
Religion Beyond the Iconic: Exploring the Shared Ownership of Nanak

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Abstract (in French and English)

This paper will examine the multiple ownership of Nanak through an exploration of sites, practices and identities. The religious boundaries which have been erected around Nanak's symbol have come to connote identities and categories which I will highlight as 'shared difference' within the heteropraxy that surrounds the veneration of Nanak. While Nanak is considered the founder of the Sikh 'religion,' he also occupies a central position within Nanakpanthi/Sindhi and Sufi community histories which transcend Sikh, Hindu and other formal categories of difference while also appearing in a multitude of other sites and practices which have existed outside of the radar of more conventional notions of Sikh studies. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Punjab across Pakistan and India over two and a half years, the paper will explore how these on-going and sustaining notions of multiple ownership call for an exploration of the figure of Nanak through sites and practices, which require attention to lived traditions, beliefs, and practices in order to trace how iconic identities are projected alongside the sustaining circulation of multiple ownership.

Keywords: Punjab, Sikhism, religion, shrines

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