

**RED TURBANS ON THE BUND:
SIKH MIGRANTS, POLICEMEN, AND
REVOLUTIONARIES IN SHANGHAI,
1885-1945**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by
me in its entirety.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been
used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university
previously.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a vertical line that ends in a small dot.

CAO YIN

22 March 2016

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Summary

This thesis focuses on the six decades of Sikh existence in modern Shanghai between 1885 and 1945. Taking the translocal approach, it explores the interplay between the Sikh community in Shanghai and the translocal networks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The main argument of this thesis is that the cross-border circulation of personnel, institutions, information, and ideologies in the British colonial network as well as the Sikh diasporic network shaped the main features of the Sikh community in Shanghai. The Sikhs in Shanghai too played crucial roles in influencing the patterns of the global Sikh migration and the enterprise of Indian nationalist struggles in Southeast and East Asia in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

By focusing on translocal networks, this study distinguishes itself from extant studies on modern Shanghai, imperial history, and the Sikh diaspora. By incorporating Shanghai into the networks of the British Empire and Sikh migration, this study critiques the nationalist historiography that overemphasizes Shanghai as merely a modern Chinese city per se, while overlooking its position in translocal networks. Additionally, different from the paradigm of imperial history that normally scrutinizes issues from the perspective of the metropole-colony binary dichotomy, this study argues that inter-colonial interactions and connections played a significant role in effecting issues such as specific policies of individual colonies, the migration of colonial subjects, and anti-imperial activities of nationalists. Last but not the least, it views Sikhs as subalterns and tries to recover their subjectivities in global history. Different from most studies of the Sikh diaspora that focus

either on the link between overseas Sikhs and their homeland, the Punjab, or on the acculturation and assimilation issues of Sikh migrants in a foreign country, this thesis focuses on migration as multi-stop journeys to illustrate how the interrelated connections among numerous Sikhs communities overseas framed their emigrant experience. In sum, taking the experience of the Sikhs in Shanghai as an example, this thesis exposes the weakness and limitation of the national history that is unable to appropriate certain cross-boundary phenomena and subjects. It further champions the translocal perspective that not only considers human pasts as connected and shared, but also sheds light on how subalterns participated in and transformed the global integration process.

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Introduction

In July 2013, I visited the Sikh gurdwara in Wanchai, Hong Kong. While talking with the gurdwara manager, I caught sight of a letter on his desk with an address in Penang, Malaysia. Knowing that Penang had a Sikh community, I asked the manager whether the letter was from his coreligionists there; he answered in the affirmative. The letter from Penang's Wadda gurdwara detailed a joint project to promote Sikh teachings in both places. The manager also told me that Sikh communities in Southeast Asia had formed a network that expedited the exchange of information and personnel, mainly for cultural and economic cooperation. However, as I was walking out of the gurdwara, I noticed a huge photograph hanging on the side wall of the entrance that recorded the turbulent incident in Amritsar in 1984.¹ On the photograph, some red words clearly stood out: "The Entire Indian System is Guilty. Never Forget 1984". One idea flitted through my mind--the network probably also served political purposes, including providing a platform for circulating Sikh nationalist ideas amongst Sikhs living overseas. Indeed, at a time when India was still under the British Raj and when the Sikhs still struggled for the independence of India instead of Khalistan, the Sikh diasporic network that expedited cultural, economic, and political connections had already been at work. Focusing on the Sikh community in Shanghai, this thesis therefore

¹ In June 1984, Indian military forces stormed Harmandi Sahib (Golden Temple) Complex in Amritsar in order to arrest leaders of the Sikh independent movement. More than 400 civilians, most Sikhs, were killed in the operation. This incident stirred up strong anti-Indian reactions amongst Sikhs overseas.

examines the origin of the Sikh diasporic network, how it was employed by various agents during the colonial period, and how the Sikhs, through the medium of this network, came into contact with global issues.



Figure 1. The photograph hanging on the side wall of the entrance in the Sikh gurdwara in Hong Kong, 2013 (Photo by Cao Yin).

Sikh Migration in the Context of Global Migration

The Sikh migration was one part of the huge human movement across the globe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Asia alone, millions of people, mainly Indians and Chinese, either voluntarily left or were coerced into leaving their hometowns. In terms of scale and influence, this Asian migration was as significant as the transatlantic migration of the nineteenth century that was dominated by Europeans. However, scholarships of the Asian migration are full of stereotypes. Asian migrants are usually depicted as indentured,

unaware of the outside world, unlikely to settle down, and emigrated because of famine, overpopulation, coercion, and European intervention. Many practitioners assume that people in Asia were unable to travel freely in a modern way and that their migrations were impelled either by European powers or despotic Asian regimes.²

Recent studies, however, contend that the patterns, quantities, and organizations of the Asian migration were fundamentally similar to that of the transatlantic migration.³ Adam McKeown even argues that these migrations are actually one migration that resulted from the global integration by the turn of the twentieth century.⁴ This unprecedented movement of human beings can be attributed to several factors. First, there was a revolution in transport and technology in the second half of the nineteenth century, epitomized by the advent of the steamboat and the railway, which made long-distance travel easier, cheaper, and faster than before.⁵ Second, the expansion of world markets into European colonies and the westward expansion in the

² Pier Emmer, "European Expansion and Migration: The European Colonial Past and International Migration, an Overview," in *European Expansion and Migration: Essays on the Intercontinental Migration From Africa, Asia, and Europe*, eds., Pieter Emmer and Magnus Morner (New York: Berg, 1992), 11; Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, *Global Migration and the World Economy: Two Centuries of Policy and Performance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Adam McKeown, "Chinese Emigration in Global Context, 1850-1940," *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 96-97; Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 45.

³ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 61.

⁴ Adam McKeown, "Global Migration 1846-1940," *Journal of World History* 15 (2004): 155-189.

⁵ Gordon Boyce, *Information, Mediation and Institutional Development: The Rise of Large-scale Enterprise in British Shipping, 1870-1919* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Gordon Jackson and David Williams, eds., *Shipping, Technology, and Imperialism* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1996); Duncan Bell, "Dissolving Distance: Technology, Space, and Empire in British Political Thought, 1770-1900," *Journal of Modern History* 77 (2005): 523-562.

United States stimulated the demand for laborers. Third, the abolition of slavery in the British Empire and the United States opened the door for global employment of indentured and contracted laborers from India and China.⁶

In many aspects, the Sikh migration was similar to other migrations during this period. Like other Indian and Chinese migrants, Sikhs went overseas to look for better salaries. Economic concern was the primary cause for most migrations at that time.⁷ Also, the Sikh migration followed the sojourning pattern of other migrations. Wang Gungwu argues that the main pattern of the Chinese migration before the 1940s was sojourning. Males worked abroad for remitting earnings back to families in China and eventually returned home themselves.⁸ Adam McKeown finds that this pattern of migration also existed in Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as India.⁹ Almost all Sikh migrants in the late nineteenth century were males working for the colonial army or police forces. They sent much of their salaries back to their families in the Punjab. After completing their contracts, most chose to return homes.¹⁰ Lastly but importantly, the Sikh migration, like many other Asian migrations, was deeply influenced by colonial empires, and the British Empire in particular. The Chinese emigration

⁶ Adam Mckeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58 (1999): 306-337; Sunil Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25-28.

⁷ Jan Breman, *Labour Migration and Rural Transformation in Colonial Asia* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1990).

⁸ Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), 198-221.

⁹ Mckeown, *Melancholy Order*, 62.

¹⁰ Sucheng Chan, "Overseas Sikhs in the Context of International Migrations," in *Sikh Studies: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Tradition*, eds., N. G. Barrier and M. Juergensmeyer (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979), 191-206.

to Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century was the response to the high demand of labor force in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The Indian migration, indentured or not, was made possible by and contributed to the enterprises of the British Empire. The British Empire not only facilitated the movement of Sikh migrants through providing easy transportations and working opportunities, but also relied on the work of Sikhs to maintain its colonial rule.¹¹

Although migrations in Asia shared a common global context, we should not simplify these processes and take for granted that there was an irreducible Indian migration, Chinese migration, or Asian migration. Adam McKeown notices the internal difference of the Chinese migration. While most migrants in Southeast Asia were from southern provinces such as Guangdong, Fujian, and Hainan, migrants in Manchuria were largely from Shandong. Other parts of China did not contribute much to this period's long-distance migration.¹² Migrants originated from the same region usually stayed together and worked in the same industry. For example, the opium farms in Penang were exclusively cultivated by the Cantonese, while the tin mines in Alor Star were labored by Hokkiens.¹³ In this sense, the transnational movement of Chinese migrants can be reduced to several translocal movements.

¹¹ Adam McKeown, "Regionalizing World Migration," *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 52 (2007): 135.

¹² Mckeown, *Melancholy Order*, 43-65.

¹³ Wu Xiaolan, *Chinese Business in the Making of a Malay State, 1882-1941: Kedah and Penang* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

This translocal approach can also help us better understand Indian migration.¹⁴ There are different versions of Indian migration. Indians from Tamil Nadu who worked in the sugarcane fields in Mauritius should be distinguished from Indians from Bengal who migrated to Rangoon to work as craftsmen and merchants. Sikhs of the Punjab also had their specific destinations and occupations.

What made Sikh migration special was that many of them actually served in the colonial police forces while their Indian and Chinese counterparts were indentured laborers, miners, craftsmen, and merchants and so became the subjects being policed.¹⁵ In this sense, the Sikh migrants were both colonized subjects on the one hand and executors of the colonial law-enforcement regimes on the other.¹⁶ Since they had been thought to be very useful in deterring the Chinese, British colonies and settlements with large Chinese population, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, enlisted large numbers of Sikhs into their police forces and thereby became the main destinations of Sikh migration.

¹⁴ This study understands that the translocal approach is not only an explanatory framework that can be used to examine interactions in various geographical scales, but also closely related to the concept of translocality, which challenges the simplifying dichotomy between local and global in globalization studies. Details of the translocal approach will be discussed later.

¹⁵ A few hundred Sikhs were brought to Fiji as indentured workers in the sugar cane plantations in the 1880s. Also, in East Africa, Sikh indentured laborers were brought to build the Uganda railway in the 1890s. Both cases, however, are exceptions. Gajraj Singh, *The Sikhs of Fiji* (Suva: South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1976); Parminder Bhachu, *Twice Migrants: East Africa Sikh Settlers in Britain* (London: Tavistock, 1985), 21-23.

¹⁶ The Gurkhas from Nepal were also massively enlisted into the British Indian Army and deployed overseas during the colonial period. However, most Gurkhas were soldiers while very few served in colonial police forces, see Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army* (Jaipur: Nirala Publications, 1994).

As nationalism and communism developed in Asia in the early twentieth century, the Sikh migration became different from other contemporary migrations. On the one hand, colonial authorities counted on the Sikh policemen for checking nationalist movements and suppressing labor strikes; on the other hand, Sikh migrants also became a subject of interest to the Indian nationalists. Their military background, as well as the crucial position they held in colonial security, made the nationalists believe that their independence struggle would be greatly facilitated if they could turn the overseas Sikhs to their side.

Because of this special status, a study of Sikhs overseas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could shed light not only on the Sikh migration, but also on some broader issues such as inter-colonial interactions, the politics of colonial law-enforcement, the Indian nationalist struggle, and consequently the global anti-colonial movement. Indeed, these various issues were related to each other in certain interwoven translocal networks. This thesis aims to demonstrate that the concept of translocal networks provides us with a useful means of investigating the special case of Sikh migration.

Shanghai in the Translocal Networks

There is a new trend amongst historians to view human pasts as entangled and interconnected. In so doing, they expect that the

boundaries and limitations of national history could be transcended.¹⁷ The concept of transnationalism has often been employed to analyze the connections amongst human societies and the circulation of population, commodities, institutions, and ideas. Since the 1900s, scholars from disciplines such as geography, cultural studies, and anthropology have set out to explore the local-to-local relations and the localized phenomena in transnational migration.¹⁸ Gradually, they find that the transnational approach, which still rests its main concern on the transcendence of and exchange beyond national boundaries, cannot appropriately describe phenomena involving mobility, circulation, and spatial connectedness in other geographical scales.¹⁹ For example, when studying Chinese emigration to Canada in the late nineteenth century, Henry Yu finds that the dominant group of emigrants at that time were Cantonese from certain specific villages of the Guangdong province, while the principal destination for them was British Columbia, and Vancouver in particular. He contends that it is inappropriate to use the concept of the transnational network to investigate the movement of population from one locality to the other.

¹⁷ For discussions of how entangled and interconnected histories developed in the late twentieth century, see Shalini Randeria, "Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities: Civil Society, Caste Solidarities and the Post-Colonial State in India," in *Unraveling Ties: From Social Cohesion to New Practices of Connectedness*, ed., Yehuada Elkana (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002), 77-104.

¹⁸ Karen Olwig, "Cultural Sites: Sustaining a Home in a Deterritorialized World," in *Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object*, eds., Karen Olwig and K. Hastrup (London: Routledge, 1997), 17-38; Luis Guarnizo and Michael Smith, "The Locations of Transnationalism," in *Transnationalism from Below*, eds., Luis Guarnizo and Michael Smith (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 3-34; David Lev, "Transnational Spaces and Every Lives," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29 (2004): 151-164.

¹⁹ Julia Verne, *Living Translocality: Space, Culture and Economy in Contemporary Swahili Trade* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012).

Translocal network, in his words, is a more lucid concept for explaining this phenomenon.²⁰

In addition to the scale problem, some scholars argue that the transnational approach inclines to highlight the interactions and exchanges between Western nation-states at the elite level, while connections within and between Asia, Africa, and the Middle East under the elite level are largely neglected.²¹ In other words, the transnational approach fails to elucidate power distribution and experience of the powerless in flows and movements.²²

Attempting to overcome the weakness of the transnational approach, a growing number of practitioners have turned to the translocal approach since the mid-1990s.²³ To date, the translocal approach is used to describe socio-spatial dynamics. From the spatial perspective, it provides an alternative way to understand the mobility, circulation, and interconnectedness that transgress borders on different scales. From the social perspective, it underscores the importance of subalterns in these cross-boundary movements. Lower-class people

²⁰ Henry Yu, "Introduction: The Rhythms of the Transpacific," in *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s*, eds., Donna Gabaccia and Dirk Herder (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 451-463.

²¹ Ulrike Freitag and Achim Von Oppen, eds., *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3; Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith, eds., *Sites of Asian Interaction: Ideas, Networks and Mobility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

²² Philip Kelly and Tom Lusic, "Migration and the Transnational Habitus: Evidence from Canada and the Philippines," *Environment and Planning* 38 (2006): 831-847.

²³ The translocal approach has also been called as translocality or translocalism by scholars. Akhil Gupta uses the term, "translocal", to distinguish state from localities, while Arjun Apparurai goes a step further to indicate that translocality is a framework that could relate the global, the state, and the local. See Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State," *American Ethnologist* 22 (1995): 375-402; Arjun Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," in *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Richard Fardon (New York: Routledge, 2003), 204-225.

from localities are not only participants of translocal circulations, but also architects and designers of structures that sustained these circulations.²⁴

The translocal approach is employed by this thesis for two reasons. In terms of scale, this thesis examines the circulation of migrants, colonial officers, institutions, remittances, and information between Punjab, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and California. This sort of circulation cannot not be explained as a transnational phenomenon, as none of these spatial entities are nations. In terms of actors, this thesis is about the experience of ordinary Sikhs and the flow of their identities as migrants, policemen, and revolutionaries. The translocal approach, with its emphasis on subalterns' migration, is an appropriate starting point to account for this mobility. It is important to point out that both the spatial circulation between places and the flow of identities happened within the multidirectional and overlapping translocal networks.²⁵

²⁴ Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives," *Geography Compass* 7 (2013): 373-384.

²⁵ For discussions of translocal network, see Malte Steinbrink, "The Role of Amateur Football in Circular Migration Systems in South Africa," *Africa Spectrum* 45 (2010): 35-60; Clemens Greiner, "Migration, Translocal Networks and Socio-Economic Stratification in Namibia," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 8 (2011): 606-627; Annelies Zoomers and Guus van Westen, "Introduction: Translocal Development, Development Corridors and Development Chains," *International Development Planning Review* 33 (2011): 377-388. For the concept of "network", scholars have noticed that it has been employed rather casually in historical and contemporary social analysis, and needs to be defined carefully when taken as an agent of historical change. See Tony Ballantyne, "Empire, Knowledge, and Culture: From Proto-Globalization to Modern Globalization," in *Globalization in World History*, ed., A. G. Hopkins (London: Pimlico, 2002), 115-140; Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45-46. Some scholars have developed a concern over the approach of network as a whole, contending that the concept of network excludes those actors whose have insufficient resources to be able to access them. Instead, they tend to replace network with "assemblages", "rhizome", or "web", see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1980); Uma

Translocal networks have long existed in history.²⁶ For military, economic, or religious reasons, human beings, commodities, institutions, knowledge, and species have travelled across regions. As movements became more frequent, localities were connected more closely and networks took shape.²⁷ This thesis focuses its attention on two networks: the British colonial network and the Sikh diasporic network. The two networks were by no means separate, but in fact overlapped each other. The colonial network facilitated the flow of information and knowledge concerning Sikhs from India to Southeast and East Asia. Moreover, when colonial authorities decided to set up Sikh police units, they counted on the colonial network to recruit Sikhs in the Punjab and to introduce training and administrative institutions. These Sikh policemen were pioneers of Sikh migration. Their experience inspired more and more Sikhs to go abroad to find a better livelihood.

Kothari, *Migration and Chronic Poverty* (Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2002); Colin McFarlane, "Translocal Assemblages: Space, Power and Social Movements," *Geoforum* 40 (2009): 561-567.

²⁶ For discussions of the concept of the network in world history, see Frederick Cooper, "Networks, Moral Discourse and History," in *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-local Networks of Power*, eds., Thomas Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir, and Robert Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23-46; Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue, eds., *Asia Inside Out: Changing Times* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue, eds., *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

²⁷ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes toward a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 3 (1997): 735-762; John Steele Gordon, *A Thread Across the Ocean: The Heroic Story of the Transatlantic Cable* (New York: Walker & Co., 2003); Himanshu Prabha Ray and Edward Alpers, eds., *Cross Current and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean World* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Port cities such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai that provided opportunities harbored tens of thousands of these Sikhs by the turn of the twentieth century. Since these cities had already been incorporated into the British colonial network through administrative arrangements, shipping lines and cables, the movement of Sikh personnel and information on payment and job opportunities, as well as Sikh institutions set up in target destinations had increased tremendously.²⁸ A Sikh diasporic network thereby emerged. In this sense, the Sikh diasporic network was actually built onto the existing colonial network. These intertwined networks were not only used by colonial authorities and Sikh migrants, other actors such as the British Foreign Office, Indian revolutionaries (the Ghadar Party and the Indian National Army in particular), the Comintern, and the Japanese Empire also employed these networks for their respective ends.

Port cities were the central nodes for these networks. The connections amongst port cities shaped the network itself. In both networks, the Chinese treaty port of Shanghai was a special case. By the turn of the twentieth century, Shanghai had been divided into three independently administered parts--the International Settlement, the French Concession, and the Chinese city. Amongst these, the International Settlement, which was largely controlled by British nationals and protected by the British navy, was the most prosperous. Owing to the growing British investment in the International Settlement and the intense interaction between Shanghai, Hong Kong,

²⁸ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, 45-63.

Singapore, and India, this Chinese treaty port had gradually been integrated into the British colonial network since the late nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the International Settlement was under the administration of an independent body--the Shanghai Municipal Council, which was mainly dominated by Shanghailanders.²⁹ The British authorities did not hold much leverage in the policy-making process of the International Settlement. As quarrels between the Shanghai Municipal Council and the British Consul-General in Shanghai over legal issues and local policies broke out frequently, Shanghai became one of the weakest points in the colonial network in terms of social control and surveillance. The absence of any strict regulation on immigration, a weakening colonial control, and the prospect of comparatively good salaries made Shanghai specifically attractive for Sikh migrants. From the 1880s onwards, thousands of Sikhs flocked into this Chinese port city, mostly employed as policemen or watchmen. The Sikh policemen later became the backbone of the Shanghai Municipal Police, the law-enforcement unit of the International Settlement.³⁰

There are other reasons that made Shanghai a special place for Sikh migration. Since Shanghai was the midpoint between India and

²⁹ According to Robert Bickers, Shanghailanders refer to Europeans and Americans who settled down Shanghai's International Settlement from the 1840s to the 1930s, see Robert Bickers, "Shanghailanders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai, 1843-1937," *Past & Present* 159 (1998): 161-162. It is important to point out that the SMC did not consist solely of Shanghailanders, but also included other settlers and expatriates at different times.

³⁰ It is important to point out here that not all Indians in the Shanghai Municipal Police were Sikhs. Muslims from the Punjab also worked as policemen and watchmen in Shanghai. However, comparatively speaking, Sikhs were the dominant group of Indians in the Shanghai Municipal Police.

North America, it played a crucial role in Sikh migration to North America in the early years of the twentieth century. As Indian nationalism soared in the 1910s and 1920s, Shanghai was used as a forward base and transferring center by Sikh revolutionaries of the Ghadar Party, who attempted to overthrow the Raj by force. Taking Shanghai's Sikh community as a case of special interest, this thesis outlines the networks that this Sikh community laid within and demonstrates the broader historical processes that they participated in.

This approach takes Shanghai not as the gate to modern China, but as a crucial node of translocal networks, thereby distinguishing itself from most writings on modern Shanghai history. A large body of literature about modern Shanghai history has been created since the 1980s, in which Yeh Wen-hsin observes two main streams.³¹ On one hand, scholars take Shanghai as a particular case to explore how the modern Chinese state sought to transform local society, and how social elements responded to state infiltration.³² The other stream focuses on

³¹ Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City," *China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 375-394.

³² Writings of this direction include Parks Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Centre, 1986); Christian Henriot, *Shanghai, 1927-1937: Municipal Power, Locality, and Modernization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Brian Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and the Organized Crime, 1919-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Student Protest in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Xu Xiaqun, *Chinese Professionals and the Republican State: The Rise of Professional Associations in Shanghai, 1912-1937* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Elizabeth Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); Nora Dillon and Jean Oi, eds., *At the Crossroads of Empire: Middlemen, Social Networks, and State-Building in Republican Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Marie-Claire Bergere, *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Shirley

the specific socio-economic milieu of Shanghai and this city's ambiguous identity hovering between the modern and traditional worlds. Its working classes, commercial culture, little idiosyncrasies, and intellectual life have all been scrutinized.³³ In fact, both streams take note of Shanghai's cosmopolitan features. While topics such as the large number of foreign residents, the neo-classical architecture along the Bund, the modern banking system, and the hybridized entertainment industry have been well documented,³⁴ most writings confine their scope to looking just at Shanghai. Little has been related about what kind of mechanism, and under what kind of context brought these foreign elements tightly together in Shanghai, and how

Ye, "Corrupted Infrastructure: Imperialism and Environmental Sovereignty in Shanghai, 1873-1911," *Frontiers of History in China* 10 (2015): 428-456.

³³ Writings of this direction include Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Elizabeth Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: the Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Bryan Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Sherman Cochran, *Inventing Nanjing Road: Commercial Culture in Shanghai, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1999); Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Christopher Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jiang Jin, *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Charlotte Cowden, "Wedding Culture in 1930s Shanghai: Consumerism, Ritual, and the Municipality," *Frontiers of History in China* 7 (2012): 61-89.

³⁴ Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Yeh Wen-hsin, eds., *Shanghai Sojourners* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 1992); Yeh Wen-hsin, "Corporate Space, Communal Time: Everyday Life in Shanghai's Bank of China," *The American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 97-122; Kristine Harris, "The New Woman: Image, Subject, and Dissent in 1930s Shanghai Film Culture," *Republican China* 20 (1995): 55-79; Chiara Betta, "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai," *Modern Asian Studies* 37 (2003): 999-1023; Marcia Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort: The Diaspora Communities in Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments* (London: Routledge, 2009); Robert Bickers, "Incubator City: Shanghai and the Crisis of Empires," *Journal of Urban Studies* 38 (2012): 862-878; Huang Xuelei, *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922-1938* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); James Farrer, *Shanghai Nightscapes: A Nocturnal Biography of a Global City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

the cosmopolitan features of Shanghai were transferred into inland China and other parts of the world.³⁵

The overemphasis on the locality of modern Shanghai studies might have been the result of what Paul Cohen calls the “China-based turn” in historical writings about modern China. In his thought-provoking monograph *Discovering history in China*, Cohen points out that historians working on China’s recent past have gradually turned to regional or local levels instead of taking China as an undivided whole. In so doing, they seek to resettle the Eurocentric paradigm that relies on the impact-response model to understand the turn of events in China in the last two centuries.³⁶ This overemphasis on the local perspective, however, downplays the fact that locality is produced in the context of cross-boundary mobility.³⁷ The China-based paradigm detaches Shanghai from the translocal networks it was rooted in. Shanghai’s cosmopolitan features have been exclusively analyzed from the local

³⁵ Joseph Esherick suggests that scholars should look beyond Shanghai and challenge Shanghai’s representational status in studies of modern Chinese history, see Joseph Esherick, ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001).

³⁶ Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Cohen later revised his assertion of the China-based paradigm and warned that the overreliance on this paradigm could lead to the Sino-centrism, see Paul Cohn, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

³⁷ Appadurai, “The Production of Locality”. For the critiques of the China-based approach, also see William Kirby, “The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Period,” *China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 433-458; Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 17-25; Isabella Jackson, “Chinese Colonial History in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15 (2014), accessed 10.1353/cch.2014.0042. Bryna Goodman and David Goodman have noted a historiographical tendency in recent years that reasserts the importance of foreign elements, colonialism in particular, in modern Chinese history. Scholars of this direction contend that the investigation of modern China must be related to a comprehensive understanding of how China was placed in a colonial world. See James Hevia, *The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Bryna Goodman and David Goodman, eds. *Twentieth Century Colonialism and China: Localities, the Everyday, and the World* (London: Routledge, 2012), 7.

perspective, while the translocal connections and backgrounds of these features have been neglected.

Revisiting Sikh Diaspora and British Imperial History

My original intention for this thesis was to write a local story of the Sikh community in modern Shanghai, similar to what has already been done with the Japanese, British, Russian, and Jewish communities in this metropolis. Nevertheless, when I set out to look into the archives, I found that it would be almost impossible to fully comprehend the Sikh experience in Shanghai if I were to overlook the Sikh migration experience in Singapore, Hong Kong, and North America, and if I ignored the socio-economic milieu in the Punjab, the concerns of British colonial authorities across Asia, and the Indian nationalist struggle in the early years of the twentieth century. The current approach of modern Shanghai studies, however, greatly restricts us from extending our vision to issues that took place beyond the boundaries of the municipality of Shanghai. To solve this problem, this thesis turns to two other fields--British imperial history and the Sikh diaspora--for inspiration.

Imperial history has long been on the margin of British history, as the tradition has been for scholars to examine how the metropole imposed its influence, politically and economically, on the colonies and the colonized people. The colonies and their people were often treated as passive subjects just waiting for initiatives to reach them

from the metropole.³⁸ Since the 1980s, this Eurocentric approach has been revisited and challenged.³⁹ Practitioners contend that colonies were active players in this core-periphery interaction. Colonies and colonized people in their turn greatly transformed the politics, cultural landscape, and economic structure of the metropole.⁴⁰ This revisionist view has extended the historical vision from the stereotyped one-way-direction perspective to a more interactive relationship, thereby greatly enriching our understanding of the mechanism of the empire.⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Sidney Mintz observes, “when scholars focus on the center, they lose sight of the periphery, whereas when they focus on the periphery, they lose sight of the center.”⁴² In other words, this metropole-colony binary dichotomy lacks the translocal consideration that takes multilateral links amongst colonies and settlements into account.⁴³

³⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1-15; Andrew Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 1-28.

³⁹ David Fieldhouse “Can Humpty-Dumpty be Put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12 (1984): 9-23.

⁴⁰ Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴¹ A. G. Hopkins, “Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History,” *Past and Present* 164 (1999): 198-243.

⁴² Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986). Social scientists such as Anthony Giddens has long observed the self-contradictory irony of the center-periphery paradigm in social analysis, and calls for a more inclusive and horizontal-oriented paradigm, see Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

⁴³ Richard Price, “One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture,” *The Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 602-627; Durba Ghosh, “Another Set of Imperial Turns?” *The American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 772-793.

The rise of global history in recent decades, with its emphasis on concepts such as networks and circulation of people and ideas, has provided imperial historians with a chance to review their approach.⁴⁴ On one hand, practitioners have set out to investigate interconnections between the British Empire and other European empires.⁴⁵ On the other, more attention has been paid to the actual inter-colonial connections.⁴⁶ The result is that the analytical tool of imperial networks has been particularly highlighted in recent years. An increasing number of scholars have been willing to take the British Empire not as a vertical structure that only concerns the linear interaction between the metropole and the individual colony, but as an integrated system that connected different parts of the empire and beyond.⁴⁷ It is at this moment that this dissertation resonates with the new trend.

⁴⁴ Antoinette Burton, "Getting Outside of the Global: Repositioning British Imperialism in World History," In *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present*, eds., Chatherine Hall and Keith McClelland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 200-205.

⁴⁵ John MacKenzie, ed., *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global 1870-1945* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ For example, some practitioners come to explore how Indian personnel, institutions, and knowledge circulated to other parts of the British Empire and influenced the imperial projects, see Thomas Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Sana Aiyar, *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4 (2006): 124-141; Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain Empire, and Transnationalism, 1880-1950* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*; Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration,*

The network turn of imperial history also influences the way we understand the Sikh diaspora. The migration of colonized population across the British Empire was always of central concern to the colonial authorities. Nevertheless, most imperial historians have paid attention to the diaspora of Europeans, while leaving the movement of people from other parts of the world to national histories.⁴⁸ For this reason, what we can read about the Indian diaspora is mostly written from the perspective of Indian national history, and studies of the Sikh diaspora are no exception.⁴⁹

Influenced by the national narrative, most writings on the Sikh diaspora focus on two areas. On one hand, they look back to the Sikh homeland, the Punjab, to ascertain the socio-economic context from which the Sikhs migrated away;⁵⁰ on the other, they jump to the host societies to investigate the assimilation and acculturation of the Sikh

Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴⁸ In the *Studies in Imperialism Series*, published by the Manchester University Press, topics about the migration of the English, Irish, and Scottish in the empire are commonly seen, while no serious work has been done on the Indian or African diaspora in this series. However, this trend is changing as some scholars have called for more attention to the relationship between European colonial empires and Asian diasporas, see Engseng Ho, "Empire Through Diasporic Eyes: A View from The Other Boat," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2004): 210-246.

⁴⁹ Brian Axel admits that studies of Sikh diaspora sit awkwardly among studies of the Indian diaspora, mainly because the Sikh identity politics or the Sikh national narrative that arose in the 1980s, see Brian Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9.

⁵⁰ Tom Kessinger, *Vilyatpur, 1848-1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Joyce Pettigrew, "Socio-Economic Background to the Emigration of Sikhs from Doaba," *Punjab Journal of Politics* Oct (1977): 48-81; Sucheta Mazumdar, "Colonial Impact and Punjabi Emigration to the United States," in *Labour Immigration under Capitalism*, eds., Edna Bonacich and Lucie Cheng (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 316-336; W. H. McLeod, "The First Forty Years of Sikh Migration," in *The Sikh Diaspora*, eds., N. G. Barrier and Verne Dusenbery (Delhi: Manohar and South Asia Publications, 1989), 36-37; Manjit Singh, "Southeast Asia's Sikhs," *Journal of Sikh Studies* 17 (1992): 89-98; Archana Verma, *Making a Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002).

migrants and their continuing interactions with the Punjab.⁵¹ In this vein, Indians overseas were incorporated into the deterritorialized Indian nation-state.⁵²

Ironically, by highlighting the motherland-settlement dichotomy in the studies of the Sikh diaspora, this national narrative strengthens the Eurocentric perspective.⁵³ When explaining the background to Sikh migration in the late nineteenth century, scholars tend to highlight the British influence. The British theory of their being a martial race is usually referred to.⁵⁴ Heather Streets contends that the main reason for the overseas employment of the Sikhs was that they were tagged by the Government of India as the martial race who were particularly adept in military-related occupations. Furthermore, the urgent needs for reliable law-enforcement forces in certain British colonies and settlements

⁵¹ Arthur Helweg, *Sikhs in England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); W. H. McLeod, *Punjabis in New Zealand: A History of Punjabi Migration, 1890-1940* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986); Sunil Kukreja, "The Political Economy of Ethnic Group Incorporation: The Case of Punjabis in Malaya," *Crossroads* 11 (1997): 25-49; Rajinder Singh Gabbi, *Sikhs in Australia* (Victoria: Aristoc Offset, 1998); Rashmere Bhatti and Verne Dusenbery, eds., *A Punjabi Sikh Community in Australia: From Indian Sojourners to Australian Citizens* (Woolgoolga: Woolgoolga Neighbourhood Centre, 2001); Gurcharan Singh Basran and B. Singh Bolaria, *The Sikhs in Canada: Race, Class, and Gender* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); Kamala Nayar, *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: The Three Generations amid Traditions, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

⁵² Michael Smith and Luis Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 8.

⁵³ Some scholars have noted that the national histories sponsored by post-colonial nation-states were heavily influenced by the Eurocentric perspective, see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limits of World History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Born out of the Enlightenment-era ideology on human evolution and climate determinism, the martial race theory claims that certain race of mankind is more suitable in fighting and obtaining martial skills than others. For details of martial race, see Pradeep Barua, "Inventing Race: The British and India's Martial Races," *Historian* 58 (1995): 107-116; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Gavin Rand, "'Martial Races' and 'Imperial Subjects': Violence and Governance in Colonial India, 1857-1914," *European Review of History* 13 (2006): 1-20.

played an equally vital role in the Sikh diaspora. Arunajeet Kaur notes that the activities of Chinese secret societies in the Straits Settlements seriously disturbed colonial rule and harmed British interests. To wipe out criminals and to maintain social order, Sikh constables were introduced.⁵⁵ The crown colony Hong Kong and the International Settlement of Shanghai also experienced similar troubles, and their solutions were no different from the Straits Settlements.

The Eurocentric perspective can also be detected from studies that turn back to the Sikh motherland, the Punjab, to look for alternative explanations for Sikh migration. Verne A. Dusenbery argues that the socio-economic milieu of the Punjab in the late nineteenth century gave rise to the large-scale Sikh migration. The Punjab had undergone dramatic transformations since the 1860s. The British had introduced agricultural infrastructures, which remarkably altered the economic conditions of the Sikh peasants. As lands had been accumulated into the hands of rich landowners, most Sikh peasants were drawn into debt. The strong desire to help their families get out of financial trouble, as Dusenbery points out, was the principal cause of their migration.⁵⁶

Whether it was the push factors such as poverty in the Punjab, or the pull factors, such as the needs of overseas colonies and settlements, it seems that the colonial authorities were always the dominant element that directed the migration, while the Sikh migrants were merely

⁵⁵ Arunajeet Kaur, *Sikhs in the Policing of British Malaya and Straits Settlements (1874-1957)* (Saarbrücken : VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009).

⁵⁶ Verne A. Dusenbery, "Introduction: A Century of Sikhs Beyond Punjab," in *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience Beyond Punjab*, eds., N. G. Barrier and V. A. Dusenbery (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989), 4.

subjects who went to destinations as directed and not of their own free will. In this explanatory framework, Sikhs were always waiting for some outsiders, the British in particular, to create a condition, whether it be the needs of overseas colonies or the specific socio-economic milieu shaped by the Government of India, for their migration. This Eurocentric perspective “refuses to take an inquiry into the extent and nature of free will within the general structure of human society”.⁵⁷

In an effort to recover the subjective experience of Sikhs and at the same time to illustrate fully their diasporic spread, this study argues that the macro-analysis typically underscores the imperial structure and context, and thus is far from sufficient. Microscopic approach might be a good complementary means for us to understand the migration process.

Similar to biographical writing, microhistory bases its strength on analyzing the course of an individual’s life. Yet, it distinguishes itself by paying specific attention to the negotiation and interaction between the individual and the world he or she resided in. If the individual is the protagonist in a biography, the microhistory’s priority lies in the social and cultural canvas in which the individual becomes entangled.⁵⁸

Although some classics such as Natalie Davis’ *The Return of Martine Guerre* and Carlo Ginzburg’s *Cheese and Worms* are more or

⁵⁷ Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory,” *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2 (1991): 97.

⁵⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It,” *Critical Inquiry*, 1 (1993): 10-35; Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History*, 1 (2001): 129-144; John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life,” *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2010): 87-109.

less local stories, a rising interest in employing the microscopic approach to investigate cross-boundary histories has been seen in recent years. Practitioners who are studying Atlantic history have long tried to elucidate unacknowledged and unobserved aspects of the African migration through telling stories of cross-boundary lives.⁵⁹ Historians with an interest in cross-cultural interactions have also turned their attention to micro-levels.⁶⁰ World historians have recently championed the idea of global microhistory, which tends to use specific individuals to illustrate broad historical structures and processes.⁶¹

The study of the Sikh diaspora would greatly benefit from the approach of global microhistory. On the one hand, differing from the prevalent Eurocentric explanatory framework that treats Sikhs as passive subjects in their migration, the microhistorical analysis not only sketches out the specific living world that the Sikh migrants inhabited, but also sheds light on how Sikhs interacted, negotiated, and even utilized their social structure for their own interests. On the other hand, it scrutinizes the Sikh diaspora through the lens of the diasporic

⁵⁹ Lara Patnam, "To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," *Journal of Social History* 3 (2006): 615-630.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Spence, *The Question of Hu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988); Jonathan Spence, *The Death of Woman Wang* (London: Penguin Books, 1998); Natalie Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (New York: Random House, 2007).

⁶¹ Tonio Andrade, "A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory," *The Journal of World History*, 4 (2010): 573-591; John-Paul Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babulon and the Uses of Global Microhistory," *Past & Present*, 1 (2014): 51-93; Charles Wheeler, "Placing the 'Chinese Pirates' of the Gulf of Tongking at the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places*, eds., Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015): 31-63.

network, and thus provides an alternative view apart from the motherland-settlement dichotomy paradigm.⁶²

Because the early Sikh migration was a product of India's place in the British Empire, the growing interest in the imperial network amongst imperial historians opens up a new window for scholars of Sikh history to track the early stage of the Sikh migration.⁶³ As Tony Ballantyne observes, the Sikh diasporic network was deeply interwoven and overlapped with the British imperial network in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The imperial network connected the Punjab to the distant parts of the empire, while the Sikhs employed the connections to construct their own network through kinship structures and religious institutions.⁶⁴ For this reason, a network approach is not only helpful, but also necessary to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Sikh migration in its early stages.

Rescuing Shanghai Sikhs from Nation

By introducing the translocal networks into modern Shanghai studies, this thesis not only tells a local story about the work, daily life, and struggles of the Sikh community in Shanghai, and as series of episodes about them, but also demonstrates how these Sikh migrants,

⁶² Some scholars have already realized the importance of introducing the concept of diasporic network in studies of Sikh diaspora, see Verne Dusenbery, "Punjabi Sikhs and Gora Sikhs: Conflicting Assertion of Sikh Identity in North America," in *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, eds., Joseph O'Connell, Milton Israd, and William Oxtoby (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for South Asian Studies, 1988), 334-355; Barrier and Dusenbery, eds., *The Sikh Diaspora*; Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993);

⁶³ Barrier and Dusenbery, eds., *The Sikh Diaspora*, 4.

⁶⁴ Tony Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 30-31.

implicitly or explicitly, involved themselves in broader issues such as the civilizing project of the International Settlement, the Chinese nationalist revolution, the international communist movement, and the Indian independence struggle. Taking the Sikh experience as an example, this thesis articulates that it is time to rescue modern Shanghai history from the China-based paradigm, and reposition it amongst the Shanghai-based translocal networks. In so doing, many foreign elements in Shanghai, which have long been oversimplified as imperialism's direct impositions, can be proved to be products of more complex translocal transportations and transference.⁶⁵

In bringing the translocal approach to the three seemingly separate fields--modern Shanghai studies, imperial history, and the Sikh diaspora, this thesis seeks to challenge the long-established national framing of history. In Chinese national history, the red-turbaned Sikh policemen have long been depicted as a symbol of imperial existence in modern China and a reminder of China's national humiliation.⁶⁶ This highly politicalized image prevents practitioners

⁶⁵ It is important to point out here that this thesis owes a debt to Isabella Jackson's article, "The Raj on Nanjing Road: Sikh Policemen in Treaty-Port Shanghai," *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012): 1672-1704, which is by far the most serious academic study of Sikhs in modern Shanghai. Jackson investigates how the exchange of ideas, practices and personnel in policing between Shanghai, Hong Kong, and India influenced the formation and development of the Sikh branch in the Shanghai Municipal Police. She also argues that Sikhs in Shanghai were not only defense and law-enforcement forces, but also symbols of the British Empire. Furthermore, she takes the Sikh migration by the turn of the twentieth century into account by underscoring that Shanghai was one of the main stops in the Sikh diaspora. Above all, this thesis builds on those arguments made by Jackson, and takes a step further by adopting wider range of primary sources and by introducing the translocal approach to recount the history of the Sikhs in Shanghai from the perspectives of the colonized and colonizers respectively.

⁶⁶ Li Fanyi, "Jiushanghai yingzujie de yindu xunbu" (Indian policemen in the International Settlement of old Shanghai), *Shanghai dangan* 4 (1985): 30; Shi Meiding, *Shanghai zujiezh* (Gazette of Foreign Concessions in Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2001); Ma Changlin, ed., *Zujieli de*

from further exploring how the Sikhs engaged themselves in local affairs. Indian national history, in its turn, has treated Sikh migrants in Shanghai as being no different from other Indian nationals overseas who were displaced by the oppressive colonial rule, tenaciously held on to their Indian identity, and maintained a close relationships with their motherland.⁶⁷ However, their specific role as an essential part of the colonial oppressive machine in Southeast and East Asia has rarely been touched upon. British national history, which deeply influences imperial historical writing, tends to take the top-down perspective to make sense of the formation, work, and cultural aspects of the Sikh police unit in Shanghai.⁶⁸ Obviously, the other identities of these Sikhs, such as fortune-seeking migrants, ordinary residents, and even revolutionaries, could hardly have been made clear using this approach.

The incomplete and sometimes even distorted information regarding the Sikhs in modern Shanghai exemplifies some of the problems of national history. In the past two centuries, national history, with its emphasis on the linear conception of temporality, has

shanghai (Shanghai in the Concessions) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2003); Xiong Yuezhi, Ma Xueqiang, and Yan Kejia, eds., *Shanghai de waiguoren 1842-1949* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003); Xiong Yuezhi, *Yizhi wenhua jiaozhi xiade Shanghai dushi shenghuo* (City life in the culture melee of Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2004); Wu Zhiwei, “Jiushanghai zujie de yinbu fengchao” (Issues on Indian policemen in the International Settlement of old Shanghai), *Dangan chungiu* 4 (2009): 52-54.

⁶⁷ Madhavi Thampi, “Indian Soldiers, Policemen and Watchmen in China in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *China Report* 35 (1999): 403-438; Claude Markovits “Indian Communities in China, 1842-1949,” in *New Frontiers: Imperialism’s New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953*, eds., Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 62-64; Madhavi Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2005).

⁶⁸ David Anderson and David Killingray, eds., *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority, and Control, 1830-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, 130-132.

gradually dominated most people's understanding of the human past.⁶⁹ The hegemonic status of national history in modern historical writings came at a time when nation-states have become the principal polities across the world and desperately desire to legitimize their sovereignties over their territories and people. One way to strengthen this legitimacy is to frame the nation-state as a coherent entity, both spatially and temporally. The linear concept of time serves this goal as it confers the nation-state to exist in an unbroken past and a progressive future. It makes the people of a certain nation believe that they share an origin that goes very far back and that the land they are presently living in was the land of their ancient ancestors. In other words, the nation is always there and the history of the nation is the exclusive property of that single national entity.⁷⁰ For elements that can hardly be appropriated into the national framework, their history would have been edited, falsified, muted or even eradicated.⁷¹ The Sikhs in

⁶⁹ For the origin of the national history and its development, see David Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," in *The South and the Sectional Conflict*, ed., David Potter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34-83; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Presenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-16; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁷⁰ For the relationship between the national history and modern state formation, see Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Gellner Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds., Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), 86-106; Jens Bartelsen, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁷¹ Geoff Eley, "Nationalism and Social History," *Social History* 6 (1981): 83-107; Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Shane

Shanghai, with their cosmopolitan features and ambiguous identities, were amongst these elements.

Critiques on national history have been voiced repeatedly in recent decades.⁷² A growing number of practitioners have reached the consensus that the historical profile of a community is possibly crisscrossed and shaped by interactions and connections, and that the history of a certain group of people is not exclusive, but is shared with others.⁷³ Since the interactions and connections amongst communities over history often spill over beyond the boundaries of the modern nation-state and sometimes even across continents, studies of such subjects have been tagged as transnational or global history.⁷⁴

The motif of this thesis echoes the concern for a connected and shared human past. Taking the Sikh community in modern Shanghai as a medium, this thesis inquires into the links amongst the mechanisms of the British colonial rule in Asia, the Sikh diaspora in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shanghai's development as a cosmopolitan hub, the Indian nationalist struggle overseas, the international communist movement, China's nationalist revolution, and Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. These seemingly

Strate, *The Lost Territories: Thailand's History of National Humiliation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

⁷² Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷³ Presenjit Duara, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and A Sustainable Future* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 71-89; Diego Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 33-58.

⁷⁴ Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jerry Bentley, "World History and Grand Narrative," in *Writing World History, 1800-2000*, ed., Benedikt Stuchtey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47-65; Patrick O'Brien, "Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 3 (2006): 3-39; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

unrelated histories, as this thesis will reveal in the following chapters, were in fact highly associated with one another. Moreover, the British colonial network and the Sikh diasporic network played crucial roles in integrating the once discrete histories into a connected one.

Sources and Structure

The translocal approach used in this study requires the translocalization of primary sources. Documents, archives, and newspapers located in New Delhi, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and California are thereby used. British Colonial Office records that pertain to the history of the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong are employed to explore the British imperial network. These records, together with local materials such as *Straits Times Overland Journal* (a Singapore based contemporary newspaper) and the Hong Kong Government Gazette, are especially helpful for us to understand the establishment and development of Sikh police units within the empire. To investigate the origin of the Sikh community in Shanghai, as well as the work and daily life of Sikhs, official documents such as the Shanghai Municipal Archives and *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council*, as well as local newspapers such as *Shenbao* and *North China Herald*, are employed. There is no systematic collection of archives about the anti-British struggle of Sikhs overseas. Relevant documents scatter around the world. This thesis uses Shanghai Municipal Police Files, *Sedition Committee Report 1918*, *Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry*, *Indian National Army Document Collection*, and British

Foreign Office Documents to scrutinize how Sikh revolutionaries took advantage of the Sikh diasporic network to organize their struggle, and how the British authorities responded this challenge with a global surveillance network. Given the limitation of time and funding, this study has not collected documents written by Sikh migrants themselves (if there is any) and oral records passed by them or their descendants. It is hoped that these crucial sources could be included in a future project.

