

THE NEW
CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF
INDIA

THE SIKHS
OF THE PUNJAB

REVISED EDITION

J. S. GREWAL

The Sikhs of the Punjab

Revised Edition

In a revised edition of his original book, J. S. Grewal brings the history of the Sikhs, from its beginnings in the time of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, right up to the present day. Against the background of the history of the Punjab, the volume surveys the changing pattern of human settlements in the region until the fifteenth century and the emergence of the Punjabi language as the basis of regional articulation. Subsequent chapters explore the life and beliefs of Guru Nanak, the development of his ideas by his successors and the growth of his following. The book offers a comprehensive statement on one of the largest and most important communities in India today

J. S. GREWAL is Director of the Institute of Punjab Studies in Chandigarh. He has written extensively on India, the Punjab, and the Sikhs. His books on Sikh history include *Guru Nanak in History* (1969), *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order* (1996), *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity* (1997) and *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* (1998).

THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA

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- I The Mughals and Their Contemporaries
- II Indian states and the Transition to Colonialism
- III The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society
- IV The Evolution of Contemporary South Asia

*A list of individual titles in preparation will be found
at the end of the volume.*

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Reeta, Aneeta, Harinder, Ravinder
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The New Cambridge History of India covers the period from the beginning of the sixteenth century. In some respects it marks a radical change in the style of Cambridge Histories, but in others the editors feel that they are working firmly within an established academic tradition.

During the summer of 1896, F.W. Maitland and Lord Acton between them evolved the idea for a comprehensive modern history. By the end of the year the Syndics of the University Press had committed themselves to the *Cambridge Modern History*, and Lord Acton had been put in charge of it. It was hoped that publication would begin in 1899 and be completed by 1904, but the first volume in fact came out in 1902 and the last in 1910, with additional volumes of tables and maps in 1911 and 1912.

The *History* was a great success, and it was followed by a whole series of distinctive Cambridge Histories covering English Literature, the Ancient World, India, British Foreign Policy, Economic History, Medieval History, the British Empire, Africa, China and Latin America; and even now other new series are being prepared. Indeed, the various Histories have given the Press notable strength in the publication of general reference books in the arts and social sciences.

What has made the Cambridge Histories so distinctive is that they have never been simply dictionaries or encyclopaedias. The Histories have, in H.A.L. Fisher's words, always been 'written by an army of specialists concentrating the latest results of special study'. Yet as Acton agreed with the Syndics in 1896, they have not been mere compilations of existing material but original works. Undoubtedly many of the Histories are uneven in quality, some have become out of date very rapidly, but their virtue has been that they have consistently done more than simply record an existing state of knowledge: they have tended to focus interest on research and they have provided a massive stimulus to further work. This has made their publication doubly worthwhile and has distinguished them intellectually from

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

other sorts of reference book. The Editors of the *New Cambridge History of India* have acknowledged this in their work.

The original *Cambridge History of India* was published between 1922 and 1937. It was planned in six volumes, but of these, Volume 2 dealing with the period between the first century A.D. and the Muslim invasion of India never appeared. Some of the material is still of value, but in many respects it is now out of date. The last fifty years have seen a great deal of new research on India, and a striking feature of recent work has been to cast doubt on the validity of the quite arbitrary chronological and categorical way in which Indian history has been conventionally divided.

The Editors decided that it would not be academically desirable to prepare a new *History of India* using the traditional format. The selective nature of research on Indian history over the last half-century would doom such a project from the start and the whole of Indian history could not be covered in an even or comprehensive manner. They concluded that the best scheme would be to have a History divided into four overlapping chronological volumes, each containing about eight short books on individual themes or subjects. Although in extent the work will therefore be equivalent to a dozen massive tomes of the traditional sort, in form the *New Cambridge History of India* will appear as a shelf full of separate but complementary parts. Accordingly, the main divisions are between I *The Mughals and their Contemporaries*, II *Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism*, III *The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society*, and IV *The Evolution of Contemporary South Asia*.

