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Ritual and Authority: Sikh Gurus, Mughal Emperors, and the Politics of Devotion

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ABSTRACT
The Sikh community was a successful, independent religious tradition that developed in 16th and 17th-century Mughal India. It emerged in a landscape influenced by imperial power and various forms of devotional activities. The most important rituals during this process included sangat (congregation), langar (communal meal), kirtan (sacred music) and remembrance of martyrdom as they served as a visible tool of defining Sikhs and their unity. This paper claims that they were not separate acts of personal religiosity, but they were places where issues of power, rights, and piousness were to be struck between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal emperors. Diplomatic interactions such as that of spiritual resistance by Guru Nanak against Babur, or the martyrdom of Guru Arjan under Jahangir, of rituals being used to both solidify her allegiance and seek patronage, or evoke rebellion, and the abidance become political statements. By relying on textual traditions such as Janam Sakhis, hukamnamas, and Mughal court chronicles, and by adopting a theoretical approach to ritual and power, this paper will demonstrate that Sikh religious practices during the Mughal period were closely tied to the politics of their day. Finally, the mechanism to which the devotion itself turned out to be the instrument of power itself is also outlined to show how the Sikh community could express both spiritual independence and indirect resistance to the Mughal imperial structure.

Key Words: Ritual, Sikhism, Mughal Empire, Devotion, Politics, 16th–17th Century

Introduction
The emergence of Sikhism in the sixteenth century was one of the most dramatic spiritual and socio-political changes in the northern Indian subcontinent. Discussing the teachings of Guru Nanak and his followers, it is important to note that they originated in Punjab and were based on the following concepts: the Gods were one, formalism was not accepted, equality and justice had to be pursued. Sikh practice, however, even in its early formation, took place within a larger imperial framework of the Mughal Empire, a polity that was not only interrelated with various religious communities, it was also interested in controlling the balance between the forces of accommodation and control (Grewal 1990; Eaton 2000). It is here that the religious rites adopted deep meaning and served as instruments bringing not only faith practices but also zones in which the politics of devotion superimposed the imperial power.
Critical Rituals have long existed as one of the central ways in which authority is passed, brokered, and opposed. The collective aspects of religion had a major influence through the sangat (congregational gathering), langar (communal meal), kirtan (sacred singing), and then, the remembrance of martyrdom, which were a significant practice in the Sikh tradition. Nevertheless, these rituals never belonged to the isolation of spirituality. They were conducted in areas that intersected Mughal political control, towns, markets, and even at some points the imperial court (McLeod 2005; Fenech 2008). This grey line between religion and politics makes us examine Sikh practices not as a theological utterance, but as something practiced in a systematic way that responded to as well as constructed the forms of power in Mughal India.
There was no linear or inert relationship between Sikh Guru and Mughal emperors. It had its

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appreciation and appreciation times, its attending and being attended times, its moments of disgrace, suppression and revolt. One end of this spectrum is evidenced, e.g. by the amicable relations between Guru Nanak and Babur, thus seen in the traditions by Janam Sakhi, or by the supposed respect of Akbar shown to the Sikh langar. At the other extreme, the execution of Guru Arjan under Jahangir and the militarization of Sikh power system by Guru Hargobind exemplify how the world of rituals and Sikh adoration bands could transform in direct points of political struggle (Grewal 1998; Habib 2016). This interactive relationship hinges on the necessity to study the ritual to grasp the way in which Sikh managed to pass the Mughal world.

During the long history of Sikh-Mughal relations, a lot has been written regarding persecution, resistance, and political struggle, but hardly anything has been said concerning the ritual aspect of this interaction. Sikh historiography traditionally focuses on the martyrdom of the Gurus and the turn of the Sikh community into a political society (McLeod 1996; Singh 2004), and Mughal historiography often overlooks Sikhism except as a marginalized practice in imperial religious diversity (Richards 1993; Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012). This article by foregrounding ritual, relocates the concern of the subject matter of the discussion neither to a political nor to theological stories.

A productive framework to answer this question is Ritual theory. There has been an argument departmented not only by Victor Turner, but also by Catherine Bell, that rituals do not constitute repetitive actions; they constitute performative actions that create social meanings and legitimate authority (Turner 1969; Bell 1992). Rituals of congregational, service and memorial in the case of Sikhs helped to uphold the moral authority of the Gurus and also question hierarchical orders of the Mughal society. As an example, the emperor of rank and caste was undermined through a radical space produced by the institution of langar, and the ritualization of martyrdom rebranded the concept of political repression as sacred resistance (Fenech 2013). Rituals therefore acted as wishes of spiritual and political compromise.