In addition to Introduction and Conclusion, this thesis has four chapters, which are organized in a partly thematic and partly chronological order. Chapter One traces how the idea of trusting Punjab Sikhs to be good and loyal soldiers and policemen was produced, and how this concept flowed from India to other British colonies and settlements. It was the British colonial network that facilitated the setup of Sikh police units in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai. This chapter also elaborates on the process of establishing the Sikh police unit in Shanghai. It sheds light on how the colonial network equipped the Shanghai Municipal Council with information concerning Sikhs, and how its interaction with other colonial authorities influenced its decision-making. Chapter Two takes the journey of a Sikh individual from the Punjab to Shanghai in the 1900s as an example to try to piece together the subaltern experience of this Sikh migration. It looks into the work and daily lives of the Sikhs in Shanghai. On one hand, they were not merely responsible for checking riots and crimes, but also for carrying out the civilizing project in the

International Settlement. On the other hand, they frequently challenged the authorities that they thought to be oppressive and discriminative. Between these two extreme positions, the Sikhs shared the normal life alongside most other Shanghai residents. Many Sikh migrants in Southeast and East Asia continued their journey onwards to North America after 1905, where they encountered racial discrimination from the local white population. Chapter Three charts the rise of one of the most influential Indian revolutionary parties in North America--the Ghadar Party, and its continuous efforts to secure an anti-colonial network in Asia. Through unearthing the murder case of Buddha Singh, the head of the Sikh police force in Shanghai, this chapter sheds light on the mechanism and main features of the Ghadar network. The Indian revolutionary movement regained its momentum during the Pacific War when the British forces were driven out by the Japanese. The last chapter outlines how the Indian National Army movement developed its extensive influence by riding on the Sikh diasporic network in Southeast and East Asia, and how the Sikh community in Shanghai were mobilized and militarized. The end of the Pacific War not only sealed the fate of the Indian National Army, but also marked the disintegration of the British Empire. As most Sikhs returned to India immediately after 1945, this legend came to an end.

Chapter 1

Establishing the Sikh Police Unit in Shanghai

In 1962, the Hong Kong based writer, Cao Juren, drafted several articles to recount his experience in Shanghai from the 1920s to the 1940s. In one article, he wrote, “When I came to Shanghai, my first impression of this city was Sikh policemen on streets, whose faces were black and who wore red turbans.”⁷⁵ Cao Juren’s impression of Sikhs was shared by many contemporary Chinese. When depicting the scenery of the Bund in the 1930s, a writer claimed, “red-turbaned Sikh policemen were the authority of the Bund. They directed all traffics and maintained the order of the city”.⁷⁶ Shanghai-based writers were so familiar with Sikh policemen that these Sikhs were often mentioned in literary works. For example, in Eileen Chang’s novel *Lianhuantao* (Woes), a few Sikh policemen were hanging their red turbans on tress for drying.⁷⁷ Another Shanghai writer, Liu Na’ou, told a story of how a young Chinese woman was chased by a terrible looking Sikh policeman at midnight.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Cao Juren, *Shanghai chunqiu* (Shanghai history) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2007), 49-50.

⁷⁶ “Huangputan de fengjingxian” (Scenery of the Bund), *Shenbao*, Jan. 28, 1934.

⁷⁷ Eileen Chang, *Zhang Ailing diancang wenji, 1944 nian zuoping* (Eileen Chang’s Classic Collections, writings in 1944) (Taipei: Huangguan wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 2001), 195.

⁷⁸ Liu Na’ou, *Liu Na’ou xiaoshuo quanbian* (Collection of novels written by Liu Na’ou) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1997), 72.



Figure 2. A Sikh policeman standing on Chappo Road Bridge, Shanghai, 1900
(Courtesy of Historical Photographs of China Project).

Who were these Sikhs? Why did they come to Shanghai? Why did the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC hereafter) employ them, who lived in a place thousands of miles away from Shanghai and who were unfamiliar with the local population and culture, into its police force? Furthermore, given the fact that the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP hereafter) was set up in 1854, why did the SMC choose to add a Sikh branch into its police force only as late as 1885? This chapter contends that the origin of the Sikh police force in Shanghai lies in the circulation of police officers, policing knowledge, and information in the British colonial network and the circulation of the idea of taking Hong Kong as the reference point amongst Shanghailanders from the 1850s to the 1880s. Furthermore, by highlighting the translocal connections and interactions amongst British colonies and settlements,

this study tries to break the metropole-colony binary in imperial history studies.

Hong Kong as the Reference

After the First Opium War (1839-1842), Shanghai was opened to foreign trade according to the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing. Western merchants, mainly British, French, and Americans, flocked into this city to pursue commercial interests. British, American, and French concessions were then established in the late 1840s. Citizens of the three countries enjoyed extraterritorial rights in the concessions.⁷⁹

The SMC was established in 1854 in the context of the Small Sword Uprising in Shanghai and the encroaching Taiping Rebellion.⁸⁰ The primary concern of the SMC at that moment was to check rampant violence, to control the influx of Chinese refugees, and to provide a hygienic environment for Western residents.⁸¹ To resolve these

⁷⁹ Shi Meiding, *Shanghai zujiezhishi*, 10-23. For discussions of extraterritoriality in modern Chinese history, see Par Kristopher Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁸⁰ For the set up of the Shanghai Municipal Council in 1854, see L. C. Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074-1858* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Shanghai: A Global City* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Jiang Longfei, *Shanghai zujie bainian* (Hundred years history of foreign concessions in Shanghai) (Shanghai: Wenhua chubanshe, 2008), 1-76; Ma Changlin, Li Xia, and Shi Lei, *Shanghai gonggongzujie chengshiguanli yanjiu* (The Research on Urban Management of Shanghai International Settlement) (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2011), 1-7; Shi Meiding, *Shanghai Zujiezhishi*, 93-94.

⁸¹ "To the Editor of the North China Herald," *North China Herald*, June 14, 1854. For refugees and immigrants that flocked into Shanghai during the Taiping rebellion, see Kuai Shixun, *Shanghai gonggongzujie shigao* (A draft of the history of Shanghai's International Settlement) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), 318; Kerrie MacPherson, *A Wilderness of Marshes: The Origins of Public Health in Shanghai, 1843-1893* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1-17; Meng Yue, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

problems, the establishment and maintenance of a full-time professional police force was necessary.⁸²

In fact, to strengthen the police forces was a trend across the British Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century. As the British authorities sought to strengthen its position in Asia by replacing indirect rule under the East India Company with direct rule from London,⁸³ it was immediately found out that security conditions from Ceylon to Shanghai were far from certain.⁸⁴ For example, the influence of Chinese secret societies was so great in Malaya and the Straits Settlements that their consecutive riots threatened British rule there.⁸⁵ The forms of perils the British authorities faced at that time were not

⁸² "Notification," *North China Herald*, July 8, 1854; Shanghai Municipal Archives, ed., *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 570.

⁸³ The other reason for Britain's decision to shift to direct involvement in its Asian colonies was its desire to consolidate and expand its control in the face of its rivalry with other European powers, namely Russia's threat to India, France and Germany's threats to Southeast Asia. See Savepalli Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Damodar Sardesai, *British Trade and Expansion in Southeast Asia (1830-1914)* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1977); Neil Charlesworth, *British Rule and the Indian Economy, 1800-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Ian Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: Paramountcy in Western India, 1857-1930* (London: Orient Longman, 1982); B. A. Knox, "The Concept of Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Ideas in the Colonial Defense Inquiries of 1859-1861," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15 (1987): 242-263; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

⁸⁴ Nicholas Tarling, *Imperial Britain in South-East Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975); Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁸⁵ Leon Comber, *Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya: A Survey of the Triad Society from 1800 to 1900* (London: J. J. Augustin, 1959); Wilfred Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya: A Historical Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Lee Poh Ping, *Chinese Society in Nineteenth Century Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1978); Carl Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore 1784-1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979); Mark Lau Fong, *The Sociology of Secret Societies: A Study of Chinese Secret Societies in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1981); Tan Pek Leng, "Chinese Secret Societies and Labour Control in the Nineteenth Century Straits Settlements," *Kajian Malaysia* 1 (1983): 14-48; Owen Rutter, *The Pirate Wind: Tales of the Sea-Robbers of Malaya* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986); Chu Yiu Kong, *The Triads as Business* (London: Routledge, 2000).

only riots, but also the illegal trafficking of human beings, drugs, and weapons which weighed heavily on tax incomes and worsened the already weakened social stability.⁸⁶ Also, uncontrolled prostitution and widespread venereal diseases made it imperative for the authorities to establish effective inspections of the population.⁸⁷

These challenges not only heavily drained revenues of the authorities, but also incurred extra expenditure in social controlling, and thus hindered the full development of colonial societies. For instance, in 1880, the Straits Settlements government spent \$3, 963 and \$41, 520 on education and medical sectors in Singapore respectively, while \$116, 368 on policing.⁸⁸ Ironically, the return of such a high expenditure on security sectors repeatedly failed to meet expectation. The problems that bedeviled colonial officers remained. It was in this historical context that the strengthening of police forces in Britain's Asian colonies and settlements became urgent. For the authorities, the problem that continuously haunted them was how to organize the police force, and the doubt over which should be the strategically appropriate pool from which the ranks of the police could be drawn.

Soon after its establishment, the SMC began to set up its municipal police. In its \$25, 000 (Mexican silver dollars) total estimate

⁸⁶ David Starkey, E. S. Heslinga, and J. A. de Moor, eds., *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997); Emrys Chew, "Militarized Cultures in Collision: The Arms Trade and War in the Indian Ocean during the Nineteenth Century," *Royal United Services Institute Journal* Oct. (2003): 90-96; Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Traders, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁸⁷ Phillippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); James Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore 1870-1940* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2003).

⁸⁸ CO 277/14, p. C20, Revenue, Expenditure, and Balances, 1880. Before 1905, the currency in the Straits Settlements was Mexican silver dollars.

for the year of 1854, \$15, 000 was for the budget of the police force.⁸⁹ However, since most members of the SMC then were just businessmen and had neither the expertise nor experience required to organize a police force, they desperately looked for a model to follow. Because many Shanghailanders stayed in Hong Kong before moving to Shanghai, and Shanghai's demographic condition was very similar to that of Hong Kong's, the Hong Kong Police became the prototype.⁹⁰

It is necessary to point out here that the Hong Kong Police in the 1850s was by no means a good model. The policemen's disciplinary problems and their low efficiency were the main concerns of the Hong Kong authorities at that time.⁹¹ However, for the SMC, it seemed that there was no other options to take.⁹²

In 1854, a former Hong Kong police officer, Samuel Clifton, was appointed as the Superintendent of the SMP. Along with Clifton, more than twenty policemen from Hong Kong were employed.⁹³ Based on the policing knowledge these policemen brought with them from Hong Kong, fundamental functions of a civil constabulary on British lines such as patrolling streets, checking transportation, and inspecting

⁸⁹ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)*, 572. Currency at that time in Shanghai was Mexican silver dollars and Chinese taels.

⁹⁰ For the establishment of the SMP and its early work, see Zhang Bin, *Shanghaiyingzujie xunbufangzhidu jiqiyunzuo yanjiu, 1854-1863* (A study on the institution and mechanism of the municipal police in the British concession in Shanghai, 1854-1863) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013), 34-37.

⁹¹ CO 129/47, pp. 85-114, From Caine to Colonial Office, 26 Sept. 1854.

⁹² Europeans established colonies in South and Southeast Asia as early as the sixteenth century. However, social order in these colonies was maintained by soldiers and mercenaries. The world's first modern police force that was professional, civilian in fashion, and only answerable to the public was set up in London in 1829. This kind of law-enforcement forces appeared in Britain's Asian colonies in a much later period, mainly because the British imposed indirectly rule over most of its Asian colonies before the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Hong Kong at that time was among those few colonies in Asia that had modern police forces.

⁹³ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)*, 569-570.

unlawful activities were briskly executed.⁹⁴ At the same time, the doctrine of the Hong Kong Police that prejudged the Chinese to be unreliable and unqualified subjects that were unsuitable to be employed as policemen were also imported to Shanghai.⁹⁵ In the first decade of the SMC, there was no Chinese employee in the police force.

In its early years, staff members in the SMP were heavily overworked. For the total of twenty-four policemen in 1856, eight were on duty every eight hours.⁹⁶ As the influx of Chinese refugees surged in the late 1850s and early 1860s, residential areas were extraordinarily expanded and thus put great pressure on the already exhausted municipal police.⁹⁷ It was under these conditions that growing numbers of Europeans were added to the unit.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, considering the relatively high cost of recruiting policemen from Hong Kong, most newly recruited Europeans were dismissed sailors.⁹⁹ Obviously, neither were they qualified for nor did they really intend to be serious about policing work.¹⁰⁰ Disciplinary cases involving being heavily drunk, absence from duty, and be engage in corruption were

⁹⁴ "Untitled," *North China Herald*, Sept. 9, 1854.

⁹⁵ Norman Miners, "The Localization of the Hong Kong Police Force, 1842-1947," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3 (1990): 300-301.

⁹⁶ "Untitled," *North China Herald*, June 14, 1856.

⁹⁷ Zhang Bin, *Shanghaiyingzujie xunbufangzhidu jiqiyunzuo yanjiu, 1854-1863*, 72-73; Fang Zhou, "The Wheels that Transformed the City: The Historical Development of Public Transportation Systems in Shanghai, 1843-1937" (PhD diss., Georgia Institute of Technology, 2010), 43-44.

⁹⁸ "Untitled," *North China Herald*, July 19, 1856; "Minutes of a Public Meeting of Foreign Renters of Land," *North China Herald*, June 23, 1860; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)*, 590, 596.

⁹⁹ "To the Editor of the North China Herald," *North China Herald*, Jan. 26, 1861.

¹⁰⁰ The same situation also happened to the Hong Kong Police. In the 1850s, the Hong Kong Police was filled with unemployed seamen and stewards with loose discipline. See, CO 129/47, pp. 85-114, From Caine to Colonial Office, 26 Sept. 1854.

widely reported.¹⁰¹ Even the Superintendent of Police himself, Samuel Clifton, was dismissed in 1860 for corruption.¹⁰²

As the American Concessions combined with the Settlement in the early 1860s, the population grew remarkably, as did security problems.¹⁰³ To inspect the ever-increasing population and to check violations of laws and regulations, an enlargement of the SMP seemed to be imperative. Nevertheless, the size of the SMP had in fact been slightly diminished, owing to the tremendous financial burden and competition from other employers.¹⁰⁴ In the early 1860s, the expenditure of maintaining the police force accounted for a large proportion of the total expenditure of the SMC, and thus became unbearable for ratepayers.¹⁰⁵ The Council was often forced to refrain from employing more staff for the police.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, private merchants and businessmen who were deeply concerned over their properties in the Settlement tried to attract reliable Europeans to serve as their watchmen or bodyguards with much higher salaries than those

¹⁰¹ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)*, 599, 601, 610, 677. Also see Robert Bickers, "Ordering Shanghai: Policing a Treaty Port, 1854-1900," in *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, eds., David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 179-180.

¹⁰² *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 1)*, 603-604.

¹⁰³ "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Herald*, Sept. 26, 1863; "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1864; "Shanghai yingxnbufang yanjing guntu ezha shi" (The Shanghai Municipal Police prohibit embezzlement), *Wanguo Gongbao* 474 (1878): 19. According to some scholars' calculation, the population in the Settlement grew from around 20,000 in 1855 to more than 90,000 in 1865, see Zou Yiren, *Jiushanghai renkoubianqian de yanjiu* (A study on the population transformation in old Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), 3; Shi Meiding, *Shanghai Zujiezhishi*, 93-94.

¹⁰⁴ "Municipal Report for the Half Year Ending," *North China Herald*, Nov. 14, 1863; "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1864.

¹⁰⁵ According to the *Land Regulation* that was signed by the British and the Qing governments in 1854, the Annual Ratepayers' Meeting of the Settlement held the final authority on the budget-making of the SMC.

¹⁰⁶ "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Herald*, Apr. 23, 1864.

paid by the SMC.¹⁰⁷ For this reason, many able policemen rushed to resign or obtain their dismissal.¹⁰⁸ Apart from the economic concern, the SMC had developed an uncomfortable opinion of its European servicemen. In a report, the Council admitted that its European police staff were not effective in dealing with Chinese burglars, neither did they understand the Chinese language, nor were they able to recognize criminals' faces.¹⁰⁹

The Rise and Decline of the Localization Policy in the SMP

In fact, the manpower shortage and disciplinary problems also haunted the Hong Kong Police at that time.¹¹⁰ Some colonial officers came to suggest that the authorities should include the Chinese in the police force.¹¹¹ After Police Magistrate Charles May, who made the policy to reject the employment of the Chinese, left the police force in 1863, the Chinese had gradually been added into the ranks.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ "Untitled," *North China Herald*, Oct. 19, 1861.

¹⁰⁸ "Minutes of the Annual Meeting," *North China Herald*, Apr. 5, 1862.

¹⁰⁹ "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Herald*, Feb. 20, 1864.

¹¹⁰ CO 129/86, pp. 43-51, From Robinson to Colonial Office, 6 May 1862.

¹¹¹ CO 129/99, pp. 359-363, From Robinson to Colonial Office, 10 Aug. 1864.

¹¹² Miners, "The localization of the Hong Kong police force, 1842-1947," 301.



Figures 3. Chinese policeman in Hong Kong, 1900s (Courtesy of Hong Kong Museum of History).

The news of how the Hong Kong Police began to engage the Chinese spread to Shanghai before long. Considering it was a good way to cut the tremendous amount of spending on the policing sector and to maintain an adequate number of officers on duty to watch over the ever-expanding Settlement, the newly appointed Superintendent Charles Penfold, a former London police officer, persuaded the SMC to follow the step of Hong Kong.¹¹³ The SMC approved this proposal and authorized Penfold to enlist some Chinese in 1864.¹¹⁴ From then on, increasing numbers of Chinese constables were taken into the SMP to replace the Europeans. In addition to patrolling streets and regulating the traffic, Chinese constables were also assigned to detect

¹¹³ In the year of 1864, the SMP merely had 126 staffs while the Council estimated that 100 more policemen were urgently needed if the Settlement could be well managed, see “Impartial, not Neutral,” *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1864. For Penfold’s plan to recruit Chinese as constables, see *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 2)*, 490.

¹¹⁴ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 2)*, 490.

crimes and collect taxes and fees. Table 1 illustrates how the composition of the SMP was transformed from 1863 to 1883.

Table 1. The Composition of the SMP, 1863-1883

	1863 ¹¹⁵	1864 ¹¹⁶	1865 ¹¹⁷	1871 ¹¹⁸	1883 ¹¹⁹
Europeans	133	140	75	34	30
Chinese	0	10	37	87	225

The localization process in the police forces in Hong Kong and Singapore, however, was not that radical. While natives were low-cost and accustomed to local environment, the British assumed that they were liable to corruptions.¹²⁰ In the 1879 Straits Settlements Police Commission Report, colonial officers noted that local policemen’s salaries were too low to support their basic living (\$6 a month, even lower than that of common laborers) and that this poor payment pushed the policemen to take bribes.¹²¹ Furthermore, many British still held the view that a police force composed largely of the locals would be unreliable in any anti-Western riot.¹²²

¹¹⁵ “Municipal Report for the Half Year Ending,” *North China Herald*, Nov. 14, 1863.

¹¹⁶ “Mr. Holliday on the New Police Scheme,” *North China Herald*, Mar. 14, 1883.

¹¹⁷ “Reports of Municipal Council Committee,” *North China Herald*, June. 10, 1865.

¹¹⁸ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 3)*, 594-595.

¹¹⁹ “Mr. Holliday on the New Police Scheme,” *North China Herald*, Mar. 14, 1883.

¹²⁰ This perception of “unreliability” of local population is undoubtedly an illusion and discrimination that Europeans hold on their colonial subjects. And only by designating the colonized people as unreliable and easily to be corrupted, Europeans could thus legitimize their colonial rule.

¹²¹ CO 275/23, p. cclxxi, Report of the Police Commission, 1 Sept. 1879.

¹²² CO 129/156, pp. 187-194, From MacDonnell to the Earl of Kimberley, 24 Jan. 1872. Also see David Arnold, “The Congress and the Police,” in *The Indian National Congress and the Political Economy of India, 1885-1985*, eds., Mike Shepperdson and Colin Simmons (Aldershot: Avebury, 1988), 208-230.



Figure 4. Chinese policeman and prisoners in Shanghai, 1907 (Courtesy of Historical Photographs of China Project).

The weakness of the localization policy in Shanghai was soon exposed. Complaints and frustrations about Chinese constables in the Settlement were frequently heard, especially amongst local Chinese residents who had contact with them in their daily lives.¹²³ At first, the Chinese constables were no less corrupt than their European counterparts. Since most Chinese constables were recruited from amongst local vagrants if not gang members, they made good use of their connections to extort money from Chinese residents and abuse their newly obtained positions to bully their countrymen.¹²⁴ As business in the Settlement prospered in the 1870s, Chinese constables

¹²³ “Zhongxi xunbu shuo” (The comparison between Western and Chinese constables), *Huatu xinbao* 1 (1881): 119.

¹²⁴ “Bendi xunbu bangou fandezhu an” (A case on the Chinese constables beat the owner of a restaurant), *Shenbao*, Aug. 24, 1872; “Cheng bendixunbu wei laoye” (Chinese constables were called as masters), *Shenbao*, July 30, 1873; “Huabu bufu” (Unlawful Chinese constables), *Shenbao*, Nov. 16, 1877; “Huabu Ouren” (Chinese constables beat residents), *Shenbao*, Mar. 3, 1878; “Kuocong xifa xunbu shuo” (Expanding the Western style policing laws), *Yiwenlu* 1538 (1896): 14; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 2)*, 599; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 3)*, 506.

turned to brothels, opium houses, and gambling establishments to extort bribes in exchange for not reporting any violation of the rules in these businesses.¹²⁵

Furthermore, it seems that these Chinese constables were unable to strike fear in the Chinese population at large. The Chinese, be they peddlers, rickshaw coolies, thieves or robbers, were not intimidated or deterred by the appearance of Chinese constables when committing crimes. It was frequently reported that Chinese constables were looked down on and sometimes even aggressively insulted by their countrymen when they were executing their duties.¹²⁶

Another problem brought about by the introduction of Chinese policemen was that the Chinese yamen (local government) was able to infiltrate into the SMP through its influence over the SMP's Chinese staff. Whenever the instruction of the Superintendent was in conflict with the yamen's, most Chinese constables took the side of the latter in order to avoid being blacklisted by the Chinese authorities.¹²⁷

These deficiencies then developed into a series of scandals within the SMP in the early 1880s. On 14 July 1882, the influential local newspaper *North China Herald* reported that the SMP had suffered from the incursion of yamen-runners from the Chinese government for a long time and that the Chinese government had probably controlled

¹²⁵ "Squeezes," *North China Herald*, Feb. 22, 1871; "Lun xunbu" (On constables), *Shenbao*, July 14, 1876; "Municipal Council," *North China Herald*, Aug. 19, 1879; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 7)*, 596.

¹²⁶ "Oubu exi" (The bad habit of beating up constables), *Shenbao*, July 31, 1878; "Chesui buyi" (Tearing uniforms of constables to pieces), *Shenbao*, Mar. 9, 1881; "Oubu panfa" (Being sentenced for beating up constables), *Shenbao*, Apr. 29, 1881; "Huabu shouru" (Chinese constable has been insulted), *Wanguo gongbao* 746 (1883): 14-15.

¹²⁷ "The Late Elections," *North China Herald*, Jan. 17, 1882; "The Proposed Municipal Regulations and By-laws," *North China Herald*, July 14, 1882.

most of these Chinese constables.¹²⁸ One month later, a member of the SMC, Charles J. Holliday, pointed out that the efficiency of the newly recruited Chinese constables was extremely low and that the criminal rate was ever on rise.¹²⁹

To better evaluate the condition of its police force, the SMC elected Holliday as the chairman of the Watch Committee and asked him to probe wrongdoings within the police. On 28 February 1883, Holliday submitted a brief report to the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers in which he claimed that the SMP was becoming a body full of scandals that no one except the Council members still trusted. He also expressed his deep frustration over the rampant corruption, demoralization, and nepotism amongst policemen.¹³⁰

According to Holliday's report, the expenditure of the SMP between 1872 and 1882 swelled to around Tls. 7, 000 (from Tls. 44, 000 in 1872 to Tls. 51, 000 in 1882). This increased expenditure had not been used to recruit adequate numbers of qualified constables, but was instead spent on paying the unreasonable salaries and bonuses of certain European police officers. Indeed, the salary of European officers in the SMP was two times higher than that of their Hong Kong counterparts. From this point of view, the original goal of the localization policy in the 1860s, which was to cut policing expenditure while maintaining adequate personnel to preserve social order, had not been attained at all. On the one hand, the money saved by replacing

¹²⁸ "The Proposed Municipal Regulations and By-laws," *North China Herald*, July 14, 1882.

¹²⁹ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 7)*, 796.

¹³⁰ "Annual Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Feb. 28, 1883.

European constables with the Chinese had been used to meet the requirements of a few European officers. On the other hand, the employment of the Chinese, most of whom were just vagrants and hooligans, had degenerated the police force. To resolve these evils once and for all, the report advocated a complete reorganization.¹³¹

Nevertheless, this much-needed reorganization of the SMP seems to have been a dilemma for the Council. Just as a local commentary pointed out, a massive recruitment of Europeans would inevitably escalate the expenditure to an extent that the SMC could not afford, but to add more Chinese would only worsen the situation.¹³² To resolve this dilemma, the Watch Committee turned its attention elsewhere for guidance.

A Martial Race in Motion

In fact, most British colonies by that time faced the same dilemma that troubled the SMC. The solution was to adopt a let-aliens-rule strategy--recruiting colonial subjects from one colony and deploying them to other colonies to police the people with whom they were unfamiliar.¹³³ In Aden, no locals were employed in the armed police force before 1965. Instead, nearly all policemen were Protectorate-born Arabs whom the British assumed to be "outsiders".¹³⁴ The security forces in the Bahamas in the late nineteenth century were

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Zailun zujie yitian xunbu" (The second comment on the further introduction of constables in the Settlement), *Shenbao*, Jan. 26, 1883.

¹³³ For this strategy, see David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras, 1859-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); Streets, *Martial Races*.

¹³⁴ John Willis, "Colonial Policing in Aden, 1937-1967," *The Arab Studies Journal* 5 (1997): 61.

firstly staffed by Africans and then by policemen from Barbados, while recruiting from the local population was never even considered.¹³⁵ In Dar es Salaam, the British authorities implemented “the strategy of reducing the local men serving in a police unit to the smallest number possible.”¹³⁶ This strategy of using aliens to police colonies was also applied to Britain’s Asian colonies. Since India was believed to be the cornerstone of British rule in East Africa and Asia, Indians were widely used in securing and sustaining British interests from Uganda to China.¹³⁷ From the nineteenth century onwards, it was not uncommon to see that Indian policemen were deployed in Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji and Malaya so as to check insurgents and maintain social order.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Howard Johnson, “Social Control and the Colonial State: the Reorganization of the Police Force in the Bahamas, 1888-1893,” *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 7 (1986): 49-51.

¹³⁶ Andrew Burton, “‘Brothers by Day’: Colonial Policing in Dar es Salaam under British Rule, 1919-1961,” *Urban History* 30 (2003): 70.

¹³⁷ Robert Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa, and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*. “Indians” in this study refer to people living under the rule of the Raj, including nowadays India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

¹³⁸ David Anderson and David Killingray, “Consent, Coercion and Colonial Control: Policing the Empire, 1830-1940,” in *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority, and Control, 1830-1940*, eds., David Anderson and David Killingray (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 7; Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora*, 71.



Figure 5. Aden Armed Police, 1966 (Courtesy of National Army Museum, U.K.).

Nevertheless, not all Indians in the eyes of the British were suitable for military service. Indeed, only those who were viewed and classified as “martial races” were deployed overseas. The concept of “martial race” was a British invention based on the nineteenth century race theory. It assumed certain groups of men were “biologically and culturally predisposed to the arts of war”.¹³⁹ Harsh environment and specific culture could make people such as Punjabi Sikhs and Nepali Gurkhas possess superior military capabilities.¹⁴⁰ Although similar ideas that defined certain societies as “warlike” or “peaceful” had not been rarely seen in pre-colonial India and Enlightenment Europe alike, the “martial race” ideology that combined nineteenth-century

¹³⁹ Streets, *Martial Races*, 1.

¹⁴⁰ For the development of the martial race theory, see Streets, *Martial Races*; David Omissi, “Martial Races: Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India, 1858-1939,” *War & Society* 9 (1991): 1-27; Purushottam Bamskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army* (New Delhi: Nirala, 1994); Barua, “Inventing Race,” 107-116; Kaushik Roy, *Brown Warriors of the Raj: Recruiting and the Mechanics of Command in the Sepoy Army, 1859-1913* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2008), 80-144.

Darwinist “scientific” understanding of race with an artificial strategy of colonial rule was largely a British invention after the 1857 Indian Rebellion.¹⁴¹

The Sikhs were recognized as a typical “martial race” by the British authorities during the colonial period.¹⁴² Generally speaking, the name “Sikh” referred to those people who came from the Punjab and who believed in Sikhism.¹⁴³ As early as the two Anglo-Sikh wars (1845 to 1848), Sikh fighters’ bravery and bellicose character had deeply impressed the British officers and thus had earned them the great reputation of being excellent soldiers with a strong martial spirit.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the Sikhs were not widely deployed outside India before the Indian Mutiny.¹⁴⁵ During the Mutiny, the Sikhs

¹⁴¹ For the concept of martial race in pre-colonial India and Enlightenment Europe, see Douglas Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995). For the historical background of the invention of the “martial races” ideology, see Streets, *Martial Race*, 7. For broader discussion of how the British invented different forms of norms to legitimize their rule around the world in late nineteenth century, see Erick Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁴² Other typical “martial races” in South Asia were Gurkhas in Nepal and Muslims in Northwest India.

¹⁴³ For the debate of the identity of Sikh people, see W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Mehar Singh Chaddah, *Are Sikhs a Nation?* (Delhi: DSGMC, 1982); Richard Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); W. H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh? The Problems of Sikh Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989); Choor Singh, *Understanding Sikhism: The Gospel of the Gurus* (Singapore: Central Sikh Gurdwara Board, 1994).

¹⁴⁴ For the Anglo-Sikh wars and Sikhs’ resistance against the British, see Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars: The British Army in Punjab, 1845-49* (New Delhi: Thomson Press, 1975); Amandeep Madra, *Warrior Saints: Three Centuries of the Sikh Military Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Sikh Foundation, 1999), 55-70; J. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. II.3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For contemporary British officers’ perception on the Sikhs, see Charles Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: The Daring Adventurers Who Tamed India’s Northwest Frontier* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000).

¹⁴⁵ One main reason why the British had no interest in recruiting the Sikhs into the Indian Army was that the Sikhs fought so well in the Anglo-Sikh wars that the British were afraid of a possible Sikh mutiny in their own Army in the future, see

demonstrated their loyalty to the Raj by not only fighting against the mutineers along with their British officers, but also actively joining the government army.¹⁴⁶ By incorporating the perception of bravery and loyalty of the Sikhs with the social Darwinist racial theory, the British thus tagged the Sikhs as a “martial race”. As a “martial race” whose character and reliability had been proved, the Sikhs were perceived to be a vital force for Britain’s colonial rule in Asia.

Once the Sikhs had been recognized as the “martial race”, information and knowledge about their martial features were spread around the empire. Heather Streets’ study on the relationship between the British Indian Army and mass media sheds much light on the circulation of the “martial race” ideology across the empire. According to Streets, British officers in India produced large numbers of handbooks, memoirs, and military journals about the merits and characteristics of the “martial races” to justify and support their recruiting policies.¹⁴⁷ These publications, with most updated knowledge and information produced by colonial officers, quickly flowed out of India and were widely circulated in other colonies.¹⁴⁸

Streets, *Martial Race*, 65; Kaur, *Sikhs in the Policing of British Malaya and Straits Settlements (1874-1957)*, 13-14; Roy, *Brown Warriors of the Raj*, 98.

¹⁴⁶ During the Mutiny, it was recorded that 23, 000 Sikhs joined the British side to fight the war, see Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, 6; Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora*, 72. For the performance of the Sikh soldiers in the mutiny, see Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (London: Viking, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ Streets, *Martial Race*, 132-150. For the handbook project on the “martial race”, also see Roy, *Brown Warriors of the Raj*, 136-140.

¹⁴⁸ For the circulation of information and knowledge during the colonial age, see Richard Grove, “The Transfer of Botanical Knowledge between Asia and Europe, 1498-1800,” *Journal of the Japan Netherlands Institute* 3 (1991): 164-172; Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993); Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Harold Innis, *Empire and Communication* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British*

Therefore, colonial officers outside India could become well acquainted with information on the Sikhs and make the decision to recruit them.

In addition to publications, British officers themselves were carriers of information as they were frequently transferred from one colony to another.¹⁴⁹ For example, when the colonial secretary of the Bahamas, Captain H. M. Jackson, who served as the Inspector-General of Police in Sierra Leone from 1880-1884, decided to reorganize the Bahamas police force in the late nineteenth century, he took the Sierra Leone colonial police as his model and recruited Barbadians who were employed in Sierra Leone, into the Bahamas police.¹⁵⁰ The early Kenya police force was mainly modeled on its Indian counterpart, because almost all police officers in Kenya had previously served in India.¹⁵¹ In Hong Kong, dissatisfied with the meager performance of European and Indian contingents in the 1870s, the commanding officer Major-General Whitfield insisted that black West Indian soldiers should be employed into the Hong Kong Police, a decision mainly based on his previous experience as a police officer in the Caribbean.

Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁹ For the transferring of colonial personals and institutions, see Henry Hall, *The Colonial Office: A History* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937); Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Empire and Its Civil Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938); Robert Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers: The Making of the British Colonial Service* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963); Eric Burr, *Localization and Public Service Training* (Oxford: Oxford Development Records Project, 1985); Anthony Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services, 1837-1997* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999).

¹⁵⁰ Johnson, "Social Control and the Colonial State," 53.

¹⁵¹ James Wolf, "Asian and African Recruitments in the Kenya Police, 1920-1950," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6 (1973): 404; Mathieu Deflem, "Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya," *Police Studies* 17 (1994): 53.

While this proposal seemed unrealistic given the long distance between Hong Kong and the Caribbean, it gained strong support from some Hong Kong government officers who shared the experience of serving in the West Indies.¹⁵² By the same token, when British officers who once served in India were transferred to other colonies, they took with them their knowledge, information, and perceptions on India's "martial races".¹⁵³ Once they held new positions in another colony, it was natural for them to apply their previous expertise to the management of the new territories.

The establishment of the Sikh police force in Hong Kong was a direct result of the circulation of colonial officers. In the 1860s the governor of Hong Kong, Sir Richard MacDonnell, castigated the Hong Kong Police as the most corrupt and low-efficiency police force he had known throughout his entire career.¹⁵⁴ Frustrated over the poor performance of the police and concerned about social unrest, MacDonnell proposed alternative ways to secure this colony.¹⁵⁵ As the governor was haunted by the deficiency of his police force, Charles Creagh, the Deputy Superintendent of Police in Sind, was transferred to Hong Kong to act as the Deputy Superintendent of Police in 1866.¹⁵⁶ Since Creagh had a positive perception of the well-disciplined

¹⁵² CO 129/153, pp. 105-108, from Whitfield to the Earl of Kimberley, 16 Nov. 1871.

¹⁵³ This circulation of individuals and information centered on India is best illustrated by Thomas Metcalf and Robert Blyth, both of whom designate India as the center of British rule in East Africa and Asia and highlight the significance of the export of British officers' Indian experience and knowledge, see Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj*; Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

¹⁵⁴ CO 129/120, pp. 42-46, MacDonnell to Colonial Office, 7 Jan. 1867.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-82.

¹⁵⁶ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, no. 87, 8 June 1867. In this document Creagh's name was wrongly given as Giles Creagh, but in the erratum of the Government Gazette, 15 June 1867, his name was corrected as Charles Creagh.

character of the Sikh policemen in his unit while he had been in India, he immediately recommended that the governor recruit some Sikhs from the Punjab to police the troubled colony.¹⁵⁷

MacDonnell approved this proposal in 1867. From 1867 to 1868, two hundred Sikhs were recruited by Creagh from the Punjab.¹⁵⁸ Although it was reported that these Sikhs were totally unqualified in the metropolitan-style beat duty, they were very skillful in quelling the riots, deterring the secret societies, and pacifying local clashes.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the government noted that it was necessary to keep the Sikhs operational in duties such as patrolling hill roads at night, guarding prisons, and watching government buildings.¹⁶⁰ Since then, the Sikh branch of the Hong Kong Police had principally maintained the scale and functions of its early years.¹⁶¹



Figure 6. Sikh and Chinese policemen in Hong Kong, 1900s (Courtesy of Hong Kong Museum of History).

¹⁵⁷ CO 129/120, pp. 42-82, MacDonnell to Colonial Office, 7 Jan. 1867.

¹⁵⁸ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 198, 23 May 1868; CO 129/122, pp. 135-140, from MacDonnell to Duke of Birmingham & Chandos, 8 June 1868.

¹⁵⁹ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 210, 17 Apr. 1869; CO 129/145, pp. 414-422, Whitfield to Colonial Office, 28 Sept. 1870; Hong Kong Blue Book, 4 Feb. 1873.

¹⁶⁰ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 188, 16 Apr. 1870.

¹⁶¹ Miners, "The Localization of Hong Kong Police Force, 1842-1947," 310; K. N. Vaid, *The Overseas Indian Community in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1972), 38-39.

In the 1870s, the Hong Kong government was remarkably satisfied with their service.¹⁶² When addressing the Police Force in 1878, the Hong Kong governor Pope Hennessy asserted that the Hong Kong Police was one of the best in the empire and that the Sikh corps was a credit to the colony.¹⁶³ The character and performance of the Sikhs in Hong Kong were even added into the handbooks and guides for young colonial officers.¹⁶⁴ For this reason, the Sikhs in Hong Kong “acquired a reputation amongst the British officers for their loyalty and martial prowess in service to the Empire”.¹⁶⁵ Subsequently, other colonies and settlements also attempted to establish their own Sikh police units, modeling them on Hong Kong’s experience.¹⁶⁶ As Isabella Jackson argues, “India was at the center of one web of empire, whilst Hong Kong and its police force were similarly at the center of a further web”.¹⁶⁷

The Straits Settlements’ Sikh unit was grounded in Hong Kong’s experience. Thanks to the frequent interactions and personal exchanges between the two crown colonies, decision makers in the Straits

¹⁶² CO 129/134, pp. 631-636, from India Office to F. Roger, 20 Mar. 1868; The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 210, 17 Apr. 1869; The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 188, 16 Apr. 1870; The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 282, 24 June 1871.

¹⁶³ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 89, 9 Mar. 1878.

¹⁶⁴ A. H. Bingley, *Caste Handbooks for the India Army: Sikhs* (Shimla: Government of India Printing, 1899); A. E. Barstow, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Sikhs* (New Delhi: The Manager Government of India Press, 1941).

¹⁶⁵ Kaur, *Sikhs in the Policing of British Malaya and Straits Settlements (1874-1957)*, 19.

¹⁶⁶ One example was in Bahamas. When the Bahamas government proposed to reorganize its police force in the 1880s, they took the Sikhs into account, basing on the information that Sikhs behaved well in Asia, especially Hong Kong, see CO 23/2322, Shea to Knutsford, 7 Nov. 1890.

¹⁶⁷ Isabella Jackson, “The Raj on Nanjing Road: Sikh Policemen in Treaty-Port Shanghai,” *Modern Asian Studies* 46(2012): 1682.

Settlements were well informed about policing work in Hong Kong. Since the Hong Kong Police had recruited the Sikhs in 1868, the Straits Settlements government had closely observed this experiment. Then when a debate arose in 1870 as to whether the Straits Settlements also needed to have a semi-military Sikh police force, both sides used Hong Kong's case to support their arguments.¹⁶⁸ When the Hong Kong Police Commission held discussions on raising the portion of Chinese constables in the Hong Kong Police Force years later,¹⁶⁹ this information immediately spread to the Straits Settlements and drew enthusiastic attention, mainly because the Straits Settlements government supposed that it was facing the same problem.¹⁷⁰

In fact, for most of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Straits Settlements government perceived its Hong Kong neighbor as a perfect model, a source of imitation and admiration, and a principal reference.¹⁷¹ Although this over-appreciation of the Hong Kong experience in the policy-making process incurred the occasional critiques,¹⁷² the perception of Hong Kong as a model colony was deeply embedded into the minds of colonial officers in the Straits Settlements.

As a result, the Straits Settlements' police commission immediately turned to the neighboring Hong Kong Police when

¹⁶⁸ "The Police Force," *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 3 June 1870.

¹⁶⁹ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, pp. 386-387, 7 Sept. 1872; CO 129/164, pp. 225-269, from Kennedy to the Earl of Kimberley, 31 July 1873.

¹⁷⁰ "The Hong Kong Police Commission," *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 7 Sept. 1872.

¹⁷¹ "The Hong Kong Police," *Straits Settlements Overland Journal*, 25 Oct. 1871.

¹⁷² In an article of the *Straits Times Overland Journal*, someone criticizes that the Straits Settlements government wrongly assumes Hong Kong as an Elysium of bliss, while often neglects the fact Hong Kong also has many problems, see "Police Commission Report," *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 31 Oct. 1879.

discussing how to improve its police force in 1879. Learning that the Hong Kong Police was composed of Sikhs, Chinese and European constables, and that this mixed composition had worked well and had proved advantageous in Hong Kong, the commissioners “adopted the Hong Kong Police Force as the model on which our much abused force should be re-organized”.¹⁷³ Since there already existed Europeans and Chinese in the unit, the establishment of a Sikh contingent was the essential point of this re-organization.¹⁷⁴ Referring to the performance of Sikhs in Hong Kong, most commissioners agreed, “It would be very advisable to introduce a certain number of Sikhs. It is enough to say that they have proved a marked success in Hong Kong, where they were introduced by Governor Sir R. Macdonnell.”¹⁷⁵

Once the decision to recruit new policemen into the unit had been made, commissioners set out to discuss the proposed salaries for the new recruits. Again, they took the rates of pay of the Hong Kong Police as the point of reference. Newly recruited Europeans would be paid at the same rates (\$40-\$100 a month) as their Hong Kong counterparts, while the salaries of the Sikhs were fixed lower than those in Hong Kong (\$9--\$30 a month).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ “The Hong Kong Legislative Council,” *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 4 Jan. 1879; “Topics of the Day,” *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 28 Nov. 1879.

¹⁷⁴ In the year of 1878, there were 45 Europeans, 540 Klings, 630 Malays, and 5 Chinese in the Straits Settlements Police, see CO 275/23, p. cxxix, Report of the Inspector-General of Police for the Year 1878, 24 July 1879.

¹⁷⁵ CO 275/23, p. cclxxviii, Report of Police Commission, 1 Sept. 1879.

¹⁷⁶ CO 275/23, p. cclxxx, Report of Police Commission, 1 Sept. 1879; “From the Daily Times, Oct. 3rd,” *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 7 Oct. 1879.

Furthermore, commissioners also took Hong Kong's police education institution into account. Informed that the Hong Kong Police had their own school to teach Indian police personnel regulations and languages (Indians needed to learn both English and Chinese in Hong Kong), and that only those who passed the relevant examinations could be promoted,¹⁷⁷ commissioners proposed to build police schools in the Straits Settlements to educate fresh recruits with policing knowledge and languages and to relate promotion with examination performance.¹⁷⁸ When the Sikh contingent was formed in 1881, that proposal was executed by the government simultaneously, as a police school specifically for the Sikhs was established in Singapore.¹⁷⁹



Figure 7. Sikh policeman in Singapore, 1900s (Courtesy of National Library Board, Singapore).

¹⁷⁷ The Hong Kong Government Gazette, pp. 64-65, 5 Feb. 1876; The Hong Kong Government Gazette, p. 130, 6 Apr. 1878.

¹⁷⁸ "Police Commission Report," *Straits Times Overland Journal*, 8 Nov. 1879.

¹⁷⁹ CO 275/27, p. 96, Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force, and on the state of crime, for the year 1881, 20 Apr. 1882.

“They were Unsuitable for Shanghai”: Rejecting the Sikh Scheme

Shanghai was another student of Hong Kong in employing Sikhs. When the Watch Committee of the SMC sought to reform the SMP in 1883, Hong Kong, the long-time preferred model in the eyes of Shanghailanders, immediately drew the attention. On the grounds that the chairman of the Watch Committee, Charles J. Holliday, also ran businesses in Hong Kong, the first-hand information on the Hong Kong Police was soon gathered through his business partners there.¹⁸⁰ Based on this newly obtained information, the Watch Committee sought to comb through practicable knowledge for their reform.

The Committee reached several conclusions. First of all, the salaries of the European staff in the SMP was two times higher than those of the Europeans in the Hong Kong Police. In other words, by using the same amount of money, the Hong Kong Police could employ many more Europeans than their Shanghai counterparts could.¹⁸¹

Secondly, even if European staff in Hong Kong were paid much less than their Shanghai counterparts, their service was reported to be more professional. Indeed, almost all European constables in Hong Kong had once served in Britain and received professional policing training. To obtain such qualified servicemen, the Hong Kong Police even kept an agent in London to help them select suitable officers. In contrast, most of SMP’s European constables had been unemployed sailors.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ “Special Meeting of Ratepayers,” *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883.

¹⁸¹ “Annual Meeting of Ratepayers,” *North China Herald*, Feb. 28, 1883; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 7)*, 799.

¹⁸² “Annual Meeting of Ratepayers,” *North China Herald*, Feb. 28, 1883.

In addition, the pension system implemented by the Hong Kong Police also played a decisive role in attracting capable men to work in the colony. After fifteen years of service in the police, a European constable was able to receive a pension equal to fifteen percent of his salary, while his Shanghai counterpart had no pension at all.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the pension system was costly and thus limited the size of the European branch in Hong Kong. The Sikhs were thereby introduced as the third element. It was reported that their clean, modest, and well-disciplined characteristics made them very qualified policemen who were able to conduct almost all police duties.¹⁸⁴

Hong Kong's professional European policemen and well-performing Sikhs remarkably intrigued the Watch Committee. In March 1883, a scheme was drafted to call for a total reorganization of the SMP. European constables were required to be directly employed from Britain in the future. To facilitate this proposal, the Committee procured the approval from the Hong Kong Police to make use of their agents in Britain to help with enlistment.¹⁸⁵ The Committee also recommended introducing a third element in the police force to balance the Chinese police. Since the work of Sikhs was highly cherished in Hong Kong, they were prescribed. The Annual Report of the Municipal Council later reported that the Sikhs were suitable to

¹⁸³ "Annual Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Feb. 28, 1883.

