of male and female infanticide. Male infanticide was a common practice in matrifamilial societies, where clan formation was based on common blood and children were traced to a common mother. In such societies male infanticide of the first born son was a common practice through which the "blood debt" of a father changed alliance to his begotten children and wife from that of his blood related sister and her children. With the advent of patriarchal social formations, however, the practice of male infanticide was abandoned and female infanticide came into practice. The author notes that the two practices differed significantly. While male infanticide stemmed from the notion of sacrifice, females were silently annihilated "without shedding of blood" in societies where males were considered as worthy assets and females as a burden. While this is a fascinating interpretation, the historical context could have been made more insightful for the reader, had the author traced the periods in history of the emergence of these social formations and what led to the transformation from matrifamilial societies to patriarchal societies.

The second section of the book explores the historical construct of Punjab as a peasant society, which was war ravaged and faced by external aggression at many times in history. The historical developments in the region led to the formation of Sikhs as a martial race and were one of the fundamental contributors to the culture of son preference in the region and establishing an entrenched patriarchal system. Subsequent developments in the region, such as the Green Revolution and the decade of militancy in 1980s, gave further impetus to increased son preferences and strengthened the patriarchal mindset in the region. Through her extensive field work, the author has conducted an in-depth exploration of son preference in the region to demonstrate how the social constructs of gender bias have altered over time. She has conducted a thorough exploration of how religious extremism in the region led by the Khalistan movement contributed to women's subjugation through cultural segregation of Sikh women and the imposing of strict codes of conduct on them. This undermined their agency and basic freedoms like the freedom to seek education and go to school or college. The insecurity surrounding a young daughter was very high during the period of militancy, as was the cost of her protection. As a consequence many girls began to be married off at an early age, especially among Jatt Sikhs because their honour and safety were at risk.

The inter-linkages between the Green Revolution and patriarchy have also been investigated in order to show that technological developments are not gender neutral but that they articulate with social relations to produce consequences which are unintended. Dagar has reiterated that developments like the Green Revolution, the resurgence of land prices and commercial conversion of land in the region provided endorsement to the male child as a finance generator. The view of the male as an economic saviour resulted in an increase in the differential worth of male and female children. In the second part of this chapter the phenomenon of 'missing girls' in Punjab is studied by mapping child sex ratios and sex ratios in the state between the time periods of 1901-2011. The author has explored how misappropriation of technology led to increasingly adverse sex ratios at birth in subsequent decades, starting from 1991. She also finds that the phenomenon of neglect of the female child also gained momentum in the decade starting from 1991. This is reflected in the increasing gender gaps in child mortality in the state. The differentiated forms of gender discrimination between various socio-economic groups like Jatts and Dalits in the region have been studied in the subsequent part. Dalits, who were traditionally discriminating against girls through the practice of cultural neglect and poor resource allocation in terms of nutrition, maternal health and treatment, have over time started adopting the practice of female foeticide through sex selective abortions, a practice which was till recently increasingly concentrated among Jatts.

In the next chapter Dagar has explored the cultural, normative and utilitarian considerations that justify male child preference and act as triggers for female child deselection. She has collected empirical evidence spanning the period of 1995-2010 to show that the desire for a male child is ingrained in the psyche of the Punjabi population. However there are some variations in response to caste, religion and region within the state. She has identified four levels at which the preference for a male child have been legitimized in Punjabi society. Firstly, kinship networks based on male lineage are taken as ordained and the hegemony of the male child is established by invoking God, biological attributes and natural laws. Secondly, a symbolic eminence is given to male roles, domains and contributions in society. Thirdly, there is a primacy given to concepts and values related to male identity, male kinship and land relations. All of these project male hegemony. Fourthly, the social life cycle is imbued with customs and rituals which give relevance to the male child, but not for the female child. Ritual celebrations at birth, infancy and puberty with each festival like Lohri reinforce the importance of the male child.