Among the most numerous practices crystallized during this era, sungat was the basis of the Sikh community life. The congregational meeting was not merely a collection of followers but a rite of passage into confirming the authority of the Guru as well as encouraging social unity.

In Mughal India, where the practice of imperial and court rules emphasized the legitimate establishment of the emperor, the Sikh sangat provided a standard equivalent in which joint authority was shared through a spirit of mutual piety instead of imperial reign (McLeod 1997; Grewal 2004). In this tension of two ritual systems, the other vision of power which Sikhism represented came to the fore.

The essentiality of the language, the system of community meals, which involved everyone in the dining table irrespective of the caste or status, was also imperative. Although the development was premised on the vision of equality established by Guru Nanak, this ideal found a new force during Mughal reign when the difference between the social strata was often accentuated. A previously mentioned fact, such as Akbar taking part in the Sikh langar as described in historical sources, demonstrates how the ritual could both have imperial presence and yet divide imperial markers in the most subtle context (Singh 1999; Habib 2016). Langar, therefore, turned out not only as a sign of service to Deity but also as a metaphorical opposition to social arrangement recognized by Mughal state.

The position of kirtan also throws more light upon the politics of devotion. An immersion in sacred singing, a key element of Sikh devotion, generated an audio field that gave the word of the Guru (shabad) a superiority compared to worldly forces. When even Mughal emperors themselves employed sound as an authority tool and patronized court musicians, a different sound landscape of such power and devotion was voiced whenever kirtan was played in Sikh congregations (Brown 2006; Callewaert 2000). This testsifies to the way rituals of sound were an insidious act of resistance and self-definition.

The case of Guru Arjan including his execution in 1606 was a turning point where martyrdom changed into a prime ritual in memory and personal identification. The Tuzk-e-Jahangiri by Jahangir describes the Guru death as a needed statement of imperial control whereas Sikh books glorify it as the supreme devotion and stand (Grewal 1990; Fenech 2013). The ancient practice of martyrdom memory eventually turned into a way of scarifying the suffering and organizing the

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society, as well as to re-define the political oppression as a worship story. In that manner the ritual solidification of Sikh identity of the group reinforced itself with the help of Mughal authority although the authoritative power was kind of evasive.

Devotional rituals with the direction of Guru Hargobind acquired the military facet to them. The ritualization of dual leadership in temporal and spiritual dominion of the Akal Takht and a ritualistic adoption of two swords (miri and piri) symbolized it. This did not only redefine Sikh self-understanding but also signified a response to the actual situation of the Mughal imperial power (Grewal 2004; Singh 2015). It was recognized in ritual as a political move of explicit departure, and worship was bound up in opposition.

Closer to the doings of the Gurus themselves, the day-to-day activities of the Sikhs too had political implications. The self-minded Sikhs who attended sangat, served at langar or sang kirtan were indulging in rituals that represented other modes of power and worship. It was in this capacity that the gurudwaras served to act as a kind of sacral location as well as an arena of exchange between the Mughal and assembly territories (McLeod 2005; Fenech 2008). Such practices made sure that the Sikh ritual activities never stood independent of the greater socio-political flows of Mughal India.

The argument of this article is thus that the ritual of Sikhs in sixteenth and seventeenth century should not be perceived just as a worshiping practice but also as very political practice. Using ritual and power as the through lens to Sikh=Mughal interactions, the paper shows how admi rationalism itself became a negotiating, resistant, and identity-making medium. Based on Janam Sakhis, hukamnamas, Mughal archives and current academic sources, the criticism shows that functions like sangat, langar, kirtan and martyrdom remembrance were both a form of confirming belief and spelling out power. The Sikhs established this unique religious space where they actively and critically implementing their relationships with the Mughal imperial order in this manner (Grewal 1990; Bell 1992; Fenech 2013).

Literature Review

Growing scholarship on the origins of Sikhism and related studies into the early Sikh community allows the study to be afforded the necessary foundation. The earliest publications by Khushwant Singh (2004) and Harbans Singh (1992) trace Sikh teaching since its foundation by Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, and underline theological innovations and establishment of a separate community. W. H. McLeod (1996, 2005) also contributed the critical, text-historical appeal of Sikh sources including the Janamsaksi and the rahitnamas claiming that these writings show gradual construction of Sikh identity, not an explicit religious order at all. The given scholarship emphasizes that Sikh rituals have to be regarded as historically evolving practices that were shaped in the conditions of changing socio-political realities.

