

subject leads him to cite numerous illustrative quotations not just in English translation but also in their original form, variously reproduced as appropriate in Persian or Gurmukhi script. As in his stimulating previous study *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus* (2008), the same enthusiasm has led to the generation of an exceptionally rich body of endnotes, which here is at least as long as the main text, and which constitutes a series of fascinating expansions and asides often to be enjoyed in their own right and certainly to be appreciated by all scholarly readers of this valuable study. chrsh2@hotmail.com

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SIKH MILITANCY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN MUGHAL AND EARLY MODERN INDIA. By HARDIP SINGH SYAN. pp. 320. London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2013.
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This spirited study by a young scholar of a central topic in early Sikh history makes stimulating use of a carefully creative reading of a notable range of both primary and secondary sources. The first chapter opens with a provocative challenge to some widely-accepted understandings by twentieth-century Sikh historians and others of how the pacific religious community founded by Guru Nanak in the sixteenth century came to be transformed by the early eighteenth century into the militant brotherhood of Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa. In questioning the ways in which the modern historiography has long continued to be unconsciously moulded in its approach to the crude categories of 'peace' and 'militancy' by the assumptions and values of the colonial period, Syan's approach is thus very much in line with the revisionism of other contemporary scholars who seek to get behind later biases so as to provide fresh understandings of the earlier history by drawing upon the authentically Indic value systems that inform the primary texts.

The focus of the book is on the seventeenth century, between the martyrdom in 1606 of Guru Arjan, the compiler of the Sikh scripture, and the foundation of the Khalsa in 1699. So far as mainstream Sikh orthodoxy is concerned, this can be characterised as an inter-scriptural period, during which rather little attention was paid to writing by the Sikh Gurus who descended from Arjan's son Hargobind, although other compositions were composed by their followers. Syan's great contribution to the wider understanding of this post-scriptural literature is to put it in proper context, for the first time in English, by reading it alongside the copious writings preserved in the manuscripts of the rival Mina community led by Arjan's elder brother Prithi Chand and the line of Gurus who succeeded him. Long relegated to obscurity by the majority Sikh community's subsequent condemnation of the Minas as schismatics, the Mina literature is only now beginning to be seen as an important subject for study.

Combining a skilfully compiled comparative account of developments in these two groups with close reading of well selected illustrative textual extracts, Syan is able to show how the rival lineages adopted different understandings of the role of sacred leadership. The second chapter looks at the innovative policies of Guru Hargobind that centred upon an explicit combination of the secular with the sacred characterised in the well-known doctrine of *mūr-pīrī*, and at the ways in which these are described by his chief follower Bhai Gurdas. This new style of Guruship is contrasted with the further development of the spiritual understandings of the earlier Sikh Gurus in the prolific writings of Miharvan, who succeeded his father Prithi Chand as the Mina Guru.

These fundamental contrasts in understanding are shown in the next chapter to have continued during the mid-seventeenth century into the time of Miharvan's successor the Mina leader Harji and

that of Gurus Har Rai and Tegh Bahadur in the orthodox Sikh line. The succeeding chapter then deals at fitting length with the innovative writings of Guru Gobind Singh in which a new 'public philosophy' for the Sikhs in Mughal India is elaborated with reference to a creative reading of Indic mythology with a poetic virtuosity to which the later Mina leaders were unable to formulate a significant response.

The conclusion reflects further on the lessons to be drawn from the contrasting philosophies of the Sikh and Mina Gurus. Even though the latter ultimately failed, Syan's book is a valuable demonstration of what he terms the 'supple dialogue' between them, and all readers with an interest in the period should learn much from the way in which his discussion of this dialogue, in his own concluding words, "undermines the coherent grand narratives of a homogenous community suffering at the whims of despotic kings". <chrsh2@hotmail.com>

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A STORY OF RUINS: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE IN CHINESE ART AND VISUAL CULTURE. By HUNG WU. pp. 293. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2012. doi:10.1017/S1356186314000017

Conscious that the architecture of the Third Reich might not endure for all eternity, Albert Speer articulated his goal of Ruinenwert, namely, that his buildings would have aesthetic value and convey the message of their Roman past even in a state of decay. Every civilisation that holds its place in history to be important must grapple with this subject. China, of course, is one of those civilisations. Yet so much of its architecture is made of perishable materials, it is especially challenging to articulate the impact of ruined buildings on China. In his newest and perhaps most ambitious and far-reaching book, Wu Hung expounds on this subject, the remains of human construction and other artisanship in China. Using painting, poetry, and photography, as well as buildings, the author addresses the question three ways: through traditional Chinese media; in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Europeans first confronted ruins in China; and in contemporary China.

Wu Hung begins with the compelling reasons for this study: why does China have no "modern cult of monuments" of the kind described for Europe by German art historian and theorist Alois Riegl in 1903, or, stated another way, why do ancient buildings appear in excellent condition in Chinese paintings? Buildings exist in ruins as often as they do in Europe, so if they are neither described in words nor depicted in painting, can ruins be considered evocative in China in the sense they are in the West? If so, what do they evoke? And, why are ruined buildings so rarely referenced even in the form of poetry known as *huaigu*, or "lamenting the past?"

Wu Hung first confronts the questions with terminology. He distinguishes between *qiu*, remains or ruins, including of buildings, and *xu*, a slightly later term that can refer to a site with no remains but that elicits historical memory or an emotional response. In painting, he points out, the closest one comes to the concept of ruins are withering trees, and the work called *Reading the Stele*. Yet the stele in the picture has no inscription, nor does it show signs of decay. To understand it as a ruin requires memory and a sense of history. Withered and dying trees are the subjects of other paintings associated with ruins, as is, according to Wu Hung, a self-portrait of the painter Shitao (1642–1707) as a withered man among withering trees. The stele, however, is in its own class because a rubbing of it can give it an independent life.