In the third section the author has conducted an in-depth analysis of the institutional structures in the region and how these are based on male attributes, stature and roles. The processes, mechanism and activities in these institutions are regulated through language, codes of conducts, customary rules, exclusive domains and cultural attributes that are masculine in form. This undermines gender equity in public institutions. She has conducted a detailed investigation of two such institutions – *panchayats* in Punjab and *khaps* in Haryana - through extensive field work in the region and enunciates how the very structure and

forms of these institutions have undermined women's agency and freedom and restricted their claims of political and institutional power. The *panchayats* in Punjab are hegemonic structures which are dominated by land politics and bar the participation of women in decision making spaces, while the *khaps* have become a means of controlling women's sexual and reproductive rights by imposing a ban on marriages within *gotras* (brotherhoods), terming them cultural incest. This is an extremely interesting part of her work. However, one major question it leaves the reader with is the role that elected women members of the *panchayat* are playing to change the power matrix. Is women's reservation brought through the 73rd Amendment of no consequence in terms of establishing women's voice and agency in these spaces? There are many studies on this theme but they are not brought into the debate. One feels that the analysis could have been made even richer had the author interrogated the role of elected *panchayats* to see if, despite the increasing proportion of women in political institutions, their role remains that of a subordinate in a hierarchical social structure.

In the final section, the author has provided a critique of the engagement of Indian policymakers with gender issues in three realms – electoral politics, gender budgeting and state programmes to check the declining sex ratios. She argues that most gender policies are based on dole-oriented politics and offering protectionism to women, without understanding the historically constructed gender hierarchies. They do not take account of the specific forms of denial, discrimination and oppression faced by women in different socio-economic settings. Most of these policies and programmes undertaken by the government merely offer a few incentives to women, without recognition of gender rights and identity as fundamental human rights. Consequently, these policies have proven to be largely ineffectual as they have concentrated on addressing the symptoms of gender bias, without understanding what causes this pervasive form of discrimination in society. Once again, it would have been very illuminating if the author had given examples of possible concrete interventions which would make a difference to the existing lopsided gender power matrix. Would effective land rights for women have made a difference? Is free and compulsory education a key contributor to declining gender hierarchies? Or are safety, mobility and employment the key elements in this process?

Overall, the book is an enlightening and well researched treatise and it provides a nuanced understanding of the historical and social constructs of gender hierarchies in northern India and their changing manifestations across time and cultural settings. It is timely because even when a lot has been written on this topic, there remains a paucity of analysis which is rooted in the actual experience of communities on the ground. The book fills a major knowledge gap as it goes into a deep contextual understanding on the phenomenon of female deselection. The exploration of institutions and political structures in the region and their underlying patriarchal biases and how they restrain women's agency and participation, is a special highlight of this study. The thorough case that the author makes in the final section for how gender hierarchies need to be understood in their historical context by policymakers in the region, if gender

concerns in society are to be properly investigated and integrated in mainstream political discourse, provides much food for thought. All in all, a must read for all those who are concerned with falling sex ratios and want to do something about it.

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Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 435pp. £20(hb). ISBN 978-0-674-05289-5

In this elegantly written text, Ayesha Jalal seeks to explain Pakistan's troubled history. In keeping with a number of scholars she focuses on the role of the army and the conflicts between the centre and the provinces in understanding the failure to consolidate democracy. The military's rise to predominance is linked with Pakistan's Cold War alliances. In a restatement of her earlier analysis in *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (1990) this is seen as resulting in a political economy of defence, rather than of development. The Pakistan Army's institutional interests are portrayed as standing in the way of the national interest not only in contemporary Pakistan, but in the lead up to the crisis of national unity in 1971. Unlike some Pakistani authors, Jalal largely absolves Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of responsibility for the tragic denouement that followed the 1970 National Elections.

In other passages of the book, the argument veers more towards establishment views, as for example when emphasizing the costs for Pakistan of the US intervention in Afghanistan following 9/11. It is true that there is an acknowledgement of the blow-back effects of the state's use of Islamic proxies to forward Pakistan's strategic interests, but this is dated to the 1979 Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan, when it can be traced back to the first Kashmir conflict within months of independence. Islamic militants were also deployed during the 1971 struggle in East Pakistan, clearly revealing that the establishment's riding the tiger of militancy has not always been a western imposition.

There is also a one-sided view of the legacies of the late colonial period for future democratic consolidation in Pakistan. While Jalal is right to point out the importance of the Partition upheaval and the geo-political pressures, they are not the whole of the story. The desperate need for allies in the Muslim majority areas drove Jinnah to compromise with landed elites who had little in common with his liberal nationalist outlook. Similarly, despite his long-term adherence to constitutionalism, Jinnah turned to direct action in 1946, risking religiously motivated violence in the struggle to achieve Pakistan. The inheritances of a culture of political intolerance and recourse to violence, alongside the weak institutionalisation of the Muslim League in the future Pakistan areas were to cast a long shadow. Moreover, to maintain a fragile unity, Jinnah had been

deliberately ambiguous about the role of Islam in a future Pakistan. Taken together these legacies were far more problematic for democratic consideration than is owned in this and other texts which focus on Jinnah's leadership.

