

Panel 3: Radical politics in 20th century Punjab

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Abstract: The historiography of twentieth century Punjab has been understandably dominated by religious sectarianism and partition. Punjab was partitioned when India gained independence from British rule and divided again because of linguistic and religious differences. However this dominance obscures the heterodox intellectual, social and cultural trends that emerged in Punjab and influenced the trajectory of its politics. This panel will explore the tradition of radicalism in Punjab, a tradition that continues to resonate in the political language of activists across the world. Radicalism is a political opinion or method that is opposed to the norm and is most commonly linked with left wing ideologies influenced by Marxism. However religious political groups such as the Akalis, the Ad-Dharmis, the Khaksars and the Ahrars, to name but a few, were also radical in their political objectives and methods. Punjabi history provides the opportunity to interrogate the term 'radicalism'; to explore the relationship between left radicalism and religious radicalism and its relationship with terms such as 'militancy', 'terrorism' and 'extremism' in the Punjab context and elsewhere in the twentieth century. This panel will draw together scholars who work on the heterodox origins of radical politics in Punjab, its links with people and groups outside province and its influence on politics both in Punjab and, through the Punjabi diaspora, the world.

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