¹⁸⁴ "The New Police Scheme," *North China Herald*, Mar. 14, 1883.

¹⁸⁵ The Watch Committee contacted the Hong Kong Police and secured their support for the reform, see "Annual Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Feb. 28, 1883.

form a complementary military force when emergency events took place.¹⁸⁶

The Watch Committee submitted the New Police Scheme to the Council in July 1883. The essential part of this scheme was the reorganization of the SMP. The Committee suggested setting up a Sikh branch for the SMP. Given their plan, the new police force would be composed of 81 Europeans, 65 Sikhs, and 120 Chinese.¹⁸⁷ To better implement the Hong Kong experience, a former Deputy Superintendent of the Hong Kong Police, J. P. McEuen, was nominated by the Watch Committee as the Captain Superintendent to succeed Penfold who was to leave office in January 1884.¹⁸⁸

Whereas the scheme was generally welcomed by the Council, specific concern was expressed about the employment of Sikhs. The Watch Committee originally proposed to assign the Sikh policemen to regulate and supervise the street traffic. Nevertheless, since the Sikhs had no knowledge of either Chinese or English, doubts on whether they could effectively follow their officers' instructions and whether they were able to interact effectively with the local population were voiced. In spite of the objections of some Council members, Holliday insisted that Sikhs were perfect policemen to oversee traffic. If they

¹⁸⁶ Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA), U1-1-918, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1905.

¹⁸⁷ This statistic was based on the report from *North China Herald*, see "The Police Scheme I," *North China Herald*, Aug. 3, 1883. In *Shenbao*, it was reported that the scheme proposed to include 74 Europeans, 65 Sikhs, and 110 Chinese in the police force, see "Zhengdun xunbu" (Reforming the police force), *Shenbao*, July 29, 1883.

¹⁸⁸ "The Police Scheme I," *North China Herald*, Aug. 3, 1883; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 15.

could also be trained in a formal way and taught to use arms, they would form a complementary defensive force.¹⁸⁹

Since a consensus on the scheme could not be reached within the Council, it was then submitted to the ratepayers for their assessment and final decision. On 5 October 1883, the Special Public Meeting of Ratepayers was held to discuss the scheme for the reorganization of the SMP. Objections against this scheme first surfaced among the members. One principal objection to this scheme was that the Watch Committee would be imitating the organization of the Hong Kong Police. It was pointed out that the title “Captain Superintendent” for the new head of the SMP was directly borrowed from Hong Kong, and that the pension system was exactly the same as Hong Kong’s. More significantly, the enlistment of Sikhs, the methods for drilling and training them, and the plan to equip them with rifles, were definitely useless imitations of Hong Kong without any practical consideration. Overall, the scheme was too Hong Kong-oriented to be put into practice in the specific milieu of Shanghai.¹⁹⁰

In his response to the objection, Holliday articulated that neither the title nor the pension system was specifically an imitation of Hong Kong. Indeed, such methods were commonly employed across the British Empire. Even if certain proposals in the scheme were similar to those of Hong Kong, they were carefully adopted for the well being of the Settlement rather than being crudely thought out policies without careful consideration. As for the introduction of Sikhs, Holliday then

¹⁸⁹ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 520.

¹⁹⁰ “Special Meeting of Ratepayers,” *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883.

turned the question to his opponents by asking them whether they could point out any other race whose recruiting ground was closer to Shanghai, who were more familiar with European customs, and who were more reliable and cheaper than Sikhs. If they were unable to give another option, then the Sikh option should be accepted.¹⁹¹

Regardless of Holliday's justification, other concerns about the Sikhs were raised. The language barrier was still regarded as the biggest challenge. Now that the Sikhs were unable to understand the English and Chinese, the Council would have to arrange an interpreter for each Sikh policeman if they were deployed on the streets. Such a measure, however, was hopelessly unrealistic, given the high expenditure thereby incurred. Furthermore, on the grounds that the Sikhs were frequently reported to strike the Chinese and be rough towards the local population in Hong Kong, it was worried that they would behave in a similar way in Shanghai and thus agitate and anger the natives. Last but by no means least, the Chinese would not easily accept these dark-skinned, bearded, and exotically clothed Sikhs to police them and the harmonious Sino-foreign relationship in the Settlement enjoyed up until then would be harmed.¹⁹²

To argue against these critics, again, Holliday resorted to Hong Kong's case. He stated that Sikhs were very adept in learning languages. In Hong Kong, Sikh policemen were said to acquire the local language within one or two years, more quickly than their

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "Special Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883; "Lun gongbujuhuiyi zhengdun xunbu shi" (On reforming the police force in the ratepayers meeting), *Shenbao*, Oct. 12, 1883.

European counterparts. Therefore, if frequent language courses were offered to them, the Sikhs would soon get familiar with both Chinese and English. Moreover, the specific feature of their work, such as directing the transport, did not call for a very high level language ability. It was argued that, if the Chinese coolie who did not have any knowledge of English could follow the instructions of their European officers well, then there was no reason why the Sikhs would not fare similarly.¹⁹³

With regard to the harsh attitude the Sikhs held towards the natives, Holliday attributed this to their specific work environment in Hong Kong. Sikh policemen in Hong Kong were frequently deployed to patrol not only downtown areas, but also the countryside and outer roads at night. They were supposed to battle predatory gangs and bandits with guns and batons. In executing such dangerous duties, their aggression was thus understandable. However, in Shanghai, the Sikhs would merely be assigned to direct the downtown transport and they would not be armed while performing this duty. Holliday argued that the Sikhs would obediently keep their tempers under control if the rule that any violence towards civilians in Shanghai was prohibited and that anyone violating this rule would be dismissed immediately could be clarified to them.¹⁹⁴

Concerning the possible curiosity and indignation brought about by the appearance of Sikhs in Shanghai, Holliday reminded those raising objections that the natives were already familiar with foreign

¹⁹³ "Special Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

faces such as Africans and Filipinos. For this reason, Sikhs would not cause much of a stir amongst the Chinese. An enquiry conducted by the Watch Committee also indicated that Chinese residents living in the Settlement would welcome reorganization within the SMP if the number of Chinese policemen could be reduced. Now that Europeans were too costly to be employed on a large scale, the Chinese had no opposition to employ the Sikhs.¹⁹⁵

Finally, Holliday warned that the Settlement was not as secure as they imagined. Threats from outside or within could crop up at any time and expose the properties of all Shanghailanders to perilous conditions. A branch of eighty well-disciplined and war-like Sikhs, who could be equipped with arms in an emergency, would provide reliable protection for the European population and their properties in the Settlement.¹⁹⁶

Following Holliday's statement, G. J. Morrison, one of the leading ratepayers in Shanghai, came up to express his concern on this issue. Morrison happened to have been in Hong Kong before then and had made an inquiry about the Sikh policemen there. Admitting that the Sikhs could be extremely helpful when facing a turbulent population and a very complicated milieu such as Hong Kong, Morrison then stressed that the Sikhs were too harsh towards the Chinese and too militant to be deployed in a relatively peaceful city like Shanghai. He also rebutted Holliday's survey that Chinese residents held a positive attitude towards the introduction of these

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Sikhs. In his opinion, this optimism was out of their ignorance of the pugilism of the Sikhs.¹⁹⁷

Since no compromise was reached in this meeting, Morrison put forward an amendment of the New Police Scheme that retained all of its contents except the employment of Sikhs and asked for a vote amongst the ratepayers. Since significant ratepayers such as Alex Myburgh, who was the Chairman of the SMC and who also represented the most votes in the meeting (29 of the total 205 votes), did not support the Sikh scheme, the result was soon released with the acceptance of the amendment.¹⁹⁸ In this sense, the first attempt to enlist the Sikh policemen in Shanghai failed.

New Bottle with Old Wine: Revival of the Sikh Scheme

Although the Sikh scheme was turned down, it seems that Chinese and Western residents were in favor of this plan. In an article written by a European, the rejection of introducing the Sikhs had been criticized as a grave mistake made by the ratepayers. The author pointed out that some ratepayers' accusations about the rough behavior of Sikhs was groundless, given the fact that no serious skirmish between the Chinese and the Sikhs had ever been reported in Hong Kong. As for the language problem, the author argued that since the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ According to the Ratepayers Meeting in 1863, all foreign ratepayers whose assets in the Settlement amounted to Tls. 1, 000 had the right to vote in the Ratepayers Meeting that would discuss and approve annual budget and any important public expenditure. Those whose assets were Tls. 1, 000 had one vote, and every more Tls. 1, 000 in their assets would give them one more vote in the meeting. Any proposal could only be passed when it had more votes in the meeting, see Shi Meiding, *Shanghai zujiezhi*, 153-154.

policing subjects in Shanghai were mainly Chinese, most of the Sikhs were only required to master the Chinese language--a requirement much easier for them to meet. More seriously, without the Sikhs, the SMP had to recruit more Chinese constables to maintain its size. Since Chinese constables had earned an extremely bad reputation in the Settlement, an augmentation of this branch would result in a disaster.¹⁹⁹

This judgement was supported by others. In a correspondence letter, a Chinese resident expressed his deep regret on the abortion of the Sikh scheme when he saw Chinese constables doing nothing to prevent crimes conducted by Westerners while seizing every chance to bully their Chinese countrymen. In his opinion, no one would be rougher towards the local population than the Chinese constables and a well-disciplined Sikh unit would be a better option.²⁰⁰

On the grounds that the public was so frustrated by the abandonment of the Sikh scheme, the influential local newspaper *North China Herald* sent its correspondent to Hong Kong to closely scrutinize the Sikh policemen there in December 1883. To obtain comprehensive, objective, and accurate information on this subject, the correspondent visited many crowded and ill-reputed streets. Surprisingly, he found that the Sikhs got along very well with the local Chinese and that they were not viewed as rough by the natives. Those Sikhs could speak a little Chinese as well as English. It was also

¹⁹⁹ "The Daily Press," *North China Herald*, Oct. 31, 1883.

²⁰⁰ "Chinese Constables," *North China Herald*, Oct. 31, 1883. This negative perception toward the Chinese constables in the Settlement was widely seen in the late nineteenth century, also see "Shanghai zujie shang bufang yu jianyu" (The police force and prison in Shanghai's International Settlement), *Shiwubao* 65 (1898): 45-48.

reported that the Sikhs were able to pick up foreign languages much faster than their European colleagues. When interviewing some local gentries, the correspondent found that they gave the Sikhs very high commendation. Overall, the correspondent concluded that the Hong Kong Police was far superior to the SMP and he thus expected that the newly appointed Captain Superintendent J. P. McEuen would bring his experience in Hong Kong to Shanghai to help improve its degraded police force. One of the strategies for doing so was to set up a Sikh unit.²⁰¹

When McEuen took up office in the SMP in March 1884, he had to address the deteriorating security conditions in the Settlement owing to the growing tension between China and France. The advance of the French troops into northern Vietnam in 1883 and 1884 had agitated the Chinese government, which still claimed suzerainty over Vietnam. As the two countries came close to an open war in 1884, the Settlement was also impacted, owing to the rampageous anti-foreign sentiment amongst the local population and a possible Chinese attack on the nearby French concession.²⁰² Soldiers deployed by the Chinese government to defend Shanghai also aroused considerable anxiety. It was reported that the morale of these soldiers was extremely low and that their appearance was more like that of bandits than military men.²⁰³ Their occasional rude behavior on the streets of the Settlement

²⁰¹ "The Policing of Hong Kong," *North China Herald*, Dec. 13, 1883.

²⁰² "French and China," *North China Daily News*, Jan. 3, 1884; "Should Foreign Settlements be Considered as Neutral in Case of War?" *North China Daily News*, Jan. 5, 1884; "Amusements," *North China Herald*, July 18, 1884; "Lunbaohu shangju zhinan" (On the difficulty of maintaining the business), *Shenbao*, July 24, 1884.

²⁰³ "Impartial, not Neutral," *North China Daily News*, Jan. 10, 1884.

stirred great concern and panic.²⁰⁴ In case that disturbance might break out, the SMP was instructed to be especially vigilant in watching over Chinese “rowdies” and prohibiting public meetings held by groups of Chinese. Also, a call for an urgent reinforcement of the SMP was expressed.²⁰⁵

Now that the New Police Scheme had failed to meet Shanghailanders’ expectations, the SMC had to figure out a new solution for this new situation. In the Special Meeting of the Ratepayers held in the previous year, most ratepayers admitted that the Sikhs were good soldiers and might be very helpful in maintaining order in troubled areas. However, the main reason some important ratepayers gave to reject the Sikh Scheme was that those militant-like Sikhs were unsuitable for a peaceful settlement like Shanghai. As the Settlement was then in great danger of being plagued by riots and crimes and in the event of the outbreak of war, the Sikh Scheme surfaced again.

The window opened when Chinese soldiers encamped along the Bubbling Well Road (one of the earliest extra-settlement roads in Shanghai) brought about a frenzied response amongst local residents.²⁰⁶ As a response, the residents stated that they would like to pay for extra patrolling forces in their neighborhood for three

²⁰⁴ “Impartial, not Neutral,” *North China Daily News*, Jan. 21, 1884; “Bingyong zishi” (Soldiers make troubles), *Shenbao*, Feb. 28, 1884; “Disorderly Chinese Soldiers in Settlement,” *North China Herald*, Mar. 19, 1884; “The Defense of Formosa,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 15, 1884; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 578, 594.

²⁰⁵ “Meetings,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 15, 1884; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 581.

²⁰⁶ “The Defense of Formosa,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 15, 1884.

months.²⁰⁷ Considering that the Bubbling Well Road was not within the realm of the Settlement and was thus vulnerable to potential unrest, the SMC immediately approved this request. On the grounds that the expenditure would be paid for by the residents rather than by using its own budget, the SMC took up the Sikh option.²⁰⁸

The original plan of the Bubbling Well Road Committee (an administrative organization of the extra-settlement road) was that they would pay \$200 a month to have policemen patrol the neighborhood for three months. The SMC intended to employ eighteen Sikhs from Hong Kong for this task. The cost of such a contingent, however, would be close to \$2, 000, far exceeding the amount that those residents could afford. A discussion was then processed to decide whether the Council still should hold on this plan. Most councilors agreed that the reinforcement of the police force in the Bubbling Well Road, which was located on the outer west side of the Settlement, would not only safeguard the properties of the residents of that area, but would also provide very effective protection for the Settlement at that time. Nonetheless, someone expressed concern that it might not be very economical to recruit Sikhs from Hong Kong for three month of patrolling work and then dismissed them afterwards. The chairman of the SMC revealed his intention that those Sikhs could probably be integrated into the formal unit of the SMP in future. As a result, the Council passed a resolution to pay all expenditure incurred for

²⁰⁷ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 582.

²⁰⁸ Wu Zhiwei, "Jiushanghai zujie de yinbu fengchao," 52.

employing eighteen Sikhs to watch over the Bubbling Well Road from September to December 1884.²⁰⁹

The Superintendent McEuen was then authorized to make use of his network in Hong Kong to facilitate the employment of Sikhs. However, no available personnel could be obtained from Hong Kong at that time.²¹⁰ McEuen turned to the alternative local market for suitable personnel. Six Sikhs who drifted into Shanghai were then picked up for a monthly pay of \$15 each.²¹¹ After five years' service, they would receive a bonus equal to \$45 and a passage home. They were put in a unit composed of four European and four Chinese constables led by a European Sergeant.²¹² Stationed in the Carter Road, this unit was instructed to patrol the Bubbling Well Road neighborhood regularly.²¹³

The experiment in the Bubbling Well Road proved to be a success as the Sikhs had no difficulty in communicating with their colleagues and their temper was not as aggressive as some councilors had previously been concerned about. McEuen was then authorized by the SMC to employ five or six additional Sikhs from Hong Kong on the

²⁰⁹ "Nishe xunbu" (Proposing to set up constables), *Shenbao*, Aug. 20, 1884; "Meetings," *North China Herald*, Aug. 22, 1884; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 582.

²¹⁰ "Meetings," *North China Herald*, Sept. 12, 1884.

²¹¹ Current archival research cannot tell how the six Sikhs made their way to Shanghai.

²¹² In September, the number of the Sikh policemen in the Bubbling Well Road was increased to eight or nine, see "Tianshe xunyi" (Reinforcing the patrolling force), *Shenbao*, Spet. 2, 1884; "Summary of News," *North China Herald*, Sept. 6, 1884.

²¹³ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 586.

same terms as those previously engaged to reinforce the Bubbling Well Road unit.²¹⁴

Thanks to his previous experience in the Hong Kong Police, McEuen successfully engaged six Sikhs in October. He also persuaded a Sikh sergeant who had served in Hong Kong for ten years and who was able to speak fluent English to come to Shanghai. The SMC accepted McEuen's recommendation and hire the Sikh sergeant with a salary of \$25 a month.²¹⁵

Acquiescing that the Sikhs had provided effective protection for the Bubbling Well Road neighborhood and had thus helped to stabilize the situation of the Settlement, the Council unanimously agreed to maintain this patrolling until the end of the war.²¹⁶

As the security conditions in Shanghai improved in early 1885, the debate over the maintaining of a Sikh police unit in the Settlement came up again. The Watch Committee suggested that this force should now be integrated into the SMP formally and be allowed to participate in the merit scale of pay with the same amount as other members of the force. Realizing that the Ratepayers Meeting had not in fact authorized the engaging of Sikhs for the police force, the SMC declined this suggestion.²¹⁷ However, advocates in the Council then took this issue to the Annual Meeting of Ratepayers, which was held in February

²¹⁴ "Yishi luyao" (Important points of the meeting), *Shenbao*, Oct. 1, 1884; "Meetings," *North China Herald*, Oct. 8, 1884; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 590.

²¹⁵ "Meetings," *North China Herald*, Oct. 15, 1884; "Yinren lai hu" (Indians arrive in Shanghai), *Shenbao*, Oct. 25, 1884; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 592.

²¹⁶ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 8)*, 595.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 599, 601, 604.

1885. They contended that the rejection of the Sikh Scheme in the Ratepayers' Meeting of 1883 had disappointed the public. On the grounds that the Sikhs had performed impressively in the Bubbling Well Road neighborhood, it was impossible to find any reason to discontinue their service. Approved by most ratepayers, the Meeting sanctioned a proposal to bring Sikhs into the Settlement to maintain the social order.²¹⁸ With this approval, the Sikh branch of the SMP continued to exist for more than five decades.

Conclusion

The Sikhs in Shanghai have recently drawn some scholarly attention. Some attribute the introduction of the Sikhs in Shanghai to the consideration of economy and Sikh reliability. Once European constables were thought to be too expensive to be massively enlisted, the Sikhs, whose salary was much lower than the Europeans, were then introduced as a complementary element. Since the SMC did not fully trust their Chinese policemen, the Sikhs were used as a reliable force to balance the Chinese unit.²¹⁹ This explanation leaves an impression that the establishment of the Sikh branch in Shanghai was a sudden and random decision. The oversimplification of certain historical events actually echoes the weakness of the modern Shanghai studies that

²¹⁸ "Annual Meetings of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Feb. 18. 1885; Xiong Yuezhi, ed., *Shanghai tongshi: Wanqing shehui* (The general history of Shanghai: Society in the late Qing period) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999), 86-87.

²¹⁹ Shi Meiding, *Shanghai zujiezh*, 259-262; Markovits, "Indian Communities in China, 1842-1949," 55-74; Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*.

overemphasizes the local perspective while overlooking translocal factors.

Robert Bickers and Isabella Jackson move away from this local-based framework and analyze this topic from the perspective of imperial history. In their view, the Sikhs not only played a substantial role in local policing and defense work, but also became a symbol of imperial power. They further point out that the process of setting up the Sikh police unit in Shanghai was by no means just a local issue, but also sheds lights on the mechanisms of the British colonial system.²²⁰

This chapter benefits from the work of Bickers and Jackson, and takes a step further to address in detail how the SMC interacted with other colonial authorities, the Hong Kong government in particular, in organizing and reforming its police force. Because of geographic and demographic reasons, as well as the links of the British Empire, the SMP had turned to Hong Kong for its experience since the first day of its inception. British police officers were employed from Hong Kong, and with them, the Hong Kong Police institutions and knowledge. Based on this connection, the SMP was established and developed. As the SMC tried to reform its police force in the 1880s, it again resorted to Hong Kong for lessons. The circulation of Sikh personnel, institutions, and recruitment pattern from Hong Kong to Shanghai helped the SMP inaugurate its own Sikh branch.

In fact, translocal connections and interactions played crucial roles in shaping local policies across the British Empire. For example,

²²⁰ Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Penguin, 2004), 86; Bickers, "Ordering Shanghai," 181; Jackson, "The Raj on Nanjing Road," 1674-1675.

Nyasaland's first police training school at Zomba, which provided modern policing techniques and knowledge for new recruits, was actually introduced by a former officer in the King's African Rifles who had served in the British South African Police for over ten years. Police reform in Nyasaland in the 1940s was conducted under an experienced colonial police officer who had served fourteen years in Palestine.²²¹ For reforming Mombasa's colonial police, the British brought from India not only Indian policemen but also police-related institutions, codes, and procedures.²²² In Aden, high-profile officers were all transferred from either London or other colonies and whose expertise was expected to help secure colonial rule.²²³

In addition to the circulation of personnel, information, and institutions over space, practices and ideas circulated over history. Facing a state of emergency, such as the Small Sword Uprising, the SMC turned to Hong Kong's police personnel and institution for help in 1854. Some thirty years later, facing the upheaval caused by the Sino-French War, the SMC turned to Hong Kong again for introducing its Sikh personnel and institution. What we have seen here is not a repetition of these practices over thirty years, but the reinvention of old practices in new circumstance so as to solve new challenges.

The approach of circulatory history that underscores translocal connections and interactions could be applied to the studies of imperial history. The history of Sikh policemen outside India, or to the larger

²²¹ John McCracken, "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspects of the History of a Colonial Police Force," *The Journal of African History* 27 (1986): 129-138.

²²² Wolf, "Asian and African Recruitment in the Kenya Police, 1920-1950," 401-412.

²²³ Willis, "Colonial Policing in Aden, 1937-1967," 57-91.

context, the colonial police as a whole, is indeed an extensive canvas of scholarship in imperial history.²²⁴ Most studies of imperial history tend to divide the British Empire into two parts, the metropole and the colonies.²²⁵ Their attention has mostly been drawn to the impact that the metropole imposed on its colonies.²²⁶ Colonial subjects have been depicted as passive victims of this repression and exploitation.²²⁷ Furthermore, colonies have been regarded as laboratories for experiments in modernization, within which Westerners exported and tried out their modern ideas and institutions.²²⁸ In sum, modern bureaucratic institutions such as political administration, coercive organizations, and industrial sectors in colonies were imitated or

²²⁴ In the *Studies in Imperialism*, a series of works on the imperial history published by the Manchester University Press in the 1990s, two collections on the colonial police have been included, see Anderson and Killingray, eds., *Policing the Empire*. Also see Anderson and Killingray, eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917-1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

²²⁵ Although scholars tend to see Ireland as a colony of the British Empire during the period of the union between Great Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, this study takes Ireland as a special part of the metropole, mainly because Ireland's political structure, demography and relations with Britain were very different from that of other colonies during this period. Therefore, the metropole hereafter refers to Britain and Ireland in this article. For the metropole-colony binary in the imperial historiography, see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World*, eds., Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-56.

²²⁶ A good example is the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*. W. R. Louis and Alaine Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire (5 vols.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²²⁷ Michael Barratt-Brown, *The Economic of Imperialism* (London: Penguin, 1974); Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

²²⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Warwick Anderson, "Excremental Colonialism: Public Health and the Poetics of Pollution," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (1995): 640-669.

imported from the metropole.²²⁹ Such a diffusionist analytical framework can also be found in studies on the colonial police, a modern and repressive institution. Indeed, the debate over the origin, development and adaptation of the colonial police has long been dominated by the diffusionist argument, which asserts that the colonial policing system was first invented in Ireland by the British authorities and then diffused to other colonies with the deployment of British officers across the Empire.²³⁰

A reappraisal of this framework, however, reveals that the degree of variation amongst colonies has been underestimated and that the localization of Western elements, widely existing to various degrees, has not been taken into account.²³¹ So is it a case of the subjectivity of

²²⁹ Bethwell Ogot, "British Administration in the Central," *Journal of African History* 4 (1963): 249-273; Henrika Kuklick, *The Imperial Bureaucrat: The Colonial Administrative Service in the Gold Coast, 1920-1939* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1979); Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992); Charles Chenevix Trench, *Men Who Ruled Kenya: The Kenya Administration, 1892-1963* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1993); Anthony Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services 1837-1997* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999); Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2008).

²³⁰ Some scholars assert that the patterns and strategies of colonial police across the British Empire could all be traced back to the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) that was established in Ireland in 1839. The primary object of the R.I.C. was to wipe out peasantry rebels and to strengthen the British rule there. For this reason, different from the Metropolitan police that only execute civic tasks, the R.I.C. was accommodated within barracks, equipped with heavy weapons, and recruited non-locally. It is said that the military-alike R.I.C. policing pattern was then exported to other colonies, especially those non-White settlements. For the set up and main features of the R.I.C., see G. Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland 1812-36* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); S. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); W. J. Lowe and E. L. Malcolm, "The Domestication of the Royal Irish Constabulary, 1836-1922," *Irish Economic and Social History* 19 (1992): 27-48. For the diffusionist argument, see Jeffries, *The Colonial Police*; Surajit Mukhopadhyay, "Importing Back Colonial Policing System? Between the Royal Irish Constabulary, Indian Policing and Militarization of Policing in England and Wales," *Innovation* 11 (1998): 253-265; Clive Emsley, "Marketing the Brand: Exporting British Police Models, 1829-1950," *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practical* 6 (2012): 43-54.

²³¹ Richard Hawkins, "The 'Irish Model' and the Empire," 18-32.

the colonized population.²³² In this sense, interactions between the metropole and the colonies have frequently been placed within the impact-response model, and then consequently simplified as a repressive relationship.²³³

Realizing the weakness of the approach of this imperial history, some scholars have sought to change the paradigm and tagged their studies as the new imperial history.²³⁴ A key step in this new imperial history is to underscore the impact of the colonies on the metropole.²³⁵ It contends that colonialism not only influenced colonies and colonized peoples, but also, explicitly or implicitly, transformed its birthplace--the metropole.²³⁶ Culturally speaking, colonial experience remarkably reconfigured and reshaped the forms of European literature and art, and even transformed the way the Europeans perceived themselves.²³⁷

²³² Stoler and Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony," 6-7. Also see Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 1516-1545.

²³³ Brian Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 649-673; D. M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu, eds., *India and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²³⁴ Noticing this paradigm transformation during the 1980s, Tony Ballantyne finds that revisionists incline to tag previous historical writings that adopted top-down and political perspectives as the "old" imperial history, and revisionist works as the "new" imperial history, see Tony Ballantyne, "Introduction: Debating Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 3 (2002): 1-21.

²³⁵ See John MacKenzie, "The Persistence of Empire in Metropolitan Culture," in *British Culture and the End of Empire*, ed., Stuart Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 21-36; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: The Empire in English Society and Culture, c. 1800-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Cultures and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²³⁶ Some historians even argue that the "new" imperial history has turned its focus from Africa, Asia and Latin America to Britain, especially England and Scotland, see Durba Ghosh, "AHR Forum: Another Set of Imperial Turns?" *The American Historical Review* 117 (2012): 773.

²³⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1978); Christopher Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Marry Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel*

In the political field, differing from the viewpoint that assumes colonized people to be only recipients of Western political ideologies, be they nationalism, anarchism or socialism, revisionists argue that political movements in the colonies also redrew the political landscapes of the metropole itself.²³⁸

By the same token, revisionists contend that the experience of the colonial police actually contributed greatly to the shape of the Metropolitan police and the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.).²³⁹ They have illustrated that policing practices in London and Dublin borrowed many colonial policing features and that the colonial police was even the origin of their metropolitan counterpart.²⁴⁰

In addition, departing from the “old” imperial history approach that had been largely confined to a specific national past, revisionists preferred to look at an interactive global network.²⁴¹ The flow of ideologies, institutions, commodities, and populations back and forth

Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992); Edward Said, *Cultural and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2012).

²³⁸ Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 23. Also see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

²³⁹ Robert Sigler and David King, “Colonial Policing and Control of Movements for Independence,” *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy* 3 (1992): 13-22; Randall Williams, “A State of Permanent Exception: The Birth of Modern Policing in Colonial Capitalism,” *Interventions* 5 (2003): 322-344.

²⁴⁰ Mike Brogden, “The Emergence of the Police--the Colonial Dimension,” *British Journal of Criminology* 27 (1987): 4-14; Surajit Mukhopadhyay, “Importing Back Colonial Policing System? Between the Royal Irish Constabulary, Indian Policing and Militarization of Policing in England and Wales,” *Innovation* 11 (1998): 253-265.

²⁴¹ Hopkins, “Back to the Future,” 198-243; Stephen Howe, “Introduction: New Imperial Histories,” in *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, ed., Stephen Howe (New York: Routledge, 2010), 11.

between the metropole and the colonies demonstrates the principal features of the new imperial history.²⁴²

Nevertheless, this revised paradigm shares something of the same binary dichotomy with the “old” one.²⁴³ By stressing the colonial empire’s influence on both the metropole and the colonies, it seems that the new imperial history is endeavoring to decentralize the stereotyped Eurocentric perspective that pays exclusive attention to Western influences around the world.²⁴⁴ Ironically, the essential focus of the “old” imperial history, namely the metropole, has remained and even been strengthened when the focal point has been turned back to the metropole from the periphery.²⁴⁵ In this sense, the interactive global network indicated by the new imperial history has widened the gap between the metropole at the center and the colonies at the periphery. In this approach, the colonies change places with the

²⁴² Mrinalini Sinha, “Britain and the Empire: Toward a New Agenda for Imperial History,” *Radical History Review* 72 (1998): 163; Mackenzie, “The Persistence of Empire in Metropolitan Culture,” 21-36; Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); David Feldman, “The New Imperial History,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9 (2004): 235-240; Andrew Thomson, *The Empire Strikes Back: the Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Cultures and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); James Thomson, “Modern Britain and the New Imperial History,” *History Compass* 5(2007): 455-462.

²⁴³ For critiques on the metropole-colony binary dichotomy, see Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 1-56; Tony Ballantyne, “Race and the Webs of Empire: Aryanism from India to the Pacific,” *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 2.3 (2001): 6; Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand’s Colonial Past* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2012).

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

²⁴⁵ Bernard Porter has already noticed the drawback of overemphasizing the influence the colonialism imposed upon the metropole. Bernard Porter, “Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008): 101-117.

metropole of the old narrative.²⁴⁶ Other forms of connections have largely been overlooked or compromised.²⁴⁷

The approach of circulatory history rescues imperial history from the metropole-colony binary framework and turns our attention from the vertical metropole-colony dichotomy to horizontal lateral networks. Thomas Metcalf and Robert Blyth have persuasively demonstrated that it was India rather than the metropole that played the central role in shaping the colonial enterprises of the British Empire in East Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. The center of the British rule in Asia and beyond was not in London but in Calcutta.²⁴⁸ Isabella Jackson goes a step further to contend that Hong Kong was at the center of an extended network in East Asia.²⁴⁹ This chapter echoes Jackson's argument by showing that Hong Kong's colonial officers, institutions, and experience spread to Singapore, Shanghai, and other Chinese treaty ports, and influenced their administrative policies. In so doing, it is expected that we could have a better understanding of the British Empire beyond the metropole.

This chapter only focuses on studying the British authorities over various colonies and settlements, while the experience of the Sikhs has yet to be told. Why did the Sikhs, whose homeland was in northwest India, consent to work in Shanghai? How did they make their journeys?

²⁴⁶Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Towards Non-imperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1995): 51-87.

²⁴⁷Stoler and Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony," 34; Carol Appadurai Breckenridge and Peter Van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

²⁴⁸Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj*; Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

²⁴⁹Jackson, "The Raj on Nanjing Road," 1682.

And what was their work and life like in this Chinese treaty port? In other words, the top-down perspective of imperial history is insufficient to reconstruct the exact experience of Sikh policemen in Shanghai. The approach of the Sikh diaspora that champions the bottom-up perspective to take Sikhs as active participants of the British colonial enterprise is therefore introduced.

However, the problem of center-periphery dichotomy haunts studies of the Sikh diaspora. Similar to the imperial historiography that overemphasizes the mutual interactions between the metropole and colonies, most writings of the Sikh diaspora tend to explore how the Sikh motherland, the Punjab, interacted with individual Sikh settlement overseas. The emigration process and the connections amongst diasporic communities have largely been neglected.

Chapter Two takes the case of a Sikh migrant who migrated to Shanghai and worked in the SMP in the 1900s to illustrate the broader context of the Sikh emigration to Shanghai. It also transcends the motherland/settlement dichotomy in studies of the Sikh diaspora via highlighting how translocal interactions amongst Sikh communities in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai shaped the work and daily life of Shanghai Sikhs.

Chapter 2

The Journey of Isser Singh: A Sikh Migrant in Shanghai

So far, the Sikhs in Shanghai has largely been discussed within the realm of British imperial history. Narratives on the circulation of the martial race ideology and the establishment of Sikh police forces in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai are mainly written from the standpoint of the British authorities. The motivations, considerations, and daily work and life of the colonized have been left out. This chapter diverts our attention from the British authorities to the Sikh diaspora.

Taking the case of Isser Singh, a Sikh constable who served in the Shanghai Municipal Police from 1906 to 1911, as an example, this chapter exhibits the specific context of Sikh migration in Shanghai. As a global microhistory, it contends that individuals such as Isser Singh were not voiceless subjects who were constantly under the manipulation of colonial authorities. Instead, the Sikh migrants played a crucial role in shaping policies in various colonies and settlements. Furthermore, Sikhs were all too ready to exploit the colonial network to pursue their own interests. As a translocal history, the chapter demonstrates that facilities and provisions for Sikh constables in Shanghai were neither novel nor locally invented, but products of translocal circulation of institutions, knowledge, and information.

A Peasant's Son in the Punjab

Since no letter, diary, or memoir has yet been discovered, primary sources on Sikh constables in the SMP are mostly government archives, newspapers, and court testimonies. The case of Isser Singh is no exception, as details of this man's life are scattered across news reports about daily crimes and court investigations. By reorganizing these primary sources and by referring to the contemporary context, the following contents try to reconstruct the course of Isser Singh's diasporic experience and the world he inhabited.

None of the sources such as newspapers indicates which part in the Punjab Isser Singh came from. Since Isser Singh took part in a strike organized by Sikhs from the Majha region of the Punjab to protest against the SMC's decision to remove a Majha Sikh interpreter in July 1910, he was probably from a village in Majha, in the central Punjab region.²⁵⁰ In fact, in the early twentieth century, nearly 70 percent of Sikh constables in the SMP were from the Majha region, with smaller numbers mainly from the Malwa region, also in the central Punjab region.²⁵¹ Majha Sikhs and Malwa Sikhs dominated Sikh police forces in other British colonies and settlements, too. This representation of certain regions of the Punjab was not a coincidence but one that had local socio-economic grounds.

²⁵⁰ For details of the strike, see "Trouble Among the Sikhs," *North China Herald*, July 22, 1910; "The Sikh Police," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910.

²⁵¹ "REX (S. M. P.) v. Twenty Indian Police Constables," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910.

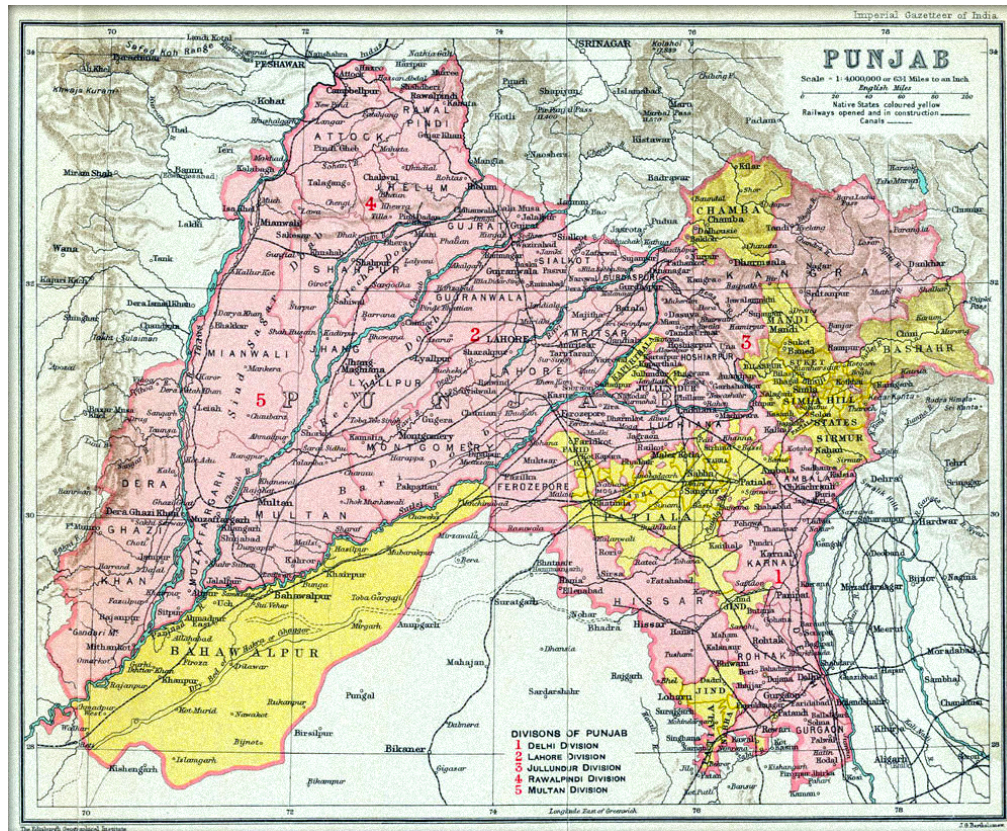


Figure 8. Map of Punjab in British Raj (Courtesy of View Punjab Project).

The Punjab was annexed by the British after the second Anglo-Sikh War in 1848, and the socio-economic structure of this area underwent a dramatic change. During the Sikh kingdom period, most high-caste Sikh males were professional military men in the Khalsa.²⁵² After the defeat of the Sikh army, the British authorities in the Punjab set out to take steps to disarm the Sikh soldiers for fear that they would rise against British rule. Several thousand Sikh soldiers in the Khalsa were then ordered to hand over their weapons and then disbanded.²⁵³

²⁵² The Khalsa is the religious order established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. It later developed into a military organization that promised to fight for protecting the Sikhism, see W. H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 143.

²⁵³ Andrew Major, *Return to Empire: Punjab under the Sikhs and British in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1996), 139-140.

The only alternative for these unemployed men was to “exchange the sword for the plough”, to become peasants.²⁵⁴



Figure 9. The Location of Punjab in South Asia (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Now that there were more laborers working on the land, and the weather in the Punjab was very suitable for cultivation in the 1850s, agricultural production increased dramatically.²⁵⁵ Continuous good harvests, however, failed to help the Sikh peasants, owing to the fall in agricultural product prices.²⁵⁶ Since the British authorities in the Punjab taxed Sikhs not in kind as the Sikh Kingdom used to, but in cash, so that a sharp fall in crop prices led to the bankruptcy of many peasants who failed to sell their products in the markets at a good price.²⁵⁷ As a result, peasants had to resort to moneylenders and thus drew themselves into poverty.

To pacify the unhappy Sikh peasants and to withstand Russia’s threat from Central Asia, the British authorities spent more than three

²⁵⁴ N. M. Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab, 1839-1858* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1972), 178.

²⁵⁵ *The First Punjab Administration Report* (1849-1951), 95, cite from Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab, 1839-1858*, 179.

²⁵⁶ Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab, 1839-1858*, 179.

²⁵⁷ Sir Richard Temple, *Lord Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1890), 58.

million pounds to build infrastructure throughout the region in the 1850s.²⁵⁸ By the eve of the Indian Mutiny, 3, 600 miles of roads had been built and several canals that irrigated once barren areas had been accomplished.²⁵⁹ Extensive roads and railways linked the Punjab with the outside world, especially with the port of Karachi, from where Punjabi agricultural products could be exported to other parts of the world.²⁶⁰

Thanks to the large-scale infrastructural building, the agricultural economy of the Punjab was opened to the outside market.²⁶¹ As this market-oriented transformation brought capital from other parts of India, Sikh peasants were further marginalized. Cultivable lands became concentrated in the hands of a few Hindu and Muslim large landholders and moneylenders, while the majority of Sikh peasants held very small tracts of land. In the Majha region where Isser Singh probably came from, most lands were tilled by Sikh landholders whose tracts were too small to lease out.²⁶² Malcolm Darling attributes the smallholdings of Sikh peasants to the Sikh traditional law of dividing a father's land equally amongst his sons.²⁶³ In this sense, even if a Sikh peasant held a medium-sized piece of land, this land would be divided

²⁵⁸ Major, *Return to Empire*, 126; Clive Dewey, "Some Consequences of Military Expenditure in British India: The Case of the Upper Sind Sagar Doab, 1849-1947," in *Arrested Development in India: The History Dimension*, ed., Clive Dewey (New Delhi: Riverdale Company, 1988), 123-142.

²⁵⁹ *The Second Punjab Administration Report* (1851-1953), 167-169; *The Third Punjab Administration Report* (1853-1955), 62, cite from Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab, 1839-1858*, 212.

²⁶⁰ Royal Rosenberry, *Imperial Rule in Punjab: The Conquest and Administration of Multan, 1818-1881* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1987), 218.

²⁶¹ Sukhwant Singh, "The Peasants' Response to Colonial Environment in the Punjab," in *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture*, eds., Reeta Grewal and Shena Pall (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 289.

²⁶² Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988), 12, 30.

²⁶³ Sir Malcolm Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 28.

into tiny pieces amongst his descendants. Therefore, the fragmentation of family land was inevitable due to Sikh tradition.²⁶⁴

As small proprietors, Sikh peasants were exposed to various disadvantages. Firstly, they had to face the fierce competition of large landowners whose agricultural products could be sold at relatively cheaper prices because of the economy of scale. Furthermore, the peasants had no choice but to till the lands with their own hands in order to feed their families and pay tax. This subsistence work forced poorer Sikhs to bear the risks of illness, bad weather and other accidents.²⁶⁵ To improve their condition, Sikh peasants also resorted to enlarging their holdings by borrowing money from moneylenders. The consequence of this rampant borrowing was that almost all Sikh smallholding peasants were more or less indebted by the turn of the twentieth century.²⁶⁶

Borrowing money to buy more land was not the sole cause that trapped Sikh peasants into indebtedness. Throughout the colonial period, female infanticide was notoriously rampant amongst the Sikh population in the Punjab. As a result, there was a shortage of women for young Sikh males to marry, and those who desired to have a wife had few choices but to spend typically 1, 000 to 2, 000 rupees to buy one.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ McLeod, "The First Forty Years of Sikh Migration," 35.

²⁶⁵ Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 28.

²⁶⁶ Royal Roseberry argues that the indebtedness of Punjabi peasants during the colonial period was also a result of high interest rate, often amounted up to 30% per year, see Roseberry, *Imperial Rule in Punjab*, 224

²⁶⁷ Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 50.

In addition to purchasing a bride, Sikhs had the tradition to hold a luxurious wedding ceremony that would put an even heavier economic burden on the husband's family. Sikh weddings in the Punjab involved more than just inviting a few guests to attend a ceremony. Sumptuous dishes had to be prepared, entertainment activities should be provided, and most importantly, jewelry and clothes should be purchased for the bride. Therefore, another 1, 000 rupees would have to be spent on the marriage.²⁶⁸ Facing such enormous expenditure, a typical Sikh peasantry family that had an average 500 rupees in their savings had to borrow, and found themselves at the mercy of the moneylenders. Overall, purchasing land and arranging for marriages would usually exhaust the whole savings of a Sikh household and draw the family into debt.

It is very possible that Isser Singh was from an ordinary peasant family that owned a tiny tract of land. Like most Sikh households in the Punjab, Isser's family may have been troubled by debt, because of purchasing more land, preparing for a wedding, or constructing a brick house. To alleviate the debt burden, Sikhs normally worked to find supplementary sources of income in addition to laboring on the land.

One of the main solutions was to encourage junior male members of the family to join the Indian Army. By the turn of the twentieth century, a soldier in the Indian Army could earn 84 rupees a year, much more than they could earn through working on the land.²⁶⁹ The

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 54-56.

²⁶⁹ Malcolm Yapp, "British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India," *Modern Asian Studies* 21 (1987): 647-665; Roy, *Brown Warriors of the Raj*, 99-100; Tan Tai

authorities also promised that those servicemen would obtain considerable portion of land in newly developed Canal Colonies after decades of long service in the army.²⁷⁰

Whereas joining the army was more promising than cultivating the land, not every Sikh had the equal chance to be enlisted. Apart from possessing an adventurous spirit, Sikhs in the Indian Army had to be from specific sects of the Sikh population. Sikh peasants, who resided in great numbers in the Majha and Malwa districts of the central Punjab region, were particularly preferred by recruiting agents on the grounds that the British assumed that they maintained the martial tradition of Sikhism and were physically sturdy, owing to their harsh living environment.²⁷¹

As a Majha Sikh who intended to add wealth to his household, Isser Singh would have offered himself to the Indian Army and become enlisted. He was assigned to the 74th Punjab Infantry Regiment based in Bellary with a monthly salary of seven rupees.²⁷² Compared with agricultural work, this army payment was very good. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Indian Army repeatedly warned that its reserves of Sikh soldiers was draining and that it could no longer employ qualified Sikhs in the near

Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: SAGA Publications, 2005), 79.

²⁷⁰ Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947*, 40. The first canal colony was opened in the 1880s in the Multan district. Since then canal colonies had expanded to Majha district. For details of the Canal Colony, see Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 112-113.

²⁷¹ Captain R. W. Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs for Use of Regimental Officers* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1896), 65; Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State*, 65.

²⁷² For the movement of the 74th Punjab Infantry Regiment in the early twentieth century, see "Native Infantry Reliefs," *The Times of India*, June 8, 1904. For the Sikh soldiers' salary, see Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State*, 79.

future. The Government of India attributed this draining of its recruiting pool to the migration of the Sikhs to other parts of the world, particularly to the colonies in Southeast and East Asia that provided Sikhs with much higher wages than the Indian authorities could manage.²⁷³

Indeed, since the Indian Mutiny, the British military officers had gradually developed the ideology of the “martial race”, which characterized certain groups of people as robust fighters adept in military activities. Sikhs, according to the British definition, were typical of the martial race.²⁷⁴ As British officers who once served in India brought this ideology to other parts of the empire and advertised the extraordinary traits of Sikhs, other colonies expressed remarkable enthusiasm for recruiting Sikhs to defend their territories and maintain social order, offering them attractive remuneration.²⁷⁵ Table 2 below illustrates the annual salaries of Sikhs serving in colonial police forces and the Indian Army at the turn of the twentieth century.