Just as the books within these volumes are complementary so too do they intersect with each other, both thematically and chronologically. As the books appear they are intended to give a view of the subject as it now stands and to act as a stimulus to further research. We do not expect the *New Cambridge History of India* to be the last word on the subject but an essential voice in the continuing discourse about it.

PREFACE

Writing his *History of the Sikhs* in the 1960s Khushwant Singh looked upon J. D. Cunningham as his predecessor whose work, written over a century earlier, had become a classic. Khushwant Singh himself has written with 'power and passion' under 'masterly restraint'. That the present volume takes into account the research on Sikh history during the past two decades may be regarded as its major claim upon the reader's attention. It touches upon religious, social, political, economic, cultural and demographic developments over the entire span of Sikh history.

Within the broad context of Indian history, Sikh history falls into four well-marked periods: from its beginning with the mission of Guru Nanak to the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708; from the rise of Banda Bahadur to the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849; the near century of colonial rule up to 1947; and the four decades of Independence. During the past century historians of the Sikhs have concentrated on the first two periods. Interest in the colonial period goes back only to the 1960s. The movement for a Punjabi-speaking state and the crisis culminating in the Operation Bluestar in June 1984 have induced many a writer to take interest in the history of the Sikhs in independent India. This broad pattern of historiography is reflected in the treatment of Sikh history in the present volume: generalizations yield more and more place to factual though analytical narrative as we pass from one period to another in an attempt to identify change.

For an invitation to pursue a subject which had been my major occupation for two decades, I am thankful to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press; I am equally thankful to the editors of *The New Cambridge History of India* for leaving me all the freedom I needed to write this volume.

I am indebted to many scholars and institutions for help, but I would like to mention specifically Professor Indu Banga and Professor W. H. McLeod among the scholars, and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, and the Indian Institute

PREFACE

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My wife, Harjinder, gave me all the care and affection I needed for completing this study through the 1980s.

P.S.

Since the publication of this book in 1990, the publishers have found its sales satisfactory enough to bring out a paperback edition. The author has taken the opportunity to bring its Epilogue up to 1997, to add to its Chronology events from 1849 onwards, to replace its maps for better cartographic representation, to update the Bibliographical Essay, and to make necessary 'corrections' in the text, footnotes and the Index.

GLOSSARY

<p><i>‘adālatī</i> <i>akālī</i></p>	<p>a touring justice under Sikh rule. a staunch follower of Guru Gobind Singh; in the early nineteenth century equated with the Nihang; in the twentieth century, initially a volunteer to take over Sikh temples and afterwards a member of the Shiromani Akali Dal.</p>
<p><i>akhand-pāṭh</i></p>	<p>‘unbroken reading’; an uninterrupted reading of the entire Ādi Granth performed by a team of readers.</p>
<p><i>akhāra</i> <i>a‘lā mālik</i></p>	<p>arena; a temple or monastery of the Udāsīs. a ‘superior owner’, entitled to a certain share in the produce from land; also called <i>ta‘alluqdār</i> or <i>biswedār</i>.</p>
<p><i>‘āmil</i></p>	<p>a revenue collector; interchangeable with <i>kārdār</i> as the administrator of a <i>ta‘alluqa</i> under Sikh rule.</p>
<p><i>ardās</i> <i>ardāsīā</i></p>	<p>the Sikh prayer. literally, one who offers <i>ardās</i>; a person employed by Sikh rulers and <i>jāgīrdārs</i> for this purpose.</p>
<p><i>auliyā</i></p>	<p>plural of <i>walī</i>, a favourite or friend of God; saints.</p>
<p><i>avtār</i></p>	<p>‘descent’; incarnation of a deity, usually Vishnu.</p>
<p><i>bairāgī</i> <i>bandh</i></p>	<p>a renunciant, usually a Vaishnavite. to stop work as a mark of protest; a method of agitation; a strike.</p>
<p><i>bāṇī</i></p>	<p>speech; the utterances of the Gurus and <i>bhaktas</i> recorded in the Ādi Granth; the amplified form <i>gurbāṇī</i> or <i>bhagat-baṇī</i> is commonly used.</p>
<p><i>bār</i></p>	<p>the upland between two river valleys in the Punjab plains.</p>

