

Khan, N. 2017. "COLONIAL LAHORE: A HISTORY OF THE CITY AND BEYOND. By IAN TALBOT and TAHIR KAMRAN. pp. 267. London, C. Hurst and Co., 2016." Book Review. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 28 (1): 198-200.

By mining the archives and interpreting materials through the lenses of imperial globalisation and international urban modernism, this immensely rich history finds new ways to challenge the stubborn orthodoxies of a presumptuous inward looking British imperial gaze, by firmly placing the city of Colonial Lahore within a longer cosmopolitan history of trans-regional, transnational trade, political, religious, artistic, literary and creative influence and connections. These connections problematise the boundaries of the region we call the subcontinent by disrupting the view of a 'backwater' waiting to be opened to urban commerce by an interlude of British rule (p. 9); they also reveal a dazzling palimpsest of European and wider influences on the city, from Chinese, Armenian, to Belgian and Swiss, stretching from AD 630 through to the 1881 British Census which recorded Lahore having the highest percentage of "strangers" in All-India (p. 21). The core of the book lies in the challenge these encounters pose to the imperial encounter with Lahore's inner heart, its walled city, which stood as an Orientalist metaphor for enclosure and isolation—and for a restrictive view of a city which would putatively become "more English than Bombay" (p.15). The opening chapters unfix this gaze—perpetuated in colonial and postcolonial writings and Indian imitators including Syed Abdul Latif— through the extensive documentation of the shifting tides and movements of urban settlement, building and expansion. Here the erection of Civil Lines, Charing Cross Mall, Lawrence Garden and Cantonment stratified a new colonial geography of class and hierarchy outside the walls, with the city's Indian elite occupying the new suburban bungalow area of Civil Lines (p. 23) and Pashtun labourers squatted in a city now zoned not only physically but also in historical-political time—one which favourably served British efforts to establish stability in colonial India's "sword arm" and "bread basket" (p. 37).

The book aligns itself with other works that likewise challenge representations of the colonial cityscape as a bounded isolationist, introspective territorial entity. Instead it seeks to read the city relationally, in "stretched" terms of spatiality and connectivity in which local and global conjunctions of time, space and place

supersede those of geographical place (p. 41). Through a focus on trans-historical migration and exchange, and overlapping, arrhythmic, simultaneously forward looking and retrospective temporalities, we are invited to interrogate afresh the idea that geographical borders can no longer be equated with national territories or city gates and walls; and to disrupt Western cartography with its notions of linearity and progression that fail to capture the roundabout and circuitous path of the East.

The ensuing chapters variedly dispel the British view of its superior, exclusive modernising presence. They establish Lahore as fully connected across Punjab, wider India, and regions of the world far beyond. Taking the diverse themes of *darvazas* and *mohallas*; travellers, tourists and texts; poets, wrestlers and cricketers; pilgrims and shrines; martyrs, migrants and militants and the consumption of foreign goods, they give us wider pause for reflection on the ways colonial time-space-materiality shaped the illusion of the geographical and historical specificity of cities.

Chapter Two opens the city's gates (*darvazas*) to explore Lahore's wider connectedness. Through framings of combined "place and space" it unsettles geographical dichotomies between the colonial and "old Lahore" (p. 43), and delves into the bazaars, alleyways and neighbourhoods that clustered around three of the city's gates. Whereas Mochi gate became a central political forum for public gatherings, notably for Muslim League rallies and the Pakistan Movement in the 1940s, the Bhati gate locality gave sustenance to the nascent Lahore cinema industry, and its artists musicians and writers who travelled to Calcutta and Bombay and back. Shah Almi neighbourhood by turn possessed important political, cultural and intellectual connections for poetry, literary gatherings, music, medicine, popular culture and theatre to flourish—including the career of the singer and actress Noor Jehan. Cross-community ties of friendship, and religious and cultural patronage complicate the epithet of Lahore as the centre of communal tensions (p. 45)—as does detail on trans-local, intra-familial, political and religious connections, from the patronage of Shia celebrations, to the importance of the site of the Mubarak Haveli from 1719 to the present (pp. 54-56); to the launch of All-India Radio Lahore in 1937 (pp. 62-64).

Chapter Three explores the under-researched literary domain of the imperial tourist guidebook, introducing detail from archives including of Thomas Cook and H. A. Newell that describe the infrastructural development of commercial travel and tourism in North India, including the role of photographers, hotel guides and

postcards. While these mostly promoted the romanticism of Lahore's Mughal past, the diaries of two Fabian socialists, the Webbs, by contrast recorded the All-India influence of educational and Hindu reformist organisations (pp. 79-80). Chapter Four describes how, alongside the popular forum of *mushairas* (competitive poetry symposia), which influenced critiques of classical Urdu culture and poetry, the city's localities nurtured sportsmen in wrestling (*akhara*), and produced legendary wrestlers who drew in crowds from all across India. Cricket came later after the mid 1850s, and in 1932 two players represented India at Lords. Chapter Five examines the role of advertising in creating the consumption of overseas products (including women's fashions, household goods, clocks and watches, motorcars and bicycles) during the closing decades of colonial rule. In Chapter Six pilgrims and shrines in the colonial age are used to illustrate Lahore's importance as a railway hub for providing religious pilgrims from Tibet and Punjab access to Lahore and wider Punjab, to steamships and to the Hijaz which became a worrisome hub of revolutionary resistance to British rule. Chapter Seven traces Lahore's transnational revolutionary networks through the late colonial era across Afghanistan, Arabia, North America and Europe.

This book wonderfully disrupts the ticking of the colonial time-clock and narrative of unyielding British power, and introduces the altogether more dynamic interference of unexpected forces from within. It will appeal to historians, anthropologists, and specialists in South Asian, literary and urban studies interested in rethinking the spatial and ideological walls of the imperial narrative. Still now, the city's expanding forms of global connectivity, alongside efforts to conserve Lahore's historical heritage, continue to perpetuate Orientalist and inward-looking portrayals of the city. <N.Khan@brighton.ac.uk>

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