



Sikh Research Journal

Vol. 6 No. 1

This article is from *Sikh Research Journal*, the online peer-reviewed journal of Sikh and Punjabi Studies *

Sikh Research Journal *Vol. 6. No. 1. Published: Spring 2021

<http://sikhresearchjournal.org>

<http://sikhfoundation.org>

Gathering the Vanishing History of Punjab and South Asia Through Crowdsourced Lived Memories

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Abstract

The 1947 Partition Archive is a crowdsourced oral history repository that trains and empowers citizens to document life stories of those who witnessed the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The novel methods for oral history documentation used by The 1947 Partition Archive aim to democratize the telling of history by exploiting modern communication technology. Groups divided by Partition, such as those identifying by nationality – Indian or Pakistani, or religion – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh among others, share the same platform for documenting and reflecting on oral histories of Partition. The crowdsourced oral histories reveal the wide-reaching international impacts of the Partition on individual lives, communities, economics, arts, culture, education and much more. This paper provides a glimpse into the contents of the oral history archive and explores a variety of new possibilities the oral history record presents in understanding our past, alongside the traditional archive, at times supplementing it, and at other times standing as a new primary source of information. Given the integral connection between Partition and modern Sikh history, the oral history collection is of significance to students studying various aspects of Sikh culture, identity and history.

Keywords: 1947 Partition, oral histories, Punjab, Sikhs, India, Pakistan

Introduction

The 1947 Partition of Punjab and Bengal in South Asia is arguably one of the most defining events for the subcontinent over the last century. Nearly 15 million people became refugees in 1947, anywhere between 250,000 to 3 million lost their lives during unprecedented mass violence, countless children were orphaned and women were kidnapped, raped and killed. As British colonizers retreated from South Asia, hundreds of kingdoms were merged together with British occupied regions or, British India, and reorganized into two new countries: India and Pakistan. Identity building in the two new nations began immediately, and the resettling of millions of refugees was a part of that process. The nature of the colonial power transfer and the birth of a democracy transformed South Asia in fundamental ways that need to be explored from a humanistic perspective. To understand the transformation, the pre-independence history, the Partition process and the post-independence socio-

economic evolution, The 1947 Partition Archive began documenting video-based oral histories of Partition eyewitnesses in 2010. Today, over 9,500 individuals have shared their life stories, building a new tapestry of nuanced perspectives that collectively provide insights into the transformation of a subcontinent from hundreds of kingdoms into three modern nation states: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Because the Sikh homeland of Punjab was one of the two states directly affected in 1947, Partition is an integral and significant chapter in Sikh history. Here we explore how oral histories from The 1947 Partition Archive provide missing links and a deeper glimpse into Punjabi and South Asian history.

How can we learn about Punjab and its past from oral history?

Too often, the folk history of Punjab as most Punjabis know it, is learned through a communal lens. To generalize: Sikhs may sing the praises of the last beloved Maharaja of the soil, Ranjit Singh. Hindus may take pride in the ancient history of Sanskrit scholarship and the land which hails as the origin place of many yogic and Vedic practices. Muslims may highlight the cultural renaissance and the artistic traditions developed under Muslim leadership and the evolution of unique practices such as Sufism. Furthermore, many Punjabi Muslims take pride in recalling family bloodlines that can be traced back to Central Asia and the Middle East, with ancestors having traveled towards Hindustan with the many rulers or other Silk Road traders during centuries of yore. Hindus, on the other hand, take pride in being indigenous sons of the soil, while Sikhs are generally more concerned with establishing their distinct identity and being neither Hindu nor *Musalman* (Muslim), and recollecting history as it began with Guru Nanak. Yet, our work documenting oral histories reveals that the story of Punjab and Sikhs (or any other group: Muslims, Jains, Hindus, Christians, Jews, among others) can only be understood when taken into context with the complex and nuanced history of Punjab's diverse cultures, dialects and surrounding regions.