GLOSSARY

<i>bemukh</i>	'without face'; one who has turned away from the Guru.
<i>bhāi</i>	'brother'; a Sikh formally connected with religious affairs; an epithet of respect.
<i>bhandār</i>	store; a storehouse; a place for the preparation and distribution of food in religious institutions.
<i>bhandāri</i>	one who looks after a <i>bhandār</i> .
<i>bhāt</i>	a popular bard who also kept genealogies of important families.
<i>bhog</i>	conclusion of the reading of the Ādi Granth, followed generally by singing of hymns and always by an <i>ardās</i> .
<i>bigha</i>	a measure of land generally considered equal to 20 <i>biswās</i> or 2 <i>kanāls</i> ; also one-half of a <i>ghumāon</i> ; the actual size varied from region to region
<i>bīmā</i>	insurance.
<i>bīrādār</i>	a local representative of the Nirankārī Guru.
<i>biswedār</i>	'the holder of a twentieth part'; a person entitled to a certain share in the produce from land; also called <i>a'lā mālik</i> or <i>ta'alluqdār</i> .
<i>chandī-pāṭh</i>	a ceremony observed by the Nāmdhārīs in which Guru Gobind Singh's composition on the Goddess Chandī was recited over a fire kept burning; also called <i>hom</i> .
<i>chaudharī</i>	the hereditary headman of a group of villages for collecting revenues on behalf of the government.
<i>chelā</i>	a disciple.
<i>daftar-i-mu'allā</i>	the exalted office; a term used for the central secretariat of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
<i>dal khālsā</i>	a term used for the combined forces of the Sikhs during the eighteenth century.
<i>dām</i>	a small coin, equal to one-fortieth of a silver rupee in the Mughal times; equated in due course with <i>paisa</i> .

GLOSSARY

<i>deoḍhī</i> <i>deoḍhīdār</i>	entrance hall; royal residence; the royal court. the keeper of the royal residence in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
<i>derā</i>	camp; encampment; a unit in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors; the place of a religious personage.
<i>dhāḍī</i>	a minstrel; among the Sikhs, a musician who used to sing in praise of the Sikh Gurus and recount the heroic deeds of the Sikhs.
<i>dharā</i> <i>dharma</i>	a factional group. the appropriate moral and religious obligations attached to any particular section in Hindu society; duty, moral obligation; a righteous cause.
<i>dharm-yudh</i> <i>dīwān</i>	war in the cause of religion; a righteous war. the keeper of a treasury; the head of the finance department; an honorific given to Hindu nobles by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors.
<i>doāb</i> <i>farmān</i> <i>faujḍār</i>	an area lying between two rivers. a royal order. one who keeps troops; a military officer under the Mughals whose duty in peace time was to maintain law and order and to assist civil authorities; the office survived into the early nineteenth century in the Punjab.
<i>ghadar</i> <i>ghuṛcharḥa</i>	‘revolt’; revolution. literally a horse-rider; a traditional horseman in the kingdom of Lahore.
<i>ghoṛcharḥā-i-khās</i>	a special cavalry raised by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to act as royal body-guards.
<i>giānī</i>	one who possesses knowledge (<i>giān</i>); among the Sikhs, a person well-versed in the scriptures.
<i>granthī</i>	a professional reader of the Granth; the functionary in charge of a <i>gurdwāra</i> .
<i>gurbāṇī</i> <i>gurdwāra</i>	‘the utterance of the Guru’. ‘the door of the Guru’; a Sikh temple, generally also the centre of social activity.

