

narratives and make them part of one's habit and attitude through training and perseverance.

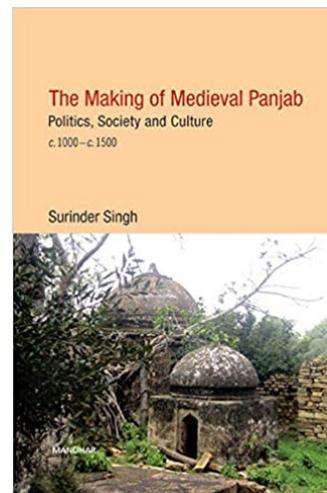
Muhammad Khalid Masud*
Muhammad Ahmad Munir** (Translator)

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Surinder Singh. *The Making of Medieval Panjab: Politics, Society and Culture c. 1000-c. 1500*. New York and London: Routledge, 2019/Delhi: Manohar, 2020. Pp. 636. Hardbound. ISBN: 978-0-367-43745-9. Price: Indian Rs. 2495.

As we move back in time, there is an increasing shortage of sources for writing history of South Asia. There is no dearth of sources for the British period, while the Mughal times are not as fortunate. Still less is the evidence for the pre-Mughal period. The difficulties become more pronounced if we narrow down to the region of Punjab. This problem is reflected in a limited scholarly interest in the period extending from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. So far, there were only two books on the subject: *Panjab under the Sultans 1000-1526 A.D.* by Bakhshish Singh Nijjar (1968) and *History of the Punjab (A.D. 1000-1526)*, edited by Fauja Singh (1972). These books, written about half a century back, were conceived in the traditional style, whereas new approaches have emerged in the craft of history during the recent decades. Moreover, several new interpretations pertaining to medieval South Asia in general have appeared. In such a situation, Surinder Singh's recent book *The Making of Medieval Panjab: Politics, Society and Culture c. 1000-c. 1500* deserves a warm welcome.

For the major part of his career, Surinder Singh taught at the Panjab University, Chandigarh. He figures among the few serious scholars of the



* Justice, Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan.

** Faculty member, Department of Fiqh and Law, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

region who have devoted their entire lives to teaching and research. After his retirement in 2015, he is free from his teaching in classrooms, but his research journey continues. Earlier, he authored two books *History of Medieval India 1000 AD-1526* (in Punjabi, 1997) and *The Political Memoirs of an Indian Revolutionary* (2005) and co-edited three books *Popular Literature and Pre-modern Societies in South Asia* (2008); *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines* (2009); and *Crisis in the Western Himalayas: Reports of J.D. Cunningham 1841-42*. Besides these works, he has to his credit about sixty research papers. The book under review has grown out of a presidential address delivered by him at the Medieval Section of the Punjab History Conference in 2008.

In this book, Punjab is not limited to the present states of the name in India and Pakistan, but extends from the Indus in the east to the Jamuna in the west, from the Himalayan hills in the north to the desert of Rajasthan in the south. The history of this vast area is at least 5000 years old. What is usually written or taught about it deals only with a very narrow geographical area and a rather short span of time, wherein the cultural diversity of the region is entirely absent. The oft-studied Mughal period is portrayed as a perpetual conflict between Islam, the religion of the rulers, and the nascent Sikhism. It is never recognized that Islam had come to Punjab about five centuries earlier and, during this long period, the people had learnt to live in peace and harmony. The new arrivals came to influence local politics, culture, and religion. All this happened not just by the force of sword but was the result of centuries-long interaction.