Oral histories force us to reconsider our long-held beliefs as we empathize with the human story of another, whose lived experiences may contradict our own preconceptions.¹ This paper explores the launching, ongoing creation and implications of the first and largest oral history archive on Partition as well as contemporary South Asian history today: The 1947 Partition Archive. More specifically, to serve the mission of the *Sikh Research Journal*, this paper explores

¹ See also, Butalia (1998), Sengputa (2013), and Singh Bhalla (2016, 2019).

the documentation of Partition oral histories as they relate to Sikhs and the Punjab – a region which is central to the Sikh faith, since Punjab is the homeland of Sikhism’s founders, the Sikh Gurus whose “gaddi” (or lineage of Guruship) began with Guru Nanak Dev of the Bedi clan from village Talwandi which is located in present-day Pakistan - and whose descendants’ oral histories are preserved in The 1947 Partition Archive.

The 1947 Partition of Punjab (and Bengal) no doubt continues to impact South Asia today and all of those members of the global Punjabi diaspora, who 75 years later, still grapple with resettlement and multiple migrations. The story of Partition is often seen by each community through a communal lens. Sikh participants of the project often mourn the loss of their “*Mecca*,” or the birthplace of their first teacher, Guru Nanak, as having been “left behind in Pakistan.”² Yet, Sikhs are not alone to believe they were the “worst affected,” as many have expressed during the interview process. Sindhi Hindus (or are they Sikhs?)³ often mourn the loss of their “homeland” as it “remains in Pakistan,” and remain largely unaware of the majority Muslim population of Sindh. The Sindhi Hindu view of a loss of homeland is mirrored by Bihari Muslims for instance, and several other groups. Which group then was the worst affected? Or is it even fair to ask this question - because ultimately the experience of Partition arguably varies by individual rather than by group? Socio-economic positioning of individuals in society, it can be argued, played perhaps an even larger role in determining experiences of Partition than ethnicity and religion as we garner from oral history. Why did the Partition happen, and who was responsible? How could we have prevented the violence? What caused the unspeakable violence, specifically in Punjab? Or, was the violence really limited to Punjab, as described in popular lore? (Oral histories tell us it wasn’t.) How and why did we become a global diaspora? Whom amongst us became a part of the global diaspora and who stayed behind? How does Partition continue to impact us today? What about the experience of women? What about epigenetics?

² The events leading up to Partition were complex and historical accounts are still contested. Numerous documents, including newspaper archives and text archives reveal the key role in negotiations between the British leadership and indigenous political parties. Master Tara Singh was one of the leaders representing the Sikhs politically during negotiations. One of the more recent overviews of this history can be found in Gandhi (2013).

³ As oral histories in The 1947 Partition Archive and several publications reveal, Sindhis who did not follow Islam often did not self-identify as Hindu or Sikh, but as Sindhi, and in most cases worshiped Sufi saints alongside the Guru Granth Sahib and a number of idols as well.

As with Holocaust survivors, and Irish potato famine survivors, does Partition impact our DNA?⁴

As our generation awakens to the history of Partition, the inquiries that surface are endless. To help satiate the needs of current and future researchers from all walks of life, we began documenting oral histories of the last survivors of Partition, a disappearing generation, 63 years after the event. Oral histories were gathered in an open-ended manner, with no particular research topic in mind, so as to serve as many fields of inquiry as possible. With time passing on and taking witnesses with it as they age, the documentation process is being executed in a manner of urgency. Below I will provide an overview on the creation of The 1947 Partition Archive, its current status, contents, relevance to Sikh history and its potential to revolutionize our understanding of the near and ancient past of Punjab, South Asia and thus, our own selves.

Origins and development of The 1947 Partition Archive

I am often labeled the “founder” of The 1947 Partition Archive, but in truth, this effort was born out of and continues to grow from the collective contributions of thousands of individuals. Perhaps my main distinguishing contribution is my relentless urge to continue this work, even through the darkest hour of financial adversity. Perhaps my other distinguishing contribution is conceptualizing the idea of documenting Partition oral histories in 2008 and in crowdsourcing it in 2009.⁵ In this too, i.e. the process of documenting Partition oral histories, I am not alone or the first. It appears to have been an idea that touched the conscience of hundreds, perhaps thousands of others, as strangers have confessed to me over the years. What I believe made execution possible during this instance was my unique geographical

⁴ Epigenetic studies of survivors of the Irish Potato famine and those who survived the Jewish holocaust concentration camps reveal a higher propensity for certain genetic markers for obesity in the former case and elevated anxiety levels in the latter case. See, for example, Shen, L., Li, C., Wang, Z. *et al.* Early-life exposure to severe famine is associated with higher methylation level in the *IGF2* gene and higher total cholesterol in late adulthood: the Genomic Research of the Chinese Famine (GRECF) study. *Clin Epigenet* 11, 88 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13148-019-0676-3>, as well as: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/descendants-of-holocaust-survivors-have-altered-stress-hormones/>