GLOSSARY

<i>gurmatā</i>	a decision arrived at by a congregation of Sikhs, generally in the presence of the Granth Sahib.
<i>gurmukhī</i>	a script adopted by the first successor of Guru Nanak for recording his compositions and used subsequently by the Sikhs for writing Punjabi.
<i>gursikh</i>	a true Sikh of the Guru.
<i>gurū</i>	preceptor; religious teacher; an epithet used for the founder of Sikhism and each of his nine successors, and also for the Granth Sahib and the Panth.
<i>harmandir</i>	‘the temple of God’; the central Sikh shrine in Amritsar commonly known as the Golden Temple.
<i>haumai</i>	self-centredness.
<i>havan</i>	offering an oblation with fire.
<i>holī</i>	an important spring festival observed by sprinkling coloured powder or water on one another.
<i>hukmnāma</i>	‘a written order’; used generally for the letters of the Sikh Gurus to their followers.
<i>hundī</i>	a bill of exchange.
<i>ijāra</i>	an arrangement in which a certain source of income was placed in the charge of a person on the condition of his paying a certain stipulated sum to the state.
<i>jāgīr</i>	an assignment of land revenue in lieu of salary.
<i>jāgīrdār</i>	the holder of a <i>jāgīr</i> ; an assignee.
<i>jathā</i>	a group, a band; used particularly for Akali volunteers during their agitations.
<i>jathedār</i>	the leader of a <i>jathā</i> ; a leader-organizer of the Shiromani Akali Dal.
<i>jhīwar</i>	a water-carrier by caste.
<i>jihād</i>	‘endeavour’; a crusade; a holy war.
<i>jogī</i>	from <i>yogī</i> , or one who practises <i>yoga</i> ; a person belonging to any of the twelve orders of the followers of Gorakhnāth.
<i>julāhā</i>	a weaver by caste.
<i>kachchī</i>	unripe; spurious; false.
<i>kalāl</i>	a brewer or distiller by caste.

GLOSSARY

<i>kaliyuga</i>	the fourth and last of the cosmic ages; the age of degeneracy.
<i>kampū-i-mu'allā</i>	the exalted camp: a term used for the standing army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
<i>kanpātā</i>	'split-ear'; a follower of Gorakhnāth who wears rings in pierced ears.
<i>kārdār</i>	an agent; an official; generally used for the administrator at the <i>ta'alluqa</i> (or <i>pargana</i>) level under Sikh rule.
<i>karhā-prasād</i>	sacramental food dispensed in <i>gurdwāras</i> .
<i>kārkhāna</i>	a work house, a manufactory; generally maintained by rulers and members of the ruling class.
<i>kesh</i>	in Sikh literature, refers to uncut hair.
<i>khālisa</i>	lands from which revenues were collected directly by the state in contrast to land alienated in <i>jāgīr</i> , <i>dharmarth</i> , <i>in'ām</i> or any other kind of alienation.
<i>khālsā</i>	the Sikh brotherhood instituted by Guru Gobind Singh; used for an individual as well as for the collective body.
<i>khande-kī-pauhl</i>	the ceremony introduced by Guru Gobind Singh, in which a double-edged sword was used for preparing the water known as <i>amrit</i> to be drunk by the person baptized.
<i>khānqāh</i>	a hospice; the establishment of a Sūfī Shaikh.
<i>khatri</i>	from Kshatriya; an important caste in the Punjab.
<i>khutba</i>	a sermon, address; pronouncement made in Friday mosques regarding the ruler of the day.
<i>kīkar</i>	<i>babūl</i> , a hardy and thorny tree in the Punjab.
<i>kirpān</i>	a sword.
<i>kīrtan</i>	the singing of hymns from the sacred scriptures of the Sikhs; hence <i>kīrtan darbār</i> for an elaborate performance.
<i>kotwāl</i>	the official in charge of a fort; used generally for the city official meant to keep law and order.
<i>landā</i>	a script used by shopkeepers in the Punjab.