Table 2. Annual Salaries of Sikh Policemen and Soldiers, 1900

Singapore Police	Hong Kong Police	Shanghai Police	Indian Army
Rs.272/year	Rs.377/year	Rs.525/year	Rs.84/year

²⁷³ “Indian Troops for Colonial Garrisons,” *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, Feb. 7, 1901.

²⁷⁴ David Omissi, “Martial Races,” 1-27.

²⁷⁵ For the advertisement of the soldier-like traits of the Sikhs, see, for example, “How Sikhs Face the Foe,” *The Straits Times*, May 1, 1902; “A Tribute to the Sikhs,” *The Straits Times*, Nov. 12, 1904.

Although Isser Singh was serving in the army, he was likely to have been very well informed about overseas opportunities, thanks to the Sikh diasporic network that facilitated the circulation of information. Tony Ballantyne sees the Sikhs diasporic network as a web that not merely linked the Punjab with a specific overseas settlement, but also connected various settlements with one another. In this web, Sikh migrants moved from one area to another, and so did their experience and knowledge of prospects in those location.²⁷⁶ On that account, the Sikhs in one region were able to know about the salaries in another very quickly, as they were constantly on the move. For example, in February 1901, the Superintendent of the SMP asked the SMC to increase the salary of staff in the police force, on the ground that Sikh constables in the SMP had recently obtained a piece of information about the rise of salaries for Sikh staff in the Hong Kong Police. The Sikhs in Shanghai had been upset by the fact that the SMP did not have any plan to increase their salary accordingly. Furthermore, the Superintendent warned that potential candidates with qualified characteristics would probably be attracted by higher salaries in Hong Kong and would cease to come to Shanghai looking for work. After hearing the Superintendent's report, members of the SMC unanimously agreed to consider a salary improvement scheme, although the administration's budget was very tight that year.²⁷⁷

However, the SMC should not blame the Hong Kong government for this economic burden. In January 1901, news about the raised

²⁷⁶ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora*, 29-33.

²⁷⁷ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 10)*, 723.

salaries of Sikh constables in Singapore had spread to Hong Kong and stirred strong emotions amongst servicemen there. Staff in the Hong Kong Police correspondingly appealed for an equal rise in their salaries. For fear that its servicemen could relocate to Singapore for better payment, the Hong Kong government sanctioned an increase of seventeen percent in line with salaries in Singapore.²⁷⁸

Information also spread back to India in the forms of letters or oral messages sent with returning Sikhs.²⁷⁹ The returnees took their overseas experience with them along as well and were ready to share what they saw, how they felt, and how much they earned abroad with their relatives, neighbors and friends.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, advertisements posted by shipment companies, newspapers and magazines also played a role in circulating such information.²⁸¹

Being exposed to information from the wider world, Isser Singh must have gradually realized that he could earn much more money overseas. After a serious consideration, he left the army and returned to his village to prepare for the journey in around 1905. Like other Sikhs desiring to go abroad, Isser Singh would have known how to optimize his migration plan by scrutinizing possible destinations.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ CO 129/305, 103, 13 May 1901.

²⁷⁹ In the SMP, for example, Sikh constable was granted nine months' leave for India with half pay after five years' term, see SMA, U1-2-309, Shanghai Municipal Council: Terms of Service of Indian Police, Mar. 30, 1904.

²⁸⁰ W. H. McLeod, "The First Forty Years of Sikh Migration," 37.

²⁸¹ Dusenbery, "Introduction: A Century of Sikhs Beyond Punjab," 4; N. G. Barrier, "Sikh Emigrants and Their Homeland," 55.

²⁸² Harish Puri, "Pioneer Punjabi Migrants to North America: 'Revolutionaries' of Will," in *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture*, eds., Reeta Grewal and Shena Pall (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 361.

Optimizing the Migration Plan

By the turn of the twentieth century, most Sikh migrants favored Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai as their destinations, mainly because of relatively good payment. Owing to the high demand for Sikhs for policing in these three cities, competition was inevitable.

In the late nineteenth century, the average annual salary of a Sikh constable in Singapore was around 120 Mexican dollars.²⁸³ Meanwhile, a Sikh constable serving in the Hong Kong Police was able to earn 166 Hong Kong dollars annually.²⁸⁴ Their contemporaries working in the SMP could obtain 168 Shanghai taels each year.²⁸⁵ For personal daily living, salaries for the Sikhs in all three locations were certainly sufficient, and much better than the earnings of local people.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Sikhs earned the money not solely for themselves, but to a larger extent, for their families in the Punjab. For this reason, they had to transfer their earnings from local currencies into Indian rupees. Table 3 below illustrates the annual salaries in Indian rupees that the Sikh constables could obtain in the three places in the 1900s.

²⁸³ CO 277/20, p. L50-L51, Civic Establishments, 1885.

²⁸⁴ Hong Kong Blue Book 1905, p. J118, Civil Establishments of Hong Kong for the Year 1905.

²⁸⁵ SMA, U1-1-917, p. 16, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1905.

²⁸⁶ CO 275/59, p. 418, Annual Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force, and On the State of Crime, for the Year 1899, 26 March 1900.

Table 3. Annual Salaries of Sikh Policemen in Local Currencies and Rupees

Singapore ²⁸⁷	Hong Kong ²⁸⁸	Shanghai ²⁸⁹
MD\$120/year	HKD\$166/year	Tls. 168/year
Rs.200/year	Rs.237/year	Rs.525/year

When converting these salaries into rupees, it can be seen that Sikh constables working in Shanghai were able to earn much higher than those in Singapore and Hong Kong. This gap explicitly indicates that Sikhs in Shanghai could transfer much more money back home than their countrymen serving in the other two crown colonies.

The authorities in Singapore and Hong Kong well understood that the weak exchange rate between their currencies and rupees had imposed remarkable negative effects on their recruitment of Sikhs. To counterbalance this disadvantage, the Hong Kong government chose to allow their Sikh constables to remit their pay home at a fixed rate of exchange of 44 Hong Kong dollars to Rs. 100.²⁹⁰ The Singapore government, at the same time, pleaded with the Secretary of State in London to take measures to control the widely differing rates of exchange for compensation across the British Empire. As the plea was declined by the Secretary of State, Singapore imitated Hong Kong's

²⁸⁷ For the exchange rate between Mexican dollars (Straits Settlements dollars after 1905) and rupees in the 1900s, see Denzel, *Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590-1914* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 541-542.

²⁸⁸ For the exchange rate between Hong Kong dollars and rupees in the 1900s, see Denzel, *Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590-1914*, 520.

²⁸⁹ For the exchange rate between Shanghai taels and rupees in the 1900s, see Denzel, *Handbook of World Exchange Rates, 1590-1914*, 526.

²⁹⁰ CO 275/56, p. C321-322, From Robinson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1898, 20 Oct. 1896.

policy, allowing their Sikh staff to transfer their salary at the rate of 44 Mexican dollars to Rs. 100.²⁹¹ Table 4 illustrates Sikh constables' salaries in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai after the implementation of the exchange compensation policy in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Table 4. Salaries after Exchange Rate Compensation

Singapore	Hong Kong	Shanghai
MD\$120/year	HKD\$166/year	Tls. 168/year
Rs.272/year	Rs.377/year	Rs.525/year

As the exchange rates were raised, Singapore's Sikh constables were able to remit Rs. 272 to India rather than merely Rs. 200. Their Hong Kong counterparts could remit Rs. 377 instead of Rs. 237. Nonetheless, the compensated payments were still much lower than those provided by the SMC.

The exclusive remuneration the Sikhs obtained in Shanghai was, indeed, deliberately set by policymakers there so as to maintain the edge over its competitors. Well informed about Sikh salaries in Hong Kong and Singapore, the SMC promised to provide a higher allowance so as to attract qualified Sikhs.²⁹²

The deep gap in income amongst various areas reshaped the landscape of Sikh migration in the early twentieth century. As Sikhs in

²⁹¹ CO 275/56, p. C321, From Secretary of State for the Colonies to Mitchell, Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1898, 15 July 1897.

²⁹² SMA, U1-1-904, p. 32, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1891.

the Punjab were informed that Shanghai was a city where their countrymen could earn much more money than others working elsewhere, many rushed to try for Shanghai. In 1906, the Singapore government had observed that fewer and fewer Sikhs were arriving in Singapore and applying for jobs in the local police force.²⁹³ Three years later, the situation in Singapore worsened, as the police force could neither recruit any more Sikhs from the Punjab nor keep Sikh staff in their positions. The head of the Singapore police force admitted that most Sikhs in the Punjab were reluctant to come to Singapore because some Far Eastern cities, particularly Hong Kong and Shanghai, held greater attractions.²⁹⁴

Since the Hong Kong Police provided relatively higher salaries than the Singapore government, Sikhs continued to pour into Hong Kong in the first decade of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, many of those who came to Hong Kong were either physically unsuitable for policing work or sought every chance to be dismissed in order to migrate to other regions where they could earn more money. For example, while attempting to strengthen its own defense, the SMC enticed more than twenty Sikh constables from the Hong Kong Police with a higher salary and allowance in a single year.²⁹⁵ Moreover, knowing that their fellows were earning more money in Shanghai, Sikh constables still serving in the Hong Kong Police even went on strike in

²⁹³ CO 275/74, p. 63, Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force, and On the State of Crime, for the Year 1906, 1 Apr. 1907.

²⁹⁴ CO 275/81, p. 28, Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force, and On the State of Crime, for the Year 1909, 17 Apr. 1910.

²⁹⁵ “Fugang zhaomu xunbu” (Recruiting constables from Hong Kong), *Shenbao*, Nov. 13, 1906.

order to pressure the authorities to increase their payment.²⁹⁶ Table 5 illustrates that a high percentage of the newly recruited Sikh constables were dismissed shortly after they arrived in Hong Kong.

Table 5. Engaged and Dismissed Sikh Constables in Hong Kong, 1903-1907

	1903 ²⁹⁷	1904 ²⁹⁸	1905 ²⁹⁹	1906 ³⁰⁰	1907 ³⁰¹
Engaged	64	93	70	115	59
Dismissed	61	83	58	74	52

Due to the much higher payment, the Sikhs in the Punjab were enthusiastic about looking for jobs in Shanghai. As a result, when the Singapore government complained that very few Sikhs were volunteering to join its police force in the mid-1900s, the SMC boasted that it had experienced very little difficulty in getting suitable Sikh recruits.³⁰² Indeed, as the SMC observed, “the influx of Sikhs and natives of India into Shanghai is constantly increasing”.³⁰³

²⁹⁶ “Sikh Police Strike,” *Hong Kong Daily Press*, Oct. 1, 1906.

²⁹⁷ Papers Laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1904, p. 51, Reports of the Captain Superintendent of Police, and of the Superintendent of Fire Brigade, for the Year 1903.

²⁹⁸ Papers Laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1905, p. 95, Reports of the Captain Superintendent of Police, and of the Superintendent of Fire Brigade, for the Year 1904.

²⁹⁹ Papers Laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1906, p. 429, Reports of the Captain Superintendent of Police, and of the Superintendent of Fire Brigade, for the Year 1905.

³⁰⁰ Papers Laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1907, p. 204, Reports of the Captain Superintendent of Police, and of the Superintendent of Fire Brigade, for the Year 1906.

³⁰¹ Papers Laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong 1908, p. 130, Reports of the Captain Superintendent of Police, and of the Superintendent of Fire Brigade, for the Year 1907.

³⁰² SMA, U1-1-917, p. 20, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1905.

³⁰³ SMA, U1-1-920, p. 11, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1907.

Table 6. Sikh Police Force in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai³⁰⁴

	Singapore	Hong Kong	Shanghai
1901	152	366	172
1902	160	367	187
1903	166	367	187
1904	171	375	209
1905	184	482	235
1906	184	410	235
1907	184	410	511
1908	188	388	555
1909	179	380	550

Table 6 clearly illustrates that the development of the Sikh police forces in Singapore and Hong Kong were almost stagnant in the first decade of the twentieth century. The strength of Singapore's Sikh police increased 17.7 percent between 1901 and 1909. The increasing rate for Hong Kong's Sikh unit was even lower, a mere 3.8 percent. In contrast to this, the Sikh branch of the SMP experienced a dramatic expansion during these years, with its strength increasing by 219 percent.

Owing to the Sikh diasporic network, this information may well have reached Isser Singh very quickly as he was preparing to migrate. Understandably, Shanghai became Isser Singh's migration point of choice. Normally, there were two channels for Sikhs in the Punjab to find jobs in Shanghai. If they had friends or relatives who had already worked in Shanghai, they could go to this city by themselves and ask these people to recommend them for certain positions.³⁰⁵ If they did

³⁰⁴ Data for Singapore is collected from Annual Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force; data for Hong Kong is collected from Papers laid before the Legislative Council of Hong Kong; data for Shanghai is collected from Annual Report for the Shanghai Municipal Council.

³⁰⁵ Government report stated that the Sikhs working in the SMP constantly brought their relatives to Shanghai and recommend them into the police force once vacancies

not know anyone there, their hope counted on the recruitment of the SMC in the Punjab. Most Sikhs decided to travel on their own money on the grounds that the SMC did not frequently send agents to the Punjab to conduct recruitment. This migration pattern, however, was reshaped by the changing policy of the Government of India in the 1900s.

The Government of India had long been perturbed by the fact that its recruiting ground in the Punjab was being depleted by overseas demands. Also, the Government of India was upset by the fact that some of the British Empire's archrivals, Russia and Germany in particular, began to employ Sikhs who drifted overseas.³⁰⁶ In 1903, the Government of India asked other colonies in the British Empire to employ Sikhs only through the agents of the Indian Army. In other words, colonial authorities were no longer allowed to employ Sikhs who applied for positions in the police forces.³⁰⁷ Although the International Settlement of Shanghai was not officially a part of the British Empire, the SMC agreed to enlist its Sikh constables from the Punjab in 1905, owing to its frustration over the work of the local recruited Sikhs.³⁰⁸

occur, see SMA, U1-1-905, p. 48, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1892.

³⁰⁶ "Arraignment of General Stoessel," *The Straits Times*, Feb. 21, 1905.

³⁰⁷ SMA, U1-5-1, from Military Department to Lord George Francis Hamilton, Apr. 9, 1903.

³⁰⁸ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 606; "The Shanghai Sikh Police," *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, Nov. 5, 1906.

The Road to Shanghai

In December 1905, a riot agitated by anti-foreign sentiment broke out in Shanghai.³⁰⁹ As foreigners were injured and foreign buildings set on fire, the SMC came to realize that its policing strength was too weak to protect the Settlement and that an augmentation of the SMP was inevitable.³¹⁰ Since Sikh policemen had proved most loyal and energetic throughout the riot, a dramatic expansion of the Sikh branch was proposed.³¹¹

Based on the new recruitment policy, the SMC submitted an application to the Government of India to enlist forty Sikh policemen in January 1906.³¹² The Government of India sanctioned the request months later and instructed the Indian Army's recruiting depot in Amritsar to assign a recruiting team composed of native officers and guides to execute the recruitment.³¹³ Meanwhile, to keep track of the enlistment, the SMP sent its police cadet A. H. Fenton and an Indian sergeant to India in October 1906.³¹⁴

The recruiting team and Fenton visited specific villages in the Majha area that normally provided soldiers for the Indian Army. The village where Isser Singh resided must have been amongst those that

³⁰⁹ "Shanghai Under Arms," *North China Herald*, Dec. 22, 1905; "The Shanghai Riots," *Eastern Daily Mail*, Jan. 2, 1906.

³¹⁰ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 606; SMA, U1-2-309, p. 543, from Acting Commissioner of S.M.C. to H.M. Consul General, Mar. 5, 1907.

³¹¹ "Shanghai Under Arms," *North China Herald*, Dec. 29, 1905; SMA, U1-1-918, pp. 22-24, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1906; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 606.

³¹² SMA, U1-2-296, p. 528, July 18, 1906.

³¹³ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 663.

³¹⁴ "The Municipal Council," *North China Herald*, Oct. 26, 1906.

the recruiters visited. Understanding that the SMC provided relatively higher pay than other colonial authorities, Isser Singh stepped forward to volunteer to join.

The SMC's criteria for selecting constables was modeled on the standard of the Indian Army. The preferred candidate should be a Majha or Malwa Sikh, at least 160 cm tall and his chest girth should not be less than 89 cm.³¹⁵ As an ex-soldier, Isser Singh met all of these requirements and was thus enlisted.

The recruiting team brought Isser Singh and other recruits to Amritsar, where a train took them on to Lahore. Meanwhile, staff from the SMP had already been sent to Lahore to take the newly recruited Sikhs back to Shanghai.³¹⁶ In Lahore, a civil surgeon of the Government of India conducted a routine medical check on these recruits to make sure that their hearing, speech, and teeth were all satisfactory.³¹⁷ Additionally, those who had symptoms of rupture, hydrocephalus, varicella, skin disease, or any other chronic diseases would be disqualified.³¹⁸ After the check, Isser Singh and others travelled to Bombay by train where they boarded a passenger liner (owned by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company that was contracted by the SMC in the early twentieth century). The

³¹⁵ CO275/69, pp. c107-c108, "Extract from the regulations as to the physical examination of Candidates for Appointments under the Government of India," Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1904.

³¹⁶ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 664.

³¹⁷ SMA, U1-1-898, p. 46, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1885.

³¹⁸ CO275/69, p. c108, "Extract from the regulations as to the physical examination of Candidates for Appointments under the Government of India," Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1904.

liner took the batch of Sikhs to Hong Kong before they finally arrived in Shanghai.³¹⁹

Accommodating the Sikhs

When Isser landed in Shanghai in November 1906, he found that there already existed a well-developed Sikh community with sophisticated facilities in this metropolis. A hospital that specifically catered for Sikh patients had been set up years before. A Sikh temple (gurdwara) was under construction for the religious needs of Sikhs. The Police school regularly provided necessary training and education for its Sikh staff. With the help of these facilities, the SMC expected to build up the efficiency of its Sikh police unit. In fact, the idea of providing Sikh police staff with customized facilities was not Shanghai's original invention. By the turn of the twentieth century, the SMC had imported and localized numerous Sikh-related institutions from Hong Kong and Singapore. In other words, the hospital, gurdwara, and school were products of a translocal network that facilitated the circulation of knowledge from one locality to the other.

Viewing Sikhs as a martial race who could easily adapt to harsh conditions, the colonial authorities in Southeast and East Asia had been keen to employ them. Ironically, the British soon found that Sikhs were particularly susceptible to tropical diseases, particularly malaria and dengue fever. In the Hong Kong Police, Sikhs always accounted

³¹⁹ SMA, U1-5-1, from Peninsular and Oriental Navigation Company to J. C. P. Bland, Jan. 22, 1906.

for a large proportion of the total number of patients admitted to the hospital.

Table 7. Police Staff Admitted to the Hospital in Hong Kong, 1901-1909

	Europeans	Sikhs	Chinese
1901 ³²⁰	163	493	215
1902 ³²¹	141	498	299
1903 ³²²	122	407	193
1904 ³²³	111	317	226
1905 ³²⁴	102	407	187
1906 ³²⁵	98	375	224
1907 ³²⁶	132	427	187
1908 ³²⁷	97	394	136
1909 ³²⁸	72	471	136

The Singapore government was also haunted by the health condition of its Sikh constables. A government survey showed that Sikhs were particularly susceptible to phthisis and intermittent fever on this tropical island and that Sikhs have a larger proportion of sickness

³²⁰ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1902, p. 105, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1901.

³²¹ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1903, p. 158, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1902.

³²² Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1904, p. 50, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1903.

³²³ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1905, p. 87, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1904.

³²⁴ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1906, p. 421, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1905.

³²⁵ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1907, p. 196, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1906.

³²⁶ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1908, p. 122, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1907.

³²⁷ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Administrative Reports for the Year 1909, p. 105, Report of the Captain Superintendent of Police.

³²⁸ Ibid.

than other contingents.³²⁹ In a report of the Inspector-General of Police in 1909, the Sikh contingent was declared the least healthy one.³³⁰ Sikh constables in Shanghai were also prone to health problems in the early twentieth century. Annual Reports of the SMC showed that the Sikhs were frequently taken to the hospital due to various diseases and cases resulting in death were not uncommon.³³¹

Various measures had been taken by colonial authorities to improve their Sikh policemen's health. Since the 1860s, the Hong Kong government had begun to import medicines from India to treat Sikh patients.³³² Besides, all ailing Sikhs were taken to the Government Civil Hospital for treatment.³³³ In Singapore, a police surgeon was appointed to take charge of the health of all Sikh policemen. Those who were suffering from serious diseases were admitted into the government-founded General Hospital.³³⁴ The hospital also catered to a specific Sikh diet for the patients.³³⁵

What happened in Singapore and Hong Kong showed that Sikhs were particularly vulnerable to diseases in Southeast and East Asia, and that customized provisions should be provided to relieve these health problems. The SMC learned their lessons well and were

³²⁹ CO 275/57, p. 71, Straits Settlements Annual Reports for the Year 1898; CO 275/59, p. 419, Straits Settlements Annual Reports for the Year 1899.

³³⁰ CO 275/81, p. 29, Annual Departmental Reports of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1909.

³³¹ SMA, U1-1-913, p. 40, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1900; SMA, U1-1-916, p. 30, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1904.

³³² CO 129/135, from Under-Secretary of State to War Office, 8 Apr. 1868.

³³³ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Administrative Reports for the Year 1910, p. 16, Government and Aided Institutions.

³³⁴ CO 275/74, p. 341, Annual Departmental Reports of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1906.

³³⁵ CO 275/50, p. 34, Annual Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force for the Year 1895, Feb. 7, 1896.

cautious about the medical care of their Sikh staff. At the time when Isser Singh would have arrived in Shanghai, the SMP, like its Singapore counterpart, had also enlisted a police surgeon to take care of its Sikh policemen.³³⁶ Ailing Sikh staff in the SMP would be checked by the surgeon and could go to the General Hospital (founded by the SMC) without any charge.³³⁷ To better accommodate the Sikh population, the SMC even built an Indian Hospital in 1919.³³⁸ The medical authorities in that hospital introduced Singapore's measure to provide specific Sikh food for its patients. Furthermore, wives and children of Sikh constables were allowed to be admitted into the hospital as well.³³⁹

In addition to the well-built medical facility, the SMC also provided training and education for Sikhs. In the first six months, all newly recruited Sikhs underwent compulsory English and Chinese languages classes, musketry shooting, and policing regulations in an Indian school that was set up by the SMC in 1896.³⁴⁰ These schooling institutions, like the medical care system, were also imitated from other colonies.

Once the Hong Kong government established its Sikh branch in 1868, a Sikh police school was simultaneously introduced by the

³³⁶ SMA, U1-1-898, p. 46, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1885.

³³⁷ SMA, U1-5-1, Shanghai Municipal Council: Terms of Service of Indian Police, Mar. 30, 1904.

³³⁸ This Indian Hospital was specifically for Sikh policemen and their wives and children.

³³⁹ SAM. U1-14-6714, from A. Hilton Johnson to the Acting Secretary S.M.C., July 21, 1917.

³⁴⁰ For the policing regulation education, see SMA, U1-1-898, p. 34, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1886. For the language education and the Sikh police school, see SMA, U1-1-909, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1896. For musketry shooting training, see SMA, U1-1-909, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1896.

governor to instruct its Sikh constables how to use a musket and to teach colloquial English and Chinese.³⁴¹ Language learning in the school was later related to the promotion of Sikh staff. Only those who passed the tests could be promoted to higher positions.³⁴² The curriculum in the school had gradually been developed, as courses such as Police Regulation and General Instructions, Sections and Beats, Local Knowledge, Police Court Routine, Observation Lessons, Jiu Jihsu-Police Holds, Physical Drill, and First Aid to Injured were all taught to Sikh policemen.³⁴³

The Sikh police school in Singapore was to a large extent modeled on that of Hong Kong's. When the Singapore authorities intended to set up its Sikh contingent in 1879, Hong Kong's experience in employing and managing the Sikh police unit was the principal reference point. As a result, a Sikh police school was built in 1881 and the Sikh servicemen were also required to take language exams.³⁴⁴

The SMC was another student of Hong Kong. To improve the efficiency of the Sikh branch, the SMC repeatedly resorted to Hong Kong's expertise in schooling its Sikh constables. As early as 1885 when the first batch of Sikhs arrived, the SMC imitated the Hong Kong Police's measure by introducing courses in Chinese and English

³⁴¹ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Hong Kong Government Gazette 1870, p. 188, Government Notification, Apr. 16, 1870.

³⁴² Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Sessional Papers 1902, p. 105, Report on the Police and Crime, for the Year 1901.

³⁴³ Hong Kong Government Reports Online, Administrative Reports for the Year 1921, p. k17, Report of the Captain Superintendent of Police.

³⁴⁴ CO 275/23, p. cclxxii, Report of the Police Commission, Sept. 1, 1879; CO 275/27, p. 95, Report on the Straits Settlements Police Force, and on the State of Crime, for the Year 1881.

languages to all recruits.³⁴⁵ As the Sikh branch had grown dramatically, the SMC asked its police officers to go to Hong Kong to learn how to manage Sikhs.³⁴⁶ Based on Hong Kong's model, a specific Sikh police school was established in 1896, and courses such as musketry shooting, police regulation instruction, and local knowledge were introduced.³⁴⁷

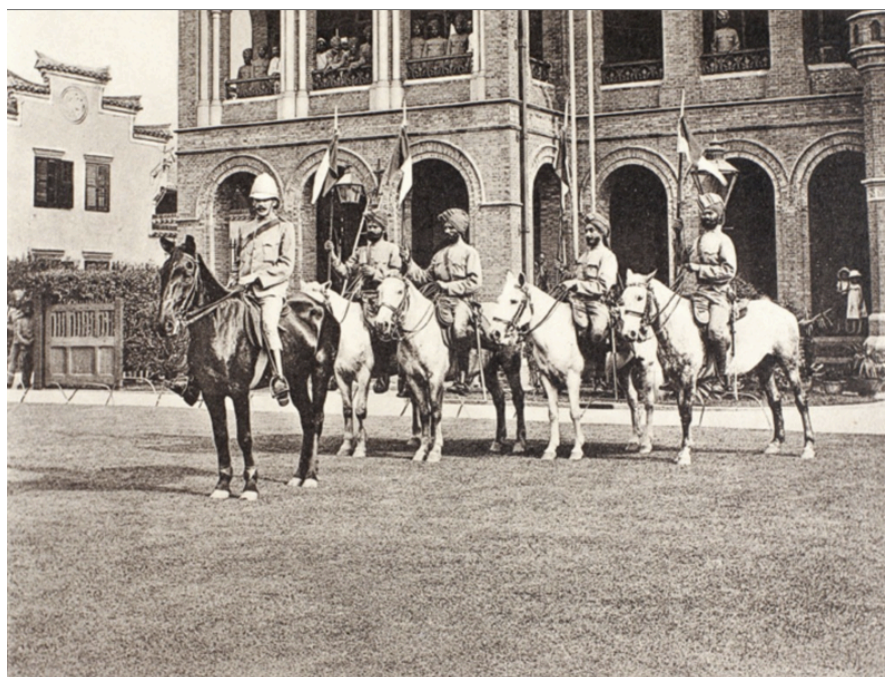


Figure 10. Mounted Sikh policemen being trained in Louza police school, 1900s
(Courtesy of Historical Photographs of China Project).

On the grounds that Sikhs based their sense of identity on the Sikh religion, most of them aspired to keep practicing their religious rituals in gurdwaras (Sikh temples) even when they were abroad. As more and more Sikhs migrated to Southeast and East Asia by the turn

³⁴⁵ SMA, U1-1-898, p. 34, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1886.

³⁴⁶ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 9)*, 717; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 13)*, 570.

³⁴⁷ SMA, U1-1-899, p. 34, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1886; SMA, U1-1-904, p. 32, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1891; SMA, U1-1-909, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1896.

of the twentieth century, gurdwaras sprang up in these regions.³⁴⁸ The first gurdwara in the Straits Settlements was set up in Penang in 1901 in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.³⁴⁹ It was reported at that time that the gurdwara in Penang would be used to serve the religious needs of Sikhs not only in the Straits Settlements but also those in the Malay Peninsula.³⁵⁰



Figure 11. Wadda gurdwara in Penang, 2007 (Photo by Nik Khusairi Ibrahim).

The Hong Kong authorities were well informed about the construction of the gurdwara in the Straits Settlements and felt it imperative that they start building one for their own Sikh servicemen.³⁵¹ In 1902, one year after the erection of Penang's gurdwara, a Sikh temple was set up in Gap Road of Wanchai, Hong

³⁴⁸ In British North Borneo, Sikh soldiers there had a gurdwara as early as 1887, see "British North Borneo News," *The Straits Times*, Sept. 15, 1887. The Sikhs in Rangoon erected their gurdwara in 1898, see "Untitled," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, Nov. 18, 1898.

³⁴⁹ "Sikhs in Penang," *The Straits Times*, Sept. 1, 1899; "Shipping News," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, June 7, 1901.

³⁵⁰ "Diamond Jubilee Sikh Temple in Penang," *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1899.

³⁵¹ "Sikh Temples," *The China Mail*, June 14, 1901.

Kong island. Whereas the Hong Kong government provided a site without any charge, money for establishing the building was raised amongst local Sikh soldiers, policemen, and watchmen.³⁵²

Noticeably, the SMC also donated some 600 HK dollars for the gurdwara in Hong Kong.³⁵³ In fact, the SMC had a strong need to improve its Sikh constables' morale and efficiency in the first decade of the twentieth century. Assuming that a religious organization would watch over and correct the behavior of all Sikhs, the SMC had a growing interest in the work of Hong Kong's gurdwara.³⁵⁴



Figure 12. Sikh gurdwara in Wanchai, Hong Kong, 2013 (Photo by Cao Yin).

After years of consideration and observation, the SMC sanctioned the plan to build a gurdwara in 1906.³⁵⁵ Agents were soon dispatched

³⁵² "New Sikh and Hindu Temple," *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, May 12, 1902; "Opening of a Sikh Temple in Hong Kong," *The Hong Kong Weekly Press*, May 19, 1902.

³⁵³ "New Sikh and Hindu Temple," *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, May 12, 1902.

³⁵⁴ "Late telegraphs," *North China Herald*, Aug. 9, 1907.

³⁵⁵ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 620.

to Hong Kong to learn the details of the building. Blueprints and plans of Hong Kong's gurdwara were also obtained and taken back to Shanghai.³⁵⁶

Based on the Hong Kong model, a gurdwara was erected in North Sichuan Road in June 1908.³⁵⁷ The SMC expected that the temple could greatly facilitate its administration over all Sikhs in Shanghai, including policemen, watchmen, and the unemployed. With the help of the priests of the gurdwara, the authorities wanted to impose religious teachings on their Sikh subjects and thus set right any serious misconduct. Furthermore, the temple provided accommodation for the destitute and other Sikhs with no home. Disputes amongst Sikhs were also brought to the temple rather than before the court for resolving.³⁵⁸



Figure 13. Sikh gurdwara in North Sichuan Road, Shanghai, 1910s (Courtesy of Shanghai Municipal Archives).

³⁵⁶ SMA, U1-1-918, pp. 22-24, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1906.

³⁵⁷ SMA, U1-1-921, pp. 13-14, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1908; "The Sikh Gurdwara: Opening Ceremony," *North China Herald*, July 4, 1908.

³⁵⁸ "The Sikh Gurdwara," *North China Herald*, Aug. 16, 1907; "The Sikh Gurdwara: Opening Ceremony," *North China Herald*, July 4, 1908.

Isser Singh arrived in Shanghai at a time when all such sophisticated facilities had been established. Like all other Sikhs, he immediately received training on policing knowledge, which was based on the Government of India's police training books.³⁵⁹ In the first six months, Isser Singh had to attend an English course three times a week.³⁶⁰ Since the SMC repeatedly defined its police unit as a defensive force that should be deployed to protect the Settlement during emergencies, shooting courses were also introduced to the newly enlisted policemen.³⁶¹

After the intensive training, Isser Singh was assigned to the Hongkou (Hongkew) station, and was responsible for checking unlawful activities in the Hongkou area. He was accommodated in a barrack that was specifically built by the SMC for newly employed Sikhs.³⁶² The barrack was closed to all outsiders and was more like a military fort, on the grounds that the SMC purported to build it as the center of the defense of the Settlement.³⁶³ Life in this building was doubtlessly dull, and the eight-hour shift on the streets chasing thieves, directing traffic, and arresting drunkards was both exhausting and dangerous.

³⁵⁹ SMA, U1-1-898, p. 34, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1886.

³⁶⁰ SMA, U1-1-914, p. 42, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1901.

³⁶¹ SMA, U1-1-909, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1896.

³⁶² *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 627.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, 616.



Figure 14. The building of the SMP Hongkou station, 2011 (Photo by Cao Yin).

The most common leisure activity for Sikhs in Shanghai at that time was the consuming of quantities of alcohol. Indeed, Sikhs living in the Punjab had a tradition of over-drinking to relax their exhausted bodies after heavy physical labor.³⁶⁴ In the early twentieth century, a social survey illustrated that one hundred Jat Sikhs could consume five gallons of spirit averagely per year, while the provincial average was just 2.25 gallons.³⁶⁵ Migrants took this habit abroad with them. In Singapore, the authorities attributed the misconduct of its Sikh constables mainly to widespread drunkenness.³⁶⁶ The overconsumption of alcohol was also widely apparent amongst Sikhs in Hong Kong. One of the crucial reasons that the Hong Kong government enthusiastically advocated Sikhism was its teachings prohibited

³⁶⁴ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs Vol. 2: 1839-1988* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966), 153.

³⁶⁵ Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, 48.

³⁶⁶ CO 275/84, p. 425, Straits Settlements Annual Reports for the Year 1910.

excessive drinking.³⁶⁷ Shanghai Sikhs were no exception, as drink-related cases were frequent.³⁶⁸ The SMC even claimed, “drunkenness is the most common crime for the Sikhs”.³⁶⁹ Like his fellows, Isser Singh occasionally indulged in spirits as well. Ironically, one of Isser Singh’s main jobs was to check drunkards on the streets.

Policing Hongkou

The policing style of Sikhs in the SMP was a mix of the metropolitan and colonial police. The modern police force was born in Britain in the early nineteenth century when the flourishing bourgeois class tried hard to impose its behavioral norms upon the working-class people and when the capitalist economic structure required a large number of well-disciplined laboring forces that could maximize the profits of the industry. In this sense, the police force in Britain was not merely responsible for detecting unlawful activities, but also for disciplining the population’s everyday practices and imposing the dominant class’ expectations on the people.³⁷⁰ As the British Empire expanded, police forces were also set up in various colonies. The colonial police, however, was remarkably different from the police force in Britain. The imperative for the colonial police was not to teach

³⁶⁷ “New Sikh and Hindu Temple,” *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, May 12, 1902.

³⁶⁸ “H.B.M.’s Police Court,” *North China Herald*, Dec. 8, 1887; “H.B.M.’s Police Court,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 11, 1893; “R. v. Nerain Singh,” *North China Herald*, Oct. 30, 1899.

³⁶⁹ SMA, U1-1-920, p. 11, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1907.

³⁷⁰ D. G. Brown, *The Rise of Scotland Yard: A History of the Metropolitan Police* (Edinburg: Harrap, 1956); Thomas Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd., 1978); David Ascoli, *Queen’s Peace: The Origins and Development of the Metropolitan Police, 1829-1979* (London: H. Hamilton, 1979); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1991); Clive Emsley, *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (London: Routledge, 2014).

colonial subjects how to meet the expectations of the middle-class in Britain, but to strengthen colonial rule in alien and sometimes, even hostile, territories by suppressing riots and overseeing locals. For this reason, colonial policemen were accommodated in barracks, equipped with heavy weapons, and trained in military techniques.³⁷¹

The SMP combined the two patterns.³⁷² On the one hand, as an autonomous foreign settlement that heavily counted on commercial development and political stability, Shanghailanders aspired to establish civic law and order that conformed to the norms of Western society. Residents were supposed to abide by Western-styled laws that would keep the Settlement in order and stable. A well-ordered Settlement would thus attract more people and cause more investment to flow in. In order to carry out this project, policemen were employed as pioneers of civilizing and disciplining work. By punishing those who failed to follow the traffic regulations, who were heavily drunk on the streets, or who caused disturbance in public, policemen were meant to be there to discipline such misdemeanors. On the other hand, on the grounds that the Chinese had become the majority of the population from the 1860s, the demography of the Settlement was less similar to other white settlements such as Canada and New Zealand and closer to colonies such as Hong Kong and Singapore. It was this colonial milieu

³⁷¹ Jeffries, *The Colonial Police*; Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule*; Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989); Brogden, "The Emergence of the Police," 4-14; Dilip Das and Arvind Verma, "The Armed Police in the British Colonial Tradition: The Indian Perspective," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 2 (1998): 354-367.

³⁷² Bickers, "Ordering Shanghai," 178-179.

that made the SMP introduce numerous colonial policing measures, including the recruitment of Sikhs.

In the debate on the police reform in 1883, C. J. Holliday, the head of the SMC's Watch Committee, contended that there were duties that the Chinese were incapable of doing while the expensive Europeans were too few to fulfill these alone.³⁷³ One of the principal duties was to suppress Chinese riots and defend against possible attack from Chinese military men. During such turbulent times, Holliday argued, the Chinese policemen in the SMP could not be trusted. However, since European constables' salaries were extremely high, the SMC was not able to maintain adequate numbers of Europeans during troubled time. For this reason, the Sikhs were introduced as the complementary element to reinforce Westerners' sub-imperial rule in Shanghai.³⁷⁴

In another speech, Holliday stressed that Indians were more familiar with the British customs and laws than any other nationals in Asia.³⁷⁵ As is stated above, Shanghailanders tended to impose British laws and norms upon the society of the Settlement, and coerced residents into following these regulations. Their aim was to turn the Settlement into another London, where traffic was well directed, streets were clean, prostitution and gambling were under check, and everything was in order. Servicemen in the SMP were one of the most significant coercing forces that were responsible for executing this civilizing work. To have servicemen execute this duty, they must be

³⁷³ "Special Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883.

³⁷⁴ SMA, U1-1-918, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1905.

³⁷⁵ "Special Meeting of Ratepayers," *North China Herald*, Oct. 10, 1883.

familiar with and abide by those British laws from the first. Nevertheless, most Chinese constables were unfamiliar with if not violators of British civil rules. Hence, to have them instruct others to follow these rules often proved to be fruitless. As the Sikhs were assumed to have a better knowledge of British customs and rules than the Chinese, they were thus obliged to do the civilizing work on the streets of the Settlement.

Isser Singh was assigned to execute this civilizing duty in Hongkou, in the northern part of the International Settlement. The Hongkou district was mainly under the administration of the American concession between 1848 and 1863. As the American concession was combined with the British concession in 1863, Hongkou became a part of the International Settlement, although it was less secure than other parts of the Settlement.³⁷⁶

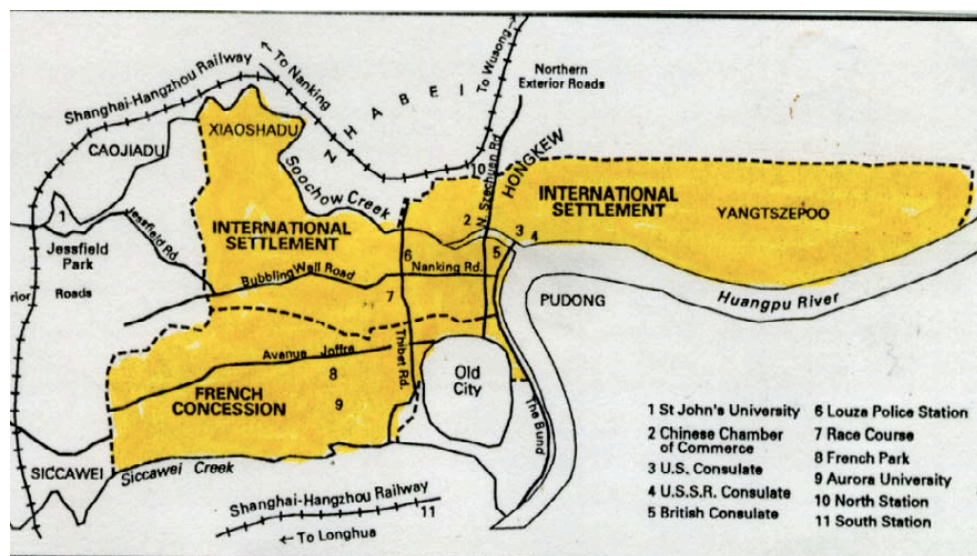


Figure 15. Map of Shanghai, 1920s (Courtesy of Tales of Old Shanghai Project).

³⁷⁶ Shi Meiding, *Shanghai Zujiezh*, 93-96.

Shanghai was one of the largest and busiest ports in Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and sailors from around the world landed for entertainment, especially to consume alcohol. Drunken sailors were particularly perilous elements for the order of the Settlement. Drunken sailors would either fight with one another or bully the Chinese or damage properties. Their rude behavior stirred a strong resentment amongst Shanghailanders, who wished to see Shanghai become a model settlement in which business could be done in a stable and safe environment. Sikh constables were responsible for correcting the wrongdoings of these troublesome seamen and arresting those who caused disturbances in the public.



Figure 16. Hongkou in the 1920s (Courtesy of Shanghai Municipal Archives).

Since Hongkou was particularly notorious for crimes and troubles caused by sailors, Isser Singh encountered them frequently. At midnight on 19 December 1906, Isser Singh was patrolling along the Yuhang Road when he saw an American cruiser sailor who was drunk. As Isser Singh was trying to hold this man in custody, the drunkard assaulted him. A tussle ensued, and thanks to his former experience as a soldier, Isser Singh soon had the American under control and took him to the police station.³⁷⁷ On 23 May 1907, a Russian cruiser sailor was lying down on Boone Road under the influence of alcohol and was obstructing traffic. On call, Isser Singh rushed to the spot and made the arrest. The man was later sent back to his ship for punishment.³⁷⁸

In fact, Isser Singh's encounter with sailors was not unusual for the Sikh policemen. On the morning of 1 April 1887, several British sailors fought with one another in Broadway, a popular place for seamen to go to for recreation. It was reported that sticks, wooden bars, and knives were used. A group of Sikh constables were then ordered to the spot to quell the fighting. The sailors dispersed before the arrival of the policemen, but the Sikhs still managed to seize two of them.³⁷⁹ Nonetheless, not all drunkards would run away without any resistance. On 30 August 1892, two British seamen were drunk outside "The Travelers" public house and their riotous behavior affected the traffic on the road. A Sikh constable was then instructed to take them to the police station, but when the Sikh constable approached the two men,

³⁷⁷ "A Correction," *North China Herald*, Dec. 21, 1906.

³⁷⁸ "The Week's Mails," *North China Herald*, May 31, 1907.

³⁷⁹ "Summary of News," *North China Herald*, Apr. 6, 1887.

they struck him down, took away his baton and beat him on the head.³⁸⁰

In addition to checking drunkards, Isser Singh was also in charge of duties such as checking sanitary issues and detecting fire. Since furious dogs often bit pedestrians and their bark was also complained by residents, the SMC viewed these animals as uncivilized subjects that besmirched the peaceful environment. The Sikhs were then ordered to catch all dogs wandering on streets without masters. And residents who were unable to control their furious dogs were sometimes also faced with punishment.³⁸¹ On the morning of 30 June 1907, Isser Singh caught a dog that was straying in North Sichuan Road with no owner in sight. On his way back to the police station, the dog's master came out and asked him to return the dog to him. Although that man insisted that it was Isser who enticed his dog onto the road, the court still fined him \$10 for letting the dog go unmuzzled.³⁸²

As these records demonstrate, Isser Singh worked well during his six-month probationary service between November 1906 and May 1907 and was therefore promoted into the rank of the sixth class constable. His monthly salary at that time was around \$16.50 (Mexican dollars). Like most of his colleagues, on receiving his salary, Isser Singh probably sent almost all of them back to India to support his

³⁸⁰ "R. v. Coll. And Eade," *North China Herald*, Sept. 2, 1892.

³⁸¹ "U.S. v. Graham," *North China Herald*, Aug. 7, 1890; "Municipal Council v. Anderson," *North China Herald*, Mar. 27, 1899; "Municipal Council v. Little," *North China Herald*, Mar. 27, 1899; "R. v. Harris," *North China Herald*, Aug. 7, 1899; "R. v. Bent," *North China Herald*, Aug. 14, 1899.

³⁸² "S. M. Police v. Wm. Rancee," *North China Herald*, July 5, 1907.

family. Claude Markovits analyses four testaments left by Sikh policemen who died in Shanghai between 1895 and 1931. He surprisingly finds that these Sikhs left extremely few savings in their accounts. Markovits further points out that most Sikh policemen in Shanghai remitted a large portion of their earnings back to the Punjab, given their peasantry background.³⁸³ This argument is strongly supported by the case of Constable Sorlan Singh. When he was fined for ten Mexican dollars for drunkenness and misconduct, he had no money to pay the fine, because he had just sent most of his wages back to his wife in India. As a result, he was sentenced to prison for one month.³⁸⁴

Apart from the cash earning, Isser Singh also enjoyed some other forms of welfare privileges such as free uniforms, fuel, and light.³⁸⁵ In 1905, the SMC even employed three Sikh cooks to prepare Punjabi food for all Sikh staff.³⁸⁶ Indeed, if Isser Singh could have kept up such a satisfactory performance, he would have had a high chance of being promoted to the rank of fifth class constable one year later.³⁸⁷ However, a lack of the knowledge on rules and regulations promulgated by the SMC impaired Isser Singh's career in the unit.

³⁸³ Markovits, "Indian Communities in China, 1842-1949," 55-74.

³⁸⁴ "A Police Constable in the Dock," *North China Herald*, Dec. 8, 1887.

³⁸⁵ SMA, U1-2-309, p. 666, Shanghai Municipal Council: Terms of Service of Indian Police, Mar. 30, 1904.

³⁸⁶ SMA, U1-1-917, p. 16, Municipal of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1905.

³⁸⁷ SMA, U1-2-309, p. 664, Shanghai Municipal Council: Terms of Service of Indian Police, Mar. 30, 1904.