⁵ The coining of the term ‘crowdsourcing’ and the idea of distributing work for social good to volunteers using the internet was born in the Department of Physics at University of California at Berkeley by physicists involved in protein folding experiments (as described in an August 2010 issue of *Wired* magazine). The author was then a researcher at the department and influenced by the concept. Further discussion can be found in Singh Bhalla (2021).

placement and my background in technology, as well as a unique time in the history of technological advancements that allowed us access to novel digital tools that overcame the many traditional barriers in documenting oral histories of Partition.

I was born into a military family in Delhi to Punjabi parents. My mother was born in East Punjab and all of my childhood summers were spent frolicking the fields of my maternal grandparents' village where I fell in love with folk history and grew intrigued by the barbed wire fences that separated East and West Punjab. My father was born in Lahore, West Punjab, on the other side of the barbed wire fence and was a toddler when my grandparents were forced to become refugees. My father's military postings took us to Kashmir, Ladakh, Pune and Chandigarh, before we immigrated to the United States following the fallout from Operation Blue Star and the precarious situation for Sikhs in India during the late 1980s. The ongoing India-Pakistan conflict, the folk memories of Partition, and my own memories of the carnage of 1984 were an integral part of my formative years and informed my desire to bridge the gap between folk and official histories later in life. I carried this desire with me, not knowing the solution for nearly two decades. Finally, during a 2008 visit to the oral testimony archives at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan, I got my answer. It came as a bolt and I finally knew what needed to be done: just like the survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, the story of Punjab, rooted in Partition, needed to be told by those who witnessed it. Only they could convey their lived experiences through their words, emotions, facial expression and body language. Truth is embodied in multiple forms of communications converging to tell the same story. This is why video-based oral testimonies were so powerful: so many forms of communication, the spoken and unspoken, as well as the tonal, could be conveyed together.

Having moved to California in 2009 to pursue post-doctoral research on quantum transport at the Department of Physics at the University of California at Berkeley (hereafter "UC Berkeley") and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, I began seeking volunteers to join me on the weekends in documenting oral testimonies of Partition witnesses in 2010. Through local resources like the Regional Oral History Office at UC Berkeley and the Department of History at Stanford University, our initial rudimentary storytelling process was formalized into a professional oral history protocol and public teaching module. UC Berkeley students and postdoctoral researchers joined me as volunteers in the mission and together we developed the initial protocols for crowdsourcing during months of all-night sessions in the underground Moffit Library. It must be noted that the systematic crowdsourcing protocol we developed during these late-night sessions

was informed by the volunteers' work⁶ in measuring electronic signals in quantum transport, and by the basic principles of journalism.

As the initial volunteer team grew, we met in homes, in balconies, in gardens and wherever a community member would provide space. Quite often, we secured classrooms after hours at UC Berkeley. The project was marketed through handmade posters pasted around the UC Berkeley campus and across restaurants and shops in the San Francisco Bay Area. The 1947 Partition Archive was registered in 2011 as a non-profit organization in California. That same year, volunteers developed an oral history workshop that was taught for free to anyone who participated. By late 2011, I had used my years of college level teaching experience to develop an oral history workshop webinar, which then attracted hundreds of "Citizen Historians"⁷ from across the world through social media postings. Through constant public feedback, and feedback from interviewees as well as scholars, the workshop, as well as oral history field materials developed for the project continued to evolve, and do so even to this day.

Because the effort required so many volunteers for each part of the oral history process, in the spirit of egalitarianism, it was decided along the way that the names of volunteers must be documented during each part of the process. For instance, an oral history interview required participation from a trained *Citizen Historian* who recorded the interview together with a camera person. The interview, the accompanying documents and metadata were then received and organized by an archivist, the interview abstract (or summary) reviewed by a copyeditor and eventually curated by a volunteer who posted it on social media. Individual volunteers playing each role in the process were given authorship credit in the archive and anywhere the interview was publicly posted. Furthermore, as an archive that is crowdsourced and crowd-funded, donors who sponsor an oral history interview are also credited.