The association between the Sikh Gurus and the Mughal state has been written on by several historians and various interpretations emerged about them. J. S. Grewal (1990, 1998, 2004) gives a balanced picture indicating that there was initial accommodation of Sikh practices by the Mughal emperors and the subsequent turmoil, which resulted in the execution of Guru Arjan. Irfan Habib (2016) describes clarifies Sikh opposition to the context of Mughal agrarian and administration policies and mentions that possibly Sikh rituals represented the popular resistance to imperial institutions as well. Such worldviews indicate that the issue of ritual practice cannot be separated entirely in the politics of resistance and power.

The ritual theory offers a significant perspective, in terms of which to analyze these dynamics. Victor Turner (1969) believed that rites created communitas, and strengthened social unity, but had potential to pose a challenge to authority. Catherine Bell (1992) placed great emphasis on the situation of power as ritualization, by demonstrating how authority is written into social life through the rituals. All these theoretical profiles have been already rendered productively in South Asian studies including works of scholars like Axel Michaels (2004) and Lawrence Babb (1986) but almost never to Sikh practices. The article is an advancement that explicitly presents the phenomenon of ritual theory in the discourse with Sikh Mughal history.

The sangat ritual has been in the eyes of scholars as the foundation of Sikh communal identity due to its exclusive Sikh activities. The meaning of sangat, as explained by McLeod (1997), is a

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social innovation that ensured that a loosely knit religious group had a form. In the meantime, Gurinder Singh Mann (2001) associates sangat to the authority of the Guru Granth Sahib by noticing that the presence of the Guru was intermediated in communal gathering. This body of work implies that sangat served as both devotional activity and consolidatory authority, themes with which the Mughal focus on ritualized wearing of allegiance at the court can be linked.

Egalitarian Langar Langar as an institution has been addressed as a radical ritual which upset both caste and status hierarchies. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (1993) understands the meshing of the dos as an embodiment of Sikh egalitarian theology, and Irfan Habib (2016) emphasizes the social-political implications of langar during the cover of the Mughal rule that facilitated rigid hierarchies that framed the society. The opinion of Emperor Akbar taking part in the langar can be viewed as the historical anecdotes illustrating the point that ritual practices could serve both as the inclusion-to some extent and as a subtle confrontation to the imperial norms.

Kirtan or singing prayer songs have had weaker scholarly coverage, though scholars such as Allyn Miner (1993) and Bonnie C. Wade (1998) have indeed studied the ways in which sacred music in early-modern India functioned in overlapping domains of temple, court, and community. To the Sikh tradition, Pashaura Singh (2011) points out that kirtan played a key role in passing on the authority of the Guru by way of the shabad. This approach points to the significance of the auditory aspect of ritual potentially expressing its authority in similar manner traditional practices of Mughal courtly patronages to music.

Martyrdom as a theme has caused great academical debate. Louis Fenech (2008, 2013) presumes that the memory of the martyrdoms of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur was ritualized in the manner that it gave Sikhs an idea of who they are and offered some theological point of departure in defence. However, other historians such as Chetan Singh (1999) warns against the simple explanation of martyrdom by the inversion of politics since devotional memory was also a spiritual and symbolic element. According to this literature, martyrdom as which was a religious commemoration; this represented a political re-interpretation of violence itself.

Even the scholarship of the Mughal Empire illuminates the larger ritual milieu, in which Sikh practices came into shape. As Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2012) draw attention to, ritualized displays of power, whether at court ceremonies or to the general audiences, articulated the Mughal sovereignty. Barbara Stoler Miller (1992) and Ebba Koch (1997) give more focus on performative and visual aspects of Mughal rulers unearthing the fact that rituals and ceremonies were at the core of the imperial legitimacy. In contrast to that Sikh practices represented different devotional and power perspectives that at the same time coincided with the imperial standards and align the opposite sides of a shape.

