

PRG Conference Abstracts, 28 October 2017

Session I. Gender and family history

Chair: Chair: Dr. Meena Dhanda, University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom

Title: Gender and policing: Understanding the experiences of women police officers in East Punjab

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Although women police officers were deployed in small numbers in some parts of preindependent India, their presence was only considered important following the partition of India in 1947, primarily to help deal with large scale offences including abductions, kidnappings, and rape (Ghose 1979). This paper addresses the entry of women police officers in contemporary East Punjab over the last 70 years. Through a methodological empirical approach that entailed qualitative interviews with 30 senior and middle ranking women police officers in Punjab, we explore the profession of policing and its inherent image of hypermasculinity. In particular, we utilise Joan Acker's theory of gendered organisations, together with the notions of space and place to understand how a gendered context, and hegemonic masculinity are reproduced and maintained. Three key themes are examined – namely legitimization of hegemonic masculinity, control and segregation, and doing gender and gendered personas. The state of Punjab is also compared to other Indian states such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra to argue for stronger policy initiatives to address the gender disparities that exist in the Punjab Police Service.

Mapping genealogical geographies of family and community heritage for people of Punjabi descent.

Chandan Mahal, PhD Candidate, Queen Mary University of London

How and why is family history important in relation to identity and heritage across different diasporic communities and generations and what are the relationships between public and personal collections in making those connections to family history? By using a participatory approach to researching family history with individuals of Punjabi descent, this paper discusses how participants took part in a series of workshops and were invited to work with the researcher to analyse the archives from the Royal Geographical Society (with Institute of British Geographers) alongside their own family photographs, objects and possessions. It considers how participants reflected on their ancestral ties to key places and people that were part of their family histories along with significant political and historical events that contributed to shaping how they understood their personal and community histories. The paper will aim to address some of the questions of how diasporic communities keep, construct and interrogate their own family archives and what role they have alongside public collections of museums and archives, specifically the Royal Geographic Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) collections.

Session II. Punjabi diaspora

Chair: Radha Kapuria, Kings College London

Kashmiri Muslims' Diaspora in Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Dr. Robina Shoeb, Assistant Prof in History and Pakistan Studies, University of Punjab, Lahore Pakistan

History of Kashmir is full of tales of terror and oppression. For centuries, despite change of rulers and reigns, sufferings of Kashmiris have continued unabated; Sikh rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh is particularly, accused of persecution of Kashmiris. This persistent privation forced many Kashmiris to leave their homeland and settle in other areas of the Punjab during Sikh rule. Maharaja Ranjit Singh replaced eight governors one after the other, mainly on account of charges of persecuting Kashmiris however; neither miseries of Kashmiris halted nor their migration to other parts of the Punjab. In addition to this 'push', establishment of factories of Kashmiri shawls and several residential colonies in Amritsar and other parts of the Punjab also pulled lots of Kashmiris to Punjab where better prospects of employment, habitation and self-esteem existed. The current study therefore, would mainly focus on various 'push and pull' factors that forced Kashmiris to abandon their homes and settle in various parts of the Punjab during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Additionally, the study will also explore, in the light of primary and secondary sources, the existing narrative against Maharaja Ranjit Singh for persecuting and forcing relocation of Kashmiris, and see if these allegations hold some ground or these are mere stereotypes and part of some larger conspiracy theory to divide the Muslims and the Sikh communities.

The 4th Punjab: Sikhs in North East India

Vijayta Mahendru, PhD Candidate, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

In addition to the 3 Punjabs, viz East, West and Diasporic, there is a 4th Punjab which comprises the Punjabis outside of East Punjab but within the nation-state of India. Their experiences, colonial, post-colonial, economic and local, have largely been missing from the greater narrative of the Punjabs. Even as their migratory history and experience of settlement in the other states of India are unique, there are a number of common elements that they share with the other Punjabs, especially the East and Diasporic.

Obtaining information from the works of Prof. Himadri Banerjee, this paper discusses the Sikhs of two of the North East Indian states, namely Assam and Manipur; and draws some parallels and points of differences between their lived experiences and those of the other Diasporic Sikhs settled outside India. These two states are far removed from Punjab, not just in terms of distance (over 2,500 kms) but also and more importantly in terms of language, culture, religion, politics and social structures. These states are at the eastern borders of the country and also have been conflict zones for a long time.

The 4th Punjab is as diverse as India itself, as Punjabis (both Hindus and Sikhs) are in almost all parts of the country. A discussion on them is imperative if we aim to deepen our perspective on the 'connected histories' and envision 'interrelated futures' of the peoples of Punjab.