Jalal of course provided the classic revisionist understanding of Jinnah's intentions in raising the Pakistan demand in her work, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (1985). Some of the arguments are reprised in this volume, although without the detailed academic reference architecture of the original. She does not address the criticisms which have been raised over the years, especially relating to the extent to which Jinnah could lead opinion, or needed to reflect it. The personality driven 'drawing room' approach to understanding politics is indeed extended from Jinnah to the contemporary scene. Ayesha Jalal talks about the 'people' from time to time, but does not frame centre-state conflicts and the rise of Islamic militancy in the context of Pakistan's failures to deliver social justice. The current political disillusionment and cynicism that feeds ethnic and Islamic militancy has resulted from decades of poor governance by civilian and military regimes and the failure to link growth with redistribution, resulting in the increasing gap between the rich and the poor.

The volume thus does not branch out into new directions when explaining Pakistan's struggles. Rather it provides for a new generation, a restatement of the author's original contributions to their understanding. Cultural and even economic concerns feature less prominently than politics in what is a lengthy text. Linkages between Pakistan and its diasporas are also largely unexplored, despite the global perspective that is embraced elsewhere. The result is a rather one dimensional portrayal of Pakistan's history which chimes in with the growing number of texts which approach it from a strategic angle. Engagement with society as well as the state would provide clues to the country's potential for a positive reawakening. It would also enable the volume to address Pakistan's resilience as well as its struggles. Despite Ayesha Jalal's concluding upbeat sentiments, there is little in this work that explains how Pakistan has survived numerous crises, beyond the well-worn theme that the state is too valuable to western interests to be allowed to fail.

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Taufiq Rafat, *Bulleh Shah A Selection*, (Karachi: OUP, 2015) xx + 231 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-940288-5 (pb) Rs. 395.

Few would deny that Bulleh Shah is a major poet, while the extensive use of his *kafis* by innumerable modern singers and musicians attests to his continuing popularity. Nevertheless, there has been relatively little sustained critical or scholarly work devoted to him. This matters because he is an important figure in three interlocked but distinctive contexts: Sufism as a very long-standing progressive current in Islam, the complications of the status of the Punjab within

Pakistan, and the history of pan-Punjabi religious thought and culture. Sufism is often detached from Islam or even from religion altogether, but it can be part of a contemporary Muslim faith that is non-authoritarian, still intensely spiritual and not secularized in a way that simply imitates the West. As is well-known, Punjabis dominate the military and other elites in Pakistan today, but their language is still often treated as a poor cousin of Urdu in many ways. There are many affinities between Bulleh and the Sikh gurus, not simply in their attitudes to ritual and dogmatic religious affiliation, but in their complex pantheisms where a divine that is in part immanent to all creation is initially accessed by sensible percept and affect, rather than a purely transcendent one that can only be "leapt to" intellectually. Key concept-words in Sikhism, such as *nam* and *shabad*, are also important in Bulleh.

Bulleh Shah A Selection first appeared in 1982. Taufiq Rafat, now dead, was a formidable poet, both technically and in his capacity to produce a very focussed and potent emotionality in his poems. He is credited with having established a Pakistani idiom in English language poetry. These qualities are evident in the seventy-one poems he translates, that is about two-fifths of Bulleh's work. The originals are given in parallel in Shahmukhi script. Rafat keeps broadly to the stanza shapes and rhyme schemes, without being pedantic, mixing a flexible iambic metre with trochaic and anapaestic variations and frequent enjambement. The latter is not to be found in the original. He has a superb ear, and his use of subtle alliteration and half-rhymes is a delight. His treatment of the Punjabi text might seem a little cavalier, even if that text is admittedly often open to different readings.

An example could be the last two stanzas of the famous *kafi*, "tere ishq nachaya", which he calls "The Follower". In the penultimate stanza, "ais ishq di jhangi wich mor bulenda/sanu qibla ton qaaba sonha yaar disenda" becomes "Although it is a peacock's squawk/in the wild, this love is all I ask". The Punjabi second line, where the lover (yaar) appears (disenda) as qibla and Kaba, is omitted altogether, as is the "ishq" in the first line, with "jhangi" providing the "wild" in the English second line, while "bulenda" is translated as "squawk", rather than "calls". "This love is all I ask" is a "filler", although it does pick up "ishq" and "yaar". In the last stanza; the second Punjabi line has the phrase to "chole saave te suhe", which Rafat turns into "dressed like a whore". "Chole" could be a saint's garment or a female one, and translators of Bulleh have used both, with one relating the green (saave) and red (suhe) to bridal colours. There is though a story connected with the *kafi*: Bulleh dressed as a female dancer and performed in the street to soften the anger of his *murshid*, Inayat Shah. Clearly, this has coloured the translation, also affecting the next line: "I click my heels, and leap in glee".