By late 2011, volunteers from around the globe had begun discovering and participating in the oral history workshops. A unique challenge emerged at this time: the video files they recorded were too large to upload and send through

⁶ The three volunteers' ongoing research work and studies in journalism as well as quantum electronics arguably played a role in conceptualizing the crowdsourcing approach for oral history documentation.

⁷ Volunteers who train at The 1947 Partition Archive's oral history workshops, and then conduct and submit an oral history interview are certified as "Citizen Historians" by The 1947 Partition Archive after their submitted works are reviewed and determined to comply within a formal oral history framework.

existing cloud services and FTP (file transfer protocol) technologies to The 1947 Partition Archive in Berkeley. A solution emerged in 2012 shortly after The 1947 Partition Archive was admitted to UC Berkeley's start-up accelerator program, Skydeck, as a part of its first cohort of early-stage startups. Kloudless, another Skydeck based company developing emerging cloud technology solutions provided a proprietary solution which continues to fuel the backend of The 1947 Partition Archive, solving all uploading needs, including from places with unreliable connectivity. While new technologies have since emerged, making large format video transfer a non-issue presently, the seamless integration of Kloudless into our website application continues to serve this purpose.

In late 2012, yet another challenge emerged: it was becoming evident that crowdsourcing had its shortcomings. This method only enabled oral history documentation within technologically equipped populations leaving gaps in representation from large segments of the population from underprivileged backgrounds, especially rural communities. To solve this challenge, The 1947 Partition Archive launched a competitive Story Scholars program which entails scholars chosen through a competition who are paid to gather oral histories from a predetermined group that is defined either geographically, ethnically or socio-economically. That year, the Story Scholars program was launched through a pilot test in Amritsar with support from the American India Foundation. Subsequently, the program was launched across Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Through the combined methods described above, which have continued to evolve in complexity as a result of community feedback and new developments in the field of oral history, The 1947 Partition Archive has helped record and preserve over 9,500 oral history interviews of Partition witnesses. The collection today is the largest in South Asia, and amongst the ten largest video based oral history collections in the world today. The collection will continue to grow as long as Partition witnesses are alive.

Along with documentation work, as a public archive that is also built by the public, The 1947 Partition Archive plays a second role as a curator of its own contents, similar to a museum. This is not a role played by traditional brick and mortar archives which primarily serve the role of being a reference resource. Here again, The 1947 Partition Archive continues to reflect public feedback by employing creative digital means of displaying its contents to satiate viewer curiosity and to engage and teach members of the public in a manner that is compelling and draws more participants to the project. In this sense the archive is a living and evolving entity that reflects public sentiment and grows through public participation, while

also influencing public sentiment. Documenting history thus shapes the future in this feedback loop.

For all participants building The 1947 Partition Archive, surprises never cease. Content that challenges our views or expands our understanding arrives nearly on a daily basis. For instance, within the first two years of beginning this work I was personally taken aback when we received oral histories from ancient South Asian Jewish community members who migrated first to Pune from Karachi and Lahore and then to Israel in 1948 when young Jewish men from India were recruited for the Israeli “builders’ movement.” They left their families behind in India and moved in with adoptive parents in communes known as “kibbutz.” However, most complained about feeling like second class citizens with respect to the Ashkenazi Jews as they took on the more menial work during the Israeli rebuilding process.

Another example of new learnings came from the Sindhi Hindu community of Fremont, California. A man I had personally interviewed explained that it was customary for Sindhis to worship idols alongside the Guru Granth Sahib and images of Muslim *peers* (mystics and saints). They were “Nanak Panthis” or followers of Guru Nanak, but also held in high regard a menagerie of other saints and mystics. Their practices were rejected as “not Sikh” by California Sikhs, he noted, but openly accepted by the California Hindu community. Hence the Sindhis established the Fremont Hindu temple, where they were welcomed to install a Guru Granth Sahib. Sindhis in Mumbai and Delhi were confronted with similar circumstances following Partition, he noted, and found themselves choosing the “Hindu” identity, an identity they only adopted after their migration to India. Yet another Sindhi woman whom I had interviewed in Faridkot, Punjab, India hailed from Sukkur’s Bedi family. She practiced the Sikh faith in India since, she claimed, her family were heirs to the “gaddi” (hereditary seat, similar to a throne) of Guru Nanak Dev’s son whom, she noted, had made a home in Sukkur centuries ago to spread the Guru’s message. The gaddi holder was revered as the true Guru until the family’s forced migration from Sukkur in 1947. This anecdote also serves as an example of one of many ancient traditions forgotten and lost during the refugee resettlement process.