In the introductory chapter, the author delineates the background for the subsequent discussions. He discusses the major trends in the historiography of the Delhi Sultanate, besides highlighting the contributions of scholars like Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, Irfan Habib, Simon Digby, Richard M. Eaton, Peter Jackson, Qamarul Huda, Tanvir Anjum, and Sunil Kumar. He goes on to analyze the content of diverse categories of primary sources including Persian chronicles, spiritual discourses, and Punjabi folklore. His book is based on an intensive study of contemporary works by writers such as Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan Nizāmī, Minhāj-i Sirāj Juzjānī, Amīr-i Khusrau, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī, Shams Sirāj 'Afīf, 'Abd al-Malik 'Iṣāmī, 'Ain al-Mulk Māhrū, Yaḥyā Aḥmad Sirhindī, and Sikandar b. Muḥammad Manjhū. For his discussions on Islamic spirituality, he has relied on the works of Amīr Khurd, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, Ḥamīd Qalandar, Faḍl al-Allāh Jamālī, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlavī, Allāh Diyā Chishtī and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī.

The main body of the text does not follow a linear chronological sequence, but it is arranged in specific themes. His real story begins with

the territorial engagement of the Ghaznavids and Ghorids with Punjab. Though they secured victories in the battlefield and annexed parts of the region to their kingdoms, they could not consolidate their rule. On the one hand, they faced tough resistance of the local tribes, particularly the Jāts and Khōkhars. On the other hand, they faced the opposition of their own governors (*muqṭi's*), who often broke into revolts. A fluid situation became more complicated with the intrusion of the Mongols, Khwarizmians, and Qarluqs, who carved spheres of authority in northwestern Punjab. A governor of Multan, Sulṭān Muḥammad, the son of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban, died fighting against the Mongols. However, the peaceful migration of Muslims, in response to the widespread destruction of the Mongols in Central Asia, had long-term cultural implications for South Asia in general and Panjab in particular.

All over the world, the rulers adopted a variety of strategies to strengthen their power, depending on the changing needs. In Punjab, up to the end of the thirteenth century, the rulers relied on superior military force to subjugate the local tribes and enforce obedience from their own officialdom. With the enthronement of the Tughluqs, a new phase began in the process of state formation. They formed alliances with the *zamīndārs* and Sufis. This enabled them to develop a network of canals and undertake agrarian expansion in southeast Punjab. A similar measure was undertaken in Multan, where the governor 'Ain al-Mulk Māhrū revived the economy. This becomes clear from the evidence preserved in his letters (*Inshā'-i Māhrū*). These letters also revealed the role of lower-level officials who dealt directly with the peasantry. Tīmūr, during his invasion, caused population desertion in three parts of Punjab: southwestern tract, cis-Satluj region, and northern hills. Interestingly, he did not show any hunger for precious metals, as he did not vandalize Hindu religious centres such as Thanesar, Haridwar, Kangra, and Jawalamukhi. Instead, he collected huge stocks of grain from the rural areas. The author sees a close relation between three developments: alliances between the rulers and local elements, canal-based agrarian expansion, and the route of Tīmūr. However, he makes it a point to consider the observations of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who has left behind an important account of the conditions prevailing in Punjab during the early decades of the fourteenth century.

In chapter three, the author narrates the story of Islamic spirituality, which developed parallel to the political changes. Shaikh 'Alī b. 'Uthmān Hujvīrī (d. 1072 CE), who produced a major treatise (*Kashf al-Mahjūb*) on the spiritual dimension of Islam and rose to be the patron saint of Lahore. Long after him, Bābā Farīd (d. 1265 CE) and Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā (d. 1262 CE) established the Chishtī and Suhrawardī

orders, laying down their beliefs in authoritative writings. A discussion on the eventful life and poetic outpourings of Shaikh Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 1289), who spent twenty-five years in Multan, adds a new dimension to the work of the Suhrawardīs. Chapter five shows that Sufism, like other historical phenomena, did not remain static but changed in response to dynamism of the times. The shrine of Bābā Farīd evolved into a major pilgrimage centre. His descendants through Badr al-Dīn Sulaimān received land grants from the Delhi Sultanate and developed close kinship ties with the neighbouring clans. Bābā Farīd's offspring, descending from other lines of descent, shifted to Delhi and, after training as Sufis, migrated to the Deccan and other areas. The descendants of Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā, particularly Rukn al-Dīn 'Abū 'l-Faṭḥ (d. 1335 CE) and Sayyid Jalal al-Dīn Būkhārī (d. 1384 CE), while retaining their spiritual legacy, were assimilated into the state structure.