There are other more accurate and sedate line-by-line translations of Bulleh, with more detail about the content and circumstances of the *kafis*, with the excellent *Bulleh Shah* by J.R. Puri and T.R. Shangari being the best one. However, Rafat has deliberately sought to convey a rougher, more spontaneous and colloquial, even edgier voice that is definitely to be found in the original Punjabi, while still clearly communicating the poetry's spiritual meaning, indeed

giving it a delicate but very intense immediacy. This effort is ably seconded by a critically perceptive and scholarly thirty page introduction by Khaled Ahmed. Bulleh's sources - Sufi, Hindu, Greek - are well covered, without any trace of communalism. Rumi is seen to be the most important influence on him. His rebelliousness is very subtly treated: he may have rejected bonds of family and caste, but he was deeply humble in relation to his *murshid*, and he may have criticized the social habits and political leadership of his day, but this was a relatively marginal element in his work. One thinks of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of a nomad figure in a smooth space: freely subversive rather than aggressively confrontational, passing through structure to the more fluid connectivity that lies beneath it and so avoiding its reification.

This reference to modern French philosophy is not fortuitous. One of its objectives was to question the rigid divisions the dominant Western philosophy of the rational subject imposed between the "properly" philosophical and the non- or no longer philosophical. Mysticism would very much fall into the latter category, but it could contribute immensely to any ontological or epistemological enquiry that explored the non-oppositional or interdependent relationships between connectivity and identity, chaos and form, nonsense and sense and truth and what is interesting. This is indeed what modern French philosophy does, and in this context, Bulleh would live again as a Punjabi philosopher contributing to world thought, as he lives again as an English language Pakistani poet contributing to world literature through Taufiq Rafat's splendid translations.

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Partha Chatterjee, Tapati Guha-Thakurta and Bodhisattva Kar (eds), *New Cultural Histories of India: Materiality and Practices*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014), + 476 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-809037-3; ISBN-10: 0-19-809037-4. Rs. 1395.

As famously noted by Raymond Williams, "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." Keeping this caveat in mind, this book makes a significant attempt towards a synoptic overview of the key transitions in methodology characterizing the 'cultural turn' in history writing on India.

The introductory essay charts out the distinct trajectory which cultural studies has taken over the years. It plots the journey of cultural studies from the early 1980s' pre-occupation with non-urban forms of popular peasant cultures in folklore studies; to the literary history of modern vernaculars; to the study of autonomous peasant and working class politics in the *Subaltern Studies* project; to SS' 'discursive' turn in the 1990s, and finally to the newer visual turn from the late '90s onwards. This broad survey of the development of the field over the last 50 years will be a major point of reference for future commentators on the

cultural history of South Asia. The essays cover fields of diverse cultural practice (divided into the rubrics textual, visual, aural, ritual and spatial) and temporally range from the 15th century to contemporary 21st century India.

Francesca Orsini's article on literature in early modern north India argues for the necessity of taking the multilingual reality of north Indian literary culture seriously to develop an alternative historical vision to the distorted one of "exclusive single language literary histor(ies)" (54). Advocating the comparative perspective—taking in cosmopolitan and vernacular languages, written archives and oral performances—she opens up a methodological possibility that pays attention to the *materiality of the archive* imagining an alternative "oral multi-lingual" context (45) for texts in scripts as diverse as Persian, Kaithi and Devanagari. Wary of easy concepts such as diglossia and dismissive of the existence of mono-lingual vernaculars, Orsini argues how literary culture in north India from the 15th to the 18th centuries witnessed a *parallel* growth in Persian and the vernacular in "a continuous process of cross-translation". (46). She points to trends like biscripturalism in Persian and Hindavi, and of 'Sufi' texts circulating beyond Muslims amongst Hindu *kayasthas*; conversely, of Kaithi texts being copied for local *amirs*, and of institutionalized patronage of manuscripts by a variety of religious groups whether Dadu *panths*, Jain *sampradays* or Sufi *khanqahs*. Critiquing Sheldon Pollock's model of court-centred vernacularization, Orsini emphasizes how the "interrelated efforts" (55) of different actors in courts, but also beyond, in village assemblies, in temples and Sufi shrines together comprised the "synchronic palimpsest of north Indian literary (and religious) culture" (53).

