

tual differences that arose between Mahalanobis, a physicist and statistician, and Dhananjay Gadgil, an economist who was tasked with the development of a formula for disbursing funds from the central (national) government to the states. These differences aside, the NSS, both during and after Mahalanobis's tenure, became an extraordinarily sophisticated survey instrument providing a remarkably accurate account of prevailing economic conditions.

Menon also describes in granular detail the heroic lengths to which Mahalanobis and his colleagues had to go to acquire even the most rudimentary computing facilities for the use of the ISI and the commission. India, in the 1950s, was acutely starved of foreign exchange, and the best computer technology was available only from the United States. Both considerations of cost and Cold War concerns about transferring technology to India, a country friendly toward the Soviet Union, often thwarted Mahalanobis's relentless efforts.

Despite these hurdles, his dogged persistence enabled the ISI to acquire the requisite technological wherewithal. It also attracted considerable talent from India and across the world. Given his intellectual stature, as well as inexorable personal drive, the Planning Commission, with the ISI as its intellectual backbone, for over a decade played an outsized role India's developmental project. However, the status of the latter, Menon shows, would undergo a decline from the late 1960s owing to both exigent circumstances, such as a critical foreign exchange crisis, and the roles of political leadership and personality conflicts.

In later decades, while the commission still remained a standing entity, the ebbs and flows of national politics affected its ability to shape economic policy. Today, following its abolition, even the NSS is now at risk, as the Modi government has been reluctant to release data that could depict the results of its economic policies in an adverse light. Given the immense effort that Mahalanobis and his colleagues had invested in forging a world-class survey, it is lamentable that the crass considerations of electoral politics are now undermining an extraordinary legacy.

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DOI: 10.1215/00219118-10849722

Notes

1. A. H. Hanson, *The Process of Planning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).
2. Jagdish Bhagwati and Padma Desai, *Planning for Industrialization: Industrialization and Trade Policies since 1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
3. Baldev Raj Nayar, *The Modernization Imperative and Indian Planning* (Delhi: Vikas, 1972).

Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-religious Diaspora. By Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. xiv, 262 pp. ISBN: 9781316501887.

In *Sikh Nationalism*, Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani lament the inadequate scholarly literature explaining contemporary Sikh nationalism. This lacuna is puzzling despite the passage of nearly four decades since the tragic events of 1984 that

began in June that year, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian Army to attack the Golden Temple, to dislodge militants who made the Golden Temple complex their central command center. In October that year, Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, after which Congress party members organized anti-Sikh pogroms in Delhi, which killed some three thousand Sikhs. It remains debatable whether one could speak meaningfully of a Sikh insurgency prior to these events; however, between 1984 and 1992 the Sikh militancy claimed some thirty thousand lives. These events also galvanized the Sikh diaspora to mobilize for a separate Sikh state, Khalistan, to be carved from the Punjab.

The authors survey the proliferation of Sikh studies scholarship and observe that what they distinctly lack is “the use of frameworks of ethnicity and nationalism to explain the multiple dimensions of the Sikh case that integrate the politics of a religious minority in India and an ethno-religious diaspora” (2). Acknowledging the difficulty in identifying Sikhs sociologically, they propose that “Sikh national aspirations and Sikh politics can be better appreciated as the interaction and outcome of three competing narratives of the community’s identity that frequently overlap” (3): (a) the Sikh faith as a world religion, (b) the narrative of a nation with its territorial moorings in the Punjab, and (c) the deep consciousness of a being a vulnerable minority in India and elsewhere in perpetual pursuit of their rights.

In this highly readable and well-researched volume, the authors persuasively draw on theories of ethnicity and nationalism to understand the cultural roots of Sikh nationalism and the several ways it has transformed since the nineteenth century. They do so throughout eight chapters.

In chapter 1 they describe the dominant narratives of Sikh identity—religion, nation, and minority status—and how the available scholarly literature treated these subjects since the 1960s. In chapter 2 they overview the emergence of Sikh identity from the fifteenth century, with the founding of the faith by Guru Nanak, through the conclusion of the nineteenth century, when distinct forms of Sikh nationalism emerged from processes associated with British colonization. In chapter 3, the authors trace the lineaments of modern Sikh nationalism from the end of the nineteenth century up to World War II.

Chapter 4 relates the Sikh community’s response to British plans for decolonization, ultimate acceptance of Partition by the erstwhile Raj, and final transfer of power. They argue that British failures to accommodate Sikh demands in the June 3 Plan of 1947 contributed to the tragic orgy of violence that characterized Partition. In chapter 5 the authors narrate the Indian state’s varied strategies to manage post-Partition Sikh demands, beginning with Sikh appeals to the Congress Party for a Punjabi-speaking state during the first states’ reorganization along linguistic lines. Prime Minister Nehru rejected this demand, fearing their demand was a feint to secure a Sikh-majority state. The Congress Party refused to create a Punjabi-speaking state until 1966. How it finally did so galvanized Sikh activism for autonomy, which began in the late 1970s.

Chapter 6 turns to the Sikh insurgency itself and the various ways the Indian state’s actions further aroused Sikh demands for Khalistan. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of various theories that seek to explain the demise of the movement by 1992. Chapter 7 then recounts the return of conventional politics in the Pun-

jab. Crucially, the authors argue that Sikh nationalism must be understood within the challenges posed by globalization, as well the rise of Hindutva chauvinism and its ever-present efforts to lay claim to and absorb Sikhism into Hinduism as it seeks to render India an ethnostate.

Chapter 8, which traces the origins of the Sikh diaspora to current day, is the most ambitious of the chapters, and perhaps least satisfying empirically. The diaspora is important because it has always given rise to the most radical of Sikh politics from the early twentieth century. In a post-9/11 world, the authors observe a “gradual displacement of the politics of homeland by the politics of recognition that is creating new opportunities for reimagining the global Sikh community” (7).

The conclusion of the book considers the contemporary conditions of Sikh nationalism, which has evolved under the umbrella of democratic majoritarianism. They suggest ways the lessons of this case may offer insights for the comparative study of ethnicity, nations, and nationalism. Finally, they make a not-so-subtle call to reflect on the “utility of the critical theory that has dominated Sikh studies. At best it offers a critique rather than a fully developed perspective that can adequately explain the social and political dimensions of Sikh Nationalism” (218). In a further rebuff, they conclude that “it is now time to take the study of Sikh nationalism seriously” (218). Such a call is a welcome breath of fresh air for those of us who share their empirical and theoretical commitments.

This book is requisite reading for anyone seeking to understand the rise of radical Sikh politics and the various influences under which they developed in the subcontinent and abroad. It offers insights for understanding the “nationalism of small peoples” (Anthony D. Smith, cited at 218) of other “nations without states” such as the Baloch, Kashmiris, Nagas, Sri Lankan Tamils, Catalans, Scots, and Kurds (218).

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DOI: 10.1215/00219118-10849732

Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples. By Emma Natalya Stein. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 299 pp., including 100 illustrations. ISBN: 9789463729123.

Kanchi or Kanchipuram, located on the Palar River in the south Indian state of Tamilnadu, is popularly known as a city of a thousand temples, with the list of favorites varying based on personal choice. Several scholars have written architectural histories of individual temples, from C. Minakshi's 1941 study of the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram to the subsequent overview of regional styles in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* (1983) by Michael Meister and M. A. Dhaky.¹ The book under review moves away from the beaten path to address such themes as the relationships among the myriad temples, the interactions of the shrines and the landscape, and their location along transregional networks of religion and power. During the eighth to the thirteenth century Kanchi was the capital of two major dynasties of South India—the Pallavas and the Cholas. However, it was