Collectively, the available literature discloses something important about Sikh history, about Mughal politics, about ritual theory, but this literature also reveals the lack. Although historians have used Sikh-Mughal relations as conflict/accommodation, and various ritual theorists have also offered us instruments with which to study authority, few s

tudies have combined these strands in order to look at how Sikh rituals themselves were swearing of political activity. The article thus adds to the body of research by examining Sikh rituals of sangat, langar, kirtan and martyrdom remembrance through the prism of ritual and authority to show how devotion was both a form of spiritual practice and a socio-political negotiation strategy within Mughal India.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on the methodology of a historical-analytical approach, where close history of primary sources is analyzed alongside substantial input in the works of secondary historians. The limited original Sikh sources, including the Janamsakis, the hukamnamas as well as the primary Sikh texts are looked into to have the idea of how rituals alone, such as the sangat and the langar and the kirtan and also the martyrdom remembrance, are conceptualized and practiced in Sikh community. They are read together with chronicles of Mughal courts like the Tuzk-e-Jahangiri and Persian documents on administration, which provide information about how the imperial state viewed Sikh Gurus and ritual practices. Although of course they are not treated as clear accounts, the study learns to view these sources as constructed narratives that

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manifest contrasting claims to authority and legitimacy (McLeod 1996; Grewal 2004). The methodology intends to emphasize overlaps between the imperial politics and the devotional practice by reading the Sikh and Mughal sources in conversation.

This paper in addition to the textual sources, interacts with ritual theory and South Asian historiography to offer a conceptual framework of an analysis. Catherine Bell (1992) concepts and Victor Turner's insights of ritual and authority are utilized to explain how the Sikhs used it as a devotion as well as politics. The history of Sikh (Grewal 1998; Fenech 2013; Mann 2001) and Mughal political culture (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012; Koch 1997) are critically surveyed secondary resources to place Sikh rituals in the context of an imperial the larger history of the early modern India. The methodology thus employs an interdisciplinary as the approach is informed by history, religious studies and ritual theory to enumerate how Sikh Gurus and their citizens employed rituals to bargain, defy and reshape power under the Mughal reign.

Discussion

Sikh adherence to ritual and authority One can see the close connection between sovereignty and devotion through Sikh ritual practice during the reign of Guru Nanak. The devotional activity known as sangat, or congregational assembly was a communal identity setting, as well as a declaration. Sangat was developed in a daily Mughal-imperial order of power, which had by court and sovereignty regulations, to substitute spiritual influence to the teachings of the Guru and the sovereignty of the Guru and the Guru was practically the Guru of England in religiosity, embracing spiritual values alongside monetary and political tenures within the Indian empire (McLeod 1997; Grewal 2004). It was the congregation that in effect transferred ritual space into consent into a space of common authority that linked the disciples in subordination but indirectly repelled the imperial forms of legitimacy.

Another ritual that was central was the langar in which the same principles were articulated in person. Thanks to the mandatory communal seating and eating of meals, the practice of language omitted caste groups and made social equality the focus of Sikh prayer (Nikky-Guninder Singh 1993). With the Mughal, where the stratification of authority and social association arranged the imperial purview, the envision that grounded in different regional requests in the exploits of the imperial Mughal, langar served as a ritual declaration of the alternative vision of community. The episode of Emperor Akbar becoming a member of the Sikh langar gives a picture of the conflict and prospect of such exchanges - an imperial acknowledgement of a rite of equality that symbolically disrupted Mughal configurations in social division (Habib 2016).

The Kirtan or singing of hymns, made the Gurus power go into sound and performance. With the help of kirtan, the word of the Guru (shabad) became heard by the population, and put people in devotional bonds. Unlike the Mughal, where Indian and heterophonic sounds at court were considered as synonymous with imperial taste and power, Sikh kirtan stressed spiritual sovereignty and egalitarian approach to divine word (Wade 1998; Pashaura Singh 2011). Ritual sound, therefore, established a new sound dimension in which Sikh identity would thrive and as opposed to the courtly scenes of Mughal patronage.

As other political leaders, the early Sikh Gurus strongly based encounters through ritual practices. The cluster of traditions of Janamsakhi describes how Guru Nanak had met with Babur when he had offered his heart in place of begging his knees. Though overlaid with subsequent memory, these descriptions demonstrate how ritualized worship offered a channel through which an attempt to negotiate imperial presence was conducted without direct relinquishment of power (McLeod 1996). By so doing, Sikh rituals became new symbolic forms of resistance and provided the community with means through which to exercise spiritual autonomy in a highly-charged political climate.