Prachi Deshpande focuses on the Inam Commission of Bombay, which in the mid-nineteenth century set out to consolidate together the mine of Peshwai Modi documents (now in Pune) from village officials and landowners to settle revenue disputes and the efforts of the Central Indian Agency to categorize its vernacular archives in the early 1900s. Deshpande concentrates on the figure of the *karkun*—scribe and interpreter—with many being seen as untrustworthy by the colonial state in the light of fraudulent claims to *inam* lands, and the search for an "impartial *karkun*", who would be cut off from the rural network of landed gentry or any native court. (69,75) She suggests how the desire of the colonial state to reduce costs of vernacular scribal establishments across Agency offices in Central India led to a weeding of records and scribes, in an attempt to replace a diverse and large vernacular staff, competent in Modi and Marathi, with a smaller English scribal staff. The essay illustrates the power wielded by scribes in the Maharashtra context and British recognition of the same. Pointing to early modern "multilingual daftars" (in Persian, Modi, and Kannada scripts) of Desais in the Maharashtra region, Deshpande ends her detailed essay, *pace* Orsini, with a paean to "bring together...these polyglot scribal worlds, their complex modern legacies, and their material histories of records and linguistic practice." (81).

Rosinka Chaudhuri reassesses the importance of Bengali poet Iswar Gupta beyond clichéd interpretations, focusing on the sound and alliteration in his poems and on the important quotidian moments of experience they captured. She points out the performative aspect of his poems, which were more attuned to

being orally recited and transmitted as opposed to aspiring to the “interiority of the modern individual poet.” (103). She also highlights how Gupta’s poems offer a window into “the lived materiality of things”, thereby manifesting the “unmistakable modernity of the urban and spatial”. This is important, since the poems capture a literary and cultural moment of immersion in the city and its ways, which was then disavowed by later 19th century Bengali literature. (104).

Christopher Pinney’s article weaves together many different fragments in the visual history of India – the pastoral utopias invoked by Gandhi’s image, the civic humanism by Ambedkar’s, and the action-oriented thrust and vernacular modernism captured by that of Bhagat Singh in his trilby—along with the role of video-recording in Dalit shamanistic rituals in Malwa of the 2000s—to establish the importance of the visual in the popular public cultures of the nation. Pinney’s agenda is to examine the political charge of these objects or images, with a desire to understand their affective presence in a larger public field. Motivated by a similar need to resuscitate the importance of visual, Kajri Jain looks at the function of monuments in the politics of Dalit self-assertion and public recognition with a focus on the Ambedkar memorials built by Mayawati.

Tapati Guha-Thakurta’s essay makes up the third in the visual thematic of the volume, taking up the issue of replicas of public monuments through time, beginning with colonial-era replications of the Sanchi Stupa in British exhibitions, to ornate contemporary copies of the Taj Mahal in Bangladesh, to the current consumerist Hindu obsession with replicating major pilgrimage sites across India, for example the Amarnath caves. She argues for a subversion of the authority of the ‘original’ monument as the privileged site of analysis in architectural history. As opposed to the politics of ‘religious tourism’ in the making of vast and lavish copies, Guha-Thakurta compares the plethora of copies that are made during the ‘festival tourism’ of the Durga Puja festival in Kolkata where temporary tableaux “convert lived urban spaces into liminal zones of worship and spectacle” in what is “an inverted economy of scale and resources” and comprises “an alternative aesthetics of production and consumption” (203), to those mentioned above.

In an essay on aural practices in south India, Lakshmi Subramanian charts out the conceptions of authentic ‘language’ in the context of Carnatic music. Looking at ideas of revival and authenticity of music practice, which recurred as enduring features in the representation of cultural politics of South India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Studying aural practices through the lens of revival movements, she exposes the overtly political nature of the cultural agenda of the revivalists, especially the middle-class Brahmins in the early twentieth century, and the demands for singing in Tamil made by non-Brahmin patrons later in the century. Subramanian establishes the special affective signification that music revivals and the discourse around them had in southern India, along with the ambivalent results of contestation over musical performance.