GLOSSARY

<i>langar</i>	the kitchen attached to a <i>gurdwāra</i> from which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed; a community meal.
<i>lāvān</i>	stanzas composed by Guru Ram Das for the solemnization of marriage.
<i>madad-i-ma'āsh</i>	literally, aid for subsistence; most commonly used in the Mughal times for land revenue alienated in favour of a religious personage or institution.
<i>madrassa</i>	a place where teaching is imparted; generally of high learning.
<i>mahal</i>	a revenue sub-division usually corresponding with <i>pargana</i> ; also applied to a source of revenue.
<i>mahzar</i>	an attestation signed by a number of persons.
<i>maktab</i>	a place where books are taught; generally used for a school.
<i>manmukh</i>	self-oriented; one who follows his own impulses rather than the guidance of the Guru.
<i>mansab</i>	literally office, position of rank; indicating under the Mughals the status, obligations and remuneration of its holder in the official hierarchy.
<i>mansabdār</i>	the holder of a rank in the system evolved by the Mughal emperor Akbar and his successors; hence, the <i>mansabdārī</i> system.
<i>marhī</i>	a small structure raised over a spot of cremation.
<i>masand</i>	a representative appointed by the Guru to look after the affairs of a local congregation of Sikhs, or a number of such congregations.
<i>mastāna</i>	an intoxicated person; used for a Nāmdhārī who was so deeply affected by the singing of hymns that he behaved like an intoxicated person, shouting and moving in frenzy. It was because of such <i>mastānas</i> that the Nāmdhārīs were given the label <i>kūkā</i> (from <i>kūk</i> or shout) by others.
<i>maṭh</i>	a monastery; a religious establishment.

GLOSSARY

<i>mātrās</i>	religious writings of the Udāsīs.
<i>mazār</i>	a mausoleum; the tomb of a Sūfī Shaikh.
<i>mīṇā</i>	a derogatory epithet used for Prithi Chand, the elder brother of Guru Arjan, and also for his successors and their followers.
<i>misl</i>	a combination of Sikh leaders in the eighteenth century for the purpose of defence and for the occupation of territories.
<i>morchā</i>	an embrasure; an entrenchment for besieging a fort; used metaphorically by the Akalis for their non-violent agitations.
<i>muftī</i>	an expounder of the law in Islam.
<i>muhtasib</i>	the superintendent of police, who examined weights, measures and provisions, and prevented drinking and gambling.
<i>munsif</i>	from <i>insāf</i> (justice), one who gives justice, a judicial officer; a judge; an arbitrator.
<i>muqaddam</i>	the headman of a village or a part thereof.
<i>nadar</i>	from the Persian <i>nazr</i> , 'sight'; grace.
<i>nāī</i>	a barber by caste.
<i>nawāb</i>	plural of <i>nāib</i> , a vicegerent; a title used generally for provincial governors under the Mughals; used also for some rulers who succeeded them.
<i>nāzim</i>	an administrator; the governor of a province.
<i>nindak</i>	detractor; used for the opponents of the Gurus.
<i>nizāmat</i>	the office of <i>nāzim</i> (governor) under the Mughals; the territory under a <i>nāzim</i> ; also used for lower officials and smaller units of administration in later times.
<i>panchāyat</i>	a local assembly of the representatives of a caste or brotherhood; used for the representatives of the soldiers in the army of Lahore in the 1840s; <i>panch</i> for an individual member.
<i>parchār</i>	propagation of ideas, particularly of one's faith.
<i>pargana</i>	the first administrative unit in a province under the Mughals; remained in use in the Punjab till the mid nineteenth century and became synonymous with <i>ta'alluqa</i> .