Considered collectively, sangat, langar, and kirtan show that pre-modern Sikh practices were not individual privations of religion, but a collective display of self-definition. They legitimized the power of Guru and strengthened the solidarity of the community and also dealt with Mughal mechanisms of power. Ritual turned Sikh devotion into a political performance even prior to the onset of open war with the Mughal state.

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Mughal Engagement and the Politics of Devotion

The Mughal emperors too were very much interested in ritual as a way of establishing sovereignty. Ceremoniation processions, rites (darbar) strengthened the political and spiritual role of the emperor (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012). Rituals of the Sikhs were equal claims to power in this scheme. Mughal experience with the Sikh Gurus should then be regarded as a meeting of two ritual systems, one courtly and centralized, the other central one, communal and devotional.

The interaction of Akbar with Sikh rituals gives an eye opener on accommodation. His alleged reverence to Guru Arjan and even his taking part in the langar can indicate that the Mughal powers could, occasionally, accommodate Sikh ways as one sign of tolerance in the empire (Singh 1999). But this was not a non partisan involvement. It recognised the importance of the Sikh rituals and it also at the same time buried them within the act of inclusiveness by the emperor. Ritual therefore served as a focal point where Mughal sovereignty and Sikh devotion came into interaction with one another in conflicting fashions.

With the establishment of accommodation and repression, the case of the Guru Arjan and the manner he was executed under Jahangir exemplifies the demotion of accommodation to repression. A memoir that was written by Jahangir- the Tuzk-e-Jahangiri, positions the power of the Guru as a political danger, one that had to be checked through the means of imperial punishment. To the Sikh community, the martyrdom of the Guru was a memory to be ritualized as an act of supreme sacrifice (Fenech 2008). This event was therefore written within ritual memory in countervectors forms, as imperial demonstration of authority and Sikh veneration of struggle. The interpretation and justification of authority was realized through ritual on both sides.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan also changed Sikh cult devotions. The celebration of his death was turned into a core ritualized behavior, instilling the resistance in the text of Sikh identity. What the Mughal state tried to repress was ritualized as the sacred memory, which reinforced and gave authority and power instead of making it weak (Grewal 1990). Here the paradoxical strength of ritual is seen: any repression of imperialism created inadvertently the conditions of the emergence of new forms of devotional power.

The beginning of seventeenth century was therefore a critical change of situations in Sikh-Mughal relations. Imperial rituals attempted to discipline the power of the Sikhs and Sikhs rituals remodel imperial violence into the suffering of Christopieness. As the politics of devotion ceased as a deft brokering and came to denote a head-on struggle to the meaning and authority, this world was acted out in the form of ritual performance.

Rituals of Resistance and Community Formation

The Sikh ritual also increased the political aspect of the Sikh religion under the leadership of Guru Hargobind. Founding the Akal Takht in 1606 added a new ritual centre reflecting the twin activity of spiritual and temporal leadership (miri and piri). The ritual of donning two swords when attending readings professionalized the assertion of the Guru in both of them (Singh 2015). However, unlike Mughal imperial rituals in which the supreme importance was put on the unique sovereignty of the emperor, the Sikh rituals during the reign of Hargobind claimed supremacy to a parallel authority based on the worship of a deity.

Agranization of Sikh identity did not have solely rationalistic nature but was highly ritualistic in nature. Engagement with armed defense was a continuation of devotion, which is supposedly sanctified through the memory of Guru Arjan martyrdom in the ritual. Religious significance was added to martial practices and turned a rebellion into a sign of faiths (Fenech 2013). Ritual therefore combined the spiritual and political world enabling Sikh community to adapt to rising enmity by Mughals.

Even such more basic rites as sangat and langar acquired a new meaning under repression conditions. Coming together and having meals collectively turned into rebellion against a state which tried to humble Sikh power. Gurudwaras also exemplified both as places of worship and also places of political unity, where the process of ritual life kept up communal morale and identity (McLeod 2005). In that regard, even the most usual types of devotion practices attained political ground.

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Martyrdom ritualization did not stop at Guru Arjan but came to feature other martyrs such as Guru Tegh Bahadur. His admnation for execution by Aurangzeb became a memory of religious freedom in Sikh tradition, and the memory of this prevention gradually came to dominate the ritual life of Sikhs. These remembrance rites formed a story of sacred resistance to preserve and legitimate the Sikh power against the repression of the Mughals (Fenech 2008).

