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Title: *Prophetic Maharaja: Loss, Sovereignty, and the Sikh Tradition in Colonial South Asia*

Author: Rajbir Singh Judge

Publisher: Columbia University Press, New York

Year: 2024 | Page: 320 | Price: \$ 14.40

ISBN: 978-93-5944-871-8

Rajbir Singh Judge's *Prophetic Maharaja: Loss, Sovereignty, and the Sikh Tradition in Colonial South Asia* offers a deeply layered meditation on sovereignty, exile, and memory. Seeking to examine and unravel the strengths and weaknesses of a region, its religion, and its people under British Rule, the book attempts to document the colonial relationships that require recognition through alternative histories. This exploration is a profound exercise in understanding what can be termed as 'unfair and unjust political ethics of colonialism.' Through this book, Judge revisits history and historiography surrounding Duleep Singh's¹ persona, his efforts to return to Undivided Punjab, and his attempt to reclaim his inheritance in the 1880s.²

In this book, Judge claims that his work is a historical narrative created for Duleep Singh, while framing a narrative that refuses to historicize. Indeed, the book is staged with a series of refusals. On the one hand, Judge probes how a people and a tradition grappled with loss, and on the other hand, he addresses the problem of space of history through a refusal. These are not two disparate modes of engagement. Rather, they are intertwined throughout the book, ebbing and flowing across the five chapters. As he puts it, "writing a narrative of a historical figure such as Singh is itself a bid to come to terms with the failure and narrative of history."³

Judge tells us that, after using Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is "no 'real' Singh nor an authentic story to tell."⁴ Judge's aim, then, is not to recover the history of Singh, but to understand how the idea of Singh circulated in late nineteenth-century Punjab, and the British Empire more