The chapter six revolves around the political changes after the departure of Amīr Tīmūr. Punjab witnessed the application of new methods of attaining and maintaining power. Khidr Khān, who inaugurated the Sayyid rule, garnered the support of a dominant section of nobles. Apart from the rebellion of Jasrath Khokhar, disturbances were caused by the revolt of Turkbacha nobles and incursions of Shaikh 'Alī of Kabul. Taking advantage of the turmoil, a large number of Afghans migrated to Sirhind and enabled Bahlōl Lōdhī to assume power in Delhi. During these turbulent times, two Sufis, Shaikh Haidar in Malerkotla and Shaikh Yūsuf Quraishī in Multan, became rulers. Both stitched alliances with powerful *zamīndārs* and entered into matrimonial relations with Bahlōl Lōdhī. In the long run, the descendants of Shaikh Haidar carved out an independent principality, while Shaikh Yūsuf Quraishī did not achieve much.

The author has filled an important gap in historiography by reconstructing the expansion of Islamic spirituality in southeast Punjab. He has thrown ample light on the role of Bū 'Alī Qalandar (d. 1324 CE) with an in-depth analysis of his *Mathnavī*. Similarly, he has traced the growth of the Chishtī seat of Hansi, with reference to the endeavours of Shaikh Jamāl al-Dīn Hānsavī (d. 1261 CE) and his descendants. Here, we encounter the beliefs and practices of Sufis as propounded by Shaikh Hānsavī in his Arabic work *Mulḥimāt*. Equally significant, the author has provided a detailed account of the Ṣābirī branch of the Chishtīs from Shaikh 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir to Shaikh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī (d. 1537 CE). Interestingly, the Sufis of southeast Punjab largely avoided state patronage, which could have been easily received from the Delhi Sultanate. This stance was in sharp contrast to the Sufis of southwest Punjab.

Like elsewhere in South Asia, the *zamīndārs* played a crucial role in Punjab. As intermediaries between the state and peasantry, they assisted in the collection of tribute or land tax and, in return, received a share in the collection. In practice, they enjoyed a considerable autonomy in their respective areas, particularly when the power of the state diminished. Chapter eight examines the position of *zamīndārs* flourishing near the Chenab. The exercise has been done on the basis of a minute analysis of the first ever text of *Hīr*, which was versified by Damodar Gulati during Akbar's reign. It has been argued that the story occurred sometime in the middle of the fifteenth century, but became generally known by the early sixteenth century. This chapter delves into the *zamīndārī* methods of attaining local dominance through peaceful and violent means. The *zamīndārs* were found engaged in mutual warfare, but did not hesitate to provide shelter to the distressed. They could muster retinues of armed men at short notice and did not worry if a few of them were killed in armed clashes over petty issues. The *zamīndārs*, in order to play a complex role in the society, relied on the support of their respective clans like Ranjha, Waraich, Siyal, Khera, Nahar and Chaddar. Conscious of their power and dignity, they took all decisions, major or minor, in consultation with the members of their clans. The book draws attention to the social values of these clans, particularly a patriarchal attitude to love, marriage, and sex. They were prone to maltreat their servants.

At the end of each chapter, the author identifies his sources of evidence, besides detailed notes on important terms and concepts. These reflect his extensive and profound understanding of the subject. A map in the beginning and an index in the end add to the value of the book, which would be useful to the students and researchers alike. It will not disappoint the general readers, who identify themselves with Punjab for various reasons.

Subhash Parihar*

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* Former Associate Professor, Centre for Museology, Archaeology, and Conservation, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, India.