“A Man Who Gives Considerable Trouble”

In May 1907, the Chairman of the SMC received a letter from the Shanghai Taotai,³⁸⁸ the magistrate of the Chinese territory in Shanghai, complaining about the action of an Indian constable who had crossed into Chinese territory with a gun and bullied some Chinese men.³⁸⁹ In fact, Sikh constables' harsh attitude toward the Chinese in Shanghai often antagonized the locals and caused complaints and demonstrations of resistances.³⁹⁰ For example, Sikh constables were often called in to fight with Chinese mafoos (carriage drivers) and rickshaw coolies when the Sikhs tried to confiscate non-licensed carriages and rickshaws by force.³⁹¹ It was also reported that Chinese rickshaw coolies were frequently struck and kicked by Sikhs, only because their rickshaws either blocked the traffic or went in the wrong directions.³⁹² Furthermore, since very few Sikhs were able to communicate in Chinese,³⁹³ misunderstandings between the constables and their policing subjects had often resulted into brawls.³⁹⁴ In one case, a Sikh

³⁸⁸ Shanghai Taotai (the Circuit Intendant of Shanghai) was the head of the Shanghai county and Songjiang prefecture during the Qing dynasty. After the First Opium War, he was instructed to take charge of foreign affairs in Shanghai, see Leung Yuen-Sang, *The Shanghai Taotai: Linkage Man in a Changing Society, 1843-1890* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991).

³⁸⁹ “Policing Beyond Limits,” *North China Herald*, July 27, 1907.

³⁹⁰ Yao Keming, *Haishang yangjingbang* (The Bund on the sea) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2004), 62.

³⁹¹ “Summary of News,” *North China Herald*, May 5, 1890.

³⁹² “The Sikh Police,” *North China Herald*, Sept. 16, 1892.

³⁹³ The SMC took note of the language problem of its Sikh policemen in the late 1890s. In 1897, an English language school was set up specifically for training newly enlisted Sikhs. In the early twentieth century, all Sikhs were required to take the English language class. Those who passed the language exams would be awarded with at most five Mexican dollars, see SMA, U1-1-910, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1897.

³⁹⁴ Isabella Jackson also observes the rough behavior of the Sikhs constables when directing the traffic, see Jackson, “The Raj on Nanjing Road,” 1690-1691.

constable was charged with beating a Chinese mafoo because the mafoo had wrongly parked his carriage on the road and obstructed the traffic. A later investigation revealed that the clash could mostly be attributed to the poor communication between the two. Since the Sikh was unable to speak Chinese, his order had been misunderstood by the mafoo. Irritated by the mafoo's disobedience, the Sikh then seized the horsewhip and beat the Chinese.³⁹⁵

However, the case mentioned by Shanghai Taotai was special given the fact that it happened outside the International Settlement. Further reports from Chinese newspapers elaborated that the Indian constable was invited by a Chinese hooligan to enter into the Chinese territory to help bully some other shopkeepers. With the help of this Indian, the hooligan also beat a Chinese policeman who came to check the case.³⁹⁶ Assuming that the Indian constable was either privately employed by the Chinese hooligan or deputed by the SMC to deliberately breach the Chinese law, the enraged Chinese authorities required the SMC to fully investigate this incident and punish this Indian.³⁹⁷

The ensuing investigation conducted by the SMC revealed that the Indian constable was none other than Isser Singh. Isser Singh stated that he had been patrolling on the Wuzhou Road on 29 April 1907 when a Chinese man came to him reporting that a lot of loafers were in his house outside the Settlement. Isser Singh then went with

³⁹⁵ "Tingche zhaoshi" (An accident caused by parking carts), *Shenbao*, May 7, 1885.

³⁹⁶ "Hudao chajiu yinbu yuejie bangxiong" (The Shanghai Taotai investigating the cross-boundary incident of an Indian constable), *Shenbao*, May 3, 1907.

³⁹⁷ "Policing Beyond Limits," *North China Herald*, July 27, 1907.

that man to the spot but found no one was there. He returned to his duty immediately afterwards. Based on this statement, the SMC judged that the accusation from the Chinese side had been much exaggerated and that there seemed to be no need to pay any more attention to this issue.³⁹⁸ While Isser Singh had been spared from being accountable for this cross-boundary incident, he undoubtedly left a negative impression with his officers, as the captain of the Sikh branch later commented, “he [Isser Singh] had given his officers considerable trouble”.³⁹⁹

On 2 August 1907, Isser Singh refused to follow the order to go on duty, saying that he had lost his money in the barrack and had been unfairly treated by senior Sikh officers. Disobeying senior officers’ orders was not uncommon amongst the Sikh constables in Shanghai. In the early twentieth century, the SMC were forever complaining about the deteriorating discipline of their Sikh branch.⁴⁰⁰ More often than not, the authorities chose to appease their Sikh staff, owing to its heavy reliance on Sikhs for defending the Settlement.⁴⁰¹ For example, on 28 May 1908, two Sikh constables disobeyed the order of an Indian Sergeant-Major, and one of them even used abusive and filthy language to attack the officer. Whereas both were taken to the police court, the sentences were quite slight as one was jailed for just three

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ “Hudao qingshang xibu wuzai yuejie” (The Taotai required foreign constables to stay within the border), *Shenbao*, July 1, 1907; “REX (S.M.P.) v. Isser Singh,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 9, 1907.

⁴⁰⁰ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 16)*, 655; SMA, U1-1-922, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1909; “Shanghai Sikh Police: Deportation Order Disobeyed,” *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, Oct. 23, 1909; SMA, U1-1-923, p. 36, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1910;

⁴⁰¹ Outside observers had long noticed that the SMC was used to punish unlawful Sikhs with light sentences in exchange of their loyalty, see “The Valueless Sikh,” *The China Mail*, July 31, 1907.

days with hard labor and the other was jailed for seven days with hard labor.⁴⁰² In contrast, Isser Singh was imprisoned for one month with hard labor, mainly because the court judged him as a troublemaker in the police unit.⁴⁰³ When Isser Singh was released in September 1907, the judge gave him two choices: he could either return to the Sikh branch by finding two sureties of \$500 each or return to India.⁴⁰⁴ With the help of his friends, Isser Singh successfully found two sureties and was allowed to resume his work in the police force.

In the next three years, it seems that Isser Singh no longer caught any drunkards on streets, and nor did he cross boundaries or cause any trouble during this period. In July 1910, Isser Singh was again imprisoned, owing to his participation in a strike. Strikes held by Sikh policemen in Shanghai were not uncommon, especially when they felt that they were unfairly treated. On 8 August 1891, the Chief Inspector of the SMP went to inspect one Sikh barrack. He found that the barrack was infested with bugs and was very sloppy. Perturbed by the poor sanitary conditions, the Watch Committee fined each member of the twenty-seven Sikhs living in the barrack three Mexican dollars. Clearly exasperated by this punishment, all those billeted in that barrack refused to go to work that day. Their strike was later supported by another thirteen Sikh constables in other barracks who had not been fined. The Watch Committee immediately summoned a meeting and reached a conclusion that the punishment was too heavy for these Sikhs who were not directly responsible for this problem. The Watch

⁴⁰² "REX v. Pumon Singh and Ujazar Singh," *North China Herald*, May 30, 1908.

⁴⁰³ "REX (S.M.P.) v. Isser Singh," *North China Herald*, Aug. 9, 1907.

⁴⁰⁴ "REX v. Isser Singh," *North China Herald*, Sept. 6, 1907.

Committee then informed the Sikhs that they would not be fined. Instead, only those who continued their strike would be fined one day's salary. The Sikhs accepted this compromise and went back to work the same day.⁴⁰⁵

Not all strikes ended in a compromise, however. In most instances, strikes simply led to serious punishments. On 19 March 1897, Sikh constables in the Louza Station refused to report for duty, stating that they had received ill-treatment from their British officer who had ordered them to drill in the rain and abused them with violent language. The Sikhs submitted a petition to the Watch Committee in which they asked to reconsider the frequency of such drilling and to employ a Sikh inspector from India. After evaluating this complaint and the Sikhs' request, the Watch Committee informed them that their petition was groundless and thus ordered them to go back to work. Frustrated by this judgment, fifty-nine Sikhs from the Louza Station and the Carter Road Station went on strike. Faced with this crisis, the Watch Committee reiterated that the request of the Sikhs was not justified and that they would take harsh action against the misconduct of these Sikhs so as to prevent such requests in future. As a result, fifteen Sikh constables who had bad records were dismissed. Other strikers were threatened with the same fate if they did not go back to work immediately. Eventually, all Sikhs gave up their protests and resumed their duties.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 10)*, 757.

⁴⁰⁶ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 13)*, 486-488.

The strike that Isser Singh took part in was not to protest against unfair British treatment, but resulted from rivalries between different sects of Sikhs in Shanghai. There were mainly two sects of Sikhs serving in the SMP in the early twentieth century. One was from the Mahja district, between the Beas and the Ravi rivers of the Punjab; the other was from the Malwa district, south of the Sutlej River of the Punjab.⁴⁰⁷ Although both sects shared the same religion and lived side-by-side in India, differing views on castes and a conflict of economic interests brought about mutual discrimination, altercation and even clashes.⁴⁰⁸ As people from both districts came abroad for their livelihood, they also brought this old antagonism to the new land.⁴⁰⁹

In Shanghai, the hostilities between the two sects repeatedly irritated the SMC.⁴¹⁰ In July 1910, a Sikh interpreter who was from the Mahja sect was dismissed by the SMC. It was rumored that the Malwa sect was behind this man's dismissal. Outraged Mahja Sikhs assembled in the Louza Police Station on the afternoon of 15 July 1910 to demand that their interpreter be restored and that they have more privileges. As a Mahja Sikh, Isser Singh found that he had an obligation to stand up with his fellows and express his support. Supposing that it was just a peaceful petition and that no serious consequence would be incurred, Isser Singh headed to the Louza

⁴⁰⁷ For the locations of the Malwa and Majha regions, see Joyce Pettigrew, "Some Notes on the Social System of the Sikh Jats," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1 (1972): 363.

⁴⁰⁸ Rajwant Singh, "Sikh Sects," *International Bibliography of Sikh Studies* 1 (2005): 355-362; Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, "Sikh Sects," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, eds., Pashaura Singh and Louis Fenech (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 350-359.

⁴⁰⁹ "Nationalities in India," *North China Herald*, June 5, 1909.

⁴¹⁰ SMA, U1-1-923, p. 36, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1910.

Station from Hongkou that afternoon. Nonetheless, as the Captain Superintendent of the SMP rejected a direct dialogue with the Mahja Sikhs, these men refused to obey the command of their officers to dismiss but kept on protesting. The next day, all Sikhs involved in this parade, including Isser Singh, were arrested and taken to the British gaol.⁴¹¹ Most of these men, however, were released a few days later, owing to the authority's unwillingness to stir anti-British sentiment amongst the Sikh population in Shanghai.⁴¹² But Isser Singh was detained two more days than the others with the allegation that this was the second time he had disobeyed orders.⁴¹³ Since the SMC did not want to lose a whole batch of experienced Sikh constables, and bear the considerably high expenditure of deporting them back to India, almost all detained Sikhs, including Isser Singh, were reenlisted into the unit.

As Isser Singh returned to the work, drunkards on the streets, again, became the subjects that he had to engage with. On 16 March 1911, Isser Singh saw a drunken Sikh lying on East Hanbury Road and took him back to the police station.⁴¹⁴ One month later, however, Isser Singh himself shared a similar fate as the drunkard he had arrested. On the evening of 13 April 1911, Isser Singh was found heavily drunk and disorderly on North Sichuan Road. Affected by the alcohol, he

⁴¹¹ "Trouble among the Sikhs," *North China Herald*, July 22, 1910; "The Sikh Police," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910.

⁴¹² *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 18)*, 440.

⁴¹³ "REX (S.M.P.) v. Twenty Indian Police Constables," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910; "REX (S.M.P.) v. Indian Constables NO. 229," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910.

⁴¹⁴ "REX (S. M. Police) v. Dial Singh," *North China Herald*, Mar. 24, 1911.

assaulted a Chinese man by dragging him across the road. He was then arrested and sentenced for seven days' hard labor with a fine of \$10.⁴¹⁵

An Unending End

The case of drunkenness is, however, the last piece of information on Isser Singh. Since then, no clue about Isser Singh has been found. It is possible that he left Shanghai in 1911 as his term of service ended. The Sikh constables serving in the SMP were normally contracted for five years. By the end of their service, they would be granted nine months' leave on half pay with \$10 passage money. If the SMC was satisfied with the constable's performance during the term, he could return to the force after his leave.⁴¹⁶ Obviously, in light of the misconducts Isser Singh had been found guilty of in the past five years, he was not the ideal kind of person that the SMC were looking for a second term contract.

With the money he saved during his term there, Isser Singh possibly returned to his village in the Punjab, and ended up as a farmer with adequate resources to support his family. However, it was more probable that Isser Singh stayed in Shanghai, and worked as a watchman or moneylender. Owing to the higher pay and more opportunities, most dismissed or retired Sikh constables chose to stay in Shanghai to find another job.⁴¹⁷ Thanks to their "martial race"

⁴¹⁵ "S. M. P. v. Isser Singh," *North China Herald*, Apr. 22, 1911.

⁴¹⁶ SMA, U1-2-309, p. 664, Shanghai Municipal Council: Terms of Service of Indian Police, Mar. 30, 1904.

⁴¹⁷ *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 10)*, 760-761. Also see Jackson, "The Raj on Nanjing Road," 1680.

reputation, locals were too all ready to employ them as watchmen.⁴¹⁸ Although the wage of a Sikh watchman was lower than that of their countrymen in the SMP (fifteen Mexican dollars a month for a Sikh watchman versus eighteen Mexican dollars a month for a Sikh constable), they still earned much more than Chinese constables in the late nineteenth century (ten Mexican dollars a month).⁴¹⁹ Indeed, Sikh watchmen were commonly seen in teahouses, theatres, warehouses and banks around the city.⁴²⁰ In 1907, of the 800 or more Sikhs in Shanghai, nearly half of them worked as watchmen.⁴²¹ In addition to obtaining salaries through working as policemen or watchmen, most Sikhs in Shanghai were keen to join the moneylending business so as to make extra money. Normally, the Sikhs set the interest rate at around ten percent, a safe level that would bring them some profit while diminishing the risk of delinquency. They not only lent the money to their Indian countrymen, but also did business with the Chinese and Europeans.⁴²²

The other possibility is that he migrated onwards to other parts of the world. In the mid-1900s, rumors about the high salaries in North America, Australia and Russia came to circulate amongst the Sikhs around the world. In the year of 1906 alone, 2, 400 Sikhs in the Punjab

⁴¹⁸ SMA, U1-1-925, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1912.

⁴¹⁹ "Gurdah Singh v. F. Mann," *North China Herald*, Oct. 26, 1894; *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 10)*, 759.

⁴²⁰ "Yinggongtang suoan" (Cases in the British Civilian court), *Shenbao*, Sept. 2, 1886; "R. v. Singh," *North China Herald*, Dec. 16, 1892; "R. v. Meah Singh," *North China Herald*, June 2, 1893; "R. v. Comanda Singh," *North China Herald*, Aug. 11, 1893; "Chait Singh v. Abdur Singh," *North China Herald*, Sept. 15, 1893.

⁴²¹ SMA, U1-1-920, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council, 1907.

⁴²² "R. v. Singh," *North China Herald*, Dec. 16, 1892; "Chait Singh. v. Abdur Rahmin," *North China Herald*, Sept. 15, 1893; "AH Jahib Singh. v. W. J. Roberts," *North China Herald*, Aug. 3, 1894; "Sunt Singh. v. Heard," *North China Herald*, Oct. 15, 1897; *Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 13)*, 526.

migrated to Canada.⁴²³ Those who served overseas also turned their eyes to more lucrative areas. The Hong Kong government had long discerned that noticeable numbers of its Sikh servicemen left their positions to move to Port Arthur (Lü Shun) and Vladivostok on the eastern seaboard of Russia, attracted by higher pay there.⁴²⁴ During the Russo-Japanese War, it was reported that some Sikhs who were captured by the Japanese in Port Arthur had migrated from the Straits Settlements.⁴²⁵ In Shanghai, the authorities reported, “many Sikhs resigned in order to go to Siberia or North America for better payment”.⁴²⁶ Since the SMC only allowed twenty Sikh policemen to purchase their discharge yearly,⁴²⁷ some Sikh constables even deliberately behaved badly in the hope that they would be dismissed and proceed forthwith to America.⁴²⁸ Taking this backdrop into account, the diasporic journey of Isser Singh would probably not just culminate in Shanghai.

Conclusion

In terms of the approach, this chapter benefits from Robert Bickers’ monograph, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*, which takes the case of an ordinary Englishman, Richard Maurice Tinkler, who served in the SMP as a constable in the early

⁴²³ “Emigration of Sikhs,” *The Straits Times*, Dec. 18, 1906.

⁴²⁴ CO 129/314, Sikhs in Foreign Employ, July 25, 1902; CO 129/314, Sikhs in Foreign Employ, Sept. 21, 1902.

⁴²⁵ “Arraignment of General Stoessel,” *The Straits Times*, Feb. 21, 1905.

⁴²⁶ SMA, U1-1-920, p. 11, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1907.

⁴²⁷ SMA U1-3-1466, p. 1896, Police Force Indian Branch: Terms of Service, Jan. 1, 1927.

⁴²⁸ SMA, U1-1-922, p. 35, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1909.

twentieth century, to demonstrate the daily experience of the working-class Britons in the periphery of the British Empire.⁴²⁹ Richard Maurice Tinkler was born in 1898 in a poor family in Lancashire, England. He joined the army in 1915 and was sent to France to fight Germans in 1916. After the War, Tinkler could hardly find a job back home because of the economic downturn in England. Through an advertisement, Tinkler applied for the position of constable in the SMP and was enlisted. He arrived in Shanghai in 1919 and spent more than ten years in the police force. However, he was forced to quit due to his racist attitude against the Chinese and bad temper in 1931. Tinkler remained in Shanghai until he was killed by some Japanese soldiers in an incident in 1939.

In many aspects, Isser Singh's experience was similar to that of Tinkler. They both served in the armies. They offered themselves to the SMP mainly because of better working opportunities. They were troublesome and both lost their jobs due to poor performance. Through the case of Tinkler, Bickers argues that the identity of working-class Britons overseas was so ambiguous that it cannot be fit into the stereotyped dichotomy of colonizers and colonized. On one hand, the empire offered ordinary British opportunities and privileges that they might never obtain in Britain; on the other, they were sandwiched between upper-class British expatriates and indigenous societies, and thereby marginalized. Bickers further argues that it is the very context

⁴²⁹ Bickers, *Empire Made Me*. It is admitted that this study differs from Robert Bickers' book in terms of primary sources. In depicting Richard Tinkler's experience, Bickers mainly relies on Tinkler's personal letters. While for Isser Singh, since no personal writing has been discovered, primary sources are mainly from court records.

of the empire that complicated the identity of those white-skin but lower-class people.⁴³⁰ So did the identity of Sikh policemen such as Isser Singh. In the Punjab, Isser Singh was a peasant with few accesses to modernity, while in Shanghai he became both the executor and subject of the SMP's modernization project. In this sense, it seems that the empire had similar effects on the life of lower-class Englishmen and colonized subjects alike.

Although there are sufficient studies of how colonialism influenced people living in the metropole and colonies, the two streams of scholarships have no conjunction. It is assumed that Westerners, even if they were working-class people, would have quite different experience from the colonized in the context of empire. The colonized were assumed to be static and passive subjects of the colonial structure. Even if they travelled abroad, their migration was viewed as unfree and indentured.⁴³¹ On the contrary, non-elite colonists such as Tinkler has been described to have the freewill to travel extensively and have the privilege to find jobs in colonial authorities.⁴³²

This chapter shows that the British Empire was composed of translocal networks such as the colonial network and the Sikh diasporic network. This colonial structure constantly influenced people

⁴³⁰ Robert Bickers, "Who were the Shanghai Municipal Police, and Why Were They There? The British Recruits of 1919," in *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia*, eds., Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 170-191.

⁴³¹ Mckeown, *Melancholy Order*, 45.

⁴³² Scholarships in this vein that focus on the cross-boundary movement of non-elite Westerners include Lambert and Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire*; Robert Bickers, ed., *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*; Ann-Marie Brady and Douglas Brown, eds., *Foreigners and Foreign Imperialism in Republican China* (London: Routledge, 2013).

living in the metropole and colonies alike. For example, the colonial network helped the SMC to post advertisements in Lancashire to employ working-class Englishmen and to learn and introduce highly customized supplies and facilities to accommodate its Sikh staff. Furthermore, colonized subjects, like their Western counterparts, were able to make good use of the empire to facilitate the circulation of information in order to pursue more economic interests. There appeared no difference between Isser Singh and Tinkler in the way of their calculation and planning for their career overseas.

Isser Singh and his colleagues not only actively took part in the colonial enterprise, but also transformed the empire in their own way. The Sikh branch, amongst all sections in the SMP, was the second largest (following the Chinese branch).⁴³³ From 1884 to 1941, the Sikh branch was seen by the SMC to be the backbone of the local defense.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, Sikh policemen such as Isser Singh were actively involved in population disciplining, riot control, and social order duties.⁴³⁵ As labor strikes became the greatest danger to the stability of the Settlement in the 1920s and 1930s, Sikhs were enlisted into the Reserve Unit of the SMP for checking furious workers on the streets. This unit was later identified by Leroy Thompson as the world's first SWAT (Strategic Weapons and Tactics) team. Its ideologies, tactics, equipment, and organization influenced later established SWAT teams in other parts of the world until today. Sikhs accounted for one third of this force. Different from Chinese and

⁴³³ Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 64-65.

⁴³⁴ SMA, U1-1-909, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1896, 33.

⁴³⁵ Bickers, "Ordering Shanghai," 188.

Western constables in this unit, who carried concealed pistols and batons, Sikhs carried carbines and lathes and were put as the backbone of the formation.⁴³⁶ In summary, whether it was a street brawl, a traffic jam, an act of unsanitary behavior, or a labor strike, red-turbaned Sikh policemen were often on the scene. In fact, their work had greatly transformed the landscape of the Settlement through maintaining social order and regulating residents' everyday practices.

In addition to being a part of Shanghai's modernization process, red-turbaned Sikhs influenced the Chinese in two aspects. First, their rude attitude toward the Chinese residents while performing duties stirred up strong animosity. This feeling was furthered by the Chinese racism. In an article published in Shanghai in 1930, the Chinese author wrote:

“For the red-turbaned Sikhs, I always hold a feeling of disgust, with no reason. Their huge bodies, silly heads, and curly beards left people a long-standing nasty impression.”⁴³⁷

This racist discourse was widely seen in Shanghai at that time. Frank Dikotter argues that the discourse of race in modern China was a combination of traditional Sino-barbarian dichotomy ideology and social Darwinism. The black-skin Sikhs were assumed to be inferior to the white and the yellow in the racial hierarchy.⁴³⁸ Since the Chinese were angered by the fact that they were policed by a rude but inferior

⁴³⁶ Leroy Thompson, *The World's First SWAT Team: W. E. Fairbairn and the Shanghai Municipal Police Reserve Unit* (London: Frontline Books, 2012).

⁴³⁷ Li Que, “Xiaoping sanze: Hongtuo asan” (Three Essay: Red-turbaned Sikhs), *Xiandai Wenyi* 1 (1931): 150.

⁴³⁸ Frank Dikotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London: Hurst, 1992).

race, nationalism had thereby aroused. For example, one author claimed in an article:

“Red-turbaned Sikhs had lost their nation and been enslaved long ago. They were now working for the British in Shanghai and Hong Kong to police the Chinese. They were the most shameless people in the world. How could we Chinese be policed by this people and oppressed by imperialism? We should rise against the British and Japanese imperialism.”⁴³⁹

In this way, Sikh policemen not only strengthened the British superiority in Shanghai, but also inflamed Chinese nationalism that weakened British interests.

Second, even if the Chinese disdained Sikh policemen, their highly disciplined and efficient work impressed the Chinese nationalists and influenced the organization of the Public Security Bureau, the police force of the Special Municipality of Shanghai, which was administered by the Chinese nationalist government in the 1930s.⁴⁴⁰ Just as Frederic Wakeman has noted:

“Chinese police force in Shanghai modeled the SMP to try to cope efficiently with Shanghai’s public health, housing, traffic, commercial licensing, entertainment,

⁴³⁹ Yi Ying, “Hongtou asan zhi buruo” (Even inferior to the red-turbaned Sikhs), *Yiyuan* 1 (1931): 302.

⁴⁴⁰ The Chinese nationalist government believed that one of the main contingencies of the modernization of the Chinese nation was to discipline the Chinese citizens. A modern police force was necessary for disciplining the population. Shanghai was one of the first cities in China that had a modern police force, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China 1911-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

labor union, kidnapping, censorship, narcotics, prostitution, and racketeering problems, and controlling popular disorder and unrest.”⁴⁴¹

While it is clear that Sikhs were indispensable elements in the SMP, current scholarship has so far been preoccupied by studies on the European officers and men in the SMP.⁴⁴² Little attention has been paid to the work and daily life of the Sikhs.⁴⁴³ Two reasons are behind this neglect. First, as symbols of imperial rule in China, the important role Sikhs played in Shanghai has been downplayed by the triumphant national history and the anti-imperial narrative. Second, although Sikhs were the backbone of the SMC’s effort in strengthening the Western superiority, enhancing social stability and carrying out the civilizing project, they were also subalterns, whom the conventional narrative of imperial history tends to overlook.⁴⁴⁴

As Isser Singh’s story shows, a lot of Sikhs in Shanghai headed to North America in around 1910. Facing discrimination there, nationalist emotion was stirred and revolutionary parties were set up. Many North America-based Sikhs later returned to Asia to help with the liberation of India. The next chapter will explore how the Sikhs rode on the

⁴⁴¹ Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xiv.

⁴⁴² Maurice Springfield, *Hunting Opium and Other Scents* (Halesworth: Norfolk and Suffolk Publicity, 1966); Ted Quigley, *A Spirit of Adventure: The Memoirs of Ted Quigley* (Lewes: The Book Guild Ltd., 1994); Peter Robins and Nicholas Tyler, *The Legend of W.E. Fairbairn: Gentleman and Warrior, the Shanghai Years* (Harlow: CQB Publications, 2006); W. E. Peters, *Shanghai Policeman* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2011); Bickers, *Empire Made me*. There are very few writings on the Chinese branch of the SMP, see K. M. Bourne, “The Shanghai Municipal Police: Chinese Uniform Branch,” *Police Journals* 64 (1991): 229-237.

⁴⁴³ Exceptions include Jackson, “The Raj on Nanjing Road”; Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*; Markovits, “Indian Communities in China, 1842-1949”; Anand Yang, “China and India Are One”.

⁴⁴⁴ Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 11.

diasporic network to facilitate their migration to North America and how this network was later employed by politicalized migrants for their revolutionary operations in Asia.

Chapter 3

Kill Buddha Singh: The Indian Nationalist Movement in Shanghai, 1914-1927

Isser Singh left the Shanghai Municipal Police in 1911. At that time, there was a rush amongst Sikhs to go to Canada. Thousands of Sikhs came to Hong Kong and Shanghai to wait for ships that could take them to the other side of the Pacific. Isser Singh probably also harbored such a dream. However, he would soon find that it was almost impossible for Sikhs to travel to Canada, owing to the strict immigration laws imposed by the Canadian authorities. As an ex-soldier who had served the British Empire for many years, he had good reasons to be angry. How could a loyal subject of the empire be rejected to enter into another territory within the same empire?⁴⁴⁵ This frustration was shared by many Sikhs around the world and led to the formation of the Ghadar Party, the most influential overseas Indian nationalist movement in the early twentieth century.

This chapter demonstrates that the Sikh diasporic network is the key point for understanding the mechanism of the Ghadar Party's campaign in Asia, and Shanghai was one of the principal centers of this network. From 1914 onwards, the Ghadar Party, under the endorsement of the Germans, the Comintern, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the Chinese Nationalist Party (GMD), worked hard to build Shanghai into an anti-British stronghold, while the British

⁴⁴⁵ For discussions of the identity of imperial subjects, see Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

authorities and pro-British collaborators responded with a heavy hand. The murder of Buddha Singh, the most influential Sikh in Shanghai in the 1920s, was one episode exemplifying this struggle. By exploring this case, this chapter attempts to demonstrate how Shanghai's Sikh community was politicized in the context of the global anti-imperial movement and how the translocal movement of the Ghadar Party stimulated the formation of the British surveillance network that had gradually subdued its adversary in the late 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁴⁶

Go to North America!

By the turn of the twentieth century, tens of thousands of Sikhs had migrated from the Punjab. Their settlements scattered across the globe, from Burma and British Malaya to Chinese treaty ports such as Shanghai and Hankou. Sikh communities in these areas were by no means segregated from one another, but instead were highly interconnected. Facilitated by steamships and trains, Sikh migrants could easily travel from one region to the other in just a few days. Moreover, news about Sikhs in one place could immediately be known to their coreligionists in other places with the help of the telegram. In a word, modern transportation and telecommunication had woven a web that tightly bound up the overseas Sikh communities with one another. This cross-boundary network was particularly discernible in Southeast

⁴⁴⁶ The approach of aligning a local story to global currents and cross-boundary connections is inspired by Tim Harper's article, which explores how the Singapore Mutiny in 1915 reflected Asian anti-colonial networks in the first two decades of the twentieth century, see Tim Harper, "Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground," *Modern Asian Studies* 47 (2013): 1782-1811.

and East Asia where Sikh migrants had settled in considerable numbers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁴⁷

In around 1905, reports of highly paid jobs in the United States and Canada had begun circulating amongst Sikh migrants in Southeast and East Asia. It was believed that such information on the lucrative employment opportunities in North America was firstly noticed by Sikh troopers from India, Malaya and Hong Kong. On their way returning home via Canada after attending Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Celebration in London in 1897, they found that the payment in North America was much higher than they had been earning in Asia. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the daily wage for common laborers in North America was \$1 to \$2 (USD).⁴⁴⁸ Considering that one U.S. dollar could be equivalent to three Indian rupees at that time, an Indian laborer who worked twenty days a month was able to obtain 60 to 120 rupees. Working as a policeman in Hong Kong in the 1900s, however, he could only expect to earn 30 rupees a month for the same amount of work.⁴⁴⁹

As these Sikh troopers returned to Asia, news of better financial prospects in North America was widely spread. The interest in the possible chance of getting rich in North America was further fuelled by shipping companies' advertisements.⁴⁵⁰ Learning both that the Sikh

⁴⁴⁷ N. G. Barrier and V. A. Dusenbery, eds., *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience Beyond Punjab* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989), 5-6.

⁴⁴⁸ Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement* (Delhi: Stern Publishers Ltd., 1969), 38-39.

⁴⁴⁹ Hong Kong Blue Book 1905, p. J118, Civil Establishments of Hong Kong for the year 1905.

⁴⁵⁰ William Mackenzie King, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Method by which Oriental Laborers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1908), 76.

population was anxious to seek a better livelihood and employers of the sparsely populated western regions of North America were desperate for cheap laborers, shipping agents found a way to make profits by transporting Sikhs to the other side of the Pacific Ocean.⁴⁵¹ Advertisements depicting North America as a heaven were posted prominently in cities wherever Sikh migrants were working.⁴⁵²

Seduced by such prospects, large numbers of Sikhs in Southeast and East Asia embarked on journeys to the west coast of Canada and America from 1906 onwards. In Shanghai, it was reported that many Sikh policemen working for the SMC deliberately violated rules to secure their dismissal so that they could make a bid for North America.⁴⁵³ By the end of 1909, the SMC even complained that the recruitment of Sikhs for its police force was practically at a standstill, mainly because news, rumors, and stories about the high pay in North America had dissuaded potential migrants from seeking employment in Shanghai.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Madhavi Thampi argues that the restrictions on Chinese and Japanese immigrants imposed by Canadian and American authorities spurred the demand for Indian labors there, see Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 181.

⁴⁵² Arun Coomer Bose, *India Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922: In the Background of International Developments* (Patna: Bharati Bhawan, 1971), 43.

⁴⁵³ SMA, U1-1-920, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1907, 11.

⁴⁵⁴ SMA, U1-1-922, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1909, 35.

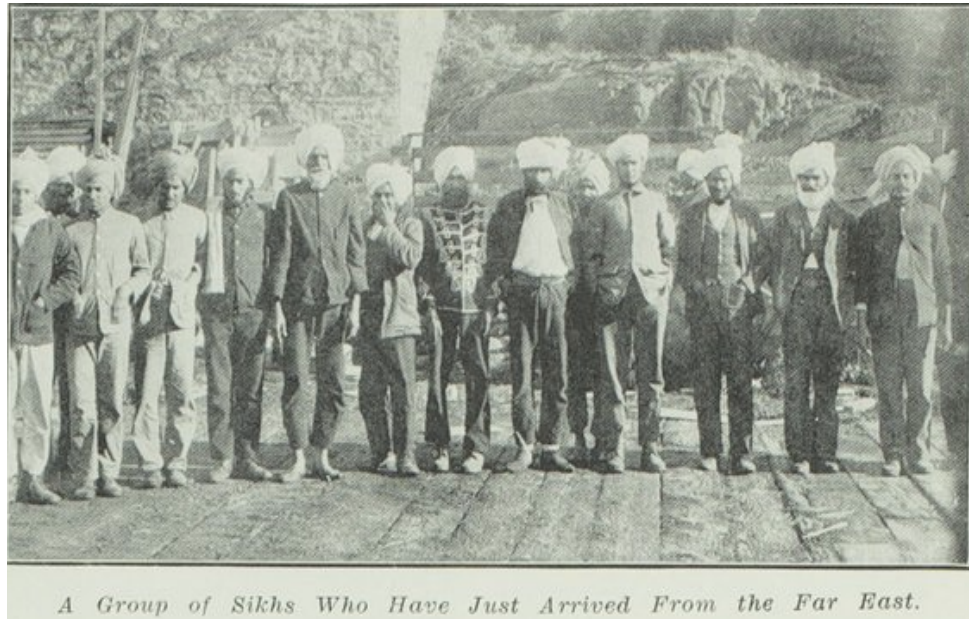


Figure 17. Early Sikh immigrants in North America, 1907 (Courtesy of South Asian American Digital Archive).

In the process of the Sikh migration to North America in the early twentieth century, the circulation of employment information preceded a large-scale mobilization of the Sikh diasporic network in Asia. Shipping agents made use of the network to advertise their tickets while potential migrants in different regions employed their connections to coordinate their plans and schedules. The journey of the *Komagata Maru* from Hong Kong to Vancouver in 1914 illustrates well the mechanism of the Sikh migration network.⁴⁵⁵

Frustrated by the Canadian and American authorities that discouraged shipping companies from transporting Indians to North America, some Sikh businessmen hatched an idea to launch their own enterprise in 1913.⁴⁵⁶ Sikh communities in Singapore, Hong Kong,

⁴⁵⁵ The classic account about the journey of *Komagata Maru* is Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the "Komagata Maru": The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁴⁵⁶ Linda Kerber, "The Stateless as the Citizen's Other: A View from the United States," *The American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 20.

Malaya, Manila, and Shanghai were all contacted towards this effort and all of them agreed to cooperate with one another to post advertisements, organize migrants, and coordinate schedules for a Sikh shipping company. With the support of the diasporic network, the Guru Nanak Steamship Company was set up in Hong Kong in January 1914. Gurdit Singh was appointed as the managing director.⁴⁵⁷

Gurdit Singh was himself a Sikh migrant. He was born in Amritsar, Punjab in 1860. Following his father and brother, he went to Malaya and Singapore in the 1880s and became a successful businessman in the food industry.⁴⁵⁸ He was in Hong Kong in December 1913 when some Sikhs there were planning to set up a Sikh shipping company. Gurdit Singh supported this idea and was asked to lead this initiative. In January 1914, he went to Calcutta in an attempt to secure a ship that could sail from Calcutta to Vancouver. However, for fear that such a ship that took Indians to Canada would violate Canadian immigration laws, the Government of India rejected Gurdit's application. Disappointed with this decision, Gurdit Singh returned to Hong Kong in March 1914, where he successfully chartered a Japanese ship, the *Komagata Maru*, through a German agent.⁴⁵⁹

Once the ship had been secured, the Sikh diasporic network was mobilized into supporting the migration business. Agents were sent to

⁴⁵⁷ Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry, "Report of the Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry," 5-6 <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/node/3336>; Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers Ltd., 1969), 87-88.

⁴⁵⁸ For details of Gurdit Singh, see Jaswant Singh, *Baba Gurdit Singh: Komagata Maru* (Jallundhur: New Book Company, 1965).

⁴⁵⁹ Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry, "Report of the Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry," 5 <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/node/3336>.

Shanghai, Manila, and Yokohama to post advertisements. Information was then widely circulated amongst overseas Sikh communities by telegrams and through travellers. After hearing the news about this new opportunity to get to North America, hopeful migrants flocked to the agents' offices to buy tickets.⁴⁶⁰ Drawing on the spread of communities in Southeast and East Asia, Gurdit Singh drew out a route that covered most parts of this network in order to pick up as many passengers as possible.

On 4 April 1914, the *Komagata Maru* left Hong Kong with 165 local Indians. It stopped at Shanghai from 8 to 14 April and picked up another 111 Indians. It then sailed for Japan and stopped at Moji and Yokohama, where 100 Indians, most of whom came from Manila and who had been waiting in Japan for a transfer, boarded the ship. By the night of 22 May 1914 when the *Komagata Maru* reached the coast of Vancouver, there were 376 passengers in total on board, of whom all but 30 were Sikhs. In this sense, the journey of the *Komagata Maru* from Hong Kong to Vancouver sheds light on how Sikh migrants consciously took advantage of their diasporic network in Asia to gain information and thence plan their migration to North America in the early twentieth century.

⁴⁶⁰ Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry, "Report of the Komagata Maru Committee of Inquiry," 6 <http://komagatamarujourney.ca/node/6526>.



Figure 18. *Komagata Maru* near the coast of Vancouver, 1914 (Courtesy of City of Vancouver Archives).

The Rise of the Ghadar Party

The *Komagata Maru*, however, did not end up berthing in Vancouver. The Canadian government prohibited its passengers from landing. After two months' fruitless waiting in Canadian waters, the *Komagata Maru* had to return to Calcutta in July 1914. On 29 September 1914, when the ship arrived at Budge Budge, seventeen miles from Calcutta, the frustrated passengers landed and attempted to march to Calcutta in a procession to express their anger towards the Indian and Canadian authorities. As policemen tried to stop the procession, a riot broke out in which fifteen passengers were killed.⁴⁶¹

The tragedy of the *Komagata Maru* in fact marked the climax of the anti-Indian movements in North America in the early twentieth century. From 1905 onwards, the number of Indian immigrants in

⁴⁶¹ Justice Rowlatt, ed., *Sedition Committee Report 1918* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1918), 146-147.

Canada increased dramatically from just less than one hundred to more than five thousand.⁴⁶²

Table 8. Indian Immigration into Canada, 1905-1908⁴⁶³

Year	Number of Immigrants
1905	45
1906	387
1907	2124
1908	2623
Total:	5179

It is estimated that over ninety percent of the Indian immigrants in Canada at that time were Sikhs who had previously worked in Southeast Asia and coastal areas of China. Most of them were employed by the Canadian Pacific Railways, lumber mills, and coalmines.⁴⁶⁴ The influx of Indians agitated local Canadian workers, whose opportunities had already been squeezed by Chinese and Japanese immigrants. In the first decade of the twentieth century, one Sikh laborer in British Columbia could earn \$1 to \$2 (Canadian dollars) a day while their white counterparts' daily salary was as high as \$6. Furthermore, Sikh laborers were able to work for longer hours and in harsher conditions.⁴⁶⁵ Sikh immigrants challenged the position of local workers. The conflict over economic issues was furthered by discrimination against colored races. Sikhs gained the spurious

⁴⁶² It was reported that 90% Sikh migration to Canada settled down in British Columbia, see Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution* (New Delhi: R & K Publishing House, 1966), 1.

⁴⁶³ William Mackenzie King, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Method by which Oriental Laborers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1908), 75.

⁴⁶⁴ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, 168.

⁴⁶⁵ King, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Method by which Oriental Laborers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada*, 79-80.

reputation of being people who covered dead bodies with butter and severed heads with swords.⁴⁶⁶ Politicians such as Henry Hubert Stevens (MP for Vancouver, 1911-1917) likened the immigration of Indians in Canada to an invasion of a corrupted civilization.⁴⁶⁷ As a result, Canadian trade unions and political parties set out to lobby the government to revise the immigration laws to put an end to the Indian immigration.

After consulting the British and Indian governments, the Canadian authorities issued two Orders-in-Council in 1908 aimed at restricting the immigration. Firstly, the sum of the money that a migrant must possess when boarding a vessel for Canada was raised from \$25 to \$200. Since few migrants were able to raise such a sum, this measure effectively closed the door on their emigration to Canada. Furthermore, the same order required all immigrants to have come directly from their country of birth or citizenship on a continuous journey. In other words, migrants who did not travel from their native country were prohibited from entering.⁴⁶⁸ Since most Canada-bound Indian migrants were from Southeast and East Asia and there was no direct shipping route from India to Canada at that time, this order further blocked the prospect of migration.⁴⁶⁹ The effect of the new policies was so discernible that between 1909 and 1913 only twenty-

⁴⁶⁶ Kesar Singh, *Canadian Sikhs and the Komagata Maru Massacre* (Surrey: Hans Publishing, 1997), 18.

⁴⁶⁷ Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History, Volume 1* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976), 112.

⁴⁶⁸ Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance & Indian Anticolonialism in North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27-28.

⁴⁶⁹ Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915*, 8-9; Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad*, 45-46.

nine Indians managed to enter Canada's territory.⁴⁷⁰ The disapproval at the attempted landing of passengers from the *Komagata Maru* in 1914 was a direct consequence of anti-Indian migration policies.

Facing discrimination in Canada, Sikhs firstly placed their hope in clemency from the British and Indian governments. As subjects of the British Empire, Sikh migrants assumed that the imperial governments had the responsibility to protect their interests when they faced trouble entering another territory within the empire. However, both the British government in London and the Government of India in Calcutta maintained an intentional silence on Canada's exclusion plan, on the grounds that they too were uneasy about the global movement of the Indian population.⁴⁷¹

The discrimination met with from the Canadians and the indifferent attitude of the British and Indian governments stirred up anti-British sentiments amongst Sikhs in Canada. This sentiment was then spread to the United States, California in particular, by migrants who crossed into the United States from Canada in around 1909.⁴⁷² By then, it was widely believed amongst the Sikh migrants in North America that the ill-treatment and racial discrimination they suffered abroad should be attributed to the colonial subjugation at home and

⁴⁷⁰ *The Canada Year Book 1914* (Ottawa: J. DE L. TACHE, 1915), 678-679.

⁴⁷¹ Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922*, 46; Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915*, 7-8.

⁴⁷² Early Sikh immigrants arrived in America from Canada from 1906 onwards and settled down in California. They also faced discrimination and even attacks from white settlers. Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 28; Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915*, 12-13.

that their struggle against political repression in North America should become related to the independence struggle of India.⁴⁷³

Anti-British organizations sprang up in America and Canada in around 1910. To coordinate the activities of the various groups and to increase influence, a number of meetings were arranged in Oregon and California to set up a united organization. Consequently, the Pacific Coast Hindi Association (PCHA) was inaugurated in Astoria in early June 1914.⁴⁷⁴ Lala Har Dayal, an influential Indian nationalist who was then a lecturer at Stanford University, was elected as the secretary of the association. Owing to Har Dayal's great influence in San Francisco and the freedom of expression political parties enjoyed in the United States, it was decided that this city should be the publishing and propaganda base for the PCHA.⁴⁷⁵ In November 1914, a weekly newspaper, the *Ghadar*, was published by the PCHA to broadcast its ideas. Because of the newspaper's enormous influence around the world, the PCHA was later known as the Ghadar Party.⁴⁷⁶

In the first issue of the *Ghadar*, the objectives of this party were clearly stated:

⁴⁷³ Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, 48.

⁴⁷⁴ F. C. Isemonger and James Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy, 1913-1915* (Berkeley: Folklore Institute, 1998), 13-15.

⁴⁷⁵ For Lala Har Dayal's effort in organizing a transnational anti-British network, see Henrik Chetan Aspengren, "Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: Revising Their Silent Moments," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15 (2014), accessed 10.1353/cch.2014.0045.

⁴⁷⁶ Ghadar is an Urdu word that refers to rebellion or revolt. By using this word to name their newspaper, the Ghadarites expressed their determination to overthrow the British rule in India. For general studies of the Ghadar Party, see Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organization, and Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993); Maia Ramnath, *Hai to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

“Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our country’s language, a war against the British Raj. What is our name? Ghadar. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will Ghadar break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink.”⁴⁷⁷

The ultimate goal of the movement was to end British rule in India through a violent revolution and to establish a republican government based on liberty and equality. However, the Ghadarites also realized that the success of their revolution depended very much on how well they could propagate their ideas and deepen their influence amongst Indians across the globe.⁴⁷⁸

The Politicization of Sikhs in Shanghai

Looking for a way to win over sympathy and supporters for their political goals, the Ghadar Party had turned their attention to Southeast and East Asia since 1914. There were three reasons behind this focus. Firstly, most Ghadarites had resided in Southeast and East Asia for some time before they left for North America, so their knowledge of this region would remarkably facilitate the propaganda and recruitment work. Secondly, in the early twentieth century, large numbers of Sikh soldiers and policemen were serving in colonies and settlements such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. The Ghadar Party reasoned that these servicemen could become the backbone of the planned

⁴⁷⁷ Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915*, 19.

⁴⁷⁸ Ramnath, *Hai to Utopia*, 35; Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922*, 48-49.

revolution in India if the party could successfully win over their loyalty to the British. Lastly but importantly, Southeast and East Asia were geographically closer to India than North America. If the Ghadarites could build up strongholds in this area, it would become easier for them to transport agents, arms, and other supplies into India for the cause of the revolution.⁴⁷⁹

Prior to the 1910s, Sikhs in Shanghai were generally not exposed to radical Indian nationalist thinking. Whereas cases of insubordination were not uncommon, few were related to the agenda of Indian independence and the anti-colonial struggle.⁴⁸⁰ In fact, the SMC's annual report of 1913 indicated that the discipline of its Sikh police unit was very good.⁴⁸¹ Nevertheless, the Sikh attitude towards the British totally changed after the *Komagata Maru* incident, which made Indians overseas to realize that they would be disgraced in all parts of the world because they did not have their own government to protect their interests.⁴⁸² This feeling was especially strong in Shanghai, as almost one third of the passengers on board the *Komagata Maru* were Sikhs who had once stayed in this city. When these passengers were rejected by the Canadian government and directly deported to India, their fellow Sikhs in Shanghai felt that Sikhs as a whole had been betrayed by the British. Sikhs complained that they were not allowed

⁴⁷⁹ Harish Puri, "The Ghadar Movement: A New Consciousness," in *Five Punjabi Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society, and Culture, c. 1500-1990*, ed., Indu Banga (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997), 172; Maia Ramnath, "'The Haj to Utopia': Anti-Colonial Radicalism in the South Asian Diaspora, 1905-1930," (PhD diss., University of California at Santa Cruz, 2008), 242.