Gautam Bhadra’s richly descriptive essay is on the importance of the nineteenth century Bengali almanac or *panjika*, which emerged as a new and important commodity in everyday ritual observances - they not only provided

readers with the knowledge of auspicious hours and zodiac divisions, but also tabularized laws and regulations of government. Bhadra details the way in which the *panjika* emerged as a curious hybrid between tradition and modernity, governed by the diverse ritual, aesthetic, commercial and technological logics, and how they ceaselessly shuttled between “the poles of everyday ritual and official regulation.” (283).

Partha Chatterjee’s essay on football in colonial Calcutta makes an important contribution to the history of the sport during colonial times, especially speaking about the importance of the Indian version of “barefoot” football, providing a riveting account of the 1911 Mohun Bagan victory against the East Yorkshire Regiment, which was the first time an Indian club broke into the exclusively European club. The essay gains its relevance from the way in which the local history of sporting in one city connected with larger issues of politics and nationalism.

Bodhisattva Kar’s insightful and informative essay reflects on the political and cultural import of “head-hunting” in the context of Naga hills in colonial India. He maps the transitions in the practice of head-hunting in the Naga hills over time - emphasising the different symbolic weight it played in its long history, with the differing cultural connotations it had for colonial administrators, for Naga people themselves, and post-1947 for the Indian state. He describes how administrator-anthropologists like Hutton and Mills argued for a logic of “substitution” of head-hunting rather than its complete prohibition (to utilize this ritual in the service of science and the state, since severed heads could then be preserved at the Pitt Rivers museum in Oxford), which led to the emergence of newer ritual norms.

Sanjay Srivastava’s article tracks urbanization in post-1947 Delhi, offering an interesting history of land acquisition by the powerful Delhi Land and Finance Corporation (DLF). They primarily succeeded through what Srivastava calls “consanguineal capitalism” (415) which relied on an extensive knowledge of local ownership patterns and the DLF owners’ own kinship ties to landowners; combined with state patronage and corporatist ambition, these yielded rich dividends. Srivastava locates DLF’s self-representation in a transformative imaginary, the “post-national”, a term the author uses to also describe the discourse of consumerism present amongst the middle-class living in DLF style ‘gated’ communities. The form of middle-class activism employed by these groups is another example of the “post-national” in that they combine an older 1950s discourse of nationalism centred on duties and urban citizenship with “new practices of consumerism and individuation”. (427).

From the focus on Delhi and urban spaces in general (Chattopadhyay’s essay on Calcutta), we move on to Srirupa Roy’s article on the non-state media, away from the middle classes on “stringers”, small-town freelance journalists—lower-middle class subjects, the “the foot soldiers of Indian media revolution” (442), in an attempt to resuscitate non-metropolitan India in the theorisation of neoliberal civil society especially in the context of the role of the media. Roy argues for recognising the coexistence of a rights’ discourse with the important role played by “backchannel bargains” in helping liberalized media organizations advance

their agendas. She also asserts that empowering hitherto marginalized groups, like the non-English speaking vernacular elites, does not, however, necessarily enact a politics of generosity and equality for others similarly marginalized.

This book is a seminal contribution to the cultural history of India centred around the material embodiments of culture within varied social and political worlds. (16) With the plethora of theoretical ideas framing the different articles, it will provoke debate and discussion especially amongst students of history, sociology, anthropology for a long time to come. The dearth of essays on a pre-19th century context (apart from Orsini's general overview of early modern north India), the somewhat skewed regional emphasis (Bengal, in particular, being the focus of five out of fourteen essays), as also glaring typographical errors in several places, are the only quibbles one can have with this otherwise excellent volume.

While striking in the absence of any essay with a direct bearing on the Punjab, this volume can help us reflect in newer ways on its cultural history. Hence, following the essays by Guha-Thakurta and Jain, several questions can be raised about the visual iconography of the Punjabi landscape. To take just one example at random, how does one explain the ubiquitous and unique presence of concrete eagles and airplanes atop houses only along the Punjab stretch of the G.T. Road?

Similarly, Subramanian's article on Carnatic music can push us to discover the limits of the folk-classical binary that has defined Punjabi music and dance so centrally. Again, Bhadra's fine analysis of Bengali *panjikas* reminds us to more rigorously look at everyday practice in the forging of Punjabi identities. This volume should encourage researchers working on widely disparate aspects of Punjab culture (culture in the broadest sense, as embodied practice), to come together in a more fruitful dialogue.