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Sikhs rituals had turned irreconcilable with politics of resistance. What started as Ethics of ritual worship had developed into acts of personified rebellion, memory and unitedness. Through ritual, the community could survive the repression of the imperial age, as well as to communicate its right to continue to possess the ultimate power.

Devotion, Authority, and the Politics of Memory

The interaction of the Sikh practices with that of the Mughal sovereignty underscore the extended use of ritual in current apparatus South Asian at the onset of the modern years. The same manner the Mughal sovereignty is exercised by use of courtly and ritualistic ceremonies, the Sikh devotion is expressed by use of practices given political connotations. The Sikh example therefore shows how rites are not only ideal but also constitutive of authority as such (Bell 1992; Turner 1969).

Another important feature that occurred in shaping collective memory was ritual. Martyrdom, the service to the community, and the music of the Sikhs were not just devotional acts of remembrance and redefined history. Ritual served to pass on memory between generations, making sure that Mughal repression was transformed into something that was sacred and not a political defeat of the post facto (Fenech 2013). Ritualized memory made the community to change vulnerability to resilience.

The Mughal state was not an exception when it comes to knowing the power of ritualized memory. Imperial memoirs, proclamation and rituals were made to enscribe power over the past. However when the praises of Sikh-Mughal collisions were involved, these imperial events could not wash out the constituent power that was asserted in the veneration in Sikhism. Rather, there were existing two rival memories of rites that supported one another in developing two distinct sets of comparability (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012).

Noteworthily, Sikh worship developed a model of power that was unlike Mughal sovereignty as well as Brahmanical hierarchy. Making the concentration of power on the Guru and the community central, the Sikh ritual practice defined a different religious community vision that would defy the existing modes. It was based on this alternative vision that the subsequent Khalsa developed, giving ritual, devotion and authority new roles as a unifying factor into a new collective identity (Singh 2004).

Overall, Sikh practice during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries serves as an example of how faith served to provide a channel of politics. Rituals represented political power and spiritual faith, either through sangat, langar or kirtan, remembrance of martyrdom or the Akal Takht. These practices have served as tools of negotiating and resisting as well as memories in their interaction with Mughal emperors. The politics of devotion was not, however, incidental to the Sikh history but a feature of its development at Mughal rule.

Conclusion

Sikh ritual history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows a complicated overlap between devotion and community-building as well as political bargaining. The sangat, langar, kirtan and martyrdom practices were not mere religious identifications but were practices that gave rise to the identity of Sikhs community as a whole. The importance of this was that they possessed the dual effect of recognizing the authority of the Gurus to the community and at the same time a moral and spiritual alternative to the hierarchical status quo in the Mughal state. This two-fold nature of the Sikh practices reveals that the question of obedience could never be divorced of inquiry into authority in Mughal India.

On their part, the Mughal emperors reacted inconsistently to the increasing strength of Sikhs. There are incidences when imperial acknowledgement can make spaces within these situations, such as the ones of respectful interaction of Akbar with the langar. On other occasions, especially

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during the reigns of Jahangir and Aurangzeb, the canalization of Sikh practices as possible sources of resistance aroused or instigated repression and violence. The martyring of Guru Arjan and the act of militant Guru Hargobind are an example of how practices that were once deeply devotional could turn into places of political protest, and that observances like martyring became ways of resistance. Such episodes reveal that Sikh-Mughal interactions were formed equally by ritualized devotion and by war.

In an expanded sense, this research focuses on rituals as a component of both social justification and political challenge. The egalitarianism implemented by Sikh Gurus through the systems of the langar opposed the hierarchy based on caste and position that were deeply rooted in the social life of that time and provided a new pattern of society that directly opposed the Mughal social order. Meanwhile the ritualised memory of martyrdom transformed they have turned repression into sources of authority lasting power gave it a new doss on the memory so that even Mughal efforts at oppression would eat at Sikh identity instead of eating it away. Ritual is therefore an amazing place, which resisted, renegotiated and reformulated the power.

This article will help not only Sikh studies but also the overall historiography of early modern South Asia by situating these interactions through ritual dimensions of cosmovision between Sikhs and the Mughals. It highlights the sensitivity of understanding devotion as a religious ceremony and practices without taking into consideration that devotion is a politically and socially sensitive action. In this manner, it also invites some additional consideration of how rituals operated as languages of power within religious communities in Mughal India. Finally, the Sikh case shows that the politics of devotion played a key role in forms of religious power and imperial rule of the sub-continent in the early modern period.

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