⁴⁸⁰ Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 179-180.

⁴⁸¹ SMA, U1-1-926, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council 1913, 35.

⁴⁸² Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 144; Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 185.

to travel freely within the British Empire even though Sikh soldiers had fought bravely for the British around the world and shown loyalty to the Raj from the Mutiny onwards.

The Ghadar Party seized this opportunity to expand its influence to Shanghai. In July 1914, copies of the *Ghadar* newspaper were found in the North Sichuan Road gurdwara.⁴⁸³ As increasing number of Sikhs in Shanghai joined the Ghadar Party and a Shanghai branch of Ghadar was thereby formed in late 1914.⁴⁸⁴ Bhagwan Singh, a veteran Ghadarite, was dispatched from San Francisco to Shanghai to lead this branch.⁴⁸⁵ Taking the gurdwara as the center, Ghadarities started to distribute seditious publications, make speeches, collect donations, and call for local Sikhs to return to India to overthrow the Raj.⁴⁸⁶ Not just operating in Shanghai, Bhagwan Singh also supervised the formation of Ghadar branches in Manila, Hong Kong, Hankou, Singapore, Yokohama, the Malay States, and Bangkok from late 1914 to 1915.⁴⁸⁷ As he later admitted, these hubs were interconnected with one another

⁴⁸³ These publications were most probably posted from Manila. In 1914, Manila was taken as the outpost to expand the Ghadar Party's influence in Asia, mainly because it was easier for the Ghadarities to transport their seditious publications from San Francisco into the Philippines, which was then an American colony, see CO 129/413, from F. H. May to Acting Consul-General, Manila, 14 Sept. 1914, 558-562.

⁴⁸⁴ "Rex (Buta Singh) v. Lal Singh," *North China Herald*, July 18, 1914.

⁴⁸⁵ "Report of Captain-Superintendent of Police for July," *North China Herald*, Aug. 6, 1914; South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), Letter from Bhagwan Singh Gyaneer to Jagjit Singh, Aug. 19, 1956, 1-2. For the activities of Bhagwan Singh, see Deol, *The Role of Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, 62-63; Sohan Singh Josh, *Baba Sohan Singh Bhukna: Life of the Founder of the Ghadar Party* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970), 28-29.

⁴⁸⁶ SAADA, Letter from Bhagwan Singh Gyaneer to Jagjit Singh, Aug. 19, 1956, 1-6.

⁴⁸⁷ Amongst these Ghadar branches, Shanghai and Manila were the most active ones, while others seemingly had limited influence. For example, there is no evidence that indicates a Ghadar involvement in the mutiny of the Indian 5th Light Infantry in Singapore in 1915. In almost all cases, local Sikhs chose to flee into jungles instead of collaborating with the mutineers. See Nicholas Tarling, "The Merest Pustule: The Singapore Mutiny of 1915," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 55 (1982): 26-59.

so that collected money, arms, seditious publications, intelligence, as well as revolutionaries could move back and forth within this network.⁴⁸⁸



Figure 19. Bhagwan Singh, 1919 (Courtesy of South Asian American Digital Archive).

The outbreak of World War I in July 1914 dramatically accelerated the ongoing process of returning to Asia. As most British military forces were entrapped in Europe, the Ghadar Party believed that it was a golden opportunity for revolutionaries to take action, especially when they secured Germany's promise that materials would be provided.⁴⁸⁹ Because Shanghai was a free port at the middle point

⁴⁸⁸ SAADA, Letter from Bhagwan Singh Gyanee to Jagjit Singh, Aug. 19, 1956, 1.

⁴⁸⁹ Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922*, 91-98. Germans not only seduced the Sikhs to rebel against the British during World War I, they also tried to stir up the anti-British sentiment among Muslim population in South and Southeast Asia. The Ottoman-German alliance influenced some Muslims' attitude toward the British, as Muslim soldiers serving in the British Indian Army refused to fight against their co-religionists. To some extent, the Singapore Mutiny in 1915 was also a result of the anti-British sentiment caused by German propaganda. See Kes van Dijk, "Religion and the Undermining of British Rule in South and Southeast Asia During the Great War," in *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia*, eds.

between North America and India and harbored large numbers of Sikhs, it became the center of the Ghadar Party's conspiracy. All returning Ghadarities were asked to assemble in Shanghai before making their way back to India.⁴⁹⁰ The German consul-general in Shanghai was authorized by the German government to provide these revolutionaries with military training, weapons, and money and to supervise their plans.⁴⁹¹

Not all Sikhs in Shanghai supported the Ghadar movement, and the German-Ghadar conspiracy was seriously thwarted by Buddha Singh, the secretary of the Sikh community in Shanghai. Buddha Singh was born in the Majha region of the Punjab in the 1870s. He came to Shanghai and joined the SMP as a constable in February 1902. According to the Terms of Service for the Indian Branch of the SMP, a constable had to spend at least five years before he had a chance to be promoted to the rank of Havildar (equal to Sergeant) and it was nearly impossible for a common constable to obtain the position of Jemadar (equal to Inspector), the highest rank for any Sikh serving in the SMP.⁴⁹² Buddha Singh, however, did not want to bow to this fate. Apart from completing his own work in an exemplary way, he also served as the treasurer of the local Sikh community and was very active in organizing religious festivals, such as the Singh Sabha

Michael Feener and Terenjit Feener (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 109-133.

⁴⁹⁰ Rowlatt, ed., *Sedition Committee Report 1918*, 125; Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922*, 123.

⁴⁹¹ Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905-1922*, 162-165; B. R. Deepak, "Revolutionary Activities of the Ghadar Party in China," *China Report*, 35 (1999): 439-456.

⁴⁹² SMA, U1-3-1466, "Police Force--Indian Branch: Terms of Service," Jan. 1, 1927, 1895-1896.

Celebration, which gained him considerable respect amongst his countrymen.⁴⁹³ The SMC felt Buddha Singh's rising influence and were all too ready to utilize him for their own ends. In February 1906, Buddha Singh was made Havildar by the SMP.⁴⁹⁴ Two years later, he was already the secretary of the Sikh community in Shanghai.⁴⁹⁵ The insubordination of Sikh policemen in July 1910 that resulted from the strife between Majha Sikh and Malwa Sikh furthered Buddha Singh's career.⁴⁹⁶ Since Naurang Singh, the Jemadar of the Sikh branch and also the ringleader of the Majha sect, had been blamed for causing the trouble, he was thereby dismissed from the SMP in January 1911.⁴⁹⁷ Buddha Singh was then promoted to Jemadar, in place of Naurang Singh, to be in charge of the Sikh branch.⁴⁹⁸

When the War broke out, Buddha Singh felt the expediency to check anti-British elements. In July 1914, he began to investigate the circulation of the *Ghadar* newspaper in Shanghai. He later found that these seditious publications were being distributed by seven Ghadar Party members, who were also responsible for recruiting local Sikhs and transporting them to India. Buddha Singh forwarded the names of these men to the SMC, adding that those involved should be arrested. Alerted to a possible British crackdown, Ghadarities had to burn all

⁴⁹³ "The Shanghai Singh Sabha," *North China Herald*, Dec. 8, 1905.

⁴⁹⁴ "Tragic Death of Sirdar Sahib Singh," *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1927.

⁴⁹⁵ "Late Telegrams," *North China Herald*, Mar. 27, 1908.

⁴⁹⁶ In Chapter Two, Isser Singh took part in this incident and was detained. For details of this incident, also see *The Minutes of Shanghai Municipal Council (Vol. 18)*, 440.

⁴⁹⁷ For the investigation of cause of the July 1910 Sikh Insubordination, see SMA, U1-1-922, Shanghai Municipal Council Report 1910, 36. Also see, "The Sikh Police," *North China Herald*, Jan. 13, 1911.

⁴⁹⁸ "Municipal Notification," *The Municipal Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1911.

copies of the newspaper in the gurdwara and flee from Shanghai.⁴⁹⁹

Even Bhagwan Singh was pressed to leave Shanghai in early 1915.⁵⁰⁰

To counter the propaganda of the Ghadar Party, Buddha Singh took measures to reinforce Sikh loyalty to the British Empire in Shanghai. On 21 November 1915, he presided over the anniversary of the birthday of Guru Nanak Singh in the North Sichuan Road gurdwara, in which a resolution that called on all Sikhs in Shanghai to express their loyalty to the British Raj and to devote their energy and means to assist the British government in the war had been passed.⁵⁰¹ To strengthen patriotism and to nurture the sense of obedience amongst young Sikhs, Buddha Singh helped to set up the Shanghai Sikh Scout Troop in August 1917. Around twenty-five Sikh boys were enlisted and received training during World War I.⁵⁰² Additionally, he initiated a movement in late 1917 to exhort Sikhs in Shanghai to donate money to the Red Cross in India for the benefit of wounded Sikh soldiers who were loyal to and had fought for the British Empire during the War.⁵⁰³

It seems that Buddha Singh's work outweighed the effort of the Ghadar Party in Shanghai. During the War, not a single case of insubordination was reported and the discipline of the Sikh police unit

⁴⁹⁹ "Rex (Buta Singh) v. Lal Singh," *North China Herald*, July 18, 1914. Buddha Singh's name was wrongly spelt as Buta Singh in this piece of news.

⁵⁰⁰ CO 129/422, from Acting Consul-General, Manila to The Viceroy of India, Delhi, 4th June 1915, 713-714.

⁵⁰¹ "Sikhs in Shanghai: A Notable Resolution," *North China Herald*, Nov. 27, 1915.

⁵⁰² "The Baden-Powell Scouts Association: The Formation of a Sikh Patrol," *North China Herald*, June 23, 1917; "The Sikh Scouts: Enrolling of New Branch," *North China Herald*, Aug. 18, 1917; "Boy Scouts," *North China Herald*, Sept. 27, 1917.

⁵⁰³ "Red Cross in India," *North China Herald*, Dec. 15, 1917.

was judged to be excellent.⁵⁰⁴ As a reward for his contribution, Buddha Singh was conferred the title of Sirdar Sahib, the most honorable title a Sikh had ever been offered in Shanghai, by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India on 24 November 1917. To glorify this achievement, all high-profile British officials in Shanghai attended the ceremony in the British Consulate. A procession, which was composed of mounted Sikh policemen, European policemen, and Sikh Boy Scouts, was held to greet the titleholder. The British Consul-General, Sir Everard Fraser, presented the insignia to him in person.⁵⁰⁵

Turning to the Left

The Ghadarities did not succeed in building Shanghai into a revolutionary hub during World War I, nor did they do so in India. Although more than eight thousand Ghadarites returned to India from North America and the Far East in the first two years of World War I,⁵⁰⁶ the tightened surveillance implemented by the British authorities around the world made the importation of arms into India very difficult.⁵⁰⁷ Without adequate arms, returning Ghadarites failed to put their plan into action. Furthermore, when the Ghadarites attempted to mobilize the peasants in the Punjab to support their cause, they frustratingly found that the Punjabi masses were not ready for a revolution. Indeed, most Punjabis were inspired by the patriotism to support the Government of India's involvement in the War instead of

⁵⁰⁴ SMA, U1-1-930, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council 1917, 25.

⁵⁰⁵ "Decoration of Sirda Sahib," *North China Herald*, Nov. 24, 1917.

⁵⁰⁶ Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 153; Darshan Singh Tatla, *A Guide to Sources: Ghadar Movement* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2003), 129.

⁵⁰⁷ Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 178-184.

seizing the opportunity to overthrow it.⁵⁰⁸ The Ghadarites then turned their energy to induce a mutiny of the Indian troops in the Punjab. However, the lack of coordination and the leak of the information led to the breakdown of that plan in February 1915. Sixty-three Ghadarites were arrested and the rest fled from India.⁵⁰⁹

The breakdown of the 1915 conspiracy marked the end of active movement of the Ghadar Party in India. Meanwhile, in the United States, factions broke out within the Ghadar Party and seriously weakened its strength.⁵¹⁰ In April 1917, the United States entered the War. As an ally of the British, the U.S. government immediately took action against the Ghadar Party in its territory. When its headquarters in San Francisco was closed down and its key members were arrested, the party went underground.⁵¹¹

As World War I ended in 1918, the Ghadarites had to admit that their golden opportunity of ousting the British had lost. The failure of the revolutionary movement resulted in a self-critical review amongst the Ghadarites. The experience of the successful Bolshevik revolution in Russia was appraised.⁵¹² Most Ghadarites agreed that their problem could be attributed to the lack of a politically conscious mass base in the Punjab. And to politicize the population, their party should be more systematic and organized and should have an appealing political

⁵⁰⁸ Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 60; Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, 146.

⁵⁰⁹ Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy, 1913-1915*, 110-112.

⁵¹⁰ James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1917), 255-256.

⁵¹¹ Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: Volume 2: 1839-1974*, 188; Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 176-178.

⁵¹² Ajeet Javed, *Left Politics in Punjab, 1935-47* (Delhi: Durga Publications, 1988), 64-67.

agenda. In the years following World War I, the Marxist-Leninist ideology was a must-try choice.⁵¹³

In fact, since the very beginning of the Ghadar Party, its leaders had realized that their struggle against racial discrimination in North America and colonial subjugation in India was a part of a broader movement against colonialism across the globe. As Seema Sohi observes, Ghadarities sought to establish an independent India in a new world order that embraced the liberation of all colonized nations.⁵¹⁴ This agenda was highly compatible with the Bolshevik call for a global revolution and thereby drew the two parties closer.

As the Ghadar Party turned towards the left, the Comintern (The Communist International) also turned to Asia in an attempt to discover a breach that would destroy world capitalism.⁵¹⁵ It immediately located India's essential role not only for the British Empire, but also for the global capitalist system. It was then believed that a communist revolution in India would bring down the economy of Britain and also set an example to other colonized people in Asia. Nevertheless, the dominant nationalist political power in India then was the Indian National Congress, which neither favored the communist ideology nor

⁵¹³ In addition to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, Woodrow Wilson's call for national self-determination was the alternative option for colonized nations. However, the Marxist-Leninist ideology was proved to be more sustained and influential than its Wilsonian counterpart, see Ramnath, *Hai to Utopia*, 123-125; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origin of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵¹⁴ Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 7. Such idea of relating India's independence struggle with global anti-imperialist movements was further inspired by Raja Mahendra Pratap, who had great influence over Indian revolutionaries overseas and championed for an united Asia in he 1920s and 1930s. For Pratap's travels and thoughts, see Carolien Stolte, "'Enough of the Great Napoleons!': Raja Mahendra Pratap's Pan-Asian Projects (1929-1939)," *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012): 403-423.

⁵¹⁵ Manabendra Roy, *Memoirs* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1964), 390.

supported any violent revolution. The Ghadar Party, with its workers' backgrounds and its aspiration for a military revolution, was soon taken by Moscow as a potential ally. Moreover, the cosmopolitan outlook of the Ghadar Party, especially its network in Southeast and East Asia, was much appreciated by the Comintern, owing to Moscow's vision of a global revolution that required worldwide outposts.⁵¹⁶

Around 1920, the Ghadar Party in the United States established a direct contact with the Comintern. Emissaries were sent to Moscow to report on the Ghadar activities in America and to ask for support.⁵¹⁷ From 1926, almost one hundred Ghadarites from Canada, America, and China were dispatched to Moscow for education and training in the University of the East (Communist University of the Toilers of the East).⁵¹⁸ The trainees had to attend courses on the Russian language, revolutionary history, the political economy, tactics and strategies of the proletarian revolution, party-building, and Marxism for almost one year. In addition, military training and factory work were also provided for practical experience.⁵¹⁹ When courses and trainings were complete, many Ghadarites went on to Kabul, Afghanistan, whence they would look for a way to infiltrate back into the Punjab.⁵²⁰

The Ghadar base in Kabul, however, did not cause much trouble to the Raj on the grounds that their support from Moscow was very

⁵¹⁶ Jon Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 8-10.

⁵¹⁷ Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-47* (Delhi: Anupama Publications, 1979), 211; Puri, *Ghadar Movement*, 246.

⁵¹⁸ Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-47*, 109-110.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid*, 218.

⁵²⁰ Ramnath, "'The Haj to Utopia,'" 372.

limited. In fact, since the Comintern-supported Islamic movement, the Khilafat, had failed in Central Asia in 1924, Moscow's focus had gradually shifted from Afghanistan and India to China.⁵²¹ This strategic shift had been expedited by the change in China's domestic politics. In 1923, the Sun Yat-sen-led Guomindang (GMD) chose to operate alongside with the Soviet Union, in the hope that the Soviet Union's support would help it defeat warlords and unify China. In exchange, the GMD agreed that members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could join its organization. Agents of the Comintern such as Mikhail Borodin were dispatched to assist the GMD.⁵²²

The May Thirtieth Movement that happened in Shanghai in mid-1925 opened the window for the cooperation between Chinese nationalists and the Ghadar Party. In 1925, the GMD-CCP alliance was very active in organizing labor unions in Shanghai. Conflicts were intensified between foreign factory managers and Chinese workers. On 15 May 1925, a Chinese worker was killed by a Japanese security guard during a strike at a Japanese cotton mill in Shanghai. On 30 May, thousands of Chinese students amassed in front of the Louza police station of the International Settlement to ask for the punishment of the murderer and the release of students who involved in previous protests.

⁵²¹ For the Khilafat Movement, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Popular Mobilisation in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Anastasia Kartunova, "Moscow's Policy Towards the National-Revolutionary Movement in China: The Military Aspect, 1923-1927," in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between Triumph and Disaster*, eds., Mechthild Leutner et al. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 66-74.

⁵²² Bruce Elleman, "Soviet Diplomacy and the First United Front in China," *Modern China* 4 (1995): 450-480; Iuruii Garushians, "The Comintern and the Guomindang: A Clash of Strategy in China's Revolution," in *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s*, 44-53; Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution 1919-1927* (London: Routledge, 2013).

British police officers gave the order to fire at the crowd, killed thirteen Chinese and wounded more than one hundred.⁵²³ Thanks to the organization of the GMD-CCP alliance, this incident triggered strong anti-British sentiment across the country, as mass anti-British demonstrations were staged in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Hankou and other big cities.⁵²⁴ The GMD-CCP alliance benefited from this movement at the cost of warlords. Their propaganda made many contemporary Chinese believe that a unified China under the rule of a strong political party was necessary for getting rid of British imperialism.⁵²⁵ Inspired by this popularity, the GMD-CCP alliance initiated the Northern Expedition in 1926, which intended to reunify China by force. Sharing a similar pro-communist and anti-British agenda with the Chinese nationalists, the Ghadarites were all too ready to exploit the situation in China to their own ends.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ Sikh policemen of the SMP also fired at the Chinese on the order of the British in this incident. However, their role was downplayed, as most contemporary critics fell onto the British imperialism, see Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 163-168.

⁵²⁴ The Society of International Problem, ed., “Wusa shijian” (The May Thirtieth Incident) in *Minguo shiliao congkan vol. 218* (Collections of Primary Sources in Republican Period), eds., Zhang Yan and Sun Yanjing (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2009), 3-150.

⁵²⁵ Edmund Fung, “The Chinese Nationalists and the Unequal Treaties 1925-1931,” *Modern Asian Studies* 21 (1987): 793-819; Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Michael Murdock, *Disarming the Allies of Imperialism: The State, Agitation, and Manipulation during China’s Nationalism Revolution, 1922-1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Wang Jianwei, “The Chinese Interpretation of the Concept of Imperialism in the Anti-Imperialist Context of the 1920s,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 2 (2012): 164-181; Kristin Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁵²⁶ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London: Routledge, 2004), 112-113; Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah, eds., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917-1939* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015), xxxiv.

From Hankou to Shanghai: The Ghadar Hubs in China

In October 1926, the National Revolutionary Army (the military force of the GMD) took Hankou (except this city's foreign concessions) from a warlord, General Wu Peifu. Hankou was a treaty port along the Yangtze River. In 1862, British expatriates set up the Hankou Municipal Council to manage the British concession in this city.⁵²⁷ A police unit was also established that year.⁵²⁸ Frustrated by the corruption and low efficiency of Chinese policemen in the 1890s, the Hankou Municipal Council decided to follow the SMC's model to set up a Sikh police unit.⁵²⁹ In 1894, sixteen Sikhs were enlisted from Shanghai.⁵³⁰ Since the British authorities there were satisfied with the performance of Sikh policemen, more Sikhs had been brought to Hankou in following years.

Table 9. Sikh Policemen Serving in Hankou's British Concession

Year	Number of Sikhs Policemen
1895 ⁵³¹	20
1900 ⁵³²	24
1906 ⁵³³	37
1925 ⁵³⁴	40

⁵²⁷ There were five foreign concessions in Hankou, namely the British concession, the French concession, the Japanese concession, the Russian concession, and the German concession. The German concession and Russian concession were reclaimed by the Chinese government in 1917 and 1924 respectively.

⁵²⁸ Yuan Jicheng, *Hankou zujiezh* (The Gazette of Concessions in Hankou) (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 2003), 226.

⁵²⁹ "Hankow Landrenters' Meeting," *North China Herald*, Feb. 21, 1896.

⁵³⁰ "Hankow Municipal Report," *North China Herald*, Feb. 8, 1895.

⁵³¹ "Hankow Landrenters' Meeting," *North China Herald*, Feb. 21, 1896.

⁵³² "Hankow Landrenters' Meeting," *North China Herald*, Mar. 3, 1900.

⁵³³ "Report of the British Municipal Council, Hankow," *North China Herald*, Apr. 6, 1906.

⁵³⁴ Yuan Jicheng, *Hankou zujiezh*, 227.

In addition to working in the police force, more than one hundred Sikhs were employed as watchmen and guards in Hankou. In 1925 Hankou was the largest concentration of Sikhs in Mainland China apart from Shanghai.⁵³⁵ However, the Ghadar Party failed to expand its influence in Hankou before 1926, owing to the surveillance of the British authorities. As Hankou fell into the hands of the nationalists, many Ghadarites went there to establish contact with the Chinese nationalists. With the support of the GMD and the CCP, a Ghadar stronghold was founded in Hankou in early 1927 under the leadership of Dasundha Singh.⁵³⁶



Figure 20. Sikh policeman in Hankou, 1920 (Courtesy of Billie Love Historical Collection).

⁵³⁵ Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 235-236.

⁵³⁶ Deepak, "Revolutionary Activities of the Ghadar Party in China," 439-456.

Dasundha Singh was a North America-based Ghadarite, who had studied in the University of British Columbia. He terminated his studies and went to China in 1926.⁵³⁷ After he had stayed several months in Beijing, the Comintern suggested that he should move to Hankou to promote a revolutionary struggle there. Dasundha Singh arrived in Hankou in January 1927 and soon set up a printing press to publish the seditious newspaper *Hindustan Ghadar Dhandora*. With this newspaper, Dasundha Singh attempted to promote the Sino-Indian friendship by highlighting the shared fate of the two nations and called for Indian soldiers, policemen, and watchmen in China to subvert their service to the British and join the Chinese nationalist movement.⁵³⁸ For example, one issue of this newspaper claimed, “The dutiful sons of China are fighting for the freedom of their country. The freedom of India and the freedom of China have a close connection with each other. By the freedom of China the day of the freedom of India will draw near.”⁵³⁹ In another issue, it called on the Indians in China “to create a general mutiny and exterminate the unjust British rule with the power of their military knowledge and having cut the chains of slavery of their mother country”.⁵⁴⁰ In addition to circulating propagandist newspapers, Dasundha Singh also maintained a close relationship with the GMD and thus obtained substantial support. At his request, more

⁵³⁷ Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-47*, 240-241.

⁵³⁸ For Indian anti-imperial activities in Hankou, see Carolien Stolte, “Uniting the Oppressed Peoples of the East: Revolutionary Internationalism in an Asian Inflection,” in *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917-1939*, eds., Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015), 77-83.

⁵³⁹ David Petrie, *Communism in India, 1924-1927* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1972), 209.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 209-210.

than eighty Sikhs received military training from the GMD in early 1927 and were ready to fight for the Chinese Nationalist Government.⁵⁴¹ To buoy up the Northern Expedition (1926 to 1928) that aimed to annihilate warlords and foreign imperialists, Ghadarites in Hankou went onto streets to denounce evil deeds perpetrated by the British both in India and China in an effort to win over Sikh soldiers and policemen serving for the British in China.⁵⁴²

Between late 1926 and early 1927, large-scale anti-British demonstrations that called for boycotting British commodities, terminating the extraterritoriality, and reclaiming the British concession were organized by the GMD-CCP alliance across China. Clashes between Chinese protestors and British marines and policemen occurred time and again.⁵⁴³ As a response to the tension, the British authorities dispatched a Punjabi regiment from Calcutta to Shanghai in January 1927.⁵⁴⁴ Sikh soldiers of that regiment soon became the targets of the Ghadar Party, as Ghadar leaders masterminded a plan to induce these soldiers to desert to Hankou.⁵⁴⁵ On 21 March 1927, a Ghadar

⁵⁴¹ "Besieged Sikhs," *North China Herald*, Feb. 5, 1927; FO 371/12461, "Arrest of Indians at Shanghai," May 18, 1927, 329.

⁵⁴² FO 371/12474, from R. A. Yangtze Kiang to Admiralty, Feb. 24, 1927, 187.

⁵⁴³ "Demands for Economic Reprisals: Anti-British Move at Hankow," *Times of India*, Dec. 29, 1926; "The Disorders in Hankow," *North China Herald*, Jan. 8, 1927; Gao Chengyuan, ed., "Guangzhou Wuhan gemingwaijiao wenxian" (Primary sources of revolution and foreign policies in Guangzhou and Hankou), in *Minguo shiliao congkan vol. 216* (Collections of Primary Sources in Republican period), eds., Zhang Yan and Sun Yanjing (Zhengzhou: Daxiang Chubanshe, 2009), 119-125. For discussions of how political parties in modern China manipulated mass movements for political agendas, see Feng Xiaocai, "Politics of Tyrannized People in Modern China" (*Jindai zhongguo de jianmin zhengzhi*), *Jindaishi yanjiu* 1 (2014): 32-44.

⁵⁴⁴ "Steamers to Convey Troops," *Times of India*, Jan. 24, 1927; "Troops for China," *Times of India*, Jan. 25, 1927; "Ramsay MacDonald on Canton," *North China Herald*, Jan. 29, 1927.

⁵⁴⁵ FO 371/12461, "Arrest of Indians at Shanghai," May 18, 1927, 378-379. In addition to the Ghadar Party, other Indian nationalist forces, including the Indian

Party member, Sangat Singh, tried to seduce some Sikh soldiers in Shanghai to desert. Sangat Singh claimed that soldiers in the Indian Army were just like slaves of the British. He left the army long ago for freedom, and the soldiers should do the same. Furthermore, he added that the Chinese would soon take over the International Settlement and that Indians who fought for the British would all be killed. Sangat Singh also presented a song that was full of anti-British sentiments.⁵⁴⁶ Although Sangat Singh failed to persuade the soldiers, this move greatly worried the British authorities. In fear that Indian soldiers were likely to be exposed to nationalist propaganda, the British authorities cut down the reinforcement and confined them within the barracks in Shanghai.⁵⁴⁷

On 4 January 1927, tens of thousands of Chinese demonstrators flocked into the British concession in Hankou, Realizing that they could not obtain the reinforcement from Shanghai's Indian regiment and that their forces were totally outnumbered, the British authorities gave up their concession and withdrew all of their expatriates, soldiers, and policemen to Shanghai.⁵⁴⁸ Greatly inspired by the success in Hankou, Chinese nationalists and the Ghadarities turned their attention to Shanghai, the epicenter of British interests in China. The Ghadar Party even worked up a plan to seduce Sikh policemen in Shanghai

National Congress and the Swaraj Party, condemned the use of Indian troops in China, see Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 194.

⁵⁴⁶ "REX v. Sangat Singh," *North China Herald*, Mar. 26, 1927.

⁵⁴⁷ Gao Chengyuan, ed., "Guangzhou Wuhan gemingwajiao wenxian" (Primary sources of revolution and foreign policies in Guangzhou and Hankou), in *Minguo shiliao congkan vol. 216* (Collections of Primary Sources in Republican period), eds., Zhang Yan and Sun Yanjing (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2009), 132.

⁵⁴⁸ "Hankow Disorders Spread," *North China Herald*, Jan. 15, 1927.

and help the Chinese nationalists to retake the International Settlement. According to this plan, those converted Shanghai Sikhs would later be transported to India via Tibet under the auspices of the Chinese and the Comintern.⁵⁴⁹

As stated earlier, Shanghai was the stronghold of the Ghadar movement in East Asia during World War I. As the Ghadar movement revived and allied itself with the Comintern in early 1920s, Shanghai again became one of the main arenas. In March 1923, the Comintern suggested that a certain amount of Communist propaganda be carried out amongst the Indians in China and that pamphlets published in some Indian languages be brought out particularly appealing to Sikhs.⁵⁵⁰ Since Shanghai harbored the largest Indian community in China (numbering 1, 076 in the International Settlement alone in 1927), it immediately drew the attention of the Comintern.⁵⁵¹ Indians who were openly Bolshevik in tendency were dispatched to Shanghai to breed anti-British sentiment among Sikh policemen and watchmen there.⁵⁵²

In June 1923, seditious publications were found in the Sikh Branch of the SMP. It was reported that prints that depicted how Indian nationalists fought against the British and how Indians were ill

⁵⁴⁹ FO 371/12487, "Activities of Members of the Ghadar Party in the United States of America," Mar. 19, 1927, 168. The infamous Indian revolutionary Raja Mahendra Pratap initiated the Tibet mission. Supported by the Ghadar Party, he went to Tibet in 1926 to seek the approval of Dalai Lama for transporting Ghadarites to India through Tibet. However, this proposal was rejected by Dalai Lama. See Carolien Stolte, "Enough of the Great Napoleons!" 179.

⁵⁵⁰ FO 371/9216, "Report on Joffe's Visit to Shanghai," Mar. 24, 1923, 15-16.

⁵⁵¹ FO 371/12460, "Activities of Indian Seditious in Shagnhai," Apr. 9, 1927, 357.

⁵⁵² SMA, U1-1-936, Annual Report of the Shanghai Municipal Council 1923, 28.

treated by the British had been hung on the wall of the rooms in the Sikh barracks.⁵⁵³

To expedite anti-British activities in Shanghai, the Hindustan Association was set up in the French concession by Harbaksh Singh, the ringleader of Shanghai's Indian nationalist movement in December 1923.⁵⁵⁴ Harbaksh Singh set out to edit a newspaper called *Hindu Jagawa* that published articles such as "British Barbarism in India" and "British Justice gone Bankrupt", which aimed to subvert the loyalty of Sikhs serving in the SMP. By April 1924, almost six hundred copies of the newspaper had been printed in the printing establishment of E. Shing & Co. at Sichuan Road.⁵⁵⁵

It seems that Harbaksh Singh's work was very effective. When he was prosecuted in the British Police Court on the charge of publishing seditious matter in April 1924, several hundred local Sikhs went to the court to express their support for the accused. Many Sikhs appeared with black turbans on their heads, signifying their adherence to the Indian nationalist movement. As the court sentenced Harbaksh Singh to two months in prison with hard labor, the Sikh crowd cheered him as a martyr.⁵⁵⁶

As Harbaksh Singh, together with some of his principal colleagues, had been deported back to India in October 1924, Indian nationalist activities were on the wane in Shanghai in the following

⁵⁵³ SMA, U1-3-2429, From Deputy Commissioner of Police, SMP to Acting Secretary, SMC, June 2, 1923.

⁵⁵⁴ SMA, U1-3-2429, From Commissioner of Police, SMP to Acting Secretary, SMC, Dec. 28, 1923.

⁵⁵⁵ "Indian Propaganda Charge," *North China Herald*, Jan. 19, 1924; "Disorderly Indians at British Police Court," *North China Herald*, Apr. 26, 1924.

⁵⁵⁶ "Disorderly Indians at British Police Court," *North China Herald*, Apr. 26, 1924.

two years.⁵⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Harbaksh Singh had paved the way for the full mobilization of the Sikhs in Shanghai for the nationalist cause and his enterprise was about to be fueled by the Chinese nationalist revolution and its Northern Expedition.

Despite the fact that the strength of the Indian nationalist movement in Shanghai had been dramatically weakened since the deportation of Harbaksh Singh, the Ghadar Party, under the instruction of the Comintern, dispatched its members from Hankou and San Francisco to Shanghai to implement the scheme of helping the Chinese retake the International Settlement. In February 1927, nearly forty Ghadarites, led by two prominent nationalists, Puram Singh and Jaghat Singh, left San Francisco for Shanghai.⁵⁵⁸ To circumvent the interception of British intelligence officers in the west coast of the United States, most returning Ghadarites went to Mexico and produced false passports there before made their way to Shanghai.⁵⁵⁹ Around the same time, a Ghadar emissary, Dasawandha Singh of Hoshiarpur, accompanied by an agent of the Soviet Military Intelligence, went to Shanghai from Hankou to collaborate with all relevant elements.⁵⁶⁰

On landing in Shanghai, the Ghadarities immediately learned that certain influential individuals in the SMP had thwarted efforts made by their comrades, including Harbaksh Singh, to build Shanghai into an

⁵⁵⁷ FO 371/10290, "Deportation of Harbaksh Singh from China," Oct. 29, 1924.

⁵⁵⁸ FO 371/12487, "Departure of Seditious Indians from United States for China," Feb. 24, 1927, 162.

⁵⁵⁹ FO 371/12487, from British Consulate-General, San Francisco to British Embassy, Washington, May 4, 1927, 183.

⁵⁶⁰ FO 371/12422, "List of Soviet Agents in China," Oct. 27, 1927, 265.

anti-British stronghold. Amongst those collaborators, the Jemadar of the Sikh Branch of the SMP, Buddha Singh, had played a central role.

“I kill Him Because He was a Bad Man”

After World War I, Buddha Singh was made the leader of the Sikh community in Shanghai. Nevertheless, his pro-British policies and heavy-handed approach towards the nationalist movement agitated many revolutionaries. In January 1923, copies of the newspaper *Hindu Jagawa* were seized by the SMP in the headquarters of the Hindustan Association in Rue du Consulat, the French concession of Shanghai. The editor of this newspaper, Harbaksh Singh, who was viewed as the ringleader of the Indian nationalist movement in Shanghai at that time, was then charged with publishing seditious papers that would result in a breach of public peace. The evidence for this charge lay in an article entitled “One Who Seeks the Blood of His Brethren for His Own Personal Benefit”. The article blamed Buddha Singh for using the Gurdwara’s money to buy gifts for his British officers in order to flatter them. It alleged, “Outwardly he [Buddha Singh] seems to love his people, but inwardly he is against them and on the side of the government”. Furthermore, the article described Buddha Singh as a traitor and a killer of the Indian nation and “to love him is like giving milk to a poisonous snake”.⁵⁶¹

In fact, the Ghadar Party had long regarded Buddha Singh as a thorn in their side. In June 1914, Buddha Singh received a letter from

⁵⁶¹ “Indian Propaganda Charge,” *North China Herald*, Jan. 19, 1924.

the Ghadar Party that threatened to kill him for his disloyalty to the Indian people.⁵⁶² On the morning of 15 July 1914, days after Buddha Singh had forwarded the names of seven Ghadarities to the SMC, he was assaulted by ex-policeman, Lal Singh, in Yuanfang Road. Lal Singh hit his leg with a heavy stick. A later investigation found that Lal Singh was a friend of those on the name list and might well be a Ghadar member.⁵⁶³ Ten days later, Buddha Singh was again attacked in Yuanfang Road. Three assailants, who were alleged Ghadarites, intercepted Buddha Singh when he was passing through a certain alleyway and knocked him down. They tried to blind him by fiercely attacking his eyes and head. Buddha Singh was so seriously injured that he was unconscious for several days.⁵⁶⁴ On 3 October 1923 when he was on a ship bound for Hong Kong, four Sikhs approached and came to inform him that one day, someone would kill him and that killer was willing to become a martyr for the cause.⁵⁶⁵ Buddha Singh understood that these threats were real and told his friends on numerous occasions that he would meet his fate by being assassinated by these revolutionaries.⁵⁶⁶

In early 1927, Shanghai had become the battlefield between the British authorities, represented by the SMC, and various kinds of anti-British elements, including the GMD, the Comintern, the CCP-backed Shanghai General Labor Union (the Labor Union thereafter), and the

⁵⁶² “Rex (Buta Singh) v. Lal Singh,” *North China Herald*, July 18, 1914.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ “Rex (Buta Singh) v. Kesar Singh and Ganda Singh,” *North China Herald*, Aug. 1, 1914; “Report of Captain-Superintendent of Police for July,” *The Municipal Gazette*, Aug. 6, 1914.

⁵⁶⁵ “Trouble in the Sikh Camp,” *North China Herald*, Nov. 17, 1923.

⁵⁶⁶ “Tragic Death of Sirdar Sahib Singh,” *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1927.

Ghadar Party. Meetings had frequently been held by these elements to discuss how to collaborate with one another to weaken and overthrow the dominating imperialists in Shanghai.⁵⁶⁷ With the help of the Labor Union, the Ghadarites set up their headquarters in Zhabei, an area outside the British-controlled International Settlement.⁵⁶⁸ The local GMD branch also offered protection to the Ghadarites.⁵⁶⁹ All parties agreed that the Ghadarites should work hard to provoke a strike amongst the Sikh policemen. It was believed that such a strike would not only showcase the unity of the Chinese and Indian people in fighting against the imperialism, but would effectively put an end to Western rule, which relied on the policing work of Sikhs in the International Settlement.⁵⁷⁰

The challenge now lay on how to stir up an appropriate strike.⁵⁷¹ In January 1927, the Labor Union hatched a plan to call on the Chinese in the Tramways Company (Shanghai Electric Construction Company) to go on strike, with the idea that the strike would totally disrupt traffic and thus cause chaos in the International Settlement. Nevertheless, Nye Tien-sung, the manager of the company's Chinese staff and one of the most influential Chinese in the company, refused to cooperate with the Labor Union and discouraged workers from holding demonstrations. On the morning of 12 January 1927, Nye was shot

⁵⁶⁷ SMA, U1-3-2429, "Report on the Case Against Lal Chand," July 29, 1927.

⁵⁶⁸ FO 371/12454, "Situation at Shanghai," Apr. 7, 1927, 88-89.

⁵⁶⁹ "Yindu gemindang kaihui beiju" (Indian revolutionaries being arrested), *Shenbao*, Apr. 8, 1927.

⁵⁷⁰ "Municipal Gazette News," *North China Herald*, June 18, 1927.

⁵⁷¹ For strategies used by the Labor Union to stir up strikes in Shanghai, see Marcia Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927-1928* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*.

dead by three union members in Bubbling Well Road.⁵⁷² Only one day after this assassination, the strike actually took place and caused great disorder to the SMC.⁵⁷³

The methods used by the Labor Union to initiate the strike were closely studied by the Ghadarites. What the Ghadarites learned from Nyeh's case was that the assassination of certain key people who were amongst the opposition would intimidate others and clear the way for the strike.⁵⁷⁴ Buddha Singh, a counterpart of Nyeh Tien-sung in the SMP, was set as the primary target.



Figure 21. Shanghai residents welcoming the nationalist troops, 1927 (Courtesy of Adam Scott Armstrong).

⁵⁷² "Tramway Employee Murdered," *North China Herald*, Jan. 15, 1927; "Ni Tiansheng zuobei ansha biming" (Nyeh Tien-sung was assassinated yesterday), *Shenbao*, Jan. 13, 1927.

⁵⁷³ "Riots and Strikes in Shanghai," *North China Herald*, Jan. 15, 1927.

⁵⁷⁴ "Municipal Gazette News," *North China Herald*, June 18, 1927. Although the method of assassinating certain important pro-British figures had long been employed by Indian revolutionaries, it had not yet been used in Shanghai until the case of Buddha Singh. For the terrorist techniques used by Indian revolutionaries, see Peter Heehs, *The Bombs in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India, 1900-1910* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993).

On 23 March 1927, one day after the Labor Union workers had defeated the troops of the warlord and controlled most parts of Shanghai (except for the International Settlement and the French Concession), two Chinese workers visited the gurdwara in North Sichuan Road. A letter, which was written in the Gurmukhi language and which was probably penned by an Indian agent of the Comintern in Shanghai, was shown to Gurbakh Singh, a local Ghadarite who lived in the gurdwara. After a short while, Gajjan Singh, the leader of the Ghadar Party's Shanghai branch, appeared and led the two Chinese into the temple library. In the ensuing meeting, the Chinese men showed a .32 calibre Browning automatic pistol to the Sikhs. A trial shooting was made and this left a bullet hole in the corrugated iron roof. After handing over the pistol to the Sikhs, the Chinese left.⁵⁷⁵ As the gun was prepared, the Ghadarties were looking for an assassin to carry out this task.

As discussed earlier, the Sikh insubordination incident on 15 July 1910 facilitated Buddha Singh's promotion as the Jemadar of the Sikh branch. This incident, however, also influenced the fate of another man, Harbant Singh. On the afternoon of 15 July 1910, Harbant Singh, a Majha Sikh policeman, joined his fellows (including Isser Singh, who is the protagonist of Chapter 2) to protest about the SMP's decision to lay off a Majha interpreter and refused to carry out the officer's orders.⁵⁷⁶ As a result of this insubordination, the SMC refused to

⁵⁷⁵ "SMP v. Harnam Singh, et al.," *North China Herald*, May 14, 1927; "SMP v. Harnam Singh, et al.," *North China Herald*, May 21, 1927.

⁵⁷⁶ "REX (SMP) v. Twenty Indian Police Constables," *North China Herald*, July 29, 1910.

recontract him by the end of his five-year service. Harbant Singh then found a job in the Shanghai Custom but was soon dismissed for bribery. He worked as a watchman afterward and maintained a close relationship with Indian nationalists such as Harbaksh Singh, Harnam Singh, and Gajjan Singh. Influenced by Harbaksh Singh, Harbant Singh also made several attempts to undermine the influence of Sikh police officers serving in the SMP by accusing them of unfair treatment of their countrymen and loyalty to British imperialism.⁵⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it seems that these efforts failed to work very well, and Buddha Singh still enjoyed great popularity amongst some of the Sikh policemen.

In January 1927, Harbant Singh resigned his work and moved to the North Sichuan Road gurdwara. From then on, he remained there, prepared food for the committee of the gurdwara, and subsisted on assistance from some Ghadarites.⁵⁷⁸

On 24 March, one day after the Chinese man had presented the pistol to Gajjan Singh, Harbant Singh told Harnam Singh and Ishar Singh, both of whom were important Ghadarites, that he would volunteer to assassinate Buddha Singh and promised that he would do the job courageously.⁵⁷⁹

As the gun and the assassin had both been organized, Gajjan Singh and Harbant Singh went to the Central Police Station in Fuzhou Road on March 28 to familiarize themselves with the locations that Buddha Singh frequented. Gajjan Singh also asked a Sikh policeman

⁵⁷⁷ SMA, U1-3-2429, "Prosecution of Harbaksh Singh," Jan. 19, 1924.

⁵⁷⁸ "SMP v. Harnam Singh, et al.," *North China Herald*, May 14, 1927.

⁵⁷⁹ "REX v. Harnam Singh, et al.," *North China Herald*, May 21, 1927.

questions about the times when Buddha Singh arrived and left his office.⁵⁸⁰



Figure 22. Map of the International Settlement, Shanghai, 1920s (Courtesy of Shanghai Municipal Archives). The arrow in the map indicates how Harban Singh walked from Nanjing Road to the Central Station. The star is the location where the shooting happened.

At about 8:45 a.m., 6 April 1927 (Wednesday), Harbant Singh arrived on the corner of Nanjing (Nanking) Road. He stopped there for about ten minutes and turned in to Henan (Honan) Road. He continued lingering in Henan Road until 9:50 a.m. when he saw Buddha Singh appear from the direction of Nanjing Road. Buddha Singh was walking on the right side of the road while Harbant Singh was on the left side. As Buddha Singh reached the crossroads of Henan Road and Fuzhou (Foochow) Road and turned towards the gate of the station, Harbant Singh walked towards him. Since that day was rightly the payday for

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

Sikh watchmen in the International Settlement, there were nearly thirty Sikhs around in the vicinity of the police station waiting to get their monthly salaries when Harbant Singh approached to Buddha Singh. Because of this situation, Buddha Singh failed to pay special attention to the oncoming man. Just as Buddha Singh arrived at the gate, Harbant Singh drew the pistol and shouted, “I have come!” Buddha Singh turned around and tried to use the stick in his hand to hit Harbant Singh. However, it was too late as Harbant Singh had shot him three times.⁵⁸¹



Figure 23. The SMP Central Station, 1930s (Courtesy of Historical Photographs of China Project).

The first bullet penetrated the chest of Buddha Singh through the second right rib and entered the large blood vessel near the heart and finally came to rest in the spine. The second bullet entered the left side of the chest. It came in through the back and crossed through the left

⁵⁸¹ “REX v. Harbant Singh,” *North China Herald*, May 21, 1927.

lung, finally making its exit through the upper left part of the chest. The third bullet failed to penetrate Buddha Singh's body but just grazed the left shoulder blade.⁵⁸²

When the shooting occurred at around 10:00 a.m., Bhan Singh, a Sikh policeman, was walking through the crowds who were going into the police station gate. Surprised by the shots, Bhan Singh turned his head and saw Harbant Singh stood on the footpath halfway between the gate and Henan Road with a pistol in his hand. At the same time, he saw Buddha Singh lying on the footpath, raising his hands and crying, "Call for help, I am dying." Bhan Singh rushed to Harbant Singh and caught hold of him from behind.⁵⁸³

The Sub-Inspector of the SMP, C. S. Philips, was in the general office of the Central Police Station when he heard the first shot. He rushed into the compound to see if someone had accidentally fired off a round when the other two shots rang out. He located the firing in Fuzhou Road and dashed to the location. When Philips arrived there, he saw Harbant Singh struggling in the arms of Bhan Singh. He immediately covered Harbant Singh with his gun and got hold of Harbant Singh's pistol. Harbant Singh had now been totally overcome by Bhan Singh and Philips and was taken to the station charge room. Throughout the process Harbant Singh said nothing.⁵⁸⁴

While Bhan Singh and Philips were grappling with Harbant Singh, Ahjan Singh, a police interpreter, attended to Buddha Singh. Although

⁵⁸² "REX v. Harbant Singh," *North China Herald*, Apr. 16, 1927.

⁵⁸³ "REX v. Harbant Singh," *North China Herald*, May 21, 1927.