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Anita Anand, *Sophia: Princess, Suffragette, Revolutionary*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) xiii + 416 pp. ISBN 978-1-4088-3545-6 (hb) £20.

In the last years of her life, whilst sharing memories of her husband's former ward, Maharajah Duleep Singh, Lady Lena Login commented that Duleep's descendants were a "family typical of the spreading ramifications of the British Empire" (Login 1917: 270).. Deposed and uprooted from his lucrative kingdom in the Punjab by the East India Company in 1849, Duleep Singh had no choice but to lead a very different life indeed to that of his father and half-brothers, who had preceded him on the throne of Lahore. The family that he had with his first wife, Maharani Bamba, was brought up in eccentric style in a uniquely Anglo-Indian home in the English countryside, and two of his children had none other than Queen Victoria as their godmother – Princess Sophia, the protagonist of Anita Anand's book, was the younger of this pair. Duleep Singh's family would,

however, again be thrown adrift when he decided to launch a dramatic (and futile) rebellion against the British Raj in 1886, to reclaim his lost kingdom. This story of the Maharajah has received a vast amount of popular attention; yet his children, though startlingly prominent in their own day, have until now been largely been relegated to the margins of history.

This debut book by TV and radio journalist, Anita Anand, is a commendable attempt at bringing to light the fascinating story of the Duleep Singh family. Choosing the quiet yet compelling figure of Sophia Duleep Singh as her central character, Anand utilizes the princess's vantage point to trace interesting connections between the family's curious internal dynamics and the turbulent and evolving nature of the elite, transnational society of which the Duleep Singhs were a conspicuous part, thanks to their infamous name and brown skin.

In a rather unlikely manner, Sophia managed to combine an exceedingly comfortable life as a princess with a commitment to far more gritty social and political matters; wherein she passionately championed causes such as female suffrage, Indian anti-imperialism and the betterment of conditions for wounded Indian soldiers and downtrodden lascars. Unfortunately though, it clearly seems to have been challenging for Anand to tease out the nature of Sophia's character and agency, due to the lack of a record that the Princess herself sought to leave of her story. Despite this, Anand has demonstrated great dedication by weaving together a detailed biographical sketch from the fragments of a variety of sources: Sophia's rather untalkative diary, a few scattered family letters, government intelligence files, oral accounts from the princess' servants and friends, and a rich crop of newspaper cuttings and photographs (a few of these splendid images are actually printed in the book).

The book itself is split into three sections. The first part contains a sweeping overview of the history of the Punjab and Maharajah Ranjit Singh's dynasty, reaching seemingly from the beginning of time up to Sophia's school years. By no means is this an academic account of Punjabi history and the simplistic narrative evidently shows that Anand's target audience is not expected to have any sort of prior knowledge about the region or the Sikhs. Readers of this journal could happily skip much of this section, though the portrayal of life at Duleep Singh's Norfolk estate is rich in colourful detail, if somewhat indulgent in gossip about the extent of his gambling and promiscuity. This is certainly the weakest part of the book, as at times Anand's writing has the tendency of lapsing into the style of a historical novel: assuming and over-dramatising what the protagonist might have done, thought or felt in particular moments, when the biographer's source material seems to have been less communicative. Furthermore, Anand does not attempt to question why, amongst the multitude of Indian royalty (deposed or ruling), Duleep Singh and his family were favoured with such special treatment by the British monarchy and the India Office; nor does she pause to reflect on how and why the Maharajah's notions of domesticity and family life might have differed from the style of child-rearing that Duleep had himself experienced within the royal *zenana* of Lahore.

The middle section of the book by contrast will likely be of much greater interest to readers of this journal. In two of her chapters, Anand paints a vivid

picture of early twentieth-century Punjab and gives the reader a detailed insight into the melting pot of regional politics under the auspices of British rule – where loyalist Maharajahs acted as British spies and activists like Sarla Devi would casually turn up at Princess Bamba’s Lahore home to talk revolution over tea. Bamba, it seems, had a mysterious role in the more radical circles of Punjabi politics and it would be fantastic to know more about how this disgruntled “maharani” might have turned her ire against the British into support for the Punjab’s revolutionary movement. The reader further gets to see how intricately connected British imperialism in India was with social and political conservatism in Britain itself through Anand’s exploration of Sophia’s grave personal antagonism against Lord Curzon, who not only treated her family and Indians in general like second-class citizens, but was also violently opposed to the Suffragette movement.