Initial insights on Sikhs, the Punjab, the 1984 genocide and the 1947 Partition

Overall, stories in The 1947 Partition Archive extend from geographies as far east as Burma, reflecting the Nagaland/Burma boundary, and as far west as Kabul reflecting the Durand line boundary. Of these, at least 25% of the oral history

collection reflects the Punjabi experience. Punjab, after all, witnessed the largest migration, not only from the violent mob attacks but later also through a forced government exchange program that many witnesses recall in their interviews. Many, like my own grandfather, had chosen to stay on, in their new countries and ancestral homes. However, they were forcefully evicted after independence, possibly due to pressures on the new governments of India and Pakistan to settle the throngs of new refugees arriving in their place.⁸

The long format oral histories recorded by The 1947 Partition Archive reflect life stories and also ancestral lore. Thus, historical events that occurred before or after Partition that may have impacted the interviewee's life are also recorded. In this sense, the collection reflects South Asian history through most of the last century, as experienced specifically by those who also witnessed the Partition. In Punjab, witnesses whose recordings are preserved in the collection were also witness to incidents such as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the 1942 Japanese bombing of Burma and the subsequent migrations of Punjabis who lived in Rangoon and surrounding regions at that time, the post-Partition wars between newly formed India and Pakistan, the Punjabi role in the Bangladesh struggle, the 1984 violence and much more.

The recollections of generational lore passed down in families holds a wealth of information on old Punjabi traditions and lifestyles. For instance, several elders we have interviewed in villages across Punjab have traditionally memorized the names and short biographical sketches of up to 50 generations of ancestors before them. These often include complex relational histories between clans including through marriages. Yet another woman remembered an ancestor who was a contemporary of Guru Nanak, and was a Guru himself. He was however an intellectual rival of Guru Nanak. She put it into perspective by noting that Guru Nanak was alive at the time of "the age of Gurus" and that most of the other movements of that time period had since died out, while unique circumstances in history had galvanized Guru Nanak's followers into forming a new religion: Sikhism. Her family lore may be referencing what has come to be known as the "bhakti movement" from that time period. The other movements, she noted, had faded with time. She reminded me in the interview, that intellectuals and great minds do not arise in a vacuum. It is just that only a few stand out in history while memories of the others fade away.

⁸ An excellent account of the refugee crisis being drawn out into the 1950's can be found in Zamindar (2007).

Another man, who claimed to be a cousin to the late freedom fighter, Bhagat Singh, recalled the story of his family settling in West Punjab. He noted that before the British built the canal system, rural West Punjab mostly consisted of lush forested regions. Following his ancestors' participation in the British military in the mid 1800's they were gifted land in newly canaled West Punjab. They were encouraged to deforest the land for farming purposes. There they ran into nomadic tribes which he referred to as "jangli" (a derogatory term that means "wild and uncivilized"), who wore long black robes and had "yellow hair" and "pointed features." These tribes often raided their newly built village since it was built on their traditional pastoral land and impacted their livelihood. This conflict though eventually faded and it is not clear what the fate of the black robed nomadic tribes turned out to be. Some have pointed out to me the similarity in description to the present day black-robed Nooristani people, who often do fit the description of having "yellow hair."

Many Punjabis recall the Japanese bombing of Burma in 1942 which led to a long caravan-like migration. Thousands fled Rangoon and marched through the jungles for over a month until they reached Bengal, from where they began their journeys back to their ancestral homes in Punjab. Many of these migrants had barely settled back in Punjab when they were forced to migrate again in 1947. For some, the migrations continued again in 1965 during the India-Pakistan war, especially if they were close to the border between the countries, or in 1984 when Punjab faced a Hindu exodus from the rural areas.