⁵⁸⁴ "Tragic Death of Sirdar Sahib Singh," *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1927.

he found Buddha Singh was still breathing on the ground, the wounded man died on the way to the General Hospital.⁵⁸⁵

The assassination of Buddha Singh appalled the SMP. Asserting that the murder was of a “seditious” nature rather than a common feud, a strong reaction had to be taken immediately. In the afternoon on the day, British soldiers raided the North Sichuan Road gurdwara under the directions of the Assistant Commissioner of the SMP, W. Beatty, who was in charge of the Sikh branch. A total of eleven Sikhs were arrested.⁵⁸⁶ However, due to the help of the Labor Union, key players such as Gajjan Singh and Haram Singh fled into Zhabei and were protected by the communists.⁵⁸⁷

In the afternoon of 8 April 1927, the SMC held one of the most impressive funerals ever seen in Shanghai for Buddha Singh. His remains were moved from the Public Mortuary in Fearon Road to the Sikh Crematorium on the Settlement side of Jiangwan Road. The procession was headed by eight Sikh troops, followed by the municipal band, who were succeeded by Sikh granthis. The hearse was loaded with wreaths. The coffin was shrouded with the municipal flag, on which reposed Buddha Singh’s sword and his long service medal.⁵⁸⁸

Investigations and prosecutions on this case were carried out in the next two months. Harbant Singh did not reveal anything about his accessories in court but only claimed, “I kill him [Buddha Singh]

⁵⁸⁵ “REX v. Harbant Singh,” *North China Herald*, Apr. 16, 1927.

⁵⁸⁶ “Yindu gemindang kaihui beiju” (Indian revolutionaries being arrested), *Shenbao*, Apr. 8, 1927; “Tragic Death of Sirdar Sahib Singh,” *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1927; SMA, U1-3-2429, “Cases of Jagat & Dansh Singh: Murder of Sirdar Sahib Buddha Singh by Harbant Singh,” July 18, 1927.

⁵⁸⁷ FO 371/12454, “Situation at Shanghai,” Apr. 7, 1927, 88.

⁵⁸⁸ “Late Sirdar Sahib Budha Singh,” *North China Herald*, Apr. 16, 1927.

because he was a bad man". He was then sentenced to death and was hanged on 18 June 1927.

The SMP, however, did not stop hunting down those who were suspected of being involved in this case. On 12 April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek openly set out to purge communists and labor union members in Shanghai. Losing the protection from the communists, the position of the Ghadarites became very vulnerable. On 9 May 1927, the SMP made a sudden raid on the headquarters of the Ghadar branch in Zhabei and arrested eleven Sikhs. Important figures such as Gajjan Singh, Harnam Singh, and the Comintern agent Daswandha Singh were amongst those arrested and sentences ranging from twelve to eighteen months imprisonment with deportation were passed on them.⁵⁸⁹

The Rise of a Surveillance Network

Although Buddha Singh was murdered, the proposed strike of the Sikh policemen never took place. Immediately following the assassination, the SMP took action to hunt down Indian nationalists in Shanghai. Within two months, almost all important Ghadarites had been located and placed in custody.

In terms of the cosmopolitan feature of this conspiracy, it comes as a surprise that the SMP could spot the Ghadarites' identities and activities in such an accurate and prompt way. Through the use of what kind of mechanism did the SMP obtain the relevant information about

⁵⁸⁹ FO 371/12460, "Indian Seditious in Shanghai," May 10, 1927, 359-361; "Municipal Gazette News," *North China Herald*, Aug. 20, 1927.

their targets? In 1926, an intelligence officer working for the Government of India reported that the SMP's own sources of information were extremely limited.⁵⁹⁰ If this officer's observation was fair, the question becomes more interesting as to how the SMP made a successful raid based on their poor information gathering system?⁵⁹¹ Was that mechanism only confined within the International Settlement of Shanghai or of multilateral elements that cooperated with one another?

In February 1927, the British Consulate-General in San Francisco was then informed by an insider that certain important figures in the Ghadar Party had left for Shanghai to organize an anti-British movement there. It was further specified that these Ghadarites had been in correspondence with an Indian "agitator" in Shanghai by the name of Gajjan Singh. A telegram was soon dispatched to the British Embassy in Washington D.C. and was forwarded to the British Consulate-General in Shanghai.⁵⁹² The SMP also received a copy of this information and was asked to keep a close watch over these Indians. As a result, the SMP actually did have adequate knowledge

⁵⁹⁰ FO 371/11688, From V .M. Smith to D. Petrie, Mar. 28, 1926, 263.

⁵⁹¹ The political intelligence-gathering unit was established by the SMP in 1898 and it was renamed as the Special Branch in 1925. Firstly, it was responsible for collecting information of the Chinese authorities and anti-British activities in Chinese territory. Since 1925, it had turned its attention to communist movement in China, especially Comintern agents and CCP members. An Indian unit of the Special Branch was set up in 1927 to check Indian nationalists in Shanghai, see Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai*, 142-145.

⁵⁹² FO 371/12470, From Viceroy, Home Department, to Secretary of State fro India, Jan. 28, 1927, 180; FO 371/12487, "Activities of Ghadar Party in United States of America," Apr. 25, 1927, 183.

about whom they should pay specific attention to and where to make the arrest if a situation suddenly developed.⁵⁹³

The inter-war period between 1919 and 1939 witnessed the rise of internationalism. Whether it be the nationalist, anarchist, communist, fascist, or Pan-Islamic movement, they all attempted to resist the confines of states and seek support and legitimacy across the globe. Internationalism stimulated strong reactions from colonial powers as cooperation between police forces, the institution of passport and visa regimes, and the restrictions on international travel were materialized.⁵⁹⁴ The Buddha Singh case was a part of this internationalist moment as it illustrates how the British authorities in different areas used cooperation to check on the Ghadarites flowing in. What helped the SMP in this case were not only its own intelligence agents, but also an information gathering and sharing network that stretched from India to North America. The rise of this surveillance network was inseparable with the cross-boundary movement of the Ghadarites.⁵⁹⁵

As discussed, the expansion of the Ghadar Party was largely based on the network of the Sikh diaspora. Its branches were mostly in

⁵⁹³ "Indian Affairs," *North China Herald*, June 18, 1927.

⁵⁹⁴ Raza, Roy, and Zachariah, eds., *The Internationalist Moment*, xii; Radhika Mongia, "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport," *Public Culture* 11(1999): 527-556; John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Harper, "Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground," 25.

⁵⁹⁵ For the British intelligence gathering work in India, see Richard Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904-1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Bayly, *Empire and Information*. For transnational intelligence sharing regime between Britain and the U.S., see Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*.

cities where large numbers of Sikh migrants stayed. British authorities in these cities, however, failed to follow this pattern of global revolution in the early 1920s. Colonial governments, consulates, and embassies were merely responsible for checking anti-British activities within their specific jurisdictions, and did not have mechanisms to express concerns, share information or conduct cooperative missions. Sometimes, they even quarreled with one another.⁵⁹⁶

On 19 August 1920, two Indians, Kala Khan and Fazal Elahi, were arrested in Hong Kong as destitute. The report showed that both men had been warders in the SMP before they were dismissed for insubordination, and were sent by the SMC to Hong Kong in July 1920. A complaining letter was immediately dispatched by the Captain Superintendent of the Hong Kong Police to his counterpart in Shanghai to protest against the SMP's irresponsible policy of allowing dismissed troublemakers to move on to Hong Kong. The letter even warned that the Hong Kong Government would no longer allow any Indian from Shanghai to land if the Shanghai authorities did not provide them with passage tickets to India.⁵⁹⁷ For Kala Khan and Fazal Elahi, the Hong Kong government asked the SMC to pay \$107 (Mexican dollars) for the cost of two passages from Hong Kong to India.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶ Seema Sohi demonstrates that British, American, and Canadian authorities had worked together in checking Indian radicals since the 1910s, see Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*. However, few scholars pay attention to the origin of the inter-colonial surveillance system built by the British,

⁵⁹⁷ FO 671/437, From R. E. Stubbs to the British Consul-General, Shanghai, Aug. 23, 1920, 255.

⁵⁹⁸ FO 671/437, From D. Burlingham to the Commissioner of Police, Shanghai, Aug. 23, 1920, 256-257.

This request, however, was firmly rejected by the SMC. In reply to Hong Kong's charge, K. J. McEuen, the Commissioner of the SMP, argued that it was reasonable to issue passports to the dismissed Indian policemen who intended to go to Hong Kong, mainly because large Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities there could provide help for them. He also stressed that the Hong Kong government should resort to the Government of India for the funds for deportation.⁵⁹⁹

Frustrated by the SMC's stubbornness, the Hong Kong government decided to take harsher action. In March 1921, the Hong Kong Police detained another arriving Indian who was a dismissed warder from Shanghai. This time, they directly deported this man back to Shanghai and asked the shipping company to collect the fees from the SMC.⁶⁰⁰

From the perspective of the SMC, however, Hong Kong's reaction was neither justified nor fair, mainly because the Hong Kong authorities did the same thing to the SMC. In October 1920, two Indians, Gaya Din and Charam Singh, were arrested in Shanghai for organizing anti-British activities. It was found that both men were members of the Ghadar branch in Shanghai and were deported from Shanghai to India in 1918. In May 1920, Charam Singh successfully obtained a passport for Hong Kong in Simla. Four months later, Gaya Din also secured a passport for Hong Kong in Calcutta. Once they arrived in Hong Kong in September 1920, they applied to continue

⁵⁹⁹ FO 671/437, From K. McEuen to the Captain Superintendent of Police, Hong Kong, Sept. 6, 1920, 258.

⁶⁰⁰ FO 671/437, From R. E. Stubbs to the Chairman, Municipal Council, Shanghai, Apr. 4, 1921, 260.

their trip to Shanghai. Without any serious inquiry, the Hong Kong government approved their application.⁶⁰¹

In the eyes of the SMC, it was the fault of the Hong Kong government that led to the return of these deportees. If the Hong Kong government allowed deported Indian revolutionaries to return to Shanghai, how could it blame the SMC for granting dismissed policemen and warders a passage to Hong Kong?⁶⁰²

To settle these disputes, G. C. Denham, the envoy of the SMC, went to Hong Kong in June 1921. Denham highlighted that a mechanism for dealing with Indians in China should be established amongst authorities in India, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.⁶⁰³ This proposal, however, failed to draw adequate attention at that time as Hong Kong and Shanghai kept accusing each other.

In June 1924, the British Consul at Changsha reported to the Consul-General at Shanghai on the anti-British activities of an Indian nationalist, Jewan Singh, in Changsha.⁶⁰⁴ An investigation revealed that Jewan Singh was an active Ghadar member in Shanghai in the 1910s and had been deported to India in July 1918. Imitating his comrades such as Gaya Din and Charam Singh, he applied in Lahore for a passport to travel to Hong Kong in October 1920. In Hong Kong, he concealed the fact of his deportation and successfully made his way

⁶⁰¹ FO 671/437, From Acting Assistant Commissioner (Sikhs) to the Commissioner of Police, Shanghai, Nov. 4, 1920, 274.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ FO 671/437, From K. McEuen to the British Consul General, Shanghai, June 17, 1921, 265.

⁶⁰⁴ FO 371/10290, From Lancelot Giles to British Legation, Peking, Aug. 31, 1924, 163-164.

to Shanghai, from where he travelled extensively to breed anti-British sentiments amongst Indians across China.⁶⁰⁵

The increasing number of returned deportees, especially the return of such influential figures as Jewan Singh, greatly concerned the British authorities. In August 1924, a scheme to check deportees from Shanghai was initiated by the British Foreign Office. The SMP was required to provide a complete list of all deportation from 1912 to 1924. A total of fifty individuals, together with their photographs and identification particulars, were produced. Copies of the deportees' information were then circulated to India, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Authorities in the three colonies were requested to intercept any deportee who attempted to return to Shanghai using this shared information.⁶⁰⁶

This mechanism of checking deportees, however, was unable to rein in the large-scale flow of Indian nationalists in the 1920s. As more and more North America-based Ghadarites slipped into China, the Government of India had gradually developed a sense of the scale of the emergency. In early 1926, V. M. Smith, a police officer working in India, was dispatched to Southeast and East Asia to evaluate the information gathering work pertaining to the Indian nationalist movement there.

Smith was disappointed by the fact that the means of collecting intelligence in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore were extremely limited and that there existed no cooperation amongst the colonies and

⁶⁰⁵ FO 371/10290, From J. R. MacDonald to British Legation, Peking, Aug. 31, 1924, 160-161.

⁶⁰⁶ FO 371/10290, From S. Barton to British Legation, Peking, Aug. 31, 1924, 169.

settlements. In Shanghai, he observed that the SMP had inadequate sources of information in spite of Shanghai's essential role as a political hub. Because Hong Kong did not have a centralized provision for the systematic collection of information, it had been classified as the weakest link in the chain of information-gathering work in East Asia. Although Singapore had an officer who was responsible for collecting political intelligence from India, Malaya, Indo-China, Siam, and the Dutch East Indies, he had no executive staff of his own, and was usually overworked.⁶⁰⁷

To strengthen these outposts' surveillance capability, Smith suggested that the Government of India could initiate an information distribution framework between itself and all these three ports. Through sharing information about the movements and identities of suspected Indian nationalists with one another, it was expected that the Ghadar-led anti-British activities in Shanghai could be kept under close watch.⁶⁰⁸

The Government of India not only accepted Smith's proposal, but also authorized him to take charge of realizing this surveillance network. From January 1927, Smith was in Shanghai censoring Indian correspondence, both from Shanghai to the outside and from other areas to Shanghai. Additionally, he watched the attitude of the Indian community, Sikhs in particular, towards the British authorities and helped in the supervision of the passenger traffic from the Far East to

⁶⁰⁷ FO 371/11688, From V .M. Smith to D. Petrie, Mar. 28, 1926, 263-265.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 265.

India. Last but not least, he paid special attention to the Bolshevik propaganda in Shanghai and its influence over Sikhs.⁶⁰⁹

However, without the help of the British Consul-General at Shanghai and the SMC, Smith could hardly get very far with his work. A cooperating mechanism was therefore set up. The Government of India requested the Consul-General and the SMC to render Smith all possible assistance in the matter of supervising the activities of Indian nationalists. In turn, Smith's findings would also be shared with these authorities.⁶¹⁰

The Government of India understood that it was far from sufficient to simply keep its eyes on Shanghai to keep the continuing influx of nationalists at bay. In February 1927, it asked the ambassador and British consuls in the United States to use every effort to obtain and communicate promptly with the Government of India and the SMP any information on the departure to Shanghai of prominent Indians.⁶¹¹ Furthermore, with the help of the British Embassy, the Government of India set up the efficient censorship of telegrams and postal matter from America, addressed to Indians in Shanghai.⁶¹²

In addition to the United States, nationalists and seditious publications also came to Shanghai from India. To intercept these elements, the Government of India approached the authorities in Hong

⁶⁰⁹ FO 371/12470, From Viceroy, Home Department, to Secretary of State, India, Jan. 28, 1927, 3.

⁶¹⁰ FO 371/12470, "Attachment of an Indian Police Officer to Indian contingent of Shanghai Defence Force," Feb. 14, 1927, 8.

⁶¹¹ FO 371/12470, From Secretary, Public & Judicial Department to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, Feb. 12, 1927, 10.

⁶¹² FO 371/12470, From Viceroy, Home Department to the Secretary of State for India, Feb. 8, 1927, 14.

Kong and Singapore, as the two colonies that played essential roles for Indians travelling between Shanghai and India. Cooperation from these two colonies was soon offered as Hong Kong and Singapore agreed to establish the censorship of telegrams and postal matter addressed to Indians in Shanghai. The information the Government of India obtained from Shanghai and the U.S. would be forwarded to Hong Kong and Singapore to facilitate their interception of nationalists on their way to or from Shanghai.⁶¹³

In early 1927, a surveillance network that connected Shanghai with India, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States took shape. Information about the movement of Indian nationalists and seditious publications in these places had been shared between them. It was under the auspices of this network that the SMP was well prepared for the conspiracy in 1927. Even before most Ghadarites, whether they were coming from Hong Kong, India, or San Francisco, landed in Shanghai, their movements had been tracked. After their arrival, the locations of their accommodation as well as the contacts made and meetings they had with various persons all occurred under the close watch of the SMP.⁶¹⁴

In the case of Buddha Singh, the SMP had long had information of a possible assassination. As a precautionary measure, Buddha Singh had been requested by British officials not to go out without a trusty bodyguard from early 1927 onwards. The assassination on the morning of 6 April 1927 was not the failure of that surveillance network, but of

⁶¹³ FO 371/12470, From W. Daurawn to the Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, Feb. 12, 1927, 15-16.

⁶¹⁴ Shanghai Municipal Police Files (SMPF), D8/8, "Indian Seditious," June 17, 1920.

the carelessness of Buddha Singh himself, as he did not take his bodyguards with him that morning.⁶¹⁵ The prompt reaction of the SMC immediately following the incident and the arrests of most conspirators demonstrated how strong the surveillance network had become.

Conclusion

After the 1927 crackdown, important Ghadar figures were either deported or fled from Shanghai. It was not until the 1930s that the Ghadar Party resumed its activities there.⁶¹⁶ Nevertheless, they never managed to restore the influence they had once exerted on Shanghai's Sikh community in the 1920s.⁶¹⁷

This declining influence may be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, the SMP set up an Indian section in the Special Branch that was specifically responsible for checking subversive political activities. This move, together with the strengthening of the surveillance network, made the infiltration of the Ghadarites into Shanghai more and more difficult. On the other hand, the SMC set out to increase the payment of its Sikh policemen, watchmen, and warders.⁶¹⁸ And a retirement bonus and free rations of food were provided to the Sikh branch.⁶¹⁹ With such benefits, the SMC successfully appeased most Sikhs and

⁶¹⁵ "Tragic Death of Sirdar Sahib Singh," *North China Herald*, Apr. 9, 1927.

⁶¹⁶ "Indians Sentenced for Sedition," *North China Herald*, July 15, 1930; "H. M. Supreme Court: Sedition Trials," *North China Herald*, Jan. 13, 1931; "H. M. Court: Seditionist to be Re-deported," *North China Herald*, May 9, 1934.

⁶¹⁷ In addition to the surveillance of British authorities, Madhavi Thampi contends that the internal faction and the waning Chinese official support also caused the decline of the Ghadar Party in Shanghai, see Thampi, *Indians in China 1800-1949*, 199-200.

⁶¹⁸ SMA, U 1-3-1466, From the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary, SMC, June 25, 1930.

⁶¹⁹ SMA, U 1-3-1466, From the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary, SMC, July 4, 1930.

therefore blocked the channel for Ghadar propaganda and recruitment. In this sense, the assassination of Buddha Singh marked both the climax and the end of a decade-long Ghadar conspiracy in Shanghai.

Ironically, this episode, with its dramatic events and panorama, has drawn very limited attention from scholars of modern Chinese history. For practitioners of the field, the 1920s was the age when the Soviet-style mass-mobilization regimes were established, and the blossoming modernity in some big cities such as Shanghai and Chengdu and the still dominant popular cultures in rural China coexisted, as did the desire for Western modernity and the nostalgia for Chinese tradition. In sum, most enquiries are confined within the specific realm of the Chinese nation-state to discuss issues such as how the Chinese people at that time attempted to safeguard the Chinese nation, and how this age transformed the Chinese nation. It has been admitted that foreign elements (Western elements primarily, and sometimes Japanese elements) are frequently referred to in writings on modern Chinese history. Nevertheless, the interest of practitioners in these elements depends on how the elements came to influence the eventful course of Chinese national history. For those that played a seemingly minimal role in national history, practitioners tend to play down if not neglect them.⁶²⁰

⁶²⁰ For critiques of writing Chinese national history within Chinese boundaries, see Karl, *Staging the World*. It is necessary to point out here that a growing number of practitioners who have interest in colonialism in modern China have recently recognized the ambiguities of Chinese and foreign interactions, and challenged the Chinese national narrative. See Stoler and Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony"; Bickers and Henriot, eds., *New Frontiers*; Bryna Goodman and David Goodman, eds., *Twentieth Century Colonialism and China*.

Since the Ghadar movement in Shanghai was neither a part of the Chinese tradition nor a representation of Western modernity, nor did it play any substantial role in Chinese national history, its story has little meaning, if any, to practitioners working from the perspective of national history. Nevertheless, this episode bears some significance when we come to observe and interpret it from a translocal angle. To rethink Chinese national history from this alternative perspective, its monopoly status in the study of modern Chinese history must be called into question.

A statement published by the Ghadar Party in San Francisco on 17 February 1927 claimed:

“British imperialism is the common enemy of China and India. The Chinese people are struggling to free themselves from this imperialism. It is in the interest of humanity at large that British imperialism must be destroyed at all costs. Therefore, be it resolved, that we, the Hindustan Ghadar Party sympathize with, and endorse, in its entirety, the national program adopted by the Kuo Min Tang [Goumindang] Party of China. We disclaim and disapprove of any and all acts of brutality committed by the Indians, in the British service, brought to China under brute force, to hinder in any way, shape or form the movement for the national freedom of China”.⁶²¹

⁶²¹ FO 371/12487, “Activities of Ghadar Party in California,” Mar. 19, 1927, 174.

To keep its promise of support for the Chinese nationalist movement, the Ghadar Party indeed had mobilized its network in Asia and North America to transport cadres as well as propagandist publications to China to fuel anti-British activities from 1926 onwards. The network that the Ghadar Party employed was actually based on the network of the Sikh diaspora that could be traced back to the 1900s when Sikh policemen and watchmen in China flocked to North America after hearing of the prosperous opportunities there. This shows how the Chinese nationalist revolution in the 1920s was related to the Sikh diaspora and the Indian nationalist movement. Here, the history of the Chinese nationalist revolution appears not merely as a part of Chinese national history, but also as a part of Indian history or global history. In this sense, it seems that the exclusive nature of national history has posed some obstacles preventing scholars from further exploring certain cosmopolitan features of modern Chinese history. This research based on a local event, but highlighting translocal connections such as the Sikh diaspora, the Ghadar movement, and the British surveillance network, therefore tries to make an effort to contextualize modern Chinese history in the global circulatory history milieu.

Chapter 4

A Lone Islet or A Center of Communications?

Shanghai Sikhs and The Indian National Army

Owing to the surveillance measures imposed by the British authorities, Indian revolutionaries failed to reorganize their anti-British activities in Shanghai after the 1927 crackdown. This situation totally changed after the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. As the British hegemony collapsed in Southeast and East Asia, Indian nationalist movement quickly revived in this region. Amongst all revolutionary organizations, the Indian National Army (INA) became the most influential one. By mining sources from the Japanese-occupied period collection of the SMA and relating them to the extant INA documents, this chapter attempts to elucidate Shanghai's position in the INA movement. It argues that although Shanghai has long been regarded as the lone islet during the Japanese occupied period from the perspective of the Allied forces, it was one of the key centers of communications for the INA. Furthermore, this chapter contends that the INA drew on the Japanese-initiated military highway and the Indian diasporic networks to carry out its propaganda, recruiting, and training work in Shanghai. Meanwhile, Shanghai's Sikh community contributed a great deal of money and manpower to the cause of the INA. By putting the wartime experience of the Sikhs in Shanghai in the context of the INA movement, this chapter not only sheds lights on the mobilization mechanism of the INA, but also opens a new window for observing Shanghai's history during the Pacific War.

The Birth of the INA and the Unification of Shanghai Sikhs

The subversive activities of the Ghadar Party in Shanghai and the murder of Buddha Singh convinced the SMC that they should work hard to cooperate with British authorities around the world to check the flow and activities of Indian revolutionaries. In May 1927, an Indian section was established in the Special Branch of the SMP. This section was responsible for three sorts of duties. First, it collected personal information of all suspected Indian radicals in Shanghai. Second, it investigated political activities of local Indians. Third, it analyzed documents and files of Indian passengers who tried to visit Shanghai. Through these efforts, the Indian section had collected the biographies of 250 revolutionaries, 120 sympathizers, and 3, 500 Indian residents in Shanghai by 1935.⁶²² Thanks to the cooperation between the SMP and the British Consul-General at Shanghai, the photographs, particulars, and even information of parents of Indians who applied for passports to visit Shanghai were all transferred to the Indian section for screening.⁶²³ Ships that took Indian passengers from North America to Shanghai were frequently checked by the Indian section.⁶²⁴ In so doing, neither revolutionaries nor seditious publications and weapons could be easily transported to Shanghai from 1928 onwards.

For revolutionaries who stayed in Shanghai, their situation was also pessimistic. After the 1927 crackdown, those who escaped the arrest reorganized their struggle and had their base in the gurdwara of North Sichuan Road. However, this gurdwara was kept under the surveillance of the Indian section. Two Sikh members of the Indian section were instructed to attend all

⁶²² SMPF, D8/8, "From D.C. Special Branch to D.S.I. Golder," 27 Feb. 1936.

⁶²³ SMPF, D8/8, "Indian Seditious," 17 Feb. 1929.

⁶²⁴ SMPF, D8/8, "Enquires concerning Indians by Special Branch," 27 Feb. 1936.

meetings from time to time held therein for the purpose of reporting, in their own vernacular, the speeches delivered. This procedure resulted in the arrest of five individuals named Ishar Singh, Indar Singh, Narain Singh, Asa Singh, and Hukam Singh, who for a long time had been a thorn in the eyes of British authorities in Shanghai. They were all sentenced on 20 May 1929, to varying terms of imprisonment and deportation to India.⁶²⁵

By the eve of the Sino-Japanese War, Indian revolutionaries were unable to reach Shanghai, nor did their comrades in Shanghai can carry on the struggle. The SMP reported that actual sedition amongst Indians did not exist after 1929.⁶²⁶ In this sense, Shanghai became a lone islet for the Indian nationalist movement between 1929 and 1941.

Instead of Shanghai, Bangkok had become the new base for Indian nationalists overseas in the 1930s and early 1940s. Radical revolutionaries such as Pritam Singh and Amar Singh organized the Indian Independent League (IIL) there with the aim of overthrowing British rule in India by force.⁶²⁷ However, owing to the lack of support from the local Indian community, the strength of the IIL was limited.⁶²⁸

While the IIL was looking for outside help, the Japanese government was also hatching a plan to ally itself with the Indian nationalists in order to weaken the position of the British in Asia.⁶²⁹ In October 1941, a Japanese intelligence agent, Fujiwara Iwaichi, was dispatched to Bangkok to hold talks

⁶²⁵ SMPF, D8/8, "Indian Sedition," 17 Feb. 1929.

⁶²⁶ SMPF, D8/8, "From D.C. Special Branch to D.S.I. Golder," 27 Feb. 1936.

⁶²⁷ K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army: Second Front of the Indian Independence Movement* (Meerut: Prakash Printing Press, 1969), 5-6.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶²⁹ T. R. Sareen, *Japan and the Indian National Army* (Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1986), 1-13; Southeast Asia Translation and Interrogation Center Bulletin No. 234, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, ed., T. R. Sareen (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2004), 73.

with the IIL leaders. Thanks to the shared anti-British agenda, the two sides soon established a cooperative relationship, with the Japanese side promising to provide facilities for the IIL to win over Indian soldiers in the British Indian Army in Malaya.⁶³⁰

As the Pacific War broke out in December 1941, the IIL advanced into Malaya and Singapore alongside the Japanese army to promote the anti-British sentiment among Indian migrants. Meanwhile, the IIL had a plan to organize its own military force by employing surrendered or captured Indian soldiers.⁶³¹ Their chance came when the Major of the ¼ th Punjab Regiment, Mohan Singh, surrendered to the Japanese on 15 December 1941.⁶³² In fact, Mohan Singh had long harbored a leaning toward the nationalist cause. After several talks with Fujiwara and Pritam Singh, Mohan Singh agreed to lead and reorganize Indian Prisoners of War (PoWs) so that he could not only further the cause of India's freedom, but also save the Indians interred in the Japanese prison camps.⁶³³ On 31 December 1941, the INA was established in Malaya.⁶³⁴

⁶³⁰ Memoirs of Fujiwara Iwaichi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 309-311.

⁶³¹ I. N. A. Papers: File No. 295, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 38-39.

⁶³² W. O. F. 208/810 (Public Record Office, London), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 278.

⁶³³ *Ibid*, 280.

⁶³⁴ I.N.A. Papers F. No. 384, 31 December 1941, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 45-48.



Figure 24. Fujiwara Iwaichi and Mohan Singh, 1942 (Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore).

Although the INA did not engage in any military action in Malaya and Singapore directly, it worked hard to promote anti-British sentiment among the soldiers of the British Indian Army and win over their loyalty.⁶³⁵ By the time that Singapore was taken by the Japanese in February 1942, the INA had around 8, 000 fighters, almost all of whom were Indian PoWs, captured or surrendered to the Japanese in the Malaya Campaign and the Battle of Singapore.⁶³⁶

Indian nationalists realized, however, that an army composed of PoWs was far from sufficient to conduct a competent campaign against the British in India. The independence struggle required a source of legitimacy that must come from the support of the people. But this was a huge challenge, given the fact that the Indian communities in Southeast and East Asia were so diversified and that there existed so many different nationalist organizations.

⁶³⁵ Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Center Report No. 31, 15 February 1942, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 49-55.

⁶³⁶ W. O. F. 208/810 (Public Record Office, London), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 282.

The priority then, before confronting the British, was to unify all these diverse elements into a coherent order. From March to June 1942, representatives from Indian communities in China, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies were gathered in Tokyo and Bangkok to discuss coordination. Finally, all parties agreed to be affiliated with the IIL and its military wing, the INA.⁶³⁷

To expand the influence and to mobilize all available sources, the IIL asked local communities to set up branches. Twelve territorial branches were identified, namely Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Burma, Borneo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra, and the Andaman Islands. Each branch was asked to elect a territorial committee that took charge of local affairs. Selected members of the territorial committee formed the Committee of Representatives, which was responsible for making the general policy and program of the IIL. In so doing, almost all Indian communities in territories under Japanese control had been integrated into the INA network.⁶³⁸ Indian migrants across Asia donated large amounts of money to Bangkok (the headquarters of the IIL) for the nationalist cause. Many even went to Rangoon (the advanced headquarters of the INA) to join the INA. Meanwhile, representatives of the IIL and INA were also dispatched to branches to instruct and supervise the local propaganda and mobilization work.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Foreign Department, File No. 313-X/1942, 28 March 1942 (National Archive of India), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 64-71; *Bangkok Chronicle*, 15 June 1942, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 125-126.

⁶³⁸ I.L.L. Papers 45/3, 20 June 1942 (National Archives of India), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 148-158.

⁶³⁹ Weekly Intelligence Summary, General Headquarters-India File No. 6017668/Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 168-170.

The Sikhs in Shanghai were not exempted from the influence of this movement. Immediately after the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese had taken over the International Settlement in Shanghai. The Sikhs were not at first much affected by this change of the regime as Sikh policemen and watchmen in the SMP maintained their usual duties.⁶⁴⁰ Nevertheless, as the INA had gained momentum and become the de-facto representative of Indians overseas with the support of the Japanese, the Sikhs in Shanghai were faced with this internal tensions.

The Sikh community in Shanghai was far from being a unified one. In fact, divisions between Sikh police officers and common constables, and between Majha Sikhs and Malwa Sikhs had long existed. Since the 1930s, the Sikh branch of the SMP had had its own committee, which was composed of thirty-three Sikh police officers. This Sikh Committee was authorized to take care of all public issues for the welfare of Sikhs and to manage a fund of the gurdwara in Gordon Road for disabled and impecunious Sikhs who had no means of subsistence. However, Sikh constables had long been uneasy about the way the Sikh Committee had been using these funds. They blamed officers in the Sikh Committee for misusing the funds to please the British without consulting all members of the Sikh community. Furthermore, most constables considered themselves to be more pro-nationalist while the officers were thought to be lackeys of the British.⁶⁴¹

The dispute between Sikh constables and officers was fueled when the INA movement initiated its influence in Shanghai. From 28 to 30 March 1942,

⁶⁴⁰ Robert Bickers, "Settlers and Diplomats: The End of British Hegemony in the International Settlement, 1937-1945," in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, eds., Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 248.

⁶⁴¹ SMA, R36-12-22, "Sikh Police Committee," 11 July 1942.

Indian nationalists held a conference in Tokyo for formalizing the structure, aim, and strategies of the INA. It was then resolved that the INA should obtain the full support and cooperation of Indians across Asia and that Indians overseas should support the Japanese in the War.⁶⁴² The resolution of the Tokyo Conference was brought back from Tokyo to Shanghai by a nationalist, Hari Singh Osman, who was met with an enthusiastic response from local Sikhs.⁶⁴³ In early April 1942, a group of Sikh constables appealed to contribute a part of the gurdwara fund for the Japanese War Fund.⁶⁴⁴ This request, however, had been firmly rejected by officers of the Sikh Committee. Instead, the officers urged local Sikhs not to give any money to the Japanese War Fund because they thought that the Japanese were not doing any good from it for the Indian community.⁶⁴⁵ Dissatisfied with the officers' handling of the funds, the Sikh constables pressed for a reorganization of the Sikh Committee by adding extra thirty-three constables in May 1942. Under the pressure of the Japanese authorities, Sikh officers yielded to this demand.⁶⁴⁶

While the constables had now seized power of the Sikh Committee, a consensus on how to protect the welfare of Shanghai's Sikh population during the War was still hard to reach, owing to the long-existing factional divide between Majha and Malwa Sikhs. Previous chapters have showed that the two sides frequently clashed with one another. They did not even share the

⁶⁴² Foreign Department, File No. 313-X/1942, 28 March 1942 (NAI), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 65-71.

⁶⁴³ Hari Singh Osman was a member of the *Kamagata Maru* and was implicated in the Budge Budge incident. He stayed in Batavia before moved to Shanghai in the 1930s. In Shanghai, he established contact with the Japanese navy for organizing anti-British activities and became a founding member of the IIL. He attended the Tokyo conference in March 1942. For his information, see INA Papers, File No. 164, 25 November 1945 (INA), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 5*, 55.

⁶⁴⁴ SMA, R36-12-22, "Regarding Indian War Fund," 20 Apr. 1942.

⁶⁴⁵ SMA, R36-12-22, "A Meeting held by Sikh Police on 17-5-42," 19 May 1942.

⁶⁴⁶ SMA, R36-12-22, "General Meeting of Sikh Police," 25 May 1942.

gurdwara, but maintained their own respective ones.⁶⁴⁷ However, both sides felt the necessity of unification when they found that the Sikhs were marginalized in the INA movement.

As the INA movement's influence was spreading across Shanghai's Indian population in early 1942, Jalal Rahman, a Shanghai-based Indian nationalist and chairman of the Indian National Association, was appointed as the chairman of the IIL's Shanghai branch.⁶⁴⁸ When Rahman and other Indian representatives across Asia were invited to attend the Bangkok Conference in June 1942 to settle the constitutions of the IIL and INA, neither did he bring any local Sikhs with him nor consult any Shanghai Sikhs for their opinions. This move deeply frustrated the Sikhs as they realized that no one would pay any heed to their hardship until they were united with one strong voice.⁶⁴⁹

The Malwa Sikhs were the first to act. On 14 June 1942, the Malwa Sikhs organized a meeting in their gurdwara in the Mandley Road. Most attendants agreed that the Pacific War had given Indians a golden opportunity to gain their freedom from the British. However, the division between Malwa and Majha Sikhs prevented them from playing a larger role in the independence struggle, even though Sikhs were born soldiers. The Malwa Sikhs finally resolved that they must compromise with the Majha Sikhs. A joint committee

⁶⁴⁷ SMA, U1-1-923, Municipal Council of Shanghai: Report for the Year 1910, 36; "Trouble among the Sikhs," *North China Herald*, July 22, 1910; "The Sikh Police," *North China Herald*, Jan. 13, 1911; SMA, U1-1-936, Annual Report of the SMC, 1923, 27-28; "A Shanghai Sikh Feud," *North China Herald*, Apr. 10, 1926; "Sikhs in Shanghai," *North China Herald*, July 15, 1936.

⁶⁴⁸ Thampi, *Indians in China, 1800-1949*, 207. Indian National Association was established in 1930 with branches in Yokohama and Kobe. It had close contact with Rash Behari Bose, who later became the president of the IIL. This relationship could partly explain Jalal Rahman's appointment as the chairman of the IIL's Shanghai branch. For information of Indian National Association, see Office of Strategic Services U. S. Government Record Group 226, U. S. National Archives, Maryland, USA, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 223.

⁶⁴⁹ SMA, R36-12-22, "Meeting of Majha Sikhs," 14 July 1942.

that would speak for all Sikhs in Shanghai should be formed with equal numbers of representatives from both sides.⁶⁵⁰ The Majha Sikhs responded to this call of reconciliation with enthusiasm. A meeting of the Majha Sikhs in July 1942 seconded the plan to cooperate with the Malwa Sikhs.⁶⁵¹ The two sides acknowledged that the priority for the Sikhs in Shanghai was to find ways to address the wartime difficulties and to contribute to India's liberation.⁶⁵² On 22 August 1942, almost five hundred Indian inhabitants attended a conference that resolved to put all Indian organizations in Shanghai under the instruction of the IIL and INA.⁶⁵³

The INA in Crisis and the Hardship of Shanghai Sikhs

Just as the Sikhs in Shanghai were preparing to do their part for the independence struggle, the INA fell into a crisis. At the Bangkok Conference in June 1942, Rash Behari Bose was elected as the president of the IIL and Mohan Singh was appointed as the commander of the INA.⁶⁵⁴ Rash Behari Bose was born in Bengal in 1886. He had taken part in the conspiracy against the British in the Punjab during World War I. When the conspiracy fell apart, he fled to Japan and became one of the most prominent Indian nationalists there. It was believed that he maintained intimate relationship with the Japanese government.⁶⁵⁵ This connection, however, destroyed the trust

⁶⁵⁰ SMA, R36-12-22, "Activities of Malwa Khalsa Dhamik Diwan," 15 June 1942.

⁶⁵¹ SMA, R36-12-22, "Members of Majha Sikh Community," 6 July 1942.

⁶⁵² SMA, R36-12-22, "Meeting of the Majha Sikhs," 20 June 1942.

⁶⁵³ Office of Strategic Services Record Group 226 (Diet Library, Tokyo), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 241.

⁶⁵⁴ I.L.L. Papers 45/3, 20 June 1942 (National Archives of India), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 152.

⁶⁵⁵ For accounts of Rash Behari Bose' life, see Georges Ohsawa, *Two Great Indians in Japan: Sri Rash Behari Bose and Netaji Subhas Bose* (Calcutta: Sri KC Das, 1954); Joyce Lebra, *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971),

between Rash Behari Bose and Mohan Singh. Since the INA had been formed, Mohan Singh had harbored a suspicious attitude toward the sincerity of the Japanese government. He doubted that the Japanese wholeheartedly supported Indian independence, but believed instead that Japanese were just using the INA for propaganda and espionage purposes.⁶⁵⁶ Rash Behari Bose, in the eyes of Mohan Singh, was merely a puppet of the Japanese.⁶⁵⁷ This perception had been strengthened when the Japanese turned down Mohan Singh's request to expand the INA and refused to recognize the INA as a Japanese allied army with equal status.⁶⁵⁸ Convinced that the Japanese were exploiting him and the INA, Mohan Singh drafted a plan to dissolve the INA in December 1942.⁶⁵⁹ The open break between Mohan Singh and Rash Behari Bose and the former's denunciation against the Japanese eventually gave rise to his arrest by the Japanese on 29 December 1942.⁶⁶⁰

The rivalry greatly weakened the INA's legitimacy and marred the morale of its soldiers.⁶⁶¹ By February 1943, there remained just 8, 000 soldiers in the INA compared to the 45, 000-strong during Mohan Singh's time.⁶⁶² Furthermore, many local branches of the IIL and INA, including the one in

48-51; Eri Hotta, "Rash Behari Bose and His Japanese Supporters: An Insight into Anti-colonial Nationalism and Pan-Asianism," *Interventions* 1 (2006): 116-132.

⁶⁵⁶ Mohan Singh had adequate reasons to doubt the intention of the Japanese. When Indian soldiers mutinied in Singapore in 1915, the Japanese did not show their support to the mutineers, but helped the British crush the rebellion, see Sho Kuwajima, *Indian Mutiny in Singapore, 1915* (Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 1991).

⁶⁵⁷ W. O. F. 208/810 (Public Record Office, London), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 280-281.

⁶⁵⁸ Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, 82-84.

⁶⁵⁹ I.L.L. Papers, File No. 45/3, 21 December 1942 (NAI), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 234-235.

⁶⁶⁰ I.L.L. Papers, File No. 45/3, 29 December 1942 (NAI), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 248-253.

⁶⁶¹ Krishan Raj Palta, *My Adventures with the INA* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), 49-57; Amil Chandra Chatterji, *India's Struggle for Freedom* (Calcutta: Chatterji & Company, 1946), 151-154.

⁶⁶² Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, 98.

Shanghai, lost their leadership and support in early 1943.⁶⁶³ At the same time, the Japanese army suffered heavy losses, firstly on the Midway Island, and then in Guadalcanal. The deteriorating military situation diverted Tokyo's attention from Indian affairs. The loss of the Japanese support and the division of the INA shattered the livelihoods of the Sikh communities in Shanghai.

Hyperinflation hit Shanghai by the end of 1942 when the Japanese confiscated most foodstuffs and fuels for military use.⁶⁶⁴ From 1942 to 1943, the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) in Shanghai increased by more than three times.⁶⁶⁵ In early 1943, rationing had been imposed on all Shanghai inhabitants to alleviate the shortage of materials.⁶⁶⁶ It was stipulated that each Indian in Shanghai could only purchase twenty pounds of flour each month.⁶⁶⁷ Not only was the amount of the staple not sufficient for an adult to live on for a month, but the flour was also set at an extremely high price, almost \$2 per pound in 1943.⁶⁶⁸ To buy sufficient ration of flour, an Indian had to spend at least \$40. Given the fact that the allowance in lieu of rations for one Sikh policeman was a mere \$30 (\$60 for married men) per month, many Sikhs suffered greatly.⁶⁶⁹ It was not until July 1943 when Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Asia and the INA movement regained its momentum that the

⁶⁶³ Ibid, 100.

⁶⁶⁴ "Shixing canzhanhou gonggu jinrong fangzhen" (Implementing the policy to strengthen the financial market after declaring the war), *Shenbao*, 13 Jan. 1943; "Neidi tongyi shougou" (Government procurement in inland), *Shenbao*, 20 Jan. 1943; "Dangju jimou anding wujia" (The authority tried to fix the commodity price), *Shenbao*, 26 Jan. 1943.

⁶⁶⁵ Institute of Economics, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, ed., *Shanghai jiefang qianhou wujia ziliao huibian* (Collection of the Commodity Price in Shanghai before and after the Liberation), (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1958), 47.

⁶⁶⁶ "Jiang shishi peijizhi" (Ration policy will be implemented), *Shenbao*, 17 Feb. 1943.

⁶⁶⁷ SMA, R22-1-155, "Flour Sales to Indians Only," 27 Aug. 1943.

⁶⁶⁸ "Gongbuju shangniandu wupingtongzhichu nianbao" (Annual Report of the Commodity Control Committee, Shanghai Municipal Council), *Shenbao*, 29 Jan. 1943. The currency here was fabi, issued by the Chinese Nationalist Government in 1935.

⁶⁶⁹ Since the Sikhs who were doing other jobs in Shanghai even did not have the allowance in lieu of rations, their condition had been even worse than the police staffs.

allowance for Shanghai's Sikh policemen was increased to \$300 (\$600 for married) per month.⁶⁷⁰

Subhas Chandra Bose and the Total Mobilization

In a talk with the Japanese agent Fujiwara Iwaichi in December 1941, Mohan Singh expressed great respect for an Indian nationalist called Subhas Chandra Bose. He believed that all Indians in Southeast and East Asia would unanimously place themselves under the leadership of Bose if he were to lead the INA.⁶⁷¹ At the Bangkok Conference of June 1942, all representatives agreed that Bose should be invited to lead the INA and requested the Japanese to bring him to Southeast Asia.⁶⁷²

Subhas Chandra Bose was born into a rich Bengali family in Cuttack, Orissa in 1897. In the 1920s, he became an active member of the Indian National Congress (INC) by participating in the civil disobedience movement.⁶⁷³ His personal charisma, dedication to the cause, and determination earned him great fame.⁶⁷⁴ Gradually, he began to embrace the radical strategy for India's independence--to confront the British Raj with violence.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁰ SMA, R22-2-506, "Indian Branch Allowance in Lieu of Rations," 22 Nov. 1943.

⁶⁷¹ Memoirs of Fujiwara Iwaichi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 323.

⁶⁷² I.I.L. Papers 45/3, 20 June 1942 (National Archives of India), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 1*, 158.

⁶⁷³ For the early life of Subhas Chandra Bose, see Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim: An Unfinished Autobiography and Collected Letters, 1897-1921* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965); Leonard Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

⁶⁷⁴ For Subhas Chandra Bose's ascendance in the INC, see Hugué Toye, *Subhas Chandra Bose: The Spring Tiger* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1959), 29-41.

⁶⁷⁵ Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1935-1942* (Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee & Company, 1952), 87-116; Shridhar Charan Sahoo, *Subhas Chandra Bose: Political Philosophy* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 1997).

As the Gandhian movement reached a point of stagnation in the late 1930s, Bose was elected as the president of the INC in 1938. At this time, he had already begun to regard fascism as the cure for India's independence and a path for later development.⁶⁷⁶ After the outbreak of World War II in Europe, he further counted on the hope of the liberation with the assistance of the Axis power.⁶⁷⁷ He was arrested in Calcutta in July 1940 under the charges of sedition. With the help of his followers, Bose fled to Berlin through Kabul in early 1941. In Berlin, however, he was disappointed that Hitler did not want to contribute much to the struggle of India.⁶⁷⁸ Instead, Japan, frustrated over the factionalism of the INA, was desperately looking for someone who could reunite Indians in Southeast and East Asia. Bose was the perfect answer.⁶⁷⁹

After several rounds of discussions, all sides agreed to transport Bose from Germany to Japan in early 1943. In February 1943, Bose boarded a German submarine and sailed to Madagascar where he was transferred to a Japanese submarine. The submarine took Bose to Sabang Island, North Sumatra before he left for Tokyo by aircraft in May 1943.⁶⁸⁰

After successfully securing the commitment of all-out aid to the Indian independence movement from the Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo in Tokyo, Bose moved to Singapore in July 1943 to take over the leadership of

⁶⁷⁶ Hira Lal Seth, *Personality and Political Ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose: Is He Fascist?* (Lahore: Hero Publications, 1943).

⁶⁷⁷ Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981).

⁶⁷⁸ Hitler was preoccupied by the war against the Soviet Union at that time and thus had few interest in opening a new frontline in Asia.

⁶⁷⁹ H. N. Pandit, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: From Kabul to the Battle of Imphal* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1988), 1-13, 89-98.