All in all, this book does, in places, make for a gripping and rather moving read. Anand succeeds in giving the reader a keen sense of the social contradictions and political complexities in the world of the Victorian and Edwardian Raj, but it perhaps could not be otherwise when one is writing about such a unique and engaging subject as a British-born, Punjabi princess with revolutionary aspirations.

Reference

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Sathnam Sanghera, *Marriage Material* (London: Windmill Books, 2014) 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-099-55867-5 (pb) £8.99.

Caught between his life as a graphic designer in London and concern for his mother’s health, Arjan Banga is reluctantly drawn back to the tight-knit community of his family’s corner shop in the Black Country. As he searches for a way to help his ailing mother run the Bains store after his father’s death, Arjan uncovers truths about his childhood, his parents’ youth and his aunt’s disappearance as a teenager that change the way he sees his family history. Arjan’s return to Wolverhampton instigates a journey of self-discovery that brings him closer to his family and the Indian Punjabi culture he had tried to leave behind.

Sathnam Sanghera’s *Marriage Material* (2014) is a poignant novel about family, community, marriage and race relations in the British West Midlands. Arjan, as well as other characters in the book, are confronted with physical and emotional tensions as they attempt to balance their Punjabi heritage with the British culture in which they live. Sanghera’s depiction of the conflict between belonging and otherness is one of the finest aspects of the novel. This tension is

most evident in the interweaving of family narratives in the plot. Arjan's return to the Black Country is juxtaposed with earlier stories of emigration from Delhi, the establishment of the family business, memories of an inter-racial marriage, as well as experiences of marital abuse and racial violence. As the Bains store moves through stages of growth and decline in the languid city of Wolverhampton, the family who owns it also changes as stories from the past fifty years emerge. Their individual accounts are laced together by undertones of racial discrimination in the Black Country. The Bains family copes with the Sikh riots occurring in Wolverhampton in the 1960s, and Arjan must stand guard in front of the shop during a new bout of riots in August 2011. Furthermore, the tension between British and Punjabi cultures can be found in the relationships between characters, such as in Arjan's attempt to make his British fiancée Freya understand his family's expectations of her and in the increasing discord between two very different sisters Kamaljit and Surinder.

Sanghera's portrayal of Punjabi culture in the Black Country is not all despondent. Arjan's narration is filled with humour as he explains aspects of his Punjabi heritage to the reader, and his feeling of being 'in-between' British and Indian cultures can be compared to the experiences of other second-generation individuals living in diaspora. While Arjan's story is at the forefront of the novel, Sanghera is also sensitive to the cultural and social expectations of young Sikh women living in 1960s England. Kamaljit's and Surinder's trials in choosing their destinies is not far removed from the challenges many women continue to face as they search for a balance between their culture and heritage. The immigrant experiences in the novel are effectively contrasted with those of a younger generation who adopt the dress, behaviour, language and manners of British society. With the Bains store as the centre for cultural exchanges, Sanghera faithfully depicts the arduousness of running a family-owned business, and he incorporates details of newspaper clippings, magazines, and even British chocolate bars into the plot.

While *Marriage Material* skillfully captures the endurance of Indian Punjabi culture in England, the reader does not always sympathize with Arjan who is indecisive about whether to respect the norms of his Punjabi community or follow the path he created for himself. His childhood friend Ranjit, who is spoiled even as a grown man and spends his time taking illicit drugs and having extra-marital affairs, is a foil to Arjan and shows him what he could have been. Ranjit's behaviour is humorous, but at times appalling, yet Arjan commends some of his less-admirable qualities in his desire to have what he believes would be an uncomplicated future. The movement between narratives in the novel enriches the accounts of family history, but at times the plot lulls, and it can be difficult to comprehend how the stories will unfold. Nevertheless, the synthesis of British and Punjabi cultures through the inclusion of Punjabi words and dialogue in the narrative and similarities between the plot and Arnold Bennett's 1908 book *The Old Wives Tale* shows Sanghera's conscious integration of cultures in all aspects of the novel. The social and historical contexts of the West Midlands provide an uncommon and fascinating setting through which to perceive the experiences of a Sikh family's integration into British society.

Marriage Material, Sanghera's first novel, is a great achievement in its portrayal of Punjabi culture in England. It promises to be at least as successful as his 2009 book *The Boy with the Topknot: A Memoir of Love, Secrets and Lies in Wolverhampton*. Through the story of Arjan's return to the Black Country and narratives of other characters who recall memories of India and 1960s England, Sanghera pieces together a personal and social history of multicultural Britain.

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