GLOSSARY

<i>pāṭhshāla</i>	an elementary school, especially for simple arithmetic and book-keeping.
<i>paṭwārī</i>	the village accountant.
<i>paurī</i>	stanza in a <i>vār</i> .
<i>pothī</i>	volume, tome.
<i>qānūngo</i>	a hereditary keeper of the revenue records at the <i>pargana</i> or the <i>ta'alluqa</i> level.
<i>qāzi</i>	the judicial officer who administered Islamic law; the office survived into the early nineteenth century in the Punjab.
<i>rabābī</i>	one who plays on the <i>rabāb</i> , a kind of violin with three strings.
<i>rāgī</i>	a singer, particularly of the verses in the Sikh scriptures.
<i>ra'īs</i>	a socially eminent and affluent person.
<i>rākhi</i>	literally 'protection'; a transitional arrangement signifying essentially the Sikh chief's claim to a part of the produce from land in return for protection afforded against all other claimants.
<i>rām-līlā</i>	the folk drama on the life of Rama as the incarnation of Vishnu.
<i>rehat</i>	the code of conduct for the Khālsā.
<i>rehatia</i>	'one who conforms to <i>rehat</i> '; used actually for a category of low-caste Sikhs.
<i>sādh</i>	a person devoted to religious pursuits; a mendicant; a recluse.
<i>sādh-sangat</i>	an association of <i>sādhs</i> or pious persons; used for a Sikh congregation.
<i>sangat</i>	assembly, religious congregation; a congregation of Sikhs; the collective body of Sikhs at one place.
<i>sanyāsī</i>	a renunciant, generally a Shaivite.
<i>saropā</i>	literally 'head and foot'; a robe of honour; a token of honour.
<i>sarovar</i>	a pool, a tank.
<i>sarrāf</i>	a money-changer; a jeweller.
<i>sati</i>	voluntary burning of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre.

GLOSSARY

<i>sat-sangat</i>	true association or assembly; used for a Sikh congregation.
<i>savayya</i>	a poetical stanza in a particular metre with a particular rhyme scheme.
<i>sehajdhārī</i>	a Sikh who is not baptized as a Khālsā and does not observe the Khālsā code of discipline; a non-Khālsā Sikh.
<i>shahīdī jathā</i>	a band of martyrs in non-violent agitation; the first band was organized in connection with the Rikabganj Gurdwara agitation in 1920.
<i>sharādh</i>	rite commemorating deceased forbears.
<i>sharī'at</i>	the Islamic law.
<i>shiqdār</i>	a person appointed by the king under Afghan rule to look after the civil and military administration of a territory.
<i>shivālā</i>	a temple dedicated to Shiva.
<i>shūdar</i>	the Punjabi form of <i>shudra</i> .
<i>shuddhī</i>	'purification'; a ceremony conducted by the Arya Samaj to induct or restore to Hindu society those outside its bounds.
<i>silsilah</i>	a line, a chain; a Sūfī order.
<i>sītālā</i>	the goddess of small pox.
<i>smādh</i>	a memorial raised on a place of cremation, generally for persons prominent in one sphere or another.
<i>sūba</i>	a province or the primary division of an empire; used also for the representative of Baba Ram Singh as an abbreviated form of <i>sūbedār</i> or governor.
<i>sūfīs</i>	the mystics of Islam.
<i>sūtak</i>	the period of 'impurity' for a woman after she has given birth to a child; supposed to be eleven days for a Brahman, thirteen for a Khatrī, seventeen for a Vaish and thirty days for a <i>shūdar</i> .
<i>ta'alluqa</i>	synonymous with <i>pargana</i> under the Sikh rule (see <i>pargana</i>).

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<i>ta'alluqdār</i>	a person entitled to a share in the produce from land; also called <i>a'lā mālik</i> or <i>biswedār</i> .
<i>tablīgh</i>	propagation of Islam.
<i>tarkhān</i>	a carpenter by caste.
<i>tat-khālsā</i>	the staunch Khālsā; used for the Khālsā of Guru Gobind Singh who opposed Banda Bahadur and his followers in the early eighteenth century, and also for the Singh reformers of the early twentieth century.
<i>ta'ziya</i>	the annual mourning of the death of Hasan and Husain, the sons of the Caliph Ali, observed by the Shī'as by taking out the representations of their shrines in a procession.
<i>thākurdwāra</i>	a temple dedicated to Vishnu or one of His incarnations.
<i>thānadār</i>	the commandant of a garrison or a fort.
<i>udāsī</i>	a renunciant belonging to an order tracing its origin to Guru Nanak through his son Sri Chand and not through Guru Angad and his successors.
<i>'ulamā</i>	the plural of <i>'ālim</i> , a person who possesses knowledge; used generally for the learned in Islamic theology and law.
<i>vaish</i>	the Punjabi form of Vaishya, one of the four castes of the <i>varṇa</i> order.
<i>vār</i>	a literary genre, generally used for heroic poetry; Guru Nanak used it for his religious compositions; the most famous <i>vārs</i> in Sikh literature were composed by Bhai Gurdas in the early seventeenth century in praise of the Sikh Gurus and their teachings.
<i>varṇa</i>	literally, colour; used for the ideal norm of the four-caste social order.
<i>walī</i>	singular of <i>auliyā</i> ; used for a Sūfi who has attained to the highest spiritual state of subsistence in God.
<i>wazīfa</i>	a stipend.
<i>wazīr</i>	the first or the prime minister, next in power and importance to the king.