⁶⁸⁰ For Subhas Chandra Bose's travel from Germany to Japan, see Sisir Kuma Bose, Alexander Werth, and S. A. Ayer, *A Beacon across Asia: A Biography of Subhas Chandra Bose* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1973), 158-164; Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj*, 488-492.

the IIL and INA.⁶⁸¹ While he was still in Tokyo, Bose had stressed that the freedom of India could only be earned through sacrifice and that to achieve that goal all Indians should actively participate in the war against the British.⁶⁸² In Singapore, he again called upon Indians overseas to put in their maximum effort. In order to legitimize the movement and coordinate support, Bose decided to set up the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind).⁶⁸³ Through the mechanism of the Azad Hind, Bose intended to mobilize all available resources, including money and manpower, of Indians living in Southeast and East Asia for the fight against the Raj. In his own words, it was a “total mobilization for a total war”.⁶⁸⁴



Figure 25. Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting the INA soldiers in Singapore, 1943 (Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore).

⁶⁸¹ K. S. Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia* (Amritsar: Singh Bros, 1947), 11.

⁶⁸² Narayana Menon, ed., *On to Delhi: Speeches and Writings of Subhas Chandra Bose* (Bangkok: Indian Independence League, 1944), 15-17; Sisir Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Chalo Delhi: Writings and Speeches 1943-1945* (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 2007), 27.

⁶⁸³ The Azad Hind government was formally declared in Singapore in October 1943. The IIL and its branches were not abandoned but thereafter affiliated with the Azad Hind government, see Sisir Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Chalo Delhi*, 108-120.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 54.

To fully implement the mobilization policy, the Azad Hind government reactivated the Indian diasporic network that had previously been used by various kinds of migrants and revolutionaries. By early 1944, a network based on the flow of mobilization strategies, recruits, donated materials, and training institutes had been formed in Southeast and East Asia.

Since August 1943, local officers of the IIL branches had been summoned to Singapore to learn about the mobilization strategies. They were told to seize every opportunity to organize mass gatherings, whether these be birthdays of certain national heroes or anniversaries of some political events, so as to promulgate the aims and ideologies of the Azad Hind government. In Hong Kong, meetings to celebrate the Baisakhi Festival, Azad Hind Day, the Commencement of the First Fight of the INA, and Netaji Week were launched consecutively from February to July 1944. All local Indians were required to attend these events as nationalist leaflets were distributed and patriotic speeches were delivered.⁶⁸⁵ The Azad Hind Day and Netaji Week celebrations were also held in Saigon where thousand of Indians living in southern Vietnam attended.⁶⁸⁶ In Rangoon, Indian inhabitants were called out by the IIL branch to celebrate the independence of Burma and were encouraged to struggle for the independence of India.⁶⁸⁷ Almost all Indians in Bangkok were rallied to pay their respects to the national flag of the Azad Hind government in October 1943.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁵ Office of Strategic Services Record Group 226 (Diet Library, Tokyo), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 242-245.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 277.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 252-253.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 272.



Figure 26. Mass gathering initiated by the INA in Singapore, 1944 (Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore).

The efforts of this mobilization gradually bore fruit as donations flooded in for the Azad Hind government. For example, Indians in Saigon contributed 2, 500, 000 rupees to the INA in November 1943.⁶⁸⁹ In Malacca, the contribution reached more than 360, 000 yen,⁶⁹⁰ and the Manila branch of the IIL collected 100, 000 pesos among Indians in the Philippines.⁶⁹¹

In addition to collecting funding, the priority of the mobilization project was to strengthen the INA. In other words, Bose needed to recruit more soldiers. To achieve this goal, the Department of Recruitment was set up to recruit Indians in Southeast and East Asia in a systematic way. The chairman of each IIL branch was automatically appointed as the recruiting officer of his own area. Recruiting officers were encouraged to enlist all able-bodied men into the unit. There was even no age-restriction for recruits applying for

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid, 276.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid, 289.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid, 323.

enlistment. To systemize the recruitment, all applicants were registered and medically checked. The particulars of the recruits were also required to be forwarded to the headquarters of the INA for the total coordination of manpower.⁶⁹² The newly recruited civilians, however, needed to be trained before formally being enlisted into the army. The Department of Training was thereby established to provide military training for recruits.⁶⁹³

Between late 1943 and early 1944, INA training schools and camps sprang up in Rangoon (Goashala Training School), Kuala Lumpur (Bharat Youth's Training Centre), Bangkok (Bangkok Training School), Shanghai (Shanghai Training School) and some other Asian cities. INA instructors who received advanced training in the Azad School in Singapore were dispatched to local branches to take charge of the training. After three months of intensive training, recruits were transported to the front in the borderland between Burma and India.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹² Sisir Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Chalo Delhi*, 61-65.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

⁶⁹⁴ Intelligence Summary, General Headquarters-India File No. 6017668/Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 2*, 321-325.

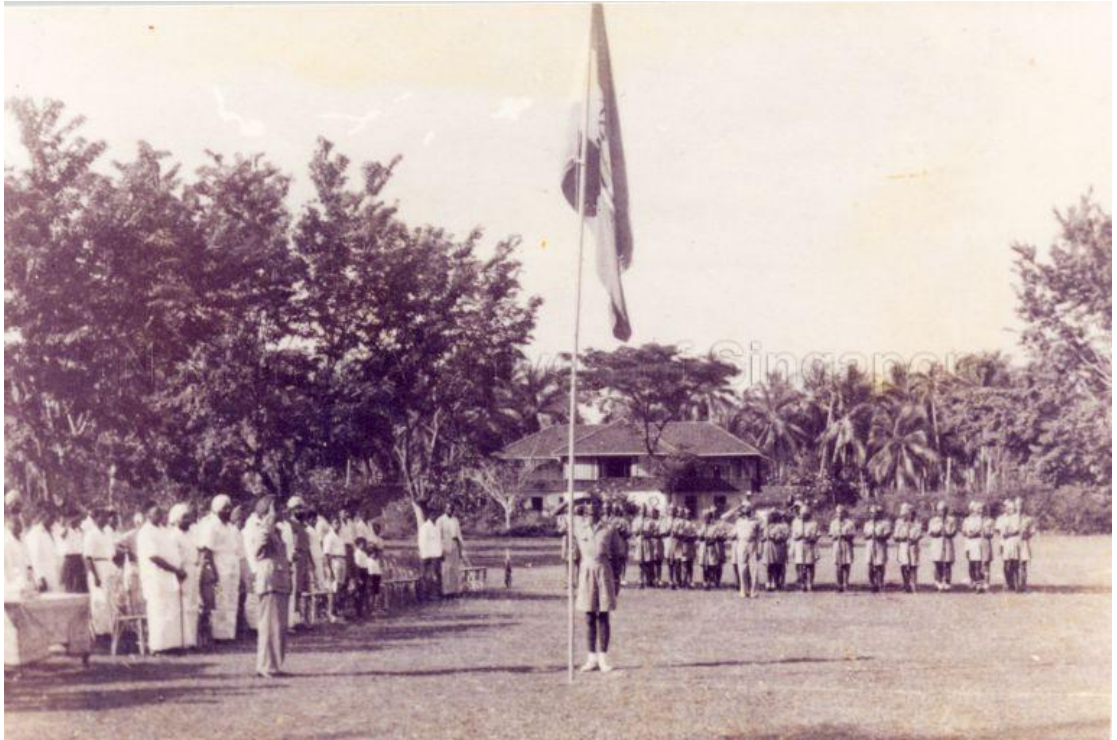


Figure 27. The INA training school (Azad School) in Singapore, 1944 (Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore).

The Mobilization of the Sikhs in Shanghai

In November 1943, Bose paid a visit to China at the invitation of the president of the Republic of China (the so-called Nanjing Puppet Regime by the GMD wartime government in Chongqing), Wang Jingwei. In Nanjing and Shanghai, he met leaders of the Nanjing regime, broadcasted propaganda to Chongqing, made speeches to the Indians living in China, and visited an INA camp.⁶⁹⁵ Addressing the Sikh community in Shanghai, Bose encouraged them to make use of Shanghai's position as the nerve center of communications in Asia and to work hard for Indian independence.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ For Bose's activities in China, see SMA, R2-1-93, 12 Nov. 1943; "Huanying baosi zhuxi" (Welcome President Bose), *Shenbao*, 18 Nov. 1943; "Shoudu minzhong zuo juxing huanying baosishi dahui" (Mass meeting was held in the Capital for greeting Bose), *Shenbao*, 20 Nov. 1943; "Baosi zhuxi zuo youjingdihu" (President Bose arrived in Shanghai from Nanjing yesterday), *Shenbao*, 22 Nov. 1943.

⁶⁹⁶ Thampi, *Indians in China, 1800-1949*, 207.

From the perspective of the Allied forces, Shanghai was by no means a nerve-center of communications between 1941 and 1945. Links from Shanghai to inland China, Europe, and North America were all cut off. Nevertheless, this judgment was only one side of the story. From the perspective of the Japanese, Shanghai was still closely connected to the sphere of the Japanese Empire. Meanwhile, from the perspective of Bose, Shanghai was a crucial site for the mobilization project of the Azad Hind government that rode on the Indian diasporic network in Southeast and East Asia.

Since the very beginning of the total mobilization, the flow of the mobilization strategies, the recruits, and the training institutes in the network had greatly influenced Shanghai's Sikh community. In July 1943, the chairman of the IIL's Shanghai branch visited Singapore to study how to mobilize the population.⁶⁹⁷ Mass meetings had been frequently launched since then. In January 1944, Indians in Shanghai were required to attend a ceremony for the birthday of Subhas Chandra Bose. The heroic deeds of Bose had been read to the public and a call for contribution to the INA had also been made.⁶⁹⁸ When the INA helped the Japanese army capture Imphal in April 1944, a rally was organized to celebrate this victory. Anti-British slogans were shouted and the bravery of INA soldiers was retold.⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, to demonstrate the military strength of the independence movement, local INA recruits often paraded 200-300 strong and fully armed through the main streets of Shanghai. Indian residents were ordered to stand alongside the streets to cheer the

⁶⁹⁷ Office of Strategic Services Record Group 226 (Diet Library, Tokyo), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 246.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 249.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 248.

march.⁷⁰⁰ One of the most dramatic mobilizations happened on 21 November 1943 when Bose visited Shanghai. In the afternoon of that day, the whole Indian community (amounting to 2, 000 people) in Shanghai assembled in the Grand Cinema (one of Shanghai's largest and best-known cinemas) to welcome Bose's arrival. Attendants were required to sing the anthem of the Azad Hind government and to chant slogans supporting Indian independence. Bose highly praised the effort made by Indians in Shanghai for the enterprise of Indian independence and called for more monetary and manpower contributions.⁷⁰¹ As a response to the appeal, all Indian nationals in Shanghai were required to join the IIL and to be enrolled into the reserve of the INA. The IIL branch in Shanghai even ruled that those who failed to register in time would be deprived of the right to obtain food rations and to conduct business.⁷⁰²

To train the enrolled civilians into soldiers, a training camp was indispensable. In February 1944, a party of ten INA instructors, led by Captain Boo Narain, left Singapore for Shanghai. Their task was to establish a training camp in Shanghai.⁷⁰³ In fact, the Azad School in Singapore, which was responsible for training these instructors, had set a guideline on how to set up training schools and how to instruct civilians. The INA training schools in Rangoon, Saigon, Bangkok, and Hong Kong all followed the same guidelines.

⁷⁰⁰ SMA, R1-18-441, from Mackoff to the Mayor of Shanghai, 21 Jan. 1945.

⁷⁰¹ "Baosi zhuxi zuo youjingdihu" (President Bose arrived in Shanghai from Nanjing yesterday), *Shenbao*, 22 Nov. 1943.

⁷⁰² Office of Strategic Services Record Group 226 (Diet Library, Tokyo), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 196, 246; Foreign and Political Department File No. 83-X/1944 (National Archives of India, New Delhi), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 2*, 200.

⁷⁰³ Intelligence Summary, General Headquarters-India File No. 6017668/Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 2*, 325.

By the time the instructors arrived in Shanghai, the institutional structure and training syllabus guidelines had also been introduced.⁷⁰⁴

The camp was opened in Baoshan Road, Zhabei District in June 1944.⁷⁰⁵ Captain Narain selected around three hundred people, most of whom were dismissed Sikh policemen and watchmen.⁷⁰⁶ Rations and uniforms were provided to all trainees for free. The training lasted for three months, and in the first two months, trainees learned tasks such as digging trenches, wiring, and rafting. They were also required to study the geography of the Indo-Burmese border, where they would be sent after the training was over. Tactics such as advance, rear and flank guards, outposts, street fighting, night work, and jungle warfare were taught according to the INA textbooks brought from Singapore. In the third month, weapon training was introduced. Although rifles and machine guns were secured from the Japanese army, not a single bullet was distributed to the camp, since trainees were only instructed to be familiar with different parts of the rifle and none were ever fired there.⁷⁰⁷

The End of a Legend

Ultimately, however, no trainees were taken to the front in the Indo-Burmese borderland, owing to the lack of available transportation at a time when the situation in the War was turning against the Japanese. Since January 1944, the headquarters of the INA had been moved from Singapore to

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, 321.

⁷⁰⁵ “Ziyouyinjun xunlianying juxing ruyingli” (Opening ceremony of the INA training camp), *Shenbao*, 21 June 1944.

⁷⁰⁶ SMA, R1-18-441, from Mai Kefu to Zhou Fohai, 21 Feb. 1945.

⁷⁰⁷ SMA, R1-18-441, from Zhou Fohai to Mai Kefu, 18 Apr. 1944; Intelligence Summary, General Headquarters-India File No. 6017668/Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 2*, 321-324; Office of Strategic Services Record Group 226 (Diet Library, Tokyo), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 247.

Rangoon to prepare for the upcoming planned military campaigns in India.⁷⁰⁸ In the spring of 1944, the Japanese Burma Area Army hatched a plan to destroy the Allied forces in the city of Imphal, the capital of the state of Manipur in northeast India, in order to strengthen the defense of Burma.⁷⁰⁹ Almost all INA troops were called to Burma to join hands with the Japanese.⁷¹⁰ In February 1944, the INA crossed onto Indian soil from the Arakan and the Imphal borders. While the attack was initially successful, the Japanese and the INA suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Allied air forces and were driven back to Burma in May 1944.⁷¹¹ The INA never took any subsequent active military action. As the Allied forces made their way into Burma in early 1945, the INA troops either surrendered or disbanded.

Knowing that the Japanese could no longer be counted on, Bose turned to the Soviet Union. He assumed that the possible conflict between the Soviet Union and Britain after World War II could be utilized to aid India's independence. In May 1945, Bose had already harbored a plan to move all INA units to China before ultimately taking them to the Soviet Union. He even gave orders to strengthen the INA branch in Shanghai to prepare for the coming of his soldiers.⁷¹² This scheme, however, was never put into action as the Japanese surrendered just months later.

When Bose heard the news of the Japanese surrender on 16 August 1945, he hurried to Saigon from Singapore. The commander of the Japanese army in Southeast Asia Hisaichi Terauchi then arranged a plane for Bose to fly to

⁷⁰⁸ Sisir Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Chalo Delhi*, 172.

⁷⁰⁹ Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, 166-168.

⁷¹⁰ W.O. 203/803 (Public Record of Office, London), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 3*, 79-84.

⁷¹¹ Pandit, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, 261-292.

⁷¹² Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, 194.

Dalian, Manchuria, where Bose could establish contact with the Russians. Due to the failure of the engine, the plane crashed in Taipei on 18 August 1945. Bose was seriously injured and died in hospital later that day.⁷¹³

The sudden death of Bose marked the end of the INA movement. INA officers in Shanghai were arrested by the Chinese authorities.⁷¹⁴ In the court, they were accused of collaborating with the Japanese, making pro-Japanese speeches in public, and using their positions to extort money from their fellow Indians in Shanghai. Three ex-SMP Sikh police officers were also brought to the court to give their testimonies of how they were framed and prosecuted by these collaborators. However, all accused refused to plea guilty and insisted that their collaboration with the Japanese was not against the Chinese but for the national liberation of India.⁷¹⁵ They were then repatriated to India as war criminals and detained in the Red Fort, Delhi. However, due to great pressure from the Indian public who saw the INA fighters as national heroes, the Government of India released all detainees on the eve of India's independence.⁷¹⁶

The lives of ordinary Sikh residents did not improve much after the War. Since the SMC had ceased to exist, the Sikhs, who were mostly employed by the SMC as policemen and watchmen, lost their jobs. The rising Chinese nationalism further blocked any prospect of securing a job, as employers no longer dared to employ foreign policemen and watchmen on Chinese

⁷¹³ W. O. 208/863 (P.R.O., London), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 5*, 19-21.

⁷¹⁴ “Sanjianan kaisheng” (The opening of three treason cases), *Shenbao*, 1 May 1946.

⁷¹⁵ “Yinjian liangming zaidu kaisheng” (The retrial of the case of two Indian traitors), *Shenbao*, 15 May 1946.

⁷¹⁶ Office of the Strategic Services, Record Group No. 226 (U.S. National Archives, Maryland), in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 5*, 53-54.

territory.⁷¹⁷ The hardships that the Sikh community faced in Shanghai even drew the attention of the Government of India. Lacking a better solution to address this issue, the Government of India decided to repatriate these Indian nationals. By the end of 1946, almost all Sikhs in Shanghai had left for India. The legend of the Sikhs of Shanghai had come to an end.⁷¹⁸

Conclusion

In 1884, the International Settlement of Shanghai was under danger as anti-foreign sentiment had been inflamed by the Sino-French War. The SMC made the decision to employ some forty Sikhs to strengthen its police force. This was arguably the commencement of the Sikh existence in Shanghai.⁷¹⁹ In the first decade of the twentieth century, influenced by the fever of migrations to North America, many Sikhs left Shanghai to pursue their dream on the other side of the Pacific. During World War I, the North America-based Ghadar Party infiltrated the Sikh community in Shanghai and used Shanghai as the transferring center for its revolutionary activities. In the 1920s, a remarkable number of Shanghai Sikhs were involved in the Chinese nationalist revolution. During the Pacific War, the INA movement gradually militarized the entire Sikh community in Shanghai in support of the Japanese occupation forces.

Previous studies tend to take the Sikh experience in Shanghai as a local story.⁷²⁰ As is shown above, however, the local community was constantly influenced by and participated in what was happening in the outside world.

⁷¹⁷ Thampi, *Indians in China, 1800-1949*, 218.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*, 219.

⁷¹⁹ Jackson, "The Raj on Nanjing Road".

⁷²⁰ Markovits, "Indian Communities in China, 1842-1949," 66-75; Shi Meiding, *Shanghai Zujiezhì*; Thampi, *Indians in China, 1800-1949*.

This interconnection sheds light on the mechanism of the Indian diasporic network. This network had not only been employed by the migrants for pursuing a better livelihood, but had also been utilized by nationalists and revolutionaries in their struggle for the independence of their motherland. Nevertheless, current scholarship of the INA rarely takes the diasporic network into account.

To date, there exist a rich body of literature on the INA. In addition to memoirs written by ex-INA members, historians have brought out a large number of publications on the INA'S history.⁷²¹ Topics such as the origin of the INA, the trajectory of its development, its reorganization presided by Subhas Chandra Bose, its campaigns in Burma, and the ultimate trial in the Red Fort have all been well studied. Furthermore, scholars have long tried to figure out the effect and nature of the INA. Although no one doubts that the military effect of the INA was not impressive, some practitioners contend that the INA has left a significant legacy on the post-independence India.⁷²² For the nature of this movement, some insist that the INA was purely a product of a rising nationalism among Indian population overseas, while others incline

⁷²¹ For memoirs about the INA, see Shri Moti Ram, *Two Historic Trials in the Red Fort* (New Delhi: Roxy Printing Press, 1946); Fujiwara Iwaichi, *F.Kikan: Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia in WW II* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1983); Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon, *From My Bones: Memoirs of Col. Gurbakhsh Singh Dhillon of the Indian National Army* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1988); Palta, *My Adventures with the INA*; Chatterji, *India's Struggle for Freedom*; Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia*; N. S. Gill, *Story of the INA* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

⁷²² Ghosh, *The Indian National Army, 198-251*; Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence, 1942-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

toward highlighting the role that the Japanese played in the course of the movement.⁷²³

Whether or not Indians joined the INA voluntarily, more than 40, 000 soldiers were in the INA force at its peak.⁷²⁴ Furthermore, training camps were established in Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai when hundreds of thousands of civilians were put into barracks.⁷²⁵ Given the diversified backgrounds of the various Indian communities in this area and their geographical separateness, it seems unlikely for the INA to have coordinated so many different elements and to have appropriated them into one unified agenda. Through what means, then, could such a large-scale mobilization have been achieved? As this chapter shows, it was the Sikh diasporic network that facilitated the mobilization work of the INA in Shanghai. It further illustrates how the flow of ideas, INA officers, and training institutes in Southeast and East Asia transformed the lives of Shanghai Sikhs during the War.

The existence of the INA in wartime Shanghai also opens up a new window for us to understand Shanghai's history as a whole. Since the Japanese troops occupied most parts of Shanghai in November 1937, this metropolis, and the French concession and the International Settlement in particular, had been described as the "lone islet" (*Gudao*).⁷²⁶ This term implies

⁷²³ Joyce Lebra, *Japanese-trained Armies in Southeast Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, xi-xiv; Joyce Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

⁷²⁴ War Office 208/868, 12 May, 1946, in *Indian National Army: A Documentary Study Vol. 5*, 347.

⁷²⁵ S. A. Das and K. B. Subbaiah, *Chalo Delhi: An Historical Account of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur, 1946), 149-156.

⁷²⁶ Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Besieged, 1937-45," in *Wartime Shanghai*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (New York: Routledge, 1998), 3-5. Frederic Wakeman Jr. uses the term "isolated island" to describe the condition of the wartime Shanghai, see Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Shanghai*

that Shanghai, then the economic, political, and cultural center of China, had been left behind and cut off from other parts of the country and the outside world. Yet, as Poshek Fu points out, the rhetorical use of the term “lone islet” by contemporaries might have been a means to shield the Shanghai inhabitants from any accusations of having collaborated with the Japanese.⁷²⁷ Shanghai was by no means a “lone islet” as capital, smuggled commodities, refugees, and intelligence agents continued to flow in and out of the city between 1938 and 1941.⁷²⁸ As Japan took over the International Settlement in December 1941, however, the situation deteriorated dramatically. The outbreak of the Pacific War blocked most traffic to and from Shanghai. Foreign residents were either detained in prisons or flocked into refugee camps.⁷²⁹ Supplies and their sources had been confiscated for military use. The shortage of fuel, food, and commodities became a daily experience.⁷³⁰ To date, most scholars agree that Shanghai suffered a very dark and isolated period from the end of 1941 to August 1945.⁷³¹ Relevant studies have explored how the condition of isolation

Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937-1941 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

⁷²⁷ Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁷²⁸ Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh, eds., *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5; Christian Henriot, “Regeneration and Mobility: The Special Dynamics of Industries in Wartime Shanghai,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 38 (2012): 167-180.

⁷²⁹ Margaret Blair, *Gudao, Lone Islet: The War Years of Shanghai* (Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, 2008); Irene Eber, *Jewish Exiles in Wartime China: Voices from Shanghai* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008); Marcia Ristaino, *The Jacquinet Safe Zone: Wartime Refugees in Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Irene Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Coexistence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). Some foreign residents chose to resist or collaborate with the Japanese, see Bernard Wasserstein, “Ambiguities of Occupation: Foreign Resisters and Collaborators in Wartime Shanghai,” in *Wartime Shanghai*, ed., Wen-hsin Yeh (New York: Routledge, 1998), 24-41.

⁷³⁰ Arthur Young, *China's Wartime Finance and Inflation, 1937-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Christian Henriot, “Rice, Power and People: The Politics of Food Supply in Wartime Shanghai,” *Twentieth-Century China* 1 (2000): 41-84.

⁷³¹ Wen-hsin Yeh, “Shanghai Besieged, 1937-45,” 10-14.

and the political and economic hardship reshaped the landscape of Shanghai and the mentality of its inhabitants.⁷³²

This chapter demonstrates that this experience of isolation is just one aspect of the history. Whereas Shanghai had been detached from the Anglo-American oriented network since the end of 1941, it had been relocated into the Japanese imperial network by early 1942. Connections between Shanghai and Japan had never stopped. Old links between Shanghai and Southeast Asia had been revived in order to facilitate the flow of materials and manpower for Japan's war effort.⁷³³ Extracted sources from remote parts of China were transported to Japan through the port of Shanghai.⁷³⁴ Japanese soldiers were taken there before furthering their march to other parts of China. Veterans who had rich experience in the battlefields of China were called back to Shanghai before being dispatched to the Pacific islands or Burma.⁷³⁵ In this sense, our previous understanding of Shanghai as a fortified prison during the Pacific War is only partly correct. From the perspective of the contemporary Japanese, Shanghai was still well connected with the outside world, and so did the INA.

⁷³² Poshek Fu, "The Ambiguity of Entertainment: Chinese in Japanese Occupied Shanghai, 1941-1945," *Cinema Journal* 1 (1997): 66-84; Frederic Wakeman Jr., "Shanghai Smuggling," in *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation*, eds., Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116-156; Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration*.

⁷³³ Alfred McCoy, ed., *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (New Heaven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1980); William Newell, ed., *Japan in Asia, 1942-1945* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981); P. Kratoska, ed., *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in South-East Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Ooi Keat Gin, ed., *Japanese Empire in the Tropics* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1998); Nicholas Tarling, *A Sudden Rampage: The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, 1941-1945* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), 218-249.

⁷³⁴ Maj Gurcharan, *Japanese Offensive* (Jalandhar: ABS Publications, 1990), 7-8; Paul Kratoska, *Asian Labor in the Wartime Japanese Empire* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006).

⁷³⁵ Saburo Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1959), 146; Saburo Hayashi, *Kogun: The Japanese Army in the Pacific War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978); Harry Gailey, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1995), 120; Edward Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 26-41; Bernard Edwards, *Japan's Blitzkrieg: The Rout of Allied Forces in the Far East 1941-42* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2006).

Historians nowadays are accustomed to taking the victors' perspective to interpret the past.⁷³⁶ So it was therefore generally accepted that Shanghai was rightly described as a lone islet, even if its communications with Tokyo, Saigon, Singapore, Bangkok, and Rangoon had never stopped during the War. From the perspectives of the Japanese and the INA, however, this story might be told in quite another way.

⁷³⁶ In Japan, revisionist views on this victors' history have frequently been put forward, although sometimes these views are highly politicalized, see Peter Cave, "Japanese Colonialism and the Asia-Pacific War in Japan's History Textbooks: Changing Representations and Their Causes," *Modern Asian Studies* 2 (2013): 542-580.

Conclusion

Circulation, Networks, and Subalterns in Global History

In the mystery/thriller film *Shanghai* (2010), directed by Mikael Hafstrom, an American agent comes to Shanghai in October 1941 to investigate the death of one of his friends. When the American lands on the Bund, the footage shows some turbaned Sikh policemen on the street, while the subtitle at that moment describes Shanghai as a city full of Chinese, British, French, Japanese, and American residents. The figures of the Sikh policemen appear in that film for only two or three seconds, without any lines. They stand far away in the background and act as part of the voiceless landscape. Indeed, countless literary, historical, and video productions about modern Shanghai nowadays have some turbaned Sikhs in their backdrops, an effort to make their depictions of Shanghai closer to the historical reality.⁷³⁷ However, with a few exceptions, most productions, like Mikael Hafstrom's film, merely take Sikhs as a colorful part of the exotic Orientalized landscape of cosmopolitan Shanghai. This image of Sikhs is widely circulated, while the actual history of how they ended up there has rarely been seriously probed.

The marginalization of the history of the Sikhs in Shanghai sheds light on the hegemony of imperial and national historiographies. In the twentieth century, imperial history was obsessed with studies that focused on how metropolises in Europe transformed the political institutions, socio-economic structures, and cultural landscapes of colonies and colonized people. The colonized have been viewed as backward, superstitious, and passive subjects

⁷³⁷ In this sense, Sikhs were implicitly involved into the locality production process of Shanghai, see Appadurai, "The Production of Locality".

that could only be activated by the stimulations from the West. In recent decades, however, imperial historians have set out to review this one-way impact-response perspective, and explored how the colonies and the colonized changed the metropolises politically, socio-economically, and culturally. To date, it is widely agreed that colonial empires were mutually constructed. Interactions between metropolises and colonies shaped their main features and influenced their historical processes. Although this revisionist approach has tried to recover the subjectivity of the colonized, the colonized were still bound with the metropolises. In Dipesh Chakrabarty's words, the history of the metropole is the master narrative, while the histories of the colonies are varieties that are always related to, if not influenced by, the metropole.⁷³⁸ Interconnections between colonies and colonized have largely been neglected in imperial history. For example, the experiences of the colonized, such as the figures of Isser Singh and Buddha Singh described in this thesis, cannot be appropriated into the metropole-colony framework of imperial history. Even though Isser Singh and Buddha Singh were colonized subjects, worked for the British authorities, and travelled across the British Empire, their experiences were unrelated to the metropole, Britain in this case. Neither did they travel to Britain, and nor did their adventures shed light on or influence contemporary British society. Instead, the two episodes demonstrate how British colonies and settlements in Asia were connected, and how the colonized made use of the facilities of the empire to pursue their own interests.

The topic of the Sikh community in modern Shanghai cannot be confused with national history either. As Presenjit Duara points out, the craze for

⁷³⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts," *Representations* 37 (1992): 1-26.

national historical writing is both the driving force and the consequence of the nation-building process. The approach to take history as the exclusive property of a certain single community or entity has gradually hegemonized most historical writings during the modern era.⁷³⁹ Ranajit Guha further elaborates that the national historiography has for a long time been dominated by national elites after the decolonization.⁷⁴⁰ As a result, histories that are viewed as useful for the nation-building process and the interests of bourgeois-nationalist elitism have been appropriated into the national framework with a linear and an evolutionary temporality, while those that are unsuitable for these agendas have either been distorted, erased, or forgotten.⁷⁴¹ Since the Sikh migrants in Shanghai were subalterns that had nothing to do with elite politics in India and China, their history has largely been distorted and forgotten in both countries.

To transcend the limitations of imperial and national historiographies, alternative methodologies have been tried. One solution is to expand the scale of the research to the transnational or global level. To date, the “transnational turn” can be detected in almost all fields of historical studies. Historians are ready to break the metropole-colony binary and the boundaries of nation-states, and to demonstrate that histories of different communities are entangled and interconnected. This thesis is inspired by these entangled and connected histories, and takes the concept of circulation and network as a priority to address three aspects of this study, namely Sikh policemen in imperial history,

⁷³⁹ Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 1-16.

⁷⁴⁰ Ranajit Guha, *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xiv.

⁷⁴¹ Gyan Prakash, “AHR Forum: Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 1475-1490; Paul Cohen, *History and Popular Memory: The Power of Story in Moments of Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

the Sikh diaspora during the colonial period, and the Sikh community in modern Shanghai.

From the aspect of imperial history, this thesis argues that the British Empire was not only a bi-linear structure that linked the metropole with colonies, but also a global-scale network that facilitated the circulation of personnel, institutions, and information among colonies and settlements. It was the circulation of publications and colonial officers across the British Empire that disseminated the martial race ideology from India to other British colonies and settlements from the 1860s onwards. In Southeast and East Asia, Hong Kong became the first colony to introduce Sikhs into its police unit. The institutions, recruiting patterns, and management rules of Hong Kong's Sikh branch were then imitated by the colonial authorities in Singapore in 1880, although Singapore was closer to the metropole geographically. As Shanghai was gradually integrated into the British imperial network, information about the Sikh police units in Singapore and Hong Kong also flowed to this Chinese treaty port and impressed the local authorities. Based on Hong Kong's model, the SMP set out to employ Sikhs in 1884. Interactions between the SMC, colonial authorities in Hong Kong and Singapore, and the Government of India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constantly influenced the recruitment, accommodation, and training of Sikh policemen in Shanghai. In the 1920s, Shanghai became the node of the Indian nationalist movement in East Asia. To check Sikh revolutionaries and anti-British publications, the SMC joined a surveillance network that connected British authorities in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and India to share intelligence and conduct collaborative operations. This cross-boundary collaboration greatly restricted

the Indian nationalist movement in East Asia until the outbreak of the Pacific War. All the above has illustrated the intra-dynamics among colonies and settlements such as India, Hong Kong, and Shanghai played central roles in creating and spreading colonial knowledge and institutions.

The concept of circulation and network has also been employed to uncover the process of the Sikh diaspora during the colonial period. Similar as imperial history, studies of the Sikh diaspora are obsessed with the motherland-settlement binary, a derivative of the center-periphery paradigm. This thesis demonstrates that the Sikh diaspora was by no means a linear process that only consisted of the starting point and the destinations, but a network that connected various overseas settlements and the hometown. Modern telecommunications expedited the circulation of information and provided Sikh peasants such as Isser Singh with access to updated news about working opportunities overseas. With the help of shipping lines that connected ports across Asia, Sikh migrants travelled extensively. Modern telecommunication and transportation therefore facilitated the formation of a Sikh diasporic network. When the information about good pay in Shanghai and North America reached Sikh migrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the network was then mobilized by Sikhs for their emigrations.

In terms of modern Shanghai history, this thesis transcends the China-based paradigm and seeks to position Shanghai in the Sikh diasporic network and British imperial network. It shows that the SMC had long maintained close relationships with British colonies in Asia, Hong Kong in particular. In its early years, the SMC took Hong Kong as a model to build its own

administrative institutions. Facing encroaching danger during the Sino-French War in 1884, the SMC strengthened its police force by establishing a Sikh branch, which was modeled on the Sikh branch of the Hong Kong Police. In order to recruit qualified Sikh policemen, the SMC engaged in a salary war with Hong Kong and Singapore. Thanks to its better pay, Shanghai became the favorite for most Sikh migrants by the turn of the twentieth century, and thereby harbored one of the largest Sikh communities in East Asia. For this reason, the North America-based Ghadar Party used Shanghai as the forward base of its anti-British struggle in the 1910s and 1920s. The circulation of revolutionaries, seditious publications, weapons, and funding between Shanghai and other Asian cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, and Bangkok shaped the main features of the Ghadar Movement. During the Pacific War, the Indian National Army (INA) employed the network that connected Shanghai's Sikh community with those in other Asian cities to implement its full mobilization project. INA instructors were dispatched to Shanghai to train newly recruited Sikhs, and money collected from local Sikh communities was transported to Southeast Asia to support the INA's war effort.

In the process of examining these aspects, cross-boundary circulation has been highlighted. The circulation of the martial race ideology, British colonial officers, and Sikh police institutions led to the setting up of the Sikh police unit in Shanghai. The circulation of Sikh migrants, information about job opportunities, and Sikh social norms contributed to the main features of Shanghai's Sikh community. Again, the circulation of the Ghadar Party

members and the INA officers, along with their institutions and ideas, inherently changed the living trajectories of many Sikh residents in Shanghai.

This circulation, however, would not have occurred had there been no structure to sustain it. This thesis argues that what made the circulation possible was indeed the existence of multilayered networks. The concept of the network has long been employed by historians to explain how transnational or global interactions occurred in history.⁷⁴² Nevertheless, many studies merely focus on one specific network, such as the oasis network along the Silk Road in the first century that facilitated long-distance trade,⁷⁴³ the slave trade network that linked Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean in the early modern period,⁷⁴⁴ or the network of Islamic scholars that stretched from the Ottoman Empire to Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴⁵ On the other hand, this study illustrates that, in a similar way, one single network, for example the Sikh diasporic network, could be used by different agents, such as Sikh migrants, the Ghadar Party, and the INA, for their respective purposes. Furthermore, different networks might very well have been intertwined. The

⁷⁴² For the significance of networks in global history, see Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang, eds., *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith, eds., *Sites of Asian Interactions: Ideas, Networks and Mobility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁷⁴³ Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Susan Whitfield, *Life along the Silk Road* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

⁷⁴⁴ Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997); Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Curto, eds., *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁴⁵ Suraiya Faruqi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Gagan Sood, "Circulation and Exchange in Islamate Eurasia: A Regional Approach to the Early Modern World," *Past and Present* 212 (2011): 113-162; Ira Lapidus, *Islamic Societies to the Nineteenth Century: A Global History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ronit Ricci, "Citing as a Site: Translation and Circulation in Muslim South and Southeast Asia," in *Sites of Asian Interaction: Ideas, Networks and Mobility*, eds., Tim Harper and Sunil Amrith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 105-126.

overlap between the British imperial network and the Sikh diasporic network provides an explanation of why the British colonial authorities employed Sikhs and why the Sikhs migrated overseas. The challenge posed by the network of the Ghadar Party in Southeast and East Asia in the 1910s and 1920s led to the birth of the British surveillance network.

The concept of the multilayered network also inspires us to rethink connections and circulations among spaces of different scales and types. Many practitioners currently prefer to employ the term “transnational” in their studies of cross-boundary activities and processes. Nevertheless, this term seems inappropriate when explaining the flow of personnel, institutions, and information that took place within an empire or among city-states.⁷⁴⁶ Instead, for many cases the translocal approach seems more inclusive and intermediary, and could help us better understand and conceptualize connections that are neither necessarily national in scale nor necessarily related to national affairs.⁷⁴⁷ For example, the Sikh diasporic network and the British imperial network described in this thesis were composed of colonial outposts, treaty ports, and cities such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Hankou, Vancouver, San Francisco, Bangkok, and Rangoon. These localities were hardly national entities, nor were the networks that connected them transnational. The circulation of Sikh police personnel and institutions from Hong Kong to Shanghai in the 1880s, the recruitment conduct of the SMP agents in the Punjab, and the travelling of Ghadarities from Hankou to

⁷⁴⁶ Christopher Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 1442.

⁷⁴⁷ Freitag and Oppen, eds., *Translocality*, 3. Also see Helen Siu and Liu Zhiwei, “The Original Translocal Society: Making Chaolian from Land and Sea,” in *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places*, eds., Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 64-97.

Shanghai to organize anti-British activities were by no means transnational, but rather translocal.

In all of these translocal connections, the protagonists were Sikh peasants from the Punjab. In view of their relations with the British, their economic conditions, and their social status, it is reasonable to categorize these Sikhs as subalterns.⁷⁴⁸ In fact, one of the main aims of this thesis is to recover the subaltern's position in global history studies. The rise of global history has been closely related to the critics of Eurocentrism since the 1970s. Influenced by the world system theory, global historians explore the social inequalities that structure the circulation of goods, populations, and ideas across the globe.⁷⁴⁹ However, postcolonial practitioners criticize such scholarship for overemphasizing the dichotomy of West and East, oppressors and oppressed, and developed and developing, while overlooking the complexities of the process of circulations.⁷⁵⁰

Since the 1990s, global history studies have been greatly diversified as gender, environmental, scientific, and medical topics have entered and dominated the field.⁷⁵¹ The common theme of such scholarship is that human

⁷⁴⁸ According to the definition of Antonio Gramsci, the term subaltern refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, languages, and culture, and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/dominated relationships in history, see Antonio Gramsci, "History of the Subaltern Classes," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. and trans., Tuintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 52-53.

⁷⁴⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (1974): 387-415; Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵⁰ Bayly, Beckert, Connelly, Hofmeyr, Kozol, and Seed, "AHR Conversation," 1443-1451.

⁷⁵¹ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Daniel Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); John McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002);

societies were interconnected in the past and will be integrated more closely under the influence of the flow of capital and the development of technologies.⁷⁵² Studies of the power distribution and the living conditions of lower-class people in the world system, however, are in decline.⁷⁵³ Although many practitioners are attentive to networks that connected various human societies and facilitated flows, circulations, and movements, few tend to elaborate how power was distributed within these networks, who benefited from these networks, and who were marginalized. In other words, while scholars are rushing to explore global connections, localities and the people living there, subalterns in particular, have been left behind.⁷⁵⁴ In current global history studies, subalterns are often viewed as people who lacked of the resources to move around, and could only stay in localities to wait for some outside forces to connect, influence, and transform them.⁷⁵⁵ Global

Sheldon Watts, *Disease and Medicine in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Alison Bashford, *Medicine at the Border: Disease, Globalization and Security, 1850 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Edmund Burke III and Kenneth Pomeranz, eds., *The Environment and World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone, eds., *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (London: Penguin, 2014).

⁷⁵² Olstein, *Thinking History Globally*, 3-4.

⁷⁵³ One of the exceptions is transnational labour history, see, for example, Marcel Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002).

⁷⁵⁴ Scholars of Subaltern Studies have long argued that the imperial and national historiographies, which are largely controlled by colonial and national elites, share the similar technique of marginalizing subaltern cultures and politics, see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Prakash, "AHR Forum: Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," 1475-1481.

⁷⁵⁵ The growing interest in diasporas amongst historians at the beginning of the twenty-first century opens the possibility of reinitiating the subaltern issue in global history studies, whereas few research have ever been undertaken to bridge subaltern studies with global history. In recent years, scholars such as Adam McKeown points out that lower-class migrants from Asia were marginalized in studies of modern global migrations, see McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 45-46. For diaspora studies in global history, see Wang Gungwu, ed., *Global History and Migrations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

connections are assumed to have materialized at government or elite level,⁷⁵⁶ while subalterns, instead, are assumed to have been unable to actively take part in and transform cross-boundary or long-distance movements.⁷⁵⁷

This thesis, however, shows that localities can be transcended and subalterns can be active. Taking advantage of telecommunication and transportation facilities across the British Empire, Sikhs made their own decisions and chose the destinations of their emigration by the turn of the twentieth century. To attract Sikhs to serve in their police forces, authorities in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai competed with one another and frequently adjusted their recruitment policies over time. In these colonies and settlements, some Sikhs, such as Buddha Singh, chose to collaborate with the British and became a part of the oppressive colonial machine, while others had gradually developed a feeling of discontent with the British rule, owing to the inferior treatment they received. The network that used to help Sikhs emigrate for better economic opportunities was then employed by Ghadar revolutionaries, most of whom were Sikh workers in North America, to undertake anti-British activities. The movement of the Ghadarities in the 1910s and 1920s accelerated the integration of the surveillance system across the British Empire and beyond. As this thesis shows, subalterns were very

⁷⁵⁶ The cross-boundary travels and cosmopolitan experience of the Indian revolutionaries such as Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Lala Har Dayal, Raja Mahendra Pratap, and Subhas Chandra Bose have all been well studied, see Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Carolien Stolte, “Enough of the Great Napoleons!”; Henrik Chetan Aspengren, “Indian Revolutionaries Abroad,” accessed 10.1353/cch.2014.0045.

⁷⁵⁷ Hatton and Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration*; Emmer, “European Expansion and Migration,” 3-11; Emmer, “Was Migration Beneficial?” 113-115. There is a new trend in recent years that pays more attention to lower-class people’s cross-boundary mobility, and their roles in shaping world history, Harper, “Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground”; Anand Yang, “China and India Are One: A Subaltern Vision of ‘Hindu China’ during the Boxer Expedition of 1900-1901,” in *Asia Inside Out: Changing Times*, eds., Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen Siu, and Peter Perdue (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 207-225.

active in participating in the cross-boundary circulations, and sometimes even transformed the rules and patterns of these circulations.⁷⁵⁸

Furthermore, unlike Subaltern Studies, which tends to emphasize how subalterns resisted and defied the elitist dominance,⁷⁵⁹ this thesis demonstrates that the identities of subalterns were multifaceted. Subalterns were neither dominated nor independent of the elites; they might have been revolutionaries, collaborators, or ordinary migrants without any political appeal. As Edward Said points out, once individuals or ideas are on the move, they are exposed to unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation. Gradually, they would be transformed, bearing some new meanings or features that are different from those at the point of origin.⁷⁶⁰ Through travelling from the Punjab to Shanghai, Sikh peasants who were exploited by Hindu landlords and British authorities became policemen who were responsible for disciplining the urban population. Through travelling from Shanghai to Vancouver or San Francisco, law-enforcement agents who were the backbone of British superiority in China became vulnerable migrants who were bitterly discriminated against by the local white people. When some of them returned to Shanghai in the 1910s and 1920s, they became revolutionaries who struggled to destroy British hegemony across the globe. Above all, the title of this thesis, “Red Turbans on the Bund: Sikh Migrants,

⁷⁵⁸ The case of Sikhs in this thesis is by no means an exception. Overseas Vietnamese subalterns (sailors, cooks, servants, prostitutes, and so forth) had their own networks that stretched from Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canton, and Shanghai to Tokyo. Many of these subalterns later became nationalists, and used these networks to facilitate their revolutionary undertakings. See Christopher Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954* (London: Psychology Press, 1999).

⁷⁵⁹ Gyanendra Pandey, “Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism The Peasant Movement in Aadh, 1919-1922,” *Subaltern Studies* 1 (1982): 143-197; James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

⁷⁶⁰ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226-247.

Policemen, and Revolutionaries in Shanghai”, not only refers to the three types of Sikh residents in modern Shanghai, but also indicates their ambiguous identities in a cosmopolitan city.

One of my Chinese friends once asked about my research subject. I told him that I was studying the Sikhs in Shanghai. “Yes, I know them,” he replied, “They were slaves of the British. Indians were not good to us.” In fact, many Chinese nowadays hold certain distorted and imaginary grudges against Indians, and vice versa. The exclusive nature of national history impedes the mutual understanding of people from different countries. In an age of rapid globalization, the agenda of national history that overemphasizes the particularity of the self-contained entity no longer serves the good of all human beings.

The urgent call of the age and the introspection regarding the approaches of imperial and national historiographies leads us to investigate the circulations of species, populations, technologies, and ideas across the globe. Recent studies have shown that long-distance trade, war, and large-scale migration have connected different parts of Eurasia since the onset of the Bronze Age.⁷⁶¹ With development of modern technologies, this integration process has been dramatically accelerated.⁷⁶² As a result, certain widely known local cooking habits, clothing styles, cultural norms, religious rituals, and so forth probably have their origins in some other places, sometimes even

⁷⁶¹ Janet Au-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A. D. 1250-1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Tansen Sen, “The Intricacies of Premodern Asian Connections,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69 (2010): 991-999.

⁷⁶² Peter Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Peter Lyth and Helmuth Trischler, eds., *Writing Prometheus: Globalization, History, and Technology* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004);

somewhere on the other side of the world.⁷⁶³ In sum, what we assume to be a specific nation's political, social and cultural history might well be a far more complex process, shaped by the circulation of various kinds of cross-boundary elements. One specific community's history is frequently under the influence of some outside forces, and is therefore not so exclusive or unique. Taking circulation and network as its principal themes, this thesis strongly aims to support this historical trend of looking into all that is connected and interrelated in our human past, to uncover a greater meaning in our common histories.

⁷⁶³ Paul Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine: Global Histories* (Lodon: Routledge, 1999); Tony Volkman, ed., *Cultures of Transnational Adoption* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History or, the Imperialists' New Clothes* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar, eds., *Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

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Hongye zhoukan 红叶周刊

Huatu Xinbao 画图新报

North China Herald

North China Daily News

Shenbao 申报

Shiwubao 实务报

Straits Times Overland Journal

The China Mail

The Hong Kong Telegraph
The Hong Kong Weekly Press
The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser
The Straits Times
The Times of India
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