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Sikhism: An Introduction (International Library of African Studies)

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

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Sikhism: An Introduction (International Library of African Studies) Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh Almost from the moment, some five centuries ago, that their religion was founded in the Punjab by Guru Nanak, Sikhs have enjoyed a distinctive identity. This sense of difference, forged during Sikhism's fierce struggles with the Mughal Empire, is still symbolised by the 'Five Ks' ('panj kakar', in Punjabi), those articles of faith to which all baptised Sikhs subscribe: uncut hair bound in a turban; comb; special undergarment; iron bracelet and dagger (or kirpan) - the unique marks of the Sikh military fraternity (the word Sikh means 'disciple' in Punjabi). Yet for all its ongoing attachment to the religious symbols that have helped set it apart from neighbouring faiths in South Asia, Sikhism amounts to far more than just signs or externals. Now the world's fifth largest religion, with a significant diaspora especially in Britain and North America, this remarkable monotheistic tradition commands the allegiance of 25 million people, and is a global phenomenon. In her balanced appraisal, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh reviews the history, theology and worship of a community poised between reconciling its hereditary creeds and certainties with the fast-paced pressures of modernity. She outlines and explains the core Sikh beliefs, and explores the writings and teachings of the Ten Sikh Gurus in Sikhism's Holy Scriptures, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (more usually called just the 'Granth'). Further chapters explore Sikh ethics, art and architecture, and matters of gender and the place of women in the tradition. The book attractively combines the warm empathy of a Sikh with the objective insights and acute perspectives of a prominent scholar of religion.

'In this delightful study Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh introduces the reader to the history, religion, and culture of the Sikhs, highlighting the various issues related to doctrine, worship, ethics, art, architecture, and diaspora. Her bold critique of patriarchal structures of Sikh society is refreshing. Written in accessible style this exciting book will appeal not only to undergraduate students of Sikh studies, religion, medieval Indian history, and literature, but also to lay readers who will gain firsthand information about the youngest world religion.' - Pashaura Singh, Professor and Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini Endowed Chair in Sikh and Punjabi Studies University of California, Riverside

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