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<i>zabt</i>	a method of assessment per unit area, based on measurement; applied commonly to perishable and superior crops under Sikh rule.
<i>zakāt</i>	charity for fellow Muslims institutionalized as a tax collected by the state.
<i>zamīndār</i>	literally the holder of land; applied alike to the intermediary who collected revenue on behalf of the state and to a vassal chief as well as to a peasant proprietor.
<i>zimmī</i>	the non-Muslims who paid poll-tax (<i>jizya</i>) to a Muslim ruler to ensure protection of their life and property.

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I

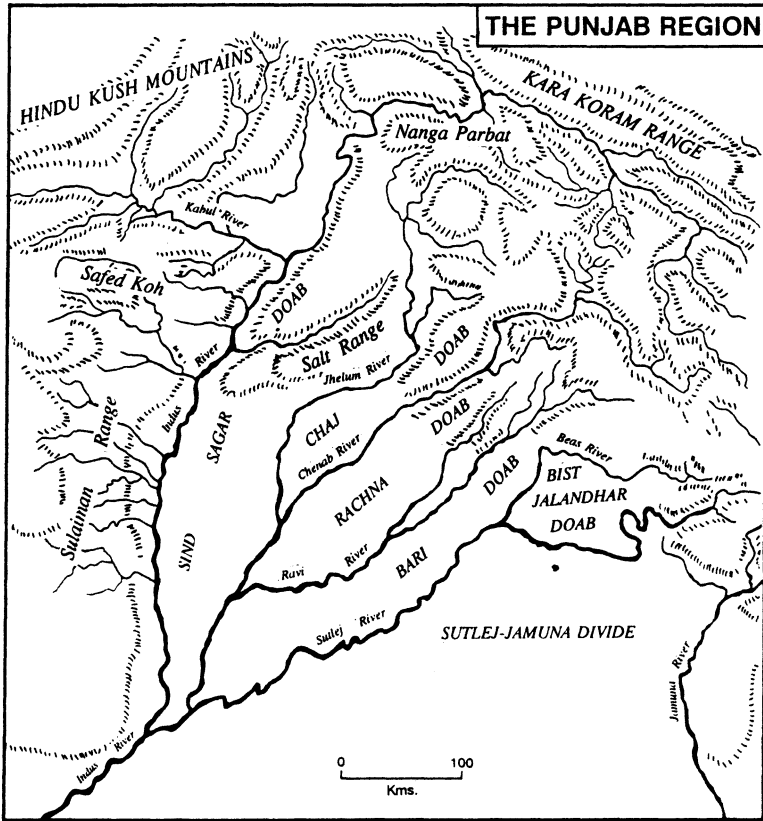
For every twenty Sikhs in the Punjab there are no more than four in the rest of India and not more than one in the rest of the world; among those who live outside, there are not many who do not have their roots in the Punjab.

The literal meaning of the Persian term *panj-āb* is 'five-waters'. It was meant to signify the land of five rivers. But it was not meant to be taken literally. When it became current in the reign of Akbar in the late sixteenth century, it was synonymous with the province of Lahore and, therefore, actually smaller than the area lying between the rivers Indus and Satlej. The British Punjab, however, embraced the entire plain between the Jamuna and the Indus. This region had a geographical entity of its own. Its southern boundary was marked by a desert in historical times. The Himalayas stood in its north even before the Punjab plains emerged as a geological entity.