Session III. Music and cinema

Chair: Dr. Eleanor Nesbitt, University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Utopia or Dystopia: *Phoren* in Contemporary Punjabi Cinema

Vishal Chauhan, PhD Candidate, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK

The contemporary Punjabi cinema is going through a flux which is also marked by a quest of exploring the Punjabi identity. The recent upsurge of Punjabi cinema is playing an important role in shaping the Punjabi identity across the world. Many contemporary Punjabi films engage with the aspiration of diasporic life and style especially in Canada and UK more than ever, for example, the recent blockbusters *Jatt-Juliet* (Singh 2012) and *Jatt-Juliet 2* (Singh 2015). Most of these films are woven in the genre of romantic-comedy and doing very well globally. On the other hand, local issue based films are receiving critical acclaim only. These features are not earning good profits, for example, *Cheevan Dariyan* (Kaur 2010) and *Chauthi Koot* (Singh 2015). Why is *Phoren* such a cherished theme in Punjabi films?

This paper explores the over- representation of foreign and diaspora in selected Punjabi films to understand the interconnection of glocal identities. This paper will use critical textual analysis to study the selected films.

Between Nostalgia and Prejudice: Punjab's Musicians in and beyond 1947

Radha Kapuria, PhD Candidate, King's College London

Music is invoked as the 'glue' that unites people like little else, perennial symbol of a composite culture disrupted by the rupture of Partition. Such a simplistic perspective rides roughshod over the complex trajectories musicians' lives took post-1947. While we know of the broader shifts in the twentieth century musical landscape of South Asia, we lack a comprehensive account of the repercussions of this cataclysm on the quotidian lives of the subcontinent's musicians. On closely examining life stories and views of a few musicians, we find that examples of 'Punjabiyaat' accompany instances of prejudice. The relationship of musicians to Partition and to religious difference is complex and contradictory, eluding simple characterizations. Here I preliminarily examine the impact of India's Partition on practitioners of Hindustani classical music belonging to Punjab. How did Punjabi musicians view the 1947 borders through time, and how have they worked to negotiate these boundaries? I explore the views of a handful of musicians from Jalandhar and Lahore. While casteist views (with a longer genealogy going back to the nineteenth century) on the mirasis ironically serve to unite musicians across the border, other, communally hostile inflections reveal Partition's divisive impact. Further, how have musicians relentlessly traversed one of the most militarized borders in the world? Through a case study of some prominent Punjabi musicians, e.g. Bade Ghulam Ali, Iqbal Bano, I demonstrate how processes of musical tutelage and pedagogy, as well as the more mundane reasons of kinship, have worked to consistently subvert, since at least the 1950s, the 'hard borders engendered by Partition. I conclude by arguing for a curious 'double nostalgia' in the case of Punjab's musicians, while re-situating them as historical agents, functioning in diverse contexts.

Session IV. Religion studies

Chair: Shreya Sinha, SOAS London

Sikhism and Sustainability

Nadia Singh, PhD Candidate, Oxford Brookes University

This paper explores the rising environmental consciousness among religious organisations in Punjab. In consonance with other major religions of the world, Sikhism, the dominant religion in Punjab is increasing taking a green turn. Environmental advocates are reinterpreting scriptural sources and drawing on elements of Sikh history to promote Sikhism as an inherently ecological tradition. Many Sikh temples have launched a grass root level “Green Gurduwara” movement to reduce their ecological footprint through preparation of organic food in the community kitchen, planting trees, recycling waste and participating in renewable energy projects.

This field-based research documents the role of community and religious organisations in promoting ecological consciousness in Punjabi society. These organisations are promoting green initiatives by utilising the Sikh tradition of seva or voluntary service. The findings from the research reveal that these initiatives are fulfilling the aspirations of the Punjabi community for sustainable living through innovative approaches based on community ownership and use of local resources/technologies as well as egalitarian community practices. Faith and community based leaders are also encouraging environmental sensitivity among people and mobilising support for ecological causes.

Guru Gobind Singh’s Leadership – Lessons for Our Time

Principal Dr. Sujinder Singh Sangha OBE FRSA

Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the ten Gurus and founders of the Sikh Faith, was a unique spiritual and temporal leader. This article celebrates the occasion of his 350th birth anniversary by analysing the qualities of his leadership which were pivotal in Sikh history - particularly during the brutal era of Mughul oppression in India. It considers the impact of the Guru’s leadership and explains, how the Guru’s leadership transformed the society by creating Khalsa Panth, which stood against the tyranny and provided a passage for the building of a self-respecting society based on universal spiritual and social values. What lessons can be drawn from the Guru’s leadership for our time?