



# The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition

*Anne Murphy*

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## **The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition** Anne Murphy

Anne Murphy offers a groundbreaking exploration of material representations of the Sikh past, showing how objects, as well as historical sites, and texts, have played a vital role in the production of the Sikh community as an evolving historical and social formation from the eighteenth century to the present.

Drawing together work in religious studies, postcolonial studies, and history, Murphy explores how 'relic' objects such as garments and weaponry have, like sites, played dramatically different roles across political and social contexts-signifiers of authority and even sovereignty in one; collected, revered, and displayed with religious significance in another-and are connected to a broader engagement with the representation of the past that is central to the formation of the Sikh community. By highlighting the connections between relic objects and historical sites, and how the status of sites changed in the colonial period, she also provides crucial insight into the circumstances that brought about the birth of a new territorial imagination of the Sikh past in the early twentieth century, rooted in existing precolonial historical imaginaries centered in place and object. The life of the object today and in the past, she suggests, provides unique insight into the formation of the Sikh community and the crucial role representations play in it.

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