As a geographical region, the Punjab was probably wetter in prehistoric times, but there has been little climatic change during the Christian era. The rains of July and August mark the end of the extreme heat of May and June, and the return of the spring in March and April marks the end of the extreme cold of December and January. The most temperate weeks come in February-March and October-November. The rivers have changed course from time to time. The river Sarswati, which either fell directly into the Arabian Sea or joined the Indus during the second millennium before Christ, is now marked by the stream called Ghaggar and its dry bed. This was a major change.

Minor changes in the courses of the rivers of the Punjab are also known to have taken place even during the past five hundred years. Consequently, the inter-fluvial area between any two rivers (*doāb*) has not remained the same. The names given to the *doābs* by Akbar have found general acceptance: the Bist Jalandhar Doab between the Beas and the Satlej, the Bari Doab between the Beas and the Ravi, the Rachna Doab between the Ravi and the Chenab, the Chaj Doab

THE SIKHS OF THE PUNJAB



Map 1 The land of the Five Rivers

between the Chenab and the Jhelum and the Sindh Sagar Doab between the Jhelum and the Indus.

In the third millennium before Christ the Punjab formed a part of the civilization called the Indus Culture when its cities and towns were located close to the rivers, particularly in their lower courses. The city of Harappa which flourished as a major urban centre for about 500 years was situated then on the left bank of the river Ravi, about a hundred miles lower than Lahore at present. The site of the prehistoric Ropar is still very close to the river Satlej. The villages which supported the towns and cities were also in or close to river valleys, and not in the upland (*bār*) between the rivers.

Though the cities and large towns of the Indus Culture began to decline in the second millennium before Christ, the broad pattern of

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human settlements persisted till about 1000 B.C. Thereafter, a slow but sure movement up the river valleys, and into the lower Himalayas, was made possible largely by the use of iron implements. Heavier rainfall among the mountain ranges then became an asset. The new cities like Taxila, Sialkot and Jalandhar as well as Lahore were among other things an index of this northward movement. A large number of villages grew up in the upperparts of the *doābs*. The balance in favour of the northern parts was tilted further by the introduction of artificial irrigation by wells with the Persian wheel, particularly after the Turkish conquest of the Punjab at the beginning of the eleventh century. The number and the size of towns began to increase in the upper portions of the *doābs* in the thirteenth century. This trend was accentuated further during the Mughal period.

The change in the broad pattern of human settlements in the Punjab was a result of political as well as technological changes. At the time of the Aryan influx into India in the second millennium before Christ, the Indus Culture was in decline. Agricultural economy was revived when the nomadic Aryans established small republics and monarchies nearly all over the Punjab. At the time of Alexander's invasion during the fourth century before Christ the kingdom of Ambhi was situated in the upper Sindh Sagar Doab, and King Puru (Poros) was ruling over a kingdom in the adjoining Chaj Doab. These areas had earlier remained peripheral to the Indus Culture. Soon after Alexander's return the Punjab became an integral part of the vast Mauryan empire which stretched from Bengal to Afghanistan under Ashoka. Taxila was linked by a highway with the imperial capital Pataliputra in Bihar. Itself a cosmopolitan centre of art and learning, Taxila served as an important centre of trade with Iran and the Mediterranean world.

For nearly a thousand years after the fall of the Mauryan empire, the Punjab remained politically isolated from the Ganges plains. In the second century before Christ, the Greek king Menander, known to Buddhist monks as Milinda, ruled over the western *doābs* of the Punjab; Greek coins bear testimony to Greek influence over the whole of the Punjab before the intrusion of the Shakas or the Scythians. In the first century before Christ, the Kushanas under Kanishka established a large empire which covered the whole of the Punjab but extended more towards Central Asia. The successors of Kanishka submitted to the Sassanian emperor Ardashir in the early third century after Christ. In the fifth century the Huns established their power in the Punjab; their