Recollections from those who also witnessed the turmoil of 1984 provide a unique glimpse into the multi-faceted aspects of the violence that unfolded. One man, a self-proclaimed gurdwara-going Hindu from Amritsar recalled to me how the residents of the areas surrounding the Golden Temple were growing increasingly wary of Jarnail Bhindrawale's "young Sikh boys." As the conflict with the center escalated, the young boys grew more desperate and began looting and stealing rations, sometimes at gunpoint. The local residents came together to file complaints to the center when such acts became unbearable, according to him. They expected a response but not the one they got. He recalled, with many pauses as he spoke, the days after the troops finally arrived. Young boys were pulled from the temple complex, the same young boys who had been looting the neighborhoods, lined up along the walls, and assassinated one by one. This, the man told me, horrified everyone. It was not the response they expected, he repeatedly told me. Several Sikh families I later interviewed in the walled city recalled similar timelines and circumstances to me, and corroborated the Hindu man's story. For me, having

grown up in Punjab and having memories of seeing the carnage at the Golden Temple in 1984, it was incredibly eye-opening to hear this perspective.

Future possibilities

The examples above provide a tiny glimpse into the rich details and historical nuance that can be found about Punjabi history, and South Asian history in general within The 1947 Partition Archive. There remain immense possibilities for research within the oral histories, in fields as diverse as history, ethnography, anthropology, cultural studies, economics, art, music, agriculture and many others.

The collection and the process of building the archive have made a clear case for opening our minds and reexamining our collective understanding of Punjabi and Sikh history. A complete picture of history can only arise from considering multiple perspectives. Many Sikh interviewees for instance have admitted to committing murders and other acts of violence during the Partition - a narrative we may not hear within our own families. There were no clear victims or perpetrators during Partition though individual communities often do not recollect or repent their own misgivings.

Amongst the critical topics to be explored within the collection of oral histories is the nature and origin of the violence that occurred during Partition. As many authors have asked, “did we go mad?” “What happened to our people?” Is it something about South Asian culture, or Punjabi culture in particular that led to the unspeakable acts of mass violence? How did this violence begin and how did it unfold? How did it spiral out of control leaving anywhere between 250,000 to several million people dead, orphaned or otherwise traumatized?

Oral histories are providing initial clues to the nature of the violence. Amongst the many groups who fought for freedom from the British, some had adopted extreme right ideologies and guerilla style targeted violence to spark distrust and fear: isolated reports of religiously targeted bombings and assassinations began circulating in newspapers as early as 1944 in areas such as Multan. Often, local political leaders and gatherings were targeted. As the British retreated and the grip on law and order loosened during the transition of power, such incidents and the widespread distrust and fear they had spread, began increasing. As many perpetrators of violence have recalled in the interviews, many were rounded as young boys with the lure of loot and a “finders keepers” mentality in exchange for attacking and driving out wealthier sections of society that belonged to those from

the minority religion. For instance, many wealthy Muslim landlords were driven out from areas such as Jalandhar and Ambala, while wealthy Hindu merchants and landlords were driven out of Sindh and cities in West Punjab. Economics, it could be argued was a greater motivator and driver of violence on an individual level than religion. After all, from stories of victims of violence we learn that they were saved by neighbors and friends, or other well-meaning individuals who belonged to the perpetrators' faith. Such good Samaritans were not victimized in these specific situations due to their faith and hence were in a position to play the savior role and it appears they largely did. As one interviewee put it, "I estimate that about 1 to 3% of the population participated in the violence. The rest were ordinary and good people trying to live their lives."

The number of inquiries one can launch into the archive's collections are endless and can serve many fields of study. Some initial projects The 1947 Partition Archive is partnering with researchers on include: (1) finding trends on communal violence via data aggregates retrieved from the nearly 10,000 oral history interviews and associated meta-data stored in the collections and (2) gathering DNA samples from victims of violence to understand links to epigenetics. Additionally, through a research residency grant being offered in collaboration with Tata Trusts, nearly 30 researchers will be exploring the collections for more information on a variety of topics. The 1947 Partition Archive is presently only accessible to researchers. For three years, the impact of the archive on researchers will be considered in order to create the right frameworks for free and open public accessibility to the potentially sensitive collections. This is only the beginning.

Conclusions

The 1947 Partition Archive is the first major oral history resource on Partition created for scholars and the public alike. As this paper has explored, the 9,500+ oral histories within The 1947 Partition Archive's collections contain a wealth of information that serve as an alternate and novel resource not found in the traditional document archive, thus aiding deeper inquiries into the history and culture of Punjab and the South Asian subcontinent it is integral to. Given the present ongoing compilation of the oral history collections, the possibilities for new types of inquiry and discovery into our collective understanding of history are endless and only just beginning.

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